Before & After



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From Publishers Weekly

Michael Cunningham, Luc Sante and Jeanette Winterson take their place alongside

newcomers Ariele Fierman and Said Shirazi in this collection of new reportage from high-watt literary types and up-and-comers. In the first half, completed just before September 11, Beller (The Sleep-Over Artist) gathers pieces that chronicle everything from kissing a cabdriver in the early hours of New Year's Day or joining a Monday night pool league to a group of poems written by people staying up all night for Chekhov tickets. The feel is definitively late '90s, and the city seems full of promise, romance and cash. The second half is devoted to essays about the attacks: a meditation on the eerie prescience of Don DeLillo's Underworld book jacket (and his oeuvre), Phillip Lopate's brief history of the towers and many first-person testimonials. Nifty graphics introduce each piece by zeroing in on the city neighborhood whence the report issues. While this is at least partly an instant book, the quality of the pieces is consistently high, and they feel authentic throughout. (Feb. 15) Forecast: Beller's high literary journalistic profile he edits Open City in addition to frequent writing for glossies and continued New York interest should convert to brisk sales. Look for Beller to begin doing talk shows as the book becomes the best-available-option for those wanting book-length stylized New York reportage, and for correspondingly increased traffic at www.mrbellersneighborhood.com, where many of the pieces originally appeared.

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Review

Brief and memorable epitomes of the urban encounter—a transporting collection. -- Kirkus Reviews

Brief and memorable epitomes of the urban encounter: a transporting collection. -- Kirkus Reviews

It's a heartbreaker of a book. -- Flakmag.com

It's hard to imagine a more appropriate or more moving collection of voices. -- San Francisco Chronicle

The essays are gorgeous, alternately sad and funny...(a) richly human collection -- Portland Mercury

The quality of these pieces is consistently high, and they feel authentic throughout. -- Publishers Weekly, 21 January 2002

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