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THE NEW YORKER
JOURNEYS

APRIL 19, 2010

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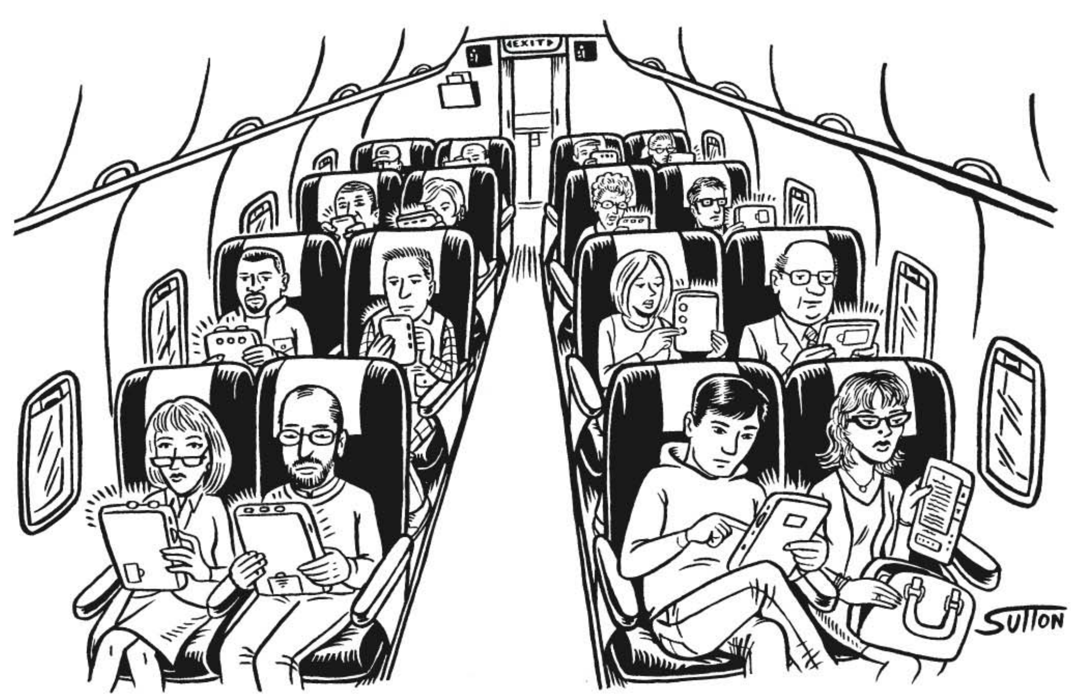
SPOTS *Philippe Petit-Roulet*



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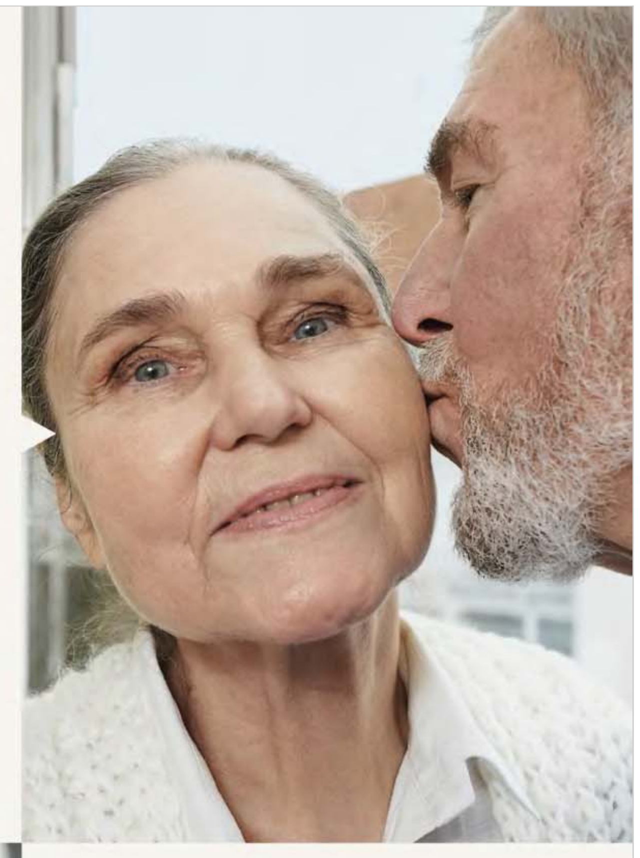

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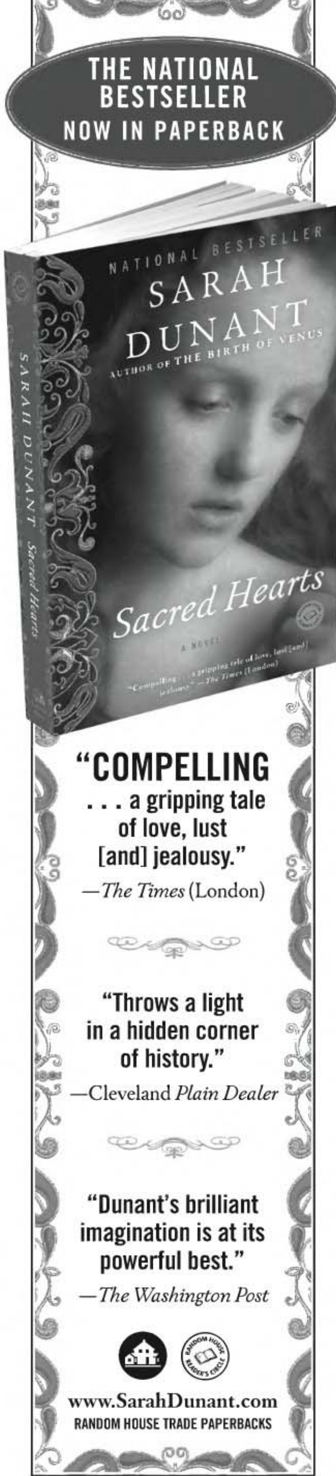

CONTRIBUTORS

Alec Wilkinson ("The Ice Balloon," p. 38) has written nine books, including "The Protest Singer: An Intimate Portrait of Pete Seeger," which comes out in paperback in June.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 31) writes about politics and policy and also has a blog on newyorker.com. "¡Obámanos!: The Birth of a New Political Era" is his most recent book.

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Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 47) contributes regularly to the magazine. His illustrations are featured in "The Steps Across the Water," by Adam Gopnik, due out later this year.

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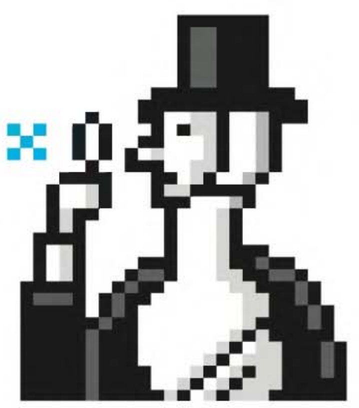
Roberto Bolaño (Fiction, p. 98), a Chilean novelist and poet, died in 2003. A translation of his novel "Monsieur Pain" came out in January.

Dan Chiasson (Books, p. 116) published his third poetry collection, "Where's the Moon, There's the Moon," in February.

Peter Schjeldahl (The Art World, p. 122), the magazine's art critic, is the author of "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*."

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Hendrik Hertzberg chats with readers about the Catholic Church. / Multimedia: *Lauren Collins* visits the aerial photographer George Steinmetz; *Elif Batuman* on the Istanbul chef Musa Dağdeviren; *Burkhard Bilger* on a family of tugboat owners, plus footage of Allen Ginsberg taking a boat ride. / Photo Booth, a new blog about photography, plus *Amy Davidson* on foreign affairs, *John Cassidy* on economics, *Evan Osnos* on China, *Macy Halford* on books, *Richard Brody* on movies, and more. / Cover jigsaw puzzles, the Cartoon Kit, and the caption contest. / A complete archive of issues, back to 1925.



THE MAIL

CORPORATE ART

While I enjoyed Calvin Tomkins's profile of the artist Julie Mehretu, I was surprised and disturbed by some of her comments in reference to her work "Mural," commissioned by Goldman Sachs ("Big Art, Big Money," March 29th). She states, "It's not so often that a painting has a chance to be public art," and Tomkins describes the months of planning and hours of work by Mehretu and her assistants necessary to complete the commission. However, there are hundreds of paintings on walls in poor and working-class neighborhoods around the world which are as large or larger than "Mural," took equal amounts of time to plan and execute, and are not aligned with a company that has been called "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity." These community murals, created by artists and young people from the neighborhoods, through organizations like Groundswell Community Mural Project, El Puente, Precita Eyes, and others, are often every bit as visually complex and engaging as "Mural" and are genuinely available to the public on a daily basis. The writer and activist Meridel Le Sueur once wrote, in reference to artists feeding at the corporate trough, "They just want you to perfume the sewers. They need artists to bring perfume to the terrible stench of their death." It's a pity that an artist as talented as Julie Mehretu cannot imagine other possibilities for herself as an artist than to take millions from Goldman Sachs and "just hope it will feel O.K. over time."

Joe Matunis
Director, Los Muralistas de El Puente
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mehretu's colorful, layered Goldman Sachs painting, placed in its new headquarters lobby, was begun before the economy's nosedive. But she says she would still take the commission, knowing what we now know about Goldman's being at the forefront of the economic collapse, through its derivatives and credit-default-swaps business. But would her execution change? There are many people who lost homes, who were personally devastated by the bad mortgages that Goldman traded and profited from—and we now also know of Goldman's involvement with the financially catastrophic government of Greece. So it goes on, and individual lives continue being affected by the decisions of big investment banks. One of the layers of Mehretu's "Mural" traces the history of financial institutions. But to be true it would now need something more, to reveal what we've learned since then about how financial Goliaths operate.

Rob Garver
Jersey City, N.J.

TO THE MIDDLE

James Surowiecki's article on the iPad asserts that middle-market product and pricing strategies are getting beaten out by competitors taking either a high-end approach or a low-end approach (The Financial Page, March 29th). As an example of the former, think of Audi; for the latter, Ford. This view has been a long-standing tenet in strategic-management theory. Nearly three decades ago, Michael Porter, the renowned business strategist at Harvard Business School, posited that companies must compete either on differentiation, by offering something unique to the market, or by underpricing the competition through cost leadership. Companies failing to choose one of these strategies eventually get "stuck in the middle." Some academics have contested Porter's view, arguing that companies can "straddle" a competitive position based on both quality and quantity. A company purported to exemplify a successful straddling strategy? Toyota.

Michael Braun
Missoula, Mont.

•

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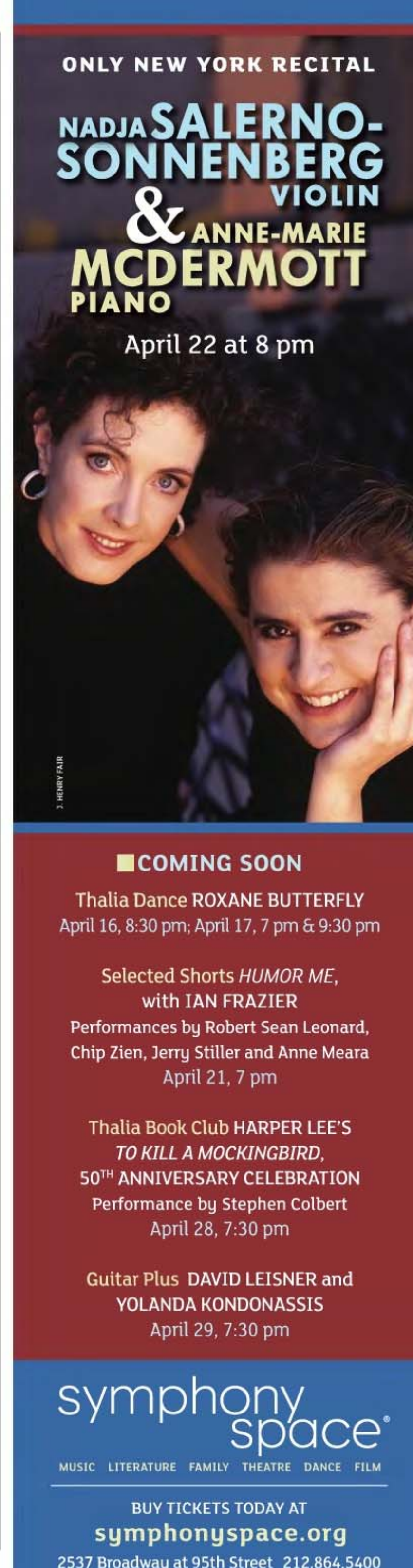

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
THIS JOINT IS JUMPIN'

Jazz at Lincoln Center honors the witty performer and stride-piano innovator Fats Waller this week. Ben Vereen hosts a large show in the Rose Theatre, featuring the likes of Andy Farber, Carla Cook, Ehud Asherie, and Doug Wamble. Next door, in the Allen Room, the pianists Dick Hyman, Judy Carmichael, and Marcus Roberts run through such Waller classics as "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Honeysuckle Rose." (See page 14.)

ART
MANY HATS

Lil Picard, who died in 1994, at the age of ninety-four, was an accomplished writer and hat designer in Berlin when she moved to New York, in 1937, and became an artist and a fixture on the downtown scene. "Lil Picard and Counterculture New York," at the Grey Art Gallery, is the first U.S. museum show devoted to her career. (See page 17.)

DANCE
SHOES TO FILL

The death of Jimmy Slyde, in 2008, robbed tap dancing of one of its greats. At Symphony Space, one of his pupils, Roxane Butterfly, keeps his spirit alive with rare film of the King of Slides and live improvisations by herself, her fellow-student Tamango, and others. (See page 20.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SPRING AHEAD

Young composers get an invaluable showcase every spring as the MATA Festival gets under way. The second night at (Le) Poisson Rouge includes a performance by the excellent Calder Quartet, from Los Angeles. (See page 22.)

MOVIES
BODY HEAT

Cinephiles have never doubted what people do in Sweden to keep warm in the chill. In "Northern Exposures," the Film Society of Lincoln Center offers a series about sexuality in the Swedish cinema, from Victor Sjöström's 1913 drama "Ingeborg Holm" and Vilgot Sjöman's "I Am Curious (Yellow)" to recent films. (See page 26.)

"Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson," at the Public. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
LEASH LAWS

It's easy to think, Oh, that's enough Snoop Dogg for today. For almost twenty years, the California m.c. has been putting out records, appearing in reality shows, and saying yes to nearly everyone who has asked for a piece of his

voice or image. Beyond overexposure, there is also the matter of Mr. Dogg's casually relentless misogyny, a tendency that cripples many of his great songs. You need to process this if you love hip-hop, because few rappers have an instrument that matches Snoop's: an easy baritone with a high ceiling that dominates any beat it faces but never tightens. Snoop's sense of how words land is unerring, and he moves with a physical confidence that betrays a lifetime of knowing—and expecting—that he is being watched. For all the Snoop you may have inhaled, you still need to see him do it live, and he doesn't often play small venues. When he appears at Brooklyn Bowl on April 19 and Irving Plaza on April 20, bring something to breathe through, and pay close attention.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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

THE ALIENS
Annie Baker's new play, about a pair of small-town Vermont slackers who impart their wisdom to a local teen-ager, premières at the Rattlestick, directed by Sam Gold. In previews. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

AMERICAN IDIOT
A new musical uses the Green Day album of the title as the backdrop for a story about working-class friends who go their separate ways. John Gallagher, Jr. ("Spring Awakening"), Stark Sands, Michael Esper, Rebecca Naomi Jones, and Tony Vincent star. Michael Mayer, who collaborated on the book with Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong, directs. In previews. Opens April 20. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

BLOODSONG OF LOVE
Joe Iconis wrote the book, music, and lyrics for this new musical, a spaghetti Western set to rock-and-roll tunes. John Simpkins directs. In previews. Opens April 15. (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
Kelsey Grammer makes his Broadway musical début, alongside Douglas Hodge, in a revival of the 1983 musical, a Menier Chocolate Factory production. With music and lyrics by Jerry Herman and a book by Harvey Fierstein, based on the play by Jean Poiret. Terry Johnson directs. In previews. Opens April 18. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

COLLECTED STORIES
Lynne Meadow directs Donald Margulies's play from 1996, about the power shift between a famous writer and her young apprentice. Linda Lavin and Sarah Paulson star. In previews. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

CREDITORS
Alan Rickman directs a Donmar Warehouse/BAM presentation of David Greig's adaptation of the 1888 August Strindberg play, following a sold-out run in London. Previews begin April 16. Opens April 20. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

DR. KNOCK; OR, THE TRIUMPH OF MEDICINE
Jules Romain's 1923 satire of French health-care reform gets a rare revival at the Mint. Gus Kaikkonen directs. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

ENGAGING SHAW
Abingdon presents a play by John Morogiello, about the relationship between George Bernard Shaw and the socialite Charlotte Payne-Townshend. Jackob G. Hofmann directs. In previews. Opens April 18. (312 W. 36th St. 212-868-2055.)

ENRON
Lucy Prebble's new play, incorporating music, dance, and video, was inspired by the Texas energy company's financial scandal of 2001. Norbert Leo Butz stars as Jeffrey Skilling. Rupert Goold directs. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAMILY WEEK
Jonathan Demme directs a play by Beth Henley, about a woman who enters a recovery program after losing her son. Kathleen Chalfant, Rosemarie DeWitt, and Quincy Tyler Bernstine star in the MCC production. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

FENCES
Denzel Washington and Viola Davis star in a revival of August Wilson's 1987 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, about a struggling former baseball player in Pittsburgh in the fifties and sixties, directed by Kenny Leon. With original music by Branford Marsalis. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE KID
The world première of a new musical with a book by Michael Zam, music by Andy Monroe, and lyrics by Jack Lechner, based on the book by Dan Savage, about a gay sex columnist who wants to adopt a baby with his partner. Scott Elliott directs the New Group production. Previews begin April 16. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LANGSTON IN HARLEM
Urban Stages presents the world première of a musical about Langston Hughes, told through his poetry. Hughes shares a writing credit with Walter Marks, who also wrote the music, and Kent Gash, who directs. In previews. Opens April 15. (259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

MY TRIP DOWN THE PINK CARPET
The actor Leslie Jordan tells of his adventures in Hollywood, in a one-man show based on his book of the same title, produced by Lily Tomlin and Jane Wagner. In previews. Opens April 19. (Midtown Theatre, 163 W. 46th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE PARENTS' EVENING
Bathsheba Doran wrote this play, about a couple with opposing views on raising their children. Julianne Nicholson and James Waterston star; Jim Simpson directs. Previews begin April 17. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

PROMISES, PROMISES
Kristin Chenoweth, Sean Hayes, Tony Goldwyn, Dick Latessa, Katie Finneran, and Brooks Ashmanskas star in the 1968 musical based on the 1960 film "The Apartment," in which an insurance-company employee lends his pad to co-workers for their trysts. With a book by Neil Simon, music by Burt Bacharach, and lyrics by Hal David. Rob Ashford directs. In previews. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

666
The Spanish comedy troupe Yllana makes its Off Broadway début with this dark comedy, in which four men on death row enact their fantasies. In previews. Opens April 15. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

SONDHEIM ON SONDHEIM
Barbara Cook, Tom Wopat, and Vanessa Williams star in a new musical for the Roundabout, a biographical look at Stephen Sondheim's life and art, conceived and directed by James Lapine and featuring Sondheim's music. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE SUBJECT WAS ROSES
Amy Wright directs Frank D. Gilroy's 1964 play, set in the Bronx in 1946, about a soldier who returns home after serving in the Second World War. In previews. Opens April 18. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE 39 STEPS
Patrick Barlow's adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock's film moves to New World Stages with a new cast. Maria Aitken directs. In previews. Opens April 15. (340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE
Nancy Harrow wrote the music and lyrics for this new musical, about the life of Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Will Pomerantz directs. In previews. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-352-3101.)

WHITE'S LIES
A bachelor invents a family to appease his mother, in this comedy by Ben Andron. Betty Buckley, Tuc Watkins, and Peter Scolari star; Bob Cline directs. In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE WOOSTER GROUP'S BOOTY CALL AVANT-GARDE-ARAMA!
The Wooster Group guest-curates two days of world premières for the P.S. 122 series. Guests include Cynthia Hopkins, Daniel Pettrow, and Yvan Greenberg. April 16-17. (First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

NOW PLAYING

THE ADDAMS FAMILY
A new musical, based on the cartoons of Charles Addams. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

BLOODY BLOODY ANDREW JACKSON
Les Freres Corbusier's latest, an emo-rock musical that satirizes the seventh President. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

ENJOY
Toshiki Okada's play, about part-time workers at a Tokyo manga café, is a delightful study in frustration. Anecdotes are eagerly introduced, then derail before arriving at a point. Ideas are overexplained

JEREMY POVOLNY

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into incoherence. Ambition dissolves in a nervous laugh. This is the first production of an Okada play not directed by the playwright himself, and the first one performed in English. He put his work in good hands: the director, Dan Rothenberg, displays an acute understanding of Okada's experiments with movement and shifting perspective, Aya Ogawa's brilliant translation meets the challenge of finding an English equivalent for Okada's highly colloquial Japanese, and the actors are wonderfully loose and nimble. In short, it's a treat. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

HAVANA JOURNAL, 2004

An eccentric seventy-two-year-old Columbia professor (Crystal Field)—who, in lieu of grading papers, spends her evenings drinking vodka out of the bottle and taping herself raging against the machine—takes an illegal trip to Cuba, where she encounters reality (probably for the first time in years) in the form of an untrustworthy Cuban revolutionary (Juan Javier Cardenas) and a smarmy C.I.A. agent (Liam Torres). There's a lot to admire in this Theatre for the New City/INTAR production of Eduardo Machado's new play: the writing is smart and funny; the set is elegant; the background music is lovely; and the supporting cast, under the direction of Stefanie Sertich, is strong and watchable (not to mention handsome). But Field's performance is so over-the-top that it doesn't feel like part of the fabric of the play, but instead a distracting indulgence. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 212-254-1109. Through April 18.)

I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER

It's not surprising that Marsha Mason, a four-time Academy Award nominee, and Keir Dullea, from "2001: A Space Odyssey," have starring roles in the Keen Company's revival of Robert Anderson's 1968 play, directed by Jonathan Silverstein—they were in their heyday around the time that the play was first produced, and it's somehow fitting that they play the elderly couple falling apart at the center of the story. The script, about a grown son (Matt Servitto) looking back on the last couple of years of his relationship with his mother, whom he adored, and his overbearing father, whom he didn't, feels dated, though; it comes from an easier time, when the worst thing we had to deal with was our parents' lack of approval. Still, it's a pleasure to watch old pros—and young ones—at work. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LEND ME A TENOR

In all the harum-scarum high jinks of Ken Ludwig's romp about opera, slickly directed by Stanley Tucci, there is a lot of theatrical panache on display, but not one idea. The mistaken identities raise no issues, and the jokes have no bite, but the audience seems to have a high old time being gummed to death by the folderol. An imported temperamental Italian tenor, who is scheduled to play the Moor in the gala Cleveland opening of Verdi's "Otello," is inadvertently drugged into a dead sleep. Cancellation is imminent. Justin Bartha gets to sing and swagger; the subtle Anthony LaPaglia gets to play dumb; Jan Maxwell gets to behave as outrageously as Lady Gaga; and the charming Tony Shalhoub, the impresario between a rock and a hard place, gets to do everything else. Tucci serves it up on a shiny plate with a cherry on top. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/12/10.) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

LOVE IS MY SIN

Peter Brook stages a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets, in a spare and poignant fifty-minute production, at the Duke on 42nd Street. Accompanied by a melancholy accordion, two actors, Natasha Parry and the fine Michael Pennington, trade off nuanced recitations of the sonnets, which are grouped under four rubrics: "Devouring Time," "Separation," "Jealousy," and "Time Defied." In part because Parry is Brook's wife, the action takes on the suggestion of a battle-tested marriage reflected in verse. Some of the playfulness of the sonnets is therefore lost, but to the benefit of their bittersweet wisdom, which the actors put across with poise and simplicity. (229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Through April 17.)

MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET

This new jukebox musical, with a book by Colin Escott and Floyd Mutrux, kicks ass. Four good actors who can really play their instruments sing twenty-three rock-and-roll hits in telling the true story of Sam Phillips's 1956 Sun Records session in which Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Carl Perkins all jammed. Lance Guest, Levi Kreis, Eddie Clendening, and Robert Britton Lyons play the rockers. A special shout-out to Kreis, who brings the house down playing "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" leaning backward over his upright piano. Good set. Tight band. Crisp direction by Eric Schaeffer. A hard-rockin' time guaranteed by this management. (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.)

RED

In John Logan's drama (elegantly directed by Michael Grandage), the painter Mark Rothko (Alfred Molina) is onstage twenty minutes before the play begins. He's in his studio, a vast cave of consciousness that, subtly designed by Christopher Oram, also suggests a sanctuary. Logan's theatrical conceit is to introduce an assistant into Rothko's solitude, an aspiring painter named Ken (the excellent Eddie Redmayne). Over two years, between 1958 and 1960, he becomes Rothko's student, gofer, whipping boy, and sounding board. In teaching Ken how to look at his art, Rothko indirectly teaches us. It's an exciting education. As Rothko, the strapping Molina burns up the stage. Even in silence, he exudes a remarkable gravity. He also makes a gorgeous fuss. (4/12/10) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **A BEHANDING IN SPOKANE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COCKTAIL PARTY:** Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through April 17. **FELA!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAPPY IN THE POORHOUSE:** Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-388-0388. **LOOPED:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT FALL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NORTH ATLANTIC:** Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-868-4444. **THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE:** Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **RACE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **RESCUE ME:** Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-352-3101. Through April 18. **WEST SIDE STORY:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—April 16: The **Good Rats** were a regular fixture on the New York scene throughout the seventies, but the storied Long Island bar band never seemed to catch a break. Ever poised on the threshold of national recognition (largely thanks to their opening for everyone from Ozzy Osbourne to the Grateful Dead), the surprisingly versatile and tenacious band failed to impress anyone beyond their loyal local following. April 17: After playing for a couple of incarnations of the bluesy hard-rock outfit Spooky Tooth, the keyboardist **Gary Wright** struck out on his own in the mid-seventies and ended up crafting a couple of memorable rock songs like "Dream Weaver" and "Love Is Alive," songs that went on to become classic-rock radio staples (the strains of the former swelled in Mike Meyers's "Wayne's World" for comedic effect whenever Garth's love interest appeared onscreen). April 20: **Neil Innes** may not be a household name, but as a member of the surreally silly Bonzo Dog Band, a regular musical co-conspirator of Monty Python's, and one-quarter of the fabled Beatles parody outfit the Rutles (wherein he played the role of Ron Nasty), he has certainly cemented his place in the annals of musical comedy.

TABLES FOR TWO
VILLAGE TART

JESSIE WENDER

86 Kenmare St. (212-226-4980)—This new restaurant may have the name of a strumpet, but it has the mien of a prim maiden aunt, with its marble-topped tables, dusky pink seats, cut-glass lustres, and ornately framed mirrors. In a neighborhood often known for being image-conscious, Village Tart is remarkably unassuming; it may be the only place within a mile radius that amiably deploys Jack Johnson as background music. The other night, the mellow decorum of a crowded dining room was disturbed only by a boisterous conversation that touched on, among other things, the iPad, the relative beauty of two sisters, and female anatomy. "Let's be honest," asserted one voice. "I'm a really smart guy who knows a lot about a lot of things, but that's one thing I've never figured out."

While the menu may lack the culinary pyrotechnics the consulting chef, Pichet Ong, one of a cohort of pastry-makers gone savory, has displayed elsewhere, most dishes succeed through a careful attention to detail. Bacon-wrapped dates countered sweetness with red-pepper flakes, and a supersized pig in a blanket—a Kobe-beef sausage wrapped in delicate phyllo dough—was rich in flavor, though, a server admitted, a bit intimidating in its heft. Both a vivid salad of red and yellow beets, with Greek yogurt, oranges, and candied pistachios, and the kobacha-and-coconut soup, sprinkled with cookie crumbs, offered the creamy satisfaction usually found in dessert. Entrées tend toward comfort: a silky buttermilk-poached halibut demonstrated the benefits of letting the fish assert its own personality; a chicken potpie, topped with an ample pastry crust, was rich without being overwhelmingly meaty.

Ong seems to assume a more hands-on role in the restaurant than his title might imply—the other evening, he was there, shuttling between the kitchen and the dining room—and it would be a shame to visit Village Tart without having dessert. On offer recently: cigar-size cannoli filled with nougat semifreddo; an inventive combination of grapefruit and butterscotch; and a brownie-like chocolate skillet torte with a swoop of marshmallow across the top. And then, finally, there's a glimpse of the flirt behind the name: affogato, served "adult." (Open weekdays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $12-$20.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

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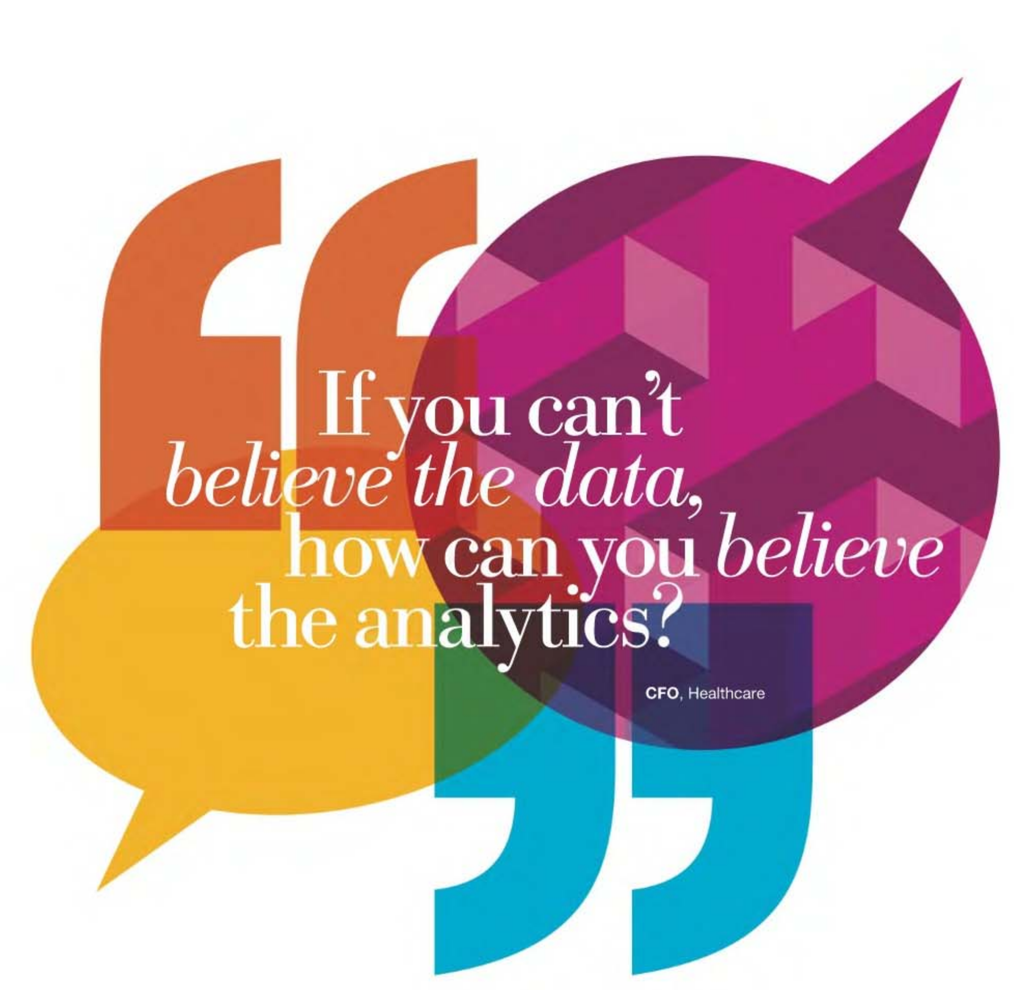
BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—April 13: The Queens quintet **Freelance Whales,** already well known to thousands in subway stations around the city, celebrates the release of its début album, "Weather Vanes." The group features instruments ranging from banjo to synthesizer, effectively merging the rustic with the rhapsodic. With **Lawrence Arabia,** the current nom de rock of the New Zealander James Milne, formerly of the Brunettes and Okkervil River, whose recent record "Chant Darling" is hooky as hell. Also with **Sherlock's Daughter,** a spacey Australian outfit.
BROOKLYN BOWL
61 Wythe Ave., Williamsburg (718-963-3369)—April 19: The ubiquitous hip-hop personality **Snoop Dogg.** April 20-21: The **Thermals** have always been masters at infusing ragged pop-punk riffs with a deceptively august sensibility. It's surprising, then, that "Canada," their recently released new single (their fifth album, "Personal Life," is due out later this year), finds the Portland, Oregon, band retreading a more radio-ready sound of the seventies. Hopefully this show will find them rocking through their more inspired early material, a surefire way to excite their scruffy fan base.
DEATH BY AUDIO
49 S. 2nd St., Brooklyn (No phone)—April 16: **Fiasco,** a young three-piece from the city, generates a stunningly propulsive enthusiasm through noodling guitars and frenetic math-rock grooves, yet their wide-eyed optimism is generally overshadowed by the celebrity of one of the guitarists' parents, the actor Steve Buscemi. No matter. They're on a bill with a group of Brooklyn noise-rockers, **Pterodactyl,** who marry a high-frequency guitar assault with idiosyncratic falsetto vocal styling. Also appearing are **Dinowalrus,** whose kaleidoscopic kraut-rock is somewhat more reserved, and the Austin-based drummer, singer-songwriter, and musical madman **Daniel Francis Doyle.**
EUROPA NIGHT CLUB
98-104 Meserole Ave., at Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-5723)—April 18: The extraordinary avant-garde guitarist and composer **Mick Barr** is best known for laying complex guitar lines over seemingly arbitrary and sudden changes in time signature, generally with his bands Octis, Ocrilim, and Orthrelm. Barr's recent project, Krallice, finds him shredding through progressive black metal.
FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl. (212-777-6800)—April 14: Toronto's **Crystal Castles** burst onto the scene in the late aughts with a slew of seven-inch singles, electro-pop fever dreams that found the producer Ethan Kath pitting the distorted squeal of the elfin vocalist Alice Glass against an unexpectedly dissonant eight-bit effect. The result was a distinctive and unsettling dance amalgam, and Glass's volatile presence onstage helped foster a near-mythic reputation. They're in town ahead of the release of their self-titled sophomore long-player, on which the duo pursues a decidedly more relaxed dance sound, with airy club bangers lacquered in the saccharine sheen of nineties rave aesthetics. April 20: **Snoop Dogg** (see Brooklyn Bowl).
IRISH ARTS CENTER
553 W. 51st St. (212-868-4444)—April 16-17: The wild Irish fiddle player **Martin Hayes** and his long-time partner, the guitarist **Dennis Cahill,** team up with the young classical violinist **Gregory Harrington.**
JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—April 15-17: **Joe McGinty** and his **Loser's Lounge**—an essential New York musical institution that gives classic pop songs the special treatment—take on Simon and Garfunkel.
RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—April 17: In the eighties, **Barrence Whitfield** and the Savages perfected a style of spirited live performance that seemed like one part party and one part exorcism. Capturing their garrulous brand of garage-rockin' R. & B. on albums like "Dig Yourself" and the incendiary "Ow! Ow! Ow!" won them critical acclaim, but the band never managed to graduate beyond cult status. Whitfield carries on today, however, with a new band called the **Monkey Hips.**
ROULETTE
20 Greene St. (212-219-8242)—April 17: The English-German trio **Konk Pack** finish a rare U.S. tour by bringing their high-minded punk-tinged improvisations to New York. The group, whose members hail from London and Köln, consists of the lap steel guitarist, saxophonist, and clarinettist Tim Hodgkinson, a co-founder of the pioneering late-sixties leftist avant-rock group Henry Cow; Thomas Lehn, on analog synthesizer; and Roger Turner, on drums. Together they embark on ferocious musical journeys that are occasionally leavened with whimsy and tiny, quiet gestures. For this show, they'll be joined by their fellow-visionary **Shelley Hirsch,** a singer whose vocal capabilities and imagination are nearly limitless.
TERMINAL 5
610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—April 20-21: Arguably the preëminent band of the British ska revival of the late seventies, the **Specials** paired the catchy basics of classic Jamaican ska with the energized aggression and pointed agitprop of British punk.
VOX POP CAFÉ
1022 Cortelyou Rd., Brooklyn (718-940-2084)—April 16: The local up-and-comers **PAPS** are an able guitar-and-uke duo who play stripped-down and gritty alt-folk; the pair was originally nurtured by the Williamsburg-based Birdsong Micropress, a grass-roots zine collective spearheaded by the D.I.Y. publisher and poet Tommy Pico.
WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
April 15: The Brazilian guitar sorcerers **Sérgio** and **Odair Assad,** whose grandfather was from Lebanon, explore the Arabic music of their roots. They'll be joined by the Beirut-born singer **Christiane Karam,** the percussionist **Jamey Haddad,** and the pianist **Clarice Assad,** Sérgio's daughter. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl.) April 17: The Malian singer, songwriter, and guitarist **Rokia Traore.** (Highline Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St.) April 18: The Portuguese fado sensation **Ana Moura.** (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) (For more information about all the shows, call 212-545-7536.)

Ethan Kath and Alice Glass bring their band, Crystal Castles, to the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—April 13-May 8: **Maude Maggart.** The theme of her new show, "Three Little Words," may be as old as the hills, but trust the sweet-voiced singer and beguiling performer to cast new light on love songs by Sondheim, Rodgers and Hart, and Porter.
BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—April 13-17: The Polish trumpeter **Tomasz Stanko** has a new group, with the guitarist **Jakob Bro** and the bassist **Anders Christensen,** and a new album, "Dark Eyes," which confirms his reputation as a strikingly lyrical player and a stimulating composer.
BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St. (212-475-8592)—April 13-18: The accomplished and ambitious pianist and composer **Kenny Werner** has established a comfort zone with some equally accomplished collaborators, the trumpeter **Randy Brecker,** the bassist **John Patitucci,** and the saxophonist **David Sanchez** among them.
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—April 14-18: A tougher side to the smooth-jazz keyboardist **Dave Grusin** may be in evidence when he's in the company of the trombonist **Steve Turre,** the flutist **Nestor Torres,** and the exceptional rhythm team of the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington.**
JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—April 16-17, in the Rose Theatre: The music of the immortal keyboardist, composer, and performer Thomas (Fats) Waller receives the royal treatment from a full cast, including **Ben Vereen, Carla Cook, Allan Harris, Ehud Asherie, Doug Wamble,** and **Jon-Erik Kellso.** The musical director is **Andy Farber.** April 16-17, in the Allen Room: Three Waller-obsessed pianists, **Dick Hyman, Judy Carmichael,** and **Marcus Roberts,** salute the titan of stride and swing.
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—April 14: The **Jeff Ballard Group.** Anyone who has witnessed Ballard with Chick Corea, Brad Mehldau, or the coöperative trio Fly, among other notable ensembles, knows that precious few contemporary jazz drummers can hold a candle to this gifted stylist. His own quintet includes two impressive saxophonists: **Mark Turner** on tenor and the MacArthur-grant recipient **Miguel Zenon** on alto. April 15-18 belongs to **Don Byron.** Even a featured week of rotating bands won't give the eclectic-minded clarinettist and saxophonist a chance to display all his musical projects. Nonetheless, his **New Gospel Quintet** (here the first two nights), his **Ivey-Divey Trio** (the following night), and his new **Swiftboat** quartet (the final night) offer enough proof that Byron remains one of the most fertile minds of new jazz.
SMALLS
183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—April 14: The dexterous and lyrically minded guitarist **Gene Bertoncini** appears sans accompaniment, a role he basks in. April 15: A solo performance by the pianist **Frank Kimbrough,** followed by the drummer **Adam Cruz** and his sextet, which includes the saxophonists **Chris Potter** and **Miguel Zenon.**

QUICKHONEY



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FAMILY CIRCUITS

With its paranoid streak and its foreshadowing of "Avatar" and "Shutter Island," the German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder's science-fiction thriller "World on a Wire," from 1973, may be even more timely now than when it was made. (It was never

distributed in the U.S., and will be screened at MOMA starting April 14.) The plot centers on an engineer who begins to suspect that the vast top-secret computer project he's working on, Simulacron—which brings to virtual life a community of ten thousand robotic humanoids—is being used for evil. When one colleague dies and another disappears along with all traces of his existence, the engineer investigates by means of a mental-transport helmet that allows him to enter the mind of one of his creations. Fassbinder's brilliantly sardonic approach decks the future out in high-gloss seventies kitsch (Plexiglas and mirrors, lacquered wood and chrome) and ubiquitous video screens, which reflect, distort, and multiply identities as readily as his panoply of zooms, pans, tracking shots, and shock cuts; his vision of a world out of joint resembles a video game gone haywire.

—*Richard Brody*

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—April 13-18: Turning to piano instead of his customary organ, **Sam Yahel** leads a trio featuring the bassist **Matt Penman** and the drummer **Jochen Rueckert.**

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Drawings of Bronzino."** The entire corpus of some sixty known drawings (a few attributions are uncertain) by the sixteenth-century Florentine painter is exhibited at the Met to rousing effect. His arrival heralds a new old movement, Mannerism, the most commonly despised period in Western art history and the one that best befits creative culture today: art about art, and style for style's sake. The pictures in the show, most of them black chalk studies of heads and bodies, are working drawings, some of which have been squared up for transfer to paintings or tapestries. Within the lines, fabulously deft anatomical details, in hatched and smeared shadings, evoke voluptuously animate flesh. The most gorgeous among them are male nudes, including a tall, narrow study, for the Eleonora chapel, of a young man seen from behind, twisting in a serpentine posture while holding a pillow, or a bizarre hat, on his head with one hand. The artificiality of the pose coexists perfectly with lip-smacking, carnal joy. Through April 18. ♦ **"Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage."** Through May 9. ♦ **"The Mourners: Medieval Tomb Sculpture from the Court of Burgundy."** Through May 23. ♦ **"The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry."** Through June 13. ♦ **"Side by Side: Oberlin's Masterworks at the Met."** Through Aug. 29. ♦ **"Vienna Circa 1780: An Imperial Silver Service Rediscovered."** Through Nov. 7. ♦ **"Tutankhamun's Funeral."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Epic India: Scenes from the Ramayana."** Through Sept. 27. (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)—**"Henri Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century."** Through June 28. ♦ **"Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present."** This survey of the pioneering sixty-three-year-old performance artist (recently profiled in these pages) is both a marvel and a letdown. Where the artist really is present—Abramović spends all day during visiting hours in MOMA's atrium—the atmosphere is electric. She sits at a table, in silence, wearing a long modest dress (blue in the opening weeks, lately red) and holding the gaze of the person across from her, a visitor to the museum. Witnessing the exchange is like overhearing a secret in a language you don't understand—charged with meaning, but also a mystery. On the sixth floor, photographs, films, and installations trace Abramović's forty-year career, while a rotating cast of young men and women reënact six iconic performances, two conceived in collaboration with her former partner, Ulay. What ought to be shocking—squeezing past two naked bodies, say—falls flat, without the artist's ferocious charisma to animate the event. It's as if Abramović has sanctioned her own knockoffs. Through May 31. ♦ **"William Kentridge: Five Themes."** Through May 17. ♦ **"Tim Burton."** Through April 26. ♦ **"Picasso: Themes and Variations."** Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Performance 7: Mirage by Joan Jonas."** Through May 31. ♦ **"Projects 92: Yin Xiuzhen."** Through May 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance."** This is one of those sprawling, grab-bag shows whose theme is vague enough to absorb just about anything, and so it does: a Rauschenberg "combine," a Paul Chan projection, Warhol's electric chairs in orange, Richard Prince's cowboys, Sherrie Levine's Rodchenkos. The slant is toward the conceptual and the theory-driven, with particular emphasis on appropriation and accumulation—all brought to bear on the idea that much contemporary photography and video is haunted by the past, often by its own recent history. There are plenty of excellent pieces to make that point, including Douglas Gordon's bootleg version of Warhol's "Empire," screening in the rotunda. But there are many more that seem to be here primarily because they're recent additions to the museum's holdings. Through Sept. 6. ♦ **"Contemplating the Void: Interventions in the Guggenheim Museum."** Through April 28. ♦ **"Paris and the Avant-Garde: Modern Masters from the Guggenheim Collection."** Through May 12. (Open Fridays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturday evenings until 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"2010 Whitney Biennial."** The most arresting work in the Biennial is, not for the first time, by Charles Ray: a roomful of fifteen large drawings of flowers in multicolored inks. Their ostensible spontaneity is a calculated illusion, as is an impression of earnest innocence that suggests outsider art. Ray is a gadfly conscience of a culture given to the myth that artists are free to do whatever they like. The surrounding show, curated by Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari, argues to the contrary. Tentativeness is all the rage. Apart from a few works—a wonderful sculpture by Huma Bhabha, a vast wall piece by Piotr Uklański, and mutedly horrific photographs by Stephanie Sinclair and Nina Berman—this Biennial seems intent not only on not offending aesthetic appetite but practically on sedating it. Through May 30. ♦ **"Collecting Biennials."** Through Nov. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"To Live Forever: Art and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt."** Who says you can't take it with you? If you were an ancient Egyptian, you could—in fact, the fancier your burial accoutrements, the better your shot at eternal life. This riveting show, which draws from the museum's stellar Egyptian collection, displays relics of the middle and lower classes alongside the funereal bounty of the rich. Compare two mummy covers from the Roman period, both made circa the fourth century A.D.: one is a piece of painted terra-cotta (possibly made by the deceased herself), and the other is a bust crafted from linen, gilded gesso, glass, and faïence. Don't miss the amazing "Mummy and Portrait of Demetrios" (95-100 A.D.), with its eerily lifelike encaustic portrait. For visceral thrills, read the wall text, courtesy of Herodotus, which details mummification pricing, from the costly organ removal and preservation to budget enema techniques. Through May 2. ♦ **"Kiki Smith: Sojourn."** Through Sept. 12. ♦ **"Healing the Wounds of War: The Brooklyn Sanitary Fair of 1864."** Through Oct. 17. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Traveling the Silk Road: Ancient Pathway to the Modern World."** Through Aug. 15. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"The Private Collection of Henry Darger."** Through Sept. 19. ♦ **"Women Only: Folk Art by Female Hands."** Through Sept. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea."** Through May 2. ♦ **"Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art."** Through June 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**"Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1956-1968."** Through Aug. 11. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Masterpieces of European Painting from Dulwich Picture Gallery."** Through May 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

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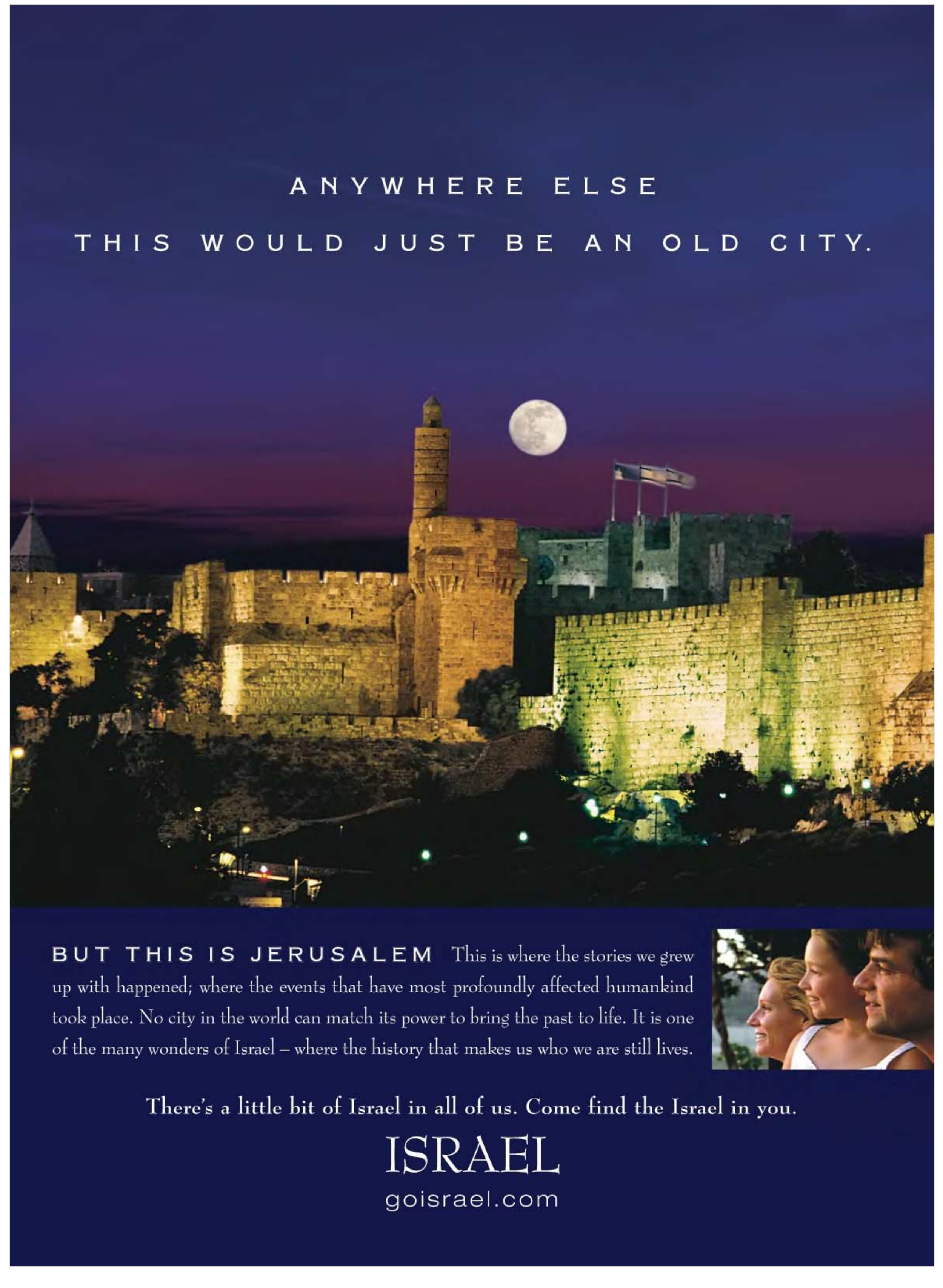
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GREY ART GALLERY
100 Washington Sq. E. (212-998-6780)—**"Lil Picard and Counterculture New York."** Opens April 20. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, Saturdays, 11 to 5, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Miroslav Tichý."** Through May 9. ♦ **"Alan B. Stone and the Senses of Place."** Through May 9. ♦ **"Twilight Visions: Surrealism, Photography, and Paris."** Through May 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-832-1155)—**"Graphic Heroes, Magic Monsters: Japanese Prints by Utagawa Kuniyoshi from the Arthur R. Miller Collection."** Through June 13. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 to 6, Fridays, 11 to 9, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Curious George Saves the Day: The Art of Margret and H. A. Rey."** Through Aug. 1. ♦ **"Modern Art, Sacred Space: Motherwell, Ferber, and Gottlieb."** Through Aug. 1. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 8, and Fridays, 11 to 4.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Demons and Devotion: The Hours of Catherine of Cleves."** Through May 2. ♦ **"Rome After Raphael."** Through May 9. ♦ **"Palladio and His Legacy: A Transatlantic Journey."** Through Aug. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Phantom Sightings: Art After the Chicano Movement."** In the sixties, much Chicano art was entwined in a political agenda. Today's Mexican-American artists—many of them graduates of M.F.A. programs—have come of age in a post-everything culture, and often seem just as concerned with the legacy of modernism as they do with the politics of identity. Adrian Esparza's unravelled serape becomes a geometric wall sculpture. Carlee Fernandez's fabulous photographs of herself holding images of white men like Werner Herzog and Charles Bukowski mine the complicated anxieties of influence. And in the museum café Los Jaichackers (Julio César Morales and Eamon Ore-Giron) provide sonic mashups that mix pop and reggaetón or create new hybrids like "Mexican black metal." Through May 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Charles Addams's New York."** Through May 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary American Art."** Through June 8. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, Fridays, 1 to 9, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Otto Dix."** The most shocking major artist, against stiff competition, of Weimar Germany is the subject of an explosive show—his first American retrospective. Dix, a veteran of the First World War, funnelled his intimacy with horror into paintings and prints that lace Old Master technique with Dadaist nihilism. Dix headed a machine-gun squad from 1915 until the Armistice, despite being wounded several times, and in 1916 he fought in the unimaginable abattoir of the Somme, which left more than a million wounded or dead. His career was launched with visions of the carnage. A room at the museum is a catacomb of grotesquerie, presenting watercolors of a man with nearly half his face gouged out and of operating-room debris (discarded organs, including a brain) and a series of fifty etchings, "The War" (published in 1924), which is like nothing else in art since Goya's "Disasters of War." Through Aug. 30. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Skin Fruit: Selections from the Dakis Joannou Collection Curated by Jeff Koons."** A Greek billionaire's fabulous holdings of contemporary art are sampled in a controversial exhibition with a remarkably icky title, curated by the creator of the boom era's definitive art. It strives to be a knockout show of knockouts: big, strong works by artists of independent, raffish temperament, nearly all of whom either render or somehow refer to the figure. There are fine works by Robert Gober, Charles Ray, Cindy Sherman, Franz West, and Cady Noland. The prevailing tone, however, is set by items that are longer on provocation than on transcendence, including "Pazuzu" (2008), by Roberto Cuoghi (a robustly ugly, nearly twenty-foot-high statue of the unfriendly Assyrian and Babylonian demon), and "Mother/Child" (1993), by Kiki Smith (life-size wax figures of a woman mouthing one of her breasts and a man likewise attending to his erect penis). Through June 6. ♦ **"In and Out of Context: REDUX."** Through July 25. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (212-869-8089)—**"In Passing: Evelyn Hofer, Helen Levitt, and Lilo Raymond."** Through May 23. ♦ **"Picture Perfect: Laurie Simmons, Photographs 1976-1978."** Through May 23. (Open Mondays, 11 to 6, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 5.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens (718-784-2084)—**"On Site 3: Mickalene Thomas."** Through May 3. ♦ **"Marina Abramović: Chair for Man and His Spirit."** Through May 10. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Duke Riley: Those About to Die Salute You."** Through April 25. ♦ **"O Zhang: Cutting the Blaze to New Frontiers."** Through April 25. ♦ **"Daniel Bozhkov: Republic of Perpetual Reconstitution and Rebuild."** Through April 25. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, noon to 5.)

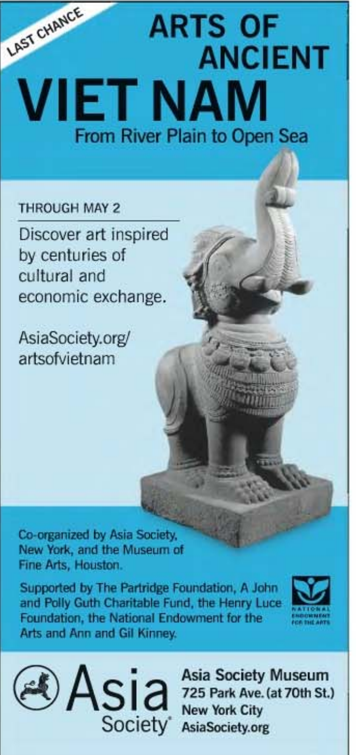
RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—**"Remember That You Will Die: Death Across Cultures."** Through Aug. 9. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, 11 to 5, Wednesdays, 11 to 7, Fridays, 11 to 10, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"THE HEARTBEAT OF FASHION"
For a show inspired by the German photographer and collector F. C. Gundlach's book of the same name, the gallery pulls pictures from its vast inventory that question the conventional definition of a fashion photograph. Here, it's broad enough to include a 1922 news photo of Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel looking sporty in newsboy caps, Brassaï's 1932 image of a chic lesbian couple at a Parisian café, and Bruce Davidson's shot of a sharply dressed man selling *Muhammad Speaks* in 1962. Seen alongside some great fashion shots by Avedon, Penn, Steichen, and Gundlach himself, these and other images of personal style help open up a genre that's always been far more various than it gets credit for. Through April 24. (Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010.)

Short List

LUCIO FONTANA/ROBERT BECK AND DONALD MOFFETT: Boesky, 118 E. 64th St. 212-680-9889. Through May 15. **MILTON GLASER:** James Cummins Bookseller, 699 Madison Ave., at 62nd St. 212-688-6441. Through April 24. **ANTONY GORMLEY:** Madison Square Park, Madison Ave. at 25th St. madisonsquarepark.org. Through Aug. 25. **PHILIPPE HALSMAN:** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930. Through May 28. **SAUL STEINBERG:** Baumgold, 60 E. 66th St. 212-861-7338. Through May 8. **"ROBERT AND ETHEL SCULL: PORTRAIT OF A COLLECTION":** Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 212-734-6300. Through May 27.



GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DAN ESTABROOK
Estabrook continues his canny update of early photographic processes with "At Sea," a show of small, delicate salt prints that draw much of their subject matter from the salt and water essential to their creation. Two crude little boats float upon painted blue waters that only partially cover the hands holding the crafts aloft. Upon inspection, breaking waves turn out to be the tousled hair of a woman staring out of the inky depths. Nearly all the images, including nudes and odd still-lifes, are printed in an antique oval format and involve hand-painting, but it's Estabrook's sly wit that makes them truly unique. Through April 24. (Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158.)

BARBARA KRUGER
Kruger is best known for text-and-image works that borrow the vernacular of gray-flannel Madison Avenue. But her new four-channel video installation is more Mamet than "Mad Men." "I've got you where I want you. Here, in the dark," a voice intones, near the end of the twelve-minute loop, after a series of disjunctive vignettes: a joke about a talking dog, an episode of road rage, and an arrogant artist being interviewed, among others. Found footage of ecstatic religious gatherings crops up at one point, perhaps for emotive emphasis. The title, "The Globe Shrinks," doesn't elucidate the experience. Through May 1. (Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

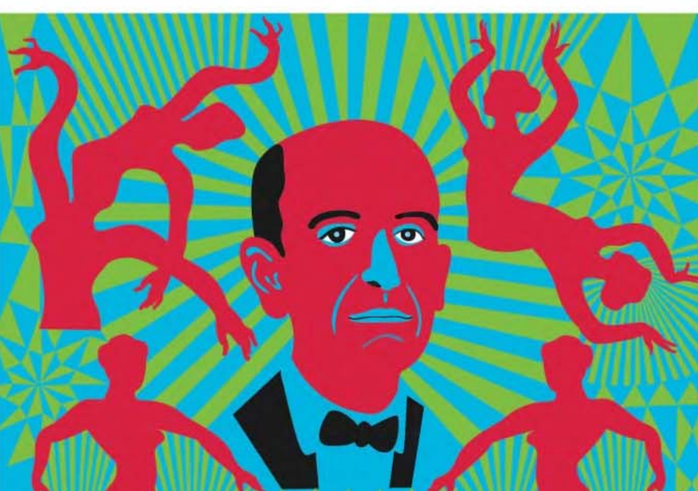
JAMES WELLING
This dauntingly prolific photographer's recent series uses his images of Philip Johnson's Glass House and its grounds as the basis for big, prismatic abstractions. Shot through filters that turn grass blue, skies crimson, and whole landscapes a bright, buttery yellow, the pictures don't document the architecture, they take it as the inspiration for a vividly impressionistic investigation of form, color, and light. Welling uses light leaks, double exposure, and multiple, distorting filters to push the work into psychedelic territory, and a series of small-scale pictures are veiled in what appears to be chemical residue, which only adds to their decorative dazzle. Through April 24. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

Short List

JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER: Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through April 24. **TAMAR HALPERN:** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460. Opens April 17. **JOACHIM KOESTER:** Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770. Through May 8. **RYAN MCNAMARA:** Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Opens April 20. **WILHELM SASNAL:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through May 15. **JOEL SHAPIRO:** Pace, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Opens April 17. **AMY SILLMAN:** Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262. Opens April 15.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

FREDDIE BRICE
Not many artists need to ritually paint their shoes and their hat before putting brush to canvas. But then Brice (1920-98), who moved from North Carolina to Harlem as a boy, wasn't your typical artist. He took up painting in his sixties, during workshops at a senior center on the Upper West Side. The mostly black-and-white panels here—accompanied by a video of the artist at work—bristle with images of bears, snakes, fish, and everyday objects (clocks, tables, and cups) riddled with polka dots. Plenty of artists (Donald Baechler comes to mind) work for years to pull off such seeming simplicity. Brice considered his art only a hobby, but he defined a hobby as "a true thing [that] becomes regular. It becomes continuously. It becomes outrageous. It becomes magnificent." And, in his hands, it did. Through May 1. (K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)



"Falla and Flamenco," a daylong celebration of the Spanish composer, at BAM.

RYAN MCGINLEY
Like Larry Clark, McGinley is interested in kids—cute, gangly adolescents and twenty-somethings who often serve as blank slates or mirrors reflecting the photographer's obsessions and concerns. For his new show and book, the thirty-two-year-old brought his young subjects into the studio and shot them naked in black-and-white for an effect that references classic fashion portraiture (especially Avedon and Bruce Weber) but does its best to undermine it. In the seventy-four pictures arranged in grids on the wall, individuals blend into a larger population of the appealing, high-spirited types who have always romped through McGinley's work. The mood is light and contagiously upbeat; it's a celebration of boundless potential on both sides of the lens. Through April 17. (Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219.)

EILEEN QUINLAN
Quinlan's photographs, nearly all of them still-lifes of mirrors and their reflections, mesh representation and abstraction so seamlessly that the distinctions dissolve. Her new works include more recognizable elements than previous ones, mainly fake and stone flowers from the graves in Paris's Père Lachaise cemetery. But the melancholy bits of information they provide are almost immediately shattered—sucked into faceted fields of abstract compositions that suggest the view from inside a diamond. Other pieces, made by allowing prints to deteriorate in a chemical bath for days, dispense with everything but wonderfully decrepit and entirely accidental expressionism. Quinlan's restraint and finesse are what keep these extraordinary images as sharp as her mirrors' broken edges. Through April 29. (Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774.)

Short List

DUNCAN CAMPBELL: Artists Space, 38 Greene St. 212-226-3970. Through May 1. **JOAN JONAS:** Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-334-3347. Through May 8. **ALIX PEARLSTEIN:** On Stellar Rays, 133 Orchard St. 212-598-3012. Through May 23. **JASON SALAVON:** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 212-226-3232. Through May 8. **SPENCER SWEENEY:** Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Through April 24.

DANCE

1.2.3. FESTIVAL
The junior troupes of Alvin Ailey, American Ballet Theatre, and Paul Taylor Dance Company take up residence at the Joyce, sharing the stage only on opening night. Taylor 2, which is more a small touring satellite of the main company than a training ground, will present scaled-down versions of four Taylor masterpieces, including the deservedly beloved "Aureole" and "Company B." ABT II's twelve young dancers will perform two new works, including "Ballo per Sei," by the Morphoses member Edwaard Liang (set to Vivaldi), as well as Jerome Robbins's youthful "Interplay." The always impressive dancers of Ailey II offer works by Judith Jamison ("Divining") and Carlos dos Santos ("Proximity"), among others. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 13-14 at 7:30, April 15-16 at 8, April 17 at 2 and 8, and April 18 at 2 and 7:30. Through April 25.)

PERFORMANCE MIX FESTIVAL
The roster for the New Dance Alliance's festival of mostly experimental companies, directed and curated by the veteran downtown solo performer Karen Bernard, includes Tif Bullard, from Chicago; Zornitsa Stoyanova and Toshi Makihara, from Philadelphia; Montreal's GAG and Ginette Laurin; La Zampa, from France; and TAIAT Dansa, from Spain. Most events take place at Joyce SoHo. For a full program, see newdancealliance.org. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-242-0800. April 13-18.)

AMERICAN TAP DANCE FOUNDATION
Before it closed, in 1998, the seedy Eighth Avenue rehearsal hall last known as Fazil's had been home for decades to practitioners of tap, flamenco, Middle Eastern, and other dance forms often not welcome elsewhere. "Sound Check," written and staged by Brenda Bufalino, pays loose tribute to the mourned institution, positioning flamenco and Middle Eastern dancers in the midst of choice revivals from Bufalino's repertory and turns by Cartier Williams, a veteran hoofer at twenty, and Harold Cromer, still young at heart in his nineties. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. April 14-16 at 8, April 17 at 2 and 8, and April 18 at 2.)

VINCENT DANCE THEATRE
This British ensemble works with an interdisciplinary mix that includes acting, singing, choreographed movement, and live music-making. The results, at least in the hands of Charlotte Vincent, can be enormously affecting—like a messier Pina Bausch—as demonstrated by Vincent's "Broken Chords," performed at Montclair three years ago. The company returns with "If We Go On," which takes as its point of departure the question "If you had one last dance in you, what shape would it make?"; "Broken Chords" will be performed on April 16. (Alexander Kasser, 1 Normal Ave., Montclair, N.J. 973-655-5112. April 15-16 at 7:30, April 17 at 8, and April 18 at 3.)

DEBRA WANNER DANCE
A respected veteran of the downtown dance scene who has worked with choreographers from Rosa-

DANIELA SCHÜTT POZZO

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lind Newman to Sally Silvers, Wanner débuts her own company, at the Chen Dance Center, in Chinatown. Wanner, who incorporates text, video, and pedestrian movement, as well as a touch of the surreal, in her work, taps into extreme situations that arise out of the everyday—sharing space, struggling for supremacy, defining identity. (70 Mulberry St. 212-349-0126. April 15-17 at 7:30.)

ROBERT STEIJN AND MARIA HASSABI
Ralph Lemon's successful stab at curating for Danspace Project comes to a close with something of an odd couple. Hassabi has lately been focussed on severe, installation-like solos deconstructing conventional representations of the female body. Steijn is a European nomad, a dance critic and curator who only recently started performing, and a mischievous ironist who seriously considers himself a contemporary shaman. Their collaboration about love addresses—by necessity, it seems—external differences, but also internal similarities. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. April 15-17 at 8.)

"DOUG ELKINS PRESENTS"
Elkins, the creator of "Fräulein Maria"—an affectionate, tongue-in-cheek dance revue inspired by "The Sound of Music"—presents work by his friends Donnell Oakley and Deborah Lohse, as well as bits of "Maria" and choreography by students of the Beacon School, an arts-centric public high school on the Upper West Side where he teaches. And it's free! (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. April 16 at noon.)

PARALLEL EXIT
With its sturdy narrative structure, well-timed slapstick, and ancient jokes, the tap-dance show "Time Step" could be an old vaudeville turn itself, a benign and appealing entertainment. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. April 16 at 7, April 17 at 2 and 7, and April 18 at noon and 5.)

"E-MOVES"
Harlem Stage's annual talent showcase concludes its run. (Harlem Stage at the Gatehouse, 150 Convent Ave., at 135th St. 212-281-9240. April 16-17 at 7:30.)

"IN THE SPIRIT OF JIMMY SLYDE"
Unquestionably a giant among tap dancers, Jimmy Slyde, who died in 2008, was also a great teacher whose principal classroom was the jam session. One of his best students, the French-born flutterer Roxane Butterfly, honors his memory by sharing bootleg footage of the Master in his pedagogical element and by sharing the stage with at least two other acolytes, the global-beat charmer Tamango and Slyde's last protégé, Rocky Mendes. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 16 at 8:30 and April 17 at 7 and 9:30.)

"FALLA AND FLAMENCO"
A daylong exploration of the connections between Manuel de Falla and flamenco (which begins at 3 and includes archival films and artist talks) culminates in the exhumation of Falla's 1917 farce "El Corregidor y la Molinera," a work almost forgotten after Sergei Diaghilev had it revised into "The Three-Cornered Hat." Responding to the subtle chamber scoring of the original, the Catalan choreographer Ramón Oller, best known in New York for his flamenco-inflected "Carmen," from 2007, largely ignores the note-for-note mime it prescribes. Casting himself in the comic role of the magistrate, Oller surrounds the four principals with five couples in a flamenco *tablao* complete with interpolated hand-clapping. The Orchestra of St. Luke's takes good care of the star: the neglected score. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 17 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Luc Bondy's unloved new production of **"Tosca"** made a bad impression on opening night, but it returns with the kind of cast that should help the audience ignore the décor. The estimable Patricia Racette, Jonas Kaufmann, and Bryn Terfel take the leading roles; Fabio Luisi—the chief conductor of the Vienna Symphony, and no stranger to the Met pit—leads the performances. (April 14 and April 20 at 8 and April 17 at 8:30.) ♦ A revival of the entertaining Julie Taymor production of **"Die Zauberflöte"** features Julia Kleiter, Albina Shagimuratova, Matthew Polenzani, Rodion Pogossov, and David Pittsinger; Paul Nadler. (April 15 at 8. This is the final performance.) ♦ Battered but unbowed, Mary Zimmerman, who has directed two of the Met's most controversial recent productions, returns to stage Rossini's seldom heard **"Armida,"** an adaptation of Tasso's poem "Gerusalemme Liberata" that was written to open the rebuilt Teatro San Carlo in Naples, in 1817. Renée Fleming rules the stage in the title role, with Lawrence Brownlee taking the most prominent of the opera's six tenor parts; Riccardo Frizza. (April 16 and April 19 at 8.) ♦ Angela Gheorghiu and Thomas Hampson, two strong and experienced singers, anchor what will be the company's final revival of the decorous Zeffirelli production of **"La Traviata,"** with the young American tenor James Valenti making a fine début in the role of Alfredo; Yves Abel. (April 17 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

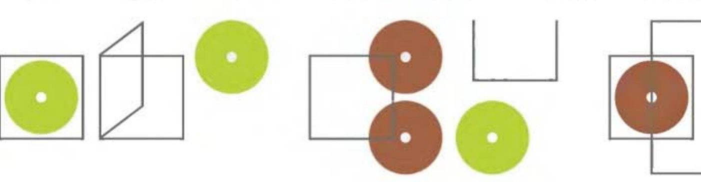
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Handel's **"Partenope"** is essentially a comedy dressed up in the formal conventions of Baroque opera seria, with wry observations about love undercutting the seriousness of the heavily embellished arias. Francisco Negrín's production for City Opera has the air of a drawing-room satire crossed with a war-room drama, with the characters entering and exiting through side doors as everyone fights over Queen Partenope (sung by the high-flying soprano Cyndia Sieden). The elegant Iestyn Davies makes his mark in the role of Prince Arsace, part of a fine cast that also includes Stephanie Houtzeel, Anthony Roth Costanzo, and Nicholas Coppolo; Christian Curnyn's conducting is stylistically assured. (April 15 at 8 and April 17 at 1:30.) ♦ A revival of Mark Lamos's beloved staging of **"Madama Butterfly"** features Yunah Lee, Konstantin Stepanov, Krysty Swann, and Nicholas Pallesen; George Manahan conducts. (April 16 at 8 and April 18 at 1:30.) (David H. Koch Theatre. 212-721-6500. These are the final performances.)

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN'S "LA COMMEDIA"
As part of Carnegie Hall's expansive festival honoring the important Dutch composer, the Asko/Schoenberg Ensemble and Synergy Vocals present the New York première (in concert form) of his latest opera, based on Dante's poem. (Stern Auditorium. 212-247-7800. April 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Following his exacting and intrepid course, Riccardo Muti inserts Boccherini's diverting Cello Concerto in D Major, G. 479 (with Carter Brey) into a program that is bookended by symphonies by Mozart (No. 34 in C Major) and Schubert (No. 4, "Tragic"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. April 14-15 at 7:30 and April 16-17 at 8. Note: A "Musical Supper," with a menu devised by Lidia Bastianich, will be offered after the April 16 concert.) ♦ Continuing his commitment to new music, Alan Gilbert conducts the rest of the orchestra's personnel in a small-orchestra program (at two locations) featuring world-première works by Sean Shepherd, Nico Muhly, and Matthias Pintscher; the baritone Thomas Hampson is a distinguished guest. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. April 16 at 8.) ♦ (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. April 17 at 7.)

CHOIR OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD
New College isn't exactly new (it was founded in 1379), but Edward Higginbottom has been keeping



ANDERS WENNGREN

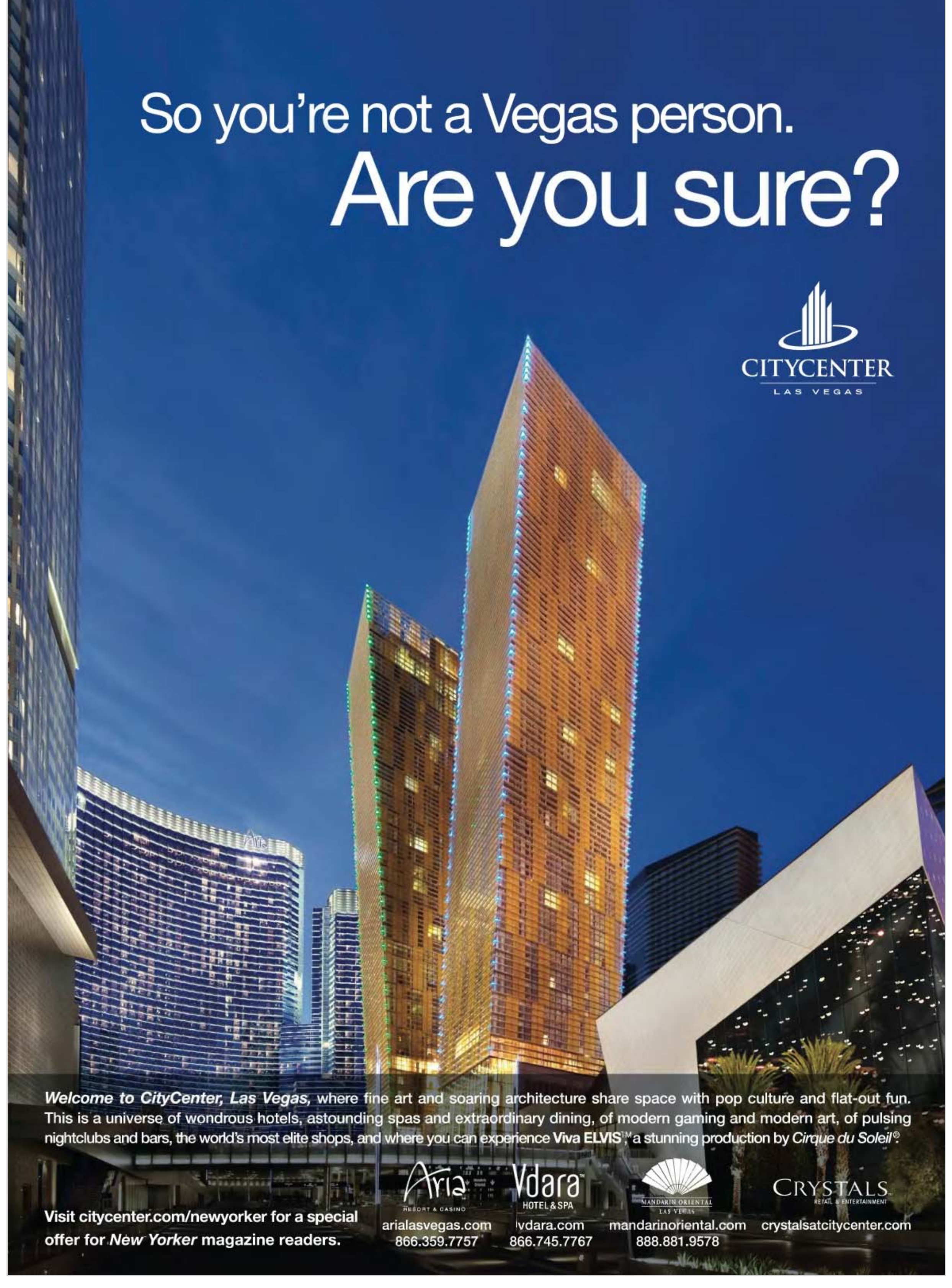
POP NOTES

HARVARD LAMPOONER

Tom Lehrer was a satirist by nature and a recording artist by accident. He started writing and performing while an undergraduate at Harvard ("Fight Fiercely, Harvard," a parodic college fight song, dates from 1945), and he continued clowning through his graduate studies in math. In 1953, Lehrer bought an hour of studio time and released "Songs by Tom Lehrer"; over the decade that followed, he became, much to everyone's surprise, a pop-culture sensation. His songs had more to do with show tunes than rock—"The Elements" set the periodic table to Gilbert and Sullivan's "Major-General's Song"—but he also had a nasty topical streak, and his work has directly influenced performers as diverse as Mark Russell, "Weird Al" Yankovic, and Stephin Merritt, of Magnetic Fields (when he sent Lehrer a copy of his magnum opus, "69 Love Songs," Lehrer responded "Now you realize that '69 Love Songs' is 67 too many").

"The Tom Lehrer Collection" (Shout! Factory) doesn't have any new songs, or even much recent material. "(I'm Spending) Hanukkah in Santa Monica," from 1999, is the closest it comes to this century. More typical is a piece like "The Masochism Tango," a spicy love song from 1960 that, as Lehrer remarks in his new liner notes, "was inspired by the 1952 hit song 'Kiss of Fire.'" As this comment suggests, the question with satire is how it plays as its target recedes: does it go like milk or like wine? In Lehrer's case, it's a bit of both. Plenty here feels old-fangled; "Wernher von Braun," a ditty from 1965 that tweaks the famed rocket scientist for his political opportunism, may be a relic of the Cold War, and the V.D.-themed "I Got It from Agnes" trades on outdated sexual mores, but in the wonderfully sour "National Brotherhood Week," hopelessness springs eternal. Most of the music has been rereleased before, on the 2000 boxed set "The Remains of Tom Lehrer"; what's most newsworthy here, and most welcome, is a DVD that collects a 1967 performance from Norwegian TV, the original animations that accompanied the children's songs Lehrer wrote for "The Electric Company" in the early seventies, and more. In Lehrer's liner notes, he recalls the Catch-22 of trying to write biting satire for a network TV show, muses about organized religion and the military, and—most charmingly—gives away more credit than he takes, acknowledging as many contemporaries and forebears as possible (Danny Kaye gets mentioned twice). This may be an academic trait, or possibly Lehrer's own, but it has been part of his work since the start; "Lobachevsky," one of his earlier songs, lampoons a mathematician who steals the work of others.

—*Ben Greenman*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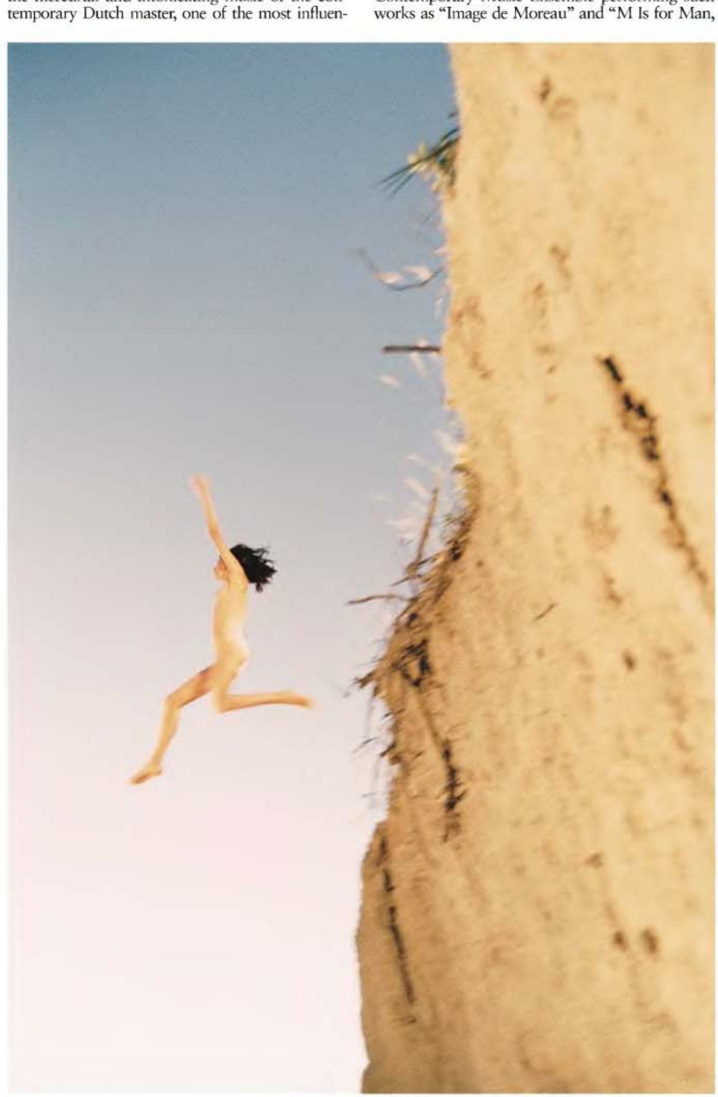
RECITALS

MAYA BEISER: "PROVENANCE"
The avant-garde diva of the electrified cello offers a concert at (Le) Poisson Rouge marking the release of her new album, a collaboration with such artists as the oud player Bassam Saba and the percussionist Glen Velez that embraces works by composers from Armenia, Iran, Israel, and the U.S. (158 Bleecker St. lpr.com. April 14 at 7:30.)

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN FESTIVAL
Carnegie Hall is devoting a swath of its schedule to a series of concerts (on-site and off) honoring the mercurial and intoxicating music of the contemporary Dutch master, one of the most influential composers of our time. In its second appearance of the week, the stunningly adept Asko/Schoenberg Ensemble, with the conductor Reinbert de Leeuw and the vocalist Barbara Sukowa, performs Andriessen's "Zilver" along with pieces by de Leeuw and an Andriessen protégé, Martijn Padding. (Zankel Hall. April 16 at 7:30.) ♦ The Master himself takes to the keyboard in the first half of an improvisatory concert in which he performs with the singer Greetje Bijma; the second half belongs to the saxophonist Evan Parker. (Weill Recital Hall. April 16 at 9:30.) ♦ Carnegie gives Andriessen the grand "Making Music" treatment, a concert conducted by Alan Pierson and hosted by Jeremy Geffen in which the soprano Dawn Upshaw, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, and the Zankel Band offer performances of the composer's "Dances" and "Life" (the U.S. première, with video) along with a work by Martijn Padding. (Zankel Hall. April 17 at 7:30. For tickets to all Carnegie Hall events, call 212-247-7800.) ♦ A concert at (Le) Poisson Rouge is all-Andriessen, with the energetic young American Contemporary Music Ensemble performing such works as "Image de Moreau" and "M Is for Man, Music, and Mozart" (with the film by Peter Greenaway). (158 Bleecker St. lpr.com. April 18 at 7:30.) (For full schedule, see carnegiehall.org.)


Ryan McGinley's photograph "Coco's Cliff, 2009," at the Team gallery.

MUSIC AT THE 92ND STREET Y
April 17 at 8: Jonathan Biss, the new torchbearer of New York's conservative Germanic piano tradition, performs solo works by Haydn, Schoenberg (the Six Little Piano Pieces, Op. 19), Mendelssohn, and Beethoven (including the "Les Adieux" Sonata). ♦ April 18 at 3: A crew of even greater expertise—the pianist Peter Serkin and the Orion String Quartet—pulls water from the same well, offering performances of music by Bach, Kirchner, Beethoven (the "Harp" Quartet), and Brahms (the Piano Quintet). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

BARGEMUSIC
Mark Peskanov's floating chamber-music series is back after its two-week hiatus. One of this week's programs features the Biava Quartet (with the well-travelled pianist Soheil Nasseri) performing the ultra-Romantic piano quintets of César Franck and Robert Schumann. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. April 17 at 8 and April 18 at 3. For full schedule, see bargemusic.org.)

MAURIZIO POLLINI
Perhaps the ultimate celebration of the Chopin bicentennial will come from the magisterial Italian pianist, who has always performed the composer's music with a combination of lyrical exactitude and emotional restraint. The first of three recitals offers the Two Nocturnes, Op. 27, the complete Preludes, Op. 28, eight Études from the Op. 25 set, and more. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. April 18 at 3.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: HÉLÈNE SCHMITT
The sterling early-music series is maintaining quality in a challenging economic environment. In its next concert, the admired violinist makes her New York début performing unaccompanied works by Biber, Tartini, and Bach (Sonata in G Minor and the Partita in D Minor). (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. April 18 at 4.)

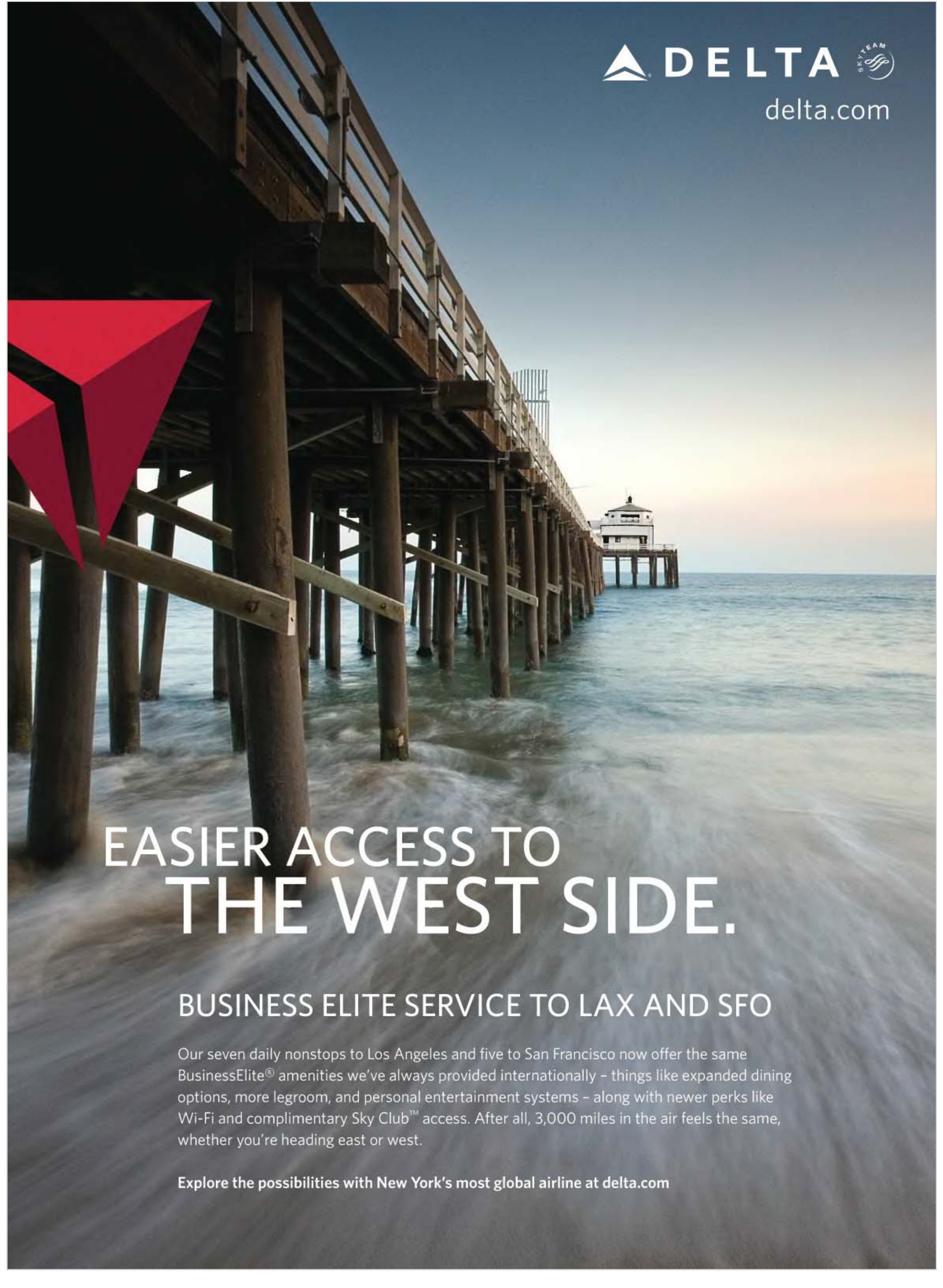
CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "RAVEL'S WORLD"
A host of young and established artists—including the mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, the pianist Ken Noda, the violinist Arnaud Sussmann, and the harpist Bridget Kibbey—offer a tempting springtime surprise, a platter of Ravel's evergreen music that features "Shéhérazade," the Sonata for Violin and Cello, and the Piano Trio. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. April 18 at 5.)

TAKÁCS QUARTET
The commanding ensemble (with Lina Bahn temporarily replacing the second violinist, Károly Schranz) offers masterworks by Schumann (the String Quartet No. 3 in A Major) and Beethoven along with a première by the New Zealand composer John Psathas. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. April 18 at 7:30.)

MATA FESTIVAL 2010
April 19 at 6: (Le) Poisson Rouge is the natural venue for the twelfth annual festival, which showcases a variety of exceptional young composers (most of them with a downtown bent). The opening-night concert takes place in the Gallery space—the world première of Matthew Wright's "Totem, for Gobi-New York," an audiovisual installation. (No tickets required.) ♦ April 20 at 7:30: The up-and-coming Calder Quartet, from Los Angeles, gifted champions of new string-quartet repertory, performs a new work by Nathan Davis in addition to pieces by Fabian Svensson, Lisa Coons ("Cythère," a "trauma ballet"), and Daniel Wohl. (158 Bleecker St. For ticket information, see lpr.com.)

MOVIES
OPENING

THE CITY OF YOUR FINAL DESTINATION
James Ivory directed this adaptation of a novel by Peter Cameron, about an American graduate student (Omar Metwally) who seeks to become a novelist's authorized biographer. Co-starring Anthony Hopkins, Charlotte Gainsbourg, and Laura Linney. Opening April 16. (In limited release.)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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THINK BIG

Big Art Group is the brass-band name of the experimental theatre party founded by Caden Mason and Jemma Nelson in 1999. In the previous decade or two, other avant-garde collectives had reached something of an impasse. When performers like

the late Spalding Gray splintered off from the Wooster Group, and stars born on Pina Bausch's stage left to pursue their own interests, they took audiences with them. It was as if their fans sought the intimacy certain monologuists could provide. But Mason and Nelson set about changing all that. Big Art Group means to make a lot of noise. With their dense, text-heavy shows, Mason and Nelson are enamored of spectacle, and they fully exploit the excitement and sadness one should feel watching something as evanescent as theatre. The group's new piece "Flesh Tone" (at Abrons Arts Center, April 15-18) will no doubt further italicize their credo: theatre not only shows our inner selves at work; it makes us better for having experienced it. Out loud.
—*Hilton Als*

DEATH AT A FUNERAL
In this remake of the 2007 comedy, directed by Neil LaBute, family secrets emerge after the death of a paterfamilias. Starring Chris Rock and Tracy Morgan. Opening April 16. (In wide release.)

EXIT THROUGH THE GIFT SHOP
A documentary by and about the English graffiti artist Banksy. Opening April 16. (In limited release.)

HANDSOME HARRY
Bette Gordon directed this drama, about an electrician (Jamey Sheridan) whose former Navy friend (Steve Buscemi) seeks to reconcile with a mutual acquaintance. Opening April 16. (IFC Center.)

HAVE YOU HEARD FROM JOHANNESBURG
A seven-part documentary series, directed by Connie Field, about the worldwide effort to overturn apartheid in South Africa. Opening April 14. (Film Forum.)

THE JONESES
David Duchovny and Demi Moore star in this satirical comedy, directed by Derrick Borte, about a man and a woman who pretend to live as a couple as part of an advertising scheme. Opening April 16. (In wide release.)

KICK-ASS
An adaptation of a comic-book series by Mark Millar, about a teen-ager (Aaron Johnson) who becomes a superhero and is aided by a pre-teen girl (Chloë Grace Moretz) and her father (Nicolas Cage). Directed by Matthew Vaughn; co-starring Christopher Mintz-Plasse. Opening April 16. (In wide release.)

NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT PERSIAN CATS
Bahman Ghobadi directed this documentary, about Tehran's underground music scene. In Farsi. Opening April 16. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE SECRET IN THEIR EYES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 16. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NOW PLAYING

ALICE IN WONDERLAND
Though hardly the most searching of "Alice" adaptations, this may be the most splendiferous. A two-dimensional shoot was converted for 3-D viewing, and the director, Tim Burton, squandered no opportunity to lavish every nook of the screen with frantic and fertile effects. Alice herself, well played by the grave and spectrally pallid Mia Wasikowska, is no child but a stubborn young lady, scorning an offer of marriage in the overworld and descending, instead, to the subterranean. Because of her age, the stretching-and-shrinking scene, as she seeks to enter the minuscule door, becomes a mild erotic fantasia; from here, though, we are back in the terrain of the Mad Hatter (Johnny Depp), the White Queen (Anne Hathaway), Tweedledum and his twin (Matt Lucas), and the rest. Much of Lewis Carroll's wordplay is either swallowed in the delivery or abandoned altogether by Linda Woolverton's screenplay, in favor of galumphing combat. The movie, badly wanting in sprightliness and fresh air, badgers rather than charms; what rescues it is the brisk performance of Helena Bonham Carter, as the Red Queen. With her bulbous brow, she is properly tuned in to the temper of the original—a frighteningly mad tyrant, convinced that she alone is sane.—*Anthony Lane* (In wide release.)

BOUDU SAVED FROM DROWNING
Jean Renoir's 1932 satire about the paired hypocrisies of bien-pensant humanism and mal-pensant indifference is centered on a satyr: Boudu (Michel Simon), a dog-bearded clochard, who, after losing his shaggy black poodle and meeting with insults and condescension, flings himself into the Seine from Paris's Pont des Arts. Lestingois (Charles Granval), a middle-aged bookseller—a civic-minded liberal intellectual—flies from his shop, rescues Boudu from the currents, and brings him into his home. There, the uncivilized outsider promptly wreaks havoc, spitting on the floor and in a fine edition of Balzac, shining his shoes with lingerie, chasing away customers, ruining the carpets, and even—in his erotic pursuit of Madame Lestingois (Marcelle Hainia)—exposing Monsieur's carryings on with Anne-Marie (Sévérine Lerczinska), the young housemaid. As played by the sly, exuberant Simon, Boudu is a shambling, willful, concupiscent child, a walking id—and, with his Harpo-like mop of curly blond hair and repertoire of chaotic pratfalls, he rattles through the household like a Marx Brother, but one whose breakage costs money, whose insults register and sting, and whose priapic antics prove truly destructive. Renoir's documentary-based devotion to the story's Parisian places and people even turns Boudu into a proto-Borat—society's indecent shadow. In French.—*Richard Brody* (BAM; April 17-18.)

THE BOUNTY HUNTER
Who's the talent agent who sold Gerard Butler to the studios as a romantic-comedy star (he was also in "The Ugly Truth")? In this execrable mess, Butler's dark hair droops over his forehead, and he looks like a cross between Cro-Magnon man and Moe from the Three Stooges. Butler is Scottish, and you can see him trying to form American-sounding tones with his lips, but the voice comes out coarse-grained and weirdly nondescript, as if produced by an indifferently programmed computer. His bounty hunter, once a great cop, takes on the job of reeling in his ex-wife, an ace New York journalist on the lam, played by Jennifer Aniston, in skintight dresses and clacking heels. For comic technique, the queen of celebrity magazines may possess little more than an anxious brow and a toss of that amazing hair, but she's still adorable. Even as the couple are tearing each other apart, we're meant to root for them to get back together. The only thing Butler and Aniston have in common, however, is their identical Aruba-bronze skin tones: they seem to have been sprayed with the same can.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/5/10.) (In wide release.)

BREAKING UPWARDS
As cutesy as any Hollywood romantic comedy and shallower than many, this low-budget production turns the scruffy intimacy and youthful quandaries of independent filmmaking into a trademark. The director, Daryl Wein, and one of his co-writers, Zoe Lister-Jones, co-star as Daryl and Zoe, a Manhattan couple (he's a writer, she's an actress) not long out of college and already together for four years, who decide, in the face of their mounting mutual boredom, to divide the week into off days and on days—and also to date other people. Unsurprisingly, things don't work out well, but by that point, who cares? Daryl and Zoe are written almost empty of attributes but smile constantly as if to ingratiate themselves with viewers; Daryl's bourgeois parents (a dentist and a housewife) and Zoe's kooky bohemian mother are only the most obvious of the movie's unexamined clichés (which also include repellent stereotypes), and money is never an object, yet it's barely a subject either. Wein's plain, flat direction pushes the chirpy performances front and center; the results feel like a feature-length sitcom audition.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)

CITY ISLAND
This amiable family comedy, written and directed by Raymond De Felitta, is one step above a sitcom but two below "Moonstruck." Andy Garcia is Vince Rizzo, the stressed paterfamilias of an Italian-American clan living in the little boating village attached to the Bronx—a family in which everyone has a secret and mistrusts everyone else. (The story is propelled by their infuriating unwillingness to say even six truthful words in a row.) Vince is a prison guard whose secret is that he wants to perform: at night, he sneaks off to an acting class, where the teacher, Alan Arkin, delivers a hilarious diatribe against "the pause"—the prolonged reflective grimace that Marlon Brando introduced into American acting. There's also a well-written and well-played casting-call sequence in which Vince finds his voice as an actor. The rest is just a pleasant way to pass the time. With Julianna Margulies, Emily Mortimer, and Steven Strait.—*D.D.* (4/5/10) (In wide release.)

CLASH OF THE TITANS
For sheer inventiveness, the casting of the original "Clash of the Titans," in 1981, is hard to beat; any film that pits Laurence Olivier against Ursula Andress and Burgess Meredith must be hailed as a significant contribution to surrealism. That aside, Louis Leterrier's new version offers a marked improvement, or, at any rate, a startling increase in the sound level. Stop-motion animation has been replaced by

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

singapore sessions

INNOVATING FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD

FROM MARGINAL MISSIONS TO PROFIT MARGINS

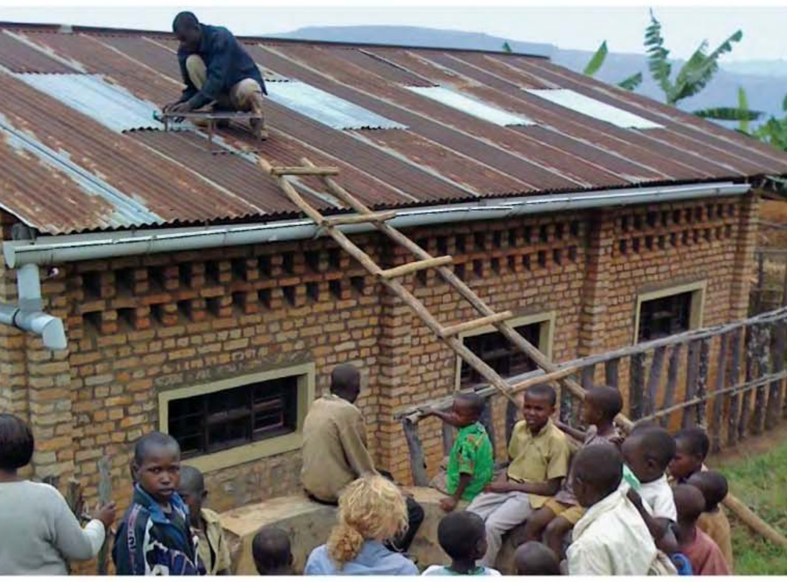
It's a fact: ninety percent of the world's products are being produced for the ten percent of the world's population that can actually afford them. This was the premise of a recent exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, called "Design for the Other 90%," which featured game-changing, low-cost design solutions for clean drinking water, sustainable energy, and other basic needs.

Most of the products in the exhibition were designed by professionals who volunteer their creativity and expertise, with production, delivery, and low price points underwritten by philanthropic organizations. Traditional business models of innovation, however, are epitomized by well-funded research and development departments that are supported by established manufacturing and distribution channels. If making a profit is the first consideration in creating and disseminating new products, then what can be done to incentivize corporations to do so for the developing world?

Beyond the profit motive, there are other barriers to entry. Many regions of Africa, India, and South America lack adequate infrastructure. This means that transportation, communication, and even electricity issues can impede information about demand for and distribution of products. Trade and tariff laws can prove prohibitive. And a fluctuating, unpredictable global economy makes projections of profitability difficult to determine.

But there are people, organizations, and even multinational corporations that are thinking in new ways about how to ameliorate the lives of underserved populations in the Third World. Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public; Heather Fleming, founder and C.E.O. of Catapult Design; Peter Loescher, C.E.O. of Siemens AG; and Thomas Magnanti, President of Singapore University of Technology and Design, have been challenged to address the question: how can we make it more profitable for companies to innovate in the developing world? Their provocative points of view will appear next month – part of a series of dynamic global conversations fostered by the Singapore Sessions.

PHOTOGRAPH: CATAPULT DESIGN



Installation in Rwanda of WE CARE Solar's plug-and-play, small-scale, low-cost solar system prototype by Catapult Design.

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NEXT MONTH'S SINGAPORE SESSION:

How can we make it profitable for companies to innovate for the developing world?

The Sessionists:

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– BILL DRAYTON, C.E.O., ASHOKA
Bill Drayton is a social entrepreneur, who founded Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, and Save EPA in 1981. As a student, he was active in civil rights and founded a number of organizations ranging from Yale Legislative Services to Harvard's Ashoka Table. Drayton has an A.B. from Harvard, an M.A. from Oxford University, and a J.D. from Yale Law School. In 1984, when elected a MacArthur Fellow, Drayton devoted himself fully to Ashoka, where he is currently Chairman and C.E.O. He is also chair of Youth Venture, Community Greens, and Get America Working!

– HEATHER FLEMING, C.E.O., CATAPULT DESIGN
Heather Fleming is the C.E.O. and a co-founder of Catapult Design, a product and technology firm supporting organizations in developing countries. Catapult's clients provide impoverished communities with solutions addressing rural electrification, water purification and transport, food sanitation, and overall health. In 2005, she co-founded and led volunteers designing technologies for impoverished communities through Engineers Without Borders. Fleming is also a staff writer for NextBillion.net and teaches Design for Sustainability at Stanford University, her alma mater.

– PETER LOESCHER, C.E.O., SIEMENS AG
Peter Loescher has been President of the Managing Board and C.E.O. of Siemens AG since July 1, 2007. He previously served as President of Global Human Health at Merck & Co., Inc., President and C.E.O. of GE Healthcare Bio-Sciences, and a Member of the Corporate Executive Council. He also served as Chairman, President and C.E.O. of Aventis Pharma Ltd. in Japan and was a Senior Management Consultant at the Kienbaum Consulting Group. A native of Austria, Loescher holds an M.B.A. from Vienna University and completed an A.M.P. from Harvard Business School.

– THOMAS MAGNANTI, PRESIDENT, S.U.T.D.
Thomas Magnanti is President of the Singapore University of Technology and Design, and Institute Professor and former Dean of Engineering at M.I.T. Much of his career has focused on education, combining engineering and management, teaching and research in the area of large-scale optimization, and developing programs for university industrial and international partnerships, technology-based entrepreneurship, diversity, and emerging educational and technical fields. His awards include several honorary degrees and membership in the U.S. National Academy of Engineering and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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CGI, which means that stuttering charm makes way for the overbearing and the eye-popping—literally so, in the case of the witches that Perseus (Sam Worthington) must confront on his way to Medusa's lair. His task is to kill, or petrify, a ravening sea beast before it dines on Andromeda (Alexa Davalos), and his journey, in the company of Draco (Mads Mikkelsen) and other nerveless warriors, takes him through deserts prowled by giant scorpions. In short, a tale of everyday folk, at once predictable and unperturbed by logic; the humans emerge with more credit than the gods, who are headed by a laughably refulgent Zeus (Liam Neeson), though Ralph Fiennes's Hades has his moments of whispering dread. The ancient myth has been updated—that is, pulped and misshapen—and the result is driven less by the call of destiny than by an incurable addiction to extreme sports. With Pete Postlethwaite and Gemma Arterton.—*A.L.* (4/12/10) (In wide release.)

EVERYONE ELSE

A young German couple, on vacation in Sardinia, pull apart and come together again—not just once, but time after time, often in the context of a single scene. Such is the simple but draining premise of Maren Ade's film, which feels like a two-hander even when other people are present. Chris (Lars Eidinger) seems the calmer of the two, although his fears of professional failure, as an architect, hint at a deeper rift in his self-worth; Gitti (Birgit Minichmayr) is the more volatile, yet nothing prepares us for those moments when her swaying mood turns into a physical lunge. There are no special effects, apart from a bloodied shin, and no music on the soundtrack, but the very plainness of the approach and the dedication of the performers make for hard, expert, and unfriendly viewing; not all moviegoers will be grateful to Ade for reminding them that the basic business of living together, even under sunny skies, can be more of an ordeal than they supposed. In German.—*A.L.* (4/12/10) (IFC Center.)

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

The setting of Niels Arden Oplev's thriller is modern Sweden, and the time that the characters spend on their laptops means that, above all, the result is a shameless commercial for Apple; yet the plot is a steady downward dig into the past. Michael Nyqvist plays a slightly boring journalist named Blomkvist, who is hired by a rich old man (Sven-Bertil Taube) to probe the disappearance of a teen-age girl forty years before. The quest leads to further unearthings as forgotten crimes are dragged into the light. (So many, indeed, that the film runs longer than two and a half hours.) The whole affair would be a humorless and brutish plod were it not for the snappy editing and the performance of Noomi Rapace as Lisbeth Salander, our hero's gothic sidekick. Oplev takes much too long to bring the pair together, and why exactly Lisbeth wants to help remains unclear, apart from a throbbing air of resentment toward the eternal cruelties of man; still, in her crow-black garb, together with her inked and studded flesh, she cuts a defiant figure in the wintry landscape, refusing to be deadened by the gloom. In Swedish.—*A.L.* (3/29/10) (In limited release.)

GREENBERG

Roger Greenberg (Ben Stiller), the fortyish pain in the neck who is the hero of Noah Baumbach's fascinating new movie, is the kind of man most of us give up on—a crank who writes complaining letters, an aesthete without an art. Yet Baumbach and Stiller had the persistence and the imagination to find a soulful side to Greenberg and the courage not to turn him into a goofy, lovable curmudgeon. Living in his wealthy brother's house in the Hollywood Hills, Greenberg has an on-and-(mostly)-off affair with the lovely Florence Marr, played by the mumblecore star Greta Gerwig, who can look Raggedy Ann messy in one scene, radiant in the next. Baumbach is perceptive about injured pride and the small, stinging chagrins felt by those whose lives haven't gone anywhere. Many of the conversations have a quirky, off-rhythm pace. With Rhys Ifans, who uses his rounded baritone and a new autumnal manner to suggest a man who has settled down and is trying to hold on to what he's got. He finds Greenberg's hauteur maddening, but Greenberg, still hoping for more, is the one who interests us. All credit to Ben Stiller, who gives the best performance of his career.—*D.D.* (3/22/10) (In wide release.)

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

The DreamWorks animation team does some of its best work in this story about a Viking boy (voiced by Jay Baruchel) who disobeys his warlike tribal family and befriends their enemy—a young, wounded dragon. A call for tolerance and understanding is nothing new in family films, nor is the idea of a young boy's quest to change the world. What makes this one special is the ease of the storytelling (it was adapted from Cressida Cowell's popular children's novel by the directors, Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois) and the exhilarating 3-D work of the animators. (The flying sequences are spectacular.) Smartly dispensing with the usual hubbub of pop references that dot many of these films, the movie offers touching, quiet moments and imaginative, high-flying beauty. It's fantastically entertaining.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE LAST SONG

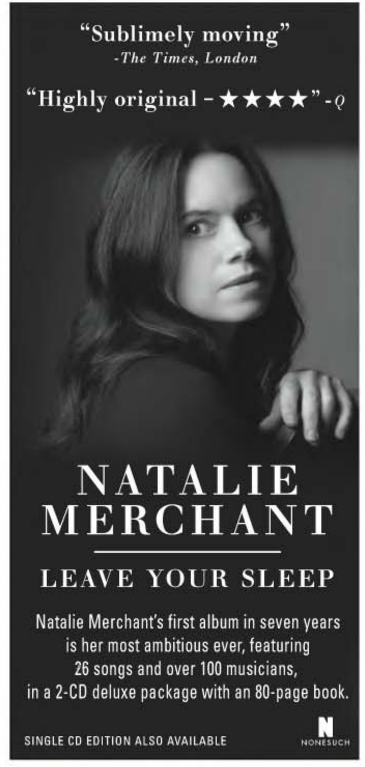
Miley Cyrus is plausible on TV, as a pop star trying to live a normal teen life; here, as Ronnie, a troubled classical-piano prodigy who spends her spare time reading "Anna Karenina," she conveys little of her character's complexities. This sentimental melodrama, based on a novel by Nicholas Sparks, transplants Ronnie from New York to spend the summer at her estranged father's waterfront house in rural Georgia, where she's deluged with opportunities for growth. She meets a boy (Liam Hemsworth) who works in a garage but turns out to be both school-smart and rich; she learns the meaning of caring when she encounters a girl (Carly Chaikin) whose troubles are worse than her own; and she reconciles with her father (Greg Kinnear) when his problems come to the fore. The drama's edifying aspects are all too obvious—the martial discipline and stern morality of the down-home milieu turn out to be therapeutic (these kids play by the rules and disdain those who don't)—and, for all the lessons about taking proper action, Ronnie, as embodied by Cyrus, is strangely stolid and passive. Experience itself, bestowed upon the characters in neatly wrapped packages, is cheapened. Directed by Julie Anne Robinson.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

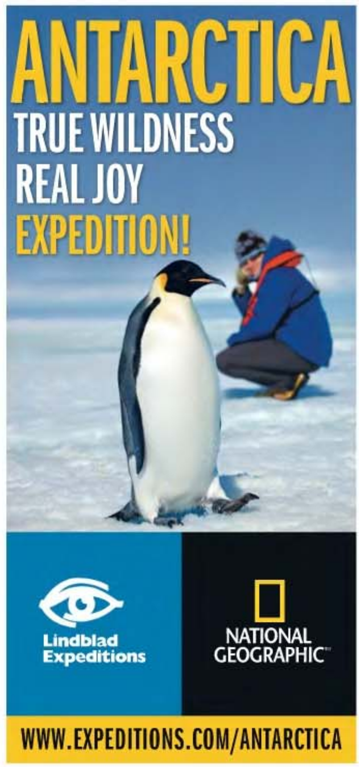
PARK ROW

Sam Fuller's odd, angular 1952 movie about an 1886 New York newspaper war marries journalistic lore to the dime novel. Fuller stirs Steve Brodie's legendary jump off the Brooklyn Bridge, the funding of the Statue of Liberty, and the creation of the Linotype machine into the eighty-three-minute story of the fighting editor (Gene Evans) of an upstart journal. It's purest melodrama: Evans and his team are the salt of the asphalt, while their enemies on a big daily are alternately high-handed and underhanded. But Fuller the ex-reporter fills it with so much argot and info (he explains everything from the use of "—30—" at the end of a news story to the derivation of the phrase "off the cuff") and exploits his Old New York set so ingeniously that the result is entertaining and even instructive.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; April 18.)

THERE'S ALWAYS TOMORROW

The psychological acuity of Douglas Sirk's direction turns this 1956 marital melodrama into an Ibsenesque tragedy. Cliff Groves (Fred MacMurray), a self-made California toy manufacturer whose wife, Marion (Joan Bennett), is preoccupied with their three children, is jolted from his routine by the visit of Norma Vale (Barbara Stanwyck), a former employee. Now a prominent New York fashion designer, Norma is a divorcée who, as Cliff discovers, has carried a torch for him since they last met, twenty years earlier. Dazzled by Norma's worldliness, Cliff is tempted to remake his life with her—but his teen-agers get suspicious and prepare to take action of their own. Sirk, who began his career in prewar Germany, infused his Hollywood films with a consciously high-cultural sophistication and irony. With an outsider's sharp eye for American artifacts, he invokes "An American Tragedy," a vulgar stage show, and Cliff's pathetic new creation, Rex the Walkie-Talkie Robot, to expose the muffled cries of pain beneath the proprieties of suburban comfort. In contrast to the typical stoic masculinity of fifties Hollywood, this is "A Doll's House" for the sensitive, passionate married man.—*R.B.* (92Y Tribeca; April 17.)





Also Playing

HOT TUB TIME MACHINE: In wide release. **WHEN YOU'RE STRANGE:** In limited release. **WHO DO YOU LOVE:** In limited release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—The films of Alain Tanner. Except where noted, all films are in French. April 15 at 7:15: "Charles, Dead or Alive." (1969). ♦ April 15 at 9:15 and April 18 at 6:15: "The Salamander" (1971). ♦ April 16 at 7 and April 19 at 9: "The Middle of the World" (1974). ♦ April 16 at 9:30 and April 19 at 6:30: "Messidor" (1979). ♦ April 17 at 4:30 and April 20 at 9: "A Flame in My Heart" (1987). ♦ April 17 at 7: "Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000" (1976). ♦ April 17 at 9:15 and April 22 at 6:45: "In the White City" (1983). ♦ April 18 at 3:45: "Men of the Port" (1995) and "Alain Tanner, Pas Comme Si, Comme Ça" (2007, Pierre Maillard). ♦ April 18 at 8:45 and April 20 at 7: "Requiem" (1998; in French and Portuguese).

ASIA SOCIETY
725 Park Ave., at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—"China's Past, Present, Future on Film." April 16 at 6:45: "Fujian Blue" (2007, Robin Weng; in Fujian dialect).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through May 11: The films of Jean Renoir. Except where noted, all films are in French. April 14 at 7: "Nana" (1926; silent). ♦ April 16 at 4, 6:50, and 9:15: "La Marseillaise" (1938). ♦ April 17 at 6 and 9 and April 18 at 3, 6 and 9: "Boudu Saved from Drowning" (†) and "A Day in the Country" (1936). ♦ April 19 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Lower Depths" (1936). ♦ April 20 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Southerner" (1945; in English). ♦ Special screenings. April 15 at 7: "The 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (1962, Vincente Minnelli).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through May 6: "The Newspaper Picture." April 14 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10 and April 15 at 1:30 and 5:20: "The Harder They Fall" (1956, Mark Robson). ♦ April 14 at 3:35 and 7:25 and April 15 at 3:35: "Deadline U.S.A." (1952, Richard Brooks). ♦ April 16-17 at 1:40, 4:20, 7, and 9:40: "Citizen Kane" (1941, Orson Welles). ♦ April 18 at 1, 4:40, and 8:10: "Park Row" (†). ♦ April 18 at 2:50, 6:20, and 9:50: "The Big Clock" (1948, John Farrow). ♦ April 19 at 1, 4, 7, and 10: "Love Is a Racket" (1932, William Wellman). ♦ April 19 at 2:30, 5:30, and 8:30: "The Strange Love of Molly Louvain" (1932, Michael Curtiz). ♦ April 20 at 1, 4:05, 7:15, and 10:25: "Doctor X" (1933, Curtiz). ♦ April 20 at 2:35, 5:40, and 8:50: "The Nuisance" (1933, Jack Conway). ♦ Special screening. April 15 at 7:15: "Housekeeping" (1987, Bill Forsyth), followed by a discussion with the director.

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"Northern Exposures: Social Change and Sexuality in Swedish Cinema, 1913-2010." Except where noted, all films are in Swedish. April 16 at 1: "Wild Strawberries" (1957, Ingmar Bergman). ♦ April 16 at 3: "The Girl with Hyacinths" (1950, Hasse Ekman). ♦ April 16 at 5: " I Am Curious (Yellow)" (1967, Vilgot Sjöman). ♦ April 16 at 7:15: "The Girl" (2009, Fredrik Edfelt). ♦ April 17 at 1:30 and April 19 at 3:15: "Karl-Fredrik Reigns" (1934, Gustaf Edgren). ♦ April 17 at 4: "Ingeborg Holm" (1913, Victor Sjöström; silent) and "Images from the Playground" (2009, Stig Björkman). ♦ April 18 at 1: "The Prisoner of Karlsten's Fortress" (1916, Georg af Klercker; silent). ♦ April 18 at 2:30: "The Emigrants" (1971, Jan Troell). ♦ April 18 at 6:15: "The Girl in Tails" (1926, Karin Swanström; silent). ♦ April 19 at 1:30 and 7:30: "A Night" (1931, Gustaf Molander). ♦ April 19 at 6: "There Was a Man" (1916, Sjöström). ♦ April 20 at 1 and 7: "A Woman's Face" (1938, Molander). ♦ April 20 at 3 and 9: "A Crime" (1940, Anders Henrikson). ♦ April 20 at 5: "South of the Highway" (1936, Gideon Wahlberg).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through April 27: "Cinema According to Véra Belmont." April 20 at 12:30 and 7:30: "Farinelli" (1994, Gérard Corbiau; in French). ♦ April 20 at 4: "Marquise" (1997, Véra Belmont; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. April 14 at 8: "Family Affair" (2010, Chico Colvard), introduced by the director. ♦ April 20 at 8: "The Kids Grow Up" (2009, Doug Block), introduced by the director. ♦ Special screenings. April 15 at 7: "Variety" (1983, Bette Gordon), introduced by the director. ♦ April 15 at 9:30: "The Life of the World to Come" (2010, Rian Johnson). ♦ In revival. April 16-18 at 11 A.M.: "Panic in the Streets" (1950, Elia Kazan). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." April 16-17: "The Terminator" (1984, James Cameron).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"An Auteurist History of Film." April 14-17 at 1:30: French avant-garde films of the nineteen-twenties, including "Ballet Mécanique" (1924, Fernand Léger; silent). ♦ The films of David Niven. April 14 at 4:30 and April 18 at 5: "The Moon Is Blue" (1953, Otto Preminger). ♦ April 14 at 8 and April 18 at 4: "Dawn Patrol" (1938, Edmund Goulding). ♦ April 15 at 4:30: "Separate Tables" (1958, Delbert Mann). ♦ April 16 at 4: "The Silken Affair" (1956, Roy Kellino). ♦ April 16 at 8: "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958, Otto Preminger). ♦ April 17 at 1:30: "The Way Ahead" (1944, Carol Reed). ♦ April 17 at 7 and April 18 at 2:30: "Around the World in 80 Days" (1956, Michael Anderson). ♦ April 18 at 5:45: "A Matter of Life and Death (Stairway to Heaven)" (1946, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger). ♦ April 19 at 8: "Before the Winter Comes" (1969, J. Lee Thompson). ♦ Special screenings. April 14, April 16, and April 17 at 7; April 15 and 19 at 4; and April 18 at 1: "World on a Wire" (1973, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ The films of Frederick Wiseman. April 15 at 8: "Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind: Multi-Handicapped" (1986).

92Y TRIBECA
200 Hudson St. (212-601-1001)—Special screenings. April 14 at 7:30: Short films by Hugo Perez, followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ April 15 at 7:30: "The Line" (2009, Nancy Schwartzman), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ "Not Coming to a Theatre Near You." April 17 at 7: "There's Always Tomorrow" (†), introduced by Richard Brody.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." April 16 at 9:30: "Galileo" (1975, Joseph Losey).

"Kick-Ass," a teen action film based on comic books by Mark Millar, opens April 16.

READINGS AND TALKS

"FUNNY BUSINESS"
Following a screening of "Funny Business," a 2009 documentary about the business of cartooning, its director, Lyda Ely, talks with the *New Yorker* cartoonists Matt Diffee, Sam Gross, Mort Gerberg, and David Sipress. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. 212-534-1672. April 15 at 6.)

TARIQ ALI
The writer and filmmaker reads from "Night of the Golden Butterfly," the final volume in his cycle of novels, the Islam Quintet. (Idlewild Books, 12 W. 19th St. 212-414-8888. April 15 at 7:30.)

SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE POETRY FESTIVAL
More than fifty poets, including Mark Strand, Frank Bidart, Marie Howe, Matthea Harvey, and Ada Limón, read from their work during this weekend-long gathering just outside the city. (For more information, visit slc.edu/poetry-festival. April 15-18.)

BOOKS OF WONDER
The delightful Chelsea children's bookstore presents "Kids and Comics!," an afternoon with the artists

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and authors George O'Connor, Mike Cavallaro, Colleen Af Venable, Nadja Spiegelman, Trade Loeffler, Geoffrey Hayes, Art Spiegelman, Françoise Mouly, Dean Haspiel, and Frank Cammuso, all of whom are involved with the creation of comic books or graphic novels. (18 W. 18th St. 212-989-3270. April 17, from noon to 2.)

WORDTHEATRE
The Los Angeles-based nonprofit WordTheatre's East Coast run continues with Kathryn Erbe, Mary Stuart Masterson, Jeremy Davidson, and other actors reading from the works of Ian Frazier, Mary Gordon, and Don Lee, all of whom will also be present for a Q. & A. (Soho House New York, 29-35 Ninth Ave. For tickets and more information, call 310-915-5150, or visit wordtheatre.com. April 18 at 5.)

LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY
The publication's festivities include a series of State-side events. They start on April 19 at 7 with a lecture by Tariq Ali about the war in Afghanistan (School of Visual Arts, 333 W. 23rd St.), and they continue on April 21 at 7 with a lecture by Jacqueline Rose on the Dreyfus Affair (The Asia Society, 725 Park Ave.) and a panel discussion on April 24 at 7 about writing in the age of the Internet, with John Lanchester, Andrew O'Hagan, Colm Tóibín, Mary-Kay Wilmers, and James Wood (New School, 66 W. 12th St.) (For more information, call 212-279-4200, or visit lrb.co.uk/spring-events.)

"THE SALT OF STRUCTURE"
The poets Peter Gizzi, Lisa Jarnot, Joan Retallack, Corina Copp, Paolo Javier, and Eugene Ostashevsky pay tribute to the experimental Polish poet Miron Bialoszewski (1922-83). The Polish poet Ewa Chrusciel will also read from her own work. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door. April 19 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

BIG RED CHAIR FAMILY SERIES
There's juggling and then there's what Michael Moschen does; he's more of a conceptual artist. He is the recipient of a MacArthur "genius grant" and he was David Bowie's contact-juggling double in "Labyrinth." Contact juggling is a form of juggling Moschen helped develop in the early eighties which involves the rolling of balls around the body. As both a philosopher and an illusionist, Moschen has elevated juggling into the realm of high art. (Skirball Center, New York University, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 866-811-4111. April 17 at 7.)

"BROADWAY RECYCLED"
One man's trash is another man's musical theatre. The At Hand Theatre Company is salvaging songs that did not make the final cut in such musicals as "9 to 5," "Yank!," and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." Mario Cantone, Ann Harada, Anthony Rapp, and others will be performing. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-539-8777. April 18 at 7.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
It's photography week at **Christie's**: the house will be holding three auctions over two days, kicking things off with a sale (April 14) focussing on works by a single master from a single collection. All seventy lots consist of gifts from Irving Penn to his personal assistant, Patricia McCabe, with whom he worked for more than three decades; they represent a very personal, chronological account of the photographer's work, one that is conspicuously not dominated by his well-known fashion photography. On April 15, another select group of prints goes on the block, this one from the Baio collection, centered on images of children by such artists as Atget, Cartier-Bresson, and Sally Mann, among others; the more general sale in the afternoon includes a striking image by Paul Strand ("Portrait, Rebecca," from 1922). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Sotheby's** will begin selling off the impressive holdings of the James S. Copley Library this week (April 14), a treasure trove of handwritten letters, documents, and manuscripts illuminating American history—reports written by British officials describing the events of the Revolutionary War, letters penned by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, notes from Eisenhower to his wife written on the battlefields of Europe. The collection is so large that it will take eight separate auctions over the course of a year to deplete it. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Photographs are also on offer at **Phillips** (April 16), which holds a wide-ranging sale that includes a palladium-and-ferroprussiate print by Edward Steichen from 1920 ("Wheelbarrow with Flower Pots, France"), as well as a group of works by Willy Ronis that capture the gritty romance and liberated atmosphere of postwar Paris. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ From April 16 to April 19, the Park Avenue Armory will be taken over by **SOFA**, a fair devoted to "sculpture objects and functional objects," items (useful or purely aesthetic) made out of glass, silver, ceramics, fiber, metal, wood, and unconventional materials like jewelry or textiles. This year, the fair features a large installation made out of "deconstructed" encyclopedias by the Rhode Island-based artist Wendy Wahl. (Park Ave. at 67th St. 800-563-7632.)

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EDEL RODRIGUEZ

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
THE WANDERERS
April 23

Dianne Wiest returns to Classic Stage Company, in "The Forest," a drama by Alexander Ostrovsky, adapted by Kathleen Tolan. John Douglas Thompson also stars in the play, in which two travelling players con their way into a country estate. Brian Kulick directs. (212-352-3101.)

MOVIES
FREAKS AND BEAKS
April 28-May 5

In a week of movies devoted to our fine-feathered friends, Anthology Film Archives will, of course, show Hitchcock's "The Birds" and the documentary "Winged Migration," along with more exotic fare, including "Woodpecker," a comedy by Alex Karpovsky about a poet who is obsessed with a bird thought to be extinct, and "Up on the Roof," a documentary by J. L. Aronson about New York's pigeon fanciers. (212-505-5181.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CITY OF PEACE
May 2-3

In "Jerusalem," a pair of concerts at Lincoln Center, Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI, his matchless early-music group, along with several guest artists from the Middle East, explore how the crosscurrents of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim cultures have shaped the life of one of the world's holiest, and most contentious, cities. (212-721-6500.)

ART
GARDEN VARIETY
May 21-Aug. 29

The pen-and-ink drawing that won Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux the commission to design Central Park and a drawing by J. M. W. Turner, formerly owned by John Ruskin, are among the treasures in "Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art, and Landscape Design," at the Morgan Library & Museum. (212-685-0008.)

NIGHT LIFE
NATIVE SONS
May 26-27 and May 29

Bruce Springsteen closed out the old Giants Stadium last fall, and now another New Jersey institution, Bon Jovi, opens the New Meadowlands Stadium with a series of shows. (800-745-3000.)

Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI, at Lincoln Center.

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
INDULGENCE

On October 31, 1517, a Roman Catholic priest and theologian, Dr. Martin Luther, put the finishing touches on a series of bullet points and, legend has it, nailed the result to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, Germany—the equivalent, for the time and place, of uploading a particularly explosive blog post. Luther's was a protest against the sale of chits that were claimed to entitle buyers or their designees to shorter stays in Purgatory. Such chits, known as indulgences, were being hawked as part of Pope Leo X's fund-raising drive for the renovation of St. Peter's Basilica. The "Ninety-five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences" touched off a high-stakes flame war that rapidly devolved into the real thing, with actual wars, actual flames, and actual stakes. The theological clash that sundered Christendom didn't just change the face of Western religion; it birthed the modern world.

Half a millennium later, the present agony of Catholicism is very far from being in the same league, even though the *National Catholic Reporter* has called it "the largest institutional crisis in centuries, possibly in Church history." The crisis is not about doctrine, at least not directly. It's about administration; it's about the structure of power within the Catholic Church; it's about the Church's insular, self-protective clerical culture. And, of course, like nearly every one of the controversies that preoccupy and bedevil the Church—abortion, stem-cell research, contraception, celibacy, marriage and divorce and affectional orientation—it's about sex.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

It's also about indulgence—the institutional indulgence, fitful but systemic, of the sexual exploitation of children by priests. The pattern broke into public consciousness in the United States a quarter of a century ago, when a Louisiana priest pleaded guilty to thirty-three counts of crimes against children and was sentenced to prison. Since then, there have been thousands of such cases, civil and criminal, involving many thousands of children and leading to legal settlements that have amounted to more than two billion dollars and have driven several dioceses into bankruptcy. In 1992, Richard Sipe, a Catholic psychotherapist and researcher who served for eighteen years as a priest and Benedictine monk, told a conference of victims that "the current revelations of abuse are the tip of an iceberg, and if the problem is traced to its foundations the path will lead to the highest halls of the Vatican."

America's liberal system of tort law, along with the enterprising reporting of journalists at newspapers like the Boston *Globe*, brought the problem to light earlier here than elsewhere. But it can no longer be dismissed as an epiphenomenon of America's sexual libertinism and religious indiscipline. In Ireland, for example, where Church-run orphanages and other institutions for children are supported by the state, a government commission reported last year that

> the Dublin Archdiocese's preoccupations in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, at least until the mid 1990s, were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the Church, and the preservation of its assets. All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities.

The past few years have seen a cascade of revelations from many countries, including, most recently, Germany, and in the past month the cascade has become a flood. Sipe's prediction has come true. As Cardinal Archbishop of Munich, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and now as Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger appears to

have been at best neglectful, at worst complicit, in minimizing and covering up specific cases of abuse that came under his supervision.

The response of the ecclesiastical powers that be, once outright denial became untenable, has all along been an unsatisfactory mixture of contrition and irritation. From Benedict on down, Church fathers have made statements of apology and shame. Awareness programs have been launched, studies have been conducted, bishops have been obliged to resign. The Pope met personally with victims of abuse during his visit to the United States, in 2008, and even his critics agree that he has taken the problem more seriously, both before and since his elevation to the throne of St. Peter, than did his predecessor, the soon-to-be-sainted John Paul II.

On the other hand, that's not setting the bar very high. When serious discipline has been imposed, it has generally been in the wake of bad publicity, usually from outside the Church and always from outside the hierarchy. There has been a lot of bad publicity of late, and some of the reaction has been tinged with resentful paranoia. In an editorial, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, accused "the media" of having the "rather obvious and ignoble intention of attacking Benedict XVI and his closest collaborators at all costs." This was echoed, nearer home, by the Archbishop of New York, Timothy Dolan, who, in his blog (yes, he has one), accused the *Times* of "being part of a well-oiled campaign against Pope Benedict." Back in Rome, on Palm Sunday, the Pope himself spoke darkly of "the petty gossip of dominant opinion."

The Catholic Church is an authoritarian institution, modelled on the political structures of the Roman Empire and medieval Europe. It is better at transmitting instructions downward than at facilitating accountability upward. It is monolithic. It claims the unique legitimacy of a line of succession going back to the apostolic circle of Jesus Christ. Its leaders are protected by a nimbus of mystery, pomp, holiness, and, in the case of the Pope, infallibility—to be sure, only in certain doctrinal matters, not administrative ones, but the aura is not so selective. The hierarchy of such an institution naturally resists admitting to moral turpitude and sees squalid scandal as a mortal threat. Equally important, the government of the Church is entirely male.

It is not "anti-Catholic" to hypothesize that these things may have something to do with the Church's extraordinary difficulty in coming to terms with clerical sexual abuse. The iniquities now roiling the Catholic Church are more shocking than the ones that so outraged Martin Luther. But the broader society in which the Church is embedded has grown incomparably freer. To the extent that the Church manages to purge itself of its shame—its sins, its crimes—it will owe a debt of gratitude to the lawyers, the journalists, and, above all, the victims and families who have had the courage to persevere, against formidable resistance, in holding it to account. Without their efforts, the suffering of tens of thousands of children would still be a secret. Our largely democratic, secularist, liberal, pluralist modern world, against which the Church has so often set its face, turns out to be its best teacher—and the savior, you might say, of its most vulnerable, most trusting communicants.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

"Great. We're dying to get rid of that."

THE BOARDS
HOME AGAIN

Christopher Walken buckled his seat belt as the Suburban with tinted windows sped up on the Queensborough Bridge. He was wearing a blue overcoat and a cashmere scarf over a black T-shirt and black pants. "When you came across this bridge, you could smell bread, twenty-four hours a day," he said. "From the Silvercup bakery—now it's Silvercup Studios, where they made 'The Sopranos.' "

It was noon on a recent sunny Thursday, and Walken was heading to Astoria, where he was born and brought up. His hair was long and unruly for his role in Martin McDonagh's dark comedy "A Behanding in Spokane." As the car crossed into Queens, Walken leaned forward to speak to his driver, Alonzo Castro: "Stay to the left, under the tracks."

Walken's father, Paul, was a baker from a family of German bakers; his mother, Rosalie, lived in Bayside until she died, a few weeks ago, at a hundred and four. "She could never really break with Astoria," Walken, who is sixty-seven, said. "I'm kind of the same way."

"When I was a kid here, I'd get on the subway, and—bang—you're in Times Square," he said. "I was a kid in show business. In those days, the nineteen-fifties, they used a lot of kids on TV. Television was all live, and it all came from New York. All the kids in my neighborhood took dance classes. I never learned how to play baseball. I can't really swim.

"Maybe make a left here—no, the next one," he said. He was determined to find his old apartment building. "Our family doctor lived on this block," he said. "He looked like Abraham Lincoln, and he smoked all the time."

Walken asked Castro to park and wait. He was precise in his instructions, because he doesn't have a cell phone. He got out of the car and approached a five-story building. "This is where we lived," he said. "This fence used to have spikes on it. They really spiffed this place up."

He peered through a first-floor window. "This was our apartment," he said. "Look, it's still the kitchen! You can see

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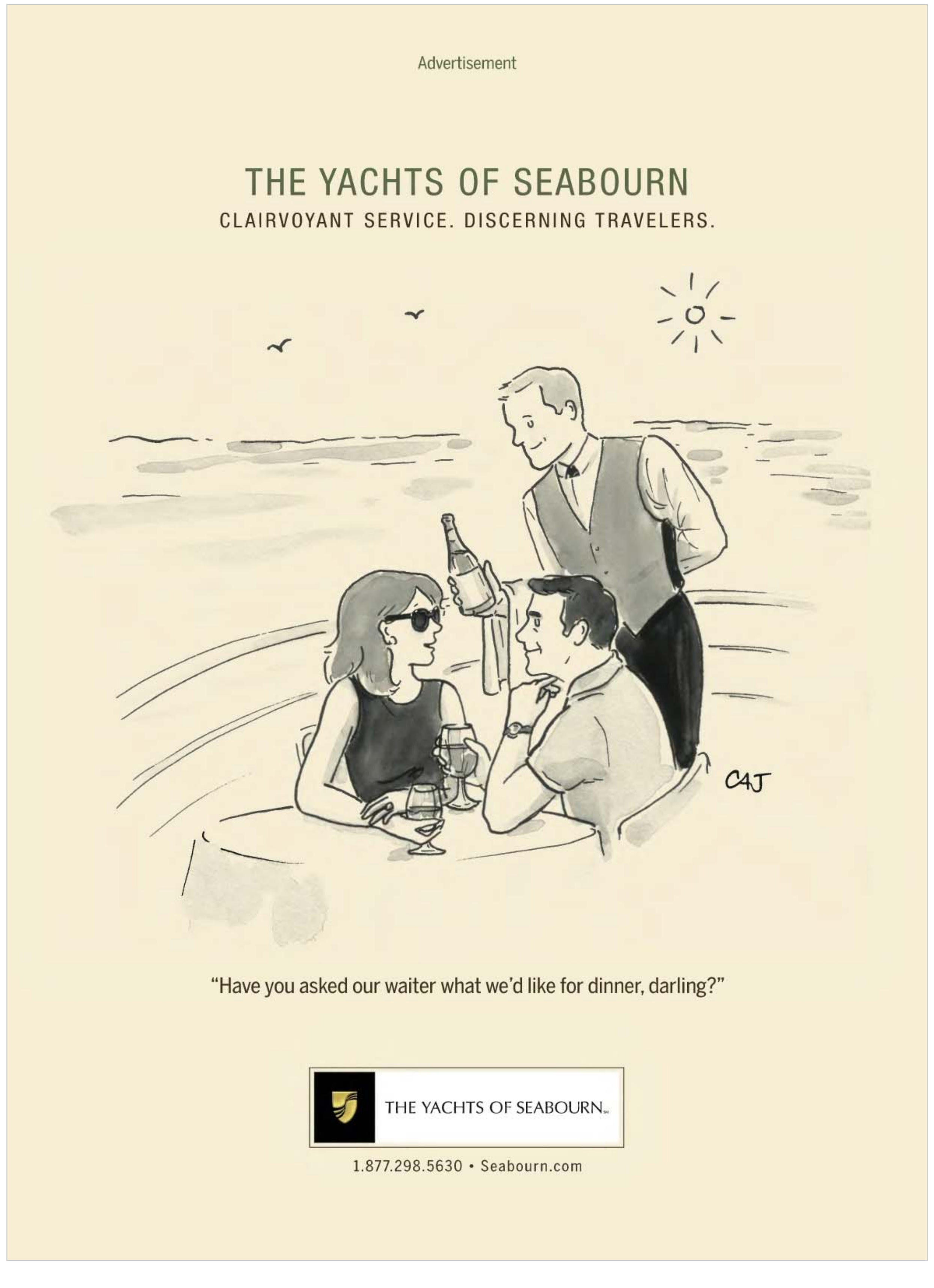
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the icebox. The kitchen table is exactly where it was." He paused. "Oh, there's somebody there. I wonder if she'd let us in. Probably she'll call the cops."

The woman in the apartment was looking out her window at Christopher Walken.

"Hello, hello! I used to live here," he said to the window.

The woman opened the window. "We just moved in yesterday," she said. "But if you want to pop in it's O.K."

The woman, who was pregnant, buzzed him in. She didn't appear to recognize him. The apartment was filled with moving boxes.

"Hello, my name is Chris Walken," he said. "This is very nice of you. When I was little, I used to have my diaper changed on the kitchen table here." He stayed in the kitchen, a polite house guest. After a minute, he said, "Well, this was very interesting. God bless and good luck!" ("This sounds silly," he said later, "but the first thing that I can remember I was on my back, on that kitchen table, and the window facing the street was open. I remember this marvellous warm breeze coming in, so it was around June, and I was a couple of months old. And I turned my head and right next to me was a white plate with scrambled eggs on it. I can still see it.")

A few blocks farther on, he walked up to the front of his father's old bakery, now a hardware store, pausing to point out a travel agency. "This was a coffee shop," he said. "The owner was the biggest bookie in the neighborhood."

He opened the door of the hardware store. He hadn't been inside since he was a boy. "I'm a little nervous," he said. When he walked in, a young Korean man came over and beamed. He was Tae Kyung, one of the store's owners.

"Hey! Man! Wow! This is Christopher Walken!" he said. "People come in here all the time and ask us, 'Is this where Christopher Walken grew up?' "

"Really?" Walken said. He looked up. "It still has the same ceiling, and the same floor, look at that. Hey! My father had a great big walk-in icebox downstairs. Is it still there?"

"No, it's all our inventory," Kyung said.

"Wow. It's crazy how small it is," Walken said. "Everybody who worked here spoke German. In the front were the women who sold the stuff, and in the back were the men who made it."

Kyung called over an employee. "You know who this is, Mario? This is Christopher Walken! 'Batman'? 'The Deer Hunter'?" Mario gave a polite nod. "This is a legend!" Kyung said. "A powerhouse—*right here!*"

Walken said, "You people are great. You're the best." Then he headed to the car and climbed in. "O.K., Alonzo, let's go back to New York."

Christopher Walken

The car dropped Walken off at the West Side apartment he shares with his wife of forty-one years, the casting agent Georgianne Walken. In the kitchen, he pointed at an avocado pit suspended by toothpicks in a glass of water, a green taproot reaching downward. "Look, my avocado is growing," he said. "Isn't that great? It's been sitting there for two months, then it did that."

The play requires Walken to stay up later than he likes; when he's not working, he's in bed by ten and up at six, and he lives at his house in Connecticut, where his satellite dish picks up dozens of movie channels. ("I've never seen 'Seinfeld.' ") "In Connecticut I don't see anybody for weeks except the guy who comes and gets the trash," he said. "At night I have possums, skunks, lots of raccoons. They come right in the house, through the cat door, and they bring their babies in. I get up at night and they're in the kitchen, eating all the cat food."

Walken doesn't use a computer. "The Internet is strange," he said. "There's stuff on the Internet about me. I've tried to find out who puts it there. Something about how I go around to hot-dog festivals, that I'm a champion hot-dog eater." Then, there's the IMDB Web site, which says that Walken has a film "in production" called "Citizen Brando." "I have no idea what that is." He said he'd had a few encounters with Brando.

"Once, in the nineties, I was in Nova Scotia, doing a movie. It's my day off, and I'm reading a book and the phone rings and this woman says, 'Christopher Walken, are you going to be there in the next ten minutes? Marlon Brando would like to talk to you.' I thought, This is one of my friends pulling my leg. So I said, 'O.K.,' and I hung up. And the phone rang again, and the second he spoke you could tell it was him. And Brando said, 'I play the piano, you know.' And I said, 'No, I didn't know that.' And he said, 'And I dance.' He told me he wanted to put cameras in his house—he wanted to do a variety show out of his house. And I said, 'Well, what can I do for you?' He said, 'You did this picture "Pennies from Heaven," and I like the numbers in that. I want you to help me get in touch with the guy who did those.' I told him it was Danny Daniels, the choreographer. Brando never did it, I guess. I'd certainly watch. Wouldn't you?"

—*Peter Stevenson*

DEPT. OF SOUVENIRS
SHOW-AND-TELL

Allan Dodds Frank, the president of the Overseas Press Club of America, stood before several dozen foreign correspondents in a penthouse apartment high above Nassau Street recently and held up a gnarled two-foot-long stick. "I don't think we're going to have to gong anybody, but, if we do, does anybody know what this is?" he asked.

"Penis bone!" someone called out.

"Yeah, it's a walrus penis," Frank, a former Anchorage *Daily News* reporter, said. "If somebody's gone on too long, I'll start waving it around." And so began the O.P.C.'s inaugural Tchotchke Night, an

élite form of war-zone show-and-tell, which prompted questions from participants like "At what point is it looting?" and "Who else has stolen the ashtray from the Rex Hotel?" (in Saigon).

Philip Sherwell, from the *Sunday Telegraph*, had brought several items that he'd "liberated," as he put it, from Uday Hussein's palace after the fall of Baghdad. "There was just one room out in the back that seemed to be still standing," he said. "It had the most remarkable collection of incredibly naf and ugly and ungainly outfits." Sherwell modelled a sampling of the Hussein collection for the club members. "I thought this was, like, a Waikiki Beach sort of thing," he said, holding up a cream-colored sports jacket with a purple boutonnière. "And this one, I thought, Elton John would be rather fond of," he went on, putting on a brocaded coat that was a few sizes too big. ("They're all very capacious," he said. "Uday was a large chap.") The clothes, judging from the labels, seemed to have come from Western designers. "You're thinking, Wow, he was really breaking sanctions pretty well," Sherwell said. "But, when you examine them closely, one of the labels says 'Yves Sanit Laurent.' And there's a pair of trousers by both Hugo Boss and Jean-Paul Gaultier. There was indeed a little room where ladies had been sewing in the labels."

More tchotchkes: a menu snatched from lunch with a foreign minister in Hanoi, circa 1985, featuring "steamed crap and flagrant rice"; a set of "Star Trek" nesting dolls; a talking Osama bin Laden action figure, smuggled out of Gaza. (Strangely, mini-Osama spoke English, and sang what sounded like an American marching hymn.)

Adam Ellick, a *Times* reporter, had left behind the T-shirt he bought from an official Rwandan tourism office ("It says 'Genocide!' and then underneath, in very small letters, it says, 'Celebrating ten years after,'" he explained) and a four-foot-high framed needlepoint depicting the Indonesian dictator Suharto. "Instead, I brought something less offensive," he said, and presented a "burka bottle cover," from Afghanistan: a miniature green burka, about the size of a fifth of vodka.

"That's not what it is!" a woman interrupted. "I brought mine."

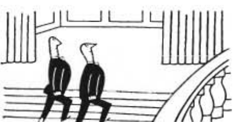
"Tchotchke slam!" someone shouted.

Ellick's challenger was Beth Knobel, a former Moscow bureau chief for CBS News. She produced a similar item, in navy blue. "It *is* from Afghanistan, but it's not a bottle cover," she said. "It's a burka for Barbie."

—*Ben McGrath*

SIDELINES

THE TOILER



A few years ago, when Peter Wolf, the former front man of the J. Geils Band, was making a new solo album, he became very anxious. "I was trying to do this, and literally the music industry was deconstructing before my eyes," Wolf said recently, while eating breakfast at 3 P.M.—an omelette and a glass of red wine—on the Upper East Side. "And I was frightened! Record stores were disappearing before my eyes, man!" He lifted his sunglasses to show his eyes—dark, wide, and bouncy with nervous energy. "My dad had a book and record store," he added. "I grew up in record stores—that was my world. And now it was all gone—boom!—in a flash of shock and awe."

To calm his nerves, Wolf started painting again. He was planning to be a painter before he got sidetracked by music in the mid-sixties, in Boston, where as a d.j. he turned a generation of college kids on to the roots of rock and roll. He taught himself painting as a teen-ager, by copying works that he liked; now, more than forty years later, he has returned to some of the paintings that moved him long ago. One painting in particular resonates with his current mood and circumstances—"The Toilers of the Sea," by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917), which Wolf first saw in an art magazine when he was thirteen. "It had this elegant primitivism that I responded to very strongly," he said. At first glance, the picture looks like a seascape—a boat in the moonlight on a troubled sea—but on close study it departs from perspective and realism in subtle ways, and the effect is dreamlike. "It's mystical—you hear the bells," Wolf said.

He became obsessed with Ryder's use of color in the painting. Somehow, the artist manages to illuminate the night without losing the feel of the darkest hour. "It's in the kind of yellow he used," Wolf said. "Is it cadmium yellow?" He searched the Internet for reproductions, but each one looked a little different. A friend suggested he hunt down the original. Wolf assumed it had been destroyed; a lot of Ryder's paintings have deteriorated, because of his habit of painting over sections before they had dried. But "The Toilers" was not only intact; it turned out to be at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "That blew my mind," Wolf said. "It never occurred to me, when I was growing up in the Bronx, that the actual painting was right here." He was finally going to see it.

Another glass of wine, and Wolf was ready to go. He left the restaurant muttering, "It has to be cadmium yellow."

On the way to the museum, Wolf said that he eventually did make the new record, "Midnight Souvenirs," which came out last week. The lyrics, which include images from a lot of sleepless nights—Wolf is an insomniac and generally doesn't get to bed before six—are colored with his musical influences, resulting in a thick impasto of sound, in which the duets—with Shelby Lynne, Neko Case, and Merle Haggard—stand out like splashes of cadmium yellow on an inky background. Listen closely and you'll hear the bells.

It was St. Patrick's Day, and the parade made crossing Fifth Avenue difficult. Wolf, slim of shank and pale of mien, wearing black, searched for an opening among the green revellers. His feet, shod in soft leather sneakers, glided along the pavement, never making a sound. Eventually, he got across Fifth, entered the museum, and found the American Wing. A guard directed him upstairs. "The Toilers" was in the rear, high up on a partition.

"There appears to be no yellow at all!" Wolf exclaimed, gobsmacked, squinting. He studied the painting in rapt silence. "It's rougher than I had imagined." Another five minutes passed. "Wow, you can get lost in this painting, which is also what I like about songs."

Before leaving, Wolf snapped a photo with his BlackBerry. On the screen the sea foam was bright yellow. "Oh, my God!" he said. "What does that mean?" It was something to think about during another sleepless night.

—*John Seabrook*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

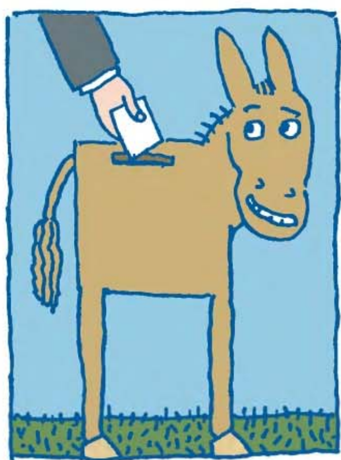
TIMING THE RECOVERY

Given high unemployment and flat wages, no one is going to be singing "Happy Days Are Here Again" any time soon (even if the tune was F.D.R.'s theme song). But we've now had three straight quarters of growth, and last month saw the creation of more than a hundred and fifty thousand jobs. That prompted the Harvard economist Jeff Frankel, a member of the committee that officially declares when recessions begin and end, to declare the downturn over. So, with the midterm elections just seven months away, people are starting to wonder how a rebound might shape results in November.

Now, economic performance doesn't necessarily determine elections; its impact was trumped in 2002, for instance, by 9/11 and in 2006 by Iraq. And its impact tends to be bigger in Presidential races than in midterms. But there is typically a strong correlation between how the economy is doing and how voters feel, with weak economies hurting incumbents and helping challengers. (That's why Presidents have a tendency to try to juice the economy in election years: in 1972, Richard Nixon pushed through a major increase in Social Security benefits just before the election.) And it doesn't matter if blame for a poor economy might plausibly be laid on a previous Administration: it's the party in charge that voters hold responsible. In other words, if the economy is bad on Election Day, blaming George Bush probably won't work. "The old party gets credit or blame for the first year, and then it's the new party's economy," Larry Bartels, a political scientist at Princeton, says. "By November, it will be the Democrats' economy."

Understandably, then, Republicans have been giddy about their prospects this fall. Even if we get a sustained recovery, more than ten million people will still be out of work in November, and few Americans will be better off than they were two years ago. And the weak economy has already helped Republicans, because it's easier to recruit what John Sides, a political scientist at George Washington University, calls "quality challengers"—among them, for instance, people who've actually held political office before—when the chances of victory look good. While high-profile Democratic incumbents have been stepping down, strong Republican candidates have decided to step up.

A tough November for Democrats therefore looks like a foregone conclusion. And yet if the economy really starts to recover this summer a lot could change. For one thing, voters have short memories: when they cast their ballots, their decisions are shaped primarily by recent events. Bartels, in his book "Unequal Democracy," points out a strong correlation between voting in Presidential elections and income growth during election years, rather than income growth over the full length of a Presidency. Indeed, he narrows it down further: the second and third quarters of the election year seem to matter most. Since the second quarter started just last week, there's time for moods to brighten substantially by Election Day. Some have argued that an economic rebound won't matter this year, because things have been so awful that normal growth won't feel like progress. But, as Sides says, "it doesn't seem that economic growth matters less when you're digging out of a crisis. What voters look at is whether things are getting better or worse."



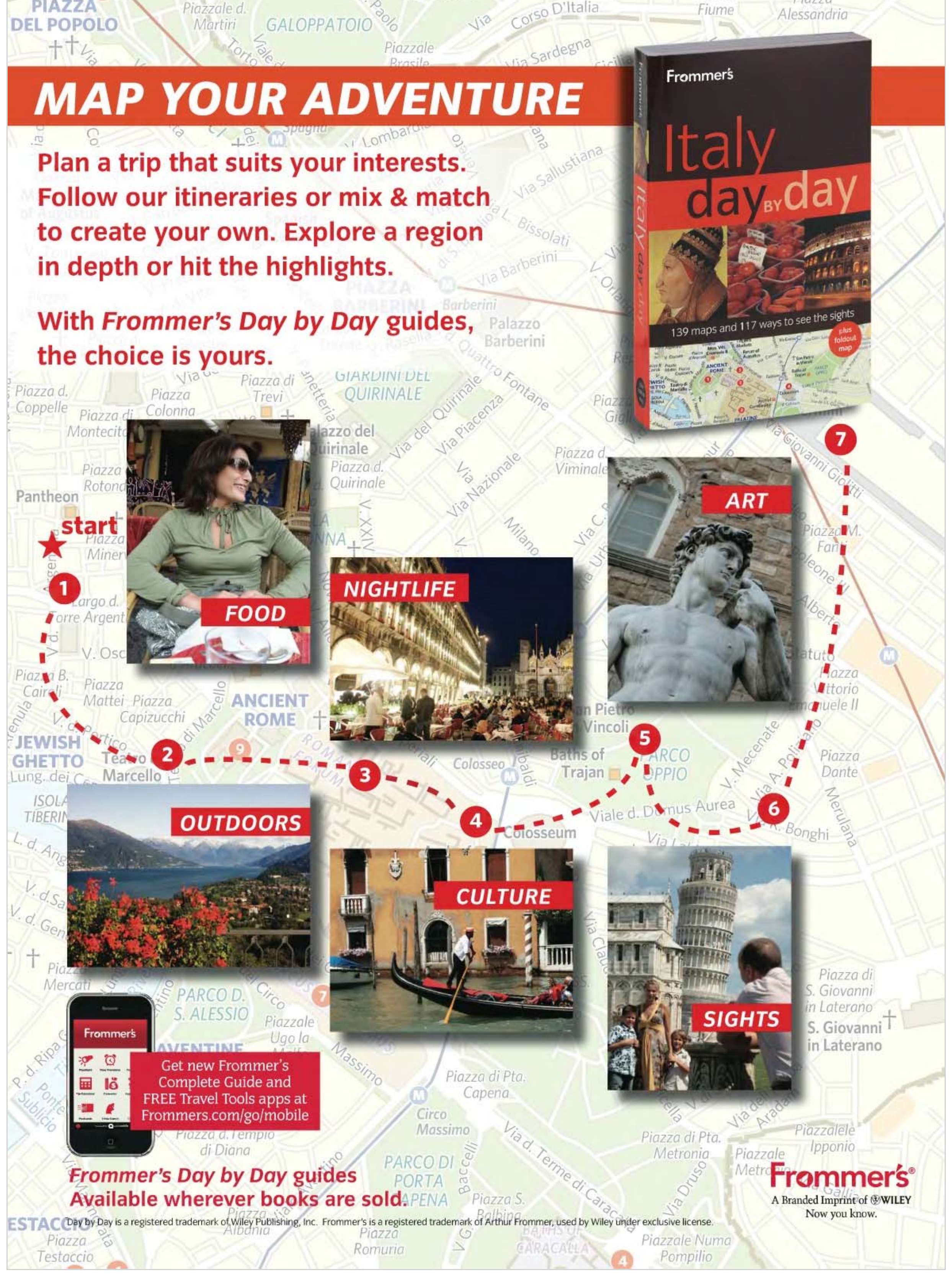
Even the high unemployment rate may be less important politically than you'd think. Seth Masket, a political scientist at the University of Denver, has found that, in midterm elections since 1950, there's been no correlation between the unemployment rate and election outcomes. The key economic variable for voters, other studies show, has been income growth, or, more specifically, how fast per-capita G.D.P. is rising. In other words, if income growth is brisk enough, Democrats should benefit at the polls even if unemployment stays high. And Democrats do have an ace in the hole when it comes to keeping the economy moving: last year's stimulus bill was backloaded, which means that close to five hundred billion dollars in stimulus money is still to be spent.

That backloading of the bill was good economics: with the Federal Reserve doing less to pump up the economy, an extra half-trillion dollars in fiscal stimulus will help pick up the slack. It was also good politics, since much of that money will be flooding into the economy during the key second and third quarters. Republicans in Congress would presumably block any Democratic attempt to pass another major stimulus, both for ideological reasons and because they have no political incentive to see the economy improve. (While you might expect all incumbents to pay the price for a poor economy, in Sides's words, "It's really only the President's party that suffers when the economy's bad.") Pushing much of the stimulus spending off until this year made that less of a problem.

It didn't guarantee that the economy would be healthy by November, though. So it's still possible that we may see a replay of the 1982-84 election cycle, when Republicans lost twenty-six seats in the midterm elections, thanks to a weak economy, but Ronald Reagan won reëlection in a landslide two years later. This time around, the recovery could come too late to save Democrats in November but still be in time to set Barack Obama up well for reëlection in 2012. The economy's recent signs of life, coupled with all the stimulus money, give the Democrats a better chance of avoiding that fate. But economies aren't machines. The Democrats will have to spend the next seven months much the way voters will: waiting and hoping that, at long last, things are finally back on track.

—*James Surowiecki*

SEYMOUR CHWAST



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ANNALS OF EXPLORATION

THE ICE BALLOON

A doomed journey in the Arctic.

BY ALEC WILKINSON

In August of 1930, a Norwegian sloop, the Bratvaag, sailing in the Arctic Ocean, stopped at a remote island called White Island. The Bratvaag was partly on a scientific mission, led by Dr. Gunnar Horn, a geologist, and partly out sealing. On the second day, the sealers followed walruses around a point of land. A few hours later, they sealers found "an aluminum lid, which they picked up with astonishment." Continuing, they saw something dark protruding from a snowdrift—a canvas boat, and in it a boat hook stamped "Andrée's Pol. Exp. 1896."

Not far from the boat was a body that was leaning against a rock. The body was frozen, and on its feet were boots, returned with a book, which was sodden and heavy, its pages stuck together. The book was a diary, and on the first page someone had written, "The Sledge Journey, 1897."

Horn rode to shore with the Bratvaag's captain, Peder Eliassen, who said that two sealers dressing seals had gone looking for water. Crossing a stream, the partially covered by snow. Very little but bones remained of the torso and the arms. The head was missing and clothes were scattered about, leading Horn to conclude that bears had disturbed the remains. He and the others carefully opened the jacket, and when they saw a large monogram "A." they knew whom they were looking at—S. A. Andrée, the Swede who, with two companions, had ascended, on July 11, 1897, in a hydrogen balloon to discover the North Pole.

Of the hundreds of people who went looking for the North Pole before the twentieth century, only Andrée used a balloon. He had left from an island six hundred and fifty miles from the Pole. It took an hour for the balloon, which was a hundred feet tall, to disappear from the view of the people watching it. Andrée had expected to arrive in no more than forty-three hours. Having crossed the Pole, he would land, perhaps six days later, in Asia or Alaska, depending on the winds, and walk to civilization if he had to.

S. A. Andrée and Knut Fraenkel, photographed by Nils Strindberg next to the group's fallen balloon, in July of 1897.

Andrée described his plan on February 13, 1895, in an address to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. The following July, in London, he gave the speech again, at the Sixth International Geographical Congress. He was forty years old, blond, tall, and well built, with wide shoulders and a strong jaw.

"The history of geographical discov-

ery is at the same time a history of great peril and suffering," he began. In warm climates, however, "nearly every hindrance can be said to contain a means of success." Natives often "bar the way of the explorer, but just as often, perhaps, they become his friends and helpers." Lakes and rivers carry him places; plus, he can drink from them and find in them things to eat. In the desert, despite the pitiless sun, there can also be "a luxuriant vegetation that serves as a shelter," not to mention people who have been where you are going and can tell you the best way to get there.

In the Arctic, "the cold only kills." There were no places to rest, "no vegetation, no fuel," just "a field of ice that invites to a journey," but this field, "covered with gigantic blocks," was too imposing to cross. The ice crushed ships, and, in the Arctic desert, no natives were around to help you.

The only means of traversing the Arctic had been the sledge, and, whether pulled by men or by dogs, it had failed to take anyone far enough. At hand, however, was another method. "I refer to the balloon," Andrée said. He described the balloon and the instruments that he thought he would need, and how much the expedition would cost—about thirty-eight thousand dollars.

As Andrée listened to objections from General Adolphus Greely, an American explorer, and others who thought that he might get lost, he made notes with a pencil. Then he pointed a finger at several explorers. "When something happened to your ships, how did you get back?" he asked. Greely, on his expedition, a decade earlier, had lost eighteen of his twenty-five men. "I risk three lives in what you call a 'foolhardy' attempt, and you risked how many?" Andrée continued. "A shipload."

As Andrée left the stage, a witness wrote, the audience "cheered until the great hall of the Colonial Institute rang."

GRENNA MUSEUM/ANDRÉE EXPEDITION & POLAR CENTRE

Andrée was born in 1854, in Grenna, about three hundred miles southwest of Stockholm, on Lake Vättern. As a child, he was said to have a wide-ranging intelligence and a capacity for asking difficult questions, and to be stubborn.

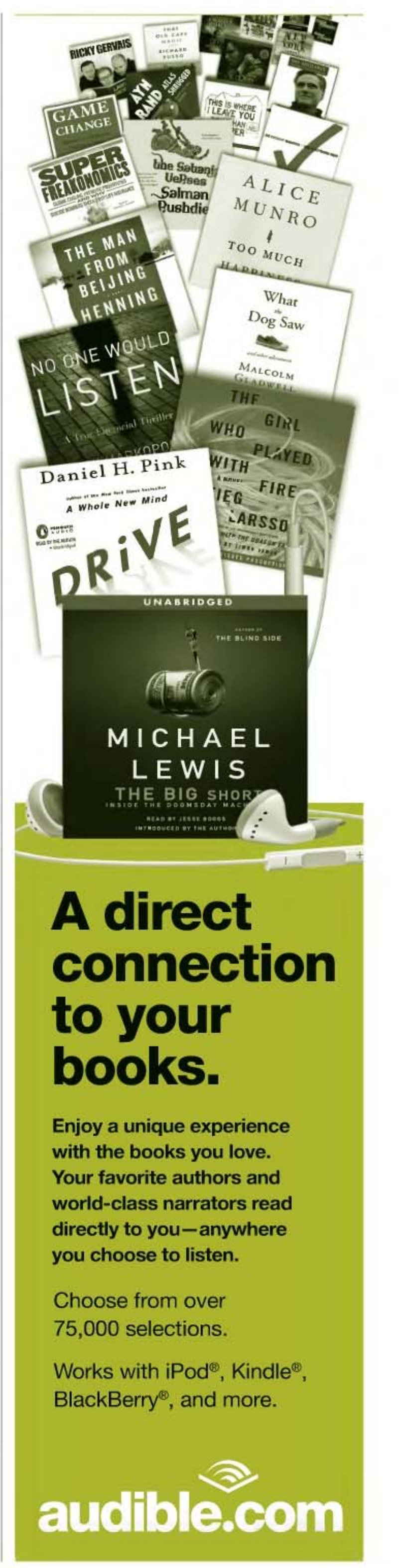
Andrée's attachment to his mother was profound, and only deepened when he was sixteen and his father died. If he felt himself drawn to a woman, he repressed the attraction. "I don't want to run the risk of having a wife to ask me with tears to desist from my flights," he once said, "because at that moment my affection for her, no matter how strong, would be so dead that nothing could call it to life again." He attended the Royal Institute of Technology, in Stockholm, and at twenty-two he went to America to see the Centennial Exposition, in Philadelphia, where all the world's new inventions were being displayed.

On the steamer to America, Andrée had only one book, "Laws of the Winds," by C.F.E. Björling. One day, reading about the trade winds and struck by their regularity, he wrote in a journal, an idea "ripened in my mind which decisively influenced my whole life." This was the thought "that balloons, even though not dirigible, could be used for long journeys." It occurred to him that a balloon might cross the Atlantic.

In Philadelphia, Andrée got a job as a janitor at the Swedish Pavilion. The American ballooning pioneer John Wise lived in Philadelphia, and Andrée went to see him. Wise had flown balloons "in sunshine, rain, snow, thunder showers and hurricanes," Andrée wrote. "He had been stuck on chimneys, smoke stacks, lightning rods and church spires, and he had been dragged through rivers, lakes, and over garden plots and forests primeval. His balloons had whirled like tops, caught fire, exploded and fallen to the ground like stones. The old man himself, however, had always escaped unhurt and counted his experiences as proof of how safe the art of flying really was."

Andrée asked Wise if he might join him in a balloon ride, and Wise said that he could go up with him and his niece, on July 4th, in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. Just as Wise's niece, dressed as the goddess of liberty, was about to board, a high wind rose and "the bag collapsed like a rag," Andrée wrote. Not long after that, Andrée fell sick with an intestinal complaint, and he returned to Grenna.

To make money to buy his own balloon, he and a partner opened a machine shop near Jönköping, but within a few years they were heavily in debt, and Andrée decided that he didn't like business, "because it seemed repulsive to me constantly to say derogatory things about competitors when it came time to sell,



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TO DINE...OR TO FEAST?

Given the many dining options at MGM Grand, using the suite's gourmet kitchen may not be necessary. In the latest edition, the *Michelin* guide once again gave its highest rating, three stars, to Joël Robuchon at MGM Grand, about which it said, "Prepare to be dazzled with culinary genius so lovingly crafted it wows the senses." Other dining destinations include Wolfgang Puck's California-inspired cuisine and Emeril Lagasse's signature blend of Creole-Cajun specialties. Craftsteak, by Chef Tom Colicchio, offers mainstays like Kobe beef along with veal, salmon, and lobster dishes prepared with the purest ingredients from small family farms. SEABLUE, by Michael Mina, is inspired by the bustling ports and marketplaces of the Mediterranean and is noted for its two open kitchens, which prepare seafood over wood-fired grills. Still more restaurants include the sleek FiAMMA Trattoria & Bar, and Pearl, which serves cuisine inspired by Canton and Shanghai.

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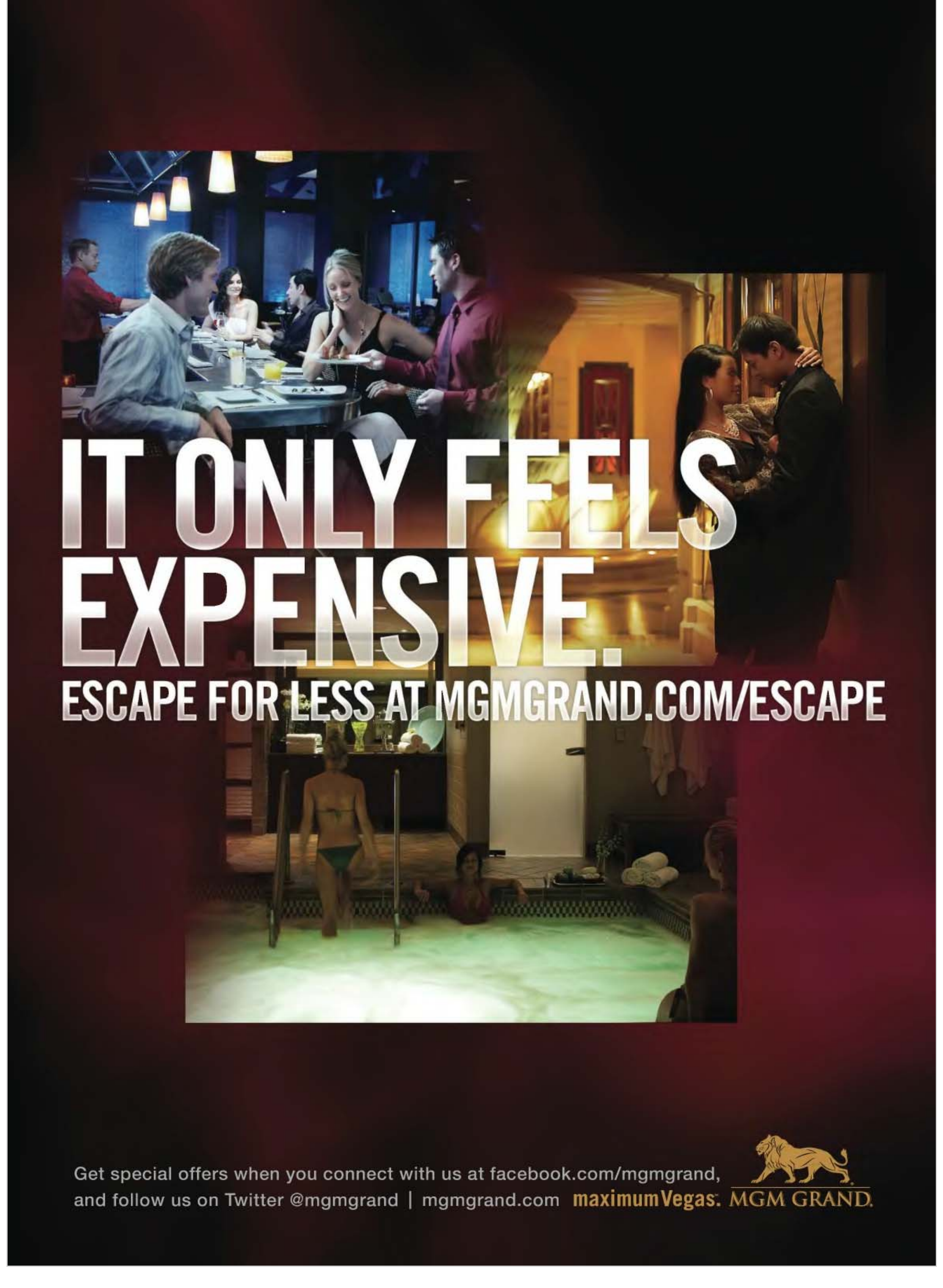
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and about goods when it came time to buy. Constant striving for money killed interests which I valued very highly and which I wanted to keep alive."

In 1882, Andrée went to Spitsbergen, in the Arctic, as a member of the Swedish delegation of the First International Polar Year, a project undertaken by eleven countries in order to study polar weather. Andrée made observations concerning aero-electricity, and he did it with such resourcefulness, solving technical problems that defeated the other nations, that the Swedish results were considered the best. To determine whether the yellow-green tinge that appeared on someone's face at the end of the Arctic winter, when daylight finally arrived, was a result of the person's skin having changed color or of his eyes having been affected by the light, Andrée allowed himself to be shut indoors for a month. When he finally went out, it was clear that the pigmentation of his skin had changed. Agreeing to his confinement, he wrote, "Dangerous? Perhaps. But what am I worth?" In 1885, Andrée went to work at the Swedish Patent Office; it was his last job.

Andrée didn't ride in a balloon until 1892, when he was thirty-eight. He went up with Captain Francesco Cetti, a Norwegian, who said that Andrée aloft was "disagreeably calm." Andrée wrote that he was preoccupied with observing himself to determine whether he was afraid. He was surprised to find himself, as the balloon left the ground, holding tight to the ropes encircling the basket. "I discovered that I was not conscious of any feeling of fear, but that I probably was influenced by it unconsciously," he wrote. After making a second flight with Cetti, Andrée was able to buy a balloon, which he did with money from a fund established to further science and the public good. Andrée called his balloon the Svea, after the Swedish national emblem, and in it he made nine trips by himself. On his first flight, at thirteen thousand five hundred feet, he said that he heard dogs barking. On his second, he noted that the balloon fell faster when a cloud passed over it.

On his fifth trip, Andrée ascended to fourteen thousand two hundred and fifty feet. As he rose, his head began to ache; he wrote that "the beating of the pulse produced a faint singing noise on the left side of my skull." On his sixth trip, he used drag ropes to slow the balloon and a sail he designed to try to steer it. He also dropped cards from the balloon, in the hope that people would note where they had found them and send them to him, so that he would be able to tell more precisely where he had been. Andrée made three more trips in the Svea, the last on March 17, 1895, after which he sold it to an outdoor museum near Stockholm. In all, he had travelled nine hundred miles and spent forty hours aloft.

Andrée was different from the other men who went looking for the Pole—they were explorers, whereas he was an engineer. Although he was eager to be lionized, discovering the Pole was peripheral to his ambition, which was to prove that balloons could sail to places that couldn't otherwise be reached. Territory that had never been seen could be mapped, and the samples and photographs taken would extend what was known of the natural world. He wanted to be regarded as a scientist, not as the performer of a stunt.

According to Håkan Joriksen, the director of the Grenna Museum, whose holdings are devoted mainly to Andrée, raising money to discover the Pole was easier than raising money to cross the Atlantic. Andrée, he said, "wanted to try the impossible—to go to the North Pole in a balloon. He realized—the North Pole, here's where we can find the money. No one would have sponsored him to fly across the Atlantic."

Andrée's polar balloon was paid for largely by Alfred Nobel—who was rich from having invented dynamite and who sought out Andrée when he learned of his plan—and by Oscar II, the king of Sweden, who thought that the Pole, one of the last of the world's unvisited places, ought to be discovered by the Swedes.

Called the Eagle, the balloon was built in Paris, from layers of varnished silk.

In the summer of 1896, Andrée was given a hero's sendoff from Sweden. His companions were Nils Ekholm, a forty-seven-year-old meteorologist who had led the expedition to Spitsbergen, and Nils Strindberg, a twenty-three-year-old assistant professor of physics and a cousin of the writer August Strindberg. So that the balloon could be filled without interference from the wind, Andrée had had a five-story balloon house built on Danes Island, in the Svalbard Archipelago of Norway. The front wall of the house could quickly be pulled down when the balloon was ready to lift off. The floor, as well as every part of the house that might touch the balloon, was covered with heavy felt. The windows were made from gelatin and the roof was cloth.

For three weeks, Andrée tried to leave, but he never got favorable winds. Having to return to Sweden and set about raising money again was a setback. That winter, Ekholm resigned, saying that he doubted that the balloon could retain sufficient hydrogen to make the trip. He was replaced by Knut Fraenkel, a twenty-seven-year-old civil engineer.

In 1897, shortly before the team left for Spitsbergen again, Strindberg's father held a farewell dinner. Andrée was unable to attend, because his mother had died unexpectedly, and he was attending the funeral. Strindberg's father saw Andrée a week later, though, as the three explorers were leaving, and wrote that he "was as calm as the summer sea." Privately, however, Andrée grieved deeply. "The only thread which bound me to the wish to live is cut off," he wrote.

Andrée and his team arrived at Danes Island in May. Strindberg wrote to his brother, "With a fairly strong wind we will . . . reach the Pole, or a point near it, in from thirty to sixty hours. Once having reached the northernmost point, we don't care where the wind carries us. Of course we would rather land in Alaska, near the Mackenzie River, where we would very likely meet American whalers, who are favorably disposed toward the expedition. It would really be a glorious thing to succeed so well. But even if we were obliged to leave the balloon and proceed over the ice, we shouldn't consider ourselves lost. We have sledges and provision for four months, guns

and ammunition; hence are just as well equipped as other expeditions as far as that is concerned. I would not object to such a trip."

As it left the balloon house, on July 11th, the balloon struck something, and the last thing Andrée was heard to say was "What's that?" The balloon rose a few hundred feet and headed northeast, across the harbor. Within moments, it began to descend, and then the basket abruptly struck the water. To raise it, Andrée and the others threw out nine bags of sand, about four hundred and fifty pounds, which they would have preferred to keep.

The balloon appeared to be travelling toward the horizon at about twenty miles an hour, according to a witness, who wrote, "For one moment then, between two hills, we perceive a grey speck over the sea, very, very far away, and then it finally disappears."

"We've decided to nest apart this year."

The discovery of the camp and the diaries in 1930 was reported throughout the world, and the diaries were published, with commentary, as "Andrée's Story." Several weeks after Horn and the Bratvaag had been to White Island, the Isbjorn, a ship hired by reporters, stopped there, and one of the reporters, Knut Stubbendorff, found a waterlogged notebook, which he dried in his cabin. "I have seldom, if ever, experienced a more dramatic, a more touching succession of events," Stubbendorff wrote, "than when I began the preparation of the wet leaves, thin as silk, and watched how the writing or drawing, at first invisible, gradually became discernible as the material dried, giving me a whole, connected description written by the dead—a description which displayed unexpected and amazing details, and which allowed me to follow the journey of the balloon across the ice during the three short days from July 11 to 14, 1897."

Each man had kept an account. Fraenkel's was composed of terse meteorological observations. Strindberg had made astronomical observations, in addition to notes, now and then, regarding the journey, and for a while he had also written letters in shorthand to his fiancée, Anna Charlier. These tend to reflect his insistence on believing that he would return to her, which is perhaps what sustained him. Two diaries belonged to Andrée, and are the most complete and the most descriptive; despite the bleakness of his situation, his determination throughout hardly falters.

The first night was wonderful, he wrote. "The snow on the ice a light, dirty yellow across great expanses. The fur of the polar bear has the same colour." He was cold, but he didn't want to wake the others. At about seven o'clock, the balloon came to a stop and didn't move for forty minutes; then the winds changed and it began to head west, instead of north. They made breakfast at about nine, the coffee taking eighteen minutes to boil. Strindberg wrote, "Pleasant feeling prevails."

For most of the morning, they travelled through mist. The temperature was just above freezing. At about three in the afternoon, the balloon sank so low that the car twice struck the ice. During the next few hours, the fog enclosed the men and the balloon struck the surface continually—"8 touches in 30m," "bumpings every 5th minute," and "paid visits to the surface and stamped it about every 50 meters"—nevertheless, "humour good," Andrée wrote. He sent Strindberg and Fraenkel to rest, and, keeping watch, wrote, "It is not a little strange to be floating here above the Polar Sea. To be the first that have floated here in a balloon. How soon, I wonder, shall we have successors? . . . We think we can well face death, having done what we have done. Isn't it all, perhaps, the expression of an extremely strong sense of individuality which cannot bear the thought of living and dying like a man in the ranks, forgotten by coming generations? Is this ambition?"

The following evening, the concussions against the ice made Strindberg seasick. By throwing out a lot of ballast, they managed to make the balloon rise. Andrée wrote that its progress was "quite stately." At about ten o'clock, "an immense polar bear swam about, 30 meters (98 ft.) right below us. He got out of the way of the guide-lines and went off at a jog-trot when he got up on to the ice."

Early on the morning of the fourteenth, the fog thickened and the car began to hit the ice again. Then the balloon rose "to a great height," Andrée wrote. They released some of the gas to lower themselves, then, a little after eight, apparently resigned to disappointment, they landed and "jumped out of the balloon . . . worn out and famished." They had been aloft for sixty-five hours and thirty-three minutes, had travelled five hundred and seventeen miles, and were about three hundred miles north of where they had started; that is, about three hundred miles south of the Pole.

They were adrift amid hundreds of

miles of ice broken into blocks and forced together by the current, and by channels filled with water, called leads. They took a week to select what to pack in their sledges, one for each of them. Strindberg noted, as they started, that the sledges, which weighed between three hundred and four hundred and fifty pounds, were very hard to pull. Sometimes, with ropes over their shoulders as if in harness, all three pulled one sledge, then went back for another.

At first, they headed southeast, for a depot they had arranged to have left for them by the captain of a ship on Franz Josef Land, an archipelago in Russia. Along the way, they shot several polar bears and dressed them. At times, they built bridges by bringing ice floes together, but the work was laborious. Sometimes they used axes to make tracks for the runners of their sledges. Sometimes the ice gave way, and they fell into the water, and the sledges fell in, too. "Is it easy to get across?" Andrée said they would ask one another. "Yes, it is easy with difficulty!"

When they saw no path through the labyrinth of ice, Andrée would take his gun and go to look for one, while the others sat shivering. For the most part, the temperature hovered around thirty-two degrees; the coldest temperature they recorded was fourteen degrees. On a good day, they made three miles.

On July 25th, Charlier's birthday, Strindberg wrote her a letter: "We have just stopped for the day, after drudging and pulling the sledges for ten hours. I am really rather tired but must first chat a little. First and foremost I must congratulate you, for this is your birthday. Oh, how I wish I could tell you now that I am in excellent health and that you need not fear for us at all. We are sure to come home by and by."

A few days later, Fraenkel began to suffer from snow blindness. On July 31st, by taking astronomical readings with their instruments, they discovered that they had drifted west with the ice faster than they had walked east. "This is not encouraging," Andrée wrote. "Out on the ice one cannot at all notice that it is in movement."

On August 4th, they gave up walking east. "We can surmount neither the current nor the ice," Andrée wrote. They decided to head southwest, toward a smaller depot on the Seven Islands. The temperature dropped to about twenty-eight degrees. "Each degree makes us creep deeper down into the sleeping sack," Andrée wrote. The cold froze some of the water in the leads, forcing them, at times, to crawl forward on hands and knees. When bear meat was scarce, meals sometimes consisted of only bread, butter, biscuits, and water. Fraenkel got the runs, and Andrée gave him opium for it.

On the seventeenth, Andrée wrote, "Our journey today has been terrible. We have not advanced 1000 meters but with the greatest difficulty have dodged on from floe to floe." They set out fishhooks baited with bear meat but didn't catch anything. One evening, Andrée suggested that they try the bear meat raw, and they decided that it tasted like oysters. They made "blood pancake" from bear's blood and oatmeal, fried in butter. Strindberg made soup from algae, which, Andrée wrote, "should be considered as a fairly important discovery for travelers in these tracts."

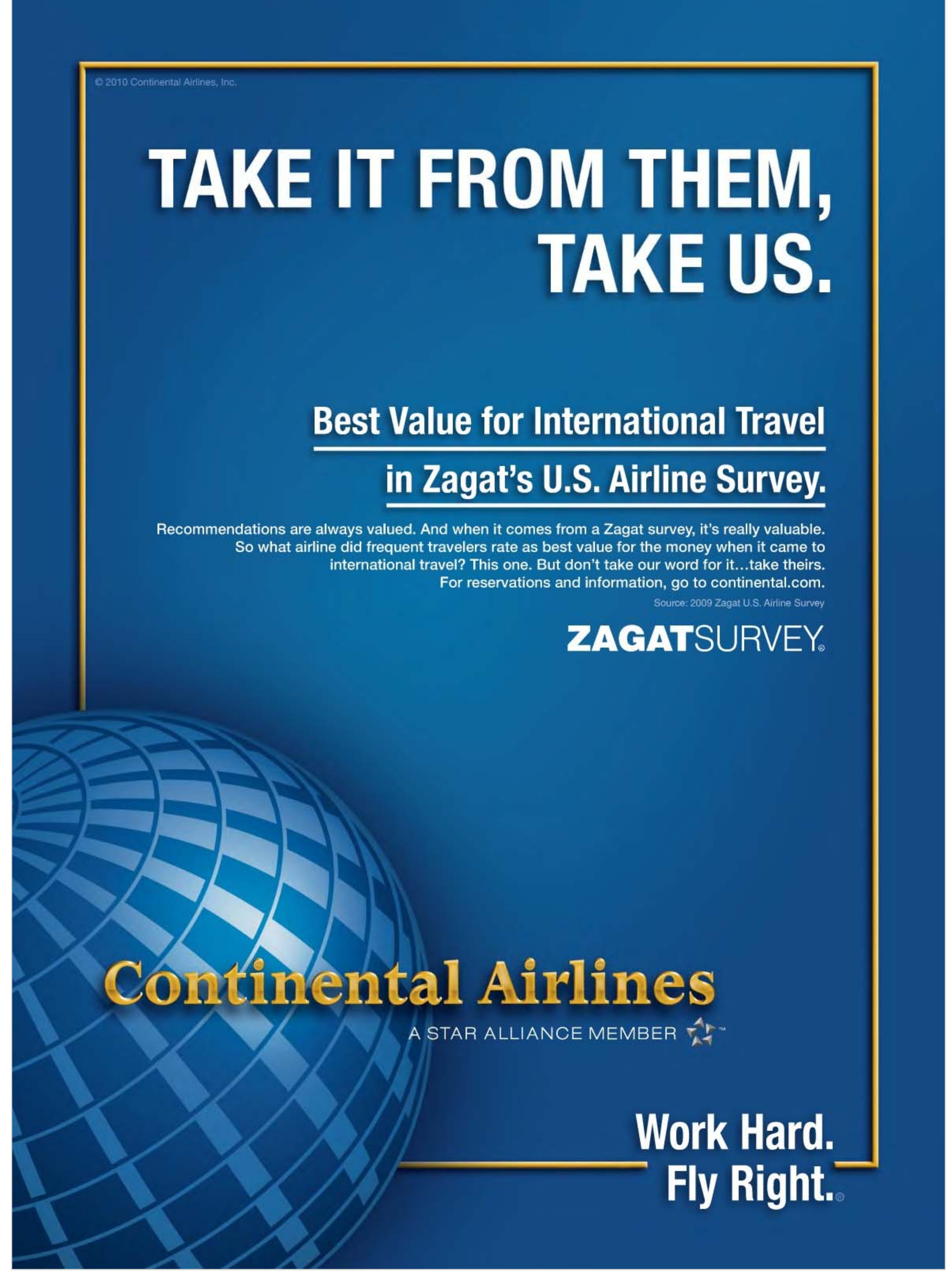
They were discouraged and tired, but, even so, Andrée at times described what he saw around him with something approaching elation. Of a peaceful, clear night, he wrote, "Magnificent Venetian landscape with canals between lofty hummock edges on both sides, water-square with ice-fountain and stairs down to the canals. Divine."

Fraenkel turned a knee and got the runs again, and when he didn't get better Andrée gave him more opium. Then Fraenkel had stomach pains, for which he took morphine. "We shall see if he can be made a sound man again," Andrée wrote.

On August 29th, he wrote mournfully, "Tonight was the first time I have thought of all the lovely things at home." On the thirty-first: "The sun touched the horizon at midnight. The landscape on fire. The snow a sea of flame." In the evening, Andrée had the runs himself, and took both morphine and opium.

On September 3rd, they came to a place where the leads were extensive and they had to take to their boat. Rowing for several hours was "marvelous, for the everlasting pulling of the sledges had become tiring," Andrée wrote. September 4th was Strindberg's birthday. Andrée woke him and gave him letters that Charlier and his family had written and given to Andrée before they left, noting, "It was a real pleasure to see how glad he was." Later in the day, Strindberg and his sledge fell into a lead, soaking all the sugar and bread he was carrying. Even so, Andrée wrote, it "did not lessen our festal mood,

"Our goal is to make prices so low that even our employees could shop here."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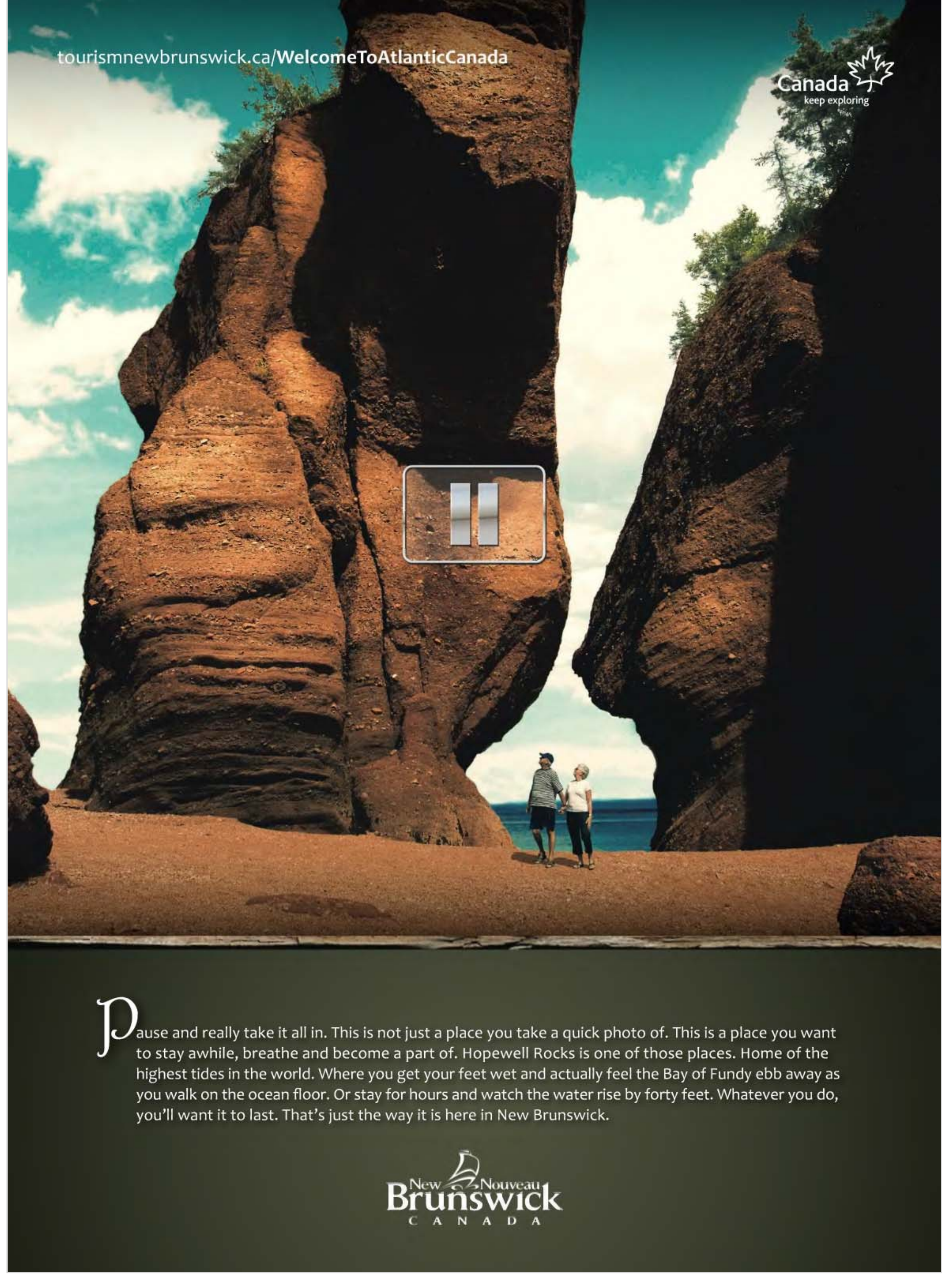
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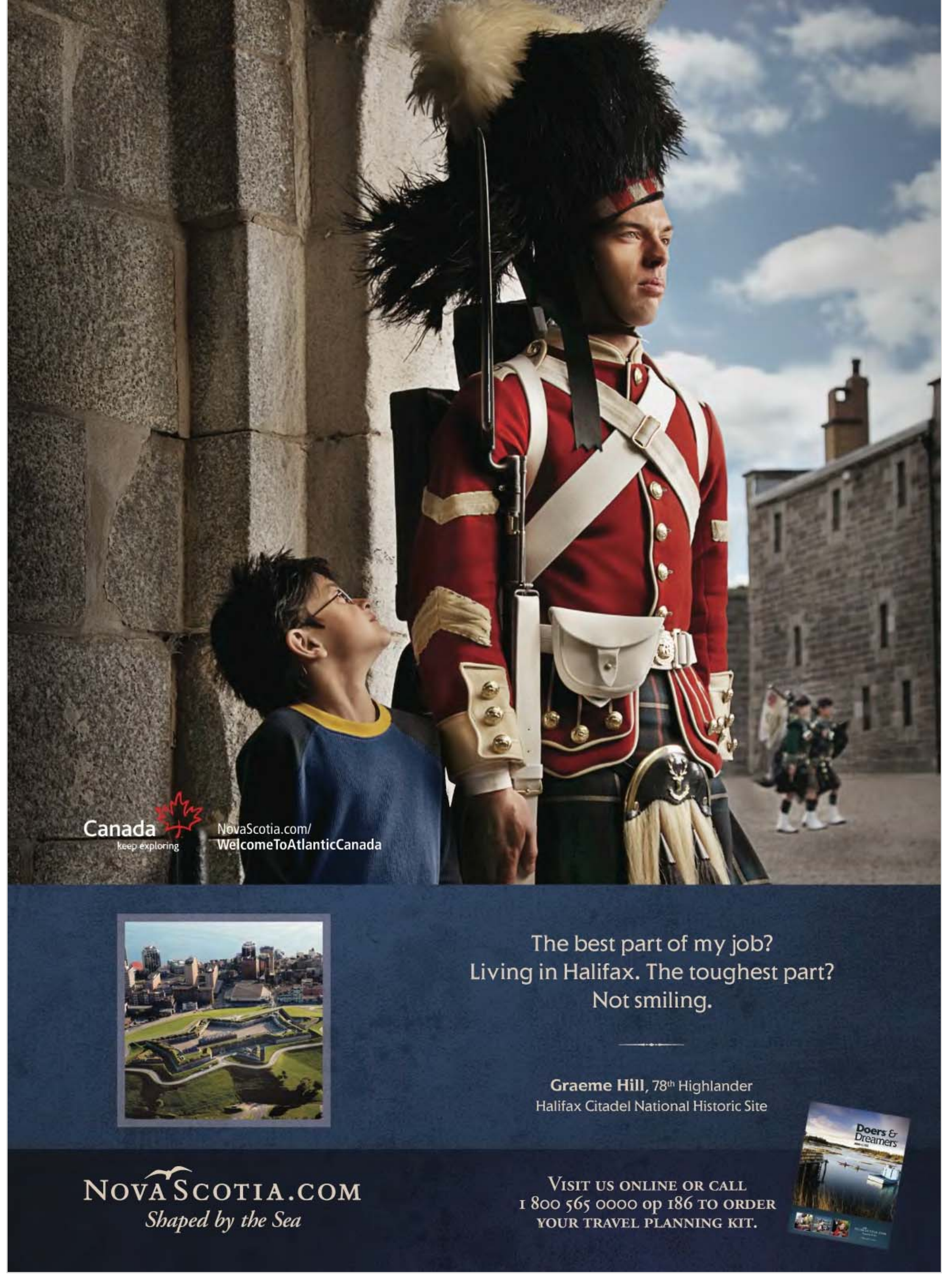
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but we were jolly and friendly as usual."

A few days later, a large blister on Fraenkel's foot became so painful that he could no longer pull his sledge, only help Andrée and Strindberg push it. Between August 4th and September 9th, when Andrée stopped making entries, the ice had carried them approximately eighty-one miles south-southeast, when they had been trying to travel the same distance southwest.

"Since I last wrote in my diary, much has changed, in truth," Andrée wrote on September 17th. Snow had fallen, which made pulling the sledges more difficult. Fraenkel's sore foot meant that Andrée and Strindberg had to pull their sledges, then go back and get Fraenkel's. Also, they were nearly out of meat. For two days, a "violent north-west wind" had pinned them down, and they had concluded that there was no hope of reaching the depot. Wintering on the ice had become unavoidable. "Our position is not specially good," Andrée wrote.

They had killed a seal and eaten all of it "except the skin and the bones." Fraenkel's foot got better but was weeks from being properly healed, and Strindberg had trouble with his feet, too. "Our humour is pretty good," Andrée wrote, "although joking and smiling are not of ordinary occurrence."

On the seventeenth, they also saw White Island, about six miles away, but thought that there was no question of landing on it, since it seemed to be occupied entirely by a towering glacier. Two days later, Andrée shot three seals, giving them enough food, with the provisions they had, to last until the middle of the winter. Because of this, he wrote, "they looked forward to the future with hopes considerably strengthened."

On the nineteenth, Strindberg began to build a house on the ice by heaping up snow and pouring water over it. On the twenty-eighth, they moved into it, sleeping under a roof for the first time since they had left home. On October 2nd, at five-thirty in the morning, according to Andrée, "we heard a thunderous crash, and water streamed into the hut." The ice floe they were living on had split into smaller floes. One wall of their house hung from the roof, with nothing below it. They saw their belongings drifting off and had to hurry to retrieve them. The diary ends on October 2nd: "No one had lost courage; with such comrades one should be able to manage under, I may say, any circumstances."

Some time after the diaries were published, modern technology made it possible to read parts of Andrée's second diary which had been illegible, and so nearly all but the conclusion of what Dr. Horn had described as "a death-march across the ice" was revealed. (These entries appear in "Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic," by Vilhjálmur Stefánsson.) On October 4th, the three men began building another house. They also saw a lowland on the island, "a refuge if we don't drift too far past," Andrée wrote, and in the afternoon they saw birds flying toward the island. The next day, they moved ashore, working partly in darkness beneath the northern lights. The following day happened to be Andrée's mother's birthday, and he christened their camp Mina Andrée's Place.

The last entry is for Friday, October 8th, when Andrée wrote that bad weather kept them in the tent all day: "It feels fine to be able to sleep here on fast land as a contrast with the drifting ice out upon the ocean where we constantly heard the cracking, grinding, and din. We shall have to gather driftwood and bones of whales and will have to do some moving around when the weather permits."

When they died isn't known, but two observations make it likely that they didn't last much longer. One is that all their provisions remained in the boat, and the other is that a pile of driftwood had been gathered but not used. Strindberg's diary has a final notation, on October 17th, saying, "Home 7:05 a.m.," but it is made in ink, when all the other entries in the diaries are in pencil. Ink freezes. A persuasive explanation offered by scholars is that Strindberg made the notation before they left, expecting to arrive home in Sweden by train at 7:05.

What killed them isn't known, either. Poisoning from the metal cans has been suggested, in addition to an accidental gunshot wound; drowning (for Strindberg, a fall through the ice while hunting a bear); dehydration; a psychotic episode of murder; suicide using opium; scurvy; trichinosis; Vitamin-A poisoning from eating polar-bear liver; botulism; polar-bear attack; and asphyxiation caused by breathing fumes from a cookstove in a poorly ventilated tent. Murder and suicide are unlikely, since their spirits appear to have held up to the end. They knew about the danger of eating polar-bear liver and avoided it. Andrée's gun was beside him when he was found, so it isn't plausible that a polar bear crept up on him. About twelve years ago, a fingernail found in one of their mittens was tested for lead and turned out to have a lot of it, but not a sufficient amount to kill someone. Three months isn't long enough to die from scurvy. Trichinosis is not likely, because the diaries mention none of the symptoms of a severe infection. Asphyxiation doesn't seem likely, because Andrée had wrapped his first diary in sedge grass (which the men used to insulate their boots) and placed it at his back, against the rock, as if wishing to be sure it was preserved, a gesture that he would be unable to make if he were lapsing abruptly into unconsciousness. Botulism is prevalent in Arctic seals, and might have killed them if they hadn't been able to cook their food properly. The sailors from the Bratvaag, seeing the woollen jerseys and cloth coats that the three men were wearing, decided that they had died of cold and exhaustion.

Early on the afternoon of October 5, 1930, escorted by five destroyers and five airplanes, the remains of the three explorers arrived in Stockholm, on the Svensksund, the ship that had taken them to Danes Island. As it approached the harbor, more and more boats joined it, until there were nearly two hundred in its wake. While the bells in all the churches tolled, the coffins were carried onto a pier built to receive them and laid in the rain at the feet of King Gustaf V, who said, "In the name of the Swedish nation, I here greet the dust of the polar explorers who, more than three decades ago, left their native land to find an answer to questions of unparalleled difficulty."

This past November, I went with a friend to visit their graves, which occupy a hillside in a small park in Northern Cemetery, in a suburb of Stockholm. Pine trees enclose the graves on three sides. At the top of the hill is a monument, about twelve feet tall, designed by one of Strindberg's brothers, Tore, a sculptor. It is in the shape of a sail, set in layers of stone that approximate the prow of a ship cutting the water. Engraved in

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the sail is the route of the explorers' flight and the walk on the ice.

In recent years, as attitudes have changed, Andrée has sometimes been characterized as a man who was willing to lead his younger companions to their deaths if that was the price of fame and accomplishment. This supposition, expressed in a popular Swedish novel called "Flight of the Eagle," by Per Olof Sundman—and in the 1982 film adaptation, starring Max von Sydow as Andrée—is based on the notion, which isn't easily supported, that Andrée knew that he couldn't succeed and was too weak to face the embarrassment, with all the world watching, of either calling off the expedition or sailing over the horizon and landing. Andrée was in early middle age, whereas Strindberg and Fraenkel were young. Fraenkel was not given to introspection. His journal entries are purely scientific. He was chosen to be the pack horse. Strindberg's nature was less hardy; he wept at leaving Stockholm and his fiancée. Andrée was the resolute figure, and they must have trusted that he would see them through. Certainly, there was a romantic element to his thinking, but if he was self-deluded or calculating he agreed to suffer for it. The tone of his journals is that of a man who believes that discipline and character can overcome formidable obstacles, and that such efforts are what great accomplishments require.

An Andrée scholar named Urban Wråkberg defended the explorer in a paper titled "Andrée's Folly: Time for Reappraisal?," published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1999. "The widespread notion that Andrée was an aspiring sensationalist and, intellectually, an isolated dreamer out of touch with the real polar science and technology of his period is distressingly close to the complete opposite to the reality," Wråkberg wrote. Being more engineer than explorer might not have made him the man to lead a trek across the ice.

Among the remnants of the expedition in the Grenna Museum are the clothes the three men were wearing, many of their scientific instruments, and several film cans. Some of the film had been exposed, but ninety-three frames, taken mostly by Strindberg, were developed, although many are only faintly legible. Strindberg had a better than typical eye for composition; he had once won a photography contest. He appears to have stopped taking photographs some time before the end (there is a drawing of the ice house, for example, but no photograph), unless those photographs are among the film that was exposed.

One photograph shows Fraenkel and Andrée standing over a shot polar bear. The camera had a time exposure, so Strindberg was able to take a picture of the three of them trying to force a sledge through a gap in the ice. There is a photograph of an ivory gull nailed to a plank, and of a fork that Andrée made from heavy wire for Fraenkel because the polar-bear meat was often so tough that it bent the forks they had. The most desolate of the photographs was taken on July 14th, when Strindberg walked about a hundred feet off on the ice and pointed the camera at the balloon, which was on its side, with the cab tipped over and Andrée and Fraenkel beside it. The black-and-white and shades of gray in many of the photographs are weak and watery, and the figures insubstantial, leading everyone who sees them to think, They already look like ghosts.

After I got back from Sweden, I wondered what the Swedish Pavilion at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia had looked like, the one where Andrée had been a janitor. When I saw a photograph of it, I was astonished, because it was a building that I have passed nearly every day for almost twenty years. It was among the first prefabricated buildings, designed to replicate a Swedish schoolhouse. After the fair, it was taken down and put up in New York City, in Central Park, on the West Side, near Seventy-ninth Street. For a long time, it was used as a toolshed for the Park's gardener, and then it was a bathroom, until a Swedish-American citizens' organization objected. Now it is the home of a puppet troupe and is called the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre. From the outside, the building probably looks more or less as it did in Philadelphia in 1876—dark stained wood, with a certain amount of fancy saw work along the eaves. One of the two large rooms downstairs is the theatre, and, sitting on a low bench there, it is easy to picture a tall, slender young man sweeping the floor, lost in thoughts about the currents of the air and having no idea how he will die. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

LIVING UP TO YOUR PRIUS

BY BRUCE McCALL

As morally superior citizens of planet Earth, we Prius owners consider it our duty to keep finding new ways to enlighten those eco-heathens who are still floundering in the eco-darkness, even as our cars sometimes fail to decelerate when the brake pedal is depressed, a violation of Newton's third law of motion, caused by global warming. Herewith, some suggestions from the "Things to Do with Your Prius" message board.

Make up a definition of the word "Prius"—for example, "Ancient Greek for making the air so clean you can see the gods frolicking on Mt. Olympus from the island of Rhodes"—and put it on a bumper sticker for your Prius.

Sidle up to an S.U.V. driver at the gas-station counter and make a show of paying for your fill-up from a jar of pennies.

Use your cross-talk minute in this month's Tantric-gardening class to share the word that social anthropologists focussing on the transportation sector recommend heli-dropping new Priuses into the Amazon rain forest, one per tribe, thereby giving these first-generation drivers an eco-savvy head start over those in more developed regions of the world who are still shackled to the total-petroleum mind-set.

Paper local college bulletin boards with copies of the epochal 2008 Vermont Free Sperm Collective study finding that babies conceived in the back seats of Priuses have I.Q.s thirty points higher than those conceived in the back seats of conventional gasoline-powered cars, as recently seen on "Maury."

Take a cell-phone photograph of your spouse washing the new Prius with biodegradable, phosphate-free, ninety-three per cent pure peppermint soap and flash it at the entrance of the next Save the Dandelions banquet. It'll get you free admission plus an extra goody bag.

Send an e-mail to every parent in your school car-pool group, saying that you regret that you cannot allow your child to ride in any vehicle but a Prius for fear that he or she will develop scaly facial and upper-body "Detroit pustules."

At the next Luther Burbank Day vegan barbecue and weed roast, back your Prius up to within a few feet of the folks lounging on the grass, with the engine running, and explain that its super-clean exhaust system is actually freshening the air.

Organize Prius-owner-only Sunday rallies to visit electric power stations, recycling centers, pit-bull rehabilitation facilities, and wind farms, followed by a gourmet brunch of non-processed, sustainably grown raw foods in a leather-free venue.

Challenge all the drivers in your neighborhood to an economy run a hundred times around the block, with first prize being a coupon good for one free colonic. (If you've had a colonic recently, consider donating the prize to your local homeless shelter.) ♦

BRUCE McCALL

PERSONAL HISTORY

GO WEST

Scenes from an American homecoming.

BY PETER HESSLER

The first thing I learned while living abroad is that if you're lost you have to ask for directions. The last thing I learned is that it's possible to ship a hundred and forty-three boxes from Beijing across the Pacific Ocean without a final destination. I've never been good at planning ahead, and this quality became worse after years in China, where everybody seems to live in the moment. And in a country like that it's easy to find a moving agent who's willing to improvise. He went by the English name Wayne, and he wore his hair long, the way Chinese artists often do. When we arranged the contract, Wayne asked my wife, Leslie, if she had any idea where we were going. "It will be a small town, probably in Colorado," she said. "But we haven't decided which one."

"Can you decide within the next few weeks?"

"I think so."

Wayne explained that the shipping container would be on the ocean for much of a month, and there the address wouldn't matter. But after it arrived in the U.S. the American partner would need to know where to deliver it by truck. That was Wayne's deadline: we had to find a home in less than five weeks.

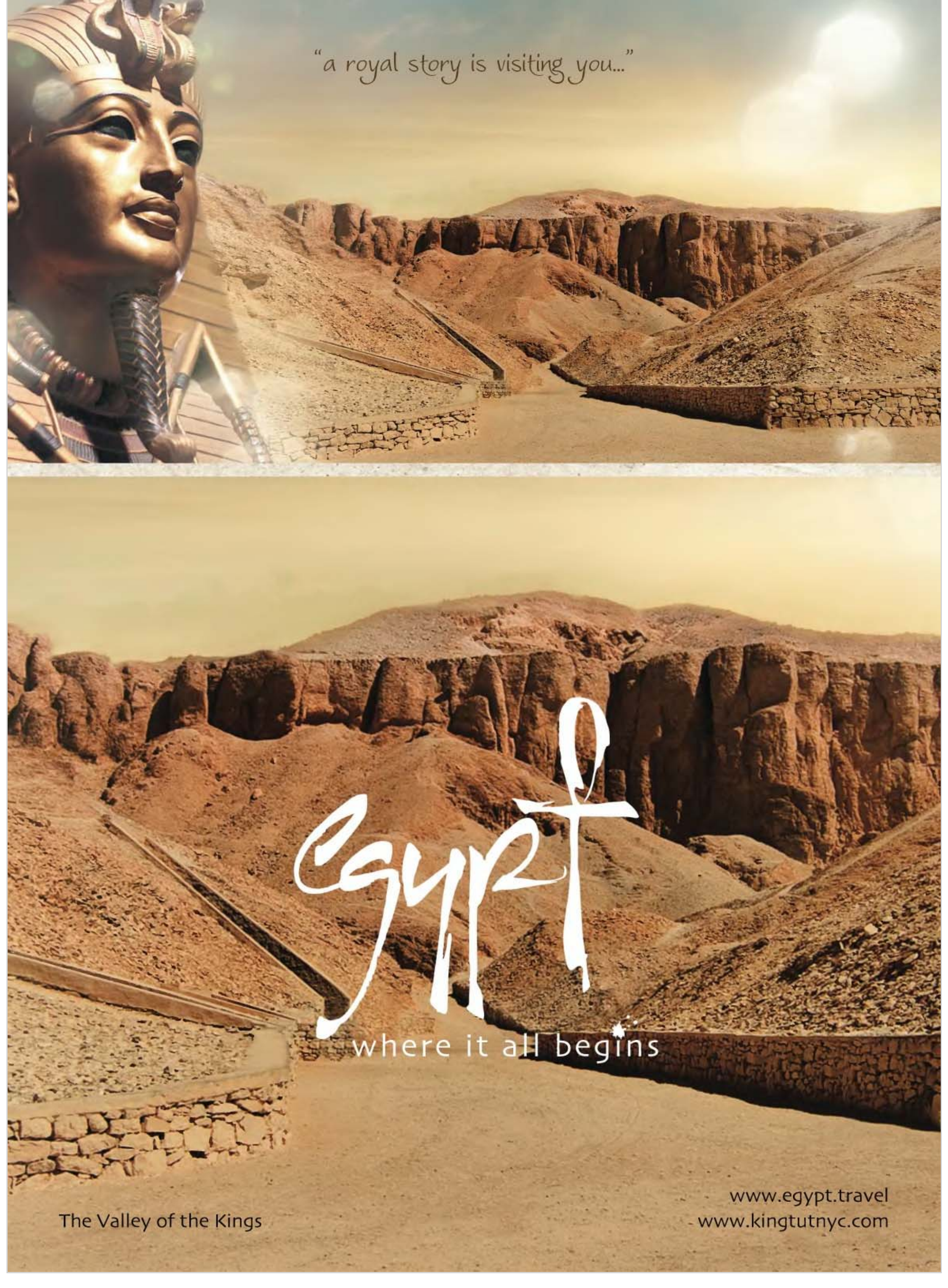
Wayne spent two days in our Beijing apartment, managing the moving crew. It consisted of a dozen men, all dressed in clean blue uniforms and carrying metal box cutters. For each piece of furniture, they sliced big squares of cardboard into a size that custom-fit the object. They'd cut off a piece, fold it neatly around the front legs of a chair, and then do the same for the back and the sides. After the cardboard was all taped together, the result looked like a chair-shaped box. They created boxes around tables, desks, shelves, stools, and couches. They made something that looked like a giant cardboard bed. An antique three-tiered opium table was perfectly enclosed, layer by layer. It was like watching a team of sculptors work backward, until every object we owned had been converted into a larger, rougher version of itself.

A couple of times, I tried to engage the workers in conversation, but their responses were brief and uninviting. They did not allow us to help. If I picked up an object, somebody immediately grabbed it away, smiling and thanking me profusely. "It's better if they do it themselves," Wayne said, and he was right. They packed the shipping container as tight as a jigsaw puzzle, and a truck carted it off into the night. Suddenly I felt wonderful: all our possessions were gone; we could live anywhere we wished. Later that month, Leslie and I set off to find a new home.

Neither of us had much experience as adults in the United States. I had left after college, to attend graduate school in England, and then I travelled to China; before I knew it I had been gone for a decade and a half. I had never held an American job, or owned an American house, or even rented an American apartment. The last time I bought a car, I filled it with leaded gas. My parents still lived in the Missouri town where I grew up, but otherwise nothing tied me to any particular part of the country. Leslie had even fewer American roots: she had been born and brought up in New York, the daughter of Chinese immigrants, and she had made her career as a writer in Shanghai and Beijing.

But during my years in China I had spent a lot of time thinking about the United States. Most Chinese were intensely curious about foreign life, and they liked to ask certain questions. What time is it there? How many children are you allowed to have? How much is a plane ticket

SCOTT MENCHIN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back? People tended to have extreme views of the U.S., both positive and negative, and they became fixated on fantastic details that they had heard. Are American farmers so rich that they use airplanes to plant their crops? Is it true that when elderly parents eat with their adult children the kids give them a bill for the meal, because they aren't as close as Chinese families? When I taught at a college, a student named Sean wrote in an essay:

> I know that persons in America can possess guns from some books and films. I don't know whether it is true. . . . I know that beggars must have bulletproof vest from a book. Is it true? There is a saying about America. If you want to go to heaven, go to America; if you want to go to hell, go to America.

It was hard to respond to such combinations of truth and exaggeration. In the early years, it frustrated me, because without any context I couldn't convey a more nuanced perspective. But eventually I realized that the conversations weren't strictly about me, or even about my home country. In China, I came to think of the United States as essentially imaginary: it was always being created in people's minds, and in that sense it was more personal for them than it was for me. The questions reflected Chinese interests, dreams, and fears—even when people discussed America, the conversation was partly about their home.

The longer I stayed overseas, the more I felt something similar. China became my frame of reference; I tended to think of the U.S. mostly in contrast to what I knew in Asia. And my conception of American life became increasingly open-ended. It was hard to envision myself in any particular place, but that also meant that I could live pretty much anywhere. When Leslie and I decided to leave Beijing, both of us had finished researching books, so our work was portable. We didn't have jobs or children, and we didn't need a long-term home; eventually, we'd probably end up overseas again. And, after years of standing out as a foreigner in urban China, I liked the idea of rural solitude and anonymity. A small town in the Rocky Mountains where nobody knew us—that was our own Chinese version of the American Dream.

We bought a used Toyota, put a cooler in the back, and followed two-lane highways around Colorado. It was late March and the snow was still deep in the mountains; some of the high passes were closed. At night, we stayed in cheap hotels, and during the day we talked to real-estate agents, who rarely had much to show us. We hadn't realized that middle-class Americans almost never rent their houses; this was before the subprime-mortgage crash and it was easy to buy. In the town of Leadville, an old silver-mining community with a population of less than three thousand, I asked an agent if she had anything for rent. "Do you qualify for HUD?" she asked. I said I was pretty sure we didn't; she suggested a mobile home. The only house we saw for rent was a white prefab situated about twenty feet from Highway 24. It was occupied by a pack of molybdenum miners, but the real-estate agent assured us that the men would be moving out soon; she could put us on a waiting list. Leadville was preparing to open up some mines again, largely because of demand from China. We took a glance at the house and kept driving.

I liked the big bright landscapes, the way the mountains caught the alpenglow in late afternoon, and I liked the heavy-named towns that sat in the valleys: Granite, Bedrock, Sawpit, Crested Butte. In southwestern Colorado, we followed the Uncompahgre River for miles; just seeing that name on a sign made me happy. Not far from the river, a man showed us a brand-new house that sat on an alkali flat. The white soil was as dazzling as broken glass; the thought of writing a book there gave me a headache. Whenever we did find houses for rent, they were usually misfits, with design flaws or poor locations. Sometimes I sensed that we had arrived in the wake of a disaster. Divorces, deaths, bankruptcies—I imagined that was why big houses skidded onto the rental market in small towns.

In a place called Ridgway, we phoned a real-estate agency and happened to talk with a young office manager who had just broken up with her boyfriend. He had left her with the lease on a brand-new house; she hoped to move to Denver and start over. The place was beautiful: high on a mesa, a thousand feet above the Uncompahgre River. From the back, we couldn't see any other houses; the view ran clear across a piñon forest to the fluted walls of the Cimarron Range. Ridgway isn't far from the borders with Utah and New Mexico, and it's home to a little more than seven hundred people. There's only one stoplight in the county. It was hard to imagine anyplace more different from Beijing, and we agreed on the spot to a one-year lease.

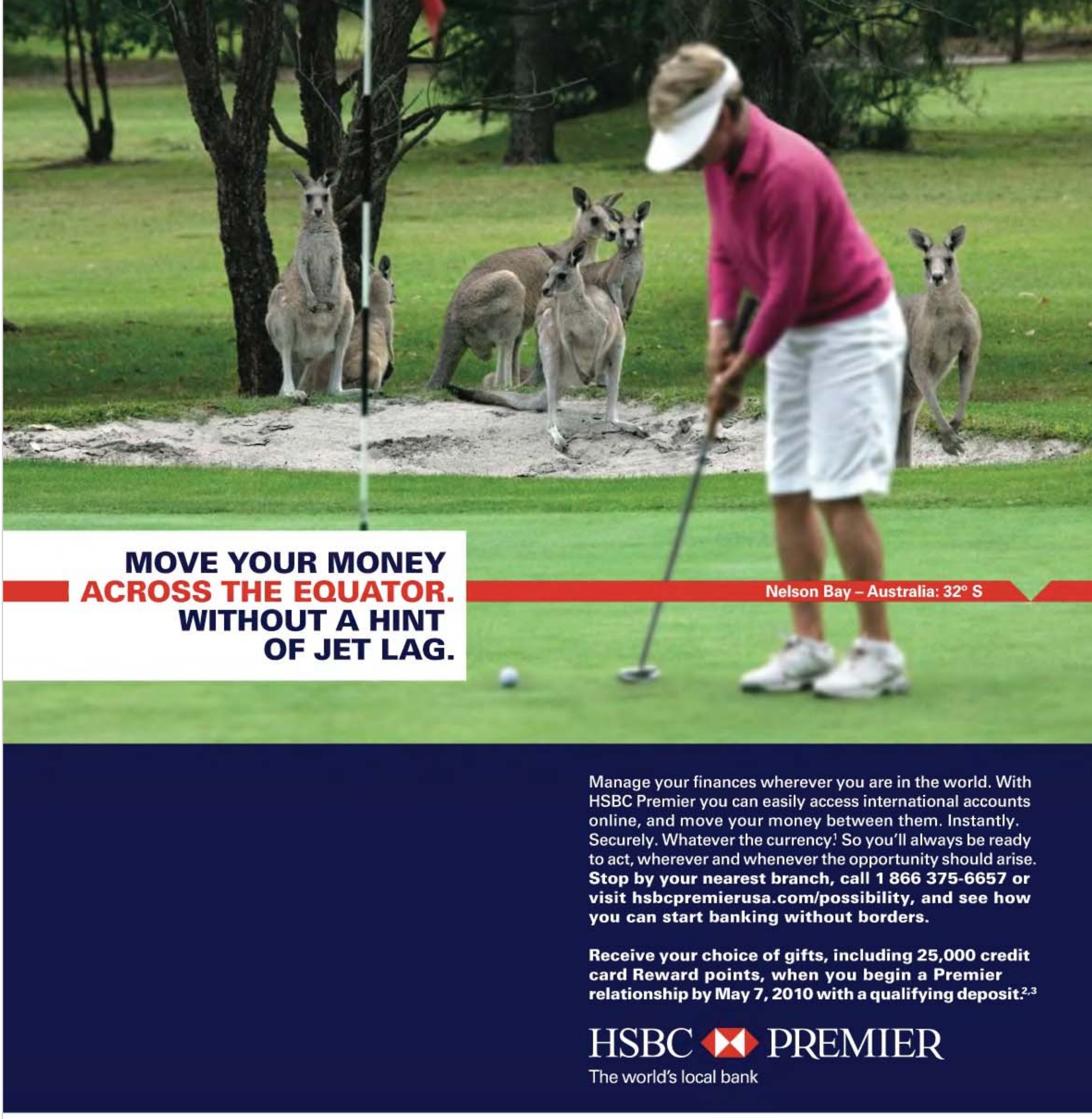
We bought a futon and some lawn furniture, and camped out on the floor to wait for our shipping container. One afternoon, we drove into the town of Montrose, where we found a couple of wooden bookshelves at an antique market. The dealer agreed to split the delivery fee: we'd pay the first ten dollars and she'd cover the rest. She telephoned her son, who owned a pickup truck. "Twenty-five?" I heard her say. "That's too much. How about twenty?" My Chinese students would have appreciated that detail—less than a month back in the States and already I'd witnessed an elderly parent negotiating with her adult child about money.

In the empty house, I signed up for telephone service. When I asked for an unlisted number, the phone-company representative said that there would be an extra fee of two dollars per month. For a moment, I weighed my cheapness against the desire for anonymity. "Put it under my wife's name, instead," I said. "Her name is Leslie Chang."

I figured that hers was a relatively common name, but I hadn't thought about how the phone-book listing would appear, with me attached: "Chang Peter and Leslie." Immediately the mail began to arrive:

> Dear Mr. Peter Chang,
> You love saving money. Better yet, you love saving money and getting better service. So why haven't you switched phone companies?

Leslie and I almost never got anything. Peter Chang was the one, and in the early months he received much of our mail. Credit-card and phone companies sent flyers, as did car dealerships. Peter Chang received advertisements in Korean Hangul and in traditional Chinese characters. People called at night speaking exotic languages. The Koreans hung up as soon as they realized we didn't understand, but we



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always tried to keep Chinese telemarketers on the line, to figure out where they were calling from. Who trolled through rural-Colorado phone listings in search of Asian names?

For the most part, the callers seemed to be lonely individuals selling long-distance phone cards. But every once in a while a Chinese telemarketer offered something different, and one evening Leslie answered the phone and heard a woman give a pitch for a vacation spot in Wai Er Ming. I listened in, although at first neither of us could make sense of the name. "Wai Er Ming?" Leslie said. "Where is that?"

The caller explained that Wai Er Ming is in the American West, land of cowboys and mountains; the air is fresh and clean. It was like staring at a puzzle for a few seconds until a pattern suddenly becomes obvious, and you can't believe you ever missed it: Wy O Ming.

"Where are you calling from?" Leslie asked. "Are you from the mainland?"

There was a pause. "Our company is from Hong Kong. But we do tours in Wai Er Ming."

"I don't believe you're a Hong Kong company," Leslie said. "A Hong Kong company wouldn't call random people like this. Also, you don't sound like somebody from Hong Kong. Where on the mainland are you from?"

The woman's voice, on the phone, became very small. "I'm supposed to say we're from Hong Kong," she said. "I can't tell you anything else." Afterward, I sometimes found myself repeating the word, just to hear the sound. It had a certain magic, half strange and half familiar: *Wai Er Ming, Wai Er Ming, Wai Er Ming.*

The shipping container arrived late. The Denver movers had scheduled delivery for noon on a Tuesday, but their truck got stuck in snow on Monarch Pass, and then they suffered a mechanical failure. In our driveway, they backed into a piñon tree and knocked off a few limbs. When the driver realized that he didn't have the key to the container's Chinese-customs lock, he grabbed a heavy decoupling tool. He grinned and said, "Give a redneck something to hit with and he'll get it done."

American friends who had moved back from Beijing had warned us about the feeling you get when your possessions arrive. It's similar to taking a new baby home from the hospital: all at once you're on your own. In Ridgway, Wayne's dozen Chinese movers became two Americans named James and Greg. They did not wear uniforms, and they did not move efficiently. They did not protest when Leslie and I offered to help. After James successfully smashed the customs lock, both of them stood in awed silence before the open container.

"I've never seen anything like this," James said finally. "I'll have to tell people about this."

During the rest of the afternoon, while we hauled boxes inside, James and Greg periodically examined the Chinese handiwork. At one point, I found both of them crouched in the driveway, studying a table that was completely enclosed in card-

I HAVE DAUGHTERS AND I HAVE SONS

1.
Who is out there at 6 A.M.? The man
Throwing newspapers onto the porch,
And the roaming souls suddenly
Drawn down into their sleeping bodies.

2.
Wild words of Jacob Boehme
Go on praising the human body,
But heavy words of the ascetics
Sway in the fall gales.

3.
Do I have a right to my poems?
To my jokes? To my loves?
Oh foolish man, knowing nothing—
Less than nothing—about desire.

4.
I have daughters and I have sons.
When one of them lays a hand
On my shoulder, shining fish
Turn suddenly in the deep sea.

5.
At this age, I especially love dawn
On the sea, stars above the trees,
Pages in "The Threefold Life,"
And the pale faces of baby mice.

6.
Perhaps our life is made of struts
And paper, like those early
Wright Brothers planes. Neighbors
Run along holding the wingtips.

7.
I've always loved Yeats's fierceness
As he jumped into a poem,
And that lovely calm in my father's
Hands as he buttoned his coat.

—*Robert Bly*

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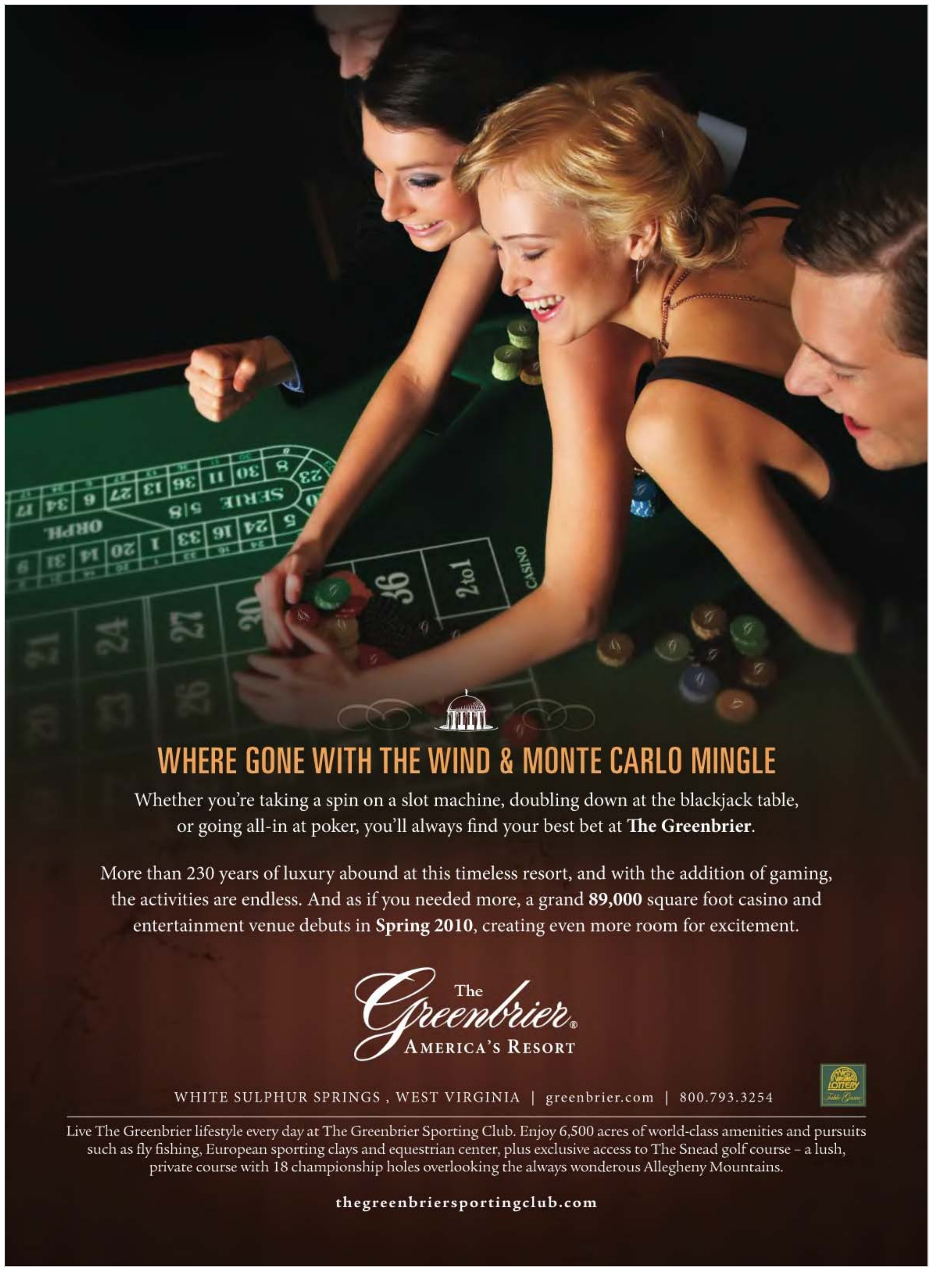
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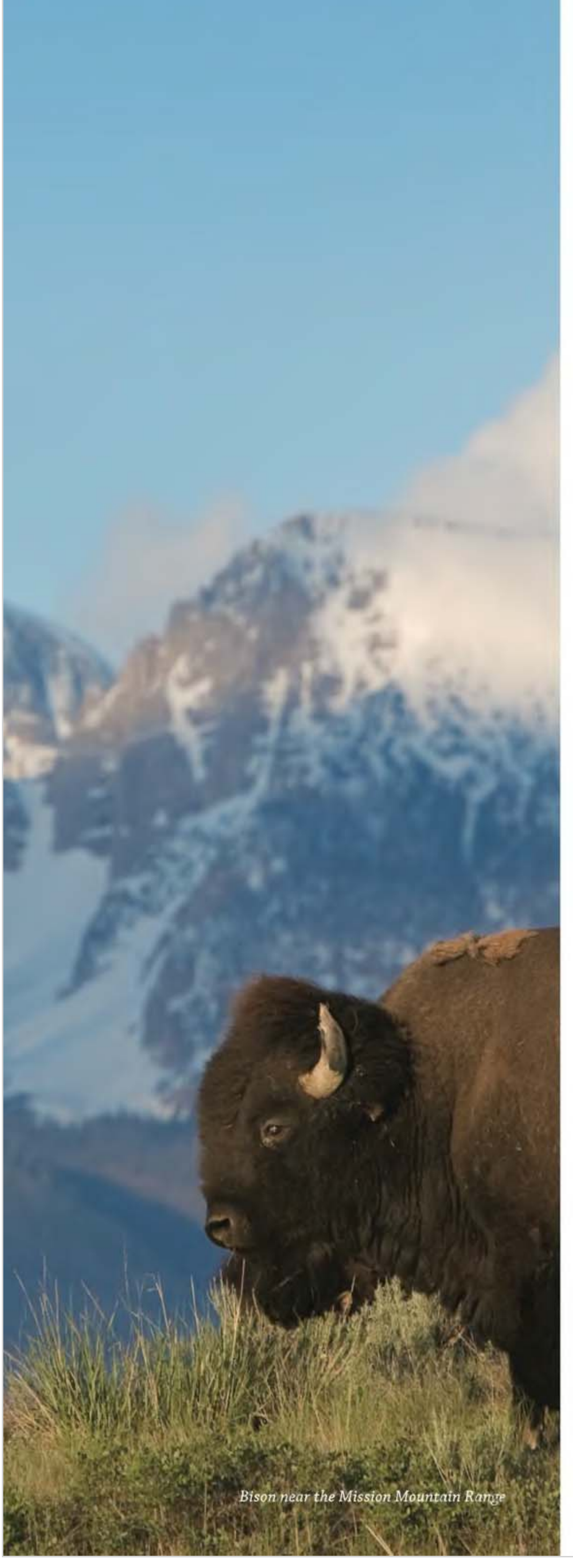
Bison near the Mission Mountain Range

Special Advertising Section MONTANA

IN MONTANA, THERE'S NOTHING BETWEEN ME AND WHERE I WANT TO GO. by Mark Costler

"In Montana," says novelist, essayist and critic Walter Kirn, who wrote the novel-turned-film *Up in the Air*, "there's nothing between me and where I want to go. It's not just the big horizons, it's that there's nothing blocking you from reaching those horizons."

Kirn, who has lived in Montana for 20 years, wrote *Up in the Air* in a cabin tucked against the Crazy Mountains. "Montana," he says, is "big outside and it makes you feel big inside. I can see farther and I can imagine further. Montana is one of the last best places to actually feel your own imagination working without the intrusions of a million others."

"I work with words and words are easily crowded out in the hurly-burly of modern American life, but they still mean something here—whether it's somebody promising to do something or just street corner conversations. Those conversations sound a bit more vibrant and distinct somehow."

Kirn is tapping into the organic connection between Montana's vast, sweeping landscape and a clarity of interior spaces that has attracted and anchored a parade of writers—Richard Ford, Richard Hugo, Annick Smith, Thomas McGuane, William Stafford, Judy Blunt, Bill Kittredge, Maile Meloy, Jim Harrison, Debra Magpie Earling, Ivan Doig, Jim Welch, Norman Maclean. They came—or stayed—to feel the grandeur of open space. They found the sense of wonder that can only exist in a land so close to its untamed past.

That's the thing about Montana—you come up over a ridge or drive downhill into a cluster of warm lights, and there it is: nothing you've ever seen before. Maybe it's a herd of bison grazing beside a steaming fumarole in America's oldest national park, or a wolf trotting along a sinuous thread of blue stream. Maybe it's a buffalo jump, where pre-contact Native Americans made possible an entire way of life. Maybe you crest a rise and suddenly see five different mountain ranges, blue and unknowable, marching toward different wild horizons. Maybe the rodeo's in town.

In Montana, the sweep and scope of the landscape, the abundance of wildlife and the tactile nearness of history don't just feed your mind with new images, they provoke new ways of imagining. These are moments that begin to change the way you see the world. You can't schedule them, but Montana allows them to happen.

Alex Smith will be trying to capture just those moments this summer when he co-directs, with his brother Andrew, the film version of *Winter in the Blood*, Jim Welch's wrenching and redemptive novel about life on one of Montana's seven Indian reservations.

"We're going to have a separate camera to capture the magic of the moment," Smith says. "I want to get more of the impressionistic quality of any given day in Montana."

Having grown up in the state, Smith understands intuitively that sense of expectancy. "People here are game. They're up for an adventure, because that is by definition what's going to happen if you head out the door. That's why we're determined to shoot the movie in Montana, because of that expectancy of adventure that's everywhere. I think there's real value in knowing that if I go on a little stroll it's guaranteed to have surprises."

It's this interaction with the land, Smith says, that allows Montanans to soar over barriers that, in our busy lives, separate inner and outer spaces.

"You're dwarfed by the landscape so you can actually become part of it easier. It's not all about humanity; there aren't humans everywhere you look. It's not about ideas, or interactions or body language or negotiations. It's quieter. You don't have to shout to be heard. You can hear the day."

Judy Blunt, whose prize-winning memoir *Breaking Clean* is a hymn to her painful separation from the enormous landscape of her youth in Eastern Montana—where the stars come down to all the horizons—says that learning to hear quietness is the true gift of the land.

"Some people are looking for a place to be quiet. Montana is where that possibility is absolutely alive, the same as it was for the first homesteaders. We haven't commodified it. For people who are willing to set aside common pleasures—things like margaritas on the beach—and find something that is at heart an American experience—a Native American experience, an early American experience—it's certainly more essentially American than they're going to find anywhere else," says Blunt.

"There's something about those open spaces that allows for an expansion of the soul. People who live here look out at the land and see something that's full and ripe. If you are willing to see beyond what you are trained to see, coming here can be a life-changing experience."

Montana's vast landscapes are full of small places that hold a piece of someone's heart. Mountain lakes with cool, reflective surfaces. Glacier-fed streams laced with cutthroat trout, pouring from hanging valleys that feel like a secret every time you find one. A restaurant in the deep blue glow of the highway lights, where warm huckleberry pie starts to melt the homemade ice cream on the plate beside it. Coming into a place like this, you can't imagine what will reveal itself to you. You won't know until you're in the middle of it.

Debra Magpie Earling, who wrote the acclaimed novel *Perma Red*, found one such place after hearing about it from friends. "I didn't know there were petroglyphs that could only be seen from Flathead Lake, but I heard about them," Earling says. "So we got on a pontoon boat and headed across the lake toward the area where we heard the petroglyphs were. Rising above us were red cliffs and you could see these old stories on the wall. They were so beautiful that I jumped in and swam to them. For me that's Montana, those pictographs and petroglyphs. People who have been here for centuries marked the land with stories. It's beyond magic. It's mysterious and wondrous. It's the stuff of legends."

Earling finds those moments of sudden awareness not only on the land, but also in its people. "One of the most interesting things about Montana are the pockets of intellectual communities throughout the state. You have people who are real maritime sailors in Polson on Flathead Lake. You have the cowboy intellectuals who are old-time historians. There are the elders who tell the old stories, and people on the reservations who preserve the languages of a different time."

From downtown Livingston, Paradise Valley leads on to Yellowstone National Park.

The mistake would be to assume Montana is all rough-and-tumble, that revelations only appear on a hike to some distant horizon. For a land that moves to rhythms as ancient as hoofbeats and the howls of wolves, "Montana has become a pretty sophisticated place," Kirn says. "When you want a little urban fix, when you want that which can only be had in a sophisticated setting, you're never that far from it. But you're

Sunset in Glacier National Park

never so close to it that it's reaching out to claim you when you don't want it to."

The state's remarkable human element, a mosaic of micro-cultures—Native American tribes; the Irish, Italian and Finnish mining conclaves of Butte; Hutterite farm colonies; the true open range cattle culture of Miles City; western Montana's woodsmen and -women—has, through a shared sense of struggle against often fiercely indifferent weather and terrain, managed to remain at the same time both individualistic *and* cooperative.

"I can pull in to any tavern or gas station anywhere in Montana and, with a basic code of politeness and fundamental human etiquette, make friends, find out what's going on, hear stories," Kirn says. "That's to me the paradox of Montana. It's a vast state that allows you to have life-sized experiences, one-on-one conversations, intimate encounters with your fellow passenger in the car as you drive to Glacier Park, walks down Main Street in which you can feel the whole history of a town."

Blackfeet tepees at Saint Mary Lake, Glacier National Park

Montana captivates the imagination of remarkably imaginative people—writers, yes, but actors, directors, musicians, painters, sculptors—not because of what's so obviously here or not here. Rather, creative people keep finding themselves amid unplanned moments of clarity that resound through their lives.

Hear it in William Stafford's poem "Once in the 40's"—hear the pure longing he feels for one of those moments, many years before, when he understood something about himself, in Montana:

> We were alone one night on a long
> road in Montana. This was in winter, a big
> night, far to the stars. We had hitched,
> my wife and I, and left our ride at
> a crossing to go on. Tired and cold—but
> brave—we trudged along. This, we said,
> was our life, watched over, allowed to go
> where we wanted. We said we'd come back some time
> when we got rich. We'd leave the others and find
> a night like this, whatever we had to give,
> and no matter how far, to be so happy again.

It's one thing to read other people sharing these moments, but to truly understand them, you have to put yourself in someplace like Glacier Country and see what happens.

In Glacier Country—the swath of Montana lying west of the continental divide, from the Canadian border in the north to the Bitterroot Valley in the south—rivers are born of towering peaks raking snow from the sky and powered by steep ravines tilting into broad valleys. The Blackfeet call the mountains of the Continental Divide in and around Glacier National Park "the backbone of the world." The road that delivers you to its summit is called Going-to-the-Sun, because it does. When you walk beneath razor ridges to a lake blued by glacial melt, past mountain goats or bighorn sheep grazing

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casually in a meadow of shooting stars and glacier lilies, the timeless state of grace you see all around you is exactly what fueled the Blackfeet's vision.

If Glacier's landscape is sudden and powerful, the clear lapping waters of Flathead Lake, only a few miles away, tell more subtle stories of light and space with their calming waltz. These old tales underlie all the new ones—the arc of a well-struck golf ball against a backdrop of Swan mountain peaks, the zing of a fishing reel announcing a connection to a living, livid creature on the other end of the line.

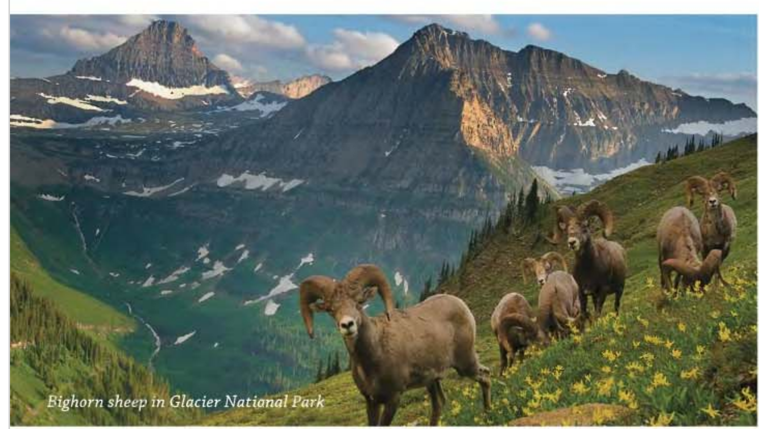
In Whitefish, a ski town and summer playground just a short drive from Glacier, people are more likely to ask you what you've seen than where you're from. Off-the-boat quality sushi can serve as a prelude to flights of fine wine, topped off by an evening of acoustic finger-picking under the stars. In gourmet coffee shops you mingle with local shop owners, park rangers and river guides jump-starting their days; if you prefer ranch-style flapjacks and bacon and eggs, you'll be sitting with a convivial clutch of locals for that, too.

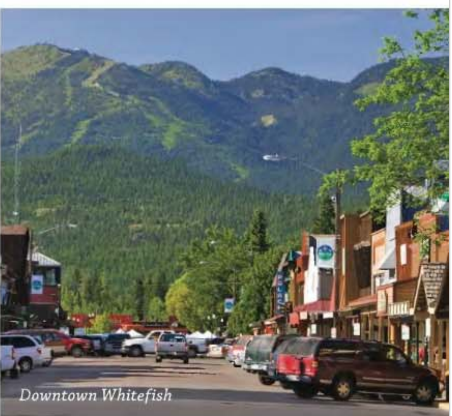
Broadway talent in one of the northern Rockies' most beautiful theaters, fine art shops next to the hardware store—downtown Whitefish looks like it feels, as if the town stepped directly from the early 20th century complete with a skate park, trail systems, wi-fi, an aquatic center and every other early 21st-century convenience. Fifty area hotels meet lodging preferences from posh to quaint. An historic train depot welcomes daily Amtrak service from both coasts and everywhere in between.

Farther south, bison graze ridges, still coexisting with the Salish and Kootenai tribes. In Missoula, the person next to you at the tavern may be a nationally recognized wildfire expert, a poet or a cutting-edge outdoor athlete. The Bitterroot mountains form a colonnade of blue peaks marching to the south. Deep woods, open valleys and cold streams all lie within minutes of a string of B&Bs, lodges, inns and hotels.

When you visit Whitefish, or anywhere in Glacier Country, stand at the outskirts of town and look around. You'll begin to see what Walter Kirn means—there really is nothing between you and where you want to go. And you can begin to understand why this much nothing is really something.

WHITEFISH: ExploreWhitefish.com, 877.862.3548
GLACIER COUNTRY: GlacierMT.com, 800.338.5072
THE STATE OF MONTANA: VISITMT.com, 800.847.4868


Bighorn sheep in Glacier National Park


Downtown Whitefish

Few states have their own literature; Montana's runs broad and deep, reaching far beyond familiar titles like The Big Sky, The Horse Whisperer *and* A River Runs Through It *and into the lives of its people. Take Glacier Country, for instance, a section of the state that includes the Blackfoot and Bitterroot Rivers, five ski resorts, the Flathead and Blackfeet Indian Reservations, the Seeley-Swan Valley's chain of lakes, and the Crown of the Continent, Glacier National Park. The selected readings that follow are a mere sampling of stories that allow you to anticipate the richness of experiences waiting in Montana:*

NONFICTION

Indian Creek Chronicles – Pete Fromm
Tough Trip Through Paradise – Andrew Garcia
One Good Horse – Tom Groneberg

HISTORY

Blackfeet Lodge Tales – George Bird Grinnell
Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome – Joseph Kinsey Howard
Montana, An Uncommon Land – K. Ross Toole

FICTION

Bitterroot – James Lee Burke
Perma Red – Debra Magpie Earling
Pale Morning Done – Jeff Hull

POETRY

Good Enough – Victor Charlo
The Lady In Kicking Horse Reservoir – Richard Hugo
Suddenly, Out of a Long Sleep – Lowell Jaeger

board. "They put us to shame," James said, shaking his head. "This is amazing."

Each box had a number and a label, and James called them out as he went, so that Leslie could check off everything on a list. Between boxes, he carried on a running commentary about his Louisiana upbringing, the seven children he and his wife were homeschooling, and the things he had learned in his former life as a long-distance trucker. He said that he spent thousands of dollars every year on books, and he told stories about all kinds of topics: trucker fuelling strategies, tree nurseries, chicken farms. "They got them on so many drugs nowadays," he said. "I had a friend who worked at a chicken plant, and from the time they're born to the time they're processed it takes eighteen days. Eighteen days! It used to take months. There was one woman who worked there injecting the chickens, and she'd prick herself occasionally by mistake. She got lupus and there was hair growing out of her face. That's why I don't eat chickens anymore. This is box No. 94—office files."

The last thing to be unpacked was our bed, which Leslie had found years ago in a Shanghai antique market. It had a canopy that consisted of eighteen separate pieces, all carved from elm wood, with intricate scrollwork depicting flowers, human figures, and Buddhist icons. The canopy had no screws, no bolts—only wooden notches and fittings. It had to be assembled in a specific order. We began with one post and worked our way clockwise, with each person supporting a side until the whole thing balanced perfectly. Night had fallen, and the darkness gave the scene a certain intimacy: Leslie and me, James and Greg, all of us together on an early-Republican-era canopy bed, surrounded by carved lotus flowers and bodhisattvas and interlocking infinity symbols. After the canopy stood erect in all its glory, James spent a minute studying the fittings. "It's so well designed!" he said. They had six hours of mountain driving back to Denver, but James was cheerful to the end. He shook my hand and wished me good luck; he seemed happy to have another story for the road.

It wasn't until I moved back to the States that I realized how much I had missed the way Americans talk, especially in small towns. I liked the pacing of their stories, and I liked being able to pick up the nuances of the language. Once when I visited my parents in Missouri, I took a shuttle bus from the airport, and the driver was a South Carolinian with a huge white beard that tumbled across his chest like a snowdrift. I told him I had been in China until recently.

"Do you speak mandolin?" he asked.

My accent doesn't sound that nice, but I said yes anyway.

"I read a statistic somewhere," he said. "I don't know where, but it said the Chinese could march four abreast into the ocean for all eternity."

The driver talked non-stop for a hundred and twenty miles. He told stories about his ex-wife, and he described his studies of Biblical Hebrew; he had strong opinions about the Book of Daniel. Nowadays, he lived in a trailer court, but during the nineteen-sixties he had travelled to France, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. "I had a rich uncle who took me there."

"Wow, that must have been nice," I said. "What did your uncle do?"

"That was Uncle Sam."

People in China never talked like that. They didn't like to be the center of attention, and they took little pleasure in narrative. They rarely lingered on interesting details. It wasn't an issue of wanting to be quiet; in fact, most Chinese could talk your ear off about things like food and money and weather, and they loved to ask foreigners questions. But they avoided personal topics, and as a writer I learned that it could take months before an interview subject opened up. Probably it was natural in a culture where people live in such close contact, and where everything revolves around the family or some other group.

And a Chinese person with options would never choose to live in a place like southwestern Colorado. The American appetite for loneliness impressed me, and there was something about this solitude that freed conversation. One night at a bar, I met a man, and within five minutes he explained that he had just been released from prison. Another drinker told me that his wife had passed away, and he had recently suffered a heart attack, and now he hoped that he would die within the year. I learned that there's no reliable small talk in America; at any moment a conversation can become personal. When I had DirecTV installed, a technician came over to drill a hole in the side of the house. He commented that he had just moved to a town called Delta, and I asked him what it was like.

"Quiet," he said. "Not much going on in Delta."

"Why did you move there?"

He looked up from the drill. He was a skinny man in his twenties, with blue-line tattoos that ran along his arms like wayward veins. "I had a two-month-old son who died," he said slowly. "That was in Denver, and I just had to get out. So I moved to Delta."

It took me a moment to respond. "I'm really sorry about that," I said. "It sounds awful."

I didn't know what else to say; in the States, I often had trouble responding to personal stories. But soon I realized that it didn't make much difference what I said. Many Americans were great talkers, but they didn't like to listen. If I told somebody in a small town that I had lived overseas for fifteen years, the initial response was invariably the same: "Were you in the military?" After that, people had few questions. Leslie and I learned that the most effective way to kill our end of a conversation was to say that we were writers who had lived in China for more than a decade.

At times, the lack of curiosity depressed me. I remembered all those questions in China, where even uneducated people wanted to hear something about the outside world, and I wondered why Americans weren't the same. But it was also true that many Chinese had impressed me as virtually uninterested in themselves or their communities. That was one of the main contrasts with Americans, who constantly created stories about themselves and the places where they lived. In a small town, people asked very little of an outsider—really, all you had to do was listen.

Sometimes that role made me feel like a foreigner or an impostor, but there was something comforting about the sense of narrative. It had defined my culture since childhood: even if I was no longer part of the local story, I still understood the way people told it. I liked listening, and I found myself drawn to community events where I could sit in the crowd and watch. Leslie and I went to rodeos and quarter-horse races, where local ranchers com-

peted along with professionals. In the autumn, we attended football games at nearby high schools. We followed tiny Olathe High through a state-championship season, and we went to the victory parade that was held on Olathe's main street. The players rode atop fire trucks to the end of the road, where they did a U-turn and came back, so everybody in town had a chance to cheer twice.

One weekend in June, we attended a religious rally called "Cowboy Up for Christ." It was held at the start of rodeo season, and the organizers gave out free copies of "The Way for Cowboys," which featured Christian-themed tales from competitive rodeo riders. One speaker was a country musician named Morris Mott, who talked about growing up in a dysfunctional family. "When I was sixteen, my personal history met up with His story, the story of Jesus Christ," he said. He explained how he had created a different life for himself, and he said that his faith had helped him cope with the near-death of his child. Mott had a slow, confident way of talking, and the crowd of two hundred fell silent. "An individual with a story is on a higher ground than an individual with an argument," Mott said. "Your story is a powerful weapon you can use, not only against your enemies but also to bring other people into the light."

In a span of six months I lost thirty pounds. Many years earlier, I had been a competitive long-distance runner, but in Beijing, where the air is badly polluted, I let the hobby go. I picked it up again in Ridgway, where my home was at an elevation of eight thousand feet, with trails heading off in all directions across the mesa. On runs, I looked for deer and elk and turkeys; twice I saw mountain lions. I was surprised to find that I could still run eight or nine miles at a stretch, and soon a lightness returned to my legs.

I came to think of this as Peter Chang's healthy period. By now, his mail was dominated by glossy Chinese flyers for ginseng products—Prince Gold Heart Formula, Pure American Ginseng Powder—all of them coming from a company called Prince of Peace Enterprises, in Wausau, Wisconsin. Peter Chang also got regular mailings from Korean Air. A company called Hellman Motors sent a check for two thousand and seventy-eight dollars, along with a letter:

> Attention Peter Chang:
> This Official Notice confirms that you have been selected as a GUARANTEED WINNER in a marketing test for the major automobile companies. This is NOT a joke, prank or gimmick.

I liked it when people pleaded with Peter Chang to accept their money. I imagined him as a lone wolf, a figure of international mystery, and I enjoyed taking his calls. One evening, the phone rang just as Leslie and I were returning from dinner in town.

"It's for Peter Chang," Leslie said, after she answered it. "It's a woman. I think she says she's from the National Light Bulb Association."

"What the hell is the National Light Bulb Association?"

"How should I know? Should I just hang up?"

But I decided to hear this one out. The connection was poor, and the woman said something about a one-question poll that would follow a recorded message from Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice-president of the association. The message began with an angry voice, and I thought, Man, this French guy seems awfully worked up about light bulbs. Then it dawned on me that we had confused the words "light bulb" with "rifle." The N.R.A. was doing a push poll, working the wilds of southwestern Colorado by phone.

LaPierre explained that the United Nations was trying to pass the strictest gun-control treaty in history. Third World dictators were urging the law forward; it was also supported by liberal American officials and the media élite. After the message, a man got on the phone.

"Mr. Chang," he said, "what's your opinion about these Third World dictators and Hillary Clinton trying to ban firearms in the United States?"

"I'm in favor of it."

"You're in favor of what?"

"I'm in favor of them banning guns," I said. "You have to understand, I'm from one of those Third World dictatorships. I'm from China. I don't think people should have too much freedom."

There was a long pause. "Well," he said, "I appreciate your honesty."

"What did you think I was going to say? If you call anybody named Chang, he's going to say the same thing. We all feel the same way about this. We're all coming from China, and we don't want guns."

"O.K.," he said. "I understand what you're saying."

"We want a more powerful government, like we have in China."

"Well," he said politely, "thanks for answering." He lingered on the line; he didn't seem to know how to disengage himself. At last, I said goodbye and hung up, and Peter Chang took the rest of the night off.

After nearly nine months in the United States, Leslie and I took a road trip to Las Vegas. It seemed like the final act of our homecoming, and we arrived in time for the city's combined marathon and half marathon. Having attended so many rodeos and football games, I decided to make my own return to athletic competition, so I signed up for the half marathon.

The race began before dawn, in front of the Mandalay Bay resort, and the mob of seventeen thousand runners headed straight up the Las Vegas Strip. In a rush, we passed the neon-lit Luxor, the Tropicana, and the MGM Grand, and some of the all-night gamblers came outside to cheer. After a couple of miles, I slipped into a faster rhythm; it felt easy, because I had been training at altitude. Soon the race thinned out, and by mile six I led a pack of a few runners, with the next group about fifty yards ahead.

There were professionals in the marathon, Africans and Europeans chasing a forty-five-thousand-dollar prize, and they had gone out fast. I knew that somewhere around six miles the half marathoners were supposed to turn off, but I couldn't see anybody up ahead making the break. Finally, I shouted at a bystander in a race-volunteer shirt, "Where are we supposed to turn for the half?"

"Right here," he said.

I skidded to a stop. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah," he said. "You're supposed to go up that street."

The volunteer hadn't been paying attention; he was simply watching the runners go by. But I followed his directions, and not far ahead of me a policeman pulled away from the curb and rolled his lights. And that was when I

realized it was the pace car, and I was the leader, and there were more than eight thousand runners following me.

Even when I was young, I had never been good enough to lead a big race. Occasionally, I had won events whose entrants numbered in the hundreds, but anything larger was guaranteed to have athletes who were much better than me. And I knew that today the faster runners were still out there; they had simply missed the turn. If they figured it out quickly, and got back to the course, they'd chase me down without any problem. I promised myself not to look back until mile ten.

In China, I had often dreamed of silence and solitude, but there's nothing quite like the loneliness of leading a race. Usually, the sport feels visual; you pick out landmarks and athletes up ahead, using them as goals. But when you're in front it's all about sound: your breathing becomes distinct, and so does the rhythm of your stride. You listen for footsteps behind you. When a bystander cheers and then goes silent, you count the seconds until his voice sounds for the next runner.

And I had never imagined how quiet Las Vegas could be. The race continued a few blocks west of the Strip, where the bright lights disappeared and the neighborhood became seedy; I ran by the Las Vegas Community Corrections Center and the Erotic Heritage Museum. I saw a homeless man pushing a shopping cart. He grinned, and shouted, "Hey, dude, you're winning!" Rock bands had set up stages along the course, and the musicians were still tuning their instruments. Often, they didn't notice me until I was almost past, and they'd try to play something quickly for my benefit. I'd hear the music behind me, growing fainter, until once again I was alone with my footsteps and my breathing.

At the ten-mile mark, I looked back and saw nobody. Soon I was on Frank Sinatra Boulevard, running past the service entrances of the big casinos, and then I reached the finish line, in front of the Mandalay Bay. A crowd cheered as I broke the tape; the race director shook my hand. Fifteen minutes later, a Las Vegas television station conducted a live interview with me, along with the winner of the women's race and the first Elvis to finish—a hundred and fifty competitors had entered the race dressed as Elvis. The fastest one stood proudly with me on TV, dressed in a white Lycra bodysuit with paste-on sideburns, sweating like the King in concert.

Leslie and I were ushered inside a special V.I.P. tent, where we helped ourselves to the breakfast buffet while waiting for the professionals to finish the marathon. One by one, they limped in, mostly Kenyans and Ethiopians with big thighs and whippet-thin calves. They had the haunted look that comes at the end of a long race: gaunt cheeks, empty stares. In the buffet line, a Russian runner looked at me quizzically. "Did you run the race?" she said.

I told her I had won the half marathon.

"You don't look very tired," she said. "You don't look like you ran at all."

She was right—I obviously didn't belong with these athletes. Mine was by far the slowest winning time in the fourteen-year history of the race, and I learned that the lost leaders hadn't realized their mistake until they were already miles off course. (In true Vegas style, a limo took them to the finish line.) The race director assured me that there would be an awards ceremony, but, as the morning dragged on, I felt more and more like an impostor sitting in the V.I.P. tent. Finally, Leslie and I grabbed a couple of croissants for the road and slipped out.

I never received an award for the race. I suppose it was in the spirit of Peter Chang—he walked away from prizes, and he also knew, like any foreigner, that you have to ask directions if you get lost. In any case, the experience was what mattered most. I had run alone down Frank Sinatra Boulevard, and I had appeared on Las Vegas television. I had shaken the sweaty hand of Elvis himself. Finally I was home, and I had a story to tell; in America that was all you'd ever need. ♦

LETTER FROM ISTANBUL

THE MEMORY KITCHEN

A chef recovers the foods that Turkey forgot.

BY ELIF BATUMAN

To get to the restaurant Çiya Sofrasi from the old city of Istanbul, you take a twenty-minute ferry ride to the Asian side of the Bosporus. On a cold Monday night last November, a friend persuaded me to make the trip with him. The place was pleasant but unremarkable, with a gray tiled floor, wooden tables, and no tablecloths or printed menus. There was a self-service bar with meze priced by weight. Hot dishes were dispensed at a cafeteria-style counter by a hatchet-faced man in a chef's hat.

The first sign of anything unusual was the *kisir*, a Turkish version of tabouli, which had an indescribable freshness and suddenly reminded you that wheat is a plant. The bitter edge of sumac and pomegranate extract, the tang of tomato paste, and the warmth of cumin, which people from the south of Turkey put in everything, recalled to me, with preternatural vividness, the *kisir* that my aunt used to make. Likewise, the stewed eggplant dolmas resembled my grandmother's version even more intensely, somehow, than those dolmas resembled themselves.

Food, I should clarify, has never played a large role in my mental life. I enjoy a good meal as much as anyone, but I get so confused by nutritional, budgetary, ecological, ethical, aesthetic, and time-management concerns that I often subsist for weeks on instant oatmeal and multivitamins. Having read Proust, and also neuroscientists on the direct connection from smell and taste receptors to the hippocampus, I have long been aware that eating is, for many people, an emotionally and mnemonically fraught activity. But, that night at Çiya, I viscerally understood why someone might use a madeleine dipped in tea as a metaphor for the spiritual content of the material world.

Overwhelmed by the *kisir* and the dolmas, I wondered if the explanation lay in my past. Both my parents were born in Turkey, but I hadn't been back for more than four years. I hadn't gone to my grandmother's funeral; I had been holed up in my apartment in San Francisco, writing a dissertation chapter about Proust—Proust, who wrote so movingly about losing a grandmother! Now, belatedly returning to my parents' homeland, I found myself not on the Black Sea, where my grandmother was born and buried, or in Ankara, where she lived, or in my father's home city of Adana, where my aunt still lives. Instead, I had come to Istanbul, a city with which I had many romantic associations but little practical experience. Perhaps the meze reminded me of an irretrievable time when my aunt and my grandmother had cooked for me, and I had been where I was supposed to be in the world.

As the meal progressed, the tastes

Musa Dağdeviren (right) in the kitchen at his restaurant Çiya Sofrasi. Photograph by Carolyn Drake.

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BlackBerry Bold.

Best coverage worldwide.

More phones that work in
more countries, like Greece.

att.com/global

Best coverage claim based on global coverage of U.S. carriers. Activation of international service required. ©2010 AT&T Intellectual Property. Service provided by AT&T Mobility. All rights reserved. AT&T, the AT&T logo, and all other marks contained herein are trademarks of AT&T Intellectual Property and/or AT&T affiliated companies. All other marks contained herein are the property of their respective owners. Coverage not available in all areas.

grew stronger and more varied. One inscrutable salad contained no recognizable ingredient except jewel-like pomegranate kernels, nestled among seaweed-colored, twig-shaped objects and mysterious chopped herbs, nutty and slightly bitter. A stew uniting beef, roasted chestnuts, quince, and dried apricots in an enigmatic greenish broth tugged at some multilayered memory involving my mother's quince compote. I kept looking around the room for some clue to what was happening. Half the tables were empty; near us sat a few Turkish families, a handful of lone diners with books, and two Italian backpackers. There were some restaurant reviews on the walls, and a portrait of Atatürk, and a shelf with a row of jars bearing handwritten labels—"Dried Quince," "Pickled Deer-Mushrooms," and many terms I didn't recognize, which I copied into a notebook.

At the end of the meal, we were served glasses of a pale-green herbal tea, the taste of which we couldn't quite place. In the window was an array of marvellous, doll-like desserts. Candied tomatoes, dull-red translucent disks, resembled ancient talismans. Miniature candied eggplants had a troublingly sentient appearance, inky and squidlike. *Kerebiç*—round cakes with pistachio filling—were served with a gooey sauce. My friend thought it might be whipped cream; I thought it was some kind of high-end marshmallow. Finally, I asked a waiter. He said it was made from "the pulverized root of a local tree from Antakya."

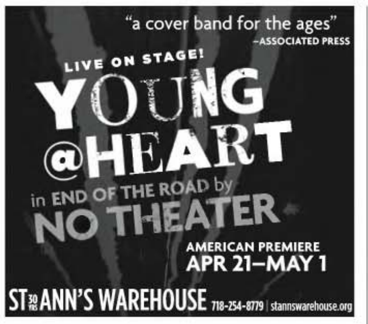
Back home, I hit the Internet. I learned that the jars contained such substances as milk thistle, gallnuts, pickled wild capers, hyssop, and *mahlep* (a spice made of ground cherry stones). I learned that the green herbal tea was made with thyme leaves, and that the food at Çiya exercised a violent effect on all kinds of people, not just bad Turkish granddaughters. One article described the reaction of "an eighty-five-year-old auntie who noisily burst into tears saying, 'This is the dish my grandmother used to make,'" and a man in his seventies who was transported back to a meal he had eaten at the age of five. Tapping into a powerful vein of collective food memory, Çiya was producing the kind of Turkish cuisine that Turkey itself, racing toward the West and the future, seemed to have abandoned.

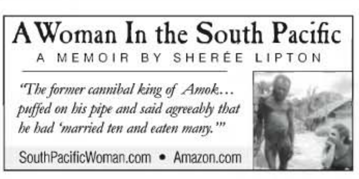
Variously described as a "laboratory of Anatolian cuisine," an "ethnographic museum," and "the garden of lost cultures and forgotten tastes," Çiya is the creation of Musa Dağdeviren, a forty-nine-year-old chef from southern Turkey, who has masterminded an ambitious project to document, restore, and reinvent Turkish food culture. Since 2005, he and his wife have been publishing a quarterly magazine, *Yemek ve Kültür* ("Food and Culture"). Each issue includes a section titled "Seven Forgotten Folk Recipes," collected by Musa during periodic forays that have taken him from the Balkans to the Caucasus, and during which he has rescued from obscurity various wild greens, sausages, yogurts, and cheeses. In Erzurum, he once discovered a forgotten kind of doughnut.

I met Musa a few weeks later, on a rainy December morning. He was wearing a wool sweater over an oxford shirt, and reading glasses hung from a cord around his neck, making him look like someone's good-natured Turkish uncle. Solidly built, with a vigorous black mustache, he projected both shrewdness and a complete lack of guile.

Musa was born in the provincial city of Nizip in 1960. He sometimes slips into a southern Turkish accent, replacing "k" with "g." His father, who grew olives and pistachios, was an ethnic Kurd, but Musa doesn't identify himself as half Kurdish. His culinary motto is "Food has no ethnicity, only geography," and his writings contain many diatribes against the claims of various groups to have discovered or invented certain techniques—claims that he thinks represent people's need "to find reasons that they're better than others."

Musa began working in a *lahmacun* bakery belonging to an uncle at the age of five, sweeping under the racks of cooling loaves. "It's a job for children between the ages of five and seven," he explained. "After age eight or nine, they can't fit under there." Today, when he walks through Antep or Adana, he can recognize the children who work in bakeries, because of the burned flour between their





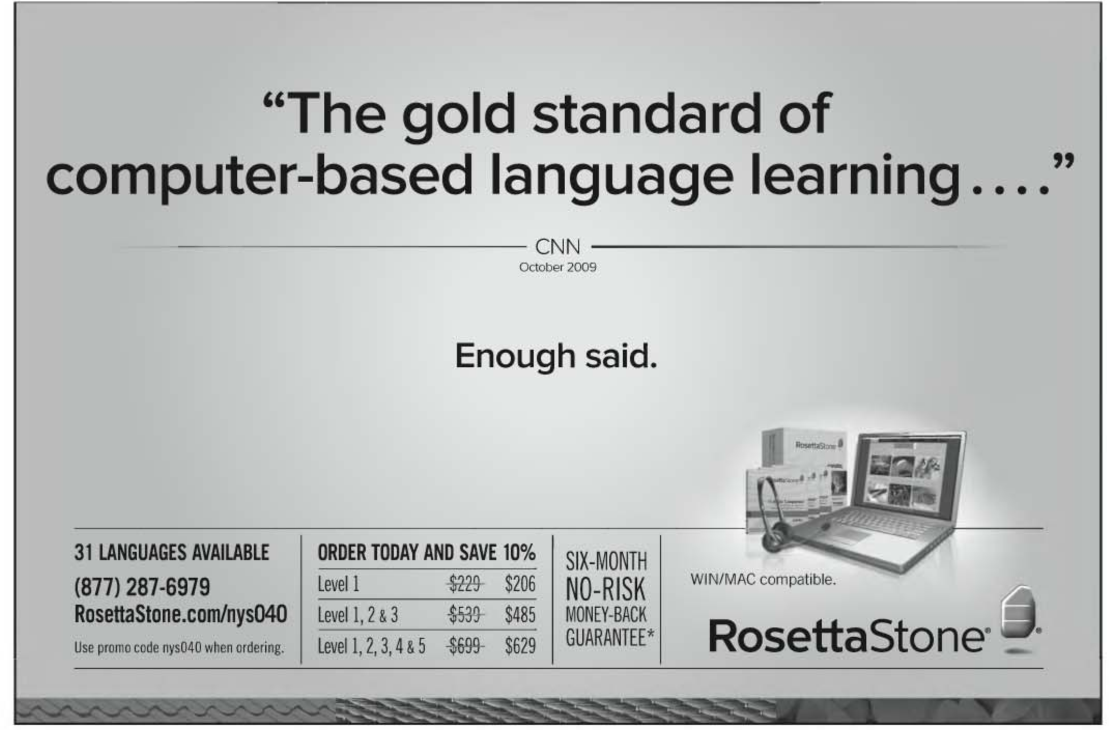
toes. I asked whether children ever got burned. "It happens," he said. "I have scars." He seemed about to roll up his sleeve, then changed his mind.

When Musa was twelve, his father died in a car accident. His mother was left to bring up six children herself, and Musa, the youngest, left school and started working, full time, in restaurants owned by his uncles. He describes his mother as his first master chef. She taught him to make vinegar, pickles, dolmas, noodles, and *mumbar*—sheep intestines stuffed with ground meat or liver, onion, and bulgur or rice. Musa told me that, a few years ago, when his mother died he went back to Nizip and stayed with a nephew, whose wife made a traditional springtime dish of fava beans and eggs. "When I tasted it, that's when I realized that my mother was dead," he said. "I realized that I was never going to taste that dish again the way my mother made it. The person who makes the food—his physique, his soul—is unique. It's like fingerprints, or handwriting."

Musa came to Istanbul in 1979, at the age of nineteen. For the next eight years, he worked his way up through various Istanbul kitchens. In one essay, discussing the education of a Turkish chef at the time he entered the profession, he describes a fifteen-to-twenty-year climb through a rigid hierarchy, from errand boy to dishwasher, from apprentice to chef, and on to head chef and master chef. (Today, most of his employees are culinary-school graduates, but he still makes them start by washing dishes and peeling vegetables.) Around year six, a dishwasher either gets promoted to apprentice or remains a dishwasher forever. The apprentice learns his craft by studying the chefs—some of whom, however, deliberately resist study. If a clever apprentice tries to deduce how many eggs went into a dessert by counting the eggshells in the garbage can, a still cleverer chef, fearful of competition, takes to grinding all his eggshells into a powder. Masters also test apprentices by giving them absurd instructions. Musa once saw an apprentice, on a master's instruction, put a whole sheep into a pot to boil with some beans.

A few years after opening his first restaurant, Çiya Kebap, in 1987, Musa married one of his regular customers. The Dağdevirens, who have one daughter, now run three restaurants: Çiya Kebap, Çiya Kebap II, and Çiya Sofrasi. Çiya Sofrasi opened in 1998 and specializes in regional home cooking (*sofra* means "dining table"). There is a wide gap in Turkey between restaurant food—grilled kebab or fish, and meat pastries like *börek* and *lahmacun*, all of which are typically prepared by men—and the food that people eat at home: stews, pilafs, and dolmas, typically prepared by women. Until recently, it was difficult to find home-style food in restaurants. Perhaps this disjunction explains some of the cathartic experiences of Çiya customers. "Sometimes one of them will start crying, and it spreads to other tables," Musa said.

For the past ten years, the Dağdevirens have been receiving lucrative offers to open restaurants in the trendy Beyoğlu



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and the touristic Sultanahmet neighborhoods, on the European side of the city, but Musa refuses to open a restaurant where he can't personally drop in every night—so the three Çiyas occupy a single block on a narrow pedestrian street in Kadiköy's market district.

One Wednesday in late December, I joined Musa for an excursion to Kandira, two hours east of Istanbul, on the Black Sea coast. The region is particularly rich in small villages, whose residents bring their food products to town to sell at the market every week. We drove through the bustling town center, past a school and a field where children were playing soccer. Small farms lay on either side of a dirt road. The market occupied a vast area under a yellow-and-white canopy. Inside, the canopy was supported by bright-blue scaffolding, from which light bulbs were strung on wires. Musa was looking primarily for foraged herbs. "There are forty or fifty women who gather them in the villages, and sell them here. They transform their poverty into riches. The people have adapted to the geography. They know how to make sweets using syrup from the inside of tree bark. They can make soup out of the buds of trees."

He held up a bunch of greens. "We call this snake's pillow, or snakeweed, or heathen's beet," he said. He tore off a leaf and handed it to me. It tasted fresh and not unpleasant.

"No, don't chew it!" he shouted. "Spit it out! Spit it out!"

I furtively deposited the half-chewed leaf in a nearby pile of detritus. My mouth was filled with a burning, numbing sensation.

"It's actually a poisonous plant—you can poison someone with the roots, but it makes a delicious soup," Musa said. "The leaves will burn you if you eat them raw. That's a joke I like to play on people." People on whom he has played this joke include Carlo Petrini, the creator of the Slow Food movement: "He liked it so much he bought a big bag of it to take to Italy to give to his friends."

I asked Musa about his relationship with Slow Food. "I like Petrini," he said. "His values, his way of thinking are similar to mine." But Turkey has its own branch of the Slow Food movement, whose adherents he is more skeptical of. "They go to villages and they find regional ingredients, but what do they do for the people?" he said. "Maybe the region has good honey, but its ovens are bad, or its schools are bad, or its roads are bad. What's it like for the person who lives there? If you don't keep the person alive, the honey will die, too."

Musa also expressed concerns about various aspects of fine-dining culture. "If you ask for olive oil, suddenly there appears some kind of a *dégustateur* with three different bottles, telling you, 'This is from this region of France, that is from that region of Italy,'" he told me. "We have an expression to describe people like that: 'He'll paint his own mother and sell her back to his father.'"

We made one round of the wild-greens sellers. Most were women, wearing bright flowered head scarves, oversized wool cardigans, and long skirts or baggy pantaloons. Musa asked their names, and how many people had worked to gather the greens, and how long it had taken, and how much they wanted per kilo. Most of the other buyers were women, and Musa, with his air of courtesy, familiarity, and botanical expertise, struck a discordant figure. As he talked to the sellers, he pointed out to me the best products and the best prices. There was a particular discrepancy between prices of corn poppy, whose Turkish name, *gelincik*, means "little bride." "It's a relative of hashish," Musa explained. "It's hashish's grandfather."

After a second circuit, during which he bought a total of thirty kilos each of borage and mallow, seven kilos of corn poppy, six kilos of curly dock, and twenty bunches of watercress, Musa seemed to relax. He made some sundry purchases: buffalo-milk yogurt and two kinds of honey, one made with chestnut and linden flower, the other with chestnut and rhododendron. Near the beekeeper's table, a farmer was selling live turkeys. There were seven or eight of them sitting on a row of crates, occasionally nodding their heads and gurgling, like members of a jury. In Turkey, the turkey is called *hindi* ("Indian") and is often roasted on New Year's Eve, which was two days away.

"Do you have any females?" Musa asked the turkey farmer.

"Females, yes, females and males."

"Which ones are females?"

"Well . . . these are males."

"I don't want males."

"There's some more turkeys in the back."

We followed the farmer to a parking lot, where some more turkeys were standing in a trailer. "Some of these are female?" Musa asked.

The farmer scratched the back of his neck, and picked a turkey up by the feet. "Here's a good bird," he said.

"It's a male, isn't it?" It gradually emerged

Clockwise from top left: Snowfall on Hehuan Mountain; enjoying cherry blossom season aboard the mountain railway at Alishan; a view of Sun Moon Lake from the luxurious Lalu Hotel; the Shuili Snake Kiln Ceramics Cultural Park.

BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT): SURFORM CHANG; YUEH-HUA LEE; VIPULA SAMARAKOON.

The Heart of Taiwan

Taiwan's strength is in its diversity, not only in regard to its people but also to its regional characteristics. Just as Taiwan's north is defined by the fast pace of the country's capital city, Taipei, the island nation's central region is known for its undisturbed nature and breathtaking views. Benefitting from its mountainous topography, Taiwan's center has managed to preserve countless plants and animals, as well as many traditional Taiwanese customs. It's for these and many other reasons that the paths of the world's more adventurous travellers are increasingly converging on Taiwan's interior.

A train trip along Taiwan's North-South Main Line and its connecting service lines will show central Taiwan's serene countryside, one filled with dense mountain forests and expansive, low-lying grasslands. Nestled within this varied landscape is **Sun Moon Lake**, the largest natural lake on the island—and a major attraction, lined with spectacular hiking trails, gardens, and ancient temples. Lulu Island, found at the lake's center, is considered a holy site for Taiwan's native Thao people. The lake means many things to many people, a fact that has travellers discovering their own interpretation.

Left: A Taiwan flamecrest; *Below:* a cup of Dongding oolong tea.

Taiwan's Central Mountain Range is home to rare plants and animals. Found within Taroko Gorge National Park is **Hehuan Mountain**, home to vast forests of Chinese hemlock and dwarf bamboo. Although the mountain's location at a convergence of airstreams causes a beautiful occurrence of subtropical winter snow, Hehuan is also revered for its summertime flowers, especially wild azalea. In the nearby Daxueshan National Forest Recreation Area, **Anma Mountain** is a haven for nearly a hundred different species of mountain-dwelling birds, such as the Taiwan flamecrest and the Swinhoe's pheasant. Whether exploring by foot or by bicycle, the Central Mountain Range offers awestruck visitors a testament to Taiwan's history of conservation. It's a destination that a nature lover must see to believe.

These mountains are also home to various Taiwanese peoples. And from their cultures come a bounty of unique artistic crafts, such as wood carving, paper-fan design, and, perhaps most notably, pottery. Originating in mainland China, these forms of pottery found a home in central Taiwan, where they have been improved upon by modern techniques. This pottery is often molded into the shapes of local flowers, birds, and animals. Two of the more renowned kilns where such pottery is produced are the **Huatao Kiln** in Miaoli County and the **Shuili Snake Kiln** near Sun Moon Lake. The Shuili Snake Kiln exemplifies an ancient style of wood-burning-kiln construction: built with brick on a gentle slope and stretching more than a hundred feet, this kiln has a snake-like appearance. It produces exquisite pottery, admired and imitated the world over—reason enough for kiln workers to want to keep their techniques a secret. But, in keeping with the Taiwanese tradition of hospitality, they are more than happy to show you how their art is made.

Just as the central Taiwanese have mastered the artistic depiction of nature, they've also excelled in its cultivation. **Taiwan is renowned for its tea, especially the many fragrant varieties of oolong.** While exploring the forested mountain trails of the Xitou Forest Recreation Area in Nantou County, you might happen upon fields of **Dongding oolong** growing in meticulously ordered rows. The mist that settles around the mountains creates the perfect conditions for Dongding oolong, resulting in a high level of catechin—a powerful antioxidant that

complements the healthy life style of the Taiwanese. The end product is a tea that brews to a golden yellow hue with an aromatic aftertaste.

Taiwan is a land of innumerable wonders, and in central Taiwan, those wonders are seen in its pristine wilderness. From snow-capped mountain peaks to grasslands, cliff-side tea plantations to mystic lakes, Taiwan's natural beauty is one of the envies of the world. Ancient cultures have not only coexisted with this beauty, but they've also used it to create unique art crafts and delicacies that exist nowhere else on the planet. It's as if, for the Taiwanese, celebration of their unique environment just comes naturally.

BY, TOP: SU-SHYUE LIAO; BOTTOM: MOHINI PATEL GLANZ.

For more information on Taiwan, visit WWW.GO2TAIWAN.NET

that these turkeys were males, too—the females were all back in the village.

"We'll get something to eat now and then we'll go to the village," Musa said, adding that the difference in taste between a male and a female turkey is as big as a mountain.

For lunch, we walked to the town center, which Musa described as "authentic," his highest term of praise. There were three busy commercial streets, whose businesses were all local. "There aren't any streets like this left in Istanbul. Look, they have a *simit* oven, and no Simit Sarayi." A *simit* is a pretzel-like ring of bread covered in sesame seeds. Simit Sarayi (*saray* means "palace") is a ubiquitous Turkish chain whose owners have plans to expand into Europe. "They sell what I call *pastane simit*"—a *pastane* is a French-style pastry shop—"and now that's what people are used to," Musa said. "In the old days, every region had its own way of making *simit*. There's an incredible variety of *simit*, and it's all being lost."

Personally, I rather like Simit Sarayi, the Starbucks of *simit:* it has ubiquity, high turnaround, reliable quality, standardized service, and clean rest rooms, whereas a local *simit* bakery is usually a small dark room with an oven and a window. You have to interact with a stressed-out baker, and, if you come at the wrong time of day, the *simit* are cold and rock-hard.

I asked why it was good to have, say, fifteen regional varieties of *simit* but bad to have fifteen regional varieties of olive oil. Musa said that the olive-oil varietals were marketed just to make a profit, whereas the *simit* arose naturally, as a function of regional differences.

"What if a boutique *simit* bakery starts reproducing the fifteen regional varieties of *simit* and selling them to rich people at a markup?" I asked. "Is that good or bad?"

"Well, of course, those things happen. That's capitalism. Everything is being commodified. But what I know is this: when big corporations become involved, it's never good for quality.

"Look at what happened to *gazoz*," he added, alluding to an indigenous carbonated soft drink. Musa's article on the subject, "Don't Touch My Gazoz!," is an elegy to the golden age of the republic, when every city in Turkey, intoxicated by the introduction of carbonated beverages from Europe, hastened to invent its own local soft drink. "Every region gave rise to its own *gazoz*, known by its own name," he writes. "Each region's *gazoz* was unique, and was made with the water from its own soil." Izmir's *gazoz*, Cincibir (pronounced "gingibeer"), was flavored with ginger, Niğde's with raspberry. The glass bottles came in different colors and shapes, and were objects of beauty. Musa describes the "terror and curiosity" with which he and his childhood friends experienced their first *gazoz*-flavored burps, and the pleasure, as an adult, of arriving in a new city, visiting its tea garden, and sampling the *gazoz*, whose flavor became inseparable from the memory of the place itself. Today, the Turkish *gazoz* market, much like the American cola market, is dominated by two corporate brands: Uludağ (once a regional *gazoz* maker, and now a national soft-drink giant) and Çamlica (part of the Ülker snack-food empire). Both have an amorphously fruit-like flavor reminiscent of Juicy Fruit gum.

Musa paused outside a fish shop, where piles of silver anchovies and reddish-gold mullet lay in bins of ice. Noticing a folding table in the back, he suggested that we go in for lunch. As the owner fried an enormous portion of fish, I contemplated the problem of *gazoz*. Some of the old brands are, in fact, being resurrected, but of course the golden age described in Musa's essay is fundamentally irrecoverable. It's difficult to see any future for *gazoz* other than corporate distribution or, perhaps, elevation to a niche commodity sold by specialty stores. And it would be hard to imagine Musa viewing with delight the appearance, in expensive tea gardens, of *dégustateurs* trained to advise diners on their selection of *gazoz* varietals. But, out of a similar impasse, Musa created Çiya: an idyll that owes its existence to his seemingly impossible expectations.

The shop owner brought the fish, which had been fried in cornmeal. Musa ate in moderation, but with quick, restless, almost peremptory movements. Finally, pushing his plate aside, he began to tell me about the Ottoman houses of Safranbolu, a five-hour drive to the east; formerly a vibrant mess, they had been cleaned up for tourists, and are now a UNESCO World Heritage site. "Nobody lives there anymore—it's all pensions and hotels," he said. "You might go to a

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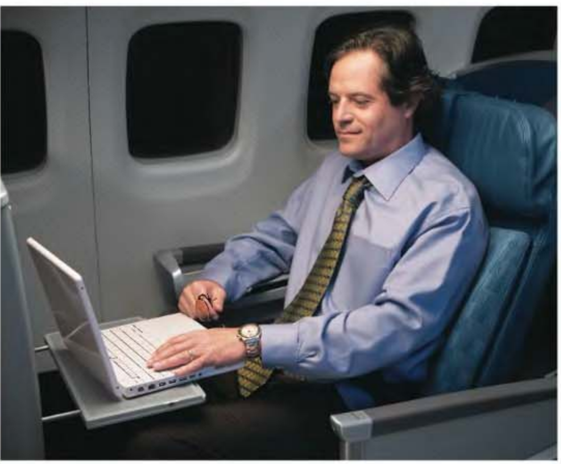

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Upon finding an old photograph of your grandmother in Ireland, standing atop massive seaside cliffs, you had always wanted to make the journey yourself. During your online search for flights, you noted that Ireland offers some of the cheapest Europe-bound fares that you've seen. As your plane lands in Shannon, your determination to find these cliffs is renewed. While at Shannon Airport's Tourist Information Centre, a clerk suggests that you start your Irish experience with the **Bunratty Castle Medieval Banquet** in County Clare. With the Bunratty Castle entertainers providing the revelry, your banquet includes a mead reception, a four-course feast, and plenty of good wine—all at a great price, allowing you to focus on the performance rather than the bill. After your meal, you ask one of the entertainers where you might be able to see more of Ireland's rich past. He tells you of the fun he had visiting the **ancient village of Adare** in County Limerick.

Top: The Cliffs of Moher in County Clare; *Above:* shopping in the village of Adare.

Once in Adare, you're amazed at the town's skill for preservation. A medieval market town, "Ireland's prettiest village" is lined with monasteries and thatched-roof cottages, while Desmond Castle rests upon the nearby River Maigue. At a local pub, you strike up a conversation with a friendly Irishman. You feel compelled to show him your grandmother's photograph. The picture's quality makes it hard to identify, he says, but its setting reminds him of the Dún Aonghasa cliffs on his native **Inis Mór**, the largest of western Ireland's Aran Islands.

As you step off the ferry and into Inis Mór's port town of Kilronan, you feel as if you've discovered a preserved remnant of Ireland's past. An impressive offering of hiking and inexpensive cycling options insure that your trip to **Dún Aonghasa** is a fun one, but the cliffs don't quite match your grandmother's picture. Back in Kilronan, you stop at the Dun Aonghasa Seafood Restaurant & Bar, where, over a hearty meal, you describe your quest to the hostess. Within seconds, she knows exactly where your grandmother posed for the shot: the mighty **Cliffs of Moher**.

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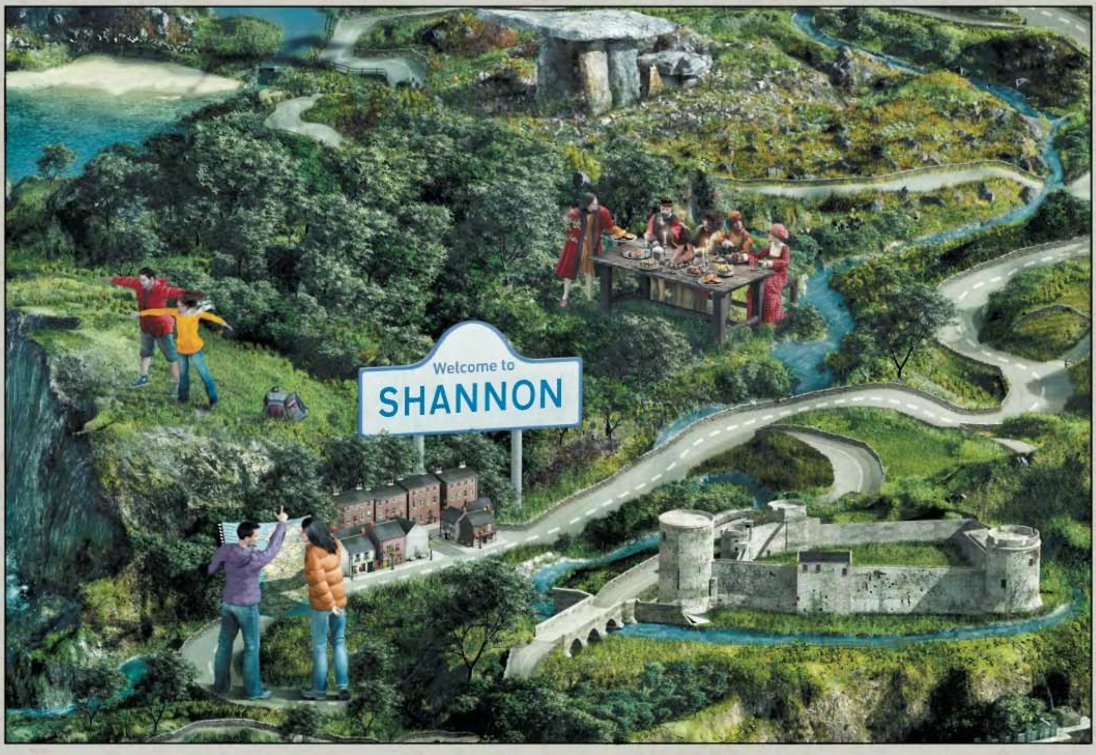

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Nearby Fort Worth is no slouch when it comes to the arts, either. Established in 1892, **The Modern** is Texas' oldest art museum yet its focus on post-World War II art in all media has kept it a stimulating environment.

Houston's Museum District comprises eighteen institutions. Among them are the **Museum of Fine Arts**, one of the largest in the country with more than 57,000 works of art. Other popular attractions include the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** and **Children's Museum of Houston**. The former boasts a collection of more than one million objects and specimens, the popular **Burke Baker Planetarium**, the **Wortham IMAX® Theatre**, and the **Cockrell Butterfly Center**. The latter is the highest-attended youth museum in the country for its size and is housed in a building designed by Robert Venturi. With a robust schedule of seasonal programming, this is a must-experience destination for families and architecture buffs alike.

Elsewhere in Texas, art is also alive and thriving. San Antonio nurtures both emerging and well-established artists. With more than two-thirds of the city Latino, it's the place to experience fresh multicultural work at **ArtPace** and the multi-gallery **Blue Star** arts complex. **Museo Alameda**, the city's newest museum, focuses on Latino art, history, and culture. The **Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art** in the **San Antonio Museum of Art** boasts the most comprehensive collection of its kind in the nation.

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place like that once, just to see it, but you won't go back a second time." The moral of his story was that "the moment you say, 'Hey, let's revive this'—no matter what it is—it's finished." This is exactly the paradox that Çiya has avoided. "The people's" lost food is rescued not only from disappearance or mechanization but also from foodie fetishism. The restaurant is an ark in which every tiny species is salvaged, represented, preserved—but still alive, changing, and growing.

Musa, who read Hegel as a young man, sees the plight of food culture in Marxist terms. The forces of industrialization and commodification have alienated people from what they eat, and labels like "organic," while seeming to offer the promise of overcoming alienation, end up as yet another market-imposed barrier between people and food. Musa's parsley suppliers, a family who have been growing parsley from their own seeds since 1909, recently asked him how they could go about making their product "organic."

Musa's magazine writings, full of veiled polemics against obliquely identified opponents, revolve around these problems. His monograph on *keşkek*—defined in the dictionary as "a dish made by slowly boiling well-beaten wheat, together with meat"—is less about boiled wheat than about a process unfolding over a certain geography. Musa has identified twenty-four regional names for *keşkek*, which may be eaten at funerals or weddings, on New Year's, Muhammad's birthday, Easter, or Ramadan; in the Turkish bath, during rain prayers, or in honor of special guests. In some villages, *keşkek* is cooked at home and eaten with walnuts; in others, villagers bring their *keşkek* to a communal oven that is operated only seven days a year. *Keşkek* is sometimes cooked in vats with pickle juice, or, like rice, with chickpeas and cumin. "There are dishes without wheat that are still called *keşkek,*" Musa writes. He later told me about a kind of dessert *keşkek,* made with dried fruit instead of meat. The facts of the dish, resisting definition, turn out to be almost incidental. What really interests Musa about *keşkek* is that it embodies a living series of social functions.

In one rather strange passage, Musa exhorts the dish to defeat the spectre of culinary fusion: "How can we deny you, how can we ignore you, O *keşkek!*" he writes. "No matter how many wits there are who call you 'risotto,' you always knock them dead with your true meaning." Musa despises fusion, a concept that, in his view, treats culinary traditions not as living processes but as finite objects to be manipulated in the name of creativity or revolution. As Musa sees it, *keşkek* risotto is the invention of someone who can't fathom the incredible richness of *keşkek*, and thinks it needs to be given a Western twist.

"Our people are ashamed of themselves," he remarks, alluding to Turkish chefs' penchant for Western cuisine. "They have a complex. Go to Iran—you'll find characteristic Iranian regional cooking. Here you open a book called 'Modern Turkish Cooking,' and the first recipe is for risotto."

The other side of this shame, he continues, is false pride, which recently gave rise to an "Ottomania" fad, with restaurants claiming to serve the dishes of Sultan Suleyman's court. There are, he says, no surviving recipes from Suleyman's court: "People just want to think that they're the descendants of kings." Musa is particularly outraged by people who claim that their ancestors invented various foods. His latest historical work debunks the origin myth of *döner* kebab, the rotating roasted meat that forms the cornerstone of Turkish street food: a chef called Iskender is supposed to have invented it in Bursa, in the eighteen-sixties. Once, at a symposium, Musa met a descendant of Iskender. "He was talking about how his ancestor, who was born in 1848, invented *döner* kebab," Musa told me. "He had no sources. He was just going around saying this." Combing libraries, used bookstores, and flea markets, Musa found *döner* represented in an 1850 engraving and an 1855 photograph. "I wanted to ask that guy, 'So your grandpa invented *döner* when he was two years old?' "

After lunch, we drove with the turkey farmer and his wife back to their village, which was called Bozburun. On the way, Musa bombarded the couple with questions. Were they Manavs (a formerly nomadic Turkic people)? They were. Did they have *keşkek*? They did. Did they prepare it at weddings?

"No," the woman said.

"Yes," the man said. "At weddings and on henna night." (A bride is traditionally decorated with henna the night before her wedding.)

The questions continued. Did they bake bread with potatoes or flour, with packet yeast or their own yeast? What did they eat at weddings and at funerals? What kind of mushrooms did they pick? How did they make pickles?

We turned onto a dirt road that led to the village.

"Foreigners live in that house," the woman said suddenly, pointing out of the car window.

"Foreigners? Where are they from?"

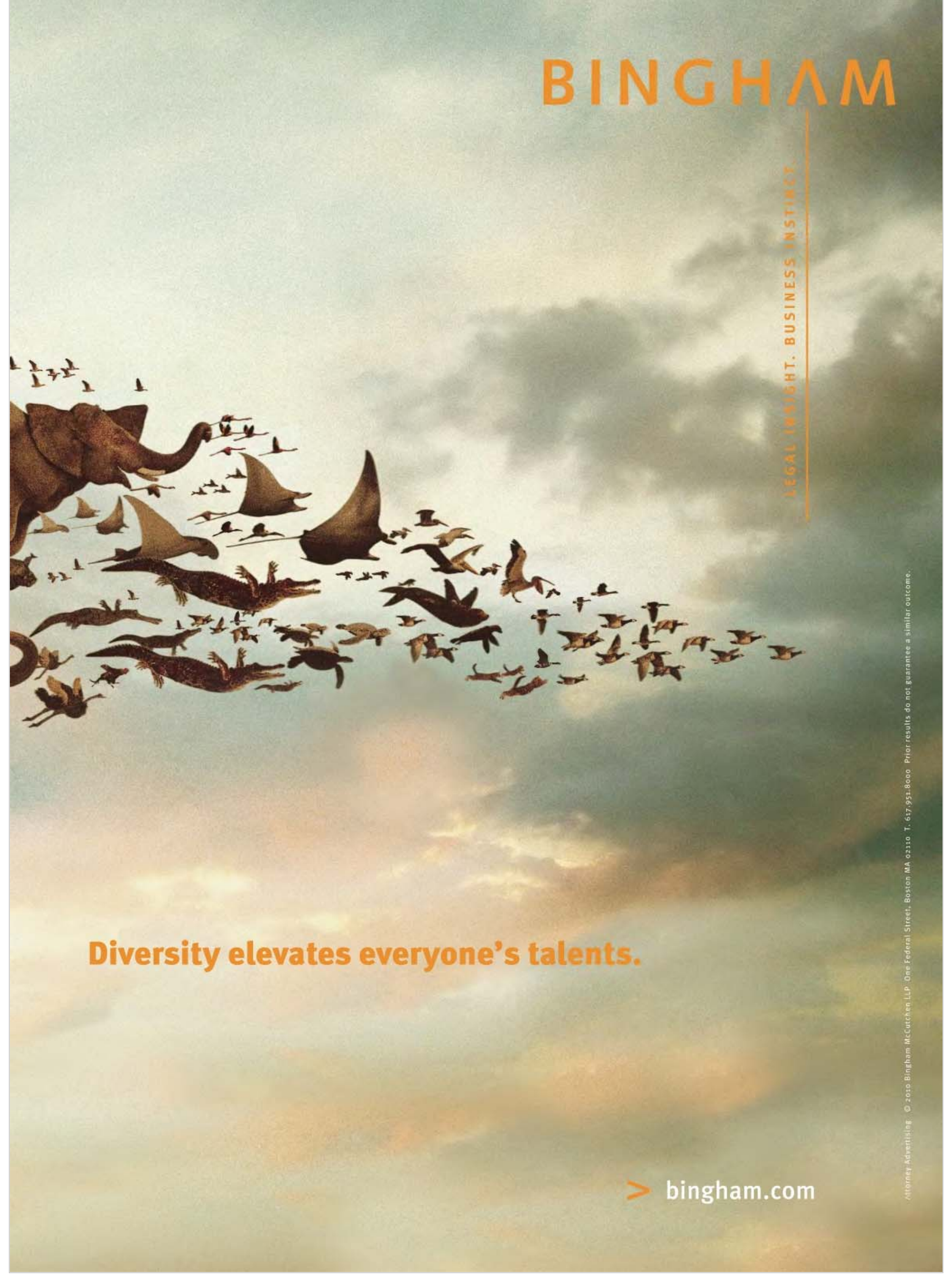
"Istanbul. They were born there, and then they came here."

We reached a small green farmhouse. In front stood a stone oven, where (using packet yeast) the family bakes its bread. We proceeded along a driveway, muddy from recent rain, to the back of the house.

Behind the house lay a patch of hilly grassland, near a creek. Turkeys were wandering everywhere, producing their strange ambient gurgle, under the lugubrious eye of a large German shepherd. Musa pointed out the four female turkeys he wanted. The farmer's wife handed the first one to her husband, who bent down and swiftly cut off its head with a sharp knife. A loud wheezing came from the stump of the neck, which emitted irregular spurts of blood. The dog stood up slowly and ambled over.

"*Hoşt!*" the farmer shouted. This is a Turkish word used exclusively for the purpose of chasing away dogs—there are different words for chasing away cats and poultry—but this dog did not respond. Finally, the farmer tossed the turkey's tiny head some distance away, and the dog went off to look for it. The farmer's wife handed him the next turkey.

The other turkeys seemed to view these developments with mild concern. Those which had been walking in the direction of the creek casually changed course and walked elsewhere, with one exception: a stately male, with a red wattle and an enormous fan of back feathers, marched pompously, deliberately, al-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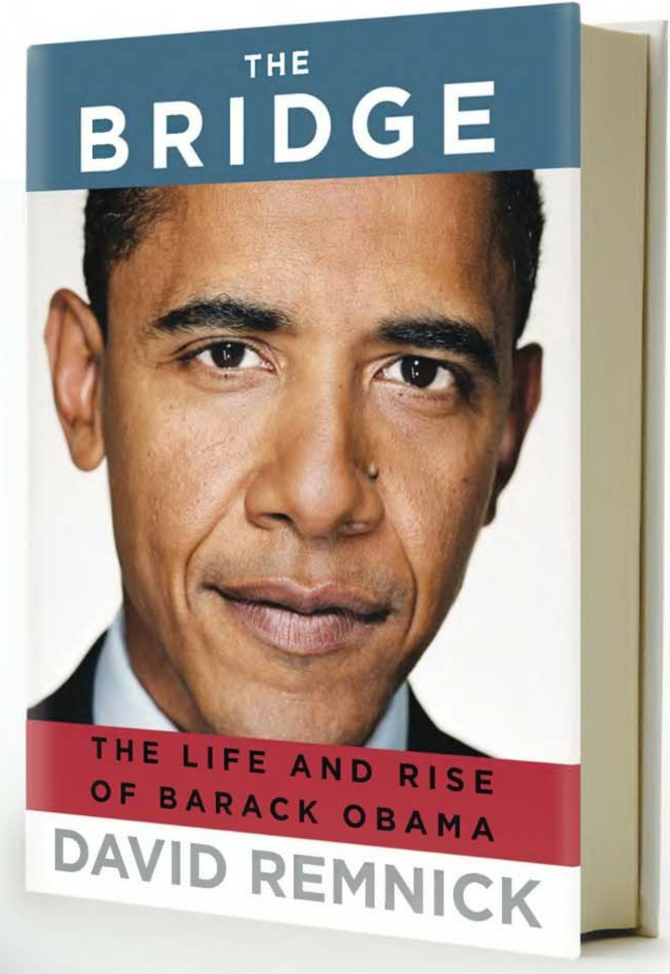

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most sinisterly before the scene of carnage. "What could he be thinking?" Musa asked.

When all four turkeys had been killed, the farmer wiped the blood off his hands. He, his wife, their twelve-year-old daughter, and Musa began plucking the birds. I decided to join them. I had never defeathered a bird before. The turkey was still warm and twitching; its bare skin felt eerily human. Plucking all the turkeys took an hour. The farmer charged Musa about five dollars a kilo, which seemed like a good price, except he insisted that each bird weighed ten kilos. To me they seemed to be about six kilos. "More like four, not counting the bones," Musa said, in the car. "But they were nice people, and this way you got to see authentic village life."

On the drive back to Istanbul, we took a scenic route through the countryside, so we could stop by a property that Musa had recently bought in order to realize his long-cherished dream of a Turkish culinary institute. The idea was to provide a center for Turkish food culture: a school, a library, a research institute, and a publishing house. Above all, Musa wants to see the history of Turkish cuisine chronicled in print. "We need records," he said. "The French have them, but we don't. Our first cookbook, the 'Melceüt Tabbâh'in,' was written by a doctor—not a chef—and published in 1844. The French had books on French cooking in the sixteen-fifties. In the seventeen-fifties, they had a book on *bourgeois* cooking. We didn't even have a bourgeoisie, and they already had books about what the bourgeoisie ate.

"Our history is such a mess. It's like an Arab's hair," he continued. "That's what we say when something is tangled. You're right, that's not a good expression—it's offensive to Arabs. Here's a better expression. A camel was asked, 'Why is your neck crooked?' The camel replied, 'What part of me *isn't* crooked?' You can't pick out the mistakes anymore, because mistakes are all there is."

"That's a great expression," I said. "Although maybe offensive to camels."

"Why should camels be offended? It's the objective truth. The camel said it himself. That's the difference between the camel and our food historians. The camel sees himself accurately."

By the time we reached the property, night had fallen. We came to a pair of imposing metal gates and Musa rang a bell, several times, to no effect. Banging on the gates with his fist, he began shouting to someone called Ismail. Then he picked up a rock and started beating it against the metal. After five minutes of this, the groundskeeper, who is hard of hearing, appeared, bowing and apologizing. "I must have fallen asleep," he said, unlocking the gate.

Inside, rows of fruit trees stretched into the gloom, interspersed with plots of furrowed earth that will someday be a living encyclopedia of Anatolian plant life—Musa is currently negotiating with various Istanbul universities to found a seed bank here. The school will offer joint degree programs and master classes. A mansion loomed before us, and Musa stopped the car, leaving the headlights on. As we walked toward the mansion, I became aware of the presence all around us of enormous, shadowy formations, which proved to be topiary animals. A monstrous dolphin reared on its tail in the middle of the circular drive, and, in the murk, I thought I could make out a stag and a bear on the lawn.

"The guy we bought the land from—he was really rich. It was his hobby to cut the bushes like that," Musa explained. "I told him he could keep doing it if he wanted. I think he's been back a few times."

Entering the mansion, he switched on the electric lights and, one by one, rooms materialized around us. Musa told me his plans for a library, a reading room, a kitchen with stations for students, conference rooms, lecture halls, editorial offices. There would be guest rooms for visiting scholars and writers. He and his family would live on the top floor. He showed me a spot he was considering for his desk, in a window overlooking a giant topiary alligator. Back downstairs, he lingered a moment in the front hall before turning off the lights. Everything dissolved again into darkness, and we got back in the car to return to Istanbul. ♦

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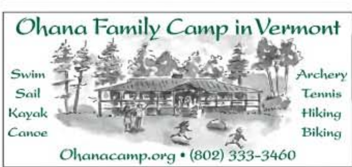
A conversation with Elif Batuman.



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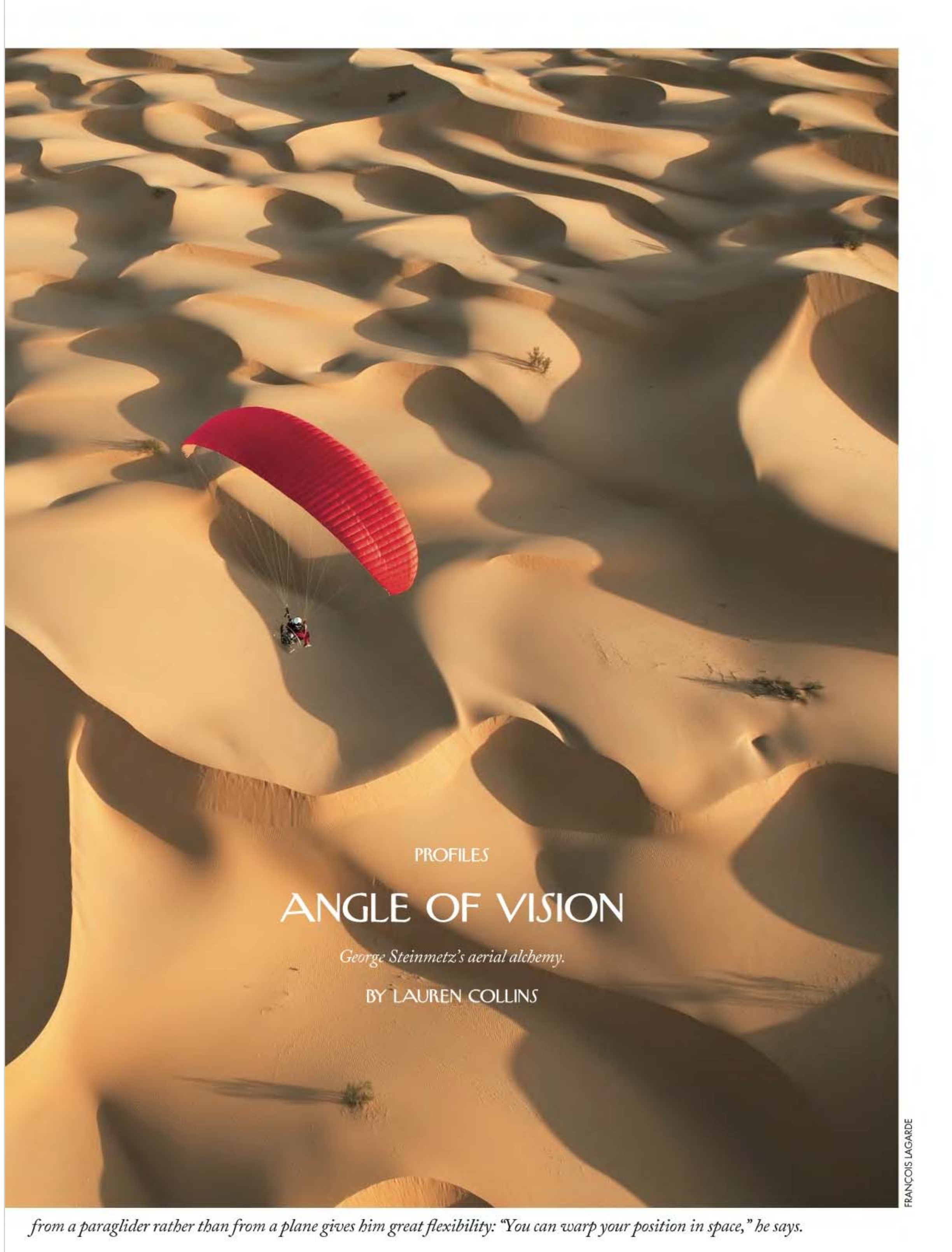
Steinmetz paragliding above a ksar in the dunes of the Grand Erg Occidental, north of Timimoun, Algeria. Photographing



from a paraglider rather than from a plane gives him great flexibility: "You can warp your position in space," he says.

"Abdu, you've got to fire this motherfucker."

"George, I cannot. It is not possible, George."

At a café on the main road of Djanet, a scraggly frontier town in southeastern Algeria, a spread of lentil stew and strawberry soda was gathering flies. George Steinmetz, a freelance photographer, and Abdarahman Daoudi, a translator and fixer, were thirty-four days into a six-week trip that had taken them and a caravan of Toyota Land Cruisers, stuffed with tarps, blankets, bananas, drums of water, jerricans of gasoline, guides, drivers, a cook—it was, by then, an eight-man expedition—on a snaky north-south route from Béjaïa, through the palm groves of El Oued and the casbah of Ghardaïa, the rippling ergs of Timimoun and the *forêts de pierre* of the Hoggar Mountains, to Djanet, an hour's drive from the border with Libya. They were doing seventy-five hundred miles a week, and tensions, as they do in the company of maps and men, had arisen. Most pressingly, Steinmetz was convinced that one of their party—Jafar, a kindly and cataracted ancient they had picked up in Tamanrasset, who was serving as the group's navigator—was going to get them all killed.

"This guy, he's a disaster," Steinmetz said. "He can't find his ass with his own two hands." Steinmetz had already lost several days of work to Jafar's miscalculations. Had the convoy followed his directions en route to Djanet, Steinmetz said, hundreds of miles into the Sahara, in the middle of a desolate sand sea, they would have run out of fuel.

To lead the trip, Daoudi, a hale, smiling twenty-seven-year-old, had taken a leave from his job as an electrical engineer with the state power utility. Despite the long days and short tempers, he had come to adore Steinmetz, whose requests he usually greeted with sympathy and resourcefulness. Now he looked as though he might retch.

"George, I tell you it is not possible," he said. "Jafar has a family he must support." The crew—young, unmarried Tuareg men—was comforted, Daoudi said, by Jafar's presence. He made the fires. He made the tea.

"I don't need a teaboy!" Steinmetz yelled. "He's dead weight. This is not a socialist bureaucracy!"

Steinmetz, who is fifty-two, looks much as he did in 1979, when, after dropping out of Stanford, he spent twenty-eight months hitchhiking across Africa—a preppy vagabond with a camera, a stove, and a snakebite kit. He still travels light. In Djanet, he was dressed in a red moisture-wicking turtleneck (one of three shirts he'd brought), blanched Levi's, and a pair of mutilated Top-Siders. ("In a rush, I packed my garden shoes.") Frequently, he wore a personalized baseball cap that read "Ain't No 911." He is tall and lean, a campfire smoker and a speed-eater, with shy eyes and a winter tan. His hands are cracked like elephant skin. He wears a fraying friendship bracelet. His face bears a scar from western China, where, in 2007, he crashed into a tree. When he woke up, in the dirt, several teeth were poking through his cheek.

A free spirit with a G.P.S., Steinmetz pursues the aims of Jack Kerouac by the means of Frank Gilbreth. In the name of efficiency, he will set the table with the forks on the right; still, he is susceptible to mid-meal demonstrations of dinner-plate tectonics. He has little interest in niceties—the forks soon give way to fingers—but he is a patient explainer, and a whiz at diagrammatic metaphor. The town of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, where he lives with his wife, Lisa Bannon, an editor at the *Wall Street Journal*, and their three children, is laid out "like a fish skeleton"; wind-eroded rock pillars in the Tassili n'Ajjer resemble "a bed of nails." He is fond of goofy abbreviations—T.M.I., O.P.M., T.I.A. ("This is Africa"). The argot of the expedition was Franglish—"The motor, it seemed to be working *parfait*," "Hotel Quelque Chose"—leavened with a bit of Arabic. The crew was amused to no end by Steinmetz's single-mindedness in the field, his goads to "*Yalla, yalla!*" Because, they said, he was interested in only two things—working and taking pictures—they had started calling him, among themselves, George *le japonais*.

Steinmetz takes the majority of his pictures from a custom-built contraption that he refers to as a flying lawn chair. In 2008, Abrams published "African Air," featuring his work from nineteen countries over twenty-six years. Last year, he released "Empty Quarter," a survey of the unforgiving and largely untrodden wildernesses of Saudi Arabia, Yemen,

"Are you kidding me? I'm not watching golf. I'm watching Tiger."

Oman, and the United Arab Emirates. Between assignments for *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, and the German magazine *GEO*, Steinmetz has for the past fifteen years been gathering material for a book on deserts, which, with their unfathomable expanses and geometric landforms, are particularly suited to the sort of tessellated, sweeping shots that he is known for, and that his machine enables. He had checked the disassembled flying machine from Newark to Béjaïa in three huge duffelbags. He can fly it as low as a hundred feet, in relative quiet. His perspective, unobstructed by glass or struts, is as close as a human can come to the bird's eye.

In 2003, Steinmetz travelled to Iran—the first person since the revolution, he thinks, to be granted permission to take photographs there from a private aircraft. He was detained three times. His guides took to playing the theme from "Mission: Impossible" on the car stereo. To capture opening night at La Scala for an early assignment, he hid a camera in his tux. (He also met Bannon, from whom he rented a room in Milan.) In South Dakota, he drank Lysol and Aqua Net with the subjects of a story about alcoholism. ("Go with Lysol.") Steinmetz learned to fly in 1997, after a bush pilot bailed out on a trip to Niger. He scorns hotdogging for its own sake—"I'm a photographer who flies, not a pilot who takes pictures"—but he will take his chances, or his advantage, when the task demands it. In Israel, where a friend knew a radar operator, he managed to buzz a men-only nude beach. In the resulting photographs, amid the scrum of tiny sunbathers, one can make out a tube sock being used as a peculiar form of sunscreen.

We were stuck in Djanet, where I joined Steinmetz in mid-December, waiting for one of the Land Cruisers to be repaired. Cement-block shops lined the main road. Garlands of pennants depicting the Algerian flag and the visage of the Algerian President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, fluttered between lampposts. The women in sight were mostly on the way to market. Men wore two-piece, pajama-like cotton robes, in an array of colors: lavender, indigo, a pale green that resembled hospital scrubs. The typical *cheche*, or veil, usually white, shrouded all but the men's eyes, which were often themselves shaded by blade-style sunglasses. Vertebral clouds spined a bright-blue sky, offsetting sandstone bluffs the color of cane sugar.

A few days earlier, Steinmetz, trying to elude the gendarmes after an illicit sunset flight over a remote oasis, had made an off-road getaway. This was done without the benefit of headlights. His car had ended up suspended in the air at a forty-five-degree angle, nose in the sand. Its back wheels rested on the face of a small cliff. After much digging and more talking—car repair is to Djanet what real estate is to New York City—it had been concluded that the car's frame was shot. Meeting me at the airport, Steinmetz had stuck out his hand and said, "We've been running from little green men."

At the café, Daoudi's cell phone erupted with the sound of "Tamiditin," a popular Tamashek-language love song. It was Fuad, the boss back at the tourist agency in Tamanrasset, to whom Daoudi had appealed to resolve the personnel stalemate. Daoudi passed the phone to Steinmetz.

"You can pick up another guide, but you can't fire Jafar," Fuad said. "The whole crew has threatened to quit if you do."

Steinmetz listened and handed the phone back to Daoudi, who ended the call.

"O.K., but he's baggage," Steinmetz said. "He's the teaboy—that's it!"

"No, thanks—I'm a libertarian."

The flying lawn chair is actually a motorized paraglider—a sail, a tank of gas, a propeller, and a seat. Steinmetz is the fuselage. He never flies for fun, but the apparatus has a back-yardish feel: picture a man with a leaf blower on his back, encircled by a metal hula hoop, dangling at altitudes of up to six thousand feet under a tomato-colored beach umbrella. The sail—paragliders call it a "wing," because it's cambered, like a bird's—is connected from its trailing edge to hand controls by two sets of nylon-sheathed brake lines in fluorescent colors. (They look like Silly String.) Steinmetz uses the brake lines, which work the wing like flaps on an airplane, to steer. The machine is more sophisticated, and more reliable, than Le Géant, the dirigible that the photographer Félix Nadar built in 1863—Daumier depicted him in a lithograph entitled "Nadar élevant la Photographie à la hau-

teur de l'Art"—but it is similar in its spirit. It conjures a patrimony of buoyant wondrousness, of whirligigs, rockets, boomerangs, blimps, and helium balloons, as though Leonardo da Vinci had collaborated on its design with Carl Fredricksen, the hero of the movie "Up."

Paragliders, the lightest of powered aircraft, occupy a murky regulatory zone. You do not need a pilot's license to fly one in the United States; in many places, you probably ought to have some sort of authorization. According to the United States Powered Paragliding Association, motorized paragliding is safer than riding a motorcycle but more dangerous than driving a car. In any case, it's a lot of trouble—why not just go up in a plane? There is the expense, and what Steinmetz calls "the hassle factor"—permits, takeoff slots. More important, Steinmetz believes that he is able to get superior pictures flying in open air. The paraglider, on the back of a camel or in the hull of a dugout canoe, can go places that planes, which require airports, cannot. It is highly maneuverable, whereas trying to get a pilot to put a plane exactly where you want it is like trying to get someone else to scratch an itch. "With the glider, it's very plastic," Steinmetz said. "It's like Silly Putty. You can warp your position in space." David Griffin, the director of photography at *National Geographic*, told me, "Photographers are always trying to find a unique perspective, and George gets himself an angle of view that basically nobody else can do."

From the glider, Steinmetz commands hundred-and-eighty-degree vertical and horizontal views. Because he flies low ("It's really only interesting once you get down to five hundred feet") and slow (the paraglider has one speed, twenty-seven miles per hour), he is able to get close enough to a landscape to engage it. Cruising above a field of fairy circles in Namibia a few years ago, he spotted some grazing zebra. "I was able to herd them where I wanted them to be, like it was a rodeo," he recalled.

Not everyone approves of this approach—a reader complained to *Smithsonian* of a "disturbing picture" of "tens of thousands of Cape Fur Seals in Namibia being stampeded as a result of an overflight by a thoughtless George Steinmetz"—but it endows his pictures with unusual intimacy. A flock of flamingos that Steinmetz shot on Bolivia's Altiplano plateau would have been wads of bubble gum from a plane. Humans seem to find the unexpected sight of him more whimsical than threatening. In Kenya, he drifted over a primary school; the resulting picture shows hundreds of girls in pink polo shirts, royal-blue sweaters, and grass-green full-length skirts, their heads tilted up toward Steinmetz, an airborne ice-cream man.

Taking aerial photographs is, in a way, like metal detecting—a hunt for treasure invisible from the earth's surface—but it is also akin to grocery shopping, in that it involves a lot of checking things off lists. While he was in Algeria, Steinmetz wanted to shoot Sefar, an isolated portion of the Tassili plateau, separated from Djanet by about seven miles and a wall of two-thousand-foot-high cliffs. To get to Sefar and back was a five-day journey by donkey. Steinmetz didn't want to gamble a week on one shot, so he and François Lagarde, a Paris doctor and paragliding enthusiast who often travels with him, had concocted a plan. Taking off from an oued—a dry riverbed—outside town, Steinmetz would attempt to clear the cliffs in the flying machine. A local guide had set out in advance with donkeys and supplies, in case Steinmetz ran out of gas, or wind, and couldn't make it back.

"I'll fly along the donkey path for safety," Steinmetz explained, the night before the flight, sitting in the flickering dim of Djanet's Internet center. He pulled

SUNDOWN

Sometimes the day
light winces
behind you and it is
a great treasure in this case today a man on
a horse in calm full
gallop on Omaha over my
left shoulder coming on
fast but
calm not audible to me at all until I turned back my
head for no
reason as if what lies behind
one had whispered
what can I do for you today and I had just
turned to
answer and the answer to my
answer flooded from the front with the late sun he/they
were driving into—gleaming—
wet chest and upraised knees and
light-struck hooves and thrust-out even breathing of the great
beast—from just behind me,
passing me—the rider looking straight
ahead and yet
smiling without looking at me as I smiled as we
both smiled for the young
animal, my feet in the
breaking wave-edge, his hooves returning, as they begin to pass
by,
to the edge of the furling
break, each tossed-up flake of
ocean offered into the reddish
luminosity—sparks—as they made their way,
boring through to clear out
life, a place where no one
again is suddenly

killed—regardless of the "cause"—no one—just this
galloping forward with
force through the low waves, seagulls
scattering all round, their
screeching and mewing rising like more bits of red foam, the
horse's hooves now suddenly
louder as it goes
by and its prints on
wet sand deep and immediately filled by thousands of
sand fleas thrilled to the
declivities in succession in the newly
released beach—just
at the right
moment for some
microscopic life to rise up through these
cups in the hard upslant
retreating ocean is
revealing, sand fleas finding them just as light does,
carving them out with
shadow, and glow on each
ridge, and
water oozing up through the innermost cut of the
hoofsteps,
and when I shut my eyes now I am not like a blind person
walking towards the lowering sun,
the water loud at my right,
but like a seeing person
with her eyes shut
putting her feet down
one at a time
on the earth.

—*Jorie Graham*

up a Google Earth map on his laptop, a battered Mac. The map was studded with yellow thumbtacks, each one marked with coördinates. (Before Google Earth, Steinmetz had to cold-call scientists and beg for satellite pictures.) Steinmetz would follow the path, a sort of trail of bread crumbs, with a handheld G.P.S. He flies at dawn and at dusk, when wind conditions tend to be relatively stable and the light is best.

"To me, it looks like a burned-out Manhattan," Steinmetz said, homing in on Sefar. Dark blocks of sandstone, tapering into whorls and spindles, reminded me of a Tetris game, or Hebrew letters. As he zoomed out, the landscape became a palimpsest, half-eroded slot canyons baring chutes of yellowed sand. "If you had to put down in there, you'd get really messed up," Steinmetz said. "It's like landing in a cheese grater."

The morning of the Sefar flight arrived cold and clear. "Bright stars," Steinmetz said, as we trundled to the cars in the darkness.

We raced out of town on empty roads. After about ten minutes, we reached a turnoff. Soon, we were slaloming across a series of rutted pistes, taking the curves fast and tight, as though the cars were on skis. Daoudi, driving, swung a sudden doughnut. "Don't chase the fennec, Abdu!" Steinmetz said, as a furry animal scampered into the brush.

The afternoon before, Steinmetz had scouted the area. To take off and to land, he needs a clear space about the size of a basketball court. (This rules out big cities, dense forests, and large bodies of water, though he has flown over smaller ones, trailed by a rescue skiff.) Air conditions are crucial: there must be enough wind to inflate the wing, but not so much as to overpower Steinmetz's ability to steer. Trying to fly the paraglider in high wind is like being tied to a spinnaker in a gale. At the takeoff site, a shallow canyon facing a low rocky shoulder, gusts whipped a few spindly acacias. Jafar, in a coarse brown burnous, had had to start his fire in a ditch.

The crew got to work readying Steinmetz's machine, which stood upright on a rubber mat. Daoudi filled the gas tank. Someone taped a bottle of carrot juice—emergency provisions—to the cage. Steinmetz, wearing a red-and-black flight suit and kneepads, an altimeter strapped to his left thigh, kicked rocks from the takeoff strip. Nearby, Daoudi and Lagarde unfurled the wing.

At six-forty, Steinmetz cranked up the machine. It was not in pristine shape. The previous day, he'd failed to take off in five tries. The cage had bent in two places, and a line had got snarled in the prop. Fixing the machine is an improvisational enterprise. Lagarde—I thought of him as François *le français*, paring apples with a penknife and likening aborted flights to failed love affairs—had jury-rigged the line by piecing in some scraps. For the cage, he fashioned a sort of splint. On Steinmetz's last attempt, the propeller had snapped in half. I'd gathered up the jagged shards, like firewood. Steinmetz had replaced it with a spare.

Daoudi and Steinmetz carried the machine over toward the wing, which was billowing violently.

"It's too windy," Steinmetz said. "We have to move."

To save time, the crew stuffed the intact machine in the back of the flight car. Lagarde rode on the roof.

Twenty minutes later, Steinmetz was setting up in a more protected canyon, just to the west of the Tassili cliffs. Daoudi and Lagarde, moving in silent coördination, like groundskeepers at a ballgame, spread the wing on the sand. Steinmetz put on a white helmet and knelt in front of the machine. Lagarde helped to buckle the harness around his legs and waist. Steinmetz stood up. Hunchbacked, gripping the risers above his shoulders, he

Flamingos photographed by Steinmetz in Bolivia. The view from the flying machine is a figurative one, transforming scale

hoofed the ground the way a racehorse does. He shimmied his left hip and revved the machine. It sounded like a lawnmower.

Steinmetz let the motor idle and ran like hell into the wind. With a hundred pounds on his back, he was barely moving. It looked as though he might topple backward. He kept running. Eventually, the sail inflated and swung over his head in a scarlet arc. Steinmetz opened the throttle. He ran about twenty more steps, and a space opened up between his feet and the ground.

He ascended smoothly—the sail fading, as he rose up the walls of the valley, to an eyebrow. After a minute or so, he banked hard to the right, in the direction of the cliffs. Hovering in front of them at around six hundred feet, he seemed to stall. The wing bounced and shook. Steinmetz, in the first rays of light, was swinging beneath it like a Ferris-wheel car.

On the ground, a handheld radio hissed.

"Radio, radio, I want François."

"Hello, George?"

"I think it's a katabatic."

A katabatic wind sends cold, dense air pouring down a slope. Steinmetz, in front of the plateau, was stuck in the atmospheric equivalent of white water. Buffeted by the current, he lofted and dropped like a yo-yo, a man on strings. The altimeter kept beeping. A sailor can see whitecaps to indicate choppy going, but a paraglider's safety depends on guesswork. Steinmetz opened the throttle and attempted to climb out of the turbulence.

"Try to go now over the cliff," Lagarde radioed.

"I'm at a thousand feet. Wind's coming out of the northeast. It's still funny."

"So we can't make it?"

A few seconds passed in silence.

"I'm coming down."

Steinmetz made a wide turn away from

and highlighting odd juxtapositions.

the cliffs and buzzed off into the distance. Daoudi jumped into the flight car. One hand on the wheel, another on the radio, he sped away from the takeoff site, scanning the landscape for flecks of red.

"George, George, do you hear me?" he said.

"Yes."

"Do you land?"

"I'm on the ground."

"Are you in the route to Djanet?"

"Roger, roger."

Daoudi barrelled down the road, honking the horn.

"George, do you hear me?"

The radio crackled.

Daoudi made a U-turn and headed back up the road. Ten minutes passed. I started to think that the proverb about the needle in the haystack should be changed to a person in a rock pile. Finally, Steinmetz emerged from behind some dunes, holding his helmet. His hair stuck up in matted stalagmites. The wing was crumpled in the sand.

"*Salaam aleikum*," he said. "That was a death trap up there."

The Sahara, where temperatures can reach a hundred and thirty degrees Fahrenheit, spans more than three million miles over eleven countries. It is one of the brightest places on earth, reflecting ninety per cent of the light that reaches its crust. It is also one of the driest—most areas receive fewer than three inches of rain in a year. The Harmattan wind, at its strongest, blows from the end of November to the beginning of March. It can pick up a particle of dust in Algeria and put it down in Venezuela. The Sahara is almost as big as the United States, but, aside from a few colonial-era *balises* and cairns, it offers as road markers only a dizzying procession of sand and rocks, rocks and sand. In 1942, twelve members of the South African Air Force landed three Bristol Blenheim bombers somewhere between the oasis at Kufra and the Rebiana erg. After a couple of days, the men were drinking the alcohol from their compasses and gun sights. "Boys are going mad wholesale—they want to shoot each other—very weak myself," Major J. L. V. de Wet wrote. The next day: "We expect to be all gone today. Death will be welcome—we went through hell."

For the unlucky, or the unprepared, the Sahara offers all manner of torment—diarrhea, dehydration, sunburn, sandstorms, dust storms, land mines, bandits. ("Sahara Overland," by Chris Scott, the premier English-language guide to independent travel in the region, devotes a section called "Dealing with Robbery" to the relative merits of fuel-cutout switches.) The harshness of the Sahara has made it isolated, which has made it attractive to profiteers and misfits and thrill-seekers for the very reasons that it repels most other people. In 1900, Isabelle Eberhardt, a twenty-two-year-old Swiss woman suffering a "fruitful, salutary melancholia," travelled to Algeria, where she lived much of the rest of her life as Mahmoud Essadi, a Muslim and a man. Nowadays, a particular sort of French person is big on Saharan holidaying. The culture of nostalgic self-sufficient mobility—schoolteachers and accountants, loosed from decades of desk work, recapturing the former glory of their homeland on the open road—is not unlike that of R.V.s in America. Mitteleuropeans also feel the call. There is a literature of off-roading: *Motorrad*, *Tourenfahrer Magazin*. I was told that someone had seen a German man, dressed in black socks and sandals, making laps under the noonday sun with a pair of hiking poles.

The Sahara is the traditional home of the Tuareg people, descendants of nomadic Berber pastoralists whose ancestral lands cover a million and a half square kilometres of Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Niger. In the main Tuareg dialect, Tamashek, the Sahara is Tinariwen—one of many words meaning desert. Herodotus described a people who some historians think were linked to the Tuareg's forebears: "Above these towards the South Wind in the region of wild beasts dwell the Garamantians, who fly from every man and avoid the company of all."

The French captured Algiers in 1830 but largely ignored the Grand Sud and *les hommes bleus*, as the Tuareg were known, for their indigo veils, the pigment of which eventually soaked into the skin. In 1881, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Flatters led an expedition south toward the Hoggar Mountains to investigate the possibility of building a trans-Saharan railroad. His men were routed by the Tuareg in what came to be known as the Flatters massacre, as William Langewiesche writes in "Sahara Unveiled" (1996). Fifty-nine survivors attempted a retreat. They ate their dogs, they ate their camels, they ate poisoned dates offered to them by the Tuareg. Eventually, they ate one another. It was not until 1904, after the Battle of Tit, that the French established loose governance over the region.

Still, the geographical isolation of the Tuareg and French romanticization of their life style afforded them significant autonomy. The French saw the Tuareg as mystical warrior-aristocrats, elegant in body and haughty in bearing. The French Nobel laureate J. M. G. Le Clézio writes in "Desert," his 1980 novel, "The blue men moved along the invisible trail to Smara, freer than any creature in the

• •

world could be. . . . The bare feet of the women and children touched the sand, leaving light prints that the wind erased immediately. . . . And the men themselves were like mirages, born unto the desert earth in hunger, thirst, and weariness." Unsurprisingly, there have been several romance novels written about the Tuareg, and they do not sound all that different.

When Algeria gained its independence, in 1962, Tuareg society still comprised a small, ruling caste of nobles; a lower, tributary class; and a third class, of slaves and vassals. Independence brought socialism to Algeria; then came a program of Arabization—the replacement of French with Arabic—and an increasing identification with Islam. During Algeria's civil war, in the nineteen-nineties, tourism suffered. The anthropologist Jeremy Keenan writes that the Tuareg sometimes refer to visitors from the north of Algeria as "Taiwan"—cheap versions of the Europeans who used to come. In 2003, thirty-two European tourists were abducted by masked men near Djanet. Still, plenty of people visit the area, because it is worth visiting. More than thirst or violence, the dangerous thing about the southern Sahara is its power to disorient the senses, to make people become lost, leading to all the familiar disasters. But the way that the desert plays with scale is also what makes it a photographer's paradise. A crater might be a footprint; corrugated channels in the sand could be the traces of armies or ants.

Once the Land Cruiser was repaired, we set out for Tadrart, a plateau in the corner of land where Algeria meets Libya and Niger. After a day of rough driving, we reached a place called the Black Dunes—sinuous mounds of yellow sand topped with fine black spores, like mold on ladyfingers. We made camp in the leeward crook of a sixty-foot-high crescent dune. Daoudi scampered up its slipface, and motioned for me to follow. "*Vitesse!*" he yelled, hoisting me over the crest. Atop the dune, I took off my shoes and nudged a bit of sand with my toes. It was very clean. Probably no one had ever touched it. It poured down the slope like batter, leaving a drippy trail. The sun was disappearing in the west; clouds like tire tracks streaked the sky. By the time we came down, I was practically in tears.

"You're going to get great pictures tomorrow," I said to Steinmetz.

"It's sunset," he replied. "It's like that old saying, 'Anybody looks good after three drinks.'"

The next morning, we got up at five-thirty. Steinmetz, huddled by the fire, was still brooding about Sefar. "I guess you can't kill an elephant with a penknife," he said, draining a cup of coffee and pulling on his boots.

An hour later, we were in the flat of a basin, surrounded by low knuckles and mounds. The moon was a sliver. Steinmetz stood in front of the wing, which was splayed on the ridge of a finely veined dune.

Steinmetz ran down the slope and took off easily. He made a series of smooth wide turns, gaining altitude as though he were climbing a spiral staircase. Nearly the entire spectrum was visible on the western horizon. At seven, the sun popped over the hills, turning everything sticky and golden.

Steinmetz flew for half an hour before the radio blared.

"I'm at fourteen hundred feet, and I'm not seeing much," he said. "It's going to be a short flight."

The rest of the day, we drove around through wormy passes and primordial valleys, looking for geological exemplars or oddities that Steinmetz might want to shoot. He browsed a few rock-art sites. He stopped to look at a boulder wall-papered with feathery fossils that used to be seaweed. Mostly, there were sandstone pillars, molded by the Saharan winds into amusing facsimiles: pig, lighthouse, porcupine, cleaver, Martini glass, mushroom, gas pump. Steinmetz's line of work requires physical fortitude as much as it does an aesthetic sensibility—a great aerial photographer is, among other things, someone whose hands don't freeze at two thousand feet. Unusually, he possesses equal measures of talent and stamina. "The places where he's going, it's not like doing 'Aerial Paris,'" Kathy Moran, Steinmetz's editor at *National Geographic*, told me. "When he lands, he's not going to have a drink with an umbrella in it. He puts

himself out there to make images of places most people don't see from the ground, much less the air."

Our new navigator, Lamine, who had taken over from Jafar, asked the driver to stop the car near a narrow pillar with a spherical top.

"Look, it's the World Cup," he said.

"Who cares?" Steinmetz muttered. "This is tourist stuff. In China, they're always, like, 'This is Emperor Feng Dao's big toe.' "

That evening, we arrived at Tin Merzouga, a sandy basin to the southeast of Tadrart. The dunes were as high as houses. Undulating into the distance, they approached abstraction—Ellsworth Kellys in sky and sand. Their parabolic swells and eskered spines, splitting shadow, reminded me of horseshoe crabs. In the fading light, the sand turned from the color of paprika to a blood-orange shade and then to an iridescent purple, like eyeshadow, eventually deepening to a chocolaty brown.

"Extraordinary," Steinmetz said, as he set up his tent. "In the morning, this place is going to rock."

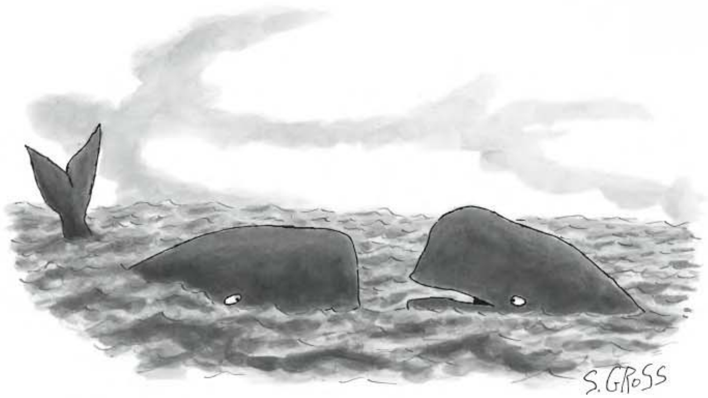
At the campfire, Jafar made tagella, the traditional Tuareg bread, combining flour and water in a bowl and pounding the mixture into dough, which he buried in the sand and covered with smoking coals. He poured three rounds of sugary tea—"the first as hard as life, the second as sweet as love, the third as light as death." Somebody pulled up a car and put on some Tuareg music: guitar, drums, ululations, handclaps. As we ate and joked and gawked at the stars, Steinmetz stood off to the side. He had propped his Mac on the hood of one of the Land Cruisers, where he stood, barefoot, studying maps and organizing files. By the time the last embers had died, and everyone had flopped into sleeping bags or passed out on top of dirty striped mats, he was still standing there, silhouetted in blue light.

The earliest pictures of Steinmetz show him in a big house in Beverly Hills, surrounded, on various nicely upholstered pieces of furniture, by his older siblings, Don (a preservationist), Julie (a psychologist), and Diane (who, with her husband, runs an African-art gallery in Los Angeles). His mother, the former Verna Pace, was a 1945 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Stanford. His father, David Henry Steinmetz III, a lumber heir who became a stockbroker, collected Munch and Johns. Family lore has it that when Steinmetz was a little boy, chasing a ball in the street, Groucho Marx almost ran him over. One of his friends was Todd Fisher, whose mother, Debbie Reynolds, used to embarrass the boys by picking them up from school in a Rolls-Royce. Steinmetz's other best friend had an ice-cream-sundae bar at his house. When Steinmetz was five, his parents divorced. He was closer to his mother, but his father, who had a degree in mechanical engineering from Caltech, exposed him to machines and to nature, and to the ways that a mastery of one could deepen an understanding of the other. A bow-tie-wearing gallant, he would pack the kids in his Cessna on weekends and fly them to the old family house in the Sierras.

"George continues to get out of his seat, wander around the room, and talk despite warnings, detention, etc. Even when complying he does so with a defiant grin," Steinmetz's fourth-grade progress report reads. At the Harvard Westlake school, he spent part of his junior year as an exchange student in Tokyo. He remembers himself as a loner. On his Stanford application, in response to the prompt "If you could write a book, what would it be about?," Steinmetz replied that, since he didn't know anything about anybody else, he would write an autobiography entitled "The Growing Up of Helmer Boogerknuckle." Still, at his high-school graduation Steinmetz was named Most Improved Student. "We got more of our money's worth than the rest of those guys," he remembers his father saying.

Stanford didn't really turn Steinmetz on. The summer after his sophomore year, eager to experience life outside the Gucci Ghetto—his name for Beverly Hills—he got a Eurail Pass and flew to Europe with a friend. The pass was good for Morocco, where Steinmetz experienced, for the first time, the perverse gratification of finite hardship—two-dollar funduqs, cheap lunches of pear cactus. "We rented mopeds and drove around with these big bottles of cheap wine and slept on the beach," Steinmetz recalled of his European idyll.

Three years into Stanford, Steinmetz had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. He spent some time in Telluride as a ski bum, and, in January, 1979, set out for what he later called "a real dirtbag safari." Steinmetz spoke no French, let alone Arabic. In Agadez, Niger, on the side of the road, he met a Belgian ethnologist named Marion van Offelen, who for five months became his travelling companion. In what was then the Central African Empire, they tracked elephants with Baaka pygmies. In N'Djamena, Chad, in the midst of a civil war, they "dined in restaurants filled with drunk mercenaries, where frozen pizzas had been flown in from Paris, and the customers would set a loaded pistol on one side of their plate and a hand grenade on the other," Steinmetz later wrote. "By day we went waterskiing on the river while watching out for hippos, and by night we danced to Boney M. and ABBA



"We should've stayed on land, and grown feet and kicked ass."

in rented houses while drinking Johnnie Walker."

The trip was not without its hairy moments. Despite precautions—always eat at the busiest food stall on the street; it's O.K. to drink anything that comes out of a pipe—Steinmetz developed all manner of ailments (according to one letter, "a bad cold, an eye infection, bed-bug bites, the trots, and a hive-like body rash"). Still, he revelled in self-sufficiency. In August of 1979, at Horombo Hut, on Kilimanjaro, Steinmetz wrote in his triplicate book of a midnight climb in freshly fallen snow: "I reached the top, out of breath, for sunrise. After eating some crackers and cheese, I mustered the strength to go on from Gilman's Point to Uhuru Peak—19,340." Steinmetz and members of a French Alpine club took one another's pictures by the Tanzanian colors that mark the summit. "I asked the remaining few if they wanted to accompany me into the crater, but no one was interested," Steinmetz wrote. "I felt the pull and set off alone."

Before leaving home, Steinmetz had borrowed a cheapo Konica camera from his brother. It broke. He got another one—a 35-mm. Olympus OM-1—from a friend who was heading home. Steinmetz found the guise of photographer a great excuse for poking his nose into whatever he wanted. From Niamey and Bangui and wherever else he could find a post office, he mailed cannisters of film to his mother. Verna was not initially thrilled. (Her take on photographers: "They all have bad breath and B.O.") Eventually, she started to come around to the idea, sending George detailed critiques of his developed pictures—"Roll 14, it's overexposed"—along with frequent care packages. In 1981, Steinmetz wrote to "Mom-O" from Goma, Zaire, "I would appreciate it if you could send me a pair of Levis straight-leg shrink to fit jeans, size 32W 34L, one tan Patagonia long sleeve shirt size large, and 20 packs Gudang Garam king size. Would also appreciate it if you could shrink the jeans and undervalue the merchandise 50% on the customs declaration."

After about a year, Steinmetz returned to California wearing a Chinese T-shirt and flip-flops (no socks, no wash). He finished Stanford and got an internship with an oil company. That didn't stick. Hoping to place his pictures in magazines, he went back to Africa, and, when that didn't work out, either, he settled in San Francisco, where he drove a VW bus called Lady Fatima and got a job taking out the trash for a studio photographer. He was fired for insubordination. His second job was for a photojournalist, Ed Kashi, who also fired him. He and Kashi remained close friends, however, and Kashi started passing on jobs to Steinmetz. His first paying gig was for the magazine *California*—a portrait of a psychic stockbroker, whom he sat in an "Addams Family" chair and lit from below, in what photographers call the Frankenstein effect. Shortly thereafter, Steinmetz shot Linus Pauling. He told Pauling that when he was a kid he'd had a snake named Linus Crawling, eliciting a wonderful smile. *California* put the picture on the cover.

Steinmetz had a breakthrough in 1986, when *GEO* assigned him to chronicle the opening of Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. He attended a toga party for high rollers, talked his way into the "goddess" dressing room—experiences that the magazine memorialized in an eighteen-page spread. One of the pictures shows a newlywed couple in a hot tub. "I met these people, and they were, like, dry-humping in the pool," Steinmetz recalled. "I said, 'Hey, I've got the honeymoon suite this afternoon. How would you guys like to have some champagne?' "

In 1989, *National Geographic* ran its first Steinmetz story, about oil exploration around the world—one shot showed an exhausted rig worker using a sack of dynamite for a pillow. After that, Steinmetz was a *Geographic* regular. In 1995, he travelled to the backcountry of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, to photograph the tree-dwelling Korowai and Kombai people. Accompanied by a Dutch anthropologist, he spent six weeks on the ground attempting to cross the pacification line—the indistinct border between tree dwellers who had touched modernity and those who hadn't. The pictures are extraordinary: a woman scurrying up a notched pole to her house, a man with a freshly killed cassowary slung over his shoulder; another, dwarfed by branches, foraging for breadfruit in the forest canopy. So that he could be at the same level as his subjects, Steinmetz had an archer shoot a lead-tipped arrow with a reel of fishing line attached to it over a high

Beni Isguen, the most traditional of the fortified

branch and affix some ropes, so that he could climb up. A picture from the time shows Steinmetz, in a Lacoste polo and khaki shorts, under a red-and-white golf umbrella, straddling a tree thirty feet in the air. Two years later, outside Paris, Steinmetz made his first flight in the paraglider. He remembers green grass and hedgerows. It was his fortieth birthday.

When Steinmetz isn't sleeping in a tent or a truck, he lives in a pale-yellow Victorian house in Glen Ridge. From the street, the only hints that it is not the redoubt of an insurance agent or

villages of Ghardaïa, Algeria—a chambered mosaic of narrow alleys and high-walled houses. Photograph by George Steinmetz.

a stockbroker are two metal signs nailed above the garage door. One of them is a yellow crossing diamond with a llama in the middle. "I tell the kids it's on loan from a mine in Bolivia," Steinmetz said. Next to it is a triangle edged in red, with an image of a one-humped camel, a souvenir of Saudi Arabia. Steinmetz, pulling in to the driveway one January afternoon, said, "I wanted a Bactrian one instead of a dromedary, but I didn't see any."

Steinmetz had been home from Algeria for about three weeks. He was wearing a white turtleneck and a heather-gray sweater, woollen clogs peeking out from the hems of his jeans. His hair was short. His fingernails were clean. He led me through the garage and out to a wooden deck that overlooked a spacious back yard. There was a trampoline and a tree house. Steinmetz continued down a set of steps—"Be careful, there's ice there"—to the frozen-over rows of a garden. He said, "We do tomatoes—they're the big thing—and then some herbs and spices."

In the kitchen, copper pots hung from the ceiling. Paperwhites wilted near a gallery of kids' art work, as a hamster named Butterfinger rustled around in a plastic castle. A list of rules was taped to a wall ("No Candy—EVER!"). Steinmetz laid out bread, a head of lettuce, and a jar of horseradish and took a hunk of roast beef out of the refrigerator. We made sandwiches and talked about the trip. "I always worry they'll come back and be, like, 'God, that guy was such an asshole,'" Steinmetz said, of the crew. He is content in the suburbs, until he isn't. He said, "I'm home for two or three months, and then I run out of hotel shampoos."

After lunch, we went upstairs to Steinmetz's office. Cubbyholes, crammed with reference materials for upcoming assignments, lined the room's perimeter. File cabinets were labelled alphabetically: Kajak-Korowai, Suriname-Yangtze. A ledge bore a lifetime's haul of un-

packed suitcases and emptied pockets: sand roses from Arabia, arrowheads, pottery shards, Bolivian flamingo eggs that Steinmetz had blown out with a Leatherman and a straw. "I bought these in southern Sudan when I was twenty-one," Steinmetz said, pointing out a pair of ivory bangles. They sat near a collection of miniature models of the flying machine, fashioned from bicycle inner tubes and baling wire, by people he'd met in the course of his travels. The mouse pad was a Persian carpet.

Steinmetz pulled up a chair to one of two back-to-back Mac monitors. He had been editing his pictures from Algeria, narrowing an initial selection of ten thousand. Now, to show for six weeks' worth of field work, he had a hundred and sixty-seven shots. He opened a file and began to scroll through a gallery. There were workers in El Oued, cutting clusters of Deglet Noor dates. The husks of the dates, in another picture, formed traceries that appeared, from the sky, like lace. Central pivot sprayers, drilling down to rain that fell in the last ice age, irrigated fields of potatoes—from above, they were a matrix of green, fuzzy polka dots. The sprayers formed radii that cut across the circles like phonograph arms.

Steinmetz proceeded to a sequence he'd shot near Timimoun, where, flying above the desert, he'd spotted an abandoned *ksar*, or fortified settlement. He'd come in high and shot it off center, in the bottom-right corner of the frame, foregrounding a plain of dunes that stretched as far as the eye—even the paraglider-aided one—could see. The angle emphasized the isolation of the *ksar*. It was a piecrust, with serrated parapets and flaky walls, that had managed to last for centuries. There was a metaphysical quality to the picture, conveying a sense of how pathetic and touching our best endeavors might appear to a skyward god. This was a yes. In another picture, Lagarde, suspended from a black-white-and-red wing, hovered above a network of *foggara*—underground channels that carried water from aquifers to villages. "That's what we call 'flying Hollywood,' " Steinmetz said. Keeper.

The material that Steinmetz works with is beautiful but tricky—too many sunsets and footprints in sand and you've got an inspirational calendar. (Recently, a Dutch couple attempted to commission Steinmetz to shoot some overhead portraits of them having sex in a desert near Dubai.) Even with the right ingredients, a flight can yield bland or cloying results. I was surprised to find that some of the places that had seemed most spectacular in person were the least impressive on the screen. At their best, Steinmetz's photographs not only capture landscape; they transform it. "Sometimes you get an idea on the ground of how something's going to look, but usually it's just a big surprise," he said. "I'll show pictures to locals who have lived in a place for fifty years, and they won't know what they're looking at." The view from the flying machine is a figurative one, highlighting odd juxtapositions and heightening or obscuring scale, in a sort of aerial alchemy. Beds of scallions become stripes. Roads become cross-hatching.

Piano music drifted up from downstairs—Nelly, who is eleven, and John and Nicolas, eight-year-old twins, had got home from school—as Steinmetz tried to decide which shots to use of Beni Isguen, the most traditional of the fortified villages of Ghardaïa. The town had a radial layout, emanating from the mosque, which loomed over a chambered mosaic of narrow alleys and high-walled houses. In one of the best shots, Steinmetz had allowed the houses to fill the frame. The image was marvellously disorienting. It could have been a cross-section or an overview. Captured at sunrise, in warm light, the houses were the color of seashells. At sunset, they were bleached out, shards of bone. Their roofs, invisible from the street, had been painted in aquas and turquoises, so that, from above, they looked like swimming pools.

"Is this one too blue?" Steinmetz asked. "That other one might be more subtle."

As he deliberated, the computer made a whirring sound, and the screen went black.

"Bummer," Steinmetz said. He walked down to the kitchen and put on a pot of tea.

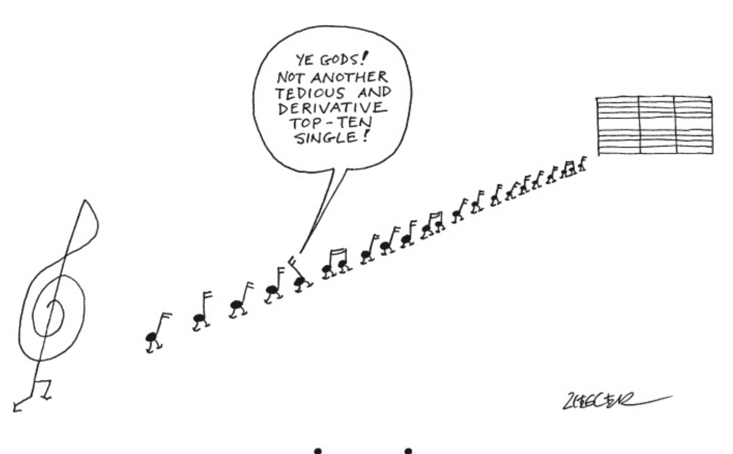
"I want that dressing-room mirror fired."

People who could fly used to be gods. The Egyptians had Horus, the falcon-headed deity of the sky, whose left eye was the moon and whose right eye was the sun. The Greeks looked to wax-winged Icarus; the Aztecs, the feathered

serpent Quetzalcoatl; the ancient Ugandans, the warrior Kibaga, who could make himself invisible and rained down rocks on his enemies from a perch in the clouds. In the Bible, air is the realm of the sublime. The prophet Ezekiel, looking into the northern sky, witnesses a blazing whirlwind, "a fire infolding itself," out of which appear four creatures, their wings "stretched upward"—soaring angels sent by a creator in Heaven.

No one knows precisely when the first human flight occurred. But, as technology evolved, the determination of man to slip his earthbound shackles became less an inchoate religious yearning and more a plausible reality: it is difficult to tell whether the Chinese legend of the emperor Shun, who, in 2230 B.C., is said to have used a pair of conical reed hats to parachute to safety from the top of a burning granary, is folklore or history. By the ninth century, Islamic tower jumpers were attempting, often disastrously, to fly. Early in the eleventh century, Brother Eilmer, a Benedictine monk, built a pair of wings, likely out of ash or willow and cloth, affixed them to his shoulders with a bow brace, and leaped from the hundred-and-fifty-foot watchtower of Malmesbury Abbey. He was able to glide for fifteen seconds, but, as a contemporary historian wrote, "agitated by the violence of the wind and a current of air, as well as by the consciousness of his rash attempt, he fell and broke his legs, and was lame ever after." (For years, he went around telling people that if only he'd had a tail.) All this is recounted in "Taking Flight" (2003), Richard Hallion's long, fascinating book about mankind's eternal regret, and vexation, that we were not born crickets or kingfishers.

Flying is the thing other animals can do that humans can't. The difficulty of defying gravity is perhaps a large part of its appeal. But even as Kitty Hawk gave way to Tailhook, and aviation became commonplace—please return your seat-back trays to their upright and locked positions—a certain novelty has endured. People thrill at kites, two thousand years after their invention. They wave at planes. This year, the announcement that DARPA—the gee-whiz arm of the Department of Defense—was attempting to develop flying cars elicited more than a hundred comments on USAToday.com. ("How about just flying over the toll booths!" someone wrote.) The ado was almost juvenile. Like X-ray machines and glass-bottom boats, flying machines are marvellous because they are useful but also because they transcend our genetic limitations, affording another way of seeing the world.



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One sunny afternoon in Tin Merzouga, something I had been dreading happened: Steinmetz asked me if I wanted to fly. My take on flying, previous to this offer, was something like that of the Bactrians, who surrendered to Alexander the Great after he made them believe that his men had flown to the summit of the Rock of Arimazes: don't tempt fate. Before boarding a plane, I usually perform an elaborate knocking ritual. Mostly because I didn't want everyone to think I was a weenie, I agreed to give the paraglider a try. I would fly without the motor.

As I squatted in the sand, Steinmetz and Lagarde helped me into the harness, which felt like a heavy backpack. I stood up, and handed my sunglasses to Steinmetz. Lagarde stationed himself in front of me, pulling on the harness to keep me upright. I was standing on the top of a fifty-foot dune, looking down upon a semicircular valley, where Daoudi, whom I could barely make out, stood waving his arms in encouragement.

I threaded the green and purple lines between my thumbs and forefingers and held the risers above my shoulders, like dumbbells. I ran down the slope. I ran more. It didn't seem that anything was happening, except that my back, under the weight of the wing, was bending in a way that I hadn't known was possible. It was as if the ground were reeling in a fish, and I were the pole. Somehow, after a few seconds, I realized that there was nothing under my feet. The takeoff was peaceful—a levitation, not a jump. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote that planes separate from the ground "with a movement like picking a flower." Maybe I was a bit of dandelion fuzz, loosed from its floret.

In dreams—mine, at least—flying is like swimming. But the air was crisp and thin, not viscous, as I'd imagined it. I didn't have to make my way through it; it made its way through me. Being upright in the air feels like being upside down on the ground. My spine stretched. I felt like I'd be an inch taller when I touched down. In twenty seconds, my feet thudded into the valley floor.

The light was perfect, and Steinmetz went up shortly after I did. He flew for more than an hour, making slow passes over crescent dunes and rock pillars. By the time he appeared again above the camp, the sky was purple and yellow. The sand looked like lava. He swooped in above a flat stretch of land near our campsite, and, descending too quickly, made a rough landing on his coccyx. It had been cold up there at two thousand feet. Steinmetz was sniffling. He could barely move his fingers, but he had taken seven hundred pictures. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/VIDEO

George Steinmetz and his flying machine.

A REPORTER AT LARGE

TOWHEADS

The far-flung adventures of a tugboating family.

BY BURKHARD BILGER

My friend Buckley McAllister has spent his life around tugboats in New York Harbor, and he belongs to one of the historic families that still rule his industry—the Crowleys, the Morans, the Fourniers, the Bouchards, the Wittes, the Watermans, and the Danns, among others. Towing ships is a dynastic business, hard to establish and harder still to give up. It's built on deep allegiances and cutthroat margins, and its inner workings, especially in Buck's stories about his own McAllister clan, are full of intrigue and successionary drama: fistfights, lawsuits, power struggles, and disinheritances; raging, intemperate fathers and sullen, rebellious sons. Everyone loves a tugboat, it seems, but no one more than tugboat owners, and that love can twist a business in ways that are hard to foresee.

New York was once the tugboat capital of the world, with more than eight hundred boats crisscrossing its harbor in the nineteen-thirties. The McAllisters were part of the so-called Irish Navy, with its patchy fleets of steamboats, diesel tugs, coal barges, and smaller fry, schooling on what was once known as the porgy grounds, around the Whitehall Ferry Terminal. The boats were manned by brothers, uncles, cousins, and more distant kin, their blood ties a bond against the petty thieves and extortionists of the waterfront. Tugboats were the great go-betweens of the shipping industry, connecting ocean to port and port to river. They docked ships, towed barges, salvaged freighters, and generally went where other vessels couldn't go. About eight hundred million tons of cargo are still moved by tugboats in the United States every year, but in recent decades the traffic has gradually shifted south in search of cheaper anchorage and offshore oil work. Philadelphia, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Jacksonville now each handle tens of millions of tons every year, and Houston takes in more cargo than New York and New Jersey combined. But one of the true towing capitals of the world, Buck says, is southern Louisiana.

Morgan City sits on the shores of the Atchafalaya River, an hour and a half west of New Orleans, sheltered from hurricanes by forty miles of marsh and cypress swamp. Its skyline is a skeletal framework of oil derricks and cranes,

Latham Smith, the owner of Smith Maritime, watches the submersion of an oceangoing barge,

VII NETWORK

a maneuver that comes dangerously close to sinking the barge, in order to load an exceptionally large cargo. Photographs by Benjamin Lowy.

and its waters seem to breed tugboats like eels on the Sargasso Sea. The tugs tow the derricks, loaded on barges, out to the Gulf of Mexico, then bring them back again after twenty or thirty years' service, to join the mountains of rusted scrap along the river. The first offshore well was dug by Kerr-McGee, in 1947, but the boom didn't begin in earnest until the late nineteen-seventies, after the Arab oil embargo. "This place was no different than the Wild West or a gold strike in the Yukon," one tugboat captain told me. "It was a boomtown without any morals. You'd get friendly with someone in a bar and wake up the next morning on a boat heading into the Gulf. Shanghaiing was a reliable trade."

Things have calmed down since then, but only intermittently, and the Cajuns still try to keep their business in the family. One local phone book lists numbers by nickname as well as by given name—Jimmy (White Bean) Sonier, Michael (Possum) St. Tierre—as if it were still a sleepy fishing community and not a global hub. "We invented this stuff here," another tug captain told me. "I can go into any airport in the world and meet a coonass coming or going on oil business."

About five miles east of Morgan City, below a set of locks that connect the lower Atchafalaya to the inland waterway along the coast, there is a small bridge and a floating casino called the Amelia Belle. In their shadow, two tugboats can sometimes be seen docked on opposite shores. One belongs to Latham Smith, the owner and operator of Smith Maritime; the other belongs to his daughter Rachel and his son Dominique. Both sides of the family specialize in salvage and ocean towing, among the most dangerous and unpredictable lines of tugboat work, and they sometimes bid for the same jobs. But whereas Latham is wealthy, with a fleet of tugs, barges, and a giant derrick crane named for his second wife, Dixie, his children have only the one boat, bought with the help of their mother, Elsbeth. The two sides haven't spoken to each other in five years.

The Smiths are from Florida originally, of Irish and British extraction, but the Cajuns have accepted them as their own. Latham is something of a legend in the towing world. When he and Elsbeth first took to the sea, in the late sixties, they seemed like characters from a picture book: the little tugboat family, island-hopping across the Caribbean, homeschooling five children as they went. Together and separately, Latham and his children have weathered cyclones on the Atlantic, towed barges up the Amazon, and circumnavigated the globe, even as the industry around them has grown ever more regulated and safety-conscious. "They're like the mad scientists of tugboating," Buck told me. "They take on projects that most others are afraid to do."

Latham turned seventy in January, but still oversees every detail of his operation. Short and wiry, with a scraggly white beard and bright, deep-set eyes, he exudes a furtive, almost feral intensity. He has a thinning pate, a bony nose, and craggy features that tend to waver between a frown and a leer. When at work, he never seems to stop moving, as if driven by some spring-powered mechanism, endlessly self-winding. "If he ever retires, I'll have to take speed to keep up with him," Dixie, who is fifty-six, told me one afternoon. We were watching Latham pace across a barge docked along the inland waterway. He was barking into a cell phone while his hair and beard whipped about like waterspouts in the wind. When I asked how much longer he'd be at it, Dixie levelled her eyes at mine. "Until he drops dead," she said. "There is no succession plan."

Even among the local Cajuns—far from a buttoned-up crew—Smith is known for his flamboyance. I've seen him, at various times, in rainbow-colored socks, silver lizard-skin shoes, a brown fedora with an orange feather stuck in it (his "pimp hat," one of his managers called it), and a white leather jacket stitched with playing cards. He has been known to go to tugboat conferences wearing an Afro wig and a zoot suit, or high heels and a feather boa, and he boasts of being the only man he knows who has had strippers pay *him* at a club. "I think what you'll find is that the essence of what I'm trying to do is to do things that are not boring," he told me. "I have an extremely low threshold. I'm not an adrenaline addict, but I like to be near the edge. One of my hobbies in past years was tightrope walking."

Earlier that day, a call had come in from Latham's operations director: the Navy had hired Smith Maritime to transport relief supplies to Haiti. It had been eight days since the country was struck by an earthquake, leaving more than two hundred thousand dead and Port-au-Prince in ruins. During the next few weeks, the American military would ship more than twenty million pounds of food and medical supplies to the island. For now, though, the airport was gridlocked—it was built for thirteen flights a day and was serving up to a hundred and fifty—its control tower cracked. At the port, the northern pier had been shaken to pieces, and its cranes had toppled into the bay. The

southern pier was in slightly better shape, but its broken pilings still had to be repaired by Army divers.

It was a situation tailor-made for the Smiths. Within days of the earthquake, Latham and his son sent separate e-mails to the Military Sealift Command, offering their services. Dominique declared himself "ready to help, self-sufficient," with a "can-do attitude." Latham was more emphatic. "We are not just a tug company," he wrote. "We can go in and get back out in conditions that are horrific to other mariners." Dominique's offer was declined: his boat was half the size of Latham's largest tug, the Elsbeth II, and he didn't own a barge. Latham, having secured the contract, now had less than three days to ship out. He had to fuel and provision the tug, equip the barge with a forklift and a mobile crane that he did not yet own, and fly in a crew from other jobs in the Gulf and the Caribbean. The barge would first go to Guantánamo Bay, where the Navy was to load it with pallets of relief supplies and send it on to Port-au-Prince. Guantánamo was a five-day trip from Morgan City. If the barge wasn't there within eight days, the contract was void.

When I first arrived that morning, Latham was sitting inside a weathered wooden hut next to the dock. He was on the phone with construction companies in Florida and North Carolina, dickering over prices for the crane and the forklift. When he hung up, he grimaced and scratched his beard. "I just spent six hundred thousand dollars," he said. To get the machines to Morgan City in time, he'd have to have them inspected by a local captain and paid for by wire that day. Then he'd have to obtain special "superload" permits from six states to transport heavy equipment on the highways—usually a weeklong process. "I'm up to my eyeballs in it," he said.

Outside, a team of welders was scattered across the top of the barge—a steel expanse four stories high and nearly the size of a football field—sending up bright rooster tails of sparks. They had to attach a hundred and fifty steel D rings by the next morning, for use in strapping down cargo. Beside them, electricians were wiring up generators and tall banks of lights; deckhands were clearing out shipping containers for provisions; and shrink-wrapped bales of springwater were being swayed on board. "This is everyone doing everything at once," Latham said.

Dixie, who'd been a pharmacist before marrying Latham, five years earlier, was in charge of immunizations. "Typhus, cholera, malaria, dengue fever—there are opportunities to die of about twenty-five tropical diseases down there," Latham said. Six sailors would be making the trip south, not including their boss, who planned to meet the boat in Haiti. Dixie had no intention of joining him. She had yet to get her sea legs, and, with her long white hair and mordant wit, had a hard time fitting in with the crew. "I was married to an Iranian for thirteen years, but this is by far the most foreign culture I've ever been exposed to," she told me. "It's like another planet peopled exclusively by smelly, hairy men."

While Dixie went off to a local clinic to schedule the immunizations, she left her toy poodle, Sophie, with Latham. He tugged her along behind him as he wandered around the dock, talking on the phone. (At one point, the dog got a paw stuck between the boards of a gangplank, and a sailor had to come and extract it.) "I've been on about three hundred of these operations, including that Haitian thing in '94," I heard him tell an Army bureaucrat who was on the line. "I was the first one in and the last one out. Everything was planned ahead of time and absolutely nothing went as planned. It just happened as it happened, and it was really better that way. Because, with all due respect to you guys in Washington, you don't know what the fuck you're doing in Haiti."

"That Haitian thing" was a reference to Operation Uphold Democracy, the U.S.-led effort to reinstall Haiti's deposed President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in 1994. Latham's tugs spent ten months shuttling between Haiti and Guantánamo that year, salvaging derelict vessels and supplying fuel to American troops. He'd done similar work in the Gulf War, hauling a "boatload of bombs," as he put it, to Gibraltar. As I watched him rally his troops on the dock that morning, he reminded me of Stonewall Jackson or some other Confederate general. He had the same grizzled authority, the same mixture of the courtly and the profane (his speech was larded with high-flown terms like "trepidatious"). Latham treated relief work as if he were going into battle, and battle as just another business opportunity. "I have no appreciation for war, although it is a traditional human endeavor," he said. "And I'm good at it."

Tugboat captains have always had to make their own fortunes. They're the symbionts of the shipping trade, in constant search of a host. When the first steam-driven tugs appeared, in the early eighteen-hundreds, they were an insult to the art of navigation. Sailors who'd spent their lives tacking up narrow inlets or into secluded bays saw hooking onto a tug as an admission of failure or frailty—like an old man taking the arm of a small boy. As late as 1835, the tugboat historian George Matteson writes, a little brig called the Galen spent two weeks fighting her way up the Mississippi, trying to get from the Gulf to New Orleans. A tug could have taken her there in not much more than a day.

The early tugs were expensive to staff and almost comically difficult to steer. A twelve-hundred-horsepower boat might burn twenty tons of coal in a day and require ten men to shovel it. Every time the tug needed to reverse direction, the engine had to be stopped and re-started, by which point the boat might well have run aground. Wheelhouse and engine room were only tenuously connected. To change course or speed, the captain had to send his orders down to the engineer via a system of gongs and bells threaded through the boat, as if phoning a foreign country. The busiest tugs, Matteson writes, averaged more than five hundred bell commands in an eight-hour shift. On trickier maneuvers, the rate could rise to six per minute.

Modern tugs are very different beasts. They can have ten thousand horsepower and carry a hundred thousand gallons of fuel. Their propulsion systems have evolved from coal to diesel, paddle wheel to propeller, single-

The Elsbeth II along the waters of Bayou Shaffer. Smith designed and built his first tug, the Elsbeth, in 1968, and lived on it with his wife and

screw to double-screw to fully revolving, azimuth-mounted drives that can spin a boat like a top. If tugs were once an insult to navigation, they now make other ships seem like "a box with a rule book," as Latham puts it. Most cargo ships spend their time tracing latitudinal lines. They may go five thousand miles without changing course. Then, when things finally get interesting—when land heaves into view and headlands rise, when currents intersect and winds barrel down from surrounding slopes, when a narrow channel must be negotiated under bridges, between breakwaters, and into a crowded port—the tug captain takes over.

Latham is true to the breed in some ways. He's a cheap bastard and an exceptional seaman. He prides himself on his self-reliance and can do every job on a boat—from rigging towlines to welding steel. "My father is a MacGyver," Dominique told me.

His competition is nearly as fierce. The shipping industry has gone on a construction spree lately, building behemoths more than a thousand feet long with as much cargo space as eleven thousand trucks. "They have double the capacity of ships that were trading on the same lanes just ten years ago," Buck McAllister told me. The larger ships mean that fewer but more powerful tugs are required to tow the same amount of cargo, and shipping schedules have accelerated dramatically. Break-bulk cargo, laboriously sorted onshore, has long since given way to uniform steel containers, transferred to truck or train by crane or conveyor belt. Tugs that could once afford to lie at port for a week or two now have turnarounds of less than twenty-four hours. Latham's frenetic pace, in other words, is business as usual. At one point, in the middle of a phone call, he unzipped his fly and relieved himself over the side of the barge as he talked. "He does that all over the world," one of his crew members told me.

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young family for much of the next two decades.

The Haiti job had arrived at a good time. Up and down the inland waterway, hundreds of tugs were sitting in their berths, waiting for the oil business to pick up. "The workload is probably thirty per cent slower than usual," Latham said. "And this is the time of year when it's already thirty or forty per cent down." To pull in the slack, Smith Maritime had been taking jobs wherever they could be found: hauling refinery modules to Port Arthur, sinking a decommissioned warship for an artificial reef off Key West. But the diciest and most lucrative work was in West Africa. The region's offshore oil industry was rapidly expanding, often with used equipment from the Gulf. "In Nigeria, everything is negotiated," Latham said. "After you sign a contract, they think it's just the beginning. You want to bloat the price, skim the top, insure the vessel, and make sure you're making money before you even deliver. Because if you don't think there are going to be problems you're a damn fool and a jackass."

In the summer of 2008, the Elsbeth II towed two barges to Africa, one of them with a liftboat perched on top. A liftboat is a vessel used to service offshore oil rigs. It has a large open deck, one or more cranes, and three enormous hydraulic legs. The legs can be dropped to the ocean floor, turning the ship into a stable platform, or jacked up above the boat, so that they sway more than sixty feet in the air. It's an extremely awkward thing to ferry across the Atlantic, and too heavy to pick up and set onto a barge. To load it, Latham first had to flood his barge with water until it floated just below the surface—a procedure precariously close to sinking it. Then he positioned the liftboat over it and pumped the water back out. Tug and barges went on to cross the ocean to Nigeria without mishap. "People had done that before, but they usually lost legs on the trip over," John Patton, the captain for the first segment of that trip and for the forthcoming trip to Haiti, told me. "We didn't."

The Nigerian coast is among the most dangerous in the world. In a period of ten days last April, bands of AK-47-wielding pirates attacked three ships and took eleven men hostage. In August, Patton took another barge to West Africa, this one meant for transporting oil. Rather than risk attack, he pulled up off the Nigerian coast and informed the buyers that he'd arrived. "They were trying to entice us to come in," he says. "That's what they do. Then they hold you hostage for the same amount that they paid to get you there." Patton, who is sixty-three, has been a tug captain for nearly forty years. A lean, wolfish ex-marine with a laconic voice and a droopy mustache, he was wounded three times in Vietnam—"I cleaned floors and shot people," he told me—and isn't easily rattled by crises at sea. On the trip in question, he didn't bother negotiating. He just called in the barge's coördinates, dropped its anchor, and sped away in the tug. "We turned off our electronics so they couldn't track us till we got a hundred miles' head start," he says. "Our next stop, twenty-eight days later, was Dominica."

Carrying firearms for self-defense is discouraged or forbidden on most commercial vessels, but the rise of Somali and Nigerian piracy has led some companies to rethink their policies. "We may have been able to cook up a couple of surprises for them," Patton told me. The following night, I was sitting in the galley of the derrick barge, when Latham plopped into the chair beside me, visibly exhausted. "I need a new body," he said. He was having trouble getting transport permits for the forklift coming from North Carolina—it was wider and heavier than expected, and some states wouldn't allow it on the highway at night. But what worried him most was the barge's safety once it arrived in Haiti. A lightly manned vessel, piled high with food, is an irresistible target for looters, and the fine for stowaways can be twenty thousand dollars and plane fare home—both payable by the tugboat company.

"They're out there sleeping in dugout canoes," Latham said. "They're desperate, they're starving. Nothing against them as human beings, but, if you let one on, after an hour there'll be three hundred, and an hour later you'll be a stripped carcass." He turned and snapped at one of his crew: "There are some twelve-gauge shotguns on that boat, but there's no ammo. What the fuck good is a shotgun without ammo?"

"I think John took off the shotguns."

"Then we've fucking got to get some new ones. We need ammo and we need slingshots. You have to defend yourself or die. That's the rules. There is a guy who has to get something in his belly or he'll kill you. And I ain't going to be et."

Latham's survival instinct has no clear genetic root, nor does his equal and opposite tendency to throw himself into harm's way. His father was a small-town lawyer in landlocked central Florida, his mother a music teacher.

His older brother and a younger sister were lawyers, his youngest sister had a Ph.D. in psychology, and Latham's failure to follow suit was a deep disappointment to his father. As a boy at St. Andrew's preparatory school in Sewanee, Tennessee, he excelled in mathematics and track, but mostly dreamed of the sea. Before getting shipped off to St. Andrew's, at the age of eleven, he'd made a kayak out of wood and canvas. He dubbed it the U.S.S. Idiot, in honor of his friends' opinion of him when he began the project, but it worked just fine. Six years later, he was halfway done building a catamaran when Yale offered him a scholarship. "That ruined all my plans," he says. "It was like coitus interruptus."

New Haven, as Latham recalls, was "a cold, wet place, with people telling me what to do." He arrived in the fall of 1957, at the height of the Eisenhower years, when wearing anything but Brooks Brothers or J. Press could get you labelled a beatnik, he says. "They had, to put it politely, the establishment mind-set, which does not allow for certain adventures of the mind and the body." Latham was a "fidgety" youth, by his own account, prone to spending hours in the library studying anything but the assignment at hand. By the end of his freshman year, he claims, he had the lowest grade-point average at Yale. "It takes more effort to do that than to be nonchalant." He took a leave of absence and lived with friends at Harvard, where he rode a Harley and did odd jobs for the mathematician Claude Shannon, the father of information theory. Then he returned to Florida, met a girl—she was playing the organ in a chapel one evening, and he followed the sound till he found her—got married, and went back to New Haven for one last, failed year at Yale, before heading south again.

Florida, in the early sixties, was still mostly undeveloped, its swampy backwaters a haven for rednecks and hippie dropouts. Latham became a little of both. He began by driving a bulldozer for his father-in-law near Daytona Beach, clearing land for I-95, tomato farms, and watermelon patches. Then he moved to the Everglades, on the Gulf Coast, where his wife, Elsbeth, took a job as a fire spotter in a lookout tower and Latham worked as a stonecrab fisherman. They had two girls in four years—Rachel in 1961, and Rhea in 1965—and always seemed to be short of money. Yet, in the flickering frames of their home movies from that period, their lives seem suffused with joy. Elsbeth has hip-length red hair and a pale, freckled face lit with a determined innocence. Latham is lithe and deeply tanned, with shaggy hair and a satyr's crooked grin. His brother, Spencer, was a civil-rights lawyer in Miami who'd done work for Allen Ginsberg and Martin Luther King, Jr., among others, and he gradually drew Latham's family into his circle. Elsbeth attended the March on Washington in 1963, and when King came to Florida the following year she and Latham joined him for the protests in St. Augustine.

"He was very much anti-establishment," John Patton, who first met Latham in the late sixties, remembers. "I had just come back from Vietnam—I've got a coffee cup that says, 'The only Woodstock I knew in '69 was an M-14.' So I didn't have much use for long-haired leaping gnomes." Yet Latham had more grit than it seemed. In 1968, the family moved to Miami and he began to do repair work on tugs and other boats. (He had taught himself welding by then, as well as metal fabrication.) The tugs struck him as by far the more interesting vessels. "With a ship, you have to go the straights and narrows. Tugs can go up the nooks and crannies," he says. "With tugs, you can change your mind and do what you want to."

He took careful note of what needed repair—where water collected and timbers rotted, engines failed and hulls were unstable—and what didn't. "I stole every good idea of every boat I ever saw," he told me. Then he set about building a tug of his own.

"The following program has been deemed unsuitable for Marjorie and Ray Kinnzle, of Short Falls, Ohio."

There was, to be a sure, a question of financing. "I was considered to be totally insane," Latham says. "And insane people don't borrow money easily." A tugboat isn't cheap to build. Latham's had to be as powerful as a freighter and as maneuverable as a Zodiac. It needed cables, winches, and a fully equipped galley, a high wheelhouse for peering down at barges and a heavy keel for staying upright in storms. A good boat could cost half a million dollars in those days—a tenth of what it would now—yet Latham had little savings. Worse, he had no blueprints, no templates, no tug-building experience aside from his repair work. Although he scoured local bookstores and libraries for plans, he found them of only moderate use. "Damn few naval architects live out of sight of land for a year," he says. "They just interact with

college types and read formulas." Instead, he followed his own instincts and observations. "I guess I would compare it to how a bird knows how to build a nest," he says. "You fly around and get twigs, and it just stays up."

Every line of a tug's design entails a compromise of some sort: the larger the propellers, the deeper the draft; the stronger the engine, the greater the fuel consumption. "For everything you want, you have to give something up," Latham says. Harbor tugs that spend their time docking ships and shuffling barges can sit low in the water. But to navigate Lake Okeechobee or the inland waterways of the Florida Keys, or to snake his way to any of a thousand cheap inland anchorages worldwide, Latham needed a boat with a flat bottom that drew less than seven feet of water. "It's a huge part of profitability, the shallow draft," he says. "And it's more fun." He needed twin propellers to negotiate the twisting inlets along the way, and a high bow to breast Atlantic swells. He needed berths for two or more crewmen as well as his family, and at least a few of the comforts of home. When the boat was done, Latham intended to live on it.

"Frankly, I was skeptical," Elsbeth, who is sixty-nine, told me recently. "Anyone would have some doubts about putting their family on an untested boat." For the next two years, Latham did his repair work by day and most of his tug work at night. "I built it when most people sleep," he says. He began with three thousand dollars and "a big pile of dirty steel," scavenged from sites around Miami. The three-quarter-inch plate for the hull came from some discarded oil tanks on Biscayne Boulevard. The framing was from a demolished warehouse by the interstate. An old telephone truck, fitted with a boom, served as a crane, and an empty lot along the Miami River as a shipyard. Latham did much of the work with Hans Peter Newe, a German sailor who'd come from Mexico on a sailing ship and decided to stick around. Newe was a gifted woodworker and shipwright. He spoke seven languages, read Shakespeare in Spanish, and had been a stunt double for Marlon Brando in "Mutiny on the Bounty," Elsbeth says. "They had a symbiotic experience, building that boat," she told me. "Peter had the carpentry, Latham had the ability to scrounge the money and bend the steel."

"And this is my cousin Dave, who handles the conventional wisdom."

Theirs was a strange, hybrid beast of a boat. It had a curved, pointed bow like a Viking ship's and a slab-sided wheelhouse of marine-varnished wood. It had a hobbit-hole bedroom for the girls, tucked behind the galley, and a piano bolted to the floor in the captain's quarters, for Elsbeth to play. (Later, a stuffed moose head hung above the bed, slowly losing its hair to the tropical humidity.) The railings were of exotic purpleheart, the panelling of angelique, the floorboards of American pine, laid on wide-set joists to give them more spring and make them easy on the feet. The propellers were oversized and driven by two five-hundred-horsepower Caterpillar engines—both still running, forty years later—and the hull drew less than six feet of water. "You take that design to a shipyard and ask them to build a tug and they'll laugh you out of the door," John Patton told me. But Latham went on to build three more like it, each substantially larger and more versatile. When I asked Patton why more builders didn't copy Latham's design, he laughed. "A lot of people don't think they're as functional as they really are. Besides, it's his signature, and nobody wants to copy Latham Smith's signature. It's like Elvis Presley wearing his collar up."

They finished the tug in the spring of 1969, heaving it onto a pair of steel skids and down into the green Miami. In a Super 8 film of the sea trial, Allen Ginsberg is along for the ride, the wind tossing his already tousled hair. He and his partner, Peter Orlovsky, had become fascinated by the tug—Orlovsky had even written a poem about it—and Latham, for all his suspicions of Eastern intellectuals, had taken to Ginsberg as well. "What I was doing was strange to the maritime community," he told me. "But Allen had worked in the Brooklyn shipyard, and he would come and ask me questions in a very thoughtful and gentle way, to get me to verbalize what was maybe visual but not verbal. To me, it was like I'd had a vision, and Allen wanted to penetrate that veil."

In the film, they stand side by side in the wheelhouse, both wearing thick black glasses—an homage of sorts, in Latham's case, since he was rarely seen in them again—grinning into the sun like two small boys on a Ferris wheel.

Rachel was in third grade when her parents pulled her out of Catholic school and moved the family onto the tug. "I wasn't too happy about it," she told me. "No. Hell no. I had my little

routines, and there was no TV." Shy and bespectacled, with her mother's freckles and carroty hair, she was a bookworm, with little interest in the sea. On the day of the launch, she was deep into a biography of Thomas Edison, and she later reorganized the ship's library according to the Dewey decimal system. (Latham, for his part, favored medical and engineering texts. "It's simple logistics," he told me. "If you take novels on board, you need a cubic yard. If you take technical manuals, you need cubic feet.") It was only later, Rachel says, that she realized that she had begun a great adventure.

Building the tug had put the family seventy-five thousand dollars in debt, despite all Latham's economies and a loan from his mother. Given that they'd never made more than a few thousand a year, this was a fortune—the payments on the engines alone came to fifteen hundred a month. To stay afloat, the tug had to keep moving, stringing jobs together from one port to the next, in what was known as tramping. Their first well-paying job took them from Miami to Walker's Cay, in the Bahamas, towing a bargeload of red golf carts for Bebe Rebozo, the Florida banker and a close personal friend of Richard Nixon. Later, they hauled loads up and down the East Coast, to the Caribbean and South America. They took I-beams to Trinidad and nuclear-reactor vessels to Norfolk and New York. They carried bauxite-mining equipment into British Guiana and drill pipe up the Amazon, hanging kerosene lanterns to light their way. They salvaged a ship full of green bananas off Puerto Rico and towed blackstrap molasses to rum distilleries in Barbados, St. Thomas, St. Martin, and Puerto Rico.

"When we started out, you could do anything," Elsbeth says. "You could pick up your crew from the homeless section of the DuPont Plaza parking lot and take 'em out and sober 'em up." They called them "tug trash" in those days—big, beer-swollen men who lurched from boat to boat for thirty or forty dollars a day and a square meal or two. "The other tugboats, they always went for the old alkies and the deadbeat people," Elsbeth says. "We took a different approach." For the first six months, Hans Peter Newe served as co-captain and crew, but the rumble and smoke of the engines eventually drove him off. (He later made two solo crossings of the Atlantic in a small boat, Latham says, then moved to Belize to build wooden ships.) To replace him, Latham took to hiring any sailor or surfer who wandered past, and whose conversation he could half abide. "It was the time of the flower children, the Beatles, and the long skirts," Elsbeth says. "We found people everywhere, just everywhere—beautiful young people. These hippies would come down on a one-way ticket from Florida to Rincón, Puerto Rico, and they'd run out of money and get desperate. So we'd hire them just for the ride back to the States." At one point, a young Harvard-trained physician named Andrew Weil tried to hitch a ride to South America, hoping to study hallucinogens and higher consciousness. (His research was later the basis for his best-seller "The Natural Mind.") Latham declined to take him. "He had the most unnatural fucking mind that I've ever seen," he says. "He would have been a very heavy burden to carry through the jungle."

When regulations began to tighten, in the seventies, and a minimum of two licensed sailors were required on every tug, Latham and Elsbeth both put in for captain's licenses. She got hers first. "He didn't study for the test," she says. "He thought he knew everything already." Elsbeth took charge of the girls' education as well. In the back pages of *National Geographic*, she had found an advertisement for the Calvert Homeschool Curriculum—a venerable system of textbooks, worksheets, and school supplies that American servicemen had long used. The girls would have class in the morning and do assignments after lunch. In the afternoons, they'd paint with watercolors, practice the piano, or sit around singing Joan Baez songs or the Irish rebel ballads that Elsbeth loved.

In those early, vagabonding years, Rachel would spend hours just staring at the sea and its quicksilver light. "I was immersed in this fairy world," she says, "imagining all the possible places or lives for myself, wondering how far the ocean went, or how it would be if I could walk on top of it, or run beside the boat. What it would be like if I fell in." When they reached shore, on their molasses runs to Puerto Rico, she and Rhea would visit the wooden cargo ships that brought salt from Anguilla, and watch the sailors slap dominoes on the dock. Or they'd wander into Old San Juan, pushing their little sister Rebekah in a stroller across the cobblestones. (She was born in Florida, in 1970, and they were back on the boat five days later.) If they were lucky, their mother would take them to the fortress of El Morro for a history lesson, or to the Librería Escorial, to buy Magnum Easy Eye editions of Charles Dickens or Jack London.

As for Latham, his opinion of formal schooling hadn't improved much, Rachel says. "It was 'Oh, they can't teach you anything. You'll learn more here in the real world.' " Still, if the mood seized him, he might take them on the deck to look through a sextant or trace constellations, or teach them to tie a Turk's Head knot or a Monkey's Fist. Now and again, he dropped them off on desert islands with Elsbeth, to spend the day dashing through the surf or leaping off dunes—or, on one moonlit beach in French Guiana, to watch baby sea turtles shuck off their shells and scuttle to the water. By the time the tug returned, the children would be burned to blistering. "My father's sense was that what doesn't hurt them will just make them stronger," Rachel says.

At night, if their cabin was too stifling and hot from the engines throbbing next door, they'd drag their bedsheets outside and crawl into the Boston whaler on deck, to drift asleep beneath the spangled sky while Elsbeth played piano. "We just had this extraordinary sense of being wild and free," Rachel says.

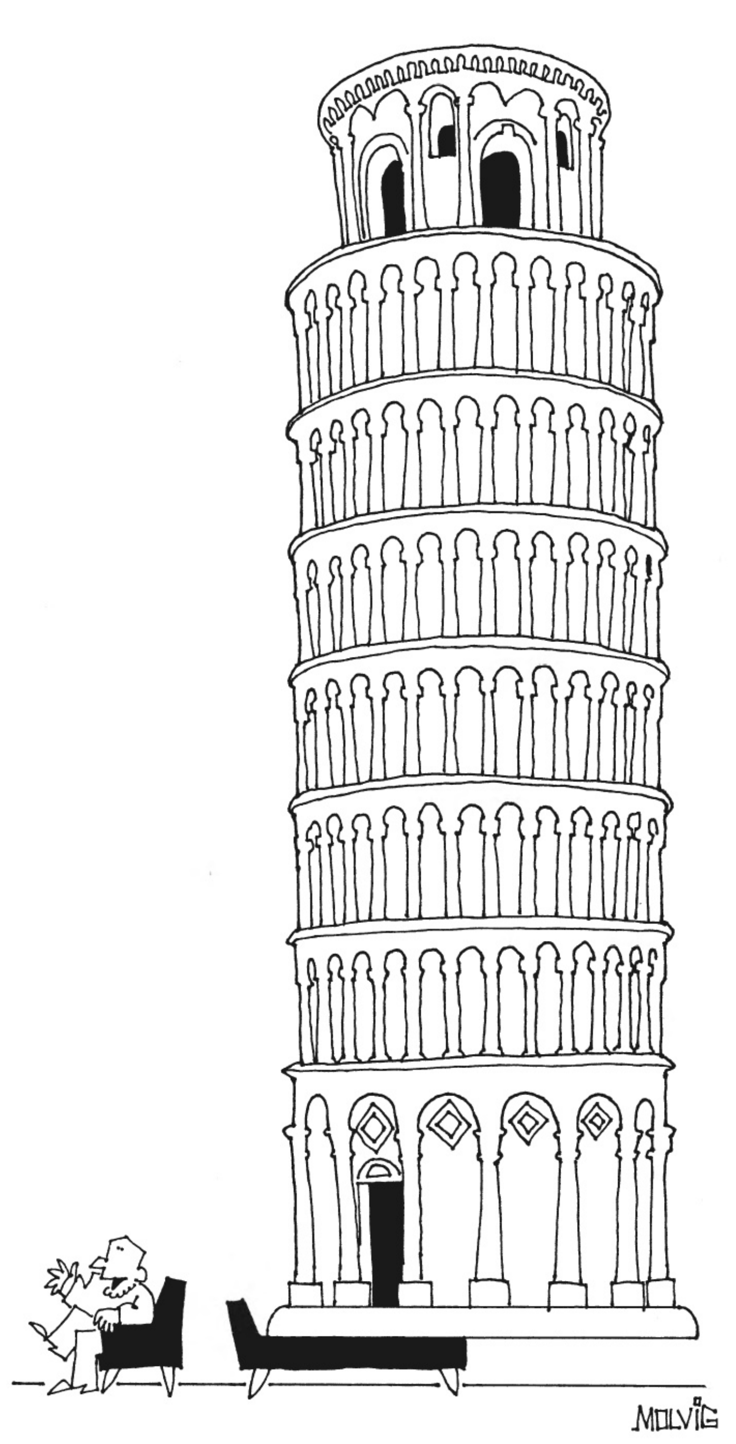
If life on the tug seemed a romantic endeavor to Latham—"Are you kidding?" he told me. "We wanted to see the world!"—it was often a grind for Elsbeth. In addition to teaching and taking care of the children, she cooked, stood watch, managed the crew, and occasionally hauled the ropes. "I worked tremendously hard," she told me. "Physically hard. I did always long for more time ashore. But even when the tug was paid for Latham wouldn't stop."

In 1974, when Elsbeth was seven months pregnant with Dominique, the family finally moved to the island of Dominica, which gave the baby its name. (Elsbeth would eventually settle there permanently, after her divorce.) But less than three years later they were off again, this time to French Guiana. Their house stood on the banks of the Maroni River, in a coastal village on the border of Suriname. Built by convicts from a nearby penal colony made famous by the movie "Papillon," it was surrounded by jungle, its ceilings traversed by tarantulas, the air so fecund that books turned green and fell to pieces in your hands. "I loved it," Elsbeth says. She washed their clothes in rainwater and often worked by the light of a lantern, because the house had no electricity. At dusk, the air would fill with the howl and chatter of monkeys, gathered in the surrounding trees.

To Latham, the situation was less enchanting. He was away for long stretches, dredging the river on a contract from the French government, and angrier and angrier at Elsbeth's absence from the boat. He was never violent, he says, but his wife and children remember things differently. Once in Dominica, Rachel told me, she threw herself between her parents to protect her mother, only to be knocked to the ground herself, and the troubles continued in Guiana. When she was fourteen, Rachel asked to be sent to boarding school, just to get away from her father.

Outwardly, at least, the family's circumstances slowly improved after that. In 1978, they moved back to Florida, where Elsbeth had her fifth and final child, Hannah, and Latham turned his efforts to building a larger, more comfortable boat. The Elsbeth II, completed in 1987, was his crowning achievement. Three times the size of his first tug and six times as powerful, it had three propellers and two wheelhouses—one perched thirty feet above the other, on an elevator shaft cut from an old dredge pipe. Latham's frugality was now veneered with luxury. The galley was hung with abstract paintings and folk carvings from South America; the quarters were generously scaled, even for adults. On the first tug, one berth was nicknamed the Coffin.

Dominique was a teen-ager by then,



"I think we made real progress today."

and already obsessed with the sea. "The only thing I was good at was being on the water," he told me. Unlike Rachel, he had never taken to his mother's schooling, and spent more and more of his time in the engine room—first with his father, then with a team of Finnish engineers who periodically came to service the tug's Wärtsilä engines. It wasn't long before Dominique could pull the engines apart and put them back together on his own, replace the pistons or help balance the turbine blades like a Swiss watch.

The first real test of his skill came a year after the tug was completed. Latham had taken a job towing a barge with an oil rig on it from Sabine Pass, Texas, to Lake Maracaibo, in Venezuela. It was early December, when the trade winds blow strong and steady, and Latham anticipated an easy tow—the rig even had a crew of more than a dozen Mexican painters on board to refurbish it as they went. They had crossed the Gulf and the Yucatán Channel and were nearing the southern coast of Jamaica when the storm hit.

"There were thirty-five-, forty-knot gales with seas to eighteen feet," Dominique remembers. "We were drifting toward the Honduran coast, and we didn't have very good radio communication." On board the barge, a forklift broke free and smashed everything in its way, then a towline snapped and the oil rig began to come apart. "The welds are starting to crack and the painting crew can see these legs about to fall—I'm talking two hundred feet tall and forty feet wide. It's a massive structure, and they're starting to panic." On the tug, a rope wrapped around one of the propellers, disabling it, and the engineer had a breakdown of his own. "He went into the fetal position in the hallway," Elsbeth remembers. "The strain of the storm was just terrible."

A tugboat is a hard thing to sink. When attached to a barge, its total length and depth can be greater than a supertanker's, and it's much more stoutly constructed. "You just seal all your holes and you're a bubble on the ocean," Latham told me. Break the towline, though, and the equation changes. The runaway barge must now be reattached, in high waves that threaten to heave it into the tug like a thousand-ton battering ram. "The tug has huge propellers that act like parachutes when it stops, but the barge is very heavy and streamlined," Latham said. "The tug will stop in three hundred feet, but the barge will maintain its speed for half a mile—it has a glide slope to destruction like a 747."

To keep a safe distance from the barge, a tug "cannot and must not lose power," Latham says. And so, on the night of the storm, when the engineer of record finally staggered to his berth and locked the door, Dominique took his place. "I had no choice," he says. "It was all hands on deck." For the next three days, as the boat careered between walls of water and the crew struggled to reattach the towline, and as a Coast Guard helicopter shuttled the painters from the barge to the tug in high winds and Latham steered the ship, Dominique seemed to never stop running. From engine room to wheelhouse and back, he took orders, shouted reports, switched generators, changed fuel filters, and checked oil, water, and temperature levels. One of the painters, hunkered in the galley with the other seasick passengers, watched him hurtle past for what seemed like the hundredth time and dubbed him Brother Kilowatt. The name stuck. "I finally fell asleep in the engine room, lying on the steel plates," Dominique says. "It was like 'Das Boot.' "

The gale blew itself out the next day. When the barge was finally reattached and towed to Grand Cayman, the insurers declared the rig a total loss.

"Really, in all honesty, I grew up too young," Dominique told me. "When you're working hard at sea at fifteen, and you go drink a beer ashore in some foreign country, you see some seedy things. I was the crew's little mascot." By seventeen, Dominique had become his father's chief engineer; at eighteen, he dropped out of high school; at twenty-one, he earned his captain's license; at twenty-three, he commanded his first transatlantic voyage.

The new tug gave play to adventures impossible in a smaller boat. It had enough power to tow an aircraft carrier and enough fuel to reach Africa without a refill. The Smiths took it to the mouth of the Congo, up the Orinoco and the Río de la Plata. They took it to Tristan de Cunha, the most remote inhabited island in the world, and past

Krakatoa. When a ship full of kiwis went adrift in the Bermuda Triangle, they towed it to Belgium before the fruit went bad. Their circumnavigation of the globe in 1991—from Brownsville, Texas, to Brazil, around the Cape of Good Hope to Singapore, then to British Columbia, and through the Panama Canal to Mobile, Alabama—was a triumph of tramping, perhaps unequalled by any American tug in half a century. A few years later, Latham and Dominique hauled a Second World War submarine from Istanbul to New Orleans and up the Mississippi River to Arkansas. In pictures from the expedition, Latham stands astride the open hatch: Ahab posing with his catch.

Like Dominique, Rachel continued to work for her father after leaving home—albeit at a safe remove, she says. After graduating from Hampshire College, in 1985, she stayed in Northampton, Massachusetts, and eventually set up an office at home to manage her father's fleet, booking contracts and coördinating trips. But even as Latham was becoming a legend in the towing world, she and Dominique told me, his behavior took a darker turn at home: he was a compulsive philanderer, and still given to flights of rage and even abuse. "He had this belief that the laws of normal society didn't apply to him, and by having this boat he had total control of his domain, of this floating world," Rachel says. "He used to joke that 'the only crime is getting caught.' "

Latham would rather not talk about those years. "I'm thinking about having a future instead," he told me in Morgan City. He blamed his family's bitterness on his divorce and remarriage—"It certainly wasn't anything that I wanted, or that I did"—and his refusal to retire early. Yet even Dixie acknowledged that the family's dysfunction had deeper roots. "Have you read 'Mosquito Coast'?" she asked me. "You know how it starts like an idyllic adventure, and you scratch the surface and everything is broken?" She paused. "They have their reasons."

When the Smiths finally divorced, in 2000, they divided up their land and their two houses in Palatka, Florida. Elsbeth received a cash settlement; Latham got the tugboat business. He had been planning to pass it on to his children eventually, he told me, but changed his mind. "Hoping your kids do all right is a great instinct and I'm loaded with it," he said. "But I've watched hereditary princes in industrial families, and they don't seem to do well. I don't think I should put my children through that."

If nothing else is conventional about the Smiths' story, the last part is. In an industry ruled by family-owned businesses, inheritance struggles are inevitable. The McAllisters, for instance, have had a succession of family skirmishes over the years, starting with Buck's great-great-grandfather, whose second wife sued her stepson for ownership of the tugboats. Buck's great-grandfather went on to fire his son for converting a steam tug to diesel (a prescient move, as it turned out); his grandfather and great-uncle spent twenty years wrestling for company control; and his father nearly lost the tugs to a businessman brought in to save them. "The current era is one of uncharacteristic peace," Buck says.

Other families have had similar issues. Nine years ago, in Portland, Maine, an old-time captain named Arthur Fournier sold a fleet of his tugs to the McAllisters. The two families were close: Arthur's eldest living son, Brian, was named after Buck's father, and the McAllisters kept him on as president of the operation in Portland. Nevertheless, last July, Arthur, now seventy-eight, launched a new company in the port. He has since undercut his son's prices, swiped one or more of his clients—depending on which family you ask—and sued Brian for defamation of character. The McAllisters, for their part, sued Arthur for unfair competition and breach of contract. Neither Fournier, in any case, is ready to quit the tugboat business.

"What would you rather be?" one tug captain asked me. "If you had the opportunity to be a tugboat captain or a bank teller, what would you choose?" Yet the footloose spirit that once sent sailors to sea has been slowly starched out of the business—mostly with good reason. Beginning with the Exxon Valdez oil spill, in 1989, regulations have ratcheted up with each high-profile accident: in 1993, when the tugboat Mauvilla, lost in fog, hit a bridge in Alabama, sending an Amtrak train plunging into the Whangaehu River; in 1996, when a barge towed by the tug Scandia ran aground in Rhode Island, dumping nearly a million gallons of oil into Block Island Sound; in 2002, when two asphalt barges towed by the Robert Y. Love struck a highway bridge in Oklahoma, dumping eight cars and three trucks into the Arkansas River.

"hey fans! im at bat,. btm 9th, bases loaded, score tied--oops, jst got called strike1!"

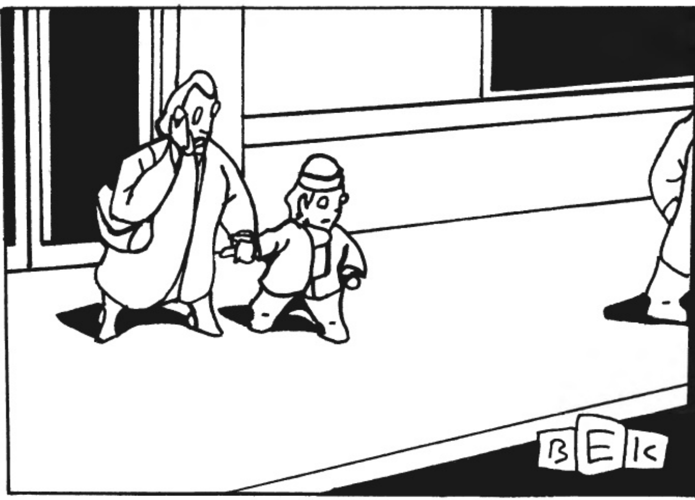
"Used to be you could get away with just about murder," another tug captain told me. "We've entered a new age."

Most tug captain's licenses now require at least three years' training at sea, if not a four-year degree from a maritime academy. Background checks, safety inspections, and drug and alcohol tests are mandatory, as are certifications in radar, firefighting, first aid, and social responsibility. As a result, in the past decade oil spills have decreased by more than eighty per cent compared with the nineteen-nineties, and crew fatalities and injuries have been nearly cut in half.

The new severity has its good points, one McAllister captain admitted. "I get into some pretty cool shit, running mock drills for catastrophic events. Who's hiding a bomb on a pier? What if someone overpowers a tug?" Yet the tramping days of Latham's youth, when a sailor could spend his shore leave exploring the markets of Bangkok, the bars of Panama City, are gone. Towing a thousand-foot container ship will always be an awe-inspiring experience—the ropes as thick as tree trunks and spools the size of houses, like children's toys for giants, and everything dwarfed by the immensity of the sea. But, in the meagre hours between just-in-time contracts, today's crews are mostly confined to their ships, at slips sealed off from land by high fences and razor wire. "People say, 'Oh, you've travelled so much, you've been to so many beautiful places!' " Rachel told me. "And I think, Yeah, I've been to all the industrial backwaters of the world."

Rachel is forty-eight now and has two grown daughters of her own. Her red hair is cut short and hennaed, her bookworm's glasses replaced by contacts, her broad Irish face lit by something of her mother's incandescence, in their old movies. She lives alone in New Orleans, in a double-shotgun Victorian near Frenchmen's Street, its walls lined with shelves of English and French fiction, Buddhist philosophy, seafaring histories, and bric-a-brac from her travels. She doesn't like to sugarcoat her history, she told me. "But I don't know what I would trade off. You get the life you get, and I wouldn't have wanted to give up on all these adventures. I can't believe the shit that we lived."

In 2005, Rachel, Dominique, and Elsbeth pooled their savings, mortgaged two of their houses, sold a third, and bought a twenty-two-year-old tug. Designed for the Alaskan coast, the Miss Lis, named for Dominique's wife, was a class smaller than the Elsbeth II but shared many of its virtues: sturdy build, shallow draft, storm-worthy behavior. They docked it in Morgan City, where the oil business was still booming (Latham arrived around the same time and set up shop across the river), and where Rachel could manage the business from her home office. Dominique would fly in every month from his house in St. Augustine, Florida, to trade shifts with another captain. It was a risky move by anyone's standard. The tug was a "fugitive asset," in banker's terms—a million-dollar boat that a single bad decision could scrap. And, like Latham forty years earlier, the Smiths planned to take it where other tugs couldn't go.



"I have to take him to his class for things kids used to learn on their own."

Earlier this year, I met Rachel and Dominique in Mexico, where their tugboat had been hired for a typically touchy enterprise. Their employer, a firm called Dragamex, wanted them to tow a pair of enormous dredging machines into an inlet near Manzanillo, on the Pacific Coast. Dragamex had hoped to put off the operation for a week or two, but had reconsidered when the radar showed a storm front massing to the west. The dredges had to be in place before it struck.

As we pulled out of the harbor on my second morning, the wind was rising. It lofted flocks of frigate birds and pelicans high above the tug, then plunged them down again on scything wings. Dominique scanned the horizon, smudged gray by approaching rain. "It's rougher than I was hoping, for sure," he said. Standing next to Rachel on the tug's flying bridge, on the deck above the wheelhouse, he kept his face to the wind and his back ramrod straight, like a wooden figurehead. He had his father's bantam frame and scruffy blond hair, his sparky temperament and salty yet formal speech. But he prided himself on the sobriety of his operation. His father was a master tugboater, he admitted, and had taught him most of what he knew. "But I don't miss the out-of-control part of it," he said. Dominique kept his crew on strict twenty-eight-day shifts, rather than on indefinite contracts, as Latham often did, and he had no patience for cowboys. "His is a different type of sailor," he said, "hard to keep in check."

Tugboat captains, like quarterbacks and fighter pilots, are born as much as made. When two vessels are tethered together, their movements become exponentially more complex. Steering

them through tight turns and choppy seas while adjusting for currents and tides, anticipating drift, and operating independent propellers requires a degree of timing, coördination, and spatial reasoning rare in humans. Even if a sailor can do it, he may run up a quarter million dollars in damages before he's trained. "That's one slip of the wheel," Buck told me. When his cousin A.J. graduated from maritime academy, he added, his grandfather half-jokingly tried to send him to their rivals, the Morans, for his first job. "When you're done banging up their tugs," he said, "you can come drive ours."

Technology has taken some of the risk out of the business. Many new tugs can be steered by joystick—though most captains disdain it—and trainees often learn to operate them on land, in mock wheelhouses surrounded by virtual harbors. (When I tried my hand at this recently, at the Maritime Simulation Institute, in Middletown, Rhode Island, I spent an hour doing doughnuts in Los Angeles Harbor; I couldn't seem to stop ramming my bow into the container ship I was towing—and that was before the computer called in the heavy fog and twenty-foot seas.) But a virtual storm is still no substitute for a howling gale, or the mad tilt and groaning steel of a ship on rough seas.

By the time we arrived at the inlet, it was looking narrower and choppier than I remembered from the day before. The entrance had a long breakwater on either side, perpendicular to the coast, piled with limestone boulders and huge concrete castings. The channel between them was about two hundred yards long and about seventy yards wide—three times the width of the barge. But the ocean current would be shoving us toward the rocks as we came in, and, if our timing was off, the crashing surf at the entrance could yank our towline in two.

"Let's wait fifteen minutes or half an hour and see if the waves go down," a Dragamex spotter onshore suggested, over the radio.

Dominique demurred. "The longer we wait, the larger the waves may become," he said.

"O.K., let's do it."

Dominique climbed down to the stern station, behind the wheelhouse, and looked back over the tug's massive towing winch. He cranked in the line, to keep the barge on a tight leash, then climbed back to the flying bridge and gunned the engines. Glancing back every few seconds, he turned the tug into the mouth of the inlet, each hand on a lever, throttling the propellers forward and back, adjusting the rudder as he went. The wind was blowing at thirty knots now, churning the waves into froth. As the barge swung around behind us, it burst through the surf and slowly drifted to the right at an angle. A second, smaller tug, owned by Dragamex, had attached a towline to the barge's stern, and, like circus trainers with an unruly elephant, the two boats leaned hard against their ropes, trying to bring the dumb beast in line. "Dominique, watch it!" Rachel shouted, her voice tight, then looked on helplessly as the barge headed toward the rocks.

Tugboat accidents almost always unfold in slow motion. If a course isn't corrected five or ten minutes ahead of time, it's usually too late. "I've gotten a call from a captain saying that he had a problem, and we had our lawyer on the road before the collision occurred," Buck told me. Dominique had better instincts than most. At the age of thirty-five, he'd probably spent a hundred thousand hours at sea, yet most jobs still came down to a do-or-die moment like this. "The tugboat business is ninety per cent boredom and ten per cent terror," he liked to say.

Swinging the nose of the tug around, he pulled the towline nearly perpendicular to the barge's bow. For a second, the barge seemed sure to hit the rocks anyway, but then, gradually, it turned aside, skimming past the breakwater and into the heart of the inlet, catching a final wave before drifting elegantly into place. Below us, in the bow of the tug, someone let out a whoop. When I looked down, I saw one of Dominique's crew, a hulking, bearded twenty-three-year-old named Lars-Erik William Edward Johanssen, a.k.a. the Swedish Meatball. He was grinning up at us, his red cheeks flecked with sea spray. "That was fucking bad-ass!" he shouted. "That was awesome. It was like surfing!"

Rachel shook her head, her eyes still bright with tension. "I wasn't thinking 'awesome.' I was thinking something else," she said. "There, for a moment, I sort of saw our whole tugboat career pass before my eyes."

I thought of Latham, on the other side of Mexico and across the blue Gulf, and wondered what he would have thought of his son and daughter. In a few weeks, the Elsbeth II would finally reach Haiti, after a short delay in Guantánamo Bay, only to sit idly at anchor for a month while Sealift Command sorted through its relief plans. A huge black pit bull named Maximus would be on board, acquired from one of Latham's neighbors at the last minute, for added protection from looters. The dog would spend most of the voyage moping about the deck, nauseated by the waves, then gradually get his sea legs under him and patrol the barge with a heavy chain around his neck. "Black dogs are bad luck in Haiti," John Patton told me recently. "Having one bark at you, as big as he was, with a big chain as a collar—it's discouraging." But there wasn't much to steal. The port was so crowded with relief vessels and barges that the Elsbeth II was never given any food or medical supplies to transport, and was finally sent home in March. By April, the tug was off on its next adventure, hauling another liftboat to Nigeria.

Towing is an unpredictable business, for all its new regulations and automated systems. It seems certain, though, that the Smiths will never work together again, and just as certain that they'll always be on tugboats. "When I was trying to become captain of the Elsbeth II, Rachel and my dad and mom wouldn't let me, because of the fear of failure," Dominique told me. "They'd hire these yo-yos instead. Then, finally, my dad said, 'Go ahead,' and I did a tandem tow from Baltimore to Maracaibo. It just came natural. It came with great ease." He laughed. "It's one of those things you're born with, I guess. When I proposed to my wife, I warned her, 'You're marrying a tugboater. That's all I know how to do.' " ♦

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More photographs and video of Latham Smith and his tugboats.

FICTION

PREFIGURATION OF LALO CURA

BY ROBERTO BOLAÑO

It's hard to believe, but I was born in a neighborhood called Los Empalados: The Impaled. The name glows like the moon. The name opens a way through the dream with its horn, and man follows that path. A quaking path. Invariably harsh. The path that leads into or out of Hell. That's what it all comes down to. Getting closer to Hell or farther away. Me, for example, I've had people killed. I've given the best birthday presents. I've backed projects of epic proportions. I've opened my eyes in the dark. Once, I opened them by slow degrees in total darkness, and all I saw or imagined was that name: Los Empalados, shining like the star of destiny.

I'll tell you everything, naturally. My father was a renegade priest. I don't know if he was Colombian or from some other country. But he was Latin American. He turned up one night in Medellín, stone broke, preaching sermons in bars and whorehouses. Some thought he was working for the secret police, but my mother kept him from getting killed and took him to her penthouse in the neighborhood. They lived together for four months, I've been told, and then my father vanished into the Gospels. Latin America was calling him, and he kept slipping away into the sacrificial words until he vanished, gone without a trace. Whether he was Catholic or Protestant is something I'll never find out now. I know that he was alone and that he moved among the masses, fevered and loveless, full of passion and empty of hope.

I was named Olegario when I was born, but people have always called me Lalo. My father was known as El Cura, the priest, and that's what my mother wrote down under "surname" on my birth certificate. It's my official name. Olegario Cura. I was even baptized into the Catholic faith. She was a dreamer, my mother. Connie Sánchez was her name, and if you weren't so young and innocent it would ring a bell. She was one of the stars of the Olimpo Movie Production Company. The other two stars were Doris Sánchez, my mother's younger sister, and Monica Farr, née Leticia Medina, from Valparaíso. Three good friends. The Olimpo Movie Production Company specialized in pornography, and although the business was more or less illegal and operated in a distinctly hostile environment, it lasted until the mid-eighties.

STEFANO DE LUIGI/VII NETWORK

The guy in charge was a multitalented German, Helmut Bittrich, who worked as the company's manager, director, set designer, composer, publicist, and, occasionally, thug. Sometimes he even acted, under the name Abelardo Bello. He was a weird guy, Bittrich. No one ever saw him with an erection. He liked to lift weights at the Health and Friendship Gym, but he wasn't gay. It's just that in the movies he never fucked anyone. Male or female. If you're interested, you can find him playing a Peeping Tom, a schoolteacher, a spy in a seminary—always a modest, minor role. What he liked best was playing a doctor. A German doctor, of course, although most of the time he didn't even open his mouth: he was Dr. Silence. The blue-eyed doctor hidden behind a conveniently located velvet curtain.

Bittrich had a house on the outskirts of Medellín, where the neighborhood of Los Empalados borders the wasteland, El Gran Baldío. The cottage in the movies. The house of solitude, which later became the house of crime, out there on its own, among clumps of trees and blackberry bushes. Connie used to take me. I'd stay in the yard playing with the dogs and the geese, which the German reared there as if they were his children. There were flowers growing wild among the weeds and the dogs' dirt holes. In the course of a regular morning, ten or fifteen people would go into that house. Although the windows were shut, I could hear the moans coming from inside. Sometimes there was laughter, too. At lunchtime Connie and Doris would bring a folding table out into the back yard and set it up under a tree, and the employees of the Olimpo Movie Production Company would dive into the canned food that Bittrich heated up on a gas burner. They ate directly from the cans or off paper plates. Once, I went into the kitchen to help, and when I opened the cupboards all I found were enema tubes, hundreds of enema tubes lined up as if for a military parade. Everything in the kitchen was fake. There were no real plates, no real knives and forks, no real pots and pans. That's what it's like in the movies, Bittrich said, watching me with those blue eyes of his. (They scared me then, but thinking of them now I just feel sad.) The kitchen was fake. Everything in the house was fake. Who sleeps here at night? I asked. Sometimes Uncle Helmut does, Connie replied. Uncle Helmut stays here to look after the dogs and the geese and get on with his work. Editing his homemade movies. Homemade, but the business was booming: the films went out to Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. Some copies stayed in Latin America and others were sold in the United States, but most of them went to Europe, where Bittrich had his main client base. Maybe that's why he did voice-overs in German, narrating the various scenes. Like a travel journal for sleepwalkers. The obsession with mother's milk was another European peculiarity. When Connie was pregnant with me, she went on working. And Bittrich made lacto-porn. Along the lines of Milch and Pregnant Fantasies, aimed at men who believe or make believe that women lactate during pregnancy. With her eight-month bulge, Connie squeezed her breasts and the milk flowed like lava. She leaned over Pajarito Gómez or Sansón Fernández, or both of them, and gave them a good swig. That was one of the German's tricks; Connie had never had milk. Or only a little bit, for two weeks, maybe three, just enough to give me a taste. Actually, the movies were like Pregnant Fantasies, not so much like Milch. There's Connie, big and blond, with me curled up inside her, laughing as she lubricates Pajarito Gómez's asshole with Vaseline. She already has the sure, delicate touch of a mother. My moron of a father has left her, and there she is, with Doris and Monica Farr, the three of them smiling on and off, exchanging looks and subtle signals or secrets among themselves, while Pajarito stares at my mother's belly as if in a hypnotic trance. The mystery of life in Latin America. Like a little bird charmed by the gaze of a snake. The Force is with me, I thought, the first time I saw that movie, at the age of nineteen, crying my eyes out, grinding my teeth, holding the sides of my head,

the Force is with me. All dreams are real. I wanted to believe that when those cocks had gone as far into my mother as they could, they came up against my eyes. I often dreamed about that: my sealed, translucent eyes swimming in the black soup of life. Life? No: the dealing that imitates life. My squinting eyes, like the snake hypnotizing the little bird. You get the picture: a kid's silly celluloid fantasies. All fake, as Bittrich used to say. And he was right, as he almost always was. That's why the girls adored him. They were glad to have the German around; they could always count on him for friendly advice and comfort.

The girls: Connie, Doris, and Monica. Three good friends lost in the mists of time. Connie had tried to make it on Broadway. Even in the hardest years, I don't think she ever gave up on the possibility of happiness. There in New York she met Monica Farr, and they shared their hardships and hopes. They cleaned hotel rooms, sold their blood, turned tricks. Always looking for a break, walking around the city hooked up to the same Walkman—typical dancers, a little bit thinner and closer together with every passing day. Chorus girls. Looking for Bob Fosse.

At a party thrown by some Colombians, they met Bittrich, who was passing through New York with a batch of his merchandise. They talked until dawn. No sex, just music and words. They cast their dice that night on Seventh Avenue, the Prussian artist and the Latin-American whores. That was where it was all decided. In some of my nightmares, I see myself resting in Limbo and then I hear, distantly at first, the sound of dice on the pavement. I open my eyes and I scream. Something changed forever that morning. The bond of friendship took hold like the plague. Then Connie and Monica Farr got an acting job in Panama, where they were thoroughly exploited. The German paid for their tickets to Medellín, which was home to Connie and as good a place as any for Monica. Doris, who went to meet them at the airport, took photos of them descending the steps. Connie and Monica are wearing sunglasses and tight pants. They're not very tall, but they're well proportioned. The Medellín sun is casting long shadows across an airstrip devoid of planes, except for one in the background, emerging from a hangar. There are no clouds in the sky. Connie and Monica display their teeth. Drink Coca-Cola in the taxi line and strike provocative, turbulent poses. Atmospheric and terrestrial turbulence. Their attitude suggests that they have come straight from New York, surrounded by mystery. Then a very young Doris appears beside them. The three of them hugging, photographed by an obliging stranger leaning against a taxi's bumper, while the driver inside looks on, so old and worn it's hard to believe he's real.

So begin the most passionate adventures. A month later, they are already shooting the first movie: "Hecatomb." While the world is in turmoil, the German shoots "Hecatomb." A film about the turmoil of the spirit. A saint in prison remembers nights of plenitude and fucking. Connie and Monica do it with four guys who look like shadows. Doris walks along the bank of a weakly flowing river accompanied by Bittrich's largest goose. The night is unusually starry. At dawn, Doris comes across Pajarito Gómez and they start making love in the back part of Bittrich's house. There is a great fluttering of geese. Connie and Monica at a window, clapping. The lobster-red cock of the saint shines with semen. The End. The credits appear over the image of a sleeping policeman. Bittrich's sense of humor. His movies amused drug lords and businessmen. The ordinary guys—the gunmen and the messengers—didn't understand them; they'd have been happy to blow the German away.

Another movie: "Kundalini." A rancher's wake. While the mourners weep and drink coffee with aguardiente, Connie enters a dark room full of farming implements. Two guys—one disguised as a bull and one as a condor—jump out of an enormous wardrobe. They proceed to force Connie's front and rear entries. Connie's lips curve into the shape of a letter. Monica and Doris feel each other up in the kitchen. Then paddocks full of cattle and a man approaching with difficulty, pushing his way through the cows. It's Pajarito Gómez. He never arrives: the following scene shows him stretched out in the mud, among cowpats and hooves. Monica and Doris rim each other on a big white bed. The dead rancher opens his eyes. He sits up and climbs out of his coffin, to the horror and amazement of his family and friends. Covered by the bull and the condor, Connie pronounces the word "kundalini." The cows escape from the paddocks, and the credits appear over the abandoned, gradually darkening body of Pajarito Gómez.

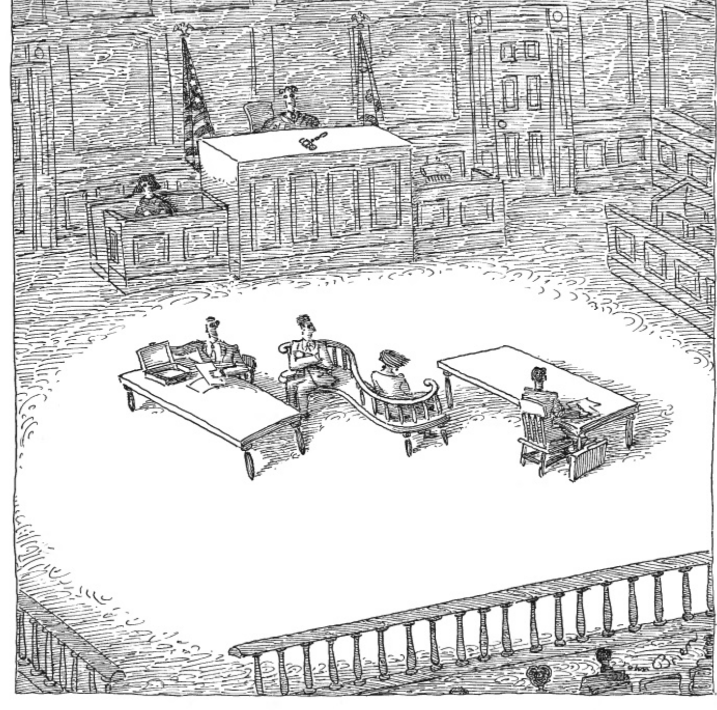
Another movie: "Impluvium." Two beggars drag sacks along a dirt road. They reach the back yard of Bittrich's house. There they find Monica Farr, naked, and chained in an upright position. The beggars empty the sacks: an abundant collection of sexual instruments made of steel and leather. The beggars put on masks with phallic protuberances, and, kneeling down, one in front of Monica, one behind, they penetrate her, moving their heads in a way that is, to say the least, ambiguous. It's hard to tell whether they're excited or whether the masks are suffocating them. Lying on an army cot, Pajarito Gómez smokes a cigarette. On another cot, the conscript Sansón Fernández is jerking off. The camera pans slowly over Monica's face: she is crying. The beggars depart, dragging their sacks down a miserable, unpaved street. Still chained, Monica shuts her eyes and seems to fall asleep. She dreams of the masks, the latex noses, the pair of old carcasses who could barely hold a breath of air and yet were so enthusiastic in the performance of their task. Supernatural carcasses emptied of all the essentials. Then Monica gets dressed, walks through the center of Medellín, and is invited to an orgy, where she meets Connie and Doris; they kiss one another and smile, and talk about what they've been doing. Pajarito Gómez, half dressed in fatigues, has fallen asleep. When the orgy is over, before it gets dark, the owner of the house wants to show them his most prized possession. The girls follow their host to a garden covered with a metal and glass canopy. The man's bejewelled finger indicates something at the far end. The girls examine a concrete swimming pool in the shape of a coffin. When they lean over the edge, they see their faces reflected

in the water. Then dusk falls, and the beggars come to an area where big cargo ships are docked. The music, performed by a band of kettledrummers, gets louder, more sinister and ominous, until the storm finally breaks.

Bittrich adored sound effects like that. Thunder in the mountains, the sizzle of lightning, splintering trees, rain against windowpanes. He collected them on high-quality tapes. He said this was to make his movies atmospheric, but in fact it was just because he liked the effects. The full range of sounds that rain makes in a forest. The rhythmic or random sibilance of the wind and the sea. Sounds to make you feel alone, sounds to make your hair stand on end. His great treasure was the roar of a hurricane. I heard it as a kid. The actors were drinking coffee under a tree, and Bittrich, away from the others, looking pasty, the way he did when he'd been working too hard, was toying with an enormous German tape player. Now you're going to hear the hurricane from inside, he said. At first I couldn't hear anything. I think I was expecting a God Almighty, earsplitting racket, so I was disappointed when all I could hear was a kind of intermittent whirling. An intermittent ripping. Like a propeller made of meat. Then I heard voices; it wasn't the hurricane, of course, but the pilots of a plane flying in its eye. Hard voices talking in Spanish and English. Bittrich was smiling as he listened. Then I heard the hurricane again, and this time I really heard it. Emptiness. A vertical bridge and emptiness, emptiness, emptiness. I'll never forget the smile on Bittrich's face. It was as if he were weeping. Is that all? I asked, not wanting to admit that I'd had enough. That's all, Bittrich said, fascinated by the silently turning reels. Then he stopped the tape player, closed it up very carefully, went inside with the others, and got back to work.

Another movie: "Ferryman." From the ruins, you might guess it's about life in Latin America after the Third World War. The girls wander through garbage dumps, along deserted paths. Then there's a broad, gently flowing river. Pajarito Gómez and two other guys play cards by the light of a candle. The girls come to an inn where the men are carrying guns. They make love with them all, one after the other. They look out from the bushes at the river and a few pieces of wood tied clumsily together. Pajarito Gómez is the ferryman—at least, that's what everyone calls him—but he doesn't budge from the table. He holds the best cards. The villains remark on how well he's playing. What a good player the ferryman is. What good luck the ferryman has. Gradually, the supplies begin to run short. The cook and the kitchen hand torture Doris, penetrating her with the handles of enormous butcher knives. Hunger reigns over the inn: some stay in bed, others wander through the bushes looking for food. While the men fall ill one by one, the girls scribble in their diaries as if possessed. Desperate pictograms. Images of the river superimposed on images of a never-ending orgy. The end is predictable. The men dress the women up as chickens, make them do their tricks, and then proceed to eat them at a feather-strewn banquet. The bones of Connie, Monica, and Doris lie on the inn's patio. Pajarito Gómez plays another hand of poker. He wears his luck like a close-fitting glove. The camera is behind him, and the viewer can see the cards he's holding. They are blank. The credits appear over the corpses of all the actors. Three seconds before the end of the film, the river changes color, turning jet black. That one was especially deep, Doris used to say. It illustrates the sad fate of artists in the porn industry: first we're ruthlessly exploited, then we're devoured by thoughtless strangers.

Bittrich seems to have made "Ferryman" to compete with the cannibal-porn videos that were starting to cause a stir at the time. But it isn't hard to see that the film's real center is Pajarito Gómez sitting in the gambling den. Pajarito Gómez, who could generate a kind of inner vibration that burned his image into the viewer's eyes. A great actor wasted by life, our life—yours and mine, my friends. But the movies Bittrich made live on, unsullied. And so does Pajarito Gómez, holding those dusty cards, with his dirty hands and his dirty neck, his eternally half-closed eyelids, vibrating on and on. Pajarito Gómez, an emblematic figure in the pornography of the nineteen-eighties. He wasn't particularly well endowed or



muscular, he didn't appeal to the target audience for that kind of movie. He looked like Walter Abel. He had no experience when Bittrich dragged him out of the gutter and put him in front of a camera: it came so naturally it's hard to believe. Pajarito had this continuous vibration, and watching him, sooner or later, depending on your powers of resistance, you'd be transfixed by the energy emanating from that scrap of a man, who looked so feeble. So unprepossessing, so undernourished. So strangely triumphant. The preëminent porn actor in Bittrich's Colombian cycle. The best when it came to playing dead and the best when it came to playing vacant. He was also the only member of the German's cast who survived. By 1999, Pajarito Gómez was the only one still alive; the rest had been killed or had succumbed to disease.

Sansón Fernández died of AIDS. Praxíteles Barrionuevo died in the Hole of Bogotá. Ernesto San Román was stabbed to death in the Areanea sauna in Medellín. Alvarito Fuentes died of AIDS in the Cartago jail. All of them young guys with supersized cocks. Frank Moreno, shot to death in Panama. Oscar Guillermo Montes, shot to death in Puerto Berrío. David Salazar, known as the Anteater, shot to death in Palmira. Victims of vendettas or fortuitous brawls. Evelio Latapia, hanged in a hotel room in Popayán. Carlos José Santelices, stabbed by strangers in an alley in Maracaibo. Reinaldo Hermosilla, last seen in El Progreso, Honduras. Dionisio Aurelio Pérez, shot to death in a bar in Mexico City. Maximiliano Moret, drowned in the Marañón River. Ten-to-twelve-inch cocks, sometimes so long they couldn't get them up. Young mestizos, blacks, whites, Indians—sons of Latin America, whose only assets were a pair of balls and a member tanned by exposure to the elements or, by some weird freak of nature, miraculously pink.

The sadness of the phallus was something that Bittrich understood better than anyone. I mean the sadness of those monumental members against the backdrop of this vast and desolate continent. For example, Oscar Guillermo Montes in a scene from a movie I've forgotten the rest of: he's naked from the waist down, his penis hangs flaccid and dripping. Behind the actor, a landscape unfolds: mountains, ravines, rivers, forests, towering clouds, a city, perhaps a volcano, a desert. Oscar Guillermo Montes perched on a high ridge, an icy breeze playing with a lock of his hair. That's all. It's like a poem by Tablada, isn't it? But you've never heard of Tablada. Neither had Bittrich, and it doesn't matter, really, it's all there in that image—I must have the tape around somewhere—the loneliness I was talking about. Impossible geography, impossible anatomy. What was Bittrich aiming for with that sequence? Was he trying to justify amnesia, our amnesia? Or to portray Oscar Guillermo Montes's weary eyes? Or did he just want to show us an uncircumcised penis dripping in the continent's immensity? Or to give an impression of useless grandeur: handsome young men without shame, marked for sacrifice, fated to disappear into the immensity of chaos? Who knows?

The only one who always got away was the amateur Pajarito Gómez, whose endowment extended, after plenty of work, to a maximum length of seven inches. The German flirted with death—what the hell did he care about death?—he flirted with solitude and with black holes, but he never tried anything with Pajarito. Elusive and uncontrollable, Pajarito came into the camera's scope as if he had just happened to be passing by and stopped for a look. Then he began to vibrate, full on, and the viewers, whether they were solitary jerk-off artists or businessmen who used the videos to liven up the décor, barely intending to glance at the screen, were transfixed by that scrawny creature's moods. Pajarito Gómez emanated prostatic fluid! That was something different, something that far exceeded the German's lucubrations. And Bittrich knew it, so when Pajarito appeared in a scene there were usually no additional effects, no music or sounds of any kind, nothing to distract the viewer from what really mattered—the hieratic Pajarito Gómez, sucked or sucking, fucking or fucked, but always vibrating, as if unawares. The German's protectors were deeply suspicious of that talent; they'd have preferred to see Pajarito working in the central market unloading trucks, ruthlessly exploited until the day he disappeared. They wouldn't have been able to explain what it was that they didn't like about him; they just had a vague sense that he was a guy who could attract bad luck and make people feel ill at ease.

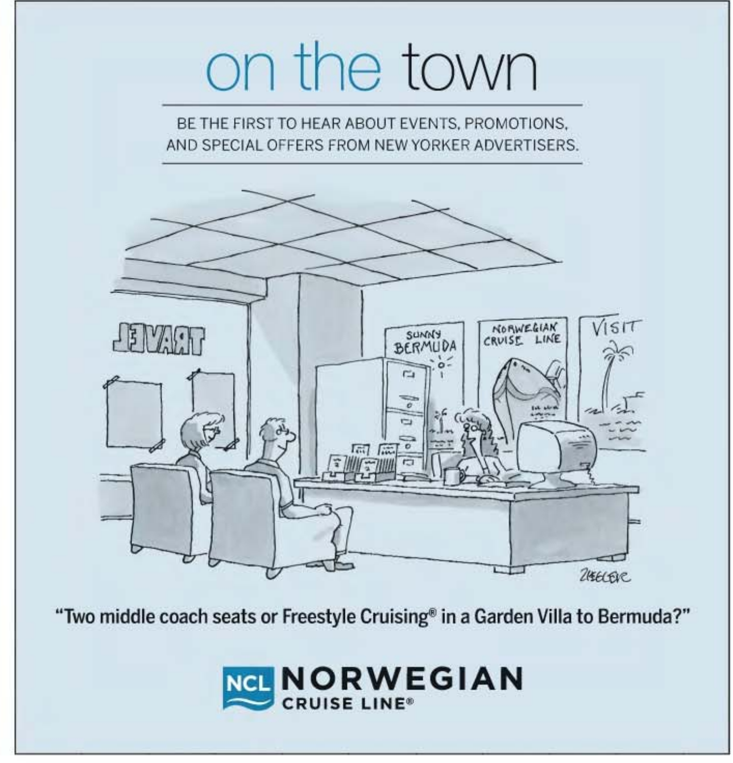
Sometimes, when I remember my childhood, I wonder how Bittrich must have felt about his protectors. He respected the drug lords; after all, they put up the money, and, like all good Europeans, he respected money, a reference point in the midst of chaos. But the corrupt police and Army officers—what would he have thought of them, Bittrich, a German, who read history books in his spare time? They must have seemed so ludicrous; he must have had such a good laugh at them, at night, after those unruly meetings. Monkeys in S.S. uniforms, that's what they were. Alone in his house, surrounded by his videos and his amazing sounds, he must have laughed and laughed. And they were the ones who wanted to get rid of Pajarito, those monkeys, with their sixth sense. Those pathetic, odious monkeys thought they could tell him, a German director in permanent exile, whom he should and shouldn't be hiring. Imagine Bittrich after one of those meetings, in the dark house in Los Empalados, after everyone else has gone, drinking rum and smoking Mexican Delicados in the biggest room, the one he uses as his study and bedroom. On the table there are paper cups with dregs of whiskey in them. Two or three videotapes sit on top of the TV, the latest from the Olimpo Movie Production Company. Diaries and torn-out pages covered with figures: salaries, bribes, bonuses. Pocket money. And the words of the police commissioner, the Air Force lieutenant, and the colonel from military intelligence still floating in the air: We don't want that jinx anywhere near the company. When people see him in our films, their stomachs turn. It's bad taste to have that slug fucking the girls. And Bittrich let them speak, he observed them silently, and then he did what he liked. After all,

they were only porn videos; it's not as if there were serious profits at stake.

Pajarito Gómez. A quiet and reserved sort of guy, but for some mysterious reason the girls were especially fond of him. In the course of their professional duties, they all got to lay him, and it left them with a curious feeling, hard to say just what it was, but they were all ready to do it again. I guess being with Pajarito was like being nowhere. Doris ended up even living with him for a while, but it didn't work out. Doris and Pajarito: for six months they went back and forth between the Hotel Aurora, which is where he lived, and the apartment on Avenida de los Libertadores where she lived. It was too good to last—you know how it is: singular spirits can bear only so much love, so much perfection stumbled on by chance. Maybe if Doris hadn't been such a bombshell, and if she'd been mute, and if Pajarito had never vibrated . . . Things finally fell apart during the shooting of "Cocaine," one of Bittrich's worst movies. But they stayed friends until the end.

Many years later, when they were all dead, I tracked down Pajarito. He was living in a tiny one-room apartment, on a street that led down to the sea, in Buenaventura. He was working as a waiter in a restaurant owned by a retired policeman—Octopus Ink, the place was called—ideal for someone who wanted to lie low. He went from home to work and back again, with a brief stop each day at a video store, where he'd usually rent a couple of movies. Walt Disney and old Colombian, Mexican, or Venezuelan films. Every day, like clockwork. From his walkup to Octopus Ink, and then, after dark, back to the apartment, with two videotapes under his arm. He never brought back food, only movies. He rented them on the way there or on the way back, it varied, but always from the same store, a little shack, nine feet by nine, open eighteen hours a day.

I went looking for him on a whim, just because I felt like it. I went looking and I found him in 1999. It was easy; it took less than a week. Pajarito was forty-nine then, but he looked at least ten years older. He wasn't surprised to find me sitting on his bed when he got home. I told him who I was, reminded him of the movies he'd made with my mother and my aunt. Pajarito took a chair and as he sat down the



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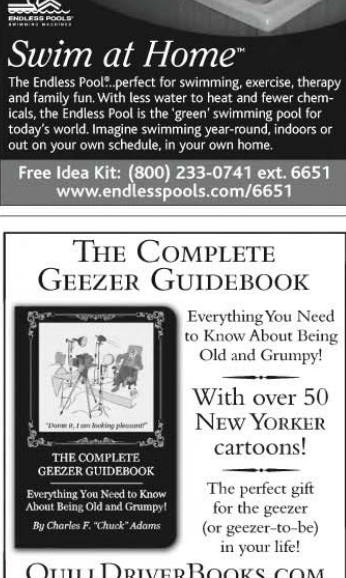

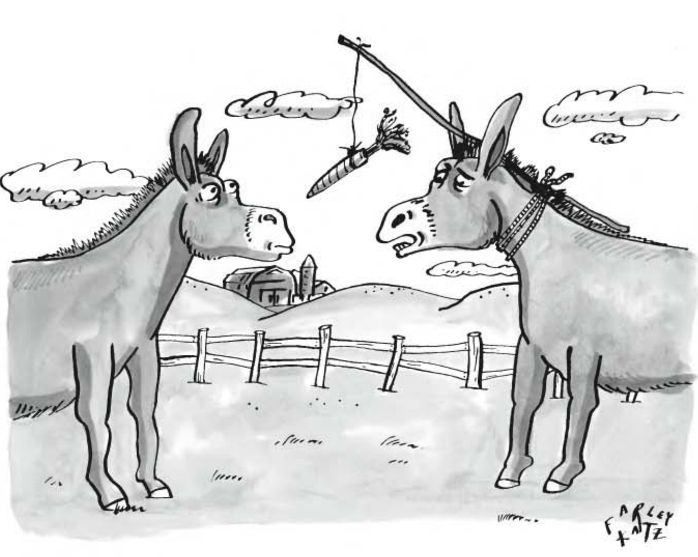

"It's the only way I can get myself out of bed in the morning."

• •

videos fell out from under his arm. You've come to kill me, Lalito, he said. He'd rented films with Ignacio López Tarso and Matt Dillon, two of his favorite actors.

I reminded him of the old lacto-porn days. We both smiled. I saw your prick, I said. It was transparent, like a worm. My eyes were open, you know, watching your glass eye. Pajarito nodded, then sniffed. You always were a clever kid, he said, before you were born, too, I guess, with your eyes open already, why not. I saw you—that's what matters, I said. You were pink at the start in there, then you turned transparent and you got one hell of a shock, Pajarito. Back then you weren't afraid—you moved so fast that only little creatures and fetuses could see you moving. Only cockroaches, nits, lice, and fetuses. Pajarito was looking at the floor. I heard him whisper, Et cetera, et cetera. Then he said, I never liked that sort of movie, one or two is O.K., but it's criminal to make so many. I'm a fairly normal person, really. I was genuinely fond of Doris, I was always a friend to your mother, when you were little I never did you any harm. Do you remember? I didn't run the business, I never betrayed anyone or killed anyone. I did a bit of dealing, a few robberies—we all did—but, as you can see, it didn't set me up for retirement. Then he picked the videos up off the floor, put the one with Ignacio López Tarso in the VCR, and as the soundless images succeeded one another on the screen, he began to cry. Don't cry, Pajarito, I said. It's not worth it. His days of vibrating were over. Or maybe he was still vibrating a little, and as I sat there on the bed I was scavenging those remnants of energy with the ravenous hunger of a shipwrecked sailor. It's hard to vibrate in such a small apartment, with the smell of chicken soup permeating every cranny. It's hard to pick up a vibration when your eyes are fixed on a dumbly gesticulating Ignacio López Tarso. López Tarso's eyes in black-and-white: how could so much innocence and malice be mixed together? A good actor, I remarked, just to say something. One of our founding fathers, Pajarito said in agreement. He was right. Then he whispered, Et cetera, et cetera. That lousy fucking Pajarito.

We sat there in silence for a long time: López Tarso went gliding through the movie's plot like a fish inside a whale; the images of Connie, Doris, and Monica lit up for a few seconds in my head, and Pajarito's vibration became imperceptible. I haven't come to rub you out, I said to him in the end. Back then, when I was young, I had trouble using the word "kill." I never killed: I took people out, blew them away, put them to sleep, I topped, stiffed, or wasted them, sent them to meet their maker, made them bite the dust, I iced them, snuffed them, did them in. I smoked people. But I didn't smoke Pajarito. I just wanted to see him and chat for a while. To feel his beat and remember my past. Thanks, Lalito, he said, and then he got up and filled a washbasin with water from a pitcher. With exact, artistic, resigned movements, he washed his hands and his face.

When I was a kid, that's what they all called me, Connie, Monica, Doris, Bittrich, Pajarito, Sansón Fernández: they called me Lalito. Lalito Cura playing with the dogs and the geese in the garden of the house of crime, which for me was the house of boredom and sometimes the house of dismay and happiness. These days there's no time to get bored, happiness has vanished somewhere in the world, and all that's left is dismay. Perpetual dismay, composed of corpses and ordinary people, like Pajarito, who was thanking me. I never intended to kill you, I said. I've kept all your movies. I don't watch them very often, I admit, only on special occasions, but I've looked after them. I'm a collector of your cinematic past, I said. Pajarito sat down again. He had stopped vibrating: he was watching the López Tarso movie out of the corner of his eye, and his stillness suggested a mineral patience. According to the clock radio beside the bed, it was two in the morning. The night before, I had dreamed of finding Pajarito: I was fucking him and shouting unintelligible words in his ear, something about a buried treasure. Or about an underground city. Or about a dead person wrapped in paper that was resistant to rot and to the passage of time. But now I didn't even lay my hand on his shoulder. I'll leave you some money, Pajarito, so you can live without having to work. I'll buy you whatever you like. I'll take you to a quiet place where you can spend all your time watching your favorite actors. There was no one like you in Los Empalados, I said. Ignacio López Tarso and Pajarito Gómez looked at me: stonelike patience. The pair of them gone crazily dumb. Their eyes full of humanity and fear and fetuses lost in the immensity of memory. Fetuses and other tiny wide-eyed creatures. For a moment, my friends, I felt that the whole apartment was starting to vibrate. Then I stood up very carefully and left. ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Chris Andrews.*)

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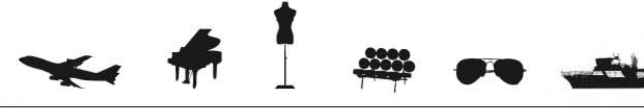

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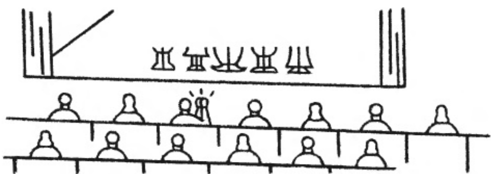

THE THEATRE

FESTERING

The "Addams Family" musical.

BY JOHN LAHR

Around 1938, the genial, suburban cartoonist Charles Addams invented in these pages a ghoulish tribe of sadists and malcontents, intended to tease the notion of American prosperity and the cult of the perfect nuclear family. Into innocent lives dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, Addams's creepy crew injected a dose of gleeful dread. His game was to turn values upside down: bad was good; ugly was beautiful; freaky was normal; the deadly gave life. His po-faced characters never explained themselves; their behavior allowed us to connect the dots of their perversity. "The tasty little family"—as the first editor of *The New Yorker*, Harold Ross, called them—were figures of startling caprice, grotesques inhabiting a bourgeois world while taking revenge on its suffocating decency. They poured boiling oil on Christmas carollers; they asked their neighbors for a cup of cyanide; their idea of child's play was to roll boulders onto passing cars. Addams's surreal juxtapositions made horror hilarious. "He translates something which is already fairly frightening into something almost cozy," William Shawn, the magazine's second editor, said. By making darkness delightful, Addams struck a lasting cultural chord; his macabre *mishpokah* has been the basis of a television series, a TV movie, two feature films, and two animated cartoons. Now, not seven decades too soon, the musical theatre has decided to exploit the brand as well—to pit the transgressive power of Addams's mischief against the bromidic power of Broadway. The result: Addams's poisoned brew is turned into Kool-Aid.

In Addams's cartoons, mordancy was an authentic expression of aggression. In "The Addams Family" (under the creative direction of Jerry Zaks, at the Lunt-Fontanne), it's merely a mannerism. For some reason, a lot of talented people associated with the musical have got the wrong end of Addams's shtick. Addams's family members *believed* that they were normal. That was the joke. From the first beats of the musical, however, the characters we see onstage know that they're not. They're in on the joke, and the joke is all there is: most of the evening is spent on endless illustration of the family's evident pathological characteristics. This is vamping, not storytelling. "Let us celebrate what it is to be an Addams," the patriarch, Gomez (Nathan Lane), says in the first speech of the show, which takes place, appropriately, in a graveyard. In "Pulled," the sour daughter, Wednesday (Krysta Rodriguez)—so named because she's full of woe—sings what is transparent to the eye: "I don't have a sunny disposition / I'm not known for being too amused / My demeanor's locked in one position / See my face? / I'm unenthused." Likewise, Gomez, hymning his zombie-like wife, Morticia (Bebe Neuwirth), sings, "The screams she saves for only you / The misery she puts you through / Morticia." Descriptive but not dramatic, the songs take neither the plot nor the characters anywhere; like an engine racing in neutral, "The Addams Family" has sound but no traction.

In keeping with Addams's graphic style, Zaks offers some delightfully surreal scenic moments: a tassel cut from the end of a rope scuttles offstage by itself; a giant squid and a monster iguanodon make surprise appearances. Zaks does his best to drive this money train down the bad track it's laid on. (He replaced the show's original directing team, Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch.) The show's narrative, however, can't handle Addams's Grand Guignol edge; the book, written by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, stays safely on the outside of Addams's comic world, looking in. Of all the dark cards in Addams's hand, the team has picked the weakest one: love. Wednesday, the crossbow-toting Goth, falls for Lucas Beineke (Wesley Taylor), a square from Ohio, whose buttoned-down parents come to dinner at the Addams house: in other words, it's "The Birdcage" reimagined for Bela Lugosi. Except for the occasional blip of wit, fifteen minutes into the palaver the audience can feel the show flatlining. The only thing that seems to build is the lyrical confusion. (The undistinguished music and lyrics are by Andrew Lippa.) In the show's opening number, Gomez deconstructs Addams's comic strategy: "You have to see the world in shades of gray / You have to put some poison in your day." Then, in Act II, he asserts exactly the opposite. "Let's keep things in black and white," he tells Morticia. Lippa's lazy lines seem to lose all touch with the reality of Addams's characters. On the page, they were agents of anarchy; on the stage, shoehorned into a show-biz formula, they end up engineering harmony. At the finale, in a perfect piece of Broadway balderdash the cast sings about moving toward the darkness, something that the show resolutely refuses to do:

> Move toward the darkness
> Don't avoid despair
> Only at our weakest
> Can we learn what's there.

Nathan Lane, in a double-breasted pin-striped jacket, and with his hair slicked back like a riverboat gambler's,

Gargoyles on Broadway: Nathan Lane and Bebe Neuwirth, as Gomez and Morticia, head the creepy clan in this adaptation.

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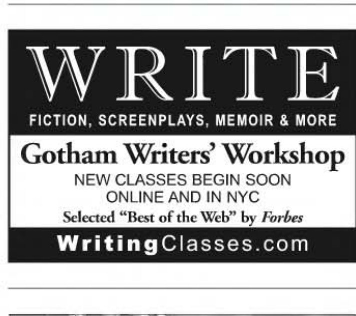

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does his best to keep the fun machine funny. With his energy and his voice pitched too high, he is irony's emissary. He's selling snake oil to the eager customers, and he knows it. Everything he says seems to be in quotation marks. When Morticia contemplates becoming a grandmother, she fears turning into Grandma Addams, who has been living in the attic for twelve years: "Unwanted. Mocked. Tolerated." "I'm not going to end up like your mother!" she bleats. "My mother?" Gomez says. "I thought she was *your* mother."

Luckily, Lane is not the only one trying to add spice to this dull meal. As Grandma Addams, Jackie Hoffman, with her pug-dog mug and cartoony caterwauling, manages to raise the show's temperature a few degrees. "Stay outta my shit or I'll rip your leg off and bury it in the back yard," Grandma screeches at her grandson Pugsley (Adam Riegler), adding, "I love you." With her head of frizzy gray hair and her high-top sneakers, Hoffman looks as if she'd stepped out of a Roz Chast cartoon, and she's just as funny. In a truth-or-dare game, after taking a slug of truth juice called Acrimonium, the old biddy confesses to wanting a "total body makeover." "Call me cougar, but five'll get you ten there's a couple of ninety-year-old hotties out there just waiting to chow down on a Grandma sandwich," she says, waddling to her seat, then noting, "I just peed." The excellent, sweet-faced Kevin Chamberlin, a chubby Uncle Fester, also adds his palpable charm to the show. Fester, who serves as the narrator, is in love with the moon; in one magical scenic sleight of hand, the moon is a balloon, and, unaided by wires, Chamberlin seems to float in space with it.

"Promises broken. Marriages threatened. Delicious anarchy," Fester says to the audience at the beginning of Act II, summing up the story so far. "Can this be repaired? Or do you all leave in an hour feeling vaguely depressed?" You know my answer. If "The Addams Family" bears witness to anything, it's to a peculiar habit of most Broadway producers: give them a mile and they'll take an inch.

I first reviewed Les Freres Corbusier's "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson" (written and directed by Alex Timbers, at the Public) in a studio production last May. The show hasn't changed much in the interim, but the times have. Since President Obama took office, America has become a whispering gallery of hate-filled teabagger cant—"the Apostles of Anger in their echo chamber of fallacies," as Charles M. Blow elegantly put it in the *Times*. At this point, the musical's sendup of the bow-wow populism of our seventh President has taken on a new relevance, if not gravity. Jackson was the President who put "the 'man' in 'manifest destiny,' " as the show says, claiming the country for its colonizers by pushing Native Americans from their homelands and expanding the nation's reaches. A smart and sophomoric lampoon, the musical romps through Jackson's biography and his political career, blowing raspberries at the absurdities of the political as well as the musical stage. Its shambolic look and narrative style spoof Broadway slickness; its emo music and lyrics, by Michael Friedman, poke fun at both the genre and sincerity of any kind. At one point, as Jackson (the excellent Benjamin Walker) and his inamorata, Rachel (Maria Elena Ramirez), slather stage blood on themselves (Jackson regularly bled himself as a form of healing), a song invokes the aperçus of Susan Sontag ("It's not blood!/It's a metaphor for love"), before concluding with an abrupt about-face:

> But Susan Sontag's dead.
> So I guess
> Her cancer wasn't metaphorical. . . .
> Sorry.

Musical theatre, like America itself, is undergoing a paradigm shift. Beneath all the impertinent high jinks, "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson" asks some pertinent questions: What do we sing about? How do we survive? How can we find new ways of telling a relevant story? Timbers and Friedman are skeptics in cap and bells; they have energy, talent, and the courage of their jejune convictions. Their show is a sort of musical bushwhacking expedition; whether they'll get lost or find a path beyond this remains to be seen. Meanwhile, they're having a good old time throwing history books into the campfire. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Belmont (Mass.) Citizen-Herald.

Officers responded to Jeannette Avenue for a report of a dispute that began over spilled milk.

A CRITIC AT LARGE

UNTIMELY

What was at stake in the spat between Henry Luce and Harold Ross?

BY JILL LEPORE

Henry Luce, who was born in Tengchow, China, used to say he wished he'd been born in Oskaloosa, Iowa. "An American can always explain himself satisfactorily by citing where he comes from," Luce said. He'd have given anything for a home town in the heartland. Oskaloosa is a mining town. Harold Ross, whose father was a miner, was born in Aspen. In 1923, Luce started *Time*, a magazine meant to "appeal to every man and woman in America." Two years later, Ross launched *The New Yorker*, which he described—in a prospectus, in the inaugural issue, and on posters pasted all over New York—as the magazine that is "not edited for the old lady in Dubuque." Dubuque is just a few hours' drive from Oskaloosa and, compared with Tengchow, a mere stone's throw from Ross's ancestral seat. When Luce and Ross were starting out, their magazines occupied adjoining floors in a building at 25 West Forty-fifth Street, a thousand miles away from anywhere in Iowa. The distance between the editorial offices of *Time* and *The New Yorker*, though, was what's called spitting.

After the first issue of *The New Yorker* came out, *Time* printed a squib inside an issue whose cover was a photograph of the fifty-one-year-old poet Amy Lowell, bespectacled and grandmotherly, her gray hair pinned up in a bun, sitting in an antique chair, reading. If you take the covers of the February 21, 1925, issue of *The New Yorker* and the March 2, 1925, issue of *Time* and place them side by side—which is a prank I wouldn't put past any of the tenants of 25 West Forty-fifth Street—they make a nifty pair, Eustace Tilley affecting to peer over his monocle at the sturdy and sensible Miss Lowell, who, engrossed in her reading, doesn't bother to look up. "In Dubuque, Iowa, there lives, doubtless, an old lady," *Time* observed. "Her existence is recognized only because certain middle-aged people in Manhattan began some weeks ago to think about her. She came frequently into their conversation and, at each allusion, a leer passed round the company—all spoke in derisive terms of her taste, though the kinder-hearted merely pitied her for being the victim of an unfortunate environment." The boys at *Time* pretended to have lately posted to this female Dubuquian in the twilight of life a copy of the magazine that was not edited on her behalf and to have received a telegram by way of reply. "The editors of the periodical you forwarded are, I understand, members of a literary clique," she wired. "They should learn that there is no provincialism so blatant as that of the metropolitan who lacks urbanity." This hit its mark. "Who was the stinker who wrote that?" Ross wanted to know. When he found out, he hired him on the spot.

"You've put your finger on it," Ross told Luce. "I believe in malice."

BARRY BLITT

Battles between magazine editors bloody the annals of literary history. In "The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century" (Knopf; $35), Alan Brinkley, the Columbia historian, dismisses the legendary feud between Luce and Ross as short-lived and silly, but it lasted for a quarter century, there have been sillier, and Ross, at least, took it about as seriously as he took anything. Brinkley's wonderfully insightful and judicious biography is more than the story of a life; it's a political history of modernity. Luce was one of the most influential journalists of the twentieth century. *Time* was the first news magazine. *Fortune*, which he launched in 1930, made business writing smarter. "The March of Time," broadcast on the radio from 1931 to 1945 and shown in theatres, as newsreels, beginning in 1935, paved the way for television news. *Life*, started in 1936, brought photojournalism into the nation's living rooms. "The American people are by far the best-informed people in the history of the world," Luce wrote in his essay "The American Century," in 1941, when Americans were getting much of that information from him and, mainly, from his magazines, which Ross couldn't stomach, and whose significance he refused to concede. "Who reads *Fortune*?" Ross once asked. "Dentists."

Luce insisted on the United States'

"Good news—we have an order for the jumbo-shrimp surprise."

unique role in spreading democracy. He wrote "The American Century" to urge Roosevelt to enter the war, but it was seen by critics as a blueprint for American imperialism. In the nineteen-forties and fifties, his influence on public opinion, and especially on foreign policy, grew, as did his anti-Communist zeal, especially with regard to Asia. "As a journalist, I am in command of a small sector in the very front trenches of this battle for freedom," Luce once said. He supported civil rights and opposed McCarthy. He called the Republican Party his "second church." His magazines' endorsement of Eisenhower helped carry the man from Abilene into office. Abroad, Luce was treated like a statesman. No private citizen should wield such power. Why anyone ever craves it can be hard to comprehend. Liberals who admired his magazines could not forgive him his support for American involvement in Vietnam. He died in 1967. Brinkley's Luce is crusading and ambitious, ardent and awkward, and, although it might be said that Luce went astray when his ambition became his crusade, Brinkley takes him as he finds him. At the helm of the largest media empire in the world, Henry Luce piloted the American middle class through a century of tumult and change by giving his magazines, American journalism, and even American culture a distinctive voice: his own. That's just what bugged the hell out of Harold Ross.

Ross was born in a prospector's cabin, in 1892; Luce was born in 1898, in a missionary compound. Ross never finished high school; Luce went to Yale, like his father before him. A person could be forgiven for expecting Ross to have been the one to start the magazine edited for the old lady in Dubuque and Luce to have started the one that wasn't. That just the reverse came to pass explains some of the waywardness between them. In 1917, Ross enlisted; Luce joined R.O.T.C., along with his friend Briton Hadden (they'd been inseparable since Hotchkiss and ran the *Yale Daily News* together). Luce and Hadden went to boot camp in South Carolina, where they trained troops. In France, Ross was tapped for Officer Training School, but flunked the test out of cussedness. Later in life, Ross liked to tell the story of how, on hearing that the Army was about to start publishing a paper, he deserted his regiment and walked a hundred and fifty miles to Paris, to the offices of the *Stars & Stripes*, where he stayed for the duration of the war, as a reporter and editor. One piece of enduring Luce lore has it that *Time* began because, while at Camp Jackson, Luce was struck by how little the enlisted men knew about the war they were being sent to fight. Brinkley suspects this boot-camp business is hooey, and I take the same view of Ross's hoofing it all the way to Paris. What's interesting, though, is that even their just-so stories run in different directions: Ross strapping his typewriter to his back and making for the metropolis, Luce pledging himself to bringing news of the world to every last Joe.

Neither Private Ross nor Lieutenant Luce ever saw combat. After the Armistice, Ross bummed around editorial posts in New York, including a brief stint at *Judge*, a humor magazine. Luce and Hadden went back to Yale, after deciding that, one day, they would start a magazine together. Luce graduated with highest honors; Hadden was voted the most likely to succeed. Luce studied at Oxford and later worked for newspapers in Chicago and Baltimore, where he met up with Hadden. By 1922, the year DeWitt Wallace started the *Reader's Digest*, Luce, Hadden, and Ross were all in New York, pounding the pavement.

Luce and Hadden thought about calling their magazine *Destiny*, which hints at the size of their dream. They also tried out *What's What*, and for a long time they called it *Facts*. What *Time* became is lavishly celebrated in "Time: The Illustrated History of the World's Most Influential Magazine" (Rizzoli; $50), by Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva. Luce came up with the name after a late-night subway ride, during which he found himself staring at an advertisement that read "Time for a Change." "That's it," Hadden said. "*Time*" was perfect, since the magazine's strategy was twofold: it would be a history of our time, chronicling the events of the day, and it would save readers time.

Magazines are ephemeral, timely at the expense of timelessness. They evanesce. Each new issue displaces the last; a magazine molts. Quite possibly the most un-magaziney thing that ever happened to magazines is the digital archive, as curious a collection of what was as jars of sharks' teeth or boxes of hair swept from the barbershop floor. Magazines change or die; they are very rarely long-lived. *Time* and *The New Yorker* are among the exceptions, not only for lasting but also for not changing as much as

most long-running magazines have. This can make both magazines look like throwbacks, if in different ways.

Time is an artifact of the Age of Efficiency. Americans, Luce and Hadden believed, were too busy to read the newspaper. The New York *Times* was "unreadable," too dense, too dull. *Time* would be everything, abridged: a week's worth of news in twenty-odd pages that could be read in an hour. An early bid for subscribers read "Take TIME: It's Brief." Each issue was to contain about a hundred articles, none more than four hundred words long. Luce and Hadden put together dummy issues by cutting sentences out of seven days' worth of newspapers and pasting them onto pages. At first, *Time* was a kind of assembly-line news, manufactured in a Taylorized shop. But they wanted it to be more than a "digest" (the word has something alimentary in common with what's now called a "feed"). They sorted the news into categories—National Affairs, Foreign Affairs, The Arts, Sport—which, amazingly, hadn't been done before, or not nearly as crisply. "The one great thing was simplification," Luce said. "Simplification by organization, simplification by condensation, and also simplification by just being damn well simple." The Simplified Spelling Board, endorsed by Theodore Roosevelt, had excised the extra "e" from "abridgement." Turning the *Times* into *Time* saved a letter right there. No wasted letters, no wasted thought. As Luce and Hadden explained in the magazine's prospectus, "TIME is interested—not in how much it includes between its covers—but in HOW MUCH IT GETS OFF ITS PAGES INTO THE MINDS OF ITS READERS."

Hadden, not Luce, was *Time's* first editor. This had been decided in a coin toss. Luce ran the business. The idea was that they'd rotate. They agreed, though, that the magazine had to have a language of its own: Timestyle. "You're writing for straphangers," a former professor of theirs advised them. "You've got to write staccato." Hadden marked up a translation of the Iliad, underscoring compound phrases, like "wine-dark sea." (A "sea as dark as wine" dragged.) No longer did events take place "in the nick of time" but "in time's nick." Everything was epic. Homer is why *Time's* story about the Scopes trial began this way: "The pens and tongues of contumely were arrested. Mocking mouths were shut. Even righteous protestation hushed its clamor, as when, having striven manfully in single combat, a high-helmed champion is stricken by Jove's bolt and the two snarling armies stand at sudden gaze, astonished and bereft a moment of their rancor." This is also a good example of what's called a "blind lead," a sort of swooping down from above, and out of nowhere. It could have been about anything. *Time's* obituaries often began, "Death, as it must to all men, came last week to . . ." They could have been about anyone.

Hadden liked to coin words, compounds like "news-magazine." He imported "tycoon," "pundit," and "kudos" into English. He filled a notebook with lists. Famed Phrases: "flabby-chinned." Forbidden Phrases: "erstwhile" (use "onetime" instead). Unpardonable Offenses: failing to print someone's nickname. He was fond of middle names, of inverted subject and predicate phrases, of occupations as titles: "famed poet William Shakespeare" and "Demagog Hitler." (What next? one reader wanted to know. "Onetime evangelist Jesus Christ?") Hadden was uncompromising and, not infrequently, explosive. His Timestyle manual listed his cardinal rules: "Be specific. Be impersonal. Appear to be fair. Be not redundant. Reduce to lowest terms. You cannot be too obvious." Scowl-faced was Editor Hadden, forgotten mag-man, called by the boys "the Terrible-Tempered Mr. Bang."

Time's first issue was dated March 3, 1923. It took aim at the "supposedly elect" who ate lunch at the Algonquin Hotel: "What is this literary New York? Who are these log-rollers and back-scratchers?" The Round Table really was a bunch of log-rollers, catty and smirking, but it was also where Harold Ross was recruiting writers. He had put together a dummy issue of his magazine, but was finding it a hard sell. Ben Hecht asked, "How the hell could a man who looked like a resident of the Ozarks and talked like a saloon brawler set himself up as pilot of a sophisticated, elegant periodical?" After rejecting *Manhattan* and *Our Town,* Ross settled on a name. In the fall of 1924, he wrote a prospectus for *The New Yorker*. He had plenty of other influences, and a whole crop of ideas of his own, but it's still striking how much it reads as a proposal for a magazine that would be everything *Time* wasn't. Where Luce and Hadden had announced that *Time* would be edited "so that a mind trained or untrained can grasp it with minimum effort," Ross explained that his magazine "will assume a reasonable degree of enlightenment on the part of its readers." It would not save anyone any time; it would not spare anyone any effort. There would be goings on but it wasn't going to be newsy. "As compared to the newspapers, *The New Yorker* will be interpretive rather than stenographic." Ross expected *The New Yorker* to be distinguished for its wit, art, integrity, and discrimination. "It will hate bunk." That old lady: "It will not be concerned in what she is thinking about. This is not meant in disrespect, but *The New Yorker* is a magazine avowedly published for a metropolitan audience."

The first issue of *The New Yorker* wasn't exactly a stunner. Its lead article, "The Story of Manhattankind," was a flat-footed parody of a well-known children's book, "The Story of Mankind." In a column called Of All Things, Ross apologized: "THE NEW YORKER asks consideration for its first number. It recognizes certain shortcomings and realizes that it is impossible for a magazine fully to establish its character in one number." But he didn't back off. "It has announced that it is not edited for the old lady in Dubuque. By this it means that it is not of that group of publications engaged in tapping the Great Buying Power of the North American steppe region by trading mirrors and colored beads in the form of our best brands of hokum."

When Hadden got hold of it, he

called over one of his writers, his cousin Niven Busch. "Just look at this goddamned magazine. Goddamn it, the old lady from Dubuque is smarter than they are. . . . There's your angle and make it plain the magazine won't last." Busch, rising to the task, wrote, "Last week, Manhattanites found the first issue of *The New Yorker* on their club tables, their hotel stands, their back-alley kiosks; they ruffled its pages, found it to contain one extremely funny original joke."

Ross knew what he wanted; he just didn't know how to get it. "If you can't be funny, be interesting" was his advice to writers, but how helpful is that? The prose and verse of two hundred and eighty-two contributors appeared in *The New Yorker* in its first ten months. Possibly that wasn't the best way to go about establishing its character. By summer, the magazine's circulation—dropping to below three thousand—had become something of a municipal joke. The *Evening World* ran this item:

> I found Mr. Manhattan reading the latest issue of "The Gothamite" when I dropped in at his apartment yesterday afternoon.
> "So you're the one who bought the copy," I said.

Bereft of advertisers and needing to fill space, Ross asked Corey Ford to write a fictional "tour through the vast organization of The New Yorker," this being just the kind of thing *Time*, whose circulation was skyrocketing, was forever doing—in earnest—as when, early on, it congratulated itself for having "built up the greatest, the largest, the soundest quality circulation in the history of U.S. publishing."

Ford wrote:

> Here it is Friday; and at a rough estimate there have been probably thirty or eighty millions of people who have bought THE NEW YORKER since last night; and the returns from Maine are not due till to-morrow. This means that if you add all these figures together and multiply them by the number you just thought of, then the card there in your hand is the eight of clubs.

Time Inc. once sent out a flyer: "TIME has given such attention to the development of the best narrative English that hundreds of editors and journalists have declared it to be the greatest creative force in modern journalism." Ford's "The Making of a Magazine" included an exposé called "The Construction of Our Sentences": "Before a sentence may be used in THE NEW YORKER it must be cleaned and polished. The work of brightening these sentences is accomplished by a trained editorial staff of 5,000 men named Mr. March." *The New Yorker* once ran a cartoon with the caption "But, Lester, is it *enough* just being against everything that 'Time' magazine is for?"

To subscribe is to sign up. People used to subscribe to books, and printers would print the list of subscribers as front matter, to woo buyers. To subscribe to a book was to endorse it; it was like supplying a blurb. Magazines don't print lists of subscribers, but the principle is the same: to subscribe is to belong. (That's one reason that surfing what can no longer be called "periodical literature"—now it's interminable—feels so aimless: its premise is not belonging.) A magazine defines itself as one thing, and not another. *Time* was quirky in this way: if it was the magazine for everyone, what was it not? Well, actually, it wasn't for everyone; that was flummery. *Time* puffed to advertisers that its subscribers were "America's most important and interesting class—the Younger Business Executive." A poll of subscribers conducted five years after *Time* began reported that more than eighty per cent of respondents were "plainly of the executive and professional class"; sixty-two per cent owned stocks and bonds; more than half had servants; more than forty per cent belonged to country clubs; and eleven per cent owned horses. These were not the aged dames of Dubuque. They were the nation's small and big businessmen, striving: one *Time* brochure asked, "Can you afford to be labelled as a man from Main Street?"

In 1928, Luce replaced Hadden as editor of *Time*. Hadden had got bored. He had also got restless and erratic and resentful, especially after Yale awarded Luce, but not Hadden, an honorary M.A. in 1926 for "distinguished accomplishments in a novel and worthy field of journalism." Luce chafed, too. "This Hadden-Luce yoke is certainly galling," he wrote to his wife Lila in 1927. Luce wanted to start a business magazine; Hadden was against it. "American business is worthy of a literature of its own," Luce wrote. "We propose to create it." "If we do," Hadden told a friend, "it'll be over my dead body." Luce at first wanted to call his new magazine *Power*. "Business is essentially our civilization," he said. "Business is our life." Hadden fell suddenly and gravely ill with what looked to his doctors like blood poisoning; they treated him with transfusions. Luce, devastated, donated blood, again and again. In March of 1929, *Time* mourned, "Death came last week to Briton Hadden." He was only thirty-one.

Luce became editor-in-chief. He acquired nearly all Hadden's stock and gained a controlling interest in Time Inc., whose offices he began to move into the new Chrysler Building. He was, by now, a millionaire. He went ahead with his business magazine. "Accurately, vividly and concretely to describe Modern Business is the greatest journalistic assignment in history," he wrote. The stock market crashed. He changed his magazine's name to something that allowed for twists of fate. *Fortune* began publication in 1930. When the first editor Luce hired proved unsuccessful, he turned to Ralph Ingersoll, the managing editor of *The New Yorker*.

Ross had been firing executive editors almost as fast as he hired them (he went through sixteen in nine years), and, for a while, Ingersoll, hired in 1925, had been his boy wonder. "To me, Ross was the father of the *New Yorker*," Ingersoll later said, "and I was the mother." But after Ross hired Katharine Angell, E. B. White, James Thurber, and Wolcott Gibbs, Ingersoll fell out of favor. "He thinks he's a writer," Ross scoffed, and then banished him to report on Ivy League football games, which he attended dressed like an Edward Gorey character. (Ingersoll, White wrote, was "right out of the social register.") Ingersoll was miserable. Luce offered to double his pay. In 1928, when White went missing, Ross sent him a telegram: "This thing is a movement and you can't resign from a movement." Two years later, when Ingersoll told Ross he was leaving, Ross glared at him and said, "Hell, Ingersoll, *Fortune* was invented for you to edit."

At *Fortune*, Ingersoll developed what came to be called the "corporation story," a profile of a company. He had the idea of writing about *The New Yorker*. He asked Katharine (Angell) White to do it with him: "It would give

your show a boost." She did not reply. Ingersoll's profile of *The New Yorker* was published, anonymously, in August, 1934. It was "The Making of a Magazine" told straight, which made *The New Yorker* look exactly the way Ross didn't want it to look. It also violated Ross's creed: "I do not want any member of the staff to be conscious of the advertising or business problems of *The New Yorker*. If so, they will lose their spontaneity and verve and we will be just like all other magazines." Ingersoll's story, which ran for seventeen pages, comprised, chiefly, sketches of the staff and their salaries (E. B. White: "With Thurber, he is wheel horse to *The New Yorker*'s wit. He makes $12,000 a year"). He was fulsome—"*The New Yorker* has first call on a nation's fancy"—but, given the (undisclosed) position he'd held there, that was weirdly preening. He wrote that Ross had triumphed over the magazine's early chaos: *The New Yorker* had been turning a profit since 1929; circulation had reached a hundred and twenty-five thousand. "If you must have a reason why *The New Yorker* is able to make big business of frivolity," Ingersoll explained, "look to this effervescent quality in its genius, Harold Ross." Ross was a madman, only ever articulate in a rage, who could turn "wit into dollars," which was hard to understand, because he was "hopelessly incompetent in judging and handling human beings" and "without taste, either literary or good."

None of this sat well. Ross was particularly pained by Ingersoll's portrayal of Katharine White. "You had her 'eloping' with White in the original draft," he later wrote Luce. "Nice for her children." (What Ingersoll did print was: "She is a lady who has her own way.") Ross wanted revenge. "It is not true that I get $40,000 a year," he wrote, in a memo he posted in the office. "The editor of *Fortune* Magazine makes thirty dollars a week and carfare," White wrote in a one-sentence Gossip Note in the next week's Talk of the Town. Ross bided his time.

In 1936, Luce was planning to start yet another magazine, *Life*. (*Time* makes enemies, Luce liked to say, but *Life* will make friends.) Knowing how hard it would be for Luce to refuse, Ross offered to run a Profile of him the week *Life* hit the newsstands. Ingersoll was against it. "They hate you over there," he warned Luce. Ross told Ingersoll that St. Clair McKelway would be writing the piece. He was lying. Wolcott Gibbs was going to write it, and if Luce had known he would never have agreed to it. (Ingersoll had written about Gibbs in *Fortune*, "He hates everybody and everything, takes an adolescent pride in it.") McKelway interviewed Luce; a fleet of reporters interviewed dozens of people at Time Inc., and then they all handed their notes over to Gibbs, who wrote a brutal parody of Timestyle, called "Time . . . Fortune . . . Life . . . Luce": "Backward ran sentences until reeled the mind." He skewered the contents of *Fortune* ("branch banking, hogs, glass-blowing, how to live in Chicago on $25,000 a year") and of *Life* ("Russian peasants in the nude, the love life of the Black Widow spider"). He made Luce ridiculous ("ambitious, gimlet-eyed, Baby Tycoon Henry Robinson Luce"), not sparing his childhood ("Very unlike the novels of Pearl Buck were his early days"), his fabulous wealth ("Described too modestly by him to Newyorkereporter as 'smallest apartment in River House,' Luce duplex at 435 East 52nd Street contains 15 rooms, 5 baths, a lavatory"), or his self-regard: "Before some important body he makes now at least one speech a year." He announced the net profits of Time Inc., purported to have calculated to five decimal places the "average weekly recompense for informing fellowman," and took a swipe at Ingersoll, "former Fortuneditor, now general manager of all Timenterprises . . . salary: $30,000; income from stock: $40,000." In sum, "Sitting pretty are the boys." He closed:

> Certainly to be taken with seriousness is Luce at thirty-eight, his fellowman already informed up to his ears, the shadow of his enterprises long across the land, his future plans impossible to imagine, staggering to contemplate. Where it will all end, knows God!

Ross sent Luce a proof. That night, they met in Ross's apartment, seconded by McKelway and Ingersoll. "It's not true that I have no sense of humor," Luce said to McKelway (who later told Thurber, "It was one of the most humorless remarks I'd ever heard"). "There's not a single kind word about me in the whole Profile," Luce said. "That's what you get for being a baby tycoon," Ross said. "Goddamn it, Ross, this whole goddamned piece is malicious, and you know it!" Ross paused. "You've put your finger on it, Luce. I believe in malice."

Ross said he'd look the piece over. Gibbs, who was an editor as well as a writer, sent him a memo, defending it. Gibbs's opinion carried a great deal of weight. ("You cannot be too obvious" was Hadden's watchword. "Oh yes you can" could have been Gibbs's. Hadden's contempt was for his readers; Gibbs re-

"Sometimes it helps to turn a question around. Why not you?"

served his for his writers. "Try to preserve an author's style if he is an author and has a style," Gibbs advised, in a 1937 memo titled "Theory and Practice of Editing *New Yorker* Articles.") The only possible way to write about another magazine, Gibbs told Ross, was as parody, and, given what it was parodying, the piece was bound to offend: "I think *Time* has gratuitously invaded the privacy of a great many people; I think it draws conclusions unwarranted by the facts, distorts quotes, reprints rumors it knows have little foundation, uses a form of selective editing in getting together a story from the newspaper that throws it altogether out of focus, and that Timestyle is an offense to the ear." Ross wrote Luce, "I was astonished to realize the other night that you are apparently unconscious of the notorious reputation *Time* and *Fortune* have for crassness in description, for cruelty and scandal-mongering and insult. I say frankly but really in a not unfriendly spirit, that you are in a hell of a position to ask anything." He changed barely a word.

After that, things did get a little silly. *Life* printed a photograph of Ross doodled on to look like Stalin; Ross toyed with starting a true-crime magazine, mainly, one suspects, because he was thinking about calling it *Death*. (He abandoned it; he had no appetite for empire.) In 1938, Ingersoll had Eustace Tilley listed in *Time's* masthead, in order to fire him in the next issue. Meanwhile, *Life* was struggling, three million dollars in the red. "We have to get more and more remarkable pictures," Luce ordered. The first week of April, *Life* warned subscribers of a forthcoming story "without precedent among general magazines": "If your copy of LIFE is read by children, this letter will give you time in which to make up your mind whether they shall see the story and under what conditions." The offending issue contained a removable centerfold called "The Birth of a Baby," consisting of thirty-five quite small black-and-white stills, hardly prurient, but the stunt worked. The issue was banned in cities across the country. *Life's* editor contrived to get himself arrested. *The New Yorker* published a lampoon called "The Birth of an Adult," written by White and illustrated by Rea Irvin. "The decrease in the number of mature persons in the world is a shocking indictment of our civilization," White wrote. That might have been satisfying, but, in the meantime, seventeen million adults had seen that issue of *Life*. *The New Yorker* later published a cartoon of two mailmen shouldering mail sacks stuffed with *Life:* "If their circulation keeps going up, Joe, I swear I can't go on."

In 1939, White wrote a parody of a *Life* circulation announcement. Ross wanted to publish it in big-city newspapers, asking a colleague, "Too strong? But what the hell?" The plan was axed. (The ad has not been found.) The next year, an editor at *Fortune* alerted Ross about a dumb prank by *New Yorker* staffers involving Luce's wife's underwear. (Luce, divorced from his first wife, married Clare Boothe Brokaw in 1935. She later served two terms in Congress.) "I don't know any more about it than you do," Ross wrote. "But I do know that there are a great many sallies of one kind or another between our two offices. It's morbid." Ross was busy nursing another grudge, against DeWitt Wallace. (*Reader's Digest's* influence on the magazine industry, Ross wrote, "gives us the creeps.") Luce was trying to get Franklin D. Roosevelt out of office, and Wendell Willkie elected in his place; the managing editor of *Fortune* ran Willkie's campaign. And by now everybody was busy covering the war. "Honest to Christ, I'm more dilapidated at the moment than Yugoslavia," Ross wrote in 1941. After John Hersey reported from Hiroshima for *The New Yorker*, Luce had Hersey's picture taken down from Time Inc.'s gallery of honor. When Geoffrey Hellman left *The New Yorker* to write for *Life*, he sent Ross a stack of blue Time Inc. memo pads. In the winter of 1947, Ross wrote on TIME INCORPORATED stationery:

> To: Mr. Hellman
> From: Mr. Ross
> What is the temperature over there?
> Do you need any pencils?

A few years later, Ross wrote a staff memo: "I earnestly recommend that we abandon the word *understandably*, which has been a fad word with us for a good many months and creeps into all sorts of pieces. I saw it in *Life* the other day and when *Life* takes up a word it is time for us to unload, I think." He sounded tired.

There may be no good way to write about one magazine in another, but it's fair to say that the rivalry between Luce and Ross, before it got goofy, served them both surprisingly well. Luce built for *Time* a glittering palace and gave journalism an energetic national voice that defined the American century; he certainly didn't need *The New Yorker* to help him do it, but *The New Yorker* helped convince him that Timestyle had run amok. "We went too far," he admitted. White once wrote, "Ross's private enemy is a study in itself." That enemy was Luce, who bolstered Ross's determination that it mattered to be something other than *Time*, that a world in which Luce was the last man standing, *Time* the last magazine read, Timese the last language spoken, would be a faster, briefer, simpler, busier, and less funny place. Ross, as much as the rest of the country, needed the news magazine. *The New Yorker* had proceeded as if the Depression never happened. *Time, Fortune, Life,* Luce, and the Second World War made writing from any such remove entirely untenable. Ross wrote wearily in 1951, "I started to get out a light magazine that wouldn't concern itself with the weighty problems of the universe, and now look at me." He died later that year, at the age of fifty-nine; his ashes were scattered in the mountains around Aspen.

The Age of Efficiency is over. This is the Age of Immediacy, faster than the speed of thought. A week is an eternity; four hundred words is too many; yesterday is ancient. Stories aren't only sorted by category; they're ranked by popularity. If, one day, everything is for everyone, and everything is timely, the battles between editors won't be as bloody, because there will be less to fight for. Upon Ross's death, *Time* printed an appreciation: "His snarling, unappeasable appetite for excellence will be missed by everybody, including the old lady in Dubuque." A last word: the signoff from a letter this magazine's founder sent to the Chrysler Building, long ago. Penned Editor Ross, furyspent, to Emperor Luce, "It's all over now, anyhow." ♦

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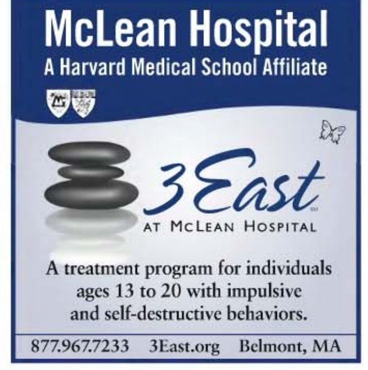
BRIEFLY NOTED

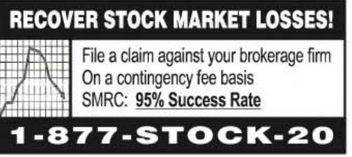
Next, *by James Hynes (Little, Brown; $23.99).* With epigraphs from Virginia Woolf and James Coburn, Hynes's novel is an unlikely but vigorous hybrid of Woolf's meandering introspection and Coburn's offbeat humor. Its protagonist is a longtime University of Michigan employee who sneaks down to Austin to interview for a more lucrative job. On the plane, he worries about terrorism, but his worries seem little more than the displaced anxieties of an unfulfilled, immature soul. He can't help laughing during sex; his former girlfriend left him for a lover who got her pregnant, and his current girlfriend doesn't know he's in Texas. Arriving early for his appointment, he wanders the unfamiliar city, ruminating about relationships and at one point wishing he could be reconditioned like an old car. "Is it even possible to remake a fifty-year-old man?" he wonders. It is, but what remakes him is also what he fears most.

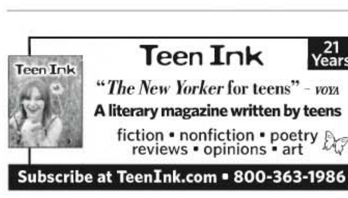
The Bradshaw Variations, *by Rachel Cusk (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* The Bradshaws, Thomas and Tonie, live in a "convenient, middle-sized town an hour from London," populated by "fretful-looking, badly paid liberal professionals." Tonie has been made head of her university English department, leaving Thomas to look after their eight-year-old daughter, while learning the piano and sulkily pondering the nature of art. The novel penetrates the world of the "solidly unexceptional bourgeoisie," who are, apparently, preoccupied with "time, and its relationship to authenticity." Moody and estranged, the characters live in a "dense atmosphere of bitterness and failure," with "folds and folds of blankness between them." Though Cusk is capable of subtle, searching description, as when she notes "the pin of routine again, searching for its mark," the book buckles under the weight of too much overwrought philosophizing.

George, Nicholas, and Wilhelm, *by Miranda Carter (Knopf; $30).* When Marie of Russia was about to give birth, her sister Alexandra, the Princess of Wales, wrote to her about getting the right nurse, "reminding her what had happened to Vicky's son, 'who came out wrong.'" The boy who came out wrong, Kaiser Wilhelm II, was the eldest of three cousins, along with Marie's son Tsar Nicholas II and Alexandra's son George V, whose lives Carter follows in her engrossing book. She shows how Europe moved from a time when royal relations were seen as a guarantor of stability to one in which the geopolitical importance of people called Duckie, Minnie, Alickie, and Affie seemed absurd. When Herbert Asquith, trying to head off the First World War, brought George a draft telegram to the Tsar, the King's sole contribution "was to add 'my dear Nicky,' and sign it." The Tsar's death, after George denied him asylum, was "a final blow to the cult of family which his queen empress grandmother had so heartily embraced."

Curfewed Night, *by Basharat Peer (Scribner; $25).* Peer's memoir of Kashmir chronicles a "fairy-tale childhood of the eighties"—samovars of *kahwa* tea drunk in paddy fields beneath the Himalayas—that gives way to "the horror of the nineties": India's rigging of the 1987 state elections and shootings of pro-independence Kashmiri protesters; Hindu-nationalist terrorization of Muslim Kashmiris; and a Pakistan-backed uprising against Indian rule. Violence becomes so routine that journalists use a chore chart to determine whose turn it is to call in and find out the daily death toll. Peer confronts us with the victims: boys soaked in kerosene; men made unmarriageable by electric shocks to their genitals. His clarity and his dedication to the region make this a much needed account of a little understood war.







BOOKS

FORMS OF ATTENTION

Don Paterson's "Rain."

BY DAN CHIASSON

It is National Poetry Month, time to remember what distinct pleasure poets themselves take in minimizing and disparaging their trade. No other art makes such a virtue of its grumpiness: painters hate other painters, or other styles of painting, but poets hate poetry itself, hate themselves for getting mixed up in it at all, hate, often, the very poem that they find themselves writing—in language brilliant and moving enough to convey how useless and phony the language of poetry is. You could call this navel-gazing, but the thing about poetry (an art of beheld excruciation) is its capacity to conscript us into emotional states we wouldn't volunteer to experience. I never worry very much about whether I'm pleasing God, and yet I love George Herbert. I don't like cats; I love Christopher Smart's mad paean to his cat, "On My Cat Jeoffry." So you needn't be a poet to care about poems about poetry. In fact, if poets (often lacking God, less often lacking cats) anguish most deeply about poetry, then we might take the argument a step further: non-poets should seek out poems about poetry, where the real intensity can be found.

Tunnel far enough into poets' bad moods about their trade, and you'll find examples of remarkable aesthetic integrity. Way down in that tunnel is the fine Scottish poet Don Paterson, a poet of surface gorgeousness (he rhymes, he writes in chiming little stanzas), who is nevertheless right at home in the dark. Paterson's signal contribution to poetry often seems to be to stamp out its most grandiose claims. *Ars longa, vita brevis*? Paterson's reply, in a poem from the late nineties, was "None of this is terribly important." Paterson came up early in that decade with some gifted friends—Simon Armitage and Glyn Maxwell, among others—who were notable for doing things in their poems that weren't at all effete or tubercular, like drinking Murphy's, smoking, and watching soccer. This could be irritating: a species of bar bluntness intended to get a rise out of the other patrons. But Paterson has made great leaps in the years since those first poems started to appear, sometimes by ironizing the bloke persona (which, to be fair, already came with a chaser of irony) but mainly just by living—the laddishness,

Don Paterson

a fad to begin with, was phased out. A few kids, a few deaths, and, before you know it, taking a drunken piss no longer seems like the perfect metaphor for mortality.

After the lad period, Paterson had a look at Zen, gave it up (perhaps wisely), translated (beautifully) Rilke's "Sonnets to Orpheus," and then took up aphorisms in a serious way, publishing two books of them (collected in the United States in a single volume, "Best Thought, Worst Thought"). The aphorism enthusiasm seems somehow illicit, a betrayal of poetry for freakish thrift, as though poetry were, by comparison, some kind of sluggish, swollen kin:

> The aphorism is a *brief* waste of time. The poem is a *complete* waste of time. The novel is a *monumental* waste of time.

This is a radical claim; poetry is nearly always thought of as a refinement of longer, coarser forms—the novel, memoir, history, the essay. Poems are not novels distilled; they are aphorisms coarsened and hideously dilated.

"Rain" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $24), Paterson's new book of poems, exchanges his barroom nihilism, and much of its swagger, for a chastened and pared-down clarity that he got from aphorism. Paterson was always a poet of the double negative (his first book was titled "Nil Nil," a soccer score that suggested, lightly, Lear: nothing can come of nothing). The new book ends where Paterson's career began, with a double negative that functions warily as an affirmative: "*none of this, none of this matters*."

In "Rain," what "matters" is children, friends, and work. What also matters, it turns out, is matter (Paterson likes puns), matter driven by the uncompromising laws of matter. Friends die, work comes to nothing, a child's pride is undone by "the flutter in his signature":

> My boy is painting outer space,
> and steadies his brush-tip to trace
> the comets, planets, moon and sun
> and all the circuitry they run
>
> in one great heavenly design.
> But when he tries to close the line
> he draws around his upturned cup,
> his hand shakes, and he screws it up.

"Screws it up" is the child's frustration rendered in the child's language: the momentary loss of control implies that control was his to lose—he is the little Yahweh of this little Genesis, his universe's unmoved mover. And yet, not so:

> The shake's as old as he is, all
> (thank god) he can recall
> of that hour when, one inch from home,
> we couldn't get the air to him;
>
> and though today he's all the earth
> and sky for breathing-space and breath
> the whole damn troposphere can't cure
> the flutter in his signature.

The Mother Goose rhymes suggest a comforting world governed by observable, Newtonian law, but these lines imply drives too complex, hidden (circuitry), or big (troposphere) to be com-

JOE CIARDIELLO

Advertisement

The Musical Wonder Returns

IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT): © 2010, CALGARY FOLK FESTIVAL: THE FESTIVAL MAIN STAGE ON PRINCE'S ISLAND FROM OVERHEAD; WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE AND MEMBERS OF NATHAN PERFORM. PHOTOS BY DOUG CALLOW.

This July, tens of thousands of revelers will head to Calgary's Prince's Island for a confluence of the musical sort. They make the journey to hear divergent musical styles come together for thrilling one-off jam sessions and legendary acts offering those once-in-a-lifetime performances fans dream about. The 31st annual Calgary Folk Festival promises a typically surprising lineup, from the cutting-edge bluegrass of the Avett Brothers to the classic soul of Roberta Flack.

In matter of sheer numbers, Folk Fest (as it's known to those on familiar terms) is four days, features 68 artists from 14 countries, involves seven stages, attracts 50,000 people, and offers a singular Canadian experience of diverse, genre-defying music in a pastoral setting. The daytime program showcases unexpected pairings of musicians—think turntablist Kid Koala on stage with multi-instrumentalist masters, The Decemberists. Evenings give way to more traditional sets on the main stage.

In terms of character, Folk Fest is a homegrown phenomenon. Begun in 1979, it has grown into a Calgary institution and a national treasure. Today, it's considered one of the seven wonders of the musical world, according to the festival aficionados at The Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper. "Folk Fest is rooted here in Calgary. It's reflected in how we program and in the unique experience our audience has here," says Kerry Clarke, the festival's artistic director.

The current landscape of large-scale music festivals focused on big-name attractions begs for a counter point. Thankfully, Folk Fest remains committed to programming admittedly obscure acts along with the marquee talent. By creating a lineup of talent on the verge of breakthrough, Folk Fest delivers a genuine experience worth every mile of travel.

This year's Folk Fest takes place July 22nd – 25th. The lineup will be announced and tickets go on sale May 13th. For more, visit calgaryfolkfest.com.

david byrne, calgary folk music festival, july 2001

prehended. Bobbing on the surface are the old, quaint explanations: God and damnation, air and the elements, measurement by inches, not light-years. And in the background a child asphyxiating while stuck in cosmic traffic.

Imagining people, for Paterson, requires imagining with equal and competing sympathy the enormous latticework of impersonal, indifferent matter that surrounds them. The trick works best if the people we imagine in these terms are intimates: a son, a friend. Robert Frost (one of Paterson's two or three most important masters) admitted that his interest in people was "at first no more than an almost technical interest in their speech." Paterson shares this sense of the human as specimen, but like some demented scientist—and like Frost!—he keeps falling in love with the subjects of his experiments. It makes him a fascinating elegist, since the singling out of individuals that justifies the project of elegy—the sense that a unique human person, now missing from the world, might be remade in art—runs counter to his intellectual inclination to view people as cogs in the cosmic machinery.

And so the heart of this book isn't loss, exactly, but, rather, a crisis over how to think about loss. The elegies here for his friend the poet Michael Donaghy suggest what deep trouble Paterson is in. It is reflected in the epigraph from Slavoj Žižek that he chooses for "Parallax": "the unbearable lightness of being no one." Here is the poem:

The moon lay silent on the sea
as on a polished shelf
rolling out and rolling out
its white path to the self

But while I stood illumined
like a man in his own book
I knew I was encircled by
the blindspot of its look

Because the long pole of my gaze
was all that made it turn
I was the only thing on earth
the moon could not discern

At such unearthly distance
we are better overheard.
The moon was in my mouth. It said
A million eyes. One word

A parallax is the apparent shift in position of an object when viewed from two different points of view: the nearer the object, the greater the parallax. And so by measuring the parallax of an object we can determine its distance. This is all John Donne would have needed to write a poem, and all Paterson needs to write this Donne-sponsored little poem about immeasurable loss. What's required, to determine a parallax, is a pair of viewpoints. Paterson can find the moon, he can find himself in the light of the moon, he can imagine himself both as reader and as book, but he cannot find his friend Donaghy, whose death has erased his mark on the cosmic map. And yet he's present: the "unearthly distance" is collapsed ("The moon was in my mouth") by language, which manifests everything on the same plane. "Parallax" finds everything except poetry useless for contacting the dead, as useless as a walkie-talkie.

The loss-consciousness of these poems changes the meaning of their formalism. Their craft is there to prove that craft is, finally, fruitless: it won't cure a child or restore a dead friend. Again one thinks of Frost (for whom poems were not a great "clarification of life" but a "momentary stay against confusion"). "Two Trees" is a parable about how vulnerable forms are—the more ornate, the more vulnerable—to being undone, unmade. And not just aesthetic form: it's a poem about marriage and separation. In the first stanza, the enterprising Don Miguel decides to graft his orange tree to his lemon tree, laboriously fusing the two trunks: "Over the years/the limbs would get themselves so tangled up/each bough looked like it gave a double crop." The local kids love it; "the magic tree in Miguel's patio" becomes village legend. Then the new guy takes over:

"It was sort of an after-the-bell transaction."

The man who bought the house had had
no dream
so who can say what dark malicious
whim
led him to take his axe and split the bole
along its fused seam, then dig two holes.
And no, they did not die from solitude;
nor did their branches bear a sterile
fruit;
nor did their unhealed flanks weep every
spring
for those four yards that lost them
everything,
as each strained on its shackled root to
face
the other's empty, intricate embrace.
They were trees, and trees don't weep, or
ache, or shout.
And trees are all this poem is about.

The history of poetry is a history of disingenuous insistence that poems are about only what they are "about": "Two Trees" is, of course, a poem "about" everything except trees. Paterson's feigned neutrality (the stanzas, each of them twelve lines long, feel like sonnets shorn of their concluding, and conclusive, couplets) simply makes that weeping, those aches and shouts, more painfully human.

Cancelling the symbols he courts, refusing the meanings he makes plain, keeping boisterously mum: these habits have been part of Paterson's work from the start. They once made him rowdy company. Now they leave him chastened, reprimanded, off balance. "Rain" is a book of middle age, its Janus face looking back at youthful excess and wondering what on earth comes next. The suspicion of girth, of chat, of forms of embellishment, of claims to truth, of brandished personality makes Paterson different from the gregarious poet he once was and different from his close contemporaries. To be both pursuer and pursued, master and disciple, "wanted man" and the "holy order" that harbors him: this fate awaits all poets of Paterson's calibre, chased offstage by the art they once chased. There is a brilliant little comic skit toward the end of this book, entitled "The Poetry," about the spiritual wear and tear of questing for a self whose nature is to stray. The speaker is Li Po, who, with Du Fu, was one of the two great masters of classical Chinese poetry:

I found him wandering on the hill
one hot blue afternoon.
He looked as skinny as a nail,
as pale-skinned as the moon;

below the broad shade of his hat
his face was cut with rain.
Dear God, poor Du Fu, I thought:
It's the poetry again. ♦

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BOOKS

CELEBRITY SMACKDOWN

Kitty Kelley takes on Oprah Winfrey.

BY LAUREN COLLINS

In February of 1988, Oprah Winfrey, the host of a year-and-a-half-old, already extremely popular talk show, landed her first big celebrity guest and flew to Los Angeles for what she has called "the worst interview of my life." Its subject, Elizabeth Taylor, wore a purple peplum suit, sat in a floral armchair—they were filming at the Hotel Bel-Air—and refused to entertain Oprah's halting inquiries about her romantic entanglements, one of the themes of the book, "Elizabeth Takes Off," that she was there to discuss. "None of your business," Taylor said at one point, fixing Oprah with a hyacinth death stare. Two weeks later, on "Donahue," Taylor was a doll. Oprah, it seemed, would be sticking to "Housewife Prostitutes" and "Man-Stealing Relatives." Her executive producer once told reporters, "Oprah does better with controversial shows, with guests that have some kind of passion and emotion and a story to tell. . . . We call them 'true-life stories.'"

Why not call them "true stories"? The term was a hedge, an acknowledgment that without sustained first-hand access to a person—even, say, a ubiquitous billionaire celebrity whose teen-age pregnancy, sexual abuse, spiritual evolution, eighteen-year engagement, weight fluctuations, reading tastes, aching "vajayjay," and fondness for candlelit baths are familiar to millions—there's only so much that we can really know. The movie equivalent is "inspired by." The literary one is "unauthorized biography." The epigraph of Kitty Kelley's proudly illicit life, "Oprah" (Crown; $30), is something that Oprah yelled on the courthouse steps in Amarillo, Texas, after being found not guilty of slandering hamburgers: "Free speech not only lives, it rocks." Kelley, who has published takedowns of Jackie O., Frank Sinatra, and Nancy Reagan, among others, means the gesture as a kiss-off, pointing out the hypocrisy of the fact that Oprah, the professional talker, has demanded that anyone who works for her, or anywhere near her, sign a confidentiality agreement. A Kitty Kelley biography of Oprah Winfrey is one of those King Kong vs. Godzilla events in celebrity culture, but in this case the subject of the exposé has the advantage. However unsportingly, Oprah has locked up tight most of the people who get whatever it is about her that we don't. Kelley's pen is not dripping poison so much as slightly curdled milk.

Kitty Kelley's book is a confetti bomb of small embarrassments.

It isn't for lack of trying. Though Kelley says that she came away from her research "full of admiration and respect for my subject," the tone of the book is prosecutorial. Among other niggling sins, Oprah—born to a teen-age single mother in Kosciusko, Mississippi, in 1954—fails to buy a fifty-dollar "legacy brick" for a new pathway at her high school in Nashville, mispronounces Barbados as "Barb-a-*doze*," and skips the retirement party, in 2007, of a colleague she last worked with three decades earlier. In one section, Kelley indicts Oprah for having, on numerous occasions, "lapsed into potty talk." ("I can't even pee straight," Oprah tells a crowd at the Kennedy Center.) Elsewhere, Kelley writes that Oprah "felt she needed to present herself as open, warm, and cozy on the air, and conceal the part of her that was cold, closed, and calculating." Well, yes.

Kelley's book is a compendium of minutiae—reels of footage, with the occasional voice-over—and some of it is delightful. Did you know that Oprah ran for student council on the slogan "Put a Little Color in Your Life. Vote for the Grand Ole Oprah"? (Later, she won the Miss Fire Prevention title, and scored a gig on Nashville's WLAC at the age of nineteen.) Or that she sent Bob Hope a bouquet of roses every week for the last thirteen years of his life? Kelley is a masterly collator—she says that she tracked down each of the 2,732 interviews Oprah has given in the past twenty-five years—but she isn't so good at weighing the relative importance of her findings. Baltimore, where Oprah spent her "Anchorman" days, covering cockatoo birthday parties and feuding with a "silver-haired, silver-tongued" co-anchor, is a city "situated north of the Confederacy, south of the Mason-Dixon Line, and in the shadow of Washington, D.C."

In 1984, Oprah moved to Chicago to host an early-morning TV talk show,

KIRSTEN ULVE

and almost immediately brought it from third place in the ratings to first; eventually, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" made her the richest black woman in the world. We hear about how she spends her money—a jade bathtub, a diamond toe ring (for Diane Sawyer), and, to a stupendous extent, charity—but not a lot about how she makes it. (Oprah's empire includes *O, The Oprah Magazine*, radio and television productions such as "Dr. Phil" and "Rachael Ray," and the Oprah Winfrey Network, which is expected to début next year.) Kelley unearths, in an inspired bit of reporting, a former airfield safety officer who attests that, whenever Oprah was due to arrive at her hangar, employees popped bags of microwave popcorn, because she loathed the smell of fuel. (Another airport employee's recollection that pilots were under orders not to disturb Oprah unless she'd slept eight hours, even if it meant sitting on the runway, is undermined by Kelley's assertion, two hundred pages earlier, that Oprah "slept only four or five hours a night.") A few mentions of Oprah's weakness for sour-cream potatoes, Ding Dongs, and fried chicken, rather than dozens, would have sufficed.

More off-putting are Kelley's innuendos about Oprah's skin tone and her sex life. Oprah, one of Kelley's sources suggests, is with her "high-yella" boyfriend, Stedman Graham, because "she needs to have a successful light-skinned man by her side to feel secure." Kelley repeats casual accusations that Oprah has bleached her complexion. Of Oprah's emotional abuse by an ex-boyfriend, she writes, "African American women understand in their bones the slave mentality that leads sisters like Oprah to give their all to a man in complete subordination." While trying to nail Oprah for being unpatriotic—discussing why American audiences failed to warm to the film "Beloved," which she produced, Oprah told the *Times* of London, "People in America are afraid of race and any discussion about race"—Kelley inadvertently reminds us what a sage and fearless inquisitor of race, and the politics thereof, Oprah has been. We get the obligatory discussion of whether or not Oprah and Gayle King, her best friend of thirty-four years, are lesbians. "There was no foundation for the rumors of a lesbian relationship, except for their constant togetherness and Oprah's bizarre teasing of the subject," Kelley writes, and then, like a conspiracy theorist squinting to see the pyramids on dollar bills, trots out unconvincing insinuations.

Despite the crudeness of the psychological insights and some wince-worthy prose—"The downpayment on dreams as big as hers meant dropping a guillotine on the past"—Kelley is good on Oprah's cultural significance. It's hard to remember, but Oprah, before converting to what Ann Landers once referred to as her "touchy-feely crap," was a contemporary of Jerry Springer and Jenny Jones and, as Kelley explains, in some ways their progenitor. She brought us daytime sleazefests such as "Mexican Satanic Cult Murders," a 1989 show on which one guest suggested that some Jews were sacrificing babies. Kelley pegs the beginning of Oprah's gradual conversion to spirituality and celebrities to 1994. As Oprah's career came to attest, we worship celebrities like gods who walk among us; as Kitty Kelley's career attests, we also feel the need to see them crucified. (Sometimes, as in the case of Tom Cruise's couch-jumping appearance on "Oprah," they crucify themselves.) Oprah and Kitty may have taken opposite roles, but, like Simba and Shenzi in "The Lion King," they help sustain the same ecology.

So while Kelley inevitably bemoans Oprah's transformation "from girlfriend to goddess," her biography reminds us that the goddess has her vulnerabilities, too. She may be, as Kelley insists, a "saleswoman," but an extraordinary number of her intimates—Stedman and Gayle being notable exceptions—have sold her out. The wariness that, in some celebrities, indicates paranoia seems, in Oprah's case, prudence. One old boyfriend circulated a book proposal saying that he'd smoked crack with her during a five-month affair; in 1990, her half sister sold the story of Oprah's teen-age pregnancy (the baby was born prematurely, and died five weeks later) to the *National Enquirer* for nineteen thousand dollars.

One of Kelley's most voluble sources is Katharine Carr Esters, an eighty-one-year-old cousin, at whose suggestion Oprah donated five million dollars to build a Boys and Girls Club in Kosciusko. "It's easy when you have that much and you need tax deductions and all," Esters told Kelley. "And Oprah doesn't bang a nail for Habitat unless her cameras are running." Esters's grudge seems to stem from Oprah's failure to help her publicize a memoir, and from disagreements about their family history: Oprah has said that she grew up in filth; Esters tells Kelley that the family's home was "spotless," with "white Priscilla-style lace curtains." In a lethal footnote, Kelley writes, "On July 30, 2007, Mrs. Esters told the author the name and family background of Oprah's real father on the condition that the information not be published until Vernita Lee tells her daughter the entire story." (This page, in something like a typographical taunt, faces a photograph of Esters and Kelley in Kosciusko, with their arms around each other.)

Oprah, or Oprahism, has often been called a secular religion, and Kelley's most plausible insight is that Oprah has, from the beginning of her career, been propelled by a nearly messianic belief in herself. "She did not believe that bad things could happen to good people," Kelley writes. Her faith in her instincts is immovable, although not immutable. Oprah was close to the Clintons; when she was to receive a lifetime-achievement award at the International Emmys, she asked Hillary to present it, and, from the lectern, said she hoped that Hillary would "do us a privilege" by running for President. Then Oprah watched Barack Obama deliver the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, and her vision changed. In 2005, she approached Obama, standing under a tree at a gospel brunch that she was holding at the Promised Land, her estate in Montecito, California, and asked, "If someone were to announce one of these days that he was going to run for President, don't you think this would be a sweet place to hold a fund-raiser?" It was as though she could create a black President through sheer force of will, and maybe she did.

Oprah's belief in her instincts doesn't mean that she's afraid to change her mind. Since she was fifteen years old, she has kept a diary. In 1993, she came very close to releasing an autobiography, which she cancelled just fourteen weeks before its intended release. Publish it, Oprah. It would be your best life yet. ♦

THE ART WORLD

PICTURE PERFECT

An Henri Cartier-Bresson retrospective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004) was a taker of great photographs. Some three hundred of them make for an almost unendurably majestic retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, from his famous portly puddle-jumper of 1932 ("Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare, Paris") to views of Native Americans in Gallup, New Mexico, in 1971, one of his last visual essays as the globe-trotting heavyweight champion of photojournalism. (Thereafter, he mostly rested his cameras and devoted himself to drawing—sensitively though not terribly well—in the vein of his friend Alberto Giacometti.) Nearly every picture displays the classical panache—the fullness, the economy—of a painting by Poussin. Any half-dozen of them would have engraved their author's name in history. Resistance to the work is futile, if quality is our criterion, but inevitable, I think, on other grounds.

Cartier-Bresson has the weakness of his strength: an Apollonian elevation that subjugates life to an order of things already known, if never so well seen. He said that the essence of his art was "the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event, as well as the precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression." Too often, the "significance" feels platitudinous, even as its expression dazzles. Robert Frank, whose book "The Americans" (1958) treated subjects akin to many in the older photographer's work, put it harshly but justly: "He traveled all over the goddamned world, and you never felt that he was moved by something that was happening other than the beauty of it, or just the composition." The problem of Cartier-Bresson's art is the conjunction of aesthetic classicism and journalistic protocol: timeless truth and breaking news. He rendered a world that, set forth at MOMA by the museum's chief curator of photography, Peter Galassi, richly satisfies the eye and the mind, while numbing the heart.

Cartier-Bresson was the eldest of five children; his mother was a cotton merchant's daughter and his father a farmer's son, who became a wealthy thread manufacturer. He had "a nearly feminine beauty," Galassi writes in the show's catalogue, "marked by fine features, blue eyes, blonde hair, and rosy cheeks." Headstrong, he declined to follow in his father's footsteps. After a lavishly cultivated childhood, Cartier-Bresson left the august Lycée Condorcet when he was eighteen, determined to paint. He was encouraged by Proust's friend the society portraitist Jacques-Émile Blanche, and studied under the post-Cubist artist and rigorous pedagogue André Lhote, whose emphasis on the rules of classical composition proved a lasting influence. He hobnobbed with Surrealists, frequented brothels, embraced Communism. Blanche wrote an affectionate burlesque of the young man who had "the air of a girl in pajamas" and preached social revolution "at the Splendide, before a very cold magnum of champagne." (He also introduced him to Gertrude Stein, who, Galassi writes, "looked at his paintings and advised him he would do better to join the family business.") In 1929, Cartier-Bresson began his year of compulsory military service with, he said, a rifle in one hand and Joyce's "Ulysses" in the other.

In 1931, he fled an unhappy love affair with a woman in Paris to Africa, where he roamed for a year and began taking pictures. (His lover had been a photography enthusiast.) Recuperating in Marseilles from a nearly lethal case of blackwater fever, he acquired a Leica and gave himself over to camera work in a Surrealist spirit, alert for odd events on city streets. He said he suddenly realized "that photography could reach eternity through the moment." The short form of that insight is the English title of his best-known book, "The Decisive Moment" (1952). (In French, it is "Images à la Sauvette"—roughly, "images on the fly," with an implication of rascality.)

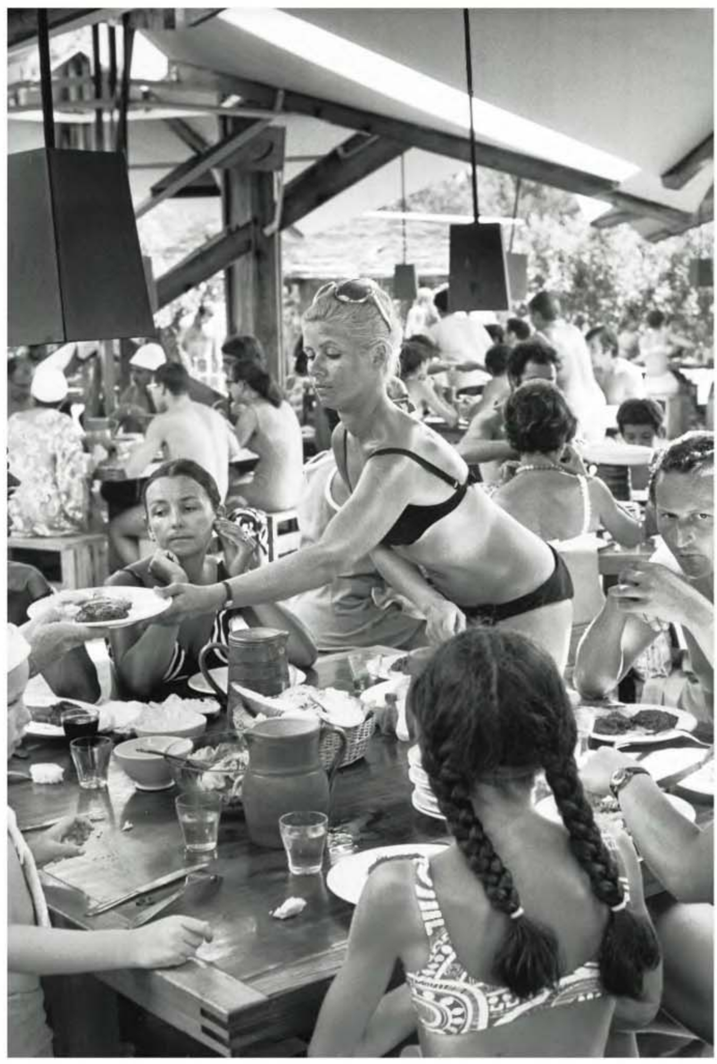
A regular at hunting parties during his youth—besides playing a servant in his friend Jean Renoir's "The Rules of the Game," Cartier-Bresson served as the offscreen gunman for the film's massacre of rabbits—he now applied a hunter's instincts to his art. He blackened the shiny parts of his diminutive camera, to keep it inconspicuous, as—"feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce," he said—he stalked epiphanies in Paris, London, Madrid, and Mexico City, among other places, in the nineteen-thirties. But form determines content in even the most spontaneous of his street shots. Let one tour de force stand for many: "Valencia, Spain" (1933), which finds a boy in a strangely balletic pose against a battered wall, his eyes mysteriously raised (following the flight of a ball, which we don't see). The subject piques and charms, but what makes the picture great is the gorgeousness of the wall, with its weary testimony to times long past.

The hallmark of Cartier-Bresson's genius is less in what he photographed than in where he placed himself to photograph it, incorporating peculiarly eloquent backgrounds and surroundings. His shutter-click climaxes an artful scurry for the perfect point of view. This made him a natural for photojournalism, whose subjects, their "significance" prejudged, unfold unpredictably in space and time. In 1934, he met the photographer David Szymin, known as Chim, who introduced him to a Hungarian colleague, Endre Friedmann. Friedmann, who soon changed his name to Robert Capa, urged Cartier-Bresson away from fine art and into the booming field of news photography. "Keep surrealism in your little heart, my dear," he recalled Capa advising him. "Don't fidget. Get moving!" In 1937, Cartier-Bresson joined the staff of *Ce Soir*, a Communist daily, and covered the coronation of King George VI—turning his lens away from the pomp to the attending

crowds. He was still a loyal fellow-traveller as late as 1959, when *Life* published his fawning shots of workers, peasants, students, and soldiers gladly engaged in Mao's Great Leap Forward. His eye was singular, but his attitudes were standard issue: his road-tour typifyings of Americans reek of condescension. (Robert Frank countered that view of us.)

Having joined the French Army in 1939, Cartier-Bresson was captured by the Germans, in 1940, and spent three years in prison camps, finally escaping on his third try. While an evidently unhounded fugitive, he travelled in France, taking portraits of Camus, Matisse, Bonnard, and other notables. (His portrait work is magnificent to a fault, marmoreally elegant. No one smiles—except Capa, at a racetrack in 1953, infectiously gloating over betting slips held like a hand of cards.) In 1945, he made a film for the United States Office of War Information, "The Return," about the repatriation of liberated prisoners and displaced persons in Europe. That project yielded his dramatic shot of a female collaborator being denounced—and hit, though it's not quite apparent—by a woman she betrayed, as an interrogator calmly takes notes. Work brought Cartier-Bresson to New York, where, in 1947, he became a co-founder of the Magnum agency, with Chim and Capa. He then quickened the always brisk pace of his travels, popping up in China for the Communist Revolution and in India for the end of the Raj. (In a secretly funny coup, he caught a starchy Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy, as his wife shared a laugh with Jawaharlal Nehru, with whom she was rumored to be having an affair.) Mural-size maps of the world introduce the MOMA show, with colored lines tracing the photographer's dizzyingly numerous peregrinations, including jaunts to Russia, Mongolia, Indonesia, the Middle East, and Japan. This suggests a novel measurement of artistic worth: mileage. It seems relevant only to the glamour quotient—a cult, practically—of Cartier-Bresson's persona, pointing up what seems to me most resistible in his work.

He developed little, in any sense. His exposed film went to labs; juxtaposed prints of the boy in Valencia, toned softly in the early thirties and sharply in the late sixties, evince changing fashions in commercial printing. Opulent blacks and whites suggest a house style of the Cartier-Bresson Foundation, in Paris, which provided most of the prints in the show. In creative approach, Cartier-Bresson indeed carried Surrealism in his heart, playing specific appearances against general ideas, as in crowd shots that discover spiky personalities amid collective passions. His strongest works, for me, are precisely those which take playfulness, or leisure, as their subject, from his canonical shot of workers picnicking by a pond, in 1938, to bikinied Club Med lunchers on Corsica, in 1969. An aesthete and a sensualist, Cartier-Bresson is authoritative, and even profound, in all matters and manners of pleasure. The consummate ease of such work resonates with his attractively reticent remark that photography is "a marvelous profession while it remains a modest one." But that self-immunizing stance palls on the occasions of historic tumult and human suffering that presented Cartier-Bresson, always and only, with chances to achieve beautiful and yet more beautiful pictures. ♦



Cartier-Bresson's "Club Méditerranée, Santa Giulia, Corsica, France" (1969).

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MUSICAL EVENTS

SWEET NOISES

William Christie at BAM.

BY ALEX ROSS

"The definition of a good musician in a lyric orchestra is someone who breathes *exactly* like a singer," the conductor and harpsichordist William Christie told an audience recently at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Christie was in town to lead his celebrated early-music ensemble, Les Arts Florissants, in a festival of Baroque opera—the offerings were Marc-Antoine Charpentier's "Actéon" and Henry Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" and "The Fairy Queen"—and he had opened one of the "Fairy Queen" rehearsals to the public. It was no surprise that several hundred people showed up to observe the proceedings, for Christie has gained an ardent following during twenty years of visits to BAM; his position in the world of early music is not unlike that of Zeus in a Baroque-opera production, gliding over the mortals in a bright chariot.

Christie, who has lived in France since 1971, speaks with an airy, hard-to-place transatlantic accent, betraying little trace of his native Buffalo. A silver-haired, bespectacled man with the manner of an eminent judge, he has a reputation as a taskmaster, but in rehearsal his tone was gentle—perhaps because he was mindful of the crowd, or, more likely, because the hard work had been done. "The Fairy Queen," a Restoration-era fantasia on Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," had opened several nights earlier, and Christie was addressing problems that had surfaced at the first performance. For one thing, the singers were having trouble hearing the orchestra from the back of the stage. Also, they were occasionally losing the tempo during some of the zanier stage actions instigated by the director, Jonathan Kent—notably, a sequence in which they donned pink-and-white bunny suits and simulated a variety of sex acts.

Christie kept insisting on the essential relationship of words and music. Rehearsing a scene in which the soprano Lucy Crowe sang the aria "If Love's a Sweet Passion," with echoes from a quartet of singers, he told them, "Lucy is coloring absolutely every word. Listen to the way she sings 'wounds.' Listen to the way she sings 'dart.' Listen to the vowel color, whether it is open or closed, lots of consonants, fewer consonants, chewy consonants, and so on."

The most striking moment came when Christie urged the instrumentalists to pay heed to what Crowe was singing. The melody is given first by the oboe, and Christie stopped his lead oboist, Pier Luigi Fabretti, in the middle of the phrase that matches the lines "Since I suffer with pleasure, why should I complain, / Or grieve at my fate, when I know 'tis in vain?" "*When* I know," Christie repeated, asking Fabretti to emphasize the crucial grammatical turn, even though it fell on the middle beat.

These and a hundred other niceties were beautifully observed in the company's rendition of "The Fairy Queen" that evening. Christie has an almost magical knack for restoring opera's unity: voices, instruments, and words are all of a piece, rather than specialized components. Whatever labor went on behind the scenes disappeared when the curtain rose: this "Fairy Queen" hit the senses like the first warm day of spring.

Purcell, whose three-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary fell last year, never wrote a full-scale opera in the modern sense. "King Arthur" and "The Fairy Queen," his most ambitious theatre pieces, are identified as semi-operas, meaning that they combine arias and choruses with dance episodes and stretches of spoken drama. "Our English genius will not relish that perpetual Singing," one pundit said, distinguishing Purcell's work from Italian opera. It has long been assumed that these extravaganzas would baffle or bore a modern audience, and they have customarily been performed with the spoken texts omitted or greatly curtailed. Christie, though, believes in the power of the original conception, where music, dance, and spectacle achieve a kind of delirious equilibrium. He gave "King Arthur" in 1995, and finally realized his dream of a total "Fairy Queen" last summer, at the Glyndebourne Festival, employing a new critical edition by Bruce Wood and Trevor Pinnock.

It does make for a long evening—four hours, with one intermission. The spoken sections sound strange to modern ears: "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is cut in pieces, shuffled around, and otherwise manhandled by Purcell's literary collaborator, whose identity is not known for certain. Yet the score, by turns ribald, spooky, and sublimely sensuous, is all the more potent when it appears in dramatic context. Five splendid musical masques, on themes of drunkenness, nocturnal magic, sex, the seasons, and marriage, amplify themes of the play. A climactic number entitled "The Plaint"—a sinuous cousin to Purcell's best-known piece, Dido's Lament, in "Dido and Aeneas"—fully captures Shakespeare's underlying mystery, the fairy tendency of "following darkness like a dream."

Kent's staging showed that the hybrid genre of semi-opera can still give delight across the centuries. The copulating-bunnies routine aside—it formed the climax to Purcell's Masque of Seduction—Kent treated the work with admirable seriousness, bringing out its more unsettling resonances; the fairies wore black wings and looked eerily batlike. Although the mechanicals wore blue overalls and undertook such modern tasks as window-washing and floor-polishing, little about the production seemed foreign to the temper either of Shakespeare's England or of Purcell's.

Christie made it all dance. Words were distinct, rhythms lilting. Singers and players imaginatively elaborated their parts, adding ornaments and runs during the repeats. Crowe anchored the night with her penetrating tone and her incisive diction. The French soprano Emmanuelle de Negri delivered a haunting, long-breathed "Plaint," and the British tenor Ed Lyon maintained a sweet, crisp voice through multiple costume changes (including nothing more than a fig leaf in the final masque). Among the stage actors, Amanda Harris was a booming Titania and Desmond Barrit a grandly oafish

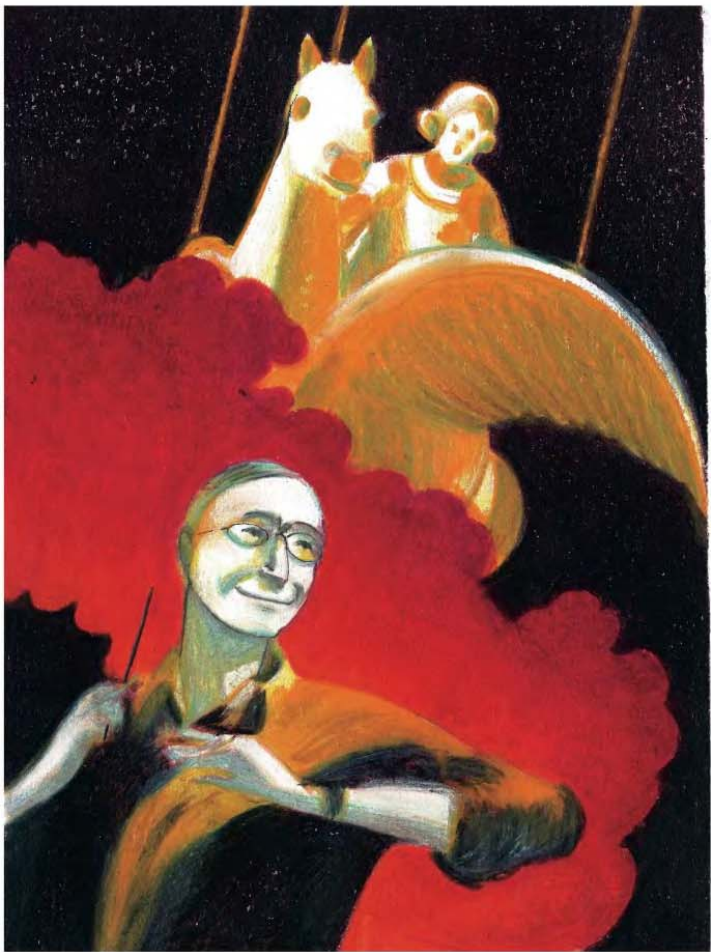
Bottom. Barrit also belted out the song of the Drunken Poet, as inebriated glissandos emanated from the orchestra.

"Dido" and Charpentier's brief tragédie "Actéon" were seen in a spare, handsome production by Vincent Boussard. Lyon again won the medal for vocal and theatrical athletics, changing from a hunter into a wounded stag and then, in "Dido," into an everywhere-darting, mischief-making Spirit. Sonya Yoncheva, as the doomed Queen of Carthage, effectively mixed plaintive and passionate accents, although her final Lament never quite tore the heart in two. In that immortal stretch of music, I wanted, for once, a little less fancy, a little more simplicity.

After "The Fairy Queen" closed, Christie moved over to Juilliard, where he is serving as a visiting artist in the school's newly instituted early-music program. Before last year, America's most illustrious conservatory offered no organized training in pre-Classical music, but it has already made considerable strides.

At a master class in Paul Hall, Christie stressed the creative dimension of early-music playing—the opportunity to express oneself in a way that mainstream classical performance generally does not permit. "These youngsters are a different breed of musician from the ordinary common garden-variety conservatory student," Christie said to the audience, with a smile. "Students have been taught to play exactly what they see in front of them. . . . You rigorously follow all the instructions communicated by the composer." In early music, he went on, the attitude is quite different: "*Don't* play what's on the page, or the score will be dead, deader than a doorknob. You've got to become a specialist. Do something to the score, help it along, nurture it, give it substance. Understand that it is a partial document—a document that wants to be completed."

He then brought out an ensemble headed by the oboist Priscilla Smith, who has recently taken up the Baroque oboe. The instrument has finger holes instead of keys, and the player must change the breath pressure in order to extend its range. Smith made her way bravely through Telemann's Partita No. 2, emitting a few squawks but obtaining a rawer, more vividly colored sound than she would have got from a modern instrument. Afterward, Christie asked her how she felt about the experience.



LORENZO MATTOTTI

Christie, in a master class, stressed the creative dimension of early-music playing.

"I love the modern oboe," she said. "I'm not going to put it down, but it does feel like I'm operating some sort of machinery." The more primitive-seeming Baroque oboe was, for her, "something sort of spiritual."

Christie beamed and said, "It seems to me that by their very limitations early instruments can create worlds of extraordinary beauty."

A convincing demonstration ended the class. Four Juilliard musicians—the violinists Beth Wenstrom and Liv Heym, the cellist Beiliang Zhu, and the harpsichordist Aya Hamada—played Purcell's Sonata VI in Four Parts, a brilliant ground-bass piece drawing on an ancient four-note descending motif of lament. (The pattern is familiar from Monteverdi's "Lamento della ninfa," or, if you prefer, Ray Charles's "Hit the Road Jack.") Zhu added telling nuances to the repeating bass, and the violinists gave fire to their variations, as if fighting off the melancholy undertow. In all, it was a very Christiesque performance, elegant and sensual, stylishly wild.

Christie asked the players how long they had been working on the music. A few weeks, they said. "At these master classes," he said to the audience, "artists want to impress the crowd and say what they can do to fix it. That can be very exciting for an audience." Indeed, some onlookers may have been hoping to see Christie twist the knife. But he shrugged happily: "There's nothing to say." These young performers may never receive praise quite as pointed as that. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

PERILOUS LOVE

"The Secret in Their Eyes" and "Date Night."

BY DAVID DENBY

In Buenos Aires in 1974, a criminal-court investigator, Benjamin Espósito (Ricardo Darín), arrives at a crime scene bantering and cursing with a colleague, and sees the naked corpse of a beautiful young woman. A conventional Argentine male with a passionate reverence for female splendor, he's stunned into silence; he appears to take the woman's violation (she has been raped, beaten, and murdered) as an affront to his personal sense of order. Not only does he relentlessly pursue the killer; he draws close to the woman's husband, a bank employee named Morales (Pablo Rago), who remains obsessed with his dead wife for the rest of his life. "The Secret in Their Eyes," which won the Oscar this year for best foreign-language film, is, I suppose, a legal thriller, but it's powerfully and richly imagined: a genre-busting movie that successfully combines the utmost in romanticism with the utmost in realism—Espósito, it turns out, has a love of his own, which he's too abashed to act on. A few scenes approach the melodramatic kitsch of a telenovela, but the writer-director, Juan José Campanella, working with the screenwriter and novelist Eduardo Sacheri, sends us deeper into mystery and passion; the movie presses forward with a rhapsodic urgency and with flashes of violence and pungent humor. "The Secret in Their Eyes" is a finely wrought, labyrinthine entertainment whose corners and passageways will be discussed by moviegoers for hours afterward as they exit into the cool night air.

The movie opens in 2000, and Espósito, gray-bearded, is at his desk, writing. It is twenty-five years after the murder, and the investigator, retired yet still fascinated by the case, is assembling his recollections of it. What he writes is played out by the actors, but he angrily throws away each recollection as an inadequate first draft, and that scene disappears from the screen. Campanella is seriously teasing us: Espósito may be dissatisfied with his prose, but what he depicts in these first-draft attempts actually happened (we see the scenes again later, in their proper place in the story). Back in 1974, Espósito chases the killer with the aid of his antic partner, Pablo Sandoval (Guillermo Francella), and their cautious superior, Irene Menéndez Hastings (Soledad Villamil), a judge's assistant. (In Argentina, judges act like D.A.s, investigating cases and indicting suspects.) Educated in the United States, Irene (as she's referred to throughout) is a tall, brilliant upper-class beauty with a big head of black hair—think of a young South American Susan Sontag. She's clearly on her way to the top (by 2000, she's a powerful judge). Espósito is an intelligent man with penetrating dark eyes, but he's not a lawyer, and the difference between them in income and status stops him from openly declaring his love for her, which she keeps hinting that she wants. Instead, he worries about Sandoval, an alcoholic genius who rises from the depths of a midday stupor in a bar and pulls together the clues that lead to the identity and the arrest of the murderer. Sandoval is a lovable mess, who, despite his gifts, can't survive amid the chaos and the repression of Buenos Aires. The movie is haunted by missed opportunities and the meaningless, unhappy passage of time—the underside of obsession.

The murderer is a furtive creep named Gomez (Javier Godino), and what follows his capture is altogether startling. When Espósito, interrogating him, doesn't get anywhere, Irene takes over. She turns the questioning into a sexual duel, taunting Gomez's manhood, her words more wounding and more effective than a beating with brass knuckles. Campanella, who works in both the United States and Argentina, has directed numerous episodes of "Law & Order," but what happens in this scene is not something you'll see on American television. Irene understands the loathing of women at the heart of Argentine machismo; she plays a sarcastic bitch in order to provoke Gomez's rage, and enjoys a triumph that pushes feminism beyond a critique of men—beyond ironic mockery, too—into a kind of legal-world performance art.

Ricardo Darín and Soledad Villamil in a film by Juan José Campanella.

TOM BACHTELL

From scene to scene, the movie has an enormously vital swing to it. Espósito is a knight-errant of the law who seeks justice, and Sandoval is his Sancho Panza, while the judges (apart from Irene) are profane and corrupt political hacks; the back-and-forth among the court workers is juicy and

explicit, sometimes hilarious, sometimes sinister, while the atmosphere outside the courts is savage. The dictator Juan Perón dies in 1974, and is succeeded by his wife, Isabel; it's the time of the death squads, the disappearances, and legal anarchy. Gomez is freed by one of the judges and becomes a bully boy for the new fascist regime. He's a serious threat to Espósito (Irene is protected by her wealthy family), and a provocation to Morales, the dead woman's husband. Years go by, and, for most Argentineans, the time between the rule of the Peróns and the rise of democracy may be lost in a way that goes deeper than the lost love of two colleagues. Yet Campanella does no more than hint at the anguished political background of the story; he mostly sticks to his principal players, who are woven together in an increasingly intricate structure, revealed by an inventive and flexible camera. Campanella moves in for prolonged, emotionally wrenching closeups, as in a Garbo drama from the nineteen-thirties. He also does fluent and muscular sweeps: when Espósito and Sandoval first discover Gomez, in a soccer stadium, the camera, exploding with animal energy, pursues him, loses him as he ducks down a ramp, picks him up again. There may be no "signature" shot here, as in the work of an established auteur, but there's an effortless mastery, from moment to moment, of whatever the dramatic situation requires.

I can think of few people in show business who enjoy greater audience good will than Steve Carell and Tina Fey, yet their début vehicle as a screen couple, "Date Night," is a clunky and obvious comedy, well beneath their talents. Fey, in particular, finds herself in the situation of a prima ballerina unaccountably dancing with the Rockettes. The movie was written by Josh Klausner ("Shrek the Third"), and directed by Shawn Levy, who, according to the peculiar logic of Hollywood, earned the job by directing the frantically busy "Night at the Museum" family-comedy franchise. Carell and Fey play Phil and Claire Foster, a self-described "boring couple from New Jersey." Too exhausted from their jobs and their kids to light each other up, they drive into Manhattan, hoping to rekindle their marriage, and wind up at a snooty new restaurant, where they claim the reservation of a no-show couple—a pair of lowlifes who are trying to blackmail a prominent gangster (Ray Liotta). They are then assumed to be that couple, and there follows much clumsy scrambling all over town, including a spectacularly pointless car chase with two cars stuck together like wrestlers with locked arms. Jonah Weiner, writing in the Sunday *Times*, has located the origins of the movie in screwball comedies like "The Thin Man." But the screwball classics were devoted to the gowned and top-hatted rich, and the audience relished the foolery because the characters remained graceful through all their misadventures. The Fosters, however, are middle-American dorks lost in the big city. Carell and Fey do one inspired sketch-comedy bit, returning to the restaurant as would-be downtown types who know how to intimidate a rude reservations girl. But the joke of their being out of it is repeated so many times, and so lamely, that after a while "Date Night" seems like yet another version of "The Out of Towners" (1970), the mortifyingly square Neil Simon picture with Jack Lemmon and Sandy Dennis as Ohioans suffering through a trip to New York.

"Date Night" is told from the squares' point of view, and Manhattan comes off as wicked, violent, and sexual in ways that suggest squeamish titillation, not the wonders and terrors of excited discovery. There's a sex club with wiggy perverts, along with the rather familiar sight of Mark Wahlberg's bare chest, which is ogled in no fewer than four separate scenes, as if he were the spirit of eros. Wahlberg is some sort of friendly psyops stud with a fantastic house in Tribeca. Trying to help the couple find the blackmailers, he sits in front of a snazzy computer, and Fey, gazing lustfully at him, says, "You are good with your instruments." This from the sharpest comic in the country! Earlier, in the restaurant, she says, "If we're going to pay this much for crab, it better sing and dance and introduce us to the mermaids," and both stars tend to burst out with "penis," "vagina," and "whore," as if the words were the ultimate in naughtiness. "Date Night" is depressing: the movie seems aimed at gentlefolk too scared of Manhattan to leave their tour buses, but any such actual families from New Jersey or elsewhere, "boring" or not, deserve to be entertained with something better than stale panic from old movies. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/FRONTROW
The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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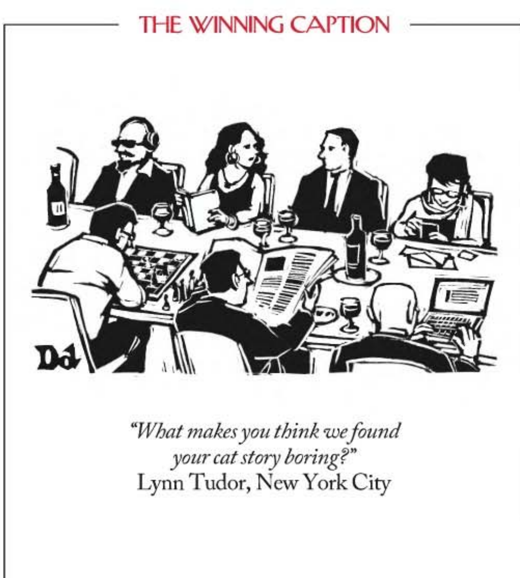
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

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 Zachary Kanin, must be received by Sunday, April 18th. The finalists in the April 5th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 3rd issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) 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



"What makes you think we found your cat story boring?"
Lynn Tudor, New York City

THE FINALISTS

"This is the last time I park on this side of town!"
Michael Wagner, Glendale, Wis.

"I knew I should have had that alarm installed when I got you."
James Novaco, Naugatuck, Conn.

"Sorry, boy, but you know how it is with them peel 'n' eat shrimp."
Andrew Jeske, Hartsdale, N.Y.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

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