



MANNY'S FEEDS ALL CHICAGO'S CHILDREN

A Boy Named Detroit

By Michael Nagrant

THOUGH HE'S A NATIVE-BORN CHICAGOAN, MY 8-MONTH-OLD SON'S MIDDLE NAME IS DETROIT. My wife and I figured if he became a rock star, he could just drop his guttural Slavic surname, and he'd have the perfect pseudonym: Grayson Detroit. We also figured once he got past the elementary-school teases, future lovers would be smitten by the cool moniker. At its most basic, the name is a reminder of where he came from—or, more precisely, where I grew up. And by transitive relation, it was also about commemorating the place that launched my love for Chicago.

While it's currently "America's Most Dangerous City," Detroit is also Motown, the birthplace of Seger, Iggy and the Stooges, the MC5 and the White Stripes. It was the antidote to my Tom Perrotta-esque suburban upbringing, an oasis of diverse cultural escape, where I could while away afternoons at the Diego Rivera murals in the Detroit Institute of Arts or watch Alan Trammell crack a bat at Tiger's Stadium. Culinarily, it was home to great chili dogs at Lafayette Coney Island, Sicilian bakery-style pizza at Buddy's and my first slices of baklava and saganaki in Greektown. I'd figured after I graduated from college, I'd live downtown, be part of the revitalization of the city. But, the rust belt had rusted. There were few job opportunities.

While I left it behind, Detroit had cultivated an urban lust that needed sating. Chicago was the next logical geographical choice to satisfy. The Windy City has proven a worthy mistress. After a seven-year affair, I love her as much as any Bridgeport bloodliner. Watching blown-out bop at 4am at the Green Mill or staring at the baroque ceiling of the Palmer House Hilton stirs my soul. Sucking down crispy sausage slices at Vito and Nick's and fiery giardiniera-infused Italian subs from Bari, slurping down Ramova Grill chili and standing in long lines at Mario's and Al's are delightful rites of passage and an informal food-based system of naturalization.

Just as naming my son was pregnant with expectation and fantasy, so was the idea of taking him to these restaurants for the first time, cultivating culinary traditions and hopefully nurturing his own love of Chicago. Up until a month and a half ago, I couldn't do much about this, as he'd been weaned exclusively on a diet of breast milk from a native Michigander. But, now, as he'd moved to solids, the opportunity was upon me. Any of the places listed above would be a great start, but there was one Chicago culinary tradition I held above all—a visit to Manny's.

I have no idea why the remnants of Jewish culinary heritage of old Maxwell Street have such a pull on this Polish Catholic boy. Maybe it's because Manny's channels the Hopperesque Nighthawks ideal with its chrome, steam- and formica-filled environs. Or, as a former political wonk, maybe it's the idea of a chance encounter with regular patrons like Mayor Daley.

With my own mother living 300 miles away, maybe it's that Manny's is the only real opportunity to score a home-style meal of tender pot-roast-like short ribs, tangles of spaghetti and corn-starch-laden cherry pie.

Maybe it's that it's the perfect place for establishing family traditions. Third-generation proprietor Ken Raskin is the grandson of founder Jack and son of the namesake Manny. (Jack bought a restaurant named Sunny's to house the original cafeteria. Rather than tearing down the old sign and buying a new one, he named the place after his teenage son, which allowed him to save money by buying only two new letters— "Ma" to replace the "Su" in Sunny's.)

Most likely though, it's the incredible pastrami. New York has Katz's and Carnegie, Montreal has Schwartz's, Miami has the Rascal House and we have Manny's. Even better, we have Gino. For over a decade, Gino Gambarota has stood sentry over the meat slicer in his white butcher's apron and paper-boat hat. The chief of corned beef always flashes a wicked grin under his bushy walrus like mustache. It's as if he's challenging you to order. When you do, he'll sling a wry insult or ironic pearl along with your meat, followed by a glinting wink, letting you know it's all in good fun.

As I strolled my son through the line for the first time, Gino didn't disappoint. He noticed Grayson and said, "What a cute boy. Good thing he takes after your wife." We ordered up a pastrami on an onion roll, a fluffy, fist-sized latke and a can of Doc Brown's Cel-Ray, and sat down to a flecked-formica table.

It's rare in life that the first of things is more than a moment in our mind's eye, but like an amateur Henri Cartier-Bresson, I stood with my Canon digital, waiting to capture the decisive moment as my wife broke off a piece of peppery moist pastrami and held it above my son's head like a priest pro-offering the Eucharist. As my son gummed the slice with a gusto he usually reserves for soft blocks and pacifiers, I thought, a boy named Detroit is finally on his way to becoming a true Chicagoan.

Manny's, 1141 South Jefferson, (312)939-2855.

MUSEUMS

Adler Planetarium

1300 S. Lake Shore, (312)922-7827.

➔MAPPING THE UNIVERSE. While the Adler Planetarium may not seem like an obvious candidate to be a part of the Festival of Maps, it only takes a few minutes in touring the exhibit to be proven wrong. "Mapping the Universe" shows an array of mapping treasures that, in some cases, have never been publicly shown until now. One such artifact is a celestial globe, which stands over six feet in height and features gold leaf stars contrasting against the blue globe. A very dramatic and unique work, it is the rightful centerpiece of the exhibit. With the goal being to show "that science is not divorced from other areas of life," as described by Dr. Marvin Bolt, the vice president of collections at the Adler, the exhibit does an excellent job of displaying the evolution of the universe as we understand it and also making it tangible. If that isn't enough, the adjacent Space Visualization Laboratory will certainly please the kids even more. Essentially a testing grounds for future exhibits, the SVL boasts an immersive "Visionstation" with a video game-like interface that allows the user to have a virtual interstellar experience. Using a wide network of resources from universities to NASA information, SVL offers a cutting-edge experience that "offers something beyond what is available at home," Dr. Doug Roberts, an astronomer who is heavily involved in SVL, explains. This exhibit is just another feather in Adler's respective cap. (Thomas Barbee) Through Jan 27. Hours: Daily 9:30am-6pm. First Fri of month 9:30am-10pm. Fees: \$10, \$8 if a Chicago resident with ID; \$8 seniors 65+, \$6 if a Chicago resident; \$6 children 4-17, \$5 if a Chicago resident; children under 4 free. StarRider and Sky Theater shows are an additional \$5 each.

Chicago History Museum

1601 N. Clark, (312)642-4600.

➔MAPPING CHICAGO: THE PAST AND THE POSSIBLE. Ah, the map: one of the most underrated of all directional tools, faced with the undesirable future of forever being locked in the glove compartment by angry fathers who would rather find themselves trampled beneath their own tires than be forced to consult the handy square of fold-out paper. Fortunately, Chicago has remedied the situation by throwing the "Festival of Maps" celebration, which includes the new "Mapping Chicago: The Past and the Possible" exhibit at the Chicago History Museum. Visitors can find all sorts of—you guessed it!—maps, ranging from guides from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition to potential venue layouts for the 2016 Olympics. Other highlights include a bird's-eye view of downtown Chicago circa 1857, where in the place of skyscrapers you can see houses and trees dotting familiar pathways like Rush Street and Chicago Avenue; there's also maps charting ethnic settlements, a map of trails, trader points and Indian settlements from 1835 and a beautiful drawing of a proposed view of Grant Park by Jules Guerin, 1909, in which a pair of towering lighthouses overlook a smattering of colorful sailboats, flocked together like geese in a large inlet of water bordering Chicago's busy downtown streets. Also on display are a number of (surprisingly competent) children's artworks, as well as nearly a hundred globes—most of which can be found hanging from the ceiling—supplied courtesy of Replogle Globe Company. (Sean Redmond) Ongoing. Hours: Mon-Wed 9:30am-4:30pm, Thu 9:30-8pm, Fri-Sat 9:30-4:30pm, Sun noon-5pm. Fees: \$12; \$10 seniors 65+ and students 13-22 w/ID. Members and children under 12 free. Mon free.

Field Museum

1400 S. Lake Shore (at Roosevelt), (312)922-9410. ➔TRAVELS OF THE CROW: JOURNEY OF AN INDIAN NATION. The Field Museum expands its already impressive Native American collection with a special showcase on the Crow people, a group that originated in the Ohio Valley before joining with the Hidatsa tribe along the Missouri River. A vision of the "sacred plant" led them to migrate west under their leader, No Intestines, where they eventually settled in the Bighorn Mountains and began cultivating tobacco. They then established secret tobacco societies and became the "Aps-alooke," a community of hunters, warriors and nomads. "Travels of the Crow" sheds light on these individuals and their unique culture through a number of artifacts, pictures and a short video by George Reed, Jr., head of the Cultural Committee of the Crow Nation. Relics include eagle feather and bison headdresses, bison and deerhide shield covers and elaborately decorative horse regalia. Used to adorn the women's horses during camp breaking ceremonies, the equestrian accoutrements include stirrups, saddle, cradleboard and collar, and each is embellished with a vibrant array of red, pink, blue and yellow beadwork. The walls are lined with pictures of other cultural goods, displaying stone dice games, instruments used during tobacco society meetings and other unique items that further illuminate the opulence of this Northwest tribal nation. (Sean Redmond) Through Jul 13. ➔MAPS: FIND OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD. Amidst the recent rise in popularity of Mapquest and the overwhelmingly intricate Google Earth, the Field Museum's simply titled "Maps" sets out to show that maps were once hand-written and delightfully flawed. Historical heavy-hitters like Charles Lindbergh's New York-to-Paris flight chart and J.R.R. Tolkien's imaginary depiction of Minas Tirith highlight the exhibit, but nearly all the pieces exist within their own subjective realm. A February 1944 Los Angeles Times wartime graphic shows an arrow decorated in stars and stripes advancing on Hong Kong while hordes of bombs obliterate Tokyo, suggesting the Americans will have the Pacific war taken care of by the spring. Leonardo Da Vinci's subtle yet professional map of central Italy blurs the line between precise cartography and expressive art, as do most of the pieces, until the grand finale: six large touch-screen computerized maps of the world. It's bright, vivid and mind-numbingly accurate, but lacks the character of a crumpled and torn-up sheet with coffee stains or the boldness of a one-sided view of territorial boundaries (see John Mitchell's 1755 map of how colonial North America ought to look). When it comes to cartography, a little bit of bias makes the end result far more absorbing. (Andy Seifert) Through Jan 27. ➔DARWIN. Immediately upon entering the Field Museum's "Darwin" exhibit, a number of all-too-important and all-too-easy-to-forget truths are brought to the visitor's attention. Guests are reminded that "Before Darwin's time, humans were not considered part of the natural world"—a bizarre notion in our post-theory of evolution society. And yet, the significance of Darwin's discoveries is as relevant today as it was one hundred fifty years ago, when "The Origin of Species" was first published. And thus it's fitting that the Field Museum has brought together the largest-ever assortment of Darwin memorabilia for its comprehensive new exhibit, on display until January 2008. The walls are posted with the story of the young man's rise from relatively unspectacular beginnings to becoming the father of natural selection, while the exhibit gathers together letters, model animal specimens, daguerotypes, skeletons, notebooks and even a

museums (cont.)

recreated model of his home workspace in an attempt to portray the world both pre- and post-Darwin—and to illustrate just how radical a break between those worlds there is. Other notable features include a live green iguana, a manuscript of “On the Origin of Species,” various family belongings, logs from the HMS Beagle and a “condensed time” video of the Sandwalk, the famous footpath he would use when in search of quiet time alone to think. (Sean Redmond) Through Jan 1. Hours: Daily 9am-5pm. Fees: \$12 adults, \$7 children 4-11, \$7 students & seniors. With Chicago ID: \$10, \$6 children, \$7 students & seniors.

Museum of Science and Industry

57th and Lake Shore, (773)684-1414. THE CANARY PROJECT is a display of more than twenty dramatic landscape photographs that highlights visual evidence of climate change and its potential of devastation. Through Feb 27. → STAR WARS: WHERE SCIENCE MEETS IMAGINATION: It would be easy to write off the new “Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination” exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry as a money-grubbing attempt to capitalize on what has steadfastly remained, despite widespread criticism of Lucas and the newer films, one of the most celebrated phenomena in pop culture history. That said, shameless ploy or not, it's still pretty damn cool—in the most nerdy, uncool, rabid *otaku*-like way possible, of course. Yeah, there are a lot of neat exploratory stations that let kids play around with robotics, magnetic levitation and other scientific-learning-made-fun-type deals—including one legitimately impressive terminal that transforms a tabletop and movable tiles into different Star Wars landscapes, allowing the user to hover ominously over an unfolding Tatooine civilization on a projected video screen—but let's face it, the real draw here is the collection of models, costumes, props and other goodies taken from the six “Star Wars” films. From Chewbacca to R2-D2, lightsabers and laser blasters, Darth Vader's disassembled helmet, model starfighters and Luke Skywalker's very own life-size landspeeder—wheels and all—it's a veritable fanboy paradise. And, as with any good fanboy convention, be sure to check out the mass of memorabilia on sale, where you can even pick up a pet Yoda costume for your dog. (Sean Redmond) Through Jan 6. Hours: Mon-Sat 9:30am-5:30pm, Sun 11am-5:30pm. Fees: \$11, \$10 Chicago residents with ID; \$9.50 seniors 65+, \$8.75 city residents; \$7 children 3-11, \$6.25 city residents; children 3 and under & members free. Thu free. Omnimax, U-505 sub tour & CSI exhibit prices not included. Parking \$12 non-members.

words

READINGS

THU/13

Eric Zimmer and Elizabeth Zimmer

The authors discuss their children's book, “Turtle & The Deep Blue Sky.”
57th Street Books, 1301 E. 57th, (773)684-1300. 7pm. Free.

FRI/14

Roosevelt University Reading

Students from Roosevelt University read from their work.
The Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln, (773)293-2665. 7pm. Free.

Venice Gas House Trolley, Clifton Roy, Folkstringer

An evening of spoken word.
Gallery Cabaret, 2020 N. Oakley, (773)489-5471. 9pm. Free.

MON/17

Darian

A performance by slam poet Darian, plus an open mic and poetry slam.
Funky Buddha Lounge, 728 W. Grand, (312)666-1695. 8pm. \$5.

WED/19

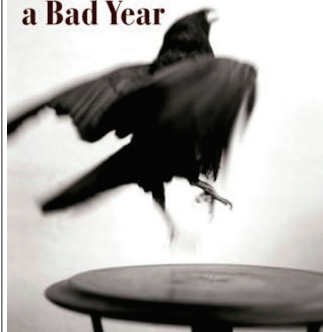
Local Author Night

Featuring Theresa Schwegel, Tim Broderick, Gerry Doyle, Michael A.Black and Julie Hyzy.
The Book Cellar, 4736 N. Lincoln, (773)293-2665. 7pm. Free.

FICTION REVIEW

J.M. COETZEE *A Fractured Year*

Diary of a Bad Year



HAVING WRITTEN ONE PERFECT NOVEL, “Disgrace,” and several others that can easily be read annually without diminishment of their power, J.M. Coetzee seems to have decided to spend his remaining years poking and prodding the limits of his form. “Elizabeth Costello” came in the shape of essays delivered by an aging writer. “Slow Man” was a perfectly functional story, until Elizabeth Costello elbowed in and called the whole enterprise her own. Now, with “Diary of a Bad Year,” Coetzee has fractured a novel into three discrete parts and allows the reader to choose how to read it.

Here is the novel in the form a triple-decker sandwich. Running along a top margin, up in the clouds, so to speak, are the philosophical diary entries of Senor C., an aging South African writer who, like Coetzee himself, resides

in Australia in the present day. C.'s German publisher plans to publish a compendium of ethical and political essays by eminent writers. This diary allows us the reader to look over C.'s shoulder as he composes these riffs, on Tony Blair in his waning days, on the ethics of eating animals, on the behavior of states. As the title suggests, C. is not happy with the state of world affairs.

In the middle of each page, set apart by a horizontal bar, is a more personal diary kept by Senor C.—much of it has to do with his infatuation with a 30-year-old woman named Anya who lives in his apartment block and possesses, among other things, a divine bottom. C. rashly tracks her down in a park and offers her a job as his typist, really as a pretense to have her nearby him—even though, like the hero of Philip Roth's new novel, “Exit Ghost,” C. hasn't the power to actually do anything. “The sexual urge has dwindled,” Coetzee writes, “and there is only a hovering uncertainty about what he is actually after, what he actually expects the object of his infatuation to supply.”

Finally, along the bottom of the page, set apart by yet another horizontal bar, Coetzee gives us the story as told by Anya. At first she is skeptical of C., then charmed by him, then bored by him, and finally provoked by him. Anya's perspective may be interesting, but her voice is not. She is sassy and colorful, but ultimately her character is entirely determined by what she thinks of the two men in the book, which includes her husband, Alan, a freckle-faced banker who likes to dominate in the bedroom and develops an obsession with Senor C.

In the hands of a writer like Julian Barnes, “Diary of a Bad Year” might have become a virtuoso feat of meta-fictional tap-dancing—a lubricious novel which invites you to read it as it in fact reads itself it yet more cleverly. And there are hints of that possibility. Spliced in to riffs on the Blair administration, on torture, on eating mammals—all familiar Coetzee interests—there is also a miniature essay on authority in fiction. “What the great authors are masters of is authority,” thinks C. But then he also remembers Kierkegaard, who instructed: “Learn to speak without authority.”

If this were all Coetzee's novel worried about, he might have provided some minor, self-referential pleasures. But Coetzee's fiction has always relied on heavier raw materials in its construction. “Disgrace” felt like a compressed piece of molten history, beautifully shaped. “Diary of a Bad Year” covers similar issues—C. writes on the mother tongue and homeland, on consciousness itself and political thought (“If I were pressed to give my brand of political thought a label, I would call it pessimistic, anarchistic, quietism”)—but as articulate as he is, one cannot help but feel these ideas are evoked in a much more superficial way, which is in the form of an opinion piece, or a diary tirade. And they have the subtlety of a sledgehammer.

Ultimately, the reader's eye glides downward to the action on the lower page, especially when Anya begins to sexually taunt C., and offers up her own criticisms of his work, and when Alan so forcefully invades his working life with Anya that the center section of the book's lateral narration falls away entirely. This moment is cleverly cast, and for a brief period the characters in the book act, as C. himself notes, as states do—which is brutally, aggressively, as if they had to eat or be eaten. But this period of the book is short lived, and after finishing “Diary of a Bad Year,” a reader feels like, for once, there has been truth in advertising. Here are fragments, shards really, of a year in which nothing much good happened, and diaries were written. If only the two had more to do with one another on the page this might be a novel. (John Freeman)

“Diary of a Bad Year”

by J.M. Coetzee

Viking, \$16.99, 304 pages

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