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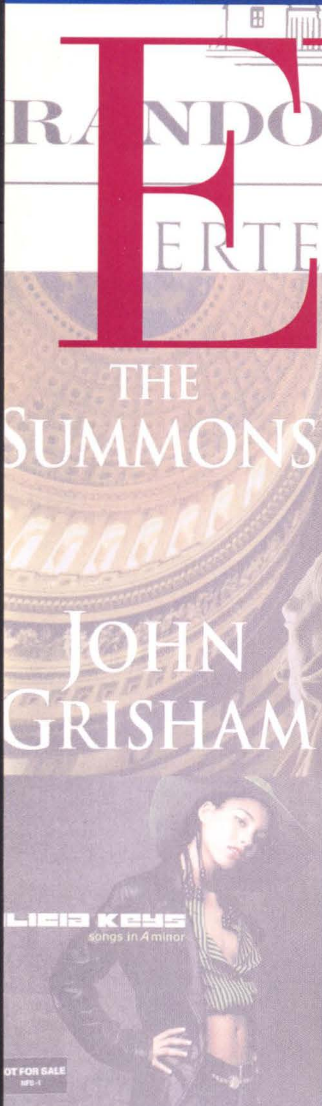
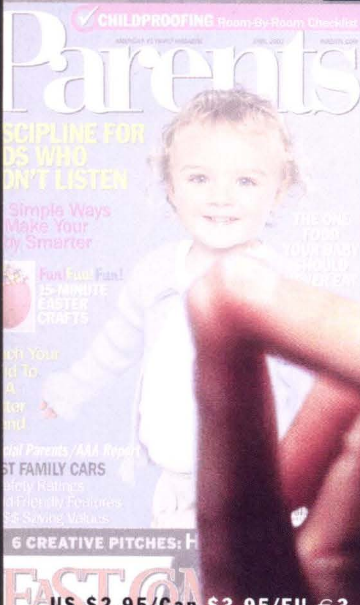
EUROPE

May 2002



European Media Giant an American Best Seller



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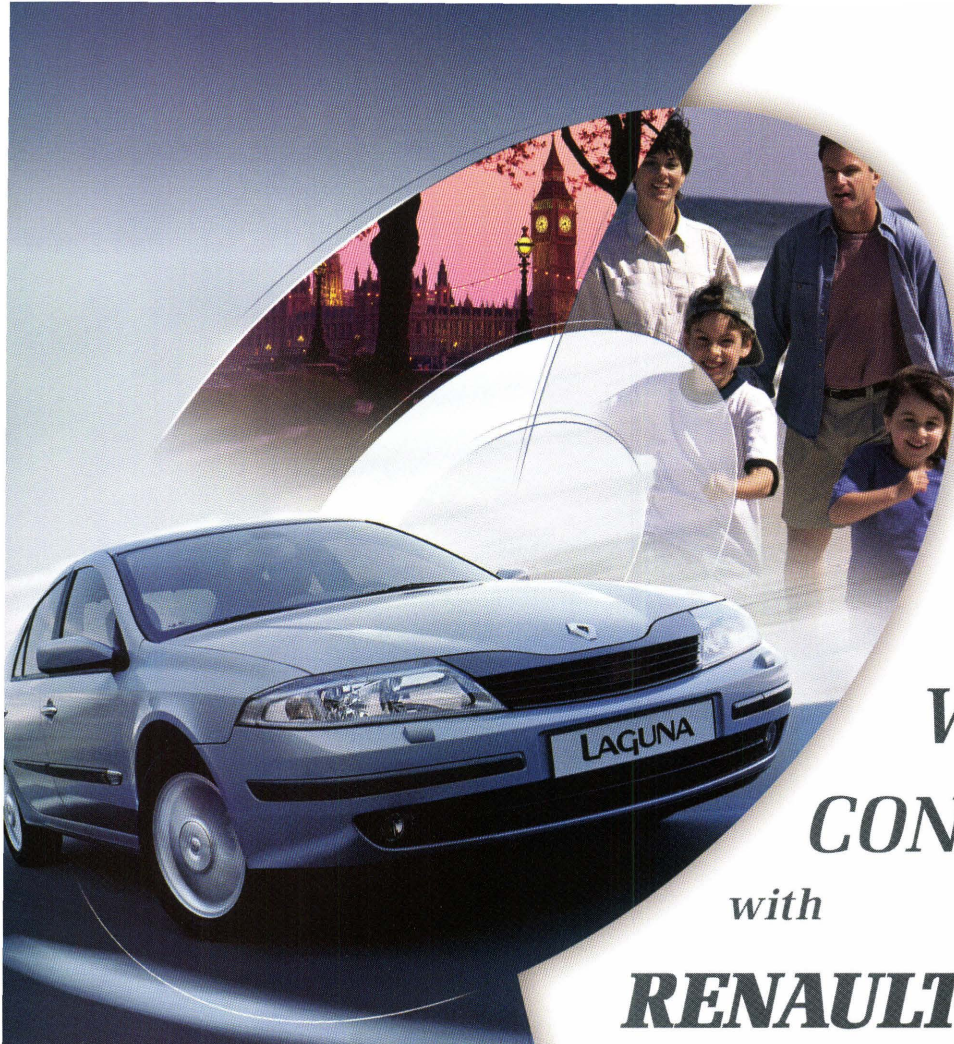
Bertelsmann CEO Thomas Middelhoff



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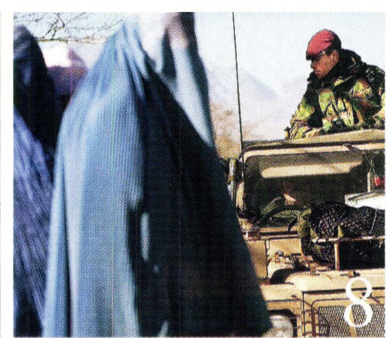
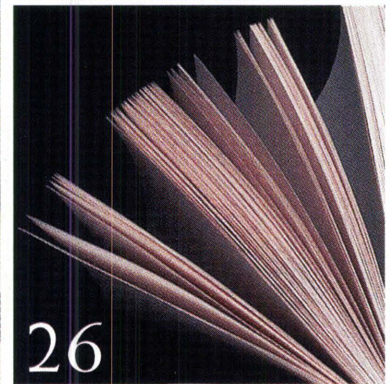
EU Commissioner Chris Patten with Secretary of State Colin Powell





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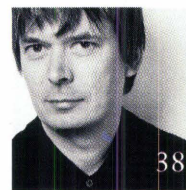

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As conditions in the Middle East continue to deteriorate, the European Union is providing increased humanitarian assistance to the people in the area. Costanza Adinolfi, director of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), in an exclusive *EUROPE* interview discusses how the EU is providing assistance in the Mideast and in Afghanistan.

Also this month, *EUROPE* looks at EU-US political relations today and asks the important question: Are we dangerously diverging in our views on the Mideast, the war on terrorism, the environment, and on trade issues? While, at first glance it may look as if the EU and US are far apart on key issues, a deeper analysis reveals a great deal of solidarity between the world's two dominant trading blocs.

The Bertelsmann Empire

As NATO takes on new tasks, *EUROPE* looks at how the EU and US are taking different approaches to military spending as well as strategy. We discuss what is meant by the "defense gap" between the US and NATO.

In this, our special "book issue," we delve into the complicated world of publishing and find that one of the top firms publishing such American icons as John Grisham, Danielle Steele, and Rosie O'Donnell is Bertelsmann, a German media giant.

We chart Bertelsmann's rapid rise in the publishing business as it prepares for an initial public offering. With its headquarters in Germany, Bertelsmann "now does two-thirds of its business outside of its home country," reports Terry Martin, our correspondent in Berlin. Much of the firm's success can be largely attributed to its CEO, Thomas Middelhoff, who has been called "an American with a German passport" because of the amount of time he spends in New York.

Not quite on the scale of Bertelsmann, Mike Burns, our contributing editor in Dublin, recently started his own publishing firm, which released its first book last fall. Burns describes, often humorously, the difficulties his fledgling imprint faced in publishing *With a Tap on the Knee*, an Irish banker's light-hearted memoir, which has sold well in Ireland.

Martin Walker, another of our long time contributors, has recently published a well-received art history mystery set in France. We interview Walker about his novel, entitled *The Caves of Perigord*.

We also review a series of books ranging from a biography of Winston Churchill written by a former president of the European Commission to a history of Wales as well as several novels.

In Capitals, each of our fifteen correspondents profiles a writer in his or her respective country. These revealing portraits include a novelist who's also a member of the Greek government, a Scottish mystery writer, a French author who overcame a serious childhood illness, and a novelist in the Hague who is a mystery himself.

Our spotlight country is the Netherlands, which holds elections later this month. As Wim Kok, the popular prime minister and leader of the social democratic PvdA party, prepares to retire, Pim Fortuyn, a maverick politician from Rotterdam, is shaking up the campaign with his controversial views.

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Editor-in-Chief

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EUROPE, *Magazine of the European Union* (ISSN 0191-4545), is published on the 1st of each month, except January and August, by the Delegation of the European Commission, 2300 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037. © The European Commission, 2002. The magazine encourages reproduction of its contents, but any such reproduction without permission is prohibited. *EUROPE,* published 10 times per year, is available by subscription for $19.95 per year; $34.95 for 2 years; $46.95 for three years. Add $10.00 to non-U.S. subscriptions for postage and handling. Student rate (with proof of enrollment): $14.95 per year; $25.95 for 2 years; $35.95 for 3 years. Bulk rate also available. **Editorial, permissions, advertising, and circulation offices:** 2300 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; Telephone (202) 862-9519. Available in microform from UMI, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106; (313) 761-4700

World Wide Web: www.eurunion.org

Newsstand distribution: Eastern News 1-800-221-3148

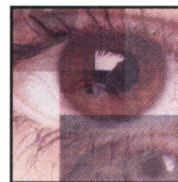
Subscriber services: 1-800-627-7961. (In Canada call 303-604-1464.) Periodicals class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional entry. **Postmaster:** Please send change of address forms to *EUROPE,* P.O. Box 55935, Boulder, CO 80328-5935.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

The magazine is a forum for discussion, and therefore its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of European Union institutions or of the member states.

EYE ON THE EU

Profiling personalities and developments within the European Union



ESTONIA LAGS BEHIND IN EU NEGOTIATIONS

Are Estonia's membership negotiations with the EU in serious trouble? For long, it was regarded as the ideal candidate and was leading the pack in terms of chapters provisionally closed. Now it is well down the field and has even been overtaken by its two Baltic neighbors—Latvia and Lithuania—even though their negotiations started nearly two years later.

Between last July and early March, only one chapter (competition policy) was closed. Little progress was made on chapters such as the free movement of persons, taxation, and customs union, where other comparable applicant states had forged ahead.

The suspicion grew that Estonia was deliberately slowing down the process, an impression reinforced by the large number of transition periods (thirty) and exceptions (forty) that it had requested in the nine chapters currently being negotiated. The longest transition period requested concerned the quality of urban drinking water, which would last until 2013, and the EU has now agreed to this.

Further doubts were raised by the sudden resignation in January of Prime Minister Mart Laar, who had pioneered the Estonian application. This provoked fears that there would be a prolonged and destabilizing interregnum while a new coalition was sought.

Laar's resignation had nothing to do with the issue of EU membership. As leader of the Pro Patria Party, he was upset that his main coalition partner, the Center Party, had linked up with the opposition Reform Party to overthrow the governing coalition on the Tallinn city council. He regarded this as a breach of trust and felt that he could not work any longer in harness with the Centrists.

Estonian President Arnold Rüütel acted swiftly to resolve the issue, asking Finance Minister Siin Kallas, the leader of the Center Party, to form a new government. This he did without difficulty, bringing in the Reform Party to replace Pro Patria and the small Moderate Party, both of which went into opposition.

The new government, which is one or two seats short of a majority, is perhaps slightly more left wing than its predecessor but is not expected to deviate very far from its central objectives. Nor is it embarking upon any purge of appointed officials. In particular, Alar Streimann, the respected chief negotiator with the EU, was promptly confirmed in office.

Kallas, whose government is expected to remain in office until the general election due in March 2003, announced on January 29 that his top priority would be to conclude the accession talks by the end of this year and promised, as head of government, "to see to it that the negotiations run smoothly."

Hopefully, this should mean a rapid catching-up operation by the Estonians. For the reason they fell behind last year was not really related to difficulties in the negotiating chapters. It had more to do with sharp fluctuations in public opinion.

As former economics minister Henrik Hololei put it, in a recent lecture in Brussels, the opinion polls were going up and down like a yo-yo. From highs of 85 percent or more, the percentage in favor of EU membership fell to as low as 34 percent, only to rebound overnight to 44 percent the day after Estonia won the Eurovision Song Contest.

The former government was criticized for closing too many chapters too quickly, and it was claimed that they could have gotten better deals by holding out longer. As a tactical response, they then held back from closing further chapters, even though these were virtually completed.

An important influence in restoring support in the polls was the election last September of the respected septuagenarian Arnold Rüütel as president. He has a wide following among elderly and rural voters, who have tended to be the most skeptical about the European Union. His repeated backing for the Estonian application has had a positive effect, and the proportion in favor has risen to 58 percent.

The European Commission believes that there are only two major obstacles specifically concerning Estonia in the remaining negotiations. One is in the energy chapter, where Estonia (which has otherwise already removed all its customs barriers) wishes to retain protection for its shale oil industry, which currently supplies 90 percent of the country's energy needs.

It is the only country in the world that exploits shale oil deposits for this purpose, and it is not a very economic—or environmentally friendly—process. Nevertheless, it is virtually Estonia's only natural resource, and it is concentrated in the eastern part of the country, which has the highest unemployment level and the largest proportion of Russian speakers.

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*as of March 2002

Estonia's economic reform program started earlier and went much further than in any other applicant country. It remains the best placed to take maximum advantage of the opportunities that EU membership will bring. The scorecard gives a misleadingly modest impression of the state of its preparations.

—Dick Leonard

EURO NOTES

Reporting news, notes, and numbers from Europe's financial centers

GERMANY'S ECONOMIC WOES

Toward the end of the 1980s, the *Financial Times* published a series of articles entitled "Germany in the Slow Lane," accompanied by a cartoon of former chancellor Helmut Kohl pictured as a snail. Fifteen years on, only the faces have changed. Economic growth is at a standstill; unemployment has edged above the 4 million mark; and the public deficit is dangerously close to 3 percent of gross domestic product, the level prohibited under the Maastricht Treaty.

This is proving particularly embarrassing for Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's center-left German government in a general election year. In economic terms, it is even more important. Germany is the workshop of Europe, a vital export market for neighboring countries. If Germany sneezes, the rest of Europe shivers.

As a leading exporter, Germany is vulnerable to contractions in foreign markets, particularly the United States. However, the German downturn was not led solely by the bursting of the American dot-com bubble. It stemmed from a collapse in domestic demand more than a year ago.

German consumers have stopped spending. Small businesses in Germany are complaining about stifling regulation. A barrage of new taxes—from gasoline to tobacco—has depressed demand. The government has dragged its feet on much-needed structural economic reforms, both in labor and product markets.

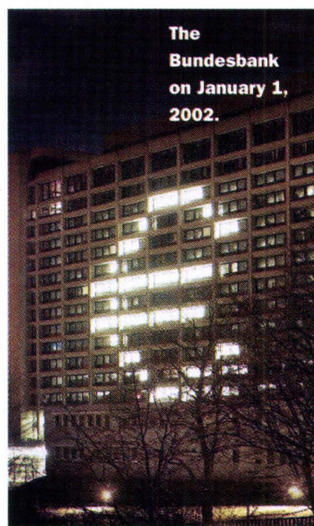
Germany's stasis is compounded by the historical legacy of German unification and the costs of absorbing the command economy of communist East Germany. By some accounts, the collapse of the construction boom in the East (fostered by the previous Kohl government's policy of offering tax breaks to companies investing in the East) has reduced growth in Germany by as much as 1 percent.

Yet there is another more unsettling factor in Germany's weak economic performance: the exchange rate. Unlike the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Italy, Germany did not benefit from currency depreciations in the 1990s. It stuck to a stable deutsche mark. In earlier inflationary times, Germany would have been cushioned. But in the era of the euro, Germany now finds itself in a low-inflation environment, along with everyone else. This means that its relative competitiveness vis-à-vis its neighbors has declined.

As one senior Bank of England official noted recently: "To a certain extent, Germany is a victim of the system of fixed exchange rates represented by monetary union."

It was not meant to be so. In 1991, when Germany agreed to monetary union at the Maastricht summit, most countries feared German strength rather than German weakness. Indeed, the blueprint for launching the euro bears an unequivocally German stamp, from the design of the European Central Bank modeled on the Bundesbank to the Stability Pact for enforcing fiscal discipline in the euro zone.

Today, these models no longer look appropriate. The



The Bundesbank on January 1, 2002.

Bundesbank has moved from the most powerful central bank in Europe to a peripheral player, languishing in the shadow of the ECB. The Stability Pact has turned into a millstone around the neck of the Schröder government. The pact's mechanistic formulation, notably its failure to take sufficient account of cyclical factors, means that Germany is tightening fiscal policy when it should be on balance allowing some loosening.

Moreover, the euro, once viewed as the independent agent of change in Germany, has only had limited success. It was once thought that the euro would render traditional macroeconomic instruments such as exchange rate and fiscal policy redundant or at least very limited in scope. This remains true, but the need for political leadership to drive reform has not disappeared because of the single currency.

What is clear is that the competitive pressures on Germany are more external than internal. One controversial source is the European Commission. The antitrust authorities in Brussels have waged a thankless campaign to reduce state aid and anti-competitive practices, notably the state guarantees provided to the *Landesbanken* or regional banks. But Chancellor Schröder has recently attacked the Commission bitterly for an alleged anti-industry bias.

The other pressure point on German business exists closer to home. The recent tax reforms pushed through by Schröder and supported by a rump of the opposition center-right parties have already had an important impact. By far, the most far-reaching is the capital gains tax reform, which scraps capital gains tax on the sale of investments in joint stock companies if they have been held for more than a year. This has allowed German banks and insurance companies, such as Allianz and Deutsche Bank, to divest billions of dollars on cross-shareholdings that have been a feature of German business for almost a century.

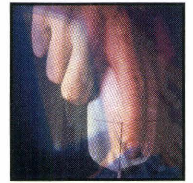
Paradoxically, however, surveys have revealed that these very tax reforms have allowed big German companies to significantly reduce their tax burden. This is one of the reasons—along with profligate local government—that Germany's fiscal difficulties are so severe.

So here is an irony worthy of one of Thomas Mann's novels: a policy designed to promote German competitiveness has ended in contributing to Germany's present troubles. If the euro finally rebounds against the dollar, the short-term difficulties in Berlin will be harder to manage.

—Lionel Barber

e-EUROPE

Tracking the news and trends shaping Europe's technology sector



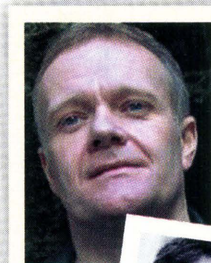
SPIKING THEORIES ABOUT WEB PUBLISHING

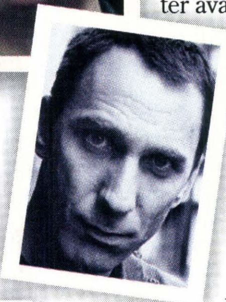
London's hippest on-line literary magazine is not owned by a media conglomerate nor backed by a major corporation. Neither is it hopelessly in debt to skittish venture capitalists eager to reap a return on their investment. Its pages bear few ads, and it has no plans to begin charging its legions of readers a subscription fee. *Spike Magazine* (www.spikemagazine.com) is free—in just about every sense of the word.

That's not to say it's not worth reading. *Spike* arguably contains some of the freshest writing on London's considerable literary scene. It features interviews with many of the United Kingdom's most celebrated authors, including Will Self, Nick Hornby, Jeff Noon, and J.G. Ballard. In addition, the site offers a selection of fiction and poetry from up-and-coming writers, as well as reviews; a news ticker; a forum where readers can go to discuss a variety of literary subjects; and the occasional philosophical rant.

What sets *Spike* apart from say, the *Times Literary Supplement*, is that no one is making a profit. The site's writers are paid nothing for their words. Its founder and editor-in-chief, Chris Mitchell, receives no salary and lets his readers rummage through the hundreds of articles *Spike* has published in its seven-years of existence without paying a cent. So, is this crazy or what?

For years analysts have been wondering how and when Web publications would evolve into profit-making enterprises. Initially, many Webzines, such as *Slate* and *Salon*, and media sites, including CNN.com and BBC.com, followed the television industry's model and built their business plans around selling advertising space. However, when on-line advertising went bust more than two years ago, the sector went through a retrenchment, and many sites closed down. Increasingly, the survivors, most of which are the pampered offspring of deep-pocketed conglomerates, are trying to boost their flagging bottom lines.





Spike features interviews with some of the UK's hippest writers, including Jeff Noon (top) and Will Self.

The most obvious way for Web sites to increase revenue would be to charge for the content—just like in the print world. However, the on-line subscription model has many notable failures. *Slate*, the Microsoft-backed current affairs site, tried charging its readers but quickly abandoned the plan. The *Wall Street Journal*'s on-line outlet, www.wsj.com, boasts 626,000 paid subscribers, although company officials acknowledge that its Web operation is not yet profitable.

In Europe, on-line content appears to be an even tougher sell. A recent survey by the Internet research firm Jupiter Media Metrix found that 47 percent of European Web users would not consider paying for Internet content. Nevertheless, some Europe-based publications are finding ways to eke out a bit of revenue.

The on-line version of the venerable UK-based *Economist* magazine, is divided into free and "premium" content, with the latter available only to subscribers. The Web site of the hallowed *Times Literary Supplement* also takes a two-tier approach, allowing free viewing of the current issue, but only subscribers can peruse their voluminous archives.

Meanwhile, *Spike* remains blissfully above the fray since turning a profit has never been part of its plan. Mitchell, himself an aspiring writer, says he started the magazine in 1996 out of a frustration with his editors at a small print magazine for which he edited a column on the publishing scene. "I quickly became frustrated with the shortness of the word-counts," he says. A friend suggested he put the unexpurgated versions of his articles and interviews on-line, and a few months later *Spike* was born.

"I didn't think there would be money in it," Mitchell concedes, "but I did think there would be other people out there who would read and enjoy my work." He adds, "Back in 1996, there wasn't that much literature on the Net, especially about more leftfield authors such as Irvine Welsh (whose cult classic *Trainspotting* became a hit movie)."

Submissions to *Spike* arrive unsolicited in Mitchell's e-mail box from all over the world. "I tend not to have to edit heavily," he says, "If something really needs to be hacked around, I won't publish it."

The site's on-line forum gets updated daily, and the rest of *Spike's* departments are refreshed on a monthly basis, although Mitchell, who works at a London-based mobile phone company by day, allows that lately the schedule has slipped to quarterly.

Although free, *Spike* does attract some revenue. A few years ago, Mitchell began accepting banner ads for some sections (mostly from booksellers). He also has an agreement with on-line retailer Amazon, which pays him a small fee for every book or CD sold.

Although *Spike* attracts more than a half million page views a year, the thirty-year-old Mitchell says he has no dreams of expanding. "I've no intention of trying to turn *Spike* into a full-blown operation, Web or print," he declares. "The nightmare of trying to generate money, let alone profit from literature would kill the fun of it."

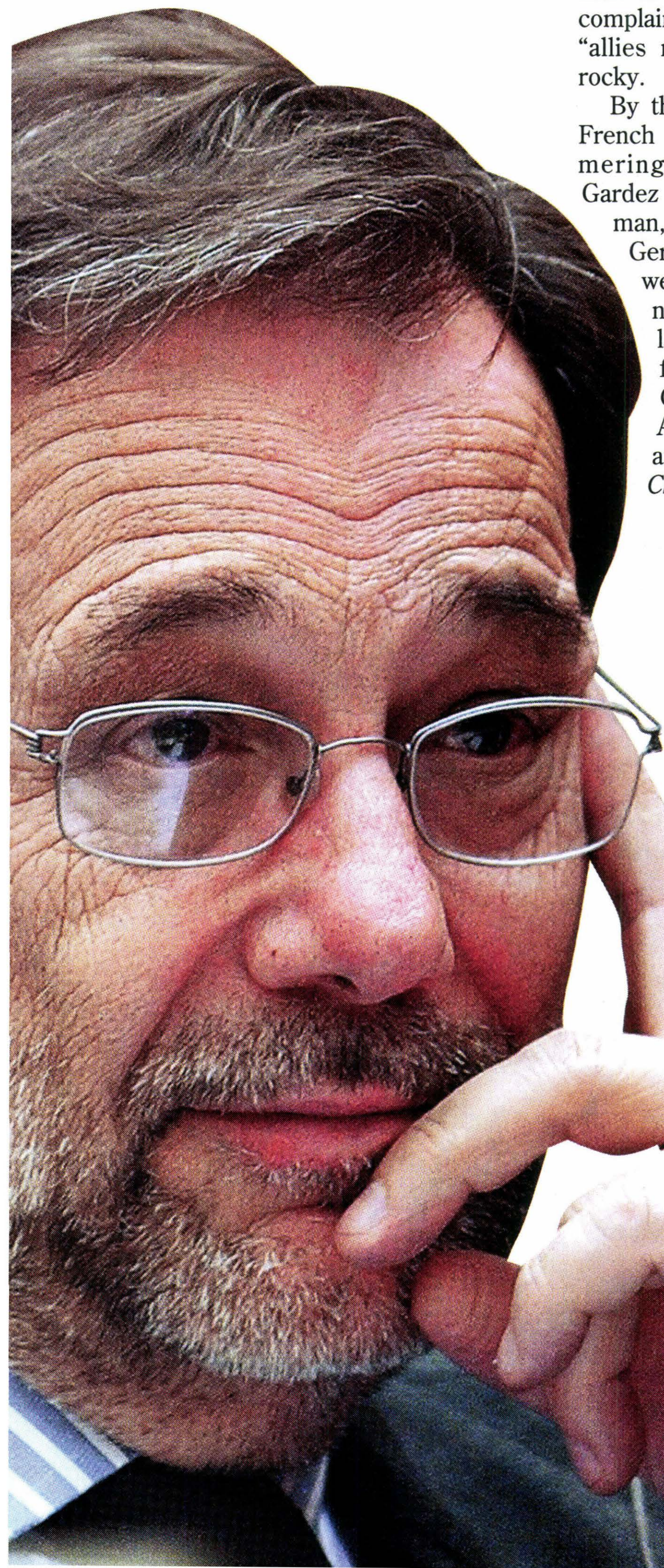
As for the future, he says, "I simply want to carry on publishing great articles from whoever cares to send them to me, whenever I have the time, girlfriends and invitations to the pub permitting."

—*Peter Gwin*

DRIFTING A

Are EU—US political relations dangerous

By Martin Walker



EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana

There's an old Irish joke about the weather that says if you don't like it, look again, and it has changed already. Relations between America and Europe are rather similar. In February, when Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine of France was denouncing President George W. Bush's "simplistic" approach to the "axis of evil" and his German counterpart Joschka Fischer was complaining that the Europeans were "allies not satellites," things looked rocky.

By the first week in March, when French Mirage warplanes were hammering Taliban positions around Gardez in support of American, German, and British troops, and two German and three Danish soldiers were killed while disarming munitions, the reality of transatlantic solidarity looked very different. The British and Germans were taking over the Afghan peacekeeping mission and the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* was demonstrating European commitment in the plainest possible way.

At the same time, German, Dutch, and Belgian aircrews were taking over the duty of guarding America's Atlantic coast, flying the AWACS airborne radar aircraft that freed US AWACS planes for the Afghan front. This was the fruit of that instinctive solidarity that had the European NATO allies declaring on the day after the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington that Article V of the NATO Treaty was now in force; an attack on one ally was an attack on them all. That was also the day that France's *Le Monde* ran the historic headline: "We are all Americans."

And yet even as the reports of the German and Danish casualties were appearing in the American media, President Bush slammed 30 percent tariffs onto imported steel, hitting European producers hard and provoking the European Union to file suit before the World Trade Organization.

The ups and downs of transatlantic relations can be dizzying to those who neglect the history of the previous fifty years. Every decade has seen dire warnings of a permanent breach. There was the Suez crisis of the 1950s and the arguments over the Vietnam War and the gold standard in the 1960s. The 1970s saw the bitter disputes over the OPEC oil crisis and the European refusal to let US aircraft land at their bases to resupply embattled Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The 1980s saw furious rows over the installation of cruise and Pershing missiles and the European role in building Soviet gas pipelines.

Sharp strategic arguments are a routine feature of the relationship and illustrate the point made by Joschka Fischer. Europeans are free and independent allies, with their own views and concerns, and not subservient satellites like the Warsaw Pact nations were to the Soviet Union. And that is one important reason why the West, as an alliance of consent, prevailed in the cold war.

However, the end of the cold war brought new doubt

whether the Western alliance could survive the shriveling of the Soviet glue that held them together. New disputes arose, over the Kyoto protocol on global warming, over the need for international courts of justice and international treaties against land mines and biological warfare. More than differences over specific policies, the arguments during the first fifteen months of the Bush administration began to suggest that Europeans and Americans might be developing different, perhaps even incompatible, views of the world and the way it should work and the policy priorities required.

Even as the Europeans began to fret about American "unilateralism," the sharp difference of view over the death penalty or hormones and genetically modified organisms in food made some wonder whether there was still any "community of values" shared by both sides of the Atlantic. Just as the Roman Empire had divided into the Eastern and Western Romans, one based in Rome and the other in Constantinople, some scholars like French philosopher

PART?

diverging?

Bernard-Henry Levi wonder whether the "West" of the cold war era might also split apart.

Maybe. But it would take a very great schism to seal a permanent rift between the world's two dominant trading blocks, each accounting for close to a quarter of the planet's GDP, and each intimately involved in the other's economic health. The US and EU not only trade with and invest in each other to the tune of $1 trillion a year, they also—uniquely—invest in each other to the point that it is hard to tell whether DaimlerChrysler, BP, and Vivendi are American or European firms. The much vaunted trade disputes cover less than 3 percent of the transatlantic economic activity.

Moreover, it is easy to mistake the critical voices of some leading Europeans—like the EU's external relations commissioner, Chris Patten, who has complained of American "hyper-unilateralism"—for a consensus that does not really exist. On the day that he announced the tariffs on steel, President Bush was heartened by the strong support of Luxemburg, the smallest state in both the NATO alliance and the fifteen-nation European Union.

"In terms of President Bush's policy, I don't see how it can be criticized by European leaders," Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg said after talks with Bush in the White House. He strongly backed President Bush's war on terrorism and against Iraq, in sharp contrast to recent criticism from larger European states like France and Germany. "It is clear to all who are not blind that Iraq is producing weapons of mass destruction, and we do not have the right to close our eyes to that. We should develop common measures to tackle this," Juncker added.

Juncker's firm support of President Bush's policies reflects divisions in European ranks, with the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy disassociating themselves from the French and German criticisms of Bush's attack on the "axis of evil" of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.

The real danger, Juncker noted, was to start linking disputes in one area like trade, where arguments were inevitable, with long-running policy debates like the use of force, the role of the United Nations, and the amount of money societies should devote to defense.

"I don't consider that we should mix the two issues. The fight against terrorism is one thing, and the trade issue is another. I am not prepared to put them at the same level," Juncker said, even though he found the Bush decision on steel unacceptable. "Even if public opinion wants to link them, I'm not prepared to do that. I will tell our public opinion there is no reason to mix the two—and most Europeans know that is so. The solidarity with America is instinctive, and heartfelt." Ⓔ

Martin Walker, based in Washington, is the chief international correspondent for United Press International and a EUROPE *contributing editor.*

Secretary of State Colin Powell

The Defense Gap

By Martin Walker

The US and the EU take different approaches to militar

President Bush's planned increase of $48 billion in the US defense budget, whose current spending of $379 billion is already twice the amount that all the European allies spend combined, will add to an awesome American military predominance. It will also widen the gap between US and European military capabilities that marked the Kosovo war, where American warplanes flew more than half the missions and dropped more than 70 percent of the "smart" munitions. The Pentagon's After-Action Report of 1999 warned that the time was coming when the Europeans "may no longer be able to operate effectively on the modern battlefield as an alliance."

That gap threatens to yawn yet further. NATO Secretary-General George Robertson warned at this year's Wehrkunde conference in Munich that transatlantic solidarity could hardly endure if "the Americans do the cutting edge while the Europeans are stuck at the bleeding edge, if the Americans fight from the sky and the Europeans fight in the mud."

When one of the German officials worried about the impact on NATO of a US "unilateral" military campaign against Iraq, Senator John McCain snapped, "I would tell our German friend to go out and buy some weapons" before questioning American policies. And with Germany spending only 1.5 percent of GDP against the 3.3 percent of the US, the Europeans were on weak ground.

Without the satellite intelligence, the "smart" weapons, the advanced anti-radar missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles that proved so useful in Afghanistan, the Europeans are paying the price of years of lower defense spending, while the US reaps its benefits.

The emergence in Afghanistan of the unmanned Predator aircraft highlighted US technological superiority on the battlefield.

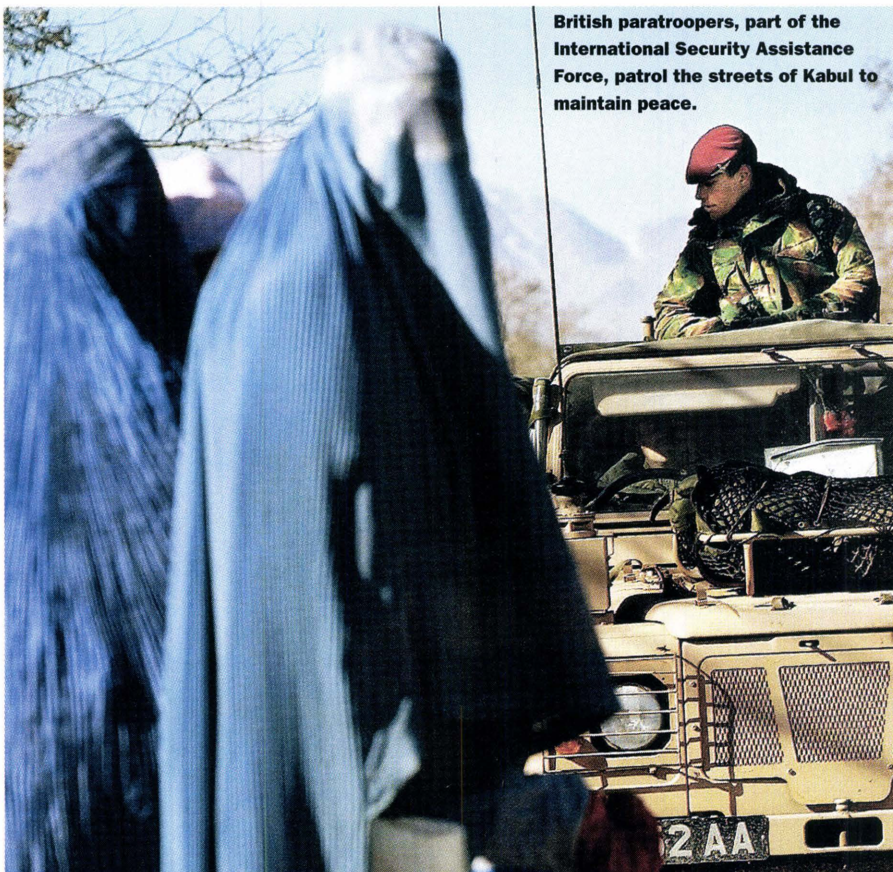
This was one of the main reasons why the Pentagon fought so hard against making the Afghan war into a NATO operation, although the allies had been quick to offer all the help they could. And yet some British SAS troops were in Afghanistan before American Special Forces. The SAS fought through the caves of Tora Bora alongside their American partners. German KSK Special Forces were in Afghanistan in November, along with Canadians and Australians. British cruise missiles slammed into Afghanistan in coordination with the American bombardment on the first night of the war. Since early October, Dutch, German, and Canadian aircrews have flown AWACS patrols over the US Atlantic coastline, while the Air Force's AWACS were busy in Afghanistan.

spending as well as strategy

The allies were useful, even without the J-STARS battlefield control aircraft and without the unmanned Predator and Global Hawk aircraft. They will be more useful still, when the French and Germans complete the transition from conscript to professional armies and when the new Airbus military transports give them serious airlift and force protection capabilities. There is a gap, but in the kinds of wars that look to be dominating NATO's future, special operations forces are going to be important, whether they wear American or any other European NATO uniform.

Above all, as former White House staffer and now National Defense University professor Hans Binnendijk points out, upgrading the allies need not be expensive. Smart munitions used to cost more than $1 million apiece. Not anymore. The most popular smart bomb of the Afghan campaign was an old-fashioned 1960s vintage dumb iron bomb, with a $30,000 kit of fins, camera, and GPS system strapped on that made it smart *and* cheap.

The costly items in defense budgets are the weapons platforms, aircraft, warships, and submarines that deliver the munitions and training people to fly and guide them. Thanks to the US paying for the technological development, closing the NATO gap in smart weapons is now a relatively cheap matter of kits, training, and software—if the Americans are prepared to share the technology with the allies whose skills they deprecate. The deal is obvious: If the Americans share more, the Europeans can spend more.



British paratroopers, part of the International Security Assistance Force, patrol the streets of Kabul to maintain peace.

There is not so much a NATO gap as a NATO gradient. The British and French are spending close to 3 percent of GDP on defense, far more than Germany, and much closer to the US proportion. The British, and not just their famous SAS, are probably closest to the Americans in skills and equipment, with the French and some German units not far behind. Dutch Marines come close, and then the gradient of capability slopes down, as it always has during NATO's fifty-four years, to the proud reservists of little Luxembourg.

There is another gap that may prove harder to close: a strategic gap about the way wars should be fought, or rather, to bow to the principles of the nineteenth-century military theorist Karl von Clausewitz, the way the military tools are used to achieve desired political goals. Again, we saw this emerge in Kosovo. US Air Force doctrine insisted on targeting Belgrade and the Serb political leadership—the head of the snake, in Pentagon parlance. The Europeans wanted to hit the Serb forces in the field in Kosovo, the ones committing the atrocities and driving the ethnic cleansing.

This strategic—or perhaps conceptual—gap emerges again in the debate on peacekeeping. The Europeans, who drew up the Petersberg Tasks that define this way of using the military, think it makes sense after a battle to use troops to help stabilize a situation so that war does not recur. The Americans, or rather the White House civilians like National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice who complain of US paratroopers escorting Bosnian kids to school, think such tasks unfit for their warriors.

The fact is that both skills, high-tech war fighting and highly skilled peacekeeping, are likely to be essential in the challenges Europe and the US face in the future. That is an argument for military division of labor rather than for the Europeans to seek to match America's global reach and power. Furthermore, thoughtful US policymakers might wonder whether an EU that decided to match its economic and technological wealth with the arsenal of a military superpower would be an altogether comfortable partner. Ⓔ

As a popular prime minister steps down, a maverick politician

GOODBYE WIM, HELLO PIM

By Roel Janssen

It was a wipeout. Voters in Rotterdam, home of the world's largest port and the Netherlands' second-largest city, dealt a stunning blow to the Dutch political establishment in the country's March 7 municipal elections. Political maverick Pim Fortuyn and his brand-new far-right party won seventeen council seats, wresting the city government from the Netherlands' biggest party, PvdA. Fortuyn's party, which seemed to materialize out of nowhere, like white puffy clouds that suddenly yield a freak spring storm, washed away the social democrats who have dominated Rotterdam politics since 1945. Hammering on the issues of safety in the streets and immigration, his followers captured more than a third of the votes. And as the results from the municipal elections were tabulated and analyzed, it became clear that Fortuyn had won more than just the Rotterdam race but had catapulted himself onto the national stage just two months ahead of the country's general elections.

Now with his emergence, the Netherlands adds its own major right-wing nationalist politician to the likes of Austria's Jörg Haider, Italy's Umberto Bossi, Belgium's Filip Dewinter, Denmark's Pia Kjaersgaard, and France's Jean-Marie Le Pen, who have staked their professional careers on nationalist and anti-foreigner issues.

With the May general elections approaching and Kok's planned retirement this spring, the Rotterdam results roiled the Netherlands' usually staid political spectrum. After almost eight years of general prosperity, political calm, and apparent satisfaction with Kok's so-called "Purple Coalition" (composed of his social democratic PvdA, the free-market VVD, and the center-left D66), a deep current of disenchantment with the government has bubbled to the surface.

As the municipal campaigns got underway in January, the main threat to the governing parties came from an unexpected source. A loosely organized group of local parties, calling itself Leefbaar Nederland (Livable Netherlands) tapped into the unexpectedly potent vein of dissatisfaction. LN blamed the poor state of the education, health, and transportation sectors; an arrogant government mentality; and the lack of solutions for ordinary people's problems squarely on the ruling parties. To this list of grievances the fledgling party

Controversial right-wing politician, Pim Fortuyn surprised the Netherlands political establishment by winning big in the March 7 municipal elections.

is stirring up the Dutch elections with extremist views

added the ultra-sensitive issue of immigration (which the mainstream parties had avoided assiduously) when it decided to name as their leader the maverick Pim Fortuyn.

Playing on the fears stirred by the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US and a general feeling of discomfort with the Netherlands' growing Islamic population, Fortuyn, whose varied career has included stints as an academic, government consultant, and columnist, argued the "backwardness" of Islam represented a threat to liberal Dutch society. He advocated a complete ban on new immigration, a radical revision of the asylum policies, and the repeal of the anti-discrimination article of the constitution (comparable to the US Constitution's first amendment).

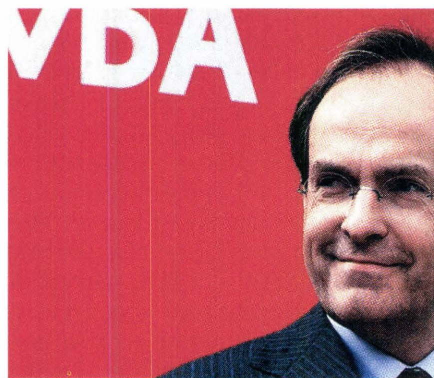
Fortuyn's xenophobic views—which coincide with the extreme rightist views of anti-immigration parties elsewhere in Europe—are far too excessive for most Dutch voters, and LN sacked him as their political leader. Leaders from the mainstream parties labeled him a racist. Undeterred, Fortuyn, with the financial backing of business associates, formed his own movement, called simply Lijst (List) Fortuyn, confident that his anti-establishment stance would attract a considerable amount of voters.

In Rotterdam, Fortuyn's victory represented his first blow to the established parties, and polls taken in mid-March forecast his Lijst Fortuyn winning enough parliamentary seats in the May 15 general elections to make him a player in determining the new governing coalition. However, from the outset it would appear that none of the established parties would include him in a governing coalition.

A demagogic but skilled public performer, Fortuyn, who previously has flirted with parties across the entire political spectrum, made no secrets of his ambitions. "I will become the next prime minister," he declared. With his aggressive one-liners, Fortuyn, who sports a shaved head and is open about his homosexuality, has become the hottest topic in the media and with the public at large.

Meanwhile, the governing parties face a difficult campaign in this month's general elections. The Rotterdam results caught them completely off guard—not coming from the coalition's main opposition, the center-right Christian Democrats (which had been excluded from power in 1994 for the first time in seventy-five years), nor from the radical left of the Socialist Party nor even the environmental Greens. The emergent nationalist movement (consisting of both the Leefbaar Nederland and Lijst Fortuyn) represents a new phenomenon in Dutch politics, and its leaders have promised the largest upheaval ever.

Meanwhile, Wim Kok, the broadly respected leader of the current government, who announced last summer he would step down as head of PvdA before the general elections, leaves the country's largest party at a difficult moment. Kok, who masterfully finessed the touchy issue of the wedding of Crown Prince Willem-Alexander with his Argentinean fiancée, Máxima Zorreguieta, soothing both strong monarchist and latent republican sentiments, continues to enjoy broad public approval. His successor as the PvdA-



Ad Melkert (pictured at top) takes over the leadership of the Netherlands' biggest political party from Prime Minister Wim Kok (above).

leader, Ad Melkert, lacks his fatherly appeal and is widely seen as a stone-faced technocrat. The other mainstream parties also have undergone leadership changes, and none of them seems to be terribly attractive to the voters. Fortuyn, with his one-liners, has captured center stage.

The Purple Coalition, however, can point to major economic successes. Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm, the most popular among the free-market politicians, has brought public finances firmly under control. Thanks to a growing economy and a spectacular fall in unemployment, Dutch prosperity has increased while lower taxes have boosted purchasing power. Increased market liberalization has further bolstered the nation's economic performance. The current government has also taken bold steps on controversial issues that would never have been approved under the Christian Democrats. Euthanasia, prostitution, and the sale of small amounts of marijuana have been legalized; gay marriages and the adoption of children by gay couples have been introduced; and the use in medical research of embryonic stem cells leftover from in vitro fertilization clinics (not from cloning) has been approved.

However, other issues have been stalemated by differences among the governing parties. The privatization of formerly state-controlled enterprises like the railways has ended in something close to a public disaster. A major reform of the social security system has stalled, particularly the disability program (the Netherlands, with a population of 16 million, counts 1 million people of working age who receive disability payments). And the continuing inflow of refugees has been addressed only reluctantly. Although the latter is a problem for Europe at large, it is acutely felt in the Netherlands. It was once considered politically incorrect to even mention the issue, but now politicians from virtually all parties recognize that the country has to change the way it handles immigration.

It is a reaction, in large part, to the astonishing rise of Pim Fortuyn. His presence in Parliament will continue to put pressure on the next government to deal with these issues. The question remains: what sort of government will arise from the elections. It might well turn out to be a "grand coalition" of PvdA, Christian Democrats, and VVD. But nothing in Dutch politics appears certain anymore, and it may be summer before the composition of the next government becomes clear. Ⓔ

Roel Janssen, based in the Hague, is a correspondent for the NRC Handelsblad and a EUROPE *contributing editor.*

A royal Dutch SEALED WITH A KISS

By Roel Janssen

With tears and kisses, the ceremony was as passionate as could be wished for. The wedding of Crown Prince Willem Alexander, the oldest son of Queen Beatrix, and his Argentinean fiancée Máxima Zorreguieta on Saturday February 2 in Amsterdam, was in every sense a royal event. It was a splendid day, and royalty from all over Europe, along with friends, family, the members of the Dutch cabinet, and various international dignitaries (including Nelson Mandela and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan) attended the consecration of the wedding. Following the ceremony, the couple took a short ride along the canals of Amsterdam in a century-old, gilded coach pulled by six horses.

Much to the relief of Prime Minister Wim Kok, who bears political responsibility for everything concerning the royal family, the show went perfectly. Rowdy dissidents were kept at bay, although they managed to hit the roof of the golden coach with a 'flour-bomb' (flour mixed with water in a plastic bag). Nevertheless, it was a dud compared to the smoke bomb that protestors threw at the same coach in 1966 when then Princess Beatrix married Claus von Amsberg, a German diplomat.

The House of Orange, as the Dutch royal family is known, has a knack for selecting controversial wedding partners. Though Prince Claus later became hugely popular, initially he was coolly received, as he had been a Wehrmacht officer during the Second World War.

His son, Prince Willem-Alexander, the heir to the throne, had been observed with several girlfriends over the years, but they never seemed to qualify for a royal marriage. Then, in 1999, at the age of thirty-three, he met the energetic Argentinean Máxima, who worked as a banker in New York. It was reportedly a *flechazo*—love at first sight.

There was a catch though. Jorgé Zorreguieta, Máxima's father, had been the secretary of agriculture during the regime of General Jorgé Rafael Videla in Argentina. Though a civilian, he was tainted by his association with the military dictatorship that killed an estimated 10,000–15,000 thousand people during the "dirty war" that raged in Argentina from 1976 until 1983.

For a year and a half, debates about the princely love affair abounded. Máxima's father and his presence at a future wedding became favorite talk show topics. A former Dutch diplomat tried to indict Zorreguieta for violations of human rights, but judges dismissed the case.

Meanwhile, Máxima moved from New York to Brussels, began Dutch language lessons, and embarked on a crash course in the singularities of Dutch society. The government sent a renowned historian on a secret mission to Buenos Aires to dig into Zorreguieta's role in the military regime. Subsequent confidential diplomatic maneuverings resulted in a public announcement by Zorreguieta that he and his wife would not attend the wedding. Although Máx-

wedding goes off without a hitch

Dutch Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and his Argentinean bride, Máxima Zorreguieta, kiss on the balcony of the royal palace after their wedding.

ima distanced herself from the cruelties of the military, she defended her father's role in the regime. Nevertheless, the way was cleared for the official announcement of engagement on March 30, 2001.

Parliament, which by Dutch law had to formally approve the engagement (without it Willem-Alexander would lose his right to the throne), was all too happy to consent. Dutch politicians had long noted that Máxima enjoyed huge popularity; furthermore, professing republicanism is definitely detrimental to one's political career in the Netherlands. The House of Orange, though formally powerless, enjoys vast influence as a symbol of national unity.

If any objections persisted, Máxima's flair conquered the last doubters. She and Willem-Alexander toured the country, and she quickly became the most popular member of the royal family, more popular even than the queen. She turned out to be a natural talent with the public, mastering the Dutch language (albeit with a cute accent), and mixing genuine interest and intelligence with a radiant personality, charm, and Latin good looks. The Netherlands was immersed in *Maximania.*

The royal wedding unfolded as the high point of a well-designed public relations strategy. After a week of parties, dinners, concerts, and a pop music concert in the country's largest sports arena, the fairy tale of the girl from the Argentine Pampas marrying her prince finally became a reality. Máxima, dressed in a wedding gown designed by Valentino, and Willem-Alexander, attired in his Royal Navy uniform, were married in the Nieuwe Kerk next to the Dam Palace in Amsterdam. Toward the end of the ceremony, the tango *Adiós Nonino* was played. With the moving tones of the *bandoneón*, the small Argentinean accordion, Máxima shed tears that flecked her cheeks. It was deeply emotional, an intimate moment that some interpreted as an expression of her dedication both to her father and to her new life as a princess. Later, after the ride in the gilded coach, the couple appeared on the balcony of the Dam Palace. And there, finally, they kissed each other in public—once, twice, with profound sensuality, again and again. Ⓔ

The Hague Revisited

International enclave

What do the glamorous Princess Máxima and the notorious Slobodan Milosevic have in common: They both now reside in the Hague. Albeit the locals are much happier with the fair princess's arrival following her storybook marriage to Prince Willem-Alexander than with the former Yugoslav strongman's extradition to face charges in the International Court of Justice. Nevertheless, both have raised the profile of the Netherlands' third-largest city.

The Milosevic trial, currently underway in the United Nations-backed ICJ, is sure to keep the Hague in the international spotlight for some time, but the city, which is also home to the government and the royal family (although Amsterdam, forty miles to the north, is the official capital), is becoming a major center for international organizations.

The Hague has long cultivated its position as the world's international legal capital. In 1945, the International Court of Justice was based in the stately Vredespaleis (or Peace Palace) built in the first decade of the twentieth century with a gift from American industrialist Andrew Carnegie. The same building now hosts the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the Special US-Iran Claims Tribunal. Other major headquarters based in the Hague include the Office for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the European Patent Office, and Europol, the European police force. Eurojust, the newly created European prosecutor's office, may soon join them as will the International Criminal Court, which was created in 1998 and awaits the required number of countries to ratify its treaty.

These international and European institutions have changed the Hague for the better. Once known as a dull town of public servants, it has become livelier over the past decade, although it remains pleasantly quieter than Amsterdam or Rotterdam. Diplomats, lawyers, and other professionals have flocked to the town, boosting its population to about 400,000 and improving the quality and variety of its shops and restaurants.

The world's largest collection of Piet Mondrian's paintings, including many of his rare early works, is housed in the Gemeentemuseum.

The Yugoslavia Tribunal and the Peace Palace have become tourist attractions, but the city itself has much to offer beyond them. Two of its museums rank among the best in the Netherlands. The modern art Gemeentemuseum boasts the world's largest collection of Piet Mondrian's paintings, and the intimate Maurits Huis, a seventeenth-century mansion, features a world-class array of classic Dutch masters. The Hague is also the home of the Netherlands Dance Theater, the country's famous ballet group.

Right next to the Maurits Huis is the Torentje (Little Tower), where the prime minister has his office. It is also adjacent to the Binnenhof, the historic complex of the Knight's Hall and former palaces of the Princes of Orange, which now are used for ceremonial events, the prime minister's staff offices, the cabinet meeting room, and the hall where Parliament's upper chamber convenes. The lower chamber meets in newly constructed

enjoys a growing profile

The Hague's Peace Palace was built with funds donated by American industrialist Andrew Carnegie.

buildings in the same complex. All are open to visitors.

The Hague also plays an important role as the keeper of the royal family's legacy. The House of Orange descended from the *stadhouders*, who were the princes that occupied the highest military ranks in what was known as the Republic of the Seven United Provinces (1568–1795). They built numerous palaces in the area, and many of these remain in use by Queen Beatrix and her family. The queen herself lives in the Huis ten Bosch and maintains an office in the Noordeinde Palace. Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Máxima will live on the estate De Horsten, just outside the Hague.

Other palaces have been transformed into public spaces. The former Lange Voorhout Palace, located on one of Europe's most elegant avenues, has been transformed into a stylish museum. A former royal beach house in nearby Scheveningen was converted into the small private museum Beelden aan Zee, which holds a precious sculpture collection.

Just beyond the Hague city limits the seaside resort Scheveningen teems with casinos, discos, and beach life. Beyond the glitz, however, this little seaside village has maintained a strong traditional fishing community, although the number of yachts moored in its marina continues to increase. Scheveningen's harbor combines that rare flavor of salty air, the buzzing activities of the local fishing fleet, and the leisure atmosphere of the amateur sailors, and of course, it boasts some excellent seafood restaurants.

Just outside the Hague, the resort village of Scheveningen offers a lively beach and nightlife scene.

Where hard-core city folks in Amsterdam and Rotterdam might refer to the Hague as sleepy, the Hague's citizens argue that one man's sleepy is another's serene. Furthermore, they add, their town is both cleaner and greener than those big Dutch metropolises. Indeed, the Hague and its immediate surroundings offer numerous natural attractions, including large swathes of protected parklands and dunes that offer countless outdoor activities year-round.

However, don't be fooled. The Hague isn't all nature hikes and bird-watching. It has increasingly become an A-list destination for Europe's glitterati, and with the rising popularity of the House of Orange after the royal marriage of Willem-Alexander and Máxima, it could very well become a center of European society life, as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ⓔ

—Roel Janssen

The Bertelsmann Empire

By Terry Martin

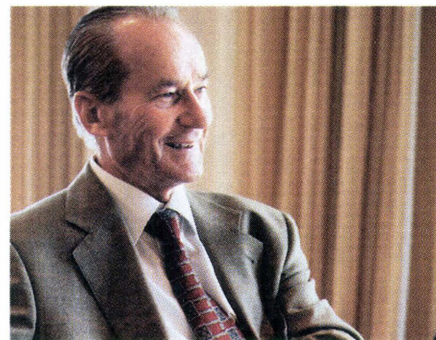
German media giant is looking for investments as it prepares to go public

Imagine you're the boss of a global media empire. The dotcoms have bombed, the economy has stumbled, and advertising revenues are anemic. What do you do? Well, if you're Thomas Middelhoff, CEO of Bertelsmann, you go on a shopping spree. Something has to be done with those excess billions (from cashing in a "put" option on half of AOL Europe). The largesse can't be distributed to free-floating Bertelsmann shareholders because there aren't any; the company isn't listed—yet. So, with bargains aplenty on the media market and an initial public offering in the offing, everything points to a flashy acquisition or two. In Bertelsmann's situation, "what to do?" becomes a question of "what to buy?"

Despite his company's cash-heavy swagger, Middelhoff insists that Bertelsmann should not be regarded as the industry's 600-pound media gorilla. "Just to be the biggest is not a strategic goal," he says. Ranked third or fourth in lists of global media giants, Bertelsmann provides healthy competition for the more diversified behemoths of AOL Time Warner and Disney. The German-based group, which employs 82,000 people in fifty-six countries, boasts revenues of $17.7 billion. Not bad, considering that Bertelsmann is a privately held company.

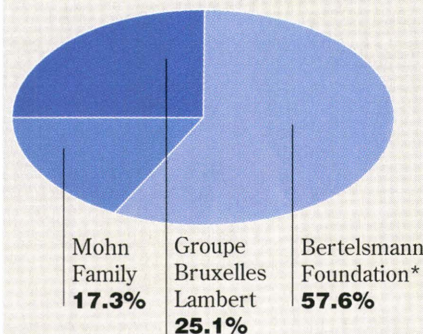
Don't be embarrassed if you've never heard of Bertelsmann. The company has traditionally cultivated a low profile. Consumers are far more likely to recognize some of the 300 brands controlled by Bertelsmann. Names like Random-House, the world's biggest book publisher, or BMG Entertainment, the world's fifth-largest music distributor. Bertelsmann also owns the controlling interest in RTL, Europe's largest television broadcaster. If you buy a book or magazine in the United States or tune into a commercial television or radio broadcast in Europe, chances are you're consuming a Bertelsmann product.

The company has come a long way since 1835, when it started out publishing Christian hymnals. Founded by Carl Bertelsmann in Gütersloh (near Hanover), the firm branched out quickly into newspaper publishing and general literature. Within a couple of

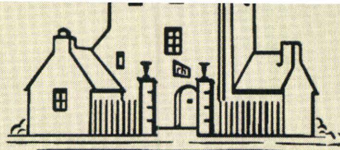


Reinhard Mohn, an heir of the Bertelsmann founder, is one of Germany's five richest men.

A Non-Public Stock Corporation...for Now

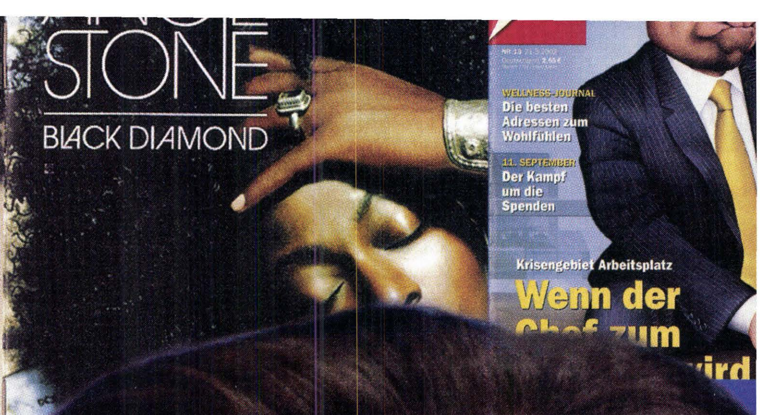


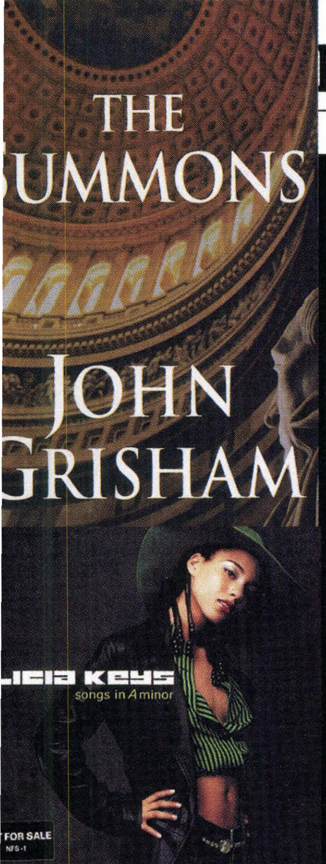
*Bertelsmann has signed an agreement to buy back shares held by the Zeit Foundation.



RANDOM HOUSE

BERTELSMANN



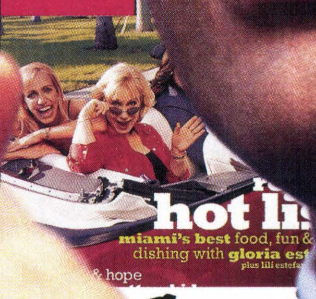


BMG
BERTELSMANN

Thomas Middelhoff, CEO of the global media giant, guided Bertelsmann into several early Internet investments, including AOL.

DANIELLE STEEL

rosie



BUSINESS

Thomas Middelhoff Takes Off

Other media magnates are more famous, but few are more successful. Thomas Middelhoff, chairman and CEO of Bertelsmann AG, has not only managed to keep his company afloat during this recession, he has amassed a multibillion-dollar surplus in the process, and in doing so, he has solidified his reputation as a master strategist.

At forty-nine, Middelhoff can already look back on a spectacular career, one shaped by the demands of cultural and technological convergence. Born in Düsseldorf, Thomas Middelhoff earned an MBA at the University of Münster, where he spent the early 1980s doing research for the Institute of Marketing. He quickly put his education to work in the service of his parents' textile company. Heading up the sales and marketing department, Middelhoff oversaw the development of the firm's production plants in Greece and the Far East. His fascination with foreign lands had taken root.

While still at university, Middelhoff began pondering the possibilities of an Internet revolution. He wrote a doctoral thesis on "Information Technologies and New Media" with an emphasis on "planning." His choice of topic seemed somewhat spurious at the time but in retrospect looks prescient. While the rest of the world was catching up with Thomas Middelhoff's cyber vision, he used the time to hone his management skills and gain hands-on experience with more traditional media.

The mid-1980s saw Middelhoff working his way through the ranks of Germany's graphics industry, finally taking over the management of the Mohndruck company in Gütersloh in 1989. One year later, he was still in tiny Gütersloh but now sitting eagerly on the board of Bertelsmann's newly created Industry Division. The thirty-seven-year-old had found the platform for his ambitions.

It took just four years for Middelhoff to be recruited onto the Bertelsmann's executive board. He was appointed head of corporate development and put in charge of coordinating the company's multimedia business, a sector the board considered to be of "secondary importance" at the time. Middelhoff saw things differently. He set off on a targeted multimedia acquisition tour, buying up holdings in AOL in the US—a move that would yield enormous profits within a few years.

By 1997, it became clear that Thomas Middelhoff would be the man to lead Bertelsmann into a new dimension. After being appointed chairman and CEO in 1998, he set about overhauling the company's corporate structure. He pushed through the decision to run the company's global book publishing businesses from New York under the Random House umbrella. That move seemed revolutionary from a German perspective. Today, Middelhoff spends half his working life in the United States. The *Financial Times* quoted him as calling himself "an American with a German passport."

Middelhoff's strength lies in his ability to combine management acumen with marketing instinct. Keeping a finger on the consumer's pulse while monitoring the technological beat, he stays tuned to the "what" and "how" of content uptake. When the signals suggest a market shift, he acts. Yet he does nothing without considering alternate scenarios and observing the principles of risk management. Middelhoff spent six years on the board of AOL and helped build AOL Europe from the ground up. But when the time came to divest, he showed no remorse. Nor did he flinch in selling off Bertelsmann's pay-television interests in Germany. His competitors now wish they had done the same.

Great strategic leaders are expected to know two things above all: when to get in and when to get out. Thomas Middelhoff has proven he knows both. Given his record at Bertelsmann so far, Middelhoff has a good chance of living up to the headline on his corporate bio: "Man for the Future."

—*Terry Martin*

Middelhoff, who spends half his time in New York, has called himself "an American with a German passport."

decades Bertelsmann was publishing books by Lord Byron and the Brothers Grimm. The company started its first book club in 1950 and began pressing LP records a few years later. During the next decade, the firm expanded into other European markets, and in the 1970s, Bertelsmann came to the US with the purchase of Arista records and the Parents Magazine group. In 1986, the growing German company swallowed the rest of RCA Records and snapped up Doubleday publishing. More buyouts followed, culminating in the purchase of Random House in 1998. Bertelsmann now does two-thirds of its business outside of Germany.

The group's ownership is something of a curiosity. Nearly 60 percent is owned by a private foundation set up by the Mohn family (descendents of the founder), who also own 17 percent outright. (Not surprisingly, Reinhard Mohn is one of Germany's five richest men.) A group of Belgian investors known as Groupe Bruxelles Lambert (GBL) controls 25.1 percent of Bertelsmann, and they have a considerable say in the way the company operates. GBL gained its position by agreeing to sell Bertelsmann its stake in the broadcaster RTL. The Belgians went along with that deal only on the condition that Bertelsmann launch itself on the stock market as early as 2005.

So, Bertelsmann is out to raise its profile in preparation for an earth-shaking IPO. And it's in an excellent position for doing that. The company is awash in cash from selling back its 49 percent stake in AOL Europe. That deal (negotiated at the height of the dot-com boom) gives Bertelsmann $6 billion to finance acquisitions worldwide. Having just launched a huge printing operation in China, Middelhoff told Germany's *Die Zeit* newspaper that the company is considering a range of options. "We're thinking about acquisitions in the American magazine market. We also think we'll soon be able to extend our interests in television broadcasters in Europe. The time for that is good."

One might surmise that the pressure of going public is compromising Middelhoff's risk-taking potential and pushing the company toward more conservative media. At the same time, it's worth noting that Bertelsmann's CEO is among the Internet's biggest defenders and a true believer in peer-to-peer model, which is what music sharing services like Napster are based on. Indeed, Bertelsmann raised eyebrows when it broke ranks with its fellow recording industry companies, which had filed suit in the US to shut down Napster, and formed an alliance with the dot-com upstart. A former Bertelsmann executive took over as Napster's CEO last summer.

Thomas Middelhoff may have been born and bred in the boardroom, but he's a CEO who knows where consumers, content, and technology meet, and as he showed with the Napster deal, he could still be good for a few surprises.

Terry Martin, based in Berlin, is a EUROPE *contributing editor.*

Kirch's Calamity

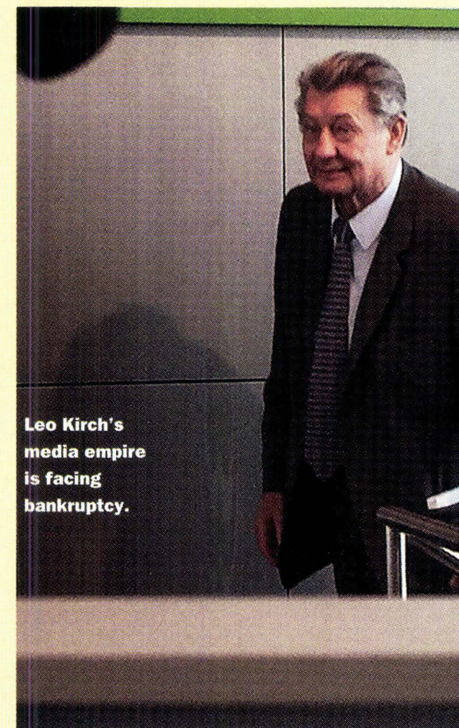
While Bertelsmann decides what it should buy, another German media group, Kirch, is being pressured to sell. Kirch has accumulated massive debts over the past years, and its creditors want their money back. Through a series of expensive acquisitions and a headlong rush into pay television, Kirch piled up a $5.2 billion mountain of debt by the end of February. The group's lenders started getting nervous when they saw that several of Kirch's loans were coming due this year around the same time. With rumors circulating of a cash crunch at Kirch, no one wanted to be last in line to get paid.

Kirch is run imperiously by its founder, Leo Kirch, whose exploits have strained the resources of the Bayerische Landesbank (State Bank of Bavaria) in Munich where the group has its headquarters. The albatross around Leo Kirch's neck is the money-losing pay-television channel Premiere. Rupert Murdoch, the London-based media tycoon (whose properties include Fox Broadcasting, BskyB, *New York Post*) owns 22 percent of Premiere and he could exercise a put option on his shares in October, forcing Kirch to buy back Murdoch's stake for $1.5 billion—money Kirch does not have. By early March speculation was rife that Murdoch might try to either take over all of Premiere or get his hands on other Kirch assets. Those assets include a 40 percent stake in the publishing giant Axel Springer, which owns Germany's (and Europe's) biggest-selling tabloid *Bild*.

Kirch has other worries, too. The group's free-to-air television stations (Sat.1, ProSieben, Kabel 1, and N24) saw their profits fall by half last year. Meanwhile, Kirch's powerful film rights unit, which had been considered the group's healthiest, ended the third quarter with a loss. Rounding out the picture, Kirch's majority stake in SLEC—which holds the commercial rights to Formula One racing—is under threat. Fans resent having to pay to watch the races on television, and many are refusing, which puts off sponsors. The car makers who participate in Formula One are threatening to launch a competing championship when their contract ends in 2007.

Germany's banks, which don't want to see their investment come to nothing, may well save Kirch from bankruptcy. But few believe the group will survive with all its pieces intact. Some media analysts have compared Kirch to Enron, suggesting the group would already have gone bust if it were an American company. The fact that it hasn't is a sign that Germany's cozy corporate culture is alive and well.

—Terry Martin


Leo Kirch's media empire is facing bankruptcy.

PUBLISHING

So You Want to Be a Publisher

By Mike Burns

Small Irish imprint has big book dreams

EUROPE *contributing editor Mike Burns has spent most of his life as a newspaperman and radio-television broadcaster in Ireland. Last year, he became a first-time book publisher. We asked him to share his experience.*

We are not Random House—yet. However, while MIS Books remains a small publisher of directories and similar reference works, we are much older and certainly much wiser after our first tentative steps into the world of "real books" publishing. Still an acorn but hoping for oak-tree growth in the future.

Like most such ventures in Ireland, it began over a pint of the "black stuff" (Guinness) with an old banking friend, who is also an artist and a well-loved raconteur. "I've written a book," Bob Ryan said, "and I wondered if you would mind casting an eye over it to see if it has potential."

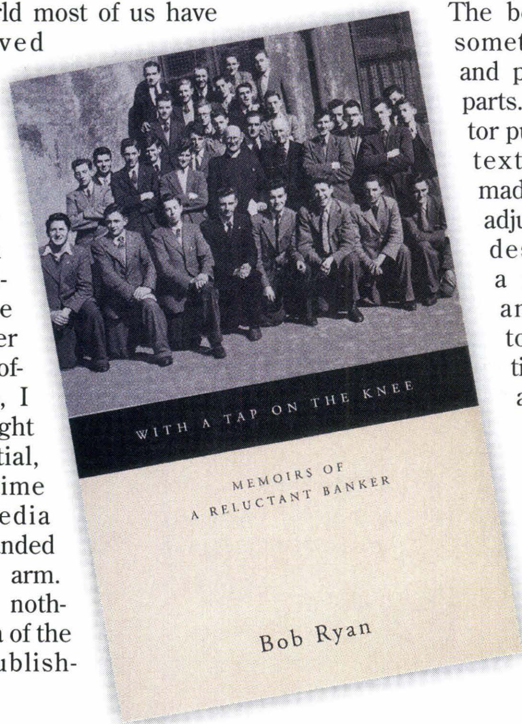
One must explain that most Irish people whom you meet in pubs will bore you with all the nitty-gritty details of the book they are writing/have written/are about to write. However, the "great novel" rarely if every appears. Nearly all such ventures perish within the walls and smoke of the bar. Generally, it is those Irish who don't frequent bars—and there are many such—who slog away in the silence of their homes or offices or attics and turn out books of generally excellent quality and with alarming frequency.

So I approached Bob Ryan's typescript with a certain degree of reserve and much skepticism. Firstly, for one who is barely literate and certainly not numerate, a book on banking and the world of high finance didn't present what one might term an entertaining prospect. But he was a friend, I had been a frequent listener to his spin on banking lore, and I felt I owed him one.

Two nights later, after much laughter, I realized this was a banking book with a difference—a collection of humorous and other stories detailing the life and times of someone who had never disguised the fact that he was, at best, a reluctant banker.

His memoirs, bearing the intriguing title *With A Tap On The Knee*, were *fun*, offering insight into the hidden but Byzantine world most of us have only observed from the wrong side of the bank manager's desk.

Another conversation with Bob ensued, this time over the other black stuff (coffee). My wife, I told him, thought it had potential, and it was time our little media company expanded its publishing arm. But we knew nothing of this area of the business—publishing his memoir would present a new learning curve for us all, if he agreed. He did. The great adventure was underway. But as a paperback or a hardcover? What body typeface? How many copies? What price? Could we afford to do it?



After more discussions, we decided it had to be a hardback, with appropriate pricing. Further conversations followed with our printers, who also were taking a leap in the dark but liked the idea and came up with estimates for both printing and binding. (Perhaps because we were so raw we didn't even seek alternative tenders!)

But before proceeding, other matters had to be addressed. The book was too long, sometimes repetitious, and possibly libelous in parts. A professional editor put her stamp on the text, a libel lawyer made a few significant adjustments, an artist-designer produced a fine dust jacket and relevant photographs, and captions were written—and checked.

Four months later, the book was a reality, launched with due pomp and ceremony by a mutual friend and eminent senator from the Irish Parlia-

ment. It got rave reviews in the main newspapers and on radio and television and did extremely well in the pre-Christmas market against dozens of opposing titles. We paid our bills, even made a small profit (and the book is still selling well), and were up and running with our MIS Books imprint and our appropriate white feather logo (actually, it is the outline of a quill).

That was in 2001. This year we have five titles in stock.

But for anyone wishing to emulate our experience, I offer a few words of advice. Books, I'm told, are described as "properties." So, first of all, make sure you get a professional editor to assess the "property" on offer. Get a libel lawyer to weed out the quirky bits (these even occur, I'm told, in works of fiction that sail too close to real people and situations, and disclaimers are of questionable value in the courts).

Then put the finished work on a computer disk for the printers—typescripts lead to costly typesetting. Proofread with care. A second or even third pair of eyes will spot mistakes that have escaped even the professional reader.

ISBN numbers, which are essential in identifying the work and in the subsequent ordering and purchasing process, are not overly costly. And with your ISBN numbers comes a pricing bar code (in our innocence, we put the bar code on the inside of the dust cover—a major faux pas. The bar code must be on the back cover to allow easy pricing at the checkout point in stores).

Then comes the launch, with—hopefully—all the attendant publicity (we did our own public relations, but most large publishers either have in-house PR specialists or hire outside firms), interviews with the author, and those much overworked words "photo opportunities" for newspapers and magazines. Radio and television interviews are vital in "spreading the word," so a round of the talk show and arts program studios is leg-wearying but highly recommended.

We picked a Dublin club with a fine library and literary tradition for our first launch: a suitable location, with ample facilities for entertaining guests with a glass of good wine and finger food, providing a center point to display the book and the author to sign copies—and, of course, an essential pay point.

Books for review should be sent out as early as possible. Reviewers, I've discovered, like to turn up at the launch with *their* copies in hand and display their erudition before those who haven't yet had the opportunity to read the just purchased book.

It's also essential that a sufficient number of copies be in the bookstores when the reviews appear. This means dealing with the larger distributors—a costly exercise. Distributors in Ireland take 50 percent of the cover price, sometimes higher, so the numbers of books you can sell at the launch or launches or through direct ordering means more money in the till. (We had two launches, one in Dublin and one in the author's home city, Cork)

Then comes the waiting—and it is a wait! Frequent visits to the larger stores indicate that distributors can be slow in servicing the supply chain, so the odd "reminder note" is helpful. And having the books in a prominent in-store position is vital. If it can't be seen, it doesn't sell. So, although it might induce nightmares for cataloguers, transfer one or more books to the most visible selling point.

Finally, you wait for payment. Most distributors, apart from taking half the cover price, also demand a ninety-day sale or return. So, if you're waiting for payment to clear your invoices, be patient.

And that's it. Still feel like becoming a publisher?

Mike Burns, based in Dublin, is a EUROPE *contributing editor and the founder of MIS Books.*

Getting Irish Senator Maurice Manning (right) to host a launch party in Dublin for Bob Ryan's memoir helped raise the book's profile heading into the Christmas shopping season.

PUBLISHING

The Memoir Industry

By Alan Osborn

Does turning politics into prose reap profits?

Margaret Thatcher has announced that for health reasons she will make no more public speeches, but as if to show that this will not silence her, she has been writing some quite shocking things about Europe. Most of the bad things that have happened in the world have come from mainland Europe, says the former British prime minister, and Britain should begin pulling out of the "fundamentally unreformable" EU. These views, never before expressed with such explosive force, are contained in *Statecraft*, a new volume of Lady Thatcher's memoirs. They offer a striking example of how a controversial politician, long out of power, can use the power of a book to recapture the world's attention.

People write books for many different reasons. They may feel that writing is simply what they are meant to do. They may want to record a protagonist's view of a particular event or achievement. They may simply want to make money.

Politicians are different again. Politicians, especially those at the top, attach importance to what posterity makes of them and memoirs are a way of making sure the record is a favorable one. But unless they happen to be by an outstanding personality like Margaret Thatcher, most politicians' memoirs are usually boring to people outside politics. Few rise to such majestic heights as Sir Winston Churchill whose memoirs won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Sir John Nott, who was the British defense secretary in the Thatcher government at the time of the Falklands War, has just published in the UK his memoirs of that time. What made him devote so much time and effort to this enterprise?

The main impulse, he told *EUROPE*, was reading the memoirs of his great-great-grandfather and other relatives. "I decided I really wanted something like that for my own grandchildren. I started off with that idea—I suppose not for widespread posterity but for that immortality which resides in the memories of one's descendants," Sir John said.

Whatever the motives, Sir John's book touches on one of the chief fascinations of political memoirs, namely what they tell us about what really happened at the time. This same pleasure comes from reading *The Plumb Line*, the autobiography of Lord Plumb who rose from being a farm-boy to president of the European Parliament. Henry Plumb led the British Conservatives in the parliament at the time when Margaret Thatcher was on the warpath over Europe. He tells how at an official government reception Thatcher introduced him to the King of Spain as "Lord Plumb, who was for many years our farmers' leader"—all his achievements in Europe dismissed as simply not worth mentioning.

Political memoirs have existed for as long as we have had politicians—even Julius Caesar wrote them. The nineteenth century was especially productive, when even minor statesmen wrote memoirs and diaries that enjoyed wide circulation. The racy letters, diaries, and memoirs of the aristocrat Sir Charles Greville, whose position as clerk to the Privy Council 1821–59 brought him into contact with all the leading political people of the time, have contributed greatly to our understanding of the era's politics although he never held major office.

Political memoirs are out of fashion today. One reason may be that political journalists and biographers have become much less deferential in their approach to their subjects so that the secrets are already out. Nevertheless, there remains a thriving niche business, and an outstanding example in London is Politicos—a specialist political bookshop, publisher, and Internet bookseller created five years ago that now sells 20 percent or more of the entire print run of a political book.

EUROPE asked Sean Magee, director of publishing at Politicos, whether these books made money. "It depends," he said. "A high-profile politician who has a good story to sell—which means there's going to be money in the serial—they probably will." Margaret Thatcher's memoirs secured for her a record million-dollar advance and were bought by thousands of people with no direct interest in politics.

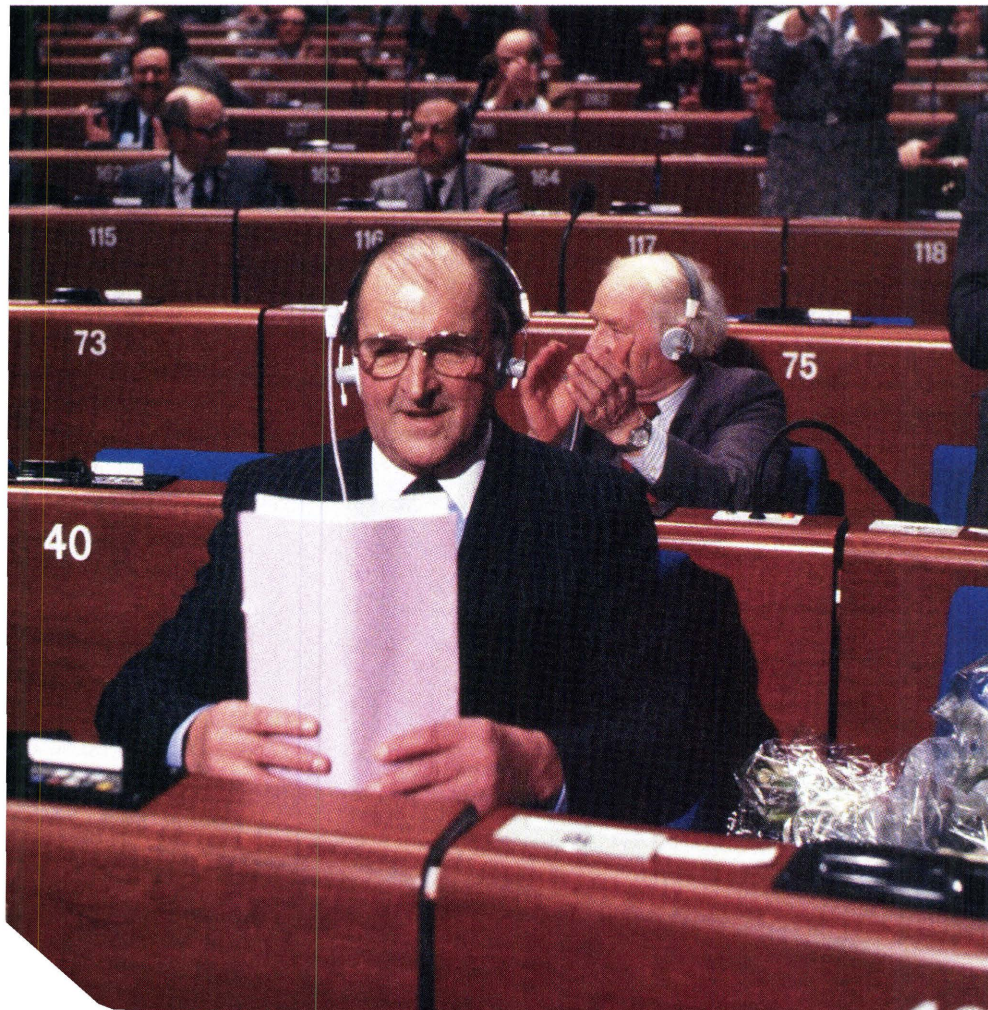
Few politicians however write purely and simply for the money. Their purpose is usually historical self-aggrandizement and their method is selective.

Former British prime ministers John Major and Margaret Thatcher have both published best-selling memoirs. Lady Thatcher has just released her third book.

François Mitterrand, the former French president, wrote poetically about his inner life, for instance, but left out aspects of his wartime behavior that showed him in a less than heroic light.

Very few volumes of political memoir have left their mark on history, but they can nevertheless contain what Magee calls "killer facts" that can have considerable news value and make them valuable newspaper serialization properties. Of course, this often goes beyond the political value of the book and touches on the human aspects, and this is particularly true perhaps when it comes to the Clintons.

Lord Plumb, a former president of the European Parliament, details his political career in his recently published, *The Plumb Line*.



Hillary Clinton's book will be published in the UK in a year's time and this will be a "tremendous" event says Peter Just, Politicos bookshop manager. Celia Kant, editor at Headline, the publisher that is reported to have paid a record advance for the former first lady's book, says, "She's shown herself to be tough in her own right, and there's also an idea that she could be the first female president of the US. People are always interested in that sort of woman." The same fascination—if for different reasons—will undoubtedly be shown in Bill Clinton's memoirs when they arrive.

Just occasionally, a memoir can do a lot more than create a short-lived sensation, however. A recent example is the book *Over Here* by Raymond Seitz, the US ambassador to Britain during the early 1990s, which, from a unique standpoint, offered important insights into transatlantic relations and is widely held to have created a better understanding between the two countries.

Alan Osborn, a contributing editor to EUROPE, *covers Luxembourg.*

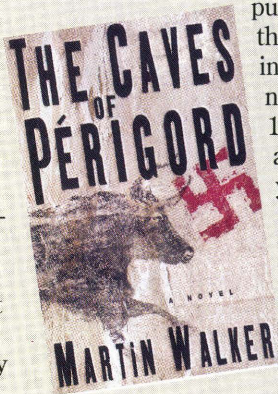
Martin Walker

Veteran journalist publishes a new novel

Martin Walker, a EUROPE *contributing editor and the chief international correspondent for United Press International, was interviewed by* EUROPE *editor-in-chief Robert J. Guttman about his newest novel,* The Caves of Périgord. *Walker, author of ten books—three novels and seven non-fiction books, including a history of the cold war—was a reporter based in Brussels, Moscow, and Washington for the* Guardian *newspaper for more than two decades. A native of the United Kingdom, Walker presents a fascinating novel spanning the entire history of Europe.*

Were you at the caves of Périgord when you got the idea to write this book?

I was living at my house in France, in the Périgord, and went to the caves—not for the first time—and I fell in love with them all over again and became fascinated more and more by not just the Lascaux Caves, but by the other caves you can visit there and the constant discovery of new caves. There was one that was discovered just about five minutes from my house only last year, and so I began to read up on everything I could. And I went to museums, and I talked to the experts at the museum at Les Eyzies, which is the world center of prehistoric studies and, at the same time, I got to know my French neighbors. A lot of the older ones had been in the Resistance or remembered it, and their kids were brought up on stories of the Resistance, and they showed me their archives and brought out their old World War II clothes, the wooden shoes that they had to make because there was a shortage of shoes, their ration books, old newspapers. Before I knew where I was, I was suddenly in my mind putting together these two stories in one little corner of Europe 17,000 years ago and fifty-five years ago.



What is the overall theme of *The Caves of Périgord?*

One thing that I was trying to say was the extraordinary continuity that you get in a continent that is as old as Europe. This valley of the river Vézère—the French call it the "Valley of Mankind"—it is the place on earth where we have the proof of the longest continuous human existence. Humans have lived there for 40,000 years nonstop, and what I am trying to point out here is constant continuities between the Périgord of 17,000 years ago, the Périgord of fifty years ago, and the Périgord of today; the same families, the same bloodlines, and equally with the British. My modern day character—my hero—is the son of one of the Brits who fought with the French Resistance during World War II.

Will this appeal to an American audience? All of your characters, except for "Lydia," are European. Do you think Americans are going to relate to this?

I hope so. After all, the heroine is an American and the Americans were deeply involved in the liberation of France in 1944. France would not have been liberated without the Americans.

Do you think, in future novels, we are going to see the detective team of "Lydia," your American heroine, and her British boyfriend, "Manners," reappearing?

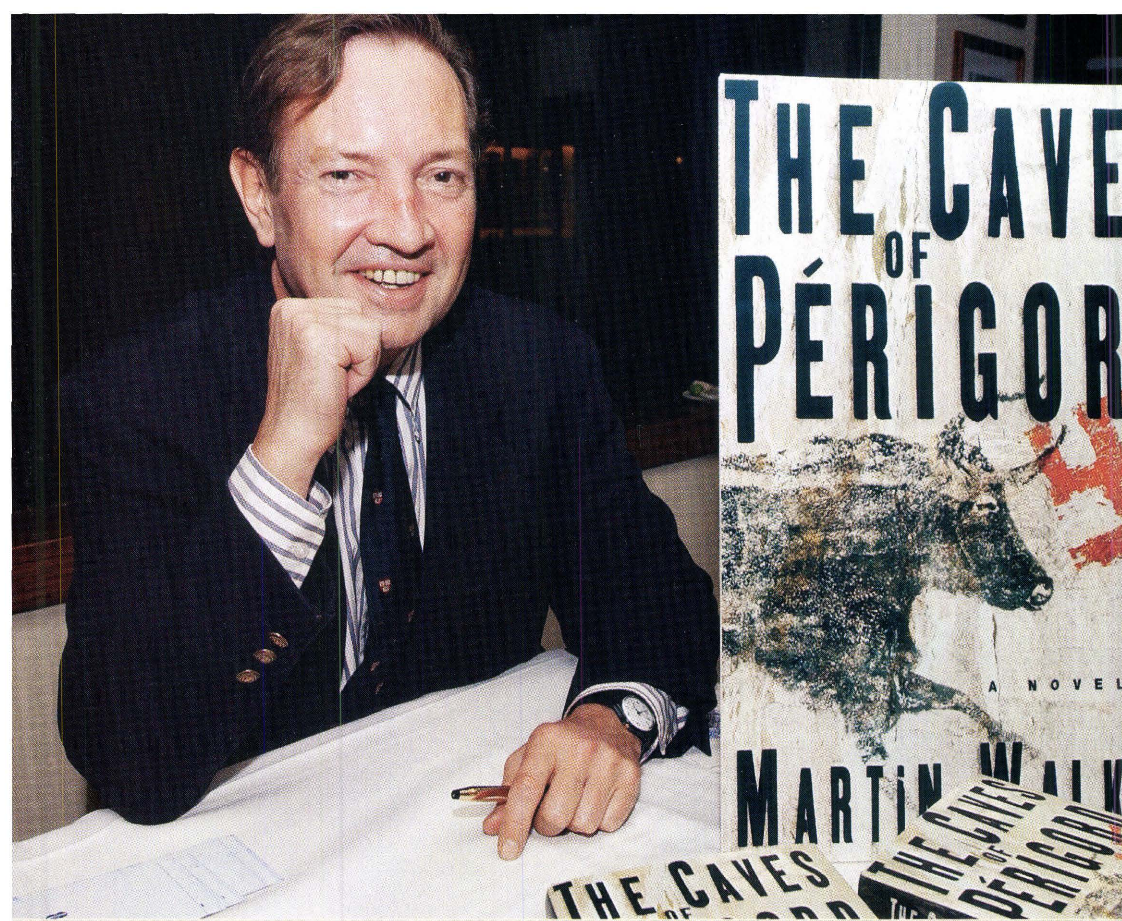
I don't know. It depends how good they are and how successful the book is. I am writing another novel now about the Armenian massacres of 1915, and the current great game over oil in the Caspian. There will be a "Manners" in that—another British hero—but again there is going to be an American heroine involved as well, but not necessarily the same two.

Could it be the beginning of a series?

It could be the beginning of a series. I am fascinated by the way in which history really never goes away. We have all of the big oil companies of Europe and America deeply involved now in Caspian oil just as they were before World War I, and that was part of the subplot that led to the Armenian massacres of 1915 and, again, here history doesn't go away. What was happening in the Resistance in this part of France is still hugely important in French politics today.

Talking about French politics, you have one of the Resistance leaders becoming the president of France. Is he based on any particular president of France?

My character is based on a anagram of two people. One of them is François Mitterrand, who became president of France and who did indeed work with the Resistance, and the other is [André] Malraux the great French writer who, in fact, had his headquarters in this valley about ten minutes walk from my house, and it is a quarters which he shared with a British and an American officer who were part of the same team. Malraux actually claimed, at one point—when he was minister of culture and responsible for building the copy of the Lascaux Cave that tourists can



now visit—that he actually stored his Resistance guns in the Lascaux Cave right by the drawing of the dead magician who had been killed by the bison—which is a drawing that figures quite strongly in the novel.

People usually say that if you are picking modern-day characters, that you are basing them on somebody, and you just said that the president of France was based on Mitterrand and Malraux, but your characters named "Moon" and "Deer" from 17,000 years ago, who did you base these on?

I just made those up. You have to make them up. We don't know very much about prehistoric culture. We know that they didn't live in the caves because there is no human detritus on the floors of the caves, and we are pretty sure from what is called post-hole evidence: that is the kind of foundations that they dug; that they lived rather like the Indians of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and like the modern-day Evenks of Siberia. Bearing in mind that, at this time, it was still the Ice Age and glaciers had advanced well down into France. What these people lived on were the great herds of reindeer that you would find near the edge of the ice pack. It is fascinating that although they lived on reindeer, they clothed themselves with reindeer, and many of their tools were reindeer antlers, they never painted the reindeer in their caves.

Why?

We don't know, just as they never painted humans or human faces in their caves.

Is that historically true?

Absolutely.

Why do you think that is?

Perhaps there may have been some taboo against it. Perhaps the actual depiction of the animals was some hunting ritual or some worship ritual. It is hard to tell. But I did spend some time living with the Evenks in Siberia when I was a correspondent in Russia, so I drew a lot from the lifestyle of the "Moon" and "Deer" people from what I knew of the Evenks. I drew some of it from what one knows about Indians. We think they lived in teepees just like American Indians and then I just let my imagination run wild.

If Americans like your books and they want to go to France to visit these caves, what can they see?

They can see the most stunning collection of prehistoric culture in the world. There are literally dozens of these caves that are open to tourists, and although the Lascaux Cave itself is closed because of too many humans—their breath damages the paintings—Malraux, when he was minister of culture, financed the building of an absolutely exact copy. I have been in both of them and you couldn't tell which is which.

I read a book called *Sarum* by Edward Rutherfurd that took place in England over centuries, and some of the James Michener novels with similar themes. Were you influenced by these books?

I don't know, maybe unconsciously. I have read all of those books, and I love books that try to bring history to life, and *Sarum* is a very good account. In a way, also because the modern section [of my book] is all about art history and the European art market, I am trying to make out and to establish what is human art. What do we know about these caves? The moment you walk into the Lascaux Cave, you think these are people that are like us. They may have been Stone Age people, but what they have produced—their creativity, their artistic sensibility—is instantly recognizable to us. These are our people, and what is it that creates that kind of huge creative surge? Why is it that art has these phenomenal peaks like the Impressionist period or the Sistine Chapel period?

If you had to write a review of your own book, how would you do it?

It is a novel that tries to bring the relevance of history to the present day through art and war, including the art of the old prehistoric people, and during World War II the Resistance in exactly the same place and how that echoes today. It is also a book that is a love letter to a part of France that I have become very fond of—the Périgord. We have a house there. I spend as much time there as I can. I have even been invited to stand for the local municipal council. I have wonderful neighbors, and I just love this part of France.

If this book does well, are you going to give up your journalism career, and write fiction full time?

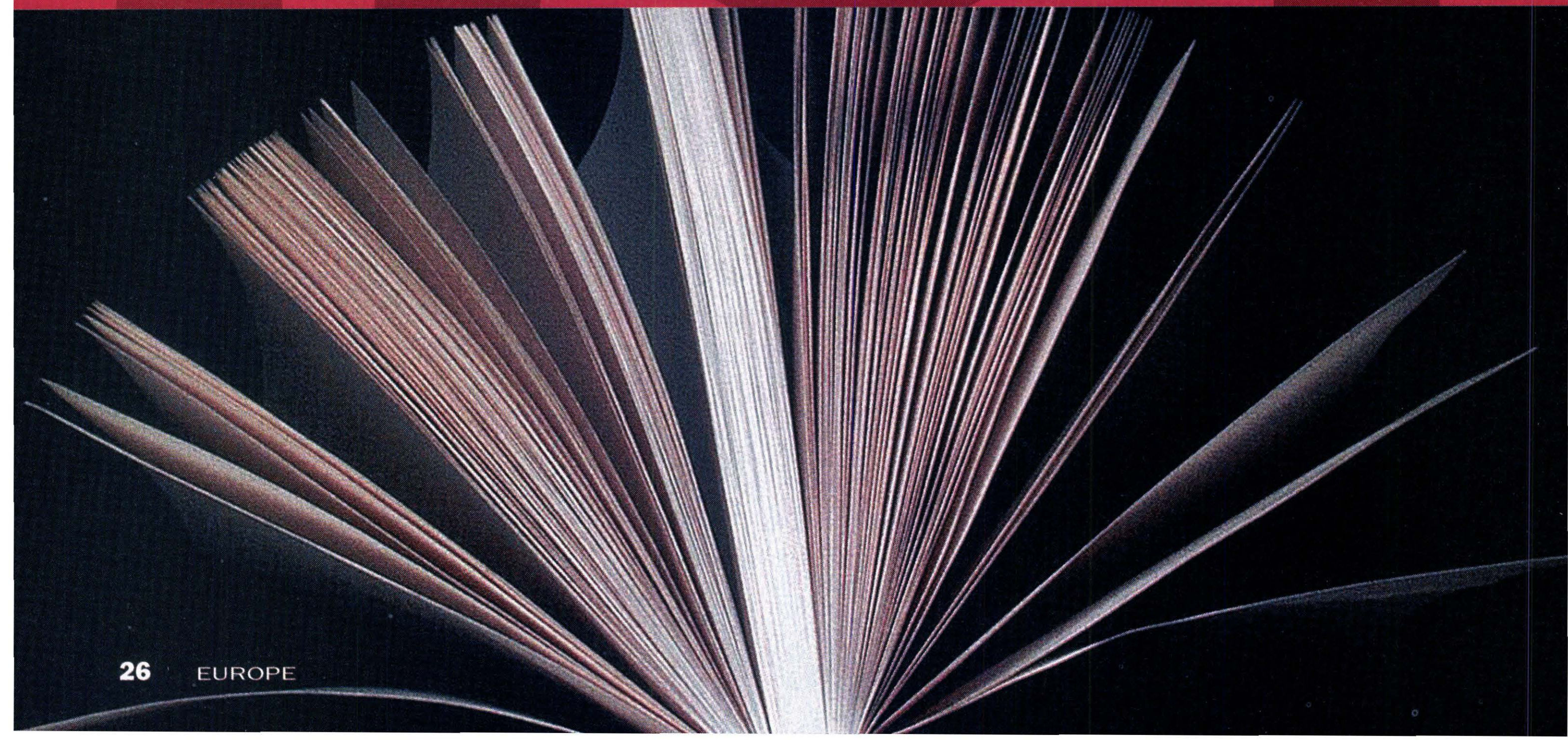
No. I am a journalist. Some people say that I have finally admitted to writing fiction all along. ⓔ

PUBLISHING

New books from Europe

HOT OFF THE PRESSES

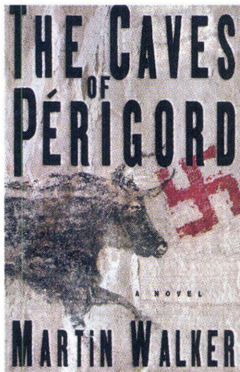
With summer's long and lazy afternoons just around the corner, we offer up a healthy crop of books suitable for a day at the beach, a trip on an airplane, or just an afternoon on the couch. Our choices come from a range of Europe's top authors, including travel writer eminence Jan Morris, *Chocolat* author Joanne Harris, historical novelist Ben Macintyre, thriller master Arturo Pérez-Reverte, historian Roy Jenkins, and even our own journalist Martin Walker, wearing his novelist hat.



The Caves of Périgord

By Martin Walker; Simon & Schuster; 374 pages; $25

"The meeting of the Dordogne and the Vezere, as lovely a place as any in France, and the valleys that said more about the ancient history and glorious achievement of humankind than any other spot on earth. And just as much about the evil that humans could wreak upon each other. These older humans had been more civilized than those of this century...But perhaps only because they left so little trace of anything but their achievements. It took a different kind of civilization to leave a record of its wickedness."



Can a novel that talks about cave dwellers 15,000 years ago and Resistance fighters in France in World War II, and an art mystery involving the president of France today be worth reading?

The answer is a resounding yes. *The Caves of Périgord* is an exciting, complex, and very interesting mystery spanning the last 15,000 years or so. The author—veteran journalist Martin Walker—has given us all a good read as he explores the mystery of ancient artists to the intrigues of today's art world.

It is a plot that reminds one of a thrilling movie that takes place in the same location over the course of many centuries with new actors appearing all the time.

The novel begins in London with an attractive American art dealer who is given a priceless object allegedly from the caves of Périgord. The object is then stolen from the museum where she works. A handsome British gentleman and soldier spirits her away to France to try and solve not only the burglary but the puzzle of whether or not the object is real or a forgery.

Walker creatively weaves in characters—Moon and Deer among others—who created these priceless drawings more than 15,000 years ago. Surprisingly, he makes them come alive, and we are transported back into the days of yesteryear.

Just as quickly, we are brought back to a band of Resistance fighters in World War II—an American, an Englishman, and a Frenchman who is destined to become a future president of France. As the scene shifts to the brutal struggles of World War II we feel the pressures these men and others were under fighting for their very existence. Strange things happen in battle and this is part of the overall plot.

As we reenter the present day part of the novel, we find out that the Englishman is the son of the former Resistance fighter who fought alongside the man who is now the president of France. The president of France plays host to everyone at his home near the caves of Périgord and the plot thickens as we relive not only the Resistance in World War II, but the love stories and actions of the cave dwellers.

Surprisingly it all comes together at the end. It is a present day art mystery with a wonderful historical twist.

Hopefully, the author, who is a contributing editor to *EUROPE*, won't forsake journalism to become a full-time novelist. However, if this novel is an indication of his non-journalism writing skills, he may well be on his way to a new successful career.

—Robert J. Guttman

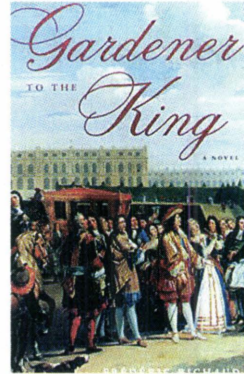
Gardener to the King

By Frédéric Richaud; Arcade; 116 pages; $20

For his first novel, Frédéric Richaud chose a very peculiar subject—Louis XIV's gardener, Jean-Baptiste de La Quintinie, reimagining the historical figure's life at what was about to become the greatest palace of the world, Versailles.

In the gardener's world, time doesn't really exist, except for the changing of the seasons.

The book's back cover teases that La Quintinie's life is "a mystery." However, instead of revealing more about this man whose job it is to grow enough food to feed the whole court of Versailles—no small feat due to the king's tight deadlines and impossible requests to the man he considers more of a wizard than a gardener—the author keeps his protagonist shrouded in enigma. The reader ultimately gleans very little detail about La Quintinie or, for that matter, the life of the seventeenth-century French court.



Nonetheless, the book leaves one with a sense of fulfillment but as a reflection on vanity and appearances rather than as a historical narrative. Indeed, Richaud depicts the gardener, who has all the court privileges that come with the king's esteem, as someone who would rather observe the bustle of the courtesans from his garden rather than spend his time among them.

La Quintinie acquires his knowledge from observing nature and prefers the simplicity of peasant life. When he finds himself bored with the royal banquets, he escapes to the trees and plants he finds more intriguing. Furthermore, he dares to speak his mind to the king.

No one knows who he is or where he comes from, but it doesn't really seem to matter. In the gardener's world, time doesn't really exist, except for the changing of the seasons, and the reader is only aware of the passing of time by elliptic mentions of historical dates and changes in the king's attitude. However, Richaud does offer glimpses of the festive atmosphere at the beginning of Louis XIV's reign; the wars being waged by Condé and Turenne; the sorcery trials; the birth of meteorology, and the discovery of Halley's comet. It concludes at the end of the Sun King's reign, a dark period marked by bigotry and devotement.

Richaud's theme is that vanity yields very little and that the humble, hard work of creating something is the only worthwhile activity.

Although it could be argued that *Gardener to the King* has no real plot, it is a pleasant read simply

because of its freshness and meticulous detail. Freshness, because it offers an outsider's point of view about the court's luxuriousness, a luxury that, to the gardener, pales in comparison with the beauty and generosity of nature. Meticulous, because Frédéric Richaud (or is it La Quintinie himself?) pays careful attention to describing the atmosphere of the times.

And if the gardener appears a solitary character, it is only because of the extraordinarily clear observations he makes about things that set him apart from the rest of the king's entourage. The reader, however, can see La Quintinie for what he really is—that is, to use Voltaire's immortal lesson from *Candide*, "a garden philosopher."

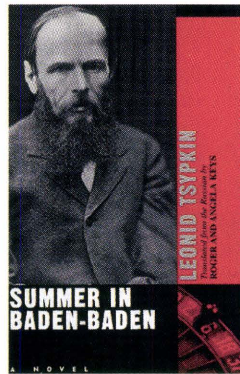
—Anne Spinali

Summer in Baden-Baden

By Leonid Tsypkin; translated by Roger and Angela Keys; New Directions; 160 pages; $24

"Half an hour later he was pushing through the players and onlookers, not caring about anything anymore and even wanting someone to knock him down or insult him, and he made his way through to the gaming table—and of the twelve francs which he had received for the suit he immediately lost three—and that familiar breathtaking sensation of falling overcame him—let everyone see and know with what ease and even joy he was losing, the ones who trembled over every kreutzer, who calculated their every move—and he staked three more francs on pass and lost again."

We tend to measure life in temporal terms, and feel most comfortable when novels progress in the same manner. Yes, it is true that 4:00 pm comes after 3:00 pm, Friday after Thursday, but these are constructs invented by humans. At any given point in time, while we are actually living in what is technically 'the present', are we not also thinking about the past and the future in that incessant inner monologue of the mind? In each of our internal worlds, one could argue, the past, present, and possibly the future simultaneously exist.



What would happen if an author recreated this timeless state of mind not for one or even two but for three principal characters? A mess or a masterpiece? That depends on whether or not one thinks the above supposition is a lot of high-sounding bunk. If this notion is intriguing, and if you want to plunge into uncharted literary territory—in which the past, present, and future of three fascinating figures intersect—actually flow—into a stream of consciousness—then *Summer in Baden Baden* may be your cup of tea. Make that strong, dark, Russian tea poured out of a samovar because *Summer in Baden Baden* is a fictional, fact-based account of the life and mind of one of Russia's greatest writers, Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

There is no plot in the conventional sense, yet there is a structure of sorts, which takes the form of an unnamed narrator, a Jewish admirer of Dostoyevsky, who himself is an anti-Jew, anti-Pole, and anti-German lover of mother-Russia. Our narrator is traveling from Moscow to Leningrad (not St. Petersburg) to trace his beloved author's steps. He has with him a battered book, the *Diary of Anna Grigor'yevna*, a collection of shorthand notes written by Dostoyevsky's second wife during the summer they spent in Baden Baden after they got married.

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This is the point in which the reader can close the book or jump into the mesmerizing flow of the imagined lives, minds, hearts, and maybe even souls of Dostoyevsky's Anna and our unnamed narrator-guide. We see and experience the world through Dostoyevsky's eyes. Thus emerges an impression of the mad, epileptic genius, his long-suffering wife, their passionate yet tortured relationship—all interwoven with swatches of the narrator's Communist Russia experience—and his honest quest to understand why he, along with many other Russian Jews, are so deeply attached to Dostoyevsky.

Summer in Baden Baden is not an easy read. There are no sentences, just very long passages with little punctuation, in the style of Portugal's José Saramago and Peru's Enrique Bryce Echenique. But the prose is emotive without being flowery—it brings to life people, places, feelings, and impressions. The drama and darkness of Russian literature is here, but the author lightens it with wit and irony.

The novel has been hailed as a discovery and its author a genius. Like the narrator, Leonid Tsypkin was a Russian Jew, a renowned medical researcher who also was a devotee of Dostoyevsky. Tsypkin never knew his novel was published. The manuscript, completed in 1980, was smuggled out of the former Soviet Union one year later, and first appeared as installments in a Russian émigré weekly in New York. Tsypkin, meanwhile, was demoted and finally fired from his job—state-imposed punishment for the emigration of his son to America. Sadly, in 1986 he died of a heart attack in Moscow at the age of fifty-four.

—Shaazka Beyerle

The Englishman's Daughter: A True Story of Love and Betrayal in World War I

By Ben Macintyre; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 215 pages; $24

"Robert Digby and Claire Dessenne were now as entwined in love as the armies were locked in war, and there was nothing Lord Kitchener, the kaiser, or Eugenie Dessenne could do to stop them," writes Ben Macintyre in his new novel, *The Englishman's Daughter*.

English soldiers lost in the chaos of World War I; a small French village north of Paris with a cast of eccentric characters; German soldiers occupying the town with the sounds of the devastating war going on all around them; a love story between one of the lost soldiers and the "most beautiful" girl in the town; a mystery and a whodunit—and it is all a true story.

Macintyre, a correspondent for the *Times* of London, based in Paris, was

sent on an assignment to the little village of Villeret, where he met an elderly lady in a wheelchair with an incredible story to tell. Helene Dessenne, the daughter born to the leader of the lost British soldiers, Robert Digby, and the French villager, Claire Dessenne, provides the writer with an amazing tale of "love and betrayal" in the Great War.

While the madness and chaos of the war and occupation linger always in the background, Macintyre presents the intriguing love story that blossomed between the Frenchwoman and the British soldier...

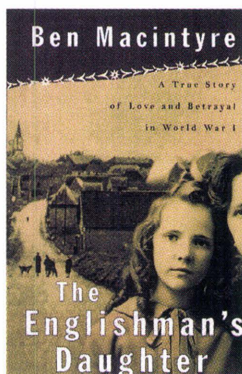
The villagers of Villeret took the British soldiers into their homes, fed them, taught them French, and when the time was right had them pose as French peasants so the German occupation forces would not harm them. One of the British soldiers spent most of his time hidden in a wooden cabinet in a house also occupied by German soldiers.

While the madness and chaos of the war and occupation linger always in the background, Macintyre presents the intriguing love story that blossomed between the Frenchwoman and the British soldier during these strange days of a world turned upside down.

After a period of time, with the fortunes of war turning against them and hunger becoming a daily fact of life, the villagers turned against their British guests. Someone in the village betrayed the soldiers and four of them including Robert Digby were put before a firing squad and executed.

While the first part of the book explores the lives and exploits of the villagers and the soldiers thrown together through the bizarre circumstances of the war, the second part of the book has the author trying to find out who betrayed the soldiers to the German occupiers.

Macintyre gives us several scenarios—from jilted jealous lovers to the possibility of a ring of spies—as he tries to assess what happened. As he says, "No guilty verdict can ever be passed in the strange case of Robert Digby, but perhaps the story went something like this..."



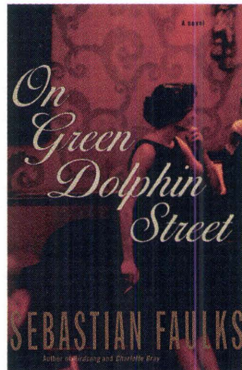
To find out who betrayed Digby and his fellow soldiers, I highly recommend reading this thrilling account of a betrayal, a love story, a view of people under occupation, and a birds-eye view of a long-forgotten war.

—Robert J. Guttman

On Green Dolphin Street

By Sebastian Faulks; Random House; 351 pages; $25

Nearly a decade ago, British author Sebastian Faulks wrote the World War I novel *Birdsong*, which was well received in the United States. Paired with Mark Helprin's *A Soldier of the Great War*, *Birdsong* was a reminder that even modern and relatively young writers could create gripping literature from that most senseless conflict. Faulks followed *Birdsong* with a World War II novel *Charlotte Gray*—the movie version of which has been playing recently in the United States.



Now Faulks has leaped across yet another historical period, as well as an ocean, to write a novel about Washington in 1959–1960, during the transition from Eisenhower to Kennedy played out against the backdrop of an ever more dangerous and confrontational cold war.

Love plays an even bigger role than war as a British diplomat's wife gets caught up in an affair with an American journalist, who is based in New York, and covering the presidential campaign. Like most triangles of this type, it is fraught with tension and doomed to end unhappily. In between, there is a lot of dashing between cities, encounters in Greenwich Village, hurried romance, and much drinking.

Perhaps this novel is most effective in portraying the dreadful effects of alcohol in that era when vast amounts of it were consumed, often destroying the careers and lives of politicians, journalists, and diplomats alike. Long before governments were declaring wars on drugs, and just a couple of decades removed from the dismal American experiment with Prohibition, alcohol was the killer drug, especially in the upper classes who seemed to consume it steadily from lunch well into the night, seven days a week.

The man poisoned by drink is British diplomat Charles van der Linden, a war veteran and Foreign Office fast-track political officer who already has served in Tokyo and Moscow, as well as doing a brief stint at Dien Bien Phu before being posted to the British embassy in Washington.

Diplomats and officials at the current British embassy may be busily searching for the *roman à clef* in their ranks, or a composite thereof, but what Faulks has done especially well is to track that combination of despair, desperation, and physiology that sets apart the deadly drunk from the robust social drinker. It is a compelling psychological portrait of a life washing down the gullet.

Alas, Faulks has less convincingly drawn the political background to his romantic tale. Indeed, his research has faltered in places. There's a reference to the Iowa caucuses, which did not play an important role until the 1976 campaign. Mississippi segregationist Senator James Eastland is put in the past tense in 1960, when he would be fighting civil rights legislation for at least another decade. The infamous White House secretary known as "Fiddle," who came to characterize the indiscretions of the Kennedy years, is placed in the Eisenhower White House. And most absurdly of all, John F. Kennedy is portrayed as tobogganing on a wooden tray down the aisle of his campaign plane to show the traveling press he was one of the boys. A man who prized his dignity to the last day of his life, when he declined to doff a cowboy hat in public, Kennedy had far more effective ways of seducing the press than with antics.

Fortunately, much of the affair is conducted in New York, and Faulks has captured far more effectively the romantic allure of the Village and other Manhattan spots, especially in those

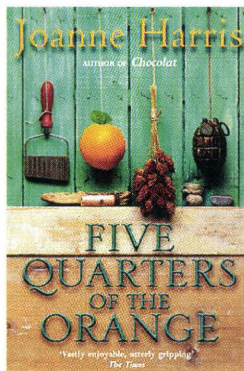
relatively innocent days before serious social decline set in. Perhaps what this comparison reveals is that Washington is the hardest city in America, if not the world, to use as a backdrop for a novel. Only a handful of novelists—Henry Adams, Allen Drury, and Ward Just among them—have succeeded in making fiction work in a small town grown large and so dominated by whatever is the current reality. New York, with its far more infinite varieties and extremes, lends itself better to the novelist's craft, as this book has demonstrated once again.

—Michael D. Mosettig

Five Quarters of the Orange

By Joanne Harris; William Morrow & Co.; 320 pages; $25

Five Quarters of the Orange is one of those books you pick out of the display shelf at the bookstore because of the riddle-like quality of the title, not because its French-British author, Joanne Harris, wrote the bestseller *Chocolat*. And you would be right: the book is exactly what it promises to be, a mystery waiting to be solved, an enigma to be unraveled, or, if you'll pardon the pun, an orange the reader will enjoy peeling.



Why doesn't Framboise Simon want the inhabitants of this small village on the banks of the Loire River to know she is Mirabelle Dartiguen's daughter?

As Framboise leafs her way through the book of recipes—the legacy her mother left her—the reader gathers clues about what really happened that summer, during World War II, when Framboise was nine years old.

Like *Chocolat*, which tells a story that evokes the rich and heady character of its title, *Five Quarters of an Orange* too offers the reader a bittersweetness not unlike the fruit it celebrates.

Offering delicious recipes along the way, the story displays its author's passion for food. It also includes some dark insights into the life of a fatherless family during the war, powerfully illustrating the old saying "You may be through with your past, but your past isn't through with you."

Joanne Harris' story may take place during the German occupation of France, but it nevertheless has a certain timelessness about it, as it digs deeper and deeper into subjects like the relationship between a mother and her daughter, jealousy between siblings, problems linked to inheritance, and most of all the lack of intimacy that comes with being an outsider in a small town.

She, of course, is in pursuit of treasure. He, of course, agrees to help her. The map, of course, offers the key to finding it. And so it unfolds.

The plot unfolds with painstaking slowness, which stems from Framboise's reluctance to come to the crux of the matter. At the same time, Harris embroideries her tale with richly detailed characters: Mireille, the sick and cruel mother, who possesses a sensuous love of food and poetic abilities; Cassis, the only son, torn that summer between childhood and adulthood; Reine-Claude, the other, beautiful daughter (as compared with Framboise's "skinny and dark" appearance), who is elected harvest queen by Paul, Framboise's stuttering and practically only friend; Tomas Leibniz, the German soldier; and finally Framboise herself, around whom everything revolves.

The reader suffers through the book the way Framboise suffers from having to hide from the customers of her small *crêperie* the fact that she is one of them, and from having to conceal her past from her own children and friends. But she finally comes to understand that resistance is like swimming against the current, exhausting and pointless, and having told her story, she reconciles herself with life the way French people usually do—with food and wine.

—Anne Spinali

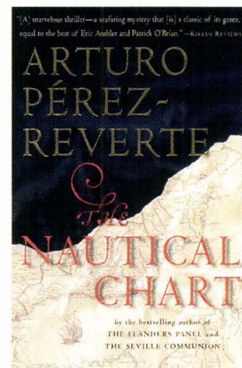
The Nautical Chart

By Arturo Pérez-Reverte (translated from Spanish by Margaret Sayers Peden); Harcourt Brace; 480 pages; $26

A busted sailor, an enigmatic historian, and an ancient map provide the elements for Spanish novelist Arturo Pérez-Reverte's *The Nautical Chart*. Of course, wherever there's a map, not to mention a beautiful woman (the historian), treasure is bound to be involved. And as is usually the case with Perez, mystery will figure into the mix as well.

Its name notwithstanding, *The Nautical Chart*, Pérez's fifth novel translated into English, is much more hard-boiled noir than sea adventure. (In fact, the characters themselves directly refer more than a few times to Dashiell Hammett's classic *The Maltese Falcon*.) Modern-day Spain's sea-obsessed subculture substitutes for 1920s California, and Coy, a hard-luck mariner whose merchant license has been suspended after a mishap at sea, stands in for Sam Spade. Stranded on dry land, he is attracted to anything relating to the only job he knows and finds himself at a Madrid auction for maritime antiques. There he witnesses a bidding war for a rare nautical chart, and later as he walks the city's dark streets, he comes to the aid of the chart's winning bidder, the beautiful and mysterious Tánger Soto.

She, of course, is in pursuit of treasure. He, of course, agrees to help her. The map, of course, offers the key to finding it. And so it unfolds. A well-worn scenario no doubt, yet in talented hands even this trite formula can yield a rollicking read. Unfortunately, Perez fumbles the opportunity.



It must be said, however, that the author seems to know what he's up against. He even acknowledges that this type of story has become a cliché, writing in a passage that Coy envies the first man who "went out to hunt a whale, a treasure, or a woman, without ever having read a book about it."

The book's biggest flaw is its desperate need for an editor to excise about eighty pages of soliloquies and meditations about the cruelty of the sea and of women, the beauty of the sea and of

women, and the mystery of the sea and of women...you get the picture. It also lacks the creepy supernatural element that made Pérez's first English-translated book, *The Club Dumas*, about a rare book dealer's investigation of a satanic text, so successful. Somehow, the mysteries of the sea and of women just aren't as scary, at least in this telling.

The author hasn't been helped much by his translator. Most jarring are the curses, which seem to have been translated verbatim from Spanish into English and at times give a comical tone rather than reinforcing the serious one intended.

Nevertheless, Pérez, a former television journalist, is a creative and detail-hungry writer who delves enthusiastically into eclectic subjects (fencing, chess, art restoration). One can only hope that his editor proves more assertive on his next manuscript.

—*Peter Gwin*

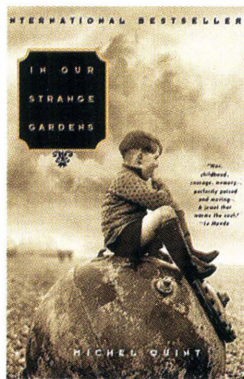
In Our Strange Gardens

By Michel Quint (translated from French by Barbara Bray); Riverhead Books; 163 pages; $13

Occasionally a book finds you. You know how that happens. Rather than spotting it on a bookstore display or tipping it down from a library shelf, somehow it just seems to end up in your possession. A friend hands it to you, or it comes wrapped as a gift. Initially, it might get tossed aside but eventually matriculates to your desk or maybe your bedside table where it sits patiently for months, years perhaps, until you open it, and it finds you.

In Our Strange Gardens is such a book, and it's probably accurate to say the story it contains found its author, Michel Quint. Although fiction, he says it is based on his father's experiences during World War II. Barely a wisp of a volume, it's more of a short story than a novel. (The book contains both the English and French translations, each a scant eighty double-spaced, small pages.) Its deceptively simple plot is nearly impossible to discuss in any detail without spoiling the rewarding conclusion.

The kernel of the story turns on the plight of the narrator's father and his cousin, who as two young members of the French Resistance are captured by



the Germans and cast with two other prisoners into a pit dug outside of their town. They are told that they have until dawn to reveal who was behind a recent act of sabotage or one of them will be shot. Huddled in the mud, they are left under the watchful eye of a single guard, who inexplicably begins making funny faces at them and then comically wrestles food out of his pocket. In front of the starving prisoners, he begins to juggle six slices of bread.

"We gaped at him with our mouths watering. Then he missed one slice, almost let it fall, then just managed to catch it in time. Meanwhile, you can imagine we'd stretched out our hands frantically, certain it was going to land down there with us. But no—when it almost seemed too late the bastard retrieved it safe and sound...He thought he was being clever, taunting us like that, but all the slices of bread ended up falling into the pit—God was raining bread and butter down on us!"

In fact, the guard, Bernd, is a professional clown who had been pressed into the Wehrmacht. He tries to make their imprisonment as bearable as possible by entertaining them and sneaking them food and a bottle of liquor.

The book's brevity notwithstanding, Quint scripts a maze of bittersweet twists that leads the narrator to an epiphany about his family and, ultimately, himself. Yet he never strays into sentimentality. The effect on the reader is not unlike unraveling a small ball of yarn only to find a jewel at its center.

In Our Strange Gardens is a book that will find many readers. This slender, almost delicate paperback, I predict, will find its way into countless briefcases and backpacks and end up in the bedclothes next to the slumbering reader. That's not to suggest it will put you to sleep. Even the slowest reader can get through it in barely more than an hour, but the story is one that you want to carry with you into your dreams and let it permeate your soul.

—*Peter Gwin*

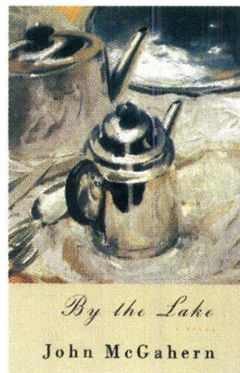
By The Lake

By John McGahern; Knopf; 384 pages; $24

Originally titled *That They May Face The Rising Sun*, John McGahern's most recent novel *By the Lake* (the US title) lacks the dark and volatile psychological drama of his earlier works, notably his last novel, the disturbing and powerful *Amongst Women*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Still, despite the more peaceful connotations of its new American title, McGahern's latest book is far from light reading. It is a strangely compelling yet uneventful novel in which nothing much happens in the here-and-now, and most of the events that have shaped the community and certain individuals are related by one or other of the novels many characters. This alternating of perspective, shifting between insiders/old-timers and outsiders/recent arrivals, blends a three-dimensional picture that does justice to the complexity of social interaction in a local history that still bears the marks of emigration, civil war rivalries, and rebellion against England.

A hallmark of McGahern's writing remains his ability to draw interesting characters that often have some sort of flaw that endears and repels at the same time. Although in *By the Lake* the characters may be too plentiful and slightly confusing to the storyline, all seem plucked from real life, certainly completely credible to anyone who has grown up in Ireland, and a testament to McGahern's powers of observation when it comes to human behavior in the most ordinary of circumstances.

In *By The Lake*, the "action," if one could call it that, revolves around a central couple, the Ruttledges, who come to Ireland to escape the rat-race of life in London. The locals, who provide much of the atmospherics, include a womanizing undertaker turned auctioneer John Quinn, a kindly neighbor Jamesie and his wife Mary, a local uneducated self-made man known as "the Shah," and a



slightly simple and underdeveloped man named Bill Evans, who works as a farmhand and radiates an awkward energy. He is described by a well-read English visitor to the Ruttledges as looking "like someone out of a Russian novel." Another character with more of a local take on the situation simply described his "mad alive," one of a kind that was common in Ireland in the not-too-distant past.

McGahern's *By The Lake* is a subtle, intimate book. All the characters have pasts, some of them quite painful, some interwoven with the troubles of Northern Ireland, yet all of it is beautifully understated. *By the Lake* is about more than life in a small community in one of the poorest parts of Ireland; it is a reflection of how people come to be what and where they are and are either at peace with it or not.

—Maeve O'Beirne

NON-FICTION REVIEWS

The Flâneur

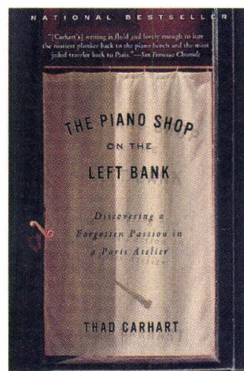
By Edmund White; Bloomsbury; 211 pages; $17

The Piano Shop on the Left Bank

By Thad Carhart; Random House; 271 pages; $24

No matter how much testiness colors the Franco-American political relationship and no matter how vehemently French intellectuals rail against US cultural imperialism, nothing seems to get in the way of the non-stop love affair between American writers and Paris. It is on display again in these two short books, each delightfully quirky but always reminding the reader of how lucky the authors were to have lived in Paris.

What Edmund White has offered up in this first of *The Writer and The City* series is a distinct look at Paris through the sharp eye of an American who lived there from 1983 until 1998. For him, a *flâneur* is someone with the time and curiosity to wander aimlessly through a city of countless delights, not for cultural self-improvement but for the sheer pleasure of the place beyond the obvious tourist sites and postcard vistas.



Thad Carhart, a former American film executive turned writer and a Left Bank resident, provides an even narrower slice of the city with his account of discovering a piano shop in his *quartier*. From his intrusion into an atelier that deals only with known customers unfolds a charming discourse on pianos, interesting even to the reader who has barely played one. Interspersed with the history of the instrument and descriptions of its infinite varieties are glimpses into French cultural and social life.

But in the cracks, he says, "are those little forgotten places that appeal to the flâneur, the traces left by people living in the margin—Jews, blacks, gays, Arabs...

The appropriate subtitle of White's book is *A Stroll Through the Paradoxes of Paris*. Perhaps seeing the city through American eyes makes the writer look at race as one of the central paradoxes. At one of those classical Parisian dinner parties with dress designers, historians, and museum directors in attendance, there was a lively discussion about how Paris had changed. And White somewhat shocked his guests by pointing to one obvious change, that Paris was no longer white but a black and yellow and tan town.

White is fascinated by the effect of immigrants as different as Arabs and Brazilians on the city's culture. And that seamlessly leads to a chapter on the role of American blacks since the early twentieth century, from jazzmen like Sidney Bechet to the trio of writers, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Chester Himes. Their main gathering place was a soul food restaurant, Haynes Grill in Montmartre, which now serves a mainly French clientele. And between discourses on African-Americans and North Africans, White can analyze French attitudes on race, mostly benign and welcoming to the former, anything but with the latter.

White several times chooses an obscure museum to tell a story, most poignantly, the Musée Nissim de Camondo on the Parc Monceau. It was the house of a family of Jewish bankers that was wiped out in the Holocaust. The saga of that family, which moved its banking business from Constantinople to Paris in the 1860s, encapsulates much of modern Jewish history in France, from remarkable assimilation to the roundups of Jews by Vichy police during the Nazi occupation.

The author sums up his Paris asserting that Baron Haussman's vision of an efficient, modern, and clean city has triumphed. But in the cracks, he says, "are those little forgotten places that appeal to the flâneur, the traces left by people living in the margin—Jews, blacks, gays, Arabs—or mementos of an earlier, more chaotic, and Medieval France." White is often categorized as a gay writer, and a brief digression on gay cruising may not be to every taste. But his substantial body of work that includes biographies of Proust and Genet, and now this delightfully insightful look at Paris, confirm his stature as an impressive author of the turn of the century.

Meanwhile, Thad Carhart's exploration into the world of the piano began almost accidentally as he finally summoned the nerve one day to walk into the piano shop he had been passing daily while walking his children to school. From the point he greets the shop owner and his assistant begins a story of a man rediscovering his love for the piano and watching that love become a full passion.

It's a story that develops step by tentative step. The American first had to persuade the patron that he was a potentially serious customer. And that could be accomplished only by getting a recommendation from an existing customer. It's hard to imagine an American business school teaching that approach to marketing. Eventually the author buys a piano, and the saga of transporting it into a Paris apartment (on the back of one man) is alone almost worth the price of the book.

One version of this story conceivably could have ended there. Instead,

the author's curiosity about pianos—their variety is immense—and how to learn to play them at various levels of expertise from beginner to master class grows and grows. The mastery of this book is that he manages to convey that curiosity to a wider circle of readers. While I enjoy listening to well played music of several styles, I have next to no interest in pianos, and my brief foray into piano lessons as a six-year-old is a dimly remembered disaster. If the author could lure me into his excitement and enchantment, he has told his tale well.

—Michael D. Mosettig

A Writer's House in Wales

By Jan Morris; National Geographic Directions; 143 pages; $20

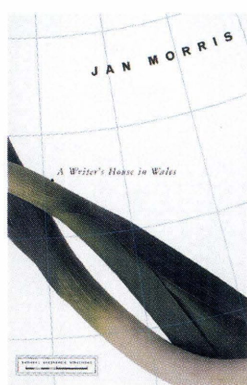
"My house is so absolutely of its setting, is rooted so profoundly not just in the soil, but in the very idea of Wales, that anywhere else it would lose all charisma."

Jan Morris, the well-known and excellent travel writer, is never better than when she writes about her own country of Wales. Although this short book purports to talk about her house—Trefan Morys—an old stable on her family's property, the main thrust of her tale is about her craggy country of Wales.

If you haven't had the privilege of traveling to Wales this short volume will make you want to make the journey. Several years ago, I visited the "land of the red dragon" with its ever present rain and chilly weather, and enjoyed immensely the hospitality of the Welsh people described so vividly in *A Writer's House in Wales.*

Morris' humor pops up throughout the book, as do her extremely fond feelings for her native land. While she writes about the landscape, the woods, and the visitors who drink tea in her kitchen and sign her guest book, the heart of the book is her discussion of her library. The author says she hasn't read all of the thousands of books she owns, but she has certainly used all of them.

"I have used them for plain enjoyment, of course. I have plundered them for my own work. I have used them as reference books. I have used one or two of them, notably the enormous *Death in Spanish Painting* which is



propping up the table in the corner, to support wobbly furniture."

Another wonderful thing I learned from this short but informative book is that I am not the only human being who ranks their books and puts them in order by subject and by fiction and non-fiction. The author writes, "My books are as carefully ranked as I can manage, fiction by authors upstairs, nonfiction by subject below."

A Writer's House in Wales is a short volume with a wealth of information and knowledge on Wales, Welshmen and women, the Welsh language, books, writers, the author's adventuresome life, and her house "between the sea and the mountains" which reeks of history and hospitality.

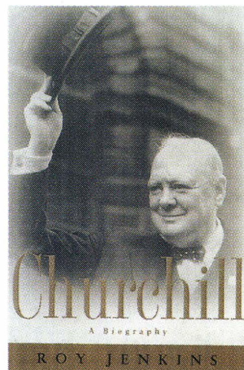
—Robert J. Guttman

Churchill: A Biography

By Roy Jenkins; Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 912 pages; $40

"He was Prime Minister at last at the age of sixty-five. It was also almost forty years after he had first been elected to Parliament...He was, or quickly became, the accepted champion of the nation in the eyes of both public and press. And those who had initially been reluctant and suspicious, from Sovereign to permanent secretaries, fairly quickly came round to his indispensability."

Roy Jenkins, the former president of the European Commission and noted British author, has written an exceedingly well-researched and well-documented biography of one of the leading figures of the last century. No matter what you thought of Winston Churchill, as this book makes quite clear, he was quite a brilliant character whose life seemed to be geared to becoming prime minister of England during the country's (and the world's) hour of need during World War II.



While many Americans may not really want to know all the ins-and-outs of British politics that the author discusses, Jenkins goes into great detail about the political environment of Britain throughout Churchill's career.

Churchill is, of course, known for his political and government career, but as Jenkins makes very clear, the former British prime minister earned most of his money writing books and articles. Churchill wrote his first book in 1898, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, and his final books in the mid-1950s, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. In 1953, he won the Nobel Prize for literature.

In the early part of the book, Jenkins states, "Fame was his constant spur, and the best route to this that he saw at the time was through his writing."

After the war, Churchill gave a speech in Zurich, which, writes Jenkins, "marked the opening of his campaign for a united Europe. The great virtue of Churchill's Zurich speech was that it saw and faced head-on the fact that a united Europe must be based on a Franco-German partnership." Jenkins discusses Churchill's efforts in "promoting a united Europe" in the late 1940s and analyzes how committed he was to this effort.

This is truly a remarkable book about a remarkable man. True fans, and I include myself in this category, will relish all the new details about Churchill in this latest biography. However, the reader really has to be a Churchill devotee to make it through this lengthy book. I would not recommend it as the first book to read on the famous and eccentric former British prime minister. I would suggest Martin Gilbert's and William Manchester's volumes on Churchill before taking on Jenkins' biography.

How does Roy Jenkins see Churchill's role in history? As he states in his final sentence of the book, "I now put Churchill, with all his idiosyncrasies, his indulgences, his occasional childishness, but also his genius, his tenacity, and his persistent ability, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, to be larger than life, as the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street." Ⓔ

—Robert J. Guttman

Gladstone's Getaway

By Lucy Gordan

The legendary prime minister's secret library has become a unique B&B

Queen Victoria and her prime minister, William Gladstone, never got along. Out of earshot she called the shy social reformer and Christian moralist "a half-mad firebrand," while he referred to the monarch as "Her Infallibility." Finally, in 1894, at the age of eighty-four, after four terms as prime minister, four terms as chancellor of the exchequer, and almost sixty years of service to the crown, Gladstone, arguably Britain's greatest statesman, resigned from political life.

A voracious reader (who is said to have consumed 20,000 books in his lifetime) and enthusiastic book collector, to escape from the pressures of state affairs Gladstone would return home to Hawarden (pronounced Har-den) in North Wales. There, he would absorb himself in the library-study he called the "Temple of Peace" after the Emperor Vespasian's library-temple complex in the Roman Forum.

Eager that others should have access to his collection, Gladstone spent his last years arranging the permanent legacy of his library to the nation. He still had enough energy to wheelbarrow his 30,000 volumes across the lawn, design their classification and shelving system, and shelve them all himself. He also discovered, much to his chagrin, that duplicates comprised 3 percent of the collection. As a result of his efforts, St. Deiniol's, named after an early scholarly abbot of North Wales, is the only library in the world with its own hotel.

When I visited this "intellectual hospice," as Gladstone affectionately called it, the majority of the guests—up to forty-six at any one time—were scholars, clerics, and university students from Britain, North America, and Australia, but non-academics are welcome. For example, I met an Australian grandmother who was researching the similarities between Celtic and Aboriginal spirituality; her son, an Anglican priest, was studying ecumenical relations; his wife made brass-rubbings; and their three small children attended the local school. It was ample evidence that the Gladstone legacy lives on.

Indeed, except for the ever growing number of books (around 1,000 per year), modern plumbing, central heating, and computer outlets in every room, it is as if the clock had stopped during Gladstone's era. "His spirit still hangs heavy. There's an overwhelming feeling of history wherever I go," says

St. Deiniol's, named after a scholarly Welsh abbot, is the only library in the world with its own hotel.

an American marriage counselor visiting St. Deiniol's to proofread his latest book.

Even the library-hotel's red sandstone building was designed by John Douglas, a very prominent Victorian architect, and the nearby parish church, also dedicated to St. Deiniol, is a treasure trove of the best of mid- and late-Victorian craftsmanship, with stained-glass windows by Edward Burne-Jones, a rood screen by Giles Gilbert Scott, and memorials to the Gladstone family.

Douglas's stately galleried reading room, with its octagonal oak columns and delicate swirling tracery, is the hub of St. Deiniol's. It is open seven days a week from 9 am to 10 pm, according to Gladstone's wishes. "The very place makes you feel intelligent," says a retired American biology professor researching the Victorian theory that early man could not discern colors.

Guests have access to open shelves of all but the rarest books. They are allowed free-run of more than 200 periodicals (100 are current), and 250,000 books and pamphlets. These reflect Gladstone's wide-range of interests, particularly history, religious studies, and the nineteenth century: its politics, philosophy, theology, human rights (especially those of women), and literature. There are also considerable holdings in ancient studies, which held a great fascination for intellectual Victorians including Gladstone, who was a distinguished Homeric scholar himself.

Besides Homer, Gladstone's favorite authors were Aristotle, St. Augustine, Dante, Shakespeare, Jean Froissart, and Sir Walter Scott. His own books, thirty-eight volumes of his speeches, and 50,000 political pamphlets, mostly written or collected by him, form the core of St. Deiniol's collection. Its most famous pamphlet is Gladstone's *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation* that denounced the pope for interfering in temporal affairs. Published in 1874, it sold more than 150,000 copies and earned Gladstone £2,000, with Pope Pius IX himself helping sales by calling the prime minister "a viper attacking the barque of St. Peter." These plus more than 50,000 first editions published during the Victorian era and 250,000 items of the Gladstone family papers make St. Deiniol's one of the world's richest troves of nineteenth-century resources.

Many volumes contain Gladstone's annotations and occasional glimpses of his sense of humor. For example, a copy of the colloquies of Erasmus of 1664 is inscribed: "Samuel Powell Purser bought this book on the 11th day of July, being Saturday in the year of grace 1840." Gladstone had written underneath: "And sold it very soon after." In fact, guests often come from all parts of the world to consult his comments and marginalia. Frequently written in Italian, a favorite is *ma* (but) followed by an exclamation point when Gladstone indicates a difference of opinion with the author.

Aside from the books, St. Deiniol's greatest asset is the chance to share ideas with others from different backgrounds over meals served in the oak-paneled dining room under the benevolent gaze of Gladstone's portrait, over coffee and tea in the common room, or in the huge park of Hawarden Castle (which is still home to Gladstone's great-grandson)—all at very reasonable rates.

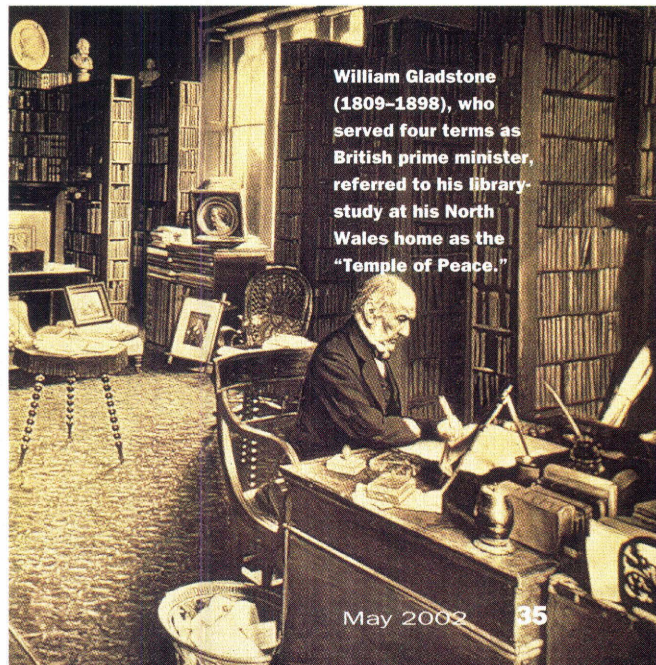
In fact, visits, generously discounted for clerics and students, run from a few days to a year. The daily rate for a single room is around $50 per person or $350 per week. You might have to share a bathroom, but breakfast and dinner are included in the price. In addition, full and partial scholarships are available.

Non-obligatory chapel services are held everyday and "choir practice" is a popular recreation. But don't worry: it means nothing more demanding than a visit to one of Hawarden's three pubs, known as "Church, Chapel, and Cathedral."

On a more serious note, lectures and seminars on theology, church history, and Victorian England are held throughout the year. There are also summer programs in Victorian studies, literature, Welsh history, continuing religious education, and crash courses in Welsh, Hebrew, and Ancient Greek. It's also possible to organize your own course.

When not at the library, North Wales, only a hour's drive from Manchester, is a great place for exploring medieval castles, panning for gold, mountain climbing, hiking, and all sorts of water sports. Chester, one of Britain's most historic and picturesque cities, is only seven miles away and features Roman remains, medieval city walls, the historic Rows galleries, an impressive cathedral, the country's largest zoo, and the oldest racetrack in the United Kingdom. The Chester Grosvenor hotel boasts the same ratings as Claridge's in London, and its high teas and dinners are, to say the very least, memorable. Ⓔ

Lucy Gordan, based in Rome, writes about culture and travel.

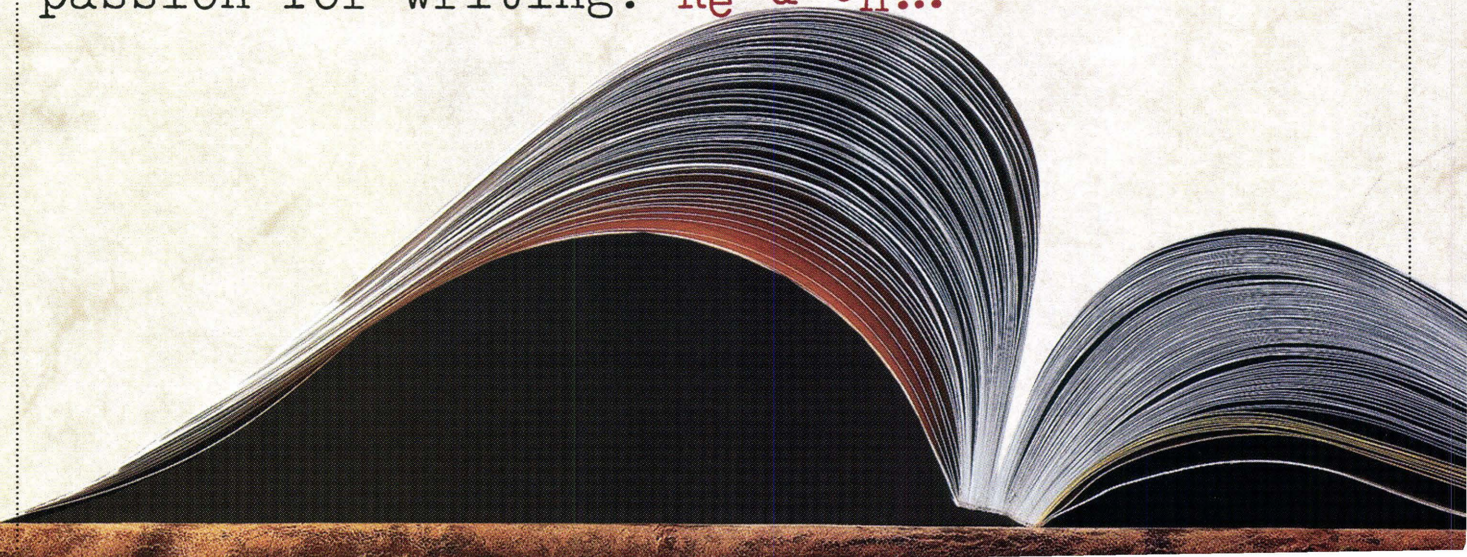


William Gladstone (1809–1898), who served four terms as British prime minister, referred to his library-study at his North Wales home as the "Temple of Peace."

CAPITALS

An overview of current events and trends in Europe's capitals

This month EUROPE asked each of our Capitals correspondents to profile an author from his or her country. Their choices come from a variety of backgrounds and approach writing from an array of vantage points: from journalists to poets, novelists to Nobel Prize winners, some young and some not-so-young. Furthermore, their subjects are as diverse as the writers themselves. They run the gamut from romance to mystery, current affairs to history, from nature and science to pop culture and everything in between, but they all share one thing in common: a passion for writing. Read on...



COPENHAGEN

GREAT DANE OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Throughout his career, seventy-year-old Danish writer, critic, and journalist Klaus Rifbjerg has been remarkably productive and innovative. Author of more than 100 books—including both prose and poetry—as well as scripts for movies, radio, and television, Klaus Rifbjerg stands out in Danish literature as one of the country's most significant contemporary writers.

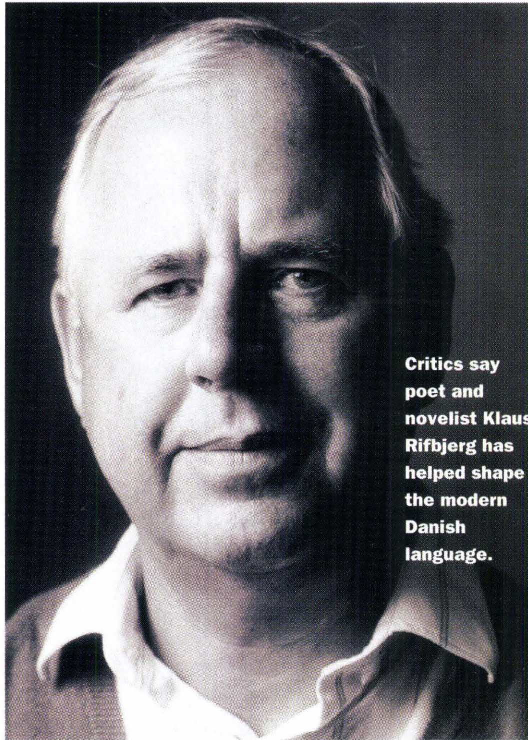
Since his debut in 1956 with the collection of poems *Under Vejrs med mig selv* (Getting Wind of Myself), Klaus Rifbjerg has earned acclaim for his sensuous language, his irony, and his incisive observations about Danish society. The latter have often provoked strong feelings among many Danish readers and given him the reputation for being the great social critic of contemporary Denmark.

On Rifbjerg's seventieth birthday last December, Denmark' s culture minister, Brian Mikkelsen, hailed Rifbjerg for being the Danes' relentless conscience. "You attacked our hypocrisy, the explosive materialism, TV, and a lurking, dangerous petit bourgeois attitude inherent in the modern lifestyle," the minister said in his congratulatory speech to Rifbjerg. "But it was never a barren, biased critique, you always preferred the dialogue."

The culture minister went on to praise Rifbjerg for living up to the standard he has set for others that they must never become indifferent to what goes on in society.

Still, most Danes know Rifbjerg for his contributions to the Danish language and literature. Since 1958, most Danish students have encountered at some point in their academic careers his most widely published book, *Den kroniske uskyld* (Chronic Innocence). The novel, which is about youth and friendship and details a young couple's intense romantic relationship that ends tragically when the girl's mother seduces her daughter's boyfriend, has thus become one of the most-read Danish novels of our time and is considered by many to be a modern classic.

Rifbjerg's special way with language and his ability to capture the Danish imagination for so long has brought the author numerous prizes over the years, including the Danish Academy's Grand Prize in 1966, the Nordic Council's Literature Prize in 1970, the H.C. Andersen Grant of the Danish Writers' Association in 1988, and the Nordic Prize of the Swedish Academy in 1999.


Critics say poet and novelist Klaus Rifbjerg has helped shape the modern Danish language.

Most recently, in October 2001, Rifbjerg was awarded the annual prize of Modersmål-Selskabet, an association furthering the preservation and development of the Danish language. When discussing its choice, the association summed up everything Klaus Rifbjerg stands for: "In poetry as well as prose, Rifbjerg's language has been innovative and marked by the humorous, the ironic, the self-ironic, the well argued, the surprising, and the sensuous—all the things that language can do and does, when Rifbjerg uses it. He makes us proud of the mother tongue we share."

—*Maria Bernbom*

BRUSSELS

POL MATHIL OR LEOPOLD UNGER?

When I came to work in Belgium twenty-two years ago, I was much impressed by the commentaries by Pol Mathil on the then Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that appeared regularly in *Le Soir*, Belgium's leading French language newspaper. They struck me as being exceptionally perceptive and authoritative, superior to anything appearing at that time in the Anglo-Saxon press.

Some time later, at a dinner party, I met a genial Polish émigré journalist called Leopold Unger, whose articles, in the *International Herald Tribune*, I had also admired. It was only subsequently that I learned that he and Pol Mathil were the same person.

Mathil-Unger will be eighty this year. He was born in Lvov—then in Poland, now Ukraine—and somehow survived the war, though both his parents were massacred in the Lvov ghetto. He has been active in journalism for more than fifty years, starting as a correspondent in Romania for the Polish press agency, by whom he was eventually dismissed for not adhering slavishly to the Communist Party line.

He then had what he describes as "a good career" with the Warsaw newspaper, *Zycie Warszawy*, where he was protected by the sympathetic editor-in-chief whose admiration for the writer's journalistic qualities outweighed his embarrassment at his liberal views. Nevertheless, the long arm of the party caught up with him in 1969, when he was once again dismissed and was forced into exile.

"You should understand," he said in a recent interview, "I was Jewish and Gomulka, the first secretary of the party, had launched a campaign against what he called the 'Jews of the Fifth Column.'"

His difficulties continued when he arrived in Belgium. "I had had to renounce my Polish nationality to be able to leave the country. And in Belgium, I was regarded by the state security service as a dangerous Communist agitator. Even at *Le Soir*, there were hesitations, with people wondering if I had come in order to settle my accounts with the Communist regime or if, on the contrary, I was playing the game of the regime in Warsaw."

Yet, his qualities were soon recognized, and he became a star contributor to the paper, his new colleagues warmly rallying round and helping him to express himself in good French. He was a quick learner and before long was turning out prose that was at least as good as most of his fellow contributors.

After more than thirty years, he is still writing for *Le Soir*, as well as for *Gazetta*, the leading Warsaw daily, and his book of reminiscences, *The Intruder*, has been a great success in Poland. "The book de-

scribes my twenty years of journalism on the east of the [Berlin] wall," he says, "my twenty years to the west of the wall and twelve years when there was no longer a wall."

He has an unrivaled network of sources to draw on, notably of course in Poland, but also throughout Eastern Europe. To my view, he remains the best-informed and most stimulating commentator on the post-communist world. The people of Belgium are indeed fortunate to have such a fine writer in their midst.

—Dick Leonard

LONDON

RANKIN AND REBUS: TARTAN NOIR

It all happened because John Rebus was in his favorite massage parlor reading the Bible." The opening line of Ian Rankin's fifth Inspector Rebus novel, *The Black Book* gives you a hint of why he has become the biggest-selling crime writer in the United Kingdom. His latest work, *Resurrection Men*, went straight to number one after its publication in January.

To say that Rebus is a police detective inspector who sees life in his native Edinburgh through the eyes of a middle-aged loner is factually correct but fails to convey the gritty realism and the exceptional depiction of modern Scotland in this series of crime novels, which are gradually being reclassified as Scottish literature.

But it didn't happen overnight. "I had the longest apprenticeship in literature," says the forty-two-year-old Scottish writer. "The first book came out in 1986 and from then on one or two books a year were published, but I wasn't making any money I could live on. It's in the last three years that things have really taken off because the backlist suddenly clicked."

Sales of old and new titles now exceed a million a year in the UK alone. A television series based on the books aired here last year and may soon reach the US where he has already gained critical acclaim and his agent is confident that popular success will follow.

Rankin would like that, as he is fascinated by America and mostly reads American crime fiction. "I like James Ellroy, Lawrence Block, and Andrew Vachss." It was Ellroy who pithily described Rankin's work as "Tartan Noir."

Crime fiction author Ian Rankin claims to have had "the longest apprenticeship in literature."

The love affair with the US began a decade ago. "Back in 1992, I won the Chandler-Fulbright Prize. They gave me $20,000 and a return flight. We bought an old VW camper and, with my wife and our three-month old son, Jack, toured for six months, covering around 20,000 miles, staying with friends and in old motels, saw sights, and each day thanked the estate of Raymond Chandler, whose money was paying for this most amazing experience."

Rankin's first Inspector Rebus novel, *Knots and Crosses*, was written while he should have been studying toward a PhD in English literature. It was intended as a one-off, until someone asked whatever happened to Rebus. So he brought his detective back to life for a second successful adventure, a third followed, and now there are thirteen.

Rebus lives in real time. He was forty in the first book, is now in his mid-fifties, and must retire at age sixty, which means, says Rankin, a maximum of another six books.

His writing has changed through the years. "My later books are a lot longer, denser, more complex than the earlier ones, blending three or four plots, challenging the reader. I want to explain Scotland to myself, to fellow Scots, and to the outside world. So far, I'm not sure I've done more than scratch the surface of this bizarre, mixed-up country, but I'll keep trying."

—David Lennon

> "We bought an old VW camper and, with my wife and our three-month old son, Jack, toured for six months . . . and each day thanked the estate of Raymond Chandler, whose money was paying for this most amazing experience."
> —IAN RANKIN

LUXEMBOURG

CHRISTOPHORY'S QUEST FOR LETZEBUERGESCH

You don't have to be a best-selling author to put your mark on the literature of a country. Sometimes it is enough simply to be an enthusiast for a neglected language and through translation, criticism, and advocacy help bring it into the literary mainstream. Jul Christophory has performed just such a service for written Lëtzebuergesch in Luxembourg.

You probably have not heard of this tongue—a distant cousin of German—but in Luxembourg, it is the language babies learn with their mother's milk. It is the common spoken tongue, heard on buses, in bars and restaurants, and in homes and offices.

The key word here is "spoken," and back in the 1960s, it was little more than that. Lëtzebuergesch was widely heard but very seldom read. There was no official grammar, no generally accepted system of spelling, and little by way of a literary tradition. Those writers who liked the idea of working in this ancient tongue were discouraged by its limited vocabulary.

Christophory says his interest in Lëtzebuergesch was awakened in the late 1960s when he was a secondary

EUROPE Update

MAY 2002 VOLUME X / NUMBER 5

ECHO DIRECTOR SPEAKS OUT ON HUMANITARIAN AID TO MIDDLE EAST AND AFGHANISTAN

Costanza Adinolfi, director of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), visited Washington, DC last month. She spoke to EUROPE *editor-in-chief Robert J. Guttman about ECHO and its role in assisting people in need during the current crisis in the Middle East and in Afghanistan.*

Can you briefly explain ECHO?

ECHO is the humanitarian office of the European Commission, and we are in charge of implementing humanitarian aid at the European level. This office is managing an annual budget averaging €450–500 million ($400–450 million) per year, but there also [have been] years when a major crisis was happening, like the Kosovo crisis or the Middle East crisis some years ago, and the budget we had managed was about €600–800 million per year.

What is ECHO doing in the Middle East today?

We have been engaged in the Middle East for a long time trying to support and give an answer to the needs of the population, be they refugees or the population outside the refugee camp. We have been covering all the Palestinian population, [including those living] outside the territories. We have assisted in Jordan and Lebanon over the last year. Recently, our major support has been to UNHCR for food aid programs and for resettlement programs. We have also worked quite a lot together with different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in trying especially to support very vulnerable groups like families headed by women and the Bedouins, which are minority groups with a very difficult situation.

This has been going on for four years now, and the situation is becoming more and more difficult. Already last year, we had difficulties in trying to target appropriate projects because of access difficulties. With the closure of the [Palestinian] territories, it has become more and more difficult for the different implementing agencies to get access to the population. The closure of the territories by the Israeli authorities has also made the overall situation of the population worse, especially over the last part of 2001 and the beginning of this year.

I would say all the normal coping mechanisms of the population, which were there up to June of last year, are progressively going downhill. For instance, with the closure of the territories and the stopping of normal economic activities, people in the territories have been obliged to use all their financial reserves to just get food and primary health care. The coping mechanism is already very much under stress, and the latest events with the destruction of assets will probably make the situation worse.

We don't know exactly what is happening now. We are trying to push for access to the territories for the region's various agencies. We need to be able to see what kind of emergency aid we are able to bring in—be it in terms of medical assistance or food delivery. We think there are shortages of food already now in the territories, which was not the case a month ago.

Is this because of the latest Israeli incursion?

As I said the situation has really worsened over the last six months because the coping mechanisms were diminishing. The last two or three weeks' events have probably made the situation a real catastrophe.

How much money has the EU given to the Palestinian Authority?

The overall contribution from the Commission budget in 2000 was about €222 million. In 2001, it was €147 million, and what is planned at this stage for 2002 is again €222 million. The humanitarian contribution of that package has been €18 million in 2000, €26 million in 2001, and we are planning at this stage €15 million, but it will probably be much more because of the emergency.

You said the violence has spiraled out of control. What about the suicide bombings?

We recognize the fact that this is unacceptable. No legitimate cause can explain the attack on civilians, and this is what the Palestinians are doing. We do not excuse it at all. We do not support at all this conduct of attacks on civilians. The attacks on civilians from the Israeli side are unacceptable, too. Our concern with the Israeli attitude now is the fact that they are denying access by humanitarian agencies to the victims. We are not saying that they are not entitled to (defend themselves). War is war and we understand they are at war, but in any war, you have laws which oblige all the belligerents to give minimum access to humanitarian agencies to civilian victims. What has been denied now is access for humanitarian organizations to the civilians.

How long has this been going on?
This has been going on since the start of the military operation, but before that, there were restrictions of the humanitarian workers' movements. But definitely since the beginning of the military operation two weeks ago, the access has been not only denied but the humanitarian agencies have been put under attack from the military. They have been shot at. I have seen ambulances being shot at by the military; people have been assaulted [in] the ambulances. The doctors and the nurses have been under threat and have been obliged to defend themselves. This is the most crucial point for us.

Does the European Commission actually have people in the West Bank or are you sending aid through your NGOs?
We do not implement directly. We provide [aid to] these NGOs and UNHCR and other UN agencies, but we have one of our technical staffers, who is based in Jordan, who normally goes to the West Bank to monitor our project and discuss it with our partners. Lately she was not in a position to go to the West Bank. However, she is in constant contact with all our partners in Jerusalem.

So an aid package from the Red Cross or from some other NGO could be paid for by the European Commission?
Yes, if there is an American NGO which is partnered with us and who is capable of delivering, they can ask for our support.

It doesn't always say provided by the European Community?
No, we normally ask that it be marked "provided by European Community," but this does not mean that it cannot go through different channels.

What is ECHO doing in Afghanistan?
We are implementing quite a large program. Last year, ECHO has funded more than €54 million in aid through different channels. We have been essentially supporting projects in rural areas and food-for-work projects, health-care projects, drinking water, and water and sanitation projects. We will be doing more or less the same thing this year. We have already approved the €17 million financing, and our global targets at this stage for Afghanistan is about €25–30 million. We also will be supporting an operation probably in Pakistan and Iran linked to returning refugees.

How will you be helping Pakistan with refugees?
We'll be giving money to NGO's, working in refugee camps for Afghan refugees who are returning. This is a small part of the European effort. There will be a major package coming from Europe for Afghanistan, which has been pledged in Tokyo and is part of a larger rehabilitation/reconstruction plan that we are supporting.

Was the EU active in helping Afghanistan before the terrorist attacks of September 11?
Yes, we have been in Afghanistan for a very long time. We first started in the 1990s. We revised our strategy in 1998 because of the Taliban attitude. We withdrew from Kabul where there was an office, and we were just in Islamabad during Operation Afghanistan. We were there before September 11, and we had already put more than €23 million in 2001 from January to July, and we had already started to request additional funding for Afghanistan in August because we saw the situation worsening.

What was most of the money for?
It was especially to address the question of drought because this was the major problem they had at that moment. We were seeing the situation getting worse and with more displacement of population, refugees going to Pakistan and Iran.

Do you ever see ECHO 'going out of business' or do you think the world isn't going to change that much?
Unhappily I don't think so. I'll say we will have achieved our mission if we are no longer needed, which means that our assistance will have started to get some results.

WHAT THEY SAID. . . ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

"We understand and respect the right of the Israeli people to live in peace and the duty of their armed forces to defend the safety of their population. But the time has come for the Israelis and Palestinians to break away from the infernal cycle of violence, revenge, and retaliation. Violence can only create more violence. It will never bring peace.

To President Arafat and all Palestinians, I say abandon terrorism. The EU remains convinced that President Arafat and the Palestinian Authority is the legitimate partner with whom peace talks must resume immediately. But you must clearly denounce all acts of terrorism that bring death and misery to innocent civilians.

The greatest tragedy is to see young Israelis and Palestinians fighting and dying, when they should be studying, working, and talking to each other."

—Romano Prodi, European Commission president

"We call on Israel to refrain from the excessive use of force and undertake all possible efforts to ensure the protection of civilians...We call on the Palestinian Authority to act decisively and take all possible steps...to dismantle terrorist infrastructure, including terrorist financing, and to stop incitement to violence."

—Kofi Annan, United Nations secretary-general; Igor Ivanov, Russian foreign affairs minister; Josep Pique, Spanish foreign affairs minister; Colin Powell, US secretary of state; Javier Solana, EU high representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy in a joint statement following talks in Madrid, Spain in April

WHAT THEY SAID . . . (CONTINUED)

"Europe is committed to peace. We are friends of both Israelis and Palestinians, but we are also neighbors and partners...When so many people take to the streets in Europe in support of peace—Arab and Jews alike, most of them EU citizens—we cannot accept the continuation of a conflict with a clear bearing on our common conscience and interests."

—Javier Solana, EU high representative for CFSP

"I very much hope that both Mr. Sharon and Mr. Arafat will listen to the advice they've been given by President Bush and by others to end the violence and to get back to talking to one another."

—Chris Patten, EU commissioner for external relations

"Both sides know what needs to be done and they should get on and do it—now...The time for violence is over and the time to get the peace process going is overdue."

—Tony Blair, UK prime minister

"The sovereignty, the right of Israel to exist, is unimpeachable, and that includes the right to life without terror."

—Edmund Stoiber, governor of Bavaria and leader of the Christian Social Union party in Germany

EU NEWS: DUTCH GOVERNMENT RESIGNS

The Dutch government headed by Prime Minister Wim Kok resigned on April 16. The resignation was triggered by a report from the Netherlands' Institute for War Documentation condemning the government's failure to prevent the 1995 massacre of 6,000 Muslims in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, which had been put under the protection of Dutch troops as part of a UN peacekeeping plan. The report also found that senior defense ministry officials withheld information from the government to preserve the army's reputation.

"We are going to visit the queen. I will offer her the resignation of the ministers and junior ministers," the prime minister told reporters. Army Chief of Staff General Ad van Baal, the second-highest ranking officer in the Dutch army at the time of the massacre, also resigned.

In explaining his decision, Kok said the international community "is anonymous and cannot take responsibility" for failing to implement an effective peace plan. "I can and I do," he said.

However, the prime minister emphasized that the Netherlands did not "accept blame for the gruesome murder of thousands of Bosnian Muslims in 1995, only partial political responsibility for the circumstances in which they happened."

For the murders themselves, he placed the blame firmly on Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic, whose forces overran the town and later deported and executed thousands of Bosnian Muslim men and boys who had taken refuge in the Dutch peacekeepers' compound. Mladic remains at-large and is one of thirty-three fugitives wanted by the UN War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague. He faces charges of genocide.

National elections had already been scheduled for this month, and the sixty-three-year-old Kok had previously announced his plans not to run again. In the interim, he and his ministers will continue to handle the nation's day-to-day affairs until a new government is formed following the outcome of the elections.

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

France's **Peugeot-Citroen** looks set to overtake German rival **Volkswagen** as Europe's biggest carmaker within a couple of years by wooing buyers with eye-catching new models and advanced diesel engines.

Peugeot captured around 15.8 percent of the market in the first quarter of the year consolidating its second place in the European sales league—a massive improvement on its 11 percent share and fifth ranking in 1997. Volkswagen has a 17.6 percent market share, broadly unchanged over the past five years.

Peugeot's small 206 model became Europe's best-selling car last year, passing the Volkswagen Golf, and the company is now focusing its growth plans on Germany where it aims to increase its market share from 4.5 percent to 6.5 percent.

Peugeot is also the world's largest producer of advanced diesel engines, with production hitting 1.7 million units last year. Nearly half of its cars and light trucks sold last year had diesel engines that are more fuel-efficient than gas engines. And with diesel cheaper than gas in most European countries demand for these engines is expected to rise to 40 percent of the market in 2002 from 35 percent last year.

•••

Telia, Sweden's state-controlled phone company, acquired Finland's **Sonera** in a $6.5 billion all share deal aimed at fending off larger European rivals and countering slowing domestic growth that is certain to accelerate consolidation of the telecom industry in the Nordic and Baltic markets.

Europe's first cross-border merger of incumbent telecom operators created a group with a market capitalization of more than $18 billion with a dominant position in the Nordic mobile phone market and a presence in emerging markets in Russia, the Baltic states, and Turkey.

The merger "constitutes the first major step in the Nordic consolidation in the industry," according to Telia chairman Lars-Eric Pettersson. Analysts say Norway's **Telenor**, which has been sidelined by the deal, might revive its courtship of **TDC**, Denmark's former state telecoms monopoly, or make a bid for Finland's **Elisa**.

The Swedish government, which owns 70 percent of Telia, will hold 45 percent of the merged group while the Finnish government's 53 percent of Sonera will dilute to a 19 percent stake in the new company. Both say they will reduce their stakes in the next five years.

•••

Europe's major power utilities are poised to launch a takeover blitz in the US as a $100 billion domestic spending spree over the past three years has reduced the number of targets at home and the collapse of **Enron** has more than halved the valuations of American energy firms.

Leading European firms like **RWE** and **EON** of Germany, **Suez** of France, and Italy's **Enel** could accumulate as much as $150 billion from the sale of a wide swathe of non core assets, from chemicals to telecoms, over the next five years.

European utilities have spent about $25 billion on US power companies in the past four years, led by **Scottish-Power**'s $10.7 billion acquisition of **PacifiCorp** in 1999, but they still want a bigger presence in the world's largest power market, twice the size of Europe's.

EON chairman Ulrich Hartmann said he plans to make two acquisitions in the US Midwest after getting clearance for the $14 billion purchase of **Powergen**, the UK utility that owns a Kentucky-based utility. The firm has sold non-energy businesses worth nearly $40 billion since June 2000 using the funds to create the world's second-largest electricity company after France's **Electricité de France** and says it has another $40 billion from planned asset sales and potential bank loans to spend on expansion.

Suez, the world's second-largest water company, is also expected to take advantage of falling valuations of US utilities. Its **Tractabel** unit acquired **Trigen Energy Corp.**, a New York-based power generator, and **Cabot LNG**, a liquefied natural gas business for more than $900 million two years ago. The UK's **National Grid** also may add to its US business, which includes **Niagara Mohawk**, acquired for $8.36 billion, and **New England Electric System**, which it bought for $3.2 billion.

•••

Switzerland's new national airline, **Swiss**, is bracing for a $662 million loss this year but expects to make a profit in 2003 on its way to becoming one of Europe's leading global carriers.

Swiss, which has been created from the wreckage of **Swissair**, which collapsed with debts of $7.9 billion last October, underlined its optimism by spurning an offer of cheap second-hand planes and placing a $1.3 billion order for thirteen brand-new Airbus A340-300s, which will form the backbone of its long haul fleet.

Swiss, which is combining some of the services of Swissair and those of regional carrier **Crossair**, was established with a capital injection of $1.7 billion from the Swiss government and private companies, including **Nestlé**, the world's biggest food group. It has 128 aircraft serving 126 destinations in fifty-nine countries and 5,500 employees—2,000 fewer than Swissair.

Swiss cut its costs by getting former Swissair pilots to accept a 35 percent wage cut, but analysts say it faces an uphill struggle to survive in an overcrowded European market that needs fewer, not more, airlines.

•••

Royal Dutch Shell embarked on another expansion drive, spending more than $14 billion acquiring gas stations in Germany, a motor oil product business in the US, and a leading independent UK oil company.

The Anglo-Dutch oil giant boosted its downstream activities in refining and marketing by taking over the **DEA** gas station network in Germany from **RWE**, the country's leading utility, and paying $3 billion for **Pennzoil-Quaker State**, a US lubricants manufacturer.

The company also continued its move upstream with the $6.2 billion acquisition of **Enterprise Oil**, the largest UK oil exploration and production company, which had rebuffed a takeover approach from Italy's **Eni** in January. The company's 250,000 barrels per day output, mostly in the North Sea, will swell Shell's total production to more than 2.5 billion barrels per day.

•••

The collapse in air travel following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US brought a warning from **EADS**, the parent of **Airbus**, that earnings will fall by nearly 30 percent this year and an admission it can't estimate orders for 2003.

EADS (European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company) increased net earnings by 21 percent last year to $1.5 billion compared with a pro forma figure of $1.3 billion in 2000 when it was formed through the merger of the leading aerospace companies of France, Germany, and Spain.

—*Bruce Barnard*

EUROPE Update

Contributors

Bruce Barnard reporting from London

Europe Update is published by the Delegation of the European Commission, 2300 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union institutions or the member states.

schoolteacher. The British ambassador at that time had asked to be taught the language and soon other foreigners followed. In 1969, Miami University opened a campus in Luxembourg, and Christophory was hired to teach languages and European literature.

At that time, he recalls, Lëtzebuergesch enjoyed little sympathy with the Luxembourg public. "Luxembourgers found it crazy to deal with the language at all. It was very much a minority thing, on a personal basis, and nothing was systematically organized," he says.

But he had the bug, and in 1971, he published an English-Lëtzebuergesch phrasebook.

Say It In Lëtzebuergesch was a classic labor of love, written in his spare time, printed at his own expense, and distributed by hand to booksellers who begrudged the space it took up. Slowly but surely, the book found a public and evolved into the more ambitious *Who's Afraid of Lëtzebuergesch?*

Two dictionaries followed during the 1970s—Portuguese-Lëtzebuergesch (the main immigrant group in Luxembourg is Portuguese) and English-Lëtzebuergesch. Both were organized by Christophory, who recalls how he gave students pages from an English-German dictionary and asked them to replace the German words with Lëtzebuergesch. The dictionaries are still used today.

Enthusiasm for Lëtzebuergesch was still largely a matter for foreigners in the 1970s. Christophory says that a significant role was played by James Newcomer, an American lieutenant who took part in the liberation of Luxembourg during the war, and afterwards devoted his life to the history of the country, even to the extent of founding, with Christophory's help, a Luxembourg library at the University of Texas in Fort Worth.

By the 1990s, however, Lëtzebuergesch had begun to seize the imagination of Luxembourg's own writers. In 1994, Christophory published *A Short History of Literature in Lëtzebuergesch* in which he proclaimed the language as the only proper means of expressing "the popular heart and soul of the native Luxembourger."

About this time, the well-known novelist and children's writer, Guy Rewenig, published a trilogy of novels that broke fresh ground by being written originally in Lëtzebuergesch. The books were an extraordinary popular success and helped spark a revival in the language that is now recognized as one of the most distinctive features of Luxembourg culture in recent years.

The teaching and promotion of Lëtzebuergesch now gets some official state support, though the language is not part of the official school curriculum. Interestingly though, it is coming increasingly into use in preschool establishments, as a means by which very young immigrant children can approach German and French without too much hassle. Lëtzebuergesch is too limited ever to challenge German or French as a medium for Luxembourg writing, but thanks to Christophory and others it now commands a genuine following in literary circles. One measure of its popularity today is that for the first time there are now more people wishing to learn it than teachers available to help them.

—Alan Osborn

BERLIN

THE QUIET GERMAN AUTHOR

Susan Sontag called his work a rare example of "noble literary enterprise." He was considered for (but never awarded) the Nobel Prize for literature. W.G. Sebald, who died last December in a car crash, won a select but devoted readership in German and English. And that seemed to suit him just fine. Shunning the conventions of popular literature, Sebald turned out highly original books—*The Emigrants*, *The Rings of Saturn*, *Vertigo*, and most recently *Austerlitz*—that defy simple classification. Their style is often described as "diffuse" or "oblique," crossing the boundaries between history writing, travelogue, and fiction. German readers have said that Sebald wrote "like a ghost."

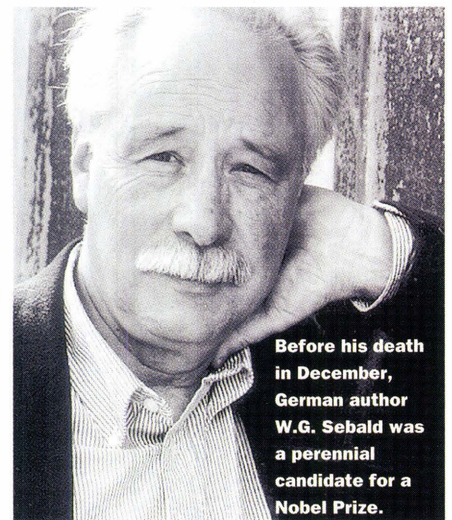
The relationship between death and memory was W.G. Sebald's all-encompassing theme. (For the record, the initials "W.G." stand for Winfried Georg. Those who knew him called him "Max," his third name being Maximilian.)

Growing up in southern Germany in the aftermath of World War II, Sebald only slowly became aware of the unspeakable atrocities committed around the time of his birth in May 1944. His father, who was a captain in the German army, returned home from a French prison camp in 1947. Like many other veterans, he never talked about the war. Sebald said that he learned "practically nothing" about Germany's wartime history until he was in his mid-teens.

Then, at the age of seventeen, Sebald was shown a documentary film about the freeing of the Belsen concentration camp. It was his first confrontation with evidence of the Holocaust. "There it was, and we somehow had to get our minds around it—which of course we didn't." This experience proved deeply influential for Sebald's emotional and literary development. He would later devote much of his life to reflections on the process of forgetting and remembering.

After studying in Freiburg, Sebald took up a post at the University of Manchester in 1966. Four years later, he moved to England permanently, joining the European studies department at the University of East Anglia. There he remained for the rest of his life. While carrying out his duties as a lecturer in German, he also founded the British Center for Literary Translation. He didn't begin writing literary works himself until he was in his mid-forties.

Although Sebald spent much more of his life in England than he did in Germany, he always wrote in the German language. "Unlike Conrad or Nabokov," he once said, "I didn't have circumstances that would have coerced me out of my native tongue altogether." Fortunately, Sebald's novels have been expertly translated into English. *Austerlitz* appeared in English just shortly before the author's death. Two more of his books are due out in translation this year: *After Nature*, his first literary work (published in German in 1988), is a one-hundred-page prose poem that introduces many of the themes explored in his later works. *Air, War, and Literature* (sched-



Before his death in December, German author W.G. Sebald was a perennial candidate for a Nobel Prize.

uled for publication in November) is a non-fiction work based on a series of lectures about the Allied bombing of German cities during the war.

What makes Sebald such a fascinating writer is not his choice of subject but rather his approach. He abhorred that genre of writing that treats existentially incomprehensible forms of experience (for instance, the Holocaust) with sentimentality. Instead, Sebald addresses his material in a subtle, unassertive way using intimation and suggestion. He often augments his writing with images, mostly anonymous, uncaptioned photographs that appear to both comment upon and act as subject for the narrative.

Reading a Sebald novel serves as an exercise in the process of remembering, with all its retrospective weight and fuzziness. Memory is what Sebald once called "the moral backbone" of literature. "Memory, even if you repress it, will come back at you, and it will shape your life," he said. "Without memories, there wouldn't be any writing." W.G. Sebald will be remembered—and missed.

—Terry Martin

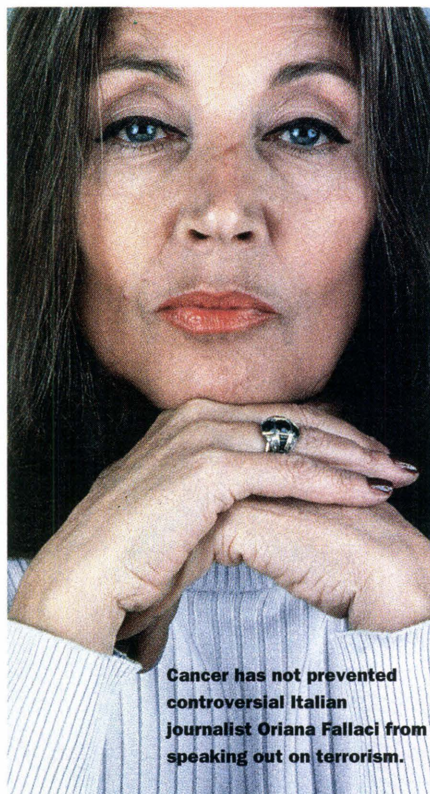
ROME

THE RETURN OF ORIANA FALLACI

It was a violent lashing. And only one person could have been wielding the whip: Oriana Fallaci.

Until recently, the war correspondent and noted author has kept a low profile as she battled cancer, taking refuge in her Manhattan brownstone and her home in Florence. "But I continued working every day, from eight in the morning until evening," she points out. "And always using my old typewriter, certainly not a computer." But after September 11, when her old newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, asked her for a commentary on terrorism, she broke her silence, unleashing a long and ferocious piece attacking Yassir Arafat, the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, and the foolishness and hypocrisy of a policy of pro-Muslim civil rights advocacy professed by Italians and the Western world in general. It was page after page of direct and outspoken attacks that the editor neither cut nor edited. Entitled "Rage and Pride," the article has since evolved into a book, which immediately scaled Italy's bestseller list.

She abstained from the ensuing uproar. Right from the beginning she announced: "I know I will irritate a lot of people, I know I'm not politically correct. But I don't care. I know I'm right when I warn against the violence and degeneration of Islam. And I know that, after September 11, we can't hold back or make compromises any longer. We're either with them or against them. That's enough for me. And I have no intention of feeding the controversies that will be sparked by what I have written." She has been as good as her word. She has responded to no one.



Cancer has not prevented controversial Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci from speaking out on terrorism.

However, after the initial shock, mainstream journalists, politicians, and opinion makers—especially those leaning toward the left—contested her thesis in articles and on television. But not a word from Oriana Fallaci. In short, her return to the journalistic scene was fittingly that of a diva. Even many of those who disagree with her admit that, despite her opinions, she is the greatest female author and journalist in Italy today.

The piece drove many to pull out her books, and once again, people were discussing her war experiences, described in *Nothing, and So Be It* and in her novel about Beirut, *Inshallah*. She says she is "obsessed by the uselessness and the stupidity and the cruelty and the folly of the war" and has always managed to describe it in a unique and precise way. The *New York Times* described her work as having "...a muscular eloquence when giving us the squalor, yearning, and shadowboxing of the soldiers' existence."

She is also famous for her aggressive interviews with history makers, including Arafat and Henry Kissinger, with whom she has had memorable and tough encounters. These interviews earned her the epithet "brutal interrogator" but one whom the *Los Angeles Times* described as "the journalist to whom virtually no world figure would say no."

Amid the renewed interest in her work, critics have repeated their praise for her intimately revealing memoirs, including *A Man*, in which she immortalized the one great love of her inveterately single life, Alexandros Panagoulis, the Greek poet and resistance leader who was killed in 1976, and *Letter to a Child Never Born*. Although very different books from her war books, they share a common theme. Of this, she writes: "Our civilization is a value which no one must be allowed to threaten or violate." It may not be politically correct. But how can one dispute it?

—Niccolò d'Aquino

> "I know I will irritate a lot of people, I know I'm not politically correct. But I don't care."
> —ORIANA FALLACI

DUBLIN

AN ARTIST OF PLACE

Almost forty years on since his debut novel appeared, John McGahern has once again taken the Irish literary scene by storm, delivering a masterpiece with his latest novel *By the Lake* (published in Ireland as *That They May Face The Rising Sun*), his first book in almost twelve years.

McGahern is hardly in his first flush of youth. But, at almost seventy, he is now toasted by the literary establishment, the grand old man of Irish letters with international recognition and the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the American-Irish Award, the Prix Étranger Ecureuil, and the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

A far cry from 1966 when his first novel, *The Dark*, whose adolescent narra-

tor challenged the thinking and attitudes of the Roman Catholic church, was banned by the Irish authorities under the then strict censorship laws.

More importantly, from a financial point, at the behest of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, McGahern was dismissed from his job as a national schoolteacher.

But McGahern, who despite these setbacks soldiered on with his writing, still refuses to condemn the church or the politicians. (Amid the public controversy over the book, the banning was debated in the national parliament.) "It was the weather of my early life, and I could no more attack that than attack my own life."

He was born in Dublin in 1934 but grew up in County Roscommon in the midwest of Ireland. He was educated at St. Patrick's Training College (for teachers) in Dublin and University College Dublin. But it is his life in rural Ireland that informs most of his works.

His father Francis was a cantankerous police sergeant, his mother Susan a teacher. Under the rules of the time, a police sergeant couldn't have a wife who worked, so the McGaherns lived apart during the school year—mother and children wherever Susan was working at the time, Sergeant McGahern at the police station in Cootehall, County Roscommon. When Susan died, the seven children moved in with their stern and frequently belligerent father.

The Moroneys, a local Protestant family, took a shine to young John and gave him the run of their nineteenth-century library. McGahern happily admits the debt he owes them. "I would never have been a writer except for the access I got to their library."

When *The Dark* was published, McGahern was married to a Finnish theater director, Anniki Laaski. They had met in Paris, married after a short courtship—a marriage that lasted a few short years, but ironically in many ways, partly mirrored his own parents' years together, albeit without the same restrictions.

John McGahern was fired from his job as a teacher for writing a controversial novel in 1966.

She worked in Finland and hated Ireland, McGahern couldn't live in Finland, and they only had occasional meetings in London when McGahern went to live there. Divorce was inevitable.

A telegram in the late 1960s from a small American college saw McGahern move to the United States to do stand-in duties as a visiting lecturer and the start of a still existing relationship with Colgate University in upstate New York.

There he met Madeline Green, childhood friend of a New York editor of McGahern's acquaintance. They married and now live in rural Ireland near where McGahern grew up.

By no stretch of the imagination can McGahern be described as a prolific writer. He takes many years to shape and hone his novels. But *The Barracks*, *The Dark*, *Nightlines*, *The Leavetaking*, *Getting Through*, *The Pornographer*, *High Ground*, *Amongst Women*, *The Collected Stories*, and a play, *The Power of Darkness*, form a significant and fascinating body of work.

Amongst Women, which won the prestigious *Irish Times* Literary Award, was short-listed for the Booker Prize and became a highly praised, four-part BBC Television series.

By the Lake is "a superb, earthly pastoral" in the words of Eileen Battersby, the *Irish Times* literary correspondent. She says McGahern, "a supreme chronicler of the ordinary as well as the closing chapters of traditional Irish rural life," has "created a novel that lives and breathes as convincingly as the characters who inhabit it."

It is a simple, ordinary story, beautifully crafted. A childless married couple, Joe and Katie Ruttledge, having abandoned life in metropolitan London, now live "the good life" in an old lakeside farmhouse. The book places Joe and Katie as interlocutors, drawing on and voicing the thoughts and views of their disparate neighbors.

Catríona Crowe, a senior archivist at the National Archives in Dublin, writes in the *Sunday Tribune*, "We are given something deep and clear from one of our greatest prose writers." Patricia Deevy in the *Sunday Independent* calls it "finely balanced between toughness and tenderness." And John Boland in the *Irish Independent* hails the book as "a masterpiece."

But don't take my word, or those of the critics, read it for yourself. You will not be disappointed.

—*Mike Burns*

STOCKHOLM

THE MASTER AND THE STUDENT

P.C. Jersild is not a man who sidesteps controversy. Since he was a teenager, the sixty-seven-year-old Jersild has been taking hard looks at the ethical and social dilemmas of modern society. Although he writes from a Swedish perspective, the questions he raises are universal.

A medical doctor, Jersild is particularly interested in medical ethics. He's the author of a pamphlet on ethics for medical students at the prestigious Karolinska Institute, where he also studied.

But far from being a dry recitation of dos and don'ts for students, the guidelines are in the form of a parable in which

two characters, "the Master" and "the Student" discuss various ethical issues. The unusual style is immediately engaging, even for those outside the medical profession. The dialogue, deceptively simple, quickly gets to the heart of such issues as when a fetus becomes a separate being, how and when laboratory animals feel pain, and the right of humans to experiment on them.

His novel *A Living Soul* is narrated by Ypsilon, a disembodied human brain. Jersild wants readers to consider just what Ypsilon is: simply an experiment or actually human? The book was written in 1980, but the question seems especially timely considering the current debates on cloning and developing laboratory embryos for research.

Most of Jersild's writing is not easy reading, nor does he intend it to be. A number of his books such as *The Animal Doctor* and *After the Flood* are dystopia novels, popular with science fiction enthusiasts. The former is an insider's look at medical research, who pays for it and how doctors and researchers can become lost in bureaucracy. The Alfred Nobel Medical-Surgical Institutes depicted in the book is a thinly disguised Karolinska Institute, whose faculty in fact awards the Nobel Prizes in medicine.

After the Flood takes place thirty years after a nuclear disaster. Although that is an old theme, Jersild manages to make it fresh.

Jersild often uses parables to make his points. In the novel *Grisjakten*, (The Pig Hunt) which was not translated into English although many of Jersild's other novels are, the main character is a civil servant who is given the job of killing all the pigs in Sweden. He keeps a diary of his experiences, which Jersild uses as a device to raise questions about blindly obeying orders and what happened at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Jersild has been a full-time author since 1977. Many of his opinions were formed during the years he spent working as a doctor, specializing in medically related social welfare problems and psychiatry.

His earliest books are a satirical look at Sweden's socialized medical system, the bureaucracy of enormous institutional hospitals, and the dehumanization of patients and doctors.

When he isn't writing books, Jersild is a regular contributor of opinion articles to the daily paper *Dagens Nyheter*. There, Jersild takes on everything from medical ethics to the adoption of children by homosexuals.

Shortly before the Swedish government brought a proposition to Sweden's parliament, the Riksdag, to allow homosexuals to adopt children, Jersild mused about whether it is possible to definitely show that children adopted by homosexuals are at a disadvantage compared with those adopted by heterosexuals and concluded that the question can never be completely settled. But most important, he said, is to stop discrimination against any group.

"For me, tolerance is central," he wrote. "When homosexuals are treated like any other people, then it can be in the child's best interest to grow up with homosexuals as parents."

The column generated many letters to the editor, probably pleasing Jersild. He doesn't necessarily want people to like what he writes. But he does want them to listen.

—Ariane Sains

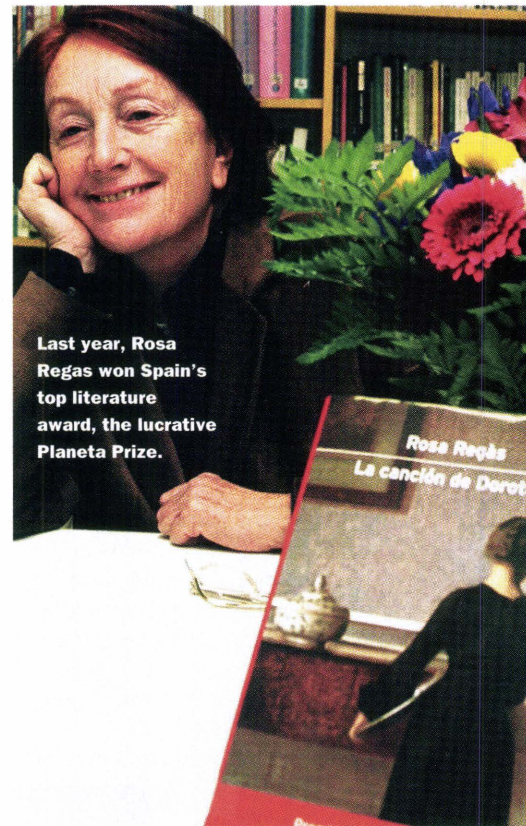
MADRID

ROSA REGÀS BUYS TIME

Spanish bestseller lists are often filled with works by women writers, and the current tabulation is no different. At number three in the first week of March was *La Cancion de Dorotea* (Dorothy's Song) by Catalan novelist Rosa Regàs, last year's winner of Spain's top literary award, the Planeta Prize.

The prize included a cash award of about $532,000, and Regàs says she will use the money to buy the most precious commodity of all—time. "That's all I want at the moment," she told the press after winning the prize. "I've got everything else I need. Many times, people move so quickly through life in order to earn a living. Well now I'm going to spend a good part of the money on taking things slowly."

A prolific author, Regàs has certainly earned a rest. Since the late 1980s, she has written a dozen novels, a collection of articles, and contributed to anthologies on such subjects as film, soccer, fictional heroines, and travel. She also regularly appears on radio chat shows and contributes to travel magazines and newspaper opinion pages.



Last year, Rosa Regas won Spain's top literature award, the lucrative Planeta Prize.

Born in 1933 in Barcelona, Regàs worked at a publishing house from 1964 until 1970 and then struck out to found her own companies—one that produced works on literature, politics, economics, and philosophy, and the other that published children's literature. She gave that all up in 1983 to work as a freelance translator for the United Nations in Geneva, New York City, Nairobi, Washington, Paris, and other cities before returning to Spain in 1994.

The latest work, *La Cancion de Dorotea*, tells the story of a woman university professor who lives in Madrid and hires a woman to care for her aging and ailing father in a country house, setting the scene for a tale full of mystery and which explores the question of identity.

After winning the Planeta Prize for the book, Regàs told the Spanish news agency EFE that while her earlier works

"Many times, people move so quickly through life in order to earn a living. Well now I'm going to spend a good part of the money on taking things slowly."
—ROSA REGÀS

had love as the common denominator, "this last one has little to do with my other books, except perhaps *Memoria de Almator* (Almator's Memory) with which it shared the importance of a landscape, of a place."

—*Benjamin Jones*

VIENNA

SAD FAREWELL TO FRANZ INNERHOFER

In his *Letters to a Young Poet*, Rainer Maria Rilke tells the writer to look deep within to see if he must write. "Find out the reason that commands you to write; see whether it has spread its roots into the very depths of your heart; confess to yourself whether you would have to die if you were forbidden to write." Franz Innerhofer was an Austrian writer who chose to die. He committed suicide; his body was found in his home in Graz on January 22. He had stopped writing his deeply autobiographical novels nine years earlier.

Innerhofer gained popularity in the seventies with his brutally honest exploration of rural life in Austria. His writing was based on his own upbringing as a badly treated farmhand working on his father's land. He went to a vocational high school and later studied German and English in Salzburg. In 1973, he embarked on a freelance writing career, and his stories of the hardships of a bucolic existence gained him widespread notoriety. His fame was ensured with his trilogy of novels *Beautiful Days*, *Shadowside*, and *The Big Words*, in which he portrayed rural life in Austria with candor and realism. Critics hailed his work as *Anti-heimatdichtung*, or anti-pastoral writing. His piercing words examined not only farm life but also the underbelly of industrial work and the often empty phrases of academics and intellectuals.

Innerhofer found himself uncomfortable with the celebrity bestowed on him by both critics and readers. He once said that he was merely a "word worker," just as he had previously been a farm worker. After he had poured out several highly acclaimed autobiographical novels, he stopped writing for several years. His work fell out of fashion as the world moved ahead and the zeitgeist changed. He unsuccessfully tried to recapture his audience in 1990 and 1992 with two stories and a novel. Although he had received many literature awards in his prime, his time had seemingly ended. Perhaps, as Ulrich Greiner proposed in *Die Zeit*, Innerhofer faced a classic dilemma of autobiographical writing—finding the way to move beyond personal history into the future. Goethe said after writing *Werther* that he had to let it die so that he himself could live. Unfortunately, Franz Innerhofer took the opposite path.

—*Alexandra Hergesell*

THE HAGUE

WHO IS MAREK VAN DER JAGT?

Who is Marek van der Jagt? Is he the author of the essay about love, written for this year's Dutch Book Week, or is he the Dutch writer Arnon Grunberg, who lives in New York? The essay for Book Week is called "Hebban olla vogala," which are the first words known to have been written in early Dutch, appearing in a love poem from the eleventh century. (The complete phrase translates as: "All birds have started nests, except you and me—so why are we waiting?")

Marek van der Jagt has been a mystery ever since his name turned up in Dutch literature. In 2000, his first novel, *The History of My Baldness,* won a prestigious prize for new writers. Yet, he did not show up at the ceremony where the prize was awarded—instead he sent a letter that insisted on preserving his anonymity. His publisher only revealed that Marek van der Jagt was born in 1967 and that he lives in Vienna, where he earns a living as a salesperson in a local pharmacy.

The jury that awarded the prize insisted that Van der Jagt's novel was, by far, the best debut of the year and that the jury itself had discovered the book. The prize was awarded but never collected. At that time, the jury was not aware that it might have been a practical joke of Arnon Grunberg. Ironically, Grunberg won the same prize in 1994 for his debut novel, *Blue Mondays*, which was later translated into English and published in the United States.

However, literary journalists started guessing about the identity of Van der Jagt and, by comparing style and other elements, soon made the connection with Grunberg. In interviews, Grunberg responded. "I am not Marek van der Jagt. *The History of My Baldness* has not been written by me. The manuscript was sent to me, and I have leafed through it."

However, in Vienna, there was no Marek van der Jagt and e-mails answered by him were traced back to New York, where Grunberg is living and working as a part-time waiter.

Grunberg belongs to the young generation of Dutch writers. After *Blue Mondays* (1994), he wrote two more novels that were well received. He is fascinated by fictitious reality, and the characters of his novels live in a world of failed loves and misunderstandings.

After the rumors about the identity of the author in 2000, it came as a surprise that the National Book Promotion Commission last year requested Van der Jagt write a special essay for this year's Book Week, the annual high point of the Dutch booksellers' promotional activities. It is a prestigious assignment and generates a huge volume of sales of the author's books. Van der Jagt has let the organizing committee know that he will not be available for promotional activities during the week, but his name alone has already stirred interest.

—*Roel Janssen*

LISBON

FOREIGN WRITERS FALL FOR LISBON

Although Portugal has produced a wealth of literary talent, including recent Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, all too little of its literature has been translated. One result is that foreign readers have little opportunity to sample literature about Portugal written with a native sensibility.

However, works by foreign writers about Portugal and its capital, in particular, have become increasingly popular. Most of these writers—whether longtime residents or occasional visitors—try hard to capture a sense of place.

For centuries, Lisbon has been seen as a place from which to set off for the rest of the world, an idea reinforced during World War II when it served as a staging point for refugees from Nazi-ruled Europe. The Cais das Colunas, a large stone-flagged terrace flanked by columns from which stone steps lead down to the Tagus River, served as the city's front door for much of this period. Dutch writer Cees Noteboom in *The Following Story* (1990) described the Cais as "like a gateway to the ocean and the world beyond."

Another aspect of Lisbon often noted by writers is its hallucinatory quality, which is connected with its unique light and the fact that it has a different rhythm from most European cities. For many, the city is associated with dreams and a mutable time.

Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi, many of whose works are translated into Portuguese and English, epitomizes this in his 1991 novel *Requiem* (released as a film by Alain Tanner in 1998). On a hot Sunday in July, the narrator tries to meet a famous writer with whom he has fixed a rendezvous. This writer is never named, but it is clear that it is Fernando Pessoa, the great early twentieth-century Portuguese poet on whom Tabucchi is an authority. But the rendezvous itself turns out to be all but incidental; the strange situations and curious characters, including a "Seller of Stories" that the narrator meets along the way are at least as important.

Pessoa himself, who identified strongly with his home city despite having spent his childhood in South Africa, makes an appearance in much literature about Lisbon. An obvious example is Saramago's 1992 novel *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, whose central character is named after one of the pseudonyms under which Pessoa published many of his poems.

Saramago is among those writers who see Lisbon with a historical eye, even when ostensibly writing about the present. *The History of the Siège of Lisbon* (published in English in 1996) deliberately muddles the story of a downtrodden proofreader with the eleventh-century Christian conquest of Lisbon from the Moors.

One foreign writer based in Portugal has delved into another, at least as harrowing, period of the capital's history. Richard Zimmler's 1998 historical novel *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon* is set in the first years of the sixteenth century, when Portugal's "New Christians" (Jews forced to convert to Christianity) were trying to keep alive their traditions in secret. The Inquisition was at its height, seeking out such heretics, forcing them to confess, and burning many of them at the stake even if they did.

It is a far cry from the more recent notion of Lisbon as a place to escape from the mainstream, a haven for the unconventional.

—*Alison Roberts*

PARIS

MIREILLE'S MAGIC

Lifelines come in all forms. For Mireille Calmel, struck down when she was eight by a mystery disease that doctors said would kill her, the written word became her tether to this world. As long as she kept writing, she was convinced that she would not die. The little girl survived and grew into a healthy young woman whose first novel, based on the early life of Eleanor of Aquitaine, has already sold a million copies.

Since last year, Mireille's life resembles a fairytale. The manuscript of her novel, *Le Lit d'Aliénor* (Eleanor's Bed), caught the fancy of Bernard Fixot, one of France's most prestigious publishers. He signed her up and presented the book to the 4 million-member France Loisir, Europe's biggest book club. They loved it and decided to give it an unprecedented European-wide private launch late last year, with seven foreign editions in Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the Czech Republic. On February 25, the novel—already a bestseller—hit French bookstores.

The road that led Mireille to this moment was a long and painful one, closer to a nightmare than the dream come true that she is living now. Born in 1964, in the south of France, Mireille was a normal little girl, when she woke up one morning to find that her limbs were starting to swell. Soon, she looked so monstrous that her mother had to take her out of school because other children were throwing rocks at the "freak." As her muscles atrophied, doctor after doctor was consulted, but no one could diagnose Mireille's strange illness. She was dying, that was all anyone was sure of.

But Mireille refused to give in. In the various hospitals where she spent time, she started reading and writing voraciously. "I started writing because it was a way of exorcising my fear of dying," she recalls. "I was literally bulimic for words: I devoured library books; I wrote hundreds of poems, songs, and even a first [self-published] novel."

From a hospital bed, Mireille Calmel began her writing career at age eight.

There came a point, when she was eleven, at which her mother was told that she would not live through the night. "Then I'll take her back home," her mother answered. "If she has to die, then it might as well be after I've done everything I can to save her." With the help of a doctor who practiced *mésotherapie*, a form of alternative medicine that stimulates the autoimmune system, Mireille's mother slowly nursed her back to health. Madame Calmel now works as a healer all over the world.

It took Mireille until the age of fifteen to be reborn as a healthy, pretty, teenage girl. She has never forgotten the lesson her long illness taught her: "You have to hang on to life and keep on fighting.

"You have to hang on to life and keep on fighting. Whether professionally or personally, life is a series of struggles and you must never give up."

—MIREILLE CALMEL

Whether professionally or personally, life is a series of struggles and you must never give up."

After her recovery, Mireille threw herself wholeheartedly into making up for the time she had lost. She wrote hundreds of poems, songs, short stories, plays, organized a theater festival, performed on stage, and even posed in public as a body-painting model to prove to herself that she was now fit to be seen. In the Aquitaine region, near the city of Bordeaux, where she settled and had two children, she started to work on an epic novel. Set in the twelfth century, it tells the story of the young Eleanor of Aquitaine, queen of France, then of England, and mother of Richard the Lion-Heart.

It took her five years to research and write *Le Lit d'Aliénor*, which focuses on Eleanor's marriage to the pious, lackluster French king, Louis VII, before she fell in love with and wed Henry Plantagenet, the hot-blooded heir to the throne of England. Mireille says she chose to concentrate on this period in Eleanor's life, not as well known as the rest, because, "I wanted to go where no one else had really been. It was an unexplored place at the heart of history where there was room for the imaginary and fantastic."

The fictitious, first-person narrator of the book, Loanna, provides that magical element. A descendant of Merlin the magician, part-witch, part-guardian angel, she becomes Eleanor's lady-in-waiting, with the secret mission to watch over her and guide her toward her true destiny of marrying Henry II. Loanna represents the ancient, pagan beliefs that were gradually dying out in the Middle Ages and being replaced by Christianity. On a more personal level, Loanna is Mireille's alter ego, different from everyone around her, who has to find her place, just as Mireille herself did.

Magic and the supernatural will also play a central part in her next book, a novel centered on the sixteenth-century Swiss alchemist Paracelsus and the French astrologer-prophet Nostradamus. Those two historic characters will be joined by imaginary beings, among them a wolf-woman. Perhaps because Mireille's own existence is something of a miracle, she appears irresistibly drawn toward the elements of life that escape the confines of logic and science.

An English version of *Le Lit d'Aliénor* is still in the negotiation stages, but an upcoming movie called *Court and Spark* may well speed up that process. It will star Nicole Kidman as none other than Eleanor of Aquitaine—and with Hollywood throwing its spotlight on that period in history, Mireille's book is likely to find itself translated and sold in the United States. No wonder she believes in magic.

—Ester Laushway

HELSINKI

THE BEACON OF FINLAND

It is a bit like taking in someone else's washing, writing about another journalist, but it is impossible to think of any contemporary practitioner who has had a greater and more prolonged influence on Finnish thought and policymaking than Olli Kivinen, whose weekly column in the country's largest newspaper the *Helsingin Sanomat* has been a beacon for decades.

Long ago he reached that elevated status in the profession of being a journalist who never does anything so obvious as producing a notebook and a ballpoint pen. Nothing disparaging is meant by this, it's just that he is a writer with such a magisterial command of subject that in many cases his interviewees would prefer to ask him questions rather than the other way around. He was, and remains, the weathervane of Finnish foreign affairs.

In general, Finnish journalism standards are not as exacting as in the Anglo-Saxon/US tradition. On a per capita basis, press readership is the world's highest, as though the population is addicted to the written media. But much of it is rather slapdash or—because the Finnish language permits so many passive and indirect forms of speech—downright circumlocutory.

The delightfully named "Boulevard Papers," that is the evening sheets, disgrace the trade in much the same way that British tabloids do. Beyond the dominating heights of the *Helsingin Sanomat*, there are few "serious" newspapers in Finland (in the interest of full disclosure: I write for one of the others, the *Turun Sanomat*), but the tradition of opinion-forming weeklies has not taken hold in the country.

I have known Kivinen a long time. He was always available patiently to steer foreign correspondents through the ambiguities of Finland's position during the cold war years, the so-called Finlandization period, when faint hearts in the West feared the nation's neutrality was a conduit for Soviet domination.

Like the best teachers, Kivinen allowed an overseas colleague to come away from these encounters flattered that one had understood rather more than was really the case. Never emphatic in his fastidious English, he let hints, indications, paradoxes, and arguments hang in the air, rarely claiming them as his own, a sort of tutorial all the more enjoyable for having taken place over a good lunch, usually at the Savoy.

His oblique style, its lightness of touch, and its trademark modesty are highly appreciated by this capital's elite. His readers know the columnist is deeply informed and perspicacious. Well before Finland began negotiating European Union membership (achieved in 1995), Kivinen had lit the lamp that illuminated the process to its successful conclusion.

"I suppose Finland joining the EU was the professional highlight of my career. I'd been writing about the need to do so for many years before that, and some people thought I was slightly loony. I would like the country to join NATO as well, but recently the popularity of that cause has sharply declined. Maybe that has more to do with President Bush than my own sentiments," he joked.

While it is true that Kivinen does not have a lot of competition, his Thursday column is undoubtedly the most influential in the country. His photograph dominates it: high-domed forehead, thin nose, and the nuance of a smile. The slot has been there for twenty-four years (available in English on the Internet at www.helsinki-hs.net) and will certainly remain until Kivinen retires in two or three years.

He gets much more response from readers than when it started. The Finns are now energetic e-mailers, and his column receives considerable feedback every week, as did his book entitled, *The EU is Not The Cucumber Directive*.

Kivinen began as a reporter in 1962, served as the paper's London correspondent for six years, and was then appointed the foreign news editor before achieving his present status as columnist and lead writer. He won the European Journalism Prize in 1994. It is rare these days that solely writing and not venturing into television achieves broad celebrity in the news trade, but Kivinen has proven to be a notable exception.

He is also one of the last of the "gen-

tlemen journalists," but few contemporary practitioners—anywhere—have had such a direct influence on the course of events in his country. Of course, he will mumble a denial.

—David Haworth

ATHENS

POLICY WONK PENS PRIZEWINNING NOVELS

Nikos Themelis is an unlikely candidate for best-selling Greek novelist. As head of the strategic planning unit set up by Costas Simitis, Greece's Socialist prime minister, he works long hours developing policy and troubleshooting on European issues, as well as traveling with the prime minister to EU summits and on other official trips.

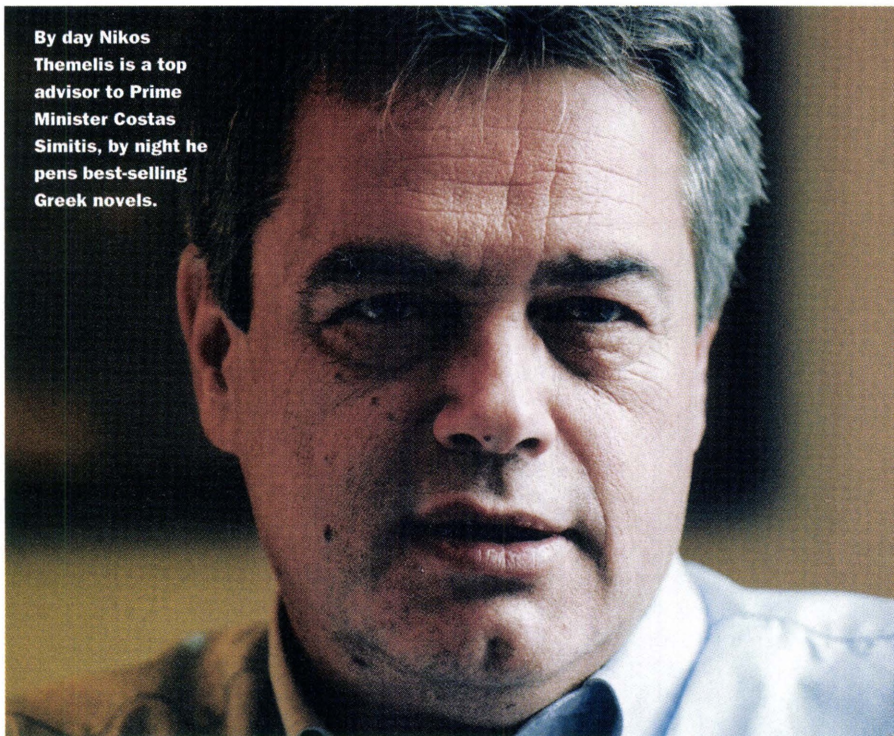
Writing, he says, is a kind of relaxation. Almost all of his first book, *I Anazitisi* (The Search) was tapped out on a laptop, while other officials were chatting or snoozing on the flight back to Athens. Much the same happened with his prizewinning second novel, *I Anatropi* (The Reversal).

Both are historical novels about Greeks living and working outside the country's borders—the diaspora community of merchants that flourished in the Balkans and around the Black Sea in the Ottoman era but was torn apart by revolution and war as old orders collapsed.

Themelis's first book was loosely based on the life of his great-uncle, an idealist from a wealthy, close-knit family of northern Greek merchants, who rejects a traditional money-making role and finds himself carving out a new life, managing an estate in Turkey in the last days of the Ottoman Empire.

The second, he says, is much more ambitious, covering a half century of change and upheaval from the viewpoint of Eleni, "a proto-feminist who's seeking freedom in a world that lacks even liberalism." The books are linked by characters that reappear, although they are written from different perspectives.

"Both titles reflect themes and ideas that were current in the region then, which I found fascinating and a source of inspiration," he says. "Both the enlightenment and the values of humanism came late to the Balkans and Asia Minor, so this was a period when issues of justice and freedom for the individual were just being recognized and debated."



By day Nikos Themelis is a top advisor to Prime Minister Costas Simitis, by night he pens best-selling Greek novels.

In *I Anatropi*, Themelis vividly recreates life in the 1880s in Siatista, a merchants' center in northern Greece, and Thessaloniki, both a cosmopolitan city linked by rail to Western Europe and a Balkan melting pot where Greek residents were outnumbered by Jewish, Armenian, Slav, and Turkish communities. Eleni, a merchant's daughter, elopes with Thomas, her father's business partner. They move to Odessa—home at that time to a flourishing Greek community and liberal ideas that helped foment Potemkin's 1905 rebellion against the Czar.

Themelis says the book has a strong political message. "Reversals and upheavals have to go on happening because there's always a democratic deficit. Eleni rejects the Bolshevik revolution, but she goes on looking for political change and personal freedom."

"But she's very much a person of her time. There was a distinct minority of Greek women from established families who worked for emancipation, just as women did in Western Europe," he adds.

The book explores Eleni's relationships with different men—from her autocratic father to her hardworking and progressive-minded husband who is killed during the Odessa uprising, and her nephew, a committed revolutionary.

The first print run of *I Anatropi* sold out within five days; within weeks it became Greece's most talked about novel. Themelis's political role certainly gives the book an extra edge. Critics have spotted some of the same themes that appear in the prime minister's speeches, in which he urges the Greeks to become more self-confident and take command of their own future, rather than seeing themselves still as the victims of Great Power conspiracies.

Themelis is already at work on his next novel, which he says will complete the trilogy. "It focuses on the interwar period, which was a very difficult time for the region, and I don't think it will be as optimistic as the earlier books," he says.

—Kerin Hope

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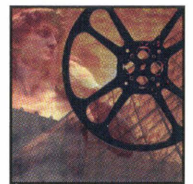


ART

GERHARD THE INSCRUTABLE

Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting; Museum of Modern Art, New York City, until May 21

"Painting is dead; long live painting!" This paradoxical phrase could be Gerhard Richter's motto. The German artist, whose work is the subject of a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), has been credited with both destroying and salvaging the enterprise of painting. Some say he paints to prove that painting is impossible.

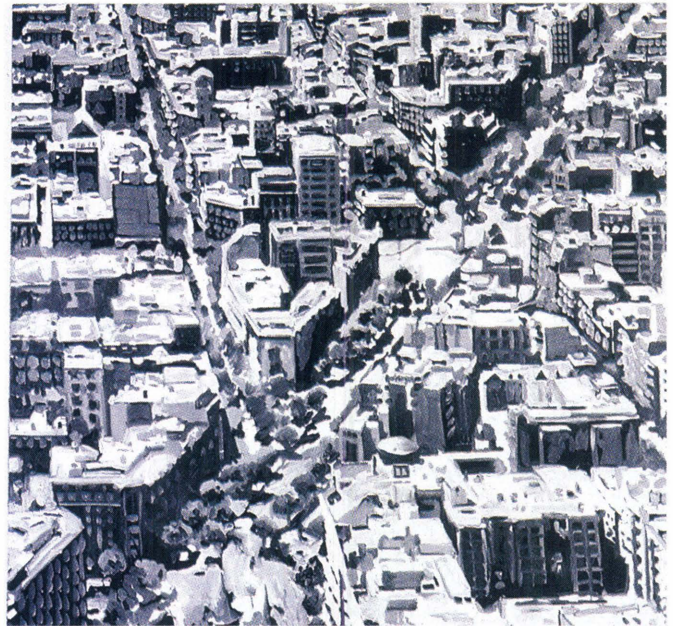
Enigmatic as ever at age seventy, Richter is the consummate chameleon, moving in and out of genres, switching media, and flipping from photo-realistic imagery to the realm of the abstract. If one moment he's making lovely landscapes, the next he's stacking panels of mirrored glass. In between, he pushes gobs of color around a canvas with a squeegee, turns out some life-like portraits, and paints a candle or two—producing works that sell for millions of dollars.

A retrospective of Gerhard Richter's paintings currently on view in New York includes (clockwise from top): *Townscape Madrid* (1968); *Meadowland* (1985); *Woman with Umbrella* (1964).

So, what makes Gerhard Richter such a hot international artist? Why does MoMA consider him "one of the most influential painters working today"? Ask an art critic, and the reply you get will likely be prefaced by a blank stare. Richter simply doesn't fit well into the pigeonholes of art theory. He's been pegged variously as a "neo-expressionist," a "deconstructionist," and a "nihilist." But none of these labels has stuck. Even the catchall "postmodern" doesn't seem to apply; the term belies the traditionalist (even romantic) elements in Richter's work.

Asked recently how he would like to be understood, Richter replied, "I don't know.... Maybe as the keeper of tradition." Then he laughed, suggesting the remark may have been made in jest. In that same interview, he claimed (perhaps more earnestly) that he's been trying to "paint the appearance of reality. That," he told the curators at MoMA, "is my theme or job."

As cryptic as that remark may sound, it at least provides a starting point for understanding Richter's photo-based work. He creates these pictures, which are among the artist's best known, by first meticulously tracing onto canvas the details of a photographic image and then introduces any number of distortions. It's a melding of organic and mechanical processes, reflecting a series of perceptual layers. For the viewer, the effect is one of seeing and not seeing. Taking Richter's cue, one might conclude that the appearance of reality is blurred.



Art critics often look to Richter's biography for clues to explain the apparent lack of consistency in his work. What

one finds is that Richter's life was shaped by a patchwork of socio-political environments. It makes a compelling argument for ideological skepticism, or a case of historical schizophrenia.

Born in Dresden in 1932, Richter grew up in the shadow of the Third Reich. His mentally disabled aunt was killed in a Nazi euthanasia program. Both his uncles died in the army. The family moved to the countryside before war's end but stayed near enough to hear Dresden obliterated by allied bombs.

Following the war, Richter went to art school in communist East Germany and learned the conventions of Social Realism. After painting political banners for a state-owned business, he traveled to the West in 1959 and saw Abstract Expressionism for the first time. Two years later, just before the Berlin Wall was built, he emigrated to West Germany. Settling in Düsseldorf, he studied at the Art Academy there and presented his *Pictures of Capitalist Realism.* The cold war set in, the protest movement hit the streets, and Richter's career ebbed and flowed with the shifting tides of contemporary art. His colleague and nemesis was Joseph Beuys.

Nazism, communism, nihilism, capitalism, realism, expressionism—the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* was on to something when it called Richter "An Artist Beyond Isms." His creative dialectic gives the impression of an artist seeking to transcend (or perhaps reconcile) competing aesthetic ideologies. Exploding the notion that painters should strive to develop a recognizable "style," Richter cultivates radically different, seemingly contradictory modes of expression.

Critics are frequently left dumbfounded—and exquisitely intrigued—admitting that they themselves don't know what his paintings are about. As Robert Storr, curator of the MoMA retrospective, put it: "Richter distills things not to get to their essence, their essential truth, but to get to their ambiguities, the essential question mark." Successful both critically and at auction, the paintings would appear to capture the zeitgeist of a skeptical society.

Ten years ago, when a smaller Richter retrospective made the rounds in Europe, it was fashionable to describe his work as "painting about painting." Today, art aficionados are still furiously debating the meanings and merits of his oeuvre. The MoMA exhibition (which will travel to Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington) provides Americans with their best opportunity yet to see why Gerhard Richter deserves recognition as one of the most challenging and influential artists of our age.

—Terry Martin

THE SOUL OF A SHOE ARTIST

Jan Jansen: Master Shoe Designer; Gemeentemuseum; the Hague; until May 31

Jan Jansen doesn't like to be called an artist, but to his admirers, that is exactly what he is—a shoe artist. His creative footwear designs are renowned in the world of fashion and passionately sought by his clients, and this winter the Hague's art museum acknowledged his genius, installing two hundred pairs of his shoes as a special exhibition. The show's popularity has been astonishing with people waiting in long lines for a chance to admire the master designer's footwear.

Nevertheless, Jansen remains adamant that form takes a backseat to function. "I don't make products of art," he insists, "but industrial products that have to be comfortable to walk in. My work is tied to the foot."

Yet, despite his current popularity, Jansen has not built a mammoth business empire on the scale of some other fashionable footwear designers, such as Salvatore Ferragamo or Manolo Blahnik. Each season, he sells about 800 pairs of shoes in his Amsterdam shop, and a couple thousand more through retailers, mainly in the Netherlands and some in Germany and the United Kingdom. Those who imitate his shoes, he has noticed, have sold much more than he ever has and have made lots of money with his designs. He recognizes that he is a good designer, but a bad businessman.

Jan Jansen's shoes are known for their distinctive shapes, bold colors, and, supposedly, their comfort.

His father sold children's shoes in Nijmegen, the city where Jan Jansen was born in 1941. As a teenager, he got his first job as an assistant in a shoe store, working Saturday afternoons. He took classes in art and shoe making and in 1961, at the age of twenty, moved to Rome to apprentice in an Italian shoe studio. After returning to Amsterdam, he started his own design studio, and soon he counted several celebrities among his clients. He then opened his own shop, which he subsequently moved to the fashionable Rokin district in the center of Amsterdam. In the 1980s, he stopped manufacturing the shoes and began outsourcing the production to factories in Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

By fashion standards, Jan Jansen is an iconoclast, refusing to be inhibited by the 'rules' and traditions of the fashion industry like many of his peers in Milan or Paris. He cherishes his freedom and doesn't bother to abide strictly to what is dictated by the ever-powerful fashion houses. Instead, he is a trendsetter in his own right, having introduced shapes for heels or toes that subsequently became fashionable and were copied by others. When it comes to some of his designs, millions have been sold—but by competitors who copied his work.

Men are mostly out of luck, however, since Jansen prefers to design women's shoes because, he says, they allow for more variations and frivolity. He tests his designs on his wife's feet—both he and his wife have worn only his shoes for the past forty years. Although he is a favorite of the social elite, his clients come from all ranges of society—people who don't go for brand names but just love his shoes. They range in price from about $70 up to more than $220 per pair and are renowned for their distinctive shapes, bold colors, and the eclectic array of materials they're made from.

All that said, however, Jansen ensures that every pair is designed with the wearer's comfort in mind. As he once said, "shoes are just a hole to put a foot in." But as we all know, if it were that simple, they would never end up in a modern art museum.

—Roel Janssen

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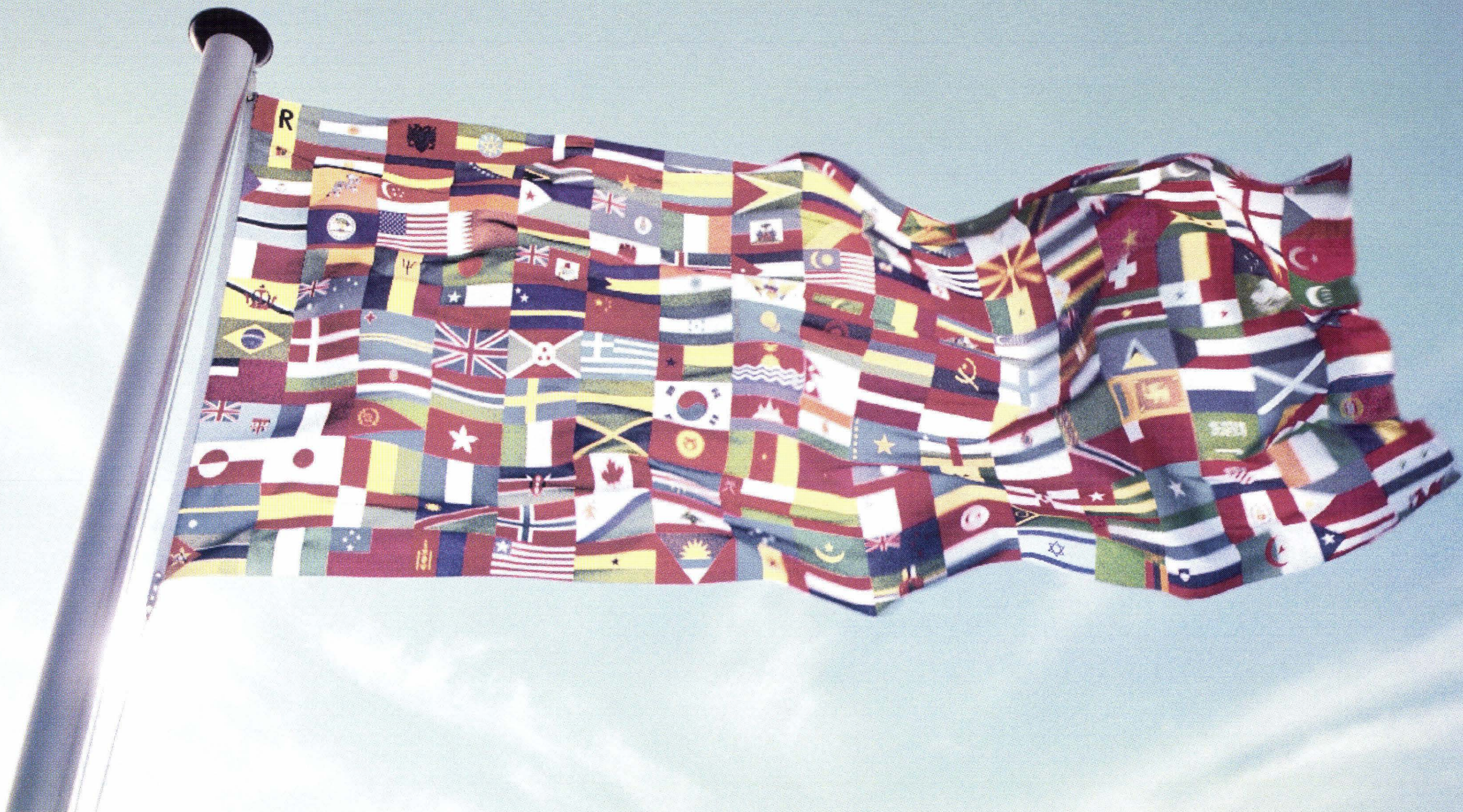

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