



**RSC**  
ROYAL  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPANY

TWO MAJESTIC PLAYS,  
ONE ROYAL EVENT.

"Hilary Mantel's bestselling novels have been brought into the open daylight and turned into EDGE-OF-YOUR-SEAT theater."

*Ben Brantley, The New York Times*



THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY PRODUCTION OF  
HILARY MANTEL'S

# WOLF HALL

PARTS ONE & TWO

PART ONE: WOLF HALL PART TWO: BRING UP THE BODIES

ADAPTED BY MIKE POULTON  
DIRECTED BY JEREMY HERRIN

**15 WEEKS ONLY**

**BROADWAY PERFORMANCES BEGIN MARCH 20**  
at the  WINTER GARDEN THEATRE 1634 BROADWAY, NYC

BUY TODAY AT [TELECHARGE.COM/WOLFHALL](http://TELECHARGE.COM/WOLFHALL) OR 212.239.6200  
[WOLFHALLBROADWAY.COM](http://WOLFHALLBROADWAY.COM)

PHOTOS: JOHAN PERSSON

**Playful**  
PRODUCTIONS UK

# THE NEW YORKER

NOVEMBER 10, 2014

	5	<b>GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN</b>
	23	<b>THE TALK OF THE TOWN</b> <i>Margaret Talbot on electoral scaremongering; "Nightcrawler" and Weegee; Wayne Thiebaud; a park plan in Queens; Garry Trudeau.</i>
<b>ALEC WILKINSON</b>	28	<b>READ IT AND REAP</b> <i>The world of "Modern Farmer."</i>
<b>COURTNEY GAUGHAN BOWMAN</b>	34	<b>TO THE COCKROACH IN MY APARTMENT</b>
<b>EMMA BROCKES</b>	36	<b>ALL OR NOTHING</b> <i>A playwright's search for his instincts.</i>
<b>RACHEL AVIV</b>	44	<b>THE OUTCAST</b> <i>A child-abuse scandal in Borough Park.</i>
<b>KELEFA SANNEH</b>	56	<b>THE DUKE OF DOUBT</b> <i>Chris Rock's movie ambitions.</i>
		<b>FICTION</b>
<b>ANTONYA NELSON</b>	64	"PRIMUM NON NOCERE"
		<b>THE CRITICS</b>
		<b>THE CURRENT CINEMA</b>
<b>DAVID DENBY</b>	72	"Interstellar," "The Theory of Everything."
		<b>BOOKS</b>
<b>LOUIS MENAND</b>	75	Gregg Herken's "The Georgetown Set."
	78	<i>Briefly Noted</i>
		<b>A CRITIC AT LARGE</b>
<b>JAMES SUROWIECKI</b>	81	"Faster, Higher, Stronger."
		<b>THE THEATRE</b>
<b>HILTON ALS</b>	86	"The Real Thing."
		<b>POP MUSIC</b>
<b>SASHA FRERE-JONES</b>	88	<i>The tape art of William Basinski.</i>
		<b>POEMS</b>
<b>FRANK BIDART</b>	50	"Half-Light"
<b>JOHN ASHBERY</b>	84	"A Sweet Disorder"
		<b>COVER</b>
<b>CHRIS WARE</b>		"Protocol"

**DRAWINGS** Edward Steed, David Sipress, Danny Shanahan, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Drew Dernavich, Joe Dator, Robert Leighton, John O'Brien, Roz Chast, William Haefeli, Trevor Spaulding, Frank Cotham, Paul Noth, Barbara Smaller, Michael Maslin, Amy Hwang  
**SPOTS** Philippe Petit-Roulet

©2014 movado group, inc.



INTRODUCING  
**MOVADO**  
**GRAVITY™**  
CARBON FIBER DIAL & CASE ACCENTS



**MOVADO**  
BLOOMINGDALE'S, SELECT LOCATIONS

MOVADO.COM



**MISSED THE  
FESTIVAL?  
IT'S NOT  
TOO LATE.**

Visit [video.newyorker.com](http://video.newyorker.com) to view exclusive behind-the-scenes footage and videos of select Festival programming.

The New Yorker Festival may be over, but the conversations continue.

SUPPORTED BY



ILLUSTRATION BY BRUCE McCALL

# CONTRIBUTORS

**ALEC WILKINSON** (“READ IT AND REAP,” P. 28) has published ten books, including “The Protest Singer” and “The Ice Balloon.”

**MARGARET TALBOT** (COMMENT, P. 23) is a staff writer and the author of “The Entertainer.”

**MARK SINGER** (THE TALK OF THE TOWN, P. 27), a longtime contributor to the magazine, is the author of several books, including “Character Studies.”

**COURTNEY GAUGHAN BOWMAN** (SHOUTS & MURMURS, P. 34) has written a parody entitled “Killing Bill O’Reilly,” which comes out as an e-book in January.

**EMMA BROCKES** (“ALL OR NOTHING,” P. 36), the author of “She Left Me the Gun,” writes for the *Guardian* and the *Guardian US*.

**RACHEL AVIV** (“THE OUTCAST,” P. 44) is a staff writer.

**FRANK BIDART** (POEM, P. 50) won this year’s National Book Critics Circle Award for poetry for “Metaphysical Dog.”

**KELEFA SANNEH** (“THE DUKE OF DOUBT,” P. 56) has contributed to the magazine since 2001.

**ANTONYA NELSON** (FICTION, P. 64) published “Funny Once,” her seventh short-story collection, in May.

**JAMES SUROWIECKI** (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 81) is the author of “The Wisdom of Crowds” and writes about economics, business, and finance for the magazine.

**HILTON ALS** (THE THEATRE, P. 86), *The New Yorker’s* theatre critic, wrote the catalogue essay for the Robert Gober retrospective currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art.

**CHRIS WARE** (COVER), the author of “Building Stories,” has a weekly comic strip, “The Last Saturday,” which appears in the *Guardian*.

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

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

**AND MORE, INCLUDING:**

**A NEW ARCHIVE COLLECTION:** Selected stories about the Presidency, including pieces about Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, by writers such as David Remnick and Nicholas Lemann.

**PODCASTS:** On the Political Scene, Jerome Groopman joins Dorothy Wickenden for a discussion about Ebola and past epidemics. Plus, Sasha Weiss and Rachel Aviv on Out Loud.

**THE MIDTERMS:** Analysis of and commentary on the 2014 elections by Amy Davidson and John Cassidy.

**FICTION AND POETRY:** Readings by Antonya Nelson, John Ashbery, and Frank Bidart.

**DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT:** Opinions, arguments, and reflections on the news and culture.

**THE CARTOON LOUNGE:** The latest episode in our new video series about cartoons, with Robert Mankoff.

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

---

# THE MAIL

## ANIMAL PLANET

As the president of Guide Dog Users, Inc., I appreciated Patricia Marx's article ("Pets Allowed," October 20th). Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is legal to travel just about anywhere with guide dogs, and the lives of people with disabilities have improved dramatically. But recently our access has been compromised by the increasing number of untrained, often uncontrolled pets that illegitimately share the spaces we frequent with service animals. The other day, I heard about a guide dog that was attacked at a grocery store by an out-of-control pet that was misrepresented as an emotional-support dog. The incident resulted in an emergency trip to the vet, hours of worry, and cancelled travel plans for the disabled person. The beautiful guide dog was left with a disfiguring scar on its face. Such incidents happen frequently, and sometimes result in high medical bills and a significant loss of freedom for the owners who can't rely on their dogs for safe travel, causing them to miss work and to experience immobilizing anxiety. Excellent guide dogs may be forced into early retirement. When people misrepresent their pets, business owners become suspicious and hostile toward anyone who claims to be travelling with a service animal. The aim of my organization is to educate the public and advocate for legislation that punishes those who misrepresent their pets as service animals. Sixteen states have passed laws that define the misrepresentation of a pet as a service animal as a crime; we continue to petition across the country to make this a punishable offense.

*Penny Reeder*  
President, Guide Dog Users, Inc.  
Silver Spring, Md.

I recognized myself as one of the connivers, scammers, and cheats whom Marx decries. I have a note designating my twelve pounds of fluff as an emotional-support animal. He and I know the reality: I'm his emotional-support human. I started taking my dog just about everywhere because he didn't

like to stay home alone and I didn't have the discipline (or the heart) to train him; I continue to take him with me because he brings out the humanity in people. Cart bumps at the grocery store that once resulted in glares are now friendly conversations. Scowling faces at the airport turn to smiles as my dog prances by. Whether it's for levity or protection, I'm still going to keep my dog by my side.

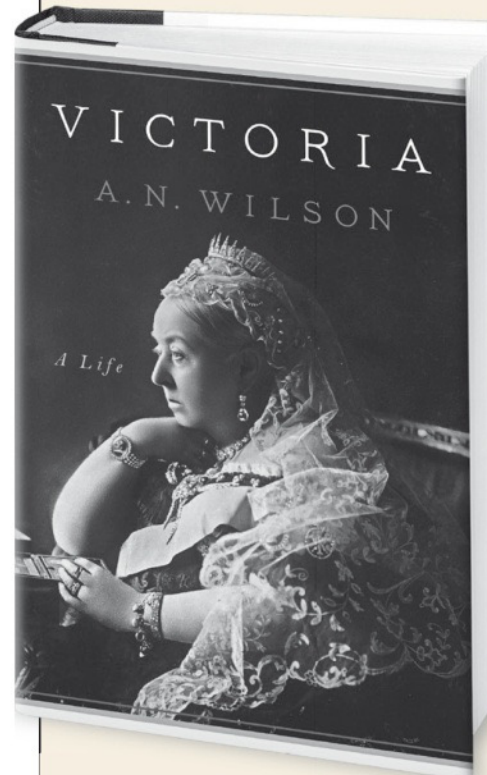
*Avisha Patel*  
Los Angeles, Calif.

I am a disabled veteran with a service dog—a white standard poodle, with a tinge of apricot behind the ears. He is tall and regal. I have been told at times, even by Department of Veterans Affairs hospital staff, that my dog is not permitted on the property. Yes, he's a poodle, but he is also a level-four service dog: he understands more than a hundred commands, including hand signs, which allow me to control him in silence, in order not to disturb others. He was originally trained as a service dog for a veteran returning from Iraq with post-traumatic stress disorder. He now assists me with my vision, hearing, mobility, and balance disabilities. On a recent flight, the boarding agent spent ten minutes at the gate talking thoughtfully with me about my dog, and when I took the train from Sacramento to Boston the conductor took note of my dog's discipline. People can buy service-dog vests and certification on the Internet, but the canine cannot lie—all it takes to see whether someone is being truthful is to observe the dog's behavior. There is no good reason to burden those who need service dogs but have limited resources with additional bureaucracy and expense: a service dog is a disciplined dog.

*Dennis Chinnock*  
Lincoln, Calif.

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

FROM ACCLAIMED  
HISTORIAN  
A. N. WILSON,  
a sweeping, definitive  
biography of one of the  
most recognizable  
yet enigmatic monarchs  
of all time.



"Wilson sums up his feelings about Victoria in a single word: 'Awe.' His own achievement, sustained by a lifetime's scholarly fascination with the Victorian era, is also, in its way, awesome."

—*Financial Times*

"A shimmering portrait of a tempestuous monarch."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)



## LET'S FIND CLEANER SOURCES OF ENERGY TODAY, TO HELP PROTECT HER TOMORROW.

The world's population has reached seven billion and is forecast to reach around nine billion by 2050. As the world's population grows its need for water, food and energy will increase. Meeting this challenge will be difficult and will place demands on all of us. At Shell we are determined to help meet the energy challenge, supplying a broad mix of lower-emission energy sources. We're making our fuels and lubricants more advanced and more efficient than before. With our partner in Brazil, we're also producing ethanol, a biofuel made from renewable sugar cane. And we're delivering natural gas to more than 40 countries around the world. When used to generate electricity, natural gas emits around half the CO<sub>2</sub> of coal. Let's broaden the world's energy mix. [www.youtube.com/shelletsgo](http://www.youtube.com/shelletsgo)



**LET'S GO.**

# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



NOVEMBER 2014    WEDNESDAY 5TH    THURSDAY 6TH    FRIDAY 7TH    SATURDAY 8TH    SUNDAY 9TH    MONDAY 10TH    TUESDAY 11TH

**THE NEW VICTORY**, which specializes in intelligent theatre for children, is an appropriate venue for Isango Ensemble's gorgeous, joyful Olivier-winning version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," but the show is recommended for grownups, too. Founded in Cape Town in 2000, Isango Ensemble transposes Western classics ("A Christmas Carol," "U-Carmen," "Aesop's Fables") to South African townships. In this "Magic Flute," a cast of twenty-three, costumed variously in modern camouflage, tribal tunics, and corseted black feathered gowns, gather as if in a village center to sing their story, in English and occasionally in Xhosa and Tswana. The stage is ringed with marimba players, the magic flute is a blues trumpet, and the Queen of the Night is the soprano Pauline Malefane, the troupe's musical director.

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

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEHAD NGA



Traditional gender roles lead to agony for a bored housewife in "Fear of Fear," at Film Society of Lincoln Center.



## MOVIES

### NOW PLAYING

#### Actress

The real-life actress Brandy Burre, a regular on "The Wire," left showbiz, had two children, and moved, with her partner, Tim Reinke, to Beacon, New York. In Robert Greene's documentary about her effort to return to the business (and the art) of acting, she gets the role of a lifetime—herself. Doing his own cinematography, Greene (then Burre's neighbor) becomes a virtual part of her household, and his camera becomes Burre's confidant, framing her in a confessional mood. But her attempt at reinvention comes at the price of her relationship with Reinke, a restaurateur (who is present in the film along with their young children, Henry and Stella). For Burre, artistic and erotic desire are fused; she sees her life as a series of roles—mom conflicts with actress, partner with lover—and her struggle for fulfillment links creative work with economic independence. Her story is the stuff of classic melodrama, and that's how Greene, astonishingly, films it: his images, with their shrieking colors and vertiginous geometry, suggest the intimate grandeur and bitter irony of a Douglas Sirk romance come to life.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

#### Applause

The sophisticated Broadway director Rouben Mamoulian's first feature, from 1929, is set in the world of itinerant burlesque troupers, the bargain basement of vaudeville, which he depicts as an oppressive, eroticized nightly horror. The torch singer Helen Morgan stars as Kitty Darling, a strip-teaser pushing forty, who scrimps and saves to send her teen-age daughter, April (Joan Peers), to a convent school. But Kitty's predatory boyfriend, Hitch (Fuller Mellish, Jr.), a fleabag comedian, demands that the girl come home and earn her keep—and when April arrives he tries to force her into the show and into his bed. Though the performances tend to bray toward the balcony, Morgan whips up a mighty storm of clashing passions. Mamoulian's roving, eye-catching camerawork—complete with atmospheric on-location views of New

## SMALL SCREEN DREAMS


*Rainer Werner Fassbinder's television masterpieces.*

**FEATURE-FILM AUTEURS ARE NEWCOMERS TO** American television, but they have long had a home on European channels. The German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who died at the age of thirty-seven, in 1982, made more than forty films, and some of the best were for German television—including several in the retrospective of his work at Film Society of Lincoln Center.

"Fear of Fear" (Nov. 13 and Nov. 16), from 1975, is a domestic melodrama that holds a broken mirror up to its mainstream audience. Margit Carstensen stars as Margot Staudte, a young housewife and mother who is frustrated by her daily routine and bored with her staid husband, Kurt (Ulrich Faulhaber). A kindly doctor prescribes Valium, and she becomes addicted, throwing herself at a predatory pharmacist for her supply. Fassbinder shows her derangement in a panoply of visual devices—wavy hallucinations, abrupt zooms, garish clashes of color, and screen-filling closeups that exalt her torments into tragedy.

In 1976, Fassbinder adapted Oskar Maria Graf's 1931 novel, "Bolwieser," as a two-part TV drama that ran two hundred minutes. He also delivered a shorter version, which was released as the feature film "The Stationmaster's Wife" (Nov. 15-16 and Nov. 19). Also a story of marital discord, the movie is set in a Bavarian town in the late nineteen-twenties, during Hitler's rise to power. Fassbinder conjures paranoia through a web of gossip and jealousy: Xaver Bolwieser (Kurt Raab), the official of the title, encourages his wife, Hanni (Elisabeth Trissenaar), to invest her inheritance with a friend, the butcher Merkl (Bernhard Helfrich), who plans to buy a restaurant. Soon, Hanni's relationship with her business partner becomes the talk of the town, and, as Xaver becomes suspicious, Hanni turns increasingly contemptuous and imperious. Despite the brevity of Fassbinder's career, his stylistic development was rapid, keeping pace with the expanding scope of his vision. Here he creates a shadowy palette, evoking the past by way of chilled and ritualized performances filmed through windows and curtains, luridly reflected in mirrors and chrome. It's a crucial step toward his crowning achievement, the fifteen-hour TV adaptation, from 1980, of Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel "Berlin Alexanderplatz" (not in the series, but on DVD).

—*Richard Brody*



EVERY STORY  
NEEDS A  
FINAL WORD.

THE  
NEWSROOM

THE FINAL EPISODES  
SUNDAY, NOV 9TH 9PM

**HBO**

OR WATCH IT ON **HBO GO**

HBO GO® is only accessible in the US and certain US territories. ©2014 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. HBO® and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc.

## OPENING ACTRESS

Reviewed in Now Playing.  
Opening Nov. 7. (In limited release.)

## THE BETTER ANGELS

A drama about Abraham Lincoln's childhood, directed by A. J. Edwards. Opening Nov. 7. (In limited release.)

## INTERSTELLAR

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 5. (In wide release.)

## NATIONAL GALLERY

Frederick Wiseman directed this documentary, about the London museum. Opening Nov. 5. (Film Forum.)

## THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 7. (In limited release.)

## REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

*Titles in bold are reviewed.*

## ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

"Essential Cinema." Nov. 7 at 9:15 and Nov. 8 at 4: "There Was a Father."

## BAM CINÉMATEK

The films of Derek Jarman. Nov. 8 at 4:30, 7, and 9:15: "Caravaggio" (1986).

## FILM FORUM

In revival. Nov. 7-13 (call for showtimes): "Only Angels Have Wings."

## FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Nov. 7 at 1:30 and Nov. 8 at 6:30: "Satan's Brew" (1976). • Nov. 7 at 4 and 9 and Nov. 9 at 3:30: "Fox and His Friends" (1974). • Nov. 8 at 4: "Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven" (1975). • Nov. 9 at 6: "Despair" (1978).

## MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Nov. 5 at 4: "Climates." • "To Save and Project." Nov. 8 at 5: "Bert Williams: 100 Years in Post-Production," a rediscovered, uncompleted feature starring Williams (1913).

## MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

The films of Rouben Mamoulian. Nov. 8 at 2:30: "Applause."



## MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Paul Thomas Anderson's "The Master," from 2012, in our digital edition and online.

York City—joins the dishevelment and grime of poverty to the sordid, lecherous leers of the men who fill the seats and haunt the corridors. The subject of the film is unrelenting and unredressed sexual harassment; it's a drama of the male gaze, which, in Mamoulian's vision, turns actresses' performances into joyless and desperate acts of self-sacrifice.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 8.)

## Birdman

Twenty years ago, Riggan Thomson (Michael Keaton) was flying high. He was the star of the Birdman movies, winged with superhuman powers. Since then, his fame has plunged, and now he is launching himself anew by writing, directing, and starring in an adaptation of a Raymond Carver tale on Broadway. Caught in the whirl of this task are his daughter (Emma Stone), his best friend (Zach Galifianakis), his lover (Andrea Riseborough), and his ex-wife (Amy Ryan). Also present is Mike Shiner (Edward Norton), an actor who joins Riggan's cast, which happens to include *his* lover (Naomi Watts), and who tussles with Riggan in almost every possible way. The movie, directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, is hectic and crammed, yet it streams along, appearing to unroll in a single, flowing take, which all but erases the border between Riggan's everyday gripes and his daydreams; with a click of the fingers, he can summon fireballs, as Birdman used to do. Keaton, a former Batman, has lost not a watt of his nervous energy, and he enlivens the film as Javier Bardem did in "Biutiful," Iñárritu's previous work. But that film seemed like an act of mourning, whereas here the New York setting and the follies of the dramatic trade have chivvied the director into comedy for the first time. If the humor is dark and fringed with fears of loss, so much the richer.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/20/14.) (In limited release.)

## Climates

The Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan daringly casts himself and his wife, Ebru Ceylan, in the lead roles of this poignant yet hard-edged modernist melodrama, from 2006. During a beachside summer vacation, Isa, a struggling university lecturer, senses that his marriage to Bahar, a television art director, is falling apart, and, at his suggestion, they separate. Lonely and adrift in Istanbul, he learns that Bahar has gone to Turkey's rural, tradition-bound East to work on a film, and he heads off to find her. Ceylan's long takes and brooding closeups capture the faces, gestures, and longings of Istanbul's aging bourgeois bohemians, as well as the moody nuances of actual and emotional weather—the ice storm brewing between Isa and Bahar at a balmy resort, the passionate heat of lovers during a blizzard. Shifting between his characters' outer and inner

realities with a deft, novelistic omniscience, Ceylan nonetheless remains resolutely outside their motives in the film's most disturbing scene, a sexual conquest that appears to be rape but isn't described as such. Under the guise of the universal theme of love and its mysteries, Ceylan offers a glimpse of harsh and unresolved local particulars. In Turkish.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Nov. 5.)

## Dear White People

Justin Simien's first feature is based on the appalling recent prevalence of blackface parties and other minority-mocking themes at colleges across the country. The story that he builds is a rickety contraption of issue-oriented talking points delivered by characters—centrally, four black students—who are constructed to fit the plot. At the Ivy-like Winchester University, the politically engaged Sam White (Tessa Thompson) hosts the controversial one-woman radio show of the title. Confronting the school's planned breakup of an all-black dormitory, she runs for its presidency against the ambitious future politician Troy Fairbanks (Brandon P Bell). Lionel Higgins (Tyler James Williams), a gay nerd, is recruited to report on the dorm controversy and on White for the school newspaper, and the fame-seeking Coco Conners (Teyonah Parris) conspires with a reality-TV producer to stir up trouble. For all the film's urgent and sometimes inspired debate about racial politics, what comes through most strongly is the students' competitive rush for professional success. As for the racist party, it remains a mere plot line; news clips placed in the end credits suggest a cinematic investigation still waiting to happen.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

## Diplomacy

Volker Schlöndorff's vigorous imagining of a crucial event that never happened—an all-night debate on August 24-25, 1944, between General Dietrich von Choltitz (Niels Arestrup), the German governor of Occupied Paris, and the Swedish consul-general Raoul Nordling (André Dussollier). During the meeting, Nordling uses charm, guile, and deceit to convince von Choltitz to disobey Hitler's orders to blow up Paris. Actually, no one knows why von Choltitz did what he did; Nordling's influence is only a hypothesis. The film is based on a play by Cyril Gély, and Arestrup and Dussollier created the roles onstage. The intimate camerawork allows each of the verbal combatants to momentarily retreat, turn his back on the other, recalculate, and then advance again. By implication, the movie presents an argument between civilization and barbarism, between the pleasure principle and the death instinct. But the filmmakers mostly avoid high-flown rhetoric in favor of the intensely practical give-and-take of negotiation. In French and German.—*David Denby* (10/27/14) (In limited release.)

## Force Majeure

A variation on a theme by Ernest Hemingway, set in a resort in the French Alps. A middle-class Swedish family takes a ski vacation: father, Tomas; mother, Ebba; and two young children, Vera and Harry. While enjoying lunch on a mountainside terrace, they witness an avalanche that's rapidly gaining in strength. Tomas bolts from the table in fear, and Ebba holds his instinctive cowardice against him. The writer and director, Ruben Östlund, presents the members of the nuclear family as stereotypes; he finds glimmers of psychological depth only in supporting characters, including a sexually uninhibited woman whom Ebba meets at the resort and a divorced man who's travelling with his twenty-year-old girlfriend. Little but the children's fear of their parents' separation has any dramatic weight. Östlund's crisp, repressed direction is itself a stereotype, and his teasing script and convenient resolutions offer only superficial ironies. A peculiarly haunting ending offers more mystery and curiosity in a single shot than does the entire story that precedes it. In Swedish and English.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

## Fury

David Ayer's fictional account of an American tank crew fighting in Germany in April, 1945, lacks poetry and greatness of spirit, but it's one of the most exciting and frightening combat films ever made. The Americans know they will triumph sooner or later, but at the moment, they feel like a losing army. Their medium-weight Sherman M4 tanks, fast and maneuverable, are badly outgunned by the heavy new German Tigers, and Ayer, holding to the illusion of realism (coherent and continuous space, no fantasy, no "Inglorious Basterds"-style cartoonishness), brings us close to the terrors of fighting in what seems like a mobile and highly flammable prison. With Brad Pitt, as Top, the inexorable tank commander; the blunt Michael Peña, as the driver; Shia LaBeouf, showing an entirely new style of performance as Boyd (Bible) Swan, the gunner; Jon Bernthal, as the growling Neanderthal, Grady (Coo-Ass) Travis; and Logan Lerman, as Norman, the inevitable pale, skinny neophyte, who is dragooned by the others into the higher wisdom of war, which is that you either kill or get killed.—*D.D.* (10/27/14) (In wide release.)

## Goodbye to Language

Shooting with largely handheld, lightweight, homemade 3-D video equipment, Jean-Luc Godard realizes, at the age of eighty-three, an ideal that he has pursued for forty years: sketch-like images, made casually and spontaneously, that are endowed with the power and grandeur of stu-

dio-era cinematography. The idea that they reveal is the essential one in Godard's later work—the romantic implications of political philosophy and the history of cinema—and it's brought to life in a collage of scenes about two couples in Switzerland, near Lake Geneva. One couple confronts the political crises of twentieth-century Europe amid espionage and violence. The other couple faces erotic conflicts that play out against a backdrop of clips from classic movies. And then there's a dog, Roxy Miéville, who wanders a glorious landscape that Godard's methods raise to painterly glory (a river in which Roxy frolics is a late Monet in motion). His 3-D technique is the first advance in deep-focus camerawork since the heyday of Orson Welles; it lends the settings a sumptuous intimacy as it restores the astonishment of sheer perception to the art of the cinema. A concluding flourish—with Godard himself, a painter in his youth, giving a young artist lessons in watercolor—looks tenderly into the future.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Listen Up Philip

In this bitter and hectic comedy, the director Alex Ross Perry shows us the life of the mind: an endless round of humiliations inflicted and endured, in which everyone is keeping score. Jason Schwartzman plays the rising literary star Philip Lewis Friedman, who isn't rising as fast or as high as others are, which is driving him crazy. Befriended by the famous elderly novelist Ike Zimmerman (Jonathan Pryce), the vain and abrasive Philip abandons the Brooklyn apartment that he shares with his longtime girlfriend, the photographer Ashley Kane (Elisabeth Moss), and moves upstate to Ike's rustic house and to a teaching job at a nearby university. In a brilliant dramatic stroke, Perry—who analyzes the action in real time through a trenchant voice-over spoken by Eric Bogosian—turns his attention to Ashley and her efforts to pick up the pieces after the sudden, agonized breakup, and then to Ike, whose own intimate life is in shambles after decades of obsessive literary devotion. Applying cinematic auteurism to actual authors, Perry—greatly aided by Sean Price Williams's tactile and probing cinematography—leaps into the maelstrom of creative fury and finds its victims.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Nightcrawler

Lou Bloom (Jake Gyllenhaal) is a missionless young man in Los Angeles, surviving on minor theft. By chance, he falls into a more rewarding trade: hastening to accidents and crime scenes, filming them, then hawking the results to TV news. Lou finds an eager buyer in Nina (Rene Russo), a producer on the vampire shift, who needs extreme material to feed the ratings. This kind of morality tale is hardly news—Nina, for instance, is foreshadowed by the Faye Dunaway character in "Network"—and if you crave understatement you may need to look elsewhere, but Dan Gilroy, making his debut as a director, delivers something as alarming as freshly spilled blood. Few stories this ghoulish can summon such an urgent sense of pace. Gyllenhaal, his features haunted and starved, adds another memorable figure to his gallery of obsessives (see "Zodiac" and "Source Code") and shows us how easy it is, when faced with disaster, to stay up close yet impersonal, and how even the weirdest of prowlers can promote himself as a bustling entrepreneur. To prey on the defenseless and the dead, the movie tells us, is no longer the prerogative of vultures. It's a business. With Bill Paxton.—*A.L.* (11/3/14) (In wide release.)

### Only Angels Have Wings

Howard Hawks's stirring tale of a fledgling airmail service that traverses the Andes from a strip in a South American banana port is the ultimate workplace dramedy. Hawks weaves brawny romance and humor and a man's-man sort of heartbreak into his tribute to the ideal of vocation. The risky job of lifting mail over and through the mountains becomes a crucible of character, group feeling, and sexual loyalty. Cary Grant delivers a robust, carnal performance as the flyboys' boss, and Jean Arthur is skittishly charming as an entertainer waiting for a boat out of town; Grant emits an electric charge when he starts to take her seriously. Hawks surrounds these two actors with a jaunty ensemble, including the impossibly pretty young Rita Hayworth, as Grant's prior flame, and the cagey Thomas Mitchell, as his best friend and right-hand man. As Hayworth's husband, a top aviator with a tainted past, Richard Barthelmess is haunted and moving. Released in 1939.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Nov. 7-13.)

### There Was a Father

This wartime drama by Yasujiro Ozu, from 1942, spans about fifteen years in the life of a fractured family. The widower Shuhei Horikawa (the Ozu regular Chishu Ryu), a middle-school teacher, struggles to raise his young son, Ryohei (Shuji Sano). The struggle deepens when, during a class trip, one of his students dies in a boating accident. Shuhei blames himself and quits his job, taking refuge in a small town and sending Ryohei to boarding school. In the effort to make a living, he moves to distant Tokyo and sees his son even less frequently. Ozu telescopes time with deft audacity: the grown Ryohei, also a teacher, finds himself posted far from Tokyo and still yearns to see his father. But

within the framework of the aching melodrama, the director daringly highlights the weight of tradition and duty that crushes the individual spirit. In such chilling nuances as Shuhei's catastrophically silent and implacable grief, his starchy demands of fealty to work, his joyful anticipation of Ryohei's military service, and Ryohei's calm lessons on the destructive properties of T.N.T., Ozu reveals a society heading blindly toward the abyss and destroying its future in the name of the past. In Japanese.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Nov. 7-8.)

### Whiplash

Andrew (Miles Teller) is at music school, in New York, studying drums—a sociable instrument, you might think, but that assumption is brushed aside by the first scene, the last scene, and pretty much everything in between. Andrew seems to be playing solo even when he's surrounded by other performers. Good news: he is picked for the best band in the school. Bad news: it's run by the formidable Fletcher (J. K. Simmons), who treats his charges like a drill sergeant would, flaying their weaknesses and provoking their tears if that will help the cause of the music—the only cause, in his eyes and ears, that counts. What lends verve to Damien Chazelle's film is not so much the lure of jazz as the power struggle between master and pupil, plus a rare honesty about the costs of the craze for excellence. We root for Andrew, but Teller makes sure that we don't always have to like him. Simmons is as taut as piano wire, twanging with impatience and intolerance, and Paul Reiser, as Andrew's father, gets a beautiful closeup at the end; he smiles at his son's prowess, but the smile fades as the drumming hits a mad intensity. The kid is lost in the sound, and lost to him.—*A.L.* (10/20/14) (In limited release.)

Advertisement



*"You know they have Wi-Fi, right?"*

**The workday can survive at any altitude.**  
The office rarely stops at the office. If only the world were so lucky. That's why Delta has never been stingy with the Wi-Fi. We've got more flights with Wi-Fi than any other carrier. No wonder more people choose Delta than any other airline.

KEEP CLIMBING  
**DELTA**  
delta.com

# THE THEATRE

## ALSO NOTABLE

### BEAUTIFUL—THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL

Stephen Sondheim

### BROWNSVILLE SONG (B-SIDE FOR TRAY)

Claire Tow

### BY THE WATER

City Center Stage II

### CABARET

Studio 54

### THE COUNTRY HOUSE

Samuel J. Friedman

### FOUND

Atlantic Theatre Company

### GENERATIONS

SoHo Rep

### A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE AND MURDER

Walter Kerr

### HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Belasco

### IF/THEN

Richard Rodgers

### INDIAN INK

Laura Pels

### LOST LAKE

City Center Stage I

### LOVE LETTERS

Brooks Atkinson

### MAJOR BARBARA

Pearl

### MATILDA THE MUSICAL

Shubert

### LES MISÉRABLES

Imperial

### ON THE TOWN

Lyric

### THE REAL THING

American Airlines Theatre.

Reviewed in this issue.

### TAIL! SPIN!

Lynn Redgrave Theatre

### TAMBURLAINE, PARTS I AND II

Polonsky Shakespeare Center

### THIS IS OUR YOUTH

Cort

### YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

Longacre



## GOINGS ON, ONLINE

More listings, including a new dance ensemble that revives Broadway numbers; the International Fine Print Dealers Association's annual fair, which brings ninety galleries to the Park Avenue Armory; and, in Classical Music, the Israeli violinist Itamar Zorman at Weill Recital Hall on Nov. 5.

## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### Allegro

John Doyle directs the musical by Rodgers and Hammerstein, from 1947, about a Midwestern doctor who marries his high-school sweetheart and then becomes cynical. In previews. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)

### The Band Wagon

"Encores!" presents a musical adaptation of the film, written by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, in which a former theatre idol tries to revive his career with a musical of "Faust." With a book by Douglas Carter Beane, music by Arthur Schwartz, and lyrics by Howard Dietz and starring Brian Stokes Mitchell, Tony Sheldon, Tracey Ullman, Michael McKean, and Laura Osnes. Kathleen Marshall directs. Opens Nov. 6. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### A Delicate Balance

Glenn Close, John Lithgow, Lindsay Duncan, Bob Balaban, Clare Higgins, and Martha Plimpton star in a revival of Edward Albee's play, from 1966, in which a suburban couple living with the woman's alcoholic sister are visited by their daughter, fresh from the breakup of her fourth marriage, as well as by their best friends. Pam MacKinnon directs. In previews. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### The Elephant Man

Bradley Cooper, Patricia Clarkson, and Alessandro Nivola star in a revival of Bernard Pomerance's 1979 play, based on the true story of Joseph Merrick, a severely deformed man who became famous on the British freak-show circuit in the late eighteen-hundreds. Scott Ellis directs. Previews begin Nov. 7. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Grand Concourse

Kip Fagan directs a new play by Heidi Schreck, about a religious manager at a Bronx soup kitchen who begins to question her faith. Quincy Tyler Bernstine and Ismenia Mendes star. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### Our Lady of Kibeho

Signature Theatre Company presents the world premiere of a play by Katori Hall, set in 1981 in Rwanda, about a young girl who believes that she's seen a vision of the Virgin

Mary, causing havoc in her village. Michael Greif directs. In previews. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

### Pitbulls

Rattlestick presents a play by Keith Josef Adkins, directed by Leah C. Gardiner, about a black community in the Bible Belt of the Appalachian Mountains, in which a local woman and her son are suspected of killing a prized pitbull. Previews begin Nov. 6. (224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

### Punk Rock

MCC presents a play by Simon Stephens ("The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time"), set in a private school near Manchester, England, which follows a group of well-educated teen-agers. Trip Cullman directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

### The River

Hugh Jackman, Laura Donnelly, and Cush Jumbo star in a new play by Jez Butterworth, in which a man brings his new girlfriend to a remote cliff-side cabin. Ian Rickson directs. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Side Show

Bill Condon reconceived and directs this musical, based on the true story of Daisy and Violet Hilton, conjoined twins who were the highest-paid vaudeville act in the nineteen-twenties. The show, which premiered on Broadway in 1997, has new music by Henry Krieger and a book and lyrics by Bill Russell. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Sticks and Bones

The New Group begins its season with a revival of the 1971 Tony-winning play by David Rabe, about a family that is torn apart when a son returns home from the Vietnam War. Directed by Scott Elliott; starring Holly Hunter and Bill Pullman. In previews. Opens Nov. 6. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### Straight White Men

Young Jean Lee wrote and directs this play, a twist on the standard father-son tale, featuring Austin Pendleton, Gary Wilmes, Pete Simpson, and James Stanley. Previews begin Nov. 7. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### You Got Older

Page 73 presents a play by Clare Barron, starring Reed Birney and Brooke Bloom, about a woman coping with the ravaging effects of her father's illness. Anne Kauffman directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 6. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave. 212-352-3101.)

## NOW PLAYING

### Deliverance

This new play—the latest from the Goddard Theatre Company, which specializes in minimalist adaptations of books—is based not on the 1972 film, which includes the indelible phrase "squeal like a pig," but on the 1970 novel by James Dickey, which does not. Starting with a premise that sounds almost impossible to capture convincingly onstage—four middle-aged, middle-class men attempt a poorly planned weekend canoe adventure down a perilous South Georgia river—this production, directed by Joe Tantaló, compounds the challenge by allowing virtually no set or props. It succeeds with astonishing virtuosity, evoking every twist in the river and the plot as surely as if it were being performed on location. Compressing the action into a fast-paced ninety minutes, Sean Tyler's adaptation never dwells for long on the story's main themes—urban male restlessness, the limits of endurance, survival anxiety—which is probably for the best. This is fundamentally a nightmare thriller, as taut and suggestive as a Daphne du Maurier short story. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 9.)

### Disgraced

The minute the excellent, humorous Karen Pittman walks onstage in Ayad Akhtar's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, she exposes all the bad acting that has come before, as well as all that is boring and sensationalistic in this ninety-minute work about cultures clashing. Pittman plays Jory, a sleek lawyer at a high-powered firm where her colleague Amir (the handsome Hari Dhillon) is slowly unravelling: he wants to be a partner but is coming undone by all the racism he feels he must combat in order to be seen as a valued colleague. Amir, a Pakistani married to a white painter named Emily (played with no energy and no imagination by Gretchen Mol), whose biggest artistic influence is Islamic art, may just be a creep—perceived racial slights and his internalized racially influenced self-hatred can't excuse his poor, indulgent behavior. Emily seeks the approval of Jory's husband, Isaac (played well by Josh Radnor), a Whitney curator. Akhtar's writing, while lively and clear, is journalism onstage: we're made very aware of the "issues." The only time they get blurred and achieve some depth is when Pittman is circling her friends and adversaries, never quite certain when they're one or the other. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

Suzan-Lori Parks is a sort of theatrical resurrectionist, forcing history's dead to life beneath the stage lights. For this triptych, the first part of an

imagined nine-play sequence, she encamps in the early years of the Civil War, following Hero (a stoic Sterling K. Brown), a slave who fights on the Confederate side. As ever, Parks's language is sumptuous and precise, almost Elizabethan in its rhythms. But, under Jo Bonney's direction, some of the drama, which deliberately echoes "The Odyssey," feels strangely abstracted, the suffering of the characters revealed at some remove. Yet in Part 2, "A Battle in the Wilderness," Hero's desperate ambivalence seems immediate and wrenching. A Yank soldier (Louis Cancelmi) urges him toward freedom. "We won't have a price," he says. "That'll be the beauty of it." Hero can only ask, "Where's the beauty in not being worth nothing?" (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### The Fortress of Solitude

This musical, based on Jonathan Lethem's panoramic 2003 novel, has two good things: the actors Adam Chanler-Berat and André De Shields. Chanler-Berat plays Dylan Ebdus, a young white kid growing up in the nineteen-seventies in a largely black and Hispanic Brooklyn neighborhood. He is befriended by the equally imaginative Mingus Rude (Kyle Beltran), who is black. Dylan finds a magic ring that unites the two boys and allows them to transcend the limits of their fractured families. (Mingus's father is abusive, as was his grandfather Senior, played by De Shields with the physical ease and certainty of a snake charmer.) Beltran is especially fine when he conveys just how rattled by hatred Mingus is, but he doesn't really connect with Chanler-Berat. The director, Daniel Aukin, seems to feel as though he's overseeing three or four shows simultaneously, but this urban circus doesn't cohere. The book, by Itamar Moses, has no clear through line, and Michael Friedman, the composer behind some of the best musicals of the past decade, doesn't have a script to work with. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

### Ghost Quartet

The latest music-theatre wonder from Dave Malloy, the composer who gave us "Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812," "Three Pianos," and "Beowulf," is an intimate night of ghost stories, revelry, and song, complete with chandeliers, Oriental rugs, hand percussion, and whiskey for all, at the cozy Bushwick Starr. Malloy, performing with Brent Arnold, Brittain Ashford, and Gelsey Bell, is as inclusive as ever, embracing everything from doo-wop to Celtic harp and Thelonious Monk, and making everybody feel like part of the fun. (207 Starr St., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111. Through Nov. 8.)

### The Last Ship

The process of adapting this song cycle, about the people and politics of a Newcastle shipbuilding community, into a Broadway musical has made Sting, the composer, and his collaborators go all soft-like, to use the play's Northern English diction. Gideon (Michael Esper) returns home fifteen years after leaving his family and his girlfriend (Rachel Tucker) to find the thriving industry he left behind all but extinguished. As a matter of pride and principle, the men of the town decide to roll up their sleeves and construct one last leviathan, on which they will sail away. The story, by John Logan and Brian Yorke, fails both as reality and allegory, falling back on one narrative cliché after another. The music is fine and the singing is great, but you can smell the plot points, and many of Sting's rhymes, wafting up from way beyond the bend

in the canal. The director, Joe Mantello, moves the actors and sets fluidly, but Steven Hoggett's choreography, in an effort to make the shipbuilders appear manly, turns them into flexing, stomping, grimacing lunks. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 877-250-2929.)

### Lift

Walter Mosley, the best-selling novelist most famous for the Easy Rawlins detective series, sets himself a formidable playwriting challenge here. An elevator car in a big-city high-rise must serve as the sole set: there's been an accident, and Tina (MaameYaa Bofo) and Theodore (Biko Eisen-Martin), two employees who interacted only briefly before the crisis, are thrown together in a tense, dangerous, intimate situation. Though the director, Marshall Jones III, and the actors are inventive and physical and thoughtful, Mosley is only partly successful. There are surprising revelations about both characters as their relationship evolves, but the playwright strains to make them represent an unwieldy gamut of intra-racial and inter-sexual dynamics. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

### Lips Together, Teeth Apart

At least Ebola dread lends relevance to this otherwise needless revival of Terence McNally's 1991 drama. Set on Fire Island in 1990, it follows two straight couples sharing an uncelebratory Fourth of July. Sally (America Ferrara) and Sam (Michael Chernus), having recently inherited a beach house from Sally's dead brother, have invited Sam's sister (Tracee Chimo) and her husband (Austin Lysy) out for the very long weekend. Homophobia and AIDS panic (even

the chlorinated pool is a worry) stifle their merry-making. McNally's script is strained and stagey, striving for a gravitas it doesn't attain, and, under Peter DuBois's direction, nothing feels real. (Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

### The Magic Flute: Impempe Yomlingo

Isango Ensemble, from South Africa, performs this Young Vic production of Mozart's opera. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Through Nov. 9.)

### On the Town

The director John Rando's sentimentality undermines much of what should be interesting about this revival of the 1944 musical. As designed by Beowulf Boritt, the somewhat Art Deco set has nothing to do with the Second World War era that Adolph Green and Betty Comden evoke in their book and lyrics. Three sailors (Tony Yazbeck, Jay Armstrong Johnson, and Clyde Alves) are on shore leave for twenty-four hours, and they want to fit all of life into them. Gabey is looking for Ivy (a too doll-like Megan Fairchild), who was voted Miss Turnstiles; he's fallen in love with her poster. Meanwhile, his buddies partner up with a lady cabdriver named Hildy (Alysha Umphress) and an anthropologist named Claire (the talented Elizabeth Stanley, who, along with Yazbeck, is the best player here), which only exacerbates Gabey's isolation. As Madame Dilly, Jackie Hoffman walks away with her scenes. She knows that musicals are best believed when the sentimentality is minimized and the action happens with a knowing wink. (Lyric, 213 W. 42nd St. 877-250-2929.)

Advertisement

e.flake

**"Pillow fight!!"**

**Jet lag, go find a different jet.**  
Taking a red-eye? No reason you can't get yourself a little shut-eye. Available on our entire long-haul fleet, you'll find not just flat-bed seats, but flat-bed seats with direct aisle access. More than any other carrier, in fact. No wonder more people choose Delta than any other airline.

KEEP CLIMBING  
**DELTA**  
delta.com



## NIGHT LIFE

### ROCK AND POP

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

### Deerhoof

For the past two decades, this progressive indie-rock band, whose main songwriter is the drummer Greg Saunier, has pushed its style toward greater compositional and rhythmic complexity. In celebration of its twentieth anniversary, however, the group has released a stripped-down new album, "La Isla Bonita," which draws on rock primitivism. The idea originated when the band fell in love with the raw sound of the rehearsal demos that they had recorded in the basement of their guitarist Ed Rodriguez. Despite the emphasis on simplicity, there are classic Deerhoof elements in the album: unpredictable, shrill guitar parts and the lead singer Satomi Matsuzaki's strange, disembodied vocals, which, despite their occasional apocalyptic themes, have a dreamlike quality. For these shows, Deerhoof will be joined by several of its favorite bands, including **Trans Am**, **White Reaper**, and the Grizzly Bear spin-off **Assembly**. (Baby's All Right, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. Nov. 4-6.)

### "Dig Deeper"

This concert series, which specializes in bringing long-lost soul singers back to the stage, presents the Detroit legend **Pat Lewis**, who is making her New York City debut. As a teen-ager, Lewis formed a group with friends called the Adorables, and then went on to cut a number of singles. (Her 1967 release, "No One to Love," is a treasured rarity among Northern Soul fans, typically going for more than two thousand dollars.) She also did session work with several Motown recording artists, including Stevie Wonder, and eventually backed Aretha Franklin, George Clinton, and Isaac Hayes, for whom she wrote many singles. For her show at Littlefield, supported by the **Brooklyn Rhythm Band**, she'll be returning to the songs of her youth, some of which she hasn't performed since the day she recorded them. (622 Degraw St., between Third and Fourth Aves., Brooklyn. littlefieldnyc.com. Nov. 8.)

## QUIT THE DAY JOB

*The guitarist and composer Stephen Ulrich returns to his trio, Big Lazy.*

**IGGY POP SAID RECENTLY THAT** he'd be "tending bar between sets" if he had to rely solely on record sales to survive. The proto-punk legend has alternate sources of revenue (a recent appearance in a car-insurance commercial, for instance), but less well-known musicians, such as the gifted composer and guitarist Stephen Ulrich, have to come up with more creative solutions.

A former architecture student, Ulrich supported his musical career for a time by building models for I. M. Pei (where he nearly severed an essential finger with a table saw) and by painting enormous advertisements along barren stretches of the South Bronx. In the past few years, he scored a six-part PBS series on comedy, two seasons of HBO's "Bored to Death," and "Art and Craft," a documentary about the art forger Mark Landis. The film work came about in part because of the cinematic sound of Ulrich's trio, Big Lazy, which for nearly two decades crafted dark, noir-tinged instrumentals. Dominated by Ulrich's intricate, jazz-inflected guitar style, the sophisticated, gritty band endured—relying on the occasional licensing deal, performing in dives and at the odd wedding, and self-releasing albums—until 2008, when its bass player abruptly quit.

Two years ago, Ulrich decided to form a new version of Big Lazy, this time with the upright bassist Andrew Hall and the drummer Yuval Lion. "I missed the sweaty places," he said. "I don't know how many times I've heard people tell me in some bar, 'You're playing the soundtrack to my life.'"

At a recent appearance at Spectrum, a tiny living-room venue on the Lower East Side, Ulrich performed several Big Lazy songs, including "Black Eyed Susan," an older, spacious ballad that features a haunting lap-steel solo drenched with reverb and tremolo. With echoes of Ennio Morricone and country-tinged Americana, the song conveys the feeling of distant vistas. "I always have a place in mind where each song takes place, a certain geography," he said. Yet the beauty of Ulrich's music is how it avoids specificity, leaving it to listeners to imagine where they want to be. On Nov. 13, Big Lazy will be at the Manderly Bar at the McKittrick Hotel, in Chelsea, to celebrate the release of a beguiling new album, "Don't Cross Myrtle," that alternates between the raucous and the lyrical.

—Dan Kaufman

### FKA twigs

The British singer-songwriter, producer, and highly kinetic dancer Tahliah Debrett Barnett, who goes by the name FKA twigs, released her magnificent debut album, "LP1," earlier this year. The record has a fully formed, larger-than-life aesthetic that draws from early-nineties trip-hop, R. & B., and the theatrical chamber pop of Kate Bush. Her songs twist and wind around snappy percussion and crystalline synthesizer work, capped by her astonishing voice, which is gorgeous alone or chopped up and filtered through layers of auto-tune. (Nov. 8: Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. Nov. 10: Warsaw, 261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn. ticketmaster.com.)

### Robyn Hitchcock

An evening with this veteran English singer-songwriter is a slightly disorienting and thoroughly stimulating study in contrasts. His subject matter tends toward the melancholy and the morbid, but life and laughs are a vital part of the mix, too. He tells his musical stories in a piercing baritone whose relationship to perfect pitch can only be described as tense, and his between-song patter veers from wild streams of consciousness to strict poetic compositions. His latest solo album, "The Man Upstairs," is a compelling collection of original tunes and complementary covers of songs by such artists as Roxy Music, a contemporary of the Soft Boys, the band that first brought Hitchcock's songs to light, in the seventies. (City Winery, 155 Varick St. 212-608-0555. Nov. 10.)

### Kimbra

When Gotye's breakthrough hit, "Somebody That I Used To Know," dominated the U.S. airwaves, in 2012, many listeners wondered about Kimbra, the co-star of the fiery duet, who brought muscle and conflict to a song that might otherwise have been shrugged off as a stalker's lily-livered lament. Kimbra, whose full name is Kimbra Lee Johnson, is a New Zealand native, and her quirky and stylistically acrobatic solo work has also commanded attention. Her second album, "The Golden Echo," came out this summer. It draws on elements of R. & B., jazz, rock, and electro-pop, and features a versatile roster of guests, including John Legend, Flying Lotus, and Matt Bellamy, of Muse. (Nov. 3: Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn 718-486-5400. Nov. 6: Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-2111.)

### Tame Impala

Spearheaded by the singer-songwriter and bedroom-recording wiz Kevin Parker, this Australian act blends psych-rock of the late sixties and early seventies with modern electronica, weaving multilayered pop songs that defy traditional structure. The band's debut album, "Innerspeak," started the buzz four years ago; its second, "Lonerism," was released in 2012; and in September Gene Simmons, of Kiss, declared that he was a fan. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Nov. 9-10.)

### Stevie Wonder

Wonder's "Songs in the Key of Life," perhaps the greatest double album in the history of pop music, released in September, 1976, includes the songs "I Wish," "Sir Duke," "Isn't She Lovely," and "Knocks Me Off My Feet." Wonder is on tour performing the entire album, from the first notes of "Love's in Need of Love Today" to the last notes of "Another Star," and he can be expected to continue into the four-song EP that was included with the record, which means the additional classics "Saturn," "Ebony Eyes," and the eternal "All Day Sucker." It's more than an hour and a half of expansive, introspective, and

melodic soul, with occasional detours into jazz and hard funk. (Madison Square Garden. Nov. 6.)

### JAZZ AND STANDARDS

#### "Celebrating Bobby Hutcherson: Life of a Legend"

Because of health problems, Hutcherson, the groundbreaking improviser whose daring playing in the sixties helped liberate the vibraphone, will not be attending this well-deserved tribute. Two fine contemporary vibes men, **Warren Wolf** and **Steve Nelson**, will be on hand, though, along with such noted Hutcherson associates as the superb drummer **Joe Chambers** and the pianists **Renee Rosnes** and the too little heard **Stanley Cowell**. (Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Nov. 8.)

#### Django Reinhardt NY Festival

To mark its fifteenth anniversary, this annual celebration of the music and influence of the unparalleled Belgian Gypsy guitarist is a true family affair. The French guitarist **Dorado Schmitt**, a longtime veteran of the festival, is bringing in his guitarist sons, **Samson, Amati**, and **Bronson**. They'll be joined by his cousin **Francko Mehrstein**, on rhythm guitar, and **Ludovic Beier**, on accordion. (Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Nov. 4-9.)

#### "Jazz Across the Americas: Mexico"

After the revolution in Cuba, the legendary bandleader Chico O'Farrill lived for a period in Mexico, where his son **Arturo**, the pianist, composer, and leader of the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, was born. Arturo opens his eighth

season at Symphony Space with a tribute to the Mexican composer Eugenio Toussaint (1954-2011). His crack ensemble will be joined by both the drummer **Antonio Sanchez** (who composed the score for the film "Birdman") and the **Villalobos Brothers**, violinists from Veracruz. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 7-8.)


#### "New Orleans to Harlem Jazz Weekend"

Louis Armstrong, the colossus of New Orleans jazz, will be inducted into the Apollo Walk of Fame during a series of uptown events curated by the Big Easy trumpeter **Irvin Mayfield**. On Nov. 7, the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris** joins others at the Apollo Music Café, conjuring the musical revelry of the Jazz Playhouse, the Bourbon Street club that Mayfield runs in his home town. Nov. 8: Mayfield brings his **New Orleans Jazz Orchestra** to the theatre's main stage. The iconic singer **Aaron Neville** will lend assistance in a program that stretches from R. & B. to jazz, reflecting the rich musical nature of the port city. Later on Nov. 8, the increasingly popular pianist and New Orleans native **Jon Batiste** keeps the jam going at the Apollo Music Café. (253 W. 125th St. 800-745-3000.)

#### Hod O'Brien

This seventy-eight-year-old pianist, who has slipped in and out of the jazz scene and effectively guaranteed himself semi-legendary status, has played with everyone from Chet Baker to Archie Shepp. A gifted musician whose first big break came in Oscar Pettiford's quintet, O'Brien still speaks bebop with an authentic accent. The bassist **Murray Wall** and the drummer **Jimmy Wormworth** round out his trio. (Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. 212-252-5091. Nov. 7.)

Advertisement




"Oh, she'll never believe my flight was delayed  
—she knows I fly Delta."

**America's most on-time global airline.**

Any airline can get you places. Getting you there exactly when they say they're going to is the tricky part. Doing it better than any global airline in the country? That's something to crow about. No wonder more people choose Delta than any other airline.

KEEP CLIMBING



Based on DOT statistics for the highest percentage of on-time arriving, domestic flights 4/14 to 6/14 and compared to our competitive set. Competitive set is U.S. carriers: Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, JetBlue Airways, US Airways, United Airlines, and Southwest Airlines.

delta.com



*"Who knew flying could be so entertaining?"*

**Boredom must have missed its flight.**

Nowhere does it state that "on board" must equal "being bored." Thanks to Delta Studio™, you can stream all kinds of free entertainment on your personal devices, including movies and TV shows. In fact, it's the most entertainment in the sky. No wonder more people choose Delta than any other airline.

KEEP CLIMBING



delta.com

# WHO SAYS

## A DOLLAR DOESN'T GO AS FAR AS IT USED TO?

With the 2015 SkyMiles® program, the more you spend, the more miles you will earn. We're also opening up more Award Seats to get you to the places you want to go. That's more chances to redeem the miles you earn and more once-in-a-lifetime trips you can take. No wonder more people choose Delta than any other airline.



KEEP CLIMBING



Ticket price eligible for mileage accrual includes base fare and carrier-imposed surcharges, but excludes government-imposed taxes and fees. See [delta.com/skymiles2015](http://delta.com/skymiles2015) for details.



# ART

## MUSEUMS SHORT LIST METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"Cubism: The Leonard A. Lauder Collection."  
Through Feb. 16.

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**  
"Sturtevant: Double Trouble."  
Opens Nov. 9.

**MOMA PSI**  
"Xavier Le Roy."  
Through Dec. 1.

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**  
"Zero: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950s-60s."  
Through Jan. 7.

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM**  
"Judith Scott: Bound and Unbound."  
Through March 29.

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**  
"The Butterfly Conservatory."  
Through May 25.

**FRICK COLLECTION**  
"Masterpieces from the Scottish National Gallery."  
Opens Nov. 5.

## GALLERIES SHORT LIST UPTOWN

**Albert Oehlen**  
Skarstedt  
20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060.  
Through Dec. 20.

"Picasso and Jacqueline: The Evolution of Style"  
Pace  
32 E. 57 St. 212-421-3292.  
Through Jan. 10

**CHELSEA**  
**Albert York Marks**  
523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200.  
Opens Nov. 8.

"Picasso and Jacqueline: The Evolution of Style"  
Pace  
534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.  
Through Jan. 10

**DOWNTOWN**  
**Henry Flynt**  
AVA  
34 W. 1st St. 917-604-8856.  
Through Nov. 16.

**Matt Hoyt**  
Bureau  
178 Norfolk St. 212-227-2783.  
Opens Nov. 5.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Museum of Modern Art

#### "Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs"

This exhibition will give you as much aesthetic pleasure as you can stand and then some. When Matisse is at his best, the exquisite frictions of his color, his line, and his pictorial invention overwhelm perception, at which point enjoyment sputters into awe. That effect recurs with startling efficiency in the major works of his late period before his death, in 1954, at the age of eighty-four. Matisse had been infirm since undergoing abdominal surgery in 1941, and he spent most of his days in bed or in a wheelchair. Painting taxed him. Scissoring shapes from gouache-painted paper and directing assistants who pinned them into compositions over and over, until they were right, was the expedient of a genius. Speaking of pins, many now loosely secure the blue arabesques of "The Swimming Pool" (1952), the fifty-four-foot-long cutout that is in the museum's permanent collection and was recently restored to its original state. Installed in a room built to the same specifications as Matisse's dining room in Nice, where it was created, the ultramarine diving and swimming forms have a rhythmic lyricism that takes the eye on a cyclonic, invigorating ride. Through Feb. 18.

### Morgan Library and Museum

#### "Cy Twombly: Treatise on the Veil"

Thirty-three feet long and awash in impassive gray, Twombly's 1970 mural bears on its surface only faint white tramlines, like the staff of a musical score, plus a few notations: "In," "Out," and other jottings. The painter drew inspiration from "Le Voile d'Orphée," the composer Pierre Henry's early masterpiece of musique concrète; a dozen hermetic, associated works on paper suggest his rigorous preparation. But, four decades on, Twombly's Hellenistic pretensions look more overweening than ever, without any of the mitigating Expressionist swagger of his early and late work. Through Jan. 25.

### Neue Galerie

#### "Egon Schiele: Portraits"

The Austrian painter has seduced generations of decadents, punks, and fashionistas with his dissonant portraits of Vienna's high society and demimonde. But the highlight of this enjoyable show is a salon-style display of two dozen self-portraits, in which dandyish pencil drawings of the artist, in jacket and bow tie, give way to images of wracked naked flesh. White highlights make his face appear ablaze, his hair stands on end as if electrocuted, and his bottom is red as a baboon's, while his right arm twists so far forward that he looks like a war casualty. The bad boy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the grave before his twenty-ninth birthday, Schiele spent a few weeks in prison in 1912, accused of seducing a child (the charges were dropped) and

of producing pornography (guilty). In the clink, he made what may be his most honest self-portrait of all: a tiny bust, with furrowed brow and bulging eyes, fashioned from kneaded pieces of bread. Through Jan 19.

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

### Kate Steciw

One of the most impressive of the new crop of artists taking liberties with the medium of photography, Steciw transforms images she grabs off the Internet into layered constructions, made more complex by the addition of colored frames and tinted Plexiglas overlays. Crudely cut-out pictures of tires, tubers, and industrial debris are jumbled into abstract masses of color and pattern that Steciw uses to animate the off-kilter geometries of her otherwise tightly structured pieces. Frank Stella's sculptural canvases come to mind, and these pieces are every bit as radical and arresting. Through Nov. 15. (Higher Pictures, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-249-6100.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Arturo Herrera

Born in Caracas and now based in Berlin, Herrera came to prominence with sliced colored papers and reliefs. Now he turns his hand to abstract painting, making heavy use of Richter-like blurs and Oehlenesque drags. Most of the smaller works here are painted on the covers of books, found at flea markets, some of which have legible spines (Friedrich Dürrenmatt gets a shout-out). Larger paintings incorporate found objects, too, including Rauschenberg-style attachments of tote bags made of hemp. Look as long as you like, but these paintings won't reveal more over time—they're designed to remain open-ended. Through Nov. 15. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

### Judy Pfaff

One of the pioneers of installation art reaches new heights in a two-gallery show, which affirms her rare capacity to integrate meticulous systems and joyous improvisation. At Howard, Pfaff utilizes Plexiglas, neon, and poured resin in wall-mounted compositions, some in eye-popping fluorescent palettes, that pay titular homage to her colleagues Jules Olitski and Helen Frankenthaler. At Zoubok, the artist takes a more ecological turn with moss-colored drawings and collages, tumbling plastic sculptures with floral motifs, and a stunning wall-sized work that incorporates twining branches, images of fish and crustaceans, and Chinese lanterns refashioned into birds' nests. Through Nov. 15. (Zoubok, 525 W. 26th St. 212-675-7490; Howard, 525 W. 26th St. 212-695-0164.)

### Alyson Shotz

Physics takes elegant, if mannered, form in Shotz's abstract sculptures

and works on paper, which attempt to convey motion, gravity, and the passage of time in two or three dimensions. Squat bronze and porcelain objects, resembling crumpled vases, were made by dropping rolled clay from varying heights and at varying force; white-on-white threaded sheets translate bodies in motion into overlaid outlines. A room-size piece, made of steel wire and glistening beads, imposes an unjustified refinement on a universe that naturally tends not toward order but toward entropy. Through Nov. 8. (Eller, 615 and 625 W. 27th St. 212-206-6411.)

### Robert Voit

Karl Blossfeldt's botanical studies, touchstones of modernist photography since the nineteen-thirties, are the models for the German photographer's new series, "The Alphabet of New Plants." But there's a twist: unlike Blossfeldt's specimens, Voit's flora—a cattail, Oriental poppy buds, fiddlehead ferns—are fake. Shot against white backdrops that play up their plastic material, these odd bits of foliage are clever one-liners, more decorative than subversive. The artifice continues in a smarter series of deadpan landscapes, centered on unusually tall palm trees and cacti that are actually camouflaged cell-phone poles. Through Nov. 15. (ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

### Tina Barney

The photographer has always maintained a certain critical distance in her color pictures of families, including her own. She shows a similar restraint in a new black-and-white series that returns to her best-known subject, East Coast Wasps in their natural habitat. Most of the pictures fall between formal and casual. Several party scenes—in a backyard, at a child's birthday—could almost be snapshots. More intriguing are the pictures that feel staged, including one of a woman and her son in their chintz-filled living room, which conveys a mix of complicity, detachment, and unease. Through Dec. 6. (Borden, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-431-0166.)

### Jennifer Paige Cohen

Thrilling new sculptures by a young Brooklyn artist channel the spirit of Edgar Degas's "Little Dancer Aged Fourteen," in her tutu of cotton and silk. Cohen embeds items of clothing into white plaster objects that also incorporate cast portions of bodies. (The elastic biomorphism of Frederick Kiesler feels like a touchstone.) Impeccably installed on pedestals of varying heights, the pieces register initially as abstractions of striking formal integrity, a series of playoffs between white and polychrome, smooth and textured, flat and dimensional, sombre and playful. And then you glimpse aspects of figures—an elbow, a shoulder, a knee—like new friends gliding into the room. Through Nov. 9. (Beauchene, 327 Broome St. 212-375-8043.)

# Touchpad technology. Launchpad performance.

The all-new C-Class.



It is the unexpected fusion of breakthrough intelligence and groundbreaking acceleration. The all-new C-Class features a more powerful, efficient engine backed by an available AIRMATIC® suspension that allows the driver to choose between a Sport or Comfort ride. Inside, every detail has been redesigned to a new level of luxury and craftsmanship. The interior boasts a Head-Up Display, a large multimedia screen and an intuitive touchpad that actually reads your handwriting—controlling navigation, climate, music, social media and more. The 2015 C-Class. Prepare to be amazed with the simple press of a finger and the push of an accelerator.



**Mercedes-Benz**  
The best or nothing.



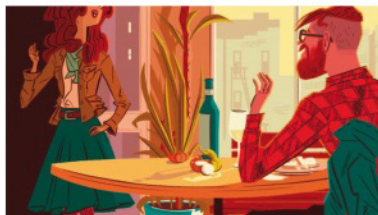
# FOOD & DRINK

## BAR TAB SUNRISE/SUNSET

351 Evergreen Ave., Brooklyn  
(347-442-5880)

Last October, having followed the trail of bread crumbs left by pioneers in search of the next brownstone on a hill, the French magazine *L'Express* discovered Bushwick: “Le nouveau repaire des artistes à New York.” “The world is obsessed with Bushwick,” said Henry Glucroft, the twenty-nine-year-old proprietor of a new bar in the neighborhood’s boonies (the boonies of the boonies being hipper than hip). He sounded sad, with a slight French accent. “I have bittersweet feelings about it. Yes, it’s an awesome place. But the sentiment of overhype can be tiring.” Glucroft, who grew up outside Paris, has lived in Bushwick for six years, operating a dancey record label and a liquor store. At Sunrise/Sunset one evening, guests pecked at laptops; the vibe was a cozier version of the living space your roommate turned into a kombucha-fermenting zone. A mellow bartender with a septum piercing swirled house-made sweet vermouth and waved to a departing couple—“Good luck with the renovations!” One visitor sampled the Gran Cerdo Tempranillo (harvest determined by lunar cycle), while another ordered a Duderino—a highbrow nod to the Big Lebowski’s drink of choice, the White Russian, made with Amarula. When a woman requested “half a beer,” Glucroft called out that she was a local, and to give her whatever she wanted.

—Emma Allen



## TABLES FOR TWO

### KING BEE

424 E. 9th St. (646-755-8088)

**THERE MAY COME A DAY** when the words “Dan Smith Will Teach You Guitar” won’t mean much. For now, they’re instantly familiar as the headline of a ubiquitous flyer, posted on bulletin boards across the city for the past twenty years, advertising music lessons with a suspiciously ordinary-looking man. At King Bee, a new restaurant in the East Village, they’re also the name of a cocktail, a kicky mix of Cocchi Americano Rosa and a particularly vinegary plum shrub, served on the rocks with a wedge of lemon. The drink is unusual enough that it doesn’t need a gimmick, but this feels like an act of cultural preservation—the de-facto theme of King Bee, whose Web site describes it as “inspired by the Acadian culinary tradition.”

“Acadian” is a word that you may have trouble defining, unless you’ve spent time in the Canadian Maritimes, where the French colony known as Acadia was established in the seventeenth century, or in Louisiana, where many Acadians settled after they were expelled by the British, a century later. (It was there that the word morphed into “Cajun.”) After trips to Newfoundland and the Bayou, the King Bee co-owners Eben Klemm (a molecular biologist turned beverage consultant) and Ken Jackson (an original partner in the New Orleans restaurant Herbsaint) came up with a menu that represents both places, then refined it with the chef Jeremie Tomczak, who worked for Marcus Samuelsson at Aquavit and the Red Rooster.

Just when it seemed like pork belly was passé, Tomczak has given it new life, chopping it into bite-size cubes for cracklings, which are deep fried and coated in cane-sugar caramel, crushed peanuts, and powdered malt vinegar. Spilling out of a paper bag and dressed with dainty sprigs of thyme, they’re as irresistible as the best French fries and as sweet and sticky as taffy. Cracklings sound like pure Louisiana, but they’re also a specialty of Newfoundland, where they’re called scrunchions, and often served over cod. Pure Maritimes are the traditional boiled potato dumplings known as *poutine rapeé*, here beautifully seared and filled with lamb neck rather than salt pork.

Marbled slices of prosciutto-like country ham come from Tennessee, Jackson’s home state. What’s more important is what they come with: crisp slices of barely pickled squash, a winning foil in both flavor and texture, especially slathered in grain-mustard crème fraîche and eaten atop good, crusty bread. Bread appears again as a juice-absorbing pedestal for an excellent rib eye, drizzled with beef vinaigrette, and yet again in little shards beneath a plump half chicken with yellow wax beans and salted greens. From North to South, it’s convincing country food, all the way down to the pecan pie and the *gâteau de sirop*, served from an antique sideboard in the back of the dining room.

—Hannah Goldfield

Open for dinner Wednesdays through Mondays. Entrées \$19-532.

**"DELICIOUSLY  
DARK COMEDY"**  
-New York Times

**"TERRIFIC AND  
VERY FUNNY...  
A BRILLIANT MIX OF  
POIGNANCY AND HILARITY"**  
-San Francisco  
Chronicle

**"A CAST SO STRONG  
THAT YOU CAN'T TAKE  
YOUR EYES OFF THEM"**  
-Wall Street Journal

**"A DARK AND ASTONISHING  
GEM OF A SHOW...  
DISTURBINGLY HILARIOUS"**  
-Los Angeles Times

**"BRUTALLY  
FUNNY"**  
-Time

**"FLAWLESSLY  
DONE"**  
-People

**"THERE'S  
NOTHING ON TV  
LIKE IT  
TODAY...  
QUICK-  
WITTED"**  
-Huffington Post

**COMEDY  
YOU  
ALL  
SHOULD BE  
WATCHING"**  
-Vanity Fair

**"FIERCELY  
SMART"**  
-New York Post

**"A PHENOMENAL  
CAST"**  
-Entertainment Weekly

# GETTING ON

NEW SEASON  
NOV 9 10:30PM **HBO**

OR WATCH IT ON **HBO GO**

HBO GO® is only accessible in the US and certain US territories. ©2014 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. HBO® and related characters and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc.

# ABOVE & BEYOND

## Comic Arts Brooklyn

Just off the Lorimer L-train stop in Williamsburg, on the south side of a pot-holed stretch of Metropolitan Avenue, lies Desert Island, a cozy bookstore, housed in a former bakery, that's catered to comic-obsessed hipsters for the past seven years. Last November, the shop's owner—a stubbly ex-Chicagoan named Gabe Fowler—organized a free cross-medium festival that presented hundreds of vendors, panelists, exhibits, and artists. On Nov. 8-9, Fowler is at it again, with a similarly sized event at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church (275 N. 8th St.). On the second day, Charles Burns, Raymond Pettibon, Art Spiegelman, Al Jafee (the creator of the legendary *MAD* magazine "Fold-In"), and other comic and art legends will be at the Wythe Hotel, around the corner, for a series of panels and talks. (comicartsbrooklyn.com.)

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

At **Christie's** evening sale of Impressionist art on Nov. 5, the premium is on rarity: many of the pieces haven't been on the market for a decade or longer. An 1881 canvas by Manet, "Le Printemps," depicting the actress Jeanne Demarsy in a leafy garden, carrying a frilly parasol, was acquired directly

from the famed Parisian dealer Durand-Ruel in 1909, and it has remained in the same collection for a century. The sale also offers the Schiele gouache "Town on the Blue River," recently restituted to the heirs of Fritz Grünbaum, a Viennese cabaret artist who died in Dachau. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Sotheby's** parade of Impressionist art continues on Nov. 5, led by a dazzling sylvan scene dotted with violet shadows by Sisley ("Sous-Bois"). After a brief foray into nineteenth-century paintings (Nov. 6) and African art (Nov. 11), the house moves on to the red-hot arena of contemporary art, where stratospheric prices are a matter of course. Among the top lots at the all-important evening sale on Nov. 11 are a rooster-red Richter ("Abstraktes Bild") and one of Jasper John's iconic flag paintings. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

### John Cleese

The great comedian discusses his new memoir, "So, Anyway," with the writer John Hodgman. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. bam.org. Nov. 5 at 8.)

### "IAC PoetryFest 2014"

The Irish Arts Center's annual festival of contemporary poetry returns, with a twist: it's presenting writers from both sides of the Atlantic. Robert Pinsky, Peter Fallon, Gerald Stern, Rita Ann Higgins, Matthea Harvey, and others are participating in three days of readings, discussions, and literary revelry. (553 W. 51st St. For reservations, which are strongly suggested, visit irishartscenter.org, or call 866-811-4111. Nov. 7-9.)



## Sally Silvers

In "Actual Size," the smart, eccentric, and unpredictable choreographer plays with the films, obsessions, and style of Alfred Hitchcock. Along with the same costume and music designers who contributed to her terrific 2012 work "Bonobo Milkshake," she is joined by a fine cast, which includes the former Merce Cunningham dancers Dylan Crossman and Melissa Toogood. (Roulette, 509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. 917-267-0368. Nov. 4-7.)

## Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company

Making its New York debut at the troupe's home base, "Story / Time" takes inspiration from the structure of John Cage's 1959 piece "Indeterminacy." Jones, a fine storyteller, reads seventy one-minute-long stories, mostly about himself, as his excellent dancers perform excerpts from his choreographic oeuvre. Later in the run, special nights include the actress Kathleen Chalfant and the conceptual artist Theaster Gates with members of the Black Monks of Mississippi. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 4-8. Through Nov. 15.)

## "DoublePlus"

In its extensively remodelled new complex, formerly home to the now bankrupt Dance New Amsterdam, Gibney Dance offers its first programming. For "DoublePlus," a six-week series, six noted choreographers have each selected a pair of much lesser-known artists. First up, Annie-B Parson presents Audrey Hales, in the personal solo "Death Made Love to My Feet," and the self-dubbed "musical priesthood" duo the Royal Osiris Karaoke Ensemble, in "The Art of Luv." (Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center, 280 Broadway. 646-837-6809. Nov. 5-8. Through Dec. 20.)

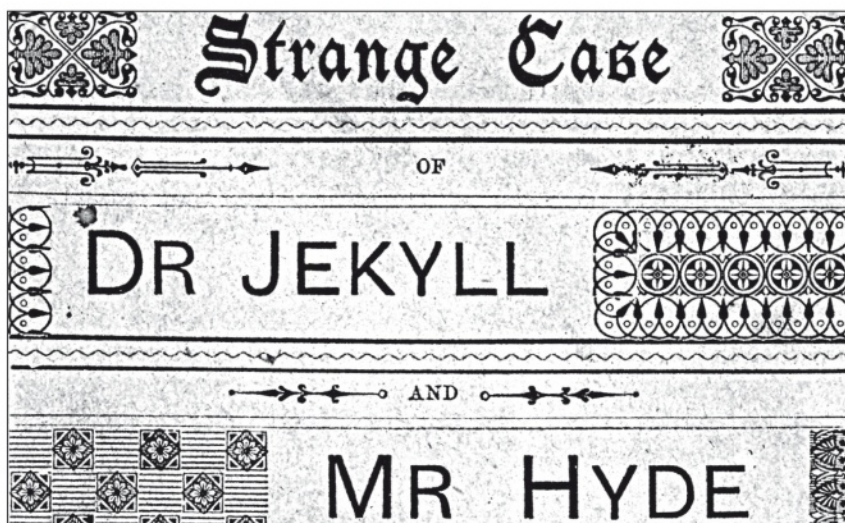
## Ronald K. Brown/Evidence

In Brown's second season at BRIC, where he and his company, Evidence, are artists-in-residence, he presents two programs, both of which include "One Shot" (2008), a poetic meditation on the works of Charles (Teenie) Harris, a photographer who documented the lives of African-Americans in mid-century Pittsburgh. Through his silken, African-and-Caribbean-influenced choreography, Brown re-imagines the lives of the people depicted in Harris's poised, everyday images. One program includes "Come Ye," set to songs by Nina Simone and Fela Kuti, and the other the more prayerful "Order My Steps." (BRIC House, 647 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-683-5600. Nov. 6-8. Through Nov. 15.)

## Mikhailovsky Ballet

Based in St. Petersburg, the Mikhailovsky has long lived in the shadow of its legendary neighbor, the Mariinsky. Recently, it has been swept up by a wealthy benefactor, whose money and connections have lured top dancers—including Natalia Osipova and Ivan Vasiliev—and helped to finance high-quality productions. On its first U.S. tour, the company performs two chestnuts, "Don Quixote" and "Giselle"; an early Soviet favorite, "Flames of Paris"; and a mixed bill of Russian works that includes the charming Petipa romp "Cavalry Halt." Nov. 11 at 7:30: "Giselle." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Nov. 23.)

SWANN  
AUCTION GALLERIES



Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, first edition, London, 1886. Estimate \$3,000 to \$4,000.

## 19th & 20th Century Literature

NOVEMBER 18

Specialist: John D. Larson • jlarson@swanngalleries.com

Preview: Nov 13 & 14, 10-6; Nov 15, 12-5; Nov 17, 10-6; Nov 18, 10-12

104 East 25th St, New York, NY 10010 • tel 212 254 4710

SWANNGALLERIES.COM





# CLASSICAL MUSIC

## OPERA

### Metropolitan Opera

"Macbeth" has left town, but another formidable opera noir, Shostakovich's "**Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk**," takes its place this week. Based not on Shakespeare's play but on an equally acidic tale by the nineteenth-century master Nikolai Leskov, it depicts a provincial Russian merchant's wife whose environment of boredom and brutality tempts her into adultery and murder. The dramatic soprano Eva-Maria Westbroek, known for her portrayals of such legendary characters as Sieglinde, Francesca da Rimini, and Anna Nicole Smith, takes the title role in a cast that also includes Brandon Jovanovich, Raymond Very, and the authoritative Ukrainian bass Anatoli Kotscherga; James Conlon conducts. (Nov. 10 at 7:30.) • **Also playing:** The Met's historic première production of John Adams's "**The Death of Klinghoffer**" features Alan Opie, Michaela Martens, Paulo Szot, Sean Panikkar, Aubrey Allicock, and Ryan Speedo Green. The new production is by Tom Morris; David Robertson. (Nov. 5 and Nov. 11 at 7:30 and Nov. 8 at 8.) • Sonja Frisell's time-honored production of "**Aida**" is a visual feast and an essential New York experience. Marco Armiliato, the Met's reliable Italian hand, is in the pit for the latest revival, which stars Liudmyla Monastyrskya, Olga Borodina, Marcello Giordani, and Željko Lučić. (Nov. 7 at 7:30.) • Julie Taymor's diverting production of "**Die Zauberflöte**," Mozart's Masonic masterpiece, features Miah Persson, Kathryn Lewek, Toby Spence, Markus Werba, Ryan McKinny, and Tobias Kehrer in the leading roles; Adam Fischer. (Nov. 8 at 1. This is the final performance.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

### New York Philharmonic: "Show Boat"

Of all the great American musicals, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's 1927 masterpiece is the most deeply indebted to the European operetta tradition, and the Philharmonic musicians, performing Richard Rodney Bennett's vivid original orchestrations, should take to it like ducks to water. The musical's story, which miraculously manages to combine an indictment of racial prejudice with traditional elements of comedy and romance, is as touching as it is improbable. Bringing it to life will be an impressive assemblage of stars of stage, screen, and television, including Vanessa Williams, Lauren Worsham, Julian Ovenden, Norm Lewis, and Fred Willard; Ted Sperling directs and conducts, with choreography by Randy Skinner. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 5-6 at 7:30, Nov. 7 at 8, and Nov. 8 at 2 and 8.)

### Orchestra of St. Luke's

Pablo Heras-Casado, the ensemble's charismatic and insightful principal conductor, has put together an

enticing program of night music that ranges from English Baroque to Italian postwar modernism. Joining the conductor and the orchestra in a concert that includes Purcell's Suite from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Tchaikovsky's "The Tempest," Dallapiccola's "Piccola Musica Notturna," and Mendelssohn's "Die Erste Walpurgisnacht" will be the standout vocal soloists Elizabeth DeShong, Joseph Kaiser, and Luca Pisaroni, along with the excellent chorus Musica Sacra. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 6 at 8.)

### Academy of Ancient Music

For many audience members, the recent passing of Christopher Hogwood, the conductor and early-music scholar who established the Academy, in 1973, and led it to world renown as a period-instrument orchestra, will lend a certain poignancy to the group's upcoming performance at Zankel Hall. The harpsichordist Richard Egarr, its current director, leads its musicians in a program of ageless allure: the four Orchestral Suites by J. S. Bach. (212-247-7800. Nov. 7 at 7:30.)

### Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra

Riccardo Chailly, an Italian conductor whose knowledge and authority in the Germanic repertory is equal to anyone's, is the longtime conductor of the storied ensemble. Its two concerts are programmed on solid ground: the first features Bach's Fourth Orchestral Suite and Bruckner's towering Seventh Symphony, while the second showcases Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Nikolaj Znaider) and the Symphony No. 5, "Reformation," by Mendelssohn, one of the orchestra's legendary music directors. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 9 at 5 and Nov. 10 at 8.)

## RECITALS

### Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: Pacifica Quartet

The dynamic American foursome, now striding confidently into mid-career, is an honored guest on the Society's roster this year. Its concert begins with the equanimity of Haydn (the Quartet in B-Flat Major, "Sunrise") but moves quickly into more passionate realms, etched by Shulamit Ran (the New York première of her String Quartet No. 3, "Glitter, Doom, Shards, Memory"), Puccini ("Crisantemi"), and Mendelssohn (the fevered, final Quartet in F Minor, Op. 80). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Nov. 7 at 7:30.)

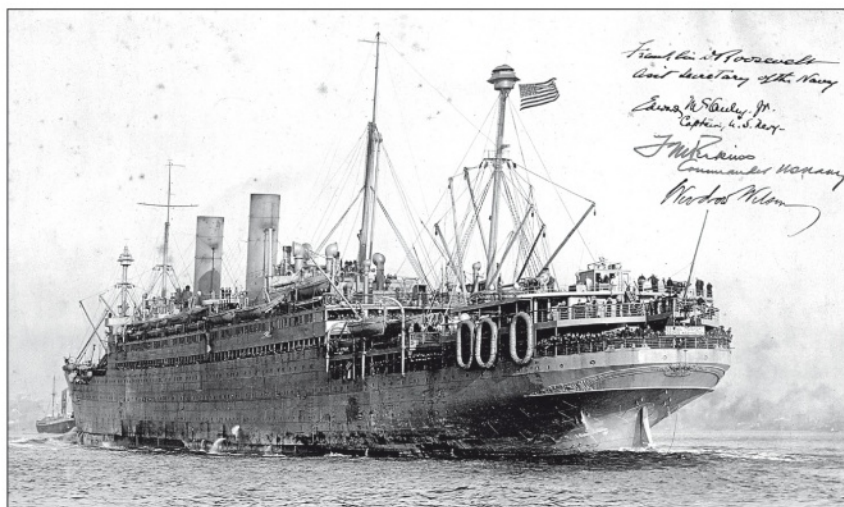
### Anne-Sophie Mutter

The incomparable violinist, who heads up a series of very personal concerts at Carnegie Hall this season, brings her characteristic combination of elegance and force to repertory sonatas by Franck and Beethoven (the "Kreutzer") and to contemporary music by composers with whom she has long been associated, André Previn and Sebastian Currier (the U.S. première of "Ringtone Variations"). The pianist Lambert Orkis and the bassist Roman Patkoló accompany her. (212-247-7800. Nov. 11 at 8.)

### New York Festival of Song: "Art Song on the Couch"

"Lieder in Freud's Vienna" is the theme of the beloved organization's latest concert, which features the soprano Janai Brugger and the baritone John Brancy performing songs by Wolf, Strauss, Schoenberg, and the Mahlers, Alma and Gustav. Steven Blier and Michael Barrett, as always, are at the keyboard. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 11 at 8.)

SWANN  
AUCTION GALLERIES



Large photograph signed by President Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and others, showing the U.S.S. George Washington on its way to the Paris Peace Conference, circa 1919. Estimate \$3,000 to \$4,000.

## Autographs

NOVEMBER 20

Specialist: Marco Tomaschett • [mtomaschett@swannalleries.com](mailto:mtomaschett@swannalleries.com)

Preview: Nov 14 & 17, 10-6; Nov 18, 10-12; Nov 19, 10-6; Nov 20, 10-12

104 East 25th St, New York, NY 10010 • tel 212 254 4710

SWANNGALLERIES.COM



# THE 2015 NEW YORKER DESK DIARY HAS ARRIVED!

This best-selling all-in-one calendar and planner, illustrated with some of our most popular cartoons and covers, helps you to juggle your daily schedule of work and play with a dose of humor, too

## FEATURING:

- Updated travel-related toll-free numbers
- Useful NYC listings including an updated 'Tables for Two' section
- Address and notes section
- Reinforced pocket for receipts
- Spiral binding to lie flat
- Big 7 1/4" x 10" pages, one week per spread
- Coordinating ribbon to mark your place
- Plus, more than 60+ cartoons, covers and color illustrations

## PERSONALIZE YOURS TODAY

### NEW, LIMITED-EDITION COLORS AVAILABLE

Sand • Clementine  
Caribbean Blue • Pistachio  
Radiant Orchid • Ruby Red  
Genuine British Tan Leather  
Navy Blue • Butter  
Genuine Black Leather



View all ten colors online at [newyorkerstore.com/diaries](http://newyorkerstore.com/diaries)  
or call 800-459-3037 to order



## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT MIDTERM ANXIETIES

When does Ebola look like a gift? Apparently, when you are a Republican candidate for the Senate who sees it as a handy pretext for bringing up immigration politics while scaring people into voting for you. Thom Tillis, in a campaign debate in North Carolina with Senator Kay Hagan, put it this way: “Ladies and gentlemen, we’ve got an Ebola outbreak. We have bad actors that can come across the border. We need to seal the border.” In New Hampshire, Scott Brown started off by conjuring up ISIS fighters slipping through spongy borders, then casually switched to Ebola-sickened hordes. “One of the reasons why I have been so adamant about closing our border,” he said, “is because if people are coming through normal channels—can you imagine what they can do through a porous border?” Both ISIS and Ebola provoke enough anxiety for most people to contemplate them without being goaded. There are, however, no reported instances of Ebola-infected immigrants crossing illegally from Mexico, and, with ISIS fighters busy in Iraq and Syria, it’s possible but not likely that they’re hanging out in Ciudad Juárez, planning a raid on Arizona, as Representative Trent Franks maintains. But, as Franks and his fellow-Republicans demonstrated, you don’t need to construct a plausible or even a coherent scenario to deploy such threats for political ends.

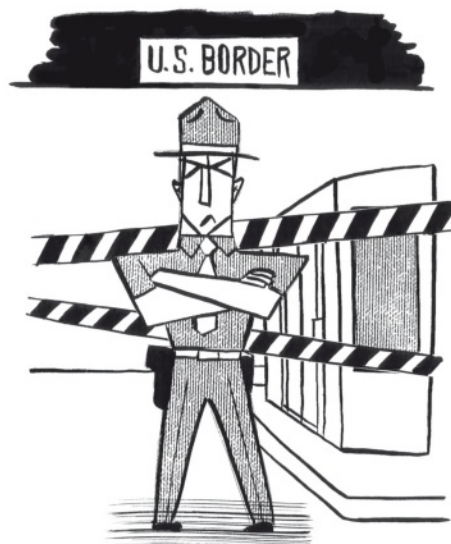
The Democrats were not entirely immune from such temptation. Campaign ads and a few candidates—including Senator Mark Udall, of Colorado—implied that Ebola surveillance would have been better coordinated if the Republicans hadn’t managed to cut the budgets of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That apportionment of blame wasn’t strictly accurate. Funding for the N.I.H. and the C.D.C. hasn’t always kept pace with inflation in recent years, but, in some budgets, Congress allocated

them more money than the Obama Administration had requested. Still, at least such tactics centered on the agencies responsible, and didn’t engage in the old practice of conflating disease and foreignness.

The medical historian Howard Markel notes that “Chinese immigrants were once linked to bubonic plague and hookworm, Mexicans were thought to be infested with lice, and Russian Jews were seen as somehow especially vulnerable to tuberculosis and—a favorite wastebasket diagnosis of nativists in the early 1900s—poor physique.” Taking advantage of such associations, which were almost never based on legitimate science, nativists helped pass the Immigration Act of 1924, the racist law that imposed quotas on the basis of national origin—Asians were completely excluded—and governed U.S. immigration until 1965. Senator Patrick McCarran, of Nevada, a co-sponsor of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, which, among other provisions, made it easier to bar immigrants who had chronic diseases, offered a metaphor that made explicit immigration law’s preoccupation with purity. Immigration was a stream, he said, adding that if it “is healthy, the impact on our society is salutary; but if that stream is pol-

luted our institutions and our way of life become infected.”

Politicians now know better than to talk openly about immigration in terms of purity and contagion, but they still make the connection. This summer, as unaccompanied minors from Central America began arriving in large numbers at the border, Representative Phil Gingrey, of Georgia—a doctor, as it happens—wrote a letter to the C.D.C. in which he said that the influx “poses many risks, including grave public health threats,” and claimed that many of the children lacked basic vaccinations such as those for measles. In fact, the vaccination rates for measles in Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico are



around ninety per cent, which means that children from those countries are about as likely to be vaccinated as children in the United States are. Undoubtedly, some of the kids were sick, or suffering from malnutrition and other ailments associated with poverty, but they were not an invading army of germ warriors.

President Obama tried to keep immigration politics out of the midterm elections; in September, the *Washington Post* reported that he had decided not to take the executive action on immigration reform which he had promised—protecting millions of undocumented immigrants from deportation—until after the midterms, “acquiescing to Democrats’ fears that such a move would damage their prospects for maintaining control of the U.S. Senate.” Meanwhile, the Administration announced plans to build an enormous detention camp for women and children who enter the country from Mexico without documentation. It will be situated in South Texas and operated by the Corrections Corporation of America, a private prison company with a controversial record. In 2009, the Administration stopped housing families in a similar facility that the company ran in Texas, the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, following widespread criticism and a lawsuit filed by the A.C.L.U. which asserted that harsh, prisonlike conditions were harming the mental health of the children held there. Federal immigration officials found many “deficiencies,” in-

cluding inadequate sanitation and an over-all attitude of “disinterest and complacency.” But somehow we’re back in a political moment when the privately contracted detention of children seems like good immigration policy.

While fears of Ebola—a disease from which one person in the United States has died—clouded the campaign like one of those imaginary miasmas to which doctors once attributed illness, real dangers seemed to slip from view. The latest school shooting, on October 24th, in Washington State, generated almost no discussion on the campaign trail, especially not of gun control. Just a week earlier, researchers affiliated with the Harvard School of Public Health had published findings showing that mass shootings in the United States—those in which the shooter did not generally know the victims, and in which at least four people were killed—have tripled since 2011. Over the past three years, a mass shooting has occurred, on average, every sixty-four days; over the previous twenty-nine years, one occurred every two hundred days. Gabrielle Giffords, the former Arizona congresswoman, who became a gun-control advocate after she was wounded in a shooting in which six people died, toured the country in the run-up to the elections, calling for tighter legislation in order to help save lives. Not a single candidate joined her.

—Margaret Talbot

## THE PICTURES REMBRANDT LIGHTING



“Oh, my God—unbelievable, awful, amazing,” Dan Gilroy murmured, as he sifted through a box of Weegee photographs from the forties. Gilroy, a writer-director, was at the Steven Kasher Gallery, in Chelsea, last week, using its collection to explain how Weegee—connoisseur of the blood-spattered corpse—had inspired his new film, “Nightcrawler,” about a feral loner who roams Los Angeles, filming scenes of mayhem for the local news.

The fifty-five-year-old Gilroy, who wrote “*The Bourne Legacy*,” is as thin and pale as dental floss, with a sepulchral face and milky-blue eyes. He is the antithesis of beach volleyball. It all began, he said, when he came across Weegee’s book “*Naked City*,” in 1988: “I thought, What an amazing intersection of art and crime and commerce! But I couldn’t figure out how to plug into it. I wrote a treatment with a ‘Chinatown’ feel, only instead of being about water it was about a landfill.”

He shrugged in mild apology and continued: “Five years ago, I heard about these stringers-slash-nightcrawlers who drive around L.A. all night at a hundred miles an hour listening to ten police scanners—a modern update of Weegee. And I decided to set the film in that world and make it a character study.” His antihero, Lou (Jake Gyllenhaal), is a one-man startup who employs business bromides, then extortion and murder, to secure a monopoly on the most lurid images. “Ten years after the film ends, Lou would be running a major corporation, orchestrating a giant merger that puts fifty thousand people out of work,” Gilroy said. “But he’s not just a sociopath—he’s also very good at adapting.” He observed that Gyllenhaal played Lou as a human coyote who comes down from the hills at night to feed: “Jake lost twenty-eight pounds for the role, so he was literally starving on camera, desperate to consume.”

Gilroy held up “Arrest,” a 1940 shot of a wild-eyed woman resisting being frog-marched by a man in a trenchcoat. “I didn’t give Lou a backstory, and we don’t have the backstory here. I imagine that the woman’s son committed suicide. And that guy over there”—a dapper observer with a weedy pencil mustache—“seems intent, like he’s taking

notes. He looks like a journalist.” He noted that the photographer was able to capture these hectic moments because “Weegee invented carrying a scanner”—his version was a shortwave radio—“and getting there ahead of the cops, then selling the images to the highest bidder.”

The director peered at Weegee’s circular stamp—“Credit Photo by Weegee the Famous”—and continued: “He used a Speed Graphic camera, had a ten-foot focus, and shot with flash to create what he called Rembrandt lighting. The flash isolates the drama—heightening the



Dan Gilroy

foreground against a black backdrop—and it distorts people, so they look like they're playing a part onstage." Lou rearranges accident scenes to make his money shots richer; Weegee, too, orchestrated shots, including his most famous image, "The Critic." It shows Mrs. George Washington Kavanaugh and Lady Decies, imperious in white furs, arriving at the opening of the Metropolitan Opera—and being stared down by a haggard-looking woman Weegee had collected on the Bowery, got drunk, and brought uptown to incite the moment.

Gilroy examined "Dead on Arrival": an extremely bloody hoodlum lies supine beside a car, an identifying tag looped around his left wrist. "It's an incredibly brutal image—too violent for the *Post* today," he said. "But there's something beautiful about it, something tragic." He was reminded that when he and Gyllenhaal toured L.A. with a nightcrawler named Howard Raishbrook they saw "a horrific car accident where three young girls had been ejected onto the street—bloody, awful, they were screaming in pain, we couldn't look. But Howard, professionally, found an aesthetically pleasing angle from behind the fire truck—and then another stringer came running down and said, 'You missed it,' arguing that the really cool shot was from the overpass."

Gilroy held up "Their First Murder," a shot of an anguished woman (the victim's aunt) surrounded by neighborhood children gleefully enjoying the tableau—which, unseen here, was actually the "Dead on Arrival" killing. "The smiling faces . . ." He shook his head. "It's the same indictment I was going for in 'Nightcrawler.' The enjoyment of savagery is so deeply human. The worst dictators in history, after ordering the deaths of thousands, would smile and play with a puppy."

"Nightcrawler," Gilroy's first turn as a director, is his big break. But as he prepared for its opening he resembled Weegee's Bowery sot more than his uptown swells. Staring at the photographs, he said, "Later, Weegee went even further in distorting faces—he made even Marilyn Monroe seem incredibly ugly. I mean, look at us! We're grotesque." He pushed the box away—and then, a moment later, pulled it back.

—Tad Friend

## THE ARTISTIC LIFE OLDIES BUT GOODIES



Wayne Thiebaud, the painter, who lives in Sacramento and who, at ninety-three, plays tennis for at least an hour and a half most mornings, was on his way to the Frick the other day, when he stopped for a coffee at Lady M, on East Seventy-eighth Street, a minimally decorated boutique-y place selling "confectionary delights"—or, to use Thiebaud's phrase, on his arrival, "un-American cakes." Thiebaud was wearing a blue windbreaker from which he had not yet removed day-old proof-of-payment stickers from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney—Thiebaud's work is in both collections—and he looked like a high-school athletic coach a week or two into retirement.

He took a seat by the door. Seventy-five- and eighty-dollar confections—including a checkerboard chocolate-and-vanilla sponge cake, a strawberry shortcake, something lemony—were lined up in a low white case, in a white room. That morning, some Lady M customers began to take photographs the moment they walked in, before the door had closed behind them; their avidity was perhaps connected to the work of Thiebaud, who in his first, hit New York show, in 1962, arranged sequences of stoical cakes and pies in brightly lit, unpeopled space, to make paintings that were warily respectful of American baking, and of America. He subsequently found other subjects—city streets, melons—but his current show, at Acquavella Galleries, includes new work on the old theme. As Thiebaud put it, there are still days that start with the thought: This morning, I'd like to paint a pie.

Thiebaud was born in Arizona and grew up in Southern California. His first experience of New York was in the mid-forties, when he stayed a year and worked as a freelance cartoonist. At Solomon Guggenheim's Museum of Non-Objective Painting, on East Fifty-fourth Street, he was distracted from the art by Greta Garbo: "I just followed her around

and watched her looking at paintings. And then I saw Salvador Dali, about two hours later. I could see why people lived in New York." He returned to the city ten years later, having committed to a career in painting and teaching. "That's when I met my heroes"—Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, and others—"and I changed my whole program." He was struck by their seriousness about the history of painting—"They were interested as much in Rembrandt as in Soutine and Picasso"—and by their advice: "If you're going to paint, you'd better find out why you're doing it, and you should do something that you know about, that you're infatuated with."

Until then, he said, "I'd been painting like de Kooning and Pollock, and trying to make it look like art. You develop these convenient *signs* of art—the drip, or whatever those things are." He returned to California and made the decision "to sit down and think out this thing. Well, I'd worked in restaurants, washing dishes, worked in theatres, as an usher. I was interested in the Americanism of gumball machines. And up in Nevada I'd gamble, play blackjack—I had a system for a while." On long Western drives, he'd been struck by sameness, brightness, and a kind of bravado: "You're going across the country, and in Reno, in the desert, there's a little hamburger place, and it says 'The Best Hamburgers in the World.'" He laughed. "It's the hope! That guy."

Working from memory, he made a painting of meringues and pumpkin pies. "I got the structure of the painting to operate—the ovals. It was very simple to get it to come together." When he had finished, he said to himself, "Look, a row of pies—that'll be the end of me trying to be a serious artist. But I couldn't leave it alone. It meant something to me." (When he later turned to landscapes, his New York dealer was supportive, but only after saying, "Jesus Christ, I've just got people used to those damn pies.")

Thiebaud's new images include a display cabinet of baked goods, and a heart-shaped cake, in a dark setting; he deliberately deprived himself of the "support system" of a white background. He also painted crudités, fanned out on a plate, such as "you see over and over and over at everything you go to, that same stuff, in a circle—a Kenneth Noland abstraction."

Lady M's cakes were, he said, "too

beautiful,” and he contrasted a “European-based, Viennese, fancy” tradition with American cakes from “basic neighborhood bakeries” that were guided by a principle of “slathering on.”

On the table in front of him, there was a slice of a Lady M cake made of many thin layers of crêpes and cream.

“Let’s try some,” Thiebaud said, and took a mouthful. “It’s like eating a cloud, right? That’s terrific.”

At the counter, a woman used the tone of someone choosing between careers to ask for help deciding between a strawberry cake and a banana cake. “It depends on whether you like strawberries or bananas,” the sales assistant replied.

—Ian Parker

## FACE-LIFT DEPT. TRACKS



**H**anging out on abandoned railroad tracks, usually an un-civic and unhelpful activity, can be transformed into a good thing with just two words: “linear park.” Make the abandoned railroad tracks into an official public space, with bike paths and benches and plantings, and the people who come to it will no longer be un-civically hanging out—

they’ll be enjoying the healthful and sociable attractions of a linear park. The success of the High Line, Manhattan’s elevated West Side walkway, shows how this sorcery is done.

In central Queens, planners want to create a linear park, called the QueensWay, that would be more than twice as long as the High Line. The Queens tracks in question were once part of the Rockaway Beach Branch of the Long Island Rail Road. The three-and-a-half-mile section has not had a train on it since 1962. Some of it is elevated, some of it is on the ground. Bittersweet vines and Norway maples and Japanese knotweed and construction debris and chaos connected to hanging out along railroad tracks (bottles, black trash bags of clothes, used spray-paint cans, needles, broken plastic chairs, flattened shoes) now rule great stretches of the old right-of-way.

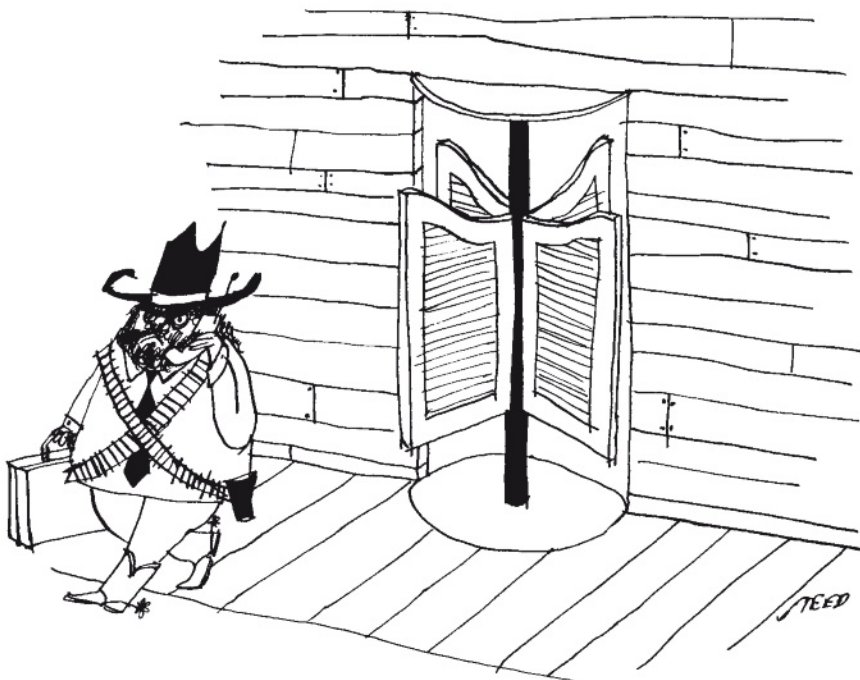
“Look out for the poison ivy—it’s everywhere,” Andrea Crawford, a founding member of the Friends of the QueensWay, said as she led a visitor along a path of broken pallets scattered beside the rails. “Leaves of three—careful!” added Marc Matsil, the New York State director of the Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit that creates and protects parks. Andy Stone, the New York City director of the same organization, held up a full-color rendering of what this part of the QueensWay would look like: people strolling arm in arm in shafts of sunlight

or bending down to examine flowers where now the trunk of a large tree grew over a rusted rail like a potbelly over a belt.

At a bridge, the tracks crossed Yellowstone Boulevard, in Forest Hills, and the planners descended to the sidewalk. A woman wheeling a laundry cart told them she lived right next to the proposed QueensWay and did not want people peeping in her windows. Crawford replied that she was a local resident, too, and that there would be fences and trees along the QueensWay to provide visual screens. Matsil assured the woman that the park would be locked at night. Farther on, in a place where the tracks ran through a wooded vale, a red-tailed hawk flew fast and silently among some low branches. “Plenty of pigeons for him in here,” Crawford said. In a poorer part of Queens, the tracks passed a public elementary school where, Matsil said, the only exercise for some of the students consisted of teacher-supervised walks around the block. The proximity of the QueensWay play areas would solve that problem.

“Over three hundred and twenty thousand people live within a mile of the QueensWay,” Matsil said. “And they speak more than a hundred languages—this is the most ethnically diverse area of its size on earth. We have a list of thirty-one top restaurants along the route, representing thirty different ethnicities.” During an illustrative lunch at one of the restaurants, a Rego Park deli called Ben’s Best Kosher Delicatessan, which is known for its pastrami, Matsil asked the owner, Jay Parker, the original Ben’s son, a white-haired, trim man who had just returned from climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, what he thought of the QueensWay. “I love it, it’s a no-brainer,” he said. “It’s like bingo. You can put bingo in a Catholic church, a Jewish synagogue, a Muslim mosque, a Buddhist temple—doesn’t matter. Bingo works for everybody, QueensWay works for everybody.”

At the southern end of the QueensWay site, near where the A train goes by, the last stretch of abandoned tracks is elevated. This is a region of small businesses—RC Forklift Co., R & H Industrial Fabricators, Punjabi Brothers Auto Repair, Arco Electrical Contractors, United Propane, Hart Truck Refrigeration, 3 Kings Collision. Late in the afternoon, the visitor found himself walking there alone. Many of the businesses



occupy the vaulted spaces beneath the elevated tracks. Slabs of rusted corrugated iron wall off the spaces, coils of barbed wire discourage burglars, and curbside ailanthus trees shoot upward until they meet the track overhang, which causes them to curl out over the street.

Asked about the QueensWay, a Guyanese man named Hemchan Persaud, the proprietor of Ozone I Iron Works, one of the businesses under the tracks, said, "It's not bad idea to make some park up there where people can run and things. Our concern is if they will evict us small business earning our living down here. I have never been up there on tracks, so I don't know. But if they can make good park up there and still have small business down here, that will be fine."

—Ian Frazier

## WIND ON CAPITOL HILL SHOWRUNNING



One recent Monday morning, Garry Trudeau—cottage industrialist, habitual voter, resident of New York County—answered a summons to appear at a New York Supreme Court building, in Foley Square. Jury duty.

Ten days earlier, Trudeau—whose lifelong magnum opus, the comic strip "Doonesbury," began appearing in the *Yale Daily News* (in its original incarnation, "Bull Tales") at the dawn of the Nixon Presidency—had completed the final editing and delivery of ten episodes of the second season of "Alpha House," in time for binge-watching on Amazon Prime on the cusp of the midterm elections. The only more-or-less-reality-based Washington-situated television series in which fictional characters refer to a President named Obama, "Alpha House" is the creation of Trudeau, in collaboration with the political journalist Jonathan Alter. Whether or not it breaks new satirical ground—the setup: four Republican senators (played by John Goodman, Clark Johnson, Matt Malloy, and Mark Consuelos) share domestic quarters in a town house while conniving and blundering their way through the halls of the Capitol—"Alpha House" has its fair

share of laugh-out-loud moments. A stream of politicians and journalists appear in cameos, playing themselves, and the sausage-making details are dead on—Alter's handiwork—as are the characters' blithe hypocrisy, blinding vanity, and swaggering soullessness. Or, as Gil John Biggs (Goodman), a lazier-than-a-possum former University of North Carolina basketball coach embroiled in a reelection fight against one of his former players, says, midway through Season 2: "You know what the sad thing is? We spend ninety per cent of our lives ducking shitstorms, begging for money, and whoring for votes. And why do we put ourselves through all that? In order to hold on to jobs that are ninety per cent ducking shitstorms, begging for money, and whoring for votes."

By midmorning, Trudeau's name had been called by a court clerk, and the next day he was selected for a jury in a drug case. After court recessed one rainy evening halfway through the trial (eventual verdict: not guilty on the most serious charges), he walked to the imprecisely named Excellent Dumpling House, on Lafayette Street. He ordered chicken dumpling soup and scallion pancakes, which then grew cold in front of him as he discussed the difference between spending days alone drawing and being an executive producer responsible for a cast and crew of a hundred and twenty people and one bloodhound (Gil John Biggs's look-alike best friend).

"I've never had a single full-time employee in my entire career," he said. "That was very disorienting in the first season. I was so clueless, I had to be told I was the showrunner. I got a call from the line producer, Antoine Douaihy. We shoot all the interiors at Kaufman Astoria Studios. He said, 'When are you coming in?' I said, 'Oh, is there a place for me to work?' He said, 'Are you kidding? You've got the corner office on the third floor. You're running the joint.'"

This was nothing like Trudeau's earlier foray into made-for-TV satire—"Tanner '88," a written-and-shot-on-the-fly mockumentary directed by Robert Altman which serially follows a hopelessly liberal Presidential candidate as he haplessly pursues the Democratic nomination.

"The actors on 'Alpha House' are so skilled," Trudeau said. "They're getting

three laughs for every one that's on the page. With 'Tanner,' because it was classic Altman, there were days when what came out of the actors' mouths bore little or no resemblance to what I'd written. He once said to me, 'Do you know why you write? You write so that the characters know who they are.'" He spooned a dumpling. "Now I'm in a position to police my dialogue and—well, Goodman calls me the script Nazi, which means I protect every period and comma. But I know what I want. And we don't have the space, time, or money to let the actors feel their way through a scene."

Under interrogation, Trudeau conceded that he had some prior experience



Garry Trudeau

telling actors what to do. Growing up in Saranac Lake, in the Adirondacks, he formed a theatre group at the age of seven and named it the Acting Corporation. "It went on for about ten years, until I graduated from high school," he said. "I just rounded up all the neighborhood kids, and we put on these productions in our basement. I think even then I understood that I really didn't have the performance gene. But I did have the impresario gene. I wrote the plays, I wrote the music, I did the scenery, I made the tickets, I directed, I manned the light board. For one of my birthdays, I asked for a curtain. My mother got red curtains that divided the basement in half. I also asked for a spotlight. We packed the basement. There were some bunk beds down there. We turned those into balconies."

—Mark Singer

THE WAYWARD PRESS

# READ IT AND REAP

*"Modern Farmer" and the back-to-the-land moment.*

BY ALEC WILKINSON



*Ann Marie Gardner has called her idea a "farming magazine for media professionals."*

Each issue of *Modern Farmer*, the stylish agrarian quarterly, has an austere portrait of an animal on the cover. So far, there have been six. The animals look remote and self-satisfied, as if nothing you said could matter to them, just like human models. The first cover had a rooster with an eye resembling a tiny dark paperweight. The second had a goat looking haughtily askance. The third was of a sheep whose gaze is so penetrating that she seems to be trying to hypnotize you. The fourth was of a pig in profile whose ears flop forward like a visor; according to a note by the photographer, a pig's flopped ears trap smells as it searches for food. The fifth had a hulking farm dog with a ruff like a headdress, and the

sixth has a serene-looking cow with a black face and a white forehead and nose. Ann Marie Gardner, the magazine's founder and editor, says that she always thought she would have animals on the cover. The art director, Sarah Gephart, says, however, that she had nearly finished designing the magazine when Gardner told her that the cover would have animals. "We thought it would be people," Gephart said.

*Modern Farmer* appeared in the spring of 2013. After three issues, it won a National Magazine Award; no other magazine had ever won so quickly. According to Gardner, though, *Modern Farmer* is less a magazine than an emblem of "an international life-style

brand." This is the life style of people who want to "eat food with a better backstory"—from slaughterhouses that follow humane practices, and from farmers who farm clean and treat their workers decently. Also, food cultists who like obscure foods and believe that fruits and vegetables taste different depending on where they are grown. Also, aspirational farmers, hobby farmers, intern farmers, student farmers, WWOOFers—people who take part in programs sponsored by the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms movement—and people who stay at hotels on farms where they eat things grown by the owners. Plus idlers in cubicles searching for cheap farmland and chicken fences and what kind of goats give the best milk. Such people "have a foot in each world, rural and urban," Gardner says. She calls them Rurbanistas, a term she started using after hearing the Spanish word *rurbanismo*, which describes the migration from the city to the countryside. Rurbanistas typify the *Modern Farmer* audience.

*Modern Farmer* has its offices in Hudson, New York, two hours north by train from Manhattan. Gardner lives nearby, in Germantown, in a house among fields by the Hudson River. She was born in Queens, in 1964, but she grew up near Boston. She went to Boston College, and in the fall of 1990 she went to the Harvard School of Public Health to study behavioral science, and also, partly, to get a Harvard degree, so that people would take her more seriously, she says. After that, she was briefly married, lived in London and wrote for *Tatler*, among other magazines, then moved to New York to work at *W*. In 2000, she came to Hudson to do a story and ended up renting a barn that had been fixed up to live in. She had planned to use it on weekends, but when the moving truck came to her apartment in Manhattan, she says, she told the movers, "Take everything. I didn't ever want to go back to New York." During the next few years, she was the editor of *T: Travel*, the travel edition of the *New York Times Style Magazine*, and a founding editor of the British magazine *Monocle*. She had the idea for *Modern Farmer* in 2010, after travelling almost constantly for *Monocle*.

"I don't have a farm," she told me recently. "I sort of dream about it. When I told people I lived in the Hudson Valley,

though, they would say, 'You're so lucky. Do you have chickens and goats?' In Iceland, they wanted chickens or already had them. In Rome, they wanted goats. You go to Italy, you have to have a ten-minute conversation about olive oil and the tomato."

We were walking down Warren Street in Hudson, which descends slowly to the river. Gardner is small and blond, with practical-looking hands that seem fitted to carry a tool. She has a round face and avid blue eyes that appear to have degrees of radiance, like headlights. She went on to say that, returning from abroad, she would see "all these really earnest, earnest young farmers coming to town meetings. They would be so idealistic about organic farming, and then you would have these old-time farmers who were full-on pesticide users, but they had a lot of experience, and there were just so many clashes. Anyway, I was doing a story in New Orleans, where this Hollywood agent guy mentioned a piece in *Monocle* about farmers in Japan going back to the land. He thought it could be a TV show, and I was, 'Yeah, I think it should be.' So I started trying to write a TV show, not in Japan but in Germantown. I was kind of imagining a show with the sort of epic landscape of 'Brokeback Mountain' and all the clashes between old farmers and new farmers."

We paused to let a car turn in front of us. "I didn't really know how to write a TV show," Gardner said. "The only way I could figure out how to do it was make the main character a magazine editor. Each episode would be about the stories she was doing. Basically, I disguised everybody I know in my town for each episode."

Gardner decided that she should write a table of contents for the character's magazine. Very quickly, she had a hundred-and-fifty-page issue with outlines for stories. "I had sections—global, local, people, places, and things, like farmers' favorite tools. I had a story, 'Is It Too Late for Poland to Save Its Soil?,' because someone told me that Poland had the best soil in the world, and they were building strip malls over it. I had a Farmonomics report called 'Weather Permitting.' I did a Harvard Business School-type study on one small farm's road to success. That's when I decided there was too much informa-

tion for TV. What it needed to be was a life-style brand with a magazine and a Web site to explain it."

A car went by with a dog leaning out the window. "February, 2012, is when I really concentrated," Gardner continued. "I just sat in my barn over that winter, working. I would have days where I thought, What the hell am I doing? I felt like I was turning a ship in my life. People think I'm brave, and I definitely am, but it's really because I'm afraid of everything. I'm afraid of being on a boat on the ocean, and when I had to do it on a story for *Monocle* I obsessed about rogue waves for a whole month before I went."

We stopped and bought coffee, then kept walking. "'Magazine' is a word I learned very early on not to use," Gardner said. "Investors didn't want to go near you. I would say I was trying to make a brand around the idea of modern farming. My friends would say, 'I don't get this, it has nothing to do with your life.'" Photographers began to send pictures of distressed trucks and falling-down barns. "'Here's a photo shoot we could do,' they would say, and I was, 'No, we're not doing that photo shoot, ever.' Everybody also wanted to shoot tables in fields. And another one they thought was so clever was a farmer in a field with a laptop."

Warren Street is lined with stores selling vintage furniture. Gardner stopped in front of a window with a display of metal lawn chairs. "I am so looking forward to spending money again," she said. "I'm still in startup mode. We are really close to being super successful financially, and I can't wait. The one thing everybody told me was 'You guys are never going to sell a magazine with an animal on the cover, and I'm so happy that's not true.'"

**M**odern Farmer prints a hundred thousand copies of each issue and has almost sixteen thousand subscribers. It costs \$7.99, and it is sold in bookstores and on newsstands and at groceries, feedlots, and tractor-supply stores. Reading it is like spending time with Gardner. Her interest is inclusive and doesn't linger. A short piece might be fewer than a hundred words ("Save Your Seeds, Canada!"), and there might be several to a page. A long piece ("Wild Pigs: It's a War, and We're Losing") is usually fifteen hundred to twenty-five hundred words. The slogan for the first

issue was "The New Food Culture." She also considered "Where Agriculture Meets Pop Culture." Agriculture, however, "is just a word that people don't like," she says. "You just shut down when you hear it; it's like hearing 'healthy' or 'nutritious.' The one we use now is 'Farm. Food. Life.'"

In the first issue, there is a story about organic food in China, where the food chain is so polluted that prosperous people in the cities sometimes hire relatives in the countryside to grow food for them. There is a story about two British guys growing mangoes in Africa, and one about farm injuries. There is an interview with a woman who wrote a book called "The Drunken Botanist: The Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks," and there are brief interviews with farmers about their favorite possessions. A farmer in Kenya loves his big knife, which he calls a slasher; a farmer in Indiana loves his chain saw; a farmer in Australia loves his tractor; a farmer in Italy loves his boots; and a grape farmer in France loves his dynamizer, a machine that spins plants, herbs, and water until they blend together and can be sprayed on his vines. There is a piece about a couple in Amsterdam who built a house from bales of straw, which took nine months. Among the features that became columns are Ask an Ag Minister, an interview with a foreign agricultural minister (Jorge Mendes Ribeiro Filho, of Brazil), and Meet the Modern Farmers, from Canada, Germany, Uruguay, England, Massachusetts, Georgia, and California. A shopping section includes farm tools, boots, an outdoor shower on a tripod that hooks up to a hose, garden gloves, an implement called a dibber that looks like a top and is for making seed holes, a hammock, and a corn sheller. Since the second issue, each cover animal has had an animal cam, a live feed from a barn or a field which can be viewed on the magazine's Web site. The most popular has been the goat cam, because goats do a lot. Compared to a goat, cows and pigs are sedentary.

Jesse Hirsch, the magazine's senior editor, had been working as a restaurant critic in San Francisco; he moved to Hudson after he was hired. When he first heard *Modern Farmer* described, he said, "I thought it sounded like an *Onion*

parody. Farm-to-table was everywhere, but then they asked me to do a story about wild boars, and I realized the magazine wasn't going to be 'Look at this gorgeous persimmon,' or something a chef in San Francisco was going to do with tweezers."

*Modern Farmer* is not widely read by farmers. The ones who encounter it tend to think that the title is literal and that the magazine presents a version of farming that is romantic, whereas farming is not. "Farming is boring," a farmer told me. "Farming is not really in any way glamorous. There is not a whole lot of whimsy to farming." This was a farmer named Lisa Seger, who, with her husband, Christian, owns Blue Heron Farm, in Field Store, Texas, where they raise goats and make cheese. Seger said that she subscribed to only two magazines, "*The Stockman Grass Farmer*, which is about how to grow grass for grazing, and *Farm Show*, which is about hillbilly farmers building things in their barns, because they don't have the money to buy them new—a guy building a combine out of a tricycle and four screws." Compared with *Farm Show*, Seger said, *Modern Farmer* was "a fashion magazine for farming."

Accepting the National Magazine Award, Gardner described *Modern Farmer* as "the farming magazine for media professionals." In Brooklyn, there is a club of writers and editors that meets occasionally on Sundays in a bar to discuss a magazine, like a book club. Recently, they discussed *Modern Farmer*. They were from such places as the *Times Magazine*, Longform.org, The Atavist, and FiveThirtyEight. The issue they had read was No. 5, for the summer of 2014, which had the dog on the cover. It included stories about farm deaths; orange wine, which is white wine that has been exposed to grape skins for longer than white wine is; Dutch farmers who raise pigs without antibiotics; entrepreneurs in Northern California trying to figure out how to farm in the midst of drought; and two people talking about romance in the context of farming ("After she'd been harvesting shallots all day, her blue eyes looked so beautiful in contrast to the black dirt on her face"). The group sat at a Formica-topped table in the back of the bar and drank cocktails.

One of them liked the story about farm deaths. "It feels gritty and crimey,"

he said. Another young man said, "I think it felt dutiful."

Other remarks: "I had an experience I don't always have with magazines—I heard about things I hadn't heard about before. Mostly, magazines now, we package things we've already seen on the Internet, especially with culture."

"I wonder who the ideal reader is. My assumption is that it's people who will never farm."

"I think it's an aspirational magazine, in the same way that *GQ* has all this fashion I would never buy, but people still subscribe."

"I think there should be a column, How I Became a Farmer. There was not anything actually written by a farmer."

"I was surprised there was nothing about kids on farms: 'I didn't want to raise these kids in the city anymore.' What about a kid, he's kind of dirty, and he's best friends with a pig. I could see a cover of farm kids."

"A kid cam."

"Maybe that will happen when they run out of animals for the cover."

Issue No. 6, which came out in September, has a piece about cowboys in southern Texas called tick riders. Tick riders patrol the Rio Grande on horseback for stray cattle that might carry a pernicious tick called the cattle-fever tick. There is also a piece about a rancher named David Munson, Jr., who raises grass-fed beef in Detroit, Texas, which is north of Dallas, near Paris. For two days at the end of July, I went to Texas with Gardner so that she could attend the photo shoots. She had hoped to see the Rio Grande, but it rained heavily, and the tick-rider shoot was cancelled, partly because the cowboy didn't want to ride his horse amid lightning. That afternoon, Gardner flew to Dallas, and the next morning we drove to Munson's ranch.

Munson had a bowl of tamales on his kitchen table. "People are getting hamburgers, but they're not getting real meat," he said. "These are made with my grass-fed meat. It's not feedlot. You better dig into them and prove me wrong."

"Do I need a fork?" Gardner asked.

"I always use one," Munson said.

After we finished the tamales, we got in Munson's truck and drove around the ranch. Passing a barn, we saw several tractors. "I have a lot of machinery,"

Munson said. "If I could have a machinery ranch, I'd be very happy. A really good cattle rancher, though, doesn't like machinery. They're like a people person. They know where every cow and where every calf is."

"You have llamas," Gardner said. One faced us in a pasture behind a fence. "To protect my goats," Munson said. "Llamas don't like dogs, they don't like coyotes, they don't really like people—they put up with them because they bring food. Some are more protective than others. Mine were raised as pet llamas, I think, and they just didn't go after the bad guys. They would walk off and leave the goat. The predators often kill for fun. You have all these goats that are torn up, and that's unpleasant. It's a combat situation." The llama in the pasture was a retired llama. "I replaced the llamas with guard dogs. I think they're Great Pyrenees. You're not supposed to pet them. We feed them right out in the pasture with the goats."

"What goes after your goats?" Gardner asked.

"Anything that can," Munson said. "Coyotes, probably cats—bobcats—and feral dogs. I have three hundred goats, and we lost about a hundred last year. Everybody says there's not a panther in here, but they're extremely elusive."

We drove slowly along a two-track road through tall grass. "I have to be careful out here for hog holes," Munson said. We came to a fence around some woods that had hogs in it, but they saw us coming and scattered so fast that they left the leaves on the underbrush vibrating. When we arrived at a piece of high ground overlooking a muddy river, Munson said, "That's the Red River. It's just constantly chewing up this land. That's why it's red."

Then Munson said that he had a neighbor who had "a big cattle farm in Africa. He's going to put in a combined fish, rice, and cattle operation. He's thinking feedlot, but I'm trying to get him to go grass feed. It's a multi-year operation, and right now he can't stand up and say he's a cash engine."

"We can all relate to that," Gardner said.

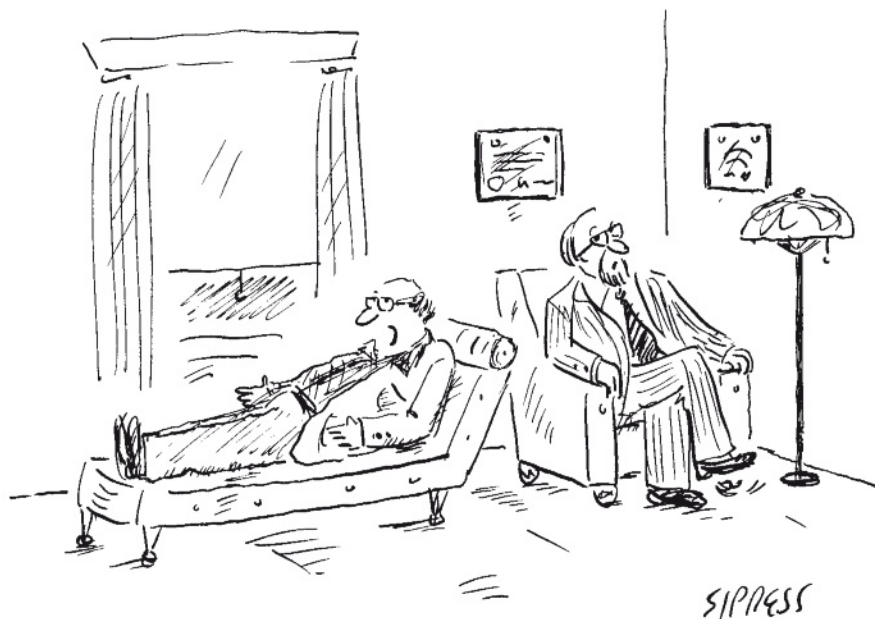
Most of the time I spent in Texas, Gardner was preoccupied with the affairs of the magazine. She was going through what Natalie Massenet, a friend of hers who's the founder of net-a-porter.com, a luxury fashion retail site, told me was

“Chapter 2 of startup. Chapter 1 is you raise an amount of money, never enough for what is expected. Then you must raise more money, always in a period of vulnerability, and meanwhile you have to keep your employees and your advertisers and your investors on your side.”

Including people who sell ads, Gardner has a staff of eight. She owns a small portion of *Modern Farmer*. The majority belongs to a Canadian investor named Frank Giustra, to whom Gardner was introduced by someone she knows in Vancouver. Gardner would not disclose the amount that Giustra put in, but among the investors that she courted she was known to be seeking two to three million dollars. In an ideal angel investor situation, Giustra might have received twenty to thirty per cent of the company. A lawyer later told Gardner that she had signed one of the three worst deals he had ever seen.

Giustra’s wealth was made mostly in mining. He is perhaps better known, however, for being friends with Bill Clinton, who travels occasionally on Giustra’s plane. Recently, for his philanthropy, Giustra received something called the Dalai Lama Humanitarian Award. In the video accompanying the award’s announcement, Clinton says of Giustra, “The thing I like about him is that he is both idealistic and very hardheaded, so he doesn’t want to waste his money, and he doesn’t want to waste his time.” Several years ago, Giustra gave Clinton’s foundation thirty-one million dollars, and he later pledged at least a hundred million dollars and half of his future earnings from natural-resource ventures. The reason that the second issue of *Modern Farmer* has an interview with Clinton is that Gardner asked Giustra if a reporter could fly with him and Clinton, and Giustra said no, but he delivered Clinton for a conversation.

Businesspeople talk about having patient capital or impatient capital. *Modern Farmer* has impatient capital. Giustra had never invested in a magazine before. In bygone days, investors might wait five years for a magazine to make money. Currently, according to David Carey, the president of Hearst Magazines, a backer might spend three to five million dollars to start a magazine and expect to recover his investment in two years. “Definitely, if you’re not profitable by the third year, something is amiss,” Carey said. I asked



*“I had to stop watching the news—it was making my own problems seem insignificant.”*

Giustra if this accorded with his assumptions. “Absolutely, I agree,” he said. “All startups are the same. If you don’t understand those issues, there’s going to be some surprises. But it takes passion and focus and discipline. Did you see her passion? You don’t see that often.” He also said, “I’m committed to it and have put up all the money so far and happy to put up more.”

Sometime after the first issue, however, during the summer of 2013, it became apparent that Gardner had likely overestimated the first year’s revenues and that the magazine would eventually need more money. Giustra apparently hadn’t expected to contribute more than he had already, and, Gardner said, he told her that she should find another investor. (Giustra declined to comment.) In May, 2014, after the National Magazine Award, Giustra said that he would pay for one more issue—the one to be prepared over the summer and published in September. When July arrived without Gardner’s having found someone else to put money in, Giustra told her that he would invest more only if she gave him a portion of her shares, an arrangement that is customary in such circumstances. However, he proposed additional terms that Gardner regarded as inequitable. Meanwhile, not knowing how much longer *Modern*

*Farmer* would last, some of her staff began looking for other work.

Gardner must overcome two obstacles to find new investors. One is that Giustra owns too much of the company. “In venture capital, usually you have several investors, no one of whom owns more than fifty per cent of the company, and they all share an idea of the future,” Kevin Powers, the controller and finance director of the company Vox Media, told me. Powers is also a member of *Modern Farmer*’s advisory board. Second, an investor would wonder why Giustra was behaving as if he wanted to sell. According to Sam Holdsworth, an investment banker who raises money for early stage media and entertainment companies and who has started several magazines, “When the principal investor tries to leave early, it makes you wonder why.”

“Frank feels I’ve been unsuccessful raising money, and I have been,” Gardner said, as we drove from Munson’s ranch to the Dallas airport. “He doesn’t believe in what I’ve accomplished, because it doesn’t work on the spreadsheet. But what you do in the first couple of years is build the brand and then that gives you value. Every single investor has told me the same thing, though, that it’s too soon to sell. They would buy us at a

fire sale. No one wants to go near—I don't want to finish that sentence.”

Giustra is accustomed to investments in mining, where there is a concrete asset. You own the asset, an investment consultant told me, and you can squeeze its elements for better terms. This is a difficult playbook to extend to media investing. There's no mine, he said; no materials in the ground, no asset you can drive out and look at. There are only people. Squeezing doesn't work. A few days after we got back from Texas, I walked into Gardner's office as she was talking on the phone to her lawyers. When she hung up, she was downcast. “There is no question the magazine will go on, but it might go on without me,” she said.

The climax arrived early in August, while the September issue was closing. “The apocalypse, literally and metaphorically, is looming large at *Modern Farmer*,” Gardner had written in her editor's letter. “The end. It could happen.” The issue, which she was calling the “pre-apocalypse issue,” was devoted “to preparing for the worst.” During the first week of August, Gardner needed to pay the printing bill, and her staff was waiting to hear if this issue was the last. “You're here on the worst day of my life,” she told me one morning. Whatever happened likely had to be resolved by the end of the afternoon.

All day, Gardner's lawyers exchanged proposals with Giustra. He kept insisting on his terms, and she kept refusing to give in. I asked what the complications were, and she said that she was prevented by confidentiality agreements from telling me. “We're just very far apart,” she said unhappily. Late in the afternoon, a proposal arrived, and she read it while biting her lip. After a few moments, her phone rang.

“I'm just reading what he put the valuation at,” she said soberly. Then, brightening, “I think Richard can live with that, don't you?” Richard was one of her lawyers. She appeared to gather herself, and then said, “Let's do it.”

She hung up the phone and said, “I'm in shock. We have runaway.” Her eyes seemed to widen. “When you came this morning, we were discussing my exit and whether I would go amicably,” she said. “I was getting ready to call the moving van

to pick up the furniture. I woke up at four and thought, I can't live like this anymore.”

Gardner had engaged for that evening an excursion boat to take the staff out on the river to celebrate her executive editor and her managing editor, who were leaving. One was going to *Cook's Illustrated*, and the other to *Fast Company*. It was now nearly time for the party. “What we're going to do is walk to the boat and get some champagne,” Gardner said. Then her phone rang. “You O.K. with me to sign this?” she asked. “I mean, I'm so scared. What if there are tricks in here? It's like the scariest thing I've ever signed. So I'm actually signing this, right?” Her gaze was fixed on her computer.

“Am I allowed to tell everyone tonight that we're in business?” she asked. “Would that be premature?” Then she let out a long breath and said, “Tell them, You got a deal.” The terms of the deal were not disclosed, but as part of it, in exchange for more money from Giustra, Gardner's shares were diminished.

That evening, the staff walked down Warren Street. On the river, Gardner gave the departing editors mock covers of the magazine with their photographs on them. “I hate that you're leaving, but I understand that the world awaits,” she said. She allowed about half an hour to pass before pouring a glass of champagne, and then announcing, “We have had some low points, and they've been getting lower and lower, and then they got lower, but at five o'clock tonight I signed a deal, and we're going to be alive for a couple more years. It really happened. We're going forward, we've got runaway, and we're not going to live month to month anymore.”

Strangely, everyone sat looking glumly at their feet. The next morning, I asked Jesse Hirsch why. He said that they had lived amid uncertainty for so long that they were stunned. “We were looking for the conditions,” he said. “You all have to take a forty-per-cent pay cut and move to Vancouver and work half the day in a mine.”

The peace held for several weeks, but by the end of October Gardner and Giustra were again disagreeing about how the business should be run. When I asked her how I should describe the fu-

ture of the magazine, she said she wanted to speak to her lawyer. Then she sent me this sentence: “The relationship between the company and the primary investor remains tense and the company is still looking for long-term financing.”

A few days after the party on the river, Gardner gave a dinner at her house, more or less on the second anniversary of one she had given for Giustra's financial team when they visited Germantown. That morning, she drove to Northwind Farms, in Tivoli, to buy chickens to grill. “The farm's run by Richard Biezynski, and his family all work there,” she said. “They have a slaughterhouse, and the animals all have these amazing lives. I think we want to make him a Meet the Modern Farmer.”

Gardner parked by a red barn. In a white room with metal tables, two men in aprons were spraying down chicken carcasses. One of the men asked how many chickens she needed.

“Fifteen people, so I probably need three or four,” she said.

“All I have is frozen chickens,” the man said. “If you can wait, I can get it done in twenty minutes. They're in there now,” he said, pointing to a room on the other side of a small opening in the wall, like something food might pass through at a restaurant. A bird in the other room squawked, and Gardner flinched. “That's fresh, that's real,” she said. “That's a little real for me. Let me think about this. We really need chicken.”

She walked out to the parking lot and called the chef who was to grill the chickens. “I'm having a crisis, because they haven't killed the chickens, and he's going to kill them for me,” she said. “I'm really seriously thinking, Couldn't we just do pasta?” She walked in a tight circle. “It's true, it's very fresh chicken,” she said, nodding. “That's one way to look at it.” When she walked back inside, the man said, “Next ones coming through the window are yours.” Gardner took out her checkbook. “I love the chef's attitude,” she said uncertainly. “It's very fresh. They're not sentimental about it.” Another bird squawked, and Gardner put her hands to her cheeks, then pressed her fingers to her eyes. “People who raise chickens say that if you saw the individual personalities they have you'd never want to eat chicken again, so I



guess my next up is to get some animals, huh?" Sniffing, she wrote a check for \$84.93, and took the chickens, which I had to carry, because when she touched them she discovered that they were still warm.

That week, Gardner was having the ceiling of her living room and two walls painted black; the rest would be white, a color scheme that suggested Sweden, she said. She had decided that her new living room would have fewer things in it, so she was planning a yard sale. The afternoon of the party, a friend of hers named John Patrick, the designer of the clothing brand Organic, was in the barn putting price tags on the furniture. "I made this table six hundred," he said, "and the chairs are a grand." Gardner asked if the prices weren't a little high. "I just think, if anyone shows any interest in something, sell it to them," Patrick said.

Then Patrick looked at me and said, "I need your attention." He wanted to talk about Gardner. "We met when she first landed in Germantown," he said. "Late 1999 or 2000. She had a dinner party that defined what was going to go on for the next five years. Tables outside, and some Italians came, and you felt you were seeing something that was interesting. When she did *Monocle*, she brought to it an enthusiasm and a very rapid set of eyes." He gave me a searching look, as if to be sure I understood.

"How *Modern Farmer* came about is she was always rooting out the next thing," he went on. "I was getting wrapped up with the anarchist farmers. The anarchists farm with no land. They do crop mobs and seed bombs. For a seed bomb, you take a bunch of clay and you put seeds in it, and you bomb it where somebody has told you that you can't plant."

"Were you in the TV show?"

"I was this fashion designer, going, 'Oh, my God, there's a good farmer making buttons, isn't that great?'" he said. "Then I get deeper and more involved with the young farmers." Gardner came walking toward us across the lawn. "With *Modern Farmer*, people don't think anything of whacking up a fence and getting some goats anymore," he said. "I think Ann Marie's what Gloria Steinem was when *Ms.* came out. She's embraced this notion and led the way."

Gardner arrived. "I've got a new magazine we need to do," Patrick said.

"Woodworking. I've been hanging out at lumberyards, and—oh!" He rolled his eyes and made like he was going to faint.

The guests began arriving in the evening, some of them with children. Among them was a woman named Tandra Dillon, who is a co-director of the Hudson Opera House. "Ann Marie had this idea, and no one got it," she said. "Period, full stop. It took a long time. You could see a huge movement going on, you saw it in Brooklyn, you saw it in the Hudson Valley—an interest in small farms, not Big Ag, the American version of the English countryside. What shelter magazines did for the home, Ann Marie saw *Modern Farmer* doing for this new food movement. Now it's two years later, and people have this thing they can touch and feel and read, and they're, 'Oh, I love *Modern Farmer*.' I would've given up a hundred times before now."

After dinner, when it was dark, a small group of men and women sat in chairs under a tree. Gardner had strung lights in the branches, and you could just see their faces. Among them, lying back in a chair, she looked, for the first time in a while, at ease.

Each morning, Gardner takes her three dogs for a walk through a field across the road from her house. The field leads to the river and belongs to a neighbor. She had always wanted to buy it, but it was never for sale. In September, though, another neighbor offered her two acres next to her property.

"I'm going to have an experimental farm," she said, "and I'm going to get some rescue animals." I asked about the magazine. "We're planning a big story on water," she said. "And I want to work on modern barn design, and also designing a car you can put animals in, because I can't have a nice car with my dogs. A pickup truck, maybe, like the old ones with the bench seats, so the dog can sit shotgun. And I want there to be a live thing of extreme weather on our Web site, and where it is in the world. Someone smart must know how to make this. I want to do more international stories, more travel, more sustainability, more stories on the Web site, maybe television, and I want to get involved in clothing," she added. "I'm trying not to get too excited." ♦



## BAM 2014 Next Wave Festival

### Upcoming Highlights

#### Music/Films

#### Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films

Nov 6—8

The Andy Warhol Museum  
Dean Wareham

Bradford Cox  
Eleanor Friedberger  
Martin Rev  
Tom Verlaine

#### Theater

#### BASETRACK Live

Nov 11—15  
En Garde Arts

#### Dance

#### Batsheva Dance Company

Sadeb21

Nov 12—15  
Ohad Naharin

#### Dance/Theater

#### Birds With Skymirrors

Nov 19—22  
Lemi Ponifasio  
MAU



*The largest experiment  
in live performance  
New York has ever seen.*

BAM.org / Brooklyn, NY  
Tickets start at \$20

Season Sponsor:

**Bloomberg  
Philanthropies**

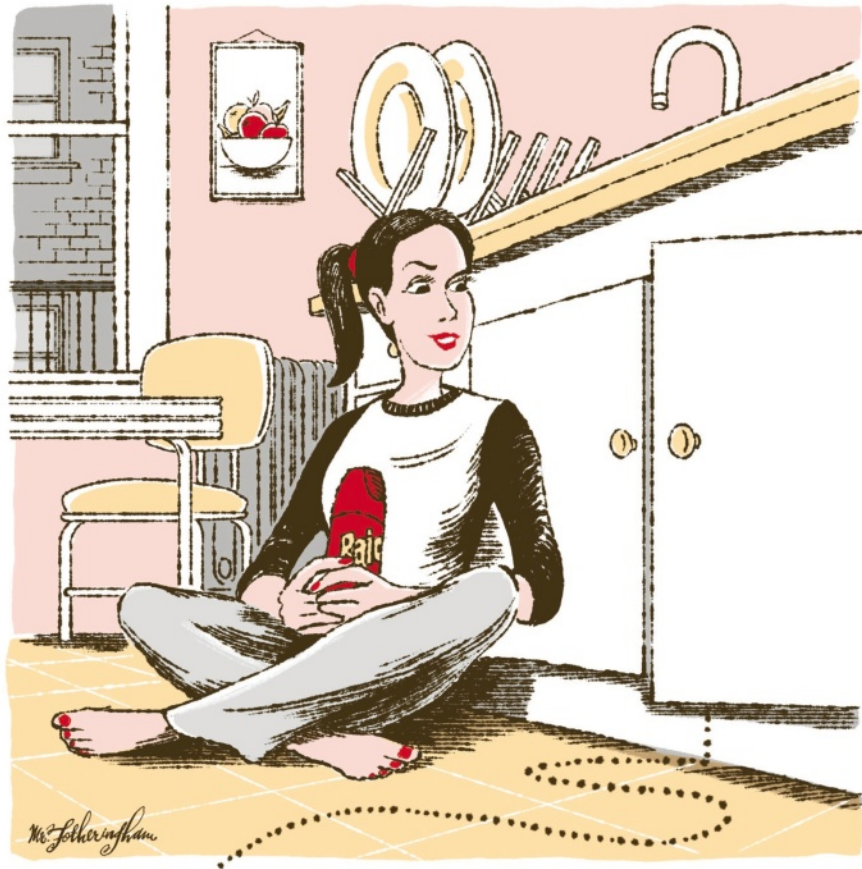
BAM 2014 Next Wave  
Festival Sponsor:

**TimeWarner**

Photos (top to bottom): *Embers*, by Ros Kavanagh; *Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films*, by Andy Warhol; *BASETRACK Live*, by Balazs Gardi; *Sadeb21*, by Gadi Dagon; *Birds With Skymirrors*, courtesy of MAU

# TO THE COCKROACH IN MY APARTMENT

BY COURTNEY GAUGHAN BOWMAN



Hey, girlfriend! Can I come in? Am I interrupting? Am I totally being “that roommate”? Ha ha. Anyway, I just wanted to tell you that your exoskeleton looks awesome on you. Seriously. I could never pull that off. So jel. Also, do you have a second? To real-chat? Great.

So, I’m a pretty laid-back roommate, right? No drama. Like, if I needed to use the toaster but you were in there? I’d just go, “No worries! I’ll wait till you’re done!” No biggie. Just so you know, though? Another roommate might freak out and squash you. But I am so not like that. I’m chillaxed. And not to be melodramatic or anything? But I kind of feel like sometimes you take advantage of my chillaxedness.

For example. If I’m taking a shower? Not a good time for you to shower, too. When something follows me into a wet enclosed space, my instinct is to drown it. No offense. I don’t know, maybe I’ve seen “Psycho” too many times. Ha ha, just kidding. I’ve seen “Psycho” the normal amount of times.

So, this might seem kind of random? But what about if we made the Internet modem a “no-go zone”? Oh, my God, I can see you’re thinking, Ack! My roommate’s being wacky again! But hear me out. When one of us crawls into a crevice in the modem, it affects the Wi-Fi for the whole apartment. So how about let’s not crawl in there? Oh! Also! Totally spontaneous random thought: can you pitch in on the cable bill? I don’t

mean, like, right now. Eventually. Since there’s two of us.

We should also probably talk about food. So, I’m not going to label my food. We’re grownups. I’ll eat the food I buy; you eat the cardboard under the sink. But we don’t have to be Nazis about it. Like, if an apple I bought is almost rotten anyway, by all means, help yourself. On the other hand, if I just bought a box of GoLean Crunch, I have dibs before you get to crawl around in there. The takeaway: this isn’t Auschwitz, but it also isn’t a Total Free-for-All. It’s more like somewhere in between Auschwitz and a Total Free-for-All? If that makes sense? Also, you never buy toilet paper. Just sayin’.

Listen, I have a lot of respect for you. I have put out every type of roach trap legally available and yet you simply will not die. You rock. Also, it’s O.K. for you to have a boyfriend. I had one of those, too, once. I get it. Love is beautiful and makes you do crazy things. But, if you have to do it in the kitchen, don’t have babies on the plate I literally *just* washed. I wouldn’t do that to you. Or, if I did, I would wash the plate again, after I finished hatching my eggs. That’s called being considerate.

I hope you don’t feel like I’m ambushing you! You are really an awesome roommate. I love how we don’t feel obligated to talk 24/7. Like, we hang, but we do our own thing. Some of my favorite nights have been when I’m on the couch sending e-mails while you’re nearby on the floor, defecating, to leave a chemical trail of pheromones. We’re getting work done, but we’re also keeping each other company.

Actually, are you free tonight? I feel like we haven’t vegged in a while. Lately, whenever I enter a room you scuttle away, and whenever you enter a room I scream and spray Raid everywhere. What’s up with that? Maybe we could order pizza and binge-watch “Gilmore Girls” like total nerds, ha ha. Unless, did you invite all your friends to hang out under the sink again? Totally fine. I mean, if it were me, I’d probably let you know before I invited someone to our apartment. But it’s cool. I’ll just be chillaxing in the living room, then. Sending e-mails.

Unless. Would it totally be annoying if I chilled under the sink with you guys? ♦

# PASSPORT NOVEMBER 8 2014 NYC

IMMERSIVE ARTS  
EXPERIENCES

GALLERY  
CRAWL

CULINARY  
ADVENTURES

SILENT  
AUCTION

A FULL-DAY CELEBRATION OF THE DOWNTOWN ARTS  
AND CULINARY SCENE, BENEFITTING CREATIVETIME.

SPECIAL EXPERIENCES BROUGHT TO YOU BY PADDLE8, SMORGASBURG, AND MORE.  
VISIT [PASSPORT.NEWYORKERONTHTOWN.COM](http://PASSPORT.NEWYORKERONTHTOWN.COM).



EILEEN  
FISHER



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

CREATIVETIME



coursehorse\*



FOLLOW US FOR  
EVENT UPDATES:  
[@NEWYORKERPROM](https://twitter.com/NEWYORKERPROM)  
[#PASSPORT2014](https://twitter.com/PASSPORT2014)

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

## ALL OR NOTHING

*A playwright's search for his feral instincts.*

BY EMMA BROCKES



One afternoon in early October, Hugh Jackman strode around a rehearsal space near Times Square, dressed in black and with a scabbard on his hip. The knife in the scabbard was intended for a fish, which, every night from November 16th onward, Jackman will gut, fillet, and season onstage in Jez Butterworth's new play, "The River." Part of Jackman's rightness for the role, Butterworth told me, is his understanding that the sea trout is in some ways the star. "He gets it."

"The River" can be a tough play to get. It opened in London two years ago, for a limited run at the tiny ninety-seat theatre upstairs at the Royal Court, and

is transferring to Broadway's Circle in the Square, with the role that was played in London by Dominic West now filled by Jackman—"the biggest Broadway star in one of the smallest Broadway theatres," Butterworth said. This marks a conscious downsizing from his last play, "Jerusalem," first produced in 2009, and a huge hit. "The River" is a different beast: eighty minutes to "Jerusalem"'s three hours and contemplative where the earlier play was raucous, turning on the intimacies of a couple rather than the carnival-like energy of a cast of fourteen. The first time I met Butterworth, in New York in the middle of the summer, it was in one of his natural environ-

ments, a cool, dark pub, which he entered, on a blazing hot day, wearing an unseasonably warm coat and a gray porkpie hat, with the shambling gait of a man on home turf. He ordered a pint of Guinness and removed his hat, revealing a jagged crest of dark hair streaked with silver, which, along with his black-and-white beard, gave him the look of an affable but vaguely diffident badger. (Butterworth finds the word "badger" hilarious; it crops up all over his plays. In "The Winterling," for example: "I'm here to tell you, the badger bears a grudge.")

Butterworth was in the States for a few days for the première of "Get On Up," a bio-pic of James Brown that he'd written with his younger brother, John-Henry. On returning to London, he would start on a rewrite of the forthcoming James Bond movie. He is in high demand as a screenwriter, a lucrative job that gives him the freedom, in his playwriting, to take risks like "The River." On paper, at least, "The River" looks aggressively uncommercial, taking place in a remote fishing cabin in rural England and, more accurately, in the figurative space of the leading man's memory. Hugh Jackman's character is identified only as The Man, and his girlfriend, The Woman, and a third character, The Other Woman, interchange at key points to represent The Man's previous relationships. Played wrongly, Jackman told me, The Man could make the audience recoil and think, "Ugh, what a dick." Played right, "The River" is an almost Gothic play about the influence of past relationships on the present. It is also a play about nature. The action, which occurs over the course of a single evening, describes The Man's ritual of taking every new girlfriend on a romantic night fishing trip, assuring her that she's the only woman to have been granted this privilege. The character is not necessarily cynical. "He's only got one fishing cabin," Butterworth said. "And it means a lot to him."

There is a tremor of suppressed mirth behind much of Butterworth's speech, a note of incredulity played to comic effect. Like the kid who buys himself license by going into an exam claiming not to have studied, he often minimizes his output and sends up the portentousness of being a playwright at

*Jez Butterworth has a need to move between country and city, stage and screen.*

all. In September, while we were talking in his apartment in South London, drilling started in the street outside, and Butterworth shouted out the open window, "On behalf of the arts, I command you to stop!" He likes to point out that, at the age of forty-five, he has written only six plays. "I couldn't call myself a tailor if I'd made six suits. I don't do anything until it shows up, and when it shows up I'm a playwright and in between I'm not. And the extent to which I'm not, in between, is ridiculous."

"The River" was well received by critics in London, but no one knows if it will repeat the Broadway success of "Jerusalem," for which Mark Rylance, in 2011, won a Tony Award for Best Actor as Johnny (Rooster) Byron. Outside the rehearsal space, visitors stood in a windowless room exchanging whispers over a rubble of dirty mugs and spent tea bags while waiting for the actors to take a break. Just before 1 P.M., Sonia Friedman, the producer, entered, in a woolly bobble hat, to join the company for lunch. In London, theatregoers were frustrated by the short run and the small venue, queuing for hours outside the Royal Court only to be turned away. What they didn't understand, Butterworth said, is that "there would've been nothing to go to see if I hadn't put it on there. I mean, really. It wouldn't finish itself. I'd go and look at spaces like the Wyndham's and I'd just think, This isn't that story."

The rehearsal room was blocked out to look like the cabin, simply outfitted with a kitchen table, a plastic fish (which will be replaced with a real fish once the play starts its run), and a cabinet full of fishing paraphernalia—feathery lures and hooks. Jackman flashed a purposeful grin at newcomers to the room. "Is there a roll with this?" he said, holding up a plate of salad before sitting down at the kitchen table for lunch with Friedman and Ian Rickson, the play's director.

Butterworth was not there, although in the early days of the play's development he was a more frequent visitor to the rehearsal room. He works best under pressure, thriving on the kind of tight deadlines that would paralyze other writers. This gives him, like a lot of his characters, the air of the blagger, that British word for someone with a slightly

knowing way of doing things on the fly. During the writing of "Jerusalem," he took this to the point of finishing the play after rehearsals had started. "The River" had an equally tortured delivery. "I would come with the same part of the play over the course of about a year and a half," Butterworth said. "We would do the same fucking stuff. I couldn't get any further with it at all. It was very late in it that I managed to make it work."

After lunch, I joined Butterworth downtown, in a hotel coffee shop. One gets the impression that, given the choice, he would like to find a less dysfunctional way of working. He recalled watching a Miles Davis interview on YouTube, in which the jazz legend was asked how, having spent years in the seventies doing pretty much nothing, he had managed to return to work: "And he said 'Dizzy Gillespie came round my house and said 'What the fuck are you doing?' and I went back to work.'" Butterworth laughed. "I just loved the idea that it's that simple."

Jez Butterworth's apartment, in Borough, near London Bridge, sits at a junction between worlds. From one angle, you can see the Shard, the glittering Renzo Piano-designed tower and monument to the capital's ritzy excesses; from another, Cross Bones Graveyard, one of the oldest graveyards in London, medieval in origin and once an unconsecrated cemetery for prostitutes, later a paupers' burial ground. A plaque on the gate reads "The Outcast Dead R.I.P."

It was early September, and Butterworth, who divides his time between London and a farm in Somerset, had spent the week in conference with Sam Mendes and Daniel Craig, tweaking story lines for the new Bond movie. (He hates corporate limos and had been conveyed every morning to Pinewood Studios, outside London, on the back of a motorbike.) This was Butterworth's second Bond; he worked on "Skyfall," too, making the kind of script changes that his twelve-year-old self, watching the movie at the St. Albans Odeon, would be pleased to see. "You know, like Bond doesn't have scenes with other men. Bond shoots other men—he doesn't sit around chatting to them. So you put a line through that."

Butterworth derives comfort and energy from being able to move between states: from city to country and from theatre to screen. This inclination has the added advantage of meaning that no one ever knows quite where he is. He was born less than a mile from Borough, in St. Thomas's Hospital, but grew up in St. Albans, a commuter-belt town just north of London, in the type of sixties housing development that has come to stand for a certain kind of spiritual death in England. (One neighbor was a salesman for Polaroid. Another neighbor was a salesman for Kerrygold butter. The guy across the road killed rats on the London Underground at night.)

Five kids is above average for that part of the world, and the family stood out. There were always broken-down vehicles outside the Butterworth house. "The house was full of stuff," Butterworth said. "And it was a mess. And we were a mess." He said this wryly, but in his plays Butterworth tends to correlate mess with integrity. Butterworth's father, a former truck driver who, after winning a trade-union scholarship to Ruskin College in Oxford, qualified as a lecturer in industrial relations and economics, met Butterworth's mother after coming round to fix her gutter. He was nineteen years her senior, a veteran of the Second World War who had been on the landing craft at Omaha Beach, and, like her, was part Irish Catholic. "My dad wanted to batten down the hatches," he said. "He was a very sweet man and enormously bright and very funny. But very afraid of the outside. His life lessons weren't about 'Go West, young man.' They were 'Don't go West, young man. Because you might get shot.'"

"Bands, or dreaming up plans," his eldest brother, Tom, said, of the group dynamic in which they were raised. Of the five Butterworth siblings—four boys, with Jez the second youngest, and one girl, Joanna, the oldest—he and Tom were the first to collaborate, while both were students. John-Henry, seven years Jez's junior, has worked with him the most, co-writing the bio-pic "Fair Game," about Joe Wilson and Valerie Plame, and the sci-fi movie "Edge of Tomorrow."

"For a long time it was quite adversarial," John-Henry said, of their early

methods. “Lots of storming out and shouting.”

“We would argue over every comma,” Butterworth said. “My working relationship with John-Henry took a seismic leap forward when I abdicated as elder brother. I started to listen to him—the fact that I saw him on the day he was born notwithstanding.”

The undisputed leader of the pack was Joanna, who “featured largely in the role of boss,” John-Henry told me, not least because she had her own bedroom, while the four boys bunked together. She was an inventor of games and stories who introduced her brothers to Roald Dahl and C. S. Lewis, and left clues around the house for buried treasure. “Joanna was extremely good at blurring the boundary between the real and the imagined,” John-Henry said.

Tom introduced Jez to drama. Butterworth visited his older brother at Cambridge and saw him in a student production of Brian Friel’s “Translations,” a classic play of Irish national identity, set in 1833 in County Donegal. “That was the blastoff,” he said. In “Translations,” you see a comic verbosity and linguistic exuberance similar to Butterworth’s achievements in “Jerusalem.” One is aware that there are words Butterworth uses partly because he finds them amusing: prannie, prannock, flapjack, Maypole, Chorleywood, piss-head, and accordion, among others—words he picks up and saves like a magpie. “Jez has got the most incredible memory for dialogue,” John-Henry said. “We’ll be walking around and something will happen, and he’ll take a shine to it and it’ll come up years later. He doesn’t make any notes. He just remembers.”

Unlike most students who harbor the desire to write a play, Butterworth, who followed Tom to Cambridge, sat down and wrote one, a surreal adaptation of a 1961 recipe book by Katharine Whitehorn called “Cooking in a Bedsitter”; he and Tom turned it into a black comedy about student alienation and took it to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. (The first person Butterworth auditioned at Cambridge, a fellow-student, was Rachel Weisz. He told me, “I thought, I’m sticking with this.”) James Harding, the director of news and current affairs for the BBC, went to college

with Butterworth and would later be his best man. “He behaved at nineteen years old as though he was already famous,” Harding said. “Not in a self-regarding way, but he was extremely unflustered and unbothered about being around grand and famous people. He was the best storyteller there was, night after night, in the Maypole pub.” He had an extraordinary ability to “embellish,” Harding added.

After Edinburgh, a couple of agents expressed interest in the Butterworth brothers, and, eventually, they decided to leave London, where they’d both moved on graduating, and take their writing more seriously. It was the first of Butterworth’s flights to the country, in this case to Pewsey, a small village in Wiltshire. “Part hiding, part escaping,” his brother said. At the end of that period, they had, together, written a TV movie for Channel 4 called “Christmas,” which aired in 1996 without much fanfare, and Butterworth had finished his first full-length play, “Mojo.”

In retrospect, Butterworth is amazed at how casually he pulled this feat off. “It was like, ‘I shall now go off from London and I shall write a play that’s got an interval. It’ll be a proper play and I’ll know what I’m doing before I start.’ And then it happened exactly like that. I gave it in to my agent and I was at the Royal Court two days later and a week after that we had a reading, and that was it. That was the whole process. I moved



back to London. It had gone exactly as I had hoped. To a disastrous degree.”

“Mojo” came out of a conversation he’d had with Malcolm McLaren about the relationship between London gangland and the arrival, in the city, of rock and roll, and at the Royal Court it fell into Ian Rickson’s hands. “When you’re finding plays, you’re looking for what is intrinsically theatrical—what in the writing could not be done onscreen,” Rickson said. “It’s about the particular

event of theatre, and it had that kind of jazzy, combustible, thrilling way about it.” It was the start of a working relationship, and a friendship, that Butterworth calls the single most important enabler of his work.

“Mojo” was set at a seedy music club in Soho in 1958: dim young goons and wannabe hoods exchange ritualistic banter in the style of early Tarantino—it has lots of abrupt shifts in tone, and its humor turns on the conflation of high and low diction. It is often described as a play about gangsters, but the gangster part is in some ways incidental; it’s as much a piece about friendship and the way members of a group start to speak their own language—playful and exclusionary, giddy at times to the point of nonsense—getting at what Don DeLillo identified, in “Underworld,” as “the hidden triggers of experience, the little delves and swerves that make a state of being.”

At one point, Potts, Goon No. 1, advises Sweets, Goon No. 2, to go to a museum in order to put their jobs as fixers in a historical context.

POTTS: Go down take a look at any picture Napoleon. Go take a butcher’s at the Emperor Half the World. And you’ll see it. You’ll see. They got a lot of blokes standing around. Doers. Finders. Advisors. Acquaintances. Watchers. An entourage.

SWEETS: Big fuckers in fur boots. On the payroll.

POTTS: Napoleon’s chums. And they’re all there. Sticking around. Having a natter. Cleaning rifles. Chatting to cherubs. Waiting. Waiting for the deal to come off.

“Mojo” ended in sudden bloody violence—the kind of rip in the fabric that Butterworth has come to specialize in. When it debuted, in 1995, it caused a sensation.

It was seven years before another play of Butterworth’s was produced. Many found it hard to discern what had happened. He didn’t self-destruct in the obvious ways. He didn’t turn up on red carpets at premières or snort coke in the loo at the Groucho Club. And he looked busy. “Mojo” got made into a film, which Butterworth was invited to direct. (It was released in 1997 and did moderately well—“Too stagebound to be entirely successful,” *Variety* wrote, in a typical review.) Other screen projects followed, and Butterworth started to develop his parallel career as a sought-after screenwriter.

“But he was definitely not writing another play,” Tom said. “I wasn’t surprised that later, looking back, he said there was a sense of panic. He’d done it once and might not be able to do it again.”

Ian Rickson looked on with concern. “There’s not a lot you can do other than be available—unconditionally there—and maybe offer little provocations,” he said. The biggest problem was tracking him down. “He was like mercury on a bit of glass.”

Butterworth didn’t disappear, though, from his family or friends. Part of his coping strategy was to embed himself in the pub in north London. “There were always periods of his life where he was extremely professionally successful but wasn’t entirely rooted,” James Harding said. “Or periods where he was being pulled by the film industry and not having time for writing plays. He wasn’t so much disguising it in the pub as drinking in the pub.”

“I was completely marooned,” Butterworth said. “I couldn’t write plays. I couldn’t find the time to work. I was spending all of my time just hanging out with friends and waking up with a hangover. And feeling like that was an endless cycle.” His group, those “lovely friends, who are still my friends,” couldn’t help, he said, because “I looked like I didn’t care.” The dry spell lasted until 2002, when he finished his second play, “The Night Heron.” Meanwhile the idea of Rooster Byron started to form in his mind, although it would take many years to cohere. “But at the end of that decade, I wrote a play about someone who spends all their time just drinking and surrounded by the same people.”

On May Day, 2009, Jez Butterworth, Ian Rickson, and Mark Rylance visited the town of Padstow, in Cornwall, two counties west of Butterworth’s farmhouse. The men were trying to drum up ideas for Butterworth’s unfinished play, which would be his fifth and was provisionally called “St. George’s Day,” after England’s national day. May Day, traditionally the first day of spring, is another ancient holiday in England, one observed with a pagan festival going back to Roman times. The celebration includes such largely defunct rites as the crowning of the May Queen and



“Let it go, Gregg.”

Morris dancing, which no English person can refer to without suppressing a light snigger. In the drizzling rain, they took in Padstow’s pageant, watching townsfolk dance around a Maypole and perform other arcane rituals with the artificial theatricality of a historical reenactment. Nonetheless, the rituals survive, and, even in reduced form, provide some antidote to the sense of modern Britain as a place of characterless small towns presided over by a capital city full of Saudi-financed glass high-rises.

When the men returned to the farmhouse that afternoon, Rickson asked Mark Rylance to read aloud a poem. Rylance, a former artistic director of London’s Globe Theatre, is perhaps best known as a brilliant interpreter of Shakespeare, most recently on Broadway in “Twelfth Night” and “Richard III.” He took a book from the shelf and prepared to read. Butterworth looked on in a state of despair. A month shy of the play’s going into rehearsal, he had spent most of the day bluffing to the other two about how much he had actually written. “Essentially dissembling,” he said recently, still incredulous at the memory. “It was a complete nightmare.”

Although Butterworth was stymied

by the new play, he recognized the importance of the farm to his writing. The effect of the countryside on the imagination is a cliché that Butterworth holds to be true. It triggers some instinct that overcomes the layers of self-consciousness which can silence a writer. In 2002, Butterworth married Gilly Richardson, a film editor, and in 2005 they moved to the West of England, first to a small cottage in Devon, and then to the farm in Somerset. They had two children, Mabel and Grace (now eight and five). Butterworth got a dog called Crosby and acquired a flock of sheep and some pigs. He started fishing and walking, and began “digging my way out.”

Describing the post-“Mojo” period, Butterworth quoted Harold Pinter, with whom he’d grown very close. Pinter, who died in 2008, once said that “when you can’t write, you feel you’ve been banished from yourself.” Some of Butterworth’s alienation showed up in the screen work he produced during those years, which also marked the end of his short career as a director. In 2001, he directed and co-wrote with Tom a film called “Birthday Girl,” which was produced by their brother Stephen. It was set on a British housing estate like

the one they'd grown up on and starred Nicole Kidman as a mail-order Russian bride, with Ben Chaplin as the weedy bank clerk who buys her, and Vincent Cassel as her boyfriend. Butterworth's writing is customarily sharp without being cruel, but there is a sneering aspect to "Birthday Girl"—small people, the film implies, living small, silly lives—and the language, in places, feels too dense and inventive for the screen. It is an oddly empty film, and small wonder. The shoot was delayed for six months, because Kidman got injured, and by the end Butterworth was bored and depressed. "I directed two films, and I hated both processes so much," he said. "It takes so fucking long. It's like you have to keep telling the same ninety-minute story for four years."

He revisited the terrain of "Birthday Girl" five years later with his play "Parlour Song," a more nuanced and sympathetic depiction of the suburbs, in which the location, neither wholly urban nor rural, stands in for a kind of psychological holding place that Butterworth described to me as "nostalgia for the opposite." Holding two options in one's mind simultaneously enables an emotional state—of freedom or evasiveness, depending on one's view—in which Butterworth's characters tend to reside. "The idea of one constantly feeds the other," he said. "If you're in one place, you long

to be in the other. Which feels terrific."

"Parlour Song," which premiered in New York with the Atlantic Theatre Company in February of 2008, was the last of three plays written by Butterworth over the course of six years. "The Night Heron," staged at the Royal Court in 2002, and "The Winterling," put on at the same venue in 2006, both turn on scruffy old blokes having baffling conversations, and the plays won Butterworth comparisons to Beckett and Pinter. He says Pinter's friendship was as important to him as Pinter's work, yet he acknowledges that he went through a Pinter "phase," something he was glad to emerge from. "Harold was such an inspiring man and guiding light, and so relentlessly himself. But a play like 'The Homecoming' is fucking horrible—what that is saying about relationships and people. It's unbelievable and brilliant, and so true. But, Christ, it is horrible."

"Parlour Song" marked the beginning of Butterworth's recovering his voice, although none of the three plays received the rapturous reception of "Mojo." It was a period that John-Henry characterized as Butterworth's attempt to find a new style for himself and get out from under the influence of Pinter. After the success of "Mojo," John-Henry said, "he had to reconfigure his ambitions." He added, "I think that's a relatively common thing with musi-

cians and stage artists—that they'll work their way out of stasis by copying something that they love."

For years, Butterworth had been toying around with "St. George's Day," which was partly based on a character he'd met fifteen years earlier, in Pewsey. He wanted to write about England through the lens of a ramshackle guy living in a trailer. It wasn't working. None of the big speeches had been written, and there was no Act III. In May, 2009, when Rylance and Rickson came to visit, he was years overdue with the final draft, and although the actors had been cast and the Royal Court booked, the end was still not in sight.

Rickson had a hunch that, "like a good chef, if I brought in the Rylance element we'd get in a domain that would really release the flow. And that's what happened." Back at the farmhouse, Rickson suggested that Rylance read aloud "Daffodils," from Ted Hughes's "Birthday Letters," his final collection, which drew on his life with Sylvia Plath. It's a poem about grief, making sudden turns from the gentle depiction of the couple picking flowers "among the soft shrieks / Of their jostled stems" to the savage foreshadowing of death: "wind-wounds, spasms from the dark earth, / With their odourless metals."

Rickson and Butterworth had spoken in the past of their admiration for Hughes, and "Daffodils," in which human experience is rooted in the cycles of the natural world, overlapped with the themes of Butterworth's play. Hearing Rylance read, Butterworth said, ignited an ambition to write something equal to Rylance's talent. He renamed the play "Jerusalem," after the William Blake poem, adapted by Hubert Parry into a popular hymn that is sung on St. George's Day. It provides a sort of bathos: the grandest expression of Englishness is used to describe the goings on of a group of drifters.

"Had that not happened, we probably wouldn't be sitting here talking about it," he said of Rylance's reading. "It had such a fundamental effect, because you were suddenly aware of what this person was capable of. You knew the second that it began that what you were hearing was the poem; it was the clearest transmission. It came through on the



*"He's still in my nervous stomach."*

clearest frequency, and I had never experienced anything like it in my life. It was like hearing Aretha Franklin sing.”

If you missed “Jerusalem” when it was onstage, the only way to see it is to go to Blythe House, in West London, a grand outpost of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Butterworth doesn’t like plays on film—he compares them to “being told about a dinner party that you weren’t at”—and he refused to give permission for a commercial DVD of the production.

In a small room, on a tiny TV, you are able to watch one of the most requested DVDs in the V. & A.’s collection, recorded at the Royal Court in 2009. Even under such circumstances, “Jerusalem” is extraordinary. It is also very long, leaving one bleary-eyed and a little blasted, wandering down Hammer-smith Road to be asked by security guards, “You all right, love?”

“Jerusalem” is devastating in the way that, say, a Stevie Smith poem is devastating: it nails that lightning swerve from comic to tragic and trivial to meaningful, so that the audience feels, at certain points, as if it had plunged through a trapdoor. The hero, Rooster Byron, is a petty drug dealer, liar, shagger, all-round rogue, and venerable pisshead in the English style, whose great unwinding speeches start out vaguely Shakespear-ean—“Friends! Outcasts. Leeches. Undesirables”—and end with something more akin to the Sex Pistols: “God damn the Kennet and Avon. Fuck the New Estate!” As with most Butterworth plays, outwardly nothing much happens—the story is of a man getting evicted from his trailer in a forest in the southwest of England. Rooster and the teen-agers who hang around his trailer summon a world on the fringes, which tells us precisely why the center isn’t holding.

The early version, “St. George’s Day,” had foundered when Butterworth tried too hard to make it about the state of England. It was “very raw,” Rylance said. “I’ve always felt he writes very subconsciously and at a kind of feral, almost animal level.” It was only when Butterworth abandoned his grand plans that he ushered in the very elements he thought he’d abandoned: “Jerusalem” was widely taken as a commentary on English national identity, that ambigu-

ous mixture of bravado, self-abasement, and sardonic pride in which pretending to be a shambles provides cover for keener movements.

“Jerusalem” is also a play about kindness. When, toward the end, Rooster is brutally beaten by thugs from the village, one implicitly understands it to be a statement about how marginal figures are treated by the mainstream. Like so many of Butterworth’s characters, including James Brown in this year’s biopic, Rooster is full of shit. He is also touching and warm, broken and tender, self-mythologizing and self-mocking. “Riches. Fame. A glimpse of God’s tail,” he says, in one of his wild speeches. “Comes a time you’d swap it all for a solid golden piss on English soil.”

The difference between a play that works and one that doesn’t is infinitesimal and huge. For Butterworth, something is working when “the connections that I normally make accelerate, and you’re suddenly in a state where you’re making them all over. And it becomes a play.” Butterworth knew “Jerusalem” was good because he wrote it in a blur and revised every day during rehearsal. “I didn’t feel defensive,” he said. “I was open to the process. And something strange was going on, where you’re working at a speed you’re not capable of on a normal day. A madness you slip into. But it can be really beneficial.” (Butterworth is less fun to work with when he’s on an unsure footing. During the rewriting of the movie “Edge of Tomorrow,” he lashed out at Doug Liman, the director, who recalled that “almost immediately afterward Jez said, ‘You know, if I ever attack you again personally, you should just know that means I know I’m wrong.’”)

“Jerusalem” transformed the way people thought about Butterworth. Ben Brantley, in a review of the Broadway production in the *Times*, said, “It thinks big—transcendently big—in ways contemporary drama seldom dares.” The play and its performances had left him in a state of “glassy-eyed rapture.”

A few years ago, Butterworth went to an exhibition of Robert Capa photos in New York. Capa’s contact sheets were on display, and you could see the pictures leading up to each famous shot. The differences between photos came down to a matter of milliseconds, yet, Butter-

worth said, “the one before, that is so nearly the shot that rings like a bell forever,” had no resonance at all. “And it taught me something about the difference between nearly and really. Those days where you’re looking at a page and thinking this is an imitation of itself—it could be as close as the frame before the actual one, and it’s nothing. It’s nothing.”

The Butterworth kitchen in Somerset is a riot of kids’ shoes, dishes, books, plants, two Aga ranges, and cats flopping about on the flagstone floor. On the wall of the downstairs loo there’s a poster for the movie “Airplane!” with a note from Jerry Zucker, one of the directors, scrawled across it: “Jez—please forgive me for corrupting your childhood. If I had only known how impressionable you were.” The farmhouse was Butterworth’s retreat in the months after “Jerusalem” opened. The play won two Olivier Awards and transferred to Broadway (where it lost out to “War Horse” for Best Play at the Tonys). When Butterworth finally got back to his desk, he once again faced the challenge of unseating a hit.

He had a more secure base from which to fight it this time. The farm is strikingly situated, with Exmoor National Park behind it and rolling fields in front, where the River Exe meets the River Barle to almost moatlike effect. In September, Butterworth greeted me at the door, bouncing lightly on his toes and wearing the accessories of youth—or, rather, of the parent of young daughters who force one to wear their hand-crafted string bracelets.

It was a Saturday morning, a few days after our meeting in London, and Butterworth was back in Somerset for the weekend. (Butterworth and his wife recently split up.) He took me to his writing shed, two fields north of the farmhouse, stopping halfway up the hill to explain the counterintuitive effect of the landscape; namely, that “you can walk the dog in a circle and never leave the river.” Butterworth pointed out a goat named Boy, “who is a girl”—his daughters named her—and Dogger, the last of a flock of sheep named after areas of the Shipping Forecast, a weather report for British coastal regions read out on the BBC, like a national liturgy. Early on, one of the sheep died shortly

after birth. Butterworth buried it, but something dug it up in the night. “The first lesson you learn is that you’ve got to dig them deep,” he said. The livestock have been radically reduced over the past few years. “Now it’s down to a few animals,” Butterworth said. “The chickens mostly got killed by the fox.”

The cabin is furnished with a single bed, a desk, and three chairs. There is no toilet. Butterworth sat in the armchair, kicked off his boots, and curled one bare foot over the other. The view from his desk looked down over fields toward a cottage, not far from the house. It was there, during the year he was finishing “The River,” that his sister, Joanna, lived after being given a diagnosis of brain cancer. Before her illness, she had been working in London as the registrar at LAMDA, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, but had always wanted to live in the country. At night, when Butterworth looked up from his desk, he could see the light in Joanna’s room.

If the intimate setting of “The River” had an immediate precedent, it wasn’t in any of Butterworth’s plays but in “Fair Game,” the 2010 film about Valerie Plame, the ex-C.I.A. agent, and her husband, Joe Wilson, the former Ambassador, which Butterworth wrote and produced while finishing “Jerusalem.” In the run-up to the second Iraq war, Wilson was sent to Niger to investigate the possibility that it was selling yellowcake uranium to Saddam Hussein, and his public protest over the use, or misuse, of his findings by the Bush government led to his wife’s exposure.

Butterworth is not political. His response to the conflict (“I didn’t think we should have been at war in Iraq, and I think that’s being borne out right now. It’s the Pottery Barn rule: if you break it, you own it”) wasn’t the reason he said yes, or why Doug Liman, the director, hired him. Both men were primarily interested in the dynamic of the marriage between Plame and Wilson, played by Naomi Watts and Sean Penn; Butterworth and John-Henry depicted the union as both tender and fraught with conflicting egos.

Responses to the film were mixed, but Butterworth makes no apology for avoiding the political controversy. It is a question, he said, of “knowing what you’re good at” and where your genuine

interests lie. “After meeting Valerie and—I can’t remember his name, whatever his name was; I love that I can’t remember his name, I’m such a prick—the character Sean played, they were in such a compelling situation because he needed the world to know who he was and she desperately needed the world not to know who she was. You could tell the second he walked into the room that he was desperate for this, and she didn’t want it to happen.”

Butterworth worked on several scripts during this period, among them “Get On Up,” and he returned to “The River” in a different mood. Living in the countryside had, to that point, made him think of the “unbelievably visceral” horror of the natural world, the fact that two feet from his door “there’s this godless game playing itself out.”

Lately, something else had struck him. “If all those winds are blowing in one direction, then there’s one wind blowing in the opposite direction, and it might be called mercy,” he said. “That you are capable of not eating the thing in front of you, that you’re not just driven by the same relentless maths. There’s some other quality there. And what is it doing there? What is that idea? Is it just an extension of how we protect our larger needs?”

Butterworth’s parents, lapsed Catholics, considered religion foolish, and he used to agree. Whether or not he had now become religious was irrelevant, he said. “My brain was. My brain had been set up around all these rituals and observances for tens of thousands of years before me, that would respond to the sun and the moon in numinous terms, that would respond to hunting, and to births and deaths in those terms, whether or not I thought it was nuts,” he said. “It’s why story is there in the first place.”

It’s one of the ideas of the play—that the conversion of life into myth, the act of curating one’s own experience, is a defining aspect of what it is to be human. The day Butterworth finished writing “The River,” his sister died. The play is dedicated to her. Afterward, he said, “I suddenly couldn’t believe how many brothers I had. It had never seemed like that.”

And what of grief? “The main thing that you learn from grief is that you

might as well try and get over it, because it’s coming around the mountain again. It’s just going to come, and come, and come, and come, and when you go it’s somebody else’s problem.”

In “The River,” Butterworth wanted all the dramatic elements pared down. No pyrotechnics, no flights of verbosity, but a singular story about the way people love each other. “A lifetime’s work, to try and say one thing that’s true.”

It comes down, in the end, to a question of structure. Butterworth has an image in his head of a play without plot, in which, like a good relationship, the balance is achieved through equal weight distribution. “It’s almost like nails in a building,” he says. “If you could put it together with none and just make everything lean on everything else, it would be perfect.”

There is a risk that “The River” will infuriate audiences. Some will arrive expecting “Jerusalem.” Others will be there for Wolverine. Hugh Jackman, who described the play to me as a piece of “chamber music,” hopes they remain open-minded. “I love people coming in not knowing what to expect,” he said. “If that means someone who goes to every X-Men movie comes to see me playing a fly fisherman trying to sort out his relationships, fantastic.”

Quite apart from taking pride in the show, Butterworth is pleased with “The River” for reasons of perversity. He talked about Neil Young, one of his musical heroes, following up his hit album of 1972, “Harvest,” with a series of more muted records, among them “Tonight’s the Night.” He said, “He’s playing ‘Tonight’s the Night’ to an English audience, and they’re screaming at him for songs off ‘Harvest’ and they’re all off ‘Tonight’s the Night,’ and at the end he goes, ‘I’m going to play you something you’ve heard before,’ and they all cheer, and he played ‘Tonight’s the Night.’ Again.”

For Butterworth, the continuity is in the people around him. Writing a play is hard enough. “It’s like going deep-sea diving. You wouldn’t want to do that on your own.” ♦

---

#### HEADLINE OF THE WEEK

*From the Minneapolis Star Tribune.*

MINNESOTA MEN, WOMEN SHARPLY  
DIVIDED ON NEARLY EVERYTHING

“RIVETING AND EXTREMELY PROVOCATIVE—  
**GET READY TO GASP!**”

NY1

“*DISGRACED* COMES ROARING TO LIFE ON BROADWAY!  
Terrific, turbulent, with fresh currents of dramatic electricity.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES

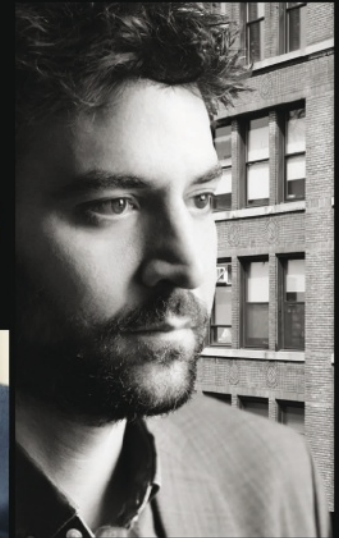
“SO GOOD,  
SO DRAMATIC.  
THIS IS SOMETHING YOU’LL  
NEVER FORGET.”

LIZ SMITH



“SHATTERING!  
A smart work of  
unusual daring, one  
that should be seen  
by anyone who cares  
about theater.”

NEWSDAY



“SCORCHING  
AND  
SHOCKING!”

TIMES OF LONDON



“ELOQUENT  
AND  
PASSIONATE!”

TIME OUT NY



“INGENIOUS!”

NEW YORK MAGAZINE



Photos by Andrew Eccles

“BREATHTAKING!  
A raw and blistering  
play that packs  
real punch and power!”

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARI DHILLON GRETCHEN MOL & JOSH RADNOR  
DANNY ASHOK KAREN PITTMAN

**DISGRACED**

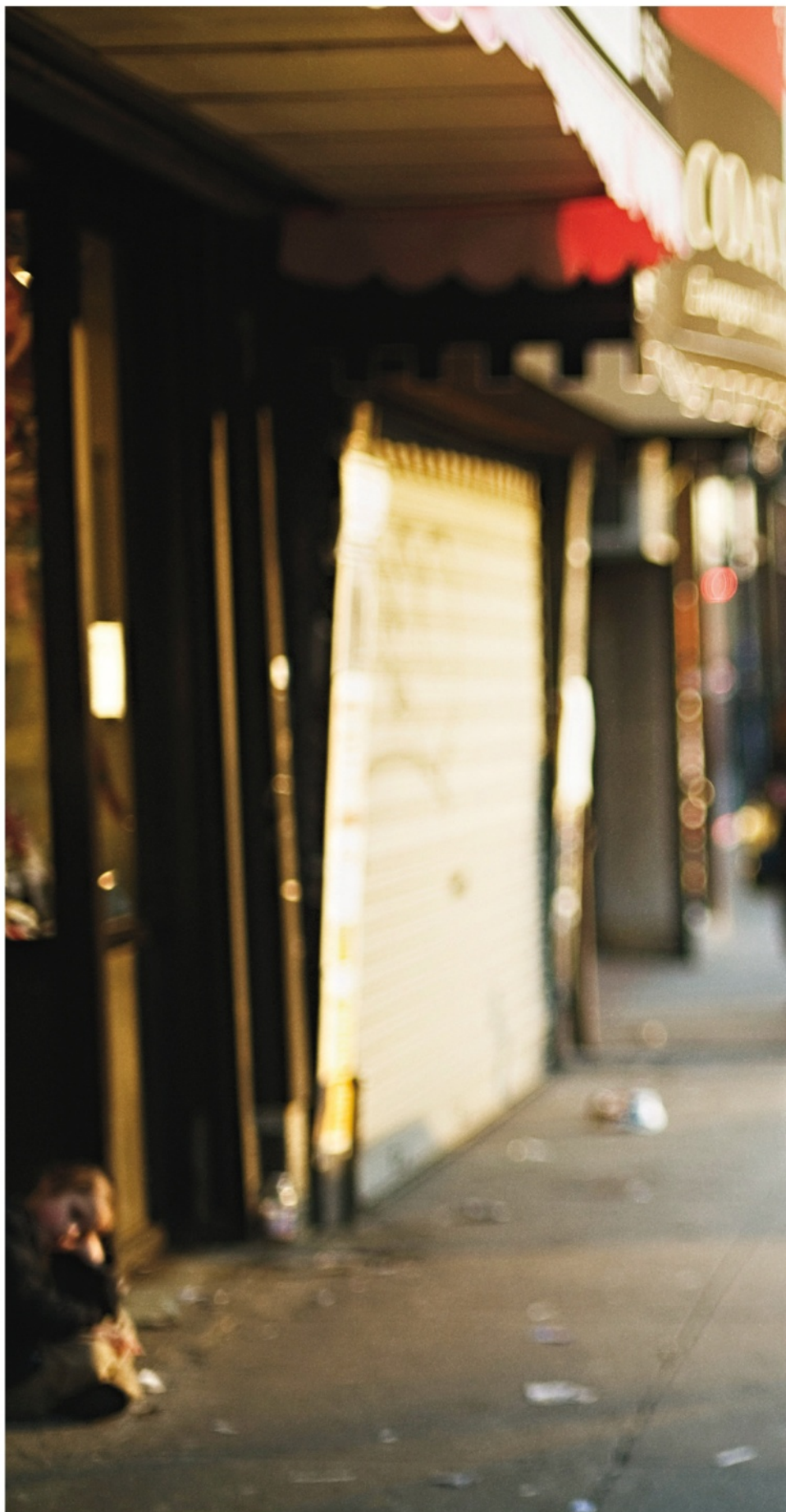
THE 2013 PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING PLAY BY AYAD AKHTAR  
DIRECTED BY KIMBERLY SENIOR

NOW PLAYING ON BROADWAY • LYCEUM THEATRE, 149 W 45th St. • Telecharge.com • 212-239-6200 • DisgracedOnBroadway.com

Sam Kellner's reputation in the Hasidic community of Borough Park, Brooklyn, began to suffer in 2008, when his teen-age son told him that he had been molested by a man who had prayed at their synagogue. Kellner's first instinct was to run the man over with his van, but he didn't know if his anger was justified. Molestation was rarely discussed in the community, and it didn't seem to Kellner that any of the prohibitions in the Ten Commandments explicitly related to it. The most relevant sins—adultery and coveting a neighbor's belongings—didn't capture the depth of the violation. Kellner couldn't pinpoint what was lost when a child was sexually abused, since the person looked the same afterward. But he sensed that molestation was damaging, because he knew a few victims, and they had gone off the *derech*, or religious way. "They became dead-enders, lost souls, outcasts," he told me.


Kellner, a heavyset man with hazel eyes and a long, graying beard, never spoke about sexual matters with his six children. They would take classes about the human body (with a focus on how to get pregnant) only after their marriages were arranged. Kellner took his son to a modesty committee, called *vaad hatznius*, which enforces standards of sexual propriety among Borough Park's hundred thousand ultra-Orthodox Jews, the majority of them Hasidic. *Vaad hatznius* disciplines residents who freely express their sexuality or behave lewdly. In a community where non-procreative sex is considered shameful, molestation tends to be regarded in roughly the same light as having an affair. When children complain about being molested, the council almost never notifies the police. Instead, it devises its own punishments for offenders: sometimes they are compelled to apologize, pay restitution, or move to Israel.

Kellner had once been a top administrator at the Munkacz synagogue and yeshiva, in Borough Park, but he had fought with other leaders about financial and educational policies. He had left the job and started a toner business, collecting discarded cartridges and reselling them. His son's alleged abuser, Baruch Lebovits, was



MAGNUM

*In exchange for political support, Brooklyn politicians give Hasidim latitude to police themselves.*



A REPORTER AT LARGE

# THE OUTCAST

*After a Hasidic man exposed child abuse in his tight-knit Brooklyn community, he found himself the target of a criminal investigation.*

BY RACHEL AVIV

*They have their own emergency medical corps, a security patrol, and a rabbinic court system, which often handles criminal allegations.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON

the descendant of a rabbinic dynasty, a prominent cantor with twenty-four grandchildren. Kellner told *vaad hatz-nius* that he wanted to report his son's abuse to the police, because he didn't trust that the issue could be dealt with internally.

The committee granted him permission, as long he had the approval of a rabbi. The rabbi would have to make an exception to the Talmudic prohibition against *mesirah*, the act of turning over another Jew to civil authorities. According to some interpretations of Talmudic law, a Jew who informs on another Jew has committed a capital crime. He is a "wicked man," who has "blasphemed and rebelled against the law of Moses," the twelfth-century Torah scholar Maimonides wrote. The law was meant to protect the community from anti-Semitic governments. Kellner said, "The way history tells it is that if a Jew was arrested he was thrown in jail and never heard of again."

Hasidim, whose movement emerged in the eighteenth century as a mystical, populist alternative to traditional Judaism, are defined in part by their concern for self-preservation. Kellner is the son of Hungarian Holocaust survivors who re-created in Brooklyn a community that had been destroyed by the war. Men dress in black frock coats; married women wear long skirts and hide their hair, which is considered alluring, under shawls or wigs. They speak Yiddish, and resist television, the Internet, and other secular forms of entertainment. Hasidic parents take literally the Lord's order to "be fruitful and multiply"—they intend to replenish a culture devastated by the Holocaust—and Hasidim are now the fastest-growing segment of the Jewish population in New York City. Sixty percent of the city's Jewish children, many of them Hasidic, live in Orthodox homes.

Kellner, who was a member of a synagogue that is closely affiliated with the Satmar sect, the largest Hasidic community in New York, wasn't sure that the prohibition against *mesirah* made sense in a country where, he said, "the justice system is credible enough." Although the Satmar community dis-

trusts secular government, it participates fully in the democratic process. Hasidim typically vote as a bloc, delivering tens of thousands of votes to the politicians their leaders endorse. In exchange for the community's loyalty, politicians have given Brooklyn's Hasidim wide latitude to police themselves. They have their own emergency medical corps, a security patrol, and a rabbinic court system, which often handles criminal allegations.

Kellner sought counsel from Rabbi Chaim Flohr, the leader of an institute where rabbinic scholars study how the teachings of the Torah translate to contemporary dilemmas. After listening to Kellner's story, Flohr called the modesty councils in Borough Park and Williamsburg (where there are sixty thousand Hasidim) to see if other children had reported being molested by Lebovits. Flohr wrote in an affidavit that "numerous complaints and allegations of a similar nature had been made against Baruch Lebovits dating back over a long period of time." Flohr told Kellner that he was justified in going to the police, because Lebovits could be considered a *rodef*, or pursuer, someone who is endangering the lives of other Jews. In a letter, Flohr wrote, "Behold I make known in the public arena: to praise an honest man, namely Mr. Shloma Aron Kellner, may his light shine, that how he acted in regards to the government was based on a query before a rabbinic court and was done according to our Holy Torah. . . . It is forbidden to trouble him or humiliate him."

With the rabbi's approval, Kellner took his son, whom I'll call Yossel, to the offices of the Brooklyn Special Victims Unit, in Crown Heights, to speak with Steven Litwin, the senior detective. A studious and introspective boy, Yossel explained that Lebovits had offered him a ride home from a school outing late at night, then reached over to the passenger seat and molested him. He said that Lebovits was soon moaning and grunting. He told his teacher what had happened, but the teacher said that Lebovits was a "respected person" and instructed him

not to think about the incident again.

Litwin found the boy's "claims to be extremely credible," he wrote in an affidavit. But he told Kellner that the crime was a misdemeanor, and that it was unlikely that Lebovits, a first-time offender, would receive jail time. Disappointed, Kellner said that Lebovits had molested other boys, too. "O.K., so help me find them," Litwin told him.

Kellner went back to the modesty council and was given the name of another boy, Joshua, who had complained about Lebovits. (All victims' names have been changed.) Joshua said that, starting in 2000, when he was twelve, Lebovits sometimes drove alongside him while he was walking to school, honking his horn and encouraging him to get into the car, where Lebovits performed oral sex on him. Joshua said that, on other occasions, Lebovits molested him in the mikvah, a ritual bath that was in the basement of his synagogue.

Joshua had gone to a yeshiva for students with developmental disabilities. His family was poor, and he begged for charity outside synagogues and weddings, a common practice in Borough Park, where the poorest members of the Hasidic community live and pray next to the wealthiest. They patronize the same businesses on Thirteenth Avenue, a commercial strip of kosher restaurants and shops. Although Kellner had never met Joshua, he drove to his house and offered him work helping to plan the wedding of a mutual acquaintance. Kellner gradually steered the conversation toward Baruch Lebovits, and urged Joshua to report his abuse. Joshua became jittery and hyper. "Listen, unless you go to the authorities, you'll never feel relaxed," Kellner told him. "You'll never feel unviolated."

On March 6, 2008, Joshua told Detective Litwin that he had been molested by Lebovits on more than thirty occasions over four years. Once, he said, Lebovits had picked him up on his way to school and anally raped him in a building near his yeshiva. After each encounter, Lebovits apologized and promised he would never do it again.

Five days later, Baruch Lebovits was arrested in front of his house. Although



Joshua's name wasn't publicly released, everyone in his neighborhood seemed to know that he had gone to the police. Natalie Hadad, his best friend, said, "People would call him and say, 'If you testify, bad things are going to happen to your parents. If you testify, you're going to get thrown out of Borough Park.'"

A few months later, Kellner spoke with Dov Hikind, the assemblyman who represents Borough Park. Hikind hosts a weekly radio program, and he had recently dedicated three shows to the problem of sex abuse among the ultra-Orthodox. Hikind said that, after the show, more than a hundred victims had called or visited his office to complain about multiple offenders. One of the victims was a twenty-year-old named Aron, who said that Lebovits had repeatedly molested him in his car, beginning when he was sixteen. A year later, he fell in with a clique of teen-agers who were known to be O.T.D., or off the *derech*, and he began using heroin or cocaine almost every day.

Aron had tried to leave the Hasidic community, but he struggled to assimilate into the secular world. Many of the yeshivas in Brooklyn teach in Yiddish and provide less than two hours of secular education a day. Aron had a heavy Yiddish accent, a rudimentary grasp of written English, and no diploma. In a video filmed by a friend, Aron complained about his limited education and social skills. He said that he didn't know how to interact with women—he had been forbidden to mingle with them or look them in the eye—and no one had taught him "what your body is about." He had struggled to process what was happening when Lebovits, a pious man, put his mouth on Aron's penis. "My head, like, exploded," he said. "Call it an epiphany, I guess."

Aron's schoolmate Boorey Deutsch said that he and his friends had known that Aron was molested by Lebovits. "We saw them together," Deutsch told me. "And every day we saw Aron breaking down. He stopped playing with us. He hung out in the corners. Then we started bullying him. I even recall slapping him once in the face."

Aron felt that he had little to lose

when Kellner urged him to report his abuse. Ian Christner, a mental-health advocate who worked with Aron, said that Kellner adopted a paternal attitude toward Aron, who was often so high that he nodded off in the middle of conversations. "Sam Kellner saw the way that victims in the community were suffering," Christner told me. "He is a real tough guy, and he has got a sense of fairness. It's not a high-placed sense of social justice that comes from being a scholar. It's simple and straightforward. If he feels like people have wronged him or his family, he'll make sure that they hear about it."

In October, 2008, a second indictment was brought against Lebovits, naming Aron as a victim. A few weeks later, Aron was invited to the home of Berel Ashkenazi, the spiritual adviser of his former yeshiva, who was a colleague of Baruch Lebovits's son. It was a Friday afternoon, a few hours before businesses closed for Shabbat. Ashkenazi served Aron food, made polite conversation, and then, Aron said, offered him between five and ten thousand dollars to drop out of the case. (Ashkenazi denied this, and said that Aron came to him seeking compensation.)

Although Aron disliked Ashkenazi, he was tempted by the offer. He told Kellner that he needed the money.

"Don't be crazy!" Kellner shouted. "I could get you two hundred thousand dollars!" Kellner, who barely had enough money to support his family, told me that he was willing to say anything to keep the case intact. He asked a rabbi, Yisroel Makevetzky, if he had permission to report Ashkenazi to the police for tampering with a witness. Makevetzky held a hearing on the matter in a yeshiva classroom on the edge of Borough Park and concluded that Aron was a *moser*, an informer. He ruled that Ashkenazi was right to dissuade Aron from testifying in criminal court, "as this is a serious transgression." In his ruling, he wrote that Ashkenazi should "help the young man in following the just path, and will begin in this after the young man removes himself from the jurisdiction of the secular courts."

Aron eventually described the situation to Detective Litwin, who documented the incident in his notes, and forbade Aron to accept money from anyone. Aron's father, Abe, who owned a kosher Italian frozen-food company, lost several customers because of the case, but he supported his son's decision to go to trial. Abe told me that the Mishnah, the first major work of rabbinic literature, says that it is the obligation of the community to stop a *rodef* from making his next attack. "It's in the



"I feel like my best passwords are already behind me."

books," he told critics. "Look it up!"

Soon, Aron became the object of intimidation and threats. A Hasidic medical volunteer, who helped Aron with his addiction, told me that "at some point people started reaching out to me. The messages were never specific, but it was pretty obvious that I need to read between the lines: you need to let him relapse. You need to let him crack." The medical volunteer (who, like many people I interviewed, requested anonymity, because he didn't want to be ostracized by his community) met with Litwin. "I tried to explain to him that there is no way he's going to get the type of cooperation he wants," he said. "Unless you really understand how this community works—what tactics are used to intimidate these victims, to prevent them from coming forward, to manipulate them into feeding the authorities wrong information—you will never deliver."

On holidays, it used to take Kellner an hour to make his way into the synagogue, because he had so many people to greet. Now only a few people in his prayer group responded when he made conversation. Some yelled that he was a *moser*. He began saying his daily prayers elsewhere. He also let his interest in his toner business lapse. He was too inflamed. "When it comes to your kid,

you overdo it—you lose your mind," he said.

He didn't dwell on the insults—in response to criticism, he usually shouted that Rabbi Flohr had approved everything—but he worried about the effect on his children. Yossel found the case so embarrassing that he denied his participation to his brothers and sisters. "There was never talk in my house about this whole Lebovits thing," Kellner told me. "My other kids heard people talking on the street, and they used to have to ask my wife, 'Which one of us was molested?'"

Kellner worried that the psychological dysfunction he saw in Joshua and Aron could eventually afflict his son. He wondered if it was possible that Lebovits had nothing to do with their fragile mental states; maybe it was just a coincidence that, on top of all their problems, they had been molested. "I was hoping to wake up one day and they tell me there's a new study and we've all made a mistake," he said. "Molestation doesn't make any permanent damage. It's no worse than yelling at your kid."

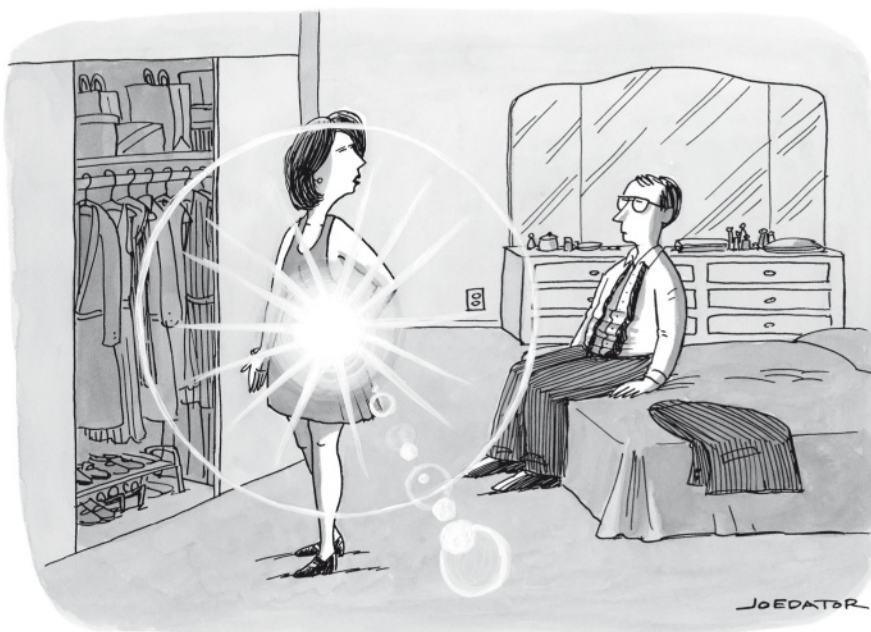
But Yossel already seemed more cautious and isolated. He was no longer welcome at his yeshiva in Borough Park. "They ignored me and my son, and, when summer was over and the new school year started, they gave me

a hard time," Kellner said. "They said, 'Oh, maybe you need special ed for your child.'" In the fall, he sent Yossel and his younger brother to yeshivas outside the city. Kellner never contemplated moving, because all the major Hasidic communities—in upstate New York, Jerusalem, London, Montreal, and Antwerp—were connected, and he assumed that everyone already knew his story. The idea of moving to a non-Hasidic neighborhood was too far-fetched to consider. "What are we going to do—give up our beliefs, our religion, our everything?" he said.

In the fall of 2009, Kellner was notified of a summons issued by Rabbi Makevetzky to participate in what was described as the "case of Mr. Shloma Aron Kellner, may his light shine, and the Lebovits family in the matter of injury of the son." Kellner assumed that the hearing was a trap, designed to force his son out of criminal court. He told the rabbi that he would cooperate only if someone else paid for the hearing—the rabbi charged a hundred and fifty dollars an hour—and for the cost of being represented by a secular lawyer. An acquaintance of one of Lebovits's sons paid Kellner's expenses. Then, Kellner said, the man came back with an offer: Kellner should accept two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to drop the criminal case. (Lebovits's oldest son, Chaim, denied that this happened. He added that Kellner was always looking for money.)

Kellner was insulted by the offer. "What would I say to my son?" he said. "That I took money so he could be used as a prostitute?" At a meeting at the district attorney's office, he told Detective Litwin and three prosecutors in the sex-crimes division that people were trying to bribe him. According to one official at the meeting, Kellner complained that the only victims who were willing to come forward were already outcasts. He warned, "Stay on top of them, or the other side will buy them off."

Not long after, Kellner drove to the home of one of Lebovits's sons, Meyer, whom he had known since he was a child, to complain about an invoice that he had received from Rabbi Makevetzky. He had been charged eight-hundred dollars, even though the



"Does this lens flare make me look fat?"

negotiations for the rabbinic court had collapsed. Meyer, who surreptitiously recorded the conversation, didn't directly address Kellner's concern about who would pay for his expenses. Standing on the sidewalk in front of his house in Borough Park, he began speaking of the shame that his family was enduring, and he accused Kellner of violating a law in the Torah. "You cannot punish a person unless you warn him," he told him.

Kellner insisted that the modesty council had tried to warn his father and had given him opportunities to cooperate. "I am not going to justify myself now," he said. "Perhaps it was half right. Perhaps it was three-quarters right. Perhaps it was only a quarter right."

"Didn't you put together an entire case?" Meyer said. "Didn't you become God's police?" He said that, if Kellner had warned him directly, "I would have taken care of the problem. We would have done everything."

"I don't believe that you will ever understand," Kellner said. "But I cannot go to a person and tell the person that his father did it."

The men began arguing about whose reputation had been hurt more by the case. They were both upset that the allegations would prevent their children from marrying well. Kellner begged Meyer to persuade his father to plead guilty, so that his son wouldn't have to testify at a trial. But Meyer said that the prosecution wasn't offering his father the plea deal he wanted: no jail time, just probation. He suggested that, if Kellner didn't want his son to be exposed, he should pull him out of the case.

"I cannot drop it," Kellner said.

"But you don't want to go to trial!"

"But after all my child was treated unjustly!"

"True."

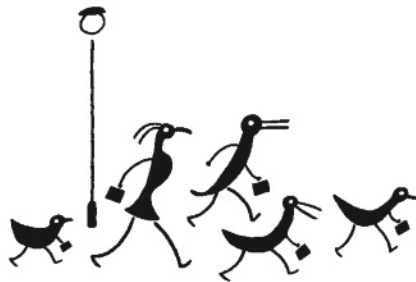
"I don't want to drop it," Kellner repeated.

"So you want to settle?" Meyer asked.

"No!"

Kellner had hoped that all three victims would testify at the same trial, but a judge ruled that trying the cases together would prejudice the jury. Joshua's case was scheduled to go first. In November, 2009, the prosecu-

tor, Miss Gregory, met with Joshua at her office, and he seemed ready for trial. Three weeks later, she received a message from John Lonuzzi, then the president of the Brooklyn Bar Association. Lonuzzi, a civil attorney, said that Joshua would no longer be cooperating with the prosecution, because it was causing him "severe stress" and he was "suffering from a variety of psychological issues." In an affidavit,



Gregory wrote that she made multiple appointments to meet Lonuzzi and Joshua, but all the meetings were cancelled. When Joshua didn't comply with four subpoenas, she mentioned to the chief assistant to Charles Hynes, the district attorney, that she was concerned about the possibility of witness tampering, but no one followed up. After Joshua dropped out of the case, he confided to Detective Litwin that he had never retained Lonuzzi and didn't know who had. Litwin wrote in an affidavit that Joshua said that he was under pressure and was afraid, but he wouldn't elaborate. (Lonuzzi denied this account, and said that he had no involvement in witness tampering.)

Aron's trial began in March, 2010. With no material evidence or eyewitnesses, it hinged on Aron's credibility. Lebovits's lawyer, Arthur Aidala, the current president-elect of the Brooklyn Bar Association, dwelled on Aron's history of sneaking into synagogues late at night and stealing cash from charity boxes. Aidala told the jury that Aron had fabricated a story about being abused so that he could extort money from the Lebovits family. "He disrespects the court and our system," Aidala said. "The whole thing—he made it up to get money. He didn't get the money, and now he is stuck."

The only witness for the defense was Berel Ashkenazi, the spiritual adviser at Aron's yeshiva. Ashkenazi testified that

Aron was a "nervous child" who "didn't have patience." He told the jury that Aron was pursuing the charges against Lebovits in order to pay for his drugs. "It bothers me that he wants to lie about an innocent person," he said.

Gregory, the prosecutor, asked Ashkenazi, "Do you consider Aron to be a traitor for what he is saying against the defendant?"

"What means the word 'traitor'?" Ashkenazi asked.

"Let me ask you this," Gregory continued. "Do you understand the concept of a *mesirah*?"

"*Mesirah*?"

"Maybe I am not pronouncing it, but isn't that a Jewish person is not supposed to perform—"

"A Jewish man is not allowed to go to court without the permission from his rabbi," Ashkenazi said.

"And if that Jewish person doesn't go to his rabbi are there any consequences?"

"I never heard," he responded. "I don't know."

"Sir, wouldn't such a person be stigmatized in your community?"

"The rabbi will talk to him," he said.

"Isn't it possible that a consequence of that could be that this person would be stigmatized within the community?"

"It depends."

"It depends on what?"

"Depends on how he did it," he said.

The jury found Lebovits guilty on eight counts of sexual abuse. In the month between the conviction and the sentencing, nearly eighty people sent letters to the judge, requesting mercy for Lebovits. They described him as charitable, kind, blessed with a beautiful singing voice, and compassionate toward helpless people. Zalman Teitelbaum, one of the two Grand Rebbe's of Satmar, the highest authorities among the Satmar Hasidim, wrote, "In the name of Almighty God and for the sake of compassionate justice, I appeal to your God-given wisdom to treat Mr. Lebovits with the utmost understanding."

The judge, Patricia DiMango, sentenced Lebovits to the maximum penalty on eight counts, to run consecutively, for a total of up to thirty-two years—a harsher sentence than anyone had expected. The average sentence given to defendants convicted of similar

crimes is two years. She said, "It is imperative for courts to send a clear and unequivocal message that abusing and harming children will not be tolerated."

One of Kellner's relatives told me that after the trial "no one talked about the real issue, the victims. Instead, they talked about the problem of Sam Kellner going on a crusade." He believed that the lengthy sentence "triggered everything. Now the Lebovits family would not let this go down. They were going to spend millions of dollars and fight, fight, fight."

Aidala, Lebovits's defense attorney, told me that the trial was one of the worst and most surprising losses of his career. Immediately, he began second-guessing his strategy. A year before, he had given the district attorney's office a tape of a recorded conversation that he thought indicated that his client's family was the target of extortion by Kellner. After discussing it with sex-crimes prosecutors, Aidala had dropped the subject.

Now Aidala wanted to broach the topic of extortion again. He was comfortable in the district attorney's office, where he had begun his career. He was close to the D.A., Charles Hynes, who had been in office for twenty years, and to his family, and to several top officials. He had volunteered on all of Hynes's reelection campaigns and frequently attended his fund-raisers.

On April 27, 2010, six weeks after the trial ended, Aidala went to the district attorney's office and met with the chief of the rackets bureau, Michael Vecchione, who was also a friend. Initially, Aidala didn't focus on Kellner. He spoke about a case that was easier to substantiate: he said that, days before, a friend of Kellner's named Simon Taub had extorted the Lebovits family. Taub had said that his son had been molested and threatened to go to the police unless he was compensated by the family. A few weeks later, in a sting operation, detectives from the rackets bureau wired Chaim Lebovits, a businessman who had made a fortune in oil and diamonds. Chaim went to Taub's home and caught him on tape accepting money.

After he was arrested, Taub said that prosecutors told him, "If you cooperate

## HALF-LIGHT

That crazy drunken night I  
maneuvered you out into a field outside of

Coachella—I'd never seen a sky  
so full of stars, as if the dirt of our lives

still were sprinkled with glistening  
white shells from the ancient seabed

beneath us that receded long ago.  
Parallel. We lay in parallel furrows.

—That suffocated, fearful  
look on your face.

Jim, yesterday I heard your wife on the phone  
tell me you died almost nine months ago.

Jim, now we cannot ever. Bitter  
that we cannot ever have

the conversation that in  
nature and alive we never had. Now not ever.

We have not spoken in years. I thought  
perhaps at ninety or a hundred, two

with us, you will be home in an hour." They pushed him to implicate Kellner in an extortion plot. Taub said that he didn't have the information that the prosecutors wanted. "To cooperate, I had to lie," he told me. Instead, he pleaded guilty to attempted grand larceny and was sentenced to probation. The alleged abuse of his son was never investigated.

Chaim told me that the crime was a "miracle," because it lent legitimacy to his family's complaints. Soon, they insisted that Kellner had been after them, too. They said that Kellner had offered to "make the case go away," but they had refused. As evidence, they gave the rackets bureau the audio recording that the sex-crimes division had already heard. The recording captured a conversation in Yiddish between Meyer Lebovits and Kellner about who would pay the costs of the rabbinic court. The English translation provided to the district attorney's office was so laden with emotional outbursts and Talmudic references that it is possible to miss the

context and understand only that Kellner is asking for money. An assistant district attorney requested that Meyer Lebovits be given a polygraph test, to see if he was lying about his family being extorted by Kellner, but Vecchione said no. According to a prosecutor with knowledge of the case, "There was a strong sense that the investigation was a favor that Mike Vecchione did for Arty Aidala, a very close friend." (Vecchione and Aidala deny that their friendship affected the case. Vecchione disputes many details of this account.)

The rackets bureau encouraged the Lebovits family to get information out of Aron. Under the guidance of Vecchione, who is now retired, the family paid for one of Aron's friends, also a drug addict, to take Aron to a rented house in Florida and question him about the case. (Vecchione denies knowing about the video before it was made.) The friend pretended to be making a movie of Aron's life, and enlisted two young filmmakers (also from Hasidic families) to direct the video. They urged Aron to open up about his relation-

broken-down old men, we wouldn't  
give a damn, and find speech.

When I tell you that all the years we were  
undergraduates I was madly in love with you

you say you  
knew. I say I knew you

knew. You say  
*There was no place in nature we could meet.*

You say this as if you need me to  
admit something. *No place*

*in nature, given our natures.* Or is this  
warning? I say what is happening now is

happening only because one of us is  
dead. You laugh and say, Or both of us!

Our words  
will be weirdly jolly.

That light I now envy  
exists only on this page.

—Frank Bidart

ship with Kellner. “In order for me to build the script of your life, I have to know the whole twist,” one of the filmmakers says, in the footage.

Aron, who was smoking marijuana for much of the filming, was less interested in talking about the case than about his sense of estrangement. Sitting on a cream-colored sofa, in a T-shirt and black jeans, he looks like a patient in his first therapy session, relieved that someone is finally listening to him. “I feel like an atheist, but I feel bad feeling like an atheist,” he told the filmmakers. “I want to live up to the place where I come from, to be Jewish.” He spoke, too, about his bond with Joshua, who had disappointed him by dropping out of the case. He said that when Joshua described his abuse to the grand jury, before the indictment, the court reporter wept while typing. “If you saw [Joshua] speaking, you’d have cried,” he said.

The filmmakers tried to direct the conversation away from Aron’s emotions. They seemed confused by the fact that Aron had risked his reputation by testifying

in court, asking what he had gained. “Kellner told you he was going to give you money?” one of them said.

“This wasn’t the thing—no,” Aron said.

“You never got money?”

“No, that’s not true, that’s bullshit.”

“What could Kellner sell you?”

“Nothing. That is the joke, that’s what I want to say.”

The filmmakers seemed unhappy with his response. One told Aron, “You would never have gone to court if not for that jackass Kellner [who] wanted money.”

“No, no, no, no,” Aron said.

“That’s how I want to make the movie,” the filmmaker persisted. “He’s a crazy man, this Kellner.”

“Do you want to hear the truth?” Aron continued. “He let me go the truthful way. I proceeded truthfully and honestly.”

“But why did Kellner have the power to schlep you?” the filmmakers asked.

“Who didn’t have the power to schlep me?” he said. “I had such a soft heart.”

Aron was proud that he had gone through with the trial, unlike Joshua, who he said had been pressured and offered money. “They terrorized him,” he said. “They took real victims, and they shot down their lives.” He said that he had expected Lebovits to call him, beg for forgiveness, and say, “I’m an elderly man, please don’t do this to me.” He figured that, if Lebovits had apologized, he would have dropped the case. “I’d say, O.K., I’m sorry. Whatever. And we forgive each other.”

The video did not produce information useful to the district attorney’s office, but the Lebovits family was still confident that they could prove that Kellner was an extortionist. Chaim told me that Hynes specified for his lawyers exactly which kinds of evidence they would need to arrest Kellner. “They said that, if you can provide A, B, C, D, E, and F, then we will move in with the indictment,” Chaim said. (Hynes, through his lawyer, declined to comment for this story.)

The Lebovits family hired a Hasidic private investigator named Joe Levin, who runs a company called T.O.T. Consulting—the letters standing for the Yiddish phrase *tuchis afn tish*, or “put your ass on the table.” Levin said that at his first meeting with Chaim, at the Plaza Hotel, he was instructed to find anything that might cast Kellner in a negative light. (He said that he was so troubled by what he observed that he felt justified in telling me about his work for the family.)

Beginning in the fall of 2010, Levin bugged Kellner’s van, and he and his employees followed him. He listened to hours of Kellner’s conversations each week. But he came up with little related to the case. “It was devastating,” Levin told me. “I really went nowhere.”

After he had been working on the case for a few months, he said, he was asked to drive to the home of a friend of Hynes, where a birthday party was being held. Levin said, “It was a very fancy house, and people just came in and out.” Meyer Lebovits attended the party briefly, he said, and was joined by two *machers*, or “big shots,” who mediate between secular political figures and the community. Levin stayed within three hundred feet of the house,

because he had been asked to record the *machers*' conversations. It is not uncommon for Hasidic power brokers to record conversations to use as leverage. (Meyer denied going to the party.)

After the party, Levin said, the relationship between the Lebovits sons and the district attorney's office immediately became much warmer. He was surprised by how frequently the Lebovits family received updates about the investigations. When he overheard phone conversations, "It did not sound like law enforcement talking to a criminal's family. It sounded like two good friends." Levin said that he can remember few cases where the pressure on him was higher. The message he got from the Lebovits sons was "Now we have the O.K., so anything you bring to us, we are going to be able to do something with it."

In late 2010 and early 2011, Aron was summoned to the district attorney's office a number of times and interrogated about his relationship with Kellner. His father, Abe, told me that Aron, after being the key witness for the prosecution, now felt as if he were being treated as a criminal. Aron had little information to offer. He repeatedly insisted, as he had at trial, that he had never accepted money.

Joshua proved a more forthcoming witness. After failing to communicate with the sex-crimes division for nearly a year, he reappeared with his lawyer, John Lonuzzi, to say that Kellner had "brainwashed" him. "Lebovits never molested me," he said. "Everything I said was false." He said that he made up the story because Kellner gave him a hundred dollars a week and Detective Litwin took him out for meals.

Lebovits's cousin Moshe Friedman, the publisher of an influential Yiddish newspaper, *Der Yid*, and the adviser to Zalman Teitelbaum, the Grand Rebbe, also accused Kellner of criminal behavior. Testifying before a grand jury in March, 2011, he said that Kellner came to his office and begged him to persuade the Lebovits family to hand over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Yosef Blau, the senior spiritual adviser at Yeshiva University, said that he was amazed that Friedman would testify before a grand jury, given the community's rules against informing on other Jews.

"It's extraordinary that this major figure in the community is willing to be a *moser* to get Kellner," he said. He believed that Friedman got involved because "Kellner's behavior was seriously threatening to the community's power structure."

Two weeks after Friedman's testimony, Kellner came home after shopping in Williamsburg and found a tall man in casual clothing standing outside. The man had a companion, who flashed a police badge and instructed Kellner to get inside his Jeep. The driver took a circuitous route through Borough Park, and Kellner began to worry that he was being kidnapped. Yossel, who had watched his father being taken away, called the police. "An unmarked car just picked up my father," he told a sergeant. "There were no lights, no nothing."

Twenty minutes later, Kellner arrived at a familiar building, the office of the district attorney, in downtown Brooklyn. He was placed in a holding cell in a hallway. His wife brought him his diabetes pills and his prayer book. He fell asleep to the sound of officers talking about a ring of criminals with stolen credit cards. He wondered if he was being apprehended for some sort of violation with his toner business or if he had accidentally got involved in a drug bust.

In the morning, he was handcuffed and escorted to Kings County Supreme Court, two blocks away. He was greeted by a crowd of local reporters, who took pictures as he walked down the hallway to court. Kellner's lawyer, Israel Fried, said that when he handed Kellner the indictment he appeared "bewildered and shell-shocked." The indictment said that he had made "repeated demands to Meyer Lebovits, the son of Baruch Lebovits, for payments in excess of \$50,000, in return for which the defendant Kellner would, through the defendant Kellner's ability to control the cooperation and the content of the testimony of the complaining victims, cause the dismissal of criminal charges." He faced up to twenty-one years in prison.

At a press conference that morning, Charles Hynes announced the charges while standing beside an easel with a large photograph of Kellner's face on it. He told a room full of reporters that "child abuse has to be prosecuted vigor-

ously, but we also have to be very, very careful about false complaints." Later, on a Jewish radio show, Hynes said, "We're confident we have the case. . . . I believe there was a substantial effort by Mr. Kellner to gain money, for his own benefit, by making up stories."

A day after Kellner's arrest, Lebovits's appeals lawyers, Alan Dershowitz (the former Harvard law professor, who worked on the O.J. Simpson case) and his brother, Nathan, persuaded an appellate judge to free Lebovits on bail, pending the determination of his appeal. Alan Dershowitz, who grew up in Borough Park, told me that "the Kellner information put the government in a difficult position: on the one hand, they are proclaiming that my client was extorted, and, on the other hand, they are claiming that he is guilty of eight felonies." Within a week, Lebovits was released, after thirteen months in prison. He arrived in Borough Park in time for the first night of Passover and led a Seder at his home.

Kellner was in jail for about thirty-two hours, which he saw as punishment for putting Lebovits in prison for thirty-two years. Although he had acted for what he thought were good reasons, there was also a part of him that had wanted revenge, and it was this impulse, he believed, that God was punishing. "When you hurt someone, you better make sure your motivations are pure," he told his son. "Because if your intentions aren't pure, you are going to pay the price."

Yossel's case against Lebovits had been dismissed six months earlier, without explanation. No one from the sex-crimes bureau had notified him or his father. Yossel told me that if he had a friend who was molested he would advise him to avoid the secular courts. "Why would you report to the police if you're just going to shame yourself and open your wounds and be more destroyed?" he said.

Yossel was a "Cadillac of a boy," one rabbi told me, but he had reached his twenties and had yet to marry. Hasidic families typically marry off their children in descending order: the younger siblings wait for the older ones to be matched, ideally around the age of eighteen. Kellner's four youngest

children had been stalled since 2008, when their father first went to the police. Kellner said that his brothers thought he was crazy for allying himself with loners like Joshua and Aron. “They tell me, ‘You’ve ruined the family,’” he said. “And the truth is I’m starting to think maybe they are right. If your job is to protect your child, maybe the best thing to do is keep your mouth shut.”

At night, unable to sleep, Kellner paced his house, going over all the details of his indictment. At times, he almost admired the Lebovits sons for spending so much money to save their father. “They honored their father so much,” he said. “You can’t take that away from anyone.” He described their activities as if recounting the chess moves of an opponent. “They masterfully put this thing together,” he said. “Amazing stuff.” His anger was directed largely toward the district attorney’s office. “A thug can only go so far on his own,” he told me.

A Hasidic businessman, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told me that in parts of the Hasidic community there was widespread speculation that Kellner had been framed. He said that Kellner had become the prime example of “how devastated you will be if you go against the rabbis.” He said that Flohr, the rabbi who had granted Kellner permission to go to the police, was an outlier in his approach toward molestation. “He’s not a major power broker,” he told me. “He’s a nobody when it comes to internal, high-level politics.” The businessman believed that Kellner had made himself vulnerable as a target, because he had been sloppy and uninformed in his interactions with law enforcement. “He didn’t understand the legal system, so he was meddling too much,” he said.

In the spring of 2012, the guilty verdict against Lebovits was vacated because of a prosecutorial violation: two pages of Detective Litwin’s notes (about Berel Ashkenazi, the defense witness) hadn’t been disclosed until halfway through the trial. The district attorney’s office promised to retry Aron’s case, but Aron, who was now twenty-four, didn’t want to go through a second trial. “He can’t take the pressure anymore,” his father, Abe, told me. Aron felt betrayed by



*“This is it, Slim. I’m putting you on the next off-peak train outta here.”*

the friend who had taken him to Florida, and now saw conspiracies in daily life. When his car broke down, he wondered if Lebovits’s sons had hired someone to fill the tank with the wrong kind of fuel. When he got in a motorcycle accident, he suspected that the Lebovits family had arranged the collision.

Several weeks after the conviction was overturned, one of Baruch Lebovits’s in-laws approached Abe outside his synagogue and said, “Maybe we can make a closing to this case.” Abe was exhausted by the case, which had hurt his business and restricted the synagogues where he could pray, so he told the Lebovits family that he would agree to negotiate a civil settlement. He asked for several hundred thousand dollars, but they said that was too much. They changed their minds after the trial of Nechemya Weberman, a Hasidic sex offender who, in early 2013, was sentenced to more than a hundred years in prison. “When Weberman got a guilty verdict, all of a sudden it was hot, hot,” Abe said. “They were willing to agree to my number.”

Abe could not disclose how much money he received except to say that it

was enough for his son to “build a house, to build a life.” In exchange, Aron sent a letter to the district attorney’s office stating that he was satisfied with the punishment that Lebovits had already served. Abe and his son were represented by an attorney named Michael Ross, who Abe said had been recommended to him by the Lebovits family and who worked for free. Ross met with Hynes and explained that Aron did not wish to testify at a second trial. Aron wrote to me on Facebook (the only medium through which he felt comfortable communicating) that the Lebovits family, their lawyers, his father, and Ross handled the details of the civil settlement. “I had no clue of anything what wuz going on beind closed doors,” he wrote. (Ross declined to comment, except to say, “Any matter that I’m involved in, the client will always be fully informed.”)

By the time the civil settlement was finalized, Hynes was deep into a campaign for reelection and was confident that he had the support of the Hasidic community. In early 2013, in an e-mail to a colleague, he asserted that an opponent’s “threat about my not getting the

Satmar vote is pathetic.” Hynes had been supported by the Hasidic bloc for two decades and worked diligently to maintain an amicable relationship with leading rabbis in the community. He had a history of offering unusually light plea deals to Hasidic offenders, whose names his office kept confidential—a practice unique to the Hasidic community. *Der Yid*, published by Lebovits’s cousin, ran a full-page notice explaining that community leaders had benefitted from an “open door with Charles Hynes for the past 20 years” and “know firsthand what happens . . . when they got themselves entangled with the law, how district attorney Hynes worked very sensitively and mercifully to avoid sending them to jail.” Jews who supported Hynes’s opponent, Ken Thompson, were “informers and accusers from the dregs of the Jewish community,” who intended to “toss Jews in jail whenever it’s possible!”

In less religious circles, the policies of the Hynes administration came under scrutiny. The links between the Kellner and Lebovits cases were analyzed by two blogs, Failed Messiah

and Frum Follies, which are written by ultra-Orthodox Jews who became disillusioned, and by Hella Winston, a contributing editor at *Jewish Week*, who for the past several years has investigated the community’s approach to sex abuse. In the months leading up to the election, other news outlets exposed the Hynes administration’s record of using unreliable or coerced witnesses to secure prosecutions: three guilty convictions had been overturned, and a panel was reviewing dozens of cases handled by a discredited detective. There were also leaks from within the office, which revealed that Hynes made little distinction between the work of the office and the goals of his campaign: he used asset-forfeiture funds to pay for a political consultant and sought political advice from a judge.

Hynes lost the election, in November, 2013, by fifty percentage points. Minutes after he gave a concession speech, Aidala put his arm around him, walked him to his car, and held the door open for him, according to a privately recorded video.

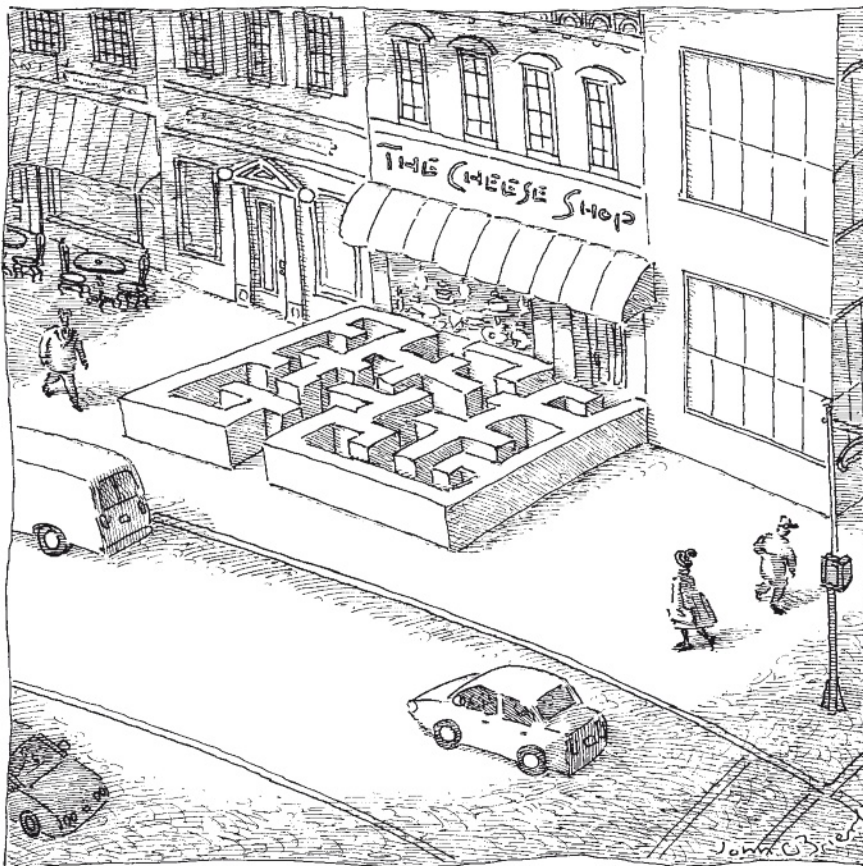
During Hynes’s last weeks in office,

Abe said, he got calls from the Lebovits sons, who were concerned that their civil agreement was no longer strong enough. They now requested a letter stating that Aron was not in good health. “They said they had some information from the higher guys in the D.A. that they need that letter to make the case go away,” Abe told me. In exchange for the letter, Abe said, Baruch Lebovits agreed to apologize to Aron in person—something that Aron had been asking for since the negotiations began. But on the morning of the meeting Aron refused to leave his house. “He was never convinced that they were not scheming,” Abe told me. “He didn’t want to fool around with these people anymore.”

For almost three years, as Kellner’s extortion case dragged on, the rabbis in his community urged him to take a plea deal. They warned him that, as a Hasid, he would never get a fair trial. “They say you are guilty just by having the big beard,” he said. His rabbi told him, “If you know you didn’t do it, what do you care? It’s between you and God.”

Kellner had a new attorney, Niall MacGiollabhú, who began working on the case in the spring of 2013. An Irish immigrant, MacGiollabhú was dismayed that the rackets bureau had relied on evidence with little regard for the culture from which it emerged. “They are lifting things out of that community, dropping it into the wider world, and stripping the things of context,” he said. MacGiollabhú initially assumed that Kellner was exaggerating when he told stories about being followed and secretly recorded, but then audio recordings of Kellner’s private conversations surfaced on a new Web site called Sam Kellner—Alleged Jewish Mob Ringleader Revealed. MacGiollabhú discovered that his own calls, too, were being recorded. He complained to the district attorney’s office that Kellner’s van was bugged, but no one investigated.

When the new district attorney, Ken Thompson, took office, last January, MacGiollabhú warned two prosecutors in an e-mail, “At the moment, your office is being openly mocked in his community.”



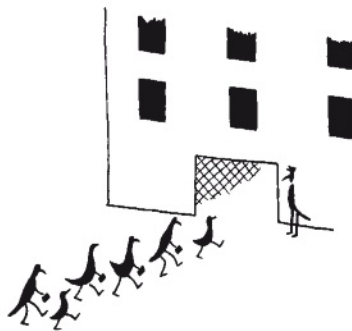
Eric Gonzalez, the counsel to Thompson, told me that the new administration was skeptical of the Kellner indictment. Four prosecutors had asked to be removed from the case, because they didn't believe in it. He said that it seemed as if "the decision had been made to prosecute Kellner, and they were going to go forward with that prosecution whether it was the right thing or the wrong thing to do. And here you had multiple senior people saying it was the wrong thing to do."

A new prosecutor, Kevin O'Donnell, conducted a review of the case in early 2014 and determined that Meyer Lebovits was not credible and the recording of him talking to Kellner was "ambiguous at best." "There are motives of certain witnesses that go beyond this case," he said at a hearing in March. He told the judge that Joshua's statements were "wildly inconsistent" and supported by "no credible evidence." In one interview, Joshua said that Lebovits might have molested him, but he wasn't sure. "Could be a different Lebovits," he offered. A week later, he said that he'd never even seen Lebovits. Joshua had recently moved to Israel, and he acknowledged that whenever he wanted to return to the United States he requested permission from a man named Zalman Ashkenazi, who paid his airfare. Records obtained by the prosecution show that Ashkenazi, who is the brother of the defense witness at Aron's trial, made monthly payments to Joshua's father. (Ashkenazi denied that Joshua needed his permission to travel.)

When O'Donnell signalled that he would submit a motion to dismiss the case against Kellner, MacGiollabhuí said that he wanted to go to trial. He didn't understand how a case had been brought against Kellner, and he wanted to put people on the witness stand. "The people in my client's community are entitled to it," he told the judge. "They are entitled to know why it is that victims of pedophiles in my client's community don't get the justice that victims in other communities get."

MacGiollabhuí consented to have the case dismissed only after O'Donnell told him, last March, that the district

attorney's office would undertake an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Kellner's indictment. But an investigation was never announced. Months later, MacGiollabhuí wrote to the prosecutor, "I now believe that I was lied to." (A spokeswoman from the D.A.'s office said that an investigation was never promised.) Gonzalez would not acknowledge whether or not there



was an ongoing investigation, but he did say that "this district attorney is very concerned about the amount of money and effort used to prevent the Baruch Lebovits case from seeing the courtroom." He said that Aron's civil settlement seemed to be a "very calculated way of buying the victim off."

Two months after Kellner's case was dismissed, Lebovits pleaded guilty to molesting Aron and avoided a second trial. The prosecution was severely compromised by the settlement. In May, Lebovits was sentenced to two years in prison. "You wanted to have it your way," Aron said to Lebovits at the sentencing hearing. "He still won't apologize to me in person," he went on. "He never apologized to me. That's it." Lebovits was released after eighty-three days.

Supporters of both Lebovits and Kellner continue their efforts at intimidation. Two people told me they were afraid that I had been hired by the Lebovits family. Others alerted Kellner that I was a secret agent of the district attorney's office. When I met Chaim Lebovits, in a suite at the Plaza, he told me that if I continued to work on this article I would make a fool out of myself and ruin my career. Chaim vacillated between lightheartedness—he played the shofar, a musical instrument made out of a ram's horn, and encouraged me to have children immediately, before I was too old—and loud rants about Kellner's evil

strategic intelligence. He told me that I could not rely on the documents that the district attorney's office had compiled, because Kellner "talked a smart language," and when it was translated into English his criminal intentions weren't as evident as they were in Yiddish.

Not long ago, Kellner and I met near the office in Crown Heights where Detective Litwin worked before moving to a new unit. Kellner wanted to talk to me only in public spaces, so that he did not violate the prohibition in his community against meeting with a woman alone. As officers walked in and out of the building, they stared at us, apparently confused that a Hasidic man was chatting with a secular woman.

Kellner was still consumed by the case. It was as though he believed that if he recited the details enough times he might figure out exactly what had happened. Since his case, he said, the rabbis had become even less willing to permit victims to go to the police. Recently, when a father whose daughter had been molested asked for advice, Kellner told him, "If you go to the police, you're probably going to end up with zero."

Three officers walked past us for the third time, and Kellner, who almost never turns down an opportunity for conversation, asked them if they knew Steve Litwin. "Steve and I worked together on a case," he said. "Then the D.A. turned against me. And no one stood up for me."

"Really," one of the officers said, casually. He suddenly seemed less interested in us.

"Basically, the D.A. destroyed me."

"Well, Steve doesn't work here anymore," the officer said.

"Yeah, but the question is, Who's going to come here anymore?" Kellner asked.

"None of these guys work here anymore," the officer said. "They're all gone."

"They ruined me," Kellner went on. "This is what is left of me."

"Well, keep fighting the fight," the officer said, as he and his partners walked away. ♦

---

NEWYORKER.COM

A conversation with Rachel Aviv.

# THE DUKE OF DOUBT

*Can Chris Rock make the leap from standup eminence to leading man?*

BY KELEFA SANNEH

In 1988, when Chris Rock had been doing standup comedy for four years, he took part in a special called “Comedy’s Dirtiest Dozen.” The producer’s idea was to gather together performers who were too shocking for the mainstream: Rock’s co-stars included Tim Allen, who hadn’t yet tamed his horny-Neanderthal act for television, and Bill Hicks, who presented antisocial rants as psychedelic parables. But even in this group Rock’s youth and acerbity and race made him stand out; the m.c. introduced him as “the Nat Turner of comedy.” Rock was a high-school dropout who had recently become one of Eddie Murphy’s protégés. After the two men met in a comedy club, Murphy gave him a six-hundred-dollar bit part in “Beverly Hills Cop II.” Rock strode onstage looking much younger than his twenty-three years: a buck-toothed kid with a multicolored leather jacket, a Jheri-curled flattop, and state-of-the-art Air Jordan III sneakers. “I was *born* a suspect,” he said, looking at the audience as if expecting a fight:

Came out my mother’s stomach; anything that happened in a three-block radius, I was a suspect! White America is so scared of black teen-agers. I walk down the streets, women are grabbing hold of their Mace, everybody’s tucking in their chains, people are hitting their car doors, people get into karate stances. I look up in the air, there’s a bunch of old white ladies on the phone—they’ll dial nine-one and just *wait* for me to do something.

His routine, barely six minutes long, was alternately rebellious and raunchy—the highlight was an absurd story about masturbating to the image on a box of Aunt Jemima pancake mix. Rock ended with an impudent gesture that any hip-hop fan would have recognized: he tossed the microphone onto the stage and walked off.

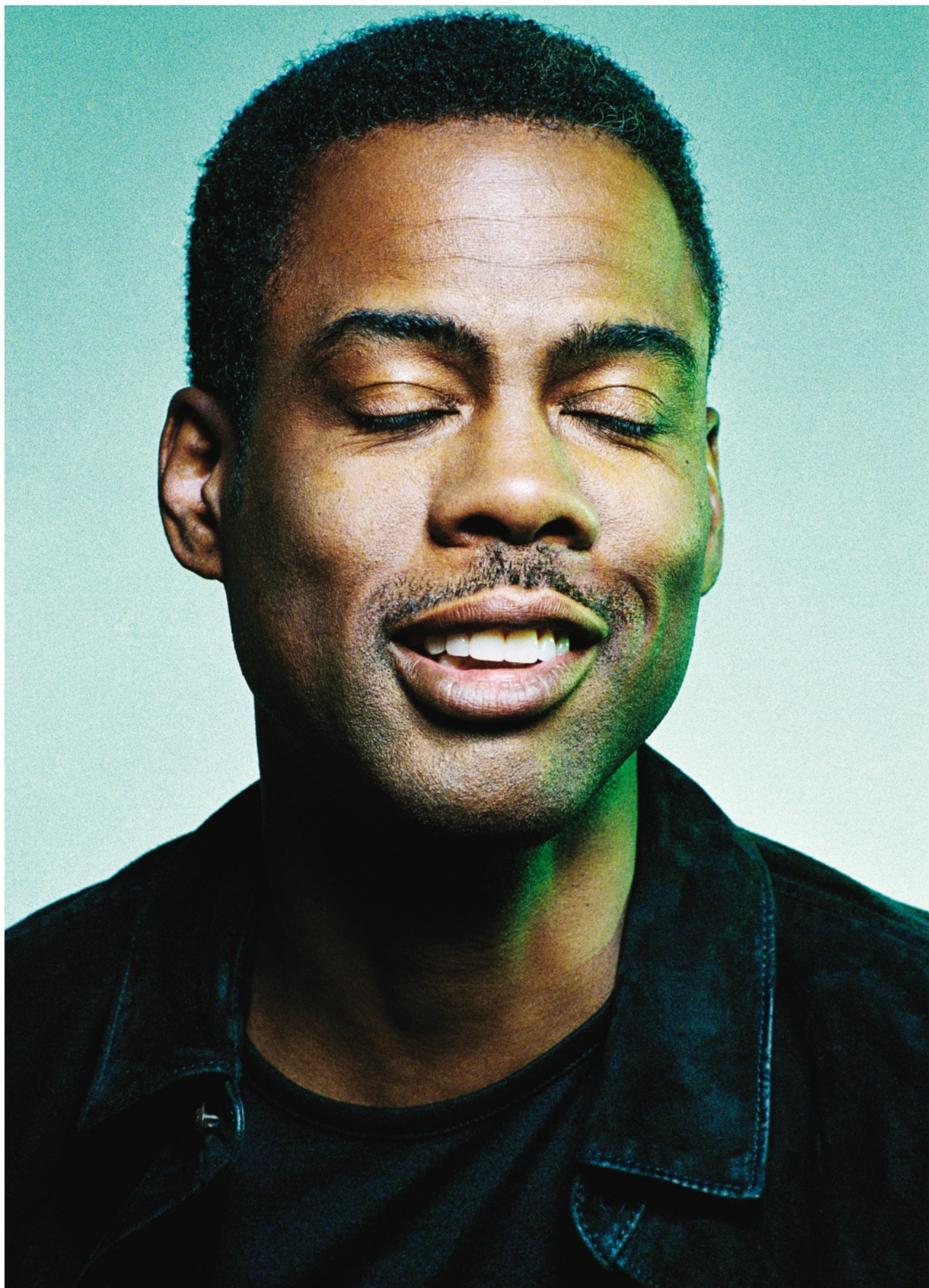
That performance helped earn

him a place in the cast of “Saturday Night Live,” two years later, and that attitude helped make him the defining comic of the hip-hop generation. “You can watch Eddie Murphy and go, This guy really loves R.&B. music,” Rock says. “You can watch Bill Cosby and it’s, like, This guy is jazz. If you watch me, it’s Ice Cube, Run-D.M.C.” Rock is forty-nine now, and in the years since that early routine he has upgraded his hair (natural, neat) and his teeth (whiter, straighter), while downgrading his sneakers—he likes cheap, plain black Chuck Taylors. Otherwise, he doesn’t look much different from the way he did back then. He has the same scrawny body and the same treble voice, an infectious instrument that sounds even better when gently distorted, guitarlike, by a P.A. system. “The standup thing is a calling,” he says. Every few years, he works up a new hour of material, takes it on tour, and then turns it into an HBO special, which wipes the slate clean—according to a prevailing comedian’s code, every joke you tell on television is one you can no longer tell onstage. He uses the time between tours to work on other projects, and to give himself a chance to start missing the presence of a microphone and a crowd. “Part of me gets a little bored with standup sometimes,” he says. “It’s like any kid: you get really good at a video game—what’s the next game?”

It was a Tuesday afternoon in Manhattan, and Rock had found his favorite table in the Mandarin Oriental’s Lobby Lounge, thirty-five floors above Central Park. He has been married since 1996 to Malaak Compton-Rock, a publicist turned philanthropist, and they have settled in New Jersey with their two daughters, who are never far from Rock’s mind. On

this day, the older one had to get from school to volleyball practice, and the younger one, home sick after an asthma attack, called to prescribe herself a Frappuccino, which he agreed to procure. Rock had spent most of the morning at his office, a few blocks away, working on his other career, the one that keeps him busy between standup tours. Almost from the start, Rock supplemented his comedy jobs with acting work; one of his first major roles came in 1991, with “New Jack City,” in which he played Pookie, a crack addict whose craving was so strong that it made his whole body vibrate. (This was not a comic role, at least in theory.) He has often been called upon to help make other people’s movies funnier, but with his new film, “Top Five,” for which he served as both writer and director, he gave himself the kind of role he has never had: the leading man in a movie strong enough to finally convince his fans that he is no longer just a standup.

The notion that there’s anything “just” about being a great comedian has irritated Rock for years. In 1997, talking with Eric Bogosian for the *Times*, he complained that standup was “the lowest medium in all of show business, in levels of respect.” No one ever suggests that a successful director branch out into standup comedy, so as not to be considered “just” a filmmaker. Still, Rock has never been satisfied with a life devoted purely to standup comedy, and “Top Five” is both an expression and a satire of the urge, common among professionally funny people, to be taken more seriously. Rock plays Andre Allen, a famous comedic actor trying in vain to create interest in his new film, “Uprize,” an earnest, misbegotten epic about the Haitian Revolution. One of Rock’s inspirations was “Stardust Memories,” the 1980 Woody Allen movie, in which Allen played



*Rock sees his new film as a last chance. "If this doesn't work, I can definitely see no one letting me direct a movie again," he says.*

Sandy Bates, a comic director who was sick of comedy. Early on, Rock has Andre repurpose Sandy Bates's best-known line. "I don't feel funny," he moans, and he spends the rest of the movie—which unfolds in New York, in the course of a day—explaining himself to a *Times* reporter, played by Rosario Dawson, while simultaneously coming to his senses, or trying to.

"Top Five" began quietly. Rock didn't tell many people that he was writing it, and he shot it independent of any studio; the cast was augmented by comedians he considers to be friends, a group that evidently includes nearly all of them. The movie had its premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, in September, where it inspired a standing ovation and, more important, an informal auction, which was won by Paramount. The studio reportedly paid twelve and a half million dollars for the rights to distribute "Top Five," and promised to spend twenty million more promoting it, with some help from its star.

In all this, Rock's partner was the powerful producer Scott Rudin, who has become his motivator and protector. Rudin likes to think of "Top Five" as a risky bet that paid off. "This movie is a version of daring yourself," he said one afternoon, during a meeting with

Rock. "Because it's not what has ever been your movie sweet spot."

Rock laughed. "I don't really have a movie sweet spot," he said.

Rudin didn't quite agree. Part of the problem, as he saw it, was that Rock had indeed carved out a role for himself in Hollywood, but a limited one. "Realistically, you've been in a lot of Adam Sandler movies," he said. "You've been that guy, and there's always a guy like that in the movie business, the reliable funny guy next to the guy at the center. But it's not enough."

"No," Rock said. "It's not enough."

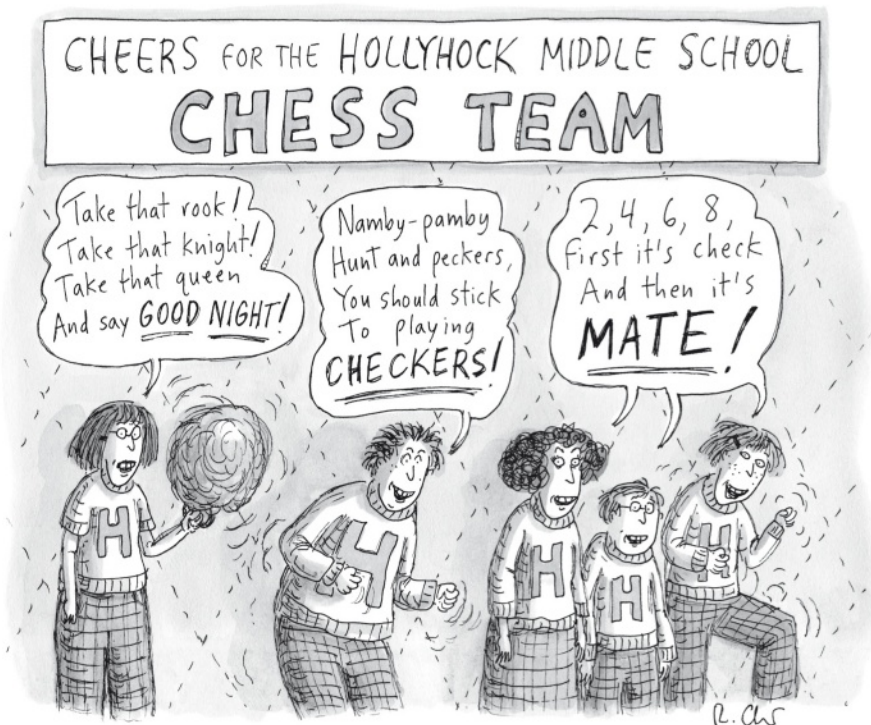
Rock wrote the script while on the set of one of those Adam Sandler movies, "Grown Ups 2," the second installment of a somewhat lackadaisical and very profitable franchise. "I'm No. 3 on the call sheet: Sandler, Kevin James, and me," he said, then reconsidered. "I might even have been four"—behind Salma Hayek, who played Sandler's wife. "Which means I had *so many* days off." He was staying in a rented waterfront house, which he turned into a one-man writer's retreat. "I'm literally looking at the ocean, like fuckin' Hemingway, writing longhand," he said. Time spent on the set also gave Rock a chance to consider the successful career of Sandler, who has been one of his best friends since the nineteen-

eighties, when they both worked at the Comic Strip, on the Upper East Side. "He had the confidence of a black wide receiver," Rock said, admiringly. In the nineteen-nineties, "Adam Sandler movie" became not just a description but a genre, and an industry. "That's something I needed to learn from him," Rock said. "He does his movie *amazingly*. O.K., what's a Chris Rock movie?"

One of Rock's many previous attempts to achieve film stardom was "Down to Earth," a surprisingly wan 2001 reinterpretation of "Heaven Can Wait," about an aspiring African-American comedian who dies and then returns to earth in the body of an old white millionaire. Near the end, when Rock's character finally gets his racial identity back, he tests it out by trying and failing to hail a cab. "I'm black again!" he cries, exultant, as it speeds off. "I'm a black man! Thank God I'm a black man!"

In one of the first scenes in "Top Five," Rock updates and improves the joke. "Black man, trying to get a cab in New York City," Andre says to Dawson's character, extending his arm, hoping to enlighten her about the realities of race in America. Just then, the punch line arrives, in the form of a taxi skidding to a stop.

Rock knows that his films, unlike his standup routines, haven't generally met with rapturous enthusiasm, although some of them might be described as cult classics. "CB4" (1993), which he helped write and produce, was a low-budget hip-hop answer to "This Is Spinal Tap," anchored by a series of loving pastiches. And "Pootie Tang," a Rock production about a black superhero who speaks only in gibberish, became a kind of cultural touchstone partly because it was so energetically reviled upon its release, in 2001. (Pootie's legend lives on in the hip-hop lyrics of Cam'ron, Big Sean, and Kanye West.) But the first two films that Rock directed were neither big hits nor brave misses. In 2003, he re-imagined "The Candidate" as "Head of State," playing an ingenuous Everyman who finds himself running for President—one of the last "black President" fantasies to arrive before



real life intervened. And in 2007 he remade the beloved French film “Chloe in the Afternoon” as “I Think I Love My Wife,” a rather sour romantic comedy. Often, he has taken smaller roles in other people’s movies, cast on the correct assumption that audiences will be happy to see and hear him, even if he doesn’t have a lot to do or say.

As a standup, Rock is verbally brash but physically restrained—“People like to see me *composed*,” he says—and his stage movements are mainly limited to pacing, pointing, and squinting. In films, he can seem inert, as if, in the effort to shed his characteristic comic fervor, he has accidentally shed too much. As he wrote “Top Five,” Rock realized that he didn’t have to create an entirely new persona: he could become a memorable protagonist by rewriting his own life, following the example of Woody Allen, his hero, and also of Louis C.K., the comedian who plays a comedian in his acclaimed anti-sitcom, “Louie.” (He and Rock are friends and frequent collaborators. Louis C.K. wrote and directed “Pootie Tang” and co-wrote “I Think I Love My Wife.”) In “Top Five,” Rock plays not an Everyman but a celebrity, often surrounded by an ambient chorus of passersby shouting “Andre!” or, worse, “Hammy!,” the name of a crime-fighting bear that has become his signature character. Naturally, Andre Allen’s guarded skepticism fades in the presence of a beautiful and tenacious journalist. As the interview evolves into a date, and then into a disaster, Andre becomes increasingly expressive, and Rock is increasingly called upon to act. In the course of filming, Rudin engaged the services of Larry Moss, a prominent coach, to help Rock stop being a director—and, for that matter, a comedian—when he was on camera. “Sometimes when people think, they hold their breath,” Moss says. “And he’s a big thinker. So I kept saying, ‘Breathe, Chris. Don’t think. Stop and feel the floor.’”

On set, whenever someone complimented Rock’s performance in a scene he responded with cheerful self-deprecation: “Just trying to stay in show business.” Unlike Andre Allen, Rock



*“We ought to send PBS some money so it can afford better pledge-break specials.”*

doesn’t have a signature character so popular that he never has to work again, although he does provide the voice of Marty, the zebra, in the three “Madagascar” films. He is a working comic who needs to keep working. “I’ve never made money like Eddie,” he said. “I’ve done fine, but it’s dribs and drabs: two here, one there. I never got, like, a thirty-million-dollar check. I never had a movie make three hundred million dollars that’s just starring me. So I don’t necessarily do it for the money—but I’ve never had so much money I don’t have to think about it.” He sometimes describes “Top Five” as his last chance to get it right. “It was, like, O.K., if this doesn’t work I can definitely see no one letting me direct a movie again,” he said. “I had to think that was a possibility. I mean, how many times can you not have a hit?” He searched for a suitable analogy. “I used to go see Christian Slater movies,” he

said, shrugging. “They don’t really have them anymore.”

During a couple of hours in the hotel lounge, Rock was approached only once, by a young girl, evidently a tourist, who ran near enough to confirm that it was really him and then retreated. But, when he descended to Sixtieth Street, his life became a bit more like Andre Allen’s. He had to get back to New Jersey, and there was no sign of the Uber car he’d ordered. “Uber fuckin’ does this shit,” he said, inspecting the map on his phone. There was a high school nearby, and teen-agers were streaming toward the subway.

“Yo, Chris Rock!” one guy shouted. “Say a joke for me or something, man!”

“Every day,” Rock muttered, without looking up from his phone.

He approached a hotel doorman. “I’m going to Jersey,” he said. “Get me a car, I’ll give him a hundred bucks.” There were half a dozen idling town

cars, but all of them already had assignments. “Motherfucker!” he said, to no one in particular. Finally, a yellow cab appeared, and after a brief negotiation—cabbies aren’t typically eager to cross the Hudson River—Rock got in and the taxi drove off.

In 1993, after three undistinguished years on “Saturday Night Live,” Rock left and joined its black-oriented rival, “In Living Color,” which was cancelled not long after he arrived. By then, the cutting edge of black comedy had moved to HBO, which had created a popular showcase for emerging African-American comedians called “Def Comedy Jam.” The series was helping to make new stars, like Steve Harvey and Chris Tucker, and Rock felt left out. “I was, like, ‘These are the new black comedians, and I’m not a part of this shit? Fuck *that*.’” He got himself booked as a guest host, in the hope that, despite his years on “Saturday Night Live,” home of the white comedy elite, his young African-American fans would continue to think of him as their own. He still pays special attention to black audiences. Earlier this year, for instance, he hosted the BET Awards, a ceremony that is both less prestigious and, possibly as a consequence, more entertaining than the Oscars, which Rock hosted in 2005. “There’s not a lot of black stars without a black following,” he says. “You’ve got to have that bottom, or else you’re just rudderless.”

Rock tends to shoot his comedy specials in front of predominantly black crowds, which gives him license to say things that might resonate differently in rooms full of white people. He recorded part of his debut album at a black-owned comedy club in Atlanta, and one bit started with Rock looking around the room. “Lotta weaves,” he said. “What’s up with that shit?” There was an explosion of howling laughter—he scarcely needed to say more, though of course he did. A few years ago, he turned this observation into a wry documentary, “Good Hair,” about the art and science of caring for black women’s hair. During an episode of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” that featured the film, an African-American woman stood up to protest. “When other races see the

movie, they’re going to laugh—but they’re laughing *at* us,” she said. “You’re telling everything about us. We just want to keep some secrets.”

Rock’s defense was rooted in autobiography. He grew up in a working-class family in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the son of a New York *Daily News* delivery-truck driver, and from the age of seven he was bused to a school in Gerritsen Beach, a largely Irish-American and Italian-American neighborhood on the southern edge of Brooklyn. (“Ain’t nothing scarier than poor white people,” he once said.) He often talks about being bullied, an experience that taught him how to navigate a cultural divide, and also what a luxury it is not to have to. “All the art I do is mostly black,” he told the woman on “Oprah.” “It’s for everybody, but it involves mostly black people, because I’m black. And Adam Sandler’s Jewish, and a lot of his stuff focusses on Jewish people.” He sounded slightly, and uncharacteristically, rattled. “I don’t have a television camera or a movie theatre that only shows to black people,” he said. “If I did, I would.”

There have been times when Rock worried about being left behind. Not long after he departed “S.N.L.,” he was shown up one night in Chicago by his opening act, Martin Lawrence, whose extraordinarily expressive storytelling inspired an outsized reaction in an audience that was supposed to be there for Rock. (He told *Vanity Fair*, “It was like watching somebody fuck your wife with a bigger dick.”) The critic and filmmaker Nelson George, who has worked with Rock for decades, remembers that era as one of reinvention. Rock knew that he excelled at writing jokes, but he resolved to get better at telling them, so he built a rehearsal space in his Brooklyn carriage house, with mirrors on the walls, to practice his physical performance. “Everyone remarks on him stalking the stage,” George says. “That was a very conscious thing: ‘How do I create more energy?’”

When Rock reemerged, he had a bolder, more theatrical style, and jokes that more precisely captured his point of view, which is broad-minded but skeptical. (Years after that night in Chicago, Lawrence saw Rock per-

form in California and paid him a very specific compliment: “You got so many topics!”) Rock’s career began anew in 1996, with the release of a perfectly crafted hour-long HBO special called “Bring the Pain,” which includes perhaps the most startling riff in the history of American comedy. “There’s, like, a civil war going on with black people, and there’s two sides,” he said. “There’s black people. There’s niggas. And niggas have *got* to go. Every time black people want to have a good time, ign’ant-ass niggas fuck it up.” What followed was a profane indictment, perfectly balanced between comic frustration and tragic anger. “Niggas always want some credit for some shit they’re *supposed* to do,” Rock said:

A nigga will say some shit like “I take care of my kids.” You’re *supposed* to, you dumb motherfucker! What are you talking about? What are you *bragging* about? Kinda ignorant shit is that? “I ain’t never been to jail!” What you want, a cookie? You’re not *supposed* to go to jail, you low-expectation-having motherfucker!

All this was palatable, if you found it palatable (and some didn’t), because Rock declined to present it as anything more than the splenetic observation of a guy who was a little older and a lot richer than he used to be—a guy, you suspected, who saw his relatives, and maybe even himself, reflected on both sides of that civil war. An intemperate rebuke about shiftless “niggas” sounded much more ambiguous, and much funnier, coming from the so-called Nat Turner of comedy.

The “black people” vs. “niggas” routine established Rock not just as a great comedian, which is indisputable, but as a potential political spokesman, a role he has rejected ever since. “You’ve never seen me on a political show,” he says. “You’ve never seen me talk about an issue.” But he knows that part of what audiences love about him is his willingness to tell unpopular truths; where more confessional comedians reveal secrets about their lives, he aims to reveal secrets about ours. This means that his act requires a steady supply of unpopular truths to tell, and finding them can take a while. “You get to a point where it’s, like, I’ve said everything,” he says.

"You want the world to change, and you want to change—you don't want to be the same guy."

It has been six years since Rock's last special, "Kill the Messenger," and so, even while finishing "Top Five," he has been making occasional forays to comedy clubs to work on his new set. On a recent Friday night, Rock turned up at the Comedy Cellar, in Greenwich Village, where Estee Adoram, the club's longtime booker, is always happy to squeeze him into the schedule. Colin Quinn, a friend from the early days, was there, having just performed. "Good shit, man," Rock said, and asked Quinn about his girlfriend. "You going to marry her?"

"Aw, leave me alone," Quinn said, fondly, before making an escape.

Rock installed himself at a table marked "Reserved" in the restaurant, upstairs, and ordered some French fries, a Coke, and a chocolate milkshake. He had with him some sheets of cardboard—the remnants of notebooks whose pages had long ago been ripped out—covered with brief phrases. This is how he writes down his routines, using a technique borrowed from his paternal grandfather, who was a cabdriver during the week and a preacher on the weekends; the idea is to always be talking, instead of reading. He managed to eat a few fries before Adoram gave him a cue, and he hopped down a narrow staircase in the back just in time to hear the m.c. say his name, and to hear the audience react with stunned jubilation. "It's not going to be that good—not at these prices," he said, when he got to the low stage. (Admission was twenty-four dollars, plus a minimum of two items from the menu.) "At these prices, I could leave right now!" He imagined the reviews: "Chris Rock came out and he left—it was good! He didn't tell any jokes, but it was good!"

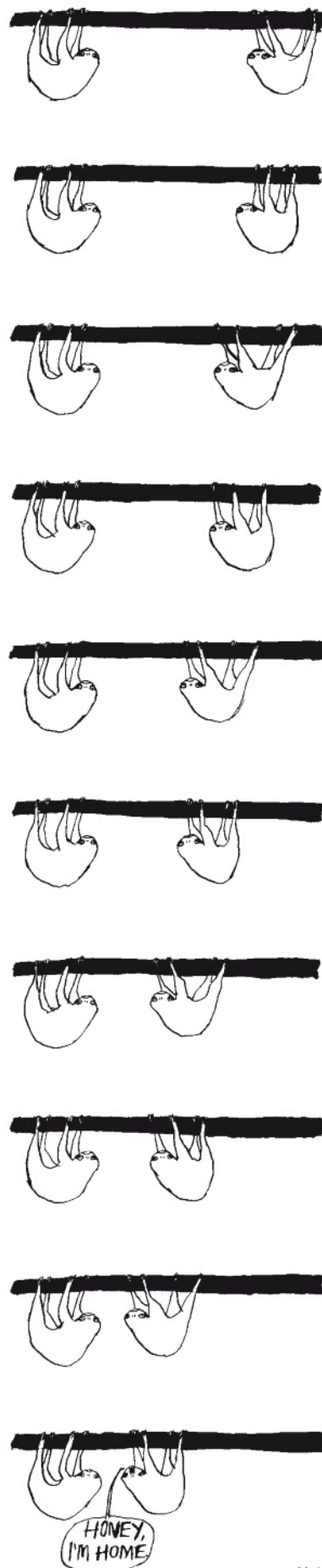
When Rock goes on tour, he is conscious of giving the audience a show: a sharp suit, a crisp set, a ferocious attitude. But on nights like this, when he is testing out material, he changes his body language in an attempt to create the conditions for a clinical trial: he wants to find out which jokes work even when he's not selling them. He slumps against the back wall, fidgets

with the microphone stand, pauses to examine his paperless notebooks. "It's a gym," he likes to say—a place to work out, not to show off. He looked out at the crowd, speaking mainly to himself: "What am I going to talk about?"

There was plenty: a long bit about religion and a short one about bullying, and also a withering take on the alleged coolness of President Obama. "Obama's, like, cool compared to other politicians—but not as cool as actual cool people," he said. "Like, Miles Davis would kick Obama in the fuckin' teeth!" Someone suggested that he say something about the new iPhone, but Rock preferred to consider Ray Rice and Chris Brown, two of the many celebrities who have been caught behaving badly in the years since Rock last toured. "People say there's no reason to ever hit a woman," he said. "No—there's no reason to ever hit a woman *first*. You can hit a woman back—shit, if Oprah hit me I'd knock her the fuck out!" The absurd image gave the crowd permission to laugh at an idea that it didn't necessarily endorse, and Rock pressed on, recalling the media coverage of Brown's assault on Rihanna, who was then his girlfriend. "No one ever asked the question 'Who hit first?'" he said. "Best journalists in the world, not one asked the question. 'It's not important.' Yes, it is! It's the most important question on earth."

The laughter was dying down. "The United States bombed fuckin' Japan," he said. "We killed so many people—like, twelve 9/11s on one day. Because they hit first," he said. "We're bombing up Syria—they cut off two people's heads!" His voice was getting higher and more insistent—he sounded about seventy per cent earnest. "We're going to kill hundreds of thousands of people! And it's O.K.!" He got quiet, and the laughter returned, as the audience warmed to the punch line: "Because they hit first."

After about fifteen minutes onstage, he walked through the crowd and upstairs to his table, where a waiter brought back his half-eaten French fries and half-finished milkshake. "There's no rich way to do standup," he said. "You've got to go to the same club you started at, be around the same bunch of guys you knew twenty-five years ago. You're going to go onstage, and they're either going to laugh or they're not. They'll





*"Does flannel go with camo?"*

give you about six minutes because you're famous. And then you're back to square one."

As much as possible, Rock moves through the city as if he were not famous. "The average guy that's been in as many movies as I have been in—and is black, or whatever—would have three people outside that door," he said, one afternoon, after arriving unaccompanied for a meeting. "The driver downstairs would have a walkie-talkie, and they would correspond: 'O.K., we're moving him downstairs.' No disrespect to anybody, but my heroes were different. Woody Allen doesn't walk around with a bunch of random people, you know what I mean?"

Rock doesn't think of himself as unusually funny. "I'm not the funniest person I know," he says. "I'm not the tenth-funniest person I know. I wasn't the funniest guy on my block. I wasn't the funniest guy in the clubs." To compensate, he says, he had to outwork everyone else. "My nickname for him is the Duke of Doubt," Nelson George says. "He's not someone who revels in his successes. He's already contemplating the next argument, the next thing that could go wrong."

For many people who knew Rock, his underwhelming film career was something of a running joke. George remembers that filmmaker friends of his used to say, "We love Chris, but he really shouldn't direct anymore." The comic and writer Neal Brennan, the co-creator of "Chappelle's Show," has known Rock for more than a decade, and served as a consultant on "Top Five." He says that for years he was puzzled by the disjunction between Rock's meticulously written standup sets and his seemingly tossed-off movies—everything he wrote, produced, or directed had been, essentially, a high-concept remake. "He likes being blue-collar: he likes that his dad was blue-collar, and he brought that blue-collar ethic to standup," Brennan says. "But he never brought that blue-collar ethic to movies. This is the first time. And he did it—he'll hate me for saying this—because Scott Rudin made him."

Rudin and Rock became close four years ago, after Rudin approached him with what sounded like a bad idea: to play a lead role in a new play called "The Motherfucker with the Hat," by Stephen Adly Guirgis, which would make its debut on Broadway. "It read like

something he'd written," Rudin says. "You read it, you couldn't help hearing the words come from his mouth." Rock's character, Ralph, was a recovering alcoholic, a seeming beacon of good sense who slowly reveals himself to be a cold-blooded opportunist. The director, Anna D. Shapiro, hesitated to cast Rock, but was worn down first by Rudin's enthusiasm and then by Rock's willingness to audition, and by his commitment to developing a different kind of stage presence. "Chris is used to making eye contact with the audience," Shapiro says. "The audience shifts and changes, and he rides that." In rehearsal, she sometimes had to admonish him for looking at her—he needed to learn to resist his habit of reading the room.

It was a difficult production—Guirgis kept rewriting all the way through the previews—but the critical notice, during the play's four-month run, was mainly kind. For Rock, the experience was transformative: he was impressed by Guirgis's ability to write new lines every day, and by his own ability to learn them and then deliver them only a few hours later. (As a standup, Rock typically doesn't say anything in a theatre that he hasn't already said, hundreds of times, in a small club.) The play helped him realize that a dramatic project could be as difficult, and as rewarding, as standup. "I think when Chris came to do 'Motherfucker' he was sleepwalking, a little bit, in his life," Shapiro says. By the time the play was finished, Rock was ready to work just as hard on a film.

Rudin says, "I'd always thought Chris was a good director. I didn't always agree with the choice of material." For "Top Five," he urged Rock to present himself as a star. "Don't make yourself a nerdy guy in glasses," he said. (In "I Think I Love My Wife," Rock played the investment banker Richard Cooper—a nerdy guy in glasses.) Rudin's hope was to recapture the rebellious spirit of Rock's early standup routines. He said, "What can we do that's as fuck-off as who you were then? What's the forty-nine-year-old version of dropping the mike?" In "Top Five," as in the previous movies Rock has directed, his character is choosing between two women: a thoughtful journalist, played by Dawson, and a reality

star, played by Gabrielle Union. It is in some ways a kindhearted story, but Union's character—glamorous and un-sentimental—could be the subject of one of Rock's less sparing routines about women. "I don't have a talent," Union laments, at one point, and it's not entirely clear whether we're meant to pity her, laugh at her, or both.

Near the end of "Top Five," Andre Allen makes his way to the Comedy Cellar, and the character and the actor become indistinguishable. Rock used to save his best jokes for his standup—in "Down to Earth," he played a struggling comedian whose material, unfortunately, made his situation seem quite believable. He says, "This is the first movie I just said, 'Fuck it—I'll write other standup jokes.'" Shapiro, the theatre director, saw an early draft, and she remembers Rock asking if she had any suggestions. "I said, 'Yeah, can you take out the stupid jokes about gay people? Or the stupid jokes about fat people?' And he was, like, 'No—but I'll take a look at them.'" The jokes stayed in, and at a recent preview screening they earned roaring responses.

One Friday morning, in the modest theatre-district offices that house Rudin's production company, the two partners were preparing for a conference call with the marketing department of Paramount. The night before, at a thirtieth-anniversary concert for Def Jam, the hip-hop record label, in Brooklyn, Gabrielle Union had introduced the debut screening of the film's trailer. "She got the title of the movie wrong," Rudin said, chuckling—she had called it "Top Ten." Like many producers, he is typically disinclined to receive bad news calmly, but on this day he seemed more like a cheerful fan, happy to share a couch with his favorite comedian. "She was great, though," Rudin said. "She was really charming."

Rock looked up. "You went?" He liked the image of Rudin in Brooklyn, watching 2 Chainz. A decade or two ago, Rock surely would have been there, instead of spending another quiet night at home in New Jersey.

"I got video," Rudin said, regretfully. "I had tickets—I couldn't get out of here."

Rudin was reprising the role of mo-

tivator. "I think he has to go back and make another movie," he said. "Not in four years—another movie should be out in two years, two and a half years." Rudin even made the impending marketing call sound like proof of Rock's arrival as a legitimate movie star. "He's going to walk into this room, there's going to be forty people on the other end of this teleconference that are all there for him," Rudin said, and then he looked at Rock. "That's a big moment in your life," he said. "They're here for you. You're not part of someone else's movie. This is your thing."

Rock laughed. "I'm Sandler!"

"Exactly!" Rudin said.

Rock is closer in spirit to Woody Allen, whom he once called the greatest comic mind since Chaplin. But what he discovered was that he could make an Allen-inspired movie—small, self-conscious, profoundly New Yorkish—without muting his other interests. "In a weird way, this is the blackest movie I've ever done," he says. "It's really black. It's *blue-black*." One extended scene, set in an apartment in the projects, is essentially an excuse to fill a room with African-American comedians, including Tracy Morgan, whose patter contains an unfootnoted allusion to a speech that Suge Knight delivered at the 1995 Source Awards. The film refuses to stop and explain its many hip-hop references. (The title refers to the characters' habit of asking one another to name their favorite rappers.) During that convivial apartment scene, Andre swaps jokes and pronouncements with old friends and relatives, speculating about what Tupac Shakur would be up to if he were still alive. When someone says that Shakur would be a political leader, Andre turns skeptical.

"Tupac might be in a Tyler Perry movie right now—you don't know!" he says. "Tupac might be the bad, dark-skinned boyfriend in a Tyler Perry movie. I would *hope* he's a senator. But he might be kicking Jill Scott down a flight of stairs." In another scene, Andre sums up the movie's split personality by granting Charlie Chaplin an honorary place in his hip-hop pan-

theon, calling him "the KRS-One of comedy."

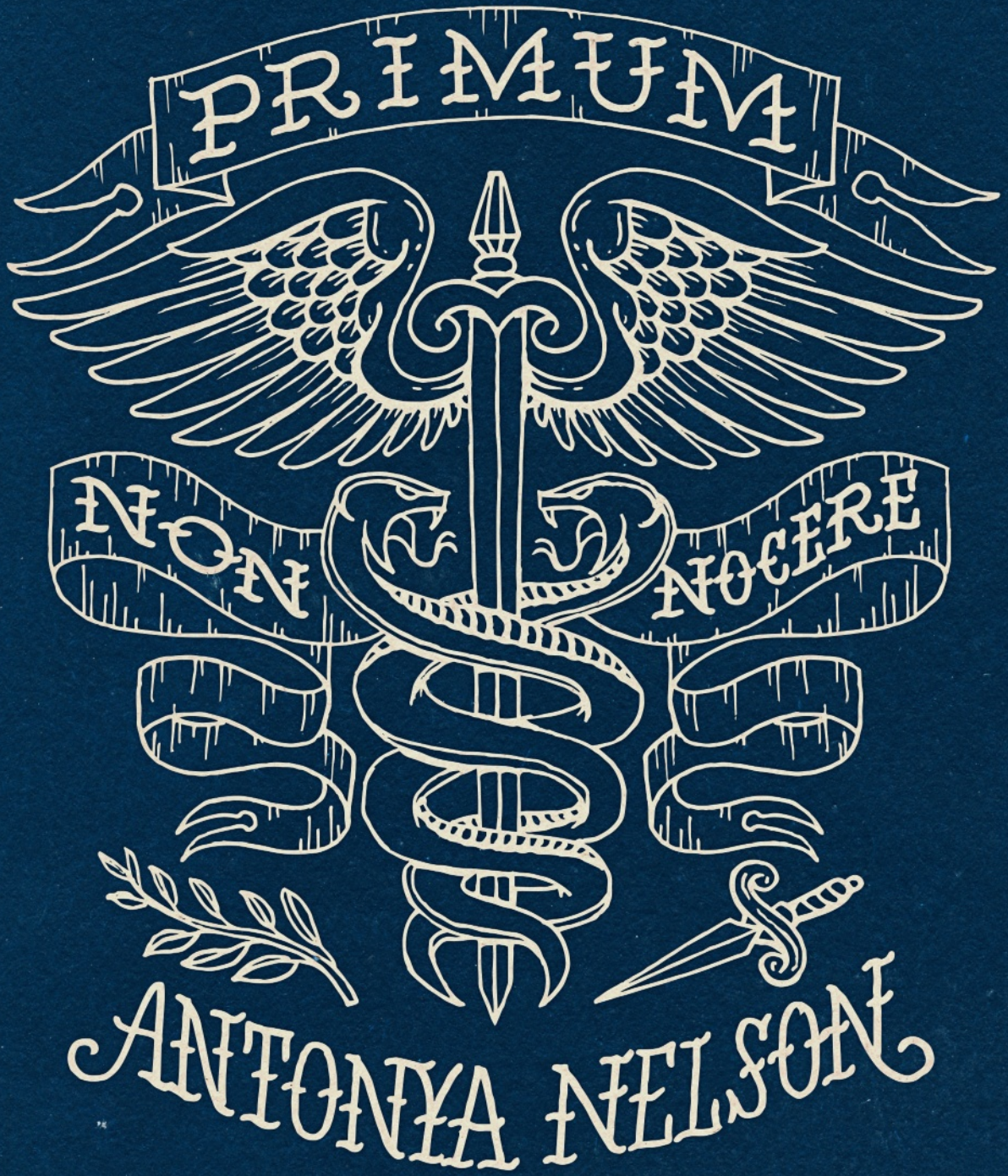
Louis C.K. thinks that the solution to Rock's movie problem was obvious in retrospect. "His honesty and thoughtfulness and intelligence—it isn't a good match for just putting a guy up there, building a big premise around him, and raking in the bucks," he says. "Chris was trying to figure out the formula to make a movie, but all he really needed to do was be who he is onstage." By writing a movie inspired by his own life, Rock found a way to put his disparate obsessions onscreen, depicting a world in which Woody Allen is no less or more important than Tupac Shakur. Rudin describes "Top Five" as "half a Richard Linklater movie and half a Robin Harris concert film," though he surely hopes that it will appeal to viewers who have never seen "Waking Life," or who have never heard of Harris, a stubbornly non-mainstream black comedian, who died in 1990. The movie succeeds as a hybrid, both moodier and bawdier than anything else Rock has done onscreen. Rock said, "Even if the movie doesn't make a dime, I've figured out the *tone* of movie I should be in."

In fact, Rock is already thinking about the next movie that he wants to direct, although it has less in common with "Top Five" than with "Uprize," Andre's disastrous movie-within-a-movie about the Haitian Revolution. Rock has been reading about Nat Turner, and he believes the time might be right for a bio-pic that

tells Turner's story in all its complexity. "Nat Turner's a fucking *nerd*," Rock said, with admiration. "He gets taught to read and write by his white *massa*, and he gets sold, and now he has to go out in the fields like everybody else, and he's *so* not equipped for this shit." He liked the idea of Turner as

a snob who became a revolutionary only after getting the snobbery beat out of him. "Nat Turner had the worst attitude," he said. "He was worse than the white guys! Then he gets put out there. It's, like, 'Oh, shit! Everything I've been taught is bullshit!' And he organizes guys and has this bloody fuckin' takeover." Rock had an onstage gleam in his eyes. "I'd *love* to do that movie," he said. ♦





“Cell-phon-ing?” her mother would ask her patients when they called, and Jewel found it embarrassing. “Are you cell-phon-ing?” her mother would demand, waving her family away, so that she could take the call in private. Her patients were what she discouraged her children from labelling “crazy.” It was her job to listen to their problems, and then her duty to never repeat what she knew to anybody else. The town was smallish; you saw everyone at the grocery store, especially on Sunday mornings. It was never a pleasure.

But, finally, Jewel understood. “Are you self-harming?” her mother was saying. Her mother’s patients were “borderline,” and their biggest issue was self-harm, which was typically, although not exclusively, cutting into their arms. Jewel suddenly understood because it was time—she was now in high school, with plenty of self-harmers. And cell-phoners, for that matter, too.

“What you’re going to learn,” her mother had told Jewel more than once, “is that no one ever gets beyond high school. It’s all high school for the rest of your life.” Not true, Jewel knew, yet also true.

Her brother, Robby, had left for college, and Jewel was the only child at home, the only person for her mother and stepfather to puzzle over at the end of the day, their shared project, last chance. She knew that she wasn’t as much trouble for her parents as Robby had been, and was, perhaps, disappointing as a result: she gave them no occasion to rise to. Jewel had never been arrested, never run away, never passed out drunk on the driveway with vomit in her hair. Raising Robby had been what they did. And now he was two states away, of a somewhat legal age.

So Jewel was alone, after school, when the woman came to the door. She was dressed like a homeless person, like a Ren Faire lady, with a bulky floral velvet bag, which she clasped with both bangled arms as if it held a child or a dog, something heavy and unwieldy. A turkey drumstick, Jewel thought, remembering this year’s Ren Faire. The rat-a-pult. The roaring dragon in the local moatlike lake. And the personnel, those people who called themselves the Creative Anachronisms. “Where’s Claudia?” the woman demanded.

“At work.”

Jewel had been watching a scary movie, one her brother had sent her; the knock

had literally made her jump, and her heart was still throbbing in places where it wasn’t, like her throat and her eyes. The teen-age girls in the film were out in the woods, and had split up, like idiots, per usual, guaranteeing carnage.

The woman on the porch had emphatic mauve hair, ribbons and beads woven into it, makeup thick on her face, her outfit far too heavy for the New Mexico fall weather. Jewel made immediate repairs in her mind, removing layers and ornaments, a habit she’d probably acquired from living in a house that was constantly being rearranged and improved upon. She had Photoshop in her head.

“I’ll wait,” the woman said, and took a seat on the brick step, her skirts hiked, her bag on her lap, arms crossed over it, head tipped sideways. Everything about her said: *sigh*.

Jewel retrieved her camera, an old Rolleiflex that her mother and Zachary had given her. She’d have preferred a cell phone—you could hardly find film for this camera or a place to develop it—but they liked old things. Through the front window, she took a picture of the extravagant figure. The window glass was aged and wavy, which added further pleasing poignancy.

A few minutes later, when Jewel looked again, the woman was gone.

“Maybe I’ll just wait in here,” said a voice from the kitchen.

Jewel had left the back door open for Magic, the cat, who’d been missing for four days. If she’d had a cell phone, she could have surreptitiously dialled 911. But the landline was in its little hallway niche, another antique. The whole house was retro, which, although it looked kind of great and had been the subject of a *New Mexico Magazine* spread, was more trouble than you’d imagine. Being stuck in the last century meant tapping into the neighbor’s Wi-Fi, watching DVDs, and having to talk on the phone, tethered by a cord and another cord, in a public place.

A woman had come here once before, looking for Jewel’s mother. A sobbing woman whose interest was angry and fraught, a blue vein pulsing at her temple. Robby had still been home then. He’d been the one to invite the woman in and sit with her while they waited for their mother and Zachary to come home. This woman had been having an affair with

Zachary and he’d broken it off. “What have I got to lose?” she’d asked the teenage Robby. “I want him to suffer.” The woman had been braced for fireworks, for Claudia to fly into a rage, for Zachary to be punished. Instead, Claudia had listened boredly to the tale—the seduction, the rendezvous in Zachary’s office—and said, finally, “I know my husband better than you do. This issue predates you. It will postdate you. It isn’t personal; it’s an addiction. Simple as that. He’s merely fallen off the wagon. Either he’ll get back on or he won’t. It’s not up to me, or to you—it’s up to him. What do you think, Zachary?” Everybody had turned in his direction. And Zachary had nodded, seeming just as sad for himself as his wife was.

“Mom’s a badass,” Robby had said later, when he and Jewel were debriefing. Her patients loved her for that unconventional understanding. She stood up for them; she visited their homes and talked to their problematic relatives, went to the store with them, walked them along the river, allowed them to bring their pets to their therapy sessions. She came to her children’s defense, too, with teachers or friends or the parents of those friends. She was brutally honest, blunt. She had never dressed up the fact that their real father, who was a therapist in Santa Fe, could not be trusted with them. His depression was extreme, and he was old, the father to four other, much older children, who were now his caregivers. Claudia had left him when Robby and Jewel were young, because he was too unpredictable—suicidal and perhaps delusional.

A few years ago, when Robby had accused their mother of keeping their father from them, Claudia had responded by telling him to go visit. “By all means,” she’d said, “go right ahead. Take the car, take your sister. Here’s a credit card. Check into a hotel. I encourage you to get to know him.” She was sincere in this gesture. By not withholding anything, she became powerful. By throwing out car keys and credit cards and permission, she insured that they wouldn’t follow through. But it wasn’t a plan, on her part, to outfox them. Had they gone, it would have turned out as she predicted: the man was old and feeble, with children who’d compelled his attention long before Robby and Jewel were born. He was done with fatherhood now; he needed the other side of the equation, the one in which his children owed him,

would care for him, would provide cute infants to be his simple objects of affection. He did not need teen-agers.

Claudia could leave a person speechless, defused. “Wow,” people might respond.

The thought that Zachary might have taken up with the woman who was in the kitchen now was surprising to Jewel. At least that other woman had been sexy, a blond rock-climbing instructor, pretty and tanned, earnest. This one was heavy: in heft, in mood, in wardrobe. Also hidden—her hair was dyed, her face was made up, her clothing was layered. It was difficult to imagine Zachary finding her appealing.

He was a physical therapist, an athlete; he worked with the body, and he appreciated the natural, the muscled, the naked and undisguised. He had turned his habit of soliciting physical intimacy into a job. Or so Jewel had been led to believe. She liked Zachary; she didn’t want to hear that he’d once again fallen off the sex-addiction wagon. And if he *had* fallen off? Well, this woman was a disappointing temptress.

“Her house is decorated just like her office,” the woman said, waving her hand to both allude to it and dismiss it. “All cool crap from back when. Although I do love that turquoise leather chaise,” she acknowledged, as an afterthought.

So: not Zachary’s scorned girlfriend, after all, but Claudia’s patient. The woman was taking in the riot of kitchen implements that filled the room, the collection of cake plates and colorful tins, the multiple sets of nesting cannisters and Mason jars and Fiesta ware, the light fixtures made of teacups, the shrinelike mosaic of broken china above the restaurant stove, a centerpiece of a sort, a hearth. There was always something new to see here, some project just completed, a product of Claudia’s after-hours decorating, redecorating hobby. The basement was filled with toys and tools and books and appliances and crockery and frames and knickknacks, waiting to be remade into another striking display. As a child, Jewel had been allowed to draw on the kitchen walls. Over by the cat-food bowls, her mother had affixed an oval embroidery hoop around the last remaining drawing, Jewel’s actual

baby teeth dotting the frame, along with some Scrabble tiles that spelled her name. The picture was of Magic eating his food. It wasn’t a bad likeness, for a four-year-old; her mother had left it there because of the little pink asterisk that was Magic’s anus, Jewel’s childish candor.

The woman said, “I found this beautiful sweater? And I bought it, even though it was way out of my price range, and

I gave it to her. She never wore it once. Cashmere! With Bakelite buttons!”

“What color?” Jewel asked.

“Ivory.”

“With watering-can buttons? That one? She loves that sweater.” It wasn’t even a lie—Claudia did love that sweater. But it was

difficult to find gifts for her—Jewel could sympathize with that. She’d more than once been hamstrung and frustrated, her gifts given and then unused—or traded in at a resale shop. Claudia did that regularly, afflicted as she was by zero nostalgia or sentimentality. Those emotions, she always argued, were dishonest. There were no halcyon days of yore, and it was fruitless to believe that there were.

“Your mother’s a tease,” the woman said, scowling at Jewel. “She shouldn’t be like that. She pretends to be your friend, to give a shit, and then? Totally blows you off. Doesn’t wear your sweater, hardly even says thanks. I gave her a plant thing with a light in it, too, and she never used it. Is your whole house like this?”

“Sort of,” Jewel said.

“Does it make you claustrophobic?”

“There’s always something to look at.”

Jewel had been able to keep her bedroom free of the intensely curated clutter. But the rest of the house was chock-full, evidence of Claudia’s impeccable eye, her energy for seeking out these objects and then making them functional. Jewel knew what kind of planter lamp the stranger was describing; there was a collection of them in Zachary’s workshop. His role in her mother’s obsession was maintenance—scavenging, cleaning, restocking, repairing. She was insatiable, Jewel’s mother. On weekends, she and Zachary went to garage and estate sales; they sat head to head scrolling through eBay and Craigslist offerings. They drove states away if the deal was a good one,



Jewel often along in the back seat, sitting beside a green kitchen sink the size of a horse tank, or a pink hair-drying chair, or a bundle of high-quality barkcloth destined to become drapes or a swing skirt.

The phone rang. This would be Kenny, from Latin class, the senior who’d become inexplicably attached to Jewel, against her will. At school, he made a point of seeking her out between classes. It was humiliating. It made her blush every time. And he called every day at four to ask her out. His family was very wealthy, which explained his confidence. “Entitlement” was her mother’s word for it. She had nicknamed Kenny the Gentleman Caller.

“You gonna get that?” the woman asked.

“It’s just this guy,” Jewel said. “He wants to take me on an airplane ride or something.”

Her mother and stepfather knew about Kenny, who desired Jewel, but they didn’t know about Anthony, whom Jewel desired. Brooding, surly, awkward Anthony, who was tall and hunched, his blond fro waving atop his skinny body like dandelion fluff, who had no friends, who skulked along ahead of her after school to his house down the street. She’d known of Anthony for years, but only recently had she begun to daydream about him, to seek out first in a crowd that specific soft yellow head of hair.

“Tell him to fuck off,” the woman suggested. “Block his number.”

“Hey, Jewel,” Kenny said on the answering machine. “Just checking in. How’s my precious Jewel?” Kenny claimed that his name, in Latin, meant handsome, and that Jewel’s, of course, meant jewel. “Catch you tomorrow,” he finished. “*Ad astra per aspera!*”

“He doesn’t sound so bad, but what’s that ass-ass-ass stuff?”

“It’s Latin for something about failure, I think.”

“Does he think speaking Latin is sexy?”

Jewel shrugged; nothing about Kenny was sexy to her.

“When does Claudia get home usually?”

“Six-forty-five. After yoga.”

“Huh. How about your brothers?”

“Robby? He’s in California.”

“And the other one?”

Jewel didn’t want to anger the woman by informing her that there was no other brother. But there was no other brother.

“What do you mean?” she said carefully.

“From the picture, on her desk. All y’all on the front porch with the cat?”

Jewel knew the photograph. “One guy is Robby, my brother. The other is Zachary. My stepfather.” Zachary was thirty-three, nine years younger than her mother, and did, it was true, look considerably younger. He smiled a lot and wore flip-flops and jeans and old concert T-shirts. His facial hair was sparser than eighteen-year-old Robby’s. Or perhaps it was because he didn’t involve himself with unpleasantness—didn’t follow the news or read books, didn’t pick fights or get defensive, didn’t rock the boat. That could make you seem younger than you were.

“Stepfather?” The woman laughed, and Jewel felt a strange protective urge flare up for her mother. “More like boy toy. You know what they say: after forty you can have either a great butt or a great face, but not both.”

“What does that mean?”

“Your mom’s too skinny, that’s what it means. Her face is haggard,” she said knowingly.

“I don’t think so,” Jewel said, although most of the time she was herself uneasy with her mother’s thinness; it seemed competitive. Her mother wore boys’ jeans, the same size as skinny Robby’s; her breasts were little pouches that disappeared when she stretched her arms overhead.

“You look just like her,” the woman said, accusingly. In usual circumstances, Jewel knew this to be a compliment, but this time saying “Thank you” felt wrong. “You’re going to be prettier than I am,” her mother had once told her. “When we walk together, the men look at you now, instead of me.” Claudia believed that airing the feelings you might be tempted to keep secret was the way not to be sabotaged by them. She had explained this to Jewel and Robby in the aftermath of Zachary’s mistress’s visit. No need for Zachary to hide the fact that he was recovering. He needed to own and then conquer his issues. He was only as sick as his secrets, she’d said, using her fingers to make quotation marks in the air. She believed in these statements, but they were not original to her, and therefore she had to scrupulously acknowledge that.

Jewel suspected that this stranger in the house was wearing long sleeves because there were scars on her arms. Jewel noticed all sorts of self-harmers these days, in stores

and at school, their scars either hidden or flagrantly displayed, those white lines, notched up the arms. Was it healthy to show them? A secret those girls or women no longer felt like keeping? Or was it hostile? In either case, it frightened Jewel.

The woman was on the move now, passing Jewel en route to the dining room, wandering around the table, admiring the walls and windows, the ceramic birds and photomontages, the fanned display of fashion ads from the forties, the silver oyster forks, the snuff spoons from France, the plates sporting seventies cartoons, the cloth napkins, each an embroidered object unique to a family member or close friend who often dined at this table, rolled into an equally unique and thoughtful napkin ring. All of this she circled and registered, murmuring to herself, nodding, not touching anything but obviously taking it in, and not with pleasure. More like evidence in a case she was building. *Mm-hmm, ab-ha!*

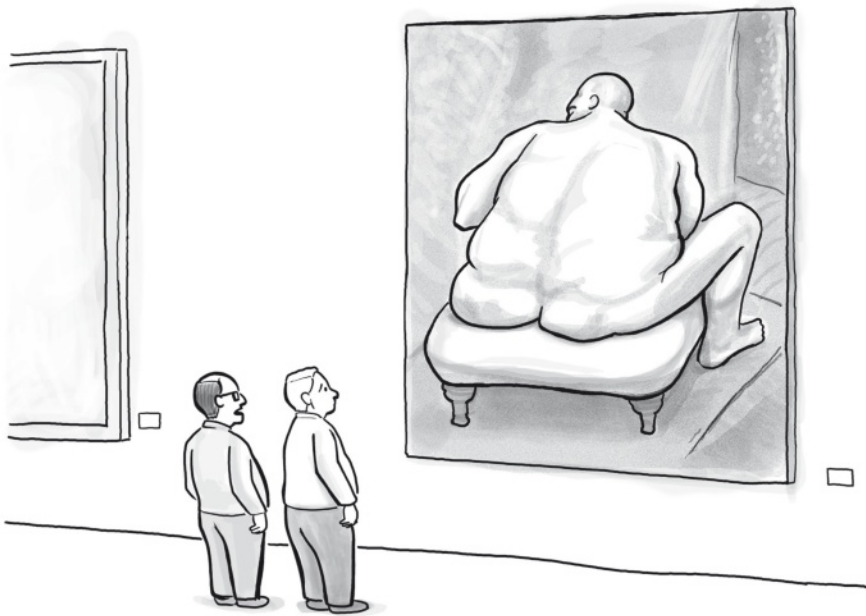
*Just as I suspected!* Jewel was afraid to interrupt with any kind of word or gesture, afraid the woman would react like a startled animal, leap and claw before realizing that the motion was innocent. Jewel held a finger to her upper lip to stifle a sneeze.

“I need to use the ladies’,” the woman said, heading off down the hallway. She went right in and slammed the door, clicked the lock. Jewel rushed to the mustard-yellow telephone, lifted the heavy receiver, and rotary-dialled her stepfather’s office. (Her mother’s phone always went straight to voice mail.) She said to the receptionist, “Tell Zachary to come home! It’s an emergency!,” and hung up.

The bathroom door didn’t unlock for an irritatingly large number of minutes, and, when it did, the woman exited with her hair refreshed and her lipstick reapplied. She’d also removed an under-layer of her outfit, so that her arms and legs were exposed, fleshy and very



*“Except for the actual sacrifice, all this is largely symbolic.”*



*"You can't hold yourself to those impossible standards."*

tattooed. Or not just tattooed but textured, as if objects had been applied to the skin, or under it, actually: a zipper there on her upper arm, elbow to shoulder, a ring of what looked like BB's on her calf, decorated with drawings on the flesh—flowers, vines, slashes, and drops representing wind and rain. Jewel had seen piercings before—eyebrows, noses, tongues, navels, and wide round plugs in earlobes—and she'd seen tattoos, full sleeves and neck and facial markings, but this singular oddity, the combination of purposeful bumpiness and color, was new to her. She had an urge to run her fingers over the woman's skin, to see how that zipper felt, or to touch the tiny dots painted bright red on her leg, holly berries in a kind of perverse snaky wreath. And what *else* was there, in the places Jewel could not see?

"Even the *baño* has the whole vintage thing going on," the woman said. She'd probably used Claudia's ivory hairbrush. Maybe she'd dipped all the toothbrushes in the toilet or scratched something profane on the wallpaper. There was no telling what she'd been up to in there. One thing Jewel knew: no pills. Those were kept under lock and key in the kitchen, in

an antique bank box in the Everything Drawer. As if reading her mind, the woman asked if there was alcohol available.

Mesmerized by the tattoos, Jewel motioned toward the mint-green pie cabinet behind her. Zachary had fitted it out as a wet bar, complete with hanging stemware and hooks for old-fashioned tools: zester, muddler, strainer. An aluminum Hamm's beer cooler full of high-end beer. "Your tats are awe—," she was saying when Zachary arrived, having run home, it seemed, from his massage practice, just three blocks away. The woman's reaction to his appearance was to calmly draw out of her bag a knife.

The knife was similar to one in their town block of knives, among the few tools in the house that were not vintage in any way. Zachary was a cook; his talents were with his hands: massage, gardening, food preparation. He was, his older wife always said, the perfect wife. Because, she would add, he also enjoyed sex. Unlike so many wives.

What would she *not* say, in the name of telling the truth?

Although it was a large knife, it was for cheese, specifically, its blade both delicately serrated and aerated to create less friction

in such a thick substance. Jewel had been at the mall with Zachary when he'd bought it. The salesman had sliced through potatoes and cheese and tomatoes and plastic and rubber with both this knife and a traditional knife, to illustrate the superior ease and versatility of this new model. Zachary had purchased it, but then allowed Jewel to wrap it up and give it to him for Christmas, the perfect gift. She and Zachary got along pretty well. At this moment, she halfway wished she hadn't phoned him. Minus the knife, the scene might have played out without real consequence.

"And here's the trophy husband!" the woman crowed.

Zachary took in the tableau with his usual slacker calm. Today's T-shirt said "Psycho Killer Qu'est-ce Que C'est," and featured a light-bulb-shaped head wearing sunglasses. Jewel's favorite of his shirts was one for his own former band, the Shit-Kicking Kitty Cats, four happy-go-lucky guys with long hair—heartthrobs. "What up, sweetheart?" he asked Jewel, showing his hands to the woman.

"She wants to see Mom."

"She could see Mom at her office."

"You don't have to talk about me in the third person," the woman said. "I already saw *Mom* in her office, and this is what happened after that. Bitch."

"I'm sorry, but that knife is making me scared," Jewel said. "I wish you would put it away. I wish she would put it away," she added, turning to Zachary.

"I agree," he said. He'd crossed his arms over his T-shirt. "We come in peace," he added. "Hey, is that *my* knife?"

"Call her up and get her here," the woman said. "I'm not waiting till six-fucking-forty-five." She dropped her bulky bag and, still holding the knife, arranged herself at the head of the table, the place where Claudia usually sat. "You call," she said to Zachary, and, to Jewel, "You get me a beer."

Upon receiving the green bottle, the woman raised her heel to the edge of the chair, exposing her bare thigh, her own glance down leading Jewel's. She was not wearing underpants, Jewel noted, briefly nauseated. "This is the newest," the woman said. The flesh was white and looked tender, bright-orange stitches surrounding yet another bump, this one the size and shape of a bullet. The tattoo above it was of a pistol, life-size, the silvery metallic hue of a smoldering charcoal briquette, the bullet heading toward her nude crotch. "I'm am-

bidextrous,” the woman said, as if that explained anything that Jewel wished to have explained. “I wanted to be a doctor, a surgeon, specifically, but they wouldn’t let me stay in med school, the bastards.” Abruptly, she locked her legs together, as if Jewel were snooping. “My I.Q. is a hundred and forty-four. Also, I make all my own clothes. I’m very talented with a needle and thread.”

Meanwhile, Zachary stood at the phone spinning his finger impatiently as he listened to Claudia’s lengthy instructions for reaching her, her breathy over-enunciation of her name and credentials, the phone tree of co-counsellors, 911, all of it designed to prevent disaster. And yet here sat disaster at the dinner table. Wearing no underwear.

“Claud, you should come on home as soon as you get this,” Zachary was saying. “We’re fine, but get here asap, K.?”

“She’ll check at ten till,” Jewel told the woman. All her life, she’d been aware of the therapeutic clock.

“Wonder who she’s making cry now?” the woman replied.

Zachary played Kenny’s message, sending Jewel a smile. “He’s pretty persistent, your Gentleman Caller.”

The woman said to Jewel, “You know what? I changed my mind. I agree with you—he sounds like a dick. You drink, too,” she commanded Zachary, who didn’t seem upset by the idea. He held up a bottle toward Jewel, offering, a first.

The woman’s name was Joy, she told them, expressing no interest in learning their names. To her, they were Claudia’s kid and Claudia’s husband. “Claudia’s the reason I can drink. She took me off those meds. Everybody else thought I was a manic-depressive—a depressed maniac! All the way back to high school—that’s like decades. The only thing every other a-hole could think to do was tranquilize me, turn me into a zombie. Now I can drink. Yay, Dr. Claudia,” she added, holding her beer bottle up, waiting for them to toast with her. “I brought other knives, too,” she added, not wanting them to lose sight of her menace. “I came by last night but all your doors were locked.”

Horror swept through Jewel. Her bedroom window had been open, for Magic; all Joy would have had to do was reach in, roll the handle, and then climb right through. Robby had come and gone from his room that way many a time. Jewel had sat at her open window for a long while last night,

calling pleadingly for Magic, who’d never stayed away so many days in a row. “He’s old,” her mother had told her, matter-of-factly. “Cats go off to die when they’re old.” Magic’s twin brother, Wizard, Robby’s cat, had been run over by a car early on. Bad luck. Magic was more of a homebody. Jewel couldn’t remember a time without him—he and Wizard had been given to her and Robby as kittens, when they’d had to move so abruptly away from Santa Fe. She wasn’t ready for Magic to go off and die, even if he felt that it was for the best. Her real father had also wanted to go away and die; he’d checked into a hotel to save his wife and small children the mess. Yet he’d missed, and survived. And then paid for the mess.

Zachary was agreeing with Joy about Claudia’s fickleness, nodding in the way of the good cop, keeping things chill. “Does she ever become friends with people when they get out of therapy? When they get better? That’s not normal, I get it, but she’s not normal,” Joy said. Zachary looked to Jewel; they both knew that Claudia would never befriend her patients. Be an invested and attentive therapist, yes; take their calls in the middle of the night, rush to their side and embrace them, of course; but invite them over for dinner? Never. Claudia didn’t even socialize with her colleagues at the practice; they were simply grateful that she wished to treat the highly difficult patients she preferred. And every year she attended funerals, plural. Suicides. It was a tragic demographic, borderlines, wobbling on the edge.

“I thought she liked me!” Joy said. “I told her everything! And she—”

“Her caseload is really heavy,” Zachary said. “I’m sure it wasn’t personal.”

“Excuse me,” Joy spat at him. “Are you stupid? It was *totally* personal. I’m a person! Who trusted another person! Who fucked me over.” And now she was in tears. Finally.

“I guess it *is* personal,” Zachary backpedaled. Jewel could tell that he wanted to rush over and massage Joy’s shoulders, demonstrate his true talents. “But I don’t think Claudia meant to hurt you.”

They heard the car door slam. And then they heard another car door slam.

“Not cool,” Claudia said to Joy. Her face was icy, furious, her lips two flat lines. With her was a man, nobody Jewel had ever seen before, his gray hair wind-blown, his eyeglasses repaired with white

*Back to School*

Retirement Living where you can walk to Oberlin College – audit classes, with no homework, no tests and no tuition.

**KENDAL**  
*at Oberlin*  
Together, transforming the experience of aging.

1-800-548-9469  
kao.kendal.org/Oberlin-connection

**PREPARE  
TO HAVE YOUR  
EXPECTATIONS  
EXCEEDED**

**INSIGHT VACATIONS**  
*The Art of Touring in Style*  
www.insightvacations.com/gold

**McLean Fernside**  
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATE

**Today my addiction has control.  
Tomorrow?**

Unparalleled treatment from U.S. News’  
Top Ranked Psychiatric Hospital

855.707.0552 mcleanfernside.org

Dallas Pridgen Jewelry  
*—one at a time, by hand—*



dallaspridgenjewelry.com  
Cat Bracelet, Sterling Silver \$165, 14k \$980



**SKOOKUM DOG**  
WWW.SKOOKUMDOG.COM

**Teen Ink** 26 Years

“The New Yorker for teens” – VOYA  
A literary magazine written by teens

fiction • nonfiction • poetry  
reviews • opinions • art

Subscribe at TeenInk.com • 800-363-1986

tape at the bridge, his worn running shoes untied. "This is Lester," Claudia said. "I'm giving him a ride."

"Dr. Lester," the man interjected, and held out a slightly trembling hand to Zachary.

"Oh, great," Joy said. "You brought backup. Another person who doesn't know shit—"

"He's not 'backup,'" Claudia said. "I do not need 'backup.' This is unacceptable, Joy. Absolutely unacceptable." Jewel's mother was doing three things at once, as usual, removing from the table Jewel's beer and Joy's cheese knife, running her hand over the condensation on the wood, and giving Zachary a what-the-fuck glance, as if this situation were of his making, and, as always, she was the one who had to fix everything.

"You handed me off to some new chick, somebody who doesn't know shit. She was reading *papers* about me, like she was a graduate student or something!"

"And the only thing you could think to do was force the issue? Come to my home?"

"She has other knives, Mom. In her bag there. Maybe we should call the—"

"What do you mean 'other knives?'"

"More than the cheese one!"

"That was hers?" she said to Zachary. "Not ours?" He raised his hands in bafflement. "Coming here is one thing, but with weapons? Jesus Christ." She wiped the table with a dish towel, exasperated but not afraid. Inconvenienced. There would probably be extra paperwork, her least favorite activity. Plus, she was missing yoga.

Dr. Lester was taking in the room, rocking on his feet, scanning methodically from ceiling to floor, his hands on his hips, his glasses reflecting the room's busy contents.

"Well, does it look like I'm doing *well*?" Joy spun on the chair to give Zachary and Claudia a peek at her bullet and gun, perhaps also her lack of underpants. "Huh? How *well* does that look, to you?"

"Joy," Claudia said, sighing. "Come on. Take a load off, Lester." She touched his elbow, pausing a moment herself to close her eyes and focus on her breathing. It was a familiar ritual, one she'd suggested to her

family time and again when someone was on the verge of overreacting. This was in service of *mindfulness*, a word that Jewel would be happy never to hear again.

"That's a crazy good gun," Zachary said, swallowing. "I mean, big ups." He leaned back to lift his psycho-killer shirt and show Joy *his* tattoos. Four Lotería cards: scorpion, sun, moon, pierced bloody heart. He lowered his chin to look down at his chest. "I could use a touch-up on the claws and the sun rays."



Claudia clapped her hands and shook the hair out of her eyes. She sat down in Robby's place, across from Jewel, checking her watch. "Here are your choices," she began. That was another word Jewel could do without.

"I thought you liked me," Joy said, wiping at her leaking face. "You know me better than anyone else, ever."

The scene reminded Jewel of ones with Robby, her mother calmly reprimanding, her brother guiltily miserable. "Why did you want to hurt my mom?" she asked Joy.

"Oh, she won't hurt anyone but herself," Claudia said. "Isn't that right?"

"Oh, yeah? What about my first 'episode'? With *my* mom?" Joy turned to Jewel. "All of a sudden I was standing over her bed in the middle of the night."

"Joy," Claudia said, "this is so not appr—"

"You're, what, fourteen?" Joy asked, ignoring Jewel's mother. "Fifteen? I was fifteen then, holding a butcher knife. I was just so angry. I don't know what would have happened if she hadn't woken up. But that's where it started, me and all the rest of the bullshit. Claudia here keeps telling me I don't really want to hurt others, but I don't know. I think maybe I was ready to do something to my mom. I just wanted to . . ." One of her lower eyelids was twitching frenetically.

"A cry for help?" Dr. Lester asked. "I mean, isn't that what it sounds like?" he added deferentially, to Claudia. Jewel realized then that he wasn't her mother's colleague, most definitely not "backup," but another of her patients. Teetering there on his own borderline.

"Maybe," Jewel said, "maybe, like, teach her a lesson?"

Joy nodded gratefully. "Exactly."

Claudia gave Jewel a long level look that made her blush and then glance away first, as if there'd been a contest.

"I'm sorry," Zachary said, that one-size-fits-all sentiment. He was in the business of relaxing people, and his voice was part of it. He wasn't really attending, but Jewel was. For her, it wasn't so hard to see what Joy was seeing, what she might be recalling, herself as a girl, new to high school, figuring out how many things she didn't really have a choice about—a process that started with the body, its siege of awful and unseemly eruptions, then kept on, relentlessly, everywhere else, invisible, insidious. And so there might be a nocturnal journey to the knife block and then to her mother's bedroom. Not difficult at all to imagine a desire to put an end to the onslaught of alarming information about what could not be stopped. "What, you want to be the only girl in history without pubic hair or breasts?" Rhetorical questions—her mother thrived on those.

"What do you mean, teach her a lesson?" Claudia asked calmly, still staring at Jewel.

Most mothers weren't like Claudia, so Jewel doubted that Joy's resembled hers. Nevertheless. Maybe all mothers existed in order to torment their daughters with news of the future. Hadn't Jewel felt that often enough? And retreated to her room, to hide behind a closed door with her dear old cat? That cat, Magic, who, by the way, came home the day after Joy's visit, and who, it turned out, wouldn't go off to hide and die for another few years yet, long after Joy had ceased to be Claudia's patient. "Poor thing," Claudia would always say, telling the story. "When she came back to therapy, we had to have a third party present. Talk about awkward." And she would laugh and roll her eyes. No, Joy was nothing special to Claudia.

"Tell me, Jewel," Claudia went on. "I want to know."

But the lesson wasn't about taking a knife to her mother's room. No, the only way to truly hurt her mother, Jewel saw now, was to hurt herself. To turn the blade, for example, a hundred and eighty degrees. Somehow it had become time for Jewel to understand that, too. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Antonya Nelson on "Primum Non Nocere."

A black and white photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a dark sweater and jeans, sitting on a stone ledge. He is holding a Kindle Voyage e-reader in his right hand and looking at the screen. The background is a blurred stadium with people playing soccer. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

YOU WILL TRAVEL  
IN A LAND OF MARVELS.

—JULES VERNE

INTRODUCING

**kindle** voyage

BRILLIANTLY CRISP DISPLAY • REMARKABLY THIN DESIGN  
EFFORTLESS PAGE TURNING • LIGHT THAT ADJUSTS WITH YOU

**amazon**

# THE CRITICS



THE CURRENT CINEMA

## LOVE AND PHYSICS

*“Interstellar” and “The Theory of Everything.”*

BY DAVID DENBY

**I**nterstellar,” an outer-space survivalist epic created by the director Christopher Nolan and his brother Jonathan, with whom he co-wrote the screenplay, is ardently, even fervently incomprehensible, a movie designed to separate the civilians from the geeks, with the geeks apparently the target audience. Nolan’s 2010 movie, “Inception,” offered layers of dreaming consciousness, each outfitted with its own style of action. The film was stunning but meaningless—a postmodern machine, with many moving parts, dedicated to its own workings and little else. In “Interstellar,” however, Nolan goes for a master narrative. Like so many recent big movies, “Interstellar” begins when the earth has had it. The amount of nitrogen in the air is increasing, the oxygen is decreasing, and, after a worldwide crop failure, dust storms coat the Midwest, drying out the corn, the only grain that is still growing. But all is not lost. God or Fortune or a Higher Intelligence (take your pick) has entered the game, and has placed near Saturn a traversable wormhole, a tunnel in space-time, providing an expressway out of the galaxy and on to the countless stars and planets beyond.

The commander of an underground NASA outpost, Professor Brand (Michael Caine), sends a favored pilot, Cooper (Matthew McConaughey), on a mission: Cooper and his crew, including Brand’s daughter, Amelia (Anne Hathaway), are to retrace the flights of three astronauts who a decade earlier were sent to planets thought to be ca-

pable of sustaining human life. Are the explorers alive? What did they find? Can the earth’s billions be moved through the wormhole? As the crew members enter the distant passage, with its altered space-time continuum, they testily debate one another, referring, in passing, to theories advanced by Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and Kip Thorne. (Thorne, a theoretical physicist and a longtime friend of Hawking’s, served as an adviser and an executive producer on the film.) Black holes, relativity, singularity, the fifth dimension! The talk is grand. There’s a problem, however. Delivered in rushed colloquial style, much of this fabulous arcana, central to the plot, is hard to understand, and some of it is hard to hear. The composer Hans Zimmer produces monstrous swells of organ music that occasionally smother the words like lava. The actors seem overmatched by the production.

Nolan, who made the recent trilogy of night-city Batman movies, must love the dark. In “Interstellar,” he and the designer, Nathan Crowley, and the cinematographer, Hoyte van Hoytema, send Cooper’s ship, the *Endurance*, hurtling through the star-dotted atmosphere, or whirling past seething and shimmering clouds of intergalactic stuff. The basic color scheme of the space-travel segments is white and silver-gray on black, and much of it is stirringly beautiful. There’s no doubting Nolan’s craft. Throughout “Interstellar,” the camera remains active, pursuing a truck across a cornfield or

barrelling through sections of the *Endurance*. All this buffeting—in particular, the crew’s rough-ride stress—is exciting from moment to moment, but, over all, “Interstellar,” a spectacular, redundant puzzle, a hundred and sixty-seven minutes long, makes you feel virtuous for having sat through it rather than happy that you saw it. The Nolans provide a pair of querulous robots, the more amusing of which is voiced by Bill Irwin, but George Lucas’s boffo jokiness and Stanley Kubrick’s impish metaphysical wit live in a galaxy far, far away.

Cooper has two children back on Earth and, like Leonardo DiCaprio’s Cobb, in “Inception,” he longs to return to his family. That leads to fights with Amelia, who wants to journey on to the planet where her lover, one of the astronauts on the earlier mission, was sent, in the hope of reuniting with him. McConaughey does his stylized, hyper-relaxed drawl, and Hathaway, with short Ph.D. hair, is crisp but also angry and passionate, and the two stars clash with professional skill. Cooper’s side of the argument sets up the movie’s finest scene. After paying a quick visit to a planet in another galaxy, the crew returns to the ship and discovers that on Earth more than twenty years has passed. Cooper watches video messages from his family, including his daughter, Murph, who was a young girl when he left but has grown up to be Jessica Chastain. Through her tears, she lashes out at him, as only Jessica Chastain can lash out, for leaving her. The Nolans take us into the farthest mysteries of space-time, where, they assure us, love joins gravity as a force that operates across interstellar distances. The Earth may die, but love will triumph. For all his dark scenarios, Christopher Nolan turns out to be a softie.

**T**he belief that love, as much as gravity, holds galaxies together, may have held some interest for Stephen Hawking, but in a more attainable setting than on a planet beyond the Milky Way. “The Theory of Everything” tells the story of Hawking and his first wife, Jane Wilde Hawking. The film begins in 1963, when Hawking (Eddie Redmayne) is a graduate student in cosmology at Cambridge

ABOVE: FRANÇOIS AVRIL



*Through a wormhole: Matthew McConaughey leads a mission to another galaxy in Christopher Nolan's "Interstellar."*

**Bon appetit...**

**Luxury Barge  
Cruises**



**FRENCH COUNTRY WATERWAYS, LTD.**

P.O. Box 2195, Duxbury, MA 02331  
800-222-1236 781-934-2454  
www.fcwl.com



1<sup>st</sup> Time Buyers  
Save 25%

**MERCER AND SONS.COM**

The distinctive full roll of our unlined 3 7/16" button down is unmistakable. Its traditional style, impeccable good taste, absolute comfort and long lasting value will not be matched. Pima Cotton Oxfords - Classic Blue, White, Pink and Yellow.

**MADE IN USA SINCE 1982**

Pullovers, 140's, Sport Shirts, Traditional Boxers, Custom.

CATALOG CALL 800-705-2828 SWATCHES

**NEARSIGHTS**  
MONOCLES

Classic Monocles  
& Magnifiers

Nearsights.com | (877)667-6494



**Stone Soup**  
stories, poems, and art by kids

The magazine  
by kids, for kids.

"The New Yorker of  
the 8-to-13 set." —Ms.

800-447-4569 | stonessoup.com



**Warm and Soft Perfection:**  
THE CASHMERE WATCHCAP

HATS • MITTENS • LEGWARMERS  
FOOTSIES • BERETS • SCARVES • ETC

MADE IN TAOS, NM 575.776.8287  
www.golightlycashmere.com



The book  
**"An Introduction to Jewish History"**  
(Regularly priced at \$18.00)  
is now available for a limited time at no cost.  
For a complimentary copy, contact  
zionpress@roadrunner.com

**FREE**

**WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?**

Small space has big rewards.

To find out more, contact  
Sara Nicholson at 877.843.6967.

University. At a party, he meets Jane (Felicity Jones), who is studying "arts," as she says, and they begin a charmingly awkward courtship in which she jollies him along as he confesses his modest desire to create "one single unified equation that explains everything in the universe." But an earlier scene, in which he races a friend around a field, shows something odd about his gait. It is the first sign of motor-neuron disease. As the illness progresses, Hawking takes a bad fall in front of his residence hall, after which he retreats to his room, listening over and over to Wagner's "Die Walküre," an opera in which goddesses ride stallions through the air. He is expected to live no more than two years, but Jane, tougher than a British Army officer, marries him and keeps him going.

The couple went on to have three children. In one scene, a male friend at Cambridge carries Hawking up some stone steps and asks him, "Does your disease affect, you know, everything?" Hawking, who is still able to speak a little, says, "Different system." The film, at its best, doesn't mince words or scenes about Hawking's disability. It's also a revelatory portrait of his strength, including his surprising gaiety, the jokes and the ironies that he drew from God knows what reserves of energy. In this movie, his illness and his productivity are intimately linked.

The film is based on Jane Wilde Hawking's 2007 memoir, "Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen," which the screenwriter, Anthony McCarten, and the director, James Marsh, have made into a physically detailed and touching but, all in all, rather conventional against-all-odds bio-pic. Some of the scenes are predictable: The hero commits prodigious feats of casual English genius, such as solving a difficult mathematical problem on the back of a railway timetable. He is wheeled before Cambridge dons and distinguished scientists, many of whom are amazed that the shrunken man at the front of the room, barely able to speak, has a remarkable talent for theoretical speculation. (It isn't made clear, though, how Hawking does his calculations—his work can't be all speculation.)

Eddie Redmayne's performance is astonishing, as eloquent, though in a

different way, as Daniel Day-Lewis's work in "My Left Foot." Day-Lewis, playing the Irish artist Christy Brown, a man whose mobility is reduced to a single limb, deployed his left foot, a bushy black beard, and minimal, mangled speech to create a ferociously willful and sexually miserable man. Redmayne is a gentler actor; he was the noble youth in "Les Misérables" who sang, in a fine light tenor, the tear-stained but upbeat "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables." Tall and slender, with freckles and a flattened upper lip, he wears his brown hair in a heavy mop that in this film falls across his forehead to meet enormous black-framed glasses. With his narrow shoulders, he initially looks like an abashed scarecrow. Redmayne uses his eyebrows, his mouth, a few facial muscles, and the fingers of one hand to suggest not only Hawking's intellect and his humor but also the calculating vanity of a great man entirely conscious of his effect on the world.

Hawking doesn't discover a unified equation, but he settles for black holes and a comprehensive and remarkably lucrative obsession with time. ("A Brief History of Time" has sold more than ten million copies worldwide.) The movie is a love story and a success story, ending with Hawking's refusal of a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth, for reasons that aren't explained. His relationships with women in general here are baffling. We're puzzled by the black hole in his character that causes him, after twenty-five years of loving marriage, to leave the devoted, accomplished, and beautiful Jane for a young nurse (Maxine Peake) who treats him like a baby, and dominates him. After one brief outburst, Jane doesn't protest but happily escapes into the arms of a strapping but gentle choirmaster (Charlie Cox). So we have to do a little speculating ourselves: Did Jane want to get out of the marriage? Or did she suppress an entirely understandable rage in order to keep the portrait of the marriage as pleasant (and salable) as possible? "The Theory of Everything" makes a pass at the complexities of love, but what's onscreen requires a bit more investigation. ♦

**NEWYORKER.COM**

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

## TABLE TALK

*How the Cold War made Georgetown hot.*

BY LOUIS MENAND



Washington, D.C., is a two-industry town. In theory, the people in government work their side of the street, passing laws and implementing policies that reflect the will of the electorate, and the people in the press work their side, reporting and opining on the laws and policies and the folks who make them. Down on the ground, the two groups are naturally enmeshed. The people in government want the stories in the press to be told their way, and the people in the press want stories to tell.

When conditions are cozy enough, the line between punditry and policymaking begins to blur, and the press and the politicians imagine that, together, they are

calling the tunes to which the world waltzes. Something like this happened in the early years of the Cold War. It was a symptom of a striking feature of that period: the relative homogeneity of the people who ran America's foreign policy, headed its foundations and cultural institutions, and published its leading newspapers, and the relative unity of their beliefs.

This coziness is the subject of Gregg Herken's "The Georgetown Set" (Knopf), a look at the official and semi-official culture of Cold War liberalism. His sample is a circle of journalists, policymakers, and spymasters who lived and socialized in Georgetown after 1945. The grand Washington funeral, last week, of Ben

Bradlee marked the passing of one of the last survivors of that era.

There were a few fixtures in the Georgetown scene: Joseph Alsop, the columnist; Phil and Katharine Graham, the publishers of the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*; Frank Wisner, of the C.I.A., and his wife, Polly; Robert Joyce, also with the agency, and his wife, Jane. They tended to be the hosts on the occasions when members of the set ate and drank together.

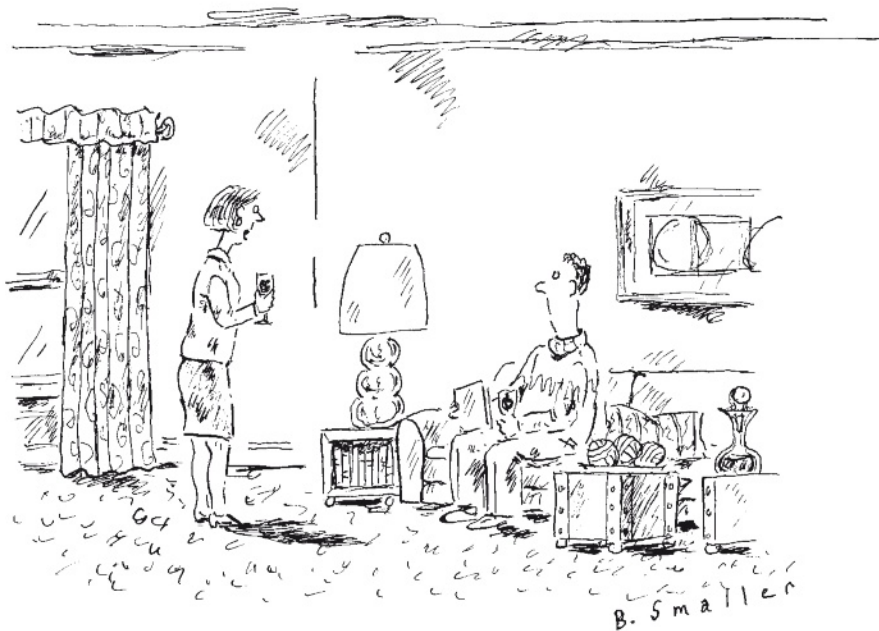
But many players have smaller parts in the story Herken tells, including George Kennan, the author of the policy of containment and, briefly, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union; Chip Bohlen, Kennan's friend and his successor as Ambassador; the C.I.A.'s Richard Bissell, who was the brains behind the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the failed invasion of Castro's Cuba, in 1961; and Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon's foreign-policy guru and a Washington player par excellence.

The relationship chart can get complicated. Bradlee, the Grahams' editor, first at *Newsweek* and then at the *Post*, became part of the Georgetown set. His second wife, Tony Pinchot, was the sister of Mary Pinchot, the wife of Cord Meyer, who ran covert operations for the C.I.A. And Mary Pinchot was one of John F. Kennedy's lovers when Kennedy was in the White House. (She and Cord had by then divorced.) Mary was murdered, on a towpath, in 1964, in mysterious circumstances; some conspiracy theorists have speculated that her death had something to do with Kennedy's assassination.

For twenty years, these people, in and out of government—and their peers in the foundation world and in leading cultural institutions—were in ideological synch. They were anti-Communists, with the same view of the nature of the Soviet Union and the same conviction about the United States' leading role in world affairs. There were sectarian fissures within this establishment, disagreements about how far the United States should go in fighting Communism, but it took two decades for the fissures to deepen and the establishment to implode. In American politics, twenty years is a long time.

Herken's protagonist is Joseph Alsop, a self-conscious élitist who reached, through his journalism, a broad segment of the American middle class. Alsop's story has been told before, by Robert

*The columnist Joseph Alsop at his Georgetown home in September of 1974.*



*"I'm not against bringing children into this world—just into this apartment."*

Merry, in "Taking on the World," and Edwin Yoder, in "Joe Alsop's Cold War." With his brother Stewart, Joe wrote a syndicated newspaper column, "Matter of Fact," which, at its peak, in the mid-nineteen-fifties, appeared in almost two hundred newspapers, with a total circulation of twenty-five million. He and Stewart also regularly contributed to a weekly, *The Saturday Evening Post*, which was famous for its Norman Rockwell covers and had a circulation of six million.

"Matter of Fact" was usually a reported column, not what journalists sometimes call a thumbsucker, and it was dedicated to breaking news. The Alsops were the first to reveal the existence of the Long Telegram, George Kennan's classified dispatch from Moscow that became the template for American policy toward the Soviets. And they broke the story of the development of the hydrogen bomb. They had sources in government and they were skilled at using them.

The Alsops could also claim credit for coining much of the political vocabulary of the Cold War era: hawks and doves, eggheads (used to characterize Adlai Stevenson supporters), the missile gap, the domino theory, and the phrase—used first wishfully and then sarcastically about the war in Vietnam—"the light at the end of the tunnel."

Joe was a master of the Sunday-night dinner. This was a Georgetown ritual, the venue where journalists and policymakers, spies and diplomats, along with visiting intelligentsia (the Oxford philosopher Isaiah Berlin became an intimate of Joe's and a close friend of Kennan's), mixed. When the dinner was at Joe's place, a servant circulated with Martinis on a salver, guests debated politics at the table, the men and the women separated after the dessert, and everyone was out the door by eleven. Alsop's specialty was homemade turtle soup. Either the Martinis or the conversation must have been really good.

The Alsops descended from an old New England family. Theodore Roosevelt was their great-uncle. Stewart went to Groton and Yale, and Joe to Groton and Harvard, where he was in the Porcellian, a Harvard club that his fifth cousin, Franklin Roosevelt, was not admitted to. (F.D.R. is supposed to have said, before he became President, that not getting tapped for the Porcellian was the greatest disappointment of his life.)

Through a family connection, Joe Alsop got a job after college, in 1932, as a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*. His grandmother (who was Teddy Roosevelt's sister) knew the owners. Alsop wrote for the paper until it folded, in 1966.

When he showed up for work at the *Herald Tribune*, in the middle of the Depression, he was wearing, Herken says, "a bespoke suit, silk shirt, and hand-sewn shoes from Peal in London." He was also, though Herken barely mentions this, fat. He was self-conscious about his weight—it had been a social problem in school—and he eventually undertook a serious weight-loss regimen, with, judging from photographs, impressive results.

An ostentatious air of upper-class refinement became part of Joe Alsop's manner. (Stewart was less showy.) He liked to say that he belonged to "the WASP Ascendancy," which he defined in his memoir as "an inner group that was, on average, substantially richer and enjoyed substantially more leverage than other Americans." This group, he said, "had long supplied the role models followed by other Americans, whether WASP or non-WASP, who were on their way up in the world." Joe Alsop did not check his privilege.

Alsop was also a closeted gay man, who, in company, referred to homosexuals as fairies. His social role was that of what used to be called a confirmed bachelor, an apparently asexual gentleman—in his case, one who liked to schmooze with both sexes, and put on displays of old-fashioned snobbishness that his friends, since none of them had to live with it, found charming. Alsop didn't give up the practice of banishing women after dessert until the late nineteen-sixties, when Katharine Graham finally told him she had had enough. Herken says that he refused to eat in Paris restaurants whose cellars were close to the Métro, because the vibrations might have disturbed the sediment in the wine bottles. He did not own a television set. That kind of thing.

In 1961, at the age of fifty, Alsop contracted a platonic marriage with Susan Mary (Soozle) Patten, the widow of a Harvard classmate. They had been close friends, and she thought that she could "convert" him, but he bullied her, and, in 1973, they separated. In his will, he left most of his estate to his male relatives—to help preserve the family name, he said.

Herken's book is solidly researched and solidly written. It is a little less biographically enterprising (a little less gossipy) than the subject might seem to invite. Herken doesn't tell us much about Alsop's

sex life, and not much is known. Alsop appears to have been either unusually abstemious or unusually discreet, although he was once hauled in by the San Francisco police for loitering in a gay pickup area. (Stewart was able to keep the incident hushed up; he was worried about the reputation of the column.) Joe seems to have had at least one sustained relationship, in the nineteen-forties, with a sailor named Frank Merlo, who later became Tennessee Williams's lover.

Herken doesn't mention the San Francisco arrest or the Merlo affair, and Alsop's sexual preferences wouldn't matter much, except that they got him into a famous Cold War honey trap. Herken does tell this story.

In 1957, Alsop visited the Soviet Union for the first time. He spent three weeks travelling in Siberia (he gave low marks to the food), and obtained an interview with the premier, Nikita Khrushchev. A couple of days later, at a party with U.S. Embassy officials, he was approached by a reporter from TASS, the Soviet news agency. The reporter was accompanied by a good-looking blond man, who introduced himself as Boris. Joe and Boris chatted, in French, and scheduled a rendezvous the following day in Boris's hotel room. As soon as they had consummated their assignation, the door opened and several officials entered, including two men from the K.G.B. They explained that they had taken some photographs.

The K.G.B. offered Alsop a deal: to keep the matter quiet, all he had to do was talk to them from time to time so that the K.G.B. could "get advice that would assist the cause of peace." Alsop played along, but he informed the U.S. Ambassador, his Georgetown friend Chip Bohlen, and then talked his way onto a plane headed home. (He told the K.G.B. that his mother was dying.) Bohlen notified the C.I.A., which debriefed Alsop on his return, and, through confidential channels, a report of the incident eventually reached President Eisenhower.

Alsop seems to have been mostly undeterred by the threat of blackmail, but it shadowed him for the rest of his life. In 1970, people around Washington began getting letters containing photographs of Joe and Boris in the nude—evidently a Soviet response to attacks Alsop had made,

in his column, on the Soviet Ambassador. With the help of the C.I.A. director, Richard Helms, a back-channel deal was brokered: the photographs stopped appearing, and Alsop ceased attacking.

Probably the most powerful of the Georgetown insiders was Frank Wisner, chief of covert operations for the C.I.A., and one of the most zealous of the anti-Communist crusaders who turned the agency into an enormous, squid-like meddler in global affairs. Wisner's story is a slightly scary one, though quite a few C.I.A. operatives had scary sides. It has been told before, too, notably by Evan Thomas, in "The Very Best Men," about the early years of the C.I.A., and Hugh Wilford, in his valuable study "The Mighty Wurlitzer." Wisner liked to compare his covert manipulations to pulling the stops on a big organ.

Wisner was from a wealthy Mississippi family; the Wisners were in lumber and banking, and owned most of the town of Laurel. He became a track star at the University of Virginia, and served with the Office of Strategic Services during the war. His political passions were apparently aroused in Bucharest, where he was the O.S.S. station chief. After the Red Army liberated Romania from the Germans, Wisner was appalled by the brutality with which Soviet troops rounded up ethnic Germans and trans-

ported them to Soviet labor camps. (He evidently didn't grasp the savage nature of Russian-German enmity: the Germans had butchered millions of Russians during the war.)

Wisner decided that the Soviet Union, then our ally, represented an evil that had to be confronted. When he returned from Europe, he took a job at a Wall Street law firm, but he missed the action. In 1947, he accepted a position in the State Department, and he and his wife bought a three-hundred-acre farm in Maryland and a four-story house on P Street, in Georgetown. Tim Weiner, in his history of the C.I.A., "Legacy of Ashes," says that it was the Wisners who started the Sunday-dinner tradition.

In 1948, Wisner became the director of the Office of Policy Coördination, nominally within the State Department (the office was later brought into the C.I.A.), and that is where Cold War covert operations began. The palette of covert activities was broad. They included secretly funding a wide range of associations, from the Congress for Cultural Freedom and Radio Free Europe to the National Council of Churches and the American Newspaper Guild. The C.I.A.'s aim was to create new groups, or assist existing ones, to compete against international organizations that were Communist fronts. The Cold War was a looking-glass war. Half a century later, the C.I.A.'s



*"Do you have anything that doesn't scream 'divine right'?"*

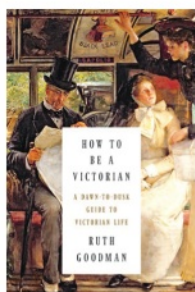
## BRIEFLY NOTED



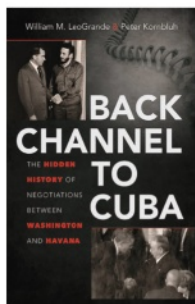
**US**, by David Nicholls (*Harper*). In his best-selling novel “One Day,” Nicholls followed the will-they, won’t-they journey of two young characters struggling with love and early careers. This new book is a thematic sequel, concerned with the disintegrating marriage of a middle-aged couple whose professional lives—Douglas is a biochemist, Connie works at a museum—have the stability their relationship lacks. On the eve of their son’s departure for college, the three undertake a doomed grand tour of Europe in the hope of solidifying their bonds. Nicholls has an easy, brisk style, but the book suffers from the rigidity of its conceit: Douglas is boring and controlling, Connie is creative and intuitive, and the clash of their personalities feels as inevitable as duck confit in Paris.



**THE DOG**, by Jack Livings (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*). Most of the stories in this debut collection are set in a contemporary China characterized by corruption, cynicism, and violence. A young Uyghur in Beijing is tortured on the pretense of having failed to pay for a haircut; a peasant on a bicycle is killed by a cargo truck careering down a mountain. In “The Crystal Sarcophagus,” set in the late seventies, a team of specialist craftsmen work tirelessly to build a crystal coffin for Chairman Mao’s mausoleum. Livings, a magazine editor who taught English in China in the early nineties, is unusually perceptive about political realities and the moral cost they exact from ordinary citizens.



**HOW TO BE A VICTORIAN**, by Ruth Goodman (*Liveright*). This entertaining guide takes the reader through a typical day in the life of a Victorian, from first shiver (Victorian houses were almost always cold in the mornings) to bedtime sitz bath. Goodman mixes historical context with technical know-how; in addition to explaining why women wore corsets she tries wearing—and even making—one herself. Such efforts sometimes result in comedy: an attempt to fashion a condom out of sheep’s gut is unsuccessful. But the book’s accumulation of detail on matters as diverse as purchasing a ticket for the new underground railway, administering an opium-based tonic to a baby, and signaling interest in a homosexual affair makes you feel as if you could pass as a native.



**BACK CHANNEL TO CUBA**, by William M. LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh (*North Carolina*). Challenging the prevailing narrative of U.S.-Cuba relations, this book investigates the history of the secret, and often surprising, dialogue between Washington and Havana. The authors, who spent more than a decade examining classified files, provide a comprehensive account of negotiations beginning in 1959 and of a relationship that, in the words of Raúl Castro, has long functioned “like a bridge in war-time.” American and Cuban officials met in places as unlikely as a cafeteria at LaGuardia Airport and the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The book’s highlights are its colorful reports of talks facilitated by personalities such as Gabriel García Márquez. The authors conclude by looking at current prospects for normalizing relations between the two countries and suggesting that the past holds lessons for future negotiators.

bones keep getting unearthed, and in some unlikely places. The scholar Eric Bennett recently discovered that the agency gave money to the Iowa Writers’ Workshop.

The C.I.A. also developed friendly relations with major news organizations, including *Time*, the New York *Times*, and CBS. The agency would sometimes debrief reporters, or ask to see unused footage of a television segment. And sometimes the organizations provided cover jobs overseas for its agents.

The C.I.A. carried out black ops all over the world, dropping agents behind the Iron Curtain into countries like Albania and Poland to foster insurgencies. It orchestrated coups and political assassinations—in Guatemala, Iran, Chile, Vietnam, and Brazil—and plotted more. It’s likely that for much of the nineteen-fifties, the C.I.A. devoted more resources to covert operations than to intelligence gathering, though the agency’s detailed budgets, past and present, are classified. Most of these operations, which Wisner ran for ten years, and which were continued by his successor, Cord Meyer, were completely contrary to the announced American policy and its philosophical underpinnings, the doctrine of containment.

Kennan’s argument for containment was that although no permanent rapprochement with the Soviet Union was possible, the United States needn’t go to war. Communism would collapse from its own inefficiency and paranoia. The United States had only to keep the Soviets inside their box. In places where Communism was already established (including Eastern Europe), the United States should be patient. Despite some rhetorical drumrolling, this was the policy that American Presidents followed for forty years.

But Wisner didn’t believe in containment. He believed in liberation—or, as it was called, rollback. His schemes for fostering insurgencies inside Soviet-dominated nations had no official backup in American policy. They all failed. The Soviets had agents within the C.I.A.’s recruiting networks, and the would-be insurgents were almost all caught and executed before they had begun to make trouble. But even if rebellion had got off the ground in

Albania or Poland, the U.S. government had no desire to intervene. The doctrine of containment can be boiled down to: What happens behind the Iron Curtain stays behind the Iron Curtain.

Still, the Office of Policy Coordination had three hundred and two employees and a budget of five million dollars in 1949, Wisner's first full year as its head. By 1952, it had more than twenty-eight hundred employees, along with more than three thousand foreign contractors; it sometimes ran dozens of operations inside a single country; and the budget was eighty million dollars, possibly higher. Wisner also skimmed an unknown amount of money off the Marshall Plan funds for European recovery. His budget was larger than that of the rest of the C.I.A.

This continued, in part, because Eisenhower liked propaganda and covert operations, for the same reason that he liked nuclear weapons: they were cheaper than maintaining a standing army. But what was the point, really? There were plenty of opportunities during the Cold War to intervene in insurgencies behind the Iron Curtain, and the United States did nothing. In 1956, thousands of Hungarians took to the streets in a revolt against the Soviet-backed Communist government. When the regime collapsed, the Red Army invaded. More than twenty-five thousand Hungarians were killed, tens of thousands were arrested, and two hundred thousand fled the country. The revolt was crushed. Its political leader, Imre Nagy, was executed.

The C.I.A. had known nothing about the revolution in advance; it had only one operative in the entire country. Still, Wisner was elated. Since Bucharest, he had been dreaming of a genuine anti-Soviet uprising. He was in Europe when the revolt broke out, and managed to get to the Austrian-Hungarian border, where he saw panicked refugees streaming across. But he could do nothing for them. He personally had to tell leaders of the rebellion that the United States would not come to their aid. Already in an agitated state, he had a serious breakdown. Although he eventually went back to work, he never really recovered. He suffered from bipolar disorder—a condition that was probably reflected in the fantastic and



# LET'S GO!

INTRODUCING THE COMPLETELY NEW

## GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN APP

Featuring the very best of  
New York City's cultural happenings,  
as chosen by **NEW YORKER** editors—  
plus smarter navigation  
and improved functionality.











ALL NEW. STILL FREE.

Search events by location, send them to friends, save them to your calendar, and buy tickets. And, in a new section, **EXCURSIONS**, our critics reveal their favorite outings around town. Alex Ross and Emily Nussbaum lead audio tours, and Hilton Als and Sasha Frere-Jones share secrets of their neighborhoods.



Supported by

PRICELESS<sup>®</sup>  
NEW YORK




[newyorker.com/go/goingsonapp](http://newyorker.com/go/goingsonapp)

unrealizable schemes he cooked up—and, in 1965, he killed himself with a shotgun on his Maryland farm. He was fifty-six.

The Georgetown set finally broke up over the issue that split Cold War liberalism apart, Vietnam. Vietnam was a crisis for containment, which was a theory with two prongs. One held that anytime Communism threatened to get outside its box, the United States was obliged to push it back in. But the other held that the United States should be guided by its own national interests, not by idealistic principles like “the right to self-determination.” To anti-interventionists like Kennan, the United States had no national interest in the fate of South Vietnam. To the last, Joe Alsop remained an interventionist.

Alsop began sounding the alarm about Indochina in 1950, even before the French had been driven from their colony. He visited the area frequently; he became friendly with the American officials there; and he was still supporting the war after almost everyone else in Georgetown had turned against it. John Kenneth Galbraith called Alsop “the leading non-combatant casualty of Vietnam” after Lyndon Johnson.

It ended grotesquely, with Alsop becoming Richard Nixon’s favorite newsman. Alsop dismissed Watergate as a distraction from the important business of staving off Communism in Asia. (After Nixon resigned, Alsop apologized to Katharine Graham.)

By then, Georgetown had lost its centrality in Washington life. The salon was no longer the preferred form of downtime for State Department officials, intelligence analysts, and a certain class of journalist. Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, and the people they brought into power with them, were not susceptible to Ivy League notions of noblesse oblige that prevailed among the Georgetown set.

It mattered that the Alsops, the Meyers, the Grahams, the Wisners, and the Bradlees were all from wealthy backgrounds. Many of them went to the same small number of elite prep schools and colleges. What seems to have motivated them to move to Washington and become involved in public affairs was the experience of the Second World War. The war had pulled them out of the world of cotillions and charities and Wall Street law firms, and given them a

dose of excitement. They had the power to change people’s lives—some of them had life-and-death power—and they became addicted.

The Second World War was a total war. It was war without rules. You didn’t have to run your ideas by Congress. That was the spirit that fuelled the O.S.S., which many well-heeled Ivy League graduates, including Stewart Alsop, joined. This sense of tactical *carte blanche* got carried over into the Cold War. The Georgetown set must have liked the idea that they were operating above the realm of public opinion, that they were beholden to no one, that they made the rules.

The Georgetowners believed in the unapologetic use of American power, because they believed in the cause for which it was used. “I have never known him to go to any area where blood could be spilled that he didn’t come back and say more blood,” Johnson’s national-security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, said of Alsop. “That is his posture toward the universe.” They were hawks, but they were liberal hawks. They disdained vulgar anti-Communism. The Grahams and the Alsops were enemies of Joseph McCarthy, even before it was politically safe to be, and Alsop was critical of the Truman Administration’s loyalty program, which was enacted in 1947 and subjected millions of federal employees to F.B.I. investigations into their political backgrounds.

How influential was the Georgetown set? The conceit of Herken’s book is, as he puts it, that “the policies and stratagems that ultimately brought down the Soviet Union, and helped bring about the world we live in today, began with a simple invitation to cocktails and dinner.” Herken is echoing a remark of Kissinger’s, which he uses as an epigraph: “The hand that mixes the Georgetown martini is time and again the hand that guides the destiny of the Western world.”

By the time the last drinks were poured, the guests at the Sunday soirées no doubt felt that they were in the cockpit of history. But the United States is a democracy, not a Wasp Ascendancy. Presidents have to get elected. For most of the postwar period, Georgetown was not popular with the White House. Harry Truman disliked Joe Alsop; Eisenhower loathed him. There is no evidence that either Administration was much influenced by policy

prescriptions emanating from P Street.

The only President who belonged to that scene was John F. Kennedy. He was a wealthy, cosmopolitan Ivy Leaguer—Georgetown’s kind of Cold War liberal. On the night of his Inauguration, restless and needing to talk, Kennedy showed up on Joe Alsop’s doorstep. That must have given the columnist quite a kick. And Phil Graham and Kennedy were close friends. (Graham, too, was bipolar; he killed himself in 1963, three months before the President was shot.)

But Kennedy’s shrewdness was very deep. He had secrets himself, and he knew just how much of an illusion of intimacy was needed to keep journalists friendly. In fact, the whole Georgetown setup can be viewed as an information market. The press honchos were looking to buy the inside scoop; the government officials were willing to exchange some of it for the right kind of coverage.

The C.I.A. actively cultivated people in the press and the media. The agency could open doors and dish dirt; in exchange, it wanted a little information, or coverage that suited its interests, or, sometimes, to have a story ignored. The Alsops were plainly part of the information economy. Herken lists a number of occasions when they wrote stories reflecting the C.I.A.’s slant.

But none of these people thought they were selling out, because they all believed that they were in the game together. In 1977, when Carl Bernstein was writing a story about the C.I.A.’s manipulation of the press, he asked Joe Alsop whether he had been an agent for the C.I.A. “It was a social thing, my dear fellow,” Alsop replied. “I never received a dollar. I never signed a secrecy agreement. I didn’t have to. . . I’ve done things for them when I thought they were the right thing to do. I call it doing my duty as a citizen.”

There was once an atmosphere of will-*ingness* that made a system of bribes and information exchanges seem, to the people involved, simply a way of working together for a common cause in a climate of public opinion that, unfortunately, required secrecy. No one got rich from the arrangement. People just lost track of what was inside their bubble and what was outside, as people tend to do. Vietnam was the reality check. “I’ve Seen the Best of It” was the title Alsop gave to his memoirs. Things hadn’t been the same since, he felt. He was right about that, and we should be thankful. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

## BETTER ALL THE TIME

*How the “performance revolution” came to athletics—and beyond.*

BY JAMES SUROWIECKI



In the summer of 1976, Kermit Washington was in trouble. He was a power forward in the N.B.A., and had just finished his third season with the L.A. Lakers. He had been a highly touted player coming out of American University, where he averaged twenty points and twenty rebounds a game and was a second-team All-American. But with the Lakers his performance had been less than mediocre. The problem was that Washington didn't know how to play basketball all that well. He had picked up the game late (in high school, he'd warmed the bench), and never learned the skills necessary to thrive as a big man in the N.B.A. In college, Washington's

size (he was six feet eight) and athleticism had allowed him to dominate other players, who were typically smaller and weaker. But in the pros, where most players were big and strong, Washington's lack of skill caught up with him. By his third season, his playing time had diminished sharply, and he feared that his career was on the line.

What Washington did next changed the N.B.A.: he called a man named Pete Newell and asked for help. Newell had been a legendary college coach, and was working for the Lakers as a special assistant. But his coaching skills were being wasted, because, as David Halberstam wrote in "The Breaks of the Game"

(1981), N.B.A. players didn't want to admit that they "still had something to learn." That summer, Newell put Washington through a series of grueling workouts, and schooled him in the basics of footwork, positioning, and shooting. The following season, Washington improved in every aspect of the game. The next summer, he worked with Newell again, and got better still. Washington was suspended for part of the 1977-78 season after he landed a devastating punch on another player during an on-court brawl, but his performance as a player continued to improve. By the end of the decade, he had become an All-Star. Other basketball players, seeing Washington's progress, started to ask if they could work with Newell, too, and within a few years there was so much demand for his services that he opened a training camp. During the next two decades, many of the N.B.A.'s greatest forwards and centers made the pilgrimage to work with the man who had saved Kermit Washington's career.

Professional athletes had always worked out, of course. But, historically, practice was mainly about getting in shape and learning to play with your teammates. It was not about mastering skills. People figured that either you had those skills or you didn't. "There is an assumption that a player arrives in the league in full possession of all the basic skills," Halberstam wrote, describing the N.B.A. in the late seventies. "Either that, or he sinks." Bob Petrich, a defensive end for the San Diego Chargers in the nineteen-sixties, told an interviewer that most N.F.L. players of his era even scorned the idea of lifting weights. "Most of the guys had this mental attitude that if you're not good enough the way you are, then you'll never be good enough," Petrich said. The prevailing philosophy was "What you are is what you are."

Today, in sports, what you are is what you make yourself into. Innate athletic ability matters, but it's taken to be the base from which you have to ascend. Training efforts that forty years ago would have seemed unimaginably sophisticated and obsessive are now what it takes to stay in the game. Athletes don't merely work harder than they once did. As Mark McClusky documents in his fascinating new book, "Faster, Higher, Stronger" (Hudson Street), they

*A focus on incremental gains has led to big advances, from sports to manufacturing.*

also work smarter, using science and technology to enhance the way they train and perform. It isn't enough to eat right and put in the hours. "You need to have the best PhDs onboard as well," McClusky says. This technological and analytical arms race is producing the best athletes in history.

The arms race centers on an obsessive scrutiny of every aspect of training and performance. Trainers today emphasize sports-specific training over generalized conditioning: if you're a baseball player, you work on rotational power; if you're a sprinter, on straight-line explosive power. All sorts of tools have been developed to improve vision, reaction time, and the like. The Dynavision D2 machine is a large board filled with flashing lights, which ballplayers have to slap while reading letters and math equations that the board displays. Football players use Nike's Vapor Strobe goggles, which periodically cloud for tenth-of-a-second intervals, in order to train their eyes to focus even in the middle of chaos.

Training is also increasingly personalized. Players are working not just with their own individual conditioning coaches but also with their own individual skills coaches. In non-team sports, such as tennis and golf, coaches were rare until the seventies. Today, tennis players such as Novak Djokovic have not just a single coach but an entire entourage. In team sports, meanwhile, there's been a proliferation of gurus. George Whitfield has built a career as a "quarterback whisperer," turning college quarterbacks into N.F.L.-ready prospects. Ron Wolforth, a pitching coach, is known for resurrecting pitchers' careers—he recently transformed the Oakland A's Scott Kazmir from a has-been into an All-Star by revamping his mechanics and motion.

Then there's the increasing use of biometric sensors, equipped with heart-rate monitors, G.P.S., and gyroscopes, to measure not just performance (how fast a player is accelerating or cutting) but also fatigue levels. And since many studies show that getting more sleep leads to better performance, teams are now worrying about that, too. The N.B.A.'s Dallas Mavericks have equipped players with Readiband monitors to measure how

much, and how well, they're sleeping.

All this effort may sound a bit nuts. But it's how you end up with someone like Chris Hoy, the British cyclist who won two gold medals at the London Olympics in 2012, trailed by a team of scientists, nutritionists, and engineers. Hoy ate a carefully designed diet of five thousand calories a day. His daily workouts—two hours of lifting in the morning, three hours in the velodrome in the afternoon, and an easy one-hour recovery ride in the evening—had been crafted to maximize both his explosive power and his endurance. He had practiced in wind tunnels at the University of Southampton. He had worn biofeedback sensors that delivered exact data to his trainers about how his body was responding to practice. The eighty-thousand-dollar carbon-fibre bike he rode helped, too. Hoy was the ultimate product of an elaborate and finely tuned system designed to create the best cyclist possible. And—since his competitors weren't slacking, either—he still won by only a fraction of a second.

You might think that this pressure to improve reflects the fact that the monetary rewards for athletic success have become immense. There's something to this. It has become economically rational to invest a lot in player training. Forty or fifty years ago, professional athletes routinely had other jobs in the off-season. Willie Davis, a future N.F.L. Hall of Famer, taught mechanical drawing at a high school. Lou Groza, a legendary kicker, sold insurance. Today, athletes spend the off-season working on their game.

Yet money isn't the whole story. We've seen similarly dramatic improvements in performance over the past few decades in fields where money doesn't play a huge role. In the nineteen-seventies, there were only two chess players who had Elo ratings (a measure of skill level) higher than 2700. These days, there are typically more than thirty such players. Analyses of great players' games from even thirty years ago uncover moves that, by today's standards, are clear blunders. Thanks to the advent of powerful computer programs, players can now practice daily against relentlessly good opponents. They can review and analyze games (not just their own but those of other great players) more quickly and efficiently.

They can instantaneously compare the consequences of potential moves. All this has led to fewer mistakes and better tactics, as chess theory has grown increasingly sophisticated.

The quality of classical musicians has improved dramatically as well, to the point that virtuosos are now, as the *Times* music critic Anthony Tommasini has observed of pianists, "a dime a dozen." Even as the number of jobs in classical music has declined, the number of people capable of doing those jobs has soared, as has the calibre of their playing. James Conlon, the conductor of the Los Angeles Opera, has said, "The professional standards are higher everywhere in the world compared to twenty or forty years ago." Pieces that were once considered too difficult for any but the very best musicians are now routinely played by conservatory students. And, if anything, the rate of improvement in technical skill has been accelerating. Music programs are better at identifying talented young musicians, training methods have improved, and the pressure of competition—with so many talented musicians competing for so few slots—keeps pushing the over-all standard of performance higher.

That's actually the biggest change in performance over the past few decades—it's not so much that the best of the best are so much better as that so many people are so extraordinarily good. In fact, McClusky points out that in some sports, particularly in track and field, the performance curve at the top is flattening out (possibly because we're nearing our biological limits). But the depth of excellence has never been greater. In baseball, a ninety-m.p.h. fastball used to be noteworthy. Today, there are throngs of major-league pitchers who throw that hard. Although a Wilt Chamberlain would still be a great N.B.A. player today, the over-all level of play in the N.B.A. is vastly superior to what it was forty years ago. There are exceptions to this rule—free-throw percentages, for instance, have basically plateaued in the past thirty-five years. But, as the sports columnist Mark Monteth wrote after reviewing a host of games from the nineteen-fifties and sixties, "The difference in skills and athleticism between eras is remarkable. Most players, even the stars, couldn't dribble

well with their off-hand. Compared to today's athletes, they often appear to be enacting a slow-motion replay."

What we're seeing is, in part, the mainstreaming of excellent habits. In the late nineteen-fifties, Raymond Berry, the great wide receiver for the Baltimore Colts, was famous for his attention to detail and his obsessive approach to the game: he took copious notes, he ate well, he studied film of his opponents, he simulated entire games by himself, and so on. But, as the journalist Mark Bowden observed, Berry was considered an oddball. The golfer Ben Hogan, who was said to have "invented practice," stood out at a time when most pro golfers practiced occasionally, if at all. Today, practicing six to eight hours a day is just the price of admission on the P.G.A. Tour. Everyone works hard. Everyone is really good.

The story of how sports has changed isn't just a story of individuals taking a new approach to their jobs. Teams, too, have learned. They're better at scouting and screening players, at getting and keeping them in shape, and at using analytics to get the most out of those players. When the Cleveland Browns won the N.F.L. title fifty years ago, they had only five assistants; today, most N.F.L. teams have fifteen or more. Coaches can specialize, and focus more intently on those small details which cumulatively add up to better performance. Technology—such as the new SportVU system, which has put fleets of high-definition cameras in fifteen N.B.A. arenas—has provided a flood of data about what's happening on the court or the field, and teams are smarter about using "Moneyball"-style analytics to improve tactics and strategy. Montieith, reviewing those fifties and sixties basketball games, found the perimeter defense, especially, to be "laughable," and the offense not much better. "Half the shots would be booed by today's fans, who would find it difficult to accept 15-foot hooks or a steady stream of off-balance jumpers," he writes. "Coaches hadn't yet come up with offenses sophisticated enough to create what are considered good shots today."

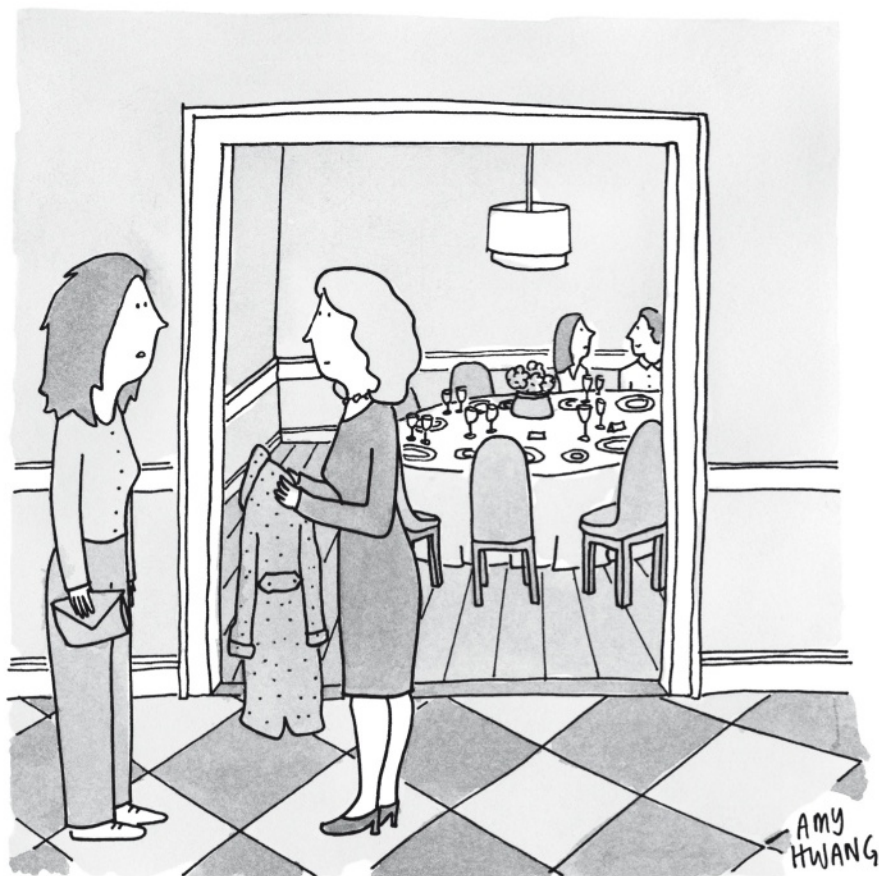
Training methods are also far more rational and data-driven. When John Madden coached the Oakland Raiders, he would force players to practice at midday in the middle of August in full

pads; Don Shula, when he was head coach of the Baltimore Colts, insisted that his players practice without access to water. Today, teams are savvier about maximizing the benefits of practices, and sometimes that means knowing when not to practice. The Portland Trail Blazers, pioneers in using data to protect players' health, will sometimes tell a lagging player to lay off practicing, lest he injure himself. To coaches of Madden and Shula's generation, this would have sounded like mollycoddling. But last season the Trail Blazers had the healthiest team in the N.B.A.

A key part of the "performance revolution" in sports, then, is the story of how organizations, in a systematic way, set about making employees more effective and productive. This, as it happens, is something that other organizations started doing around the same time. Look at what happened in American manufacturing, a transformation that also has its origins in the nineteen-seventies. At the time, big American companies were in

woeful shape. In the decades after the Second World War, they had faced almost no foreign competition, and typically had only a few domestic rivals. That made them enormously profitable but complacent about quality and productivity. The result was that, by the early nineteen-seventies, American productivity growth was stalling, while American products were often defect-ridden and unreliable. One study, in 1969, found that a third of the people who bought a new American car judged it to be in unsatisfactory condition when it was delivered.

This state of affairs became untenable when high-quality Japanese products started to appear in American markets. Japanese companies had, since the late nineteen-forties, completely overhauled their approach to the assembly line. Where American companies preferred to churn products out and then test them to see if they were defective, Japanese companies, drawing from the ideas of American management consultants such as W. Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran, embraced the idea that



*"I hope you sat me next to someone who wants to hear all about my bathroom renovation."*

quality was about catching mistakes when (or just before) they happened, rather than repairing defects after the fact. Japanese workers had the authority to stop assembly lines if they saw a potential problem, and regularly met in small groups to talk about quality improvement. At the same time, Japanese firms emphasized what came to be known as “lean production,” relentlessly looking to remove waste of all kinds from the production process, down to redesigning workspaces, so workers didn’t have to waste time twisting and turning to reach their tools. The result was that Japanese factories were more efficient and Japanese products were more reliable than American ones. In 1974, service calls for American-made color televisions were five times as common as for Japanese televisions. By 1979, it took American workers three times as long to assemble their sets.

The prospect of losing all their business to foreign competitors persuaded American companies to change their ways. They borrowed as liberally from the Japanese as the Japanese had from Deming. By the nineteen-eighties, manufacturing productivity had rebounded, and it has risen steadily ever since. (Factories are also much safer than they once were: the rate of injuries in manufacturing is now less than half what it was just twenty years ago.) Product quality, at least when it came to products manufactured in the developed world, took an even greater leap. Although products are more complex today, they’re also typically more reliable. The average age of a car on the road today is almost double what it was in 1970. And, the recent spate of recalls notwithstanding, the average number of problems reported in J. D. Power’s annual survey of new-car buyers has fallen sharply over the past twenty-five years. In manufacturing, just as in professional sports, the gap between top and bottom has narrowed. In 1987, the worst model had 3.3 more problems per car than the best. In 2012, that number had shrunk to 0.8. Lemons, for the most part, have become a thing of the past.

The ethos that underlies all these performance revolutions is captured by the Japanese term *kaizen*, or continuous improvement. In a *kaizen* world, skill is not a static, fixed quality

## A SWEET DISORDER

Pardon my sarong. I’ll have a Shirley Temple.  
Certainly, sir. Do you want a cherry with that?  
I guess so. It’s part of it, isn’t it?  
Strictly speaking, yes. Some of them likes it,  
others not so much. Well, I’ll have a cherry.  
I can be forgiven for not knowing it’s *de rigueur*.  
In my commuter mug, please. Certainly.

He doesn’t even remember me.  
It was a nice, beautiful day.  
One of your favorite foxtrots was on,  
neckties they used to wear.  
You could rely on that.

My gosh, it’s already 7:30.  
Are these our containers?  
Pardon my past, because, you know,  
it was like all one piece.  
It can’t have escaped your escaped your attention  
that I would argue.  
How was it supposed to look?  
Do I wake or sleep?

—John Ashbery

but the subject of ceaseless labor. This idea is more applicable to some fields of endeavor than to others—it’s easier to talk about improved performance in sports or manufacturing, where people’s performance is quantifiable, than in writing or the fine arts—but the notion of continuous improvement has wide relevance, leading to dramatic advances in fields as disparate as airline safety and small-unit performance in the military. Which raises a question: what are the fields that could have become significantly better over the past forty years and haven’t?

There are obvious examples. Customer service seems worse than it once was. Most companies underinvest in it, because they see it purely as a cost center, rather than a source of potential profits, and so workers are undertrained. Customer-service centers have often been set up to maximize the very things—speed and volume—that make for a poor customer experience. Continuous improvement is of no use if you’re not improving the right things. Medicine, too, has not seen the leap in performance one might have expected. Tech-

nology has given doctors many more tools, and has materially improved patients’ lives. But the number of serious medical errors has remained stubbornly high, as has the amount of wasted spending in the system. Reformers are now calling for a “focus on performance” in medical schools, precisely because it hasn’t been a focus in the past.

In one area above all, the failure to improve is especially egregious: education. Schools are, on the whole, little better than they were three decades ago; test scores have barely budged since the famous “A Nation at Risk” report came out, in the early nineteen-eighties. This isn’t for lack of trying, exactly. We now spend far more per pupil than we once did. We’ve shrunk class sizes, implemented national standards, and amped up testing. We’ve increased competition by allowing charter schools. And some schools have made it a little easier to remove ineffective teachers. None of these changes have made much of a difference.

All sorts of factors, of course, shape educational performance. For one thing, the United States has more poor

kids relative to other developed countries, and poor kids do worse on tests, on average, all over the world. Schools can't make up for that gap entirely. But there is one crucial factor in how kids fare that schools do control; namely, the quality of their teachers. Unfortunately, as two new books, Elizabeth Green's "Building a Better Teacher" (Norton) and Dana Goldstein's "The Teacher Wars" (Doubleday), point out, teacher training in most of the United States has usually been an afterthought. Most new teachers enter the classroom with a limited set of pedagogical skills, since they get little experience beforehand, and most education courses don't say much about how you run a class. Then teachers get little ongoing, sustained training to help them improve. If American teachers—unlike athletes or manufacturing workers—haven't got much better over the past three decades, it's largely because their training hasn't, either.

Some educational reformers in the United States insist that we don't need to worry about training: firing all the bad teachers would be enough. Yet countries that perform exceptionally well in international comparisons—among them Finland, Japan, and Canada—all take teacher training extremely seriously. They train teachers rigorously before they get in the classroom, and they make sure that the training continues throughout their work lives. Green writes about how Japanese elementary-school math teachers rely on *jugyokenkyu*, "a bucket of practices that Japanese teachers use to hone their craft, from observing each other at work to discussing the lesson afterward to studying curriculum material with colleagues." They've developed a vocabulary to describe successful teaching tactics. They spend hours talking about how to improve things such as *bansho*, the art of writing out a math problem (with possible solutions) on a chalkboard in a way that helps students learn. And they get constant feedback from other teachers and mentors.

The key, Green writes, "lay in the fact that no teacher worked alone." This method—with its systematic approach to learning, its emphasis on preparation, and its relentless focus on small details and the need for constant feedback—

sounds like the way athletes train today. The results have certainly been comparable. Finland had lackluster schools until, in the nineteen-seventies, it revamped its educational system, including the way it recruited and trained teachers. Now its schools are among the highest performing in the world.

There are logistical hurdles to Finland-style reforms in the United States. Because we don't have a national educational system, we have to rely on local governments to make the necessary changes. But the biggest problem is that we're in thrall to what Green calls "the idea of the natural-born teacher," the notion that either you can teach or you can't. As a result, we do little to help ordinary teachers become good and good teachers become great. What we need to embrace instead is the idea of teaching as a set of skills that can be taught and learned and constantly improved on. As both Green and Goldstein detail, school districts in the United States that take teacher training seriously have seen student performance improve, often dramatically. More accountability and higher pay for teachers would help, too. But at the moment most American schools basically throw teachers in at the deep end of the pool and hope that they will be able not only to swim but also to keep all their students afloat, too. It's a miracle that the system works as well as it does. To make gains, schools should take advantage of the training techniques that other countries have mastered: record classes so that teachers can study their own work and that of colleagues; let teachers observe each other; measure performance; and deploy a staff of full-time trainers.

These measures will cost money, although they may not cost more than constantly replacing struggling teachers (not to mention the long-term economic cost of churning out mediocre students). And there will be some teachers who will find all the feedback intrusive. But what's happened in sports over the past forty years teaches that the way to improve the way you perform is to improve the way you train. High performance isn't, ultimately, about running faster, throwing harder, or leaping farther. It's about something much simpler: getting better at getting better. ♦



ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST  
presents

# AD OASIS

@THE JAMES  
ROYAL PALM

WHERE ART AND  
DESIGN UNWIND

DECEMBER 4–6, 2014

HOSTED BY  
**THE JAMES ROYAL PALM**  
Fine Cuisine & Cocktails,  
Luxury Boutique & Lounge,  
Curated Art & Design Galleries

ENVISIONED BY  
**THOM FILICIA**  
Celebrated Interior Designer,  
Author, and Television Personality

ARCHDIGEST360.COM/ADOASIS  
#ADOASISMIAMI

PRESENTING SPONSORS  
& PARTNERS:

ANN SACKS | AT&T WIRELESS  
CAESARSTONE | CIRCA LIGHTING  
DEDON | DYSON | KOHLER  
LLADRÓ | PORSCHE | SUNBRELLA

CONDÉ NAST

# THE LOVER

*Tom Stoppard's theatrical seductions.*

BY HILTON ALS

Witty rarely, if ever, plays as sexy. Onstage and off, wits base their identity on language and seduce through talk, not through silent-movie friction. Poor Henry (Ewan McGregor), in Tom Stoppard's 1982 play, "The Real Thing" (in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival, at the American Airlines), can't seem to shut up, not even when his wife,

was his tongue that drew them to him in the first place. That, and his pen. Henry is a playwright, and Charlotte and Annie are actresses. In fact, we first encounter Henry, so to speak, through a scene he's written, in a play called "House of Cards." The scene is performed by Charlotte and Annie's husband, Max (Josh Hamilton). Max's character is sitting at home, build-

ing if it were in Basel. He is prattling on because he doesn't want to say what he knows he must and does then say: Charlotte's character couldn't possibly have been in Switzerland on business, because she left her passport at home. Emboldened by the truth, Max points out that this is not the first time that Charlotte has said she was travelling abroad when she wasn't. (How on earth did she find those Rembrandt placemats for her mother when she didn't even go to Amsterdam?) So who is it? Her lover, he means. Or lovers.

CHARLOTTE: I'm sorry if you've had a bad time. But you've done everything wrong. There's a right thing to say if you can think what it is. (*She waits a moment while Max thinks.*)

MAX: Is it anyone I know?

CHARLOTTE: You aren't anyone I know.



*Backstage affair: Gyllenhaal, Hamilton, Nixon, and McGregor as "The Real Thing"’s adulterous foursome.*

Charlotte (Cynthia Nixon), or his mistress, Annie (Maggie Gyllenhaal), insists that he do so. When it comes to speechifying, Henry's a dissident who will not be verbally suppressed. Still, no matter how much the women in his life complain about his astringent verbiage—he breaks down their self-delusions with the appetite of a lover disrobing the beloved—it

ing a house of cards. A door slams, and the house falls down. Charlotte—who plays the wife of Max's character—enters, carrying some luggage. She's been on a business trip to Switzerland. Where? Max asks. Was it Basel? Geneva. There's a lake in Geneva, isn't there? Max asks. Of course there is, he says, not waiting for an answer; they wouldn't call it Lake Geneva

Charlotte walks out and closes the door on this fictional failed marriage. In this scene, Stoppard—a quasi-philologist, who has always treasured the kind of show biz that goes into making thoughts flash and glitter—poses a number of questions that are threaded throughout the play: Are the lives we build with others an illusion, defined by

deception? Where is the truth in acting, in language? And what does it mean to discover, let alone try to understand, the truth of another person?

Annie, an actress who is always striving to live, as they say, in her truth, longs to announce her love for Henry—a passion that she calls “the real thing”—but Henry isn’t ready to break up his marriage. As buoyed as he is by Annie’s attention, he’s equally enthralled by the game of love, by how infidelity feeds his imagination. We learn all this in the play’s second scene. It’s a Sunday morning, and Henry is puttering around in his brightly lit, high-ceilinged, Scandinavian-looking living room. What we see: shelves of records and books, and a long sofa flanking the back of the stage. Charlotte enters, a trifle put out. By life? By the life of the stage, actually. Performing in Henry’s play has exhausted her. Henry, a self-described “intellectual playwright,” responds to Charlotte’s wry peevishness with light, self-involved talk that goes on and on. He’s been asked to appear on “Desert Island Discs,” an invitation that, among other things, inspires him to whip up a batch of Buck’s Fizz when Max arrives. Henry has invited him over without consulting Charlotte. Now she has to play a part she loathes: hostess.

Max is a dark, tight little soul (Hamilton plays him well, like a man who wants to strike out at the world but is afraid of being hit back), and he’s eager to understand a few things—such as why Henry seems to be avoiding him. Henry doesn’t explain. Instead, he expresses his contempt for Max and Charlotte by talking about the neediness of actors, which, of course, is secondary to his own. In response, Charlotte criticizes Henry’s failings as an artist:

What an ego trip! Having all the words to come back with just as you need them. That’s the difference between plays and real life—thinking time. You don’t really think that if Henry caught me out with a lover, he’d sit around being witty about Rembrandt place-mats? Like hell he would. He’d come apart like a pick-a-sticks. His sentence structure would go to pot, closely followed by his sphin-ter.

Charlotte has the most caustic and, therefore, most knowing lines in the play; she has learned a lot while sitting at Henry’s knee—and being repelled by the body attached to it. Calling into question the verisimilitude of his script is her way of saying that she doesn’t trust

him. (Nixon, a stage veteran who played Henry and Charlotte’s teen-age daughter in the 1984 Broadway production of “The Real Thing,” is at her best when showing her distaste for male self-importance. Anger focusses her, chuffs her.) Henry and Charlotte operate on two levels: as husband and wife, and as playwright and actress. The power dynamic between them is constantly shifting; sometimes Charlotte needs Henry to give her her identity, as a performer, and sometimes Henry needs Charlotte to give his words life.

Soon Annie drops by, on her way to spearhead a demonstration in support of Brodie (Alex Breaux), a Scottish activist who has vandalized a British soldier’s memorial wreath. Annie is carrying a bag of vegetables she picked up at the market. (Charlotte: “Darling, there was absolutely no need to bring . . . mushrooms?”) When Max and Charlotte go into the kitchen to chop the crudités, Annie flirts openly with Henry, but Henry doesn’t want to be open with her, let alone with Charlotte and Max. It’s a terrible exertion of control: Henry wants to manipulate all the characters in his life, while Annie wants only to be the star of Henry’s show. Gyllenhaal has a beautiful husky voice and a slight lisp. She walks from the hips, with a stooped grace. Her Annie is not just a good girl longing for her chance at love; her goal is also to marry up, to make the leap from being tied to another actor, who has no real power, to being a playwright’s other half, the muse for all those delicious scenes and words which make drama happen.

That’s where Henry has them all—with his words. Without him, they’d have no story. When Max confronts Annie with evidence of her affair, we feel as if something were missing, because it is: Henry himself. Although Max and Annie pretty much replicate the first scene of the play, they can’t do it convincingly without Henry’s writing. His language has become, for us, like the subtitles for a play in a foreign language—which “The Real Thing” is, for Americans, at least. The play is, in part, an examination of British tact and its perversions: how can an action be wrong if you never mention it?

By Act II, Henry and Annie are living together, and Annie suggests that he rewrite a play that Brodie has been work-

ing on from prison. Horrified, Henry cites Brodie’s rotten politics and clumsy words; in his heart, though, he recognizes that Brodie’s script is about Annie—he knows the source material. It’s especially painful for him to read it because he’s stymied by his own script: real-life happiness has quieted him artistically.

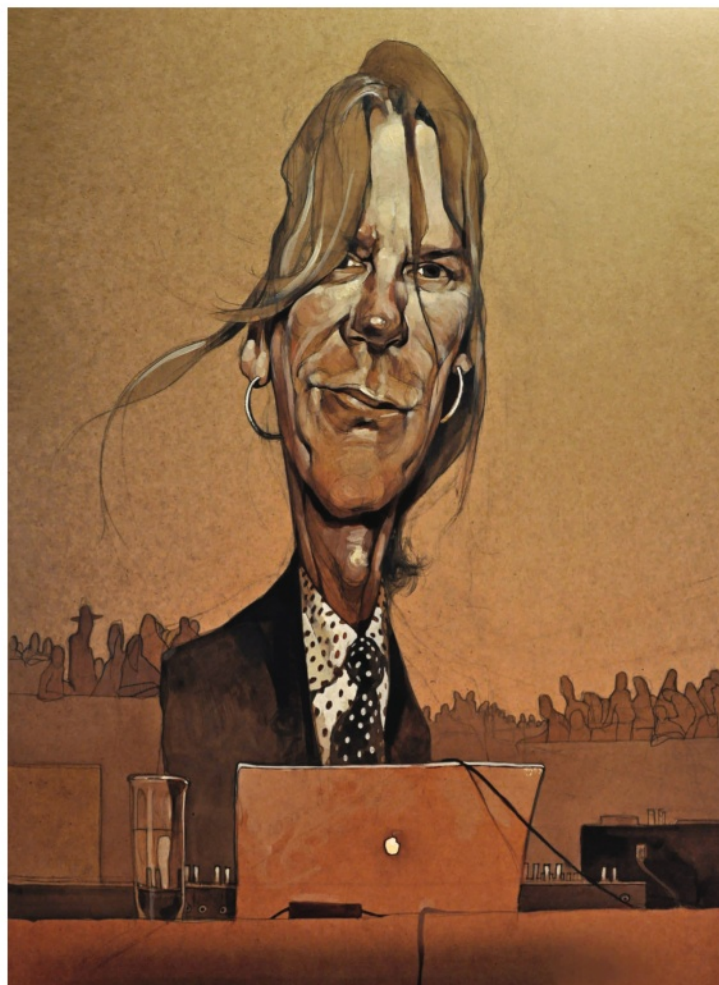
Playing a dried-up artist must be a difficult but intellectually powerful experience for an actor, who has to embody a lack of inspiration while remaining creative and vibrant himself. McGregor refuses to face anything as degrading as failure. He plays it all on one level: up, up, up. With his broad grin and his high, smooth forehead, he performs an actor’s idea of a post-Noël Coward Englishman: everything rolls trippingly off his tongue, brain, and heart. But because he doesn’t connect with Henry’s doubt—the doubt that Henry is trying to push away when he asserts his power as a writer—the other actors can’t connect with him. (The star who could do this part justice, I think, is Robert Downey, Jr., who is so verbally dexterous—he can twist his body around words while standing still—that he may be the ideal Stoppard performer.)

Gyllenhaal’s and Hamilton’s performances are compromised by McGregor’s lack of interest in Henry’s weaknesses. They struggle against the vortex of his movie charm, which the director, Sam Gold, never challenges. Gold, who has directed works by playwrights as quintessentially American as Annie Baker and William Inge, doesn’t have a feel for British life in the Thatcher era, when politics charged so many conversations. Instead, he tries to turn “The Real Thing” into a drawing-room comedy—dressed up with some lame-ass tricks. (The actors sing Henry’s “Desert Island Discs” selections during a scene change, for instance.) Neither Gold nor McGregor can quite excavate the tragedy in Stoppard’s essentially realistic view of love as something that we at once cleave to and reject, especially when we want it most. In play after play, Stoppard does what all literary modernists aim to do: he cuts through his own old-fashioned sentimentality to tell us, in a rush of words, what it feels like to live in a changing world where language and the imagination may turn out not to matter much at all. ♦

# LOOPED IN

*William Basinski's evocative tape art.*

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



For some musicians, the link between persona and material is as short as a wick. With Taylor Swift or Frank Sinatra, songs and singer line up and suggest a single human being, with the music presented as evidence of lived experience. Other musicians, like actors, create things that bear little relation to what they do offstage. The composer William Basinski falls into this second category. His work resonates with his name—it's severe and Eastern European, a body of intense and grave music. But Basinski is Billy to his friends, an unshakably

cheerful man who seems more like a retired surfer than like a composer. In September, when Basinski performed a version of his forthcoming release, "Cascade," on the grounds of Olana, the historic home of Frederic Edwin Church, in upstate New York, he showed up in a white raincoat, a black leather cowboy hat, and driving gloves. As mist scrolled over the Hudson, above the bluish Catskills, Basinski sipped beer and played a series of mesmerizing piano loops that suggested worlds crumbling and blooming between the notes. He seemed unbothered that the

small crowd was eating sandwiches, chatting, and drinking wine.

Raised in Dallas, Basinski studied saxophone and clarinet at the University of North Texas, in Denton, for two years. In the summer of 1978, he ditched school and travelled around Texas to see bands like the Sex Pistols and Television. He became interested in the music of what he calls "three points to a triangle": John Cage, Steve Reich, and Brian Eno. He met the man who is still his partner, the visual artist James Elaine, and moved to San Francisco on Halloween of the same year. Basinski began buying cheap tape recorders and creating the work that sustains him today. He captured the sounds of a rented piano, the inside of his freezer, ambient noises of San Francisco—"the clicking electric buses, the grasshopper legs, and the trolleys creaking," he says—and made physical loops of this material.

In 1980, Basinski and Elaine moved to a loft in downtown Brooklyn. Over the next few years, Basinski made hundreds of loops, which he organized by hanging them from a tree branch that he kept near his mixing desk. Some loops were made from his own playing, others from accidental noises or from radio-station broadcasts bleeding into his amplifiers and tape decks. Though he didn't release any music, he was gathering material that he "never could have created with pencil and paper," he says. "I was getting all this great stuff. It was just coming from the sky."

In 1989, he and Elaine moved to a loft in Williamsburg that became known as Arcadia. Basinski began to play his loops for people at Arcadia, which got a reputation as a place for others, including Antony Hegarty, later of Antony and the Johnsons, to develop their craft.

It wasn't until the summer of 2001 that Basinski stumbled into the work that brought him out of obscurity. He had decided to start transferring the loops he'd made in the early eighties to CDs, for posterity. Some of the tapes were in terrible shape, and as Basinski let the loops play they fell apart. Magnetic tape stores information on bits of metal affixed to a ribbon. That metal is the music, and the music was crumbling. Basinski copied as many loops as

*Basinski started recording the changes that happen to audiotape as it turns to dust.*

he could, capitalizing on the changes happening to the sounds as the tapes turned into dust.

On September 11, 2001, Basinski had a job interview with the arts organization Creative Time at the World Trade Center. But from his roof he could see a huge cloud of smoke drifting into Brooklyn from lower Manhattan. Downstairs, he played music as loud as he could, until the “disintegration loops” started. He returned to the roof and began videotaping the clouds of debris at Ground Zero as night fell. When he synched the visual with the disintegration loops, something clicked.

Basinski released “The Disintegration Loops” in four volumes, in 2002 and 2003. Antony called them “the most helpful and useful music I have ever known.” The first loop, officially called “dlp 1.1,” was eventually scored by Maxim Moston, of Antony and the Johnsons, for an orchestra and played in the Temple of Dendur, at the Metropolitan Museum, on the tenth anniversary of September 11th. The loop, which is made from a source Basinski can no longer identify, is a sleepwalking mesh of horns and strings that rises and falls, suggesting neither sadness nor ecstasy but a kind of uneasy limbo. After about twenty minutes, the loop begins to audibly decay, and for the next forty minutes the tape edits itself, introducing gaps and bits of silence that create a lopsided rhythm. As the music dies, it emerges.

Basinski’s music is difficult to classify. Minimalist composers and sampling artists are related, but only somewhat. His loops are being voiced neither by humans—who repeat

figures in a way that involves a fairly high level of variation—nor by digital devices like samplers and software programs, which come close to no variation at all. Basinski’s music is based on the flutter in the machine. Digital technology flattened out the analog machine: tape-deck speeds vary, but the speed of iTunes doesn’t. Basinski’s innovation was to step back not a hundred years, and pick up a banjo or a steel guitar, but maybe forty or so years, and find the organic change—the aging, if you will—at the heart of early audio machinery. Basinski’s loops are defined by the fact that machines are always in the process of failing, and that change itself is a form of composition. Like hip-hop producers, who develop sample banks of favored snares and hi-hats from old songs, Basinski has built a career from fragments of thirty-year-old tape.

The changes in his loops are infinitesimal and almost imperceptible, very close to the adjustments a musician might make when repeating a phrase, but slightly more dependable. It’s a loose repetition: a train going across the tracks, the sound of coins dropping into a farebox on a city bus, the flutter of an oscillating fan in summer. Basinski’s music celebrates the decay of the ideal copy. Each successive wobble is a compositional change—it builds up or directs the flow of narrative feeling in a piece. Brian Eno once said that “repetition is a form of change,” but Basinski’s tape loops physically revise that and bring the idea back as “repetition is change.”

I first heard “Cascade,” to be released in March, at Issue Project Room, in Brooklyn, in June. As Basinski played, projections—mostly images of rippling water—made by Elaine fell over him and his equipment. Though “The Disintegration Loops” holds gravitas, it is not his most severe or dark work. That prize might go to “Cascade.”

The main loop is something in a minor key that Basinski played on the piano and then modified. A pair of two-note phrases repeat and are answered by two lower notes, rising. The main section of “Cascade” is that loop, burrowing in and beginning to unfold as it is put through various echo units. At Issue Project Room, Basinski played the first loop from an Apple laptop, which he calls a “third deck.” On either side of the laptop were his most important collaborators: two portable reel-to-reel tape decks. Next to each one was a glass jar with tape loops lying at the bottom. (It is important that the tapes not become crinkled or bent, so Basinski transports “the girls,” as he calls them, in jars or lunchboxes.)

The main “Cascade” loop is followed by another, colder piano loop and then a burst of smeared strings reminiscent of the soundtrack of a bad forties melodrama. Basinski plays these on the tape decks, creating a space that feels increasingly claustrophobic, revealing the unexpected nature of looping. How pretty a loop sounds the first time has no bearing on how you will feel after hearing it for thirty minutes. ♦

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

VOLUME XC, NO. 35, November 10, 2014. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 17 & 24, June 9 & 16, July 7 & 14, August 11 & 18, and December 22 & 29) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Elizabeth Hughes, vice-president and publisher; Beth Luskó, associate publisher advertising; James Guilfoyle, director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, chief executive officer; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; Jill Bright, chief administrative officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001. Canada Post: return undeliverable Canadian addresses to P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS (SEE DMM 707.4.12.5). NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: SEND ADDRESS CORRECTIONS TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone IA 50037-0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Beth Luskó at (212) 286-4454. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker’s name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenest.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

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



## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by David Borchart, must be received by Sunday, November 9th. The finalists in the October 27th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 24th 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](http://contest.newyorker.com).

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"The sign said 'Home-Style Cooking.'"*  
Thomas Reed, Greenup, Ky.



### THE FINALISTS

*"I need to confirm a reservation."*  
Dean Herrin, Frederick, Md.

*"He's working remotely this week."*  
Bill McMullen, Richmond, Va.

*"Looks like you just missed Him."*  
Henry Northington, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

# This little piggy stayed home...



...and saved hundreds on car insurance at [geico.com](http://geico.com).  
Go online, get a quote today, and see how much *you* could save.

## **GEICO**

[geico.com](http://geico.com) | 1-800-947-AUTO | local office



*Breguet*  
Depuis 1775

## Breguet, the innovator. Classique Hora Mundi - 5717

An invitation to travel across the continents and oceans illustrated on three versions of the hand-guilloché lacquered dial, the Classique Hora Mundi is the first mechanical watch with an instant-jump time-zone display. Thanks to a patented mechanical memory based on two heart-shaped cams, it instantly indicates the date and the time of day or night in a given city selected using the dedicated pushpiece. History is still being written...



BREGUET BOUTIQUES - NEW YORK 646 692-6469 - BEVERLY HILLS 310 860-9911

BAL HARBOUR 305 866-1061 - LAS VEGAS 702 733-7435 - TOLL FREE 877-890-0847 - WWW.BREGUET.COM