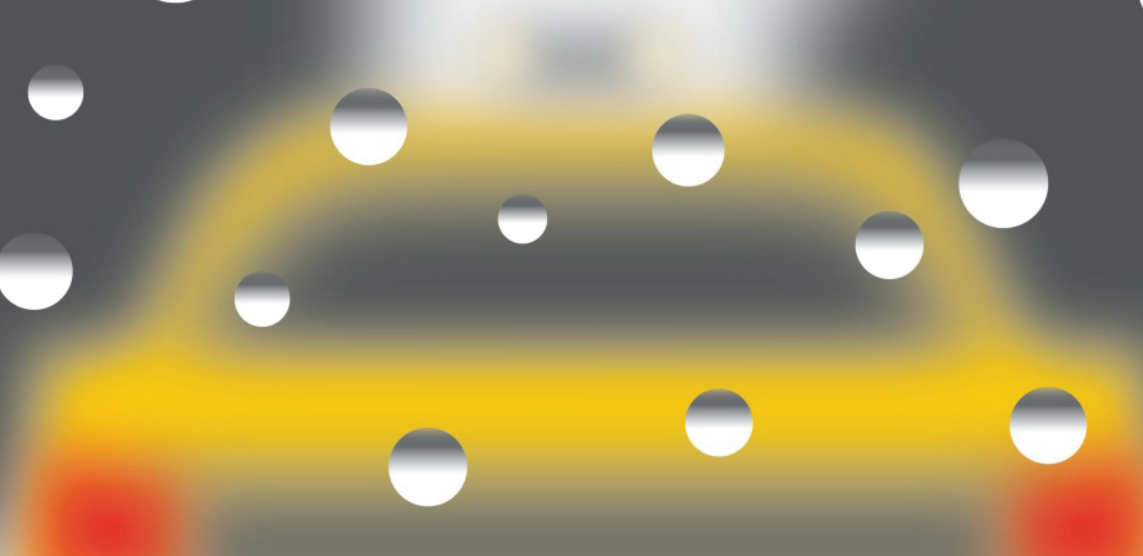


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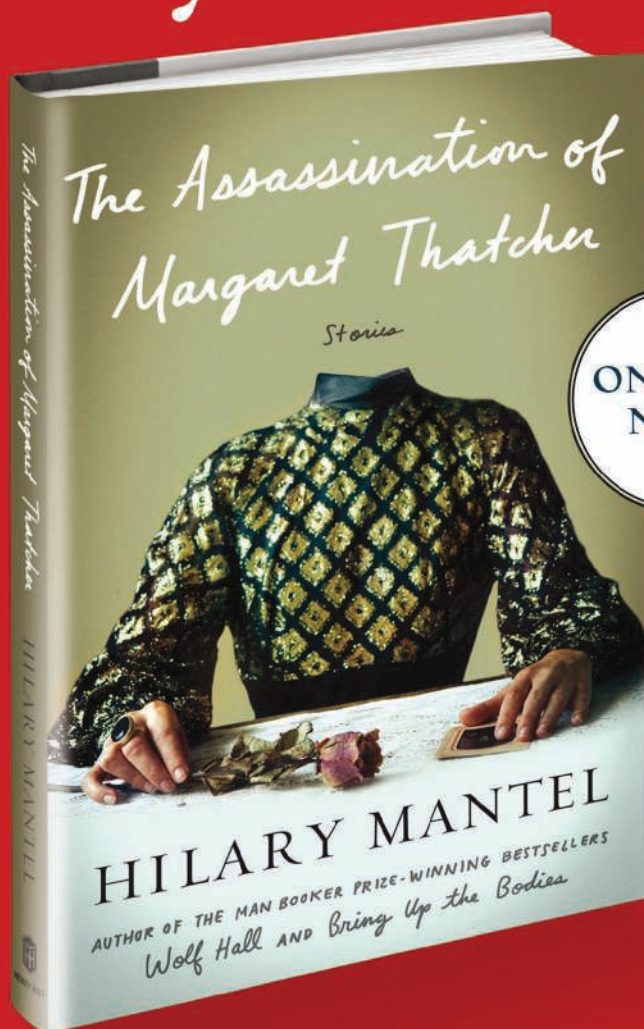


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FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by Kevin Canty and Samuel Amadon.

CLOSE READ: Amy Davidson's blog about war, sports, and everything in between.

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THE MAIL

THE OLD COLLEGE TRY

Nathan Heller, in reviewing William Deresiewicz's book "Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life," quotes the author as saying, "Revolutions in our tools—the kind that have been wrought by Facebook, Apple, Google, and so forth, the kind so many young people dream of making, as they work on their gadgets and apps—do not necessarily alter the structure of society" ("Poison Ivy," September 1st). Heller's arch reply is to ask, "Does lyric poetry?" As a poet and a professor in the English Department of California State University, East Bay, near Silicon Valley, where such "revolutionaries" have been idolized for decades, I'd like to answer Heller's question with this rejoinder by the poet, novelist, and literary critic Stephen Dobyns. Speaking of William Wordsworth's lyric expression of grief, Dobyns writes, "Only through art do we come to appreciate his emotional state as we engage in an act of imagination that makes the poet's experience our own. The social function of this within the society is that it forges links between us." I'd add that those are stronger than any bonds that LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook could ever provide.

*Susan Gubernat
Oakland, Calif.*

Heller sets up two competing visions of the university: the exclusive, undemocratic prewar academy, filled with scholars of Chaucer and Plato, and the postwar university, which is oriented toward specialized training, engaged with the world of commerce, and full of academic stars who may not care deeply about teaching. He asks, "Can it be both?" I hope so. Heller rightly notes that learning is a lifelong pursuit and the college years are only a small part of that journey. We must recognize that students arrive at college with vastly different biographies, learning

styles, temperaments, and needs. There is plenty of room for divergent approaches to higher education—from Hampshire College to M.I.T., from the state university systems to Yale, with many variations in between. Deresiewicz's most valuable point is that our hyper-marketed consumer society is perilously shallow, often confusing purchased identities with more mindful outlooks, and excusatory rationales with genuine moral deliberation. Hollow credentialism often appears to hold more sway than deeply examined experience. We must train a workforce capable of doing the work of the twenty-first century, but we must also educate a population able to meet the demands of democratic citizenship. To do this, we as a nation must begin asking ourselves some hard questions. College is a fine place to acquire that habit.

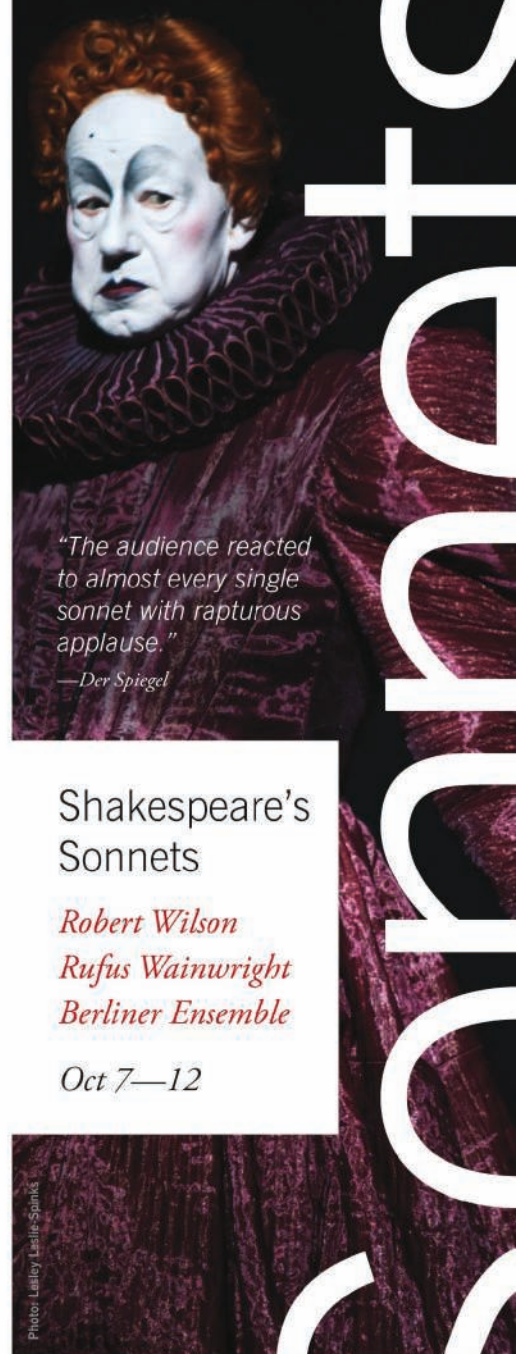
*Joseph Leventudsky
Watertown, Mass.*

CONFRONTING CANCER

As an anesthesiologist, and as someone who just this week was given a diagnosis of a rare cutaneous T-cell lymphoma, I found it inspiring to read Groopman's account of the medical world's advances in what President Nixon called the War on Cancer ("The Transformation," September 15th). Groopman has expertly distilled, from a highly complex field, the critical elements of contemporary thought on cancer management. Perhaps among the variety of agents now in trial there might be something to assist not just me but others with problematic cancers.

*Ian McPhee, M.D.
Tweed Heads, Australia*

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



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*Robert Wilson
Rufus Wainwright
Berliner Ensemble*

Oct 7–12

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LET'S GO.



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

OCTOBER 2014 WEDNESDAY 1ST THURSDAY 2ND FRIDAY 3RD SATURDAY 4TH SUNDAY 5TH MONDAY 6TH TUESDAY 7TH

IN ONE WAY, the soprano Pretty Yende's successful Metropolitan Opera debut, as Countess Adèle in a 2013 staging of Rossini's "Le Comte Ory" (she's at present singing Pamina, in a revival of "Die Zauberflöte"), is a familiar story. Young unknown learns daunting role on short notice; crowd goes wild; critics approve. But the individual poise of her musicianship—the unforced fullness of her timbre, a tonal warmth that persists even through flights of treacherous coloratura—makes her distinctive, as well as a leading figure in a new wave of classical musicians from South Africa. "UBUNTU," Carnegie Hall's upcoming festival of South African music and arts, will feature not only Yende's New York recital debut (Oct. 13) but also concerts by another young Met star, Elza van den Heever, and the violinist Daniel Hope.

MOVIES | THE THEATRE
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NIGHT LIFE
FOOD & DRINK

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZACH GROSS



A Shakespeare play permeates the lives of its performers in Matías Piñeiro's "The Princess of France."

LOVE'S LABOURS

Highlights of the New York Film Festival.

THIS YEAR'S EDITION of the New York Film Festival offers a remarkably strong lineup. The programming reprises some of the festival's classic themes, with particular attention paid to European cinema, American independent filmmaking, and films of an aesthetic complexity that reflect on the art of the cinema itself.

The young Argentinean director Matías Piñeiro packs an amazing amount of action and thought into a mere sixty-five minutes with his new feature, "**The Princess of France**" (Oct. 5-6). Its subtly complex opening shot, a virtuosic four minutes, is of a nocturnal soccer game in a Buenos Aires courtyard that evokes theatre and romance arising in the shadows of a great city. The story is centered on the charismatic director of a small theatre company that's working on a production of "Love's Labour's Lost."

It's no surprise that the offstage lives of the company members reflect aspects of the play, but Piñeiro never makes too much of these parallels. Rather, he illuminates the inner experience of young urban strivers through their passionate but selective approach to artistic classics. The action takes place in streets and bedrooms, studios and museums, and the actors are never word-bound; Piñeiro, a master choreographer, sets them in graceful motion and captures them in fluid, lively images. As romantic intrigues unfold, they don't

just reflect the play; they also influence the production. Piñeiro shows that backstage drama is more than an anecdotal "making of"; it's artistic history in itself.

The four-part, three-hour-plus television miniseries "**Li'l Quinquin**" (Oct. 2) is both a Zolaesque revelation of brutality in the French countryside and a sly laugh riot. The director, Bruno Dumont, returns to his native northern France for a grand yet nuanced fresco of rural life that's as intimate and loving as it is derisive and horrific. The story is set in the summertime, when the pugnacious title character, a farmer's son just short of adolescence, is off from school. In his freewheeling bicycle excursions through the rugged landscape, he happens upon a murder investigation and crosses paths with a goofy local police captain. As the investigation unfolds and more bodies keep turning up, Dumont—who seems to know every inch of the terrain and every idiosyncrasy of the residents—lays bare the crude sediment of country life: the wounds of history, ancient family grudges, xenophobia and racism, a density of unchallenged tradition.

In the hallucinatory drama "**Heaven Knows What**" (Oct. 2 and Oct. 5), the New York-based brothers Josh and Benny Safdie look past Manhattan's glossy surfaces to reveal an underworld of homeless young heroin addicts hidden in plain sight. Though the film is a work of fiction, it's based on the autobiographical writings of its young lead actress, Arielle Holmes. She plays Harley, a nineteen-year-old addict in love with another young addict, Ilya (Caleb Landry Jones), whose cavalier violence nearly destroys her. But she survives, begging for change, cadging drugs, finding her way into a peculiar rooming house, facing awful physical dangers while baring her soul to nearly unbearable extremes of emotion. The Safdies' images, by the cinematographer Sean Price Williams, capture her romantic obsession with unflinching roughness and intense tenderness.

—Richard Brody

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OPENING

THE DECENT ONE

Reviewed in Now Playing.
Opening Oct. 1. (Film Forum.)

GONE GIRL

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 3. (In wide release.)

LEFT BEHIND

Nicolas Cage stars in this science-fiction film, about the survivors of a catastrophe that wipes out most of the human race. Directed by Vic Armstrong. Opening Oct. 3. (In wide release.)

MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Jason Reitman directed this drama, about the lives of adolescents and their parents in the age of the Internet. Starring Ansel Elgort, Adam Sandler, Jennifer Garner, and Emma Thompson. Opening Oct. 3. (In limited release.)

THE SUPREME PRICE

A documentary about the Nigerian activist Hafsat Abiola, directed by Joanna Lipper. Opening Oct. 3. (In limited release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

BAM CINÉMATEK

"Retro Metro." Oct. 1 at 7 and 9:15: "The Clock" (1945, Vincente Minnelli). • Oct. 2 at 7 and 9:15: "On the Town" (1949, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly). • Oct. 3 at 2, 4:30, and 9:15 "The Incident" (1967, Larry Peerce). • Oct. 4 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Saturday Night Fever" (1976, John Badham).

FILM FORUM

"Tennessee Williams." Oct. 3 at 9:20: "Boom" (1968, Joseph Losey). • Oct. 4 at 2:45 and 7:10 and Oct. 5 at 6: "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958, Richard Brooks). The 7:10 screening on Oct. 4 will be introduced by Williams's biographer John

NOW PLAYING

The Decent One

This documentary, based on a recently recovered trove of letters, photographs, and other archival material belonging to Heinrich Himmler—who headed the S.S. and was one of the potentates of Nazi Germany—reduces the material to Holocaust kitsch. The film proceeds in chronological order, from Himmler's childhood and frustrating adolescence to his discovery of nationalist politics, his involvement with Hitler, and his enthusiastic persecution of Jews and supervision of concentration camps. His place on the world stage is intertwined with the minutiae of his personal life—his courtship and marriage, his relationship with his children, his emphasis on discipline, his sentimental streak, his moral obliviousness (which gives the film its title). But the voice-over recitation of the Himmler family's correspondence meshes with music to underline obvious emotions and cheap ironies, and the director, Vanessa Lapa, uses archival footage merely to illustrate the events being discussed on the soundtrack. Moreover, that footage is so extensively reprocessed that much of it appears fictionalized. Horrific images of beatings and shootings are adorned with isolated sound effects that seem borrowed from a comedy. The effect is repellingly trivializing; when images of concentration-camp victims later appear, their use seems like a violation of their privacy.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

Dragonwyck

Joseph L. Mankiewicz's first feature film, from 1946, is a gothic romance, set in upstate New York in the eighteen-forties. With its blend of historically accurate political debates and macabre mysteries, it plays like a blend of Poe and Tocqueville. The story concerns young Miranda Wells (Gene Tierney), a pious Yankee farmer's daughter, who enters service as a nanny in the lavish (and haunted) Hudson Valley mansion of Nicholas Van Ryn (Vincent Price). But Van Ryn has designs on the young woman and plans to marry her—once he disposes of his wife. As "patroons" (descendants of the region's original Dutch settlers), Van Ryn and his wealthy peers ludicrously re-create European court culture—and feudal dominion—in the foothills of the Catskills, but the local farmers rebel. Mankiewicz builds the drama around real-life events in New York State's violent Anti-Rent War, including a famous murder trial, the election of Governor John Young on a land-reform platform, and a doctor (played by Glenn Langan) who leads the strikers. Mankiewicz's incisive visual prose deftly parses the characters' political psychology along with the lurid romance; he reserves his most poetic flourishes for the whirling

dance that snares Miranda in Van Ryn's web of intrigue.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Oct. 6.)

The Equalizer

Robert McCall (Denzel Washington), a former black-ops guy, is now retired and living in Boston, where he reads Cervantes in an Edward Hopperish late-night café. He protects a forlorn young prostitute (Chloë Grace Moretz), and winds up taking on the Russian Mafia, killing its members by fist, pistol, automatic rifle, corkscrew, electrified water, garden tool, and glass shard. Washington operates with amused and amusing cool as this gravity-bound superhero, and Marton Csokas, as a sadistic crime boss, speaks with exquisite diction, in the tradition of Hollywood's most cultivated swine. Csokas also has what appears to be the city of Volgograd (or is it Ulyanovsk?) tattooed on his chest and shoulders. The director, Antoine Fuqua, relies on small details, which anchor the vigilante-as-saint myth in at least a minimal degree of reality. Richard Wenk wrote the screenplay, which is based on the TV series from the eighties. Expect many sequels.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

The Guest

The director Adam Wingard joins the ranks of the current masters of unease with this suspenseful horror tale. David (an excellent Dan Stevens) is a young soldier who visits his dead Army buddy's family, wins their trust, and begins to pile the bodies up around them, all set to a John Carpenter-like music score. Stevens, employing his good looks and toothpaste-bright smile in David's con artistry, has never been looser (he's shaken off his "Downton Abbey" training). Wingard teams up again with the writer Simon Barrett (they also collaborated on the cult horror film "You're Next"); by means of sharp dialogue, black humor, and visual flair, they've made a very effective suspense film. One caveat: the ending of the film is something of a bloodbath; this rampage belongs in some other film than the more precise, unnerving one that preceded it.—*Bruce Diones* (In limited release.)

Jimi: All Is by My Side

Despite the narrow scope of this biographical drama—which focusses on Jimi Hendrix's prelude to fame, in 1966–67—the writer and director, John Ridley, conveys Hendrix's genius with a deep range of undertones (and possibly an excess of fiction). André Benjamin, a.k.a. André 3000, of Outkast, brings a wry and pensive presence to the role of Hendrix, powerfully conjuring a musician distracted by his inspirations as the world spins around him. The story is sparked by two young British women—Linda Keith (Imogen

Poots), a socialite who meets him in New York and coaxes him to London and into the limelight, and Kathy Etchingham (Hayley Atwell), a d.j. and hairdresser with whom he shares fun times in London. (He's also depicted beating her bloody in a jealous rage, which, according to the real-life Etchingham, never happened.) Then a third woman, Ida (Ruth Negga), a black activist, tries to lure him into nationalist politics. (Ida is a fictional, or perhaps fictionalized, character.) Most of the action occurs below the surface—genius giving birth to ideas, ambition crystallizing into action—and, at times, Ridley's direction evokes the inner life with subtle invention. Simple dialogue scenes sparkle with clever twists, including out-of-synch visual asides and conspicuously concentrated long takes. Only disputed events detract from the movie's understated delights.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Maze Runner

Television's "Teen Wolf" dreamboat Dylan O'Brien stars in this dystopian adventure based on a young-adult novel (yep, another one). This time, a group of boys are exiled, for mysterious reasons, to a place called The Glades. In order to escape, they must map out a rabid-creature-infested, ever-changing maze. The director, Wes Ball, has a brisk action style, and the exceptionally well-cast actors (including Aml Ameen, Will Poulter, and Blake Cooper) give winning performances. As alliances are formed and betrayals erupt, the simple let's-get-out-of-here plot slowly reveals a more intriguing mystery. It's all familiar territory, but it's realized with flair.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

Ninotchka

Despite the bubbly erotic wit of Ernst Lubitsch's 1939 comedy, the movie's political satire is chillingly serious. Greta Garbo stars as Nina Ivanovna Yakushova, a stone-faced Soviet agent who arrives in Paris to sell jewelry confiscated from an exiled noblewoman, Grand Duchess Swana (Ina Claire). There, she allows herself to be seduced by Count Léon d'Algout (Melvyn Douglas), a debonair French idler, who happens to be Swana's lover. The romantic roundelay, linking fine emotions with fine lingerie, is shadowed by the brutality of Soviet tyranny. Ample comic references to executions, forced confessions, Siberian prisons, censorship, and the secret police are matched by a sharp scene evoking the corrupt and bloodthirsty arrogance of the tsarist aristocracy that the Revolution overthrew—as well as two jolting, pointed "Heil, Hitler" jokes that spotlight another menace. The movie was shot in mid-1939. By the time it was released, later that year, France was at war, and it's painful to imagine how Ninotchka and the



FRONT ROW

A look at the New York Film Festival's Joseph L. Mankiewicz retrospective.



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Tsai Ming-liang's "Goodbye, Dragon Inn," from 2003, in our digital edition and online.

Count would fare under the Occupation; the charming ending gives them a surprising way out.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; Oct. 3-5.)

People Will Talk

Women's desire and the judgment of men are at the noble, mysterious heart of Joseph Mankiewicz's 1951 comedy of medicine and mores. Cary Grant stars as Dr. Noah Praetorius, a medical-school professor, conductor of the student orchestra, and founder of a gynecological clinic that runs on his unusual principles. Yoking psychiatry and modern science to metaphysics and folk wisdom, Praetorius is uniquely qualified to treat a troubled young woman, Deborah Higgins (Jeanne Crain), whose unwanted pregnancy lands her in his clinic and, soon, in his romantic schemes. (Their frank allusions to illegal abortion are an audacious surprise.) Meanwhile, Praetorius's unorthodox methods spark opposition from his colleagues, especially the weaselly Dr. Rodney Elwell (Hume Cronyn), who, after much snooping, brings him up on trumped-up charges that also threaten his faithful sidekick, Shunderson (Finlay Currie), one of the strangest and most powerful supporting characters in all Hollywood. A counterpart to the Commendatore from Mozart's "Don Giovanni," Shunderson—who makes his first appearance alongside an anatomy-lab skeleton—is a stone-faced victim of eros-fueled injustices. On the basis of this character alone, the movie, whimsical yet profound, with a stirring idealistic vision of a liberal culture that honors the primal drives of human nature, would be immortal.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Oct. 2.)

Pride

A blithe, entirely entertaining movie about a magical occurrence during the British coal miners' strike of 1984-85. When the Thatcher administration threatens to close down a significant number of the country's pits, a young gay-rights activist named Mark Ashton (Ben Schnetzer) leads a group of gays and lesbians to the dreary South Wales town of Onllwyn, where they are greeted by the striking Onllwynites with varying degrees of warmth, hostility, and astonishment. The movie asks: What is solidarity? The young people from London are smart, ironic, and sometimes furious over their own hurts; the miners and their wives and widows can be hearty, even cheery, but, just below the surface, they carry a lifelong bitterness. The two groups are fused by anger and need. The actor and playwright Stephen Beresford initiated the project and wrote the screenplay; the director, Matthew Warchus, who is skilled at mounting stage musicals, gives the material a lilting charm. With Bill Nighy; the great Imelda Staunton, in

feisty form; and the barrel-chested Dominic West, as a gay man who breaks the ice by putting on Sylvia Robinson's seventies disco number "Shame, Shame, Shame," turning a testy meet and greet into a delirious uproar.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/29/14.) (In limited release.)

A Time to Live and a Time to Die

The strands of intimate and historical memory twist together in this delicate, haunted drama, from 1986, in which the director Hou Hsiao-hsien conjures his reminiscences of childhood and adolescence in a remote Taiwan village in the nineteen-forties and fifties. There, the young Hsiao-yen lives with his family (including his ailing father and his increasingly loopy grandmother), shadowed by the story of his father's 1947 departure from mainland China on the eve of the revolution. When his father dies, the boy grows up (a moment dramatized brilliantly by Hou in a single jolting cut) and turns into a quietly wild adolescent of the streets. The ambient menace of war and the militarized culture lend a hectic tint to daily life and give rise to Hsiao-yen's inner turmoil (the teen-ager even considers going to a military academy). The older generation's devastated lives and poignant secrets provide the silently roiling undertones of Hou's sharply drawn and tender yet nostalgia-free recollections. He depicts the gang violence, family burdens, authoritarian schooling, broken romance, and grinding poverty that proved to be the crucible of his clear-eyed, poetic artistry. In Mandarin.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Oct. 3.)

Tracks

A camel's roar begins as a coarse bellow, degenerates into the rumble of a 1948 Chevy cranking over, and ends as the sound of water gurgling down a clogged pipe. It would be glib to say that the unmelodious beasts are the film's most enjoyable element, but, unfortunately, it's close to the truth. In 1977, Robyn Davidson (Mia Wasikowska), accompanied only by camels and her dog, set out to walk from Alice Springs, in central Australia, to the Indian Ocean, a distance of some seventeen hundred miles. The real-life Davidson's account of her adventures, from a 1980 memoir, is strongly written; the movie is repetitive and righteously monotonous. The character Robyn chooses her fate in an act of self-transcending defiance, and, in a misogynistic society such as Australia was forty years ago, she's certainly heroic. But her obsessions don't have the variety and depth that would make her a continuously challenging movie subject, and the director, John Curran, can't find the mystery in the reddish-brown desert that would make up for the blankness in her soul. With Adam Driver, as

Rick Smolan, the *National Geographic* photographer assigned to document Robyn's trip.—*D.D.* (9/29/14) (In limited release.)

20,000 Days on Earth

The Australian singer and songwriter Nick Cave, formerly the front man of the Bad Seeds, is both a dispenser of apocalyptic gloom and, on the sly, a natural prankster. (Maybe you have to be both in order to enjoy the British weather, as Cave now claims to do.) Hence this curious film by Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, a shaggy-dog documentary, in which Cave, a most unreliable witness, guides us through a supposedly typical patch of his present life and muses on the sins and quirks of his past. Celebrity friends, including Ray Winstone and Kylie Minogue, converse with Cave in a car, and we also see him at the microphone, crooning and crying his songs of lamentation. Surprisingly, however, the more obviously staged the episode, the more the star reveals—as in his trawl through his personal archives or in the piecemeal therapeutic session during which he confronts a shrink (a real one: Darian Leader, who wrote a fine study of melancholia, and is thus the right man for this job). Hard-core Caveans will hang on their hero's every word and moan, but there is plenty here to divert the neutral viewer; as for any casting agents in search of the next Count Dracula, their work is surely done.—*Anthony Lane* (9/22/14) (In limited release.)

The Zero Theorem

Once again, Terry Gilliam plunges into the maelstrom, only to find, to his merriment and dismay, that none of it makes any sense. In film after film, he lurches to a similar conclusion, and there is something both futile and heroic in that quest. This new variation on the theme involves Qohen Leth (Christoph Waltz), a bald and forlorn computer genius living in a derelict church. Beyond its doors, as so often with Gilliam, the city seems glaringly modern in some ways but broken and shabby in others; the same feels true of the grand corporation that employs Qohen on a ceaseless virtual quest for exactitude and meaning. He is helped and hindered in his work by a gaudily clad supervisor (David Thewlis), a vamp by the unlikely name of Bainsley (Mélanie Thierry), and a teen-age technician (Lucas Hedges), all of whom invade the narrative, repeatedly, without quite propelling it along. Gags, both visual and verbal, splutter like firecrackers, and there are cameos from Matt Damon and Tilda Swinton, but the story merely flirts with awe, and it toys with political fear; what once seemed oppressive, in Gilliam's "Brazil," has dwindled into the hectic.—*A.L.* (9/22/14) (In limited release.)

Lahr, of this magazine. • Oct. 5 at 3:40: "Senso" (1954, Luchino Visconti).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

New York Film Festival: Main Slate. Oct. 1 at 6 and Oct. 2 at 4: "Timbuktu" (2014, Abderrahmane Sissako). • Oct. 1 at 9: "Goodbye to Language" (2014, Jean-Luc Godard). • Oct. 2 at 8:30: "Saint Laurent" (2014, Bertrand Bonello). • Oct. 2 at 9 and Oct. 5 at 8: "Heaven Knows What" (2014, Josh and Benny Safdie). • Oct. 3 at 6 and Oct. 4 at 3:15: "The Wonders" (2014, Alice Rohrwacher). • Oct. 4 at 5:30, 5:45, 9, and 9:15: "Inherent Vice" (2014, Paul Thomas Anderson). • Oct. 5 at noon and Oct. 6 at 6: "The Princess of France" (2014, Matias Piñeiro). • Oct. 5 at 9 and Oct. 7 at 6: "Eden" (2014, Mia Hansen-Løve). • Oct. 7 at 6: "Horse Money" (2014, Pedro Costa). • Oct. 7 at 9: "Jauja" (2014, Lisandro Alonso). • New York Film Festival: Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Oct. 1 at 9 and Oct. 2 at 6:30: "All About Eve" (1950). • Oct. 2 at 1: "People Will Talk." • Oct. 3 at 3:15: "There Was a Crooked Man..." (1970). • Oct. 6 at 6: "The Barefoot Contessa" (1954). • Oct. 6 at 6:15: "Dragonwyck." • Oct. 6 at 9: "The Late George Apley" (1947). • Oct. 7 at 8: "A Letter to Three Wives" (1949). • New York Film Festival: Documentaries. Oct. 1 at 9: "The Look of Silence" (2014, Joshua Oppenheimer). • Oct. 2 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 6:15: "Stray Dog" (2014, Debra Granik).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

The films of Alain Resnais. Oct. 7 at 4 and 7:30: "Mon Oncle d'Amérique" (1980).

IFC CENTER

"1939—Hollywood's Golden Year." Oct. 3-5 at 11 A.M.: "Ninotchka." • "Stranger Than Fiction." Oct. 7 at 8: "65 Revisited" (1967, D. A. Pennebaker).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Acteurism." Oct. 1-3 at 1:30: "Torrid Zone" (1940, William Keighley).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

The films of Hou Hsiao-hsien. Oct. 3 at 7: "A Time to Live and a Time to Die." • Oct. 4 at 2:30: "Daughter of the Nile" (1987). • Oct. 5 at 5: "The Sandwich Man" (1983, Hou, Wan Jen, and Tseng Chuang-hsiang), introduced by the critic Jonathan Rosenbaum. • Oct. 5 at 7:30: "Growing Up" (1983, Chen Kun-hou).

THE THEATRE

ALSO NOTABLE BEDBUGS!!!

Arclight

BOOTYCANDY

Playwrights Horizons

CABARET

Studio 54

THE COUNTRY HOUSE

Samuel J. Friedman

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

Ethel Barrymore

DISGRACED

Lyceum

THE FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE

Public

FOUND

Atlantic Theatre Company

GENERATIONS

SoHo Rep

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Belasco

INDIAN INK

Laura Pels

KING LEAR

N.Y.U. Skirball Center

LADY DAY AT EMERSON'S BAR & GRILL

Circle in the Square.
Through Oct. 5.

THE LAST SHIP

Neil Simon

LOVE LETTERS

Brooks Atkinson

MATILDA THE MUSICAL

Shubert

ON THE TOWN

Lyric

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

New York Theatre Workshop.
(Reviewed in this issue.)

TAIL! SPIN!

Lynn Redgrave

THIS IS OUR YOUTH

Cort

TO THE BONE

Cherry Lane. Through Oct. 4.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

Longacre



GOINGS ON, ONLINE

More theatre reviews, including
INTAR's take on Ionesco in
"Teach, Teacher, Teachest" and
"Almost Home," a new play by
Walter Anderson.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Billy and Ray

Garry Marshall directs the New York première of a comedy by Mike Bencivenga, about Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler and the difficult time they had while adapting "Double Indemnity" for film. Starring Vincent Kartheiser ("Mad Men") and Larry Pine. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

brownsville song (b-side for tray)

LCT3 presents a new play by Kimber Lee, about a black seventeen-year-old boy who gets killed, leaving his family to grieve and deal with his senseless death. Sheldon Best stars; Patricia McGregor directs. Previews begin Oct. 4. (Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

Jacuzzi

Ars Nova presents a new play by the Debate Society, written by Hannah Bos and Paul Thureen, in which two townies take up residence in a chichi Colorado ski house. Directed by Oliver Butler. In previews. (511 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

The Real Thing

Ewan McGregor and Maggie Gyllenhaal make their Broadway debuts, alongside Cynthia Nixon, in this 1982 play by Tom Stoppard, about a love triangle involving a playwright, his wife, and his leading lady. Sam Gold directs. Previews begin Oct. 2. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

NOW PLAYING

Mighty Real: A Fabulous Sylvester Musical

Sylvester, the fantastic singer and androgynous show-business presence who died of AIDS-related complications in 1988, was one of the first black stars to express his genius through a variety of personas. As a member of the legendary transgender group the Cockettes, he sang the blues; in the late seventies, he became a disco sensation. Of course, Sylvester's vocal range—he could go from falsetto to baritone in a beat—was the aural equivalent of his various selves; he was the very soul of queerness. Anthony Wayne, who's starring as the singer in this strangely hollow show, gives it all he's got vocally, but he's not an actor: he's not free enough to imagine anything but Sylvester's attitude. Co-directed by Wayne (who also wrote the book) and Kendrell Bowman, the ninety-minute intermissionless piece is enriched by Jacqueline B. Arnold, who plays Sylvester's legendary backup singer Martha Wash. Arnold is a star with killer pipes; some clever producer with a love of music might do well to build a show around her—it's not too much of a stretch to imagine her as Dinah Washington. (Theatre at St.

Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 866-811-4111. Through Oct. 5.)

The Money Shot

What's a safer bet than lampooning vapid L.A. types for an audience of New York teatrogoers? Neil LaBute's latest comedy, set in the Hollywood Hills, draws its characters broadly: a self-absorbed movie actress with a life-style Web site (Elizabeth Reaser); an aging action star who isn't sure if Belgium is part of Europe (Fred Weller); his blond-bimbo wife, a vegan "except for pizza" (Gia Crovatin); and a sneering lesbian film editor in glasses (Callie Thorne). The plot—the two actors are meeting to discuss an upcoming sex scene—arrives an hour in, and brings the play to a loony, surprising turn. Until then, LaBute's satire gets laughs, but the easy kind, and it is up to the fine cast, directed by Terry Kinney for MCC, to go off-kilter. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

Mr. Landing Takes a Fall

The premise of this dark comedy is strongly reminiscent of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?": a young couple spends the evening at an older couple's house, where alcohol fuels a reckless tournament of cruel jokes, violent flashes, and sexual games that leave both couples shattered before dawn. The difference here is a script (written by Sari Caine, who also plays the younger woman) that starts off surreal and then assumes the atmosphere of a fever dream. The play is sharpest when poking at the thin veneer between the domestic and the animalistic—and Adam LeFevre is especially effective as the alternately avuncular and aggressive Mr. Landing—but it never really jells. As crazy as things get, the end arrives with the sense that they haven't gone quite mad enough. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 4.)

Rock Bottom

We're not used to seeing women like Bridget Everett—large, loud, guzzling Chardonnay—express their sexuality with such euphoric abandon. "See these? They're double Ds," she tells a guy in the front row, "and you're going to drown in them." A ribald fixture of the alt-cabaret scene, Everett has powerful pipes and zero inhibitions. Prowling the audience for people to mess with (middle-aged men, beware), she sprinkles a kind of theatrical catnip: few performers can so reliably liberate a room. For her new show, she returns to her artistic home, Joe's Pub, with a four-piece band, a pair of backup singers, some boozy monologues, and a catalogue of raunchy anthems, which she wrote with Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, Matt Ray, and Adam (Ad-Rock) Horovitz. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

This Lingering Life

Chiori Miyagawa has taken the plotlines of nine Noh plays and woven them together into a long chain of

skits about karma and reincarnation, performed by ten actors playing twenty-eight characters. In one recurring skit, a ghostly fifteenth-century warrior tries to kill a twentieth-century businessman who was his assassin in a previous life; in another skit, an old woman, driven crazy by the death of her son many years before, meets a young backpacker, and the two instantly recognize each other as mother and son. A gardener, a princess, a pair of drowned lovers, and a woman whose hair grows up all move in the direction of freeing themselves from their past karma. Apart from some inconsistent acting, Miyagawa's play is clever, stylish, and often funny. Directed by Cat Miller. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 4.)

Uncle Vanya

Anton Chekhov's play of disappointment, dissolution, deforestation, and despair, first produced in 1899, was described by the author as a comedy. This translation, by Paul Schmidt, as directed by Hal Brooks, employs a bit of colloquial comedic spin, but remains largely workmanlike—stolid, static, old-fashioned, unconvincing. Part of the problem is in the casting: Dominic Cuskern, as Alexander, the professor whose officious presence in the country house is the cause of much of the malaise, is described as being significantly older than his wife, Yelena (Rachel Botchan), a source of romantic longing and discomfort, but the actors do not appear that far apart in age; Vanya's niece, Sonya, everyone agrees, is a plain drudge, but Michelle Beck is lovely and vivacious in the role. Chris Mixon puts some life in Vanya's explosion at the climax, but by that time a kind of torpor has set in, agonizingly emphasized in the endless dénouement after the shots are fired. (Pearl, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

The Valley of Astonishment

The director Peter Brook likes to wander tortuous neural pathways. In 1992, he adapted Oliver Sacks's "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat." In this new work, written and directed with Marie-Hélène Estienne, he contemplates the synaptic muddle of synesthesia, which Sacks describes as an "immediate, physiological coupling of two sorts of sensation." Three actors play various characters, though much of the action centers on Samy Costas (the impish, splendid Kathryn Hunter), a woman with a prodigious memory who associates words with images and sounds with colors. (A man's voice is "very orange, but nice.") Though lucid and reflective, the show is also at times frustratingly modest. There's hardly any set or costumes, and only the most discreet lighting effects. When the subject is sensory abundance, it seems stingy to offer so little to see and hear and feel. (Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111. Through Oct. 5.)

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum of Art "Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age"

It is hard to look at the glorious alabasters depicting the Assyrian warrior king Ashurbanipal, on loan from the British Museum for this major show about war and migration, without feeling aftershocks twenty six hundred years later; his palace at Nineveh, once the largest city on earth, is now deep in the territory of the Islamic State, whose jihadists have funded their brutality in part through antiquities trafficking. Assyria, the undisputed hegemon of the ninth to the seventh century B.C., set in motion an early era of internationalism, and, as its armies plundered from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, their gods and art travelled with them. Soon the more mercantile Phoenicians—whom Homer praised for their seafaring prowess—began their own explorations westward from the Levant, as affirmed by Orientalized jewelry and ceramics found on Crete and Corfu. (Another Phoenician legacy: the alphabet, as seen here on a Sardinian stele bearing a half-deciphered cultic inscription.) As the show moves from east to west, it charts the unprecedented interactions among Near Eastern and Mediterranean societies, stretching as far as Spain: a gold bangle from Seville would be worn by a priest honoring Phoenician-inspired deities, a gold pectoral plate by a cow marked for sacrifice. It's a vast affair, and in places it can feel too ambitious, spanning too many centuries and square miles. But what it does do, decisively, is elevate the artistic legacy of the early first millennium B.C., which proves as complex, as arresting, and as essential to civilization as the classical Greek culture it gave rise to. Through Jan. 4.

Jewish Museum

"From the Margins: Lee Krasner / Norman Lewis, 1945-1952"

As this exhibition's gauche title implies, the two painters showcased here were at a slight distance from the Cedar Tavern scene, favoring subtle, small-scale painterly gestures rather than Abstract Expressionist swagger. Although the show points up certain cultural specificities—Krasner, a Jew, wrote glyphs right to left on some compositions, while Lewis, an African-American, drew inspiration from jazz for his forests of whisper-thin lines—it largely treats the artists as pure formalists, feeling their way from Surrealism-inspired mark-making into pure abstraction. The pairing is inspired, but the final gallery, with a few later examples of Krasner's calligraphic swoops and Lewis's sfumato clouds, leaves you hungry for proper retrospectives of each. Through Feb. 1.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Lois Conner

The distinctive elongated format of the American photographer's beautiful platinum prints is well-suited to her signature subject: landscape. Conner's sweeping vistas of mountains and valleys recall classic nineteenth-century views of the American West, and the pictures here, made over the past twenty years, include examples taken in Arizona, Utah, and South Dakota. They are juxtaposed with images of Tibet, Turkey, and China, as well as less picturesque but equally subtle shots of New York rooftops and a Louisiana back yard. Through Nov. 15. (Gitterman, 41 E. 57th St. 212-734-0868.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

León Ferrari

In the late nineteen-seventies and early eighties, the Argentine artist, recently resettled in Brazil, photographed the sculptures of thin, intersecting iron rods he'd been making in his São Paulo studio. Ferrari's small black-and-white images, discovered after his death last year and shown here for the first time, place the viewer deep inside his intricate structures, which slip in and out of focus. These close-up studies of what look like dense forests or ruined bird's nests, luminous with reflected light, are also brisk, agitated drawings in space. Through Oct. 25. (Bienvenu, 529 W. 20th St. 212-206-7990.)

Jenny Holzer

A decade since she began using declassified (though heavily censored) government documents in her art, Holzer is still finding new ways to make the hidden visible and the silent resounding. Numerous silk-screened works evoke, in childlike handwriting, the abuse and death of an Afghan prisoner held by U.S. Special Forces, while in paintings of C.I.A. and F.B.I. documents, she translates black-box redactions into colored rectangles, recalling that other master of politics and abstraction Kasimir Malevich. One smaller new canvas, entitled "Doodle," reproduces a hand-drawn diagram of Internet surveillance techniques, leaked last year by Edward Snowden. Near the bottom, the N.S.A. spy who sketched it blithely included a smiley face. Through Oct. 25. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

Agnieszka Kurant

The young Polish artist plays with the fictions, inconsistencies, and absurdities that crop up in economic exchange and in everyday life. A black neon squiggle derives from hundreds of people's signatures, which Kurant collapsed into a single meaningless form; books that have never been written line a shelf, complete with

real ISBN numbers; a black meteorite, mysteriously levitating above a tall plinth, is entitled "Air Rights," referring not just to the sculpture but to the commodifiable space above it. There's also a motorized soccer ball that chases viewers around the gallery, a playful counterweight to Kurant's more sinister forces. Through Oct. 18. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jean-Luc Moulène

The French artist came to prominence as a photographer, but he's long since moved into three dimensions, making works that he rather pretentiously declines to call sculptures. Shoulder-height, freestanding bronzes twist into calla lilies or funnels (the sexual implications are unavoidable); colorful blown-glass knots, aggrandized with lots of mathematical back story, challenge distinctions of inside and outside. The best pieces here were made by filling latex Halloween masks with concrete. A horned devil, a glowering alien, an encephalic monkey: these are far more engaging exercises in boundary-crossing, and they get along just fine without any prolix defenses. Through Oct. 26. (Abreu, 88 Eldridge St. 212-995-1774.)

Jenny Perlin

An array of a hundred colored drawings, plus a 16-mm. film in black-and-white, seem at first to be unsophisticated compositions of fat circles and little lines. Only the works' titles—both are called "One Hundred Sinkholes"—tip you off to the fact that Perlin generated the drawings and the related film from individual cases of collapsing infrastructure. The sublimation of urban decay into such simple forms has surprising wit, which cannot be said of five solid-orange works on paper, deriving, so the press release tells us, from the artist's reading of Henri Bergson. Is Perlin making a case for the continued relevance of monochrome painting or is she launching a book club? Through Oct. 5. (Preston, 301 Broome St. 212-431-1105.)

OF NOTE THE MATERIAL IMAGE

"What Is a Photograph?," the question that I.C.P. asked earlier this year, has been echoed in a slew of recent exhibitions, few as savvy, provocative, and elegant as this one. Organized by the curator Debra Singer, it includes Mariah Robertson, Michele Abeles, Lucas Blalock, Ryan Foerster, and other young artists who use photography not as a window on the world but as an expressive, process-driven tool. Many of the best works are abstract, the result of darkroom or digital manipulation, but even representational images, like the knockout Barbara Kasten piece that opens the show, redefine the medium on their own terms. Through Oct. 25. (Boesky, 118 E. 64th St. 212-680-9889.)



MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

"Thomas Hart Benton's 'America Today' Mural Rediscovered." Through April 19.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Robert Gober: The Heart Is Not a Metaphor." Opens Oct. 4.

MOMA PSI

"Xavier Le Roy." Opens Oct. 2.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Kandinsky Before Abstraction." Through spring, 2015.

WHITNEY MUSEUM

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

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond." Opens Oct. 3.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

"Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs." Through Jan. 4.

ASIA SOCIETY

"Nam June Paik: Becoming Robot." Through Jan. 4.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

"Sebastião Salgado: Genesis." Through Jan. 11.

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

"Cy Twombly: Treatise on the Veil." Through Jan. 25.

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Chinese American: Exclusion/Inclusion." Through April 19.

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

"Charles Gaines: Gridwork, 1974-1989." Through Oct. 26.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

Richard Eyre's new staging of "**Le Nozze di Figaro**" would seem to be the kind of production—accessible and entertaining, but smart and cunning, too—that Peter Gelb has been praying for these last eight years: it is one of the most delightful things the company has done in the last quarter century. Peter Mattei and Isabel Leonard, in the roles of the Count and his nemesis Cherubino, have never failed to deliver as Metropolitan Mozarteans, and they both notch winning renditions here, as do Marlis Petersen, a wise and confident Susanna, and Ildar Abdrazakov, a deft and potent Figaro. Amanda Majeski, Susanne Mentzer, John Del Carlo, and Ying Fang (a charming Barbarina) also give fine performances; James Levine, who conducted a somewhat wobbly "*Così Fan Tutte*" last season, is back to his usual gold standard, and the orchestra sounds great. (Oct. 2 and Oct. 7 at 7:30.) • In this era of Caledonian crisis, the Scottish play seems apropos: Verdi's "**Macbeth**," a taut and gripping treatment of Shakespeare's original, has been well served for two seasons by Adrian Noble's production, which updates the setting to mid-twentieth-century Britain. The Slavic tinge of previous casting has been renewed for this revival, with Željko Lučić and Anna Netrebko taking the roles of the murderous lead couple; Joseph Calleja and René Pape complete the starry cast, with the formidable Fabio Luisi conducting. (Oct. 3 at 7:30.) • A revival of Eyre's production of Bizet's "**Carmen**" features Anita Rachvelishvili, Aleksandrs Antonenko, Anita Hartig, and Massimo Cavalletti in the principal roles; Pablo Heras-Casado, a brilliant young Spanish conductor who is already delivering on his potential, is in the pit. (Oct. 4 at noon.) • Franco Zeffirelli's production of "**La Bohème**" is fairly foolproof, so the Met often uses it to test out newcomers or nurture emerging stars. The role of Rodolfo—in recent seasons a showcase for the tenors Vittorio Grigolo, Joseph Calleja, and Piotr Beczala—is a splendid vehicle for Bryan Hymel, who brings ringing tone and exuberant phrasing to the part. Hei-Kyung Hong's reliably sensitive portrayal of Mimì now joins Quinn Kelsey's booming Marcello and Myrto



PASSION PROJECT

Peter Sellars takes on Bach's most searching sacred work at the Park Avenue Armory.

SEEN IN THE CONTEXT of its time, J. S. Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" is a testament of unshakable Lutheran piety. In a less religious age, however, it is tempting to simply enjoy its abstract beauty—you don't need an education in Protestant theology to be moved to the core by "Erbarme dich, mein Gott," the duet for contralto and solo violin that is the most famous excerpt from the piece. For the director Peter Sellars, who spent his apprentice years in Boston with the musicians of Emmanuel Church, Bach's music also has real-life use: in addition to its religious and aesthetic value, every cantata, he says, is a "mini twelve-step program," and each long and elaborate melody offers a plan of action for a soul in crisis.

A fortunate few will experience Sellars's staging of the "St. Matthew Passion," which will be presented at the Park Avenue Armory on two nights this week, as part of Lincoln Center's White Light Festival (Oct. 7-8). The Armory's Wade Thompson Drill Hall will be filled with a stage inspired by the Berlin Philharmonie, where the production was performed in April of 2010. Occupying it will be not only the Berlin Philharmonic and its chief conductor, Simon Rattle, but the members of the Berlin Radio Choir; Sellars worked to transform the singers, who memorized their parts, into a community devastated by the loss of Jesus, desperately trying to reconstruct the actions and implications of his final days.

If Sellars's aims are radical, then Rattle's task as conductor is more practical: to maintain musical coherence even while members of the orchestra leave their seats at various points to help the soloists and chorus act out the Passion story. Rattle's subtly modulated interpretation is just as personal as Sellars's; the sustained lyricism and limpid textures owe as much to Debussy and Mahler as they do to Baroque performance practice. Jesus, sung in exquisitely measured tones by the baritone Christian Gerhaher, is a distant, almost disembodied figure; the riveting Mark Padmore (the Evangelist) and the fervent Magdalena Kožená (a Mary Magdalene figure) are more vivid presences. (The other fine vocal soloists include Camilla Tilling and Topi Lehtipuu.) In Berlin, the bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff, now retired, brought the audience out of the abyss with a heartbreaking rendition of the aria "Mache dich, mein Herze, rein"; in New York, it will be Eric Owens, another singer of transformative power.

—Russell Platt

Papatanasiu's strident Musetta to round out the quartet of young lovers; from the pit, Riccardo Frizza follows every twist of their tempestuous affairs, from punchy highs to heartbreaking lows. (Oct. 4 at 8:30.) • Julie Taymor's production of **"Die Zauberflöte,"** which the company occasionally uses, in an abridged, English-language version, for holiday concerts, is equally viable in its entertaining, full-length staging, even if some of the darker undertones of Mozart's opera, with its deeply Masonic text, are left unexplored. The able Adam Fischer, an expert in the music of the composer's older colleague Haydn, conducts a cast featuring Pretty Yende, Ana Durlovski (in her house debut), Toby Spence, Markus Werba, and the great René Pape. (Oct. 6 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

Joyce DiDonato: "Stella di Napoli"

The American mezzo-soprano, at the height of her popularity, could have launched her new album at Carnegie Hall—but she's giving the honor to LoftOpera, one of the city's up-and-coming "indie opera" companies. She'll sing excerpts from the recording (a celebration of Neapolitan bel canto) in a concert that also includes a preview of the little company's next production, "The Barber of Seville." (Gowanus Ballroom, 55 9th St. loftopera.com. Oct. 3 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert conducts the Philharmonic in the finale of his "Nielsen Project," a multi-season effort to bring the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, one of the most fascinating and fiercely expressive of the early moderns, to a broader audience. The program includes the engaging "Maskerade" Overture, the shattering Symphony No. 5 (a Bernstein favorite), and the mysterious and mercurial Symphony No. 6, "Sinfonia Semplice"—which is hardly as "simple" as its name suggests. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Oct. 1-2 at 7:30 and Oct. 3 at 2.)

Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic

The Vienna Philharmonic's beguiling sound tempts listeners, inviting them into a realm of complexity and delight; in contrast, the magnificent Berlin band—under its longtime conductor, at least—engulfs the audience in luxuriant timbres and dazzles it with technical accomplishment. Rattle's Carnegie Hall residency is sprawling, four concerts of Russian and Germanic music. The opening gala surrounds Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor (with Anne-Sophie Mutter, a model of enduring elegance) with Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances and excerpts from Stravinsky's "Firebird"; the second repeats the Rachmaninoff and presents the Stravinsky ballet in the complete score. The third is a febrile evening of Schumann, consisting of the First ("Spring") and Second Symphonies, and the grand finale offers Schumann's Fourth (in the original version) and Third ("Rhenish") Symphonies, with the U.S. premiere of Georg Friedrich Haas's "Dark Dreams" in between. (212-247-7800. Oct. 1 at 7 and Oct. 2 and Oct. 5-6 at 8.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic: Stefan Jackiw

The American violinist, a young artist of interpretive insight and technical command, has made a specialty of the violin sonatas of Johannes Brahms. He leads off the weekend at the floating chamber-music series by offering all three of them, accompanied by the pianist Anna Polonsky.

(Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. Oct. 2 at 8. For tickets and full schedule, see bargemusic.org.)

Miller Theatre Composer Portrait:

Chou Wen-chung

Columbia University's performance series welcomes back a distinguished former faculty member and onetime Columbia student: Chou, an eminent modernist who began his career as a protégé of Varèse and went on to become a valued mentor to a new wave of Chinese composers. This retrospective concert features three first-rate ensembles—the New York New Music Ensemble, the Brentano String Quartet (performing the String Quartet No. 2, "Streams"), and the percussion group Talujon. (Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com. Oct. 2 at 8.)

Claire Chase: "Density 2036"

The fearless American flutist, known not only for her virtuosity but also for her founding of the International Contemporary Ensemble, has just begun a twenty-two-year project to introduce new solo works in tribute to Varèse's "Density 21.5," which was written in 1936 for Georges Barrère. Part II brings world premieres by such composers as George Lewis, Matthias Pintscher, Felipe Lara, and Du Yun. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Oct. 2-3 at 8.)

Anna Lucia Richter

The White Light Festival's "St. Matthew Passion" isn't the only classical event taking place at the Park Avenue Armory this week. Richter, a young German soprano, makes her U.S. recital debut in the intimate Board of Officers Room with a program that will delight art-song connoisseurs—an evening of lieder by Hugo Wolf that offers selections from the Mörike, Eichendorff, and Goethe songbooks

(including such gems as "St. Nepomuks Vorabend," "Ganymed," and "Er Ist's"). (Park Ave. at 66th St. armoryonpark.org. Oct. 2, Oct. 4, and Oct. 6 at 8.)

Scott Johnson's "Mind Out of Matter"

Johnson, an uncompromising composer influenced by both classical and rock idioms who was the first to create music from the rhythms and pitch gradations found in recorded speech, is a longtime figure on the New York scene. His largest extant work, inspired by the atheist-Darwinist philosopher and scientist Daniel Dennett and commissioned by Montclair State University's "Peak Performances" series, is receiving what should be a peak world-première performance—from the renowned new-music group Alarm Will Sound. (Alexander Kasser Theatre, Montclair, N.J. 973-655-5112. Oct. 4 at 8 and Oct. 5 at 3.)

"Music Before 1800" Series: Quicksilver

The stylish New York early-music ensemble (headed by the violinists Robert Mealy and Julie Andrijeski) presents "The (Very) First Viennese School," a program that takes note of the flourishing of the city's music before Mozart, with works by such Baroque masters as Biber, Fux, and Schmelzer. (Corpus Christi Church, 121 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Oct. 5 at 4.)

Le Poisson Rouge: Tre Voci

Debussy's delectable Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp is both a masterpiece in its own right and the foundation of what became a substantial repertory for a then-new genre. Three superb instrumentalists—Marina Piccinini, Kim Kashkashian, and Sivan Magen—perform it along with works by Rameau and Sofia Gubaidulina ("The Garden of Joy and Sorrow"). (158 Bleeker St. lprnyc.com. Oct. 6 at 7:30.)

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Laura Knight, *The Yorkshire Coast* (detail), 1929. Estimate \$4,000 to \$6,000.

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DANCE

New York City Ballet

In recent City Ballet seasons, Alexei Ratmansky has created such winners as "Russian Seasons," "Concerto DSCH," and "Namouna." This time around, the choreographer offers a suite of dances set to "Pictures at an Exhibition," Modest Mussorgsky's tribute to the young painter Viktor Hartmann. The virtuosic piano score is like a walk through an art show, with stops to admire paintings with titles like "The Gnome," "The Old Castle," and "The Great Gate of Kiev." This pairing of Russian music and storytelling seems well-suited to Ratmansky's talents. The company unveils the new, as yet untitled, work on Oct. 2, in a program dominated by new works. • Oct. 1 at 7:30 and Oct. 3

at 8: "Apollo," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Duo Concertant," and "Agon." • Oct. 2 and Oct. 7 at 7:30: "Morgen," "Funérailles," "Clearing Dawn," "This Bitter Earth," "Belles Lettres," and the new Ratmansky ballet. • Oct. 4 at 2: "Serenade," "Mozartiana," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." • Oct. 4 at 8 and Oct. 5 at 3: "Donizetti Variations," "La Sonnambula," and "Firebird." (David H. Koch Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Oct. 19.)

Ivana Müller

This Croatian-born artist brings two participatory works of "social choreography" to the "Crossing the Line" festival, one for grownups, one for kids. In "We Are Still Watching," adult ticket holders, each given a script and a role, read through a text about people waiting for a play to start who gradually realize that they are the play. In "Partituur," children, and adults who want to join them, are asked to follow instructions transmitted through headphones. How they choose to obey or ignore the directions determines the shape of the collective experience.

(New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. "We Are Watching": Oct. 1 and 3 at 8. "Partituur": Oct. 4 at 11 A.M. and 2 and Oct. 5 at noon and 3.)

"Quantum"

Recently, the Swiss choreographer Gilles Jobin spent time in residence at the laboratories of CERN, home of the Large Hadron Collider, working with scientists to explore applications of particle physics to contemporary dance. One result is this dance, in which relationships among particlelike dancers seem to be influenced by invisible forces and to follow laws that are sometimes counterintuitive. A sculpture of lights by Julius von Bismarck responds to their movements, as a sound score by Carla Scaletti, derived from Collider data, whirrs. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl, Brooklyn, 718-636-4100. Oct. 2-4 at 7:30.)

Jillian Peña

One of several downtown artists who have lately been interested in ballet, Peña uses classical steps to show how their artificiality can connote strangeness. In "Polly Pocket: Expansion Pack," the strangeness she is after is Freudian. Dancers double one

another or take narcissistic pleasure in video images of themselves. They engage in banal conversation and banal ballet. But instead of drawing out some unsettling eeriness, Peña keeps settling for a tone of camp. (Dance Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Oct. 2-4 at 8.)

"Works and Process"

The popular series at the Guggenheim offers a backstage peek at Susan Stroman's production of "The Little Dancer," a new musical based on the mostly imagined life of Marie Geneviève van Goethem, the teen-age dance student who became the model for Degas's famous "Petite Danseuse." Tiler Peck, of New York City Ballet, plays the young Marie, who did not last long at the school of the Paris Opéra. Peck not only dances but also acts and sings. Rebecca Luker, a veteran of "Mary Poppins" and "Nine," channels Marie's later years. Both take part in this preview, which includes a conversation with Stroman's artistic team and excerpts from the show. The event is sold out but will be live-streamed at guggenheim.org/video. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3575. Oct. 5 at 7:30.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

"iViva Brooklyn!"

The Brooklyn Museum's First Saturdays programs start each month with an evening of free activities and entertainment. The next one is a celebration of the borough's Latino communities. Highlights include live music by Arturo O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra and his youth orchestra, Fat Afro Latin Jazz Cats, La Mecánica Popular, and Los Rakas; interactive performances by the artists Miguel Luciano, who's showing "Pimp My Piragua," his mobile art project commemorating Latino street vendors, and Caecilia Tripp, who's presenting her project "Music for (Prepared) Bicycles"; dance by Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana; a pop-up social club featuring specialty cocktails and offering salsa and rumba lessons, provided by Global Rhythms; and an interactive mural by the artist Don Rinx, presented by Brooklyn Street Art. There will also be gallery talks by Latino artists, a hands-on Mayan art class, and a lecture by the filmmaker William Caballero. (200 Eastern Parkway. brooklynmuseum.org. Oct. 4.)

"Psycho... Entirely from Memory"

Ten Bones Theatre Company, a Brooklyn-based collective, bridges

the gap between the stage and the audience by weaving in lines written by spectators during performances. It also gives one viewer a horn to honk three times. Each time the horn is honked, the actors must create a scene on the spot. They typically perform wherever alcohol is served, and on Oct. 3 at 9 and Oct. 25 at 9:30 at Videology, a Williamsburg bar plus screening room, the ensemble solicits assistance in re-creating Hitchcock's classic 1960 thriller. If you prefer the film straight, Videology will be screening it on Oct. 10 at 11. (308 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn. 718-782-3468. For details about tickets, visit tenbones.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

This week at **Phillips** (Oct. 1), the Art Institute of Chicago is deaccessioning a group of a hundred and seventeen photographs, the first time it has done so in the sixty-five years since it began acquiring photographic prints. (The proceeds will be used to purchase more photographs for the museum.) Many are early pieces, including Henri Cartier-Bresson's Surrealist portrait "Córdoba, Spain," from 1933, in which a portly dowager in black stands before a poster of a slender sylph lacing her corset. The sale includes two well-known images by

Edward Weston, his "Dunes" (in a print from the early nineteen-fifties) and "Nude," both taken in 1936, as well as works by Penn, Kertész, and Lewis Wickes Hine. A larger sale of photographs follows. (450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.) • **Swann's** auction of illustrated books (Oct. 1) includes issues of Umberto Brunelleschi's

richly decorated Art Deco magazine *La Guirlande*, an edition of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" filled with etchings by Salvador Dali, and a copy of "The Mushroom Book," a mycological tome with illustrations by Lois Long and witty text by John Cage, a passionate fungiphile. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

READINGS AND TALKS

"NYPL Books at Noon"

The New York Public Library's weekly series in Astor Hall (the soaring space just inside the main entry), which features a writer in conversation with a member of the library's staff, continues with the poet Mark Strand. Jessica Strand, the library's associate director of public programs and events as well as the poet's daughter, will be doing the interviewing. (Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 917-275-6975. Oct. 1 at noon.)

Barnes & Noble

The psychologist and linguist Steven Pinker discusses his new book, "The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century." (Broadway at 82nd St. 212-362-8835. Oct. 2 at 7.)

"Poetry for Every Season"

The poet Chase Twichell has curated a walk through the New York Botanical Garden's latest exhibit, "Kiku: The Art of the Japanese Garden." Twichell, a Zen Buddhist, will be reading her own poems as well as ones translated from Japanese. (Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx. nybg.org. Oct. 4 at 4.)

Octavio Paz Centennial

The writer and translator Eliot Weinberger and the poets Coral Bracho and María Baranda celebrate the noted Mexican writer with a discussion, in English. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-249-8950. Oct. 6 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

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

Bryan Ferry

While he was releasing huge hits in the U.K. with the art-rock act Roxy Music, this English singer-songwriter and musician was simultaneously building a solo career. There was scarcely a year during the seventies and early eighties that didn't see an LP out by either Roxy Music or Bryan Ferry, or both. Ferry, once dubbed "the coolest living Englishman" and universally acknowledged as one of the world's top sophisticates, continues creating original material as well as rendering snazzy covers of other artists' songs. In 2012, with the Bryan Ferry Orchestra, the oft-tuxedoed Brit released "The Jazz Age," a trove of instrumental interpretations of his own compositions that sound like they're straight out of the roaring twenties. He's currently on the Can't Let Go Tour, named for a song from his 1978 solo album, "The Bride Stripped Bare." He has a new studio album of original pieces, "Avonmore," coming out next month. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Oct. 1.)

Fleetwood Mac

The band that started off by playing rocking blues in the sixties and ended up defining soft rock in the seventies is back. Few groups had as much drama and energy, and its history includes no shortage of personnel changes, cocaine, affairs, religious cults, private jets, bad acid trips, and mental institutions. No matter how bad the interpersonal vibes got, the band stayed at it, and became one of the greatest-selling acts of the twentieth century. For this tour, its keyboardist, Christine McVie, has returned to the group for the first time in sixteen years, joining Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, and Stevie Nicks. Expect their unique (to say the least) chemistry to make for a compelling live show that is at once classic and relevant to a younger generation. (Madison Square Garden. Ticketmaster.com. Oct. 6.)

Lykke Li

Since emerging on the scene, in 2007, this Swedish songwriter has released three full-length albums, "Youth Novels," in 2008, "Wounded Rhymes," in 2011, and "I Never Learn," earlier this year. With each work, the dream-pop chanteuse veers further away from the bubblegum vibes of her early material and treads deeper into dark waters. Recorded after a devastating breakup, Li's latest tracks are her most downcast yet. The stentorian soprano, who has collaborated with such artists as David Lynch and U2, still goes for a reverb-soaked sound, but this time it's in the service of tearful power ballads. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. Oct. 4.)

Perfume Genius

Mike Hadreas, a pianist and singer who performs soulful, stark music under this tongue-in-cheek moniker,

is a gay man and a sufferer of Crohn's disease. He has had an uncomfortably close relationship with drugs and alcohol, and his first two albums often turned his anger inward, in an attempt to drain emotional abscesses and cauterize unseen wounds. For his new album, "Too Bright," he expanded his sonic palette to include glam-inflected pop and inspirations from musical theatre. (Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Oct. 7.)

Tycho

Scott Hansen, who records and performs as Tycho, never touched a musical instrument until his early twenties; up to that point, he worked as a freelance graphic designer and visual artist in San Francisco. You'll forgive him if his music betrays his roots in design: the ambient electro-acoustic post-rock found on his sophomore record, "Awake," is built on neutral tones, airy synths, and minimal, propulsive percussion. He designs all his own album covers and concert posters, but he's rounded out his live performance to include a four-piece band and a multimedia stage show. This week, he finishes up the U.S. leg of his current tour, before leaving for a few weeks in Europe. (Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. Oct. 1.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Terence Blanchard

To a non-jazz audience, Blanchard may be best known as a composer for the films of Spike Lee; on his own recent recordings (including last year's "Magnetic"), the brilliant trumpeter graciously encouraged his own bandmates—including such talents as the pianist **Fabian Almazan** and the saxophonist **Brice Winston**—to contribute material.

Those players, and the responsive rhythm team of the bassist **Joshua Crumby** and the drummer **Justin Brown**, join Blanchard at the Jazz Standard. (116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Oct. 1-5.)

Ravi Coltrane

Offsetting an analytic nature with a fervid spirit, Coltrane lends an inviting balance to his involving improvisations on tenor and soprano saxophones. His wiry bands have always included able players, and his current quartet's inclusion of the far-reaching pianist **David Virelles** is of special interest. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Sept. 30-Oct. 5.)

Chick Corea

The long-celebrated and dizzily eclectic keyboardist calls forth his Vigil quintet, a fusion-esque unit that, amidst the thunder, finds room for the adroit work of the British reeds player **Tim Garland**. To his credit, Corea has hardly mellowed as he has marched proudly into his seventies—his commitment to fulsome jazz-rock is as firm today as it was when he helped usher it to life, some forty years ago. (Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592. Sept. 30-Oct. 5.)

Rita Wilson

Although she is routinely associated with her husband, Tom Hanks, Wilson has plenty to show for herself, both as a producer, with the sleeper megahit "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," and as an actress, with a recurring role on "Girls." Wilson's also a skillful singer and songwriter, and she's in the midst of her Café Carlyle debut, performing hits of the sixties and seventies, as well as original tunes from an upcoming album. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Through Oct. 4.)

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W. Eugene Smith, *Man in Radiation Helmet*, from the series *Life Without Germs*, silver print, 1949, printed circa 1970. Estimate \$3,000 to \$4,500.

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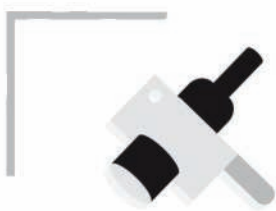
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FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB BLIND BARBER

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After dark, opposite Tompkins Square Park's northern border, a glowing barber pole twirls. Beyond, men draped with striped cloths indulge in a straight-razor shave or a haircut, plus a complimentary cocktail from the hidden bar in the back. "What're we doing, my friend?" Nicky, a skinny dude in Vans, recently asked a shaggy patron, who replied, "High fade—a No. 2." The Sweeney Ted—Jameson, lemon, honey, egg white, bitters—seemed too obvious a punch line, so he ordered the Smoke & Dagger, a concoction part manly (Jack Daniels, jalapeño) and part dandy (cucumber, lemon, ginger). "People pace back and forth for, like, twenty minutes, and they won't ask and I won't fucking tell them," Nicky said about the bar's clandestine entrance. Rose, a local character formerly employed at the Bellevue morgue, wandered in and inquired after Nicky's evening plans. "I'll be here, shaking my front tail. Do you know what that is?" he quizzed the man under the clippers. "It's a ding-a-ling!" Rose said, with a lewd gesture. Mr. High Fade moseyed back into the low-lighted barroom. The vibe was less genial than up front, but even the most hirsute drinkers were markedly well groomed. Shelves held the kinds of books abandoned at B. and B.s. Mr. High Fade picked up "The Evolution of a Cro-Magnon," ran his fingers through his remaining curls, and heeded the Blind Barber's motto: "Stay handsome."

—Emma Allen



TABLES FOR TWO

HOMETOWN BAR-B-QUE

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"SOUTHERN BARBECUE," THE SOCIOLOGIST John Shelton Reed once wrote, "is the closest thing we have in the U.S. to Europe's wines or cheeses; drive a hundred miles and the barbecue changes." New York is many hundreds of miles from the South, but, in the past ten years, the city has put itself on the barbecue map, with a style that's not so much distinctly regional as it is an amalgamation of borrowed techniques, cherry-picked from the Meccas of the South and the Midwest. The success of this melting-pot model varies, but in Red Hook a Brooklyn native named Billy Durney has nailed a formula: mostly Texas, a touch of North Carolina and Kansas City, but very Brooklyn.

Durney started out by experimenting with a smoker at his South Park Slope apartment, as a way to relieve the stress of his job as "executive protection" (read: bodyguard) to "A-list celebrities" (whose identities he won't reveal). Travelling through South America, he was inspired by the practice of cooking whole animals over fire pits on the beach, and a visit to Louie Mueller Barbecue, in Taylor, Texas, he said, "kinda changed my life." A year ago, after a Hurricane Sandy setback, he opened Hometown in a garage converted to resemble a Texas dance hall, with exposed wooden rafters and an enormous American flag painted on a wall. In one room, twangy bands with names like the Sometime Boys perform on a small stage; in the other, patrons line up to order meat by the half pound, served in piles on butcher-paper-lined metal trays, along with sides in paper cups.

You could make a meal out of poultry (the smoked turkey is moist and flavorful, with a peppercorn crust), or pork (the jerk baby backs are almost *char siu*-like, scattered with green onions), or even lamb belly, which can be ordered alone or as a banh mi. But Durney's beef is the greatest testament to his skill: he seasons it with just salt and pepper, then cooks it in a carefully controlled environment for fifteen hours overnight, tending oak fires out on Valentino Pier, three blocks away. The brisket is superlative but almost Puritan compared to the gigantic bone-on beef rib, its layers of rendered fat and fall-apart meat encrusted in a hard to achieve, intensely peppery yet sweet black bark, known in Texas as the "sugar cookie."

There are sauces if you need them (you don't): hot and sweet, Kansas City-style sticky, vinegary Carolina pepper. Creamy mac and cheese gets an extra drizzle of Velveeta-colored queso, collards are strewn with pulled pork, and spicy baked beans contain tender chunks of burnt-end brisket. Between the sugar cookie and the cakelike corn bread, dessert seems negligible, but banana-cream pudding, topped with crumbled Nilla Wafers, makes a perfect palate cleanser.

—Hannah Goldfield

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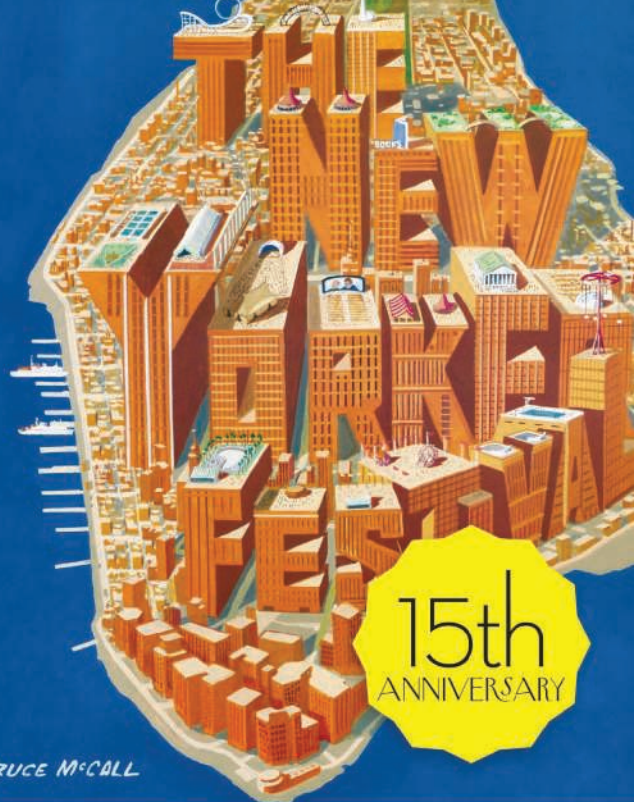
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT MATTERS OF PRIVACY

In most of its details, the domestic-violence case of Mark Fuller was not all that unusual. One night in August, a woman called 911 from a hotel room in Atlanta, pleading for help, because a man was beating her. When the police arrived, Fuller's wife, Kelli, opened the door. She had "visible lacerations to her mouth and forehead," the police report said. During an argument in which she had accused her husband of infidelity, the report continued, she said that he "threw her to the ground and kicked her. Mrs. Fuller also stated she was dragged around the room and Mr. Fuller hit her in the mouth several times with his hands." Fuller said that he had been defending himself from his wife after she threw a glass at him while he was watching TV.

In one respect, however, the case stands out from the general depressing run of such incidents. Mark Fuller is a federal judge. He has occupied his position on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama since 2002, when President George W. Bush appointed him. (Fuller has a national reputation as a result of having presided over the controversial bribery trial of the former Alabama governor Don Siegelman, a Democrat.) He was arrested that night in August and released on bond the next day—not an uncommon turn of events in misdemeanor domestic-violence arrests. More unusual was the fact that Fuller accepted a plea deal in which he agreed to enter counselling—once a week for twenty-four weeks—rather than stand trial. Under this arrangement, his arrest record could be expunged. It was, as another federal-court judge and Republican appointee, Richard George Kopf, noted in a blog post, "a sweet deal." It may sound familiar, because Ray Rice, the N.F.L. running back caught on videotape knocking his then fiancée unconscious, got a similar bargain. But, nationally, fewer than ten per cent of domestic-abuse charges lead to pretrial diversion programs.

Fuller's case also raised an unusual

question: what to do with a judge whose judgment is so manifestly impaired? It took a little while, but many leading politicians in Alabama, most of them Republicans, have now called for his resignation. His "unacceptable personal conduct violates the trust that has been placed in him," Senator Jeff Sessions said. Fuller has refused to resign, however, so, according to the *Times*, Representative Martha Roby has suggested that Congress could initiate impeachment proceedings against him. But only fifteen federal judges have ever been impeached, and, in most cases, it was on account of improper behavior in the courtroom, such as drunkenness or perjury. It also seems unlikely that impeachment would be taken up in the Republican-controlled House. Judge Kopf said that Fuller should be stripped "of his ability to hear cases for as long as the law allows." He added, "It is very simple. Given what happened in that hotel room, no one should trust his judgment in a federal-trial courtroom."

Like other public figures caught up in scandal, Mark Fuller has asked for privacy. "As difficult as this situation is, I hope that you can respect the need to let my family heal as we move forward with addressing our private and personal family issues," he said. Such requests elicit some sympathy, at least for the other

family members, but, in the case of domestic violence, privacy carries an unfortunate set of implications: for a long time, privacy and the sanctity of the home were ideas that stood in the way of treating an assault on an intimate partner as a crime.

The doctrine of chastisement, under which a husband could physically punish a defiant wife, as long as her injuries weren't permanent, held sway in Anglo-American common law until the mid-nineteenth century. By then, the authoritarian notion of marriage was giving way to the idea that a husband's dominion over his wife and children shouldn't be physically enforced, and wife-beating was



increasingly seen as brutal and low-class. In fact, one of the first states to rescind the right of chastisement was Alabama, in 1871, in a case called *Fulgham v. State*. “The wife is not to be considered as the husband’s slave,” the State Supreme Court held. “And the privilege, ancient though it be, to beat her with a stick, to pull her hair, choke her, spit in her face or kick her about the floor, or to inflict upon her like indignities, is not now acknowledged by our law.”

But, as the Yale law professor Reva Siegel has shown, courts and legislatures “vehemently condemned chastisement doctrine, yet routinely condoned violence in marriage.” What was often used to justify this paradox was obeisance to marital privacy. In a North Carolina case from 1868, *State v. A. B. Rhodes*, the State Supreme Court declined to enforce charges against a man who whipped his wife “with a switch about the size of one of his fingers (but not as large as a man’s thumb).” It did so not because it was upholding the husband’s right to chastise his wife “but because the evil of publicity would be greater than the evil involved in the trifles complained of; and because they ought to be left to family government.” The court cautioned against “raising the curtain upon domestic privacy.”

That was the thinking that shaped law enforcement and the broader understanding of domestic violence for most of the

twentieth century. Violence in the home was regarded as something that was unfortunate but private, and arrests were discouraged in favor of mediation. It was not until the nineteen-seventies and eighties—when feminists and the battered-women’s movement brought renewed attention to the problem, introducing shelters and hot lines, and treating assault within the family as seriously as assault outside of it—that law enforcement and legislatures responded, passing mandatory arrest laws, creating domestic-violence units in prosecutors’ offices, and making it somewhat easier to obtain and enforce protection orders.

The incidence rate of domestic violence remains high, but it has dropped markedly in the years since that movement began. According to the Justice Department, it fell by sixty-seven percent between 1994 and 2012. To some extent, that mirrors the general decrease in violent crime in the same period. This may be due, in part, to the increasing economic independence of women, which affords them more freedom to leave abusive relationships. But experts also point to the reforms brought about by the greater awareness of domestic abuse—by the raised curtain that the courts once feared, and that, apparently, some federal judges still do.

—Margaret Talbot

DOWNLOAD DEPT. ONLY DISCONNECT



Tim Fite has the rarest iPhone. It’s not the iPhone 6 or even the elephantine 6 Plus. It’s his own design, a fused-glass rectangle that he calls the Phoney. It has no circuits, no wires, and no buttons: a brick for your hand. “You can’t make a call with the Phoney,” Fite said the other day, picking one up off a table in his Brooklyn apartment. “But you can make a point.”

The Phoney is part of Fite’s latest project, “iBeenHACKED,” a satirical meditation on the encroachment of high-tech devices into modern life. Fite, a thirty-seven-year-old musician and artist with a passing resemblance to the actor Jonah Hill, has released nearly a dozen albums, first as part of the hip-hop duo Little T and One Track Mike (they had an MTV hit, “Shaniqua”), and then as a solo artist who stays rooted in hip-hop while incorporating elements of alternative rock and experimental folk.

From the start, Fite has fretted about the impersonality of modern society. His 2006 album, “Over the Counter Culture,” was an anti-consumerism broadside that

made several critics’ year-end lists, but Fite, mindful of the record’s theme, opted not to release it commercially.

That year, Fite got his first cell phone. “I had resisted for years, and then a friend of mine gave me one,” he said. “He told me I was stupid for not having one. I didn’t embrace it at first. I tried to keep my distance. But then, in 2010, I got a smartphone. The fact that it gave me access to the whole Internet meant that it also got me at all hours, in all ways. I was like everyone else. I texted. I checked my mail. I played *Angry Birds*, motherfucker.”

And then he became an addict. “I started getting a phantom buzzing in my leg,” he said. “It was like the feeling of a call coming in, but my phone wasn’t even in my pocket. For me, that was extremely profound. Technology wasn’t just messing with my time or my productivity. It was messing with my body.”

Fite sketched out a plan to investigate his relationship with technology. Some days, he immersed himself in online culture, clicking and following every link that he could find. Other days, he replicated text conversations on a manual typewriter, thinking about what online shorthand means. “I didn’t just want to be flaunting my sobriety chip,” he said. “I wanted to criticize from a place of participating.”

The result of his inquiry, an album

called “iBeenHACKED,” patrols the borders of digital culture, pausing at one-click approval (“Like”), online celebrity (“Viral”), emoticons (“:”) ; 0 : (“”), and networked social capital (“Followers”). There’s a commercial for a real bar—Chicago’s Tonic Room, which is cast as an antidote to online dating sites—and even one for the Phoney (“a silicone-based lifehack/to help you get your life back”). The songs are short and sharp, and often gleefully profane, but there’s a wistfulness beneath the comedy. The title track, a sea of sound effects and high-tech noises, parts for slogans like “I’d rather be a clone than be alone.”

“I like being alone,” Fite said. “It’s an important part of my life. It’s something I need. So where does that leave me in a world where so much of our culture is designed to celebrate connectivity and abate loneliness?”

“iBeenHACKED” was funded through Kickstarter, which Fite saw both as an indie-music necessity and as an object lesson in the strangeness of online communities. “At first, it made no sense,” he said. “You’re telling people that you want to take their money so you can hop in a van and come to their city and take more of their money? But it’s also a way of increasing engagement with fans, both artificially and actually.”

The Kickstarter project forced Fite to create art works for contributors: letter-

press prints of text-message bubbles (for pledges of thirty-five dollars); one day spent posting “personalized positivity” on a donor’s social-media profile (fifty dollars); and even a top tier where Fite promised to write and record an advertisement for an individual contributor and put it on his album (a thousand dollars; no one took him up on it). And, of course, the Phoneys, which come in both miniature



Tim Fite

(forty dollars) and regular (two hundred dollars) sizes.

Roughly a month before the October appearance of “iBeenHACKED,” life imitated (or intimidated?) art. Apple unveiled the iPhone 6 in a lavish event that featured an album release of its own: U2’s “Songs of Innocence” appeared, free, on the computers of all iTunes subscribers. The innovative distribution angered Apple customers, who felt that the stunt was a kind of corporate hack. “It’s funny to me,” Fite said. “It’s a pissing contest: look how far we can pee. As it turns out, U2 can pee pretty far. And some of it got on people, and they weren’t too happy about that.”

—Ben Greenman

DEPT. OF HYPHENATES ROLLING RANGER



Among the movers and shakers who met in New York last week to talk about climate change was Chuck Leavell, a slight, soft-spoken sixty-two-year-old piano player from Georgia. Though better

known for the moving and shaking he does onstage—since 1982, he has been the Rolling Stones’ main keyboardist—Leavell has become an influential voice on an array of reforestation issues around the world. Heads of state have yet to find much common ground when it comes to climate change, but they appear to agree about the Rolling Stones. Presidents, senators, and high-ranking ministers all happily engage with Leavell about Stones songs, and when he smoothly changes the subject to wind farms, or biomass in Brazil, they listen.

Leavell was attending the U.N. Summit as a member of the Global Restoration Council, a new entity backed by the World Resources Institute. Another member is Bianca Jagger, and on the eve of the summit they met with a few other environmentalists at the Mandarin Hotel. One visitor ventured, “You two must have some friends in common in the Rolling Stones,” which drew an icy stare from Jagger, her eyebrows cocked like drawn bows. (She and her ex have not remained close.)

“Acquaintances,” Leavell proposed.

Leavell’s interest in the world’s trees began when he and his wife, Rose Lane, inherited an eleven-hundred-acre farm in Georgia, in 1981. Chuck took a forestry-management correspondence course while he was on a Fabulous Thunderbirds tour, and started planting trees. Years of managing his own land as a mixed-use forest that is a hunting preserve and a tree farm has made him aware of the economic and environmental benefits of planting trees. He is one of only three people in the U.S. to be made an honorary forest ranger. (The other two are Betty White and Arnold Schwarzenegger.) “One of my proudest possessions is an original forest-ranger hat,” he said. “Like my man Pharrell wears.”

Did Leavell talk to the other Stones about trees?

“At first, there was a lot of head-scratching—‘What’s he going on about the trees again for? What’s that all about?’”—he said. “But, you know, they understand my commitment to these issues, and the fact is we’re all parents and grandparents, we’re concerned about our children and grandchildren’s future, and we all have hopes we can make positive changes in those regards.”

From the Mandarin, Leavell and his wife walked up Broadway to the recep-

tion for the Equator Prize awards, which was held in the soaring atrium of Avery Fisher Hall. There Leavell became involved in a discussion with several State Department officials about upcoming Stones dates in Australia, next month, and soon moved on to the deforestation of palm trees in Indonesia by palm-oil producers. Among the group was Charles Barber, who, until recently, was the Forest Chief at the State Department and now works for the World Resources Institute.

“People listen to Chuck,” Barber said. “He knows how to tell the story, without getting into the weeds on issues like the price of softwood lumber.” He added, “A lot of actors don’t want to talk about their acting experiences; they want to talk about the issues. But Chuck loves to talk about the music.”

The conversation kept drifting back to the Stones. Couldn’t Chuck get the band to represent the issues onstage, somehow?

“You mean, like, Mick goes, ‘I’m a tree, I’m a tree.’” Leavell expertly mimed Jagger’s frantic rooster strut, imitating a tree.

“Keith would just be, like, ‘Plant a fuckin’ tree.’”

Leavell has met three Presidents—Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush—but before the summit he had never met Barack Obama. “He could be more of an R. & B. guy,” Leavell said at Lincoln Center.

The following night, after dinner at the Waldorf, they did meet.

Leavell said, “Mr. President, wonderful to meet you. I play with the Stones!” “What?”

“I play piano with the Rolling Stones.”

The President replied, “You must be, like, the youngest guy in the group!”

—John Seabrook

THE ARTISTIC LIFE FENDER BENDER



Remember art before Instagram? These days, it can seem that gallerygoers are in it for the selfies (#Koons #nofilter). But if you spot Eric Fischl with a camera in hand, beware. One recent Sunday, the sixty-six-year-old painter

steered his red Ford Flex along the back roads of Long Island's East End, toward the Art Southampton fair, which takes place in a large tent behind the Elks Lodge. He was on his way to photograph the fairgoers.

"I only started going to art fairs two years ago, and only because I was doing research," he explained, in a droll monotone. His wispy gray hair was swept back from a tanned forehead. "They're so *depressing*. This one is sort of secondary-market stuff. And some third-tier stuff—a lot of *shiny* things." Fischl is known for his early, psychologically fraught paintings of suburban life, as well as for Updikean moonlit nudes, and portraits of his friends—prominent artists and collectors—often at the beach. He said, of his new paintings, "They're all art fairs, all people in vari-

at the art fair," Fischl said, as he turned into the parking lot. Encountering a bottleneck, he backed up—directly into a silver Jaguar.

"Ah, shit," he said. A petite woman in white Versace jeans emerged from the Jag.

"I don't think you did too much here," she said cheerfully.

They exchanged phone numbers, and Fischl made his way into the tent. Noticing a sculpture of a prancing cat, he crouched and clicked. "Let's get the cat in, for God's sake. It's *adorable*." Fischl and his wife, the painter April Gornik, have two cats, Hooper and Beebop, of whom he said, "They're very respectful of art; it's the one thing they haven't peed on."

A cologned gallerist strode over, business card extended. He drawled, "We're in Dallas, and let me tell you something—Dallas is the absolute hottest market going right now. It's on fire!"

"See what I have to live with?" Fischl mumbled. He caught sight of a woman in a floral jumpsuit: "Look at this dress. It's an *outfit*." *Snap snap snap*.

He himself wore rimless glasses, Nantucket red shorts, and an East Hampton Indoor Tennis T-shirt. Fischl has played tennis since the early eighties; he traded drawing lessons for tennis lessons with John McEnroe. "We started with nudes, live models—very intimidating," he said. "I should've started him off on a still-life."

Tucked between booths was an outpost of the Hamptons realty firm Saunders & Associates. Sofas flanked a vase of hydrangeas; a de Kooning painting hung on the wall. "We're sellin' houses, sellin' art—we got couches for sale, too," the broker said. Fischl photographed a woman, wearing hiking boots and a dolphin sweater, napping outside the Maserati V.I.P. Lounge, then moved on to a young girl who was taking a photo of her mother in front of a metal sculpture of underpants.

The Chicago-based Hexton Gallery was hawking some of Fischl's work—prints and sculptures cast in glass. Madeline Kisting, manning the booth, told him, "So far, Eric, people have said that you're cute; that you're Eric Fischl the author" (of the recent memoir "Bad Boy"). "I also got, 'He's the local guy.'"

Fischl laughed and said, "Local boy makes good!" He grew up in nearby Port Washington, with three siblings, a salesman father, and an alcoholic mother, who committed suicide when Fischl was twenty-two. In 1967, the family moved to Phoenix; in the seventies, Fischl left to pursue a B.F.A. at the California Institute of the Arts, before winding up in New York, in 1978. He and Gornik moved to Sag Harbor full time ten years ago.

Fischl photographed a mopey woman, pecking on a laptop beneath a sparkly, all-pink interpretation of "Girl with a Pearl Earring."

"I wonder whether, after my show, people will know to be wary," he said. After one of his art-fair paintings was shown in New York this year, he recalled, "I got an e-mail that said, 'I think I'm the person in the painting.' And it was. It was this girl I photographed in Miami. She was wearing this hat and glasses and a denim shirt. Must be from a wealthy family, because she said, 'My grandmother wants to buy it.'"

A yell came from a nearby booth: "He's the one who hit my car!" It was the Versace-jeans woman. She was standing with the proprietor of a gallery in Nuremberg. "He said I should take a painting! I'll take a sketch. Poor Jaguar. But we'll work it out. All right, sweetheart?"

—Emma Allen



Eric Fischl

ous relationships to each other or to the art, usually ignoring it, sometimes looking at their phones."

He attends fairs—Art Basel in Miami, Frieze's New York edition—and takes hundreds of photos with a Sony a7 digital camera. He makes Photoshop collages with the resulting images, creating vignettes that he then paints. A show of these canvases (priced between four hundred thousand and seven hundred thousand dollars) will open at the Victoria Miro Gallery, in London, next month, to coincide with the Frieze fair in that city. "I figure people can go to the art fair and then come to my show and see what they look like

THE BOARDS WITCHES' BREW



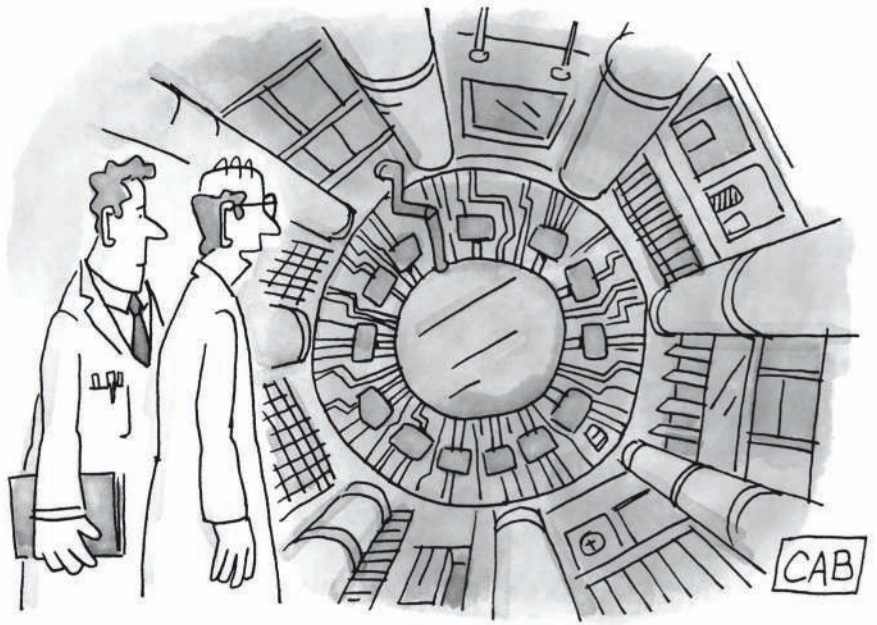
Ira Glass may have overstated his case when, after attending a performance of Shakespeare in the Park this summer, he tweeted that he found King Lear "not relatable." But Glass is surely not alone in finding the Bard hard: all those byzantine complexities of plot, all that highly wrought language. Might it not be a relief for Shakespeare to be presented in a way that emphasizes the lower entertainment values of the plays? Such was the thinking of David Hudson, who is one of the co-founders of the Three Day Hangover theatre

company. Since 2013, Hudson and his colleagues have performed textually divergent interpretations of “Hamlet” and “Romeo and Juliet,” not behind a prissy proscenium but in the differently challenging arena of a crowded bar.

“We discovered that there is this little niche market of people who were excited about going to a bar and letting go, but also seeing some great Shakespeare,” Hudson explained the other evening at Quinn’s Bar & Grill, on West Forty-fourth Street. The experience was, he said, “fully immersive.” For “R+J: Star-Cross’d Death Match,” which ran for several weeks in a midtown bar last summer, audience members were handed either red or blue flip cups upon arrival, to indicate their allegiance to the Capulets or the Montagues.

Hudson’s latest production, “Macbeth,” has been running at Quinn’s since March, to capacity audiences, under the auspices of the Drunk Shakespeare Society. This is a Three Day Hangover spinoff to which a piquant theatrical innovation has been added. “A producer, Scott Griffin, said, ‘I want to throw an actor who’s drunk into the mix,’” Hudson said. One member of the cast downs four shots at the outset of the play, with two more shots—integrated into the course of action—imbibed thereafter. “A drunk actor has a level of humor and comedy that you wouldn’t get with a sober actor,” Hudson explained. “They let go of their inhibitions.” The role of drunken actor rotates among a company of ten players, he added. “We’re very concerned about responsible drinking,” he said with a straight face.

Hudson estimates that Drunk Shakespeare audiences are about equally divided between Shakespeare aficionados and drinking aficionados. “Maybe sixty-forty on the drinking side,” he said, after a moment’s reflection. At a recent performance, audience members were carded, then handed a shot of tequila, as they entered. Volumes of Shakespeare’s works were set on the tables alongside bar slips for ordering more drinks, though anyone wishing to follow along in the text would have been confounded by the high proportion of spontaneously improvised interpolation. While it can be assumed that



“Once you have a collider, every problem starts to look like a particle.”

players at the Globe sometimes went off text, it seems unlikely that the Porter—played, in this case, by Whit Leyenberger—has often before compared a female audience member to “a jungle cat in heat.”

Lucas Calhoun performed the title role, and was also the evening’s designated sot, though a latecomer might have been forgiven for failing to distinguish who among the players was sober, so high was the level of emoting, flailing for comic effect, and shouting. (By evening’s end, it was not only the raven who was hoarse.) Calhoun, whose affect was more frat boy than Scots warrior, occasionally stepped out of character to deliver commentary. “I’m from the South. If you tell me I’m going to be King, I’m going to kick back, have a SoCo and a Coke, and wait to become King,” he said, after receiving the witches’ prophecy. “This guy, he kills everyone. *Children* get killed. This person is really deranged.”

Lady Macbeth was played with verve by Lindsay Hope Pearlman; her delivery of “unsex me here,” spread-eagled on her back, might reasonably have been interpreted to mean the opposite. The role of King Duncan was assigned to an audience member who identified herself as Denise. She entered vigor-

ously into the spirit of the event. “My liege!” she exclaimed to Calhoun, toasting him with her glass. “I think you got it reversed, but that’s very cool,” he replied.

Silence fell when Calhoun asked one man to show him his absent girlfriend’s picture on his cell phone; Calhoun then called her, put her on speakerphone, and recited Sonnet 44—“If the dull substance of my flesh were thought”—to her. (She remained mute.) But a more representative moment was when the final showdown between Macbeth and Macduff (Christina Liu) was conducted as a dance-off.

For the Banquo’s-ghost scene, his many descendants were represented by a crowd of audience members holding up Whit Leyenberger’s headshot—which he, along with thirteen hundred other aspiring actors, had submitted to the company several months earlier. Lady Macbeth’s improvised line thereafter was “What the fuck is going on here?”—a query that might well have been applied to the entire endeavor, and that likely proved useful in evaluating Three Day Hangover’s most recent effort, which ran at the Gin Mill on Amsterdam Avenue last month: “Drunkle Vanya.”

—Rebecca Mead

OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

BEFORE THE LAW

A boy was accused of taking a backpack. The courts took the next three years of his life.

BY JENNIFER GONNERMAN



In the early hours of Saturday, May 15, 2010, ten days before his seventeenth birthday, Kalief Browder and a friend were returning home from a party in the Belmont section of the Bronx. They walked along Arthur Avenue, the main street of Little Italy, past bakeries and cafés with their metal shutters pulled down for the night. As they passed East 186th Street, Browder saw a police car driving toward them. More squad cars arrived, and soon Browder and his friend found themselves squinting in the glare of a police spotlight. An officer said that a man had just reported that they had robbed him. “I didn’t rob anybody,” Browder replied. “You can check my pockets.”

The officers searched him and his friend but found nothing. As Browder recalls, one of the officers walked back to his car, where the alleged victim was, and returned with a new story: the man said that they had robbed him not that night but two weeks earlier. The police handcuffed the teens and pressed them into the back of a squad car. “What am I being charged for?” Browder asked. “I didn’t do anything!” He remembers an officer telling them, “We’re just going to take you to the precinct. Most likely you can go home.” Browder whispered to his friend, “Are you sure *you* didn’t do anything?” His friend insisted that he hadn’t.

Kalief Browder spent more than a thousand days confined on Rikers Island.

At the Forty-eighth Precinct, the pair were fingerprinted and locked in a holding cell. A few hours later, when an officer opened the door, Browder jumped up: “I can leave now?” Instead, the teens were taken to Central Booking at the Bronx County Criminal Court.

Browder had already had a few run-ins with the police, including an incident eight months earlier, when an officer reported seeing him take a delivery truck for a joyride and crash into a parked car. Browder was charged with grand larceny. He told me that his friends drove the truck and that he had only watched, but he figured that he had no defense, and so he pleaded guilty. The judge gave him probation and “youthful offender” status, which insured that he wouldn’t have a criminal record.

Late on Saturday, seventeen hours after the police picked Browder up, an officer and a prosecutor interrogated him, and he again maintained his innocence. The next day, he was led into a courtroom, where he learned that he had been charged with robbery, grand larceny, and assault. The judge released his friend, permitting him to remain free while the case moved through the courts. But, because Browder was still on probation, the judge ordered him to be held and set bail at three thousand dollars. The amount was out of reach for his family, and soon Browder found himself aboard a Department of Correction bus. He fought back panic, he told me later. Staring through the grating on the bus window, he watched the Bronx disappear. Soon, there was water on either side as the bus made its way across a long, narrow bridge to Rikers Island.

Of the eight million people living in New York City, some eleven thousand are confined in the city’s jails on any given day, most of them on Rikers, a four-hundred-acre island in the East River, between Queens and the Bronx. New Yorkers who have never visited often think of Rikers as a single, terrifying building, but the island has ten jails—eight for men, one for women, and one so decrepit that it hasn’t housed anyone since 2000.

Male adolescents are confined in the Robert N. Davoren Center—known as R.N.D.C. When Browder arrived, the jail held some six hundred boys, aged

sixteen to eighteen. Conditions there are notoriously grim. In August of this year, a report by the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York described R.N.D.C. as a place with a “deep-seated culture of violence,” where attacks by officers and among inmates are rampant. The report featured a list of inmate injuries: “broken jaws, broken orbital bones, broken noses, long bone fractures, and lacerations requiring stitches.”

Browder’s family could not afford to hire an attorney, so the judge appointed a lawyer named Brendan O’Meara to represent him. Browder told O’Meara that he was innocent and assumed that his case would conclude quickly. Even the assistant district attorney handling the prosecution later acknowledged in court papers that it was a “relatively straightforward case.” There weren’t hours of wiretaps or piles of complicated evidence to sift through; there was just the memory of one alleged victim. But Browder had entered the legal system through the Bronx criminal courts, which are chronically overwhelmed. Last year, the *Times*, in an extended exposé, described them as “crippled” and among the most backlogged in the country. One reason is budgetary. There are not nearly enough judges and court staff to handle the workload; in 2010, Browder’s case was one of five thousand six hundred and ninety-five felonies that the Bronx District Attorney’s office prosecuted. The problem is compounded by defense attorneys who drag out cases to improve their odds of winning, judges who permit endless adjournments, prosecutors who are perpetually unprepared. Although the Sixth Amendment guarantees “the right to a speedy and public trial,” in the Bronx the concept of speedy justice barely exists.

For as long as Browder could remember, he had lived in the same place, a two-story brick house near the Bronx Zoo. He was the youngest of seven siblings; except for the oldest two, all the children were adopted, and the mother fostered other children as well. “Kalief was the last brought into the family,” an older brother told me. “By the time it came to Kalief, my mom had already raised—in foster care or adoption—a total of thirty-four kids.” Kalief was the

smallest, he recalled, “so my mom called him Peanut.”

As a child, Browder loved Pokemon, the W.W.E., free Wednesdays at the Bronx Zoo, and mimicking his brother’s workout routine. “At six years old, he had an eight-pack,” his brother said. When Browder was ten, their father, who worked as a subway cleaner, moved out, though he continued to help support the family.

For high school, Browder went to the small, progressive New Day Academy. A former staff member remembered him as a “fun guy,” the type of kid others wanted to be around. Occasionally, he would grab a hall pass, sneak into a friend’s classroom, and stay until the teacher caught on. He told me that his report cards were full of C’s, but the staff member I spoke to said, “I thought he was very smart.”

Inside R.N.D.C., Browder soon realized that he was not going to make many friends. He was assigned to a dorm where about fifty teen-age boys slept in an open room, each with a plastic bucket to store his possessions in. “Their conversations bored me,” he told me. As far as he could tell, the other inmates were interested only in “crimes they committed and girls that they did.” When Browder asked a guard how inmates were supposed to get their clothes cleaned, he was told that they had to wash them themselves. He thought this was a joke until he noticed other inmates scrubbing their clothes by hand, using their bucket and jailhouse soap. After he did the same and hung his wet clothes on the rail of his bed, he wound up with brown rust stains on his white T-shirt, his socks, and his boxers. That day, he told himself, “I don’t know how I’m going to live in this place.”

Browder’s mother visited every weekend. In the visiting room, he would hand her his dirty clothes and get a stack of freshly laundered clothes in return. She also put money in a jail commissary account for him, so he could buy snacks. He knew that such privileges made him a target for his fellow-prisoners, who would take any opportunity to empty someone else’s bucket of snacks and clothes, so he slept with his head off the side of his bed, atop his bucket. To survive inside R.N.D.C., he decided that the best strategy was to keep to himself

and to work out. Before Rikers, he told me, “every here and there I did a couple pullups or pushups. When I went in there, that’s when I decided I wanted to get big.”

The dayroom was ruled over by a gang leader and his friends, who controlled inmates’ access to the prison phones and dictated who could sit on a bench to watch TV and who had to sit on the floor. “A lot of times, I’d say, ‘I’m not sitting on the floor,’” Browder said. “And then they’ll come with five or six dudes. They’d swing on me. I’d have to fight back.” There was no escape, no protection, and a suspicion that some of the guards had an agreement with the gang members.

Browder told me that, one night soon after he arrived, a group of guards lined him and several other inmates up against a wall, trying to figure out who had been responsible for an earlier fight. “They’re talking to us about why did we jump these guys,” he said. “And as they’re talking they’re punching us one by one.” Browder said that he had nothing to do with the fight, but still the officers beat him; the other inmates endured much worse. “Their noses were leaking, their faces were bloody, their eyes were swollen,” he said. Afterward, the officers gave the teens a choice: go to the medical clinic or go back to bed. But they made it clear that, if the inmates went to the clinic and told the medical staff what had happened, they would write up charges against them, and get them sent to solitary confinement. “I just told them I’ll act like nothing happened,” Browder said. “So they didn’t send us to the clinic; they didn’t write anything up; they just sent us back.” The Department of Correction refused to respond to these allegations, or to answer any questions about Browder’s stay on Rikers. But the recent U.S. Attorney’s report about R.N.D.C. recounts many instances in which officers pressured inmates not to report beatings—to “hold it down,” in Rikers parlance.

On the morning of July 28, 2010, Browder was awakened at around half past four. He was handcuffed to another inmate and herded onto a bus with a group of other prisoners. At the Bronx County Hall of Justice, they spent the day in a basement holding pen, each

waiting for his chance to see a judge. When Browder's turn came, an officer led him into a courtroom and he caught a glimpse of his mother in the spectator area. Seventy-four days had passed since his arrest. Already he had missed his seventeenth birthday, the end of his sophomore year, and half the summer.

A grand jury had voted to indict Browder. The criminal complaint alleged that he and his friend had robbed a Mexican immigrant named Roberto Bautista—pursuing him, pushing him against a fence, and taking his backpack. Bautista told the police that his backpack contained a credit card, a debit card, a digital camera, an iPod Touch, and seven hundred dollars. Browder was also accused of punching Bautista in the face.

A clerk read out the charges—"Robbery in the second degree and other crimes"—and asked Browder, "How do you plead, sir, guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," Browder said.

An officer escorted him out of the courtroom and back downstairs to return to Rikers. It no longer mattered whether his mother could find the money to bail him out. The Department of Probation had filed a "violation of probation" against him—standard procedure when someone on probation is indicted on a new violent felony—and the judge had remanded him without bail.

Browder repeatedly told O'Meara, his court-appointed lawyer, that he would never plead guilty and that he wanted to go to trial. O'Meara assumed that his courtroom defense would be "Listen, they got the wrong kid." After all, the accusation had been made a week or two after the alleged robbery, and the victim had later changed his mind about when it occurred. (The original police report said "on or about May 2," but Bautista later told a detective that it happened on May 8th.)

With each day he spent in jail, Browder imagined that he was getting closer to trial. Many states have so-called speedy-trial laws, which require trials to start within a certain time frame. New York State's version is slightly different, and is known as the "ready rule." This rule stipulates that all felony cases (except homicides) must be ready for trial within six months of arraignment, or else the charges can be dismissed. In practice, however, this time limit is subject to

technicalities. The clock stops for many reasons—for example, when defense attorneys submit motions before trial—so that the amount of time that is officially held to have elapsed can be wildly different from the amount of time that really has. In 2011, seventy-four per cent of felony cases in the Bronx were older than six months.

In order for a trial to start, both the defense attorney and the prosecutor have to declare that they are ready; the court clerk then searches for a trial judge who is free and transfers the case, and jury selection can begin. Not long after Browder was indicted, an assistant district attorney sent the court a "Notice of Readiness," stating that "the People are ready for trial." The case was put on the calendar for possible trial on December 10th, but it did not start that day. On January 28, 2011, Browder's two-hundred-and-fifty-eighth day in jail, he was brought back to the courthouse once again. This time, the prosecutor said, "The People are not ready. We are requesting one week." The next court date set by the judge—March 9th—was not one week away but six. As it happened, Browder didn't go to trial anytime that year. An index card in the court file explains:

June 23, 2011: People not ready, request 1 week.

August 24, 2011: People not ready, request 1 day.

November 4, 2011: People not ready, prosecutor on trial, request 2 weeks.

December 2, 2011: Prosecutor on trial, request January 3rd.

The Bronx courts are so clogged that when a lawyer asks for a one-week adjournment the next court date usually doesn't happen for six weeks or more. As long as a prosecutor has filed a Notice of Readiness, however, delays caused by court congestion don't count toward the number of days that are officially held to have elapsed. Every time a prosecutor stood before a judge in Browder's case, requested a one-week adjournment, and got six weeks instead, this counted as only one week against the six-month deadline. Meanwhile, Browder remained on Rikers, where six weeks still felt like six weeks—and often much longer.

Like many defendants with court-appointed lawyers, Browder thought his attorney was not doing enough to help

him. O'Meara, who works mostly in the Bronx and in Westchester County, never made the trip out to Rikers to see him, since a visit there can devour at least half a day. To avoid this trek, some lawyers set up video conferences at the Bronx courthouse with their clients who are in jail. O'Meara says he's "pretty sure" he did this with Browder, but Browder says he never did. Court papers suggest a lawyer in a hurry: in the fall of 2010, O'Meara filed a notice with the court in which he mistakenly wrote that he would soon be making a motion on Browder's case in "Westchester County Court," instead of in the Bronx.

New York City pays lawyers like O'Meara (known locally as "18-B attorneys") seventy-five dollars an hour for a felony case, sixty dollars for a misdemeanor. O'Meara handles all types of cases, from misdemeanors to homicides. When I met him, earlier this year, he was eating a hamburger and drinking coffee at a diner in Brooklyn after an appearance at a courthouse there. He was about to take the subway back to the Bronx, and his briefcase was bulging with papers. He told me that Browder, compared with some of his other clients, "was quiet, respectful—he wasn't rude." He also noted that, as the months passed, his client looked "tougher and bigger."

Most of the time, however, Browder had no direct contact with O'Meara; the few times he tried to phone him, he couldn't get through, so he was dependent on his mother to talk to O'Meara on his behalf. Every time Browder got the chance, he asked O'Meara the same question: "Can you get me out?" O'Meara says that he made multiple bail applications on his client's behalf, but was unsuccessful because of the violation of probation. Meanwhile, other inmates advised Browder to tell his lawyer to file a speedy-trial motion—a motion to dismiss the case, because it hadn't been brought to trial within six months. But, with so many one-week requests that had turned into six-week delays, Browder had yet to reach the six-month mark.

For a defendant who is in jail, the more a case drags on the greater the pressure to give up and plead guilty. By early 2012, prosecutors had offered Browder a deal—three and a half years in prison in exchange for a guilty plea. He refused. "I want to go to trial," he told

O'Meara, even though he knew that if he lost he could get up to fifteen years in state prison. Stories circulate on Rikers about inmates who plead guilty to crimes they didn't commit just to put an end to their ordeal, but Browder was determined to get his day in court. He had no idea how rare trials actually are. In 2011, in the Bronx, only a hundred and sixty-five felony cases went to trial; in three thousand nine hundred and ninety-one cases, the defendant pleaded guilty.

Not long after arriving on Rikers, Browder made his first trip to solitary confinement. It lasted about two weeks, he recalls, and followed a scuffle with another inmate. "He was throwing shoes at people—I told him to stop," Browder said. "I actually took his sneaker and I threw it, and he got mad. He swung on me, and we started fighting." Browder was placed in shackles and transferred by bus to the Central Punitive Segregation Unit, which everyone on Rikers calls the Bing. Housed in one of the island's newer jails, the Bing has four hundred cells, each about twelve feet by seven.

In recent years, the use of solitary confinement has spread in New York's jails. Between 2007 and mid-2013, the total number of solitary-confinement beds on Rikers increased by more than sixty per cent, and a report last fall found that nearly twenty-seven per cent of the adolescent inmates were in solitary. "I think the department became severely addicted to solitary confinement," Daniel Selling, who served as the executive director of mental health for New York City's jails, told me in April; he had quit his job two weeks earlier. "It's a way to control an environment that feels out of control—lock people in their cell," he said. "Adolescents can't handle it. Nobody could handle that." (In March, Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed a new jails commissioner, Joseph Ponte, who promised to "end the culture of excessive solitary confinement.")

For Browder, this was the first of several trips to the Bing. As he soon discovered, a prisoner there doesn't leave his cell except to go to rec, the shower, the visit room, the medical clinic, or court; whenever he does leave, he is handcuffed and strip-searched. To pass the time,

Browder read magazines—*XXL*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Hip Hop Weekly*—and street novels handed on by other inmates; one was Sister Souljah's "Midnight." He'd always preferred video games, but he told me, "I feel like I broke myself into books through street novels." He moved on to more demanding reading and said that his favorite book was Craig Unger's "House of Bush, House of Saud."

Summer is the worst time of year to be stuck in the Bing, since the cells lack air-conditioning. In the hope of feeling a breeze, Browder would sleep with the window open, only to be awakened at 5 A.M., when the cell filled with the roar of planes taking off from LaGuardia, one of whose runways is less than three hundred feet from Rikers. He would spend all day smelling his own sweat and counting the hours until his next shower. He thought about the places he would have been visiting if he were not spending the summer in jail: Mapes Pool, Coney Island, Six Flags. One day, when he called home to talk to his mother—he was allowed one six-minute call a day while in solitary—he could make out the familiar jingle of an ice-cream truck in the background.

There hadn't been much to do at R.N.D.C., but at least there was school—classrooms where the inmates were supposed to be taken every day, to study for a G.E.D. or a high-school diploma. The Bing had only "cell study": a correction

officer slid work sheets under the door in the morning, collected them a few days later, and, eventually, returned them with a teacher's marks. Some inmates never bothered to fill in the work sheets, but Browder told himself, "I'm already in jail—I might as well keep trying to do something." There were times, however, when nobody came by to collect the work sheets on the day he'd been told they were due. If Browder saw a captain walk by through the small window in his door, he would shout, "Where is the school correction officer to pick up the work?"

Near the end of 2010, Browder returned to the Bing; he was there for about ten months, through the summer of 2011. He recalls that he got sent there initially after another fight. (Once an inmate is in solitary, further minor infractions can extend his stay.) When Browder first went to Rikers, his brother had advised him to get himself sent to solitary whenever he felt at risk from other inmates. "I told him, 'When you get into a house and you don't feel safe, do whatever you have to to get out,'" the brother said. "It's better than coming home with a slice on your face."

Even in solitary, however, violence was a threat. Verbal spats with officers could escalate. At one point, Browder said, "I had words with a correction officer, and he told me he wanted to fight. That was his way of handling it." He'd already seen the officer



"Maybe we need different types of clubs for different types of situations."

challenge other inmates to fights in the shower, where there are no surveillance cameras. “So I agreed to it; I said, ‘I’ll fight you.’” The next day, the officer came to escort him to the shower, but before they even got there, he said, the officer knocked him down: “He put his forearm on my face, and my face was on the floor, and he just started punching me in the leg.” Browder isn’t the first inmate to make such an allegation; the U.S. Attorney’s report described similar incidents.

Browder’s brother reconsidered his advice when he saw him in the Bing visiting area. For one thing, he says, Browder was losing weight. “Several times when I visited him, he said, ‘They’re not feeding me,’” the brother told me. “He definitely looked really skinny.” In solitary, food arrived through a slot in the cell door three times a day. For a growing teen-ager, the portions were never big enough, and in solitary Browder couldn’t supplement the rations with snacks bought at the commissary. He took to begging the officers for leftovers: “Can I get that bread?” Sometimes they would slip him an extra slice or two; often, they refused.

Browder’s brother also noticed a growing tendency toward despair. When Browder talked about his case, he was “strong, adamant: ‘No, they can’t do this to me!’” But, when the conversation turned to life in jail, “it’s a totally different personality, which is depressed. He’s, like, ‘I don’t know how long I can take this.’”

Browder got out of the Bing in the fall of 2011, but by the end of the year he was back—after yet another fight, he says. On the night of February 8, 2012—his six-hundred-and-thirty-fourth day on Rikers—he said to himself, “I can’t take it anymore. I give up.” That night, he tore his bedsheet into strips, tied them together to make a noose, attached it to the light fixture, and tried to hang himself. He was taken to the clinic, then returned to solitary. Browder told me that his sheets, magazines, and clothes were removed—everything except his white plastic bucket.

On February 17th, he was shuttled to the courthouse once again, but this time he was not brought up from the court pen in time to hear his case called. (“I’ll waive his appearance for today’s purposes,” his lawyer told the judge.) For more than a year, he had heard various excuses about

why his trial had to be delayed, among them that the prosecutor assigned to the case was on trial elsewhere, was on jury duty, or, as he once told the judge, had “conflicts in my schedule.” If Browder had been in the courtroom on this day, he would have heard a prosecutor offer a new excuse: “Your Honor, the assigned assistant is currently on vacation.” The prosecutor asked for a five-day adjournment; Browder’s lawyer requested March 16th, and the judge scheduled the next court date for then.

The following night, in his solitary cell on Rikers, Browder shattered his plastic bucket by stomping on it, then picked up a piece, sharpened it, and began sawing his wrist. He was stopped after an officer saw him through the cell window and intervened.

Browder was still on Rikers Island in June of 2012, when his high-school classmates collected their diplomas, and in September, when some of them enrolled in college. In the fall, prosecutors offered him a new deal: if he pleaded guilty, he’d get two and a half years in prison, which meant that, with time served, he could go home soon. “Ninety-nine out of a hundred would take the offer that gets you out of jail,” O’Meara told me. “He just said, ‘Nah, I’m not taking it.’ He didn’t flinch. Never talked about it. He was not taking a plea.”

Meanwhile, Browder kept travelling



from Rikers to the Bronx courthouse and back again, shuttling between two of New York City’s most dysfunctional bureaucracies, each system exacerbating the flaws of the other. With every trip Browder made to the courthouse, another line was added to a growing stack of index cards kept in the court file:

June 29, 2012: People not ready, request one week.

September 28, 2012: People not ready, request two weeks.

November 2, 2012: People not ready, request one week.

December 14, 2012: People not ready, request one week.

By the end of 2012, Browder had been in jail for nine hundred and sixty-one days and had stood before eight different judges. He always maintained his composure, never berating his attorney or yelling protests in court. O’Meara was impressed by his control. “I can’t imagine most people sitting in there for three years and not becoming very upset with their attorney,” he says. “He just never complained to me.” Privately, though, Browder was angry. About the prosecutors, he would tell himself, “These guys are just playing with my case.”

On March 13, 2013, Browder appeared before a new judge, Patricia M. DiMango, who had been transferred from Brooklyn as part of a larger effort to tackle the Bronx’s backlog. She was known for her no-nonsense style when dealing with defendants; at the Brooklyn courthouse, she was referred to as Judge Judy. (As it happens, this year she became a judge on “Hot Bench,” a new courtroom TV show created by Judge Judy.) In the Bronx, DiMango’s job was to review cases and clear them: by getting weak cases dismissed, extracting guilty pleas from defendants, or referring cases to trial in another courtroom. At the start of 2013, there were nine hundred and fifty-two felony cases in the Bronx, including Browder’s, that were more than two years old. In the next twelve months, DiMango disposed of a thousand cases, some as old as five years.

Judge DiMango explained to Browder, “If you go to trial and lose, you could get up to fifteen.” Then she offered him an even more tempting deal: plead guilty to two misdemeanors—the equivalent of sixteen months in jail—and go home now, on the time already served. “If you want that, I will do that today,” DiMango said. “I could sentence you today. . . . It’s up to you.”

“I’m all right,” Browder said. “I did not do it. I’m all right.”

“You are all right?” DiMango said.

“Yes,” he said. “I want to go to trial.”

Back at Rikers, other prisoners were stunned. “You’re bugging,” they told him. “You’re stupid. If that was me, I would’ve

POEM FOR THE OPENING OF THE HAMILTON
FISH PARK POOL, 1936

A black cloud composed of cutouts of Moses
On the beam, Moses laughing, holding
A letter. We saw him first on a cool June evening,
While we entered the bathhouse, twenty-
Two hundred, and dipped our feet in basins of
Disinfectant so that the sky above the pavilions
Chlorinated with silver reflection. Or I was there
Almost alone, barely fit in my body and ready
To turn, to clarify as I descended, found I was able to
Descend. Things are overhead. Choruses
Of things turn around me. I am in a pool.
Robert Moses swims with me, and I with him.
I say, "Oh, let the decades filter outward!"
And he says, "Let them file down the streets."

—*Samuel Amadon*

said I did it and went home." Browder knew that it was a gamble; even though he was innocent, he could lose at trial. "I used to go to my cell and lie down and think, like, Maybe I am crazy; maybe I am going too far," he recalled. "But I just did what I thought was right."

On May 29th, the thirty-first court date on Browder's case, there was another development. DiMango peered down from the bench. "The District Attorney is really in a position right now where they cannot proceed," she said. "It is their intention to dismiss the case." She explained that this could not officially happen until the next court date, which ended up being a week later. "I will release you today, but you have to come back here on time without any new cases," she said. "Do you think you can do that, Mr. Browder?"

"Yes," he said.

Browder could not believe what was happening. His battle to prove his innocence had ended. No trial, no jury, no verdict. An assistant district attorney filed a memo with the court explaining that Bautista, the man who had accused Browder, had gone back to Mexico. The District Attorney's office had reached his brother in the Bronx and tried to arrange for him to return and testify, but then the office lost contact with the brother, too. "Without the Complainant, we are unable to meet our burden of proof at trial," the prosecutor wrote.

Browder had to spend one more night on Rikers. By now, he had missed his junior year of high school, his senior year, graduation, the prom. He was no longer a teen-ager; four days earlier, he had turned twenty.

He didn't know what time he would be released, so he told his mother not to bother picking him up. The next afternoon, he walked out of jail, a single thought in his mind: "I'm going home!" He took the bus to Queens Plaza, then two subways to the Bronx, and his euphoria began to dissipate. Being around so many people felt strange. Except for a few weeks, he had been in solitary confinement for the previous seventeen months.

After leaving Rikers, Browder moved back home, where his mother and two of his brothers were living. Everybody could see that he had changed. Most of the clothes in his bedroom no longer fit; he had grown an inch or two while he was away and had become brawnier. Many of his former pastimes—playing video games, watching movies, shooting hoops in the park—no longer engaged him. He preferred to spend time by himself, alone in his bedroom, with the door closed. Sometimes he found himself pacing, as he had done in solitary. When he saw old friends, he was reminded of their accomplishments and what he had not achieved: no high-

school diploma, no job, no money, no apartment of his own.

Before he went to jail, he used to like sitting on his front steps with his friends, and when a group of attractive girls walked by he'd call out, "Hi. What are you doing? Where's the party at? Can I go with you?" Now, if he managed to get a girl's number, the first real conversation would always go the same way: she would ask him if he was in school or working, and he would feel his anxiety rise. Once he revealed that he was still living at home, without a job or a diploma, "they look at me like I ain't worth nothing. Like I ain't shit. It hurts to have people look at you like that." He could explain that he'd been wrongfully arrested, but the truth felt too complicated, too raw and personal. "If I tell them the story, then I gotta hear a hundred questions," he said. "It gets emotional for me. And those emotions I don't feel comfortable with."

Not long after Browder returned home, one of his relatives called an attorney named Paul V. Prestia and told him that Browder had spent three years on Rikers only to have his case dismissed. "Send him down," Prestia said. A former prosecutor in Brooklyn, Prestia now has his own firm. On his office wall hangs a 2011 *Post* story about a Haitian chef from the Bronx who was mistakenly arrested for rape and spent eight days on Rikers; Prestia got the case dismissed.

When Prestia first heard Browder's story, he thought there must be a catch; even by the sorry standards of justice in the Bronx, the case was extreme. "It's something that could've been tried in a court in a matter of days," he told me. "I don't know how each and every prosecutor who looked at this case continued to let this happen. It's like Kalief Browder didn't even exist." Earlier this year, Prestia filed a suit on Browder's behalf against the city, the N.Y.P.D., the Bronx District Attorney, and the Department of Correction.

Robert T. Johnson, the Bronx District Attorney, will not answer questions about Browder's case, because, once the charges were dismissed, the court records were sealed. But recently when I asked him a general question about cases that drag on and on, he was quick to deflect blame. "These long delays—two, three years—they're horrendous, but the D.A. is not

really accountable for that kind of delay,” he said. His explanation was that either the case did not actually exceed the six-month speedy-trial deadline or the defense attorney failed to bring a speedy-trial motion.

Prestia, in his lawsuit, alleges “malicious prosecution,” charging that Johnson’s prosecutors were “representing to the court that they would be ‘ready’ for trial, when in fact, they never were.” Prestia said, “The million-dollar question is: When did they really know they didn’t have a witness? Did they really not know until 2013?” He suspects that, as he wrote in his complaint, they were “seeking long, undue adjournments of these cases to procure a guilty plea from plaintiff.” The city has denied all allegations of wrongdoing, and Johnson, when I asked about these accusations, said, “Certainly if there is something uncovered that we did wrong, I will deal with that here. But I don’t expect that to be the case.”

Prestia has represented many clients who were wrongfully arrested, but Browder’s story troubles him most deeply. “Kalief was deprived of his right to a fair and speedy trial, his education, and, I would even argue, his entire adolescence,” he says. “If you took a sixteen-year-old kid and locked him in a room for twenty-three hours, your son or daughter, you’d be arrested for endangering the welfare of a child.” Browder doesn’t know exactly how many days he was in solitary—and Rikers officials, citing pending litigation, won’t divulge any details about his stay—but he remembers that it was “about seven hundred, eight hundred.”

One day last November, six months after his release, Browder retreated to his bedroom with a steak knife, intending to slit his wrists. A friend happened to stop by, saw the knife, and grabbed it. When he left the house to find Browder’s mother, Browder tried to hang himself from a bannister. An ambulance rushed him to St. Barnabas Hospital, where he was admitted to the psychiatric ward. In his medical record, a social worker describes the suicide attempt as “serious.”

One afternoon this past spring, I sat with Browder in a quiet restaurant in lower Manhattan. He is five feet seven, with a high forehead, tired eyes, and a few wisps of hair above his upper lip.

“Being home is way better than being in jail,” he told me. “But in my mind right now I feel like I’m still in jail, because I’m still feeling the side effects from what happened in there.”

When I first asked if I could interview him, he was reluctant, but eventually he agreed, and we met many times. We always met in downtown Manhattan, near Prestia’s office. He didn’t want to meet in the Bronx, and seemed to feel more comfortable speaking where nobody knew him. He almost always wore the same uniform: a hoodie with the hood pulled down; a pair of earbuds, one stuck in an ear and the other swinging free; rosary beads dangling from his neck—not because he is Catholic (his family are Jehovah’s Witnesses) but “for fashion,” he said. When I asked him about Rikers, he surprised me with his willingness to speak. At times, he seemed almost unable to stop, as if he had long been craving the chance to tell somebody about what he endured. Other times, though, the act of remembering seemed almost physically painful: he would fall silent, drop his gaze, and shake his head.

Ever since Browder left Rikers, he has tried to stay busy. He sat through G.E.D. prep classes, signed up for a computer course, searched for a job, and attended weekly counselling sessions. This past March, he learned that he had passed the G.E.D. on the first try. “I gained some of my pride back,” he told me. He landed a job as a security guard—not his dream position, but it would serve while he looked for something better. By coincidence, one of the places he was sent was St. Barnabas. On his second day there, he overheard some employees talking about him; somebody seemed to have figured out that he had been in the psychiatric ward. Soon afterward, with a vague explanation, he was fired.

Prestia helped him find a part-time job, working for a friend who runs a jewelry business in the same building as Prestia’s office, near Wall Street. On May 29th—four days after his twenty-first birthday, and a year to the day after DiMango told him that he would be set free—Browder stood on a sidewalk in front of a Chase bank, handing out flyers advertising the jewelry business. He told me that he liked Wall Street—being sur-

rounded by people with briefcases and suits, everyone walking with a sense of purpose. “When I see professional people, I see myself,” he said. “I say, ‘I want to be like them.’”

Exactly how he would manage this he was not sure. Most days, the progress he had made since coming home did not feel like progress to him. “It’s been a year now, and I got a part-time job, and I got my G.E.D.,” he said. “But, when you think about it, that’s nothing. People tell me because I have this case against the city I’m all right. But I’m not all right. I’m messed up. I know that I might see some money from this case, but that’s not going to help me mentally. I’m mentally scarred right now. That’s how I feel. Because there are certain things that changed about me and they might not go back.”

This month, Browder started classes at Bronx Community College. But, even now, he thinks about Rikers every day. He says that his flashbacks to that time are becoming more frequent. Almost anything can trigger them. It might be the sight of a police cruiser or something more innocuous. When his mother cooks rice and chili, he says, he can’t help remembering the rice and chili he was fed on Rikers, and suddenly, in his mind, he is back in the Bing, recalling how hungry he was all the time, especially at night, when he’d have to wait twelve hours for his next meal.

Even with his friends, things aren’t the same. “I’m trying to break out of my shell, but I guess there is no shell. I guess this is just how I am—I’m just quiet and distant,” he says. “I don’t like being this way, but it’s just natural to me now.” Every night before he goes to sleep, he checks that every window in the house is locked. When he rides the subway, he often feels terrified. “I might be attacked; I might be robbed,” he says. “Because, believe me, in jail you know there’s all type of criminal stuff that goes on.” No matter how hard he tries, he cannot forget what he saw: inmates stealing from each other, officers attacking teens, blood on the dayroom floor. “Before I went to jail, I didn’t know about a lot of stuff, and, now that I’m aware, I’m paranoid,” he says. “I feel like I was robbed of my happiness.” ♦

INTERNETFACTCHECKING.COM

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

Dear Internet Fact Checking: I spend a lot of time in a genealogical chat room called whosyourgranny.com. Recently, it carried a post suggesting that the Koch brothers, the right-wing billionaires from Wichita, Kansas, were distantly related to the late Ed Koch, the former Democratic mayor of New York, despite the fact that their names are pronounced differently. It sounds right to me, but someone I work with told me that you can't believe everything you read on the Internet.

High Flier, Torrance, Calif.

Dear High Flier:

Whoever told you that you can't believe everything you read on the Internet is a deeply cynical and untrustworthy person. Both the Mayor and the billionaires from Wichita flatly denied any family connection, and flat denials are, of course, the next best thing to an admission. According to kissincousins.com, the Mayor and the Koch brothers discussed the matter in 2008, during a reception honoring David Koch for his donation to what became the David H. Koch Theatre, at Lincoln Center—although Mayor Koch had privately referred to the donation and the renaming as “yet another reputation-laundering operation” (dishmonger.com). At the reception, the Wichita Kochs dismissed a family relationship with Ed Koch as ridiculous, and spent twenty minutes trying to explain why without mentioning the word “Jewish” (knishdish.com). Finally, Mayor Koch ended the conversation by saying, “I’m not related to any out-of-towners” (whosyourgranny.com).

Dear Internet Fact Checking:

Now that every product on the shelves claims to be gluten-free, I started to wonder what happened to all of that gluten that used to be in everything. Then I read on cashgab.com that someone has been buying up gluten (at

bargain-basement prices) and storing it in caves in Utah, on the theory that—like eggs, which used to be considered unhealthy and now are considered O.K. to eat—gluten will someday be found to be perfectly healthy, food companies will want to put gluten back in their products, and buyers will find that one person has cornered the world's gluten supply. Is this true?

Ravioliron, Rock Springs, Wyo.



Dear Ravioliron:

As usual, cashgab.com is, if we may put it this way, on the money. Where has all the gluten gone? Is it just a coincidence that the same question was raised (hidingstuff.com) about the eventual destination of the trans fats that so many products claimed to have rid themselves of? What about reports (photosquashed.com) that astronauts took pictures from space of quivering mountains of trans fats in the Chihuahuan Desert, and that the pictures were suppressed because of pressure from the Trilateral Commission? As if this weren't proof enough, trucks have definitely been seen driving through Utah (eyeballer.com). Why else would trucks drive through Utah? Is it just a coinci-

dence that Utah ranks fourteenth among the states for number of usable caves? It is hardly insignificant that when George Soros was asked whether he was trying to corner the gluten market, he said, and we quote, “What a stupid question!” (cashgab.com).

Dear Internet Fact Checking:

I read on the Internet (I think it was on starschmutz.com) that some London bookmakers are taking odds on whether Vladimir Putin or Kate Winslet will appear the most times without a shirt in front of a camera during any given month. A friend of mine read the same thing, which makes me think it's true.

Sixpacker, Chillicothe, Mo.

Dear Sixpacker:

The report on the London betting was indeed by starschmutz.com, and you can take their reporting to the bank. In fact, the story, we're told by a reliable media outlet (gossipedia.com), goes farther: London, where you can legally bet on almost anything, is a city that has proved very attractive to billionaire Russian oligarchs, all of whom have an intense interest in Vladimir Putin. According to russoblab.com (significantly, the site that had the exclusive on Putin and Madonna's love child), the oligarchs sometimes refer to Putin as the Bare-Naked Boychik. No less an authority than moviedirt.com reports that the oligarchs are suspected of having been behind the fact that Kate Winslet, who was heavily favored to win against Putin for December, 2008, because of the release that month of “Revolutionary Road,” managed to complete two sex scenes in that film without removing her shirt. See the post on celebritybreasts.com (significantly, the same site that had the exclusive on Putin and Prince Harry's love child) entitled “Was the Editing Room Locked?” At the same time, we have reports that a December, 2008, photo will soon emerge showing Putin—whose shirtless pictures have usually been of some outdoor activity like horseback riding or fishing—appearing naked from the waist up in a formal meeting with His Holiness Kirill I, Patriarch of Moscow and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Patriarch was fully clothed, according to a source who was nearly there (starschmutz.com). ♦

THE WEIGHT OF WORDS

One of Russia's most famous writers confronts the state.

BY MASHA GESSEN

About three-quarters of the way through Lyudmila Ulitskaya's latest novel, "The Big Green Tent," set in the Soviet Union after the Second World War, a character named Mikha stays up all night reading. In the morning, when he arrives at work late, overwhelmed from the night of reading and from the discovery that his col-

lies of events that will end Mikha's career and, ultimately, his life.

Back when many books were banned in the Soviet Union, books had that kind of power. The official publishing houses printed vast quantities of a tiny selection of titles. The underground canon—the samizdat—was also small, chosen nearly at random with question-

year, a character comes across an entire discarded home library of unapproved books and discovers, to her disappointment, that she has already read all of them—meaning that she has read these physical copies, which once belonged to the parents of a friend.

A book can be an inspiration or a murder weapon. Ulitskaya is fascinated by these transformations, but even more so by the peculiar trajectories that create fate—the travels of a person, a picture, a book. If there is a strange journey to be traced, she cannot resist the retelling. On a warm July Saturday afternoon in Moscow, she gave a talk about an anthology of pieces devoted to the memory of the dissident poet Natalya Gorbanevskaya, her lifelong friend, who died



Lyudmila Ulitskaya has become a voice of moral authority, tackling in her novels topics that make many Russians uncomfortable.

leagues have covered for him, Mikha is compelled to share his reading with an older co-worker. It is a set of photographs of manuscripts that could not be published in the Soviet Union, and one look at it is enough for the older man to grasp the gravity of the crime that is being confessed. He reports Mikha to the authorities, setting in motion a se-

able literary taste and eclectic political beliefs: retyped manuscripts of recently written unpublishable books; facsimile copies of rediscovered books from an earlier, freer era; and printed volumes smuggled into the country by proselytizers of various kinds. In another scene in "The Big Green Tent," which will be published in the United States next

last year. She noted Gorbanevskaya's political activism and the persecution she faced. Gorbanevskaya was first arrested at the age of twenty, for associating with people who protested the Soviet invasion of Hungary, in 1956. She spent two years in a psychiatric hospital for daring to document the dissident movement, having helped found a newsletter that

tracked arrests and dissident activities. In 1975, she was forced to emigrate. But the focus of Ulitskaya's talk was Gorbanevskaya's nonlinear private life. The poet never married but, like her mother, adopted a girl; she also had two biological sons. Both of her sons had children out of wedlock before marrying women who were not the children's mothers. It fell to Gorbanevskaya to create connections among all these people. "She made friends of everyone; she made everyone love one another," Ulitskaya said, and an extended family took shape. She died a happy death, sudden and peaceful. But she was penniless. As one of her sons sat in her Paris apartment trying to figure out how to pay for her burial, a friend's widower called to offer his condolences—and ended up offering a cemetery plot as well, which he had bought for himself before remarrying. "And so she lies next to her friend, in a gifted grave," Ulitskaya concluded.

It's a great story. It also showcases the human qualities that Ulitskaya seems to prize most: personal loyalty—not to be confused with niceness, which Gorbanevskaya did not possess—and a boundless capacity for inclusion. Ulitskaya speaks of her friend with admiration as if for a member of a higher caste. "I wasn't a dissident," she explains. "I was a girl who washed the dishes in the kitchen while they talked. I remember all of them, but hardly any of them remembered me." Now, at seventy-one, she has become a voice of moral authority for differently minded Russians, and one of Russia's most famous writers.

In recent years, as Russia has grown politically repressive and culturally conservative, Ulitskaya's fiction, which addresses both religion and politics, has moved in for a confrontation. Increasingly, Ulitskaya has also become a public intellectual. During the anti-Putin protests of 2011 and 2012, Ulitskaya joined the board of the League of Voters, which tried to coordinate and direct the disparate components of the protests. She continued speaking out even after the protests were crushed; by the end of this past summer, she, along with a handful of other writers and a couple of musicians, had been branded a traitor for her opposition to the war in Ukraine. The musicians in the group have had their concerts cancelled all over the

country. The writers' punishment may be slower in coming, but already Ulitskaya is the object of regular assaults by Kremlin mouthpieces in such venues as the newspaper *Izvestia*, which apes the rhetoric used against writers who were excommunicated by Soviet authorities, half a century ago. Like some of those writers, she is widely read outside Russia. She has amassed many of Europe's most prestigious literary prizes, even as she has come under attack at home.

The Gorbanevskaya event was part of a haphazardly organized city-funded series, and Ulitskaya spoke under a big white tent in a park in a historically working-class neighborhood. The moderator, a young, bearded book reviewer, approached her minutes before the event to rehearse the format. He had to step off the wooden path and stand on the grass so as not to tower over Ulitskaya, who is barely five feet tall. Once she got a look at him, she said, with evident satisfaction, "You look just like your mother." The moderator's mother is a scholar and translator of French literature and part of Ulitskaya's extraordinarily large social circle of Moscow intelligentsia. After the event, it emerged that the organizers, seemingly unaccustomed to dealing with speakers of Ulitskaya's renown, had failed to set up a table for signing books, so Ulitskaya sat cross-legged on the ground. Her older fans looked shocked, even as they reached into their bags for copies of her books—she has published eight novels and numerous short-story collections.

Ulitskaya agreed to the reading as a result of a misunderstanding: she thought that the young woman who called her with the request was someone else. But it was a happy accident: the people present gave Ulitskaya the idea and the opportunity to do some quiet fund-raising for a Russian-Ukrainian publishing project. With Russia fighting a very popular war against Ukraine, it was a difficult task. But, dating back to Alexander Herzen, who spoke out against Russia's war with Poland, in the mid-nineteenth century, members of the Russian intelligentsia have supported nations victimized by the empire. Ulitskaya is one of the few people still carrying out this duty.

Ulitskaya's fiction is often, like her talk about Gorbanevskaya, storytelling reduced to plot. She does not inhabit her characters; rather, she describes and



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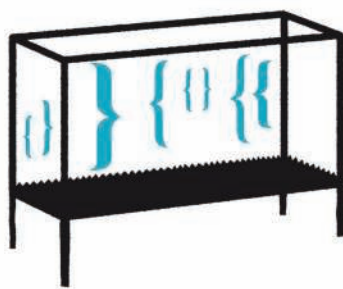
observes them through a narrator who seems to hover at an equal distance from each one. In “The Big Green Tent,” as in her other novels, she often favors capsule descriptions over character development: “She was barely fifty, but to her daughter she appeared old and uninteresting. Raisa Ilinichna shared this view of herself.” She makes little use of dialogue and, unusual in Russian fiction, does not delve into the tortured workings of her characters’ psyches, though she acknowledges that tortured they are: “Feelings of guilt and disgust were killing him, and the idea of suicide was constantly lurking in the margins of his consciousness.” The result is compelling, addictive reading, driven entirely by the desire to learn what happens next. Every time I start reading something of hers, I am initially taken aback by the flatness of her characters’ emotional landscape and her transparently convoluted plots. And then, after a certain point, I can’t stop. In Russia, Ulitskaya’s books sell ten times as many copies as any other literary fiction.

A gift for rendering the vagaries of fate was evident long before Ulitskaya started writing fiction. Tatyana Borisova, an old friend of hers, told me that when Gorbanevskaya was asked who Ulitskaya was—in fact, Gorbanevskaya was asked this quite often, because the young Ulitskaya, though short and short-haired and flat-chested, the exact opposite of the classic Russian beauty, was by all accounts possessed of a magnetic sexuality—she would say, “Lus’ka?,” using an intimate diminutive for Lyudmila. “Who is Lus’ka? Lus’ka is a writer. Yes, that’s who she is.”

But, before becoming a published author, Ulitskaya spent decades on the edges of Soviet society, to which people who lacked roles in official state structures were relegated. She started on a conventional enough track. Her parents were highly educated ethnic Jews, her mother a biologist and her father an engineer and inventor. After high school, Ulitskaya worked as a lab assistant on a long-running brain study, a job she secured by successfully decapitating a live baby rat. This gave her the understanding that a momentary lapse in moral vigilance can set one on a path that one would have thought unimaginable.

“On Judgment Day, I personally will be standing knee-deep in decapitated rats,” she has written. In her case, it led to working with the brains of larger and larger mammals, both living and dead. In the case of most of the characters in “The Big Green Tent,” it leads to collaborating with the K.G.B.

Moscow State University, where Ulitskaya wanted to study, had an unofficial but strictly enforced quota on the number of Jews admitted, but in 1962, after applying three times in two years, she was admitted to the biology department. Like many women in the Soviet Union, Ulitskaya married early. Her husband was a physicist. They divorced when she was twenty-five, and about to graduate from university. She got a job at the Institute of Genetics, and soon remarried—this time, her husband was a young geneticist. The field of genetics had been nearly eliminated under Stalin, who believed in the singular power of the environment to shape all living things, and demanded that the research of Soviet scientists comply with his belief. Following Stalin’s death, in 1953, genetics was gradually re-legitimized. Scientists returned from internal exile or emerged from hiding to resume their work, and Ulitskaya joined four other scientists in a laboratory. Young and well-educated, they were avid consumers and occasional distributors of samizdat. At one point, Ulitskaya



was given the chance to retype a copy of an underground translation of Leon Uris’s “Exodus.” The task was so important that Ulitskaya did not even notice how much she disliked the writing. “Now that you can buy it in any bookstore, no one does, because it’s so mediocre,” she said. “But back then I found it insanely interesting, because we didn’t know anything about Israel.” She typed poorly, so she paid the lab’s typist to do the job. The typist turned the novel, the

typewriter, and the five young scientists in to the K.G.B. They got off easy: they were held and questioned for less than twenty-four hours and then released from jail—and from their jobs. The lab was shut down.

In “The Big Green Tent,” this story turns into two: one about a typist, a friend, and a typewriter that ends up with the K.G.B., and the one about Mikha’s reading indiscretion, which starts him on the path to full-on dissident activity and then to jail. Ulitskaya chose a different route. Like many intellectuals of her generation, she sought refuge from the Soviet system in the underground practice of Christianity. And, after losing her job, she took advantage of an opportunity that Soviet society afforded its disenfranchised women: for the next decade, she focussed entirely on her family. She cared for her mother as she died of cancer, and she had two sons with her second husband.

Then Ulitskaya did what she still considers one of the bravest things she has ever done: she divorced her husband. “I had two very small children, no job, and no support network to speak of,” she said. She had fallen in love with an artist named Andrey Krasulin, but she claims that that was not the reason for the divorce; in any case, she did not marry him. In the end, she had what she considers to be the quintessential Russian woman’s experience: that of bringing up her children alone. After the Second World War, which led to a shortage of men from which the Soviet Union never fully recovered, social forces and government policies combined to create the female-headed household as a distinct—and common—institution. Ulitskaya’s divorce settlement got her an apartment in Moscow’s relatively comfortable and prestigious Writers’ Union quarter—though she was not yet a writer—and alimony payments that, combined with her talent for making connections and her having the time to stand in lines for hours on end, put food on the table. But when her younger son started attending preschool, in the late seventies, she decided to go back to work.

Ulitskaya was invited to take on the role of dramaturge at the Jewish Chamber Musical Theatre. She uses the word “role” advisedly: the theatre performed in Yiddish, but not a single member of the

troupe spoke the language. Its existence could be attributed only to the hypnotic powers of its founder, a dancer, director, and composer named Yuri Sherling. In the mid-seventies, Sherling, then in his early thirties, convinced the Soviet authorities that the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan, a failed attempt at creating a Jewish settlement on the Soviet-Chinese border, should have its own theatre. I have seen the building constructed for the theatre there: it is the largest glass-and-concrete structure for hundreds of miles. Sherling's troupe played there only once in the theatre's eight-year existence; the rest of the time, it staged Yiddish-language musicals in Moscow. Ulitskaya brushed up on her German, and learned the Hebrew alphabet; the combination placed her in the general vicinity of understanding Yiddish.

During the next three years, Ulitskaya found that she liked the theatre and hated most of what was written for the stage. "It occurred to me that writing my own play would be easier than rewriting someone else's bad play," she said. In 1982, when she was thirty-nine, she quit, completed a yearlong course on writing for animation—which is the extent of her formal literary training and the source of her unshakable belief that every story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end—and started writing plays, many for puppet theatres. Some of them are still being staged.

In the mid-eighties, Mikhail Gorbachev declared the era of perestroika and glasnost; censors loosened the reins on literary publishing, and a variety of journals and magazines filled with previously unpublishable writing. Press runs increased exponentially, reaching into the millions for some literary journals. Ulitskaya had started writing stories; she sent them to five magazines and got five rejection letters.

These first short stories, like the subsequent novellas and novels, traced the shaping and the invention of lives: loves that are improbably found or, even more improbably, carried through decades; unlikely alliances of every sort; the crooked journeys of people and things through space and time. They made reference to facts of public life that had been kept silent for most of the Soviet period and had now become topics of

extensive discussion—the Gulag, the Holocaust, Jews. But these topics were merely the background for Ulitskaya's study of her characters' small lives. At times, her stories read like benevolent gossip, and, unlike much of the writing that was emerging then, they were not anti-Soviet; rather, they were profoundly un-Soviet. She evoked a world in which nothing was more important than the private lives of individuals.

Ulitskaya's first published short fiction appeared in 1990, in a magazine called *Ogonyok*, which means "Little Flame," launching her career and what she apologetically calls her "Cinderella story." First, she got a phone call from Sergei Kaledin, then one of Russia's most successful fiction writers. "I knew who he was, of course—he was at the top of his fame," Ulitskaya told me. "He says, 'Listen, I liked your story.' I say, 'Thank you, that is very good to hear.' And he says, 'Do you have any more? Where do you live, anyway?' And twenty minutes later Seryozha walks through the door." Even before looking at Ulitskaya's other stories, he told her, "All right, we'll make a book"—and over the next couple of years Kaledin and his wife, a book editor, shepherded Ulitskaya's first story collection, "Poor Relations," to publication. The book has stayed in print for twenty years and has been published in ten countries.

After the success of her short stories, Ulitskaya tried writing something longer. Her novel "Sonechka" was short-listed for the Russian Booker Prize in 1993 and awarded the Prix Médicis Étranger in 1996. The French prize is given to writers whose "fame does not yet match their talent." Ulitskaya's opinion of her talent, however, is tempered. By the time she became a published author, she felt she was too old to want to compare herself to others. "I hold a sober view of my abilities," she claims. It took her years to stop feeling like an impostor, and she still often mentions her lack of formal literary training. Her first profession casts a slight shadow over her success. Ulitskaya confesses that the void in her life left by genetics has recently started hurting more, perhaps because there is no pretending that she could ever go back, not at the age of seventy-one, with science

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having advanced beyond recognition.

But writing has given her a chance to relive the past, which she does in all her books. "I can't change what happened, but I can think about it," she said. "I can analyze. And then you start to see details you couldn't see when you were inside that time." Her books trace the progression of her life, in relatively straightforward chronological order. The early short stories take place in the fifties and sixties, when she was growing up. "Sonechka" takes its protagonist, a librarian, from the Second World War through the seventies. Published in 1993, it also contains a lesbian romance and even the tame outlines of a lesbian sex scene: "Yasya led her into the room that had just been declared the maiden's chamber but was fated never to shelter any maidens. They climbed into Yasya's bed. Yasya removed the band from her thick ponytail and as they stroked each other's hair they made up fully." The portrayal of such a romance is unimaginable in a mainstream Russian book today; it would run afoul of the newly conservative cultural norms and legislation.

Gradually, Ulitskaya tackled bigger stories. The eponymous protagonist of her second novel, "The Kukotsky Case," is a gynecologist whose practice focusses in-

creasingly on abortion, which was then illegal in the Soviet Union. Kukotsky is based largely on Ulitskaya's father, though he was an engineer and not a doctor. Kukotsky's daughter, Tanya, works in a brain-research lab, where she preps samples of ever larger mammals until she realizes that she would have no reservations, if asked, about prepping a human baby:

"What are you injecting?" Tanya asked in a businesslike tone.

"A human fetus," Raya responded.

Tanya opened a glass case filled with tiny metal gems, clanging her keys, removed tweezers, scalpels, and fixators from a broken box, counted all this old metal out one by one, and, as she picked out the right clamps, asked, still all business:

"Living or dead?"

"Dead," good-looking Raya responded calmly, signed for the tools she had received, and began her uneven descent down a steep little stairway into the cellar.

She had made it all the way to the bottom and was already shuffling her hand against the wall in search of the light switch when Tanya realized what she had asked. And once she did, she replaced the key to the O.R., took off her white coat and hung it up, and walked out of the laboratory. She never went back. Nor did she go back to the university: her love affair with science had ended permanently at that minute.

She quits the lab to lead the life of a bohemian. The moral epiphany is Ulitskaya's own, though she did not quit

but was fired. The book, which preceded Russia's current ultraconservative phase by nearly a decade, won the Russian Booker Prize, in 2001. Ulitskaya was the first woman to be awarded what was then the country's most important literary honor. She was now far better known than her former benefactor Kaledin or any of the literary stars of the nineties, such as Peter Aleshkovsky and Evgeny Popov. Along the way, she lost her religion.

Russian Orthodoxy had been Ulitskaya's way out of what she calls the "airless space" of the Soviet Union in the nineteen-seventies. "I was ready to accept any offer that suggested an exit from this eternally flat space," she says. "You should say thank you I didn't become a Satanist." Nor did she become an observant Jew, as did some other ethnic Jews of her acquaintance. She associated Judaism with her grandfather, a watchmaker from the shtetl, who studied the Torah until he died but, she said, "had no use for Tolstoy." She attended services with a small group of co-conspirators at a priest's house in a town a few hours outside of Moscow. "It was the discovery of a new kind of collectivism, a community of different but like-minded people," she wrote in a personal essay published in a 2012 collection of her nonfiction. "There was no force, only a shared desire to serve one another."

Once the Soviet regime collapsed, the Russian Orthodox Church gathered all its parts, including the groups that had been underground and the masses who had been passive, and merged with the state in all its newly corrupt and tasteless glory. Church property was reclaimed, wrested not only from factories and bureaucratic institutions but also from schools and hospitals that happened to be occupying valuable real estate. A new church was constructed on seemingly every street corner, the funds collected from entrepreneurs allied with the government. The Bible became a mandatory subject in grade school. The head of the Church wore a wristwatch worth forty thousand dollars.

In an attempt to figure out what Christianity should be, Ulitskaya wrote her most ambitious novel, "Daniel Stein, Interpreter." Published in 2006, it is based on the life of Oswald Rufeisen, a

Polish Jew who survived the Second World War by pretending to be a Gentile, worked as an interpreter for the Germans, managed to use his job to help three hundred Jews escape death, later hid in a convent, then converted to Christianity, became a Catholic priest named Brother Daniel, and emigrated to Israel in the nineteen-fifties. The novel was about faith and freedom, rather than about love and life, and although it still had a beginning, a middle, and an end, long stretches of it read like a selection of archival material. The themes of the book—Jewish-Christian relations and the Holocaust—were unfamiliar to most readers in Russia, where discussion of both religion and the Holocaust had been banned for decades. “I was writing that book for two dozen people who I thought were engaged with the subject,” she says. “Daniel Stein” sold about two and a half million copies in Russia and was awarded the *Bolshaya Kniga*—Big Book—prize, which had overtaken the Booker as the country’s most important literary award.

But the English translation flopped in the United States. Ulitskaya’s previous books hadn’t sold particularly well here, but they were generally well reviewed. “Daniel Stein” was barely noticed, and that may have spared Ulitskaya some unpleasant moments: she closely follows the fate of her books in all their editions. “A wish-fulfillment fantasy of the conversion of the Jews” was one of the kinder lines from Melvin Jules Bukiet, in the *Washington Post*. To a Western reader, “Daniel Stein” feels as if it had been written in a vacuum. Although Ulitskaya undertook extensive research for the project, many passages read as though she were unaware of most of what has been written about the Holocaust in the past half century and about Jewish-Christian relations for a far longer period of time. But this may also account for the book’s—and Ulitskaya’s—spectacular popularity in Russia: she doggedly, and effectively, works to build a bridge between Russian culture, where, as recently as the seventies, she wrote, “no one had spoken of the subconscious,” and the larger world from which it was isolated. The book was an attempt, finally, to examine what it meant to be a Christian, now that nearly all Russians said they were Chris-

tians. “I may not have been aware of it, but I sensed the question was in the air,” she said.

The Russian Orthodox Church’s official press denounced “Daniel Stein” as “anti-Christian,” making Ulitskaya’s break with the Church final and public. It is the classic predicament of the Russian writer: novels are read as manifestos, prescriptions, and protests. Ulitskaya accepted the burden with no apparent difficulty; she had things to say, and more and more people were willing to listen. The worse things got in her country, the better she became at articulating its problems. In the late nineties and early two-thousands, she began organizing small-scale charity projects—helping a homeless family or a single juvenile facility—and writing about them.

She also launched her first venture as a publisher, a children’s-book series called “The Other, the Others, for Others”—a collection of short volumes that tackle cultural topics ranging from food to family. The book on families, which includes eleven lines on same-sex unions, got Ulitskaya in trouble. The detached, anthropological tone of the passage would make most Americans cringe. But it was enough to draw the ire of the prosecutor of a provincial Russian city, and the author of the book, Vera Timenchik, was dragged in for questioning several times earlier this year and threatened with charges of spreading propaganda about homosexuality and incest. Ulitskaya spoke publicly about the interrogations and said that she would be willing to testify, but the case then seemed to disappear. Apparently, the prosecutor’s office did not want to take on someone so well loved.

In 2008, Ulitskaya became one of several Russian writers who accepted an invitation to correspond publicly with Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former oil tycoon who was Russia’s best-known political prisoner. In 2003, Khodorkovsky was jailed for tax evasion, but many Russians believe that his actual crime was insubordination to the Kremlin. Now he was trying to build a political platform from jail. His other high-profile correspondents were Boris Akunin, an author of best-selling historical fiction, and Boris Strugatsky, a science-fiction writer. In their letters, the men occasionally

clashed as they debated the comparative advantages of democracies and dictatorships, the future of alternative energy, and the limitations of trying to predict the future. But Ulitskaya acted like a master interviewer, fleshing out the portrait of a man she found bewildering: he had been a true believer in Communism at a time when she thought such people were extinct, and had turned into a fervent capitalist. She had also, she confessed, found him suspect because of his wealth. “I feel ashamed for the wealthy,” she wrote. “I admit that I am prejudiced.” Their correspondence was published in 2009.

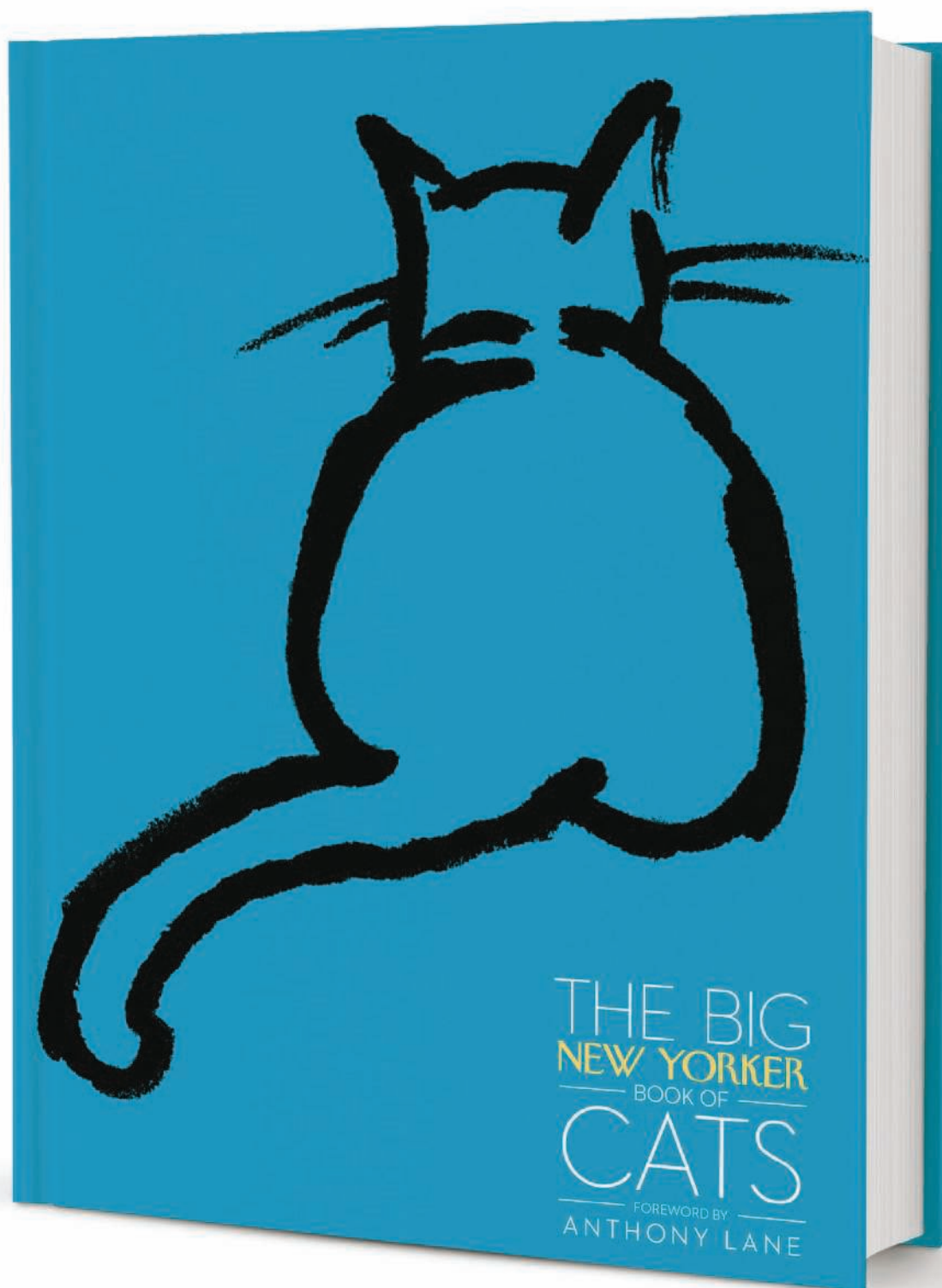
He wrote to her:

Jail is the opposite of culture, the opposite of civilization. Here good is evil and evil is good. Human refuse here grooms other human refuse while decent people grow deeply unhappy because they can do nothing inside this disgusting system.

No, that’s too much. They can do something, of course, and they do, but it is frightful to watch that only a few can survive the day to day while dozens of human lives are ruined. And how slow change proceeds, always turning around and back on itself.

The correspondence helped bolster Khodorkovsky’s reputation; even in prison, he emerged as the leading critical voice in Russia. Late last year, after Khodorkovsky had spent ten years in prison, Putin pardoned him on the unspoken condition that he stay out of Russia and Russian politics. Following a brief period of silence, Khodorkovsky, who now lives in Switzerland, started commenting on Russian politics; he has also re-launched a foundation for social change in Russia and funded several projects, including joint Russian-Ukrainian ventures that have involved Ulitskaya. But his forced exile has rendered him less relevant to Russians. Akunin now spends most of the year out of the country, explaining that he finds the environment toxic. Strugatsky died. That has left barely a handful of prominent non-nationalist public intellectuals, including Ulitskaya.

This year, Ulitskaya became the de facto head of Russian PEN, the writers’-advocacy organization, whose Russian chapter had long been quiet. Under her leadership, it quickly turned into one of the few voices in Russia criticizing the war in Ukraine; its revamped Web site has become a repository of antiwar articles and statements. That, in turn,



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has made her the object of attacks. In late August, the president of Russian PEN, the seventy-seven-year-old novelist Andrei Bitov, who had not been active in years, issued a vitriolic open letter accusing Ulitskaya of having staged a coup. A few days later, a large banner went up on one of Moscow's central avenues, featuring portraits of five people—two rock stars, a journalist, and two writers, one of them Ulitskaya—next to an American flag, with the words “Are You Living Off Their Bucks?” Within a few months, Ulitskaya had gone from being too popular for the prosecutor's office to tangle with to being someone too dangerous to be allied with.

Several days after the talk in Moscow, she travelled to Salzburg to collect the Austrian State Prize for European Literature, the country's highest literary prize. Along the way, she wrote an essay for *Der Spiegel* about the experience of being a Russian writer receiving a European prize in 2014, and the Russian text went viral. “Culture has suffered a crushing defeat, and we, people of culture, are helpless to change our state's suicidal politics,” it read. “Goodbye, Europe. I'm afraid we will never be able to join the European family of nations.” When she returned to Moscow, in late August, ITAR-TASS, a state news agency, asked her to hold a press conference about receiving the prize. Two hours before the event, she was informed that the press conference had been cancelled; supposedly, a pipe had burst. The burst-pipe excuse is an old Soviet standby for cancelling anything anywhere. Ulitskaya may be the only person who lived through the previous period of blatant repression as an active reader and has entered the current one as a professional writer. And that, she says, is one of the many lucky coincidences of her life.

A sort of wondrous optimism, which comes across in all of her writing and her interviews, sets her apart from almost every Russian writer, past and present. The coincidences and twists that populate her books fill her with the joy of discovery. She was thrilled when she and I found a decent café in the back of an unremarkable Moscow building. To appreciate how unusual this makes Ulitskaya, against the desolate background of Rus-

sian literature, consider the word *prekrasnodushiye*. It denotes an optimistic world view—it means, literally, “fine soulhood”—and it is a put-down.

Ulitskaya spends part of the year in a tiny apartment in the Italian countryside, near Genoa. She bought it a couple of years ago, and, she says, it was “the smartest thing I have ever done, because that's the only place I can work.” She finds Moscow, which she once loved intensely, increasingly difficult to take: it is dirty, loud, inconvenient, and more and more hostile. In 2000, she moved into a larger apartment in the Writers' Union quarter. Her husband has an apartment next door. He is Andrey Krasulin, now seventy-nine, the artist she fell in love with thirty-seven years ago. While she was a divorced single mother, she says, they were locked in a battle of wills. After seventeen years, it ended, in what she calls “a perfectly honest, dignified draw”—and marriage. It is a union that involves more physical distance than many marriages, and more mutual interest and creative cross-pollination than most.

Four years ago, Ulitskaya received a diagnosis of Stage III breast cancer. She underwent a mastectomy in Israel, followed by chemotherapy and radiation. Several friends went through cancer diagnoses and treatment at the same time, and none of them were as lucky. Afterward, she wrote about the experience in several articles that she collected, along with other personal writings, in an anthology called “Discarded Relics.” She also spoke to journalists about the cancer and the treatments, and was filmed for a Russian documentary on living with the disease. None of these are things that Russian women of her generation, or Russian writers of any generation, would do: the former generally conceal their bodies in shame, and the latter tend not to entertain mortality. “It's just that I have things to say,” she explains. “I want to tell people not to be scared and to face their disease. There are treatments available. My mother died thirty years ago of a cancer with which she could have lived ten or thirteen years more with the kinds of treatment available today. And this is the

strongest argument there is for living in this country of ours: you can be an educator here every waking hour—while living at home.” Another way to look at it is that in Russia information is a scarce resource.

“Our generation—the boys and girls born in 1943—were extremely lucky,” she insists. “I was born late enough so I don't remember the war or the hunger. We were poor, we faced all sorts of limitations, but I never knew the pain of hunger. But I do remember Stalinism, and I remember Stalin's funeral. I still have those images in my mind, and I have written about them. Then we saw people getting released from the camps: my grandfather was released and I saw him for the first time in my life. Then there was the Khrushchev era, the hopes of

that. Then Brezhnev sucked all the air out—that was my generation's most difficult period.” She skips over the nineteen-eighties and nineties, the most exciting period for Russian intellectuals, and the time of her rise to literary stardom. From the vantage point of Russia in 2014, an authoritarian country at war, the brief period of post-Soviet elation appears irrelevant.

It is a strikingly selective narrative. I suggested to her that the story could be told differently. “You were born during the worst war in the history of humanity,” I said. “As soon as your family began to recover, the Stalin anti-Semitic campaign hit, and your mother lost her job. You came of age in an era of great hope, but then you lost your own job—indeed, your chosen profession. And your entire generation had its hopes dashed. The bulk of your adult years passed in the era you describe as ‘airless.’ Then it was all over and it seemed that you and your peers triumphed—only to have history turned back again. Soon enough, your books will be banned in this country.”

She nodded. “Yes, we tell the stories we want to tell,” she said. “I increasingly think I should describe myself not as Cinderella but as Little Red Riding Hood—I'll be eaten before it's all over.”

She paused and then said, “But maybe I won't live long enough to see that happen.” ♦



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THE REVENGE OF RAND PAUL

The Senator has fought to go mainstream with the ideology that he shares with his father. How far can that strategy take him?

BY RYAN LIZZA

At 8 A.M. on a Friday in late July, Senator Rand Paul, of Kentucky, stood before a predominantly African-American audience of about a hundred at an Urban League conference in Cincinnati. An ophthalmologist before he was a senator, Paul has spent much of his career in surgical scrubs, but he was dressed nattily, in a charcoal suit and a red rep tie. His typically unkempt curls, which give him the look of a philosophy student lost in thought, were restrained with the help of a hair product. His aides had been promoting the talk for weeks, as part of a yearlong effort to reintroduce himself to political constituencies—on both the left and the right—that may have reason to distrust him. In the next few months, he is planning to deliver a major speech on foreign policy; like race, it is an area in which Paul has encountered strident opposition.

Paul began with the story of Clyde Kennard, a black man in Mississippi who was jailed in 1960 on false charges after he tried to enroll at an all-white college. “Despite our progress,” Paul said, “there are Clyde Kennards today who can’t fully access the franchise because they’re handicapped by either educational or judicial systems.” He laid out a criminal-justice-reform package he has introduced in the Senate to end mandatory minimum-sentencing laws, expunge nonviolent felonies from criminals’ records, reclassify some felonies as misdemeanors, and restore voting rights to citizens who had committed a nonviolent felony. Like Barack Obama, he vowed to free many people imprisoned for crack cocaine, and he announced a new proposal to end the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine. He had even spoken with the President about it—not something about which a Republican would normally boast: “I talked to him last week and said, ‘I will help in any way I can.’”

Like many Republicans speaking before a black audience, Paul quoted Martin Luther King, Jr., but he also invoked Malcolm X. He declared, “I support the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.” If enacted, Paul’s agenda would arguably do more to address issues that are important to the black community than anything that other members of his party are currently proposing. Cory Booker, of New Jersey, a Democrat and one of only two African-Americans in the Senate, is co-sponsoring part of Paul’s reform package, and Harry Reid, the Democratic Majority Leader, has joined Paul’s bill to restore voting rights to felons. No Republican senator has endorsed any of the legislation. “As a Christian, I believe in redemption,” Paul told the crowd. “And I believe in second chances.”

In some respects, Paul is to Republicans in 2014 what Barack Obama was to Democrats in 2006: the Party’s most prized fund-raiser and its most discussed senator, willing to express opinions unpopular within his party, and capable of energizing younger voters. The Republican National Committee, which in 2008 refused to allow his father, Ron Paul, to speak at its Convention, recently solicited donations by offering supporters a chance to have lunch with Rand Paul. The only potential obstacle to a Paul Presidential candidacy in 2016 is his wife, Kelley. Douglas Stafford, Paul’s top political adviser, said, “Unless Kelley says no, he’s running.” Steve Munisteri, the chairman of the Republican Party of Texas, told me this summer, “He is objectively one of the three most likely people to get the nomination.”

Yet, also like Obama at a similar stage in his career, Paul could be hobbled by past associations and statements, especially on race and foreign policy. He has questioned government attempts, including a core provision of

the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to address discrimination in the private sector. He has proposed dramatically slashing the Pentagon’s budget and cancelling all foreign aid. Ron Paul ran for President as the nominee of the Libertarian Party in 1988 and as an isolationist Republican in the Presidential primaries of 2008 and 2012. Rand has followed his lead in opposing most U.S. military interventions of the past few decades, aside from the war in Afghanistan.

Many members of the Republican establishment see him as a dorm-room ideologue whose politics are indistinguishable from his father’s. Earlier this year, Mark Salter, who helped run John McCain’s 2008 Presidential campaign, wrote that Rand’s “foreign policy views, steeped as they are in the crack-pot theories that inform his father’s worldview, are so ill-conceived that were he to win the nomination, Republican voters seriously concerned with national security would have no responsible recourse other than to vote for Hillary Clinton.” Paul told me that he wasn’t concerned by such attacks. “Most of the criticism has come from people who would have us involved in fifteen wars right now,” he said. “The American people don’t want that. They’re closer to where I am.”

After the Cincinnati speech, I drove with Paul across the Ohio River into northern Kentucky, where a series of political meetings were scheduled. Paul is prickly but also has a quick sense of humor. He seemed to relax as we traded stories about the indignities of air travel on our respective trips from Washington. “I got sort of accosted by a guy,” he said. “The aisle people are allowed to stand in the aisle at the end of the flight, not the window people. So the guy behind me in the window gets out, pushes me across, you know, has a hundred-pound belly. When there’s no space between people, the polite thing



The G.O.P. has treated Ron Paul as a kook; his son understands which of his views to emphasize and which to downplay.

is not to push yourself in there. He pushes me forward and then leans on me the whole time while we're waiting the five minutes to get off the plane."

As I was waiting for Paul to finish a meeting, I told two of his aides about an e-mail that had been sent to reporters during his speech. It was from a public-relations firm working for Ron Paul, also a doctor, who had recently written a column for his Web site explaining why he thought Russia wasn't responsible for downing Malaysia Airlines Flight No. 17, in Ukraine. "In the interview, Dr. Paul will defend his controversial comments on Putin and voice his support of non-interventionist foreign policy," the e-mail said. Even as Rand was working to rebrand himself, his father was unintentionally undercutting the effort. Rand's aides were caught off guard. "It's good to see that the old man is still out there speaking his mind," one said.

Paul's relationship with his father is a sensitive issue. A couple of weeks before his speech to the Urban League, Paul was sitting at a conference table in his Capitol Hill office suite complaining about his press coverage. He was agitated about a story in the *Times*, earlier this year, which traced his intellectual lineage by reporting on many of the fringe groups and individuals with which his father has been associated during his career, including the John

Birch Society and various writers who "championed the Confederacy."

"I really was disappointed," Rand said, his voice rising. There was a quote "from some guy who I've never met saying something about how slaves should have been happy singing and dancing because they got good food or something. Like, O.K., so now I'm in the *New York Times* and you're associating me with some person who I don't know." He went on, "It's one thing to go back and interview my college professor or groups that I actually was with. But I was never associated with any of these people. Ever. Only through being related to my dad, who had association with them."

It would be impossible, however, to describe Rand Paul's politics without indicating his father's influence. Paul is sometimes portrayed as a political neophyte, a small-town doctor who won his Senate seat in 2010 when the Tea Party erupted in opposition to Obama's Presidency. But he grew up steeped in the libertarian political philosophy beloved by his father, and he worked as a strategist on Ron Paul's many political campaigns, watching as his father's ideas helped to shape the Republican Party and give rise to the Tea Party. Rand, though, also learned from his father's political rigidity. Ron Paul never was able to graduate from the lower chamber or to expand his appeal beyond

hard-core supporters; Rand won a statewide election on his first try. As a member of the House, Ron voted as an ideological purist, opposing most spending bills and nearly any foreign intervention; Rand has shown a willingness to compromise. "Ron was always content to tell the truth as best he understood it, and he saw that as the point of his politics," Jesse Benton, a close friend and political adviser to both men, said. "Rand is the guy who is committed to winning."

When I called the Paul family home, in Lake Jackson, Texas, Rand's mother, Carol, cheerily answered. In an hour-long conversation, she explained that her husband didn't like doing interviews about Rand. "Everybody that calls him wants to argue about their differences," she said. "They don't really have differences. They might have fractional differences about how to do things, but the press always want to make it into some kind of story that isn't there."

As a boy, Randal Howard Paul, the middle child of five, didn't have his distinctive curls or his distinctive name. "His hair was as straight as could be and we never called him Rand," Carol said. "We always called him Randy."

The Paul family moved to Lake Jackson when Rand was five. He grew up untouched by the turbulent politics of the late sixties and early seventies. Ron Paul was a well-off doctor, and Rand lived in a four-bedroom house with central air-conditioning and a swimming pool. He played Pee Wee League baseball and went to Cub Scouts at the First United Methodist Church. The family had a farm nearby and a beach house fifteen minutes away, in Surfside, on the Gulf coast. Paul recalled his early childhood as carefree. "I rode my bike to school every day from age five to age fourteen," he told me. "It was a small town—you could go anywhere." He added, "You were completely independent."

This idyll was the result of New Deal-style central planning. In the nineteen-forties, Dow Chemical, with help from the federal government, created Lake Jackson to house employees of its nearby magnesium plant. Strict zoning regulations kept industry away, and the roads were laid out so that the



"You don't need to conduct me so hard—I'm right here."

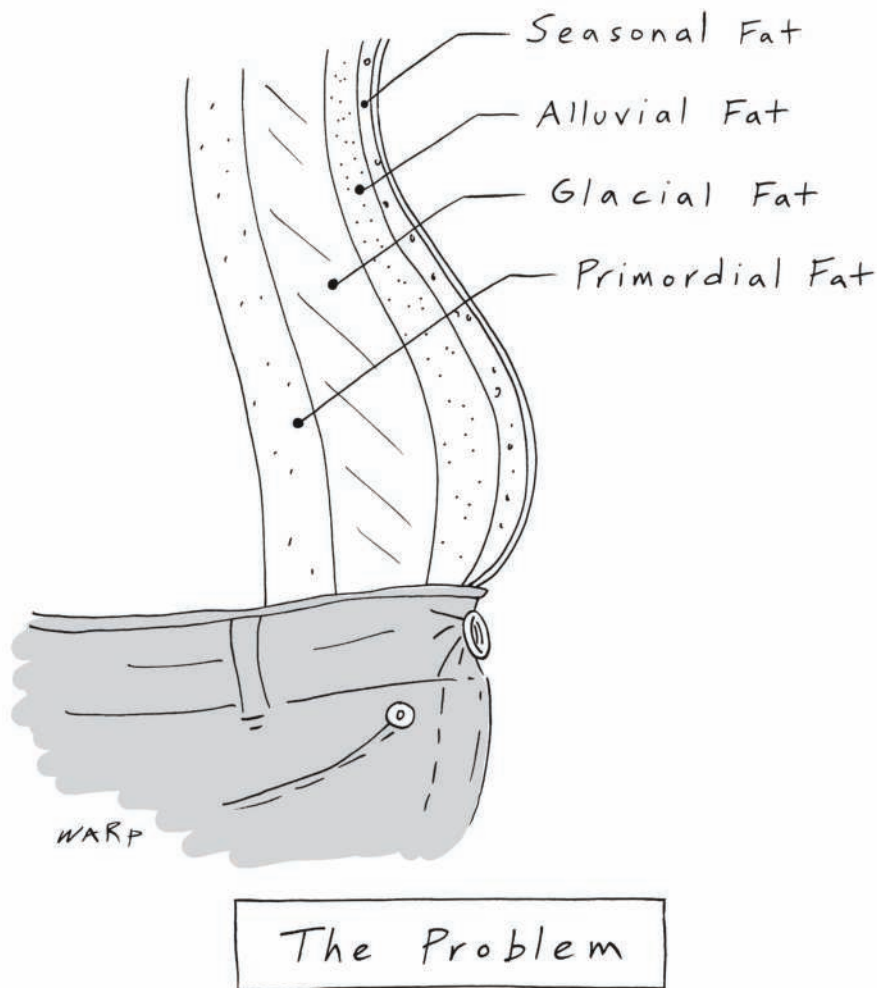
most heavily trafficked highways by-passed the city, leaving quiet, tree-lined streets in the residential interior. Carol Paul described Lake Jackson as “a town of churches” where “everybody knew everyone else and everybody looked out for everybody else.”

Ron Paul, for a time the only obstetrician in the county, was known as a community leader and an expert on women’s health, although privately he was immersed in free-market economic philosophy and raised his children on the writings of Ayn Rand, Friedrich von Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises, who saw government-run monetary policy as the greatest threat to Western democracies. Mises argued that governments were incapable of managing money; central banks inevitably destroy a country’s currency, create hyperinflation, and set society on the road to fascism. In keeping with his fervid anti-government stance, Ron Paul refused to accept Medicare or Medicaid from his patients.

It was Richard Nixon who unknowingly persuaded Ron Paul to enter politics. In 1971, the President fully uncoupled the dollar from the gold standard and attacked inflation with wage and price controls. Paul was aghast, and, in 1974, he ran for Congress. Rand, who was then eleven, became more involved in his dad’s political career than any of his four siblings. “Everyone was interested, but Rand would take it a step forward,” his mother said. Paul agreed: “I was probably more interested in going to the rallies, listening to speeches and the politics and the philosophy.”

Over the next decade, Ron Paul campaigned for the House and then the Senate, while Rand finished high school and went to college. Running on the slogan “Freedom, Honesty, and Sound Money,” Paul lost his 1974 House race but ran again in early 1976, in a special election, after the retirement of the incumbent who had defeated him. “I can see the whole system coming to a collapse in three or four years,” he said during a speech in January of that year, echoing Mises’s apocalyptic message that the financial system was on the edge of ruin. “No system has survived on only paper for currency.”

Rand watched his father change from a conventional small-town physi-



cian into a political firebrand. Ron Paul tapped into the resentments and federal policies that were turning the South solidly Republican. In a speech in 1976, he claimed that big cities were afflicted by crime because they were “swarming with welfare,” and actual “jobs wouldn’t pay them”—recipients—“what sitting on their butts does.” He criticized federal attempts to correct the history of racist housing policies through government programs. “Everyone should have the right to buy property wherever he wants to live,” he said. “And he should have the right to sell it to anyone he chooses.”

In Texas, Ronald Reagan’s 1976 Presidential primary campaign ignited the political transformation of the state. Texas had an open primary system, and Reagan worked hard to woo Democrats disaffected with their party over such issues as race, crime, and welfare. As Gilbert Garcia notes in “Reagan’s Come-

back,” his 2012 book about the 1976 state race, “The Texas primary was also the first demonstration of what came to be known as the Reagan Democrat phenomenon.” But the first beneficiary of this change wasn’t Reagan—it was Paul, whose special election occurred on April 3rd. Reagan’s victory, on May 1st, was close enough for Paul to capitalize on the energy and organization of Reagan’s campaign. Paul beat his opponent, Bob Gammage, by twelve points, and Reagan defeated Gerald Ford by thirty-three points. After losing Texas, the Ford campaign wrote a memo warning that “a small number of right-wing nuts” was on the verge of taking over the Party.

Ron Paul became the leader of Reagan’s Texas delegation, and he drove his family in a camper from Lake Jackson to Kansas City, Missouri, for the 1976 Republican National Convention, the last seriously contested



"So how does that eightfold path get us back on the Garden State?"

Convention in American politics. Rand saw in vivid relief the struggle between the Party's populist and elite factions, a split that he is now trying to navigate. "My dad was one of only four congressmen who supported Reagan," Rand told me. He said that at a meeting in the White House shortly after his father was elected Ron "was directly asked by Ford for his support and he had to tell him no." At the Convention, the Texans were relegated to a hotel twenty miles away. Inside the hall, thirteen-year-old Rand watched as Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, the embodiment of the old Republican establishment, picked up a floor sign and tried to hit one of Texas's Reagan delegates. The rowdy Texans sat at the rear of the hall, below the Ford family's pri-

vate box. According to Garcia's book, they heckled the mild-mannered Fords, and, on the last night of the Convention, one of Ford's sons dumped garbage on the Texas delegates.

Rand Paul told me that one of the lessons of the 1976 Convention is that the current divisions in the Republican Party have been there all along: "There have always been more of a business class and more of a conservative class, more of a grassroots class and more of a moneyed class."

He enjoys discussing his father's role in Reagan's first Presidential campaign and his own youthful trip to Kansas City, because the tale places the Paul family at the birth of the modern conservative movement. Reagan narrowly lost the nomination, and Ron Paul lost

his House seat in November. He contested the election, but the House of Representatives rejected his case, which in part rested on allegations that felons had voted illegally. The Paul family believed that the race had been stolen. But both defeats turned out to be temporary. Ron Paul won back the seat in 1978 and returned to the House, and Reagan was elected President two years later. Rand was less eager to discuss the events of the next decade, when his father's libertarianism and Reagan's conservatism gradually took divergent paths.

In 1981, Rand entered Baylor University, a Baptist school in Waco, four hours from home. He immediately set himself apart. He contributed regularly to the school newspaper, the *Lariat*, drawing on Ayn Rand, Hayek, and Mises's disciple Murray Rothbard. He studied biology (as his father had in college) and liked to challenge Waco's fundamentalists, some of whom criticized the school for teaching evolution. George Paul, the son of a prominent Texas political fund-raiser, was Rand's closest friend in college. George told me, "Many of the students had never left Texas and could be very limited in their outlooks." He said that on Sundays he and Rand often visited different churches in an attempt "to observe how people practice their spirituality," and frequently debated "individuals who very literally interpret the Bible, who question many scientific theories." He added, "We would start digging by asking very direct questions, and people's inability to answer them would fluster them and in some ways make it uncomfortable for them—and hopefully inspire one or two to think back on it later." He recalled that he and Rand would debate anti-abortion extremists calling for the death penalty for doctors who performed abortions. ("Senator Paul denies that he went church to church seeking out people to argue with on religious matters," Brian Darling, Paul's communications director, said.)

Rand's friendship with George Paul was itself a small act of rebellion. George and Rand, who were both on the Baylor swim team and often spent six hours a day in the pool, became so close that, shortly after they arrived at Baylor, George legally changed his

George, now a teacher and consultant living in Austria, drew Rand into a secret society at Baylor known as the NoZe Brotherhood, which had recently been banned from campus. The group was founded in the nineteen-twenties mostly to mock Baylor's clubs and fraternities and to satirize its earnest religiosity. In 1982, Baylor's president condemned the group for its "sacrilegious, vulgar, obscene, and sometimes tasteless crudities." For initiation, called "unrush," Rand was required to submit a satirical essay of "10,622 words or less." George said that Rand signed the document with the name of a nineteenth-century anarchist and abolitionist, Lysander Spooner, who later opposed the Civil War on the ground that states had the right to secede. Spooner has become a revered figure to modern libertarians, especially in the South, where some revisionist historians have embraced his antislavery and anti-Lincoln views.

Rand was placed in a claw-foot bathtub while the brothers gathered around him in absurdist costumes they called “undress,” shone a bright light on his face, and tested his wits by shouting ridiculous questions. (“What effect did orthodontics have on nineteenth-century Romanticism?”) Rand excelled at the Raz and advanced to a more serious interview—conducted under a highway bridge—before being confirmed for membership. The brothers gave him his secret name: SpoonNoZe.

Rand was a member of another group that attracted campus dissidents: the Young Conservatives of Texas. It was founded by Munisteri in 1980 as a more conservative breakaway organization from Young Americans for Freedom, which had been started by William F. Buckley in 1960. Munisteri told me that he and his colleagues didn't like taking orders from the national Y.A.F. leadership.

Rand, who arrived the year after the Y.C.T.'s founding, became a leader of the Baylor chapter, which spread the Paul family gospel. Ron Paul became an adviser to the group and spoke on cam-

pus several times. In November of 1981, during Rand's first semester, he and his father screened "The Incredible Bread Machine," an anti-government documentary with a counterculture sensibility. It opened with I.R.S. agents confiscating horses from a farmer, cops seizing land, and federal agents breaking into the wrong home during a drug raid. The following semester, the Y.C.T. sponsored a talk on Austrian economics. In the fall of 1982, it hosted Johnny Stewart, a conspiracy theorist who was obsessed with the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Bilderberg Group, an international network of political and industry élites. The next semester, the Y.C.T. invited Kitty Werthmann to speak. An Austrian exile who warned that America was creeping toward Nazism, in 2010 she became a popular guest on Glenn Beck's television show.

Meanwhile, Rand had adopted his father's questioning of the government's efforts to alleviate discrimination. In March of 1982, he responded to a *Lariat* op-ed writer who favored "some form of government action" to insure that A. T. & T. didn't lose its proportion of



the sky wasxxxxxxbigxtimexxx
wasxxdeepxxamazing; was xxcounting
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was beyond description.

female employees after the company's breakup. The editorial, Rand wrote, "unfortunately typifies the reasoning behind every piece of anti-discrimination legislation passed over the past few decades. The mentality behind such legislation ignores one of the basic, inalienable rights of man—the right to discriminate."

Rand had developed a signature style: he opened with a provocative statement to jar the casual reader, and then calmly laid out his argument. "Discrimination has become a dirty word in our society," he wrote. "However, Webster defines discrimination as 'the ability to perceive distinctions; perception; discernment.' Now then, don't we all discriminate? Don't we discriminate in the selection of friends, mates, employees, students? Discrimination thus implies the recognition of individual talents, the discernment of inequality between individuals." While "eliminating racial and sexual prejudice" had "noble aspiration," such laws "necessarily utilize the ignoble means of coercive force."

Rand made a similar case about the Equal Rights Amendment, which had already died. "All must agree that bigoted discrimination is detrimental to the peaceful interaction of different sexes and races in the marketplace," he wrote. "Should we enact laws that say 'Thou shall not be prejudiced in business transactions,' and then hope that the courts interpret such laws in a rational manner? Or should moral questions such as discrimination remain with the individual? Should we preach in order to bring about change, or should we compel?"

Around this time, Ron Paul was growing disillusioned with Reagan, who he believed had increased the size of government, meddled in the affairs of nations abroad, and was inattentive to civil liberties at home. The differences between Ron Paul's libertarianism and the Republican Party on all three issues continued to widen, and Paul sought a larger platform to make his case.

In 1984, Rand took a semester off to work on his father's primary campaign against Phil Gramm for the Republican nomination in the upcoming U.S. Senate race. Rand helped to secure the endorsement of the Young Conservatives

THE WORLD WE SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN

The clothes, the food, the nickel-coated iron flower tables, the glass-and-wood-fluted doorknob but most of all the baby girls holding chicks in one arm and grapes in the other just before the murder of the Gypsies under Tiso the priest, Slovak, Roman Catholic, no cousin to Andy, he Carpatho-Russian or most of all Peter Oresick, he of Ford City, he of Highland Park and East Liberty Carpatho-Russian too, or just Ruthenian, me staring at a coconut tree, I swear it, listening late on a Saturday afternoon a few weeks before my 88th to airplane after airplane and reading the trailers by the underwater lights of yon organ-shaped squid-squirming blue and land-lost swimming pool the noise a kind of roar when they got close I'm watching from the fifth floor up, Warholean here and there oh mostly on the elevator but certainly by the pool, his European relatives basking under his long serrated leaves

of Texas, although the state party—and Ronald Reagan—rallied around Gramm. The race marked the ignominious end to Ron Paul's first stint in the House. "It was a time when Republicans were still on the upswing in Texas and didn't always win," Rand told me. "So they wanted the Republican who could win." Gramm beat Ron Paul by fifty-seven points.

Rand never graduated from Baylor, but he scored high enough on the MCATs that he was accepted at Duke Medical School, his father's alma mater. In 1984, Rand went to Durham to study ophthalmology and Ron returned to Lake Jackson. Three years later, Ron resigned from the Republican Party in an angry letter attacking Reagan, and he ran for President as the candidate of the Libertarian Party. The *Times* described Rand as his father's "aide-de-camp" in the campaign. It was Rand's eighth campaign in fourteen years.

After graduating from medical school, Rand moved to Atlanta for an internship. In 1989, at an oyster roast, he met Kelley Joanne Ashby, from Russellville, Kentucky. An English major at Rhodes College, in Tennessee, she was into acting and modern dance. "She wasn't interested in poli-

tics," Christie Ewing Rolon, one of her sorority sisters, said. At the party, Kelley and Rand talked about Dostoyevsky. A year later, at their wedding, a candlelit ceremony in her home town, Ron Paul was best man. After a honeymoon on St. Kitts, in the Caribbean, they moved back to North Carolina, where Rand finished his ophthalmology residency.

Not long after meeting Randy, Kelley told him that his name didn't seem appropriate for an adult, and she renamed him. Carol Paul told me, "When he and Kelley met, he was a big boy. He could be Rand."

In 1993, Rand and Kelley moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky, to be closer to her family. He joined the ophthalmology practice of John Downing and created Kentucky Taxpayers United. It was an antitax organization, modelled on the Young Conservatives of Texas, which rated legislators on their fealty to small government. He learned that the ratings business was an easy way to get his name into the press. "There's kind of a vacuum for it," he told me during an interview in Washington. "Whereas up here there's hundreds of groups that do ratings, and

coconuts near the top—ripe and dangerous—like Peter, coming from one of the villages inside Pittsburgh, like me, half eastern Poland, half southern Ukraine born in the Hill, on Wylie Avenue, the first village east of downtown Pittsburgh, Logan Street, the steepest street in the Hill, two blocks—at least—a string of small stores and Jewish restaurants, Caplan's, Weinstein's, I was born at the end of an era, I hung on with my fingers then with my nails, Judith Vollmer's family was Polish but they were twelve miles away from Peter's village, this was a meal at Weinstein's: chopped liver first or herring or eggs and onions, then matzo-ball soup or noodle or knaidel, followed by roast veal or boiled beef and horseradish or roast chicken and vegetables, coleslaw and Jewish pickles on the side and plates of cookies and poppy-seed cakes and strudel, Yiddish the lingua franca, tea in a glass, the world we should have stayed in, for in America you burn in one place, then another.

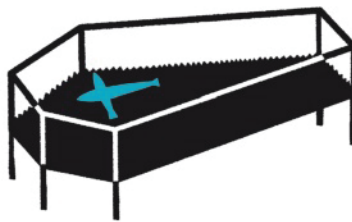
—Gerald Stern

they're kind of passé. In state capitals, there aren't many people who do it."

Unlike his father, Paul gladly accepted Medicare and Medicaid, which eventually accounted for fifty-five per cent of his patients. In 1994, he and Kelley bought an acre and a half of land and built a house in a new gated community called Rivergreen. The Pauls liked the eighteen-acre man-made Sunfish Lake, which was stocked with bluegills, but Rand balked at the twenty-one pages of restrictions that Rivergreen placed on homeowners. Only brick, stone, or stucco houses with at least three thousand square feet of living space were allowed. Gravel driveways, clotheslines, and piles of firewood visible to neighbors were forbidden. Aboveground swimming pools were banned. If Paul wanted to change the style of his mailbox, he had to get approval from Rivergreen's three-member Architectural Committee. "He didn't much like that," Jim Skaggs, Rivergreen's developer, told me. "He said, 'I bought the property, it's my property!'" Paul eventually relented, and built a four-bedroom, red brick Colonial with an indoor swimming pool. The libertarian who a few years earlier had railed against suffocating conformity at Baylor had settled into a neighborhood

where he wasn't allowed to choose the exterior of his own home.

Paul took no interest in the local party. "I held fund-raisers within four hundred feet of where he lived and he didn't attend," Skaggs, who is a prominent Republican fund-raiser in Kentucky, said. "He didn't attend our Lincoln Day Dinners and that kind of thing." Rand and Kelley, who had three boys between 1993 and 1999, privately



agreed that he would wait to run for office until they were in their fifties. He used his antitax group as a platform to speak out about political issues, but he was working on the edges of conservative politics. John David Dyche, a Kentucky lawyer and longtime Republican commentator, told me, "He was regarded somewhat like his dad was: a smart guy but maybe a little flaky and a little too far over to the edge to really ever get anything done."

But the national mood was warming to the Paul family's politics. In 1978, Ron Paul's victory had been facilitated by a conservative backlash against the first two years of the Carter Administration. The anti-government voices were more muted during the subsequent Republican Presidencies, but gained volume again in 1993, after the election of Bill Clinton. The following year, Republicans won the Senate and, for the first time in four decades, took over the House. Ron Paul decided to run for Congress again, in 1996, telling a local paper, "My platform is not so strange anymore." Rand returned to Lake Jackson as his father's campaign strategist.

It was a good moment for Rand to take a break from practicing medicine. Downing and Paul disagreed about how their practice was run and decided to part ways. The biggest fight was over "some differences over charges and taxes," Downing told me. "He was a little bit more interested in avoiding taxes than I was. And I was afraid he was pushing things a little bit." He thought that Paul "was taking more deductions than was reasonable." Paul's spokesman said, "The Senator does not remember the dissolution of their partnership over a tax issue."

Rand Paul has the bedside manner of a surgeon. He is more comfortable attacking a cataract or reshaping the cornea during Lasik surgery than he is talking to voters. "He's not naturally gregarious," Al Cross, a longtime Kentucky political columnist, said. "He's not a natural politician." Paul is accommodating to reporters but wary of questions that seem like political traps. Yet at the mention of his father's victory in the 1996 House race he smiled and loosened up. Paul was thirty-three at the time. He liked the challenge of the ferocious primary against the incumbent, Greg Laughlin, a Democrat who had switched parties. The family once again took on the Republican establishment, which closed ranks around the party switcher. "He was extra motivated by the fact that the National Republican Congressional Committee was against his dad," Jesse Benton said. "It was just so outrageous that the N.R.C.C. was for this former Democrat."

Several high-profile Republicans



arrived in South Texas to endorse Laughlin, trashing Ron Paul as a Libertarian Party extremist who hated Reagan and wanted to legalize drugs and prostitution. The two candidates also fought over Paul's call for a less muscular U.S. foreign policy, and Laughlin criticized his opposition to the Gulf War. Newt Gingrich, former President George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush—then the governor of Texas—and Karl Rove all campaigned against Rand's father. "Over a hundred and fifty Republican congressmen supported the other guy," Rand Paul told me. "Whenever they switch parties, they all make a deal: you have to support this guy for switching parties." He added, "It was kind of annoying at the time," since some of them were his father's friends.

Ron Paul's public comments and personal views were as radical as ever, but Rand's political team presented his father as a more mainstream conservative. "Ron Paul wants to expand the economy and promote job growth with across-the-board tax cuts," one ad said. Ron Paul defeated Laughlin in a primary runoff by eight points, humiliating the Republican establishment.

The Republican primary that year

had tested Paul's ability to win a debate over foreign policy. But in the general election his Democratic opponent, Charles (Lefty) Morris, attacked him as a racist. For years, Paul had been selling newsletters—"The Ron Paul Survival Report," "The Ron Paul Political Report," "The Ron Paul Investment Letter"—that mixed Austrian economics and right-wing populism. The venture eventually earned him hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. In May, 1996, Morris released copies of Paul newsletters from 1992 that were overtly racist. "We are constantly told that it is evil to be afraid of black men," one article said, but "it is hardly irrational. Black men commit murders, rapes, robberies, muggings and burglaries all out of proportion to their numbers." The article went on, "We don't think a child of thirteen should be held responsible as a man of twenty-three. That's true for most people, but black males age thirteen who have been raised on the streets and who have joined criminal gangs are as big, strong, tough, scary and culpable as any adult and should be treated as such."

In another commentary, he wrote that most black males in Washington, D.C., were "semi-criminal or entirely

criminal," and that "only about five percent of blacks have sensible political opinions." At the time, Ron Paul did not dispute that he wrote the articles, though many years later he insisted they were ghostwritten.

Ron Paul was effective at fund-raising, and his campaign raised more money than his opponent's. Rand organized a superior get-out-the-vote effort. "He had all these ideas and ways to do things better," Carol Paul said of her son's effort.

"Rand is actually amazingly politically savvy," Jesse Benton said. "He got a lot of credit from his dad for some of the strategy. He figured out early on how to use satellite mapping, how early versions of MapQuest could be used in 1996 to help block out neighborhoods in a really efficient way."

"We had it kind of down to a science," Rand said. "There are thirty of us in the family. And so we were a force to be reckoned with. We could come to a community and knock on every Republican door in a town of two thousand in an afternoon." Ron Paul won by three points. Rand had saved his father's political career. He returned to Kentucky and started to plot his own.

Late one afternoon in mid-July, Senator Paul was in the passenger seat of an aide's car making his way through the District's rush-hour traffic to a campaign event in Maryland. He was reflecting on the long series of events that had propelled him, in 2010, into his Kentucky senatorial seat. "In life, you can't really predict when things are going to occur," he said. "You can try to create an opportunity, but most of the time those fail."

In the years leading up to his election, Paul mostly failed at creating opportunities for himself. He was still using his antitax group to speak out about political issues, to little effect. "He put out stuff about legislators voting for bad spending bills, and we would write something about it from time to time, but he wasn't a political force," Al Cross said. Paul maintained a presence in the local paper as a letter writer and an occasional columnist. And for more than a decade, starting in early 1997, he was a frequent guest on "Kentucky Tonight," a political roundtable show on state public television. Much of his

commentary dealt with Kentucky tax policy, but he sometimes weighed in on national issues, and revived his college-era editorial style.

In 2000, when a caller to “Kentucky Tonight” asked guests what they thought of a plan to legalize all drugs, release all nonviolent drug offenders, and use the savings to fix Social Security, Paul responded, “I would agree.” When another caller complained that her anti-anxiety drugs were expensive and suggested that the government should reduce prices, Paul recommended that she look for another remedy, such as Benadryl. “If you’re having trouble sleeping, that’s a very cheap alternative to any of the prescription drugs that are out there,” he told her.

His central philosophy seemed little changed from his father’s. In May, 2002, Paul returned to a long-held view, one that is not shared by most Republican politicians: that government attempts to address discrimination are always wrong. His target was the Fair Housing Act, a provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 which bans discrimination in the sale or the rental of housing on the basis of race, color, nationality, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. Among many other kinds of housing discrimination, the F.H.A. made it illegal to build segregated housing, a practice that was commonplace not all that long ago. In 1942, when Dow announced its plan to build Lake Jackson, an article noted that the company had selected “a special location for a negro residential area.”

Paul, then thirty-nine, found the F.H.A. to be a monstrous infringement on liberty: “Decisions concerning private property and associations should in a free society be unhindered. As a consequence, some associations will discriminate.” He went on to note that although it is “unenlightened and ill-informed to promote discrimination against individuals based on the color of their skin,” a free society “will abide unofficial, private discrimination—even when that means allowing hate-filled groups to exclude people based on the color of their skin.”

Paul was beginning to think about running for political office. One of his last articles for the local paper consisted mainly of advice for Kentucky’s embat-

tled Republican governor at the time, Ernie Fletcher, who was also a physician, about how he could win reelection in 2007. “What would I do?” Paul asked. “Get a vision. Make it simple. Repeat it over and over again. Make the Republican party, the Democrats, the press debate your vision.”

Ultimately, Rand was saved from political obscurity by his father. In 2008, Ron Paul decided to run for President. The campaign raised an extraordinary thirty-five million dollars by cultivating a small but intensely committed following that later carried Rand Paul’s message, too. At the beginning of 2008, Ron Paul was treated as he always had been by the Republican establishment: like a kook. When he argued that George W. Bush’s militarized foreign policy was creating more terrorists, or insisted that the country was on the edge of an economic calamity, he was mocked by Republican opponents such as John McCain and Rudolph Giuliani.

Rand and Jesse Benton, who managed Ron’s campaign, pushed to spend more of the enormous war chest on television ads to woo Republican voters outside Ron Paul’s support base. “A lot of that advice went unheeded,” Benton said. “Rand had so many different really good ideas on how to capitalize and leverage media in a way that we just

didn’t do.” When the campaign was over, Barack Obama, an anti-Iraq War Democrat, had defeated the hawkish John McCain, and the economy was in the depths of a financial crisis, the kind of event that Paul had long said was imminent. Ron Paul seemed prescient, and Rand moved quickly to claim an inheritance. “Everything had to be perfect for me to win,” he told me. “I had some notoriety, but not much. My dad had a lot.”

An opening presented itself in the form of Kentucky’s Republican senator Jim Bunning, who was then seventy-seven. Bunning was up for reelection in 2010, but Senator Mitch McConnell, the dominant Republican in the state, was trying to force him into retirement. McConnell let it be known that Trey Grayson, the secretary of state, was his favored replacement. Grayson, the son of a banker and a former Democrat, was exactly the kind of establishment figure the Pauls enjoyed running against. But Rand told me, “Nobody predicted that I could win in the beginning. Myself included.” Benton e-mailed Rand, “You can beat this guy!”

Paul was drawn to the idea of overcoming the Republicans who for thirty-four years had pilloried his father as an extremist. For eight years, the White House and the Party had been controlled by Bush and Rove, who, in 1996,



“But think of the S.E.O. if the title actually named the two cities.”

tried to chase Ron Paul out of politics. The Kentucky Republican Party was dominated by former Democrats and country-club Republicans who had sided with Ford during the 1976 Convention fight. "After seeing how the establishment treated my father during his presidential campaign," he later wrote, "I had every reason to believe that the powers-that-be would do everything they could to keep another Paul away from the reins of government."

In taking on the Republican establishment, Rand won over his father's ardent supporters. "That network was absolutely crucial," Benton said. "It was a serendipitous moment. He was the right candidate with the right message at the right time with the right father." But it also meant that Rand had to court some of the offbeat opinion-makers in the insular world of Ron Paul. Rand conducted several interviews with the radio host Alex Jones, a conspiracy theorist who thinks that 9/11 was an inside job and shares Ron

Paul's view that America is perpetually on the verge of economic collapse. During an appearance in August, 2009, Rand said, "We really don't have a lot of time." He worried that an economic collapse could lead to a situation similar to how "we got Hitler in Germany," and added, "If you get some kind of strong leader like that, then it's all over for the Republic." The Alex Jones appearances were hard to turn down: after the first one, Rand's campaign server crashed from the donor traffic.

Grayson recalled the primary as a series of blows from which he never recovered. The political terrain was shifting. As with Carter and Clinton, Obama saw his first year in office create a surge in anti-government sentiment on the right. That spring, Rand spoke at a boisterous Tea Party gathering in Bowling Green, and his anti-Bush and anti-Obama message was cheered. Even people who disagreed with Ron and Rand on many issues were coming around to the Paul philosophy. "I

thought at the time that his father was kind of far out, but as I get older I think he's been more right than a lot of other politicians," John Downing said. He told me that as time passed he also realized that Rand was right about their tax dispute. "I think he was perfectly legal and I was paying Uncle Sam too much," he said. "I have wished since that I had been more open-minded."

On the day that Paul spoke in Bowling Green, Grayson tried to address a crowd at a Tea Party event two and a half hours north, in Louisville. "They wouldn't let me speak, because I was an officeholder," he said. He added that that's when he realized, "There might be something here."

Rand used Grayson's money and endorsements against him. When Grayson held a splashy fund-raiser attended by about a dozen Republican senators, many of whom had voted for the Troubled Asset Relief Program, Rand and Benton dubbed it the Bailout Ball, and organized an online fund-raising event to counter it. "They actually raised more money off their Bailout Ball Money Bomb than we did at the actual Bailout Ball," Grayson said. "I locked up most of the big donors and most of the Republican volunteers, but Rand had his own source of volunteers, and Rand had his own source of money."

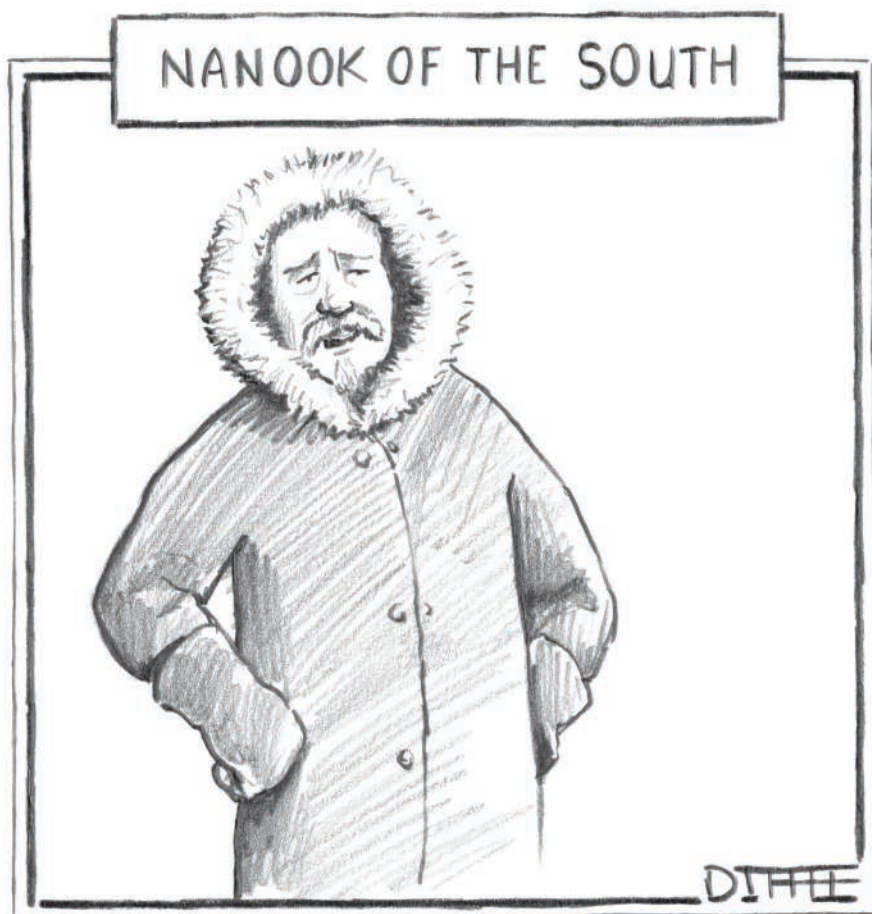
Grayson and his Republican allies belittled Rand's "strange ideas" and called him "too kooky for Kentucky." They hammered him for campaigning against Reagan's policies in 1988 and opposing Bush's war in Iraq. They said that he was soft on crime and soft on terrorism, and supported "all things Ron Paul."

Rand defeated Grayson, fifty-nine points to thirty-five. "He whupped me pretty much everywhere," Grayson said.

Kelley Paul plays a somewhat protective role in her husband's career. A few days after his primary victory, she gave him a copy of the Emily Dickinson poem "Fame Is a Bee":

Fame is a bee.
It has a song—
It has a sting—
Ah, too, it has a wing.

She warned him about the heightened scrutiny that would accompany his burst of fame. One of Paul's former aides told me that Kelley is "politically



"I have over a hundred words for 'grits.'"

savvy,” but she also encourages his worst instincts. “Kelley is going to say what’s on her mind,” the former aide said. “She eggs him on when he gets attacked.”

After he won, Paul agreed to an interview with Rachel Maddow, on MSNBC. Kelley told him to cancel it, but he didn’t listen. Maddow focussed on Paul’s views of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A few weeks earlier, during an interview with the liberal-leaning editorial board of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, Paul had expressed ambivalence about whether the government should be allowed to police discrimination in the private sector. “Do you think that a private business has a right to say that ‘we don’t serve black people?’” Maddow asked. Paul believed that private entities did have the right to discriminate, a view he had articulated as recently as 2002. He tried to elevate the conversation to an abstract debate about private rights in a free society and his abhorrence of racism in general. But he made it clear that he still believed that the government should not be allowed to police racism in the private sector.

Paul devoted almost an entire chapter to the Maddow episode in his 2011 book, “The Tea Party Goes to Washington.” But, even then, he didn’t modify his view. He said that the media were out to get him. “Besides the absurd charge that I was some sort of secret racist,” he wrote, “another thing that bothered me about the controversy is it was a reminder of just how limited we are in our public discourse. As my dad often had to deal with in his 2008 presidential campaign, any outside-the-box or unconventional thinking is either dismissed or used to malign one’s character.”

He favorably quoted a columnist named Jack Hunter, who happened to be Paul’s co-author, lamenting the fact that there weren’t more “philosopher-statesmen.” Hunter went to work for Paul in the Senate, but, in June of 2013, Paul was pressured to fire him when it became public that Hunter had previously been a masked pro-Confederate radio host known as the Southern Avenger.

As with so many aspects of his personal history, Paul approaches the subject of his intellectual influences as though he were defusing a bomb. In his book, he wrote about several libertarian



“He looks so relaxed.”

• •

writers he had turned to since high school: Ayn Rand (“one of the most influential critics of government intervention and champions of individual free will”), Hayek (“‘The Road to Serfdom’ is a must-read for any serious conservative”), and the Mises disciple Murray Rothbard (“a great influence on my thinking”). In my conversation with him, he shrugged them off.

Ayn Rand was just “one of many authors I like,” he said. “And it’s, like, ‘Oh, because I believe in Ayn Rand I must be an atheist, I must believe in everybody needs to be selfish all the time, and I must believe that Howard Roark is great and Ellsworth Toohey is evil,’ but she’s one of many authors I’ve read. I like Barbara Kingsolver, too.”

Hayek? “I wouldn’t say I’m like some great Hayek scholar.”

Rothbard? “There are many people I’m sure who are more schooled.”

After Rand defeated Grayson in the Senate primary, the appearances on Alex Jones’s show stopped and the wooing of the establishment that he abhorred began. He had met with McConnell and convinced him that he would be a team player. John David

Dyche, the Republican commentator, who has written a biography of McConnell, talked to him shortly after the meeting. “He realized that he was not his father’s son in all respects, and that he was interested in winning and achieving things rather than just making philosophical points,” Dyche told me. “McConnell quickly realized that this is somebody with whom political business can be done.” But, Dyche said, “McConnell has moved more toward Paul than Paul has moved toward McConnell.” Jesse Benton said, “They’re not best friends, and neither is going to pretend that they’re best friends. But they worked out a relationship that’s good for Kentucky.” (Last year, Benton became the manager of McConnell’s 2014 reelection campaign; he resigned earlier this year over allegations that Ron Paul’s 2012 Presidential campaign had paid an Iowa state legislator to endorse Paul. Benton denied involvement with the incident.)

Paul must be aware that his past will attract minute scrutiny if he runs for President. Just as he was gliding to victory in the 2010 Senate race, an episode from his days in the NoZe

Brotherhood threatened to upend his campaign. GQ.com posted a report in which an anonymous source said that Paul and another NoZe brother had taken her from her apartment, encouraged her to smoke pot, and asked her to pray to something called Aqua Buddha. The source for the story was Kristy Ditzler, Paul's friend from the Baylor swim team. His collaborator in the prank was George Paul. Ditzler and George Paul agreed to talk to me about the controversy.

Paul and George had driven to Ditzler's apartment and asked her to put a bandanna around her eyes. "They did pretend they were abducting me, but it wasn't a forced sort of thing," Ditzler said. They took her to another apartment and removed the blindfold. "It was weird, with all of these tents with bongs inside and piles of clothing. Completely bizarre." Ditzler said that George and Rand asked her to go into one of the tents and smoke pot, but when she declined they drove to a creek in Elm Mott, north of Waco, and told her to wade into the water and worship Aqua Buddha. "They never explained what was going on, but that's the way they were about everything—vague and mysterious."

George offered a slightly different version—they took her to a dark pub, where they had an easel set up and pretended to sketch a portrait of her while reading Kant—but he insisted that no drugs were involved, not even his nitrous pleasure units. He also said that the Aqua Buddha incident took place on another night, when he and Paul blindfolded Ditzler and several other members of their swim team by putting cotton in their goggles, and then loaded them into the back of a pickup and drove to the creek, where they were asked to "pay homage to the Aqua Buddha, and then we all went swimming." He explained that Aqua Buddha was an inside joke on the swim team. During practice, George, Rand, and others would descend to the bottom of the pool and strike a Buddha pose, creating an amusing sight for swimmers at the surface. "It broke the monotony and helped us get through the workout," he told me.

When the anonymous version of the story emerged, Paul quickly tracked

down George. "I had just gotten off a sailboat and I saw a bunch of calls," George told me. "He said someone may try to contact me, and he said, 'Do you recall anything about that?'"

Rand's Democratic opponent, Jack Conway, and his allies alleged that Paul had kidnapped Ditzler, and they described the NoZe Brotherhood as an anti-Christian cult. But nobody else could find George, and Ditzler refused



to discuss the event on the record, so the story faded away.

Ditzler, who is a Democrat, was appalled by how Rand's political opponents mischaracterized the GQ.com interview. "I would not use that as a specific reason not to vote for him," she told me, but she thought the incident raised a larger question, one that many others are now asking about the Senator. "The only reason I felt like speaking up was that I was a little bit irked by him making himself out to be all about God and country and all about conservative values, because he was clearly not promoting that when I knew him," Ditzler said. "I mean, we all change, we all have a past. If he's changed, why can't he just say that he's changed?"

In Louisville, people talk of the Ninth Street Divide. East of that boundary, the city is alive with boutique hotels, bourbon bars, and the region's financial center. West of Ninth Street, the city is largely blighted. St. Stephen Church, on Fifteenth Street, in West Louisville, is a sprawling complex of modern brick buildings and manicured lawns, an oasis surrounded by vacant lots and light industry. It has become one of the fastest-growing churches in America.

Kevin Cosby, a Baptist, is the church's pastor and the president of Simmons College, a historically black institution

in Louisville that was founded in 1879. He and Paul first met in January, 2011, shortly after Paul was sworn in as a senator, at a Martin Luther King Day celebration at Simmons. They became friends, and Cosby invited him to speak to students at Simmons in 2013.

Cosby's relationship with Paul has caused some concern among his parishioners and Simmons students. "I have to keep telling them that just because Reagan engaged Gorbachev does not mean he endorsed Gorbachev, and just because Roosevelt engaged Stalin, and Nixon had his kitchen talk with Khrushchev, does not mean that engagement is endorsement," he said.

In Presidential elections, the Republican Party's share of the African-American vote has been declining, from fifteen per cent in 1976 to six per cent in 2012. Paul's outreach is no doubt partly influenced by his and his father's controversial record on civil rights, but he has chosen a different way to woo black leaders and black voters. Republicans have generally tried one of two approaches. One, best demonstrated by the former congressman and 1996 Vice-Presidential candidate Jack Kemp, is to campaign in black communities with a generic message of free-market conservatism and other traditional Republican values. The message has often helped such candidates get attention and praise from the media but few African-American votes. Today, a candidate associated with this strategy is Paul Ryan, whose anti-poverty agenda draws on the ideas pushed by Kemp, for whom he once worked. In the other approach, Republican candidates have aligned themselves with conservative black leaders.

Neither strategy has been successful. Cosby believes that both parties were mistaken when they stopped treating the African-American community as an interest group with a specific policy agenda. Cosby blamed Clinton and Obama for the shift, citing Tim Wise's argument, in his 2010 book, *Colorblind*, that the past two Democratic Presidents have adopted a policy of "post-racial liberalism." Cosby said, "The position is, what is good for America is good for African-Americans." He described Obama as

“a post-racial liberal. He’s Michael Jordan. He transcends race. He’s Tiger Woods. He’s what Tim Wise calls ‘the exceptional African American.’”

Cosby told Paul that Republicans needed to understand black frustrations with the Democratic Party. Although Obama’s support is solid among African-Americans, Hillary Clinton might be vulnerable to a Republican attack. “Michelle Alexander, in her book ‘The New Jim Crow,’ says that no one helped build up the prison industrial complex any greater than Bill Clinton,” Cosby told me. “Reagan started it, but Bill Clinton put it on steroids.” He added, sarcastically, “And he’s the first black President.”

Cosby, who does not endorse candidates, explained all this to Paul, and told him that he needs to think of the black community in terms of a detailed list of concerns to be addressed, the same way that politicians approach the L.G.B.T. community or female voters. Most Republicans have been even less inclined than Democrats to talk about policy in racial terms, while simultaneously promoting some ideas, like voter-identification laws, that alienate the black community.

Paul has taken Cosby’s advice, although his effort got off to an embarrassing start last year, when he spoke at Howard University and was greeted with mocking laughter after he asked black students if they knew that the N.A.A.C.P. had been founded by Republicans. Nonetheless, Cosby said, “He’s one of the few persons that I see speaking to some specific issues that are not general issues, as relates to the black community.” In mid-August, after police in riot gear and armored trucks confronted unarmed black protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, Rand wrote an article decrying the militarization of the police. “Given the racial disparities in our criminal justice system,” he said, “it is impossible for African-Americans not to feel like their government is particularly targeting them.”

In July, after he left a meeting of African-American leaders, Paul told me, “I believe strongly that we have created enormous social problems with government policy. They’ll tell you the whole idea of how many people we’re putting in jail is destroying communi-

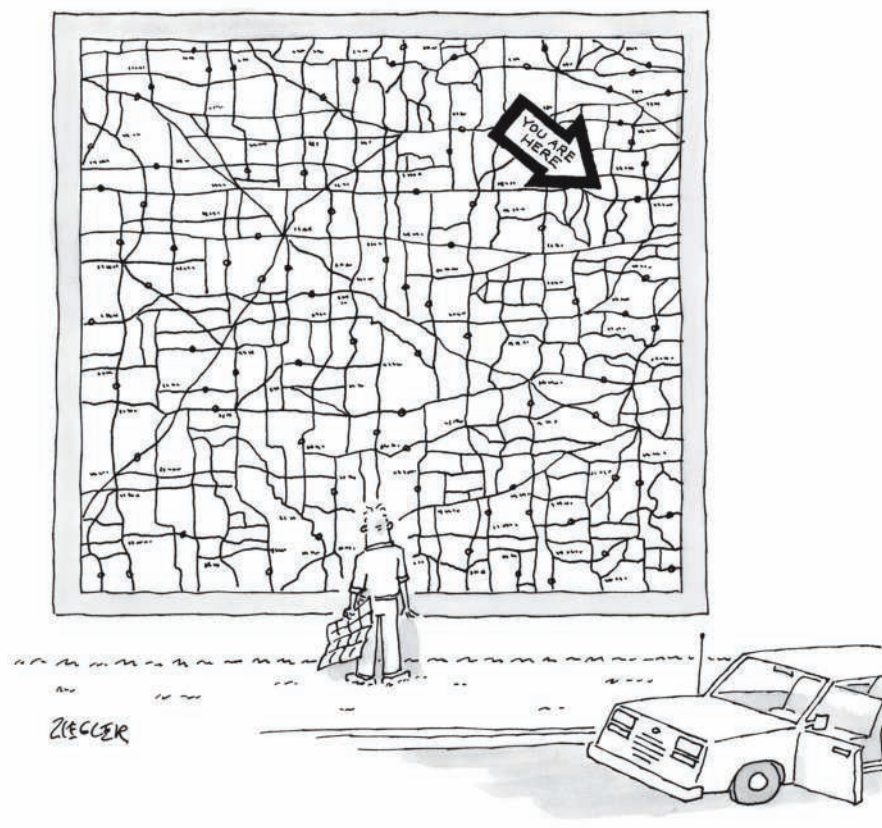
ties. It’s taking away the fathers. It’s preventing their employment when they come back. It prevents contact with their kids. It’s just one thing after another. It’s all the overzealousness to incarcerate people for nonviolent felonies.” He added, “I’ve always felt like the war on drugs was overly criminalized and used overly harsh penalties, but I never really spent enough time in the African-American community to know how devastating it is to their community.”

I asked him what had changed. “I’ve always been of the same opinion,” he said. “But I’ve been in some way made more aware that we can do something about it.” He said that “The New Jim Crow” had greatly influenced him. “It is the biggest civil-rights problem of our era,” Paul told me.

Cosby related a surprising conversation that he had with Paul not long ago at Simmons: “He said that if he could he would shut down a lot of these prisons, and he specifically said that the money saved from mass incarceration would be re-channelled toward job training. Now, I am one hundred per cent sure he said that to me.” Cosby went on, “I was blown away, because I’m thinking, This

doesn’t sound like libertarianism to me. This sounds like big government. Libertarianism means redirecting money back to the taxpayers. If he made a statement like that publicly, and stood by it, I don’t know where he will stand within the Republican Party and the libertarians, but that would shake things up in the black community.” He repeated Paul’s statement to me three times. “He said the thousands and thousands of African-Americans that have gone to jail because of mandatory sentencing should be released and the money saved should go for a job-training program. Whoa!”

Rand Paul has spent the past few months often clumsily trying to convince voters that his foreign policy differs from his father’s. Rand is perhaps best known, thus far, for his nearly thirteen-hour filibuster last year to protest the Administration’s use of drones—a tactic that further convinced Republican hawks that he doesn’t share their assessment of the risks posed by terrorism. Over the summer, Paul was under constant attack from rivals, such as Governor Rick Perry, of Texas, who described him as “curiously blind” to





"Sid, is there anyone we can contact for you?"

the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham. As with the criticisms of his past statements on civil rights, Paul felt that he was the victim of a smear campaign. "Unfair criticism from people who have partisan goals," he told me.

Paul said of attacks like Perry's, "They just want to call me names. Calling me 'curiously blind' and 'an isolationist'—that's just name-calling." As the crises in Iraq and Syria escalated, Paul became bolder in his statements that the U.S. should stay out of the conflict. "The American people pretty much decided where they are," he told me in July. "They are weary of war." He won in 2010 despite Republican charges that he was an isolationist, and he came away convinced that the base of the Party has shifted toward him. "If you want to poll the issue of going to Syria, seventy per cent of the American public said no, over fifty per cent of Republicans. You want to poll the issue of sending troops back to Iraq, over fifty per cent of Republicans are opposed to that now."

Speaking in July, he explained why the United States should not intervene in Iraq and Syria. "You could probably write an essay of the hun-

dred ironies of the Middle East in our policy right now," he said. "I mean, who's doing the most right now to help us combat ISIS? The Air Force of Syria. They're bombing ISIS. So who did the most to create a haven for ISIS? The United States—and Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, and Kuwait. By financing people to fight and try to degrade Syria."

He had recently listened to a speech by Secretary of State John Kerry: "He said, and he's said this many times, 'Our goal is not victory with Syria; our goal is to degrade their capacity such to get them to negotiate.' Well, what does that mean? Their capacity right now to what? To attack ISIS? So he's going to degrade their capacity to attack ISIS?"

"When you have so many confusions, how can you ask an American G.I. to go fight and lose his life for something where we'd be fighting with the Iranians and the Syrians against ISIS, but in the neighboring country we would be fighting with many people who hate Israel, hate the United States, hate Christianity? Makes absolutely no sense." He added, "I think the American people are with me, not the Old Guard that wants to always fight." I asked him who he thought was a worse

foreign-policy President, Barack Obama or George W. Bush. "I don't have an answer for that," he said.

A few weeks later, as ISIS's brutality dominated the news, Paul seemed to change his position dramatically. He said that as President he would "seek congressional authorization to destroy ISIS militarily." John McCain, one of Paul's longtime critics, told me in August, "I see him evolving with experience, with travel, with hearings on the Foreign Relations Committee. I see him having a better grasp of many of the challenges we face than when he first got here. That doesn't mean he is now a John McCain, but it certainly does mean that he has a greater appreciation and has been articulating that." He compared him with Ron Paul. "His father is a person who really believes that the United States should not be engaged in foreign events and foreign countries. I think that Rand Paul is seeing a very unsettled world, one in significant turmoil, and I see him understanding and articulating what in my view is a realistic view of the United States and the importance of its leadership and role in the world."

McCain cited as an example Paul's shift on aid to Israel between 2011 and today. "Look at the Rand Paul alternative budget," he said. "Have you heard of that? It cut aid to Israel; it cut defense in half." More recently, Paul has said that he would cut foreign aid to five billion dollars per year, with most of that reserved for the Jewish state. "He made a trip to Israel about a year or so ago, and he came back a little bit different," McCain said.

During the most intense phase of the recent war in Gaza, when even staunchly pro-Israel American commentators were decrying Israel's tactics, I asked Paul if he had any reservations about the offensive. "Every sovereign nation has a right to defend themselves, Israel included," he said. "It's not the job of American politicians to always have an opinion and to insert themselves into everybody's business." He added, "It's not the job of an American politician to say anything other than we support Israel as an ally, we support the right to self-defense." This contradicted Paul's position on Egypt, which is that the U.S. should withhold aid to the country

unless it conforms to certain standards. I asked if our aid and arms to Israel were problematic. "I think I've answered the question pretty well," he said.

Jesse Benton told me that the foreign-policy differences between Rand and his father stem from Rand's facing the realities of the world. "If Ron were President, he would have had to govern like Rand," Benton said. "Ron is much more of a purist about non-intervention, and that's fine, but in many ways Ron's foreign policy can exist only in an academic sense. It's just not possible for the United States to be non-interventionist. It's not much of a difference on principle, but a much bigger difference in practice."

McCain told me that, if Rand Paul is the Republican nominee for President in 2016, he will support him. "I've seen him grow and I've seen him mature and I've seen him become more centrist. I know that if he were President or a nominee I could influence him, particularly some of his views and positions on national security. He trusts me particularly on the military side of things, so I could easily work with him. It wouldn't be a problem."

In mid-July, Senator Paul was on the phone making a deal. Paul, who was wearing two-tone Wayfarers and a navy shirt under a navy jacket with a stain on the sleeve, left his Senate office building while he negotiated with Scott Brown, a Republican running for the Senate from New Hampshire. Brown needed Paul's help, but Paul was hesitating. He walked across a Senate parking lot and listened to Brown make his pitch. Brown, who was elected to the Senate from Massachusetts in 2010, to finish the late Ted Kennedy's term, lost the seat in 2012 to Elizabeth Warren. A year later, he moved to New Hampshire to try his luck there.

Once a Tea Party bannerman, Brown was running a milquetoast primary campaign against several lesser known conservatives, including Jim Rubens, a libertarian-leaning Republican who is closer to Paul on civil liberties and foreign policy than Brown is. The Republican Liberty Caucus, a leading libertarian group that once featured Ron Paul as its honorary chairman and backed him for President in 2012, endorsed

Rubens over Brown. "I'm a liberty-oriented Republican," Rubens told me recently. "Whenever someone asks me what senators I admire, I always cite Rand Paul."

Earlier this year, Rubens pulled Paul aside at an event in New Hampshire and asked for his endorsement. Paul declined, and Rubens told me that he assumed the decision was related to Paul's Presidential aspirations. Over the phone, Brown was asking Paul to commit to a political event for him in mid-September, the weekend after his race against Rubens would be decided.

Paul stepped into an aide's beat-up black Kia. Every day, he faced similar decisions between the ideological principles of the libertarian movement and the transactional politics required to get him closer to the White House. Ron Paul once wrote that he had adopted Mises's view that America had no statesmen because politicians voted according to the whims of pressure groups. Rand Paul seems to regard such shifts as inescapable. His political successes so far have all come at moments when he has relinquished his long-held views, most notably in his recent, unambiguous endorsement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and his shift in foreign-policy positions to comport with those of Republican Party voters who see Israel as a key ally and ISIS as a serious threat.

But the contradictions have started to pile up. Last week, I talked to John McCain again, and he was in a less generous mood. In an interview with the *Daily Beast* on September 17th, Rand Paul, apparently referring to a widely discredited Internet conspiracy theory, said that McCain had met with ISIS. "They had a doctored picture of me with Baghdadi!" McCain said, speaking of the leader of ISIS: "It is disappointing that he would pick up and legitimize what was clearly information that was being pushed by people who are enemies of the United States." McCain now dismissed Rand's hawkish rhetoric about ISIS: "He said we have to destroy ISIS, and yet he has not described a strategy in order to achieve that goal."

Kevin Cosby had hoped that Paul would use his Urban League appearance to publicly endorse a bold new job-training program for ex-felons that Paul had

described to him privately, but it was absent from the speech. Other close friends of Paul warned that his political identity was becoming confusing. Steve Munisteri said that Paul should stop calling himself a libertarian. "I know he just means that he likes to protect individual freedoms, but that's not what it means down here," he said, referring to Texas. "They think it means you're going to legalize heroin." He said he no longer believed, as he had told me over the summer, that Rand was one of the three candidates most likely to win the Republican nomination in 2016, because "the foreign-policy situation is such a wild card."

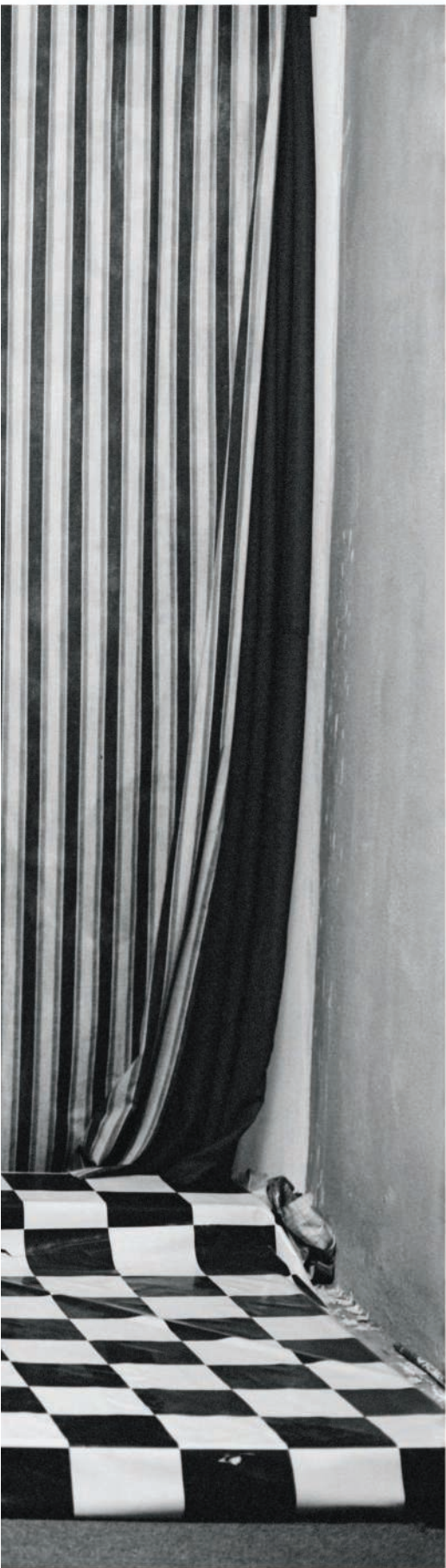
In August, John Downing accompanied Paul to Guatemala to perform pro-bono eye surgeries. Downing told me he thinks that Paul would be a good President, but he complained that Paul, in an effort to placate social conservatives, had endorsed the so-called "personhood amendment." That would grant a fertilized egg the full rights of an individual and make abortions, I.U.D.s, and the morning-after pill illegal. "They're going to kill him about it if he doesn't figure out a way to get away from it," Downing said. "He's going to lose half or more of women immediately once they find out what that would do to birth control."

In the car, Rand told Brown, "We'll do it." But he had one request. Paul's grassroots supporters were uneasy about his evolving positions on key issues. Benton said, "There's a sub-layer that's a very, very loud minority of supporters, and nothing is ever going to be right unless Rand is on a regular basis standing on the floor of the Senate smashing the establishment." He went on, "They want Ted Cruz on steroids, and that's just not going to work in the long term." With this in mind, Paul asked Brown to keep their deal secret until Brown had defeated Rubens and his other opponents. "We don't want to get any backlash from that," Paul said. "I know you're going to win."

Brown could deliver control of the Senate to Republicans this fall and give Paul an even larger platform from which to launch a Presidential campaign. "We want to pick up your seat," Paul told Brown. He hung up the phone and headed off to a fund-raiser. ♦



PHOTOGRAPH BY MALICK SIDIBÉ



PROFILES

INTO THE UNKNOWN

Chris Ofili returns to New York with a major retrospective.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

Chris Ofili paints in a dilapidated white cottage on Lady Chancellor Road, about ten minutes from downtown Port of Spain, in Trinidad. It has three rooms, each large enough to accommodate one or two of the strange, dreamlike paintings he is working on. Aside from taking out the kitchen, Ofili has done nothing to the cottage. Rickety windows on one side are propped open with sticks. No air-conditioner, no screens, no studio assistant. The house clings to a steep hillside, the floor slants downhill, and the floorboards sag and groan. Most of the recent paintings in Ofili's first major New York retrospective, which opens at the New Museum on October 29th, were done in these rooms.

"I think I just resolved something about this one," he said, somewhat conspiratorially. It was a morning in June, and we were looking at a dark nine-foot-tall vertical painting called "Lime Bar," which he had been working on since April. A black man in a frilled white semi-transparent shirt stands behind a bar squeezing limes, and in the foreground a couple in shadow, a man and a woman, sit close together drinking. "When I leave the studio at night, I take a photo of the picture I'm working on," Ofili continued. "This morning when I woke up, I looked at the photo and thought, I'll change his shirt." The barman's shirt had originally been white, but Ofili had painted it black, to make the figure recede. "It looked ghastly," he said. "So this morning I decided to make the shirt white again, but the black was still wet, and the paint wasn't going on the way I wanted. I started to blot it with this"—he picked up an old green T-shirt to demonstrate—"and it left this amazing texture. I got lucky. Until that moment it was all panic and despair, be-

cause I thought I was going to lose it."

That an artist of Chris Ofili's stature could feel panic and despair over an unfinished painting somehow strains belief. He projects the inner confidence that his physical presence leads you to expect—at forty-five, he is well over six feet tall and powerfully built, and he dresses with casual elegance. Early success in London gave him the freedom to chart his own course in painting, at a time when painting was being dismissed as obsolete. He won the Turner Prize in 1998, when he was thirty, the first black artist to do so. Notoriety arrived a year later, in New York. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's moral and political sensitivities were so outraged by Ofili's use of elephant dung in his painting of the Virgin Mary that he tried to cut off all municipal funding from the Brooklyn Museum, where it was part of a group exhibition from the Saatchi Collection. Ofili has been reluctant to exhibit his work in New York since then, but he has gone right on producing startlingly original paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures. Writing about the later paintings in Ofili's 2010 retrospective at Tate Modern, Adrian Searle, a British critic who has followed his career with particular acumen, found them "uncompromisingly difficult." "This is dangerous territory," Searle went on to say. "Rather than living up to his reputation, he is now more concerned to push his art forward."

Ofili's art has changed profoundly since he moved from London to Trinidad, in 2005. In his latest paintings, whose fluid colors make me think of Matisse, the forms are elongated and enigmatic. Adjacent to the barman picture, on the side wall, another vertical canvas showed a tall man in a green tailcoat and striped pants, balancing a house of cards on a tray. Sinuous black lines issuing from his

Ofili in Malick Sidibé's studio, in Mali. Ofili used a Sidibé photograph from 1963 in several works that he made in recent years in Trinidad, where he now lives.

mouth turn into thicker, ropy shapes that coalesce into a dark cloud at the lower left of the canvas, where two men are playing cards. The players are about half the size of the man in the tailcoat, although they seem to be on the same plane. “They’re all breathing the same smoke, I think,” Ofili said. I asked about the difference in scale. “Oh, yeah. That really bothered me for a while,” he said. “But I didn’t feel it was my responsibility to change it. In a painting you can do anything, right? I’m making it all up. This thing is too big! But it’s just what it is. Not bad, not good, just too big.”

Ofili loves the moment in a painting’s development when he temporarily loses control. “Painting is a kind of pursuit, a hunt,” he told me, in a later conversation. “I think it’s more interesting when you can corral your subjects, instead of just going right to them. Enjoy and engage with the process—you want to keep going into the unknown, to the point where you don’t think about how long it’s going to take to get there. I’ve become more and more comfortable with the idea that

you can construct a narrative and bring someone onstage, and you don’t have to tell them what to do. Once they arrive, they’ve activated their character.”

I asked him about his 2008 painting called “The Healer,” which made a strong impression on me when I saw it at the David Zwirner Gallery, in New York. Its central image, emerging from darkness, is a Gauguin-like deity, with long blue-black hair, who seems to be eating, or perhaps disgorging, a stream of radiant yellow blossoms. Ofili said, “Oh, God. I remember going on and on with that painting, trying to get him to lift off the canvas, almost to float in the room. What this healer does, he consumes light. To remain dark he has to consume light, and he sees light as being these flowers from the poui tree we have here, a tree that sheds its blossoms all at once, overnight. The painting was in the studio for more than a year. It didn’t really come to life in the second room, the painting room, so I moved it to the first room, which is the waiting room. That was like cutting the cord—then it could free itself, and I could see it in a new way.

It’s really a Trinidad painting. I mean, they’re all made in Trinidad, but they’re not all Trinidad paintings.”

Ofili visited Trinidad for the first time in 2000, when he was invited by an international art trust to attend a painting workshop in Port of Spain. He persuaded the sponsors to invite his friend Peter Doig, a Scottish painter who had lived on the island for five years when he was a child. “It wasn’t what I thought it was going to be,” Ofili told me. “There’s no real tourism here—it’s an industrial economy, oil and gas—and there’s a quiet dignity about the way people interact, a bare honesty that takes the airs and graces out of living.” In Trinidad, a former British colony with a polyglot population descended largely from African slaves and South Asian indentured workers, whites make up less than one per cent of the population. Doig told me that on their first night in Port of Spain they went out to get rotis, “a sort of curry wrap, quite delicious, and this guy on the street, a tramp or something, black but not as dark as Chris, said, ‘Hey, darkie, buy me a roti.’ I looked at Chris and we both started laughing. People there talk about color in a way you never hear in London.”

The only paintings they did on that trip were collaborations. Doig, who was becoming known for his paintings of forests and snow scenes in Canada, where he lived for thirteen years when he was growing up, had brought seven rolled-up canvases, which they worked on jointly, “him mocking my work and me mocking his,” as Doig put it. The rest of their three-week trip was spent exploring the island in rental cars and taking hundreds of photographs and videos. Before leaving, Doig bought a piece of land on the island’s north coast, and Ofili decided he, too, would be coming back.

He came back a dozen times or more during the next few years, and brought his future wife, Roba El-Essawy, a singer and songwriter in a London hip-hop band called Attica Blues. Music has always been a big part of Ofili’s life. When he was nominated for the Turner Prize, he asked Attica Blues to do the background music for the required documentary film on his work. El-Essawy left a vivid impression on him, and two years later, after breaking up with his longtime girlfriend,



*“Either the President’s in town or they’re selling
zeppoles on Seventh Avenue.”*

the German artist Tomma Abts, he called her. They went to the movies on their first date—Ofili told me they saw Spike Lee’s “Jungle Fever,” but El-Essawy insists it was “Summer of Sam.” They got married at the end of 2002. El-Essawy, whose parents are Egyptian, had lived in London all her life, and her warmth, wit, and physical presence are as impressive as Ofili’s. She has degrees in biology and neuroscience. She began teaching reading skills when they moved to Trinidad, and recently she has started writing music again. For a long time, she was “hesitant,” as she put it, about the idea of living there. More than hesitant, Ofili recalls. “She said, ‘I can see why you want this, but it’s not happening.’ But then, one evening, I overheard her talking to a friend about a concert or something that was a few months off, and she said, ‘I’m not sure, because we might be going to Trinidad.’” They moved there in 2005, and their two children, a boy and a girl, were born on the island. Amel, the girl, is now seven, and Dalil is four.

Although the Ofilis feel that Trinidad is their home, and they are building two new houses there, both of them designed by the architect David Adjaye, Ofili’s closest friend, they have kept their London house in the East End, which they use in the summer and visit several times throughout the year. (Ofili also has a London studio and a small office to handle his business affairs.) They have a place in Brooklyn, too. They can afford all this real estate because Ofili’s new paintings—the large ones, four or five a year—are priced between four hundred thousand and six hundred thousand dollars apiece, and his dealers, Victoria Miro in London and David Zwirner in New York, have no trouble finding buyers.

Ofili picked me up in his dark-green Land Rover the next morning and we went to see one of the new houses, on a hillside overlooking Port of Spain. It’s a massive three-story concrete-and-glass structure, with large rooms and outdoor passageways. The house was supposed to be Ofili’s dream studio, but somewhere along the way he decided to turn it into a family house. (His joke name for it is Afrovilla.) When it’s finished—Ofili seemed certain that this would be in three months—the place they’ve been living in, beyond the white cottage on Lady Chan-

cellor Road, will become his studio. Leaving the white cottage, cramped as it is, will be difficult for Ofili. When his first car, a 1973 Ford Capri, had to be replaced, he couldn’t bear the thought of anyone else driving it, so he had it crushed. I asked him if this would happen to the white cottage. “Maybe,” he said, laughing.

The next day, we drove for almost an hour to the north coast, climbing much of the way. We stopped to look at the hilltop house that Peter Doig had built in 2005. Doig wasn’t there. Henry Pearson, his Guyanese caretaker, took us through and then came with us in the Land Rover, down the steep, twisting unpaved road (washed out in a few places) that leads to Adjaye’s second building for Ofili, which he calls his beach house, although it’s in a tropical jungle and the beach is a five-hundred-step walk (he’s counted) farther down. The house is made of concrete and local bluestone, and its clear, powerful forms and open perspectives—even more open than they are in the family house—makes it look like a minimalist sculpture. “To build here, you have to see what the land is doing and not fight against it,” Ofili said. He had brought a cooler filled with ice, lemon soda, and fresh limes, which he passed around. The whole family comes here on weekends, often with friends; they cook outdoors and sleep in hammocks. “Daddy, can we leave the house like this, unfinished?” Amel asked recently.

On the way back to town, we stopped at Maracas Beach, the main public bathing area, and had shark sandwiches and soursop ice cream at Vilma’s Bake and Shark stand. As we were leaving, Ofili bought some pomegranates (like a small red pear) from a toothless man on the road, who had recognized the Land Rover and waved him down; they chatted for a while, holding up traffic. We drove back through the mountain village of Paramin, which is known for its “blue devils”—men who paint their faces and bodies blue and intimidate townspeople during carnival week. Ofili gets continuing pleasure from the pace and texture of life here. For the first time, nature became prominent in his life and his work. He goes on long hikes with friends, swims in a water-

fall deep in the forest, runs for an hour when he leaves the studio in the late afternoon. “Trinidad is warm and friendly, but it’s quite secretive, and the countryside is very mysterious,” he said. “There’s always more to see, and the more is not like what you’ve seen.” A few years ago, he took over the bartender’s job at the film club that Peter Doig had started in his Port of Spain studio. On film nights, he

turned up in a white shirt, a black bow tie, black pants, and a long white apron. “It was a bit like being invisible, but you get to see people differently,” Ofili told me. It also led to the “Lime Bar” painting.

“Chris is the most private person I have ever met,” his wife told me. “I’m

pretty sure that to this day most people here don’t know what he does for a living. He’s the man with the green car that looks like an army car.” (In London, he drives a BMW 7 series, the largest made. Before that, and after the Ford Capri, he had a Jaguar XJ.) I asked Ofili if he ever worried about being cut off from the art worlds in London and New York. “I do get mild anxiety,” he said. “Some people say you have to be on the track to be in the race. But I feel that by coming here we created more life options and more mental space. I want the kids to have a wonderful life. And the art stuff piggybacks on life, not the other way round.” I quoted a saying that I’d heard attributed to Fernand Léger: “Either a good life and lousy art or good art and a lousy life.” “Why not both?” Ofili said. “It can all be good.”

May and Michael Ofili left Nigeria in 1965 and settled in Manchester, England, where Chris was born three years later. He was their second child, after Anthony and before Francis and Josephine. Both parents worked for McVitie’s, which has been manufacturing biscuits and sweets since 1830, May for thirty years. When Chris was eleven, his father left the family and moved back to Nigeria. May worked harder after that, putting in as much overtime as she could get, so that all four children could go to college. Chris never saw his father again. “His leaving was not a big shock,” he told me. “It was a deteriorating relationship. He



had another family—I got to learn that later—and then he went on to have still another family in Nigeria. It sounds really bad, but I’m comfortable with it. My mother held the family together amazingly, with a lot of dignity and strength, and my uncle Festus”—his father’s brother, who lived nearby and worked for British Telecom—“was always a central part of our lives.” Ofili has visited several African countries, and a recent trip to Mali made him think about going to Nigeria, where he’s never been. Would he try to see his father there? “Part of me says yes and part of me doesn’t know,” he said. “I don’t want to make assumptions from afar.”

The children attended Catholic schools, and both Anthony and Chris were altar boys. “It was a *little* like being on the football team,” Chris recalls. “We sort of had our own thing, and there were a lot of jokes. When people were taking Communion, we’d go round with metal trays that were supposed to catch any stray drops, and if the recipient was a friend of yours you’d hold the tray against his neck when he said ‘Amen’ so he’d go ‘Aargh’ instead.” Ofili sometimes thought about becoming a priest: “It seemed like a good life, and you were guaranteed a good end.” In secondary school he stopped going to church, and concentrated on getting good grades and playing soccer—he was a left-wing striker on the school team. Art didn’t register in his thinking—he had never been to a museum—but as graduation approached he decided he might like to study furniture design. He was told he should first take a one-year art foundation course, where he would be exposed to many different disciplines. He applied to Tameside College, on the outskirts of Manchester, and was accepted.

“We had two weeks of everything at Tameside,” he said. “There was a painting teacher, Bill Clark, who had a completely different approach from the others. At the start of the class, he’d have all of us lie down and meditate, listen to our thoughts. The other guys were teaching technique. If you’re going to make a print, this is the way you do it.” Clark liked to confuse his students by telling them to divide what they were working on into four parts, chuck three of them away, and enlarge the scale of the piece remaining. “Chris not only embraced

this—he took it on, as though he understood what I was trying to do,” Clark told me. “Of course, he came with a completely clean slate. I didn’t have to delete past experience, which is what I’m doing with most of my teaching. What comes over with Chris is sheer intelligence.” Ofili found Clark’s teaching immensely liberating. In art, he realized, there was no right and wrong. Halfway through the foundation year, he decided to specialize in painting.

He started with portraits and self-portraits. Although the first oil painting he sold was a portrait of Bill Clark’s wife and child—Clark bought it—most of his paintings were of himself or of imaginary characters, usually black figures. At the end of the year, he enrolled in a three-year course at the Chelsea College of Arts, in London. His mother didn’t see how he could make a living as an artist, so he told her that he would eventually study design. (His older brother, Anthony, studied history in college and found a good job with an insurance firm. Francis, his younger brother, runs a children’s clothing shop and designs Web sites, and Josephine left her job with the National Health Service to stay home and raise her four children.) “I knew I didn’t want to study design and that I wanted to carry on painting,” Ofili said. “Luckily, it didn’t cost anything, because in those days it was all supported by the state.” In his first year, one of his self-portraits won a prize at a student exhibition in Manchester. His work was heavily influenced by Jean-Michel Basquiat, America’s black wunderkind, whose graffiti-style primitivism surfaces in some of Ofili’s student portraits; he also looked closely at Georg Baselitz, Philip Guston, and George Condo.

Peter Doig was doing graduate work at the Chelsea College of Arts when Ofili was an undergraduate, and they soon became friends. “I’m nine years older than him, but I never felt like his mentor,” Doig told me. “Chris always seemed the older one. I don’t think he ever lacked self-confidence, in his work or in himself.” Their paintings had certain similarities, such as the tendency to combine figurative and abstract elements, but they didn’t influence each other, and their careers have had different trajectories: recognition came earlier for Ofili, but in the past few years Doig’s work has brought much

higher prices at auction—seventeen million dollars in 2014 versus Ofili’s current auction record of two million eight hundred thousand. Neither of them felt any connection to the Young British Artists (or Y.B.A.s), who started getting a lot of attention in 1988. To Ofili, the Y.B.A.s’ talent for self-promotion and their use of non-art materials—such as Damien Hirst’s tiger shark in formaldehyde and Tracey Emin’s “Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995,” a tent emblazoned with names—seemed unrelated to what he was doing. Elephant dung, coated with resin and incorporated into an oil painting, was an art material to Ofili.

Ofili graduated from Chelsea in 1991, and in September he entered the Royal College of Art, where he studied for a master’s degree and experimented with larger paintings. The rules there were less flexible than they had been at Chelsea, though, and he was eager for new experiences. That summer, he attended a three-week international art workshop in Zimbabwe, and then spent three more weeks travelling around the country. Although he finds it insulting when people assume he was “connecting with his roots,” he did feel an internal resonance. “It was my first time in Africa. I was twenty-three. I’d go on these little safaris on horseback.” One of the safaris was to Matobo National Park, where he saw prehistoric cave paintings. He was particularly struck by a cave wall, six feet high and about twenty feet long, covered entirely with red and yellow dots. “To me, it looked like markmaking that would have taken an eternity,” he said. “It made me think about time—making art in relation to time.” He saw a lot of animals, but no elephants—a drought had dried up their watering places. He did see elephant droppings, and was impressed by their size and their round shape. “I brought some of them home in my suitcase, in a cardboard box, along with my clothes,” he said.

In the fall of 1992, he got a one-year exchange scholarship to an art school in Berlin, where the atmosphere was much freer and livelier than in London. “They allowed twenty-four-hour access to the school, and there was a night club in a bombed-out basement in Potsdamer Platz with amazing hip-hop music,” he

said. “Music was the battery, fully charged. I wanted to paint things that would feel like that music.” Ofili had been experimenting with the elephant dung he had brought back in his suitcase, gluing pieces of it to paintings. He turned three jumbo droppings into “Shitheads,” one of them accessorized with his own cut-off dreadlocks and a set of baby teeth. (When he ran out of the Zimbabwe product, he arranged for a renewable supply from the London Zoo.) At a street fair in Berlin, he spread a Laura Ashley fabric on the sidewalk and placed several dung balls on it, without explanation. (A little later, he heard that in 1983 the African-American artist David Hammons had offered snowballs for sale on the street; to his chagrin, he also learned that Hammons had used elephant dung in his art.) Ofili said, “People would look at the dung, look at me, and ask what it was. I actually sold some, which was hilarious.” Later that spring, he did the same thing on Brick Lane, in London’s East End, where a number of people assumed he must have been selling drugs. He posted stickers around town reading “Elephant Shit,” and placed an ad with the same words (and nothing else) in a new British art magazine called *frieze*. These activities drew scant attention, but then a respected art writer, Stuart Morgan, who had seen Ofili’s work when he came to the Royal College as a visiting critic, put him in a three-artist group show he was organizing at the Cubitt Gallery, in 1993. Morgan followed up a year later with a longish article about him in *frieze*, called “The Elephant Man.” “That article was a big deal,” Ofili said. “It set me off from other young artists and gave me my first taste of a type of fame, which I didn’t know how to handle. It left me with a slight feeling of guilt.”

Ofili graduated from the Royal College in 1993. He found a studio space in Fulham, where a group of former students had rented the unused second floor of a gas-company building. He had a part-time job with an off-license wine-and-liquor store on weekends, and once or twice a month he earned serious money de-installing commercial exhibitions at night—tearing down and carting away temporary walls and partitions. Since visiting Zimbabwe, his paintings had become more abstract. “Painting



Ofili’s “Lime Bar” and, at right, “House of Cards,” new works in his Trinidad studio.

with Shit on it,” which had been in Stuart Morgan’s show, was a maze of interlocking concentric circles composed of meticulously painted dots, hundreds of them, with an explosion of black paint and elephant dung near the center. Instead of hanging on the wall, the canvas rested on two highly varnished dung balls on the floor—a practice Ofili followed with all his paintings for the next decade. Peter Doig swapped one of his own pictures for one of Ofili’s dung paintings, which he still owns.

Figuration returned two years later, in the paintings that Ofili produced in the

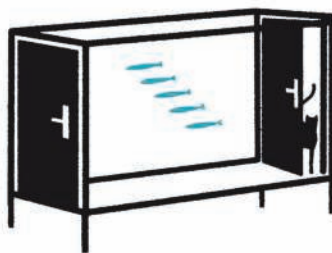
mid-nineties. Brash, funny, and bursting with energy, a mixture of bad-ass subject matter and virtuoso craftsmanship, they show a young artist coming into exuberant possession of an original voice. Against abstract backgrounds of spiralling dot patterns in glowing colors, the painted or collaged images (often cut from black porn magazines) are drawn from sources that range from art history and the Bible to black popular culture of the preceding three decades. “Satan” and “7 Bitches Tossing their Pussies before the Divine Dung,” both dated 1995, took a hip-hop approach to William Blake, whose luminous

watercolors, including “Satan in his Original Glory” and “The Four and Twenty Elders Casting their Crowns before the Divine Throne,” Ofili had spent many hours studying at the Tate. The two versions of “Afrodizzia” (1996), in which dozens of cut-out photographs of black faces (Miles Davis, Diana Ross, James Brown, Cassius Clay) float in a sea of subtly shifting colors, pay homage to the renaissance of black creativity that Ofili believes hip-hop helped to create. His heroes at the time included Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg, Lil’ Kim, and Wu-Tang Clan. “It was like revisiting the idea of black power in the seventies, but through a more celebratory lens—not fighting for power but celebrating a newfound power,” he said. As he told an interviewer in 2010, “A lot of black art that came before was set up to critique the system. I thought that was boring . . . I wanted to be sincere and outrageous and friendly and rude and experimental and conventional.”

Ofili had started a series of small watercolor drawings of stylized, exotically clothed black women and black men that he called “Afromuses”—painted in ten or fifteen minutes every morning, as a sort of warm-up exercise—and another series of abstract black-and-white pencil drawings of linked black heads under Afros. (Years later, Thelma Golden, the director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, caught a glimpse of the “Afromuses” when she was interviewing Ofili in his London studio and persuaded him to let her show a hundred and eighty-one of them at her museum.) By 1995, he was selling enough work to quit his other jobs. He had joined Victoria Miro’s gallery in London, and shortly before his first one-man show there, in 1996, Gavin Brown, a British-born artist and dealer, gave him his first solo show in New York. “One of the brighter points of light in the starry London art scene is Chris Ofili . . . whose paintings are at once suave, obnoxious, and naïve, on purpose,” Roberta Smith wrote in her *Times* review of the show. That same year, the Walker Art Center, in Minneapolis, included him in its “‘Brilliant!’ New Art from London” survey. That show was a mixed blessing, because it made people link him with the Y.B.A.s. Nobody in London or New York was making art like Ofili’s. “It was all mine, and it was

the greatest feeling,” he told me. “This was the music I liked, this was the work I was doing, and it was all tied in.”

Toward the end of 1996, Ofili had to find a new studio space, and he moved to a much rougher neighborhood, in Kings Cross, near the railroad station. “There was a parking lot next door, and at night I could look out the window and see street prostitution linked with drugs, pimps getting paid off, people sleeping in doorways,” he said. His new surroundings were reflected in “Foxy Roxy,” “Blossom,” “She,” “Pimpin’ ain’t easy,” and other big (eight-by-six-foot), loud, sexy paintings that played with the stereotypes of black street life. He was “kind of jokin’ around” with the way black pimps and their “hos” were treated in gangsta rap, as he said—the central image in “Pimpin’ ain’t easy” is a tower in the shape of an upright phallus, with eyes, nose, and a sappy grin. Many of these works appeared in the first big show of Ofili’s work, which opened at the Southampton City Art Gallery in 1998, moved to the Serpentine Gallery, in London, and went on to the Whitworth Art Gallery, at the University of Manchester. The critical reaction was profuse and generally positive. Paintings like “Pimpin’ ain’t easy” were “too erudite, too funny, too seductive for any kind of single-minded reading,” Adrian Searle advised in the *Guardian*, a warning that eluded the



Times’ reliably outrageous Waldemar Januszczak. He called the work “sexist, crude, misjudged . . . Madonna-bashing, woman-denigrating, posturing, pretentious, dumb paintings.” After watching several American “blaxploitation” films from the seventies at B.F.I. Southbank, Ofili introduced his own black action antihero, Captain Shit, whose swash-buckling he chronicled in half a dozen paintings. “He didn’t have much power,” Ofili explained, laughing. “He could

make the space around him glow—that was his power.”

The survey show earned him a nomination for the Turner Prize. The other nominees that year were Tacita Dean, Sam Taylor-Wood, and Cathy de Monchaux, each of whom was asked to present work for the Turner Prize exhibition at the Tate. Ofili decided to come up with an image that would resonate beyond the art world. “No Woman, No Cry”—the title comes from a Bob Marley anthem—is a portrait of a black woman named Doreen Lawrence, whose teen-age son, Stephen, had been stabbed to death in South London while waiting for a bus. “It was an issue that was still bubbling, bubbling,” he said. “This kid had been killed by white racists. The police had fucked up the investigation, and the image that stuck in my mind was not just his mother but sorrow—deep sorrow for someone who will never come back.” He painted the mother in profile, weeping large tears, with a tiny image of Stephen inside each of them. “I nailed it with that one,” he said, very quietly. “I remember finishing the painting and covering it up, because it was just too strong.”

Ofili’s solo show was still open in Manchester when he found out he’d won the Turner Prize. “They had record attendance at the Whitworth Art Gallery the day after,” he said. The gallery staff found his family’s number in the phone book and called his mother, and that, he said, “gave me the license to not have to study design.” Winning the prize brought him national attention and twenty thousand pounds, which went into the town house that he and David Adjaye were renovating in London’s East End. Adjaye, the son of a Ghanaian diplomat, had studied architecture at the Royal College when Ofili was there. They reconnected one day in 1997, when Adjaye saw Ofili driving his lime-green Ford Capri on Brick Lane. (The car had been rusting away in a parking lot behind Ofili’s studio in Fulham; he fell in love with it—his uncle Festus used to have a yellow one—tracked down the owner, bought it, restored it, and taught himself to drive, right there in the lot.) Adjaye had just opened an architectural office in the East End, a long-distressed area that was starting to revive, and Ofili, who had bought a derelict house nearby on Fashion Street, took him to see it. Adjaye became Ofili’s architect

that day. “It wasn’t like having a client,” Adjaye told me. “It was this fantastic dialogue, a kind of sharing”—and it developed into a lasting friendship. Ofili was the best man at Adjaye’s wedding, this year, at St. Paul’s Cathedral, and the two figures sitting together in the “Lime Bar” painting are Adjaye and his bride, Ashley Shaw-Scott. The Fashion Street house, with a magnificent studio in back, was finished in 1999, and it became a refuge from the media storm that broke later that year over Ofili’s painting “The Holy Virgin Mary.”

The picture had set off no alarm bells when the exhibition it was in, called “Sensation,” appeared at the Royal Academy in London, and then at the Hamburger Bahnhof, in Berlin. Ofili, the former altar boy, has said that the painting was an attempt to deal with his own childhood questions about race and virgin mothers—“a hip-hop version of the story.” His Africanized Virgin’s exposed right breast is made of lacquered elephant dung, and her robed, beautifully painted form is surrounded by what look like flying angels until you realize that they are female buttocks cut from porn magazines. Sixteen days before “Sensation” opened at its next stop, the Brooklyn Museum, the *Daily News* headlined a story about the museum’s “Gallery of Horror,” and described the Virgin as being “splattered with elephant dung.” Other papers, including the *Times*, picked up the story. Mayor Giuliani, a Catholic, ignoring multiple invitations to view the painting, issued a statement calling it “sick stuff,” cut off city funds to the museum, and demanded it be removed from the show. (The museum’s funds were eventually restored, following an out-of-court settlement.) The media circus lasted for more than a week, and Ofili, who had stayed in London, stopped answering the telephone. Tasha Amini, his first (and last) studio assistant, tried to protect him from reporters and photographers who came to the door, but, as he remembers, “this was a massive thing coming at you at high speed. It changed everything, messed everything up. I just had to shut down, go inwards. I decided to do fewer exhibitions and no interviews. Luckily, I was making paintings, so I had something to focus on.”

During the next two years, holed up



“He’s waking up! Places, people!”

in his new studio, Ofili completed the most ambitious series of paintings he had done to date. It started with a painting of a long-tailed rhesus monkey holding a cup, or chalice, an image he borrowed from a 1957 Andy Warhol collage that he found in a book. (The psychiatrist and art collector César Reyes, who owns work by both Ofili and Peter Doig, had recently taken Ofili to an island off the coast of Puerto Rico that was populated entirely by rhesus monkeys, and this experience had “just stayed in my mind,” Ofili said.) One monkey painting led to another, and then to a third, each with a single dominant color but permeated by many other colors in the lushly decorative backgrounds. Ofili kept going, and eventually there were thirteen paintings. “I really cannot remember at what point the monkeys became representations of elements of the Last Supper,” Ofili told an interviewer. When I asked him whether the religious theme had been in his mind all along, though, he said, “Absolutely—but calling it ‘The Last Supper’ would have kind of closed it down.”

He didn’t expect the paintings to stay together as a single work—“Who would

want to buy thirteen paintings on the same theme?” he said—but he wanted them to be shown together, and he and David Adjaye spent several weeks transforming a room on the second floor of Victoria Miro’s new gallery into a chapel-like environment. The installation, which opened in June, 2002, as part of a larger Ofili exhibition, was called “The Upper Room,” after the room in Jerusalem where the disciples gathered for the Last Supper. Ofili had said he wanted to slow down the viewing experience, and he succeeded. Viewers waited in long lines to climb a steep flight of stairs, then groped their way down a narrowly lit oblong space with six gorgeous paintings on each side and a larger gold one at the end. The walls, the ceiling, and the floor were clad in walnut veneer, which gave off an aromatic scent. Spotlights on each painting spilled pools of reflected color on the floor.

Sir Nicholas Serota, the Tate’s director, saw the show and began lining up support on his board to acquire it, intact. Miro had already accepted reserves on several of the paintings, but she was able to persuade the buyers to release them,



"We find shopping at the farmers' market to be more self-congratulatory."

and the Tate eventually paid six hundred thousand pounds for the complete ensemble, which it puts on view periodically. Serota had to defend the purchase against conflict-of-interest charges, because Ofili was one of the Tate's artist-trustees; the museum had previously bought works by sitting artist-trustees, however, and "The Upper Room," Serota felt, was too important to lose.

Ofili and Adjaye worked together a year later, in Venice, on the installation of a new series of large red-green-and-black paintings that Ofili had done for the British pavilion at the 2003 Biennale. The subject was an idealized narrative of a man and woman in an African Eden, a paradise of tropical foliage and romantic ardor. The germ of this idea came from an image on the paper triangle of a dry cleaner's hanger, but the real sources were Trinidad and Ofili's feelings for Roba El-Essawy. Limiting himself to three colors was a nod to Marcus Garvey's pan-African flag, in which red symbolizes the blood of martyrs, black the color of their skin, and green the land of Africa. Adjaye's installa-

tion turned the classical proportions of the British pavilion into a fever dream of color and light. Some spectators during the Biennale's opening week, which coincided with the worst heat wave in Venetian memory, found it overwhelming. What few people realized at the time was that Ofili, at the pinnacle of his early success, was striking out in new directions. The Venice paintings were the last to include or rest on elephant dung and the last to use exfoliating patterns of colored dots. He had already stopped mining popular culture for his subject matter, and for two years after his Venice show he stopped making oil paintings—like many artists in search of a new aesthetic, he could experiment more freely with drawings and watercolors. His art was changing radically, but the full extent of the changes did not emerge for three years.

I felt ready for the change to happen, and I knew it was happening inside me," he said, straining to be clear. "It's hard to go away from something that's very enjoyable, and a domain where I

felt supremely confident. Before, I was focussing on high impact, and what I wanted to find was a way of working that was less complex and maybe less visible." He found it in Trinidad. On his many visits to the island, he had been fascinated by its haunted landscape and mysterious light—especially the slow transition from day into night, an extended period when forms are still visible but their shapes become indistinct. Trying to capture that experience in paint opened up a whole new way of working. "I felt I was tapping into a process of looking that was slower," he said.

Alone in the white cottage in Trinidad, he began experimenting with blue, a color he had always shied away from, because of its tendency to dominate other colors. "I'd seen the blue devils, and the power of dark blue, and I realized it was more than a color—it had a strength other than color strength," he said. When he was still living in London, he had done a number of blue-and-silver paintings, the "Blue Rider" series, which he showed at Berlin Contemporary Fine Arts in 2005. In Trinidad, he began a new series of darker-blue paintings. "I had found that if you put silver underneath blue, the blue sits back, like night, or glows like moonlight," he told me. He began building up the blue in darker and darker layers, with shadings of purple, indigo, and black. The images in the blue paintings are from his imagination, from the Bible, and from life in Trinidad. Two *parang* musicians are on a bridge in "Iscariot Blues," seemingly oblivious of a hanged man nearby. "After Judas tried to give away the thirty pieces of silver and hung himself, nobody wanted to cut him down," Ofili explained. "I made the association because of what appeared to me a sort of nonchalance about death here. When somebody dies in a car accident, the body is not immediately covered up by the medics, as it would be in the U.S. or the U.K. People just carry on with their daily life."

A few of the blue paintings are so dark that you have to look for some time before the forms emerge. Other paintings, done in that period and later, are full of color, with sinuous semi-abstract human forms flowing into each other and into nature. A photograph taken in 1963 by the great Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, whose work Ofili

had seen in a book, recurs in seven Ofili paintings, in many drawings, and in a sculptural frieze he's carved into a wall of his new family house. It shows a young couple dancing, bodies separate but heads nearly touching. The photograph is called "Christmas Eve," and Ofili found out that the couple were brother and sister. In his painting "Douen's Dance," their heads touch. "Douens here are spirits of children who died before they were baptized, so they never get to move on," he said.

His first sculptures were cast in 2005, a pair of squatting figures, male and female, under whose bared posteriors lie neat coils of excrement. They are based on the folk-art *caganers* (defecators) in Catalanian Nativity scenes, which he had seen on a trip to Barcelona when he was at the Royal College. Two monumental Annunciations came next. After going to a Fra Angelico exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in 2006, Ofili made the clay model for a seven-foot bronze sculpture in which the Virgin has thrown herself so violently against the black-winged angel that her feet have pierced his thighs; in a second version, the two of them appear to be copulating. Ofili's eroticizing of religious themes brought out the Giuliani in some viewers. When the two Annunciations and other Ofili sculptures were shown at Zwirner in 2007, they struck one critic as "hideous" and another as "so over the top it feels fatuous," but Ofili brushes this sort of thing aside. To him, the sculptures represent another kind of "experimentation and discovery" in his work, a way to "be out in the open ocean—which is better than an aquarium or, worse still, a fishbowl." No sculptures were included in his 2010 retrospective at the Tate, because Ofili and the Tate curators had decided to focus exclusively on his paintings. When "Night and Day," his exhibition at the New Museum, goes on view this month, it will include several sculptures, along with a selection of other recent works, a floor devoted to his first decade, and a specially constructed space for nine of the blue paintings, only a few of which have been exhibited in this country. "The blue paintings will challenge your expectations about Ofili," Massimiliano Gioni, the museum's artistic director and chief curator, said last month. "There's

no trace of the carnivalesque element that's so strong in his nineties work. You can really get lost in them."

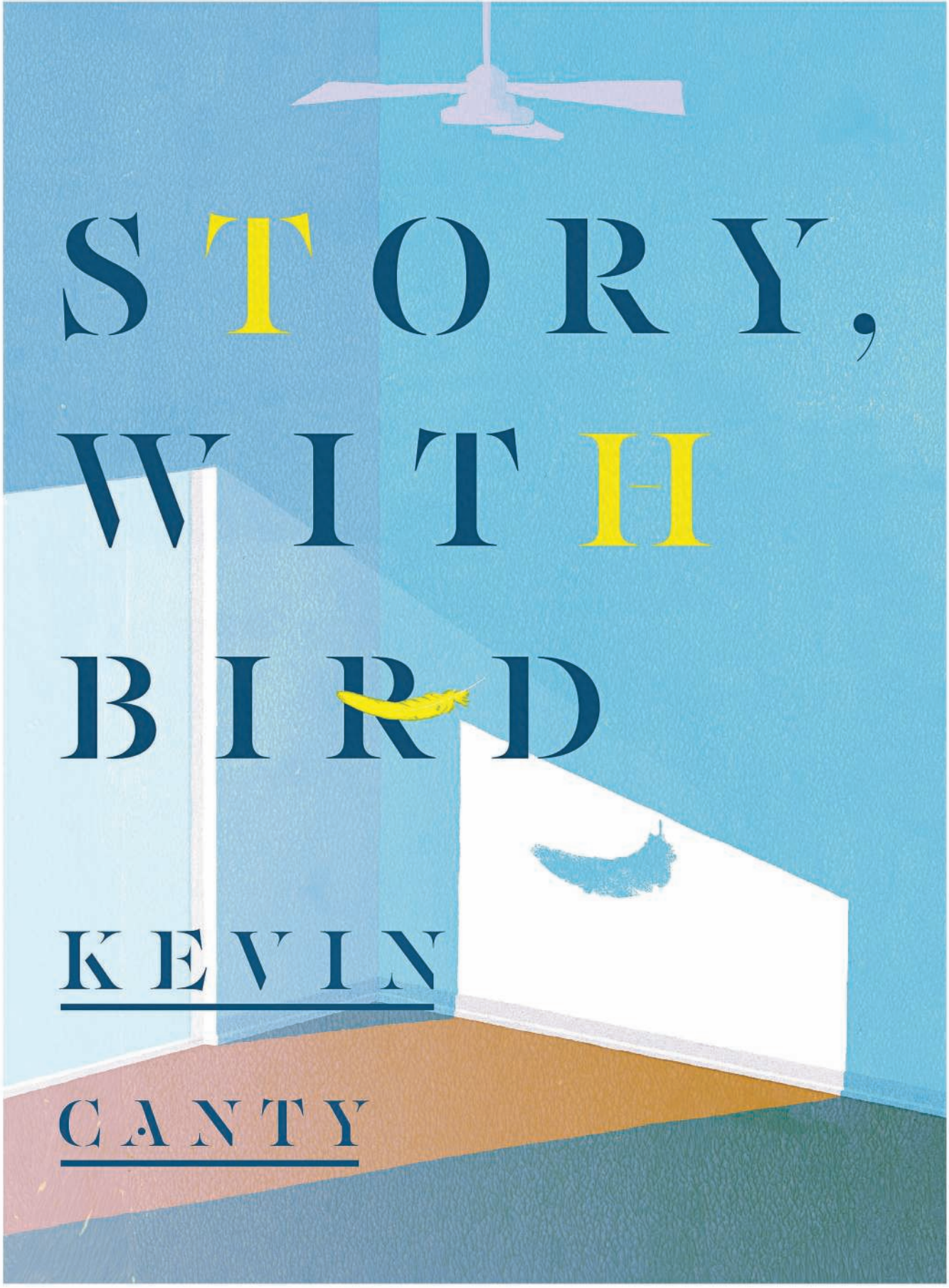
Ofili brought his family to New York in mid-July. He had to make some decisions with Gioni about the hanging of his show, which will occupy the whole museum. Amel took dance classes at the Joffrey Ballet School, and Dalil went to a sports camp at Chelsea Piers. They stayed for nearly three weeks before going on to London, where Ofili was doing the costumes for a new dance by the Royal Ballet. Four years earlier, the Royal Ballet had commissioned him to paint the set and design the costumes for a ballet called "Diana and Actaeon," part of a hugely ambitious production based on three Titian paintings that deal with Ovid's telling of the Diana myth. The new dance, whose protagonist is a combination of Prometheus and Agni, an Indian god, opened the first weekend in September, and before each of its three performances Ofili was given two hours to paint his designs directly on the dancers—on their leotards and their bodies.

Before he left for London, I suggested he meet me at the Museum of Modern Art to see the Gauguin print show. Ofili admitted that he doesn't think about Gauguin very much, but he liked the "sense of imperfection" in the woodcuts that Gauguin printed himself. Compared with the beauty and finish of his paintings, "the prints are more like open letters," he said. "There's sound in them, the sound of fire, or of water, but not the impression of people speaking." Ofili was struck by the parallels between Gauguin's Tahiti and Trinidad, especially the "nonvisible energies" of the night scenes. He found it hard to look at Gauguin's ceramic sculpture of a savage goddess killing a wolf cub. "I think the night spirits are more playful in Trinidad," he said. "They're mischievous rather than menacing."

The museum was also showing a new body of work by Jasper Johns, which interested him much more than the Gauguins. It was a small show, called "Regrets"—two paintings, ten drawings, and two prints, all of which had come out of a creased and damaged photograph of Lucian Freud, sitting on a bed and clutching his forehead. The photograph had belonged to Francis Bacon.

Johns had seen it reproduced in a Christie's auction catalogue, and what he did with it electrified Ofili. He moved from one image to another, his eyes shining with excitement. "The initial impulse is quite simple, like a heartbeat, and then it becomes . . . symphonic," he said. "What's wonderful is that you get glimpses of how he works. You can see all of Jasper Johns here." After walking through the show a second time, he said, "Last night, I wasn't sure I needed to go to the Gauguin—I didn't tell you I had already seen it—but this is the reason why. This is just chilling." He kept talking about it in the taxi afterward. He said, "Gauguin is like a drug-infused sleep, a tortured dream with wonderful moments. But you don't get a full night's sleep with Jasper. You're never settled. He's certainly one of the great painters. This is what museums are for, right?"

I've known Johns since the nineteen-sixties, and a few days later my wife and I took Ofili to his house in Connecticut. Both artists seemed to welcome the meeting. Johns, at eighty-four, is more genial than he was thirty years ago, when he used to fend off questions with other questions, such as "Why do you ask that?" After lunch, Johns took us to a converted barn on his property that he uses as a private gallery for his own work and works by other artists. In the main room were paintings, prints, and drawings by Johns from various periods: new works related to the "Regrets" series; three or four older paintings, including one from his flagstone series; two drawings of kitsch hula dancers, from a bandanna that someone had given him; several images in various media of a man slumped on a bench with his head turned to the wall. Ofili told Johns he thought the last seemed related to the Freud photograph, and Johns said, "I do, too." None of us spoke much, but at one point I saw Ofili go over to Johns and say something that made Johns throw back his head and laugh. In the car returning to New York, I asked him what that was about. "I said, 'You're a happy man,'" Ofili replied. "He said he didn't know what I meant, but he knew exactly. I'm really happy for him. His work is so full of life. He's like a bloodhound that's got the scent, and just goes for it. He's in heaven right now—and he's sharing the joy of it." ♦



STORY,

WITH

BIRD

KEVIN

CANTY

Somewhere near the end, she decided that the drinking was the problem. So we stopped cold, both of us, in the middle of February. One of those winters where the sky looms over the town like a gray roof that never changes. Old ice and blackened snow in the gutters. It was maybe a mistake.

It was maybe a mistake, but she might have been right, too. I have since stopped drinking for reasons of my own. But back then it was a test—as everything was a test—of how much we would endure in order to stay together.

And sober we stayed for the rest of the winter. It was interesting, in a way. It was a departure for us, from the long evenings of drinking and laughing and fighting and sex. We'd have some modest, healthful dinner and then watch a movie, and then it would seem like there was nothing else to do. She'd go to work in her little office downstairs and I'd go to bed and listen to the wind in the eaves, the branches scratching against the windowpanes. The days, of course, were actually better: no hangovers, lots of energy. I'd be up at six, before the dawn, and we were both getting a lot of work done. Yes, it felt penitential at times, but at other times it felt as if we had solved a problem, undertaken some new way of life, done an important thing and done it together.

This lasted until spring, until an evening in May. I was out on the porch, smoking a cigarette, enjoying the long, slow twilight of the northern spring, when I heard her scream inside the apartment. When I ran in, there was a bird flying around in circles above her head. I should explain about this apartment: it was very nice, very new, and the main part of it was open two stories up. The living room was a kind of gallery overhead, with the office and the bedroom underneath. The bird was circling in the middle of this grand open space, evidently in a panic, and she was trying to hit it with a broom. So far, she had knocked over a chair and a kettle.

I asked her to stop.

She wanted to know what I had in mind.

We were just at the point where ev-

erything is a contest—the right way to do the dishes, drive a car, chase a bird out of a room. She agreed to try the way my mother had taught me, so we opened all the windows and all the screens and shut the lights off and left the room. We sat outside and shared a cigarette. She was going to a wedding in California the next weekend. I knew better, but I asked her anyway: was she going to be drinking at the wedding?

Of course she was. Everybody was.

What about, you know—what we agreed to?

I'm not the one with the problem, she said. You're the one with the problem.

I went for a walk after that remark, down by the river, the gravel path busy with dog walkers and cyclists and college girls playing with Frisbees in the twilight. I knew the grocery store next to the apartment would be open until eleven, and I turned the matter over in my mind: a nice Côtes du Rhône, maybe, or a rosé we liked that wasn't too sweet. Either that or I could pick up a lime and some tonic water. We still had a bottle of Bombay in the freezer, three-quarters full, which ought to tell you something about what we were doing.

If we were not in this together . . .

The bird was gone when I got home, and she was working in her office. I opened a bottle of club soda. There would be time for the rest of it later.

The bird came back, a few nights later. At least, I think it was the same bird. My knowledge of these things is at a kindergarten level: robin, seagull, magpie, crow. But this one had the same yellow breast and a round black spot on top of its head, as if it were wearing a beret.

It was a delicious spring night, and I had opened all the windows. I was sitting in a good chair under a lamp, with the rest of the house dark, sipping gin and reading one of her poetry books. This was when she was at the wedding, sleeping with her ex-boyfriend. I found out later. I read poetry about once a year, but this time I was looking for something, some secret or clue. That was the hunch I had, anyway, but what was between the covers just seemed like intelligent gibberish. I

wanted some of the old heartbreak. I put her book back on her bookshelf, carefully, so she wouldn't know I had taken it, so she wouldn't know I had been looking for her secrets. I found my college copy of Auden and freshened my drink and settled in again: *Hell is neither here nor there*. . .

Just then the bird flew in. It circled under the big overhead fan, which was turning slowly but still worried me. I switched the fan off, then the reading light. The sound of wings in the dark was stirring. Then the fluttering stopped, and I thought it had left, but when I turned the light back on I knew it was in the room somewhere. I just had a feeling of being watched. And there it was, up on the railing of the living room, staring down at me. I could barely make out its shape, but I saw its eyes, glittering.

Animal eyes in the dark.

It wasn't like the bird was going to hurt me or anything, but its presence made me uneasy, so I went out onto the porch with my poetry and gin. Whatever had made the Auden seem possible indoors, under a quiet solitary light, didn't work at all in the warm expanding evening, and I put the book down and concentrated on my gin. When I went back in to refresh my drink, I couldn't tell whether the bird was still there. In the refrigerator light, I had a creepy feeling that it might land on my back or my head, so I went outside again with my drink and my thoughts. I was thinking about the things I was afraid of: the likelihood of loss, of loneliness. But then I found myself remembering another time: a road trip we'd taken down through the mountains, she and I, that had wound up in a derelict hot springs at the end of a dirt road. The lodge was gray and tumbledown. The hippies who ran the place seemed to be waiting for something that wasn't going to come. They had a blank-eyed, resigned look, the kind you see in the survivors of a tsunami or a typhoon. Suffering that doesn't even know its own name.

After ten o'clock only guests of the lodge were permitted in the pool, and we seemed to be the only guests. This is what I remembered: going out in our bathrobes, taking the bathrobes

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CONDÉ NAST

off, entering the warm water naked, feeling it close around our bodies. It was the edge of fall, so the air was cold, and steam rose from the warm water. We were touching. We were hidden by the steam, and no one was watching anyway, and then sometimes the steam would thin out or vanish completely and we'd get a brief glimpse of a brilliant night sky with clear, clean, glittering stars before the mist rushed in again. And then I was inside her, on the steps at the far end of the pool, half in and half out of the water, so there seemed to be no distinction between my body and hers, between water and air, and we were moving slowly against each other, no hurry, when the steam parted and there, a few feet away, staring directly at us, was a buck with a big spread of antlers and a few of his harem.

Animal eyes in the dark.

No human eyes could see us, and we didn't stop. But I think we both felt those animal eyes on us as we were moving in the dark, in the space between air and water. It changed the thing, somehow. I could remember that feeling, sitting out there on my porch. She and I and the watching deer. It changed the thing.

I woke at first light, six or so, with a dull ache behind my eyes and a tremendous thirst. Every window in the house was still open and a cool breeze, almost cold, blew through the apartment. The bird was gone.

At least, I didn't see it as I went from window to window, closing the house up. Nor did I find it later, as I was tidying the apartment. She was due back from the wedding that evening, and I wanted everything to be nice for her return. The sinks and counters and so on. It was a very pretty place, and we had furnished it together, though it was more her taste than mine. It was never going to be clean enough to make a difference between us, but I kept at it till it sparkled.

I was expecting what? Nothing good. I was trying not to think about it.

But when she came out of security she was happy to see me, and I saw right away how beautiful she was, and how I loved her. That smile when she saw me! Later, she told me how mis-

erable she had been, and I believed her. But I also knew that smile, those moments of pure feeling, plain happiness. And the answering happiness in me.

On the way home, she asked me to stop at the liquor store, and she bought a fresh bottle of Bombay, and when we got home she led me into the bedroom and took her clothes off and pulled me down onto the bed, which I didn't need to be talked into: quick, hot, careless fucking. Afterward she went to the kitchen naked and made us each a gin-and-tonic, the way she liked it, with too much gin and too much lime and just a splash of tonic water, and she handed the glass to me and said, Hello, stranger.

We had a few weeks of this. I wasn't really expecting more, to tell the truth. All the nickels had already dropped in all the slots. We ate butter and steaks and ahi tuna that cost twenty-four dollars a pound, we drank French champagne and Russian vodka, we fought like two cats in a bag and then made up at three in the morning and had sloppy, sentimental sex. We played Scrabble in the small hours of the night, just the two of us. We smoked cigarettes until our lungs felt like sandpaper. The world divided itself into the drinking and the hangover, day and night, and we lived for the nights, the



ones that ended in a blank place, half a memory to wake up to.

And then it was summer. We packed the car with pink wine and sandwiches, apples and paperbacks, and headed south on two-lane highways, skipping the interstates in favor of the little towns of wandering dogs and cheerful bartenders. Her bare feet up on the dashboard. White peaks in the distance, sage flats in the sunlight, shimmering toward the horizon. We stayed in one-of-a-kind motels, the

Bavarian Inn in Sun Valley, the Shady Grove Motor Court in Mexican Hat. We wound up following the Dolores River south, through red-rock canyons stained with ancient creosote, looking for rock art high up on the canyon rim. We saw little dancing men and stars and constellations engraved on the walls.

I dropped her at the airport in Denver and went on south, to stay with my sister in Arizona. She flew home to pack her things and go.

We didn't get married, though both of us had thought we would. And we never got a dog. We'd wanted one, but we'd never agreed on a breed: she wanted a corgi, and I wanted a golden retriever. It's strange the way those plans we made are still floating out there, without us. The possibilities. What if I had agreed to the corgi? What would have happened after that?

I knew as soon as I got home from Arizona that I would not be able to stay in that beautiful apartment. She was everywhere, not just in the furniture and the mirrors and the art on the walls—she'd left in a hurry, like a woman fleeing a burning city—but in the plans we'd made and never carried out. I found a graduate-student couple to take over the lease and got a little house across town—nice enough, but no match for that apartment.

The night before I moved, I made myself a gin-and-tonic and went from room to room, looking at all the absences: empty bookshelves, closets. The floral smell of her various products and potions still hung in the air. Every molecule of the place was hers. I took my drink out on the porch and sat in one of the two chairs, the other one empty. It was a delicate cool summer night, a little hint of the coming fall. I could get whatever kind of dog I wanted now. I could have a drink anytime. But, as I thought this, I also understood that without her there to keep me company, without her there to argue with me about it, there wouldn't be any point to it pretty soon. And I was right about that. ♦

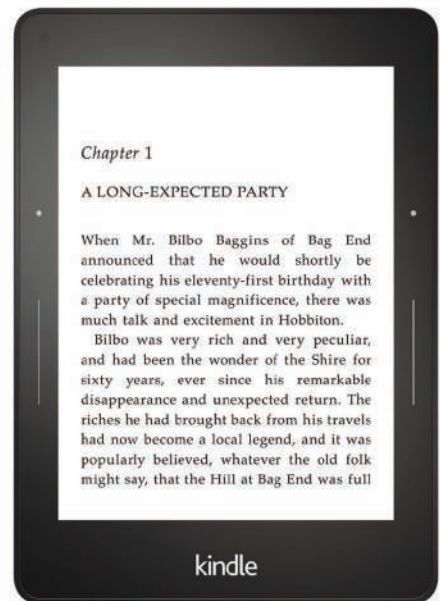
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Kevin Canty on "Story, with Bird."



NOT ALL THOSE
WHO WANDER ARE LOST.

—J.R.R. TOLKIEN



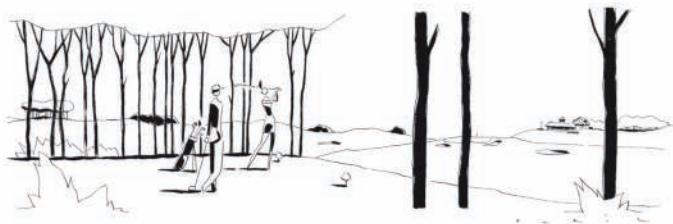
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THE CRITICS



THE CURRENT CINEMA

THEYDUNNIT

"Gone Girl," "The Two Faces of January," and "The Blue Room."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Three happy marriages, beginning to crack; three dissatisfied blondes; and, crawling out from the cracks, the thought of violent crime. Such is the substance of three new films, all derived from works by popular authors. The longest is *"Gone Girl,"* adapted by Gillian Flynn from her own novel; the most nattily dressed is *"The Two Faces of January,"* taken from Patricia Highsmith; and last, courtesy of Georges Simenon, comes *"The Blue Room,"* the Frenchest of the three, so much so that the plot relies on *confiture de prunes*.

"Gone Girl," directed by David Fincher, starts with Nick (Ben Affleck)—in his own words, "a corn-fed, salt-of-the-earth Missouri boy." He used to live in New York and write for magazines, but the work dried up and he returned home, to the uneventful town of North Carthage, with his wife, Amy (Rosamund Pike). According to your point of view (and the film is all about viewpoints, and the urge to shuffle them around), Amy is one or more of the following: the inspiration for the "Amazing Amy" series of children's books, written by her parents; a flat-out dazzler, too cool for the neighborhood; a rich kid, spawned by a snotty family; the original desperate housewife, becalmed and unadored; or a heap of trouble—the Clytemnestra of the Midwest. Oh, and another thing. She may be dead.

Nick owns a bar with his twin sister, Margo (Carrie Coon), and he stops there one morning for an early Scotch. He then drives home to find the front

door open, a glass table smashed, and no sign of his wife. Their cat is a witness, but, if it knows anything, it's not coughing up. The police arrive, and Detective Boney (Kim Dickens) declares a missing-persons case; before long, Nick is knee-deep in press conferences, candlelit vigils, and public appeals, flashing a polite, reluctant grin that is parsed, by tabloids and TV hosts, as proof of guilt. (You can't blame them. The Affleck smile, from the dawn of his career, has looked more creepy than consolatory—softening that firm, all-American jaw but never quite reaching the eyes.) Suddenly, after an hour, we flip to Amy, and to her version of what happened—so different, and so close to wacko, that it seems like another story altogether. I would happily unveil the rest of it, but, in deference to the twenty-one people who have yet to read the novel, I will say nothing more without a lawyer present.

At first blush, *"Gone Girl"* is natural Fincherland. Not geographically; he seems less absorbed in North Carthage, described by Amy as "the navel of the country," than he was in the California of *"Zodiac"* or the Harvard of *"The Social Network."* Those are his masterpieces: the two movies that I can't not watch when they turn up on TV, and the two occasions on which his pedantry and his paranoia have fused together, engrossing us in a crazed aggregation of detail. Nothing could equip him better for the coiled and clustered goings on in the new film, and, for good measure, he has hired Trent Reznor and Atticus

Ross, whom he last used for *"The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,"* to compose the score. They don't let him down. *"Gone Girl"* boasts one major act of savagery, drenched in a downpour of blood, and what we hear during it sounds like the wah-wah pedal of Satan. So why doesn't the movie claw us as *"The Social Network"* did? Who could have predicted that a film about murder, betrayal, and deception would be less exciting than a film about a Web site?

The glum fact is that *"Gone Girl"* lacks clout where it needs it most, at its core. We are accustomed to Fincher's heroes being as obsessively smart as he is, if lacking his overarching patience, whereas Nick remains, to put it gently, a lunkhead. Amy has twice the brain, and ten times the cunning, but, despite the best efforts of Rosamund Pike, her character, onscreen as on the page, feels cooked up rather than lived in. That *can* work on film, as shown by another beauty, Gene Tierney, in *"Laura"* and *"Leave Her to Heaven,"* but the scheming of Tierney's heroines was matched by a rare, ornate febrility in the movies themselves. Fincher's method, on the other hand, is dogged and downbeat, so that Amy sticks out like a cartoon in a newsreel. (One expected the same of the title character in *"The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,"* who was equally extreme, but somehow Rooney Mara gave her life—all drilled intensity where Pike offers elegant drift.) *"Gone Girl"* is meant to inspire debates about whether Amy is victimized or vengeful, and whether Nick deserves everything he gets, but, really, who cares? All I could think of was the verdict of Samuel Butler on Thomas Carlyle: "It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle marry one another, and so make only two people miserable and not four." Or, in the words of Tanner Bolt (Tyler Perry), Nick's unflappable attorney: "You two are the most fucked-up people I have ever met, and I specialize in fucked-up people."

Perry has a grand time. His wave to the press corps, camped out on Nick's sidewalk, is a cool mixture of dismissal and salute. He knows that our attention is straying from the main couple toward the outlying figures: Tanner himself, Detective Boney, and, best of all, Margo—a fine performance, both

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL; OPPOSITE: TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX



"Gone Girl," directed by David Fincher, is one of three new crime-thriller movies adapted from novels by popular authors.

ILLUSTRATION BY OWEN FREEMAN

THE NEW YORKER, OCTOBER 6, 2014

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grounded and wounded, from Carrie Coon. Against that, we have Desi (Neil Patrick Harris), a wealthy ex of Amy's, wandering in as if from another film, and eating up the final slice of the action with a silly Gothic subplot. It comes straight from the novel, and you can picture the outcry if Fincher had chopped or changed it, but so what? A director's task is not to suck up to readers, or to flatter his source, but to imagine it afresh, as film, while seizing on those aspects that matter to him most. What grabs Fincher about "Gone Girl," I suspect, is not the mystery in Missouri but the sight of a media wolf pack in full cry. Hence the time that he devotes to two cable-TV hosts, played by Sela Ward and Missi Pyle, who rifle through Nick's privacy, and his state of mind, in their lust for a story. Fincher is right: these days they *are* the story, and I wish that he would tell it again from their angle, through the eyes of bloggers, and via the phones of the people we see laughing outside Nick's bar, taking selfies at a hot spot of fame. So, "Gone Girl Redux": the campaign starts here.

At one point in "Gone Girl," the preposterous Desi talks of quitting America for Greece. There a new life awaits—"Octopus and Scrabble," he says. So much for the land of Plato. In "The Two Faces of January," much the same dream possesses Chester MacFarland (Viggo Mortensen) and his wife, Colette (Kirsten Dunst), whom we meet at the Parthenon. The year is 1962, and they are clad like modern deities, in creamy white—she in a dress and sun hat, he in a crisp suit, tie, and shades. Typical American tourists of the time, you presume, noting the guidebook in his hand, but this is a Patricia Highsmith fable, which means that you would be wrong.

Risking heresy, I would argue that Hossein Amini, the writer and director, actually improves on Highsmith in these early scenes. She stresses, in her first chapter, that Chester is a fraud, leaving behind him a trail of swindled investors and coasting through Europe on ill-gotten gains, one step ahead of the law. Onscreen, however, that discovery is slow to come. Chester exudes such worldly charm that we take him on

trust; how could he not be a gentleman, inside and out? The role is deliciously ripe and ready for Mortensen, who demonstrated, in "A History of Violence," how the shell of a regular guy can be broken and peeled away, and who times to perfection the hollowing out of Chester—a worried glance here, a watery smile there. Even his hair, brushed and waved at the start, becomes a mussed-up clue, flopping gray and sweaty over his brow. His very handsomeness is a mask.

The MacFarlands have a couple of stalkers. One is a detective, who confronts them in their hotel room and suffers the consequences. The other is Rydal Keener (Oscar Isaac), a Yale graduate turned scam artist, acting as a tour guide first to rich American girls and second, for more insidious reasons, to Chester and Colette. He spirits them out of Athens to Crete and obtains false passports for them, but why? Can he smell a profit? Is it because he wants Colette? Or because Chester reminds him of his father, recently deceased? The magnetic pull of restless souls toward one another, and thence into calamity, was an abiding theme for Highsmith, and Anthony Minghella caught it well in "The Talented Mr. Ripley." Amini lacks the daring of that film; he tamps down the sexual forces that should flame among the trio, and the Cretan scenes grow strangely errant and flat. Even in the ruins of Knossos, with a labyrinth of unease at his disposal, Amini seems to lose the thread. Still, there is beauty and perversity enough in the remainder of the movie, and you should see it just for Chester—the adventurous sham, running ever deeper into a maze of his own devising.

The story goes like this: Alfred Hitchcock calls Georges Simenon, who is among the speediest and most prolific authors of the twentieth century, with nearly four hundred works to his name. A secretary answers, apologizes, and explains that Monsieur cannot be disturbed, because he has just started a new book. Hitch: "That's alright, I'll wait."

Untrue, of course, but apocrypha don't always lie. Simenon had a matchless ability to take the first narrative

step, without fuss, and then to forge ahead, as though beckoned by the destiny of his characters, and that untiring purpose has proved invaluable to the movies. The list of his beneficiaries runs from Jean Renoir, with "Night at the Crossroads," in 1932, to Béla Tarr and "The Man from London," in 2007, and now we have "The Blue Room," directed by Mathieu Amalric. The room in question is a bedchamber in a small provincial hotel, where Julien, played by Amalric, meets his lover, Esther (Stéphanie Cléau)—only eight times, but that is sufficient, as Simenon fans will confirm, to precipitate any man's ruin.

The great virtue of the movie is its length: a fat-free seventy-six minutes, leaving "Gone Girl," which lasts almost two and a half hours, looking dangerously bloated. To pass from the exploits of Nick and Amy to the worlds of Highsmith and Simenon is to trade contrivance, however entertaining, for something palpable, reeking of moral seediness and disrepair. Julien, like Chester and Rydal, appears to behave as he chooses, yet something deep in the natures of such men—the itch of recklessness, the gluttonous demands of wallet and loins, the mere wish to learn more—hurries them along their fateful paths. What we understand, in retrospect, is that they had no real choice at all.

That is why Amalric, following Simenon's slippery example, oils so smoothly back and forth in time. We see Julien on holiday, at the beach, with his wife, the fair Delphine (Léa Drucker), and their daughter; we see him and Esther sprawled in bed, perspiring; and, in the wake of a killing that we don't yet comprehend, we see him interviewed by a judge, a psychiatrist, and two cops, who, under French law, are required to utter things like "You say no other woman brought you the fullness of physical love." These interrogations weigh too heavily on the film, which could have been trimmed further still, but I liked the fact that the walls of the courtroom, where the case is tried, are of the same midnight hue as those in the bedroom, where the seed of the crime was sown. Blue is the warmest color, and the coldest. Judgment matches desire. ♦

LONESOME ROAD

Marilynne Robinson returns to Gilead in her new novel.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA



Marilynne Robinson's new novel, "Lila" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), opens in about 1920, and it begins with a shocking action: a woman steals a child. Not that anybody seems to care much. The child, a girl who looks to be four or five, has been deposited by someone (there is no mention of parents) in a house for migrant workers somewhere in the Midwest. Most of the time, she hides under a table, but occasionally she cries, and then she gets pushed out onto the front steps. One night, a woman named Doll, the sole denizen of the house who appears ever to have paid any attention to the girl, returns from

work and finds her on the stoop. This time, instead of settling her back inside, Doll carries her off to another cabin, where an old woman grudgingly lets them in. The two women feed the girl some corn bread and then try to clean her up:

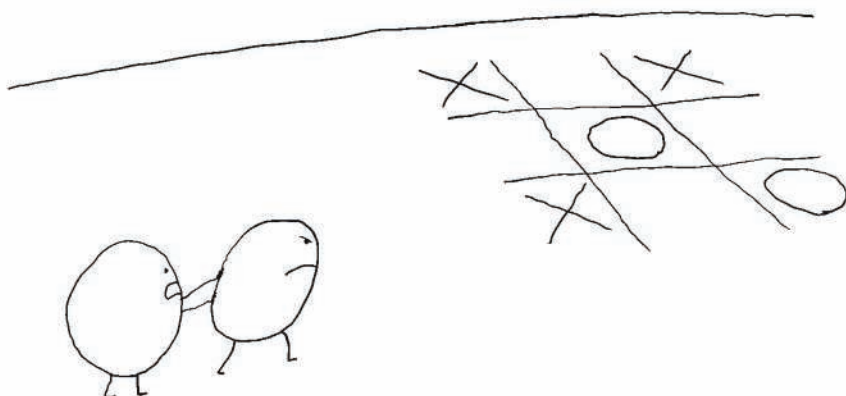
The old woman held her standing in a white basin on the floor by the stove, and Doll washed her down with a rag and a bit of soap, scrubbing a little where the cats had scratched her, and on the chigger bites and mosquito bites where she had scratched herself, and where there were slivers in her knees, and where she had a habit of biting her hand. The water in the basin got so dirty that they threw it out the door and started over. Her whole body shivered with the cold and the sting. "Nits," the old woman said.

"We got to cut her hair." She fetched a razor and began shearing off the tangles as close to the child's scalp as she dared—"I got a blade here. She better hold still." Then they soaped and scrubbed her head, and water and suds ran into her eyes, and she struggled and yelled with all the strength she had and told them both they could rot in hell.

Despite the chiggers and the curses, the scene is pure Rembrandt. We can almost see the ray of heavenly light coming through the side window. Ever since the publication of Robinson's thrilling first novel, "Housekeeping" (1980), reviewers have been pointing out that, for an analyst of modern alienation, she is an unusual specimen: a devout Protestant, reared in Idaho. She now lives in Iowa City, where she teaches at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and where, for years, she has been accustomed to interrupting her career as a novelist to produce essays on such matters as the truth of John Calvin's writings. But Robinson's Low Church allegiance has hugely benefitted her fiction. It is certainly responsible, in part, for her extreme directness. In that bath scene, in "Lila," the author lays out, right at the start, all the novel's main themes: suffering, abandonment, forgiveness, rescue, and then, in bracing counterpoise, the question of whether one actually *wants* to be rescued, or can be. The scene also contains the book's governing metaphor, water, which will wash away our sins—or not. And there, in the middle of the water, naked and screaming, is the book's heroine. She does not speak except to curse, Doll reports. She has no name that she can tell them. Eventually, the old woman says, "I been thinking about 'Lila.' I had a sister Lila. Give her a pretty name, maybe she could turn out pretty." After a few weeks, Doll and Lila take off down the road and join a work crew.

Some of us have met Lila before. Since "Housekeeping," Robinson has written three novels—"Gilead" (2004), "Home" (2008), and now "Lila"—centered in Gilead, Iowa, a dusty, no-account little town, where dogs take their naps in the middle of Main Street. Gilead, however, was once at the heart of a great passion. It was a stop on the Underground Railroad and, in time, a hot spot of the

Throughout the Gilead books, Robinson relates events from different points of view.



LIANA FINCK

"Larry! No!"

• •

Union Army's cause, under the town's Congregationalist minister, a fiery-eyed man who had audible conversations with Jesus. That man's son and then his grandson succeeded to his pulpit, and it is the grandson, John Ames, who is the most important figure in the series so far. In "Gilead," Ames, as a young man, marries the girl whom everyone in town expects him to marry. She dies in childbirth, and the baby dies with her. Ames goes on alone. By day, he writes his sermons and reads books of philosophy, theology, and history. At night, he eats a fried-egg sandwich, listens to the radio, and goes to bed. This continues for forty years, and he expects it to continue for the rest of his life. But then, one Sunday, while he is preaching—he is now sixty-seven—the back door of the church opens, and a woman slips into the sanctuary, to get out of the rain. Her dress is shabby. Her eyes are sad. She didn't grow up to be pretty. It is Lila.

Their circumstances could not be more different. He is almost twice her age. Furthermore, he is an erudite man, however isolated and obscure, while she is a transient worker. In "Lila," with her bedroll and a small suitcase (she owns two dresses), she goes from place to place, asking at houses in the towns and the countryside for a day's work. She was on her way to Sioux City when, approaching Gilead, she spotted an abandoned shack. She has been camping out there for a few weeks

when, as she is walking in the town, a storm breaks and she ducks into Ames's church.

As Ames tells us in "Gilead," he falls in love instantly, and though he is too modest to say that she seems attracted to him also, he hints at this. She asks him about the possibility of baptism. "No one seen to it for me when I was a child," she says. "I been feeling the lack of it." Most suggestively, she starts turning up in the garden behind his house, to tend to it—pull weeds, plant roses. (She has a special talent with roses.) At first, she makes sure to come when she knows he won't be there. Eventually, she omits that caution. Then, one evening, according to Ames, "when I saw her there, out by the wonderful roses, I said, 'How can I repay you for all this?' And she said, 'You ought to marry me.' And I did." It is like a miracle: sudden, inexplicable.

Ames is a kind of character that people say novelists can't create, an exceptionally virtuous person who is nevertheless interesting. As it happens, he has a few failings. He is sometimes bitter about the fact that he has spent his life stuck in Gilead, baptizing babies (his brother became a professor, and an atheist), and he grieved that he had no children. His best friend, Robert Boughton, the town's Presbyterian minister, fathered eight. At times, when Boughton's children were still young, Ames couldn't bear to enter his friend's

house. (If the two men were working together on a project, Boughton's wife would pack a dinner for them to eat in Ames's kitchen.) Then comes Lila and, in short order, a child, Robby, named after Boughton. But no sooner does Ames receive these gifts than he is told that he must lose them. The doctor says that he has angina pectoris and won't live long. That would be hard enough, but Ames is desperately worried about how Lila and Robby will fare without him. Boughton has a son, Jack, who could be a character out of Dostoyevsky. As a boy, Jack liked to steal things, break things, and then smile when he was caught. As a young man, he got a fifteen-year-old country girl pregnant and promptly left town. Now, after twenty years, Jack has returned to Gilead, and Ames thinks he sees him hanging around Lila and Robby. What rises in his heart is not just concern but hatred.

Ames is a sort of visionary—a trait that would appear to mark him as saintly—but, as with other saints, not all of his visions are beautiful. In "Gilead," he remembers a windy night when he walked beneath a row of oaks:

They were dropping their acorns thick as hail almost. There was all sorts of thrashing in the leaves and there were acorns hitting the pavement so hard they'd fly past my head. All this in the dark, of course. I remember a slice of moon, no more than that. It was a very clear night, or morning, very still, and then there was such energy in these things transpiring among those trees, like a storm, like travail. I stood a little out of range, and I thought, It is all still new to me.

It's as though he had seen a ghost.

With all this in his head, plus the learned books, he can sometimes fail to notice what is in front of his face. When he speaks of his coming together with Lila, which he regards as the most glorious event of his life, what appears to please him most is the idea that he gave her a settled existence, a settled mind. "It seemed that all the wondering about life had been answered for her, once and for all," he says. "If that is true, it is wonderful."

It isn't true. The most forceful piece of technical machinery operating in Robinson's Gilead books is point-of-view narration. "Gilead" is written in the first person: Ames speaking to us, or,

rather, to Robby (it is a letter for the boy to read when he is grown). “Lila,” like “Home,” employs a tight—that is, heavily filtered—third-person. As Henry James put it, the narrative emerges from a “central intelligence.” (Lila is “she,” not “I,” but everything is recorded as she alone sees it.) Each of the three Gilead books can stand on its own. I didn’t hear anybody complaining, when “Gilead” was published, that we were getting only Ames’s side of the story. Who cared about another side? Ames’s point of view was truer, or at least more interesting, than any purportedly real truth. But now Robinson has followed up “Gilead” with “Home” and “Lila,” which often, while covering the same events as “Gilead,” contradict that book, and each other, too. Or, if they don’t actually catch each other in lies, they still manage, by omission or inclusion or shading, to cast a different light on matters. Robinson is now very obtrusively using point of view. To what end?

Few people who have read “Gilead” will forget Ames’s description of his and Lila’s decision, among the roses, to get married—the speed, the wildness of it—but I hope nobody ever asks me to choose between that and the version that Lila, in “Lila,” gives of the same event. In her version, she is not in a nice, symbolic garden. She is walking down a dusty road, with Ames beside her. She didn’t invite him to accompany her, and yet, once he does, she tells him that he should marry her. It’s crazy, but so is his answer: “You’re right. I will.” Her rejoinder is equally crazy: “All right. Then I’ll see you tomorrow.” In fact, they have no plans to meet the next day. She is just saying that so that she can get away from him for a moment.

In Lila’s life, one emotion trumps all others, and that is shame: over her poverty, her lack of beauty, her ignorance, and, since these facts determined her choices in life, over her life. She wasn’t ditched just once but several times. She did a stint in a brothel, though she wasn’t a very good prostitute—she couldn’t see the point of high heels, for example—and she eventually switched to being the institution’s cleaning lady. That was right before she went to Gilead. When she attends Ames’s Sunday services, she always sits in the back row,

so that no one can see her, judge her. But how, if she is so filled with shame, could she have proposed marriage to Ames? There, I think, lies the secret of Lila, as a character: boldness, the perception and expression of truth, combined with a certainty, based on her past experience, that she will be cast aside.

That is what she expects from Ames, and after saying that she will see him tomorrow she scrupulously avoids him. A few days later, he goes to her shack, and finds her coming up from the river, barefoot, with a catfish that she has just caught. He says that he has brought her a gift, his mother’s locket:

She felt her face warm. And the fish kept struggling, jumping against her leg. She said, “Damn catfish. Seems like you can never quite kill ‘em dead. I’m going to just put it here in the weeds for a minute.” And there it was, flopping in the dust. She wiped her hand on her skirt. “I can take that chain now, whatever it is.”

He said, “Excellent. I’m—grateful. You should put it on. It’s a little difficult to fasten. My mother always asked my father to do it for her.”

Lila said, “Is that a fact,” and handed it back to him. He studied her for a moment, and then he said, “You’ll have to do something with your hair. If you could lift it up.” So she did, and he stepped behind her, and she felt the touch of his fingers at her neck, trembling, and the small weight of the locket falling into place. Then they stood there together in the road, in the chirping, rustling silence and the sound of the river.

After this beautiful scene, the only episode in “Lila” that you could call a sex scene, Ames says, “So. Are we getting married or not?” Lila answers that she doesn’t think it’s a good idea. The abstemious Robinson allows Ames only a tiny, and therefore especially poignant, reaction. (“His face reddened and he had to steady his voice.”) Lila quickly tries to explain. If she married him, she says, she would be the preacher’s wife, and people would look at her all the time, to see if she measured up. She couldn’t bear that. That’s why she can’t even get baptized. Ames protests that if she wants to get baptized they don’t need a church. They can do it right there, in the field, with water from her bucket. Yes? she says. Then hold on. And she goes to her shack and changes into a clean blouse. Then he baptizes her, resting his hand three times on her hair. She bursts into tears. Ames loans her his handkerchief.

“Wait,” she says to him. “Can you still get married to somebody you baptized?” “No law against it,” he says. She tells him that she wants him but that she doesn’t trust him not to discard her. (“I done some things in my life”; she goes ahead and mentions the brothel.) Nor does she trust *herself* not to walk away from him. This long scene overflows with lyricism and tenderness and sensuousness—the locket, the tears, the trembling fingers—but buried in the middle is some dark, ugly business that you can’t fully see: Lila’s and Ames’s loneliness, endured for so many years, and probably largely ineradicable. As they embrace, the slimy catfish wriggles in the dirt, ready to die. When the afternoon is over, they have agreed to marry, and you feel as though you have to go lie down.

But Lila and Ames are not just a couple of people in Iowa. As much as Natasha Rostova and Andrei Bolkon-sky, they represent their country’s history, and that is the second department in which Robinson has made point-of-view narration work for her powerfully. In “Gilead,” Ames tells us that his grandfather preached the town “into the war,” the Civil War, with the result, Robinson suggests, that most of the young men in Gilead died. This turned the grandfather’s son, Ames’s father, into a pacifist. On Sundays, he did not attend his father’s service; he went to the Quakers instead, creating a terrible breach within the family. That is a flashback; “Gilead” is set mostly at the beginning of the civil-rights movement. “Home” takes place in the year of the Montgomery bus boycott, 1956. Boughton and Ames watch the events on Boughton’s new appliance, a television.

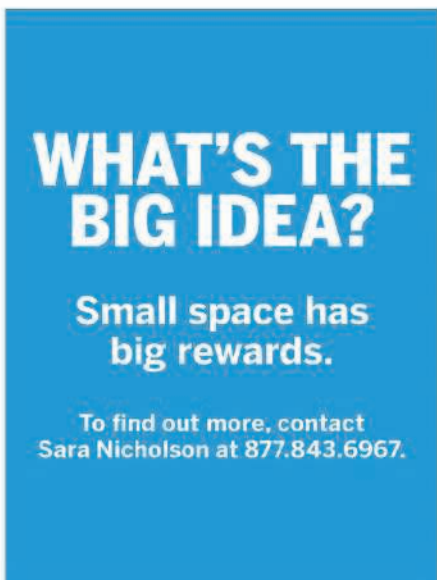
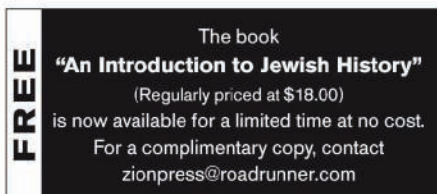
“Lila” is less concerned with race than just with poverty—indeed, starvation—among the migrant workers of the Midwest. We hear what they ate, when they had anything to eat: basically, fried mush. When Lila is abandoned for the second time, it is by a decent person, the head of the work crew that she and Doll joined at the beginning of the book. The crew can’t afford to feed her anymore. Robinson didn’t need point-of-view narration in order to delineate these matters, but she certainly makes it enrich the situation. In “Home,” Boughton, watching the

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Montgomery riots, says that the rioters are unwise to make such a fuss. He doesn't know that his son Jack is married to a black woman whom he met after he left Gilead. Jack, returning to Gilead, asks Ames: could he and his wife and their son make a home in that town? Ames says no, for which he has a solid, political reason (a small black community was forced out of Gilead years earlier) and also a selfish, personal reason (Ames wants Jack nowhere near Lila). This is the way politics operates in our lives, on the bone.

Robinson's use of politics is also, to some extent, a weakness of the Gilead novels. It is in these matters that we start to get clichés, so foreign, otherwise, to her work. Discussing the victims of the Dust Bowl, she apostrophizes: How can that be? "People only trying to get by, and no respect for them at all, even the wind soiling them." If I am not mistaken, what we are getting here is Robinson's moral-essayist voice, in opposition to her novelistic voice. Both "Home" and "Lila" sag in the middle, as Robinson shakes her finger at whoever she thinks needs to learn a lesson. I'm not saying that great novelists haven't done this before (see "War and Peace"), only that it didn't necessarily benefit their work. Robinson writes about religion two ways. One is meliorist, reformist. The other is rapturous, visionary. Many people have been good at the first kind; few at the second kind, at least today.

The second kind is Robinson's forte. She knows this, and works it. She inverts time, she loops it, she dispenses with whole chunks of it. (We never find out what Lila did for most of her adult life, before arriving in Gilead.) When Robinson likes an image, she'll use it as many times as she wants to. If the young Lila gets ditched more than once, other children, too, are abandoned. Married and pregnant, Lila, in "Lila," revisits her old shack and finds that it has been taken over by a boy, maybe twelve years old, who has been thrown out by his father. (The father chased him down the road, throwing rocks and sticks at him. "The way you'd chase off a dog," the boy says.) Winter is coming. Lila, after hearing the boy's story, goes back to town to get him some warm clothes and food. While

she is gone, he takes fright and runs away, with nothing. A blizzard arrives, shutting Lila and Ames in their house. Sitting in their kitchen, playing cards and waiting for their baby to come, they are in a sort of daze—thrilled that their child is about to be born, but aware that another child, the renegade boy, is out there, dying in the snow. Add one boy; take one away. "Lila"—and "Home" also—is in many ways a realistic novel. It tells us how to make biscuits and harness a mule. At the same time, Robinson shows us griefs that go far beyond the bounds of realism. In "Housekeeping," there's a woman who is certain that she sees the ghosts of naked little children by the road at night, hungry and crying. She puts out food for them. The dogs eat it. She puts out more. In a way, that's Marilynne Robinson.

But most of the time Robinson's people aren't actually starving; they're just alone. That is the final meaning of her insistence on her characters' own point of view: because they don't see the same reality, they are consigned to solitude. Lila tells us that, as Ames's wife, she was just as lonely as she had been before she married him. And the horrible, or at least extremely arresting, thing is that Robinson doesn't entirely regret the situation. Lila, soon after the birth of her son, begins having fantasies of opening her front door and walking back out into her old life, and taking the baby with her:

But she imagined the old man, the Reverend, calling after them, "Where are you going with that child?" The sadness in his voice would be terrible. *He* would be surprised to hear it. You wouldn't even know your body had a sound like that in it. And it would be familiar to her. She didn't imagine it, she remembered that sadness from somewhere, and it was as if she would understand something if she could hear it again. That was what she almost wanted.

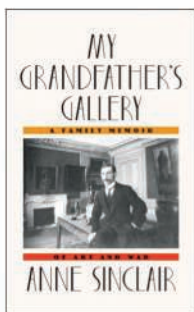
Life without comfort, without love, that is the real life, and Lila would like to understand why. This is an unflinching book. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

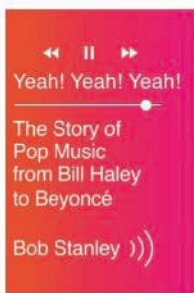
From the *Lake Oswego (Ore.) Review*.

Following up on a report of screaming at a residence on McVey Avenue, an officer defused a situation by assisting in the making of peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches.

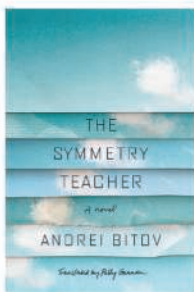
BRIEFLY NOTED



MY GRANDFATHER'S GALLERY, by Anne Sinclair, translated from the French by Shaun Whiteside (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). In this memoir, the French television journalist and former wife of Dominique Strauss-Kahn recalls her grandfather, Paul Rosenberg, a renowned Jewish art dealer who fled Nazi-occupied France for New York. Among the first to champion the works of Matisse, Picasso, and Braque, he left behind a collection that was seized by the Nazis, and spent much of his postwar life trying to recover it. Sinclair highlights her grandfather's close relationships with the artists, but also focusses on matters of family history—the unearthing of old letters, her own complicated relationship to France. She uses this “improvised portrait” of her grandfather as a lens through which to view the country's recent history and current politics.



YEAH! YEAH! YEAH!, by Bob Stanley (Norton). This compulsively readable history of pop music begins in 1955, the year of the first Billboard Top Hundred and of Bill Haley's “Rock Around the Clock.” It ends some fifty years later, in the digital era. For Stanley, pop is anything that gets into the charts. In some five hundred pages he ranges from Elvis, skiffle, and Phil Spector to glam, Michael Jackson, and Mary J. Blige. The book is a pleasure, not just for its breadth but for Stanley's views, which are often bracingly unorthodox. He sees the Rolling Stones as “indirectly responsible for some of the worst aspects of modern pop,” and Joni Mitchell's music as not quite as clever as she thought it was.



THE SYMMETRY TEACHER, by Andrei Bitov, translated from the Russian by Polly Gannon (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). This novel is an ingenious, often maddening series of echoing tales written in the manner of Calvino. The conceit is that this book is a rough translation of a text (“The Teacher of Symmetry”) by “an obscure English author,” which itself consists mainly of excerpts from another obscure writer, one Urbino Vanoski. In one of these tales, Vanoski is involved in a love triangle with twin sisters—who may be the same person and/or sometimes turn into a dog—on a mysterious island. In another, a man who claims to have fallen from the moon engages in philosophical debates with a young psychiatrist. Bizarre and wonderful sequences await readers with a taste for vertiginous postmodern mayhem.



THE WALK HOME, by Rachel Seiffert (Pantheon). In this sombre family tale set in Glasgow, Seiffert uses multiple viewpoints to weave a narrative of frustration and abandonment across generations. The story centers on Stevie, who has left high school and his grandparents' home to join a Polish construction team after the disappearance of his mother and the subsequent neglect of his depressive father. Behind the characters' confused attempts at fulfillment is Uncle Eric, to whom they go seeking solace, not realizing that his brooding wisdom is driving them apart. Against a backdrop of religious and political divisions, Seiffert's even prose is melodious, if at times slow-moving.

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THE THEATRE

VOWS

Ivo van Hove takes on Ingmar Bergman's "Scenes from a Marriage."

BY HILTON ALS



Having an affair is certainly one way of shaking off the traditional constraints of matrimony, at least for a time, but, then again, what's more conventional than an affair? Illicit love can get old fast, marred by the kinds of responsibilities one longs to escape: someone has to book that hotel room and hunt for those out-of-the-way restaurants where family and friends do not go. This cloak-and-dagger approach to love—to life—works only if you believe in marriage but hate it, too. For the self-dramatizing adulterer, life would be nothing without the pain of these contradictions.

In Ingmar Bergman's 1973 film "Scenes from a Marriage," we never actually see the protagonist, Johan (Erland Josephson),

having the affair that derails his marriage to Marianne (Liv Ullmann). When Johan tells Marianne that he has fallen in love with someone else, our focus is less on what he's saying than on his wife's face as she registers it. Bespectacled, chewing on a sandwich, Marianne listens, rapt, as if she were watching a movie about the unraveling of someone else's life. Johan wants to be "honest" with Marianne—they've shared everything, including, ironically, their family values—but how can you determine the truth of a relationship, when one partner has been deceitful, in order to protect himself and his dream of a free and different love?

Bergman, in an introduction to the

published version of his script, describes Marianne and Johan as being "smug in a quiet way, convinced that they have arranged everything for the best." In Ivo van Hove's stage adaptation of the work, with a script by Emily Mann (at New York Theatre Workshop), that smugness is disassembled and reassembled, just as the notions of intimacy and unfaithfulness are disassembled and reassembled. Van Hove, a Belgian director who has become a much admired and much reviled figure in the New York theatre world—his 1999 interpretation of Tennessee Williams's "A Streetcar Named Desire," for instance, featured a Blanche who played almost all her scenes in a tub—more or less follows Bergman's narrative arc. We see Marianne and Johan united, then not; after meeting to sign their divorce papers, they cheat on their new partners together, before finding some level of acceptance of themselves and of each other. Yet it feels peculiar or wrong to describe van Hove's production in a linear way, because he powerfully messes with time, not only as it applies to Marianne and Johan but as it applies to storytelling in the theatre.

Van Hove, working with his longtime production designer and domestic partner, Jan Versweyveld, has literally remade New York Theatre Workshop. First, he has dispensed with the proscenium arch; the audience enters a small viewing area through a narrow passageway. The lighting is dim. The main prop is a table, covered with a dull industrial-carpet-like fabric. On it, Johan 1 (Alex Hurt, a bright new star) and Marianne 1 (the versatile Susannah Flood) have placed plates and glasses; they're entertaining Katrina and Peter (Carmen Zilles and Erin Gann, both well cast), who have had too much to drink, and now Katrina is breathing fire. As Marianne looks on with a kind of fascinated horror—Flood's large eyes, like Ullmann's, reveal how Marianne does and doesn't identify with her own life—Katrina explains to the assembled that she hates Peter and his power games but loves how good their fucking gets when she's cheating on him. Infidelity sexes up their marriage.

While this is going on, Johan 1 walks into a glassed-in "offstage" room, where various props are stored—phonographs, records, plants, and so on. There he puts on what he thinks of as a bit of soothing music—Paul Simon's "Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover." While the record

Alex Hurt and Susannah Flood as one of the couples in "Scenes from a Marriage."

spins, we hear other sounds, too, a medley of voices that rise and fall, often angrily, somewhere else in the theatre. It turns out that van Hove has divided the hall into three separate spaces. In another space, another audience is watching Marianne 2 (Roslyn Ruff, doing her usual indomitable-woman thing) and Johan 2 (the sly and crafty Dallas Roberts), as they play out the ups and downs of their coupling. (I saw the production twice. The first time, I began at the stage where Johan 2 confesses his affair. I started my second viewing with the strained dinner party.)

After Marianne 1 signals to Johan that the Simon record might not be the best choice, he goes to turn it off; at the same time, an actor from another scene enters the prop room to retrieve something for his set. There is no “offstage” moment—everything is visible, including Marianne and Johan’s future, as played by other people. Van Hove is trying to make a point about marriage being as much of a public display as acting is. The performers speak Bergman-inspired lines, for sure, but the text that interests their immensely talented director is one that’s not so much spoken as danced; the actors rarely stop moving, as if they were always running a few steps ahead of the revelations they do and do not want to share. Van Hove has developed a postmodern Strindbergian choreography: through the bodies onstage, he conveys intimacy and convention as both life force and death.

After Katrina and Peter leave, Johan 1 and Marianne 1 clear the table in relative silence. The table becomes a bed—that great symbol of closeness, of defenselessness—and Marianne 1 curls up on it. But she cannot rest. Her mind is filled with dense feelings and thoughts:

MARIANNE 1: Do you think it’s possible two people can spend their entire lives together?

JOHAN 1: That’s just an insane convention we inherited from God knows where. There should be five-year contracts. Or an agreement that remains valid for one year that you can also terminate.

MARIANNE 1: For us, too?

JOHAN 1: No, not for us.

MARIANNE 1: Why not for us?

JOHAN 1: Because you and I are the exception to the rule. You and I won the Fools’ Lottery.

MARIANNE 1: So you think we’ll stay together our entire lives?

JOHAN 1: What a strange question.

It’s not that Johan 1 has no doubts. He just knows what to avoid—namely, Marianne’s line of philosophical inquiry. In any

case, he can’t answer a question that has no answer; you can’t make the hypothetical real. Johan’s practical, spiritually flat-footed side—the very aspect of his character that makes Marianne feel protected—also makes her angry. Who is this self-contained Johan married to? Himself? Is he cheating on his wife by keeping his own counsel? In an effort to break through, she tells him that she’s pregnant. Should she abort the child? Again, Johan won’t weigh in, not really. It’s her body, isn’t it? Marianne can’t reconcile herself to the fact that Johan won’t tell her what to do; despite her many modern-world accomplishments, she wants him to play the traditional man and give her direction.

Van Hove and Mann condense whole stretches of Bergman’s original work into single scenes that never feel long and are always interesting, if only because it’s interesting to watch one authentic artist interpret another. What mars van Hove’s staging—and makes it feel less juicy than the Bergman film—is a sense of impersonality. Bergman, as a young man, was in the habit of exploding his relationships whenever he fell for one of his muses, Ullmann included. “Scenes from a Marriage” seems to have grown, in part, out of a feeling that he had about his own foolishness and romantic yearnings. But van Hove is an auteur, not a writer. He filters his emotions through other people’s texts and through actors, perhaps as a way of controlling his work, or himself.

When the Marianne 1 and Johan 1 scene is over, the audience moves on to the next space. There Marianne 2 and Johan 2, with no expression whatsoever, scatter a number of Mike Kelley-like stuffed toys on the floor, to indicate that they’re parents. It’s a funny moment, and it passes quickly. In the scene that follows, Marianne 2 tells Johan 2 that she doesn’t enjoy sex with him and asks why he wants to force the issue. Marianne 2 goes on and on, enveloped in the urgency of her declaration, but can we still hear her? While the intensity of the actors’ attack can be moving, we can’t help wanting to pause the action for a moment, so that our ears can take a rest and our minds can feel nourished by the experience of van Hove’s intelligence. Instead, we’re just perplexed by the fact that Bergman’s sensitivity to women emerges from van Hove as something else—a shallowness, like that of Anne Sexton’s poem “Divorce, Thy Name

Is Woman,” where it’s all Daddy’s fault.

Indeed, Johan 3 (wonderfully played by Arliss Howard) has a way of making it all about him, even when he isn’t sucking up the emotional spotlight, because he, like Marianne 3 (Tina Benko), knows that his butchness is a thing of beauty. Their set is mostly taken up by a large bed that soon becomes a battleground of bitterness and recrimination. Marianne 3 tries to dissuade Johan 3 from leaving her by making him tea, climbing on top of him, and pleading: all the stereotypically female stuff that has worked for her in the past. When Johan 3 doesn’t take the bait and slams the door on their past, Benko wipes away her tears and makes the bed for the next round of viewers.

Growing up in early-twentieth-century Stockholm, Bergman felt imprisoned by his parents’ difficult marriage. In his memoir, “The Magic Lantern” (1988), he writes of his and his siblings’ childhood, “We had never heard of freedom and knew even less what it tasted like. In a hierarchical system, all doors are closed.” The hierarchy in van Hove’s “Scenes from a Marriage” is this: women feel the strain of marriage while trying harder than men to make it work; they are the architects of intimacy, whereas men get their hands dirty in the bricks and mortar only when they have to—in order to house their fears, their wounded egos, their need for attention.

After a thirty-minute intermission, the audience returns to a theatre in the round: there are no more partitions. The three Mariannes and the three Johans meet onstage, sometimes finishing one another’s lines, sometimes squaring off—self against self. Again, there’s a record-player, and, once Marianne 3 and Johan 3 have signed the divorce papers and released themselves from the tyranny of what they’ve done, Johan 3 puts on some music and dances, a spirit free at last from the weight of expectations: he is only himself. After a while, he turns off the music and lies down beside Marianne 3. Suddenly, they’re vulnerable children again, waiting to be told a story that will send them to sleep. But they’ve already told a story—the story of their marriage. As in Bergman’s film, the spent but present Johan, looking and not looking at Marianne, says, “Here, in a dark house, somewhere in the world, I’m holding you in my arms, and you’re holding me.” That’s the thing about love. It can happen anywhere and anytime, even when it’s supposed to be over. ♦

THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Aphex Twin smooths out his edges.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



Richard D. James, an electronic musician from Cornwall, U.K., who has, since the late eighties, recorded as Aphex Twin and under many other names, has a reputation for mischief and red herrings. “Drukqs,” the previous album released under the name Aphex Twin, came out in 2001. It was a double album of songs that alternated between the woody tones of acoustic instruments and fluttering, rebarbative rhythms that sounded as much like random generations as like compositions. The title reflects the album’s sound: a bit off. While Aphex Twin went quiet for much of the next decade, Kanye West sampled “Avril 14th,” from “Drukqs,” for “My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy” (2010).

In the years following “Drukqs,” James, who is forty-three, moved to a small village near Glasgow, married for a second time, and had children. He released tracks in 2003, 2005, and 2007, under the names AFX, Smojphace, and the Tuss, and then went silent again. In April of this year, fans created a Kickstarter campaign and raised sixty-seven thousand dollars to persuade James to officially release “Caustic Window,” a side project from 1994 that, James said, in an interview with Pitchfork, “just got forgotten about.” A vinyl test pressing had surfaced, and, at the end of the Kickstarter project, the vinyl sold on eBay, for more than forty-six thousand dollars, to Markus Persson, the creator of Minecraft. Soon after

this halting exchange with his public, James announced that he had finished a full-length album, “Syro.” He celebrated the album’s existence by sending over London a chartreuse blimp bearing the Aphex Twin logo and the date “2014,” which is typical Aphex Twin: amusing, extravagant, but not exactly informative.

“Syro” itself is a kind of perversion, simply because it is so comfortable with the pleasurable. Until now, James seemed to like nothing more than making things difficult for his public—whom he’s confessed to hating—and himself. (James, who describes himself as “a little bit autistic,” doesn’t generally allow himself to be photographed or interviewed.) Now he’s made the kind of album that could earn him young fans who have no idea they’ve been listening to James knockoffs for decades.

There are few figures in the past twenty years of electronic music as important and as mercurial as James. Thom Yorke has credited him with inspiring Radiohead’s “Kid A.” The work that Aphex Twin released in the early nineties involved taking the sounds of dominant British dance genres—the crunching bass lines of acid house and the narrowly sliced drum breaks of jungle—and pushing them beyond what seemed humanly possible, or even human. These hard and hitchy songs were released alongside multiple volumes of “ambient works,” gentle tracks in the tradition of Brian Eno’s plangent electronic music. In 1997, James released “Come to Daddy,” which became one of his best-known songs. It’s a raucous track that sounds like a sleep-deprived fast-food worker screaming while a Transformer tries to disentangle itself from the Large Hadron Collider. (It did not hurt James’s reputation as a misanthrope that the popular video, directed by Chris Cunningham, features children who, wearing silicone masks of James’s grinning face, menace an elderly woman in a run-down British housing block.) Loving Aphex Twin demands that a fan resolve the contradictory questions hanging over his music: “How can he pull that off?” and “Is he putting us on?”

“Syro” may be Aphex Twin’s most complex, self-referential lark of all. It is not a recapitulation of Aphex Twin as he sounded in the nineties but a re-creation of the nineties as heard

There are few figures in electronic music as important and as mercurial as Aphex Twin.

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES WALTERS/GETTY

through the filter of his work. There wasn't a single artist of note who wasn't listening to Aphex Twin at the time, and with "Syro" James reminds us of his influence on the era.

He embodies a strange quality that is inherent in electronic music: the fake sounds exactly the same as the real. Electronic music has gone from being devilishly hard to make to being relatively easy. In 1981, Kraftwerk dragged computers the size of washing machines onstage; similar work can now be achieved on a smartphone. James knows this as well as anyone. He has five different studios at his home in Scotland—one has been built to his specs from the ground up—and owns pipe organs that are digitally controlled and robots that play the drums. But a listener cannot tell how any particular track was made. This may explain why James has published a list of all the gear used on "Syro"; the odd and appealing names, like Crumar Bit01 White and Intellijel Rubicon, radiate outward in a sundial of text in the liner notes. (Several track names are based on the gear involved.)

James's only true peer is Autechre, a duo from Rochdale, near Manchester, who, like James, are signed to Warp, the electronic-music label they helped to define. Both acts seem to be searching for things that don't exist. The name Autechre and almost all the song titles—like "Melve" and "Second Bad Vilbel"—are based on made-up words, referring to nothing but themselves. And both acts are central to the evolution of a genre known as intelligent dance music (a term that is widely re-

viled but still commonly used). This process began in the eighties, with the laborious work of synching up drum machines manually; moved on to the controlling of samplers and keyboards with MIDI files (which are like player-piano rolls, but fussier); and arrived at the current ability to directly manipulate the digital wave form itself. Aphex Twin and Autechre, at their best, produced records from sounds that no physical instrument can make, over rhythms that no set of hands could ever play. This established the important dialogue between electronic dance music and electronic music of all kinds, where there's always an option to invoke dance music, but no obligation. The generation of Aphex Twin and Autechre was inspired by the grain of electronic sounds as much as by the idea of hard, propulsive rhythms. Younger artists, like Evian Christ and Clams Casino, see little contradiction in making both beats and noise.

Aphex Twin's records often have the feeling of mimicking records from the immediate moment but twisting them, celebrating and mocking genres at the same time. One of his first well-known tunes, "Digeridoo," from 1992, seems to use the sound of the Roland TB-303 Bassline, the main tool of acid house. The rhythmic mayhem of drum-and-bass informs the middle stretch of Aphex Twin's work, which includes some of his most famous songs. The "Come to Daddy" EP, from 1997, has the contained, crackling "Bucephalus Bouncing Ball." The near-epileptic procession of rhythms and sounds is rooted in the careful chopping up of drum

breaks that formed the basis for jungle music. The song sounds like a ball bearing or a marble when it bounces repeatedly on a surface and the rate at which it hits accelerates. The track spits out an almost laughable amount of information—clattering metallic sounds, bell tones, whooshes—daring a listener to keep track of what has happened.

"Syro" takes all these years of work and smooths out the edges. Tracks change from bar to bar, but they are less like being poked in the shoulder by your little brother and more like running water. The opening song, "minipops 67 [120.2][source field mix]," could even be fairly described as funky; while a host of sounds swirl and chatter and drop out, an easily identifiable bass line and a linear melody run through all the distraction. On this song, as throughout "Syro," there are traces of human voices—James's own, his wife's, his parents', and those of his young children. It would be misleading to say that "Syro" has a lot of what you'd call singing, but it does seem to be a landscape in which humans are welcome. Previously, Aphex Twin records sounded as though they might be mildly hazardous if repeated too often.

"Syro" is no less overprogrammed and hectic than James's previous music, but it is arrayed in a way that feels confident rather than pointlessly detailed. He has described the album as the end of a certain era of work, and though it's unclear why it took him thirteen years to get around to doing it, that's exactly what it is. "Syro" is Aphex Twin saying, "Yes, that was me," rather than "Here is the new frontier." ♦

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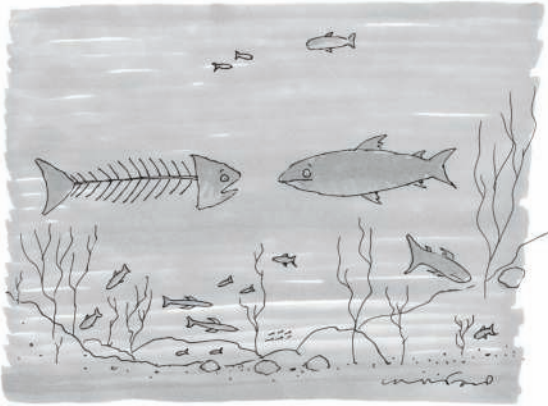
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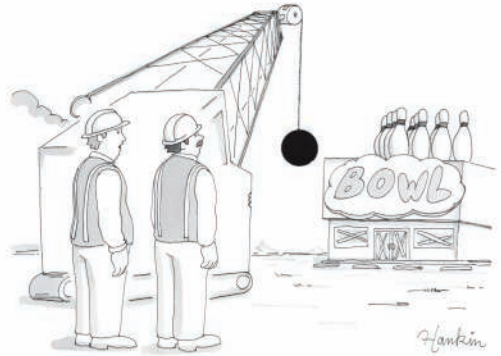
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, October 5th. The finalists in the September 22nd contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 20th 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



"He only wanted me for my body."
Barrett Bodine, Pasadena, Calif.



THE FINALISTS

"Remember that domino factory?"
Steve Farnan, Tampa, Fla.

"Bring me my shoes."
Christopher Ritter, Johnson City, N.Y.

"A strike sends us home early."
Jim Thiel, Alexandria, Va.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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