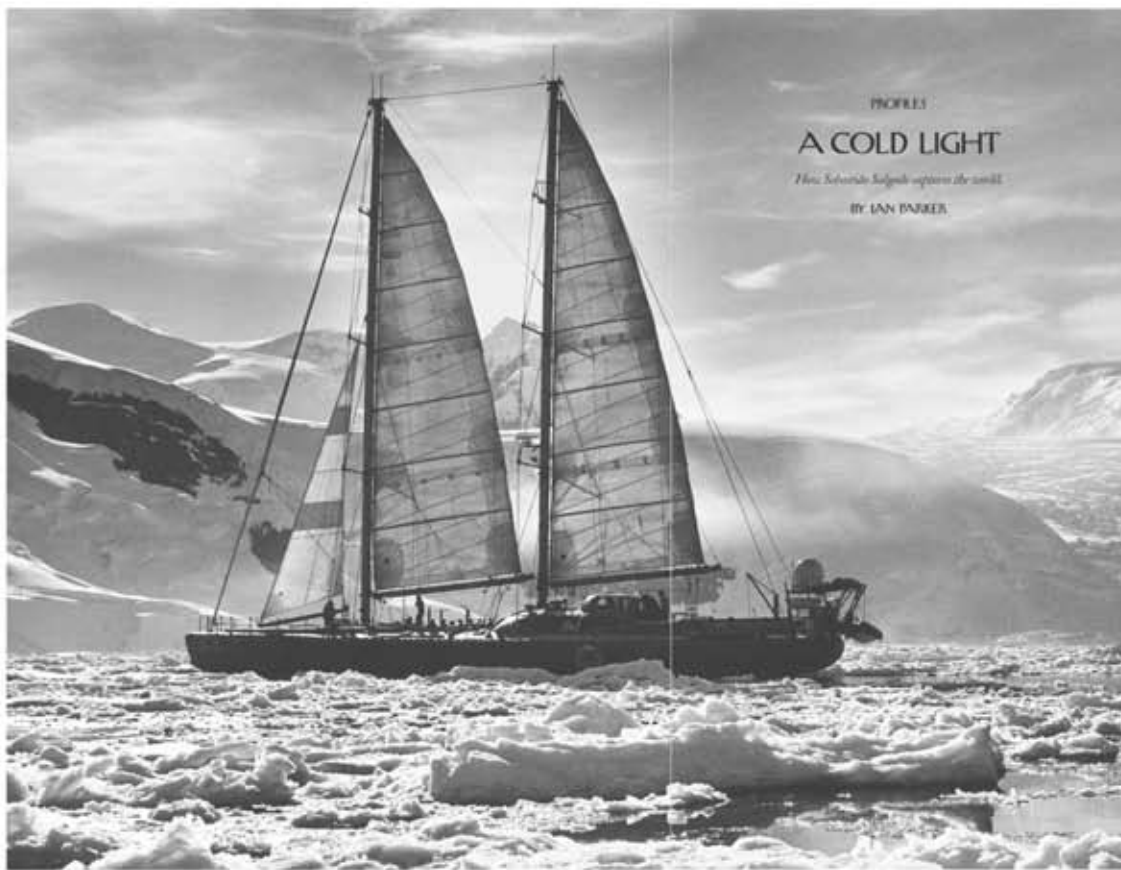


PRICE \$4.95

APRIL 18, 2005

# THE NEW YORKER



PROFILES

## A COLD LIGHT

*The Brazilian Salgado captures the world.*

BY IAN PARKER

*Toss, the hundred-and-twenty-foot ice-breaking yacht that Salgado and the author sailed on from Ushuaia, the southernmost town in Argentina, to the Antarctic Peninsula, in January, 2005. Photographs by Sebastião Salgado.*

The Amazonas photographic agency is in a neighborhood of rising elegance and property prices in northeastern Paris, in a former coal warehouse on the Saint-Martin canal. Just in front of the building, a steeply arched wrought-iron footbridge extends over the water to the Hôtel du Nord, where Marcel Carné set his melancholy film of the same name. Inside the agency, which features floors of polished hardwood that were imported from Brazil, half a million postcard-size work prints are immaculately arranged in smooth-running drawers. Six people work here, including two full-time photographic printers, each with his own darkroom.

Sebastião Salgado, the Brazilian-born photojournalist known for beautiful black-and-white photographs of people living difficult lives, is the agency's only photographer. In the world of photojournalism, a place where his fame and magisterial rhythm of work give him a singular status, Salgado has the added distinction of being his own producer: he owns the factory. And although Salgado often works abroad, when he does return to his family in Paris he walks each day to Amazonas, from an apartment fifteen minutes away.

One morning a few weeks ago, Salgado was in the basement of the office, where the sound of continuously running water—prints were being rinsed nearby—gave the room the feel of compulsory calm found in the lobbies of some expensive hotels. On a wall in front of him was a poster-size reproduction of a photograph he had taken in Serra Pelada, a Brazilian gold mine, in 1986. It showed thousands of men—sacrificial and single-minded, each apparently working for himself—covering every surface of a great open pit, hauling dirt-filled sacks on makeshift ladders. A silvery sheen of mud covers the men, making it nearly impossible to tell that they are wearing modern clothes. A contemporary image saturated in the long history of South American gold prospecting and in a longer history of human toil, it comes from a series of extraordinary photographs taken at the same mine which have been described as “evocative of the masterworks of Pieter Brueghel and Cecil B. De Mille.” Fusing fact to myth, past to present, the images helped propel Salgado’s already successful career to something far loftier, much the



*"Let's go someplace awful to avoid the tourists."*

way Bono is something more than a pop star. Salgado, a former economist, has become an architect of photojournalistic projects with a global reach, an icon of social conscience, a kind of solo branch of the United Nations.

A broad-shouldered, Picasso-ish man of sixty-one, he was wearing jeans and a V-necked cashmere sweater over a checked shirt. He had a penknife in a leather pouch fixed to his belt, and gold-rimmed half-moon reading glasses on a chain around his neck. His head is shaved bald, and his face is unlined; you can therefore find your gaze skidding off him, or snagging on his bushy eyebrows, which rise and fall in the beseeching way of a conductor squeezing sad and delicate sounds out of an orchestra. Lélia Wanick Salgado, his wife of more than thirty years, the editor of his books and his exhibitions, and the director of Amazonas, was consulting with Salgado about a future retrospective in Paris. She is a slim woman with a smoker's dark-textured voice; she was dressed all in black, and at one point in the conversation her husband spun her slowly around, picking pieces of lint from her clothes; when he was done, she kissed him on the lips.

Lélia went to the office space upstairs, where Sebastião's photographs are sold to magazines, and where they are collected in vast books and travelling exhibitions, and

where the phone calls are about honorary degrees and invitations to sit on panels and accept awards. ("We have two talents and they are complementary," she later said. "He knows how to take photographs and I know how to exploit them.") Downstairs, Salgado sat at a table with a long-time colleague, Françoise Piffard. They had boxes of small, freshly printed photographs in front of them—images from his latest long-term, self-assigned project, "Genesis." For the first time, Salgado is photographing wild animals instead of people, in an enterprise that carries at least a hint of the idea that he is owed a vacation. He is visiting environments unchanged by human progress, after more than thirty years spent photographing miserably changing environments, and people in the middle of economic or political upheaval. Salgado started "Genesis" last year, photographing giant tortoises in the Galápagos Islands, gorillas in central Africa, whales off the Argentine coast. He expects to finish in 2012.

Salgado had just returned from Antarctica, and before him were dozens of small photographs of penguins feeding their offspring by regurgitation, jamming their beaks down into the throats of their young; there were also glaciers, and icebergs, and albatrosses looking directly into the camera. "Nice, nice pictures. Incredible dignity they had," Salgado said of the

birds. His first language is Portuguese, and he speaks both French and English with an accent that becomes stronger if he gets agitated or excited; in English, "refugees" becomes "hefugees," for example.

The work prints needed to be divided into two piles: yes and no. Such sifting would eventually lead to a final selection of about fifty images, which would be presented to magazines. In an action repeated every minute or so, Salgado held up two photographs with a similar composition, often taken moments apart, and he and Piffard would try to find a weaker print to reject, with Salgado saying, "I wish the sky was a bit more dramatic," or "I don't think that's too horrible," or enthusing, "That's beautiful, no? That is the idea, how close we can be to Genesis, yet in our times!" Piffard wore magnifying goggles, and peered forward with pursed lips, like a jeweller; at times she questioned a composition, or simply said, "I don't think so." Salgado decided on rejects only grudgingly, slapping them down like a frustrated poker player. When he put neither print into the reject pile (which was growing more slowly than the other), Piffard said, "Oh, Sebastião," disappointingly.

"I'm happy," Salgado said. He rubbed his hand over his smooth scalp. "I believe we have a story." In the room next door, the printers were making more penguins, and more albatrosses. Salgado had returned from Antarctica with more than ten thousand negatives.

A few weeks earlier, I had watched Salgado unpack his bags in a cabin on a hundred-and-twenty-foot ice-breaking yacht moored in the harbor of Ushuaia, the southernmost town in Argentina. At mid-evening, the air was cool, but summer sunshine still entered the room through a skylight. "All this is a question of adaptation," Salgado said, as he arranged his possessions in the small space. "You adapt yourself to any kind of place you find." He had four identical medium-format cameras, each the size of a brick, and several hundred rolls of black-and-white film, which he lined up on the higher of the two bunk beds as neatly as in a store display. He showed me two pairs of khaki pants into which Lélia had sewn Velcro strips at the knee, on the inside, for attaching little pads that made kneeling on the ground more comfortable; some new snow-proof boots; and tiny elasticized

rain protectors for his cameras' viewfinders which he had made out of shower caps. He had a ball of wool for darning his sweater, anti-inflammatory drugs for a damaged tendon, Quaker Oats, and Portuguese translations of books by Bruce Chatwin and John Kenneth Galbraith. "And here are fingerless gloves," he said. "In reality, they are not fingerless. You go like this, now out." He folded down a flap, and his fingerless gloves became mittens. "To change the films, you put here again, that's it. That is this." He refolded the flap, then went back and forth: glove, mitten.

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There were eight small cabins, each with two narrow bunk beds. The boat's owner, Étienne Bourgois, was housed close to Salgado. Bourgois, an amiable, troubled-looking man of forty-four, is the director of Agnès B., the French fashion company founded by his mother, Agnès. Divorced and the father of five, Bourgois has the face of a young man but the tufty baldness of a sixty-year-old, giving the impression of a high-school student playing King Lear. Bourgois bought the ship in 2003 from the estate of Sir Peter Blake, the New Zealand sailing hero and America's Cup winner. In 2001, Blake sailed the ship—then called the *Seamaster*—to the Amazon. Near the mouth of the river, armed pirates forced their way on board. Blake was standing at the bottom of the stairs that connect the living quarters to the deck when he opened fire on them with a

shotgun that he kept on board. He shot two fingers off a pirate's hand, but the gun jammed; Blake was shot and killed. Lead from Blake's cartridge was still embedded in a window at the top of the stairs.

In the last years of his life, Blake was a good-will ambassador for the United Nations Environment Program, UNEP. After Bourgois bought the *Seamaster*—and renamed it *Tara*, his family's traditional name for its boats—he arranged to continue the association with UNEP. UNEP officials also happened to be in conversation with Salgado, and knew of his plans to include Antarctica among the twenty or so stories that would make up the "Genesis" project. Bourgois offered Salgado a ride. For all the obvious appeal of a private yacht exploring the continent on its own timetable, Salgado hesitated. Bourgois's idea was a shared expedition for poets, painters, and photographers. "I said no," Salgado told me. "I said, I apologize, I cannot accept to go and look at things together, one make pictures, another write—a kind of tourism. I must go to work." (Salgado has been to every country in the world, he says, except New Zealand, Nicaragua, and Tonga, and has never bought himself a souvenir.) Bourgois and Salgado agreed on a separate trip; the artists would have their adventure another time. His agency put up about twenty thousand dollars, a quarter of the cost.

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His two previous projects on a similar scale, "Workers" and "Migrations," each took more than five years. The latter, a study of people displaced by war and by a globalized world economy, was punishing to produce, physically and mentally, and left Salgado unsure if mankind deserved to survive. The "Genesis" project had its roots in that period of despair, Salgado said. But he is a former Marxist activist and a onetime student of Esperanto, and although he has lost the big mustache of his youth, he has a surviving confidence in





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*Two Kosovar women, among the tens of thousands of refugees who left their homes to flee the conflict with the Serbs, on the road between Kakë and the Morini border post, in Albania, in 1999.*

the possibility of prompting radical action. "Genesis" was in part inspired by the Instituto Terra, a nonprofit environmental foundation that Lélia and Sebastião run on seventeen hundred acres of former farmland in the rain forest of southeast Brazil. (The Salgados have a home by the sea, a few hours away.) The Salgados have planted seven hundred and forty thousand trees on the site so far, with the aim of planting a million and a half trees. The land is returning to its prelapsarian state; schoolchildren are being brought to see it. "This gave me a big hope that we can live with nature, be in peace with our planet," Salgado said. "Genesis," then, could set a similar example. Salgado, who talks of his photography only as a tool—an action undertaken in the world of information, not the world of art—had managed to balance gloom with a sense of purpose. "Forty-six per cent of the planet is not destroyed," he said. "I must show this, take pictures that show it's necessary to preserve these places. Show how wide they are, how big they are."

Tara motored out of Ushuaia. Later, the sails were raised. Salgado made himself weatherproof and took a "king of the world" spot on the bow. When dolphins swam alongside, and his shipmates dashed from side to side to photograph them (and while Bourgois leaned over the railing and slapped Tara's hull, in what I took to be a known form of human-to-dolphin communication), Salgado remained still, and waited for a dolphin to pass in front of his camera. Rounding Cape Horn the following day, we took photographs of one another; Salgado did not look in anyone's lens, but instead gazed down into the water, with the air of modest contemplation seen on the face of a Virgin Mary in a Renaissance painting.

We sailed south and lost sight of South America. The air became colder and the sea rougher. Most of those on board spent the afternoon queasily in bed—including Salgado, who listened to his new iPod, which, as he later showed me, included Chopin's Nocturne No. 2 and a Julio Iglesias song in its Most Played list.

That night, Tara reached Diego Ramírez, a group of small islands sixty miles southwest of Cape Horn, uninhabited but for a lonely meteorological station on one of them. Salgado had official permission to land, a rare entitle-

## FOUR POEMS OF YOUTH

### I. THE DREAM

Later  
that now long-lost night  
in December, beside you, I saw  
that the leaves had returned  
to the branches  
outside my window. Now  
that is all it was: leaves, blowing  
in the windy sunlight: somehow,  
in spite of the chances against it  
occurring, in spite of the critic's wan sneer,  
I dreamed this lovely thing.

### 2. MINNEAPOLIS, 1960

Children in a classroom peer  
into microscopes.  
Bombsights  
it occurs  
to the young woman  
moving from one  
to another, peripherally  
mesmerized  
by the second hand, trees  
flailing  
dimly in windows.

ment owing something to the ship's U.N. imprimatur—and to the fact that Salgado himself is a good-will ambassador for UNICEF. After the ship spent a night at anchor, he went ashore by inflatable motorboat with five others. "What a privilege to be here!" Salgado said, after landing awkwardly on a small rocky beach at the foot of some grassy cliffs. He put down his stuff. Photojournalists do not usually travel with assistants, and Salgado, who would never want to be taken out of that category, tends to travel alone, even after having made the switch, for "Genesis," from 35-mm. Leicas to heavier, medium-format Pentax cameras. But

he accepts help, and allowed volunteers to carry some of his equipment. Salgado kept a camera over each shoulder.

It was cold and the sky was a flat gray. We began to climb the slope, pulling ourselves up by tufts of silvery-green grass four or five feet high. Within moments, Salgado found himself standing before a gray-headed albatross—smooth and polished, with smears of black around its eyes. At a distance of about six feet, Salgado raised a camera: the shutter made a surprisingly loud clunk. He moved closer, and quietly sang a classic bossa-nova song, "A Felicidade."

"Where's my tripod?" he asked. "The person who's carrying my stuff needs to be near me." (His avuncular manner tightened into something harder when he began photographing; by the end of the day, he was holding a hand out behind him, without turning around, to show that he needed his tripod.) The others in the group had already taken their own pictures of the bird and moved on, and had found another albatross, and then another.



### 3. ON THE RUN

Winter hours, white  
dune grass.  
Secret  
pinewoods to the ocean—now what?

### 4. THE BLACKOUT: FIRST ANNIVERSARY

It finds me in Port Authority, penniless,  
seated at a bar unable to remember  
how I came there (*why* is obvious).  
Do you know this terror—not to remember?  
I go to the men's room and look in the mirror,  
look in his aggrieved and music-haunted eyes.  
The mouth opens, but there are no words;  
there are words, but the mouth will not open.  
Tears form but cannot fall, fingers  
gradually tightening at my throat . . .  
Blood of his blood, flesh of his ghost—  
the hand stretched toward me in the flames!  
Do you?  
I am worn out, I can't go on.

—Franz Wright

The slope was covered in birds, which had rarely, if ever, seen humans and had no reason to fear them; they barely moved when approached, beyond turning their heads this way and that, like fashion models. It was hard to think of another environment as congenial to the novice wildlife photographer. (As Art Wolfe, one of America's leading photographers of wildlife, later explained, without scoffing, it is easier if the animals are not running away.)

Salgado, unhurried by the activity above him, retrieved his tripod while keeping his eye on the first albatross as if it were the last bird on earth. He changed film with the deliberation of a mime artist. Each time he took out an exposed film, he had to lick a paper tag to seal it closed, and for this he used a big, slow lick that hinted at the perils of rushed licking. Then, as he wound in the new film, he sang more loudly than before. "It's the only way I get to hold my concentration," he later told me. "When you change the film, you break your sequence. Changing film is an empty moment and you fill it with the music."

Once, years ago, Salgado flew to Rome to take a portrait of the novelist Italo Calvino. "I can only give you an hour," Calvino said upon opening the door. Salgado said he needed at least two or three days. (He got them.) After forty-five minutes on the island, Salgado was still just a few feet above the beach. The day was arranging itself according to two different appreciations of time and space: it was the unspoken instinct of everyone but Salgado to reach the top of the slope quickly, then make a survey—to take possession of the pristine island. Salgado's instinct was to look only at the thing in front of him. "Almost no one in the world has seen this," he said. His left hand, cupped under the lens, made minute movements to focus.

When he finally reached the top of the slope, he found hundreds of albatrosses of a different species, sitting on mud nests the size and shape of a dog's feeding bowl. Salgado inched among them, as infant albatrosses spilled orange vomit onto his new boots. When the

sun came out, he shot into the light, as has always been his preference. ("For me, the good pictures are against the light. Against the light, you have shapes, the forms get a contour. It's not easy but I like it.") He said that he wanted to show "the equilibrium of the birds and their environment." Beyond Salgado's hearing, one of the party said, in a friendly enough way, "If it's like this everywhere, we'll be on the island for three months."

Salgado's reputation was built on monumental, backlit images of physical labor and human fortitude, and to watch him work—to wake up for two weeks to the soft buzzing of Salgado shaving his head smooth in the cabin opposite—was to be shown how a shadow of self-portraiture falls across those images. Salgado would not mistake himself for a steelworker or an underfed migrant, but what has interested him in others is what he looks for in himself: a level of imperiousness to testing conditions, and tolerance of a long working day. For Salgado, taking pictures is a pleasure but also a discipline: he is not the kind of photographer who goes to pick up laundry carrying a loaded camera. When I spoke to Robert Pledge, Salgado's friend and agent in the U.S., he could not remember a single occasion in thirty years when Salgado had taken his photograph. (Salgado said that he remembered one.)

At the end of a cold, ten-hour stay on the island at Diego Ramirez, Salgado was able to show no less interest in the day's last albatross than he had shown in the first—holding his thumb and forefinger together in a gesture of epicurean satisfaction while his shipmates slumped on the springy earth, fully gorged on birds and sea lions. "I have a few good pictures," Salgado said. "I don't think I have a great picture. The sky was fifty-percent sky, not a hundred-percent sky. All my life was like that—looking and waiting for the combination."

For three days after leaving Diego Ramirez, Tara sailed across the Drake Passage, beyond sight of land. Salgado had to endure a period of enforced inactivity. The weather was stormy, and the front of the ship rose up and then came banging down with the sound of someone dropping a small car onto the deck. Seawater washed over the skylights. In the living area, blue rubber matting was brought out to stop



the plates from sliding off the table. It began to snow. Salgado, restless at times, made slow tours of the main cabin, trying to stay upright while reading and rereading the dishwashing roster and the warnings on packets of seasickness pills.

Salgado is not an ebullient man: his sociability sometimes seems to come from a portfolio of skills learned with the aim of taking fine photographs; he often allows his sentences to fade away, with a sigh—"And this is that . . ." But when he talks about the Instituto Terra, to which he and his wife have given much of their time and income in recent years, he grows animated. As we thumped through the waves, he told me how fish and birds had reappeared at the site; how his friend Robin Williams (with whom he spent Election Night last year in L.A.) had put thirty thousand dollars into a theatre at the institute; how the institute had become one of the town's largest employers. One evening, he drew a little map of the land in my notebook. "The pumas are back!" he said. "You know, one puma tells another."

The Instituto's seventeen hundred acres had previously belonged to Salgado's father, a freemason and local assembly member who was so formal that his children called him *Senhor*. Salgado grew up a few minutes from the ranch, in the town of Aimorés, in a house with seven sisters. His mother was a dressmaker. During his childhood, Salgado watched as his family's land, once forest, turned to dust, as his father brought more and more cattle

onto it. When Sebastião and Lélia bought the acreage from the family, in 1991, "the land was dead," Salgado said. Learning of their idea of turning the soil back over to trees, Salgado's father told them that they were crazy. (He died in 2001; Salgado's mother died the following year.)

"I am from the most baroque place on the planet," Salgado said to me. His family was not particularly religious, and he grew up to be a nonbeliever, but Salgado sang (in Latin) in the choir of his Catholic, Salesian high school, and was surrounded by the kind of religious architecture and iconography that are embedded in his work: Sudanese refugees illuminated by heavenly shafts of light; a gold miner leaning on a post in the pose of a martyred saint. To these childhood influences Salgado then added a leftist sensibility, formed at a moment of repression and rebellion in Brazilian history. He studied economics first in Vitória, the nearest large city to Aimorés, where he met Lélia, in 1964 ("Oh, she was beautiful: thin, large breasts, hallelujah!" I heard him say one time, turning his eyes upward), and then in São Paulo. For a short while afterward, he worked as an economist in the Ministry of Finance for São Paulo state. (As Salgado pointed out, he had experience in planning and financing large-scale projects long before the organizational feat of "Workers.") By 1968, the military government that had come to power in a coup four years earlier was evolving into a full-blown dictatorship, and the Salga-

dos became part of a protest movement. The couple gave money to the A.L.N. (Ação Libertadora Nacional), the armed group led by Carlos Marighella, who is now best known as the author of the "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla," a guide to terrorist techniques that influenced the tactics of the Baader-Meinhof group and the I.R.A. At this time, Salgado was a Communist, and a supporter of the Cuban revolution; he was never an A.L.N. member, but he did meet Marighella. (Salgado later regretted having told me about his A.L.N. connection, not for fear of seeming extreme but out of anxiety that he would appear to be dressing himself in radical chic.)

The authorities made no move against Sebastião and Lélia, but friends were arrested, and some of them were tortured. "We could either leave or become clandestine," Salgado said, and in 1968 the couple moved to Paris, where Sebastião studied for a Ph.D. in economics at the Sorbonne. Photographs taken at the time show him bearded, long-haired, and intense, looking much like the young Bjorn Borg. The Salgados remained politically active. Later, their Brazilian passports were revoked, and Salgado did not return to that country until 1979. "It was tough for my father," Salgado said. "When I left Brazil, he was a strong man. When I came back, he was an old man."

Lélia began a course in architecture, and in 1970 she bought a Pentax camera, to use in her studies. When Salgado first picked the camera up, that summer, he had never taken a photograph before. In his first, taken while on vacation in the southeast of France, Lélia is seen sitting on a window with the light behind her. "I knew when I looked inside this camera, now I had another way to relate with any kind of thing," Salgado told me. "It was so natural." After finishing his Ph.D. course work but before writing his thesis, Salgado accepted a well-paid job in London with the International Coffee Organization—coffee's OPEC—and began to work on a diversification fund designed to raise coffee prices by encouraging growers to move into other crops. He took Lélia's camera on field trips to Africa. "He was not satisfied with economics," Lélia remembered. "But he was very happy to take pictures."

Sebastião set up a darkroom in their apartment. "At first, it was just fun," Lélia recalled. One summer afternoon in



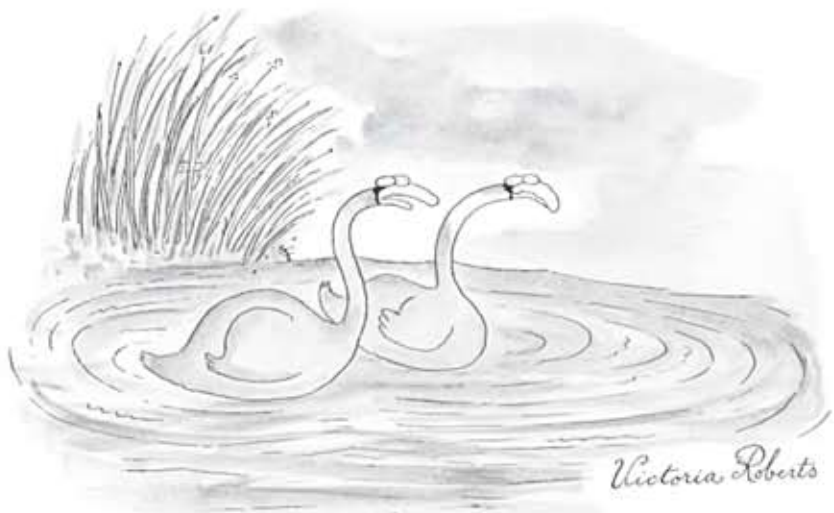
"Found meat is income."



1972, he and Lélia rented a rowing boat in Hyde Park and went out on the Serpentine to discuss their future. "I'd studied many years and I had a very good job—hard to get this job—and I had an invitation to go to the World Bank in Washington," Salgado said. But he wanted to be a photographer. Lélia agreed he should try, despite the financial risks. When Salgado resigned from the I.C.O., soon after, his boss was exasperated by his apparent naïveté. "Of course you want to be a photographer," he said. "I want to be a photographer. My wife wants to be a photographer."

The Salgados moved back to Paris, and Salgado began to find work with trade-union and church magazines: he shot stories about migrant workers and the construction of the Pompidou Center. But, as Robert Pledge recently recalled, "he was lucky that Portuguese-speaking countries were very much in the news. That propelled him onto the circuit." Salgado was quickly taken on by the Sygma agency, and covered Portugal's Carnation Revolution, in 1974, and Angola's war of independence, which led to Portugal's withdrawal from the country, in 1975. And he did the everyday news stories and golf tournaments of an agency photographer. Pledge, who was then at the Gamma agency, which Salgado joined in 1975, could already detect Salgado's restlessness. "He quickly said, 'I don't want to do this all my life.' He was talking about not dealing with the news per se but using the news to deal with issues—poverty, injustice. That really struck me. That's not what young photographers said then."

Sebastião and Lélia's first son, Julião, was born in 1974. Rodrigo, their second, was born in 1979. He had Down syndrome, a fact that his parents had not known during the pregnancy. Salgado told me that he cried for three hours after Rodrigo was born. The baby suffered from respiratory problems, and Lélia always kept him in her arms as he slept. "She thought he was going to die," Salgado told me. (Today, Rodrigo lives with his parents.) By now, Salgado was frequently working overseas; in 1979, he joined Magnum, the elite and cooperatively owned photo agency founded in 1947 by Robert Capa, with Henri Cartier-Bresson and others. Lélia told me, "It was hard. He thought I was strong, and could do it. And I could do it, but it was a lot—the house,



"Maybe we mate for life because we're lazy."

the children, illness, all that." She never asked him to stop, and he never thought of changing the pace or the emphasis of his work, in order to spend more time in Paris. (Juliano Salgado, who now works in television and movies, and himself has a son, told me that he thought of his father as an "Indiana Jones figure.") In 1981, Salgado was on his way back from Australia when he accepted an assignment from the *Times* to spend three days photographing Ronald Reagan. When the President was shot, outside the Washington Hilton, Salgado was a few feet from the scene. Sales of Salgado's photographs from that day (he took seventy-six frames, with three cameras, in about a minute) made enough money for him to buy the apartment in Paris where he and Lélia still live, and, in an uncharacteristically flashy gesture, an Alfa Romeo Alfetta—"an incredibly nice car."

Late one evening, Tara's captain called us up to the bridge to see a single green dot on the radar: the first iceberg. And when we woke the next morning the ship was passing through a calm, wide channel with white mountains on either side. There was a hint of something sour and eggy in the air that we learned to recognize as the smell of massed penguins. Out of the wind, it barely felt colder than a December day in Central Park; and among the serious sailors there began a silent competition

to see who could respond to Antarctica with the most non-specialist wardrobe, at least for a few minutes at a time: T-shirts, baggy cardigans, plaid slippers.

We were near the northern tip of the seven-hundred-mile-long Antarctic Peninsula, on the western side: a landscape of fjords and islands. This strand of Antarctica is relatively close to South America, and, because it is less cold than the mass of the continent, a dozen or so scientific bases have been built by various countries, at the kind of rocky coastal spots also valued by penguins. These few sheds and huts, along with some grander developments, on the other side of Antarctica, and a station at the South Pole, constitute virtually the only man-made environment, and therefore human population, of the continent, which is one and a half times the size of the United States. We dropped anchor close to the Chilean base of Gonzalez Videla. Salgado went on shore dressed in many layers of clothing and walked up a little icy slope, where he put on sunglasses, and said quietly, "I don't know if I can do this. It's too big." He was looking across at a panorama of sea and icebergs. Glaciers slipped straight into the sea, forming ice cliffs where they came to an end in the water. It looked as if a flood had rolled into a Himalayan valley. "I ask myself if it's possible to represent it by pictures," he said.

Salgado moved hesitantly off the ice onto dark rocks—you could feel your