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IMHBCO (In my Humble But Correct Opinion): OCLC, Trademarks, and the Library Hotel

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Talk of the Trade
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magazines in America", says Morris Dickstein, professor of English at New York University.

Dickstein says "the main influence of Partisan Review came from its freewheeling intellectual style, which was exactly criticizing the joky and colloquial, Miltonesque sources as wildly as Yiddish humor, Talmudic debate, sectarian Marxist polemics, modernist insincerity, and psychoanalytical unmasking. Versions of this style surfaced in journals of different political stripes....(that) drew away talented writers and eroded Partisan Review's natural constituency" over the years.

For 66 years the magazine was edited by its co-founder, William Phillips, until his death late last year at age 94. Ownership then passed to Boston University, and after polling a large group of intellectuals, BU made the decision to suspend publication this past spring. Because Partisan Review wielded such influence over the years, it spawned several imitators that were better funded and published more frequently. According to Dickstein, "the uniqueness of the magazine diminished and disappeared", becoming increasingly less relevant after the end of the Cold War. In a sense, says Dickstein, "the magazine became a victim of its own success."

Advice to the Lovelorn from Jurasic Park
Some people say that a second marriage is the triumph of hope over reason. Whether or not you agree with this sentiment depends, I'm sure, on your personal experience. But what can we say about a fourth marriage? Author Michael Crichton recently offered some success tips for wedded bliss: "You want to spend a lot of leisure time together, sharing the same interests. ...if she wants to go shopping and you want to go hiking, you have a problem." According to Crichton's fourth wife, Anne-Marie Martin Crichton, living with her husband while he was writing was "like living with a body and Michael is somewhere else." The couple recently divorced. Failing to follow his own advice cost Crichton $31 million, as the blushing bride of 14 years got their 65 acre estate in Bedford, NY (near the Clintons, Martha Stewart, Ralph Lauren and only 15 miles from the one-quarter acre estate of your humble correspondent), their 20 horses, two tractors and an art collection (in contrast, on our estate we have several cats, a lawn mower, and lots of fake Cretan art, which may partly explain our continued marriage).

Crisis Looms as Academic Heavyweights Debate Theories of Literary Criticism
Critical Inquiry, the academy's most prestigious literary theory journal, convened a panel of scholars to discuss the recent demise of theories in the humanities. After the French assault of the 1960s—deconstruction and post-colonialism, and the earlier psychoanalysis, Marxist and structuralism theories of the 1940s and '50s, the mandarins gathered in Chicago to attempt agreement on a new approach in this time of crisis. WJ Mitchell, University of Chicago, according to the New York Times, set an upbeat tone by declaring "We want to be the Starship Enterprise of criticism and theory." From this high point, the discussion languished toward Bush-bashing and condemnation of American foreign policy. As if to demonstrate the importance of this event, Henry Louis Gates arrived late, saying "I thought I was in the wrong room...because I thought we'd be talking about academic jargon: people, that Qaeda and Iraq." Sander Gilman of the University of Illinois, Chicago, managed to get the debate back on track by stating, "I would make the argument that most criticism, and I would include Noam Chomsky in this—is a poison pill. I think one must be careful in assuming that intellectuals have some sort of insight....(in fact) they have been wrong almost all the time...and wrong in corrosive and destructive ways."

Stanley Fish nodded approvingly and said, "I like what that man said. I wish to deny the effectiveness of intellectual work." Homi Bhabha was the only panelist to disagree, saying, "incredible work has its place and its uses." Gates rose to argue that he had never seen "the liberation of people of color because of deconstruction or post-structuralism." Trying to explain why so much of the forum was devoted to attacks on American foreign policy instead of discussion of literary theory, Catherine R Simpson of New York University theorized "This particular group of intellectuals has a terror of being politically irrelevant."

Random House to Create New Imprint:
Will the Launch Party Take Place in the Sewer?
Back in the good old days when Senator Joe McCarthy could ruin your career with the "pinko" word, he eventually generated enough public disgust to bring about his own demise. Today, however, personal attacks and inflammatory accusations ensure your steady employment as a TV talking head and your book on the bestseller list. But who would ever believe that the venerable Random House, urged on by its German parent Bertelsmann, would use its Crown Publishing unit to provide a new venue for venomous right wing writers.

Regnery, the Fox News of the publishing world, has been so successful with a number of conservative bestsellers that other publishers have overcome their visceral abhorrence of the right wing. Some have dipped their toes in the sea where Rush Limbaugh swims. Crown, however, will now surf the wave, launching Crown Forum and planning to publish about 15 conservative books a year. (Penguin announced their intention to launch a similar conservative imprint soon after the Random House/Crown Forum press release.) Not that there's anything wrong with this. After all, publishers are in the business of giving readers what they want, and a glance at the Times bestseller lists make it abundantly clear that readers like the right and the left. That's healthy in a democracy. But perhaps we should pause, and contemplate Crown Forum's first blockbuster: The insufferable Ann Coulter debates with her Joe McCarthy defense, Treason: Liberal Treachery from the Cold War to the War on Terrorism. Treason? You can go to jail for that. Can't honest people disagree? Or even dishonest people, for that matter, Can't we passionately disagree without resorting to the kind of name-calling that is designed to destroy reputations? Is there no low blow that a publisher decides is too offensive? Random House ought to know better, and they would be the first to howl if anyone accused them of publishing treasurous books. This is more than bad taste. This kind of rhetoric is unhealthy for democracy.

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When OCLC filed a complaint of trademark infringement against New York's Library Hotel over the hotel's use of the Dewey Decimal Classification® system, word of the suit spread quickly through various online discussion lists. The library community's response was swift and generally incredulous, How could a company claim to own Dewey? How could it believe that a hotel's use of the Dewey system constituted some kind of commercial threat? What was OCLC thinking?

OCLC responded promptly to the growing outcry, issuing a public statement that was sent to a number of lists and individuals. OCLC explained itself by invoking the responsibility of trademark owners to protect their trademarks continued on page 86

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
I, User – The eBook Prospectus: 2004

by Rick Lugg and Ruth Fischer (R2 Consulting)

Column Editor's Note: This prospectus explains what you should know about eBooks before you invest. Please read it carefully. The SEC has not approved or disapproved this offering, or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense. —RL

It's been a confusing couple of months here in eBook World, enough so to turn the steeliest of experts to grey hairs, even if just for a moment. The SEC has not approved or disapproved this offering, or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense. —RL

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reviving at least the rhetoric of boomtown. In short, a great time to be alive!

The bears can point a paw toward B&N.com's surprise announcement on September 9th that it would stop selling eBooks, effective immediately. (Customers have until December 9th to complete downloads of previously purchased Adobe and Microsoft Reader titles.) B&N.com's decision followed by some months that of Gemstar, which ceased selling (or apparently, trying to sell) its eBook devices and content in June. Given B&N.com's early leadership in eBook selling, and its extensive customer reach, this equates to at least a 0.5% on the industry's Richer scale, and testifies to the bears' depression.

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