

## TABLE TALK

Not long after we had sat down to dinner at a long table in a restaurant in Chicago and were deeply engrossed in the heavy menus, one of us—a bearded man with a colorful tie—asked if any one of us had ever considered applying the paradoxes of Zeno to the martyrdom of St. Sebastian.

The differences between these two figures were much more striking than the differences between the Cornish hen and the trout amandine I was wavering between, so I looked up and closed my menu.

If, the man with the tie continued, an object moving through space will never reach its destination because it is always limited to cutting the distance to its goal in half,

then it turns out that St. Sebastian did not die from the wounds inflicted by the arrows. No, the cause of death was fright at the spectacle of their endless approach. St. Sebastian, according to Zeno, would have died of a heart attack.

I think I'll have the trout, I told the waiter, for it was now my turn to order, but all through the elegant dinner I kept thinking of the arrows forever nearing

anybody *sign* this?" he said. "The analogy I've always made is, the old publishing agreement was to the writer what the New York apartment lease is to a tenant. Because, if you ever read your lease, the only thing that's permanent is the obligation to pay rent. The building breaks down, you pay rent. It's very weighted in favor of the landlord. That was the existing agreement in publishing.

"The author needed to deliver a book at a certain time at a certain quality of content, which had to be 'acceptable' to the publisher," Janklow went on. "But there were no parameters on what acceptability meant. So all the publisher had to say was 'It's unacceptable,' and he was out of the contract."

To Janklow, the real reason for Morrow's decision was obvious. It was about what had happened in the interval between when the company bought Safire's book and when the manuscript was handed in: Watergate. Morrow just didn't want to publish a pre-Watergate

Janklow decided to fight. His friend's reputation was on the line. Hughes referred Janklow to the publisher's lawyer, Maurice Greenbaum, of Greenbaum, Wolff & Ernst. "It was considered a very literary, high-level firm," Janklow recalled. "And Maury Greenbaum was the classic aristocratic fourth-generation German Jew, with a pince-nez. So I went to see him, and he said, 'Let me tell you about how publishing works,' and off he went in the most sanctimonious manner. I was a serious corporate lawyer, and he was lecturing me like I was a freshman in law school. He said, 'You're in a standards business. You can't force a publisher to publish a book. If the publisher doesn't want the book, you give the money back and you take back the book. That's the way the business has worked for hundreds of years.' When he was finished, I said, 'Mr. Greenbaum, I'm not trying to force the publisher to publish the book. I'm just trying to force the publisher to *pay* for it. This acceptability

the pale, quivering flesh of St. Sebastian a fleet of them perpetually halving the tiny distances to his body, tied to a post with rope, even after the archers had packed it in and gone home.

And I thought of the bullet never reaching the wife of William Burroughs, an apple trembling on her head, the tossed acid never getting to the face of that girl, and the Oldsmobile never knocking my dog into a ditch.

The theories of Zeno floated above the table like thought balloons from the fifth century before Christ, yet my fork continued to arrive at my mouth delivering morsels of asparagus and crusted fish,

and after we all talked and ate and lifted our glasses, we left the restaurant and said goodbye on the street then walked our separate ways in the world where things do arrive,

where people get where they are going—where the train pulls into the station in a cloud of vapor, where geese land with a splash on the surface of the lake, and the one you love crosses the room and arrives in your arms—

and, yes, where sharp arrows will pierce a torso, splattering the groin and the bare feet of the saint, that popular subject of European religious painting. One hagiographer compared him to a hedgehog bristling with quills.

—Billy Collins

and I'm going to sue you.' So Greenbaum's jaw clenched, and the veins on his forehead popped, and he said, 'You don't understand. If you start a lawsuit, I will see to it that you never work in this business again.'"

The case went to arbitration. Janklow uncovered a William Morrow memo written in the summer of 1973—before Safire handed in his manuscript—saying that because of the Watergate scandal the firm ought to back out of its deal with Safire. Humiliated, Morrow settled, and a jolt of electricity went through the literary world. The likes of Larry Hughes and Maury Greenbaum didn't have all the power after all, and as one author after another—Judith Krantz, Barbara Taylor Bradford, and Sidney Sheldon, among others—called Janklow asking him to represent them, he began steadily extracting concessions from publishers, revising the acceptability clause and the financial terms so that authors were no longer held hostage to the

publisher would say, 'Send back that contract or there's no deal,' " Janklow went on. "And I would say, 'Fine, there's no deal,' and hang up. They'd call back in an hour: 'Whoa, what do you mean?' The point I was making was that the author was more important than the publisher."

Janklow and Miller have never met, and they occupy entirely different social universes. Miller is a class warrior. Janklow is a rich corporate lawyer. Miller organized the ballplayers. The only thing Janklow ever organized was his Columbia Law School reunion. But their stories are remarkably similar. The insurgent comes to a previously insular professional world. He studies the prevailing



rules of engagement, and is aghast. (For New Yorkers of a certain age, apparently, nothing represents injustice quite like the landlord's contract.) And when he mounts an attack on what everyone else had assumed was the impregnable fortress of Capital, Capital crumbles. Comrade Janklow, meet Comrade Miller.

Why did Capital crumble? Maury Greenbaum had no doubt been glowering at upstart agents for years and no one had ever challenged him before. Bobby Bonds was as deserving of a big contract as his son. So what changed to allow Talent's value to be realized?

The economists Aya Chacar and William Hesterly offer an answer, in a recent issue of the journal *Managerial and Decision Economics*, by drawing on the work of Alan Page Fiske. Fiske is a U.C.L.A. anthropologist who argues that people use one of four models to guide the way they interact with one another: communal sharing, equality matching, market pricing, and authority ranking. Communal sharing is a group of roommates in a house who are free to read one another's books and wear one another's clothing. Equality matching is a car pool: if I drive your child to school today, you drive my child to school tomorrow. Market pricing is where the terms of exchange are open to negotiation, or subject to the laws of supply and demand. And authority ranking is paternalism: it is a hierarchical system in which "superiors appropriate or pre-empt what they wish," as Fiske writes, and "have pastoral responsibility to provide for inferiors who are in need and to protect them."

Fiske's point isn't that one of these paradigms is better than the rest. It is that, as human beings, we choose the relational form that's most appropriate to a particular circumstance. Fiske gives the example of a dinner party. You buy the food at the store, paying more for those items which are considered more valuable. That's market pricing. Some of the people who come may have been invited because they invited you to a dinner party in the past: that's equality matching. At the party, everyone is asked to serve himself or herself (communal sharing), but, as the host, you tell your guests where to sit and they do as they are told (author-

, does book in a post-Watergate world. clause was being fraudulently exercised,  
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whims of their publishers. "The pub-



ity ranking). Suppose, though, you were  
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