

HUMOR

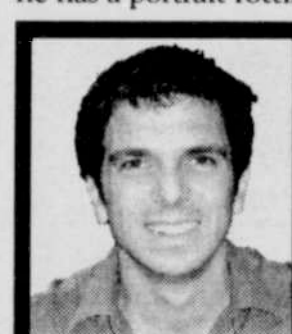
Botoxic shock

Who needs plastic surgery?

The thought first occurred to me as I sat pondering Brad Pitt's strangely lineless face in *Troy*. (Not to mention his golden thighs.) I swear, the man looked as buffed and polished as a granite countertop.

Not that I minded. In fact, I timed my pee breaks carefully during the film's three hours to ensure I didn't miss seeing him naked.

But it does bug me that, while I continue to age, the march of time seems to have halted for the Pitt. Either the guy has had work done or he has a portrait rotting in an attic somewhere.



The Gospel According to Marc
by Marc Acito

I've been more aware of aging lately as I've noticed that no matter how well-rested I may be, I still look tired all the time. I tell myself the bags under my eyes give me a charming, hangdog quality, like Al Pacino. But I fear I'm really on my way to looking like Keith Richards the morning after.

What's more, after 38 years without any hair loss, I thought I was immune, but the recent combination of a wet head and overhead lighting revealed that my hairline is receding faster than Charlton Heston's short-term memory.

I've begun experimenting with a little artful rearranging, but I worry that the trendy Caesar haircut of today will become the comb-over of tomorrow. I'm sure it's only a matter of time before I start wearing a baseball cap indoors, a fashion choice that makes middle-aged men

look like movie directors or the cast of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

So I wonder: Is it time I got a little work done myself?

I'm very conflicted. On the one hand, I'm continually dismayed by actors whose face-lifts are so tight they don't need side-view mirrors. It seems to me that one of the prerequisites for being in moving pictures should be having a face that moves. I was particularly mortified when Helen Mirren, an actress who has remained defiantly natural all these years, showed up in *Raising Helen* looking so overly Botoxed it was like she'd been sandblasted. Perhaps it should have been called *Lifting Helen*.

There's just something about that unblinking, apple-cheeked look of plastic surgery that makes everyone resemble a Japanese anime cartoon.

Look at the contestants on *The Swan* (if you dare). After undergoing more renovations than the Sistine Chapel, these women were rendered virtually unrecognizable, not to mention indistinguishable, which leads me to wonder whether one of them is actually Osama bin Laden. (Face it, with plastic surgery being what it is today,

bin Laden could be sipping coffee on TV every morning with Regis and none of us would notice.)

Often the nipped and tucked just end up looking different instead of better, like Jennifer "Nobody Puts Baby in the Corner" Grey, whose career took a nose dive when she got a nose job. Or Michael "Hold the Baby Over the Balcony" Jackson, who simply cut off his nose to spite his race.

But it's not the prospect that I might end up looking like The Joker that stops me. It's the fact that I'd have to get cut up like a medical school cadaver. Call me crazy, but I have a hard

time signing up to do a procedure for which a possible side effect is "death."

Twenty people die for every 100,000 liposuctions, although most of those operations are on Cher. These are actually pretty low odds compared to, say, I don't know, something a real journalist would look up. But no matter how you slice it, plastic surgery is still a risk.

It's not that I'm particularly afraid of death; it's just that I'd rather go in a less humiliating way. I don't want to end up like Olivia Goldsmith, the author of *The First Wives Club*, who died earlier this year during a fairly routine surgery to remove excess skin from her chin and was memorialized in articles with headlines like "A Face to Die For." You might as well write, "The author was shallow and vain to the very end."

So, since I'm simply too chicken to undergo plastic surgery, I've decided instead to be dogmatically opposed to it and grow old wearing turtle-necks in the summer like Katharine Hepburn.

The fact is our consumer culture has become obsessed with the "new and improved." But it's time we came to appreciate what the Japanese call wabi-sabi, which isn't an Asian spice but a Zen philosophy of seeing the beauty in things that are imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. As a society, we all need to embrace the aging process.

That is, until they come up with a way of slowing it down.

And that, my friends, is *The Gospel According to Marc*. ☐

MARC ACITO's first novel, *How I Paid for College*, will be published in September. Write him

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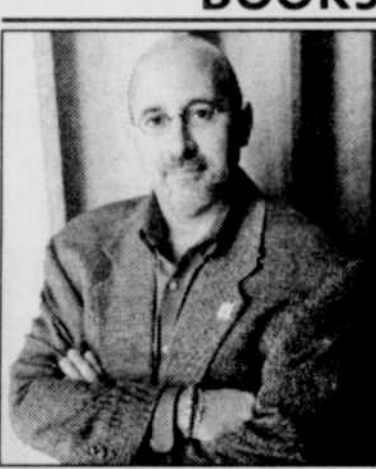
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