

The City University of New York Graduate Student Advocate

May 1994

Paradise Regained Issue

Volume 6, Number 3



Streetwatch volunteer talks with homeless man

Students Join Streetwatch

CUNY Students Monitor Police and Grand Central Partnership

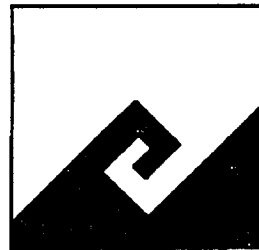
BY ALEX S. VITALE

Several Graduate Center Students are involved with a new organization called Streetwatch which was begun in January by the New York Coalition for the Homeless. One of those students, Tracy Morgan (History), was drawn to Streetwatch because the program "highlights the city's failure to address the problem of homelessness. The city is using the

police to extinguish lives and in an effort to hide a problem it has created." The program is based on a group in San Francisco whose volunteers monitor police misconduct towards the homeless. Here in New York, the decision to create Streetwatch was motivated by both the change in mayoral administrations and an increase of brutality-complaints being made by the homeless to the Coalition for the Homeless.

Streetwatch relies on volunteers to monitor the activities of law enforcement agencies like the NYPD, Transit Police and Amtrak Police. These volunteers are trained in observation techniques, the legal rights of homeless people and the best ways to work with people on the streets in order to collect information

Continued on page 5



Excerpts and photo from a discussion between Cornel West and Manning Marable. See page 3.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick Speaks on Campus

Queer Theorist Discusses Silvan Tomkins

BY PAM RENNER

On April 8th, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick addressed a capacity crowd in the Graduate Center's third floor studio. The well-known Duke University based pioneer in Queer Theory, author of such works as *Tendencies* (1993), *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), was introduced by Michele Wallace, who represents all of the departments which joined forces to sponsor Sedgwick's visit: the English Departments of the Graduate Center and City University, as well as the Women's Studies Certificate Program.

Sedgwick's topic was as interdisciplinary as the crowd she drew: shame, an emotion that's familiar to most of us, regardless of sexual orientation or political persuasion. "Shame at the Threshold: Reading Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991)," examined the work of an American psychiatrist, who wrote in the political context of a 1950s-style liberal agenda, yet whose views, remarkably, are without the prevailing homophobia of the period. The reason for Tomkins' prescience in this matter remains a mystery, even to Sedgwick herself: "I'd love to know how come there's no heterosexism in this book," she mused, in response to an audience question about Tomkins' own sexuality.

Though Tomkins was not gay himself, Sedgwick points out that his work allows a great freedom for theorists today to navigate between biologically-based notions of affect, and the digital (on/off) model of the human psyche that has tended to remain in theoretical vogue ever since the writings of structuralists like Levi Strauss.

Sedgwick's involvement with Tomkins'



Photo by Joyce Geist

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

works, however, is more than academic; she described the process of reading him as an affective affair: "What does it mean to fall in love with a writer?" Sedgwick asked. She and her graduate student Adam Frank, a partner in this venture, admire Tomkins for writing "a text full of unpathological notions about us." She lauds his work for its multi-valent possibilities, comparing it to a "colorwheel."

Calling Tomkins a "polymath," Sedgwick went on to explore the implications of his unconventional psychological writings for the practice of theory today. In his works, a four-volume study entitled

Affect Imagery Consciousness, Sedgwick seeks, and finds, "grounds for a more respectful conversation between science and the humanities." "The transmissibility of theory," she complained, "is getting strongly laminated with certain notions." Because of a strong, even a "reflexive anti-biologism," Sedgwick argued, "theorists have not transformed automatically... into subversive vs. hegemonic." She expressed reservations about the implications of this for the theoretical practice. "If we banish biologism entirely, are we going to have access to more than two values?"

In this light, Sedgwick spoke about the ambiguity of shame, "It's not the most toxic emotion," she suggested, "shame is a punctuational moment. It's about thresholds. It's painful."

When asked what the most toxic emotion might be, Sedgwick responded: "Tomkins says the most toxic is the mixture of anger and contempt which makes hatred." The works of Silvan Tomkins, and those of Sedgwick herself, go a long way towards combatting the prejudice and ignorance upon which hatred thrives.

Confessions of a Caffiend

An Addict's Guide to East Village Cafes

BY GREGORY IGORIOG

Six steps below sidewalk level in my damp lair, where there are no pools of sunlight in the morning and no views of moon at night, one primitive, dark spirit prevails. Coffee. In shifting masks and avatars—from the vicious espresso that thrashes me out of the sheets at morning through the benign creamy shades of afternoon and evening to the solid

black that gives strength to the weary at night—coffee orders the hours and quickens the brain. It is coffee that makes humans out of slate-eyed zombies, separates us from the sluggish crepuscular beasts—eels, say, or tree-sloths—that do not care what time it is and do not bother to finish their work.

Wondering if maybe I've been down in my lair too long, I emerged the other day to have my cup o' joe in public, at a cafe. I decided to take a walk and check out the new cafes in the neighborhood. My neighborhood is the East Village and the new cafes are so numerous that the morning cup multiplied into two, four, a half dozen. Prodigious doses of caffeine, even for me. Quaking like a jackhammer, I have returned to tell the tale. With these new spots, the East Village is more than ever a haven for students looking for a place to get their dose, to read a book, eat cheap, or just observe the other wildlife in the Manhattan zoo.

No Bar Cafe (432 E. 9 Street, between 1st and Avenue A) opened its doors last summer and kept them open whenever the Con Ed bill was paid up.

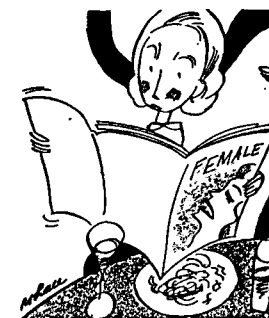
Continued on page 4



Maria Hong reviews *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White*, a new book by Brent Staples. See page 6.



Professor Norman Kelvin Edits the Letters of William Morris, the first of a three part series on Scholars and their Subjects by Pam Renner. See page 8



This month, Valkyrie gets a pedicure and takes home the goodies. See page 12.

INSIDE

NEWS

Cornel West and Manning Marable	3
Newsbrief: Summer Research	4
Star-Crossed Lovers in Middle Ages	4
Taking Toads: Part II	6
New Exhibit at Public Library	7
Biking Shorts	11

ARTS & FEATURES

Review of <i>Parallel Time</i> by Brent Staples	6
Artbeat: Onward to Eden	7
Scholar and Subject: part I	8
The Coins of Yesteryear: Audubon Terrace	9
An Open Forum	10-11
Regular Columns	12-16

Editor's Note

Welcome to the *Advocate's* last stand for this semester, our first (and probably final) **Paradise Regained** issue. Though spring in New York may be a step or two down from Eden, it sure feels good to have the sun in our faces again after such a long, bruising winter. To fete the finish of the cruelest month, our art column, by Jeannette Redensek, examines plans for several public gardens-to-be. And, if you're starting to make your own plan for springtime in the city—that magical season when the last term paper vanishes into the U.S. mails and the rowers appear in force at the Central Park Boat Basin, our May marginalia offer something in the way

of ideas for summer pleasures, ranging from research grants to study urban immigration to bike routes to escape the city smog. Before making the break from academe final, we introduce a new multi-part series: *Scholar and Subject*. In forthcoming issues, we will see how scholarly research works across a variety of disciplines.

Finally, our lead Letter to the Editor invites the Graduate Center community to attend a crucial conference at Brooklyn College on May 6, about the future of teachers at CUNY. For our sake and for that of our students, it is more vital than ever that we begin to organize and air our concerns about fair conditions. What's at stake now is the future of public education in New York.

The City University of New York Graduate Student

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The opinions expressed in The Graduate Student Advocate are those of the individual contributors and in no way reflect the opinions of the Doctoral Students' Council, its officials or its representatives.

Letters to the Editor

To The Editor:

There is no more important issue facing higher education in general, and CUNY in particular, than the use and abuse of part-time faculty. This issue affects all strata of academe. The growth in employment of part-timers has arisen from a multitude of factors: the decline of the professoriate, lack of support for students, worsening benefits and working conditions, and the debasement of liberal arts and science education, especially in the public sector. In this deteriorating atmosphere, academic unionists must rise to this challenge if CUNY's mandate of providing a quality higher education to the citizens of New York City is to survive and thrive.

In an attempt to explore the national and local situation, and to come up with concrete possibilities, proposals, and an agenda for action, a free conference for full-time and part-time faculty is taking place at Brooklyn College on Friday, May 6, 1994. We hope to explore the concerns of part-timers and full-timers, and discuss the kinds of solutions suitable to CUNY.

"Academic Unionism & Part-Time Faculty Strategies for Change" is a true CUNY-wide conference, co-sponsored (so far) by various local chapters of the union—Borough of Manhattan Community College, Brooklyn College, Hostos, Kingsborough, and LaGuardia, and various professional organizations—Doctoral Students Council, CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors, CUNY Language Forum, and Part Timers United, among others. One of the keynote speakers is Karen Thompson, the Chair of the AAUP National Committee on Part-Time and Non-Tenured Track Appointments. Other representatives of academic unions and the fight for part-time faculty will be there.

Everyone is invited. Please come and express your worries, opinions, and hopes. Help us articulate our concerns for a more equitable and healthy CUNY for all involved. For further information call the Brooklyn College chapter of Professional Staff Congress, the union that negotiates for all instructional staff and management, at (718) 951-4413.

Sharona A. Levin
Co-Chair of Organizing Committee

To the Editor:

Kudos ain't the word, [the March issue] looks great. Just grabbing a copy here in the computer lab and seeing people stuffing it under their arms around the building, made me think it was another *Advocate*—all slicked out with splashy graphics. I haven't had time to sit down and check out the words, but on my train ride back to the island I'll be doing just that. GOOD STUFF!

David Kirschenbaum
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Fix the Toilets

Every time I use the bathrooms on the basement level or on the 18th floor at the Graduate Center, I wonder what architectural school flunkie designed the stalls. And what flunkie toilet technician helped out. First of all, the stall doors have huge gaps in them. Not only can you see out, others can see in. You just know some peeping tom thought that gimmick up. Worse, if you're sitting on the throne, contemplating, say, your next seminar presentation, and someone else enters a stall and closes her door, next thing you know, your door swings open and you are cruelly exposed to the sight of the less fortunate waiting for their shot at the pot. Finally, when all is said and done and you try to flush away your rich or watery substance, the toilet makes abysmal little sucking sounds, but doesn't do—excuse the expression—shit. I guess it's too much to ask for new stall doors that stay closed properly, but those johns could use a tune-up.

—Valerie Walker

Course Evaluations: Why not Here?

Frank feedback from one's students is one of the most valuable tools a teacher—on any level—has to work with. After all, how can a professor know what evil lurks in the hearts of his students during a two-hour monologue on, say, the syntactical anomalies in the Virgilian epic, unless he asks? The easiest and most elegant mechanism for students to evaluate their professors is the course evaluation form, familiar to many from their undergraduate days, or perhaps from their own adjunct-teaching experiences. On these nifty little forms, for those who have never used them, one can usually find a variety of questions, some to be answered numerically (for example, "How successfully do you feel this class was organized, on a scale of 1-5?"), others allowing for individual comments ("If this class were to be taught again, what features could be improved?").

The results from these end-of-the-term surveys are often published in a school-wide guide for undergrads. For graduate students, whose burrowings into foreign departmental offerings are far more rare, it makes sense to publish a guide within each department, so that next spring's students may be the inheritors of this spring's hard-earned wisdom.

Though these student course guides are un-

doubtedly valuable, there's an even more important reason to make these evaluations compulsory for all the departments. Professors should know how they're being perceived by their classes. They may be surprised, pleased, outraged, or just plain floored by the results—but in the end, ignorance is not bliss. Knowing one's strengths and shortcomings as a teacher can be the first step towards improvement.

At the CUNY Graduate Center, the policy on this score seems to be laissez-faire, at best. Some departments do publish valuable student guides about professors and their courses, while others seem to have never even considered adopting such a policy. A practice this valuable should not be left to the fates; it could easily be institutionalized. To wit: all professors, during the final class session, must hand out a prepared survey form about the course. These forms are to be answered anonymously. Every student must complete one, during a twenty-minute interval set aside for this purpose.

The benefits of institutionalizing feedback are incalculable, for professors and graduate students. Doctoral students, many of whom are college teachers themselves, tend to have strong opinions on the subject of pedagogical techniques. Why not put these strong opinions to work for the improvement of our intellectual lives?

Who's to Be Executive Officer?

I remember being baffled the first time I attended an Executive Committee meeting in my program and discovered that the program was actually run by the professors. Why, one might think, would anyone with a Ph.D. in German (or Math or Biology and so on) be competent enough to run an organization, which is in some ways what a department is? Running a department is, after all, not what drew them to the scholarly world in the first place. Yet it is a job that must be done, and some people do it well. The position of chair is, indeed, of the utmost importance. The Executive Officer determines to a large extent the direction the program will take. Some people fear that three years, the current term of EOs, is long enough to "radicalize" a program. Others welcome such a possibility. The fact that EOs are appointed by the president and not selected by the programs themselves is also a subject of some debate at the Graduate Center.

President Horowitz stressed to me in an interview that the input she received concerning David Nasaw's appointment as the new History EO was among the most thoughtful that has come her way. The letters she received, the interviews she held, all showed "a real love of the program." She was emphatic that Prof. Nasaw was of the opinion that "1000 flowers should bloom," that the History Program will continue to be one in which there will be room for traditional as well as contemporary methodologies.

Her job, as the one who makes the appointment, is to "get as much input as possible, specifi-

cally information that will allow me to develop as large a perspective as possible on the needs of the program in the next years." As part of this goal, she recently instituted a formal procedure whereby she meets with the Executive Committee of each program when appointing EOs. She stressed that the process stops with her and that 80th Street, as some have maintained, plays no role.

Concerning the matter of whether an EO should be appointed by the president or selected by the program, she said that those in favor of the latter method think this a more democratic way of doing things. She emphasized, however, the singular nature of the Graduate Center. Because of the consortial aspect, the faculty of the various programs are not together like a "family" (as in the case of departments at other universities), and thus there is great variability, not to mention inconsistency, of faculty involvement in a program. Thus, if the selection were made within the program itself there is the danger of the process becoming politicized.

The needs of a program are, of course, viewed differently by different people. "Rumor evolution" was how President Horowitz characterized what fuels the fears and passions aroused over the matter of EO appointments. The process by which President Horowitz was selected to head the Graduate Center was a lengthy one. In retrospect it strikes me that the deliberation involved itself reflected the recognition that a powerful hand and an objective point of view were needed for just such matters as the appointment of Executive Officers.

—Elizabeth Powers

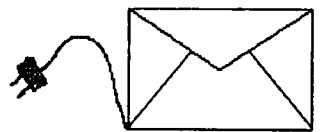
Cornel West and Manning Marable



Photo: copyright 1994 by Peter Robertson

Dr. Cornel West, (left) author of *Race Matters* and Director of the Afro-American Studies at Princeton University; Dr. Manning Marable (right) director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. Drs. West and Marable met during a 1994 City University of New York seminar entitled "A Conversation on Contemporary Political Conflict: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion."

This is a forum for opinions which are of interest to the CUNY community.



The Advocate is wired!
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Contemporary Political Conflict

Cornel West:

How do you develop a framework where we train a cadre of black, Latino, Asian-American and progressive white scholars who are both in the public and private sector to work in concert with each other around a democratic vision, in radical democratic institutions as we enter the 21st century? For me, part of that battle has to be a redefinition of what the city is: what is the nature of the urban living space? Issues of health care, environment, housing, education affect all of us, regardless of our ethnicity. They affect all working women in New York City. It's around those common daily life questions that we can

forge a democratic unity. But for us, part of that question is one of agency: the development of a strategy that can make unity real.

Manning Marable:

We have to distinguish between a criticism and an attack. Oftentimes a critique of black nationalism is viewed as ipso facto an attack. ... Nationalists believe that the project of radical democracy is unworkable. That's what Farrakhan claims. It is a serious claim. If you believe, following de Tocqueville, that democracy is a form of tyranny by the majority and American democracy is far more tyrannical, any language of democracy is a cover for the tyranny... It could get to be the case that an appeal to radical democracy in American civilization is empty because American civilization does not have the capacity to come to terms with it ... My desire is to channel nationalism to changing a flawed American democracy.



The Advocate welcomes letters to the editor, opinion pieces, and other submissions. Please include your telephone number and address for verification. We encourage you to submit a hard copy along with a 3.5 inch disk copy (Macintosh format preferred). All submissions are subject to editing in the interest of clarity and to meet space requirements.

Thanks!

The staff wishes to thank: President Horowitz, Liz and Jessica, and all the consultants who work in the Computer Center.

The CUNY Graduate Center Political Science Program recently sponsored a conference called "Contemporary Political Conflict: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion." The conference, which took place on April 8th and 9th, was organized by Isolda Ortega-Bustamante and Robert R. Sullivan. Professors Drucilla Cornell, Manning Marable and Cornel West spoke at the plenary.

Drucilla Cornell teaches at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. Manning Marable is Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. Cornel West is Director of the Afro-American Studies Program at Princeton University, but will be leaving Princeton to teach at Harvard University in the fall of 1994. Professor West is also author of a recently published book, *Race Matters*.

The following excerpts are taken from a discussion between Cornel West and Manning Marable which took place at the conference.

Queens College Has No Right to Abandon Five Graduate Fellows

Several days after the spring semester began, Queens College rescinded the reappointments of five Graduate "A" Teaching Fellows in the English Department. We were told that Queens College had no money to pay us as Grad A's, but we were expected to continue teaching, at substantially lower wages, as adjunct lecturers.

None of the five quit working, but the action by the new Queens College Provost, John Thorpe, has raised questions about just what reappointment "subject to financial availability" means—as well as about the nature of the College's commitment to graduate student lecturers. As recently as a few years ago the Queens College English Department boasted 18 Grad A lines. The present cut leaves the department with five.

In mid November, we received notification of reappointment from the College's Personnel and

Budget Committee. One week later our reappointments were confirmed by the Provost's Office, pending "financial availability, sufficiency of registration, and Board of Trustee approval." On February 1, three days after the spring semester began, however, we received letters from the English Department that the Provost's Office had notified them that there was no money to pay the five most recently hired Grad A's. No compensation was offered.

In mid February, we met with union Vice-President for Part-Time Faculty, Susan Prager, who filed a grievance. At press time no response had been received.

By timing their decision such that notification was made after the semester had begun, the College administration was clearly playing upon our sense of moral obligation to our students, and our sense of ethical responsibility to the department. But what

about the administration's moral and ethical obligations to us?

In accepting Grad A's at Queens College we gave up health benefits (offered to adjuncts only), and in some cases other competitive job opportunities, and teaching fellowships, elsewhere. We spend 20-40 hours per week or more as graduate student lecturers, and are grossly under-compensated as it is! Can't we at least expect to be negotiated with in good faith, and treated as integral members of a department's faculty? Because we teach so many intro courses, we are often the first experience CUNY undergrads have with the academy.

We believe that the College has no right to rescind the terms of appointment after classes have begun, and are now in the process of seeking legal consultation through the DSC legal fund.

Eric Marshall,
One of the Five

NEWSBRIEF

Summer Research: Immigration in the Big Apple

Is the American Dream a mere dream, or can it become a reality for immigrant families from different ethnic, racial, and geographic backgrounds in New York City? That's a question that six CUNY Graduate Center students will be studying this summer, under the guidance of Political Science Professor John Mollenkopf. Each researcher will receive a grant of \$5,000 for participating in the program. The greatest benefit, however, may well transcend the financial: this is a special opportunity to do research on the urban frontier. Perhaps it will bring us one step closer to an understanding of some of the chronic problems and prejudices which make it difficult for many immigrants to succeed in New York.

The original impetus for this project grew out of a class that Professor Mollenkopf offered this semester at the CUNY Graduate Center on recent population gains and the interactions between different immigrant groups. Student-researchers involved in the study will collect data on about twenty diverse immigrant groups. They will examine the rate at which these populations learn English, acquire their citizenship, and break the barriers of poverty.

"This is one of the few times such studies

Continued on page 5

CAFFEINE

An Addict's Guide To East Village Cafes

Continued from page 1

There were poetry readings and one little cappuccino maker. The poets have been discontinued—"they were real hard to deal with," says co-owner Danny Torres—but the place has become a great full-service cafe. Danny's partner, Mourad Boussata, offers a menu of soups, sandwiches, and crepes. Mourad is a chef who cooked for SoHo's fancy Casa la Femme and Dean & DeLuca, and the food here surpasses usual cafe fare. Many nights you'll find guitarists playing original compositions. But even if you just come for the coffee (strong!) you're expected to make yourself at home and you'll never be hurried out. After a few visits, the staff will remember your name. One neighbor even leaves her spare keys here. Like everything about No Bar, the room itself is unassuming but gradually discloses engaging quirks to those who are looking. The semicircular swelling in one wall hides an old stairwell, and the overabundance of rugged doors remains from the days when there was a speakeasy here. Hooch has flowed here

weak. I gloat over my pot, waiting, musing over the swirling grounds. My palm is on the plunger, but I do not push it. The wispy man sneaks a nervous glance. Dead silence. From the pot, a faint buzz as the tortured water nears saturation. A collective sigh rises as I ease the plunger down through coffee as thick as tree-gum, black and rich.

If not dazzled by the infinite possibilities of shades, you can breed your own hybrid, mating the Sumatra Mandheling, say, with the Jamaica Mountain Blend. Though the unparalleled attention to coffee is what makes this place a stand-out, there's also wine and beer, pasta, salads, and sandwiches. From a shelf of books and games in the corner, you can help yourself to Scrabble or The Simpsons 3-D Chess. With this coffee, the chairs, the location, the eight-month old 9 is bound for greatness, and certainly for trendiness. They are prepared, though: 9 T-shirts and hats are available at the counter.

The already-trendy **Limbo** (47 Avenue A, between 3 and 4 Street) opened last summer and was written up all over town. It is bright and loudish, so its vintage formica tables might not be the best place to read. Other diversions abound. There are poetry readings (Tuesdays at 7 p.m.) and tarot readings (Thursdays, 8-11 p.m., by "the beautiful and quite fab" Betsy Thomson). At all hours there is the Avenue A circus of the pierced and moussed, the bikers and addicts, and those who want to look like riders of Harleys or horse.

Almost a year ago, an old chocolate-covered-nut factory was impregnated with the ethos of downtown playpen Max Fish, and **The Pink Pony** (176 Ludlow Street, between E. Houston and Stanton) was born. Somehow, in spite of the garish orange and green walls, floors of smooth cement, and plywood tables, it is an immensely welcoming place. In the corner, a guy slumped in an easy chair reads a book, at the counter an older man jabs at a pad with charcoal. Once in a while, someone gets up from a table to have a look at the magazines and second-hand books that cover one wall. In the back a gaunt figure tries a few chords on an upright piano. At the table behind him, a slack-jawed woman snores. It's a big cafe, a good place to get lost in or be left alone in. Before I hiked all the way to the back, I never even heard the piano. More subtle treasures are hidden throughout. On a rack next to the bar off-beat videos are for sale and, if somebody has not snapped it up already, you can find a copy of "para punk" sleeper *They Eat Scum*. (On the cover, reviewer Brendan Gill is quoted: "to call the plot wafer-thin is probably to insult wafermakers from coast to coast.") On weekends, **The Pink Pony** is open until 4 a.m. Weeknights, they close at midnight—but if you're not ready to go home, Max Fish is right next door.

Cafes Outside the Village

If you're nowhere near the East Village and you can't limp another step without the intervention of St. Caffeine, you might look for one of these favorites:

Biblio's (Tribeca, 317 Church Street, between Canal and Lispenard) arrived a year ago in a neighborhood sadly lacking in cafes. With big windows in front and books and magazines all around, it is a good spot to read while you sip. Most of the books are new but there are some used ones too: watch for bargains on art books. Beware of its schedule: it closes at 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday; 10 p.m. the rest of the time.



It is coffee that makes humans out of slate-eyed zombies, separates us from the SLUGGISH beasts—crepuscular eels, say, or tree-sloths—that do not care what time it is and do not bother to finish their WORK.

for most of the building's 140 years, Danny says, and though the bottles are gone, the old wooden bar is still in use.

There really is no bar across the street at **Cafe Irina**, but you can still get a shot of vodka—if you don't mind having it baked. Many of the Ukrainian desserts, baked by Irina herself, contain a dram of spirits, from the subtle drop in the Absolut raspberry mousse to the pirate-size serving of rum in the Ukrainian tiramisu cake. Light à la carte items and full dinners are offered too, but sweets are the specialty. **Cafe Irina** (417 E. 9 Street) is small and serene: low lighting, white walls bare except for three mirrors, quiet music. The tables are few (only nine) and the place is just getting on its feet (opened in March) so this is not the best place to linger hours over a single mug. If you do hang around for a while, pick a spot facing away from the street windows and toward the narrow window in the back. There, across a thin crevice of alleyway, you'll have an eerily theatrical view of the neighbor's shadow swimming on a lace half-curtain.

An ebullient population of chairs resides at **9 Coffee House** (110 St. Mark's Place, between 1st and A). Built and painted by a set-designer friend of manager Erik LaMarca, the chairs and tables are resplendent with suns and moons, whorls and yawning jaws. Works by local artists hang on the brick walls and are changed on a monthly basis. But the real masterpiece here is the coffee. You choose from their selection of beans and they bring the coffee, still brewing, to your table in a French press. True freedom of worship for devotees of the caffeine god! Two tables over, a thin wispy fellow shoves down the plunger immediately, and furtively sips his thin decoction without the humiliation of asking for it

Dean & DeLuca (SoHo, 121 Prince Street, between Wooster and Greene) is not ashamed of its grocery-store ancestry. It is bright and big, a cavernous, tiled place humming with activity. The long lines at the cash register and the high prices may also remind you of a gourmet supermarket, but this is a great place to watch the SoHo crowds, and it is refreshing to find a cafe that does not even attempt to look European.

Caffe Raffaella (Greenwich Village, 134-7 Avenue South) is Italianate and elegant, with marble tables, silk lampshades, and piano concertos. You may not feel comfortable lingering at your table as the rest of the Village presses in for a seat. In addition to pastries from local bakeries, hot and cold sandwiches and salads are served. You can cut back on your caffeine here—any type of coffee, from double espresso to cafe Viennese, can be ordered decaf.

French Roast (Greenwich Village, 458 6 Avenue at W. 11 Street) has attracted quite a following in the year since it opened. Johnny Depp drops by from time to time and Ethan Hawke was recently sighted. Fans come for cafe au lait in big bowls and for beans by the pound. The restaurant menu ranges from French brasserie fare like choucroute to sleeker dishes like grilled salmon. **French Roast** is open 24 hours but is especially pleasant in the daytime, when light pours in the big windows.

The Antique Cafe (Greenwich Village, 388 Bleecker Street, between W. 10 and Charles) opened five months ago on a block full of antique shops and you could walk right past without recognizing that this is not one of them. It's furnished with antiques, of course, but the desserts are freshly made and they specialize in sugarless and no-fat selections. Carrying the gallery theme further, they are closed on Monday.

Braque (West Village, 775 Washington Street, between Jane Street and W. 12) is tucked into a squat industrial bunker near the Hudson River. On May 3, **Braque** sheds its winter shutters, and becomes an open-air patio. From here, they say, you can admire the rosy glow of sunset over New Jersey. Chances are, you won't be looking outside. **Braque** is the house cafeteria of Industria Superstudio (a favorite place for high-fashion shoots) and every evening after posing under bright lights, the place fills up with thin-stemmed flowers and razor-jawed, squint-eyed boys who pose in the semi-dark. Light Italian fare and fresh squeezed lemon margaritas are what these fashion creatures thrive on.

Streetwatch

Continued from page 1

from them and to inform them about their rights. Streetwatch also draws on the resources of lawyers interested in pursuing litigation against possible human rights abuses. Media attention to Streetwatch's activities also helps the group gain the clout necessary to accomplish their goals.

Streetwatch monitors several areas around New York including Grand Central Terminal. William Broberg, the Coalition's Director of Community Organizing, says the organization began receiving reports in September 1993 of homeless people being assaulted in the area around Grand Central. "These reports included people coming in with obvious signs of physical abuse," says Broberg. These assaults, however, appeared *not* to be a result of NYPD abuse, but, rather were injuries inflicted by other homeless people employed as "outreach workers" by the Grand Central Partnership.

The Partnership, which includes in its district 50 blocks around the midtown area, is probably best known to CUNY Graduate students for its restoration of Bryant Park behind the New York Public Library and across from the Graduate Center. In addition to this and other beautification projects, the Partnership also runs a social service program for the homeless out of St. Agnes Church on East 44th Street. Social workers provide referrals to homeless services and a 24 hour drop-in center. They also send people to a drug treatment center in Phoenix. Some of the homeless people who frequent the St. Agnes program are offered the opportunity to be outreach workers.

Streetwatch has begun to investigate the nature of this program further. Mathew Schneider from CUNY Law School coordinates the Grand Central Committee of Streetwatch. He says that numerous conversations with homeless people in the area painted a damning picture of the program. "We got reports that homeless people are spending the night in the street with no regular food service."

Those who become outreach workers for the Partnership experience only minimal change in their situation, according to Schneider. "People are working 40-80 hours a week for a \$40-50 stipend. And instead of sleeping in a chair they get to sleep on the floor and eat whatever left over food is donated by area restaurants."

What Schneider and others find most disturbing is the role of these outreach workers. "They are going around telling other homeless people in the area that they have to move into St. Agnes or get out of the area, or be beaten up." On February 13, Streetwatch volunteers witnessed an incident in which a man was sleeping in a cardboard box on 42nd St. at 2nd Ave. at about 11 p.m. Several people with GCP OUTREACH jackets got out of a car and proceeded to tear the boxes apart and roll the guy onto the sidewalk, yelling at him to "get the hell out of the area." Similar incidents have been reported to Streetwatch by homeless people. Schneider says, "It's an outrage that homeless people are being pitted against each other for the profits of this private organization."

The Partnership makes its profits in three ways. It levies membership dues against businesses around 42nd Street. It also has security contracts from businesses around the city (not necessarily in the Grand Central/midtown district) who pay the homeless minimum wages to keep other homeless people away from their storefronts and ATM machines. These workers wear the "GCP OUTREACH" jacket. One outreach worker who requested anonymity said he works up to 12 hours at a time, overnight, for a bank in Greenwich Village to keep homeless people away from the ATM machines. Finally, The Partnership receives city contracts to provide the program at St. Agnes. All this, plus two other similar business improvement district programs, adds up, according to a recent report in the *New York Observer* (17 January 1994) to a salary of \$250,000 for Partnership director Daniel Biederman. Streetwatch also targeted the Grand Central

Partnership because of the increased use of private police forces in New York and across the country. Organizations such as the Partnership use uniformed security officers, yet these guards have no public accountability. Lisa Daugard, the Coalition for the Homeless' Litigation Director, says, "What this means is that there is a para-police agency that is sweeping areas of the city without the authority to do so." That is, such private forces answer only to the businesses that hire them, and not to the city or the public.

A few Grad Center students are working on the Grand Central Committee of Streetwatch. As Tracy Morgan notes, "What is appealing to students here is that it's going on just a few blocks away. And most shifts are in the evening after classes end and the library is closed." Stephen Duncombe (Sociology) also works with the Grand Central Committee. "I have spent time studying homelessness, community development, crime and other pressing urban issues, and Streetwatch gives me an opportunity to participate in trying to shape the nature of these issues; it makes what can seem abstract concerns very real."

Streetwatch will continue through the summer. In addition to direct monitoring, there are also committees that work on legal research and on media coverage, and that coordinate video resources. People who are interested in volunteering or learning more should contact Becky or J.D. at the Coalition for the Homeless at 212-964-5900.

SUBMIT TO THE ADVOCATE

Writers, reporters, illustrators, photographers, designers, artists and others are invited to give us a ring and discuss possible submissions: (212) 642-2852

Newsbrief

Continued from page 4

have been done across groups," Professor Mollenkopf said. "Among the important correlations to success are the amount of education members of the group have, and whether there is a high percentage of both men and women in the labor force." Yet he stresses the complexity of finding solutions to the problem of who will thrive in the city's mercurial economy: "There are no simple answers. We have found that the Dominicans are working hard and not getting out of poverty, while the Chinese are working hard and moving out of poverty."

Proposals for the six research grants are due by May 15 to Professor John Mollenkopf, Political Science Program, CUNY GC. Students in both Social Sciences and Humanities at the Graduate Center are eligible to apply.

—Catherine Kimball

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Marginal Media**TOKING TOADS: Part II**
Lassoed by the Law

Perhaps you recall the notice in last month's Advocate regarding toad tokers—those kooky folks out in California who smoke dried toad venom to get a higher-than-high psychedelic trip. Well, guess what. Such fun-loving shenanigans only get you in deep trouble.

Bob and Connie Shepherd in Sonora, CA got caught experimenting with toad venom and it seems like their lives have been turned upside-down ever since. Not only were their little green friends confiscated, they have agreed to stay drug free for two years in order to have the charges dropped. They also have to attend a drug education program in order to avoid prison. Along with these changes in their lifestyle, Shepherd was fired from his job as a naturalist at the Regional Learning Center in the Sierra Nevada foothills and the couple has since moved to northern Oregon, according to their lawyer.

The Shepherds were accused of squeezing the venom from their Colorado River toads, drying it, and then smoking it. Police charged them with five felony counts of drug possession, including possession of the psychedelic amphibian venom bufotenine.

Book Review**Revelations of a Solitary Wanderer**

Thoughts on *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White* by Brent Staples, \$23, hardcover, published by Pantheon Books

BY MARIA HONG

America welcomes autobiography from its minority writers, more than any other genre. Sometimes confused with unmediated confession, memoir is perceived as artless and thus appropriate for authors of color. The best autobiographies, however, refute and dispel this myth in their rigor and literary virtue and add important stories to the literature. Brent Staples's new book, *Parallel Time*, is one such book.

Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White is a remarkable account of coming-of-age during the 1960s and 70s. It is also a stark portrait of race in the United States and how being African American and male can affect the course of a person's life. Written with spare elegance and grace, the book describes Staples's journey from boyhood in a small industrial town in Pennsylvania to his present position as a *New York Times* editorial writer.

Staples frames his story with a single tragic event: the murder of his younger brother, Blake. Twenty-two years old at the time of his murder, Blake Staples was a drug dealer shot to death by a former customer and cocaine addict. *Parallel Time* opens and closes with chapters recalling Blake's grisly and untimely death.

In the first chapter, the author views the coroner's photos of his brother's corpse. The description is detailed and is narrated in a notably controlled tone:

A horrendous wound runs the length of the abdomen, from the sternum all the way to the pubic mound. The wound resembles a mouth whose lips are pouting and bloody. Massive staplelike clamps are gouged into these lips at regular intervals along the abdomen. This is a surgeon's incision. The surgeon was presented with a patient shot six times with a large-caliber handgun. Sensing the carnage that lay within, he achieved the largest possible opening and worked frantically trying to save my brother's life.

The chapter concludes with the author's reaction to the photographs, which he had asked to see: "I opened the pouch; there was Blake dead and on the slab, photographed from several angles. The floor gave way, and I fell down and down for miles."

From there, Staples begins the story of his own life, from his childhood to the near past, and rarely refers to his brother's murder again until the very end of the book. By contextualizing his memoir within the framework of this horrifying event, he gives his story a charmed aspect: the bulk of the book portrays a life which, in comparison to the tragedy of his brother's death, seems magically untainted by violence. *Parallel Time* depicts the vast gulf between living in a world of middle class security and in one which has been swallowed by corruption and chaos, and it emphasizes the role that luck plays in determining which sphere the individual inhabits.

More than half the book is devoted to Staples' childhood and adolescence in Chester, Pennsylvania, a small factory town twenty miles south of Philadelphia. Born in the early 1950s, he grows up as the second of nine children in what could be described as a dysfunctional family.

Although gainfully and steadily employed as a Teamsters truck driver, his father, Melvin, drank excessively and much of what he earned was spent on alcohol. His father's behavior toward the family is characterized

by emotional distance and sometimes physical abuse. Staples' stoic mother, Geneva, was unable to manage his father's remaining earnings and the family moved frequently due to eviction.

Despite this lack of stability, Staples recalls his early life with a good amount of affection and nostalgia. This part of the book is abundant with interesting and kind characters, from the Jordans,

The autobiography functions as a brilliant rebuke to those who sought to demean Staples on the basis of his race.

who share their delicious peaches with the local children, to Gene, his mother's gay hairdresser and loyal friend.

Recounted in a lyrical yet meticulous manner, Staples' boyhood and adolescence are marked by the usual endeavors and rites of passage: first love, fighting, escaping into comic books, exploring the area, making and losing friends. In some instances race is a factor, but his most devastating encounters with racism come later, when he leaves Chester for graduate study at the University of Chicago.

In high school, Staples was an unexceptional

student and he expected to go to work in the Chester shipyard or some other job after graduating from high school. A man named Eugene Sparrow changed this fate by introducing him to another life.

Staples met Sparrow, the only African American professor at a local college, when he was hanging out at the League of Women Voters office with Josephine, his radical intellectual girlfriend. Sparrow convinced him to apply to the college, despite financial barriers and the fact that he hadn't taken the SATs. With Sparrow's help, Staples was accepted under a program called Project Prepare, which was implemented in 1969 to increase black enrollment at the college.

Many of the book's most humorous passages are stories from Staples's college years. Staples took to the new environment without much inner conflict, embracing academics and campus life. Partly to ease the transition to his new life, he took on the garb and rhetoric of the Black Panther party, playing the part of a black radical. He became class president through something of a fluke, and hammed up the role as a political leader. He earned a place on the Dean's list.

After sharing beds and clothes with his brothers for years, he reveled in the opportunity for solitude. Trips home were traumatic; and the gap between Staples and his family grew inevitably as he saw less and less of them. By the end of college, he had decided to go on to graduate school. He was accepted at the University of Chicago and won fellowships which paid his way. He left Chester, glad for the chance to escape.

In some of the best descriptions I've read on how bigotry wounds the spirit, Staples recalls various experiences in the book's longest chapter, "Mr.



Photo by James White

Brent Staples, Author of *Parallel Time*, published by Pantheon Books, February 1994.

Bellow's Planet." In Chicago, Staples confronts widespread racism among the mostly white residents of Hyde Park. Walking down the street, he discovers that white people are afraid of him. They cross the street or swerve out of his way to avoid him, treating him like a monster. He develops tactics to counter and survive this vision of himself as an inhuman being, sometimes by whistling Vivaldi to calm skittish fellow strollers, and then by playing a game he calls Scatter the Pigeons.

The man and the woman walking toward me were laughing and talking but clammed up when they saw me. The man touched the woman's elbow, guiding her toward the curb. Normally, I'd have given way and begun to whistle, but not this time. This time I veered toward them and aimed myself so that they'd have to part to avoid walking into me. The man stiffened, threw back his head and assumed the stare: eyes dead ahead, mouth open. His face took on a bluish hue under the sodium vapor streetlamps. I suppressed the urge to scream into his face. Instead I glided between them, my shoulder nearly brushing his. A few steps beyond them I stopped and howled with laughter.

This dehumanizing reaction to him as a black man wasn't confined to Staples' experiences walking down the street. He also found it in academia and in the literature of one of the University of Chicago's most revered scholars and writers, Saul Bellow. Although Staples admired Bellow's novels for their literary merit, and identified with descriptions of university life, their passages reducing black men to barbarous beasts alienated and infuriated him. Fight-

ing back, Staples tried to stalk Bellow, not knowing what he'd do when he saw him. Finally, one day he spied Bellow walking in a crowd. Although he did nothing at the time, Staples gets his revenge by reporting the results in this book. He portrays Bellow as a voracious creature, relentlessly consuming other human beings as fiction fodder:

He moved through the crowd looking downward, hungrily scanning asses, hips, and crotches. This was how he did it. The rest of us were a junkyard where he foraged for parts. I wanted something from him. The longing was deep, but I couldn't place it then. It would take years for me to realize what it was. I wanted to steal the essence of him, to absorb it right into my bones.

In a way, the autobiography functions as a reprisal and a brilliant rebuke to those who sought to demean Staples on the basis of his race. In predominantly white environments, discomfort with and ignorance of racial issues surface again and again after he graduates from Chicago, during his career as a journalist.

There is the demand for authenticity. During job interviews he is asked The Real Negro questions by interviewers who want to know if he's a "real" ghetto type or merely a suburban poseur and who want an explanation for Staples's achievements. Staples states that after his brother's murder, his handling of such invasive personal probes changed.

My inquisitor was asking me to explain my existence. Why was I successful, law-abiding, and literate, when others of my kind filled the jails and the morgues and the home-

less shelters? A question that asks a lifetime of questions has no easy answer. The only honest answer is the life itself...

Chance wasn't popular as explanation. People preferred a story about an individual who triumphs over all through force of character. The least charitable of these people cited me as proof that the American dream was alive and well—if only those shiftless bastards in the slums would reach for it. Once I'd kept a wry distance on this process and accepted the halo when it was given. Blake's murder changed this. Now I could see that my "escape" from the ghetto was being marshaled as evidence against him. This role I no longer wished to play.

It is hard to imagine a more eloquent response to the questions regarding Staples's past than the one presented as *Parallel Time*. The book is a distinctly American memoir of how family, race, fortune, and personality intertwine in the complex life of an individual, and it is distinguished by a restrained yet passionate voice.

Perhaps more than anything else the book depicts a journey of the self as a lone operator. While Staples's recollections of his early years abound with vivid characters, other people are relegated to a more and more minor role as we get closer to the present. Lovers and friends are barely mentioned. Even Sparrow, the man who Staples says saved his life and to whom the book is dedicated, receives scant if eulogistic mention. *Parallel Time* is a self-portrait of a man as an observer and as a writer. Solitude is necessary corollary to this vision and its dominating motif.

MARGINAL MEDIA

NEW EXHIBIT AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY: Stonewall Revisited

The Library is commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots with this exhibition documenting the emergence of lesbians and gay men as a social community and political force through the course of the twentieth century, with New York City as the primary focus. Included in the exhibit are items from the International Gay Information Center Archives, and photographs, posters, books and flyers which document the ways in which homosexuals have forged individual and collective identities in the face of widespread opposition in American society. A related exhibition entitled *Out in Public: Post-Stonewall Era Performance and Protest* will be presented at the The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Artbeat

ONWARD TO EDEN

Designers Propose New City Gardens

BY JEANNETTE REDENSEK

In 1993, the Public Art Fund, a private non-profit group, commissioned thirteen artists and landscape architects to design gardens for the city. Real estate values being what they are, the sites available for transformation by artists tended toward the forgotten, the marginal, and the ruined: degraded shorelines, vacant lots, median strips. No one is going to let artists dig up a midtown plaza to plant roses! The artists, moreover, were interested in expanding the definition of what constitutes a garden. No longer a matter of just annual borders and vegetable patches, a garden has become a state of mind. A garden is about work, community, identity, philosophical reflection. A garden reproduces in miniature the contradictions of contemporary life, the tensions between urban vs. rural, reality vs. possibility, freedom vs. control.

The artists worked with community groups and city agencies to design gardens for ten sites in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. All the project proposals, which will be realized over the next three years, are on view through July 1 at the PaineWebber Art Gallery in the exhibition *Urban Paradise: Gardens for the City*. In a series of intriguing and often witty installations, the exhibition provides a concise survey of current issues in public art and conceptual horticulture. And because so many of the projects were designed in collaboration with the communities in which they will be located, they are poignant statements about what people want their neighborhoods to be.

In a number of the projects, the garden becomes a metaphor for nature as a state of perfection and possibility. The natural world is cast as an antidote to the ills of civilization. On a vacant lot in the Bronx, Justin Ladda reconstitutes mythic Eden in the form of a picturesque mountain with scenic

grottoes for picnics and community gardens on its lower slopes: paradise in this neighborhood means to play, the relaxation of working with the soil, and fresh food for the table. Meg Webster, in a proposal for gardening throughout the city, suggests a different kind of Eden, one that redeems the fragmentation of urban society through meaningful labor. She wants to plant community gardens to make us rediscover the productivity of the earth and, by extension, the notion of work as a productive, soul-enriching enterprise. It's nineteenth-century agrarianism or, if you prefer, ninth-century monastic rule, updated for the next millennium. Imagine densely planted orchards and flowerbeds on 42nd Street. Imagine restoring ponds and bogs to the Lower East Side. But Webster doesn't specify who cultivates the gardens. Where in our hierarchy of careers will we place the new urban farmer that she thinks we need to have?

Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel have left behind the realm of work for a hallucinatory landscape to induce Platonic reverie. They want to transform an abandoned Hudson River pier into an undulating promenade replete with an inaccessible mountain and floating islands sculpted in the shape of boats. Or, in an even more visionary gesture, they propose replacing the pier with a landscaped topography of which is in fact an enormous, recumbent human body.

The sense of the garden as a psychological theater is more fully developed in Lorna Jordan's plans for the reclamation of Paedergat Basin on Jamaica Bay in Brooklyn. One side of the oblong channel is returned to its wild state. For the other side, Jordan has designed a promenade punctuated by a series of five "follies," contemporary conceptual updates of the 18th-century British garden pavilions. Mini-landscapes comprised of circlets of overhanging willows, flowering dogwoods, and marshland plantings invoke abstract mental states in the viewer, such as Suspension, Passage, and Spectacle.

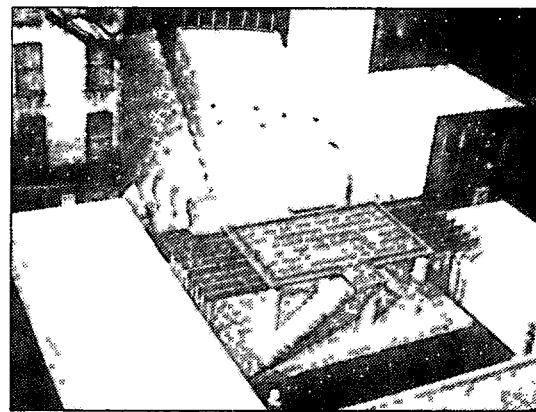
Haim Steinbach takes a similar approach to assigning abstract meanings to landscape in his project for the Newtown Creek Wastewater Plant in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Inspired by the spare and formal design of Augustus' Mausoleum in Rome, Steinbach has designed a serpentine wall to surround

the facility and a classically proportioned island planted with trees for its interior. For Steinbach, the landscape is a garden, a landscape that is a metaphor for idealization of nature. The conflation of architectural typologies—classical funerary monument and municipal sewage treatment plant—is curious, but there's no hint in the artist's conception that he was consciously manipulating metaphors of cyclical return, either spiritual or corporeal.

With Vito Acconci's project for the no-man's land of half-completed urban renewal at Metrotech Center in Brooklyn, the horticultural drama of freedom and control becomes downright spooky. Using a horizontally elevated chainlink fence overgrown with ivy, Acconci has proposed construction of a maze-like grid of ever-narrowing orthogonal passages. At the terminus of each path is a seat fitted for a single soul. Once the visitor is seated, only his head is visible above the swath of the neatly clipped green hedge. The image is ridiculous and vaguely threatening at the same time. Acconci has created a masterful landscape of implied purpose that points up the purposeless sterility surrounding it.

Another theme prevalent among the artists' projects in *Urban Paradise* is the idea of the garden as a center for learning. Alison and Betye Saar have designed a garden as instructional playground for kindergartners in Woodside, Queens. Gilbert Boyer proposes a subtle plan for etching the utterances of community memory into broken pavement stones at Peretz Square on the Lower East Side. In collaboration with students at Brooklyn Technical High School, Gary Simmons has designed a more radical kind of learning garden in the form of an infill park between two existing buildings in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Working from ideas about history presented in Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, Simmons and the students have designed a community amphitheater, with plants, sculptures, and a stage. With its locking gate and nighttime illumination, it's a classically

Continued on page 9



▲ Above: a model of a design proposal for a garden in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, created by Gary Simmons in collaboration with students from Brooklyn Technical High School.

A Letter from Mr. Morris

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
November 7, 1887

Dear Mr. Robert Browning

I venture to write and ask you to sign the enclosed appeal for mercy and so to do what you can to save the lives of seven men who have been condemned to death for a deed of which they were not guilty after a mere mockery of a trial.

I do not know if you have taken note of the events, the English press has practically boycotted the subject; nor can I give you a full account of our view of the matter. But I will ask you to believe me as an honest man when I say that these have been made to

pay (because of their opinions) for the whole body of the workers in Chicago who were engaged in a contest with the capitalists last year. You probably know how much more violent and brutal such contests are in America than in England, and of how little account human life is held there if it happens to thwart the progress of the dollar; and I hope that you will agree that the victors in the struggle need not put to death the prisoners of war whom they took, after having kept them more than a year in prison. I must ask you to excuse my haste: I am much troubled by this horror: we all thought that the Supreme Court would have granted the writ of error, & that a new trial would either have acquitted the men or justified their sentence, so as to prevent such a terrible

Continued on page 9

Scholar and Subject:

English Professor Norman Kelvin Edits the Letters of William Morris

This is the first in a multi-part series, investigating the attachment that grows between the scholar and his or her subject matter. In this issue and in those following, The Advocate talks to various professors in the CUNY Graduate Center community in order to examine this connection.

BY PAMELA RENNER

Professor Norman Kelvin, of the City College and Graduate Center English programs, is about to finish giving editorial life to a four-volume offspring: the collected letters of William Morris. Recently, the manuscript for the final volume was delivered to Princeton University Press, marking the end of a long period of intensive research. The publication is the fruit of a collaboration of sorts between the Victorian whirlwind and the twentieth-century professor. Though Morris may no longer be here to tell about himself, his letters and other creative endeavors speak eloquently of his passionate and constant activity. William Morris was a one-man heroic catalogue of occupations: writer, painter, Socialist activist, protector of endangered historic buildings, lover of Icelandic sagas, medievalist, pioneer in the book arts movement, Luddite. We tend to know him best as a designer, as much of utopias as more mundane items such as fabrics, wallpaper, tapestries, illuminated manuscripts, and typographical imprints. Yet in his private life, William Morris was also the uneasy husband of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite femme fatale, Jane Morris, the oft-painted mistress and muse to Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Always a dreamer as well as a man of action, Morris may have been best known in his own time as the poet of a fantasia called *The Earthly Paradise*. Though he died in 1896, almost at the same moment as his century, his designs and crafts live on. They provide a visual richness still appreciated by many. His hobbies were as manifold as his talents, and many of these enthusiasms are reflected in his output of letters. Four volumes may seem like a lot to us, but for a Victorian penman it was not by any means unaccountable.

Professor Kelvin did not set out to produce the definitive edition of the Morris epistolary corpus. "I had originally planned a book that would be a kind of interpretation of English literature and the visual arts between 1850 and 1941—from the Pre-Raphaelites through Bloomsbury. Basically, I was planning to write a cultural history. I liked the fact that Morris touched upon so many areas of cultural life." Editing the letters seemed to Professor Kelvin "a good way to get to know Morris as well as moving forward with the larger project." Little did he know that the letters



William Morris, 1880, as photographed by Abel Lewis; from the National Portrait Gallery, London

would become a larger project in their own right.

What happens to the scholar who gets involved in a project that grows well beyond the bounds of the original intent? "Parts of your life stand still, in some ways, while the other marches steadily ahead," Professor Kelvin remarks. Editing the Morris letters, he says, has influenced his own way of perceiving others. "I learned to appreciate active people for whom the interior monologue is not the most important part of their mental activity."

If the letters do not, in fact, provide a window upon Morris's emotions, they do offer Victorianists a valuable and compelling documentation of the constant activities of Morris. From the earliest volume onwards through the most recent, Morris' letters record the practical details of his working life. In some respects a man who took refuge from his private self in the press of continual activity, Morris frustrates any search for an explicit key to his psyche. "There's very little about what it feels like to realize himself as a designer," Professor Kelvin explains. Morris' letters rarely make reference to his marital difficulties. "He was an unhappy man in his private life. His wife had two serious affairs, one with his friend, the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, Rossetti." Yet Morris' letters reflect an almost total reserve, even perhaps a stoicism, on this count. He never unburdens himself in his letters, and in fact, he prefers to avoid voicing his personal grief. Instead, there are glimpses of Morris in action.

The first volume, for example, covers the period of the founding of Morris and Company, which produced wallpapers and fabrics according to traditional—in some cases archaic—methods. Morris' products, in a very Ruskinian sense, avoided the tyranny of the machine-made in order to feature the exquisitely-imagined workings of the human craftsman. When, for example, Morris wanted to learn about the dyeing process, he turned to the one

man in England who still knew the old ways. His letters to his mentor in the dyeing art "are the most interesting in Volume One, for some readers. As for myself, I think they really do show Morris. He's constantly explaining how he wants things done. They're hasty, they're tense, they're angry," Professor Kelvin says. Clearly, they show the mind of a man possessed by one idea: to get the job done, and to do it as beautifully as possible.

Yet Morris was hardly a lily-pure aesthete, untouched by the pressing social issues of his day. His socialism was ardent, and his activism could be lively, even cantankerous, when his ire was aroused. After the anarchists who began the Haymarket Riots in Chicago were condemned to death, "Morris flung himself into activity, circulating petitions and writing letters to have their lives spared." One paper to comment on the petitions was the *New York Tribune*. They published, according to Professor Kelvin, "a sneering editorial: 'It is of little consequence what the London Socialists say about the case of the condemned men in Chicago. Their utterances bear no more relation to the public opinion of England than the sewage of a great city does to the ocean. The one respectable name among them is that of William Morris, whose Socialism can be pardoned as a harmless eccentricity.' He wrote the *Pell Mell Gazette*, which had reprinted the editorial, a marvelous letter in response."

When the existence of medieval buildings in England and abroad was threatened by the ugly conquests of restorers, Morris' epistolary indignation flared up. "Again he writes these great, sardonic, ironic, subtle letters to the newspapers calling the restoration vandalism," Professor Kelvin says. "The visual—buildings, carved walls—provided a sensual, almost an erotic, experience for him. If you think about it, he took in his pleasure by looking. And he said, 'How lucky I am, I love my work.'" This last can be said of Professor Kelvin as well.

Eden

Continued from page 8

inspired safe-zone. It's also the only one of the project proposals explicitly to address the problems of crime and vandalism in public places.

The sense of nature and civilization as irreconcilable opposites looms large in the proposals of *UrbanParadise*. Gary Leonard Strang's and Michael Roche's "Steam Temple" proposal for the Lower East Side is unique among the projects in its acceptance of the city as an extension of nature. Recognizing that technology is but a channeling of physical phenomena, Strang and Roche have designed a garden in which the conduits beneath a city street are vented at the surface to create a vaporous landscape of water spouts and belching steam.

The celebration of the city garden as an intersection of technology and nature is evident also among some of the uncommissioned projects — a group of proposals received in an open call to artists and architects. Two projects among this group utilize the verticality of the city to create unusual urban gardens. In one of these, Erin O'Keefe has proposed a simple, yet subversive, apparatus of periscopic mirrors which reflect the urban skyline down onto the walls surrounding a mid-block pocket park. The rarified landscape of capitalist aristocrats — the glass, ornate highrise spires and blue skies visible from corner offices on the fortieth floor — can be enjoyed by common plebes eating lunch al fresco down below. Of such moments might real urban paradise be made.

Urban Paradise: Gardens in the City is on view at the PaineWebber Art Gallery, 1285 Avenue of the Americas at 52nd Street through July 1. Starting May 5, there will be free gallery talks on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. A public symposium will be presented on Thursday, September 22 at 6:30 pm at Cooper Union. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Public Art Fund is also publishing an edition of *Public Art Issues* with essays on art, landscape, and community gardens. For information about the exhibition and programs, call 212/980-4575.

Star-Crossed Lovers in the Middle Ages

A Lecture by Emeritus Professor Lemay

BY ELAINE RAGLAND

Homosexuality, academic reputations, and multicultural tensions were just some of the timely issues addressed by Emeritus Prof. Richard Lemay at a recent lecture in the Pearl Kibre Medieval Study. In "Two Works by Hermann of Carinthia Recently Discovered," Lemay described the methods by which he had identified two lost works by a twelfth-century scientist and Latin translator of Arabic texts. Based in Reconquista Spain, Hermann and his fellow translators were responsible for the rediscovery of Greek texts and the translation of Arabic commentaries on classical science.

According to Lemay, Hermann's long-term companion was another translator and minor cleric, Robert of Chester. Eventually, their illicit romance drew the attention of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, and the two were separated by Robert's clerical superiors. Abbot Peter's correspondence widely publicized the affair, condemning Hermann to academic obscurity and exile. Robert recanted, and was able to salvage his standing. Hermann was forced to leave Spain and wandered from court to court, finally settling at the Norman-Sicilian court of Salerno.

Lemay has discovered two Latin treatises from twelfth-century Salerno which match descriptions of works by Hermann. He has further identified the Arabic source of one treatise on Ptolemaic astronomy, and has prepared a bilingual edition of the text. At the end of his talk, Lemay offered student members

of the Medieval Study an opportunity to edit and translate several prefaces from the *Astronomia*. A special tutorial in editing and translating medieval scientific texts is now being planned by the Medieval Study and the Interdisciplinary Medieval Certificate Program.

Translation projects from original sources will soon be enhanced by the addition of a computer and CD ROM reader in the Medieval Study, funded by the Doctoral Students Council. The Study plans to expand its collection by fundraising and purchasing original source collections now available on compact disc.

The Pearl Kibre Medieval Study, located in 40-17 Grace Building, contains the Raymond De Roover Memorial Collection, and hosts a series of faculty and student lectures on assorted topics related to medieval studies. The Study was founded to encourage research in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance topics, and is open to all students and faculty of the CUNY Graduate Center. For more information about the Medieval Study and its sponsored programs, contact Elaine Ragland, in the History Department, or Margaret Hammitt-McDonald, in the English Department.

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Continued from page 8

disgrace as a judicial murder clinging to the robe of the Great Republic.

I am

Dear Mr. Robert Browning

Yours faithfully

William Morris

P.S. If you sign the petition, please send it at once to The Socialist League, 13 Farringdon Road, EC.

My dear [Ford Madox] Brown

I write to you in great haste and ask you to read & sign the enclosed. In spite of anything you may have seen in the papers I must ask you to believe me that these men have not had anything like a fair trial, and that they have not done what they are accused of...in plain words that they

the crime of leading the Strikers in their attempt to get the hours of labour shortened: their violent language often foolish enough, I admit, and their known opinions, which to a certain extent at least I share offered them as a butt to the enraged Capitalists and they are to pay for all. I confess my grief and anger are so great at this miserable murder, and the dastardly way the subject has been treated by the press, that I am not so coherent on the subject as I ought to be...

If as I hope you will sign the petition kindly send it

at once to the Socialist League

13 Farringdon Road London.

I am My dear Brown

Yours ever

William Morris

Above letters are reprinted from *Collected Letters of William Morris*, Princeton Univ. Press, edited by Norman Kelvin.

The Coins of Yesteryear

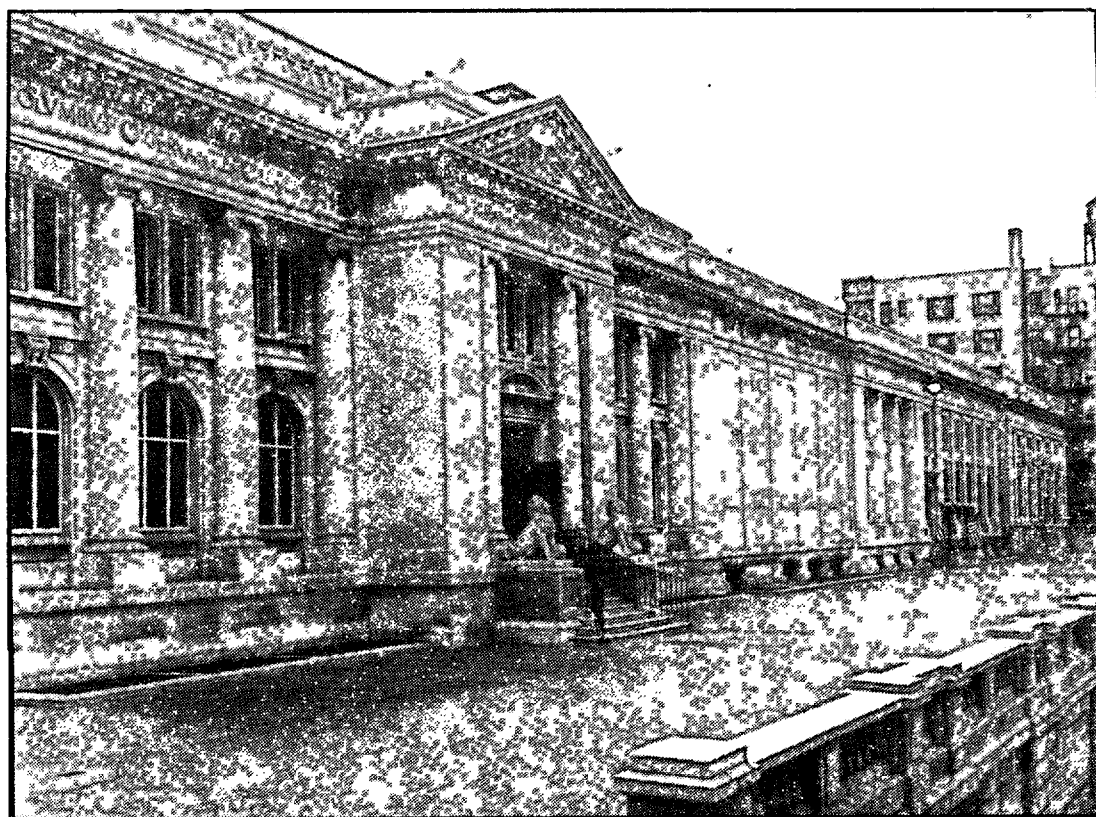
A Trip to Audubon Terrace

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Despite the fact that I used to be a travel writer and can swap stories with the best of them, I hate visiting the sights or being a tourist. When out-of-town visitors descend on me in New York I have a set tour I take them on: a sunset walk along the Promenade at Battery Park City, a round trip on the Staten Island ferry after dark, followed by an evening at a bar I know in the Village where the jazz is free and the crowd grungy.

New York "events," even ones in my neighborhood, come and go without my participation, though three summers ago I went to a Central Park concert of La Bohème with a group of friends and suitable refreshments. When we arrived with our picnic hamper at 5 p.m. we got a patch of ground half way across the Great Lawn from the stage. Four hours later I stood up to make my way to the San-Johns and found myself surrounded by a mass of humanity. I remember that summer evening as one of the loveliest of my life, and for this reason I have never attempted to repeat a Central Park concert.

Sightseeing and cultural events seem to cause fatigue, though there are a couple exceptions. One is the Cloisters. Another may be Audubon Terrace, which I only got to know recently. Located at 155th and Broadway, in the heart of a predominantly Dominican population, Audubon Terrace is so-called because it is the original site of the estate of the naturalist John J. Audubon. In the early years of this century a group of buildings was constructed that now house the American Numismatic Society, the Hispanic Society of America, the American Acad-



Audubon Terrace, at 155th Street and Broadway in Manhattan, formerly the site of naturalist John J. Audubon's estate, is now home to The Hispanic Society, and The American Numismatic Society.

emy of Arts and Letters, and Boricua College. (The National Museum of the American Indian will soon move to new quarters in the U.S. Custom House.) Both the Numismatic and the Hispanic societies contain important library and research resources. The Numismatic Society also maintains extensive publishing and training programs and has a delightful installation on the history of coins. The Hispanic Society's small but wonderful art collection begins in Roman times and includes several works by Goya and Velasquez, at least one of the latter the real thing.

The buildings surround a plaza, and the effect of high buildings and pillars is a certain kind of

European city of the imagination, maybe Madrid of the 1920s. It is no doubt an unintended effect that the Hispanic Society contains a series of mammoth paintings from this period by the Spanish artist Joaquin Sorollo. Not a lot of people drag themselves uptown to visit the museums. More's the pity, for the terrace is a dream of a place, producing the kind of awe you feel amid the thick walls of the Cloisters. That it abuts such a lively area is an added attraction. To be recommended afterward is a large cup of delicious Spanish coffee, which can be had at the Dominican diner next to McDonald's, just across Broadway from Audubon Terrace.



Liz

(above, right) *SINGLE* and in her 20s, Liz studied English at grad school. Now she's into publishing, and lives in the East Village.



Jessica

(above, left) Also *SINGLE* and in her 20s, Jessica moved to New York City from London five years ago. She works as a literary agent and lives in the East Village.



Valerie

(above, center) The Advocate's own Valerie Walker lives in SOHO. She's got a pseudonymous boyfriend, and studies Art History here at the CUNY Graduate Center.

An Valerie In- terviews Open ♀ Forum Jessica and Liz on Love, Lust, Infidel- ity, Kurt Cobain, and the Future of Madonna

In this question and answer session, the Advocate's VALERIE WALKER talks to two New York women about things personal and topical.

Valerie: How would you describe yourself?

Jessica: I've lived in New York for 4 and a half years. My father's English, my mother's Malaysian and Thai. I moved here from London to go to journalism school, got involved in magazines and now I'm a literary agent.

Valerie: What if I asked you to pick three adjectives?

Jessica: Umm...

Liz: I'll do it. Small, dark, and very energetic.

Valerie: And how about you?

Jessica: She's tall, dark, and very slinky.

Valerie: What else, Liz?

Liz: Umm, ah, I'm...single. (Laughs.) And I've lived in New York for six years, and I'm also half English. I did English in graduate school and then got into publishing.

Love and Marriage

Valerie: Just off the top of your heads, how many men have you dated?

Liz: Do you mean had sex with?

Valerie: Not necessarily. Maybe just men you've gone out with, had drinks with, were interested in.

Liz: The possibility of sex.

**"There is no
Generation X.
There's always been that
kind of apathetic, critical,
negating youth culture out
there. We're being re-
SOLD our
individuality."**

Valerie: Yes. Just off the top of your head:

Liz: I don't know, um, 25 or 30?

Jessica: The same.

Valerie: Do either of you think marriage is an outdated concept?

Liz: It is, but it's something that we are brought up with. I have very mixed feelings about it. To be really honest I wish I could say it's an outdated concept I don't want a part of, and I wouldn't like to be part of many marriages I've seen, but it would be really hard to say I don't want it at all, despite all the negative marriages I know about.

Jessica: I agree with Liz, and also, it's curious

how you reach a certain age and people think you should get married...it's a question of timing, although some people approach the issue very romantically. One person wants to get married, the other doesn't, they break up, and one of them marries someone else in two months. Or someone says, I will never marry, and then they share a cab with someone and wind up marrying them soon thereafter. It's a strange concept...I've never been really hit with the desire, it's such a grey area for me.

Valerie: Do both of you see yourselves having children?

Liz & Jessica: Yes.

Valerie: At what age do you see yourselves doing something like that?

Liz: Mid-thirties.

Jessica: Same.

Valerie: How many children do you see yourselves having?

Jessica: Big. Four, five, some adopted.

Liz: Me too. I want to be like Mia Farrow.

Valerie: How likely is it if you're married you'll have an affair?

Liz: Highly likely. (Laughs)

Jessica: Well, when you're just dating someone you certainly develop these crushes, not to mention when you've married. Maybe you act on them, maybe you settle down and think about the consequences. It's such an open book, it could go either way. I don't know about myself.

Topical Issues

Valerie: What do you think of the fad in rampant body and face piercing?

Liz: Well, if you live in the East Village, you see so much of it, you don't really think about it. I don't think it's that decadent or anything. Some people look nice with a pierced nose but I sometimes get grossed out by a pierced lip or eyebrow. I had a friend who had his nipples pierced and he said he went around always partially aroused. I thought that'd be kind of a drag.

Jessica: I think in general people are far more interested in fetishes, body-piercing, S&M, that sort of thing. It's all more out in the open. I've met people who have tattooed themselves, they've started with one and then got another and before you know it they've covered themselves.

Valerie: Would you ever get a tattoo if you saw one you liked?

Jessica: No.

Liz: I once got close to getting one but my



boyfriend gave me a rubber stamp instead.

Valerie: What do you think of all the media coverage of lesbianism as a trend? I read the other day, for instance, an expression new to me—"LUG" or Lesbian Until Graduation.

Jessica: The media definitely has made it more trendy.

Liz: In college campuses it's always been trendy to experiment with your sexuality and to seem open to different sexual experiences. Now there's all these books about gender differentiation, cross dressing... You have Camilla Paglia and Ru Paul,

a mediocre academic and someone who did drag shows in Atlanta. I think it's totally because of the media, or else people like this couldn't cross over into the mainstream.

Jessica: I used to always have lesbian dreams, and I'd think, oh well, that's me just being a normal girl, but I wouldn't talk about it. Now it's all so out in the open, I feel quite comfortable talking about them and being amused by them or whatever. The media has made it topical to talk about such dreams.

Valerie: How do you feel about drag queens and the attention they're getting?

Liz: I don't think they are distasteful, but I do I think it's interesting that they focus on the elements that are the most artificial details of what women are all about. They aspire to the most artificial details—fake fingernails, eyelashes, wigs.

Jessica: What they aspire to takes on this ironic quality, which is why I suppose they're so hip now. The irony is now on us, whereas before I think it was more on them.

Valerie: What do you think of the Generation X label?

Liz: I think it's a shame that the name comes not from the Billy Idol band but the awful novel [by

Liz: I'm broken up, I'm devastated. He was a really talented musician, he was 27, he had a young daughter. Nirvana was really incredible. Not because of the whole grunge thing, but because they were the first independent band to get signed to a major record label—several bands followed in their footsteps.

Jessica: I was really upset to hear he had committed suicide. I don't know much about the band to be honest. Every time I hear of people committing suicide it really bothers me, especially if they are really young people. I remember meeting a beautiful girl at a wedding and later hearing she had gone back to Peru and killed herself. I was deeply affected by that. I didn't even know her.

Liz: There's no closure, there's no way to make sense of it ever.

Possibilities

Valerie: What is the worst scenario you could see happening to you, I mean in terms of how your life will go?

Liz: To work in some dusty old publishing house

Valerie: How likely is it if you're married you'll have an affair?

Liz: HIGHLY likely.

and to be one of these bitter old publishing women. I know that almost sounds misogynist, but there definitely is that type. And to grow old in the East Village and be at Max Fish and places like that.

Valerie: So it's a question of working and getting bitter and mean and then boozing at the same places for the next twenty years.

Liz: Yeah, you're fifteen years older than everyone and they all know your name.

Jessica: Adding to that would be being in an unhappy marriage and being trapped. That would be worse than being in a crummy job.

Valerie: What are one or two other careers you could see yourself having?

Liz: Well I could see myself being a rock star or a supermodel...just kidding. It's funny, you know the older I get the less career-track I become. In college there was this angst—"I don't have a career"—and then I found one and I like it and I'm becoming more focused...

Valerie: This is fantasy.

Liz: I would love to be in a band. I'd be happy just playing bass. As long as they're up there and a good band.

Jessica: Fantasy career. I used to listen to Ella Fitzgerald and I just loved her. I would love to have been born with an incredible voice. If you have that, you're set. But that is just my fantasy, it's probably not a reality.

Valerie: What quality would you like to have or change about yourself that you probably could never have or probably could never change?

Liz: Self discipline.

Jessica: Self discipline. And also, because I'm very scatty, being less scatty. Being scatty wastes a lot of time.

Valerie: That's my last question. Do either of you have any thoughts you'd like to add?

Jessica: Do you ever have evil thoughts, evil fantasies? Sometimes I'll be in the street and I think I'll see, I don't know, my grandmother strung up on a hook or something. Weird things frighten me and I don't know where they come from. It's like being a serial killer in my head.

Valerie: Any evil thoughts, Liz?

Liz: Only directed towards my landlord.

Valerie: Practical evil thoughts. Well, we'll conclude with that.



(From left to right) Jessica, Valerie and Liz smile for the camera at Woolworth's.

Douglas Copeland]. There is no Generation X. There's always been that kind of apathetic, critical, negating youth culture out there. This is just trying to categorize it. We're being re-sold our individuality. It's totally a media thing. When I was in college everyone dressed a certain way and listened to alternative rock but they weren't called anything. It's an empty label.

Celebrities

Valerie: What do you think is going to happen to Madonna?

Liz: She's tired. I think if she had been really smart she would have dropped out of sight for awhile. Her book was a huge mistake. Mystery and glamour go hand-in-hand. No one could believe that she has any secrets left.

Jessica: I heard she's starting a line of clothes. She's always going to be a hard nut, moving up the ranks, entrepreneurial, never glamorous.

Liz: Maybe a Madonna theme park is next.

Valerie: What model do you consider the most irritating?

Liz: Claudia Schiffer bugs the shit out of me.

Jessica: Claudia Schiffer bugs me because her image is irritating, it's not one I aspire to. I mean, who would you want your ex-boyfriend to go out with, a Claudia Schiffer or a Kate Moss? I'd rather he went out with Claudia Schiffer because it would be less threatening.

Valerie: Are you sad that Kurt Cobain shot himself?

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Bike Shorts

BY MARIA HONG

It's May already. The wisteria is blooming, the sun sets after eight, and it's a great time to take your bicycle out for a spin. Besides riding in the parks and hazarding the city streets, your bike can be your ticket to areas outside of Manhattan which are fun to ride to and to explore once you get there. Here are two trips you can take:

Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey. Ride along the Hudson on Riverside Drive from West 72nd Street

or take the A train to 175th Street to get to the George Washington Bridge. Take the bike path across the bridge. On the Jersey side, it's a short ride to the Palisades (there are signs). You can take the trail north, which is canopied by

small rest area by the river.

There's no food stand, so bring your own picnic lunch.

Brighton Beach and

Coney Island. This is a longer ride from Manhattan.

Ride across the Brooklyn

Bridge. When you come off the bridge you'll be on Adams

Street. Take Adams for about 10 blocks, cross Atlantic

Avenue and make a right onto Bergen Street. Take the first

left onto Court Street and ride on Court for a few more

blocks to Union Street. Make a left onto Union and take it to

Grand Army Plaza, where there's an entrance to Prospect

Park. Take the loop around the park and exit at Coney

Island Avenue. Ride two

blocks to Church Ave.,

making a right onto Church.

From Church make a left onto

Ocean Parkway, which has a bike path and will take you all

the way to the beach and

amusement park.

Overseen and Overheard

COMPILED BY VALERIE WALKER

We at the Advocate remain amazed at the variety of comments you can hear in the course of a day or two in our benighted city.

1940s starlet-type woman about another woman her age: "She looks like someone who would bring cold macaroni salad with pickle relish to a neighborhood block party."

Same woman: "He was a slimester. He had three crotch shots on his wall."

Graffiti in women's bathroom at El Teddy's: "Year 2050—Nothing new, feed the poor."

Remark about a professor: "It's a miracle that he's lived this long."

One hypochondriac to another, on learning about the discontinuation of a favorite sunscreen: "We've been dealt a blow by the pharmaceutical industry."

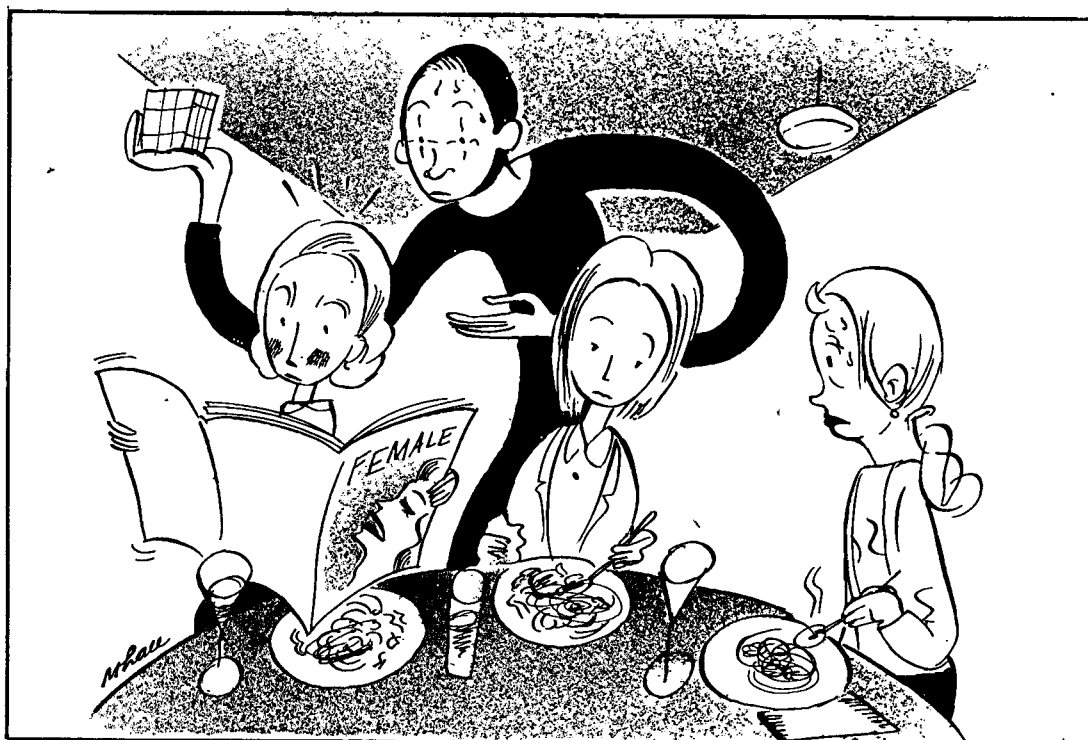
Outraged barmaid to woman asking for more vodka in her drink: "I always give proper pour!"

Drunk woman in restaurant to her dinner companions: "Qualudes were my drug of choice in college. If you're on ludes, you're so horny a greyhound looks good."

Man overhearing the above: "A bus or a dog?"

Man at a deli, late, to a wasted couple trying to

Continued on page 13



Valkyrie reading Female magazine.

Drawing by Marcellus Hall

Valkyrie in Valhalla

Tis the valkyries who sing,
while they spin thy vital thread

-1806 W. Herbert Sel Icelandic Poetry

BY VALERIE WALKER

Two days of foot fetish madness. That's what it was shaping up to be: Caroline, my boss at the time, and I examined the invitations taking place that magical week that occurs every April when the shoe market opens in New York, and buyers from all over the country come to place orders for the next season. Shoe companies use the opportunity to schedule public relations events and make nice with editors and buyers both.

Although Caroline was my boss, she was definitely one of my favorite people. She had hired me away from my previous existence as a cringing, tip-toeing editorial assistant at *Glamour* magazine. We were fashion editors at *First for Women* magazine and felt the same about many things in the fashion business. The buyers were all pulled tight with face lifts, had bad taste and bad manners; the Seventh Avenue showroom representatives with their Long Island accents would try to push you around when you wanted to borrow clothes for a shoot; the public relations representatives were always promoting things you weren't interested in; and the editors at many magazines were too snotty for their own good. Also, if you were offered a freebie you took it, and that included attending any event with the promise of good food and a bag of treats when you left.

Anyhow, Caroline and I had received some pretty fancy invites from some historically pretty unfancy companies—Thom McAnn, Dr. Scholl's, and Kinney shoes. Fashion editors aren't necessarily compelled to do anything in return for the invitations. The practice is as corrupt as it sounds. They wine and dine you, give you freebies, and then hope in return you'll call them, ask to borrow their products, and feature them in your next shoot.

The Thom McAnn lunch at Tatou was first. The restaurant was empty except for the editors milling around the lobby and bar. I don't want to make it sound like these were editors from *Vogue* or *Harper's Bazaar*—these were the editors at magazines like *Woman's Day*, *Family Circle*, and *Redbook*—magazines part of a group frequently referred to as the Seven Sisters. Our magazine was owned by a secretive German company and didn't really fit into any category neatly—it was part celebrity interviews, part fashion and beauty, part self-help, and part fattening recipes.

Anyhow, as editors at somewhat, ahem, less

fashionable publications, we didn't get invited to many ritzy events. But for companies like Thom McAnn that didn't try to be high fashion but still had a lot of money to throw at P.R., we were the ideal venue for their fashion aspirations. Hence, here we were being ushered upstairs to the VIP room at Tatou for a show. At the top of the stairs was a mime making bird calls and gesticulating to our seats in that emphatic way particular to mimes.

The show consisted of a music video with flashes of groups of shoes with the clothes that might go with them. It was a kind of subliminal suggestion exercise that was supposed to reemerge magically into a fashion editor's consciousness when she thought about her next shoot. Thom McAnn had big plans for updating its image into a younger, hipper one. They were redesigning the logo, starting a new ad campaign (one of the ad tags, you may recall, included, "We knew you when you were a virgin," which just goes to show what a good advertising campaign can do for a shoe company's image), and designing shoes that were quite up-to-date—lug soled boots, platform pumps, clogs—and well priced. The president of Thom McAnn spoke, as did some other honoraries, and then, curiously, the mime came out. His face seemed sweaty under the white makeup and I felt repulsed when I looked at him. He had a Rubik's cube and twiddled it around until the colors matched up. The theme, see, for the event was "Putting the pieces together." Thus the Rubik's cube. How the mime fit into the theme, however, was an open question.

After the show we adjourned downstairs for lunch. Caroline and I made a beeline for the emptiest and most remote table—we hated to talk to the P.R. representatives and we didn't particularly want to mingle with other editors. Our table didn't stay clear for long. Soon we were joined by editors from a fairly newish publication that I'll call *Female* and a big fat blond buyer-type from Florida, and one or two ever-enthusiastic P.R. lackies. Lunch started soon and wasn't disappointing. Glasses of red wine. Steak frites. Salad. Crème brûlée. I looked at Caroline as she munched a few more french fries and she winked at me. Yes, we were in fat city that afternoon.

Just before dessert was served I picked up a copy of *Female* and started reading it with slack-jawed amazement. Although it purported to be a women's magazine, it bordered on soft porn. Every article dealt with aspects of women's sex lives. "How to push the ultimate bedtime buttons." "What to do if you want to (and he can't)." "Dealing with your fantasies—realize them or keep dreaming?" The photographs were racy too—a couple in bed simulating sex, for instance. "What the hell is this," I finally said aloud in a sudden burst of prudishness, "soft porn for women?" The two editors stopped eating their crème brûlée just long enough to shoot me a long glance. Caroline giggled and attempted to make a diplomatic comment. I put the magazine

down and dealt with my own crème brûlée. "What rubbish," I said to myself.

Soon lunch was over and we were handed our freebie bag. We said goodbye and ran out to get a cab. "Quick, what's in our goody bag?" said Caroline, ripping hers open. We found shoe products, a scarf and a gift certificate for Thom McAnn's new 34th Street store. "It's worth \$100! That will go a long way at Thom McAnn's," I crowed. "You've put the puzzle together, Valerie," Caroline said in approving tones. We couldn't wait to see what kind of pleasures awaited us at Dr. Scholl's later that afternoon.

Almost as soon as we arrived at the hotel floor where Dr. Scholl's was hosting its event we saw editors from the event we had just left two hours before. "Oh, hi!" I said to a couple of them and smiled stiffly. As soon as we signed up for our foot massage and pedicure we were sent into a back room to exchange our shoes for flip flops. A man was tending to net bags with various-sized flip flops in pastel colors. Caroline and I both wear 6 and a half. "I think I'll have," Caroline started to choose her flip flops. "I'll have the pink pair," I butted in. "Oh, but I was thinking, um," Caroline sorted through the bag, "Oh, I guess yellow will be okay." We changed and went out to the main room.

On the left side they were giving pedicures; on the right they were giving massages. Editors were talking to each other while people bent over their feet and washed them and painted their toenails. Caroline and I were the last two women to get pedicures. While they did our feet we were asked to fill out a questionnaire. "Do you wear shoes that hurt?" "Do you massage your feet?" "How would you rate your foot happiness?" We both scored badly. Then we were the last to be seated for our foot massage. My foot masseur did foot reflexology for a living. He said he could read the state of my health from my feet. I think he told me I had a bad head and a bad liver, but I didn't pay much attention. We both had only one foot "read" when some of the busybody P.R. reps started chivving us. "The lecture is starting, you must come to the lecture now," they said. Caroline and I looked at each other wearily. Lecture, indeed.

We walked out to another room where the spread of cheese, crackers, fruit and little cakes didn't even tempt us. Behind a curtain several dozen Dr. Scholl employees, P.R. flunkies and, I think, a couple of editors were sitting attentively while a small man with slicked-back hair ranted about foot problems. Behind him was a display case decked with every Dr. Scholl product you've ever seen. "Caroline, I want that display case," I said plaintively. A P.R. disciplinarian stared at us when we giggled. Caroline looked around. "Let's go. I'm bored." We flung aside the curtain and entered the room with the lavish spread. "Where's the P.R. women? I want my goody bag," said Caroline. We spotted a lackey at the same time. "Uh, we have to go to a meeting," Caroline started. "Do you have something for us?" I piped up. "Why, yes, right over here." She handed us black mesh bags laden with Dr. Scholl products. We grabbed our bags and made for the elevator. "Hot damn! We hit the jackpot!" I cried as we scavenged quickly through our plunder.

Finally it was the Kinney shoe day. We had to work that day and put in our hours at the showrooms. We could arrive at the Royalton penthouse suite any time after five. I called The Delicious One and asked him to meet us there at 6:30. "I think there will be a lot to eat and drink," I hyped encouragingly. "Please come." He said he would. Caroline and I got there around 6 and checked our coats in the dark entrance way. The next room we stepped into was filled with a blinding white light. Display cases of shoes stood throughout the room. I think the shoes rested on some kind of fake moss—forgive the expression—or were surrounded with autumnal-looking paper leaves. Next to each display was a huge plexiglass box with a model in it. The models, I guess, were Kinney's answer to Thom McAnn's mime. They stared blankly ahead and danced slowly and jerkily. It wasn't quite '60s enough to have any sex appeal;

Continued on page 15

City Sites

Eden in Brooklyn?

BY PAM RENNER

The flowers fell off the cherry trees all at once, as if responding to some signal only they could hear. Their attrition left the Cherry Esplanade, the only area in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden where one is allowed to sit on the grass, with a sort of furtive, knobby bareness, reminding me of a guy I'd known at college. He'd floated through freshman year study breaks and keg parties wrapped in a shyness so intense it rendered him mute around any representative of the female sex. A few years later, after I had long since fled the grimly institutional dormitories and the matching social life they fostered, I came upon him in the supermarkets which off-campus seniors frequented. We greeted each other with a warmth that surprised both parties. He had relaxed. His posture showed signs of the thaw, and his conversation reinforced the impression. I noted a sort of self-deprecating wit, a new talent for eye contact, and a shopping basket full of fresh basil leaves, which could only mean one thing—domestic felicity.

"We're going to make a pesto sauce tonight," he said. "She told me to get pignoli nuts. Any idea what they are?" I nodded, and pointed out an aisle.

As we took leave and turned to go, I noticed the bald patch, a smiling nakedness at the crown of the head, the size of a small pancake. Just another

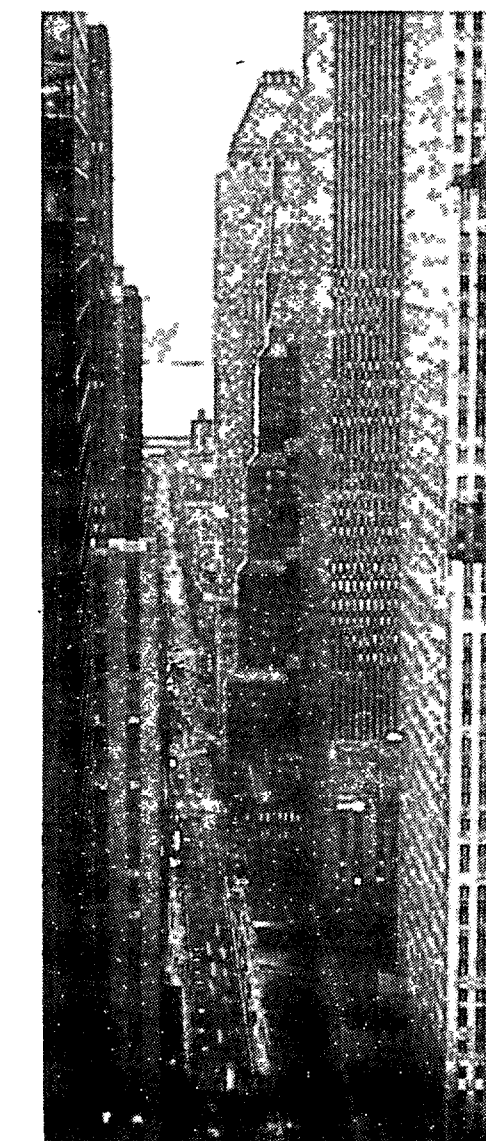
I noticed the bald patch, a smiling nakedness at the crown of the head, the size of a small pancake. Just another proof of nature's indifference to HUMAN PAIN, that he'd start to lose his hair the instant he found his tongue.

proof of nature's indifference to human pain, that he'd start to lose his hair the instant he found his tongue. The same thing might have happened to the shy guy's father, to generations of shy-guy ancestors. It was a genetic mouse trap.

I felt sorry, as well, for the cherry trees in Brooklyn. They looked wizened without their lavish pink clusters, and the grass beneath them was strewn with the casualties, like the flat corpses of birthday balloons after someone has gone around with a pin. Two days before they had been celebrants, augurs of the voluptuous ways in which Brooklyn could console you for the places left behind: those old, intimate nations where people queued up for food on winter mornings, or the tropical islands dense with poverty and oleander.

Now that the petals had fallen it was hard to remember that they'd been alive, dense and nearly frothy with pinkness as they clung to the branches. I had never seen cherry trees like this before I came to Brooklyn; in fact, I'd thought they couldn't live in this climate—something about tree blight and the superiority of the Japanese soil. But here on the Esplanade there were dozens of trees, cutting across the midriff of the Botanic Gardens. I passed the wrought iron entrance gates each day on the way to my job at Prospect Heights High School, where I was a distraught, new teacher of remedial English, and strolled through the garden many afternoons when the school day was over. I sat under the cherry trees, reading Derek Walcott's poems to forget my almost-daily disasters in the classroom, in late, golden October and beyond that, through the much emptier winter months. By January the garden closed early and was deserted, its branches and shrubs reduced to bare spiny outlines, like the ghosts of seaweeds on a dry oceanbed.

With the warmer months, of course, the people



returned in full force to the garden, and it was no longer mine exclusively. I was not unwilling to share, and I admitted that in some ways the place became more interesting. Lovers tumbled out of bushes. Down the pathways came prepubescent school kids, tourists, Hasidic mothers with sidelocked sons, Jamaican mothers with dreadlocked daughters, and young husbands from Japan who crouched, grave and nervous, to take pictures of their wives against a backdrop of pink blossoms. Also, women from Guyana pushing infants of Park Slope stockbrokers in carriages, babies as fat and stuporous as huge escargots. Everyone romped together under the pink canopy of cherry blossoms, without a premonition of how sudden the end would be.

After they fell—for me at least—it was necessary to find another spot. But a particularly fierce species of security personnel patrols the Botanic Garden, always vigilant to uphold the garden's primary rules; grass is not for sitting on, and flowers are not for picking. I had never stolen roses or daffodils, but I'm not by nature a friend of rules and, like my blond-tendrilled Biblical progenitrix, I could not resist breaking the garden's law.

When caught prone on one of the delectable forbidden lawns I'd turn wide-eyed innocent—"You mean we can't sit down here? Why not?"—and slink

off, ready to return when the guards had found other prey.

They travelled in golf carts, exuding a kind of martial seriousness. Though their eyesight was uncanny, there was a certain place I knew where a conspiratorial shrub might serve to make one invisible. Here I devoured Cynthia Ozick's Puttermessa stories, about an acerbic Jewish lawyer whose vision of heaven looked a lot like mine: green and full of fudge and books. Puttermessa creates a golem named Xanthippe out of mud, imbuing her with life by uttering "a single primeval Hebrew word...the Name of Names." Once she has given life to this daemon-child, it's an easy trip to City Hall for Puttermessa (golems proving to be good campaign managers). Alas, the Puttermessa utopia—created without further ado—is ultimately brought to its knees, in part because of Xanthippe's insatiable appetites.

From my vantage behind the bush, golems and duppies, their West Indian cousins in the spirit world, seemed no more chimerical than the tiny ants that strayed over my ankles. The ants were almost too small to spot. You felt their progress along bare skin, a brush of spectral fingers. They eluded me, the same way I eluded the guards: small size, luck, and cunning.

I end this on a note of confession. Once I fell from grace and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden was the scene. You may stop reading at this point; otherwise brace yourself. It was a Monday afternoon, at approximately four p.m. I had a date with a friend of a friend, a possessor of uncanny green eyes and a piquant, manic-depressive personality. He met me after school and we ate pistachio ice cream, more like students than the high school teacher I pretended to be. The *pièce de résistance* that afternoon was to be a walk through the Botanic Garden, but the iron gates were locked when we arrived. I'd forgotten that it was closed on Monday. "Look at that fence, Pam," he said. "It's hardly a fence at all."

"It looks like a fence to me."

"Nah, it's nothing. You just climb up on this little ledge, hoist yourself over the spikes, and jump. It's not a real fence, believe me."

"Maybe we have different ideas about fences."

He came from Ithaca, New York, where he had undoubtedly had more fence climbing experience in a single summer than I had had in my entire Bronx-bound childhood. I pointed this out.

"I'll help you over," he offered, his green eyes stepped up to their full voltage. Meanwhile, graceful, he scampered over the illusory fence and leapt to freedom. I had no choice; I started up, placing my pointy boots in the metal grating, and eased myself over the dangerous-looking spokes. Swaying vertiginous, I looked down at my friend, in his glade of ivy. He stood up, reached a hand out for me, and I jumped. My body fell towards the ground, but I did not land. Instead, for an awful moment I hung in suspense, my skirt impaled upon the iron teeth, my bare legs dangling, marionette-style, in mid-air. A ripping sound as I disentangled myself, and then a long instant of earthbound collapse: pride the cost of such a fall as mine.

count out change: "Don't worry, with practice it gets easier."

On the same day and in the same neighborhood as a horrible bike messenger accident took place, one yuppie woman to another, both done to the teeth in bike gear: "I told you, I'm dying to be a messenger."

At the Irving Howe Conference Refreshment Hour, woman in suit, surveying trays of denuded lettuce leaves: "Honey, have you seen where the lox went?"

Message on telephone:

"You've reached John Smith. At the sound of the beep, speak. Or roll over."

One man on the subject of an old friend: "She lives in her own reality. You have to swallow the whole package, stuffed bunnies and all."

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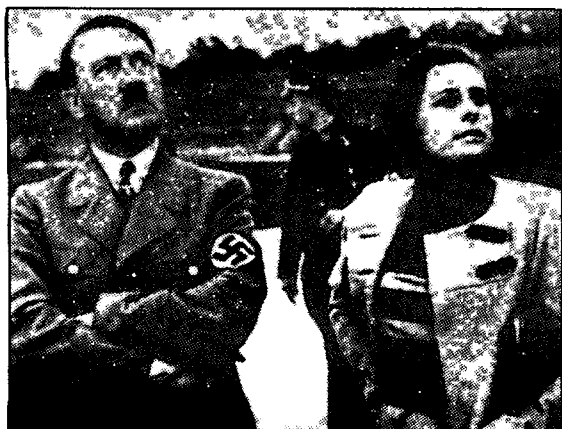
Black and White with a Little Grey After It

*69

BY VALERIE WALKER

*69 sounds like the wildest sex act to come down the pike but it's just one of the nifty new telephone features that NYNEX hopes will help keep their tills full. Perhaps you remember getting notices from NYNEX that you now have the option to press *69 and the phone will automatically redial (at 75 cents a shot) the last person who called you, whether you spoke or not. The true meaning of phone sex? Maybe.

My friend Fiona picked up the phone in her office last week and answered



Above: Leni Riefenstahl discussing *Triumph of the Will* with Adolf Hitler, 1934

with the name of her company. "Fuck you, bitch," the caller replied. "What?" gasped Fiona, stunned at the greeting. "I said fuck you, you bitch. I just *69ed you because you hung up on me twice." "I didn't make any outgoing calls," said Fiona. "Hey," she called out to the office, "did anyone make calls and then hang up?" "Uh, yeah, I did," answered her boss sheepishly. My friend apologized to the caller and then hung up. At least she

Continued on page 15

The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Hitler descending in an airplane like a deity over Nuremberg, divers rejecting the weight of the earth and soaring like birds—those are two among many powerful images from Leni Riefenstahl's two major movies. I saw *Triumph of the Will*, the documentary of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress, and the two-part documentary of the 1936 Berlin Olympics years ago, but they don't stick in my mind the way certain other mammoth films do, those, say, of D.W. Griffith or Marcel Ophüls. But the woman on the screen in Ray Müller's 1993 documentary is something else altogether, and it's the fascination of that woman that troubles people these many years later. For instance, Susan Sontag, who wrote an essay ("Fascinating Fascism") on Riefenstahl's 1972 book of photos of African tribesmen: In the photos of beautiful black bodies, Sontag discerned a continuity with what she sees as Riefenstahl's fascist aesthetics. Müller's movie, which moves uneasily between critical analysis and unconscious paean, will no doubt fuel the controversy that rages on about the woman and her work.

The two are hard to separate. First, because Riefenstahl has become so identified with *Triumph des Willens*. Second, because it's clear from hearing her talk about her film-making and from all of Müller's footage of Riefenstahl at work that she is a perfectionist consumed by her artistic vision. The few other films she made or starred in, featuring a struggle between corruption and idealism, are from the era in which socialist art was also being drafted

into the service of constructing an ideal human society. That Nazi Germany was a revolutionary society is not well understood, and Riefenstahl was the only visual artist of stature in Germany able to transform the banal clichés that affect revolutionary propaganda into something that resembled art. Such art is necessarily abstract, which may explain my lack of enthusiasm for Riefenstahl's movies. The communists never did as well at conveying images of a perfect future, but they were able to manipulate the past brilliantly: we are all able to identify with the downtrodden in Eisenstein's movies, even when we realize we are being set up.

Müller's documentary, divided into chronological sections, mixes contemporary clips and stills with present-day Riefenstahl filmed in locations significant in her career: the Olympic stadium in Berlin, the field on which the 1934 Nazi Party Congress took place, the Nollendorfplatz subway stop in Berlin where, in 1927, she saw a poster for the Arnold Fanck film, *Mountain of Destiny*, which led to her acting in a number of "alpine epics." Studio stills show a young woman with a beauty similar to that of the young Garbo, but the different kinds of movies they starred in presage their fates in old age. Riefenstahl, a dancer before becoming an actress, can be seen clambering barefooted and without ropes up practically vertical rock faces, perching on narrow cliff ledges, or being buried again and again by avalanches. Movie-making in this early era was very fare-thee-well.

Riefenstahl directed and wrote a movie called *The Blue Light* (1932) in which she also starred as Junta, an outcast who spends a lot of time in a mountain grotto in which the crystals turn blue during the full moon. "Junta," says Riefenstahl,



Leni Riefenstahl preparing Olympia, 1938.

"was loved and hated." At the end of *The Blue Light* she is persecuted and driven out of society, which, says Riefenstahl, "was a premonition of my own fate," a reference to the boycott of her person and reputation. To this day her films are not shown in Germany.

Hearing Riefenstahl tell Müller of her first impressions of Hitler, whom she heard speaking at a rally in Berlin, of how she believed he would be the one to lead Germany from its horrible problems, one also hears echoes of the idealists caught up in the whirlwinds of the Russian Revolution. Carried away by Hitler's spellbinding oratory and the enthusiasm of the crowd, she wrote him a letter. In private she found him modest; she is quick to add that she didn't find him (or Goebbels) attractive. The film doesn't make any explicit points about Riefenstahl's sex life. She says she didn't take up Sternheim's offer to go to Hollywood in 1932 because she was in love. To see her scuba diving at ninety (with her fifty-year-old male companion-colleague) or hear her describe how she kept shooting a harrowing scene even after a blow torch had exploded and scorched her hair and face is to see a woman who has lived by her own rules.

There was a limit to things, however. Riefenstahl says she objected to Hitler after Kristallnacht about the Nazis' anti-Semitism; she claims he asked her never to mention the subject again and had her ushered from the room. This may be an out-and-out lie; it may be the truth. But this statement may also represent a wish to present herself as having been courageous when criticism was life-threatening. Sontag wants to deny Riefenstahl's exculpating claim of animosity between herself and Goebbels, but Sontag herself seems disingenuous about the power machine in totalitarian countries. Doesn't she know that Stalin sent to their deaths people who told jokes in his presence.

That a woman and a non-Party member was brought in to film the Nazi rally was Hitler's idea. "I mean always to have artists near me, for they have blood in them," he once said. "I need them in my fight against philistinism," he continued, showing his grasp of the power of images to shape opinion and action. Riefenstahl is coy about her contribution to an earlier Party film, *Victory of the Will*. Long believed lost, clips of this film of the 1933 Nazi Congress have been unearthed for this documentary. To Müller she denies it was her film in the sense that she did not have the material resources to make the film she wanted, and indeed what the clips of this Congress show is that the Nazis had not yet learned to march like Nazis. They bankrolled the 1934 film, *Triumph of the Will*, which marked the turning point in their fortunes. With the assistance of thirty cameramen, she showed the Nazis as a perfectly functioning machine, one suggesting power, inevitability, and grandeur, with Hitler at the top.

Watching her respond to the charge that it glorified the Nazis, I thought again of the Russian

artists who churned out advertising posters, matchbook covers, and people's operas, all portraying a beautiful vision of the future. She's aware of this comparison, too, for though she's sorry she made the film because it came to ruin her life, she says she feels no guilt about it: does anyone criticize Eisenstein, she asks. You sense the quandary she is in. On the one hand, she's an artist, proud of having made a movie that surpassed the static newsreels of the day. She spent five months editing *Triumph*, working ten to twenty hours a day, and there's no doubt she was mesmerized by the work and by her subject. On the other hand, she's aware that she supported not simply the losing side but the archfiend of the twentieth century. Obviously she would be regarded with more sympathy today if, after making *Triumph*, she had somehow crossed Hitler and ended up in a concentration camp. Instead, though she made no other films for the Nazis after the 1936 Olympic film, and though she was never a Party member or, she says, never made racist remarks, that film remains an albatross around her neck.

For those who think I am letting her off the hook easily, there was one point in the documentary that did bother me. As Riefenstahl floats around in her blue scuba suit directing a sting ray, for what is described as "an underwater epic," the voice-over says she is a member of Greenpeace. This socially conscious gesture seemed odd: aware of the dangers to the environment but not to the deaths of her fellow humans during the Nazi era? I assume that people knew in their heart of hearts that the street behavior of the Nazis had had consequences for the disappearing Jews.

But living with evil in a tyranny is very complex. Take Northern Ireland, a situation that, in its terrors, bears a certain analogy. The vast majority of the population are people trying to do the right thing in a terrible situation, which causes them to close their eyes to acts that were commonplace under the Nazis or the Soviets. I am also suspicious of the motives of critics of Riefenstahl like Sontag, who bear a responsibility of their own. They were strangely silent in the 1950s and 1960s when millions were perishing in Soviet death camps. For forty years, when they had the chance to wax brilliant about those barbarities, they were instead like the Holocaust revisionists; only now, after Soviet communism has expired, are those barbarities starting to register on their radar screens.

As for Riefenstahl, maybe she believed that people, in contrast to animals, would take care of themselves. It's clear she always did what she wanted. At the end of the movie she says that all the detractions she's suffered have been so horrible that death would be preferable—but watching her face light up as she struggles to pull herself out of the sea and onto the boat after a dive and exclaiming, *toll* (fantastic), you don't believe for a second that she would rather be dead.

Continued from page 12

it was just plain weird. The techno-mechanical music kept repeating "Kinney shoes more than shoes more than fashion" again and again at different pitches.

"I guess Kinney's going for a hipper new image too," said Caroline. "Yeah, but a bit over the top," I agreed. We plunked down on a huge velvet blue sofa and I got a glass of champagne. Caroline opted for red wine. Soon we were joined by two editors from *Family Circle*. One of them I knew through my ex-boyfriend. I felt a little strange that I'd be introducing her to my Delicious One soon. By the time he got there, however, we were pretty relaxed and Caroline was attacking the hors d'oeuvres plate with vigor every time it came around. "Those asparagus wrapped bacon treats!" she screeched. "Give me one! No, two!" This was our kind of public relations event. We could sit and be served food and wine and then leave without having to listen to any lectures or watch a video. Furthermore, it was in the evening, which meant the night could proceed smoothly from this point.

We were some of the last people there when they started to let the models out of the boxes. When one was released, she managed to topple the whole box so that the display was knocked over. There was a shocked silence as box and shoes and moss tumbled over and landed on the wooden floor. The model smiled and stepped daintily over the whole mess. We decided to go. On the way out a little paper bag was placed in my hand, by a person whose face I forgot immediately. In the cab with The Delicious One I opened the bag and pawed at the tissue paper, searching like a diligent beast. Inside was a little suede pouch stuffed with a black velvet choker (surely you recall chokers were all the rage last spring) with a delicate little brass shoe hung on it. I tucked it away in my bag to admire it another time. We decided to eat dinner at Two Boots that night and headed for the East Side.

Musicbeat

Theatre of Voices at the Frick Collection

Paul Hillier's Quintet Sings Songs of the Sublime

BY PAMELA RENNER

For those able to triumph over the Frick's Byzantine ticket request procedures, the museum's Sunday concert series offers a consistent opportunity to hear some of the finest chamber music in New York, for free. The performers scheduled to play in any given season series tend to be more various and adventurous than those booked by the commercial venues; and besides, where else can you go to hear the silvery toned vocal compositions of the 12th-century botanist, abbess and mystic, Hildegard von Bingen, right after strolling within whistling distance of an El Greco saint?

The first appearance of *Theatre of Voices* (Paul Hillier, Judith Nelson, Drew Minter, Paul Elliot, and Alan Bennett) in New York City was an occasion to celebrate. On March 13, the Frick's music hall was filled with the sound of gorgeous melancholy, as five jewel-like voices merged to recreate this music of exultation and desire, first performed in the late medieval period and spanning the final decades of the Renaissance.

It's difficult for me to think of early music as entertainment; there's something too strenuous in the yearning it expresses. Its rhythms are those, somehow, of a creature thrashing against the bars of a cage. One listens and seems to hear—instead of the



Photo by Roberto Masotti

Paul Hillier, ECM Records

discrete tones of baritones, tenors, sopranos—a single soul struggling towards a freedom it cannot otherwise apprehend. By the time the Baroque period comes along, this quality disappears. Monteverdi's early madrigals are lit, for me, in the stained-glass colors of cathedrals, but in his later operatic music I find the palette changed, even destroyed.

Giovanni Palestrina's (1525-1594) *Song of Songs*, the final selection on the *Theatre of Voices* program, comes at the time before this shift in coloration. Its text, familiar yet always strange, is given a splendid setting by the performance: we're able to see new reflections under its surface. The music performs the function of illumination, setting the Biblical words before us, the way a skilled lapidary might display a precious stone: "You are beautiful my darling, beautiful and graceful as Jerusa-

Where else can you go to hear the silvery toned vocal-compositions of the 12th-century botanist, abbess and mystic, Hildegard von Bingen?

lem, terrible as the battle-line of an army drawn up. Turn away your eyes from me, because they make me fly away."

Palestrina's composition does what language cannot—even the elevated and sonorous language of the Canticum—and it stands in fascinating contrast to Philippe de Vitry's (1291-1361) *Roman de Fauvel*, a scathing parable about a jackass who rises to glory. Other selections performed on the evening's program included works by Guillaume de Machaut and Josquin Desprez, to name just a few of the composers represented.

The season's schedule of upcoming concerts and performances can be obtained by visiting or writing to the Frick.

In order to receive a pair of tickets to an upcoming concert, send requests in writing to the Concert Department, Frick Collection, 1 East 70th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Requests must be received on the third Monday before the concert, and no hand-delivered or telephone applications are considered. It sounds complicated, but it's really not hard—just mail your request on the Thursday or Friday before the designated Monday, cross your fingers, and say little invocation on behalf of the ever-swift New York Postal Service. Another option: show up on the evening of the concert, an hour or more beforehand, and wait on line to see if there are any vacant seats. There are often a few.

Continued from page 14

didn't *69 her right back for the hell of it.

Another friend of mine, Diana, started receiving prank phone calls that went something along the lines of this: "Diana, I want to suck your toes." "Who is this?" "I want to suck your toes so badly, I want them." "Please stop making these calls. I'm having my line monitored." "Ahh, your toes, I want them constantly." Diana hung up. Suddenly, she realized she could *69 the caller back. When she did and he answered, she was too abashed to confront him. She just hung up, blushing from her head to her toes.

After hearing a couple of tales like these I realized the raunchy possibilities of the expression *69. "I could have *69ed him back all night." "He was so great about *69." "That was the best *69 I ever had." Surely, NYNEX knew something about subliminal suggestion when it chose "star six nine" to name its redial feature. It's something you just want to do again and again.

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TOP PET PEEVES

a personal compilation

BY VALERIE WALKER

1. Toilets and stall doors in the Graduate Center that don't work.
2. Male classmates who ask your name and have forgotten it the next time you bump into them.
3. Female students who you can never, *ever* get out to do things.
4. Having people walk out in the middle of your class presentation for the semester.
5. The single rib you get when short ribs are the student lunch.
6. Older students who allude haughtily to the academic conferences they've attended since 1977, but neglect to keep in mind you were only 9 years old at the time.
7. Anyone who bitches about the Advocate.
8. Coming around the back way to enter the Graduate Center and finding the gate down at 7 p.m.
9. People who talk only about their classes and department.
10. Going to the computer center and finding that the system is not quite down, but it sure as hell isn't very up.
11. Waiting in line for one of the pay phones on the basement level.
12. Students who wear fake nose rings.
13. People who always talk in academic jargon.
14. The DSC plenary board's occasional but pointed attempts to cut the pay of Advocate staffers.
15. Getting the results back from a language exam three months after you took it.

Ask♥Aphrodite**Dear Aphrodite,**

I met this adorable graduate student in Comp Lit at a conference called "Transgression, Digression, and Phallic Fallacies." She was delivering an intense and subversive little response paper that had to do with Queer Theory, Decentering Gender Identity, and the Malaise of the Marginal. I think that's what it was about. She was terrific; I mean, you could feel the seismic shifts in people's thinking as she was speaking, and, for godsakes, it was just a fifteen-minute response paper.

I was really fascinated by her, and I invited her to go for a drink after the Keynote address on Saturday night, when the conference ended. She was visiting New York (she's a student at Berkeley) and she wanted to know about the lesbian scene here, and I told her about where my friends and I hang out, and she seemed really interested. I felt like there was an electricity between us; I was excited.

Nothing prepared me then for the shock I received on Friday-evening. I was passing by this tacky, yuppiecentric, and utterly unhip restaurant/bar when who should I see in the window, making out with this blondish guy in a three-piece suit, but her. That's right, Ms. Decentered Gender Identity Herself. They were really going at it, let me tell you. Aphrodite, tell me what you think: was it all a mirage or is she the world's biggest poseur?

*Genderchic/shock***Dear Genderchick/shock,**

Who's the poseur here? You or the woman who you've so neatly labeled? Why are you so confident that there are only two kinds of desire out there—homo and hetero? I know a guy who likes dogs...sometimes...but that's another story. One would think that since you claim to know so much about transgressive sexuality you'd know that great sex can happen even after dinner at Trader Vic's. Blond? Three piece? Yupster bar? In New York, who really gives a damn? I don't. I suggest asking her to a venue of your choice and planting a kiss on her lips. Or better, ask her if she'd like to go out and decide on a place together—maybe you'll both learn something.

*Aphrodite***Dear Aphrodite,**

You may remember me from the last time I wrote to you: O.K., so you blew me off, tried to quench the fire in my heart and my loins, told me to get lost. I don't mind. I want you to know I went to the dining commons bar that Tuesday night at seven and waited for you anyway. When you didn't show, I felt like Bogart at the end of *Casablanca*; my whole world ending but continuing to mock me. You will always be my goddess. Who are you anyway? I think I know.

After that rendez-vous without *vous*, Aphrodite, I went to the student mezzanine and I sat and waited. I watched the door of the Advocate office. Quite a few extremely attractive women were going in and out, but my gut instinct told me: none of them was you. I went back the next day and waited in the same place. This continued.

I don't want you to think I'm some kind of scary psychopath. I mean, I walked out of Fatal Attraction when Glenn Close skinned the bunny rabbit; and I give money to Oxfam and buy envelopes made of recycled paper, each of which says, "Save the Whales." I'm a nice guy. I even voted in the DSC election! I don't mean to make you uncomfortable, but I'm totally possessed by my passion for you. Take pity on me, please. Reveal your identity to me, and you won't be sorry.

*Paris, Still in Flames***Dear Flaming,**

Personally, I wouldn't be caught dead at the dining commons at 7:00 p.m. Try San Domenico. I'll be sitting across from Jackie O.

But I think you're right, you may have seen me handing in my column at the Advocate. I can't stand the Basement Mezzanine—it smells like potato chips and flatulence. Was that you by the microwave morosely eating popcorn? Terrible posture but you're kinda cute.

I prefer Jimmy's bar after school, Cafe Orlin for brunch (but the cappuccino is rancid), and order out for dinner. But if you don't find me there, look for me under your bootsoles. You will hardly know who I am.

*Aphrodite***Dear Aphrodite,**

I'm not a student at CUNY Grad Center, but my boyfriend is writing his dissertation in clinical psych. I work a regular nine-to-five job, and I don't mind working hard and paying a whole lot of our household expenses (he's too busy with research to bring in much money) or even doing a lot of the housework, chores, and time-consuming annoying things like income tax preparation. We've lived together for a

couple of years now, and we might get married one of these days, when he's finished his dissertation.

The problem with this arrangement is, he's never said thank you. He often analyzes my motives, and when I get annoyed he explains me to myself. My mother complex, my unfulfilled Oedipal hostilities are only part of it; there's a long and meticulous account of how I cause neurotic symptoms in Ginger, our cat. What can I say? He knows a lot about psychology, and I admire his brilliant scientific mind: But sometimes he's just too much to take, and all I want to do is pick up Ginger and catch the first flight to someplace else (just as long as it's not Vienna!). *Electra of the East Village*

Dear Electra,

Let's face it: if the guy won't do housework, prepare taxes, or acknowledge your efforts, something's got to change, but it probably won't be him. You can cave in now or cave in later, but there's little difference between a dissertation and the rest of an academic's life—you'll be cleaning up after him for the next 45 years.

You have several options: simmer until you explode; nag him gently until your relationship is a gray rag; force a crisis while you're still angry enough and clear enough to know what you want and deal with the outcome however difficult it may be. I advise that you tell him clearly what you need, and if you can't negotiate a livable solution, leave. Some-

times people need a wake-up call, Helllll-oooo, but if they don't respond, they have to go their own way.

*Aphrodite***Dear Aphrodite,**

I am not the kind of person who usually writes to a column like yours. I am a very serious student of computer programming. I am headed for great things in the world of bits and bytes and cyber-engineering. But I have to say I've never been a pro at engineering my own affairs of the heart. Anyway, to make a long story short, I went to the computer center one Friday afternoon to make a printout of a paper, and while I was working a delicate and subtle scent, like fresh jasmine, crossed my nostrils. I looked up, and I saw the most beautiful girl in the world. I'm not kidding. I don't even know how to describe her, you'll have to use your imagination.

I'm scheduled to give a seminal paper on some findings I've been working on for about a year, on a very complex theoretical issue, but I have not been able to concentrate. Every time I sit down at the terminal to work, I go into power failure mode. My brain terminal goes woozy and fuzzy, my hands will not follow my brain's commands. Something is screwy in my emotional mainframe, something has gotten loose and is mucking up the programming apparatus. I think it's a jasmine petal. What should I do?

*Programming Error***Dear Cybersmuck,**

Your vocabulary is terminally frustrated. As for your seminal paper, most people take care of that with a tissue or a T-shirt. You need to explore the world of human beings, those squishy things. I advise a road trip with a case of Budweiser and two hits of acid. Eat some mud, bark like a dog. Thrash around in briar patch for an hour or so. Then go back and find the jasmine. It blooms in the spring.

Aphrodite

Gentle Aphrodite had some help from a caustic Cupid this month.



Aphrodite is waiting to hear from you. Drop your letters in The Advocate mailbox inside the DSC Office on the Basement Mezzanine. No one will ever know it was you.

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