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THE NEW YORKER

SEPTEMBER 8, 2014

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WED, OCT 1

Lenny Kravitz
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FRI, SEP 19



READINGS



EXCLUSIVE NYC
APPEARANCE
Ian McEwan
MON, SEP 15

John Lahr & Tony Kushner
on Tennessee Williams
MON, SEP 29

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MON, OCT 20

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IAN FRAZIER ("THE ANTIDOTE," P. 60), a longtime *New Yorker* contributor, is working on a book about the closing of the Stella D'oro bakery, in the Bronx.

THOMAS MCGUANE (FICTION, P. 70) will publish "Crow Fair," a collection of short stories, in the spring.

MARK ULRIKSEN (COVER) wrote and illustrated "Dogs Rule, Nonchalantly," which comes out later this month.

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THE MAIL

SONGS OF SIMONE

Claudia Roth Pierpont's review of Nina Simone's legacy and her relationship to the civil-rights movement details the evolving politics of one of our national musical treasures ("A Raised Voice," August 11th & 18th). Pierpont rightly points out the fact that Simone's music did not fit neatly into established genres. Her work lives on in contemporary hip-hop in more fitting ways than Kanye West's, Jay Z's, or even Lauryn Hill's uneasy adoptions. Talib Kweli, before he became a popular artist on a major label (and before Simone died), recorded a reimagined version of her song "Four Women." His rendition is a lyrically dense and politically charged retelling of Simone's story about four very different women, each marked by different forms of racism and misogyny. Kweli updates the song to current forms of oppression and new challenges in the struggle for civil rights. I routinely play both songs for students in my sociology of popular culture class; many of them have never heard either one (and many, sadly, do not even know who Simone is). Simone's spirit is alive and well in many places.

Kevin Wehr

*Professor of Sociology, California State University, Sacramento
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IMPERIAL RUSSIA

The new Putinism that David Remnick writes about has the stench of old, historic Fascism ("Watching the Eclipse," August 11th & 18th). This can be observed in the way that President Putin has re-centralized the state, relying on personnel of the old K.G.B. while retaining a quasi-private economy; in the fabrication of a neo-nationalist ideology with anti-Semitic overtones and a claim to so-called traditional values; and in the politics of *ressentiment* over Russia's fallen status as a world power. One need only add to the mix the repression of dissent and

the assault on media independence, reducing news outlets to virtual propaganda organs of the state. I find Remnick's descriptions of today's Russia to be valuable, but they bring to mind elements of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's prewar Germany.

Albion Urdank

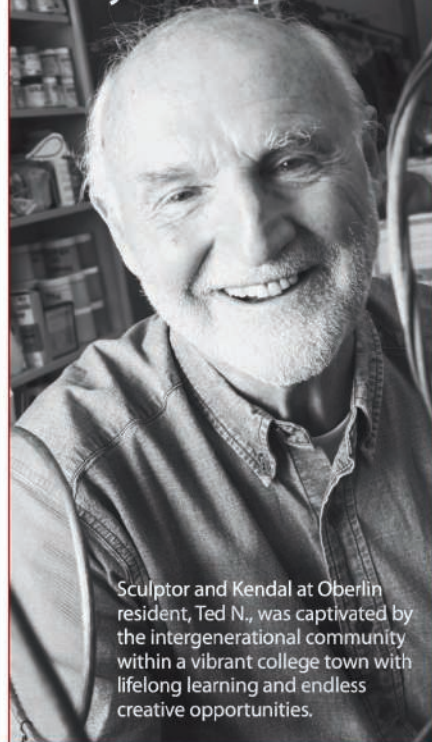
*Professor of History, University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, Calif.*

Remnick notes that Michael McFaul, the former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, took the position that "nations need not wait for the development of a middle class before building democratic institutions." But the former Ambassador may have fallen victim to his own idealism. The late political scientist Samuel Huntington, who taught at Harvard, first established the bedrock principle in his 1968 book "Political Order in Changing Societies." He wrote, "Men may, of course, have order without liberty, but they cannot have liberty without order." The dynamic emergence of East Asia's political economies over the past fifty years can be attributed, at least in part, to this realization. From "soft" authoritarianism in Singapore and Japan to "hard" authoritarianism in China, these stable, high-performing economies were never predicated on establishing liberal democratic systems, though they all hold elections, of a kind. Russia and China have chosen different strategies for their political economies since the end of the Cold War. Russia would do well to borrow from East Asia's superior model, which may be one reason that Moscow is reconnecting with Beijing and distancing itself from Washington.

*Steve Schlossstein
Princeton, N.J.*

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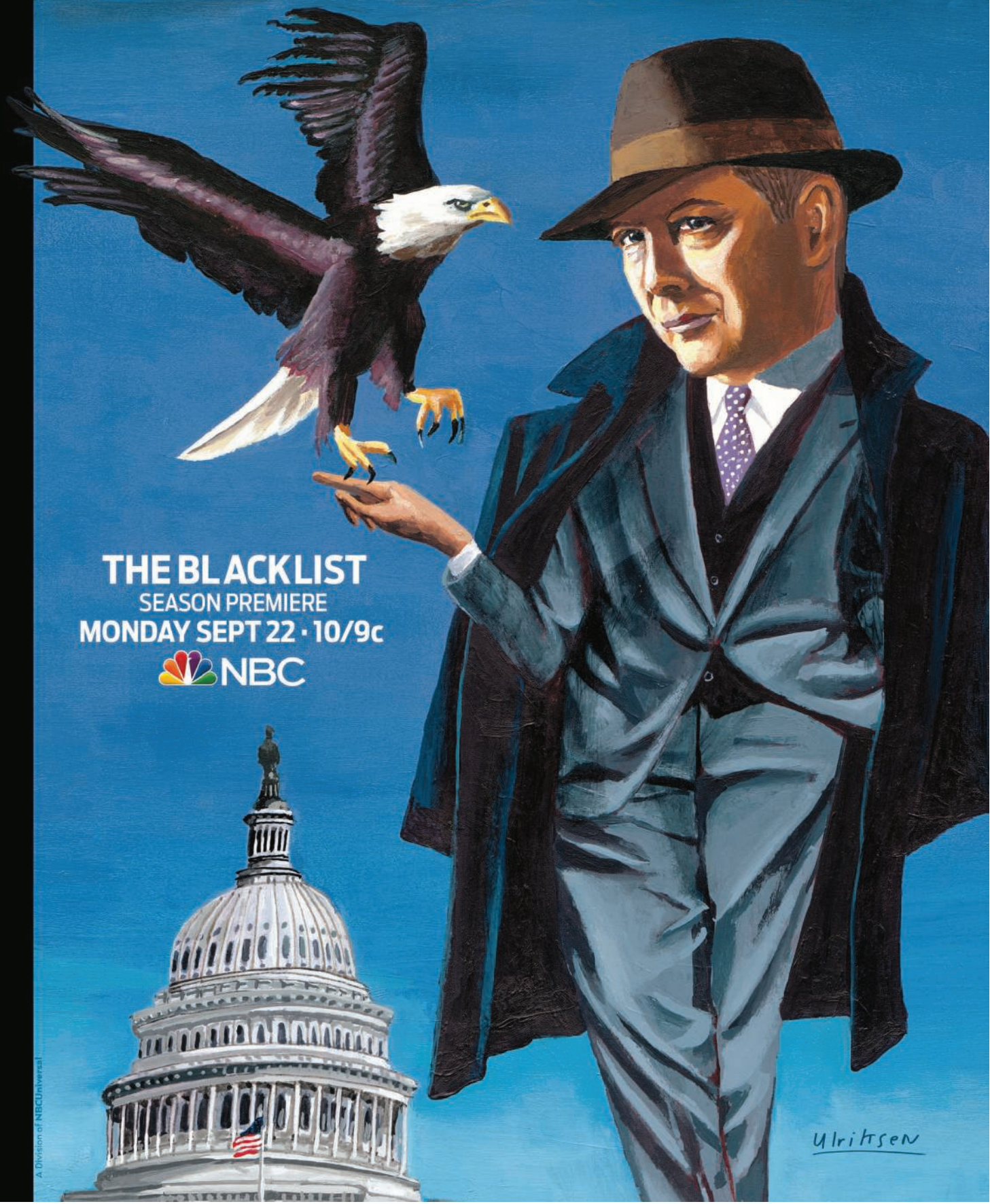


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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

SEPTEMBER 2014 WEDNESDAY 3RD THURSDAY 4TH FRIDAY 5TH SATURDAY 6TH SUNDAY 7TH MONDAY 8TH TUESDAY 9TH

IN THE GREAT TRADITION of behind-the-scenes theatre-world satires comes a starry revival of Terrence McNally's "It's Only a Play," at the Schoenfeld. The comedy premiered Off-Off Broadway in 1982, but the script has been updated with fresh references both broad (the revival of the revival of "Les Misérables") and insidious (the uncanny power of NY1 theatre critics), to skewer—and celebrate—the state of theatre today. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick, professional buddies since "The Producers" (2001) and "The Odd Couple" (2005), pair up once again, as a successful TV actor (Lane) and a playwright (Broderick), who, along with a falling-star actress sporting an ankle monitor (Stockard Channing) and a wealthy producer (Megan Mullally), wait anxiously on opening night to see if their new play will be a hit.

MOVIES | NIGHT LIFE
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PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY FINK



Ann Sothern, Linda Darnell, and Jeanne Crain in the suburban drama "A Letter to Three Wives."

FALL PREVIEW

The New York Film Festival (Sept. 26–Oct. 12), the key movie event of the fall season, is more than just a roundup of world cinema. It's also a repertory cornucopia, and this year's major sidebar is a complete retrospective of the films of **Joseph L. Mankiewicz**, whose psychologically exacting comedies and dramas remain better known than he is. Mankiewicz wrote some of Hollywood's most memorable women characters and directed some of Hollywood's greatest actresses playing them, as in "All About Eve," starring Bette Davis, Anne Baxter, and Celeste Holm in a backstage triangle of professional rivalry. His analytical portraiture of modern women reached its apogee in "A Letter to Three Wives," from 1949, for which he won Oscars for both Best Director and Best Screenplay.

MOMA's annual series "**To Preserve and Project**" (Oct. 24–Nov. 20) features notable restorations from the world's archives, and this year's première is a major one: the city's first public screening of Orson Welles's first professional film, "Too Much Johnson," from 1938, featuring scenes made to be shown in his staging of the play of that title. Joseph Cotten stars in a tale of mistaken identities that propels him through the alleys and across the roofs of the meatpacking district and another labyrinthine Lower West Side neighborhood, which is now demolished. Welles's images have a pictorial drama that was far removed from the Hollywood styles of the day and that foreshadowed the visual originality of "Citizen Kane."

Nothing says New York like the subways, which are also cinematic objects par excellence. BAM Cinématek's series "**Retro Metro**" (Sept. 26–Oct. 23) features subway classics from Hollywood (including "Dames") and the independent scene (such as "Just Another Girl on the I.R.T."), as well as a weeklong run of Manfred Kirchheimer's 1981 visual poem, "Stations of the Elevated," a paean to the overhead tracks and the graffiti adorning them, set to music by Charles Mingus.

—Richard Brody

NOW PLAYING

The Congress

Robin Wright, playing a version of herself, is a beautiful, maturing movie actress who agrees, out of desperation, to allow herself to be electronically "scanned" and preserved for all time by a vicious studio boss (Danny Huston). The first half of this film by Ari Folman ("Waltz with Bashir"), based on a novel by Stanislaw Lem, bitterly suggests that the corporate future of movies depends on the extinction of the live actor. But, rather than showing Wright's digital avatar at work in future projects, in the second half of the film Folman turns everyone into animated versions of themselves, with Tom Cruise and many others wandering dully through a cartoon Valhalla. The anger drains out of the picture, and we watch in a state of passive appreciation and indifference. Harvey Keitel gives a marvellous performance as Wright's tough-talking but sympathetic agent. With Paul Giamatti and the voice of Jon Hamm. —David Denby (In limited release.)

Fedora

Billy Wilder's penultimate film, from 1978, is a shattered reflection of his 1950 classic, "Sunset Boulevard," starting with the casting of William Holden, a struggling screenwriter in the earlier film, as Barry Detweiler, a late-career independent producer seeking a comeback. He's got a script for an adaptation of "Anna Karenina," and wants a retired grande dame of classic Hollywood—the reclusive Fedora (Marthe Keller)—to return and play the lead. But she's living on a private island off the coast of Corfu, where she's dominated by a cluster of hangers-on, led by the shady plastic surgeon Dr. Vando (Jose Ferrer) and the imperious Countess Sobryanski (Hildegard Knef). Like "Sunset Boulevard," this film is also told as a postmortem flashback: it starts with Fedora's suicide and funeral, which inspires Detweiler's reminiscences and leads him to revisit mysteries concealed at the intersection of intimate crisis and Hollywood publicity. He recalls the golden-age studio system as a lost empire that inspires both awe and regret. Unlike the earlier film, though, this one seethes with authentic nostalgia; Wilder's attempt not merely to eulogize earlier styles but to revive them feels somewhat embalmed. —Richard Brody (Film Forum; Sept. 5–11.)

Frank

To cast Michael Fassbender in a title role and then conceal him from the neck up feels like a waste of vital resources. Yet that is what Lenny Abrahamson does in his new film, which seldom picks the obvious path in narrative and tone. Frank spends most of his time with a large, painted, and easily dented fake head placed over his real one; why this was done is never explained, nor does it need to be. What matters is how expressive he remains, both in the larky language of his body and in the desperate cries and croonings of his voice—a virtue of sorts, since he is the lead singer in a band. The musicians' devotion to their art, their fierce indifference to success, and their curt flirtation with fame, on a trip from Ireland to Austin, Texas, are shown through the marvelling eyes of Jon (Domhnall Gleeson), their freshly recruited keyboard player; yet he seems a very pale, diluted presence beside people like Frank and Clara (Maggie Gyllenhaal), the band's resident ice queen, who plays the theremin. The whole thing is in danger of becoming arch and quirky, yet Abrahamson steers the final act of his drama toward a sombre, unhappy rumination. Fassbender, in finally doffing his cheap head, somehow reveals more than he did with his unabashed nakedness in "Shame." —Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 8/25/14.) (In limited release.)

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OPENING FRONTERA

A drama, directed by Michael Berry, about a Mexican migrant (Michael Peña) who is wrongfully accused of murder in Arizona. Co-starring Ed Harris and Eva Longoria. (In limited release.)

LAST DAYS IN VIETNAM

A documentary, by Rory Kennedy, about the end of the Vietnam War. Opening Sept. 5. (In limited release.)

MEMPHIS

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Sept. 5. (In limited release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

"Simenon Redux: Maigret on Film." Sept. 5 at 7:30 and Sept. 6 at 6: "Night at the Crossroads." • Sept. 6 at 8 and Sept. 7 at 5:45: "A Man's Neck" (1933, Julien Duvivier).

BAM CINÉMATEK

The films of Les Blank. Sept. 5 at 2, 6, and 9:50: "Always for Pleasure" (1978). • Sept. 5 at 4 and 8: "In Heaven There Is No Beer?" (1984). • Sept. 6 at 2, 4:15, and 9:45: "Burden of Dreams" (1982).

FILM FORUM

In revival. Sept. 5-11 (call for showtimes): "Fedora."

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The films of John Waters. Sept. 5 at 6:30: "Female Trouble" (1974), followed by a Q. & A. with the director, moderated by the critic J. Hoberman. • Sept. 6 at 7:30: "Polyester" (1981). • Sept. 7 at 4:30: "Hairspray." • Sept. 7 at 6:30: "Desperate Living" (1977).

IFC CENTER

"1939—Hollywood's Golden Year." Sept. 5-7 at 11 AM: "The Women" (George Cukor). • "High Art." Sept. 5-6 at midnight: "Half Baked" (1998, Tamra Davis).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

In revival. Sept. 3-6 at 7 and Sept. 7 at 4:30: "Hat Check Girl" (1932, Sidney Lanfield). • "The Great War." Sept. 3 at 8 and Sept. 4 at 4:30: "A Farewell to Arms" (1932, Frank Borzage). • Sept. 6 at 2 and Sept. 8 at 8: "Wooden Crosses" (1932, Raymond Bernard). • Sept. 9 at 8: "King and Country." (1964, Joseph Losey).



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Jerry Schatzberg's "The Panic in Needle Park," from 1971, in our digital edition and online.

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 he 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 whizbang 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.)

Hairspray

The writer-director John Waters treats the message movie as a genre to be parodied, just like the teen pic. Combining the two, he comes up with a pop-Dadaist musical comedy, set in Baltimore in 1962. Waters loves narrative, and he has half a dozen plots crisscrossing each other. In the middle are the spherical Mrs. Edna Turnblad (played by the drag queen Divine) and her baby-blimp daughter, Tracy (Ricki Lake); they wear matching mother-and-daughter outfits. Tracy, who's the newest teen-age dancer on "The Corny Collins Show," discovers that black kids aren't allowed to take part, and she becomes a leader in the fight for integration. Meanwhile, Divine watches over Tracy and preens like a mother hen. There's a what-the-hell quality to Divine's acting which the film needs; it would be too close to a real teen pic without it. When Divine's Turnblad is onscreen in the sleeveless dresses she's partial to, the movie has something like the lunacy of a W. C. Fields in drag. With Waters himself, as a sicko psychiatrist. Released in 1988. —Pauline Kael (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Sept. 7.)

Love Is Strange

Ira Sachs's film begins with a bedroom scene; to be exact, with a tranquil shot of naked legs and feet, stilled in slumber. That pretty much sums up the air of decorum in which the tale, whose theme could have proved incendiary, unfolds. The limbs belong to a painter called Ben (John Lithgow) and a music teacher called George (Alfred Molina). They have been together for years and have grown used to the shape of each other's bodies and souls. We join them on the day of their wedding, and thus at the start of their troubles. George,

once hitched, loses his job at a local Manhattan church, and with it goes the couple's ability to pay for their apartment; the rest of the movie becomes an awkward and very parochial quest for real estate. The newlyweds are forced to live apart: George with the gay cops downstairs and Ben with his nephew (Darren Burrows), whose wife (Marisa Tomei) and teen-age son (Charlie Tahan) are both moved and exasperated by his stay. The film becomes a meditation on the lure of the city and the inexorable crawl of time, and it inches close to dullness; what lends it spirit is the performances, both major and minor, and Sachs's determination to dramatize same-sex love not as groundbreaking but as securely rooted—rent control and all—in common ground. —A.L. (8/25/14) (In limited release.)

Memphis

Tim Sutton's second feature, starring the young contemporary musician Willis Earl Beal as a musician with the same name, captures the mood of the blues with pitch-perfect sensuality. As depicted, Willis is a bluesman with artist's block—he's nearly unable to compose or perform, and when he does play he feels inadequate and unmotivated. His attempts at self-healing take him on a round of visits to older friends bearing tough love and bitter wisdom, to the guided ecstasy of a Baptist church, to the bruising pleasures of rollicking night spots, to the arms of a lover. Along the way, he drifts through a symphony of sights and sounds—steamy sunlight piercing vaulted foliage, dusty streets teeming with hidden life, the wind in the trees, train whistles, birdcalls—accompanied by a haunting score of elusive fragments and dreamlike widdles that could be coming from Willis's studio or from his solitary yearnings. His heavy trudge on a game leg suggests weariness of historical dimensions; the harmonious mysteries of the urban landscape are themselves the essence of his art. A brilliant sequence of musicians at work gets away from familiar modes of filmed performance and into the depths of inner experience. —R.B. (In limited release.)

Night at the Crossroads

In Jean Renoir's 1932 adaptation of a detective novel by Georges Simenon, the stink of humanity rises equally from the gutters of Paris, where the laconic Inspector Maigret (Pierre Renoir, the director's brother) is stationed, and the muddy suburban outpost where Maigret is sent to solve a crime. A car is reported stolen and turns up with a diamond dealer's corpse inside, and Maigret begins his investigation with the obvious suspect, an immigrant of dubious background whose ramshackle house is a nest of questionable habits and suspicious intentions. The film is famously gappy (the real-life reasons remain a mystery), but it's nonetheless a sly

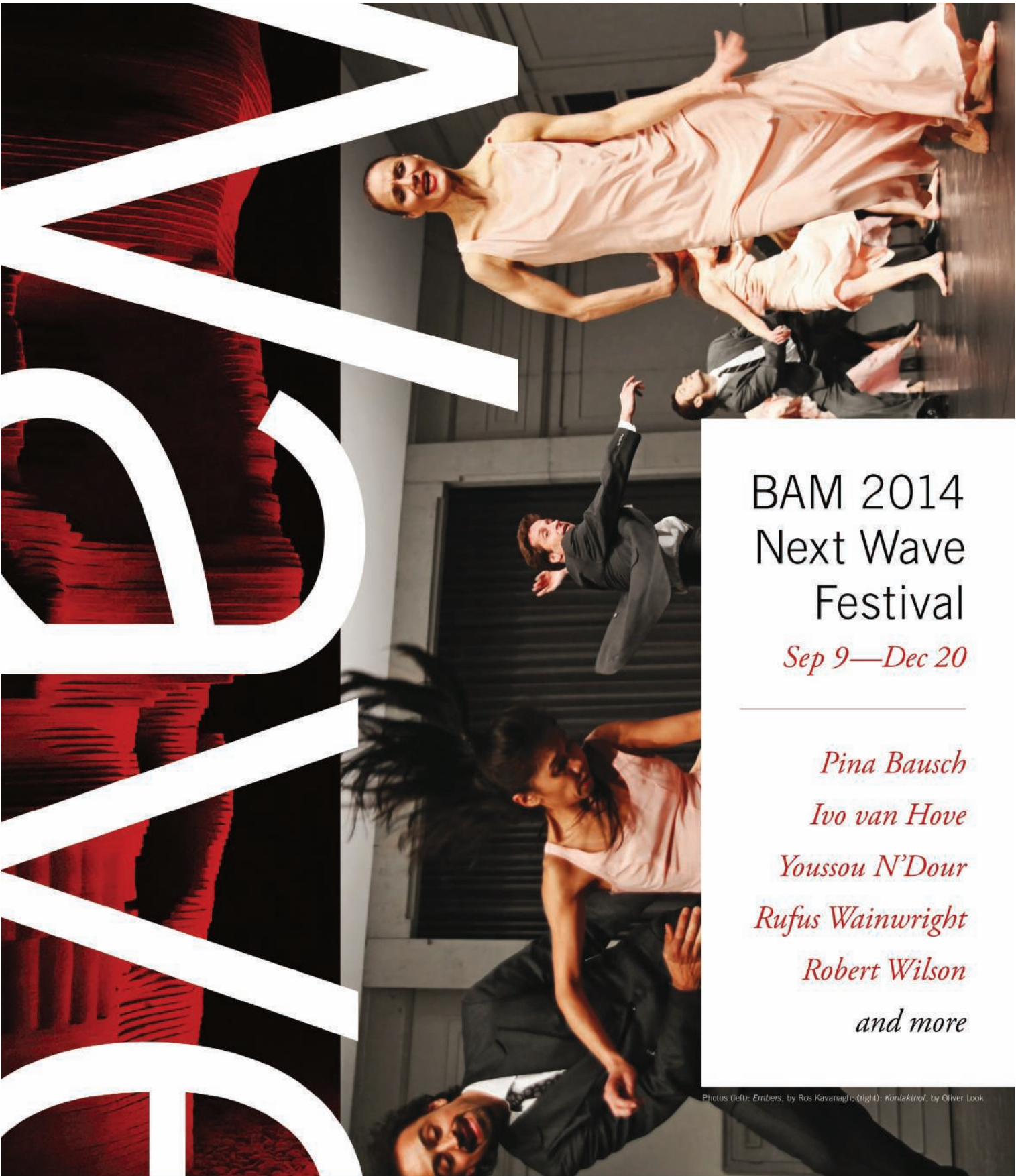
and raunchy glimpse of the resentment and aggression beneath the French populace's back-slapping heartiness. The director's vision of the working world is harshly physical. The night mist is sickly with cigarette smoke and pungent liquor; the glistening of headlights on rain-slicked roads, the screech of a wan accordion, and the scrape of a favorite old record are symbols of evil and harbingers of death. Renoir matches the elegance of calm lawmen with their terse courage, Maigret's perspicacity with an astonishing, documentary-style long take of a car chase through back roads in near-total darkness. In French. —R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; Sept. 5-6.)

The One I Love

The talented stars of this arch romantic-comedy reboot work hard to infuse the fantasy premise with a glimmer of life. The marriage of Sophie (Elisabeth Moss) and Ethan (Mark Duplass) is on the rocks; their therapist (Ted Danson) sends them off to reconnect at a country retreat. There, they endure a Dostoyevskian twist of fortune—a mysterious encounter with another couple which makes them doubt each other and themselves all the more. The trick is a good one, but the director, Charlie McDowell, and the screenwriter, Justin Lader, don't pull it off. They can't decide whether the marvel, at its core, is metaphysical or medical or even criminal, so the ground rules of the game are hopelessly tangled, and its emotional import—regarding those we love and how we'd wish them to be—remains undeveloped. Ethan and Sophie are never more than playthings of the premise; Moss and Duplass are the sole sources of nuance and vitality, and they seem unduly hemmed in by the movie's unimaginative confines. —R.B. (In limited release.)

The Trip to Italy

In this hilarious sequel to their 2010 film, "The Trip," also directed by Michael Winterbottom, the great comics Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon have been given a tough assignment by the *Observer*—an all-expenses-paid journey through the most beautiful parts of Italy, where they are required to eat lavishly and stay in exquisite small hotels, all so that one or the other can write highbrow culinary drivel for the paper. As they amble through paradise, the two men take turns topping each other with impressions of famous movie stars. They aren't interested in anyone's soul; they see themselves as professionals in an exacting trade that requires getting Christian Bale's guttural whisper and Roger Moore's English-butter croon exactly right. This hedonistic jape is shot through with middle-aged melancholy and the fear of death. Both movies, it turns out, are about the impossibility—and the necessity—of male friendship. —D.D. (9/1/14) (In limited release.)



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The free-spirited Irish singer Hozier releases his self-titled début album next month.

FALL PREVIEW

Last fall, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, a twenty-four-year-old Irish singer-songwriter with a deep, burnished voice, released his first EP, "Take Me to Church." The dark and soaring title song struck a nerve: its lyrics confront religious dogma, and its arresting video addresses homophobia and oppression in Russia. The song ricocheted around the Internet, with more than seven million views on YouTube, and the EP went to No. 1 in Ireland.

Hozier (he goes by his middle name) grew up in the country, in County Wicklow, and his entertainment was limited to his parents' record collection: albums by Nina Simone, John Lee Hooker, Tom Waits, and other soul and blues artists. As a teen-ager, he led an eight-piece blues band, and his precocity is evident in his current work, which has the spare lyricism of an old soul. Hozier's self-titled début album comes out on Oct. 7, and he's on a headlining tour of North America that ends at Irving Plaza on Nov. 5-6.

"**Twenty Years of Freedom**," at Carnegie Hall on Oct. 10, celebrates two decades of democracy in South Africa, and features performers from that country, including the trumpeter Hugh Masekela, beloved for his 1968 hit, "Grazing in the Grass," and the Pretoria-born singer Vusi Mahlasela, who is known as "the Voice" at home. The event is part of "UBUNTU: Music and Arts of South Africa," a monthlong festival running through Nov. 5, with appearances by the male vocal ensemble Ladysmith Black Mambazo; the singer Angélique Kidjo, who will be paying tribute to Miriam Makeba; and the jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim.

Def Jam, the record company that defined hip-hop in its early days by signing acts like the Beastie Boys, LL Cool J, Slick Rick, Run-DMC, and Public Enemy, is turning thirty, and it's throwing a party at the Barclays Center, in Brooklyn, on Oct. 16. Rick Ross, 2 Chainz, DMX, Fabolous, Foxy Brown, Onyx, Method Man, Redman, Ashanti, EPMD, and many others are slated to perform. Who knows—maybe even Jay Z, its onetime C.E.O., will drop by.

—John Donohue

ROCK AND POP

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

Sir Richard Bishop

In 1981, the guitarist Rick Bishop joined with his bass-playing brother Alan and the drummer Charles Gocher to form a long-lived, often revelatory trio called Sun City Girls. That group, which started in Phoenix and later relocated to Seattle, broke up in 2007, when Gocher died. By then, Sun City Girls had a cult of devoted fans, after having released more than fifty records and twenty-three hour-long cassettes of impossibly wide-ranging music reflecting the group's interests in South Asian drones, South American folk songs, surf rock, jazz, and numerous other genres. Just before the band's dissolution, Bishop began performing solo concerts under the name Sir Richard Bishop, deeply influenced by Indian ragas, flamenco, Middle Eastern *taqsim*, and the American folk idioms of John Fahey. His music maintains an edgy, underground patina, especially when he plays the electric guitar and the lines speed up and distort, morphing into euphoric and messy psychedelic rock. The Bhutanese experimental guitarist **Tashi Dorji** opens. (Issue Project Room, 22 Boerum Pl., Brooklyn. issueprojectroom.org. Sept. 6.)

Gary Clark, Jr.

This thirty-year-old Austin native has been playing blues guitar since before he could drive. He got his start at the famed club Antone's, and climbed his way to the top of the tough blues scene in his home town. The title track on his 2010 EP, "Bright Lights," grabs you from its first, dirty-funky chords, incorporating the lessons of Clark's fellow-Texan Stevie Ray Vaughan and, further back, those of the song's spiritual father, Jimmy Reed, whose "Bright Lights, Big City" was a pioneering electric-blues hit. Clark's major-label début, 2012's "Blak and Blu," showcases his many sides as a performer. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 69th St. ticketmaster.com. Sept. 8.)

Popa Chubby

A heavysset, heavily tattooed bluesman (born Ted Horowitz), Chubby is a performer with a hardscrabble past. When Horowitz was seven, his father died, and he was left to his own devices for the most part. While still a teen-ager, in the late nineteen-seventies, he moved to New York and came under the spell of the burgeoning punk scene around CBGB, eventually joining Richard Hell's post-Television band, the Voidoids. After a long battle with heroin addiction, Horowitz got clean and rechristened himself Popa Chubby, playing Buddy Guy-style electric blues tinged with punk aggression. (Iridium, 1650 Broadway, at 51st St. 212-582-2121. Sept. 4-5.)

Renegades of Rhythm

The turntablists **DJ Shadow** (a.k.a. Josh Davis) and **Cut Chemist** (a.k.a. Lucas MacFadden) are on tour, paying tribute to Afrika Bambaataa, the trailblazing d.j. from the South Bronx and the founder of the Universal Zulu Nation. Their vinyl-only outings find the pair playing original disks from Bambaataa's personal collection, which spans forty thousand records and is housed at Cornell University, where Bambaataa is a visiting scholar. Intent on representing the full scope of their hero's interests—which include soul, rap, soca, calypso, salsa, and dub—the d.j.s are spinning records that, in terms of wear, appear to have been the hip-hop legend's favorite listens. (Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl. 212-777-6800. Sept. 4-5.)

Total Slacker

This grungy Brooklyn quartet harkens back to the heady days when alternative rock reigned supreme. They took their name from Richard Linklater's 1991 do-nothing epic, "Slacker," and their retro aesthetic is so defined that it borders on fantasy. This would be grating were it not for their sense of zoned-out playfulness. They perform here with their fellow nineties revivalists **PAWS**, as well as **Flashlights**, a garage-punk band from Brevard, Florida. (Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. musicallofwilliamsburg.com. Sept. 5.)

Warm Up

MOMA PS1's summer afternoons of dancing, experimental music, and architecture come to a close on Sept. 6, with a show that includes two artists from the venerable Tri Angle Records, a small North Brooklyn label with a penchant for gloomy electronic fare. **Forest Swords** is the icy, dub-inflected trip-hop project of the U.K. producer Matthew Barnes, a talented artist, photographer, and designer in his own right. **Evian Christ** (né Joshua Leary) gave up a career as a primary-school teacher after collaborating with Kanye West on "I'm in It," a particularly bleak track off his 2013 album, "Yeezus." He will be doing a d.j. set. There will also be performances by **Lone**, **Sophie**, and special guests. (22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens. momaps1.org.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

George Coleman

It's not unusual to catch this fine veteran player onstage these days, giving veritable master classes on the art of bebop saxophone, but to find him in the company of such golden-era peers as the drummer **Louis Hayes** and the bassist **Bob Cranshaw** (a Sonny Rollins mainstay) will be a special treat. (Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Sept. 5-6.)

Tootie Heath/Ben Street/Ethan Iverson

The fact that the veteran drummer Heath is nearly twice as old as his bandmates—the pianist Iverson and the bassist Street—doesn't seem to make the slightest difference when it comes to the effervescent spirit of this occasional trio. On the album "Tootie's Tempo," from 2013, Heath and his younger cohorts share a historical take on jazz that allows them to successfully reinterpret the work of James P. Johnson, Billy Strayhorn, Mal Waldron, and Paul Motian. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Sept. 3.)

Ute Lemper

Recalling her past triumphs, you might associate this cabaret star with Brecht and Weill and all manner of shadowy Weimar decadence, but Lemper's repertoire now touches on a broader international spectrum. Her new album, "Forever: The Love Poems of Pablo Neruda," finds this thoughtful multilingual vocalist interpreting the work of the Chilean master. (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. Sept. 2-6.)

John Zorn

Little by little, in the past decade or so, the walls of the venerable Village Vanguard have begun shaking to the sounds of outré jazz, and this week the club welcomes the iconoclast Zorn. In typical grand fashion, the conceptually leaning instrumentalist and composer will present eleven different ensembles, each interpreting music from Zorn's Masada Books Two and Three. (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Sept. 2-7.)

ART



The 1947 cutout "Two Masks (The Tomato)," by Henri Matisse, at MOMA.

FALL PREVIEW

For sheer visual bliss (and the long lines that come with it), the season belongs to "**Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs**," which opens at MOMA on Oct. 12. The exhibition was co-organized by the Tate Modern, where it has been such a smash hit that the museum will stay open this weekend, the show's last in London, for thirty-six hours straight. Enticing the crowds are some one hundred late works, which Matisse made using a radical method he hit on in his seventies, when his failing health ruled out painting on canvas. Bedridden, he covered paper in jewel-bright washes of gouache and then sheared out shapes, a process he likened to drawing with scissors. Among many astonishments—the ornamental audacity, the room-dwarfing scale, the lyrical tilt toward abstraction—is the fact that such vitality emerged from despair. Matisse made his first cutout in 1943, in the Occupied French countryside, with German soldiers staked out in his basement. Two years earlier, doctors had given the artist only three years to live; he survived until 1954, working with increasing ferocity and a production line of assistants, one of whom described the artist's last years as "an endurance course that he was running with death." Viewers in New York will see one piece that didn't travel to London: "The Swimming Pool," which Matisse made for the dining room of his apartment in Nice in the summer of 1952. Owned by MOMA, the newly restored piece has been under wraps for more than twenty years.

Also making a splash at MOMA is the much anticipated survey "**Robert Gober: The Heart Is Not a Metaphor**," opening Oct. 4. The American sculptor's meditations on familiar subjects—sinks, beds, bodies—feel at once tender and perilous. In a counterpoint to such intimacy, a sweeping survey of artifacts from the Near East and the Mediterranean in the first millennium B.C., "**Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age**," opens at the Met on Sept. 22.

—Andrea K. Scott



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"Garry Winogrand."
Through Sept. 21.

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

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

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

ASIA SOCIETY
"Nam Jun Paik: Becoming
Robot." Opens Sept. 5.

GALLERIES SHORT LIST
CHELSEA
Nick Cave
Shainman
513 W. 20th St.; 524 W. 24th St.
212-645-1701. Opens Sept. 4

Roger Hiorns
Luhring Augustine
531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.
Opens Sept. 5

Justine Kurland
Mitchell-Innes & Nash
534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.
Opens Sept. 4.

DOWNTOWN
Cory Arcangel
Team
47 Wooster St. 212-279-9219.
Opens Sept. 7.

Gina Beavers
Clifton Benevento
515 Broadway, at Spring St.
212-431-6325. Opens Sept. 6.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES
Museum of Modern Art
"The Paris of Toulouse-
Lautrec: Prints and Posters"

This pleasant vest-pocket show pairs Lautrec's lithographs of Belle Époque night life with a soundtrack of songs from the cafés concerts, a few photographs of the Moulin Rouge by Eugène Atget, and film loops of dancers doing the cancan and the serpentine, the latter shot and hand-colored by the Lumière brothers. Lautrec, dead at thirty-six, was a lecherous party animal, but he could also be a sublimely reverent portraitist, notably when he turned to Paris's then thriving lesbian scene. In his images of the singer Yvette Guilbert and the dancers La Goulue and Jane Avril, you see an artist looking not with the usual voyeuristic eye of the fin de siècle but with respect and admiration. Through March 22.

Museum of Biblical Art
"Back to Eden"

Despite its title, this Adam-and-Eve-themed show is no prelapsarian fantasia—the contemporary artists here, among them Jim Dine, Fred Tomaselli, and the always engaging Pipilotti Rist, are not trying to get back to the garden. At times, the show takes its theme too literally; there are half a dozen works featuring snakes, among them a big reflective daguerreotype by Adam Fuss in which a serpent writhes on a mattress. It's more interesting to treat Adam and Eve as archetypes,

as Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons does in a triptych of a flame-haired woman, incorporating human hair as well as ink. For Alexis Rockman, the expulsion from Eden prefigures current ecological woes, as seen in his fever-dream landscape of the Gowanus Canal. Through Sept. 28.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN
"That Obscure Object of
Desire"

There are no great revelations in this show about fetishism, co-curated by Tamar Margalit and Stephanie Adamowicz, but along with predictable inclusions (Hans Bellmer's contorted dolls) are small but admirable works from two late artists whose fortunes have waxed in recent years. One is the American photographer Robert Heinecken, represented by a fitful panorama of a nude and a puzzle that isolates body parts in a disquieting tessellation. The other is the Polish sculptor Alina Szapocznikow, whose resin lamp in the shape of her own mouth interweaves the erotic and the mundane. The show's best surprise is by the young New York sculptor Alisa Baremboym, whose table covered in industrial emollients seems at once bodily and inorganic. Through Oct. 4. (Luxembourg & Dayan, 64 E. 77th St. 212-452-4646.)

"Ta Hiera"

The gallery gives this standard-issue group show of strong work by seven photographers a rather pretentious gloss: its title is an ancient-Greek

term that relates to the gods. Laura McPhee, Jeffrey Milstein, and Simon Norfolk, document sites that are sacred or simply astonishing, from erotic ceramics on the portals of an Indian temple to the mandala-like design of the proton-pounding Large Hadron Collider, in Switzerland. Lauren Semivan gives the concept a paranormal twist in two Expressionist images that suggest agitated spiritual landscapes. In a separate room, small platinum prints by Jed Devine and Regina DeLuise of a skull, a wrapped statue, and a church organ provide a hushed coda. Through Sept. 6. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA
Laura Larson

In this compact survey of works made between 1996 and 2012, the Brooklyn-based photographer conjures up a range of mysterious phenomena. In several series, she revisits nineteenth-century spirit photographs, those marvellous hoaxes that conflated spiritualism and sex. Teen-age girls in trance states are seen levitating a table and a bell; ghostly apparitions (in the form of puffs of white smoke) float through abandoned rooms. In a group of faux-spiritualist portraits, Larson's evocation of ectoplasm pays winning homage to the body-conscious performances of such feminist artists as Hannah Wilke and Carolee Schneeman. Through Sept. 13. (Lennon Weinberg, 514 W. 25th St. 212-941-0012.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

"Swing House"

For Gemini & Scorpio, an outfit that puts on imaginative parties, nothing is run of the mill, and nothing is off limits. For its next fête, "Swing House," it is transforming a Gowanus loft into a sanctum of decadence. The speakeasy-themed soirée celebrates the Jazz Age with a modern twist. Live music, burlesque performers, and electro-swing d.j.s remixing vintage tunes are all part of the fun. An introductory swing-dance class by Brooklyn Swings gets the night started, followed by a live set from the New Orleans-style band Professor Cunningham and His Old School. Dressing the part is required; in this case that means zoot suits, flapper dresses, corsets, and fedoras—the more extravagant the costume the better. (geminiandscorpio.com. Sept. 6.)

Bushwig

From the mid-eighties to the middle of the first decade of this century, an annual gathering of drag queens called Wigstock filled Tompkins Square Park and, later, the Hudson River Piers. Carrying the torch over the East River, to Secret Project Robot's experimental space in the industrial-artistic enclave of Bushwick, this gathering fills the big-hair void. Now in its third year, the event features more than a hundred and sixty performers and d.j.s. Highlights include an appearance by New York's incomparable performance artist and playwright Penny Arcade, as well as the outrageously smart, grotesque, and innovative multidisciplinary performance art of Dynasty Handbag. There will also be music from the Bottoms and Soft Pink Truth and a d.j. set by the activist and former Le Tigre member JD Samson. (389 Melrose St., Brooklyn. secretprojectrobot.org. Sept. 6-7.)

READINGS AND TALKS

The Graduate Center

Senator Elizabeth Warren, from Massachusetts, discusses what ails the middle class with the economist and writer Paul Krugman. Janet Gornick, a professor of political science and sociology and the director of the Luxembourg Income Study Center at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, is the moderator. (365 Fifth Ave, at 34th St. 212-817-8215. Sept. 4 at 7:30.)

Barnes & Noble

Randall Munroe, of the Web comic "xkcd" and the science question-and-answer blog What If?, talks about his new book, "What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions." (33 E. 17th St. 212-253-0810. Sept. 5 at 7.)

Pen Parentis Literary Salon

Pen Parentis, an organization devoted to supporting writers who are also parents, kicks off its new season with David Gilbert, the author of "& Sons"; Julia Fierro, who wrote the novel "Cutting Teeth"; and Mira Jacob, the author of "The Sleepwalker's Guide to Dancing." (Andaz Wall Street, 75 Wall St. penparentis.org. Sept. 9 at 7.)

WHITNEY

JEFF Koons



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Jeff Koons (b. 1955), *Woman in Tub*, 1988. Porcelain; 23¾ x 36 x 27 in. (60.3 x 91.4 x 68.6 cm). Collection of Stefan T. Edlis and H. Gael Neeson, partial and promised gift to the Art Institute of Chicago. ©Jeff Koons

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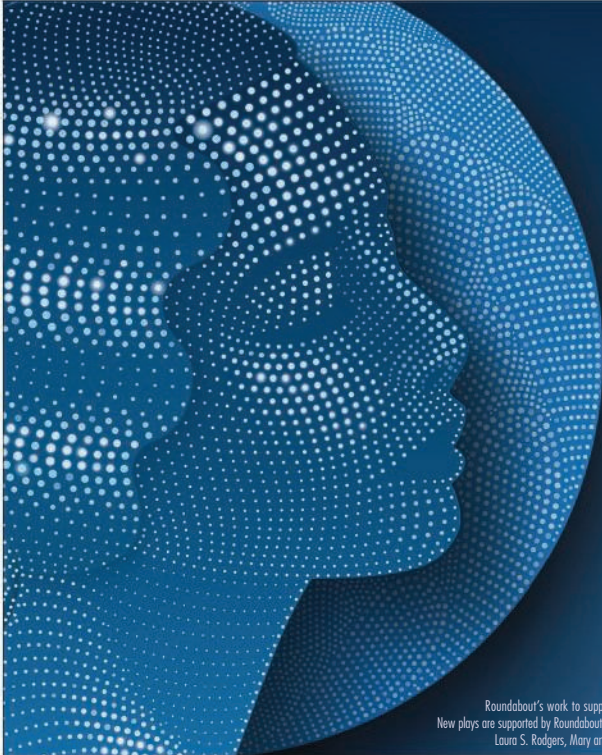
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Cynthia Nixon Josh Hamilton

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By Tom Stoppard

Directed By Sam Gold



INDIAN INK

BY
Tom Stoppard

PREVIEWS
BEGIN
SEPTEMBER 4

DIRECTED BY
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Matthias Goerne sings William Kentridge's version of "Winterreise" at Lincoln Center on Nov. 11.

FALL PREVIEW

On Oct. 1-3, Alan Gilbert conducts the Philharmonic in the finale of his **Nielsen Project**, a multi-season effort to bring the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, one of the most fascinating and fiercely expressive of the early moderns, to a broader audience; the program includes the engaging "Maskerade" Overture, the shattering Symphony No. 5 (a Bernstein favorite), and the mysterious and mercurial Symphony No. 6. **Christian Tetzlaff**, a violinist of formidable technique and piercing insight, kicks off the season at the 92nd Street Y on Sept. 18 with an evening devoted to the solo Sonatas and Partitas by J. S. Bach, and the **Attacca Quartet**, the new string quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum, begins its varied series with a foundational gesture—an all-Haydn program, on Oct. 10.

Schubert's "**Winterreise**" will get a revisionist treatment at Alice Tully Hall on the closing night of the White Light Festival (Nov. 11), with twenty-four short animated films by the South African artist **William Kentridge**, who brought his brilliant and hyperkinetic style to the Met's lauded staging of "The Nose" in 2010. Kentridge will also be in town for "Paper Music" (Oct. 27), a ciné concert with the composer Philip Miller that is part of Carnegie Hall's "UBUNTU: Music and Arts of South Africa," a festival that also includes recitals by the Met singers Pretty Yende (Oct. 13) and Elza van den Heever (Oct. 24).

The **Metropolitan Opera**, after weeks of labor trouble, is thankfully back from the brink of disaster. Opening night (Sept. 22) puts the spotlight on Richard Eyre's new production of "Le Nozze di Figaro." James Levine conducts, with Ildar Abdrazakov (last season's compelling Prince Igor) as the crafty valet. The young American soprano Amanda Majeski makes her Met debut in the role of the Countess; as in Eyre's successful 2009 production of "Carmen," the action is set in Seville during the turbulent years between the First and Second World Wars.

—Russell Platt

CONCERTS IN TOWN

SubCulture: Christoph Denoth

Manhattan's new underground venue goes from strength to strength with an ambitious array of concert projects for the fall season. It begins quietly with a recital by the esteemed Swiss guitar virtuoso, offering a slate of classic works by English composers (a suite of Dowland pieces and Britten's haunting "Nocturnal") and Hispanic ones (compositions by Falla, Turina, Albéniz, and Villa-Lobos). (45 Bleecker St. subculturenewyork.com. Sept. 4 at 7:30.)

Maya Beiser: "Uncovered"

(Le) Poisson Rouge is a natural home for this boundary-busting cellist, who cut her teeth as a founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars and has since gone on to a singular solo career. Her latest show is a mix of reimagined rock tunes (by such giants as Led Zeppelin, Janis Joplin, and Nirvana, in arrangements by Evan Ziporyn) and new works by Glenn Kotche, David Lang, and David T. Little. The bassist Gyan Riley and the drummer Matt Kilmer join her. (158 Bleecker St. lprnyc.com. Sept. 4 at 7:30.)

"As One"

A new era at American Opera Projects—with a new composer-in-residence, Laura Kaminsky, late of Symphony Space—begins with the world premiere of her new chamber opera, in which the husband-and-wife team of the mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and the baritone Kelly Markgraf, backed by the Fry Street Quartet, share the role of the transgender protagonist. The libretto is by the seasoned opera pro Mark Campbell and the transgender filmmaker Kimberly Reed; Steven Osgood conducts. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. bam.org. Sept. 4 and Sept. 6 at 7:30 and Sept. 7 at 3.)

John Cage's "Song Books"

In an echo of the Cage centenary celebrations, several of the New York avant-garde's leading lights (including Eve Beglarian, John King, and Nate Wooley) mark the composer's hundred-and-second birthday with a sixty-minute performance of this 1970 work, which "sets"—in all sorts of ambitious and expansive ways—texts by such American icons as Thoreau, Duchamp, and Buckminster Fuller. (Wild Project, 195 E. 3rd St. avantmedia.org. Sept. 5 at 8.)

Dixon Place / Morningside Opera: "Here Be Sirens"

Kate Soper, a dynamic young composer and singer with keen theatrical instincts, draws elements of parlor music, modernist atonality, and Cagean experimentalism into a firmly focussed style. She takes part in a revival of her three-woman show, a dazzling, funny, and erudite post-feminist meditation on ancient myth; Rick Burkhardt directs. (161A Chrystie St. dixonplace.org. Sept. 5-6 and Sept. 12-13 at 7:30.)

Rite of Summer Music Festival: Grand Band

Lisa Moore and Blair McMillen are among the players in this piano sextet, all talented promoters of serious fun, offering two concerts of contemporary music (including a piece by Michael Gordon and Steve Reich's "Six Pianos," from 1973) at Colonels' Row on Governors Island, a relaxed setting that allows for picnicking as well as dedicated listening. (Sept. 6 at 1 and 3. For ferry information, see govisland.com.)

FAMILY POLITICS

America's most intriguing political family has inspired a monumental new documentary series—and the caption-seeking cartoon below. Ready to put your Rooseveltian wit to the test?



“

”

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Submit your caption to this cartoon inspired by the new Ken Burns documentary “The Roosevelts: An Intimate History.” The new 7-part series makes its 2-hour premiere on Sunday, September 14, at 8/7c, only on PBS. Visit NewYorkerOnTheTown.com/win/roosevelts and enter for the chance to win a private lunch with Ken Burns.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter and for full rules, go to www.newyorkeronthetown.com/win/roosevelts. Promotion period begins 12:00 AM 9/1/14 and ends 11:59 PM ET 9/12/14. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States/D.C. 18 years or older, except employees of Sponsor, their immediate families, and those living in the same household. Void outside the 50 United States/D.C. and where prohibited.

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Five Boroughs Music Festival: “A Banner Bicentennial”

The two-hundredth anniversary of “The Star-Spangled Banner” is a wonderful excuse for a concert celebrating the past and present of American song. This program, given in coöperation with the Casement Fund Song Series, features four outstanding young singers (Caitlin Lynch, Leah Wool, Michael Slattery, and Sidney Outlaw) partnering with the pianist Spencer Myer in music by Ives, Gershwin, Stephen Foster, Ned Rorem, and others. (Flushing Town Hall, 137-35 Northern Blvd., Queens. 5bmf.org. Sept. 5 at 8. The concert will be repeated at Manhattan’s Federal Hall, 26 Wall St., on Sept. 6 at 8.)

Bargemusic

The first of this weekend’s programs at the floating chamber-music series is offered by two superb young artists, the clarinetist Alexander Fiterstein and the pianist Michael Brown, and includes sonatas for clarinet and piano by Bernstein, Brahms (No. 1 in F Minor), and Poulenc. The second, performed by the pianist Ursula Oppens and the Cassatt Quartet, features Dvořák’s “American” Quartet, Beethoven’s String Quartet in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2, and Franck’s Piano Quintet, a summertime mainstay. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org. Sept. 6 at 8 and Sept. 7 at 4.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tannery Pond Concerts: Ji

Whatever his name may be, this young Korean pianist—who, until recently, was known as Ji-Yong—has an undeniable presence at the keyboard. His program at Christian Steiner’s quietly distinctive festival is a typical young-artist showcase (Bach’s Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, Prokofiev’s Seventh Sonata, and the like), but it promises rewards. (New Lebanon, N.Y. tannerypondconcerts.org. Sept. 6 at 8.)

South Mountain Concerts

This quietly distinguished series, founded in 1918 by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, takes up the slack after the big summer festivals taper off. The first concert this year is given by the brilliant young Escher String Quartet, performing music by Haydn, Berg (the “Lyric Suite”), and Dvořák (the Viola Quintet in E-Flat Major, Op. 97, with the Emerson String Quartet’s Lawrence Dutton). (Pittsfield, Mass. southmountainconcerts.org. Sept. 7 at 3.)

Music Mountain

Few string quartets have generated as much industry buzz as the Dover Quartet, which swept the prizes at the Banff Competition last year. Graduates of the Curtis Institute of Music, they team up with the school’s director, the eminent violist Roberto Díaz, for a concert offering Haydn’s Quartet in G Major, Op. 76, No. 1, Shostakovich’s trenchant Quartet No. 7 in F-Sharp Minor, and Brahms’s String Quintet No. 2 in G Major. (Falls Village, Conn. musicmountain.org. Sept. 7 at 3.)

Maverick Concerts

Haydn, the father of the string quartet, rules the out-of-town scene this weekend. One of the crowning glories of the genre—the Quartet in C Major, “Emperor”—begins the Maverick Hall’s final program of the summer, offered by the authoritative American String Quartet; the concert continues with Romantic works by Mendelssohn and Brahms (the Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2). (Woodstock, N.Y. maverickconcerts.org. Sept. 7 at 4.)

DANCE



Monica Bill Barnes and Anna Bass dance as Ira Glass tells stories at Town Hall.

FALL PREVIEW

The body is the dancer’s instrument, like a violin—or so the old adage goes, which perpetuates the idea that dancers are robots, just muscles and ligaments, moving without thought. Therefore, it’s a pleasure and a revelation to hear the dancer Anna Bass describe what it’s like to perform alongside her longtime collaborator Monica Bill Barnes, while the two women share the stage in “Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Host,” a variety show put together by Ira Glass, of “This American Life.” “We’re simultaneously supporting each other and stealing the spotlight from each other,” Bass says in an interview recorded by Glass, which plays as the duo silently perform Barnes’s signature choreography, both earnest and theatrical. “She’ll either give me a little nudge or leave me,” Bass says, revealing what makes Barnes’s work feel so spontaneous. Other segments—including a moving tribute to the “T.A.L.” contributor David Rakoff, a dancer himself, who died in 2012—revive old stories from the radio show, enhanced by Barnes’s and Bass’s dancing. This charming, funny production has been on the road; it makes a stop at Town Hall Sept. 10-12.

Thirty years after Tanztheater Wuppertal’s New York début, and five years after the death of Pina Bausch, its leader and choreographer, the troupe returns to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where New York audiences first encountered Bausch’s blunt, visceral style. As in recent seasons, the artistic director, Lutz Förster, has chosen one of Bausch’s evening-length works: “Kontakhof,” from 1978, which runs for two weeks, Oct. 23-Nov. 2. In this mordant piece, two dozen dancers, men and women, gather in a nineteen-thirties-style dance hall. Dressed in high heels and satin dresses, the ladies preen and vie for the men’s affections. The gentlemen grab greedily at the women. This is no meet-cute business; it’s human nature, vivid and wild.

—Katia Bachko

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"DanceNow"

On each evening of this annual showcase, ten choreographers or companies share a tiny stage. Of course, they do take turns; each is allotted no more than five minutes. The restrictions of time and space are part of the challenge in an audience-judged contest. Each night's winners earn rehearsal space, and the top ten return on Sept. 13. Mixing newcomers with familiar faces (Jane Comfort, Lawrence Goldhuber, ZviDance) trying new things, the festival provides an efficient way to sample a lot of New York dance over a drink or two. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Sept. 3-6 at 7.)

Trajal Harrell

Following "Twenty Looks," his multi-part project that examines voguing at Harlem balls and postmodern dance (which gets its first complete New York run at the Kitchen starting Sept. 14), the ambitious choreographer has turned to another big subject: the life and work of Tatsumi Hijikata, a founder of the Japanese style Butoh. At the Museum of Modern Art last February, he presented an early staging that was irritating and promising. Now he returns to the museum with "In One Step Are a Thousand Animals," a collaboration with dancers and d.j.s, and opens his working process to the public in six two-hour sessions. (11 W. 53rd St. 212-708-9400. Sept. 4-5 at 10:30 A.M., 1, and 3:30.)

Mazzini Dance Collective

As a longtime member of the Paul Taylor Dance Company, Annmaria Mazzini was known for her exuberance, which now resonates in her choreography for her own small ensemble. The troupe stages an evening of new and recent works, by Mazzini and her collaborator Orion Duckstein, also a former Taylor dancer. One piece, "Playing with Angels," is set to music by the composer Robert Paterson, performed live by the American Modern Ensemble. (Ailey Citigroup Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 212-868-4444. Sept. 6 at 8 and Sept. 7 at 3.)

Farruquito

This scion of a prominent Gypsy flamenco family has not performed in New York since 2003, when critics hailed the then twenty-year-old as a heartthrob and a brooding marvel. He has spent some of the intervening years in prison, after being convicted of hit-and-run manslaughter in his native Spain. His comeback show, "Im-provisao," is a return to flamenco's roots—just him and musicians from the same background improvising together, trying to surprise and please one another in the moment. (N.Y.U. Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-352-3101. Sept. 7 at 3 and 8.)

National Ballet of Canada / "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

Christopher Wheeldon's skillful interpretation of Lewis Carroll's eccentric novella is fantastic fun. The production is big, with colorful designs by Bob Crowley augmented by animation and puppetry—including a multi-piece Cheshire Cat that assembles and dissolves. Even better is the score, by the British composer Joby Talbot, well suited to both storytelling and dancing. Wheeldon's ballet is sophisticated, too, with little winks to the balletomanes in the audience. These performances mark the National Ballet of Canada's first visit to New York in almost a decade. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Sept. 9 at 7:30. Through Sept. 17.)

THE THEATRE



Young Jean Lee directs her new play, "Straight White Men," at the Public.

FALL PREVIEW

The experimental Belgian director **Ivo van Hove** has not only tackled the theatrical canon but also adapted works by master film directors, from Antonioni to Cassavetes. Van Hove strips plays down to basics—a nearly bare stage, actors in plain clothes—and makes the timeworn feel quite contemporary. He brings two shows to New York this fall: a five-hour Dutch-language production of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America" (at BAM's Harvey Theatre, Oct. 23-25, with supertitles) and an English-language adaptation of Ingmar Bergman's "Scenes from a Marriage" (previews begin Sept. 12, at New York Theatre Workshop). Van Hove says that the latter, which is based on Bergman's original television series, "is an epic about very normal people." He imagines the characters Johan and Marianne as three couples: one young, one middle-aged, and one old. "The audience," he said, "is separated into three groups and sits in different rooms together with the actors. No Sweden. No seventies. It is about us."

The Brooklyn-based Korean-American playwright **Young Jean Lee** studied Shakespeare at Berkeley for ten years before starting to make her own theatre. Lee sends up identity politics in brave, funny works such as "Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven," in which she took on stereotypes of Koreans; "The Shipment," about blackness in a so-called post-racial America; and "Untitled Feminist Show," which had all sizes and colors of women gallivanting nude. "Straight White Men" (beginning previews Nov. 7, at the Public) offers a twisted view of the father-son relationship.

After Norma Desmond, what's left? **Glenn Close**, who starred on Broadway in "Sunset Boulevard" in 1994, joins John Lithgow, Bob Balaban, and Martha Plimpton for a revival of Edward Albee's "A Delicate Balance" (previews begin Oct. 20, at the Golden). **Ewan McGregor** and **Maggie Gyllenhaal** make their Broadway debuts, alongside Cynthia Nixon and Josh Hamilton, in Tom Stoppard's "The Real Thing" (previews begin Oct. 2, at the American Airlines).

—Shauna Lyon

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Bauer

Lauren Gunderson wrote this play, about the artist Rudolf Bauer, his wife, and his lover, the curator Baroness Hilla Rebay. Bill English directs the San Francisco Playhouse production, part of the 5A series. In previews. Opens Sept. 9. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

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. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Boys and Girls

This play, a hit at the Dublin Fringe festival, written and directed by Dylan Coburn Gray, follows four characters over the course of one crazy night in Dublin. Part of Origin's 1st Irish festival. In previews. Opens Sept. 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

Dry Land

Colt Coeur presents a play by Ruby Rae Spiegel, about the tumultuous lives of teen-age girls. Adrienne Campbell-Holt directs. Previews begin Sept. 6. Opens Sept. 8. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

FringeNYC Encore Series

Hits from the New York International Fringe Festival getting a reprise include David Carl's "Gary Busey's One Man Hamlet"; "Hoaxocaust!," by Barry Levey; "Magical Negro Speaks," by Jamil Ellis; and Katelin Wilcox's "The Pawnbroker: Lies, Lovers, and Bertolt Brecht." Opens Sept. 4. (Nagelberg Theatre, Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. 646-312-5073.)

I Like to Be Here:

Jackson Heights Revisited; or, This Is a Mango

New Ohio Theatre and Theatre 167 present a work (part of the Theatre:Village festival) collaboratively written by seven playwrights, about a meeting of people of several different cultures in Jackson Heights. Previews begin Sept. 6. Opens Sept. 8. (New Ohio Theatre, 154 Christopher St. 866-811-4111.)

Indian Ink

Rosemary Harris stars in the New York premiere of a romantic drama by Tom Stoppard, in which a British woman recalls her older sister's love affair with an artist in India in the nineteen-thirties. Carey Perloff directs the Roundabout Theatre Company production. Previews begin Sept. 4. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

It's Only a Play

Matthew Broderick, Stockard Channing, Nathan Lane, Megan Mullally,

and F. Murray Abraham star in an update of Terrence McNally's 1982 comedy. Jack O'Brien directs. In previews. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Juárez: A Documentary Mythology

Rattlestick presents a co-production with Theatre Mitu (part of the Theatre:Village festival) that portrays drug-war-torn Juárez, Mexico. Rubén Polendo directs. Previews begin Sept. 4. (224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

The Money Shot

MCC begins its season with the world premiere of a new play by Neil LaBute, about two Hollywood stars looking to revive their careers. Starring Elizabeth Reaser, Gia Crovatin, Callie Thorne, and Frederick Weller. Terry Kinney directs. Previews begin Sept. 4. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

Rock Bottom

The funny, raunchy neo-cabaret performer Bridget Everett stars in a show based on her Chardonnay-tinged life. Written by Everett, Marc Shaiman, Scott Wittman, Adam Horowitz, and Matt Ray; Wittman directs. Previews begin Sept. 9. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

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 debut. Michael Cera, Tavi Gevinson, and Kieran Culkin star; Anna D. Shapiro directs. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

Uncle Vanya

Hal Brooks, the new artistic director of the Pearl, directs the Chekhov classic to begin the new season. Previews begin Sept. 9. (555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

Waiting for Godot

The New Yiddish Rep presents Samuel Beckett's masterpiece in Yiddish (with English supertitles), as part of Origin's 1st Irish festival. Moshe Yassur directs. Previews begin Sept. 4. Opens Sept. 7. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444.)

You Can't Take It with You

James Earl Jones, Rose Byrne, Anna-Leigh 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. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

And I and Silence

For Jamie and Dee, life in prison in 1950 has a kind of simplicity: "Sleep,

eat, get hit, hit back." It's life on the outside that's complicated. Naomi Wallace's stark, elegiac drama, the first in her Signature season, shifts between Jamie and Dee, first as incarcerated teens and then as young women struggling to make their way in the world together. Because Jamie is black and Dee is white, they have to struggle that much harder. Under Caitlin McLeod's direction, the four actresses (Trae Harris and Emily Skeggs as the younger pair, Rachel Nicks and Samantha Soule as the elder) infuse Wallace's writing with deep feeling. Wallace is as much a poet as a playwright. Colloquial dialogue steals into lyricism, elevating the simplicity of the story as it transforms from a fierce and tender tale of female friendship to something more tragic, if also more familiar. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

Pageant

Six ripped young men in drag playing competitive national beauty-pageant contestants—poofy wigs, high heels, garish gowns, unflattering swimsuits, and wide, toothy, phony smiles—are bound to be at least a little bit funny. Frank Kelly and Bill Russell's well-acted 1991 show is good clean campy fun, even though the depictions of desperate contestants—often inarticulate and untalented—are thin and tiresome clichés. There's the Bible thumper from the Bible Belt (Curtis Wiley), the New Age flake from L.A. (Seth Tucker), the Latina gal from the industrial Northeast (Nic Cory), who says "jes" instead of "yes." Some might view this parody of a certain kind of dumb, shellacked femininity as offensive, but the actors seem to enjoy embodying these sad and proud, if empty, girls, and anyone can take pleasure in that. (Davenport, 354 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Poor Behavior

The ingredients are familiar—two upper-middle-class couples, the whisper of infidelity—but the playwright Theresa Rebeck ("Seminar") mixes them into a combustible cocktail in her high-strung new comedy, skillfully directed by Evan Cabnet for Primary Stages. We open on a tastefully rustic country house outside New York, where Ian (Brian Avers) and Ella (Katie Kreisler) are mid-quarrel. They're debating goodness—does it exist?—as their respective spouses (Heidi Armbruster and Jeff Biehl) idly watch. There's chemistry between them, which Ian, an Irish moralist with a waggish streak, nudges toward adultery. Rebeck's dialogue is taut and unsparing, especially when it comes to bourgeois illusions of happiness. But the play belongs to Avers, who plays Ian with sneering, raffish abandon. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Through Sept. 7.)

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MOTOWN: THE MUSICAL

Lunt-Fontanne

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Jacobs

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Majestic

PIECE OF MY HEART

Pershing Square Signature Center

PIPPIN

Music Box

REVOLUTION IN THE ELBOW OF RAGNAR AGNARSSON

FURNITURE PAINTER
Minetta Lane Theatre

ROCK OF AGES

Helen Hayes

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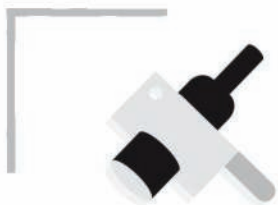
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FRONT ROW

Richard Brody discusses rare films by Jean Renoir.



FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB NO NAME BAR

597 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn

Let the two hundred and sixty-two American children named Kale last year bear witness: sometimes it's best to stick to basics. Jessica Wertz did, when christening her bar in Greenpoint—she didn't call it anything. It's come to be known as No Name Bar, Nameless Bar, and Boîte sans Nom. But, having survived since 2010 without a fixed identity, it's now suffering a crisis: the garden, once thronged with lovelies sporting crop tops and even a few Polish denizens of the neighborhood's Old Guard, has been shut down. One afternoon, a near-catatonic bartender served generous Negronis, Bulleit bourbon, and four-dollar Tecates, while recalling an evening last September, when officials (N.Y.P.D., F.D.N.Y., D.O.H., S.L.A.) picked No Name from a list of 311-noise-complaint offenders and stormed the place, looking to rack up violations. "We're being held under the big thumb of the Department of Buildings," Wertz said, describing the ongoing scramble to meet requirements, such as the costly construction of new stairs from the yard to the roof. "I'm like this little boxer with these giants beating me down. But I'm going to keep fighting as long as I can afford to." As the Bo Diddley song "Let Me In" played on vinyl, one visitor noted a jar of eggs in murky liquid. "For eating," the bartender explained, of the Southern pickled snack. "I don't eat them. They just showed up one day."

—Emma Allen



TABLES FOR TWO

ÉLAN

43 E. 20th St. (646-682-7105)

WHEN THE BRONX-BORN CHEF David Waltuck opened his restaurant Chanterelle, in November, 1979, on a dark corner in SoHo, formal paeans to French cooking ruled midtown. Waltuck's playful, lighter take on classic French cuisine resonated with the artists in the neighborhood, and in 1989 the chef and his wife, Karen—who graciously handled the front of the house, writing out the menus and arranging the flowers—moved the operation to Tribeca, where they perfected their game, with soothing butter-yellow walls, impeccable service, and some of the most elegant and unpretentious food in the city. Chanterelle, perhaps too formal to compete in a struggling economy, closed in 2009; now Waltuck is back with a new restaurant, élan.

By opening in the Flatiron district, Waltuck is announcing both that he's in the big-boys club—Eleven Madison Park, Craft, ABC Kitchen, and Gramercy Tavern are all within a few blocks—and that he's playing it safe. That's O.K., though, since Waltuck's safe is delicious and decadent. Gone are Chanterelle's quenelles and crazy salad, made with lobster, papaya, and foie gras, the last of which shows up here in something like an adult Tootsie Pop, coated in pistachios, with a figgy center. Sweetbreads, a staple at Chanterelle, appear in a lively General Tso's preparation, with a sticky orange-inflected glaze. Uni guacamole, served with taro chips, causes initial suspicion— isn't anyone who wants to improve guacamole just showboating?—but the uni holds its own, lending a welcome salinity and richness.

Considering Waltuck's culinary standing, the dining room is small. A whitewashed brick wall nods to the chef's downtown roots, and to the casual air he seems to be trying for, even if he can't help but send out perfectly composed plates. The crowd is full of sophisticates, many of whom will reminisce over his signature dish of seafood sausage—lobster, shrimp, sea scallops, and sea bass packed into a pork casing—with mustard-infused beurre blanc. It still sounds slightly off-putting, and still surprises with its salty-sweet delicacy. Technique is where élan really shines, in dishes like the striped-bass filet, with crisp skin and a deep red-wine sauce, and a smoky oolong-tea-infused duck breast, perfectly rare. Waltuck favors unctuousness, and goes overboard in the sea-scallop fettuccine coated in melted duck fat. But zucchini blossoms with lemon crème fraîche are ethereal, and tomato-watermelon gazpacho with lobster tastes like pure summer.

Karen is missed (she has moved into a social-work career), but there are many signs of humility and finesse at élan. The wine list is full of accessible bottles, with a section called "Treat Yourself," so you don't have to see the three-hundred-dollar Burgundy and feel like a piker for ordering something under sixty. On your way out, there are lovely chocolate truffles filled with caramel—salted, of course.

—Shauna Lyon

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

IN SEARCH OF A STRATEGY

At the end of the eighth century, Harun al-Rashid, a caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, built a palace in Raqqa, on the Euphrates River, in what is now Syria. His empire stretched from modern Tunisia to Pakistan. It was an age of Islamic discovery in science, music, and art; Rashid's court of viziers inspired stories in "One Thousand and One Nights."

In June, the Islamic State in Iraq al-Sham (ISIS) declared Raqqa the seat of a new caliphate, presided over by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a fierce preacher who was once an American prisoner in Iraq, and is now in hiding. The city has lost its splendor. Public executions are "a common spectacle" on Fridays in El Naim Square or at the Al Sa'a roundabout, a United Nations human-rights commission reported last month. ISIS fighters mount the dead on crucifixes, "as a warning to local residents."

ISIS emerged a decade ago as a small Iraqi affiliate of Al Qaeda, one that specialized in suicide bombings and inciting Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority against the country's Shiite majority. The network regenerated after 2011 amidst Iraq's growing violence and the depravities of Syria's civil war. This year, ISIS has conquered cities, oil fields, and swaths of territory in both Syria and Iraq. The movement draws its strength from Sunni Arab communities bitterly opposed to the Shiite-led government in Baghdad and the Alawite-dominated regime in Damascus, led by Bashar al-Assad.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has called ISIS "as sophisticated and well funded as any group that we have seen . . . beyond anything we have seen." The group has former military officers who can fly helicopters, spot artillery, and maneuver in battle. ISIS is increasingly a hybrid organization, on the model of Hezbollah—part terrorist network, part guerrilla army, part proto-state.

President Obama has decided that the United States must now attack ISIS, if only from the air. The President vacationed on Martha's Vineyard, and

golfed conspicuously, as his initial aerial campaign in Iraq unfolded. He has been less than forthright about why, after pledging to end America's costly war in Iraq, he believed a return to battle there was necessary. But in interviews and other forums Obama has offered a *casus belli*, in three parts.

ISIS has massacred religious minorities, including Christians and Yazidis, and American air strikes can prevent more wanton killing, the President has said. A second imperative is the defense of the Kurdistan Regional Government, a semi-autonomous, oil-endowed American ally in northern Iraq, which a few weeks ago was teetering under pressure from ISIS but has since recovered, with the aid of American air power. The third, and most resonant, reason that the President has given is self-defense: to disrupt ISIS before it tries to attack Americans in the region or inside the United States.

ISIS has beheaded one American journalist, James Foley, and threatened to execute a second. Yet some terrorism specialists point out that ISIS is consumed by the sectarian wars in Syria and Iraq, and has shown no intent to launch attacks in the West, or any ability to do so. Still, ISIS has attracted five hundred British volunteers, many scores of other European passport holders, and even some Americans to its fight; they might eventually turn toward London, Berlin, or New York. Last week, British

authorities announced that the threat of a terrorist attack on its home soil was "severe," given the rising number of British jihadis now among the militants in Iraq and Syria.

The question about President Obama's resumption of war in Iraq is not whether it can be justified but where it will lead. Air strikes against a well-resourced guerrilla army will do little if they are not accompanied by action on the ground. It would be a catastrophic error for the United States to take on that role. But what other professional force will dislodge the self-proclaimed ISIS caliphate and



then control the population? American policy assumes that Iraq's squabbling politicians will rally a Shiite-led army to fight ISIS in the country's Sunni heartland. On recent evidence, this assessment looks unrealistic.

In Syria, the options are worse. Obama has said repeatedly that he does not believe that Syria's moderate rebels have the capacity to overthrow Assad or defeat jihadists. Yet the alternatives would allow Syria's violence to fester at the cost of tens of thousands more civilian lives or would tacitly condone an alliance with the brutal Assad, who has been implicated in war crimes.

Obama and his advisers have at times taken refuge in a self-absolving logic: We can't force people in other countries to unite around our agenda, so, if they don't, whatever calamity unfolds is their responsibility. As a retreat from American hubris, this form of realism has appeal. As a contribution to a stable Middle East, it has failed utterly.

It is not yet clear that ISIS will endure as a menace. Fast-moving extremist conquerors sometimes have trouble holding their ground. ISIS has promised to govern as effectively as it intimidates, but its talent lies in extortion and ethnic cleansing, not in sanitation and job creation. It is vulnerable to revolt from within.

The group's lightning rise is a symptom, however, of deeper instability; a cause of that instability is failed international policy in Iraq and Syria. If the United States is returning to war in the region, one might wish for a more considered vision than Whack-a-Mole against jihadists.

The restoration of human rights in the region first requires a

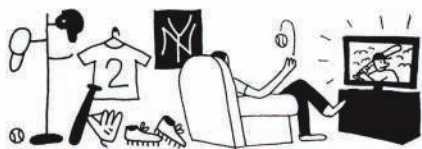
renewed search for a tolerable—and, where possible, tolerant—path to stability. ISIS feasts above all on the suffering of Syria, and that appears to be unending. The war is in its fourth year, with almost two hundred thousand dead and nine million displaced, inside the country and out. The caliphate now seated in Raqqa is the sort of dark fantasy that can spring to life when people feel they are bereft of other plausible sources of security and justice.

"We don't have a strategy yet," the President remarked last week, infelicitously, about Syria. He does have a coalition of allies in the region that are willing to challenge ISIS's ambition, including Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These countries patronize disenfranchised Sunnis in Iraq and Syria, and some of their support certainly reaches jihadists, including ISIS. Yet they share an interest in reducing Syria's violence and in promoting regional and local Sunni self-governance that is less threatening and more sustainable than what ISIS has created. Ultimately, Sunnis will need the kind of autonomy that Kurds presently enjoy.

Leading a coalition of this character is hard, uncertain work. George H. W. Bush, the President whose foreign policy Obama seems to admire most, did it successfully in the runup to the Gulf War of 1991, by intensive personal engagement. Obama has more than two years left in the White House. To defeat ISIS, but also to reduce its source of strength, will require the President to risk his credibility on more than just air strikes.

—Steve Coll

DEPT. OF LEGACY S'LONG, JEET



We know Derek Jeter by heart, so why all this memorizing? The between-pitches bat tucked up in his armpit. The fingertip helmet-twiddle. The left front foot wide open, out of the box until the last moment, and the cop-at-a-crossing right hand ritually lifted astern until the foot swings shut. That look of expectation, a little night-light gleam, under the helmet. The pitch—this one a slow breaking ball, a fraction low and outside—taken but inspected with a bending bow in its passage. More. Jeter's celebrity extends beyond his swing, of course, but can perhaps be summarized by an excited e-mail once received by a Brearley School teacher from one of her seventh graders: "Guess what! I just Googled 'Derek's butt!'"

This is Derek Jeter's twentieth and final September: twenty-seven more games and perhaps another hundred

at-bats remain to be added to his franchise record, at this writing, of 2,720 and 11,094. He's not having a great year, but then neither are the Yanks, who trail the Orioles by seven games in the American League East and are three games short of qualifying for that tacky, tacked-on new second wild-card spot in the post-season. It's been a blah baseball year almost everywhere, and, come to think of it, watching Derek finish might be the best thing around.

Jeter has just about wound up his Mariano Tour—the all-points ceremonies around home plate in every away park on the Yankees' schedule, where he accepts gifts, and perhaps a farewell check for his Turn 2 charity, and lifts his cap to the cheering, phone-flashing multitudes. He does this with style and grace—no one is better at it—and without the weepiness of some predecessors. His ease, his daily joy in his work, has lightened the sadness of this farewell, and the cheering everywhere has been sustained and genuine. Just the other day, Tampa Bay manager Joe Maddon groused about the rare sounds of cheering offered up to Derek by his customarily sleepy attendees.

At every stop, there have been replays of Jeter's famous plays and moments up on the big screens—the no-man's-land relay and sideways flip to nab the Athletics' Jeremy Giambi at the plate in the 2001 American League Division Series; that horizontal dive into the Yankee Stadium third-base stands against the Red Sox in 2004. I don't expect further dramatics—he's forty and often in the lineup as d.h. these days—but closings have been a specialty of his, and it's O.K. to get our hopes up one more time. I'm thinking of the waning days of the old Stadium, in 2008, when Derek's great rush through September carried him to the top of the all-time career hits list at the famous crater, each fresh rap of his coming as accompaniment to the deep "Der-ek Je-tuh!" cries from the bleachers that the new restaurant site has pretty well silenced. The next year, up there, he passed Lou Gehrig for Most Yankee Base Hits Ever. Two years after that, he delivered his three-thousandth career hit: a home run that touched off a stunning five-for-five day at the Stadium against the Rays.

All right, I'll settle for one more



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inside-out line-drive double to deep right—the Jeter Blue Plate that’s been missing of late. It still astounds me—Derek’s brilliance as a hitter has always felt fresh and surprising, for some reason—and here it comes one more time. The pitch is low and inside, and Derek, pulling back his upper body and tucking in his chin as if avoiding an arriving No. 4 train, now jerks his left elbow and shoulder sharply upward while slashing powerfully down at and through the ball, with his hands almost grazing his belt. His right knee drops and twists, and the swing, opening now, carries his body into a golf-like lift and turn that sweetly frees him while he watches the diminishing dot of the ball headed toward the right corner. What! You can’t hit like that—nobody can! Do it again, Derek.

It’s sobering to think that in just a few weeks Derek Jeter won’t be doing any of this anymore, and will be reduced to picturing himself in action, just the

way the rest of us do. On the other hand, he’s never complained, and he’s been so good at baseball that he’ll probably be really good at this part of it too.

—Roger Angell

THE PICTURES OUR GANG



One afternoon last week, Stuart Murdoch, the founder of the Scottish pop group Belle and Sebastian, was walking along the Gansevoort Woodland section of the High Line, admiring the wildflowers. It was a hot afternoon. At the water feature, children in bathing suits played in the fizz. “If I weren’t talking, I would stop and have a paddle,” Murdoch said. He was dressed in a felt fedora, sunglasses, a striped sweater, and a zip-up

jacket. “I’m a heat seeker,” he said. “San Francisco was the first place I ever visited outside Scotland, in the nineties. My friend and I were invalids, both of us, with chronic fatigue. We couldn’t get warm, because we moved around so little. I sold all my records to fund the trip.”

Murdoch “was poorly,” as he put it, for several years. He turned to Christianity, living for a time in a caretaker’s apartment at a Glasgow church that he still attends, began writing songs, found like-minded friends, returned to health, and, in 1996, formed Belle and Sebastian. He has been healthy, and a pop star, ever since. This week, the movie “God Help the Girl,” a musical that he wrote and directed, comes out. Murdoch was visiting New York for its North American premiere.

Some of Murdoch’s old friends saw parallels to his own story in the film, which surprised him. Its mod and melancholy young heroine, Eve (Emily Browning), is anorexic, and she lives in a hospital. She sneaks out to form a band with two new friends, James (Olly Alexander), a guitarist-lifeguard, and Cassie (Hannah Murray), an ingénue-chanteuse, and she ponders God and visits a Christian faith healer, as Murdoch had done. Mostly, though, the film is about the joy of getting a band together, finding a sound and camaraderie at once—all acoustic guitars, shoo-bops, sunshine, and canoes, like a Belle and Sebastian fever dream.

Eve’s story came to Murdoch much the way instructions came to Joan of Arc. “When Eve first came along as a character, she came as a singer, and her songs came fully formed,” Murdoch said. “Quite often, you wake up with songs. I just had to write them down. The songs were a blueprint for the film. I could empathize with Eve, and I liked her. It was fun to be around those guys”—the three characters. He added, “I’m talking like a child with invisible friends.” Spirituality helped his screenwriting process. “You’re used to listening for something else,” he said. “I just sat down and let the characters talk. It was a bit like ‘Seinfeld,’ without the gags.” He gestured toward the city. “It’s on my mind here. ‘Seinfeld’ is like my second family.” He smiled. “The gang.”

He descended the High Line stairs, and said, of the guitarist for Belle and Sebastian, “Stevie Jackson said that it took him back to the early days of the group.



“As you go through life, take time to monetize the roses.”

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There were definitely things in common. The moment where Eve seems to tell a couple of people what to do and then suddenly they're playing 'Come Monday Night,' with the strings and everything—when you have a group of like-minded people it's not that hard." And, like the movie's trio, who have a "Tom Sawyer adventure" outdoors, "we had this honeymoon period where we were joined at the hip, and we'd go on day trips."

After a few blocks, Murdoch wandered into Star Struck Vintage Clothing, on Greenwich Avenue. Inside, there were racks of fur wraps, go-go dresses, Adidas track pants, and rock-band T-shirts. "Jolene," by Dolly Parton, was playing. "Weird," Murdoch said. "This was playing at breakfast this morning in the hotel. It's a good one." He held up a Yes T-shirt ("That's a great band but a terrible T-shirt. Not the classic logo at all"), checked out two dresses for his wife (charming, too much polyester), and headed toward some jackets.

"I was watching a 'Seinfeld' yesterday called 'The Jacket,' in which Jerry buys a suede jacket," he said. He reenacted a highlight: George, apoplectic, imagining its cost. He examined a navy-and-orange varsity jacket. "Syracuse?" he asked.



Stuart Murdoch

"Where's Syracuse?" He put it on and flapped his arms. "Too big—too everything," he said. Then he held up a red sleeve and gasped: a zip-up jacket, just his size, in a Royal Stewart plaid. "Oh, that is *such* a great jacket." He looked at the price tag and startled a bit. "I'm having a moment like George has," he said. He put it

on. "It's in great condition. It's obviously from way back. It's not for everyday wearing—choose your occasion." He walked to the mirror. "It is *perfect*. But I can't until the next record comes out. I know that sounds a little bit Scottish." He took off the jacket and gazed at it, wistfully. "Somebody else is going to have the good fortune of wearing it."

—Sarah Larson

THE SPORTING LIFE PRACTICE COURTS



Fans at the U.S. Open divide into two castes—one with seats in the nosebleeds, the other next to Alec Baldwin—and each abides by its own dress code. Close to the court, there's mostly gingham, khaki, and Lilly Pulitzer; up top, an alarming number of adults dress in full tennis attire, as if they might be asked to join a mixed-doubles match at any moment. Experienced Open-goers of all types have long known, however, that the best view of Rafael Nadal, available to anyone with a grounds pass and a little moxie, was on the tournament's practice courts: there, where the players warm up, all that separated fans from the athletes was a chain-link fence and a wall of bushes. Those with enough daring would pause, glance sideways to check for security guards, and then dive in, as if entering C. S. Lewis's wardrobe.

For this year's tournament, to improve the fan experience and cut back on its gardening bill, the Open christened a new thirteen-hundred-seat viewing gallery above five dedicated practice courts. "I can't say I blame them," Danny Zausner, the facility's chief operating officer, said, of fans who had gone trailblazing for a closeup of Maria Sharapova. "The players have become such rock stars. What we've done is created backstage." The guest list has quickly filled up. On the tournament's first day, John McEnroe strolled the courts in a Rage Against the Machine T-shirt, blurring caste distinctions. The seats were filled to capacity, while other spectators stood at ground level, two or three deep, behind a wall of blue

mesh that made the players look a little like orcas, swimming around in a tank at SeaWorld. Last Tuesday, when Roger Federer's hitting session was announced, so many people tried to squeeze in that the fire marshal closed off the stands. The men in gingham, unused to being turned away, pleaded with security, to no avail. "You don't feel as much privacy," Federer said afterward, of the new setup. On the plus side, he added, fans, "don't have to break all the rules possible to walk over trees."

The practice courts had become more of a spectacle than a place for the monastic work that builds a champion, but most players seemed willing to battle traffic on the Long Island Expressway to get in a session. (Novak Djokovic, an exception to many conventions, usually stays in a house in New Jersey equipped with an artificial lake, where he goes fishing; an egg-shaped hyperbaric chamber, which he has used to boost red blood cells; and a private practice court.) "Andy hit in Grand Central once, but the court was greased lightning," Brad Gilbert, an ESPN commentator and Andy Roddick's old coach, said last week, referring to the court hidden away on the train station's fourth floor. He meant that the balls skidded faster and lower than at the Open, offering poor preparation for the real thing. Gilbert, who was dressed to play—aquamarine top, matching sneakers—noted that three-time Open champ Ivan Lendl used to rebuild his personal court every year to the same specifications as the Open. "The exact formula," Gilbert went on. "Whoever resurfaced the courts here, I'm sure they resurfaced the court at his house." As he talked, Roger Federer walked off the practice courts, while Serena Williams warmed up. "More than anything, you're just getting a little sweat in," Gilbert said. "If you're working on something technical at this point, you're in trouble."

Practice space at the Open is apportioned in keeping with a player's position in the food chain: Federer and Williams got their own courts, but those with double-digit rankings might be squeezed onto a single court with three other players. Williams, the top women's seed, had requested the court farthest from the fans, while the near court was occupied by Simona Halep, the tournament's No. 2 seed. Several

hundred fans huddled in the stands nearest Williams. Eleven people sat above Halep.

Gilbert said that practice had changed since his coaching days. "Now players have a whole team," he said, of the retinues that accompany top players. Williams, who wore a butterscotch top that matched her hair color du jour, was joined by her coach, her full-time hitting partner, and two people shagging stray



Serena Williams

balls. The social order at the Open had shifted, too. When Gilbert was coaching Roddick and Andre Agassi, he said, Americans were given special treatment. "They used to keep Court 5, which is now a match court, by that Heineken thing"—a two-story beer bar—"for American players to practice." What happened? "Well, we used to have a lot of good players." There are no longer any courts reserved for Americans, and not much need: this year, only three men, the fewest in history, made it to the tournament's second round. Time to practice.

—Reeves Wiedeman

THE BOARDS KABOOM



When Lady Gaga wanted to slosh around in three hundred gallons of slime, while singing "Born This Way" on "Good Morning America," she turned to J&M Special Effects, in

Brooklyn. The company started in 1985, in a SoHo basement, with two fog machines. It now occupies an eleven-thousand-square-foot warehouse on the Gowanus Canal and handles everything from explosives and weaponry to bulk confetti, especially for live shows. If you enjoyed the sixteen hundred gallons of blood in the Metropolitan Opera's "Parsifal" or the seventy feet of flying fire in "Romeo and Juliet" starring Orlando Bloom, you have witnessed the firm's handiwork.

As Jeremy Chernick, an effects designer who has worked with the shop for eight years, explained the other day, a special effect is, basically, "a thing that no one else wants to do." (Chernick's recent theatre credits: Rocky's bloody nose, the genie smoke in "Aladdin.") A baby-faced forty-three-year-old from Teaneck, New Jersey, Chernick was recently hired to design effects for the Broadway revival of "You Can't Take It with You," the 1936 George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart comedy. In the play, a member of an eccentric New York family makes homemade fireworks in the cellar ("which is a terrible idea," Chernick clarified). He and Bohdan Bushell, a pyrotechnician at J&M, were about to give a demo for ten or so people, including the play's director, Scott Ellis; the set and lighting designers; a tech supervisor, who said tech-supervisorish things ("If he can reload it from the walkable truss the next day, then we should be O.K."); and the producer Jeffrey Richards, who said producerish things ("Are you going to tell us how much each cue costs?").

The group walked to the back of the warehouse, past shelves of road cases and cartons labelled "Pirate Queen Steam Hose" and "Billy Elliot Snow." "I'm looking for something rather spectacular," Ellis explained, adding, "The last time this play was done on Broadway was thirty years ago, so they didn't have stuff like this." Richards said, "We had no special effects on 'The Bridges of Madison County.' Just real human emotion." (It closed after four months.)

First up was a small effect for Act I, when a character played by Mark Linn-Baker enters holding a frying pan full of firecrackers. The team gathered around a skillet-like contraption on the

floor, and Chernick called out, "Firing in three ... two ... one ..." He pressed a button, and the object emitted five small blasts of white sparks, followed by a tiny puff of smoke. The designers nodded. "Could an actor hold it if it were in a pan?" someone asked.

"I think so," Chernick said. "I used a similar product in 'Aladdin,' and they tap-dance literally standing on top of it."

They moved on to the end of Act I, when Linn-Baker ignites some explosive powder, "shedding a soft glow over the room," according to Kaufman and Hart's stage directions. Bushell brandished a rod that let out a hissing red flame, like that of a blowtorch. The group seemed underwhelmed. "It has to be romantic," Ellis said. (One character calls it "the most beautiful red fire in the world.") "That feels like just a flare. Is there another way to explore the red?"

"Absolutely," Chernick said. "A lot of this is to create a conversation."

Then, the big one: the end of Act II, when a character leaves a lit pipe in the basement and accidentally sets off a year's worth of firecrackers. Chernick had designed a sequence of fourteen blasts, including a ricochet effect off the stage-left wall. "It might be super smoky in here," Chernick warned, then let'er rip: *Pop! Hiss! Pow! Screech! Boom!* The resulting spectacle looked like something Wile E. Coyote might walk out of, blackened and chastened.

The team peppered him with questions: Could the explosions build into more of a crescendo? (Yes.) Would there be this much smoke onstage? (No.) Could they add more colors? "The colors I chose are red, white, and green," Chernick said. "But all colors are essentially up for grabs."

"What about red, white, and blue?" Richards suggested. "It's an all-American comedy."

Finally, the team demonstrated an effect that Ellis had requested that wasn't in the script: a huge cascade of fireworks during the curtain call. They lit up the warehouse ceiling, sending a shower of sparks to the concrete floor. It felt almost patriotic.

"They look great," Ellis said, smiling.

Chernick assured him, "They make the audience applaud."

—Michael Schulman

PHI BETA FOOTBALL

A nice piece of change.

BY JOHN MCPHEE



At a reception in Castine, Maine, years ago, I was introduced to and then left alone with Dick MacPherson, who at the time was the head coach of the New England Patriots. I had no idea what to say. What on earth could I possibly say to the coach of the New England Patriots? Then, out of somewhere, I remembered that Dick MacPherson was born and raised in Old Town, Maine, on the Penobscot River, next door to the University of Maine, in Orono. When I was seven, eight, nine years old, in Princeton, New Jersey, our next-door neighbor was Tad Wieman, Princeton's football coach, who went on to become the athletic director at the University of Maine.

So I said to Dick MacPherson, "You must have known Tad Wieman."

Responding in a split second, he said, "Unbalanced line, unbalanced mind."

In the mid-twentieth century, Princeton football hung on to a fossil offense called single wing while most college teams were mating the quarterback to the center of the line in the formation called "T." Tad Wieman's single wing was pure power football. The center was not in the center. One side was overloaded, and, with certain exceptions, you battered that side.

I acquired some of this knowledge at an early age, by osmosis. Not only were Wieman and his family next door but my father, an M.D., was the football team's doc-

tor. Margaret Wieman, the coach's wife, was a close friend of my mother. In the fall in Palmer Stadium, the two of them attended every home game in a fifty-yard-line box over a vomitorium. I was six or seven when they took me with them for the first time. I sat between my mother and Mrs. Wieman. On each play, offense and defense, Mrs. Wieman screamed. It began low. As a play developed, it crescendoed. Before runner and tackler came together, it had become a major shriek, which abruptly stopped as the play ended. Bronco Van Lengen took the snap from center, followed his blockers on a sweep, and before he was halfway around, Mrs. Wieman's voice was curdling blood. And that was my basic introduction to football.

Aged eight, I was promoted to a position on the field. Actually, I was with the college players on various fields all week long. I was in grade school in what is now a university building, and every fall day after soccer I went down the street to university football practice and hung around my father, the trainers, the student managers, the coaches, the team. A football jersey—black with orange tiger stripes on the sleeves, the number 33 front and back—was made for me by the same company that made the big guys' uniforms. On Saturdays, I went down a slanting tunnel with the team and onto the playing field in Palmer Stadium. After they scored—and in those days they really scored—I went behind the goalpost and caught the extra point.

There were indelible moments. Bronco Van Lengen goes off tackle at the closed end of the horseshoe and a great cheer rises, but Bronco is lying on the grass and not getting up. It looks so serious that not only the head trainer but my father as well hurry to the scene and kneel beside Bronco's unstimulating body. Bronco opens one eye. He sees the teams collected on the one-yard line and waiting to resume play. He says, "Didn't I score?" Actually, not that time, Bronco. Bronco leaps up off the grass, adjusts his helmet, and joins the huddle.

Wieman won four straight against Yale in those years. Before one Yale game, he collected his team and unfurled before them a banner large enough to cover ten guys at once, or so it seemed to me. The banner was black with orange block letters a foot and a half high that said "PRINCETON." Speaking quietly, Wieman told his cloistered team that the banner before them represented what they were

Single-wing days: Princeton athletes, including Dick Kazmaier, were national gods.

about to do, and nothing they had ever done was more important. Before then, I had never witnessed such a solemn scene. Wieman, of course, was not alone in this genre of forensic coaching. And, a decade later, Herman Hickman, of Yale, was said to up the ante, telling his players that representing Yale on the football field would forever be the pinnacle of their lives.

My father played football at Oberlin, class of 1917, notably in a game won by Ohio State 128–0. Before Oberlin, he had been a three-season athlete at Rayen High School, in Youngstown. Contemplating one or more of his varsity letters there, he cut the leg off the “R.” He had never been east of western Pennsylvania, but he had nonetheless developed a mystical sense of Princeton, whose athletes were national gods during his high-school years. Later, as a doctor, he worked first at Iowa State, but he soon found his career post at Princeton. The younger of my father’s two brothers had the same names I have, first and last. He was my Uncle Jack. He was executive secretary of the Youngstown Y and later sold industrial lubricants to the steel industry, but on weekends he was a football official. It was Uncle Jack who threw the first flag in big-time football. Ordinarily a field judge or head linesman, he was in this instance refereeing a game at Ohio State. Officials used to carry wee horns strapped to their wrists. On observing an infraction—anywhere on the scale from offside to unnecessary roughness—they blew the horns, and that was their penalty signal for more than fifty years. Uncle Jack had been there, blown that, and in Ohio Stadium he had experienced louder, more continuous dins than he ever would in any steel plant. Much of the time, no one on the field could hear the wee horns. At the suggestion of his friend Dwight Beede, the coach of Youngstown College, Uncle Jack took a red-and-white bandanna to Columbus and, instead of blowing the horn, whipped the bandanna out of his pocket and dropped it on the ground. The idea had arisen here and there across the years, but now its time had come. John Griffith, the conference commissioner, instructed all Big Ten officials to show up at all Big Ten games with flags in their pockets the following week.

Before that, when I was a child, Uncle Jack had been an Eastern College Athletic

Conference official, and his work included games in what is now the Ivy League. In the locker room before my first of those games—when I was with the team and about to go onto the field—my father leaned down and said to me, in a low steely voice, “Remember: do not talk to, or even recognize, your Uncle Jack.” I had long since been taught that Uncle Jack—head linesman, in black and white stripes—was an official officially impartial.

Down the tunnel we went and out onto the stadium field. I saw the officials clustered near the fifty-yard line. I have never suffered from oppositional defiant disorder. Pure excitement stripped me of restraint, and in my orange-and-black tiger-striped jersey I shouted, “Uncle Jack! Uncle Jack! Uncle Jack!”

A year or two later, on a November Saturday of cold, wind-driven rain—when I was about ten—I was miserable on the stadium sidelines. The rain stung my eyes, and I was shivering. Looking up at the press box, where I knew there were space heaters, I saw those people sitting dry under a roof, and decided then and there to become a writer.

In following years, I did not play football, but in one way or another it continued to be close around me. One of my college roommates won the Heisman Trophy. Another played safety, catching punts and getting crushed in the absence of the fair-catch rule. A third—an English major, like me—was the quarterback. Their coach was Charlie Caldwell, and the team was undefeated two straight years. One day on the campus, I happened to encounter the coach, and he told me he was writing a book—on football, what else, although it could have been baseball (he had pitched three games for the New York Yankees and had coached Princeton baseball for two seasons). He said he was having difficulty finding a title for the football book and asked me to help him, adding, “If you come up with something good, I’ll give you a nice piece of change.” I went away thinking, mostly about the piece of change. A week later, I suggested that he call his book “Phi Beta Football.” He called it “Modern Single-Wing Football.”

One of my cousins (who was also a college classmate) was an All-American end in two of his three eligible years. Freshmen had their own teams then. Some of us played freshman basketball. Our coach

was Eddie Donovan, a former Holy Cross athlete, who also coached Princeton baseball and J.V. football. Even in his fifties and sixties, Eddie Donovan seemed to be the best all-around athlete who had ever set foot on the Princeton campus, whether he was hitting his precision fungoes, outshooting Bill Bradley at h-o-r-s-e, or besting various champions in squash, tennis, and golf. He took his J.V. football team to Maryland when the Maryland varsity was among the highest ranked nationally. Right from the kickoff, Donovan’s J.V.s outscored the Maryland J.V.s and pushed them all over College Park. In the second half, things changed. Maryland scored, scored again, scored again. Sending in a substitute, Donovan said to the player coming off the field, “What is going on out there?” The player said, “Coach, those are the same uniforms but different guys.”

The varsity quarterback I mentioned was George Stevens, who went on to be headmaster of New Canaan Country School. The punt-catching safety was John McGillicuddy, who became the C.E.O. of Manufacturers Hanover Trust and eventually merged it with Chemical Bank. His high-school field in Harrison, New York, is named for him. The Heisman winner was Dick Kazmaier, who went to Harvard Business School instead of the N.F.L. All three are no longer alive. There were ten of us around a central living room, where a sign on a wall asked what it might have been like to be a college roommate of Red Grange. As I said in an introduction at an event some fifty years later, we knew what it was like to live with Dick. He had better things to do than play gin rummy. He drew a tight circle around his teammates, roommates, and other friends. Across the years, he often said that what mattered to him most at Princeton was, in his words, “what I was part of: I was like every other student.” He alluded to the Heisman Trophy and all that went with it as “an unusual external part of the picture.”

He was enduringly superstitious. When he went down the tunnel into Palmer Stadium for football games, he was always the last player. It had been so augured. Somewhere. He told George the quarterback never to let him touch the ball on Princeton’s first play. In the old single wing, the tailback and the fullback always lined up where either one could take

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CONDÉ NAST

the snap. Dick was the tailback, Russ McNeil the fullback. After other teams somehow became aware of Kazmaier's superstition, Russ McNeil, on the first play, went down like General Custer. The number that Kazmaier wore—42—became his lucky number. His Massachusetts license plate was KA42. His e-mail address was RWK4252@earthlink.net ('52 being his class year). When he was in a restaurant, if the check came to x dollars and forty-two cents he was made happier than he could ever be by the sum contents of ten thousand fortune cookies. Seat No. 42 in any kind of theatre or arena was a good-luck seat. His company, Kazmaier Associates, on Elm Street, in Concord, Massachusetts, seemed to have a tentacle in every aspect of most known sports, from the international licensing of basketball broadcasts to the manufacture and sale of baseball uniforms and football helmets. Dick's parking space at Kazmaier Associates was No. 42. There were thirty-six spaces in the parking lot.

Those of us who are still around are in our eighties now. For a decade or so, I have been back on Princeton sidelines in the sorcerous capacity of Faculty Fellow of Men's Lacrosse. This has not passed unnoticed by my daughters, least of all the youngest, Martha, who also teaches writing in a college (Hofstra) but does not haunt the stadium there. Recently, after listening to one of my game summaries over the telephone, Martha said, "Dad, when you were eight years old you were a mascot on the sidelines at Princeton, and you're a mascot on the Princeton sidelines now."

Bill Belichick has come to Princeton with the Johns Hopkins men's lacrosse team. Belichick loves lacrosse. He once warmed up a Hopkins goalie. The fact that recent N.C.A.A. final fours in college lacrosse have been held in the N.F.L. stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, owes itself to the fact that he coaches there. He grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, where lacrosse goals are in people's yards and lacrosse has more status than football. He played lacrosse for Annapolis High School and in a PG year at Andover. He played at Wesleyan. His children are lacrosse players. I have not had the moxie even to think of approaching him. What on earth could I possibly say to the coach of the New England Patriots? ♦

HOW TO CONTACT THE AUTHOR

BY HEATHER HAVRILESKY

I love to hear from my readers. My readers are my everything, and hearing from them makes me feel so blessed! **SO, CONNECT WITH ME, ALREADY!** Here's how:

E-MAIL ME at mary.danforth5493@gmail.com.

Friend me on **FACEBOOK**. My readers are my besties 5ever!

come, any time of day. Feel free to push my boundaries! When my readers interrupt my life with their inquisitive digital messages, I feel truly blessed.

Also, **CALL ME AT HOME**, anytime! I'd love to hear your voice right now. 1-555-913-1213. My readers are my sun and my moon and my stars, and I adore it when they check in with me, even when

tor of my will? Because that would mean the world to me, it truly would. <3 <3

In fact, if you drop by and I'm not home? **SLEEP WITH MY HUSBAND**. Seriously, go ahead. It's fun! You are amazing and you totally deserve this little gift to yourself. ;-)

And if I am home? Boy, are we going to have a good time together! But I guess by now it goes without saying that all of my readers are my forever lovers and **I WANT TO BE PHYSICALLY INTIMATE WITH EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU**.

Wait. Why are you making that face?

Stop looking around. Of course I can't see you! But I still know you well enough to know how you're feeling. (We're besties, remember?)

O.K., also? **DON'T FREAK OUT**, but I'm a little bit surprised that you haven't e-mailed me yet. No biggie—just e-mail me sometime soon, 'kay?

And you are going to follow me on Twitter, right? And if you don't friend me on Facebook soon it'll be hard not to take that personally. Honestly? It hurts my feelings that you haven't checked out my family photos on Instagram yet. Of course I care! You mean everything to me—isn't that obvious? Jesus. I feel like I keep saying the same thing over and over and you're not even listening!

Seriously, **WHAT IS HAPPENING TO US?** Do you even **REMEMBER WHAT WE USED TO MEAN TO EACH OTHER?**

Oh, my God, you have the gall to play dumb? You never text or call or stop by, and you haven't given me power of attorney yet. How am I *supposed* to feel?

Yeah, sure. You care enough to read my damn books, but you don't care enough to have intimate relations with my spouse. I mean, how does that make the *slightest* bit of sense?

You know what? Forget it. I'm done. It is *over*. All of my readers are dead to me, 6ever. I'm unfriending and unfollowing and unliking every last one of you. Do me a favor and **LOSE MY NUMBER**, and my Twitter handle, and my address and my Social Security number and all of my credit-card numbers and security passwords and the name of my favorite pet. :-(

You can all **GO TO HELL**, 7ever!

Please do buy my book on Amazon, though.

Please.

Pretty please? ♦



Follow me on **TWITTER**: @youcompletete33. I follow back, because I want to know what you're thinking about, every second of every day. Your little mind-doodles are sweet nourishment to my soul!

Add me to your network on **LINKEDIN**. Networking is so awesome!

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DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR ME? Tweet away! I ♥ reader questions, no matter how personal or prying. I can't wait to reply to your inquiries in front of hundreds of strangers!

Why don't you **TEXT ME**, in fact? I love getting texts from my readers: 1-555-913-1212. Sexts are also totally wel-

I'm about to sit down for dinner or I'm in the middle of watching something on TV. My readers are my first priority, always.

In fact, **DROP BY MY HOUSE!** I love it when readers swing by and say hello and introduce themselves: 554 Ruby Lane, Sacramento, CA 95831. I feel so blessed when someone cares enough to invade my personal space! Dinnertime works fine. Middle of the night, also perfect. I am so incredibly humbled to have you in my life, whoever the hell you are!

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Have you considered adding me as a beneficiary on your life-insurance policy? (Click [HERE](#) for my Social Security number.) What about making me your kid's god-parent? Would you like to be the execu-

LETTER FROM MAURITANIA

FREEDOM FIGHTER

A slaving society and an abolitionist's crusade.

BY ALEXIS OKEOWO



Two springs ago, Biram Dah Abeid arrived home in Nouakchott, the desert capital of Mauritania. At the airport, he was welcomed by hundreds of supporters, along with his wife and children. Abeid, the founder of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement, is the most prominent anti-slavery activist in Mauritania, which is said to have the highest incidence of slavery in the world. It was Friday, the holiest day of the week, and Abeid, returning from a trip to Berlin and Dakar, was enraged. Recently, he had helped force the government to put a slave owner in prison, and he had learned that the man was released after less than two months.

Abeid, a forty-nine-year-old man with hooded, intense eyes and a warm demeanor, went to his house, and changed from his Western suit into a traditional Mauritanian bubu, a long, loose embroidered tunic. He was going to lead a public prayer nearby, in Riyadh, a section of the city with rocky lots, narrow sand-bleached streets, and pastel-painted concrete houses. When he arrived, a few hundred people had assembled under a bright sun. Men sat on a wide mat on an empty stretch of street, wrapping their turbans tight to ward off dust. Women and children gathered behind them. Activists, sympathetic residents, and the press had been alerted

that this prayer was going to be special.

In 1981, Mauritania became the last country in the world to abolish slavery, while making no provision for punishing slave owners. In 2007, under international pressure, it passed a law that allowed slaveholders to be prosecuted. Yet slavery persists there, even as the government and religious leaders deny it. Although definitive numbers are difficult to find, the Global Slavery Index estimates that at least a hundred and forty thousand people are enslaved in Mauritania, out of a population of 3.8 million. Bruce Hall, a professor of African history at Duke University, said that people endure slavelike conditions in other countries in the region, but that the problem in Mauritania is unusually severe: "Some proximate form of slavery has continued to be a foundation of the social structure and the division of labor within households, so there are many more people who are willing to support it as an institution." While Abeid was travelling, a well-known imam had given a televised interview. A journalist asked whether slavery existed in Mauritania, and the imam said no. Then why, the journalist asked, had the imam recently given the journalist's boss a slave girl as a gift? The imam simply smiled.

Many Mauritanian slaves, isolated by illiteracy, poverty, and geography, do not recognize the possibility of a life outside servitude, and part of Abeid's mission is to make them aware. The job is complicated. Slaves are tied to their masters by tradition, by economic necessity, and, Abeid argues, by a misinterpretation of Islam.

Mauritania is an avowedly Muslim country, and though the constitution endorses both secular and religious law, in civic matters Islamic precepts dominate. But the Koran is ambiguous on the essential question of whether slavery should exist. In much of the world, Muslim scholars argue that the only Islamic basis for slavery is in jihad: after conquering unbelievers, Muslim warriors may take them as slaves, provided that they treat them well. In Mauritania, there is little consensus. Imams who defend slavery often refer to a set of interpretive texts that date back as far as the eighth century. One prominent example is a *mukhtasar*, or handbook of Islamic law, written by the fourteenth-century Egyptian scholar Khalil ibn Ishaq.

Biram Dah Abeid is from the country's traditional slave caste, the Haratin.

According to its precepts, a slave cannot marry without her master's permission, nor does she have any right to her children; a free man who murders a slave will not be punished by death, but a slave who murders a free man will be; slaves are whipped for fornicating, though a master may have sex with his slave girl; and slaves may not inherit property or give testimony in court.

At Abeid's public prayer, a member of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (known as IRA) stood to say that he was against any interpretation of Islam that violated its principle of egalitarianism. An imam spoke against slavery and inequity. Another man called for a Haiti-style slave revolt. As they spoke, a plainclothes policeman jumped up and shouted, "*Allahu Akbar!* What you are saying is wrong!" Men escorted him away.

Abeid came to the microphone, and reporters pushed voice recorders in front of him. "Today will be a historic day," he said in Hassaniya, the local Arabic dialect. "We will begin today to clean the faith of Mauritania. We will purify the slaves and the slave owners, because both need to be purified. There is a group of bad people who are guarding Islam and using it however they want, and that group is dividing society, putting some people on top and some people down—not because of what they are doing or who they are but because of the color of their skin. We will stop that today." The crowd murmured in agreement. Abeid is a theatrical speaker, with an impassioned voice that fluctuates wildly, and a habit of preacher-like pauses between phrases.

Abeid addressed the authoritarian government of President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, a former officer who took power in a 2008 coup. "Start your campaign against me," Abeid said, his voice rising nearly to a shout. "Say that I am against religion. Write that and say that in your mosques. Give money to your slaves and send them to say that everywhere—that will not help you." The audience watched, transfixed, as he railed against the authorities. "We don't have to explain ourselves to them," he said. "We are not afraid and we don't need their money. Sometimes we have nothing but water for dinner. But we are not afraid. They are false Muslims, so they cannot evaluate our Islam. No one can have more conviction than us, because we

say the truth. If we die, it will be from the front, not the back. We will not run away."

He called President Aziz an ignorant military man with whom it was pointless to negotiate, and he suggested that religious leaders were little better. For years, Abeid had asked the Supreme Council for Fatwa and Grievances to prohibit slavery; he would not ask anymore. IRA would free slaves on its own. "Where are my books?" he said, snapping his fingers. Earlier that week, Abeid had sent IRA leaders to the market to buy a number of books that interpreted Islamic law. "These books justify selling people, they justify raping people," he said. "We will purify the religion, the faith, and the hearts of Mauritania." He held up a red hardcover with intricate embossing. "What the Prophet says was hidden by these books, which are not real words from God," he said. "These old books give a bad image of Islam. We have no choice but to take this step."

One of Abeid's bodyguards dropped the books into a cardboard box and doused them in lighter fluid. The crowd was on its feet, peering at the spectacle. No one had expected this. Defacing the holy books of Islam is a crime of apostasy, punishable by death. Abeid set the books on fire.

Mauritania, on the west coast of Africa, is a vast, empty landscape of sand dunes that swirl down to iron-ore pits in the Sahara. It is an impoverished place, supported mostly by mining and fishing, and by military aid from the West, given in exchange for helping to fight terrorism in the region. Since a drought struck the Sahel in the nineteen-sixties, the country has been collapsing in on its cities, as nomads and farmers in search of work migrate from sandy hinterlands to slightly less sandy urban areas. Nouakchott, the largest city, feels marooned in time: aged buildings with faded paint, a few elegant homes hidden behind gardens, and shops and offices that sit in near-stasis, in a heavy heat that relents only during the rainy season.

The city stands at the crossroads of sub-Saharan and northern Africa, which helps to explain its vexed ethnic politics. In the course of centuries, Berbers and Arabs came to inhabit the region, and they took black African slaves. Over time, the bloodlines of the masters

and the slaves intermixed and they came to share a language and cultural practices; as the masters imposed their traditions, the slaves lost their own. These days in Mauritania, people speak of the mingled Arab-Berbers as Beydanes and the slaves as Haratin. The Beydanes, a minority, hold most of the country's wealth and political power. The Haratin, who typically have darker skin, are regarded as a permanent underclass, even after they are freed. Abeid is a Haratin, as are all the people he rescues.

To free slaves and to force the government to imprison slave owners, IRA holds sit-ins in front of the justice ministry, stages hunger strikes, and marches through cities and towns around the country. "We are always protesting something," Brahim Abeid, a gregarious IRA vice-president, said. Sometimes, police beat protesters, or spray them with tear gas. After demonstrations, IRA sends press releases to supportive human-rights organizations in Europe and the United States, and circulates them within the Mauritanian diaspora. The government tends to respond to protests in one of two ways: it imprisons activists, or it puts slave owners in jail, only to release them within days and close the cases. Several of the men who spoke at the public prayer were later arrested.

After IRA was founded, in 2008, authorities dismissed the organization, and scoffed that Biram Dah Abeid was protesting because he wanted to be regarded as important. "Whenever we brought a slavery case to the police, they would release the slave owner," Abeid recalled. "We would tell them that they were criminals, and they said, 'Say whatever you want.' I decided that this had to stop. The next time we had a slavery case, the police had to put the slave owner in jail or put us in jail." One day in December, 2010, he learned that two girls were being held as slaves in Nouakchott. That evening, he summoned about eighty activists, and the group went to the house where the girls lived. He alerted the police. An officer showed up with a number of policemen, and said that they would take over. He told the activists to go home. "I told them we would not leave until you free the girls and put these criminals in jail," Abeid recalled. The police blocked the front door, while the slave owner and her sister hid behind them.

Finally, the police took the slaves to

the station, and Abeid and the others followed. For a moment, the activists—schoolteachers, civil servants, the unemployed—remained in a standoff with the police there, a force of some sixty officers. Abeid walked toward a policeman. When the policeman grabbed Abeid's shirt, Abeid butted him twice with his head. "I wanted to go to jail," he said. "When people ask why I am in jail, they will have to know there were two slave girls, and the government refused to put the slave owner in jail." As the activists and the police clashed, Abeid lunged at the police again, and he was arrested. He was jailed for three months; the slave owner was released after nine days. But it was a seminal victory for IRA: the first time that police had imprisoned a slave owner. The organization has since helped to put about twenty others in jail, though often for brief terms. As owners heard about the arrests, they started releasing their slaves, in a ripple of fear. Working through a network of nine thousand activists, IRA

has freed thousands of slaves around the country. Haratin often refer to the former slaves as Biram Frees.

In the countryside, entire communities of slaves live in the service of their masters, on call for labor whenever they are needed. They work as camel and goat herders, and in other menial jobs, starting in early childhood; women and children make up the majority of domestic slaves. Because slave status is matrilineal, they typically serve the same families that their mothers and grandmothers did. They usually sleep and eat in the same quarters as the families' animals.

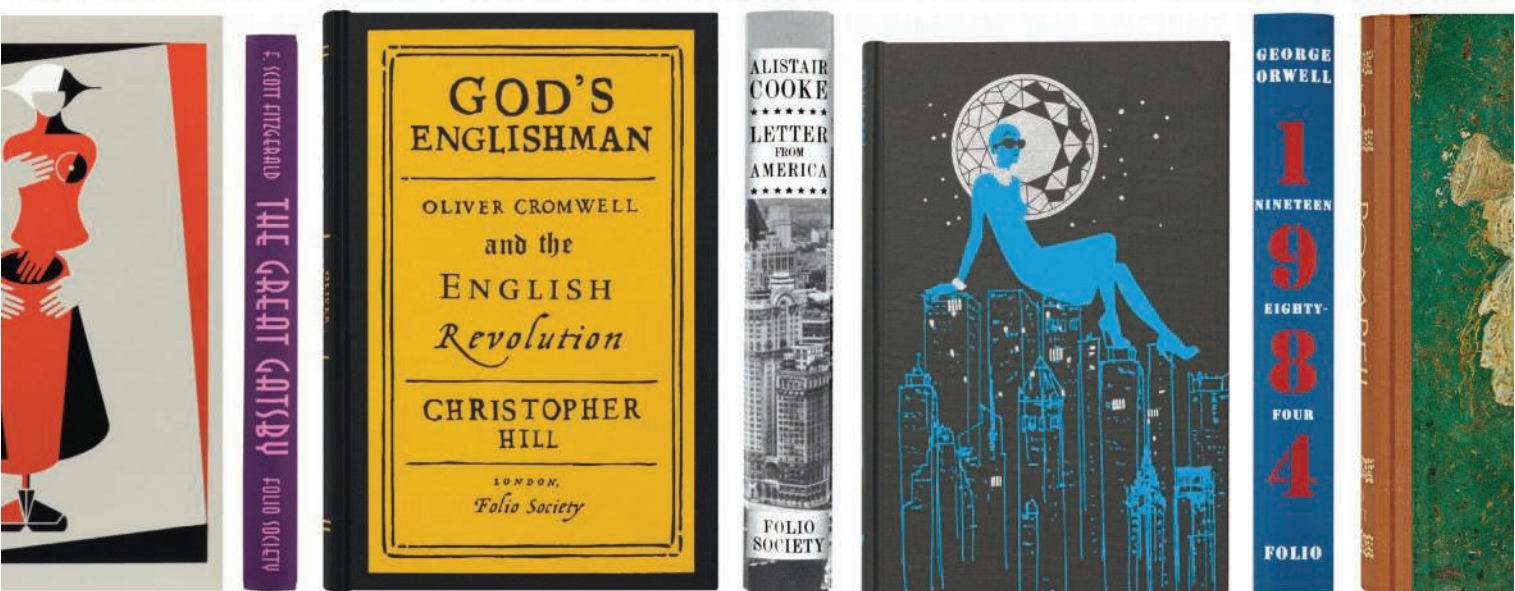
When I met Haby Mint Mahmoud, a former slave, in Nouakchott, she was wearing a pink chiffon hijab. She has a small-boned, delicate face and a serene way of taking up as little space as possible: sitting on the floor, she pulls her legs in close and folds her body over itself. Now in her late thirties, Mahmoud belonged to a woman and her brother since before she could remember. Her

two brothers and her sister were given to her owners' relatives, and she has lost most of her memories of them. Her owners lived in a rural outpost. All day, Mahmoud gathered firewood, herded animals, and went to the well to collect water. In the evening, she cooked for her masters. There was never rest. Nothing she did was good enough; they beat her constantly. When she went to work in the bush, the brother followed and raped her on so many occasions that she lost count. She had two children from the rapes. One, a young boy, is still alive; like other children of slaves and their masters, he was considered a slave. "They were very harsh with me," Mahmoud said, of her owners. "It was not normal." She ran away several times. "I escaped, but the master would always take me back and tell me, 'If you escape again, I will take you to the police.'"

Mauritanian slaves are not restrained by chains; slavery is in large measure an economic and a psychological institution. Slaves are denied secular education, and

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religion permeates the culture. Because Islam is perceived as endorsing slave ownership, questioning slavery is tantamount to questioning Islam. When slaves are told that servitude in this life brings reward in the next one, some believe it. No one in their community who looks like them has ever known another way of life. One former child slave told me, "In the village, when a slave says he does not want to be a slave anymore, people will ask, 'Why? Who are you? Your mother was a slave; your grandmother was a slave. Who are you?'" Their masters, on the other hand, are the embodiment of Allah's likeness. "To the slave, his identity is his master," Abeid said. "The master is his idol, one he can never become, and he is invincible."

When boys come of age, they sometimes manage to leave their masters' families. Adult women are considered minors by Mauritanian custom, and female slaves face greater difficulty escaping. Abeid argues that there is a kind of informal coalition—Beydanes, the state, police, judges,

and imams—that prevents slaves from leaving their masters. "Whenever a slave breaks free and IRA is not aware and not present, police officers and judges help Arab-Berbers to intimidate the slave until he returns in submission," Abeid said. Slave owners use physical abuse and threats of death. Children are beaten and women are raped. Courts have ruled that slave owners have the right to former slaves' inheritances, even to their children.

Still, the masters have begun to worry. In 2008, people in Haby Mint Mahmoud's village began hearing on the radio that IRA was bringing cases against slave owners. Her masters told her that she was free. "They said that because they were scared, like a lot of slave owners around there," she recalled. "They called Biram a criminal and said he was working for the United States and Israel. It was a way to keep me with them." If anyone asked her about her situation, her masters warned her, she should say that she was not a slave.

One of her brothers had escaped

years before, and, after going to IRA about his sister, he came to her village to help her leave. She was terrified. Her masters had always told her that any other life would be unbearable. "Even though they beat me, even though they were against me, they were all I knew," she said. "I did not know where I was going. I was resistant." She is now married to an IRA activist, and participates in a project, run by IRA and the U.N., that teaches sewing to former female slaves. She has learned to read and write. "I became free," she told me. "I met my brothers. My children go to school." Mahmoud began crying, and tried to hide her face. "But since there is slavery in Mauritania I will always feel that I am not free."

Before Abeid was born, his family lived as nomads near the Senegal River, in the south of Mauritania: raising sheep, goats, and cows, farming the fields, and moving by seasons. In the rainy season, they crossed the river to

And that's **just** for openers...



One

They threw me off the hay truck about noon. It was the night before, down at the border, and as soon as I was under the canvas, I went to sleep. I needed after three weeks in The Jauma, and I was still glad they pulled off to one side to let the engine cool. I was sick out and threw me off. I tried some but all I got was a dead gun, so that gag was out. A cigarette, though, and I hid down the road thing to out.

That was when I hit this Twin Oaks Tavern. I but a roadside sandwich joint, like a million others. There was a lunchroom part, and over that where they lived, and off to one side a filling station. I was in a hurry and began looking down the Greek showed. I asked if a guy had been by in was to pick me up here. I said, and we were to have today, said the Greek. He told a place at one of asked me what I was going to have. I said cran fish, fried eggs and bacon, enchilada, flapjack. Pretty soon he came out with the orange juice fishes.

"Hold on, now. One thing I got to tell you. If you show up, you'll have to treat me for it. This was and I'm kind of short, myself."

"Hokay, Bill in up."

Senegal for verdant farmland, and then came back to Mauritania in the dry season. In the early seventies, his family settled in a village called Jidrel Mohguen, where his mother sold seeds, animal skins, and traditional mats in the market. His father had grown old and stopped working. His mother's first two sons were blind, and she prayed for another son until, nine children later, she had Abeid; he was the twelfth of thirteen. His mother nicknamed him Aïnine el Iyil, which means "the eyes of the boys," and his parents cherished him. "I'm the first one who went to school in my family," he told me.

Abeid's childhood friend Hamady Lehbouss, a teacher and an activist with IRA, described him as a normal boy—interested in sports, music, and girls—but also unusually fearless and increasingly aware of the country's inequities. Their village had a half-dozen Beydane families and dozens of Haratin families. Beydanes owned the land, and Abeid's parents and their neighbors farmed it

and turned over a portion of the harvest. He heard his parents talk about how the local administration favored the Beydanes. "Our village was divided into two parts, like apartheid," he said. "That is when I started to see what discrimination was." When escaped slaves reached Abeid's village, they stayed with his family. His mother fed and clothed them, and their children began to say that she was their mother. Abeid pitied the former slaves. At school, he watched as Beydane children went blameless after fights with black classmates, while the headmaster punished the black students. "I started to ask my dad questions about the discrimination I saw in the village," he recalled. "That's when he told me his story."

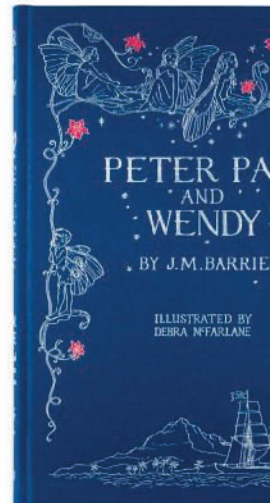
When Abeid was eight, his father told him that he had been born to a slave, and was therefore supposed to be a slave, too. But, while his mother was pregnant, her master had fallen ill, and, heeding the Koranic idea that acts of benevolence will be rewarded, had re-

leased him from slavery before he was born. As a young man, Abeid's father crossed the river to work for a time in Senegal, where he felt free from racial discrimination. Back in Mauritania, he met and married a woman who was a slave, and they had two sons. Full of pride, he went to his wife's master to ask to take his family to Senegal. The master refused. His father went to court, but the judge said, "This is his slave—unless you want to buy her from him." His father did not have enough money, so he pleaded to at least take his sons, but the judge refused him again. The French colonial governor told Abeid's father that the dispute fell under Islamic law and that he could not interfere. Defeated, the father left his wife and children and went back to Senegal. Later, a friend introduced him to Abeid's mother, and they were married.

"My father wanted to have the evidence to oppose slavery," Abeid told me. "But he did not have the capacity to convince himself and others intellectually

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and spiritually.” Despite the trauma of losing his first family, he still believed this was the way Islam had ordained things to be. Abeid’s secular and religious education allowed him to question more than his father had. “I freed myself,” he said. He began reading the teachings of Muhammad, which seemed to him to be clearly against slavery. Later, he read books of Western philosophy that supported this conviction. “My problem is not with religion,” he told me. “It’s with the interpretation of religion as the origin, the justification, and the legitimatization of slavery. The use of Islam, not Islam.”

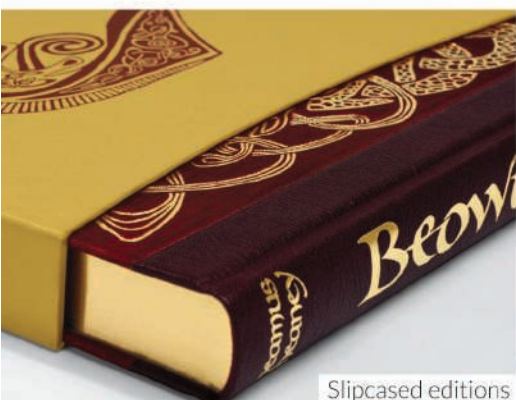
Abeid told his father that he wanted to fight back. He wrote manifestos about the situation of the Haratin and distributed them around the school in the morning, before the teachers and other students arrived. “There was no other way to inform people,” Lehbouss said. Abeid felt that the villagers, white and black, hated him for questioning slavery. “I remember the discussions I

had, not just with students but also with teachers, about discrimination and slavery,” he said. “My whole life has been filled with these kinds of discussion. But they were not open to understanding and helping me.” Parents warned their children not to spend time with the boy with the foolish ideas.

He left for the University of Nouakchott to study law, but, after a year and a half, he ran out of money. The university’s dean already disliked him, for participating in protests for better services on campus. He took an administrative job in the court system, where he worked for the next ten years. While living in the northern city of Nouadhibou, he married and had two daughters. But he eventually quit the courts, frustrated with his superiors. He sold his car and his other possessions, divorced his wife, and reënrolled in the university in Nouakchott, leaving the children behind. “Maybe he has to make the choice between being a good father and a good leader,” Lehbouss told me. “It’s not pos-

sible to do both at the same time.” In his thirties, Abeid went to Senegal to get a master’s degree in history, and he wrote his thesis on slavery. His father had died, but Abeid was still searching for evidence to convince him that slavery was wrong. “I would have liked him to be here when I burned the books,” Abeid said. “It would have been a great moral satisfaction.”

In 2003, he did field work in Mauritania, supervised by a prominent abolitionist named Ahmed Khlive. For most of the year, the two stayed up nights discussing the history of slavery in Mauritania, and the conversations sometimes lasted into the morning. When Khlive left for work, his teen-age daughter Leila—fair-skinned, with a cherubic face—made tea for Abeid, and they talked for hours. “He had principles, he was clearly fighting for human rights,” Leila told me; her grandmother had been a slave, and she shared some of Abeid’s zeal. They are now married, and have two young sons and a daughter. “Sometimes



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Hide and Seek

I see him in the middle of the night or during the day, and he is absent. I ask him what he's thinking about, and he says he's thinking about how to win this fight. Even if it's just him and me together, we don't talk about anything else," she said. "For another person, it could be a big deal, but for me it's not. I am engaged in this fight. I support him."

By eight o'clock on the evening of the book burning, local news Web sites had begun calling Abeid a heretic. "When I went to bed, I was satisfied," he told me. "But I had a feeling something would happen tomorrow. When I woke up, it was a war—in the media, in the mosques." Newspapers were calling for his death. His phone and Internet had stopped working. Activists flocked to his home, and a steady stream of reporters came for interviews. He prepared himself for the police, and, as the hours dragged on with no sign of them, he thought that the government must want him to run away. In the evening, some journalists told him that they had seen police cars headed to his house.

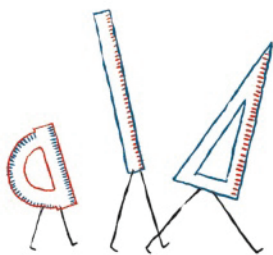
The police came at nine-thirty and put him in a squad car. "It was dark, and we didn't know where we were going," Abeid said. At the police station, Abeid's cell was filthy, full of mosquitoes, and cramped; five other activists were also imprisoned. Policemen brought a television to the cell, and Abeid watched Mauritians calling for his death on the news. Hundreds of people had gathered in the streets to protest. Abeid recalled watching as President Aziz appeared onscreen and promised to administer the death penalty.

The police asked Abeid to state on camera why he had burned the books. He refused, suspecting that they would manipulate the video. During his time in prison, the authorities spread a rumor that he was an Israeli agent. "They said I work for the Jews," he recalled. "It's a way to make the Mauritanian people turn against me." The idea gained currency among Beydanes, and blacks and whites argued about his arrest in offices, markets, and mosques.

Police allowed Leila to visit him once, and after that he had no contact with the outside world. He settled into a calm, waiting to die or to be released. But when Haratin guards delivered his

meals they would flash him the victory sign. "I understood that things outside were positive for us," he said. "We had some support." IRA led thousands-strong protests. Haratin marched in the streets. After four months, he was released, and as he left he thought, We won. A scrawl of black paint now marks a wall near where the book burning took place as "Shar'a Biram"—Biram Avenue.

Many Mauritians exist somewhere on a continuum between slavery and freedom. There is outright subjugation; there is indentured servitude, like the sharecropping that prevailed in Abeid's village; and there is the freed slaves' struggle with what is politely referred to as the "vestiges of slavery." Because much of the economy is informal, those who find work are often exploited and poorly paid. "Women especially have few options for earning a living, and those without an education are mostly limited to petty trade in markets, perhaps opening a small boutique," Erin Pettigrew, a scholar of African history at New York University, told me. "The especially poor and desperate will leave their children with family to venture into Nouakchott to find domestic work." There are a few Haratin politicians, but the government remains dominated by the Beydanes. Last year, Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, a Haratin who was the president of the National Assembly, announced that "slavery is



alive and well in Mauritania." The government did not respond.

In the effort to gain political power, Abeid has sought allies among the country's large population of Afro-Mauritians, black Muslims who face systemic racism but who were not enslaved by the Beydanes. He argues that, like the Haratin, the Afro-Mauritians have suffered for their dark skin. But much separates the two groups. Though Afro-Mauritians struggle to obtain

equal education, employment, and political representation, they look down on the Haratin because of their origins in slavery—and regard them with suspicion for their connection with the Beydanes. During the late eighties and early nineties, the government committed ethnic cleansing of some groups of Afro-Mauritians, and used Haratin soldiers to kill, torture, or deport them.

The Haratin are equally suspicious; they point out that Afro-Mauritians owned slaves themselves and ally with Beydane slave owners when it's convenient. After centuries of forced integration, the Haratin share a language and, to an extent, a culture with their captors—and they are reluctant to disavow their link to the privileged class. Their cultural identity has not been predominantly forged by race. As a result, their activists have seen slavery as a problem distinct from racism. Abeid and his allies, though, see slavery and racism as inextricable—and an alliance between the two groups as politically irresistible. Together, they represent about seventy per cent of the population. A joint candidate would have a notably greater chance of winning power.

The government is evidently concerned by the prospect. While Abeid was in prison, the police told him that his greatest offense was promoting a union between Haratin and Afro-Mauritians. There was no reason to unite, they argued; the Haratin were a special group in a special situation. He disagreed. "It is a link among all victims of slavery, racism, and discrimination," he said. To his delight, the protests outside his prison cell marked the first time that Haratin and Afro-Mauritians marched together.

The government's measures against slavery have been largely symbolic, but it has been willing to acknowledge the lingering effects of slavery. Last year, it opened the National Solidarity Agency for the Fight Against the Vestiges of Slavery, for Integration, and for the Fight Against Poverty. When I met its director, Hamdi Ould Mahjoub, a slight Beydane with glasses, he suggested that freed slaves were no worse off than African-Americans. "I will give you an example," he said. "Today in the United States, forty per cent of prisoners are black Americans. And the percentage of black Americans who are unemployed

NURSING ASSISTANT: CHAPTER REVIEW

After we shave balloons,
but before the test on decubitus ulcers,
a shamelessly bellied
Venus of Willendorf talks trash
and recounts every detail of her long-past pregnancy,
her meltdown in a family photograph at age ten,
and the recent transgressions of a drunken live-in.

In the chapter on mobility,
two *h*'s are silent: *eschar*,
as in necrotic tissue, a black wound,
and *trochanter*, as in trochanter prominence,
as in there are many ways to be broken.

—C. Malcolm Ellsworth

is not proportional to the percentage of black Americans in society. Those are the kinds of problem we have generation to generation.” He said that the agency was working on a program to help farmers and others to build clinics and improve access to water. “After the Civil War in the United States, the government promised to buy each slave family a mule and forty acres, but it did not,” he said. He began laughing. “There are donkeys everywhere we can use.”

I asked him how his organization planned to help current slaves. “If the agency has evidence of a case of slavery, any practice of slavery, we have the authority to be the advocate for the slave. But, since the agency was created, no cases have been reported to us,” he said. “Slavery as an institution, as something accepted by society, does not exist.”

Before IRA, Abeid said, “we were missing something in the fight against slavery.” Other antislavery groups issued statements and tried to persuade religious leaders to denounce slavery, with little success. “We needed something more open, with more action,” he said. “We set out to do a civil resistance, like the ones led by Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. The other organizations respect the imams and the books that are the origin of slavery. We don’t respect them.”

In June, the country held Presidential elections, and Abeid decided to run. His critics, and even some allies, claimed

that he was interested primarily in self-promotion. Abeid, for his part, saw the election as a forum to discuss slavery and racism. But most of the opposition pulled out, concerned about the possibility of government fraud, and, in any case, many blacks lacked the identity cards that were required to vote. Abeid came in second to Aziz, with nine per cent of the vote. He later filed an appeal with the Constitutional Council, claiming that in a fair election he would have got at least thirty-five per cent.

During the election, Abeid’s opponents accused him of fomenting racial division, and of endorsing violence. In one speech, he responded, “There are Beydanes in IRA. These Beydanes who are with us are not crazy. They are not stupid.” About the charges of violence, he said, “We went to jail several times, and the judges never had proof we were violent. They never saw stones, or guns, or knives.” But everyone knew that he had fought with a policeman. For many of his followers, it was part of his appeal. “It’s a generational difference,” Bou-bacar Messaoud, a co-founder of the antislavery group SOS Slaves, told me. Messaoud, a man in his late sixties with a snowy beard, is a former slave who went on to study engineering and architecture in Mali and in Moscow. SOS aids slaves who escape their masters, and petitions the government and the clergy to address the problem of slavery, but it stops short of aggressively confronting the authorities. Messaoud said that

Abeid was leading young people who were driven by a sense of urgency. “They are impatient, and they want to act now against this unfair situation. SOS is pacifist. There is a conflict between IRA and the power. They have provided a new way of fighting the situation.” The organizations’ approaches do sometimes converge. In 2011, Messaoud and Abeid held a hunger strike in a Nouakchott police station until the police put a slave owner in jail. They have not been allowed inside a police station since.

“My fight is pacifist, but it was necessary to start with violence,” Abeid told me. “The Haratin have to take power. The Beydanes have not accepted that the Haratin will not put up with their illicit privilege forever.” If the Beydanes will not consent to political accommodation, he said, “the Haratin will one day say, ‘Stop,’ and there will be a confrontation. The price Haratin will have to pay is blood.”

In Nouakchott, slavery has become less openly accepted than it is in the countryside. Among friends, people will admit to owning slaves, but among strangers they often claim that the slaves are relatives. Still, the evidence of it is there. In a grocery store, I came across a Beydane family with a Haratin girl who fetched their purchases and then followed them to the car, where she sat in the back seat cradling the family’s child. In front of the opulent house of a prominent Beydane journalist, an activist pointed out a shack, which was empty except for a rudimentary mat. “That is the type of place where slaves sleep,” he told me. Wealthy Saudis sometimes buy Mauritanian slaves as child brides.

Abdel Nasser Ould Ethmane, a political adviser to the African Union and a co-founder of SOS Slaves, owned a slave for much of his life; relatives gave him one as a child. “Slaves insured the comfort of the master and his family,” he told me. “They spared them the manual tasks that Beydane society considers repugnant or demeaning: fetching water, preparing food, herding cattle.” They also served more intimate roles, he said: “making the master laugh, massaging him, and insuring his sexual pleasure, if so desired. Some slaves who assimilated the attitudes and behavior of their masters eventually gained the respect and

consideration of the family. The others were insulted, sometimes beaten.”

His slave is now legally free, but he works for relatives and still believes that he belongs to Ethmane. “The slaves who still serve my family are no longer constrained by force, only by economic necessity and, I would say, a very strong emotional link,” Ethmane said. “Masters and slaves live together, build relationships from generation to generation. Most children of masters were breast-fed and raised by slave nannies; they will later treat them as second mothers. It is a complex link that is very difficult to break.”

The Beydanes’ fear of a changing world is not unfounded. The Mauritanian social order would be upended if slavery were completely abolished, and Beydanes would have to perform their own menial tasks, or pay for labor on an unprecedented scale. “The former master needs therapy more than the former slave, because of trauma resulting from the rupture between his sense of racial superiority and the necessity of the modern world,” Ethmane said. In public, the Beydanes tend to echo the government’s line, he said: “Slavery no longer exists, and talk of it suggests manipulation by the West, an act of enmity toward Islam, or influence from the worldwide Jewish conspiracy.”

Nevertheless, some think that Mauritanian society is slowly evolving. People used to brag about having many slaves and camels, Mohamed Said Ould Hamody, a Haratin and a former Ambassa-

dor to the United States, told me. It is now taboo to say such a thing. “This is a very important phase,” he said. “People are saying this is the start of something.”

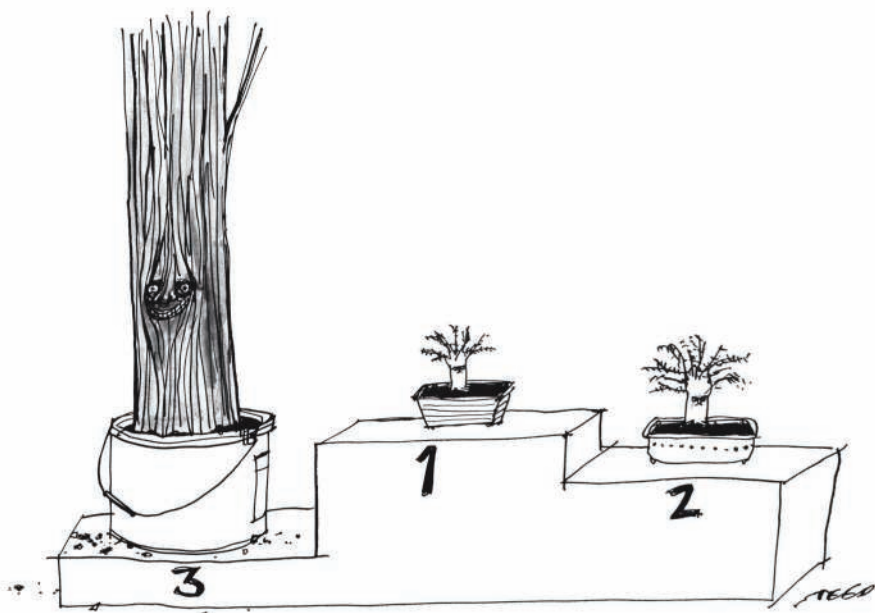
Not long ago, Abeid, dressed in an oversized bubu, was sitting cross-legged on the carpeted floor of the upstairs salon in his house, which resembles an unfinished manor, with exposed foundations and missing walls. Activists and other men, mostly middle-aged and older, filtered in throughout the day, as many as twenty filling the small room. Some had come to ask for money, others for medicine or for advice. Some were just bored, with no work or school to involve them, and wanted the company of a lively group of activists. “When I wake up, the first thing I do is ask the boys”—his volunteer bodyguards—“how many people are waiting for me,” Abeid said.

“I feel frustrated because I don’t have enough time for my family, for my children, for myself,” he said. One day, eight people came to ask for money; he did not have enough to buy sugar for his tea. Donations are irregular, and there are never enough. “There are no funds—we have total need,” he said. Because the Mauritanian government refuses to allow IRA to register as a nongovernmental organization, it is impossible to solicit funding through grants. IRA has to rely on gifts from patrons, mainly government employees. The government has persuaded other activists to leave the movement, threatening them

or winning them over with lucrative state jobs. “Sometimes I feel doubt,” he admitted. “I see the total power of the authorities—religious power, economic power, military power, security power, media power, all its power, against my organization—and I don’t even have money to buy soap. But it reassures me when I see people resist.” I asked whether former slaves, who mostly live in poverty, could be enslaved again. “We have never seen a single slave go back to slavery after he is free,” he said. “When we free them, at least they sleep when they want to sleep. No one rapes them. No one beats them. If they work with someone, he will pay them.”

Several slaves that Abeid freed live in his house. I found one of them, Mocketar Ould Sidi, playing soccer at sunset in a field nearby. At fifteen, he has hazel eyes and bright, reddish skin, and he was wearing athletic clothes and shoes. “My mother was a slave, I was a slave,” he told me. In the house of a wealthy family in Nouakchott, Sidi cleaned, washed the dishes, ran errands. He had no name in that house; he was called *abd*, or slave. He slept by himself in a tent in front of the house. “I didn’t have any right to study, any right to sleep when I want, any right to play when I want,” he said. I asked him if the family members ever hit him. “Always, always, always,” he said. Sidi recalled that his masters were generous with their children. “They gave them money, they gave them good clothes, and they sent them to school,” he said. “They never gave me that.” Instead, they berated and beat his mother in his presence. Still, she pressed him to stay, believing it was his best option.

When he was twelve, a friend of his mother’s took him to an IRA representative, who led him to Abeid. He and Abeid went to the police station together. “My mother was angry at me when I left my masters,” Sidi recalled. “To her, she is a slave, I am a slave, and we have to be slaves—she did not understand.” Their relationship is slowly improving. His mother tells him that his three siblings are not slaves, and that they have left the house. Sidi was skeptical, but he seemed certain of his own fate. “Now I feel that I am a person,” he said. “Because before that I was not a person. I was nothing.” ♦

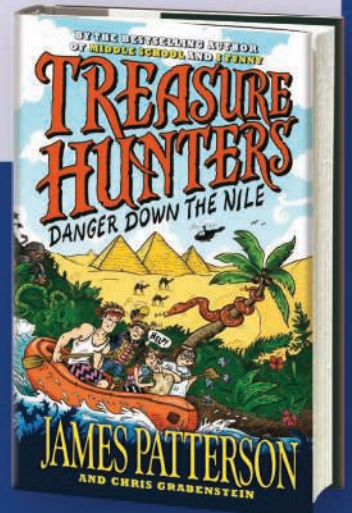




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THE MASKED AVENGERS

How Anonymous incited online vigilantism from Tunisia to Ferguson.

BY DAVID KUSHNER

In the mid-nineteen-seventies, when Christopher Doyon was a child in rural Maine, he spent hours chatting with strangers on CB radio. His handle was Big Red, for his hair. Transmitters lined the walls of his bedroom, and he persuaded his father to attach two directional antennas to the roof of their house. CB radio was associated primarily with truck drivers, but Doyon and others used it to form the sort of virtual community that later appeared on the Internet, with self-selected nicknames, inside jokes, and an earnest desire to effect change.

Doyon's mother died when he was a child, and he and his younger sister were reared by their father, who they both say was physically abusive. Doyon found solace, and a sense of purpose, in the CB-radio community. He and his friends took turns monitoring the local emergency channel. One friend's father bought a bubble light and affixed it to the roof of his car; when the boys heard a distress call from a stranded motorist, he'd drive them to the side of the highway. There wasn't much they could do beyond offering to call 911, but the adventure made them feel heroic.

Small and wiry, with a thick New England accent, Doyon was fascinated by "Star Trek" and Isaac Asimov novels. When he saw an ad in *Popular Mechanics* for a build-your-own personal-computer kit, he asked his grandmother to buy it for him, and he spent months figuring out how to put it together and hook it up to the Internet. Compared with the sparsely populated CB airwaves, online chat rooms were a revelation. "I just click a button, hit this guy's name, and I'm talking to him," Doyon recalled recently. "It was just breathtaking."

At the age of fourteen, he ran away from home, and two years later he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, a hub of the emerging computer counterculture. The Tech Model Railroad

Club, which had been founded thirty-four years earlier by train hobbyists at M.I.T., had evolved into "hackers"—the first group to popularize the term. Richard Stallman, a computer scientist who worked in M.I.T.'s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at the time, says that these early hackers were more likely to pass around copies of "Gödel, Escher, Bach" than to incite technological warfare. "We didn't have tenets," Stallman said. "It wasn't a movement. It was just a thing that people did to impress each other." Some of their "hacks" were fun (coding video games); others were functional (improving computer-processing speeds); and some were pranks that took place in the real world (placing mock street signs near campus). Michael Patton, who helped run the T.M.R.C. in the seventies, told me that the original hackers had unwritten rules and that the first one was "Do no damage."

In Cambridge, Doyon supported himself through odd jobs and panhandling, preferring the freedom of sleeping on park benches to the monotony of a regular job. In 1985, he and a half-dozen other activists formed an electronic "militia." Echoing the Animal Liberation Front, they called themselves the Peoples Liberation Front. They adopted aliases: the founder, a towering middle-aged man who claimed to be a military veteran, called himself Commander Adama; Doyon went by Commander X. Inspired by the Merry Pranksters, they sold LSD at Grateful Dead shows and used some of the cash to outfit an old school bus with bullhorns, cameras, and battery chargers. They also rented a basement apartment in Cambridge, where Doyon occasionally slept.

Doyon was drawn to computers, but he was not an expert coder. In a series of conversations over the past year, he told me that he saw himself as an

PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT DUNBAR

the epic win—and, especially, the lulz."

activist, in the radical tradition of Abbie Hoffman and Eldridge Cleaver; technology was merely his medium of dissent. In the eighties, students at Harvard and M.I.T. held rallies urging their schools to divest from South Africa. To help the protesters communicate over a secure channel, the P.L.F. built radio kits: mobile FM transmitters, retractable antennas, and microphones, all stuffed inside backpacks. Willard Johnson, an activist and a political scientist at M.I.T., said that hackers were not a transformative presence at rallies. "Most of our work was still done using a bullhorn," he said.

In 1992, at a Grateful Dead concert in Indiana, Doyon sold three hundred hits of acid to an undercover narcotics agent. He was sentenced to twelve years in Pendleton Correctional Facility, of which he served five. While there, he developed an interest in religion and philosophy and took classes from Ball State University.

Netscape Navigator, the first commercial Web browser, was released in 1994, while Doyon was incarcerated. When he returned to Cambridge, the P.L.F. was still active, and their tools had a much wider reach. The change, Doyon recalls, "was gigantic—it was the difference between sending up smoke signals and being able to telegraph someone."

Hackers defaced an Indian military Web site with the words "Save Kashmir." In Serbia, hackers took down an Albanian site. Stefan Wray, an early online activist, defended such tactics at an "anti-Columbus Day" rally in New York. "We see this as a form of electronic civil disobedience," he told the crowd.

In 1999, the Recording Industry Association of America sued Napster, the file-sharing service, for copyright infringement. As a result, Napster was shut down in 2001. Doyon and other hackers disabled the R.I.A.A. site for a weekend, using a Distributed Denial of Service, or DDoS, attack, which floods a site with so much data that it slows down or crashes. Doyon defended his actions, employing the heightened rhetoric of other "hacktivists." "We quickly came to understand that the battle to defend Napster was symbolic of the battle to preserve a free internet," he later wrote.

One day in 2008, Doyon and Commander Adama met at the P.L.F.'s basement apartment in Cambridge. Adama showed Doyon the Web site of the Epilepsy Foundation, on which a link, instead of leading to a discussion forum, triggered a series of flashing colored lights. Some epileptics are sensitive to strobes; out of sheer malice, someone was trying to induce seizures in inno-

cent people. There had been at least one victim already.

Doyon was incensed. He asked Adama who would do such a thing.

"Ever hear of a group called Anonymous?" Adama said.

In 2003, Christopher Poole, a fifteen-year-old insomniac from New York City, launched 4chan, a discussion board where fans of anime could post photographs and snarky comments. The focus quickly widened to include many of the Internet's earliest memes: LOLcats, Chocolate Rain, RickRolls. Users who did not enter a screen name were given the default handle Anonymous.

Poole hoped that anonymity would keep things irreverent. "We have no intention of partaking in intelligent discussions concerning foreign affairs," he wrote on the site. One of the highest values within the 4chan community was the pursuit of "lulz," a term derived from the acronym LOL. Lulz were often achieved by sharing puerile jokes or images, many of them pornographic or scatological. The most shocking of these were posted on a part of the site labelled /b/, whose users called themselves /b/tards. Doyon was aware of 4chan, but considered its users "a bunch of stupid little pranksters." Around 2004, some people on /b/ started referring to "Anonymous" as an independent entity.

It was a new kind of hacker collective. "It's not a group," Mikko Hypponen, a leading computer-security researcher, told me—rather, it could be thought of as a shape-shifting subculture. Barrett Brown, a Texas journalist and a well-known champion of Anonymous, has described it as "a series of relationships." There was no membership fee or initiation. Anyone who wanted to be a part of Anonymous—an Anon—could simply claim allegiance.

Despite 4chan's focus on trivial topics, many Anons considered themselves crusaders for justice. They launched vigilante campaigns that were purposeful, if sometimes misguided. More than once, they posed as underage girls in order to entrap pedophiles, whose personal information they sent to the police. Other Anons were apolitical and sowed chaos for the lulz. One of



CAJ

"I need to talk about my inner life."

them posted images on /b/ of what looked like pipe bombs; another threatened to blow up several football stadiums and was arrested by the F.B.I. In 2007, a local news affiliate in Los Angeles called Anonymous “an Internet hate machine.”

In January, 2008, Gawker Media posted a video in which Tom Cruise enthusiastically touted the benefits of Scientology. The video was copy-right-protected, and the Church of Scientology sent a cease-and-desist letter to Gawker, asking that the video be removed. Anonymous viewed the church’s demands as attempts at censorship. “I think it’s time for /b/ to do something big,” someone posted on 4chan. “I’m talking about ‘hacking’ or ‘taking down’ the official Scientology Web site.” An Anon used YouTube to issue a “press release,” which included stock footage of storm clouds and a computerized voice-over. “We shall proceed to expel you from the Internet and systematically dismantle the Church of Scientology in its present form,” the voice said. “You have nowhere to hide.” Within a few weeks, the YouTube video had been viewed more than two million times.

Anonymous had outgrown 4chan. The hackers met in dedicated Internet Relay Chat channels, or I.R.C.s, to coordinate tactics. Using DDoS attacks, they caused the main Scientology Web site to crash intermittently for several days. Anons created a “Google bomb,” so that a search for “dangerous cult” would yield the main Scientology site at the top of the results page. Others sent hundreds of pizzas to Scientology centers in Europe, and overwhelmed the church’s Los Angeles headquarters with all-black faxes, draining the machines of ink. The Church of Scientology, an organization that reportedly has more than a billion dollars in assets, could withstand the depletion of its ink cartridges. But its leaders, who had also received death threats, contacted the F.B.I. to request an investigation into Anonymous.

On March 15, 2008, several thousand Anons marched past Scientology churches in more than a hundred cities, from London to Sydney. In keeping with the theme of anonymity, the organizers decided that all the protesters should

wear versions of the same mask. After considering Batman, they settled on the Guy Fawkes mask worn in “V for Vendetta,” a dystopian movie from 2005. “It was available in every major city, in large quantities, for cheap,” Gregg Housh, one of the organizers of the protests and a well-known Anon, told me. The mask was a caricature of a man with rosy cheeks, a handlebar mustache, and a wide grin.



Anonymous did not “dismantle” the Church of Scientology. Still, the Tom Cruise video remained online. Anonymous had proved its tenacity. The collective adopted a bombastic slogan: “We are Legion. We do not forgive. We do not forget. Expect us.”

In 2010, Doyon moved to Santa Cruz, California, to join a local movement called Peace Camp. Using wood that he stole from a lumberyard, he built a shack in the mountains. He borrowed WiFi from a nearby mansion, drew power from salvaged solar panels, and harvested marijuana, which he sold for cash.

At the time, the Peace Camp activists were sleeping on city property as a protest against a Santa Cruz anti-homelessness law that they considered extreme. Doyon appeared at Peace Camp meetings and offered to promote their cause online. He had an unkempt red beard and wore a floppy beige hat and quasi-military fatigues. Some of the activists called him Curb-hugger Chris.

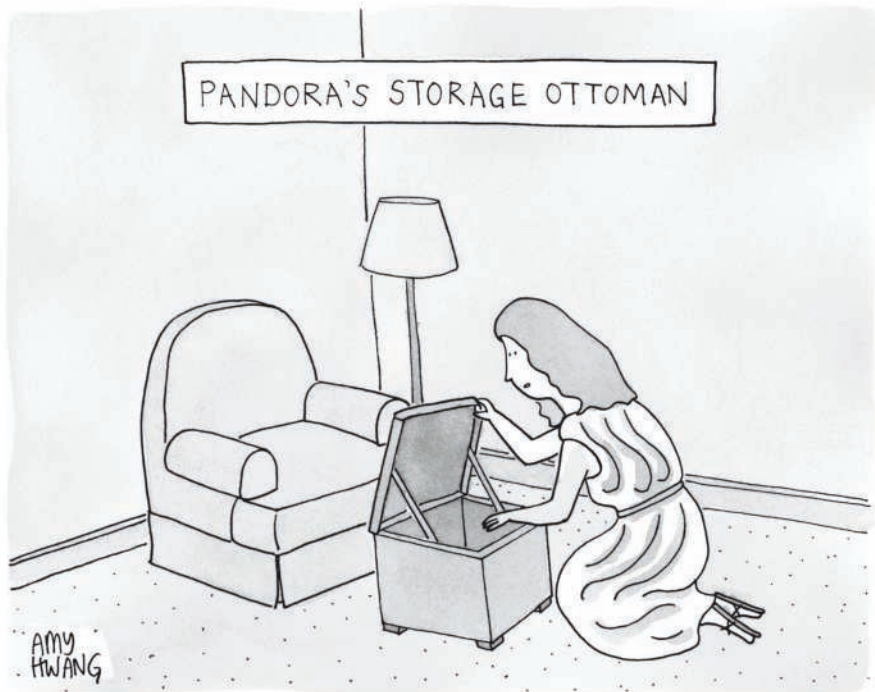
Kelley Landaker, a member of Peace Camp, spoke with Doyon several times about hacking. Doyon sometimes bragged about his technical aptitude, but Landaker, an expert programmer, was unimpressed. “He was more of a spokesman than a hands-on-the-keyboard type of person,” Landaker told me. But the movement needed a passionate leader more than it needed a

coder. “He was very enthusiastic and very outspoken,” Robert Norse, also a member of Peace Camp, told me. “He created more media attention for the issue than anyone I’ve seen, and I’ve been doing this for twenty years.”

Commander Adama, Doyon’s superior in the P.L.F., who still lived in Cambridge and communicated with him via e-mail, had ordered Doyon to monitor Anonymous. Doyon’s brief was to observe their methods and to recruit members to the P.L.F. Recalling his revulsion at the Epilepsy Foundation hack, Doyon initially balked. Adama argued that the malicious hackers were a minority within Anonymous, and that the collective might inspire powerful new forms of activism. Doyon was skeptical. “The biggest movement in the world is going to come from 4chan?” he said. But, out of loyalty to the P.L.F., he obeyed Adama.

Doyon spent much of his time at the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company, a café downtown, hunched over an Acer laptop. The main Anonymous I.R.C. did not require a password. Doyon logged in using the name PLF and followed along. Over time, he discovered back channels where smaller, more dedicated groups of Anons had dozens of overlapping conversations. To participate, you had to know the names of the back channels, which could be changed to deflect intruders. It was not a highly secure system, but it was adaptable. “These simultaneous cabals keep centralization from happening,” Gabriella Coleman, an anthropologist at McGill University, told me.

Some Anons proposed an action called Operation Payback. As the journalist Parmy Olson wrote in a 2012 book, “We Are Anonymous,” Operation Payback started as another campaign in support of file-sharing sites like the Pirate Bay, a successor to Napster, but the focus soon broadened to include political speech. In late 2010, at the behest of the State Department, several companies, including MasterCard, Visa, and PayPal, stopped facilitating donations to WikiLeaks, the vigilante organization that had released hundreds of thousands of diplomatic cables. In an online video, Anonymous called for revenge, promising to lash out at the companies that had impeded WikiLeaks. Doyon,



attracted by the anti-corporate spirit of the project, decided to participate.

During Operation Payback, in early December, Anonymous directed new recruits, or noobs, to a flyer headed “HOW TO JOIN THE FUCKING HIVE,” in which participants were instructed to “FIX YOUR GODDAMN INTERNET. THIS IS VERY FUCKING IMPORTANT.” They were also asked to download Low Orbit Ion Cannon, an easy-to-use tool that is publicly available. Doyon downloaded the software and watched the chat rooms, waiting for a cue. When the signal came, thousands of Anons fired at once. Doyon entered a target URL—say, www.visa.com—and, in the upper-right corner, clicked a button that said “IMMA CHARGIN MAH LAZER.” (The operation also relied on more sophisticated hacking.) Over several days, Operation Payback disabled the home pages of Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal. In court filings, PayPal claimed that the attack had cost the company five and a half million dollars.

To Doyon, this was activism made tangible. In Cambridge, protesting against apartheid, he could not see immediate results; now, with the tap of a button, he could help sabotage a major corporation’s site. A banner headline on the Huffington Post read “MasterCard DOWN.” One gloating Anon tweeted,

“There are some things WikiLeaks can’t do. For everything else, there’s Operation Payback.”

In the fall of 2010, the Peace Camp protests ended. With slight concessions, the anti-homelessness law remained in effect. Doyon hoped to use the tactics of Anonymous to reinvigorate the movement. He recalls thinking, “I could wield Anonymous against this tiny little city government and they would just be fucking wrecked. Plan was we were finally going to solve this homelessness problem, once and for all.”

Joshua Covelli, a twenty-five-year-old Anon who went by the nickname Absolem, admired Doyon’s decisiveness. “Anonymous had been this clusterfuck of chaos,” Covelli told me. With Commander X, “there seemed to be a structure set up.” Covelli worked as a receptionist at a college in Fairborn, Ohio, and knew nothing about Santa Cruz politics. But when Doyon asked for help with Operation Peace Camp, Covelli e-mailed back immediately: “I’ve been waiting to join something like that my entire life.”

Doyon, under the name PLF, invited Covelli into a private I.R.C.:

Absolem: Sorry to be so rude . . . Is PLF part of Anonymous or separate?

Absolem: I was just asking because you all seem very organized in chat.

PLF: You are not in the least rude. I am pleased to meet you. PLF is 22 year old hacker group originally from Boston. I started hacking in 81, not with computers but PBX (telephones).

PLF: We are all older 40 or over. Some of us are former military or intelligence. One of us, Commander Adama is currently sought by an alphabet soup of cops and spooks and in hiding.

Absolem: Wow that’s legit. I am really interested in helping this out in some way and Anonymous just seems too chaotic. I have some computer skills but very noob in hacking. I have some tools but no idea how to use them.

With ritual solemnity, Doyon accepted Covelli’s request to join the P.L.F.:

PLF: Encrypt the fuck out of all sensitive material that might incriminate you.

PLF: Yep, work with ANY PLFer to get a message to me. Call me . . . Commander X for now.

In 2012, the Associated Press called Anonymous “a group of expert hackers”; Quinn Norton, in *Wired*, wrote that “Anonymous had figured out how to infiltrate anything,” resulting in “a wild string of brilliant hacks.” In fact some Anons are gifted coders, but the vast majority possess little technical skill. Coleman, the anthropologist, told me that only a fifth of Anons are hackers—the rest are “geeks and protesters.”

On December 16, 2010, Doyon, as Commander X, sent an e-mail to several reporters. “At exactly noon local time tomorrow, the Peoples Liberation Front and Anonymous will remove from the Internet the Web site of the Santa Cruz County government,” he wrote. “And exactly 30 minutes later, we will return it to normal function.”

The data-center staff for Santa Cruz County saw the warning and scrambled to prepare for the attack. They ran security scans on the servers and contacted A.T. & T., the county’s Internet provider, which suggested that they alert the F.B.I.

The next day, Doyon entered a Starbucks and booted up his laptop. Even for a surfing town, he was notably eccentric: a homeless-looking man wearing fatigues and typing furiously. Covelli met him in a private chat room.

PLF: Go to Forum, sign in—and look at top right menu bar “chat.” That’s Ops for today. Thank you for standing with us.

Absolem: Anything for PLF, sir.

They both opened DDoS software. Though only a handful of people were participating in Operation Peace Camp, Doyon gave orders as if he were addressing legions of troops:

PLF: ATTENTION: Everyone who supports the PLF or considers us their friend—or who cares about defeating evil and protecting the innocent: Operation Peace Camp is LIVE and an action is underway. TARGET: www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us. Fire At Will. Repeat: FIRE!

Absolom: got it, sir.

The data-center staff watched their servers, which showed a flurry of denial-of-service requests. Despite their best efforts, the site crashed. Twenty-five minutes later, Doyon decided that he had made his point. He typed “CEASE FIRE,” and the county’s site flickered back to life. (Despite the attack, the city’s anti-homelessness law did not change.)

Doyon hardly had time to celebrate before he grew anxious. “I got to leave,” he typed to Covelli. He fled to his shack in the mountains. Doyon was right to be wary: an F.B.I. agent had been snooping in the I.R.C. The F.B.I. obtained a warrant to search Doyon’s laptop.

A few weeks later, Doyon’s food ran out, and he returned to town. While he was at the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company, two federal agents entered the shop. They brought him to the county police station. Doyon called Ed Frey, a lawyer and the founder of Peace Camp, who met him at the station. Doyon told Frey about his alter ego as Commander X.

Doyon was released, but the F.B.I. kept his laptop, which was full of incriminating evidence. Frey, a civil-rights lawyer who knew little about cybersecurity, drove Doyon back to his hillside encampment. “What are you going to do?” Frey asked.

He spoke in cinematic terms. “Run like hell,” he said. “I will go underground, try to stay free as long as I can, and keep fighting the bastards any way possible.” Frey gave him two twenty-dollar bills and wished him luck.

Doyon hitchhiked to San Francisco and stayed there for three months. He spent his days at Coffee to the People, a quirky café in the Haight-Ashbury district, where he would sit

for hours in front of his computer, interrupted only by outdoor cigarette breaks.

In January, 2011, Doyon contacted Barrett Brown, the journalist and Anon. “What are we going to do next?” Doyon asked.

“Tunisia,” Brown said.

“Yeah, it’s a country in the Middle East,” Doyon said. “What about it?”

“We’re gonna take down its dictator,” Brown said.

“Oh, they have a dictator?” Doyon said.

A couple of days later, Operation Tunisia began. Doyon volunteered to spam Tunisian government e-mail addresses in an attempt to clog their servers. “I would take the text of the press release for that op and just keep sending it over and over again,” he said. “Sometimes, I was so busy that I would just put ‘fuck you’ and send it.” In one day, the Anons brought down the Web sites of the Tunisian Stock Exchange, the Ministry of Industry, the President, and the Prime Minister. They replaced the Web page of the President’s office with an image of a pirate ship and the message “Payback is a bitch, isn’t it?”

Doyon often spoke of his online battles as if he had just crawled out of a foxhole. “Dude, I turned black from doing it,” he told me. “My face, from all the smoke—it would cling to me. I would look up and I would literally be like a raccoon.” Most nights, he camped out in Golden Gate Park. “I would look at myself in the mirror and I’d be like, O.K., it’s been four days—maybe I should eat, bathe.”

Anonymous-affiliated operations continued to be announced on YouTube: Operation Libya, Operation Bahrain, Operation Morocco. As protesters filled Tahrir Square, Doyon participated in Operation Egypt. A Facebook page disseminated information, including links to a “care package” for protesters on the ground. The package, distributed through the file-sharing site Megaupload, contained encryption software and a primer on defending against tear gas. Later, when the Egyptian government disabled Internet and cellular networks within the country, Anonymous helped the protesters find alternative ways to get online.

In the summer of 2011, Doyon succeeded Adama as Supreme Commander of the P.L.F. Doyon recruited



“Zach is in the gifted-and-talented-and-you’re-not class.”

roughly half a dozen new members and attempted to position the P.L.F. as an elite squad within Anonymous. Covelli became one of his technical advisers. Another hacker, Crypt0nymous, made YouTube videos; others did research or assembled electronic care packages. Unlike Anonymous, the P.L.F. had a strict command structure. “X always called the shots on everything,” Covelli said. “It was his way or no way.” A hacker who founded a blog called AnonInsiders told me over encrypted chat that Doyon was willing to act unilaterally—a rare thing within Anonymous. “When we wanted to start an op, he didn’t mind if anyone would agree or not,” he said. “He would just write the press release by himself, list all the targets, open the I.R.C. channel, tell everyone to go in there, and start the DDoSing.”

Some Anons viewed the P.L.F. as a vanity project and Doyon as a laughingstock. “He’s known for his exaggeration,” Mustafa Al-Bassam, an Anon who went by Tflow, told me. Others, even those who disapproved of Doyon’s egotism, grudgingly acknowledged his importance to the Anonymous movement. “He walks that tough line of sometimes being effective and sometimes being in the way,” Gregg Housh said, adding that he and other prominent Anons had faced similar challenges.

Publicly, Anonymous persists in claiming to be non-hierarchical. In “We Are Legion,” a 2012 documentary about Anonymous by Brian Knappenberger, one activist uses the metaphor of a flock of birds, with various individuals taking turns drifting toward the front. Gabriella Coleman told me that, despite such claims, something resembling an informal leadership class did emerge within Anonymous. “The organizer is really important,” she said. “There are four or five individuals who are really good at it.” She counted Doyon among them. Still, Anons tend to rebel against institutional structure. In a forthcoming book about Anonymous, “Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy,” Coleman writes that, among Anons, “personal identity and the individual remain subordinate to a focus on the epic win—and, especially, the lulz.”

Anons who seek individual attention are often dismissed as “egofags” or

“namefags.” (Many Anons have yet to outgrow their penchant for offensive epithets.) “There are surprisingly few people who violate the rule” against attention-seeking, Coleman says. “Those who do, like X, are marginalized.” Last year, in an online discussion forum, a commenter wrote, “I stopped reading his BS when he started comparing himself to Batman.”

Peter Fein, an online activist known by the nickname n0pants, was among the many Anons who were put off by Doyon’s self-aggrandizing rhetoric. Fein browsed the P.L.F. Web site, which featured a coat of arms and a manifesto about the group’s “epic battle for the very soul of humanity.” Fein was dismayed to find that Doyon had registered the site using his real name, leaving himself and possibly other Anons vulnerable to prosecution. “I’m basically okay with people DDoSing,” Fein recalls telling Doyon over private chat. “But if you’re going to do it, you’ve got to cover your ass.”

On February 5, 2011, the *Financial Times* reported that Aaron Barr, the C.E.O. of a cybersecurity firm called HBGary Federal, had identified the “most senior” members of Anonymous. Barr’s research suggested that one of the top three was Commander X, a hacker based in California, who could “manage some significant firepower.” Barr contacted the F.B.I. and

offered to share his work with them.

Like Fein, Barr had seen that the P.L.F. site was registered to Christopher Doyon at an address on Haight Street. Based on Facebook and I.R.C. activity, Barr concluded that Commander X was Benjamin Spock de Vries, an online activist who had lived near the Haight Street address. Barr approached de Vries on Facebook. “Please tell the folks there that I am not out to get you guys,” Barr wrote. “Just want the ‘leadership’ to know what my intent is.”

“‘Leadership’ lmao,” de Vries responded.

Days after the *Financial Times* story appeared, Anonymous struck back. HBGary Federal’s Web site was defaced. Barr’s personal Twitter account was hijacked, thousands of his e-mails were leaked online, and Anons released his address and other personal information—a punishment known as doxing. Barr resigned from HBGary Federal within the month.

In April, 2011, Doyon left San Francisco and hitchhiked around the West, camping in parks at night and spending his days at Starbucks outlets. In his backpack he kept his laptop, his Guy Fawkes mask, and several packs of Pall Malls.

He followed internal Anonymous news. That spring, six elite Anons, all of whom had been instrumental in

ALMOST LIKE THE BLUES

I saw some people starving
There was murder, there was rape
Their villages were burning
They were trying to escape
I couldn’t meet their glances
I was staring at my shoes
It was acid, it was tragic
It was almost like the blues

I have to die a little
Between each murderous thought
And when I’m finished thinking
I have to die a lot
There’s torture and there’s killing
There’s all my bad reviews
The war, the children missing
Lord, it’s almost like the blues

I let my heart get frozen
 To keep away the rot
 My father said I'm chosen
 My mother said I'm not
 I listened to their story
 Of the Gypsies and the Jews
 It was good, it wasn't boring
 It was almost like the blues

There is no G-d in heaven
 And there is no Hell below
 So says the great professor
 Of all there is to know
 But I've had the invitation
 That a sinner can't refuse
 And it's almost like salvation
 It's almost like the blues

—Leonard Cohen

deflecting Barr's investigation, formed a group called Lulz Security, or LulzSec. As their name indicated, they felt that Anonymous had become too self-serious; they aimed to bring the lulz back. While Anonymous continued supporting Arab Spring protesters, LulzSec hacked the Web site of PBS and posted a fake story claiming that the late rapper Tupac Shakur was alive in New Zealand.

Anons often share text through the Web site Pastebin.com. On the site, LulzSec issued a statement that read, "It has come to our unfortunate attention that NATO and our good friend Barrack Osama-Llama 24th-century Obama have recently upped the stakes with regard to hacking. They now treat hacking as an act of war." The loftier the target, the greater the lulz. On June 15th, LulzSec took credit for crashing the C.I.A.'s Web site, tweeting, "Tango down—cia.gov—for the lulz."

On June 20, 2011, Ryan Cleary, a nineteen-year-old member of LulzSec, was arrested for the DDoS attacks on the C.I.A. site. The next month, F.B.I. agents arrested fourteen other hackers for DDoS attacks on PayPal seven months earlier. Each of the PayPal Fourteen, as they became known, faced fifteen years in prison and a five-hundred-thousand-dollar fine. They were charged with conspiracy and intentional damage to protected computers under

the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. (The law allows for wide prosecutorial discretion and was widely criticized after Aaron Swartz, an Internet activist who was facing thirty-five years in prison, committed suicide last year.)

A petition was circulated on behalf of Jake (Topiary) Davis, a member of LulzSec, who needed help paying his legal fees. Doyon entered an I.R.C. to promote Davis's cause:

CommanderX: Please sign the petition
 and help Topiary...
 toad: you are an attention whore
 toad: so you get attention
 CommanderX: Toad your an asshole.
 katanon: sigh

Doyon had grown increasingly brazen. He DDoS'd the Web site of the Chamber of Commerce of Orlando, Florida, after activists there were arrested for feeding the homeless. He launched the attacks from public WiFi networks, using his personal laptop, without making much effort to cover his tracks. "That's brave but stupid," a senior member of the P.L.F. who asked to be called Kalli told me. "He didn't seem to care if he was caught. He was a suicide hacker."

Two months later, Doyon participated in a DDoS strike against San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit, protesting an incident in which a BART police officer had killed a homeless man named Charles Hill. Doyon appeared on the "CBS Evening News" to defend the action, his

voice disguised and his face obscured by a bandanna. He compared DDoS attacks to civil disobedience. "It's no different, really, than taking up seats at the Woolworth lunch counters," he said. Bob Schieffer, the CBS anchor, snickered and said, "It's not quite the civil-rights movement, as I see it."

On September 22, 2011, in a coffee shop in Mountain View, California, Doyon was arrested and charged with causing intentional damage to a protected computer. He was detained for a week and released on bond. Two days later, against his lawyer's advice, he called a press conference on the steps of the Santa Cruz County Courthouse. His hair in a ponytail, he wore dark sunglasses, a black pirate hat, and a camouflage bandanna around his neck.

In characteristically melodramatic fashion, Doyon revealed his identity. "I am Commander X," he told reporters. He raised his fist. "I am immensely proud, and humbled to the core, to be a part of the idea called Anonymous." He told a journalist, "All you need to be a world-class hacker is a computer and a cool pair of sunglasses. And the computer is optional."

Kalli worried that Doyon was placing his ego above the safety of other Anons. "It's the weakest link in the chain that ends up taking everyone down," he told me. Josh Covelli, the Anon who had been eager to help Doyon with Operation Peace Camp, told me that his "jaw dropped" when he saw a video of Doyon's press conference online. "The way he presented himself and the way he acted had become more unhinged," Covelli said.

Three months later, Doyon's pro-bono lawyer, Jay Leiderman, was in a federal court in San Jose. Leiderman had not heard from Doyon in a couple of weeks. "I'm inquiring as to whether there's a reason for that," the judge said. Leiderman had no answer. Doyon was absent from another hearing two weeks later. The prosecutor stated the obvious: "It appears as though the defendant has fled."

Operation Xport was the first Anonymous operation of its kind. The goal was to smuggle Doyon, now a fugitive wanted for two felonies, out of the country. The coördinators were Kalli

and a veteran Anon who had met Doyon at an acid party in Cambridge during the eighties. A retired software executive, he was widely respected within Anonymous.

Doyon's ultimate destination was the software executive's house, deep in rural Canada. In December, 2011, he hitchhiked to San Francisco and made his way to an Occupy encampment downtown. He found his designated contact, who helped him get to a pizzeria in Oakland. At 2 A.M., Doyon, using the pizzeria's WiFi, received a message on encrypted chat.

"Are you near a window?" the message read.

"Yeah," Doyon typed.

"Look across the street. Do you see the green mailbox? In exactly fifteen minutes, go and stand next to that mailbox and set your backpack down, and lay your mask on top of it."

For a few weeks, Doyon shuttled among safe houses in the Bay Area, following instructions through encrypted chat. Eventually, he took a Greyhound bus to Seattle, where he stayed with a friend of the software executive. The friend, a wealthy retiree, spent hours using Google Earth to help Doyon plot a route to Canada. They went to a camping-supplies store, and the friend spent fifteen hundred dollars on gear for Doyon, including hiking boots and a new backpack. Then he drove Doyon two hours north and dropped him off in a remote area, several hundred miles from the border, where Doyon met up with Amber Lyon.

Months earlier, Lyon, a broadcast journalist, had interviewed Doyon for a CNN segment about Anonymous. He liked her report, and they stayed in touch. Lyon asked to join Doyon on his escape, to shoot footage for a possible documentary. The software executive thought that it was "nuts" to take the risk, but Doyon invited her anyway. "I think he wanted to make himself a face of the movement," Lyon told me. For four days, she filmed him as he hiked north, camping in the woods. "It wasn't very organized," Lyon recalls. "He was functionally homeless, so he just kind of wandered out of the country."

On February 11, 2012, a press release appeared on Pastebin. "The PLF is delighted to announce that Com-

mander X, aka Christopher Mark Doyon, has fled the jurisdiction of the USA and entered the relative safety of the nation of Canada," it read. "The PLF calls upon the government of the USA to come to its senses and cease the harassment, surveillance—and arrest of not only Anonymous, but ALL activists."

In Canada, Doyon spent a few days with the software executive in a small house in the woods. In a chat with Barrett Brown, Doyon was effusive.

BarrettBrown: you have enough safe houses, etc? . . .

CommanderX: Yes I am good here, money and houses a plenty in Canada.

CommanderX: Amber Lyon asked me on camera about you.

CommanderX: I think you will like my reply, and fuck the trolls Barrett. I have always loved you and always will.

CommanderX: :-)

CommanderX: I told her you were a hero.

BarrettBrown: you're a hero . . .

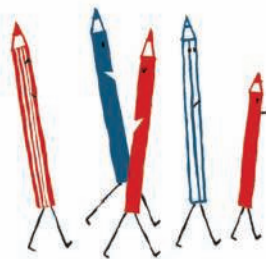
BarrettBrown: glad you're safe for now

BarrettBrown: let me know if you need anything

CommanderX: I am, and if this works we can get others out to . . .

BarrettBrown: good, we're going to need that

Ten days after Doyon's escape, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Keith Alexander, then the N.S.A. and U.S. Cyber Command director, had held classified meetings in the White House and elsewhere during which he ex-



pressed concern about Anonymous. Within two years, Alexander warned, the group might be capable of destabilizing national power grids. General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the *Journal* that an enemy of the U.S. "could give cyber malware capability to some fringe group," adding, "We have to get after this."

On March 8th, a briefing on cybersecurity was held for members of Con-

gress at a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility near the Capitol Building. Many of the country's top security officials attended the briefing, including Alexander, Dempsey, Robert Mueller, the head of the F.B.I., and Janet Napolitano, the Secretary of Homeland Security. Attendees were shown a computer simulation of what a cyberattack on the Eastern Seaboard's electrical supply might look like. Anonymous was not yet capable of mounting an attack on this scale, but security officials worried that they might join forces with other, more sophisticated groups. "As we were dealing with this ever-increasing presence on the Net and ever-increasing risk, the government nuts and bolts were still being worked out," Napolitano told me. When discussing potential cybersecurity threats, she added, "We often used Anonymous as Exhibit A."

Anonymous might be the most powerful nongovernmental hacking collective in the world. Even so, it has never demonstrated an ability or desire to damage any key elements of public infrastructure. To some cybersecurity experts, the dire warnings about Anonymous sounded like fear-mongering. "There's a big gap between declaring war on Orlando and pulling off a Stuxnet attack," James Andrew Lewis, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told me, referring to the elaborate cyberstrike carried out by the U.S. and Israel against Iranian nuclear sites in 2007. Yochai Benkler, a professor at Harvard Law School, told me, "What we've seen is the use of drum-beating as justification for major defense spending of a form that would otherwise be hard to justify."

Keith Alexander, who recently retired from the government, declined to comment for this story, as did representatives from the N.S.A., the F.B.I., the C.I.A., and the D.H.S. Although Anons have never seriously compromised government computer networks, they have a record of seeking revenge against individuals who anger them. Andy Purdy, the former head of the national-cybersecurity division of the D.H.S., told me that "a fear of retaliation," both institutional and personal, prevents government

representatives from speaking out against Anonymous. “Everyone is vulnerable,” he said.

On March 6, 2012, Hector Xavier Monsegur, a key member of LulzSec with the screen name Sabu, was revealed to be an F.B.I. informant. In exchange for a reduced sentence, Monsegur had spent several months undercover, helping to gather evidence against other LulzSec members. The same day, five leading Anons were arrested and charged with several crimes, including computer conspiracy. An F.B.I. official told Fox News, “This is devastating to the organization. We’re chopping off the head of LulzSec.” Over the next ten months, Barrett Brown was indicted on seventeen federal charges, most of which were later dropped. (He will be sentenced in October.)

Doyon was distraught, but he continued to hack—and to seek attention. He appeared, masked, at a Toronto screening of a documentary about Anonymous. He gave an interview to a reporter from the *National Post* and boasted, without substantiation, “We have access to every classified database in the U.S. government. It’s a matter of when we leak the contents of those databases, not if.”

In January, 2013, after another Anon started an operation about the rape of a teen-age girl in Steubenville, Ohio, Doyon repurposed LocalLeaks, a site he had created two years earlier, as a clearinghouse for information about the rape. Like many Anonymous efforts, LocalLeaks was both influential and irresponsible. It was the first site to widely disseminate the twelve-minute video of a Steubenville High School graduate joking about the rape, which inflamed public outrage about the story. But the site also perpetuated several false rumors about the case and it failed to redact a court document, thus accidentally revealing the rape victim’s name. Doyon admitted to me that his strategy of releasing unexpurgated materials was controversial, but he recalled thinking, “We could either gut the Steubenville Files . . . or we could release everything we know, basically, with the caveat, Hey, you’ve got to trust us.”

In May, 2013, the Rustle League, a group of online trolls who often provoke



“This is what I learned during my summer at TED camp.”

Anonymous, hacked Doyon’s Twitter account. Shm00p, one of the leaders of Rustle League, told me, “We’re not trying to cause harm to the guy, but, just, the shit he was saying—it was comical to me.” The Rustle League implanted racist and anti-Semitic messages into Doyon’s account, such as a link to www.jewsdid911.org.

On August 27, 2013, Doyon posted a note announcing his retirement from Anonymous. “My entire life has been dedicated to fighting for justice and freedom,” he wrote. “‘Commander X’ may be invincible, but I am extremely ill from the exhaustion and stress of fighting in this epic global cyber war.” Reactions varied from compassion (“you deserve a rest”) to ridicule (“poor crazy old gnoll. Maybe he has some time for bathing now”). Covelli told me, “The persona has consumed him to the point where he can’t handle it anymore.”

The first Million Mask March took place on November 5, 2013. Several thousand people marched in support of Anonymous, in four hundred and fifty cities around the world. In a sign of how deeply Anonymous had penetrated popular culture, one protester in London removed his Guy Fawkes mask to reveal

that he was the actor Russell Brand.

While I attended the rally in Washington, D.C., Doyon watched a live-stream in Canada. I exchanged e-mails with him on my phone. “It is so surreal to sit here, sidelined and out of the game—and watch something that you helped create turn into this,” he wrote. “At least it all made a difference.”

We arranged a face-to-face meeting. Doyon insisted that I submit to elaborate plans made over encrypted chat. I was to fly to an airport several hours away, rent a car, drive to a remote location in Canada, and disable my phone.

I found him in a small, run-down apartment building in a quiet residential neighborhood. He wore a green Army-style jacket and a T-shirt featuring one of Anonymous’s logos: a black-suited man with a question mark instead of a face. The apartment was sparsely furnished and smelled of cigarette smoke. He discussed U.S. politics (“I have not voted in many elections—it’s all a rigged game”), militant Islam (“I believe that people in the Nigerian government essentially colluded to create a completely phony Al Qaeda affiliate called Boko Haram”), and his tenuous position within Anonymous (“These people who call themselves

trolls are really just rotten, mean, evil people”).

Doyon had shaved his beard, and he looked gaunt. He told me that he was ill and that he rarely went outside. On his small desk were two laptops, a stack of books about Buddhism, and an overflowing ashtray. A Guy Fawkes mask hung on an otherwise bare yellow wall. He told me, “Underneath the whole X persona is a little old man who is in absolute agony at times.”

This past Christmas, the founder of the news site AnonInsiders visited him, bearing pie and cigarettes. Doyon asked the friend to succeed him as Supreme Commander of the P.L.F., offering “the keys to the kingdom”—all his passwords, as well as secret files relating to several Anonymous operations. The friend gently declined. “I have a life,” he told me.

On August 9, 2014, at 5:09 P.M. local time, Kareem (Tef Poe) Jackson, a rapper and activist from Dellwood, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, tweeted about a crisis unfolding in a neighboring town. “Basically martial law is taking place in Ferguson all perimeters

blocked coming and going,” he wrote. “National and international friends Help!!!” Five hours earlier in Ferguson, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African-American, Michael Brown, had been shot to death by a white police officer. The police claimed that Brown had reached for the officer’s gun. Brown’s friend Dorian Johnson, who was with him at the time, said that Brown’s only offense was refusing to leave the middle of the street.

Within two hours, Jackson received a reply from a Twitter account called CommanderXanon. “You can certainly expect us,” the message read. “See if you can get us some live streams going, that would be useful.” In recent weeks, Doyon, still in Canada, had come out of retirement. In June, two months before his fiftieth birthday, he quit smoking (“#hacktheadaddiction #ecigaretteswork #old,” he later tweeted). The following month, after fighting broke out in Gaza, he tweeted in support of Anonymous’s Operation Save Gaza, a series of DDoS strikes against Israeli Web sites. Doyon found the events in Ferguson even more compelling. Despite his idiosyncrasies, he had a knack for being early to a cause.

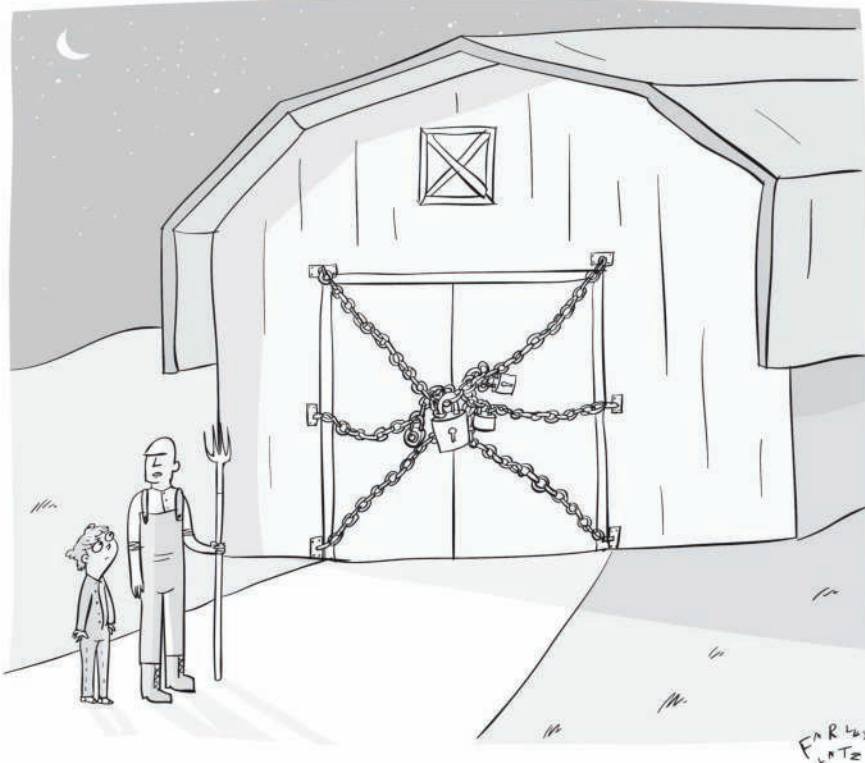
“Start collecting URLs for cops, city government,” Doyon tweeted. Within ten minutes, he had created an I.R.C. channel. “Anonymous Operation Ferguson is engaged,” he tweeted. Only two people retweeted the message.

The next morning, Doyon posted a link to a rudimentary Web site, which included a message to the people of Ferguson—“You are not alone, we will support you in every way possible”—and an ultimatum to the police: “If you abuse, harass or harm in any way the protesters in Ferguson, we will take every Web based asset of your departments and governments off line. That is not a threat, it is a promise.” Doyon appealed to the most visible Anonymous Twitter account, YourAnonNews, which has 1.3 million followers. “PLEASE support Operation Ferguson,” he wrote. A minute later, YourAnonNews complied. That day, the hashtag #OpFerguson was tweeted more than six thousand times.

The crisis became a top news story, and Anons rallied around Operation Ferguson. As with the Arab Spring operations, Anonymous sent electronic care packages to protesters on the ground, including a riot guide (“Pick up the gas emitter and lob it back at the police”) and printable Guy Fawkes masks. As Jackson and other protesters marched through Ferguson, the police attempted to subdue them with rubber bullets and tear gas. “It looked like a scene from a Bruce Willis movie,” Jackson told me. “Barack Obama hasn’t supported us to the degree Anonymous has,” he said. “It’s comforting to know that someone out there has your back.”

One site, www.opferguson.com, turned out to be a honeypot—a trap designed to collect the Internet Protocol addresses of visitors and turn them over to law-enforcement agencies. Some suspected Commander X of being a government informant. In the #OpFerguson I.R.C., someone named Sherlock wrote, “Everyone got me scared clicking links. Unless it’s from a name I’ve seen a lot, I just avoid them.”

Protesters in Ferguson asked the police to reveal the name of the officer who had shot Brown. Several times, Anons echoed this demand. Someone tweeted, “Ferguson police better release



“This is the barn where we keep our feelings. If a feeling comes to you, bring it out here and lock it up.”

the shooter's name before Anonymous does the work for them." In a community meeting on August 12th, Jon Belmar, the Chief of the St. Louis Police Department, refused. "We do not do that until they're charged with an offense," he said.

In retaliation, a hacker with the handle TheAnonMessage tweeted a link to what he claimed was a two-hour audio file of a police radio scanner, recorded around the time of Brown's death. TheAnonMessage also doxed Belmar, tweeting what he purported to be the police chief's home address, phone number, and photographs of his family—one of his son sleeping on a couch, another of Belmar posing with his wife. "Nice photo, Jon," TheAnonMessage tweeted. "Your wife actually looks good for her age. Have you had enough?" An hour later, TheAnonMessage threatened to dox Belmar's daughter.

Richard Stallman, the first-generation hacker from M.I.T., told me that though he supports many of Anonymous's causes, he considered these dox attacks reprehensible. Even internally, TheAnonMessage's actions were divisive. "Why bother doxing people who weren't involved?" one Anon asked over I.R.C., adding that threatening Belmar's family was "beyond stupid." But TheAnonMessage and other Anons continued to seek information that could be used in future dox attacks. The names of Ferguson Police Department employees were available online, and Anons scoured the Internet, trying to suss out which of the officers had killed Brown.

In the early morning of August 14th, a few Anons became convinced, based on Facebook photos and other disparate clues, that Brown's shooter was a thirty-two-year-old man named Bryan Willman. According to a transcript of an I.R.C., one Anon posted a photo of Willman with a swollen face; another noted, "The shooter claimed to have been hit in the face." Another user, Anonymous|11057, acknowledged that his suspicion of Willman involved "a leap of probably bad logic." Still, he wrote, "i just can't shake it. i really truly honestly and without a shred of hard evidence think it's him."

TheAnonMessage seemed amused by the conversation, writing, "#RIPBry-

anWillman." Other Anons urged caution. "Please be sure," Anonymous|2252 wrote. "It's not just about a man's life, Anon can easily be turned on by the public if something truly unjust comes of this."

The debate went on for more than an hour. Several Anons pointed out that there was no way to confirm that Willman had ever been a Ferguson police officer.

Anonymous|3549: @gs we still don't have a confirmation that bry is even on PD

Intangir: tensions are high enough right now where there is a slim chance someone might care enough to kill him

Anonymous|11057: the only real way to get a confirmation would be an eyewitness report from the scene of the crime. otherwise it's hearsay and shillery

Anonymous|11057: the fastest way to eliminate a suspect is to call him a suspect ... we are all terrified of being unjust, but the pegs keep fitting in the holes ...

Many Anons remained uncomfortable with the idea of a dox. But around 7 A.M. a vote was taken. According to chat logs, of the eighty or so people in the I.R.C., fewer than ten participated. They decided to release Willman's personal information.

Anonymous|2252: is this going on twitter?

anondepp: lol

Anonymous|2252: via @theanonmessage ?

TheAnonMessage: yup

TheAnonMessage: just did

anondepp: its up

Anonymous|2252: shit

TheAnonMessage: Lord in heaven...

Anonymous|3549: ...have mercy on our souls

anondepp: lol

At 9:45 A.M., the St. Louis Police Department responded to TheAnonMessage. "Bryan Willman is not even an officer with Ferguson or St. Louis County PD," the tweet read. "Do not release more info on this random citizen." (The F.B.I. later opened an investigation into the hacking of police computers in Ferguson.) Twitter quickly suspended TheAnonMessage, but Willman's name and address had been reported widely.

Willman is the head police dispatcher in St. Ann, a suburb west of Ferguson. When the St. Louis Police Department's Intelligence Unit called to tell him that he had been named as the killer, Willman told me, "I thought it was the weirdest joke." Within hours,

he received hundreds of death threats on his social-media accounts. He stayed in his house for nearly a week, alone, under police protection. "I just want it all to go away," he told me. He thinks that Anonymous has irreparably harmed his reputation. "I don't see how they can ever think they can be trusted again," he said.

"We are not perfect," OpFerguson tweeted. "Anonymous makes mistakes, and we've made a few in the chaos of the past few days. For those, we apologize." Though Doyon was not responsible for the errant dox attack, other Anons took the opportunity to shame him for having launched an operation that spiraled out of control. A Pastebin message, distributed by YourAnonNews, read, "You may notice contradictory tweets and information about #Ferguson and #OpFerguson from various Anonymous twitter accounts. Part of why there is dissension about this particular #op is that CommanderX is considered a 'namefag/facefag'—a known entity who enjoys or at least doesn't shun publicity—which is considered by most Anonymous to be bad form, for some probably fairly obvious reasons."

On his personal Twitter account, Doyon denied any involvement with Op Ferguson and wrote, "I hate this shit. I don't want drama and I don't want to fight with people I thought were friends." Within a couple of days, he was sounding hopeful again. He recently retweeted messages reading, "You call them rioters, we call them voices of the oppressed" and "Free Tibet."

Doyon is still in hiding. Even Jay Leiderman, his attorney, does not know where he is. Leiderman says that, in addition to the charges in Santa Cruz, Doyon may face indictment for his role in the PayPal and Orlando attacks. If he is arrested and convicted on all counts, he could spend the rest of his life in prison. Following the example of Edward Snowden, he hopes to apply for asylum with the Russians. When we spoke, he used a lit cigarette to gesture around his apartment. "How is this better than a fucking jail cell? I never go out," he said. "I will never speak with my family again. . . . It's an incredibly high price to pay to do everything you can to keep people alive and free and informed." ♦

THE ANTIDOTE

Can Staten Island's middle-class neighborhoods defeat an overdose epidemic?

BY IAN FRAZIER

Joseph D'Agosto, a paramedic with the Fire Department's 23rd E.M.S. Battalion, on Staten Island, is the best person in New York City. During his twenty-four years on the job, he has saved many lives—"hundreds, probably," he says. D'Agosto is known throughout the department as an instructor in emergency medical techniques. When I went looking for him the other day at battalion headquarters, near the southern end of the island, one of his colleagues said he was out, called him on the phone, and told me an address where I could find him. Somehow I had the impression that D'Agosto would be conducting an instructional session, but he turned out to be getting a tattoo of an owl ("for wisdom") on his left forearm at Contemporary Tattoo and Gallery, occasional workplace of his friend and E.M.S. colleague Josh Fitch, who was washing down D'Agosto's arm for stencilling when I came in.

Staten Island has a lot of tattoo parlors, Italian delicatessens, two-story office buildings with empty spaces to rent, massage therapists, car services, Italian restaurants, places that give rock-music lessons and host children's birthday parties, laundromats, liquor stores, tire shops, nail parlors, foot spas, pet-grooming salons, hair salons, barbershops ("buzz cuts, fades, tape-ups"). A small-business miscellany, sprung from the borough's abundant middle-class life, lines the bigger roads like Hylan Boulevard from one end of the island to the other.

Most Staten Island enterprises are as their signs describe them. Occasionally, one or two storefronts that look no different from the rest also do a steady, word-of-mouth business in the illegal sale of OxyContin, oxycodone, Percocet, and other prescription painkillers. A neighborhood ice-cream truck playing its jingle might also be selling pills, according to police, who keep an eye on

ice-cream trucks. A window-blinds and drapery store sold oxycodone pills until the N.Y.P.D. arrested one of the owners and the store closed. At a barbershop called Beyond Styles, on Giffords Lane, in the Great Kills neighborhood, police arrested the owner and two accomplices in October of 2013 for selling oxycodone and other drugs—two thousand pills a week, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The silent sniper fire of overdoses from pills and heroin that has been picking people off one at a time in increasing numbers all over the country for almost twenty years has hit Staten Island harder than anyplace else in the city. For a number of reasons, this borough of four hundred and seventy thousand-plus people offers unusually good entry routes for the opioid epidemic. In 2012, thirty-six people on Staten Island overdosed on heroin and thirty-seven on prescription opioid pills, for an average of almost exactly one overdose death every five days. Many of the dead have been young people in their late teens to early thirties. In this self-contained place, everybody seems to know everybody, and the grief as the deaths accumulate has been frantic and terrified.

I wanted to talk to Joseph D'Agosto because he had recently appeared in the Staten Island *Advance* for saving an overdose victim. That alone would not have got him in the news, because he saves overdose victims with some frequency. What made this rescue different was that he used a nasal-spray syringe of a drug known as Narcan, whose name comes from the first syllables of "narcotic antagonist," a term for opioids that reverse the action of other opioids. In Narcan, the antagonist drug is an opioid called naloxone. Like heroin, naloxone is highly soluble in the blood, and it acts almost instantly, reversing the effects of heroin or pain-relief opioid pills often in

one or two minutes. Formerly, D'Agosto and other paramedics administered an intravenous dosage of naloxone to revive overdose victims; general use of the nasal-spray injector is something new.

Josh Fitch traced the outline of the owl tattoo on D'Agosto's arm, which D'Agosto extended as if getting an I.V. himself. "We received a call for an unresponsive person in the courtyard of an apartment building, early morning, around three or four o'clock, on a night shift last February," D'Agosto told me. "The unresponsive person, a lady in her sixties, was slumped over on a bench, in like a robe or a housecoat. Near her we found a pill bottle for painkillers, almost empty, and I saw on the label that it had been filled only a week before. She was not breathing, lips blue, pupils miotic—pinpoint-size—all symptoms of opioid O.D. We put her head back, secured a breathing passage. I took the Narcan injector and sprayed a milligram of the naloxone solution in each nostril, and about a minute later she coughed and started breathing again. My partner that night, Henry Cordero, and I were, like, 'O.K.! We figured it out!' We put her on the stretcher and brought her to the hospital, and they took over from there.

"In the past, when we used the naloxone with the I.V., that worked, too, of course. But finding a vein for the I.V. can be difficult. Maybe the person was an I.V. drug user and he's got collapsed veins in his arms. Maybe you're in a dim hallway, family members around you crying and screaming—there it's not as easy finding a vein as in a well-lit hospital room. Also, you have the problem of when they come to, sometimes they get agitated and want to fight you, and with the I.V. there can be a danger of a needle stick from someone who may have a disease. With the Narcan atomizer, none of that is a problem, and anybody can use it. You don't need a special



"Same thing every September. He begins to doubt the existence of man, then football season begins, and he snaps out of it."

skill—you just spray it in the nose. And everybody's got a nose."

The Narcan nasal-spray program began in Staten Island's 120th Precinct in January. All first responders—police and firefighters, along with the E.M.T.s—received Narcan syringes and instruction on how to use them. Including the police was important, because they usually get to the scene first, and speed counts; when an overdose victim stops breathing, brain damage begins in four to six minutes and death soon follows. By March, responders with Narcan had saved three overdose victims in the precinct. City higher-ups decided to extend the program to the rest of the borough and, soon afterward, to the rest of the city. More Narcan-produced rescues followed. In June, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the Narcan kits would be given to every first-responder unit in the state.

It used to be that the medical profession undertreated pain. Doctors didn't want to create opioid addicts, and the consensus was that patients should suffer rather than risk addiction. That started to change in the seventies, with the rise of the pain-management move-

ment, when pain came to be seen not only as a symptom but as an illness in itself. Now the worry was of "opiophobia." A widely used pharmaceuticals textbook advised, "Although many physicians are concerned about 'creating addicts,' very few individuals begin their drug addiction problems by misuse of prescription drugs. . . . Fear of producing such medical addicts results in needless suffering among patients with pain."

Strong opioids like morphine or oxycodone already existed for patients with intense, short-term pain from healing trauma or end-of-life illnesses. Long-term, chronic pain was another matter—no existing drug was ideal for that. Seeing the need, Purdue Frederick, a pharmaceutical company in Norwalk, Connecticut, developed a long-term pain reliever called MS Contin, which was a morphine pill with a time-release formula. When the patent ran out on MS Contin, Purdue introduced a time-release oxycodone pill, OxyContin.

The pill entered the market in 1996 and quickly became an iatrogenic disaster. OxyContin's purpose was merciful—to provide pain relief at a steady rate over a ten- or twelve-hour period, so a pain

sufferer could sleep—and millions benefitted from taking it. But for its effect to last that long the pill had to contain a lot of oxycodone. People discovered that the capsules could be crushed, then swallowed, snorted, or injected for a powerful high. Purdue marketed the drug aggressively to general practitioners who accepted the company's claim (untested and untrue) that OxyContin was difficult to abuse. Overdoses involving OxyContin soon became horribly routine in places like Maine and West Virginia. As the epidemic of "Oxy" addiction and overdose spread, Purdue did not take the drug off the market. Several states and many individuals sued the company, which fought with tobacco-company-like determination but eventually gave in. In 2007, Purdue pleaded guilty in federal court to misbranding the drug by not stating its potential for causing addiction—a felony—and paid a fine that totalled \$634.5 million. It also introduced a version of OxyContin that was more tamper-proof. By that time, the drug had made the company many billions of dollars.

Even with the fines and the deaths, OxyContin showed the profitability of long-term opioid pain relievers and contributed to the enormous proliferation of pain pills nationwide. Therein lay the beginning of Staten Island's opioid problem. More Staten Islanders work in health care than in any other industry. Health-care workers often know about and have access to pills, and their insurance generally pays for them. Many other Staten Islanders are police officers, firefighters, and sanitation workers, with health insurance from the city. If they get injured on the job, they see their own doctors, who can write prescriptions. Staten Islanders receive the pills, in short, because they are prescribed them and can afford them. In 2012, doctors and hospitals on Staten Island prescribed painkillers at a rate about twice that of the rest of the city.

Kids who abuse pills usually get them first from friends or the family medicine cabinet, but then they have to buy them. Illegal pills sell for as much as forty or fifty dollars apiece. Six or eight dollars, however, will buy a packet of heroin, for a high that's the same or better. Most people who come to heroin get there by way of pills. New York City is the

heroin capital of the country; twenty per cent of all the heroin confiscations and arrests nationwide happen here. When I talked to Agent James J. Hunt, the head of the New York Division of the D.E.A., he said that ninety per cent of New York's heroin originates in South America and Mexico. Poppy fields in Colombia grow the raw opium, labs hidden in the jungle process it, Mexican drug cartels smuggle the heroin through the Caribbean or across the U.S.-Mexico border, and dealers, who are often Dominicans, package it, stamp it with brand names like Breaking Bad or Government Shutdown, and sell it to street dealers. Heroin confiscations at the border have increased from about five hundred and fifty-six kilos in 2008 to about twenty-one hundred kilos in 2012. In New York in 2014, more than two hundred kilos had been seized by July, more than twice as much as during all of 2013.

Agent Hunt's office chair at his big desk in D.E.A. headquarters in Manhattan is black and high-backed. He wore a black shirt and a muted tie. His blue eyes and his blond, wavy hair parted almost in the middle made his face stand out as if in an Old Master dark-background oil portrait. I asked if the plan to push large quantities of cheap heroin and undersell the illegal pill market had been the idea of a particular person—like El Chapo Guzmán (the Sinaloa cartel leader who went to jail, escaped, and was recently recaptured). Hunt thought a minute and said, "Yes, it probably was his idea, or the idea of four or five cartel leaders like him."

"In Yonkers recently there were some dealers who were mixing heroin with fentanyl, a very dangerous opioid, and selling it on the street," Hunt went on. "Four people died from using it, and the dealers kept on selling it even after they knew that. Anybody who would sell heroin is evil."

The opioid epidemic may seem to be a crisis that simply happened, but actual people set it in motion, and other actual people make it worse and keep it going. The cartel leaders and the smugglers and the dealers belong to the second category. In the first category must be included the former management of Purdue Pharma, three of whom pleaded guilty to a non-felony misbranding

charge. Purdue Pharma is the huge drug company that grew from Purdue Frederick, whose owners, Dr. Mortimer Sackler and Dr. Raymond Sackler, were not charged in the case. Their older brother and mentor, Dr. Arthur Sackler, known as the founder of modern pharmaceutical advertising, served as the inspiration for the company's ambitious OxyContin marketing strategy. The Sacklers made many philanthropic gifts and many things are named after them, such as the Sackler Wing, at New York City's Metropolitan Museum, with its famous Temple of Dendur.

Staten Island's special misfortune is to exist at a point where somewhat ambiguous but real corporate crime helped to provide a market opportunity for straight-ahead drug-cartel crime. In the years since Purdue Pharma pleaded guilty, the company has tried to make its product safer and to draw more attention to problems of abuse. During the early years of the OxyContin rollout, it has to be said, Purdue ignored the physician's basic rule, *Primum non nocere*—"First, do no harm"—with terrible consequences.

Johnathan Charles Crupi is buried in Triangle 63, Lot 66, Grave 3, in Staten Island's Ocean View Cemetery. He died in March, at the age of twenty-one. A photograph of him—blue eyes, affectionate smile, gold-colored earring in one ear—looks at you from

his marker. The grave is still fresh, the dirt reddish, next to a gravel lane that wanders by. Purple and white impatiens, a pot of campanula, and a circle of white stones brighten the plot. The ocean is difficult to see from the cemetery and impossible to hear. The main sounds are birdsong, a lawnmower, and the nearby buzzing of a Weedwacker.

Johnathan Crupi's parents, Barry and Candace Crupi, did not want his obituary in the *Advance* to say he "died at home"—a newspaper formula sometimes used for overdose victims. The writeup described him as a "wonderful kid until drugs came" and said he died of a heroin overdose.

In May, the Crupis took part in a New York State Senate Joint Task Force Panel Discussion on Heroin and Opioid Addiction at a community center near the middle of the island. The gathering was one of many held by the New York State Legislature to get public comments on the problem at various locations around the state—the Senate held eighteen such forums, the Assembly held three. For this event, the room, a high-ceilinged conference space, seated a hundred and fifty or more, with many standees along the side. Before the proceedings started, a chatty, neighborly cheeriness overlay the nerve-racked, sometimes desperate mood underneath.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. A state senator, the task force's head,



Darst Swift

"Can't we just settle this Prius a Prius?"

spoke, followed by other senators. Then Brian Hunt, a panelist identified in the program as “Father of deceased Adam Hunt,” stood up. (He and Agent James Hunt are not related.) Brian Hunt’s voice was in a register almost beyond pain. He said that Adam had been in rehab for two months and came home to look for a job. In February, at a Super Bowl party, he took a drink. Soon afterward, someone sold him heroin. He died on March 2nd of acute heroin intoxication. Some of the people he had bought drugs from, as Hunt later learned, lived in the Hunts’ neighborhood, on the next block. Sellers of heroin hide in plain sight and may be friends and neighbors; sellers of heroin should get life in prison, he said.

Candace Crupi spoke next. Her voice was small, quiet, and almost devoid of intonation. She talked about a time when Johnathan was four and she lost him briefly at a Costco. She said what a sweet boy he was. She said no one was ever beyond redemption, because “every angel has a past and every sinner has a future.” She added that the pharmaceutical companies should help pay for drug treatment, because they’re reaping all the profits and suffering none of the sorrow.

Several young men who stood up at the meeting said they were addicts in recovery and praised a rehab program called Dynamite, in Brooklyn. When I called Dynamite’s number, its executive director, Bill Fusco, and associate director, Karen Carlini, offered to show me around. Dynamite is the short name for Dynamic Youth Community, a rehab program with residential facilities in the town of Fallsburg, upstate, and outpatient services and main offices on Coney Island Avenue, in a distant neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Fusco, who co-founded D.Y.C. more than forty years ago, has the heft and the large hands of a blazing-fast softball pitcher, which he is. Karen Carlini, who’s slim and pretty, began as a patient and then a volunteer at the center, in the seventies. D.Y.C. is for young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four. The program begins with a year’s residence at Fallsburg and continues with a year of daily outpatient attendance at the Brooklyn center. At the moment, seventy-five members—

“They’re not clients or patients, they’re members of the Dynamite family,” Fusco said—were here on outpatient status, with an almost equal number in residence at Fallsburg. Seventy-eight per cent had entered the program because of addiction to heroin.

Fusco and Carlini and another staffer and I sat and talked with a group of members in a circle in a high-windowed top-floor room with easy chairs and couches. Some of the young women got comfortable with their legs folded under them, as the incoming daylight of sobriety set the atmosphere. There was a moment of everybody looking at one another. A lot could go unsaid—how they got here, the nightmares that went before. Every sentence carried a freight of experience and accomplishment. They had built houses at Fallsburg, and gone without cell phones or Internet, and visited the county fair, and attended religious services in the town, and written letters, and hiked to the waterfall on the property, and played softball, and painted the scenery for the graduation ceremony, and sat on the lawn, and, as one young woman said, “learned how to have sober fun again.”

They all said that they had thought pills couldn’t be so bad, because doctors were prescribing them. “I never thought they could create an addict in me,” one said.

Fusco repeated that they had worked hard to get where they are today and they should be proud, because they did



the hardest parts themselves. Later, he told me that the program costs about twenty-eight thousand dollars a year per member. Parents pay a portion, on a sliding scale depending on income, and New York State picks up most of the rest. “I think the taxpayers are justified in expecting that the state will contribute when their kids need this kind of help and the health insurance won’t cover it,” he said.

“Up to now, insurance has allowed

for only seven or ten days of rehab, twenty-eight days at most,” Carlini said. “That might work for adults who have families to support and a limited amount of time. But for kids who are addicted rehab takes years, not weeks. The good news is that kids are more resilient than older people. They can recover fully, both physically and mentally.”

Some of the Dynamite members said that at one time or another they had overdosed and naloxone had revived them. To a few this had happened more than once. Though the drug may have saved their lives, none said they enjoyed the experience. Naloxone is like the bouncer of the opioids; it stops the high of heroin or morphine or opioid pills so fast that the user does a hundred-and-eighty-degree return to reality and undergoes the familiar miseries of detoxing in a sudden, intense onset. The reversal is of short duration, though, and after thirty to ninety minutes the person usually slips back into a milder opioid sleep. If the original opioid was in the system in such an amount as still to be a threat, the naloxone must be used again. Most overdoses involve multiple drugs; naloxone works only on other opioids. Alcohol, cocaine, and benzodiazepines like Valium are unaffected by it.

With a minor asterisk, one can say that naloxone was invented in Queens. (A Japanese pharmaceutical company received an earlier patent for the drug, but seems not to have known what it had.) Dr. Jack Fishman, a young biochemist with a Ph.D. from Wayne State University, first developed it in a small lab under the elevated tracks on Jamaica Avenue in the late nineteen-fifties. Ever since morphine was synthesized from opium, in 1803, chemists had been searching for a drug with morphine’s good qualities but none of its bad. Mostly what they’d come up with was other addictive drugs—heroin, for example, invented by an English chemist in 1874 and developed commercially by Germany’s Bayer Company as a cough suppressant aimed mainly at patients with pneumonia and terminal TB. Opioids with antagonistic properties had been discovered before naloxone, but they presented serious problems. Nalorphine and cyclazocine both reversed the effects of pain-relieving

opioids but also caused severe dysphoria (the opposite of euphoria), hallucinations, and psychotic episodes.

Dr. Fishman worked at the Sloan Kettering Institute for Cancer Research and had taken a second job at the private lab in Queens because he was going through a divorce and needed the money. Dr. Mozes Lewenstein, the head of narcotics research at a company called Endo Laboratories, oversaw the private lab. A colleague of his at Endo, Dr. Harold Blumberg, proposed that a change in the structure of oxymorphone, a recently synthesized morphine derivative ten times as strong as morphine, might produce an opioid antagonist of comparable potency. Following Blumberg's idea, Fishman began to work with oxymorphone and, by replacing an N-methyl group in its structure with an allyl group, synthesized naloxone. Tests showed it to be more potent at reversing the effects of opioids than any antagonist synthesized so far. In 1961, Lewenstein and Fishman applied for a U.S. patent for naloxone, called only by its chemical name, N-allyl-14-hydroxydihydro-normorphinone. Five years later, they received patent 3,254,088.

The drug turned out to have all kinds of uses. First, as an opioid antidote, naloxone comes with almost no contraindications—it does not combine to bad effect with other drugs. Its serious side effects are rare and few. (A study found that in 1.3 per cent of cases where naloxone was administered, seizures and pulmonary edema occurred.) Though naloxone displaces other opioids, no other opioids displace it. During the period before it wears off, it has the final word. It produces no analgesic effects and is itself non-addictive.

Naloxone's invention led to important discoveries about the chemistry of the brain and the nervous system, such as the discovery of endorphins. These endogenous opioid peptides—chemicals in the body that provide pain relief and pleasure like pain-relieving opioids—revealed hints of their existence when it was found that electronically stimulated pain relief could be reversed by naloxone. If naloxone could reverse pain relief when no drugs were present, researchers guessed that the body must have its own pain-relief systems. "Endorphin," the word, comes from "endog-



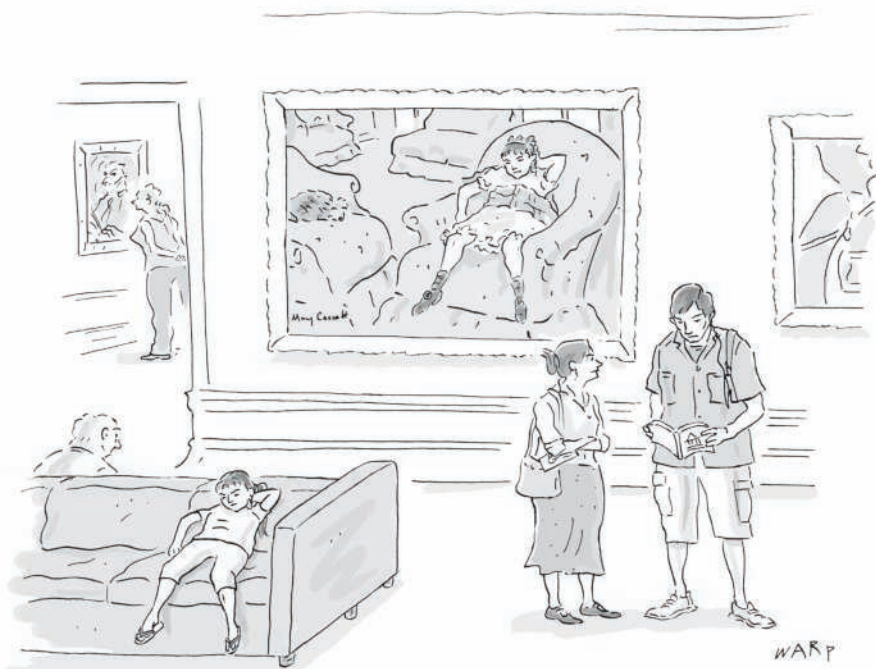
"If I told you where the happy place in my mind is, you'd start showing up there and ruin it."

enous morphine." A number of such natural chemicals were later found, along with receptors in the brain upon which they and the opioids acted. Other studies showed that naloxone may block the pain-relieving effects of acupuncture and placebos, temporarily suppress the urge to eat, and reduce the body's shock and stress reactions.

The drug must be injected or administered intranasally, because it's not absorbed well by digestion. This is fortunate for drugmakers who want to put safety brakes on drugs meant to be taken only orally. Suboxone, a methadone-like drug used in the treatment of addiction, consists of naloxone combined with an analgesic opioid called buprenorphine. The Suboxone pill re-

leases its buprenorphine under the tongue, but if you try to grind up the pill and inject it for a stronger rush naloxone's usual downer effect kicks in.

Naloxone is given to newborns whose mothers have had opioid painkillers during childbirth, so the opioid won't suppress the babies' breathing. Postoperative patients sometimes are brought out of anesthetic with naloxone. Patients suffering from dissociative disorder, which often causes everything around them to seem unreal, can be treated with naloxone; the drug's true affinity seems to be with reality. Naloxone has no dysphoric or psychotomimetic effects and no obvious potential for abuse. Anybody can use it to revive an overdose victim with little fear of



causing injury. Thebaine, the Tasmania-grown, opium-derived raw-material precursor of oxycodone and other legal opioids, is also the precursor of naloxone; the harmless drug comes from the same stuff as the dangerous ones for which it is the antidote. If there ever was a *primum non nocere* drug, naloxone is it.

Our Lady Star of the Sea, a Catholic church serving forty-one hundred families, occupies a rise above Amboy Road, in the Huguenot neighborhood. Weekly, the church offers fourteen Masses and a dozen twelve-step-program meetings—seven of Alcoholics Anonymous, two of Pills Anonymous, and one each of Gamblers Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and Al-Anon. Cars come and go in the ample parking lot all day. Some guys were leaving an A.A. meeting at the rectory and having an earnest conversation as I went in one afternoon to see Monsignor Jeffrey P. Conway, at that time Our Lady Star of the Sea's pastor (he has since moved to St. Patrick's, in nearby Richmondtown). Conway is a tall, narrow-faced, soft-spoken, cerebral man who even in civilian clothes looks set apart. The blue polo shirt, blue slacks, and blue sneakers he was wearing somehow evoked monastic garb.

He had been pastor at this church since 1993 and had watched the opioid problem grow in the area, he said. As an A.A. member himself for thirty-five years—in a kind of apostolic succession from one of A.A.'s founders, Bob Smith, whose nephew was the doctor at a rehab clinic for priests that he attended in Michigan—Conway instituted the church's various addiction programs. In 2010, two young brothers said they wanted to start a chapter of Pills Anonymous here. Only about five people came to the first meetings, but fifty or sixty attend regularly now.

An assistant brought him a black-bound ledger with "Deaths" on its front cover in gold Gothic letters, and he began to turn its pages slowly. "I wanted to look at this. I've presided at a lot of funerals for overdose victims," he said. "Here's one . . . March 9, 2011. . . . He was eighteen years old. . . . Another, April 10, 2011. . . . twenty-two years old. I remember he joined A.A. as a sixteen-year-old, and later stopped coming to meetings. I heard he was doing pills and I tried to get in touch with him but he wouldn't take my calls. . . . May of 2012. . . . He was thirty-one. His family said it wasn't drugs, but I'm not sure of it. . . . It's hard to know what to say in your funeral homily, almost impossible to give consolation. The families feel

guilty, bereaved, angry at the kid, angry at themselves. . . . Here's a fifteen-year-old boy. . . . A young woman, May of '13. . . . And here, June of '13. . . . This young man was in rehab in Georgia and got out and was found dead a few days later in a motel room. . . . Another, November 13th, end of last year. . . . twenty-three years old."

He laid the book aside. I asked if Scripture has any verses that apply to this situation. "Second Corinthians, Chapter 12," he said, and then he recited, "In order that I might not become conceited by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. . . . The Lord said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong."

"That's the twelve-step idea of admitting your weakness in the face of addiction and giving yourself up to a higher power," he continued. "Alcoholism takes a while to ruin your life, but opioid addiction can happen in a week. It's almost instant. And the physical addiction of opioids is much harder to fight. Once you're off the drugs, you still have to maintain your sobriety by going to twelve-step meetings. The programs that get kids off drugs are wonderful, but some don't emphasize the follow-up enough. At meetings, you have the fellowship of older participants who know about sobriety day to day and year to year. Stopping drugs is the beginning. Then you must keep getting the power in order to stay stopped."

I wandered all over Staten Island but saw very few outward signs of the opioid crisis. On July 8th, police arrested a pharmacist named Anthony D'Alessandro at his house in a new development for stealing almost two hundred thousand oxycodone pills while he was head of the drug dispensary at Manhattan's Beth Israel Medical Center (he pleaded not guilty); when I walked through his neighborhood soon afterward, it seemed untouched, with kids playing baseball in

a little park and women watering yards. In the pharmacist's front window was a vase with a bouquet of pussy willows.

I checked behind a high school, where a footpath rumored to be a drug hangout dozed, empty of hangers-out, in the suburban fragrance of newly mown grass. By a shopping-center alley in which drug deals supposedly occur, a young man in a yarmulke was handing out campaign literature to passing shoppers. At a park entrance where, according to police, an undercover cop bought four oxycodone pills for thirty dollars each from a young woman drug dealer, an Uncle Louie G's Italian Ices truck was playing "I Can't Stop Loving You," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

As I drove by Silver Mount Cemetery, on Victory Boulevard, suddenly a shirtless young man with tousled blond hair and wild eyes was walking toward me in my lane. I veered. His face was weirdly red and he held a clear plastic water bottle in one hand. By the time I pulled over and looked back for him, he was gone.

The plague's silence and invisibility on Staten Island kept it from public attention for a long while. Deaths from overdose do not tend to happen on the street. As a veteran rehab counselor said at the Senate Joint Task Force meeting, "The kids would come home by curfew, say good night to their parents, and leave their bedrooms feet first the next morning." Then commuters started noticing kids nodding out on the ferry and on the Staten Island Railway. Neighbors heard from neighbors about kids who had overdosed, and the bad news spread. Daniel Master, the Chief Assistant District Attorney of Richmond County (Staten Island's coextensive county), remembers going to a wake for an older person and observing that the other part of the funeral home was filled with weeping teen-agers.

Staten Island is not the healthiest place. It has the highest rate of smoking in the city and shares the highest rate of obesity with the Bronx. More teen-agers here, per capita, use alcohol and binge-drink than in the other boroughs. "Kids drinking is just a part of the cul-

ture here," explained Diane Arneth, the president and C.E.O. of a nonprofit called Community Health Action of Staten Island (CHASI). "Staten Island is a mostly blue-collar community, and drinking on the weekend is a normal way to relax. When kids are around, sometimes they drink, too. The parents say they'd rather have the kids drinking at home than out somewhere on the street. I know people who play drinking games with their underage kids and their kids' friends at family parties. It's not seen as a big deal.

"Staten Islanders generally work in other parts of the city, and they have the longest average commuting times in the United States," Arneth went on. "So the kids are alone a lot. The parents accept that, because this is a supposedly 'safe' place. Staten Island kids have cars, they use social media, they're mobile, looking for the party. Pills fit right into that world. And then, when substance-abuse problems come up that the par-

ents can't handle, they hate to ask for help. A lot of them are cops, firemen, they've done military service. They give help, they're not used to asking for it. Help is for 'those people'—families in the projects, Latino immigrants, poor people—not for them. When we went to community boards back in the nineties trying to set up local needle exchanges to stop the spread of AIDS, some of the responses were so cruel. Nobody thought it was their problem. They said, 'They're just junkies—let them die.' Now some of the same people who used to yell at me about why I cared about the junkies are asking for help for their addicted kids."

Community Health Action of Staten Island works closely with a larger nonprofit called the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness, which in 2011 responded to the youth opioid problem by founding a coalition called Tackling Youth Substance Abuse. TYSA's enterprising director, Adrienne Abbate,



"Before we cut the cake, I want to thank my bride for bringing our wedding in under budget."

brought together many groups and agencies to look for solutions, and the idea of giving Narcan kits to all emergency personnel came from one of TYSA's meetings in 2013.

If you want a Narcan kit of your own, Community Health Action of Staten Island will provide you with one at no charge. You have to attend a training session at a CHASI office, where you watch a PowerPoint presentation, hear some facts (drug overdoses recently overtook car accidents as the leading cause of accidental death in the United States; most victims of drug overdose are between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-four), answer questionnaires having to do with your knowledge of opioids, and do a hands-on assembly of syringes from kits that are past their expiration dates. You leave with a small blue nylon zip-up bag that contains a prescription for the drug signed by a doctor or a nurse practitioner, two syringes and two capsules in small cardboard boxes that say "Naloxone Hydrochloride" on them, two "Intranasal Mucosal Atomization Devices" that fit onto the syringes, a pair of rubber gloves, two alcohol wipes, and a mouth-to-mouth-resuscitation face shield.

Joshua Sippen, a vice-president of CHASI, led the session that I attended. Before he began, he pointed me out and said I was a reporter, in case anyone in the group objected on the ground of privacy; a number of the attendees were the mothers of addicts. Nobody did. Afterward, a woman named Melissa Forsyth, who had been sitting a few rows up, introduced herself to me as Missy. I was glad to meet her. She has a good laugh—the kind that's full-throated and infectious, an intact survival from a younger self. She said her son had been addicted to heroin. Like others there, she wanted the naloxone kit in case she ever had to save her child. Data show that as many as eighty-five per cent of overdose victims are with other people at the time of the overdose; if there's naloxone in the vicinity and someone to administer it, they could be saved.

A few days later, she and I met at a bagel place on Bay Street. She was on a break from her job as a Y.M.C.A. peer counsellor working with families of addicts, she had a four-month-old girl she was taking care of in a stroller, she was getting lunch for herself and her seventeen-year-old daughter, Leanne, and her phone kept ringing. Missy Forsyth is forty-six years old. Her husband, a

New York City firefighter, is forty-seven. Her brown hair was pulled back in a clip, and she wore a patterned top and a pair of rectangular glasses, lightly tinted purple.

"My addict is my oldest son, Joe," she told me, jiggling the baby on a knee. "He had a horrible experience—his cousin Amanda, who he was close to, was hit by a car and killed on Richmond Avenue coming out of a Sweet Sixteen party in 2006, and he blamed himself. He was supposed to come home and take care of his younger siblings so his father could pick her up. Of course, the accident was not his fault, but he started drinking heavily, then doing pills, and eventually he went to heroin. We understood how bad it was when we found he'd been taking money out of a family member's bank account."

She answered a phone call, got a bottle of water for the baby, and told her daughter what sandwich she wanted. "Joe says he's clean now," she said. "He's been in three rehab programs. I hope that's finally true. But, really, it never ends. He went to college at Oneonta, left after a year. Worked at a café, got a job as an exterminator, went to College of Staten Island, dropped out. Did a year of treatment at a residential rehab, came back, started working at a brand-new hotel in Brooklyn, lost that job. Now he lives with his fiancée. The disease is hard to fight, and he kept getting sucked back in. I support him when he's in recovery, at arm's length when he's not."

A young woman she knew came in and stopped to talk to her. (People in Staten Island seem constantly to run into friends and acquaintances when they go out.) "I used to try to control what my kids do, but I've stopped that," she said, turning back to me. "I was a helicopter parent, but my helicopter landed long ago. Now I'm working on a certification in counselling at C.S.I., I volunteer for the Y.M.C.A., and I do presentations at schools about drug addiction. I want to give people a face they can put with the addiction crisis. I was very involved with my kids' lives, coached their sports teams, drove them to lessons, and still this happened to us. I tell the high-school kids again and again that opioid pills can make them addicts in five days. I say, 'Don't drink, but if you do, what-



"Quit makin' up constellations."

ever you do, DO NOT take any pill. Stick to alcohol!" She laughed; she was kidding about the last part.

"Joe is a loose, tall, gangly sort of kid," she said after a moment, readjusting the baby in her arms. "As a little boy and a teen-ager, he was always kind of flopping around and tripping and falling down, and then he'd get right up again and be fine. It's a reality I've accepted in my life that Joe may one day be dead. But so far he's still alive. As long as he's still breathing, I've got hope."

In 2012, New York State passed a law called ISTOP/P.M.P., for Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing/Prescription Monitoring Program, and it went into effect in August, 2013. ISTOP requires that most prescribers of painkillers and other drugs with the potential for abuse check the state's Prescription Monitoring Program to see what the patient's prescription history has been during the previous six months before giving out a prescription. The idea is to make it difficult for people to go to a series of doctors and get repeats.

Within a few months, evidence seemed to show that ISTOP had reduced the amount of illegal opioids on the market. Critics said the law would create a greater demand for heroin, and that seemed to have occurred. According to N.Y.P.D. Captain Dominick D'Orazio, commanding officer of Staten Island Narcotics, seizures of pills had gone down forty-four per cent, while seizures of heroin had gone up by the same amount. D'Orazio said he saw this as a good sign for the long run, because virtually everybody who tries heroin nowadays begins as an opioid pill abuser; fewer pills out there may mean fewer heroin addicts in the future.

Diane Armeth took a similarly positive view of what sensible laws and public-health policy can accomplish. She noted that AIDS needle-exchange programs, which met resistance not only in Staten Island but all over the country, reduced the number of needle-transmitted AIDS cases in New York from fifty per cent in 1992 to four per cent today. Programs that are now handing out naloxone kits in Chicago and San Francisco and other cities started, like her own CHASI, as providers of AIDS services and needle exchanges. Reducing

overdose deaths will be their next victory, she believes.

An August 28th press release from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene announced that the citywide rates of drug-overdose deaths had gone up forty-one per cent between 2010 and 2013. Now the city's average for such deaths is two a day. The Staten Island overdose death rate, however, is starting to come down after its fourfold increase



between 2005 and 2011. The department said that the aggressive approach to Staten Island's overdose crisis would now be applied elsewhere in the city.

On Staten Island, the new Narcan program had resulted in thirteen overdose reversals by July, adding to the thousands naloxone has already rescued nationwide. Dr. Jack Fishman could be proud. When he invented naloxone, he was only in his twenties; I wondered if he might still be alive, and what he thought of his invention now. It turned out that he died in December, 2013, but his oldest son, Howard, lives on the Upper West Side. Howard remembered the storefront lab, the El tracks overhead, the smell of chemicals, and the drugstore next door where his father used to buy him a pistachio ice-cream cone after his visits. After his father and his father's parents escaped from Poland, in the thirties, they were penniless, Howard told me. His father's pharmaceutical discoveries and career eventually made his fortune. He did important work on breast cancer, headed a pharmaceutical company, served as a consultant to the World Health Organization, and was director of research at the Strang-Cornell Institute for Cancer Research until shortly before his death.

I asked Howard if his father took satisfaction from the fact that his invention had saved so many lives. "He was a complicated man," Howard said. "Like many super-achievers, he thought he

had never really achieved anything. He shied away from the spotlight. He didn't talk about himself; he talked about other people—like when he met Kissinger, he talked about that. Originally, he had wanted to be a rabbi. He was very generous to his family members around the world. He was a good father. I'm happy just to bask in his glow. His was a well-lived life."

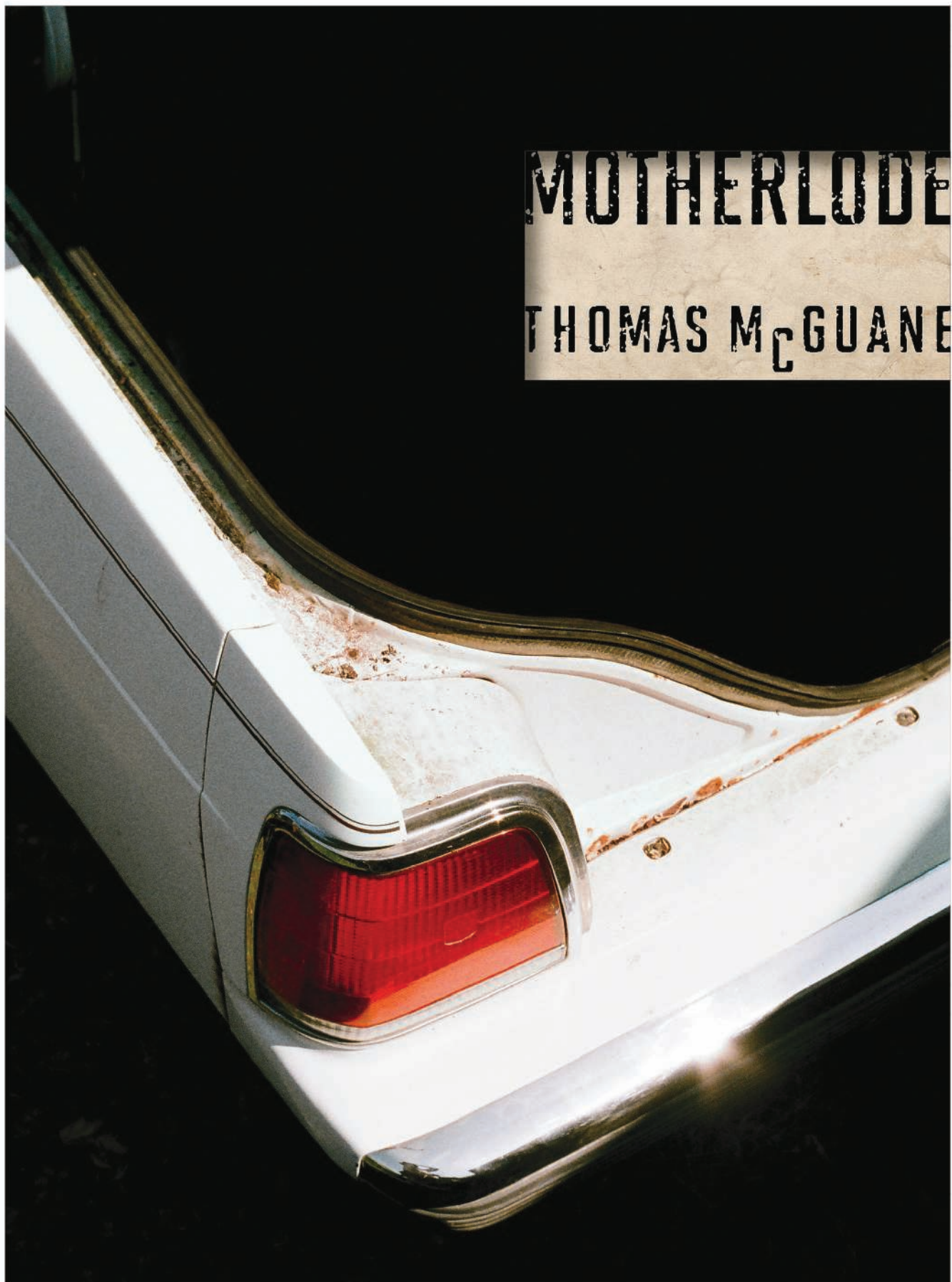
A woman whom naloxone revived more than a decade ago, when she was in her twenties, now works for a national nonprofit that fights drug addiction and its dysfunctions. She is married, with two small children, and her official, job-related manner is bright and hopeful. When I asked her what being revived by naloxone had felt like, she hesitated. Her voice changed; a particular quiet bleakness filled it. "When I overdosed, I was with some other people, and one of them had a naloxone injector kit he had bought from his dealer," she said. "I guess this dealer was kind of conscientious, if that doesn't sound too strange. Maybe he wanted his clients to be safe, so he wouldn't be hit with drug-induced-homicide charges. Anyway, he sold naloxone kits sometimes. Back then, there were no naloxone distribution programs where we were.

"So we did heroin, and I overdosed, and the guy with the naloxone injected me with it, and all I remember is waking up and feeling so horrible that I thought the people I was with were being mean to me. I didn't thank anybody for saving me—I was only angry and upset that they had made me feel like this. The withdrawal came on immediately and it was very, very painful, like twenty times worse than the worst flu I ever had. But without the naloxone I don't know what would have happened. The thought of being left passed out where I was still scares me. We were homeless junkies. Nobody who saw me would have bothered with me. No way anybody would've called 911."

She talked about her recovery and what it still involves. I asked her what she imagined would be the best possible result of the work she's doing, and she said, "I love that question!" Her voice brightened completely. "We're going to stop this opioid pandemic!" she said, and began to explain how. ♦

MOTHERLODE

THOMAS M_CGUANE



Looking in the hotel mirror, David Jenkins adjusted the Stetson he disliked and pulled on a windbreaker with a cattle-vaccine logo. He worked for a syndicate of cattle geneticists in Oklahoma, though he'd never met his employers—he had earned his credentials through an online agricultural portal, much the way that people became ministers. He was still in his twenties, a very bright young man, but astonishingly uneducated in every other way. He had spent the night in Jordan at the Garfield Hotel, which was an ideal location for meeting his ranch clients in the area. He had woken early enough to be the first customer at the café. On the front step, an old dog slept with a cancelled first-class stamp stuck to its butt. By the time David had ordered breakfast, older ranchers occupied several of the tables, waving to him familiarly. Then a man from Utah, whom he'd met at the hotel, appeared in the doorway and stopped, looking around the room. The man, who'd told David that he'd come to Jordan to watch the comets, was small and intense, middle-aged, wearing pants with an elastic waistband and flashy sneakers. Several of the ranchers were staring at him. David had asked the hotel desk clerk, an elderly man, about the comets. The clerk said, "I don't know what he's talking about and I've lived here all my life. He doesn't even have a car." David studied the menu to keep from being noticed, but it was too late. The man was at his table, laughing, his eyes shrinking to points and his gums showing. "Stop worrying! I'll get my own table," he said, drumming his fingers on the back of David's chair. David felt that in some odd way he was being assessed.

The door to the café, which had annoying bells on a string, kept clattering open and shut to admit a broad sample of the community. David enjoyed all the comradely greetings and gentle needling from the ranchers, and felt himself to be connected to the scene, if lightly. Only the fellow from Utah, sitting alone, seemed entirely apart. The cook pushed dish after dish across her tall counter while the waitress sped to keep up. She had a lot to do, but it lent her a star quality among the diners, who teased her with mock personal questions or air-pinchings as her bottom went past.

David made notes about this and that

on a pad he took from his shirt pocket, until the waitress, a yellow pencil stuck in her chignon, arrived with his bacon and eggs. He turned a welcoming smile to her, hoping that when he looked back the man would be gone, but he was still at his table, giving David an odd military salute and then holding his nose. David didn't understand these gestures and was disquieted by the implication that he knew the man. He ate quickly, then went to the counter to pay. The waitress came out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dishcloth, looked the cash register up and down, and said, "Everything O.K., Dave?"

"Yes, very good, thanks."

"Put it away in an awful hurry. Out to Larsen's?"

"No, I was there yesterday. Bred heifers. They held everything back."

"They're big on next year. I wonder if it'll do them any good."

"They're still here, ain't they? I'm headed for Jorgensen's. Big day."

Two of the ranchers had finished eating and, Stetsons on the back of their heads, chairs tilted, they picked their teeth with the corners of their menus. As David put his wallet in his pocket and headed for the door, he realized he was being followed. He didn't turn until he was halfway across the parking lot. When he did, the gun was in his stomach and his new friend was smiling at him. "Name's Ray. Where's your outfit?"

Ray had a long, narrow face and tightly marcelled dirty-blond hair that fell low on his forehead.

"Are you robbing me?"

"I need a ride."

Ray got in the front seat of David's car, tucked the gun in his pants, and pulled his shirt over the top of it, a blue terry-cloth shirt with a large breast pocket that contained a pocket liner and a number of ballpoint pens. The flap of the pocket liner said "Powell Savings, Modesto, CA."

"Nice car. What're all the files in back for?"

"Breeding records—cattle-breeding records."

"Mind?" He picked up David's cell phone and, without waiting for an answer, tapped in a number. In a moment, his voice changed to an intimate murmur. "I'm there, or almost there—" Covering the mouthpiece, he pointed to the inter-section. "Take that one right there." David turned east. "I got it wrote down some-

place, East 200, North 13, but give it to me again, my angel. Or I can call you as we get closer. O.K., a friend's giving me a lift." He covered the mouthpiece. "Your name?"

"David."

"David from?"

"Reed Point."

"Yeah, great guy I knew back in Reed Place."

"Reed Point."

"I mean, Reed Point. Left the Beamer for an oil change, and Dave said he was headed this way. Wouldn't even let me split the gas. So, O.K., just leaving Jordan. How much longer, Morsel? Two hours! Are you fucking kidding? O.K., O.K., two hours. I'm just anxious to see you, baby, not being short with you at all."

Lifting his eyes to the empty miles of sagebrush, Ray snapped the cell phone shut and said, sighing, "Two fucking hours." If it weren't for the gun in his pants, he could have been any other aging lovebird. He turned the radio on briefly. "Swap Shop" was on the air: "Broken refrigerator suitable for a smoker." Babies bawling in the background. He turned it off. David was trying to guess who Ray might really be—that is, if he was a fugitive from the law, someone he could bring to justice, in exchange for fame or some kind of reward, something good for business. He had tried everything he could to enhance his cattle-insemination business, even refrigerator magnets with his face on them that said "Don't go bust shipping dries."

He asked, "Ray, do you feel like telling me what this is all about?"

"Sure, Dave. It's all about you doing as you're told."

"I see. And I'm taking you somewhere, am I?"

"Uh-huh, and staying as needed. Jesus Christ, if this isn't the ugliest country I ever seen."

"How did you pick me?"

"I picked your car. You were a throw-in. I hadn't took you along you'd've reported your car stolen. This way you still got it. It's a win-win. The lucky thing for you is you're my partner now. And you wanna pick up the tempo here? You're driving like my grandma."

"This isn't a great road. Deer jump out on it all the time. My cousin had one come through the windshield on him."

"Fuckin' pin it or I'll drive it like I did steal it."

David sped up slightly. This seemed to

placate Ray and he slumped by the window and stared at the landscape going by. They passed an old pickup truck, traveling in the opposite direction, a dead animal in the back with one upright leg trailing an American flag.

After they'd driven for nearly two hours, mostly in silence, a light tail-dragger aircraft with red-and-white-banded wings flew just overhead and landed on the road in front of them. The pilot climbed out and shuffled toward the car. David rolled down his window, and a lean, weathered face under a sweat-stained cowboy hat looked in. "You missed your turn," the man said. "Mile back, turn north on the two-track." Ray seemed to be trying to send a greeting that showed all his teeth but he was ignored by the pilot. "Nice little Piper J-3 Cub," Ray said.

The pilot strode back to the plane, taxied down the road, got airborne, and banked sharply over a five-strand barbed wire, startling seven cows and their calves, which ran off into the sage, scattering meadowlarks and clouds of pollen. David turned the car around.

Ray said, "Old fellow back at the hotel said there's supposed to be dinosaurs around here." He gazed at the pale light of a gas well on a far ridge.

"That's what they say."

"What d'you suppose one of them is worth? Like a whole *Tyrannosaurus rex*?"

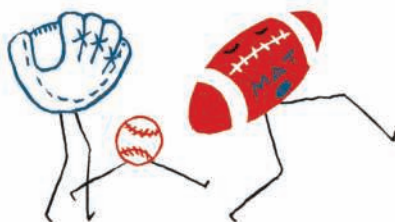
David just looked at Ray. Here was the turn, a two-track that was barely manageable in an ordinary sedan and David couldn't imagine how it was negotiated in winter or spring, when the notorious local gumbo turned to mud. He'd delivered a Charolais bull near here one fall, and it was bad enough then. Plus, the bull had torn up his trailer and he'd lost money on the deal.

"So, Dave, we're about to arrive and I should tell you what the gun is for. I'm here to meet a girl, but I don't know how it's gonna turn out. I may need to bail and you're my lift. The story is, my car is in for repair. You stay until we see how this goes and carry me out of here, if necessary. My friend here says you're onboard."

"I guess I understand, but what does this all depend on?"

"It depends on whether I like the girl or not, whether we're compatible and want to start a family business. I have a lot I'd like to pass on to the next generation."

The next bend revealed the house, a two-story ranch building with little of its paint left. Ray gazed at the Piper Cub, which was now parked in a field by the house, and at the Montana state flag popping on the iron flagpole. "*Oro y plata*," he said, chuckling. "Perfect. Now, Davey, I need you to bone up on the situation here. This is the Weldon Case cattle ranch, and it runs from here right up to the Bakken oil field, forty miles away, which is where all the *oro y plata* is at the moment. I'm



guessing that was Weldon in the airplane. I met Weldon's daughter, Morsel, through a dating service. Well, we haven't actually met in real time, but we're about to. Morsel thinks she loves me, and we're just gonna have to see about that. All you have to know is that Morsel thinks I'm an Audi dealer from Simi Valley, California. She's going on one photograph of me standing in front of an Audi flagship that did not belong to me. You decide you want to help, and you may see more walkin'-around money than you're used to. If you don't, well, you've seen how I put my wishes into effect." He patted the bulge under his shirt. "I just whistle a happy tune and start shooting."

David pulled up under the gaze of Weldon Case, who had emerged from the plane. When he rolled down the window to greet the old man again, Case just stared, then turned to call out to the house. "It's the cowboy way," Ray muttered through an insincere smile. "Or else he's retarded. Dave, ask him if he remembers falling out of his high chair."

As they got out of the car, Morsel appeared on the front step and inquired, in a penetrating contralto, "Which one is it?" Ray raised his hands and tilted his head to one side, as though modestly questioning himself. David noted that the gun was inadequately concealed and turned quickly to shake Weldon Case's hand. It was like seizing a plank.

"You're looking at him," Ray called out to Morsel.

"Oh, Christ," she yelled. "Is this what I

get?" It was hard to say whether this was a positive response or not. Morsel was a scale model of her father, wind-weathered and, if anything, less feminine. Her view of the situation was quickly clarified as she raced forward to embrace Ray, whose look of suave detachment was briefly interrupted by fear. A tooth was missing, as well as a small piece of her ear. "Oh, Ray!"

Weldon looked at David with a sour expression, then spoke, in a lustreless tone: "Morsel has made some peach cobbler. It was her ma's recipe. Her ma is dead." Ray put on a ghastly look of sympathy, which seemed to fool Morsel, who squeezed his arm and said, "Started in her liver and just took off."

A small trash pile next to the porch featured a couple of played-out Odor-Eaters. David wondered where the walkin'-around money Ray had alluded to was supposed to come from. "Place is kind of a mess," Morsel warned. "We don't collect but we never get rid of."

As they went into the house, Weldon asked David if he enjoyed shooting coyotes. He replied, "I just drive Ray around"—Ray turned to listen—"and whatever Ray wants I guess is what we do . . . whatever he's into." David kept to himself that he enjoyed popping coyotes out his car window with the .25-06 with a Redfield range-finder scope and a tripod that he'd got from Hill Country Customs. David lived with his mother and had a habit of telling her about the great shots he'd made—like the five-hundred-yarder on Tin Can Hill with only the hood for a rest, no sandbags, no tripod. David's Uncle Maury had told him a long time ago, "It don't shoot flat, throw the fuckin' thing away."

David, who enjoyed brutally fattening food, thought Morsel was a good cook, but Ray ate only the salad, discreetly lifting each leaf until the dressing ran off. Weldon watched Ray and hardly said a word, as Morsel grew more manic, giggling with laughter and enthusiasm at each lighthearted remark. In fact, it was necessary to lower the temperature of the subjects—to heart attacks, highway wrecks, cancer—in order to get her to stop guffawing. Weldon planted his hands flat on the table, rose partway, and announced that he'd use the tractor to pull the plane around back. David was preoccupied with the mountain of tuna casserole between



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him and the peach cobbler and hardly heard him. Ray, small and disoriented next to Morsel, shot his eyes around the table, looking for something he could eat.

"Daddy don't say much," Morsel said.

"I can't say much," Ray said, "with *him* here. Dave, could you cut us a little slack?"

"Sure, Ray, of course." David got up, still chewing.

"See you in the room," Ray said sharply, twisting his chin toward the door.

Weldon had shown them their room by walking past it and flicking the door open without a word. It contained two iron bedsteads and a dresser, atop which were David's and Ray's belongings, the latter's consisting of a JanSport backpack with the straps cut off. David was better organized, with an actual overnight bag and a Dopp kit. He had left the cattle receipts and breeding documents in the car. He flopped on the bed, hands behind his head, then got up abruptly and went to the door. He looked out and listened for a long moment, eased it closed, and shot to the dresser, where he began rooting through Ray's belongings: rolls of money in rubber bands, generic Viagra from India, California lottery tickets, a passport identifying Raymond Coelho, a woman's aqua-colored wallet, with a debit card in the name of Eleanor Coelho from Food Processors Credit Union of Modesto, Turlock grocery receipts, a bag of trail mix, and the gun. David lifted the gun carefully with the tips of his fingers. He was startled by its lightness. Turning it over in his hand, he was compelled to acknowledge that there was no hole in the barrel. It was a toy. He returned it to the pack, fluffed the sides, and sped to his bed to begin feigning sleep.

It wasn't long before Ray came in, singing "Now Is the Hour" in a flat and aggressive tone that hardly suited the lyrics: "Sunset glow fades in the west, night o'er the valley is creeping! Birds cuddle down in their nest, soon all the world will be sleeping. But not you, Dave. You're awake, I can tell. I hope you enjoyed the song. It's Hugo Winterhalter. Morsel sang it to me. She's very nice, and she needs a man."

"Looks like you got the job."

"Do what? Hey, here's what's going on with me: I'm starving."

"I'm sure you are, Ray. You ate like a bird."

"I had no choice. That kind of food

gathers around the chambers of the heart like an octopus. But right behind the house they got a vegetable garden, and my plan for you is to slip out and bring me some vegetables. I've been told to stay out of the garden. Don't touch the tomatoes—they're not ripe."

"What else is there?"

"Greens and root vegetables."

"I'm not going out there."

"Oh, yes, you are."

"What makes you think so?"

Ray went to his pack and got out the gun.

"This makes me think so. This will really stick to your ribs, get it?"

"I'm not picking vegetables for you, or, technically speaking, stealing them for you. Forget it."

"Wow. Is this a mood swing?"

"Call it what you want. Otherwise, it's shoot or shut up."

"O.K., but not for the reason you think. I prefer not to wake up the whole house."

"And the body'd be a problem for you, as a house guest and new fiancé."

"Very well, very well. This time."

Ray put the gun back in his pack. "You don't know how close you came."

"Whatever."

David rolled over to sleep, but he couldn't stop his thoughts. He should have spent the day at Jorgensen's with his arm up a cow's ass. He had a living to make and, if it hadn't been for his inappropriate curiosity about Ray and Morsel, he'd already be back in Jordan, looking to grab a room for the night. But the roll of money in Ray's pack and the hints of more to come had made him wonder how anxious he was to get back to work. There was opportunity in the air and he wanted to see how it would all play out.

"Ray, you awake?"

"I can be. What d'you want, asshole?"

"I just have something I want to get off my chest."

"Make it quick. I need my Zs."

"Sure, Ray, try this one on for size: the gun's a toy."

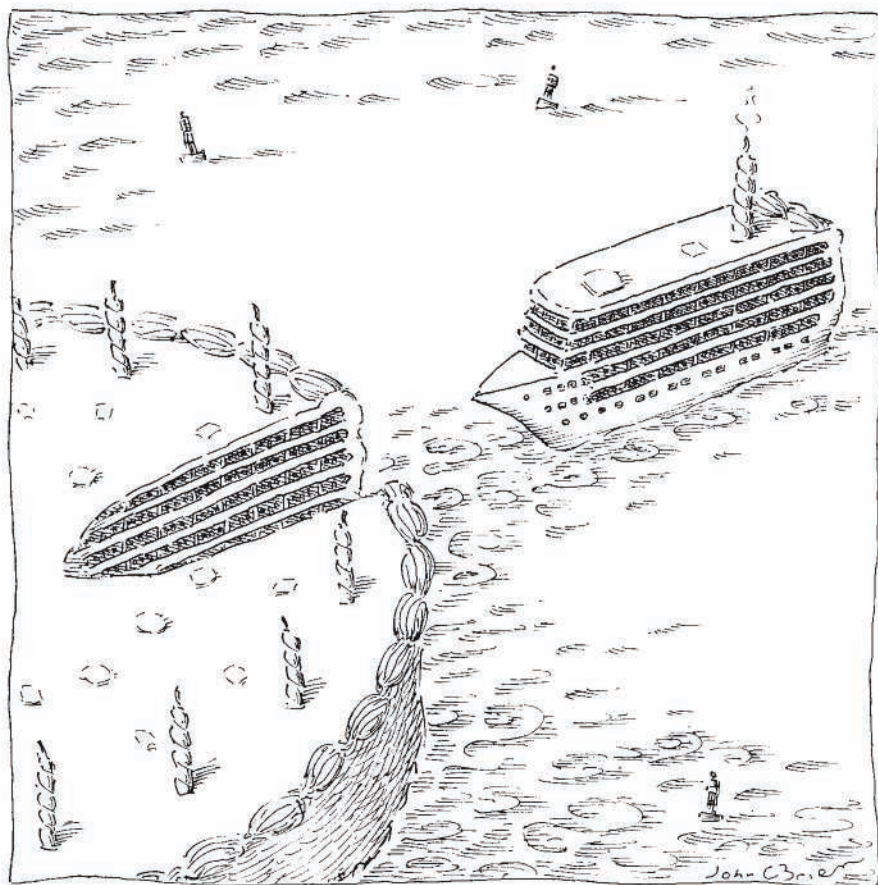
"The gun's a what?"

"A toy."

"You think a gun's a toy?"

"No, Ray, I think *your* gun's a toy. It's a fake. And looks like you are, too."

"Where's the fuckin' light switch? I'm not taking this shit."



"Stub your toe jumping off the bed like that."

"Might be time to clip your wings, sonny."

"Ray, I'm here for you. Just take a moment to look at the barrel of your so-called gun, and then let's talk."

Ray found the lamp and paced the squeaking floorboards. "Taking a leak off the porch. Be right back," he said. Through the open bedroom door, David could see him silhouetted in the moonlight, a silver arc splashing onto the dirt, his head thrown back in what David took to be a plausible posture of despair.

By the time Ray walked back in he was already talking: "... an appraiser in Modesto, California, where I grew up. I did some community theatre there, played Prince Oh So True in a children's production and thought I was going places, then 'Twelve Angry Men'—I was one of them, which is where the pistol came from. I was the hangman in 'Motherlode.' Got married, had a baby girl, lost my job, got another one, went to Hawaii as a steward on a yacht belonging to a movie star, who was working at a snow-cone stand a year before the yacht, the coke, the babes, and the wine. I had to sign a nondisclosure agreement, but then I got into a fight with the movie star and got kicked off the boat at Diamond Head. They just rowed me to shore in a dinghy and dumped me off. I

hiked all the way to the crater and used the rest room to clean up, then took the tour bus into Honolulu. I tried to sell the celebrity drug-use story to a local paper, but it went nowhere because of the confidentiality agreement. Everything I *sign* costs me money. About this time, my wife's uncle's walnut farm was failing. He took a loan out on the real estate, and I sold my car, which was a mint, rust-free '78 Trans Am, handling package, W-72 performance motor, Solar Gold with a Martinique Blue interior. We bought a bunch of FEMA trailers from the Katrina deal and hauled them to California. We lost our asses. The uncle gasses himself in his garage, and my wife throws me out. I moved into a hotel for migrant workers, and started using the computers at the Stanislaus County Library and sleeping at the McHenry Mansion. One of the tour guides was someone I used to fuck in high school and she slipped me into one of the rooms for naps. I met Morsel online. I told her I was on hard times. She told me she was coining it, selling bootleg Oxycontin in the Bakken oil field, but she was lonely. It was a long shot. Montana. Fresh start. New me. Bus to Billings and hit the road. I made it to Jordan, and I had nothing left. The clerk at that fleabag barely let me have a room. I told him I was there for the comets. I don't know where I come up with that. Breakfast at the café was my last

dime and no tip. I had to make a move. So what happens now? You bust me with Morsel? You turn me in? Or you join us?"

"You pretty sure on the business end of this thing?" David asked, with a coldness that surprised him.

"A hundred per cent, but Morsel's got issues with other folks already in it. There's some risk, but when isn't there, with stakes like this? Think about it, Dave. If you're at all interested in getting rich, you tell me."

Ray was soon snoring. David was intrigued that all these revelations failed to disturb his sleep. He himself was wide awake, brooding over how colorless his own life was in comparison with Ray's. Ray was a con man and a failure, but what had *he* ever done? Finish high school? High school had been anguish, persecution, and suffering, but even in that he was unexceptional. He'd never had sex with a mansion tour guide. He'd had sex with a fat girl he disliked. Then the National Guard. Fort Harrison in the winter. Cleaning billets. Inventorying ammunition. Unskilled maintenance on UH-60 Blackhawks. Praying for deployment against worldwide towel heads. A commanding officer who told the recruits that the President of the United States was "a pencil-wristed twat." Girlfriend fatter every time he went home. He still lived with his mother. Was still buying his dope from the same guy at the body shop he'd got it from in the eighth grade.

Perhaps it was surprising he'd come up with anything at all, but he had: Bovine Deluxe, L.L.C., a crash course in artificially inseminating cattle. David took to it like a duck to water: driving around the countryside detecting and synchronizing estrus, handling frozen semen, keeping breeding records—all easily learnable, but David brought art to it, and he had no idea where that art had come from. He was a genius preg-tester. Whether he was straight or stoned, his rate of accuracy, as proven in spring calves, was renowned. Actually, David *preferred* preg-testing stoned. Grass gave him a greater ability to visualize the progress of his arm up the cow's rectum. His excitement began as soon as he donned his coveralls, pulled on his glove, lubed it with O.B. goo, and stepped up to the cow stuck in the chute. Holding the tail high overhead with his left hand, he got his right hand all the way in, against the cow's attempt to expel it, shovelled out the manure to clear the way



"It's O.K. for now, but ultimately I'd like to work somewhere other than a post-apocalyptic world."

past the cervix, and finally, nearly up to his shoulder, grasped the uterus. David could nail a pregnancy at two months, when the calf was smaller than a mouse. He never missed, and no cow that should have been culled turned up without a calf in the spring. He could tell the rancher how far along the cow was by his informal gradations: mouse, rat, Chihuahua, cat, fat cat, raccoon, beagle. Go through the herd, or until his arm was exhausted. Throw the glove away, write up the invoice, strip the coveralls, look for food and a room.

Perfect. Except for the dough.

He'd once dreamed of owning jewels, especially rubies, and that dream was coming back. Maybe glue one on his forehead like a Hindu. It'd go over big on his ranch calls.

Morsel made breakfast for her father, David, and Ray—eggs, biscuits, and gravy. David was thinking about Ray's "last dime" back in Jordan versus the rolls of bills in his pack and watching Weldon watch Ray as breakfast was served. Morsel just leaned against the stove while the men ate. "Anyone want to go to Billings today to see the cage fights?" she asked. David looked up and smiled but no one answered her. Ray was probing around his food with his fork, pushing the gravy away from the biscuits, and Weldon was flinching. Weldon wore his black Stetson with the salt-encrusted sweat stain halfway up the crown. David thought it was downright unappetizing, not the sort of thing a customer for top-drawer bull semen would wear. At last Weldon spoke at top volume, as though calling out to his livestock.

"What'd you say your name was?"

"Ray."

"Well, Ray, why don't you stick that fork all the way in and eat like a man?"

"I'm doing my best, Mr. Case, but I will eat nothing with a central nervous system."

"Daddy, leave Ray alone. You'll have time to get to know each other and find out what Ray enjoys eating."

When Morsel brought Ray some canned pineapple slices, he looked up at her with what David took to be genuine affection.

She turned to David and said, "It's all you can eat around here," but the moment he stuck his fork back in his food she put a hand in his face and said, "That's all you

can eat!" and laughed. David noticed her cold blue eyes and thought he was beginning to understand her.

To Weldon, she said, "Daddy, you feel like showing Ray 'n' 'em the trick?" Weldon stopped his rhythmic lip pursing.

"Oh, Morsel," he said coyly.

"C'mon, Daddy. Give you a dollar."

"O.K., Mor, put on the music," he said with a sigh of good-humored defeat. Morsel went over to a low cupboard next to the pie safe and pulled out a small plastic record-player and a 45-r.p.m. record, which proved to be a scratchy version of "Cool Water," by the Sons of the Pioneers. Weldon swayed to the mournful tune and then seemed to come to life as Morsel placed a peanut in front of him and the lyrics began: "Keep a-movin', Dan, / Don't you listen to him, Dan. / He's a devil not a man." Weldon took off his hat and set it upside down beside him, revealing the thinnest comb-over across a snow-white pate. Then he picked up the peanut and, with sinuous movements, balanced it on his nose. It remained there until near the end of the record—"Dan, can you see, / That big green tree, / Where the water's runnin' free"—when the peanut fell to the table and Weldon's chin dropped to stare at it. When the record ended, he replaced his hat, stood without a word, and left the room. For a moment it was quiet, and then came the sound of Weldon's plane cranking up.

"Daddy's pretty hard on himself when he don't make it to the end of the record," Morsel said glumly, as she cleared the dishes. Heading for the living room, she added, "Me and Ray thought you ought to see what dementia looks like. It don't look good and it's expensive."

David had taken care to copy out the information from Ray's passport onto the back of a matchbook cover, which he tore off, rolled into a cylinder, and put inside a bottle of aspirin. And there it stayed until Ray and Morsel headed off to the cage fights. David used his cell phone and 411 Connect to call Ray's home in Modesto and chat with his wife or, as she claimed to be, his widow. It took two calls, a couple of hours apart. The first try, he got her answering machine: "You know the drill: leave it at the beep." On the second try, he got Ray's wife. David identified himself as an account assistant with the Internal Revenue

Service and Ray's wife listened only briefly before stating in a firm, clear, and seemingly ungrieving voice that Ray was dead: "That's what I told the last guy and that's what I'm telling you." She said that he had been embezzling from a credit union, left a suicide note, and disappeared.

"I'm doing home health care. Whatever he stole he kept. Killing himself was the one good idea he come up with in the last thirty years. At least it's kept the government from garnisheeing my wages, what little they are. I been through all this with the other guy that called, and we have to wait for his death to be confirmed before I get no benefits. If I know Ray, he's on the bottom of the Tuolumne River, just to fuck with my head. I wish I could have seen him one more time to tell him I gave his water skis and croquet set to Goodwill. If the bank hadn't taken back his airplane, I would have lost my house and been sleeping in my car. Too bad you didn't meet Ray. He was an A-to-Z crumb bum."

"I'm terribly sorry to hear about your husband," David said mechanically.

"I don't think the government is 'terribly sorry' to hear about anything. You reading this off a card?"

"No, this is just a follow-up to make sure your file stays intact until you receive the benefits you're entitled to."

"I already have the big one: picturing Ray in hell with his ass *en fuego*."

"Ah, you speak a bit of Spanish, Mrs. Coelho?"

"Everybody in Modesto 'speaks a bit of Spanish.' Where you been all your life?"

"Washington, D.C.," David said indignantly.

"That explains it," Mrs. Coelho said, and hung up.

Of course he had no car when we met, David thought. No need to leave a paper trail by renting cars or buying tickets on airplanes. He'd got done all he needed to get done on the Modesto library computers, where he and Morsel, two crooks, had found each other and gone into business without ever laying eyes on each other.

Before heading to Billings, Morsel had told David how to get to the Indian small-pox burial ground to look for beads. Otherwise, there was nothing to do around here. He wasn't interested until he discovered the liquor cabinet and by then it was early evening. He found a bottle marked Hoopoe Schnapps, with a picture of a bird on its label, and gave it a try: "Bottoms

up.” It went straight to his head. After several swigs, he was unable to identify the bird but he was very happy. The label said that the drink contained “mirabelles,” and David thought, Hey, I’m totally into mirabelles.

As he headed for the burial ground, David was tottering a bit. Rounding the equipment shed, he nearly ran into Weldon Case, who walked by without speaking or apparently seeing him. Behind the ranch buildings, a cow trail led into the prairie, then wound toward a hillside spring that didn’t quite reach the surface, visible only by the greenery above it. Just below that was the place that Morsel had told him about, pockmarked with anthills. The ants, Morsel claimed, carried the beads to the surface, but you had to hunt for them.

David sat down among the mounds and was soon bitten through his pants. He jumped to his feet and swept the ants away, then crouched, peering and picking at the anthills. His thighs soon ached from squatting, but then he found a speck of sky blue in the dirt, a bead. He clasped it tightly in one hand while stirring with the other and flicking away ants. He didn’t think about the bodies in the ground beneath him. By the time it was too dark to see, his palm was filled with Indian beads and he felt elevated and still drunk.

As he passed the equipment shed, he made out first the silhouette of Weldon Case’s Stetson and then, very close, the face of Weldon himself, who gazed at him before speaking in a low voice. “You been in the graves, ain’t you?”

“Yes, to look for beads.”

“You ought not to have done that, feller.”

“Oh? But Morsel said—”

“Look up there at the stars.”

“I don’t understand.”

Weldon reached high over his head. “That’s the crow riding the water snake,” he said, and turned back into the dark.

David was frightened. He went to the house and got into bed as quickly as he could, anxious for the alcohol to fade. He pulled the blanket up under his chin, despite the warmth of the night, and watched a moth batting against an image of the moon in the window. When he was nearly asleep, he saw Morsel’s headlights wheel across the ceiling, then turn off. He listened for the car doors, but it was nearly ten minutes before they opened and closed. He rolled close to the wall and pretended to be

asleep, while the front door opened quietly. Once the reverberation of the screen-door spring had died down, there was whispering that came into the bedroom. He felt a shadow cross his face as someone peered down at him. Soon the sound of muffled copulation filled the room, stopped for the time it took to raise a window, then resumed. David listened more and more intently, until Ray said, in a clear voice, “Dave, you want some of this?”

David stuck to his feigned sleep until Morsel laughed, got up, and walked out with her clothes under her arm. “Night, Ray. Sweet dreams.”

The door shut and, after a moment, Ray spoke. “What could I do, Dave? She was after my weenie like a chicken after a June bug.” Snorts, and, soon after, snoring.

Morsel stood in the doorway of the house, taking in the early sun and smoking a cigarette. She wore an old flannel shirt over what looked like a body stocking that revealed a lazily winking camel toe. Her eyes followed her father as he crossed the yard very slowly. “Look,” she said, as David stepped up. “He’s wetting his pants. When he ain’t wetting his pants, he walks pretty fast. It’s just something he enjoys.”

Weldon came up and looked at David, trying to remember him. He said, “This ain’t much of a place to live. My folks moved us out here. We had a nice little ranch at Coal Bank Landing, on the Mis-



souri, but one day it fell in the river. Morsel, I’m uncomfortable.”

“Go inside, Daddy. I’ll get you a change of clothes.”

Once the door had shut behind him, David said, “Why in the world do you let him fly that airplane?”

“It’s all he knows. He flew in the war and dusted crops. He’ll probably kill himself in the damn thing.”

“What’s he do up there?”

“Looks for his cows.”

“I didn’t know he had cows.”

“He don’t. They all got sold years ago. But he’ll look for them long as he’s got fuel.”

Morsel turned back to David on her way inside. “I can’t make heads or tails of your friend Ray,” she said. “He was coming on to me the whole time at the cage fights, then he takes out a picture of his wife and tells me she’s the greatest piece of ass he ever had.”

“Huh. What’d you say to that?”

“I said, ‘Ray, she must’ve had a snappin’ pussy because she’s got a face that would stop a clock.’ He didn’t like that too much. So I punched him in the shoulder and told him he hadn’t seen nothing yet. What’d you say your name was?”

“I’m David.”

“Well, Dave, Ray says you mean to throw in with us. Is that a fact?”

“I’m sure giving it some thought.”

David was being less than candid. He would have slipped away the day before if he hadn’t felt opportunity headed his way on silver wings.

“You look like a team player to me. I guess that bitch he’s married to will help out on that end. Long as I never have to see her.”

David had an unhappy conversation with his mother, but at least it was on the phone, so she couldn’t throw stuff.

“The phone is ringing off the hook! Your ranchers are calling constantly, wanting to know when you’ll get there.”

“Ma, I know, but I got tied up. Tell them not to get their panties in a wad. I’ll be there.”

“David!” she screeched. “This is not an answering service!”

“Ma, listen to me. Ma, I got tied up. I’m sparing you the details but relax.”

“How can I relax with the phone going off every ten seconds?”

“Ma, I’m under pressure. Pull the fuckin’ thing out of the wall.”

“Pressure? You’ve never been under pressure in your life!”

He hung up on her. He couldn’t live with her anymore. She needed to take her pacemaker and get a room.

That week, Morsel was able to get a custodial order in Miles City, based on the danger to the community presented by Weldon and his airplane. Ray had so much trouble muscling Weldon into Morsel’s sedan for the ride to assisted living

that big strong David had to pitch in and help Ray tie him up. Weldon tossed off some frightful curses before collapsing in defeat and crying. But the God he called down on them didn't hold much water anymore, and they made short work of the old fellow. At dinner that night, Morsel was a little blue. The trio's somewhat obscure toasts were to the future. David looked on with a smile; he felt happy and accepted and believed he was going somewhere. His inquiring looks were met by giddy winks from Morsel and Ray. They told him that he was now a "courier," and Ray unwound one of his bundles of cash. He was going to California.

"Drive the speed limit," Ray said. "I'm going to get to know the airplane. Take it down to the oil fields. It's important to know your customers."

"Do you know how to fly it?" This was an insincere question, since David had learned from the so-called widow about Ray's repossessed plane.

"How's thirteen thousand hours sound to you?"

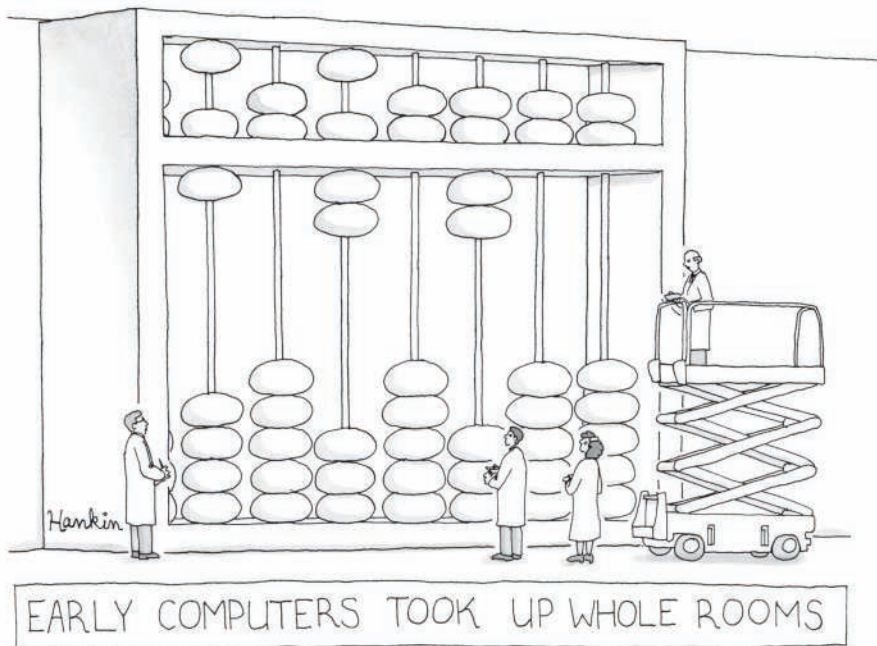
"I'll keep the home fires burning," Morsel said, without taking the cigarette out of her mouth.

David had a perfectly good idea of what he was going to California for, but he didn't ask. He knew the value of preserving his ignorance. If he could keep his status as a simple courier, he was no guiltier than the United States Postal Service. "Your Honor, I had no idea what was in the trunk, and I am prepared to say that under oath or take a lie-detector test, at your discretion," he rehearsed.

He drove straight through, or nearly so. He stopped briefly in Idaho, Utah, and Nevada to walk among cows. His manner with cattle was so familiar that they didn't run from him but gathered around in benign expectation. David sighed and jumped back in the car. He declined to pursue this feeling of regret.

It was late when he got into Modesto, and he was tired. He checked into a Super 8 and woke up when the hot light of a California morning shone through the window onto his face. He ate in the lobby and checked out. The directions Ray had given him proved exact: within ten minutes, he was pulling around the house into the side drive and backing into the open garage.

A woman came out of the house in a bathrobe and walked past his window without a word. He popped the trunk and sat



quietly as she loaded it, then closed it. She stopped at his window, pulling the bathrobe up close around her throat. She wasn't hard to look at, but David could see you wouldn't want to argue with her. "Tell Ray I said be careful. I've heard from two I.R.S. guys already." David said nothing at all.

He was so cautious that the trip back took longer. He stayed overnight at the Garfield again, so as to arrive in daylight, and got up twice during the night to check on the car. In the morning, he skipped eating at the café for fear he might encounter some of his rancher clients. Plus, he knew that Morsel would take care of his empty stomach. He was so close now that he worried about everything, from misreading the gas gauge to flat tires. He even imagined the trunk flying open for no reason. Now he drove past fields of cattle with hardly a glance.

He had imagined a hearty greeting, an enthusiastic homecoming, but the place was silent. A hawk sat on the wire that ran from the house to the bunkhouse, as though it had the place to itself. It flew off reluctantly when David got out of the car. Inside, there were soiled plates on the dining-room table. Light from the television flickered without sound from the living room. David walked in and saw the television first—it was on the shopping network, a closeup of a hand dangling a gold bracelet. Then he saw Morsel on the floor with the chan-

nel changer in her hand. She'd been shot.

David felt an icy calm. Ray must have done this. He checked the car keys in his pocket and walked out of the house, stopping on the porch to survey everything in front of him. Then he went around to the equipment shed. Where the airplane had been parked in its two shallow ruts lay Ray, also shot, a pool of blood extending from his mouth like a speech balloon without words. He'd lost a shoe. The plane was gone.

David felt as if he were trapped between the two bodies, with no safe way back to the car. When he got to it, a man was waiting for him. "I must have overslept. How long have you been here?" He was David's age, thin and precise in clean khakis and a Shale Services ball cap. He touched his teeth with his thumbnail as he spoke.

"Oh, just a few minutes."

"Keys."

"Yes, I have them here." David patted his pocket.

"Get the trunk for me, please." David tried to hand him the keys. "No, you."

"Not a problem."

David bent to insert the key but his hand was shaking and at first he missed the slot. The lid rose to reveal the contents of the trunk. David didn't feel a thing. ♦

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Thomas McGuane on "Motherlode."

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

SOUL CYCLE

David Mitchell's *"The Bone Clocks."*

BY JAMES WOOD

As the novel's cultural centrality dims, so storytelling—J. K. Rowling's magical Owl of Minerva, equipped for a thousand tricks and turns—flies up and fills the air. Meaning is a bit of a bore, but storytelling is alive. The novel form can be difficult, cumbrously serious; storytelling is all pleasure, fantastical in its fertility, its ceaseless inventiveness. Easy to consume, too, because it excites hunger while simultaneously satisfying it: we continuously want *more*. The novel now aspires to the regality of the boxed DVD set: the throne is a game of them. And the purer the storytelling the better—where purity is the embrace of sheer occurrence, unburdened by deeper meaning. Publishers, readers, booksellers, even critics, acclaim the novel that one can deliciously sink into, forget oneself in, the novel that returns us to the innocence of childhood or the dream of the cartoon, the novel of a thousand confessions and no unwanted significance. What becomes harder to find, and lonelier to defend, is the idea of the novel as—in Ford Madox Ford's words—a “medium of profoundly serious investigation into the human case.”

David Mitchell is a superb storyteller. He has an extraordinary facility with narrative: he can get a narrative rolling along faster than most writers, so that it is filled with its own mobile life. You feel that he can do anything he wants, in a variety of modes, and still convince. “Black Swan Green” (2006) is a funny and sweet-natured semi-autobiographical novel, conventionally told, about a boy growing up in a stifling Worcestershire village. “Cloud

Atlas” (2004), his best-known book, is a brilliant postmodern suite, comprising six connected and overlapping novellas, set in such eras as the eighteen-fifties, the nineteen-thirties, the nineteen-seventies, and the dystopian future. His 2010 book, “The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet,” is a more or less traditional historical novel, set in 1799, in the bay of Nagasaki, about relations between the Japanese and the Dutch. He has a marvellous sense of the real and of the unreal, and his best work keeps these elements in nice tension—a balancing of different vitalities. One of the reasons he is such a popular and critically lauded writer is that he combines both the giddy, freewheeling ceaselessness of the pure storyteller with the grounded realism of the humanist. There's something for everyone, traditionalist or postmodernist, realist or fantasist; Mitchell is a steady entertainer. Pleasing his readership, he has said, is important to him: “One of the questions I always try to keep in the front of my mind is to ask why would anyone want to read this, and to try to find a positive answer for that. People's time, if you bought it off them, is expensive. Someone's going to give you eight or ten hours of their life. I want to give them something back, and I want it to be an enjoyable experience.”

His latest novel, “The Bone Clocks” (Random House), is often enjoyable in this way, and is rarely without Mitchellian charm—a good sense of humor, a lack of pretentiousness, and decent prose. It is very long, is profuse with stories, and reemploys the form of “Cloud Atlas”:

there are six large, related narratives, stretching from 1984 to 2043. There are plenty of vivid protagonists, including Holly Sykes, whom we first meet as a teen-ager, in 1984, and finally take our leave of in 2043; Hugo Lamb, a dastardly Cambridge undergraduate, seducer, thief, and near-murderer; and Crispin Hershey, a successful English writer with tinctures of both David Mitchell and Martin Amis, who is obsessed with taking revenge on his harshest reviewer, one Richard Cheeseman.

But pure storytelling seems to have triumphed here; the human case has disappeared. The novel keeps producing iterations of itself, in different places and times—England in the nineteen-eighties, Iraq in 2004, America in 2025, post-apocalyptic Ireland in 2043—but instead of formal capability there is a sense of empty capacity. It hardly helps that threaded through the book is a science-fiction plot about warring bands of immortals, named the Horologists and the Anchorites. Weightless realism is here at slack odds with weightless fantasy. Both the book's exuberant impossibilities and its restlessly proliferating realities have a way of refocusing one's suspicions of his earlier work: Mitchell has plenty to tell, but does he have much to say? “Cloud Atlas” offered an impressive narrative parquet, but what else was it? In that novel, to take an example, Robert Frobisher, a composer working in the nineteen-thirties, is writing a musical piece called “Cloud Atlas Sextet”; later in the book, in the pulp-fiction tale set in nineteen-seventies California, a character named Luisa Rey listens to this piece in a record store; she had discovered the music in a series of letters written in the nineteen-thirties by this same Frobisher. “Cloud Atlas” is made up of intricate replications like these, but what do they amount to? Does “Cloud Atlas” do much more than announce and adumbrate a universal, and perhaps not very interesting, interconnectedness? “The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet” begins as a formidably achieved historical novel but gradually turns into something out of Japanese anime, complete with a shadowy nunnery and an evil abbot, bent on grooming young girls as sex slaves. And although that book inhabits its late-eighteenth-century milieu with easy power, there is perhaps something ungrounded about its very ease, as if

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL



Mitchell has written a theological novel of sorts, in which human beings are mere pawns to be used by his feuding immortals.

Mitchell might as well have set his tale in eighth-century England or fifteenth-century Granada. Mitchell can seem a weirdly frictionless entertainer.

"The Bone Clocks" begins in 1984, in pleasingly familiar territory. We are in the provincial England of "Black Swan Green"—a world of possessive lower-middle-class parents, bad English cars, inventive slang, and terrific music (Talking Heads' "Fear of Music," the Police's "Zenytà Mondatta," a "Quadrophenia" T-shirt). Holly Sykes, a fifteen-year-old whose parents own a pub in Gravesend, Kent, has an argument with her mother and runs away from home. Things quickly get peculiar. On the road, Holly encounters a strange old woman named Esther Little, who knows her name, and who mysteriously says that she may need "asylum" if "the First Mission fails." Holly tells us that from an early age she has had visions and has heard voices, which she used to call "the Radio People." At the age of seven, she woke up to find a spectral visitor, Miss Constantin, sitting on the edge of her bed. Dr. Marinus, a Chinese child psychiatrist based in London, was called in to treat Holly, and used what he said was a technique from "the Old Country" to cure her: with his thumb, he touched a point in the middle of her forehead.

Now the problem of the visions returns with force. Holly has a vision of her kid brother, Jacko, under a bridge, even though

she is miles away from home. She has various adventures and further visions. Holly ends up picking fruit at a farm. It is here that a concerned school friend, Ed Brubeck, arrives, with the news that Jacko has gone missing. So ends the novel's first section, which is about ninety pages long.

All the sections in "The Bone Clocks" are narrated in the first person, a mode whose natural volubility does Mitchell few favors. He uses first-person narration to seat himself in a comfy, rather bloke-ish realism; his characters, whether fifteen-year-old girls or middle-aged male English novelists, sound too alike, because they are all involved in a figurative exaggeration that is at first amusing but which becomes tiresome and coarse. Here is Holly Sykes: "Guys are all sperm-guns. . . . Green tea's great while you're drinking it, but it makes you pee like a racehorse, and now my mouth feels like a dying rat crapped in it." And here is Hugo Lamb, the Cambridge undergraduate who narrates the novel's second section (set in 1991), describing his besotted friend Olly: "His pupils have morphed into love-hearts and, for the *n*th time squared, I wonder what love feels like on the inside because externally it turns you into the King of Tit Mountain. . . . Olly's glowing; if he was six inches tall and fluffy, Toys R Us would ship him by the thousands." And here is the adult Ed Brubeck, who narrates the third section, set in 2004. (Ed

is now a distinguished war reporter; he and his partner, the adult Holly Sykes, have a six-year-old daughter, Aoife.) "Pete's bat-eared and his hairline's beating a hasty retreat, but Sharon's marrying him for love, not hair follicles." Here is Ed again, describing someone's look of sheer surprise: "If Austin Webber wore a monocle, it would drop." When Aoife goes missing, Ed is terrified: "Twenty thousand volts fry me into hyperalertness. . . . My bones turn to warm Blu Tack." And here is Crispin Hershey, the middle-aged novelist who narrates the fourth—and excessively long—section, entitled "Crispin Hershey's Lonely Planet": "Miguel tries to look jokey-penitent, but misses and looks like a man in white jeans who underestimates a spot of flatulence."

Since all the characters in "The Bone Clocks"—even the Anchorites and the Horologists, alas—speak to one another with the same matey, Christmas-cracker jokiness, the effect is that of a novel without internal borders, everyone churning up the same bright, clever prose, the tone poised somewhere between Richard Curtis and Eddie Izzard. Even Crispin Hershey's literary agent sounds just like Crispin Hershey. "Your sales have resembled a one-winged Cessna," he complains to his famous client.

Much contemporary writing fetishizes style, and the priority is felt as a constant anxiety. Prose has to sign itself, establish its showy authority in silvery cutlass swipes through the air: clever insights, brilliant metaphors, unusual words, sharp observation, perpetually buoyant dialogue. The way Crispin Hershey describes a cool young woman—"short, boyish, and sports a nerdy pair of glasses and a shaven head: electrotherapy chic"—not only confirms Crispin's literary talent but validates Mitchell's, too: it's the kind of thing that gets approvingly quoted in reviews like this one. But novels are not best built out of one-liners, and long novels of one-liners drum an insistent, madly intermittent tattoo.

Crispin Hershey, a writer known, we are told, for his Amisian avoidance of cliché, tells a class that the writer should "grade every simile and metaphor from one star to five, and remove any threes or below." At such a moment, Mitchell seems to tease this kind of post-Flaubertian peacockery, but he is not quite able to resist it. There is a telling moment when

THOUSAND-YEAR AWKWARD SILENCE CONTINUES



Crispin, who has been visiting an area of Australia marked by colonial atrocities against the Aborigines, complains about “all those slick galleries selling Aborigine art. . . . It’s as if Germans built a Jewish food hall over Buchenwald.” Aoife, who has been listening to him, approvingly comments: “Spot the writer.” Mitchell may be having fun with his assembled characters, but the phrase about the Jewish food hall sounds very like David Mitchell: the writer as phrasemaker, the guy who keeps things entertaining. It gets tiring to keep spotting the writer.

“The Bone Clocks” is indeed entertaining. What it cannot be is coherent. It knits itself together, to be sure: we follow Holly Sykes as she grows up, and we enjoy her reappearances in the novel’s successive sections. In the second, she has a brief relationship with Hugo Lamb, when the two of them meet in a Swiss resort, in 1991. In the third, set in 2004, she is living with Ed Brubeck, who later dies in Syria. A single mother in the fourth section, set in 2015, Holly is now a very successful writer, well known for her memoir “The Radio People,” which tells of Jacko’s disappearance, and of the voices she heard when she was a child. On the literary circuit, she meets Crispin Hershey, and the two become friends. These connections and interweavings are fluidly managed, and there is pleasure to be had from Mitchell’s customary self-references: Dr. Marinus appeared in “The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet”; a Chinese restaurant is called the Thousand Autumns, and so on. (In *New York*, Kathryn Schulz counts twenty-three characters who appear in more than one of Mitchell’s novels. Mitchell tells her that he keeps track of Marinus’s many lives in a notebook.)

But these happenings, which occur over hundreds of pages, feel a bit empty, because they are not humanly significant. What occurs in the novel between people has meaning only in relation to what occurs in the novel between Anchorites and Horologists. A struggle, a war, is being played out, between forces of good and forces of evil, although how humans behave with one another appears to have little impact on that otherworldly battle.



Mitchell has written a theological novel of sorts, and just as certain kinds of theology threaten to rob human life of intrinsic significance—since theology exists to convert worldly meaning into transcendent meaning—so Mitchell’s peculiar cosmology turns his characters into time-travelling groundlings, Horology’s dwarves.

First, the cosmology, which has the demented intricacy of science fiction. Holly Sykes is not the only character to encounter Miss Constantin. Hugo Lamb is similarly visited, and is persuaded to join the villainous Anchorites, of which Immaculée Constantin (to give her her full name) is second-in-command. Two fellow-Anchorites explain to Hugo that “we are the Anchorites of the Dusk Chapel of the Blind Cathar”; the cult sustains itself by inducting members into “the Psychosoterica of the Shaded Way.” Though it is 1991, the Anchorites’ leader was born in 1758. Their visitations are abrupt, alarming, and mysterious, but it is clear that they are up to no good.

In the fifth section, “An Horologist’s Labyrinth,” set in 2025, Marinus explains the shape of things to a bewildered Holly. The Horologists, we learn, were founded in the fifteen-nineties. A schism appears to have divided the group into Horologists and Anchorites. Members of both cults have the power to defy death. The Horologists can live for centuries by inhabiting successive historical personages. (Ordinary mortals, by contrast, live and die only once: they are the poor “bone clocks” of the book’s title.) Esther Little, the strange old woman whom Holly encountered when she was fifteen, is a tremendously old Horologist; her soul pre-dates Rome, Troy, Nineveh. She has taken “asylum” in Holly Sykes. Esther taught Marinus, who, when he treated Holly as a girl, was inhabiting the body of a Chinese man based in London but all these decades later is inhabiting the body of a woman based in Toronto. Jacko, Holly’s curiously precocious brother, was actually hiding the soul of Xi Lo, “the oldest and best of Horologists.” Horologists are inclined to make references to the Script, a plan that is to be followed.

While the benevolent Horologists

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“inherit resurrection as birthright”—they live natural lives and die like normal humans, and then come back as someone else—the sinister Anchorites lack this gift for metempsychosis, and must kill humans, ideally children, in order to drink their blood, or, in the proper lingo, “decant” the victim’s soul into “Black Wine,” which temporarily staves off aging. The Anchorites are thus soul vampires, and the Horologists have been at war with them for a hundred and sixty years, in order to put a stop to their rampant “animicide.” (As a girl, Holly had been in danger before Marinus intervened.) Esther Little helped launch the First Mission against the Anchorites, in 1984; it is time, Marinus explains, for the final mission, the war to end all wars. In required fantasy form, Mitchell stages a battle royal, popping with barely comprehensible patois. It is narrated by Marinus:

Seeing my dead body against the wall, the Anchorites reason that no psychosoteric can now attack them, and their red shield flickers out. They’ll pay for this mistake. Incorporately, I pour psychovoltage into a neurobolas and kinetic it at our assailants. It smacks into Imhoff and Westhuizen, the Fifth and Seventh Anchorites, respectively, and down they go. Three against seven. I ingress into Arkady to help him repair the shield, which turns a stronger blue and pushes back the remaining Anchorites. . . . *Go to Holly*, suborders Arkady. I obey without even thinking to bid him goodbye, an omission I regret even as I transverse to Holly, ingress, evoke an Act of Total Suasion.

This kind of thing leaves my own *Black Wine* quite cold, though there are many readers who thrill to tales of invisible eyes, Scripts and Counterscripts, the Shaded Way Codex, the Dusk Chapel, redacting human memories, and so on. But how much respect does this fantastic imagining deserve? Susan Cooper’s “The Dark Is Rising” series anticipates Mitchell, with its notion of “the Old Ones,” mystical beings who can freeze time, and who represent the forces of Light against the forces of Dark. Nor is Mitchell’s fantasy so different, in its materials, from Mark Haddon’s story for children “Boom!” (about aliens who are kidnapping humans, in order to restock their dying planet), a terrific little book I enjoyed reading to my son a few years ago, but which I didn’t bother to treat as more than a nice bedtime game.

Of course, Mitchell’s novel is longer, deeper, more ambitious, and more intricately constructed than Haddon’s swift

concoction. He writes better prose. But the two books share a fatal structural similarity. As soon as the fantasy theme announces itself in the novel’s first section, the reader is put on alert, and is waiting for the next visitation, which arrives punctually. Gradually, the reader begins to understand that the realism—the human activity—is relatively unimportant; it is the fantastical intergovernmental war that really matters. Whatever the stakes are, the reader decides, they are not really decided in the sublunary realm. As in Haddon’s book, though on a grander scale, the emphasis is shifted away from the human characters toward the supernatural goings on, and the human characters become mere decoders of the peculiar mystery that has befallen them: detectives of drivel. The fantasy rigs the narrative, so that there is something wearily formulaic whenever Mitchell stages, as he regularly does, a spot of “realistic” skepticism. “It all sounded too *X-Files*,” Ed Brubeck thinks. “Stop talking as if I believe you,” Holly says to Marinus, as he is explaining how things really work. “They’re mad, or liars, or—most disturbing of all—neither,” Hugo Lamb thinks, of his visiting Anchorites. “What bloody planet are you *on*?” Holly demands of Marinus. And so on. These ritualized expressions of resistance have no more weight than the token obstacles thrown in the way of thieves by other thieves in heist movies (“Are you kidding? This is crazy. . . . I’m in”). An authorial decision has been made in favor of the mystery: this is no more than weak realism’s bad-faith tussle with a fantastic assailant who has already won.

So the human protagonists are slowly imprisoned, deprived of their freedom as fictional actors. (That this freedom is itself fictional is an unimportant paradox, just part of the everyday novelistic contract.) And there are other ways in which Mitchell’s cosmology rigs things. As far as I can tell, *Horology* is spiritually elitist. In this, it has something in common with Gnosticism, whose heretical mythology appears to have influenced Mitchell’s invention. I was surprised, late in the book, to discover that there are perhaps only eight Horologists. Presumably, in some supernatural version of the Académie Française, the number of them is strictly limited. And even the poor victims of

the Anchorites are not ordinary folk—only “the souls of the Engifted can be decanted.” Crispin Hershey, apparently, is not gifted enough: he is of no great theological interest to either Horologists or Anchorites; and the same goes for Holly’s parents, and for Ed Brubeck, and for the horrid critic Richard Cheeseman. (Oh, well.)

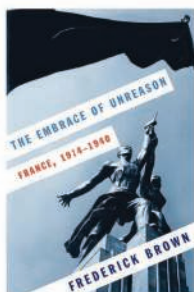
It is possible that Mitchell truly proposes a bleak Gnosticism, a vision of the universe in which humans, poor bone clocks, suffer and strive, to little effect, in a cursed material world, while all the momentous stuff is going on in a restricted soul world of true initiates. But this vision, because it wrenches interest away from the human realm, seems a dubious one for a novel. The battle belongs to the Anchorites and Horologists, fighting in Technicolor hues of Good and Evil.

I doubt that David Mitchell’s intention was to return the secular novel to theological allegory, but that is what “The Bone Clocks” does. Above all, his cosmology seems an unconscious fantasy of the author-god, reinstating the novelist as omniscient deity, controlling, prodding, shaping, ending, rigging. He has spoken of his novels as forming one “Über-book,” in which themes and characters recur and overlap: an epic ambition. Battles involving men and gods are, indeed, the life-and-death-blood of the epic form. But didn’t the epic hand off to the novel, in the last book of “Paradise Lost,” when the Angel Michael tells Adam and Eve that, though they will lose actual Paradise, they will possess “a Paradise within thee, happier far”? The novel takes over from the epic not just because inwardness opens itself up as the great novelistic subject but because human freedom asserts itself against divine arrangement. The “human case” refuses to be preordained. The history of the novel can, in fact, be seen as a secular triumph over providential theology: first, God is displaced; then the God-like author fills the theological void; then the God-like author is finally displaced, too. Despite Mitchell’s humane gifts as a secular storyteller, “The Bone Clocks” enforces an ordained hermeticism, in which fictional characters, often bearing names from previous Mitchell fictions, perform unmotivated maneuvers at the behest of mysterious plotters who can do what they want with their victims. Time to redact this particular Script. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED



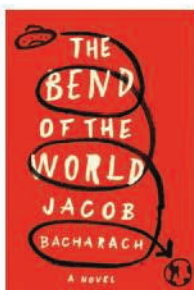
IN THE KINGDOM OF ICE, by Hampton Sides (Doubleday). In the fall of 1879, the Arctic expedition aboard the U.S.S. Jeannette realized that the North Pole did not, as scientists of the day believed, sit in a warm sea behind a ring of ice. The ship and its crew of thirty-three were trapped in the ice pack, as if in cement. Sides's narrative of what happened in the next two years—the breakup of the ship, the crew's flight over ice, acres of slush, and Siberian tundra—is harrowing and impeccably paced. The supporting pageant is well rendered, too: Thomas Edison had sold the captain lights that didn't work; the owner of the New York *Herald* paid the expedition's bills but was distracted by tennis.



THE EMBRACE OF UNREASON, by Frederick Brown (Knopf). The author, whose previous book, "For the Soul of France," was about the Enlightenment, here turns to a generation of French intellectuals who rejected reason, putting their faith in "the soil of one's homeland." Covering the period from 1914 to 1940, the book tracks writers and thinkers who fomented nationalistic fervor, xenophobia, and militarism. Brown doesn't present an overarching thesis, but his biographical portraits are absorbing. Chief among the characters are the right-wing novelist Maurice Barrès and the royalist poet and essayist Charles Maurras. Their younger counterpart Pierre Drieu La Rochelle wrote of his "hope for the triumph of totalitarian man," and for a few years, as a Nazi collaborator in Vichy, he got his wish. After the Liberation, he killed himself.



MR. TALL, by Tony Earley (Little, Brown). These six loosely connected stories and a novella are set in Earley's familiar North Carolina—with its "shriveling" towns and its mountains "thick with balsam and rhododendron." The pervasive theme is the hard work of marriage. For a young bride, wedlock seems like "some benevolent, secret society to which almost everyone belonged but of which hardly anyone ever spoke." Unuttered thoughts corrode relationships: a painter's wife misunderstands her husband's work, a couple never mention their stillborn baby. In the lonely, mountainous terrain, spouses endure silences and slights. These accomplished stories celebrate patience and resolve, echoed in the relationship advice of one character: "If you want to stay together, then don't leave."



THE BEND OF THE WORLD, by Jacob Bacharach (Liveright). Peter Morrison, the narrator of this funny, acerbic, and absurd debut, is a disengaged "manager of customer analytics and spend processes" at a Pittsburgh company called Global Solutions. He is about to turn thirty; his girlfriend is a burned-out art student who makes sculptures that look like chairs, and his best friend is a drug-addled conspiracy theorist. As Peter inches toward maturity, events around him grow more and more bizarre—U.F.O. sightings, cultists, and a mysterious takeover of Global Solutions. Bacharach has a keenly satiric eye, and, some sophomoric moments aside, his book is a delightful study of extended adolescence.

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BY ALEX ROSS



What was once known as building a library is now considered hoarding.

Recently, while moving my CD collection to new shelving, I struggled with feelings of obsolescence and futility. Why bother with space-devouring, planet-harming plastic objects when so much music can be had at the touch of a track-pad—on Spotify, Pandora, Beats Music, and other streaming services that rain sonic data from the virtual entity known as the Cloud? What is the point of having amassed, say, the complete symphonies of the Estonian composer Eduard Tubin (1905–82) when all eleven of them pop up on Spotify, albeit in random order? (When I searched for “Tubin” on the service, I was offered two movements of his Fourth Symphony, with the others appearing far down a list.) The tide has turned against the collector of recordings,

not to mention the collector of books: what was once known as building a library is now considered hoarding. One is expected to banish all clutter and consume culture in a gleaming, empty room.

Yet I’m wedded to the wall of plastic. I like browsing the spines—Schnabel, Schnebel, Schnittke—and pulling out disks at random. Even in the age of Wikipedia, liner notes and opera librettos can be informative. (Not everything exists online: I tried and failed to find the libretto for Franz Schreker’s “Christophorus,” which begins with the lines “Her eyes—hot summer./Her thinking—cool.”) I get a pang of nostalgia in seeing recordings that I bought almost thirty years ago, using money earned through an inept gardening business: the

cover of Karajan’s Mahler Ninth bears the scratches of a dozen college-era moves. My working process as a critic revolves around a stack of disks that I call the Listen Again pile: recent releases that have jumped out of the crowd and demand attention. None of this happens as easily on the computer. I experience no nostalgia for the first music I downloaded, which appears to have been Justin Timberlake.

The idiosyncrasies of aging critics aside, there are legitimate questions about the aesthetics and the ethics of streaming. Spotify is notorious for its chaotic presentation of track data. One recording of the Beethoven Ninth is identified chiefly by the name of the soprano, Luba Orgonášová; I had to click again and scrutinize a stamp-size reproduction of the album cover to determine the name of the conductor, John Eliot Gardiner. A deeper issue is one of economic fairness. Spotify and Pandora have sparked protests from artists who find their royalty payments insultingly small. In 2012, the indie-rock musician Damon Krukowski reported that his former band Galaxie 500 received songwriting royalties of two hundredths of a cent for each play of its most popular track on Spotify, with performance royalties adding a pittance more. Spotify has assured critics that artists’ earnings will rise as more people subscribe. In other words, if you give us dominance, we will be more generous—a somewhat chilly proposition.

Such objections fall away in the case of institutions and ensembles that offer streaming audio and video of their own performances. Here the aim is simply to reach a broader audience and, perhaps, to make a little extra money from subscribers. The Glyndebourne Festival, the Bavarian State Opera, the Detroit Symphony, and the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics, among others, offer fairly high-quality streams; my favorite is Detroit’s, since it represents the try-anything spirit of an orchestra recovering from a brush with financial catastrophe. A good guide to this increasingly crowded landscape is Charles T. Downey, the proprietor of the arts blog Ionarts, who features dozens of audio and video links every Sunday: a recent edition included everything from Rameau’s “Les Boréades” in Aix-en-Provence to Steve Reich’s “The Desert Music” at the BBC Proms.

If I were a music-obsessed teen-ager today, I would probably be revelling in this endless feast, and dismissing the complaints of curmudgeons. No longer would I need to prop a tape recorder next to a transistor radio in order to capture Bruckner's Sixth Symphony. The thousand-year history of classical music would be mine for the taking. But there is a downside to the glut of virtual product and the attendant plunge of prices. As the composer-arranger Van Dyke Parks has argued, in a recent essay for *The Daily Beast*, the streaming model favors superstars and conglomerates over workaday musicians and indie outfits. Its façade of infinite variety notwithstanding, it meshes neatly with the winner-take-all economy. And if it ever comes crashing down—streaming services have struggled to turn a profit—hoarding may return to fashion.

My Listen Again pile currently contains a formidable new recording, from Deutsche Grammophon, of Strauss's "Elektra," with Christian Thielemann conducting fluidly and Evelyn Herlitzius slashing through the title role; a reissue of arias and cantatas by the seventeenth-century singer-composer Barbara Strozzi, recorded back in 2001 by the Milanese ensemble La Risonanza for the Glossa label; a two-CD set of whispy, meditative chamber works by the contemporary British composer Laurence Crane, from Another Timbre; a Naxos survey of intricately expressive harpsichord pieces by the Elizabethan courtier Ferdinando Richardson, with Glen Wilson performing; and "All the Things You Are," a recital by the pianist Leon Fleisher, on Bridge. In each case, the physical object adds something to the experience, whether it's Wilson's erudite notes about Richardson ("He waited at the feet of Queen Elizabeth of famous memory" is a line from the composer's epitaph) or a letter from the composer George Perle reproduced with Fleisher's release ("My piano music is quirky and takes some getting used to").

The Fleisher disk is the one I've listened to the most, nearly to the point of obsession. At the age of eighty-six, the pianist remains a musician of magisterial powers; this CD, containing music of Bach, Perle, Federico Mompou, Leon Kirchner, Dina Koston, George Gersh-

win, and Jerome Kern, is one of his finest hours on record. In the mid-nineteen-sixties, Fleisher began suffering from focal dystonia, and for several decades he lost the use of his right hand. Eventually, thanks to experimental treatments, he returned to playing with both hands, but he still gravitates toward the left-hand repertory, much of which was commissioned by the Austrian pianist Paul Wittgenstein, one of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's brothers, who lost an arm during the First World War. Fleisher has expanded that repertory further, and draws upon it in "All the Things You Are."

The central work is Bach's Chaconne in D Minor for violin, arranged as a left-hand piano exercise by Brahms. In a letter to Clara Schumann, Brahms told of his love for the Chaconne—"a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings"—and said that he enjoyed struggling in solitude to execute it with one hand, because "one does not always want to hear music actually played." The miracle of Fleisher's account is that, while he performs with astonishing dexterity, he retains that atmosphere of exploration, as if no one were listening. The most wrenching passage in the Chaconne comes toward the end, when, after an upward-striving, light-seeking section in D major, there is a shuddering collapse back into the minor. Here, as sonorous, multi-register figuration gives way to spare, confined lines, you may remember what you might have forgotten, that the pianist is using one hand, and that the impairment of the other has caused him much sorrow.

The remainder of the program extends the ruminative mood. Perle's, Kirchner's, and Koston's pieces, all informed by Schoenbergian modernism, find a mysterious rapport with the bluesy chords of Gershwin and Kern. By the end, as Kern's "All the Things You Are" unwinds at a last-call, closing-time tempo, we seem to be in some transcendent hotel lounge, with Bach and Brahms sequestered in a corner and Gershwin flitting about. Bridge Records, a family-run concern, has placed most of its releases on Spotify and other streaming services, and you can have equally intense encounters there. But only by buying the albums are you likely to help the label stay in business. ♦

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YOUNG LOVE

"If I Stay" and "The Last of Robin Hood."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Chloë Grace Moretz and Jamie Blackley star in R. J. Cutler's new movie.

Young-adult fiction: what a peculiar product it is, sold and consumed as avidly as the misery memoir and the self-help book, and borrowing sneakily from both. One can see the gap in the market. What are literate kids meant to do with themselves, or with their itchy brains, as they wander the no man's land between Narnia and Philip Roth? The ideal protagonist of the genre is at once victimized and possessed of decisive power—someone like Mia, the heroine of Gayle Forman's *"If I Stay,"* which has clung grimly to the *Times* best-seller list, on and off, for twenty weeks. And the ideal subject is death, or, as we should probably call it, the big sleepover.

Movie studios, exquisitely tuned to the economics of the snuffle, are on the case. *"The Fault in Our Stars,"* adapted from John Green's book and starring Shailene Woodley as a cancer patient, is still in cinemas, and its global box-office takings—two hundred and eighty million dollars to date—are in the pink of health. Now, in its wake, comes the film of *"If I Stay,"* written by Shauna Cross and directed by R. J.

Cutler, barely giving teen-age weepers a chance to throw their tissues on the floor and grab a fresh box of Goobers. Even if they haven't read the novel, they will know the mortal twist, thanks to the trailer, and to the fact that no twist can survive the blizzard of life online. Early on, there is a car crash on a wintry road, involving Mia (Chloë Grace Moretz); her father, Denny (Joshua Leonard); her mother, Kat (Mireille Enos); and her younger brother, Teddy (Jakob Davies). Mia spends the rest of the movie hovering on the border between this world and the next, watching her wounded body being taken from the wreck to the hospital, and reflecting in voice-over on her existence hitherto. She is, at best, a demi-ghost, and, as a nurse, bending down close, informs her, "Here's the secret, baby. If you live, if you die, it's all up to you."

Say what? Surely it's up to the skill of Mia's doctors, too, and her physical resilience? What sounds to me like lousy nursing is, however, the über-mantra of young-adult narrative: everything is a choice—your boyfriend,

your college application, your breakfast, your playlist, the color of your scrunchie, and your ontological status. No reference must be made to principles beyond your reach, because those do not apply; you will be tested and validated according to your own lights, and Mia's predicament, though terrible, should therefore be seen not as a tragedy but as the very last word in self-help. If Macbeth had been her age, we would have none of that nonsense about strutting and fretting and candles and idiots. On the contrary, life is a tale told by a highly intelligent young woman with great career prospects and excellent hair, and it signifies what she damn well likes.

On balance, Mia has plenty to live for. She is a cellist, with a sticker reading "I ♥ Yo-Yo Ma" on the inside of her locker door at school. And, oh, my God, there was this one day when a hot boy watched her rehearsing alone. A friend told her all about it:

"Adam Wilde saw me geeking out?"

"Adam Wilde saw you blissing out, and he's totally into it."

That exchange, cunningly wrought, is designed to soothe any nerd-nerves that viewers may be experiencing. It is hereby decreed that geeking and blissing shall be as one—and thank heaven for that, because Adam (Jamie Blackley) is a rock god not just to his school-mates but, increasingly, to fans beyond. He is the lead singer in a band called Willamette Stone, and no one has the heart to hint that it may be anything but riotously good—least of all Mia, who bops along awkwardly at his concerts, even dressing up in a blond wig and leopard skin for a Halloween gig, but who would prefer to be at home practicing Beethoven (or "Loodvig," as she refers to him). The love that soars between Mia and Adam is as fine, as rare, and altogether as dull as you could wish for, with flickers of creepiness; when she auditions for Juilliard, he helpfully papers her bedroom ceiling with an exact photographic replica of the roof of the concert hall where she will perform, and the result looks exactly like the lair of a serial killer, as broken into by wide-eyed cops in a grimy thriller. Then, at the end, seated next to the motionless Mia, he

suddenly produces a guitar from nowhere, like a magician with a bunny, and starts to sing, just off key enough to make her immortal spirit wince. You can picture her thoughts: Forget this staying crap. If he doesn't shut up, I'm off.

The saddest thing about "If I Stay" is that it affords Moretz so little opportunity to be non-sad. She can be funny (witness her spat with Alec Baldwin, on "30 Rock"), but recent roles, in "Let Me In" and "Carrie," have ironed out the smiles, and there is no way that Mia's earnestness was ever going to be jeopardized by jokes. Yet a gag does run through Cutler's film, and it's a doozy: the oldsters are more engaging, as characters, than their junior kin. For instance, Stacy Keach—who is on a roll, after his formidable turn in "Nebraska"—is in solid form as Mia's grandfather, chewing through his cheesy lines with ease. More galling still, we learn that Kat and Denny, Mia's not entirely uncool parents, used to be rockers themselves, like Adam, before they gave up musical mayhem to raise the kids. That sort of sacrifice, whether done with a full heart or through gritted teeth, is always worth exploring, although it will, naturally, be anathema to the target audience. If there's one thing that young adults abhor, it's adults who want to stay young, and, even worse, succeed. Well, tough.

Another movie, another teen-ager in peril. Beverly Aadland (Dakota Fanning) was fifteen when she met Errol Flynn (Kevin Kline), in 1957. He didn't know how old she was, or, at any

rate, he chose not to think about it, and the best scene in "The Last of Robin Hood" comes when, having seduced her, he asks to meet Florence (Susan Sarandon), her indomitable mother. He fixes Florence a vodka-on-the-rocks, his back turned to her, and casually inquires into Beverly's age. "She's fifteen, Errol," Florence says, and, for a couple of seconds, he freezes, tongs in hand. There is a kind of vertigo in his stillness, beautifully registered by Kline. Flynn knows at once that he has committed statutory rape, and that his career, already on the skids, is now racing toward the abyss. The moment thaws; he drops the ice in the tumbler; the life of crime goes on.

Is there enough in the saga of Flynn and Aadland to furnish a whole film? Only just. "The Last of Robin Hood," written and directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, is often pallid and thin, with a scant sense of urgency; we are at the farthest possible remove from "The Adventures of Robin Hood" (1938), the jewel in Flynn's rickety crown, which proved that cinema can be powered by purest joie de vivre. By the late fifties, his light was failing badly, and you could argue that the new movie, clearly made on a tight budget, honors that diminution; but laziness creeps in, too, and continuity buffs will grimace as Flynn's walking stick, wielded in a mock duel with Beverly, becomes an umbrella in the next shot. As for "The Roots of Heaven" (1958), which he made in Africa with Trevor Howard and Orson Welles, under the guidance of John Huston (*there's* a posy of blushing vio-

lets), did it have to be conjured up by a trio of native Africans, drumming at dusk?

On the other hand, we have Sarandon and Kline, whose combined expertise is such that Flynn, a connoisseur of the apparently effortless, would have raised an admiring glass. After he died, in 1959, Florence served sixty days in jail for "contributing to the delinquency of a minor," but we don't need to be told that she had pimped her child to a star; we see it in the eagerness with which, when interviewed on tape about the story, she lunges into her side of it as the reels begin to turn. As for Kline, with his lupine smile, his silk cravats, and his handkerchief crisply folded in his breast pocket, he reminds us that wolves can have wonderful manners, right up to the verge of the pounce. Hence the meeting with Stanley Kubrick, limply dramatized here, at which Flynn did indeed propose himself and his young belle, as a package deal, for the roles of Humbert and Lolita. (Nothing ensued, and we are left to contemplate what might have been: the swaggering rake, trapped in Kubrickian shadows.) Only at the death does "The Last of Robin Hood" haunt us as it should, with Flynn—old at fifty, marinated in booze—expiring not in the sack, as one might expect, but fully dressed and twitching on the floor. He has just re-galed a party of folks in the next room with a favorite show-business anecdote, and they gulped it down. Such is the comeuppance of the wolf: to tell tales of himself, as he finally runs out of puff. ♦

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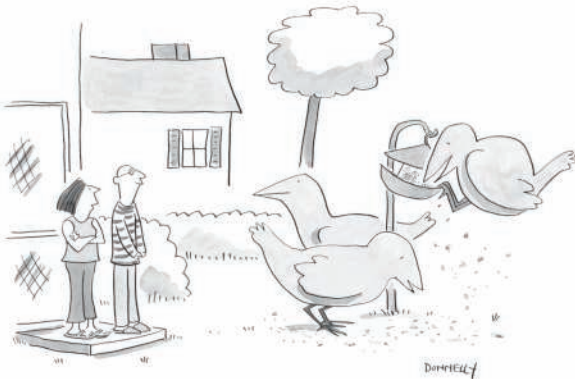
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Michael Crawford, must be received by Sunday, September 7th. The finalists in the August 25th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 22nd 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 contest.newyorker.com.

THE WINNING CAPTION



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



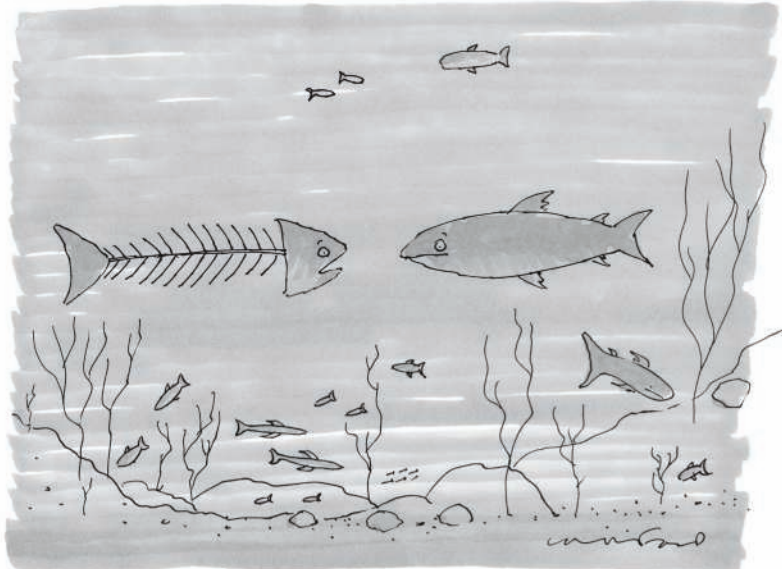
THE FINALISTS

"No, he left here at 8:07."
Michael Boyette, Elkins Park, Pa.

"Well, they're never late for happy hour."
Justin O'Connor, Leeds, Mass.

"It's mostly a bridge-and-tunnel crowd."
David Sayer, San Francisco, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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