

12/5 Extraordinary image on the cover of the *Post* yesterday. Next to the stacked-up headline: HILL, RUDY FADE: SLIPPING IN CRUCIAL POLL, a vertically-cropped full-figure photo of a young woman. Hair disheveled, she faces us, eyebrows swooping upward and together, jaw jutting, her lips protrude in a kind of closed-mouth kiss – all in all a masque of despair, her visage and posture that of a lost soul out of Munch, arms held slightly out from her body, palms forward, open as in supplication. You read that her name is Amy Winehouse, a singer you've not heard of till now. The photographer has caught her wandering by night through the streets of London. Painfully thin. Barefoot. She wears blue jeans and a red bra. Torso and arms peppered with tattoos: a palm tree, a feather, an exotic bird, a tiny fan dancer, a horseshoe in the U position. Upon her stomach, an anchor enspiraled by a serpentine rope above which in loopy script: Hello. And beneath: Sailor.

A mob, shouting racial epitaphs.

Your maternal and paternal grandparents immigrated, respectively, from Poland-Russia, via France, and England. As a consequence of which, with practice, you've learned to speak Immigrant perfectly.

If not fluently.

An eye for a universe – a solar system anyways. Filled with water. Glaucomet. A moat in your eye. Crocodiles? Dragons?

As The Fifth Dimension – density – once sang: *Everyone knows it's windy...*

No, not The Fifth Dimension, they did Age of Aquarius. It's was the Strawberry Alarm Clock. No, that was Incense and Peppermints – *a yardstick for lunatics one point of view*. No, damn, who was it?

Like a dragon swimming through the clouds.

Boycott!

Genie back in the bottle? Dream on.

Properties have properties have qualities have

The Association! Whew. *And windy has stormy eyes, that flash at the sound of lies...* O brother. *And windy has wings to fly above the clouds...* O sister. O mama!

The *Post* refers to the president of Iran as A'jad. Still one vowel too long, no? Or four letters and an apostrophe too real and alive. But watch out. What's forcibly compressed may rapidly expand.

Or is the primal breath about to get sucked back in... And has this happened more 'n once before?

Rummy's replacement, Robert M. "Heavens" Gates, visits Baghdad and Kabul. In both cities, folks celebrate his arrival by blowing themselves up along with

whomever happens to be standing by.



By freezing certain mortgage interest rates, Congress attempts to slap a pressure dressing on the sub-prime hemorrhage that's sent the body economic spiraling into shock – not to say awe. Run in a line for a fast transfusion. Under the circumstances, who's going to quibble that the donors are Saudi? Blood is thicker than water, but what, dear hearts, is the comparative density of oil?

Horrific massacre in an Omaha shopping mall. Eight dead, five wounded, shot

by a distraught young man, bespectacled, wearing camo, who, at the end of his spree, did himself in too.

12/6 Ever seeking the main chance, the *Messenger* senses an opening and surges to a new low. Under the rubric HOUSE PROUD: KING'S RICHES IN A CHELSEA DOMAIN the Leviathan dives, and surface with this:

There are designers who proudly haunt thrift shops and tag sales, but Thomas Hays, an investment banker turned interior designer who has just redone a boutique hotel in Marrakech, Morocco, is not one of them....

The 18 wooden columns on his two-level terrace – which, even barren on the cusp of winter, must be one of the most beautiful rooftop spaces in New York – are from India and Afghanistan and date to the 18th and 19th centuries. They came from dealers in New York and Denver and totaled \$35,000 to \$40,000....

That flat, round piece of palest jade with the hole in the center on the downstairs bathroom sink? It's a bi, a ceremonial piece sometimes found in Chinese burial chambers, and it probably dates to about 2,000 B.C. Mr. Hays, a relative newcomer to the design scene who has done about a dozen projects, lingers over it, holding it up to the light, displaying the striations in the jade. He says it was made by hand and came from Throckmorton Fine Art in New York and was \$7,000; similar pieces have gone for \$70,000 at auction, he says. He moves into the dining area, pointing out what appear to be favorites: two carpets that he says came from the Forbidden City.

The Forbidden City? As in Beijing, and if you weren't a eunuch or a diplomat it used to be really, really hard to get in?

Do the Chinese know about this? Mr. Hays is teased.

Mr. Hays does not see any humor here.

'Nothing was taken out anywhere illegally,' he says....

An interjection from his reed-slim blond wife, [is she made of bamboo?] Marlene Wallace, an actress who joins in the conversation now and then. 'There was also a trade in the 19th century,' she says. 'They would give them to ambassadors.'

Feeling good about the 900-square-foot one-bedroom you found for the bargain price of \$700,000 in Lower Manhattan? You might want to stop reading right here. Mr. Hays, who turns 46 this month, bought this 2,800-square-foot apartment 10 years ago for \$635,000.

And his stuff is so fabulous it should be capitalized: Stuff. A Maria Montez poster encased in a blue and green wooden frame of carved Afghan doors in the den. Eighteenth-century Chinese stone dragons in the gardens. A French Art Deco mirror and wrought-iron day bed. A set of Spanish chairs so old that the person who once reclined in them might have wondered how the Inquisition was coming along.

'The key word is fusion' Mr. Hays says, when asked to describe his style. 'I always try to put things together in a way that is unexpected – stone artifacts next to mohair, a gilt bronze next to hand-tooled leather.'

Oy vay iz mir! Interesting times.

High, low, where you gonna go

Where you gonna go on the totem pole?

Whatcha gonna do to save your soul?

Can't climb down off the totem pole.

In Bullwinkle, weren't the cartoon people and animals always reading the *Picayune Intelligence*?

Theft-O-Rama

Global megastore

Goods are in the where house?

Ohmygod Ohm-a-ha.

We ain't got no ma or pa, cause we is au-tom-a-ta...

Gearing up for the post-Xmas fire-next-time sale.

Turner's Pale Horseman with the corpse draped across the pommel. No camo.

The Unknotted States of Hummerica.

Heads will wobble.

Down the flu and up the drain.

The shock doctrine: coup upon coup until you're coupcoup.

Arbitration, arbitrage.

The Nijinsky code.

Arbitrage agin' the machine?

Vox humana.

Pigarrogance.

The result of this deception is very strange to tell...

Will there come a point whether the dollar's slow bleed becomes a gush?

It's all about smell. Retitle your previous book *Nose of a New York Son*.

Other values: Sotheby's auctions off a fierce little stone lioness for \$57 million to anonymous buyers. Found near Baghdad in the '30s, the creature, purportedly five thousand years old, has lived at the Brooklyn Museum since 1948. About the height of your thumb, this lioness of the Tigris. Where will she journey now?

This past August, a more recently made artifact, and the product of a very different civilization: a platinum skull, more or less death-size and studded with diamonds was sold by its author, Damien Hirst, to an investment consortium for \$100 million. Mr. Hirst is himself a member of said group.

Infinite jest.

Under cover of brightness. Lightning. Tennyson's *flying flame*.

Bloodwateroilbloodwateroilbloodwateroilbl

12/7 Jack's 88th birthday. 1919. Keys on a Steinway. Fifteen minutes of infamy.

"The "Doctor' is out." "Right Hand Dan Quits." "Mike's deputy to be Bloomberg LP prez." Also sprach the *Post*.

"In a stunning development, the senior mayoral aide [Dan Doctoroff] overseeing some of the city's largest and most ambitious projects announced yesterday that he was resigning..."

True and not so. The words themselves are right, but misapplied. The stunning development is not that Doctoroff is resigning. Rather that the city, under

Doctoroff's generalship, has been devastated by the shock and awe of, literally, his strategy of stunning development. From Hudson Yards to Atlantic Yards, from Coney Island to Willets Point and back again. The Powell Doctrine of overwhelming force as applied to the urban organism. All proportions violated tout court. Eminent domain uber alles.

"Doctoroff, a wealthy investment banker working for just \$1 a year, was long rumored to be job hunting..." Hunting? Well, Daniel didn't have to venture far before bagging the presidency of Bloomberg LP, the mayor's, er, "information-services company." Lateral, bro, lateral. Sliiiiide.

"'The city's loss will be the private sector's gain,' declared Mayor Bloomberg..." Again, true words, falsely spoken. For has it not been, time and again, that the city has lost precisely so that the private sector might gain? Speak memory, of Gotham's "fiscal crisis," and its rescue, Andromeda-like, by Perseus in the guise of Lazard Frères and a bankers' consortium.

The smart rats know, before the ship's left port, that out there in the battering waves, it will surely sink.

The tanker Hebei Sprit, its hold punctured by a collision with another vessel, will not, apparently, head straight for Davy Jones'. But while bleeding, it made a gift of 11,000 tons of crude to Korea's most abundant fishery.

Catch o' the day. Comes pre-oiled.

The good ship Gotham. Scuttled by the state? Or is there simply no more food aboard?

Meanwhile, someone keeps stealing Bloomie's car. Twice in one year. And now, politically if not fiscally, he's lost his rodent vehicle. Courage!

All along the watchtower, princes kept the view...

Si, pero unless the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.
That is if you believe Psalm 127: 1

94,000 jobs "added" in November. Nothing smells quite as funky as the attar of cooking books.

And dollars, doldrums, oildrums y dolores. Will it become a tradition in future economies, to give, around solstice time, a few cheap dólares mixed into a gift basket of more valued currencies? Chanukah gelt?

Solstice approaches. The sun stops. And in the northern climes we have least axis to it.

The wind began to howl.

Not officially one of the 36 Tactics, but useful nonetheless: *Use codpiece to cover figleaf.*

Stunning unravelment.

“If your cookie is in 3 pieces,” says the fortune, “the answer is no.”

Turn the slip over: LEARN CHINESE: *QUITE POSSIBLE*: hun yao kaor nun.

Four ideograms. Lucky numbers: 11, 31, 14, 47, 26, 33.

How do you say “stunning unravelment” in Chinese?

Lay on Macduff, and damned be him that first cries, ‘Hold, enough!’

The Man is not a mensch.

News reaches of the death t’other day of Stockhausen, at 79. Music, spheres. He’s part of the kosmos in another kind of way now. During his latter years, it was told and retold that he’d pronounced the destruction of the World Trade Center to be “the greatest work of art.” What he did say, at a press conference on the Monday, September 17, 2001 ran closer to this:

“What happened there, is – now you must all reset your brains – the greatest artwork ever. That in one act, spirits accomplish something that in music we could not dream of; that people rehearse like crazy for ten years, totally fanatically for one concert and then die. That is the greatest artwork for the whole cosmos. Imagine what has happened there. People who are so completely focused on one performance, and then 5000 people are chased into resurrection, in one moment. I would not be able to do that. In comparison, we as composers are nothing. Imagine that I could now create an

artwork and all of you would not only be amazed, but you would drop dead on the spot. You would be dead and reborn, because it is simply too insane. Many artists try to do something like that, to go beyond the limit of what is thinkable and possible, so that we wake up, so that we open ourselves for another world.”

In response to the subsequent question, whether he equated crime and art he replied: “It is a crime because the people did not consent. They did not come to the ‘concert’. That is clear. And nobody announced to them, you could get lost. But what happened there spiritually, this jump out of the realm of safety, of self-evidence, of life, that also happens a little bit in art sometimes – or it is nothing.”

Peace be witcha Karlheinz.

Worth noting too that, Damien Hirst, when interviewed by *The Guardian* on September 11, 2002, reeled off, albeit less breathlessly, pretty much the same line as Stockhausen’s – minus the caveat about lack of consent.

What did the war do in you, daddy?

One evening, Ryokan, or someone like him, was wending his way home to his hut at the foot of a mountain. Entering, he found he had a visitor – a thief. The thief, caught by surprise, made haste to leave, but Ryokan, knowing the man had come a long way and found nothing of value in the hut, detained him. Hastily removing his clothes, Ryokan pressed them on the thief who seized them in a panic and ran off.

Ryokan walked outside naked and looked up at the night sky. *Poor man*, he thought, *I wish I could give him this beautiful moon.*

Tizzy the season.

Busted! For crimes of compassion.

Broken bottles, broken plates,

Broken switches, broken gates,

Broken dishes, broken parts,

Streets are filled with broken hearts.

Broken words never meant to be spoken,

Everything is broken.

Seems like every time you stop and turn around

Something else just hit the ground...

Sang Dylan in "Oh Mercy!"