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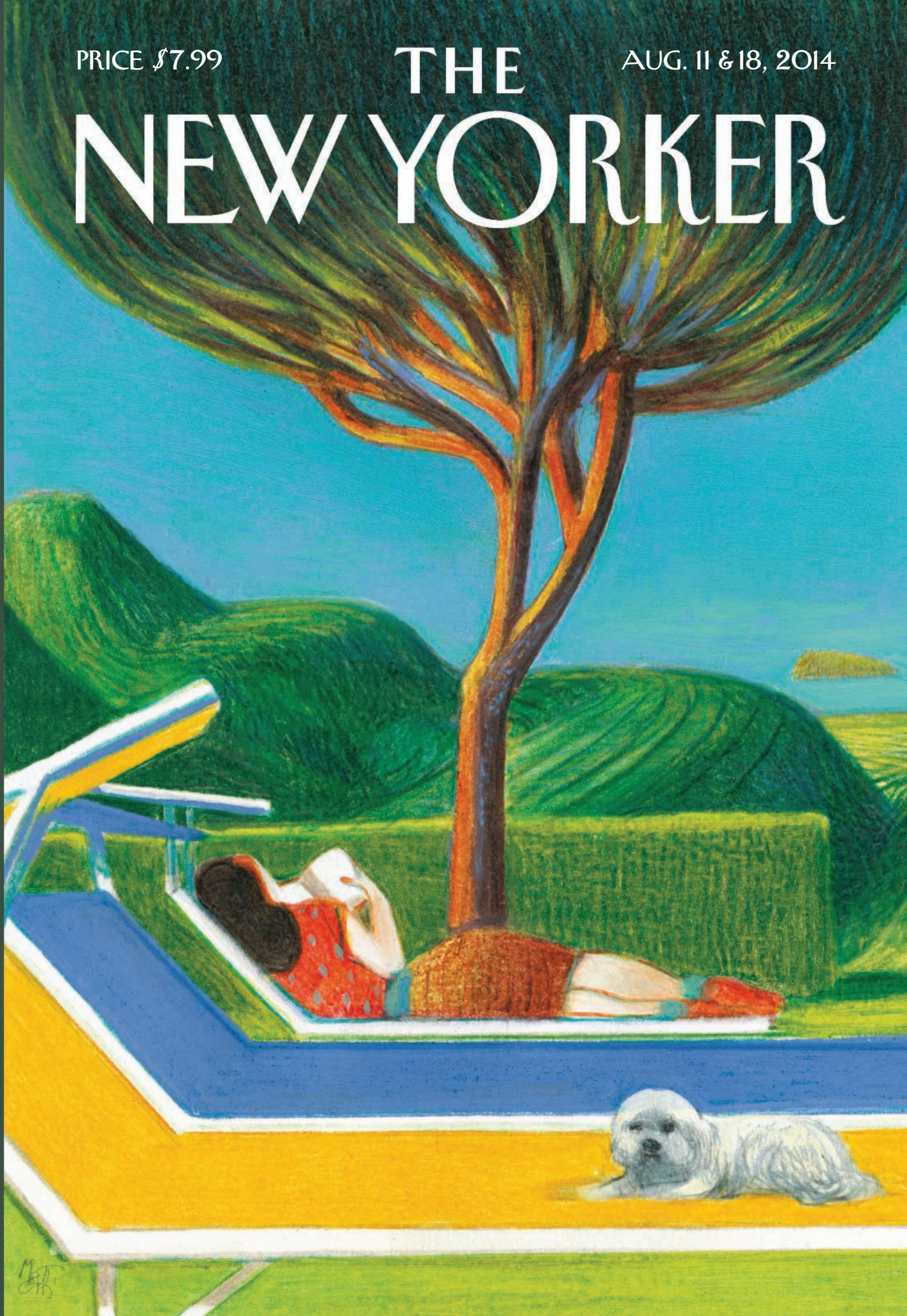

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THE NEW YORKER

AUGUST 11 & 18, 2014


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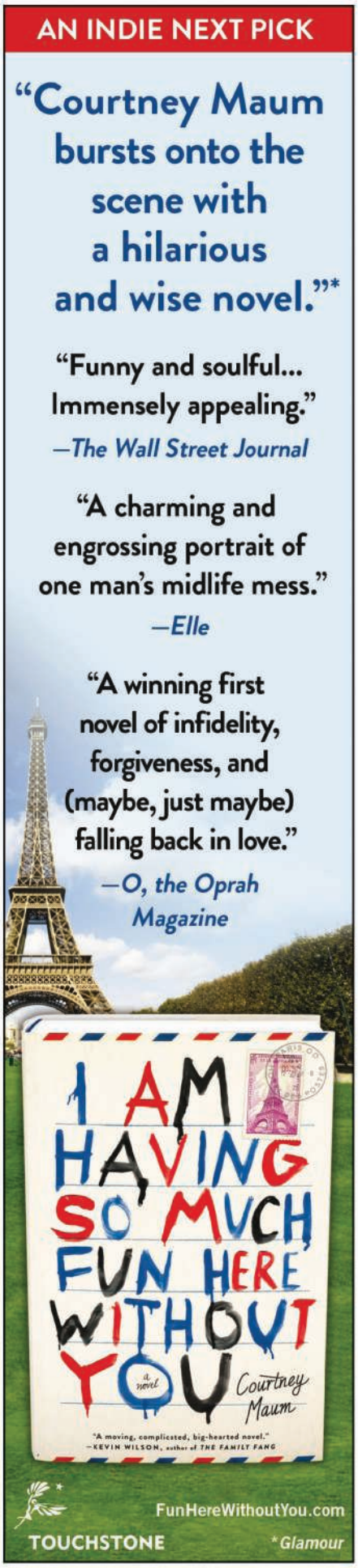

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**BERTOLT BRECHT** (POEM, P. 84) died in 1956. His "Love Poems," translated by David Constantine and Tom Kuhn, will be published in November.

**HILTON ALS** (THE THEATRE, P. 88) is the magazine's theatre critic. He is the author of "White Girls," which comes out in paperback this month.

**LORENZO MATTOTTI** (COVER), a contributor since 1993, drew the illustrations for "Hansel & Gretel," which will be published in October.

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**PAGE-TURNER:** Criticism, contention, and conversation about books and the writing life.

**VIDEO:** *Emily Nussbaum* comments on the new season of "Masters of Sex."

**PODCASTS:** *Jeffrey Toobin* talks with *John Cassidy* and *Bernard Avishai* about the conflict in Gaza on the Political Scene. Plus, *Claudia Roth Pierpont* and *Sasha Frere-Jones* on Out Loud.

**SLIDE SHOW:** The paper architecture of Shigeru Ban.

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# THE MAIL

## EQUALITY ASSURANCE

It's quite likely that the late suffragist and women's-rights activist Alice Paul would enjoy reading, and possibly debating, the points highlighted by Louis Menand ("The Sex Amendment," July 21st). As the executive director of the Alice Paul Institute, I would like to emphasize that what she would have considered the real "sex amendment," the Equal Rights Amendment, is still three states away from ratification. It is disappointing that she didn't live to see the amendment she worked so hard to get Congress to pass become a part of our Constitution. The protections afforded to women through Title VII of the Civil Rights Act can be legislated away at any time. We need an amendment to the Constitution to guarantee women's equality under the law.
*Lucienne Beard*
*Mt. Laurel, N.J.*

Menand reminds us that African-Americans were not the only ones whose lives were transformed by the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title VII not only dismantled overt employer practices like reserving certain jobs for men or paying women less than their male colleagues; it also, via a steady stream of court decisions, outlawed behaviors that were previously tolerated—such as sexual harassment or refusing to promote women deemed insufficiently "feminine" in appearance or demeanor. Only after Congress acted, in 1978, to amend Title VII by passing the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was pregnancy bias explicitly covered by the law—and the extent of that coverage is still up for debate. The Supreme Court, on its last day before summer recess, agreed to hear a case next term on how employers must accommodate pregnancy's physical effects; for example, by providing temporary light-duty work.
*Gillian Thomas*
*Brooklyn, N.Y.*

## THE INFORMATION GENE

In Seth Mnookin's piece about a rare genetic disease, a medical researcher says, "In this day of social media, dedicated, educated, and well-informed families have the ability to make a huge impact" ("One of a Kind," July 21st). I am the C.E.O. of the National Organization for Rare Disorders, where my team witnesses this paradigm shift daily. While patients and parents have always promoted research, social media have empowered the community. Families who once struggled alone for years can now connect online with others who are going through similar struggles, along with medical experts, to promote further research of rare diseases. This gives hope to those affected by extremely uncommon disorders. Of the nearly seven thousand known rare diseases, only some two hundred and eighty have treatments approved by the Food and Drug Administration. NORD's programs reflect the new opportunities made possible by advances in technology, as we help patient groups establish global registries and provide online learning opportunities for physicians.
*Peter L. Saltonstall*
*Washington, D.C.*

Mnookin's lucid account of the medical odyssey endured by the Might family reveals the devastating impact of rare genetic disorders. I contributed to the 2012 research that helped identify Bertrand Might's genetic mutation. In spite of the unprecedented opportunity for better understanding of genetic diseases, we are facing funding challenges in biomedical research. Geneticists understand the function of fewer than half of the twenty-one thousand human genes. Beyond assisting individual patients, research into rare genetic disorders provides a major source of information about the remaining genes and their universal role in human health. DNA sequencing will provide the key to many medical mysteries, and also targeted treatments for currently intractable disorders. Although the National Institutes of Health is the major funding source for research into genetic disorders, including the work described in Mnookin's article, its budget has failed to keep up with inflation and is subject to political will. Active public and political support for the N.I.H. will be crucial to continued progress and improved collective health.
*Miriam H. Meisler*
*Ann Arbor, Mich.*

Mnookin's article resonated with my family's experience. Last October, our three-month-old child was given a diagnosis of terminal spinal muscular atrophy, Type 1, one of the most common of the rare genetic diseases and, among them, the leading cause of infant mortality. My husband and I were told that our baby, Heidi, who had barely been able to move since she was born, will eventually lose the ability entirely. She will become unable to swallow or breathe. My husband, who is a geneticist for a plant biotech company, found a clinical trial for an S.M.A. treatment, and we were able to get Heidi in. She was the eleventh infant to get the experimental drug in the dose she was given. Every four months, she has the drug injected into her spinal fluid. She will never be cured, but now she can sit with support, and use her hands and bring them to her face. We believe that the drug will probably extend her life, and we are certain that it has improved her quality of life. Through Families of S.M.A. and the S.M.A. Facebook page, we connected with other families with affected children. With rare diseases, you are not likely to find others with affected children in your community, and the connections we have made with others via the Internet have been invaluable.
*Sandra Hall*
*Durham, N.C.*

•

*Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter or return letters.*

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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

| AUGUST 2014 | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6TH | 7TH | 8TH | 9TH | 10TH | 11TH | 12TH |
| | 13TH | 14TH | 15TH | 16TH | 17TH | 18TH | 19TH |

**THERE'S MORE TO** the recovering Rockaways than the beach. A sprawling art festival, co-hosted by the Rockaway Artists Alliance, the National Park Service, and MOMA PS1 (among other organizations), kicked off in late June with a concert by Patti Smith, whose black-and-white photographs and site-specific installations occupy two galleries and one derelict building on the grounds of Fort Tilden. Nearby, the seraphic strains of Janet Cardiff's "Forty Part Motet," a sound piece based on a sixteenth-century choral work by Thomas Tallis, fill a military chapel. Down the road, works by more than seventy-five international artists—from the boldfaced Marina Abramović to the brilliant French newcomer Camille Henrot—vie for attention in a group show at the Rockaway Beach Surf Club.

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THE THEATRE | DANCE
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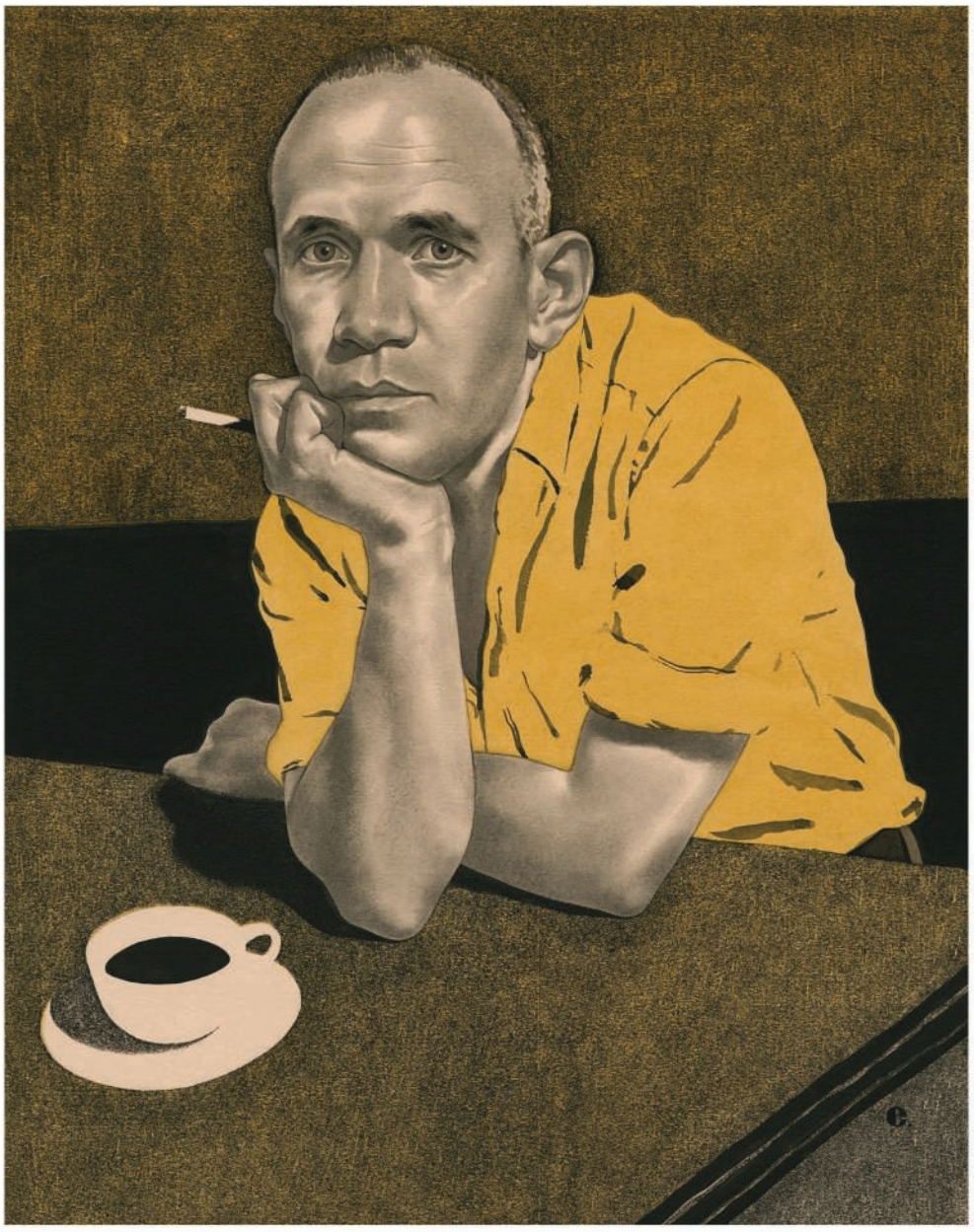

Jean Genet's first play to be produced was based on the Papin case, in which two maids killed their mistress.

THE THEATRE

# ENFANTS TERRIBLES

*Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert play murderous sisters in a revival of "The Maids."*

**IN 1947, THE FRENCH WRITER** and provocateur Jean Genet was not yet forty, but he had already lived a number of different lives. An illegitimate child whose young mother left him to the state before he was a year old, Genet would remain spiritually orphaned throughout his relatively long life. (He died in 1986, at the age of seventy-five.) Despite the care that his foster families took with the intellectually talented boy, Genet pulled away from Gallic respectability. When he was fifteen, he was sent to a penal colony for vagrancy. Later, he would be arrested for stealing, prostitution, and any number of other deviations from the social norm. Being incarcerated gave him his voice, though; he wrote his first poem while serving time. Subsequent writings, like his first novel, "Our Lady of the Flowers" (1944), which he completed during another period behind bars, described, in alternately baroque and simple language, not only dislocation, bravery, and brutality but the poetics of confinement and male desire.

Genet's inventiveness and insight made him a literary star, and when he was condemned to life in prison, in 1948, after his tenth arrest for burglary, he got off because French intellectuals, from Jean-Paul Sartre to Jean Cocteau, came to his defense. The year before, "The Maids," the first of Genet's plays to be produced, premièred in Paris. It was inspired by the famous Papin case, in which two sisters working as domestics in Depression-era France killed their mistress and her adult daughter. With "The Maids," Genet introduced a new way of making theatre, treating it as a plastic art, in which stylized language and gesture could describe not only what was happening but also what the characters longed for, or imagined.

Genet had hoped that the play would be staged with male actors in order to heighten the comedy, and therefore the absurdity, of the story. But who could doubt what the mighty Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert will bring to their roles in Sydney Theatre Company's production, at the Lincoln Center Festival. In "The Maids," directed by Benedict Andrews (at City Center Aug. 6-16), the sisters, Claire (Blanchett) and Solange (Huppert), act out a fantasy of maleness and femaleness, force and subjugation, in service to a Madame (Elizabeth Debicki) whom they despise because she is less a woman without them. Delighting in their spit and rouge and storytelling, the sisters are a kind of nightmare grown out of our generally unspoken desire to be looked at and claimed—and pitied.

*—Hilton Als*



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## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### And I and Silence

Naomi Wallace wrote this play, set in the nineteen-fifties, about the bond between two teen-age girls, one black and one white, who meet in jail. Caitlin McLeod directs the Signature Theatre Company production. In previews. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

### The Maids

Lincoln Center Festival includes this revival of Jean Genet's play from 1947, presented by Sydney Theatre Company. Cate Blanchett, Isabelle Huppert, and Elizabeth Debicki star in a new English translation by Benedict Andrews and Andrew Upton; Andrews directs. Aug. 6-16. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-721-6500.)

### New York International Fringe Festival

The annual festival includes hundreds of comedies, dramas, musicals, solo shows, and more, in eighteen downtown venues. Opens Aug. 8. (Various locations. fringenyc.com)

### This Is Our Youth

Kenneth Lonergan's play from 1996, in which privileged teen-agers get lost in a world of drugs and money, makes its Broadway début. Michael Cera, Tavi Gevinson, and Kieran Culkin star; Anna D. Shapiro directs. Previews begin Aug. 18. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

### The Wayside Motor Inn

Signature Theatre Company presents a new play by A. R. Gurney, directed by Lila Neugebauer, about the intersecting lives of ten people staying at a highway motel. Previews begin Aug. 12. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

## NOW PLAYING

### Between Riverside and Crazy

Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new play by Stephen Adly Guirgis; Austin Pendleton directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111.)

### King Lear

The Public Theatre's free Shakespeare in the Park series concludes with the Shakespeare tragedy, starring John Lithgow, Annette Bening, Jessica Collins, and Jessica Hecht. Daniel Sullivan directs. (Delacorte, Central Park. Enter at 81st St. at Central Park W. 212-967-7555. Through Aug. 17.)

### Mala Hierba

In Tanya Saracho's restive drama for Second Stage Uptown, the Spanish actress Marta Milans plays Liliana, a Texas trophy wife whose gilded surface is beginning to chip. While pacifying her brutal husband and placating her bratty stepdaughter (Ana Nogueira), Liliana's Valium-aided equilibrium suffers when a former lover (Roberta Colindrez) appears. Saracho, who writes for "Girls" and "Looking," favors unfussy, animated dialogue that hurtles from Spanish to English and back. The local details she supplies—*raspa* ices, flashy S.U.V.s—are colorful and specific. But the play seesaws queasily from finely observed comedy to telenovela melodrama. Though Jerry Ruiz offers sympathetic direction, the shifts in mood feel too haphazard, the focus too diffuse. Despite Malins's considerable glamour, Liliana remains a fashion-plate cipher, but Colindrez, a standout in last season's "Fun Home," has a cool pragmatism that grounds the script's excesses. (McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-246-4422. Through Aug. 9.)

### Sex with Strangers

A thoughtful comedy about privacy and publicity, Laura Eason's script centers on Olivia (Anna Gunn), a reclusive novelist, and Ethan (Billy Magnussen), a brash blogger who pursues her. Magnussen, fresh from a mirthful turn in "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike," plays a variation on the boy toy—this one has a six-figure book deal. Gunn, so obdurate in "Breaking Bad," is a more girlish presence here. The play has the savor of female fantasy—Ethan, unusually ripped for a blogger, is half desperate to open both Olivia's heart and thighs—but what's so wrong with that? David Schwimmer directs with more sensitivity than his "Friends" résumé might suggest, and Eason offers resonant observations about how technology both eases and complicates relationships. At a recent performance, when Olivia told Ethan that the Wi-Fi at their isolated bed-and-breakfast had broken, several audience members audibly gasped. (Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

### Strictly Dishonorable

This 1929 play was a big hit on Broadway for Preston Sturges, and paved the way for his move to Hollywood. Late one night, a young, well-to-do unmarried couple, Henry and Isabelle (Thomas Christopher Matthews and Keilly McQuail), step into a New York City speakeasy staffed by Italian immigrants. Henry is a bully, a boor, and a bigot, and Isabelle is a bright free spirit, chafing at the restrictions imposed on her by virtue of her sex and social position. Lots of Old-Fashioneds and champagne are consumed, and Henry angrily staggers out, but Isabelle decides to stay, disgusted by her fiancé's behavior and charmed by the attentions of Gus (Michael Labbadia), the opera-singing childhood friend of the bar's owner. Up to this point, the director, Laura Braza, has kept her funny, adept cast fizzing, but the second act becomes a morose, unconvincing roundelay of will-they-won't-they that even the skilled Sturges stars Barbara Stanwyck and Joel McCrea would have trouble selling today. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through Aug. 10.)

# DANCE

### Lincoln Center Out of Doors

Ragamala Dance is expert at keeping the traditions of India's bharata-natyam style fresh. The troupe's new work, "Song of the Jasmine," is a collaboration with Rudresh Mahanthappa, a saxophonist who mixes jazz and Indian music with remarkable success. The program also includes Kung-Yang Lin's company in "Be/Longing 2," which depicts the experiences of Asian immigrants in the form of labyrinths and mandalas, and the Chinese American Arts Council Dancers performing dances of Chinese ethnic minorities. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5456. Aug. 7 at 7:30.)

### Mostly Mozart Festival / "Acis and Galatea"

Mark Morris, a frequent visitor to the annual music festival, débuts his staging of Handel's 1718 pastoral opera. In Morris's vision of this simple tale—a love triangle between a nymph, a shepherd, and a Cyclops—dancers and singers share the stage, all inhabiting the same rustic world. As he puts it, "the dancers are the story." They're dressed in Isaac Mizrahi's foamy green costumes, inspired by Adrianne Lobel's sylvan stage designs. The role of Galatea is sung by the fresh-voiced soprano Yulia Van Doren. Maestro Nicholas McGegan conducts the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale in Mozart's orchestration of the score—slightly heavier than Handel's. As per the original, the text is sung in English. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Aug. 7-9 at 7:30.)

### "Dance Off the Grid"

As part of the free SummerStage series, the dance critic turned curator Valerie Gladstone presents a mixed evening at East River Park, anchored by Ron K. Brown's company Evidence, which performs "Come Ye," a tribute to Afro-pop featuring Brown's vibrant blend of West African, Caribbean, and urban dance styles. Also on the program is a fusion of flamenco and salsa in a quartet by Nélida Tirado and a Brazilian-flavored hip-hop solo by Ephrat (Bounce) Asherie. (F.D.R. Dr. at Grand St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 9 at 8.)

## OUT OF TOWN

### Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

The excellent Seattle-based Pacific Northwest Ballet offers "A Million Kisses to My Skin," a propulsive tribute to neoclassical ballet technique; "Rassemblement," Nacho Duato's earthy portrait of sorrow and oppression; "Take Five . . . More or Less," an elegant jazz number by Susan Stroman; and "Before After," a contemporary work by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa (Aug. 6-10). • "Stardust," by the veteran choreographer David Roussève, tells the story of a troubled gay African-American teen-ager through projections of his confessional text messages. Accompanied by a score that flatly juxtaposes Nat King Cole romance against electronica, a ten-member company peppers sweeping, body-flinging modern dance with hip-hop posturing (Aug. 6-10). • The following week, the festival presents several hip-hop ensembles. Companhia Urbana de Dança, from Rio de Janeiro, deconstructs hip-hop's spectacular moves to create sophisticated, abstract compositions that reflect the inner lives of its dancers (Aug. 13-16). • In "Mo(or)town/Redux," Doug Elkins brilliantly refracts "Othello" through the prism of American pop culture, updating José Limón's "The Moor's Pavane" with an arrangement of Motown recordings. In "Hapless Bizarre," he teams up with the physical comedian Mark Gindick for a wild ride in the tradition of Chaplin, Keaton, and Tati (Aug. 13-17). (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 6-17.)

### Mount Tremper Arts Festival

"Black Lakes," the latest première by the idiosyncratic choreographer Katie Workum, sounds a bit dark for this friendly Catskills festival, at least as a title, though the mention of lakes does jibe with the summer-camp-for-experimentalists feel. Billed as a "spontaneous celebration of the mundane," the piece features a strong cast, including the focussed and lucid Eleanor Smith. (Mount Tremper Arts, 647 South Plank Rd., Mount Tremper, N.Y. 845-688-9893. Aug. 8-9.)

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# CLASSICAL MUSIC

**CONCERTS IN TOWN**

**Mostly Mozart Festival**

There isn't much Mozart on offer this week, but other temptations abound; a selection follows. Aug. 7 at 7:30: One of the most exciting classical partnerships of recent years has been that of Bremen's Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, a group originally formed without a conductor, and the maestro Paavo Järvi, whose style matches the intensity of the ensemble. They team up with the persuasive pianist Lars Vogt for an all-Brahms program—the "Academic Festival" Overture, the First Piano Concerto, and the Second Symphony. (Alice Tully Hall.) • Aug. 8-9 at 8: Yuja Wang, a young star as well known for her daring outfits as for her astonishing keyboard facility, is the guest artist with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in a program that features the return of one of the industry's great survivors—Osmo Vänskä, the reinstated music director of the Minnesota Orchestra—on the podium. Music on the lighter side by Prokofiev (the Symphony No. 1, "Classical"), Shostakovich (the Concerto for Piano, Trumpet, and Strings, with Philip Cobb), and Beethoven (the Eighth Symphony) is on offer. (Avery Fisher Hall.) • Aug. 12-13 at 8: Beethoven is the festival's next focus—the mighty Symphony No. 9, "Choral," specifically, with the "Consecration of the House" Overture as a prelude. The festival orchestra and the Concert Chorale of New York will be led by a commanding conductor, Gianandrea Noseda; the vocal soloists are Erika Grimaldi, Anna Maria Chiuri, Russell Thomas, and Ildar Abdrazakov (whom Noseda paced in "Prince Igor" at the Met last season). (Avery Fisher Hall.) • Aug. 17 at 3: This year's opera is an outlier—Handel's seldom heard **"Teseo,"** a work (adapted from a libretto made for Lully) inspired by the heroic deeds of Theseus at the court of Athens. Nicholas McGegan and his superb Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, from San Francisco, are on hand, offering a concert performance with a cast that features such singers as Amanda Forsythe, Dominique Labelle, and Robin Blaze. (Alice Tully Hall.) • Aug. 17 at 5: Sofia Gubaidulina, one of the world's indisputably great composers, is a

# UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

*The Bard Music Festival explores Schubert's wondrous music and his mysterious life.*

**FRANZ SCHUBERT, THE FOCUS** of the twenty-fifth annual summer music festival at Bard College, is, in several ways, the most unfathomable of the great composers. We know more about him than we do about, say, Bach. Yet, while we can summon a rough idea of Bach's personality—blunt, cantankerous, at once earthy and devout—Schubert eludes capture. Modern scholars have discarded the Romantic picture of Schubert as the innocent tunesmith, but agree on little else. Was he a dissipated merrymaker? A solitary depressive? Gay, straight, or none of the above? Did his highest ambitions lie in opera, symphony, chamber music, or art song? It seems as though Schubert, who died at thirty-one, departed before his character had fully formed. That he nonetheless possessed a ragingly powerful musical identity is not in doubt. The apocalyptic tremors that scar his mature lyric landscapes—the subterranean trill in the B-Flat Sonata, the stabbing dissonance at the end of the F-Minor Fantasia—presage symphonic and operatic utterances that would have struck fear into the nineteenth century and perhaps rendered Wagner unnecessary.

Song remains the leading edge of any Schubert survey, and at Bard a gifted array of singers, including the tenors Paul Appleby and Nicholas Phan and the mezzo-soprano Rebecca Ringle, will tackle the composer's lieder in a two-weekend embrace (Aug. 8-10 and Aug. 15-17) that also offers a selection of chamber and symphonic works by Schubert and his contemporaries. Leon Botstein, Bard's musical and multitalented president, will take the lead; in his role as a conductor, he may have limitations, but he has won a loyal following in a business riven by instability. He also hosts, as before, a knotty fugue of musicologists. At Bard, the talks and panels are nearly as well attended as the concerts: this audience wants to think about the music, not merely bathe in it. The festival ends with a concert performance of "Fierrabras," Schubert's most imposing attempt at opera. The libretto, which tells of loves among warring Franks and Moors in the time of Charlemagne, is too conventional to allow for the full liberation of the composer's dramatic capacities, but there are premonitions of what was not to be: notably, the harmonically wayward aria "Die Brust, gebeugt von Sorgen," which ends with cries of "Blood!" over a hammering B-minor ostinato. "Who Was Schubert?" is the title of one scholarly discussion, and no one is likely to give a confident answer.

*—Alex Ross*



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# Discover the Undiscovered

## Aboard Japan's Hokuriku Shinkansen

*Clockwise from top: New bullet train service from Nagano to Kanazawa begins in the spring of 2015; shoppers at the Omi-cho Ichiba Market; a sampling of Toyama Bay Sushi; world-famous* taiko *drummers performing on Sado Island.*

Travel at thrilling speed in total comfort and experience the beauty of Japan aboard one of the world's most advanced high-speed trains when the **Hokuriku Shinkansen** (bullet train) opens its doors to new passenger service in the spring of 2015. Connecting Tokyo and the historic capital of Ishikawa prefecture, Kanazawa, in approximately two and a half hours, the new route will provide quick access to the Hokuriku region and beyond.

Heading north and west from Tokyo on Japan's main island of Honshu, the new train route will provide ready access to the prefectures of Nagano, Niigata, Toyama, Gifu, Ishikawa, and Fukui. Framed by the majestic Japanese Alps to the south and the fishing villages found along the Sea of Japan's picturesque coastline, the region offers a treasure trove of cultural excursions far off the beaten path.

**Sado Island** in Niigata is home to **Kodo**, the world's most famous group of *taiko* drummers and the biggest draw of the Earth Celebration held every August. Steeped in rural custom, Sado is also known throughout the country for its Noh dramatic traditions. More than thirty Noh stages present performances from April to October, including the famed Takigi Noh (Bonfire Noh). Sado is easily reached from the bullet train's Joetsu-Myoko JR Station and via ferry from nearby port of Naoetsu.

The terrific profusion of sushi restaurants found throughout Hokuriku, coupled with regional sake offerings from the area's **Sakagura** (sake cellars), make the region a special draw for culinary enthusiasts. In Toyama, dominated by the magnificent Tateyama Mountains and Toyama Bay, the **Toyama Bay Sushi** network supplies local restaurants with more than 100 varieties of freshly caught seafood, while the **Masuda Sake Company**, founded in 1893, offers an informative Sakagura tour. Cap the experience with a visit to Kanazawa's teeming and not-to-be-missed **Omi-cho Ichiba Market**, founded in 1721.

Hokuriku is also renowned for its traditional craftsmanship, with techniques passed down by generations of artisans creating everything from lacquerware and handmade *Washi* paper to forged steel swords. See Fukui masters at work demonstrating traditional Japanese papermaking techniques at the **Udatsu Paper and Craft Museum**, where visitors can also participate in a hands-on workshop.

The **Hokuriku Shinkansen** will open a new frontier for international tourism. Be among the first to explore this incredibly diverse and largely undiscovered region of Japan.

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**Japan.** Endless Discovery.

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Japan. Endless Discovery.

# Food for thought: Visit Japan

Japan is known the world over for magnificent food, and one of our most celebrated creations is wagashi. A traditional confection, wagashi is prepared in a variety of shapes and colors which reflect our four magnificent seasons. Of course, fine eating isn't the only thing you'll enjoy here. But when considering a vacation, it is food for thought.

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Russian of Tatar heritage, but her work has been profoundly influenced by the German tradition of Bach and Webern. The outstanding International Contemporary Ensemble devotes a concert to her music at the Park Avenue Armory's exquisitely restored Board of Officers Room, featuring such works as the String Trio and the "Meditation on the Bach Chorale 'Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiermit.'" (Park Ave. at 66th St.) (mostlymozart.org.)

**Rite of Summer Music Festival**
A summer ferry ride to Governors Island is a great way to get out of town without actually leaving Gotham. This series has found a comfortable niche, with a varied schedule of concerts for both connoisseurs and families; its latest program at Colonels' Row, entitled "American and Argentine Sounds from Bolcom to Piazzolla," will be performed by the pianist Pam Goldberg, the soprano Allison Charney, the violinist Esther Noh, and the cellist Caitlin Sullivan. (Aug. 9 at 1 and 3. No tickets required. For a ferry schedule, see govisland.com.)

**Naumburg Orchestral Concerts: Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center**
In the Naumburg series' final concert of the summer, small is beautiful. The organization has invited several of Lincoln Center's chamber-music masters (including the pianist Gloria Chien and the clarinettist Jose Franch-Ballester) to perform bedrock works by Haydn and Weber (the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 34) along with Paul Schoenfield's vibrant Trio for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano. (Naumburg Bandshell, mid-Park, south of 72nd St. Aug. 12 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

## OUT OF TOWN

**Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival**
Aug. 6 at 7:30: The Bard Music Festival is not alone in celebrating Schubert. The flutist Marya Martin's gracious Hamptons festival (with an exemplary slate of performers) is also involved; an upcoming concert offers two choice works (the Notturno in E-Flat Major and the String Quintet), as well as Ned Rorem's entrancing "Bright Music" (1985), which she commissioned. • Aug. 9 at 6:30: The gallant guys of Brooklyn Rider offer a relaxed concert combining a Haydn favorite (the String Quartet in G Minor, "The Rider") with new and recent pieces by Gabriel Kahane, Evan Ziporyn, and the folk singer-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan. (The concert will be repeated at the Parrish Art Museum at 9.) • Aug. 17 at 6:30: The pianist Shai Wosner, the violinist Frank Huang, and other esteemed performers play music by three of the great "B"s—Beethoven, William Bolcom ("Three Rags for String Quartet"), and Brahms (the Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor). (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. For tickets and full schedule, see bcmf.org.)

**Glimmerglass Festival**
Aug. 7 at 7:30, Aug. 9 and Aug. 11 at 1:30, and Aug. 16 at 8: When Tobias Picker and Gene Scheer's **"An American Tragedy"** (based on the Dreiser novel) had its world première, at the Met in 2005, Francesca Zambello, Glimmerglass's enterprising leader, was at the controls. Now Peter Kazaras directs Glimmerglass's production of a new, revised version, with a cast that features the young artists Christian Bowers, Vanessa Isiguen, and Cynthia Cook in the major parts and the veteran Patricia Schuman in the pungent character role of Elvira; George Manahan conducts. • Aug. 8 at 7:30 and Aug. 17 at 1:30: If one Glimmerglass production this summer is especially inviting, it's Zambello's staging of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's **"Ariadne in Naxos,"** set in a New York country home and sung in a combination of English and German, with the imperial title role taken by Christine Goerke, a breakout star at the Met last season. Catherine Martin, Rachele Gilmore, Corey Bix, and Carlton Ford take the other leading roles; Kathleen Kelly. • Aug. 9 at 8, Aug. 15 at 7:30, and Aug. 18 at 1:30: Zambello directs an affecting and acclaimed production of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Yunah Lee and Dinyar Vania in the leading roles; Joseph Colaneri. • Aug. 10 at 1:30, Aug. 14 at 7:30, and Aug. 16 and Aug. 19 at 1:30: Rodgers and Hammerstein's **"Carousel,"** with Andrea Carroll and Ryan McKinny portraying the vulnerable young lovers Julie Jordan and Billy Bigelow; Doug Peck. (Cooperstown, N.Y. glimmerglass.org.)

**Tanglewood**
The supreme music festival of the summer overflows with concerts during the next two weeks; here is a selection. Aug. 7 at 8: Three big stars—the pianist Emanuel Ax, the violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and the cellist Yo-Yo Ma—offer an all-Brahms program (including the Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major) at Ozawa Hall. • Aug. 8 at 8:30: Leonard Slatkin, never shy about conducting American music, leads the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the world première of William Bolcom's "Circus Overture" and Barber's Violin Concerto (with Gil Shaham, one of the work's great interpreters) before wrapping things up with Elgar's "Enigma Variations." • Aug. 10 at 2:30: Ma returns, lending his gifts to an all-Tchaikovsky concert, with the estimable David Zinman leading the B.S.O. in such works as the Andante Cantabile for Cello and Strings, the "Variations on a Rococo Theme," and the Symphony No. 6, "Pathètique." • Aug. 13 at 8: Jeremy Denk is not one to offer light programs. In a concert at Ozawa Hall, the compelling pianist performs Ives's "Concord" Sonata and, as a chaser, Bach's Goldberg Variations. • Aug. 16 at 8:30: The memory of Leonard Bernstein—one of Tanglewood's patron saints—is honored with a concert performance of his ebullient operetta **"Candide,"** with the B.S.O., a fine young cast (including Anna Christy and Nicholas Phan), and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, under the baton of Bramwell Tovey. (Lenox, Mass. tanglewood.org.)

**Philadelphia Orchestra at SPAC**
The Fabulous Philadelphians bring their mastery to the Saratoga Performing Arts center for some three weeks each August. Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the orchestra's music director, conducts one of the more interesting programs, a concert that pairs an ambitious new multimedia work by Tan Dun ("Nu Shu: Secret Songs of Women," featuring the harpist Elizabeth Hainen) with a proven crowd-pleaser, Mahler's invigorating Symphony No. 1 in D Major. (Saratoga, N.Y. Aug. 15 at 8. For tickets and full schedule, see spac.org.)

**Maverick Concerts**
Trio Solisti—one of the most exciting piano trios in the business—is a favorite at Maverick's woodland music chapel. Its upcoming program features masterworks by Beethoven and Brahms (the arch-Romantic Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8), which bookend the Piano Trio No. 3 (2012) by Lowell Liebermann, a superb craftsman in the late-Romantic tradition. (Woodstock, N.Y. Aug. 17 at 4. For tickets and full schedule, see maverickconcerts.org.)

**GOINGS ON, ONLINE**
See our Web site for more information about the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, which is offering a new series of concerts at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. Plus, more Movies, including reviews of "Bad Blood," "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors," and other revivals.

## OF NOTE

**MARLBORO MUSIC FESTIVAL**
The legendary festival (long led by the pianists Richard Goode and Mitsuko Uchida) brings the world's leading musicians together with a flock of their impressive protégés to play chamber-music masterpieces; the renowned Kaija Saariaho is this year's composer-in-residence. Detailed concert programs are announced a week in advance on the festival's Web site, marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. Aug. 8-9 and Aug. 15-16 at 8:30 and Aug. 10 and Aug. 17 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

**THE STONE: LISA BIELAWA**
John Zorn has offered a well-deserved, multi-concert residency to the fascinating composer and singer, whose sophisticated post-minimalist music abounds in lyrical richness. Among the performers—a *Who's Who* of New York freelancers—are the vocalist and violinist Carla Kihlstedt, the violin-and-cello team of Colin and Eric Jacobsen, the pianist Bruce Levingston, the mezzo-soprano Hai-Ting Chinn, the baritone Jesse Blumberg, and the American Contemporary Music Ensemble. (Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. Aug. 12-17 at 8; the Aug. 13 and Aug. 16 shows are repeated at 10.)

A banquet is overtaken by paranoia and mob rule in Luis Buñuel's "The Exterminating Angel" (1962), at BAM.

## MAKING A MEAL OF IT

*Dinner with cinema's preëminent Surrealist.*

**THEY ARRIVE AT A HUGE** marble mansion, the men handsome and sturdy in evening dress and top hats, the women in jewels, furs, and gowns. They're the élite of Mexican culture and business, and their hosts are putting on a banquet for them. Sitting down at the long table, they exchange the usual fatuous compliments, but in this case there's an underlying sense of menace. They don't much like one another, yet when the meal is finished they cannot leave. They just can't do it. Weeks pass, and the politeness dissolves. Conspiracies develop; lovers commit suicide in a closet; paranoia and mob rule take over. Elsewhere in the mansion, a growling bear and several fleecy sheep linger.

So it goes in Luis Buñuel's "The Exterminating Angel" (1962), in which almost nothing is explained. It's at BAM on Aug. 14, as part of a monthlong revival of his work. Buñuel was the preëminent Surrealist of the cinema, a director who revelled in erotic provocation, puzzles, formal play, and "symbols" that he planted like savage jokes. Born in Spain in 1900, he joined the Paris avant-garde around 1925 and collaborated with Salvador Dali, with whom he completed the sixteen-minute-long film "Un Chien Andalou," in 1929. The image in "Chien" of a woman's eye being cut with a razor remains one of cinema's most upsetting, beautiful moments. The shock that Buñuel administered to narrative logic was just as great. His images, with a few exceptions, didn't conform to a conventional, or an unconventional, temporal scheme; instead, the logic was associational. Meanings had to be inferred (psychoanalysis helped). Yet "interpreting" Buñuel too much muffles him. He was an anarchist filmmaker-poet and moralist who thought the rich corrupt, the Church hypocritical and life-denying, and benevolence largely meaningless. When the surface is so viciously alive, stacking up his ciphers in search of profundity is a mistake.

"Angel" is only the first of his dinner-party films; the second, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (Aug. 9), made in 1972, is even more baffling and funny. Another slice of the upper crust, including three respectable husbands running a drug ring, gathers in a large house outside Paris. In the first film, the diners can't leave; this time, they can't eat. They meet in different places, including restaurants, and then return to the house, but their hunger is never satisfied. A chicken arrives, which turns out to be a rubber chicken; a tea room is out of tea; the Army, on maneuvers, breaks into the country house and stays for a while; some dolorous stranger shows up and relates a dream, which we see. Soon the diners are dreaming, too, and Buñuel wraps dream within dream, taunting his characters with mocking nightmares that undermine their peace and authority. In "Angel," the upper classes paid attention to certain forms of honor, but in "Charm" the wealthy don't disguise their nastiness. Why bother? Precursors to today's superrich, they can get away with anything. Buñuel is playful and knife sharp at the same time. Eating is the central ritual of haut-bourgeois civilization, and he aims for the gut.

*—David Denby*

EVERETT

When the going gets treacherous you need more than just another pretty sedan. That's when the all-new 2015 Subaru Legacy shines. Subaru Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive sends power to every wheel simultaneously for confidence and control in all weather conditions. And does it with an amazing 36 mpg*. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**

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## OPENING

**ABOUT ALEX**
A drama about a group of young recent college graduates who gather after a friend's attempted suicide. Directed by Jesse Zwick; starring Aubrey Plaza, Maggie Grace, and Max Minghella. Opening Aug. 8. (In limited release.)

**FIFI HOWLS FROM HAPPINESS**
A documentary about the Iranian artist Bahman Mohassess, directed by Mitra Farahani. Opening Aug. 8. (In limited release.)

**FRANK**
Michael Fassbender stars in this comic drama, based on the true story of the British musician Chris Sievey, who performed while wearing a fake head. Opening Aug. 15. (In limited release.)

**THE HUNDRED-FOOT JOURNEY**
Lasse Hallström directed this comedy, about an Indian family that emigrates to a small town in France and seeks to open a restaurant. Starring Manish Dayal, Om Puri, and Helen Mirren. Opening Aug. 8. (In wide release.)

**LIFE AFTER BETH**
A comedy, about a young woman (Aubrey Plaza) who dies and returns to her boyfriend (Dane DeHaan) as a zombie. Directed by Jeff Baena; co-starring Anna Kendrick. Opening Aug. 15. (In limited release.)

**JEALOUSY**
Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 15. (In limited release.)

**RED HOLLYWOOD**
Thom Andersen directed this documentary, about blacklisted filmmakers of the nineteen-forties and fifties. Opening Aug. 8. (Film Society of Lincoln Center.)

**THE TRIP TO ITALY**
A comedy sequel, starring Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon as themselves, on a restaurant tour through Italy. Directed by Michael Winterbottom. Opening Aug. 15. (In limited release.)

**WHAT NOW? REMIND ME**
Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 8. (Film Society of Lincoln Center.)

**MOVIE OF THE WEEK**
A video discussion of Whit Stillman's "Barcelona," from 1994, in our digital edition and online.

## NOW PLAYING

### And So It Goes

Or, "They're Too Old to Be That Bad at Sex." Rob Reiner's new film stars Michael Douglas, as Oren, a prune-faced, semi-retired real-estate agent in Fairfield County, and Diane Keaton, as Leah, an uncertain lounge singer who lives next door. Oren's reprobate son drops off his nine-year-old daughter, and the perplexed curmudgeon turns to his neighbor for help, which certainly comes as an enormous surprise. Yet some of the writing in this romantic comedy is surprisingly snappy; Keaton (playing flustered and angry) and Douglas (who's quite funny) survive Reiner's soft-hearted direction, except in the bedroom scene, which turns embarrassing and unbelievable, as if Nancy Meyers had taken over. With Sterling Jerins, Austin Lysy, and the great Frances Sternhagen, as a witty old woman. Written by Mark Andrus.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

### Boy Meets Girl

The meteoric first film by Leos Carax—which he made at the age of twenty-three, in 1984—hurls Alex (Denis Lavant), an aspiring filmmaker, through a permanently nocturnal Parisian atmosphere of poetic coincidences and crazy risks, out of one desperately romantic relationship and into another. Alex maps the sites of his initiation experiences on the walls of his garret, writes love letters on a typewriter and saves copies for his autobiography, shoplifts books and records, and scuffles around pinball machines in downbeat cafés. On the eve of his departure for compulsory military service, he crashes a party and meets a woman (Mireille Perrier) whose boyfriend has left her via intercom. Lucid, sardonic, cinemacentric asides (especially one brilliant set piece involving a movie technician from the silent-film era) adorn their all-night tangle of intimacy, which builds to a grungy, furiously self-deprecating *Liebestod*. Ecstatic cinema and ecstatic living are joined in a pressurized promise of glory and misery, a flameout waiting to happen—and to be filmed. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; Aug. 8-14.)

### Calvary

Father James (Brendan Gleeson) is a widower and a Catholic priest, with a country parish in Ireland. In the first scene, he listens to the plaint of an unidentified man in the confessional, who says that, in revenge for abuses suffered in boyhood at the hands of the Church, he will kill Father James in a week's time. Unsurprisingly, the writer and director, John Michael McDonagh, never quite matches the tautness of this opening; instead, the movie loosens into a sour, semi-comic exploration of a faithless and feuding community. By the end, we barely care who the would-be murderer is. Yet the movie coheres around the brooding bulk of Gleeson, who carries with him, as ever, the hint of great powers held in check, but adds a new shade of compassionate loneliness; the big man keeps his faith when all those around him are losing theirs. With Chris O'Dowd, M. Emmet Walsh, and Kelly Reilly, as Father James's daughter and the inheritor of his woe.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/4/14.) (In limited release.)

### Happy Christmas

In this comic drama, the director Joe Swanberg looks unsparingly at family bonds—their deep roots, their tenuous threads. He opens the door to his Chicago home and plays a role similar to his real-life one, a young paterfamilias named Jeff who earns a living in the movie business. Jeff is married to Kelly (Melanie Lynskey), a novelist who spends a lot of time at home with their baby son, Jude (Jude Swanberg, the director's son and a scene-stealing natural). Their routine is disrupted by the arrival of Jeff's sister Jenny (Anna Kendrick), who is as free-spirited and reckless as Jeff is practical and responsible. The movie is built from warmly and vigorously observed story crystals—Jeff's rescue of Jenny from her night of hard partying with a local friend, Carson (Lena Dunham); Kelly's quest to find more time to write; the trials of babysitting; the jousting and wrangling of Jenny's new romance with her pot dealer, Kevin (Mark Webber)—but Swanberg has great personal stakes in it. Long-standing family grudges and new irritations give rise to a series of micro-crises balanced between ferocity and forbearance, breakup and reconciliation; the big-hearted, rowdy humor rises to something like transcendence.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Hercules

Dwayne Johnson makes a convincing hero in this passable, old-fashioned entertainment. Brett Ratner's direction, eschewing the self-seriousness of recent sword-and-sandal epics, rocks more of a "Robin Hood" vibe, as Johnson and his band of wisecracking merry men battle a sorcerer and an army of demons. The shoddy special effects are in keeping with the silly script, but Ratner stages some formidable fight scenes and keeps the pacing brisk. It's fun to watch Johnson flex his mighty muscles; he's enjoying himself, and his brashness is endearing. With Ian McShane, Rufus Sewell, and John Hurt, who, thankfully, don't act as if they were doing Shakespeare.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

### House of Bamboo

The most exciting spasm of violence in Samuel Fuller's wide-screen, color-splashed 1955 film noir is one that doesn't happen. It involves an American crime boss (Robert Ryan) who runs a syndicate in Tokyo, a hard-nosed expat (Robert Stack) who has recently joined the gang and arouses suspicion, and a billiard ball. This was the first Hollywood feature to be shot on location in postwar Japan, and Fuller transports to an exoticized setting his usual concern: the conflict between the moral repugnance of violence and its visual and visceral thrills. The movie is famous for its gunplay—a bathtub shooting that's sordidly funny, a police ambush of silhouettes seen through a rice-paper screen, and a climactic shoot-out on a flying-saucer-like carrousel perched on a rooftop high above the city. But, for one terrifying moment, captured in a single tense shot and embodied in Ryan's seething, pantherish self-control, Fuller makes his fierce sympathies ambiguous even as he imagines gore beyond what Hollywood mores allowed—and hints that he enjoyed it.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Aug. 14-15.)

### Jealousy

The exhilaration of love, the exaltation of art—both of these pillars of the modern French psyche take quietly shuddering blows in the director Philippe Garrel's new film. It stars the director's son, Louis Garrel, as Louis, a struggling actor in a barely paying role in a small theatre troupe. When Louis leaves his girlfriend, Clothilde (Rebecca Covenant), their young daughter, Charlotte (Olga Milshtein), witnesses the breakup through a keyhole. Louis's new lover is another actor, the impulsive and smoky-voiced Claudia (Anna Mouglalis); the director films the early days of their relationship with a thrilling, starry vigor, even as the couple's energy spirals downward. Their lives are emptied out by the centripetal intensity of their romance, and Claudia is determined to fill hers up again. With its stark black-and-white images, seemingly rubbed like charcoal onto the screen by the cinematographer Willy Kurant, Garrel's wickedly ironic palimpsest sketches present-day Paris onto passions of past decades. Though the film is a work of rueful, retrospective wisdom, its rough-edged beauty is very much of the moment. In French.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Lucy

The director Luc Besson grafts a visionary science-fiction story onto a bloody pulp-fiction framework. Scarlett Johansson plays the title role of an American student in Taipei who is forced to become a mule to transport a strange new drug. A pouch of it bursts in her body, and the substance ramps up the percentage of brain space that she can tap into. Her new powers aren't merely intellectual but also telepathic. Lucy travels to Paris to consult a neuroscientist (Morgan Freeman) and to thwart her kidnappers. The story's metaphysical shift is Besson's license to thrill;

EVERETT

Libya, August 8th, 2011:
Pain after the massacre at Majer.

Don't resign
yourself
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Lucy is a walking machine of special effects, and the director delights in her ability to pin opponents to the ceiling and empty their gun cartridges from across the room. But he also visits territory familiar from films by Terrence Malick, contriving fantastic images that range from the molecular to the cosmic in order to conjure the seemingly supernatural scope of Lucy's transformation. Her effortless, mighty control over time and matter leaps as far into the wondrous as it does into the absurd; Besson's visions are exhilarating and imaginative, goofy and bombastic.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

**Magic in the Moonlight**
As Woody Allen ages, beauty—old beauty, permanent beauty—has become emotionally paramount to him. In this new romantic comedy, set in the twenties in the South of France, he films on location at stunning old villas and lays on the dignified glamour—the lawns and potted plants, the gardens and blooming trellised walks. At the estate of a wealthy American family, Colin Firth, as a surly professional magician who exposes frauds, fights with an eager young American medium played by Emma Stone. Allen poses the rational view of life against magic, skepticism against romance—the debate goes on forever (it's like Shaw without irony), and you can see the plot reversals coming. It's a fussy, unimpassioned movie, pleasing in a minor way.—*D.D.* (7/28/14) (In limited release.)

**A Master Builder**
In the long wake of "My Dinner with André" and "Vanya on 42nd Street" comes a new collaboration between Wallace Shawn and André Gregory, adapted from Ibsen's play. Shawn plays the builder of the title, the domineering Solness, who lacerates everyone in the blast area of his scorn, including his wife (Julie Hagerty), his old friend (Gregory), and the friend's ineffectual son (Jeff Biehl). No less damage is done to those whom Solness desires, such as his quavering bookkeeper (Emily Cass McDonnell) and the young woman with the crying laugh (Lisa Joyce) whom he preyed upon ten years ago, when she was a child, and who now shows up at his door. As so often in Ibsen, the characters seem to follow a fierce, buried, and unnatural logic to which we are not always privy; the grandeur of that, when viewed in the theatre from afar, is replaced here by the intimacy of the hothouse, as the director, Jonathan Demme, tracks the actors in unstinting closeups. The result can be exhausting, and the risk of melodrama is never far away; but the urge to translate Ibsen into the language of film remains as honorable as ever.—*A.L.* (8/4/14) (In limited release.)

**What Now? Remind Me**
The Portuguese producer Joaquim Pinto's treatments for H.I.V. bring side effects ranging from fatigue to hallucinations. In this intimate and finely wrought self-portrait, he depicts his condition with incisive visual imagination and passionate attachment to memory. Pinto and his husband, Nuno Leonel, do the filming as part of their daily lives, and the pressure of circumstances lends their images a melancholy avidity. The camera desperately embraces faces, landscapes, flowers, and even more ordinary things; a dirty windshield seems as much of a wonder as the lush fields that it frames. Special effects evoke fantasy and derangement, and classical music on the soundtrack seems to arise from his unconscious. Revelling in the art of movies, recalling the Portuguese revolution of 1974 and the cinematic flowering that followed, Pinto turns the pleasures of looking, thinking, remembering—and filming—into reasons for living. In Portuguese.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center.)

# ART

**MUSEUMS SHORT LIST**

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
"Garry Winogrand." Through Sept. 21.

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
"Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988." Through Aug. 24.

**MOMA PS1**
"Christoph Schlingensief." Through Aug. 31.

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
"Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe." Through Sept. 1.

**WHITNEY MUSEUM**
"Jeff Koons: A Retrospective." Through Oct. 19.

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM**
"Ai Weiwei: According to What?" Through Aug. 10.

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**
"Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs." Through Jan. 4.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**Museum of Modern Art**
**"Christopher Williams: The Production Line of Happiness"**
Williams's first U.S. retrospective brings a tonic chill to an art summer enfevered by the Jeff Koons retrospective at the Whitney. The American artist, fifty-eight, shows scores of photographs, mostly of odd objects (glass flowers, stacks of chocolate bars, cameras that have been cut in half to reveal their anatomy) and of subjects that suggest glossy-magazine advertisements (fashion models, fancy photographic gear) but often have something a bit off about them—such as a model seen from a strange angle. One immediately compelling aspect of Williams's process is his mastery of the forms and protocols of display. The exactingly considered, quite beautiful arrangements of walls and works in the show sparkle with wit, however elusive the content of the jokes may be. Koons exalts a society that is defined and dominated by financial wealth, as flaunted by those who have it and presumably admired by those who don't. Williams assumes and addresses people who would rather be rich in leisure time and energy to visit museums, read specialized books, and savor wayward discourses. Through Nov. 2.

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

**Nancy Rubins**
Outdoors, this artist's gargantuan assemblages of boats or airplane parts (you may know the one outside MOCA, in L.A.) seem to be all about transubstantiation, turning the heaviest of materials into buoyant, jovial monuments. Here, indoors and up close, it's harder to escape the sculptures' thingness: four constructions of aluminum animals salvaged from carnival rides, three balanced on plinths, one somewhat niftily suspended from the wall. At her best, Rubins can pull off a baroque conversion of bulk into weightlessness, but these are just fender benders, with not much more consequence than the merry-go-rounds that supplied their constituent parts. Through Sept. 13. (Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**Polly Apfelbaum**
The fifty works on fabric that make up "A Handweaver's Pattern Book," this artist's new series, aren't actually woven. Using markers and a punch card, Apfelbaum studs unstretched rayon sheets with colored dots, discrete or overlapping, in stripes or in squares, in blue or yellow monochrome or else dancing across the color spectrum with uncommon poise. Each one is covetable, but they work best together, as a carnival of difference and repetition. You can try to look dispassionately, but, eventually, you will succumb to pure joy. Through Aug. 8. (Clifton Benevento, 515 Broadway, at Spring St. 212-431-6325.)

**Zoe Beloff**
A few months after the shutdown of Occupy Wall Street, in 2011, Beloff returned to Zuccotti Park with an amateur theatre troupe to stage Bertolt Brecht's little-performed "Days of the Commune." As the actors read their lines from scripts in a video recording, you can forgive their hesitancy, but Beloff's fusty Brechtian touches—cardboard props and name tags, displayed here as art objects—exhibit a tiresome nostalgia for a theatrical tradition nearly a century old, not to mention for the long-gone comfort of ideological clarity. She seems to have forgotten the playwright's famous maxim, which the O.W.S. protesters understood better than she: bad new things are preferable to good old ones. Through Aug. 17. (Participant, Inc., 253 E. Houston St. 212-254-4334.)

**Lisa Elmaleh**
The Brooklyn-based photographer travelled to Appalachia with an old-fashioned view camera to make these portraits of folk musicians outdoors in their natural habitat. Although her subjects include young upstarts and grizzled veterans, they all look well established in Elmaleh's pictures, largely because the warm-toned, black-and-white images were printed from her tintype originals. That antique process gives the work a historic bent and a sweet gravity that Elmaleh emphasizes with charming variations on traditional poses. A couple of landscape views and one shot of a porch with a banjo, a rocker, and the ghost of a passing cat ground the project in a sure sense of place. Through Aug. 9. (Foley, 97 Allen St. 212-244-9081.)

**"Romeo & Juliet in Pictures"**
Perhaps inevitably, describing the story of Shakespeare's most popular play in twenty-three photographs involves some Cliffs Notes kitsch, but the images here are strong and surprising. The opening sequence—pictures of male camaraderie by Joseph Szabo, Bruce Davidson, Mark Steinmetz, and Colin LaFleche—establishes a tense, volatile mood that later images of flirtation and young love can't dispell. In the show's turning point, the lower half of a decorative screen door stands in for Juliet's balcony, and death comes soon thereafter, summoned up movingly in photographs by Teenie Harris, Walker Evans, and Frances Scully Osterman. Through Aug. 10. (Wolf, 70 Orchard St. 212-925-0025.)

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# NIGHT LIFE

## ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### Americanafest NYC

Lincoln Center Out of Doors wraps up its eclectic 2014 lineup. Aug. 6, in the Damrosch Park Bandshell: **Emmylou Harris** and **Rodney Crowell,** friends and collaborators since the mid-seventies, released the album "Old Yellow Moon," last year, and it won a number of awards. Aug. 7, in the David Rubenstein Atrium: The singer-songwriter **Tift Merritt** combines a storyteller's sensibility, a country musician's frankness, and a rock singer's chops. Aug. 8, in the bandshell: The jazz singer **Cassandra Wilson.** Also on the bill are the Sacred Steel guitar masters the **Campbell Brothers**, presenting "A Sacred Steel Love Supreme," a world première marking the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of John Coltrane's masterpiece. Aug. 9, on Hearst Plaza: Modern rockabilly, alternative country, and folk music, from the **Devil Makes Three,** the **Old 97's,** and **John Fullbright.** Aug. 9, in the bandshell: **Rosanne Cash**. With **Buddy Miller** and **Jim Lauderdale,** richly talented, slightly crusty singer-songwriters who have succeeded, against big odds, in Nashville. Aug. 10, in the bandshell: The James Brown-inspired stylings of **Charles Bradley;** the classic Southern blue-eyed soul of **St. Paul and the Broken Bones**; the funky Lone Star breakdown of **Bobby Patterson;** and the **Music Makers Blues Revue,** starring the banjoist **Dom Flemons, Beverly (Guitar) Watkins**, and the pianist **Ironing Board Sam.** (lcoutofdoors.org.)

### Tori Amos

Amos has been practicing her particular brand of classically inflected piano pop for decades, and she's still going strong. Her latest album, "Unrepentant Geraldines," earned her some of her best reviews since the mid-nineties. It was inspired by visual artists, including the photographer Diane Arbus and the painter Paul Cézanne. In concert, Amos is more relaxed than she was when she was younger, and she's not above throwing in a few kitschy eighties covers (Duran Duran's "Rio," Wham!'s "Careless Whisper"). (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Aug. 12-13.)

### Black Bananas

The tough-as-nails singer-songwriter Jennifer Herrema hasn't known any life style other than rock and roll—born in Washington, D.C., in 1972, she founded Royal Trux with her then boyfriend, Neil Hagerty, before she was out of high school. The group, which was massively influential on the scummier fringes of nineties alt-rock, lasted into the early aughts, as did her relationship with Hagerty. Since their split, she's focussed on her solo work, and this group is built around thick, sludgy riffs and Herrema's trademark vocals, the product of a lifetime of screaming and cigarettes. (Seaport Music Festival, Water and Fulton Sts. seaportmusicfestival.com. Aug. 8.)

### Blood Orange

The American-born and British-bred musician Devonté Hynes seems to have a hand in everything cool. His current project, Blood Orange, is directly inspired by his synesthesia, a condition in which, in his case, sounds are perceived as colors. His tracks are attempts at creating color patterns that he finds pleasing, and even for those who cannot see sound these rich, textural songs are vivid and evocative. A collaborator extraordinaire, he's produced songs for Solange Knowles, the Chemical Brothers, and Sky Ferreira, and he wrote the score for Gia Coppola's 2013 film "Palo Alto." With the L.A.-based **Moses Sumney**, who plays ethereal loop-pedal music with soul and folk influences, and **Sean Nicholas Savage**, a singer-songwriter hailing from Montreal's indie scene. (SummerStage, Central Park, mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org. Aug. 16.)

### Musiq Soulchild

The smooth, versatile R. & B. vocalist made his (idiosyncratically spelled) name with a series of jubilant (and equally idiosyncratically spelled) albums in the early part of this century: "Aijuswanaseing," "Juslisen," and "Luvanmusiq." His most recent release, "9ine" (so idiosyncratically spelled that it includes a number), is a duet album with Syleena Johnson that has nine songs recorded over nine days and leans toward the pop-reggae end of the musical spectrum. (SummerStage, Central Park, mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org. Aug. 17.)

### St. Vincent

Earlier this year, the enigmatic avant-pop chanteuse released an arresting, self-titled fourth album marked by brash, processed vocals and fragmented drumbeats evoking digital coolness. As a performer, she accentuates this mechanistic quality with robotlike dancing that is deliberately stiff and geometric. Her flamboyant and unpredictable guitar solos are a welcome leavening of the austere approach—they both shred and sing in a deeply moving, human way. With the lush orchestral pop of the Brooklyn-based octet **San Fermin.** (Celebrate Brooklyn!, Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. bricartsmedia.org. Aug. 9)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Fabian Almazan

The Cuban-born pianist may be best known for his work with the trumpeter Terence Blanchard's band, but at the Village Vanguard he takes the lead. The first three nights of the engagement, Aug. 12-14, give him a chance to display his prodigious keyboard skills in a trio with the bassist **Thomas Morgan** and the drummer **Henry Cole.** The remainder of the week, Aug. 15-17, the threesome is joined by the **Rhizome String Quartet,** throwing light on Almazan's compositional ambitions, as demonstrated on his new album, "Rhizome." (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037.)

### Django Reinhardt NY Festival

This annual celebration of the music and influence of the unparalleled Belgian Gypsy guitarist celebrates its fifteenth year with a solid run. It features such acolytes as the French guitarist **Samson Schmitt,** as well as guest soloists, including the clarinettist **Anat Cohen** (Aug. 6-7), the singer **Jane Monheit** (Aug. 8), and the harpist **Edmar Castaneda** (Aug. 9). (Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Aug. 5-10.)

### Harold Mabern

Mabern is the kind of old-school crowd-pleasing pianist who, in the course of an evening, can find room for interpretations of "Cherokee," "Seven Steps to Heaven," and "Making Our Dreams Come True," the theme song from "Laverne & Shirley." That he has a firm grasp of the blues helps it all go down smoothly. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Aug. 5-10.)

### Nellie McKay

Leave it to this irrepressibly imaginative and frequently zany talent to build a show around the career of the pianist Billy Tipton—a woman who, from the nineteen-thirties until her death, in 1989, passed as a man in both her professional and private lives. The mind reels at the possibilities. (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. Aug. 5-9.)

Lincoln Center's Americanafest NYC includes the Music Maker Blues Revue, featuring Dom Flemons, Beverly (Guitar) Watkins, and Ironing Board Sam.

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL KRALL

# ABOVE & BEYOND

**Art Deco Scavenger Hunt**
Open House New York, a nonprofit committed to cultivating awareness of, and appreciation for, the city's architecture and design, is most notable for its OHNY Weekend, an annual occasion that offers New Yorkers behind-the-scenes tours of sites that are typically off-limits. The organization also puts on other events that have a once-in-a-lifetime feel, such as the Art Deco Scavenger Hunt, co-engineered with the Art Deco Society of New York. Intended to pay homage to the Deco aesthetic unique to the twenties and thirties, this all-day affair gives registrants armed with clues a chance to search for sites throughout the five boroughs, posting photographs of the exteriors to Instagram for proof of a find. Points will be tallied at the end of the event, and prizes will be awarded. (ohny.org. Aug. 9.)

**"Mae West in Bohemia"**
The red brick Venetian Gothic building towering over the Avenue of the Americas at West Tenth Street wasn't always the cozy branch of the N.Y.P.L. that it is today. Until 1945, it was the Jefferson Market Courthouse, where, in 1927, the actress, singer, writer, and Brooklyn native Mae West was convicted on obscenity charges for "Sex," the Broadway play she wrote, produced, directed, and starred in. The historian, author, and dramatist LindaAnn Loschiavo is giving an illustrated talk in the very building where the iconic bombshell was found guilty. The presentation, subtitled "Gin, Sin, Censorship, and Eugene O'Neill," recalls Greenwich Village in its bohemian heyday, shining a light on West and the playwright O'Neill, whose controversial works caused him to come under fire in New York City in the same era. (Jefferson Market Library, 425 Sixth Ave. 212-243-4334. Aug. 13 from 6:30 to 8.)

**"Marvel Universe LIVE!"**
The Avengers, Iron Man, Captain America, Hulk, and other timeless Marvel characters have made the leap from colorful panels in small comic books to high-energy action sequences on the big screen, but now they are going further, into unexpected arenas. Well, actually, they are headed to the Barclays Center, in Brooklyn, In an original story involving the legendary Cosmic Cube (a source of great power in the Marvel world), live-action versions of the superheroes battle live-action versions of their archenemies, including the Green Goblin, Doctor Octopus, Red Skull, and Electro. (620 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. marveluniverselive.com. Aug. 13-17.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

**Powerhouse Arena**
Joshua Wolf Shenk talks about his new book, "Powers of Two: Finding the Essence of Innovation in Creative Pairs," with his editor, Eamon Dolan. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-666-3049. Aug. 6 at 7.)

**Music Maker Blues Revue**
The pianist Ironing Board Sam, Beverly (Guitar) Watson, and the multi-instrumentalist Dom Flemons discuss Southern music, in advance of their performance at Lincoln Center's Out of Doors festival. (David Rubenstein Atrium, 10 Lincoln Center Plaza. Aug. 10 at 1.)

**Franklin Park Reading Series**
The authors Paula Bomer, Michael Kimball, Jamie Iredell, Brian Allen Carr, and Andrew Duncan Worthington, all of whom are published by independent presses, gather for the latest installment of this monthly reading series in Crown Heights. (Franklin Park Bar and Beer Garden, 618 St. Johns Pl., between Franklin and Classon Aves., Brooklyn. Aug. 11 at 8.)

**Word**
John Bemelmans Marciano, an illustrator and the grandson of Ludwig Bemelmans, talks about his new book, "Whatever Happened to the Metric System?: How America Kept Its Feet," a history of measurements and an exploration of why the U.S. has one system and most of the rest of the world has another. (126 Franklin St., Brooklyn. 718-383-0096. Aug. 12 at 7.)

# FOOD & DRINK

**BAR TAB MINUS5 ICE BAR**
1335 Sixth Ave. (212-757-4610)
At this glassy joint in the midtown Hilton, you choose among pricey "entry packages," rent a coat (the ninety-five-dollar package comes with a faux-fur upgrade and a souvenir Russian hat), and enter a sort of frozen disco, complete with colored flashing lights and synth pop, where you drink booze out of an ice glass while relaxing on a pelt-strewn ice bench, admiring ice art. The house specialties, such as the Snowflake (cherry vodka, peach schnapps, white cranberry juice) and the Iceman (berry vodka, pineapple juice, coconut juice), taste like sugar, or maybe a loud, sugary color, with a splash of antifreeze. But you're having an adventure. "This place is awesome!" an exuberant Canadian said on a recent evening, laughing atop an ice throne. He had brought his own toque. "I'm going to give my mother this idea—to make ice glasses. She'll fucking love it!" The ice decorations' strong New York City themes reach their apotheosis in a tiny rock-and-roll V.I.P. room, open to everyone, whose centerpiece is a pointillist ice portrait of John Lennon, who seems to be challenging you to explain to him what the hell is going on. If you laugh, you might fog up your glasses; when you leave, you might check for your own coat and hat, having forgotten that it's summer. Like a sauna's opposite, Minus5 has done the trick: back on Sixth Avenue, the heat feels good.

*—Sarah Larson*

**TABLES FOR TWO**

## IRIS CAFÉ STORE #9

*20 Columbia Pl., Brooklyn (718-722-7395)*

**ON THIS MOST BROOKLYN** of streets—one of those blocks in the Heights that looks dreamt up by Auden, or perhaps Dunham—there could be no Manhattan. "We're out of sweet vermouth," the waitress explained. "How about an Old-Fashioned?" (Another thing missing from the drinks offerings: anything approaching a gimmick.) It's impossible to stay mad at Iris Café Store #9, which feels like the best-kept secret in a neighborhood that's known less for its interesting dining than for its streets named after fruits. The restaurant, an old storefront done up with Edison bulbs and fresh flowers in the window, started as a breakfast joint, famous for its exceptionally sticky buns and rustic feel. For the past year, locals have been wandering in after work to enjoy a modest but lovely dinner service that's conversant in the clichés of the borough—think kale croquettes—but never succumbs to them.

You will have by now guessed the basics: a menu that changes frequently, a kitchen that encourages sharing. But you might not have predicted that the obligatory tomato-and-burrata appetizer is served on miniature scallion pancakes, resulting in a deeply satisfying mix of temperatures (room temperature, cool, straight out of the deep fryer) and textures (juicy, smooth, crunchy). Similarly, those kale croquettes take the "Put an egg on it" routine, by now familiar to all who have eaten at farm-to-table establishments, to the next level, because the egg yolk is cured, and then in its dehydrated state grated on top. Those little golden specks somehow work to intensify the flavors of what could taste like spanakopita into something vaguely umami, like a memory of miso.

These are not party tricks but signs of an imaginative mind. The chef Joey Scalabrino seems determined to upend expectations. (A recent feature on eater.com spoofed trendy restaurant menu items: "truffle oil-tainted mashed potatoes," "an unconventional riff on brussels sprouts," "tarted-up pork belly.") Yes, there's an octopus dish, served with what is described as "really good olive oil," but the trace of Meyer lemon, easily abused in excess, elevates the traditional preparation. (On another night, slivers of plum brought acidity.) Or take the roast chicken, an exercise in symmetry, two elegant fingers, seared so they develop an impressive crust, with a flourish of green garlic spiralled across the plate.

We could talk about what, exactly, is in the tangy, lemony sauce that accompanies the ribbons of summer squash dusted with crushed pistachios (avocado and Greek yogurt). Or about the charming way two different desserts—a tiramisu and an Earl Gray crème brûlée—came with raspberries on top, as though the kitchen couldn't resist a reminder that this was the height of summer. When you're eating, you won't much care about the why. Sort of like how the Old-Fashioned will do just fine, thanks.

*—Amelia Lester*

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# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## COMMENT
### INSTANT REPLAY

More and more often, when someone behaves badly in public, someone else is there with a cell-phone camera to record it, and a video goes viral. Watching such videos turns us into witnesses after the fact, but it also turns us into ersatz judges and jurors. There's a tendency to compare and rank the wrongdoing we see on our screens, and the comparisons make us more aware of the jaggedly uneven distribution of consequences and, at the same time, less able, from the discomfort of our living rooms, to do much about it.

The video of New York police officers putting a man named Eric Garner in a choke hold, after which he died, is a useful document. Garner's offense was the suspected peddling of untaxed cigarettes. The video shows the officers tackling him, with one seeming to grip him by the neck and then force his head to the ground, while Garner, who was forty-three and asthmatic, gasps and says repeatedly, "I can't breathe." The video is deeply disturbing to watch, but it could help insure that justice is served in the case. It has already started an important discussion about the proper use of force.

Garner's case is one horrifying outcome in the era of broken-windows policing. That approach prescribes arrests for small-scale lawbreaking, on the theory that major crime often finds a niche in neighborhoods where minor crime has been allowed to flourish. There's evidence to support the strategy, but it's not an unambiguous boon to crime-fighting, and it can inflict a disproportionate penalty for infractions of the cigarette-peddling, subway-dancing, panhandling variety. As a recent article in the *Times* pointed out, in 1995, the N.Y.P. D. made one felony arrest for every 1.3 arrests in "the broadest category of misdemeanors; by 2013, the ratio had grown to 2.5 misdemeanor arrests for each felony." Some of the offenses targeted are real social irritants. But the crackdown on them—not just in extreme examples like Eric Garner's but in the general pitilessness of the pursuit—can make urban life less civil, not more.

In 2007, Roger Goodell, the National Football League commissioner, adopted a new code for player conduct off the field. The behavior that prompted it—violent altercations, weapons possession, and so on—was a lot worse than the usual targets of broken-windows policing. But the code proceeded from a similar logic, that the way each of us behaves in our daily lives has an impact on the functioning of society, and that the behavior of N.F.L. players may exert an outsized influence. However, in the case of Ray Rice, a running back for the Baltimore Ravens who was disciplined last week under that code, Goodell and the N.F.L. showed that certain kinds of reprehensible behavior don't necessarily seem to warrant a stringent response.

Rice's case also hinges on a video. In February, someone leaked security-camera footage of Rice dragging his then fiancée, now wife, Janay Palmer, out of an elevator in an Atlantic City casino. She appeared to be unconscious. Rice has not explained what happened that night, but he has not corrected the widely aired speculation that he hit Palmer during a fight. (The police and N.F.L. officials have reportedly seen the video recorded inside the elevator, which has not yet been made public.) Rice was charged with third-degree aggravated assault, but he accepted a deal in which he would enter a diversionary program, requiring community service and counselling, instead of going to trial.

At that moment, the N.F.L. could have chosen to send a strong message about how seriously it takes domestic violence. In an interview with CBS Sports in 2012, Goodell acknowledged that such abuse was an issue in the N.F.L. "We are going to do some things to combat this problem, because some of the numbers on D.U.I.s and domestic violence are

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

going up and that disturbs me," he said. In fact, it's not clear that football players or other professional athletes are any more likely to be charged with acts of domestic violence than the general population. What does seem clear is that they are less likely to experience strict consequences. A study published in the *Journal of Sports and Entertainment Law* in 2010 notes that "conviction rates for athletes are astonishingly low compared to the arrest statistics. Though there is evidence that the responsiveness of police and prosecution to sexual assault complaints involving athletes is favorable, there is an off-setting pro-athlete bias on the part of juries."

The N.F.L. could have helped counter this sort of bias by levelling a strong penalty on Rice. It could at least have imposed one more on a par with that of another player who got into trouble recently, for a repeat drug-related offense. In May, Josh Gordon, a wide receiver for the Cleveland Browns, was told that he faced a year's suspension for a positive marijuana test—in other words, for allegedly engaging in a victimless activity that is well on its way to legalization. (One sample from Gordon's incriminating test was lower than the accepted threshold; one was higher, but just barely.) Instead, the N.F.L. opted in Rice's case to mete out the fearsome punishment of a two-game suspension.

There was plenty of outrage from sports fans and reporters, but some of the hard-core Ravens fans who showed up at training camp last week took their first opportunity to give Rice a standing ovation. Many online commenters said that he was a good player and a good guy and that he shouldn't be judged by one mistake. But, of course, that's what the criminal-justice system does all the time. Rice no doubt regrets what he did—he said so at a press conference last Thursday, and he sounded sincere—which may be reason enough for his fans to love him again. Some commenters also noted that, because Palmer married Rice after the incident, and wrote a letter to the court on his behalf, she must have forgiven him, so why couldn't everybody else? That sort of reasoning ignores the fact that assault is assault, whether the victim "forgives" or not, and that when it comes to domestic violence forgiveness is at best a complicated thing. It's possible that the complete video mitigates Rice's responsibility. A police report noted that Rice and Palmer had been hitting each other—though it was Palmer who ended up on the floor. At the press conference, Rice, for the first time, referred to his actions as domestic violence, but if the events need to be clarified he and Goodell should say so.

Videos that do show crimes in progress may be helpful in identifying perpetrators or in drawing attention to an injustice that might have been neglected. But the proliferation of those videos can have a numbing effect. There they are on YouTube, or on Twitter, scrambled together with celebrity gossip and cat antics, administering brief shocks, then slipping from the grasp of our compassion. They seem at once urgent and very far away. So we watch, and maybe share the link, and hope that the consequences will fit the crime.

*—Margaret Talbot*

## KENEMA POSTCARD
## OUTBREAK

This spring in West Africa, a muttering emergence of the Zaire species of Ebola virus turned explosive. As of this writing, more than thirteen hundred cases of Ebola-virus disease have been officially reported in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The virus is spreading, uncontrolled, in widening chains of infection, which include cities—something never seen before. In Liberia, parts of the medical system have effectively collapsed. Some hospitals and clinics have been abandoned, while others have become choked with Ebola patients. The hospitals of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, are full of Ebola patients and are turning away new patients, including women in childbirth. American Ebola experts in Monrovia are hearing reports that infected bodies are being left in the streets: the outbreak is beginning to assume a medieval character. People sick with Ebola are leaving Monrovia and going into the countryside to search for village faith healers, or to stay with relatives. In Sierra Leone, in the town of Kenema, eighteen doctors and nurses who had been working in the Lassa/Ebola ward have contracted Ebola, and at least five have died. They had been working in biological-hazard suits, yet they got sick anyway. People are wondering if the virus could spread to Europe or the United States, but the more immediate question is whether it could infect a whole lot more people in Africa.

A particle of Ebola-Zaire virus is made of only ten proteins, locked together in what looks like a tangle of string. Despite its extreme simplicity as an organism, when Ebola strikes a human it becomes a killing machine, the biological equivalent of a steel axe. The virus is transmitted from one person to the next through contact with blood or other bodily fluids. The symptoms of the disease start out looking like those of malaria: the patient runs a fever and feels weak. Ebola patients proceed to vomiting and diarrhea, which sometimes turns black; and they can develop hiccups. Fewer than half the patients in this outbreak have shown signs of hemorrhage: pinpoint droplets of blood can sometimes glisten on the rims of the eyelids. Around sixty per cent of the victims have died.

In July, as the outbreak gathered force, Daniel Bausch, an American doctor and Ebola expert, arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and proceeded on to the Lassa/Ebola ward in Kenema, a facility that he helped set up. The hospital is a cluster of small cinder-block buildings in the center of town. He put on personal protective equipment, known as P.P.E.—a type of biohazard gear that consists of a Tyvek whole-body suit, a Tyvek hood with an opening for the eyes, safety goggles, a breathing mask over the mouth and nose, two pairs of nitrile gloves, a plastic apron, and rubber boots—and he walked into one of the Ebola wards, a makeshift structure with walls made of plastic film. There he found the director, Dr. Sheik Humarr Khan, and a nurse wearing biohazard suits and taking care of thirty Ebola patients. "The floor was splashed with blood, vomitus, feces, and urine," Bausch said recently. Patients in the throes of Ebola often fall out of bed. "You need a whole team to decontaminate the

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bed and lift the patient up off the floor and put him safely back in bed." Khan and the nurse were overwhelmed.

Some Ebola nurses had stopped coming to work: they had been working twelve-hour days, in biohazard suits, and they were supposed to be earning an extra thirty dollars a week in hazard pay, but the government of Sierra Leone had not provided it. Not unreasonably, many nurses had stopped showing up.

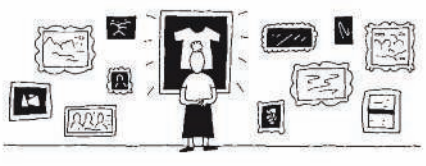
Last month, Joseph Fair, an American doctor who had worked in the ward, arrived to help in Kenema. He considered Khan one of his best friends, and told me that he regarded the chief nurse, a woman in her fifties named Mbalu Sankoh, who'd helped run the Kenema ward for twenty-five years, "as more or less a mom to me." He embraced Mbalu when they met, and he warmly greeted another old friend, a senior nurse named Alex Moigboi.

Two days after Fair's arrival, Nurse Mbalu developed a fever. She placed herself in a bed in the Kenema hospital and gave herself an I.V. drip, and told people that she thought she had malaria. Eight days later, she died. Since he had embraced her, Dr. Fair began testing his blood for Ebola virus. Alex Moigboi died shortly afterward.

For weeks, Dr. Fair has been going to funerals in Kenema. "I just couldn't keep it together at Mbalu's funeral," he said last week. He was in Freetown, and had just returned from the funeral of Dr. Khan. "The ones who have passed are the only ones who would go into the Ebola ward," Fair said. "Now we have a huge void." He recounted how Dr. Khan, as he lay dying in the ward he had run for ten years, had whispered to a fieldworker, "James, I am going. You have to carry on."

*—Richard Preston*

## UP LIFE'S LADDER
### TEE TIME



Recently, Tadashi Yanai, the richest person in Japan, visited the second floor of Uniqlo's Fifth Avenue flagship store, where he was nearly invisible amid a herd of public-relations helpers and large urns of cherry blossoms. (He is five feet two.) Yanai is the president of Fast Retailing, a group of companies that includes Uniqlo, Helmut Lang, Theory, and J Brand. According to Bloomberg's Billionaires Index, he has a net worth of $17 billion.

Yanai had flown in that morning, for the launch of Uniqlo's SPRZ NY collection: hundreds of items emblazoned with images by famous artists, both dead (Basquiat, Haring, Pollock) and alive (Ryan McGinness, Yayoi Kusama, David Shrigley), ranging in price from a bandanna ($5.90) to an Ultra Light Down Parka ($79.90). The line is, in part, a collaboration with MOMA; earlier this summer, Uniqlo designed crisp new uniforms for the museum's security guards. (In a similar vein, the Whitney has teamed up with H&M to sell a Jeff Koons "Balloon Dog" purse.) Yanai would not have time to visit either museum before heading back to Tokyo the next day.

*Tadashi Yanai*

"These are some of my favorites—Keith Haring, Andy Warhol—I love those kinds of classic modern artists," he said, via a translator, a cheery woman named Rie Kasahawa.

Yanai had on a white shirt, a black tie with pinpoint polka dots, and a dark-gray suit, with a white pocket square. He stood with his arms crossed, his expression grave, in front of a T-shirt featuring a Warhol soup can, spotlit in a vitrine. "I have some art—I don't know if you'd call it a collection," he went on. "Anything I like I would collect." He offered Edward Hopper as an example.

"Edward Hopper," Kasahawa interpreted.

"Norman Rockwell," Yanai said.

"Norman Rockwell," Kasahawa repeated.

The first work he ever bought, he recalled, was an ukiyo-e print of Edo, by Utagawa Hiroshige, which is too delicate for him to display in his house. "The artist that I have the most of, though—I don't know whether I should disclose this. I will refrain from telling you." He paused. "It is a Danish artist."

He led a brisk tour of the store, pointing enthusiastically at a glass elevator. "You can see people going up and down!" he said. A scrolling L.E.D. sign ran along the edges of the ceiling, listing prices of Uniqlo merchandise. "The ticker is eighty metres," he said. "I think it is maybe the longest ticker in the whole world." He laughed, a few loud barks, and his people tentatively joined in.

"And you have this little table." He gestured to a little table. "And you see the T-shirt"—the word "SYMBOLISM," from an art work by Jack Pierson, was printed along the bottom—"it is more than a T-shirt. Because you have something like a picture frame around it. So the T-shirt itself is an art work!" He added, "I don't think art is something that you should study. Something beautiful is something that you enjoy by observing it." When asked about a controversial comment by President Obama that "folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art-history degree," Yanai shrugged and said, "It's O.K. for me to say. I am a businessman."

Yanai moved on to a Lawrence Weiner T-shirt, white with "ART AINT ABOUT YOU—ITS ABOUT WE" in black lettering. "You see, T-shirts convey messages. So this is why I love T-shirts, basically." He laughed again.

Every year, Yanai picks a T-shirt-ready slogan for Uniqlo's employees. 2007: "MAKE PROFIT." 2011: "CHANGE OR DIE." When asked what this year's mantra was, he answered, in accented English, "Global is local. Local is global."

Yanai was born in Ube, a mining town, where his parents ran a Western-clothing shop. In the mid-eighties, he opened the Unique Clothing Ware-

house, in Hiroshima; now Uniqlo is so ubiquitous in Japan that there's an expression, *unibare*, which is slang for "We all know you're wearing Uniqlo, and it's really lame."

He pulled a black leather Hermès card case from his pocket and extracted a laminated card, on which were printed six standard phrases that Uniqlo employees are supposed to know—e.g., "Uniqlo is beauty in hyperpracticality"; "Uniqlo is clothing in the absolute"; "Uniqlo is how the future dresses."

Yanai has gone on record saying that he'd hoped to retire at sixty-five, a birthday he commemorated earlier this year with little pomp. He sat down on a leather banquette by the store's new Starbucks ("I happen to know Howard Schultz") and said, "Unfortunately, I have to continue working." When he does manage to hand over the reins, will he spend more time looking at art? "No, I don't think I will be doing such a thing," he said. "You see, I only have interest in playing golf and doing business."

*—Emma Allen*

## THE SPORTING LIFE

### MERITORIOUS

The midsummer view from the white-columned veranda of the Otesaga Hotel, one of the grander jewels of Cooperstown, New York, imprints instantly in memory—croquet lawn, golf course, century-old oaks punctuating the shore of shimmering Otsego Lake, silhouetted Catskills in the distance. On the veranda at cocktail hour one recent Friday, a trim ninety-three-year-old gent in a blue blazer, pin-striped shirt, chinos, and penny loafers leans lightly on a cane amid a crowd of admirers. Roger Angell—*our* Roger Angell, colleague, friend, embodiment of this magazine's history and institutional memory—has come to town to receive his due: the J. G. Taylor Spink Award "for meritorious contributions to baseball writing," presented annually by the members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America during induction weekend at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Nearby stands the customarily taciturn Bob Gibson—the St. Louis Cardinals samurai whom Angell artfully opened up for a 1980 Profile, on the cusp of Gibby's election to the Hall—and across the way his garrulous battery mate Tim McCarver ("I caught him a hundred and ninety-seven starts") holds forth. Now George Brett comes to pay his respects—"a brilliant repeated exhibit of precision and style and success," Angell once wrote, teeing up a Muybridge-esque anatomization of Brett's hitting mechanics—followed by Johnny Bench.

Angell introduces his friends and family to Susan Slusser, a past president of the B.B.W.A.A., who covers the Oakland A's for the San Francisco *Chronicle;* her husband, Dan Brown, of the San Jose *Mercury News;* last year's Spink Award winner, Paul Hagen, late of the Philadelphia *Daily News;* and the 2000 winner, Ross Newhan, now retired from the Los Angeles *Times*.

When Angell refers to Newhan as "the Frank Robinson of baseball writers," his wife, Connie, demurs on Newhan's behalf.

"Ross says Roger's just the best of the best," she says. "Like Mozart."

Next afternoon: Doubleday Field, a W.P.A.-built ballpark on the mythical site where Abner Doubleday in fact did not invent baseball in 1839. Sunlit grandstands buzzing. Potted lavender, privet, and geraniums spaced evenly up the first and third baselines.

Gathered on a canopied dais at the edge of the outfield are forty-five Hall of Fame members (Alomar to Yount). Seated stage left in the front row are the Hall's newest inductees—Bobby Cox, Tom Glavine, Tony La Russa, Greg Maddux, Frank Thomas, and Joe Torre. Stage right, Angell, in his everyday editor-writer's uniform, plus a ballcap bearing the logo of *WoodenBoat*, pensively awaits his turn at the podium. When it arrives, he carries his acceptance speech in a blue binder.

"Thank you," he says, about to unspool a classic Angell lede. "And, first, thanks to the Baseball Writers of America, who went out of their way to select me, a non-member and a part-timer, for this shining prize. Spink! Spink! J. G. Taylor Spink! This was one of that early flood of tingling baseball names that rushed over me when I was a boy and first began hearing about and reading about baseball. Ossie Bluege! Flint Rhem! Hod Lisenbee! Urban Shocker! Mel Ott—an 'o' with two 't's! Jimmie Foxx—a fox with two 'x'es!. . . .

"At Yankee Stadium in the spring of 1930, I saw Lefty Gomez win his first game in the major leagues. A long time later, he said to me, 'I beat Red Faber and the White Sox, 4–1, and I'd never seen so many people in one place before in my life.' I was nine years old that day and I had exactly the same impression."

Following the ceremony, a parade of convertibles and pickups will proceed along Main Street to the Hall of Fame. With each superstar sighting ("*Look! Reggie! . . . Whoa! Ozzie!*"), every adult in attendance will recapture his or her own inner nine-year-old.

Inside the Hall: When Angell arrives, he finds the sublime southpaw Whitey Ford, the all-time winningest Yankee pitcher, seated at a table. They each order a glass of red wine and reminisce about old New York; as a boy, Angell lived on East Ninety-third Street, and Ford on East Sixty-sixth. "I remember you told me once about when you were maybe seventeen and would go to Canarsie, where there were a bunch of diamonds," Angell recalls. "You said you would play in five or six games, counting doubleheaders, over a single weekend, and maybe pitch in two of them."

Eyes brightening, Ford says, "You've got it right."

Angell sidles toward the gallery, where bronzed plaques of the immortalized line the walls. He steps into an alcove between black marble columns, in the company of Rabbit Maranville, Bill Dickey, Dizzy Dean, Chief Bender. As he reads the inscriptions, Jim Leyland, retired from managing the Detroit Tigers, finds him and offers congratulations.

Afterward, Angell says softly, "Jim Leyland coming by. That's really something."

He surveys the congregation. "This is the greatest party I ever went to in my life. You're all in my will."

*—Mark Singer*

## THE FINANCIAL PAGE
### MERGING LIKE IT'S 1999?

When news broke that Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox had made an eighty-billion-dollar bid to acquire Time Warner, it looked like a throwback to the days when the media business was dominated by high-profile moguls obsessed with aggressive takeovers. In recent years, content companies have become more sedate and disciplined, focussing on efficiency rather than on acquisitions. But, from the nineteen-eighties until around a decade ago, they tended to be run by C.E.O.s who were largely indifferent to shareholders and unfettered by boards of directors. Moguls like Ted Turner, Sumner Redstone, and Murdoch himself did pretty much whatever they wanted—which, most of the time, meant doing deals and building empires.

These imperial adventures made for good drama but bad business. As Jonathan Knee, Bruce Greenwald, and Ava Seave showed in their book "The Curse of the Mogul" (2009), media stocks significantly underperformed the market in the mogul era. Companies had to take huge writedowns on overpriced acquisitions—two hundred billion dollars' worth between 2000 and 2009. Obsession with size blinded moguls to the fact that they were paying too much for assets that made little strategic sense. Obsession with dealmaking led them to neglect the basic task of managing their companies. According to a study by Douglas Shapiro, a Bank of America analyst, in most cases their shareholders would have been better off if the deals had never been done.

Unlike some of his peers, Murdoch has a knack for managing. As Knee and his co-authors put it, Murdoch had "all the elements of the perfect mogul." He was able to run his companies efficiently, to spot new opportunities when they arose (the Fox News Channel), and to cut his losses when businesses weren't working. But he still couldn't escape the mogul's curse. He sabotaged performance by spending absurd amounts of money on assets of dubious value: three billion dollars for *TV Guide* and a couple of other titles, six billion for a stake in Gemstar (which he ended up selling for less than a billion), more than a billion dollars for MySpace and IGN. In 2007, ingrained press-baron instincts led him to shell out five billion dollars for Dow Jones. As a manager and an entrepreneur, Murdoch created value. But as a shopper he often destroyed it.

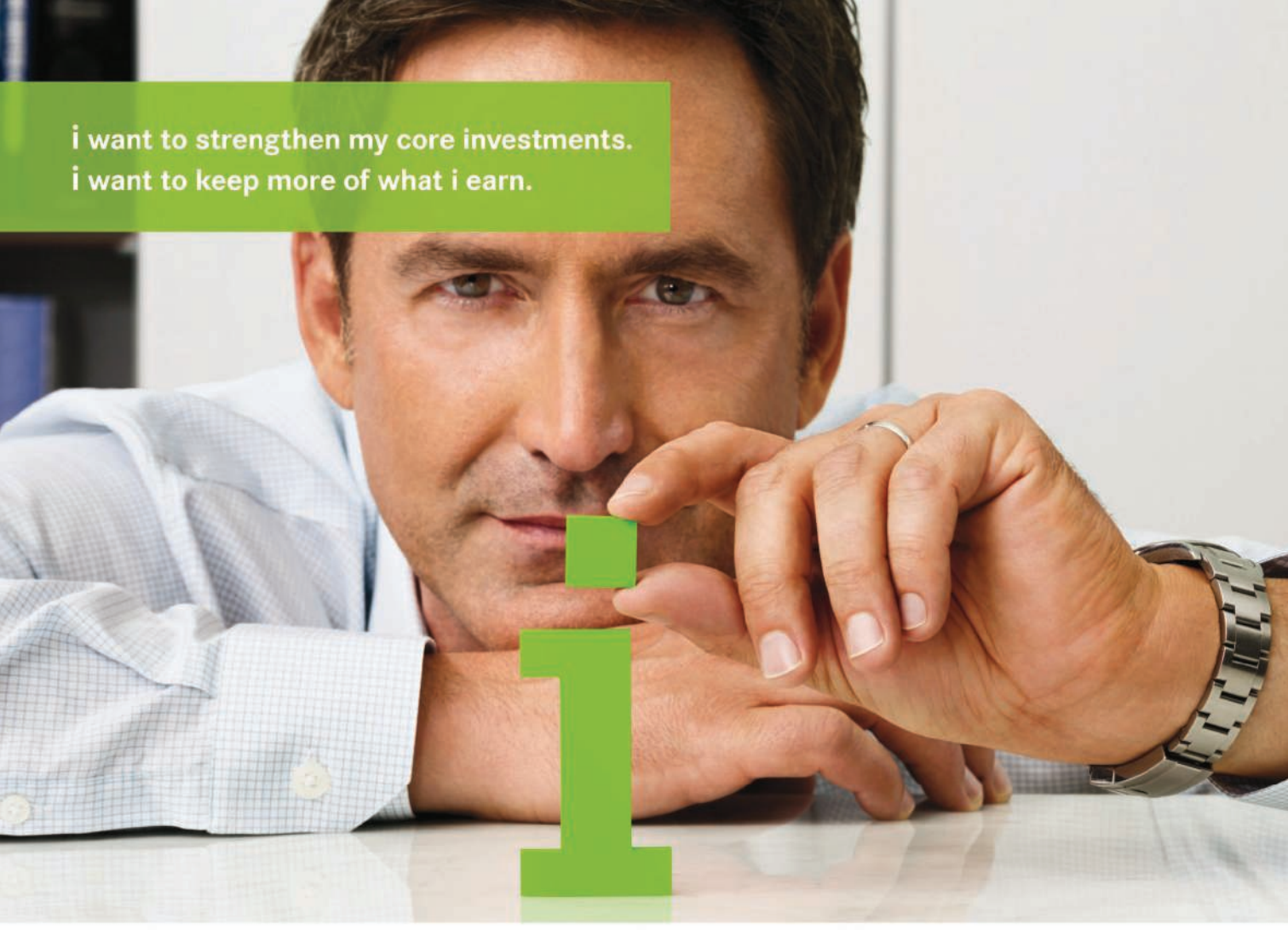
Still, at least Murdoch can say that he's the last man standing, because, in the past decade, those old-style media moguls have vanished. Some were pushed out by restive shareholders, some gave up, some got old. And the men who replaced them—people like Jeffrey Bewkes, at Time Warner—adopted a very different approach. Instead of building empires, they spun off businesses—Bewkes got rid of Time Warner's print division, its cable division, and A.O.L.—and focussed on running the remaining ones better. In part, this was a natural reaction to the hangover from the merger boom. "After a period of merger frenzy, it takes time to sort it all out," Hal Vogel, a longtime media analyst, told me. But the approach also reflected a new deference to shareholders' interests. The results have been impressive; media stocks have done exceptionally well during the bull market. Even Murdoch reined in his spendthrift habits after buying Dow Jones. He let his chief lieutenant, Chase Carey, focus on operations. And he streamlined, spinning off his publishing assets into News Corp and putting the rest into Fox.

It would be easy to say that, with the bid for Time Warner, Murdoch is simply returning to his old, reckless ways. And there are reasons to think that this is a foolish move; merging two big companies is enormously difficult, potential synergies are often overstated, and the high price tag leaves little room for error. Yet the deal makes a lot more strategic sense than many of Murdoch's previous ones. The assets of the two companies complement each other, so back-office operations could be efficiently consolidated. Time Warner has important sports contracts that could help Murdoch in his quest to build a real competitor to ESPN. And a new Fox Time Warner company would have great leverage in dealing with bulked-up cable and satellite companies like Comcast (which is buying Time Warner Cable) and A.T.&T. (which is buying DirecTV), as well as with distribution powerhouses like Netflix and Amazon. Murdoch's timing is good, too, because other logical bidders, like Comcast and A.T.&T., are busy. If Murdoch succeeds, it would be scary for content producers, since the new company would be able to drive very hard bargains. Consumers would likely face higher prices, not to mention the unpredictable impact of Murdoch's influence on well-loved brands like HBO. These are reasons that regulators should think hard before approving a merger. But they're also doubtless the reasons that the deal looks good to Murdoch.

From one angle, then, this is the rare moment when a mogul's imperial instincts dovetail with his company's interests. But it's a good deal only if Murdoch can buy Time Warner at around the price he bid for it. Few people think that's a real possibility, because Time Warner's board doesn't want to sell and Murdoch can't pay cash. So he will almost certainly have to overpay. That's exactly what the history of media deals tells us Murdoch shouldn't do. If he has learned from the past, he'll walk away if the price isn't right. But Murdoch is the last mogul. Would he pass up the chance to be the most powerful one ever?

*—James Surowiecki*

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

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URBAN CHRONICLES

# THE CROOKED LADDER

*The criminal's guide to upward mobility.*

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

*Italian mobsters climbed by way of crime. For black criminals, the story has changed.*

In 1964, the anthropologist Francis Ianni was introduced to a man in a congressional waiting room. His name was Philip Alcamo. People called him Uncle Phil, and he was, in the words of the person who made the introduction, "a business leader from New York City and an outstanding Italian-American." Uncle Phil was in his early sixties, twenty years older than Ianni. He was wealthy and charming and told Runyonesque stories about the many characters he knew from the old neighborhood, in Brooklyn. The two became friends. "He spoke the lobbyist's language, but with a genial disdain for Washington manners and morals," Ianni later wrote. "He was always very good in those peculiar Washington conversations in which people try to convince each other how much they really know about what is going on in the government, because he generally did know."

Ianni was by nature an adventurous man. He had two pet wolves, called Remus and Romulus. He once drove his young family from Addis Ababa to Nairobi in a Volkswagen microbus. ("I cannot tell you how many times we broke down," his son Juan recalls. "I remember my father fixing the generator by moonlight, and the nuts and bolts falling into the sand.") Uncle Phil fascinated him. At dinners and social functions, Ianni met the other families in the business syndicate whose interests Uncle Phil represented in Washington—the Tuccis, the Salemis, and, at the heart of the organization, the Lupollos. When Ianni moved to New York to take a position at Columbia University, he asked Uncle Phil if he could write about the Lupollo clan. Phil was "neither surprised nor distressed," Ianni recounted, but advised him that he should "tell each member of the family what I was about *only* when it was necessary to ask questions or seek specific pieces of information." And for the next three years he watched and learned—all of which he memorably described in his 1972 book, "A Family Business: Kinship and Social Control in Organized Crime."

The Lupollos were not really called the Lupollos, of course; nor was Uncle Phil really named Philip Alcamo. Ianni changed names and identifying details in his published work. The patriarch of the Lupollo clan he called Giuseppe. Giuseppe was born in the eighteen-seventies in the Corleone district of western Sicily. He came to New York in 1902, with his wife and their two young sons, and settled in Little Italy. He imported olive oil and ran an "Italian bank," which was used for loan-sharking operations. When a loan could not be repaid, he would take an equity stake in his debtor's business. He started a gambling operation, and moved into bootlegging; during Prohibition, the business branched out into trucking, garbage collection, food products, and real estate. He recruited close relatives to help him build his businesses—first, his wife's cousin Cosimo Salemi, then his son, Joe, then his daughter-in-law's brother, Phil Alcamo, and then the husband of his granddaughter, Pete Tucci. "From all accounts, he was a patriarch, at once kindly and domineering," Ianni wrote of Giuseppe. "Within the family, all important decisions were reserved for him. . . . Outside of the family, he was feared and respected." The family moved from Little Italy to a row house in Brooklyn, and from there—one by one—to Queens and Long Island, as its enterprise grew to encompass eleven businesses totalling tens of millions of dollars in assets.

"A Family Business" was the real-life version of "The Godfather," the movie



ILLUSTRATION BY LESLIE HERMAN

adaptation of which was released the same year. But Ianni's portrait was markedly different from the romanticized accounts of Mafia life that have subsequently dominated popular culture. There were no blood oaths in Ianni's account, or national commissions or dark conspiracies. There was no splashy gunplay. No one downed sambuca shots at Jilly's, on West Fifty-second Street, with Frank Sinatra. The Lupollos lived modestly. Ianni gives little evidence, in fact, that the four families had any grand criminal ambitions beyond the illicit operations they ran out of storefronts in Brooklyn. Instead, from Giuseppe's earliest days in Little Italy, the Lupollo clan was engaged in a quiet and determined push toward respectability.

By 1970, Ianni calculated, there were forty-two fourth-generation members of the Lupollo-Salemi-Alcamo-Tucci family—of which only four were involved in the family's crime businesses. The rest were firmly planted in the American upper middle class. A handful of the younger members of that generation were in private schools or in college. One was married to a judge's son, another to a dentist. One was completing a master's degree in psychology; another was a member of the English department at a liberal-arts college. There were several lawyers, a physician, and a stockbroker. Uncle Phil's son Basil was an accountant, who lived on an estate in the posh Old Westbury section of Long Island's North Shore. "His daughter rides and shows her own horses," Ianni wrote, "and his son has some reputation as an up-and-coming young yachtsman." Uncle Phil, meanwhile, lived in Manhattan, collected art, and frequented the opera. "The Lupollos love to tell of old Giuseppe's wife Annunziata visiting Phil's apartment," Ianni wrote. "Her comment on the lavish collection of paintings was '*manga nu Santa*' ('not even one saint's picture')."

The moral of the "Godfather" movies was that the Corleone family, conceived in crime, could never escape it. "Just when I thought I was out," Michael Corleone says, "they pull me back in." The moral of "A Family Business" was the opposite: that for the Lupollos and the Tuccis and the Salemis and the Alcamos—and, by extension, many other families just like them—crime was the means by which a group of immigrants could transcend their humble origins. It was, as the sociologist James O'Kane put it, the "crooked ladder" of social mobility.

Six decades ago, Robert K. Merton argued that there was a series of ways in which Americans responded to the extraordinary cultural emphasis that their society placed on getting ahead. The most common was "conformity": accept the social goal (the American dream) and also accept the means by which it should be pursued (work hard and obey the law). The second strategy was "ritualism": accept the means (work hard and obey the law) but reject the goal. That's the approach of the Quakers or the Amish or of any other religious group that substitutes its own moral agenda for that of the broader society. There was also "retreatism" and "rebellion"—rejecting both the goal and the means. It was the fourth adaptation, however, that Merton found most interesting: "innovation." Many Americans—particularly those at the bottom of the heap—believed passionately in the promise of the American dream. They didn't want to bury themselves in ritualism or retreatism. But they couldn't conform: the kinds of institutions that would reward hard work and promote advancement were closed to them. So what did they do? They innovated: they found alternative ways of pursuing the American dream. They climbed the crooked ladder.

All three of the great waves of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European immigrants to America innovated. Irish gangsters dominated organized crime in the urban Northeast in the mid to late nineteenth century, followed by the Jewish gangsters—Meyer Lansky, Arnold Rothstein, and Dutch Schultz, among others. Then it was the Italians' turn. They were among the poorest and the least skilled of the immigrants of that era. Crime was one of the few options available for advancement. The point of the crooked-ladder argument and "A Family Business" was that criminal activity, under those circumstances, was not rebellion; it wasn't a rejection of legitimate society. It was an attempt to join in.

When Ianni's book came out, there was widespread speculation among


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Mafia experts about who the Lupollos really were. One guess was that they were descendants of the crime family originally founded by Giuseppe Morello and Ignazio (Lupo) Saietta in the early nineteen-hundreds. (Lupo plus Morello equals Lupollo.) If that is the case, then the origins of the Lupollos were distinctly unsavory. Morello and Saietta were members of the Black Hand, the name given to bands of Southern Italian immigrants who engaged in crude acts of extortion—threatening merchants with bodily injury if protection money wasn't paid. Saietta was thought to be responsible for ordering as many as sixty murders; people in Little Italy, it was said, would cross themselves at the mention of his name.

During Prohibition, the Lupollo gang moved into bootlegging. The vehicles that were used in the liquor trade became the basis for a trucking business. Gambling money went to family bankers, who directed the funds to Brooklyn Eagle Realty and other legal investments. "After the money from gambling is 'cleansed' by reinvestment in legal activities," Ianni wrote, "the profit is then reinvested in loan-sharking."

Ianni didn't romanticize what he saw. He didn't pretend that the crooked ladder was the principal means of economic mobility in America, or the most efficient. It was simply a fact of American life. He saw the pattern being repeated in New York City during the nineteen-seventies, as the city's demographics changed. The Lupollos' gambling operations in Harlem had been taken over by African-Americans. In Brooklyn, the family had been forced to enter into a franchise arrangement with blacks and Puerto Ricans, limiting themselves to providing capital and arranging for police protection. "Things here in Brooklyn aren't good for us now," Uncle Phil told Ianni. "We're moving out, and they're moving in. I guess it's their turn now." In the early seventies, Ianni recruited eight black and Puerto Rican excons—all of whom had gone to prison for organized-crime activities—to be his field assistants, and they came back with a picture of organized crime in Harlem that looked a lot like what had been going on in Little Italy seventy years earlier, only with drugs, rather than bootleg alcohol, as the currency of innovation. The newcomers, he predicted, would climb the ladder to respectability just as their predecessors had done. "It was toward the end of the Lupollo study that I became convinced that organized crime was a functional part of the American social system and should be viewed as one end of a continuum of business enterprises with legitimate business at the other end," Ianni wrote. Fast-forward two generations and, with any luck, the grandchildren of the loan sharks and the street thugs would be riding horses in Old Westbury. It had happened before. Wouldn't it happen again?

This is one of the questions at the heart of the sociologist Alice Goffman's extraordinary new book, "On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City." The story she tells, however, is very different.

When Goffman was a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, she began tutoring an African-American high-school student named Aisha, who lived in a low-income neighborhood that she calls 6th Street, not far from campus. (Goffman, like Ianni, altered names and details.) Through Aisha, she met a group of part-time crack dealers and was soon drawn into their world. She asked them if she could follow them around and write about their lives. They agreed. She had taken an apartment close by and lived in the neighborhood for the next six years, profiling the lives of people who, in many ways, were the modern-day equivalents of old Giuseppe Lupollo, in his earliest days on the streets of Little Italy.

At the center of Goffman's story are two close friends: Mike and Chuck. Mike's mother worked two and sometimes three jobs, which meant that he was well off by the standards of the neighborhood. His mother's house was immaculate. Chuck was a senior in high school when he and Goffman met. He had two younger brothers, Reggie and Tim, both of whom were devoted to him. Chuck had a harder time of it; he lived in the basement of his family's derelict row house, where, Goffman writes, "sometimes the rats bit him, but at least he had his own space."

Goffman immersed herself in the 6th Street community. Her school friends dropped away. Chuck and Mike—and occasionally another friend of theirs, Steven—eventually moved in with her, sleeping on two couches in the living room. She lived through a war between her friends on 6th Street and the "4th Street Boys." One day, Mike came home with seven bullet holes in the side of his car. ("We hid it in a shed so the cops wouldn't see," she writes.) Goffman, Mike, and Chuck would text one another every half hour, to make sure each was still alive:

*You good?*
*Yeah.*
*Okay.*

Chuck did not survive the gang war. At the end of the book, Goffman attaches a fifty-page "Methodological Note," in which she describes the night that he was shot in the head outside a Chinese restaurant. The passages are devastating. She came running to the hospital room where his body lay. "I cried to him and told him that I loved him," she writes. Then Chuck's girlfriend, Tanesha, and his friend Alex arrived. "Tanesha was talking to him and telling Alex and me what she saw: how he moved his arm because he was fighting, he always was a fighter; how she had followed the ambulance here. How could he leave her and leave his girls? She noticed that his body was beginning to grow stiff." Tanesha began to cry softly. "You are my baby," she said. "Why did you leave me?" Finally, gathered around Chuck's bed, Goffman writes,

> we talked about bringing Reggie home from county jail on a funeral furlough. I said that if Reggie came home, all he was gonna do was go shoot someone, and Alex said, "Please—somebody gon' die regardless," and Mike nodded his head in agreement, and Tanesha too. Alex counted one, two, three, four with his fingers. The number of people who would die.

Chuck and Mike were criminals: they were complicit in the barbarism of the drug trade. But, in the Mertonian sense, they were also innovators. Goffman describes how they craved success in mainstream society. They tried to get an education and legitimate jobs,

only to find themselves thwarted. Selling crack was a business they entered into only because they believed that all other doors were closed to them. In Chuck's case, his mother had a serious crack habit. He began dealing at thirteen in order to buy food for the family and to "regulate" his mother's addiction; if he was her supplier, he figured, she wouldn't have to turn tricks or sell household possessions to pay for drugs. Chuck's criminal activities were an attempt to bring some degree of normalcy to his family.

The problem was that on 6th Street crime didn't pay. Often, Chuck and Mike had no drugs to sell: "their supplier had gotten arrested or was simply unavailable, or the money they owed this 'connect' had been seized from their pockets by the police during a stop and search." And, if they did have drugs, the odds of evading arrest were small. The police saturated 6th Street. Each day, Goffman saw the officers stop young men on the streets, search cars, and make arrests. In her first eighteen months of following Mike and Chuck, she writes:

> I watched the police break down doors, search houses and question, arrest, or chase people through houses fifty-two times. Nine times, police helicopters circled overhead and beamed searchlights onto local streets. I noted blocks taped off and traffic redirected as police searched for evidence . . . seventeen times. Fourteen times during my first eighteen months of near daily observation, I watched the police punch, choke, kick, stomp on, or beat young men with their nightsticks.

Years later, when Chuck went through his high-school yearbook with Goffman, he identified almost half the boys in his freshman class as currently in jail or prison. Between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-seven, Mike had spent three and a half years behind bars. He was on probation or parole for eighty-seven weeks of the hundred and thirty-nine weeks that he was out of prison, and made fifty-one court appearances.

The police buried the local male population under a blizzard of arrest warrants: some were "body" warrants for suspected crimes, but most were bench and technical warrants for failure to appear in court or to pay court fees, or for violations of probation or parole. Getting out from under the weight of warrants was so difficult that many young men in the neighborhood lived their lives as fugitives. Mike spent a total of thirty-five weeks on the run, steering clear of friends and loved ones, moving around by night. The young men of the neighborhood avoided hospitals, because police officers congregate there, running checks on those seeking treatment for injuries. Instead, they turned to a haphazard black market for their medical care. The police would set up a tripod camera outside funerals, to record the associates of young men murdered on the streets. The local police, the A.T.F., the F.B.I., and the U.S. Marshals Service all had special warrant units, using computer-mapping software, cell-phone tracking, and intelligence from every conceivable database: Social Security records, court records, hospital-admission records, electricity and gas bills, and employment records. "You hear them coming, that's it, you gone," Chuck tells his little brother. "Period. 'Cause whoever they looking for, even if it's not you, nine times out of ten they'll probably book you." Goffman sometimes saw young children playing the age-old game of cops and robbers in the street, only the child acting the part of the robber wouldn't even bother to run away:

> I saw children give up running and simply stick their hands behind their back, as if in handcuffs; push their body up against a car without being asked; or lie flat on the ground and put their hands over their head. The children yelled, "I'm going to lock you up! I'm going to lock you up, and you ain't never coming home!" I once saw a six-year-old pull another child's pants down to do a "cavity search."

When read alongside Ianni, what is striking about Goffman's book is not the cultural difference between being an Italian thug in the early part of the twentieth century and being an African-American thug today. It's the role of law enforcement in each era. Chuck's high-school education ended prematurely after he was convicted of aggravated assault in a schoolyard fight. Another boy called Chuck's mother a crack whore, and he pushed his antagonist's face into the snow. In a previous generation, this dispute would not have ended up in the legal system. Until the nineteen-seventies, outstanding warrants in the city of Philadelphia were handled by a two-man team, who would sit in an office during the evening hours and make telephone calls to the homes of people on their list. Anyone stopped by the police could show a fake I.D. Today,

there are computers and sometimes even fingerprint machines in squad cars. Between 1960 and 2000, the ratio of police officers to Philadelphia residents rose by almost seventy per cent.

In the previous era, according to Goffman, the police "turned a fairly blind eye" to prostitution, drug dealing, and gambling in poor black neighborhoods. But in the late nineteen-eighties, she writes, "corruption seems to have been largely eliminated as a general practice, at least in the sense of people working at the lower levels of the drug trade paying the police to leave them in peace."

The Lupollos, of course, routinely paid the police to leave them in peace, as did the other crime families of their day. They got the benefit of law enforcement's "blind eye." Ianni observed that, in Giuseppe's lifetime, "no immediate member of the Lupollo clan had ever been arrested." Uncle Phil hung out in Washington, in a blue suit. "I have met judges, commissioners, members of federal regulatory bodies, and congressmen socially when I have been with Phil Alcamo," Ianni wrote. At such meetings, "Phil openly discusses the needs of the family where government is concerned and often asks for advice or favors. He also suggests favorable business investments or land-purchase opportunities and will 'put someone in touch with someone who can do something for them.'" Apparently, no one in Washington during that period found anything unusual about a Mafia capo openly discussing "the needs of the family where government is concerned" and suggesting "favorable business investments" for the politicians and regulators whom he was lobbying.

The Federal Witness Protection Program did not yet exist; federal wiretaps weren't admissible in court. Only the F.B.I. was properly equipped to tackle organized crime, and under J. Edgar Hoover the bureau saw targeting Communism and political subversion as its primary mandate. "As late as 1959, the FBI's New York field office had only 10 agents assigned to organized crime compared to over one hundred and forty agents pursuing a dwindling population of Communists," the attorney C. Alexander Hortis writes, in "The Mob and the City." In the unlikely event that a mobster was arrested, Hortis points out, he could expect to walk. Between 1960 and 1970, forty-four per cent of indictments of organized-crime figures in courts around New York City were dismissed before trial. In that same ten-year period, five hundred and thirty-six mobsters were arrested on felony charges, but only thirty-seven ended up in prison.

Hortis retells the story of the famous Apalachin incident, in 1957, when several dozen mobsters from around the country gathered at the upstate New York property of Joseph Barbara, Sr., for a weekend retreat. The get-together was broken up by the police. Some of the mobsters ran into the surrounding woods—and the resulting arrests led to congressional hearings and headlines. How did this happen? By chance, a detective ran into Barbara's son at a local motel and eavesdropped on his conversation. He drove by the Barbara estate, saw lots of fancy cars, ran their plates, and called in reinforcements. The subsequent grand-jury investigation, Hortis says, was a "farce." One mobster claimed that he had dropped in while on an olive-oil sales trip. Another said that he had had car trouble. A third said that he had heard there was free food. Twenty mobsters were convicted on conspiracy charges, and all twenty convictions were reversed on appeal.

That's why the crooked ladder worked as well as it did. The granddaughter could end up riding horses because the law—whether from indifference, incompetence, or corruption—left her gangster grandfather alone.

The idea that, in the course of a few generations, the gangster can give way to an equestrian is perhaps the hardest part of the innovation argument to accept. We have become convinced of the opposite trajectory: the benign low-level drug dealer becomes the malignant distributor and then the brutal drug lord. The blanket policing imposed on 6th Street is justified by the idea that, left unchecked, Mike and Chuck will get worse. Their delinquency will metastasize. The crooked-ladder theorists looked at the Mafia's evolution during the course of the twentieth century, however, and reached the opposite conclusion: that, over time, the criminal vocation was inevitably domesticated.

One of the dominant organized-crime figures on Long Island during the nineteen-seventies and eighties was a former garment manufacturer named Salvatore Avellino, and Avellino's story is an example of the crooked ladder in action. It is a good bet that Ianni's Lupollos dealt with Avellino, because they were in the garbage business and Avellino was the king of "carting" (as it was known). He was the de-facto head of a trade association called the Private Sanitation Industry Association; it represented a cluster of small, family-owned carting companies that picked up commercial and residential garbage in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Each carter paid membership dues to the P.S.I., a portion of which Avellino dutifully passed on to the Lucchese and Gambino crime families.

Avellino was a gangster. He would burn the trucks of those who crossed him. He eventually went to prison for his role in assassinating two carters who refused to play along with the P.S.I. But, in other ways, Avellino didn't behave like a thug at all. He worked largely by persuasion and charisma. As the economist Peter Reuter observes in his history of the Long Island carting wars, Avellino's mission was to rationalize the industry, to enforce what was called a "property rights" system among the carters. Individual firms were allowed to compete for new customers. But, once a carter won a customer, he "owned" that business; the function of Avellino's P.S.I. was to make sure that no one else poached that customer. Avellino was, essentially, acting as an agent for the garbage collectors of Long Island, inserting himself between his membership and the marketplace the way a Hollywood agent inserts himself between the pool of actors and the studios.

Ordinary thieves act covertly. They hide their identity from the person whose money they are taking. Avellino did the opposite. He ran a public organization. The ordinary thief is outside the legitimate economy. Avellino was integrated into the legitimate economy. When it came to his P.S.I. members, Avellino acted not as a predator but as a benefactor. By Reuter's estimates, Avellino's

cartel enabled P.S.I. members to charge their commercial customers fifty per cent more than would otherwise have been possible.

On one federal wiretap, Avellino was recorded speaking about a P.S.I. carter named Freddy, who, Avellino says, drove up to his house in a brand-new Mercedes, "the fifty-thousand-dollar one." Avellino goes on, "So I walked out. It was a Sunday morning and I said, 'Congratulations, beautiful, beautiful.' He says, 'I just wanted you to see it, 'cause this is thanks to you and to P.S.I. that I bought this car.'"

In his economic analysis, Reuter marvels at how scrupulously Avellino defended the interests of his carters. Avellino allowed the bulk of that fifty-per-cent margin to go to the carters and the unions—not to the Luccheses and the Gambinos. Reuter reports, with similar incredulity, about Avellino's personal business dealings. He ran a carting company of his own, but as he expanded his business—buying up routes from other companies—he never demanded discounts. Here was the representative of a major crime family, and he paid retail. "Ya see, out here, Frank, in Nassau, Suffolk County . . . we don't shake anybody down, we don't steal anybody's work, we don't steal it to sell it back to them," Avellino says, in another of the wiretaps. "Whenever I got a spot back for a guy because somebody took it, never was a price put on it, because if it was his to begin with and he was part of the club and he was payin' every three months, then he got it back for nothin', because that was supposed to be the idea."

This restraint was, in fact, characteristic of the late-stage mobster. James Jacobs, a New York University law professor who was involved in anti-Mafia efforts in New York during the nineteen-eighties, points out that the Mafia had every opportunity to take over the entire carting industry in the New York region—just as they could easily have monopolized any of the other industries in which they played a role. Instead, they stayed in the background, content to be the middlemen. At New York's Fulton Fish Market, one of the largest such markets in the country, the Mob policed the cartel and controlled parking—a crucial amenity in a business where time is of the essence and prompt delivery of fresh fish translates to higher profits. What did they charge for a full day's parking? Twelve dollars. And when the Mob-controlled cartel was finally rooted out, how much did fish prices decline at the Fulton Fish Market? Two per cent.

• •

In the mid-eighties, when Jacobs worked for the Organized Crime Task Force in New York, trying to rid the construction industry of racketeering, he said that the task force's efforts "had no interest from the builders and the employers." Those immediately involved in the business rather liked having the Mafia around as a referee, because it proved to be such a reasonable business partner. "This was a system that worked for everybody, except maybe the New York *Times*," Jacobs said dryly.

"This is one of the most interesting things about the Mafia," Jacobs went on. "They did business and cooperated. They weren't trying to smash everybody. They created these alliances and maintained these equilibriums. . . . You'd think that they would keep expanding their reach."

They didn't, though, because they didn't think of themselves as ordinary criminals. That was for their fathers and grandfathers, who murderously roamed the streets of New York. Avellino wanted to be in the open, not in the shadows. He wanted to be integrated into the real world, not isolated from it. The P.S.I. was a sloppy, occasionally lethal but nonetheless purposeful dress rehearsal for legitimacy. That was Merton's and Ianni's point. The gangster, left to his own devices, grows up and goes away. A generation ago, we permitted that evolution. We don't anymore. Old Giuseppe Lupollo was given that opportunity; Mike and Chuck were not.

"The pioneers of American capitalism were not graduated from Harvard's School of Business Administration," the sociologist Daniel Bell wrote, fifty years ago, in a passage that could easily serve as Goffman's epilogue:

> The early settlers and founding fathers, as well as those who "won the West" and built up cattle, mining and other fortunes, often did so by shady speculations and a not inconsiderable amount of violence. They ignored, circumvented, or stretched the law when it stood in the way of America's destiny and their own—or were themselves the law when it served their purposes. This has not prevented them and their descendants from feeling proper moral outrage when, under the changed circumstances of the crowded urban environments, latecomers pursued equally ruthless tactics. ♦

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# HEAR THIS

BY WILLIAM SORENSEN

While we regret the discontinuation of our popular Bar Car service, Metro-North is pleased to announce a new program that should provide comfort and freedom of choice on rides in and out of Grand Central Terminal. This initiative is an expansion of our Quiet Car program and will be known as Hush Plus. Each car on every rush-hour train will be designated one of the following: Quiet, Almost Quiet, Normal Amount of Noise, It's Getting Louder, or Insanely Loud.

To help passengers decide which car is right for them, Metro-North enlisted a panel of monthly ticket-holders and behavioral scientists from SUNY Purchase and Yale. The panel provided these guidelines:

QUIET CAR: For many commuters, the Quiet Car has never been quiet enough. Now it will be. Sounds once tolerated, such as a cell-phone whisper ("Can't talk—I'm in the Quiet Car"), will now result in a fifteen-dollar fine or deboarding at 125th Street. Screen swiping on any wireless device must be silent. Passengers with long fingernails and jangly jewelry should think twice before taking a seat in the Quiet Car.

ALMOST QUIET CAR: A car reserved for people who tolerate eye contact. The exchange of a few daily pleasantries will be permitted, although sustained conversation will be banned. Absolutely no jokes are allowed, especially the one about the husband who regrettably misspeaks to his wife at breakfast when he merely intends to say, "Please pass the marmalade."

NORMAL AMOUNT OF NOISE CAR: The place for old-fashioned face-to-face conversation with colleagues, neighbors, and other acquaintances. Older passengers can rest assured that other riders will not roll their eyes when they rustle and fold their printed newspapers. The Normal Amount of Noise Car will provide a sound buffer, so that you can speak frankly without worrying that your words might be overheard and come back to haunt you in a securities investigation. Here, too, you can safely tell your seatmate that your kids turned out to be total assholes.

IT'S GETTING LOUDER CAR: Words uttered in this car can be loud enough to be heard by four rows in either direction. This is the proper venue to brag about a near hole in one, your dog, or your daughter's pre-wedding brow-lift. The joys of Percocet and the nightmare of house renovation might also be popular topics. Anecdotes tinged with self-deprecation will be well received. Don't hold back. Tell the story of the roofing contractor who crashed through the family-room ceiling and damn near landed on your Samsung seventy-eight-inch curved-screen TV. Luckily, he only kicked the remote and momentarily switched on "The Naked Chef."

INSANELY LOUD CAR: Almost named the Earsplitting F-Bomb Car, as it will be filled with young adults adjusting to the burden of first jobs. This is where primal screams are permitted on inbound trains. Nervous riders facing a client pitch, a performance review, or a meeting with an I.R.S. auditor may relieve stress by slipping into the rest room, shutting the door, and screaming bloody murder. On outbound trains, passengers can unplug headsets and crank up the volume on rap-remix sing-alongs. Rousing versions of college fight songs are appropriate here, especially during March Madness.

For riders who haven't yet weaned themselves from the ambience of the Bar Car, Metro-North is establishing a B.Y.O.B. Drinking Game, to be played every third Friday on every train out of Grand Central. The car will, of course, be the insanely loud one. Fuck, yeah! ♦

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AMERICAN ANNALS

# A RAISED VOICE

*How Nina Simone turned the movement into music.*

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

"My skin is black," the first woman's story begins, "my arms are long." And, to a slow and steady beat, "my hair is woolly, my back is strong." Singing in a club in Holland, in 1965, Nina Simone introduced a song she had written about what she called "four Negro women" to a young, homogeneously white, and transfixed crowd. "And one of the women's hair," she instructed, brushing her hand lightly across her own woolly Afro, "is like mine." Every performance of "Four Women" caught on film (as here) or disk is different. Sometimes Simone coolly chants the first three women's parts—the effect is of resigned weariness—and at other times, as on this particular night, she gives each woman an individual, sharply dramatized voice. All four have names. Aunt Sarah is old, and her strong back has allowed her only "to take the pain inflicted again and again." Sephronia's yellow skin and long hair are the result of her rich white father having raped her mother—"Between two worlds I do belong"—and Sweet Thing, a prostitute, has tan skin and a smiling bravado that seduced at least some of the eager Dutch listeners into the mistake of smiling, too. And then Simone hit them with the last and most resolutely up to date of the women, improbably named Peaches. "My skin is brown," she growled ferociously, "my manner is tough. I'll kill the first mother I see. 'Cause my life has been rough." (One has to wonder what the Dutch made of killing that "mother.") If Simone's song suggests a history of black women in America, it is also a history of long-suppressed and finally uncontainable anger.

A lot of black women have been openly angry these days over a new movie about Simone's life, and it hasn't even been released. The issue is color, and what it meant to Simone to be not only categorically African-American but specifically African in her features and her very dark skin. Is it possible to separate Simone's physical characteristics, and what they cost her in this country, from the woman she became? Can she be played by an actress with less distinctively African

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*Simone with James Baldwin in the early sixties. Her intelligence and restless force attracted African-American culture's finest minds.*

features, or a lighter skin tone? *Should* she be played by such an actress? The casting of Zoe Saldana, a movie star of Dominican descent and a light-skinned beauty along European lines, has caused these questions—rarely phrased as questions—to dog the production of "Nina," from the moment Saldana's casting was announced to the completed film's début, at Cannes, in May, at a screening confined to possible distributors. No reviewers have seen it. The film's director, Cynthia Mort, has been stalwart in her defense of Saldana's rightness for the role, citing not only the obvious relevance of acting skills but Simone's inclusion of a range of colors among her own "Four Women"—which is a fair point. None of the women in Simone's most personal and searing song escape the damage and degradation accorded to their race.

Ironically, "Four Women" was charged with being insulting to black women and was banned on a couple of radio stations in New York and Philadelphia soon after the recording was released, in 1966. The ban was lifted, however, when it produced more outrage than the song. Simone's husband, Andrew Stroud, who was also her manager, worried about the dangers that the controversy might have for her career, although this was hardly a new problem. Simone had been singing out loud and clear about civil rights since 1963—well after the heroic stand of figures like Harry Belafonte and Sammy Davis, Jr., but still at a time when many black performers felt trapped between the rules of commercial success and the increasing pressure for racial confrontation. At Motown, in the early sixties, the wildly popular performers of a stream of crossover hits became models of black achievement but had virtually no contact with the movement at all.

Simone herself had been hesitant at first. Known for her sophisticated pianism, her imperious attitude, and her velvety rendition of "I Loves You, Porgy" (which, like Billie Holiday before her, she sang without the demeaningly ungrammatical "s" on "loves"), she had arrived in New York in late 1958, establishing her reputation not in Harlem but in the clubs of hip and relatively interracial Greenwich Village. Her repertoire of jazz and folk and show tunes, often played with a classical touch, made her impossible to classify. In these early years, she performed African songs but also Hebrew songs, and wove a Bach fugue through a rapid-fire version of "Love Me or Leave Me." She tossed off the thirties bauble "My Baby Just Cares for Me" with airy insouciance, and wrung the heart out of the lullaby "Brown Baby"—newly written by Oscar Brown, Jr., about a family's hopes for a child born into a better racial order—erupting in a hair-raising wail on the word "freedom," as though registering all the pain over all the years during which it was denied. For a while, "Brown Baby" was as close to a protest song as Simone got. She believed it was enough.

And then her friend Lorraine Hansberry set her straight. It speaks to Simone's intelligence and restless force that, in her twenties, she attracted some of African-American culture's finest minds. Both Langston Hughes and James Baldwin elected themselves mentors: Simone, appearing on the scene just as Holiday died, seemed to evoke their most exuberant hopes and most protective instincts. But Hansberry offered her a special bond. A young woman also dealing with a startling early success—Hansberry was twenty-eight when "A Raisin in the Sun" won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, in 1959—she had a strongly cultivated black pride and a pedagogical bent. "We never talked about men or clothes," Simone wrote in her memoir, decades later. "It was always Marx, Lenin and revolution—real girls' talk." A milestone in Simone's career was a solo concert at Carnegie Hall—a happy chance to show off her pianism—on April 12, 1963, which happened also to be the day that Martin Luther King, Jr., was arrested with other protesters in Birmingham, Alabama, and locked up in the local jail. The discrepancy between the events was pointed out by Hansberry, who telephoned Simone after the concert, although not to offer praise.

Two months later, Simone played a benefit for the N.A.A.C.P. In early August, she sang "Brown Baby" before a crowd gathered in the football stadium of a black college outside Birmingham—the first integrated concert ever given in the area—while guards with guns and dogs prowled the field. But Hansberry only started a process that events in America quickly accelerated. Simone watched the March on Washington, later that August, on television, while she was preparing for a club date. She was still rehearsing when,

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on September 15th, news came of the bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four young African-American girls who had just got out of Bible class. Simone's first impulsive act, she recalled, was to try to make a zip gun with tools from her garage. "I had it in my mind to go out and kill someone," she wrote. "I didn't yet know who, but someone I could identify as being in the way of my people."

This urge to violence was not a wholly aberrant impulse but something that had been brewing on a national scale, however tamped down by cooler heads and political pragmatists. At the Washington march, John Lewis, then a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was forced to cut the word "revolution" from his speech and to omit the threat that, absent immediate progress, the marchers would go through the South "the way Sherman did" and "burn Jim Crow to the ground." James Baldwin, in a televised discussion after the bombing, noted that, throughout American history, "the only time that nonviolence has been admired is when the Negroes practice it." But the center held. Simone's husband, a smart businessman, told her to forget the gun and put her rage into her music.

It took her an hour to write "Mississippi Goddam." A freewheeling cri de coeur based on the place names of oppression, the song has a jaunty tune that makes an ironic contrast with words—"Alabama's got me so upset, Tennessee made me lose my rest"—that arose from injustices so familiar they hardly needed to be stated: "And everybody knows about Mississippi, goddam!" Still, Simone spelled them out. She mocked stereotypical insults ("Too damn lazy!"), government promises ("Desegregation/Mass participation"), and, above all, the continuing admonition of public leaders to "Go slow," a line that prompted her backup musicians to call out repeatedly, as punctuation, "Too slow!" It wasn't "We Shall Overcome" or "Blowin' in the Wind": Simone had little feeling for the Biblically inflected uplift that defined the anthems of the era. It's a song about a movement nearly out of patience by a woman who never had very much to begin with, and who had little hope for the American future: "Oh but this whole country is full of lies," she sang. "You're all gonna die and die like flies."

She introduced the song in a set at the Village Gate a few days later. And she sang it at a very different concert at Carnegie Hall, in March, 1964—brazenly flinging "You're all gonna die" at a mostly white audience—along with other protest songs she had taken a hand in writing, including the defiantly jazzy ditty "Old Jim Crow." She also performed a quietly haunting song titled "Images," about a black woman's inability to see her own beauty ("She thinks her brown body has no glory")—a wistful predecessor to "Four

Women" that she had composed to words by the Harlem Renaissance poet Waring Cuney. At the time, Simone herself was still wearing her hair in a harshly straightened fifties-style bob—sometimes the small personal freedoms are harder to speak up for than the larger political ones—and, clearly, it wasn't time yet for such specifically female injuries to take their place in the racial picture. "Mississippi Goddam" was the song of the moment: bold and urgent and easy to sing, it was adopted by embattled protesters in the cursed state itself just months after Simone's concert, during what they called the Mississippi Summer Project, or Freedom Summer, and what President Johnson called "the summer of our discontent."

There was no looking back by the time she performed the song outside Montgomery, Alabama, in March, 1965, when some three thousand marchers were making their way along the fifty-four-mile route from Selma; two weeks earlier, protesters making the same attempt had been driven back by state troopers with clubs, whips, and tear gas. The triumphant concert, on the fourth night of the march, was organized by the indefatigable Belafonte, at the request of King, and took place on a makeshift stage built atop stacks of empty coffins lent by local funeral homes, and in front of an audience that had swelled with twenty-five thousand additional people, drawn either by the cause or by a lineup of stars that ranged from Tony Bennett and Johnny Mathis to Joan Baez. Simone, accompanied only by her longtime guitarist, Al Schackman, drew cheers on the interpolated line "Selma made me lose my rest." In the course of events that night, she was introduced to King, and Schackman remembered that she stuck her hand out and warned him, "I'm not nonviolent!" It was only when King replied, gently, "Not to worry, sister," that she calmed down.

Simone's explosiveness was well known. In concert, she was quick to call out anyone she noticed talking, to stop and glare or hurl a few insults or even leave the stage. Yet her performances, richly improvised, were also confidingly intimate—she *needed* the connection with her audience—and often riveting. Even in her best years, Simone never put many records on the charts, but people flocked to her shows. In 1966, the critic for the Philadelphia *Tribune*, an African-American newspaper, explained that to hear Simone sing "is to be brought into abrasive contact with the black heart and to feel the power and beauty which for centuries have beat there." She was proclaimed the voice of the movement not by Martin Luther King but by Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, whose Black Power philosophy answered to her own experience and inclinations. As the sixties progressed, the feelings she displayed—pain, lacerating anger, the desire to burn down whole cities in revenge—made her seem at times emotionally disturbed and at other times simply the most honest black woman in America.

She recalled that racial anger first arose in her when she was eleven. Born Eunice Waymon, in 1933, she was the sixth of eight children of John and Kate Waymon, who were descendants of slaves and pillars of the small black community of Tryon, North Carolina. Her mother was a Methodist preacher, a severely religious woman who made extra money by cleaning house for a white Tryon family; her father, who had started off as an entertainer, worked at whatever the circumstances required. Even during the Depression, the Waymons made a good home. Simone's earliest memories were of her mother singing hymns, and both the house and the church were so filled with music that no one noticed little Eunice climbing up to the organ bench until, at the age of two and a half, she played "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," straight through.

Yet as rare as the little girl's musical gifts is the way that, in that time and place, those gifts were encouraged. She began playing for her mother's sermons before her feet could reach the pedals, and was soon accompanying the church choir and Sunday services. She especially enjoyed playing for visiting revivalists, because of the raptures she discovered that she could loose in an audience with music. At the other end of the spectrum, she was five years old when the woman for whom her mother cleaned house offered to pay for lessons with a local piano teacher, Muriel Mazzanovich. The British-born Miz Mazzy, as Eunice called her—and also, later on, "my white momma"—inspired her love of Bach and her plans to become a great and famous classical pianist. Giving a recital in the local library, at eleven, Eunice saw her parents being removed from their front-row seats to make room for a white couple. She had been schooled by Miz Mazzy in proper deportment, but she nevertheless stood up and announced that if people wanted to hear her play they'd better let her parents sit back down in the front row. There were some laughs, but her parents were returned to their seats. The next day, she remembered, she felt "as if I had been flayed, and every slight, real or imagined, cut me raw. But, the skin grew back a little tougher, a little less innocent, and a little more black."

Her skin was very black, and she was made fully aware of that, along with the fact that her nose was too large. The aesthetics of race—and the loathing and self-loathing inflicted on those who vary from accepted standards of beauty—is one of the most pervasive aspects of racism, yet it is not often discussed. The standards have been enforced by blacks as well as by whites. Even Harry Belafonte wrote, in his memoir, about his mother's well-intentioned counsel to "marry a woman with good hair," and he added, in unnecessary clarification, "Good hair meant straight hair." (Reader, he married her.) But Nina Simone, strong and fierce and proud Nina Simone? "*I can't be white* and I'm the kind of colored girl who looks like everything white people despise or have been taught to despise," she wrote in a note to herself, not during her adolescence but in the years when she was already a successful performer. "If I were a boy, it wouldn't matter so much, but I'm a girl and in front of the public all the time wide open for them to jeer and approve of or disapprove of."

Countering the charge of physical inferiority, in her youth, was the talent that her mother assured her was God-given. Music was her salvation, her identity. Thanks to a fund established by a pair of generous white patrons in Tryon, she was sent to board at a private high school—she practiced piano five hours a day, and graduated valedictorian—and then to a summer program at Juilliard, all with the unwavering aim of getting into the Curtis Institute of Music, in Philadelphia, where admission was terrifically competitive but tuition was free. Her destiny seemed so assured that her parents moved to Philadelphia before she took the Curtis exam. The fact that she was rejected, and believed that this was because of her race, was a source of unending bitterness. It was also a turning point. In the summer of 1954, in need of money, Eunice Waymon took a job playing cocktail piano in an Atlantic City dive—the owner demanded that she also sing—and, hoping to keep the news of this unholy employment from her mother, turned herself into Nina Simone, feeling every right to the anger that Nina Simone displayed forever after.

At times, it seemed that she could outdistance her feelings. In 1961, after a brief marriage to a white hanger-on at the Atlantic City club, she married Stroud, a tough police detective on the Harlem beat whom she initially sized up as "a light-skinned man," "well built," and "very sure of himself." The following year, she gave birth to a daughter, Lisa Celeste, and Stroud left his job to manage Simone's career; they lived in a large house in the leafy Westchester suburb of Mount Vernon, complete with a gardener and a maid. Although she complained of working too hard and touring too much—of being desperately exhausted—her life was not the stuff of the blues. And then, before a concert in early 1967, Stroud found her in her dressing room putting makeup in her hair. She didn't know who he was; she didn't quite know who she was. She later remembered that she had been trying to get her hair to match her skin: "I had visions of laser beams and heaven, with skin—always skin—involved in there somewhere."

The full medical facts of Simone's mental illness became public only after her death, in 2003, thanks to two British

*"Summer's here. Do you want to start talking incessantly about tomatoes or corn?"*

*"I don't know about you guys, but I've had it up to here with the paleo diet."*

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fan-club founders and friends of Simone's, Sylvia Hampton and David Nathan, whose account of the singer's career was aptly titled, after one of Simone's songs, "Nina Simone: Break Down & Let It All Out" (2004). Subsequent biographies—the warmly overdramatizing "Nina Simone," by David Brun-Lambert (2009), and the coolly meticulous "Princess Noire," by Nadine Cohodas (2010)—have filled in terrible details of depression and violence and long-sought but uncertain diagnoses: "bipolar disorder" appears to be the best contemporary explanation. Excerpts from Simone's diaries and letters of the nineteen-sixties, published by Joe Hagan (who got them from Andrew Stroud) in *The Believer*, in 2010, added the news that Simone's personal hell was compounded by regular beatings from Stroud. The marriage dissolved in 1970, but it was many more years before she received any helpful medication.

All the more remarkable, then, the strength that Simone projected through the sixties. As the decade wore on, she began to favor bright African gowns and toweringly braided African hair styles; she became the High Priestess of Soul, and though the title was no more than a record company's P.R. gambit—Aretha Franklin was soon crowned the Queen of Soul—she bore it with conviction. It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that her songs were mostly about civil rights. Stroud, with his eye on the bottom line, was always there to keep her from going too far in that direction. In concert, she even pulled back on "Mississippi Goddam," singing "We're all gonna die, and die like flies" in place of the gleefully threatening "You're all gonna die . . ." Although she did record the classic anti-lynching ballad "Strange Fruit," in 1965, and she could give the most unexpected songs an edge of racial protest (listen to her harrowing version of the Brecht-Weill "Pirate Jenny"), she had a vast and often surprising musical appetite. By the late sixties, she was so afraid of falling behind the times that she expanded her repertory to include Bob Dylan, Leonard Bernstein, and, covering all bases, the Bee Gees. One of her biggest hits of the era was the joyously innocuous "Ain't Got No—I Got Life," from the musical "Hair"—which, in her hands, became a classic freedom song.

But womanly strength was in everything she sang: in the cavernous depths of her voice—some people think Simone sounds like a man—in her intensity, her drama, her determination. It's there in the crazy love song "I Put a Spell on You," in which she recasts the crippling needs of love ("Because you're *mine!*") into an undeniable command. It's there in the ten-minute gospel tour de force "Sinnerman," when she cries out "Power!" like a Southern preacher and her musicians shout back "Power to the Lord!," and especially when she takes the disapproving voice of the Lord upon herself: "Where were you, when you oughta been praying?" If you'd never before thought of the Lord as a black woman, you did now.

The civil-rights songs were nevertheless what she called "the important ones." And the movement is where she gained her strength. It's also where her private anger took on public dimensions, in the years when patience gave way entirely and the anger in many black communities could no longer be tamped down. Onstage in Detroit, on August 13, 1967—two weeks after a five-day riot had left forty-three people dead, hundreds injured, and the city in ruins—Simone, singing "Just in Time," added a message to the crowd: "Detroit, you did it. . . . I love you, Detroit—you did it!" She was met with roars of approval, which one Detroit critic said he presumed had come from "the arsonists, looters and snipers in the audience." Another critic, however, wrote that her show let white people know what they had to learn, and learn fast. Was she the voice of national tragedy or of the next American revolution?

And then King was shot, on April 4, 1968. Sections of Washington, Chicago, Baltimore, and more than a hundred smaller cities went berserk. Despite her rhetoric, Simone was profoundly shaken, and her views of what might be accomplished in this country only grew more bleak. At an outdoor concert in Harlem, the following summer—it's available on YouTube—she went for broke.

Majestically bedecked *à l'africaine*, she opened with "Four Women," singing now before a crowd where an Afro was the norm. After several other stirring, politically focussed songs—"Revolution," "Backlash Blues"—she closed with something so new that she had not had time to learn it, a poem by David Nelson, who was then part of a group called the Last Poets and is now among the revered begetters of rap. She read the words from a sheet of paper, moving across the stage and repeatedly exhorting the crowd to answer the question "Are you ready, black people? . . . Are you ready to do what is necessary?" The crowd responded to this rather vague injunction with a mild cheer, prompted by the bongos behind her and the demand in her voice. And then: "Are you ready to kill, if necessary?" Now a

bigger, if somewhat incongruous, cheer rose from the smiling crowd filled with little kids dancing to the rhythm on a sunny afternoon. It had been five years since the Harlem riot of 1964, the granddaddy of sixties riots; New York had largely escaped the ruinations of both 1967 and 1968. "Are you ready to smash white things, to burn buildings, are you ready?" she cried. "Are you ready to build black things?"

Despite her best efforts, Simone failed to incite a riot in Harlem that day in 1969. The crowd received the poem as it had received her songs: with noisy affirmation, but merely as part of a performance. People applauded and went on their way. There are many possible reasons: no brutal incident of the kind that frequently set off riots, massive weariness, the knowledge of people elsewhere trapped in riot-devastated cities, maybe even hope. Simone had her unlikeliest hit that year with a simple hymn of promise, "To Be Young, Gifted and Black," based on the title of a play that had been put together from Lorraine Hansberry's uncollected writings. Hansberry, who died in 1965, had used the phrase in a speech to a group of prize-winning black students, and Simone asked a fellow-musician, Weldon Irvine, to come up with lyrics that "will make black children all over the world feel good about themselves forever." Indeed, it is a children's song (or it was, until Aretha took it over). Simone's most moving performance may have been on "Sesame Street," where she sat on the set's tenement steps wearing an African gown and lip-synched her recording to four enchanting if slightly mystified black children, who raised their arms in victory toward the end.

It was not a victory she could believe in or a mood she could sustain. By the end of the sixties, both Simone's career and her marriage were in serious trouble. Pop-rock did not really suit her, and the jazz and folk markets had radically shrunk; the concert stage still assured her income and her stature. And if the collapse of her marriage was in some ways a liberation she was also now without the person who had managed her finances and her schedule, and who had kept her calm before she went onstage (by forbidding her alcohol, among other means), and got her offstage quickly when the calm failed. She was left to govern herself in a world that suddenly had no rules and, just as frightening, was emptied of its larger, steadying purpose. "Andy was gone and the movement had walked out on me too," she wrote, "leaving me like a seduced schoolgirl, lost."

Looking back on the historic protests and legislative victories of the sixties, one may find it easy to assume a course of inevitable if often halting racial progress, yet this was anything but apparent as the decade closed. When, in 1970, James Baldwin set out to write about "the life and death of what we call the Civil Rights movement," its failure seemed to him beyond contention. As for the black leaders who had "walked out" on Simone, they were in cemeteries (Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, King, Fred Hampton), in jail (Huey Newton, Bobby Seale), or in Africa (Stokely Carmichael), or else had "run for cover," as she put it, "in community or academic programmes." White liberals had diverted their efforts to Vietnam; this was now the war being fought on televisions in living rooms every night. According to Simone, "The days when revolution really had seemed possible were gone forever."

She left the country in 1974. Travelling to Liberia with her twelve-year-old daughter, she stayed for two years, during which she performed hardly at all. She left Liberia for Switzerland in order to put her daughter in school there. Eventually, she moved to France, alone. It seems to have been only the recurrent need for money that spurred her to perform again in the United States, although she took great pride in an honorary doctorate that she received from Amherst, in 1977, and insisted ever after on being called "Doctor Nina Simone." Meanwhile, her concerts tended increasingly toward disaster. As she now sang in "Mississippi Goddam," "the whole damn world's made me lose my rest."

The remainder of her life, some twenty-five years, is a tale of escalating misery. At the worst, she was found wandering naked in a hotel corridor brandishing a knife; she set her house in France on fire, and once, also in France, she shot a teen-age boy (in the leg, but that may have been poor aim) in a neighbor's back yard for making too much noise—and for answering her complaints with what she understood as racial insults. Yet the ups of her life could be almost as vertiginous as the downs. In 1987, just a year after she was sent to a hospital in a straitjacket, her charmingly upbeat 1959 recording of "My Baby Just Cares for Me" was chosen by Chanel for its international television ad campaign. Rereleased, the record went gold in France and platinum in England. In 1991, she sold out the Olympia, in Paris, for almost a week.

She toured widely during her final years. In Seattle, in the summer of 2001, she worked a tirade against George W. Bush into "Mississippi Goddam," and encouraged the audience to "go and do something about that man." She was already suffering from breast cancer, but it wasn't the worst illness she had known. She was seen as a relic of the civil-rights era, and on occasion she even led the audience in a wistful sing-along of "We Shall Overcome," although she did not believe her country had overcome nearly enough. Once she became too sick to perform, she did not return to what she called "the United Snakes of America." She died in France, in April, 2003; her ashes were scattered in several African countries. The most indelible image of her near the end is as a stooped old lady reacting to the enthusiastic cheers that greeted her with a raised, closed-fisted Black Power salute.

Thirty-four years after Simone released "Young, Gifted and Black," Jay Z reused the title for a song that describes the fate of many of those gifted children—"Hear all the screams from the ghetto all the teens ducking metal"—in twenty-first-century America. The rap connection with Simone is hardly surprising, since rap is where black anger now openly resides. Simone disliked the rap she knew, however, in part for displacing so much anger onto women—or, as she put it, for "letting people believe that women are second class, and calling them bitches and stuff like that." Back in 1996, Lauryn Hill rapped an anything-you-can-do retort to a male counterpart, "So while you imitatin' Al Capone/I be Nina Simone/And defecatin' on your microphone," but no one has really taken up the challenge of Simone's example. There was a minor uproar last year over Kanye West's sampling of phrases from Simone's

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recording of "Strange Fruit" (with her voice speeded up to an unrecognizable tinniness) in "Blood on the Leaves," in which Simone's evocation of lynched black bodies is juxtaposed with West's personal concerns about "second string bitches," cocaine, and the cost of paying off a baby mama versus a new Mercedes. Some people have seen a social statement here, but one can't help recalling Simone's broader reaction to rap: "Hell, Martin and Malcolm would turn in their graves if they heard some of this crazy shit."

As for jazz, Simone was largely excluded from the history books for decades. Will Friedwald's seminal "Jazz Singing," of 1990, mentioned her only in passing, as "off-putting and uncommunicative" and as the center of a cult "that only her faithful understand." But Simone's eclecticism has slowly widened the very definition of jazz singing. And, ever since Presidential candidate Obama listed her version of "Sinnerman" as one of his ten favorite songs of all time, in 2008, the cult has gone mainstream. There's now a burgeoning field of what may be called Simone studies—Ruth Feldstein's "How It Feels to Be Free" and Richard Elliott's "Nina Simone" offer two highly intelligent examples—and Friedwald's even more authoritative volume of 2010, "A Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers," includes a lengthy entry on Simone that pronounces her "more important than anyone" in her influence on twenty-first-century jazz singing.

Last year, two Broadway shows depicted Simone as an inspiration for a couple of unexpected figures: in "A Night with Janis Joplin," she helped to provide her white soul sister with the gift of fire, and, even stranger, in the crude but enthusiastic "Soul Doctor"—which reopens Off Broadway this winter—she was the force behind the "rock-and-roll rabbi" Shlomo Carlebach. Nutty as it seemed onstage, Simone's acquaintance with the rabbi appears to have some basis in fact, and helps to explain the Hebrew songs she performed at the Village Gate (where he also performed) in the early sixties. While it may be a show-biz exaggeration to suggest that the rabbi and the jazz singer had an affair—the show featured an Act I curtain clinch that, on the night I saw it, had its largely Orthodox audience literally gasping—the point was the universality of Simone's message about persecution, the search for justice, and the power of music.

Back in 1979, at a concert in Philadelphia, Simone followed a performance of "Four Women" by scolding the black women in the audience about their changes in style: "You used to be talking about being natural and wearing natural hair styles. Now you're straightening your hair, rouging your cheeks and dressing out of *Vogue*." In 2009, the comedian Chris Rock made a documentary titled "Good Hair" because, he explained, his young daughter had come to him with the question "Daddy, how come I don't have good hair?" For an African-American child, nothing had changed since Harry Belafonte's mother's advice, more than half a century earlier. (According to one contented businessman in Rock's film, African-Americans—twelve per cent of the population—buy eighty per cent of the hair products in this country.) As for skin tone, the cosmetic companies have been expanding their range ever since Iman established a line of darker foundations, in 1994, although in March, 2014, a former beauty director of *Essence*, Aretha Busby, complained to the *Times*, "The companies tend to stop at Kerry Washington. I'd love to see brands go two or three shades darker."

The question of skin tone and hair and their meaning for African-American women exploded on the Internet with the announcement of the casting of Saldana in the Hollywood bio-pic about Simone. When the idea for such a film was initially floated, in the early nineties, Simone herself gave the nod to being played by Whoopi Goldberg. When, in 2010, the present film was announced in the *Hollywood Reporter*, Mary J. Blige—the reigning Queen of Hip-Hop Soul—was announced for the lead. Once Blige was replaced with Saldana, however, a woman whose skin tone is more than two or three shades lighter than Simone's, the cries for boycotting the film on the basis of misrepresentation—on the basis of insult—were instantaneous. Why not cast Viola Davis? Or Jennifer Hudson? Production photographs showing Saldana on the set with an artificially broadened nose, an Afro wig, and—inevitably, but most unfortunately—dark makeup that is all too easily confoundable with blackface rendered any hope of calm discussion futile. It's been suggested that the filmmakers might

as well have cast Tyler Perry in full "Madea" drag.

Simone's daughter has come out against the film because its story focusses on an invented love affair as much as for the casting of Saldana, although she is quick to point out how much her mother's appearance shaped her life. (Lisa once told an interviewer that her mother would sometimes "traumatize" her because she is light-skinned—"and I'd remind her that she had chosen my father, I didn't.") The fight over the film ultimately extended to a lawsuit filed by the director, Cynthia Mort, against the British production company, Ealing Studios Enterprises, on the very eve of the screening at Cannes. Since then, though, the suit has been dismissed, so "Nina" may yet show up in a theatre near you. And Saldana may give a compelling performance—may well prove that she can play not only women who are sci-fi blue (as in "Avatar") or green (as in "Guardians of the Galaxy") but real-life black. Still, there is no escaping the fact that her casting represents exactly the sort of prejudice that Simone was always up against. "I was never on the cover of *Ebony* or *Jet*," Simone told an interviewer, in 1980. "They want white-looking women like Diana Ross—light and bright." Or, as Marc Lamont Hill writes in *Ebony* today, "There is no greater evidence of how tragic things are for dark-skinned women in Hollywood than the fact that they can't even get hired to play dark-skinned women." Well beyond Hollywood, these outworn habits of taste reverberate down the generations, infecting all of us.

Simone's favorite performer in her later years was Michael Jackson. She brought cassettes of his albums with her everywhere, and recalled having met him on a plane when he was a little boy, and telling him, "Don't let them change you. You're black and you're beautiful." She anguished over his evident failure to believe what she'd said: the facial surgeries, the mysterious lightening of his skin, the fatality of believing, instead, what the culture had told him, and wanting to be white. Simone appeared onstage with him just once, amid a huge cast of performers gathered for Nelson Mandela's eightieth birthday, in Johannesburg, in the summer of 1998. She was sixty-five years old, and photographs of the event show her standing between Mandela and Jackson, overweight yet glamorously done up, her hair piled in braids and her strapless white blouse a contrast to the African costumes of the chorus all around. But she was also very frail. In one photograph, Jackson—in his glittering trademark military-style jacket, hat, and shades—holds her left hand in both his hands, in a gesture of affection. But in another shot he has put one steadying arm around her, and she is grasping his hand for support. Few people seem aware of what is happening. The stage remains a swirl of laughter and song, a joyous African celebration. And at its center the two Americans stand with hands clasped tight—one hand notably dark, the other notably fair—as though trying to help each other along a hard and endless road. ♦


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LETTER FROM MOSCOW

# WATCHING THE ECLIPSE

*Ambassador Michael McFaul was there when the promise of democracy came to Russia—and when it began to fade.*

BY DAVID REMNICK

In January, 2012, Michael McFaul, a tenured political scientist from Stanford and President Obama's chief adviser on Russia through the first term, arrived in Moscow with his wife and two sons to begin work as the United States Ambassador. In Palo Alto and Washington, D.C., the McFauls had lived in modest houses. In Moscow they took up residence at Spaso House, a vast neoclassical mansion that was built by one of the wealthiest industrialists in imperial Russia. Spaso features a vaulted formal dining room and a chandeliered ballroom, where William C. Bullitt, the U.S. Ambassador in the thirties, used to throw parties complete with trained seals serving trays of champagne and, on one memorable occasion, a menagerie of white roosters, free-flying finches, grumpy mountain goats, and a rambunctious bear. One guest, Mikhail Bulgakov, wrote about the bash in his novel "The Master and Margarita." Another, Karl Radek, a co-author of the 1936 Soviet constitution, got the bear drunk. The bear might have survived the decade. Radek, who fell out with Stalin, did not.

On his first night in Spaso, McFaul wearily climbed the stairs, from the stately rooms on the ground floor to the living quarters on the second, and he noticed along the way a wall filled with black-and-white photographs of his predecessors, including the "wise men" of mid-century: W. Averell Harriman, Charles (Chip) Bohlen, George F. Kennan. Every diplomat and scholar who thinks about Russia thinks about Kennan—his mastery of the language, his chilly, and chilling, brand of élitism, and, particularly, his influence on the strategic posture of the West from the end of the Second World War until the collapse of the Soviet imperium. Kennan, who lived to be a hundred and one, had been Ambassador for only four months when, in September of 1952, Stalin declared him persona non grata and ordered him out of the country.

McFaul had no reason to expect that sort of hostility from the Russian President, Dmitri Medvedev. As a policy expert who served on Obama's National Security Council, McFaul was a principal architect of the "reset," a kind of neo-détente with Moscow. When, in September, 2011, Obama nominated McFaul to be his envoy to Moscow, relations with the Kremlin were hardly amorous, but a businesslike atmosphere usually prevailed. Obama and Medvedev did solid work on arms control, antiterrorism efforts, Iran's nuclear program, and the war in Afghanistan. To the bitter outrage of Vladimir Putin, Medvedev's predecessor and patron, Medvedev even agreed to abstain from, rather than veto, a U.N. Security Council resolution approving NATO air strikes in Libya. But a week after McFaul's official appointment was announced Putin declared that he would return from the shadows and run for President again in March, 2012. This high-handed "castling" maneuver soured spirits in Moscow, sparking a series of demonstrations in Bolotnaya Square and elsewhere in downtown Moscow. The protesters' slogan was "Russia Without Putin."

In the three months between McFaul's appointment and his arrival in Moscow, a great deal changed. Putin, feeling betrayed by both the urban middle classes and the West, made it plain that he would go on the offensive against any sign of foreign interference, real or imagined. A raw and resentful anti-Americanism, unknown since the seventies, suffused Kremlin policy and the state-run airwaves.

As a new Ambassador, McFaul was hardly ignorant of the chill, but he launched into his work with a characteristic earnestness. "Started with a bang," he wrote in his official blog. During the next two years, McFaul would be America's primary witness to the rise of an even harsher form of Putinism—and, often enough, he would be its unwitting target.

William Burns, a former U.S. Ambassador to Russia and then a deputy to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, had, coincidentally, come to Moscow that January, and together McFaul and Burns visited a range of Kremlin officials. McFaul also presented his diplomatic credentials to the Russian Foreign Ministry. The next day, they were scheduled to meet at the U.S. Embassy with some of the best-known figures in human-rights circles and leaders of the opposition. When McFaul saw the schedule, he knew it was part of a traditional "dual-track" diplomacy—officials first, then the opposition—but he was also aware of Putin's darkening mood. Putin had publicly accused Hillary Clinton of giving "the signal" that sparked the Bolotnaya demonstrations. He was also familiar with McFaul's biography—his long-standing relationships with liberal activists, the shelf of books and articles he'd published on democratization.

McFaul was nervous about these meetings, but, he said, "I was the democracy guy, so we went forward." The visitors to the Embassy included some of Putin's fiercest critics, and, after their session with McFaul and Burns, representatives of state television lobbed accusatory questions at them as if they had just received marching orders for an act of high treason.

That night, Channel One, the biggest television station in Russia, turned its rhetorical howitzer on the new Ambassador. Mikhail Leontiev, an acid-tongued conservative who hosts a show called "Odnako" ("However"), declared that McFaul was an expert not on Russia but on "pure democracy promotion." In the most withering tone he could summon, Leontiev said that McFaul had worked for American N.G.O.s backed

*At first, Putin had little interest in ideology. Then a vision emerged of a Eurasian Russian imperium, fending off Western decay.*

by American intelligence; he had palled around with anti-Kremlin activists like the "Internet Führer," Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption crusader who had, damningly, spent some time at Yale. (The listener was meant to interpret "some time at Yale" as roughly "some time inside the incubator of Russophobic conspiracy.") Leontiev also noted that McFaul had written a book about the Orange Revolution, in Ukraine, and another called "Russia's Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin."

"Has Mr. McFaul arrived in Russia to work in his specialty?" Leontiev said. "That is, to *finish* the revolution?"

Like any effective propagandist, Leontiev had artfully woven the true, the half true, and the preposterous into a fabric of lurid colors. When I asked him about the broadcast recently, he smiled and shrugged: "What can I say? It was very convenient. McFaul made himself vulnerable and we exploited that."

Andranik Migranyan, a Putin loyalist who directs a Russian-financed institute in New York, told me, "You can't come and start your ambassadorship by seeing the radical opposition." He compared it to a Soviet diplomat coming to Washington heading straight for "the Black Panthers or the Weathermen."

At first, McFaul took the attack personally, not yet realizing that he was, for Putin and official Moscow, a mere foil. "The shit that Leontiev put out on me—this haunted me for the rest of my time in Russia. I was made out to be the guy who came to Moscow to foment revolution," McFaul told me. "Meanwhile, I was feeling really bad about this fiasco, and in D.C. the mid-level people"—in the Administration—"were saying, Why is McFaul doing this? It was affirmation of why you don't send people like McFaul to Moscow. Like I was the one screwing up the U.S.-Russia relationship."

A generation ago, in 1990, as the Soviet Union was lurching toward implosion—with the economy cratering, the Communist Party unravelling, the republics rebelling, the K.G.B. plotting its revenge—McFaul, a graduate student in his mid-twenties, kept showing up in Moscow's "pro-democracy" circles, hanging out, asking questions, offering assistance and advice. McFaul was a sunny, eager guy, with a wide-open expression, shaggy blond hair, effortful Russian, and an irrepressible curiosity. He had grown up rough in a mining town in Montana. His mother was a secretary, his father a saxophone player in a country-and-Western band. In Moscow, operating in a culture steeped in fatalism and irony, McFaul was the most optimistic, least ironical young man you'd ever want to meet. He handed out in-

structional manuals translated into Russian with titles like "How to Run for Office." He was determined to help establish liberal values and institutions—civil society, free speech, democratic norms—in a land that, for a thousand years, had known only absolutism, empire, and the knout. "That's me," he says even now. "Mr. Anti-Cynicism. Mr. It Will All Work Out."

McFaul was ostensibly in Moscow to write a doctoral dissertation on Soviet-African relations. He was, in truth, bored with the quantitative trends in his field of political science—the stark modellings, ziggy graphs, and game theory that seemed so abstract when all around him was the nerve-racked excitement of revolt, the intrigue of political debate and awakening in meeting halls that stank of cheap cigarettes and wet wool. Moscow at that time was a pageant, irresistible to anyone with even a trace of democratic idealism and fellow feeling for the Russians. The sense of historical drama was unmistakable. "Like being in a movie," McFaul recalled.

The Eastern and Central Europeans, with their simpler narrative of liberation from Soviet occupation, had already sprung the lock of history—or so it seemed—and now the capital of empire was up for grabs. McFaul was addicted to the excitements of revolution. You kept seeing him at demonstrations on Manezh Square or at Luzhniki Stadium, alongside young activists aligned with groups like Democratic Russia and Memorial; there he was at public forums and meetings where the fevered talk was all about how Mikhail Gorbachev was finished, Boris Yeltsin was the answer, and it was only a matter of time before some form of counterattack would come from the reactionary elements inside the secret services and the Communist Party, the gray, angry men, who saw their footing in the world—their power, their salaries and privileges—slipping away.

When McFaul took the time to read, it was rarely for his dissertation. He lived in a miserable hotel room and pored over Crane Brinton's study of the cycles of rebellion and reaction in "The Anatomy of Revolution," Trotsky's account of the Bolshevik Revolution, and the work of the "transitologists" Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, who explored the process by which one political system transforms into another—anything that might feed his understanding of what he was seeing on the streets and what he was hearing in his interviews with the political actors of Moscow: the radicals, the reactionaries, the manifesto drafters.

McFaul had first visited the Soviet Union in 1983, when he was an undergraduate at Stanford. The Palo Alto campus, with its gleam of wealth, had pushed him to the political left. His summer at Leningrad State University was his first time abroad. He was at ease there. After classes, he met with dissidents and consorted with the *fartsovshchiki*, the young hustlers of bluejeans and hard currency. There are people who encounter Russia and see nothing but the merciless weather, the frowns, the complicated language that, in casual encounters, they hear as rudeness, even menace; and there are those who are entranced by the literature and the music and the talk—the endless talk about eternal matters. McFaul was attuned to this particular kind of Russian romance. But his unusual immersion in politics made him stand out from his fellow-students. He believed, without reservation, that he could take part in the transformation of the world.

That was his habit of mind, a peculiarly American one. He was an idealist, at once ambitious and determinedly naïve. When McFaul was applying for a Rhodes Scholarship, his interviewer took note that McFaul, along with an

intelligent and rambunctious classmate named Susan Rice, had helped lead the anti-apartheid movement on the Stanford campus. They occupied a building, campaigned for divestment. Among McFaul's academic interests was the range of liberation movements in post-colonial Africa: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. How did McFaul reconcile his desire to study at Oxford on a Rhodes, the interviewer inquired, with the fact that its benefactor, Cecil Rhodes, had been a pillar of white supremacy? What would he do with such "blood money"?

"I will use it to bring down the regime," McFaul said. In the event, both he and Rice won the blood money and went to Oxford.

Over the years, as he developed as a scholar, McFaul made frequent trips to Moscow, and, because of his refusal to stay in the library, some Russian officials grew convinced that he was working for Western intelligence, doing what he could to hasten the fall of the Kremlin's authority. They took his openhearted activism to be a cover for cunning.

In 1991, McFaul was in St. Petersburg, trying to organize a seminar on local government. He found himself doing business with a man from the mayor's office named Igor Sechin. He and Sechin took an immediate liking to each other. It turned out that, like McFaul, Sechin was interested in Mozambique. They both spoke Portuguese. Sechin never actually said that his familiarity with matters Mozambican came from having been a young Soviet intelligence operative in Maputo, or that he still was a K.G.B. officer, but McFaul knew the score. What he discovered, as they talked, was that Sechin assumed that McFaul, too, was an intelligence agent.

It was an encounter with a certain historical freight: a generation later, when McFaul became Obama's Ambassador to Russia, Sechin became the president of Rosneft, Russia's state-owned, hugely profitable energy conglomerate. He would also be the most important counsellor to the same man he was working for way back in 1991: a career intelligence officer and deputy mayor named Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin.

On the day McFaul was preparing to go home, he went to see his academic supervisor in Moscow, Apollon Davidson. He thanked Davidson and said he'd had a fantastic time and was hoping to return in a few months.

"You are *never* coming back," Davidson said.

McFaul was shocked. There was a taxi outside idling, waiting to take him to the airport.

"You came here to do one project," Davidson said, "and you did a lot of *other* things—and it isn't going to happen again."

"There is a file on me," McFaul said. A couple of decades ago, a Russian friend from perestroika days who is "still in politics" told him, "I just read something disturbing about you that says you are C.I.A." McFaul denied it, but he could see that his friend was impressed. The file, after all, had been marked "Sovershenno Sekretno"—"Top Secret."

"In government, I've seen the power of getting a file marked 'Top Secret,'" McFaul said.

In 1996, President Yeltsin was running for reëlection against Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of what was left of the Communist Party. After a few years in office, Yeltsin had soiled his reputation as a reforming democrat. There was his strategy of brutal overkill in Chechnya and the way he empowered, under the banner of privatization, a small circle of billionaire oligarchs to soak up Russia's resources and help run the country. "Democracy" was roundly known as *dermokratiya*—"shitocracy." Yeltsin's approval numbers plunged to the single digits. For months, it seemed entirely possible that Zyuganov, who attacked the injustices of the Yeltsin regime in favor of the old ideology, could win. McFaul, who had established an outpost of the Carnegie Center in Moscow, had attracted attention in Yeltsin's circles by writing an article about how Yeltsin could win.

Yeltsin was ailing, alcoholic, and often out of sight. He left his campaign largely to shadowy figures like his bodyguard, Aleksandr Korzhakov. In January, McFaul got a call from "a guy—let's call him Igor—one of Korzhakov's guys." They met at the President Hotel, Yeltsin's campaign headquarters. "The people I knew were on the ninth floor," McFaul said to me. "He was on the tenth: metal detectors, guys with guns. And he told me, 'I am intelligence. I work for Korzhakov. I am in charge of the analytic center.'"

Later that year, Igor asked to meet with McFaul again. "We need to have a quiet conversation about the elections," Igor said. "Let's go out to Korzhakov's dacha."

McFaul was nervous, but an intermediary from Yeltsin's team told him, "You are better off going than not going." He called his wife, who was in Palo Alto, and told her, "If I am not back by the end of the day, tell the Embassy."

McFaul met his contact at the Kremlin and got in his official car, the standard

black Volga sedan. They reached the dacha, one of Stalin's old country residences. "The Chechen war was going hot and heavy, so there was lots of security and guys with guns," McFaul recalled.

Yeltsin's people engaged McFaul in a long discussion about the elections. As the conversation developed, McFaul realized that they were implying two things: that he was a C.I.A. agent and that the Yeltsin forces might postpone the elections. What they wanted from Washington, they made clear, was "coöperation." If the election was postponed, they said, they wanted Washington to "hold your nose and support us."

Finally, McFaul broke in and said, "Hey, I'm just an untenured assistant professor at Stanford."

Igor replied, "Stop! I know who you are! I wouldn't have brought you here if I didn't."

The experience, McFaul said, "freaked me out." He told the Embassy about it.

As the election approached, Yeltsin fired Korzhakov and relied on the largesse, the media outlets, and the strategic advice of the tight circle of oligarchs, who had met secretly in Davos and decided that they could not afford to lose their patron.

On Election Day, "the good guys won," as McFaul puts it. Yeltsin prevailed. McFaul's book on the subject, "Russia's 1996 Presidential Election: The End of Polarized Politics," is not only dull; it is a whitewash, far too cursory about the shabby nature of the election. When I conveyed that to McFaul, he did not dispute the point, instead saying that the book was "an illustration of the tension between being an advocate and an analyst at the same time." McFaul said that his academic friends thought the best outcome would have been a fair election; his friends in Russian political circles thought a Zyuganov victory would be a catastrophe, morally worse than a rigged ballot. "I was tormented about that," he said.

McFaul has written and edited many books on Russia and political transition—some of them useful, some pedestrian, none enduring. From the start, his idealism and ambition lured him away from the library and toward politics and the powerful. He began visiting Washington to talk periodically with members of the Bush Administration, including Bush and Cheney. The Administration's neoconservatism and McFaul's liberal interventionism overlapped in the desire to press the "democracy agenda" in the former states of the Soviet Union. In 2004, McFaul counselled the Edwards and the Kerry campaigns.

*"They know me here."*

In late 2006, McFaul got a call from Anthony Lake, who had been the national-security adviser in the Clinton Administration. Lake said that he was putting together a foreign-policy advisory team for "the next President of the United States"—Barack Obama. McFaul told Lake that he was already committed. He was planning to work with Edwards again.

A half hour later, Susan Rice, his old friend from Stanford and Oxford, called him.

"I am part of this thing, too, so get your shit together and join!" she crooned.

"That's Susan's personality, and so I said, 'Yes! Of course!' The stakes for me were low. Susan had had to defect from the Clintons, and they were tough on her, with all kinds of nasty-grams about people who aren't loyal."

Rice had already put in place a kind of shadow National Security Council for Democrats, with various foreign-policy mavens charged with heading up regional directorates. The group was later dubbed the Phoenix Initiative, a name intended to send the message that, in the wake of the Iraq War and the Bush Administration's Vulcans, American foreign policy, under a Democratic President, would, like the mythical bird, rise from the ashes. Rice declared that the group's thinking had broken free of the traditional clash in American foreign-policy thinking between realist power politics and liberal idealism. The emphasis was less on big-power politics than on problems like climate change and terrorism, issues that emphasized international institutions and coöperation. Around the same time, Rice and Lake also set up an advisory board for their candidate. McFaul led the division dedicated to the former Soviet Union.

The 2008 Presidential-election contest between Obama and John McCain was mainly about domestic issues. Russia was barely on the agenda—until the summer of 2008, when Russia and Georgia went to war. "McCain wanted more conflict, and we were the ones pulling back," McFaul said. "That was the whole analytic frame of the campaign. . . . We were on defense." McFaul was among those who pressed Obama to toughen his language and prevailed.

The episode made an impression. Benjamin Rhodes, a close adviser to

## BOP AFTER HIP OP

For years, I wrote as if without stop—
like lines of spore in a dish, the letters of the
alphabet would come out of me,
like tiny antlers out of my head,
like branches, twigs, stems of a tree,
it seemed to be who I was, the thorny
singing. But when the elkhorn
joint of my upper femur was removed
from inside me song went quiet in me,
as if my hair stopped growing—no more
tendrils of thought out into the air,
down onto the page. Who had I thought
I was, that I could write what I wanted
about my family? Now I feel
as if I have lost my court case
against my mother and father, and the great
forked tongue of my thighbone
has been taken in forfeit. I always wanted
my life to be a comedy,
now I feel in the grip of something
inexorable. But I remember a seed,
a dandelion sphere, which I blew on once, and its
silvery runes poured forward. It's as if—
until now—I thought that I would never
fade, or fail, or fall silent, or die.
I trusted that I had it coming to me,
without cease, the firework of language.
Futhorc! Let me cry out, again!
Or even just hum, without meaning,
maybe to the tune of "Motherless Child,"
mm *mm*, *mm mm*, mm mm *mm mm mm mm*,
and so she comes in, self-pity—self-compassion,
my darling, my constant one, the scarf dancer.

—*Sharon Olds*

Obama on foreign policy, said that McFaul's scholarly background provided "context" that the President appreciated during the campaign and throughout the first term. They talked about everything from just-war theory to questions of development, and yet, McFaul told me, on the "big debate" over realism versus internationalism, he could never quite figure out Obama. "For Barack Obama, it is essential to end those two wars"—Iraq and Afghanistan—"and this retrenchment is in the national interest," he said. "What I never knew at the time is where he came down on the question of hard interest versus values."

During one argument among aides in the White House, McFaul took the position that nations need not wait for the development of a middle class before building democratic institutions. As McFaul recalled, "Somebody said, 'That's interesting, but that's not what the President thinks.' And I said, 'That's interesting, but if that is what he thinks he is wrong.' It was a jarring moment, and I thought I might even get fired." He recalled arguing with Tom Donilon, the national-security adviser, about the issue. "Donilon would tell me, Obama is not really interested in that stuff. He's *just* a realist." And yet McFaul, who is not shy about suggesting his own influence, pointed out that Obama gave speeches in Cairo, Moscow, and Accra, in 2009, "making my arguments about why democracy is a good thing. . . . Those speeches made me more optimistic, after all those colleagues telling me he is just a realist."

"Obama has multiple interests he is thinking about," McFaul went on. "He has idealist impulses that are real, and then impulses about concerns about unintended consequences of idealism. We were in the Roosevelt Room during the Egypt crisis, and I asked, 'What do you think?' He said, 'What I *want* is for this to happen quickly and the Google guy to become President. What I *think* is that this will be a long-drawn-out process.'"

Obama's advisers and the Washington policy establishment have all spent countless hours trying to square the President's admiration of George H.W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft—classic realists—with his appointments of interventionists like McFaul, Rice, and Samantha Power. In the end, one leading Russia expert, who has worked for two Administrations, told me, "I think Obama is basically a realist—but he feels bad about it."

In his first two terms in office, from 2000 to 2008, Vladimir Putin made his priority the reëstablishment of a strong state. He disempowered disloyal regional governors, crushed the oligarchs who did not heed his insistence that they stay out of politics, and obliterated the leadership of the separatist uprising in Chechnya. He took complete control of the main television channels and neutered any opposition political parties. He established postmodern state symbols and an anthem that combined features of the imperial and Communist past. But he was not, foremost, an ideologue. Kleptocracies rarely value theoretical tracts. They value numbered accounts. They value the stability of their own arrangements.

In the heart of the Soviet era, Kremlin leaders, including Lenin and Stalin, wrote scholastic treatises dictating the ideological course for many aspects of life. At the heart of the Communist Party Central Committee was the department of ideology, which laid down the law on everything from the permissible interpretation of history to the dissidents and artists who had to be suppressed, imprisoned, or exiled. By the late Soviet period, though, K.G.B. officers

like Putin were nearly as dismissive of Communist ideology as the dissidents were. "The Chekists in his time laughed at official Soviet ideology," Gleb Pavlovsky, a former adviser to Putin, told me. "They thought it was a joke." Putin, in 1999, admitted that Communism had been a "blind alley, far away from the mainstream of civilization."

Buoyed by the sharp rise in energy prices, Putin was able to do what Yeltsin had not: he won enormous popular support by paying salaries and pensions, eliminating budget deficits, and creating a growing urban middle class. It was hardly a secret that Putin had also created his own oligarchy, with old Leningrad pals and colleagues from the security forces now running, and robbing, the state's vast energy enterprises. This almost unimaginably corrupt set of arrangements, which came to be known as Kremlin, Inc., outraged nearly everyone, but the relative atmosphere of stability, in which tens of millions of Russians enjoyed a sense of economic well-being and private liberty, provided Putin with a kind of authoritarian legitimacy.

This relative prosperity and personal freedom was, in fact, unprecedented. For the first time, millions of Russians took vacations abroad, got mortgages, bought foreign cars, remodelled their kitchens, acquired iPhones. The state was indifferent to the way people lived—what they read, where they worshipped, whom they shared a bed with. A sitcom called "Nasha Rasha" featured a gay factory worker in the Urals. "For the States or Sweden, it would have been politically incorrect," Alexander Baunov, a columnist for the Web site slon.ru, told me. "But for Russia it was a real improvement! No one killed him!" The state media were under close watch by the authorities, and there were occasional arrests to show where the limits were, but there was no return to Sovietism. Vladislav Surkov, Putin's deputy chief of staff, called the system "sovereign" democracy.

Nor was Putin aggressively anti-American in his first years in power. He craved membership in the world economy and its institutions. He was the first foreign leader to telephone George W. Bush on 9/11 and offer assistance in Afghanistan. He abhorred the influence of foreign N.G.O.s, thinking that they undermined Russian interests, but he wanted membership in the global club. He even talked about Russia joining NATO. "Russia is part of the European culture," he told the BBC, in 2000. "And I cannot imagine my own country in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilized world. So it is hard for me to visualize NATO as an enemy." The spirit of relative amity did not last.

In 2009, after Putin had ceded the Presidency to Medvedev, he hosted Obama at his country residence and lectured the U.S. President on the history of American deceptions. It was an hour before Obama managed more than "hello." McFaul, who was at that meeting, said, "It was grossly inaccurate, but that is his theory of the world." Putin demanded that the U.S. cede to him the former Soviet republics—Ukraine above all—as a Russian sphere of influence. He felt that the United States had, in the glow of post-Cold War triumphalism, pushed Russia around, exploiting its weakness to ignore Yeltsin's protests and bomb Belgrade and Kosovo. Gorbachev had always said that the U.S. had promised that, in exchange for his acquiescence to the reunification of Germany, NATO would not expand to the east. In 2004, NATO absorbed seven new countries—Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and the three Baltic states, which Putin took as a particular offense and a geopolitical threat. And then, later that year, came the Orange Revolution, in Ukraine, which Putin saw as a Western project and a foreshadowing of an assault on him.

When, after the Medvedev interregnum, Putin returned to power, in 2012, he perceived the anti-Kremlin protests as an echo of Kiev. The demonstrators had no clear ideology, no leaders. They did not extend much beyond the urban creative and office classes. They had neither the coherence nor the staying power of the protesters on other squares—Taksim, Tahrir, Maidan, Wenceslas. All the same, Putin could not countenance them. What he loathes, his former aide Gleb Pavlovsky told me, is spontaneity in politics. "Putin is anti-revolutionary to his core," he said. "What happened in Kiev"—on Maidan, in 2014—"was for him absolutely disgusting."

An avid reader about tsarist Russia, Putin was forming a more coherent view of history and his place within it. More and more, he identified personally with the destiny of Russia. Even if he was not a genuine ideologue, he became an opportunistic one, quoting Ivan Ilyin, Konstantin Leontiev, Nikolai Berdyayev, and other conservative philosophers to give his own pronouncements a sense of continuity. One of his favorite politicians in imperial Russia was Pyotr Stolypin, the Prime Minister under Nicholas II. "We do not need great upheavals," Putin said, paraphrasing Stolypin. "We need a great Russia." Stolypin had also said, "Give the state twenty years and you will not recognize Russia." That was in 1909. Stolypin was assassinated by a revolutionary in Kiev, in 1911. But Putin was determined that his opportunity not be truncated: "Give *me* twenty years," he said, "and you will not recognize Russia."

And so now, instead of nurturing the business and creative classes in the big cities, he turned on them. He vilified them on TV; he weakened them with restrictions, searches, arrests, and selective jail terms. He sided now with the deeply conservative impulses, prejudices, and habits of mind of the Russian majority. "There was an idea to gain the support of the majority, to distinguish it from the minority," Boris Mezhuev, a conservative columnist at *Izvestia* and the editor of the Web site politconservatism.ru, told me. "This was done harshly."

Putin's speeches were full of hostility, lashing out at the West for betraying its promises, for treating Russia like a defeated "vassal" rather than a great country, for an inability to distinguish between right and wrong. He denounced the United States for its behavior in Hiroshima and Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, the Balkans and Libya. He cut off adoptions to America, claiming that "our" babies were being abused by cruel and heedless foreigners. The West was hypocritical, arrogant, self-righteous, and dissolute, according to Putin, so he strengthened his alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church to reëstablish "traditional Russian values." He approved new laws on "non-traditional" sexual practices—the so-called "anti-gay propaganda" laws. When the feminist performance artists and political activists Pussy Riot burst into the Cathedral of

Christ the Savior and performed their "Punk Prayer" ("Throw Putin Out!"), the system knew what to do: Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Church, denounced them for "blasphemy," and the courts, an utterly dependent instrument of the Kremlin, handed down a Draconian sentence. More and more, Putin spoke about "traditional Russian values" and of the uniqueness of Russian "civilization," a civilization that crossed borders.

An ideology, a world view, was taking shape: Putin was now putting Russia at the center of an anti-Western, socially conservative axis—Russia as a bulwark against a menacing America. "Of course, this is a conservative position," he said in a speech last year, "but, speaking in the words of Nikolai Berdyayev, the point of conservatism is not that it prevents movement forward and upward but that it prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state."

One reason that McFaul was surprised by the assault on him is that he thought he was being careful in his ambassadorial role. He never went to demonstrations. He steered clear of Alexei Navalny.

Still, he was hardly a quiet American. Hillary Clinton had called for U.S. diplomats to use social media, and he was especially ardent, maintaining an active presence, in both Russian and English, on Facebook and Twitter. The young liberal intelligentsia loved McFaul for his openness, his availability. Putin's people thought his behavior bewildering, adolescent, and hostile.

When Navalny was on trial for a trumped-up charge of embezzlement, McFaul addressed him directly: "I am watching." And when street reporters stalked McFaul and tried to throw him off his stride, he had a tendency to confront, rather than finesse, his tormentors. Considering McFaul's sometimes shaky grasp of the Russian idiom, this could make him look both volatile and unconfident.

One winter afternoon, he went to call on the human-rights campaigner Lev Ponomaryov, an old friend from the nineties, and he made the mistake of getting into an unruly debate with a "reporter" from NTV, one of the slavishly loyal television channels. He accused the reporter of somehow knowing his whereabouts through illegal surveillance: "Aren't you ashamed?" At one point, he blurted out that his diplomatic rights had been violated, that Russia "turned out to be a *dikaya strana*"—a wild, an uncivilized, country. Later, on Twitter, he said, "I misspoke in bad Russian." He had meant to say that NTV was behaving wildly. "I greatly respect Russia." He told a reporter, "I'm not a professional diplomat." It might not have helped that Navalny, Putin's nemesis, stepped in and tweeted, "I don't understand McFaul. He's got diplomatic immunity. He can just lawfully beat up the NTV journalists. Come on, Mike!"

PETE SOUZA/WHITE HOUSE

*McFaul briefs Obama as N.S.C. senior adviser for Russian affairs, February, 2010.*

Another time, McFaul went on Twitter to announce in Russian that he was headed to "Yoburg" for an event. He intended a slangy way of saying Yekaterinburg. Unfortunately, *yob* is the root of the verb for copulation and his tweet came off as "I am headed to Fucksville."

These awkward moments were gifts for Putin and his circle, who wanted nothing more than to keep McFaul, and, by extension, the Obama Administration, off balance. At one Kremlin reception, where Putin gave a toast in honor of national independence, a Russian friend told McFaul that he should "lay low," and said, "You are really on thin ice."

"What do you mean?" McFaul said.

"I saw Putin and he said, 'What's up

*"All of my work deals with the theme of exclusion."*

• •

with this guy? He seems like a real rabble-rouser.' Putin's message was to be very careful."

At the Embassy, McFaul was writing deeply pessimistic memos to the White House about the direction of Russian-American relations. At night, he would go up the stairs and see Kennan's photograph and wonder if he, too, would get expelled from Moscow.

When Obama was reëlected, in 2012, McFaul was among those who pressed him to visit Moscow, to see what business there was to do with Putin. "So the trains started rolling, we got dates, and our job was to develop a substantive agenda to make this worthwhile," McFaul said. "This was the last push to try to engage on some of these issues, and it all struck out—arms control, missile defense. It got to be where I was having doubts whether the President should come. It looked like chickenshit to me. And I thought that would be a way worse optic than not coming at all."

Then Edward Snowden arrived in Moscow from Hong Kong. The Russians greeted him with barely concealed delight. The summit was off. "And suddenly," McFaul said, "we were in a different world."

The imagery of Putinism, with its ominous warnings against political chaos and outside interference, has long been in evidence. All you have to do is watch television. In 2008, state television broadcast a cheesy docudrama called "The Destruction of an Empire: The Lesson of Byzantium," which was hosted and produced by Tikhon Shevkunov, a Russian Orthodox priest whose church, the Sretensky Monastery, is just down the street from Lubyanka, K.G.B. headquarters. Shevkunov, who has known Putin for many years, is widely rumored to be the Russian President's *dukhovnik*, his spiritual adviser. The film purports to be a history of the Byzantine Empire's fall at the hands of the perfidious West, and not, as scholars have it, to the Ottoman Turks, who conquered Constantinople in 1453. The film is a crude allegory, in which, as the Byzantine historian Sergey Ivanov points out, Emperor Basil is an "obvious prototype of Putin, the wealthy man Eustathios is a hint at the jailed oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, while Bessarion of Nicea is easily associated with another tycoon, Boris Berezovsky," and so on. Shevkunov's film was, in effect, about the need to resist Western influence and to shore up central authority in Russia.

Such phenomena are now common fare. The airwaves are filled with assaults on the treachery of Russian liberals and American manipulations. Dmitri Kiselyov, the head of Russia Today, Putin's newly created information agency, and the host, on Sunday nights, of the TV magazine show "News of the Week," is a masterly, and unapologetic, purveyor of the Kremlin line. With his theatrical hand gestures and brilliantly insinuating intonation, he tells his viewers that Russia is the only country in the world that can turn the U.S. into "radioactive dust," that the anti-gay-propaganda laws are insufficiently strict, and that Ukraine is not a real country but merely "virtual." When I remarked on his delivery, during a recent visit to his offices, Kiselyov was pleased: "Gestures go right to the subconscious without any resistance."

In 1991, Kiselyov made a name for himself by refusing to go on the air and broadcast the Kremlin line about an attack on the Baltic independence movements, but now he is an enthusiastic, and often vicious, voice in defense of the state.

"I preserved the capacity to evolve," he told me. "Back then, we believed we could build a democracy without a state. . . . People said, 'So what, we will just be a collection of little Latvias.' But society began to change, and I am a reflection of that change."

Kiselyov worked as a broadcaster in Kiev during the Orange Revolution and recalls being sickened by the upheaval, which he says was sparked by insidious American interference. "Western journalism, in large part, reproduces values," Kiselyov said. "When I saw the horror in Ukraine and I returned to Russia, I realized we need to *produce* values. . . . Putin didn't make me this way. The Orange Revolution did." As a master of theatrical sarcasm and apocalyptic rhetoric, Kiselyov eclipses Bill O'Reilly, and as a theoretician of conspiracy he shames Glenn Beck. He tells his viewers that, in Ukraine, fascists abound, the U.S. State Department underwrites revolution, and "life is not worth a single kopeck." But he insists, "The presentation of me as a

minister of propaganda is itself a form of propaganda."

Although Kiselyov denies that he gets direct instructions from the Kremlin, he was appointed by Putin and is under no illusions about what is expected of him. When he goes on an anti-Semitic tirade against an opposition journalist or mocks American officials, he is doing what he was hired to do. He is a wily, cynical man, and well briefed. When we met, he quickly wanted me to know that he had somehow seen a film of a speech I'd given a couple of years ago in Moscow. "You mesmerized the public, you made them zombies!" he said, delighted with himself. "They looked at you the way they would a boa constrictor!"

When I noted that Putin's tone had changed, he said, "I agree. Putin now talks more about ideology and about the system of values and the spiritual origins of Russia. In this sense, he, too, is a person of tardy development. He became President unexpectedly. He had no preparation for this role. He had to respond to challenges in the course of things. At first, he had to reconsolidate the state. Now he has inspired a new energy that can be drawn from the national character and the system of values that are rooted in our culture."

Putin, Kiselyov has said on the air, "is comparable among his predecessors in the twentieth century only with Stalin." He meant it as a compliment.

Nearly a quarter century after the fall of empire, Putin has unleashed an ideology of *ressentiment*. It has been chorussed by those who, in 1991, despaired of the loss not of Communist ideology but of imperial greatness, and who, ever since, have lived with what Russians so often refer to as "phantom-limb syndrome": the pain of missing Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Baltic states; the pain of diminishment. They want revenge for their humiliation.

"People in the West twenty-five years ago were surprised by how calmly Russians seemed to absorb the collapse of the Soviet Union," Boris Mezhuev, the conservative columnist, said. "It seemed to them as if we had voted on it! But in no time at all people were told that everything they had worked for was nonsense. They were told that the state they lived in was based on an unfair idea, that ideology was a myth, the West was only a friend—a complete reversal of ideas. The West underestimated the shock. Only now are we facing the consequences."

There is an air of defiance, even a heedlessness, to Putin's behavior. As the conservative commentator Stanislav Belkovsky put it to me, "It was clear that the actions in Crimea would lead to sanctions, capital flight, and a deterioration of Russia's reputation, but nobody supporting the aggression thought twice. The imperial horn has been sounded. But we are a Third World kleptocracy hiding behind imperial symbols. There are no resources for a true imperial revival."

Nevertheless, the voices of neo-imperialism are loud and prominently aired. One evening, I went to see Aleksandr Prokhanov, a far-right newspaper editor and novelist, whom I've known since the late eighties. In the Soviet period, he was known as the Nightingale of the General Staff, a writer commissioned to ride and chronicle the glories of nuclear subs and strategic bombers and to visit the Cold War battlefields of Kampuchea and Angola. He was a panegyrist of Stalin's military-industrial state and the achievements of Sovietism. "No one," he told me, "could describe a nuclear reactor like I could."

Prokhanov loathed Gorbachev and Yeltsin—Gorbachev for his weakness and lack of regard for the Soviet system, Yeltsin for "hollowing out the state." He not only favored the K.G.B.-led putsch against Gorbachev, in 1991; he was the principal author of an ominous manifesto, "A Word to the People," shortly before Gorbachev was put under house arrest at his vacation home in Crimea and tanks rolled into the center of Moscow. He began publishing a newspaper called *Dyen* (the *Day*), which collected the fevered rants of all the forces in opposition to the democrats: imperial Stalinists, Russia-for-Russians nationalists, National Bolsheviks, ugly sorts who traced Russia's troubles to "international Jewry," Masonic conspiracy, George Soros, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Foundation. Somewhere along the line, the paper was relaunched as *Zavtra* (*Tomorrow*).

Prokhanov is now in his seventies. In the Yeltsin era, the "democratic" media rarely invited Prokhanov on the air. These days, the Nightingale sings brightly and nationally; he appears regularly on talk shows and prime-time debates, a deliberate attempt by the regime to give voice to ascendant, approved ideas. When a liberal is trotted out to debate him, viewers invariably vote in overwhelming numbers for Prokhanov's arguments.

"I miss the nineties! They were the best!" he said with mock despair. "I was in the opposition and was alone battling against the system! Now I am part of the system."

When I asked him if he wasn't being exploited by the regime, he smiled indulgently.

"Everyone is being used, including yourself," Prokhanov said. "We give the system a body, a shape. We've explained to the system why it's great, why it's in a condition of blooming, and that it exists because of God's will. And the system has been enlivened by this." Prokhanov admires, above all, Putin's strength, as a matter of both image and policy.

Putin came to power thanks to Yeltsin, but Putin did not hesitate to put some distance between himself and his ailing patron. Bill Clinton, at the very end of his time in office, visited Putin at the Kremlin, and at one point in their time together Putin led Clinton on a tour of the vast and magnificent premises. (Compared with the Kremlin, the West Wing of the White House is as grand as an Ethan Allen furniture outlet.) First, they visited a gym, full of state-of-the-art equipment. "I spend a lot of time here," Putin said, body-proud even then. They proceeded down a long hall to another room; this one was gloomy, abandoned, with a hospital bed, a respirator, a cart filled with medical paraphernalia. Putin turned to the President. "The previous resident spent a lot of time here," he said.

Putin's displays of shirtless virility may play as a joke abroad, but to supporters like Prokhanov strength and its projection are at the center of Putinism. "Putin prevented the disintegration of Russia," Prokhanov said, echoing a widely held sentiment. "In him I saw the traits of a traditional Russian ruler. He struck out at the oligarchs who had controlled Yeltsin. They would pour some vodka for Yeltsin, get him drunk, and they ran the country. Putin destroyed the Yeltsin élite and created a new élite from the *siloviki*"—the leaders

of the security services and the military.

During the anti-Putin protests two years ago, Prokhanov attended counter-demonstrations elsewhere in Moscow. "These young liberals wanted to get rid of Putin and practically send him to the fate of Qaddafi. There was an imbalance in political and ideological forces. The liberals dominated everywhere in mass media, culture, the economy, and Putin decided to correct this imbalance and so he began to grow the patriotic forces."

Prokhanov could read the signals of encouragement, but he does not pretend to see Putin often. ("My connection to Putin is mystical. We meet each other in our dreams. Which is the best place. No one eavesdrops there.") Together with members of other institutions associated with the Kremlin—the armed forces, the intelligence services, and the Russian Orthodox Church—he started an intellectual group called the Izborsky Club. In the nineties, Yeltsin had called on a group of intellectuals to help formulate a new "Russian idea," one that relied largely on a liberal, Westernized conception of the nation. It went nowhere. Now, with such notions as "democracy" and "liberalism" in eclipse, groups like the Izborsky Club, Prokhanov says, are a "defense factory where we create ideological weapons to resist the West." He said the group recently organized a branch in eastern Ukraine, led by the pro-Russian separatists. "The liberals used to be in charge in all spheres," Prokhanov said. "Now we are crowding them out."

According to ideologues like Prokhanov, the thousand-year shape of Russian history is defined by the rise, fall, and reassertion of empire. "These empires flower and become powerful and then they fall off a precipice and leave behind a black hole," he said. "And in the black hole statehood disappears. But then the state reëmerges as the result of some sort of mysterious forces." So far, Prokhanov explained, there have been four great empires. The first, a confederacy of princedoms with its center in Kiev, was invaded by the Tatars, in the thirteenth century. Then came the Moscovy tsardom, which featured the reign of Ivan the Terrible and was transformed into an empire by Peter the Great at the turn of the eighteenth century. Then came the three-hundred-year reign of the Romanovs, who gave way to the Bolsheviks in 1917. Finally, Prokhanov said, Stalin "took Russian statehood out of that black hole, put the state on its feet, built factories, produced scholars, and won the Great Patriotic War against Germany and conquered outer space." That empire, the Soviet Union, crashed in 1991. Again, there was a ten-year-long black hole. "Yeltsin is the black hole of modern Russian history," Prokhanov said. Under Putin, Russian statehood reëmerged. In his latest book, which Prokhanov gave me as a gift, he has a set piece addressed to Putin called "The Symphony of the Fifth Empire."

Prokhanov is pleased to conclude that Russia is entering a prolonged war with the West—a cold war, possibly worse. "There is always danger of worse," he said, "even worse than nuclear war—and that is soulless surrender." Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, he insisted, the West was, through its spies and diplomats, through its perfidious deals with weak Russian leaders, able to achieve its objective: the destruction of the state. The West, he said, "destroyed the Soviet Union without setting off a single bomb."

Nothing has lifted the spirits of intellectuals like Prokhanov—and tens of millions of their countrymen—quite like Putin's decision to flout international opinion and annex Crimea. Prokhanov pronounced himself "ecstatic" about it. One of his favorite writers for *Zavtra*, Igor Strelkov, is a former Russian intelligence agent who is leading the separatists in Donetsk, and is widely believed to be among those who bear responsibility for the destruction of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. On the day of the catastrophe, Prokhanov posted a veritable ode to Strelkov on the *Zavtra* Web site, saying that the Russian fight in eastern Ukraine was a battle for "divine justice" and comparing Strelkov—"Russian warrior, knight, perfect hero"—to the most fabled generals in national history. To Prokhanov, this glorification of an armed agent is only natural, the war for Ukraine a matter of highest principle.

"This is a great country with only arbitrary borders," Prokhanov said. "People grabbed up our territory, chopped it up into bits. Some people got used to this state of affairs and didn't notice that their extremities had been chopped off—including the very pleasant extremity between your legs—and so it was with Ukraine. . . . Russians had to choose: ruin their relationship with the West, which was the very axe that chopped Russia into bits in the first place, or act without fear, because now Russia has an axe of its own."

"When you see what is going on in Iraq, you can see that America is powerless to respond," Prokhanov went on. "America brought chaos to the Middle East. Al Qaeda has its own state. And now Obama doesn't want to send bombers to destroy it. We poor Russians have to go destroy it. Aren't you ashamed?"

Prokhanov is hardly an outlier on today's ideological scene in Russia. Nor is the geopolitical theorist, mystic, and high-minded crackpot Aleksandr Dugin, who has published in Prokhanov's newspapers. He was once as marginal as a Lyndon LaRouche follower with a card table and a stack of leaflets. He used to appear mainly on SPAS (Salvation), an organ of the Russian Orthodox Church. Now the state affords him frequent guest spots on official television.

Dugin is in his mid-fifties and wears a beard worthy of Dostoyevsky. His father, he says, "probably" worked for military intelligence. His parents divorced when he was three. He hated Soviet society. He hated his family. "I hated the world I was born into," he said. As a teen-ager, he fell into a circle of eccentric kitchen intellectuals, young people who despised Communism and the West with equal fervor. "They were kind of loonies," Dugin told me. He attended the Moscow Aviation Institute, but was thrown out for his anti-Soviet, far-right politics.

Dugin's intellectual journey includes dalliances at various times with pagans, priests, monarchists, fascists, neo-Bolsheviks, and imperialists. He admires far-right European theorists like the Weimar conservative Carl Schmitt; he

admires various strains of the European New Right. He is a follower of René Guénon, a French mid-century philosopher who espoused the doctrine that became known as Traditionalism, which bemoans the decline of man since Creation and rejects modernity and rationalism. His most powerful influence is the Eurasianists, who envisioned Russia as a unique civilization, neither European nor Asian, with its own "special destiny" and grandeur.

The world, for Dugin, is divided between conservative land powers (Russia) and libertine maritime powers (the U.S. and the U.K.)—Eternal Rome and Eternal Carthage. The maritime powers seek to impose their will, and their decadent materialism, on the rest of the world. This struggle is at the heart of history. For Dugin, Russia must rise from its prolonged post-Soviet depression and reassert itself, this time as the center of a Eurasian empire, against the dark forces of America. And this means war. Dugin rejects the racism of the Nazis, but embraces their sense of hierarchy, their romance of death. "We need a new party," he has written. "A party of death. A party of the total vertical. God's party, the Russian analogue to the Hezbollah, which would act according to wholly different rules and contemplate completely different pictures."

For all of Dugin's extremism, he has, in the past decade, found supporters in the Russian élite. According to the Israeli scholar Yigal Liverant and other sources, Dugin's work is read in the Russian military academy. He has served as an adviser to Gennady Seleznyov, the former chairman of the Russian parliament. His Eurasia Movement, which was founded in 2001, included members of the government and the official media. He declared his "absolute" support for Putin, and when he pressed his political positions in public it was usually to take the most hard-line positions possible, particularly on Georgia and Ukraine. In 2008, he was appointed head of the Center for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University. Dugin used to brag that "Putin is becoming more and more like Dugin." And indeed Putin speaks more and more in terms of Russian vastness, Russian exceptionalism, of Russia as a moral paradigm.

When I asked Dugin about his connection to, or influence over, Putin, though, Dugin carefully disavowed any "personal connection" to the President. "I doubt that he knows who I am," he said. "My influence on politics is zero, on government zero. I am working only on my Platonic vision of things." Yet the mystic chords of that vision have come to reverberate widely in Russian society.

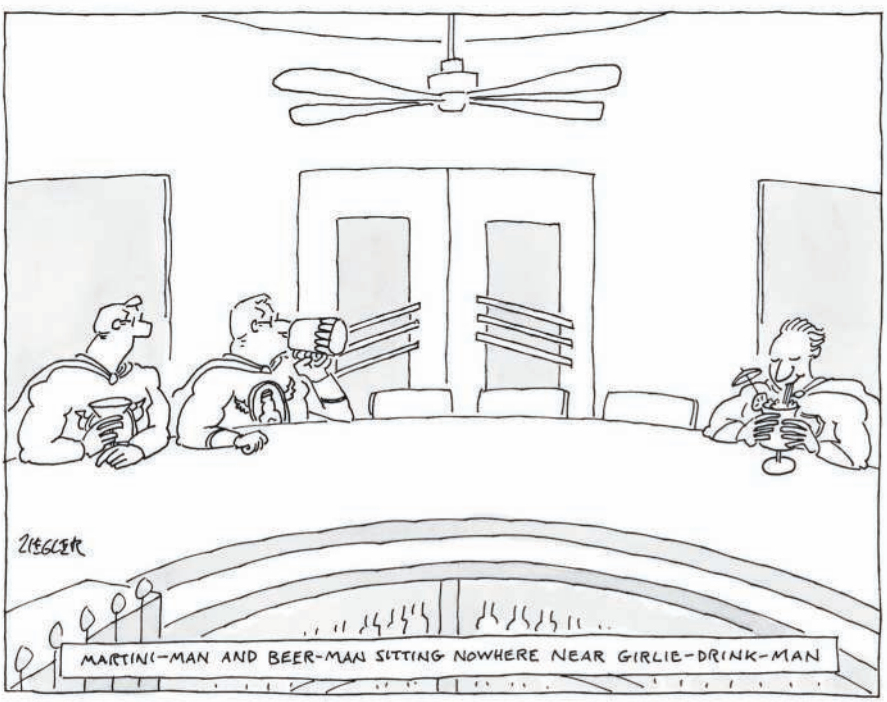
Dugin began to visit the West in 1989. Even though he spent most of his time calling on like-minded leaders of the European New Right, such as Alain de Benoist, he loathed his time there. Paris and Berlin were, in 1989, "worse than the Soviet Union." Commercialism had obliterated the European culture he loved and reduced its citizens to a state of profound "loneliness." As for the Americans, he found them "honest and clear and pragmatic and very free, and they are not so corrupt or hypocritical or decadent as Europe—but they are absolutely wrong at the same time in the metaphysical sense. They have a cult of real evil there. What they have taken for the most important value—individuality—is absolutely wrong. . . . I think American society is simply insane."

The day before I called on Dugin at his office, he had been mysteriously dismissed from his teaching post at the university. He had apparently gone too far. On the air, he had called on Russian forces to attack Ukraine with the full force of the Army—"Kill! Kill! Kill!"—and made it plain, on social media, that he was deeply disappointed in Putin's decision to limit himself to the annexation of Crimea.

Dugin said that he conceived of Putin as a man divided within himself—"the solar Putin," who is a Russian patriot and a fierce conservative, and "the lunar Putin," who is "conformist" and pro-Western. Dugin is a sun worshipper. Only the invasion and annexation of Ukraine will satisfy him.

In the Moscow of Putin Redux, Michael McFaul could not hope to make many inroads. And with every week his and his family's life in Moscow became more unnerving.

"They ran all kinds of operations against me," McFaul told me when we met this winter at the Olympics, in Sochi. There were demonstrators outside Spaso and the American Embassy. Russians, presumably paid stooges, posted on social media that McFaul was everything from a spy to a pedophile. There were death threats. Russian intelligence agents occasionally followed McFaul in his car, and even showed up at his kids' soccer games. The family felt under siege. "They wanted us to know they were there," he said. "They went out of their



way to make us feel their presence, to scare us."

McFaul was pleased to see that some of his old friends—human-rights activists like Lev Ponomaryov—had remained steadfast friends and true to their principles, but many had sold themselves out for money or Kremlin favor. People he had first met in the pro-democracy movement more than twenty years ago were now feeding at the trough of authoritarian power and the various business conglomerates aligned with it: they were Kremlin officials and advisers, oil and gas magnates, highly obedient intellectuals. Sergei Markov, one of his closest friends from the old days, and a co-author with him of a book called "The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy," was now a Putin loyalist.

Markov, who speaks decent English, frequently goes on foreign television to make the Kremlin's case. He has accused Blackwater of assassinating innocent Ukrainians at Maidan. He has said that Russian doctors were devising a "special medicine" to "cure" gays and lesbians and move them toward "normal sexuality." He is always on call to attack Obama.

I knew Markov, too, when McFaul did, and I had a hard time believing that he had become so reactionary, so shameless. I asked him about his outlandish remarks about gays on television. Was it true what he had said—that Russian doctors were working on a "special" gay-reversal medicine?

"I will speak frankly," he said. "Russian medicine is not working on this. But I don't want to talk about gays—but every time they ask about gays! I personally believe homosexuality is part of a human mind's nature. And I believe homosexuality is behind every human being's nature, one per cent, two per cent, and it can develop under some circumstances. And I am very sorry, but I will make a strong comparison—it's like sadism. Sadism is in every human's psychology. But it can develop only under some circumstances. If someone becomes gay, it is also, I believe, bad for him. . . . Someone can say, 'I am proud that I am gay.' O.K., I can believe. But if they say, 'I am happy I am gay,' I don't trust that. It just isn't true."

Markov holds a variety of academic and governmental advisory posts, and when I paid him a visit at his office he allowed that he was "a little bit" conspiratorial in his thinking these days. He said that "the international oligarchy—Soros, the Rockefellers, the Morgans—all these big, rich families and networks" were backing an attempt to topple Putin. "They want to take control of Russian gas and oil resources." That there is such a conspiracy afoot is also "clear to Putin."

Putin himself has not been reluctant to express his sense of such hidden intrigues. When Secretary of State John Kerry came to town for the first time, he and McFaul went together to see Putin. At one point, Putin stared at McFaul across the table and said, "We know that your Embassy is working with the opposition to undermine me."

"What do you mean?" Kerry said.

"We know this," Putin said.

"Putin didn't want to go into details," McFaul continued. "He stared right at me. . . . That kind of threatening, we-will-prevail look."

On February 4th, McFaul announced that he would step down as Ambassador following the Sochi Olympics. Angered by the anti-gay-propaganda laws, the Obama Administration had scaled back its delegation to the event. They sent no top officials and made sure that the most prominent figures were gay athletes. When I had breakfast with McFaul in Sochi, he made it clear that he was keeping a low profile and leaving after just a few days. His family was waiting for him in Palo Alto. For such an easygoing guy, McFaul can show surprising flashes of temper and irritation. In Sochi, he just seemed sombre. He had lasted two years in Moscow, hardly a truncated term, and he had poured his heart into the job, but his ambassadorship had not been a success. It couldn't have been, not when, in McFaul's words, the U.S.-Russia relationship was "at its lowest point since the post-Soviet period began, in 1991."

In March, after Putin annexed Crimea, McFaul wrote what he saw as his "Kennan" manifesto for the *Times*' Op-Ed page. He endorsed the Administration's policy—sanctions, isolation, expulsion from international organizations like the G-8—but he also admitted that the U.S. "does not have the same moral authority as it did in the last century." He recalled that when he was Ambassador and challenged his Russian interlocutors on issues of international law and a commitment to sovereignty, he was met with "What about Iraq?" And, in a subtle jab at Obama, he wrote, "We are enduring a drift of disengagement in world affairs. After two wars, this was inevitable, but we cannot swing too far. As we pull back, Russia is pushing forward."

A few months after our meeting in Sochi, I went to see McFaul in Palo Alto.

*"Come out, honey. I found the sunscreen."*

We rode around town in his car. It smelled as if he had bought it last week. His offices—he has three of them, for various bureaucratic reasons—overflowed with books that now seem superfluous: endless volumes on the perestroika years, books about transitions to democratic governance. I glanced at the book McFaul had published with Sergei Markov and remarked on how much Markov had changed.

"When I met him, he was against the status quo, he was for change," McFaul said. "He was for social democracy. But, remember, they hadn't had decades to discuss ideas. They were against the regime—that was the main thing, being *against*. This happens in lots of transitions: a coalition against Them. And then what they are *for* gets worked out in the post-revolutionary phase. That's natural and normal. What's a little more depressing are those others who get bought out and co-opted for financial reasons."

Although McFaul feels a deep sense of outrage about Putin, he also understood the mind-set of resentment and conspiracy. "I didn't go to foment revolution," he said. "I went to take the reset to the next stage. That was my mandate." He added, "Obama people don't sponsor color revolutions. Other Administrations had done this. Has the U.S. used covert operations to foment regime change? The answer is yes. I don't want to get in trouble or go to jail, but has the U.S. supported the opposition to bring about political change? Serbia is a paradigmatic case: direct money to the opposition to destabilize things, and it was successful." He also cited the overthrow of Mossadegh, in 1953, in Iran, and the support for the Nicaraguan Contras.

"Putin has a theory of American power that has some empirical basis," McFaul went on. "He strongly believes this is a major component of U.S. foreign policy. He has said it to the President, to Secretary Kerry. He even believes we sparked the Arab Spring as a C.I.A. operation. He believes we use force against regimes we don't like. . . . By the way, he damn well knows that the government of the Soviet Union used covert support. He worked for one of the instruments of that policy. He really does kind of superimpose the way his system works onto the way he thinks our system works. He grossly exaggerates the role of the C.I.A. in the making of our foreign policy. He just doesn't get it. Or maybe he does get it and doesn't portray it that way. I struggle with that: is he really super-clever and this is his psych op, or does he believe it? I think he does believe that we are out to get him."

Last month, Obama named a new Ambassador to Russia: John Tefft, a career diplomat who has been Ambassador to Ukraine, Lithuania, and Georgia. This is a geography that will not necessarily enamor Tefft to the Kremlin.

On July 4th, I went with some Russian friends to Spaso House for the annual Independence Day party. The place was filled with hundreds of guests, diplomats from the other embassies, Russian officials, members of the downtrodden opposition. McFaul loved throwing these parties. He loved the jazz and blues bands he got to play in the back yard, the talk over the buffet tables, the intrigue, the conversation, the promise of it all. I sent McFaul an e-mail saying I'd somehow never been to Spaso and found the scale of the place shocking.

"The scale is shocking indeed," he wrote back from Palo Alto. "Big downgrade to our place here at Stanford. I saw photos and got emails from people at July 4th, which made me very nostalgic."

On July 17th, a surface-to-air missile shot Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 out of the air over the Donetsk region of Ukraine, killing almost three hundred men, women, and children. Western and Ukrainian intelligence agencies agree that the evidence implicates pro-Russian separatist forces in the region, which are funded, directed, and supported by Vladimir Putin, in Moscow.

Prokhanov and Dugin were entirely in tune with the reigning propaganda. All blame lay with Obama and the "illegal regime" in Kiev. "America did this—with a hand from Ukraine," Prokhanov told me. "How could it be otherwise? A catastrophe like this helps America, not Russia. It serves to demonize Novorossiya and the forces there. It demonizes them to look like Al Qaeda. It brings us back to the sort of moment when Ronald Reagan called us the 'evil empire.' It tightens the international noose on Russia and it brings powerful pressure to bear on Putin, pressure designed to break his will. And, by blaming this on us, it helps our liberal intelligentsia consolidate their forces, the way the Orange Revolution and the Bolotnaya demonstrations did. There is a history to such conspiracies. Or have you forgotten your General Colin Powell at the U.N. with his 'evidence' and his theories about Saddam Hussein?"

McFaul is trying to enjoy his return to paradisal Palo Alto. His wife, Donna, is happier now that the family is no longer followed by spies and hostile reporters. The boys are spending long summer days at leisure. But McFaul can't fully escape the tragic course of things.

"Just when I thought relations between the U.S. and Russia couldn't get any lower, this tragedy happened," McFaul said. "Of course, Putin could use this tragedy/accident/terrorist attack to distance himself from the insurgents that he has been supporting. It gives him a face-saving out. He could say, 'They went too far, enough is enough. Time now to get serious about deëscalation and negotiation.' I assign this possible outcome a small probability. More likely is that he will not change his course, the U.S. will then increase sanctions, and the war will continue. Neither scenario, however, offers a way to reverse this negative trajectory in U.S.-Russia relations. I really don't see a serious opening until after Putin retires, and I have no idea when that will be."

"In the long run, I am still very optimistic about Russia and Russians," he went on. "In my two years as Ambassador, I just met too many young, smart, talented people who want to be connected to the world, not isolated from it. They also want a say in the government. They are scared now, and therefore not demonstrating, but they have not changed their preferences about the future they want. Instead, they are just hiding these preferences, but there will be a day when they will express them again. Putin's regime cannot hold these people down forever. I do worry about the new nationalism that Putin has unleashed, and understand that many young Russians also embrace these extremist ideas. I see it on Twitter every day. But, in the long run, I see the Westernizers winning out. I just don't know how long is the long run." ♦

# PAPER PALACES

*The architect of the dispossessed meets the one per cent.*

BY DANA GOODYEAR

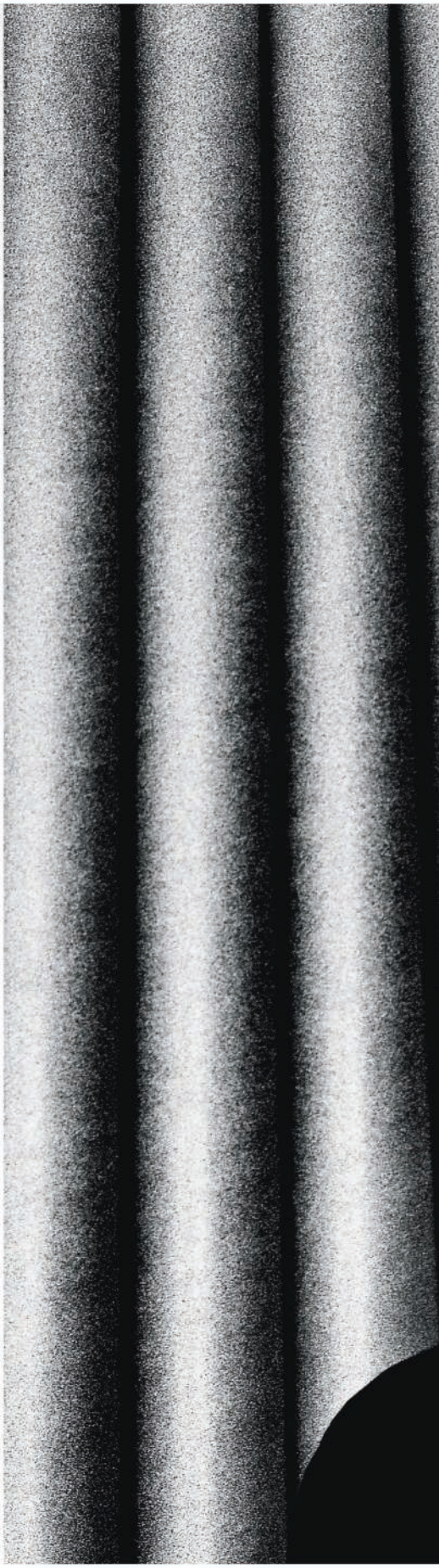
The main campus of Vitra, a Swiss furniture company that produces Frank Gehry's Wiggle chair, is an Epcot of contemporary architecture. It includes buildings by Gehry, Herzog & de Meuron, and Tadao Ando; a fire station by Zaha Hadid; and an elegant white factory, shaped like a slice of eight-minute egg, by the minimalist Japanese firm Sanaa. All these architects have won the Pritzker Prize, the field's highest honor. The work of this year's laureate, Shigeru Ban, has also been displayed at Vitra. Huddled on a lawn, his structures, three fifty-dollar tents sheathed in standard-issue plastic tarps from the U.N., intended for the refugees of the Rwandan civil war, looked as if any minute they might be loaded on a pallet and removed. Ban's work lay underneath the plastic: a simple skeleton of recycled-paper tubes, fitted together with plastic joints and braced with ropes describing the pattern of an unfinished star. Ban, who has built museums, mansions, corporate headquarters, and a golf-course clubhouse in South Korea, takes pleasure in distinguishing himself from his peers, and in pointing up their excesses: not much of their work could fit into a kit that comprises eleven elements (Paper Tube A, Paper Tube B, plastic peg), including the bag. "This company has the most expensive collection of architecture," he says. "My tents became their cheapest collection."

In a profession often associated with showmanship and ego, Ban's work appears humble, and appropriate to a historical moment that celebrates altruism, or its posture. The Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer, a member of the Pritzker jury, told me that he was moved by Ban's commitment to the dispossessed. "The world is filled with billions of people, and most of them live in conditions where they will never see an architect or an architect-designed space," he said. "To have a first-rate architect pay attention to those in need of shelter, and build better-quality buildings to serve their aesthetic and human needs—that is wonderful."

With a team of student volunteers, Ban has touched down at nearly every major natural-disaster site of the past two decades. The arc of his career tracks the rise of cataclysmic weather as page-one news: the Kobe earthquake, which killed six thousand people (1995); the magnitude-7.4 earthquake in Turkey that left half a million homeless (1999); the Gujarat earthquake (2001); the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004); Hurricane Katrina (2005); the Sichuan earthquake (2008); the L'Aquila earthquake (2009); Haiti, Tohoku, the Philippines. Ban's practice, according to Riichi Miyake, a scholar of Japanese architecture, is "an architectural iteration of Doctors Without Borders."

Ban, who is fifty-seven, has pillowy lips and lids, and a barrel-shaped body perpetually swathed in softly pleated black linen; behind him trails a small black suitcase on wheels. He looks clicked together, like a Lego figurine. (He used to play rugby, No. 8.) A black pen with a red dot on its clip—a sole concession to color—is tucked between two buttons on his shirt. His mother, a dressmaker with a small atelier on the second floor of his suburban Tokyo studio, designs his clothes. In addition to Tokyo, he has two other offices, in Paris and in New York, and some seventy employees. Masako Ban, the wife he rarely sees, makes accessories and women's pocketbooks inspired by industrial materials. They don't have children.

On August 9th, Ban will mark the public opening of the Aspen Art Museum, his first permanent museum in the United States. The building, a glass box nested in a lattice screen made from resin-infused paper and topped with a timber truss roof, is an astonishing plexus of materials pushed to their



*Ban, who has been celebrated for his socially*

*conscious architecture, says, "I have no interest in 'Green,' 'Eco,' and 'Environmentally Friendly.' I just hate wasting things."*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KOSUKE OKAHARA

*"Beautiful—that's all we need to sue them into oblivion."*

• •

limits. Materials—in his case, paper tubes, shipping containers, beer crates, sustainably sourced wood—and their capabilities have always been Ban's primary concern, placing his work in sharp contrast to the spectacular, parametric, digitally derived architecture that dominates today. "I'm not the architect to make a shape," he told me firmly. "My designs are always problem solving." Rafael Viñoly, who worked on a team with Ban in 2002 to propose a design for the new World Trade Center—they made it to the final round—says, "This is a guy that still thinks architecture is about building, the mechanical part of building and what the building does. Architecture is not writing or talking, it's building buildings."

Toyo Ito, another Japanese Pritzker winner, wrote in an e-mail, "Many architects in the world today are competing only for the beauty of the architectural form. Ban-san's attempt is a counter-punch against these architects, and I think he represents a new model of a 'socially responsible' architect." To many in the field, though, Ban represents a conundrum. "I don't know exactly what to do with him, really," Kenneth Frampton, a noted architecture critic who teaches at Columbia, told me. "Underlying his work is an idea of a minimalism based on the notion of energy and ecological sustainability. He's connected to the Japanese tradition, but also very influenced by America and a Yankee-tinker attitude, which was Buckminster Fuller's approach. It's a value-free technical performance, detached from anything you could call a critical cultural position." Like Fuller, who was obsessed by structural and engineering questions but indifferent to the dialogue around aesthetics, Ban labors at his private puzzles and patents his inventions. Whatever meanings may be embedded in his materials—globalism, consumerism, thrift—he will not be the one to tease them out. "I am not reflecting on it," he says. Another time, he wrote to me, "I do not know the meaning of 'Green Architect.' I have no interest in 'Green,' 'Eco,' and 'Environmentally Friendly.' I just hate wasting things."

Ban counts stubbornness as one of his great strengths, but he is not entirely free of self-consciousness: he had to interrupt his Pritzker acceptance speech, flustered, he said, because "Rem is looking at me." In March, when the prize was announced, Patrik Schumacher, a partner at Zaha Hadid Architects, posted on Facebook, "I worry if the criteria of the Pritzker Prize . . . are now also being diverted in the direction of political correctness." To others, Ban's focus is so far from the aesthetic concerns of the discipline that he poses no threat at all. Tod Williams, a prominent New York architect who taught Ban and likes him, said, "It's barely architecture. There's no real depth to the work, and that's why it's a good, clear message."

In airports, Ban is quick. Catching up to him is embarrassing. You may choose to lag. A comfortable range is one where you can see the small bald spot on the top of his head and know that you could reach him at a sprint. He is a hard man to buy a sandwich for. If you succeed, you must ask him questions while he chews. (Is it a conversation if one of you is also writing e-mails on his iPad?) He exasperates quickly. Many things are too complicated to explain. You must read his official biography, on the Web site of the Pritzker Foundation. You must attend his upcoming public lecture. Parting ways, even when you are boarding the same plane, he will say, "See you tomorrow," but it's possible you will never see him again. His seat, in first, is in Row 1, by the aisle.

On Memorial Day, Ban flew to Aspen—his fifth city in as many days—to check on the progress of the museum. A nineteenth-century mining town, where Victorian houses go for four

million apiece, Aspen has never had an "architectural" building, at least not one that the public could access. In the mountains around the city, there are numerous fine examples of contemporary architecture, including the first residential project by Renzo Piano, which belongs to Tom Pritzker, of the prize family. (They own the Hyatt hotel chain.) But, despite the presence of Prada and Frette, downtown is a place of low-slung red brick. The pride of the city—the tallest building in the historic core—is the Wheeler Opera House, built to fifty-five feet in 1889. The museum, thirty-three thousand square feet right at the base of the ski mountain, is a behemoth by local standards—shockingly contemporary and, at forty-seven feet, dangerously close to upstaging the Wheeler. The mayor, Steve Skadron, campaigned for office on the strength of his record: as a city-council member, he had cast the single dissenting vote on Ban's proposal. "Our built environment is the one thing that keeps us from looking like everything else," he told me, then added, forebodingly, "A short way up the highway is *Vail*."

The art museum was founded in 1979 by local artists hoping to attract interesting shows. Based in a former hydroelectric plant across the river from downtown, the old museum—the only accredited museum on the Western slope of the Rockies, and one of four in the entire state—had less than three thousand square feet of exhibition space. In 2005, Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson, a savvy curator from the Berkeley Art Museum, took over as director, determined to reshape the museum's identity and harness the community's abundant and largely untapped wealth. "We could be the best midsized museum in the country, which is so not sexy—it's like being plus-sized at the mall," she told me. "Or we could be the best non-collecting museum in the world. Our donors could give their collections to other institutions and give *us* funding." Her ambitions for the museum, which would focus on contemporary art, required something more than a squat on the outskirts of town. In order to build and endow a new home, and make it free to the public, Jacobson and her board raised more than seventy million dollars. Becoming a member of the architecture-selection committee required a seven-figure donation.

At the construction site, a team from Denver was preparing to install the lattice screen, stained a mellow rusty brown. Ban, wearing a bright-yellow construction vest and a hard hat, said that the building was meant not to stand out but to reflect and complement the local environment. "In a traditional Western downtown, the street fabric is controlled—all the buildings are the same height, same material," he said. "In Aspen, there are many nice, old brick buildings. I wanted to make this a traditional volume, a brown boxlike building, to be part of the downtown fabric." The weave would be uneven, opening wider at opposite corners, to give the façade a sense of movement and to mimic the imperfections in old brick.

The building hugged the sidewalk; along one side, behind an orange mesh fence, workers were excavating to make an outdoor sculpture plaza. Ban slipped into an alley and through the museum's service door. Yellow strand lights glowed dimly in the dusty interior, and a heater blasted, curing the plaster gallery walls. He trudged up the back stairs, three flights, not panting, to the roof. The problem he had solved in Aspen was that of a nondescript site with no ground-floor view of the mountain, and a museum director who wanted maximum gallery space. With no room for a large entry foyer, and a directive to create a vantage point, Ban decided to

invert the building. Arriving visitors ascend, as on a gondola, by means of a large glass elevator or a sweeping staircase to the topmost level, a café where they can enjoy the view from beneath the truss roof or the open sky. From there, they "ski" down through the galleries.

Ban looked up at the truss. The wood, a golden-yellow spruce, made a pattern of interlacing chis, held together only with screws at the tangent points, no steel braces. It was a feat both of physics and of resourcefulness. "Wood is the most ecological thing," he said. "Steel, concrete—we are just consuming from a limited amount. Timber is the only renewable material." He continued, "A concrete building stays only a hundred years, and it's very difficult to replace or repair, where timber is very easy to repair. Also nicer. Such a nice material. Can you imagine if this truss was made of steel?" He grimaced. To achieve the curvaceous shape, several pieces of wood had been glued together to a six-inch depth and carved. "It's quite economical. You just glue like this and cut like this"—he stacked his hands and traced a saw's movement—"without wasting." I said that the swooshing lines reminded me of overlapping ski tracks. He looked at me blankly. He doesn't ski, and, in the course of seven years of work on the museum, with trips roughly every other month during the construction phase, he had yet to ride the gondola to the top of the mountain.

Aspen is Ban's second major museum commission. His first, an extension of the Centre Pompidou, in Metz, a small city in northeastern France, was completed in 2010. Inspired by the airy bamboo weave of a Chinese hat that he'd bought in Paris, Ban created an intricate hexagonal timber grid shell, then covered it in a translucent white Teflon-coated membrane. A seventy-seven-metre spire makes reference to the year—1977—that the original Centre Pompidou, by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, opened, in Beaubourg. In pictures, Ban's building appears ready to glide through the landscape like a remote-controlled attack stingray. (Others have likened it to a Smurf hat or a mushroom.) "The mayor was looking for a monumental building for tourism, but museum people hate sculptural buildings," Ban said; curators prefer spaces where the art takes priority. "I felt the building had to be architecturally interesting but also very practical." To satisfy the curators, he built three rectangular "tubes," containing the galleries, which protrude from underneath the chapeau's brim.

As a foray into shape-making, Pompidou-Metz was less than triumphant. *Architectural Record* deemed it "conspicuously, tragically less than the sum of its

*Using inexpensive, everyday materials, Ban has created a variety of structures for disaster survivors: houses, churches, classrooms.*

parts." The reviewer wrote, "If it's a tent, it's a lugubrious one; if it's a museum, it's a shoddy one." Ban, however, told me that to view the building as an attempt at sculptural architecture was a mistake. "It looks like an organic shape, but the timber roof has very strict geometrical and structural rules," he said. "I'm not criticizing, but the form-making of Frank Gehry at Bilbao is more instinctual, and it requires very complicated technology to make a drawing out of his form. My form has rules behind it. Even if it looks like the same kind of organic shape, there's a process of making underneath." In any case, Ban measures the building by a different standard. "It is a very successful building because the people of Metz love it," he wrote me in an e-mail. Hélène Guenin, the museum's acting director, says that in the four years since it opened the building has attracted 2.2 million visitors, more than twice the expected number. A report commissioned by the city showed that the building had almost paid for itself in its first year.

Pompidou-Metz cost ninety-three million dollars. The Aspen Art Museum, about a third the size, cost twenty-four million. "It's very economical," Ban said, up on the roof. Construction costs were running about seven hundred and twenty-five dollars a square foot; *Architect* had just published a survey of Renzo Piano's museum projects and found that most of his recent designs cost more than a thousand a square foot. Compared with the Aspen museum, Ban said, "many of the houses around here cost more."

That night, Jacobson, who is wiry, with straight blond hair and an air of self-possession, hosted a small dinner for Ban, the project architect, and a couple of museum patrons at the Little Nell hotel, at the base of the gondola. "Do you want champagne?" she asked Ban when he arrived. "That's what you usually want." He took a glass and answered a few questions from the guests about the progress on the screen. "Shigeru builds out of paper," Jacobson said. "That we would have the surface of our building made out of paper is his dance move." (No matter that the "paper" layer is mostly synthetic.) She said she'd also asked him to incorporate paper tubes, his other dance move; they decorate the boardroom ceiling and the gift shop. Later, she told me she had originally asked Ban for three designs. He said, "No, Heidi, I only do one design." She was incredulous. "If I do three, obviously one is going to be the best," he said. "You're only going to want the best, so I'm only going to show you one." The logic was inescapable.

According to Jacobson, Ban's disaster-relief projects were central to his selection as the architect. "Everyone was so taken by the humanitarian work, because people here are so philanthropic," she said. "It's just part of their spirit." The opening exhibit in the museum's largest gallery is "Shigeru Ban: Humanitarian Architecture," and includes a U.N. tent and a cabin with walls made of upright paper tubes, which he has used around the world. At dinner, she described her plans for the grand opening, a twenty-four-hour gala, with a silent dance party and an opportunity to sleep in the galleries and have your dreams analyzed upon waking.

"Perhaps Shigeru can design partitions," the project architect said wryly, referring to paper-tube-and-curtain

LI JUN/COURTESY SHIGERU BAN ARCHITECTS

*Ban was hired to design the new Aspen Art Museum. Its director says, "Everyone was so taken by the humanitarian work."*

DEREK SKALKO/COURTESY ASPEN ART MUSEUM

systems that Ban has erected in gymnasiums to give evacuees privacy in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. Ban seemed untroubled by the notion of exhausted guests playing the part of disaster victims—Marie Antoinettes of global homelessness. "They can sleep in my house!" he said, referring to the cabin that would be on display. "It is designed to sleep in."

The conversation turned to the lack of affordable housing in Aspen—a city, the saying goes, where the millionaires have been driven out by billionaires. Ban said that the 2011 earthquake in Japan had exposed the country's severe shortage in resources for dealing with widespread displacement. In collaboration with a large Japanese home-building company, he is planning a plant in the Philippines for the manufacture of prefab units that can be deployed either as temporary emergency housing or as long-term affordable housing. "It will create employment and improve the slum, and at the same time it can be imported to other countries in disasters," he said.

Jacobson, who lives in Snowmass Village, a ski town next to Aspen, had another idea for the prefabs. "That's what I want our guesthouse to be," she said.

In Ban's childhood, his parents were continually renovating; the house, it seemed to him, was always full of carpenters, wielding beautiful hand tools. He wanted to be a carpenter, then changed his mind to architect. In high school, he worked with a tutor to prepare for the rigorous entrance exams to Tokyo University of the Arts. As it happened, he did not pass the exams: too much rugby, not enough model-making. But at his tutor's home he came across a magazine article about John Hejduk, the iconoclastic dean of Cooper Union's School of Architecture, in New York, and set himself on going there. His father, who had a desk job at Toyota, disapproved: "Cooper Union" didn't sound like a real school to him.

Cooper Union required students to be U.S. residents. Speaking little English, Ban moved to Los Angeles in 1977 and took classes at a language school in Santa Monica. There he learned of a fledgling architecture school called SCI-Arc. The founder, Ray Kappe, a pioneer of prefab housing, admitted Ban based on the paper models he'd made for his application to school in Tokyo. In spite of the language barrier, Kappe placed him in the second year.

Housed in a warren of industrial buildings that had previously been an LSD factory, SCI-Arc was radical. Students built their own workspaces using scaffolding, and were encouraged to scavenge from a pit full of old airplane wings and other industrial refuse. They studied tent-making and beehive morphology, and made Fuller-style geodesic domes and lightweight space frames inspired by the German architect and engineer Frei Otto. Instead of mailboxes, they used bisected paper tubes. Thom Mayne and Frank Gehry were teachers. Ban, who had planned to be there for a year before transferring to Cooper Union, stayed nearly three. Still, he claims to have been affected only marginally by his time there, mostly through exposure to the Case Study Houses, a numbered series designed by well-known mid-century architects, which were meant to serve as prototypes for

affordable, modern living. The Case Study Houses introduced him to the concept of prefabrication, which gave rise to a construction method he has practiced both in commissioned buildings and in disaster work, using factory-built bookshelves to hold up a house. They also gave him an indirect education in the Japanese notion of indoor-outdoor space and the use of screens.

The Cooper Union curriculum was rooted in the rational modernism of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, with flourishes of Dada. One seminar consisted of Peter Eisenman reading "In Search of Lost Time" aloud to the students for several hours at a time. "I felt that it was important culturally for them to know how important Proust was to thinking about space," Eisenman, who now teaches at Yale, told me. Hejduk asked students to design a house in the mood of Juan Gris, and to study a piece of fruit over the course of a semester, as it decayed. A self-styled poet, Hejduk also insisted that architecture students take a poetry workshop. Ban says he was often asked to read his poems aloud, as examples for the class. "Surprisingly, I was very good," he told me. "My poems were always short." At night, he tutored his friends in structural engineering. One of them was another transfer student, Dean Maltz, who later became his New York partner. "He just understood it intuitively, better than any architect in our class," Maltz told me. "He's very calculating—I don't mean strategically calculating, though he is—but calculations are what goes on in his head."

As a student, Ban was hardworking, literal-minded, and impervious to criticism. His designs, classmates told me, tended to be based on one big idea, seemingly drawn from one of the masters or from Hejduk himself. Tod Williams said, "He seemed shockingly clear, almost naïve, in the kinds of work that he brought to the studio. It was almost embarrassingly direct." Ban was sometimes at odds with his professors. Eisenman, to his displeasure, called him Sugar Bear. His thesis project—a Tribeca warehouse space for the display of Richard Serra's sculptures—didn't pass, causing him to graduate six months late. But he remained devoted to his teachers' ideas. For one early residential project in Japan, he completed Hejduk's standard first-year assignment, to design a house on a nine-square grid. He called it the Nine-Square Grid House. Another early commission, the Curtain Wall House (or Case Study House 07), demystifies one of modernism's great features, the non-load-bearing exterior wall known as a curtain wall. The house, a blocky all-white structure in downtown Tokyo, has exterior walls formed by a billowing white curtain. Metaphor! Be gone.

Ban's industrious and entrepreneurial side emerged early. During a year off

from school, in which he was an intern in the office of Arata Isozaki, one of Japan's most prominent architects, he arranged to bring an experimental show organized by Tod Williams and another Cooper Union professor, Ricardo Scofidio, to a gallery in Tokyo. Instead of using his professors' installation design, he surprised them by coming up with his own. Maltz, who was also living in Japan that year, in the only tatami room in the Bans' Western-style house, started to view him as "the Pied Piper of architecture." He said, "I didn't even really know this was going on, and all of a sudden he goes, 'Dean, we're putting up the exhibition at the Axis Gallery, in Roppongi. Why don't you help us out this weekend?' I get there and it's like thirty people helping assemble this thing. Where did all these people come from?" The Japanese wonderingly referred to Ban as "the American."

On a trip to New York, shortly after opening a practice in Tokyo, Ban went to see Laurie Hawkinson, a friend from Cooper Union, who now teaches at Columbia. He was telling her about a new material he'd discovered in the course of designing installations for the gallery. At first, she could not fathom what he was talking about. Then he showed her pictures of his paper tubes being used to hold up display stands. If they could support a stand, why not a full-scale building? "He could do it because he actually knew and could calculate the loads," she said.

Using the tubes allowed Ban to slough off his modernist masters. He told me, "I was hoping ever since I was a child to not be influenced by fashion, and to develop my own structure and materials." Paper appealingly undermined a basic premise of architecture. "When people try to do something new, they always think something stronger or more acrobatic," he said. "My development was using more humble material, or weaker material. The strength of the material has nothing to do with the strength of the building, even nothing to do with durability. I knew logically that even using a weaker material like a paper tube I could make a strong building."

Convincing building inspectors and code enforcers was another matter. In an effort to prove his concept, in 1995 Ban built himself a weekend house on Lake Yamanaka from an S-shaped colonnade of a hundred and ten paper tubes. It has scarcely been used. "I have no time," he told me. "I have no weekend. The main purpose was not to enjoy the weekend. Its main purpose was to get government permission to use the paper tube as a permanent building material—otherwise I could not use this idea for another project."

Humanitarian work has also allowed Ban to explore materials and systems that might be disallowed outside a disaster area. Not long after completing his weekend house, he learned about a group of Vietnamese immigrants who had lost their homes in the Kobe earthquake and were living in flimsy tents in a park, where they were vulnerable both to weather and to public opinion. Under conditions far less bureaucratic than when he was working on his own house, he built them a cluster of cabins with walls made from upright paper tubes, set on a foundation of donated Kirin beer crates filled with sand. "In an emergency, I don't need to get government permission for a new structure as long as I make sure of the safety by myself, working with an engineer," he told me.

Pleasingly geometric, with an eco-friendly, brown-rice look—smooth paper columns supporting crisp white canvas roofs—the Kobe cabins have an aesthetic that lies somewhere between a Tinkertoy masterpiece and a Seventh Generation diaper with operable windows. They are inexpensive, easy to assemble, and made from widely available,

energy-efficient components, and Ban has since replicated them around the world, making small adjustments to suit the local climate. In areas where alcohol is prohibited, he makes foundations from rubble scavenged at the site. His very materials can seem like a rebuke to inefficiency; the tubes he builds with are most commonly used as disposable molds for concrete columns, by-products of the profligate construction industry.

When the Kobe cabins were finished, Ban built a temporary community space for a Catholic congregation that had lost its church in the earthquake. An oval formed from paper tubes and a white tent roof, it is quietly consoling, with the plain beauty of a Greek shrine to a minor god. A decade later, the church was disassembled; in 2008, it was reconstituted in Taiwan, after an earthquake there, and has become a permanent monument. The Taiwanese government took his word for it that the structure would hold.

"Architects mostly work for privileged people, people who have money and power," Ban said recently. "Power and money are invisible, so people hire us to visualize their power and money by making monumental architecture. I love to make monuments, too, but I thought perhaps we can use our experience and knowledge more for the general public, even for those who have lost their houses in natural disasters." One employee on the Tokyo staff devotes the majority of his time to disaster-relief projects, and others pitch in as needed. Ban claims not to worry about balancing the books. ("That's why he has partners," Maltz says.) The two sides of Ban's practice are symbiotic. His commissions pay for his pro-bono work, and the pro bono serves both as a testing ground and as a powerful marketing tool. "He is both deeply concerned about humanity and also sees it as a way to uniquely advance his career," Hawkinson said. "They help each other."

In the past decade, according to Alexander Betts, an associate professor at Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre, more than a hundred million people have been forced from their homes by natural disasters. A report released in June by U.N.H.C.R., which concerns itself primarily with political refugees, estimated that in 2013 there were more displaced people than at any time since the Second World War. Ban's paper structures may prove a brilliant solution to the political difficulty posed by camps, where structures that appear permanent distress host governments and those which don't tend to be insufficient for long-term needs. "You have settlements designed for the emergency phase lasting ten to fifteen years," Betts said. "Ban's work with paper and cardboard creates an aesthetic of temporariness. Something that is durable and sustainable but has the appearance of non-permanence might be desirable." The question, Betts said, is scalability. During the Rwandan crisis, Ban sent fifty tents. In Kobe, he produced twenty-one temporary houses and the church; in Turkey, seventeen houses; in India, twenty. A fishermen's village in Sri Lanka, a permanent settlement, has forty-five houses. In China, Ban built nine classrooms. A shipping-container complex in Tohoku serves a hundred and eighty-nine families. One of his most spectacular projects, the Cardboard Cathedral, erected in Christchurch, New Zealand, holds seven hundred people. Ban likes to say, "It's become the new symbol of Christchurch." When pressed, and not in an auditorium before a loaded slide show, he adopts a more modest tone. "I look for people who have a particular problem," he told me. "Always I take care of smaller groups of people. My capacity is not big enough. The bigger number of people has to be taken care of by the government."

Ban's greater effect may lie in his potential to catalyze innovation in humanitarian relief. Eric Cesal is the executive director of Architecture for Humanity, a consortium of public-interest designers which was founded in 1999 as a kind of protest against the culture of celebrity architecture and gee-whiz buildings. He sees Ban as an important vector, and a reference point for the increasing number of young architects who are driven to design for the disadvantaged. "There are very few people that do what we do that have a signature brand and aesthetic," he said. "Ban can live in both worlds." As the social divisions around

*"Politics is the art of nothing is possible."*

the world grow starker, the work becomes more urgent and, potentially, more attractive. "If you set aside all ethics and morality and humanitarian idealism, seventy-five per cent of construction in the next twenty-five years will happen in the global south," Cesal said. "This is the emerging market."

Several weeks ago, I visited the single unit that Ban built in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward, in collaboration with Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation, after Hurricane Katrina. The house, a taupe-colored box with a triangular roof, on eight-foot concrete piles, was missing its front porch and the staircase leading up to the front door, owing to rot. I entered the back way, which meant passing underneath the house, where a network of vines dangling limply from a trellis attempted to establish themselves as a green wall, and up a steep flight of stairs to a sliding glass door. The house belonged to Ann Parfaite, a seventy-two-year-old retired financial-aid administrator, who was inside serving bread with butter and syrup to her grandchildren. Her old house, where she'd lived since 1966, had entirely washed away. She had paid a hundred and fifty thousand dollars—partly covered by her insurance money and a forgivable loan from Make It Right—for the new one. "People say, 'You live in one of the Brad Pitt houses,'" she said. "I say, 'No, I live in my own house.'"

Parfaite, who had soft gray curls and an unlined face, shooed her grandchildren to a back room and sat down in an easy chair. She said she had chosen the Ban design—instead of, say, the Gehry house, the David Adjaye, or the Thom Mayne—because it included an attic room, with a separate stairway, for her son, and had "oodles and oodles of storage." An open "memory shelf," filled with portraits of young people in football uniforms and on graduation days, ran the length of the room; the other side was all built-ins. (Ban based the design on his furniture houses.) She showed me a framed picture of herself with Pitt and Ban, and said she had tangled a little with her architect. "The front steps went straight up," she said. "I wanted an L-shape, but he said, No, that didn't fit with the integrity of his design." She prevailed, and got a landing, then also insisted on a back stairway. "If anything happens in this house, I can't jump down," she said. A golf ball, left by the kids, rolled down the gentle slope of the not-level floor to rest in a corner. Parfaite had no real complaints, though. Like all the Make It Right projects, her house is LEED platinum, and her electricity and water bills are minimal. More important, her son had stayed in the house through Hurricane Isaac and been safe, the only damage a bit of mildew and a leak.

You can live in a house designed by Shigeru Ban only if you are recently homeless or exceedingly wealthy. His latest residential project in New York is a full interior renovation of a landmarked building in Tribeca, with a two-story, fifteen-million-dollar glass-box penthouse cantilevered over the roof. Dean Maltz, wearing a white denim sports coat and white pants, gave me a tour of the model in a sleek showroom—blond wood and art lighting. As Ban's New York partner, he is responsible for business in the Americas. "I call it the ship-in-the-bottle project," he said. "The existing building is the bottle, the ship is what's inside. Le Corbusier refers to the ship as the symbol of creating a new architecture."

For about half the price of the Tribeca

penthouse, you can buy a two-thousand-square-foot unit in Ban's Metal Shutter Houses, a boutique building in Chelsea, which backs up to Gehry's IAC Building and looks out on a Jean Nouvel apartment complex and a coming Norman Foster tower. For now, it has a great view of the High Line. The north face of the apartment is a single twenty-foot window, leading onto a small terrace. At the push of a button, the window lifts and folds like an origami crane, opening the living room to the outdoors. Another button lowers a perforated metal shutter, to screen the terrace.

At the end of May, Tom McInerney, a forty-one-year-old tech investor, brought his girlfriend, Yuko Mizutani, who is thirty, to hear Ban lecture on his humanitarian work at a Landmarks Preservation Commission forum, and afterward they went to see the Metal Shutter Houses. McInerney liked the apartment, but he was most impressed by the lecture. "It was cool that as an architect he had this existential crisis where he thought, Is my job to make monuments for rich people?" he said. "He was thinking bigger." McInerney decided that he wanted Ban to design a house for him on a piece of land that he owns at the Yellowstone Club, a private ski resort near Big Sky, Montana, whose members include Eric Schmidt and Bill Gates. (The motto of the club is "Private Powder.") "I looked at him on the cardboard and thought, Wow, this is an innovative guy," he told me. "My business, we're change agents, we like to get in there and disrupt." If things went well, he thought, he might also like to hire Ban to make a paper-tube cabin for a hilltop property he owns in Los Angeles.

One Sunday morning in mid-July, Ban—first class, Row 1, aisle—arrived in Bozeman, was conveyed by Range Rover to a helicopter, and took off south, following the line of the Gallatin River, over red-roofed agricultural buildings; in the distance was Ted Turner's bison herd, ants on a green blanket. The hills below, covered with bristly train-set pines, turned rocky and molar. The helicopter flew over the snow-licked Spanish Peaks and into a valley, landing on a paved pad above a golf course with a man-made waterfall and sand traps in the style of Matisse cutouts. McInerney and Mizutani were waiting there with Maltz.

Ban's design process begins when he visits a site. "I don't know how he does it, frankly," Maltz told me. "We go to the site. I never speak to him about it. Weeks later, we get a sketch and go, Ah, wow, that's kind of amazing." His employees render the plan on the computer, using basic architectural software. Ban marks up the renderings until they get it right. "His idea is fully formed when he gives us the sketch," Maltz says. "We're just trying to articulate it." Next, the architects build a model from foam core and mat board and sometimes wood, which Ban edits. "Then you present it to the client and the client loves it," Maltz says. "I've never seen a client not love it."

Ban got out of the helicopter, shook hands in silence, and took a small camera from his backpack. Maltz pointed out the boundaries of McInerney's lot, a one-acre triangle just below the helipad, on the thirteenth hole, with views of Lone Mountain to the north and a less dramatic range to the east. Ban photographed three hundred and sixty degrees, then asked for lunch.

In the car, McInerney addressed Ban deferentially. "Shigeru—Shigeru-san," he began. "The architecture here is very traditional so far, and it's, um—I don't like it. So we're going to build something very new and different." Ban took in a line of maximalist cabin-chalets. "Those houses were built by the developer?" he asked. "But a private owner can build whatever he wants?"

"I think so, yeah," McInerney said. "There are some guidelines that we're going to have to work with, but we have to push the boundaries." He went on, "Let's build something beautiful, and we'll figure out how to get it through the committee."

Arriving at the clubhouse, a massive lodge crowded with bison heads and stained-glass light fixtures, Ban tapped curiously on the walls. Plywood panelling, over steel! And the scale: a Disneyfied version of rusticity. There would be no authentic architectural language to draw upon for ideas. "The design board may be challenging," Ban said, sitting in a U-shaped leather club chair. "I may have to make some interesting interpretation of the vernacular, instead of making something against it." Maltz said it would be fine, so long as they used natural material, like concrete.

"Concrete is not a natural material," Ban said.

"To them it is," Maltz said.

McInerney showed Ban a picture of himself in front of a reclaimed-wood shop in Bozeman, where they could get Douglas fir, redwood—any wood they wanted, with the nails removed, stamped and graded for structure.

"Timber siding," Ban said softly, as if an idea were stirring. He liked the prospect of reclaimed wood, less wasteful than fresh-cut, though it would be more expensive.

McInerney showed him pictures of andesite.

"Local rock?" Ban wanted to know.

McInerney and Maltz had a long conversation about wood, rocks, glass, sun, and snow, during which they excitedly presented Ban with images on cameras, phones, and an iPad, and in the project book for McInerney's site. "It's the beauty of the nature, and every day is different, every day the sky is different, the clouds are different," McInerney said plaintively. Ban was mostly quiet. Who knew what he was thinking? "Do you have mayonnaise?" he said finally.

After lunch, Ban returned to the site. He and Maltz walked across a field of yarrow, vetch, and shale—a smaller man dressed in black and a taller man wearing shorts. Maltz said he preferred the range to the peak. Ban studied the view to the east, and to the north. Mizutani blew the seeds off a dandelion head. McInerney prayed for the Lone Mountain view.

Ban, taking in the less dramatic range, said, "It's nice to see *this* mountain, very simple."

McInerney boldly asked if they could capture both.

"We can picture the different views, but we should not see everything," Ban said, walking to the far end of the lot, where he could be alone. From his backpack, he took a hardbound black sketchbook, the kind he started using at Cooper Union and which Maltz still buys for him at the Utrecht store downtown and sends to him wherever in the world he might be. He started drawing. He was worried about protecting the house from the thirteenth hole. *Clink!* A golfer teed off, and the ball sailed past. No vernacular. Two views. He swatted a mosquito forcefully, like a bear pawing at a tree. He did not yet know what he would do, but whatever he decided he would never change his mind. ♦

HAND LETTERING BY JOEL HOLLAND

It all began when the genie came out of the Magic Milk bottle and asked me what I would prefer: to have a Picasso or to be Picasso. He could grant me either wish but, he warned me, only one of the two. I had to think about it for quite a while—or, rather, he obliged me to think about it. Folklore and literature are so full of stories about greedy fools who are punished for their haste it makes you think those offers are all too good to be true. There are no records or reliable precedents on which to base a decision, because this sort of thing happens only in stories or jokes, so no one has ever really thought about it seriously; and in the stories there's always a trick, otherwise it would be no fun and there would be no story. At some point, we've all secretly imagined this happening. I had it all worked out, but only for the classic "three wishes" scenario. The choice the genie had given me was so unexpected, and one of the options was so definitive, that I needed some time to weigh them up.

It was a strange choice but not inappropriate; in fact, it was particularly apt. I was leaving the Picasso Museum, in a state of rapture and boundless admiration, and at that moment I could not have been offered anything, or any two things, that would have tempted me more. I hadn't actually left the museum yet. I was in the garden, sitting at one of the outdoor tables, having gone to the café and bought a little bottle of the Magic Milk that I'd seen tourists drinking everywhere. It was (it is) a perfect autumn afternoon: gentle light, mild air, and still a while to go before dusk. I took my notebook and pen from my pocket to make some notes, but in the end I didn't write anything.

I tried to put my ideas in order. I silently repeated the genie's words: to have a Picasso or to be Picasso. Who wouldn't want to have a Picasso? Who would turn down a gift like that? But, on the other hand, who wouldn't want to have been Picasso? Was there a more enviable fate in modern history? Not even the privileges of supreme worldly power are comparable to what he had, because they can be removed by political events or wars, while the power of Picasso, transcending that of any president or king, was invulnerable. Anyone else in my place would have preferred the second option, which included the first, not only because Picasso could paint all the Picassos he liked but also because it's well known that he kept a lot of his own paintings, including some of the best (the museum I'd just visited had been founded with his personal collection), and in his later years he even bought back works that he'd sold as a young man.

This inclusion did not, of course, exhaust the advantages of being transformed into Picasso, not by a long shot: the "being" went far beyond the "having," taking in all the protean joys of creation, stretching away to an unimaginable horizon. "Being Picasso," in the wake of the real-life Picasso—whatever he was really like—meant being a Superpicasso, a Picasso raised to the power of magic or miracle. But I knew my geniuses (*je m'y connaissais en fait de génies*), and I could tell or guess that it wasn't quite so simple. There were good reasons to hesitate, and even to recoil in horror. In order to become someone else, one has to cease being oneself, and no one willingly consents to that surrender. Not that I considered myself to be more important than Picasso, or healthier, or better equipped to face life. He had been fairly unstable (I knew that much from the biographies), but not as unstable as me, so by becoming him I would improve the state of my mental health to some degree. Still, thanks to a lifetime's patient efforts, I had made peace with my neuroses, fears, anxieties, and other handicaps, or at least reached a point where I could keep them under control, and there was no guarantee that this partial cure would work with Picasso's problems. That was more or less my reasoning, although I didn't put it into words; it was just a series of hunches.

Fundamentally, this was an extreme case of the problem of identification, which is raised not only by the master of Málaga but by every artist one admires or venerates or studies. The problem goes beyond Picasso, and yet remains within him, too. Identification is one of those things which can't be generalized. There is no identification in general, as a concept, only identification with this or that figure in particular. And if the figure is Picasso, as in this case, there can be no other. The concept turns itself inside out, as if we were to say (although it's a clumsy way to put it) that it's not about "identifying with Picasso" but about "Picassifying identification."

Few individuals have inspired so much writing; everyone who came into contact with Picasso left a testimony, an anecdote, or a character sketch. One is almost bound to find a common trait. For example, I've read that he had a problem with action. He would see a piece of paper lying on the floor of his studio, and it would bother him, but he wouldn't pick it up, and the piece of paper could lie there for months. Exactly the same thing happens to me. It's like a tiny, incomprehensible taboo, a paralysis of the will, which keeps me from doing what I want to do, and does so indefinitely. Picasso overcompensated for this with his frenetic production of art, as if by painting picture after picture he could make the piece of paper pick itself up.

Whatever the reason, there was no doubting the continuity of his production, through all his metamorphoses. Picasso was only Picasso insofar as he was a painter, so if I were Picasso I could paint all the Picassos I liked, and sell them and get rich, and maybe (since the rich can do anything these days) stop being Picasso if I felt trapped in a life I wasn't enjoying. That's why I said that the gift of "being" included that of "having."

Picasso once said, "I'd like to be rich, so I could live in peace, like the poor." Setting aside the deluded belief that the poor have no problems, there's something odd about the remark: he was rich already when he made it, very rich. But not as rich as he would be now, thirty years after his death, with the rise in the price of his paintings. Everyone knows that painters have to die, and therefore stop producing, for their work to become really valuable. So there was an economic gulf between "being Picasso" and "having a Picasso," as there is between life and death. The remark about living in peace, leaving aside its facile ingenuity, could be applied to the situation in which the genie had placed me; it was a message from beyond the grave, sent in the knowledge that my dearest wish was for a truly peaceful life, without problems.

Given the current prices, and the relative modesty of my aspirations, a single painting would be enough to make me rich and allow me to live in peace,

*"Maybe you'd better go ahead and order for me."*

• •

writing my novels, relaxing, and reading. . . . My mind was made up. I wanted a Picasso.

No sooner had the thought formed in my mind than a painting appeared on the table, without anybody's noticing; by then, the people who had been occupying the neighboring tables had got up and walked away, and the others had their backs to me, as did the waitresses at the café. I held my breath, thinking, It's mine.

It was splendid: a medium-sized oil painting from the thirties. For a long time, I gazed at it intently. At first glance, it was a chaos of dislocated figures, a superposition of lines and wild but fundamentally harmonious colors. Then I became aware of the beautiful asymmetries that leaped out at the viewer, then hid, then reappeared elsewhere, then concealed themselves again. The impasto, the brushwork (it had been painted *alla prima*), was a masterly demonstration of the assurance that can be achieved only by unself-conscious virtuosity.

But the painting's formal qualities were merely an invitation to explore its narrative content, which began to reveal itself little by little, as if I were decoding hieroglyphics. First, there was a flower, a crimson rose, emerging from the multiple Cubist planes of its petals; facing it, like a mirror image, was a jasmine in virginal whites, painted in Renaissance style, except for the right-angled spirals of its tendrils. In a collision of figure and ground, typical of Picasso, the space between was filled with little snail-men and goat-men, wearing plumed hats, doublets and breeches, or armor; one wore a fool's cap and bells; there were nude figures, too, dwarflike and bearded. Over this court scene presided a figure who must have been the queen, to judge by her crown: a monstrous broken-down queen, like a damaged toy. Rarely had the distortion of the female body, one of Picasso's trademarks, been taken to such an extreme. Legs and arms stuck out of her any old how, her navel and her nose were chasing each other across her back, the windmill of her torso was inlaid with the multicolored satins of her dress, and one foot, encased in an enormous high-heeled shoe, shot up skyward. . . .

Suddenly, the plot revealed itself to me. I was looking at an illustration of a traditional Spanish fable, or, rather, a joke, and a joke of the most primitive and puerile variety; it must have come back to Picasso from his early childhood. The joke is about a lame queen, who's unaware of her handicap, and whose subjects don't dare tell her about it. The Minister of the Interior finally comes up with a strategy for tactfully letting her know. He organizes a floral competition, in which all the kingdom's gardeners compete with their finest specimens. A jury of specialists narrows the field down to two finalists: a rose and a jasmine. The final decision, the choice of the winning flower, is up to the queen. In a grand ceremony, with the whole court in attendance, the minister places the two flowers before the throne, and, addressing his sovereign in a clear, loud voice, says, "*Su Majestad, escoja*," which means "Your Majesty, choose," but also, if the last word is broken up, "Your Majesty is lame."

The tale's humorous tone was translated visually by the multicolored tangle of gaping courtiers, by the stocky minister raising his index finger (which was bigger than the rest of him), and, above all, by the queen, composed of so many intersecting planes that she seemed to have been extracted from a pack of cards folded a hundred times over, refuting the idea that nine is the maximum number of times a piece of paper can be folded in half.

The fable had some intriguing features, which gave Picasso's decision to turn it into an image further layers of

significance. First, the fact that the protagonist was lame and didn't know it. It's possible to be unaware of many things about oneself (for example, to take the case at hand, the fact that one is a genius), but it's hard to imagine how this could extend to an obvious physical defect like lameness. Perhaps the explanation lay in the protagonist's regal condition, her status as the One and Only, which prevented her from judging herself by normal physical standards.

The One and Only, as there had been only one Picasso. There was something autobiographical about the painting and about the idea of basing it on a childish joke that he must have heard from his parents or his schoolmates, and even about the implicit use of his mother tongue, without which the joke wasn't funny and made no sense. The picture dated from a time when Picasso had been in France for thirty years and had completely adapted to the language and the culture; it was curious, to say the least, that he had resorted to Spanish to provide the key to a work that was otherwise incomprehensible. Perhaps the Spanish Civil War had renewed a patriotic streak in him, and this painting was a kind of secret homage to his homeland, torn apart by the conflict. Perhaps, and this need not exclude the previous hypothesis, the root of the work was a childhood memory, which had lived on as a debt to be repaid when his art had acquired a sufficient degree of power and freedom. By the thirties, after all, Picasso had been recognized as the preëminent painter of asymmetrical women: complicating the reading of an image by introducing a linguistic detour was just another means of distortion, though crowned, in this case, by its application to a queen.

There was a third hypothesis, on a different level from the first two, which took the painting's supernatural origins into account. Up until then, no one had known that it existed; its enigma, its secret, had remained intact until it materialized before me, a Spanish speaker, an Argentine writer devoted to Duchamp and Roussel.

In any case, it was a unique piece, singular even among the works of an artist for whom singularity was the rule; it could hardly fail to fetch a record price. Before embarking on one of my habitual fantasies about future prosperity, I took a little more time to enjoy contemplating the masterwork. I smiled. This crooked little queen, who had to be put together again from a whirl of tangled limbs, was touching, with her biscuitlike face (once you found it), her golden chocolate-wrapper crown, and her puppet's hands. She was the center of a centerless space. The round of courtiers, a veritable gallery of painterly miracles, was waiting for her choice; the evanescence of the flowers was a reminder of time, which for her was not a duration but an instant of understanding, a final realization, after a lifetime of illusion.

A crueller version of the joke can be imagined: the queen has always known that she's lame (how could she not know?), but good manners have prevented her subjects from broaching a topic that she prefers to avoid. One day, her ministers dare one another to say it to her face. This may be more realistic, but it's not what the painting represented. No one would make that queen the butt of a joke; no one would mock her. The courtiers all loved her, and wanted her to know it. Beneath the surface message ("choose"), the hidden message ("is lame") was meant for her: she would hear it and then, in a flash of insight, understand why the world rocked when she walked, why the hems of her dresses were cut on the diagonal, and why the lord chamberlain rushed to give her his arm each time she had to descend a staircase. They had resorted to the language of flowers, that eternal vehicle for messages of love. She had to choose the most beautiful flower in the kingdom, just as I had been obliged to choose between the two gifts offered by the genie. . . .

And at that moment my flash of insight came, freezing the smile on my face. Why this hadn't occurred to me before I couldn't understand, but all that mattered was that it was occurring to me now. As in a nightmare, an insoluble problem loomed, engulfing me in anxiety. I was still inside the museum: sooner or later I would have to leave; my life as a rich man could begin only outside. And how could I leave the Picasso Museum with a Picasso under my arm? ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Chris Andrews.*)

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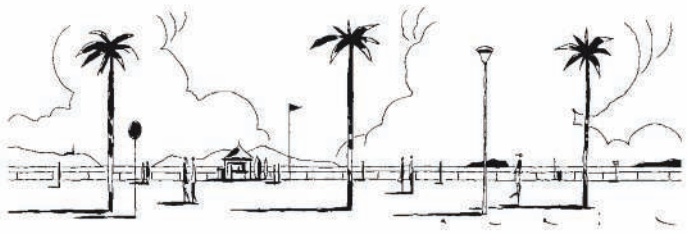
# THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

# THE USES OF DIVISION

*Rick Perlstein chronicles the fall of the American consensus and the rise of the right.*

BY GEORGE PACKER

Anyone old enough to have lived through the nineteen-seventies knew them as a long and often embarrassing anticlimax—a shapeless, burned-out interregnum between the high dramas of the sixties and the bright, hard edges of the Reagan era. Unlike the decades that preceded and followed, the seventies seemed to have no plot: a mishmash of musical styles and fads, a blur of failed Presidents, a series of international fiascoes, a mood of cynicism and farce. Preparing for a thoroughly ironic *fin de decade* party, Zonker Harris, of "Doonesbury," raised his mug: "To a kidney stone of a decade!" "Try to retrieve the seventies and memories crumble in one's hand," the critic Irving Howe wrote in his autobiography. "The decade itself lacks a distinctive historical flavor. It's as if the years had simply dropped out of one's life and all that remains are bits and pieces of recollection." In my memory, the seventies began in an atmosphere of antic nihilism—*Mad*, "ratfucking," Richard Pryor—and ended on the downer of "malaise" and the hostage crisis. I mainly remember longing to be somewhere else—it didn't matter whether it was the future or the past. (Admittedly, I was a teen-ager.) If there was any theme to that decade, it was the lack of a theme, of any higher meaning to events.

In recent years, there has been an onslaught of books, academic and popular, whose titles insist that the decade marked a major turning point: "The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics," "How We Got Here: The 70s, The Decade That Brought You Modern Life—for Better or Worse," "Mad as Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right," "Pivotal Decade," "Something Happened." What happened, we now know, was the collapse of the American consensus, the postwar social contract, founded on a mixed economy at home and bipartisan Cold War internationalism abroad. The seventies turned out to be the decade when the country began its transformation from steady economic growth to spasms of contraction, from industry to information and finance, from institutional authorities to individual freedoms, from center-left to right. Global competition happened in the seventies, and so did populist politics, special-interest money, the personal computer, and the cult of the self. The obsessed-over sixties seem increasingly remote and sui generis, while the trademarks of the seventies are strangely persistent. Wages have remained largely flat since 1973. Gas prices never stopped outraging drivers. "The Happiness Project" updates "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." We're still, or again, talking about the decline of American power and prestige. Ted Cruz today sounds a lot like Jesse Helms did back then.

In other words, the seventies were important because of what's happened since. At the time, Americans weren't conscious of a great shift, pivot, or crisis. The nature of historical writing, of memory itself, is to distort by selecting

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL; OPPOSITE: GEORGE ROSE/GETTY

*Reagan campaigning in L.A. before the 1976*

*Republican National Convention. His closing speech brought delegates to tears, and left many with a sense that they'd chosen wrong.*

and compressing events, making the past seem more dramatic and coherent than it ever was, but this is especially true of accounts of the seventies. Back then, only true believers saw those years as the final way station on the conservative movement's path to victory. In histories of the seventies, that destination now seems to have been obvious all along—maybe even inevitable. Narrative history, in bringing the past to life, asks us only to forget about the other turns we might have made.

For Americans younger than fifty-five, the story of conservatism has been the dominant political factor in their lives, and Rick Perlstein has become its chief chronicler, across three erudite, entertaining, and increasingly meaty books: "Before the Storm" (2001), about the birth of the conservative movement in the late fifties and early sixties, up to the landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 Presidential election; "Nixonland" (2008), about Richard Nixon's strategy of amassing power by dividing the country into two antagonistic camps; and now "The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan" (Simon & Schuster), which finally brings into focus the saga's leading character, Ronald Reagan, who made cameo appearances in the earlier books.

"Before the Storm" told the New Right's origin story, peopled by "a little circle of political diehards"—forgotten names like Clarence Manion and F. Clifton White. In a brilliant move, Perlstein showed that the early-sixties conservative movement was just as revolutionary and hostile to the political establishment as the much more famous New Left. The book made a persuasive case that, of the many insurgencies in the sixties, the one on the right had the most lasting significance. Perlstein, who was born in 1969, is a man of the left, but he explored the archives of the New Right in a spirit of imaginative sympathy, excited by the characters he found—activists from Young Americans for Freedom, *National Review* editors, members of the John Birch Society. His favorite targets were not diehard segregationists or fringe anti-Communists but the leading commentators of the era—Richard Hofstadter, James Reston, Walter Lippmann—who saw in Goldwater's flameout proof that conservatism had no future in American politics. "It was one of the most dramatic failures of collective discernment in the history of American journalism," Perlstein wrote.

If Perlstein seemed to be half rooting for the early conservative movement, it was because, from across the divide, he shared its combative approach to politics, admired its steadfastness in the face of crushing defeat, and wanted to emulate its ultimate success. This unexpected identification gave "Before the Storm" its energy and freshness. Always lively and sometimes cocky, Perlstein can't resist poking a finger in the sober faces of "the wise men," "the sophisticates," "polite Georgetown insiders," "the guardians of elite discourse," the New York *Times* columnists, *New Yorker* reporters, and Democratic Party mandarins who didn't like to admit that politics is often a conflict between unreasoning wills, and who therefore couldn't begin to understand the likes of Phyllis Schlafly or Louise Day Hicks. In his preface to "The Invisible Bridge," Perlstein writes, "A central theme of my previous two books chronicling conservatism's ascendancy in American politics has been the myopia of pundits, who so frequently fail to notice the very cultural ground shifting beneath their feet." The demise of liberalism after the sixties had more than a little to do with the self-satisfied blindness of liberals, and the targets of Perlstein's mockery often deserve what they get. But failures of collective discernment are always easier to spot half a century on.

"Nixonland" was necessarily a different kind of book. Its subject was "the fracturing of America," a larger and harder story to tell than that of the early New Right; it encompassed the whole of American culture, not just a single political movement. Perlstein began with the Watts riots in 1965 and ended, seven hundred and fifty pages later, with Nixon's reëlection, in 1972. In between came the Republican victories in the 1966 midterms, the Newark riots, the '68 campaign, assassinations, the mayhem in Chicago, Nixon's triumph, the Manson killings, the Silent Majority speech, Agnew and "positive polarization," Kent State, the Hard Hat Riot, George Romney, George Wallace, George McGovern—less focussed than "Before the Storm" but higher-octane. Perlstein developed a twofold method for harnessing his unruly material. Combing through the written record and television clips, he narrated well-known events in such minute detail that historical distance collapsed and readers began to feel that they were living through them week by week (or, in the case of his bravura reconstruction of the 1968 Democratic National Convention, watching them on TV hour by hour). Perlstein tried to convey what it felt like when political combat was no metaphor and Americans turned on one another in the streets. What the subject lacked in newness, the prose made up in heavily researched zest.

Perlstein, who has a propensity to view politics through the lens of psychology, organized this sprawling narrative under a single conceit. At Whittier College, Nixon founded a club, the Orthogonians, for the uncool strivers like himself who couldn't make it into the Franklins, the club for those born to effortless success. Franklins against Orthogonians, Kennedyesque liberal élites against Nixon's Great Silent Majority: on the back of this conceit Perlstein piled a great deal of explanation—in the end, more than it could support—about the social resentments beneath the explosions of the sixties.

If Nixon needed any encouragement in turning Americans against one another—and at times his caution and his desire to sound like a statesman held him back—he always had young Patrick Buchanan at his side, urging him on. Buchanan, a Catholic editorial writer who was raised by his father to admire General Franco and Joe McCarthy, joined Nixon on the lonely campaign trail in 1966 as a speechwriter, and remained his loyal lieutenant until Nixon resigned the Presidency, on August 9, 1974, forty years ago this week. In "The Greatest Comeback: How Richard Nixon Rose from Defeat to Create the New Majority" (Crown Forum), Buchanan shows Nixon tirelessly clawing his way back to the top of American politics after barely losing to Kennedy in 1960 and being humiliated in the race for governor of California in 1962. Buchanan was Nixon's cheerful id—Nixon minus the inner torments and the pious hypocrisy—always encouraging "the Boss" to savage an opponent, feed the

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public's anger, carve out slices of the Democratic coalition. The Nixon of "The Greatest Comeback" is basically the same dark figure we recognize from the Watergate tapes, though in better times: ordering a reporter off the campaign plane, calculating how to exploit the disorders of 1968. Buchanan (who cites "Nixonland" in his bibliography) conceals none of this, because he welcomed Nixon's polarizing impulses.

Buchanan once described to me a sweaty, raucous rally he and Nixon attended at a hotel in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1966, stumping for local Republicans in that year's midterms. Nixon, along with Senator Strom Thurmond and Representative Albert Watson (South Carolina segregationists who had recently defected to the Republican Party), whipped a room full of cigar-smoking men into a rage that "burned the paint off the walls," shouting about freedom, patriotism, and law and order. In "The Greatest Comeback," Buchanan calls this event "the most memorable" of that 1966 campaign—the first election of the backlash—and afterward Nixon exulted, "This is where the energy is! This is where the future of the party is!" Buchanan denied that the speakers had appealed to racism—before a crowd of incensed white men, in South Carolina in 1966, they didn't have to. Nixon didn't condone racial prejudice, as Buchanan protests (a little too much), but he walked a carefully calibrated line—keeping some public distance from the likes of George Wallace, while rousing the anxieties and anger of Wallace's millions of supporters and encouraging them to think of Nixon as their man. In a memo during the 1968 campaign, Buchanan warned Nixon not to go after the Alabama governor: "Wallace is the symbol of Southern resistance to Washington in the South, just as we would like to be the symbol of resistance to Washington and its policies in the nation. We will want, I would think, the people who are supporting Wallace now to be in our corner perhaps later." This approach came to be known as the "Southern strategy," and Buchanan was its unapologetic advocate.

"The Greatest Comeback" is a final act of loyalty to "the Boss," drawing our gaze away from Watergate (in 1973, Buchanan advised Nixon to pile his tapes on the White House lawn and light a bonfire) and reminding readers of that earlier, underdog Nixon from the good old days of the endless campaign, risen from the grave to claim the Presidency—because, with his acute political intelligence and deep personal grievances, he understood exactly how millions of Americans felt at the end of the sixties. Those are the qualities that made Nixon the ideal anti-hero for Perlstein's second volume.

With "The Invisible Bridge," Perlstein picks up where "Nixonland" left off, chronologically and formally. There's the same week-by-week narration, intercutting between several story lines, now covering 1973 to 1976. The tragedies of the sixties are repeated as farce: instead of the Kennedy and King assassinations, Lynette (Squeaky) Fromme, of the Manson family, and Sara Jane Moore (a fellow-traveller of the Symbionese Liberation Army) can't shoot straight in their attempts on Gerald Ford; instead of Vietnam, there's the botched Mayaguez rescue; instead of the Moratorium to End the War, there's "Saturday Night Live"'s Weekend Update with Chevy Chase. Three years, eight hundred pages, the final third wholly devoted to the Presidential primaries and conventions of 1976: the mass of detail is spread even thicker here than in "Nixonland," and over a smaller canvas. It's good to have one's crumbled memories of the Patty Hearst kidnapping and the Hank Aaron home-run record reassembled, but at times it feels as if Perlstein were just indulging his love of archival newspaper research, all the way down to the killer bees.

The Nixon we meet at the start of "The Invisible Bridge" is less interesting than the protagonist of "Nixonland." He has become the Nixon of popular revulsion. It's January, 1973, the President has won reëlection in the greatest landslide in U.S. history, and Watergate is about to blow up. In announcing the end of the American war in Vietnam, "peace with honor," and the return of almost six hundred prisoners of war, Nixon launches Operation Homecoming—a bald play to exploit the P.O.W.s and further his project of pitting the patriots against the America-haters. It turns out that the freed soldiers themselves have become polarized, in captivity and after their release: some heap praise on the President; others refuse to say that their sacrifice was on behalf of a noble cause. Pundits and politicians fight over the meaning of the prisoners and the war. The P.O.W.s missed out on the "Nixonland" years, and they've come home to a divided country.

"There were two tribes of Americans now," Perlstein writes, in a characteristic formulation. "One comprised the suspicious circles, which had once been small, but now were exceptionally broad, who considered the self-evident lesson of the 1960s and the low, dishonest war that defined the decade to be the imperative to question authority, unsettle ossified norms, and expose dissembling leaders—a new, higher patriotism for the 1970s." The other tribe consisted of believers in "America the innocent." It was led, cynically, by Nixon, and then, after Nixon's fall, wholeheartedly by Reagan.

These are not the analytical categories of "Nixonland," let alone of "Before the Storm." In his accounts of the sixties, Perlstein had a more complex view of the decade's political passions—he took pains to understand the mental world inhabited by Goldwater, Nixon, and their

## SEND ME A LEAF

Send me a leaf, but from a little tree
That grows no nearer your house
Than half an hour away. For then
You will have to walk, you will get strong and I
Shall thank you for the pretty leaf.

*—Bertolt Brecht*

*(Translated, from the German, by David Constantine.)*

partisans. In "The Invisible Bridge," he descends from his omniscient perch and takes up the cause of "the suspicious circles," implicitly throughout and explicitly in his preface: "What does it mean to *truly* believe in America? To wave a flag? Or to struggle toward a more searching alternative to the shallowness of the flag-wavers—to criticize, to interrogate, to analyze, to *dissent*?" If you put it that way, there's only one answer. Perlstein continues to show up the liberal commentariat—notably its failure to foresee Reagan's success. But, as the story of modern conservatism moves toward the present, Perlstein's attitude toward it begins to resemble the dismissiveness of those liberal critics, which takes some of the tension out of his dialectics.

"The Invisible Bridge" covers the three years between the return of the P.O.W.s and the Republican National Convention in the summer of 1976—years in which "America suffered more wounds to its ideal of itself than at just about any other time in its history": a criminal Presidency; oil shock; inflation, followed by stagflation; America's first military defeat, with the ignominious fall of Saigon; congressional revelations of dark deeds by the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.; violent, bankrupt cities; failed leaders; and on and on. Perlstein has looked under every rock. He has dug up the long-buried meat-inflation crisis from the spring of 1973, and he knows what the Birmingham *News* editorial page had to say about the bicentennial. The barrage of artifacts is arranged to convey a sense of panic, nervous breakdown, "a world gone mad." At one point, Perlstein riffles through the March 15, 1975, issue of the Milwaukee *Journal* and finds "a cabinet of horrors": a Purdue coed kidnapped by a professor, devastating tornadoes in the South, a bribery conviction in Oklahoma, a French journalist murdered in Saigon, new leads in the search for Patty Hearst, an attempted hijacking in Ethiopia, purse snatching in Milwaukee. "Horrors, of course, drench the news in any decade," Perlstein admits. "By the middle of the 1970s, however, the perception of the density of horrors was so much worse."

The horrors in that day's Milwaukee *Journal* don't actually seem that dense. When I checked the *Daily News* Web site this morning, it featured an Arkansas man accused of stabbing his pregnant girlfriend to death, an attempted mass shooting at a hospital in Pennsylvania, a poll showing that a third of Americans are in favor of impeaching the President, the latest on the influx of tens of thousands of Central Americans into Texas, a plane crash in Mali, the evacuation of the Malaysian Air Flight 17 corpses, Russian cross-border attacks on Ukraine, Israeli air strikes in Gaza, and an account of how a 2012 solar storm almost caused two trillion dollars' worth of damage around planet Earth. Future historians might conclude that the summer of 2014 felt apocalyptic to Americans. Instead, it's an anxious and depressing muddle—not unlike how 1975 felt. But even the most capacious chronicle is bound to scant the dismal ordinariness of life.

Perlstein's account depends on things falling apart in spectacular fashion—a version that's advanced by drawing chiefly on the news media, which fills everything with extra voltage, rather than on personal interviews. And it fits with the theme of an America dividing into two warring tribes in a world gone mad. Political ideas dominated "Before the Storm," but "The Invisible Bridge" has less to say about, for example, the influence of Milton Friedman's monetarist theory or the neoconservative critique of urban policy than about "The Exorcist" and "Jaws." The politics that matters to Perlstein here is rhetorical. He's concerned with the country's mood, and "The Invisible Bridge," like "Nixonland,"

has an organizing psychological insight. This one involves the radiantly smiling man with the glossy black hair in the book's perfectly chosen jacket photograph, speaking outside his birthplace while straddling two car bumpers with the grace of Cary Grant. (Though the title seems off—wouldn't "The Imaginary Bridge," from the Khrushchev quote in the epigraph, have been a more apt evocation of the fantasist on the cover?) Perlstein's Reagan is not new: the product of an alcoholic father and a chaotic boyhood, who learns to tell stories, first to himself and later to the world, stories that bear little relation to the truth but which make everything come out right in the end, and in which he is always the hero, the rescuer. What gives "The Invisible Bridge" its originality is the way Perlstein embeds Reagan's familiar biography in the disillusionments of the seventies. America was on its knees, where it finally had a chance to face its flaws and learn from them—"to *grow up*." Along came Reagan out of the past, a has-been in his mid-sixties who looked like Dean Martin, peddling a tale about a country blessed by divine providence. We know where the story went from there. "People want to believe," Perlstein concludes. "Ronald Reagan was able to make people believe."

It's notoriously hard to write about Reagan. His authorized biographer, Edmund Morris, given unprecedented access to the President while he was still in the White House, was so defeated by Reagan's opacity and quips that he resorted to fictionalizing. Perlstein synthesizes what other historians have uncovered about Reagan's earlier years into a vivid psychobiography ("Perhaps it was that he worked out in the psychic gymnasium of boyhood fantasy with ten times the furious determination of an ordinary boy"). The book punctuates a rich cultural history of Watergate with increasingly astonishing quotes from Reagan on Nixon's behalf. Reagan doesn't sound like an angry partisan; he tilts his head, smiles, and shrugs, as if the whole thing were an overblown kerfuffle. After the Saturday Night Massacre—on October 20, 1973, Nixon had ordered Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Archibald Cox, the Watergate special prosecutor; Richardson refused and resigned, as did his deputy; F.B.I. agents raided the special prosecutor's office; and John Chancellor, of NBC News, reported, "The country tonight is in the midst of what may be the most serious constitutional crisis in its history"—Reagan said, "I will not comment on the issue of Archibald Cox being discharged since it is relatively unimportant." His dismissiveness seems especially ominous in retrospect, since Watergate shows the country's democratic institutions still healthy and able to respond. (For two

deeper excursions into the scandal, whose extent still seems breathtaking, there's "Washington Journal," a reissue of collected pieces by Elizabeth Drew, this magazine's Washington correspondent at the time; there's also John W. Dean's "The Nixon Defense," a heroic paraphrase, in narrative form, of the thousand Watergate-related conversations recorded on the White House taping system, conversations in which the author plays no small role: "Nixon continued, 'Dean is obviously the kind of guy that likes to screw anything, that's really what he is. And that's what we need.' Haldeman burst out laughing at Nixon's sexual double entendre, as the president repeated, 'And that's what we need. That's what we need.'")

No matter what happened in the seventies, Reagan kept giving the same speech—"preaching the gospel of free enterprise"—that he'd been perfecting ever since his half-hour TV appearance on behalf of Goldwater at the end of the 1964 campaign, which, in turn, was based on the speech he'd been giving in the years before that, as General Electric's pitchman. By 1976, the speech, in one form or another, was more than two decades old, but Reagan kept giving it all the way to Kansas City, where, at the Republican National Convention, he came within a handful of delegates of beating the Party's own President. It was the last Convention whose outcome wasn't a foregone conclusion, and Perlstein makes the most of it, noting every detail, down to the steel casing around the Ford campaign's phone lines that ran underneath Reagan's trailer—protection against bugging. As the chaos mounts on the Convention floor, Perlstein's paragraphs get shorter, sounding more and more like the New Journalism of the time, and for a moment we seem almost to be back in Mailer's "Miami and the Siege of Chicago":

> Rockefeller held up the severed phone for the cameras, sweat breaking through his dress shirt. He then gave the sign back to a Reagan delegate—after ripping it in half.
>
> The American flag on the stage fell over.
>
> New York and North Carolina delegates, whose standards were next to one another on the floor, issued catcalls at one another, waving fists, making threats.
>
> Dole, at the podium, was livid.

The book ends with one of Reagan's great moments, the last act of the Convention—a closing speech about a note he had written for a time capsule. ("Will they look back with appreciation and say, 'Thank God for those people in 1976 who headed off that loss of freedom, who kept us now a hundred years later free, who kept our world from nuclear destruction'? And if we failed, they probably won't get to read the letter at all because it spoke of individual freedom, and they won't be allowed to talk of that or read of it.") It brought the Republican delegates to tears, and gave them the distinct sense that they'd just nominated the wrong man. His stirring lines were widely believed to have been delivered impromptu—but, according to Perlstein, that's just another Reagan story.

Compared with Chicago in 1968, there wasn't much at stake in Kansas City. Ford was racing toward Reagan's right-wing positions as fast as he could, in order to forestall defeat. The platform, with pro-life, pro-gun, pro-God, and anti-détente planks, was the first that sounded like the Republican Party we now know. "The fight here was between two groups of conservatives," an old Goldwater hand said. The battle for the Republican Party was over, and the winner was the loser. Reagan's failed challenge in 1976 became a grand dress rehearsal for 1980—the subject of the next, and concluding, installment of Perlstein's epic tale.

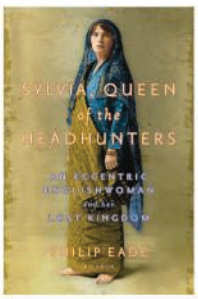
History comes with a kind of retrospective determinism. Just as it's impossible to imagine Kennedy beyond Dallas, Reagan's victory now seems contained in Goldwater's defeat. But the conservative ascendancy wasn't inevitable, and its triumph was far from complete. It's true that the center of gravity in American politics began moving toward the right in the mid-sixties and then, in the mid-seventies, did so more dramatically. We know the reasons, from reading Perlstein and many others: the broken promises of liberalism, the disorienting changes of modernity, the chaos in the streets, the shrinking of the pie. By 1980, Americans desperately wanted to be inspired and reassured, and Reagan, who knew how to do both, was the beneficiary of that longing. In his decisive debate with Jimmy Carter one week before the election, Reagan prevailed through charm, clarity, confidence, and the grim state of the Union ("Are you better off than you were four years ago?"). To win, however, he had to mute long-held positions, dissembling his radical views of Social Security and Medicare, and toning down his hawkish anti-Communism.

Jimmy Carter, appearing humorless and angry, was no longer capable of inspiration, and had never been particularly reassuring. These were not superficial defects in a leader, and at the Democratic National Convention of 1980 it was the soaring oratory of Edward M. Kennedy—the primary's loser, though at one point he was far outpolling both Carter and Reagan—that gave delegates an indelible vision of a better country. If you listen to Carter's Oval Office addresses on inflation, energy, and the nation's "crisis of confidence," the level of honesty is shocking, and deflating. No President has ever spoken that way since. The lesson he taught all his successors was not to tell the American people hard truths. Instead, Reagan set the tone. He forced American politics to be played on his turf—a rhetorical achievement that continues today.

In other ways, though, the conservative agenda of Goldwater, Nixon, and Reagan never took. If we see the seventies not as an apocalyptic war between two Americas but as a time of profound uncertainty, in which conflict and contradiction were found just as often within as between Americans, it's possible to imagine the country, at the end of the decade, turning for inspiration to a vision quite different from Reagan's brand of denial. His vision was the one on offer—but a majority of the country didn't vote for the destruction of blue-collar America in 1980, or the creation of a new plutocracy, or the rigging of legislation in favor of organized money. Most Americans still want their social programs kept intact, dislike being told how to conduct their private lives, and don't want their country to go looking for foreign dragons to slay. What Perlstein calls the "cult of official optimism," founded by Reagan, requires our leaders, including Barack Obama, to genuflect ritually before America the innocent. That rhetoric has grown extremely thin, however—not many Americans these days are optimistic. Reagan won, but the seventies never ended. ♦

# BRIEFLY NOTED

**THE MOST DANGEROUS BOOK**, *by Kevin Birmingham (Penguin Press)*. The existence of James Joyce's "Ulysses" owes much to the various people who helped Joyce as he wrote, got the book published, and faced down obscenity charges and censorship in Britain and America. This innovative literary history is a group portrait of a "handful of awestruck people"—editors, benefactors, lawyers, printers, smugglers, and even a U.S. federal judge, who, in a decision in 1933, justified the book's sexual explicitness by noting that "it must always be remembered that his locale was Celtic and his season spring." At the center of it all is Joyce, and Birmingham's greatest insight is the degree to which Joyce's tormented "life in pain"—ill health, poverty, crippling eye ailments—shaped his consciousness and his writing.




**SYLVIA, QUEEN OF THE HEADHUNTERS**, *by Philip Eade (Picador)*. In 1911, Sylvia Brett married the last of the White Rajahs of Sarawak, the only British dynasty ever to occupy an Asian throne. (A family member was given the island in 1841, after he helped put down a rebellion.) The family spent most of its time in England, and its exploits filled the gossip columns. Sylvia, a novelist and a memoirist celebrated for her wit, traipsed about London in traditional Malay dress, hosted bohemian parties, and conspired against a nephew who was heir to the throne. Eade captures the strange political mechanics of this late-colonial oddity (the Rajah's reign ended in 1946), but he seems determined to play down the flamboyance of his subject.

**THE MAD AND THE BAD**, *by Jean-Patrick Manchette, translated from the French by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York Review Books)*. This is a sort of murder-comedy, with, if you listen carefully, a muffled heartbeat at the center. A young girl is released from a madhouse in order, as she finds out, to help a rich man murder his ward, a red-headed little boy. The man sends a collaborator with her, a well-dressed sociopath, who means to kill her, too. Cramped by an ulcer, he comforts himself by imagining the two small bodies hanging from ropes, "tongues protruding, swollen, black." The story goes on pretty much that way—guts flying, underpants on fire—until the end. You practically die of suspense. And then there is a quiet, ironic French ending.

**TIME PRESENT AND TIME PAST**, *by Deirdre Madden (Europa)*. This tightly controlled novel meditates on the nature of memory through three generations of an Irish family. In 2006, a businessman, unaware of the financial troubles that will soon engulf his country, has become obsessed with old photographs. As he researches the development of color processing, his sister and aunt quietly grapple with recent trauma and his three children inch toward adulthood. Madden's language and her careful pacing imbue scenes of routine with a sense of poetry. When the narrator breaks in at the end, it's clear that, like the pictures that the protagonist studies, the story is a moment of suspended animation: the characters are helplessly unable to parse their history or anticipate the future.

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THE THEATRE

# THE FAMILY OF MAN

*Stephen Adly Guirgis on fathering the fatherless.*

BY HILTON ALS

*Stephen McKinley Henderson as Pops, an ex-cop, in "Between Riverside and Crazy."*

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN PFLUGER

It wasn't until I'd read and reread, recently, a number of Stephen Adly Guirgis's plays that I began to think seriously about the influence standup has had on contemporary American theatre. Like several other mid-career playwrights of distinction (Suzan-Lori Parks and Robert O'Hara come to mind), the forty-nine-year-old Guirgis, who has been a member of the LAByrinth Theatre Company since 1994, writes scripts that are, first and foremost, about the author's voice: fractious, verbally packed, hard, and true. Take away Guirgis's instinctive sense of how a play is shaped—most of his pieces have dramaturgically sturdy conclusions, especially if the preceding action has been frenetic and hard on his characters' souls, as it almost always is—and what you have left is a series of monologues that would rival any performance by Lord Buckley, Lenny Bruce, or Dick Gregory, masters of cranked-up, broken-down hip. In "The Little Flower of East Orange," Guirgis's heartbreaking 2008 comedic drama about redemption scooped out of the gutter of addiction and self-pity, the hero, an on-again, off-again junkie named Danny, gets an upsetting phone call from his sister, Justina, about their mother, who has disappeared. Justina's hysteria is a family trait:

> Shriek!, shriek!, sob, sob! *DANNY!* / Shriek, shriek!, wail, wail! *MOMMY GONE!!* / Howl, howl, sedative, sedative, *get on a fuckin' plane selfish addict fuck!* / Hysteria, hysteria, gasp, moan, cry, *asthma onset—your fuckin' fault!!* Sniffle, sniffle, passive-aggressive silence—*the world is fucking ending* / Sniffle, sniffle, Valium, Seconal, *airport now!* / Moan, moan, audible gasp. *At work. Can't talk. I do everything. Ready to slit my throat with carving knife.* / Cry, cry, bellow, bellow *MOMMY GONE MOMMY GONE MOMMY GONE. I hate you!* Cry cry wail! Wail—indecipherable threats—*JetBlue, motherfucker—book that shit!*—slam. Click. Dial tone.

Guirgis's monologues are reminiscent, in their energy and sheer playfulness, of Lord Buckley's classic routine "Subconscious Mind" ("Have you ever swung along a beautiful country road . . . Suddenly you start thinking about a beautiful girl . . . Phew! . . . And it's like uh uh uh take me now!"). "The Little Flower of East Orange," Guirgis's fifth full-length play, contains another hallmark of his work: thinking female characters, whose intellect is sometimes at odds with their intuition. It's a sad fact that many male American playwrights, both gay and straight, write female characters who seem to be born out of some peevish memory—what Mom did to me in the cradle, that sort of thing. Guirgis's perspective may not always be entirely grownup, either—no real artist ever feels complete—but at least his women characters struggle toward the same kind of grace, armed with the same kind of hope, as his men. Veronica, the female protagonist in his first Broadway show, the exciting and enjoyable "The Motherfucker with the Hat" (2011), has a coke problem, but that nasty drug doesn't so much get her high as help her manage her extravagant and disappointed ambitions. Guirgis is an equal-opportunity dreamer.

Oswaldo (the sexy and genuine Victor Almanzar), one of the male protagonists in Guirgis's new play, "Between Riverside and Crazy" (an Atlantic Theatre Company production, at the Linda Gross), doesn't have a girlfriend, but he does have language. He's so full of it, in fact, that he's like a comedian—he's always angling for the spotlight. Fragile and volatile, Oswaldo is a thirtyish unemployed Nuyorican with tats and black hair in a Caesar cut. He may remind you of another of Guirgis's characters, the convicted felon Angel Cruz, who argues about religion, being, and nothingness with a fellow-inmate in the stellar 2000 play "Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train." Like Angel, Oswaldo is keyed up, lonely, and bewildered,

it seems, by all that has gone wrong, not only in his world but in the world at large. Why is the cosmos filled with so much loneliness—and loveliness that's perpetually out of reach? For a time, Oswaldo tried to fill his emptiness with everything bad. Now he has a caseworker at a facility he calls "the place," who is helping him stay sober and learn something about himself, but he still doesn't know how to be a better man, not exactly. Which is one reason that he looks to Walter (Pops) Washington (the indelible character actor Stephen McKinley Henderson), a big, rust-colored ex-cop with a voice that sounds alternately gravelly and slightly strangled. Oswaldo reveres the older man for his authority, which includes his real estate: Pops holds the lease on a large, rambling rent-controlled apartment on Riverside Drive, where he puts up Oswaldo, along with his son, Junior (Ray Anthony Thomas), and Junior's girlfriend, Lulu (Rosal Colón).

Pops, who sits across from Oswaldo in his late wife's wheelchair—she died around Christmas; it's summer now—eating pie and drinking whiskey and tea, looks like a spoiled baby in a pram. Watching him, Oswaldo delivers a diatribe on his own former self-destructive habits:

> See: the Ring Dings and baloney and Fanta Grape, it turns out, that's what doctors and *People* magazine call "Emotional Eating" on my part—on account of I only ate that shit because those foods made me feel "safe and taken care of" back when I was a kid who was never "safe or taken care of." But now, I'm a adult, right? So I don't gotta eat like that no more, and I can take care of myself by getting all fit and diesel, like how I'm doing from eating these almonds and making other healthful choices like I been making. And so, I'm not trying to get all up in your business, but maybe that's also the reason you always be eating pie—because of, like, you got Emotionalisms—ya know?

But Pops is only marginally interested in Oswaldo's garbled homilies. How much does anyone really change? Lulu walks around the house half dressed, sometimes rubbing up against Pops; she's a baby in need, too, but a fleshy, sexy one—the only woman in a house filled with men and the dusty fixtures of Pops's past, including a bent Christmas tree that he can't seem to throw out, just as he can't throw out the bent lives that surround him.

In a revolving set created by the great Walt Spangler (this was the first time I'd seen a play at the Linda Gross and not felt that the actors and the sets were limited by the narrowness of the stage), the winds of change blow into Pops's existence, making way for the new—and the newly corrupt. Pops's landlord is going to court to raise the rent, and his former partner on the squad, Detective O'Connor, and her fiancé, Lieutenant Caro (Elizabeth Canavan and Michael Rispoli, both anxious, loud, and terrific), try to persuade him to accept a settlement in a lawsuit he has brought against the city. (He was accidentally shot by another police officer.) In a way, Pops is as lonely as Oswaldo. He's a man of color who lives in chaos, and who is trying to make a kind of family order out of the disparate emotional pieces. I think that that's Guirgis's goal, too: to paint a credible portrait of a black father in a world where fathers are mostly absent. Certainly Oswaldo's father is missing in action; when Oswaldo returns home at the end of Act I, drunk and violent, all he can see is that absence, which no amount of pleading or healthy eating can fill.

In Guirgis's previous plays, the male point of view was always balanced by the tenacious earthiness of the female characters. And in the ultimately muddled and perfunctory second act of "Between Riverside and Crazy" Pops takes up with a beautiful Santeria practitioner named Church Lady (brilliantly and freely played by Liza Colón-Zayas), but the play is really centered on the idea of patriarchy: How do we father the fatherless? It's a rich subject—this is Guirgis's most intellectually advanced play—but you can't analyze what you understand only intuitively. Although the director, Austin Pendleton, transports us into the characters' inner lives with real belief and clear stage management, he can't push what isn't on the page, and the play, especially during the second act, becomes little more than a series of character studies. Everyone in Pops's improvised family is left to come up with his or her own idea of what makes a father—or a man. Is it a role? A convention? A calling? Can becoming a father make a man see life anew? Guirgis, like other storytellers who explore the sacred and the profane, is most interested in how grace transforms us. His empathetic, poetic tales of ex-cons, addicts, and other men whom society would label losers return us, again and again, to a world that Guirgis, by virtue of his particular religion—the church of the streets—illuminates with the bright and crooked light of his faith. ♦


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ON TELEVISION

# SURGICAL STRIKEOUT

*Steven Soderbergh's disappointing "The Knick."*

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM

*"The Knick" makes you appreciate other historical dramas, like "Masters of Sex."*

Steven Soderbergh's "Behind the Candelabra" (2013), for HBO, was a spectacular with a shrewd heart. In the two-hour movie, Soderbergh placed two superb performances, by Michael Douglas (as Liberace) and Matt Damon (as his lover, Scott), inside a jewel-box mansion, which he filmed as both a prison and a castle. Set in the Hollywood of the late seventies and early eighties, the movie admirably resisted bio-pic sentimentality, dwelling comfortably within the contradictions of that closeted era, never telling the audience quite how to respond to this exploitative but genuine marriage. Like many director-driven TV shows of the past few years, "Behind the Candelabra" offered a fresh model for television, in which audacious visuals are as central to storytelling as great writing is.

In recent interviews, Soderbergh has seemed disenchanted by movies, financially and culturally: TV audiences, he has argued, are more open to character complexity, to ambiguity and risk-taking. It's all the more disappointing, then, to report that Soderbergh's first post-"Candelabra" TV venture, the period hospital drama "The Knick," colors inside the lines. Rather than innovate, the series, on Cinemax, leans hard on cable drama's hoariest (and whoriest) antiheroic formulas, diluting potentially powerful themes. Set in New York at the turn of the twentieth century, "The Knick," which was written by Jack Amiel and Michael Begler, is about the Knickerbocker, a hospital that treats the city's poorest immigrants, with a board of directors made up of wealthy philanthropists. At the Knick, a brilliant, drug-addicted, brothel-frequenting doctor—John Thackery, played by a beetle-browed Clive Owen—is poised to push modern medicine forward, from C-sections to skin grafts. The surgical-history material is rich stuff, but the series itself is dour and hokey, full of stock characters and eye-rolling exposition. Designed to flatter rather than to challenge the viewer, it's proof that even an ambitious director can't overcome a blinkered script.

The series opens with a dazzling sequence of obstetric surgery gone horribly wrong, in front of an auditorium of onlookers—a vision plucked straight out of Thomas Eakins's "The Agnew Clinic." White men in wool suits gaze down in judgment, while nurses, who wear tiny crested hats, like paper *frites* cones, stand by, stiff as soldiers. Soon, blood fills every jar, and chaos takes over, seeping into the clean place where the surgeons hoped to bring pure reason. This horrific set piece, and the grim scenes that follow, promise something powerful: a meditation on the stop-and-start nature of surgical innovation, one grounded in the economic and racial fractures of the era. Instead, the first seven episodes devolve into something far simpler: a Great Man tale, studded with lurid thrills. Like "Boardwalk Empire" and its ilk, "The Knick" is studiously harsh, visually and thematically—the well-done and gory surgical reënactments substitute for mobster violence. It's a historical reconstruction, although not always a careful one: at one point, a character refers to men "running trains" on a prostitute, an idiom that didn't appear until mid-century. Often, the series feels reverse-engineered from network history, a fancied-up variation on "St. Elsewhere" or "House," its familiar story beats disguised by propulsive editing and elegant long shots. The British show "Luther" does something similar, wrapping a crime procedural in a well-made suit and a serious scowl, earning credit for greater originality than it possesses.

Thackery himself is a by now familiar figure. He is a rebel, a loner, a genius with a bad temper; he's also a junkie, who hangs out in exotic opium salons, where he is catered to by Oriental prostitutes—that seems like the right adjective, given the way that these scenes are filmed, with silent beauties offering up their breasts like kumquats. Thackery attracts the ladies at the hospital, too, including a bicycle-riding West Virginian nurse who moons after him (the raw-faced Eve Hewson, giving a subtle, watchable performance). When an ex shows up on his doorstep, wracked by syphilis, Thackery is unfazed. "No one handles the unexpected like John Thackery," she says. "It's where I live," he replies. As Liz Lemon might put it: *opposite*.

In the show's major departure from formula, Thackery is also a racist, in a way that's logical for the period. He scorns and rejects Dr. Algernon Edwards, the

MARY CYBULSKI/CINEMAX

"Negro" doctor with whom he's forced to work, because the hospital benefactor's liberal white daughter (Juliet Rylance), who grew up with Edwards—he's the son of her cook and her chauffeur—insists that he be on staff. But we can tell, right off, where this story must go: you can't have two medical geniuses without game eventually recognizing game. Andre Holland brings considerable charisma to the role of the soft-voiced, steely-spined Edwards, but the character is a dignified contrivance, a model minority who is all decency, without edges or idiosyncrasies. In his basement office, he sets up a secret clinic for African-American patients, where he spearheads new surgical techniques. In his run-down boarding house, he's threatened by a ruffian, who says, on cue, "You think you're better than me?" Edwards—in a surprise that is no surprise—knocks out his assailant, demonstrating his virility.

Meanwhile, every other black character is made of particleboard: worthy victims, poor workingmen, proud mothers. The same is true of many of the other picturesque immigrant patients, glimpsed in squalid tenements or dying in the ward. When a violently racist Irish mother shows up, in a late episode, it's exciting, because she feels so organically hateful. There's a "You must pay the rent!" bluntness to the show's politics: rich men say stuffy things, corrupt men say pervy things, gangsters say "dese" and "dose," a crass health inspector slurps his coffee. When two wealthy families are infected with typhoid fever, a prim matron asks, "Do you know if they've been spending any time with immigrants? They carry it, you know." Her modern daughter replies, "Oh, for God's sake, Mother." Her father sighs and says, "Let's just hope this isn't the beginning of an epidemic." The best bits—a race riot, an unsettling series of C-sections—never gain traction, since the larger arcs veer, maddeningly, toward progressive wish-fulfillment: the essentially decent people (sexy, iconoclastic freethinkers) must eventually unite against the jerks (thugs, prigs, snobs, bigots).

It's enough to make you re-appreciate the boldness of other historical dramas, which have lent such variety to TV. "Mad Men," that sly opiate dreamscape, is unpredictable to a fault—who could have imagined that a lawnmower would run over a British foot? Peggy Olson has never been a mere chin-up proto-feminist; instead, she's a lovable, exasperating freak, capable of pettiness as well as gumption. There's also the satisfying BBC series "Call the Midwife," set among nuns and midwives in London in the nineteen-fifties. At first sight, it's more formulaic than "The Knick": it's a straight-up procedural, like "Grey's Anatomy." But "Call the Midwife" has become richer, more variable, and more ambitious with every season, exploring, like "The Knick," themes about obstetrics and class politics yet painting far warmer, less generic portraits of the midwives' slum-dwelling clients.

Best of all is "Masters of Sex," another quasi-historical show that portrays a brilliant, prickly ob-gyn—but one whom the show isn't dedicated to glamorizing. The series sets itself a near-impossible task: to make viewers care about the bond between two sex researchers, the icy William Masters and the warm Virginia Johnson, whose odd affair is, like the one in "Behind the Candelabra," at once a cynical bargain, a bold experiment in intimacy, a future marriage, and a tragedy in the making. Amazingly, in the show's superior second season, it pulls this off. The structurally experimental third episode focusses on one interaction between the couple—an erotic role-play—intercut with both a prizefight and a story about an intersex infant whose father insists the child be surgically made female. Skillfully directed by Michael Apted and written by Amy Lippman, the story raises questions about rage and masculinity, sex and power, but doesn't resolve them. Instead, it finds theatre in the uneasy, irrational, libidinal swing of human spontaneity. Like the best historical dramas, it does something better than deliver the facts: it expands the boundaries of what's possible. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

*From the Falmouth (Mass.) Enterprise.*

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POP MUSIC

# WEIRDLY POPULAR

*The enduring appeal of "Weird Al" Yankovic.*

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Do people enjoy "Weird Al" Yankovic because he's funny or because he's not that funny? The comedian, who specializes in song parodies, just released his fourteenth studio album, "Mandatory Fun," which features his class-clown mangling of hits by Lorde, Iggy Azalea, and Pharrell Williams, among others. It débuted at No. 1, selling more than a hundred thousand copies in its first week. Considering the post-digital slump in music sales—a hit album a decade ago could sell as many as a million copies in a week; this year, Sia's "1000 Forms of Fear" entered the charts at No. 1 by selling only fifty-two thousand copies—this might be the biggest first week for a comedy album ever. But what is it that Weird Al actually does? I don't laugh at his songs, yet I'm delighted by his presence in the world of pop culture. With his parodic versions of hit songs, this somehow ageless fifty-four-year-old has become popular not because he is immensely clever—though he can be—but because he embodies how many people feel when confronted with pop music: slightly too old and slightly too square. That feeling never goes away, and neither has Al, who has sold more than twelve million albums since 1979.

Anxiety starts early for pop audiences. For decades, I have had twenty-somethings tell me that they don't know what's on the charts, haven't listened to any new artists since college, and don't "know anything about music." They feel confused by how quickly the value of their knowledge of what's current fades. Weird Al's songwriting process, almost without exception, is to confront that anxiety and to celebrate it. Yankovic will take a mysterious and masterful song and turn it into something mundane and universal. He makes the grand aspirational concerns of teen-agers in Lorde's "Royals" into a story that includes a lesson about the hygienic advantage of taking food home in aluminum foil. (You'll see the rhyme there.) Charli XCX's boast of being "classic, expensive, you don't get to touch," in Azalea's "Fancy," becomes an ad for a handyman who can resurface your patio in Yankovic's "Handy."

The opening lyrics of "Smells Like Nirvana," Yankovic's 1992 version of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit," are as close to a mission statement as he has: "What is this song all about? Can't figure any lyrics out. How do the words to it go? I wish you'd tell me, I don't know." Weird Al has been cool for so long because pop makes everybody feel uncool; that he is the only one to admit it has made him a pop star. What's strange is how frequently the musicians whom Weird Al parodies feel blessed, as if some kind of comic Pope had waved at them. Williams, for instance, told Yankovic that he was "honored" to give him permission to do a take on his hit "Happy."

Yankovic grew up in Lynwood, a suburb of Los Angeles, and learned the accordion as a child, playing polka and other genres. Inspired by satirists like Tom Lehrer and Allan Sherman—the previous No. 1 comedy album was Sherman's "My Son, the Nut," in 1963—Yankovic began to create his own parodies. As his Twitter bio succinctly says, he's "the Eat It guy." In 1984, his version of Michael Jackson's "Beat It" seemed almost as popular as Jackson's original and, on MTV, made a star out of a goofball with bad glasses, curly hair (longer now, but still not gray), and a taste for Hawaiian shirts. Jackson sang about the pointlessness of violence; Yankovic used the handiest rhyme available and turned

*Funny voices, kazoos, and polka serve not to entertain us so much as to reassure us.*



ILLUSTRATION BY MR. BINGO

"Beat It" into a song about finishing your dinner. His video re-creates Jackson's famous red-leather style and adds gang members armed with utensils, which was sufficient to push Yankovic's song up to No. 12 on the *Billboard* singles chart and earn him a Grammy.

Musical verisimilitude is part of what Yankovic provides—it's a form of comfort that's slightly different from comedy. With his producers and musicians, Yankovic comes up with songs that can function, in a pinch, as stand-ins for the original. He was as good at re-creating Jackson and Quincy Jones's dance-rock production (itself a slightly out-of-touch reading of the rock music of the era) as he is at mimicking the minimal beat made by the Invisible Men and the Arcade for Azalea's "Fancy." For those who feel ashamed to play a chart hit, or possibly even hate the chart hit, Yankovic offers an opportunity to have your cake and eat it. None of these parodies would work with weak songs; he chooses ones with strong melodies and distinct personalities. If you feel out of your element listening to a hip-hop song about flying around the world and cleaning out minibars, you can still enjoy the shape of Azalea's song by listening to "Handy." You're probably not going to do this publicly if you're over the age of ten, but then no song will sell this many copies in one week to pre-teens alone. There are many people listening to Weird Al on headphones at work, which makes sense, because Yankovic is never disrespectful of the music; what he's sending up is the idea that he would ever be cool enough to live in the world the music came from.

He did, however, come close to transcendent coolness when he released videos for all the songs on "Mandatory Fun," as Beyoncé did last year with her self-titled, out-of-the-blue album; several writers pointed out the parallel. In fact, Yankovic had done that before, for "Alpocalypse," from 2011. The only real similarity with Beyoncé is that each video has obviously been carefully planned and has its own, distinct tone. The videos have been a core part of his approach from the beginning, and this album is no different. In fact, I often find that I encounter Weird Al's music through videos rather than through singles on the radio or through full-length albums.

The video for "Word Crimes," which has been viewed more than twelve million times on YouTube, is a good example of another appealing aspect of Yankovic's work: a soft and goofy sweetness. The original song, Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines," was a huge hit in 2013, despite the suspicion that the music was a shameless rip-off of Marvin Gaye's "Got to Give It Up." (Litigation is ongoing.) Thicke's lyrics centered on his deciding for an unnamed woman that "I know you want it," which, if not criminally coercive, sounded extremely creepy. Yankovic's video turned the video for Thicke's song, a display of barely clad models, into an animated lesson on avoiding grammatical crudeness. Brackets and exclamation points dance as Yankovic defines contractions and counsels against using "c" to mean "see." But Yankovic never comes off as a scold. Every aspect of his art is enthusiastic and cheerful, a throwback to an earlier era of comedy and pop culture, when lightness had validity. Now every fairy-tale princess and superhero has to be drenched in blood, watching a city collapse in a fake orgasm of C.G.I. overload. Standup comedians these days are more likely to plumb the depths of their emotional dysfunction than they are to wear trick costumes or do imitations. Yankovic is comforting in the way of Bugs Bunny, or early Steve Martin.

Or in the way of "The Dr. Demento Show," which I listened to as a kid, and on which Yankovic first aired his parodies, in the seventies. Working in a wild and wacky tone that made me cringe even then, the syndicated late-night d.j. who called himself Dr. Demento played comedy acts like the Firesign Theatre and parodies like Yankovic's. Though I eventually left behind what felt like kid stuff, kid stuff is another way of describing a thing that we know, that feels familiar and unthreatening. In a time of complete unrest, even the darkest and most grownup person will reach for something sweet and unchallenging. Funny voices and kazoos and accordions and polka serve not to entertain or delight us so much as to reassure us. Thank God, then, for the medley on Yankovic's new album, which folds in hits by anxiety-provoking young acts like Miley Cyrus and One Direction: "Now That's What I Call Polka!" ♦


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# THE ONE

*"Get On Up."*

BY DAVID DENBY

*Chadwick Boseman plays James Brown in a movie directed by Tate Taylor.*

In many ways, James Brown defies comprehension. He performed relentlessly for nearly six decades, beginning in the early nineteen-fifties. When he put his shows together, he rehearsed every move, every step, every interlude. In front of an audience, however, he surged beyond calculation, and entered a region both frenzied and rapturous. Other R. & B. and soul performers may have had greater gifts (Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke) and some rock-and-roll stars may have been just as entertaining (Little Richard, before he found God), but no one else had Brown's convulsive blend of musical genius and ecstasy. He was strong enough and shrewd enough to cast aside good taste; he screamed and grunted and, turning his head, telegraphed indecipherable messages to his backup players, all of it part of an unstoppable flow. He was an overwhelming talent, and also an overtly sexual presence onstage—something that whites did not see much of in black male celebrities in the fifties and the early sixties, before Muhammad Ali changed everything. For many in the audience (especially the white audience), James Brown was exciting and discomforting in equal measure.

"Get On Up," the bio-pic devoted to Brown's life and music, is surprisingly candid. The movie insists that "the godfather of soul" could be soulless—at least in his personal relationships. Again and again, Brown (Chadwick Boseman) is manipulative, violent, greedy, and just plain elusive. He hurts many of the people who are close to him (though the film only hints at the brutalities of his later years). At the same time, "Get On Up" does something that most fans would not have thought possible: using the original recordings and a lot of lip-synching, staging, and choreography, the movie re-creates Brown in full cry. Surrounded by his band and his singers, he gives everything of himself to his audience. *That's* where the man's soul was, the movie tells us. It's hardly a fresh insight, but to see it reënacted with this much skill is thrilling. Bette Midler, in "The Rose" (1979), brought her mixture of pungent wit and emotional vitality to the role of a self-destructive genius—Janis Joplin in all but name. "The Rose" has been forgotten, and it should be revived, but "Get On Up," as a portrait of a singer-songwriter, surpasses it. This movie will never need reviving. Brown's innovative rhythms will always make his music sound contemporary.

It has taken a long time for Hollywood to recognize what Brown and other soul musicians accomplished. Taylor Hackford struggled for fifteen years to get his Ray Charles bio-pic, "Ray" (2004), off the ground. The producer Brian Grazer obtained the rights to James Brown's story thirteen years ago. He developed a script with the British screenwriting team of John-Henry and Jez Butterworth. But Brown died in 2006 and the project stalled, until Mick Jagger, who then held the rights, proposed to Grazer that they join forces. (Jagger, who learned so much from Brown, has been making his own film about him—collaborating with Alex Gibney on a documentary.) Grazer and Jagger hired Tate Taylor, a white Southerner, who directed "The Help" (2011), the soft-grained movie about black servants and white bosses in early-sixties Mississippi.

Taylor's involvement turns out to be a mixed blessing. Altering the Butterworths' screenplay, he has attempted to elevate the standard tropes of a Hollywood bio-pic into a radical new form. As Taylor shows us, James Brown had a terrible time as a child. Abused and beaten by his father (Lennie James) and abandoned by his mother (Viola Davis), he grows up in Depression-era rural Georgia, under the protection of Aunt Honey (Octavia Spencer), an all-seeing woman who runs a brothel, and who tells him that he's meant for greatness. His mother, before she left (for unexplained reasons), told him the same thing. These solemn predictions give a corny, quasi-mythical aura of destiny to a triumph that was actually built on talent, hard work, daring, and opportunism; if anyone was self-made, it was James Brown. But Taylor can't let go of his pretentious design: imitating Alain Resnais and other modernist directors, he dissolves linear narration, plowing backward again and again, giving us more Southern-gothic moss—often when we're most fascinated or appalled by Brown and would rather not leave the moment to search for the root cause of his behavior. Didn't anyone tell Taylor that you can't explain a phenomenon

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ILLUSTRATION BY CONCEPCIÓN STUDIOS

like James Brown any more than you can explain Mozart?

As Brown, Chadwick Boseman is sensational. In "42," he played Jackie Robinson, who could make history in the major leagues only if he ignored the race-baiting snarls from other players and from the stands. Boseman's lionlike eyes conveyed some of what Robinson went through, but, except on the field, the performance never took off physically. He conquers all restraint in "Get On Up." Thirty-seven years old, he assumes the role of Brown as the performer turns seventeen, squeezing his words into the young Brown's strangled, high-pitched blur. (Eddie Murphy said that he never understood a word Brown said.) Acting with his arms and his shoulders—Brown's body wasn't yet fully liberated—Boseman makes him a little overeager: a young man with a killer smile and enormous charm, especially when he wants something from someone.

Brown and a group of other young musicians, obsessed with the impassioned style of Pentecostal gospel music, form a group called the Famous Flames. At the demand of a booking agent, Ben Bart (Dan Aykroyd), and a record producer, Syd Nathan (Fred Melamed), the name of the group is changed to James Brown and His Famous Flames. The rest of the band is furious, but Brown agrees. He makes everyone, including his friend and musical collaborator Bobby Byrd (Nelsan Ellis), address him as "Mr. Brown." At first, the formality seems a hipster joke, a way of announcing that he has arrived. But Brown takes it very seriously, and also fines anyone in the group who plays a wrong note or does drugs—any drugs, including marijuana. He insists on respect from whites, too, but, in Taylor's apparently ironic telling, Brown's ways with black musicians become increasingly domineering and egotistical. The situation grows worse when Brown starts making millions but denies his salaried musicians base pay and taunts them into quitting.

As Brown's music moves from gospel to rhythm and blues (and later to funk), audiences go crazy, and Boseman reveals what success does to Brown's body. The smile is no longer welcoming; it's sharklike, a demand for recognition. Offstage, Boseman gently swings his torso as he walks, as if Brown were teasing the sexual opportunities that are open to him. He enters a room with his head slightly turned; he has his own angle on what's going on, and won't submit to anyone else's. He does look directly at Bart, a fond and protective music pro, but otherwise he's distant and impersonal, a man incapable of acknowledging anyone who isn't a member of his audience.

Onstage, in blue silk, and with abundant ascending hair, Boseman in one continuous motion grabs the mike, drops it, pulls it back by its cord, and launches into "Night Train." The beat is driving, constant, even ferocious, but Boseman's movements are liquid. A spectacular dancer (the choreographer Aakomon Jones worked with him), he does Brown's swivelling side to side, his scissoring splits. To my eyes, his performance is both accurate and a marvellous interpretation, an extension of Brown's greatness. The filmmakers give us plenty of music-making: the famous night at the Apollo, in 1962, which became a hit album and brought Brown to national attention; the 1964 T.A.M.I. Show, filmed at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, in which he blew the Rolling Stones off the stage; and the Paris concert of 1971, when he performed three stunning numbers—"Get Up (I Feel Like Being a) Sex Machine," "Super Bad," and "Soul Power." In a rarity in these bio-pics, the movie captures a musician's shifts in style. Rehearsing, Brown teaches his rebellious backup band to emphasize rhythm rather than melody. "Every instrument a drum," he says, and persuades the horns to play, in unison, a single chord. Funk takes shape before our eyes, with hip-hop beckoning down the road.

The presentation of Brown's music is extraordinarily generous, and I have only one quarrel with it. Brown made records from 1956 almost until his death. The filmmakers transferred all the recordings to a different digital format, adding some new sounds and deleting some old ones. These versions tame the rawness of the original records, particularly the early ones—the incomparable assault, aimed at your heart and your body, that leaped out of radios, loudspeakers, hi-fi equipment. Grazer, Jagger, and Taylor (and probably a host of sound technicians) undoubtedly wanted clarity and dramatic emphasis. But, no matter how you heard it, James Brown's music was devastating, and it shouldn't be plumped and smoothed. Brown helped create the contemporary taste for rawness in popular music; it's what people have always loved him for. ♦

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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Matthew Diffee, must be received by Sunday, August 17th. The finalists in the July 28th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 1st issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit newyorker.com/captioncontest.*

### THE WINNING CAPTION

*"Oh, yeah? Well, I'm off to see the orthopedist."*
Brian Murphy, Portland, Ore.

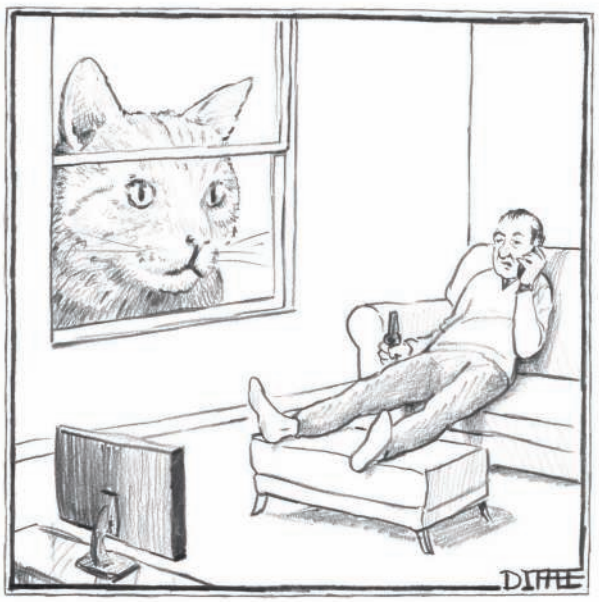
### THE FINALISTS

*"My last office had a castle."*
Nathan Tatro, Alexandria, Va.

*"Do you ever get the feeling that we're purely decorative?"*
Alexandria Wallace, West Palm Beach, Fla.

*"Some guys never make it out of the plastic bag."*
Sandra A. Miller, Arlington, Mass.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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