PRICE $6.99

THE NEW YORKER

AUG. 25, 2014

iPhone 5s. The perfect phone deserves the perfect plan.

AT&T's best-ever pricing for families.

AT&T's family pricing*		
2 lines	$130	Including 10 GB of data to share Unlimited talk & text
3 lines	$145	
4 lines	$160	
5 lines	$175	

*iPhones sold separately.
AT&T Next℠ and other device charges additional.

Get the iPhone 5s for $0 DOWN

iPhone 5s

Our fastest way to order is att.com

Visit att.com/mobilesharesavings for pricing on plans from two to ten lines.

MOBILIZING YOUR WORLD℠

Pricing for Value plan w/10 GB data includes plan charge ($100/mo.) & $15/mo. access charge per smartphone on no annual service contract (AT&T Next,℠ bring your own, pay full price, or month-to-month). Pricing also applies to customers w/smartphones on 2-yr agmts prior to 2/2/14. Discounted pricing is avail. as long as you keep your phone. If upgrading to a new phone discount is only avail. via AT&T Next℠ or if you bring your own phone or pay full price. If you upgrade to a new 2-yr agmt, the discount is lost. **iPhone 5s:** Sold separately. AT&T Next℠ installment or other device charges add'l. **AT&T Next℠:** Req's eligible installment agmt & qual. credit. Tax due at sale. Wireless service (voice & data) req'd & is add'l. Limit four devices via AT&T Next℠ or tablet installment agmt per acct. Select locations. Device balance due if wireless svc. cancelled. **Device Limits:** 10 devices per plan. Limit four financed devices per wireless account. **Data:** Charged $15/GB for overage. **Gen. Wireless Svc. Terms: Subject to Wireless Customer Agmt or Applicable Business Agmt.** Activ./upgrade fee up to $40/line & a deposit may apply. Credit approval req'd. Coverage & svc. not avail. everywhere. Other restr's apply & may result in svc. termination. **Other Monthly Charges/Line:** May include taxes & federal/state universal svc charges, Reg. Cost Recovery Charge (up to $1.25), gross receipts surcharge, Admin. Fee & other gov't assessments which are not gov't req'd charges. Pricing subject to change. **Visit a store or att.com/mobilesharesavings for more info.** ©2014 AT&T Intellectual Property. All rights reserved. Apple, the Apple logo, and iPhone are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

THE NEW YORKER

AUGUST 25, 2014

5 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

17 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
George Packer on handling another Iraq crisis; remembering Robin Williams; data; fossils; James Surowiecki on Ebola economics.

JILL LEPORE 22 THE CROOKED AND THE DEAD
Money, politics, and the Constitution.

PAUL RUDNICK 29 TRIGGERS

CHRISTOPHER BEAM 30 UNDER THE KNIFE
China's doctor-patient wars.

LAUREN COLLINS 36 THE SPY WHO LOVED ME
The double life of an undercover cop.

MICHAEL SPECTER 46 SEEDS OF DOUBT
An activist's crusade against G.M.O.s.

FICTION

TESSA HADLEY 58 "ONE SATURDAY MORNING"

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

JAMES WOOD 64 *James Kelman's "If It Is Your Life."*
69 *Briefly Noted*

MUSICAL EVENTS

ALEX ROSS 70 *Nights at the Hollywood Bowl.*

POP MUSIC

SASHA FRERE-JONES 72 *Nashville's bigger tent.*

THE CURRENT CINEMA

ANTHONY LANE 74 *"Frank," "Love Is Strange."*

POEMS

LUCIA PERILLO 33 *"Blacktail"*
EAVAN BOLAND 54 *"The Lost Art of Letter Writing"*

DANNY SHANAHAN COVER
"Trunk Show"

DRAWINGS Paul Noth, Edward Steed, Michael Maslin, Farley Katz, David Sipress, J. C. Duffy, Carolita Johnson, Frank Cotham, Roz Chast, P. S. Mueller, Bruce Eric Kaplan, P. C. Vey, T. S. McCoy
SPOTS Tibor Kárpáti

"An intimate window on life in the military, the impact of war, and the difficult transition to home. This is an absolutely terrific and important work."

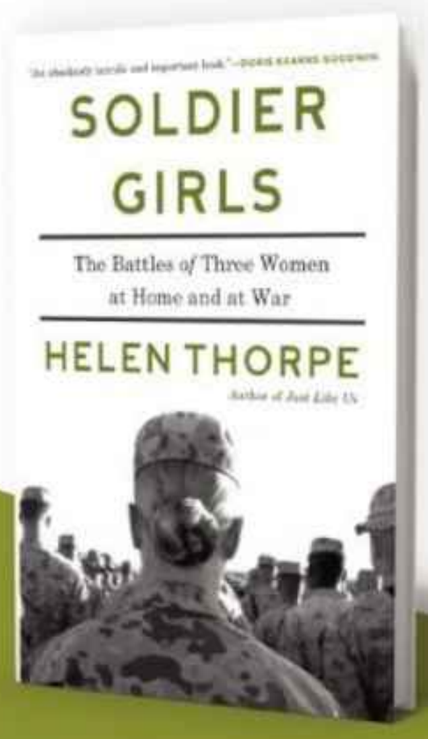
—DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

SOLDIER GIRLS

The Battles *of* Three Women at Home and at War

By award-winning author

HELEN THORPE



A groundbreaking account of three women deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, and how their military service affected their friendship, their personal lives, and their families.

SCRIBNER
A Division of Simon & Schuster
A CBS COMPANY

SimonandSchuster.com

CONTRIBUTORS

JILL LEPORE ("THE CROOKED AND THE DEAD," P. 22) is the David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard. Her new book, "The Secret History of Wonder Woman," will be published in October.

GEORGE PACKER (COMMENT, P. 17), a staff writer, is the author of "The Unwinding," which won the 2013 National Book Award for nonfiction.

ELIZABETH KOLBERT (THE TALK OF THE TOWN, P. 20), who writes about environmental issues for the magazine, published "The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History" in February.

CHRISTOPHER BEAM ("UNDER THE KNIFE," P. 30) is a staff writer for *The New Republic* and is currently based in Beijing.

LAUREN COLLINS ("THE SPY WHO LOVED ME," P. 36) reports from Europe for the magazine.

MICHAEL SPECTER ("SEEDS OF DOUBT," P. 46), the author of "Denialism," is a staff writer who covers science and global public health.

TESSA HADLEY (FICTION, P. 58) has published two short-story collections and five novels, including "Clever Girl," which came out in March.

JAMES WOOD (BOOKS, P. 64) is Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard. He has published several books, including "The Fun Stuff."

ALEX ROSS (MUSICAL EVENTS, P. 70), the magazine's music critic, is the author of "Listen to This" and "The Rest Is Noise."

DANNY SHANAHAN (COVER), a longtime *New Yorker* cartoonist, wrote the introduction, and drew the cover, for "The *New Yorker* Book of Golf Cartoons."

NEWYORKER.COM

EVERYTHING IN THE MAGAZINE, AND MORE THAN FIFTEEN ORIGINAL STORIES A DAY.

PLUS: EVERY PIECE WE'VE PUBLISHED SINCE 2007, FREE FOR A LIMITED TIME.

AND MORE, INCLUDING:

A NEW ARCHIVE COLLECTON: Selected fiction from the magazine about crime and punishment, by writers such as *Margaret Atwood* and *Daniel Alarcón*.

DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT: Analysis of news and culture by *Amy Davidson*, *Alex Ross*, and others.

HUMOR: A Daily Cartoon drawn by *Benjamin Schwartz*, plus the Shouts & Murmurs blog.

FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by *Tessa Hadley* and *Eavan Boland*.

PODCASTS: *Dexter Filkins* and *Evan Osnos* discuss the ongoing crisis in Iraq with *Amelia Lester*, on the Political Scene. Plus, *Michael Specter* and *Alan Burdick* on Out Loud.

VIDEO: *Sasha Frere-Jones* comments on a transformation in the sound of country music.

SUBSCRIBERS: *Get access to our magazine app for tablets and smartphones at the App Store, Amazon.com, or Google Play. (Access varies by location and device.)*

THE MAIL

A WOMAN'S WORLD

Michelle Goldberg's piece about radical-feminist views on transgender identity and rights accurately portrays the trans-exclusionary radical feminist movement as fringe ("What Is a Woman?" August 4th). However, as the executive director of Feministing.com, I want to underscore that complaints about lost venues and critical Tumblr posts cannot be adequately understood without hearing from a category of people at the center of the conflict, whose identity is systemically denied. While the trans-rights movement has indeed seen gains in recent years, transgender people, as Goldberg notes, still face disproportional and soaring rates of discrimination and violence, with low-income women and women of color particularly affected. In the first four months of this year, more than a hundred trans people were murdered, according to data compiled by the Transgender Violence Tracking Portal. Much of this violence is fuelled by the same impulses expressed by so-called radical feminists to police gender and dictate the terms of acceptable womanhood. Transgender issues are feminist issues. A feminist who uses hateful logic to deny trans people rights and resources isn't a feminist.
Lori Adelman
Brooklyn, N.Y.

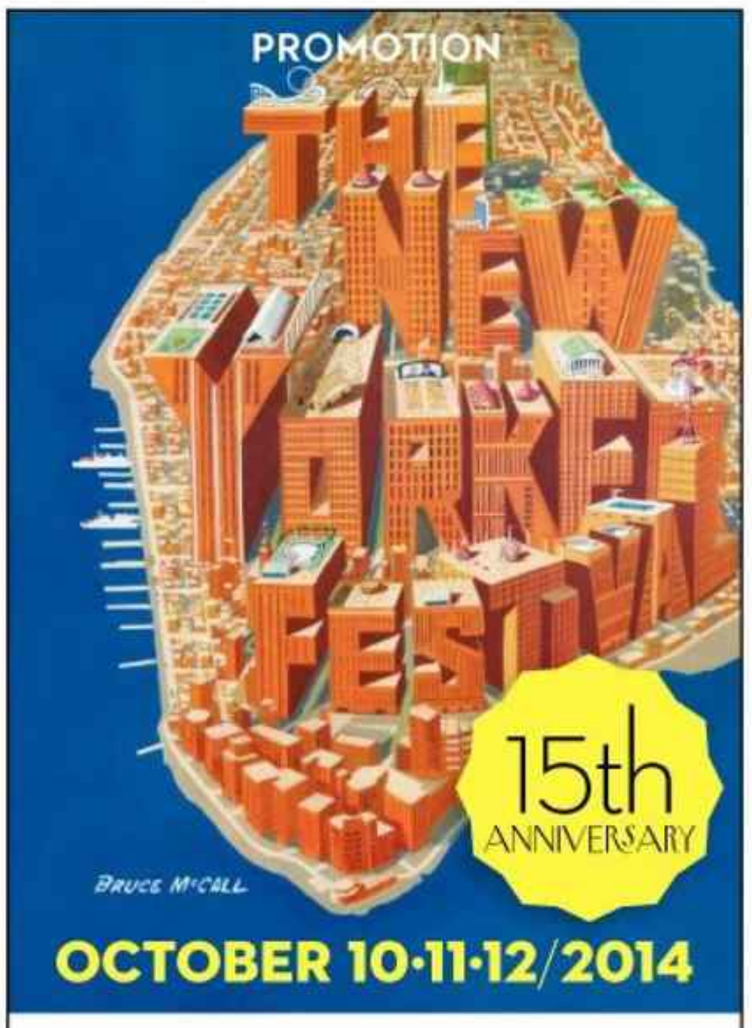
Intelligent voices must speak out on behalf of the legitimacy of femaleness as a fluid, spectral self-identification. I serve as the communications director for the Empire State Pride Agenda. Mainstream society may not yet be fully aware of the heinous acts of discrimination that transgender females face on a daily basis, as targeted victims of hate. Positing that male-to-female trans women hold male privilege, and should therefore be excluded from all-female spaces, as the trans-exclusionary radical feminists so callously do, breathes falsehood into a delicate situation. The plight of transgender women has only recently gained visibility. The truth is, transgender women face very real threats of eviction, unemployment, and verbal or physical attacks precisely because of a perceived, masked maleness that society rejects. Trans women do not enjoy male privilege—their experience is far from it.
Allison Steinberg
New York City

Trans people experience repeated harassment and abuse from trans-exclusionary radical feminists. Last year, for instance, a transgender high-school student in Colorado was targeted by conservative groups in a media campaign that lied about her to the extent that she was threatened with violence, and even murder, on social media. The story was disseminated online by trans-exclusionary radical feminists. As a result, she was put on suicide watch. This is typical of the actions I have seen taken by trans-exclusionary radical feminists to silence and bully trans people.
Natacha Kennedy
London, U.K.

As a man, and aware that my self-identification as gay is somewhat of a sociopolitical construct, I wanted to hear what the radical feminists have to say about those who are intersex at birth. According to research by Anne Fausto-Sterling, an expert in biology and gender development, one in 1,666 children is born with neither XX or XY chromosomes—a base for determining gender that is unswayed by social norms. About one in a thousand people gets surgery to "correct" or define his or her birth gender. Do the trans-exclusionary radical feminists comb through an intersex female's medical history, or do they base their decisions on the way a woman presents herself? Gender and gender identity can be complicated, and the transphobic activists are just another sad example of a group marginalizing those who don't fit into a neat box.
Doug Wright
Los Angeles, Calif.

•

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.



Only MasterCard® Priceless® New York allows you to go behind the scenes, access extraordinary experiences, and secure tickets to the most coveted events in the city—including The New Yorker Festival.

ADVANCE TICKET SALES
MasterCard cardholders get early access to tickets for all Festival events, beginning at 11 A.M. E.T. on September 11th and continuing until 11 A.M. E.T. on September 12th. Purchase tickets only at newyorker.com/festival.*

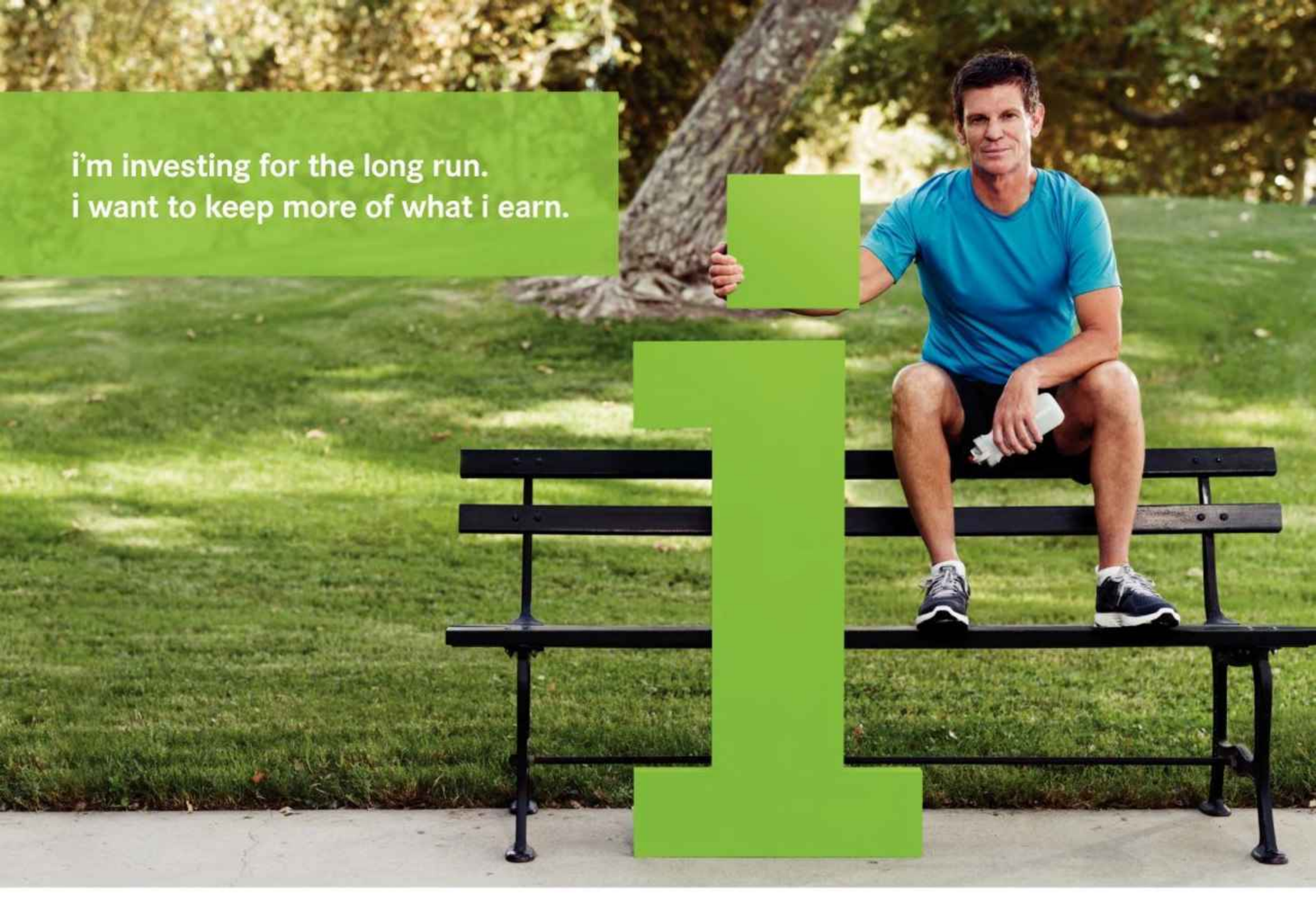
UNIQUE BENEFITS
Cardholders enjoy preferred seating and a complimentary beverage** at select events when purchasing tickets to the Festival with a MasterCard.

PRESENTED BY
MasterCard
PRICELESS® NEW YORK

*While supplies last.
**Preferred seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis upon arrival at MasterCard Stage at SVA Theatre and Gramercy Theatre. Complimentary beverage is available at Gramercy Theatre, and you must be 21 years old or older to redeem offer.

MasterCard, Priceless, and the MasterCard Brand Mark are registered trademarks of MasterCard International Incorporated.
© 2014 MasterCard.

ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE McCALL



iShares Funds can help you keep more of what you earn.

iShares Funds are diversified, low cost and tax efficient.
They cost 1/3 as much as the typical mutual fund.[1]

To find out more, ask your financial advisor or visit iShares.com

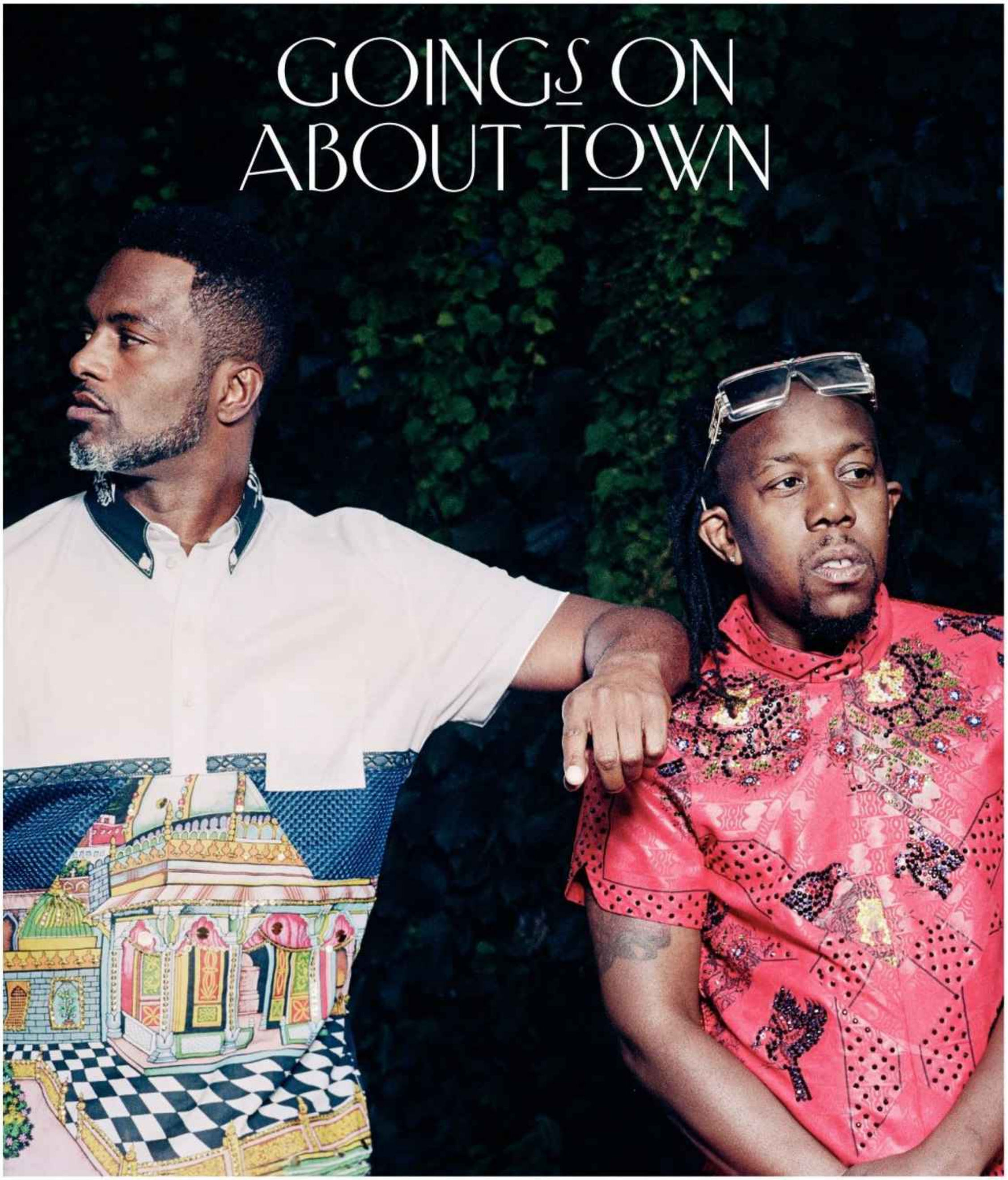
iShares by BlackRock, the world's largest investment manager. Trusted to manage more money for investors than any other firm in the world.[2]

iShares® by BLACKROCK®

1. Source: Morningstar, as of 3/31/14. Comparison is between the Prospectus Net Expense Ratio for the average iShares ETF (0.40%) and the average Open-End Mutual Fund (1.27%) available in the U.S. 2. Based on $4.3T in AUM as of 12/31/13.

Carefully consider the Funds' investment objectives, risk factors, and charges and expenses before investing. This and other information can be found in the Funds' prospectuses or, if available, the summary prospectuses which may be obtained by visiting www.iShares.com or www.blackrock.com. Read the prospectus carefully before investing. Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal. Diversification may not protect against market risk or loss of principal. Transactions in shares of ETFs will result in brokerage commissions and will generate tax consequences. All regulated investment companies are obliged to distribute portfolio gains to shareholders. The Funds are distributed by BlackRock Investments, LLC (together with its affiliates, "BlackRock"). ©2014 BlackRock. All rights reserved. **iSHARES** and **BLACKROCK** are registered trademarks of BlackRock. All other marks are the property of their respective owners. iS-12402-0514

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



AUGUST 2014 | WEDNESDAY 20TH · THURSDAY 21ST · FRIDAY 22ND · SATURDAY 23RD · SUNDAY 24TH · MONDAY 25TH · TUESDAY 26TH

BROADLY SPEAKING, AFROPUNK refers to the adaptation by African-Americans of traditionally white musical forms, such as alternative rock, metal, and punk. For the past ten years, the Afropunk Festival, which takes place Aug. 23-24, in Fort Greene's Commodore Barry Park, has celebrated this movement, uniting different musical genres as well as embracing skate culture and D.I.Y. fashion. The acts include Alice Smith and other unclassifiable yet great vocalists; the ska-funk veterans Fishbone; the country-folk newcomer Valerie June; and the Seattle-based experimental hip-hop act Shabazz Palaces (Palaceer Lazaro, a.k.a. Ishmael Butler, formerly of Digable Planets, and Tendai Maraire, above). D'Angelo, the once and future neo-soul messiah, is the headliner. He hasn't released an album in fourteen years. When will a new one arrive? No one knows; just listen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK PECKMEZIAN

NIGHT LIFE | DANCE
MOVIES | THE THEATRE
ABOVE & BEYOND
ART | CLASSICAL MUSIC
FOOD & DRINK

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

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

Arcade Fire

This band is big—big in sound, big in fan base, and big in showmanship. And its front man, Win Butler, is an imposing six feet four. Its action-packed arena shows are full of epic ballads, Haitian rhythms, costumes, video projections, and confetti. Violins, congas, and a delightful choreographed woodwind section expand the sound, while oversized Haitian carnival heads give the group a Pez-dispenser-on-parade look. But Arcade Fire is a family band at heart: Butler performs alongside his wife, Régine Chassagne, and his brother William Butler, and he has his baby boy on tour with him. The band's latest release, "Reflektor," was co-produced by LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy, and it ups their dance game. (Barclays Center, 620 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. barclayscenter.com. Aug. 22-24.)

The Clean

In the late seventies, this groundbreaking New Zealand act inspired untold numbers of Kiwis to pick up guitars and start bands. In the early part of their career, they encouraged a vibrant scene in their home town of Dunedin. The band's name doesn't match most of its output, an infectious, sixties-inflected indie rock that tends to sputter and start. While the group has been unable to re-create their success on the international stage, their influence has been global—it's impossible to imagine what Pavement, Yo La Tango, or any number of indie-rock heavy hitters would sound like without them. (Glasslands, 289 Kent Ave., between S. 1st and S. 2nd Sts., Brooklyn. theglasslands.com. Aug. 22.)

Liturgy

The quest for extreme sound has a long history in New York. It includes solo loft performances by the guitarist-composer Glenn Branca, in the seventies; the punishing brutality of early-eighties Swans; and, more recently, the music of Liturgy, a superb Brooklyn-based group that calls its music "transcendental black metal." In 2009, the outfit's leader, Hunter Hunt-Hendrix, published a manifesto that sought to sketch out the aesthetic qualities of this self-created genre. "Transcendental Black Metal is in fact nihilism," he wrote. "It is a double nihilism and a final nihilism, a once and for all negation of the entire series of negations." More persuasive than Hunt-Hendrix's writing is Liturgy's sound, a relentless, trance-inducing meld of noise, hyper-detailed guitar riffs, and chanted or screamed vocals. For this performance, the group will expand from a duet to a quartet for the first time in three years, and will preview material from an eagerly awaited new album, due out next year. The opening acts include **White Suns** and **Wreck and Reference**, both of which share the headliner's belief in the beauty of sonic aggression. (Issue Project Room Summer Series at Pioneer Works, 159 Pioneer St., Brooklyn. issueprojectroom.org. Aug. 23.)

Röyksopp & Robyn

The Norwegian electronic-music duo Svein Berge and Torbjørn Brundtland (a.k.a. Röyksopp) and the Swedish singer-songwriter Robin Miriam Carlsson (a.k.a. Robyn) have teamed up in the past, but "Do It Again," a mini-album, is their most collaborative effort yet. Despite the frustrating brevity of the record (it's only thirty-five minutes), there's nothing small about its songs, which are not just unusually long but also hypnotic and ethereal. Expect the stage effects to be well suited to the sexy, trippy mood. (Pier 97, W. 55th St. and the Hudson River. hudsonriverpark.org. Aug. 20.)

X

Perhaps the preëminent punk band to emerge from California during the genre's early days, Los Angeles's X distinguished itself with feral rockabilly riffs (courtesy of the guitarist Billy Zoom) and skewed harmonies (thanks to the vocalist Exene Cervenka and the singer and bassist John Doe). The band, which is rounded out by the drummer DJ Bonebrake, embraced elements of folk, pop, and country, while the rest of the punk scene, by comparison, stuck with monochromatic monotony. X is one of the American underground's most beloved and influential acts, and the original lineup is spending four nights at City Winery playing the entirety of each of the band's first four albums. Aug. 21 is devoted to "Los Angeles"; Aug. 22 is for "Wild Gift"; Aug. 23 will be "Under the Big Black Sun"; and on Aug. 24 X plays "More Fun in the New World." (155 Varick St. 212-608-0555.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Charlie Parker Jazz Festival

The late-August birthday of the legendary bebop saxophonist prompts an annual uptown-downtown mini-festival. The twenty-second edition of the gathering gets under way on Aug. 23, in Marcus Garvey Park, in Harlem, with the trumpeter **Wallace Roney** and his orchestra, the guitarist **Lionel Loueke,** and the hip-hop-informed pianist **Kris Bowers.** The festival concludes in Tompkins Square Park, in the East Village, on Aug. 24, with a bill that includes the piano patriarch **Kenny Barron,** the drummer **Cindy Blackman Santana,** and the rising vocalist **Brianna Thomas.** (summerstage.org.)

Dave Douglas

Always ready for challenging musical experiences, the trumpeter Douglas juggles bands the way others change shoes. A favorite ensemble seems to be his quintet, stocked with exciting younger players, including **Jon Irabagon,** on saxophones; **Matt Mitchell,** on piano; **Linda Oh,** on bass; and **Rudy Royston,** on drums. Douglas never panders to his audience, but this astute ensemble—which has recorded the albums "Be Still" and "Time Travel"—displays the agreeably accessible aspects of his artistry. (Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Aug. 19-23.)

Joel Forrester

The pianist Forrester is an old hand at composing beguiling yet decidedly off-center instrumental pieces, polished by the Microscopic Septet and his own bands. But his songs with lyrics display more of his antic humor, and in the vocalist **Christina Clare,** who joins him here, he's found a collaborator in tune with his quirky lyricism. (Barbès, 376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 347-422-0248. Aug. 21.)

Stranahan, Zaleski, Rosato Trio

Sharp piano trios stocked with capable young players are common these days, but ones that flaunt an uncommon equilibrium while drawing on memorable original compositions are not. This group's second album, "Limitless," spotlights the individual skills and the collective unity of the pianist Glenn Zaleski, the bassist Rick Rosato, and the drummer Colin Stranahan. (Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. Aug. 20.)

DANCE

Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance

This free showcase, tucked into the weeklong Downtown Dance Festival, has heretofore been a midday affair, but this year it shifts to dusk and a new location, one that trades the usual contrast between sinuous bodies and skyscrapers for one between subcontinental forms and the Statue of Liberty. The diverse program includes exponents not only of the Kathak and Odissi traditions but also of the rarer Kathakali, Manipuri, and Sattriya styles. (Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park, 20 Battery Park Pl. 212-219-3910. Aug. 20 at 6.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

In the festival's closing week, the Ted Shawn Theatre hosts Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, one of a handful of topflight American dance ensembles specializing in an edgy, moody style. The program is made up of three recent commissions, only one of which includes any dancing on pointe. "Beautiful Mistake," by the Spanish-born Cayetano Soto, is spare and dark, with unisex costuming; "The Heart(s)pace," by the company's resident choreographer, Nicolo Fonte, has a lighter, brighter feel, and includes touches of classicism. The closer, "Over Glow," is a virtuosic, fidgety showpiece by the ubiquitous Finnish choreographer Jorma Elo, set to bits of Mendelssohn and Beethoven. • Fantasy, sensuality, and images of power and pain are familiar elements in the work of Lee Sher and Saar Harari, the Israeli-born duo behind LeeSaar, performing this week at the Doris Duke. "Grass and Jackals," a work for eight women, is an extension of these themes, augmented by slick, painterly lighting by Avi Yona Bueno (a.k.a. Bambi), a favorite of the veteran Israeli dancemaker Ohad Naharin. (The final image is particularly striking, if clichéd.) The choreography, which owes a debt to Naharin's earthy movement style, known as Gaga, transforms the dancers, clad in gleaming black bodysuits, into exotic creatures. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 20-24.)

Mount Tremper Arts Festival

In the work of other choreographers, the composure of Mina Nishimura can bring strangeness into focus; choreographing for herself, she's capable of beguiling eccentricity. "Princess Cabbage" cribs grotesque images from a novel by the Butoh founder Tatsumi Hijikata. "Quiet House, Ash Daughter" recomposes Hijikata's choreography for a quartet of dancers who surround the audience. (Mount Tremper Arts, 647 South Plank Rd., Mount Tremper, N.Y. 845-688-9893. Aug. 22-23.)

SEEING YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS

Introducing the All-New
2015 Acura TLX

acura.com/TLX

It's a rush of blood to the head. Not to mention the rest of your limbs. The all-new 2015 Acura TLX with next-generation Precision All-Wheel Steer™ for more intuitive response to driver input.

ACURA

TLX IT'S THAT KIND OF THRILL

TLX shown with optional equipment. ©Acura 2014. Acura, TLX, Precision All-Wheel Steer, and the stylized "A" logo are trademarks of Honda Motor Co., Ltd.

MOVIES

OPENING

ABUSE OF WEAKNESS
Catherine Breillat directed this drama, based on her own experience with a con artist. Starring Isabelle Huppert and Kool Shen. In French. Opening Aug. 22. (In limited release.)

ARE YOU HERE
Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 22. (In limited release.)

IF I STAY
A drama, based on the novel by Gayle Forman, about a teen-ager (Chloë Grace Moretz) who, after a car accident, has an out-of-body experience. Directed by R. J. Cutler. Opening Aug. 22. (In wide release.)

LOVE IS STRANGE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 22. (In limited release.)

SIN CITY: A DAME TO KILL FOR
Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller directed this four-part crime thriller, based on graphic novels by Miller, starring Jessica Alba, Bruce Willis, and Eva Green. Opening Aug. 22. (In wide release.)

WHEN THE GAME STANDS TALL
A drama about a football coach (Jim Caviezel) who turns a mediocre high-school team

GOINGS ON, ONLINE
More night life, including the return of Tom Bailey, of the Thompson Twins, a residency by the avant-garde pianist Connie Crothers, and additional jazz listings.

MOVIE OF THE WEEK
A video discussion of Anthony Mann's "The Furies," from 1950, in our digital edition and online.

NOW PLAYING

Are You Here
This garrulous comedy by the writer and director Matthew Weiner ("Mad Men") seems pulled from his bottom drawer. Zach Galifianakis plays a visionary pothead, given to stripping off his clothes and gambolling across lawns, who unexpectedly inherits serious money and property from his dead father. Amy Poehler plays his viciously unhappy sister, who fights him hard; Owen Wilson plays his improbable best friend, a local TV weatherman and a cynical lost soul who tries to keep his buddy sane while falling in love with the dead man's very young and beautiful widow (Laura Ramsey). The drug stuff and the widow's soft talk of "relationships" and "feelings" seem about thirty-five years out of date. Wilson, though, delivers his sarcastic lines with enormous skill; it's one of his largest performances.—*David Denby* (In limited release.)

Bad Blood
A masterpiece of ecstatic cinema from 1986, by the twenty-five-year-old Leos Carax. The neo-noir plot concerns Marc (Michel Piccoli), an older gangster who lures Alex (Denis Lavant), the son of his slain cohort, into a plot to break into a laboratory and steal an H.I.V.-like virus. Along the way, Marc's mistress, Anna (Juliette Binoche), falls for Alex, whose tender romance with his blond teen-age girlfriend (Julie Delpy) is threatened by his rhapsodic obsession with the dark-haired gamine. Carax sends Alex and Anna airborne in a parachute-jump sequence that is one of the movie's many great plein-air set pieces. (The feral Lavant's self-punishing exultation to the strains of David Bowie's "Modern Love" is another.) With an emotional world akin to that of the New Wave masters, a visual vocabulary that pays tribute to their later works, and a visionary sensibility that owes much to Jean Cocteau's fantasies, Carax suggests the burden of young genius in a world of mighty patriarchs who aren't budging. In French and English.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; Aug. 20-21.)

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.)

Get On Up
Chadwick Boseman gives a startling and galvanic performance in this bio-pic about the singer and composer James Brown. The news is that the "godfather of soul" was soulless—in his personal relationships, that is, where he could be domineering, egomaniacal, and cruel. At the same time, the director, Tate Taylor—using original recordings and enormous amounts of lip-synching and choreography—shows Brown, in full cry, giving everything of himself to his audience. That's where the man's soul is, the movie tells us. Onstage, in blue silk, and with abundant ascending hair, Boseman grabs the mike, drops it, pulls it back by its cord, and swings into "I Feel Good." The beat is driving, insistent, even ferocious, but Boseman's movements are liquid. The concert re-creations include the famous night at the Apollo, in 1962, which brought Brown to national attention, and the 1964 T.A.M.I. Show, in which he blew the Rolling Stones off the stage. But the account of Brown's miserable childhood in Georgia, which keeps popping back into the movie, explains nothing. Written by the brothers Jez and John-Henry Butterworth. Produced by Brian Grazer and Mick Jagger, who decided to smooth out the sound of Brown's recordings, slightly diminishing their impact. With Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer, Nelsan Ellis, and Dan Aykroyd.—*D.D.* (8/11 & 18/14) (In wide release.)

A Grin Without a Cat
Chris Marker's intellectually elegant film essay from 1978 (which he reworked in 1993), three hours long and composed entirely of archival footage, looks back nostalgically and ruefully at France's 1968 student revolt and situates it in an international political context, in part to understand why it veered away from real revolution and became merely a cultural symbol. Using Eisenstein's "Battleship Potemkin" as the cinematic paradigm for socialist uprisings, Marker deftly identifies the Vietnam War as the galvanizing source of outrage for left-wing radicalism worldwide, and Fidel Castro's successful guerrilla war as the model for how such a doctrine should be put into action. The title is Marker's epithet for May, 1968, in Paris—an illusory gesture devoid of physical force to back it up—and he blames the French Communist Party for its unwillingness to take part in a revolution. With slyly edited images and a probing, whimsical voice-over, Marker links seemingly disparate facts and ideas in surprising, provocative ways (his take on the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 is worth the price of admission), even if his ultimate dream of a dictatorship of the proletariat remains nothing more than a self-abnegating fantasy.—*R.B.* (BAM Cinématek; Aug. 24.)

Guardians of the Galaxy
Marvel Studios strikes gold again with this zippy superhero treat. The plot's MacGuffin is a mysterious orb that the newly formed team of Guardians (played by a ragtag group of actors, augmented by C.G.I. effects) must keep out of the hands of an evil, universe-threatening maniac. The film, directed and co-written by James Gunn, is joyfully irreverent. Gunn lends his underachiever superheroes a geeky, comic camaraderie—and brings a spry touch to the wacky intergalactic adventure. Chris Pratt, overflowing with charisma, plays the leader of the pack of misfits, and his blissed-out space cowboy (with a love for seventies music) is so full of good will that he buoys the film and its requisite whiz-bang special effects. With Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, and Lee Pace, and featuring on-the-button voice work by Bradley Cooper, as a gun-toting raccoon, and Vin Diesel, as a sentient walking tree called, unforgettably, Groot.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide 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.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

Jealousy
The exhilaration of love, the exaltation of art—both of these pillars of the modern French psyche take quietly shuddering blows in Philippe Garrel's new film. It stars the director's son, Louis Garrel, as Louis, a struggling actor with a barely paying role in a

EVERETT

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 becomes 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.)

Life After Beth
Aubrey Plaza plays Beth Slocum, a twenty-one-year-old college student who dies of a snakebite while hiking alone but turns up again at her parents' house—and in the arms of her boyfriend, Zach (Dane DeHaan)—as a zombie. That's the elevator pitch of this hectic comedy, written and directed by Jeff Baena, and the movie isn't much more than an illustration of it. Baena decorates the tale with some winking clichés of family life—Zach's parents (Paul Reiser and Cheryl Hines) are fussy suburban stereotypes and his brother (Matthew Gray Gubler) is a freelance gun nut—but tedium sets in quickly. Yet, as Beth's post-dead syndrome kicks in and she shifts from recklessness to danger (complete with an apocalyptic nod to "Kiss Me Deadly"), Baena delivers a vigorous but cautious depiction of female fury unleashed. The result feels like an Ed Wood film smoothed out and sweetened up by Richard Linklater. As Beth's parents, John C. Reilly and Molly Shannon do their best to flesh out their cartoonish characterizations; as a neighborhood friend of Zach's, Anna Kendrick steals the movie with her concluding flourish.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Lost Patrol
The blank uniformity of the desert sets a bleak tone of existential cruelty in John Ford's strikingly modern, quasi-absurdist First World War drama, from 1934. It's set in 1917 in Mesopotamia—modern-day Iraq—where a squad of British soldiers on horseback is separated from its company and set adrift with little water, no sense of direction, and no defense against the local snipers who pick them off with a derisive impunity. After taking refuge in a decrepit hut at a desolate oasis, the men, thinking themselves safe from Arab raiders, wake up bereft of their horses. Cut off from the rest of the world and facing certain death, the Britons yield to sentiment, reminiscence, rage, and madness as they prepare for a last-ditch suicide escape mission. With no name for the enemy and no objective for the battle, the soldiers endure a conflict that's seemingly without cause, without purpose, and without hope. For all of Ford's emphasis on courage, self-control, and esprit de corps, he delivers the ultimate antiwar film.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Aug. 22-23.)

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 kidnapped and 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; 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 covered previously in films by Terrence Malick, contriving fantastic images that delve into the molecular and range into 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.)

May in the Summer
The Palestinian-American filmmaker Cherien Dabis approaches this intimate story with audacity: she writes, directs, and also stars, as May Brennan, a half-American, half-Jordanian author who lives in New York and returns home to Amman for her wedding. There, while awaiting the arrival of her fiancé, Ziad (Alexander Siddig), a professor at Columbia, she finds her family in turmoil. Ziad is Muslim, to the consternation of her mother (Hiam Abbass), a devout Christian. May is estranged from her father (Bill Pullman), an American diplomat, and her mother is still reeling from their divorce. Her sisters have problems as well: Yasmine (Nadine Malouf) is something of a party animal with impulse-control issues; Dalia (Alia Shawkat) is wrestling with her sexuality. And May is unsure whether to go through with the wedding. The teeming story offers intriguing glimpses of life in Amman, but Dabis's script is mechanical, and her direction rarely rises above it. Hints dropped throughout the film suggest Dabis's wider interests, and a single shot—of sun-streaked revellers beside the swimming pool of a ritzy hotel, frozen in place as a fighter jet passes overhead—is packed with the symbolic density that the rest of the film lacks. In Arabic and English.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Prowler
From the start of this bitter 1951 film noir, directed by Joseph Losey, the forces of order are as much a menace as they are a comfort. Two officers respond to the suspicions of Susan Gilvray (Evelyn Keyes), a comely, not quite young woman who is left alone in a suburban house at night by her aging disk-jockey husband. Later, one of the men—the bristling and randy Webb Garwood (Van Heflin)—comes back for a courtesy call that results in a passionate affair and, unsurprisingly, a case of homicide. By way of starkly shifting visual perspectives and chilly, hands-off compositions, Losey calmly observes the destructive mechanisms of desire and despair, which mesh like gears when these two frustrated souls meet. With a blandly dismissive anti-romanticism, the director sees through the pretenses of civility to find the mediocrity, disappointment, venality, gullibility, duplicity, and boredom that pass for daily life. Yet the lovers on the run, heading toward the wilderness, find no romantic liberation there, only the menacing ghosts of distant conflicts. Heflin's unctuous performance comes off as a model of cowardly villainy—and as a portrait of the American dreamer caught in a plasticized nightmare.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Aug. 21.)

Some Came Running
When a frigid blond professor (Martha Hyer) tells a lapsed author and war veteran (Frank Sinatra) that he has an exciting talent, it's as unintentionally comic as Dorothy Malone's taking off her eyeglasses for Bogey in "The Big Sleep" was intentionally comic. But Vincente Minnelli's 1958 screen version of James Jones's sprawling novel, about a literary black sheep in a small Midwestern town, develops an irresistible momentum that sweeps aside objections to its campy depictions of culture, both high and low. Minnelli's hyper-expressive camera style, set loose in real locations, makes pop opera out of the rift between the heartland demimonde and the bourgeoisie. Sinatra is sensationally moody (he often was in this era); Shirley MacLaine manages to mine pathos, sweetness, and exuberance from her clichéd part as a gold-hearted factory girl. And, as a sardonic gambler, Dean Martin has a genius for being himself that turns his character's affectation—never removing his white Stetson—into an indelible signature.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 23.)

into champions. Directed by Thomas Carter. Opening Aug. 22. (In wide release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
"Screenwriters and the Blacklist." Aug. 22-23 at 7: "Force of Evil" (1948, Abraham Polonsky). • Aug. 23 at 5: "Three Faces West" (1940, Bernard Vorhaus). • Aug. 23 at 9 and Aug. 25 at 7: "The Lawless Breed" (1953, Raoul Walsh). • Aug. 24 at 5: "The Boy with Green Hair" (1948, Joseph Losey).

BAM CINÉMATEK
The films of Chris Marker. Aug. 20 at 4:30 and 9 and Aug. 21 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Level Five" (1996). • Aug. 22 at 5, 6:30, 8, and 9:30: "La Jetée" (1962). • Aug. 23 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Sans Soleil" (1982). • Aug. 24 at 4:30: **"A Grin Without a Cat."**

FILM FORUM
The films of Leos Carax. Aug. 20 at 12:30 and Aug. 21 at 9:15: "The Lovers on the Bridge" (1991). • Aug. 20-21 at 3 and 7:20: "Mr. X: A Vision of Leos Carax" (2014, Tessa Louise-Salomé). • Aug. 20 at 4:40 and Aug. 21 at 12:30: **"Bad Blood."** • Aug. 21 at 4:40: "Holy Motors" (2012). • In revival. Aug. 22-28 (call for showtimes): "That Man from Rio" (1964, Philippe de Broca).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
"Red Hollywood and the Blacklist." Aug. 20 at 9: "Road Gang" (1936, Louis King). • Aug. 21 at 2:15: **"The Prowler."** • "Strange Lands: International Sci-Fi." Aug. 22 at 6:15 and Aug. 23 at 1:30: "Kin-Dza-Dza" (1986, Georgiy Daneliya). • Aug. 22 at 9: "Days of Eclipse" (1988, Aleksandr Sokurov). • Aug. 23 at 4:15: "Freak Orlando" (1981, Ulrike Ottinger).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"The Great War." Aug. 20 at 7: "Four Sons" (1928, John Ford). • Aug. 22 at 8 and Aug. 23 at 2: **"The Lost Patrol."** • Aug. 23 at 8 and Aug. 26 at 4:30: "Seas Beneath" (1931, Ford). • Aug. 26 at 8: "Broken Lullaby" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
"See It Big!: Hollywood Melodrama." Aug. 23 at 2: **"Some Came Running."** • Aug. 24 at 5:30: "Letter from an Unknown Woman" (1948, Max Ophuls). • The films of Patrick Lung Kong. Aug. 23 at 2: "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" (1970). • Aug. 23 at 4: "The Window" (1968). • Aug. 24 at 3: "Pei Shih" (1972). • Aug. 24 at 6: "Mitra" (1977).

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Bootycandy
Playwrights Horizons kicks off its season with a new play written and directed by Robert O'Hara, a satire centered on the life of a young black gay man. Previews begin Aug. 22. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

The Fatal Weakness
The Mint Theatre presents a 1946 comedy by George Kelly, directed by Jesse Marchese, about a happily married woman who discovers that her husband is a cheat. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111.)

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. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

You Can't Take It with You
James Earl Jones, Rose Byrne, Annaleigh Ashford, Elizabeth Ashley, Reg Rogers, and Kristine Nielsen star in a revival of the 1936 play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, about two families who become intertwined when their children get engaged. Scott Ellis directs. Previews begin Aug. 26. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

Between Riverside and Crazy
In a new play by Stephen Adly Guirgis, Oswaldo (the sexy and genuine Victor Almanzar) reveres Walter (Pops) Washington (the indelible character actor Stephen McKinley Henderson), an ex-cop, for his authority, which includes his real estate: Pops holds the lease on a large 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'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. In the ultimately muddled and perfunctory second act, Pops takes up with a beautiful Santería practitioner (brilliantly and freely played by Liza Colón-Zayas), but the play is really about the idea of patriarchy: how do we father the fatherless? The director, Austin Pendleton, transports us into the characters' inner lives, and Guirgis, like other storytellers who explore the sacred and the profane, is most interested in how grace transforms us. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11 & 18/14.) (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111. Through Aug. 23.)

"Bootycandy" is a series of vignettes, many outrageous, based on the playwright's life.

HISTORY LESSONS

Robert O'Hara gets personal in his new play.

IT FEELS WEIRD TO CALL the forty-four-year-old playwright and director Robert O'Hara a major figure in the American theatre, because the phrase sounds oddly ossifying—like an honor one is bestowed at the end of a long, satisfying career. But I do think he's a virtuoso, and has been since his first play, "Insurrection: Holding History," was produced in New York, at the Public Theatre, in 1996. The Cincinnati-born author, who directed the show himself, was mentored by the institution's artistic director at the time, George C. Wolfe. It was inevitable that Wolfe's influence—particularly when it came to sending up blackness as it was portrayed in the American theatre—showed in "Insurrection." Its protagonist was a black gay man who, during a stay in a Virginia motel, travels back in time to the eighteen-thirties; there, he falls for one of the guys in Nat Turner's posse.

O'Hara's early work drew from other great sources. His interest in time travel is reminiscent of the novelist Octavia Butler's forays into America's slave-owning past. His sometimes dense, humorous speech owed a bit to Suzan-Lori Parks's plays, in which history would not leave her characters alone. During the past fifteen or so years, though, O'Hara has worked hard to become himself. The hallmark of his comedic dramas is the way he examines the deeply complex relationship that blacks have with homosexuality, and what gay people themselves feel about homosexuality.

O'Hara's latest full-length play, "Bootycandy," which begins previews at Playwrights Horizons on Aug. 22, is somewhat autobiographical. In it, we first meet a little boy named Sutter, whose mother criticizes not only the way he describes his penis but its uses. From there, O'Hara takes us through a number of very funny and often scathing scenes depicting Sutter's coming of age and beyond. Gays dismantle gayness, and a lesbian couple reverse their commitment-ceremony vows by saying things like "Wherever you go, I will not be there." The punch line in O'Hara's work? His recognition and dissection of that ill-fitting straitjacket called political correctness.

—Hilton Als

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE WACKSMAN

The Good and the True

Hana Pravda (Isobel Pravda) and Milos Dobry (Saul Reichlin) were fairly ordinary Jewish teen-agers in Prague in the nineteen-thirties—one an ambitious actress, the other an optimistic athlete—when the Nazis began interning Jews. Though Pravda and Dobry were both sent to the ghetto Terezín and then later were moved to Auschwitz, they never met. In the director Daniel Hrbek's adaptation of Pravda's and Dobry's stories, two actors playing the survivors stand behind bare wire strung across the stage and take turns describing the intimate details of their horrific daily experiences. Though there's no doubt that the theatre is a good medium for keeping the stories of survivors alive, this particular piece, as testimony alone, feels more educational than artful. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Opponent

The sweet science turns sour in Brett Neveu's sullen, kinetic drama, an import from Chicago's A Red Orchid Theatre. In the first act, the fighter Donell (Kamal Angelo Bolden) and the trainer Tre (Guy Van Swearingen) run combinations hours before a pivotal fight. (The environmental set design is by Joey Wade.) The second act returns them to the same gym five years later, when success, in the ring or out of it, seems ever less likely. Bolden and Van Swearingen give focussed, wearying performances. In the cramped theatre, the audience is close enough to smell and even feel their sweat. Neveu's script goes round and round, ducking and sidestepping in ways that feel less than purposive. But Karen Kessler's direction—assisted by the fight director, John Tovar—is keen and expressive. The drama is in the movement and not the dialogue. If the words don't land, the punches do. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

Phoenix

When we first meet Sue (Julia Stiles) and James (James Wirt), both lonely singles, it has been four weeks since their one-night stand. Sue is pregnant and about to fly to Phoenix to get an abortion (she's a travelling nurse). James, a sensitive hunk who listens to lectures on Kierkegaard (don't they all?), insists on joining her. From there, the relationship takes several foreseeable turns. More searching than a rom-com but still colored by some of its tropes, Scott Organ's two-person drama is best when the couple digress on topics like time travel, but turns generic when they get to dissecting their feelings. The strength of Jennifer Delia's production is Stiles, whose mixture of blankness and sorrow holds more interest than the quasi-colloquial dialogue. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111. Through Aug. 23.)

Summer Shorts: Series B

The first two one-acts in this series are simple, straightforward, naturalistic conversations between two people. In Daniel Reitz's touching "Napoleon in Exile," directed by Paul Schnee, a single mother (Henny Russell), sick with cancer, struggles to talk to her low-functioning twenty-five-year-old son with Asperger's (played convincingly by Will Dagger) about how he might take care of himself when she's gone. In Neil LaBute's dark piece "The Mulberry Bush," directed by Maria Mileaf, a pleasant man (Victor Slezak) is disturbed during his quiet lunch hour in the park when a high-strung stranger (J. J. Kandel) with a bone to pick comes by to threaten him. The third one-act, Albert Innaurato's iconoclastic black comedy "Doubtless," is, in contrast, nasty and surreal. In it, two Church-hating, lesbian nuns (Tasha Guevara and Brenda Currin), on their way to get married, encounter Jesus Christ, a lustful vampire (Dana Watkins). Under the direction of Jack Hofsiss, dialogue that is meant to be irreverent, shocking, and hilarious is instead clunky, tired, and infantile. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

ALSO NOTABLE

AND I AND SILENCE
Pershing Square Signature Center

BEAUTIFUL—THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL
Stephen Sondheim

CABARET
Studio 54

A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER
Walter Kerr

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
Belasco

IF/THEN
Richard Rodgers

LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL
Circle in the Square

MATILDA THE MUSICAL
Shubert

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
Various locations. Through Aug. 24.

NEWSIES
Nederlander. Through Aug. 24.

PIECE OF MY HEART
Pershing Square Signature Center

THE WAYSIDE MOTOR INN
Pershing Square Signature Center

ABOVE & BEYOND

SummerStage Kids International Contemporary Circus Festival

This free, family-friendly event brings otherwise tent-enclosed spectacles to Marcus Garvey Park, in Harlem. The first two evenings of the three-night jamboree feature performances by the Montreal-based troupe Throw2Catch, the Loki Circus Theatre, the beatbox and hip-hop artist Akim Funk Buddha, and Paris the Hip-Hop Juggler. SummerStage Kids' first commissioned circus, "Circles," which was inspired by Rumi's poetry, will have its première. There will also be puppet-making workshops run by Central Park's Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, and Circus to Go, an offshoot of the Big Apple Circus, will be on hand. The last night spotlights aerialists and athletic feats, with the Seattle-based ensemble Acrobatic Conundrum, ChelseaO Productions, which is run by the aerial artist Chelsea O'Brian, and a local juggling duo, Jen Slaw and Michael Karas, who perform "A Perfect Catch: A Throw-mantic Comedy." And Paris the Hip-Hop Juggler returns for another stylish session. (W. 122nd St. and Mount Morris Park W. cityparksfoundation.org.)

Lebowski Fest

A dozen years ago this October, a few folks with a fine appreciation for a 1998 Coen-brothers flop about an unemployed Angeleno who liked to bowl gathered at a bowling alley in Louisville, Kentucky, to honor their hero, Jeff Lebowski, a.k.a. the Dude (played by Jeff Bridges). Things have never been the same. Bands as big as My Morning Jacket and as quirky as They Might Be Giants have played the celebration, which has taken place in Louisville every summer since. Occasionally, Bridges and other stars of "The Big Lebowski" make appearances, and the party has spread to more than thirty cities, here and abroad. New York's festival begins on Aug. 22, with bowling, costumes, and trivia contests at Lucky Strike, in Times Square. The second evening, Aug. 23, at the Gramercy Theatre, features a concert by the punk act Cover Me Badd, followed by a screening of the movie. (lebowskifest.com.)

The Battle of Brooklyn

The United States declared independence on July 4, 1776, and a little more than a month later Washington's men were on the run. Thanks to the bravery of four hundred Maryland troops that August, along the banks of the Gowanus, in Brooklyn, his army evaded capture by the British, and went on to make history. A week of commemorations is under way, featuring neighborhood walks, reënactments, and a tasting of Colonial-inspired dishes. Many of the events are centered on the Old Stone House, in Washington Park, a decisive site during the battle. (3rd St. between Fourth and Fifth Aves., Brooklyn. theoldstonehouse.org. Through Aug. 24.)

READINGS AND TALKS

BookCourt

Matthew Thomas reads from his début novel, "We Are Not Ourselves." (163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. Aug. 20 at 7.)

Fort Greene Park Summer Literary Festival

Vanessa Gabb, Sapphire, Danny Simmons, Angel Nafis, and Willie Perdomo gather for the tenth annual outdoor event. The journalist and WFMU d.j. Gaylord Fields is the master of ceremonies, and young participants in the New York Writers Coalition workshops will share their work. (Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument, Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn. In case of rain, the event will be held at BRIC Media House Ballroom, 647 Fulton St., Brooklyn. nywriterscoalition.org. Aug. 23 at 2.)

Strand Book Store

The photographer Julia Leeb discusses her new book, "Anonymous Country: North Korea," a visual account of life in that secluded land. (Broadway at 12th St. 212-473-1452. Aug. 25 at 7.)

ART

MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

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

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"Christopher Williams: The Production Line of Happiness."
Through Nov. 2.

MOMA PS1
"Maria Lassnig."
Through Sept. 7.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
"Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today."
Through Oct. 1.

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

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
"Swoon: Submerged Motherlands." Through Aug. 24.

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

JEWISH MUSEUM
"Sights and Sounds: Israel."
Through Aug. 28.

NEUE GALERIE
"Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937." Through Sept. 1.

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
"Madeline in New York: The Art of Ludwig Bemelmans."
Through Oct. 19.

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
"Charles Gaines: Gridwork, 1974-1989." Through Oct. 26.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum

"Ragamala: Picturing Sound"

This small treasure of a show, featuring a velvety soundtrack from the Hindustani sitarist Ustad Shujaat Husain Khan, looks at artists who translated the moods of Indian classical music into exquisite paintings. Ragamala, or "garlands of ragas," were tactile, loose-leaf series of works on paper that illustrated well-known musical compositions, and sometimes depicted musicians themselves. In one piece by the seventeenth-century Rajasthani artist Ruknuddin, an ash-covered ascetic listens to a musician who performs on a leopard skin, balancing a rudra vina on his shoulder. (There's an old rudra vina here, too: a seven-stringed zither attached to two resonant gourds, bedecked in a floral motif.) In a nineteenth-century portrait, a female sitarist, nose pierced and forehead festooned with pearls, strums her instrument in a rock-strewn landscape. In the turret above, ensorcelled, is Krishna himself, his blue skin blending into the night sky. Through Dec. 14.

New York Public Library

"Over Here: World War I and the Fight for the American Mind"

The U.S. tried mightily to stay out of the conflagration that began on July 28, 1914, but, as this dense exhibition makes clear, the First World War engulfed the American consciousness long before we formally entered the fray, in 1917. With the sinking of the Lusitania—evoked on a *Life* cover in which Kaiser Wilhelm throws President Wilson some coins as blood money—neutrality lost its appeal, and anti-German sentiment thrived everywhere from the popular press to the music hall, in immigrant-bashing songs like "Don't Bite the Hand That's Feeding You." (It's a missed opportunity, however, that the show includes nothing from the thriving German-language American press of the time.) When war came, Wilson mandated an in-house propaganda firm, the Committee on Public Information, to dominate the mediascape. Its gruesome posters, encouraging Americans to "beat back the Hun," are the forgotten flip side of the more enduring image from those days: Uncle Sam proclaiming, "I Want You." Through Feb. 15.

Queens Museum

"Bringing the World Into the World"

This globally minded exhibition of works by sixteen artists and collectives riffs on the museum's prized architectural model of New York City, and on the 1964 World's Fair, for which it was built. Sadly, few of the young artists here are up to the challenge. (The Bahamian Tavares Strachan, reprising his trip to the North Pole for the recent Venice Biennale, is an exception.) Works by older artists are already well known, if not overexposed: Alighiero e Boetti's "Ononimo" drawings, the Eameses' film "Powers of Ten," and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's films of world capitals shot in a melancholy haze. Nevertheless, it's a pleasure to revisit a late work by the German filmmaker Harun Farocki, who died several weeks ago. His reconstructions of the 2006 World Cup final feature computer animations, surveillance footage, and ten other unorthodox views of the moment when more than a billion people turned their eyes to Berlin and saw Zinedine Zidane pass into history. Through Oct. 12.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"Other Artists' Artists"

It sounds like a recipe for chaos—a group show in which each artist on the gallery's roster selects one other artist, maybe two—but the results are surprisingly cohesive. Some artists tapped compatriots: William Kentridge brought Viviane Koorland, who contributes a rough-hewn painting on burlap naming townships in South Africa. Others invited their students (the colorful Kerstin Brätsch glass work is here thanks to her former professor Lothar Baumgarten) or friends: a ravishing silver abstraction by Jacqueline Humphries appears on the advice of Lawrence Weiner. Julie Mehretu, bless her heart, saw no reason not to pick her own wife; happily, in the case of Jessica Rankin's inky and absorbing collage, the nepotism was worth it. Through Aug. 22. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

"Small Things Considered"

At a time when photographers are making prints the size of picture windows, it's a relief to spend time with this show of fifty-five images small enough to hold in your hand. Works by Helen Levitt, Edward Weston, Harry Callahan, and Robert Frank ground the exhibition in subtle, seductive visions. But classics are neatly balanced by equally compact contemporary material, including Liz Nielsen's understated abstractions and Kazuo Sumida's marvellously succinct shots of people on the New York subway. Through Aug. 21. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Keld Helmer-Petersen

The twenty-one vivid pictures in this small, strong show were made by the Danish photographer in 1948, when color photography was not yet considered a fine-art medium. Helmer-Petersen's images deliberately reference the commercial context in which color was used, focussing on details of the industrial landscape: pipes, bricks, a hydrant, an oil drum. His elegantly composed still-lifes were also clearly influenced by the German photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch's brand of "new objectivity," paring an image down to its essence in a style that could be called proto-Pop. Don't ignore the show of process-driven photographs in the front room, notably Michelle Kloehn's alluringly abstract tintypes on aluminum. Through Aug. 29. (Milo, 245 Tenth Ave., at 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

"The Thing Itself"

Photographs about photographs can either illuminate or muddle the medium, zeroing in on its core inspiration or stumbling into fatuous self-consciousness. A clever exhibition surveys the approach in current practice (plus a couple of earlier examples: Kenneth Josephson and Laurie Simmons) while skirting the theory-heavy downside. The work ranges from casual show-and-tell (Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Bertien van Manen, Anne Collier) to a more rigorous look into the picture-making process (Christopher Williams, Wolfgang Tillmans, Sara Cwynar). In between, there's room for some serious fun, like Roe Ethridge's freakishly layered apple and Vik Muniz's collaged version of a Garry Winogrand classic. Through Aug. 22. (Richardson, 525 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

Tom Friedman

Is it possible to be a Serra of Styrofoam? Friedman's latest investigation of mundane materials has yielded fifteen sculptures made of paint and polystyrene, some aping freestanding objects (a guitar, a microphone, an in-Koons's-face oblong balloon) but most of them hanging on the wall as trompe-l'oeil monochrome "paintings." A light-blue seascape has been incised around its edge, simulating a frame; two other works seem to be affixed with household objects, resembling nouveau-réaliste assemblages, but are in fact nothing but plastic. Alas, some of the impostures fall very flat, including an ersatz "Starry Night," a black monochrome with van Gogh whorls but no stars. Through Aug. 23. (Luhring Augustine, 25 Knickerbocker Ave. 718-386-2746.)

OF NOTE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
"ROBERT DAVIDSON: ABSTRACT IMPULSE"

One of the freshest painting shows of the season is tucked away in the Beaux-Arts Custom House at Bowling Green, where Davidson, an artist of the Haida nation, in British Columbia, recharges not only tribal traditions but the entire practice of hard-edged abstraction. Davidson employs the thick black U shapes and ovoids common to Northwest Coast art in allover compositions of sizzling primary colors, some with representational resonances (birds, fish), others luxuriating in swooping nonfigurative forms. You may see affinities with Kenneth Noland or Al Held in these buoyant paintings, but don't mistake modernity for rootlessness—Davidson's style, though vigorous, is older than British North America by a few thousand years. Through Sept. 14.

The Palestinian artist Wafa Hourani imagines the refugee camp Qalandia as a thriving neighborhood, in the exhibition "Here and Elsewhere."

OUT OF PLACE

Artists from the Middle East, North Africa, and their diasporas, at the New Museum.

WHAT DOES ART of the Arab world look like in 2014? The question at the heart of this summer's most vital show sounds like Edward Said's nightmare, an invitation to reduce a nuanced and inevitably provocative subject to a cliché. The last major exhibition in New York to touch on similar themes, at MOMA, in 2006, was a milquetoast affair, criticized by some of its participants for soft-pedalling politics. No one will lob that accusation at the New Museum's ambitious artistic director, Massimiliano Gioni, and his curatorial team; at times, the sprawling "Here and Elsewhere," which fills five floors with works by forty-seven artists, feels ripped from the headlines. In July, the West Bank artist Khaled Jarrar, whose film "Infiltrators" documents the travails of Palestinians trying to cross into Israel, was himself turned back at the Jordanian border. As a result, he missed his flight to the U.S. and a scheduled appearance at the museum.

Roundups of Middle Eastern art in the West are often accused of courting the oil-rich, art-crazed collectors of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Qatar. The show tackles the issue up front with GCC, a nine-person collective (or, as they prefer to be called, "delegation"), named for the Gulf Coöperation Council, whose photomural transforms the museum's lobby into an absurdly opulent hotel interior. (A vending machine dispenses gold ingots.) Nearby, the classic Orientalist trope of the Bedouin is winningly updated by Abdullah Al Saadi, who is based in Khor Fakkan, in the United Arab Emirates. His hundred and fifty-one watercolors and single video detail a three-week-long trek in the company of a dog and a donkey.

The title "Here and Elsewhere" is borrowed from a 1976 movie co-directed by Jean-Luc Godard, who set out to make a pro-Palestinian documentary and ended up musing on the ethical quagmire of representation. Museumgoers may feel as if they've stumbled into a film festival: you could spend an eight-hour day watching video works and still have five hours to go. One of the most moving is one of the simplest, "The Mapping Journey Project," by the Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili, in which offscreen narrators describe the circuitous routes they travelled to various parts of the world, as their hands are seen tracing the trips with a pen. A Sudanese man describes a harrowing voyage from Libya through the shark-infested Mediterranean. Hoping to find work in Italy, he ended up as a displaced person in Turkey instead.

As the casualties rose in Gaza this summer, one sculpture gained poignancy. "Qalandia 2087," an elaborate architectural model by the Ramallah-based Wafa Hourani, reimagines a Palestinian refugee camp as a utopian zone of playgrounds, cafés, and landscaped courtyards—there's even a glitter-paved aquarium, stocked with fish. It's a potent reminder that art really can be a matter of life and death.

—Andrea K. Scott

CLASSICAL MUSIC

CONCERTS IN TOWN

Mostly Mozart Festival

The wide-ranging, thoughtfully programmed festival offers its final concerts of the season, leaping from one century to another with aplomb. Aug. 19-20 at 8: David Zinman, masterly in his control of orchestral textures and rhythmic pulse, leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in its penultimate program, which has music by its namesake composer in the center—the rapturously lyrical Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major, with the violinist Joshua Bell and the violist Lawrence Power—and works by Boyce and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 3, "Eroica") as bookends. (Avery Fisher Hall.) • Aug. 20 at 7:30: John Luther Adams, whose pacific, environmentally conscious music provided a kind of blessing at the festival's opening, has another notable performance coming up: the dazzling percussionist Steven Schick will offer Adams's "The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies" in a concert at the Clark Studio Theatre. • Aug. 21 at 7:30: The young and brilliant International Contemporary Ensemble is on hand at the Park Avenue Armory's exquisitely restored Board of Officers Room, performing the bravely uncompromising music of Dai Fujikura, John Zorn (the New York première of "Baudelaires"), Alvin Lucier, and Messiaen. • Aug. 21 at 10: The last of the series' "Little Night Music" concerts is devoted to the festival début of the lauded young Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, who performs unaccompanied works by Enescu, Bach (the Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 in D Minor), and Bartók (the Sonata). (Kaplan Penthouse.) • Aug. 22-23 at 8: To perform Mozart's Requiem is hardly novel, but to prelude it with a sequence of Bach chorales (from the "St. John Passion") and with Frank Martin's compact yet powerfully expressive violin concerto "Polyptyque: Six Images of the Passion of Christ" (with Patricia Kopatchinskaja) is truly daring. The works make up the season-closing program from Louis Langrée and the festival orchestra, with the vocal soloists Susanna Phillips, Kelley O'Connor, Dimitri Pittas, and Morris Robinson, as well as the Concert Chorale of New York (prepared by the supremely proficient James Bagwell). (Avery Fisher Hall.) (mostlymozart.org.)

Bargemusic

Three of the floating chamber-music series' most reliable performers—the violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Edward Arron, and the pianist Jeewon Park—survey three monuments of the piano-trio genre: Haydn's Trio in G Major, "Gypsy"; Beethoven's "Kakadu Variations"; and Schubert's majestic Trio in B-Flat Major, Op. 99. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. Aug. 22-23 at 7. For tickets and full schedule, see bargemusic.org.)

OUT OF TOWN

Glimmerglass Festival

Aug. 21 at 7:30 and Aug. 23 at 1:30: Francesca 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, is easily a highlight of the summer, with the imperial title role taken by the Met star Christine Goerke. Catherine Martin, Rachele Gilmore, Corey Bix, and Carlton Ford take the other leading roles; Kathleen Kelly conducts. • Aug. 22 at 7:30: Rodgers and Hammerstein's **"Carousel,"** with Andrea Carroll and Ryan McKinny portraying Julie Jordan and Billy Bigelow; Doug Peck. • Aug. 23 at 8: Zambello's affecting and acclaimed production of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Yunah Lee and Dinyar Vania in the leading roles; Joseph Colaneri. • Aug. 24 at 1:30: Tobias Picker's **"An American Tragedy,"** an opera based on the Dreiser novel, had its world première at the Met in 2005. Peter Kazaras directs a newly 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. (Cooperstown, N.Y. glimmerglass.org. These are the final performances of the season.)

Tanglewood

Aug. 22 at 8:30: In "Oz with Orchestra," the Berkshire festival offers a complete embrace of the film-with-accompaniment concept. It's a screening of a richly remastered version of "The Wizard of Oz," in which the vocals of Judy Garland and the rest of the legendary cast will be backed by Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops Orchestra, giving splendid life to Harold Arlen's original score. • Aug. 23 at 8:30 and Aug. 24 at 2:30: The final classical concerts of the summer feature the Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the suave command of Charles Dutoit. The first is a program of color-splashed pieces that conjure up the romance of Italy, with Berlioz's "Roman Carnival" Overture followed by Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini" (with an excellent young pianist, Kirill Gerstein) and Respighi's orgiastic tributes to the Italian capital: "Roman Festivals," "Fountains of Rome," and "Pines of Rome." The second is the orchestra's traditional, big-Beethoven sendoff—the "Choral Fantasy" and the Ninth Symphony. In addition to the formidable pianist Yefim Bronfman, the vocal soloists include the sopranos Nicole Cabell and Meredith Hansen, the mezzo-soprano Tamara Mumford, the tenors Noah Stewart and Alex Richardson, and the bass-baritone John Relyea. (Lenox, Mass. tanglewood.org.)

Maverick Concerts

The annual chamber-orchestra concert at the Maverick Hall is ambitious in scope: "In the House of Don Manuel," an "extravaganza" celebrating Manuel de Falla and Federico García Lorca, who became close friends during the vibrant years of Spanish creativity that followed the First World War. Alexander Platt, the Maverick's director, conducts music by Revueltas, Ginastera, the British modernist master Simon Holt (the U.S. première of "Canciones," with the mezzo-soprano Lucy Schaufer), and a selection of Falla masterworks that includes "Psyché," a suite from "The Three-Cornered Hat," and the bristling Harpsichord Concerto (with the intrepid pianist Jenny Lin). (Woodstock, N.Y. maverickconcerts.org. Aug. 23 at 6:30.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center at SPAC

This summer, the Society, making an upstate jaunt, joins the Philadelphia Orchestra as a major classical attraction at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. The final two concerts are proudly thematic: the first ("Colors of France") highlights music by Saint-Saëns, Debussy, and Fauré (the Piano Quartet No. 2 in G Minor), while the second offers a diversion by the Bard Conservatory composer George Tsontakis ("KnickKnacks," for violin and viola) in between repertory bulwarks by Beethoven and Brahms (the String Sextet No. 2 in G Major). The eminent musicians include the cellist David Finckel and the pianist Wu Han. (Saratoga Springs, N.Y. spac.org. Aug. 24 at 3 and Aug. 26 at 8.)

Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival

The flutist Marya Martin's gracious Hamptons series comes to a close with a program that hints at grandeur, featuring not only Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and Arvo Pärt's "Mozart-Adagio" but also Brahms's orchestral Serenade No. 1 in D Major, heard here in a reconstruction of its original nonet version. Martin's exceptional colleagues include the clarinettist Romie de Guise-Langlois, the violinist Anthony Marwood, and the pianist Orion Weiss. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. Aug. 24 at 6:30. For tickets and full schedule, see bcmf.org.)

Jenny Lin is featured in Maverick Concerts' chamber-orchestra program, a celebration of the friendship of Manuel de Falla and Federico García Lorca.

ILLUSTRATION BY RAYMOND BONILLA

TABLES FOR TWO

THE PAVILION MARKET CAFE

20 Union Square W. (212-677-7818)

WHEN DANNY MEYER OPENED Union Square Café, in 1985, he was a pioneer in serving local, seasonal ingredients from the Union Square Greenmarket. Meyer recently announced that he will move the Café from Sixteenth Street to an undetermined location when his current lease is up, on account of the rent being too damn high. That's bad news for the neighborhood, but good news for the Pavilion Market Cafe, a new restaurant that's moved into the Square's imposingly neoclassical band shell; it probably wouldn't exist without its predecessor, and might have a hard time competing with it. In a way, the Pavilion's loyalty to the Greenmarket one-ups Meyer's, because it's mandatory: part of the deal that the restaurateur Simon Oren (Nice Matin, Five Napkin Burger) struck to secure the lease was that he'd feature "market day" specials using goods from the farmers who set up shop just outside.

Across the menu, the food, though not particularly adventurous, is much better and fresher than you might expect from a restaurant in one of Manhattan's most trafficked hubs. An appetizer of fried calamari, scattered with sweet garlic chips, sliced chilis, and black sesame seeds, comes on a delicate tomatillo purée. Salads are meal-size but not unrefined: the shredded-kale Caesar is dressed with roasted-garlic vinaigrette and a pickled anchovy, the classic Greek elevated by sharp local feta and crisp nubs of toasted pita. Nineteen dollars seems steep for a simple, if delicious, pappardelle al pesto, but in the end it's a better deal than a gigantic but confused special of an overcooked, fat-ringed Hudson Valley pork chop that comes with both grilled blue-velvet apricots and a pitcher of black-cherry sauce, plus slightly soupy farro, for $32.50.

The Pavilion's opening has been protested by community advocates who argue that an upscale restaurant is a perversion of public space. "Let's see how douchey this place will get," a commenter wrote on Gothamist. Levels were high on a recent Tuesday: by the bar, a conversation between two men in suits shifted seamlessly from "More chicks coming my way!" to "How do you know your assets are growing?" In the dining room, lush with potted palms, music from speakers overhead clashed deafeningly with an orchestra playing outside for the hoi polloi. On a Saturday, post-Hamptons exodus, the scene was calmer, the patio populated by just a handful of diners under orange umbrellas, enjoying white-wine-steamed mussels with herb-flecked golden fries and cocktails like the Rialto—a sweet-and-sour mixture of dark rum, tea syrup, pineapple, and bitters. A tiny park mouse frantically circled the flower-box perimeters. To the west, the night sky was lit up with L.E.D. slingshot helicopters, set aloft by hawkers on the Square.

—Hannah Goldfield

Open weekdays for lunch and dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $18.95-$33.95.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BROWNJOHN

PHOTOGRAPH BY LANDON NORDEMAN

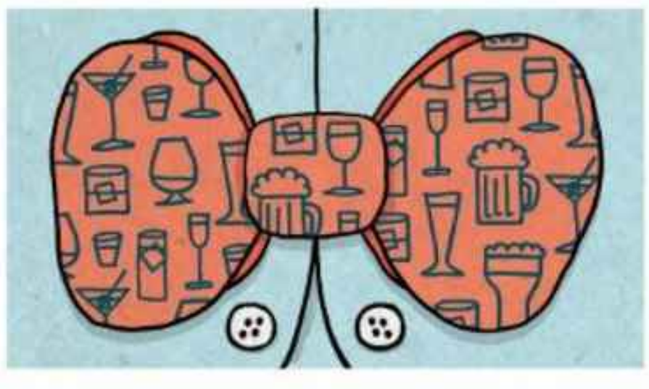
FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB HUDSON MALONE

218 E. 53rd St. (212-355-6607)

On a recent Thursday, Doug Quinn, the bow-tied proprietor of this midtown bar, took a break from fiddling with an antique jukebox to greet some regulars. "I have to say hi to these masculine guys up here," he said, shaking hands with six broad-shouldered men. Hudson Malone is full of masculine guys: "Bankers, admen. Dabney Coleman was here Tuesday, with some friars." Friars? "From the Friars Club." Quinn, who opened the bar after his well-publicized firing, in 2012, from P. J. Clarke's, nearby, is legendary for his photographic memory, his whirlwind drink-making, his ability to "keep Joe away from Jim and put Joe with Ann." This, he says, is "the magic" of a classic New York saloon. "I want this to be the kind of place where a guy could bring his mistress one night, his boss the next, and his wife the next," he said. The Siren Room, a "feminine, sexier" space upstairs, opens officially in September. It's candlelit, with a walnut bar from 1890 and a piano; each photograph is of "a siren or someone who has made love to a siren." Downstairs, behind the bar, Quinn knew everybody's name and drink ("Lenny, what are we doing, Maker's?"), made a new customer a Manhattan with Michter's rye ("This is the real McCoy"), and introduced her to a trial lawyer in a bespoke suit. "This is probably my best friend in the world," Quinn said, and disappeared into the fray.

–Sarah Larson



STAND UP TO CANCER®

WHEN WE ALL
COME TOGETHER
CANCER DOESN'T STAND
A CHANCE

THE STARS WILL ALIGN

FRIDAY, SEPT 5th
8PM / 7 CENTRAL

abc CBS FOX NBC
AFN Bravo COOKING CHANNEL fit & health E! POP OF CULTURE encore encore ESPAÑOL
epix ESPNEWS FOX SPORTS 2 FXM HBO HBO LATINO
ion TELEVISION LMN LOGOTV MLB NETWORK NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL oxygen palladia
pivot SHOWTIME. Smithsonian CHANNEL starz TNT VH1

Cancer Treatment Centers of America®
MasterCard
Sidney Kimmel FOUNDATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH
American Cancer Society®
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Genentech
PROSTATE CANCER FOUNDATION

GO TO STANDUP2CANCER.ORG

CANADIAN BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION, CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY, CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH, CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE, CANCER STEM CELL CONSORTIUM, FARRAH FAWCETT FOUNDATION, FIFTH THIRD BANK, FOX FAMILY CANCER RESEARCH FUNDING TRUST, GENOME CANADA, LAURA ZISKIN FAMILY TRUST, LUSTGARTEN FOUNDATION, MELANOMA RESEARCH ALLIANCE, NATIONAL OVARIAN CANCER COALITION, ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH, OVARIAN CANCER NATIONAL ALLIANCE, OVARIAN CANCER RESEARCH FUND,ROOMKEY.COM, SEAN PARKER FOUNDATION, SIEMENS, ST. BALDRICK'S FOUNDATION

STAND UP TO CANCER IS A PROGRAM OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY FOUNDATION (EIF), A 501(C)(3) CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION. IMAGES FROM THE STAND UP TO CANCER 2012 SHOW.
THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH (AACR) IS STAND UP TO CANCER'S SCIENTIFIC PARTNER.

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE COMMON ENEMY

The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham controls thirty-five thousand square miles of land, an area the size of Jordan. The self-proclaimed caliphate stretches from the newly conquered towns along the Syrian-Turkish border, through its de-facto capital of Raqqa, in northern Syria, across the obliterated Iraqi border into Mosul, Tikrit, and Falluja, down to the farming towns south of Baghdad—roughly a third of the territory of both countries. It is exploiting almost every oil and gas field in Syria; it has seized Iraq's largest refinery, in Baiji, and its biggest dam, north of Mosul, which provides water and electricity for much of the country and could, if destroyed, submerge Baghdad. ISIS funds its operations by selling oil and electricity, emptying captured banks, and extorting money through kidnappings and "taxation." Its highly skilled army fights with billions of dollars' worth of stolen American- and Russian-made armored vehicles and heavy weapons. According to Janine Davidson, a former Pentagon official, "ISIS now controls a volume of resources and territory unmatched in the history of extremist organizations."

Until recently, this astonishing record of conquest failed to win the full attention of the West. The idea of a new Islamic caliphate seemed at the very least far-fetched, and there was a deep American reluctance to know more. Even now, officials can't agree on its name. ISIS came to power through a civil war in Syria that President Obama had decided to keep out of; as for renewing the American war in Iraq, whose conclusion he regards as one of his main achievements, nothing could be less appealing. There was no clear way to take on these jihadists: targeted drone strikes—the Administration's preferred tool for countering terrorism—are barely relevant against the Islamic State's thousands of ground troops. Unlike Al Qaeda—which expelled the ISIS franchise for excessive brutality, last February—the Islamic State hasn't made its name with spectacular acts of terrorism under the glare of global media. "It's a state and not a group," an ISIS press officer named Abu Mosa explained to a documentary filmmaker from Vice News. "We aim to build an Islamic state to cover every aspect of life"—a totalitarian project, but, perhaps, a localized one.

ISIS was easier to ignore than to destroy. As long as it focussed on beheading prisoners of war and imposing its extreme version of Sharia law on subject populations, the threat that it posed seemed limited to anyone who wanted to smoke a cigarette, show her face in public, or worship his chosen god somewhere in the swath of land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Even after the fall of Mosul, in June, and the cleansing of the city's ancient Christian population, ISIS continued to be underestimated by almost everyone who wasn't directly in its path. Then, earlier this month, came its assault on the Yazidi religious minority in northwestern Iraq, bearing all the signs of an imminent genocide: the local population driven into the mountains without food or water, captured families divided, men forced to choose between conversion and execution, women taken into slavery. ISIS has done the same to Iraqi Shiites and other supposed infidels, but the plight of the Yazidis was so vivid, so undeniably reminiscent of Srebrenica, that it jolted Washington into action.

"America is coming to help," the President said on August 7th, four days after the attack. With the consent of the Iraqi government, he ordered U.S. air strikes on ISIS positions besieging Mt. Sinjar and threatening the Kurdish regional capital of Erbil, where thousands of Americans work. Within a week, most of the surviving Yazidis in the mountains had escaped and joined the more than one million internally displaced Iraqis who have been driven into Kurdistan. The C.I.A. began funnelling arms to the Kurdish peshmerga, the only ground troops in the area capable of taking on the Islamic State, and two ISIS-held towns east of Mosul were recaptured. Iraqi and Kurdish forces began coördinating operations, an unprecedented alliance, just weeks after the two sides seemed poised to fight each other. In Baghdad, Iraqi politicians from

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

diverse groups, with support from their backers in Tehran and Riyadh, coalesced behind an alternative to the disastrous incumbent Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki, who was forced to step down. The Saudis wrote a five-hundred-million-dollar check to cover the whole of a United Nations humanitarian appeal. Turkey made noises about sealing its border against fighters and arms infiltrating Islamic State territory. European countries promised aid for the refugees and arms for the Kurds.

Suddenly, a common enemy has joined mutually distrustful players in the making of a coalition against ISIS—just the kind of multilateralism that the President favors. As this month's events bore out, such an effort requires American leadership. Obama said as much in his August 7th speech, but it's easy to sense his reluctance to get dragged back into the sinkhole of Iraq and the region. The speed with which he declared the Yazidi crisis over—while thousands of people, including those too old or too weak to walk, remain behind on Mt. Sinjar—suggested a desire to move on. Meanwhile, thousands of people from another beleaguered Iraqi minority—Shiite Turkmen—face destruction in the town of Amerli, near Kirkuk, under an ISIS siege. Tribal sheikhs in Anbar are fighting ISIS, and the provincial governor there has asked for American help against the jihadists. The risks of action are obvious; by now, the risks of inaction should be, too.

Armed movements driven by an ideology like that of ISIS are expansionist as well as eliminationist. There is always a new enemy to defeat, a new threat to the dream of purifying the world. The Islamic State, whose success makes it a magnet for jihadists around the globe, has recruited hundreds of suicide bombers, who could carry out operations across the region. Its many hundred fighters holding European or American passports will eventually return home with training, skills, and the arrogance of battlefield victory. It's hard to believe that the ambitions of ISIS will remain confined to the boundaries of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Only the President can explain to the public why containing and defeating ISIS requires deep, steady, patient engagement. Americans are justly haunted by the mistakes, the deceptions, and the tragedies of the Iraq War. Our toxic domestic politics make it extremely difficult to have an honest debate about this unfolding catastrophe—it's far easier to assign blame. But fully absorbing the lessons of the past should mean being able to think clearly about going forward: Find partners, internationally and locally, and don't get out in front of them. Understand the complexity and the importance of politics. Locate the elusive ground between overreacting and underreacting. Pay attention to other people's nightmares, because they might be contagious.

—George Packer

REMEMBRANCE

THE OLD GANG

After Robin Williams ended his singularly pyrotechnic life last week, his friend Penny Marshall's phone kept ringing. All the old gang—Carol Kane, Julie Kavner, Robert De Niro—were calling, in shock. Marshall, the director who once played Laverne in "Laverne & Shirley," said, "My brother Garry"—who created "Mork & Mindy" for Williams—"was crying, and that made me fall apart more. I've never seen my brother cry. He could always talk to actors, settle them down. He said he loved Robin but he couldn't get through to him, that some inner layer was out of reach."

She lit a Gambler cigarette, explained her puffy eyes—"I've got this eye thing"—and subsided into an armchair in her Upper West Side apartment. Marshall first worked with Williams when, as Laverne, she made a crossover appearance on "Mork & Mindy"'s pilot: "Fonzie was in it, and he fixed me up with Mork, because I was a fast girl, and Mork came on to me in his Morkish way, and I had to slap him." She rolled her eyes—*seventies sitcoms*. "All of our scripts seemed to blend into each other—who's got the monkey this week? Who's on roller skates? But we'd all go watch Robin—he was just out there, so many voices, so many connections. No one was that fast. Valerie, his first wife, told me, 'I can't keep up with him.' I said, 'Well, who can?'

"Robin was either on"—her eyes went wide, eyebrows a curtain going up—"or he was off, and the sweetest, gentlest man. Later, we all went on vacation to Mexico, and he'd eat peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches and watch that Civil War documentary with his son Zak. He was very childlike. I remember him asking his second wife, Marsha, for permission—'Can I go swimming now?' He was Peter Pan. He was one of those people who can't be alone, who have to entertain you. And the truth is it's *dull*, just sitting around—this is why people do drugs!"

When Marshall directed "Awakenings," in 1990, she cast Williams as a doctor who tries dopamine on encephalitis victims who are unable to move. The treatment works for a time, particularly on Leonard, a patient played by De Niro. "Robin had already done a drama, 'Dead Poets Society,' but he told me he was afraid Bobby was going to blow him off the screen. I said, 'I won't let that happen.' So it was my job to keep Robin from being funny. We had a shorthand signal for when he got a little flamboyant, improvising." She curled her fingers tight and dropped the fist to her groin: "It meant 'More balls.' " She smiled, remembering how hard it was to corral him: "There was a scene where a cockroach was going to crawl across the table, and Robin suddenly did a thing where he was a cockroach who was up for a Raid commercial." She went on, "Robin could make Bob laugh so hard his face got all red, and Bob was supposed to be, you know, *sick*."

On the press tour, she recalled, "I slurred, and said the film was set at a menstrual hospital, instead of a mental hospital—and Robin immediately said, 'It's a period piece.' But he also made you cry at the end, when all the patients go back to being frozen." She grabbed another cigarette—"I'm *going* to stop smoking"—and continued: "We had a Ouija-board scene, and it looked like a monkey was doing it, and I told him, 'Robin, you gotta take the hair off your hands!' He said, 'I know: I sweat! I'm hairy! God's gifts to me!' He made fun of himself, which a lot of comedians can't, and he had a great laugh, and there was not a mean streak in him."

For years, she didn't see much of him.

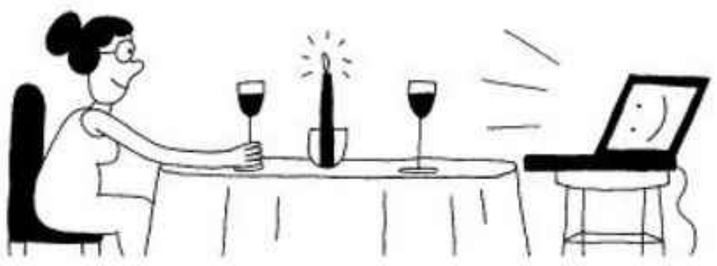
"He seemed excited about his third wife, and he called when I was sick: 'How can I help?'" (Marshall was treated for lung cancer in 2009.) "I wish—I *wish*—I'd known to call him." She plumed smoke. "Lauren Bacall dying, O.K., she was eighty-nine—I want to be dead at eighty-nine. That's enough. But not sixty-three!" Referring to reports that Williams—who, it later emerged, was in the early stages of Parkinson's disease—had slashed at his wrist before using a belt to asphyxiate himself, she said, "It didn't look planned. Most of his improvs were great, but he takes a penknife, you know? Then thinks, *That's* not going to work." She laughed, despite herself.

After a moment, Marshall went on, "There's something he said, I think in his Actors Studio interview. James Lipton asked, 'What do you hope Heaven is like?' and Robin said, 'I hope there's laughter, and it'd be great if, when I talk to God, God goes, "So two Jews walk into a bar . . ."'" She fell silent. "I've got this eye thing," she said again, to explain why she was crying. "And I'm sad."

—Tad Friend

BRAVE NEW WORLD

MAKE ME A MATCH



Christian Rudder, one of the founders of the online dating site OkCupid, got himself into a tangle a few weeks ago when he announced in a blog post, "We Experiment on Human Beings!" OkCupid had wanted to find out if its assertion of compatibility influenced how compatible couples could be. "To test this, we took pairs of bad matches . . . and told them they were exceptionally good for each other," Rudder wrote. (He neglected to say that people have been doing this to friends and relatives for centuries.) As it turned out, being set up by OkCupid was enough to inspire bad matches to exchange nearly as many messages as good matches typically do. Rudder wrote, "When we *tell* people they are a good match, they act as if they are. Even when they should be wrong for each other." Call it the If You Say So romance, and chalk it up to the trust people put in the site's matching algorithms, or to the possibility that the algorithms aren't trustworthy at all. Or maybe it's just that wrongness takes a while to reveal itself. (One date? Seven years? A lifetime?)

Rudder fessed up to all this because it seemed germane, in light of the controversy surrounding Facebook's recent admission that it had tweaked news feeds to test how negative or positive news affects people—what they repost and how it travels. He promptly took a beating. One journalist called him a sociopath. Another likened OkCupid to a restaurant that had intentionally poisoned its patrons. Many people thought that it was cruel to toy with human relationships, and that it was typically arrogant of a tech executive not to recognize this.

Ten days later, Rudder sat munching on raw cauliflower at a midtown bar. He had been thinking about the word "experiment," which seems, despite its implicit virtues, to leave a sinister aftertaste, a residue of Mengele, Milgram, and frog dissections in middle school. "There's no question that Web sites experiment on people," he said. "People justifiably find that weird. But these experiments are so minor. They're more like a chef changing a spice. So you use dill instead of cumin. It might be gross, but it might be delicious." He'd assumed that on some level his revelation wouldn't be taken as a revelation—that the world knew by now that Internet companies collate and analyze data about their users, and often manipulate behavior, in an attempt to refine their services or to achieve world domination. For better or worse, it's part of the compact (and the terms of use): free service in exchange for personal information.

Rudder has written a book on the subject, called "Dataclysm: Who We Are (When We Think No One's Looking)." In it, he doesn't wring or clap his hands over the big-data phenomenon (see N.S.A., Google ads, that sneaky Fitbit) so much as plunge them into big data and attempt to pull strange creatures from the murky depths. Here's one: in U.S. Google searches, the most common word to follow the phrase "Is my husband . . ." is "gay." It is ten times more common than "depressed." It won't be long before Google will be able to provide the answer. Right now, just from your pattern of likes on Facebook (and without relying on status updates or comments), an algorithm can determine with eighty-eight-per-cent accuracy whether you are straight or gay. Sixty per cent of the time, it can tell whether your parents were divorced before you turned twenty-one. Rudder calls this trove of data "an irresistible sociological opportunity." He writes, "You know the science is

Christian Rudder

headed to undiscovered country when someone can hear your parents fighting in the click-click-click of a mouse."

Rudder, who is thirty-eight, grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas, and, like his fellow OkCupid founders, majored in math at Harvard. He's a "Magic: The Gathering" nut and a bit of a Luddite; he's never been on an online date (he's been married for eight years). He's still a member of the indie rock band Bishop Allen, although he's not going on its forthcoming tour. "This is the difference between being in a band and being the author of a nonfiction book," he told his bandmate Justin Rice the other day. "When you're in a band, there's a guy with a microphone who's asking you questions. When you write a book, there's a guy with a microphone who's trying to argue with you."

But back to that argument: If the Internet is one giant experiment, are we all just lab rats? "I prefer the analogy of a glass-bottomed boat," Rudder said. He derived the word "dataclysm" from the Greek word *kataklysmos*, for the Great Flood. He'd like for this current inundation, like Noah's, to be thought of not just as an agent of destruction, "an unprecedented deluge," but as a means

of renewal, one that will wash away our old limited understanding of how people actually think and behave. The power of suggestion is strong. Dinner and a movie?

—*Nick Paumgarten*

FIELD STUDIES

BUG BED

Four hundred and fifty million years ago, what's now upstate New York lay roughly at the latitude of contemporary Brazil, at the bottom of the ocean. Bony fish had yet to evolve; instead, the ocean was populated by trilobites, which are sometimes referred to as "butterflies of the sea" but, in fact, looked a lot more like wood lice. One day, a sort of underwater avalanche buried millions of trilobites in the mud, and their bodies remained undisturbed even as the mud turned to stone, the seafloor buckled, and the continents regrouped. The result is a layer of fossil-rich rock that runs under a hill not far from Utica. The site, which has become known as Beecher's Trilobite Bed, has yielded some of the most coveted finds in the history of paleontology.

On a recent Saturday, Markus Martin stood at the spot, trying to speak above the roar of a rented jackhammer. He was dressed in a Yale University cap, a black T-shirt, and dusty khakis. Martin works in finance in Watertown, but his real passion is trilobites, and for the past five years he has leased the bed from a local dairy farmer. Martin had assembled a posse of fossil enthusiasts to help with the weekend's hunting; two had travelled all the way from Ohio, and a third had driven fourteen hours from Iowa.

"They're the only guys I can trust," Martin said of the trio. The fossiliferous layer lies beneath a hillside's worth of other layers; to expose a new section, the men were jackhammering through this "overburden," then taking turns shovelling away the debris. The Iowan, Travis Vivian, estimated that during the course of the day they would haul out more than a ton of fragmented rock. "What's funny," he said, wiping sweat from his face, "is that the three of us have desk jobs."

Beecher's Bed is named for Charles Emerson Beecher, a paleontologist and neo-Lamarckian who taught at Yale in the eighteen-nineties. What drew Beecher—and now Martin—to the bed is a quirk of geology. The fossils are coated in pyrite, or fool's gold; this has preserved the outline not just of the animals' shells but of their softest and most delicate parts.

Beecher used the fossils he gathered to solve the mysteries of trilobite anatomy; the animals had long, thin antennae, dozens of jointed legs, and, most bizarrely, above each leg an armlike appendage that they used to breathe. Then, in 1904, Beecher suddenly dropped dead. He had never recorded the bed's exact location, and for three-quarters of a century it was lost.

Finally, in the nineteen-eighties, Beecher's Bed and its golden trilobites were rediscovered. Several museums, including Yale's Peabody, subsequently sponsored excavations. Since acquiring the lease, Martin has found the fossils of several new species—some probably represent new genera—all of which he has donated to the Peabody, though, as he noted wistfully, each would have fetched thousands of dollars from a private collector. The price that rare fossils command is the reason Martin is so wary. He's convinced that a rival collector once ran—or, really, drove—off with a wheelbarrow's worth of rock from the site. In response to the heist, he set up a motion-activated camera; however, he said, gesturing toward his friends, "the only pictures that I got were of us."

While the others continued to jackhammer and shovel, Martin offered to show a visitor how to find trilobites. He walked over to an exposed section of the bed, took a geologist's hammer, and hacked out a dinner-plate-size chunk of rock. He gave the chunk another blow, and then another, and within about a minute the rock had fallen away to reveal two half-inch-long trilobite fossils lying next to each other, as if snuggling. Martin explained that most trilobites in the bed are small but that he sometimes finds larger ones, a few inches long. He licked the rock and the pyrite glinted, so that the trilobites, members of the species *Triarthrus eatoni*, looked like little gold bugs. (Collectors affectionately refer to trilobites as "bugs," though they were probably more closely related to today's horseshoe crabs.)

Martin handed the visitor a hammer and invited her to give it a try. She struggled. The split rock had sharp edges that made it difficult to grasp. Martin wandered away, then wandered back. He turned over some of the rocks the visitor had discarded.

"Oh," he exclaimed, pointing to a set of ridges. They belonged to a trilobite maybe two or three inches long. Unfortunately, the visitor had hacked the trilobite in half. "That would have been a nice one," he said, returning the rock to the pile.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

"I always cry at mergers."

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

EBOLANOMICS

The deadly hemorrhagic fever Ebola was first discovered in 1976, and it has haunted the public imagination for twenty years, ever since the publication of Richard Preston's "The Hot Zone." Yet, in all that time, no drug has ever been approved to treat the disease. Now the deadliest outbreak yet is raging in West Africa, and there are no real tools to stop it. (Supplies of the experimental drug administered to two American patients have already run out.) The lack of an Ebola treatment is disturbing. But, given the way drug development is funded, it's also predictable.

When pharmaceutical companies are deciding where to direct their R. & D. money, they naturally assess the potential market for a drug candidate. That means that they have an incentive to target diseases that affect wealthier people (above all, people in the developed world), who can afford to pay a lot. They have an incentive to make drugs that many people will take. And they have an incentive to make drugs that people will take regularly for a long time—drugs like statins.

This system does a reasonable job of getting Westerners the drugs they want (albeit often at high prices). But it also leads to enormous underinvestment in certain kinds of diseases and certain categories of drugs. Diseases that mostly affect poor people in poor countries aren't a research priority, because it's unlikely that those markets will ever provide a decent return. So diseases like malaria and tuberculosis, which together kill two million people a year, have received less attention from pharmaceutical companies than high cholesterol. Then, there's what the World Health Organization calls "neglected tropical diseases," such as Chagas disease and dengue; they affect more than a billion people and kill as many as half a million a year. One study found that of the more than fifteen hundred drugs that came to market between 1975 and 2004 just ten were targeted at these maladies. And when a disease's victims are both poor and not very numerous that's a double whammy. On both scores, a drug for Ebola looks like a bad investment: so far, the disease has appeared only in poor countries and has affected a relatively small number of people.

It's not just developing nations that the system disserves, however. In recent years, the rise of drug-resistant microbes has made the antibiotics we use less effective and has increased the risk that an infectious disease could get out of control. What people in the West need, health officials agree, is new drugs that we can keep in reserve against an outbreak that regular antibiotics can't contain. Yet, over the past thirty years, the supply of new antibiotics has slowed to a trickle. "Antibiotic resistance really has the potential to make everything about the way we live different," Kevin Outterson, a co-director of the Health Law program at Boston University and a founding member of the C.D.C.'s working group on antimicrobial resistance, told me. "So we need to stoke the pipeline."

The trouble, again, is the business model. If a drug company did invent a powerful new antibiotic, we wouldn't want it to be widely prescribed, because the goal would be to delay resistance. "Public-health officials would appropriately try to limit sales of the drug as much as possible," Outterson says: a good public-health policy; a bad investment prospect.

So how can we get the drugs we need without magically transforming the industry that develops them? The key is to reward companies for creating substantial public-health benefits. And the simplest way to do this would be to offer prizes for new drugs. Outterson describes one scenario: "The government would make a payment or a stream of payments to the company, and in exchange the company would give up the right to sell the product." The drug company would get paid, and would avoid all the expenses of trying to push a new product (which you don't want with a last-resort antibiotic, anyway). Society would get a new drug, and public-health officials would be able to control how it was promoted and used.

Prizes aren't a new idea—in the seventeen-hundreds, the British government successfully used a prize to find a method for measuring longitude at sea. But, in the past couple of decades, they've become more common, with prizes being offered for things like innovations in private space flight and an arsenic filter for safe drinking water. The Obama Administration has been especially active in this area, offering more than a hundred and fifty prizes for a range of technological breakthroughs. Economists on both the left and the right see them as a useful way to spark innovation. They're cost-effective, since you have to pay only if the product works. They're well suited to encouraging investment in public goods—like antibiotics and vaccines—where the benefits of an innovation aren't reaped only by those who use it. (My family is safer if yours is vaccinated.) They rely on existing infrastructure. And, in economic jargon, they harness market forces by "pulling" research into neglected areas.

The up-front costs of a prize system would be substantial—a recent report commissioned by the F.D.A. estimated that it would cost a billion dollars to get a great new antibiotic, factoring in tax credits. But we'd save lives by developing the drugs we need and taking measures against future disaster. The alternative is pretty grim: a system that, when it comes to some fierce mortal perils, is leaving a lot of blood on the floor.

—James Surowiecki

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

AMERICAN CHRONICLES

THE CROOKED AND THE DEAD

Does the Constitution protect corruption?

BY JILL LEPORE

The fall and winter before last, Daniel J. Halloran III, a Republican city councilman from Queens, met with two men: an undercover F.B.I. agent who was posing as a businessman called Raj and a real-estate developer named Moses Stern, who was coöperating with the F.B.I. in exchange for a reduced prison term. (Stern is facing a four-hundred-and-fifty-five-year sentence for bank fraud, among other charges.) During meetings that were secretly recorded, Raj and Stern gave Halloran almost forty thousand dollars in cash, including hundred-dollar bills crammed into unmarked envelopes, and sixty-five hundred dollars in checks made out to his congressional campaign: in 2012, Halloran ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. The checks were written from other people's accounts, Raj allegedly told Halloran, because he didn't want his name to appear in any campaign-finance report. "I can take green," Halloran said, after he lost the congressional race and was no longer eligible for campaign matching funds. "That's politics, that's politics," he told Stern at a restaurant in Manhattan on a night when he accepted a wad of cash, adding, philosophically, "You can't do anything without the fucking money."

Much of the money, in this case, was payment to Halloran for brokering a deal with two Republican Party officials, Vincent Tabone and Joseph Savino, buying their support for Malcolm Smith, a Democratic New York State senator who wanted to run for mayor of New York as a Republican. (Smith's party switch required the approval of three of the city's five Republican Party borough chairmen.) Stern warned Smith that getting onto the ballot would cost "a pretty penny."

"It's worth it," Smith said.

On February 14, 2013, in a car parked outside Sparks Steak House, on East Forty-sixth Street, Savino accepted fifteen thousand dollars from Raj. (Tabone, a harder bargainer, got twenty-five thousand.)

"Tell me you love me," Halloran texted Savino, after the handoff.

The legal scholar Zephyr Teachout is running for governor of New York to focus attention on corruption, a fiercely contested idea.

"U are my fucking valentine," Savino texted back.

In April, 2013, the office of Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, indicted Halloran, Smith, Tabone, and Savino on federal corruption charges. After the news broke, the state's governor, Andrew Cuomo, urged the Legislature to

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN LANCASTER

pass a package of anticorruption reforms, including a Campaign Finance Reform Act. The Legislature failed to pass a single measure. That summer, Cuomo announced the formation of a twenty-five-member panel, the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption, "to probe systemic corruption and the appearance of such corruption in state government, political campaigns, and elections." He said, "Anything they want to look at, they can look at: me, the lieutenant governor, the attorney general, the comptroller, any senator, any assemblyman." The commission was given eighteen months to conduct its investigation, but in March, 2014, apparently as part of a budget deal with the Legislature—a deal that did not include any meaningful campaign-finance-reform provisions—Cuomo shut it down. In April, Bharara, concerned about possible malfeasance, seized the commission's files.

This spring, while the U.S. Attorney's office launched an inquiry into the possible corruption of the corruption commission, the *Times* began its own investigation. Reporters discovered that, after the commission issued a subpoena to a political-consulting firm called Buying Time ("How and where campaigns spend their money on media is more important than ever," the firm's Web site reads), Cuomo's top aide called one of the commission's co-chairs, told him that Cuomo was one of Buying Time's clients, and said, of the subpoena, "Pull it back." The subpoena was withdrawn. (It was later reissued.) The *Times* report appeared in July. In a thirteen-page response, the Governor's office insisted that by law the commission had never been independent: "A commission appointed by and staffed by the executive cannot investigate the executive."

Cuomo is up for reëlection in November, but first he has to win a Democratic primary, on September 9th, against an improbable challenger: Zephyr Teachout, a constitutional-law professor at Fordham University. The week before the *Times* published its report, nearly ninety per cent of New York voters either didn't know her name or had no opinion about her. Teachout has never held an elected office; she has little experience and less support. She's not so much campaigning for office as campaigning for reform. Shortly before the primary, her first book will be released. It's called "Corruption in America."

Running for office, a vital civic act, costs money. How much it costs and who pays for it are legitimate matters of public concern and legislative action. Four years after the Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United dismantled a regime of campaign-finance legislation that had been in place for more than a century, the prospects for reform are bleak. There is quite possibly more money in American politics today than at any point in the country's history. But there is also less agreement than ever about what can or should be done about it. In fact, there is very little agreement about whether fighting corruption is a compelling state interest, or even about what corruption is.

The New York story is important because, historically, New York is corruption's proving ground. In December, 2013, three months before Cuomo shut down the Moreland Commission, it issued a preliminary, ninety-eight-page report describing "an epidemic of public corruption." For instance: "One out of every eleven legislators to leave office since 1999 has done so under the cloud of ethical or criminal violations." But those are only the people who got caught violating the scant, weak, and poorly enforced anticorruption laws that govern their conduct. "The real scandal," according to the report, "is what remains legal."

What remains legal includes the following: between 2009 and 2012, donors gave two hundred and thirty-two million dollars to legislators in Albany, and lobbyists gave six hundred and ninety-three million—a total of nearly one billion dollars in direct political spending. Eighty per cent of individual contributions came from big donors. (New York has hardly any small donors. Of New Yorkers who voted in the last gubernatorial election, fewer than one per cent made campaign donations.) Big donors give big money to both Democrats and Republicans; they give it to whoever holds power. In 2012, when Republicans held a majority in the Senate, they took in thirteen million dollars, while Senate Democrats took in only seven million dollars. In 2010, when Democrats held the Senate majority, the

PROMOTION

NEW YORKER .COM

DAILY COMMENT

OPINIONS, ARGUMENTS, AND REFLECTIONS ON THE NEWS

"It cannot be said too clearly, and it cannot be said too often: guns make violence happen; gun-control laws make it stop."
—"No Time to Despair About Gun Control," Adam Gopnik

www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment

NEWYORKER.COM
PUBLISHES MORE THAN FIFTEEN ORIGINAL STORIES A DAY

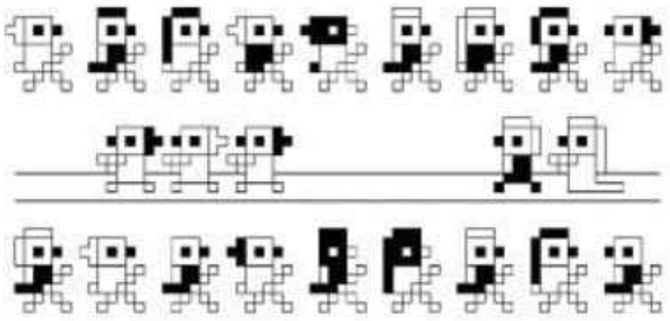
CONDÉ NAST

pattern was reversed. Big donors aren't advancing an ideology or a party, the commission concluded: they're paying for access. They give money to politicians who wield power over decisions affecting their specific economic interests, regardless of those politicians' party affiliations or ideological positions. One example: between 2011 and 2012, the chairs of the health committees in both the Republican Senate and the Democratic Assembly each received more than half of his campaign funds from the health industry. The people and the organizations writing these checks know exactly what they're buying. In one instance cited in the report, a trade association asked its members to donate ten thousand dollars each, because "Our future ability to adopt favorable legislation, stop terrible legislation or modify legislation to limit the pain to our industry is directly tied to our continued positive relationship with all the leaders in Albany." A further source of corruption, according to the report, is "shadowy outside spending." After Citizens United, a Virginia-based 501(c)(4) called Common Sense Principles spent nearly $3.5 million attacking Democratic candidates from New York. The commission was unable to identify who runs this organization, or where it gets its money.

The Moreland Commission, in its preliminary report, urged an overhaul of the state's campaign-finance laws—closing loopholes regarding limited-liability companies, mandating disclosure of outside spending, instituting public financing for state campaigns, and creating an independent election-law-enforcement agency—and suggested that it would include, in its final report, a vast amount of evidence that it held back from the preliminary report because of the ongoing nature of the investigation. Before that investigation was halted, the commissioners, including nine district attorneys, had been working with a data-analytics firm to study political contributions, floor motions, votes, and policy outcomes: they were following the money, politician by politician, penny by penny. Unless the U.S. Attorney's office continues the study, the findings of that analysis will never be made public.

It may not matter. What the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption considers to be corruption is not what the United States Supreme Court considers to be corruption. And much of what the commission urged, by way of legislative reform, is, in the eyes of the Court, unconstitutional.

Cuomo announced that he had shut down the commission on March 29th. On April 2nd, the Supreme Court issued its ruling in McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission. The case clarified and extended the logic of Citi-



zens United, in which the Court had ruled that certain contributions made by corporations cannot be regulated, because corporations are people and money is speech, and therefore money spent by corporations is protected under the First Amendment. In McCutcheon, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the opinion for the five-to-four majority. "The right to participate in democracy through political contributions is protected by the First Amendment, but that right is not absolute," he began. Congress may not "regulate contributions simply to reduce the amount of money in politics, or to restrict the political participation of some in order to enhance the relative influence of others." But there is "one legitimate governmental interest for restricting campaign finances," he explained: "preventing corruption or the appearance of corruption." That said, the Court's understanding of corruption is very narrow, Roberts explained, echoing a view expressed by Justice Anthony Kennedy in McConnell v. F.E.C., in 2003: "Congress may target only a specific type of corruption—'*quid pro quo*' corruption."

Quid pro quo is when an elected official does something like accepting fifteen thousand dollars in cash in exchange for supporting another politician's bid to run for mayor of New York. The only kind of corruption that federal law is allowed to prohibit is out-and-out bribery. The kind of political prostitution that the Moreland Commission was in the middle of attempting to document—elected officials representing the interests not of their constituents but of their largest contributors—does not constitute, in the view of the Supreme Court, either corruption or the appearance of corruption. In the words of Daniel Halloran, "That's politics." Is the distinction tenable?

"It's not a quid-pro-quo thing," Vincent Tabone insisted, when asked what he wanted in exchange for his support of Malcolm Smith. "It's a matter of good faith."

"You give us some ideas on how he can demonstrate that good faith," Raj suggested.

Three weeks later, Tabone accepted twenty-five thousand dollars, cash.

Last year, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee advised freshman members of Congress to spend four hours on the phone each day raising money. That sounds dreadful. But what would be the right number of hours? There's only so much that can be done about money in politics, of course. The trouble, at the moment, is that almost nothing can be done. In 2009, John McCain, after hearing oral arguments in Citizens United, made an impassioned speech on the floor of the Senate: "Throughout our history, America has faced periods of political corruption, and in every instance Congress has risen above its own self-interest and enacted the necessary reforms to address the scandals and corruption that have plagued our democratic institutions." That's a wonderfully rosy account of American history, but, at this point, Congress is handcuffed. The Court's rulings in Citizens United and McCutcheon are so broad and far-reaching that, notwithstanding public support for campaign-finance reform—four out of five Americans support it—nearly any campaign-finance laws passed in the states or by Congress stand a good chance of being struck down.

One approach that has been pursued by those interested in reform since 2010 is to amend the Constitution. In a recent book, "Six Amendments," the retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, who dissented in Citizens United, urges an amendment separating the regulation of campaign finance from the protections offered by the First Amendment. In September, the Senate is

scheduled to vote on an amendment that, in the interests of "democratic self-government and political equality, and to protect the integrity of government and the electoral process," grants to Congress and the states the power to "regulate and set reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates and others to influence elections." It can't possibly pass; a constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds majority in both houses. But, if the issue gets enough play in the press, it could bring voters to the polls in November, and reformers to office.

To that end, the political consultant Mark McKinnon and the Harvard Law School professor Lawrence Lessig are using the deregulation of the campaign-finance system to raise what they hope will be an overwhelming amount of bipartisan money from small and big donors to get both Democratic and Republican reformers elected to Congress, so that they can support efforts regulating the very spending that got them elected. Lessig and McKinnon have launched a Super PAC called Mayday, one of whose objectives is to make Super PACs illegal. Lessig says, "Embrace the irony." Tragedy, more like.

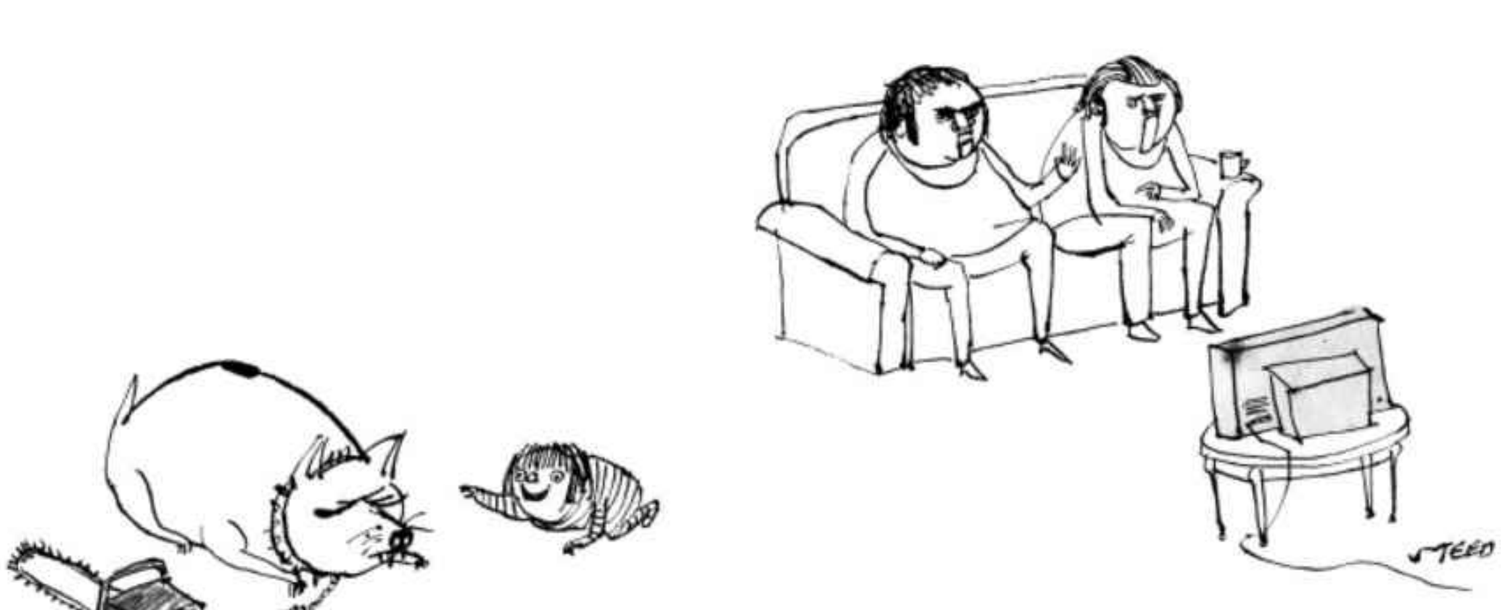
Zephyr Teachout's argument in "Corruption in America" follows an argument that Lessig made in his book "Republic, Lost" (2011). Lessig countered the Court's cramped understanding of corruption with a sprawling one, defining corruption as "the economy of influence." By that, he meant the overpowering—by outspending—of the will of the many by the will of the few, a corruption he describes as "the banal evil of second-rate minds who can't make it in the private sector and who therefore turn to the massive wealth directed by our government as the means to securing wealth for themselves." Teachout believes that Lessig's definition of corruption is the framers' definition of corruption. If Lessig's gambit is to outspend the spenders, Teachout's is to out-original the originalists. The first half of her book is a long essay on the role of corruption in eighteenth-century political thought—Hobbes and Montesquieu, Pufendorf and Locke. Indisputably, in the eighteenth century corruption meant a great deal more than bribery. "By corruption, the early generations meant excessive private interests influencing the exercise of public power," Teachout writes. Of the hundreds of times that the subject of corruption was raised during the Constitutional Convention and the ratification debates, as Lessig pointed out in an amicus brief in McCutcheon, only a handful of times—about one per cent of the time—did it mean anything as narrow as quid pro quo.

This isn't uninteresting, but it's not especially helpful, either. Teachout, while writing from the left, makes the same rhetorical moves as the Tea Party. She loves Benjamin Franklin and James Madison, and she is certain that they are on her side. Her chief complaint is that Americans have abandoned the Founding Fathers. Another complaint is that "the Court has become populated by academics and appellate court justices," rather than by people who have experience with "real problems." Admittedly, there are only so many cards in the populist deck. But gushing about the Founding Fathers and demeaning intellectuals is a weak hand.

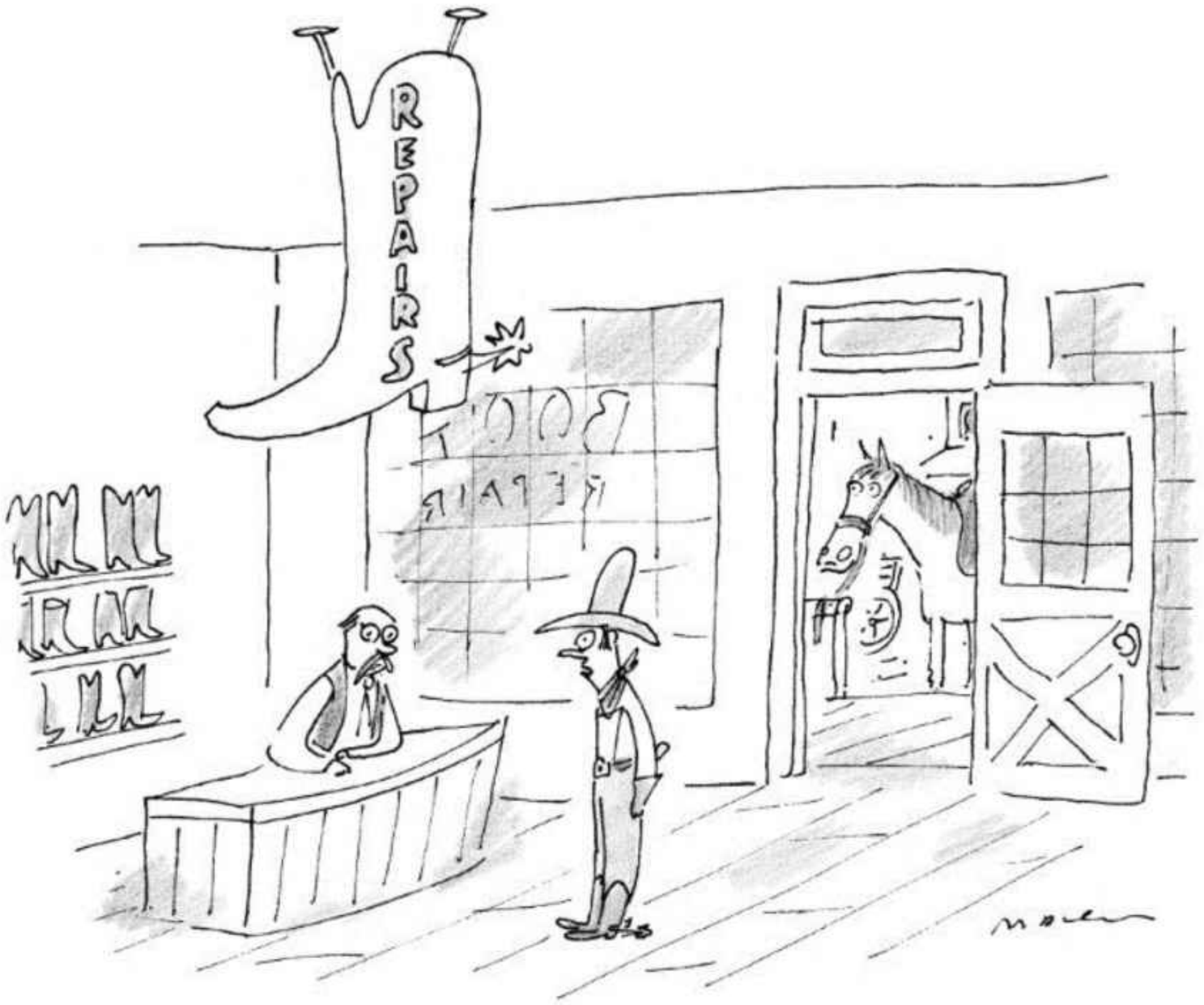
Only in passing does Teachout note that an element of corruption, in republican political theory, is "dependence." The Declaration of Independence declared independence from a corrupting dependence on the king and his council. Another and deeper meaning of dependence had to do with structural economic dependence on other people: the dependence of women on their husbands, of servants on their masters, of workers on their bosses, and of tenants on their landlords. In the early American republic, people who were economically dependent on other people were not allowed to vote, because their votes were considered inherently corrupt: they lacked the independence that made civic virtue possible. Property requirements for voting were struck down, in the nineteenth century, only by the force of the argument that the cost of disenfranchising the dependent outweighed the risk of corruption. So, while it's certainly true that the attempt to stamp out "corruption" was very much a part of the founding of the United States, it's not an idea that can simply be lifted out of the eighteenth century to overturn Citizens United, any more than "liberty" can be lifted out of the eighteenth century by the Tea Party to overturn the Court's decision on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act.

There may be good reasons to define corruption broadly. But fighting corruption through democratic action requires embracing a set of ideas about democracy that the framers did not.

The entrance into the electorate of men who owned little or no property democratized American politics. The fear that they would sell their votes—a fear that was not unfounded—was chiefly addressed, in the eighteen-eighties, by the adoption of the secret ballot. In the eighteen-nineties, reformers who had fought against machine politics turned their attention to a new source of corruption: big business. In 1894, Elihu Root proposed an amendment to New York's constitution, banning "great aggregations of wealth"—corporations—"from using their corporate funds, directly or indirectly to send members of the legislature to these halls, in order to vote for their protection and the advancement of their interests as against those of the public." The



"You have to let them make their own mistakes."



"I got spurs that jangle jingle jangle—I want spurs that jingle jangle jingle."

• •

amendment failed, but Root kept the issue on the agenda when he helped Theodore Roosevelt campaign for mayor of New York, in 1886, and for governor, in 1898. In 1905, when Roosevelt was President (Root served as his Secretary of State), he told Congress, "All contributions by corporations to any political committee or for any political purpose should be forbidden by law."

The first federal law to ban corporate political donations, the Tillman Act, was passed in 1907, the same year that New York passed the Moreland Act, granting to the governor the power to appoint commissions to investigate corruption. Both pieces of legislation were the result of hearings conducted in 1905 by the Armstrong Committee, which was appointed by the New York State Legislature to investigate the insurance industry. Charles Evans Hughes, serving as the committee's chief counsel, stumbled upon evidence that insurance companies had, for years, paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Republican National Committee, often listing these disbursements in their account books as "legal expenses." Hughes entered into evidence a check for $48,702.50 that New York Life had paid, through J. P. Morgan & Co., to the Republican National Committee in 1904 (about a million dollars, in today's money). As the historian Robert E. Mutch points out in his thoughtful and well-researched study "Buying the Vote," this proof of what had before only been rumored occasioned an outcry. "So long as great corporations are permitted to send their checks for $50,000 to campaign committee Treasurers we shall have, or be in great danger of having, a Government of the corporations, not a Government of the people," the editors of the New York *Times*, a Democratic newspaper, wrote. The city's leading Republican paper, the *Tribune*, went further:

> In the United States the government is intended to be a government of men. A corporation is not a citizen with a right to vote or take a hand otherwise in politics. It is an artificial creation, brought into existence by favor of the State solely to perform the functions allowed by its charter. Interference by it with the State and attempts by it to exercise rights of citizenship are fundamentally a perversion of its power. Its stockholders, no matter how wise or how rich, should be forced to exercise their political influence as individuals on an equality with other men. That is the basic principle of democracy.

Hughes asked the New York State senator and Republican Party boss T. C. Platt whether these payments involved any quid pro quo: Had any of these insurance companies ever asked Platt to "intervene in their favor"? Platt said no. Hughes then asked if the consideration given was, perhaps, broader:

> HUGHES: To see that the legislature, for example, did not enact legislation which they thought hostile to their policyholders?
>
> PLATT: That is what it would amount to. . . .
>
> HUGHES: Is not that the way it really comes about, Senator, that the use of these contributions in the election of candidates to office puts the candidates under more or less of a moral obligation not to attack the interests supporting?
>
> PLATT: That is what would naturally be involved.

In the manner of all the best dialogue, this exchange changed everything.

Hughes's effectiveness on behalf of the Armstrong Committee carried him into the New York governor's office in 1906. One of the first things he did after his inauguration, in January, 1907, was to ask the assemblyman Sherman Moreland, who had been a law student of his at Cornell, to introduce legislation giving the governor investigative authority. Meanwhile, in Washington, Congress debated the Tillman Act, which banned corporate contributions to political campaigns (while providing no mechanism for enforcement). Because of the breadth of its support, the Tillman Act was the subject of almost no formal discussion. The Senate elections committee, forwarding it to the floor, said only, "The evils of the use of money in connection with political elections are so generally recognized that the committee deem it unnecessary to make any argument in favor of the general purpose of this measure." Mutch suggests that the absence of official discussion has led the Supreme Court to underestimate both congressional and popular support for the Tillman Act.

Restricting political contributions is one approach; requiring them to be made public is another. In 1908, William Taft pledged to make public his entire donor list. Disclosure was a political necessity even before the passage, in 1910, of the Publicity Act. In 1925, the amended Tillman and Publicity Acts became the Federal Corrupt Practices Act, which together regulated campaign finance in the United States until, in the Watergate era, the system began to unravel.

In 1972, the Committee to Re-elect the President failed to comply with the

1971 Federal Election Campaign Act, the first significant revision of the 1925 Federal Corrupt Practices Act. (Individual contribution caps were set at five thousand dollars; some of Nixon's donors had given more than two million dollars.) The Watergate scandal exposed Nixon's campaign finances, leading, in 1974, to a revision of the 1971 act, strengthening and expanding its regulations and providing for their enforcement through the establishment of the F.E.C. The act passed only after a filibuster in the Senate; Ford considered a veto but, in the end, signed. And then, in the nineteen-seventies, campaign finance, like abortion and gun control, moved from Congress to the courts.

In 1976, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in Buckley v. Valeo, which challenged the constitutionality of the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act; the decision marked the beginning of the era of constitutional interpretation that resulted, this year, in McCutcheon v. F.E.C. "A line of cases this misguided about matters of such fundamental importance to American politics is a frightful thing," Robert Post, the dean of Yale Law School, writes in his new book, "Citizens Divided."

The Buckley of Buckley v. Valeo was James Buckley, who is now a U.S. appeals-court judge but who was then a U.S. senator from New York, elected as a member of the Conservative Party, and the brother of William F. Buckley. The petitioners, which included Buckley, the N.Y.C.L.U., and Eugene McCarthy, made a libertarian argument, that the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act violated the First Amendment because giving money to campaigns and the spending of money on behalf of campaigns are forms of political expression. This argument rested on a new interpretation of the First Amendment, a cornerstone of the rising conservative movement. The D.C. Court of Appeals ruled against Buckley, six-to-two, writing, "It would be strange indeed if, by extrapolation outward from the basic rights of individuals, the wealthy few could claim a constitutional guarantee to a stronger political voice than the unwealthy many because they are able to give and spend more money."

This argument, however, found favor on the Supreme Court, aided by an amicus brief submitted on behalf of the Ford Administration and written by Solicitor General Robert Bork. (The filing of this brief, opposing a brief submitted by the Justice Department, was unprecedented.) "Money is a proxy for speech," Bork wrote. "Money is speech," Justice Potter Stewart echoed, during oral arguments, "and speech is money."

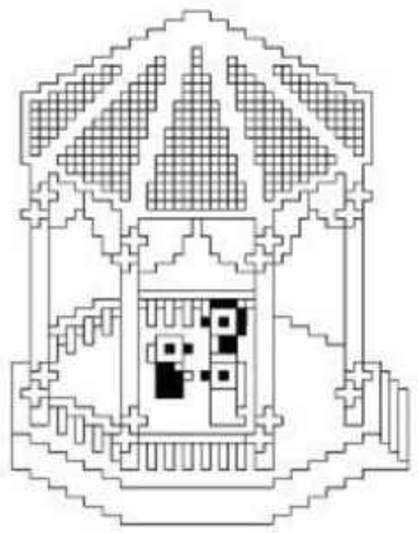
The petitioners' argument, if accepted, challenged every part of the law except disclosure, as Mutch explains. The defendants argued that the rationale for each part of the law was the same, and had been the same, since 1907: curbing "the undue influence of a wealthy few" owing to "the corrupting influence of large contributions," in the interest of political equality and public trust. The Court split the difference, ruling that limits on campaign spending are unconstitutional, because they violate the First Amendment, and that limits on campaign contributions are legitimate only if they target one kind of corruption: quid pro quo. Everything sorted into one pile or the other: First Amendment speech or quid-pro-quo corruption. Restrictions on "independent expenditures"—money spent on behalf of a candidate but not given to his campaign—were struck down (as violating the First Amendment). Disclosure requirements were upheld (as anticorruption measures).

In Buckley, the Court dismissed political equality as a justification for regulating money in politics, even though political equality had, all along, been the point of campaign-finance legislation; it also replaced Congress's definition of corruption with James Buckley's definition of corruption. In Citizens United, Teachout argues, the Court did something even stranger: it redefined undue influence, which for a very long time had been seen as a form of corruption, and destructive of democracy, as "responsiveness," and foundational to democracy. "The fact that speakers may have influence over or access to elected officials does not mean these officials are corrupt," Justice Kennedy wrote, citing his opinion in McConnell v. F.E.C.: "Democracy is premised on responsiveness."

Kennedy has a point. Still, the narrower the Court's definition of corruption, the less Congress can do about money in politics. Teachout wants to restore the older definition, which is why she's written "Corruption in America," and why she's running for governor of New York. "I am trying to bring corruption back," she writes. "As an idea, as something we fight about." It might not be the right fight to pick.

"Conceptualizing campaign finance reform in terms of the state's interests in preventing corruption leads down a constitutional blind alley," Robert Post warns, in "Citizens Divided." Historically, he points out, three compelling state interests have been cited to support the regulation of money in politics: promoting equality, removing distortion, and eliminating corruption. In Buckley, the Court rejected the equality argument; Post thinks this decision was correct. In Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce, in 1990, the Court supported the distortion argument. Post thinks this decision was incorrect. He agrees with Teachout and Lessig that the Court's definition of corruption from Buckley to McCutcheon is weak and confused and wrong, but he doesn't think the way out is redefining it as "undue influence."

Lessig says that Post has given up on the possibility of clarifying what corruption is, which is a fair charge. But Post isn't alone. Bringing corruption back is an odd strategy when anticorruption campaigns, like purity crusades, have often done more harm than good. In "Captured by Evil: The Idea of Corruption in Law," the Cornell law professor Laura Underkuffler argues that corruption is a moral and religious idea, more medieval than modern, whose place in the law is troubled. Piety makes poor policy. One reason that campaign-finance jurisprudence is such a mess is that attempting to eliminate corruption is like trying to stamp out sin. To say as much isn't to take a libertarian position, or even a cynical one. It's not only possible to argue for better laws without damning either government or politics to hell; it's necessary. Unregulated money in politics erodes the public's



ADVERTISEMENT

2015
NEW YORKER
DESK DIARY

Our 2015 collection has arrived.

Juggle your daily schedule of work and play with a much-needed dose of humor.

View all ten colors online at
newyorkerstore.com/diaries
or call **800-459-3037** to order

trust in government. There will never be no money, but, for the public to have faith in government, the law has to be something a great deal stronger than: anything goes.

Aside from amending the Constitution, what can work? For Post, the only state interest in campaign-finance regulation that is both compatible with the First Amendment and rises above the threshold to interfere with it, because its claims are prior, is electoral integrity: "Electoral integrity is a compelling government interest because without it Americans have no reason to exercise the communicative rights guaranteed by the First Amendment."

Post sees the debate over campaign-finance reform as a debate between those concerned about discursive democracy and those concerned about representative government. One is more interested in free speech, the other in free elections. For much of the twentieth century, he argues, a bridge between these two positions was a shared faith in public opinion and the press. The line of cases from Buckley to McCutcheon has favored free speech over free elections, and Post considers this a vulnerability—this is the fight he wants to pick—because speech can't be free unless elections have integrity. As a legal strategy, that might be sound. But, practically, it's worrying, because the set of ideas about public opinion and the practice of journalism which guided American democracy a century ago was never a very sturdy bridge, and, at this point, the bridge is out.

Post hasn't repaired that bridge, or even neared it. But he has hacked his way through a thorny partisan thicket to a constitutional clearing. The problem is, once you get to Post's clearing, what you need, to do anything, is evidence about the integrity of elections. He hasn't got any. "I am not now engaged in the serious historical and empirical inquiry that would be necessary to address this issue," he admits. You're on your own until that research is done. In the meantime, it would be helpful if investigative bodies like the Moreland Commission were allowed to finish their work.

Daniel Halloran pleaded not guilty to federal corruption charges. His lawyers ventured an insanity defense. (Halloran had a benign brain tumor removed two years ago.) The judge denied that motion. Joseph Savino pleaded guilty, and is coöperating with the prosecution. The trial of Halloran, Vincent Tabone, and Malcolm Smith began in June. During opening statements, Smith's attorney, Gerald Shargel, accused the F.B.I. of entrapment. Tabone's attorney is pursuing a similar defense, charging the government with an attempt to "create corruption." Both defenses question Moses Stern's credibility. A few weeks into the proceedings, it was revealed that the prosecution had failed to turn over to the defense more than seventy hours of recordings—about a third of them conversations in Yiddish, most between Stern and a rabbi from Queens. Lawyers for Tabone and Smith sought and were granted a mistrial.

Halloran's trial proceeded. His lawyers argued that the money Halloran received was a combination of campaign donations and personal loans. On the stand, Halloran said he'd consulted the New York City Campaign Finance Board's Web site to make sure everything he was doing was legal, by comparing his political-consulting expenses with those publicly disclosed by Michael Bloomberg. In July, the jury found Halloran guilty on five counts. He faces up to fifty-five years in prison, and his lawyers are pursuing an appeal.

During the F.B.I.'s undercover operation, Malcolm Smith said that, if his plan to run for mayor of New York as a Republican didn't work out, he hoped to regain his position as the Democratic leader in the Senate. At the White Plains Ritz-Carlton, Raj, the undercover F.B.I. agent, warned him that this would require bribing his fellow Democratic senators.

Raj: "Sometimes it takes cash, sometimes it takes checks, sometimes it takes a job."

Smith: "Right, right, right."

Smith and Tabone will be retried in January, after the Yiddish tapes have been translated. Meanwhile, Smith is running for reëlection. His name will be on the ballot in November.

Zephyr Teachout would like to debate Andrew Cuomo. She thinks that there ought to be three debates: one on education, one on immigration, and one on fracking. "But," she admits, "all three would end up in a debate about corruption." No debates are scheduled. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

TRIGGERS

BY PAUL RUDNICK

Politically sensitive organizations and individuals have begun to advocate for the addition of "trigger warnings" to books and movies that contain scenes of bullying, prejudice, or sexual violence. A group called SKITTISH, the Society of Kindhearted Individuals Terrified of Trauma, Icky Stuff, and Heartache, has issued a manifesto calling for even more extreme measures:

1. A series of escalating online alerts to warn viewers of any film or public-service video featuring Angelina Jolie, whose appearance may further upset Jennifer Aniston, even now.

2. If any work of fiction describes stereotypical behavior by a member of a minority group, there must be a boldfaced introduction stating such correctives as "JEWS ARE NEITHER WEALTHY NOR EDUCATED"; "AFRICAN-AMERICANS HAVE NO AFFINITY FOR DANCE, MUSIC, OR CO-HOSTING MORNING SHOWS"; and "GAY MEN DO NOT GO TO SEE 'CAPTAIN AMERICA' MOVIES HOPING FOR A SUDSY SHOWER SCENE."

3. Any work of fiction or nonfiction that includes depictions of sadomasochistic sexual activity must be rated on the following scale. X: Suitable Only for Bored, Lonely Women in Small Towns. XX: Suitable Only for Bored, Lonely Women Married to Men Who Wear Oversized Team Jerseys to Weddings. XXX: Suitable Only for Bored, Lonely Women Who Will Re-Create the Most Graphic Scenes Using Their Workplace Precious Moments Figurines.

4. Any documentary about war or slavery must begin with a title card reading either "War and Slavery Are Bad," "War May Sometimes Be Regrettably Necessary to End Slavery," or "War and Slavery Are Not Appropriate Names for Children or Pets."

5. Any animated film that depicts colorful cartoon animals must conclude with this voice-over: "The creatures you have just witnessed were created entirely on a computer. Never attempt to force live animals to sing power ballads, tap-dance on a tundra, or assure you that everything will be fine if you just believe in yourself. In reality, such animals would be hunted and killed."

6. Any written work that contains derogatory references to a character's height, weight, skin tone, gender, original gender, or sexual orientation must have all of these references crossed out and replaced with the words "proud," "healthy," "personhood," "not gross in any way so stop making that face," and "attractive to people who like that sort of thing."

7. Any recording of a song with lyrics that are degrading to women must include a supplementary version of the same song with alternate lyrics. For example, the words "mega-booty," "pumpin' thang," "luscious lady lava," and "steamin' hot pocket" would be replaced with the words "respect," "boundaries," "child care," and "Pelosi."

8. Any cable program featuring scenes of Viking misbehavior, vampire lust, questionable prison romance, enjoyable drug use, or unrepentant serial killing must be preceded by one or more of the following admonitions: "Suitable Only for Mature Audiences, Meaning No Male Viewers of Any Age," "May Contain Nudity by Attractive Actors, Which Will Inspire Immediate Audience Arousal Followed by Clinical Depression," and "So Filthy, Disgusting, and Insulting That There's Nothing We Can Possibly Say to Stop You from Enjoying Every Second of It." ♦

NISHANT CHOKSI

Promotion

THE NEW YORKER

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN APP

IT'S A DATE

Your favorite New York City events app now offers movie locations, times, and tickets, and lets you save events to your calendar. Download the free **GOINGS ON APP** and book some quality time with the city you love. Our editors pick the best things to do, every day—just search the app by neighborhood or date. Plus, listen to audio tours by our critics, and discover secret spots chosen by *New Yorker* writers.

GET IT TODAY
newyorker.com/go/goingsonapp

SUPPORTED BY
MasterCard PRICELESS® NEW YORK

Available on the App Store
GET IT ON Google play

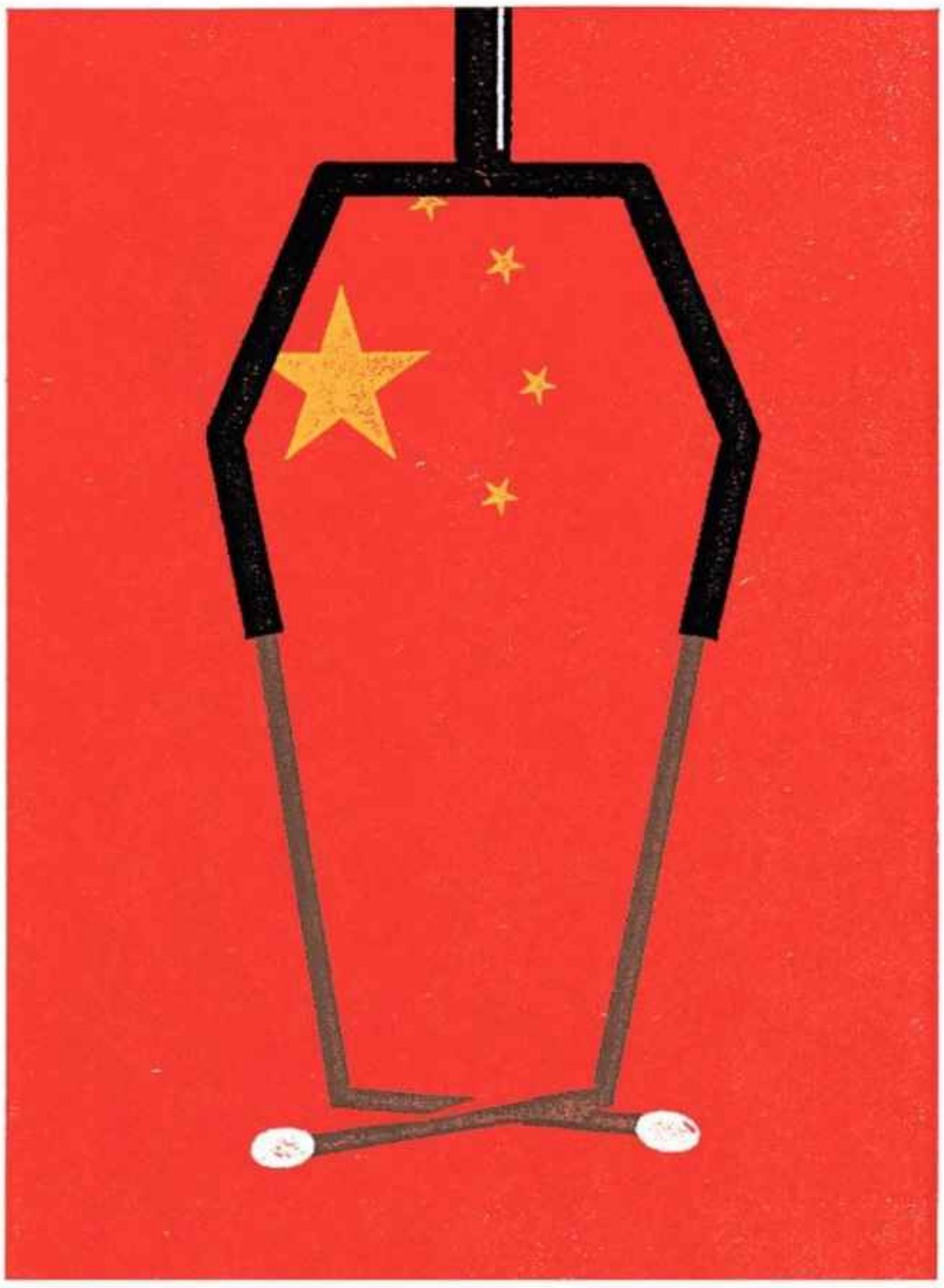
Apple, the Apple logo and iPhone are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc. Android and Google Play are trademarks of Google Inc.

LETTER FROM CHINA

UNDER THE KNIFE

Why Chinese patients are turning against their doctors.

BY CHRISTOPHER BEAM



After being refused treatment, Li Mengnan stabbed the first doctor he saw.

ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER MUNDAY

There was still snow on the ground on the day, in late March, 2012, that Li Mengnan, a seventeen-year-old boy, hobbled into the First Affiliated Hospital of Harbin Medical University for the last time. He came from a remote town in Inner Mongolia, a ten-hour train ride away, and this was his sixth trip to the hospital in two years. During that time, his illness, an excruciating inflammation of the spine called ankylosing spondylitis, had got progressively worse. Earlier that day, the doctors at the hospital had sent him across town to a clinic for an X-ray, only to tell him, when he came back, that he should have brought the clinic's notes with him. When he returned with this paperwork, they told him that they couldn't treat his spinal problem after all, because he had a history of tuberculosis. Li would have to go back to Inner Mongolia untreated.

A few blocks away, Wang Hao, a twenty-eight-year-old intern at the hospital, was rushing to get to work. "Going to eat?" his landlord asked him as he slipped out the door of his apartment building. Wang said he'd eat later: he needed to get to the hospital to start the night shift. When he arrived, his friend Zhang Xiaozhong, a nurse who worked with him in the rheumatology department, was just leaving. He asked if she was free for dinner the next day. They often met for a meal and a karaoke session, and, since they had both been away, spending the Spring Festival holiday with their families, it was time to catch up.

Meanwhile, Li Mengnan and his grandfather Li Lu, who had accompanied him to Harbin, walked back to the small hotel where they were staying, across the street from the hospital. Li Lu lay down to take a nap, and Li Mengnan said that he was going out for a walk. Instead, he went to a nearby store that sold household goods and then returned to the hospital carrying a three-inch fruit knife. He took the elevator up five floors to the rheumatology department, where he'd been turned away. He didn't have a plan, exactly. He later said that he'd been looking for the doctor who had refused to treat him. But when he came out of the elevator he approached the first white coat he saw. Wang Hao was sitting at a computer when Li plunged the blade hilt-deep into his neck. Hospital workers rushed over, and Li turned on them, cutting one doctor's ear and face and slashing two others. Li then tried to stab himself, but the knife was cheap and he succeeded only in making a surface gash in his neck and injuring his hand. Having failed to kill himself, Li fled.

Li Lu later remembered his grandson coming through the door of the hotel holding his throat, blood running through his fingers and soaking his sweater and jeans. "I don't want to live anymore," Li Mengnan said, and lay down on the bed. His grandfather wrapped his neck and hands with tissue paper and bedsheets, and took him back across the street to the hospital's emergency room. As he was being treated, one of the doctors he'd slashed, who was also in the E.R., identified him and he was quickly arrested. Down the hall, in the intensive-care unit, Wang Hao had been declared dead.

The killing in Harbin was national news. The health minister called for severe punishment. When Li Mengnan went on trial, four months later, the government took the rare step of opening the courtroom to the media. The Chinese business weekly *Caixin* spoke of the country's "doctor-patient conflict," and an editorial in the British journal

The Lancet warned that "China's doctors are in crisis."

Violence against doctors in China has become a familiar occurrence. In September, 2011, a calligrapher in Beijing, dissatisfied with his throat-cancer treatment, stabbed a doctor seventeen times. In May, 2012, a woman attacked a young nurse in Nanjing with a knife because of complications from an operation performed sixteen years earlier. In a two-week period this February, angry patients paralyzed a nurse in Nanjing, cut the throat of a doctor in Hebei, and beat a Heilongjiang doctor to death with a lead pipe. A survey by the China Hospital Management Association found that violence against medical personnel rose an average of twenty-three per cent each year between 2002 and 2012. By then, Chinese hospitals were reporting an average of twenty-seven attacks a year, per hospital.

As new details emerged in Harbin, the media's portrait of the killer softened: Li Mengnan wasn't a lunatic, nor did he have a history of violence. He was a man whom society had failed so completely that he was impelled to lash out. Wang Hao's death came to symbolize the collapse of doctor-patient relations and a fundamental dysfunction in China's health-care system.

Li Mengnan was represented at his trial by a lawyer named Wei Liangyue. I went to visit him in his office, in downtown Harbin, on the fourth floor of a drab building with heavy front doors and a security guard in the lobby. Wei is a youthful fifty-year-old. For much of his career, he has specialized in human-rights law. He has suffered as a result. At the time of the trial, Wei had only recently returned from a reëducation camp, where he'd been held for twenty-six days. In 2009, he and his wife were detained for a month by police from Harbin's public-security bureau, owing to his work on behalf of Falun Gong practitioners in Inner Mongolia. Since then, he has been too nervous to take on controversial cases, he told me, but when a colleague asked if he would defend Li Mengnan he accepted immediately. He said that, when he first heard media reports about the case, he thought, Why did the patient resort to this?

Wei was working with Li Fangping, another human-rights lawyer, who recently represented a prominent Uighur scholar. Wei and Li were able to meet their client only shortly before the trial began. Sitting in a detention cell, Li Mengnan was silent and preoccupied. Li Fangping was struck by this teenager who had none of the liveliness of youth. "I felt he was a complete blank," he said.

The prosecution was calling for life in prison, the maximum punishment for a minor. But the more Wei and his team learned the more Li seemed like a victim in his own right. They decided to construct their case around the argument that the medical system had repeatedly failed him. "Although there is no reasonable ground for Li Mengnan to kill someone," the written defense plea at the trial stated, "the hospital's negligence, overprescription, and terrible quality of service are the main reasons this tragedy occurred."

Li Mengnan was born in 1994 and grew up in Dayangshu, a small town in the Hulunbuir region of Inner Mongolia, known for its grasslands and its coal mines. His parents divorced when he was around a year old, and he lived with his grandparents while his father looked for work in the cities. When Li was three, his father was sent to prison for participating in a botched robbery. Li didn't do well in school, and his middle-school teacher recommended that he drop out. At the age of fifteen, he went to live with an aunt in Beijing. Borrowing the I.D. of an older friend, he got a job giving rubdowns at a public bathhouse, where he earned, at best, a monthly salary of seven hundred yuan (a little more than a hundred dollars).

After a few months, his legs started to hurt. He went to a hospital but couldn't afford all the tests necessary for a full diagnosis. He left Beijing and went back to his family, but rural hospitals rarely have specialist care; many can't afford basic equipment. In September, 2010, Li and his grandfather booked cheap tickets on the ten-hour night train to Harbin, the nearest major city.

Like all top-tier hospitals in China, the one in Harbin was thronged. A doctor diagnosed synovitis, an inflammation of the joint lining, and prescribed a series of shots for Li. This turned out to be a misdiagnosis, and at the trial Wei argued that treatment for the wrong disease worsened Li's condition.

By the following spring, it was evident that the medicine wasn't working. Li, still in his mid-teens, walked like an old man. "He couldn't even squat when he went to the bathroom," his grandmother told reporters later. In April, his grandfather took him back to Harbin. This time, the diagnosis was the correct one: ankylosing spondylitis, a chronic inflammatory disease that can result in a complete fusion of the vertebrae known as "bamboo spine."

The condition is incurable, but doctors explained that the symptoms could be treated with an intravenous drug called Remicade. For a poor Chinese family, the cost was daunting—thirty-nine thousand yuan (more than six thousand dollars) for the course of injections. As a migrant worker, Li had some insurance, but the plan covered less than half of the total cost, which eventually came to around eighty thousand yuan. The remainder he and his family had to pay out of pocket. They scraped together the funds using Li's welfare subsidies and his grandfather's pension, and borrowing the rest from family and friends.

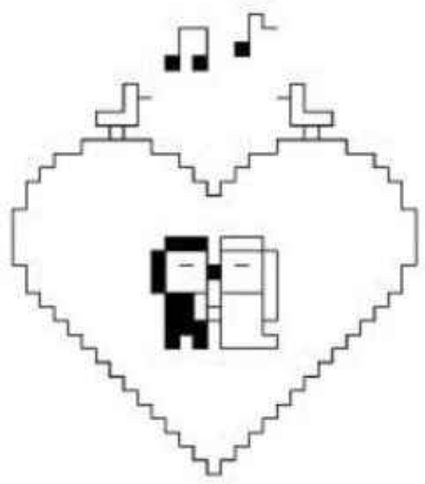
After the first round of Remicade injections, Li immediately felt better. He trotted around the family's courtyard, yelling to his grandmother, "Look, I can run!" But a month later doctors found that he had tuberculosis—a likely consequence of the drug's tendency to weaken the immune system. They'd have to halt the Remicade, they told him, until the t.b. was cured. In his defense brief, Wei argued that the hospital had detected tuberculosis before giving Li the injections, inviting the suggestion that it hadn't said anything because the medication is so lucrative.

Before he could continue with his back treatment, Li had to spend four months in a hospital in Hulunbuir, taking an anti-tuberculosis drug. According to his grandfather, during this period Li started to act strangely. He would suddenly burst out laughing, and walk around at night shouting. Still, by the time the pair returned to Harbin for the last time, they were feeling optimistic. News that the t.b. still hadn't receded completely and that Remicade treatment

would have to be delayed for three more months was crushing. The doctor didn't tell Li the bad news directly; instead, he made him stand outside his office while he talked to Li's grandfather. According to Wei, it was at this moment that his client felt most insulted. "Li's mind-set was now 'Are the doctors tricking me?'" he told me. "All he knows is he's been there many times, and each time it's 'No, no, no.'"

One of China's first doctors was Bian Que, a semi-mythical figure of the fifth century B.C., remembered for his ability to see through the human body and to raise the dead. But he seems to have been underappreciated in his own time: when he told the king of Qi that he looked sick, the king dismissed him, suspecting that the doctor was trying to cheat him out of his money. Days later, the king died. Hua Tuo, a famous surgeon in the second century A.D., recommended removing a tumor from the brain of a general, who, suspecting a murder plot, had him executed—an early instance of patient-on-doctor violence.

Despite China's rich history of traditional medicine, professional practitioners haven't always fared well. The Confucian system held that every gentleman should have enough medical knowledge to take care of his family himself, and even the best doctors had low rank. The Qing-dynasty medical scholar Xu Yanzuo was disdainful of the level of competence. "Rarely do people die of diseases," he wrote. "They often die from medicine."



Modern medical techniques, which evolved in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, were slower to take hold in China. Well into the twentieth century, doctors continued to practice a mixture of traditional healing and modern medicine, and it wasn't until the Communist takeover, in 1949, that the Chinese government assumed any responsibility for health care. Vaccination drives, improved sanitation, and a campaign to eradicate the "four pests"—rats, flies, mosquitoes, and sparrows—curbed disease and reduced child mortality. In 1965, on the brink of the Cultural Revolution, the Party announced an initiative to provide every production brigade with "trained medical personnel who are practitioners part time and do physical work." These "barefoot doctors," as they became known, were typically peasants, along with a few urban youths. By Western standards, they were amateurs, but the system at least provided rural Chinese with access to very basic treatment. Ten years after the start of the program, life expectancy in China had increased from fifty-one to sixty-five years.

Some barefoot doctors went on to have significant careers in medicine. One is Gordon Liu, whom I met at his office at Peking University, where he is the director of the China Center for Health Economics Research. His office is in a resplendent Qing-dynasty building, overlooking a courtyard on one side and a river on the other. "I got the best spot," he said, with a grin. Liu, who has spent most of his career in the United States, was wearing Nike sweatpants and a casual Boss shirt. He spoke with the offhand confidence of a professor in permanent lecture mode. Whenever I asked a question, he'd pause and say "O.K." before starting again, as if I'd interrupted his flow.

Liu grew up in rural Sichuan, and, like most young people during the Cultural Revolution, was sent to work on a collective farm as soon as he finished high school. He remembers waking up at 6 A.M. to plant corn in soil that wasn't suitable for corn. "Every day, we had to do that kind of meaningless work," he said. One day, the village leader called him in and told him that he would be the village doctor. His qualifications: he had a high-school diploma.

"I knew nothing about medicine," Liu told me. "I just began to treat people. I don't even know how many people got worse after my treatment, how many people died. I have no clue." Still, barefoot doctors were respected and patients didn't complain about the standard of care. "People were fighting for a cup of water, a bowl of rice," Liu said. "Health care was not even on their agenda."

After Mao died, in 1976, China reopened its universities, and Liu attended college in Chengdu. In 1986, he went to the City University of New York's Graduate Center, to study health economics, and stayed on in the United States, teaching. China's medical system, meanwhile, fell apart. Deng Xiaoping instituted a program of economic liberalization, which dismantled the system of co-operatives that many had relied on for medical care. While the hands-off approach boosted certain sectors of the economy, like manufacturing and real estate, it crippled the health system. The state was no longer responsible for providing health care, and public hospitals, in charge of their own financing, went after profits. Doctors were poorly paid and many of them started taking bribes, the money typically stuffed in a "red envelope." Under the old system, teams of educated city doctors had travelled to rural areas to supplement the service of the barefoot doctors; now sick farmers had to come to the provincial capitals for the best treatment, and big urban hospitals became overburdened. "The government basically considered health care a back-burner issue," Liu said.

By the beginning of this century, everyone from patients to doctors and government leaders agreed that the system was broken, and the SARS epidemic, which started in southern China in 2002, added to the sense of crisis. In 2003, the government created a medical-insurance system for people living in rural areas, and in 2007 it added a plan for urban residents. In 2002, Liu, who was teaching at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, got a call inviting him to Beijing to help establish the department of Health Economics and Management at Peking University. He accepted. "It was my dream," he said.

In Beijing, Liu began to advise the State Council, China's top administrative body, which drafts legislation and generally decides the direction of national policy. In 2009, the council announced a reform package with five components: the government would get the entire population insured by 2020; it would bring down the cost of basic drugs; it would boost public-health services, like education and immunization, especially in the poorest regions; it would invest in hospitals in rural areas, to reduce the pressure on urban hospitals; and it would restructure

BLACKTAIL

Like tent caterpillars, we cover the landscape with mesh
because of the deer, the ravenous deer.
They enter the yard with the footwork
of cartoon thieves—the stags wear preposterous
inverse chandeliers, the does bearing fetuses
visibly kicking inside of their cage. And who
can not-think of that crazy what-if: what if
a hoof tears through? Would you call
the dogcatcher or an ambulance?

The problem's their scale—you might as well park
a Cadillac in the house. Or go be a hunter
inside a big plastic goose, a fibreglass burger
on top of a hamburger stand. The way they tiptoe
past the bird feeder, rattling the seed
the squirrels have spilled. Then they eat
something outrageous, like the pansy
all the way up on the stoop. Before they leap
into the ravine with a noise like cymbals!

But isn't that how things end, with a cymbal crash? Leaving
you at the window with not even your rage.
Because you cannot rage at such delicate skeletons—
that is a social misdemeanor—though they have stepped
toward us the way the founding fathers
must have once approached the natives, with their arms
extended, though they bore disease.

—*Lucia Perillo*

big public hospitals so that they focussed on emergency care and specialist services. This last item has been the trickiest part, Liu said, because it entails taking customers away from the big hospitals. "Hospitals will never do that themselves, unless you surgically conduct the reform," he said.

The reforms have had mixed success. Officials declare proudly that ninety-five per cent of the Chinese population now has some form of basic medical insurance, up from thirty per cent in 2003, but, over the same period, the cost of medical care has risen, so that, in practice, many patients are paying as much as they were before. Furthermore—as Li Mengnan discovered—the amount of care covered by government insurance plans varies widely depending on where you live. And the pressure on big urban hospitals has increased, because the recently insured have flocked to them faster than new rural facilities can be built. Huang Yanzhong, a professor at Seton Hall University who studies Chinese health care, told me that the spate of violent incidents reflects the failure of the reforms to solve the problem of affordability and access. Patients still expect the best care from big urban hospitals, he said. "When that turns out not to be the case, they get very upset."

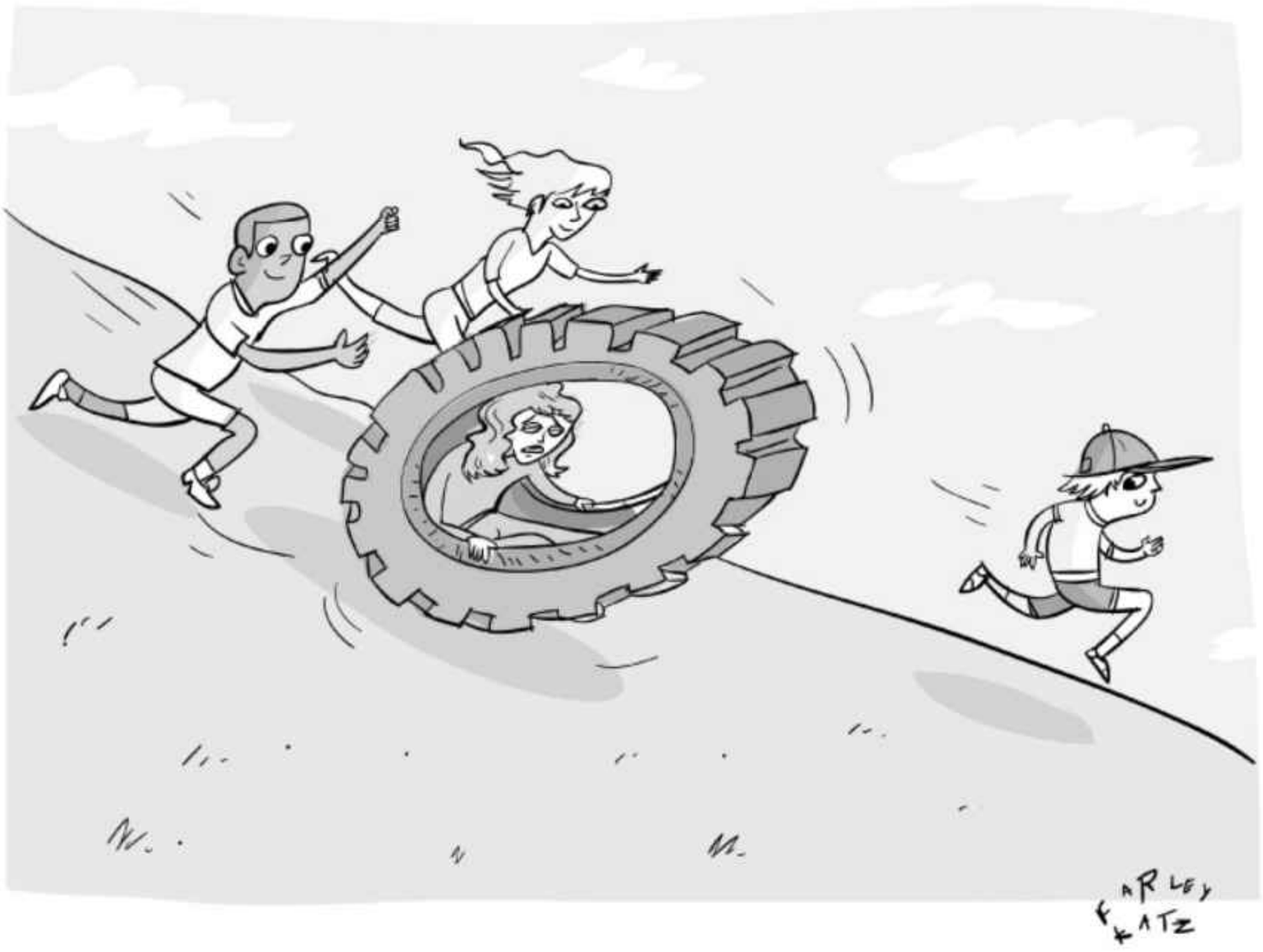
I first saw the inside of a Chinese hospital last summer, during a trip to Yunnan province, in southwestern China, when I contracted a mysterious full-body rash. The doctor, a friendly man in his fifties, saw me right away. As several other patients and a janitor gathered around, I lifted up my shirt so he could see the discoloration. He asked where I lived, and I said Beijing. Of course, he said—the air in Yunnan is different. That was most likely causing the rash. I told him I'd been to Yunnan before and hadn't had a problem. "What about the food?" he said. "It's very spicy here." I was used to spicy food, I said. The water might be having an effect, he suggested. I told him I hadn't been drinking the water. He looked perplexed and, when I asked what he would recommend, he suggested leaving Yunnan.

On my second hospital visit, I got to wear a white coat. Meng Hua, an affable surgeon in his early forties, had agreed to let me shadow him for a day at the Beijing Friendship Hospital. Other doctors I'd approached had said no, but Meng Hua had recently launched a Web site promoting his latest bariatric-surgery techniques, and he seemed to sense an opportunity for publicity. I planted myself in a corner of his office.

"It's been a long time!" Meng said as an old woman came in. She'd been having stomach pains and had come by to go over some test results. Everything looked O.K., Meng said, holding up her CT scans. He speculated that her stomach ache might be constipation-related. "I poop every three days if I'm lucky," she said. "See, that's not enough," Meng said. "You have to poop every day. What do you eat mostly?" "Steamed buns, rice, porridge," she said. Meng suggested more vegetables. He offered to order a sonogram from the urology department, but she decided against it.

As a specialist, Meng has the time to get to know his patients and hear their concerns, but, in this sense, he is in a minority. After clocking out, he took me across the hall to the office of a regular resident physician. The man was scribbling a prescription for a nervous-looking woman. When I asked him how many patients he'd seen that day, he silently collected the dozens of receipts scattered across his desk and piled them under my nose.

I heard countless tales of overwork among Chinese doctors. A leading radiologist in Shanghai told me he'd heard that the record number of patients seen in a day is three hundred and fourteen. "That was at the Shanghai Children's Hospital," he said. "One doctor, 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., ten hours, two minutes per patient." According to a study conducted in Shaanxi province, the average visit to a doctor's office lasts seven minutes, and physicians spend only one and a half minutes of that time talking to the patient. As a result, patients tend to be



"Can we please go back to playing on our phones?"

• •

pushy, crowding in doorways and entering without knocking. Joe Passanante, a doctor from Chicago who did a stint at Beijing United Family Hospital, told me that he was once performing CPR on a woman when the parents of a girl with a fever walked into the room. "Here I am pushing on a dead person's chest, trying to revive her, and they're asking me to see their daughter," he recalled.

At the end of my day with Meng Hua, I noted that I hadn't seen any red envelopes changing hands. He explained that extra cash tends to be offered for serious operations, not for the kind of routine visits I'd been seeing. But he said that bribes have become so common in hospitals that they're barely even frowned on. Physicians' salaries are low but are typically supplemented with bonuses, kickbacks from drug sales, and bribes. Meng said, "My whole salary for one month is ten thousand yuan," which is about sixteen hundred dollars. "I want to drive a car, have a house. I need the extra income. If a patient gives a red envelope after a surgery, I might not refuse."

It's not too surprising that doctors face significant public hostility. After the killing in Harbin, there were almost as many expressions of sympathy for the killer as for the victim. When *People's Daily*, a newspaper that acts as a Chinese government mouthpiece, posted an online questionnaire asking readers to rate their reaction to the murder, as a smiley face, a sad face, or an angry face, sixty-five per cent of readers chose the smiley face. The survey was taken down, but CCTV aired a segment about it: a commentator mused, "Is it possible that we are all the killers?"

Almost everyone in China seems to have some story about being poorly treated by doctors or hospitals. Most large hospitals have a customer-service department where patients can lodge grievances and demand compensation. Failing that, they can sue for malpractice. But most Chinese people don't trust the legal system, and rates of success are unpredictable. Hospitals, too, prefer to settle privately, rather than go to court, out of concern for their reputation, and because local governments can sanction them for logging too many disputes.

If the official channels yield nothing, patients will often stage protests. In 2013, a thirty-four-year-old mother alleging malpractice after a Cesarean section rallied a dozen friends and relatives to storm Beijing's No. 6 Hospital. She ended up winning about ten thousand dollars in compensation. In May this year, in Kunming, a man whose wife and baby had died during a Cesarean section climbed onto the roof of the hospital carrying his other child in his arms. He threatened to jump while a crowd of relatives below brought traffic to a standstill. When a patient dies and family members blame the doctors, they sometimes lay the corpse in front of the hospital entrance until they are paid off.

In Beijing, I met Benjamin Liebman, a professor at Columbia Law School, who has published a study on "malpractice mobs" in China. He told me that protests consistently extract more money from hospitals than legal proceedings do. Family members can even hire professional protesters. One report in Shenzhen mentioned an average price of fifty yuan a day for the service of a protester. The radiologist in Shanghai told me, "If your mother dies in the hospital, there will be an agency that comes to you and says, 'We can help you. We can have twenty guys who can come to the hospital, blackmail them, and share fifty per cent of the profits.' They're very professional."

Surprisingly, in a country where even a small public gathering can spark a government response, malpractice mobs often proceed without intervention. It's possible that the authorities see them as justified or simply as an efficient method for negotiating compensation. Some scholars even argue that the Chinese government tacitly welcomes such protests, considering them to be a relatively harmless outlet for discontent and an early-warning signal of more serious social unrest—a phenomenon that the Berkeley political scientist Peter Lorentzen, in a study of authoritarian regimes, has called "regularizing rioting." Liebman told me, "Protest becomes the mechanism for providing social security and for distinguishing people who need help." The problem is, he said, "everyone knows the government has funds to pay people who petition or protest, and that incentivizes more protest."

At Li Mengnan's trial, his lawyers' attempt to get his sentence reduced on the ground of shoddy treatment failed. Li made a poor impression in court and seemed incapable of expressing remorse. During the judge's

interrogation, he answered in monosyllables. "Are you sorry?" the judge asked. "Uh-huh." "Then apologize to Wang Hao's parents and the doctors." "O.K." The family refused to accept the apology. "I didn't believe him," Wang's father told me later. "Those words were not from the bottom of his heart." The trial lasted a day; three months later, the judge sentenced Li to life in prison.

The criminal trial ran in tandem with a civil suit, as is common in China, in which Wang Hao's family sought compensation for their loss. Li was ordered to pay six hundred and eighty thousand yuan (more than a hundred thousand dollars) to the bereaved family. But Wang's father told me that he didn't expect to see a penny.

For the civil suit, the family hired a lawyer named Li Huijuan, an energetic woman who also took on the roles of spokeswoman, P.R. agent, and therapist. When I met her recently, at a bookstore café in Beijing, she was wearing an enormous purple coat, and carried a blue Prada purse. She spoke smoothly, often throwing in obscure Chinese idioms, which, upon seeing my blank expression, she would jot down and explain. Li is in her fifties, and went to medical school before becoming a lawyer. Before that, she taught middle school, and she still has a way of turning everything into a teachable moment. Since the trial, she has become the closest thing China has to an activist against patient-doctor violence, flying around the country to lecture doctors and hospital directors on how to prevent conflict with patients. She took out a MacBook Air and showed me a PowerPoint presentation that featured bloody crime-scene photographs, images of protests, and quotations from, among others, Hippocrates, Einstein, Marx, and Peter Drucker. Each victim had his or her own memorial slide: a head shot floating above icons of flowers and candles and a banner detailing the perpetrator's eventual punishment.

Li is despondent about the state of medicine in China. "The reforms have all failed," she said. Her view is that it is up to doctors and hospitals to change what they can. In her presentations, she recommends that doctors keep careful records, and make sure that patients understand their diagnosis. Medical schools, too, have begun emphasizing the doctor-patient relationship. Peking University Medical School now offers a course called "Introduction to Medical Humanities," in which future doctors are taught to empathize with patients.

If China's medical reforms fail, the cost will be high. As the population ages, families are spending a growing portion of their income on medical care, and an increase in the rates of obesity and smoking means that a younger generation also faces high medical bills. This isn't just a personal problem—it could drag down the whole economy. For the past few decades, China has prospered by exporting goods to the rest of the world. But, as global demand slows, it will have to rely increasingly on domestic consumption for its growth. The Chinese, who currently have the world's highest household savings rate (about fifty per cent of income), have to start buying more. But, unless insurance plans offer better coverage for the average family, people will continue to save in order to cover potentially ruinous health-care costs.

Li Huijuan said that when she was studying to become a doctor medicine was a respectable profession. Now, she said, "our friends' children aren't going into medicine." A shortage of doctors, combined with rising costs, could hurt more than just the medical industry, she said: "It will weaken the country's power."

On April 1st, the second lunar anniversary of Wang Hao's death, his family gathered at his grave, on the outskirts of their home town, Chifeng, in Inner Mongolia. Wang Dongqing, Wang Hao's father, picked up Li Huijuan and me at the airport. "All this architecture is from the past ten years," Li explained as we drove through the city. "Originally, Chifeng was poor, remote, desolate—now it's thriving." Wang nodded in agreement. He grew up in the countryside, but after a stint in the Army went to work at a bank in the city. His car was a luxury Roewe sedan. I asked where he lived. "He lives in the old town," Li interjected. She was dressed in a black trenchcoat, black leather pants, and big black sunglasses, like a celebrity hiding from the paparazzi. I noticed a miniature prayer wheel on the dashboard, and asked if Wang was a Buddhist. He said no.

We pulled into the cemetery and followed the sound of wailing. Wang Hao's mother, Zhao Chunyun, sat beside the grave, sobbing, while aunts and uncles and cousins hovered over her. "My son is gone, just like that," she moaned. The headstone, a tall tablet of black marble with the characters for "beloved son" carved into it, was surrounded by flowers and offerings of fruit, incense, beer, and a can of Red Bull. Friends lit a bonfire nearby. Li Huijuan went straight to Zhao, and they embraced. "We came to see you," Li said. "A lot of people are paying attention. He didn't die for nothing." Eventually, a man who worked in the cemetery came over and asked Zhao to be quieter. "Sorry, we're almost done," someone replied.

The group went to have lunch in a private room in a nearby hotel, where Li continued to comfort Zhao. The men sat at one circular banquet table, the women at another. I took a spot next to Wang Dongqing, whose dark suit had somehow accumulated a few patches of dirt. Between sips of gullet-searing *baijiu*, the local grain alcohol, I asked him about his son. "He was incredibly steady," he said, and "very diligent." The last time they'd seen each other, during the Spring Festival holiday, the young man spent all his time studying. "He loved medicine," his sister-in-law said. "He loved it crazily. He told his mom that he'd definitely get the Nobel Prize." He had just been accepted into a Ph.D. program in Hong Kong—the letter arrived five days after his death—and, whenever a friend or family member got sick, he'd help out, so they never had to go to the hospital. His father and others kept returning to the fact that Wang Hao and Li Mengnan didn't even know each other. Wang's death seemed random, the result of unseen forces, "like lightning out of the blue sky," Wang Dongqing said. There were a billion things that one of the two men could have done differently that day.

I asked Wang Dongqing whom he blamed for his son's death. "I blame the health-care system," he said. "Li Mengnan was just a representative of this conflict. Incidents like this have happened many times. How could we just blame Li?" ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE *SPY* WHO LOVED ME

An undercover surveillance operation that went too far.

BY LAUREN COLLINS

I—JUNE 14, 2012

It was four o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, and Jacqui had just got home from work. She made a pot of coffee and took it out to the garden with the *Daily Mail*. It was the start of her weekend. The sun was out. She sat down at a patio table and poured the coffee, taking a minute to enjoy the scent of the wisteria that was blooming on her trellis.

She opened the paper: the Queen in Nottingham for her Golden Jubilee; bankers under scrutiny; wives and girlfriends of the England football team. Absent-mindedly, she continued to read. She barely glanced at an article titled "How Absence of a Loving Father Can Wreck a Child's Life." A few pages later, she came to a photograph of a smiling young man with bouffy brown curls that parted like curtains around his eyes. Even after twenty-five years, she knew the face's every freckle and line.

She subsequently told a parliamentary committee:

> I went into shock. I felt like I couldn't breathe and I started shaking. I did not even read the story which appeared with the picture. I went inside and phoned my parents. My dad got the paper from their nearest shop and my mum got out the photos of Bob and our son, at the birth and when he was a toddler. They confirmed to me, by comparing photos, it was definitely Bob.

Bob Robinson was Jacqui's first love and the father of her eldest child. He had disappeared from their lives in 1987, when their son was two. (To protect her son's privacy, Jacqui asked me not to use her last name.) Over the years, Jacqui had tried many times to track Bob down, but she had never been able to find him. Neither had any of the government agencies she had enlisted to help in the search. Bob had seemingly vaporized. Now there he was, staring back at her from the pages of a tabloid.

Jacqui tried to focus. "An undercover policeman planted a bomb in a department store to prove his commitment to animal rights extremists, an MP claimed yesterday," the article that the picture accompanied began. "Bob Lambert is accused of leaving an incendiary device in a Debenhams in London—one of three set off in a coordinated attack in 1987." (No one was hurt in the attacks, which caused millions of dollars' worth of damage to the stores, targeted because they sold fur products.) It went on to explain that Caroline Lucas, an M.P. for the Green Party, had invoked parliamentary privilege to make the accusation. She was calling for "a far-reaching public inquiry into police infiltrators and informers." Jacqui read on. The officer, the article said, had insinuated himself into animal-rights groups in the nineteen-eighties, creating an alter ego under which, for several years, he led a double life. Bob Robinson was Bob Lambert, and Bob Lambert was a spy.

II—1984-87

Bob and Jacqui met in early 1984, at an animal-rights protest outside Hackney Town Hall, in East London. Jacqui, who was twenty-two, was wearing a red uniform, with a nametag and a knotted scarf. "Why are you dressed like that?" Bob said, approaching her. She replied that she'd come straight from her job, at Avis Rent-a-Car. Gangly and polite, Bob struck Jacqui as slightly awkward. He was clearly in his thirties—old, to her mind. She found him nice-looking, but didn't dwell on their encounter. "I didn't go home and think about him," she told me recently. "It wasn't, like, 'Wow!'"

A month or so later, Bob showed up at another demonstration, in the English countryside. A hunt club was holding a fox hunt, which Jacqui and her fellow-"sabs"—saboteurs—were doing their best to disrupt. "They had their little drink before the hunt—it's got a special name—they were all wearing their gear," Jacqui recalled recently. As the tweed-jacketed field trotted by, the activists, their faces masked by balaclavas, blew horns (to distract the hounds) and sprayed eucalyptus oil (to dull the scent of the quarry). The skirmishing was a form of class warfare as well as a clash of ideals. "What it really turned into was hunt supporters hunting us," Jacqui said. "The hunt master, he didn't care about killing foxes—it was hunting sabs. He would, like, whip us with his whip, and the police would just be standing around watching."

The protesters finished the day muddy and elated. Bob asked Jacqui if she wanted a ride home. "It was a dirty old Escort van," Jacqui recalled. "But if you had a van you didn't have to get the train back to London, and also you could get quite a lot of people in the back." Bob offered to chauffeur Jacqui's friends; when they got back to London he dropped the friends off first. Outside her flat, Bob and Jacqui sat in the van and talked. Jacqui recalled, "That happened a couple of times, and, eventually, I invited him in."

Soon Bob and Jacqui were a couple. The age difference wasn't an issue. Bob, who said he was an odd-job gardener, seemed no more settled than Jacqui and her peers. Moreover, his tastes and values chimed perfectly with hers. He took her to see the Pretenders at the Hammersmith Odeon and haunted Housman's, the radical bookstore. Unconcerned about possessions, he rented a tiny bed-sit. His clothes often had a

Jacqui met Bob Lambert at an animal-rights protest in 1984, when she was twenty-two. Their son was born the next year.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: KELD NAVNTOFT/AFP/GETTY; GRAHAM TURNER/KEYSTONE/GETTY (LONDON POLICE); WILLIAM LOVELACE/EXPRESS/GETTY (MARGARET THATCHER)

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX WILLIAMSON

"We'd prefer a beheading, but we've decided to sue you instead."

• •

musty smell, as though he had trouble getting them to dry.

As Rob Evans and Paul Lewis write in "Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police," Lambert "was well versed in political theory." A former acquaintance told them, of Bob, "He was not a cardboard activist, he had real depth to him." (Evans and Lewis exposed many of the events in this story in a series of articles in the *Guardian*, for which they won a 2014 British Press Award, and in "Undercover," which is the definitive account of the excesses of undercover policing in Britain.) He urged Jacqui, a vegetarian, to become a vegan. With his long hair and off-the-grid life style, he seemed the embodiment of the anti-consumerist ethos of the British far left in the Thatcher age.

Politically outspoken as he was, Bob said little about his background. He attributed his reticence to a painful childhood. His mother, he said, had died of cancer when he was young. He had a brother to whom he wasn't close. From time to time, he would take off in the van to visit his father, who had dementia and was living in a nursing home in the North of England. Whenever Jacqui offered to come along, Bob would say that his father was too far gone for it to be worth the trip. Something about Bob's solitary, apologetic air brought out her nurturing instincts. "Do you know how Princess Diana used to do that sideways, victimlike look?" she recalled. "He was, in some ways, quite geeky and awkward, and you wanted to sort of care for him, because he had no one."

Jacqui was gregarious and beautiful, with dark witchy curls and a heart-shaped face. She had grown up in a housing development in East London, as part of a "big East End family that lived off their wits." Her father was a television engineer. Her mother was a medical receptionist. As a child, she excelled in school—"They were talking about me being Oxbridge material"—but by the time she was a teen-ager she had become "a handful," talking back to teachers and riding around in cars with older boys. "She was a bright pupil, but she mucked about and she didn't really put her mind to things," her mother told me. At seventeen, eager for excitement, she dropped out of school and moved out of her parents' house. She picked up what work she could—typing, temping at a shoe importer's office, tending bar. On their nights off, she and her best friend would spend hours getting ready to go out to the Blitz Club, in Covent Garden, where the coat-check attendant was Boy George.

Jacqui had loved animals since she was a child. She became a vegetarian in 1982, after Channel 4 broadcast "The Animals Film," a documentary that detailed the horrors of such practices as factory farming and vivisection, galvanizing a generation of animal-rights activists. She began taking part in Sunday protests to dissuade shoppers at the livestock market on Petticoat Lane. "People just gave up, really. They were, like, 'It's probably not worth getting my chicken from there, because I'm going to get loads of aggro.' " Eventually, the market closed.

In the early eighties, some factions of the British animal-rights movement—particularly those aligned with the Animal Liberation Front—veered into violence. Their tactics included harassment, death threats, arson, larceny, and sabotage. Jacqui limited herself to nonviolent means, but by the time she met Bob she was a credible regular at protests around London. "I wasn't floating around making cupcakes," she told me.

As Bob and Jacqui grew closer, he began spending most of his time at her apartment, a council flat in Hackney. He brought Leonard Cohen and Doors records. His curly hair reminded her of Jim Morrison. "I think a lot of people were surprised that I'd settled with him, because, apart from the animal rights, we were very different," Jacqui said.

She recalled, "Once, we went to a family do. There was a hall hired and everything, and I pleaded with him—because he used to wear the same clothes all the time—to get something decent. So he got this suit from a charity shop that didn't fit him properly. He looked awful. I thought he should have made a bit of an effort." Jacqui's love of glamour meant that, despite the camaraderie of the movement, socially she remained something of an outsider. In her way, she was as alone as Bob was. "I was attracted to him because of the animals," she recalled. "I also just think that I wanted somebody to care for me, because I'd been on my own since I was seventeen. It seemed like he was besotted."

They got a cat together, naming it Winnie-Woo. Every night before they went to bed, Jacqui sent Bob out to wander Hackney Downs in search of the cat, afraid that someone would steal him if they didn't bring him in. Jacqui was buoyed by their domesticity. Soon, she had bought Bob cologne, and his

clothes, which she washed at the local launderette, smelled like fabric softener. "He told me he loved me all the time," Jacqui said. "I always felt that he was scared of losing me, and, in some ways, that felt quite powerful."

With the flat, the pet, and the committed partner she'd always wanted, a baby seemed to Jacqui a natural step. (Bob claimed to be philosophically opposed to marriage; Jacqui was fine with that.) At first, Bob said that he didn't want to have children with her. "He said that he had had a child with a previous girlfriend, and she'd gone off to live in either Australia or New Zealand," she recalled. "He said that he couldn't go through losing another child." Bob even gave the absent daughter a name—Rachel.

Jacqui was not on the Pill, and Bob didn't use condoms. In any case, according to Jacqui, Bob eventually came around to the idea of starting a family. "I kept on and on about it, and he said no, and then I sort of said, 'Well, then, I don't think we can have a future, because I really want a baby.' And he said, 'All right, then.'" One night, Jacqui and Bob went out for a meal with Denise Bennett, a fellow-activist, at a Chinese vegan restaurant in North London. Bennett was not a tremendous fan of Bob's—a group administrator, she found him creepily keen to volunteer. Still, she recalled, "It was pleasant company, chatting away, and then Jacqui said she wanted a baby. He didn't say a word."

After the conversation with Bob, over Christmas of 1984, Jacqui got pregnant almost immediately. She remembers Bob as a doting father-to-be—accompanying her to doctor's appointments, fretting over her comfort, shopping for baby clothes and a crib. They spent long afternoons strolling past the furniture workshops on Hackney Road, where Jacqui fell in love with a big pine bed. Bob bought it for them. He insisted on rehearsing the drive to the hospital. "Our happiest time together was when I was pregnant," she said.

Jacqui's due date—in late September of 1985—came and went. She recalled, "Then Bob announces to me that he's got to go and see his dad in Cumbria. I was a bit pissed off with him, but he said he had to go away, so what he would do was see if my mum could come over, which she did." All of Saturday, Jacqui felt funny—"flu-y, or whatever"—but the baby didn't budge. "So on the Sunday night, when my dad came to pick up my mum, she said, 'Are you sure you're going to be all right?' I said, 'Well, Bob'll be back soon.' Then, about an hour later, I was just rolling about in agony. There was this woman who lived up the road from us—she used to rescue cats, and she was a bit mad—and I run up to her, and I can remember her going, 'Don't worry, I've helped my cats give birth many times!'"

Bob returned just as Jacqui's contractions became unbearable. He rode with her to the hospital in an ambulance and was by her side through more than fourteen hours of labor. When the baby, a boy, was born, they named him after Jacqui's father. (I will call him Francis.) Bob cried.

"I was at work, and he phoned me and told me that Jacqui had had a son," Jacqui's mother recalled. "They had wanted to surprise me, so that was lovely, because we'd had all girls in our family." Jacqui's mother went to stay at her apartment to help care for the baby. She recalled, "Bob would be there and he was very good—he'd change him and do it all quite expertly."

A picture from the time, taken by Jacqui's mother, shows Bob staring adoringly at the baby, cradling him in the crook of his arm. The day after Francis was born, Bob gave Jacqui a card printed with a sentimental drawing—Jessie Willcox Smith's "First the Infant in Its Mother's Arms." Inside, it read "Well done Jac. Love, Bob."

Bob was a steady presence in the early months of Francis's life. He took him on outings, changed his diapers, and babysat so that Jacqui could go out with friends. (He somehow avoided going to the registry office to sign forms identifying him as Francis's father.) Another picture from the time shows Bob in mud boots and a barn jacket at some sort of work site. As his friends haul two-by-fours, he leans against a wall, holding the baby, who, in a powder-blue playsuit, paws at his neck. The young family spent Christmas together at Jacqui's parents' house. Bob was there on Christmas Day. Jacqui recalled, "He was a normal, loving father."

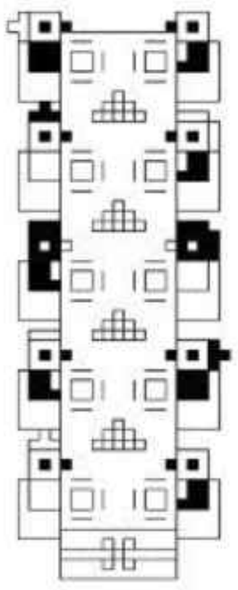
Jacqui and Bob's relationship, however, was beginning to falter. Overwhelmed by motherhood, Jacqui drifted away from the animal-rights crowd. While she was entering a more practical phase of her life, Bob was acquiring a new set of friends, who were involved in increasingly radical factions of the movement. "He wanted me to go to London Greenpeace meetings with him," Jacqui recalled. (London Greenpeace, which was not affiliated with Greenpeace, was an anarchist environmental collective best known for battling McDonald's in a libel suit.) "I went to one meeting with him, and there was this plastic cup they were passing around, and you put in what you could afford. There wasn't enough money in it to get the bus fare home, much less start the revolution."

Bob's lack of ambition, which had initially seemed so noble, began to irritate Jacqui. "Everybody else in the animal-rights movement was growing up, starting to settle down, moving out of the squats and all that," she recalled. "He was already a lot older, and he was not progressing." While Bob was in the pub, plotting direct actions, Jacqui was at home, worrying about money. Her feelings toward him fluctuated: she would nag him to contribute more to the household and then feel bad about herself for having been a nag. Occasionally, Bob would come through in surprising ways. One day, Winnie-Woo got hit by a car. The vet told Jacqui that the surgery required to save him would cost three hundred pounds. "There's no way I had that sort of money," Jacqui said. "So I called Bob, and I was really upset, and he went, 'I'll pay for it.' And I was still going on, and he said, 'I'll pay for it. Jacqui, I've just told you I'll pay for it.'" When she asked how he planned to come up with the money, he said he was due a payment from a gardening job.

Despite the tension between them, the couple rarely fought. According to Jacqui, it was nearly impossible to provoke Bob, who, when confronted with anything unpleasant, became robotically calm. Jacqui recalled, "He'd go, 'I think you need to calm down,' and he'd leave and come back later. I can remember chasing him down the street." Bob's detachment exasperated Jacqui. She

recalled, "If I started shouting, he would just wring his hands and say, 'Jacqui, but you know I love you.'"

"I had just had a baby and everything, and I was tired," Jacqui said. "He wasn't getting the sort of sex he was getting before, and I was blaming myself. I thought, I've been grumpy, snapping at him, going on about money, going on about getting a proper job. He was such a loving father, and I thought, He's sweet, he's kind, he loves his child, he loves me. I'm really, really going to give it a try."



The relationship persisted, but by 1986 the two were spending much of their time apart. Jacqui moved to the suburbs, further distancing herself from the London scene. Still, she and Bob continued to see each other and to raise Francis on good terms.

One evening in the fall of 1987, Bob had agreed to watch Francis at Jacqui's flat. "He rung me up as usual in the morning and said, 'Don't go out tonight—I need to talk to you,'" Jacqui recalled. "I thought he was going to tell me that he'd met somebody else. So I waited until he came back and straightaway said, 'Yep, what is it?'" Bob told Jacqui that he wanted to put the baby to bed before they talked. He went upstairs and laid Francis in his crib.

Jacqui recalled, "I could hear him on the baby alarm, which I'd deliberately switched on, and he was saying goodbye to him and telling him that he loved him, and that he'd be back as soon as he could." Bob came downstairs and, according to Jacqui, said that he had to leave because of the investigation into the Debenhams bombing. He was going abroad, and, for a while, it might be difficult to communicate. As soon as it was safe, he said, he would write. Jacqui could bring their son to visit him in Spain.

III—JUNE 15, 2012

As soon as the hour seemed decent, at 9 A.M. sharp, Jacqui picked up the telephone and dialled the switchboard at the University of St. Andrews, in Fife, Scotland.

"May I have the Handa Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence?"

The operator put her through. A woman answered the phone.

"Could I speak to Bob Lambert, please?"

"Who's calling?"

Jacqui, in spite of herself, burst into tears.

"I'm the mother of his child!"

Jacqui had barely slept. After confirming with her parents that the man in the paper was indeed Bob, she had gone inside and typed "Bob Lambert father child" into Google. Pages of pictures of Bob had popped up, showing him both as a youthful, shaggy Bob Robinson and, now, as a thin, gray-haired man with a beard and the same startled eyes. He looked like the sort of person who would wear a windbreaker and comfortable shoes. He could have been, maybe, a retired geologist. In one of the older pictures that had circulated on the Web after the disclosure of Bob's identity, Bob held Francis's hand as he sat on a Shetland pony. Jacqui recalled, "It could have been a doll that he was holding—you couldn't see his face—but I knew that was my son, and that was, like, really, really shocking."

Jacqui had stayed on the computer late into the night, trying to navigate the thicket of information. Eventually, she made her way to the Web site of the *Guardian*, where she found the series of articles by Rob Evans and Paul Lewis about the state-sponsored espionage of British citizens. Evans and Lewis, following up on a lead from former activists, had unmasked Bob Lambert as a spy in a front-page article in October, 2011, but Jacqui had missed it. "I don't read the *Guardian*—nobody I know reads the *Guardian*," she said. Bob had been back for eight months, and she was only now hearing about it. (She would later recall their courtship for Evans and Lewis's book.)

Bob had been a member of the Special Demonstrations Squad, the domestic-intelligence-gathering arm of the Metropolitan Police. The S.D.S. was established in 1968, after the Grosvenor Square protests against the Vietnam War. Conrad Hepworth Dixon, the squad's first chief, when ordered by his superiors to do something about the protests, is said to have replied, "Give me a million pounds and ten men, and I can deal with the problem for you."

The unit's mission—to provide "sufficient and accurate intelligence to enable the police to maintain public order," according to an internal document obtained by Evans and Lewis—was as broad as its techniques were particular. Officers, known as "deep swimmers," transformed themselves into facsimiles of their targets, taking on new identities that they inhabited for years. They got perms and new passports; they acquired tattoos, accents, and, if necessary, drug habits. "For the whole time they were undercover they would never wear a uniform or set foot in a police station, unless, of course, they were dragged in, kicking, screaming, and handcuffed," Evans and Lewis write. "They would find flats or bed-sits, preferring those at the back of houses in case fellow activists went past at night and noticed the lights were off and no one was in. They would take up jobs with flexible working hours and travel, such as laborers or delivery van drivers, so they could disappear for, say, a day with their family without arousing suspicion."

The information overwhelmed Jacqui. Bob had disappeared, and now he was resurrected. Trying to figure out who he was, or who he had been, was like trying to read a biography backward from the last page. According to the articles, he had, at some point during his deployment, nurtured a long-term relationship with another woman, a non-activist—she worked at the electric company—who, like Jacqui, had been oblivious of his real identity. "I was cruelly tricked and it has made me very angry," the woman, Belinda Harvey, told Evans and Lewis. "I am actually quite damaged by the whole thing. I am still not over it."

Bob, under pressure from the reporters, issued a statement:

> As part of my cover story, so as to gain the necessary credibility to become involved in serious crime, I first built a reputation as a committed member of London Greenpeace, a peaceful campaigning group. I apologise unreservedly for the deception I therefore practiced on law abiding members of London Greenpeace. I also apologise unreservedly for forming false friendships with law

abiding citizens and in particular forming a long-term relationship with [Belinda Harvey] who had every reason to think I was a committed animal rights activist and a genuine London Greenpeace campaigner.

Even as he purported to come clean about his past, he made no mention of Jacqui or the son they had together. (He declined to comment publicly for this account.)

Clicking on links, Jacqui tried to fill in the blanks of decades. After Bob's undercover stint ended, in 1988, he worked on a squad that investigated terrorist threats. By 1994, he had become the S.D.S.'s second-in-command. After stepping down from the S.D.S., he set up a group called the Muslim Contact Unit, an organization ostensibly dedicated to building relations between the police and London's Muslims. In 2007, he retired from the Metropolitan Police; in 2008, he was awarded an M.B.E. for services to police work. Jacqui struggled most to digest the fact of his proximity. While Bob Robinson was on the lam in Spain, Bob Lambert, for the past thirty years, had been several miles away, sitting behind a desk.

He hadn't even tried especially hard to maintain his cover. In his most recent incarnation—as Dr. Robert Lambert, a progressive academic—he had earned a B.A. in "inter-disciplinary European cultural history" and, then, a Ph.D. in politics. Now he was a lecturer in terrorism studies at St. Andrews. His bio on the university's Web site read:

For the bulk of his police service (1977–2007) Robert Lambert worked in counter-terrorism, gaining operational experience of all forms of violent political threats to the UK, from Irish republican to the many strands of international terrorism that include what may now best be described as the al-Qaida movement. One common denominator in all the many and varied terrorist recruitment strategies he witnessed over the years is the exploitation of a sense of political injustice amongst susceptible youth.

In 2011, he had published a book called "Countering Al-Qaeda in London: Police and Muslims in Partnership." He blogged on the Huffington Post.

In October, 2011, Bob was a speaker at a conference organized by anti-racist groups in London. In front of an audience of four hundred people, he delivered a lecture on extremist political violence. During the question-and-answer session, a man stood up and raised his hand. When called upon, he spoke:

"I have one question from the floor. David Morris, London Greenpeace. Is he going to apologize for organizing disgusting undercover police infiltration of campaign groups including anti-fascists and my own group, London Greenpeace, for five years as Bob Robinson?"

The lecture's moderator tried to quell the mutiny. Morris, who had come with a group of activists, continued to shout from the floor, pressing Bob to apologize. He added, "We want to ensure that you are not informing on groups that are here today." According to "Undercover," "Lambert sat impassively, giving nothing away. He sipped from a glass of water."

When Lambert left the building, the activists followed him onto the street, trailing him with a video camera.

"Bob, we'd like to talk to you about your infiltration of London Greenpeace and your abuse of female campaigners," a woman said.

"What are you ashamed of?" someone else yelled.

Lambert, wearing a blue shirt and a dark blazer and carrying a backpack, walked faster and faster, saying nothing. As the activists continued to harangue him, he turned into the street and, picking his way through traffic, broke into a run.

Jacqui's mind spiralled: Were we real? Did Bob love me? Was our son wanted? She was particularly haunted by the mechanics of her selection. "The thing I wanted to know most was, Why me?" she recalled. "Was he given a load of photographs and he said, 'I want that one?' Or did he just get in there and mix, and I stood out because of the red uniform?" The knowledge that she had been seduced—and, perhaps, surrendered—by script did not relieve her of the insecurities that attend the demise of romantic relationships, particularly those that end in abandonment. Even within painfully revised parameters, she wanted, somehow, to have been wanted.

Jacqui's orientation toward Bob, despite his betrayal, remained intimate. Her first instinct, rather than calling a lawyer, was just to dial Bob up and try to talk to him. At St. Andrews, the woman who answered the phone was initially cagey about letting a stranger through to his office. But after

"I know you're breaking up with me in a restaurant so I won't make a scene, but here's one from 'Death of a Salesman.'"

Jacqui burst into tears she opened up.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," the woman said. "He's not actually here, but I'll ring him, and I'll come back to you if there's any message for you."

"Come back to me anyway," Jacqui implored her. "Please, don't leave me hanging."

They hung up. Several minutes later, Jacqui's phone rang. It was Bob.

He sounded the same as she remembered, with an Estuary accent and a gentle voice.

"How many children did you father while you were undercover?" Jacqui asked.

"Only our son," Bob replied.

"Well, has he got any brothers or sisters?"

A woman came on the line, and introduced herself as Bob's wife. I will call her Katharine. "The reason why I've taken the phone is that Bob's upset," she said. "Both of his children have died. His daughter died when she was seventeen, and his son died in February of last year."

"Oh, God," Jacqui said. "I'm so sorry."

Katharine explained that she was Bob's second wife, and that they didn't have any children together. Bob's children were by his first wife, from whom he was divorced. Jacqui paused—she had assumed that Bob's children, if he had any, would be younger than Francis. Instead, they had been born in the mid-seventies. Bob had been married, he acknowledged—raising a family of his own in suburban Herefordshire—throughout the time that they were together.

Jacqui tried to digest the news. Having a skeptical view of male fidelity, and having learned what she already had about Bob, she was less shocked by his admission of romantic duplicity than by the fact of his offspring. All along, her son had had an older half brother and half sister. Now they were dead before he'd even known they were alive.

"So our son is his only remaining child?"

"Yes."

IV—1988-2012

At a pub in February of the year after Bob left, Jacqui met Kevin, a former professional soccer player. Five months later, they married. Because Kevin came into their life while Francis was young, the family blended easily. In 1990, Jacqui gave birth to a second son, and the four formed a close unit. Jacqui rarely mentioned Bob outside of the family, for the sake of discretion and because, after a while, it simply seemed easier not to; she was happy to let people assume that Kevin, who worked as an engineer for British Gas, was the father of both her children. But, despite Bob's abrupt departure, Jacqui never questioned his loyalty. "Apparently there were rumors that he had been a spy, when he disappeared just after the Debenhams bombing," she recalled. "But by then I was living in suburbia with my husband, so I didn't hear them."

In the summer of 1993, Kevin woke up with a swollen leg. He assumed it was due to an old soccer injury, but his symptoms worsened, and he was eventually admitted to the hospital. "He said, 'Jac, I feel funny,' and he just started fittin'," Jacqui recalled. "He was a healthy thirty-six years old, and he dropped down dead in front of me." (The official cause of his death was a heart attack with an underlying malignant teratoma.)

At thirty-one, Jacqui was a widow. It was a difficult time. Her younger son struggled with health problems. Francis, who had now lost two fathers, became angry and disruptive. In September, 1994, Jacqui decided to go back to school. Quickly, she fell in love with one of her professors. "It was a typical thing of trying to replace what I'd lost," she recalled. Several months later, she found herself pregnant again. In her second trimester, she suffered a breakdown and voluntarily committed herself to a psychiatric hospital. The baby was born there, premature. (She and the professor remained a couple until 2001 and are still close.) For a time, her older children went to live with her parents.

Slowly, she got herself back together. "It was very gradual," she said. "One day, you find yourself laughing at something on television when, before, there'd been such a black cloud." Her studies offered the structure and sense of purpose that had eluded her in the past, and with time her life stabilized. In 1998, she earned a bachelor of laws, making her the first person in her family to graduate from college.

When Francis was about ten, he announced that he wanted to try to find his father. Jacqui had remained a vegan, and Francis was a vegetarian. She had

always spoken of Bob as a man of principle, explaining to Francis, as he grew older, that his father had been a hero in the animal-rights movement. "I believe that as many people as possible that love the child is best, so I never slagged Bob off," Jacqui recalled. With Francis longing for paternal affection, she pursued every means she could come up with of trying to locate Bob. "We tried tracing agents," she said. "Child services tried to contact Bob. We got nowhere."

Jacqui's elder sons thrived, went to college, got jobs, and moved out of the house. Her youngest son lived with her and visited his father on weekends. Jacqui went on to obtain an LL.M., researching female prisoners with personality disorders. She earned a postgraduate certificate in education. She became a teacher at a secondary school. There was money. She travelled with friends to places like Spain and San Francisco. She took spin classes. She watched boxed sets. "Life was boring, but it was quite nice," she said. Her thoughts turned only occasionally to what had become of Bob. When she earned her bachelor's degree, Jacqui had dedicated her thesis to him: "Wishing on a star to find out where you are. Hope you're safe and happy and your dreams have come true."

V—JUNE 28-AUGUST 3, 2012

On June 28th, Jacqui received an e-mail from Katharine Lambert:

> Hi, Jacqui, I hope you've managed to get some sleep, Bob was up early this morning (4:30) and felt very strongly that he wanted to make contact with Francis, he has written him a letter which I've attached for you to pass on. . . . We'll leave it to Francis now to decide—he may need time to think things through and that's fine. I hope you're feeling better Jacqui, Bob's not a bad person and is really genuinely sorry for the distress he's caused you.

Attached was a letter from Bob to his son:

> Dear Francis,
> I just wanted to say hello and to say how much I am really looking forward to meeting you again. It's been a long time! Lots to catch up on and talk about. In all seriousness I think I would be the luckiest man alive if I had the opportunity to get to know you again. I have a lot to explain and to apologize for, to you, your mum, who I have always held in the highest regard, and your grandparents who I remember fondly. And I will.

Bob wrote that he was "probably more comfortable expressing my thoughts and feelings on paper than in person" and that he didn't "want to get too heavy!" He talked about running ("Saturday morning at 9 A.M. I sometimes do a 5K Parkrun locally"). His tone was tender and, given the sensitivity of the situation, surprisingly forthright. He hoped, he wrote, that they could meet soon. "In the meantime, take care," he wrote. "Love, Bob."

Jacqui was reeling. "Basically, all my pieces were glued together, and then this wrecking ball happened," she said. Transiting between the bed and the couch, she trawled the murkiest depths of her memory in search of some moment that would illuminate everything that had come after. Events whose causes and consequences had been fixed in her mind for decades mutated in the half-light of Bob's revelations. "I went through things he said to me, things I said to him, this, that," she recalled. "He says to my son, as if he's been in pain all these years, that he wants to see him, so I don't know, is that true? On the other hand, if it hadn't all come out, he would've taken this to his grave, wouldn't he?" Walking her dogs in the park with a friend one day, she was overcome with guilt. "I had to sit down on a bench, because I couldn't stop crying," she said. "I told my friend, 'I blame myself. I've messed my life up, I've messed my kids up. I picked him, didn't I? I gave my son the terrible childhood he had because I picked Bob—and he picked me.'"

Jacqui struggled to sort out her contradictory impulses. "I didn't know what to do," she recalled. "Whatever my feelings were, this is Francis's dad." It happened that Francis was in Thailand for a month, travelling around after having graduated from college. "So I had a bit of breathing room," Jacqui recalled. She sat down at her computer and poured out her emotions:

> Hi Katharine, I am very grateful for your email. Since Thursday evening I have not been able to function—I have been in shock very teary, not being able to eat or sleep. Today is the first day I feel slightly "normal." I do have many questions for Bob, because I am being bombarded with information from different sources about the nature of my relationship with him. I felt like tying Bob to a chair so that he couldn't escape whilst he answered all my questions. However over the last few days I have realised going over and over every little event in our relationship and everything said and what it all meant and what were true and did I know Bob Robinson or Bob Lambert is futile. I am however angry that I had to find out the way I did and that it was not arranged for me to be contacted sooner.

Jacqui believed that Bob, with the resources of the Metropolitan Police at his disposal, had been keeping tabs on her over the years; it enraged her to think that he had stayed at a self-preserving remove, valuing his career over Francis's well-being, when Francis had needed him after Kevin's death. She was especially upset that Bob had not been moved to contact them in the wake of the deaths of his children—both had suffered from sudden arrhythmic death syndromes, a set of genetic conditions with which Francis could have unknowingly been afflicted. (He has since been tested and does not carry the gene.)

Jacqui described their son's difficult boyhood and the hurt that Bob's desertion had caused. Of Bob, she wrote, "If he had made contact then or at some time during Francis's childhood revealing his true identity and trusting me, he could have had a relationship with his son." Still, from time to time her tone toward Bob softened, her anger at his deception mingling with her hope that Francis stood, perhaps, to regain a father.

Even as Jacqui attempted to extract redress from Bob, she could not afford to alienate him. Francis "is very politically aware and has tons of compassion about injustice both to animals and humans," she wrote. "In fact I describe him as his father's son, meaning the Bob Robinson that I knew. He looks like Bob, and speaking to Bob on Friday, he sounds like him, too." At the close of the letter, she agreed to encourage Francis to meet Bob:

> I got a wonderful son out of our relationship and for that I can never regret and it is difficult to feel hate for someone who is part of the son I love so much. I'm weeping all over my laptop again, so will go now. . . . My greatest fear was that Francis would want to meet Bob and be rejected again, this I could not bear.

In late June, Francis came home from Thailand. Jacqui explained to him what had happened in his absence. He was eager to meet his father, and, on July 8th,

"We have very little need these days to employ a cudgel."

• •

he and Bob got together at Bob's house. They had an easy affinity, discussing their favorite soccer team. They watched Andy Murray play in that day's Wimbledon final. They discovered that they walked the same way, with their toes pointing in.

Afterward, Bob wrote to Jacqui, thanking her for "how much you have done to bring him up over the years to become the fine young man that he is." He said that he was looking forward to renewing their relationship, writing, "I have a lot of work to do to prove that I can be trusted and be a worthy father for Francis. I promise that I will be. But actions speak louder than words, and I will let my actions prove my words in the weeks, months, and years ahead."

If Bob's promises were legitimate, Jacqui was happy for her son, but she was still not faring well. Bob continued to call frequently, saying that he wanted to explain as much as he could about what had happened between them. Finally, Jacqui agreed to meet with him.

Bob and Katharine rang Jacqui's doorbell at 3 P.M. on August 3rd. Jacqui had been extremely nervous about their arrival, but she was relieved by Bob's mild appearance. "He just looked like an old man," she said. They hugged. They sat down in her living room and began to talk. Jacqui had assumed that Bob would hold the definitive answer key to her questions, but he, too, was ambivalent about the origins and intentions of much of what had passed between them. He apologized for having deserted her and her son, but he argued that he had been bound, both morally and legally, to maintain the secrecy of his mission. At one point, Jacqui brought up a long-ago afternoon when she, Bob, and Francis had gone over to her parents' house for Sunday lunch.

"Remember, they wanted new fencing put up?" Jacqui said.

Bob, being a gardener, had been charged with the task.

"He's useless at D.I.Y.!" Katharine said.

Jacqui continued, "And then my sister and her boyfriend asked you to do theirs, and I'm looking at you like, 'You're not gonna charge them, you can't!'"

Jacqui recalled, "And then he ended up sort of having to cut back trees for the whole street. So now, in 2012, we're talking about this, and me and him are laughing like old exes, through all the tears and everything that's happened." Despite the occasional flash of humor, the meeting didn't assuage Jacqui's agitation. As Bob spoke, he let drop that he and his wife and children had also had a cat. It was a particularly sickening detail, conjuring a mirror-image family life: two women, two houses, two sofas covered in cat hair. Had Winnie-Woo—and, by extension, all the dear mess of their life together—been a punctiliously drawn insurance policy against detection?

"When he talked about 'I buried two of my three children' or 'my other son,' even at the beginning, the language that he used was very clever," Jacqui recalled. "It's as if Francis was no different, as if he had always had his third child."

The paradox of Bob's character was impossible to crack: the kinder he was, the more he raised Jacqui's suspicion that she was, once again, being manipulated. She vacillated between wariness and wanting to believe—she even worried that her skepticism of Bob's motives would hurt his feelings. It was almost as if the knowledge of Bob's alter ego had cleaved her own consciousness, giving birth to an alternate persona that could accept the Bob of the present without having to resolve the implications of his past deeds. Bob, whether by temperament or design, seemed typically dissociated. He wrote to Jacqui at one point, "Probably only a psychiatrist stands a chance of unravelling and explaining all of my thinking and my behaviour during and after my time as Bob Robinson."

VI—2014

The revelation of the extent of the British police's spying, and the dubiousness of some of their tactics, caused a scandal that has yet to be resolved. Reporters and activists have confirmed that at least nine police officers—including one woman—conducted sexual relationships with unsuspecting citizens during their undercover deployments. At least twelve women, including Jacqui, are suing the Metropolitan Police for deceit, assault, misfeasance in public office, and negligence. Those whose relationships began after 2000 are also bringing suit under the Human Rights Act, arguing that the Met's "systemic abuse of female political activists" breached Articles 3 and 8, which forbid inhumane treatment and guarantee the right to private life. Jacqui has

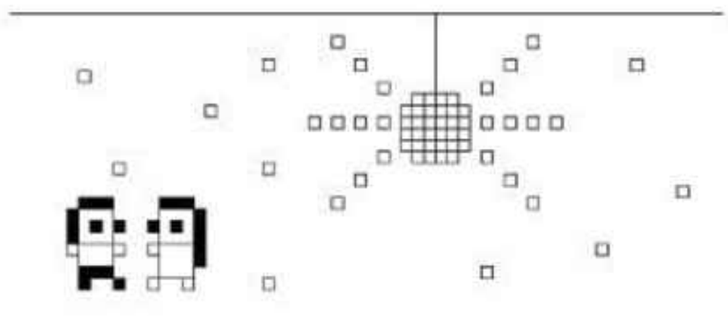
said that she feels as though she were "raped by the state."

It is true that the officers violated their partners in the most intimate of ways, grooming them, courting them, becoming part of their lives, and then leaving them, as though by template. When the relationships are taken in the aggregate, the sad individual twists of fate that endeared the impostors to their lovers become cynical commonplaces: deceased parents, estranged siblings, urgent errands, rushed goodbyes, dozens of fictitious children and exes and old friends killed off or dispatched to the far corners of the Commonwealth. In a report for Operation Herne—one of a number of ongoing inquiries into undercover policing—Mick Creedon, the chief constable of Derbyshire, concluded that "no evidence has been found of sexual activity ever being explicitly authorized," yet he acknowledged the existence of a " 'tradecraft' document which provides informal tacit authority and guidance for officers faced with the prospect of a sexual relationship." Creedon wrote, "There are and never have been any circumstances where it would be appropriate for such covertly deployed officers to engage in intimate sexual relationships with those they are employed to infiltrate and target. Such an activity can only be seen as an abject failure of the deployment, a gross abuse of their role and their position as a police officer and an individual and organisational failing." (One policeman is also suing the Met, alleging that his time undercover resulted in traumatic psychological consequences for him.)

When I asked the Metropolitan Police Service to comment on Lambert's role, a spokesman would only acknowledge by e-mail that Lambert had been an undercover police officer. Because of the civil cases, the spokesperson wrote, "it would be inappropriate for us to comment in any further detail." The e-mail concluded, "The MPS position, which we have repeated a number of times, is that long term sexual relationships between an undercover officer and a member of the public is not an authorised tactic."

James Olson, a former Chief of Counterintelligence at the C.I.A., who was involved in clandestine operations overseas for many years, described undercover sexual involvements as "something that we should not do in the C.I.A., absolutely not." He went on, "Our liaison friends in other services think that we Americans are ridiculously puritanical and that we avoid using something that works." The masters were the East Germans—particularly Markus Wolf, whose Romeo agents seduced government secretaries in the West. As for Bob Robinson, Olson said, "It's very easy to fall into that trap—the righteousness trap. Some people are so convinced that what they're doing is for the good of the country that they're willing to excuse what would ordinarily be gross misconduct on their parts. They lose sight of ethical constraints."

The S.D.S.'s transgressions were not confined to the romantic realm. As Evans and Lewis have reported, officers testified in court under their false identities, perjuring themselves rather than break cover. In order to make their backstories as realistic as possible, they plundered the public records, assuming the names and birth dates of dead children. Bob Robinson took his alias from Mark Robert Charles Robinson, who was born February 28, 1952—Bob's real birthday is sixteen days earlier—and died in 1959, of a congenital heart defect. There is also the claim that Lambert participated in a crime during his stint as Bob Robinson. Geoff Sheppard, who, along with Andrew Clark, was jailed for the attacks on Debenhams—



the third suspect has never been found—has alleged that Bob was their co-conspirator. (This was the allegation that Caroline Lucas repeated in Parliament.) Lambert has acknowledged that his intelligence contributed to the convictions of Clark and Sheppard, but has repeatedly denied being involved in the bombing himself.

The emotional compasses of many of the women have been permanently disoriented by the knowledge that they were unwittingly drawn to undercover spies. While the Met commissioner Bernard Hogan-Howe has acknowledged that sexual relationships between undercover officers and citizens are inappropriate, the department has fought in court to have the tactic upheld as legal. Even as individual officers like Bob Lambert have confirmed their identities and admitted their wrongdoing, the Met, citing operational concerns, has maintained a policy of "Neither Confirm Nor Deny." (In July, a court ruled that the Met could no longer resort to N.C.N.D. in its handling of the Bob Lambert case and others.) Given the evasions of truth that attended the original injury, many of the victims have found this a particularly cruel stance.

Last year, after several of the women spoke publicly of their experiences, Bob gave a televised interview to Britain's Channel 4. He admitted to having slept with a total of four women while undercover. He answered questions in a calm, didactic tone. His affectlessness was confounding—it was difficult to tell whether it sprang from remorse and a desire to accept whatever punishment was due or from a profound lack of empathy. He said, of Jacqui and Belinda Harvey, "They were both fine, upstanding citizens who had the misfortune to meet me. I can only apologize to them. I think it was just a case of falling in love, I guess, and I should not have allowed that to happen."

Bob and Francis have developed a close relationship. They watch soccer together and run 5Ks. Francis has a bedroom in Bob and Katharine's house. Some afternoons, Bob visits him at work to bring him a drink from his favorite coffee shop.

Sitting in her living room one day not long ago, Jacqui tried and failed to deliver a neat summation. Sometimes, she said, she wondered if she had been too hard on Bob. But lots of people she knew thought that she had cut him too much slack. "Bob Lambert is going to be in my life for the rest of my life," she said. "When this is all over and done with, and everyone else is getting on with their lives, they're not going to have to face their cop or anything. I am. I'm going to share grandchildren with him at some point. So I can't help it." ♦

ANNALS OF SCIENCE

SEEDS OF DOUBT

An activist's controversial crusade against genetically modified crops.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Early this spring, the Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva led an unusual pilgrimage across southern Europe. Beginning in Greece, with the international Pan-Hellenic Exchange of Local Seed Varieties Festival, which celebrated the virtues of traditional agriculture, Shiva and an entourage of followers crossed the Adriatic and travelled by bus up the boot of Italy, to Florence, where she spoke at the Seed, Food and Earth Democracy Festival. After a short planning meeting in Genoa, the caravan rolled on to the South of France, ending in Le Mas d'Azil, just in time to celebrate International Days of the Seed.

Shiva's fiery opposition to globalization and to the use of genetically modified crops has made her a hero to anti-G.M.O. activists everywhere. The purpose of the trip through Europe, she had told me a few weeks earlier, was to focus attention there on "the voices of those who want their agriculture to be free of poison and G.M.O.s." At each stop, Shiva delivered a message that she has honed for nearly three decades: by engineering, patenting, and transforming seeds into costly packets of intellectual property, multinational corporations such as Monsanto, with considerable assistance from the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, the United States government, and even philanthropies like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are attempting to impose "food totalitarianism" on the world. She describes the fight against agricultural biotechnology as a global war against a few giant seed companies on behalf of the billions of farmers who depend on what they themselves grow to survive. Shiva contends that nothing less than the future of humanity rides on the outcome.

"There are two trends," she told the crowd that had gathered in Piazza Santissima Annunziata, in Florence, for the seed fair. "One: a trend of diversity, democracy, freedom, joy, culture—people celebrating their lives." She paused to let silence fill the square. "And the other: monocultures, deadness. Everyone depressed. Everyone on Prozac. More and more young people unemployed. We don't want that world of death." The audience, a mixture of people attending the festival and tourists on their way to the Duomo, stood transfixed. Shiva, dressed in a burgundy sari and a shawl the color of rust, was a formidable sight. "We would have no hunger in the world if the seed was in the hands of the farmers and gardeners and the land was in the hands of the farmers," she said. "They want to take that away."

Shiva, along with a growing army of supporters, argues that the prevailing model of industrial agriculture, heavily reliant on chemical fertilizers, pesticides, fossil fuels, and a seemingly limitless supply of cheap water, places an unacceptable burden on the Earth's resources. She promotes, as most knowledgeable farmers do, more diversity in crops, greater care for the soil, and more support for people who work the land every day. Shiva has particular contempt for farmers who plant monocultures—vast fields of a single crop. "They are ruining the planet," she told me. "They are destroying this beautiful world."

The global food supply is indeed in danger. Feeding the expanding population without further harming the Earth presents one of the greatest challenges of our time, perhaps of all time. By the end of the century, the world may well have to accommodate ten billion inhabitants—roughly the equivalent of adding two new Indias. Sustaining that many people will require farmers to grow more food in the next seventy-five years than has been produced in all of human history. For most of the past ten thousand years, feeding more people simply meant farming more land. That option no longer exists; nearly every arable patch of ground has been cultivated, and irrigation for agriculture already consumes seventy per cent of the Earth's freshwater.

The nutritional demands of the developing world's rapidly growing middle class—more protein from pork, beef, chicken, and eggs—will add to the pressure; so will the ecological impact of climate change, particularly in India and other countries where farmers depend on monsoons. Many scientists are convinced that we can hope to meet those demands only with help from the advanced tools of plant genetics. Shiva disagrees; she looks upon any seed bred in a laboratory as an abomination.

The fight has not been easy. Few technologies, not the car, the phone, or even the computer, have been adopted as rapidly and as widely as the products of agricultural biotechnology. Between 1996, when genetically engineered crops were first planted, and last year, the area they cover has increased a hundredfold—from seventeen million hectares to a hundred and seventy million. Nearly half of the world's soybeans and a third of its corn are products of biotechnology. Cotton that has been engineered to repel the devastating bollworm dominates the Indian market, as it does almost everywhere it has been introduced.

Those statistics have not deterred Shiva. At the age of sixty-one, she is constantly in motion: this year, she has travelled not only across Europe but throughout South Asia, Africa, and Canada, and twice to the United States. In the past quarter century, she has turned out nearly a book a year, including "The Violence of the Green Revolution," "Monocultures of the Mind," "Stolen Harvest," and "Water Wars." In each, she has argued that modern agricultural practices have done little but plunder the Earth.

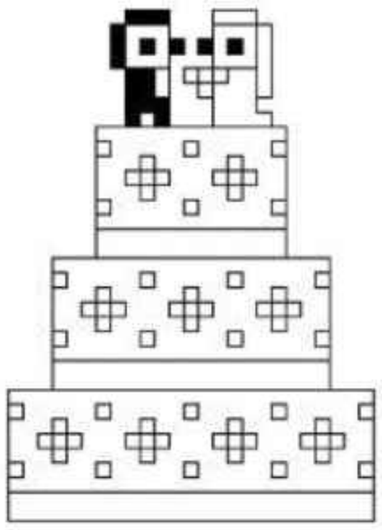
Nowhere is Shiva embraced more fully than in the West, where, as Bill

REFERENCE: AMANDA EDWARDS/WIREIMAGE

Vandana Shiva accuses multinational corporations such as Monsanto of attempting to impose "food totalitarianism" on the world.

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SEILER

Moyers recently noted, she has become a "rock star in the worldwide battle against genetically modified seeds." She has been called the Gandhi of grain and compared to Mother Teresa. If she personally accepted all the awards, degrees, and honors offered to her, she would have time for little else. In 1993, Shiva received the Right Livelihood Award, often called the alternative Nobel Prize, for her activism on behalf of ecology and women. *Time*, the *Guardian*, *Forbes*, and *Asia Week* have all placed her on lists of the world's most important activists. Shiva, who holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Western Ontario, has received honorary doctorates from universities in Paris, Oslo, and Toronto, among others. In 2010, she was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize for her commitment to social justice and her tireless efforts on behalf of the poor. Earlier this year, Beloit College, in Wisconsin, honored Shiva with its Weissberg Chair in International Studies, calling her "a one-woman movement for peace, sustainability, and social justice."



"For me, the idea of owning intellectual-property rights for seeds is a bad, pathetic attempt at seed dictatorship," Shiva told the audience in Florence. "Our commitment is to make sure that dictatorship never flourishes." While she spoke, I stood among the volunteers who were selling heirloom vegetable seeds and handing out information about organic farming. Most were Italian college students in for the day from Bologna or Rome, and few could take their eyes off her. I asked a twenty-year-old student named Victoria if she had been aware of Shiva's work. "For years," she said. Then, acknowledging Shiva's undeniable charisma, she added, "I was just in a room with her. I have followed her all my life, but you can't be prepared for her physical presence." She hesitated and glanced at the platform where Shiva was speaking. "Isn't she just magic?"

At least sixty million Indians have starved to death in the past four centuries. In 1943 alone, during the final years of the British Raj, more than two million people died in the Bengal Famine. "By the time we became free of colonial rule, the country was sucked dry," Suman Sahai told me recently. Sahai, a geneticist and a prominent environmental activist, is the founder of the Delhi-based Gene Campaign, a farmers'-rights organization. "The British destroyed the agricultural system and made no investments. They wanted food to feed their Army and food to sell overseas. They cared about nothing else." Independence, in 1947, brought euphoria but also desperation. Tons of grain were imported each year from the United States; without it, famine would have been inevitable.

To become independent in more than name, India also needed to become self-reliant. The Green Revolution—a series of agricultural innovations producing improved varieties of wheat that could respond better to irrigation and benefit from fertilizer—provided that opportunity. In 1966, India imported eleven million tons of grain. Today, it produces more than two hundred million tons, much of it for export. Between 1950 and the end of the twentieth century, the world's grain production rose from seven hundred million tons to 1.9 billion, all on nearly the same amount of land.

"Without the nitrogen fertilizer to grow crops used to feed our recent ancestors so they could reproduce, many of us probably wouldn't be here today," Raoul Adamchack told me. "It would have been a different planet, smaller, poorer, and far more agrarian." Adamchack runs an organic farm in Northern California, and has served as the president of California Certified Organic Farmers. His wife, Pamela Ronald, is a professor of plant genetics at the University of California at Davis, and their book "Tomorrow's Table" was among the first to demonstrate the ways in which advanced technologies can combine with traditional farming to help feed the world.

There is another perspective on the Green Revolution. Shiva believes that it destroyed India's traditional way of life. "Until the 1960s, India was successfully pursuing an agricultural development policy based on strengthening the ecological base of agriculture and the self-reliance of peasants," she writes in "The Violence of the Green Revolution." She told me that, by shifting the focus of farming from variety to productivity, the Green Revolution actually was responsible for killing Indian farmers. Few people accept that analysis, though, and more than one study has concluded that if India had stuck to its traditional farming methods millions would have starved.

The Green Revolution relied heavily on fertilizers and pesticides, but in the nineteen-sixties little thought was given to the environmental consequences. Runoff polluted many rivers and lakes, and some of India's best farmland was destroyed. "At first, the Green Revolution was wonderful," Sahai told me. "But, without a lot of water, it could not be sustained, and it should have ended long before it did."

To feed ten billion people, most of whom will live in the developing world, we will need what the Indian agricultural pioneer M. S. Swaminathan has called "an evergreen revolution," one that combines the most advanced science with a clear focus on sustaining the environment. Until recently, these have seemed like separate goals. For thousands of years, people have crossed sexually compatible plants and then chosen among their offspring for what seemed like desirable characteristics (sturdy roots, for example, or resistance to disease). Farmers learned how to make better plants and varieties, but it was a process of trial and error until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Gregor Mendel demonstrated that many of the characteristics of a pea plant were passed from one generation to the next according to predictable rules. That created a new science, genetics, which helped make breeding far more precise. Nearly all the plants we cultivate—corn, wheat, rice, roses, Christmas trees—have been genetically modified through breeding to last longer, look better, taste sweeter, or grow more vigorously in arid soil.

Genetic engineering takes the process one step further. By inserting genes from one species into another, plant breeders today can select traits with even greater specificity. Bt cotton, for instance, contains genes from a

bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, that is found naturally in the soil. The bacterium produces a toxin that targets cotton bollworm, a pest that infests millions of acres each year. Twenty-five per cent of the world's insecticides have typically been used on cotton, and many of them are carcinogenic. By engineering part of the bacterium's DNA into a cotton seed, scientists made it possible for the cotton boll to produce its own insecticide. Soon after the pest bites the plant, it dies.

Molecular biology transformed medicine, agriculture, and nearly every other scientific discipline. But it has also prompted a rancorous debate over the consequences of that knowledge. Genetically modified products have often been advertised as the best way to slow the impact of climate change, produce greater yields, provide more nutrients in food, and feed the world's poorest people. Most of the transgenic crops on the market today, however, have been designed to meet the needs of industrial farmers and their customers in the West.

Shiva and other opponents of agricultural biotechnology argue that the higher cost of patented seeds, produced by giant corporations, prevents poor farmers from sowing them in their fields. And they worry that pollen from genetically engineered crops will drift into the wild, altering plant ecosystems forever. Many people, however, raise an even more fundamental objection: crossing varieties and growing them in fields is one thing, but using a gene gun to fire a bacterium into seeds seems like a violation of the rules of life.

Vandana Shiva was born in Dehradun, in the foothills of the Himalayas. A Brahmin, she was raised in prosperity. Her father was a forestry official for the Indian government; her mother worked as a school inspector in Lahore, and, after Partition, when the city became part of Pakistan, she returned to India. In the nineteen-seventies, Shiva joined a women's movement that was determined to prevent outside logging companies from cutting down forests in the highlands of northern India. Their tactic was simple and, ultimately, successful: they would form a circle and hug the trees. Shiva was, literally, one of the early tree huggers.

The first time we spoke, in New York, she explained why she became an environmental activist. "I was busy with quantum theory for my doctoral work, so I had no idea what was going on with the Green Revolution," she said. Shiva had studied physics as an undergraduate. We were sitting in a small café near the United Nations, where she was about to attend an agricultural forum. She had just stepped off the plane from New Delhi, but she gathered energy as she told her story. "In the late eighties, I went to a conference on biotechnology, on the future of food," she said. "There were no genetically modified organisms then. These people were talking about having to do genetic engineering in order to take patents.

"They said the most amazing things," she went on. "They said Europe and the U.S. are too small a market. We have to have a global market, and that is why we need an intellectual-property-rights law." That meeting set her on a new trajectory. "I realized they want to patent life, and life is not an invention," she said. "They want to release G.M.O.s without testing, and they want to impose this order worldwide. I decided on the flight back I didn't want that world." She returned to India and started Navdanya, which in Hindi means "nine seeds." According to its mandate, the organization was created to "protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, and to promote organic farming and fair trade." Under Shiva's leadership, Navdanya rapidly evolved into a national movement.

In contrast to most agricultural ecologists, Shiva remains committed to the idea that organic farming can feed the world. Owing almost wholly to the efforts of Shiva and other activists, India has not approved a single genetically modified food crop for human consumption. Only four African nations—South Africa, Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Sudan—permit the commercial use of products that contain G.M.O.s. Europe remains the epicenter of anti-G.M.O. advocacy, but recent polls show that the vast majority of Americans, ever more focussed on the connection between food, farming, and their health, favor mandatory labelling for products that are made with genetically modified ingredients. Most say they would use such labels to avoid eating those foods. For her part, Shiva insists that the only acceptable path is to return to the principles and practices of an earlier era. "Fertilizer should never

• • •

have been allowed in agriculture," she said in a 2011 speech. "I think it's time to ban it. It's a weapon of mass destruction. Its use is like war, because it came from war."

Like Gandhi, whom she reveres, Shiva questions many of the goals of contemporary civilization. Last year, Prince Charles, who keeps a bust of Shiva on display at Highgrove, his family house, visited her at the Navdanya farm, in Dehradun, about a hundred and fifty miles north of New Delhi. Charles, perhaps the world's best-known critic of modern life, has for years denounced transgenic crops. "This kind of genetic modification takes mankind into realms that belong to God and God alone," he wrote in the nineteen-nineties, when Monsanto tried to sell its genetically engineered seeds in Europe. Shiva, too, invokes religion in her assault on agricultural biotechnology. "G.M.O. stands for 'God, Move Over,' we are the creators now," she said in a speech earlier this year. Navdanya does not report its contributions publicly, but, according to a recent Indian government report, foreign N.G.O.s have contributed significantly in the past decade to help the campaign against adoption of G.M.O.s in India. In June, the government banned most such contributions. Shiva, who was named in the report, called it "an attack on civil society," and biased in favor of foreign corporations.

Shiva maintains a savvy presence in social media, and her tweets, intense and dramatic, circulate rapidly among tens of thousands of followers across the globe. They also allow her to police the movement and ostracize defectors. The British environmentalist Mark Lynas, for example, stood strongly against the use of biotechnology in agriculture for more than a decade. But last year, after careful study of the scientific data on which his assumptions were based, he reversed his position. In a speech to the annual Oxford Farming Conference, he described as "green urban myths" his former view that genetically modified crops increase reliance on chemicals, pose dangers to the environment, and threaten human health. "For the record, here and up front, I apologize for having spent several years ripping up G.M. crops," he said. "I am also sorry that I . . . assisted in demonizing an important technological option which can be used to benefit the environment." Lynas now regards the assumption that the world could be fed solely with organic food as "simplistic nonsense."

With that speech, and the publicity that accompanied it, Lynas became the Benedict Arnold of the anti-G.M.O. movement. "If you want to get your name splattered all over the Web, there's nothing like recanting your once strongly held beliefs," Jason Mark, the editor of *Earth Island Journal,* wrote.

Perhaps nobody was more incensed by Lynas's conversion than Shiva, who expressed her anger on Twitter: "#MarkLynas saying farmers shd be free to grow #GMOs which can contaminate #organic farms is like saying #rapists shd have freedom to rape." The message caused immediate outrage. "Shame on you for comparing GMOs to rape," Karl Haro von Mogel, who runs Biology Fortified, a Web site devoted to plant genetics, responded, also in a tweet. "That is a despicable argument that devalues women, men, and children." Shiva tweeted back at once. "We need to move from a patriarchal, anthropocentric worldview to one based on #EarthDemocracy," she wrote.

Shiva has a flair for incendiary analogies. Recently, she compared what she calls "seed slavery," inflicted upon the world by the forces of globalization, to human slavery. "When starting to fight for seed freedom, it's because I saw a parallel," she said at a food conference in the Netherlands. "That time, it was blacks who were captured in Africa and taken to work on the cotton and sugarcane fields of America. Today, it is all of life being enslaved. All of life. All species."

Shiva cannot tolerate any group that endorses the use of genetic engineering in agriculture, no matter what else the organization does, or how qualified its support. When I mentioned that Monsanto, in addition to making genetically engineered seeds, has also become one of the world's largest producers of conventionally bred seeds, she laughed. "That's just public relations," she said. She has a similarly low regard for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has taken strong positions in support of biotechnology. Not long ago,

Shiva wrote that the billions of dollars the foundation has invested in agricultural research and assistance poses "the greatest threat to farmers in the developing world." She dismisses the American scientific organizations responsible for regulating genetically modified products, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the United States Department of Agriculture, as little more than tools of the international seed conglomerates.

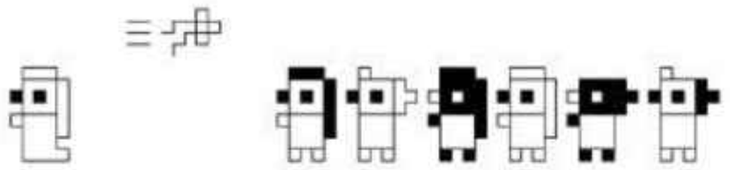
At times, Shiva's absolutism about G.M.O.s can lead her in strange directions. In 1999, ten thousand people were killed and millions were left homeless when a cyclone hit India's eastern coastal state of Orissa. When the U.S. government dispatched grain and soy to help feed the desperate victims, Shiva held a news conference in New Delhi and said that the donation was proof that "the United States has been using the Orissa victims as guinea pigs" for genetically engineered products. She also wrote to the international relief agency Oxfam to say that she hoped it wasn't planning to send genetically modified foods to feed the starving survivors. When neither the U.S. nor Oxfam altered its plans, she condemned the Indian government for accepting the provisions.

On March 29th, in Winnipeg, Shiva began a speech to a local food-rights group by revealing alarming new information about the impact of agricultural biotechnology on human health. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that in two years the figure of autism has jumped from one in eighty-eight to one in sixty-eight," she said, referring to an article in *USA Today*. "Then they go on to say obviously this is a trend showing that something's wrong, and that whether something in the environment could be causing the uptick remains the million-dollar question.

"That question's been answered," Shiva continued. She mentioned glyphosate, the Monsanto herbicide that is commonly used with modified crops. "If you look at the graph of the growth of G.M.O.s, the growth of application of glyphosate and autism, it's literally a one-to-one correspondence. And you could make that graph for kidney failure, you could make that graph for diabetes, you could make that graph even for Alzheimer's."

Hundreds of millions of people, in twenty-eight countries, eat transgenic products every day, and if any of Shiva's assertions were true the implications would be catastrophic. But no relationship between glyphosate and the diseases that Shiva mentioned has been discovered. Her claims were based on a single research paper, released last year, in a journal called *Entropy*, which charges scientists to publish their findings. The paper contains no new research. Shiva had committed a common, but dangerous, fallacy: confusing a correlation with causation. (It turns out, for example, that the growth in sales of organic produce in the past decade matches the rise of autism, almost exactly. For that matter, so does the rise in sales of high-definition televisions, as well as the number of Americans who commute to work every day by bicycle.)

Shiva refers to her scientific credentials in almost every appearance, yet she often dispenses with the conventions of scientific inquiry. She is usually described in interviews and on television as a nuclear physicist, a quantum physicist, or a world-renowned physicist. Most of her book jackets include the following biographical note: "Before becoming an activist, Vandana Shiva was one of India's leading physicists." When I asked if she had ever worked as a physicist, she suggested that I search for the answer on Google. I found nothing, and she doesn't list any such position in her biography.



Shiva argues that because many varieties of corn, soybeans, and canola have been engineered to resist glyphosate, there has been an increase in the use of herbicides. That is certainly true, and in high enough amounts glyphosate, like other herbicides, is toxic. Moreover, whenever farmers rely too heavily on one chemical, whether it occurs naturally or is made in a factory, weeds develop resistance. In some regions, that has already happened with glyphosate—and the results can be disastrous. But farmers face the problem whether or not they plant genetically modified crops. Scores of weed species have become resistant to the herbicide atrazine, for example, even though no crops have been modified to tolerate it. In fact, glyphosate has become the most popular herbicide in the world, largely because it's not nearly so toxic as those which it generally replaces. The E.P.A. has labelled water unsafe to drink if it contains three parts per billion of atrazine; the comparable limit for glyphosate is seven hundred parts per billion. By this measure, glyphosate is two hundred and thirty times less toxic than atrazine.

For years, people have been afraid that eating genetically modified foods would make them sick, and Shiva's speeches are filled with terrifying anecdotes that play to that fear. But since 1996, when the crops were first planted, humans have consumed trillions of servings of foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients, and have draped themselves in thousands of tons of clothing made from genetically engineered cotton, yet there has not been a single documented case of any person becoming ill as a result. That is one reason that the National Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the World Health Organization, the U.K.'s Royal Society, the French Academy of Sciences, the European Commission, and dozens of other scientific organizations have all concluded that foods derived from genetically modified crops are as safe to eat as any other food.

"It is absolutely remarkable to me how Vandana Shiva is able to get away with saying whatever people want to hear," Gordon Conway told me recently. Conway is the former president of the Rockefeller Foundation and a professor at London's Imperial College. His book "One Billion Hungry: Can We Feed the World?" has become an essential text for those who study poverty, agriculture, and development.

"Shiva is lionized, particularly in the West, because she presents the romantic view of the farm," Conway said. "Truth be damned. People in the rich

world love to dabble in a past they were lucky enough to avoid—you know, a couple of chickens running around with the children in the back yard. But farming is bloody tough, as anyone who does it knows. It is like those people who romanticize villages in the developing world. Nobody who ever lived in one would do that."

I arrived in Maharashtra in late spring, after most of the season's cotton had been picked. I drove east from Aurangabad on rutted roadways, where the contradictions of modern India are always on display: bright-green pyramids of sweet limes, along with wooden trinkets, jewelry salesmen, cell-phone stands, and elaborately decorated water-delivery trucks. Behind the stands were giant, newly constructed houses, all safely tucked away in gated communities. Regional power companies in that part of the country pay two rupees (about three cents) a kilogram for discarded cotton stalks, and, as I drove past, the fields were full of women pulling them out of the ground.

Although India bans genetically modified food crops, Bt cotton, modified to resist the bollworm, is planted widely. Since the nineteen-nineties, Shiva has focussed the world's attention on Maharashtra by referring to the region as India's "suicide belt," and saying that Monsanto's introduction of genetically modified cotton there has caused a "genocide." There is no place where the battle over the value, safety, ecological impact, and economic implications of genetically engineered products has been fought more fiercely. Shiva says that two hundred and eighty-four thousand Indian farmers have killed themselves because they cannot afford to plant Bt cotton. Earlier this year, she said, "Farmers are dying because Monsanto is making profits—by owning life that it never created but it pretends to create. That is why we need to reclaim the seed. That is why we need to get rid of the G.M.O.s. That is why we need to stop the patenting of life."

When Shiva and I met in New York, for about an hour, I told her that I have often written favorably about agricultural biotechnology. She seemed to know that, but said that the only way I could understand the scale of the disaster would be to visit the region myself. She also proposed that I join the seed caravan in Europe and then travel with her to the Navdanya farm. We exchanged several logistical texts and e-mails, but by the time I got to Italy Shiva had stopped writing or responding to my messages. In Florence, where she spoke to me briefly as she walked to a meeting, she said that I could try to see her in New Delhi but she doubted that she would be free. When I arrived in India, one of her assistants told me that I should submit any questions in writing. I did, but Shiva declined to answer them.

Shiva contends that modified seeds were created almost exclusively to serve large industrial farms, and there is some truth to that. But Bt cotton has been planted by millions of people in the developing world, many of whom maintain lots not much larger than the back yard of a house in the American suburbs. In India, more than seven million farmers, occupying twenty-six million acres, have adopted the technology. That's nearly ninety per cent of all Indian cotton fields. At first, the new seeds were extremely expensive. Counterfeiters flooded the market with fakes and sold them, as well as fake glyphosate, at reduced prices. The crops failed, and many people suffered. Shiva said last year that Bt-cotton-seed costs had risen by eight thousand per cent in India since 2002.

In fact, the prices of modified seeds, which are regulated by the government, have fallen steadily. While they remain higher than those of conventional seeds, in most cases the modified seeds provide greater benefits. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, Bt farmers spend at least fifteen per cent more on crops, but their pesticide costs are fifty per cent lower. Since the seed was introduced, yields have increased by more than a hundred and fifty per cent. Only China grows and sells more cotton.

Shiva also says that Monsanto's patents prevent poor people from saving seeds. That is not the case in India. The Farmers' Rights Act of 2001 guarantees every person the right to "save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share, or sell" his seeds. Most farmers, though, even those with tiny fields, choose to buy newly bred seeds each year, whether genetically engineered or not, because they insure better yields and bigger profits.

I visited about a dozen farmers in Dhoksal, a village with a Hindu temple, a few seed shops, and little else. Dhoksal is about three hundred miles northeast of Mumbai, but it seems to belong to another century. It's dusty and tired, and by noon the temperature had passed a hundred degrees. The majority of local farmers travel to the market by bullock cart. Some walk, and a few drive. A week earlier, a local agricultural inspector told me, he had seen a cotton farmer on an elephant and waved to him. The man did not respond, however, because he was too busy talking on his cell phone.

In the West, the debate over the value of Bt cotton focusses on two closely related issues: the financial implications of planting the seeds, and whether the costs have driven farmers to suicide. The first thing that the cotton farmers I visited wanted to discuss, though, was their improved health and that of their families. Before Bt genes were inserted into cotton, they would typically spray their crops with powerful chemicals dozens of times each season. Now they spray once a month. Bt is not toxic to humans or to other mammals. Organic farmers, who have strict rules against using synthetic fertilizers or chemicals, have used a spray version of the toxin on their crops for years.

Everyone had a story to tell about insecticide poisoning. "Before Bt cotton came in, we used the other seeds," Rameshwar Mamdev told me when I stopped by his six-acre farm, not far from the main dirt road that leads to the village. He plants corn in addition to cotton. "My wife would spray," he said. "She would get sick. We would all get sick." According to a recent study by the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology, there has been a sevenfold reduction in the use of pesticide since the introduction of Bt cotton; the number of cases of pesticide poisoning has fallen by nearly ninety per cent. Similar reductions have occurred in China. The growers, particularly women, by reducing their exposure to insecticide, not only have lowered their risk of serious

© THE IRVING PENN FOUNDATION

Robin Williams, New York, 1998. The most dazzlingly free-associative verbal comedian of his time was also an acrobatic master of slapstick and an actor whose range spanned whiz-bang antics and criminal menace, domestic charm and aching tenderness.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IRVING PENN

illness but also are able to spend more time with their children.

"Why do rich people tell us to plant crops that will ruin our farms?" Narhari Pawar asked. Pawar is forty-seven, with skin the color of burnt molasses and the texture of a well-worn saddle. "Bt cotton is the only positive part of farming," he said. "It has changed our lives. Without it, we would have no crops. Nothing."

Genetically engineered plants are not without risk. One concern is that their pollen will drift into the surrounding environment. Pollen does spread, but that doesn't happen so easily; producing new seeds requires a sexually compatible plant. Farmers can reduce the risk of contamination by staggering planting schedules, which insures that different kinds of plants pollinate at different times.

There is a bigger problem: pests can develop resistance to the toxins in engineered crops. The bollworm isn't Bt cotton's only enemy; the plant has many other pests as well. In the U.S., Bt-cotton farmers are required to use a "refuge" strategy: they surround their Bt crops with a moat of plants that do not make Bt toxins. This forces pests that develop resistance to Bt cotton to mate with pests that have not. In most cases, they will produce offspring that are still susceptible. Natural selection breeds resistance; such tactics only delay the process. But this is true everywhere in nature, not just on farms. Treatments for infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and H.I.V. rely on a cocktail of drugs because the infection would quickly grow resistant to a single medication. Nevertheless, none of the farmers I spoke with in Dhoksal planted a refuge. When I asked why, they had no idea what I was talking about.

THE LOST ART OF LETTER WRITING

The ratio of daylight to handwriting
Was the same as lacemaking to eyesight.
The paper was so thin it skinned air.

The hand was fire and the page tinder.
Everything burned away except the one
Place they singled out between fingers

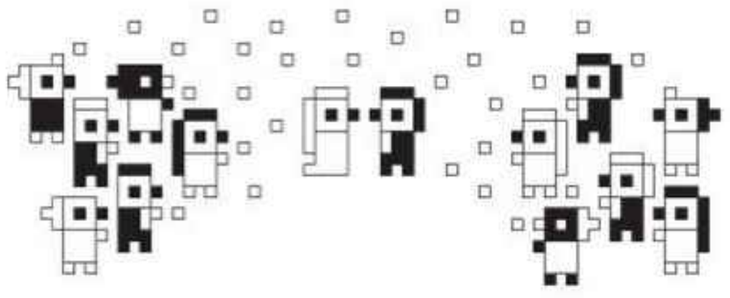
Held over a letter pad they set aside
For the long evenings of their leave-takings,
Always asking after what they kept losing,

Always performing—even when a shadow
Fell across the page and they knew the answer
Was not forthcoming—the same action:

First the leaning down, the pen becoming
A staff to walk fields with as they vanished
Underfoot into memory. Then the letting up,

The lighter stroke, which brought back
Cranesbill and thistle, a bicycle wheel
Rusting: an iron circle hurting the grass

Responsible newspapers and reputable writers, often echoing Shiva's rhetoric, have written about the "suicide-seed" connection as if it were an established fact. In 2011, an American filmmaker, Micha Peled, released "Bitter Seeds," which argues that Monsanto and its seeds have been responsible for the suicides of thousands of farmers. The film received warm recommendations from food activists in the U.S. "Films like this can change the world," the celebrity chef Alice Waters said when she saw it. As the journalist Keith Kloor pointed out earlier this year, in the journal *Issues in Science and Technology*, the farmer-suicide story even found its way into the scientific community. Last October, at a public discussion devoted to food security, the Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich stated that Monsanto had "killed most of those farmers in India." Ehrlich also famously predicted, in the nineteen-sixties, that famine would strike India and that, within a decade, "hundreds of millions of people will starve to death." Not only was he wrong but, between 1965 and 1972, India's wheat production doubled.



The World Health Organization has estimated that a hundred and seventy thousand Indians commit suicide each year—nearly five hundred a day. Although many Indian farmers kill themselves, their suicide *rate* has not risen in a decade, according to a study by Ian Plewis, of the University of Manchester. In fact, the suicide rate among Indian farmers is lower than for other Indians and is comparable to that among French farmers. Plewis found that "the pattern of changes in suicide rates over the last fifteen years is consistent with a beneficial effect of Bt cotton for India as a whole, albeit perhaps not in every cotton-growing state."

Most farmers I met in Maharashtra seemed to know at least one person who had killed himself, however, and they all agreed on the reasons: there is almost no affordable credit, no social security, and no meaningful crop-insurance program. The only commercial farmers in the United States without crop insurance are those who have a philosophical objection to government support. In India, if you fail you are on your own. Farmers all need credit, but banks will rarely lend to them. "We want to send our children to school," Pawar told me. "We want to live better. We want to buy equipment. But when the crop fails we cannot pay." In most cases, there is no

Again and the hedges veiled in hawthorn
Again just in time for the May Novenas
Recited in sweet air on a road leading

To another road, then another one, widening
To a motorway with four lanes, ending in
A new town on the edge of a city

They will never see. And if we say
An art is lost when it no longer knows
How to teach a sorrow to speak, come, see

The way we lost it: stacking letters in the attic,
Going downstairs so as not to listen to
The fields stirring at night as they became

Memory and in the morning as they became
Ink; what we did so as not to hear them
Whispering the only question they knew

By heart, the only one they learned from all
Those epistles of air and unreachable distance,
How to ask: *is it still there*?

—Eavan Boland

choice but to turn to money lenders, and, in villages like Dhoksal, they are often the same people who sell seeds. The annual interest rate on loans can rise to forty per cent, which few farmers anywhere could hope to pay.

"I am at serious odds with my colleagues who argue that these suicides are about Bt cotton," Suman Sahai told me when I spoke to her in Delhi. Sahai is not ideologically opposed to the use of genetically engineered crops, but she believes that the Indian government regulates them poorly. Nonetheless, she says that the Bt-suicide talk is exaggerated. "If you revoked the permit to plant Bt cotton tomorrow, would that stop suicides on farms?" she said. "It wouldn't make much difference. Studies have shown that unbearable credit and a lack of financial support for agriculture is the killer. It's hardly a secret."

It would be presumptuous to generalize about the complex financial realities of India's two hundred and sixty million farmers after having met a dozen of them. But I neither saw nor heard anything that supported Vandana Shiva's theory that Bt cotton has caused an "epidemic" of suicides. "When you call somebody a fraud, that suggests the person knows she is lying," Mark Lynas told me on the phone recently. "I don't think Vandana Shiva necessarily knows that. But she is blinded by her ideology and her political beliefs. That is why she is so effective and so dangerous." Lynas currently advises the Bangladeshi government on trials it is conducting of Bt *brinjal* (eggplant), a crop that, despite several peer-reviewed approvals, was rejected by the environmental minister in India. *Brinjal* is the first G.M. food crop in South Asia. Shiva wrote recently that the Bangladeshi project not only will fail but will kill the farmers who participate.

"She is very canny about how she uses her power," Lynas said. "But on a fundamental level she is a demagogue who opposes the universal values of the Enlightenment."

It long ago became impossible to talk about genetically engineered crops without talking about Monsanto—a company so widely detested that a week rarely passes without at least one protest against its power and its products occurring somewhere in the world. Shiva has repeatedly said that the company should be tried for "ecocide and genocide." When I asked Monsanto's chairman, Hugh Grant, how he dealt with such charges, he looked at me and shook his head, slowly. "We are a science-based company," he said. "I feel very strongly that you need to be grounded in the science or you lose the drift."

It was an unusually hot day in St. Louis, where Monsanto has its headquarters, and Grant was in shirtsleeves, rolled halfway up his arm. "Obviously, I am an optimistic Scotsman," he said, in an accent that has been softened by many years in the U.S. "Or I would be doing something else for a living." Grant often stresses the need to develop crops that use less water—and has argued for years that G.M.O.s alone could never feed the world.

Nonetheless, Monsanto has pursued the market for transgenic crops with a zeal that has sometimes troubled even proponents of the underlying science. "When G.M. technology was in its infancy, many people were concerned," Anne Glover, the chief scientific adviser to the president of the European Commission, said recently. Glover considers it unethical to ignore G.M. crops if other approaches have failed. "People are still concerned about G.M.," she said. "Most of them are uneasy not with the technology per se but, rather, with the business practices in the agrifood sector, which is dominated by multinational companies." She said that those companies need to do a much better job of communicating with their customers.

Grant concedes the point. "For years, we would have said that we are a biotech company," he said. "We are so far down the food chain . . . we always felt that we were divorced from what ends up on the shelf. And we are not." He noted that, during the past fifty years, the connection between American farmers and their customers had become increasingly tenuous, but that had begun to change. "People may despise us," he said, "but we are all talking about the same issues now, and that is a change I welcome. Food and agriculture are finally part of the conversation." Grant told me that, in 2002, he had commissioned a study to explore the idea of changing the company's name. "It

would have cost twenty-five million dollars," he said. "At the time, that seemed like a waste of money." He paused for a moment. "It was my call, and it was a big mistake."

The all-encompassing obsession with Monsanto has made rational discussion of the risks and benefits of genetically modified products difficult. Many academic scientists who don't work for Monsanto or any other large corporation are struggling to develop crops that have added nutrients and others that will tolerate drought, floods, or salty soil—all traits needed desperately by the world's poorest farmers. Golden Rice—enriched with vitamin A—is the best-known example. More than a hundred and ninety million children under the age of five suffer from vitamin-A deficiency. Every year, as many as half a million will go blind. Rice plants produce beta carotene, the precursor to vitamin A, in the leaves but not in the grain. To make Golden Rice, scientists insert genes in the edible part of the plant, too.

Golden Rice would never offer more than a partial solution to micronutrient deficiency, and the intellectual-property rights have long been controlled by the nonprofit International Rice Research Institute, which makes the rights available to researchers at no cost. Still, after more than a decade of opposition, the rice is prohibited everywhere. Two economists, one from Berkeley and the other from Munich, recently examined the impact of that ban. In their study "The Economic Power of the Golden Rice Opposition," they calculated that the absence of Golden Rice in the past decade has caused the loss of at least 1,424,680 life years in India alone. (Earlier this year, vandals destroyed some of the world's first test plots, in the Philippines.)

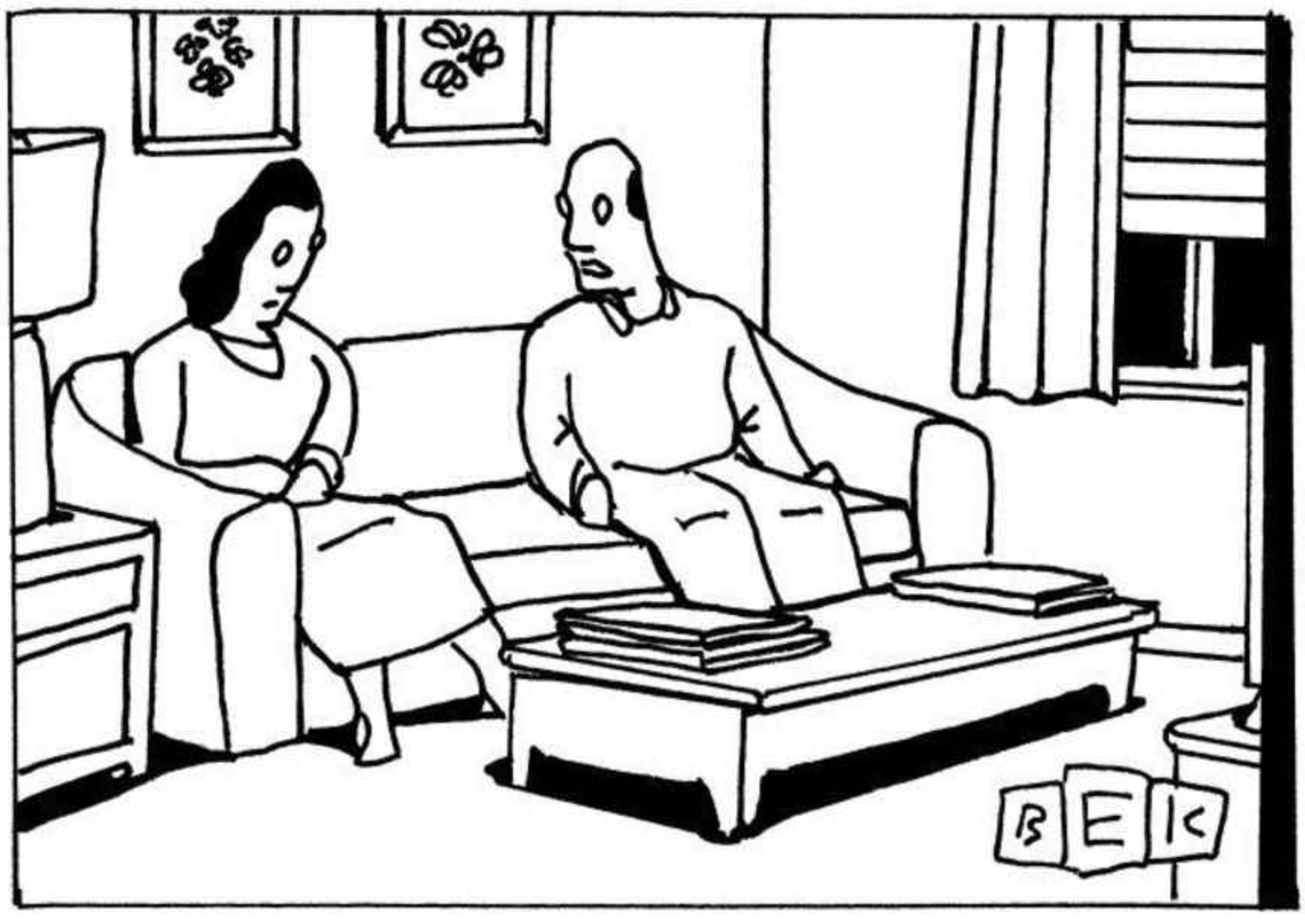
The need for more resilient crops has never been so great. "In Africa, the pests and diseases of agriculture are as devastating as human diseases," Gordon Conway, who is on the board of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, told me. He added that the impact of diseases like the fungus black sigatoka, the parasitic weed striga, and the newly identified syndrome maize lethal necrosis—all of which attack Africa's most important crops—are "in many instances every bit as deadly as H.I.V. and TB." For years, in Tanzania, a disease called brown-streak virus has attacked cassava, a critical source of carbohydrates in the region. Researchers have developed a virus-resistant version of the starchy root vegetable, which is now being tested in field trials. But, again, the opposition, led in part by Shiva, who visited this summer, has been strong.

Maize is the most commonly grown staple crop in Africa, but it is highly susceptible to drought. Researchers are working on a strain that resists both striga and the African endemic maize-streak virus; there have also been promising advances with insect-resistant cowpea and nutritionally enriched sorghum. Other scientists are working on plants that greatly reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizers, and several that produce healthful omega-3 fatty acids. None of the products have so far managed to overcome regulatory opposition.

While I was in India, I visited Deepak Pental, the former vice-chancellor of the University of Delhi. Pental, an elegant, soft-spoken man, is a professor of genetics and also one of the country's most distinguished scientists. "We made a mistake in hyper-propagandizing G.M. products, saying it was a technology that would sort out every problem," he began. "The hype has hurt us." Pental, who received his doctorate from Rutgers, has devoted much of his career to research on *Brassica juncea*, mustard seed. Mustard and canola, *Brassica napus*, share a common parent.

Mustard is grown on six million hectares in India. There are parts of the country where farmers raise few other crops. "We have developed a line of mustard oil with a composition that is even better than olive oil," he said. "It has a lot of omega-3 in it, and that is essential for a vegetarian food"—not a minor consideration in a country with half a billion people who eat no meat. The pungency that most people associate with mustard has been bred out of the oil, which is also low in saturated fats. "It is a beautiful, robust system," he said, adding that there have been several successful trials of the mustard seed. "All our work was funded by the public. Nobody will see any profits; that was never our intention. It is a safe, nutritious, and important crop." It also grows well in dry soil. Yet it was made in a laboratory, and, two decades later, the seed remains on the shelf.

Nearly twenty per cent of the world's population lives in India. But the country has only five per cent of the planet's potable water. "Every time we export one kilogram of basmati rice, we export five thousand kilograms of water," Pental said. "This is a suicidal path. We



"What should we belabor tonight?"

have no nutritional priorities. We are exporting millions of tons of soy meal to Asia. The Japanese feed it to cows. The nutritive value of what a cow is eating in Japan is more than what a human being eats in India. This has to stop."

Pental struggled to keep the disappointment out of his voice. "White rice is the most ridiculous food that human beings can cultivate," he said. "It is just a bunch of starch, and we are filling our bellies with it." He shrugged. "But it's natural," he said, placing ironic emphasis on the final word. "So it passes the Luddite test."

In a recent speech, Shiva explained why she rejects studies suggesting that genetically engineered products like Pental's mustard oil are safe. Monsanto, she said, had simply paid for false stories, and "now they control the entire scientific literature of the world." *Nature*, *Science*, and *Scientific American*, three widely admired publications, "have just become extensions of their propaganda. There is no independent science left in the world."

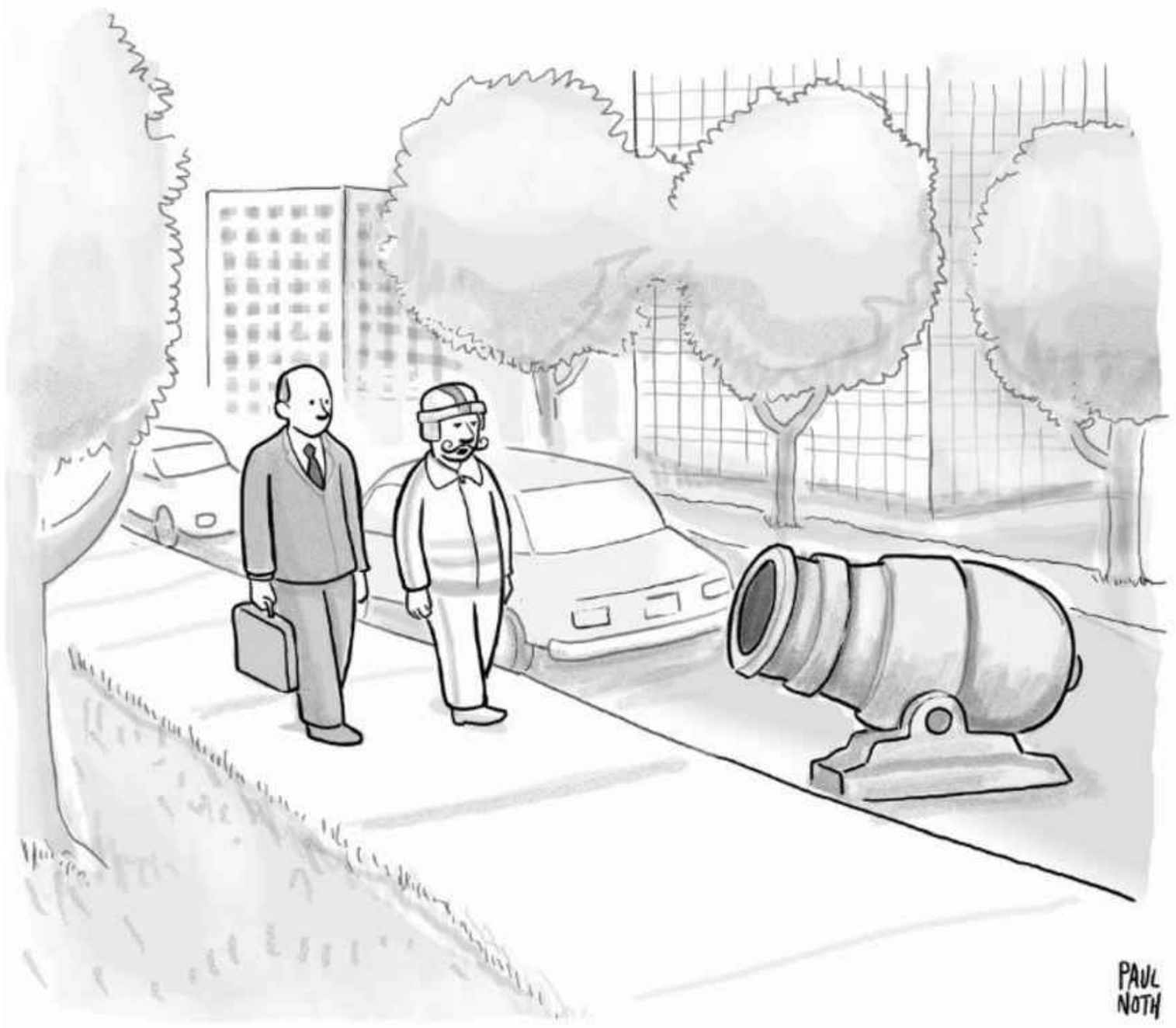
Monsanto is certainly rich, but it is simply not that powerful. Exxon Mobil is worth seven times as much as Monsanto, yet it has never been able to alter the scientific consensus that burning fossil fuels is the principal cause of climate change. Tobacco companies spend more money lobbying in Washington each year than Monsanto does, but it's hard to find scientists who endorse smoking. The gulf between the truth about G.M.O.s and what people say about them keeps growing wider. The Internet brims with videos that purport to expose the lies about genetically modified products. Mike Adams, who runs a popular Web site called Natural News, recently compared journalists who are critical of anti-G.M.O. activists such as Shiva to Nazi collaborators.

The most persistent objection to agricultural biotechnology, and the most common, is that, by cutting DNA from one species and splicing it into another, we have crossed an invisible line and created forms of life unlike anything found in "nature." That fear is unquestionably sincere. Yet, as a walk through any supermarket would demonstrate, nearly every food we eat has been modified, if not by genetic engineering then by more traditional cross-breeding, or by nature itself. Corn in its present form wouldn't exist if humans hadn't cultivated the crop. The plant doesn't grow in the wild and would not survive if we suddenly stopped eating it.

When it comes to medicine, most Americans couldn't care less about nature's boundaries. Surgeons routinely suture pig valves into the hearts of humans; the operation has kept tens of thousands of people alive. Synthetic insulin, the first genetically modified product, is consumed each day by millions of diabetics. To make the drug, scientists insert human proteins into a common bacteria, which is then grown in giant industrial vats. Protesters don't march to oppose those advances. In fact, consumers demand them, and it doesn't seem to matter where the replacement parts come from.

When Shiva writes that "Golden Rice will make the malnutrition crisis worse" and that it will kill people, she reinforces the worst fears of her largely Western audience. Much of what she says resonates with the many people who feel that profit-seeking corporations hold too much power over the food they eat. Theirs is an argument well worth making. But her statements are rarely supported by data, and her positions often seem more like those of an end-of-days mystic than like those of a scientist.

Genetically modified crops will not solve the problem of the hundreds of millions of people who go to bed hungry every night. It would be far better if the world's foods contained an adequate supply of vitamins. It would also help the people of many poverty-stricken countries if their governments were less corrupt. Working roads would do more to reduce nutritional deficits than any G.M.O. possibly could, and so would a more equitable distribution of the Earth's dwindling supply of freshwater. No single crop or approach to farming can possibly feed the world. To prevent billions of people from living in hunger, we will need to use every one of them. ♦

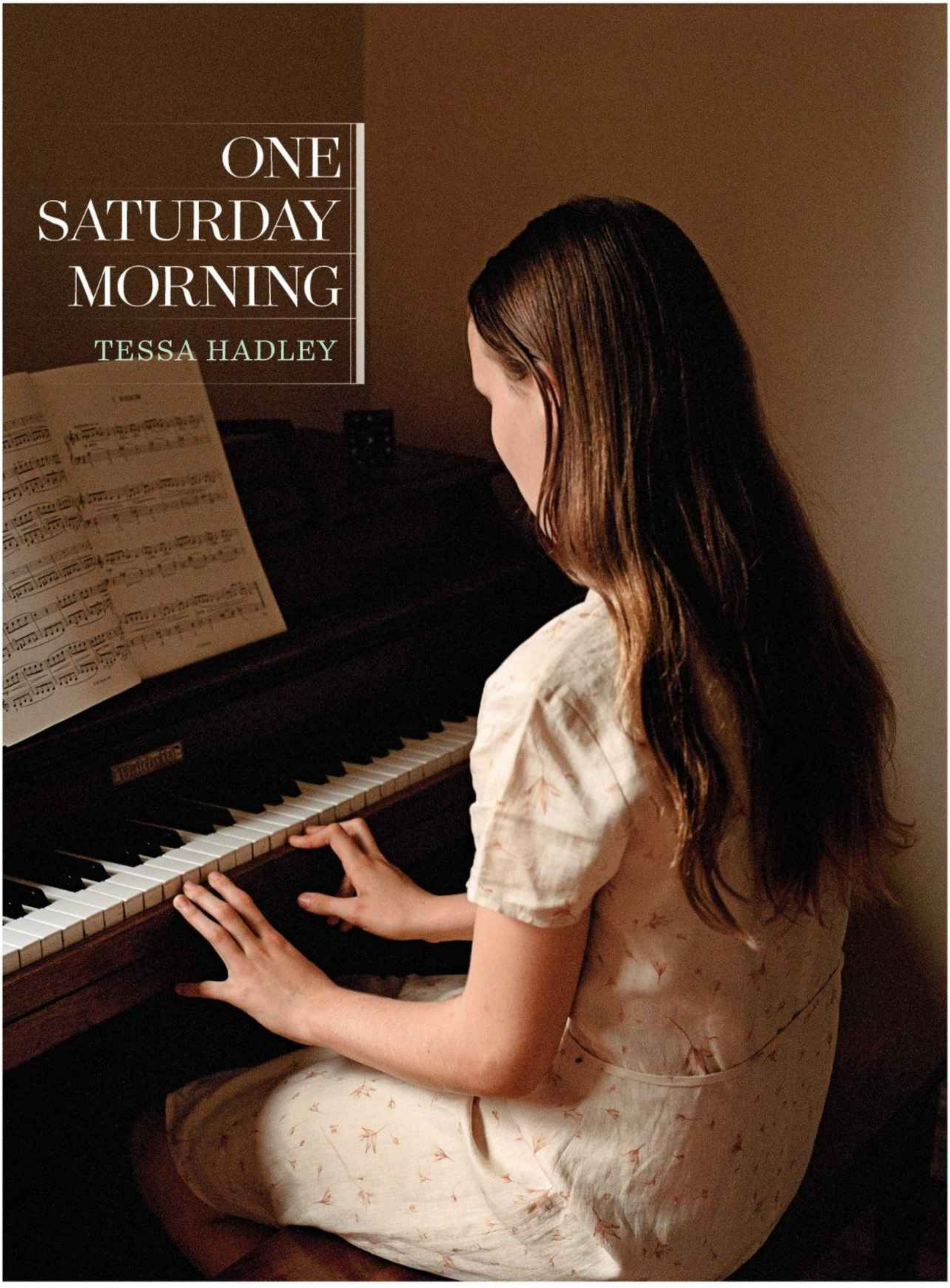


"Well, this is me."

• •

NEWYORKER.COM

A conversation with Michael Specter.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSS McKINLEY

Carrie was alone in the house. It was a Saturday in the mid-nineteen-sixties, and her parents were out shopping: she was ten years old, and doing her piano practice. She had borrowed her parents' alarm clock and put it on top of the piano to time herself—she had so many twenty-minute practices to make up, it seemed as though she'd have to sit there forever. While she was playing, she often looked up at the clock, willing the time to pass; sometimes she just stared at it stonily, letting her fingers wander at random around the notes. Her younger brother, Paul, had a game of cricket going outside with his gang of friends, on the stretch of worn grass enclosed by railings that was a kind of garden for the whole terrace, although only the children used it. The chock of the ball against the bat and the boys' voices calling to one another sounded dreamy at this distance, travelling across the road through the summer heat. Every so often a boy appealed—'*Owzat!*—with sudden violence. Carrie shuddered; it was still cool indoors and she wished she had her cardigan on. This room at the front of the house was always dark, because of the horse-chestnut trees outside the window. They called it the dining room, though they used it for dining only on special occasions, or when her mother had a dinner party; mostly, they watched television in here. A dinner party was planned, in fact, for that night, and the room seemed braced in anticipation: the notes Carrie played fell into an alert silence.

The television was in a corner, opposite a low couch covered in olive-green cotton; Carrie's mother had made the couch covers and also the floor-length curtains and the pelmet at the window, in mustard-yellow velvet. All of the ground floor—the dining room and the kitchen and the hall—was laid with black and white Vinolay tiles, stuck to sheets of hardboard nailed over the old wood floor. Carrie's parents had done this themselves, in the evenings and on weekends, when her father wasn't at work—he taught in a secondary-modern school. Not many people in those days were keen to live in these dilapidated Georgian terraced houses, so a schoolteacher and his wife could afford one, if they had imagination and were able to do it up themselves. Carrie's parents had hired a builder to cut out an archway between the dining room and the hall, but the arch was slightly lopsided, which exasperated Carrie's mother. She had a vision of the house she wanted, elegant and arty. A bulb in a Japanese white paper globe was suspended on a long flex from the high ceiling. Carrie had turned on this light when she came downstairs to do her practice, and in the daylight it glowed weakly and inhospitably.

She was working through the exercises in a book called "A Dozen a Day." The twelfth and last exercise in each section was "Fit as a Fiddle and Ready to Go," but Carrie had worn out all the hopefulness she'd felt when she first started piano lessons. She knew that she wasn't particularly good, and that piano wasn't the answer she'd hoped for, to what was unsolved in herself. There was something slapdash in the way her mind connected with the sounds that her fingers were making. Also, an uncomfortable thing had happened recently in relation to her piano teacher, who was kind and sensible, with a bosom that quivered in stretch polo-necks. The teacher had liked Carrie at first because she was willing to play modern pieces: most of her pupils preferred to stick with "Beside the Stream" or "A Winter Morning." But a few weeks ago Carrie had lost a letter that she had written to her best friend, Susan, and she was afraid that she'd dropped it at her piano teacher's house, though she wasn't sure. Her teacher hadn't said anything about it, but that didn't mean she hadn't found it.

The letter was a joke, one in a series that Carrie and Susan had been writing to each other, full of rude words and innuendo, half learned from the playground and half invented. In the letters they addressed each other as Dug-less and Fanny, and traded insults. *Dear Fanny, Guess what? P.A. told me that you asked him to show you his thingy. He said you really liked it, and wanted to touch it! Then you cried when he wouldn't let you. Boo hoo!* Outwardly, Carrie and Susan were not at all like the clowning raucous characters in the letters: they were quiet girls, shy and hardworking. The boy in their jokes was always the same one: a fat boy in their class, who was their enemy. He banged down their desk lids on their heads, pretended to waft away their bad smells, asked if they were wearing itchy knickers. The letters had seemed richly and mysteriously funny, until the joy was tainted by Carrie's having to imagine her piano teacher reading one.

Bitterly, she addressed herself, frown lines cut deep between her eyes, to one of Bartók's children's pieces, breaking it down as she was supposed to, practicing the left hand first, over and over. There was a relief in pounding the repeated chords, which were neither contented nor plangent. Her right hand lay curled in her lap, palm upward, a useless and discarded thing, and she swung her legs under the piano stool as she concentrated: a sharp-faced little scrap of a girl, blotted with freckles, straight hair pushed out of the way behind sticking-out ears. She looked like her father's side of the family, thin and strong-boned, and didn't much resemble her opulently attractive mother, who was shapely, with wide hazel eyes and a full mouth. It was Paul who looked like their mother.

Above the dining-room fireplace was a gilt-framed mirror that their mother had found in a junk shop and repaired; she had also made lamps out of old glass demijohns and pottery bottles, with her own silk shades. The grate in the fireplace was filled all year round with dried flowers and a gold paper fan: no one wanted real fires when you could have central heating. In photographs now, those arty sixties rooms look unexpectedly austere; their effects seem sparse and rickety, amateurish, in comparison with the fat tide of spending and decorating that came later. But that innocence is appealing, and not incongruous with the high-ceilinged Georgian rooms, always painted white.

The doorbell rang, tearing into Carrie's solitude. She felt herself reprieved—she had done almost an hour's practice, and there was still tomorrow. It might be her parents, back already from Sainsbury's, or Paul, coming in from across the road, to look for another ball or to get a drink of water. When he ran in from his games, sometimes he drank straight from the tap in the kitchen, making a great show of his wild heat and thirst, cocking his head under the

flow, letting the water soak his hair, his eyes rolling back as if he were delirious with physical effort. On her way out through the crooked archway, Carrie caught sight of her reflection in another mirror, above the Pembroke table in the hall, with its bowl of unmatched gloves left over from winter and its jug filled with silvery dried honesty. The outer front door stood open, as it always did in the daytime; the inner door was made of rippled glass. A man was leaning against the glass on the other side, his bulk blocking the light. He was peering inside through his cupped hands to see if anyone was at home.

Carrie dreaded any encounter with a stranger and wished she hadn't let herself be seen. Suffering, she fumbled with the lock, as the man stepped back. When she swung the door open, she discovered that he wasn't a stranger after all but someone who didn't come to the house often enough for her to have recognized his outline. Dom Smith was a friend of her parents who had moved to another city some time ago, to a new job at a university. Her parents would be so disappointed to miss Dom. He was a favorite of theirs, clever and handsome, an anthropologist, with a young family. Carrie's mother talked about him in the cherishing, appreciative tone that she reserved for certain people she admired, mostly men, mostly just out of reach on the margins of their acquaintance; she liked the idea of Dom's life, with its aura of bohemianism and its promise of good conversation. She liked his wife, Helen, too, but they'd seen less of her. Once, Helen had lived with Dom among the tribal peoples in Assam, but when he'd visited here she often stayed at home with their babies.

Dom puzzled down at Carrie, perhaps only vaguely remembering her existence, certainly not her name. In his shabby reefer jacket, he seemed too warmly dressed for the summer day; she could smell his sweat. If only her parents had been at home, she could have tagged on behind their welcome, basking invisibly at the edge of all the talk: Dom put them in touch with something glamorous. Her father enjoyed their noisy quarrels over music (Dom liked classical, her father liked jazz), in which neither of them gave an inch. Dom had the kind of physique that makes a man seem fearless—he was huge and rumpled, with untidy black curls and a beard, a big affable voice. You could easily imagine him living in a hut in Assam, with people who kept the bones of their ancestors under the floor. In actuality, he was more diffident and awkward than his physique suggested. He told Carrie that he was in town for a couple of days, looking up old friends. Were her parents anywhere around?

"They're out at the shops," she said. "You could come in and wait."

He hesitated and cast a look back into the street, almost as if he were being pursued.

"How long d'you think they'll be?"

Surely they'd been gone for hours? They would be back very soon, Carrie reassured him, eager to coax him inside. Yet, as soon as he stepped across the threshold into the dim interior, she felt how inadequate she was to entertain him. Her parents' friends might play significant roles in her imagination, but left alone with them she had nothing to offer. Dom's towering presence was confounding; he stood with his back to the hall mirror, obliterating her reflection and surveying the place, as if to remind himself where he was. They both seemed at a loss.

"Were you playing the piano?" he asked politely. "Why don't you go ahead?"

It would be unbearable to play while he was listening. Carrie gabbled something about reading her book and fled upstairs; her cowardice was crucifying. But she knew that as soon as her parents came back from the shops the tide of their pleased sociability would lift her with it; she'd be all right. Skulking behind the open door of the playroom, she listened to Dom moving around downstairs. They called this room the playroom because there was a table-tennis table in it, which her father had rescued when the school was throwing it out. Her mother kept her sewing machine there, too, and the table was spread with the cut-out and pinned pieces of a dress she was making for one of the ladies she sewed for. Dom went into the kitchen and must have sat still for a bit because she couldn't hear him. Then he pushed back a chair and began pacing again, in and out of the dining room, back to the kitchen; Carrie felt guiltily responsible for his restlessness.

She took off her sandals so that she wouldn't make a sound; he mustn't know that she was wandering upstairs, prickling with consciousness of his wanderings below. Several times she tiptoed to the windows in the lounge, to see whether her parents' car was pulling up; its continuing absence was a drawn-out physical pain. To appease this, after a while she got out her shoebox full of the collectible cards that came free with packets of tea, then sat down at the table-tennis table and began doggedly pasting these into their places in her albums. She was saving British Butterflies and Great Engineers. Dom meandered into the dining room again. It was strange that a grown man could be reduced to the listlessness of a child, waiting for something that didn't come.

He sat down at the piano and began to play. The piece was much too advanced to be in any of the books she had, so it must have been something he knew by heart. His playing seemed like a solution to their impasse while they waited; Carrie put down her pot of paste and crept out of the playroom, sitting at the top of the stairs to listen, hugging her stomach, feeling the music for once as if it were inside her. It was the tiny scope of her Bartók piece, she saw now, that made it suitable for children. This different music rolled and rippled up and down the notes, joyous and mournful, lingering and delaying, holding back with painful sweetness. Carrie was in awe of Dom Smith's adult competence, so rich in understanding; she couldn't imagine attaining it in any lifetime.

Then he broke off abruptly in the middle of the piece, pushing back the piano stool as if he were angry with it and striding out into the hall, where he hesitated before calling upstairs. "Hello?"

He was going to go; she should never have tried to keep him there in the first place—the only surprise was his even remembering that she was in the house. When he called, she didn't answer right away, not wanting him to know that she'd been listening from the stairs. And at that very moment her parents arrived home from the supermarket: she heard their voices first, then a key in the lock and the noise rolling in from the street.

Her mother exclaimed in shock at finding Dom Smith in her hall, on the point of leaving.

"Dom! What a lovely surprise! Did Carrie let you in?"

"I was just about to give up on you," he said.

Carrie bounded downstairs, to be present at the happy greetings. She knew that her mother would be quickly calculating, standing among the plastic carriers from the supermarket, rearranging her plans to make room for Dom, running through what preparation was still needed for the dinner party. Her timetable leading up to these events was tightly organized, and she worked through it with fierce energy and efficiency, but she could make lightning adjustments, too. All this time she was showing Dom her brightly delighted face. She was genuinely pleased that he had come.

"I told him to wait," Carrie said, hanging onto her mother's arm and stretching out her feet in the new ballet moves that Susan had taught her. She was performing for him now that she was safe. "I knew you wouldn't be long."

"I'm down for a few days," Dom said. "I came for a rugby game and I thought I'd catch up with people."

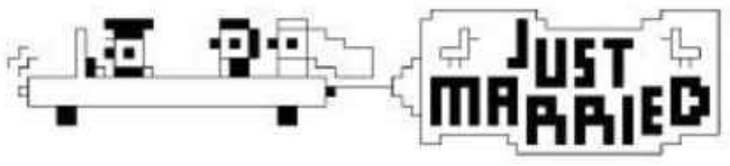
He stood awkwardly in their way in his thick dark coat, stubborn, as if he lacked the fluency to explain himself further but didn't care. It was hard to believe that such marvellous music had poured out of him, only a few minutes earlier. Carrie's father, his extreme thinness and height making him look martyred under the weight of more shopping bags, was thankful for male company after a morning at the supermarket. Paul ran in from across the road and began hunting through the carriers for a packet of crisps, glancing only once at their visitor, then hurrying out again, fairly oblivious of his family's social life. Carrie's father asked about the rugby, while her mother turned on the coffee percolator and unpacked the perishables into the fridge. The grownups sat down around the kitchen table to drink their coffee, and Carrie pulled up a stool to sit beside her mother, delighted with Dom's presence now, as if it were her own achievement. Her mother tore open a packet of chocolate truffles in his honor, but he shook his head. Carrie was allowed just one. No doubt they'd been intended for the dinner party.

"So how are things?" her father cheerfully asked.

"I have to tell you straight away," Dom said.

Helen, his wife, had died suddenly of meningitis in the spring. She had gone to bed one night complaining of backache, Dom had called an ambulance the next morning, and she had died at the hospital the following day. Now Helen's mother was helping Dom look after the children, because he had to work. Carrie's family hadn't heard anything about this. In those days, news didn't travel so fast; lots of people didn't even have telephones. And her parents didn't really have many friends in common with the Smiths. In fact, after this one momentous visit when he brought his news, Carrie's family didn't see Dom again for a long time.

He stayed that day for hours, sitting with Carrie's parents at the kitchen table. Carrie crept upstairs, to be where she couldn't hear them talking in their stricken, changed voices, but she couldn't get rid of the terrible knowledge that Dom had brought; it seemed to be stuck inside her, in her stomach or her throat. Her bedroom was high up in the attic, under the roof baking in the sun, hot even with the windows wide open; in summer the weedy, sour smell of the rush matting on the floor was overpowering. She knelt on it, punishing herself,



until its corded pattern was printed as red welts in the flesh of her bare knees. If only she hadn't let Dom Smith into the house. She tried not to remember him announcing his news, in those oddly hearty, premeditated sentences; his words cut across the bright air of her bedroom in stark flashes, darkening it. Her parents' jolly hospitality had been stalled mid-gesture; Carrie saw her mother holding the percolator at a slant but not pouring, surprising tears brimming into her hazel eyes, as if they had been waiting for this moment, close beneath the surface. Her father, in his role as the man of the house, was the first to struggle, heroically clumsy, to say something. Her mother had just let out a cry, as if it were she who was wounded.

Carrie took everything to heart. She was earnest and susceptible, suffering easily. But it wasn't exactly pity for Helen Smith or her husband or children that overwhelmed her as she knelt in her bedroom; it was something more selfish and self-protective. She wished fiercely that she'd never learned about Helen's death. Helen didn't seem the right person to be singled out. She had been tiny and plump and hopeful, with soft brown hair and a pleasant ringing voice. But now the idea of death closed on her in Carrie's imagination, like a trap. Her image and her name had been transformed by Dom's announcement, and were framed with sorrow, could never be dissociated from it. Helen's children had still been small when the Smiths moved away; Carrie had hardly known them. Before the Smiths left, the two families had gone for a walk together in some woods, and Carrie remembered that Dom had carried his younger daughter in a backpack, which wasn't common then. The thong had broken on one of Helen's sandals and she'd had to keep bending down to adjust it. After the walk, they had gone back to the Smiths' flat for tea, and Helen had fried Scotch pancakes, which they ate hot with butter. The flat was on a steep hill, overlooking the river and the docks below; it was shabby and comfortable, untidy with books and baby apparatus. Carrie's mother had said on the way home that the flat could have been made very nice, but Helen Smith wasn't interested in that sort of thing. She'd said this defensively, as if Helen had actually reproached her for her frivolous concern with appearances.

This morning, the memory of that walk had been jumbled carelessly among all Carrie's other memories; now it had to be separated from the rest, darkened with foreboding. She felt guiltily relieved that those smitten children lived in another city, far away. The sensations of her long vigil alone with Dom Smith in the house were vividly present still; she was shrivelled and humiliated by the foolish excitement she had felt at keeping him

"Tell me again about the time before the sands came."

• • •

waiting, then offering her family to him like a bright gift. Peering in through the glass door, then blundering around in the shadows downstairs, Dom was turned into a figure of dread by what had happened to him. He was set apart, just as his wife had been set apart—except that it was worse with Dom, because he persisted, discomforting in all his living bulk, putting himself in the way of Carrie's thoughts when she tried to be rid of him. She longed to hear the door shut behind him and for the dinner-party preparations to be resumed, however belatedly—for the whole ordinary process of living to start into motion again, downstairs in the kitchen.

It was a lovely evening, very still. The house filled up with the smell of meat stewing slowly in wine. Slanting yellow light, thick with dancing midges, pooled under the horse chestnuts outside. The floor-length sash windows were thrown up in the lounge, and after the guests had finished eating they came upstairs to sit there in the twilight, smoking and drinking. Two men started a game of table tennis in the playroom, slamming the ball down hard, exploding with shouts of triumph or defeat. There was jazz music on the gramophone in the lounge, and a blackbird competed in a tree outside; some of the guests came out to smoke on the white-painted wrought-iron balcony, where Carrie's mother grew nicotiana and petunias and white lobelia, in pots and in the halves of a barrel sawn in two. Cigarette smoke and the smell of flowers, together with the uninterpretable mingled voices and laughter from inside the room, floated up to where Carrie watched, unseen, from the open window in her parents' bedroom, on the floor above.

She and her brother were supposed to be asleep in their rooms in the attic. But Carrie was spying on the dinner party and Paul was sitting up in bed in his thin cotton pajamas, his skin darkly tanned from the days outdoors, his hair bleached a striking yellow gold. Carrie knew that he was writing his weather report in a notebook—*sunny, some high cumulus, 68°F, no precipitation*—and flipping back through its pages to where things got more interesting: his record-low temperature for the year, heaviest rainfall, days of hail or thunder. He would be murmuring certain words over to himself, incantatory: *the leaden sky promised an early fall of snow.*

Carrie had found the stupid letter that she'd thought was lost, tucked into the pocket of a cardigan put away in her drawer. She had dived on it with a little private cry of pain, then torn it up quickly without reading it, burying the fragments in her wastepaper bin. Of course she was relieved; certain scenes at her piano teacher's house could now be wiped clean of the taint of her teacher's knowledge. Yet her relief was trivial, because the problem of the lost letter had been displaced by something quite incommensurate with it. Resolutely, Carrie refused to let thoughts of the Smiths into the foreground of her attention. At least Dom was gone now, and she could begin to forget about him; the time they'd spent in the house together shamed her, as if she'd been witness to some unseemly grief.

Her mother had tried to persuade Dom to come back for the dinner party, and he'd promised to think about it, but she'd said afterward that she was sure he wouldn't come—it would be unbearable under the circumstances for him to mix with strangers, or people he hardly knew. Carrie couldn't tell from her mother's voice whether she was glad that Dom wouldn't come, or sorry. But surely he would have ruined things—what could they have laughed at, if he'd brought his weight of sadness in among them? His visit had disrupted her mother's plans, but still she had got everything ready on time, working under pressure with a severe, set face: the table had been laid beautifully with its blue-and-brown-checked cloth and red stemmed glasses and red paper napkins; the glazed vol-au-vents were filled and ready for the oven; the chocolate pudding was set in its palisade of sponge fingers, piped with whipped cream; the candles were on the table with their box of matches.

Carrie's father was studying, in the evenings and on weekends, for a degree in politics, but on the day of a party he had to leave his books and submit to the different laws of the female domain, obeying the instructions that his wife rapped out, vacuuming and tidying, setting up the drinks tray. She followed impatiently after him, because he had no feeling for arranging the cushions or the flowers; he thought these things were not worth having a feeling for. The children exchanged sly looks and jokes with

their father behind their mother's back, conspiring against her remorselessness. But as soon as the guests arrived she relaxed into smiles, as if that other, sterner self had never existed.

In the half-dark now, feeling the evening air against her nakedness under her nightdress, Carrie fingered the objects on her mother's dressing table, so well known they seemed like parts of her own self: the amber necklace with its knotted waxy thread, the prickly dried sea horse someone had brought from Greece, a cylinder needle case of polished wood, a bottle of the Basic Dew that her mother used on her face. The coral brooch, with its fine gold safety chain and extra pin, had belonged to her mother's own mother; a black lacquer box was painted with forget-me-nots and had a poem pasted inside the lid. This bedroom was never as perfectly tidy as the rooms downstairs. There were stray halfpennies and dressmaker's pins in the dust on the dressing table, neglected letters in manila envelopes were propped against the mirror, and one of Paul's football boots was wrapped in a plastic bag, waiting to be repaired. Some meaning was hidden in these mute things Carrie touched: twisting the top off the needle case, she tested the blunt ends of a few rusty needles, pressing hard and then harder, until the needles made white dents in her fingertips.

Then, when she looked out of the window again to check on the party, she saw to her horror that Dom Smith was standing out on the balcony below, with his back to her. So he had turned up after all. It was Dom, she realized now, who had been playing table tennis with her father, yelling and cursing and shouting with glee, throwing himself about the room as if the only thing he cared about were winning. Now he was alone, leaning hunchbacked over the railing in the shadows between the two lit windows, his shoulders broad in his checked shirt, whose sleeves were rolled up, businesslike, to the elbows. While she watched, he threw his cigarette down into the street. Carrie's mother stepped out onto the balcony through one of the windows; the noise of the party carried on in the room behind her. Carrie saw that her mother didn't really know Dom well, and was uncertain whether she ought to approach him. Her sleeveless white dress, which she had made herself, gleamed in the twilight. She must have kicked off her white shoes in the lounge; it was one of the things she did when she was tipsy. Hesitant, she moved toward him, and he turned his head to look at her.

"Dom, I don't know what to say. Poor, lovely Helen. It's too awful."

Where they were standing, between the two windows, they weren't visible from inside the lounge, but Carrie saw what happened next. Dom grabbed hold of her mother—not suavely and sexily, like one of those flirty men who were always grabbing at her, but clumsily, half smothering her. The top of her head only just came up to his chin, but he squeezed her tightly and nuzzled under her ear, as if he wanted to burrow down into her. Her mother was taken by surprise; she staggered backward under Dom's weight and at the same time patted his shoulder as if she were comforting him. "Help me," he was saying to her. The words were muffled because his face was buried in her neck. "You've had too much to drink," she said tenderly. "You're not making any sense."

For a while the two of them clung together, circling slowly on the creaky planks of the balcony as if they were dancing. He was pressing the huge palm of his hand against her head, stroking her tousled hair, clasping her head against his chest, kissing the top of it, kissing her ear. Carrie felt as if she weren't really present at the scene; she was disembodied. She believed that, even if they'd looked up to where she was craning out of the window above them, they wouldn't have been able to see her. Then her mother, with her hand flat on Dom's chest, was pushing him away in the teasing, charming way she pushed away the other men. "No, Dom," she said sweetly. "I'm sorry." Quietly, Carrie stepped away from the window and went upstairs. She pictured herself making a joke at breakfast the next day about her mother dancing on the balcony with Dom Smith, and then she knew she mustn't, and grew hot with the memory of the rude letter, her wrong judgment of what was funny and what was shaming.

Paul was still sitting up in bed in the room next to hers. He snapped his notebook shut when she came in. "Get out," he said. "I'm doing something."

Carrie ignored him and stretched out her leg, pulling up her nightdress to her knees, pointing her toes and practicing ballet moves in the narrow space between Paul's bed and his collection of empty cereal boxes stacked against the wall. She had given up her ballet lessons; she wasn't really any better at ballet than at the piano. An insect flew in through the open window and landed on the cover of Paul's book. "I can see his eyes," he said, peering closely. "They're like little blobs of ink, gold ink. He's looking right back at me."

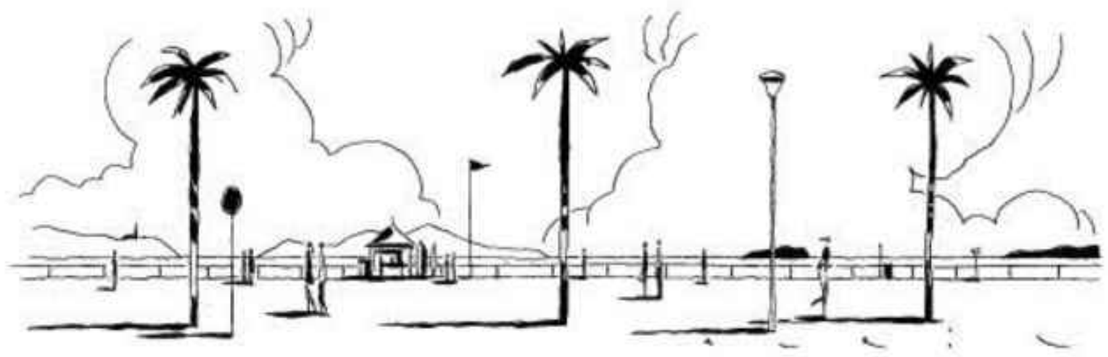
Then their mother, barefoot, was standing in the doorway. "What are you up to?" she said crossly. "You two are supposed to be in bed." But she didn't seem to be in any hurry to get back to her guests. She began picking up the clothes that Paul had dropped on the floor and folding them. Carrie kept very still, with one foot pointing and her arms curved in an arabesque above her head: it occurred to her suddenly that her mother was afraid of Dom Smith, too, unwilling to return downstairs, where he was lying in wait with his grief and his hunger for consolation.

"Look, Mummy," Paul said. "Come and look at this."

The three of them bent together over the insect, whose frail folded wings were transparent and dark-veined. Its long green body curled and uncurled lasciviously. "What an extraordinary creature," their mother said. Pressing close against her, Carrie breathed in her perfume, and the wine and smoke on her hot skin; the white dress smelled of ironing. Paul blew gently at the insect, which swayed on its threads of legs. Their happiness in that moment was almost too much—its precariousness squeezed Carrie's chest like a tight band. A breeze stirred in the horse-chestnut trees beyond the casement windows, and a street lamp glowing through the foliage was a glassy lozenge, like a sucked barley sugar. Already, Carrie hardly knew if she'd actually seen Dom dancing on the balcony with her mother, or if that had happened only in her imagination, a vision of what consolation might be—something headlong and reckless and sweet, unavailable to children. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Tessa Hadley on "One Saturday Morning."



BOOKS

AWAY THINKING ABOUT THINGS

James Kelman's fighting words.

BY JAMES WOOD

I was a judge of the 1994 Booker Prize, the year the award went to "How Late It Was, How Late," by the Scottish writer James Kelman. The decision was contentious. For most of us judges, the prize gave recognition to a significant and consistently challenging writer, whose experiments with vernacular speech and internal monologue had produced some of the most stubbornly interesting work in recent British fiction. To others on the panel, his novel was monotonous, unpunctuated, and foulmouthed. ("Every other word is 'fuck'" was the usual reproach.) One of the judges marched out of the room, promising to denounce the decision to the media. Kelman turned up at the foolishly formal, black-tie award dinner in a regular business suit and an open-necked shirt, the rebellious semiotics of which were quickly understood, and spoke about how the writer must stand up to oppression: "My culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that. . . . A fine line can exist between élitism and racism. On matters concerning language and culture, the distance can sometimes cease to exist altogether." As he began to raise his fist in a quasi-power salute, I overheard one of the executives of Booker McConnell, the food distributor that sponsored the prize, call the performance "a bloody disgrace." Each to his own vernacular.

Kelman was referring to the way he uses Lowland Scots and Glaswegian dialect, to his work's linguistic difference from what used to be called, in Britain, "received pronunciation," or "educated speech." His claim that verbal élitism approaches actual racism might seem politically overwrought, a territory that Kelman has never avoided. But the overwrought response to the Booker win seemed to justify Kelman's extremity. Rabbi Julia Neuberger, the judge who had promised to denounce the decision, made good on her pledge. The book, she said, was "frankly . . . crap." The columnist Simon Jenkins, writing in the *Times* of London, called Kelman "an illiterate savage." He had done nothing more, in his novel, than transcribe "the rambling thoughts of a blind Glaswegian drunk." Even those who defended Kelman fixated, perhaps inevitably, on the profanity of the style rather than on the style of the profanity. (It was reckoned that "fuck" occurs four thousand times in the novel, twenty-one times in the first three pages alone.)

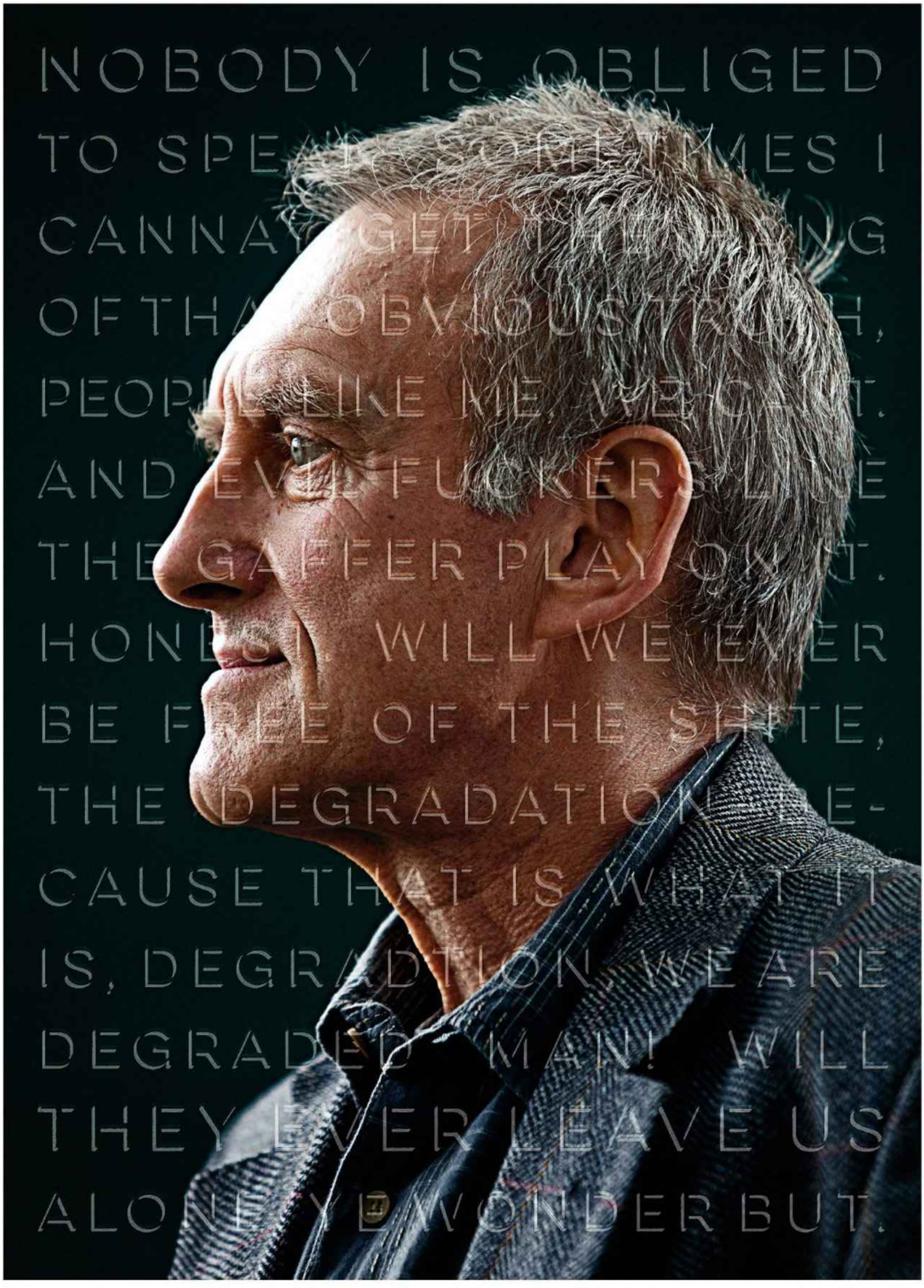
Kelman is a narrow writer, and can indeed be monotonous (often usefully, sometimes merely). It is not Kelman's sociological seam that is narrow—he writes about Glasgow's white, Scottish poor, the class into which he was born in 1946: about bus conductors, street sweepers, night-shift workers, the unemployed, small-time criminals, men waiting for scrawny unemployment checks and hopeless job interviews—but the vein of his thought. Most of his characters work the same side of the mental street; they wage an obsessive, internal war with their limited circumstances, and often rant against the authority figures who seem to control those circumstances: the boss, the government officer at the job center, sometimes the wife, the police, the local and national politicians. Unlike the work of Beckett, who has obviously had a large influence on him, Kelman's writing has almost no metaphysical dimension, as though metaphysics were offensively luxurious—brocade for the bourgeois. There is an atmosphere of gnarling paranoia, imprisoned minimalism, the boredom of survival.

But within these limits, and because of them, Kelman is a funny, sour, expansive writer, whose strange, new sentences are brilliant adventures in thought. He uses first-person and very close third-person narration (the two are almost indistinguishable in his work) to represent with bitter fidelity the mental journeys of his characters. Because proximity of impersonation is his goal, he is unafraid of boredom, banality, digression, repetition, and verbal impoverishment. His experiments in vernacular Scots push and twist the language, sometimes to breaking points. And his work is humorously interested in the question of what constitutes a story: he likes tales in which nothing happens, twice, thrice, and beyond. When these tendencies are joined by his politics (he has said that he feels a particular affinity with post-colonial writing, because he considers Scotland to be an occupied nation), language gets weaponized, and fiction marches out to do passionate deconstructive battle with "official" writing—that is, ninety-nine per cent of everything produced by the despised English literary tradition.

His strongest work is in the short story rather than the novel, where the immersion principle can make for work that seems relentlessly long. By contrast, his short stories are often *very* short—he is fond of brief dramatic monologues, sometimes only a page or two in length—and present vivid fragments, barely comprehended moments. His story "This Man for Fuck Sake," which appeared in the great collection "Greyhound for Breakfast" (1987), is only nine sentences long. Here it is, entire:

> This man for fuck sake it was terrible seeing him walk down the edge of the pavement. If he'd wanted litter we would've given him it. The trouble is we didn't know it at the time. So all we could do was watch his progress and infer. And even under normal circumstances this is never satisfactory: it has to

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL; OPPOSITE: COLIN MCPHERSON/CORBIS



Kelman is a funny, sour, expansive writer whose vernacular experiments push and twist the language, sometimes to breaking points.

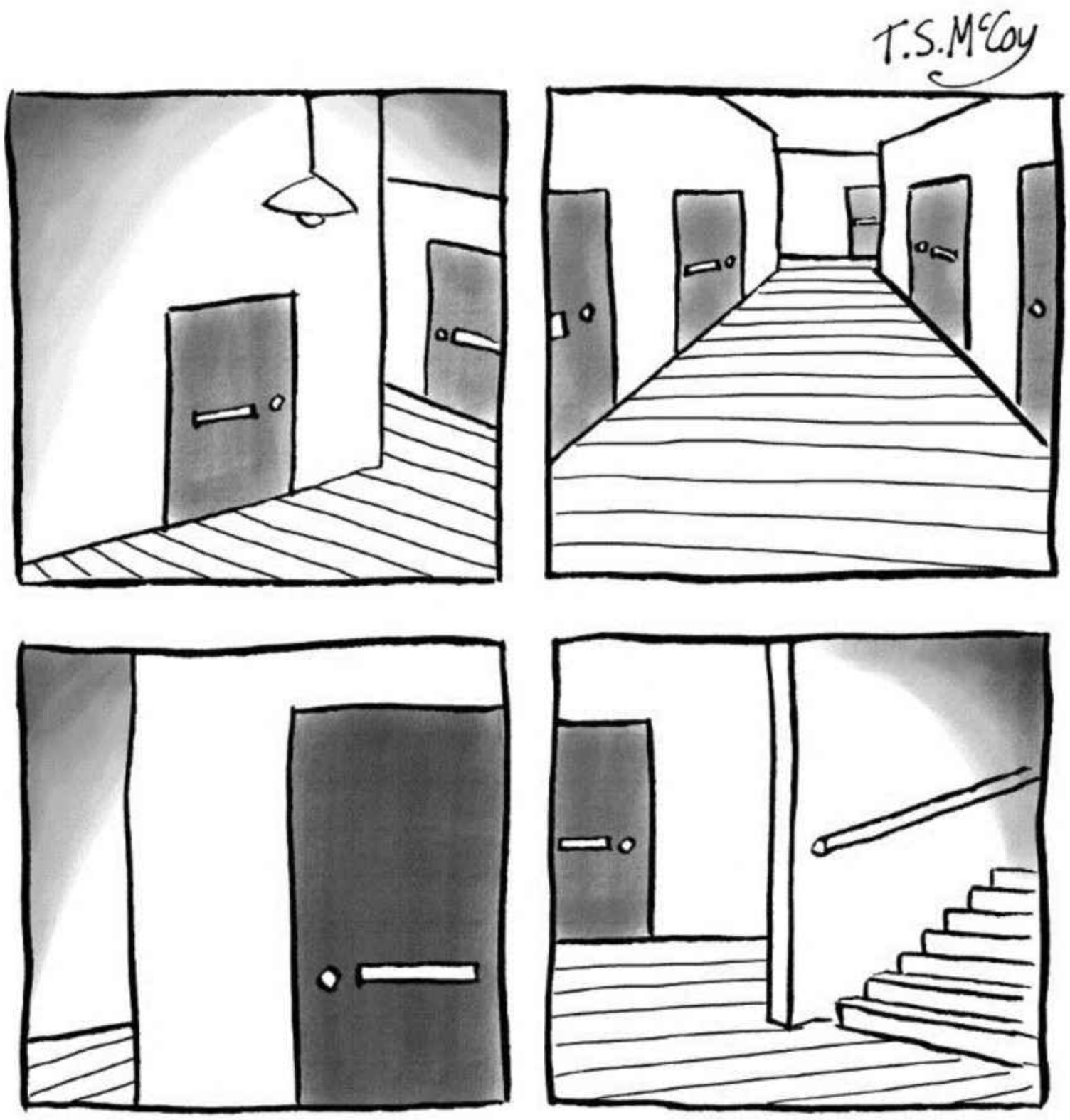
be readily understood the types of difficulties we labored under. Then that rolling manoeuvre he performed while nearing the points of reference. It all looked to be going so fucking straightforward. How can you blame us? You can't, you can't fucking blame us.

Notice how content Kelman is to leave "points of reference" unexplained. What does "litter" mean in this story? What is being inferred, exactly? Yet, without having to explain the "types of difficulties we labored under," he imparts a pretty immediate idea of the difficulties within which his characters exist.

You get a sense of this approach—the story as a swipe at life—from the wonderful, songlike titles in his new collection, "If It Is Your Life" (Other Press). In addition to the title story, we get such selections as "Tricky Times Ahead Pal," "Talking About My Wife," "As If from Nowhere," "Pieces of Shit Do Not Have the Power to Speak," "Justice for One," "Death Is Not.," and "Bangs & a Full Moon." They're not all quite successful, but you want to start each one because of the titles, just as you might want to hear all the Paul Weller songs on a record at least once. Kelman has claimed, in fact, that his influences come from "two literary traditions, the European Existential and the American Realist, allied to British rock music (influenced directly from Blues music, with an input from Country and Western)."

Kelman's language is immediately exciting; like a musician, he uses repetition and rhythm to build structures out of short flights and circular meanderings. The working-class Glaswegian author knows exactly how his words will scathe delicate skins; he has a fine sense of attack. "The One with the Dog" is only two pages long, and is narrated by a man who begs for money, likes to do so on his own, and is wary of other guys who do it in gangs or go around with dogs. It begins, "What I fucking do is wander about the place, just going here and there. I've got my pitches. A few other cunts use them as well." It's hard to imagine a swifter, more visceral introduction to this man's voice and world, a place of pitches and cunts, temporary benefactors and regular rivals. The reader begins to hear the prose as well as read it, ideally allowing its Glaswegian rhythms to speak through the phrasing. If the novelty of this kind of writing has lost a bit of its shine, it's partly because authors like Irvine Welsh have subsequently rubbed away at the same surfaces. But when this story initially appeared, in "Greyhound for Breakfast," Welsh's first novel, "Trainspotting" (1993), was six years away. And, besides, while Welsh has tended to drop Scottishisms ("wee," "didnae," "canna'e," and so on) into fairly established, normative rhythms, a process that might be called tartanizing, Kelman invents his own rhythms, using words and stubs of words with subtle daring. A bit later in the same tale, Kelman's panhandler complains, "Sometimes I think ya bastard ye I'm fucking skint and you're no." The sentence gets all its fighting power from the jabbing of "ya," "ye," and "you're no."

Or consider the way that Kelman uses the word "but": "One thing I'm finding but it makes it a wee bit easier getting a turn." The man is saying that, although he dislikes having a dog tag along with him, he has found that it helps to bring in money. So the sentence, written out formally, would be something like: "One thing I'm finding is that it makes it a little easier to get a turn." In the formal version, though, the musical pitching of "but" and "bit" disappears, as does the sentence's weird, hopping rhythm, where the unexpected incursion of "but" forces a caesura, so that the reader has to speak the sentence as: "One thing I'm finding/but/it makes it a wee bit easier getting a turn." (Kelman often does surprising things with "but," as in this line of spoken dialogue: "I've never been to Carfin but; never I mean have you?")



Kelman's fiction travels in two apparently opposing directions. In subject and theme, it insists on an absolute materialism. There is almost no visual description in his work, very little

metaphor or figuration, no fine phrasing or lush gratuity. Nothing extra. His characters worry about money, cigarettes, a drink, just getting home and getting by. A grinding minimalism holds sway, not without a grim comedy of its own: "He lifted his empty beer glass and swirled the drop at the bottom about, put the glass to his mouth and attempted to drink, but the drop got lost somewhere along the way." Or this, on a dwindling supply of cigarettes:

> There were only two left. It was unbelievable how they went. Two before going into the pub; three in it; then this was the second since leaving. Which makes seven. He must've smoked another one somewhere else.

Kelman, in this mode, can sound like the Knausgaard who lovingly describes making tea, or spreading toast with butter: "He collected the dirty dishes, the breakfast bowls and tea-plates from last night's supper. He put the plug in the sink and turned on the hot water tap, shoving his hand under the jet of water to feel the temperature change; it was still a novelty." Kelman, like Knausgaard, is rarely boring when writing like this: partly because, like Knausgaard, he simply proceeds *as if* the subject matter were interesting; and partly because, in writing as in most areas, limitation increases focus, and tends to irradiate necessity as if it were a luxury. This is the principle of prison writing, both in the literal sense ("One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich") and in the figurative sense (Kafka's allegories of imprisonment). "How Late It Was, How Late," a three-hundred-page monologue from the point of view of a Glaswegian man who has recently lost his sight (perhaps as a result of a drunken fall, perhaps at the hands of the police, who briefly locked him up), systematically employs the prison principle to squeeze amplitude out of deprivation, feet of fascination out of mere inches of material.

The prison principle extends to Kelman's language—his habit of using and reusing a relatively small register of words, as, for instance, in the way he repeats and refines "fuck" and "fucking." A single sentence will deploy the same word differently. "If it was me I'd just tell them to fuck off; away and fuck I'd tell them, that's what I'd say if it was

PROMOTION

NEW YORKER .COM

CURRENCY

STORIES AND ANALYSIS OF WALL STREET AND THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

"At this point, a tech company having a C.E.O. who opposes gay marriage is not all that different from a company in 1973 having a C.E.O. who donated money to fight interracial marriage. The C.E.O. would still have been on the wrong side of history."
—"How Mozilla Lost Its C.E.O.," James Surowiecki

www.newyorker.com/business/currency

NEWYORKER.COM PUBLISHES MORE THAN FIFTEEN ORIGINAL STORIES A DAY

CONDÉ NAST

me," the narrator thinks in "The One with the Dog." There is also "fucking" as a kind of midsentence punctuation (functioning like "but"): "She would just fucking, she would laugh at him." And also as impacted repetition: "Fuck sake, of course she would; what was the fucking point of fucking, trying to fucking keep it away, of course she'd be fucking worrying about him," Ronnie thinks in the story "Greyhound for Breakfast."

But, alongside this materialism of subject and language (words as things, weapons, counters), Kelman insists on the play and the liberty (more often glimpsed than found) of the mind. It's not that his characters escape from their impoverishment in flights of thought or imagination. More desperately, it's that they see privacy as the last unmortgaged, unindebted, unsold space, always on the verge of being invaded by the materialism of survival that tyrannizes the rest of life. Here Kelman announces, perhaps, his connection not only to Kafka, Hamsun, and Beckett (the "European existential tradition") but to comic Russian internal expansionists such as Gogol and Chekhov, and to those English writers who learned most from those Russians, including V. S. Pritchett and Henry Green. In "Street-Sweeper," which appeared in the collection "The Burn" (1991), Peter, who works for the city, sweeping the roads, likes to nip away for illicit breaks, in order to catch up on his reading:

> This was these fucking books he read. Peter was a fucking avid reader and he had got stuck in the early Victorian era, even earlier, bastards like Goldsmith for some reason, that's what he read. Charles fucking Lamb, that's who he read; all these tory essayists of the pre-chartist days, that other bastard that didni like Keats. Why did he read such shite. Who knows, they fucking wreaked havoc with the syntax, never mind the fucking so-called sinecure of a job, the street cleaning. Order Order. Sorry Mister Speaker. But for christ sake, for christ sake.

Peter is confronted by his hated boss ("the gaffer"), who sacks him for going off the job. But Peter finally does what he has always wanted to do: tells the boss where to shove it. Though he appears to read the "wrong" writers ("that other bastard that didni like Keats"—Kelman, as a fiction writer here, is more playful than his own, rather humorless politics might seem to allow), it is reading per se that acts as license for the eventual rebellion against the job. Maybe there is a connection between good wrecked syntax and wrecking your life for the good. A fucking avid reader is fucking avid for change.

Ronnie, the protagonist of Kelman's greatest short story, "Greyhound for Breakfast," is also avid for change. He has just bought a greyhound, for the not small sum of eighty pounds, which he hopes to race for profit. He takes it to the pub, where his regular friends start ribbing him. Does his wife know yet? Where is he going to keep it? What's he going to call it? Imagine if he'd brought a horse into the pub! They see only failure and comic shame. "I'll tell yous mob something: see if this fucking dog doesn't get me the holiday money I'll eat it for my fucking breakfast" is Ronnie's defiant boast. But he is stung by the reaction of his friends, and spends the day walking around town with his dog, afraid to go home, where he must tell his wife what he has done. As dinnertime comes and goes, Ronnie wanders, thinking about profits and losses, and about how the foolishness of dog racing—"racing round and round and fucking round"—is matched only by the foolishness of the human race. It's a beautiful story, whose tone recalls Chekhov's tale "Rothschild's Fiddle" (another anguished calculation of profit and loss), in which hope and fatalism are evenly weighted, and only fantasy retains any dignity.

There aren't any stories of that calibre in "If It Is Your Life," though a couple come close. Several continue Kelman's struggle against official notions of the well-made story. In "Bangs & a Full Moon," which is only a page in length, the narrator looks at the full moon from his window:

> A fine Full Moon from the third storey through the red reflection from the city lights: this was the view. I gazed at it, lying outstretched on the bed-settee. I was thinking arrogant thoughts of that, Full Moons, and all those fucking writers who present nice images in the presupposition of universal fellowship under the western Stars when all of a sudden: BANG, an object hurtling out through the window facing mine across the street.

The "story," the event, is the BANG, though we never find out what it is. And its function is to undermine stories that go on too long, or wallow in epiphany ("nice images"). The piece ends, "I got back up again and closed the curtains. I was writing in pen & ink so not to waken the kids and wife with the banging of this machine I am now using." In "The Third Man, or Else the Fourth," four men stand around a fire, on a freezing day. They appear to be out of work, and very poor. They talk about politics, about an old man who was recently found dead in a cold tenement building, about prison. One of the men, Arthur, starts describing a dream he had. Like most dreams, it is incomprehensible; it gathers pace, and we are drawn into it, and then it fizzles out. Kelman makes a funny, implicit connection between maintaining the fire (the narrator goes off to get "burnables") and maintaining a story: everything is potentially burnable, everything can be used.

If everything can be used for stories, it follows that middle-class life is as permissible as working-class life. Indeed, Kelman's new collection shows him swerving from his commitment to Glaswegian vernacular and exploring, if a bit tentatively, a wider area of social life. Along with the unemployed, or the night-shift worker (who, in the story "Talking About My Wife," declares, "That was a thing about women, they were all middle class"), there are portraits of a young university student (the title story); a writer ("Bangs & a Full Moon"); and a teacher and artist ("Ingrained"). There is less vernacular. In the beautiful story "Death Is Not.," Kelman's language strives to impersonate and inhabit the negation of death—the narrator is dying, and so his language dies with him, as he considers how to tell the woman he loves what is happening to him: "How would I speak of my death to her, speaking to somebody of that. Death is not, is not, isnay . . . death is not, it is nought. Death is not really, it isnay. . . . To her I could say it and not to others, it ended for them before that."

The book's title story is its longest, and most complex. The narrator is a Scottish student, who is on the bus, coming home from university in England. He thinks about England, about

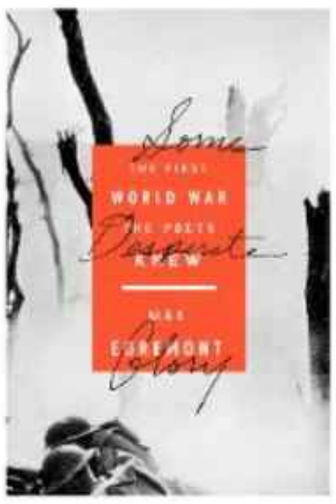
Scotland, about social class, about his girlfriend, Celia, about his joyous discovery of sex. The narrator talks "properly," because "if I do not say things properly people did not know what I was talking about." Without Kelman's scintillating use of the vernacular, the story's language can seem, at first, a bit pressureless. But the pleasure, as always in Kelman, is being allowed to inhabit mental meandering and half-finished thoughts, digressions and wayward jokes, so that we are present with that student on that bus. He thinks about Celia (who is from a much higher social class than he), and his words expire at the surprise that he has such a girlfriend:

> My head went everywhere, and seeing the moon too, just everything. The thing about her, how sexy she was. You were not supposed to talk about that. Ha ha. Well it did not apply to her! Because she would have been the first, and I was the one if anybody did, knowing about it, because I did. It made you smile. Because people would never think, seeing me, they would never ever think, and yet, that was them, it was up to them.

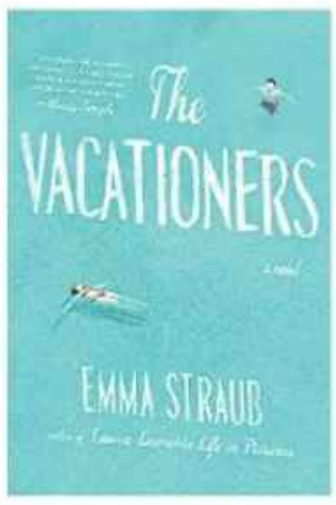
The narrator enjoys studying philosophy: "I loved the subject, if you would call it a subject. The great thing about philosophy is that it is actual life, it is hardly a subject at all." His parents think that he is brilliant, because he did well at school in Scotland; but they don't understand that everything is harder in England: "I was in the low half down there whereas up home I was top or else near the top." Out of this loaded spatial geography—down there/up home; low half/near the top—Kelman delicately builds his themes. The story is alive to class difference, to the border between home and away, but proceeds in gently exploratory fashion, without the pugilism and the occasional didacticism of some of Kelman's work. Being away in England, in order to think properly (studying philosophy at university), and being away in one's mind, actually thinking (sitting on a bus and carelessly philosophizing) are wonderfully, lightly brought together near the end of the story, when the narrator looks out the window: "It was heavier rain than a drizzle. Had it been like this a while? Maybe. I was away thinking about things." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

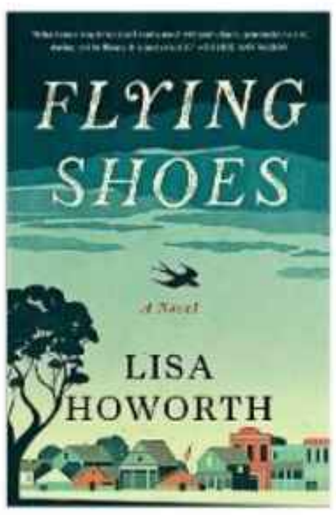
THE INVENTION OF NEWS, *by Andrew Pettegree (Yale).* The first modern-format newspaper appeared in Strasbourg in 1605, but this revelatory history argues that the news industry is a few centuries older than that. Forerunners included woodcut broadsheets with a tabloid sensibility; strange celestial phenomena and crimes by women were especially popular subjects. Multinational trading companies paid for subscription news services; in Venice in 1429, word of regime change in Egypt caused the price of pepper to fall. The Thirty Years' War was a test for Germany's new newspapers. A Frankfurt paper carried the first news of the Defenestration of Prague, in 1619, but got the names wrong. Pettegree writes, "The next issue of this paper does not survive, so we cannot tell whether it published a correction."



SOME DESPERATE GLORY, *by Max Egremont (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).* This book—both a study and an anthology—presents the work of eleven poets of the First World War. Some are famous (Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, and Siegfried Sassoon). Others are less well known, such as Charles Sorley, whose poem "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead" was found on his body after a battle. Short chapters providing social backgrounds and painting portraits of the poets' lives and, sometimes, deaths punctuate selections of poetry grouped by year. Egremont notes that disillusion with war both caused this poetic flourishing and led to its eclipse, with the coming of the modernists.



THE VACATIONERS, *by Emma Straub (Riverhead).* "Mallorca was summer done right," Straub writes at the beginning of this breezy novel, about Jim and Franny, a well-heeled Manhattan couple on a Mediterranean vacation with their two children and another couple. Every unhappy family vacations in its own way, it seems, and things quickly unravel: Jim and Franny's daughter becomes infatuated with her Spanish tutor and contends with the fallout of a drink-fuelled night; their son has brought along an older girlfriend whom no one seems to like; and Jim and Franny's marriage hangs in the balance following an act of infidelity. The book is entertaining and sardonic, and touching about the compromises of middle age, but almost too neatly executed for its own good.



FLYING SHOES, *by Lisa Howorth (Bloomsbury).* Mary Byrd Thornton, an "attractive enough, nice enough" Mississippi housewife caught up in the rhythms of daily life, has her Valium-laced equanimity disturbed by a phone call summoning her to her home town, where, thirty years earlier, her stepbrother was molested and murdered. The case, unsolved, is to be reopened. As she prepares for her trip, the story of the murder recedes, and a very funny novel about her current life in a "boozy, barbecued" college town comes to the fore. The narrative structure mirrors Mary Byrd's consciousness: the world works "randomly and chaotically," she thinks, "with billions and trillions of stories overlapping and colliding and entangling." And during a friend's funeral she reflects, "God may work in mysterious ways," but "a lot of those ways suck."

MUSICAL EVENTS

UNDER THE *STARS*

The Hollywood Bowl gets a digital upgrade.

BY ALEX ROSS

The amphitheatre, seen in 1927, had a populist philosophy from the outset.

When an orchestra plays outdoors, you have the sense, on the best nights, that it has been released back into the wild. The stiff ceremony that has fastened itself to classical music in the past century recedes. Spurious rules about when to applaud are relaxed. Crowds are generally bigger, more youthful, more ethnically diverse. Veteran concertgoers may be reminded of a bygone age when the art form had a more vital place in mainstream culture than it does now. Witness the scene in the 1944 film noir "Double Indemnity" in which Walter Neff—the downward-spiralling insurance salesman played by Fred MacMurray—spends an evening in the hills above the Hollywood Bowl, conversing uneasily with the young daughter of the man he has murdered. Floating up from the orchestra shell are the strains of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, brooding over a desperate man's predicament. No culture gap is apparent: Schubert writes the soundtrack to the seething L.A. night.

We're told that obstacles both financial and psychological stop people from venturing into the concert hall. Tickets are too expensive; a veneer of élitism keeps the ne'er-do-well insurance man and the roller-skating teen-ager at bay. When the New York Philharmonic plays for free before tens of thousands in Central Park, critics and professionals invariably wonder what it would take to bring the same crowd to Avery Fisher Hall or to the Met—whose present labor-management crisis is related to a sudden plunge in attendance. Lower ticket prices would certainly help, although the mental barrier might be even stronger. I attended several concerts by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Bowl this summer, and one night I bought an eight-dollar ticket for the benches at the top of the hill, just below where Walter Neff and Lola Dietrichson had their Schubertian chat. Up there, the audience was more varied than down below: I heard Spanish and English spoken in equal measure. Yet most of the benches were empty.

Much is also lost when music goes outdoors. For decades, P.A. systems have readily delivered earthshaking volume, but clarity and warmth are a different matter. Classical instruments, especially strings, turn fuzzy and indistinct; the bass has an artificial throb; fortissimos splinter into distortion. The resulting sound may, in decibel terms, be louder than what you hear in the concert hall, but the impact is less substantial. The precious phenomenon of resonance goes missing: you aren't enveloped by the music as it bounces off surfaces all around you. And the softest timbres disappear into the noise of the night: the ex-nihilo opening of Beethoven's Ninth may be drowned out by crickets.

Technological solutions are at hand. Many orchestras go outdoors in the summer—the N.Y. Phil, the L.A. Phil, the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood, and the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia, among others—and some are turning to digital P.A. systems that capture more of the richness of instrumental sound. The industry standard is the SoundScape in the plaza outside the New World Center, in Miami: a forest of Meyer Sound speakers simulates the sonic architecture of the hall's interior. Last year, the Bowl was outfitted with a system by the French company L'Acoustics, which, if not as spectacular as the Miami setup, improves greatly on what came before. Usually, I'm reluctant to judge an ensemble on the basis of outdoor appearances, but the L.A. Phil concerts I heard at the Bowl afforded a clear picture: the orchestra is increasingly secure across all sections, while its superstar music director—Gustavo Dudamel—has yet to realize fully his tremendous potential.

The Bowl occupies a natural amphitheatre in the chaparral-covered Hollywood Hills, about a mile north of the Chinese Theatre. It was founded just after the end of the First World War, its philosophy unconventional from the outset. As Catherine Parsons Smith relates, in her book "Making Music in Los Angeles," the Bowl's guiding spirits were Christine Stevenson, a Theosophist from Philadelphia, who hoped to create a utopian environment in which the arts would converge with higher spirits, and Artie Mason Carter, a pianist and community activist, who conceived the populist idea of "Symphonies Under the Stars." In the early years, all seats cost twenty-five cents, and twenty thousand or more people materialized on summer

COURTESY LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

nights. Although business leaders soon pushed out the founders and dropped their more idealistic schemes, the Bowl retained a visionary tinge. "It is like a sort of new Nativity," one enthusiast wrote.

The Bowl is now owned by Los Angeles County and operated by the L.A. Phil—an arrangement that has proved a financial boon to the orchestra, not least because the venue is prized by pop acts. (Practically alone among American classical institutions, the orchestra receives the majority of its income from ticket sales, and is less dependent on donations.) Currently, the Bowl seats seventeen thousand and five hundred; the typical classical program sells less than half that number, although Dudamel can draw crowds of ten thousand or more. The cheapest tickets remain cheap indeed, with upper bench seats going for as little as a dollar. But the bulk of the receipts comes from the box seats in the lower sections, some of which cost upward of a hundred dollars. Here you can have a picnic dinner beforehand, with attendants applying a level to the foldout tables to make sure there will be no spillage of beverages.

Some recent innovations have distressed longtime Bowlgoers. Last summer, the Los Angeles *Times* critic Mark Swed spoke for many patrons in criticizing four large L.E.D. screens that had been installed alongside the new speaker system. They show closeups of the musicians, in the familiar "Here comes the horn solo" style of PBS broadcasts, as well as wide shots of the ensemble. Swed deemed the screens too bright and too visually coercive—"the tyranny of a technology forcing you to witness what someone else wants you to see." The brightness has been toned down, but there's still something jarring about the high-definition imagery: it is never as beautiful as the last glow of the sun against the dry hills or the deepening of the sky from blue to black.

During the regular season, the L.A. Phil is commendably bold in its programming, emphasizing twentieth-century and contemporary works. At the Bowl, it skews more conservative. Two crowd-pleasers this summer have been a Bernstein-Gershwin night, with the talkative British conductor Bramwell Tovey, and an all-Beethoven program, with Dudamel. Experiments in modern music have never blended easily with the Bowl's classical-tailgate sensibility. In 1933, Nicolas Slonimsky caused a minor scandal when he led Edgard Varèse's "Ionisation," for percussion ensemble. One irate listener shouted "Lousy!" while Charlie Chaplin applauded vigorously and the young John Cage went away with a host of new ideas.

I saw three Dudamel shows: the Beethoven program, which included the Fifth Symphony and the Triple Concerto; a concert performance of the operatic double bill of "Cavalleria rusticana" and "Pagliacci"; and a film-music night, which also featured Dudamel as a composer. The Beethoven was rock solid. In the Fifth, Dudamel found more of a sustained narrative drive than he did in a 2006 recording of the piece, while allowing space, in the first movement, for a rhapsodic, freely phrased oboe solo, by Ariana Ghez. In the concerto, he ceded control to the well-coiffed French trio of Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Renaud Capuçon, and Gautier Capuçon, who displayed exceptional cohesion in a work that is often rehearsed in haste. In "Cavalleria," Dudamel's tempos were sometimes labored, although "Pagliacci" had thrust and snap. (Stuart Neill was the ringing tenor in both.) Missing was the continuous crackle of electricity that, perhaps unfairly, we have come to expect from this lionized young maestro.

The film program, part of a series devoted to North and South American music, included Bear McCreary's "Battlestar Galactica," Gustavo Santaolalla's "Motorcycle Diaries," Thomas Newman's "Angels in America" (from the HBO miniseries), and Dudamel's music for "Libertador," a South American historical epic about the life of Simón Bolívar. Much of the music was pleasingly atmospheric and sensuous, with brassy Hollywood heroics kept to a minimum. And yet, Newman's elegant offering aside, the selections failed to reflect the best of film scoring, and Dudamel's work—though it exhibited easy command of the idiom—was an oddly anonymous effort, its trudging ostinatos and chanting choruses interchangeable with the Hollywood soundtrack of the week. I went away feeling uncertain about Dudamel's current direction, though his musicianship remains formidable.

The Bowl has long had a fetish for young conductors; Dudamel made an acclaimed North American début here in 2005, when he was twenty-four, and Esa-Pekka Salonen, Dudamel's predecessor, first appeared at the venue in 1985, at the age of twenty-seven. This summer, Salonen returned to the Bowl for the first time since he ceded the directorship of the orchestra, in 2009. The pianist Yuja Wang, a rare combination of flamboyance and intelligence, pounded poetically through the first piano concertos of Prokofiev and Shostakovich; Salonen found a darkly playful tone in the Prokofiev "Classical" Symphony and relentlessly turned the screws of the Shostakovich First Symphony.

The young star this summer was Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, a twenty-eight-year-old Lithuanian woman who has just been appointed the Philharmonic's assistant conductor. After an energetic ramble through Brahms's Double Concerto, with Alina Pogostkina and Robert deMaine as the soloists, Gražinytė-Tyla offered a vital, sinewy interpretation of Mahler's First Symphony. The sound system had an off night—a strange sonic spotlight kept falling on the bassoon—but the orchestra showed palpable involvement, finding a forward-hurtling momentum in Mahler's expansive forms. One great pleasure of the Bowl is the sense of a spell being cast, and it happened here: in the third movement of the Mahler, when a ghostly klezmer band files by, seven thousand leaned in, their red wine and grilled chicken neglected, their motionless heads etched by the light pouring off the stage. At such moments, the flighty rhetoric of the Bowl's founders seems apt: the private act of listening becomes visible and communal. ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

From the Guardian.

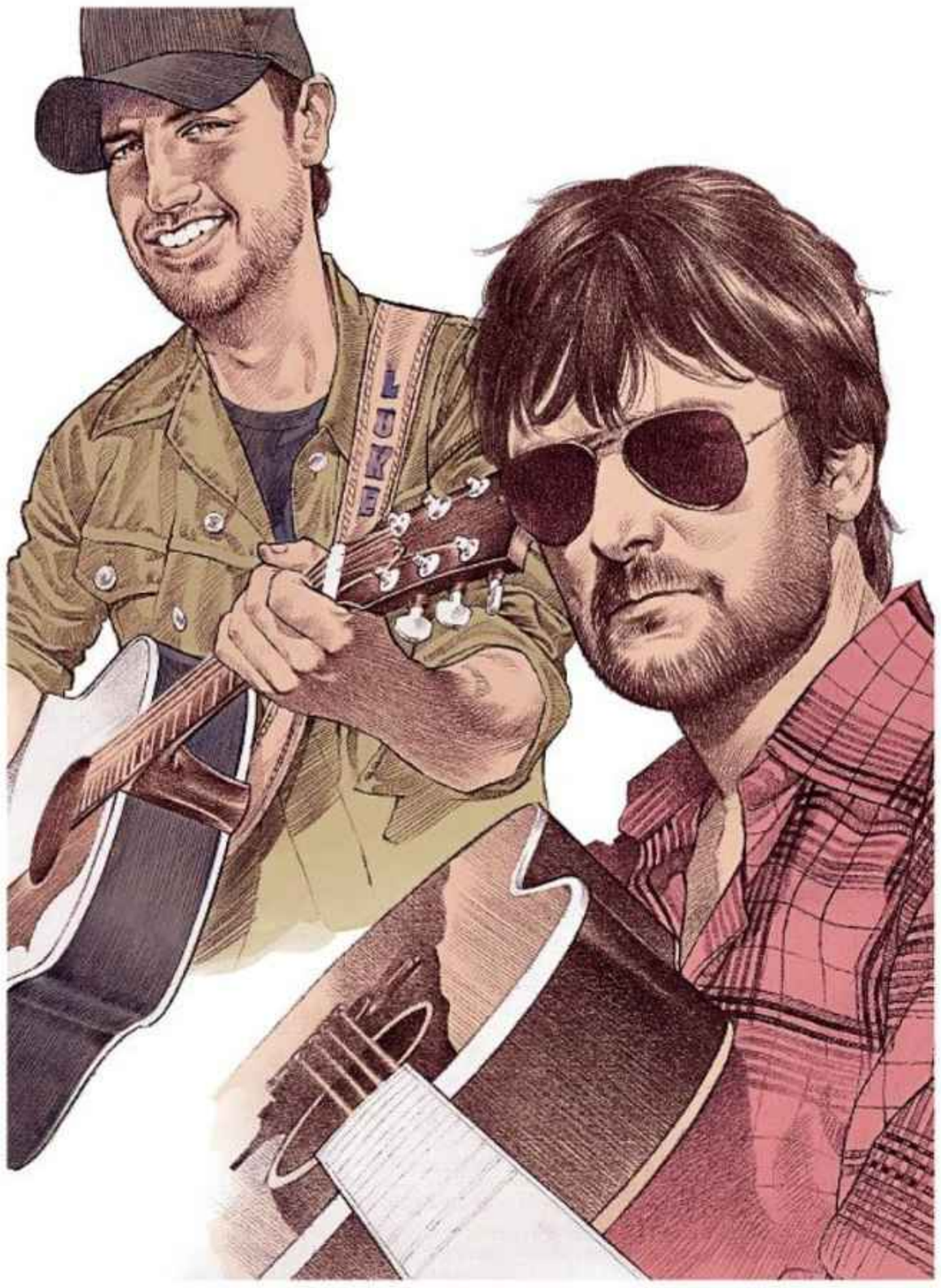
Editing changes to a piece from the Hay Festival - Jane Birkin on love, legs, and Bardot, 25 May, page 11 - had us saying one of the featured authors had written a book comparing Barack Obama and George W Bush. What the text originally said was that festival highlights included "Lincoln's distinguished biographer, Doris Kearns Goodwin, on the parallels between Barack Obama and his great predecessor."

POP MUSIC

CROSS COUNTRY

Nashville expands its range.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



In July, Nielsen SoundScan released its midyear sales figures. The top-selling album, at 2.7 million records, was the soundtrack of the animated movie "Frozen." Second, selling almost two million fewer copies, was Beyoncé's self-titled album. Third, not far behind, was Eric Church's "The Outsiders," released in February. At No. 7 was Luke Bryan's "Crash My Party." If you mostly read the mainstream press, or survey indie Web sites such as Pitchfork, or if you're just out of touch with the movements of Nashville pop stars, you could be forgiven for not knowing who these guys are. Church and Bryan are both pushing forty, and have released five albums each. They are neither grizzled veterans nor teens, but they are perfect examples of how Nashville has built a model for the pop song, with its standard verse-chorus-bridge architecture, that has outlasted the other genres that have traditionally used the form.

Until recently, country music was seen as stylistically retrograde—conservative music for the conservative states. But the truth is more complicated. In the nineties, Garth Brooks was blending stadium rock into his country songs. He was also singing about gay rights, something that it took a Top Ten rapper two more decades to do. In 2000, when pop stars were unlikely to write songs about domestic violence, the Dixie Chicks scored a Top Twenty hit with "Goodbye Earl," a cheerfully ruthless narrative about two friends poisoning an abusive husband. And Taylor Swift is only one of many country artists who incorporate covers of hip-hop and R. & B. into their live sets, a favor that is not often returned by their peers in other genres. Country refuses to die because it isn't particularly specialized—it's an ecumenical church that admits all comers.

Church and Bryan, like almost everyone under forty currently working in Nashville, need just a few elements to signal that they are country before they are other things: a Southern-leaning, medium vocal twang and an emphasis on realistic storytelling. Acoustic guitars are common in the catalogues of both artists, but no more so than in the work of many indie-rock musicians. When Eric Church sings about Talladega in the song of the same name, from "The Outsiders," it might confirm the idea that country is intended for Nascar Nation. The song mentions whiskey and one of Nascar's most famous speedways, and has a nostalgia for the immediate past that seems endemic to country: "We were laughing and living, drinking and wishing and thinking, as that checkered flag was waving, sure would like to stay in Talladega." But the music is as much classic rock as country; several solos are tucked in behind Church's even tenor.

The title track reveals how porous the boundaries between country and the genres it incorporates are. The song opens with finger-picked guitar arpeggios that sound more like Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler than like the hard crack of a traditional flat-picking guitar player. Several waves of majestic guitar chords hit, and massed background vocals of "whooah oooh ooh" follow. The music doesn't entirely line up with lyrics like "Our women get hot, and our leather gets stained when we saddle up and ride them in the pouring rain. We're the junkyard dogs, we're the alley cats, keep the wind at our front, and the hell at our back." The tune feels more like "We Will Rock You" than like Johnny Cash. Around 3'15", there's an instrumental break that, pitting two time signatures against each other,

Luke Bryan and Eric Church stretch country to include a wide variety of pop genres.

ILLUSTRATION BY CASARRAMONA

could have been lifted from the progressive-rock group Yes; the song then builds to a crescendo that skips forward a decade, sounding like a bridge from an early Metallica record. The cowboy hats have turned into camouflage. Anything, pretty much, can go on a country record if it's sung well and doesn't use abstract imagery.

Church and Bryan are both regular-guy stars, intermittently scruffy and not given to a signature stage or video outfit. Church has more complex narrative material, while Bryan sticks to tales of the good life that rest comfortably in an album titled "Crash My Party." One of Church's most emotionally shaded songs is "Homeboy" (2011). Accompanied largely by acoustic guitars, and leaving bravado mostly to the side, Church sings to a family member who seems to be culturally mixed up: "You were too bad for a little square town with your hip-hop hat and your pants on the ground." The character skirts trouble with the law, while Church plays on the title word and sings the praises of a traditional life: "Ain't no shame in a blue-collar forty, little house, little kids, little small-town story. If you don't ever do anything else for me, just do this for me, brother—come on home, boy." His main argument is "We both know who you are." If that sounds vaguely conservative or even slightly racist, it's impressive that Church sings about the culture clash at all. His tendency to discuss domesticity and the family unit doesn't exclude all the variations those choices might entail, giving his version of country a broader social gaze than many expect. In Nashville, at its best, observation trumps preaching.

Bryan's new single is especially free in style—the song could have bounced between Atlanta and New York conference rooms before returning to Music Row. "Roller Coaster," about a summer fling, is one degree of regional inflection removed from being a hit for almost any pop star: One Direction, P!nk, Bruno Mars. The chorus ends with a classic Nashville explainer, making sure no loose metaphors are released into the world: "I should've known that kind of feeling would last longer than that week did, blown away and barely breathing. Sunday came, and it was over. Now she's got me twisted like an old beach roller coaster." Bryan sings higher and with less twang than Church; on "Roller Coaster," the songwriters Michael Carter and Cole Swindell pull off the commercial bull's-eye of making a song that suits a video of contemporary attractive young people but works, when heard and not seen, as the kind of nostalgia that could be about the summer of 1969 as easily as about that of 2014.

There are limits. The music that comes out of Nashville isn't likely to use the kind of minimal, sere electronics of an emerging producer like Arca. If your audience is going to stretch to accommodate several taste cohorts and several generations, eliminating certain kinds of sounds serves to situate listeners. But this remaining slice of sonic restraint may not be long for the world. "That's My Kind of Night," from "Crash My Party," works over a dumb, simple beat that says "dance music" at any wedding. Though the instruments include a banjo, the lyrics make it clear that the world of the narrator isn't limited to whatever country music is reduced to in TV commercials. "Might sit down on my diamond-plate tailgate, put in my country ride hip-hop mixtape—little Conway, a little T-Pain, might just make it rain," Bryan sings, referring both to Conway Twitty and to throwing dollar bills at dancers in a strip club, a hip-hop coinage. There's also a river and some catfish in the song, geographical touches that reassure people who might not love the sound of that mixtape.

Bryan works in the lineage of acts like Kenny Chesney, in which the beach seems as crucial as the pickup truck, and the emotional range isn't as important as the relaxed, boot-cut feeling of the music. Church, on the other hand, has amped up his ambitions on "The Outsiders," which may be doing so commercially well because it is so musically catholic. Land on the right (or wrong) track and it's not even clear that Church is making country music. (He says he grew up listening to Pink Floyd, and the album makes this entirely clear.) Bryan and Church show how hardy the genre is, no matter the year. But theories be damned—people use country music, whatever it is. ♦

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Small space has big rewards.

To find out more, contact Sara Nicholson at 877.843.6967.

ADVERTISEMENT

NEW YORKER COVER PRINTS

Carter Goodrich, August 3, 1998

Find your favorite at NEWYORKERSTORE.COM

THE CURRENT CINEMA

HIDE AND SEEK

"Frank" and "Love Is Strange."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Can the power of a star be sensed without being observed? Claude Rains suggested as much eighty years ago, in "The Invisible Man," where his features were swathed in bandages, and Michael Fassbender now does the same in "Frank." For most of the film, in which he plays the title character, his head is completely covered by another head—a great painted pumpkin of papier-mâché, with staring eyes and a gently gaping mouth. He wears it everywhere, even in the shower. Nobody knows why. The people around Frank accept the head, not as an excrescence or a badge of style but as part of his nature, and as the source of his disorienting charm. If he worked in a law firm, the head might be a stumbling block, but Frank is the lead singer in a rock band, so it's O.K.

The band is called soronprfbs, which, being stubbornly unpronounceable, is unlikely to bring in new fans. That suits the band just fine, even if it locks the members into penury. The pursuit of fame means treachery and compromise to people like Frank; Don (Scoot McNairy), the manager; and Clara (Maggie Gyllenhaal), who plays the theremin and dresses like Holly Golightly's very angry sister. All of which is confounding to an upstart like Jon (Domhnall Gleeson), who joins soronprfbs on keyboard after the band's usual player tries to drown himself in a cold gray English sea. Jon passes the audition, which consists of being asked, "You play C, F, and G?," and finds himself spirited off to Ireland, in the back of a van, to cohabit for months with soronprfbs in a secluded house beside a lake, working on an album that almost no one will want to hear. Cheerfully defying the void of his own talent, Jon dreams of writing popular hits. He uses an inheritance to fund the band, tweets news of its progress, and chivvies it toward the outside world. He wants the band to be *liked*, of all things. The bickering and the indecision that ensue are an accurate guide to the ambitions of the movie itself: Does "Frank" want to be a crowd-pleaser, or is it happy to stay difficult and odd, and let the crowd go hang?

There was once a real Frank, of sorts, with a comparable head. He was a persona created by a British comedian and musician named Chris Sievey; a friend and collaborator, Jon Ronson, wrote a book about Sievey and has co-written the script for the film, with Peter Straughan. Together with the director, Lenny Abrahamson, they proceed on the assumption that too much Frank, uninterrupted, would burst the bounds of the movie, and that much of his mystery would leak away. They cleave, in other words, to what I call the Backbeat Principle: if your main man is shiningly glamorous or markedly eccentric, don't plant him in full view, but approach him through the prism of another character—preferably a duller one, so as not to steal the glow. Thus, in "Backbeat," Iain Softley's 1994 film about the early Beatles, John Lennon was refracted through the gaze of Stuart Sutcliffe. Much earlier, there was Charles Ryder, in "Brideshead Revisited," and Nick Carraway, in "The Great Gatsby," both of them reliably spellbound narrators. Even there, however, in the hands of masterly authors, one felt a twinge of doubt. What did Sebastian Flyte, a lord and a dandy, see and admire in the mousy, middle-class Charles? Would Gatsby really have lavished such companionship on a square like Nick, if it weren't for the link to Daisy? And so it is with "Frank," which badly needs Jon to stick around and tell the tale, but which leaves you wondering why on earth a pack of tortured, experimental hipsters would hire a full-blown dork.

The final third of the movie takes a fresh turn, westward and downward. The band members, against their instincts, are persuaded by Jon to try their luck at South by Southwest, in Austin. I was praying for a scene in which Frank is instructed by airport security to remove his head and place it on the conveyor belt to be scanned, but Abrahamson, for some reason, skips that particular hurdle. In any case, disaster enough awaits soronprfbs, and the film's dive into gloom has been greeted, in some quarters, with dismay. I have to disagree. The first hour of "Frank" was in danger of becoming merely cultish and kooky, and so the decision to reveal Frank not as a poser but as a genuinely

Members of the band: Domhnall Gleeson, Michael Fassbender, and Maggie Gyllenhaal.

ILLUSTRATION BY VICTOR MELAMED

blasted soul, his mind veering between doldrum and storm, strikes me as honest and affecting. It also reveals him without his false head, which was, we now realize, less a mask than a fragile fortress against a world that he, and the contents of his actual head, couldn't handle. Best of all, we get to witness Fassbender at full tilt—to revel in that gaunt, El Greco mug of his, which, for all its handsomeness, betrays no sunny side, whether here or amid the shenanigans of "X-Men." In the new film, he sings throughout, signing off in a half-deserted bar with a rendition of "I Love You All," in his lonely drone. Just when "Frank" threatens to drift away, Fassbender anchors it, reminding us that for some folk, in the music business as elsewhere, the creative act is more of a trial than a flight. There is method in his sadness.

The new Ira Sachs movie, "Love Is Strange," begins where many stories used to end, on a wedding day. There are no bells, but we get an open-air ceremony, a few speeches, a sing-along around a piano, and a deep, smacking kiss between groom and groom. Ben (John Lithgow), a painter, and his British partner, George (Alfred Molina), have been together for decades. Now they set the seal on their affection.

That simple gesture, however, has repercussions. George is the music director at a Catholic church in Manhattan, where his sexuality has never been a secret; by marrying, though, he falls foul of diocesan rules and loses his job. The lack of fuss that he makes, when faced with dismissal, is our first clue to the shading of his character and to the temper of Sachs's film. We prepare ourselves for outrage, and it never comes. Instead, as George accepts his fate, his features and his heavy frame subside into a doleful, if courteous, despair. Invited by the priest to join him in prayer, George declines: "I think I'd like to pray on my own."

To an extent, all this is the mark of Molina, perhaps the leading melancholic of our age. Even as the villain of "Spider-Man 2," armed with killer tentacles, he managed to inject a dose of the rueful. But the snapping ferocity that is also his to command—as anyone who saw him onstage, as Mark Rothko, in "Red," can testify—is hushed here, and his only outburst, in the whole movie, is a sudden tempest of tears, as he shuffles through the door, on a rainy night, into the arms of Ben. We could be watching a small boy, plump and bullied, seeking a parent's embrace. Such sorrow makes an ideal foil for Lithgow, who is blessed with more natural upswing, in his demeanor and in the rising curve of his voice; he can flip from petulant to avuncular in a heartbeat. They make a lovely couple.

"Love Is Strange," however, is not about gay marriage. It is about a marriage that happens to be gay. If the film grows slightly boring, even that can be construed as an advance. In the dramatizing of gay rights, somebody needed to include the right of same-sex partners to be as bogged down in moping and pettiness as anyone else, and Sachs has shouldered the task. He has made things easy for himself, you could argue, by setting the story in a state and a town where two guys getting hitched is no big deal, but, by way of compensation, choosing New York City does provide him with a source of genuine anguish: not sex (we see a quick cuddle on the lower deck of a bunk bed, and that's it); not religion (George affirms his faith once, then never refers to it again); but real estate. The loss of one income forces the newlyweds to give up their place and, unable to afford an apartment big enough for both of them, find separate refuges. And the moral is: Those whom God has joined together let rents and co-op boards put asunder.

So George moves in with friends downstairs—a pair of gay cops—sleeps on their couch, and tries not to mind the rumpus of their gregarious lives. Ben, meanwhile, goes to the Brooklyn home of his nephew Elliot (Darren Burrows), who struck me as increasingly creepy; Elliot's wife, Kate (Marisa Tomei); and their teen-age son, Joey (Charlie Tahan). Tomei's performance is, as usual, alert and unvain, and there is a fine scene in which Kate—a novelist by trade, presumably one of dozens living on her street—tries and fails to write while Ben peppers her with specks of annoying conversation. For his part, Ben goes up to the roof to paint, looking for all the world like Matisse, with his white beard, spectacles, and scruffy summer hat. There are tranquil shots of the city as it breathes the afternoon light, yet I felt like shaking him and saying: Haven't you heard about the country? It's calmer and cheaper, with even better light. So why stay here, torn from your beloved, when you could pack up your easel, take his hand, and go? ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/FRONTROW
Richard Brody blogs about movies.

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2014 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME XC, NO. 24, August 25, 2014. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 17 & 24, June 9 & 16, July 7 & 14, August 11 & 18, and December 22 & 29) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Elizabeth Hughes, vice-president and publisher; Beth Lusko, associate publisher advertising; James Guilfoyle, director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, chief executive officer; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president; John W. Bellando, chief operating officer & chief financial officer; Jill Bright, chief administrative officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001. Canada Post: return undeliverable Canadian addresses to P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

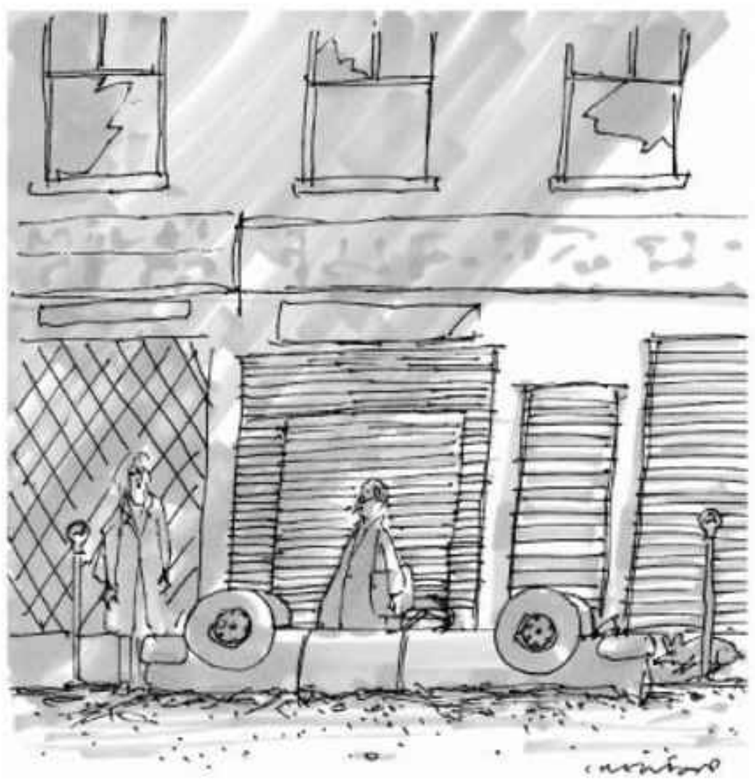
POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Beth Lusko at (212) 286-4454. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenet.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.

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 Corey Pandolph, must be received by Sunday, August 24th. The finalists in the August 4th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 8th 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



"It's an invertible."
Dan Broom, Branford, Conn.

THE FINALISTS

"Move the car."
Anwar Ragep, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"I miss the little birds, and some of the little children."
Turk Sties, Richmond, Va.

"They're for our senior-citizen bird-watchers."
Alberto Cantu, Edinburg, Texas

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

“ ”

A bag full of farm-to-table vegetables, because it's responsible.

A grocery bag full of free-range chicken, because it's natural.

Another bag full of organic fruit, because it's healthy.

And a can of aerosol cheese, because America the beautiful.

When your arms are full, your foot can lend a hand.

2015 **ESCAPE** with foot-activated liftgate.*

*Available feature.

Ford

Go Further

Timbuk2 is helping to revive American manufacturing by making San Francisco the home of their custom messenger bag factory, countering a trend which has seen U.S. manufacturing lose over 65,000 facilities since 2000.

But to grow, Timbuk2 needed global financial capabilities and expertise. With Citi's support, they opened stores overseas, expanded their factory and doubled in size. They are proof that manufacturing can thrive in America.

For over 200 years, Citi's job has been to believe in people and help make their ideas a reality.

citi.com/progress

citi®
The World's Citi℠

© 2014 Citigroup Inc. Citi and Citi with Arc Design are registered service marks of Citigroup Inc. The World's Citi is a service mark of Citigroup Inc.