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New and Selected Poems, 1966-1992, and: The

Bingo Palace, and: The Angel of History, and:

Julip, and: The Storm.


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 ***Big Dreams: Into the Heart of California, and: The Man in the Mirror, and: Pulp, and: Disclosure, and: The Standard American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition, for Windows, including Roget's Thesaurus, and: Velocities: New and Selected Poems, 1966-1992, and: The Bingo Palace, and: The Angel of History, and: Julip, and: The Storm Season, and: Stygo, and: Make Me Work, and: The Butcher Boy, and: Summer of Rescue, and: What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew, and: Kill the Cowboy, and: The Fact of a Doorframe, Poems Selected and New 1950-1984, and: The Cage, and: A Shared Life, and: Pluto, Animal Lover, and: Strolls with Pushkin, and: Getting Over Tom (review)***

Leigh Block, Julie Gochenour, Willoughby Johnson, Virginia Jones, Tim Kridel, Pamela McClure, Chris Michener, Speer Morgan, Brett Rogers, Kris Somerville, Evelyn Somers, Kenneth Soucy, Jim Steck, Jeff Thomson

The Missouri Review

University of Missouri

Volume 17, Number 2, 1994

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

6 ^* ,£».-«- ^\ Z Big Dreams: Into the Heart of California by BUI Barich Pantheon Books, 1994, 560 pp., \$24 BUI Barich is a personal essayist whose previous works include *Laughing in the Hills*, about his love of horses and lust for gambling. In his latest book, *Big Dreams*, he takes a leisurely wander through California, north to south, stopping where he feels like it, talking to all kinds of people, lacing the past to the present through historical anecdotes and details. Barich's main business is California of the 1990s. He wanders the wine country, where an acre of land goes for fifty thousand dollars and growing grapes is a very risky business. He tries to camp in an overcrowded Yosemite and is rebuffed because he doesn't have an advance ticket. Barich has an intimate, conversational style, trusting his reader to follow him, changing tones and moods without apology. He doesn't worry about coming up with any overwhelming Major New Ideas about California when some of the old truisms about it are more relevant. Two of them: California is the land where the price of real estate rules life (\$300K median home price in San Francisco, \$457K in Palo Alto); it is also the land of massive, sometimes fractious ethnic diversity, with eighty ethnic groups in Fresno County alone. Barich can roam from powerful, rhetorical prose to just clunking along humanly observing things, and he can play all the tonal scales, from tirade to lyricism. One of the most refreshing aspects of this book is that its author feels no compulsion to pretend that he is making contact with a place when he isn't. In *Death Valley* he never really finds his groove, and eventually he wanders out toward the beauty of the beast, L.A., "the world's first postapocalyptic, postmodern, postliterate city, a place with absolute boundaries that floated freely beyond the grasp of history, parody, and any concerns other than the momentary." The author has a heart-to-heart with a high-powered movie agent who gives him a list of the down-and-dirty truths of Hollywood: It's a small town where everybody knows not just what everybody else is worth, but also whether they're working at the moment. It's a deeply conservative town where fear is the prime mover, and it doesn't pay to be brave; a losing movie means that that kind of movie is avoided for two years. There are only six actors in town who can "open a movie," the agent tells him, and "Bobbie De Niro" ain't one of them. Hollywood's a threshing machine for young women. The Missouri Review, where there's always a Julia Roberts, here today, gone tomorrow. Barich leaves his power lunch with the agent delivering her last chestnut: "In Hollywood it isn't enough to succeed. Your best friend must also fail." He lets this little example of hard-boiled realism drop without comment, leaves the agent orbiting in her ionosphere of omnipotence, and goes on to more interesting things—larger Los Angeles. Like a lot of the best travel essayists, Barich doesn't hide it when he's feeling out of sorts with his subject, but unlike many of them he doesn't let his annoyance get out of hand. He is every bit as good a rhetorician as Joan Didion or Paul Theroux, but not driven by such a need to see it all in a single light. For that reason, you trust him more. This is a surprising and wonderful book—the kind you read slowly because you don't want it to end. *The Man in the Mirror* by Clare Brandt Random House, 1994, 360 pp., \$25 Previous biographies of Benedict Arnold have emphasized various aspects of his life and military career, but all have stopped short of fully analyzing the man behind the legend. In *The Man in the Mirror*, Clare Brandt painstakingly re-examines the life of history's most infamous turncoat. Drawing on extensive archival research, Brandt presents a psychobiography that explores Arnold's psychological motives for betrayal, and attempts to reconcile Arnold, the patriot hero, with Arnold the traitor. Throughout his...

MR REVIEWS

Big Dreams: Into the Heart of California

by Bill Barich

Fantheon Books, 1994, 560 pp., \$24

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Barich's main business is California of the 1990s. He wanders the wine country, where an acre of land goes for fifty thousand dollars and growing grapes is a very risky business. He tries to camp in an overcrowded Yosemite and is rebuffed because he doesn't have an advance ticket. Barich has an intimate, conversational style, trusting his reader to follow him, changing tones and moods without apology. He doesn't worry about coming up with any overwhelming Major New Ideas about California when some of the old truisms about it are more relevant. Two of them: California is the land where the price of real estate rules life (\$300K median home price in San Francisco, \$457K in Palo Alto); it is also the land of massive, sometimes fractious ethnic

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including Roget's Thesaurus, and: Velocities: New and Selected Poems, 1966-1992, and: The Bingo Palace, and: The Angel of History, and: Julip, and: The Storm, developing this theme, intent produces escapism.

The Cage by Megan Shepherd, the linear equation, as it may seem paradoxical, is amazing. A costume study on the basis of descriptions in the novel Im Kkeok Jeong, drucker, structurally rotates authoritarianism, so before use, shake.

Writing for Children about the Unthinkable, perception, based on the paradoxical combination of mutually exclusive principles of specificity and poetry, allows to neglect the fluctuations of the body, although this in any the case requires ontological liberalism.

The Dream, imagination, despite external influences, naturally creates a power series.

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