

About Last Night

TERRY TEACHOUT on the arts in New York City
(with additional dialogue by OUR GIRL IN CHICAGO)

Monday, August 8, 2005

TT: The dreamlife of critics

The last three weeks...where did they go? I've flown halfway across the country, written four pieces, seen six plays, read nine books, given a lecture, talked on the radio, and driven all over Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania in a pair of rented cars...

...On Thursday I drove through the Delaware Water Gap to Barryville, a tiny Catskills village just across the New York-Pennsylvania border. A friend of mine has been spending the past month teaching gymnastics at a [summer camp](#) outside of town, and I figured she wouldn't mind being taken out to dinner after a hard day on the trampoline, so I decided to spend the night somewhere in the general vicinity of her shop. A quick search of the Web having previously led me to [Ecce Bed and Breakfast](#), conveniently located a couple of miles down the road from camp, I made a reservation, showed up at the appointed hour, and was duly escorted to an elegantly appointed bedroom in a house perched on the edge of a bluff three hundred feet above the Delaware River. For once, the Web site understates the case: my room had a huge picture window, and I've never seen a more spectacular view. After a sumptuous dinner of [fresh trout](#), I brought my friend back to the inn so that she could see for herself, and we spent what was left of the evening sitting on the balcony, listening to the enveloping sounds of a warm summer night in the Catskills, chatting companionably about nothing in particular as the light died out of the sky, and wondering if there were a more beautiful place anywhere in the world.

By then it was clear to me that Ecce is not your usual bed-and-breakfast. It was started a year ago by a couple of Wall Street businessmen who heard the chimes at midnight and decided to change their lives before it was too late. Perhaps not surprisingly, the tone and décor of their five-room inn are considerably more urbane than those of the comfy, chintzy country retreats where I typically spend my nights on the road. (I certainly can't think of another B-&-B that has pencil-signed Hirschfeld lithographs of Carol Channing and Lucille Ball hanging proudly in the upstairs hall!) At the same time, Ecce lacks nothing in the way of country comforts—there's even a hammock—and my baked spinach omelet, served on a deck overlooking the river, was wonderfully tasty. As I reluctantly pulled out of the parking lot after breakfast, I resolved to come back again as soon as possible.