December 2003

Talk of the Trade

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Recommended Citation

Fast, Barry (2003) "Talk of the Trade," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 6, Article 30.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4221>

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Lost in Austin from page 82

50 of us gathered for drinks — good wine, good beer — and a lowcountry dinner and then enjoyed some after dinner theater that was worth the price of admission even without the food and drink. The one-man show was called “The Book Lovers’ Road Show” and the star was **Jack Walsdorf**.

I have known **Jack** for more than 20 years and I know what a great and knowledgeable collector he is but I didn’t know that he was a showman, too, and a darn good showman, and his presentation in Charleston was an abbreviated version of his usual act. I need to see the whole thing one day and pretty soon.

Basically, people in the audience bring books

that they value for one reason or another and **Jack** appraises them, much as they do on the television show about antiques. The difference is that after **Jack** estimates a book’s value, someone standing by looks the book up on **ABE/ALIBRIS** and sees how close **Jack** was. Sounds pretty boring doesn’t it? But you would be wrong to think that. **Jack** is not boring and his stories and presentation are witty, funny, informative, and entertaining.

During the conference, **Jack** and I each visited **Boomer’s Books** on King Street, the difference being that he visited the store twice and bought something, I visited only once for an hour and found nothing of interest by the authors I collect. I did, however, get a good deal on a used mandolin at **George’s Pawn and Music Store**, also on King Street, a little far-

ther down towards the water and on the other side of the street. It wasn’t a total loss.

You can tell that it doesn’t take much to make me happy. Besides the book talks, there were a couple of meals with colleagues that did not necessarily limit conversation to books and there was lots walking, too, in a city that was built for people and not automobiles.

While I was in Charleston, Austin was celebrating its annual **Texas Book Festival** so I missed out on that and had to turn down a ticket to the gala dinner that is held with each conference. I will stay in Austin next fall (unless the dates do not conflict) and hope for another offer, but I don’t want to wait another seven years before returning to Charleston and the **Charleston Conference**. 🌳

Talk of the Trade

by **Barry Fast** (Deltabooks, 186 Cross Street, City Island, NY 10464; Phone: 718-885-9563) <barry0112@aol.com>

Hey Honey, Let’s Go To The Orbium Phonographicorum Theca After We Load The Escariorum Lavator

“There’s still life out there,” announced **Rev. Claudio Rossini**, director of the **Libreria Editrice Vaticana**, upon the publication of the new modern Latin-Italian dictionary. To prove his point, the previous edition, in two volumes, covering the letters A to L and M to Z, was a “*liber venditissimus*,” a blockbuster best seller to you Latin-challenged readers. In fact, it has sold out, so this new edition, at \$115 a pop, has a whopping 500 copy print run.

Although Latin has been removed from the Mass, Papal encyclicals and other documents issued by the Vatican are still written in this grand though dead language. A committee of scholars is working on keeping Church Latin current, dealing with the thousands of new words in science, computers, and other 21st century issues. So if you want to take your sweetheart to the disco after you load the dishwasher, and you want to say it like a true ancient Roman, now you know how.

First It Was The McDonalds Invasion; Now It’s Nigerian Hookers

Longing for those halcyon days of yore, before gay men “with their castrato voices moan about what heteros put them through,” former film star and animal rights activist **Brigitte Bardot** laments the decline of native-born French prostitutes. In her new memoir, *A Cry of Silence*, Bardot longs for “our lovely, kind streetwalkers.” But those French hookers are largely gone now from the doorways and alleys, replaced by “girls from the East, Nigerians, travelers (Gypsies), transsexuals, drag queens, bearers of AIDS and other friendly gifts.”

It seems kind of pointless to go to Paris these days.

“Tanned Fat Looks Better Than White Fat”

Tammy Faye Messner (nee Bakker) hosted a tea party at New York’s Inn at Irving Place recently to celebrate her inspirational new book, *I Will Survive ... and You Will Too*. The mostly male crowd, according to the *NYTimes*, showered her with adulation. “I just love her,” cooed a drag queen known as Porsche, “ever since I was a little boy in Texas.” Asked if it was the drag queen in him or the Texas, he replied “Oh much more the Texas.”

The new book, part memoir, part advice on every subject imaginable, includes “Who made the rule that you don’t put mascara on false eyelashes?” Indeed. Fans of **Marilyn Manson** will be thrilled to know he’s a close friend of Tammy Faye, but, she complains, “All he wants to talk about is God.” For those of us paralyzed by the vicissitudes of life, she advises, “Your problems are never as bad as you think they are.”

And for the very few of you with problems just as bad as you think they are, you can cheer up by reading the chapter entitled “Fun With Nail Polish.”

Don’t Even Think Of Saying How Much You Admire Her

Folks line up at book signings so they can meet the author, express their admiration for the author’s work, and get an autograph they will treasure. But this is apparently not the case at the **Hillary Clinton** appearances celebrating the publication of *Living History*. At a recent book store event, *The Boston Globe* reports that **Hillary** claimed to have signed approximately 1,000 copies in two hours. This computes to a steady pace of 7.2 seconds per signing. The junior senator from New York must have been saying “Next” at a feverish rate, and woe to the thrilled **Hillary** groupy who even dared to gush empathy for the presidential candidate of 2008.

It Certainly Reads Better Than “Call Me Ishmael”

Congratulations to **Mariann Simms** of Wetumpka, Alabama. She won the \$250 first prize at the Worst Opening Line of a Novel Contest hosted by **San Jose State University**. I quote in full: “They had but one last remaining night together, so they embraced each other as tightly as that two-flavor entwined string cheese that is orange and yellowish-white, the orange probably being a blend of cheddar and the white mozzarella, or it could be provolone or just plain American.”

Adult Arabs Read Fewer Books Than Your Kids

A UN report, prepared by Arab scholars, “outlines how reading and writing (in the Arab world) are impaired by censorship, poor education, religious fundamentalism and war.” In a *Chicago Times* coverage of the report, the newspaper says, “While writers everywhere complain that nobody reads anymore, analysts now provide startling evidence of that trend in the Arab world. Grasping the poor state of Arab information industries such as publishing and journalism, they say, is critical to understanding the alienation, isolation and malaise roiling the modern Middle East.... Across the Arab world, a region of 280 million people, a best seller is a book that sells just 5,000 copies.”

More titles are published in Israel than in all Arab countries combined. “Arabs represent 5 percent of the world’s inhabitants, yet they produce just 1.1 percent of the world’s books, less than the percentage produced by Turkey alone. Religious books represent a higher share of Arabic titles, accounting for 17 percent of all published, compared to a world average of 5 percent.” 🌳