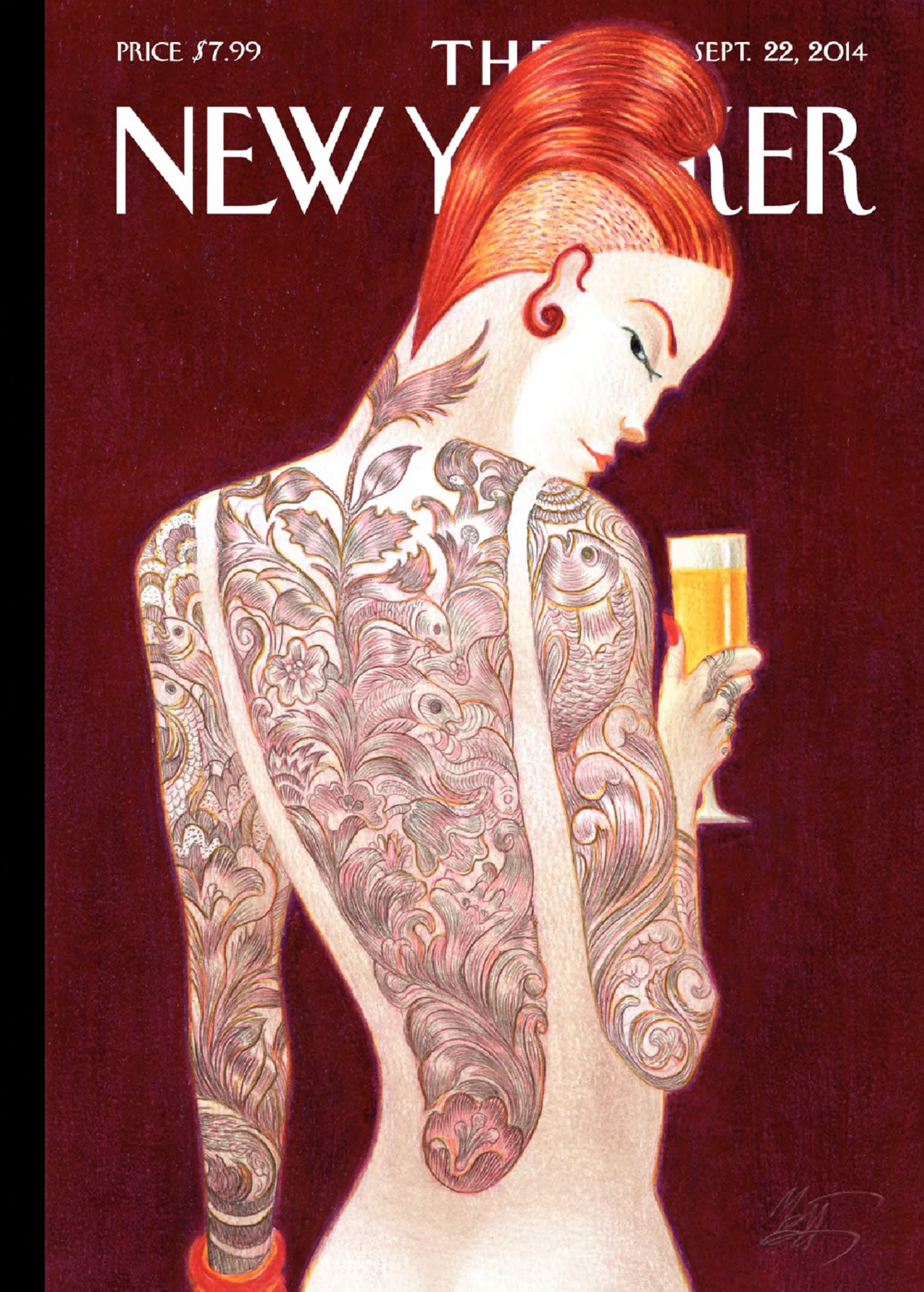

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THE NEW YORKER

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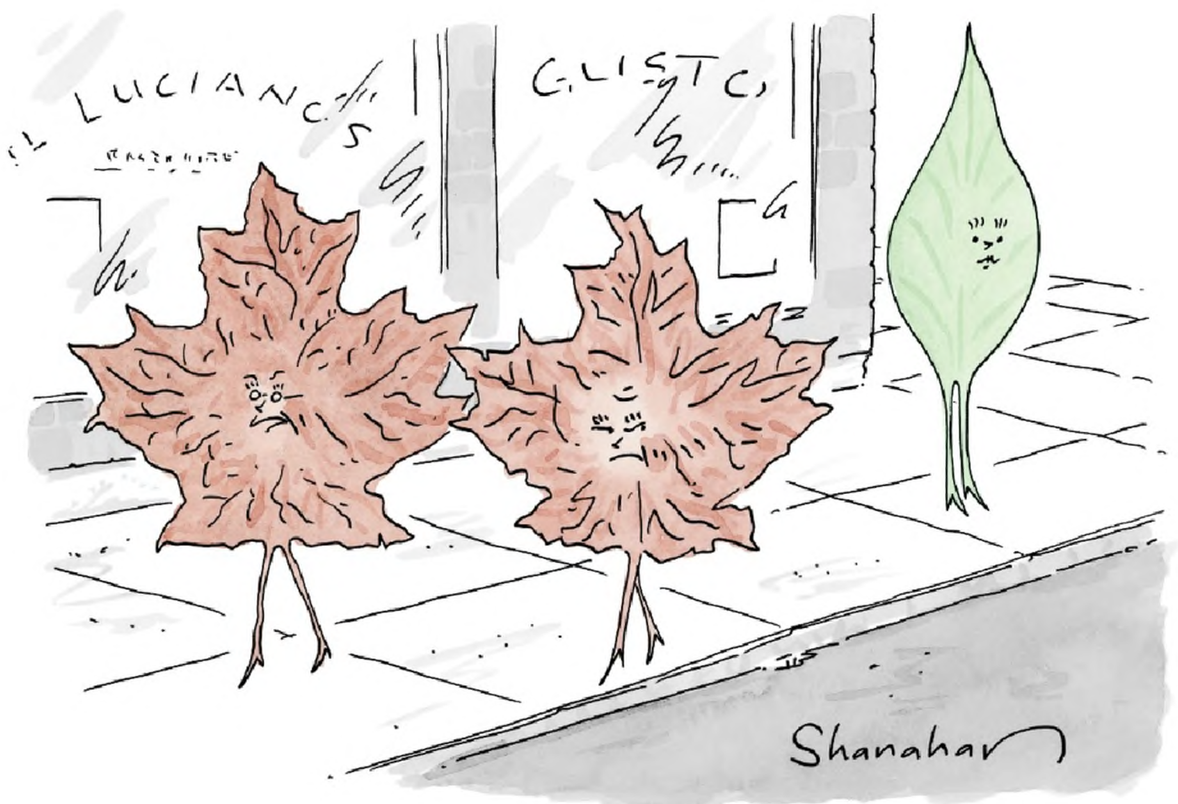

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THE SPORTING SCENE: *The New Yorker*'s blog about the world of sports, with coverage of the N.F.L.'s domestic-violence crisis.

SLIDE SHOW: Art by Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis.

FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by *Victor Lodato*, *Mary Karr*, and *Kevin Holden*.

PODCASTS: On the Political Scene, *William Finnegan* and *George Packer* join *Dorothy Wickenden* for a discussion about fast-food workers and the new labor activism. Plus, *Lizzie Widdicombe*, *Judith Thurman*, and *Sasha Weiss* on Out Loud.

VIDEOS: A performance by Perfume Genius. Plus, the art of making a GoPro video.

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THE MAIL

AIPAC'S INFLUENCE

Connie Bruck, in her piece about the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, shows clearly the flaws in the U.S. political system ("Friends of Israel," September 1st). AIPAC's practices constitute nothing less than legalized bribery of American politicians. In most democracies, airtime for campaigning is not for sale; it is allocated equitably, so that all voices can be heard. In Israel, there is some of the U.S.-type corruption in internal party primaries, but, in the lead-up to the general election, television and radio time is rationed. When Thomas Friedman wrote in the New York *Times* that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's standing ovation in Congress was bought and paid for, he was right on target. The problem transcends AIPAC and Middle East policy. The U.S. has transitioned from a democracy to an oligarchy.
Aharon Eviatar
Professor Emeritus, Tel Aviv University
Hofit, Israel

While there is much to admire in Bruck's writing, I must disagree with some of the AIPAC article. I have belonged to AIPAC for years. The organization should be applauded for trying to keep a small democratic state's foreign-policy problems before American power brokers and the public. Certainly, there are many Palestinians who would prefer to live in a modern state with a successful economy, but there are others who believe strongly that all territory should be returned to them. Hamas has stated in its charter that Israel does not have the right to exist, and the group encourages the killing of Jews. In Palestinian areas, children are brought up to honor martyrs who die killing Israelis. AIPAC has a role to play, because, unfortunately, there are anti-Israeli forces spending money and time pushing the idea of Israel as existentially evil and Israelis as murderers of innocents. This is particularly troubling as Hamas fighters lurk in tunnels and rockets are fired overhead. We in the Jewish community constantly self-criticize; we understand that no country is perfect. Bruck's article points out some flaws and problems, but there is a deadly battle going on. Political support and education of the American people are necessary if Israel is to survive.
Janyce C. Katz
Columbus, Ohio

Bruck's reporting documents the profound influence of AIPAC on American foreign policy toward Israel. But one can take the argument farther: as Israel built strong commercial and military ties to apartheid South Africa in the seventies and early eighties, many Jews chose to look the other way, while some right-leaning, Likud-supporting American Jewish leaders consistently and vociferously defended Israel, weakening American Jewish organizational ties to the global anti-apartheid movement. In my research, I have interviewed American Jews who joined the early anti-apartheid movement and challenged Israel's right to do business with South Africa. They were pushed out of American Jewish organizations and accused of threatening Israel's right to exist, of self-hatred, of anti-Semitism. Jews wishing to protest South African apartheid—and, for that matter, those using the label of apartheid to describe Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories—struggled to find a place in the Jewish community. Forty years ago, some American Jews stood apart from the "generation of unquestioning adherents," as Bruck writes, who contributed to AIPAC's well-financed successes. Then, as now, those who dissent from AIPAC's platform demonstrate its polarizing effect on American Jewry. By joining domestic and global civil- and human-rights movements, these American Jews dispute the idea that AIPAC speaks on their behalf.
Marjorie N. Feld
Associate Professor of History
Babson College
Babson Park, Mass.

SPEECH FOR SALE

Jill Lepore's article on the power and the corrosive influence of money on American politics should be a wake-up call for all who are concerned about the decline of democracy in the U.S. ("The Crooked and the Dead," August 25th). Money-driven politics brought us "Corporations are people"—contorted logic upheld by a narrow majority on the Supreme Court. We are on the verge of seeing American democracy become a plutocracy, run by the worst politicians money can buy. I served as the chair of the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity under Presidents Carter and Reagan, and taught public policy at the University of California for more than forty years. I am convinced that the leprous condition Lepore describes—of private greed subverting the public good—will not be reversed by elaborate legal theories, refined philosophical treatises, or constitutional amendments. A solution will come about only through political means. Upon the eventual retirement of Justice Kennedy, Scalia, or Thomas, a Democratic President may then appoint a moderate to the Court who could vote to reverse Citizens United.
Arthur Blaustein
Berkeley, Calif.

Lepore's piece inspires further reflection on the Roberts Court's spurious argument that big-money contributions to political campaigns are a form of free speech. This claim is little more than the pop wisdom that says, "money makes the world go round." The Founders understood free speech as the liberty to expound one's beliefs in debate without penalty, and as the freedom of the press to criticize government policies and actions. Today, big corporations contribute to both parties in order to secure privileges with whoever gets elected. How did we go so wrong?
David Wright
Tampa, Fla.

•

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SEPTEMBER 2014	WEDNESDAY 17TH	THURSDAY 18TH	FRIDAY 19TH	SATURDAY 20TH	SUNDAY 21ST	MONDAY 22ND	TUESDAY 23RD

IN THE TYPICAL WESTERN movie, a solitary figure moves across dusty hills while a rough-hewn cowboy song or a spare pastoral melody plays on the soundtrack. The opening shot of Paul Thomas Anderson's 2007 film, "There Will Be Blood," showing a man prospecting for silver in a barren landscape, upends musical clichés of the West in an unnerving instant: the first thing that you hear is a dissonant chord of twelve tones, a seething of strings. It is pure sonic claustrophobia, and it exposes the implosive soul of the future oilman Daniel Plainview. The collaboration between Anderson and the composer Jonny Greenwood (above), who scored "There Will Be Blood" and also plays guitar in Radiohead, is among the strongest creative alliances in contemporary Hollywood, and the Wordless Music Series will mark the achievement by presenting two screenings of the film at the United Palace Theatre, with Greenwood participating in live performances of his score (Sept. 19-20).—*Alex Ross*

THE THEATRE
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ABOVE & BEYOND
FOOD & DRINK

PHOTOGRAPH BY NADAV KANDER

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

The Country House
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the world première of a play by Donald Margulies, starring Blythe Danner, about a family of actors who gather during the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Daniel Sullivan directs. In previews. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
Marianne Elliott directs a new play by Simon Stephens, adapted from the novel by Mark Haddon, about the inner life of a fifteen-year-old boy on the autism spectrum. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

Embers
Pan Pan Theatre stages this early Samuel Beckett radio play, from 1959, in which a man ruminates on his faltering marriage, his writing, and his father's suicide. Gavin Quinn directs. Sept. 17-20. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

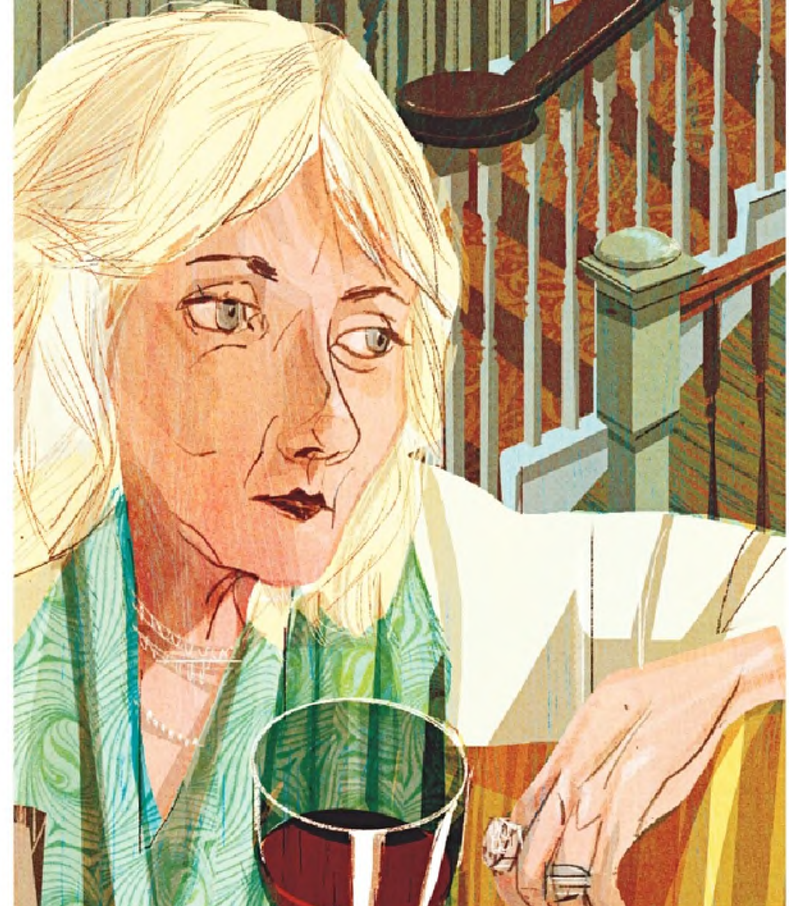
Found
Atlantic Theatre Company presents the world première of a musical, with a book by Hunter Bell and Lee Overtree and music and original lyrics by Eli Bolin, inspired by notes and letters featured in the magazine *Found*. Overtree directs. Previews begin Sept. 18. (336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111.)

Illusions
The contemporary Russian playwright Ivan Viripaev wrote this drama, translated and directed by Cazimir Liske, about two married couples with entangled lives. Sept. 17-24. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 866-811-4111.)

Indian Ink
Rosemary Harris stars in the New York première 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. In previews. (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.)

The Killing of Sister George
TACT presents the 1964 play by Frank Marcus, in which a woman who plays Sister George on a BBC radio drama realizes that she might be killed off in the show. Previews begin Sept. 23. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)



Blythe Danner stars in Donald Margulies's "The Country House," set at the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

BEYOND METHOD

Two veteran actors have bucked the trend.

IN THE NINETEEN-EIGHTIES, when secondhand bookstores were not too hard to find in Manhattan, I would hunt out copies of *Show*. The visually beautiful magazine captured that most ephemeral of activities: theatre-makers making theatre. One story, shot by Duane Michals in the early sixties, showed the young and then relatively unknown actors James Earl Jones, Barbara Harris, Austin Pendleton, and Zohra Lampert as they did the hard work of living their dreams. What interested me, apart from the fabulous black-and-white photography, was the kind of theatre that this group of performers created. Jones and his contemporaries, including the stellar Blythe Danner—both of whom are now on Broadway, Jones in Kaufman and Hart's 1936 comedy "You Can't Take It with You," and Danner in Donald Margulies's "The Country House"—came of age as post-Method actors.

Danner found her footing in the sixties, following the advances that the Method-based actors Montgomery Clift and Maureen Stapleton had made in a field dominated by Constantin Stanislavski and Lee Strasberg's teaching, by which the actor "becomes" the character. But there was something lighter, more modern, and less documentary-like in Danner's attack. When the Philadelphia native acted in Chekhov's "The Seagull," in 1975, and in Tennessee Williams's "The Eccentricities of a Nightingale," in 1976 (both fortunately preserved by the Broadway Theatre Archive), the work was definitive because of Danner's access to her emotional imagination, and because of her voice, which always sounds as though she's been crying and wants to get past it, with our help.

Jones has a similarly powerful vocal instrument, and, in work ranging from "The Great White Hope" (1967) to "Driving Miss Daisy" (2010), he has always spoken as though he's pulling his character's soul up from his soles. Jones's strength, like Danner's, relies on combining the discipline of the Method with the freedom inherent in building illusions through voice, body, and enthusiasm.

—*Hilton Als*

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THE THEATRE

A DIRECTOR WITH THE GENIE TOUCH

Casey Nicholaw's magic carpet ride from the chorus to the director's chair

For twelve years he sang and danced in the choruses of multiple Broadway shows. Then, while performing in the Dr. Seuss musical *Seussical*, Casey Nicholaw had an epiphany. He says, laughing, "I was in a cage on stage in a purple yarn suit singing backup, and I was like, 'I need a little more!'"

He decided to try his hand at choreography, hosting a showcase attended by some of Broadway's top theater professionals. Among them was legendary director Mike Nichols, who hired Nicholaw to choreograph *Spamalot*. An instant success, the show went on to win the 2005 Tony Award® for Best Musical. Nicholaw continued his winning streak with the raucous hit *The Drowsy Chaperone* and the global smash *The Book of Mormon*, for which he won a Tony Award® for Best Direction of a Musical. In just a few years, Nicholaw had taken over a brand-new role—as Broadway's go-to director/choreographer for new musical comedies.

So, when the folks at Disney were on the lookout for someone to direct their stage version of *ALADDIN*, Nicholaw was a wish come true.

Thomas Schumacher, the show's producer and president of Disney Theatrical Group, says, "He's really the Gower Champion of our time—a guy who looks at a show for its entertainment value, who thinks, 'How much fun is it going to be?'"

It was a dream job, albeit one that came with its own unique challenges. Nicholaw says, "The tone of the movie was really action-adventure, and on stage you can't do most of that. You have to give it a different take and make it theatrical in a way that we haven't seen on film."

And how does *ALADDIN* become more theatrical? For the stage version of "Friend Like Me," the Genie's Act One showstopper, Nicholaw returned to the song's roots as a Cab Calloway-style big band number. Nicholaw says, "It originally had much more of a vaudeville, musical theater feel to it. So we've added that back in." But he also threw in a nod to "Dancing with the Stars" and some country-western for fun. Nicholaw admits, "It takes a lot to choreograph a number that also gets laughs."

Nicholaw and dancers from the *ALADDIN* ensemble pose for *Vanity Fair*.

Nicholaw keeping tabs on every detail during rehearsal.

The ensemble leaps to life onstage in *ALADDIN*'s marketplace.

Photos by: Max Abadian, Matthew Murphy and Deen van Meer ©Disney

Nicholaw adds, "It's a very funny show, but it's also very sophisticated. I think it's going to be so much fun for people who've seen the movie to see it now on stage. Now it's a bit more adult." According to Nicholaw, "It's still true to the movie, but it's done in high musical theater style."

Audiences and critics were quick to fall in love with the show: it opened to rave reviews and became the undisputed top-selling new musical of the season.

Despite the show's success, Nicholaw doesn't take all the credit. He says, "I've never seen a group of people work so hard at getting something right. It's like doing theater for all the reasons that you love. That's what I want to see as a director."

The hard work has unquestionably paid off. Nicholaw says, "It's been such a journey. We always knew it would be good, but we had no idea it would be *this* good. It makes me so proud. All I want *ALADDIN* to do is bring joy into people's lives. We could all use it."

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New Amsterdam

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Walter Kerr

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
Belasco

IF/THEN
Richard Rodgers

JERSEY BOYS
August Wilson

JUÁREZ: A DOCUMENTARY MYTHOLOGY
Rattlestick

KINKY BOOTS
Hirschfeld

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

LOVE LETTERS
Brooks Atkinson

MATILDA THE MUSICAL
Shubert

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial

THE MONEY SHOT
Lucille Lortel

MOTOWN: THE MUSICAL
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Broadway Theatre

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE
New York Theatre Workshop

TEACH, TEACHER, TEACHEST
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THIS IS OUR YOUTH
Cort. Reviewed in this issue.

TO THE BONE
Cherry Lane

UNCLE VANYA
Pearl

THE VALLEY OF ASTONISHMENT
Polonsky Shakespeare Center

WICKED
Gershwin

On the Town

John Rando directs the musical comedy, written by Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden, Adolph Green, and Jerome Robbins, about three sailors looking for fun while on leave in New York City. Starring Jackie Hoffman, Tony Yazbeck, Megan Fairchild (a New York City Ballet dancer), Jay Armstrong Johnson, and Clyde Alves. Previews begin Sept. 20. (Lyric, 213 W. 42nd St. 877-250-2929.)

Tail! Spin!

Mario Correa wrote this satire of political sex scandals of the past decade, including episodes involving Mark Sanford, Larry Craig, Anthony Weiner, and Mark Foley. Rachel Dratch stars; Dan Knechtges directs. Previews begin Sept. 18. (Lynn Redgrave Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 866-811-4111.)

While I Yet Live

Primary Stages presents the world première of a play by Billy Porter (the star of "Kinky Boots"), about a boy coming of age in Pittsburgh and the strong women around him. Starring S. Epatha Merkerson and Lillias White. Directed by Sheryl Kaller. Previews begin Sept. 23. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)

You Can't Take It with You

James Earl Jones, Rose Byrne, Annaleigh Ashford, Elizabeth Ashley, Reg Rogers, and Kristine Nielsen star in a revival of the 1936 play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, about two families who become intertwined when their children get engaged. Scott Ellis directs. In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

Bastards of Strindberg

In his preface to "Miss Julie," August Strindberg wrote, "I have made an attempt! If it has failed, there will, I hope, be time enough to make another!" Of course, Strindberg's 1888 tragedy of sex and class didn't fail. And now the Scandinavian American Theatre Company has commissioned other works, in homage. Four playwrights (two Swedish, two American) and two directors rejigger the catastrophic tryst between an heiress and her father's footman. Dominique Morisseau's "High Powered" offers the most radical rewrite, dispensing with Strindberg's characters in favor of a modern-day chauffeur and a dog walker. The other plays are more tethered to the original, goosing it with postmodern interventions. "Bastards" is thriftily stylish and reasonably clever (in the case of Andreas Boonstra and his theatrical hermeneutics, maybe too clever), but none of the pieces shocks or enthralls the way that "Miss Julie" still can. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Through Sept. 21.)

Bauer

When Rudolf Bauer (Sherman Howard), one of the first Abstract Expressionist painters in Germany, was jailed by the Nazis for making what they called "degenerate" art, his good friend and former lover, the painter Hilla Rebay (Stacy Ross), convinced the patron Solomon Guggenheim to bribe the Germans to set Bauer free. Afterward, Guggenheim bought all of Bauer's work, but not before getting him to unwittingly sign a contract giving Guggenheim ownership of all of Bauer's future paintings. Feeling duped and betrayed—especially by Rebay—Bauer never painted again. In Lauren Gunderson's beautifully written play, directed by Bill English, Rebay, who hasn't seen Bauer for thirteen years, comes to his house at the invitation of his wife (Susi Damilano), and the two struggle to make sense of all that happened between them. Gunderson goes deep in her exploration of greed's effect on love and art, and, though her well-played drama is talky, it brings its audience to tears. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

Bootycandy

Robert O'Hara's brazen comedy of alienation moves like a carrousel (the brilliant revolving set is by Clint Ramos, as are the candy-bright costumes) and feels like a roller coaster—or, given its splashy, raunchy spirit, a log flume. A series of playlets take on black life and black stereotypes, from a sermon delivered by a cross-dressing preacher to a blinged-out lesbian divorce ceremony. Weaving them together is Sutter (the excellent Phillip James Brannon), a stand-in for O'Hara, who as a child tends toward musicals and Michael Jackson and as an adult harbors a troubled sense of sexuality and self. Once or twice, the play veers into a meta-theatrical cul-de-sac, but these gimmicky moments have meaning: O'Hara's refusal to conform to our expectations of what a gay black playwright should be. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Dry Land

"Do you ever think about the fact that our organs taste like something?" the high-school senior Ester (Tina Ivlev) asks. "I guess I taste like sour milk," her friend Amy (Sarah Mezzanotte) replies. "One of my English teachers in middle school called me 'acerbic.' " The Yale undergraduate Ruby Rae Spiegel is pretty acerbic, too. In her début full-length play—with bracing direction by Adrienne Campbell-Holt, the artistic director of Colt Coeur—Amy undergoes an agonizing medical abortion on the floor of the swim-team locker room. (Medical abortion isn't usually so excruciating. Though she is a sophisticated playwright, Spiegel takes an adolescent's pleasure in shock.) Spiky dialogue animates the play, Mezzanotte's moving performance substantiates it, and the D.I.Y. termination lends it topicality. But the greater concern, as in Spiegel's early one-act "Carrie & Francine," is the messiness of female friendship and the wonder, frustration, vulnerability, and total weirdness of the female body. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

My Mañana Comes

In the kitchen of a busy Upper East Side restaurant, four desperate busboys work hard for lousy tips and a small salary. Though there's racial tension between the four men—a black father (Jason Bowen), a cocky Mexican-American kid with big dreams (Brian Quijada), and two illegal immigrants from Mexico (José Joaquín Pérez and Reza Salazar)—it's nothing compared with the difficulty that arises when they find out they're no longer being paid. Under the direction of Chay Yew, Elizabeth Irwin's fast-paced, funny, and bittersweet drama goes off without a hitch; all four actors are talented, and their chemistry is palpable. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Sept. 20.)

3Christs

To test his theory that deep-seated beliefs about one's identity can change, a psychologist (Christopher Hurt) brings together three mental patients (Donald Warfield, Arthur Aulisi, and Daryl Lathon), each of whom believes that he is Jesus Christ, and watches as they fight it out. When none of them changes, he interferes. The writers, S. M. Dale and Barry Rowell, don't seem to know what to do with their rich premise, which is based on a true story. The three actors playing the Christs are gifted, but the characters are undeveloped, and the dialogue is stilted, rambling, and not at all heartfelt. (Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Sq. S. 866-811-4111.)

Waiting for Godot

This New Yiddish Rep production of Shane Baker's translation (he also plays Vladimir), presented here as part of Origin's 1st Irish Festival, in Yiddish, with English supertitles, is advertised like a gimmick: "At last a 'Godot' you'll understand!" But the performance feels natural enough to suggest that Beckett's play (which was first produced in French) may have finally found its mother tongue. Aside from the language, there is a smattering of clues that the central duo are not only Jewish but also Holocaust survivors: a bit of striped fabric peeks out from Estragon's waistband; when Vladimir recounts the Gospel story of the two thieves at Golgotha, the supertitles put "the savior" in scare quotes; an offhand bit of dialogue, absent from Beckett's text, refers to "the camp." The director, Moshe Yassur, wisely lets the play otherwise speak for itself, and his and Baker's tweaks amount not to a high-concept reimagining but to a subtle and thoughtful nudge toward the postwar context in which "Godot" first appeared. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. Through Sept. 21.)

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MOVIES

OPENING

ART AND CRAFT
A documentary about the art forger Mark Landis, directed by Sam Cullman and Jennifer Grausman. Opening Sept. 19. (In limited release.)

THE GUEST
A thriller, directed by Adam Wingard, about a military veteran who moves in with a bereaved family. Opening Sept. 17. (In limited release.)

THE SKELETON TWINS
Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Sept. 19. (In limited release.)

THIS IS WHERE I LEAVE YOU
Shawn Levy directed this adaptation of a novel by Jonathan Tropper, about four adult siblings (Jason Bateman, Tina Fey, Adam Driver, and Corey Stoll) who reunite after their father's death. Opening Sept. 19. (In wide release.)

TUSK
Kevin Smith directed this horror film, about a man who disappears in the Canadian wilderness. Starring Justin Long and Johnny Depp. Opening Sept. 19. (In limited release.)

20,000 DAYS ON EARTH
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 17. (In limited release.)

A WALK AMONG THE TOMBSTONES
Scott Frank wrote and directed this drama, about a private detective (Liam Neeson) who investigates the murder of a drug dealer's wife. Opening Sept. 19. (In wide release.)

THE ZERO THEOREM
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 19. (In limited release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
"Lines and Nodes." Sept. 20 at 5:15: "The Path of Oil" (1967, Bernardo Bertolucci). • Sept. 21 at 3: "The Land of Wandering Souls" (1999, Rithy Panh). • Sept. 21 at 5:30: "Water and Power" (1989, Pat O'Neill). • The films of Joseph Sarno. Sept. 19 and Sept. 24 at 9: "Sin in the Suburbs" (1964). • Sept. 20 at 5: "Moonlighting Wives" (1968).

BAM CINÉMATEK
"Nonesuch Records." Sept. 17 at 4:30, 7, and 9:40: "The

NOW PLAYING

Bird People

An artful experiment that only half works. Josh Charles (from "The Good Wife") plays an American high-tech executive from San Francisco whose commitment to his life lapses into inattention and disgust. Stopping in Paris on his way to a meeting in Dubai, he never leaves his hotel at the airport; instead, he blows off his business partners and then, in a long, acrimonious videoconference session, his wife (Radha Mitchell). At the same time, a depressed student who works in the hotel as a chambermaid (Anaïs Demoustier) gazes at birds and fondly admires their freedom. The director, Pascale Ferran, is adept at conveying the moods of silent dissociation that overcome people in the simultaneously connected and disconnected contemporary world. But the movie turns to airborne whimsy in a way that is technically amazing but bereft of meaning. Written by Ferran and Guillaume Bréaud.—*David Denby* (In limited release.)

Chronicle of a Summer

In 1960, the sociologist Edgar Morin approached Jean Rouch, who had renewed the ethnographic documentary by filming his African subjects' self-dramatizations, about doing the same for Parisians, simply by asking them, on camera, "Are you happy?" The results are a shock. The filmmakers first show their preliminary discussions with Marceline, the young woman who will conduct the interviews. Then they speak with passersby, visit frustrated intellectuals and alienated laborers, African immigrants and Saint-Tropez models. But, when Marceline speaks to the filmmakers about her life as a survivor of Auschwitz, her story begins to take over the film. Rouch and Morin create a cinematic stream of consciousness as she wanders through Paris murmuring anguished recollections into a hidden mike. Five years earlier, in "Night and Fog," Alain Resnais had shown the Holocaust to have been largely forgotten in France. Rouch and Morin expose the inner cost of that collective silence: if the French were neurotically unhappy, it was owing not to their repressed desire but to their repressed history. In French.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; Sept. 20.)

The Color Wheel

In this bracingly original comedy, from 2011, the director Alex Ross Perry gives a harsh, sarcastic twist to the intimate rivalry of siblings. He co-stars as Colin, a diffident aspiring writer, whose older sister, J.R. (Carlen Altman), a proud and caustic aspiring actress, has dropped out of college after ending a relationship with "one of the top broadcast-journalism professors in the entire state." She recruits Colin to join her on a road trip to her ex's house to retrieve her belongings. The siblings' antic humiliations begin at a Christian-themed motel, where they must pretend to be a married couple, and continue through a series of chance encounters, including one with former high-school friends (Kate Lyn Sheil and Anna Bak-Kvapil). Along the way, they pummel each other verbally and unearth several decades of pent-up grudges. Perry directs these uproarious rapid-fire outbursts with exquisite comic timing and incisive comic framing (the black-and-white cinematography is by Sean Price Williams); he and Altman reveal the terrifying vulnerability of two wounded souls who know each other's wounds all too well.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Sept. 22.)

The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Them

High-toned and hollow, a movie without a center. Ned Benson, a first-time feature filmmaker, initially made two pictures about a happy marriage that falls apart after the death of the couple's baby boy—"Him," which presents the point of view of Conor (James McAvoy), and "Her," told from the point of view of Eleanor (Jessica Chastain). (The two movies will be made available on Oct. 10.) What we have now, in "Them," is an uneasy amalgam. It begins in reckless rapture, with young Conor and Eleanor dashing out of a restaurant without paying the bill. It then skips to a few years after the tragedy: Eleanor, who is suicidal, has retreated to her parents' house in Connecticut; Conor molders in the mostly empty Village bar that he has opened with his best friend (Bill Hader). The dissolution of the marriage is never shown. What remains is knowing and allusive, but muffled—the earnestness is stalled by pauses and misgivings and occasionally made handsome with long tracking shots. Chastain's Eleanor has a skull-like stillness animated by signs of recognition that flicker when she sees someone she loves. But Chastain only half-alive is a great actress half-wasted. With Isabelle Huppert, as Eleanor's mother, holding a glass of wine as she makes bitter remarks, and William Hurt, who, as Eleanor's sensitive-shrink father, speaks so slowly that you want to applaud when he finishes a sentence.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/15/14.) (In limited release.)

Fox and His Friends

At the start of this 1975 drama, Franz Biberkopf—Fox, to his friends—loses his job as a carnival-sideshow performer but wins half a million marks in the lottery. Soon thereafter, Fox also wins a new boyfriend: Eugen Thiess (Peter Chatel), a refined heir to a small printing firm, whose comforts are threatened by the company's impending bankruptcy. A gay man who's half a hustler, Fox—played by the film's director, Rainer Werner Fassbinder—has a bluff and naïve workingman's simplicity; he may be a fool, but he's a fool for love, and he's soon parted from his money. Fox makes loans to keep the company afloat and finances Eugen's long-deferred dreams of luxury; and he's welcomed into the Thiess family, where his table manners, his speech, his wardrobe, and his cultural references come under cruel scrutiny. This melodramatic fable of emotional extremes is sharp and precise—nowhere more than in Fassbinder's attention to the price of domestic comforts and industrial necessities. Munich's hothouse demimonde plays like a permanent floating theatre that spotlights class and status divides that, in the wider world, often go unspoken. Here, good taste happens to bad people, and the predatory wiles of business and love alike remain suavely concealed. In German.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Sept. 21.)

Good Men, Good Women

The title of the Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien's modernist melodrama, from 1995, is also that of a film-within-a-film—a historical drama about a group of young Taiwanese Communists who, during the Second World War, travel to mainland China to join the anti-Japanese resistance and who, back home afterward, face brutal persecution for their political beliefs. Its star is the actress Liang Ching (Annie Shizuka Inoh), whose personal life is a mess: in the chic confines of her apartment, pages of her stolen diary come to her by fax and tell the story of her romance with a small-time gangster who was killed in her arms, prompting flashbacks to those days and nights of love. Personal and historical memory intertwines with intimate and ideological passion in Hou's sinuous, meticulously constructed tableaux, which unfold hypnotically, as if conjuring the subjective depths and suppressed agonies that they dramatize. In Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, and Taiwanese.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 20.)

Harakiri

Feudal Japan is at peace, and starving out-of-work samurai beg to perform ritual suicide at the mansions of powerful clans—a request they hope will lead to a charitable pittance or a menial job. When one of them is forced to go through with hara-kiri, his father-in-law, a veteran swordsman (Tatsuya Nakadai), vows to expose the cruelty and the hypocrisy of the warrior code. The film has a steady, hypnotic momentum; the director, Masaki Kobayashi, wrings as much drama out of facial twitches as he does out of sword fights. He's helped immensely by Nakadai's molten performance and Toru Takemitsu's

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Bad Seed" (1956, Mervyn LeRoy). • Sept. 21 at 2 and 6:30: "Spartacus" (1960, Stanley Kubrick). • Sept. 22 at 5:15 and 8: **"Harakiri."** • "Overdue." Sept. 18 at 4:30 and 9:30: "The Cure in Orange" (1987, Tim Pope). • Sept. 18 at 7: "Belly" (1998, Hype Williams). All screenings will be introduced by the critics Nick Pinkerton and Nic Rapold. • "The SOURCE360." Sept. 19 at 10: "Nas: Time Is Illmatic" (2014, One9).

FILM FORUM
In revival. Sept. 17-25 at 12:45, 3, 5:10, 7:30, and 9:45: **"Rome, Open City."**

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
"NYFF Opening Acts." Sept. 19 at 9: "Zodiac" (2007, David Fincher). • Sept. 20 at 2: "Corpo Celeste" (2011, Alice Rohrwacher). • Sept. 20 at 4:15: "Body Snatchers" (1993, Abel Ferrara). • Sept. 20 at 6:15: "All Is Forgiven" (2007, Mia Hansen-Løve). • Sept. 22 at 9: **"The Color Wheel,"** followed by a Q. & A. with the director, Alex Ross Perry.

IFC CENTER
"1939—Hollywood's Golden Year." Sept. 19-21 at 11 A.M.: "When Tomorrow Comes" (1939, John M. Stahl).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"Carte Blanche: Christopher Williams." Sept. 17 at 6:30: "Au Hasard Balthazar" (1966, Robert Bresson). • Sept. 20 at 5: "Le Gai Savoir" (1969, Jean-Luc Godard) and **"Chronicle of a Summer."** • Sept. 21 at 2: "The Human Pyramid" (1961, Jean Rouch) and **"Fox and His Friends."** • Sept. 22 at 5: "Far from Vietnam" (1967, Godard, Agnès Varda, and others). • Sept. 23 at 5: "Ordet" (1955, Carl Theodor Dreyer).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
The films of Hou Hsiao-hsien. Sept. 19 at 7:30: "Millennium Mambo" (2001). • Sept. 20 at 2:30: **"Good Men, Good Women."** • Sept. 21 at 5: "The Boys from Fengkuei" (1983). • Sept. 21 at 7:30: "Taipei Story" (1985, Edward Yang).

MOVIE OF THE WEEK
A video discussion of Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Medea," from 1969, in our digital edition and online.

spare, disquieting music. Released in 1962. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Cinématek; Sept. 22.)

If I Stay
Mia (Chloë Grace Moretz), a promising cellist, fresh from an audition for Juilliard, is in a car wreck on an icy road, together with her father (Joshua Leonard), her mother (Mireille Enos), and her brother (Jakob Davies). As Mia teeters on the brink of death, her spirit (which remains nicely dressed) watches events at the hospital and reflects on the times preceding the crash—in particular, on the love that bloomed between her and a brooding rocker named Adam (Jamie Blackley). R. J. Cutler's film, adapted by Shauna Cross from the young-adult novel by Gayle Forman, is decorous to behold and unerringly doomy in tone, as its target audience demands. It's also in no hurry whatever; the title refers to Mia's fraught decision—should she cling to existence or just give up?—and, well before the end, even loyal viewers will be begging her to hurry up and choose. With Stacy Keach, as her grandfather.—*Anthony Lane* (9/8/14) (In wide release.)

Last Days in Vietnam
The director Rory Kennedy's masterpiece of the compilation-documentary form reconstructs, with abundant historical footage and recent interviews, the tragic final days of the American presence in Vietnam. It focusses on the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, Graham Martin, who, unwilling to admit that the game is over, refuses to begin an evacuation (he wouldn't even countenance the word); his decision strands hundreds of South Vietnamese citizens who may have otherwise got away. Yet a variety of American military personnel, defying orders, conspire to help the most vulnerable South Vietnamese escape. Who goes? Who has to stay? As a portrait of America in a moment of both idealism and betrayal, the movie is heartbreaking as well as inspiring. Among the many participants whom Kennedy interviews are Henry Kissinger, the Army colonel Stuart Herrington, and the C.I.A. analyst Frank Snepp. Written by Mark Bailey and Kevin McAlester.—*D.D.* (In limited release.)

The Last of Robin Hood
Not, sadly, the tale of an old man in faded green, shuffling through Sherwood Forest with a wilted feather in his cap, but the unsavory final chapter in the life of Errol Flynn. By the late nineteen-fifties, his capering days are gone; he lives in California, with a swimming pool and a sea of vodka, and the best he can manage is a few airy sword thrusts on a diving board. Kevin Kline inhabits the role with a courteous and melancholy grace. (It makes a shabby companion piece to the sprightly Douglas Fairbanks whom Kline played in "Chaplin.") The story concerns the illicit—and illegal—affair between Flynn and Beverly Aadland (Dakota Fanning), who was fifteen when they met. Fanning looks frozen throughout, and you can see the dilemma—if she made her character at all provocative, it might lend a dangerous leeway to Flynn's offense. More engaging are the moves and motives of Florence (Susan Sarandon), Beverly's mother, whose ambition knew no bounds; Sarandon's timing, as she charts this rising recklessness, has never been more precise. But the movie around her, written and directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, looks lowly and limp, and we seldom feel just how much is at stake. The hero's demise, at fifty, comes as a welcome release.—*A.L.* (9/8/14) (In limited release.)

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 twiddles 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.)

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.)

Rome, Open City
Handheld cameras tremble with the urgency of open wounds and violent emotion in Roberto Rossellini's 1945 drama of the Italian resistance to the capital's occupation by Nazi Germany. It's a tale of two women: Pina (Anna Magnani), a widowed mother who is pregnant with the child of a resistance fighter whom she is about to marry, and Marina (Maria Michi), a night-club performer in love with another leading resister and longtime anti-Fascist. Yielding to spur-of-the-moment impulses, one sacrifices for the resistance, the other sacrifices the resistance. Magnani's—and Pina's—natural and earthy theatricality conveys an art of living, which is also the stuff of Rossellini's art. Pina's young son

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and a patriotic priest are involved in the tense, meticulous plotting of clandestine warfare, which unfolds against unstinting depictions of the German occupiers' cruel psychological games and depraved physical exactions. Rossellini's tense, bloody, death-haunted film conjures an authenticity that's based less on its quasi-documentary style than on a vision that brings ideas to life. The drama reveals a deep grid of underlying connections: the unity of Communists and nationalists against the German occupation and their Italian Fascist allies, and the popular legitimacy of the resistance. It offers a template for a postwar renewal of Italy, as well as of Italian cinema.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; Sept. 17-25.)

The Skeleton Twins
This melodrama of family troubles, directed by Craig Johnson, from a script that he co-wrote with Mark Heyman, is a formidable display of grimness by two primarily comic actors, Kristen Wiig and Bill Hader, in the roles of long-estranged fraternal twins, Maggie and Milo Dean. Milo, a failed actor in Los Angeles, survives a suicide attempt, and the official call to inform Maggie of this event interrupts her own effort at self-extinction. After a hospital-room reunion, she invites him to stay with her at the house that she shares with her husband, Lance (Luke Wilson), in their home town in New Hampshire. There, the past emerges. Milo, who is gay, had a calamitous high-school affair with his English teacher, Rich (Ty Burrell), and seeks him out again; Maggie's affair with her scuba instructor (Boyd Holbrook) unearths her long-standing marital misery; their father's suicide still weighs heavily on them; and a modicum of healing and progress depends on recalling the good along with the bad. Like many of the best comedians, Hader and Wiig have a real flair for drama, but the rote plotting and the airtight story give them no room to perform. The direction has no style, and the script has no perspective; the result is drama by numbers.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Starred Up
In this unusually cohesive and exciting prison drama, a father and son's mix of hatred and love are woven through the violent rituals of penitentiary life and the corrupt relations of inmates, guards, and administrators. As the nineteen-year-old Eric Love, the great young Anglo-Irish actor Jack O'Connell throws his shirtless tattooed body around with animal ferocity, and Ben Mendelsohn, as his father, Neville, has a sociopath's lunging, incoherent aggressiveness. The movie was directed by David Mackenzie, working with a script by Jonathan Asser, a poet who became a therapist and spent years talking to violent British prisoners. The two men took over an old prison in Belfast and shot the movie in sequence, with the editing occurring only a day behind the shoot. Knowing precisely where they were in the story, the actors were secure enough to take off from the script without losing their way. Many scenes would play even better if we could understand more of the profane working-class slang and prison abuse, which, to American ears, is often indecipherable. A few subtitles would have helped.—*D.D.* (9/15/14) (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 japery 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.)

Wetlands
The director David Wnendt's adaptation of the German writer Charlotte Roche's novel, about a teen-age girl with a taste for bodily fluids and an interest in sexual experimentation, stars Carla Juri as Helen Memel, whose efforts soon land her in the hospital. She cuts herself while shaving her anus; the wound, compounded by her hemorrhoids, requires surgery; while recuperating, she falls in love with her male nurse, Robin (Christoph Letkowski). The fizzy and playful movie is filled with calculatedly provocative grossness, such as a feast of semen-spattered pizza, fun with the seats and the stuff of public toilets, and streams of blood and feces. Yet, for all its gooey physicality, the film is peculiarly sexless; the effluvia of intimacy takes the place of its psychic jolts, and Helen's faux liberation is just an adolescent version of mud pies. Her fearless self-mutilations come off as mere plot points in an absurdly simplistic family drama; the movie's apparent audacity isn't even skin-deep. In German.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

New York City Ballet
For its opening gala, the company has commissioned works from three young choreographers. (Alas, all are men. Where are the women?) Justin Peck and Liam Scarlett are already well established, as choreographers-in-residence with N.Y.C.B. and the Royal Ballet, respectively. Scarlett, a Briton, has two ballets opening in New York this fall alone. Troy Schumacher, a member of the City Ballet corps, is a fresh voice; his first work for the company is a sextet set to a rhythmic chamber piece by the young Brooklyn composer Judd Greenstein. As in recent seasons, the new ballets—and an older one, "Morgen," by Peter Martins—will be costumed by fashion designers, a gambit that has yielded mixed results so far. On Oct. 2, the company reveals a new work by Alexei Ratmansky, set to the solo-piano version of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." The season's other banner events include the return of Balanchine's beautiful "Chaconne," from 1976, and a farewell, as Wendy Whelan leaves the company after a career spanning nearly thirty years. • Sept. 23 at 7: Gala. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Oct. 19.)

Marissa Perel
"More Than Just a Piece of Sky," which kicks off the Queer New York International Arts Festival, is a kind of fantasia on themes from "Yentl the Yeshiva Boy"—both the Isaac Bashevis Singer story about a girl who dresses as a boy to go to yeshiva and the 1983 Barbra Streisand film musical, based on Singer's tale. Through text, video, song, and dance, Perel shows how desire can strain against social conventions, while artifacts from the nineteen-eighties allow for a commentary on the possibilities of cultural change. (The Chocolate Factory, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. Sept. 17-20 at 8.)

New Chamber Ballet
Miro Magloire, the artistic director of this small company, cares as much about music as he does about dance. Trained as a composer, in Germany, Magloire has a taste for tricky twentieth-century works, especially those of Stockhausen. (His musicians, particularly the pianist Melody Fader, are a pleasure.) The music is not always easy to dance to, but his dancers are game. This program includes a duet set to a work for violin and piano by the twentieth-century Argentinean composer Mauricio Kagel—a great musical prankster. (City Center Studios, 131 W. 55th St. 212-868-4444. Sept. 19-20 at 8.)

Kyle Abraham/ Abraham.In.Motion
Last year, when Abraham—a talented, Pittsburgh-born choreographer with a style both streetwise and lyrical—won a MacArthur Fellowship, it seemed to confirm his status as the rising contemporary choreographer most favored by prestigious organizations. For the past two years, he has been a resident commissioned artist at New York Live Arts, and now his company presents the fruits of his labor in two programs over two weeks. The first is "Watershed," a big work about big themes: the Emancipation Proclamation, the civil-rights struggles of the sixties, apartheid in South Africa, and freedom past and present. Will he deliver? (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 23 at 7:30. Through Oct. 4.)

Cia. Unión Tanguera / "Nuit Blanche"
Based in Lyons and Buenos Aires, this company specializes in theatricalized tango. The show it brings for its New York début depicts one evening in a night club. Music by a live quartet alternates with historical recordings, and the floor-bound subtleties of classic tango duets mingle with acrobatic lifts, partner-switching ensemble numbers, and bits of Bauschian theatre that include heated relations between men and women amid several beanbag chairs. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Sept. 23 at 7:30. Through Oct. 5.)

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ART

MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
"Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age." Opens Sept. 22.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"A Collection of Ideas." Through Jan. 11.

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

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

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
"Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe." Through Feb. 15.

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

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Siah Armajani

The Iranian sculptor is best known for public works in outdoor spaces that riff on the vernacular architecture of America's heartland, notably bridges. Now in his seventies, Armajani shifts to a subject that is both public and eternally private: a series of tombs, dedicated (mostly) to writers. The exhibition of drawings, models, and freestanding sculptures suffers from overcrowding, but each piece is deeply felt and formally deft, from a tabletop array for John Berryman, which fulfills the poet's unrealized dream of being interred beneath a busy street in Minneapolis, where Armajani has lived since 1960, to a monument for Walt Whitman, graced by a black canvas tent. In the most powerful piece, subtitled "The Last Tomb," the artist memorializes his own life bridging two cultures. The Constructivist-looking drawing, more than eighteen feet long, maps out his adopted home town by marrying architectonic lines and the curving ornament of Farsi calligraphy. Whitman wrote of "an end that lightly and joyfully meets its translation"—Armajani achieves as much here. Through Oct. 18. (Gray, 508 W. 26th St. 212-399-2636.)

John Divola

The eight large photographs from 1990 that make up the bulk of this smart show are pictures of hastily painted, black-on-black abstractions that served as backdrops for brief performances, in which Divola tossed handfuls of flour and recorded the atmospheric results. Fog rolls in, clouds drift by, smoke erupts, a nebula explodes. Conjuring weather and cosmic events from the simplest materials, the California artist combines action, painting, and photography in surprisingly seductive ways. Through Oct. 25. (Wallspace, 619 W. 27th St. 212-594-9478.)

Paul Graham

In his most unabashedly romantic exhibition so far, the British-born, New York-based photographer fills the gallery with pictures of rainbows arcing across bucolic landscapes. Any gold at the end of these rainbows probably ended up in the urban pawnshops that appear in several gritty streetscapes, also on view. But Graham finds treasure elsewhere: scattered throughout the show are pictures of his girlfriend asleep in several different beds. Formally rigorous, incredibly tender, and simply beautiful, these works avoid pitfalls of sentimentality, and instead put the focus on love. Through Oct. 4. (Pace, 510 W. 25th St. 212-255-4044.)

Justine Kurland

A photographer who started out as a fantasist—staging scenes of young girls escaping together into idyllic landscapes—has turned into one of our most talented realists. Kurland remains a storyteller, and her new work combines engaged photojournalism with a sure feel for its narrative possibilities. Her latest pictures, of wrecked cars, auto-repair shops, and mechanics, reflect her recent years on the American road, usually in the company of her son, who shows up here as the youngest member in a cast of rough-and-ready guys. Kurland's take on masculinity is an ideal balance of appreciation and critique. With no women in sight, the automobile becomes the focus of all erotic attention. Through Oct. 11. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Ernest Cole: Photographer

One of South Africa's first black photojournalists, Cole risked imprisonment with a hidden camera to expose the everyday humiliations of life under apartheid. His career was brief; all the pictures in this retrospective were taken in the nineteen-sixties, when Cole was in his twenties. Many of them didn't appear in print until after he fled South Africa, in 1966, following an arrest. (He was homeless when he died, in New York, of cancer, in 1990.) Although his 1967 book, "House of Bondage," was immediately banned in his homeland, smuggled copies made Cole a hero there, and no wonder. His work is a painfully intimate view of a system that dictated where and how blacks could live, work, learn, sit, stand, and gather. One of the show's most extensive series documents the hiring and housing of miners, including Cole's most famous image, of a group of naked men lined up facing a wall in a doctor's office, their arms raised as if in total surrender. Little is left to the imagination here; whether he's in the townships, on the streets of Johannesburg, or on an overcrowded, blacks-only train platform, Cole is a fearless and relentless witness. Through Dec. 6. (Grey Art Gallery, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

If you missed the smashing survey of the Korean video-art pioneer Nam June Paik at the Smithsonian, in 2013, a consolation prize has arrived at the Asia Society: the less trenchant but still fascinating "Becoming Robot."

NAM JUNE PAIK, "TRANSISTOR TELEVISION" (2005)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

CONCERTS IN TOWN

Metropolitan Opera

After much shouting and wringing of hands, the world's busiest opera house has put aside its labor troubles, for now, and the season will begin as scheduled. Opening night belongs to a new production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro"** by Richard Eyre; having transferred "Carmen" to the Spanish Civil War years of the nineteen-thirties, he will now bring a similar treatment to Mozart and Da Ponte's eighteenth-century comedy of manners, with Jean Renoir's film "The Rules of the Game" as an added influence. Ildar Abdrazakov, last season's superb Prince Igor, takes the title role, with Amanda Majeski (in her Met début) as the Countess, Marlis Petersen as Susanna, Isabel Leonard as Cherubino, and Peter Mattei as the Count; James Levine, a formidable Mozart interpreter over the years, conducts. (Sept. 22 at 6:15.) • On the heels of the new comes the tried and true: Franco Zeffirelli's production of **"La Bohème,"** a durably crowd-pleasing take on Puccini's sentimental classic. The young American tenor Bryan Hymel, a breakout star in the Met's most recent revival of "Les Troyens," takes the role of Rodolfo, joined by Ekaterina Scherbachenko, Myrtò Papatanasiu, and Quinn Kelsey in the other principal roles; Riccardo Frizza. (Sept. 23 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

New York Philharmonic

In the second and final week of its season-opening "Art of the Score" series, Alan Gilbert hands the baton to Timothy Brock, who has made his reputation by writing and conducting scores for classic silent films. "Modern Times: The Tramp at 100" is a celebration of Charlie Chaplin's immortal screen persona; in addition to a live accompaniment of a screening of the 1936 movie "Modern Times" (featuring Brock's reconstruction of the score that Chaplin wrote with the assistance of the composer Alfred Newman), the program will open with a showing of "Kid Auto Races at Venice," the 1914 silent short that introduced Chaplin's Little Tramp, for which Brock has written a new score. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Sept. 19-20 at 8.)

Opening Night at the 92nd Street Y: Christian Tetzlaff

In the past decade, Tetzlaff, a violinist of rare insight and expressive force, has progressed from virtuoso firebrand to mature artist. He kicks off the Y's season in an auspicious manner, performing in one concert (with an extended intermission) all six of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, in which he should easily hold the stage. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Sept. 18 at 7.)

Miller Theatre Opening Night: "Heart and Breath"

Eighth Blackbird—once an upstart, now an avant-garde institution—has always had a freewheeling performance style. Now the sextet steps fully into the realm of music theatre with the New York première of Amy Beth Kirsten's "Colombine's Paradise Theatre," a postmodernist treatment of commedia dell'arte in which the musicians, with their parts memorized, act and perform in costume. Also on the program are works by Bon Iver and Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parry, along with arrangements of musical gems from the seventeenth century by Monteverdi and Gesualdo. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Sept. 18 at 8.)

"Music by the Glass"

Talented classical musicians who aren't lucky enough to be superstars are adapting to a situation in which classical chamber concerts are merging with "life style" events. The outstanding young pianists Ran Dank and Soyeon Kate Lee, husband and wife, have founded this concert series, which pairs fine performances with wine tastings of equal distinction. The latest, at the Louis K. Meisel gallery, is "Gypsy Nights," an evening with Dank and the string trio of Emilie-Anne Gendron, Vicki Powell, and Julia Bruskin. (141 Prince St. musicbytheglass.com. Sept. 18 at 8.)

Bargemusic

The barge's ambitious "Here and Now" series of contemporary concerts opens a new chapter this week, with "Tokyo to New York," a concert by the intrepid clarinettist Thomas Piercy and the pianist Noritaka Ito that consists entirely of world premières—short works by noted composers from both cities, a list that includes the illustrious Toshio Hosokawa and Ned Rorem, as well as Gene Pritsker, Peri Mauer, Masatora Goya, and Senri Oe, among others. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. Sept. 19 at 8. For tickets and full schedule, see bargemusic.org.)

Tenet: "The Motets of J. S. Bach"

Eight expert singers from the ensemble, young pacesetters in New York's early-music scene, will be backed by the instrumentalists of the Sebastians in a concert devoted to several of Bach's most demanding pieces for chorus, including "Komm, Jesu, Komm" and "Singet den Herrn ein Neues Lied." (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 3 W. 65th St. tenetnyc.com. Sept. 20 at 7.)

New Juilliard Ensemble

Joel Sachs's ensemble, which for two decades has been a window onto the worldwide new-music scene, begins its season with a concert that features the New York première of Harrison Birtwistle's "Cantus Iambeus," in honor of the great British composer's eightieth birthday. Also on the program are new and recent pieces by Alessandro Annunziata, Bernd Franke, and Shulamit Ran ("Fault Line"). (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School. Sept. 20 at 8. Tickets are available at the Juilliard box office.)

American Classical Orchestra

Thomas Crawford's enduring period-instrument ensemble begins its thirtieth season in fine style, with music by Mendelssohn (the Violin Concerto, with Krista Bennion Feeney), Beethoven, and Mozart (the Symphony No. 35, "Haffner"). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Sept. 23 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

South Mountain Concerts

The distinguished longtime series, which bridges the gap between the summer season and the arrival of fall, welcomes another blue-chip ensemble—the Juilliard String Quartet—to its concert hall. At the center of its program is the String Quartet No. 2 ("Vistas"), by the lauded Chicago modernist Shulamit Ran, bookended by some happy Haydn (the Quartet in G Major, Op. 33, No. 5) and desperate Schubert (the Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, "Death and the Maiden"). (Pittsfield, Mass. 413-442-2106. Sept. 21 at 3.)

Caramoor: The Knights

The dynamic Brooklyn chamber orchestra (and the string quartet at its core, Brooklyn Rider) takes over the elegant Westchester festival for an end-of-season weekend blowout. After concerts with the extra-classical stars Béla Fleck and Joshua Redman, Gil Shaham joins the Knights in the Venetian Theatre for an afternoon of music by Prokofiev (the "Overture on Hebrew Themes" and the Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor) and Dvořák (including the Symphony No. 7 in D Minor). (Katonah, N.Y. caramoor.org. Sept. 21 at 4.)

CULTURE DESK

View a slide show of paintings by Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis.

GOINGS ON, ONLINE

See our Classical section for more information about Inon Barnatan, one of the brightest lights in SubCulture's ongoing PianoFest, who will perform solo works by Bach, Barber, and Matthias Pintscher on Sept. 23.

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

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

Nonesuch Records at BAM
The venerable label is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary at the Brooklyn Academy of Music this month with a provocative set of programs. A few highlights follow. Sept. 18: The **Carolina Chocolate Drops'** début on Nonesuch was "Genuine Negro Jig," from 2010, a vital take on black contributions to old-time string-band music. The vocalist, fiddler, and banjoist Rhiannon Giddens leads the group. Sept. 19: Three of the most thoughtful and genre-stretching singer-songwriters of the day share the stage. **Devendra Banhart**, born in Houston and raised in Venezuela, last year released his eighth studio album, "Mala," his first on Nonesuch. **Stephin Merritt,** best known as the front man for the Magnetic Fields, brings his resonant bass-baritone and acerbic songwriting skills to the party. And the avant-folkster Sam Beam, who records under the name **Iron and Wine,** and who released "Ghost on Ghost" on Nonesuch last year, completes the bill. Sept. 20: The **Kronos Quartet** continues to expand the boundaries of the classical string chamber group, teaming up with **Natalie Merchant, Rhiannon Giddens,** Vermont's **Sam Amidon,** and London's **Olivia Chaney** for a program that puts a new spin on old folk songs. Sept. 23: The guitarist Jeff Tweedy steps away from his band Wilco for a minute to perform songs from "Sukierae," by the group **Tweedy,** which includes his son Spencer on drums. He will also play a solo acoustic set. (bam.org. Through Sept. 28.)

Panda Bear
Noah Lennox, a founding member of the psychedelic-rock act Animal Collective, who records and performs under this name, is a long-established solo artist—his eponymous début album came out in 1998, roughly two years before Animal Collective released its first LP, "Spirit They're Gone, Spirit They've Vanished." Along with traditional rock instruments, the singer-songwriter uses sampling, looping, and enormous reverb to create epic, experimental pop songs. The Baltimore native, who now lives in Lisbon, Portugal, is previewing songs from his upcoming

"Music for Touching," released this month, tends toward high-production-value pop.

ACCEPT COOKIES

How to bake a song.

ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO, after a stint in Northampton, Massachusetts, Ben Sterling moved back home, to New York. He had been in a group called Mobius Band, which had formed at Wesleyan and made a handful of albums. The music, which used both live instruments and sampling, was plangent and atmospheric, with unobtrusive vocals that hinted at songs without necessarily committing to the idea of songs. Frustrated with the consensus struggles of a band in general, and wanting to work with a female vocalist specifically, Sterling quit and started working on a project called Cookies. He paid the rent by scoring commercials (for companies like Pepsi and Uniqlo) and promo films for institutions like the Whitney, while writing songs at night. Though Sterling is a fluent electronic musician and knows what's happening on the frontiers of production, his own tastes push him repeatedly in the direction of the classic pop song. "Music for Touching," released this month, is the first full-length Cookies album, and it tends toward high production value, on the order of Madonna or the Gap Band: clever lyrics, a general lack of moping, and bright, pleasant sounds. There is no preoccupation with challenge or disruption. "Hell, I love Paul Simon," Sterling said recently. "Three minutes and thirty seconds. There's just something about a song in three-thirty."

Most of "Music for Touching" was performed and recorded by Sterling alone, with appearances by friends; his main vocal counterpoint is Melissa Metrick. Sterling's soft and clear voice, combined with Metrick's glassy alto, sounds like wind through trees, equally soothing and ominous. In "Crybaby (A)," Sterling's track rides an unfashionably perky bass line, octaves popped with the thumb rather than plucked. He sings to a departed lover, sounding at peace, "You moved to California and changed your name, now when I call you it just rings and rings." But, when Metrick joins him in the chorus, the melody rises and the mood becomes dreamy and a little ambiguous.

Sterling's latest live lineup, with the drummer Cinque Kemp, the bassist Aakaash Israni, and the singer Ashley Giorgi, comes close to realizing his vision of a pop music that isn't necessarily hip but is built to last—for at least three and a half minutes. Cookies plays at Baby's All Right on Sept. 16.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN MALTA

Special Advertising Section

THE ONTARIO INSIDER

OntarioTravel.net/insider
#DiscoverON

Clockwise from top: Toronto's CN Tower glows in the skyline; theatre tours bring fans backstage for rare peeks at the makings of masterpieces, including the contents of costume and wardrobe departments; flavor discoveries abound in Ontario's cheese regions.

IMAGES COURTESY OF ONTARIO TOURISM

The rewards of experiencing Ontario as an insider are especially rich: Visitors who go beyond the guidebook in Canada's most populous province tap into a deep well of diversity to find local flavors and culture that make for a singularly original escape. Home to the country's largest urban center, Toronto, as well as Ottawa, the Canadian capital, Ontario rewards the adventurous traveler with local gems to rival some of the world's best-known attractions.

Follow these tips to explore Ontario as a proud local would: Once-a-season highlights, in-the-know happenings, and off-the-beaten-path destinations that pair a sense of discovery with a sense of accomplishment, for having sought out the true and unique tastes of a world-class destination.

CULINARY ADVENTURES IN ONTARIO
WORLD-RENOWNED WINE REGIONS

Established and emerging wine regions make Ontario an oenophile's dream. With 25 local wineries within 20 minutes of Niagara Falls—and a full 50 wineries in **the Niagara wine region** along Lake Ontario's shores—visitors can immerse themselves in winemaking and its culture, including stays at romantic inns nestled among the vines. TripAdvisor recently toasted the Niagara region, citing it as Canada's top-choice food and wine destination. And with **Prince Edward County**, between Toronto and Ottawa, ripening as well, the opportunities for tours, tastings, and inspired pairings are becoming as varied as the wine lists in the region's best restaurants.

The trail of culinary discovery continues with a full calendar of **Fall and Harvest Festivals** sending the aroma of expertly prepared local specialties wafting through the crisp autumn air (see details at right). And look to the charming roadside markets, pick-your-own berry and pumpkin farms, and local inns of York, Durham, and the Hills of Headwaters to get out amidst the nature—and the nurturing instincts—of Ontario's refreshing countryside.

The farm-to-table, locavore ethos celebrated at festivals and farms shows on restaurant menus as well. Highlights of an inspired dining scene, as a Toronto local might tell you, include locally sourced cooking at **Richmond Station** in the Financial District and five-course meals served communally at **Café Belong**. In Kingston, try the finely crafted comfort food at **Bistro Le Chien Noir**. From gastropub fare in Thunder Bay to bacon butter tarts in Stratford and Mennonite 'broasted' chicken in Millbank, every corner of the province has cultivated culinary expertise to delight locals and well-informed visitors.

FALL & HARVEST FESTIVALS

Niagara Wine Festival
September 18 - 28
niagarawinefestival.com

Beau's Oktoberfest in Vankleek Hill
October 3 - 4 • beaus.ca/Oktoberfest

Bala Cranberry Festival
October 17 - 19
balacranberryfestival.on.ca

Taste Trail, Prince Edward County
Year-round • tastetrail.ca

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THEATRE TOURS

The Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto
Most tours on Sundays
coc.ca
The opera house reveals hidden treasures during a backstage tour.

The Shaw Festival, Niagara-On-The-Lake
April through October
shawfest.com
Secrets of the stage, unveiled on a tour of the Festival Theatre.

The Stratford Festival, Stratford
April through October
stratfordfestival.ca
Stand in footlights that have shone on legends like Maggie Smith and Christopher Plummer.

The Grand Theatre, London
By appointment
grandtheatre.com
A captivating tour of this 113-year-old grande dame.

Theatre season is well underway in Ontario, and fans longing for a more in-depth look behind the curtain can sign up for guided tours that take them to the heart of the working stage. Go inside rehearsal spaces, costume and prop warehouses, and beneath the boards for an insider's view.

For those whose taste in art runs to the collectible, art galleries and co-ops across the province offer a multitude of take-home finds. The **Alton Mill Arts Centre** in the Hills of Headwaters, carved out of an 1881 stone mill, is now home to more than 25 artist spaces, a museum, a café, and a cluster of galleries. Between Toronto and Ottawa, the **Prince Edward County Arts Trail** invites visitors along a well-marked route of artist-in-residence studios, where working craftspeople share the fruits of their labors.

Style seekers in Toronto have long flocked to the western branch of **Queen Street West** for trendy baubles and other fetching one-of-a-kind discoveries. Mint-condition silk gowns from the 1920s and party dresses from the 1950s and 1960s draw window-shoppers to stores like **Magwood** and **Cabaret**. **REmix** beguiles buyers with an expertly curated selection of designer bags and jewelry sold on consignment.

Larger treasures—antique hardware, furniture, and fixtures—have turned sprawling **indoor and outdoor markets** throughout Ontario into prized destinations for both dealers and collectors. East of Toronto, along the Lake Ontario waterfront, multiple shops and warehouse markets in **Cobourg** have made the town a starred destination for buyers. In southern Ontario, the hamlets of **Aberfoyle** and **Waterford** are now well known for the quality and variety of their inventories.

Make Ontario's unique mix of attractions part of your next vacation adventure. Visit **OntarioTravel.net/insider** for special offers and to download Ontario's *The Local Insider* magazine.

ART ON THE EDGE
ONTARIO'S CREATIVE HOTSPOTS

BESPOKE MASTERPIECES
HAND CRAFTED GEMS

BACKSTAGE REVEAL
A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

IMAGES COURTESY OF ONTARIO TOURISM

OTTAWA MAKING ITS MARK

The capital city of Ottawa is a microcosm of the Canadian experience, a welcoming and accessible introduction to the cultural history and ethnic diversity of the country. Walking the city—or better yet, biking it, for a striking, on-the-move perspective—treats the eye to Gothic Revival spires on Parliament Hill, late-Victorian row houses on residential streets, and a tapestry of parks, cafés, museums, and restaurants that create a vibrant cityscape.

Bikers and walkers alike will enjoy following the contours of the **Rideau Canal** as it forms a thin ribbon through the city's heart. Detours include the Changing of the Guard on the expansive public grounds of **Parliament Hill** and the engaging exhibits at the **Canadian Museum of History**.

Close to Parliament Hill, the **ByWard Market District** is almost a city unto itself. Founded in 1826 by Lt. Col. John By, ByWard is one of Canada's oldest and largest public markets, encompassing four square blocks of diverse shops, restaurants, bars, music venues, galleries, and performance spaces hosting themed festivals and special events all year long.

A culinary journey awaits **ByWard Market** visitors who partake in one of the tasting walks organized by **C'est Bon Cooking Tours**. Chefs, producers, and food artisans are all on the gastronomic agenda offering delicious and fascinating flavors that reveal aspects of the market's long history. The innovative offerings of Canada's next generation of epicurean masters are also within reach at **Le Cordon Bleu Ottawa Culinary Arts Institute**—the only Cordon Bleu campus in Canada, and a great spot for lunch or dinner.

At the **National Gallery of Canada**, in-the-know art aficionados seek out the landscapes of the Group of Seven, also known as the painters of the Algonquin School. Before the group's emergence in the 1920s, northern Canada's wilderness was considered by the art establishment as too untamed to be worthy of canvas. The reverence these masters inspire today is a testament to the outsider artist spirit—and the enduring rewards for straying from the beaten path. But not too far: Ottawa is only a short one-and-a-half-hour flight from New York City.

For information on making Ottawa part of your vacation plans, or to book hotels and packages, visit **ottawatourism.ca**.

IMAGES COURTESY OF OTTAWA TOURISM

album, tentatively titled "Panda Bear Meets the Grim Reaper." (Sept. 22: Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. Sept. 23: Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl. livenation.com.)

The Replacements
This group formed in Minneapolis in 1979, and during the next six years made several indelible records, including one masterpiece, "Let It Be," a rebellious, bighearted album marked by world-weary rage, braggadocio, and Midwestern angst. The band's sound was dominated by the pairing of the singer Paul Westerberg's ragged, yearning voice with the guitarist Bob Stinson's shambolic, often brilliantly unpredictable solos. While the Replacements drew inspiration from punk rock, Westerberg's gift for crafting aching confessionals and defiant rock songs put them on the edge of mainstream success. In 1986, the band fired Stinson, and in his absence the music became more sterile and commercial. But during their heyday, when their live performances were on (and they could be disastrously off, owing to inebriation), the Replacements had few peers. This re-formed version, which draws mostly on the group's back catalogue, with the addition of an occasional cover, includes Westerberg and his fellow original member Tommy Stinson, the brother of Bob, who died in 1995. Opening will be the **Hold Steady** and **Deer Tick,** two of the Replacements' numerous musical progeny. (Forest Hills Tennis Stadium, West Side Tennis Club, 1 Tennis Pl., Forest Hills, Queens. foresthillsstadium.com. Sept. 19.)

Sam Smith
Soul-inflected British singers with acrobatic vocals and tasteful material seem to come along at a steady clip these days. The latest one is Smith, who rose to prominence as a contributing vocalist on songs by Disclosure and Naughty Boy and then broke out as a solo artist with the album "In the Lonely Hour." Whether his music is stripped down and acoustic or backed by the top production that money can buy, Smith generally puts his vocals up front, which not only separates him from many other contemporary pop stars but gives listeners a chance to marvel at his impressive range. (Sept. 18: United Palace, 4140 Broadway, at 175th St. Sept. 19: Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. samsmithworld.com.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Steve Coleman
Operating outside the jazz mainstream, the saxophonist and composer Coleman is a revered figure, with extensive philosophical and mathematical interests. It's fitting, then, that this visionary has a special two-week slot at the Stone, a den of musical experimentation run by the similarly inclined John Zorn. For decades, Coleman has been an inspiration to venturesome players, and he loads his musical palette with rhythmically charged new jazz, funk, and genres from across the globe, as he relentlessly redraws boundaries and mixes cultural influences. The first week features his Five Elements band, an evolving ensemble that Coleman has led since the eighties. The second week finds him and the Five Elements joined by members of the Talea Ensemble, Brazilian and Cuban percussionists, and others. (Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. Sept. 16-28.)

Bill Frisell
American music is a wellspring of inspiration for the influential guitarist. He's here with the Big Sur Quintet, featuring the violinist **Jenny Scheinman,** the violist **Eyvind Kang,** the drummer **Rudy Royston,** and the cellist **Hank Roberts,** and together they'll delve into the songs of Woody Guthrie, our nation's preëminent troubadour. Expect radical reinvention—for Frisell, the sanctity of roots music is never sacrosanct. (Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Sept. 19-20.)

Jeff Goldblum
The actor—tall, funny, and known to run from dinosaurs—also plays the piano and sings. He started playing as a teen-ager, in his home town, Pittsburgh, and for the past two decades he's held down an almost weekly gig at a Los Angeles club. He's here with his band, the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra (an informal jazz combo named for a friend from his youth), taking on standards, originals, and other fare, such as "Theme from 'Jurassic Park'" with his own cheeky lyrics appended. (Café Carlyle, Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Sept. 16-20.)

Chucho Valdés, Pedrito Martinez & Wynton Marsalis
Valdés, a first-rank piano virtuoso and an imaginative, style-blurring composer and arranger, is an icon of contemporary Cuban musical culture. He opens the Jazz at Lincoln Center fall season with the world première of a collaborative commission. Joining him are the Cuban expatriate percussionist and singer Martinez and the trumpeter Marsalis, who will be leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Sept. 18-20.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

Brooklyn Book Festival
This annual festival features authors from near and far and an assortment of panels and presentations covering a variety of genres. There are events around the borough starting on Sept. 15, leading up to a daylong gathering on Sept. 21, on and around the plaza at Brooklyn's Borough Hall, featuring Paul Auster, A. M. Homes, James McBride, Salman Rushdie, and Naomi Klein. In all, more than two hundred writers and illustrators are expected. Highlights include a conversation between Roz Chast and *The New Yorker's* cartoon editor, Robert Mankoff; the WNYC host Leonard Lopate in discussion with the novelists Mary Gordon and Emma Straub; Jonathan Lethem sitting down with Jules Feiffer; and readings by Tina Chang (the Brooklyn Poet Laureate), Rita Dove (a former U.S. Poet Laureate), Marie Howe (the New York State Poet Laureate), and others. (brooklynbookfestival.org. Through Sept. 22.)

"Shinnyo Lantern Floating for Peace"
Shinnyo-en, an International Buddhist community, is providing paper lanterns that people are encouraged to inscribe with messages of peace and then set afloat on the Paul Milstein Reflecting Pool, at Lincoln Center's Hearst Plaza (otherwise known as the water surrounding Henry Moore's "Reclining Figure"). The event brings together community, civic, and interfaith leaders, and there will be performances of works by the choreographers Christopher Wheeldon (featuring the New York City Ballet dancers Wendy Whelan and Craig Hall) and Abdur-Rahim Jackson. The jazz trumpeter Alphonso Horne, Shinnyo Taiko drummers, and others will also be on hand. (bealightforpeace.org. Sept. 21, starting at 1.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The second day of the season at **Christie's** (Sept. 17) is devoted to Indian and Southeast Asian modern art, led by a small group of paintings from the trove of the New York dealers Shumita and Arani Bose. One of the main attractions here is an expressionist oil by Francis Newton Souza, "The Butcher" (1962), a grisly depiction of a cleaver-wielding shopkeeper, painted on black satin. Then, after an auction of cloisonné from China (Sept. 18), comes a two-day offering of Chinese furniture and ceramics (Sept. 18-19), including a handsome eighteenth-century vase carved from canary-yellow jade. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • As part of a controlled sell-off of family treasures, the Duke of Northumberland is letting go of a fifteenth-century Nepalese sculpture of the Hindu demigoddess Indra, part of an auction of Buddhist and devotional works at **Sotheby's** on Sept. 17. (The family seat, Alnwick Castle, is familiar to fans of the "Harry Potter" movies: its exterior was used as Hogwarts.) This sale is followed by a daylong offering of Chinese pieces on Sept. 18, led by a select group of paintings and calligraphic works. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • The first sale of the season at **Swann** is devoted to prints and drawings (Sept. 23-24), featuring works by such artists as Whistler, Pissarro, and Bellows. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

READINGS AND TALKS

Brooklyn Brewery
The series "War Correspondents at the Brooklyn Brewery" presents the *New Yorker* writer Philip Gourevitch, who will talk with the brewery's co-owner Steve Hindy, a former foreign correspondent, about the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. (79 N. 11th St. 718-486-7422. Sept. 17 at 7:30.)

"Word for Word"
The alfresco reading series in Bryant Park has teamed up with the Poetry Society of America to pay tribute to Jean Valentine. Catherine Barnett, Mark Doty, and Timothy Liu will do the honors. (42nd St. side of the park, between Fifth and Sixth Aves. 212-768-4242. poetrysociety.org. Sept. 23 at 7.)

FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB CHAMPAGNE CHARLIE'S

180 Tenth Ave. (212-929-3888)

The British music-hall comedian George Leybourne, born in 1842, came to be known as Champagne Charlie, the titular character from his popular song. As Charlie, he'd fluff his Piccadilly weepers (bushy sideburns) and strut the stage, swilling Moët (contractually, he was allowed to drink nothing else in public), while warbling, "Who'll come and join me in a spree?" His exuberance for bubbly is being kept alive in the front garden of the High Line Hotel, which inhabits the former General Theological Seminary, in Chelsea. One late-summer evening, patrons in designer sunglasses lazed beneath gas lamps, slurping oysters and sipping Chandon Brut, or Étoile Brut, or an eight-hundred-and-fifty-dollar magnum of Dom Perignon Vintage Blanc '04 from large coups. (If you buy the apocryphal tale that Marie Antoinette's breast inspired the glass's shape, you'd infer that she was a C-cup.) One vertically challenged gentleman worked on a bottle with a blonde flashing a large diamond. He dwelled on his medical maladies: "I woke up and smelled the formaldehyde. It was straight out of the nineteenth century." A nun wandered into the garden, and was ignored by its occupants. Perhaps they were unaware that "Champagne Charlie" 's melody was adapted for a Salvation Army hymn—"I am trusting in the cleansing flood./Bless His name, He sets me free"—but its sentiment they understood: they rode the sparkling flood's tide into the night.

—Emma Allen

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN LANCASTER

TABLES FOR TWO

THE GORBALS

98 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-387-0195)

"I REMEMBER WHEN there were hookers on this street!" a longtime Williamsburg resident exclaimed as he sat down at the Gorbals on a recent evening. These days, there's a small-batch coffee roaster, an exercise studio specializing in the Lagree Fitness Method, and a "unique retail concept" called Space Ninety 8. The latter, brought to you by Urban Outfitters, that bastion of commodified early-aughts hipsterdom, features the company's "reworked vintage" line, plus a rotating array of pop-up shops (Forage Haberdashery, Stolen Girlfriends Club) and the Gorbals, an East Coast outpost of the Los Angeles restaurant that Ilan Hall, of "Top Chef" fame, opened in 2009.

In a cagelike mezzanine overlooking displays of distressed denim and handcrafted deerskin medicine bags, the Gorbals gives off the vibe of a converted Bushwick warehouse, circa 2005; the flimsy floorboards trembled in time with the bass thumping from an event below. As diners studied the menu, divided into "Portlandia"-esque categories—Field, Barn, Stream, Coop—an endearingly earnest server, hands clasped, offered tips: "Talk amongst yourselves"; "I don't like to usurp anyone's natural interests"; "Both the chef and myself like to promote sharing."

When it comes to the whole roasted pig's head, sharing becomes more of a mandate—although the server allowed, "I watched a man eat the whole thing himself the other night. He was hammered. He was kind of bridge-and-tunnel. I can say that, 'cause I'm from Long Island." Hall is also from Long Island, Great Neck, where he grew up eating the traditional Jewish food that he now seems to take pleasure in subverting with pork: the crackly-skinned pig's head sometimes comes with thick, charred tortillas made from matzo meal, and matzo balls wrapped in bacon are reminiscent of Scotch eggs, which is fitting, considering Hall's Scottish heritage. (The Gorbals is the name of a once Jewish area of Glasgow.)

Out of soup, the matzo balls were a shade too wet, and some will find the carve-it-yourself pig's head hard to grapple with, both literally and figuratively. But, as much as the Gorbals can feel like a parody of itself, a lot of Hall's food is seriously good. Broccoli was deep-fried to a delicate, candylike texture and saturated with sweet soy and vinegar. Thrice-cooked thick-cut fries were bathed in hoisin gravy and tangled with Vietnamese pickles, sriracha, and shreds of pulled pork for the superb banh-mi poutine. A tender leg of wood-grilled rabbit came nestled in microgreens and tart, juicy vinegar-cured cherries.

The brownie with Vidalia caramel and candied onions is about as weird as it sounds, and better, the pungent astringency of the onions playing nicely off the creamy richness of the chocolate. By dessert, the bass had died down. On the roof deck, men in graphic tank tops milled about the bar. Hall sat at a picnic table, not watching his newest reality show, "Knife Fight," which was being projected onto a brick wall.

—*Hannah Goldfield*

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ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL KRALL

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WHY A BANK SHOULD CARE ABOUT SPAGHETTI AND MEATBALLS

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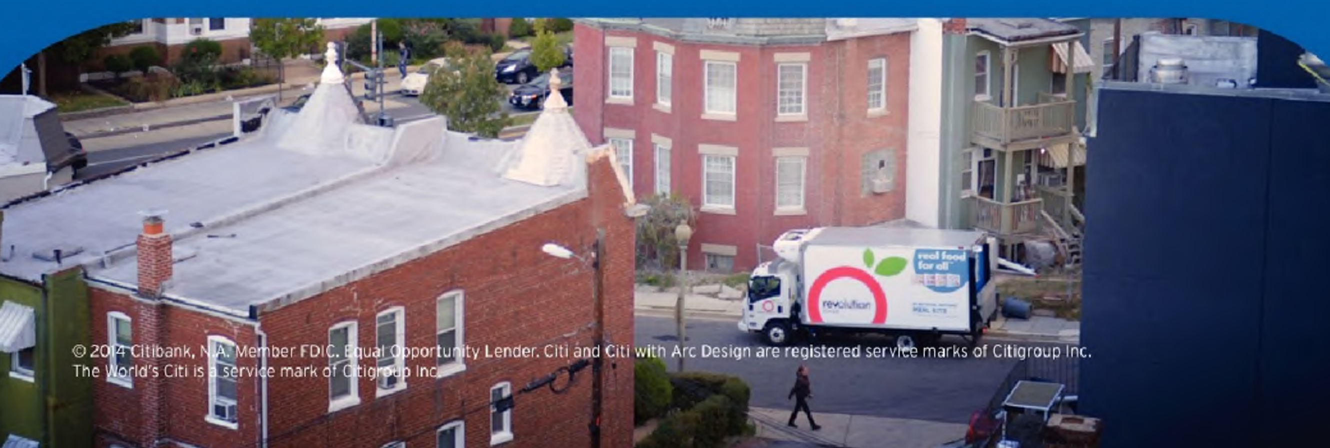

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE NAME OF THE FIGHT

"Mr. President, everybody is asking in this country, are we or are we not at war?" a reporter asked Harry Truman at a White House press conference on June 29, 1950. It was a reasonable question: two days earlier, in response to a swift, unexpected advance of North Korean troops, Truman had ordered American forces to South Korea. In keeping with the rules of the time, the reporters asked the President for permission to print his answer verbatim. "The Chief Executive responded that he would allow the news men to use in quotes: 'We are not at war,'" the *Times* noted. One of the reporters then asked if "police action under the United Nations" would be a more appropriate phrase. Truman said that that sounded right. The "police action" lasted three years (or longer, by some measures; there are still American troops in South Korea), and the term was eventually retired as a label for what Presidents don't want to call wars.

Last Wednesday night, in a televised address from the White House, President Barack Obama presented his strategy for how to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS. "We will not get dragged into another ground war," he declared. His plan calls for air strikes in two countries, a multinational coalition, and the deployment of four hundred and seventy-five more service members to Iraq, but, he said, those troops "will not have a combat mission." They will execute a "counterterrorism campaign."

That campaign seemed to both swell and contract as the President described it. He called ISIS a "small group of killers." They are certainly killers: they have murdered their way across northern Iraq and Syria and beheaded two American journalists. But "small" is, perhaps, a less apt term for a force estimated to number close to twenty thousand fighters, unless it was meant as an expression of dismay at the group's seizure of an outsized share of the world's attention. The President had decided to reëngage the American military in Iraq now, he said, because of the "unique" threat that ISIS posed. At the same time, he emphasized that the new strategy wasn't really so novel; such operations were already part of our routine, a regular exercise that "we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Many observers found it odd that the President would try to reassure the public by invoking Somalia, which, for most Americans, conjures decades-old scenes of Black Hawk Down, the desecrated bodies of Rangers, and intractable warlords. Obama may have wanted the public to see, instead, a fragile government aided by American air strikes like the one that killed the Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane, earlier this month. Or maybe the President's message was that, as with Somalia and Yemen, Americans won't find themselves thinking about Syria or Iraq much at all.

That prospect—an engaged military, a disengaged public—is part of the reason that the name we give this fight matters. Under the War Powers Resolution, the President is required to get congressional approval within sixty days of going to war. (Counterterrorism, by contrast, is something that even local police departments can undertake.) Obama said that, while he would "welcome congressional support for this effort," formal approval was not necessary: "I have the authority to address the threat." By way of justification, he and his aides have referred to Article II of the Constitution, which designates him Commander-in-Chief. Like some of their predecessors, they hold that the President has a great deal of leeway to act on his own in matters of "national security," as Obama put it in a letter to Congress last month, or in "protecting our own people," as he said on Wednesday. That's well and good in certain emergencies, but if "national security" is defined too broadly it would follow that the only wars in which Congress has a role are those which somehow don't pose any danger to Americans.

Then again, with the exception of some Democrats and libertarians in the G.O.P.,

THE LUXURIOUS HEART OF YUCATAN

For visitors to Yucatán who prize authenticity in their vacation experience, a stay at an historic hacienda provides a rewarding glimpse into the romantic sights and flavors of old Mexico.

Visitors to Mexico's Yucatán region in the 1600s could expect a lavish welcome from their hosts. The Spanish crown rewarded nobles for their military triumphs with generous land grants, and stately haciendas—ornate plantation-like estates—spread out across the landscape from Mérida, the colonial capital of the Yucatán state.

The warmest part of the day would be spent in the shade of carved stone verandas, with guests of the owner admiring the view of fertile fields that stretched to distant foothills. Dinner would be an impressive show, and during Catholic festivals and harvest celebrations, the dining and drinking would stretch well into the night.

The splendid collection of ornate estates and palaces lining Mérida's boulevards is testament to the fortunes generated by the cultivation of Henequén, a fibrous species of agave used in the production of sisal. In the 19th century, the demand for this natural fiber exploded, making Mérida home to what was once the greatest concentration of wealth in the world. Though the market eventually collapsed and the city's fortunes faded, the magnificent haciendas in and around Mérida remained.

Thanks to the attention of preservationists, historians, architects, and hoteliers, more than 170 haciendas in Mérida and throughout Yucatán have reclaimed their former glory. Travellers can enjoy a magnificent vacation experience while they explore the cultural richness of the state.

The **Hacienda Xcanatun** on the outskirts of Mérida is typical of the sisal-producing estates that once dominated the region. Converted into 18 luxury suites, the mansion boasts three acres of exotic gardens, two swimming pools, and an award-winning restaurant, the "Casa de Piedra."

Clockwise from top: Poolside exterior of the Hacienda Temozon Sur; brightly colored courtyard and pool of Rosas & Xocolate boutique hotel; hammocks on the shaded patio of the Casa Lecanda and the hotel's sumptuous lobby.

Many haciendas in Yucatán were built on or near old Mayan settlements, usually close to underground springs and natural wells called *cenotes*. The **San Antonio Millet** was built on a site the Maya called *Mul Chac* or Red Hill. The turreted main building houses 12 rooms outfitted with French antiques, and the surrounding grounds feature a school and a modest chapel.

Near the heart of Mérida, **Casa Lecanda** is a recently restored 19th-century mansion that has been converted into an indulgent seven-suite boutique hotel. Fountains and pools landscaped with greenery, shaded private terraces, and arched porticos outfitted with hammocks make it a casually luxurious spot from which to explore the city.

Reconstituted from two colonial mansions and located along Mérida's stately Paseo Montejo Boulevard, near the historic district, the bold pink stucco exterior of **Rosas & Xocolate** brings a modern design aesthetic to its blending of past and present. This luxury space features a spa specializing in chocolate treatments, a wine and tequila bar popular with locals, and a gourmet chocolate shop that adds appeal to this unique property.

The blue stucco walls and stately white accents of **Casa Azul Hotel Monumento Historico**, another standout boutique resort, make it an arresting presence in Mérida's historic district. Built at the turn of the century, the French-style neo-classical façade houses a beautiful inner courtyard, and the wide, white-paneled corridors showcase an impressive collection of antiques.

Twenty miles from Mérida, the ruby red walls of the commanding **Hacienda Temozon Sur** welcome guests into what was once the wealthiest and most productive sisal estate in Yucatán. This majestic 28-room luxury hotel, complete with lush, tropical gardens and a dramatic center pool, is the perfect springboard for exploring the nearby wonders of Chichén Itzá and Uxmal, and all the rewarding wonders of the region.

For more about hacienda hotels in Mexico and other highlights from the Yucatán state, go to **visitmexico.com**.

TASTE THE YUCATÁN PENINSULA

WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL CANCUN – RIVIERA MAYA, 2015

Experience the flavor of the Yucatán peninsula when the fourth annual **Wine and Food Festival Cancun-Riviera Maya** gets underway March 12–15, 2015. This year's "Europe Meets the Americas" theme assembles culinary talents from across Spain, France, and Mexico for four days and nights of the world's best food and wine.

Visit crmfest.com for more information.

this Congress has shown little interest in being consulted: after the President's address, there was some movement toward providing funding for training and the like, but the general attitude seems to be Don't Ask, Just Tell. Obama has indicated that he will use executive actions as a way around gridlock. There are areas where that maneuver is appropriate; the decision to go to war, the gravest a President can make, is not one of them. And yet Republican leaders who were ready to sue the President over the Obamacare employer mandate seem content to let him deploy troops where he will. They may prefer to avoid the responsibility, leaving them room for Benghazi-style recriminations later, if things go wrong. Obama is making that too easy for them.

The White House has suggested an additional rationale. An Authorization for the Use of Military Force, passed in the days after the attacks of September 11, 2001, is still in effect. But it names as its target Al Qaeda and its "associated forces," and Al Qaeda and ISIS, though once affiliated, are now fighting each other. There is also the 2002 authorization that launched the Iraq War, but Syria is not Iraq, and the Syrian part of this strategy demands a true political debate. Nearly two hundred thousand people have died in Syria's civil war; millions are refugees. How do we weigh the possibility that strikes against ISIS might help the regime of Bashar al-Assad or enmesh us in his war? Obama talked about strengthening the opposition and said, "We stand with people who fight for their own freedom"—except that, in Syria, we are not quite sure who those people are. And what if our Sunni allies, like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, continue to allow money and arms to make their way to ISIS and groups like it? Yet another calculation involves Iran. These are political questions, not simply partisan ones.

There is a further problem. The legal basis for this country's drone campaigns in Somalia and Yemen has never been clarified, particularly when it comes to the extrajudicial targeted killings of American citizens abroad. (Nor has the collateral damage from the strikes been completely tallied.) The White House has not released the full memo pertaining to such killings, but Justice Department white papers refer to "the law of war," "the government's interest in waging war," and the "circumstances of war." The executive branch seems to believe that it can ignore restraints on pursuing what looks very much like a war by denying that it is one, while avoiding checks on constitutionally questionable practices in the name of an ineffable war. By this logic, war is both nowhere and everywhere.

"This is American leadership at its best," the President said on Wednesday. "When we helped prevent the massacre of civilians trapped on a distant mountain, here's what one of them said: 'We owe our American friends our lives.'" That endeavor was called a "humanitarian operation." We are no longer so distant from the fight.

—Amy Davidson

OLD MAN RIVER DEPT.
SOUTHBOUND

Dick Conant likes to say that the Mississippi River, on which he has passed many months living out of a canoe, is a "vibrant monster you just let out of its cage," whereas the Hudson is merely an "old uncle that has its moods." Conant spent much of the past two months afloat on the Hudson, before turning right at Bayonne and traversing the toxic waters under the Goethals Bridge. He is likely making his way along the Raritan now, en route to the Delaware—en route, eventually, to Naples, Florida, which he expects to reach around mid-February, a snowbird arriving unfashionably late. Conant is sixty-three. A summer spent on the water has given him the complexion of a boiled lobster, to go with the build of a manatee. While paddling alongside the village of Piermont, a few miles south of the Tappan Zee Bridge, recently, he was waved ashore by a resident who called him Wild Bill, on account of his overalls and his beard. Kindred spirits, evidently: the resident, a Lebowski-like figure named Scott Rosenberg, produced a framed newspaper clipping, detailing his own slo-mo southern migration, on a bicycle from New York to Cocoa Beach in 1977. He served Conant vodka and caviar for breakfast.

Conant isn't an outdoorsman so much as a nomad. His digital watch still tells the time in Bozeman, Montana, where he began his current voyage, by Greyhound. He bought the canoe, which is red, fourteen feet long, and made of plastic, in Plattsburgh, upstate near the Canadian border. Somewhere in the boat, amid the pickled hot dogs, the wheels (for the occasional portage), the tarps, and the unused fishing kit, is a dry bag containing a laptop, which he hasn't turned on since he put in, on Lake Champlain. "I don't play patty-cake with wild animals," he said the other day, while resting on a beach beneath the Palisades, and offering a handshake firmer than an interloper could recall. "I wish I was like that guy in Alaska who was making friends with all the bears—and then the bears ate him?" He let out a belly laugh. Sometimes, Conant swigs Tabasco from the bottle: "energizing the flavor buds," as he put it.

Conant seeks no attention for his questing; he doesn't even inform his siblings, or his "sweetheart," about his plans, lest they worry. Nor is he raising money for any cause, in the manner of cancer walkers or AIDS cyclists. There are scant traces of his passage to and fro. A Web posting, from New Year's Day, 2008: "As a kayak fisherman, I thought that your membership would be interested in the adventures of Dick Conant. I met him . . . at Stingaree marina on East Bay on December 30." That would be up the coast from Galveston, Texas, toward the end of a trip that Conant began near Buffalo in the summer of 2007. In Caruthersville, Missouri, Mary Beth Johnson keeps a hand-drawn map and some pages of a journal that Conant left at Woody's Lounge, her family's bar, during a stopover in the fall of 2010. (Start: Bemidji, Minnesota. Finish: Portsmouth, Virginia. He got a lift over the Appalachians from a NASA programmer who had just returned from a missionary trip to Alaska.) "I think about him often," Johnson said last week. "What struck me is how he looked like a grandpa. Like, 'What the heck is this guy doing by himself out on the river?'" She added, "He seemed very educated."

Conant is well read—he takes books from the "free" shelves of libraries he visits along the way, and then burns them

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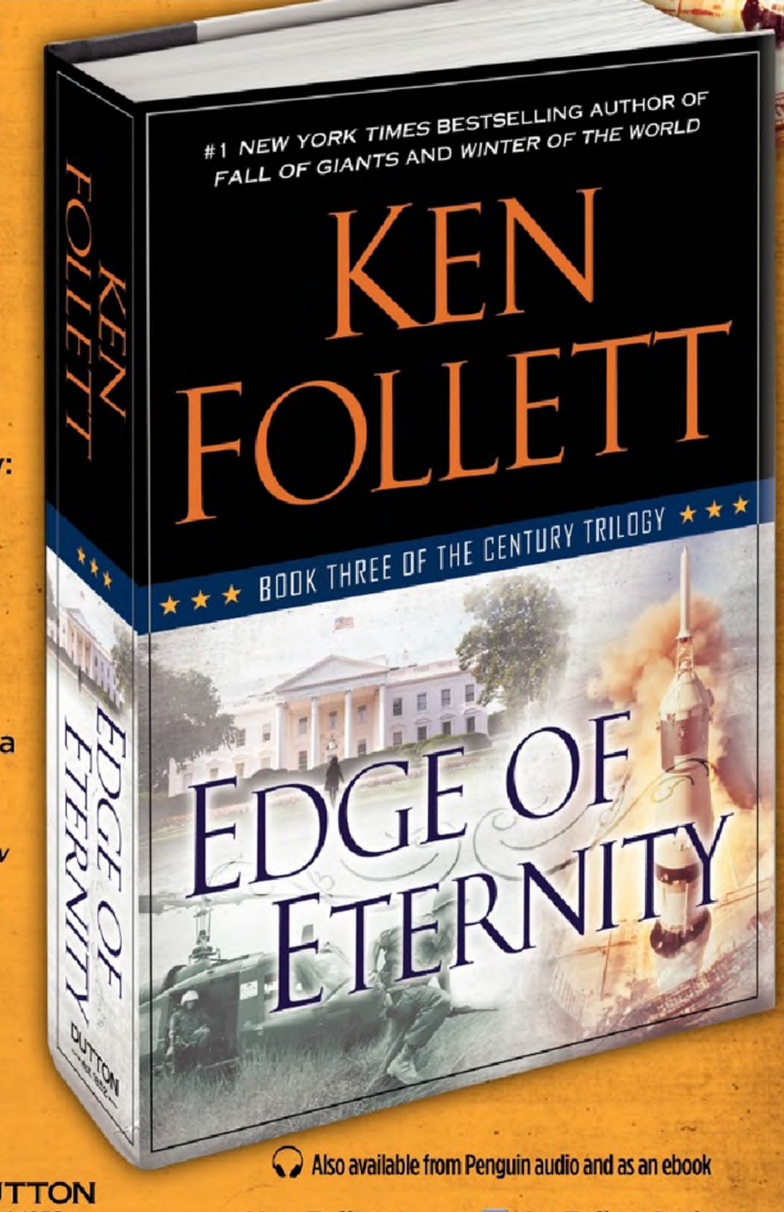

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in campfires, to lighten his load—but he admits to a "checkered career," including stints in the Navy, on the railroad in Wyoming, as a surgical technologist, and as a "weather watcher" at Montana State University. He is retired now—and homeless. "I figure if I got to live outdoors, I might as well really enjoy what I'm doing," he said. "I'm getting to really visit our nation, piecemeal."

Splayed out in front of him were a book of tide charts and an atlas. Directly across the river was Spuyten Duyvil Creek, separating Manhattan and the Bronx. The city posed a challenge: a dozen or more miles without likely campsites on either side, not to mention the ferries and the barges. It was a waxing moon, and Conant hoped for low cloud cover that would trap the skyscrapers' lights, further illuminating the river at night. "I looked at this on Google," he said, pointing on a map to the area around Liberty State Park. "And it looks like if I got there after dark . . ." He acknowledged that some of his makeshift sleeping accommodations (tied to a fence, curled in a bush) might be illegal. "I shouldn't tell you my secrets," he said, and added that he was thinking of paddling out to Ellis Island. "I've never been."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE PICTURES
HOME IMPROVEMENT

On a steamy morning in Manhasset, Shawn Levy's dream house shimmered like a mirage: a white-brick-and-clapboard affair on a lake of Long Island lawn. Levy, a director known for such family-friendly hits as "Cheaper by the Dozen" and the "Night at the Museum" series, stood in the street, admiring the place he rented last year as the setting for "This Is Where I Leave You." His R-rated film, which opens later this month, is about four quarrelsome siblings who sit shivah in their childhood home after their father's death. The house, Levy said, "had to feel immediately inviting, but not lavish. It had to have a filmable rooftop," for a pair of scenes where Jason Bateman and Tina Fey, playing the middle children, drink on the roof and discuss their lousy marriages. "And it had to be on a cul-de-sac, like in the book. Even Tropper"—Jonathan Tropper, who wrote the novel and adapted it for the screen—"said, 'It doesn't *literally* need to be a dead end.' But for me it really did. When I moved into my dad's house in Montreal, at thirteen, it was on a cul-de-sac. And the mess and cacophony there—with four siblings and street hockey and touch football on the street—saved me."

The forty-six-year-old director hooked his sunglasses into his jeans. He has warm brown eyes and a gravelly voice, and recounts his doings in the urgent manner of an Animal Planet documentary. "We shot it cheap, $19.4 million, and I took five per cent of my usual salary to be free of marketplace exigencies," he said. "So that when I wanted Adam Driver"—for the impulsive youngest sibling, Phillip—"I could get him instead of, oh, I don't want to name names, but Zac Efron." Even the changes he made from the book, he said, were in the service of truth. In the novel, and early versions of the script, Bateman's character comes home with a birthday cheesecake to surprise his wife, lights the candles, finds her in bed with his boss, and rams the cake into his boss's nearest aperture. Levy explained that, when he discussed the prospective film with his friend Owen Wilson, he said, " 'Are you *literally* going to shove a cake up someone's ass and have his balls set on fire?' And I realized that a guy getting his scrotum lit on fire in the first five minutes would be broadly comedic and not the realistic way I wanted this film to go."

A neighbor named Pat came over, greeted Levy, and said, "The first three days of shooting, I thought, These guys are going to throw us off the block. Ian"—his son—"kept helping himself to craft services."

"No, no! Ian was our mascot!" the director cried. "And he made the cut—you'll see him in the street-hockey game!"

Waving fondly as Pat headed off, Levy went on, "My parents divorced when I was three, and I lived with my mother for ten years. She had her struggles, and those years were not . . . uniformly happy. I was such a pleaser to my mom, but, quite young, I had a leaning to sad, cathartic films and TV shows. My sister and I would watch 'St. Elsewhere' every Wednesday night, and I'd be crying to the TV." He hesitated, then went on, "I'm picturing how those words will be received when they're read, not spoken. Steven Spielberg said about me, 'Sean likes to tell his stories as if he's in the audience.' It's an asset and a weakness."

He walked the lawn's perimeter, staying a certain distance from the doorbell, as the owners had raised some concerns about the condition of the house they got back. "I repainted and re-wallpapered every room we shot in so it felt like my childhood home," he recalled. "I grew up in an upper-middle-class Jewish milieu, and this one was more Gentile, more paisley-based." Noticing that the woman of the house had stepped out of her garage, Levy waved and bounded over. When he sought her verdict on the experience, she crossed her arms and said, "We'll see the movie, I guess." He promised her tickets, then turned away in sorrow.

Over lunch in a nearby mall, Levy said, "I started off making one comedy, 'Big Fat Liar,' and then success has its

TANG DYNASTY
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MING DYNASTY
1430

DUCK DYNASTY
2014

own momentum, and sameness has its own propulsion, and I lacked the discipline to say, 'Pause!' With big-budget family entertainment, you need to *please* a lot of people, but with this film I wanted to *satisfy* them with a catharsis." Yet, he acknowledged, "I did add a new scene in a bar with the four siblings, because I knew the audience would love a moment where they're all together and happy." He fell silent, then confided, "I was just thinking that the title for this piece should be 'Crowd, comma, Please.'"

—*Tad Friend*

FIELD TRIP
SURVIVORS

To find the oldest living thing in New York City, set out from Staten Island's West Shore Plaza mall (Chuck E. Cheese's, Burlington Coat Factory, D.M.V.). Take a right, pass Industry Road, go left. The urban bleakness will fade into a litter-strewn route that bisects a nature preserve called Saw Mill Creek Marsh. Check the tides, and wear rubber boots; trudging through the muddy wetlands is necessary.

The other day, directions in hand, Rachel Sussman, a photographer from Greenpoint, Brooklyn, went looking for the city's most antiquated resident: a colony of *Spartina alterniflora* or *Spartina patens* cordgrass which, she suspects, has been cloning and re-cloning itself for millennia. The city's oldest trees, among them the Queens Giant, a tulip poplar near the Long Island Expressway, have been living, at most, for centuries. But the Staten Island marshes, formed after the Wisconsin Glacier receded from New York, date back thousands of years. Surrounded by commercial property, and buffeted by pollutants—from oil to heavy metals—they remain a resilient prehistoric fixture. Scientists had suggested that she look there.

For nearly a decade, Sussman has been tracking down such leads, maxing out credit cards and travelling to every continent, to photograph ancient life as it tenaciously hangs on—the planet's ultimate survivors. This year, she compiled her photos into a book, "The Oldest Living Things in the World," and for an exhibition, which will run at Pioneer Works, in Red Hook, until November. Many of Sussman's subjects are unassuming: the two-thousand-year-old *Welwitschia* that she photographed in Namibia looks like a forlorn mop of leaves. Some are otherworldly and beautiful, like the three-thousand-year-old Chilean llareta, a bulbous desert growth that would blend in just fine on a set for the nineteen-sixties "Star Trek." Her oldest subject resides in a soil sample at the Niels Bohr Institute, in Copenhagen: bacteria that have been living for half a million years.

"I think this is where we're supposed to park," she said. It was noon, and just off the road bisecting the marsh was a junk yard filled with old tires, stacks of particleboard, and a dilapidated trailer inhabited by cats. Up the road, there was a gate with two signs, "Danger: Keep Off" and "Notice: Private Property." Sussman ducked underneath and walked along train tracks heading north. A siren roared in the distance. "What is that?" she said. "We have entered some kind of Twilight Zone." She followed the tracks to a footpath into the marsh.

Stepping into the sticky Staten Island mud, she said, "When I was in Greenland, there was this glacial mud—someone had to pull me out." She paused. "There are map lichens in Greenland that grow one centimetre every hundred years. Just think about that in human terms: imagine if, in your whole life span, your main accomplishment was to grow one centimetre. Continents drift away faster than that!"

The creek flowed slowly. Pools of water had gathered among the grass, some of the water tainted by algae. "It's probably pretty polluted," she said.

She scanned the ground. "This short grass is *Distichlis*," she said. "It's just a different type of marsh grass. And there's a heron or crane or something." She raised her camera. "Right now, I'm getting a bit of the juxtaposition of the whole marsh and this bird—and is that a power station? It's a very dirty-looking industrial complex." She took a picture. "In Riverside, California, there is a thirteen-thousand-year-old Palmer's Oak, and it's next to mounds of garbage."

Sussman pushed farther into the marsh, soft lumpy earth underfoot. "It feels like we're walking on bones," she said. An open swath of spartina swirled in on itself, in a way that seemed both haphazard and organized. "This is really beautiful," she said. "It looks so windblown and battered." After additional surveys, and genetic testing to measure age, she would eventually be able to confirm whether any of the plants belonged to an ancient organism. Sussman gazed across the creek. "I would love to go over there, but I have a feeling that we're going to get stuck." The tide was coming in. The wind was rushing across the wetland, and the air filled with the smell of effluent. She headed back toward the train tracks. Strands of high-voltage wires hummed eerily overhead.

Rachel Sussman

Of the thirty ancient living things that Sussman has photographed, two have since died. "One was a thirteen-thousand-year-old 'underground forest' outside a botanical garden in Pretoria," she said. "Apparently, they changed the traffic pattern and just bulldozed right over it. The other was a thirty-five-hundred-year-old tree just outside Orlando, Florida—actually, the original tourist attraction before Disney. Meth heads snuck into it to do meth, and they accidentally burned it down. One of them later said, 'Oh, shit, we killed something that was older than Jesus.'"

—*Raffi Khatchadourian*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

HOME FREE?

In 2005, Utah set out to fix a problem that's often thought of as unfixable: chronic homelessness. The state had almost two thousand chronically homeless people. Most of them had mental-health or substance-abuse issues, or both. At the time, the standard approach was to try to make homeless people "housing ready": first, you got people into shelters or halfway houses and put them into treatment; only when they made progress could they get a chance at permanent housing. Utah, though, embraced a different strategy, called Housing First: it started by just giving the homeless homes.

Handing mentally ill substance abusers the keys to a new place may sound like an example of wasteful government spending. But it turned out to be the opposite: over time, Housing First has saved the government money. Homeless people are not cheap to take care of. The cost of shelters, emergency-room visits, ambulances, police, and so on quickly piles up. Lloyd Pendleton, the director of Utah's Homeless Task Force, told me of one individual whose care one year cost nearly a million dollars, and said that, with the traditional approach, the average chronically homeless person used to cost Salt Lake City more than twenty thousand dollars a year. Putting someone into permanent housing costs the state just eight thousand dollars, and that's after you include the cost of the case managers who work with the formerly homeless to help them adjust. The same is true elsewhere. A Colorado study found that the average homeless person cost the state forty-three thousand dollars a year, while housing that person would cost just seventeen thousand dollars.

Housing First isn't just cost-effective. It's more effective, period. The old model assumed that before you could put people into permanent homes you had to deal with their underlying issues—get them to stop drinking, take their medication, and so on. Otherwise, it was thought, they'd end up back on the streets. But it's ridiculously hard to get people to make such changes while they're living in a shelter or on the street. "If you move people into permanent supportive housing first, and then give them help, it seems to work better," Nan Roman, the president and C.E.O. of the National Alliance for Homelessness, told me. "It's intuitive, in a way. People do better when they have stability." Utah's first pilot program placed seventeen people in homes scattered around Salt Lake City, and after twenty-two months not one of them was back on the streets. In the years since, the number of Utah's chronically homeless has fallen by seventy-four per cent.

Of course, the chronically homeless are only a small percentage of the total homeless population. Most homeless people are victims of economic circumstances or of a troubled family environment, and are homeless for shorter stretches of time. The challenge, particularly when it comes to families with children, is insuring that people don't get trapped in the system. And here, too, the same principles have been used, in an approach called Rapid Rehousing: the approach is to quickly put families into homes of their own, rather than keep them in shelters or transitional housing while they get housing-ready. The economic benefits of keeping people from getting swallowed by the shelter system can be immense: a recent Georgia study found that a person who stayed in an emergency shelter or transitional housing was five times as likely as someone who received rapid rehousing to become homeless again.

It may seem surprising that a solidly conservative state like Utah has embraced an apparently bleeding-heart approach like giving homeless people homes. But in fact Housing First has become the rule in hundreds of cities around the country, in states both red and blue. And while the Obama Administration has put a lot of weight (and money) behind these efforts, the original impetus for them on a national scale came from the Bush Administration's homelessness czar Philip Mangano. Indeed, the fight against homelessness has genuine bipartisan support. As Pendleton says, "People are willing to pay for this, because they can look at it and see that there are actually solutions. They can say, 'Ah, it works.' " And it saves money.

The recognition that it makes sense to give money away today in order to save money later isn't confined to homeless policy. It has animated successful social initiatives around the world. For more than a decade, Mexico has been paying parents to keep their children in school, and studies suggest that the program is remarkably cost-effective, once you take into account the economic benefits of creating a more educated and healthy population. Brazil's Bolsa Familia is a similar program. The traditional justification for such initiatives has been a humanitarian or egalitarian one. But a cost-benefit analysis suggests that, in many cases, such programs are also economically rational.

Our system has a fundamental bias toward dealing with problems only after they happen, rather than spending up front to prevent their happening in the first place. We spend much more on disaster relief than on disaster preparedness. And we spend enormous sums on treating and curing disease and chronic illness, while underinvesting in primary care and prevention. This is obviously costly in human terms. But it's expensive in dollar terms, too. The success of Housing First points to a new way of thinking about social programs: what looks like a giveaway may actually be a really wise investment.

—*James Surowiecki*

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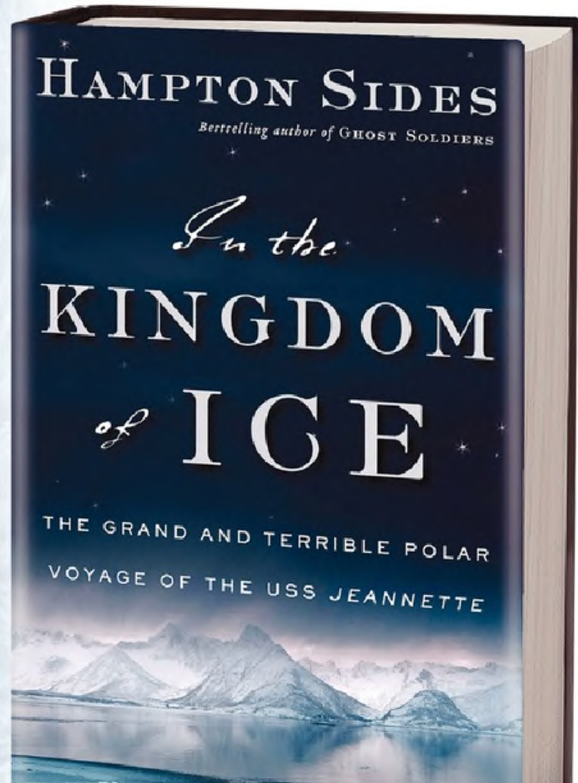

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

WE ARE A CAMERA

Experience and memory in the age of GoPro.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

Late one fall afternoon two years ago, Aaron Chase, a professional mountain biker, was riding his bike in the Smoky Mountains, near Sun Valley, Idaho. He'd powered up to a high-altitude ridge and was gazing, less than eagerly, at the trail down toward the backcountry yurt where he and two fellow pro riders were camped for the week. He wasn't feeling well. He was tired, hungry, dehydrated, and a little woozy. In the argot, he was bonking.

The GoPro short video is a post-literate diary, a stop on the way to a future in which everything will be filmed from every point of view.

COURTESY GOPRO

He and the others, along with a professional photographer, had spent two days filming video footage of themselves hurtling down steep technical trails and executing tricks off natural features. They had brought along more than a dozen GoPros, the ubiquitous small digital point-of-view cameras.

Chase, who is sponsored by GoPro and is exceptionally adept at using GoPro cameras to make videos, likes to use a camera mount called the 360 Narwhal, after the species of whale with a tusk protruding from its jaw. The mount consists of a lightweight carbon rod affixed to the top of his helmet, like a helicopter rotor, to which he attaches a pair of GoPros, one at each end, a couple of feet from the center, in the manner of two buckets hanging from a carrying pole. The rod can rotate around its center, its movements determined by the cameras' weight and centrifugal momentum. Typically, Chase sets one camera a little farther out from his head than the other and, with subtle tilts of his head, exploits the asymmetry to manipulate the cameras' positions and movements as he rides. He is star athlete, director, and D.P. He gives as much thought to getting the shot as he does to nailing the trick.

For two days in the Idaho mountains, Chase's cameras had been rolling virtually non-stop. Now, with his companions lagging behind, he started down the trail, which descended steeply into an alpine meadow. As he accelerated, he noticed, to his left, an elk galloping toward him from the ridge. He glanced at the trail, looked again to his left, and saw a herd, maybe thirty elk, running at full tilt alongside his bike, like a pod of dolphins chasing a boat. After a moment, they rumbled past him and crossed the trail, neither he nor the elk slowing, dust kicking up and glowing in the early-evening sun, amid a thundering of hooves. It was a magical sight. The light was perfect. And, as usual, Chase was wearing two GoPros. Here was his money shot—the stuff of TV ads and real bucks.

Trouble was, neither camera was rolling. What with his headache and the ample footage of the past days, he'd thought to hell with it, and had neglected, just this once, to turn his GoPros on. Now there was no point in riding with the elk. He slowed up and let them pass. "Idiot," he said to himself. "There goes my commercial."

Once the herd was gone, it was as though it'd never been there at all—Sasquatch, E.T., yeti. Pics or it didn't happen. Still, one doesn't often find oneself swept up in a stampede of wild animals. Might as well hope to wingsuit through a triple rainbow. So you'd think that, cameras or not, he'd remember the moment with some fondness. But no. "It was hell," Chase says now.

When the agony of missing the shot trumps the joy of the experience worth shooting, the adventure athlete (climber, surfer, extreme skier) reveals himself to be something else: a filmmaker, a brand, a vessel for the creation of content. He used to just do the thing—plan the killer trip or trick and then complete it, with panache. Maybe a photographer or film crew tagged along, and afterward there'd be a slide show at community centers and high-school gyms, or an article in a magazine. Now the purpose of the trip or trick is the record of it. Life is footage.

Chase's elk came to mind on the morning, in late June, of GoPro's initial public offering. When GoPro goes public, there is no chance of missing the shot. Before the opening bell, legions of GoPro executives, employees,

family, and friends gathered on the ground floor of the NASDAQ building, in what is really just a TV studio, facing out onto Times Square. There's no trading floor at NASDAQ, so bell ringings are Potemkin affairs—in this case, not only for the usual phalanx of TV cameras but also for the fifty-odd GoPros the team had brought along, so everyone could chronicle the occasion from a variety of unconventional vantages.

The camera is a relatively simple device. High-tech guts in low-tech disguise—it's "cute and fancy," as the late Sony chairman Akio Morita is supposed to have said of the Walkman. A GoPro Hero 3+, the latest iteration (the tech rumor mill predicts that the Hero 4 will début next month), costs between three hundred and four hundred dollars. Once removed from its waterproof case—to the GoPro what armor was to the knight—it is small and spare. People say "matchbox-size" but it's more like two matchboxes. It has just three buttons and yet, somehow, dozens of settings.

The GoPro is defined as much by its limitations as by its advantages. It has no display, so you can't see what's in the frame. In a way, this doesn't matter, because the wide-angle lens takes in so broad a field (everything in focus, everything lit) that you need only point it in a general direction and you can expect to capture something good.

Both the indicator light and the control display are on the front of the camera, so this is where its operator must go to operate it, or to make sure that it is in fact operating. In unedited GoPro shots, the cameraman often appears in closeup in the frame, amid the muffled clatter of finger (or glove) brushing microphone; this routine parenthesis is the GoPro version of a director's slate. (You could cut an hour-long edit of these accidental selfies—a montage of scraped knuckles, double chins, and bloodshot eyes—and call it "Action!") The microphone picks up sound that is very close but misses sound farther away. GoPro shots are often characterized by one-sided conversation, the rattle of straps, or the beatbox fusillade of water and wind. This is one reason a polished GoPro edit is usually set to music. Still, the clarity of the picture, which renders trees, waves, seracs, clouds, and cliffs with a kind of lysergic radiance, flatters the natural world.

The pervasiveness of cameras, seemingly playful and benign, may be anything but.

On the morning of the I.P.O., the company's founder, Nick Woodman, who devised a crude version of the camera twelve years ago to get photos of himself surfing, held GoPros, at different times, in his teeth, at arm's length, or on an array of mounts, filming himself and others, who in turn trained their cameras on him and on themselves. Woodman, in jeans and a dark-blue button-down shirt, tan and fit with white teeth and spiky dark hair, led them in impromptu banshee howls, the feral woo-hoos of joyriders everywhere, and chants of "Go Pro! Go Pro! Go Pro!" and with his non-GoPro hand flashed the surfer's hang-loose shaka sign. He pointed a GoPro at himself and howled, "This is really happening!" The camera affirmed it.

Becoming a multibillionaire may not be as rare an occurrence these days as riding a mountain bike through a herd

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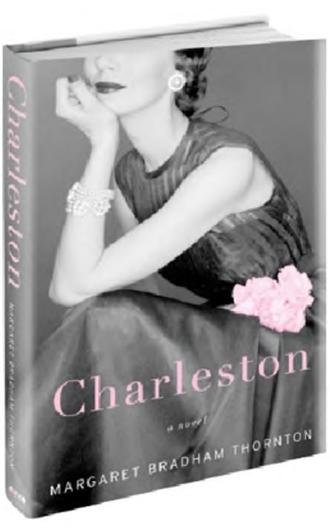

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of elk, but it is nonetheless a feat worthy of documentation. GoPro's offering price, of twenty-four dollars a share, valued the company at around three billion dollars. Woodman's father, Dean Woodman, a hale gent of eighty-five who had himself once been a very successful entrepreneur, as a founder of the now defunct San Francisco investment bank Robertson Stephens, and who early on had lent his son two hundred thousand dollars to finance GoPro, came up to him and said, "You look like a rock star."

"I play one on TV," the son said. He is known as the Mad Billionaire, for his hyperactive antics and taste for adventure sports. But when it came time for him to talk, just before the opening, he teared up, presumably at this culmination of so much hard work—years of risks rewarded, doubts dashed, overpromises met, and paternal expectations exceeded. He recovered himself for the cameras. "I'm fired up!" he called out to his employees. "You fired up?"

After the bell, while the GoPro employees milled around and posed for photos, Brad Schmidt, GoPro's creative director, working on a laptop with GoPro editing software, quickly cut the footage into a packet to present to the TV producers who'd be interviewing Woodman and his fellow-executives throughout the day. As Schmidt has said, you don't hunt shots; you "capture" them. (This approach requires lots of work in the cutting room, or what *Surfing* called "a time-warping pain in the edit-ass.") Schmidt scrolled through dozens of vantages, many of them imbued with a kinetic intensity you don't usually see on the set of a stock-market show. "The button shot is amazing," he said; it had captured Woodman reaching down toward the camera to press a lit panel that would initiate the day's trading—the NASDAQ equivalent, perhaps, of getting tubed at Pipeline.

As he worked, half a dozen guests held their GoPros up to the window to film the Jumbotrons in Times Square, which NASDAQ had leased for the occasion in order to display GoPro videos. Among the cavalcade of images was an underwater shot of Woodman's toddler son learning to swim: a private event now magnified into mythology in the hall of mirrors that is our world of cameras and screens.

Woodman had the good fortune to invent a product that was well suited to a world he had not yet imagined. The ripening of the technology in his camera, after a half decade of tinkering, coincided with the fruition of broadband and the emergence of YouTube, Facebook, and other social-media platforms for the wide distribution of video. GoPro rode the wave. What might have been just another camcorder became a leading connector between what goes on in the real world and what goes out in the virtual one—a perfect instrument for the look-at-me age. Its charm lies perhaps in its sublimated conveyance of self, its sneaky tolerable narcissism. GoPro footage is related to the selfie, in its "Here I am" (or "was") ethos, and its wide view and variety of mounts often allow the filmmaker to include himself, or some part of himself, in the shot. But because it primarily points outward it's a record of what an experience looks like, rather than what the person who had the experience looked like when he stopped afterward and arranged his features into his pretested photo face. The result is not as much a selfie as a worldie. It's more like the story you'd tell about an adventure than the photo that would accompany it.

Though GoPro is known primarily for its connection to adventure sports, the camera is increasingly used in feature films and on TV, and by professionals of many stripes—musicians, surgeons, chefs. Many BMWs now come with an app to control a GoPro in the dash (in case you want to show the kids your commute). The company has been promoting its use in broadcasting traditional sports. An armada of GoPros greatly enhanced the coverage of last year's America's Cup, in San Francisco Bay, but perhaps they'd shed less light on the mysteries of an N.F.L. line of scrimmage: one imagines indecipherable grunting and rustling, the filmic equivalent of a butt dial. The opposite of this, and the big thing these days, is the footage that comes from mounting GoPros on small quadcopter drones: sublime sweeping shots and heretofore unseen bird's-eye vantages, on the cheap.

As for its broadcast applications, we are still in a relatively primitive stage. A GoPro senior producer described to me the process he came up with last year to get P.O.V. footage of Shane Dorian surfing the giant waves at Mavericks, off the coast of Northern California, to use on a broadcast of a competition there. After Dorian had ridden a wave, a guy on a Jet Ski would zoom over, grab the camera, and then carry it in past the break to a paddleboarder, who'd maneuver through the swirling whitewash to the base of a cliff, over which a member of the broadcast team had lowered a basket. Up went the basket, and an assistant ran the camera over to the broadcast tent.

In going public, GoPro has tried to position itself not just as a camera-maker but as a media company—a producer and distributor of branded content. In this conception, it is hawking not only cameras and accessories (the source, up to now, of pretty much all of GoPro's revenue) but videos, too (a source, up to now, of pretty much no revenue). In the past five years, videos posted by GoPro have attracted half a billion views. On the GoPro channel on YouTube, videos average about half a million viewers each. The company thinks it can capitalize on the fact that thousands of people every day post videos online and, without prompting, tag them as GoPro.

Most of them are not the ones that come from their sponsored athletes (or "brand ambassadors"), like Aaron Chase, who are expected to submit footage. They are crowdsourced—amateur-hour finds that turn pro. For the latter, GoPro pays very little—maybe some accessories or a camera, plus, say, a thousand dollars for the first million views. A cadre of editors at GoPro scours Facebook, YouTube, and Reddit and often reëdits the best and pushes them out on its own channels on YouTube, Pinterest, and other platforms. In the process, the company has nurtured a growing army of amateurs (eager providers of free content) and helped the

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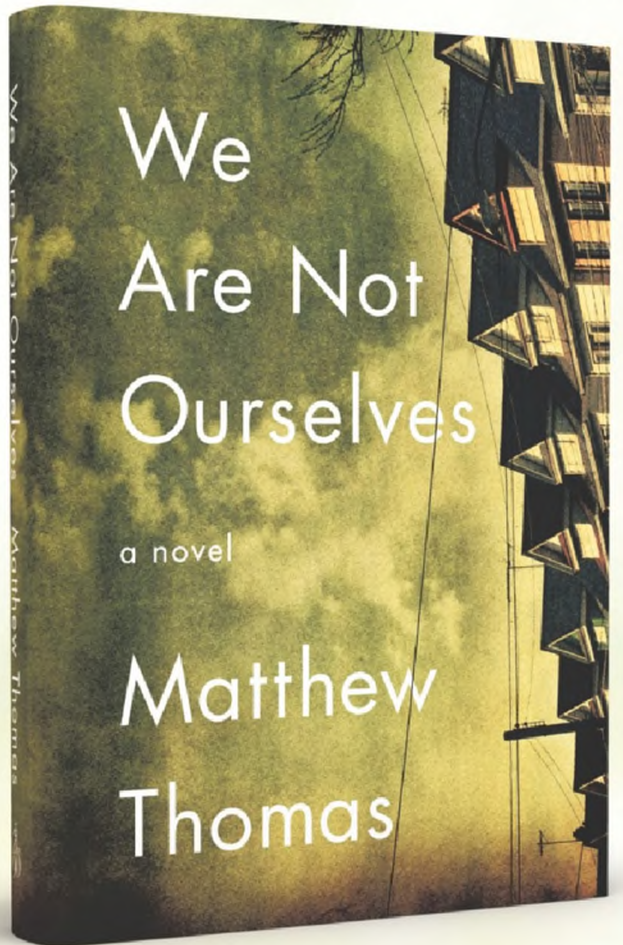

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GoPro name become shorthand not only for all P.O.V. cameras, including those made by other manufacturers, but for the genre of short video that has arguably become as much a feature of daily life as the three-minute pop song.

You can probably think of as many viral GoPro videos as you can recent hit singles. Have you seen the one that was shot from the beak of an airborne pelican? The one of the South African mountain biker being robbed by the gunman? The woman giving birth on the sidewalk? The fireman rescuing the kitten? The Lion Whisperer guy? "Toy Robot in Space"? The view from a car wheel or the inside of a fox's mouth or a drone soaring through a Fourth of July fireworks display? Of course you have, and if you haven't I'll send you the link.

The genre is characterized by point of view, by brevity, and by incident. The ones that go viral contain something extraordinary, be it unimaginable risk, uncharted beauty, unlikely encounter, or unexpected twist. The categories bleed. A common critique has been that the presence of the camera prods people to take greater risks as they aspire to virality—Kodak courage, which might now be more properly called GoPro guts. It may not be fair to say that it's the camera that causes people to attempt to brush the ground while flying past an outcrop in a wingsuit, but perhaps seeing it done on film inspires other people to try. Some have attributed this phenomenon to "Jackass," the MTV program on which a band of pranksters subjected their bodies to clever, horrific abasements, but, really, people have attempted dangerous stunts for attention and money since the invention of the camera. Before there was Johnny Knoxville there was Buster Keaton. GoPro has been sensitive to the contention that their cameras play any role in getting people to do stupid, risky, dangerous, or unlawful things. It offers, with some plausibility, a kind of guns-don't-kill-people argument. Don't blame the camera. A spokesman cited Icarus.

A popular subgenre is the blooper, the so-called GoPro Fail. Sometimes the intention to Be a Hero causes one instead to Be the Schlemiel. There may be violence, but insofar as it ends well, you might call it comic. My favorite GoPro Fail, which first made the rounds in February, 2011, and still circles the Internet in a kind of ongoing viral orbit, was of, and by, a skier named Stefan Ager. The video is a minute and a half long and is shot from Ager's helmet mount. It begins with him and a friend atop a snow-clad peak in Austria, after a three-hour climb. The setting is a sheer ridge, with cliffs seemingly dropping off in all directions. After some giddy panorama shots, he holds his helmet out and turns the camera on himself, revealing a young shaggy dude. He dons the helmet and looks down to put on his skis, which he lays parallel in the snow, along the narrow ridge. He steps into his bindings, the skis drift backward a few inches, and—"Whoa!"—our man goes backward over the precipice. The camera tosses and clicks as Ager—"Aaaah!"—plummets more than a thousand vertical feet down a cliff, bouncing off rocks, before landing—"Oof!"—on the edge of a glacier. He moans a couple of times and then stands up (or so it looks from his shadow, which is topped by a silhouette of the GoPro). He looks around. Somehow, his survival makes the glacier all the more beautiful, even to the viewer. He glances back to where he came from, and then the video ends.

It's the mother of all pratfalls, and I've watched it more than a dozen times. It's had more than three million hits. Last month, when I tracked Ager down, via Facebook, I felt as though I'd found an e-mail address for, say, Lorde. He wrote back, "I am actually not interested in an interview regarding my fall. I am glad that nothing happened and I can keep skiing."

Every entrepreneurial success story hardens into legend, and the quickening often occurs around the time of the I.P.O. GoPro's is as follows: In 1999, during the dot-com boom, Woodman, a recent graduate of the University of California at San Diego and the son of a prominent Bay Area banker, started an online video-game company called Funbug. It failed two years later, amid the dot-com crash, and Woodman, embarrassed over having lost other people's

"Oh, come on—I just want to see if my friend is in there!"

money, decided to take six months off to surf and travel with his girlfriend. While in Indonesia, in 2002, he struck up a friendship with another surfer, named Brad Schmidt. They were both intrigued by the problem of how to get pictures of themselves riding waves. At this point, Woodman's innovation was a wrist wrap fashioned from the ankle end of his surfboard leash, to which, using rubber bands, he affixed a disposable Kodak camera in a waterproof case. He had a sense that the wristband could be marketable, but soon realized, after trying various cameras, that it would get complicated, with regard to licensing and legal permission. So he went to China to have a camera made to his specs.

By 2004, he had a prototype of the GoPro Hero, a clunky 35-mm. box that used film. In the next few years, with Schmidt testing it out on surfing trips and sending back astonishing images, Woodman made refinements, and started making money, too. He travelled around the country in a 1974 VW van he called Biscuit, to surf shops and trade shows (and did a couple of appearances on QVC); to raise extra funds he sold belts made of seashells he'd picked up in Bali. At surfing events, he handed out cameras to pros. One day, he attached a GoPro to the cockpit of a racecar, and everyone at the track became fascinated by both the device and the result. A light bulb: this thing wasn't just for surfers.

Schmidt, fresh out of film school, became the head of GoPro's media division, which distributed as many videos, from an ever-widening circle of sources, as it could—in part, as Schmidt has said, to convince the world that these videos were real. By the end of the decade, the GoPro was commonplace in the world of action sports. Every week seemed to bring a revelatory new vantage on some established exploit or trick. And then people began coming up with new moves and feats, to suit the camera.

The producers at GoPro are often athletes themselves, maybe with some film or photography experience. Woodman has always encouraged his employees to hire their friends. Zak Shelhamer, a photographer and former professional snowboarder, joined the company to help edit and produce snow-sport videos and now runs the adventure-sports division. He told me that he'd recently been talking to a pair of young Frenchmen who were planning to row a boat from Monterey to Hawaii. They'd submitted a proposal for a contest the company ran called How Will You GoPro? They didn't win, but Shelhamer gave them some cameras anyway and promised to take an interest in what they might come back with. In discussing the risks, he mentioned a guy who had tried rowing from Australia to New Zealand. "How'd he do?" one of the Frenchmen asked him.

"He drowned," Shelhamer said.

"How'd they figure that out?"

"They found his camera."

After the I.P.O., GoPro's stock price almost doubled and began to develop the characteristics of a so-called battleground stock. On one side were the believers, who, implicitly or not, endorsed the company's branded content aspirations. (One Wall Street analyst last week called GoPro a "movement.") On the other side were the skeptics who suspected that the stock's rise had as much to do with a love for the product as for its real long-term prospects—cute and fancy winning out, for now, over hard and cold. They note that bigger companies are now making similar cameras (one can argue which are the best), and so they wonder how long GoPro can stay on top. The cautionary example, cited by doubters and by GoPro itself, is the Flip, the briefly ubiquitous digital camcorder, which got overtaken by smartphones and is now out of business.

The company wants to capitalize on the mass-market home-video urge, the camera's aptitude for capturing what GoPro's president, Tony Bates, calls "life's great moments," and yet retain its reputation as a kind of philosopher's stone, capable of transforming ordinary experience into magical footage. (Two tips: "Slow it down and you look like a pro." "The closer the better.") In some respects, the GoPro is like the Brownie and the Polaroid, devices that democratized photography and revolutionized the way we think about the past and even the way we fashion the present,

FACE DOWN

What are you doing on this side of the dark?
You chose that side, and those you left
feel your image across their sleeping lids
as a blinding atomic blast.
Last we knew,
you were suspended midair
like an angel for a pageant off the room
where your wife slept. She had
to cut you down who'd been (I heard)
so long holding you up. We all tried to,
faced with your need, which we somehow
understood and felt for and took
into our veins like smack. And you
must be lured by that old pain smoldering
like woodsmoke across the death boundary.
Prowl here, I guess, if you have to bother somebody.
Or, better yet, go bother God, who shaped
that form you despised from common clay.
That light you swam so hard away from
still burns, like a star over a desert or atop
a tree in a living room where a son's photos
have been laid face down for the holiday.

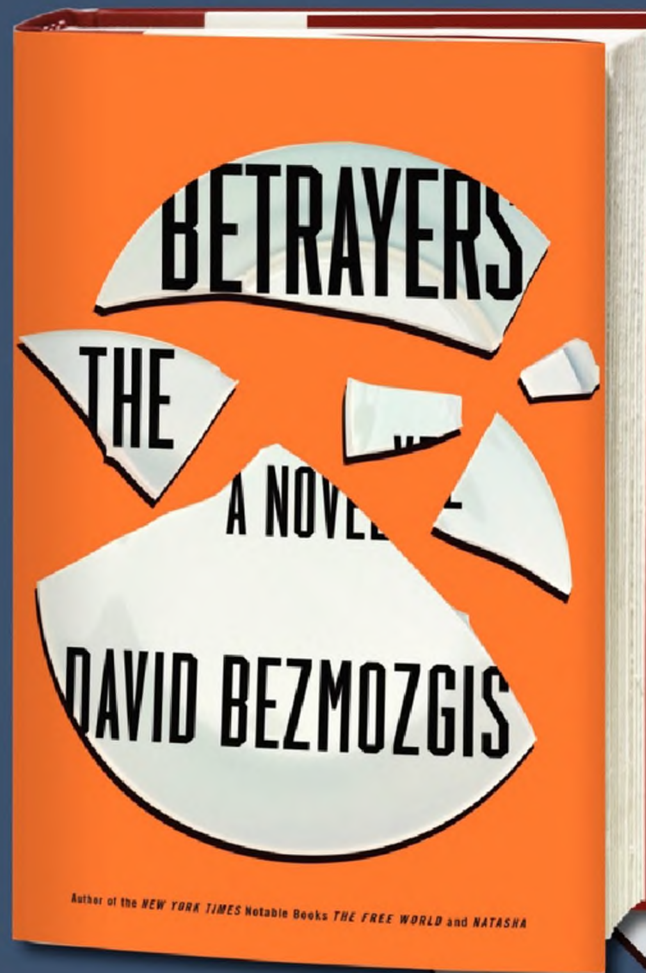
—*Mary Karr*

"ONE OF THE FOREMOST WRITERS OF HIS GENERATION."

—BEN FOUNTAIN, author of *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*

"DISPATCHED WITH A GRIPPING ELEGANCE."
—JOSHUA FERRIS, author of *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour*

"A beautifully written exploration of the role fate can play in the finer distinctions between a heroic life and a villainous one."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)



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"May I air-quote you?"

• •

with an eye to how it will look later, when we linger over photographs of it. But the analogy comes up short, because GoPro videos aspire to go viral. You're sharing the photos of your ski trip not just with your family and a few friends but, if you're any good, with thousands, if not millions, of people. The GoPro, by implication, asks its users to push a little harder, as both subjects and filmmakers. Be a Hero: The premise from the start has been that you, in every way an amateur, can go pro—on both sides of the lens. It's karaoke, but with the full Marshall stack.

The short video synonymous with GoPro is a kind of post-literate diary, a stop on the way to a future in which everything will be filmed from every point of view. Humans have always recorded their experiences, in an array of media and for a variety of reasons. Not until very recently, with the advent of digital photography and video, and unlimited storage and distribution capacity, has it been conceivable to film everything. As we now more than ever communicate through pictures, either still or moving, perhaps our lives come closer to Susan Sontag's imagined "anthology of images." An obvious example is the people who film concerts on their smartphones. Will they ever watch the video? And if they do will it measure up to the concert, which they half missed? Of course not. They film the concert to certify their attendance and convey their good fortune. The frame corroborates.

The computer scientist Gordon Bell, a former Digital Equipment Corporation engineer, an early developer of the Internet, and later a top researcher at Microsoft, spent several years as the main subject of a life-logging experiment called MyLifeBits, inspired by the work of the scientist Vannevar Bush, who, in 1945, wrote, "The camera hound of the future wears on his forehead a lump a little larger than a walnut." (To store all the images, and everything else, Bush envisioned a device called the "memex," short for memory extender.) Bell, in addition to digitizing every document, object, phone conversation, and transaction in his life, wore a Microsoft SenseCam around his neck. It snapped a photo every twenty seconds.

"What you're capturing is one thing," he told me. "The other is when are you going to use it." He'd recently gone to a conference on memory, sponsored by something called the Institute for the Future. Apparently, psychologists and neurologists have discovered that photos or video of an event are more effective than notes or conversation at helping people remember an experience.

Bell is amazed that a surfer in California cornered the market for what he calls go-everywhere cameras. "Where were the Japanese?" he said. "They totally ignored the fact that you could have a camera like this at this price point. But really it's not the camera—it's the Internet."

At any rate, he predicts that eventually GoPros and their ilk, as well as contrivances like Google Glass, will be supplanted by truly wearable cameras, with virtually no volume (a card, or a chip, or, one imagines, an implant in the retina). "Is there a time in the future where people will record everything they see and hear?" Bell asked. "Yes. It's at least a decade away." The difficulty arises in the sorting—a pain in the edit-ass of big-data proportions. "It requires an enormous amount of software."

By now, so much video is being produced that it's hard to imagine a fate for it other than obsolescence. Where does all this video go? If it's in the cloud, will it all come falling back to earth, in an apocalypse of pets, babies, head-cam porn, flight lessons, golf swings, and unicycle tricks?

Earlier this summer, I attended the GoPro Mountain Games, in Vail, Colorado, a competition-cum-festival featuring mountain bikers, rock climbers, and other outdoor athletes. Teeming with GoPros, the village, ersatz Alpine to begin with, felt a little like the set of a ski-town "Brigadoon." One afternoon, I went whitewater kayaking down Gore Creek with Eric and Dane Jackson, father-and-son professional freestyle kayakers and GoPro ambassadors. The paddling wasn't hard, and yet the Jacksons, who routinely descend steep creeks and giant waterfalls, seemed intent on making my outing into an accomplishment worthy of recording and then foisting onto the world. Now and then, Dane paddled over, spat on his fingers, and rubbed saliva on the lens of the GoPro on the bow of my boat. We drifted past a man who was operating a quadcopter drone with a GoPro attached. It swooped over us and then receded upriver. Above the takeout, in town, a little girl with a GoPro on her forehead passed over us on a zip line. On bridges and banks: GoPros everywhere. We were mayflies, flashing through the frames of strangers.

When we were done, Eric Jackson,

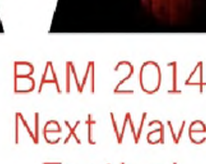
using GoPro's editing program, made a thirty-second video of our trip and posted it on his Facebook page. He scrolled down, interested only in how much attention his posts were getting, not in what others had to say. "I don't read any of this," he said. "I don't read Facebook. I don't watch the other videos. I don't want to read everyone else's diaries. I write a diary." He posts a video almost every day, in part to promote himself and his business (he also manufactures kayaks), but also out of some compulsion to leave a record of his exploits—to draw on the walls of the cave.

Two years ago, my son, then ten, won a GoPro in a school raffle. On a ski vacation that spring, he affixed it to the top of his helmet with the standard mount—Tinkywinky, we called him, after the Teletubby with the triangle on its head—and let it roll most of the day, five to fifteen minutes at a stretch. What struck me, while watching some of the footage on a laptop later, was the idiosyncratic ordinariness of it. As he skied, he whistled to himself, made odd sounds, looked around at the mountains, shouted to his brother and his cousin, cried out at the slightest hint of air, and now and then bent forward and filmed upside down through his legs. Even though the camera was turned outward, filled mainly by the sight of the terrain sliding past, it provided, more than anything, a glimpse into the mind of a dreamy and quiet boy—who, to my eyes, during the day, had been just a nose, his features and expressions otherwise hidden by helmet, neck gaiter, and goggles. I didn't need a camera to show me what he looked like to the world, but was delighted to find one that could show me what the world looked like to him. It captured him better than any camera pointed at him could. This was a proxy, of sorts.

This past spring, he again spent a few days skiing with the camera on his head—Tinkywinky at twelve. His best footage came from a powder morning, his first ever in the Rockies; the camera aimed just past the tips of his skis. Every civilian who skis powder with a GoPro on his head gets the same kind of shot, pole tips rhythmically appearing at the edges of the frame, ski tips porpoising in and out of the snow, the occasional whoop of joy. In my son's video, the whistling and whimsical attention of two years before had given way to a devoted concentration and perhaps an earnest attempt to record what he, in the manner of skiers everywhere, deemed a noteworthy experience. Later, he shot footage while following me through gaps in the trees. That night, I watched it—again in the manner of skiers everywhere—for glimpses of myself.

A month later, he had to make a presentation in class, and he decided to do his about the GoPro. Planning to demonstrate his handiwork, he edited the footage, but then, at the last moment, decided it was too commonplace. It wasn't awesome enough—or, anyway, he didn't want his classmates to think that he thought it was awesome. Instead, he featured, in his report, a famous video from the P.O.V. of a mountain biker named Kelly McGarry doing a backflip over a canyon gap in Virgin, Utah. My son had become a habitual consumer of GoPro videos. Even as a grommet, he had standards. He no longer thought of it as home video.

At many ski areas nowadays, you can rent a GoPro for the day. The slopes teem with Teletubbies. People have helmet mounts for P.O.V. cameras of every make, and even smartphones in waterproof shells. It's not just groms or pros. It's grampas and gapers, too ("gapers" being the shredder's term for hapless wannabes). A ski trip has become a kind of life-logging vacation. People who'd never film a minute of their ordinary lives deem a day riding chairlifts and creeping along groomed trails to be worthy of wall-to-wall coverage. The sense among many serious skiers is that the cameras have contributed to heedless, or at least distracted, behavior in the backcountry. Any attention given to getting the shot, or posing for it, is attention diverted from the task of staying safe. Of course, there is no data to support this, and it could well be mere curmudgeonly grumbling. It's just that there are so many videos of bad stuff happening to backcountry skiers. GoPros have made it possible to see, really for the first time, the way the snowpack jigsaws around you (a skier's

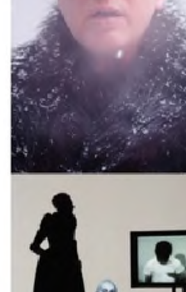

BAM 2014
Next Wave
Festival

Upcoming Highlights

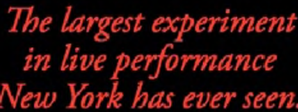
Music
Landfall
Sep 23—27
Laurie Anderson,
Kronos Quartet

Theater
ABACUS
Sep 24—27
Early Morning Opera,
Lars Jan

Theater/Dance
Alan Smithee
Directed
This Play
Sep 30—Oct 4
Big Dance Theater,
Paul Lazar,
Annie-B Parson



Theater/Music
Shakespeare's
Sonnets
Oct 7—12
Berliner Ensemble,
Rufus Wainwright,
Robert Wilson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Photos (left): *Embers*, by Ros Kavanagh; (right column, top to bottom): Laurie Anderson, by Tim Knox; *ABACUS*, by Calvin Knight; *Alan Smithee Directed This Play*, by Julieta Cervantes; *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, by Lesley Leslie-Spinks.

version of a land mine's click) when an avalanche kicks off or how it looks and sounds to be buried when the slide comes to a stop.

When it ends badly, the camera can be a kind of black box. A fantasy of the film-everything movement is an end to forensic uncertainty. Wearable P.O.V. cameras are also coming into vogue as a tool for soldiers and police. The premise is that reviewability makes for greater accountability—that seeing is knowing. After the Michael Brown shooting, in Ferguson, many commentators, accustomed already to the ubiquity of cameras, were dismayed that there was no footage of the incident. In this instance, we may wish we had some, but a world in which the police film every interaction with the public is not all sweetness and light. You may catch some bad cops, but you'd also hamstring the good ones. By enforcing uninterpretable standards of exchange, a video record has the effect of a mandatory sentence. It deprives the police of discretion, and the public of leniency. There are many things we'd rather not see or have seen.

GoPro, like Google Glass, has the insidious effect of making the pervasiveness of cameras seem playful and benign when it may one day be anything but. The *Economist* called the film-everything culture "the people's panopticon"—the suggestion being that with all these nifty devices we might be unwittingly erecting a vast prison of self-administered surveillance.

Andrew Rossig started BASE jumping in 2004, under the tutelage of an Englishman who was a proponent of "bandit jumping"—that is, jumping off things you are not allowed to. He got his first GoPro in 2010. It was much lighter than existing wearable cameras, which typically involved the camera on one side of the helmet and a battery pack on the other, a strain and a threat to the neck. You might say that a BASE jump consists of two main ingredients: the jump itself and the record of it. The GoPro made feasible part two.

Rossig, a carpenter who works in New York City, building movie sets, began nursing an ambition to film himself leaping off all the city's iconic tall structures, but it eventually became clear to him that it wasn't very safe and that the authorities would never permit it. Still, a man could dabble. In 2012, he was arrested, with a fellow BASE jumper named James Brady, while attempting to jump off a thirty-three-story tower in Co-op City, in the Bronx. Not long afterward, they began planning a jump off One World Trade Center, which Brady, an ironworker, had helped to build. They talked about making a movie out of the whole thing or not filming any of it at all. They agreed that it was perhaps unwise and potentially incriminating, at least, to film their conversations and preparations. Still, isn't the point of jumping off an iconic building to create and share a record of the deed? Rossig felt they had to have footage, at least for the benefit one day of children and grandchildren.

One night last September, the two of them, with a third jumper and a lookout man, sneaked through a hole in the security fence at the construction site and walked up the hundred and four flights to the top of the tower. They wore GoPros on their helmets but opted not to turn them on, lest the red indicator lights give them away. Only once they were on top of the tower, at the edge, preparing to leap, did they start shooting.

Each of the three jumpers shot footage. The first jumper pulled his chute immediately and soared way out over the Hudson and then tacked back toward the towers. Brady was the second to go; his video would be the most widely distributed. Rossig went last, did a somersault in the air, and pulled his chute later in the plunge than the others. He actually passed Brady. Altogether, the three original videos have been viewed almost three and a half million times on YouTube. One is struck by the tranquillity and silence before the jump, the mixture of reverence and apprehension. Often GoPro undertakings have a frivolous air, but this one's no joke. Their silhouettes are backlit by a vast plain of city lights. One jumper coaxes another, with a gentleness uncommon to GoPro-land. Most striking of all is the vision, once the plummet begins, of the illuminated glass façade of the tower sliding past, the pace accelerating yet oddly slow, almost elegant, with no trace really of violence or terror. In 1878, "Sallie Gardner at a Gallop," in a sense history's first film, depicting a thoroughbred in profile, surprised many viewers who'd previously misconstrued the mechanics of a galloping horse. These days, the drift of One World Trade's lit windows has a similar effect. So this is free fall. The pace shifts abruptly when each jumper pulls his chute. They drift toward the pavement. At the end of each video, the jumper lands in abandoned streets and scurries toward the shadows and a getaway car.

That night, a passerby caught a glimpse of them and called 911. The police checked security footage from the Goldman Sachs building nearby. They noticed a suspicious car, and then, using footage from other cameras in the area, in an ever-widening radius (there are more than four thousand working security cameras and license-plate scanners below Canal Street), they identified the vehicle (apparently, the N.Y.P.D. keeps a record of every vehicle that crosses into Lower Manhattan) and eventually, in part by subpoenaing cell-phone records, the jumpers themselves, who, in the immediate aftermath of the jump, had dispersed and refrained from calling each other. A month afterward, they got together with thumb drives to watch and share each other's footage of the jump. But once the cops had identified them, five months after the jump, they turned themselves in. It was only then that they posted their jump footage on YouTube, in the hope that the beauty and strangeness of it might persuade the public, if not prosecutors, that they meant no harm.

"The legal advice we got was that we should show we're not bad guys," Rossig said. "If we're going to get in trouble for it, maybe everyone should see how amazing it was. Who else is going to get that camera angle?"

After a week, the videos had attracted more than three million hits. Still, GoPro's media staff did not reach out to them. "They didn't want to be associated with us," Rossig said.

He and the others now face numerous charges, including one felony, and as much as seven years in prison. The police have confiscated their cameras. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

PENTAGON COP AID HITS SNAGS

BY BRUCE McCALL

Since President Obama took office, the Pentagon has transferred to police departments tens of thousands of machine guns; nearly 200,000 ammunition magazines; thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment; and hundreds of silencers, armored cars and aircraft.
—*NYTimes.com.*

From: Chief Z. Z. Lawless, Mumsdorf Police Department, Mumsdorf
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

My men and I sincerely appreciated the overnight railway-flatcar delivery of the XX-B Annihilator Halftrack Urban Ambassador, which is already earning its keep. Thanks to its jumbo rubber shells and its six-hundred-per-second firing capacity, those local moms are going to think twice before they try organizing a march to protest school-lunch cuts. However, I have one problem: our XX-B is out of fuel and nobody in the department can find the gas cap. Help!

*

From: Gus Lard, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, Finksville Metropolitan Volunteer Fire Brigade
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

The instruction manual that came with the UT-777 Barbarian helicopter you sent appears to be printed in Chinese (next time in English, please, and no MSG!), so we're having trouble figuring out the recommended effective height for dropping napalm bombs on the public-housing complex without torching the greens of the nearby golf and country club.

Can you lend a hand?

*

From: V. Vern Cudgelson, Director of Public Works and Law Enforcement, Hyena County
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

Our department's first outing aboard the M333 Kaboom all-terrain defensive heavy tank you so kindly gave us was going great—pedestrians scattered like chickens as we traversed Main Street, rotating the unit's suite of cannons for range-finding purposes—until we hit a glitch. My men hadn't realized that Main Street was being repaved that day. After locking down for half an hour to set up and launch the department drone, pursuant to pursuing a suspected no-parking agitator, our crew returned to find that the asphalt had hardened and the twenty-three-ton Kaboom was stuck, completely immobilized.

NISHANT CHOKSI

Could someone at the Pentagon e-mail us a requisition-request form for the Marine Corps's biggest crane? The M333 Kaboom is blocking traffic all the way past the Route 632 intersection.

*

From: Buster Mashfoot, Chief Sergeant, Pankster City Bureau of Citizen Surveillance, Pankster City
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

Me and my deputy, cousin Roy, are pleased to report complete success in uncrating the A-498-Class Mayhem Jr. automatic self-propelled semi-mobile peace-delivery system that was recently delivered by an Air Force cargo plane to this bureau. A hearty thanks to the "Gifts for the Good Guys" Law-Enforcement Self-Defense Program.

The accompanying instructional CD classifies this as a two-man item, but we reckon it needs a crew of three: one to man the laser direction indicator, one to control the computer readouts, and one to operate it. And our department's 2014-15 budget has no room for hiring a third officer.

Also, although it was obvious right away that this item is a breathtaking technological advance, can you please inform us exactly what it is for? Roy thinks it's something to do with intercepting Greenpeace smoke signals. If you could send a diagram, a certified trainer, and that "third man" to help us get the thing moving, it would be much appreciated.

*

From: Arnie Dunceforth, Acting Chief Pro Tem, Department of Human Control, Whackem Center
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

Our department hereby acknowledges receipt of five hundred fifty-litre cannisters of XXXX Lungbuster troublemaker-dispersion vapor. I am writing in place of our chief, who, in the name of speed, removed the lid of one cannister with a crowbar. So, does the Pentagon by any chance stock pairs of human lungs? If so, please forward to the Department of Human Control, Whackem Center, stamped "RUSH."

*

From: Sergeant Rocco Smith, Admiral of the Silt City Regional Marine Armada, Town of Silt City
To: "Gifts for the Good Guys," c/o the Pentagon

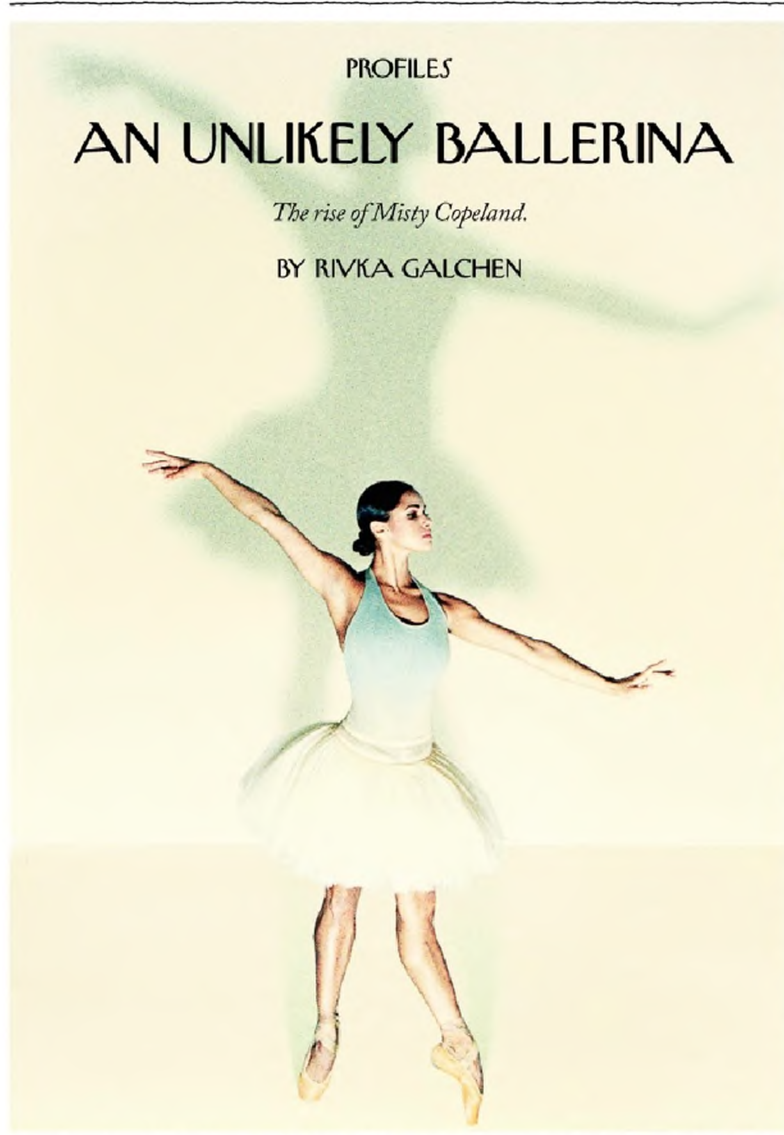
Thanks for the G.F.G.G. night airdrop. Question: Is the NX-900 King Crocodile Amphibious Water-Rescue and Ground-Attack Vehicle seaworthy? Reason I ask: the skipper barely escaped with his life when the King Crocodile gurgled and sank as soon as he entered deep water in our local swimming hole while pursuing semi-nude bathers. A design flaw, perhaps? Also, if we manage to locate a licensed plumber with scuba gear who can effect repairs, might the Pentagon pick up the bill? ♦

PROFILES

AN UNLIKELY BALLERINA

The rise of Misty Copeland.

BY RIVKA GALCHEN



Copeland's goal is "to become the first African-American principal dancer with A.B.T."

On a recent August afternoon, near Nineteenth Street, two young girls with blond hair pulled back in ponytails ran past me, one of them calling out, "Daddy, Daddy, I just saw Misty Copeland!" The tone of voice might as well have been used to announce a sighting of Katy Perry, or Snow White. A few steps later, I entered the tiny lobby of a building on Broadway, where an old electric fan was not quite keeping the doorman cool. A caged elevator took me up to the third floor, where I passed through a low-ceilinged hallway crowded with unlabelled posters of ballet greats, until I reached an expansive fluorescent-lit room with two walls of slightly warped mirrors and air-conditioning units sealed into the windows with black electrical tape. The American Ballet Theatre soloists Misty Copeland and Alexandre Hammoudi were rehearsing the pas de deux from Act II of "Swan Lake," the scene in which we first meet Odette; an evil sorcerer's spell has left her a swan by day and a human by night. Prince Siegfried is poised to kill the swan, but then witnesses its transformation into a beautiful young woman. "It's not that you turn her," Kevin McKenzie, A.B.T.'s artistic director since 1992 and a former principal dancer, told Hammoudi. "It's that she's startled, so she turns to you." In the movement they were practicing, Odette is downstage left and Prince Siegfried walks up behind her. Odette is naïve, uncannily beautiful, and destined to die, but she is also, in each production, a very particular dancer. McKenzie continued, "And then you're near this creature, and you're both surprised by your proximity."

Although ballet fans never lack for darlings, rarely does a dancer become an old-fashioned star, one recognized outside the realm of people with nuanced opinions about the alternative endings to "Swan Lake." But Misty Copeland, who is thirty-two, has not only performed some of the most coveted and challenging roles in classical ballet; she has also danced atop a grand piano during Prince's 2010 Welcome 2 America tour and starred in a Diet Dr Pepper commercial, and, a few days before the "Swan Lake" rehearsal, was featured in a commercial for Under Armour that within a week of its release had more than four million views on YouTube. In the ad, a voice-over reads a rejection letter detailing why "the candidate" is not a good fit for ballet—the letter is a fiction, albeit one not unrelated to Copeland's career—while Copeland, who is wearing a sports bra and underwear, slowly rises onto pointe. In chiaroscuro lighting that is usually reserved for boxers' bodies, the camera focusses on Copeland's substantial, sinewy musculature. "I Will What I Want" is the tagline; a billboard in SoHo features a similar muscles-and-determination image. While it is disheartening to be reminded that product endorsement is the strongest measure of mainstream success, it feels good to see a woman who is doing more than being pretty become the kind of idol commonly associated with the stars of ESPN. Most ballerinas don't have pensions, they rarely dance past the age of forty (injuries often end their careers earlier than that), and a soloist at A.B.T. earns between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand dollars a year. The great Anna Pavlova endorsed Pond's Vanishing Cream.

American Ballet Theatre is typically considered the best company for classical ballet in the nation. For it, Copeland has played the Firebird, in "Firebird" (think wild jumps); Swanilda, in "Coppélia" (dirndls and dolls); Gamzatti, in

PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC

"La Bayadère" (fury and theophany); and Lescaut's mistress, in "Manon" (blond wig and longing). This month, she played the lead in "Swan Lake," the ballet equivalent of playing Hamlet for the Royal Shakespeare Company; in the course of two hours, the ballerina must become the supremely innocent Odette and the masterfully manipulative Odile, who is pretending to be Odette; of course, she must also be a swan. Copeland has danced with A.B.T. since 2001, and performed as a soloist since 2007, but until recently her important solo roles have largely been in relatively modern pieces; all her major roles in full-length ballets have been performed in the past two years. Following one after the other, her recent roles create the illusion of Copeland's proceeding along a kind of inevitable music-box destiny, but her path to becoming a star ballerina has been as dramatic, unlikely, and hinged on coincidence as the plots of most ballets—the ones that have plots, anyway, like the classical ones she prefers, which require tremendous endurance and technical expertise to produce spectacles we associate with spun sugar.

Copeland grew up in Los Angeles, as one of six children. Her memoir, "Life in Motion," written with Charisse Jones, portrays her childhood as having been in some ways idyllic: swimming at the beach, a circle of loving and talented siblings, a charismatic and beautiful mother, and a gift for responsibility and leadership. But another version of Copeland's childhood, which also comes through in her memoir, is the hardship tale: not knowing her real father, a succession of differently difficult stepfathers, and uncertainty about whether there would be dinner on any given night.

As a young girl, Copeland loved dancing to Mariah Carey videos, rewatching a movie about the gymnast Nadia Comaneci, and being very prepared for school, where she was a hall monitor and the class treasurer. She usually showed up an hour early. Until the age of thirteen, she took no gymnastics or dance classes, though she did take and love a woodworking class at the local Boys & Girls Club.

Copeland is considered an unlikely ballerina: she is curvy and she is black, neither of which is a common attribute in the field. But it is her very late beginning and rapid attainment of virtuosity that are arguably without precedent for a female ballerina. (Rudolf Nureyev had a famously late and chaotic start, his early training having been limited by the vagaries of the post-Second World War Soviet Union.) Many professional ballet dancers begin their training around the age of three. Every dancer is a synthesis of givens—height, limb length, natural turnout—and intense effort, but Copeland's late start can exaggerate the tendency we might have to regard a ballerina as simply touched by something divine.

When she was thirteen, and very shy, Copeland followed the lead of her older sister Erica and tried out for the middle-school drill team. She choreographed her own piece, set to George Michael's "I Want Your Sex." The closing move was a split, head held high. The evening after the audition, she received a call saying that she had been named captain of the squad of sixty.

The team's coach, Elizabeth Cantine, was new, and Erica, who had been a drill-team star, told Misty that this was unfortunate; the old coach had led the team to wins all over the state, while Cantine was an unknown, just someone who'd been hired to teach history and English. But Cantine had a background in classical dance, and, after working with Misty for a short time she suggested that she try the ballet class at the Boys & Girls Club. "I wasn't excited by the idea of being with people I didn't know, and though I loved movement, I had no particular feelings about ballet," Copeland said. "But I didn't want to displease Liz."

Cindy Bradley, who taught the class, told me, "I remember putting my hand on her foot, putting it into a tendu pointe, and she was definitely able to go into that position—she was able to go into all the positions that I put her into that day—but it wasn't about that." Bradley said she had a kind of vision, "right then, that first day, of this little girl becoming amazing."

Copeland recalls her first class differently: "I was so embarrassed. I didn't know anything that the other girls in the class knew; I thought I was doing everything wrong."

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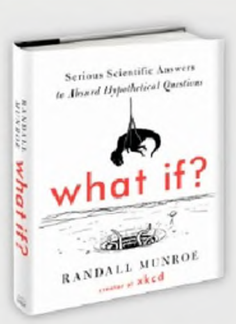

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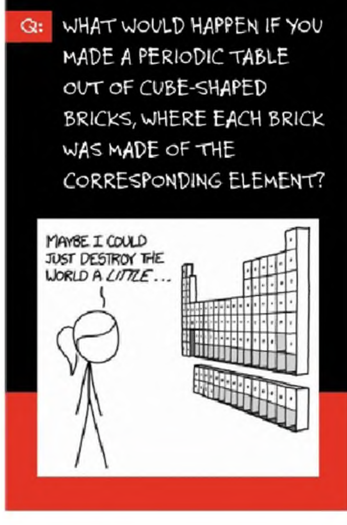

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shoulders were sloped, her legs were long, her knees were hyperextended, and she was effortlessly flexible and strong even as she was very slight. She was in the habit of entertaining her siblings (and slightly weirding them out) by linking her hands together, putting them over her head behind her ears, and then getting her elbows to bend in the wrong direction. She also had a natural ability to quickly memorize and mimic any movement she saw. She began attending ballet classes five days a week, at Bradley's studio in San Pedro. "One day, it just clicked," Copeland told me. "I began to understand what it was."

According to Copeland, the beginning of her ballet career overlapped with her family's abrupt move out of her second stepfather's spacious home and into a single room of the Sunset Inn, near a highway and liquor stores, in Gardena. The move left her with a long commute to school and then home from ballet practice. Her brother Douglas recalls them missing their bus one afternoon, and walking the thirteen miles home. Seeing an exhausted Copeland one evening, her mother, Sylvia DeLaCerna, told her that she had to give up ballet. Copeland didn't protest; that wasn't what she was like.

But the next evening DeLaCerna and Bradley spoke, and they decided that Misty would spend the weekdays at the Bradley home and weekends with her family. "I hadn't been married that long," Bradley explained, "and we had a two-year-old son, but I just walked into our home that night and called out to my husband, 'I have Misty here with me, and she's going to be staying with us.'"

Bradley waived Copeland's ballet-school fees, and other community members contributed to the cost of her leotards and pointe shoes. "When I was dancing, I felt in control, and happy," Copeland said. "I'm a Virgo, so I really like to be in control." For most of the next three years, she lived with the Bradleys. Fairly predictable tensions arose between the two families. "I felt very loved and accepted by the Bradleys—I felt like a member of the family," Copeland told me. "I'm not sure my attitude was so great when I would go home and complain about canned string beans, and say that I preferred shrimp scampi. My mom was working all day, and she had six children." Copeland shared a room with the Bradleys' young son, Wolf, attended synagogue with Bradley's parents, and at the dinner table all attention was centered on her and her goals. Bradley's husband, a modern-dance teacher, was Copeland's pas-de-deux instructor and partner. "I loved the attention," Copeland told me.

At fifteen, Copeland attended the San Francisco Ballet summer intensive program on a full scholarship; at the end of it she was invited to study with the school. (She turned the invitation down, planning to try out for her dream company, A.B.T.) Copeland believes, in retrospect, that her mother saw her summer success as evidence that she no longer needed the Bradleys—she could now move back in with her family and attend a ballet school nearby. At the time, however, both Copeland and the Bradleys felt that this would damage Copeland's career. Everyone panicked. In her memoir, Copeland relates that the Bradleys introduced her to a lawyer, and she filed for emancipation. DeLaCerna filed restraining orders against the Bradleys, claiming that they had brainwashed her daughter. Copeland was too young, by a few weeks, to take action anyway. At one point, police officers picked Copeland up, so that she could be reunited with her mother, and for the next decade she saw little of the Bradleys.

"It was a nightmare," Copeland told me. Her story was covered extensively in newspapers and on television. "I had no places left for privacy, where I could feel safe. Everyone had an opinion about what happened." Eventually, all sides withdrew their claims. A while later, Copeland went with Elizabeth Cantine to try out for A.B.T.'s summer intensive session; she was accepted, and at the end of the program she was invited to join the studio company. Her mother expressed reservations, but ultimately said

that the choice was Copeland's. After spending another year at home, Copeland moved to New York.

"None of this is a fairy tale," Craig Salstein, an A.B.T. soloist who has danced with Copeland since her earliest days in the company, told me. He was talking about ballet in general, but it applies equally to Copeland's career path. Only a few months after she became a member of A.B.T.'s corps de ballet, at the age of eighteen, she found out that she had a lower-vertebral fracture. She had to wear a brace twenty-three hours of the day, and for a year she was unable to dance at all. A doctor, learning that she had not yet menstruated, told her that this was likely contributing to weakness in her bones. He recommended that Copeland begin taking birth-control pills to induce puberty. Within ten days, she began menstruating, and in a short time her figure changed from ballet-tiny to Marilyn Monroe. Her body, which at the start of her career had been considered perfect for ballet—she was said to have the "Balanchine body"—was suddenly no longer the ideal. "I was scheduled to do Clara, in 'The Nutcracker,' before that injury," Copeland said. More than a decade passed before she was offered the role again.

Copeland says that eating disorders are not as pervasive among ballerinas as people think. Nearly every woman has at times felt that the shape of her body has determined an overwhelming proportion of someone's response to her; ballet dancers, so much more intimately aware of their bodies' appearance and ability both, might—through professionalism, through necessity—have a healthier way of relating to their bodies than the rest of us. Then again, the stakes are higher. Copeland had never given much thought to her diet, but when it was suggested to her that she needed to "lengthen"—balletspeak for losing weight—she rebelled. This was pretty much the first time in her life that she had done so, and, in the way of a young person, she mostly damaged herself.

"I didn't want to be seen ordering huge amounts of food, but the local Krispy Kreme would do deliveries if the order was large enough," Copeland said. "After practice, I would order two dozen doughnuts and then, alone in my apartment, eat most of them." She felt that her ballet career was getting away from her, that she was far from family, that she was alone. "I was barely over a hundred pounds, but I felt so fat, and even a stranger at a club, when I told him I was a ballerina, said, 'No way,'" Copeland recalled. "It took me about five years to figure out how my body worked, and to understand how to make my muscles more lean."

Even though Copeland now has a more elongated—more classical—physique, and no longer has a double-D chest, she remains more buxom than most ballet dancers, and also more visibly athletic. A significant part of what distinguishes her is her un-classical

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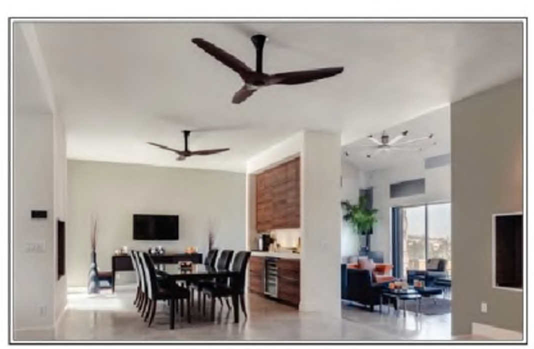

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body. Marie Taglioni, the nineteenth-century ballerina, is thought to have had special appeal because her proportions didn't conform to the ideal; her rounded back made her lean forward a tiny bit, so that she seemed on the verge of losing her balance; her physical limitations ended up shaping what became her definitive style. And it was arguably with Taglioni that ballet—a man's game until a hundred years before, with men *"en travesti"* even playing the roles of women in most serious productions—began to be about ballerinas.

In a recent production of "La Bayadère," at the Metropolitan Opera House, Copeland played Gamzatti, a raja's daughter who has been promised the warrior Solor as a husband, even as Solor has declared his love for a temple dancer, Nikiya. Copeland's scene with Alina Cojocaru's Nikiya was tense and complicatedly erotic—a highlight of the ballet. But it was the scene that followed, in which Gamzatti mostly sits at the side of the stage, that stayed with me. While Nikiya dances for Gamzatti's betrothal, Gamzatti has to put on a game face about the love triangle. Copeland's commitment to the minimal movement required by her role—to the expressiveness of her neck and her long-fingered hands—means that emotion must be compressed into the smallest gestures. Even her simple walk was mesmerizing, her stiff yellow tutu moving as softly as a sea anemone. (Ballet costuming often seems ridiculous at first glance, but usually reveals its own special mechanics.) When I went backstage after the show to meet Copeland, a very slight, smiling woman came out, wearing a black sports bra and overalls that left her narrow back exposed. The formidable Gamzatti was gone. The actors Nicole Ari Parker and Boris Kodjoe had brought their two young children to meet Copeland, and when she posed for a photo with them she might have been the third child. People often find that ballerinas seem smaller offstage, an effect attributable, in part, to the elongation of their legs in pointe shoes, but also to charisma.

Those of us who are outside the world of ballet tend to think of it as a very old art form: Louis XIII wrote ballets, and Louis XIV danced in forty productions. But ballet, like so many venerable and beautiful things, has been too easily co-opted into the fallacy of our assumption that its worth today is best measured by fidelity to its original form. In the ballet of the French aristocracy, different body types were assigned to different character types—tall people played nobles, shorter people played comic roles—and, in a dance, the choreography emphasized the king's literal superiority over the court. After the French Revolution, those norms changed, and the ballet we now think of as classical is, in large part, derived from a radical reaction against original ideals.

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The story of ballet in America also began as a devotion to ballet as it once was; it was seen as something from across the ocean. In the nineteen-forties, Ballet Theatre, the precursor to A.B.T., an American company, was billed as "The Greatest in Russian Ballet." As the historian and former dancer Jennifer Homans details, in "Apollo's Angels," it was not until after the Second World War that a distinctively American ballet began to form. (This followed some tender failings with ballet scenarios about Billy the Kid and Pocahontas.) The United States government, which took a Cold War interest in developing an American ballet—and culture—that could rival the Russians', began to fund émigré dancers and choreographers who had fled to New York. When the dance companies toured abroad, they travelled in Army buses and slept at Air Force bases. "I could represent America . . . better than ice boxes and electric bathtubs can," George Balanchine said. Russian dancers who came to America were treated like trophies: Rudolf Nureyev was flown on a private plane to have tea at the White House with Jacqueline Kennedy.

Ballet, and ballerinas, have been deployed to extoll the king, and then the Politburo, and then the President—but the art often exceeded what was asked of it. With the mixed blessing of generous funding, choreographers like Balanchine, Antony Tudor, and Arthur Mitchell created a ballet scene in America that was like nowhere else in the world—radical, classical, old, new, constrained, and wild. Perhaps it's not surprising that some of the ballets most beloved in the U.S. are about captive birds and mistresses treated other than ideally yet remaining devoted.

When I visited Copeland backstage after "La Bayadère," I met a friend of hers, eighty-year-old Raven Wilkinson, an elegant older woman who wore her hair twisted into a topknot. Wilkinson was born in Harlem, and in 1955 joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

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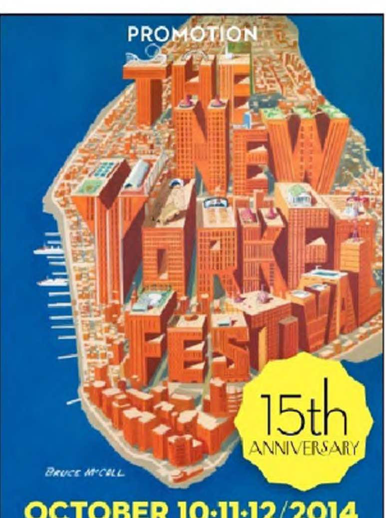

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for its American tours. "I had been told not to try out, that they wouldn't take me, because they toured through cities in the South," Wilkinson said to me, when we met for lunch a while later. She has African, Native American, and European ancestors; she is pale, and onstage she wore powder. "But I thought, Well, if I don't even try out I know I'll never have what I want."

Wilkinson toured with the Ballet Russe for two years, dancing the Chinese solo in "The Nutcracker," a solo in the famous waltz of "Les Sylphides," and in the pas de trois in "Raymonda." Then, in 1957, at a hotel for whites in Atlanta, Wilkinson noticed the hotel manager talking to the director of the ballet. The manager walked over to the elevator operator, who was black, and asked her to point out who among the dancers might be "colored"; she pointed to Wilkinson. The manager called a cab for her—one that served colored people—and she spent the night at a colored hotel. After that, booking agents in the South were aware of the colored ballerina; Wilkinson would sometimes skip the company's Southern engagements and, instead, rejoin the company when it reached Baltimore.

Eventually, Wilkinson left the U.S. to dance with the Dutch National Ballet, encouraged by the black American dancer Sylvester Campbell, who had joined the company. "I swear, he was better even than Nureyev—I used to think his joints were ball bearings," Wilkinson told me. Europe had a reputation for being more open to dancers of color, and the Dutch treat their dancers very well; they receive pensions, and after retirement they are offered training for other work. "But I felt I was American," Wilkinson said. "And, when I was done dancing, I wanted to come home." For many years, she played small roles with the New York City Opera.

The original dream of a uniquely American ballet was of a company that mixed whites and "Negroes"—the term used by George Balanchine, one of the co-founders of New York City Ballet. Balanchine had been influenced by working with Josephine Baker, the black American dancer who became a celebrity in France during the twenties. His vision was only occasionally realized: in his famous "Agon," he choreographed a pas de deux for Diana Adams and Arthur Mitchell, a white woman and a black man. "Agon" was performed in 1957, to critical celebration, even though it could not be shown on television until 1968. Balanchine also made Maria Tallchief, who was of Osage heritage, an early star of the New York City Ballet. (For a time, he also made her his wife.)

Many black ballet dancers, including Wilkinson, were encouraged to concentrate on "African dance," or maybe modern dance or musical theatre—even if they had spent years training in classical ballet. Virginia Johnson, long a lead ballerina and now the artistic director of Dance Theatre of Harlem, a predominantly African-American ballet company, once said she had been told by someone with good intentions that she could never be a ballerina because there aren't any black ballerinas.

That is not quite true today, but it's in the neighborhood of true. "Let's be honest," Susan Fales-Hill, a writer and a philanthropist who served on the board of A.B.T., says. "Most ballet companies look like an Alabama country club in 1952." There is a small number of Asian-American ballerinas, and a small number of black ones. The reasons usually cited include the holdover of antiquated ideas of beauty, the lack of role models, the preference for a uniform look among the corps dancers in a company, and the high cost of years of training. (Pointe shoes, for example, are around seventy dollars a pair, and a serious dancer can easily go through a pair a week.) Lauren Anderson, a longtime principal dancer with the Houston Ballet, was the first African-American woman to reach the rank of principal ballerina with a major American company other than D.T.H. (Principal is the highest rank for a dancer, above soloist.) She played Odette/Odile a number of times before she retired, in 2006. "When we think of ballerinas, we think of pink and pale and fluffy," she told me. "We're not accustomed to thinking of black women's bodies in that context. We're accustomed to thinking of black women as athletic and strong. But all ballerinas are athletic, all ballerinas are strong."

In 2004, when D.T.H. went dormant for nine years, because of financial difficulties, only one of its dancers was offered a job with a major American ballet company. "For many people, even

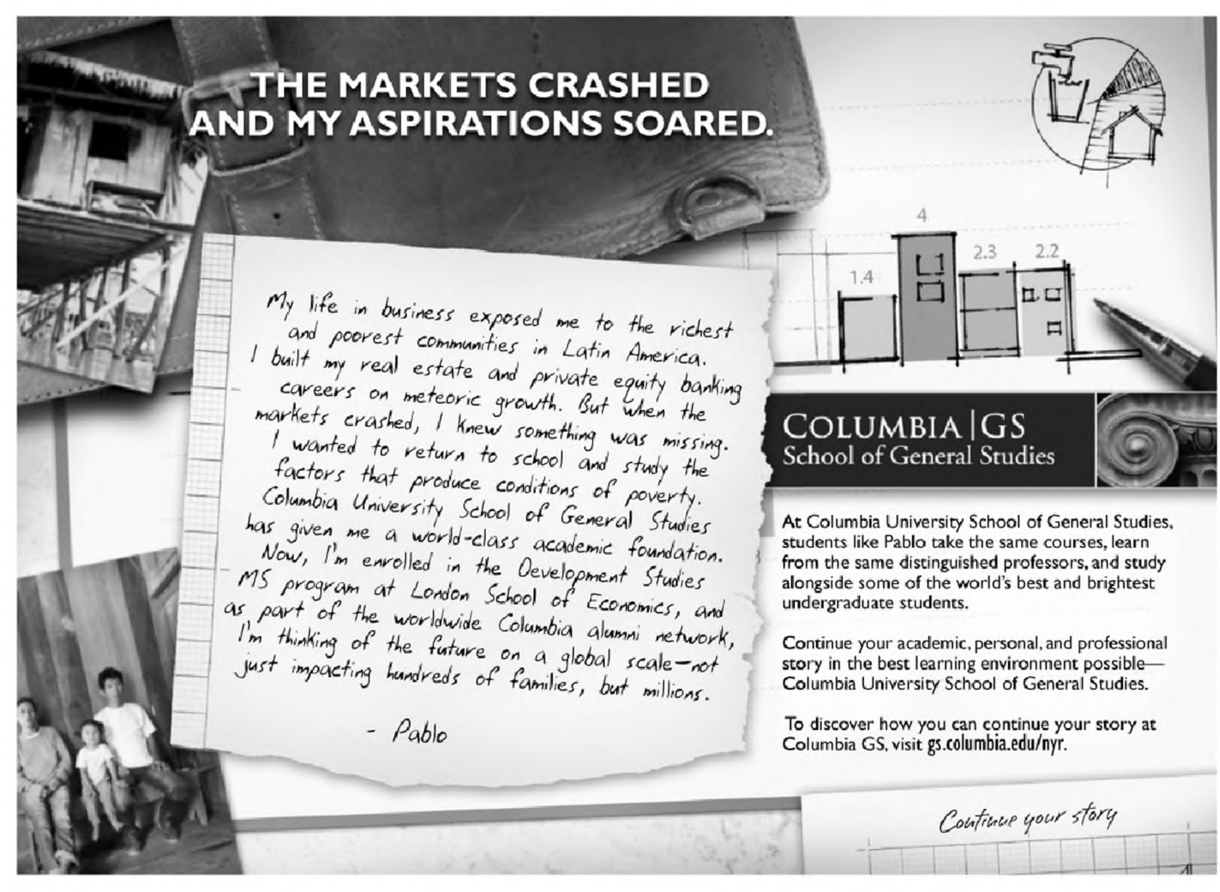
if the physical things are there, this one physical factor—skin color—makes it hard to see the others," Johnson told the critic Marina Harss, in an extended interview that appeared in *DanceTabs*. Johnson has said that she regularly gets calls from ballet companies saying that they are looking for more dancers of color, but the problem goes beyond casting. D.T.H. hosts a summer session for kids from around the country, and "for so many of them this is the first time they're in a classroom that really welcomes them," she said. "But I look at these dancers and I see that they're not being corrected. There are some very basic things going on that reveal that they're being ignored."

Copeland told me, "People will say, 'Isn't it really about class, not race?'" She explained that she sometimes felt a more natural connection to some of the A.B.T. dancers who grew up abroad; in Russia and Cuba, for example, ballet is more a part of popular culture, and dancers come from all social classes. "But I think there is more to it than that. I can see now how I was so well supported, even in my low times, but I don't know if I ever felt like I belonged."

"You can't imagine how much it means to people, to see themselves onstage," Fales-Hill said. At a crowded luncheon held in Copeland's honor by the New York alumnae chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority (founded at Howard University, in 1913), Copeland answered questions about her life and her career, but she also simply listened, as one woman after another—engineers, lawyers, journalists—stood up to praise and bless her. One woman asked her what her goals were, now that she had achieved so much, and Copeland said, right off, like a mantra, "My goal is to become the first African-American principal dancer with A.B.T." After a pause, she added, "And, you know, of course, to get married and have kids." (Copeland lives with her boyfriend, Olu Evans, a lawyer.)

Copeland acts as a mentor to aspiring dancers, including Makeda Roney, a young woman who wrote Copeland a letter while she was in tenth grade, after seeing her perform. Roney, who was recently accepted into a yearlong program with the Joffrey Ballet, in Chicago, says that she calls or writes to Copeland whenever she feels anxious or discouraged. "She's like a sister to me," Roney said. Copeland has also been a public face for A.B.T.'s recent Project Plié initiative, which provides training and scholarships for kids who live in communities where there is little exposure to ballet.

Copeland's artistic and commercial successes make us all feel good—about ballet, about America—and yet that feeling is somewhat tendentious. It is impossible to distill the current role of race in ballet (or in any field) from one woman's career. Copeland's race makes her immediately distinctive in the ballet world, and this has undoubtedly helped her commercial career, but murmurings, on some online dance-discussion threads, that she has been excessively promoted within A.B.T. because of her



race overlook not just her virtuosity but also the many years in which she wasn't a soloist, or even a lead dancer.

The immensely talented young ballet dancer Michaela DePrince, an orphan from Sierra Leone who was adopted at the age of four by a New Jersey family, danced for a short time with D.T.H., but said that she yearned for "the frills, flounce, and romance of classical ballet" that connected her to her childhood love of fairy tales. (D.T.H. is a classical ballet company, but its repertoire largely consists of shorter pieces, rather than long crowd-pleasers like "Romeo and Juliet.") Raven Wilkinson said to me, toward the end of our lunch, "I don't want to sound bitter—I've never been a protester—but when I saw that Michaela DePrince had left for the Dutch National Ballet, as I had, I felt like nothing had changed." She continued, "I asked Michaela, 'What about American companies?' She said she was told she didn't have the right body type."

In April, 2012, Copeland danced her first full lead role in an A.B.T. production, as the Firebird in the Stravinsky ballet. Alexei Ratmansky, the former artistic director of the Bolshoi, modelled the choreography, in part, on Copeland's body, as well as on those of the two other lead dancers playing the role. In "Firebird," an enchanted bird is caught by a prince who will not free her unless she promises to exercise her powers on his behalf; eventually, she does so, and, along the way, she helps free some enchanted maidens and reunite the prince with his beloved. The Los Angeles *Times* praised Copeland's Firebird as "abandoned" and "creaturely," and, in this magazine, Joan Acocella wrote that her performance showed that her artistry merited promotion to principal dancer. Days after Copeland's first Metropolitan Opera House performance in New York, she discovered that she had six stress fractures in her left tibia; she had surgery to insert a titanium plate in her shin. The hyperextended knees that are part of what makes Copeland's lines so lovely also make her more vulnerable to certain kinds of injury, just as the pointe shoes that foster the illusion of a ballerina's length also damage her feet. Already, Copeland was approaching an age when dancers don't have many years left, and now she wasn't sure how long she would be sidelined.

"I went to the J.C.C. near my house, because I knew I would want to swim as part of my recovery," Copeland told me. "I just took the Pilates class, on a whim. After class, in the locker room, I had showered—I didn't even have clothes on—and this tiny little woman, smaller than me, she comes up to me while I'm naked, saying, 'You look like that ballerina Misty Copeland. You look too small to be her—not tall enough—but those look like her legs,'" Copeland recounted. "I thought, Great, here's a crazy person." It was Marjorie Liebert, a former dancer, now in her sixties, who taught a class in her apartment, in something that Copeland had never heard of: barre-à-terre, a method of doing ballet while, basically, lying on the floor.

"My résumé says I'm five feet tall, but I'm not," Liebert told me. "I'm four foot eleven. It didn't help my ballet career: many people wouldn't even let me try out." After an accident and a subsequent surgery, in the nineteen-seventies, Liebert went to Paris, intending to dance. She had heard of a healing class taught by a man named Boris Kniaseff, who had a devoted following. "I went, and first I thought, This is interesting. I went again, and I thought, This is important. In a month, I grew an inch and a half. I know that sounds unbelievable, but it's true." Kniaseff supposedly developed barre-à-terre after seeing circus performers begin their exercises while lying on the floor. Liebert became a disciple of sorts, and when Kniaseff died she began to teach his technique; eventually, she moved back to New York, bringing it with her.

For seven months, Copeland worked with Liebert nearly every day. "I absolutely wouldn't be the dancer that I am now without her," Copeland told me more than once. Liebert explained to me that many people are unable to stick with a barre-à-terre class. Transitioning between positions while lying on the floor requires using muscles in a different way than people are accustomed to. "Lying on the floor, you have a different perspective. You really have to find your center to make yourself better, to hold yourself up."

Copeland hesitated to admit that her injury, which healed slowly, had been a difficult time for her. She joked, "There were a couple days when Marjorie was sick, and that was very hard for me, it's true. My boyfriend said to me, 'That's what happens when your closest friend is in her sixties.'"

In May, 2013, Copeland was back onstage. Her first performance, as Queen of the Dryads, in "Don Quixote," disappointed her. But a week later she felt that she was performing at a new level. When I asked Kevin McKenzie, A.B.T.'s artistic director, why he has had the confidence to cast Misty in so many lead roles in the past two years, he said, "She learned so much from her periods off." He

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DC's *Cool*est SEASON

by Andrew O'Connor

DC might as well stand for District of Culture. The city has a well-documented national identity on the Mall, while embassies, eateries and entertainment houses lend themselves to international influences. Regional touches spill into DC, too, by way of Maryland crab cakes and Virginia wines and colonial designs. All the while, locavores lean on new shops, trusted cafes and small theaters to satisfy neighborhood cravings. ***That's culture at all levels.***

In fall, the city's confluence of cultures offers everything from craft festivals, museum exhibits and theater season debuts to a large-scale urban portrait – smack-dab in the middle of America's "front yard."

FALL *in* WASHINGTON DC

visit **DCcool.com**

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBITS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

***The Boomer List* (Sept. 26 - July 25, 2015)**, a Newseum photography exhibit, features trend-bucking icons born during the post-WWII generation – one for each year.

Urban landscape artist Jorge Rodriguez-Gerada turns the National Mall into an exhibition hall with ***Out of Many, One* (Oct. 1 - 31)**, a large-scale composite portrait derived from people photographed in DC. Translated from the American motto E Pluribus Unum, the National Portrait Gallery-backed installation will be spread across six acres of ground just south of the Reflecting Pool and fully visible from the top of the Washington Monument.

Go on an interactive voyage of vittles at the National Geographic Museum's ***Food: Our Global Kitchen* (Oct. 16 - Feb. 22, 2015)**. Explore the future of food, rustle up a virtual dish and even enjoy seasonal samples.

PERFORMING ARTS

PERFORMING MIRACLES

The stage is set for greatness in DC, where The Washington Ballet honors a trio of European dance virtuosos in ***Petite Mort: Masterworks by Kylián / van Manen/Wheeldon* (Oct. 22-26, at The Harman Center)**. Besides a risqué rendition of Jiří Kylián's eponymous work, the performance will include van Manen's ***5 Tangos*** and Wheeldon's ***Polyphonia***.

Go from ballet to ballet-themed musical with the world-premiere Kennedy Center production of the ***Little Dancer* (Oct. 25 - Nov. 30)**, starring multi-Tony Award-winner Boyd Gaines as French artist Edgar Degas. The play is based on Degas' sculpture "Little Dancer Aged Fourteen," exhibited at the National Gallery of Art.

Political drama is an ancient story. Take it in just steps from the U.S. Capitol at the Folger Theater's interpretation of Shakespeare's ***Julius Caesar* (Oct. 28 - Dec. 7)**.

Smithsonian American Art Museum

New Exhibitions this Fall!

The Singing and the Silence: Birds in Contemporary Art

October 31, 2014 – February 22, 2015

Laurel Roth, *Regalia*, 2011, mixed media including fake fingernails, nail polish, barrettes, false eyelashes, jewelry, walnut, Swarovski crystal, Private collection, Portland, OR

Richard Estes' Realism

October 10, 2014 – February 8, 2015

Richard Estes, *Bus with Reflection of the Flatiron Building*, 1966–67, oil on canvas, Private collection. © Richard Estes, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York. Photo by Luc Demers

Smithsonian American Art Museum

8th and G Streets, NW • Washington DC 20004
11:30–7 • Free • AmericanArt.si.edu

ART REALITY CHECK

Richard Estes helped shape the photorealism movement in the 1960s with paintings of busy streets, phone booths and other city scenes – all made with picture-perfect precision. Now, thanks to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, a major Estes exhibit will be on display for the first time since the late '70s. ***Richard Estes' Realism*** **(Oct. 10 - Feb. 8)** features a collection of 46 works across 50-plus years, including the artist's noted urban pieces, as well as rarely seen natural landscapes.

ABOUT

Smithsonian American Art Museum

8th and G NW, Washington, DC 20004

(202) 633-1000
americanart.si.edu

EVENTS AROUND TOWN

The 5x5 Project
Now - Dec.
CITYWIDE

(e)merge Art Fair
Oct. 2 - 5
CAPITOL SKYLINE HOTEL

Africa Umoja
Oct. 2 - 12
THE NATIONAL THEATRE

Craft2Wear
Oct. 24 - 26
NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM

STEALING THE SHOW

Arena Stage, which highlights American theater, opens its 65th season with a world-premiere comedy, ***The Shoplifters*** **(Ends Oct. 19).** The play stars Tony-nominee Jayne Houdyshell as Alma, a pilfering senior citizen who encounters an overeager security guard with surprisingly funny results. For the holidays, Arena serves up not one, but two irresistible musicals: ***Fiddler on the Roof*** **(Oct. 31 - Jan. 4)** - and the joyful blues-infused ***Five Guys Named Moe*** **(Nov. 14 - Dec. 28)**). The fall-winter schedule finishes with another comic world premiere, Ken Ludwig's ***Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*** **(Jan. 16 - Feb. 22)**.

ABOUT

Arena Stage

1101 Sixth Street SW, Washington, DC 20024

(202) 554-9066
arenastage.org

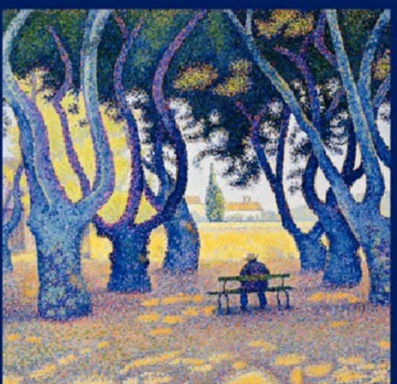
ABOUT

The Phillips Collection

1600 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20009

(202) 387-2151

phillipscollection.org



NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

and the Dream of Realities: Painting, Poetry, Music

SEPTEMBER 27, 2014–JANUARY 11, 2015

The exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection.

This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Support provided by Morgan Stanley and the Robert Lehman Foundation

Morgan Stanley ROBERT LEHMAN FOUNDATION

Brought to you by the Exhibition Committee for *Neo-Impressionism and the Dream of Realities*: John and Gina Despres, Charlotte Cameron and the Dan Cameron Family Foundation, and Melissa J. Thompson

With support from the Musée d'Orsay

Additional in-kind support provided by FARROW&BALL

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION 1600 21st Street, NW, Washington, DC

TICKETS AT WWW.PHILLIPSCOLLECTION.ORG

Paul Signac, *Place des Lices, St. Tropez, Opus 242* (detail), 1893. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

FIRST CHANCE AT SECOND IMPRESSIONS

As America's first museum of modern art, The Phillips Collection is hallowed ground among DC galleries. In late September, the museum will devote exhibition space to Neo-Impressionist masters in an exhibit entitled ***Neo-Impressionism and the Dream of Realities: Painting, Pottery, Music*** **(Sept. 27 - Jan. 11, 2015)**. Surmise complex themes and emotions depicted through portraits and pastoral and urban landscapes from the likes of Paul Signac, Henry van de Velde and Georges Seurat.

EVENTS AROUND TOWN

Boo at the Zoo
Oct. 24 - 26
NATIONAL ZOO

Washington Craft Show
Oct. 31 - Nov. 2
WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER

Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea
Dec. 5 - Apr. 12, 2015
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

ABOUT

Ford's Theatre

511 10th Street NW, Washington, DC 20004

(202) 347-4833

fords.org

Ford's 150: Remembering the Lincoln Assassination

April 2015 will mark the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln Assassination. Join us as we honor our 16th President with:

The Widow Lincoln
Jan. 23-Feb. 22, 2015 | A world premiere!

Freedom's Song: Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War
March 13-May 20, 2015 | An epic, concert-style musical!

Silent Witnesses: Artifacts of the Lincoln Assassination
March 23-May 25, 2015 | A once-in-a-lifetime exhibition!

www.fords.org

150

Background image © Maxwell MacKenzie. Lincoln photo courtesy of Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.

LINCOLN SESQUICENTENNIAL

In 2015, Ford's Theatre turns back the clock to Civil War days to mark the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's assasination. ***The Widow Lincoln*** **(Jan. 23 - Feb. 22)** recounts the forty days after First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln lost her husband. Hear Civil War time-inspired music in ***Freedom's Song*** **(March 13 - May 20)**, which also will incorporate poignant passages uttered by the 16th president. Lastly, a slew of original artifacts from Lincoln's assassination return to the scene of the crime with the on-site exhibit, ***Silent Witnesses*** **(March 23 - May 25, 2015)**.

continued, "Even though she had this late start and meteoric rise, in the end her training was as long as anyone's. She had gone through puberty and had a different body, and then she excelled again. She had a heinous injury; she came back better—more mature, more analytical. Because she had to be, because she knew she couldn't take her body for granted. I'm a firm believer that, no matter how talented you are when you're young, there's a certain amount of life experience you can't accelerate. Misty could have done these same roles—technically—ten years ago, but she wouldn't have been ready."

Lauren Anderson told me that she had played the Sugar Plum Fairy for twenty-five years, and that the role kept evolving as she herself changed. "You're playing someone else, but you're also yourself—you have to be in order to be believable," she said. When Anderson premièred the Odette/Odile role, she was coming out of a divorce. "I took all the tragedy and heartbreak and just brought it out onstage with me. When I was onstage, I was free from the problems of my life. I was someone else."

Liebert said simply, "We dance who we are."

Near my apartment, there's a dance school on the second floor of a nondescript building, and sometimes, looking up from the dollar-a-slice pizza place across the street, you can see the students going through their exercises again and again and again. You couldn't choreograph as ideal a work as that. A smart and witty ballet dancer once told me that he thought truly pure ballet would eliminate performances—that the essence of ballet is the practice of it. Copeland said to me, with obvious frustration, "In social situations, people so often ask me, 'So what do you do when you're not performing—what is your job?' I'm, like, 'I have a job, I work every day, I'm in a union, we get overtime.'"

In addition to its practice space on Broadway, A.B.T. has a rehearsal space several floors below the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House. One afternoon, I went to see Copeland rehearse a pas de deux with Herman Cornejo for a production of Kenneth MacMillan's ballet "Manon," which they were to perform for the first time the next day. To get to the practice space, I tunnelled through one red-velvet-and-gold-detailed hall after another, until I found a service elevator. Though it was summer, a woman was wearing red snow booties and a fading purple jumper with a long-sleeved polka-dot shirt underneath. Standing in natural turnout, she got off the elevator in front of me, with that walk that unites ballerinas and cowboys. Many dancers in the hallways were wearing similar booties, and the majority of the women had hair that seemed

to come from a Dante Gabriel Rossetti painting. Basement Floor C resembled a boiler room, yet I felt that I had entered a commune of unicorns.

In the high-ceilinged practice space, Copeland and Cornejo lay on the floor, whispering and laughing as they stretched. "For your next career, as a stripper, you need to work on your split," Copeland said to Cornejo. They were waiting for Keith Roberts, a former principal dancer and now a ballet master, who would be running the session. He had been delayed upstairs by a dress rehearsal with the corps de ballet, so Copeland asked Cornejo for help working on her entrance.

"There's never enough time to tell anyone anything," Roberts said, when he rushed in. The conductor, Ormsby Wilkins, sat at the piano with Daniel Waite, the pianist. They began practicing. Cornejo played the charming cad Lescaut; Copeland was his young lover, probably one of many. In the scene they were rehearsing, Lescaut is drunk, and spins his mistress off balance while she's on pointe; although he has knocked her over, he continues spinning an invisible ballerina. Much of the movement was tilted in this way.

I never used to be easily drawn in by the long storybook standards of classical ballet; it was as if the salmon sandwiches and the bubbly rosés served during intermission got in the way. It was easier to access the more immediately legible expressiveness of abstract, modern pieces. But many dancers have told me that they revere the long classical pieces. When I asked why, they talked about how freeing the strict constraints of classical ballet are, from its most basic positions to its thirty-two-fouetté extremes; from other forms of dance, one couldn't transition to classical ballet, but from classical ballet one could do anything.

Dance is not like the other arts. The words in a book stay in place, paintings barely fade, musical performances can be recorded. But watching a recording of dance is about as close to the real thing as reading "Eugene Onegin" in Google Translate. Dancers often restrain themselves, necessarily, during practice, but Cornejo and Copeland seemed to be leaping higher, and moving more articulately, than they did onstage. I had just seen three grand ballet performances in a row, but this harshly lit, uncostumed, and repeatedly interrupted performance was my favorite. It wasn't simply the proximity, the sound of the shoes, the soothingly minor comments—"Your back arm tends to get behind you"; "A little more shoulder at the beginning, so it's not so flat"—it was more the juxtaposition of the mundane and the magnificent: "Be careful when you do the relevé; don't crank her leg too much"; "The second pirouette—did you just do left?"

"People are surprised to hear that I still go to class," Copeland told me. "But that's what dancers do." In a studio class one Thursday morning, there were dancers from all ranks of A.B.T., as well as dancers not yet in the company, stretching, chatting. One dancer asked for a recommendation for a travel agent. Another replied that no one has used travel agents since the eighties. Copeland sat on the floor beside them, in a purple leotard, applying glue to the inside of her pointe shoes. The director of A.B.T.'s studio company, a former dancer named Kate Lydon, called the class to attention: "We'll start with sixteen swings, port de bras forward." The pianist accompanying the class played some Dvořák, then some Bach, then "The Girl from Ipanema." After the barre exercises, there were floor exercises, then jumps, then more exercises moving across the room. ♦

THE LAST AMAZON

Wonder Woman returns.

BY JILL LEPORE

The Wonder Woman Family Museum occupies a one-room bunker beneath a two-story house on a hilly street in Bethel, Connecticut. It contains more than four thousand objects. Their arrangement is higgledy-piggledy. There are Wonder Woman lunchboxes, face masks, coffee mugs, a Frisbee, napkins, record-players, T-shirts, bookends, a trailer-hitch cover, plates and cups, pencils, kites, and, near the floor, a pressed-aluminum cake mold, her breasts like cupcakes. A cardboard stand holds Pez dispensers, red, topped with Wonder Woman's head. Wonder Woman backpacks hang from hooks; sleeping bags are rolled up on a shelf. On a ten-foot-wide stage whose backdrop depicts ancient Greece—the Parthenon atop the Acropolis—Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons, a life-size mannequin wearing sandals and a toga, sits on a throne. To her left stands her daughter, Princess Diana, a mannequin dressed as Wonder Woman: a golden tiara on top of a black wig; a red bustier embossed with an American eagle, its wings spread to form the letters "WW"; a blue miniskirt with white stars; bracelets that can stop bullets; a golden lasso strapped to her belt; and, on her feet, super-kinky knee-high red boots. Nearby, a Wonder Woman telephone rests on a glass shelf. The telephone is unplugged.

Superman débuted in 1938, Batman in 1939, Wonder Woman in 1941. She was created by William Moulton Marston, a psychologist with a Ph.D. from Harvard. A press release explained, "'Wonder Woman' was conceived by Dr. Marston to set up a standard among children and young people of strong, free, courageous womanhood; to combat the idea that women are inferior to men, and to inspire girls to self-confidence and achievement in athletics, occupations and professions monopolized by men" because "the only hope for civilization is the greater freedom, development and equality of women in all fields of human activity." Marston put it this way: "Frankly, Wonder Woman is psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who should, I believe, rule the world."

The house in Bethel belongs to Marston's oldest son, Moulton Marston. He's eighty-six. Everyone calls him Pete. "I started it six or seven years ago when I had so much Wonder Woman stuff lying around," he says. A particular strength of the collection is its assortment of Wonder Woman dolls, action figures, and statuary. They come in every size, in ceramic, paper, rubber, plastic, and cloth; jointed, inflatable, and bobble-headed. Most are posed standing, legs astride, arms akimbo, fists clenched, half sassy, half badass. In a corner, blue eye-shadowed, pouty-lipped Wonder Woman Barbie dolls, tiaras missing, hair unkempt, have been crammed into a Wonder Woman wastebasket.

Many of the objects in the Wonder Woman Family Museum date to the nineteen-seventies, when DC Comics, which owns Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, was newly affiliated with Warner Bros. Between 1975 and 1979, Warner Bros. produced a Wonder Woman TV series, starring Lynda Carter, a former beauty queen. Since 1978, Warner Bros. has made six Superman films and eight Batman films, but, to the consternation of Wonder Woman fans, there has never been a Wonder Woman film. This is about to change. Last December, Warner Bros. announced that Wonder Woman would have a role in an upcoming Superman-and-Batman film, and that, in a three-movie deal, Gal Gadot, a lithe Israeli model, had signed on to play the part. There followed a flurry of comments about her anatomical insufficiency for the role.

"It's been said that you're too skinny," an interviewer told Gadot on Israeli television. "Wonder Woman is large-breasted."

"Wonder Woman is Amazonian," Gadot said, smiling coyly. "And historically accurate Amazonian women actually had only one breast." (They cut off the other one, the better to wield a bow.)

The film, being shot this summer and fall in Detroit and Chicago, is a sequel to last year's "Man of Steel," directed by Zack Snyder, with Henry Cavill as Superman. For the new film, Ben Affleck was cast as Batman. One critic tweeted this suggestion for a title: "BATMAN VS. SUPERMAN WITH ALSO SOME WONDER WOMAN IN THERE SO SIT DOWN LADIES WE'RE TREATING YOU FINE: THE MOVIE." Warner Bros. has yet to dispel this impression. In May, the company announced that the film would be called "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice."

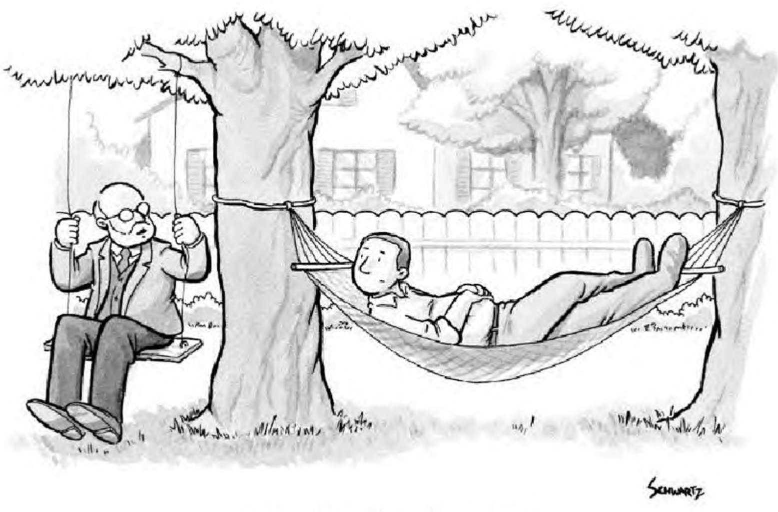
"You can talk all you want about other superhero movies, but it's Batman and Superman, let's just be honest," Snyder said in an interview with *USA Today* in July. "I don't know how you get bigger than that."

The much cited difficulties regarding putting Wonder Woman on film—Wonder Woman isn't big enough, and neither are Gal Gadot's breasts—aren't chiefly about Wonder Woman, or comic books, or superheroes, or movies. They're about politics. Superman owes a debt to science fiction, Batman to the hardboiled detective. Wonder Woman's debt is to feminism. She's the missing link in a chain of events that begins with the woman-suffrage campaigns of the nineteen-tens and ends with the troubled place of feminism a century later. Wonder Woman is so hard to put on film because the fight for women's rights has gone so badly.

"In the days of ancient Greece, many centuries ago, we Amazons were the foremost nation in the world," Hippolyte explains to her daughter in "Introducing Wonder Woman," the character's

Wonder Woman, introduced in 1941, was a creation of utopian feminism, inspired by Margaret Sanger and the ideals of free love.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRANT CORNETT



"How does this make you feel?"

• •

début, in a 1941 issue of *All-Star Comics*. "In Amazonia, women ruled and all was well." Alas, that didn't last: men conquered and made women slaves. The Amazons escaped, sailing across the ocean to an uncharted island where they lived in peace for centuries until, one day, Captain Steve Trevor, a U.S. Army officer, crashed his plane there. "A man!" Princess Diana cries when she finds him. "A man on Paradise Island!" After rescuing him, she flies him in her invisible plane to "America, the last citadel of democracy, and of equal rights for women!"

Wonder Woman's origin story comes straight out of feminist utopian fiction. In the nineteenth century, suffragists, following the work of anthropologists, believed that something like the Amazons of Greek myth had once existed, a matriarchy that predated the rise of patriarchy. "The period of woman's supremacy lasted through many centuries," Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote in 1891. In the nineteen-tens, this idea became a staple of feminist thought. The word "feminism," hardly ever used in the United States before 1910, was everywhere by 1913. The suffrage movement had been founded on a set of ideas about women's supposed moral superiority. Feminism rested on the principle of equality. Suffrage was a single, elusive political goal. Feminism's demand for equality was far broader. "All feminists are suffragists, but not all suffragists are feminists," as one feminist explained. They shared an obsession with Amazons.

In 1913, Max Eastman, a founder of the New York Men's League for Woman Suffrage and the editor of *The Masses*, published "Child of the Amazons and Other Poems." In the title poem, an Amazonian girl falls in love with a man but can't marry him until "the far age when men shall cease / Their tyranny, Amazons their revolt." The next year, Inez Haynes Gillmore, who, like Mary Woolley, the president of Mount Holyoke College, had helped found college suffrage leagues, published a novel called "Angel Island," in which five American men are shipwrecked on a desert island that turns out to be inhabited by "super-humanly beautiful" women with wings, who, by the end of the novel, walk "with the splendid, swinging gait of an Amazon."

Gillmore and Max Eastman's sister Crystal were members of Heterodoxy, a group of Greenwich Village feminists. So was Charlotte Perkins Gilman. In 1915, Gilman published "Herland," in which women live free from men, bearing only daughters, by parthenogenesis. (On Paradise Island, Queen Hippolyte carves her daughter out of clay.) In these stories' stock plots, men are allowed to live with women only on terms of equality, and, for that to happen, there has to be a way for the men and women to have sex without the women getting pregnant all the time. The women in Gilman's utopia practice what was called "voluntary motherhood." "You see, they were Mothers, not in our sense of helpless involuntary fecundity," Gilman wrote, "but in the sense of Conscious Makers of People." At the time, contraception was illegal. In 1914, Margaret Sanger, another Greenwich Village feminist who attended meetings of Heterodoxy, started a magazine called *The Woman Rebel*, in which she coined the phrase "birth control" and insisted that "the right to be a mother regardless of church or state" was the "basis of Feminism."

In 1917, when motion pictures were still a novelty and the United States had only just entered the First World War, Sanger starred in a silent film called "Birth Control"; it was banned. A century of warfare, feminism, and cinema later, superhero movies—adaptations and updates of mid-twentieth-century comic books whose plots revolve around anxieties about mad scientists, organized crime, tyrannical superstates, alien invaders, misunderstood mutants, and world-ending weapons—are the super-blockbusters of the last superpower left standing. No one knows how Wonder Woman will fare onscreen: there's hardly ever been a big-budget superhero movie starring a female superhero. But more of the mystery lies in the fact that Wonder Woman's origins have been, for so long, so unknown. It isn't only that Wonder Woman's backstory is taken from feminist utopian fiction. It's that, in creating Wonder Woman, William Moulton Marston was profoundly influenced by early-twentieth-century suffragists, feminists, and birth-control advocates and that, shockingly, Wonder Woman was inspired by Margaret Sanger, who, hidden from the world, was a member of Marston's family.

Marston entered Harvard College, as a freshman, in 1911. That fall, the Harvard Men's League for Woman Suffrage invited the British militant Emmeline Pankhurst to give a lecture; the Harvard Corporation banned her from speaking on campus. The news made headlines all over the United States. "IS HARVARD AFRAID OF MRS. PANKHURST?" one newspaper asked.

(The answer was yes.) Undaunted, Pankhurst spoke in Harvard Square. "The most ignorant young man, who knows nothing of the needs of women, thinks himself a competent legislator, because he is a man," Pankhurst told the crowd, eying the Harvard men. In 1915, Marston married Elizabeth Holloway, who'd just graduated from Mount Holyoke, where she studied Greek, read Sappho, and became a feminist. Her hero was Mary Woolley, who lived for fifty-five years with Jeannette Marks, an English professor and an ardent suffragist. "Feminism is not a prejudice," Woolley explained. "It is a principle." In 1916, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to Congress, and Margaret Sanger and her sister Ethel Byrne, both nurses, opened the first birth-control clinic in the United States, in Brooklyn. (Sanger and Byrne founded what later became Planned Parenthood.) Byrne was arrested and, inspired by Pankhurst and her followers, went on a hunger strike that nearly killed her. In a statement to the press, she called attention to the number of women who die during abortions. "With the Health Department reporting 8,000 deaths a year in the State from illegal operations on women, one more death won't make much difference, anyway," she said. Against Byrne's wishes, Sanger, hoping to save her sister's life, made a deal with the governor of New York; he issued a pardon for Byrne on the condition that Sanger promise that her sister would never again participate in the birth-control movement.

Marston graduated from Harvard Law School in 1918; Holloway graduated from Boston University's law school the same year. (Harvard Law School did not admit women.) Women finally gained the right to vote in 1920. That year, in her book "Woman and the New Race," Sanger wrote, "The most far-reaching development of modern times is the revolt of woman against sex servitude," and promised that contraception would "remake the world." Marston finished his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1921, after a stint of service during the First World War. His research had to do with emotions. His dissertation concerned the detection of deception, as measured by changes in blood pressure. (Marston is often credited with inventing the lie-detector test, which is why Wonder Woman carries a magic lasso that makes anyone she ropes tell the truth.) He was also interested in another preoccupation of psychologists: sex, sexual difference, and sexual adjustment. Lewis Terman, who helped develop the I.Q. test, also helped create a test to measure "masculinity" and "femininity": its purpose was to identify deviance. According to the behaviorist John B. Watson, feminism itself was a form of deviance. "Most of the terrible women one must meet, women with the blatant views and voices, women who have to be noticed, who shoulder one about, who can't take life quietly, belong to this large percentage of women who have never made a sex adjustment," Watson wrote in *The Nation.* Marston's research ran in a different direction. In "Sex Characteristics of Systolic Blood Pressure Behavior," published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology,* he reported on a series of tests that he and Holloway had conducted on ten men and ten women at Harvard between 1919 and 1921, while Holloway was pursuing a graduate degree in psychology at Radcliffe. They'd tried to get their subjects upset, and then they'd tried to arouse them. He believed his study demonstrated that women are more emotional than men and that women's emotions are often rooted in their sexuality ("there being a far greater number of adequate stimuli to sex-emotion in the female organism"). He also found out he really liked studying sex.

He then embarked on an academic career. Gaining the right to vote had by no means automatically led to political equality. The Equal Rights Amendment, drafted by Alice Paul, was first introduced to Congress in 1923. At the time, women were denied the right to serve on juries in thirty-one states. At American University, Marston and Holloway conducted a series of experiments whose findings, he said, demonstrated that women are more reliable jurors than men: "They were more careful, more conscientious and gave much more impartial consideration to all the testimony than did the male juries." Marston was fired from American University, after he was arrested for fraud, in connection with some business dealings. (All the charges were later dropped.) He next taught at Tufts, where, in 1925, he fell in love with one of his students: Ethel Byrne's daughter Olive.

At Tufts, Marston and Olive Byrne conducted research together. Byrne took him to her sorority, Alpha Omicron Pi, where freshmen pledges were required to dress up like babies and attend a "Baby Party." Marston later described it: "The freshmen girls were led into a dark corridor where their eyes were blindfolded, and their arms were bound behind them." Then the freshmen were taken into a room where juniors and seniors compelled them to do various tasks, while sophomores hit them with long sticks. "Nearly all the sophomores reported excited pleasantness of captivation emotion throughout the party," Marston reported. (Marston's interest in what he called "captivation emotion" informs the bondage in Wonder Woman.)

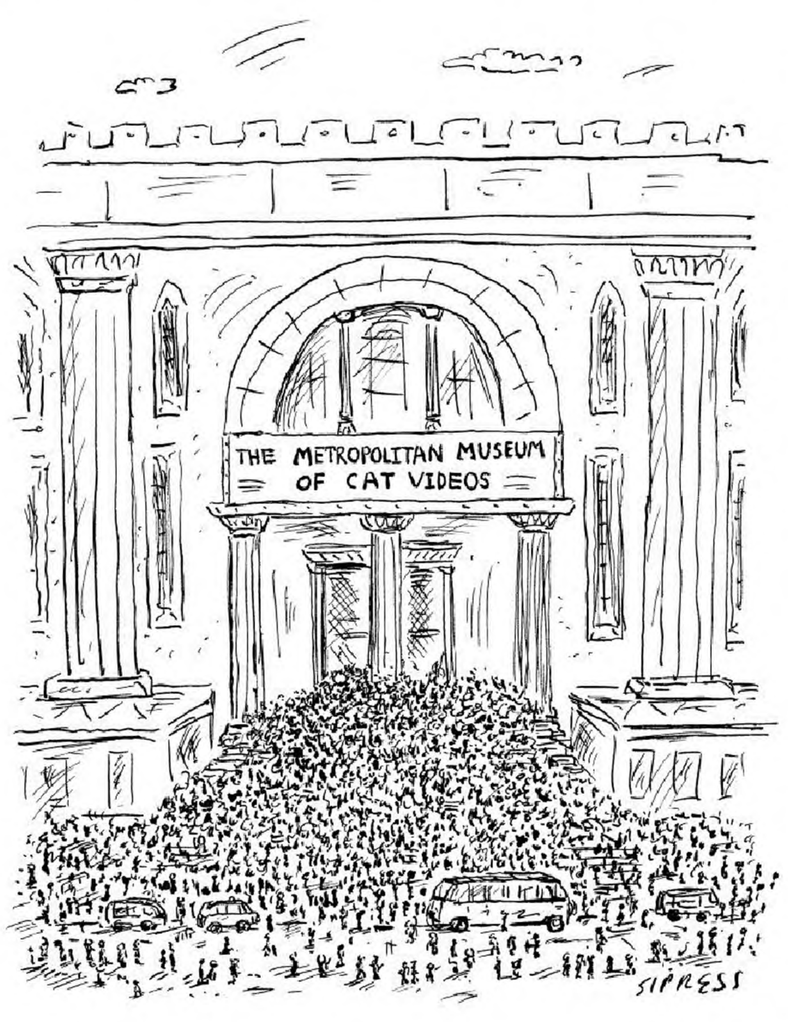
Beginning in 1925, Marston, Holloway, Byrne, and a librarian named Marjorie Wilkes Huntley, whom Marston had met during the war, attended regular meetings at the Boston apartment of Marston's aunt, Carolyn Keatley. Keatley believed in the teachings contained in a book called "The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ," by a preacher named Levi H. Dowling. She thought that she was living in the dawn of the Age of Aquarius, the beginning of a new astrological age, an age of love: the New Age. Minutes for the meetings held at Keatley's apartment describe a sexual "clinic," involving Love Leaders, Mistresses (or Mothers), and Love Girls. A Love Leader, a Mistress, and their Love Girl form a Love Unit, a perfect constellation. There is much in the minutes about sex itself; e.g., "During the act of intercourse between the male and his Mistress, the male's love organ stimulates the inner love organs of the Mistress, and not the external love organs," but "if anyone wishes to develop the consciousness of submission, he or she must keep the sexual orgasm in check, and thus permit the nervous energy to flow freely and uninterruptedly into the external genital organs." There is also much in the minutes about Marston's theory of dominance and submission; females, "in their relation to males, expose their bodies and use various legitimate methods of the Love sphere to

create in males submission to them, the women mistresses or Love leaders, in order that they, the Mistresses, may submit in passion to the males."

In 1926, Olive Byrne, then twenty-two, moved in with Marston and Holloway; they lived as a threesome, "with love making for all," as Holloway later said. Olive Byrne is the mother of two of Marston's four children; the children had three parents. "Both Mommies and poor old Dad" is how Marston put it.

Holloway said that Marston, Holloway, and Byrne's living arrangements began as an idea: "A new way of living has to exist in the minds of men before it can be realized in actual form." It had something to do with Sanger's "Woman and the New Race." Holloway tried to explain what she'd taken away from reading it: "The new race will have a far greater love capacity than the current one and I mean physical love as well as other forms." And it had something to do with what Havelock Ellis, a British doctor who was one of Margaret Sanger's lovers, called "the erotic rights of women." Ellis argued that the evolution of marriage as an institution had resulted in the prohibiting of female sexual pleasure, which was derided as wanton and abnormal. Erotic equality, he insisted in 1918, was no less important than political equality, if more difficult to achieve. "The right to joy cannot be claimed in the same way as one claims the right to put a voting paper in a ballot box," he wrote. "That is why the erotic rights of women have been the last of all to be attained."

But there was more to it. For Holloway, the arrangement solved what, in the era of the New Woman, was known as the "woman's dilemma": hardly a magazine was sold, in those years, that didn't feature an article that asked, "Can a Woman Run a Home and a Job, Too?" The modern woman, Crystal Eastman explained in *The Nation*, "wants some means of self-expression, perhaps, some way of satisfying her personal ambitions. But she wants a husband, home and children, too. How to reconcile these two desires in real life, that is the question." You can find more or less the very same article in almost any magazine today—think of Anne-Marie Slaughter's 2012 essay, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All"—which is a measure of just how poorly this question has been addressed. A century ago, though, it was new. Between 1910 and 1920, Virginia MacMakin Collier reported in 1926, in "Marriage and Careers," the percentage of married women working had nearly doubled, and the number of married women in the professions had risen by forty per cent. "The question, therefore, is no longer, should women combine marriage with careers, but how?"



Here's how. Marston would have two wives. Holloway could have her career. Byrne would raise the children. No one else need ever know.

The scandal of Marston's family arrangements, which, inevitably, became known to his close colleagues, cost him his academic career. This kind of thing happens all the time in Wonder Woman. "What are you doing here?" Dean Sourpuss, of Holliday College, asks Professor Toxino. "You know you're not welcome at this college!" In the nineteen-twenties, Marston barely held any appointment longer than a year, and, with each move, he climbed another step down the academic ladder. At American University, he'd been a full professor and the chair of the Psychology Department. Tufts appointed him an untenured assistant professor. In 1928, while he was teaching at Columbia—on a one-year appointment, as a lecturer—he published a book called "Emotions of Normal People," as part of a series called the International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method. (Other contributors to the series included Wittgenstein, Piaget, and Adler.) Its chief argument is that much in emotional and sexual life that is generally regarded as abnormal and is therefore commonly hidden actually inheres within the very structure of the nervous system. The work of the clinical psychologist, Marston argued, is

to provide patients with an "emotional re-education": "People must be taught that the love parts of themselves, which they have come to regard as abnormal, are completely normal."

Marston's interests in deception, sex, and emotion fed a long-standing interest in film. He'd worked his way through Harvard by selling screenplays. In 1915, after the Edison Company held a nationwide talent search among American college students, promising a hundred dollars to the author of the best movie scenario submitted by a student at one of ten colleges—Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, and the Universities of California, Chicago, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—Marston won. The resulting film, "Jack Kennard, Coward," played at scattered theatres across the country, in some places sharing a billing with Charlie Chaplin. In 1916, Marston's undergraduate adviser, Hugo Münsterberg, who ran Harvard's Psychological Laboratory, published a psychological theory of cinema. (Münsterberg, who vehemently opposed both the suffrage and the feminist movements, is the inspiration for Wonder Woman's arch-nemesis, Doctor Psycho.) In 1928, when it became clear to Marston that his academic career was doomed, he returned to his earlier interest in the movies. Working with Byrne, who was, at the time, pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology at Columbia, he conducted a series of experiments at the Embassy Theatre, in New York. He invited reporters and photographers to watch as he seated an audience of six chorus girls—three blondes and three brunettes—in the front row. The experiment was captured on newsreel footage: "Dr. William Marston tests his latest invention: the Love Meter." Marston and Byrne hooked the girls up to blood-pressure cuffs and recorded their level of excitement as they watched the romantic climax of M-G-M's 1926 silent film "Flesh and the Devil," starring Greta Garbo. Marston claimed his findings proved that brunettes are more easily aroused than blondes. Columbia did not renew Marston's appointment. Essentially, he was blacklisted. "He might fit very well in some places," the Harvard psychologist Edwin Boring wrote in a fainthearted letter of recommendation, "but in the average, normal, general department of psychology he would probably remain separated in his work, and even at times open to the charge of sensationalism."

In the summer of 1928, Carl Laemmle, the head of Universal Studios, placed a notice in the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post:*

> Wanted—A Psychologist
>
> Somewhere in this country there is a practical psychologist—accomplished in the science of the mind—who will fit into the Universal organization. He can be of real help in analyzing certain plot situations and forecasting how the public will react to them. As moving pictures are reaching out more and more for refinements, such a mental showman will have great influence on the screens of the world.

"Carl Laemmle Digs the 'Doc,'" *Variety* reported five months later, announcing that Universal had hired Marston, "Who Went Through Harvard Three Times Without Quitting." Marston, Holloway, Byrne, and baby Pete moved to Los Angeles. Marston was supposed to help with casting, story editing, and setting up camera shots, and, in general, to "apply psychology wherever psychology is needed." In one experiment, he showed Universal's 1929 film "The Love Trap" to a thousand college students, omitting the final scene. He wanted to know whether audiences could handle movies that end with unfinished business.

Meanwhile, Marston and his friend Walter Pitkin, who had taught at the Columbia School of Journalism, wrote a book about how to write a screenplay for the talkies. Much of "The Art of Sound Pictures," published in 1929, is dedicated to explaining, point by point and state by state, what could pass the censors, and what couldn't. Branding—"Scene showing branding iron in fire, if application of it is not shown"—was O.K. in New York, Ohio, and Virginia, not allowed in Pennsylvania, Maryland, or Kansas. Sex—"Man and woman (married or unmarried) walking toward bedroom, indicating contemplated intimacy, if they are not shown after the door closes on them"—depended on action. Homosexuality—"Action of characters, indicating they are perverted, as scene showing women kissing each other, if shown in long shot"—was not usually allowed.

Marston and Pitkin also founded a production company, Equitable Pictures. Pitkin scratched out a story idea for a film whose plot was to revolve "Around Bill Marston's thesis: How can a woman love & yet make a living? How be economically independent & also erotically independent?" It would be called either "Brave Woman" or "Giddy Girl." (The Giddy Girls was the stage name of Billy and Charlie Byrne, Olive Byrne's uncles; they were female impersonators on the vaudeville circuit.) Equitable Pictures was incorporated in October of 1929, days before the stock market collapsed. It folded. A woman, one woman, who could be both economically and erotically independent would have to wait out the Depression. She'd have to have been a superhero, anyway. And superheroes hadn't quite been invented yet.

Marston spent most of the nineteen-thirties unemployed, supported by Holloway, who worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance, while Olive Byrne raised their four children in a sprawling house they called Cherry Orchard, in Rye, New York. Byrne also wrote for *Family Circle,* using the pen name Olive Richard. Her first article, a cover story from 1935, was a profile of Marston. In the story, she pretends they're strangers. She goes to visit him. Marston attaches a blood-pressure cuff to Byrne's arm—the machine that, in the experiments they conducted together, Byrne usually took charge of:

> "Tell me what you did last evening—truth or lie, just as you like."
>
> I thought for a minute. Then I decided to be clever. I'd mix truth and falsehood and see if he could tell which was which.

Byrne at once hid everything about her life and, like Marston, almost compulsively exposed it. But, plainly, she adored him. He was undignified and funny and warm. She found him wonderful:

> This noted scientist is the most genuine human being I've met. He isn't fat—that is, in

the ordinary way. He's just enormous all over. We walked through the garden and about the grounds. The doctor asked me about my work and myself, and I told him more in 15 minutes than I'd tell my most intimate friend in a week. He's the kind of person to whom you confide things about yourself you scarcely realize.

Margaret Sanger visited Cherry Orchard, and Olive Byrne brought the children—her two sons, Byrne and Donn, and Holloway's two children, Pete and Olive Ann—to visit Sanger at Sanger's house in Fishkill. (The kids called Sanger Aunt Margaret.) Sanger knew about the family intrigue and was untroubled by it. The children knew less. "The whys and wherefores of the family arrangements were never discussed with the kids—ever," Pete says.

The kids called Holloway Keets or Keetie, for "cutie," and Olive Byrne Dots or Dotsie, for "docile."

"What are Mommies, Daddies, and Keeties for anyway?" Olive Ann, at the age of three, asked Olive Byrne.

"I can't quite say myself," she replied quietly.

In 1937, the year the American Medical Association finally endorsed contraception, Marston held a press conference in which he predicted that women would one day rule the world. He also offered a list, "in the order of the importance of their contributions to humanity," of six surpassingly happy and influential people: Margaret Sanger was No. 2, just after Henry Ford and just before F.D.R. The story was picked up by the Associated Press, wired across the continent, and printed in newspapers from Topeka to Tallahassee. "WOMEN WILL RULE 1,000 YEARS HENCE!" the Chicago *Tribune* announced. The Los Angeles *Times* reported, "FEMININE RULE DECLARED FACT."

In 1940, M.C. Gaines, who published Superman, read an article in *Family Circle* by Olive Byrne. She'd been worried by reading in the papers that comic books were dangerous, and that Superman was a Fascist. "With terrible visions of Hitlerian justice in mind," she wrote in *Family Circle,* "I went to Dr. Marston."

"Do you think these fantastic comics are good reading for children?" she asked.

Mostly, yes, Marston said. They are pure wish fulfillment: "And the two wishes behind Superman are certainly the soundest of all; they are, in fact, our national aspirations of the moment—to develop unbeatable national might, and to use this great power, when we get it, to protect innocent, peace-loving people from destructive, ruthless evil."

Gaines decided to hire Marston as a consultant. Marston convinced Gaines that what he needed, to counter the critics, was a female superhero. The idea was for her to become a member of the Justice Society of America, a league of superheroes that held its first meeting in *All-Star Comics No. 3,* in the winter of 1940: "Each of them is a hero in his own right, but when the Justice Society calls, they are only members, sworn to uphold honor and justice!" Wonder Woman's début appeared in December, 1941, in *All-Star Comics No. 8.* On the eve of the Second World War, she flew her invisible plane to the United States to fight for peace, justice, and women's rights. To hide her identity, she disguised herself as a secretary named Diana Prince and took a job working for U.S. Military Intelligence. Her gods are female, and so are her curses. "Great Hera!" she cries. "Suffering Sappho!" she swears. Her "undermeaning," Marston explained, concerned "a great movement now under way—the growth in power of women." Drawn by an artist named Harry G. Peter, who, in the nineteen-tens, had drawn suffrage cartoons, she looked like a pinup girl. She's Eleanor Roosevelt; she's Betty Grable. Mostly, she's Margaret Sanger.

In the spring of 1942, Gaines included a one-page questionnaire in *All-Star Comics.* "Should WONDER WOMAN be allowed, even though a woman, to become a member of the Justice Society?" Of the first eighteen hundred and one questionnaires returned, twelve hundred and sixty-five boys and three hundred and thirty-three girls said yes; a hundred and ninety-seven boys, and just six girls, said no. Wonder Woman joined the Justice Society. She was the only woman. Gardner Fox, who wrote the Justice Society stories, made her the society's secretary. In the summer of 1942, when all the male superheroes head off to war, Wonder Woman stays behind to answer the mail. "Good luck boys," she calls out to them. "I wish I could be going with you!" Marston was furious.

In May, 1942, F.D.R. created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. A hundred and fifty thousand women joined the Army, filling jobs that freed more men for combat. The corps "appears to be the final realization of woman's dream of

BEES

Bees in Virgil—something silver and secret,
Like lightning over the land
Or striking a plum tree on some dried hill.

Bees in Frost: light jumping off the back of a flower—yellow jackets
And a grasshopper too—always wet and alive since it's spring—
White faces peeking over stacks of new hay.

Bees also
In Crane,
Strange and mechanical, mud wasps,
A corset of wires,
The buzz
Of a tiny iron machine,
Thunderstorm coming
On a dark afternoon.

Dickinson knew the smallest bees,
Tiptoeing along the edge of her desk,
Until she got an idea and suddenly stood,

Knocking the table, the bee taking off
Into the night she was rapidly opening,
Catching a glimpse at the end of the world
Of a white rocking chair
And, behind it, circumference,
An enormous black pine, blue sky,
The little bee obliterated by white-yellow light.

O'Hara saw a bee,
Following a long line of salt through the air,
Buzzing new purple gold, a little blurry,
Wavering, like a doubloon in the azure, under the water.

And Mandelstam's bees
Wore the thin wings of time,
Every one silent and enormously still,
Staring at him from the stone of the page.

—*Kevin Holden*

complete equality with men," Sanger wrote in the New York *Herald-Tribune*. But she was dismayed that the government didn't provide contraceptives for WAACs and adopted a policy of dismissing any woman who got pregnant. "This new women's Army is a great thing, a real test of the woman's movement," she said. "Never before has the fight for woman's equality narrowed down to the real issue, sex."

In 1943, Marston wrote a Wonder Woman story called "Battle for Womanhood." It opens with Mars, the god of war, angry that so many American women are helping with the war effort.

"There are eight million American women in war activities—by 1944 there will be eighteen million!" one of Mars' female slaves reports, dragging a ball and chain.

"If women gain power in *war* they'll escape man's domination completely!" Mars thunders. "They will achieve a horrible independence!... If women become warriors like the Amazons, they'll grow stronger than men and put an end to war!"

He commands the Duke of Deception to put a stop to it. The Duke enlists the aid of Doctor Psycho, who, by means of tools he's developed in his psychological laboratory, conjures a trick in which George Washington rises from the dead and addresses a spellbound audience.

"I have a message for you—a warning!" Washington says. "*Women* will lose the war for America! Women should not be permitted to have the responsibilities they now have! Women must not make shells, torpedoes, airplane parts—they must not be trusted with war secrets or serve in the armed forces. *Women will betray their country through weakness* if not treachery!"

Wonder Woman, watching from the side, cries out, "He's working for the Axis!" To defeat Doctor Psycho, she breaks into his laboratory, dropping in through a skylight. Captured, she's trapped. Doctor Psycho locks her in a cage. Eventually, she's rescued by her best friend, Etta Candy, after which she frees Psycho's wife, Marva, whom he has blindfolded and chained to a bed.

"Submitting to a cruel husband's domination has ruined my life!" an emancipated Marva cries. "But what can a weak girl do?"

"Get strong!" Wonder Woman urges. "Earn your own living—join the WAACs or WAVES and fight for your country!"

At the end of 1943, Wonder Woman reports to Hippolyte, "Women are gaining power in the man's world!" Hippolyte shows Wonder Woman what lies ahead: Etta Candy will be awarded an honorary degree and become Professor of Public Health at Wonder Woman College, and Diana Prince will be President of the United States.

In 1944, Wonder Woman became the only superhero, aside from Superman and Batman, to make the jump from the pages of a comic book to daily newspaper syndication as a comic strip. Marston had so much work to do, writing Wonder Woman stories, that he hired an assistant, nineteen-year-old Joye Hummel. She'd been a student in a psychology class he taught at the Katharine Gibbs School. (Hummel, now ninety, still has the exam that Marston gave in class. It reads as though it were written by Sheryl Sandberg. Question No. 6: "Advise Miss F. how to overcome her fear of talking with the company Vice President who is in charge of her Division and whom she has plenty of opportunities to contact if she chooses; also tell Miss F. why these contacts are to her advantage.") To help Hummel write Wonder Woman, the family gave her copies of Marston's "Emotions of Normal People" and Sanger's "Woman and the New Race."

By the end of the Second World War, the number of American women working outside the home had grown by sixty per cent; three-quarters of these women were married, and a third were mothers of young children. Three-quarters of the working women hoped to keep their jobs, but they were told to make room for men returning from military service. If they didn't quit, they were forced out: their pay was cut, and factories stopped providing child care.

Marston died in 1947. "Hire me," Holloway wrote to DC Comics. Instead, DC hired Robert Kanigher, and Wonder Woman followed the hundreds of thousands of American women workers who, when peace came, were told that their labor threatened the stability of the nation. Kanigher made Wonder Woman a babysitter, a fashion model, and a movie star. She gave advice to the lovelorn, as the author of a lonely-hearts newspaper advice column. Her new writer also abandoned a regular feature, "The Wonder Women of History"—a four-page centerfold in every issue, containing a biography of a woman of achievement. He

replaced it with a series about weddings, called "Marriage à la Mode."

"You, Daughter, must become the women's leader," the Duke of Deception tells Lya, in a Wonder Woman story written by Kanigher. "You must persuade them that they don't want any political rights and that everything I dictate they vote for." Lya smiles, and says, "That'll be easy!"

In the nineteen-fifties, women went home. Women's rights went underground. And homosexuals were persecuted. Is there a "quick test like an X-ray that discloses these things?" U.S. Senator Margaret Chase Smith asked in hearings about homosexuality in 1950. At the State Department, a former F.B.I. officer was put in charge of purging the civil service of homosexuals by administering lie-detector tests, based on Marston's research. Those who failed were required to resign. Between 1945 and 1956, a thousand accused homosexuals employed by the State Department and five thousand employed by the federal government lost their jobs. Marston, Holloway, and Byrne had led a closeted life. It had its costs.

In 1948, Holloway went back to her job at Metropolitan Life. Byrne found another kind of employment. "I am working for our local 'Maternal Health Center' clinic," she wrote to Margaret Sanger, "and am most amused when they speak of you. Somehow they think you are a contemporary of Florence Nightingale." It was as if Sanger had lived in another century. Byrne tried to explain to people at the clinic that Sanger was alive and well, but she never told anyone that she was Sanger's niece.

In the nineteen-fifties, Sanger turned her attention to the question of how she would be remembered. She'd been sorting through her papers, preparing them for the Library of Congress and for Smith College, deciding which papers to keep, and which to throw away. In 1951, at the age of seventy-two, Sanger sold the rights to a film based on her autobiography. She then wrote a letter to Ethel Byrne, claiming that the scriptwriter wished to make a slight alteration to the facts of the founding of the birth-control movement, regarding the trials the two women had faced in 1917. In the film, Sanger told her sister, "I should be the Hunger Strikee." Ethel Byrne would not be mentioned. Sanger asked her sister to sign a release stating that she agreed that the film would not "portray me or any part of my life" and that, in the film, it would appear "that Mrs. Sanger engaged in the famous hunger strike instead of myself." Ethel Byrne thought the release was "the funniest thing in the world," according to Olive. She never signed it. The film was never made.

In much the same way that Sanger wished she could erase from the historical record the fact that Ethel Byrne, and not she, had gone on a hunger strike, she also wanted to keep well hidden her ties to the comic-book superhero created by William Moulton Marston. Maybe she found the association embarrassing or thought it was unimportant. But, more likely, never mentioning it was among the things that Sanger did to help keep Olive Byrne's family arrangements secret, in order to avoid scandal for Olive and the children, and harm to Sanger's cause. Whatever the reason, in no part of the story of Sanger's life, as she told it, did she ever mention Wonder Woman.

Holloway and Byrne lived together for the rest of their lives. In the fifties and sixties, they often stayed in Tucson, taking care of Sanger. Byrne worked as Sanger's secretary. In 1961, Byrne's son Donn married one of Sanger's granddaughters; she became Margaret Sanger Marston. In 1965, when the Supreme Court effectively legalized contraception, in Griswold v. Connecticut, Byrne wrote to Justice William O. Douglas, who had written the opinion for the 7-2 majority, "I am sure Mrs. Sanger, who is very ill, would rejoice in this pronouncement which crowns her 50 years of dedication to the liberation of women." Sanger died the next year.

In 1972, the editors of *Ms.* put Wonder Woman on the cover of the first regular issue, bridging the distance between the feminism of the nineteen-tens and the feminism of the nineteen-seventies with the Wonder Woman of the nineteen-forties, the feminism of their childhoods. "Looking back now at these Wonder Woman stories from the '40s," Gloria Steinem wrote, "I am amazed by the strength of their feminist message."

Ms. was meant to be an organ for a revived feminist movement, begun in 1963 with the publication of Betty Friedan's "Feminine Mystique" and the passage of the Equal Pay Act. The National Organization for Women was founded in 1966. In 1969, Ellen Willis and Shulamith Firestone started the Redstockings of the Women's Liberation Movement. Firestone's manifesto, "The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution," was published the next year, along with Kate Millett's "Sexual Politics" and Robin Morgan's "Sisterhood Is Powerful." A revolution was being waged, too, in the world of magazines. In March, 1970, forty-six women working at *Newsweek* sued the magazine for discrimination. At the *Ladies' Home Journal*, more than a hundred women staged an eleven-hour sit-in; their demands included day care, a female senior editorial staff, and a special issue of the magazine to be called *The Women's Liberated Journal.*

The revolution also came to comics. In July, 1970, the Women's Liberation Basement Press, in Berkeley, launched an underground comic book called "It Aint Me Babe." Its first issue featured Wonder Woman on its cover marching in a parade with female comic characters, protesting stock plots. In a story called "Breaking Out," Veronica ditches Archie for Betty, Supergirl tells Superman to get lost, Petunia Pig tells Porky Pig to cook his own dinner, and, when Iggy tells Lulu she can't be in his parade ("No girls allowed!"), she walks away, saying, "Fuck this shit!"

A nationwide Women's Strike for Equality was held on August 26, 1970, the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Joanne Edgar helped organize the work stoppage at Facts on File. Patricia Carbine went on strike at *Look*. A year later, Edgar became a founding editor of *Ms.*, Carbine its publisher.

"Hello, I'm Elizabeth Marston and I know all about Wonder Woman," Holloway said when she walked into the

offices of *Ms.*, in the spring of 1972. She was nearly eighty, as pale as paper and as thin as bone. In Virginia, where she was living with Olive Byrne, who was sixty-eight, she'd got a letter from Joanne Edgar, telling her that *Ms.* was planning to run a cover story about Wonder Woman. Holloway flew to New York. She met the magazine's writers and editors and artists. "All were on the young side, very much in earnest," she reported to Marjorie Wilkes Huntley. "I told them I was 100% with them in what they are trying to do and to 'charge ahead!' " Huntley sent in a money order for a subscription, signing herself, at the age of eighty-two, "Marjorie Wilkes Huntley (Ms.)."

But Holloway never told Edgar, or anyone else, about Olive Byrne. In 1974, when a Berkeley Ph.D. student writing a dissertation about Wonder Woman asked Holloway about Wonder Woman's bracelets, Holloway replied in a letter, "A student of Dr. Marston's wore on each wrist heavy, broad silver bracelets, one African and the other Mexican. They attracted his attention as symbols of love binding so that he adopted them for the Wonder Woman strip." The bracelets were Olive Byrne's. Olive Byrne had at that point been living with Holloway for forty-eight years.

At the beginning of 1972, when the editors of *Ms.* were planning their Wonder Woman issue, the women's movement seemed on the verge of lasting success. On March 22, 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed the Senate, nearly a half century after it had been introduced. In June, Congress also passed Title IX, assuring that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." The year 1972 was a legislative watershed. "We put sex-discrimination provisions into everything," Bella Abzug said. "There was no opposition. Who'd be against equal rights for women?"

A lot of people. In 1972, Wonder Woman was named a "Symbol of Feminist Revolt"; the next year, the Supreme Court legalized abortion. But the aftermath of Roe v. Wade didn't bolster the

feminist movement; it narrowed it. If 1972 was a legislative watershed, 1973 marked the beginning of a drought. The movement stalled. Wages never reached parity; social and economic gains were rolled back; political and legal victories seemingly within sight were never achieved. Then, too, the movement was divided, bitterly and viciously, radicals attacking liberals and liberals attacking radicals. In May, 1975, the Redstockings held a press conference and issued a sixteen-page report purporting to reveal that Gloria Steinem was a C.I.A. agent, that *Ms.* was both a capitalist manifesto and part of a C.I.A. strategy to destroy the women's movement, and that Wonder Woman was a symbol of nothing so much as feminism betrayed. "Wonder Woman also reflects the anti-people attitude of the 'liberal feminists' and matriarchists who look to mythical and supernatural heroines and 'models' while ignoring or denigrating the achievements and struggles of down-to-earth women," they charged. "It leads to the 'liberated woman,' individualist line that denies the need for a movement, and implies that when women don't make it, it's their own fault." Steinem rebutted the allegations. "Although it seems bizarre to have to write this obvious sentence," she wrote, "let me state that I am not now nor have I ever been an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency."

Wonder Woman ran for President in a comic book written by Marston in 1943; she ran for President on the cover of *Ms.* in 1972. She'll run again; she's never won. The Equal Rights Amendment never became law; in 1982, the deadline for its ratification expired. A century after Sanger started *The Woman Rebel*, even the fight for birth control isn't over.

Last March, I went to see "Captain America: The Winter Soldier," with Byrne Holloway Marston. He's named for all three of his parents. He's eighty-three. He's a retired obstetrician. He's also a movie buff. He's optimistic about Gal Gadot, though he thinks that Jennifer Lawrence would have made a tip-top Wonder Woman. "She's good enough to soften it up," he says.

Captain America and Wonder Woman are about the same age. He made his début in 1940. They've aged differently, the Boy Scout and the bombshell. Captain America is so hard to update that Marvel decided to have him frozen in 1945 and awakened in 2011. A guy he meets while out for a run on the Washington Mall asks him what's different about now versus 1945. "No polio is good," he says.

Warner Bros. is unlikely to release a film in which Wonder Woman is frozen in time in 1941, in order to call attention to what's changed for women, and what's not, when she's defrosted. She'd have to take stock, and what could she say about what women have got? Breast pumps and fetal rights instead of paid maternity leave and equal rights? Longer hours instead of equal pay? Aphrodite, aid me! Lean in? Are you *kidding*? Batman vs. Superman? Suffering Sappho.

Sitting in the dark, I asked Byrne Marston what he thought he would do if he were writing Wonder Woman into the script for "Dawn of Justice."

"God, I don't know," he said. He stretched out his legs. "I'd go back to the origins." ♦

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

THE PLUS SIDE

Full-figured fashion gets a new look.

BY LIZZIE WIDDICOMBE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PARI DUKOVIC

I attended a runway show at New York Fashion Week this year, and I managed to get a very good seat—in the front row, right where the models made their turns. As is often the case in fashion, the best part was not *where* I was sitting but with whom: two of the biggest players in the industry—the editor-in-chief of the leading magazine and a colleague, a former model.

Show time: the lights went up, and a model sashayed onto the runway in something that resembled Miami club wear, by way of an ashram. She wore black platform heels and short white harem pants with a white tailored draped top. A crackle of flashes came from the photographers. The clothes seemed to be a success. At a black-and-white wool herringbone suit, the editor exclaimed, "*Yes!* I love that!"

Then a model came down the runway wearing a skintight leopard-print dress with a V neck and a scandalously high slit up the front. There were gasps from the audience as the model narrowed her eyes and strutted toward us. The editor whispered, "That is an air-your-coochie dress!"

"Don't look up!" the editor's colleague joked, as the model pivoted on the runway.

This scene did not take place at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, where coochie jokes are about as common as last season's sweatpants. I was at Full Figured Fashion Week, an independent event held this summer, in downtown Manhattan, to showcase plus-size clothes—14 and above. The editor-in-chief was Madeline Jones, of the magazine *PLUS Model*—an online-only magazine that is sometimes described as the *Vogue* of the industry—and her companion was Alexandra Boos, a former plus-size model who now runs the "curvy" division of TRUE Model Management and is the marketing and creative director for *PLUS Model.* For anyone accustomed to navigating the anxious crowds at uptown Fashion Week, Full Figured Fashion Week can feel like passing from a land of famine into one of plenty. The guests are more racially diverse—there were plenty of white people, but much of the crowd was African-American and Latino—and they come in every shape and size: short women with slim waists and enormous breasts, tall women with narrow shoulders and thick torsos, round women, pear-shaped women, and a few mesmerized men. The atmosphere is celebratory, rather than cutthroat. There were snacks, and buoyant music was playing. People referred to the "plus community," and they wore T-shirts with slogans such as "Thick Girls Do It Better."

Full Figured Fashion Week is the creation of Gwen DeVoe, a onetime plus-size model who now works in human resources at Scholastic publishing. DeVoe, a tall African-American woman with broad shoulders and prominent cheekbones, wears a size 18. She got the idea for Full Figured Fashion Week in 2007, after attending a Tracy Reese show at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. Reese is one of her favorite designers, and DeVoe told me she'd been excited about the show. "My friends were texting me, like, 'Oh my God, take a selfie!' " But after watching a procession of clothes she loved she had a sinking realization: "None of these things are for me. And not because I wasn't a buyer—because I *had* the money. But because they didn't come in my size."

DeVoe is the take-charge type: "My motto has always been, if you don't invite me to the party, I'll have my own party." She raised ten thousand dollars in sponsorship money and spent ten thousand of her own to host a plus-size runway show. This year, its sixth, the event attracted about a thousand people, from as far away as Japan and Germany, and featured events all over town—parties, trunk shows, panels—culminating in two fashion shows: an Indie Designer show, which displayed the work of eleven plus-size designers from cities around the country, including Portland and Atlanta, and a runway show, which featured larger companies, including Kiyonna and ModaMix. For people working in the often overlooked business of selling clothes to large women, "it was recognition," Boos told me. "It was no longer feeling invisible."

At Full Figured Fashion Week, people wondered

To understand what fashion for plus-size women is, it's important to understand what it hasn't been—which is fashionable. At Full Figured Fashion Week, people often asked me to imagine a typical department store. Upstairs, above cosmetics and accessories, is the elaborate layer cake of women's apparel: juniors, sportswear, swimsuits. There are sections for "accessible luxury," celebrity lines by Jessica Simpson and Kate Moss, power suits, ten-thousand-dollar wedding dresses, designer jeggings. But these clothes typically come in sizes 0 through 12. To find anything bigger, you have to go to the top floor or the basement, "a hidden little grotto," as Boos told me. "Like it's the dirty secret, hidden between the tire department and home goods."

Historically, plus-size apparel has had a conservative look. Its unofficial name, I quickly gathered at Full Figured Fashion Week, was "fat-girl clothes." The clothes were heavy on basics—items like plain T-shirts—in stretchy materials and dark colors. They usually conformed to a set of generally accepted rules about what plus-size women should wear. No one can decide who wrote the rules (perhaps it was the principal of a very strict all-girls school), but everyone could rattle them off: Nothing tight or body-hugging. No crop tops. No loud colors. No patterns. No horizontal stripes. As a result, the plus

whether plus-size designers could find acceptance in the high-fashion world. Alexandra Boos, a former model, described the shows as "recognition."

section became the land of the mom jean and the muumuu—of dresses that were less fashion statement and more "tent to hide your body," as one woman put it.

In the past five years, however, things have changed. Fast-fashion outlets—H&M, Forever 21, Wet Seal, and Mango—have rolled out new, plus-size lines, forcing their more traditional competition to catch up. Macy's is spicing up its "Woman's" section. (This season, a representative told me, the store's in-house line, INC, is focussing on "peasant tops, soft pants, and jumpsuits.") And on the Internet a new generation of e-retailers—the U.K. brand ASOS and the plus-size-only brand Eloquii—have found success selling trendy clothes to a younger market. "Truthfully, it's gotten better," Boos told me.

The improvements in plus-size clothing shouldn't come as a surprise. Consider the demographics: In 1985, the average woman wore a size 8. Today, she wears a size 14. The U.S. government considers more than a hundred million Americans—and more than sixty-four per cent of females—to be overweight. Plus-size apparel represents almost eighteen billion dollars of the hundred-and-sixteen-billion-dollar women's-apparel business, and in the past year it has grown three per cent. According to Marshal Cohen, a former retail executive who is now an analyst at the market-research group NPD, "There is money in it, and there is big, healthy money."

The question in the air at Full Figured Fashion Week was whether plus-size fashion can find acceptance in the high-fashion realm. Last fall, Lane Bryant—the brand that most people associate with the dowdy, conservative look of yore—announced a collaboration with Isabel Toledo, the designer known for her meticulous architectural clothes. In March, Lane Bryant and Toledo put on a plus-size show in New York that was attended by editors from *Glamour* and *Vogue*. The former *Vogue* contributing editor André Leon Talley, who attended, told me that he was impressed by the show: "It was hip. It had today written all over the silhouettes, the casting, the shoes. Attitude. Everything." Talley added that in the past three years he's noticed a change in the women he sees on the streets. "The big girl rocks. The big girl is dope," he said. "Walking down the street, all the big girls are looking and thinking fashion. They're on point with the fashion trend."

There's a sense that the fashion world is on the verge of a change equal to the "democratization" that's gained momentum in the past ten years—in which

Fashion week is as much a show for the audience as for the models. "People have been plotting their outfits all year," a blogger said.

runway-knockoff chains like Zara and big-box designer collaborations like Vera Wang for Kohl's have made high fashion available to the masses. This hope has been buoyed by the box-office triumph of female celebrities with non-Jennifer Aniston-esque bodies, who seem to be closing the gap between fashionable and "real" America. Melissa McCarthy, who starred in "Bridesmaids," said that just two years ago she had trouble finding a designer to make her a dress for the Academy Awards. As Jill Herzig, then the editor of *Redbook*, told a reporter, "The second wave of this big style revolution . . . is that accessibility doesn't just mean price—it means size."

I first met Alexandra Boos on the Wednesday of Full Figured Fashion Week. Hundreds of full-figured women, dressed in white and showing skin, were lined up along a pier on the East River, waiting to board a party boat for an event called Curves at Sea. Boos is tall and voluptuous, with a bright, Midwestern disposition and a blond-bombshell look—flowing hair, pouty red lips, and a face that resembles Cindy Crawford's. She was wearing an A-line dress from Macy's and was shepherding a group of young plus models: busty twentysomethings of various races, in high heels. "O.K., girls!" Boos called out, lining up the models for a picture. One of them asked, "Have we got all the curves in?"

Boos, who is in her forties, has never had the mainstream recognition of famous plus-size models, such as Mia Tyler or Ashley Graham, but in the industry she's a fixture. She came to New York from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, in 1989, with plans to become an actress. People kept asking her if she modelled. She was confused: "How can I be a model? I'm a size 14." Eventually, though, she became a plus-size Ford model, and shot campaigns for Lane Bryant, Catherine's, and Ulla Popken, a German brand. Work was plentiful, but plus-size models didn't have the same status as their thin counterparts. Major brands ordered them to show up for photo shoots at 8 A.M., in their own makeup. "The straight-size models would come and have pro makeup artists do their hair and makeup," Boos said. "It was a blatant stepchild feeling."

Boos explained the rules of the game. Despite the aura of inclusiveness surrounding the plus-size fashion industry, its models are subject to many of the same forces as their thinner counterparts—including the need to appear thin. It's not uncommon to find size-8 models in plus-size clothing catalogues. "There's pressure to have an angled face," Boos said. "What some models would do is they'd be on the smaller spectrum—normal weight—and they would get padding." In her modelling years, Boos said, she always carried pads. "On top of that, if I was on the smaller side, the seamstresses would make me a fat suit out of pillow padding."

There is also the matter of terminology: in the plus-size world, sizes 0 to 12 are generally called "straight"—or, occasionally, by department-store buyers, "missy"—never "standard" or "regular." Terms for larger sizes keep piling up. "When I started, they called them 'mama sizes,' " Boos said—an expression still used by some Chinese manufacturers. Then came "women's" sizes, followed by "full-figured," which was popularized by lingerie sellers. The more assertive "plus" arrived in the past decade. Lately, it has been losing traction to "curvy," though some people think that favors an hourglass physique. An alternative movement has long pushed to reclaim the word "fat." "It's a big controversy," Boos told me. "We haven't landed on the word that pleases everybody, and, frankly, I don't know if we ever will."

Full Figured Fashion Week is as much a fashion show for the audience as for the models. "People have been plotting their outfits all year," one blogger, Marie Denee, told me. Boos urged me to attend the Indie Designer show on Friday. The show was held in the Broad Street Ballroom, a bank building downtown, with classical columns. Club music played, the runway was decorated with paper butterflies, and, in a bar area, waiters served cream-cheese-stuffed strawberries and champagne.

If the cruise had tweaked the rules of "fat girl" dressing, the scene at the show ripped them to pieces. Instead of white, people wore eye-catching color: sequins, bodysuits, flashy headpieces. I chatted with an entrepreneur named Camille Newman, who went to Oberlin and lives in Brooklyn. She had a reverse-ombré hair style, with light bangs and dark hair extensions. Her outfit mixed high and low: hot-pink lipstick, dollar-store earrings, a tight pink top, and a shiny purple "skater skirt" from an independent designer named Youtheary Khmer. "We carry this on my site," Newman said; she is the owner of a pop-up store and online designer shop called Pop Up Plus. "We're trying to be the Nasty Gal of plus," she said, referring to the fast-growing e-tailer.

I found Boos talking to the French plus-size model Clémentine Desseaux, who has brown hair and girlish freckles. Boos threw her arms around Desseaux's manager, Becca Thorpe, another stately blonde. "*Eee!* Good to see you!" Boos said. She told me, "Becca and I modelled together back in the day."

They posed for pictures, and Desseaux, whom Thorpe seems to be positioning as a kind of plus-size Gwyneth Paltrow—she writes a life-style blog called Bonjour Clem—said that she had recently moved to New York, and was finding the city "empowering and awesome." In France, plus size is called *grande taille*, and is considered something of an embarrassment. Desseaux sighed: "It was not easy being curvy in France."

I sat between Boos and Jones, the editor of *PLUS Model*. The lights went down, and a hush came over the room. Full Figured Fashion Week plays "a spiritual role," Boos told me. Sometimes, the body-acceptance talk has an evangelical tone. Late in the show, a male spoken-word artist named Jamaal St. James, invoking a preacher, delivered an ode to curvy women. Sample lines: "On the eighth day, God created thickness and saw that it was good!"; "Stop asking me if those jeans make your butt look big. No. Your butt makes your butt look big! And I love every inch of it"; and "I like my women the way I like my pancakes: hot, fluffy, and stacked!"

The lights went up, and the m.c. told us to greet one another: "Turn to your neighbor and say, 'Girlfriend, you are beautiful!' "

It's worth recalling that the very idea of "fat" is a fairly recent creation. For most of human history, as Amy Farrell, a professor of women's and gender studies at Dickinson College, notes in "Fat Shame," only the wealthy could have extra fat on their bodies. Most people worked too hard, had too little food, and were often too sick. Then came the Industrial Revolution: mass food production and more

sedentary jobs meant that the new middle class, and not just the wealthy, became heavier. Once "average" fat people came on the scene, Farrell writes, "fat denigration" became more common: fat jokes proliferated in nineteenth-century magazines.

Clothing changed, too: with manufactured garments came standardized sizes. People used to sew their own clothes (or, if they were wealthy, hired tailors), so they made clothes that fit their body's shape. But factory-made clothes came in predetermined sizes. (In 1939 and 1940, the U.S. Department of Agriculture conducted a survey of fifteen thousand women's bodies to devise commercial standards.) Suddenly, it became important for your body to fit your clothes, instead of the other way around: it was possible to try on a skirt in a store and think, My legs are too short, or My butt's too big.

Still, until the nineteen-sixties—with the brief exception of the Flapper era—the ideal body shape for women was curvy and feminine; Marilyn Monroe reigned. The Youthquake of the nineteen-sixties fuelled the ascent of teen-age beauty icons like Twiggy and Penelope Tree, and the ultra-thin body became the new ideal. The ancient equation was completely reversed: fatness became associated with low social status; thinness became a symbol of wealth and prestige.

But, as Full Figured Fashion Week demonstrated, class and racial politics complicate this narrative. "In the black community, there's always been a celebration and a recognition of the fact that black women have thick, curvy bodies," Tanisha Ford, a professor of women, gender, and sexuality at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, told me. She pointed out that traditional African clothes were designed to highlight curves, and that hip-hop today embraces a wide range of shapes, including "thickness." Nicki Minaj is a reigning beauty icon. Ford, who is the author of a forthcoming book called "Liberated Threads: Black Women and the Politics of Adornment," noted that fashion shows have long played an important political role in African-American culture, starting with Sunday processions, when slaves walked to church, and extending through Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, which hosted beauty pageants and fashion shows with a Black Nationalist bent. "For me, it's no shocker that black women would be leading the charge toward full-figured fashion," Ford said. "Black people have always used clothing as a form of resistance."

Full Figured Fashion Week included an indie show, with designers from around the country.

In the modern era, resistance tends to happen on the Internet. The plus-size fashion movement owes much to the emergence, in the past six or seven years, of a new generation of fashion bloggers, who challenge mainstream beauty standards using cheeky names: Plus Size Princess, Curvy Girl Chic, Stylish Curves, La Pecosa Preciosa, A Well-Rounded Venture, Chubble Bubble, Curves and Chaos, Hey, Fat Chick!

Many blogs grew out of "body acceptance" communities on the Web, like the Livejournal community Fatshionista, and

The audience wore eye-catching color—sequins, bodysuits, flashy headpieces—and a spoken-word artist delivered an ode to curvy women.

they have flourished, in part, for practical reasons. Sarah Conley, a social-media consultant and the blogger behind StyleIT, told me that readers often follow bloggers whose bodies look like their own. "Take Chastity Garner," Conley said, naming the blogger behind Garner Style. "Her readers follow her because their body is similar to hers—she's more pear-shaped—so they want to know how clothes look on her, and what her tips and tricks are."

Once in a while, a single post can spark a movement. In the summer of 2011, Gabi Gregg, who writes the blog GabiFresh, went on a quest to find a bikini; at the time, bikinis were hard to find in large sizes. When she found one, she posted a picture of herself in it, calling it a "fatkini." (Gregg says that she got the word and the idea from a Tumblr user.) The picture, and a follow-up article for the Web site xoJane, the next summer, went viral, prompting a wave of copycat posts. Plus-size women took bikini pictures and tagged them #fatkini. Gregg ended up on the "Today" show, and the retail landscape changed. Gregg told me,

"Out of nowhere, all these plus-size brands were suddenly making bikinis."

The fatkini movement—and plus-size fashion in general—has occasionally sparked a backlash. "Being really visible when you're a plus-size woman is not for the faint of heart," Conley told me. Many blogs attract lewd and misogynistic comments, but the more mild-mannered critics cite health concerns. "There's a fine line between anti-body-shaming and obesity-glorification," one reader wrote, at the bottom of a Buzzfeed article about the fatkini trend. Another added, "Celebrating obesity seems a bit ridiculous."

Obesity is a genuine health concern, but the connection between health and the wearing of crop tops is a murky one. "This should never be a conversation about health," Madeline Jones told me. People become plus size for all sorts of reasons, not all of which involve lifestyle choices. And it's not clear that shaming people—or requiring them to wear muumuus—is an effective weight-loss tool. (Most psychological studies suggest the opposite.) In general, the academics I spoke with argued that health-related critiques of plus-size fashion veil an age-old impulse: the desire to police the prevailing social order, in which fat women are inferior. Kinitra Brooks, a scholar of black women and popular culture, has a word for it. "That's called concern-trolling," she said. "It's another tool of control."

Being among the first to challenge the social order can be lucrative. Gabi Gregg, the blogger who started the #fatkini movement, now designs her own line of swimwear, called Swim Sexy. Her galaxy print suit, which she described as her "all star," sold out in twenty-four hours.

In the world of plus-size fashion, activism and consumerism often cheerfully intermingle. Bloggers move merchandise. Raina Penchansky, the chief strategy officer of Digital Brand Architects, an agency that represents bloggers, told me that plus-size bloggers have the highest "conversion rate" in the business—meaning that their blog posts result in sales. Retailers are eager to get them on board, and bloggers often do double duty as paid spokespeople. One executive at a plus-size-clothing chain told me that winning "grass-roots" support was critical to any sales strategy. "Our market moves much more bottom up than top down."

Terms for larger sizes keep piling up—"full-figured," "plus," "curvy."

The rising clout of bloggers occasionally creates tension. The Italian brand Marina Rinaldi used plus-size fashion bloggers as models for a recent ad campaign, and some models, Boos told me, saw themselves out of a job. "The bloggers are becoming kind of industry celebrities," she said. Gwen DeVoe, the organizer of Full Figured Fashion Week, said that she'd considered inviting a popular plus-size blogger, only to be told by the blogger's booking agent that the fee would be three thousand dollars. "I'm not mad at her," DeVoe added. "Do your thing! But I can't afford her."

At Fashion Week, I attended several events set up by brands to wine and dine bloggers, including a "pampering session" at the W downtown, hosted by the British brand Evans, and a "birthday party" thrown by Just My Size, an underwear company celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. The room was full of youthful women in dresses with loud patterns: the uniform of the new wave. I spoke to Karen Ward, a Toronto blogger and store owner who writes the blog Curvy Canadian, and several New York-based bloggers: Mellie Davis, from the Fat Apple; Ty Alexander, from Gorgeous in Gray; Beck Delude, a six-foot-three twenty-four-year-old who works as a social-media strategist and writes a blog called the Manfattan Project; and Chastity Garner, the thirty-three-year-old blogger behind Garner Style. Garner, who is African-American and from Georgia, wore a girlie outfit—a long dress with a black-and-white striped skirt and a black top with lace detailing—and had her hair in a chin-length curly bob. She started blogging in 2008, while working at a nonprofit. "Plus-size clothes were just getting good," she said. She quit her job two years ago, and now lives in San Francisco, where she has a high-five-figure income, thanks to a combination of sponsored posts, advertisements, consulting for brands, and writing a column on plus-size fashion for About.com. She told me, "The crazy thing is, I think the reason I'm able to be a full-time blogger is because I'm fat."

While plus-size and fast-fashion brands scramble to attract attention from the plus-size community, "straight" fashion brands are more ambivalent. At Full Figured Fashion Week, I heard people making reference to the fashion industry's "closet" plus-size designers: accessible luxury brands with big licensing businesses—including Calvin Klein, Vince Camuto, Ralph Lauren,

Tommy Hilfiger, and Michael Kors. All have plus-size lines that are sold in stores like Macy's but are not advertised.

Some people in the plus-size fashion world have attempted to persuade them to be more vocal, to little avail. Jones told me that *PLUS Model* has remained online-only for eight years, rather than in print, because she can't get fashion companies to buy ad pages. "I've approached INC, Roberto Cavalli, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Michael Kors, Adrianna Papell," she said. "They never buy ads." (She has hired a new marketing director to approach the brands again this fall.) Nicolette Mason, a columnist for *Marie Claire* and a blogger, said that she had made it a mission to persuade Michael Kors to acknowledge his "beautiful" plus-size line, Michael. "I tried to get samples from Michael Kors, and they wouldn't lend them to me," she said. "They pretty much said that they would not publicize their plus brand." When I contacted Michael Kors, a public-relations representative sent over a statement: "The MICHAEL Michael Kors plus size line launched in 2007. Michael prides himself on being able to dress women of all shapes and sizes, and making them feel and look good."

The fashion world's paranoia about associating itself with the plus-size movement goes beyond simple prejudice. Marty Singer, a consultant who works with luxury fashion companies, told me that retail executives constantly worry about maintaining "brand equity"—that nebulous commodity, beloved by marketers, which represents some combination of reputation and market share. Luxury brands aren't just selling clothes, of course; they're selling a life-style fantasy. Singer reeled off a few: "Gucci or Prada: luxury. Coach, Tory Burch, Kate Spade: accessible luxury. Tory Burch is the uptown-downtown, cool-chic girl. Michael Kors: Hollywood jet set." In the fashion industry, Singer said, there's a common (and, in his opinion, misguided) belief that associating one's image with downmarket things—like fat bodies—will result in mall-ification.

Even for brands that do advertise to plus-size customers, choosing what imagery to promote can be tricky. At Full Figured Fashion Week, TRUE Model Management sponsored a panel called "The Great Debate." It was hosted by the actress and comedian Erica Watson, who played a small role in the movie "Precious." (She also received the Full Figured Entertainer of the Year Award.) Participants addressed the question of whether "plus" had become a "dirty word," and discussed their frustration at the tendency of brands like Macy's to use size-12 models when selling clothing to size-24 women.

Macy's—aware of the rumblings of discontent among its consumers—had sent word that its buyers were coming to the event. I sat next to the Macy's representatives, and discovered that the buyers had actually sent their assistants: nervous—and thin—young women clutching notepads.

The blogger Marie Denee, one of the panelists, said, "The marketers still think that we're in transition. They can't accept a plus-size woman who isn't waiting to be a smaller size."

Madeline Jones turned to the audience with a rallying cry: "You know why the plus-size industry is the way it is? Because we have a voice! This is what we have to do. We have to say, 'You know what? We're going to write to Macy's!' "

The Macy's assistants kept their heads down and took notes, but Watson hadn't forgotten about them. "Where's the girl from Macy's?" she asked. The assistants waved shyly. Jones said, in a sweet voice, "Hi, Macy's!"

Watson cut in: "Put some fat girls in your advertisements!"

Not all brands are getting it wrong. One day during Full Figured Fashion Week, I stopped by a trunk sale at the London Hotel for the relaunched plus-size e-tailer Eloquii. Eloquii started three years ago as a "sister brand" to The Limited, the ubiquitous mall store, and it gained a small but devoted following for its workplace-centered clothes. In 2013, it was shut down amid a corporate restructuring by The Limited's private-equity owners, Sun Capital Partners.

There was an outcry online: plus-size bloggers, including Marie Denee, wrote open letters to The Limited's owners, asking them to bring the brand back to life. To their delight, an anonymous Internet mogul bought up all of Eloquii's assets—technical specs, e-mail lists—rehired members of the original executive team, and, last February, relaunched it.

I showed up early at the Eloquii trunk show, and found the two-room suite decorated as if for a girlie carnival: vases of fresh flowers, a tarot-card reader, a photo booth uploading pictures to Instagram, and a salon area with manicurists at the ready. Along the walls and upstairs in the bedroom suites, racks of the bright new clothing line—skirts, dresses, and tops, in sizes 14 through 24—stood ready to be tried on by bloggers and fans.

Jodi Arnold, the company's creative director, roamed around, making last-minute adjustments to the clothes on the racks. Arnold is a veteran of the straight retail world—she had her own line before being hired by Linda Heasley, who was then The Limited's C.E.O., and is now the head of Lane Bryant. Arnold is not plus size, but she lets it be known that, at times in her life, she's worn a size 12.

Arnold told me that the Eloquii woman is "a trend customer." After years of being relegated to fashion's sidelines, she's developing a yen for of-the-moment items: animal prints, miniskirts. "At launch, the best-selling item was a crop top," Arnold said.

Arnold aspires to make Eloquii into a "Zara for plus size"—a brand that sells expensive-looking clothes at affordable prices, with styles that turn over quickly. She approached a rack of clothes: their bright colors and horizontal stripes had a faintly revolutionary quality. She fingered a body-hugging, black-and-white striped skirt made of a thick, stretchy material. "This fabrication is called scuba," she said. "It's stretchy, but it's also constructed." The skirt had a short overlay called a peplum. Arnold explained, "The peplum has been a big thing in fashion, in general, but for this customer it's been really good, because it feels like she covers something, but she can still show off her waist."

The shoppers arrived: a giddy mob of women decked out in Eloquii-ish hues—black-and-white stripes, yellows, pinks. A collective squeal went through the room as they descended on the clothes. Sheri Atwell, twenty-eight, the blogger behind Shapely Chic Sheri, admired the cutout detailing around the neckline of a lilac-colored dress. "Anything unique is really hard to find for plus-size women," she said.

She was accompanied by Georgette Niles, who was wearing an all-yellow ensemble. Her skirt, the Citron Midi Skirt, with pleats, had in the past week become an iconic Eloquii item: the company

posted the piece on Instagram, and sold a hundred and fifty-eight skirts in five days. Niles, who is forty-two, is a fashion blogger and a social worker in Philadelphia. "I'm helping little children and being fashionable at the same time," she said. She grabbed the black-and-white scuba skirt. "Oh my gosh! I love this!" she said. "I'm trying this on. This is going to be mine, in my house."

"*This* one is mine," Atwell said, holding a floral asymmetrical skirt up to her waist. "Look at this, right?"

There was something touching about the scene—and about the way the women were mobbing Arnold. Any revulsion at the unbridled consumerism was mitigated by the earnest joy of the customers. I couldn't remember seeing a Zara shopper expressing this much appreciation for the designer's work.

Atwell admired a white midi skirt. "Beautiful," she said. "Look at that heavy material."

Niles rolled her eyes. "A lot of times they give us *cream*, or *off-white* or *ivory*, because it's supposed to camouflage you. Just give me white!"

"We want color. We want fun prints," Atwell said. "We can be bold, it's O.K.!"

"Give me some leopard print—I'm all right!" Niles said, before she was distracted by another dress. "Ooh!" she exclaimed. "Lace hem! Lace hem!" She seemed to be having an out-of-body experience. "This is happening! This is happening *today!*"

I spotted Alexandra Boos looking through the racks, fingering a studded ponte-knit skirt. "You know what is the best?" she said. "When a straight-size girl comes up to me and is, like, 'Oh my God, I love your outfit. Where did you get it?' And you're, like, 'I'm sorry, it doesn't come in your size!'"

The longer you spend in the world of plus-size fashion, the clearer it becomes that self-esteem isn't just a personal issue—it's an economic one. People sometimes refer to the lack of clothing options for plus-size women as a chicken-and-egg problem. Designers don't make the clothes because store buyers don't request them. Buyers don't request them because, when they do, shoppers don't buy them. The blogger Nicolette Mason pointed to an "information gap"—the lack of media coverage devoted to plus-size fashion and the fact that, for the most part, fashionable plus-size women aren't represented in the engines of mainstream consumerism: celebrity magazines and television. "Lauren Conrad drives so much in terms of fashion and sales," she told me. "Kim Kardashian." But it also has to do with people's self-image. Marshal Cohen, the NPD analyst, told me that among retailers plus-size customers are known for being more "price sensitive" than straight-size shoppers. And it's not merely a difference in income levels. "Half of the plus-size population doesn't have a passion for fashion," he said. "They don't like the experience of going into stores and trying things on; they don't like having to buy a size that they don't fit into." The other half are "just as fashion-conscious as anybody else," and their spending patterns are the same. But, in an already volatile retail business, the plus-size market is extra volatile. "When it's good, it's really good," Cohen said. "When it's bad, it's really bad."

Cohen pointed out that the plus-size clothing industry is coming out of a rough patch. Saks Fifth Avenue stopped offering plus-size clothes two years ago; the plus-size brands Ashley Stewart and Avenue filed for bankruptcy. "A decade ago, plus size was hot, and it was hot for capital investment," Cohen said. "2004 and 2005 was a real hot era." Then the economy dipped, and many plus-size brands went under. Cohen predicted that plenty of today's upstarts will suffer the same fate. Retail executives are business people first. "If the business isn't big enough—no pun intended—to be able to sustain a profit, they're going to walk away."

If anyone can survive in the new era of plus-size fashion, it will probably be Lane Bryant. The company long ago solved the problem of how to make plus-size retail profitable, by acquiring a sturdy reputation and a loyal customer base. "It is the tortoise in the apparel tortoise-and-the-hare story," Cohen told me. "It is slow and steady." Yet, from a fashion standpoint, it has helped to solidify the frumpy look you envision when you think of plus-size clothing.

The company was started at the turn of the twentieth century, in New York, by Lena Himmelstein, a young immigrant from Lithuania who married a jeweller named David Bryant, and, within two years, found herself widowed with a baby. Lena could sew, and she moved in with her sister in Harlem and began tailoring lingerie for brides and expectant mothers. She opened a shop on Fifth Avenue, uptown. (Her business became Lane Bryant thanks to a clerical error made by the bank on a loan application.) One day, a wealthy pregnant customer asked for a dress that would hide her stomach, so that she could throw a dinner party—at the time, it was considered taboo for pregnant women to show themselves in public. Lena made a pleated silk underskirt for a dress with a slimming elastic waistband. The dress took off. Soon, with the help of Lena's second husband, a Lithuanian engineer named Albert Maslin, Lane Bryant expanded into "stout sizes." An early marketing campaign was titled "Calling All Chubbies."

The company went public in 1928. In 1982, Lane Bryant's heirs sold their majority stake to The Limited. By then, the company had acquired an uncool reputation. Two of Bryant's great-grandsons, Michael and Nick Kaplan, have started Fashion to Figure, a fast-fashion chain for plus sizes. "We're trying to be a fashion store, not just a size store," Michael said. "And they were the quintessential size store."

These days, that's something Lane Bryant no longer wants to be. A few weeks ago, I met with Linda Heasley, who was hired to turn around Lane Bryant by the Ascena Retail Group, the corporation that now owns the brand. (Ironically, Heasley was the Limited executive who started Eloquii.) Lane Bryant's headquarters are in Columbus, Ohio, but Heasley was in New York, interviewing to fill new executive positions. Heasley is straight-size and delicate, but, she told me, "that shouldn't matter." She wears her hair in a short brown bob, and she had on red lipstick. She was dressed in an edgy take on Midwestern corporate chic: black blazer, tweedy black-and-gray dress, and round Le Corbusier-style glasses.

She outlined her plan to turn around the brand. The first order of business: getting Lane Bryant stores out of strip malls. She had just come back from a trip scouting new real-estate locations. When I asked about the threat of competition from fast-fashion companies like

Suzette Green, a model. Despite the aura of inclusiveness around the plus-size world, models are still expected to appear thin.

H&M, she made a case for Lane Bryant's technical know-how. She pointed out a dress in the fall catalogue. "Our denim has special fibre wrap that has incredible recovery and helps to lift and slim. It has tummy panels in here that give her a girdling effect. You can get this, or you can just get any old denim." Heasley told me that Lane Bryant's new motto is "We are 'her' size, we're not plus size."

But who is *she*? "That's the hard one," Heasley said. It can be difficult to imagine a customer who represents the majority of the country. "You can go into an Ann Taylor Loft and you say, 'I know who their customer is.'" But in a Lane Bryant store, she said, "you see so much variety, it makes it harder to get a direction." In Heasley's ideal world, Lane Bryant would attract both the fashion-conscious bloggers I met at the Eloquii sale and women who are coping with post-pregnancy weight gain.

Heasley is trying to solve the problem of the divided consumer base by breaking Lane Bryant's line into "sub brands." Half are designed for a more conservative, self-conscious shopper, whom the company calls "Ava." The other half are designed for "Jennifer," who feels great about her size. The denim brand, Lane Bryant Denim, is broken into life-style ideas: "rocker cool," "out and about on Saturday," "great American sportswear." The intimates brand Cacique has taken inspiration from the film roles of Angelina Jolie. Heasley said that her design team had put together a "tear sheet" with images. "We have her doing all sorts of things," she said. "She's Lara Croft, she's Nina the nurse, she's Adele the teacher."

Heasley said that Lane Bryant wants to deliver a message to the straight fashion world: "We want to put the fashion industry on notice. There's a new woman on the scene. Lane Bryant isn't your mother's plus-size brand, and it's not your grandmother's, either."

The company's new direction doesn't thrill everyone on the grass-roots side of the movement. When I spoke to Madeline Jones about Lane Bryant's rebirth as a fashion brand, she was skeptical. "The whole plus-size industry always wants to be legitimatized by the mainstream industry, and that's never going to happen," she said. She added, about Lane Bryant, "They're trying to find that happy medium, where they're marketing to the plus-size women but still being seen by Seventh Avenue as a viable fashion contender. But these plus-size women don't care! They don't give a flying fajita whether André Leon Talley likes Lane Bryant. They want clothes!"

There's a paradox to the very idea of the plus-size-fashion movement. As with other civil-rights causes—feminism comes to mind—there are trade-offs inherent in the prospect of success. If plus-size fashion achieves its goal of mainstream acceptance, it risks losing some of its outsider energy and community.

One evening, I stopped by the Lane Bryant in downtown Brooklyn. The store looked slick and polished, and so did its saleswomen, who wore hip glasses and chunky jewelry. The "6th & Lane" display of runway-inspired clothes—black with shades of fuchsia—looked like something you might find in SoHo. The Isabel Toledo collection—with its feminine, textured dresses and hundred-dollar blouses in metallic colors—looked even better. It wouldn't have seemed out of place at Barney's. There was just one problem: there were no customers here. Everyone was upstairs, browsing the clearance racks.

"I'm just looking," Deanna, a consultant, said. She wore a white cotton dress and had her brown hair in a long braid. She said that she'd noticed an improvement in Lane Bryant's offerings. "I've seen a shift in the past six months. I bought these two cute dresses that I wore all summer long: a white, tight thing with a blue gradated pattern and a gray dress that had a high-low back." She added that she was in a weight-loss program: "I hope not to be plus-size in the next couple years."

I asked if she considered herself a follower of fashion. "Not really," she said. "I wear what I like." She's not risqué, either: "I'm never going to wear a crop top." She felt that Lane Bryant's clothes, in general, fit better than those from other stores, but, she added, "there's been ebbs and flows." She turned to a wall of tweed biker jackets, in aqua, from the spring collection. "I tried on one of those jackets, and it didn't fit at all—it's really boxy," she said. "Sometimes you wonder, What were they thinking?" ♦

Karen Ward, a store owner, writes the blog Curvy Canadian.

NEWYORKER.COM

A conversation about plus-size fashion.

In the world of plus-size fashion, activism and consumerism often cheerfully intermingle. Bloggers move merchandise.

LEFT: H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/GETTY (DOG); RIGHT: SAM SHERE/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY (MAN)

ILLUSTRATION BY JULIEN PACAUD

The sun was a wolf. The fanged light had been trailing him for hours, tricky with clouds. As it emerged again from sheepskin, Jack looked down at the pavement, cursed. He'd been walking around since ten, temperature even then close to ninety. The shadow stubs of the telephone poles and his own midget silhouette now suggested noon. He had no hat, and he'd left his sunglasses somewhere, either at Jamie's or at The Wheel, or they might have slipped off his head. They did that sometimes, when he leaned down to tie his shoes or empty them of pebbles.

Pebbles?

Was that a word? He stopped to consider it, decided in the negative, and then marched on, flicking his thumb ceaselessly against his index like a Zippo. His nerves were shot, but unable to shut down. No off button now. He'd be zooming for hours, the crackle in his head exaggerated by the racket of birds rucked up in towers of palm, tossing the dry fronds. What were they doing? Ransacking sounds. Looking for nuts or dates, probably. Or bird sex. Possibly bird sex. Maybe he should walk to Rhonda's, ask her to settle him. Or unsettle him. Maybe he wanted more. *Share* was what she should do, if she had any. He always shared with her. Not always, but it could be argued.

Rhonda was a crusher, though, a big girl, always climbing on top. Her heft was no joke, and Jack was a reed. Still, he loved her. Ha! That was the tweak coming on. He'd never admit to such a thing when he was flat. Now his immortal brain understood. He wanted to marry Rhonda, haul her up the steps of her double-wide, pump out about fifty kids. In the fly-eye of his mind he saw them, curled up like caterpillars on Rhonda's bed.

Jack picked up the pace. The effect of his late-morning tokes was far from finished. Though he'd pulled nothing but dregs (the last of his stash), it was coming on strong, sparking his heart in unexpected ways.

So much gratitude. Jack made a fist and banged twice on his chest, thinking of Flaco, a school friend, now dead, who'd first turned him on to this stuff—a precious substance whose unadvertised charm was love. It was infuriating that no one ever mentioned this. The posters, the billboards, the P.S.A.s—all they talked about were skin lesions and rotten teeth. Kids, sadly, were not getting well-rounded information. If Jack hadn't lost his phone, he'd point it at his face right now and make a documentary.

Traffic, a lot of it. On Speedway now, a strip-mall jungle, which, according to his mother, used to be lined with palm trees and old adobes, tamale peddlers and mom-and-pop shops. Not that Jack's mother was nostalgic. She loved her Marts—the Dollar and the Quik and the Wal. "Cheaper, too," she said. She liked to buy in bulk, always had extra. Maybe he should go to her place, instead of Rhonda's, grab some granola bars, a few bottles of water for his pack. Sit on the old yellow couch under the swamp cooler, chew the fat. He hadn't seen her in weeks.

Weeks?

Again, the word proved thin, suspect. "Mama," he said, testing another—an utterance that stopped him in his tracks and caused his torso to jackknife forward. Laughed to spitting. He could picture her face, if he ever tried to call her that. She preferred Bertie. Only sixteen years his senior, she often reminded him. Bertie of the scorched hair, in her sparkle tops and toggle pants. "What's it short for?" he once asked of her name. She'd told him that his grandfather was a humongous piece of shit, that's what it was short for.

Of course, Jack had never met the famous piece of shit, had only heard stories. Supposedly he and Grandma Shit still lived in Tucson, might be anywhere, two of Jack's neighbors. He might have passed them on the street, or lent them an egg or a cup of sugar.

Jack tittered into his fist. What eggs? What sugar? There was fuck-all in the fridge. In fact, depending on his location, there might not even be a fridge.

Buses roared past, their burning flanks throwing cannonballs of heat at the sidewalk. Jack turned away, moved toward himself, a murkier version trapped in the black glass façade of a large building. Twenty-two—he looked that plus ten. Of course, a witch's mirror was no way to judge. The dark glass was spooked, not to be trusted. Hadn't Jamie said, only yesterday, in the lamplit corner of the guest bedroom, that Jack looked all of sixteen? "Beautiful," Jamie had whispered, touching Jack's cheek.

Beautiful. Like something stitched on a pillow, sentimental crap from some other era. The lamplit whisperings had made Jack restless, the dissolved crystal blowing him sideways like a blizzard.

To hell with Jamie! Last week, after partying all night, Jack had woken up to find Jamie lying beside him, the man's hand crawling like a snail across the crotch furrows of Jack's jeans. Half dead, in deep crash, Jack hadn't even been sure they *were* his jeans—the legs inside them looked too skinny, like a kid's. He'd watched the snail-hand for a good five minutes, feeling nothing—and then, with a gush, he'd felt too much. When he leaped from the bed, Jamie screeched, "Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh!"—apologizing profusely, claiming he'd flailed in his sleep.

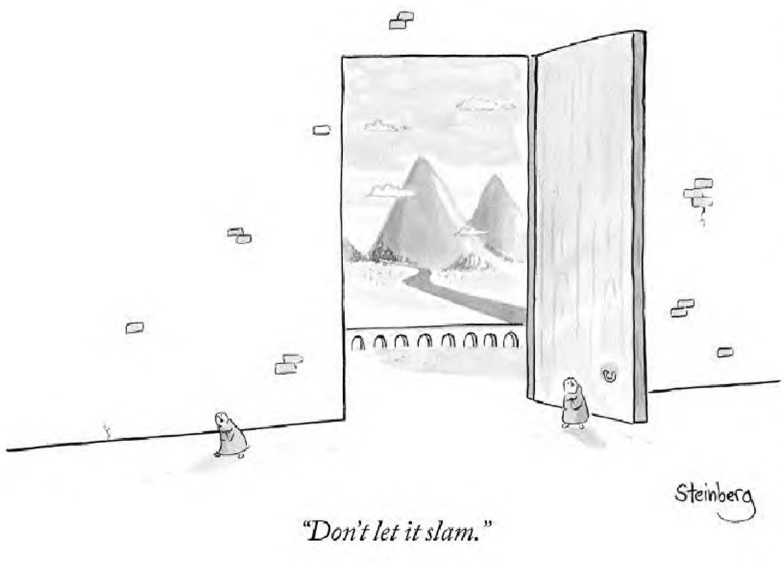
"Why are you in my bed *at all*?" Jack had asked, storming into the bathroom with shame-bitten fury. He'd got into the shower, only to find a bar of soap as thin and sharp as a razor blade—scraped himself clean as best he could, until he smelled breakfast coming on hot from the kitchen. It had turned out to be silver-dollar pancakes with whipped cream and chocolate chips. Jack's favorite. Could the man stoop any lower?

Jamie just didn't add up. A bearded Mexican with a voice like a balloon losing air. Wore pleated slacks, but without a belt you could sometimes glimpse thongs. Didn't smoke, but blew invisible puffs for emphasis. And the name—Jamie—it sat uncomfortably on the fence, neutered, a child's name, wrong for anyone over thirty, which Jamie clearly was. Plus he was fat, which made his body indecisive, intricately layered with loose slabs of flesh—potbelly and motherflaps. "Stay with me, why don't you?" he'd said, for no discernible reason, at the Chevron rest-room sink, where Jack had been rinsing his clotted pipe.

That had been a week ago, maybe two. They'd been strangers in that rest room, the obese man appearing out of the gloom of a shit stall. His words, *stay with me*, had seemed, to the boy, vaguely futuristic, a beam of light from a spaceship.

Jack should have known better.

The sun drilled the boy's head, looking for something. He closed his eyes and let the bit work its way to his belly, where the good stuff lived, where the miracle often happened: the black



"Don't let it slam."

• •

smoke reverting to pure white crystal. A snowflake, an angel. He smiled at himself in the dark glass. It was so easy to forgive those who betrayed you, effortless—like thinking of winter in the middle of July. It cost you nothing. Reflexively Jack scratched deep inside empty pockets, then licked his fingers. The bitch of it was this: forgiveness dissolved instantly on your tongue, there was no time to spit it out.

He'd have to remember to speak on this, when he made his documentary.

"Welcome to Presto's!"

The blond girl stood just inside the black door, her face gaily frozen, as if cut from the pages of a yearbook. Jack comprehended none of her words.

"Welcome," he replied, attempting a flawless imitation of her birdlike language. Jack was good with foreigners. Most of his school buds had been Chalupas.

The girl tilted her head; the smile wavered, but only briefly. Her mouth re-expanded with elastic lunacy.

"Ship or print?"

Jack was taken aback. Though it was true he needed to use the bathroom, he was disturbed by the girl's lack of delicacy in regard to bodily functions.

"Number one," he admitted quietly.

"Ship?" she persisted.

Jack felt dizzy. The girl's teeth were very large and very white. Jack could only assume they were fake. Keeping his own dental wreckage tucked under blistered lips, he lifted his hands in a gesture of spiritual peace. "I'm just going to make a quick run to the rest room."

"I'm sorry, they're only for customers."

"George Washington," Jack blurted, still fascinated by the girl's massive teeth.

"What's that?"

"Cherry tree," he continued associatively.

"Oh, like for the Fourth?" asked Blondie.

"Yes," Jack replied kindly, even though he knew she was confusing Presidents. Fourth of July would be Jefferson or Adams. Jack had always been sweet on History. In school, when he was miniature, he'd got nothing but A's. Again he sensed the expansiveness of his brain, a maze of rooms, many of which he'd never been in. It didn't matter that he hadn't finished high school, there was an Ivy League inside his head, libraries crammed with books. He just needed to pull them from between the folds of gray matter and read them. Close his eyes and get cracking. See, this was the other thing people never told you about meth. It was educational.

The girl informed him that there were no holiday specials, if that's what he was asking about.

Jack nodded and smiled, tapping his head in pretense of understanding her logic. As he moved quickly toward the bathroom, the girl skittered off in another direction, also quickly.

Perhaps she had to print, too. Or take a ship.

Jack giggled, and opened a door leading to a storage closet.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes," Jack said to the man inside the closet. "I understand what you're saying."

"What am I saying?" asked the man.

"Perfectly clear," said Jack. He held up his peace-hands, walked back through the room of humming and spitting machines, and exited the building—behind which he quickly peed, before resuming his trek down Speedway.

As soon as he knocked at the trailer door, he was aware of the emptiness in his hands. He should have brought flowers. Or a burrito. He knocked again. Sweat dripped from under his arms, making him feel strangely cold.

"I have flowers," he said to the door.

"Go away," said the door.

"I'm not talking to a door," said Jack. "I don't take orders from doors."

"You can't be here. Why are you here?" The voice was exhausted, cakey. Jack could picture the pipe.

"Baby," he said. "Come on. Why are you being stingy?"

"I'll call the police, I swear to God."

Jack was silent, but stood his ground. He scratched at the door like a cat. After a while, someone said, "Please." The word sounded funny, like a flute. Jack tried saying it again. Even worse. It almost sounded as if he were going to cry.

When the door opened, it did so only a few inches—most of Rhonda's mouth obscured by a chain.

"You cannot be here, Jack."

Jack, who was clearly there, only smiled.

"I'm O.K.," he assured her.

"You look like shit," said Rhonda.

"Sunburn," theorized Jack. "It's like a hundred and twenty out here." He could barely see the girl—or he could see her, just not recognize her. She seemed different, her hair and her clothes fussed up, neat. He smelled no smoke, only perfume. "What's going on?" he asked, flicking his thumb.

Rhonda made an irritated snort, half laugh, half fart. It seemed to come from her mouth.

Jack, confident he was at the peak of his charm, refused to be put off. "Can you just open the door, so that we can talk like humans, without the frickin' mustache?"

"The what?"

"The..." Jack gestured swoopily toward the door. "The frickin'..."

"Chain?" suggested Rhonda.

"All I want is, like, *hello*, O.K.? Like hello, whatever, a glass of water."

The girl grimaced dramatically, egging on Jack's own sense of tragedy.

"I am literally dying, Rhonda."

Jack pressed his face into the door crack, letting the cool air caress his skin. His eyes, blinded from sunlight, barely took in the fact that the girl was gone. After a moment, he heard water running in the sink, the clink of a glass being pulled from a cupboard. He closed his eyes, felt a stirring between his legs. Rhonda had always been so kind.

"I don't need ice," he called out.

"Good. Here you go."

At first Jack wasn't sure what it was. The water thrown in his face was cold. It dripped down his neck and into his shirt, slow trails across his belly. It lingered, drifted lower, like a kind of kiss. Jack licked his lips: the tap water salty, mixed with his sweat. Something was humming, too—the bones under his cheeks, near his eyes, vibrating like a tuning fork or an organ at the back of a church.

"Don't cry," he said to Rhonda, who said she wasn't.

"Why would I be crying after a fucking year?"

Jack said, "What year?"—to which Rhonda replied, "I thought you were dead."

She wasn't making a whole lot of sense. Jack asked if she was going fast.

"Are you insane?" said Rhonda. "Those were the worst two months of my life."

"Why don't I come in and we'll take a nap?" suggested Jack.

"Listen to me," the girl said. "You have to lose this address—do you hear me?"

Jack ran a hand over his wet face.

"Please," begged Rhonda. "You have to go. Eric will be home soon."

Jack wondered if she meant *Jack*, since the names were so similar. "Do you mean *me*?" he asked in earnest. He tried to find the girl's eyes—and when he did he saw that she wasn't a girl at all. She was old, practically as old as Bertie. What was more astonishing, though, was the look on her face. There was no love in it whatsoever.

"I don't know you," said Jack.

"Good," said Rhonda, shutting the door.

He stood on some gravel, and felt terrible. Even the little plank of shadow beside the cement wall held no appeal. Were he to lie there, he'd only get the jits.

Walking was what he needed, and to hell with the sun.

That's what people in his position did. They walked, they moved, they got things done. Sitting was no good. Talking was fine, if you had someone. Sex was primal. Jack's body knew the rules. There were any number of ways to keep one's brain from exploding.

People going fast rearranged the furniture, or crawled around looking for carpet crumbs. Anything that used your hands, which, compelled by the imaginative fervor of your mind, became tools in a breathless campaign to change the shape of the world. It was art, essentially. Jack wondered why more people going fast didn't do crafts. He suddenly wished for construction paper and Elmer's glue; glitter, cotton, clay. Once,

when he was little, he'd made a kick-ass giraffe from a walnut and some toilet-paper tubes. The legs, ingeniously, had been chopsticks.

Bertie used to leave them for hours, on the days she attended her meetings. She'd always made sure there were coloring books and Play-Doh, carrot sticks and DVDs. Little notes saying *Love* and *Be back soon*. Jack and his sister had in no way been deprived.

His sister? *Fuck*. His sister. She came back to him like sheet lightning. He hadn't seen Lisa since she'd gone away. He clapped his hands, to banish the thought. It was almost funny how, at certain elevations, it was so easy to pretend you didn't know things you could never forget. Jack dug for his phone, to see if he had Lisa's number.

But, being that there was no phone, he pulled up only lint—which he quickly dismissed, into the air, with a puff. He watched it float for a moment, fluttering with indecision, before it drifted down, in a slow sashay, and landed on his shoe.

"Fine," said Jack. "Fine!" He picked up the gray fluff, and stuffed it back in his pocket.

Walked around the block to see if he could trick it. He'd done it before. Pull one over on time. Circle back and confuse it. Like one of those Aborigines. They were big walkers, too. Ugly fuckers, but the cool thing was they could walk a thousand miles, no problem—and they weren't trying to get to China or some shit like that. What they wanted was to get back to their ancestors—way the fuck past Grandma and Grandpa, all the way back to the lizards and the snakes.

Jack, of course, would have been satisfied with a smaller victory—finding his way back five, six years, to Bertie's crumbling adobe. "Star Trek" and pizza with Lisa. Hell, he'd be fine with getting back to just last year, to the old Rhonda, the Rhonda of the bra-welted back and the cream-cheese thighs, the sad girl he'd met at The Wheel, and whom he'd made happy with snowflakes and black clouds.

Had it really been a year? Jack felt nervous now, flicked his thumb even faster, sensed his shadow growing longer, trailing him like gum stuck to his shoe. Soon, he knew, the freak would come, the soul-suck, if he didn't get one of two things: more crystal or a sound sleep—both of which would require money, because sleep, at this point, wouldn't be free. It would cost a bottle of grain or a six-pack or a pill. Sometimes he wondered why a person couldn't just hit himself over the head with a rock.

He climbed on top of the gas meter and opened the window, as he'd done a

million times before. A small, high window, facing the alley. Lisa's window, which Bertie never locked.

A tight fit, even for a skinny drink like Jack. Halfway through, he found himself stuck, but with a series of wriggling bitch-in-heat motions he managed to make it through, head first, onto the dusty shrine of his sister's neatly made bed. The friction of passing through the small opening, though, had pulled down his pants, as well as given him an erection. When he stood to hoist his jeans, a young woman in yoga tights entered the room, dropped a pear, and screamed.

Jack, thinking the pear was some sort of grenade, covered his head, leaving his erection exposed.

The woman moved quickly to the bureau and grabbed a bead-encrusted candlestick that Lisa had made in sixth grade. Jack, watching the drama through smoke-scented fingers, calmed, seeing the familiar prop. Plus, the grenade, bearing teeth marks, was obviously a ruse.

"I'm not here to hurt you," said Jack—a comment that, judging by the woman's anguished face, failed to impart the cordiality he wished to convey. The woman squealed and fled the room.

"I just want to see Bertie," Jack called out, pulling up his pants. "I'm her son. I'm Jack."

The idea of having to explain his existence exhausted him. When he walked into the living room, the woman was still clutching the candlestick—a lathe-turned beauty, to which Lisa had glued hundreds of tiny red beads. Jack had lent her the epoxy himself, a leftover tube from one of his build-it-yourself dinosaur sets.

"You can put that down," said Jack.

"Look," said the woman, "Beatrice isn't here. She won't be back for a while."

"Who?"

"You're looking for your mother?"

Jack felt a peculiar flutter in his gut.

"I'm meeting her in a—in a bit," stammered the woman. "I'll just—I'll let her know you were here."

"What did you call her?" asked Jack.

The woman took a step back. "Nothing. What?"

"Her name," Jack stated as calmly as possible, "is Bertie."

"Well, that's not how I know her," said the woman in yoga tights, who, even with the upraised candlestick, seemed to smile, a quick flash of arrogance.

"I can see your vulva," said Jack.

The woman covered her crotch with the candlestick. "My God, do you even know what you're saying?"

"It's inappropriate is all I'm saying," replied Jack, strolling over to the yellow couch. He sat at the far right, where the air of the swamp cooler always hit you square in the face. As kids, he and Lisa used to fight over this spot. "Fifteen minutes each," Bertie used to say, making them share the luxury equally. "Otherwise I'll shut the damn thing off." Frickin' Solomon, that was his mother all right. A part-time Christian with a gutter mouth.

Beatrice? For fucking real? How could Jack not have known this—or, more important, why had this information been kept from him? "I don't think you know what you're talking about," he said to the woman.

But she wasn't listening. She was on the telephone, giving an address Jack recognized. He made a blah-blah-blah gesture with his hand, as the woman prattled into the phone.

Why did no one wish to have a legitimate exchange with him? He was a good person, a personable person, a person with a heart the size of a fucking bullfrog. Couldn't the woman in yoga tights understand that there was no need to involve the police?

"I live here," said Jack.

The woman said, "Thank you," and hung up the phone. "I've called the—"

"I know," interrupted Jack. He crossed his legs, willing himself to stay calm. Anyway, it would take them at least ten minutes to get here. This wasn't a Zip Code anyone rushed to, especially the cops.

"Do you want to get arrested?" the woman asked. "I mean, do you *want* to be like this?"

"Like what?" asked Jack.

"Do you realize how much pain you've caused Beatrice?"

"Who are you, exactly?" Jack had the thought to have Yoga Tights arrested when the police arrived. "How do you even know my mother?"

"We're *room*mates," the woman articulated with unnecessary aggression.

Jack had a vision of pillow fights, s'mores, backrubs.

"Disgusting," he said.

"What's disgusting?"

Jack didn't reply—glass houses and all. He might as well be talking about himself and Jamie. He stood, annoyed, and walked over to the mirrored cabinet in the corner of the room. It seemed distinctly smaller than it had when he was little, like a toy version of the real thing. He knelt before it, turned the silver

"It's sad, but it's not laugh-out-loud sad."

latch, opened the doors. He stared inside, uncomprehendingly (*What the fuck?*), pushed around envelopes and stamps, a pile of old phone bills. He shoved his hands to the far back. Not even a bottle of Tio Pepe or crème de menthe.

"We don't keep any in the house," the woman said.

Jack scowled. He knew Bertie better than that.

"In case you care to know, your mother is doing really well."

Wonderful! thought Jack. Applause!

He stood, dusted himself off regally, as if he might dismiss the increeping panic. "I just need to get a few bottles of water."

In the kitchen, in the pantry, he pulled the cord, turned on the light. Well stocked, as usual. For Judgment Day, Bertie had always been prepared. With food, if not with mercy. "I can't be held responsible," Bertie liked to say. In a more generous mood, everything was God's plan, God's doing. Jack took six bottles of water and ten granola bars, stuffed them into his pack.

"Help yourself, why don't you?" the woman said.

Unbelievable. Un-fucking-believable. Jack turned to her. She was standing in the doorway, still holding the candlestick.

"Do you even know who that belongs to? Do you even know who made that?"

But the woman had no interest in discussing the relics of Jack's childhood. "Just take what you want and go," she said. "Beatrice would probably be pissed anyway, if I got you arrested. I don't know why she should be, though. You've been a very toxic influence on her." She shook her head, puffing air bullishly from her nose. "Everyone at Fellowship thinks so, too, but your mother is, like, deluded."

The woman moved the candlestick from one hand to the other. Jack looked at her hard, just to make sure she wasn't Lisa. No one really knew what Lisa looked like these days.

You could always tell by the eyes, though—and when Jack looked at those he knew that Yoga Tights was not his sister.

"You're not even a very good replacement," he said.

"Replacement for what?" she asked.

But Jack did not deign to answer. He zipped his pack and, without even bothering to take the loose change visible on the counter, scurried out the back door.

He cut through neighbors' yards to avoid running into the cops. He leaped over stones, over crevices, over brown lawns and tiny quicksilver lizards. His speed exhilarated him, and then made him feel distinctly ill. When he finally heard the sirens, he was three blocks away, in an alley frilly with trash. He lurched to a stop, sending up clouds of dust. A dry wind blew grit into his eye.

Fuck. He needed an improvement in his itinerary, like immediately. But he had no leverage. Not even two bucks for the bus. He should have taken the coins from Bertie's kitchen. Probably no more than a dollar, but a dollar was enough to get started. Four quarters in a newspaper lockbox and you could steal the lot, sell them from some busy intersection. Old-school, but it worked—even if, sometimes, it took five hours to make five bucks.

"What's that?" Jack said to his stomach, which was mumbling something vague but insistent. He fed it a granola bar, and immediately vomited. Drank some water. Vomited again.

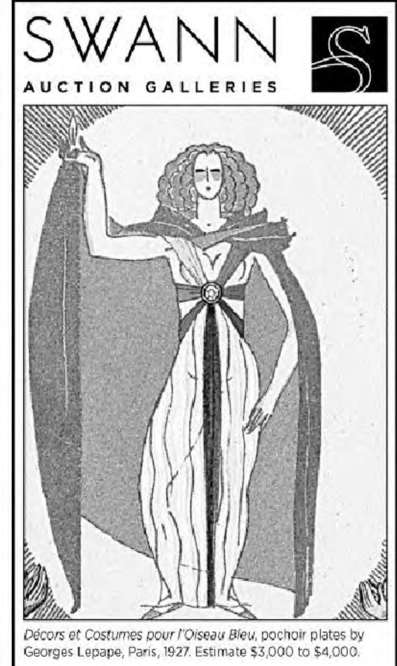
Dirt, weeds, a huge prickly pear like a coral reef. Jack covered his burning head with his T-shirt, exposing his belly. Why hadn't the Founding Fathers planted more shade trees out here? Probably because the bastards had never made it this far west. The only people who'd ventured this far, back then, were derelicts and thieves. Uprooted types, not prone to plant things.

Jack was leaning philosophically against a fence for several minutes before he spotted the dog, sleeping on the other side. Not a pit, just some big floppy collie. Still, it reminded him of Lisa.

How could an animal sleep in this heat with all that fur? Jack knelt in the alley, winding his fingers through the chain-link. "*Psst.*" Rattled the fence. "Hey! Buster!"

The dog opened one eye, too stunned to get up. Shook a leg epileptically.

"You're just gonna lie there?" Piles of dried shit everywhere, like a miniature



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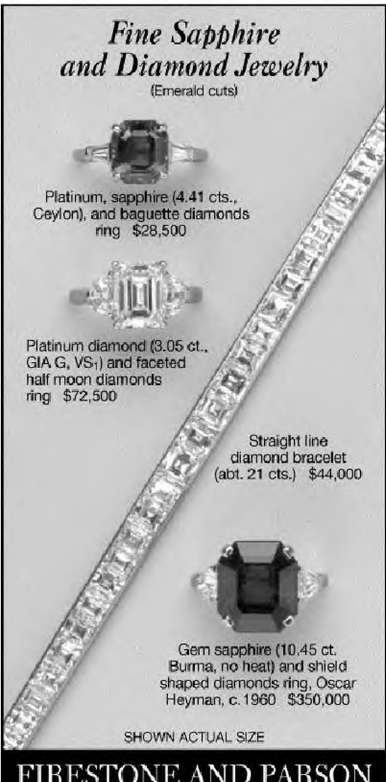

wigwam village. Again Jack rattled the fence.

"What are you doing? Why are you bothering him?" A little man with a lopsided beard, like a paintbrush that had dried crooked, appeared at a window.

"I'm not bothering him," said Jack. "I thought he was someone else."

"He's a dog," said the man. "He ain't got nothing to do with you."

Jack, riled, was ready to argue the point, but then let it go. He could see that the man was old, and so was the dog. Besides, his mouth was dry, and as he tried to get up his legs buckled.

The man snapped his fingers in Jack's direction. "No funny business!"

Jack nodded and backed away. "I'm going."

He walked about ten feet before he stopped, opened his backpack, and pulled out another granola bar—which he quickly unwrapped and tossed over the fence. "Get up for that, I bet."

The dog didn't hesitate. "I thought so," said Jack.

Instantly, though, the old man shot from the back door and pulled the food from the dog's mouth.

"It's not poison!" shouted Jack. "It's granola!"

A firecracker went off in the distance, and Jack turned. Next time, he thought, I'll do *that*—stick a firecracker in the damn granola.

For years, he'd hated every dog, and experienced a paralyzing weakness in their presence. Now, despite the occasional flash of cruel intention, Jack's anger had mostly turned into something else. A dog, any dog, was like the relentless sunshine: mind-alteringly sad. Jack sat on the curb, touched his hand to blazing macadam.

Sometimes it could be burned out of you—the pain.

But no, the past was here, before him now like a mirage, wavering with tiny figures, holograms he recognized.

Resistance is futile, the Borg say.

Because not only had he run into a dog; he'd run out of his stash as well—and running out of crystal was like running out of time, sinking back into the mud that was your life. No dusting of white snow to prettify the view. With a mad, flea-scratching intensity, Jack scraped out the stem of his pookie, but what fell from it was worthless: a few flakes of irredeemable tar. The holograms grew to full size, and came closer.

"*Grrr*," said Jack, hoping he didn't sound like an animal.

Jack had been with his sister that day—a summer morning, playing Frisbee in a field. The Frisbee had gone over a fence.

The dog was black, not huge, the size of a twenty-gallon ice chest.

After the attack, Jack wondered if they'd really killed it. The police had used the words *put to sleep*, but Jack had worried that the owners might have somehow woken the animal up, and were hiding it inside their house. Lisa's fears, no doubt, had been far worse—but Jack had known better than to ask her.

Anyway, Lisa couldn't really talk after it happened. She had a lot of problems with her jaw. With everything, really. Her right hand was so nerve-damaged that she had to use her left, which she never got very good at. She shook a lot, refused to eat, mostly drank smoothies. Her pinkie was missing.

Her face, though, was the worst. Even after two surgeries, it looked like something badly made, lumpy—as if a child had made it out of clay. It was less a face than the idea of one, preliminary, a sketch—but careless, with terrible proportions, and slightly skewed; primitive—a face that might be touching in art, but in life was hideous.

"Look at that!" Bertie had shouted at the lawyer, showing him pictures of what Lisa had looked like before. "*Beautiful.* And this is what they're saying she's worth?"

The settlement had not been much. "An outrage," Bertie said to anyone who would listen. She tried to get another lawyer to take on the case. Jack would sit with his mother in cluttered offices, staring at the floor, telling the suits what he'd seen. "Happens every seven seconds," one lawyer said with disturbing enthusiasm, as if discussing the odds of winning the lottery. "Plus, you know how people in Tucson love their Rotts and their pits." Unfortunately, he explained, a jackpot settlement was usually tied to an attack catching the right wave of publicity. "Your moment has probably passed," he said with a wince, a shrug.

"That baby," Bertie would complain, referring to what she considered Lisa's competition.

The same summer, a two-year-old had been mauled near Sabino Canyon. There'd been a fund-raising campaign. "Foothills," Bertie had scoffed, after seeing the child's parents on television, their big house on a ridge. "As if they need help! We should start our own campaign," she'd muttered, after a sip, to Jack.

"We could make posters," he'd suggested sheepishly.

"Posters, TV commercials, the whole shebang." His mother pulled more deeply from her Captain Morgan mug, the ice clinking like money inside a piggy bank.

"Wanna make them pop, though," she said of the posters. "Need to get us some big-ass pieces of paper."

It would have been easy. Jack was artistic (everyone said so), and Bertie had balls. But, in the end, they'd never done a thing; never called a TV station or decorated a coffee can with ribbons and a picture of Lisa's face. Never took the case back to court—even though it was clear, after the initial surgeries, that Lisa would require more. The procedures couldn't be rushed, though. The doctor had recommended that Lisa wait before going back under the knife: "Too much trauma already. Let's see how the current work heals."

What little remained of the settlement money was kept in a separate account, like a vacation fund or a Christmas club, some perverse dowry. Money for the future, earmarked for surgery.

Jack had helped, at some point, hadn't he? Standing at the edge of the alley, he scratched his leg—a vague recollection that he'd given Lisa some of his own skin. It had been more compatible than Bertie's.

In the fall, Lisa had refused to go back to school for her junior year. She mostly stayed inside, in her bedroom. There was a lot of pain medication—which was apparently, Jack learned, something to be shared. "I'm in pain, too," Bertie had cried, defensively, when he caught her one night with the bottle. "Anyway," she chided, changing the subject, "your sister can't live in a fog for the rest of her life. She needs to get a job."

Jack didn't understand why a person in Lisa's position couldn't be allowed to stay inside, in a dark bedroom, for

the rest of her life. Bertie had a thing, though, about self-improvement and positive thinking, which often made her children shrink from her as if she were a terrorist.

Amazingly, Lisa had found a job fairly quickly, full time at a telemarketing firm. "You see," Bertie had chirped. "Up and at 'em," practically shoving Lisa out the door, her hair strategically feathered over her cheeks. "Minimum wage," Lisa said, and Bertie replied that there was no shame in that. All day, Lisa had sat in a cubicle, talked on the phone in her new, funny voice. But maybe, thought Jack, the people his sister called just assumed she had a toothache, or an accent.

No one on the phone would have known that his sister was a high-school dropout in Tucson—or that she'd been mutilated. That was a word no one had used—not the doctors or Lisa's friends or even the truth-obsessed women from Bertie's so-called church. No one ever said *maimed*, *destroyed*, *ruined*.

Bitten, people preferred to say, modestly, as if Lisa's misfortune had been the work of an ant, or a fly.

"I'm glad to see that almost everyone has been taking advantage of the new executive fitness center."

Jack rubbed his eye, swatted his cheek. As he headed downtown in long, loping strides, his body was dangerously taut, a telephone wire stretched between time zones. He needed to bring his thinking back to 2000-whatever-the-fuck-it-was—*this* day, *this* street. "Excuse me," he said to a woman with a briefcase and praying-mantis sunglasses—but, before he could explain his purpose, she darted away and leaped into a black sedan. The woman obviously had issues; even from inside the vehicle, she was waving her hands at him in extreme sign language: *no tengo no tengo no tengo.*

After an hour and a half, he'd managed to assemble two dollars (a few quarters from a laundromat, a few obtained by outright begging). When he climbed on the bus and dropped the coins in the chute, they made a sound like a slot machine promising a payout.

"What are you waiting for?" asked the driver.

"Nothing," mumbled Jack, taking a seat at the back.

He'd been looking forward to the air-conditioning, but now it made him shake—the cold air, like pins on his face. Sometimes he'd met Lisa after her shift, to accompany her home. She hadn't liked to take the bus alone. She'd wanted Jack to ride with her in the mornings as well—but how could he? He was fifteen; he had school.

Anyway, the afternoons were enough. The walk to the back of the bus had always seemed to take a lifetime. People stared, kids laughed. Lisa never said anything, but sometimes she took Jack's hand, which embarrassed him: what if people thought she was his girlfriend? Sometimes he could hear her breathing; sometimes, a sound in her throat like twigs snapping.

That same year, Jack met Flaco. The first time they went fast together, in Flaco's enamel-black bedroom, it was like, *oh yes*—total understanding, total big picture, all the nagging little details washed away. Soon Jack stopped meeting Lisa after work. He let her take the bus alone, with nothing but her feathered hair to protect her; her head drooping like a dead flower; a white glove on her right hand like Michael Jackson, the pinkie stuffed with cotton.

It was O.K., though. Because the funny thing was, he'd been able to love her more, and with less effort, from a distance. He felt that by going fast he was actually helping Lisa, he was helping all of them. He was building a white city out of crystal, inside his heart. When it was finished, there'd be room for everyone. For the first time in his life Jack had understood Bertie's nonsense about positive thinking, about taking responsibility for your own life. After Jack met Flaco, there were nights he didn't come home at all. Sometimes their flights lasted for days. Bertie might have complained, but she, too, was spending more and more time at her meetings. It was no surprise when Lisa said she was going away.

"Away? Where could you possibly go?" cried Bertie.

Lisa said she'd heard there was a good doctor in Phoenix; she'd start there.

"For how long?" Bertie had asked—and, when Lisa didn't answer—"And I suppose you plan on taking the money with you?"

"It *is* mine," said Lisa.

No one could argue with that.

Jack pulled the cord, made his way to the rear exit of the bus. The door opened with a life-support hiss.

Whiplash of light coming off a skyscraper. Jack held up his hand to block the sun's reflection, a roundish blur of ghostly ectoplasm that hovered somewhere around the twentieth floor—which the boy's street sense interpreted, correctly, as roughly five o'clock.

Please be over soon, he thought, knowing full well that the day would linger

for hours yet. Even after sunset, the heat would be terrible—the sidewalks, the streets, the buildings, radiating back the fire they'd absorbed all day. There'd be no relief until well after midnight.

Jack walked south, toward the barrio, toward the sound of firecrackers, the whistle of bottle rockets. Later, at dark, the neon pompoms would come—the big holiday displays at the foothills resorts, and the city-sponsored show on Sentinel Peak, which half the time had to be stopped due to the scrub catching on fire. From the valley, you could watch the flames flowing down the mountain like lava. People looked forward to that as much as to the fireworks.

Jack walked with no particular purpose, and was surprised when he found himself standing before Flaco's house. There was the white storybook fence around the neatly swept yard; the saint with her garland of artificial flowers, standing on a lake of tinfoil. At the Virgin's feet, a weird mix of things: playing cards and plastic beads, and what looked like pieces of old bread. Jack had always loved this diorama, which lived inside a little cage like a chicken coop. To protect it from the rain, Flaco's mother had explained.

He wondered if she'd still recognize him, maybe give him some *carne seca* wrapped in a tortilla as thin as tissue paper. In so many ways, his life had started in this house. A thousand hopes and dreams. Jack wondered if they were still in there, inside Flaco's spray-painted bedroom. Wondered, too, if there might be any crystal left in one of the old hiding spots.

Five years was a long time, though. Someone would already have smoked it, or flushed it down the drain. And, besides, Jack didn't have the stamina to crawl through another window. He was done with windows and doors. He half considered climbing inside the chicken coop with the saint.

The sadness bloomed in his belly. It always started there—a radioactive flower, chaotic, spinning out in weird fractals until it found its way to his arms and legs, his quivering lips. Then the telltale buzz of electricity in his hair.

See, this was the reason it was better to go fast with another person—so that, when you crashed, you weren't alone. The high, too, was better when shared. Sometimes he and Flaco, as a team, could increase the effect of the drugs, pinballing around the bedroom, generating so much heat they could barely stand the feel of their clothing. Often they'd ripped off their shirts, lain next to each other on the bed, watched in amazement as their words turned into flames, rose into the air like rockets.

Flaco—and this was something Jack wished to mention in his documentary—Flaco had not died from crystal. It had been something else, something stupid, a car.

Walking away from the imprisoned saint, Jack passed old women putting lawn chairs along the street, claiming spots. *Brujas* in flowered smocks and slappy flip-flops, some with brooms, territorial. Later, they'd sit there with glasses of watermelon juice and watch the fireworks, the burning mountain.

Farther south now, past Birrieria Guadalajara, where he and Flaco used to eat everything, even tongue.

Lengua.

Words no longer seemed chimeric to Jack, no longer seemed approximations for something else. They were earthbound now, which was what happened when you were sober. Jack clenched his fists—untrimmed nails digging into his flesh. All he wanted was to find a safe place before the blooms made a mess of the sky.

He stopped at the railroad tracks. Stopped right between the iron rails, kicked aside some trash, and sat. In his dark jeans, his dirt-brown shirt, they might not even see him. "*Ow*," he said, because of the stones as he lay down.

While the sun cooked him, he became aware of how dirty he was. He could smell himself, even a slight tang of shit. Disgusting. His breath stank—and his stomach was bubbling, an ungodly flatulence from a diet of protein bars and black smoke. It was understandable why others would despise him. Most people lived their entire lives straight, and had no ability whatsoever to see through surfaces—unlike Jack, who'd been schooled in crystal, and who understood how easy it was to forgive.

Who knew if Lisa forgave him? He hoped she didn't. He was the one who'd thrown the Frisbee over the fence, a total spaz, missing Lisa by a mile. She'd pulled a face and told him to go get it. "You're closer," he'd shouted back. "You get it."

Jack turned his head, to see if he could spot the train. Flicker of distant traffic: metal and glass. Lost saguaros, catatonic, above which birds drifted in slow circles, like pieces of ash. To the east, the mountains, shrouded in dust, were all but invisible. The train would come eventually, the crazy quilt of boxcars, the fractious whistle.

Oh, but it was so boring waiting for death! Jack had come to the tracks before. When the signal light began to flash, he jumped up. He wasn't an idiot.

Besides, he couldn't help himself; his sadness was like a river, carrying him home.

"You don't like your life, make up another one." Something Bertie used to say. Her children had, in the end, listened to her.

Jack kept running, and when he got to Jamie's he didn't knock; he walked right in, sat at the table.

It wasn't long before Jamie came into the kitchen in his phony orange kimono ("*Mijo! Mijo!*"), flapping his arms, flushing, like something out of a Mexican soap opera.

And though Jack didn't laugh, he remembered the part of himself that had—and not so long ago. Still, he flinched when the man tried to touch his face.

In the silence that followed, Jamie began to smile.

"What?" said Jack—and Jamie said, "I'm just looking at you."

"Why?"

"Do I need a reason?"

Jack shrugged, evasive. "I'm sort of hungry."

"Well," Jamie said grandly, "you're dealing with an expert on that subject. The only question is: animal, vegetable, or *mineral*?" This last word sugarcoated, singsong.

Jack looked up, hopefully.

"Yes, *mijo*." Jamie patted the pocket of his kimono. "I do I do I do."

"I do," repeated Jack, feeling his heart leap straight into the man's fat little hand. ♦

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Victor Lodato on "Jack, July."

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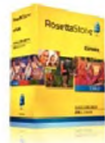

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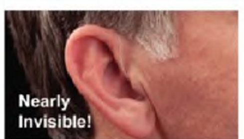

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THE CRITICS

POP MUSIC

GROWTH SPURT

Perfume Genius's expansive, exuberant new album.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Beauty and ugliness can be doppelgängers, if only for the length of a song. On September 23rd, Mike Hadreas, who performs as Perfume Genius, will release "Too Bright," a profoundly beautiful record that remains intense throughout its brief, thirty-three-minute running time. The album, his third, was co-produced by Portishead's Adrian Utley, and sounds much larger than his previous albums, which were mostly duets made up of vocals and either guitar or piano. In extremis is the default state for the narrator of a Perfume Genius song, but that doesn't mean that the work is showy or loud. What you notice first in Hadreas's new songs is silence, which he then breaks apart with his tremulous but accurate voice and a host of supporting instruments.

Although "Too Bright" is being released by Matador Records, a prominent indie-rock label, Hadreas's music has little to do with rock or dance, or any genre with obvious or aggressive timekeeping. At its most dramatic, it resembles torch songs. Hadreas has been compared to Rufus Wainwright—both are typecast as "gay piano," Hadreas told me—but that description is unlikely to help you understand his work. Wainwright, a virtuosic piano player, typically uses the lower registers of his voice. Hadreas, by contrast, often ends up in his head voice, a bony echo, and his piano figures are reduced, small, and spaced out. His aesthetic is marked by a lack of interest in anything flippant or goofy. He is more indebted to the work of PJ Harvey and Nina Simone—two artists he cites repeatedly—and perhaps the softer moments of R.E.M. or the less operatic side of Antony and the Johnsons. This loosely defined area of music concentrates on a kind of seriousness that isn't afraid to approach melodrama but is after bigger game: catharsis, beauty, and truth—positively old-fashioned concepts.

"Queen," the record's first single, is a steely, menacing song. The lyrics are fairly clear, even if you're not familiar with its slang: "Don't you know your queen? Cracked, peeling, riddled with disease—don't you know me? No family is safe when I sashay." In slightly veiled language, Hadreas claims the flamboyance of the stereotypical gay man, and then brandishes it as both a right and a threat. The song is anchored by a simple but heavy drumbeat—for Hadreas, this is novel—and various buzzing and twinkling lines that frame his voice. Though there is a piano buried amid some unidentified woofing and a lovely bit of choral singing that ends the song—both efficient and epic, at under four minutes—you would never hear this song and think, Oh, the voice-and-piano guy.

Hadreas wrote about the song in an early version of the album's promotional material: "There is some satire to the song obviously, but if we are being real—if these fucking people want to give me some power—if they see me as some sea witch with penis tentacles that are always prodding and poking and looking to convert the Muggles—well here she comes." Hadreas works in the area of pop culture made by gay men that straight culture handles as if it were microwavable food innovations—tentatively, gingerly, and with fascination.

Hadreas is from Seattle, of Greek descent, and his formal piano training is limited to basic childhood lessons. After studying painting in school, he began making home recordings; they compose the bulk of his début album, "Learning," from 2010. His first show was the same year, at the small Vera Project club, in Seattle, where he opened for a muscular indie-rock band called A Sunny Day in Glasgow. Hadreas's style comes clearly into focus on the second album, from 2012, "Put Your Back N 2 It." That version of Perfume Genius could have a long shelf life, without much alteration. The song "Dirge"—you'll see this coming—features Hadreas singing in a hazy, high voice, softened and enlarged with reverb, as is his piano. There is no timekeeping, and the song, which quotes Edna St. Vincent Millay, feels like a prayer or an invocation: "Boys that held him dear, do your weeping now. All you loved of him lies here. Do your weeping now." The effect is pure: it's a secular kind of hymn, agnostic about sexuality.

Hadreas's music is aggressive in conception but often gentle in execution—or has been until now. "Too Bright" is a thrill, because Hadreas turns out to be more than the guy in the charnel-house cabaret, affecting but slightly dour, short on musical variety. With Utley's battery of synthesizers and unusual instruments, Hadreas sings more confidently than before; he also increases the level and range of creepy things in his lyrics. The song "My Body" hints just slightly at the barely cloaked terror of Utley's work with Portishead, and invokes artists far from pop music: Jean Genet, for one, who wrote extensively about the status of the outsider through stories about degradation of the body; and Dennis Cooper, who did the same, later, in New York.

The basis of "My Body" is a low, thrumming vamp in three-four time, like the opening of a song by Nick Cave & the

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL

Hadreas's music works in the area of pop culture made by gay men that straight culture handles gingerly and with fascination.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC

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Bad Seeds or like a disturbing Nancy Sinatra single. But, in the full two minutes and nineteen seconds of this song, someone else's work might just be getting going. Hadreas sticks to the point, even when it's a weird point. He doesn't need his "big step forward" record to be an endless double album. When "My Body" hits its thematic peak, which serves as a sort of chorus in a song with no traditional division points, the music becomes a hybrid, guttering buzz that stops and starts while Hadreas goes into a strangled falsetto: "I wear my body like a rotted peach. You can have it if you handle the stink. I'm as open as a gutted pig. On the small of every back, you'll see a picture of me wearing my body." The song ends with a high-pitched shriek and what sounds like a few distant land mines being set off. Fiesta!

In feel, though not much in sound, Hadreas recalls Diamanda Galas, another performer of Greek origin. Though unlikely to come up in conversation now, unfortunately, Galas was a central figure in the downtown music scene of the late eighties and early nineties. Her work involved physically demanding singing that was sometimes indistinguishable from screaming, and if she needed to be covered in blood when she sang so be it. Hadreas, however, is still developing a live show that can address the extremity of his own music; he told me that to duplicate all the textures of "Too Bright" would likely require either lots of prerecorded tracks or a large ensemble of musicians, so his current touring band isn't trying to.

"Too Bright" is one of the most encouraging albums of the moment, in its delivery of exuberant sounds by a spiky, unbiddable performer. It is outside most conceptions of pop, whether gay or straight; emotional heaviness isn't an easy sell, no matter who you are. Hadreas is developing not by becoming easier to like but by becoming more fully himself. If it's hard to take, the warning is right there in the title. ♦

THE LYRICAL PRESS

From the London Independent on Sunday.

Naomi Campbell arrived for her court appearance in New York last week to face charges of assault in a white mink poncho and jewelled Louis Vuitton sunglasses—go for it girl!

A CRITIC AT LARGE

AS BIG AS THE RITZ

Scott and Zelda go on inspiring new books.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote once that there are no second acts in American lives—which proves, perhaps, only that there are no second acts in American aphorisms. The line has been repeated so often that it has become drained of its implicit point, which was not that things stop in this country as soon as they start but that there is no room for the graceful intermediate development of themes before the catastrophe arrives. In classic theatre construction, as Fitzgerald knew, second acts are where the slow stuff happens.

Yet the misreading, as so often, says as much as the right reading could. It's true that we frequently get one big fireworks display and then silence. Bix Beiderbecke makes sublime music and dies at twenty-eight; Stephen Crane writes one perfect book and evaporates; Orson Welles's career in Hollywood begins and essentially ends with his first two movies. Fitzgerald himself, famous at twenty-four, dead and forgotten at forty-four, is a model of the type.

Second acts there may or may not be, but American epilogues go on forever. Scott and Zelda's friends from the Jazz Age would doubtless have spit up into their morning coffee—or, more likely, into teacups filled with bathtub gin—to find the pair, almost a century after their meeting, not a poignant footnote to an ill-named time but an enduring legend of the West, a subject adaptable for movies and novels and probably paper dolls and ice shows. Already by the late fifties, the critic Edmund Wilson, who had known Fitzgerald since their Princeton years and had the exasperated affection mingled with disdain that we have for old friends who become famous, had marvelled that Fitzgerald in death had become a variant of the Adonis of Greek myth, taking on "the aspect of a martyr, a sacrificial victim, a semi-divine personage." Wilson, who served Fitzgerald beautifully as a literary executor, thought it was absurd that his drunken, often silly college friend could become a dying-and-reviving god—which is surely how Dylan Thomas's and Percy Shelley's friends felt about a similar transformation in those afterlives, and doubtless how Adonis' friends felt about him, too.

And here we are, in another season, with more new books that are in one way or another new treatments of the Fitzgerald myth: Zelda and Scott courting, Zelda and Scott in New York frolicking in the Plaza fountain, Zelda and Scott in the South of France taking lovers and the sun, and, finally, both of them bereft and alone, she in a sanatorium in North Carolina, he in the Garden of Allah hotel, in Hollywood. Even Fitzgerald's old income-tax returns have been pored over like a politician's, revealing that he made a lot of money for a writer in those days, or in these. In the twenties, he earned about twenty-four thousand dollars a year, the equivalent of about three hundred thousand now, though in those days, as in these, that did not feel like a lot of money to a writer trying to live among people who really did have a lot of money (as Fitzgerald demonstrated in his charming, much resented essay "How to Live on $36,000 a Year").

Fitzgerald's worldly success, and his good looks, haloed his literary reputation. One of the sharpest portraits of him remains Budd Schulberg's fine, too often overlooked novel "The Disenchanted" (1950), a transparently fictionalized account of a doomed and drunken effort to write a screenplay for a college musical with the frail Hollywood Fitzgerald. Schulberg's Fitzgerald, called Halliday, was a "wonder boy of the Twenties . . . less real than the most romantic of his heroes, the only writer who could win the

The Fitzgeralds are not a poignant Jazz Age footnote but an enduring legend of the West.

ILLUSTRATION BY LEO ESPINOSA

approval of Mencken and Stein and make fifty thousand a year doing it and look like Wally Reid." (That's Wallace Reid, a now forgotten silent-movie star, who shared with Schulberg's Fitzgerald the "face of the Twenties": "the face of someone who has just stepped out of a Turkish bath miraculously recovered from the night before, the clean-cut face of the American sheik.")

Encyclopedic though the literature seems, it often misses something essential. People tend to take other people at their own estimation: declare yourself a genius and acolytes will follow; call yourself a hero and soldiers will assemble; make anxiety a theme and people will assume you're anxious. Fitzgerald, having conjured himself early on as a follower and even a bit of a fool, and then as a failure and a drunk, mostly got taken as such: a naïf who occasionally stumbled on beauty. In truth, though, his aphoristic intelligence was much keener, his eye much sharper, his judgment of others generally shrewder than that of most of his fellows, Wilson included. The thing that escapes Fitzgerald's myth is precisely his intelligence, the kind of generalizing intelligence instantly apparent in his notebooks, where he writes, for instance, "The American capitol not being in New York was of enormous importance in our history. It had saved the Union from the mobs in sixty-three—but on the other hand, the intellectual drifted to the Metropolis and our politics were childish from lack of his criticism." Another sharp mind typed as a moony mystic, J. D. Salinger, recognized this truth, saying once that he was drawn to Fitzgerald because of Fitzgerald's "intellectual power."

Fitzgerald is less a natural and more a "made" writer than he allowed himself to seem. He had a first rush of fame with "This Side of Paradise," a bad book buoyed up by its time, and a probing and uncertain rise into mature artistry with two good, troubled books, "The Great Gatsby" and "Tender Is the Night." Then, having fallen apart, he arrived at an articulate vision of what had gone wrong, and, with "The Crack-Up," helped invent a genre: the addiction confession, which became a strong form of American writing in the second half of the twentieth century. "The Crack-Up" is hanging over the shoulder not just of the confessional poets but of "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" and "A Fan's Notes" and, for that matter, "Eat, Pray, Love." He flourishes in fragments, in confessional bursts, in fable-minded stories, and in beautiful, isolated pages that pack in as much of the American scene as haiku do of the Japanese one.

The latest crop of Scott & Zelda writing has two forms. First, it aims at remaking Fitzgerald as a pop artist, salvaged from being taken too seriously and made overliterary. Second, it aims at vindicating his wife, Zelda Sayre, as an artist, cramped and driven into madness by the patriarchal brutalities of her time and her circle. While Scott is being made one with James M. Cain and Cole Porter, Zelda is brought together with Sylvia Plath as an American feminist of poetic gifts, afflicted by a large-egoed husband who squelched her even when pretending to serve her.

Therese Anne Fowler's best-selling novel "Z.," written in Zelda's persona—though in nothing like her original, run-on rhapsodic literary voice, evident in her letters and one promising, if fragmentary, novel—is a recent installment in the story. It retells the tale: the courtship in Montgomery, Alabama, Fitzgerald's disappointment when what became "This Side of Paradise" was rejected by Scribner's and his elation at its

eventual acceptance, all the way to Zelda's frantic effort, in her late twenties, to become a dancer and her eventual breakdown. People recite events in tabloid fashion, announcing what would in their own day have been obvious background information: "We girls were trained up knowing there was only one goal to worry ourselves about, and that was marriage to the best sort of fella who would have us." Or: "Gone were the simple cotton blouses and casual skirts that had been my everyday wear. Now I had finer cotton, and silk!"

The adaptation does an injustice to Zelda's voice, which, reflected in the style of her novel, the autobiographical "Save Me the Waltz," is often mannered but always in valiant pursuit of original metaphor. "Z." works its way around to make the now familiar case—Tennessee Williams wrote a whole play with this view—that Zelda was deprived of a literary future by male jealousy, with the strong implication that Fitzgerald drew on her language and experience in his fiction without sufficiently crediting her, albeit this book makes the case with some sympathy for Poor Scott. Hemingway is now cast as the brutal woman-hating villain. (Poor Hemingway! Benefitting unreasonably from his macho image in his lifetime, he suffers from it almost unduly now, even though he was, for the most part, a bystander to the Fitzgeralds' marriage.)

This is all part of a larger effort to recruit as a feminist heroine this otherwise forgotten writer of great personal pathos and limited accomplishment. No one who reads her prose can doubt her natural talent. (It was Zelda, not Scott, who originally wrote of "the silhouette of retrospective good times when we still believed in summer hotels and the philosophies of popular songs.") Nor can anyone doubt that she was not encouraged by her husband, or by her milieu, to make as much of the talent as she might have. But the claim that his work depended on hers is true only in the sense that anyone's work depends on the people closest to her: although Scott and Zelda occasionally signed a magazine piece together, there's no evidence that she added a semicolon to "The Great Gatsby," much less to "The Last Tycoon." To see her as a victim of other people's cruelties is also to take an old-fashioned and romantic attitude toward the mental illness from which she suffered, even if the treatments for it in her day strike us as uncivilized and ignorant (as ours will in the future). Like Virginia Woolf, she had the signs of the kind of bipolar disorder perhaps best captured by the old French name of *folie circulaire*, meaning a madness that rises and recedes—and these horrible disorders afflict, haphazardly, the smart and the simple, and men as well as women. Tragic figures, including writers, can, like

Woolf, still be tragic figures, even with the best luck and the most supportive spouses and the warmest encouragement and the wisest of friends. It's the inability of all those other things to keep them sane that makes them tragic.

The Zelda cult, intended to right an injustice done to a remarkable woman, can end by doing an injustice to less theatrically glamorous women writers of her time—Dawn Powell and Anita Loos, in the same social circle and milieu, come to mind—who did get their work done and their selves expressed in even more resistant circumstances. At a time when Powell's journals have struggled to find an American library to hold them, and Loos's Hollywood serial, "The Better Things of Life," which Wilson praised as the Hollywood fiction "with most teeth in it," has vanished from view, it would seem more urgent to press on readers actual books written by women who achieved and sustained their formidable talent against the formidable odds.

Getting Fitzgerald's own writing right-sized is hard. Two new books show how easy it is to make him either too big, too grandiose and epic, or too small, an easy-to-take pop artist, in a way that erases his commitment to literary seriousness of the most earnest, modernist kind. This doubleness is in part built into the economics of his career, which made him both chase conventional commercial success and hate it. His essential economic engine was not Hollywood or the American novel—there were many more successful novelists at the time—but the *Saturday Evening Post*, which paid well and illustrated richly, though its demands for a light touch and a soft landing made Fitzgerald feel, from time to time, ashamed. The *Post* is the Ozymandias of American magazines—once mightiest of all, it now exists merely as a stump in the sands—but Fitzgerald was as much, and as proudly, a *Post* writer as P. G. Wodehouse was, at a time when George Horace Lorimer, the editor of the *Post*, was as much a legend as Harold Ross, of this magazine, was later. The *Post's* touch suited Wodehouse's art perfectly, as the Riviera suited Matisse, but Fitzgerald's social conscience, implanted in him like a pacemaker by Edmund Wilson, at Princeton, sporadically bugged him and made him eager not to be seen as a *Post* writer.

John T. Irwin's "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Fiction" (Johns Hopkins) is a brave attempt to redeem that Scott, to give Fitzgerald the kind of resolutely non-fan-magazine scrutiny that Irwin has previously given to Hart Crane and Poe. He says some smart things about Fitzgerald's imagery—about, for instance, how ambiguous the idea of light is in his writing, so that the green light at the end of the dock is a portent of the shining illusory screen of the movies, standing for persistent illusion as much as for romantic aspiration. Irwin makes the provocative argument, too, that the seemingly throwaway Pat Hobby stories, tales of a rapscallion screenwriter, dramatize the "authority of failure"—Fitzgerald's phrase for what his personal defeats had earned him; Hemingway, he thought, wrote with the "authority of success"—and let Fitzgerald see beyond the ideologies of his time. The struggling Pat Hobbys know what reality looks like.

Yet Irwin needs Fitzgerald to be not just good but big, and he ends his book with a long, portentous paean to Fitzgerald's imagination in terms of Plato's allegory of the cave:

> If Plato's cave of shadow images is evoked as a figurative telluric womb and if that cave and the underworld of shades were for the classical world cognate formations, based, no doubt, on the notion of a body's personal survival after death being thought of as analogous to the persistence of a person's mental image in the minds of those who knew and loved her, then we can see that *The Last Tycoon*'s scenario of image projection . . . and of a consequent resurrection served as Fitzgerald's fictive expression of a narcissistic desire to correct two previous incarnations of his muse by symbolically bringing back the images of two women, one dead, one among the living dead in an asylum, so as to have another chance at creating an ideal form that would combine the figures of mother and spouse.

You can see his point—Kathleen, the English outsider in "Tycoon," is an attempt, based on a real person, Fitzgerald's last lover, Sheilah Graham, to come up with a female character who is both dream girl and wise woman—but does so plain a point need so elaborate a philosophical apparatus?

On the other hand, Maureen Corrigan, the "Fresh Air" book critic, seems eager to downsize Fitzgerald to contemporary tastes. In "So We Read On: How

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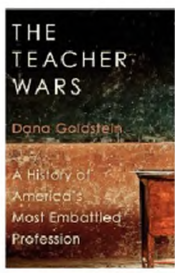
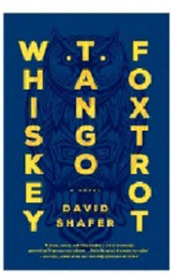
BRIEFLY NOTED

EICHMANN BEFORE JERUSALEM, *by Bettina Stangneth, translated from the German by Ruth Martin (Knopf).* This remarkable history covers the decade that Adolf Eichmann spent in semi-hiding in Argentina before his capture, in 1960, by Mossad. Eichmann called himself a "small cog" in the Nazi war machine, but Stangneth draws on recently released documents to show that he was anything but. In Argentina, he was the heart of a close-knit German expat community that was well aware of his wartime exploits: he was too proud of his legacy, and too hopeful for the "Führer-state's return," to refrain from boasting. The book's other major focus is how Eichmann remained at liberty for so long. Many documents from his years in hiding have yet to be released by German intelligence agencies.



THE TEACHER WARS, *by Dana Goldstein (Doubleday).* This engaging history chronicles a hundred and seventy-five years of educational-reform initiatives, union conflicts, and moral panic, from the nineteenth-century ideal of schoolhouses as "secular churches" to denunciations of the perceived zealotry of Teach for America. Goldstein ably sketches reformers past and present, asserting that the common force behind each new wave of school reforms is evangelical conviction, and that new movements often seem based more on faith than on factual evidence. Thorough and fair-minded, she offers limited proposals for practical improvements, but her ability to illuminate each new wave's "hype-disillusionment cycle" is a welcome treatment of a fraught subject.



WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT, *by David Shafer (Mulholland).* Nothing less than control over the world's information is at stake in this dystopian thriller, in which an underground movement attempts to thwart an "electronic coup" planned by a cabal of powerful businessmen and corporations known as the Committee. The novel has three unlikely heroes: a laid-off kindergarten teacher with a conspiracy-filled blog, an insecure self-help guru, and an N.G.O. employee who stumbles on secret dealings. Shafer peppers his novel with the zany thoughts of variously idealistic and jaded characters. "This living-under-tyranny thing was a super-bummer," one observes. The book's fanciful premise comes to seem eerily plausible: "How about if a shadow government is filing away everything about you?"

PANIC IN A SUITCASE, *by Yelena Akhtiorskaya (Riverhead).* In this début novel, the Nasmertovs, immigrants from Odessa living in the Ukrainian enclave of Brooklyn's Brighton Beach, find themselves straddling two worlds. Though they can buy all the comforts of home at the corner store, they are discombobulated by life in a foreign land—the small misunderstandings, the unfamiliar mores, the unmet expectations. The fall of Communism puts the past only a plane ticket away, compelling them to confront what they have chosen. In an engrossing, sensitive, and funny narrative, Akhtiorskaya captures the transcendent absurdities of intra-family communication, and explores the way one family's decisions can "cast a shadow that could be interpreted as fate."

'The Great Gatsby' Came to Be and Why It Endures" (Little, Brown), she has an infectious sense of excitement about the novel, the furthest thing from academic deadness imaginable. She can be shrewd and clear-eyed—rightly pointing out that Daisy, for all Gatsby's idealization of her, is intended to be an empty shell, not a dream girl, a zero in whom Gatsby has overinvested. Corrigan has also done some terrific reporting; Sylvia Plath, she surprises us, was a Fitzgerald fan, densely annotating her copy of "Gatsby."

Yet, though she loves the book, she seems reluctant to take it on its own terms, rather than on some other terms, easier to take now. She devotes an entire chapter, called "Rhapsody in Noir," to the notion that "Gatsby" is a herald and variant of the kind of hardboiled pulp fiction that was then coming into favor. Fitzgerald had an affection for pop fiction, including bad historical novels and detective stories, but there's little evidence in his letters that he really emulated or learned much from such things as *The Black Mask*, the detective-story monthly that, Corrigan notes, H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan sponsored as a money-making alternative to their taste-making *The Smart Set*. The stylishly distinctive noir novels of Cain and Dashiell Hammett came out long after "Gatsby" was published and Fitzgerald's style was fully formed. She even reverse-engineers the connection from the noirish forties Alan Ladd movie version of the novel, which the studio tried to make look like a fashionable thriller of that later period. (At another moment, she repeats the idea that the long dash on the last page of "Gatsby" is a deliberate attempt to evoke Gatsby's dock, thereby marking "one of the first graphic novel moments in American literature.")

In truth, Fitzgerald's tastes and his ambitions for his writing, and for "Gatsby" in particular—as well documented as any writer's have ever been—were resolutely high-minded and literary. His masters were the Edwardian novelists John Galsworthy, Compton Mackenzie, and Joseph Conrad—the first two mentioned nowhere in Corrigan's book, while Conrad gets a sentence. Galsworthy and Mackenzie are out of fashion now, but they, with

Conrad, account for nine-tenths of the foundation of Fitzgerald's style, and without that style there is no "Gatsby." It was Mackenzie's Oxford novel "Sinister Street" (1914), with its sinuous, slightly overripe autumnal chiaroscuro, at once elegantly mysterious in its atmosphere and innocently romantic in its aspirations, that gave Fitzgerald the model for the self-consciously lyrical sections of Gatsby, while Galsworthy's disabused take on middle-class manners is the tannins in the wine, and helped give Fitzgerald the courage to write the adultery sections with such blunt realism.

Above all, Conrad's short fiction gave Fitzgerald the sense that a big, melodramatic story might be told in a compressed, epigrammatic form. "Gatsby" is a deeply Conradian novella, in its fable-like tone; in the play of dark and light between the ash heap and the parties, between the heightened, unreal action and the cool, mordantly ironic tone of the narration. A book about where "The Great Gatsby" came from that does not give Conrad at least equal time alongside *The Black Mask* and "Sunset Boulevard" is about something other than where "The Great Gatsby" came from.

In any case, the noirish tone of disabused realism isn't Fitzgerald's tone by a mile. "Gatsby" is a book about a tabloid murder that works by being resolutely anti-tabloid in style; that's its point. The noir novelists properly so called, Cain and Hammett, later on saw real virtues in the stripped-down style of the popular newspaper account; Fitzgerald, a much more self-consciously poetic writer, working in a distinctly earlier moment, did not. "Romantic readiness" is the last thing a writer like James M. Cain valued. The point of everything that Cain wrote is that a green light on the end of the dock is a sick joke that the rich play on the poor; the whole point of "Gatsby" is that the sick jokes that the rich play on the poor can nonetheless be turned into a green light on the end of the dock, forever radiant to the willing mind.

People never tired of lecturing Scott Fitzgerald, telling him to pull up his socks and stop being so "effeminate," the way they never tired of telling Philip Roth not to be so funny or Updike not to write so well. Roth's comedy could be taken to be problematic, because it contended with his sense of serious form—nobody ever derided Bruce Jay Friedman or Neil Simon for being too funny. Fitzgerald invited criticism by making his theme, again and again, his weakness, his materialism, his love of money and nice clothes and fame; he appeared to trivialize himself by making his values open to the charge of being trivial. This blaming an author for being himself reached a climax for Fitzgerald when, in 1936, he published in *Esquire* the series of confessional pieces titled "The Crack-Up."

Their publication—for three hundred dollars apiece—is the moment when Fitzgerald became Poor Scott, forever to be pitied. (Hemingway called him so in a short story a few months later.) A reliable rule of literary reputations is that whatever your own time jeers is the one thing that will prove most lasting in your work. Boswell was ridiculed for inserting so much undignified detail into his accounts of life with Dr. Johnson—didn't he know he was embarrassing himself by telling how he clung to Johnson? Of course, we read him for the undignified details, alive as they are with truth. There is always in the literary world an odd marriage of malice and squeamishness, a hatred of emotional revelation disguised as a mistrust of mawkishness, and Fitzgerald got hit by a lot of it.

Read today, "The Crack-Up" is a surprisingly cautious, abstract kind of confession; Fitzgerald is reluctant to admit to being the drunk he really had been. But one of its great, honest virtues is to position a story of success and failure in the context of American entertainments, inasmuch as he insists that we can understand success and failure in America only through the metaphors of show business. The novel, he explains, has failed in the face of the movies, and this failure is the type and pattern of his own: "A passionate belief in order, a disregard of motives or consequences in favor of guess work and prophecy, a feeling that craft and industry would have a place in any world—one by one, these and other convictions were swept away. I saw that the novel, which at my maturity was the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and communal art . . . capable of reflecting only

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the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion." What was happening to Fitzgerald's nervous system was happening to the novel, too: the crack-up is externalized, and a sure sign that someone really is cracking up.

Patricia Hampl, in a fine essay not long ago in *The American Scholar*, outlined the ways in which "The Crack-Up" was a "sharp pivot, marking a fundamental change in American consciousness" (and how badly misunderstood the essay was in its time). One can also, perhaps, itemize some of the significant ways in which it breaks with almost all earlier confessional writing, of the kind we find in English with De Quincey and Hazlitt, in French with Stendhal.

First, the class aspect of the fall is much muted. It is essential in the earlier kinds that the narrator end in bad company: whores, gamblers, and lower-class types. In Fitzgerald, this aspect is much less pronounced: the suffering is done in common with others of the same sort. The confessor has not fallen from grace in the world's eyes as much as in his own. The man in his parents' basement is more shamed than the man in the gutter. There are exceptions, but mostly, as in John Berryman's rehab novel "Recovery," the suffering is a failure in one's own eyes, not a descent in the world's.

Second, the sin of which one is guilty is against the cult of success—I was intended for success, I tasted it, but some flaw in me made me unworthy to keep it. "The Crack-Up" is not a critique of the Church of Success and its "bitch goddess" for having failed the writer. It is an apology to the Church of Success for having failed it. In Henry Adams, the fatal flaw, discovered just in time, is pursuing success at all. In "The Crack-Up," it is failing through bad budgeting of every kind—money, sex, booze—to remain in possession of a form of worldly success whose value is taken for granted. Images of the more conventional kind of success glow brighter or seem ever more baffling. As in "A Fan's Notes," every Fred Exley has his Frank Gifford.

Third, substance abuse, booze or, later, heroin, is accepted from the first as a need or a compulsion more than a pleasure. Even in Pete Hamill's "A Drinking Life," the tone is of rueful necessity more than of recalled hilarity. The jolly literature of drunkenness in England doesn't transplant here—take the play "Jeffrey Bernard Is Unwell," an account of an unrepentant alcoholic that was huge in London but would be baffling here. "It was fun; now it's over" is the theme of the British drying-out book. "It was never really fun, and it's never really over" is the theme of the American one, after Fitzgerald.

The oddest irony of "The Crack-Up" is that Fitzgerald, burned in his life by a failure to measure up in masculinity, according to the wretched custom of his time—the moment when Hemingway measures Scott's member in "A Moveable Feast" is still notorious, if of dubious truth—did his best work in the most "feminine" mode he tried. "The Crack-Up" provoked indignation in part because Fitzgerald was a masculine writer who was doing a womanly thing: he whined and whinged and wept right there on the page. What was seen as weak was exactly his strength. Romanticism under stress always becomes expressionism—what happened to Poe is also what happened to Fitzgerald. When a lyric writer cracks, there's a new kind of dissonant music in the breaking. The best passages in Fitzgerald's novels always worked better as fable and fairy tale than as realistic fiction. The most fantastical of his stories, "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," haunt us more than the neatly journalistic, mirror-of-their-time stories, like "May Day" and "The Rich Boy." Fitzgerald himself knew that the real weakness of his best novel was that we could not imagine Gatsby and Daisy reunited—that, in plain English, he could not evoke them rutting because he could not credibly imagine it. Neither really has a body or an appetite, only an envelope of clothes, and an aspiration.

Fitzgerald was a maker of American fables and literary fragments that lodge like splinters in the brain. "The Last Tycoon" might not have been more memorable for having been finished. All he had to do was get his stars cut out to make his constellations shine. The most beautiful things he ever did may be the separate sentences that fill a hundred and fifty or so pages at the back of Wilson's posthumous collection of Fitzgeraldiana that took its title from "The Crack-Up," sentences that are presented in their complete form in the volume of notebooks that appeared some twenty-odd years later. Wilson, in editing "The Crack-Up," was a little unclear about the source of these sentences—some of them are stand-alone lines, others are literally cut and pasted from those "commercial" stories, supposedly saved from the furnace for another, higher cause.

But they are kept alive by their perfection. The small cause was the high one. Some are reflective and aphoristic: "It is in the thirties that we want friends. In the forties we know they won't save us any more than love did." "The combination of a desire for glory and an inability to endure the monotony it entails puts many people in the asylum." Others are quietly observational, as in this sequence on national types: "Like all self-controlled people, the French talk to themselves"; "Voices: American doubtful—'Well, I don't know'; English saying 'Extraordinary,' refusing to think; French saying, 'Well, there you are' "; "France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still that quality of the idea, was harder to utter—it was the graves at Shiloh and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men. . . . It was a willingness of the heart." That sentence is better than the story it climaxes. Best of all are the ones that seem to announce whole stories in a phrase: "He paused speculatively to vault the high hydrant in front of the Van Schellinger house, wondering if one did such things in long trousers and if he would ever do it again." (The first two-thirds of the sentence could have been written by Tarkington; the last third by Fitzgerald alone.) Or simply, "Sending orchestra second rate champagne—never, *never* do it again."

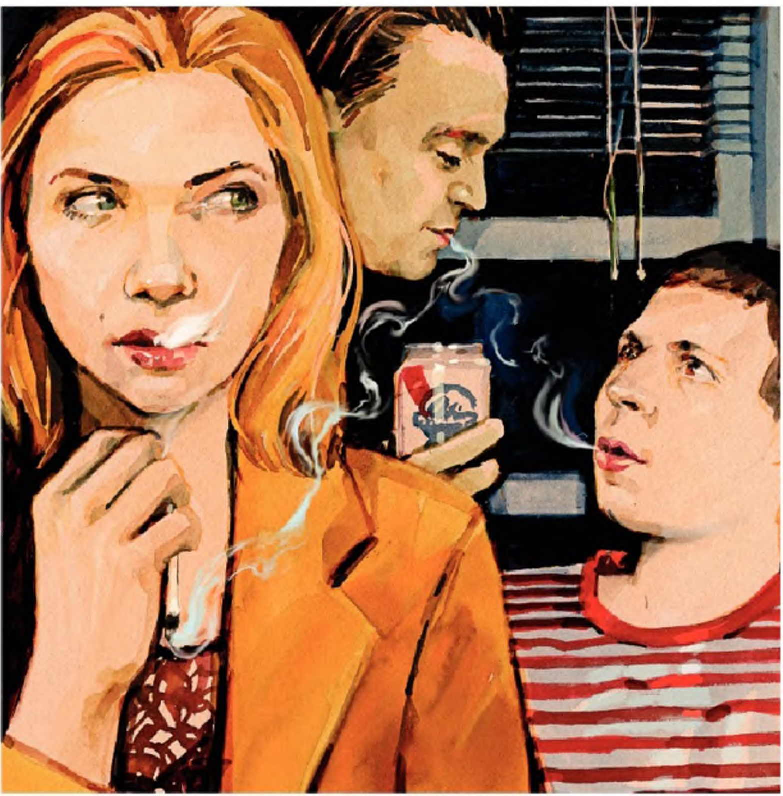
There is very little second-rate champagne in Fitzgerald. He lives in his sentences, which is where writing lives, in sentences and human sympathy. Everything else is just journalism and punditry. The reason we have fair-minded civilizations is to hear from artists who choose not to be conventionally fair-minded, who build up their heroes and heroines unreasonably, and then crack up and break down. The Adonis myth may be too narrow, but it is not entirely false. Writers are sentenced to their sentences, which sometimes set them free. ♦

THE THEATRE

URBAN BLIGHT

The world of Kenneth Lonergan.

BY HILTON ALS



Tavi Gevinson, Kieran Culkin, and Michael Cera in "This Is Our Youth."

A kind of bewildered atmosphere rises up around Kenneth Lonergan's characters as they talk. Despite their verbosity, powers of observation, and critical acumen, Lonergan's mostly Manhattan-based creations—they don't journey far—are at the mercy of their own innocence: they yammer on about their insights but fall short of perception. Often they take life for granted until it happens to them; when it does, their illusions devolve into soul-crushing disillusion. Four of Lonergan's five major full-length plays—his first, "This Is Our Youth" (1996), is now in revival, at the Cort—present a primarily white, middle-class or upper-middle-class world, in which the kids are feckless, families are coming apart, and siblings are permanently estranged.

A bard of the not-so-haute bourgeoisie, the fifty-one-year-old Bronx-born playwright, who graduated from the progressive (now defunct) Walden School, on Central Park West, chronicles but rarely analyzes his characters. Even after we meet Lonergan's creations, we don't always know who they are, in part because they don't *tell* us who they are—at least, not in the standard ways. They're impatient with their personal histories, all that backstory stuff that traditionally shores up a naturalistic play. (Harold Pinter was a master of this type of avoidance, but then again he didn't write naturalistic plays.) When a Lonergan character mentions the past, it comes as a surprise, like a bright-colored fish flitting across a big gray wave.

Daniel, the twentysomething narrator of Lonergan's second play, "The Waverly Gallery" (2000)—which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and is, in many ways, his archetypal stage work—is as hard of hearing emotionally as his grandmother, Gladys, is physically. The play is set in the West Village, partly in the house that Gladys, the child of Russian Jewish immigrants, bought with her husband, in the nineteen-forties. At the start of the two-act piece, it's 1989 and Gladys is in her eighties. She lives in one apartment in her building, while Daniel, who works for the Environmental Protection Agency, lives in another. Gladys's body and mind are failing, but she still enjoys certain pleasures, chief among them the small art gallery she's run for years. Daniel tells the audience that most of the art Gladys exhibits isn't very good, but what he doesn't say or realize is that Gladys, an old Commie, is interested in artists and the act of creation; she's determined to maintain her emotional availability and curiosity, even as her memory dims and various prejudices replace her former freedom of thought. Gladys's most vocal critic is her daughter, Daniel's mother, Ellen, a psychoanalyst who lives uptown with her second husband, Howard. (He's a shrink, too.) Ellen complains about Gladys's faulty memory, her deafness, and her habit of repeating stories, but you get the sense that she is rather proud of her own whiny stoicism; it's of a piece with her poker-faced martyrdom.

In "The Waverly Gallery," Lonergan sends up psychoanalysis—with its cause-and-effect assumptions—as the science of the entitled. His language is a New Yorker's language: part Borscht Belt mock-incredulity, part survivor's guilt and pride. He likes to pervert the "actualized" or "evolved" talk you might expect in his settings by cutting to the chase: sometimes an asshole is just an asshole. (He is occasionally too enamored of his cranks, whose crustiness he equates with truthtelling.) But, like John van Druten, Dorothy Parker, Dawn Powell, and J. D. Salinger before him, Lonergan is attuned to the beauty of surfaces—what people say and how they say it. In "The Waverly Gallery," Howard wants Daniel to go out with a nice girl and re-create the banality of

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL GILLETTE

his own life, but for Daniel love is not love unless it's out of reach:

HOWARD: Is this girl you're seeing also involved in politics?

DANIEL: I'm not exactly seeing her, she can't make up her mind whether or not I'm seeing her. . . .

HOWARD: Is she involved in politics?

DANIEL: No, she's involved in torture. She comes over and she tortures me and then she goes away and looks around for somebody to torture her—which she actually seems to prefer—but she has extremely high standards, so if she can't find anyone sufficiently diabolical, she comes back and tortures me some more.

HOWARD: Jesus Christ. She sounds delightful. . . . Is this girl in analysis?

DANIEL: Yes, unfortunately her analyst recently committed suicide.

HOWARD: He did? No . . .

DANIEL: Yes, that's the third psychoanalyst who tried to treat her and ended up killing himself. She's cutting a swath of terror through the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. I'm surprised you guys haven't seen anything about it in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*.

HOWARD (*laughing*): Come on . . . !

DANIEL (*laughing*): It's true—They say she has no superego. They're dropping like flies.

"The Waverly Gallery" is Lonergan's most directly autobiographical play. His mother and his stepfather were both practicing psychiatrists, and as a young man he moved into a building in Greenwich Village that his grandmother had purchased after the Second World War. (He still lives there.) After attending the dramatic-writing program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, he supported himself as a speechwriter for the Environmental Protection Agency, and by writing long-form commercials for Weight Watchers, Fuji Film, and the like. He has always had an ear. In a 2001 *Bomb* interview, Lonergan said, "I try to be scrupulous about not letting people say things I don't think people say." Such scrupulousness about dialogue often means screenwriting work for a writer, and in 1999 "Analyze This," which Lonergan claims to have written strictly for the money, was produced. He also collaborated on the script for Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" (2002).

Although Scorsese produced the first movie that Lonergan wrote and directed, "You Can Count On Me" (2000), and did an edit on his second, the strange "Margaret" (2011), Lonergan doesn't share his mentor's fascination with blood, bones, and flesh. Lonergan's movies are imbued with Aristotelian order and calm. Indeed, when blood is shed in "Margaret," we watch the victim less for the grim signs of her expiration than for what she says as she lies dying. In Lonergan's film work, the world is framed by language. But what he does share with Scorsese is a romantic dweeb's interest in bad boys, those tough guys who, through action and sometimes violence, take far more risks than socially considerate dudes with sensitive, demanding grandmothers or parents who are shrinks.

"This Is Our Youth" is a boy-centric piece; it's narrower than Lonergan's other work, but that serves to focus its passions and its poetry. We first meet Dennis Ziegler (the outstanding and alluring Kieran Culkin) as he sits, zoned out, in front of a television set in his dumpy studio apartment on the Upper West Side. He's twenty-one years old; his parents pay the rent. He works as a bike messenger and supplements his income by dealing pot. It's 1982, and Dennis has posters of Richard Pryor and "The Honeymooners" on his wall, along with a photograph of Louis Armstrong—tricksters all. Dennis is a trickster, too. In perhaps the longest character description Lonergan has ever written, we learn that Dennis is a "grungy, handsome, very athletic, formerly long-haired kid . . . a very quick, dynamic, fanatical, and bullying kind of person; amazingly good-natured and magnetic, but insanely competitive and almost always successfully so; a dark cult god of high school only recently encountering, without necessarily recognizing, the first evidence that the dazzling aggressive hipster techniques with which he has always dominated his peers might not stand him in good stead for much longer." Dennis's bratty attitude—he always has to be on top—is his way of putting off adulthood: if he can get one over on the people around him, maybe he can get one over on time.

One person Dennis can always feel superior to is his friend Warren (the beautiful and beautifully cast Michael Cera). The nineteen-year-old Warren turns up at Dennis's studio, looking like an exclamation point as imagined by Claes Oldenburg—tall, thin, and droopy. He is carrying a large suitcase. He has left his divorced father's place after one argument too many:

DENNIS: Why'd he kick you out? What'd you do?

WARREN: Nothing. I got stoned and he comes home and he's like, "This apartment smells like pot *all the time*." And I'm like, "Yeah, 'cause I'm always *smoking* it." So then he's like, "I want that smell out of this house." And then he's like, "No, actually, I want *you* out of this house." Then he throws a few bills on the floor and is like, "There's some cash, now pack up your shit and get out before I beat your fuckin' head in." And I was like, "Whatever." So he went on a date with his whore, and I packed up my stuff and left.

Where does Warren plan to stay? He doesn't know. Maybe he can stay at a hotel; maybe he can stay with Dennis. Whoa. Dennis doesn't like that idea—why does life keep serving him burdens, dressed up as losers?—but he changes his mind when Warren reveals that he's ripped his dad off for fifteen grand. Warren found the money in a suitcase in his father's room and figured Dad owed it to him, for how messed up he's made him. Double whoa. Maybe, Dennis says, they should use the money to go to France, or maybe they should buy some coke, cut it with crap, sell it, and make a profit. That's the kind of thing that Dennis is good for—a hustle. "Don't *ever* try to out-Jew me, little man," he says to Warren. "I'm twice the Jew you'll *ever* be. I'm like a Jewish *god*. I'm like—*Joooo*olius *Caesar!*" These colorful cartoons of rhythmic speech float over our heads as the boys toss a football around. Eventually, Warren shows Dennis that he's filled his suitcase with treasures from his childhood—once fashionable action figures, a collectible toaster. Maybe Dennis can sell this stuff, too, and then they'll be on their way—but to what?

You can always tell when a writer feels free on the page, and one of the joys of "This Is Our Youth" is that it gives the audience a chance to reëngage with listening. Several months ago, I saw the play, with the same actors, at the Steppenwolf, in Chicago, where Anna D. Shapiro (who directed both productions) staged it in the round; the setting was so intimate that you could almost feel the actors vibrating with Lonergan's words and imagination. When Dennis goes out on a drug run, Jessica (Tavi Gevinson, who brings a nice improvisatory vibe to the proceedings) turns up to hang out with Warren, and the two mess around a little before taking off for a hotel. But when Jessica asks about Warren's sister—who was beaten to death by her boyfriend (Warren's dad beats him, too)—Warren

shuts her down. He turns away from his history of abuse; what he wants is anesthesia, not Jessica getting under his skin, searching for clues. The actors' trust in each other in these scenes was so tangible it was almost painful.

For the most part, shows that make it above Fourteenth Street drown out language in favor of production: glittery sets, prancing actors. Transferred to the Cort's proscenium stage, with a set by Todd Rosenthal that makes it look like something out of the old TV series "Naked City," "This Is Our Youth" has lost some of its intimacy. Everything is in medium shot, and the actors have to compensate for the size of the space, their voices more strained, their manner more graphic and frenetic. This shift in presentation reminded me of Lonergan's overdone "Medieval Play," which I saw at the Signature, in 2012. That comedy, which Lonergan began writing when he was twenty-two and directed himself, used the Hundred Years' War as a backdrop, against which two knights (played by Josh Hamilton, who originated the role of Dennis, and Tate Donovan) searched for—what? I still haven't worked out the story. In any case, the production was loud in ways that Lonergan's work generally isn't. The current staging of "This Is Our Youth" competes, at times, with Lonergan's dialogue, but Culkin, Cera, and Gevinson don't allow the moments that matter to be drowned out by the demands of Broadway.

At the start of Act II, Warren returns to Dennis's place, high on the possibility of love with Jessica, and finds Dennis hung over from doing too much blow. Dennis has no interest in Warren's glimmer of hope; he wants to find out how things went in bed. But their conversation is cut short when Jessica turns up. Dennis heads out to sell Warren's childhood memorabilia—he's already scored the coke—but before he goes he lets Jessica know that he knows what she's done with Warren. Jessica feels violated by Dennis's words—for her, language is a wound that opens up other wounds—and she tells Warren so. Faced with her anger, Warren goes slack; he's back where he started, feeling smaller than someone else's problems. One of the more remarkable questions Lonergan poses in "This Is Our Youth" is: How do you forge friendships in the modern urban environment, where detachment is a code of honor? Jessica doesn't feel that she can trust Warren after he's revealed their affair, but whom can she trust? So when she starts railing at Warren it's not really about who knows what but about this: How can two people get close to each other in the minefield of their unspoken doubts and fears and the backstories they're unwilling to share?

Despite the specificity of Lonergan's characters and setting, "This Is Our Youth" works like music from the past: it reminds us of who we once were and who we are. We have all left home; we have all tried to make love suffer by turning our backs on it, if only to prove how little we need or deserve its warm, brutalizing complexities. Lonergan's music is all his own, but if you listen closely to the script you may be reminded not of another dramatist but of a songwriter like Stevie Wonder, whose 1973 hit "Too High" played in my mind as Dennis and Warren hobbled and swaggered around the stage:

> I'm too high
> But I ain't left the ground . . .
> I'm too high
> I hope I never ever come down
> She's the girl in her life
> But her world's a superficial paradise
> She had a chance to make it big more
> than once or twice
> But no dice
> She wasn't very nice . . .
> I'm so high
> I feel like I'm about to die

It's to Lonergan's credit that he doesn't wrap things up neatly at the end of the play. "It doesn't seem right to conclude the characters' entire lives by the end because that doesn't feel real to me," he told *Bomb*. "I write about people grappling with situations that are bigger than they are, and by their nature not situations the characters can resolve." "This Is Our Youth" ends with Dennis asking Warren what he plans to do next. "I don't know, man. I guess I'll just go home," Warren says. It's a devastating line, particularly as spoken by Cera. As the lights fade on his forlorn, Buster Keaton-like face, we can see what he will confront in the next moment, and the next: walking into his father's home and into his future, that ruined kingdom of adulthood, with its judgments, its emotional parsimony, its occasional moments of honesty, attention, and hope. ♦

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THE ART WORLD

WHEN IT POURS

Works by Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Two new shows of color-field paintings from the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties—by Helen Frankenthaler, at Gagosian, and by Morris Louis, at Mnuchin—recall a time when such works served as intellectual battle flags in the dispute over what painting should be. The movement was mentored by the critic Clement Greenberg as the inevitable next phase after Abstract Expressionism. Inspired by Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, color-field aimed for "purely optical" effects—the works were dead flat, eschewed drawn line, and referred to nothing. They were made by pouring paint onto unstretched canvases laid on the floor, or, in the case of Jules Olitski, by applying the paint with a spray gun. Color-field reacted against the juicy, muscular styles of Willem de Kooning and his many followers, which Greenberg deemed spurious and passé. It won that scrap, in the court of uptown galleries, but soon succumbed to the juggernauts of Pop art and minimalism, which had behind them forces of more than rarefied aesthetic theory: by 1962, Andy Warhol's silk-screened works equalled the formal strength of color-field and surpassed its éclat, with the added bonus of Marilyn Monroe. Greenberg's dialectic made color-field sound formidable, but the art proved lightweight in practice, a genteel sort of taste—the visual equivalent of second-Martini euphoria. Still, some gifted artists espoused it, none better than Frankenthaler, its effective inventor, and Louis, its sternest reductionist.

The two shows, in their timing, attest to one nice effect of today's ravening art market: the scramble of dealers and collectors for undervalued goods, which affords the rest of us fresh encounters with the artists who made them. It's not as if Louis, who died, of cancer, at the age of forty-nine, in 1962, and Frankenthaler, who survived in grand style until 2011, are obscure. Their work hangs in museums and sells, at auction, for respectable six-figure sums, with the odd spike into the low millions. But compare that to the example of their contemporary Joan Mitchell, whose unabashed, emphatic lyricism was scorned by Greenberg; she holds the auction record for a work by a female artist—almost twelve million dollars, set at Christie's in May. Shadows of overblown and unmet expectation fall across the reputations of Frankenthaler and Louis. Can a reset button be hit? The next auction tallies will tell.

There's pleasure to be had, certainly, at Gagosian, in eleven lively paintings by Frankenthaler from a two-year period, 1962-63, when she was transitioning from oils to acrylics, then a modish new medium. The change incurred a loss in the depth and the bite of Frankenthaler's color, though it enabled the flooded look, like that of an engulfing weather front, that characterizes much of her later work. (Her cultivation of what the critic B. H. Friedman called the "total color image" was never doctrinaire.) The pictures vary within two main types: discrete, skittery spills of paint, with lots of blank canvas, and more crowded, overlapping pourings, cradled in surrounding forms. The colors tend to the horticultural: rose red, mint or grass green, citron, grape, and peach, with occasional sun yellow and sky blue.

In the best instance—"Cool Summer" (1962), a panoramic winner in oils—rhythmic shapes distantly suggest blurry figures at a beach, wavering in a stiff breeze. (Greenberg said that we should reject seeing chance imagery in abstract art, but he didn't say how.) "Moat" (1963) reinforces its flatness with striations, the result of the lines of the floorboards on which the canvas was spread. Frankenthaler often inserts her signature into a composition, which can

Frankenthaler in her New York City studio, in 1964, with "Interior Landscape."

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER LIBERMAN

seem elegant to a fault—a sometime weakness that she shared with the high-minded Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell, whom she married in 1958. There's a provisional, close-call air to each painting, which I think owes less to her spontaneous method than to her appraising taste: the long look afterward to decide if something had worked or not. You sense an anxious risk and a wariness of the arbitrary.

Frankenthaler was a New York City child of privilege; she graduated from the Dalton School and, in 1949, from Bennington College. The following year, she met Greenberg, who became, for a few years, her lover. She studied with the German-born guru of painterly abstraction Hans Hofmann, but she shunned the modes of fervent expressiveness—promoted as Action painting by Greenberg's agonistic rival critic Harold Rosenberg—that engaged most artists of the so-called second generation of Abstract Expressionism. She said, "You could become a de Kooning disciple or satellite or mirror, but you could *depart* from Pollock," by which she meant that adapting Pollock's idea of coöperating with chance held more promise than aping de Kooning's unattainable virtuosity. She was just twenty-three when she poured puddles of paint, in palely glowing colors, onto a cotton canvas to produce "Mountains and Sea" (1952), which is the Rosetta stone of color-field (it's in the National Gallery of Art, in Washington), despite the fact that it bears drawn lines and a redolence of landscape. Greenberg showed the picture to Louis and the painter Kenneth Noland, both visiting from Washington, D.C., on April 4, 1953. If color-field were a nation, that day would be its Fourth of July. Frankenthaler's work was the "bridge from Pollock to what was possible," Louis later declared.

Louis was born Morris Louis Bernstein, to working-class Russian immigrants, in Baltimore in 1912. He pursued a passion for art in rugged circumstances, taking menial jobs, participating in the Depression-era Public Works of Art Project, and teaching privately. Smitten by Abstract Expressionism, Louis made unsatisfying attempts to absorb variants of the style. His introduction to Frankenthaler's technique, and encouragement from Greenberg, led him to eliminate drawing and brushwork and to develop rote formats that bet everything on flat, frontal color. The Mnuchin show samples the most extensive of these, the "Veils," which he painted between about 1954 and 1960: mostly large canvases that he tilted to soak with layered, broad runs of translucent acrylic, their downward course narrowing slightly from top to bottom. Like the man himself, by all accounts, the motif is clenched and taciturn, even glum, though given over to delectations of the eye in nearly infinitely variegated chords of color.

Despite the liberty implied in letting gravity make a picture, the "Veils" evince something like the steely control of scientific experimentation. The cumulative, blushing colors are kept within tight ranges of hue and saturation, and of warm and cool. There is a remarkable effect of liquid depths snugged up to dust-dry surfaces, as optical pushes and pulls attain an exquisite equilibrium. How to look at the works isn't obvious. They appear clunky from any great distance. (On the score of seeing things you shouldn't, I can never entirely shake a fancy that some of the big shapes represent dental X-rays of fantastically diseased molars.) Beauty happens within a couple of feet. Then the nuances of color, as of a dusky green caressing a smoldering orange, trigger little shocks of perception. Closeup viewing may persuade you that you have underrated your powers of visual discrimination. Look long, for best results. You may feel lonely, but that's by design.

Color-field climaxed a modern ambition to expunge narrative content from painting. You were meant to be alone—"autonomous" was a byword—in wordless communion with art, as with a sunset. But art, unlike nature, requires someone to perform an act of will, and where there's a mind directing a hand there's a story. If the story is excluded from a picture, it will reconstitute around it as art criticism, which provides a set of thoughts for the reasons that, as you look, you should abandon thinking. That isn't fair to individual aesthetic experience, which may find drama in abstraction and transport in realism. It also leaves out of account the worldly circumstances that impel and reward changes in art. Those turned out, by the end of the sixties, to endorse almost anything but more color-field. Color-field paintings are period artifacts, some of them lastingly enjoyable, of a peculiar presumption. ♦

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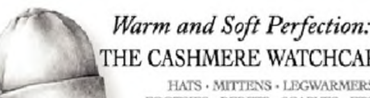

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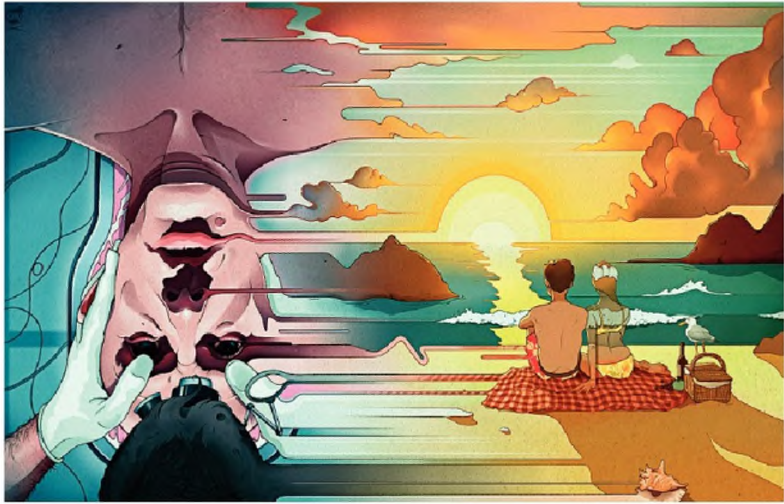
THE CURRENT CINEMA

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

"The Zero Theorem" and "20,000 Days on Earth."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Christoph Waltz works for an Orwellian corporation in Terry Gilliam's new film.

The hero of "The Zero Theorem" is a computer genius called Qohen Leth (Christoph Waltz). It seems like a name he deserves—the sort of name your keyboard would produce if you sat on it by mistake. Hairless, friendless, and roped in by his anxieties, Qohen refers to himself in the first person plural, presumably in a bid to feel less lonely. He is the sole resident of a derelict church, where, on a crucifix in front of the altar, the head of Christ has been replaced by a security camera. No prayers are ever said, and none are answered.

In short, the place is deconsecrated, but to claim that it lacks any spark of sacred yearning would be wrong, because Qohen devotes his days to seeking the Zero Theorem, which—whatever it may be—lies at the fuzzy limit of human powers. "We crunch entities," he says, as if that explained anything. His employer is Mancom, a large corporation that, in Orwellian fashion, oversees ordinary lives, although it betrays more frantic desperation than glowering threat. Qohen used to work in its headquarters, under a supervisor named Joby (David Thewlis), but now, by special command, he toils at home. We see his computer screen, and his attempts to maneuver cubes of figures and equations through a gray virtual landscape that keeps crumbling under the touch of his joystick. It looks like "The Lego Movie" with all the fun peeled off. The aim is to show that "Zero must equal one hundred per cent," or, to switch it around, "Everything adds up to nothing." So says Joby, who drops in to see how the task is progressing, only to be told by Qohen that "the Theorem is unprovable." What's going on?

Well, the director is Terry Gilliam, so any viewer wishing to trace a clear narrative line, or more than a whisper of argument, will be fated to fail. Over the past decade, in "Tideland" (2005) and "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus" (2009), Gilliam has taken to scattering images much as a military aircraft dispenses chaff—shiny showers of diversionary material, deflecting all efforts to track its course. There is something so generous and so full-hearted in this profusion that to complain seems churlish, but "The Zero Theorem" has a bothersome ratio of misses to hits. I loved the public wall crammed with interdictions—fifty or sixty plaques, forbidding people to sit, eat, cycle, smoke, dance, water-ski, or do pretty much anything else. That's a whole culture of killjoying, summed up in a single shot, and it shames the looser quirks of style that fill the rest of the movie. Why must Joby dress in royal-blue vinyl, say, with his hair in a silly coif? Why should Ben Whishaw, in his one-scene role as a doctor, be similarly dandified? No point is being made; the characters might as well be on a catwalk.

The warmest response that Gilliam has earned, in recent years, was for his 2011 production of Berlioz's "The Damnation of Faust," at the English National Opera, and you can see how the Faustian myth—a moral tale, if ever there was one—would profit from the lavish designs that spring so naturally, and with such demonic delight, to Gilliam's eye. One thing that "The Zero Theorem" lacks, by contrast, is a whiff of Mephistopheles—the tug of temptation that could lead our hero astray, or drag him down. True, we get Bainsley (Mélanie Thierry), a youthful siren who shows up at the church in a nurse's outfit, and then invites Qohen to enter her Web site and frolic with her—or her avatar—on a digitized beach. The humor of this, however, is so basic and broad that, when Bainsley later reveals genuine feelings for him, we don't care whether he spurns her or falls into her embrace. Nothing of value is at stake, least of all Qohen's soul, and the film continues on its giddy spin.

If there is a villain here, it is institutional. Mancom, headed by something or someone darkly referred to as Management, is to "The Zero Theorem" what government departments were to Gilliam's "Brazil," in 1985, and his gleeful disgust with bureaucratic behavior, whether of the state or of movie studios that mess with his work (as Universal did with "Brazil"), remains undimmed. So does his belief that the best way to describe a world that has taken leave of its senses is to submit your audience to a matching sensory overload—to a frame that bubbles with detail, to tumescent wide-angle shots, and to gaudy cameos from obliging stars. (In the new movie, we meet Matt Damon, in a suit that changes color to match the background, and Tilda Swinton, as an online

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS MURRAY

therapist with a frosted black wig and a scalding Scottish burr.) The idea that paranoia, and the machinery of oppression, can be conveyed with unquerulous calm, as they are by Kafka, and that they might seem even more daunting as a result, has never occurred to Gilliam, and it never will.

All this leaves "The Zero Theorem" looking both disorderly and stuck. And yet, to my surprise, on returning for a second viewing I found myself moved by the film—by the very doggedness with which it both hunts for and despairs of meaning. You sense that persistence in Christoph Waltz, whose silver tongue, deployed so suavely in "Django Unchained" and "Inglourious Basterds," sounds tarnished by time, in the mouth of Qohen Leth. Hunched and unhappy, he hovers near the phone, and says:

> We've been waiting for a call all our life now, and, although the nature and the origin of our call remains quintessentially a mystery to us, we can't help but hope that it will provide us with a purpose we've long lived without.

That is a standard cry of the middle-aged, half conceding that Godot never had our number in the first place. But it also speaks, perhaps, to a buried fear in Gilliam himself—to the suspicion that, as the Theorem dares to suggest, everything is nothing. What if the bells and whistles of filmmaking, rung and blown through an entire career, turn out to be in vain; what if no inch of the mystery has been unveiled? When there's no punch line, can you still enjoy the joke? Gilliam once tried, without success, to make a movie of "Don Quixote," and that chivalrous futility plagues him still. Some quests find an end. Others, like windmills, just go round and round.

How and why the creators of the "Twilight" franchise never hired Nick Cave I have no idea. Look at the man: long pale features, inky hair swept back to his collar, eternal dark suit. In the new film about him, "20,000 Days on Earth," he feasts on black tagliatelle and eel, which is, by tradition, what vampires eat when there's no fresh blood in the fridge.

Most people know of Cave as a singer-songwriter, and as the front man of the Birthday Party (cunningly promoted as "the most violent band in the world"), the Bad Seeds, and, latterly, Grinderman. But he has also been an actor and a screenwriter; in 2006, *Variety* reported that he had written a sequel to "Gladiator" for his friend and fellow-Australian Russell Crowe. According to Cave, the climax was "a twenty-minute war sequence that ended up in Vietnam, and then in a toilet in the Pentagon," although I hope that it followed Maximus into the underworld—a home away from home, for someone of Cave's apocalyptic interests. These days, he lives in Brighton, on the south coast of England, where the rain is suitably infernal. "The more I write about the weather," he says, "the worse it seems to get."

"20,000 Days on Earth," directed by Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, should be approached with care. It is a tall tale pretending to be a documentary. We see Cave waking up, mooching around, driving his Jaguar, and visiting a shrink. There he remembers his father taking him aside and reading him the first chapter of "Lolita." Is that a fact, to be taken at face value, or a succulent tidbit, such as a poet or a con man would pass off as true? And does Cave really have his own archive, where objects from his past are handled, like jewels, with white gloves? We certainly find him wandering through the shelves and reading his last will and testament from the nineteen-eighties, in which he provided for "the Nick Cave Memorial Museum." He gives a rare grin and says, "I was always a kind of ostentatious bastard."

That is the best side of Cave—the habitual mischief with which he peppers the gothic gloom. Without such spice, he might grow unbearable, and although fans will need no persuading, newcomers to his music may ask what the fuss is about. As he sat at the piano and delivered an anguished ballad, I struggled to fend off blasphemous thoughts of Nigel Tufnel, in "This Is Spinal Tap," who favored us with a no less tender tune and then explained, "This piece is called 'Lick My Love Pump.'" No one who was not laughably self-involved would agree to a project like "20,000 Days on Earth," and yet Cave, to his credit, comes most alive in his hymns to other selves—to a furious Nina Simone, for instance, who stared an audience into submission, then parked her chewing gum under the piano and launched into a set of songs that were, as he recalls, "transformative." She put a spell on him, and now Nick Cave, with his lugubrious sleights of hand, does much the same to us. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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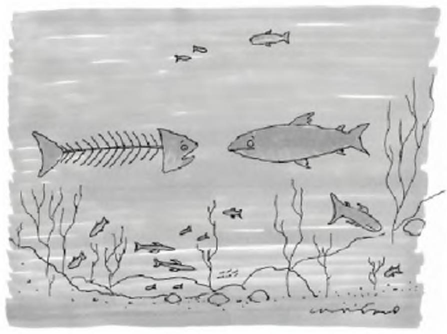
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

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 Charlie Hankin, must be received by Sunday, September 21st. The finalists in the September 8th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 6th 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

"No, he left here at 8:07."
Michael Boyette, Elkins Park, Pa.



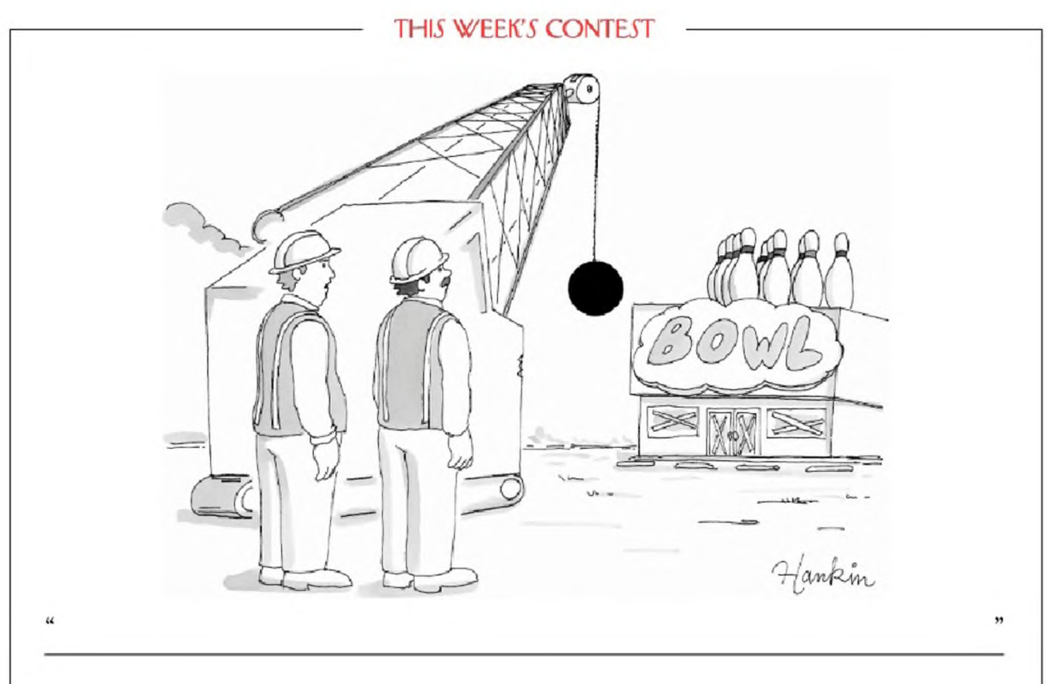
THE FINALISTS

"It's mostly water weight."
Derek Simmonsen, Baltimore, Md.

"The relationship was less symbiotic than I'd hoped."
Matt Sterenberg, Grand Rapids, Mich.

"He only wanted me for my body."
Barrett Bodine, Pasadena, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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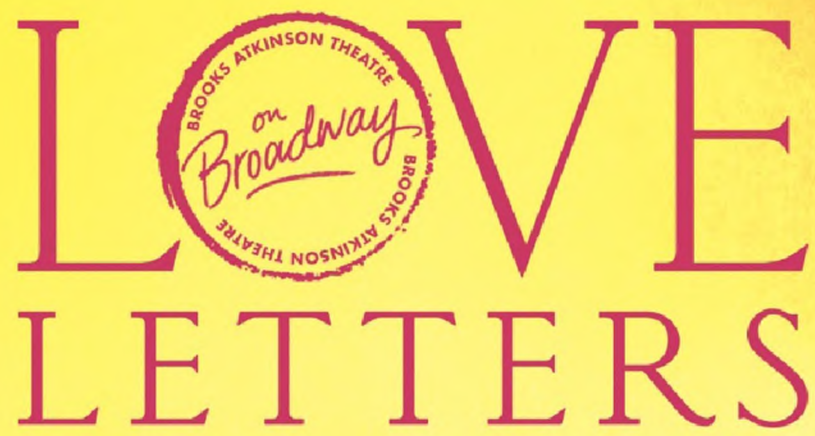

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