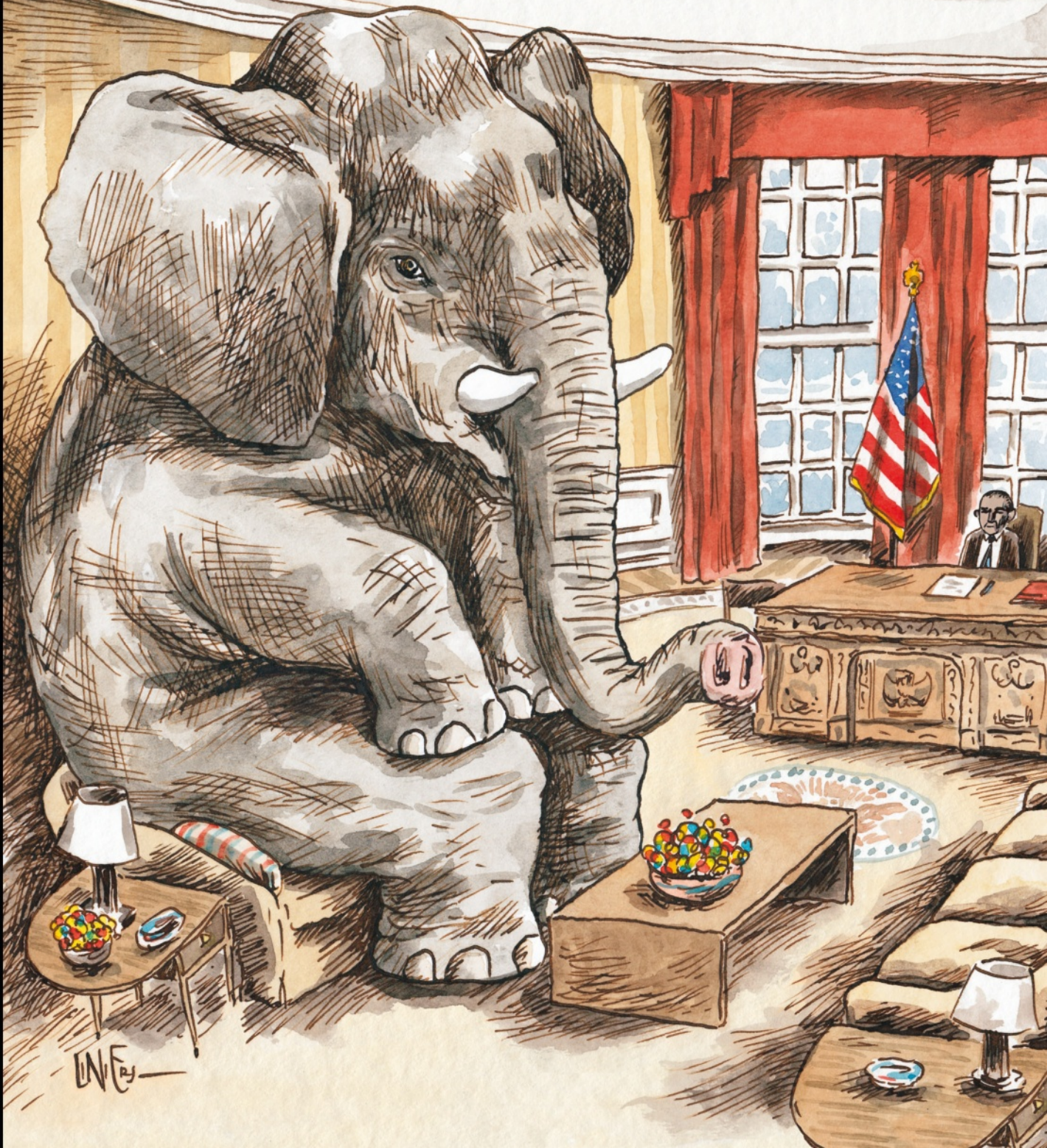


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NEW YORKER



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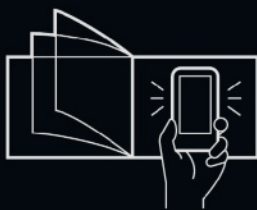
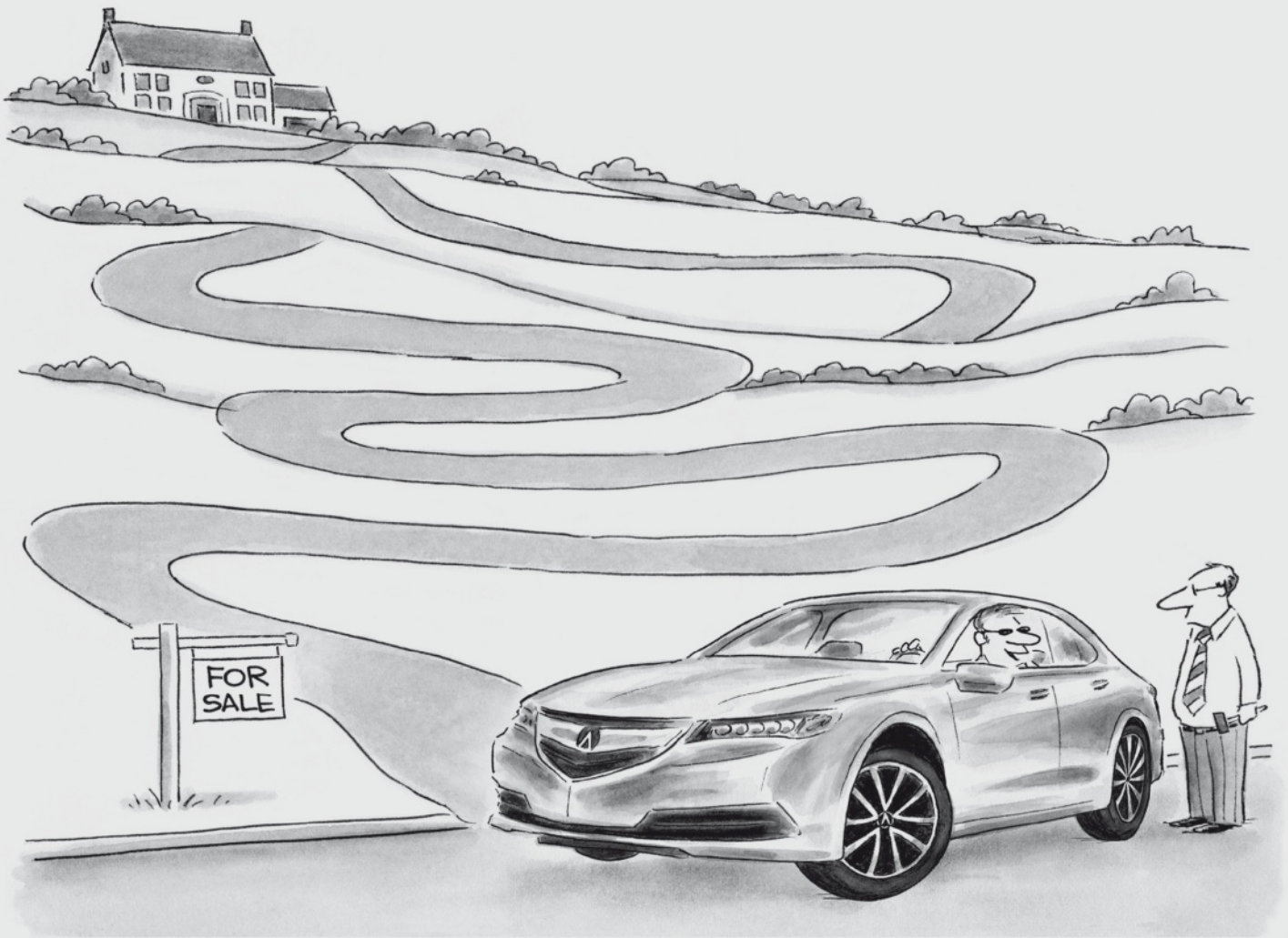
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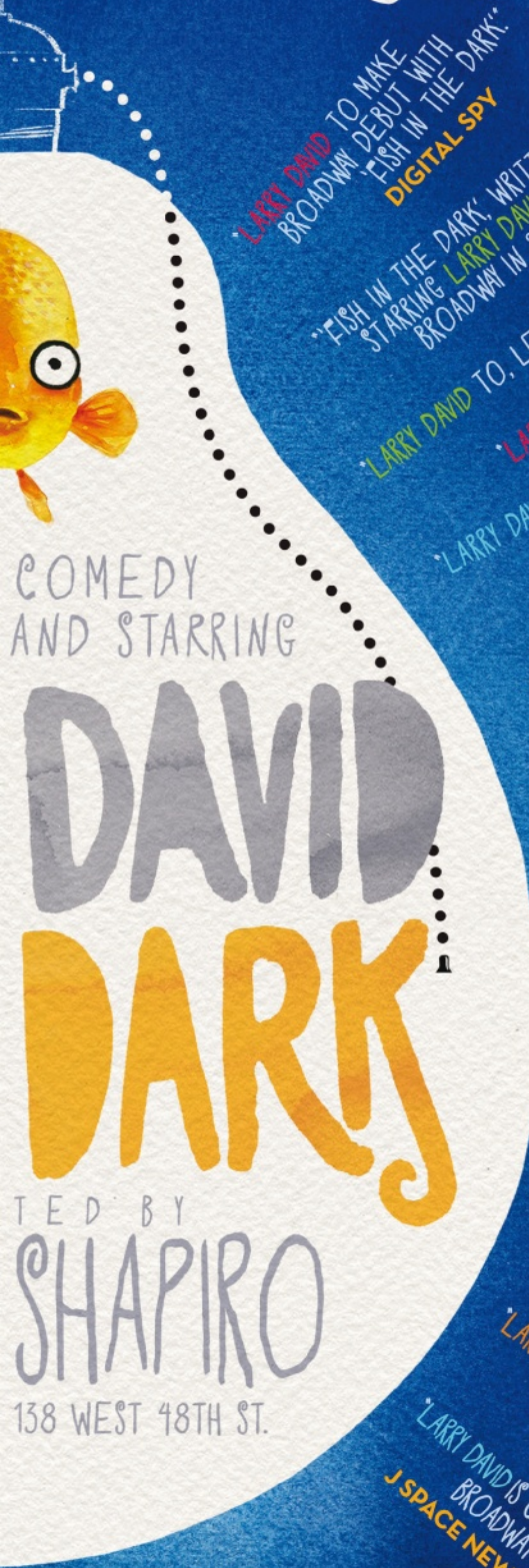


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THE NEW YORKER

NOVEMBER 17, 2014

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CÉLINE

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FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by Dave Eggers, Nick Laird, and Robert Polito.

PODCASTS: Hendrik Hertzberg and David Remnick join Dorothy Wickenden to assess the midterm elections on the Political Scene. David Remnick also appears on Out Loud, with Sasha Weiss, to talk about his article on Israel in this week’s magazine. Plus, on the monthly Fiction Podcast, David Gilbert reads a story from the archive and discusses it with Deborah Treisman.

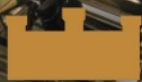
HUMOR: A Daily Cartoon drawn by David Sipress. Plus, Andy Borowitz and the Shouts & Murmurs blog.

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THE MAIL

HOW EBOLA OPERATES

Richard Preston's piece did much to explain the Ebola virus ("The Ebola Wars," October 27th). Yet when Preston writes that "the virus is a parasite" he's characterizing Ebola in language that some physicians and scientists would not readily use. Although a virus can be considered a cellular parasite, in that it uses its host cell's reproductive machinery to duplicate itself, a virus is not a parasite, nor is a parasite a virus. Parasites are living organisms that feed off of other organisms; viruses are unique sequences of genomic material which can cause a disruption or aberration of normal biological function. Sometimes these viral invaders turn cells into incubators for more virus particles, which then propagate from cell to cell, causing a variety of symptoms and, ultimately, derangement of normal function within infected cells. An Ebola particle, as Preston writes, is "pulled inside the cell, where it takes control of the cell's machinery and causes the cell to start making copies of it." But viruses are not considered true life forms, since they lack the biological inventory necessary to sustain either aerobic or anaerobic metabolism. They are the water in the gas tank and, improbably, the bearer of genomic variability and inoculation. Unlike a parasite, the Ebola virus cannot really be granted sentience.

Gil Herren, M.D.

Collierville, Tenn.

In formulating the genetic evolution of the Ebola virus, Preston posits "a vast population of particles, different from one another, each particle competing with the others for a chance to get inside a cell and copy itself." We usually think of competition among organisms in terms of a scarce resource that is used up by more successful members of a population. The scarce resource in Ebola's case appears to be the time needed by each genetic subtype to multiply before the entire virus population kills the

host. A mutation that results in a faster virus would disadvantage a slower population only if the change occurred early enough in the infection. Even then, subsequent hosts would have to be infected by multiple strains for this time competition to press ahead.

Andy Miller

Vancouver, B.C.

Preston concludes his article on Ebola by writing that "in the U.S. and Europe, hospitals have made fatal mistakes in protocol . . . errors that no well-trained health worker in Africa would likely make." Still, as his own reporting tragically illustrates, many sophisticated health workers in Africa have contracted, and died from, the disease. The intricacies of properly utilizing personal protective equipment, combined with Ebola's infectiousness and inevitable human fallibility, have made this outbreak a clinician's nightmare.

Jeffrey Lazar, M.D.

New York City

PIANO MAN

Nick Paumgarten's piece contains many defenses for the "art" of Billy Joel ("Thirty-Three-Hit Wonder," October 27th). Quoting Ron Rosenbaum's slam "No career re-evaluations please!" was almost a masterstroke for a career reevaluation. But when Paumgarten writes of Joel, "Onstage he could be enthralling, but he had the disadvantage of sitting at a piano," I swear I heard Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis laughing outside my window. Joel sounds like a personable financial success, but he remains a dime-store Dylan, now with writer's block.

Peter Golkin

Arlington, Va.

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

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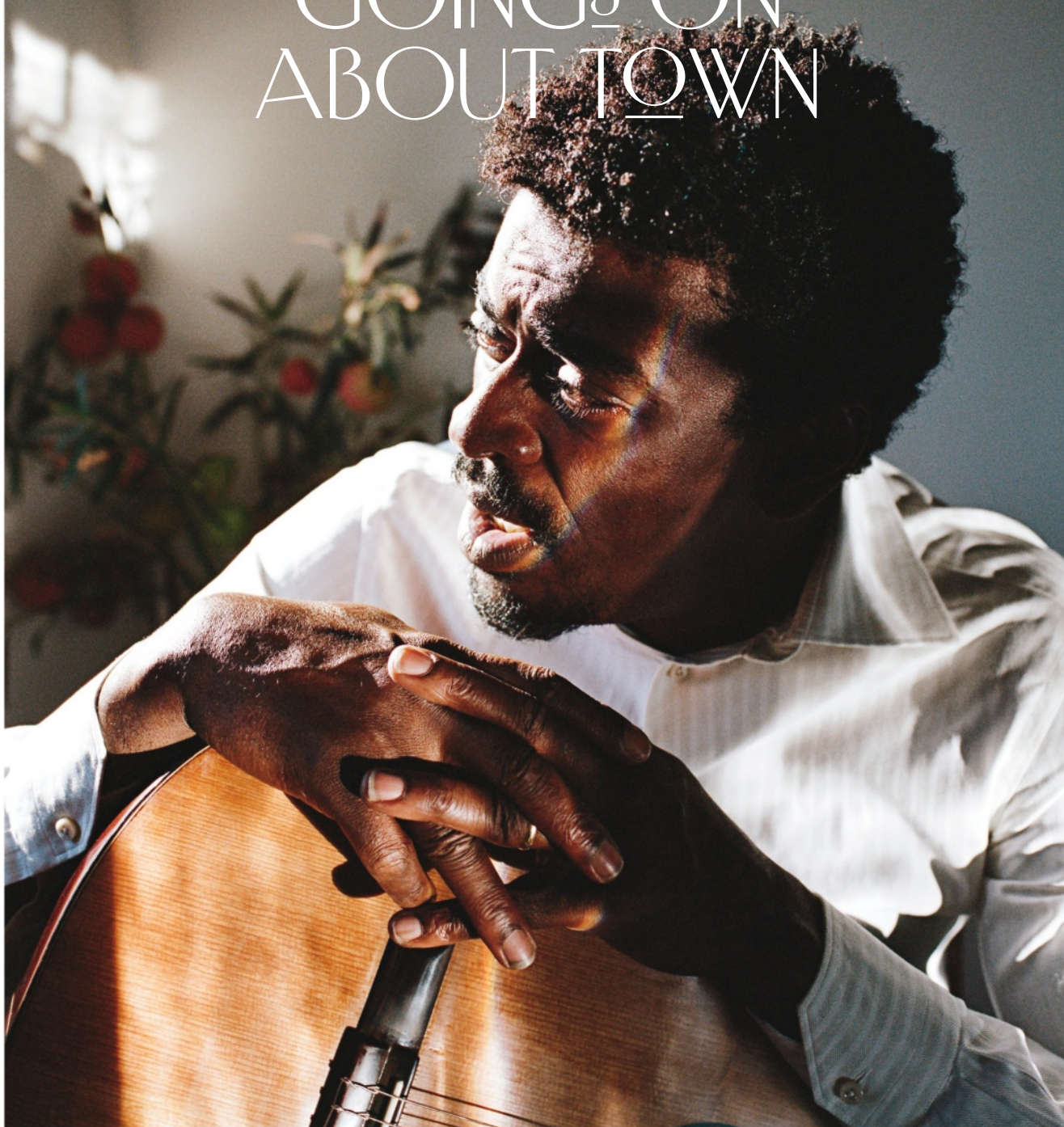
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



NOVEMBER
2014

WEDNESDAY
12TH

THURSDAY
13TH

FRIDAY
14TH

SATURDAY
15TH

SUNDAY
16TH

MONDAY
17TH

TUESDAY
18TH

SEU JORGE GREW UP in the favelas of Rio, where his brother was killed as a teen-ager, and he was homeless for a period. A role in the 2002 film “City of God” brought him acclaim in Brazil, and a part in Wes Anderson’s “The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou,” in 2004, did the same here, thanks to his exquisite renditions of David Bowie songs, in Portuguese, on the soundtrack. With his heartbreakingly emotive baritone, Jorge (whose name is pronounced “say-oo zhor-zhee”) has reinvigorated samba and other Brazilian genres, and also interpreted songs by Roy Ayers, Michael Jackson, and other pop stars. He performs for eight nights at the Blue Note, beginning Nov. 10.

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

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID BLACK



"Carlotta" (2013), by the German-born, American-based painter Charline von Heyl.

WINTER PREVIEW

In **"The Forever Now,"** which opens on Dec. 14, MOMA examines painting today and finds it more vital than ever. It's an exciting prognosis for a medium that's been declared dead, on and off, since the mid-nineteenth century. The show's dexterous curator, Laura Hoptman, made a strong impression at the museum in 2002, with a genre-bending survey of recent drawing. Now she's tapped seventeen painters—more than half of them women—whose approaches are all over the map, from figurative to abstract and boisterous to restrained. The youngest is the twenty-eight-year-old Oscar Murillo, a much hyped star from Colombia by way of London, whose canvases are as likely to bear traces of boot marks as brushstrokes. The elder statesman is New York's Amy Sillman, fifty-nine, a crackerjack colorist who celebrates the legacy of Abstract Expressionism as she upends it. What unifies the works of such diverse artists, who borrow freely from art-historical sources while breaking new ground? According to Hoptman, it's a spirit of atemporality. In the Information Age, she argues in the show's catalogue, the past and the future coexist in an elastic present.

Time was the lifelong subject of On Kawara, the deep-thinking Japanese artist, who lived in New York from 1965 until his death, in June, at the age of eighty-one. He is best known for his date paintings, collectively titled "Today," of which he produced thousands throughout his life. On each monochrome canvas, he hand-painted the date of the day it was made; if Kawara didn't finish a piece by midnight, it was abandoned. For years, he sent daily telegrams to friends and associates around the world that read, "I am still alive," and mailed postcards stamped with the time he woke up. Examples of these works and others are installed in the retrospective **"On Kawara—Silence,"** opening at the Guggenheim on Feb. 6.

—Andrea K. Scott

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Museum of Modern Art

"Cut to Swipe"

This show of recent acquisitions is the first outing at the museum for Stuart Comer, the sharp new chief curator of media and performance art. He has an eye for reconstituted analog media, whether in Dara Birnbaum's pioneering 1982 recut of TV news or in the Otolith Group's more recent redeployment of Chris Marker's essayistic documentaries on Hellenic culture, which were banned by Greek broadcasters in 1989. If media these days is viral, you'd better learn to manage the symptoms, as Hito Steyerl insists in her bravura video on surveillance technology. The opposition of digital and analog in Ken Okiishi's painted-over flat-screen TVs is the only glib note in an otherwise ambitious show. Through March 22.

Brooklyn Museum

"Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond"

At some point in the past several years, maybe late one night—dogs whimpering in their sleep, cats snapping alert—the tectonic plates of youthful creativity in New York City shifted, and Manhattan became a suburb of Brooklyn. This show of works by thirty-five local artists and collectives, curated by Eugenie Tsai and Rujeko Hockley, favors installation, performance, and conceptual work, including the "community practice" that tends to occur when artists live within walking distance of poor people. Demotic touches include an alluringly swanked-up tricycle for vending shaved-ice treats, by Miguel Luciano, and a lovely parlor space, by Pablo Helguera, decorated with works made in 1899—the year that Susannah Mushatt Jones, a Brooklyn supercentenarian, was born. The collective BFAMFAPHD (the initials of academic degrees) spreads a homeopathic wet blanket with statistical documentation of the hard lots of current graduates—the staggering number of artists, debt burdens, iffy prospects. But, over all, effervescence predominates. Anything can happen when enough artistic ambition and critical exasperation cram into patches of urban geography. Top up your MetroCard. Through Jan. 4.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

John Baldessari

Like his early text paintings and his recent storyboard works, these new diptychs by Los Angeles's enduring ironist play on the tension between word and image: typewritten fragments of screenplays are juxtaposed with details plucked from the history of Western painting. Some of the latter are recognizable—Cranach's Eve, Jan Davidsz. de Heem's still-life with a peeled lemon—and some are more obscure. The screenplays purport to illustrate the paintings, but only a few actually do; too many simply crack art-market jokes, in which rich men buy art and gold-digging women egg them on. (One text begins, "Int. Hotel—Basel Art Fair.") At eighty-three, Baldessari still has wit and invention to spare, but you wish he'd dial back the clichés. Through Nov. 22. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Willie Doherty

The subject of Doherty's fine work is the conflict in Northern Ireland, which gives even the most ordinary landscapes an unsettling charge. The show opens with large black-and-white photographs of trash-strewn lots, scarred wastelands that prepare viewers for "Remains," a video that tracks slowly

An 86-mile trip to watch your son's basketball game.

A 46-mile trip to watch your daughter's soccer game.

A 123-mile trip to watch your other daughter's softball game.

A 12-foot walk to the couch, because free weekends don't come that often.



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"Grand Design: Pieter Coecke van Aelst and Renaissance Tapestry." Through Jan. 11.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Sturtevant: Double Trouble." Through Feb. 22.

MOMA PSI

"Zero Tolerance." Through March 8.

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

"Nature's Fury: The Science of Natural Disasters." Opens Nov. 15.

NEW MUSEUM

"Chris Ofili: Night and Day." Through Feb. 1.

GALLERIES SHORT LIST

UPTOWN

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Feigen

34 E. 69th St. 212-628-0700.
Through Jan. 16.

Leo Villareal
Gering

14 E. 63rd St. 646-336-7183.
Through Jan. 10.

"Freezer Burn"

Hauser & Wirth
32 E. 69th St. 212-794-4970.
Through Dec. 20.

CHELSEA

Louise Bourgeois
Cheim & Read

547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.
Through Jan. 10.

Alexander Ross
Nolan

527 W. 29th St. 212-925-6190.
Through Dec. 6.

Franz West
Zwirner

537 W. 20th St. 212-727-2070.
Through Dec. 13.

DOWNTOWN

Urs Fischer
Brown

620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.
Through Dec. 20.

Takeshi Murata
Salon 94 Bowery

243 Bowery. 212-979-0001.
Through Dec. 21.

Artie Vierkant
Untitled

30 Orchard St. 212-608-6002.
Through Dec. 14.

through similar sites as an exhausted narrator describes the brutal beatings that occurred there. A second video, "The Amnesiac," follows a well-dressed, haunted-looking man as he walks into a clearing in the woods and relives a moment from the past. Closeup photographs of gouged and burned tree trunks suggest wounds that have yet to heal. Through Dec. 6. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

Hans Haacke

An eighteen-inch-tall bronze horse skeleton, with a live stock ticker tied around one foreleg, is a model for Haacke's upcoming sculpture in Trafalgar Square. Who knows what its impact will be at full scale, but here the wealth-gap allegory comes off as agitprop. Haacke is far better—indispensable, really—when he tackles the relationship between art, money, and power head on: in this case, the Met's recent christening of its ugly new fountains, which proudly bear the name of the billionaire David Koch. Giant hundred-dollar bills on the wall feature closeups of the fountains' pools, although, if Koch and other climate-change deniers manage to forestall regulation, the water may be flooding Chelsea's streets in the not so distant future. Through Nov. 22. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

Zarina

The Indian-born virtuoso's small woodcuts and collages are poignant, delicate, and alive with numinous beauty. Some of these new works assert political and cultural origins—one faint white scrawl bisecting a black field suggests the India-Pakistan border, and a gilded collage punched with holes is named for the Syrian city of Aleppo. Others transcend the terrestrial, such as a wonderful sequence of seven prints of the night sky, the first studded with white dots, the last almost solid darkness. A suite of fifty collages, each black and gold, turns the abstract forms of a house into realms of the supernatural. Through Dec. 6. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

"The Floral Ghost"

This project space considers its context, the flower district, in works by six artists and one writer, Susan Orlean, whose essay lends the show its title and is distributed here as a broadside. Instead of looking at nature in situ, the artists fix their gazes on self-contained botanical specimens, as in Fred Tomaselli's rainbow circuits painted on photographs of fallen leaves, or Simryn Gill's panoramic photograph of a tree shielding a Chinese cemetery. In the back room, a former plant refrigerator, Philip Taaffe presents seventy square monotypes whose symmetrical petals and blossoms eloquently split the difference between nature and artifice. Through

Dec. 12. (Planthouse, 107 W. 28th St. 212-564-5500.)

"Picasso & the Camera"

John Richardson's latest excavation of the Picasso archive may not be as spectacular or revisionist as his previous shows in this space, but it's packed with fascinating material involving the artist's relationship with photography, both as icon and iconographer. Picasso had limited gifts as a photographer; he took the usual snapshots, some of which provided source material for the many paintings here. And the pictures that he took of his studio don't compare to Brassai's or Cartier-Bresson's. Those photographers, and others who made Picasso their subject (including Edward Quinn, Andre Villers, and Dora Maar), contribute more substantial images to a show that is as much about the construction of celebrity as it is about the creative process. Through Jan. 3. (Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Henry Flynt

Audio Visual Arts, an East Village storefront run by the perceptive Justin Luke, has developed an ardent following thanks to its program of sound and sound-related art. Now gracing the walls are text pieces by Flynt, a septuagenarian avant-garde

musician and sometime "anti-art activist." Twelve small black-on-white panels, made this year but conceived in 1992, shift in tone from absurdist ("fight porcelain now") to poetic ("moon-free water") to laugh-out-loud commonsense ("the fewer teenagers in your basement the better"). At least, those were the tones on one recent visit: there are sixty-eight works in the entire series, and Flynt, ever mercurial, has been rotating them throughout the show. Through Nov. 23. (AVA, 34 E. 1st St. 917-604-8856.)

"Classical Nudes and the Making of Queer History"

Gathering works from Michelangelo to Nan Goldin, with Romaine Brooks, Paul Cadmus, and Robert Mapplethorpe in between, the curator Jonathan David Katz makes a persuasive case for the image of the naked faun, satyr, warrior, and goddess as a crucial key to gay and lesbian identity. Classical examples of the physical ideal—including the drawings, etchings, and bronze and marble statuary displayed here—became the models for later artists who dealt frankly with desire and sexuality. Setting the slyly subversive tone at the exhibition's entrance, a life-size nude self-portrait by Lyle Ashton Harris undermines a heroic pose with a curly wig and full makeup. Through Jan. 4. (Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, 26 Wooster St. 212-431-2609.)



An untitled painting on fabric, from 1993, by the influential German painter Albert Oehlen, who studied with Sigmar Polke, at the Skarstedt gallery.

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MOVIES



Reese Witherspoon plays an F.B.I. agent and Joaquin Phoenix is a sleuth in “Inherent Vice.”

WINTER PREVIEW

The quirks of Oscar politics push many of Hollywood’s most prestigious releases to year’s end, and they tend to fall into a few major categories—star vehicles, auteur creations, literary adaptations, and historical dramas. “**Inherent Vice**” (Dec. 12), Paul Thomas Anderson’s adaptation of Thomas Pynchon’s novel, fits all four. Set in Los Angeles in 1970, it stars Joaquin Phoenix as a stoner private eye whose investigation into the disappearance of a real-estate mogul draws him into high-level political conspiracies. Anderson revels in the absurd clash of period details: the prodigious countercultural indulgence in sex, drugs, and protest, the raw menace of neo-Nazi bikers, and the punitive moralism of establishment authorities. Phoenix amiably shambles through a cannabis haze, but Reese Witherspoon, with just a handful of scenes, steals the show, as an F.B.I. agent with a gleefully Hitchcockian rigor.

Quvenzhané Wallis, the child star of “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” plays the title role in the musical remake “**Annie**” (Dec. 19), directed by Will Gluck and co-starring Jamie Foxx as the orphan’s wealthy benefactor. “**American Sniper**” (Dec. 25), directed by Clint Eastwood, is based on the autobiography of the Navy SEAL Chris Kyle. Bradley Cooper plays Kyle, whose marksmanship renders him essential to his unit; Sienna Miller co-stars as Kyle’s wife. Ava DuVernay directs “**Selma**” (Dec. 25), the story of the voting-rights marches that Martin Luther King, Jr., led from that city to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. David Oyelowo plays Dr. King; Carmen Ejogo plays his wife, Coretta Scott King. The long-gestating movie version of “**Into the Woods**” (Dec. 25), Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s musical adaptation of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, stars Anna Kendrick as Cinderella and Meryl Streep as the Witch; Rob Marshall (“Chicago”) directs.

—Richard Brody

NOW PLAYING

Actress

The real-life actress Brandy Burre, a regular on “The Wire,” left show biz, 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 (at that time 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.)

Butter on the Latch

After a sudden Brooklyn breakdown—a freakout of vulnerability on the ambiguous edge of art and abuse—Sarah (Sarah Small), a young performance artist, heads to a rustic California “Balkan camp,” along with her friend Isolde (Isolde Chae-Lawrence), to study folk music and dance. There, the primal rhythms and ancient spirits of tradition fuse with a deep rural darkness and the magnetic pull of the redwoods to ensnare the women in a hypnotic bond of desire and a terrifying artistic nightmare. The friends’ erotic confidences veer toward sexual rivalry when a tall and diffident classmate (Charlie Hewson) arrives. Carrying flashlights and wearing headlamps in the thick underbrush, Small and Chae-Lawrence convey looming frenzy with an easygoing charm; the hallucinatory videography, by Ashley Connor, looks at faces and landscapes with penetrating detail while evoking unseen realms and timeless mysteries. The director, Josephine Decker, seems to be filming in a state of permanent sleeplessness; every image and sound has the impulsive energy of a creation wrenched from a void into which she would leap again joyfully.—*R.B.* (IFP Media Center.)

The Chair

This 1962 documentary, produced by Robert Drew and filmed by Richard Leacock and D. A. Pennebaker, offers high drama, complex characters, and vivid performances that match those of any fictional film. It focusses on a Chicago attorney, Donald Moore, and his efforts to get the death sentence of a convicted killer, Paul Crump, commuted, on the then novel ground that the prisoner had been rehabilitated. (Crump was a trusted counsellor to other inmates, and the prison warden had become a friend and supporter.) Three days before the scheduled execution, the New York lawyer Louis Nizer joins Moore on the case. The filmmakers, working with newly available lightweight equipment, capture the action with agility and concentration, but their method is not that of the self-effacing fly on the wall: the subjects are aware of the camera, and, far from censoring themselves, they expose their machinations and emotions with a self-aware sincerity and perform with a confessional and confrontational daring. Moore, in particular, is like a real-life Jimmy Stewart, with his folksy drollery giving way to grand—and grandly principled—oratorical bravado.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; Nov. 14.)

Matisse The Cut-Outs Now on View



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—*The New Yorker*

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Henri Matisse. *Blue Nude III*. 1952. Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, on white paper, mounted on canvas. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Purchase, 1982. © 2014 Succession H. Matisse/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

MoMA

OPENING

BEYOND THE LIGHTS

Gugu Mbatha-Raw stars in this drama, as a singer facing personal issues. Directed by Gina Prince-Blythewood. Opening Nov. 14. (In wide release.)

BUTTER ON THE LATCH

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 14. (IFP Media Center.)

DUMB AND DUMBER TO

Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels star in this comedy sequel, directed by Bobby and Peter Farrelly. Opening Nov. 14. (In wide release.)

FOXCATCHER

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 14. (In limited release.)

THE HOMESMAN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 14. (In limited release.)

THOU WAST MILD AND LOVELY

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 14. (IFP Media Center.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

The Austrian Film Museum. Nov. 14 at 9 and Nov. 16 at 3: "The Lost One" (1951, Peter Lorre).

BAM CINÉMA TEK

In revival. Nov. 12-25 (call for showtimes): "The Sacrifice."

FILM FORUM

In revival. Nov. 14-27 (call for showtimes): "Le Jour Se Lève."

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Nov. 14 at 1:30: "Despair." • Nov. 14 at 9: "In a Year of 13 Moons" (1978).

IFC CENTER

"DOC NYC." Nov. 14 at 2:30: "The Chair."

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"To Save and Project." Nov. 12 at 6:45 and Nov. 13 at 4: "Her Sister's Secret." • Nov. 18 at 4 and Nov. 19 at 6:45: "The Cave of the Silken Web" (1927, Dan Duyu).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

Films from Poland. Nov. 13 at 7: "Blind Chance" (1981, Krzysztof Kieslowski).



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Jacques Tourneur's "Wichita," from 1955, in our digital edition and online.

Despair

Adapting a script by Tom Stoppard based on a novel by Nabokov, Rainer Werner Fassbinder brings Weimar-era decadence to life with vibrant derision and visual mystery. In the sleek world of White Russian refugees, the well-assimilated, haut-bourgeois chocolatier Hermann Hermann (Dirk Bogarde), sexually obsessed with his sybaritic wife, Lydia (Andréa Ferréol), is being brazenly cuckolded by her cousin (Volker Spengler), an artist. In the backwash of the 1929 Wall Street crash, his business (whose employees are clad in chocolate-box lilac) suffers a downturn. As a result, he concocts a plot involving murder and insurance fraud that propels him toward the roiling underworld from which prosperity had shielded him. Fassbinder films life in the cosseted class as a masque of glass and mirrors, replete with alluring deceptions and suave surfaces that belie volcanic passions. In the crude and vulgar beauty of a society on the edge of violence, Stoppard's ping-ponging witticisms freeze in the air with a ballistic grimness. Released in 1978.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Nov. 14.)

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: sketchlike images, made casually and spontaneously, that are endowed with the power and the grandeur of studio-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 through 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.)

Her Sister's Secret

In this feverishly romantic, visually resplendent war-at-home melodrama, from 1946, Edgar G. Ulmer cuts loose with a wild creativity that yoked his theatrical imagination to a keen view of traumatic times. The opening sequence, showing Mardi Gras revels in New Orleans through a frenzied chiaroscuro of streamers and wrought

iron, evokes psyches already ratcheted to fever pitch. There, a serviceman on leave (Phillip Reed) locks eyes with a masked beauty (Nancy Coleman), and they share a rapturous night of passion. She finds herself pregnant; he's sent to war and doesn't return, and she heads to New York, where her childless sister (Margaret Lindsay), living on Fifth Avenue and married to a serviceman on active duty, persuades her to let the child pass as theirs. Ulmer wrings true emotion from every soap-operatic twist, while also baring the domestic scars of war's violence, sacrifice, and, above all, silence. The actors are hardly charismatic, but Ulmer, capturing their frozen energy in daringly long takes, inspires them with his rhapsodically compassionate vision. For the duration of the movie, as they deliver the terse dialogue with hushed urgency and vibrate with the burden of unspeakable passions, they, too, are among the greats.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Nov. 12-13.)

Interstellar

In Christopher Nolan's new spectacle, the Earth has had it, and a team of scientist-astronauts (led by Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway) travel through a wormhole and into distant galaxies, seeking planets on which humanity may be able to exist. Moving through the altered space-time continuum, the crew members snap at each other testily, making use, in passing, of Einstein's theories, as well as speculations by Stephen Hawking and Kip Thorne. Black holes, relativity, singularity, the fifth dimension! The talk is grand but delivered in a rush, and, in competition with Hans Zimmer's swelling music, it hardly functions in the story, even though it's central to the action. The film is a grandiose, redundant puzzle, sometimes beautiful and moving; in the best scene, the crew returns from a brief jaunt away from their craft only to discover that, on Earth, more than twenty years have passed. McConaughey's young daughter, now a woman (played by Jessica Chastain), confronts him on video, fighting and loving at the same time. The movie's message seems to be: To hell with the Earth—love will hold us together. With Michael Caine, Wes Bentley, Matt Damon, Mackenzie Foy, and David Gyasi. Bill Irwin provides the voice of a querulous robot.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/10/14.) (In wide release.)

John Wick

Keanu Reeves's latest film, produced and directed by two former stuntmen (David Leitch and Chad Stahelski, both of whom doubled for Reeves in the "Matrix" movies), is stylishly violent and not much else. Reeves plays a former hit man who revives his career by taking on the Russian mob after his wife dies of a lingering illness. (The gangsters aroused his ire by shooting his dog.) The movie's simple plot and bloody action scenes, which include more head shots than a casting director's portfolio, leave little room for complexity, and

there's a lack of tension in the clichéd setups. Reeves has only a few lines of dialogue, which he delivers in his usual monotone, and the film gradually sinks into video-game carnage. With Willem Dafoe and the great Ian McShane, who have little to do but watch.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

Le Jour Se Lève

This prototype of film noir, from 1939, is both a grim feast of prewar French acting and a catalogue of French moods on the eve of disaster. It begins with François (Jean Gabin), a diamond-hard laborer, killing Valentin (Jules Berry), an unctuous con man, in a shabby residential hotel, and retracing in flashbacks the steps that led to murder. The director, Marcel Carné, roves the staircases and the alleys of proletarian Paris and its suburbs, capturing an eerie tone of science fiction in the factory where François spray-paints metal. There, he and Françoise (Jacqueline Laurent), a naïve gamine, meet cute, but their romance is shadowed by the predatory Valentin, and also by Clara (Arletty), a world-weary artiste. The dialogue, by Jacques Prévert, has a self-conscious streetwise flavor that the actors deliver with extra spice. Blending romantic despair with violent moods, theatrical volubility with oppressive silence, the movie captures a society of contradictions at a tragic breaking point. When François, besieged by armed officers, screams, "I want peace! Peace!" he seems to speak for a panic-stricken nation. In French.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; Nov. 14-27.)

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.)

National Gallery

The documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman offers an enraptured view of a

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great cultural institution—London's National Gallery—as it struggles and succeeds in its task of preserving and exhibiting art amid declining government support. He displays his own wide-spanning curiosity about the life of the institution by blending closeup views of the paintings themselves with his observation of framers, restorers, floor polishers, budget-makers, curators, and scholars at work. The museum's interior is neoclassical, and Wiseman's severely restrained style of filmmaking matches it perfectly. His focus on looking and his contemplation of the public engaged in looking—the ultimate purpose of visual art—holds the movie viewer in a state of intense and pleasurable concentration, aided by insights from a remarkably lively group of docents (mostly English and Irish women) about Rembrandt, da Vinci, Vermeer, Rubens, Turner, and other Old Masters. The guides, the public in the gallery, and now the viewers of the movie live gratefully within the gaze of the masterpieces, which, glowing from restoration, look back at us with imperious strength.—*D.D.* (Film Forum.)

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.—*Anthony Lane* (11/3/14) (In wide release.)

The Sacrifice

Andrei Tarkovsky's last film, from 1986, is a grand, unworldly, even antiworldly religious vision that depends on its perfect pitch to avoid absurdity and bathos. Alexander (Erland Josephson), a middle-aged critic, lives in a remote waterfront manor in rural Sweden with his frustrated wife, Adelaide (Susan Fleetwood), her grown daughter, Martha (Filippa Franzén), and their young son (Tommy Kjellqvist), called only Little Man, who, after minor surgery, cannot speak. The action is set on Alexander's birthday. He receives greetings, presents, and visits, but suddenly the house shakes with the thunder of military aircraft and a television broadcast announces an imminent nuclear attack. The members of the household and their guests are on the verge of a collective breakdown as they face the end, but Alexander's friend Otto (Allan Edwall), a postman and retired history teacher, offers him a metaphysical bargain to save the world. The blend of midlife crisis and existential terror is reminiscent of the films of Ingmar Bergman, but Tarkovsky makes it a world of his own. His images have a transcendental glow and a hieratic poise; alternating between contemplative distance and moral confrontation, they assert, in the most radical sense, the high cost of living—the unbearable price of earthly delights. In Swedish.—*R.B.* (BAM Cinématek; Nov. 12-25.)

The Theory of Everything

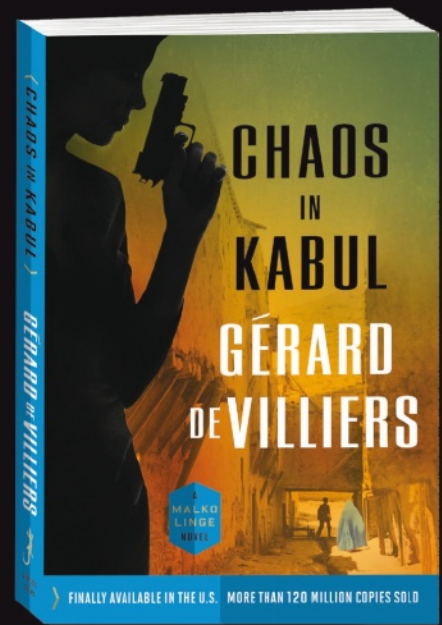
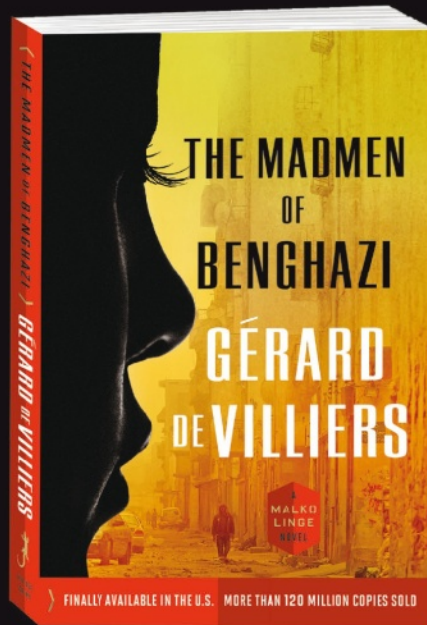
James Marsh directed this drama, about the marriage of the young physicist Stephen Hawking (Eddie

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Redmayne) and Jane Wilde (Felicity Jones), who treats her husband's enfeebled body with love and the toughening discipline of a British Army sergeant. Set largely at Cambridge University, the movie plays as a genteel great-man bio-pic. Redmayne's performance is in the same league as Daniel Day-Lewis's in "My Left Foot." With his narrow shoulders, Redmayne initially looks like an abashed scarecrow. He acts with his eyebrows, his mouth, a few facial muscles, and the fingers of one hand, and he suggests not only Hawking's intellect and humor but also the calculating vanity of a genius entirely conscious of his effect on the

world. We're puzzled, at the end, by the black hole in Hawking's character that causes him to leave, after years of marriage, the devoted, accomplished, and beautiful Jane for a young nurse (Maxine Peake), who looks like Ann-Margret and talks to him like a child that she can dominate. The screenwriter Anthony McCarten adapted Jane Hawking's memoir, "Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen." Co-starring David Thewlis.—*D.D.* (11/10/14) (In limited release.)

Thou Wast Mild and Lovely

Josephine Decker's visionary second feature, a rural melodrama, is imbued

with the blood and the muck, the harshness and the carnality of life on a farm. Akin (Joe Swanberg), a hired hand, leaves his wife and child behind for a summer job at a ranch belonging to Jeremiah (Robert Longstreet), and begins an affair with his boss's grown daughter, Sarah (Sophie Traub). The stark setup gives rise to flights of cinematic invention that are as psychologically probing as they are aesthetically thrilling. The script (which Decker co-wrote with David Barker) gives the characters intimate idiosyncrasies that mesh in moments of eroticism and clash in scenes of violence. Swanberg, a frequent per-

former in his own films, is wracked with Akin's hidden wounds; Traub balances ethereal fancy with blunt practicality and tragic sensuality; and Longstreet lends Jeremiah the destructive fury of a Biblical patriarch. The animals on the farm, the rugged yet soaring landscape, the light and the weather are crucial to the action as well. Decker's ecstatic fusion of the material world and the inner life is realized by the cinematographer Ashley Connor, whose camera has the bold agility of a paintbrush, ranging from microscopic precision to cosmic turbulence.—*R.B.* (IFP Media Center.)



FOOD & DRINK

TABLES FOR TWO

WHITE STREET

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IF RON BURGUNDY WERE REAL, he would bring his lady friends to this new Tribeca restaurant. It's hard to think of a classier opening: ornate crystal chandeliers, velvet emerald drapes, black tufted-leather banquettes, and low lighting for a moody "Godfather" glow. What a glorious setting for the food of Floyd Cardoz, who was the chef at the beloved Danny Meyer-owned Indian restaurant Tabla for twelve years, and then, for a few years, at Meyer's North End Grill. Now Cardoz, who amicably parted ways with Meyer, has joined forces with a group of investors that includes the "Nightline" host Dan Abrams and David Zinczenko, an author of life-style books such as "The Abs Diet for Women."

At White Street, several solicitous young hostesses bustle about, managing to make short skirts, very high heels, and even lamé appear tasteful. They cheerfully encourage a stop in the lounge, where a concise list of subtle cocktails, with names like Dorsey and Garland, features the requisite two strange ingredients per drink: fennel syrup, candied



lavender crumble, sarsaparilla-kumquat rye. The dinner menu includes bistro classics and luxurious special-occasion dishes, each with its own unique ethnic flavor profile—Indian, Japanese, upstate New York—making it difficult to decide which way to go. Pretty much everything is good. Roasted quail with tangy cider-braised skin nullified the usual annoyance of carving the tiny bird, and the bacon-and-mustard-infused barley stuffed inside it was rich and delicious, sensations not usually associated with cereal grains. Raw Long Island fluke with wasabi-tamari broth poured over it was called ceviche, but it was more like an earthy Japanese tartare.

Missteps are rare, making them noticeable. One night, a special of gooseneck barnacles was described by a proud server as "an amalgamation of every seafood you've ever tasted: lobster, shrimp, scallops—very delicate." "Are the barnacles, like, from a ship?" one diner asked. "No, a rock," the server said. When they arrived, they were so tiny, and so hard to procure from their shells, even after a lengthy tutorial, that they were deemed a disaster. (For the record, they look and taste rather like the sock-shaped appendages on steamer clams.)

The seared lamb cannon with cumin and mint was juicy and pink, the edges crispy, and the short ribs, over horseradish grits and topped with fried shoestring potatoes, were both comforting and refined. When you read "spiced fries, duck fat, homemade mayonnaise," you know what to do. But Cardoz is still most engaging when he veers toward Indian flavors, as in the perfectly balanced curry sauce that came with those sad little barnacles, and the piri-piri-chili-spiked broth in the White Street bouillabaisse, full of clams, shrimp, and swordfish. After the coolly inventive bay-leaf custard and the warm sticky-toffee pudding with crème-fraîche gelato, the server's enthusiasm had not waned. "Want a fun cocktail?" he asked. "It's Tuesday!"

—Shauna Lyon

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ROCK AND POP

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

Ryan Adams

Prolific, critically acclaimed, and temperamental, the singer-songwriter has both rabid fans and rabid detractors. Adams's first solo album, "Heartbreaker," from 2000, is a consensus classic, thanks to songs like "To Be Young (Is to Be Sad, Is to Be High)" and "Oh My Sweet Carolina," but later albums, like "Love Is Hell" and "Cold Roses," divided his followers, many of whom felt that Adams's almost obsessive productivity and his increasingly drastic stylistic departures were distracting him from what he did best. Adams did little to quell those concerns: he released books of poetry, recorded a heavy-metal album, and formed a punk-rock band called Pornography, all while struggling with Ménière's disease (a degenerative inner-ear disorder that affects balance and hearing). This year, Adams returned to traditional rock music, more or less, with a self-titled album. For two shows at Carnegie Hall, Adams is stripped bare of all accoutrements and gimmicks, playing solo and acoustic. (Seventh Ave. at 57th St. ticketmaster.com. Nov. 15 and Nov. 17.)

The Corrections

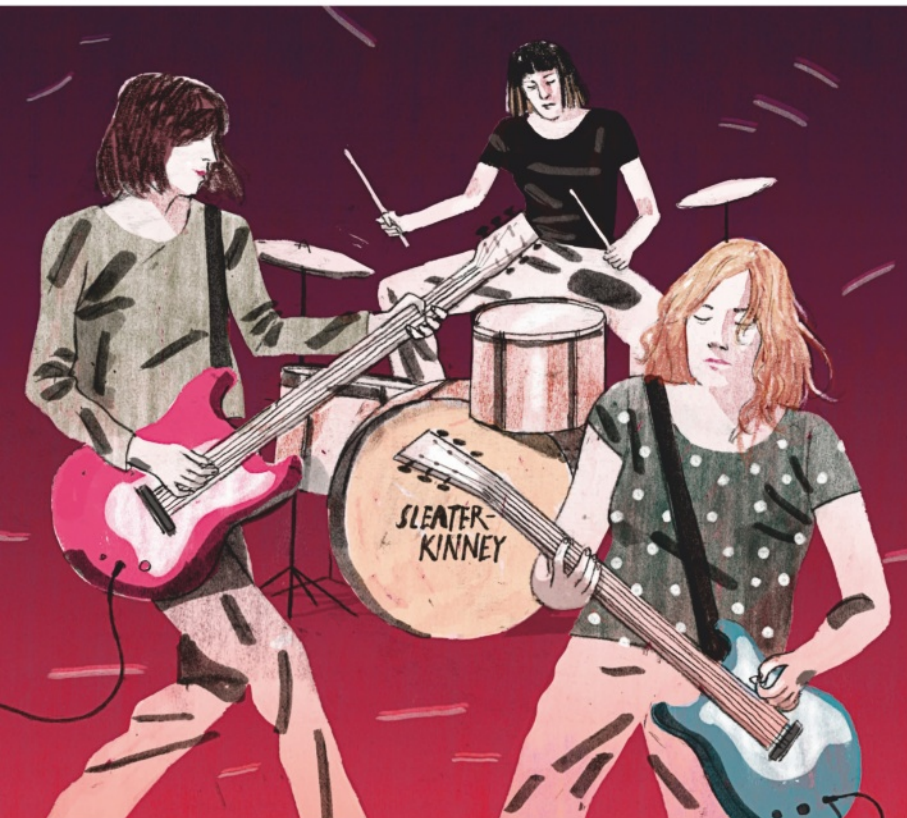
In 2001, James Wood, a professor at Harvard and, since 2007, a literary critic at this magazine, reviewed Jonathan Franzen's "The Corrections," somewhat harshly. Perhaps with a bit of irony (or maybe just because it sounds cool), it's also the name of a torchy soul-rock group, with Wood on drums. The novelist Rebecca Donner is the lead vocalist, and the saxophonist Lily White, the bassist Gregory M. Jones, and the keyboardist Adam Klipple round out the ensemble when it plays on Nov. 14 in the Red Room at KGB Bar, a former speakeasy. No word on whether Franzen will be reviewing. (85 E. 4th St. kgbbbar.com.)

Sallie Ford / Crooked Fingers

The Oregon-based singer-songwriter and guitarist Ford is like a cross between Liz Phair and Buddy Holly. Her previous band, the Sound Outside, delivered rockabilly by the gallon, but recently she assembled an all-female four-piece group that favors sixties-infused guitar-pop marked by a fair amount of distortion pedal. Her rollicking new album, "Slap Back," is a gem, with fierce and danceable tracks, heavy on attitude. Crooked Fingers is led by Eric Bachmann, who is best known for the guitar heroics and shredded sounds of his nineties band, Archers of Loaf. Though he's capable of high-gear anthems, this solo appearance may find him indulging in a more reserved side. (Rough Trade NYC, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtradenyc.com. Nov. 14.)

Ray LaMontagne

A late bloomer, LaMontagne was over thirty when he released his first album, "Trouble," in 2004. It was competent, terribly earnest, and just folk-rocky enough to gain an immediate foothold in Americana playlists across the country, and the three releases that followed cemented his position in that format. Then something remarkable happened: in April of this year, he put out "Supernova," a record brimming with life, inventiveness, and diversity, produced by Dan Auerbach, of the Black Keys. It's a release that wouldn't have sounded out of place in 1970—full of distinctive songs in psychedelic-pop colors, with great melodies, barbed hooks, and sly arrangements. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Nov. 12-14.)



Sleater-Kinney releases its first album in ten years, "No Cities to Love," in January.

WINTER PREVIEW

John McCauley, a gravelly-voiced singer-songwriter with a history both checkered and charmed (his father went to federal prison on charges of conspiracy and tax fraud; Stevie Nicks officiated at his wedding, to the pop singer Vanessa Carlton), leads **Deer Tick**. When the band started out, in 2004, it had a folky Americana bent, but it has since embraced a flintier sound. Their live shows, which can be raucous, include a fair number of covers. Next month, they mark their tenth anniversary with six shows at Brooklyn Bowl, starting on Dec. 26. The first five are devoted to the band members' favorite albums, one a night, beginning with NRBQ's "Tiddlywinks" (and their own first record, "War Elephant"), followed by Lou Reed's "Transformer," the Beatles' "Meet the Beatles!," Devo's "Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!," and Elvis Costello's "My Aim Is True." On the last night, New Year's Eve, the group will play Deer Tick favorites, picked by their fans.

Songs of an earlier vintage are the focus of Michael Arenella's sixth annual **Winter Ball**. Arenella, a talented crooner and horn player, leads his seven-piece Dreamland Orchestra in a program of Jazz Age treasures. The party is on Dec. 13, at the Irondale Center, which is situated in a former Sunday-school auditorium in a church in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, with plenty of room for the Charleston. The show also features the tap-dancing Minsky Sisters, as well as the accordionist and performance artist Nicole Renaud.

New music from seasoned performers is a highlight of the New Year. **Sleater-Kinney**, the premier riot-grrrl power trio of the nineties (and perhaps of all time), has reunited, and the vocalists and guitarists Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein and the drummer Janet Weiss have put aside midlife projects like "Portlandia" to release their first album in ten years, "No Cities to Love." They're on a tour that brings them to Terminal 5, Feb. 26-27.

—John Donohue

Milton Nascimento

For many people, Portuguese is the most beautiful language for singing, especially as expressed through the rhythms and the structure of Brazilian popular music. Nascimento's voice is surely among the most exquisite exponents of that form, with an effortless low-end projection that can rise to a soaring falsetto. An accomplished composer and guitarist, the Rio de Janeiro native released his first album in 1967, and began garnering international acclaim when he was featured on the saxophonist Wayne Shorter's 1974 LP, "Native Dancer." (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. ticketmaster.com. Nov. 18.)

New Pornographers

Since blasting onto the scene with the album "Mass Romantic," in 2000, this Canadian supergroup has been perfecting its style of New Wave-inflected power pop, delivering catchy songs with thundering energy and a big synth sound. The title of the act's sixth and latest LP, "Brill Bruisers," references the famed New York building that was home, in the mid-twentieth century, to scores of legendary songwriting teams. The band invokes nostalgia with a clever twist, as crashing guitars rough up bubblegum melodies, and tender harmonies are frozen out by icy electronics. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 800-745-3000. Nov. 17.)

O'Death

This shambolic country-punk group, known for inciting mosh pits with the twang of its fiddles and banjos, has slowed down in the past few years. The lead singer, Greg Jamie, and his wife, Kristin, have been holed up in Biddeford, Maine, focussing on a cozy grassroots music-and-arts space they run there called the Oak and the Ax. Last month, O'Death returned with "Out of Hands We Go," their fourth album of moody, gritty folk. It was recorded at the Jamies' venue, and captures the feeling of the group's live shows, which has been honed to a fine edge in O'Death's decade of existence. (Bell House, 149 7th St., Brooklyn. 718-643-6510. Nov. 14.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Bill Charlap

Although it's been far too long since he's released a new album, the pianist, a modern mainstream giant, always has a stockpile of imaginative and meticulously arranged material to draw on. His longtime trio mates—**Peter Washington**, on bass, and **Kenny Washington**, on drums—could not be more in synch with Charlap's manicured swing. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Through Nov. 16.)

Patti LuPone

The Broadway grande dame has a simmering intensity onstage whether she's starring in a musical or bringing additional grit to David Mamet's words. She's performing the second part of "Far Away Places," the program she presented at the opening of this high-class cabaret joint, two years ago. Touching on her abiding taste for travel, the evening is full of songs by such far-flung composers as Johnny Mercer, Billy Joel, Irving Caesar, and Kris Kristofferson. (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. Through Nov. 15.)

Ellis Marsalis Eightieth-Birthday Celebration

The pianist, the patriarch of the illustrious Marsalis brood, is a quietly commanding soloist

who rewards close listening. An elegant stylist, he moves freely among classic idioms, and has successfully collaborated with each of his musical sons: Wynton, Branford, Delfeayo, and Jason. Marsalis celebrates his eightieth birthday in the company of the saxophonist **Derek Douget**, the bassist **Jason Stewart**, and the drummer **Herlin Riley**. (Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Broadway at 60th St. 212-258-9595. Nov. 13-16.)

"A Memorial Concert for Kenny Wheeler"

Wheeler, a brilliant musician whose inventive trumpet and flugelhorn playing and distinctive compositions graced recordings starting in the sixties, and who went on to work with Dave Holland and others, died in September. An esteemed educator, Wheeler influenced a generation of younger instrumentalists, a number of whom will make up a large tribute ensemble, featuring the trumpeter **Tim Hagans** as a guest soloist.

(Jazz Gallery, 1160 Broadway, at 27th St., fifth fl. jazzgallery.org. Nov. 11.)

Ryan Truesdell's Gil Evans Project

The legendary arranger Evans, revered for his timeless collaborations with Miles Davis, holds a special place in the heart of the arranger-conductor Truesdell, who has spent the past few years combing the Evans archive in search of undiscovered orchestral charts. He has found plenty, and two years ago he presented select pieces on the acclaimed album "Centennial: Newly Discovered Works of Gil Evans." At Zankel Hall, Truesdell is offering a retrospective of Evans's most fertile period, 1947 to 1971, which found the master sculpting scores for the pioneering Claude Thornhill band; formulating cool-jazz and orchestral projects with Davis; recording his own superb albums; and, with the arrival of the seventies, peering into the possibilities of fusion. (Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. Nov. 14.)

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In "Pretty Filthy," the Civilians consider pornography from the perspective of its makers.

WINTER PREVIEW

The Civilians make charmingly straightforward musical theatre about subjects both mundane (lost ephemera, in "Gone Missing") and controversial (evangelical Christianity, in "This Beautiful City"), using an unusual method: its members interview scores of people, and weave their responses, often verbatim, into a show. At Abrons Arts Center (Jan. 31-March 1), the troupe mounts "**Pretty Filthy,**" an investigation into the lives of people in the pornographic-film industry. The Civilians' not-so-secret weapon is the composer Michael Friedman, whose melodic, emotive pop songs winningly walk the line between earnestness and irony.

Lately, Jake Gyllenhaal has turned to blockbuster thrillers, like "Nightcrawler" and "Prisoners." If you miss the softer, more sensitive days of "Brokeback Mountain," or even just "Love and Other Drugs," catch Gyllenhaal on Broadway, in "**Constellations,**" a play by Nick Payne, at the Samuel J. Friedman (previews begin Dec. 16). The thirty-three-year-old actor made his New York stage debut in Payne's "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet," in 2012; now he plays a beekeeper who falls in love with a quantum-theory professor, whose hypotheses on alternate universes are reflected within the structure of the play.

Kristin Chenoweth has done well playing young—when she burst onto the Broadway scene with her Tony-winning performance as the five-year-old Sally, in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," she was thirty, and she aged up to the college years for the role of Glinda, in "Wicked." Now, in Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of "**On the Twentieth Century**" (previews begin Feb. 12, at the American Airlines), the 1978 musical by Cy Coleman, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green, she plays an established film star. The old-fashioned comedy, also starring Peter Gallagher, as a producer desperate for a hit show, seems a good fit for Chenoweth's high-flying comedic style—Madeline Kahn originated the role.

—Shauna Lyon

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Allegro

John Doyle directs the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical 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.)

BASETRACK Live

En Garde Arts presents this piece, created by Edward Bilous, adapted by Jason Grote, and directed by Seth Bockley, which uses video, music, and live performance to explore the experience of U.S. marines who return home after serving in southern Afghanistan. Nov. 11-15. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

By the Water

Manhattan Theatre Club, in association with Ars Nova, presents a play by Sharyn Rothstein, about a family torn apart by the devastation of their home in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. Hal Brooks directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 18. (City Center Stage II, 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 best friends, and by their daughter, fresh from the breakup of her fourth marriage. 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 eighteenth-century. Scott Ellis directs. In previews. (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. Opens Nov. 12. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Honeymoon in Vegas

Tony Danza, Rob McClure, and Brynn O'Malley star in Andrew Bergman and Jason Robert Brown's new musical, based on the 1992 movie. Gary Griffin directs. Previews begin Nov. 18. (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 877-250-2929.)

Lypsinka! The Trilogy

John Epperson revives his alter ego, Lypsinka, in return engagements of the jukebox concert show "Lypsinka! The Boxed Set" and the Joan Crawford tribute "The Passion of Crawford," as well as the New York premiere of an autobiographical pastiche, "John Epperson: Show Trash." In previews. Opens Nov. 13. (Connolly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

Major Barbara

George Bernard Shaw's play is directed by David Staller, the artistic director of the Gingold Theatrical Group, which is co-presenting with the Pearl. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (Pearl, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

Me, My Mouth and I

Joy Behar wrote and stars in this autobiographical one-woman show. In previews. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111.)

Our Lady of Kibeho

Signature Theatre Company presents the world première of a play by Katori Hall, set in 1981 in Rwanda, about a young girl who believes that she's had a vision of the Virgin Mary, causing havoc in her village. Michael Greif directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

A Particle of Dread (Oedipus Variations)

Signature Theatre Company and Field Day Theatre, of Ireland, present the U.S. première of Sam Shepard's play, a dark modern take on "Oedipus Rex," starring Stephen Rea. Nancy Meckler 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 woman and her son in a black community in the Bible Belt of the Appalachian Mountains who are accused of killing a prized pit bull. In previews. (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. Opens Nov. 17. (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 cliffside cabin. Ian Rickson directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 16. (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. Opens Nov. 17. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

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. In previews. Opens Nov. 17. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Tristan & Yseult

Kneehigh presents a play about forbidden love, written by Carl Grose and Anna Maria Murphy, adapted and directed by Emma Rice. Previews begin Nov. 16. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 29 Jay St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

NOW PLAYING

Chairs and a Long Table

Distressed by the news that a Los Angeles theatre company has cast a play about imperial China with only white performers, four Asian-American actors gather in a New York City conference room with a white "conflicts consultant" to argue over how they'll present their case at a hastily convened town-hall meeting the next day. This somewhat meta setup, presented with high naturalism by the Ma-Yi Theatre Company, is made consistently engaging thanks to Han Ong's gently witty script,

Lindsay Firman's brisk direction, and loose and sympathetic performances across the board. It proves to be a smart way of revealing new facets of an old debate: watching the characters struggle with how best to articulate their grievance, a process frequently interrupted by false starts, second thoughts, self-doubts, and psych-outs, is far more illuminating than their unseen finished presentation could ever hope to be. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

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, self-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.)

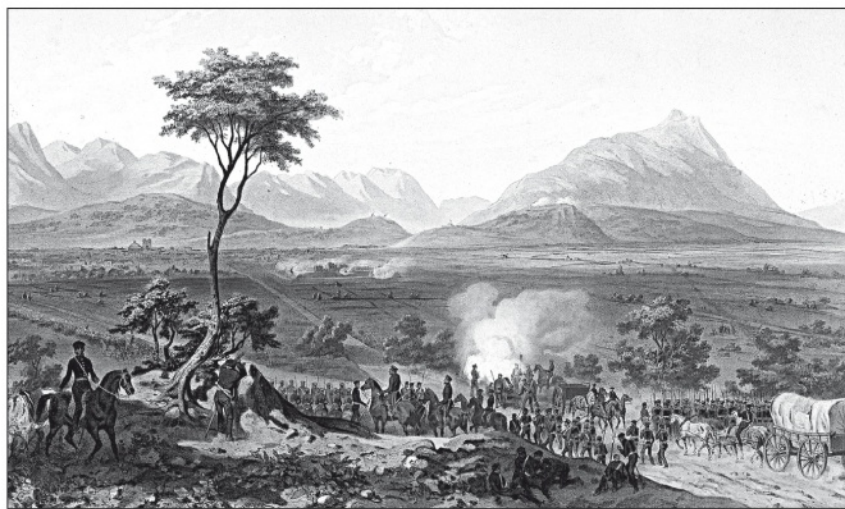
Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

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.)

Generations

Written by the accomplished young black British-born Londoner Debbie Tucker Green and directed by Leah C. Gardiner, this miniature spectacle, set in black South Africa, runs less than an hour, but it is filled with so much warmth and thought that the feeling it imparts remains long after you've left the theatre. Boyfriend (the heart-wrenching Mamoudou Athie) is in love with Girlfriend (Shyko Amos), and Junior Sister (Khail Toi Bryant) tells Mama (Ntombikhona Dlamini) what Girlfriend

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shies away from and rushes toward: the fact that Boyfriend thinks he can “sweet-talk” her into loving him back. The preparation of food is the main action at the beginning of the show, which is set in and around the family’s kitchen; a chorus comments on the action, in Zulu. (Green does not specify if the play is set during apartheid.) Green gives her characters the language one associates with lore: everything is remembered and reported, but each telling shifts in accuracy as the characters change and grow. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-352-3101.)

The Oldest Boy

A young mother (Celia Keenan-Bolger) still co-sleeps with her nearly three-year-old son, and breast-feeds him “just a little bit.” In other words, she’s hardly a candidate for radical non-attachment. Yet, in Sarah Ruhl’s moving play, that’s just what’s asked of her. Her child, Tenzin (played, somewhat ineffectually, by a small Bunraku puppet and the sixty-seven-year-old actor Ernest Abuba), is recognized as the reincarnation of a revered lama, and the mother, a white American married to a Tibetan man, must decide whether to surrender him to the burgundy-robed monks who want to enthrone him. Ruhl’s work can sometimes be cloying, perhaps a result of her attempt to soften her fierce, questing intelligence. There’s a touch of that here, particularly in a flashback scene, and also a whiff of exoticism. But, under Rebecca Taichman’s direction, what emerges is a poignant piece about love and choice. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Real Thing

Poor Henry (Ewan McGregor), in Tom Stoppard’s 1982 play, can’t

seem to shut up, not even when his wife, Charlotte (Cynthia Nixon), or his mistress, Annie (Maggie Gyllenhaal), insists that he do so. Henry is a playwright, and Charlotte and Annie are actresses; Max (Josh Hamilton) is Annie’s husband, who acts with Charlotte in Henry’s drama. In this play, Stoppard asks: Are the lives we build with others an illusion, defined by deception? And what does it mean to discover, let alone try to understand, the truth of another person? Gyllenhaal’s and Hamilton’s performances are compromised by McGregor’s lack of interest in Henry’s weaknesses, and they struggle against the vortex of his movie charm, which the director, Sam Gold, never challenges. 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. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/10/14.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

Sticks and Bones

It’s a shame that the director Scott Elliott’s revival of David Rabe’s immensely important 1971 play, for the New Group, isn’t the version you should see—his actors don’t quite know what to make of the material, or the horrific times that it grew out of. In the nineteen-seventies, Rabe was to playwright what Michael Herr was to journalism: a visionary. Like Herr, Rabe wrote about the Vietnam debacle from a traumatized point of view—Rabe had served his country. His Vietnam trilogy included “The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel” and the remarkable “Streamers”; in this, the second piece in the trilogy, Rabe lays out

how Eisenhower-era dreams of homogeneity and success cracked once the boys returned home. Ozzie (Bill Pullman) is the patriarch in a split-level home. His son David (the badly cast Ben Schnetzer) is a war casualty—he’s blind. His only good memories, it seems, are of a true love, a Vietnamese girl, Zung (the exceptionally poised and centered Nadia Gan), who frightens Ozzie and his wife, Harriet (a somewhat desperate and uncomprehending Holly Hunter). Completing the family quartet is Rick (the clever but one-note Raviv Ullman), who despises difference as much as his parents do. Matching an archetypal nineteen-fifties television-show format with the surrealism of trauma, Rabe’s play asks: If war is hell, what is the American family? (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

You Got Older

Freshly dumped, unemployed, and stricken with a nasty rash, Mae (Brooke Bloom) temporarily moves back to her childhood home to help her father (Reed Birney) as he deals with his cancer, finding some relief in vivid sexual fantasies of high-stakes rescues by a fearsomely authoritative cowboy. This terrific play by Clare Barron, directed by Anne Kauffman for Page 73, offers a hilarious and painfully affecting blend of oddball dialogue, beautifully observed family dynamics, and a preoccupation with the weird ways of the body. In one explosively funny scene, Mae and her three siblings, chattering around their father’s hospital bed, analyze and bemoan “the family smell.” Barron’s special genius lies in the deep dividends she derives from small talk. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

ProtoHack New York

Computer science is no longer just for computer scientists; increasingly we hear about the importance of knowing how to code if we want to stay relevant in the future. But coding isn’t the only techy skill set around, and this hackathon, which is billed as code-free and is organized by a group from San Francisco, turns the spotlight on another, perhaps equally important, activity: prototyping. During the twelve-hour event, attendees—essentially, anyone with an idea, initiative, and free time—will have nine hours of access to the tools they need to complete prototypes that communicate their ideas visually, and will then present them before judges; the top three entrants receive resources to make their ideas a reality. There will also be presentations by several

industry veterans. (Wix Lounge New York, 235 W. 23rd St. 646-862-0833. protohack.org. Nov. 15, starting at 9:30 A.M.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

In addition to the usual stratospherically priced Lichtensteins and Warhols, the big postwar and contemporary sale at **Christie’s** on Nov. 12 includes twenty-one of Cindy Sherman’s “Untitled Film Stills,” offered as a single lot. (Sherman began this photographic project—carefully staged images in which she dressed up like a nineteen-forties starlet and captured herself in various noirish poses—when

she was just twenty-three.) The following day, more contemporary art goes under the gavel, including works by Warhol, Stella, Guston, and Richter. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Phillips** dives into the contemporary-art melee with two days of auctions, Nov. 13-14, led by a quintessential Robert Ryman painting—“Hour,” a square canvas covered in richly textured white impasto—and a sensual late de Kooning (“Untitled XVIII”). (450 Park Ave., at 57th St. 212-940-1200.) • **Sotheby’s** squeezes in a last auction of contemporary art on Nov. 12, offering works by Calder, Dubuffet, Baldessari, and Christopher Wool. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

READINGS AND TALKS**“Sunday Sessions”**

Marking its fortieth anniversary, the independent press Semiotext(e) presents “The Return of Schizo-Culture,” a program inspired by the 1975 Schizo-Culture conference, which merged radical theory and radical culture. Kim Gordon, Richard Hell, Alan Vega, Penny Arcade, Gary Indiana, and many others are participating in the afternoon of performances, screenings, and readings. (MOMA PS1, 22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens. momaps1.org. Nov. 16, from noon to 6.)

National Arts Club

The writers Sean Wilsey, Charles Bock, and Leslie Jamison gather for a conversation about artist colonies, accompanied by a slide show on Marfa, Texas. (15 Gramercy Park S. 212-475-3424. Nov. 18 at 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC



Joyce DiDonato sings Rossini at the Met and music by Jake Heggie at Zankel Hall.

WINTER PREVIEW

Her beloved Kansas City Royals may have come up short at the World Series, but **Joyce DiDonato**, the mezzo-soprano of the moment, will have New York at her feet this winter. Her “Perspectives” series, at Carnegie Hall, which began with an acclaimed performance, last month, of the title role in Handel’s opera “Alcina,” continues on Feb. 5, at Zankel Hall, when she collaborates with the Brentano String Quartet, a group that matches her exacting standards of beauty and craft. The mostly French-themed program includes a new cycle (“Camille Claudel: Into the Fire”) by Jake Heggie, instrumental works by Debussy and Charpentier, and the world premiere of “MotherSongs,” a collection of songs by teen-age composers, arranged by Heggie. (The young American mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton, a standout in the Metropolitan Opera’s “Norma” last season, offers the world premiere of Heggie’s “The Work at Hand” in another Zankel recital, on Feb. 17.) It’s all a prelude to DiDonato’s star turn—with Juan Diego Flórez—in the Met’s first-ever performances of Rossini’s “La Donna del Lago,” a treatment of Walter Scott’s Romantic poem “The Lady of the Lake,” beginning on Feb. 16.

Anna Netrebko showed Met audiences a newly potent side of her musical character when she portrayed Lady Macbeth this fall, but she’ll return to the gentler, lyric roles for which she’s famed in another long-delayed premiere, Tchaikovsky’s fairy-tale opera “Iolanta” (sharing a double bill with Bartók’s “Bluebeard’s Castle,” another new production, starring Nadja Michael), in a run that starts on Jan. 26. Vocal fireworks will close out the winter season on March 5, when **Anna Caterina Antonacci**, the Italian soprano whose dusky and intimately expressive voice, unheard at the Met but prominently featured in Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series, offers a well-chosen program of music by Berlioz, Debussy, Ravel, and Poulenc (including the monodrama “La Voix Humaine”) at Alice Tully Hall.

—Russell Platt

ILLUSTRATION BY JONNY RUZZO



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Dance

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Photos (top to bottom): *Embers*, by Ros Kavanagh; *BASETRACK Live*, by Balazs Gardi; *Sadeh21*, by Gadi Dagon; *Birds With Skymirrors*, courtesy of MAU; *Black Mountain Songs*, by Elizabeth D. Herman

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

If February's première production of "La Donna del Lago" offers a chance to make a new acquaintance from the Rossini canon, then a revival of Bartlett Sher's durable staging of "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" lets us catch up with an old friend. The British baritone Christopher Maltman takes the title role of this eternally entertaining opera, with two young Met favorites, Isabel Leonard and Lawrence Brownlee, as Rosina and Count Almaviva; Michele Mariotti conducts. (Nov. 18 at 7:30.) • **Also playing:** With two exceptions, this week is a love-in for Italianate revivals. It begins with Sonja Frisell's time-honored production of "Aida," a visual feast. Marco Armiliato conducts a cast that features Liudmyla Monastyrskya, Olga Borodina, Marcello Giordani, and Željko Lučić in the leading roles. (Nov. 12 at 7:30 and Nov. 15 at 8.) • Based not on Shakespeare's play but on an equally acidic tale by the nineteenth-century writer Nikolai Leskov, Shostakovich's "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk" 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. The cast also includes Brandon Jovanovich, Raymond Very, and Anatoli Kotscherga; James Conlon. (Nov. 13 and Nov. 17 at 7:30.) • The admired Bulgarian soprano Sonya Yoncheva replaces Kristine Opolais in the role of Mimì in the latest revival of "La Bohème," joined by Myrtò Papatanasu, Ramón Vargas, and David Bizic; Riccardo Frizza. (Nov. 14 at 7:30.) • Peter Gelb, his staff, and his musicians deserve genuine praise for facing down a barrage of ill-informed enmity and making the house première of John Adams's "The Death of Klinghoffer" a reality. Now the final performance is here, and attendance is highly recommended. The outstanding performers include Michaela Martens, Alan Opie, Sean Panikkar, Paulo Szot, Aubrey Allicock, and Ryan Speedo Green, with the invaluable David Robertson in the pit. (Nov. 15 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

OF NOTE

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

James Levine is back, and so, thankfully, is the ensemble he founded, which always gives incisive performances. The soprano Kiera Duffy is the guest in an Alt Wien program of works by Berg, Webern, Johann Strauss II ("Roses from the South"), and Schoenberg (the seminal "Pierrot Lunaire"). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 5.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC "CONTACT" SERIES

The orchestra's welcome series of new-music concerts has its latest posting at SubCulture. This important program, curated and hosted by John Adams (and co-presented by the 92nd Street Y), features works by the young composers Daniel Bjarnason, Missy Mazzoli, and Timo Andres (the New York première of "Early to Rise"), as well as music by a distinguished veteran, Ingram Marshall ("Muddy Waters"). (45 Bleecker St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 17 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

Case Scaglione, newly promoted from assistant conductor to associate conductor at the Philharmonic, leads his first subscription week with the orchestra. The violinist Joshua Bell lends his star power to an audience-friendly Franco-Russian program that offers Debussy's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," Glazunov's Violin Concerto, and—a challenge for any young maestro—Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 12-13 and Nov. 18 at 7:30 and Nov. 14 at 8.)

American Classical Orchestra: The B-Minor Mass

Thomas Crawford and his admirable period-performance ensemble and chorus reach for the heights when they take up J. S. Bach's supreme masterwork. The impressive vocal soloists are Christine Brandes, David Daniels, Charles Blandly, and Dashon Burton. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 15 at 7:30.)

Czech Philharmonic

Naturally, Dvořák is on the program when this renowned ensemble comes to town; the concert's closing selection is the Symphony No. 9, "From the New World" (which was given its world première by the New York Philharmonic back in 1893). Jíří Bělohávek also conducts Janáček's "Taras Bulba," once a repertory staple, and Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Jean-Yves Thibaudet), a work always deserving of rediscovery. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 2.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Mutter Virtuosi

The impeccable violinist returns to Carnegie Hall, this time not only as a soloist but as the leader of her personal ensemble of standout students and professionals, all alumni of her eponymous foundation. André Previn's Violin Concerto No. 2, in its U.S. première, is at the center of this concert, bookended by two popular favorites, Bach's Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins and Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." (212-247-7800. Nov. 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

Ebène Quartet

The dashing young Frenchmen in what has become one of the world's most distinctive ensembles perform bracingly mature string quartets by Mozart and Bartók (No. 4), as well as Mendelssohn's Quartet in A Minor, Op. 13, composed when he was a teen-ager. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 12 at 7:30.)

New York Polyphony: "Celebrations from the Mediterranean"

The remarkable breakout group, four male singers of superb musicianship and vocal allure, perform ancient European music (and contemporary scores) with an appealing combination of sincerity and sophistication. Their latest program, presented by Miller Theatre, offers music for rejoicing by Morales, Guerrero, Victoria, and Palestrina ("Gaudet in Coelis"). (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Jeremy Denk

The probing American pianist, always an ambitious programmer, offers his next recital at the 92nd Street Y, an evening in which substantial works by Haydn (the Sonata No. 50 in C Major) and Schumann ("Carnaval") frame shorter pieces by Janáček, Mozart (the Rondo in A Minor, K. 511), and Schubert (including selections from "Moments Musicaux"). (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Nov. 16 at 5: Sweet lyricism will be the hallmark of one of the Society's concerts this week, an afternoon of works for strings and piano by Dvořák (including selections from "Cypresses"), Chausson, and Schubert (the "Trout" Quintet), featuring the prominent young pianist Inon Barnatan, as well as the violinists Ani Kavafian and Areta Zhulla, among others. • Nov. 18 at 7:30: An enticing program of music for virtuoso winds offers pieces by Taffanel, Barber ("Summer Music"), Poulenc, and Mozart (the Serenade in E-Flat Major, K. 375), in addition to a recent work by Brett Dean; the musicians include the pianist Gilles Vonsattel, the oboist Stephen Taylor, the clarinetists Romie de Guise-Langlois and David Shifrin, and the bassoonists Peter Kolkay and Bram van Sambeek. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

Miller Theatre "Composer Portrait": Bernard Rands

During his long career, Rands has created a large body of music that is as notable for its considerable beauty as for its solid intellectual structure. Miller toasts him on his eightieth birthday with a concert that features the New York première of "Folk Songs" (with the winning Met countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo), along with three other works, performed by the white-hot International Contemporary Ensemble. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com. Nov. 18 at 8.)

DANCE



Two Nrityagram dancers perform Odissi at the Met's Temple of Dendur.

WINTER PREVIEW

For centuries in India, religious rituals featured sacred female dancers, known as *devadasis*, whose stylized movements suggested both idealized beauty and communion with the gods. Even though Indian dance long ago left the temple for the concert hall, it has retained an air of sacredness. On a recent visit to the Metropolitan Museum's Temple of Dendur, **Surupa Sen**, the artistic director of the Indian dance ensemble Nrityagram, had an idea. On Jan. 10, Sen and her star dancer, **Bijayini Satpathy**—both extraordinary exponents of Odissi, a form that originated in the eastern state of Orissa—will perform an evening of solos and duets based on stories of the Hindu gods in the shadow of the temple's sandstone walls. For one night, Krishna and Radha will dance with Isis and Osiris.

After a four-year absence from New York, the **Mariinsky Ballet** comes to BAM (Jan. 15-24). Of three programs, "Swan Lake" is the most familiar; the company's production is considered one of the finest. Another program features Chopin ballets, including Fokine's moonlit reverie "Chopiniana" (a Mariinsky specialty), Jerome Robbins's "In the Night," and Benjamin Millepied's "Without." For the more adventurous, there's Alexei Ratmansky's modernist retelling of "Cinderella," from 2002. Go for the dancers—the marvellous Yekaterina Kondaurova, Diana Vishneva, Ulyana Lopatkina, and the young Vladimir Shklyarov—but also for the orchestra, particularly on the nights that Valery Gergiev conducts.

Contemporary flamenco comes in a variety of styles: with or without a plot, choreographed or freestyle, highly produced or roughshod. The impressive **Sara Baras**—known for her virtuosic footwork, or *zapateado*—has dabbled in them all. Her new show, "Voces, Suite Flamenca" (March 4-7), part of the "A Bailar" festival at City Center (Feb. 18-March 7), pays tribute to flamenco's elemental forms: the brilliant *farruca* in which she excels, the searing *siguiriyá*, and the upbeat *alegrías*.

—Marina Harsis

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. This week, the company performs "Giselle"; an early Soviet favorite, "Flames of Paris"; and a mixed bill of Russian works that includes the charming Petipa romp "Cavalry Halt." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Nov. 11-18. Through Nov. 23.)

Batsheva Dance Company / "Sadeh21"

Israel's preëminent dance troupe is turning fifty. For years after it was founded, Martha Graham was the principal influence, but now it's the homegrown choreographer Ohad Naharin, with his unique mind-body technique—known as Gaga—who has shaped the company's fierce, seemingly boneless style. At BAM, Batsheva will perform Naharin's "Sadeh21," an abstract, evening-length work, set to atmospheric soundscapes by Brian Eno, Angelo Badalamenti, and the British electronic duo Autechre. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 12-15.)

Hilary Easton / "I Am with You"

Easton, the veteran experimentalist and a Juilliard faculty member, says that her newest work is about growth and transition. In one section, she works with a mixed cast of professionals and teen-agers. As they dance side by side, tackling increasingly complex material, the audience is able to see them push and guide each other toward mastery. (The commissioned score is by Mike Rugnetta.) In another section, two dancers from her company engage in an evolving duet set to music from Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde," in which the dancers begin more or less in synch and then diverge. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Nov. 13-15.)

Jaro Viňarský

Best known in New York for his searing performances in works by Pavel Zúšťiak, the Slovakian dancer presents a duet of his own making. "Animalinside" is a series of vignettes inspired by the poems and illustrations in a frightening book of the same title by László Krasznahorkai and Max Neumann. Viňarský and Marek Mensik, clothed, unclothed, and sometimes wearing animal heads, explore the tension generated by the domestication of savage forces within. (Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 13-15.)

Ivy Baldwin / "Oxbow"

Baldwin is a collagist—a bit of absurdist humor here, a surge of violence there. She can be arch, but her new "Oxbow," named for a bow-shaped lake formed by a meandering river, is suffused with sadness, and seems to continue a recent turn toward seriousness. Wade Cavanaugh and Stephen B. Nguyen's set of twisted paper suggests the gnarled trees that come to menacing life in fairy tales, and Baldwin's capricious imagination tries to find a way out. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 13-16.)

"Dig Dance: Weekend Series" / ABT Studio Company

The young dancers in this training program, run by American Ballet Theatre, are students of the highest calibre. This evening is fairly heavy on romance, from Stephen Mills's blandly courteous "Hush" to Antony Tudor's sweet game of pretend, "Little Improvisations." A dash of Merce Cunningham's witty "Duets" should offer more room for maturation. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 14-16.)

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT TWO MORE YEARS

"The American people have spoken," Mitch McConnell said last week, after announcing his intention to lead the Senate's new Republican majority. "They've given us divided government." It's a habit. Since 1981, party control of the White House and Congress has been split for all but six and a half years. Voters continually tell pollsters how disgusted they are that government doesn't function, then cast their ballots in patterns that all but insure gridlock. This pathology has many causes. One is that the electorate that votes in midterm years is smaller, older, whiter, and, these days, angrier than the one that votes in Presidential years. This contributes to Election Night whiplash; the change of control in the Senate next January will be the seventh since the Reagan Administration.

The Founding Fathers romanticized ancient Rome's republic (and feared mobs), so they eschewed straightforward majority rule and created the Senate, which evolved to empower small and rural states over large and urban ones. Accordingly, last Tuesday night, citizens stared bug-eyed at red-and-blue maps on their TV screens to puzzle out whether Kansans, who constitute less than one per cent of the population, or similarly minuscule bands of Alaskans, Arkansans, or Iowans might determine President Obama's ability to legislate, appoint judges, and ratify treaties. The slate of Senate races favored Republicans to an unusual degree. Among other things, many of the states hosting contested races had few Latino voters, who have recently been a decisive source of Democratic support. Democratic strategists boasted that they could overcome that deficit by turning out large numbers of African-American voters in North Carolina and Georgia. They failed.

The Republicans won a clean technical knockout against a hamstrung opponent, but they pranced as if they'd walloped Joe Louis in his prime. Party spokesmen described the victory as a referendum on Obama's failed leadership. That was spin, yet Obama does deserve much of the criticism he has taken for his

party's defeat. Before the midterms, amid public scares over Ebola and ISIS, approval of the President's performance sank. He was late to lead in these crises and he failed to inspire swing voters with his successes: for one, his Administration is presiding over the fastest-growing economy in the industrialized world.

Now Obama seems at risk of running out his time in office by accepting dutifully the shrinking boundaries of his Presidency. Last Wednesday, at a press conference in the East Room, he spoke about how, even without congressional support, his Administration might yet improve customer service at government offices—an aspiration so small that it would sound sad if voiced by a mayor of Topeka. Asked about being called a lame duck, Obama replied, "That's the label that you guys apply." He outlined a modest legislative agenda that might be pursued with Republican cooperation, if such a thing could be obtained: infrastructure spending that would create high-paying jobs, a raise in the federal minimum wage, and programs to expand early-childhood education and to make college more affordable.

In private, Obama and his aides are discussing a different agenda, one that could be achieved without Congress, through regulation and executive orders, such as the ones he has already

signed to raise the minimum wage for federal contract workers and to triple the government's use of renewable energy. Separately, the E.P.A. has proposed to reduce carbon emissions from electricity plants by thirty per cent before 2030, which could hasten the country's transition away from coal, if the regulations are seen through. In the aftermath of the Ferguson crisis, civil-rights groups have pressed the White House to order the Justice Department to end racial profiling in federal law enforcement. And the President is reportedly considering two exceptionally bold ideas: to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay and to temporarily normalize the legal status of undocumented immigrants who have been living



and working here for years. These proposals would require enormous political tenacity, but would greatly elevate Obama's legacy.

Guantánamo's stain on American credibility is only deepening. The prison's guards are force-feeding hunger strikers, including prisoners who were approved for release years ago but can't be resettled. (Seventy-nine of the remaining hundred and forty-eight prisoners have been cleared to leave.) The Justice Department has taken up the degrading task of defending the feeding regimen in federal court; to try to cover up the crisis, the military has stopped disclosing how many prisoners are refusing food. The President signed an executive order to close the prison in 2009, but Congress banned transferring prisoners to U.S. soil. According to Harold Koh, who was Obama's legal adviser at the State Department, if the President first reduces the prison's population to the smallest number possible through diplomatic measures and offshore transfers, he could finish the job with a flourish, either by vetoing congressional restrictions or by forcing Congress to weaken them, with the threat of a veto. He could then try the remaining defendants in federal courts or seek prison terms in plea bargains.

The President has already said that he will enact immigration reforms on his own authority. Last year, he endorsed a bill with Republicans, which included a path to citizenship for many undocumented immigrants; it passed the Senate but died in the

House, as Tea Party nativists refused to compromise. Obama vowed to act by executive order, but postponed any move until after the midterms. There are about eleven million undocumented immigrants, more than half of whom have lived here for ten years or longer. Obama could ease their situation by suspending deportation and creating special work permits, as he has done for some immigrants who came here illegally as children. The order could be undone by his successor, but, given the increasing importance of Latino voters, would even a Republican President do that? Action by Obama now could trap Republicans into an uncomfortable choice in 2016.

Last week, McConnell said that if Obama acted unilaterally he would so inflame Republicans that it would be like "waving a red flag in front of a bull." Obama's choice of sports metaphor involved basketball. He's playing in the fourth quarter, he said, but "the only score that matters" is how he serves the American people. The President has always preferred to win his points through legislative process. Bill Clinton, who faced Republican majorities in both houses of Congress for six of his eight years in office, signed three hundred and sixty-four executive orders; Obama has signed a hundred and ninety-one. The reality now is that either Obama outruns McConnell's bulls or he waddles down Pennsylvania Avenue like a certain duck.

—Steve Coll

THIN AIR SUMMIT PUSH



Ueli Steck, the mountaineer known as the Swiss Machine, was in New York last week to give a talk at the Explorers Club. He never knows what to do with himself in big cities. No mountains to climb. You train in basements, lifting free weights in a hotel gym.

He had just spent two months in Tibet. He and his wife, who live near Interlaken, Switzerland, had gone there to climb Shishapangma, the fourteenth-highest mountain in the world—their idea of a vacation—but when conditions proved too much for her Steck joined another group of climbers. A few hundred feet from the summit, three of them were caught in an avalanche. Two were killed.

On his first morning in New York City, Steck managed to find what he called some "good exercise": the marathon. He hadn't run at all since August, and finished in three hours and nine minutes. Not much of a result for arguably the fastest climber in the world (he

once ascended the North Face of the Eiger, traditionally a two-day affair, in two hours and forty-seven minutes), but he feels that he has nothing left to prove. A recent exception would be his record-breaking twenty-eight-hour solo climb of Annapurna's South Face, perhaps the most treacherous test in the Himalayas. "I took too much risk," he said last week. "I was accepting to die up there." He'd climbed through the night, switching his right mitten from hand to hand (an avalanche had swept the left one away).

Steck's subsequent vow to cool it a bit (he ended his Explorers Club talk with the self-admonition "Slow down and stay alive") has not deterred him from devising ambitious excursions, what he calls "projects." And so, as he battled the headwind through Brooklyn on Marathon Sunday, he kept seeing, to the west, the shiny new tower at the tip of Manhattan, One World Trade Center: the skyline's highest peak. Two days later, a future tenant of the building suggested to Steck that the two of them climb to the top of it and make a viable claim to a first ascent. Taken together, the marathon and the summit of One World Trade would be an unprecedented accomplishment, an urban analogue to the combination of the so-called Lhotse

Traverse and Everest, a feat Steck covets. "This is a good project," Steck said. The future tenant set about securing a permit.

On the day of the climb, Steck and the tenant met up with the expedition's third member, Jordan Barowitz, an escort assigned to them by the building's landlord. Barowitz had brought along a radio, he said, "in case something happens." Steck is thirty-eight, slight and bow-legged. He had on bluejeans, a light down jacket, and running shoes. When he rounded a corner onto Vesey Street and got his first glance of the building close up—the fearsome east face—he gasped: "Fucking hell!"

He made a joke about putting in a route up the sheer glass exterior. (He had never heard of George Willig, or Philippe Petit.) The day's program involved taking a more conventional route, one with fixed handrails and established foot placements; that is, the stairs. The trailhead was in the basement. Steck stuffed the down jacket in a backpack, started the timer on his altimeter watch, and set off in the lead. He'd agreed to keep to a pace that was amenable to his teammates, and so the trio plodded upward, one stair at a time. Traffic on the stairway, as on Everest, was surprisingly heavy, with groups of construction workers descending a floor or two. Most paid

the climbers little mind; one, encumbered by a metal case and a tripod, grumbled, “Fucking stupid.” The floors accumulated. Nothing to see: the walls in essence a whiteout. The team took a water break on the thirty-eighth landing (the future advanced base camp for These Pages). Past forty-four, there were no more workers. “The treeline,” Barowitz said.

“Pretty boring route,” Steck said after a while. “At least they could change the colors.”

After thirty-two minutes and nineteen seconds and twenty-three hundred and fifty vertical feet (according to Steck’s watch), and twenty-five hundred and ninety-six steps (according to Barowitz’s Fitbit), and seventeen litres of lactic acid (according to the future tenant’s quads), Steck and his team reached the hundred and fourth floor. It was a windowless mechanical space. The building’s owner had decreed that the team not be allowed on the roof. There was a security guard blocking the door leading up to it.

“We found the Yeti,” Steck said.

The expedition descended by elevator, stopping on sixty-three for sanctioned views: the Midtown Massif, the Jersey City Alps, the Dumbo Cwm. “This was a good project,” Steck said.

—Nick Paumgarten

ODD JOBS CRYSTAL BALL



Shingy believes in storytelling—more story, less telling. A story can be anything—text or image, six seconds or thirteen hours. According to Shingy, we are no longer living in the age of information; it’s the age of social, and social is all about conversations. How does Shingy know? Because he is a digital prophet. Literally. His business card has a microchip embedded in it, and it reads “Digital Prophet, AOL.” It also says “David Shing,” but, unless you knew him when he was a kid in Australia, you should just call him Shingy, which is also his Twitter handle and his URL. AOL pays him a six-figure salary for—for doing what, exactly?

“Watching the future take shape across the vast online landscape,” Shingy says. “I fly all around the world and go to conferences.” Last month, he was in Singapore, Brazil, and Germany. “I listen to where media is headed and figure out how our brands can win in that environment.” In 2002, AOL had more than twenty-five million subscribers; it now has fewer than



Shingy

two and a half million. Shingy calls it “a company in transition.”

“There is no typical day for me,” Shingy, who is forty-four, said. “Which, if you think about it, means that today is pretty typical.” He arrived at AOL headquarters in the Village wearing black nail polish and high-top sneakers with leather wings. His jacket, T-shirt, and pants were black, and he had decorated them with wide stripes of white paint. He wears his hair up and out, like Phyllis Diller or Beetlejuice. “You’d be surprised how easy it is to get it to stay like this, actually—a blow-dry and then a quarter-size dab of product,” Shingy explained. “It’s all in the cut, not the styling.” He ran into a Ward Cleaver-ish advertising executive named Jim Norton. “My man!” Shingy said, offering his trademark three-part handshake, ending in a hug.

Next, Shingy stopped by the office of Erika Nardini, the chief marketing officer of AOL Advertising, and handed her an iPad Mini. “Wanted to show you a little brain fart I had on the plane,” he said. It was a cartoon he had drawn of a bear wearing zebra-print pants and a shirt covered in ones and zeros.

“Love it, love it, love it,” Nardini said.

“I’m thinking of the bears more as a metaphor.”

“A thousand per cent,” Shingy said.

“Shingy is my muse,” Nardini said. During this conversation, Shingy was distracted by his phone, but he looked up and smiled every few seconds. “I lean on him really heavily for the feel of what’s happening in the here and now. There is something so polarizing about Shingy, but also so unifying.”

Shingy kept moving. He is passionate about spaces, and when a space is not working he reboots it, taking everything out and starting over. He said, “This is a space I recently rebooted for Tim”—meaning Tim Armstrong, the C.E.O. of AOL. The room had been a standard fluorescent-lit office. Now the desk was gone, replaced by leather armchairs in a circle, and the walls were painted dark gray. Armstrong entered, wearing a fleece, baggy jeans, and loafers. Shingy is short and slight, and Armstrong, who played lacrosse in college, towered over him.

“Do you like the scent?” Shingy said. A diffuser released a fragrance (called London) designed by Tom Dixon into the air. Shingy’s office features another of Dixon’s scents (Orientalist), but Armstrong’s, he pointed out, was newer.

“It’s funny,” Armstrong said. “I thought it was the cleaning materials. The cleaning lady was in here last night, and I’m like, ‘I love the smell of this table!’ She was like, ‘Um, O.K.’”

“I still need to put some sound in here,” Shingy said.

Armstrong looked around. “I have meetings here, and people don’t know where to sit,” he said.

“They’ll figure it out, man,” Shingy said.

He took an Uber car uptown to IPG Mediabrands, an advertising firm, where he was due to give a speech. “I think some folks from Applebee’s are going to be in the house,” he said. “I’m more of a caffeine-free, gluten-free, raw-food sort of guy, but I am able to find something to like in every brand once I hear their story.”

He told the Applebee’s people that to make their brand “remarkable, reactive, and relevant” they have to tell stories in real time. Everyone is talking about So-LoMo—social, local, mobile—but they should be talking about HoMo: home/

mobile, cell phones used on the couch.

"How many apps does the average person have?" Shingy asked the crowd.

"Forty-two?" Justin Colavita, a media planner, said.

"That's right!" Shingy said. "Forty-one, actually."

A colleague turned to Colavita and asked, "How did you know that?"

"I was just guessing," Colavita said. "I must be a prophet."

—Andrew Marantz

INK PRODIGAL



The first time Martin Short went to a broadcast of "Saturday Night Live," it was 1976, and he was there to see his ex-girlfriend, Gilda Radner. They had met in Toronto, not far from where Short grew up, at auditions for a Canadian production of "Godspell." Short sang "My Funny Valentine"; Radner sang "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah." They both got cast. By the time Short joined Second City and Radner joined "Saturday Night Live," they had dated on and off for two years. "She was kind of magical," Short recalled recently. "She would

carry this big purse full of bingo chips, because she'd go to a bingo party and play eighteen cards at once."

Short, who turned sixty-four in March, was sitting in the balcony of "S.N.L.'s Studio 8-H, looking down on the unpeopled set of "Weekend Update." He was on something of a victory lap. In his new memoir, "I Must Say," he chronicles his boyhood in Ontario, the "SCTV" years, his marriage (to Nancy Dolman, whom he started dating during a lull with Radner), his starry Christmas parties (Tom and Rita, Kurt and Goldie), and his brief, stressful stint on "S.N.L.," which he joined in 1984, after Radner had left.

This was during one of the seasons when Lorne Michaels was not producing the show and Dick Ebersol took over. "The George Steinbrenner year—that's what Dick called it," Short said, referring to the all-star cast: Christopher Guest, Harry Shearer, Billy Crystal. Not planning to stay in town long, Short sublet a place on York Avenue, leaving his wife and baby back in Toronto. "I tried to quit four shows in. That's in the book," he went on. "Dick said, 'You have the highest Q rating.' I didn't know what that was. I said, 'Oh, that's good.' Then he said, 'If you feel this way at Christmas, then I'll let you out of your contract.'" He stayed through April.

He laughed to himself and said, "In 1990, I made 'Clifford' with Charles

Grodin, and he had written a book. And he'd say"—his voice turned gruff—"You know, one time I was in London—well, it's in the book.' So I find myself saying, 'It's in the book.'"

Short flicked at a piece of prosthetic behind his ear—the remnant of a character he had created the day before, for Tina Fey's new television show, "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt."

"I played this bizarre dermatologist," he said, pulling up a picture on his phone: Morlock hair, surgical skin. Much of "I Must Say" is devoted to Short's menagerie of weirdos, who inhabit his brain like squatters: the albino crooner Jackie Rogers, Jr. (inspired by Sammy Davis, Jr.), the cigar-chomping fossil Irving Cohen (shades of Sophie Tucker), the fatuous celebrity interviewer Jiminy Glick (Merv Griffin with the quavering voice of a childhood neighbor).

If Short has a Mona Lisa, it's Ed Grimley, the excitable man-child with shark-fin bangs, who debuted at Second City Toronto, in 1977. For years, Grimley was the peacekeeper in his marriage to Dolman. "I'd say, 'I think you're overreacting.' 'I'm not remotely overreacting!' she'd say. 'Forget it, let me talk to Ed. What do you think, Ed?'" He screwed his face into Grimley's: jutted teeth, dopey eyes. "Oh, he's just jealous, Miss Nancy, because of your beauty."

When Short went to "SCTV," he initially avoided doing Grimley: "It seemed almost too personal to bring him into television." Dolman died in 2010, of ovarian cancer, and the book is as much a widower's reminiscence as a showman's. Sometimes, in his imagination, Short still does Ed Grimley for her.

He looked up: "Is someone urinating?" A crew guy was testing out a shower on wheels, for a future sketch. Short made for the stairs down to the stage, but became disoriented. "Every time I've been here since I left in '85, there's been someone escorting me around." He whizzed by framed head shots—Tom Hanks ("Baby Tom!"), Robin Williams ("Sweet Robin")—and emerged into a corridor of dressing rooms. He mimicked a loudspeaker: "Two minutes for Ed Grimley!"

As Short strutted onto the set, his phone rang. "Uh-oh—it could be *Hollywood*," he announced with mock self-importance. It was Larry David. "Lawrence!" he said, pacing. "I'm in New York City.

ADAM AND EVE AND COURTNEY



Where are you? Are you here? Get out!” He circled backstage, past the spot where he once kissed Lorne Michaels during a Christmas sketch. After getting lost in the elevators, he went up to the seventeenth floor and peeked into Michaels’s vacant office. (“Where’s Lorne? Amagansett?” he asked an assistant.) On



Martin Short

his way, he passed a framed photo of himself, from an old hosting gig. He read aloud the inscription he’d written on it, which isn’t in the book: “Tom Wolfe was nuts. You can go home again.”

—Michael Schulman

BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT. ON THE SIDE



Spring, 2008. Barack Obama, a first-term United States senator from Illinois, gains momentum on his trajectory to the Presidency of the world’s most bewildering democracy, as tens of millions of disaffected citizens find reason to hope again. (Though evidently not the ones who, at the sight of him, begin to stockpile automatic weapons.) Great changes, it seems, await.

Simultaneously, in Providence, Rhode Island, Scott Norton and Mark Ramadan, two ambitious econ majors in their final semester at Brown University, perceive that, yes, our futures are bright. Harboring entrepreneurial ambitions, they accept job offers in, respectively,

finance and management consulting. In the spirit of the historical moment, they dream of launching a game-changer. Inconveniently, Facebook has already been invented. What else, besides being umbilically attached to little digital devices, do consumers need to make life worth living?

Artisanal ketchup. (Obviously.)

In Norton’s off-campus apartment, they come up with six recipes and test them on friends. Because ketchup typically likes company, they also provide straight-cut French fries, waffle fries, and dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets. Critical consensus lands on two of the varieties. They graduate. Norton moves to Japan to work for a bank. Ketchup master plan incubates until 2010, when they get seriously serious: Norton repatriates; Ramadan quits job. They have by now concocted not only a condiment but also a branding eponym: Sir Kensington, a top-hatted, monocled, late-eighteenth-century globe-trotter just as real as Tony the Tiger and the Frito Bandito. Sir K’s biography: Oxford graduate, conversant in agronomy and culinary arts; travels to Constantinople, pursues doctoral studies at Cambridge (thesis topic: Byzantine gastronomy blah blah); makes a boring fortune; one night at a fancy banquet, his dining companion, Catherine the Great, asks for ketchup; he retreats to the kitchen and whips up a batch; two centuries later, idling in the special collections of the Brown library, Norton and Ramadan discover the recipe.

In 2011, they hire their first employee, open an office in Chelsea, and progressively insinuate Sir Kensington’s Classic Ketchup and Sir Kensington’s Spiced Ketchup into retail stores. Then come restaurants, customers in all fifty states, sales volumes doubling and tripling annually, Sir K’s mayonnaise (classic, chipotle, sriracha) in 2013, and mustard (Dijon, spicy brown) earlier this year. Last July, shortly after the spicy brown takes the silver medal in the deli-mustard category at the World-Wide Mustard Competition, in Middleton, Wisconsin, the next stupendous idea dawns: “Fries of New York,” an exhibit fully worthy of a pop-up gallery on the Bowery (where last week it opened and, two days later, closed).

During the week and a half leading up to the opening, a fresh-hot-food-procurement strategy executed with the

precision of the Allied invasion—Mobile Fry Command Center roaming Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn (“Twenty minutes to go! Fire up the fries!”); couriers on bicycles (“We need to keep that optimization window open!”)—delivers French fries from almost a hundred restaurants to Guild, an architectural design and branding collaborative in Gowanus. There perfect specimens are dehydrated, coated with a low-sheen resin, mounted on aluminum spindles, and placed in bell jars.

On the eve of the opening, Norton serenely surveys the exhibit as it comes together. Vinyl-transfer drawings of Sir Kensington’s self-satisfied mug have been placed on the gallery windows, mingling with bottles of ketchup, mustard, and mayo. Dozens of bell jars rest on tables, waiting to be taxonomically arranged. A workman applies a time line to a white wall: “8000 B.C. (Potato first domesticated in modern day Peru and Bolivia) . . . 500 B.C. (evidence found of tomato cultivation in Mexico) . . . 544 A.D. (first recipe of ke-tchup on record found in China, involving the stomach, intestine, and bladder of a yellow fish) . . .”

Brimming with curatorial pride, Norton identifies specimens without needing to check the labels beneath the bell jars: “The curly fry is Papaya King. The four-and-a-half-inch lightly seasoned natural-cut fry is from Delmonico’s. That cocoa-and-chili-dusted waffle fry is from Max Brenner in Union Square. The tater tot is from P.J. Clarke’s, and it’s definitely an outlier. In the most pure sense, a tater tot is not a French fry. Same genus, different species.”

A father and daughter from Long Island, Rob and Brianna Cano, the caterers for a pre-opening party, show up to discuss logistics. They also happen to be the owners of Twist and Smash’d, in Astoria and Forest Hills, home of the exhibit’s *pomme de résistance*, a symmetrical tornado-shaped fry cut from a single potato.

“We were in Ecuador three years ago and found this handheld spiral cutter in a bodega,” Rob says. “I don’t know the name of it, but we brought it back, put it with a smashed burger, patented it, and wrapped a whole franchise around it. Business got so good we had to switch to an electrical-powered cutter. What do we call that? We call it the potato machine.”

—Mark Singer

THE INEVITABILITY TRAP

Hillary Clinton and the drawbacks of being the front-runner.

BY RYAN LIZZA



The Sunday before Election Day, Hillary Clinton addressed a crowd of voters at an afternoon rally in Nashua, New Hampshire. The state has long served as a source of political renewal for the Clintons. Early in 1992, during Bill Clinton's first Presidential run, he was hobbled by allegations of womanizing, but he finished a strong second in the New Hampshire primary, and his campaign rebounded. In 2008, Hillary lost to Barack Obama in the Iowa caucuses but defied the polls in New Hampshire, which showed Obama far ahead, and won the state, setting up a marathon nomination fight that lasted into June. On Sunday, she was ostensibly in the state

to boost the campaigns of Governor Maggie Hassan and Senator Jeanne Shaheen, both threatened by the surging Republican tide. It was also an ideal opportunity for Clinton to advertise her unofficial status as the Democrat to beat in the 2016 primaries.

"It's really hard for me to express how grateful I am, on behalf of my husband and myself, to the people of New Hampshire," Clinton said. "Starting way back in 1991, you opened your homes and your hearts to us. And in 2008, during the darkest days of my campaign, you lifted me up, you gave me my voice back, you taught me so much about grit and determination, and I will never forget that."

Bernie Sanders, Martin O'Malley, and Jim Webb may all run for President in 2016.

Many of the candidates for whom Clinton campaigned throughout the summer and fall lost on Tuesday. Shaheen, though, was one of the clear Democratic winners. She asked at the rally what many were thinking: "Are we ready for Hillary?" The crowd chanted Clinton's name, and she mouthed a thank-you. In national surveys this year, Clinton's support among Democrats has been as high as seventy-three per cent. That makes her the most dominant front-runner at this stage of a Presidential contest in the Party's modern history. Media pundits and political strategists agree overwhelmingly that Hillary's lead within the Party is unassailable. Tuesday's results, which gave Republicans control of both the House and the Senate, may solidify her standing, as Democrats close ranks around her in an effort to hang on to the White House, their last foothold on power in Washington. But the election results could also lead to an entirely different outcome: a Republican Party that overinterprets its mandate in Congress and pushes its Presidential candidates far to the right, freeing Democrats to gamble on someone younger or more progressive than Clinton.

In every fight for the Democratic Presidential nomination in the past five decades, there has come a moment when the front-runner faltered. "Nature abhors a vacuum, and so does politics," Anita Dunn, a Democratic strategist, told me. Voters in the early states, perhaps spurred by a sense of civic responsibility, begin to take an interest in candidates they had previously never heard of. Those candidates seize on issues, usually ones that excite the left, that the front-runner, focussed on the general election, has been too timid to champion. The press, invested in political drama, declares that the front-runner is vulnerable.

Since the nineteen-eighties, four Democratic-primary contests have featured an establishment-backed front-runner who, early in the race, encountered little competition, but who eventually faced a vigorous challenge from a relative unknown. In 1984, Walter Mondale, Jimmy Carter's Vice-President, loomed over the Democratic field much as Clinton does now. In Iowa, Mondale defeated Senator Gary Hart, a younger candidate whose aim was to modernize the Democratic Party, by a wide margin, 49 to 16.5 per cent, but Hart emerged as a serious threat nonetheless. "The only thing anybody gave a damn

about that night was who came in second—Who was the other guy?” Joe Trippi, who ran Mondale’s campaign in Iowa, told me. But nobody in the Hart campaign had thought to slate delegates in the later primary states, and Mondale’s superior organization prevailed.

In 2000, Vice-President Al Gore’s ability to raise money and secure Democratic endorsements scared off most competitors, but then Senator Bill Bradley jumped into the race and briefly threatened Gore. Dunn, who worked for Bradley, said that the campaign used Gore’s experience against him “by finding the things that progressives were upset with in the Clinton Administration.” In 2004, the dark horse was Howard Dean, an unknown ex-governor of Vermont, who faced four experienced members of Congress: Joe Lieberman, John Edwards, John Kerry, and Dick Gephardt. Kerry emerged as the leading candidate, but Dean briefly surged ahead in the polls when he attacked Kerry and other Democrats for being too supportive of the Bush Administration. Although Dean built a large following, he couldn’t organize it.

“In some ways I got captivated by my own campaign,” Dean told me. He found it impossible to make the ideological and stylistic shifts that might have transformed him from insurgent into front-runner. “The problem with running against somebody like Hillary—or my problem running against Kerry—is that, when you make the turn, then you disappoint all your followers.”

In the fall of 2007, Obama had a respectable national following as a senator, but Hillary Clinton led by more than thirty points in some national polls. Like Hart, Obama ran on a simple message of new versus old—“Change”—but he was prepared for a long fight over delegates when the press anointed him Clinton’s main challenger. As Bradley had done with Gore, Obama attacked Clinton on matters that liberals cared about, but his main issue—the war in Iraq—was more powerful than anything available to Bradley, who had focussed on gun control and universal health care. And, like Dean, Obama energized new voters, including many African-Americans, a key voting group in Democratic primaries. But Obama had a sophisticated plan to get them to the polls. These three ingredients—message, demographics, and orga-

nization—were just enough to defeat Clinton in the primaries. For the first time in modern history, a Democratic insurgency defeated the establishment.

Could it happen again? “There is going to be a challenge,” Trippi said. “And I would never underestimate the challenge if I were the Clinton campaign.” Dean has said that he will support Clinton if she runs. “I think the chances are fifty-fifty the Republicans are going to nominate a nutcase, and Hillary’s the perfect foil for a Rand Paul or a Ted Cruz,” he told me. But he also endorsed the idea of a strong debate: “I actually don’t think a primary is a bad thing. I think coronations are bad things.” Another Democratic strategist described the effect that even a losing challenger could have on the race. “If you get a deft insurgent, they may not win. But an insurgent could torture this poor woman.”

“Hi, I’m Martin O’Malley, the governor of Maryland. Are you guys Iowans?”

O’Malley, who is fifty-one, is one of several candidates who are considering running for the Democratic nomination. A two-term governor of Maryland, he is youthful-looking despite a receding hairline. In January of 2013, he briefly became an Internet sensation when photos emerged of him participating in a polar-bear plunge, wearing a bathing suit and revealing six-pack abs. One Sunday morning in mid-October, he was scanning the crowded tables at the Drake Diner in Des Moines. He was hungry—“Smelling all these eggs, it’s killing me!”—but he had work to do before he could eat. He pirouetted around a waitress delivering omelettes and descended on a family of four to introduce himself. Like most of the restaurant’s patrons, they had no idea who he was.

Historically, the longer a party remains in power, the more emboldened its activist base becomes. Many liberals are frustrated with Obama’s inability to enact more progressive change, such as assertive policies against global warming and income inequality, comprehensive immigration reform, or a less hawkish foreign policy. Democratic-primary voters are always eager to see a fresh potential candidate. “Seventy or eighty per cent of people want to hear from a new perspective before they make a decision about whether to go with what they know,” O’Malley told me. “A person becomes

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Pictured: Maurice Jones as Mark Antony | Photo by James Kogley

very famous in this country very quickly.”

O'Malley isn't new to politics. His parents met in 1954, in Washington, where they worked together on a Young Democrats newsletter. In 1965, when he turned two, they frosted his birthday cake with the words “Martin for President 2004.” He's been running for one office or another since he was in grade school, at Our Lady of Lourdes, in Bethesda, Maryland. In the past twenty-four years, he has served at just about every level of government in his state: Baltimore city councilman for eight years, mayor of Baltimore for eight years, and governor of Maryland for eight years. In January, facing term limits, he'll be out of a job. There's only one other elective office he wants to pursue.

In Des Moines, at the diner, O'Malley eagerly introduced himself to patrons and asked them to vote for Iowa's Democratic gubernatorial nominee, Jack Hatch, who was not known for his flash or political skills. A longtime Democratic state legislator, Hatch was running fifteen points behind, in an ultimately doomed campaign against Terry Branstad, the state's Republican chief executive. O'Malley was one of the few Democrats who had bothered to campaign for him. It was an odd scene: a little-known governor from a state a thousand miles away, introducing the candidate to his own voters. “He's running for governor, and he needs your help,” O'Malley said, then dashed to another table to greet more Iowans.

Clinton can't present herself as a novelty. She'll be sixty-nine on Election Day in 2016 and has been a national figure for a quarter century. The last politician to become President after a similarly long and distinguished career was George H. W. Bush. Since then, the office has been won by relative newcomers: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama. “The one time in my political life that we've gone back a generation was Carter to Reagan,” Dean said. “Once you change the page on generations, you don't go back.” He added that Clinton could be the exception.

O'Malley has been thinking about the political dynamics of new versus old for a long time. In 1984, he took a semester off from Catholic University to volunteer for Hart, who represented a new generation of Democratic thinking, even though he was only eight years younger than Mondale. O'Malley and a friend signed on with the campaign. “We made the decision at the age of twenty that we weren't going to defeat Reagan after one term by offering up the same old leadership from yesterday,” O'Malley told me.

The conventional wisdom heading into the Iowa caucuses, he reminded me, was that “Mondale was totally inevitable, and the only person with a chance of beating him was astronaut John Glenn.” The story that unfolded instead “was that Glenn totally imploded, pancaked, and Gary Hart got sixteen per cent, and it was

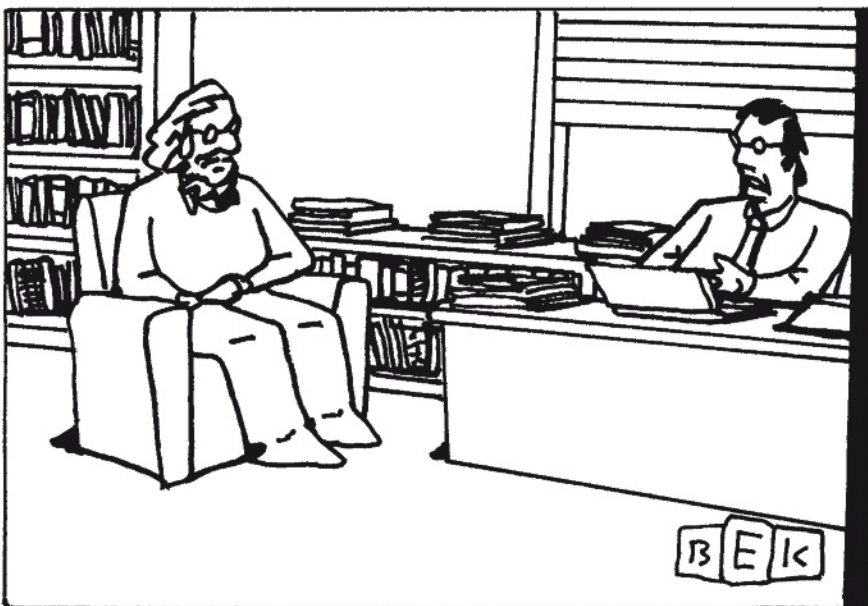
that distant second place that was heard around the world.”

The Hart campaign's organizational failure was an education for O'Malley. “It was like a ‘Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe’ experience for me,” O'Malley said. “I walked into the wardrobe, I got about twenty years of adult experience in management and being under deadlines and high pressure, and then I came back and I was still twenty-one.”

The history of Democratic primaries suggests that an insurgent can't expect to gain recognition with only a fresh face and a superior organization. Inevitably, the candidate must attack the front-runner from the left. O'Malley is not necessarily a natural candidate to pursue this strategy, but he is trying.

As a mayor and as a governor, he has been known for bringing a McKinsey-esque reform to Baltimore and to Annapolis, instituting programs that use computer-aided metrics to judge government performance. In 2002, when he was mayor, *Esquire* called him one of the “best and brightest”; in 2009, as governor, he was honored by the magazine *Governing* as one of the “public officials of the year.” He applied his data-driven techniques to crime, and Baltimore's murder rate plummeted to below three hundred per year for the first time in a decade. Until recently, he hasn't offered much to Democrats who are worried that Hillary is too centrist on economics and foreign policy. But in the past two years he has won approval of gun-control legislation, a new state immigration law, the repeal of the death penalty, and an increase in the minimum wage. There was only one warning sign for O'Malley as he canvassed Iowa. His lieutenant governor, Anthony Brown, who was running to succeed him as governor, was in a close race against a local businessman and political upstart, Larry Hogan, who attacked the O'Malley administration for raising taxes.

O'Malley's strategy so far suggests that the 2016 primaries may turn into a debate not so much about Clinton's record as about Obama's effectiveness as a leader—an issue that Republicans used to win races last week, and which they would almost certainly raise in a general election against Clinton. O'Malley told me that Obama's response to the 2008 financial crisis was too timid: “When the Recovery and Reinvestment Act was introduced, it was



“I'm sorry—you tapped into something no one cares about.”

probably half of what it needed to be, and the congressional parts of our own party watered it down to a half of that, which meant it was about a quarter of what it needed to be.” And Obama was too soft on Wall Street, O’Malley said. “The moment was ripe for much more aggressive action. If an institution is too big to fail, too big to jail, too big to prosecute, then it’s probably too damn big.” O’Malley also talks about inequality, in terms that more populist Democrats, like Elizabeth Warren, who insists she isn’t running for President, have embraced, but which Obama and Clinton have generally avoided.

Clinton has said little about economic policy in recent years and could co-opt some of the same arguments without seeming overly disloyal to the President. Many liberals, though, will want concrete promises on policy rather than mere sound bites. Michael Podhorzer, the political director at the A.F.L.-C.I.O., said, “What we learned from the Obama Administration is that if the Presidential candidate surrounds themselves with the usual Wall Street suspects, then, whatever the populist rhetoric is, that’s not going to be good enough.”

At the Drake Diner, O’Malley sat down briefly with Hatch and Monica Vernon, Hatch’s running mate, to discuss the race against Branstad. O’Malley had a tightly scheduled day of events ahead and he ordered the No. 5: scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, toast, pancakes, and coffee.

“How’s it going?” he asked the two candidates.

Hatch complained that everyone except a few labor PACs had given up on him. Voters weren’t giving him a close look, because Branstad seemed like the inevitable victor. O’Malley told Hatch not to give up.


“There’s a tremendous David-versus-Goliath Zeitgeist going on out there,” he said. In his own underdog races, the key was to figure out “the narrative” to use against the front-runner and to stick to it. “You guys have to be the new.”

On Tuesday, Hatch lost by more than twenty points. In Maryland, in one of the biggest upsets, Hogan defeated Brown by five points. The loss will make it difficult for O’Malley to argue that his economic agenda in Maryland is a winning formula for his party nationally. “I wasn’t on the ballot,” he told me after the election, insisting that the results won’t change his plans. “In

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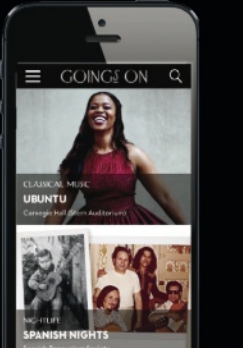
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the last race that I ran, in 2010—not a very easy year—the exact same tax attacks were levelled and the economy was even worse, and we won by fourteen points.”

At the diner, O'Malley's aide told the Governor it was time to get to the next event. He looked at her and frowned. “But I ordered the No. 5.”

Democratic strategists like to divide the Party's electorate into “wine track” and “beer track” voters. Insurgents typically have done well with the wine track—college-educated liberals—and although that portion of the electorate has grown, it's still not enough to win. (Hart once told me that he did well in all the states that were benefitting from globalization; Mondale, who had union support, did well in all the states where workers were feeling economically squeezed.) It's not clear what major demographic group O'Malley could steal from Clinton; for now, he seems like a classic wine-track insurgent. On Tuesday, the Republican victory in Maryland was fuelled by working-class and suburban voters, who revolted against higher taxes.

Former Virginia Senator Jim Webb, who served one term, from 2007 to 2013, and then retired, has the potential to win the beer-track vote. In early October, I drove from Washington to a residential building that sits high on a hill in Arlington. On the eighth floor, in a condominium with a sweeping view of Washington's monuments, Webb has been plotting his own path to defeating Clinton. “I do believe that I have the leadership and the experience and the sense of history and the kinds of ideas where I could lead this country,” he told me. “We're just going to go out and put things on the table in the next four or five months and see if people support us. And if it looks viable, then we'll do it.”

Webb is a moderate on foreign policy, but he is a Vietnam veteran from a long line of military men. His condo, which he uses as a study, is filled with antique weaponry and historical artifacts from his ancestors. He showed me a bookcase filled with collectibles. “I've been to a lot of battlefields,” he said. He pointed to some sand from Iwo Jima; glass from Tinian,

the island from which the Enola Gay was launched before it dropped an atomic bomb on Japan; and some shrapnel from Vietnam. “I have that in my leg,” he said.

After the war, Webb became a writer. His most famous book, “Fields of Fire,” published in 1978, is a novel based on his own experiences and has been credibly compared to Stephen Crane's “The Red Badge of Courage” for its realistic portrayal of war. Webb has always moved restlessly between the military and politics and the life of a writer. In the late seventies and early eighties, he worked as a counsel on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and later as Ronald Reagan's Secretary of the Navy. He has also travelled around the world as a journalist for *Parade*. In 2007, I interviewed him in his Senate office weeks after he was sworn in. He noted that he was having a hard time adjusting to life as a senator and missed his writing life. Now, in Arlington, he talked about the unfinished business of his Senate career.

In his senatorial race, Webb did well not only in northern Virginia, which is filled with Washington commuters and college-educated liberals, but also with rural, working-class white voters in Appalachia. In 2008, those voters were generally more loyal to Clinton than to Obama, but Webb believes that he could attract a national coalition of both groups of voters in the Presidential primaries. He laid out a view of Wall Street that differs sharply from Clinton's.

“Because of the way that the financial sector dominates both parties, the distinctions that can be made on truly troubling issues are very minor,” he said. He told a story of an effort he led in the Senate in 2010 to try to pass a windfall-profits tax that would have targeted executives at banks and firms which were rescued by the government after the 2008 financial crisis. He said that when he was debating whether to vote for the original bailout package, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, he relied on the advice of an analyst on Wall Street, who told him, “No. 1, you have to do this, because otherwise the world economy will go into cataclysmic free fall. But, No. 2, you have to punish these guys. It is outrageous what they did.”

After the rescue, when Webb pushed

for what he saw as a reasonable punishment, his own party blocked the legislation. “The Democrats wouldn't let me vote on it,” he said. “Because either way you voted on that, you're making somebody mad. And the financial sector was furious.” He added that one Northeastern senator—Webb wouldn't say who—“was literally screaming at me on the Senate floor.”

When Clinton was a New York senator, from 2001 to 2009, she fiercely defended the financial industry, which was a crucial source of campaign contributions and of jobs in her state. “If you don't have stock, and a lot of people in this country don't have stock, you're not doing very well,” Webb said. Webb is a populist, but a cautious one, especially on taxes, the issue that seems to have backfired against O'Malley's administration. As a senator, Webb frustrated some Democrats because he refused to raise individual income-tax rates. But as President, he says, he would be aggressive about taxing income from investments: “Fairness says if you're a hedge-fund manager or making deals where you're making hundreds of millions of dollars and you're paying capital-gains tax on that, rather than ordinary income tax, something's wrong, and people know something's wrong.”

The Clintons and Obama have championed policies that help the poor by strengthening the safety net, but they have shown relatively little interest in structural changes that would reverse runaway income inequality. “There is a big tendency among a lot of Democratic leaders to feed some raw meat to the public on smaller issues that excite them, like the minimum wage, but don't really address the larger problem,” Webb said. “A lot of the Democratic leaders who don't want to scare away their financial supporters will say we're going to raise the minimum wage, we're going to do these little things, when in reality we need to say we're going to fundamentally change the tax code so that you will believe our system is fair.”

Webb could challenge Clinton on other domestic issues as well. In 1984, he spent some time as a reporter studying the prison system in Japan, which has a relatively low recidivism rate. In the Senate, he pushed for creating a national commission that would study the American prison system, and he convened hearings



on the economic consequences of mass incarceration. He says he even hired three staffers who had criminal records. “If you have been in prison, God help you if you want to really rebuild your life,” Webb told me. “We’ve got seven million people somehow involved in the system right now, and they need a structured way to reënter society and be productive again.” He didn’t mention it, but he is aware that the prison population in the U.S. exploded after the Clinton Administration signed tough new sentencing laws.

The issue that Webb cares about the most, and which could cause serious trouble for Hillary Clinton, is the one that Obama used to defeat her: Clinton’s record on war. In the Obama Administration, Clinton took the more hawkish position in three major debates that divided the President’s national-security team. In 2009, she was an early advocate of the troop surge in Afghanistan. In 2011, along with Samantha Power, who was then a member of the White House National Security Council staff and is now the U.N. Ambassador, she pushed Obama to attack Libyan forces that were threatening the city of Benghazi. That year, Clinton also advocated arming Syrian rebels and intervening militarily in the Syrian civil war, a policy that Obama rejected. Now, as ISIS consolidates its control over parts of the Middle East and Iran’s influence grows, Clinton is still grappling with the consequences of her original vote for the war in Iraq.

Although Webb is by no means an isolationist, much of his appeal in his 2006 campaign was based on his unusual status as a veteran who opposed the Iraq war. “I’ve said for a very long time, since I was Secretary of the Navy, we do not belong as an occupying power in that part of the world,” he told me. “This incredible strategic blunder of invading caused the problems, because it allowed the breakup of Iraq along sectarian lines at the same time that Iran was empowering itself in the region.”

He thinks Obama, Clinton, and Power made things worse by intervening in Libya. “There’s three factions,” he said. “The John McCains of the world, who want to intervene everywhere. Then the people who cooked up this doctrine of humanitarian intervention, including Samantha Power, who don’t think they need to come to Congress if there’s a problem

that they define as a humanitarian intervention, which could be anything. That doctrine is so vague.” Webb also disdains liberals who advocate military intervention without understanding the American military. Referring to Syria and Libya, Webb said, “I was saying in hearings at the time, What is going to replace it? What is going to replace the Assad regime? These are tribal countries. Where are all these weapons systems that Qaddafi had? Probably in Syria. Can you get to the airport at Tripoli today? Probably not. It was an enormous destabilizing impact with the Arab Spring.”

Early on as a senator, Webb championed the idea of the so-called “pivot to Asia,” a rebalancing of America’s strategic and diplomatic posture from the Middle East to the Far East—an idea that Obama and Clinton subsequently adopted. Webb pushed Secretary of State Clinton to open up relations with Burma, a policy that Clinton includes in her recent book, “Hard Choices,” as a major achievement. (Obama is travelling to Burma this week.) When I raised the subject with Webb, he seemed annoyed that he hadn’t received adequate credit for the Burma policy. People who know him well suggest that part of what’s motivating him to consider a primary challenge to Clinton is his sense that she hasn’t expressed the proper gratitude.

It remains to be seen whether Democratic voters will care as much about foreign policy in 2016 as they did about Iraq in 2008. And it’s unclear how Clinton’s record on the Middle East will look two years from now. If Webb runs, Clinton will face an unpredictable debate about her hawkishness.

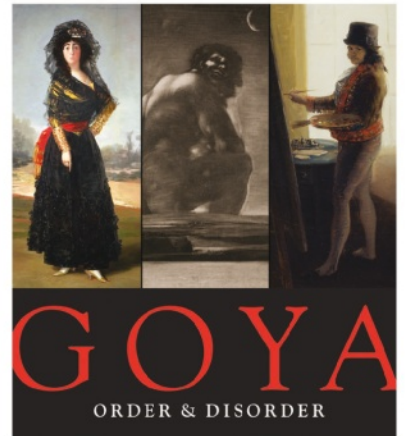
At the end of our interview, I noticed a picture of Don Quixote on Webb’s wall of military treasures. He laughed when I asked about it. “The beauty of Don Quixote is not that he dreamed impossible dreams,” he said. “It’s that, because he believed, he caused other people to believe.”

Senator Bernie Sanders, a socialist and the longest-serving independent in Congress, is seventy-three; he speaks with a Brooklyn accent that is slightly tempered by more than two decades of living in Vermont, where he was previously the mayor of Burlington and then the state’s representative in the U.S. House. One evening in mid-October, he was hunched

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Francisco Goya, *María del Pilar Teresa Cayetana de Silva Álvarez de Toledo y Silva* (detail), 1797. Oil on canvas. On loan from the Hispanic Society of America, New York, N.Y. Francisco Goya, *Seated Giant* (detail), by 1818. Aquatint with burnishing and scraping, first state. Katherine E. Bullard Fund in memory of Francis Bullard. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Francisco Goya, *Self-Portrait While Painting* (detail), about 1795. Oil on canvas. Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid. Photo © Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid.

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over a lectern addressing students at the University of New Hampshire in Durham. Supporters selling “Run, Bernie, Run!” bumper stickers milled around the edges of the crowd, along with a local labor leader, Kurt Ehrenberg, who is a regular volunteer with Sanders’s potential Presidential team in the state. Long wisps of Sanders’s white hair levitated above his head, as if he were conducting electricity.

“The great crisis, politically, facing our nation is that we are not discussing the great crises facing our nation,” he told the students. He launched several attacks on billionaires, each one to cheers. “We look at the United Kingdom and their queens, their dukes, and whatever else they have, and say, ‘Well, that is a class society, that’s not America.’ Well, guess what? We have more income and wealth inequality in this country than the U.K. and any other major country on earth.” It was time “for a political revolution.”

Earlier in the day, Sanders had told me that he was thinking about running for President. If he does, he will be the Democratic Party’s Ron Paul: his chance of winning would be infinitesimal, but his presence in the race and his passion about a few key issues would expose vulnerabilities in the front-runner’s record and policies, as Paul did with John McCain and Mitt Romney. Sanders recited for me a list of grievances that progressives still harbor about the Clinton Presidency and made it clear that he would exploit them in his campaign.

“The Clinton Administration worked arm in arm with Alan Greenspan—who is, on economic matters, obviously, an extreme right-wing libertarian—on deregulating Wall Street, and that was a total disaster,” Sanders said. “And then you had the welfare issue, trade policies. You had the Defense of Marriage Act.”

He said that the George W. Bush Presidency “will go down in history as certainly the worst Administration in the modern history of America.” But he has also been disappointed by Obama. “I have been the most vocal opponent of him in the Democratic Caucus,” he told me. In his view, Obama should have kept the grass roots of his 2008 campaign involved after he was elected, and he should have gone aggressively after Wall Street. “His weakness is that either he is too much tied to the big-money interests, or too quote-unquote nice a

guy to be taking on the ruling class.”

Sanders, like Paul, has a loyal national following that finances his campaigns. He made life difficult for Democrats in Vermont for many years. In 1988, when he was the mayor of Burlington, he went to the Democratic caucus in the city to support Jesse Jackson’s Presidential campaign. One woman, angry with Sanders for his attacks on local Democrats, slapped him in the face. Soon after he won a seat in the House of Representatives, in 1990, some Democrats tried to exclude him from caucusing with them. At a meeting to decide the matter, his opponents humiliated him by reading aloud his previous statements criticizing the Democratic Party.

“I didn’t know that they could track back everything you had ever said,” Sanders told me. “That did not use to be the case. You could certainly get away with a lot of stuff—not anymore!”

The Democrats eventually welcomed him back as a collaborator. In 2006, when he ran for the Senate, the Party supported his candidacy. He now campaigns for those Democrats who are comfortable having an avowed socialist stumping for them, and raises money for others. But he has never been a member of the Democratic Party, and if he decides to run against Hillary in the primary, he will have to join. The alternative would be to run as a third-party candidate in the general election. “It’s a very difficult decision,” he said. “If I was a billionaire, if I was a Ross Perot type, absolutely, I’d run as an independent. Because there is now profound anger at both political parties. But it takes a huge amount of money and organizational time to even get on the ballot in fifty states.”

Most likely, he said, he will run in the Democratic primaries, if he runs at all. I asked him if he thought there was deep dissatisfaction with Hillary on the left. “I don’t think it’s just with Hillary,” he replied. “I think it’s a very deep dissatisfaction with the political establishment.” He insisted that he would run a serious campaign against her, not just “an educational campaign” about his pet issues. “If I run, I certainly would run to win.”

The 2016 Presidential primaries will be the first fought by Democrats since the Supreme Court opened the door for individuals to spend unlimited sums of money on an election. In 2012,

those new rules almost cost Romney the Republican nomination, when nuisance candidates like Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum, who in previous years would have never survived their early losses, were propped up by rich allies. Before 2012, it would have been difficult to find interest groups that might help fund someone like O’Malley, Webb, or Sanders. Now all it takes is a billionaire who cares about gun control, climate change, war, or inequality.

“What if you decided to have a really strong antiwar person run?” one Democratic strategist told me. “Don’t you think four or five crazy rich people from the Democracy Alliance”—a network of wealthy Democratic donors—“would be funding that?”

Democratic voters often like to flirt with other candidates in the primary, before the arranged marriage is made. O’Malley wants Democrats who were demoralized by Tuesday’s election results to know that they have a choice. “None of our surrogates from the Party’s past were able to affect the results of this wave,” O’Malley said, in a veiled reference to the Clintons, who campaigned hard for many candidates who were defeated. “I think a reasonable person could conclude that the nation is looking for new solutions to our problems and looking for new leadership.”

In October, at a campaign event in Iowa, O’Malley arrived late to a small gathering of boozy liberals at a fundraiser for Bruce Braley, the Democratic Senate candidate, who ended up losing by eight points. In his spare time, O’Malley plays in an Irish rock band called O’Malley’s March. He strapped on a guitar and sang “Scare Away the Dark,” a neo-folk song by the band Passenger about choosing your own path, rather than the one everyone else says you should follow. The white, middle-aged crowd clinked wineglasses and rose to their feet when he belted out the chorus:

To sing, sing at the top of your voice,
Love without fear in your heart.
Feel, feel like you still have a choice.
If we all light up, we can scare away the dark.

O’Malley wandered through the crowd, shaking hands, and ordered a drink at the bar. “People,” he said, “want to be inspired.” ♦

SECRETS OF THE TRIANGLE OFFENSE

BY YONI BRENNER

As the Knicks begin their inaugural season under the team's new president, Phil Jackson, fans are getting their first glimpses of Jackson's signature triangle offense, the byzantine strategic scheme that propelled teams he's coached to a record eleven N.B.A. championships. In an effort to decode the much heralded but rarely understood triangle offense, I offer this brief, lightly researched guide.

One of the central tenets of the triangle offense is that there should be at least fifteen feet between teammates at all times. This is accomplished through a variety of dynamic dribble-weaves and back-door cuts, as well as an almost visceral dislike of the players for one another.

Preceding the tipoff, the starting players must stand in a straight line in order of descending height. This does not offer any competitive advantage, but it is considered "cuter."

Quick decisions are critical. The point guard must pass at the "first" opportunity rather than at the "best" opportunity, never holding on to the ball for longer than two seconds. If no pass is available, the point guard must call a time-out. The ball is then placed in a velvet pouch for the duration of the time-out, after which an assistant coach determines whether the ball has "forgiven" the point guard. If it has, the guard may return to the game. If not, player and ball are whisked to the New Mexico desert for a weeklong "period of reflection" among the Navajo. If, at the end of the week, the ball still has not forgiven him, the point guard is traded to the Minnesota Timberwolves.

There are a number of ways for the triangle system to break a pressure defense, and almost none of them involve travelling back in time to change one tiny thing that, a million years later, causes the opposing team's hands to turn

into lobster claws. That one is hilarious, though.

The most fundamental element of the offense is, of course, the triangle, which is formed by two players properly spaced along the three-point line and a third player in the post. Once a perfect triangle is formed, a designated assistant rings a small bell, at which point all of the players stop what they are doing,



clap three times, and turn around in place while waving their hands in a fun dance called either the Triangle Shimmy (strong side) or the Triangle Shuffle (weak side). The youngest player on the court is then obligated to sing "The Hypotenuse Song," in a sweet, clarion voice. Then, assuming that there is time left on the shot clock, everyone scrambles around and tries to score, or something.

In order to cultivate a team-first attitude, assistant coaches are encouraged to strategically "forget" or "misremember" the names of elite players. For instance, Carmelo Anthony might be rechristened Fudgesicle Roberts. J. R. Smith could be called R. J. Reynolds, or "hobbit guy"; Tim Hardaway, Jr., might become Walter Cronkite, Jr., and Amar'e Stoudemire could be referred to, cryptically, as "little Bobby Basketball."

Coaches are discouraged from giving speeches or pep talks during halftime. Rather, they should screen DVDs from

the "Great Courses" series, followed by a short quiz. At the end of the season, the player with the highest cumulative quiz score will receive a prestigious postdoc in semiotics from Harvard. The player with the lowest score will also receive a postdoc in semiotics, but from the Timberwolves.

When Tex Winter developed the modern triangle offense, at Kansas State, in the early nineteen-fifties, it was intended not as a basketball strategy but, rather, as a geopolitical solution to the Cold War. Only after repeated rejections from the Defense Department did it occur to Winter, in a moment of boozy inspiration, to apply the triangle to the hardwood. If not for this crucial reversal, historians agree, the Cold War would have been peacefully resolved by 1958.

For centuries, mathematicians feuded over whether the triangle offense consisted of two similar but distinct triangles (the double-triangle theory) or a single, repeatedly reconstituted triangle (the single-triangle theory). In 1715, the problem was tackled by no less a personage than Sir Isaac Newton. Newton puzzled over the intricacies of the offense for six months before giving up in despair, on account of his "useless, useless lobster hands."

During a time-out in the waning seconds of a tie game, when an assistant coach draws up a play on a dry-erase board, he is also required to draw adorable Hello Kitty whiskers on any player who requests them. Again, this does not definitively offer any competitive advantage, but it is considered "cuter."

Naturally, it takes time for any roster, no matter how intelligent, to internalize the rhythms and movements, the feel and philosophy of the triangle offense. When the day comes—often forty to fifty games into the season—that the very last player on the team seems to at least vaguely kind of understand what's happening, the coaches are encouraged to throw a small cash-bar celebration in his honor, complete with a d.j., door prizes, and a cake decorated with a smiling cartoon likeness of the player. Then, the next morning, when the player arrives for practice, he should be given a box containing any leftover cake, along with a handwritten card informing him that he has been traded to the Timberwolves. ♦

THE ONE-STATE REALITY

Israel's conservative President speaks up for civility, and pays a price.

BY DAVID REMNICK



Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin, the new President of Israel, is ardently opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. He is instead a proponent of Greater Israel, one Jewish state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. He professes to be mystified that anyone should object to the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank: “It can’t be ‘occupied territory’ if the land is your own.”

Rivlin does not have the starched personality of an ideologue, however. He resembles a cheerfully overbearing Borscht Belt comedian who knows too many bad jokes to tell in a single set but is determined to try. Sitting in an office

decorated with mementos of his right-wing Zionist lineage, he unleashes a cataract of anecdotes, asides, humble bromides, corny one-liners, and historical footnotes. At seventy-five, he has the florid, bulbous mug of a cartoon flatfoot, if that flatfoot were descended from Lithuanian Talmudists and six generations of Jerusalemites. Rivlin’s father, Yosef, was a scholar of Arabic literature. (He translated the Koran and “The Thousand and One Nights.”) Ruvi Rivlin’s temperament is other than scholarly. He is, in fact, given to categorical provocations. After a visit some years ago to a Reform synagogue in Westfield, New Jersey, he declared that

the service was “idol worship and not Judaism.”

And yet, since Rivlin was elected President, in June, he has become Israel’s most unlikely moralist. Rivlin—not a left-wing writer from Tel Aviv, not an idealistic justice of the Supreme Court—has emerged as the most prominent critic of racist rhetoric, jingoism, fundamentalism, and sectarian violence, the highest-ranking advocate among Jewish Israelis for the civil rights of the Palestinians both in Israel and in the occupied territories. Last month, he told an academic conference in Jerusalem, “It is time to honestly admit that Israel is sick, and it is our duty to treat this illness.”

Around Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, Rivlin made a video in which he sat next to an eleven-year-old Palestinian Israeli boy from Jaffa who had been bullied: the two held up cards to the camera calling for empathy, decency, and harmony. “We are exactly the same,” one pair read. A couple of weeks ago, Rivlin visited the Arab town of Kafr Qasim to apologize for the massacre, in 1956, of forty-eight Palestinian workers and children by Israeli border guards. No small part of the Palestinian claim is that Israel must take responsibility for the Arab suffering it has caused. Rivlin said, “I hereby swear, in my name and that of all our descendants, that we will never act against the principle of equal rights, and we will never try and force someone from our land.”

Every Israeli and Palestinian understands the context of these remarks. In recent years, anti-Arab harassment and vitriol have reached miserable levels. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who treasures his fragile ruling coalition above all else, is more apt to manipulate the darkling mood to his political advantage than to ease it.

“I’ve been called a ‘lying little Jew’ by my critics,” Rivlin told the Knesset recently. “Damn your name, Arab agent, ‘Go be President in Gaza,’ ‘disgusting sycophant,’ ‘rotten filth,’ ‘lowest of the low,’ ‘traitor,’ ‘President of Hezbollah.’ These are just a few of the things that have been said to me in the wake of events I’ve attended and speeches I’ve made. I must say that I’ve been horrified by this thuggishness that has permeated the national dialogue.”

Talk of a two-state solution has been swallowed by despair, rage, or triumphalism.

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Goya's Journey

A Boston retrospective examines the artistic evolution of a great Spanish Master.

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828) is widely regarded as the most important Spanish painter of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Known as both the last of the Old Masters and the first of the Moderns, Goya bridged worlds, transcended convention, and forever changed artistic expression.

Goya gained early renown for his masterful portraits of nobles and wealthy merchants. His skills eventually won him commissions from the Spanish royal family, greatly advancing his career. But as Europe's political landscape grew more turbulent and troubled, what he painted and how he painted underwent profound change.

Scarred by the brutality he witnessed during the Napoleonic Wars, Goya's worldview darkened. In stark contrast to the heroic depictions of battle painted by his contemporaries, Goya presented an unflinching portrayal of war's cruelty and barbarism. His revolutionary defiance of convention and commitment to truth would inspire generations of artists.

In the largest retrospective of the artist to take place in America in 25 years, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) presents "Goya: Order and Disorder," a landmark exhibition that offers the rare opportunity to examine the full sweep of the artist's startling body of work with a presentation featuring 170 of his paintings, prints, and drawings.

In a novel approach, the MFA exhibition presents the full range of Goya's artistic output across eight distinct themes, encompassing richly detailed and lifelike portraiture, hauntingly seductive depictions of the supernatural, and the disorders of madness and war.

Learn more about "Goya: Order and Disorder," on view through January 19, 2015, by visiting www.mfa.org.



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Clockwise from top left: Francisco Goya, *Self-Portrait While Painting* (detail), about 1795. Oil on canvas. Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid. Photo © Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid; Francisco Goya, *Witches' Sabbath* (detail), 1797-98. Oil on canvas. Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, España; Francisco Goya, *Maria del Pilar Teresa Cayetana de Silva Álvarez de Toledo y Silva* (detail), 1797. Oil on canvas. On loan from the Hispanic Society of America, New York, NY.



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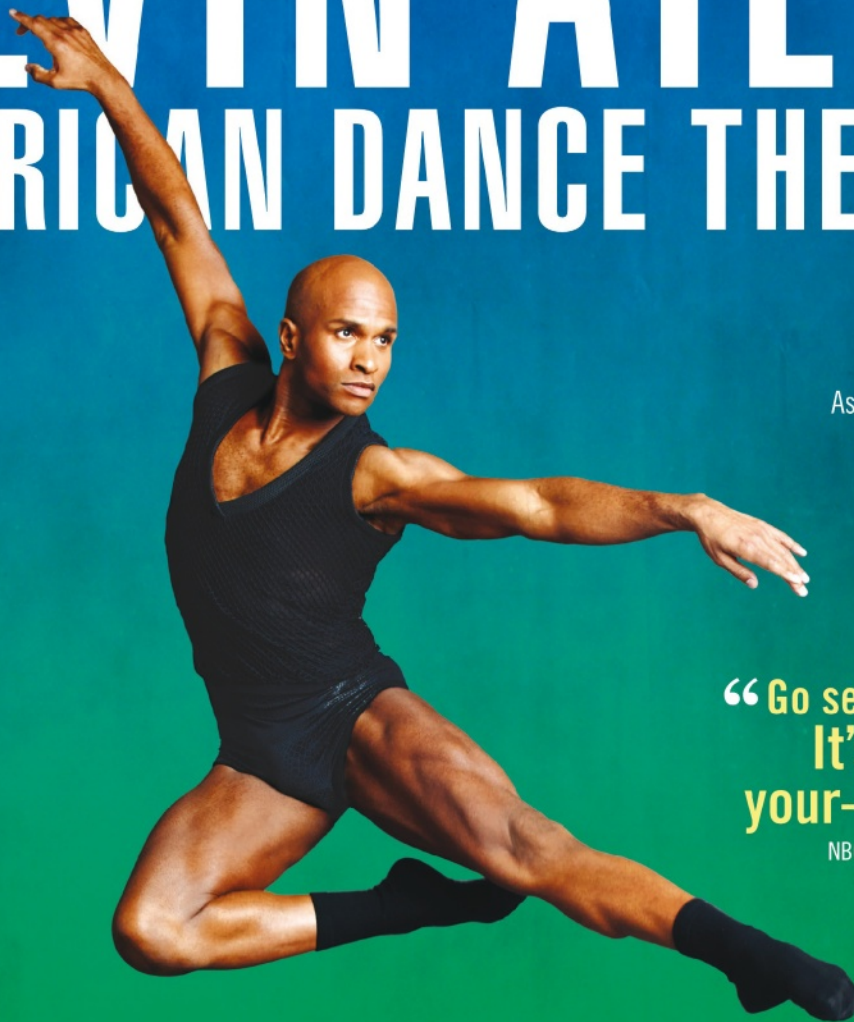
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Glenn Allen Sims. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

Rivlin is no political innocent. A former speaker of the Knesset—like Netanyahu, he is a member of the Likud—he was a clubhouse pol, a backslider, a vote trader. But he was never a first-rate campaigner, and in his long career he lost more than a few elections. His distinguishing quality, according to an endorsement from the left-wing daily *Haaretz*, is “niceness.” Niceness has never been a common quality in the Knesset. Screaming is. So is interruption, insult, epithet, storming out, and an occasional shove or thrown glass of water. After years of intra-party quarrels with Rivlin, Netanyahu went to great lengths to crush his Presidential hopes, pushing alternatives such as Elie Wiesel, who was neither interested nor eligible, not being a citizen of Israel. This time, however, niceness paid off for Rivlin. In his bid to become President—a largely but not entirely ceremonial post that is chosen by the Knesset—he won support from Arab legislators who appreciated his courtesy, and from right-wingers like Naftali Bennett and Danny Danon, who join him in a desire to make the West Bank a part of Israel proper.

Despite Rivlin’s satisfaction at achieving a lifelong goal, his mood when we met was not untroubled. As always, he began with a long story about the Rivlin legacy—a grand patriarch’s determination, in the eighteenth century, that his family leave Lithuania for Jerusalem—but he was soon enveloped in the details of what he refers to as “the tragedy we are now living in.”

“The extremists are talking too loudly, and everyone is convinced that only he is on the right side,” Rivlin told me in one of our conversations. “It’s not just Jews against Arabs. It’s the Orthodox versus those who don’t think they can keep all six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Bible. It’s rich people versus poor people. At some point, something came over Israel so that everyone has his own ideas—and everyone else is an enemy. It’s a dialogue among deaf people and it is getting more and more serious.”

Rivlin is careful to point out enmity among Arabs as well as among Jews. Hamas, he says, is a nightmare for the people of Gaza above all. But in his speech at the Jerusalem conference he

made it plain that he was talking mainly about his own tribe. He despairs of hate speech on the Internet, of politicians and prominent rabbis condoning anti-Arab violence and rhetoric. “I’m not asking if we’ve forgotten how to be Jewish,” he said, “but if we’ve forgotten how to be human.”

Israeli politicians often speak of the country’s singularity as “the sole democracy in the Middle East,” “the villa in the jungle.” They engage far less often with the challenges to democratic practice in Israel: the resurgence of hate speech; attacks by settlers on Palestinians and their property in the West Bank; the Knesset’s attempts to rein in left-wing human-rights organizations; and, most of all, the unequal status of Israeli Palestinians and the utter lack of civil rights for the Palestinians in the West Bank. A recent poll revealed that a third of Israelis think that Arab citizens of Israel—the nearly two million Arabs living in Israel proper, not the West Bank—should not have the right to vote.

The reasons for the curdled atmosphere are many: the persistence of occupation; the memory of those lost and wounded in war and terror attacks; the Palestinian leadership’s failure to embrace land-for-peace offers from Ehud Barak, in 2000, and Ehud Olmert, in 2008; the chaos in Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon; the instability of a neighboring ally like Jordan; the bitter rivalries with Turkey and Qatar; the regional clash between Sunni and Shia; the threats from Hezbollah, in Lebanon, from Hamas, in Gaza, and from other, more distant groups, like ISIS, hostile to the existence of Israel; the rise of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic sentiment in Europe and its persistence in the Arab world; a growing sense of drift from the Obama Administration. All these developments have pushed the country toward a state of fearful embattlement. The old voices of the left, the “pro-peace camp,” have too few answers, too few troops. And so Netanyahu, the champion of a status quo that favors settlers and the Likud, retains his perch. His strategic vision seems to be a desire to get from Shabbat to Shabbat. He has been Prime Minister longer than any of his predecessors except David Ben-Gurion.

During the Gaza war this summer, as the death toll reached twenty-one hundred Palestinians and seventy-one Israelis, and leaders around the world expressed indignation at the scale of the Israeli response to the Gaza rockets, nearly all the rallies in the country were pro-war, shows of national solidarity with the families of the Israeli dead, with the Israel Defense Forces. Some rising young ideologues in the Likud assailed Netanyahu as indecisive, weak, unwilling to “go all the way.”

Expressing doubts about the proportionality of response, even documenting the human consequences of that response, was, in this charged atmosphere, taken as deeply suspect. The images of carnage and destruction in Gaza that were so common around the world were rare on Israeli television or in mainstream dailies like *Yedioth Ahronoth*, where the emphasis was on rockets, tunnels, and honoring the I.D.F. When Yonit Levi, the lead anchor of the Channel 2 evening news, delivered straightforward reports about deaths and casualties in Gaza, she was rewarded with a Facebook page on which thousands of people demanded that she be removed from the airwaves, and text messages that were so threatening the police had to get involved.

Meanwhile, right-wing groups came to workplaces in Israeli cities that were known to employ Arabs and denounced them and the owners. Palestinians in Jerusalem told me they were afraid to take public transportation, to visit markets and malls. “This has been the most dehumanizing ordeal in my experience,” Diana Buttu, a lawyer and former legal adviser for the Palestine Liberation Organization, told me. “All you hear about is the idea that Palestinians ‘don’t value human life,’ ‘they have a culture of martyrdom,’ ‘they use their children and women as human shields.’ The idea is not that Israel is doing this but that we are doing this to ourselves.”

One morning during the war, before I went to call on Rivlin at the Presidential residence, I was reading *Haaretz* at Caffit, a café in the German Colony of Jerusalem. Shin Bet, the Israeli security service, was still hunting for the Hamas operatives who in June had kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers—Eyal Yifrach, Gilad Shaar, and

Naftali Frankel. The crime had outraged the nation. Shin Bet had in custody a twenty-nine-year-old settler named Yosef Haim Ben-David, who was a suspect in the retaliatory murder of a Palestinian teen-ager named Mohammed Abu Khdeir. Police had found Abu Khdeir's body in the Jerusalem Forest; he had been bludgeoned and burned to death. Ben-David, the owner of an eyewear shop who lived in a West Bank settlement called Geva Binyamin, told the police that he and two friends were so enraged by the murder of the three Israelis that on the day of the funeral they wanted to "harass an Arab or vandalize property or beat somebody up, nothing specific."

Ben-David and his friends stopped at a station to fill bottles with gasoline. As he told his interrogators, "We were hot and angry, and decided we'd burn something of the Arabs.'" At first, they looked for an Arab shop to burn. "Then we talked and decided to take it up a notch," he went on. "We said, 'They took three of ours, let's take one of theirs.' And we decided to pick someone up, to kidnap him, beat him up, and throw him out."

The friends drove to the neighborhood of Shuafat. It was after 3 A.M., but it was Ramadan, and many Arabs were out on the streets well before the morning meal. Ben-David and the others spotted a skinny sixteen-year-old boy along a main road: Abu Khdeir. He was studying at a vocational school to be an

electrician. Two of the Israelis got out of the car and asked for directions to Tel Aviv. Abu Khdeir did not speak Hebrew well; they closed in on the boy, and shoved him in. One of the Israelis started to choke him. Ben-David yelled, "Finish him off!"

"He started to gurgle," Ben-David told the police. "At some point he stopped struggling."

They drove to the Jerusalem Forest, and then Ben-David hit Abu Khdeir repeatedly in the head with a crowbar. Finally, the men dragged him out of the car, and as Ben-David rained blows on him he shouted, "This is for Eyal, and this is for Naftali . . ." Then they poured gasoline over Abu Khdeir and set him on fire. The postmortem determined that Abu Khdeir was still alive as he burned.

The Israelis then drove to a nearby park. Ben-David confessed that they began to feel remorse. "I was in shock," he told the interrogators. "We're Jews, we have a heart. Afterward we talked about it and . . . each one poured his heart out and we regretted doing it. I told them . . . 'This is not for us. We erred, we're compassionate Jews, we're human beings.' Then we got depressed."

This spirit of rage and resentment is, as Rivlin observes, no longer confined to the outer fringe. In the mid-eighties, Meir Kahane, a Brooklyn-born rabbi who led both the Jewish Defense League in the United States and the Kach Party in Israel, won a seat in the

Knesset. Kahane trafficked in baldly xenophobic rhetoric, but, by 1988, Kach had been banned by the Knesset as a racist party and barred from most media outlets. Today, the mainstream right-wing party Likud has moved so much farther to the right that its old "princes," such as Benny Begin and Dan Meridor, who had been opponents of a Palestinian state but advocates of democratic norms, were voted out of the leadership in 2012. The Party's dominant young voices include hard-liners like Danny Danon, who, as deputy defense minister, disparaged the Gaza operation as "feeble"; another Likud legislator, Moshe Feiglin, has called himself a "proud homophobe" and has vowed to build a Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount and "fulfill our purpose in this land." Netanyahu's principal coalition partner, Avigdor Lieberman, has demanded that Israeli Arabs take loyalty oaths. Naftali Bennett, the leader of Jewish Home, a settler-dominated party, speaks of at least a partial annexation of the West Bank.

"There's been a sea change in Israel," Bennett told me recently, with distinct satisfaction. "Something dramatic happened with Gaza. People realize now that the whole notion of a Palestinian state, of handing over land to another Arab entity, won't work. Nine years ago, we pulled out of Gaza and took out all the Jews. The result is that Gaza became Hamastan, a fortress of terror. As much as we wanted to separate, terror has a way of running after you." Bennett hopes to succeed Netanyahu as Prime Minister.

More explicitly jingoistic and racist elements now operate closer to the center of Israeli political life. Some well-known figures in the religious world speak openly in an anti-democratic rhetoric of Jewish supremacy—"strength and victimhood all melded together," as one Israeli friend put it to me. (When a group of rabbis told their followers not to rent property to Arabs, Rivlin called the edict "another nail in the coffin of Israeli democracy.") Yoav Eliasi, a rapper who calls himself HaTzel (the Shadow), led a group of fellow-fanatics who broke up a peace demonstration in Tel Aviv. One of the groups that accompanied the Shadow was Lehava (Flame), an association of religious



"A man can't fully enjoy golf until he has a family of his own to avoid."

extremists who see it as their mission to battle assimilation. Lehava tries to break up weddings between Muslims and Jews. Similar groups comb through Facebook looking for left-wing sentiment among Israeli Jews; when they find it, they send letters to their employers demanding that the lefties be fired.

Assaf Sharon, a young liberal activist and academic who went to a yeshiva in a religious Zionist settlement, told me that a few years ago he had helped stage a demonstration after settlers attacked Palestinians near Jerusalem. As soon as the small rally began, a group of young right-wing thugs were all over them. "We were thirty, they were seventy, and they had chains and knives and sticks," Sharon said. "I had my nose broken. Some had limbs broken. The police were there, but there were no prosecutions. Now these same guys come to Tel Aviv, to Haifa. They are very hot-tempered, excited hooligans, and it is all anti-Arab. Their slogan is 'A Jew Is a Blessed Soul, an Arab Is a Son of a Whore.'"

When Rivlin was the speaker of the Knesset, he tried time and again to quash legislation that he felt was discriminatory and anti-democratic, including a measure designed to prevent the boycotting of any Israeli institution or commercial product. "Woe betide the Jewish democratic state that turns freedom of expression into a civil offense," he wrote in *Haaretz* at the time. The law "threatens to catapult us into an era in which gagging people becomes accepted legal practice." As the speaker of parliament, he repeatedly defended the rights of Arab legislators who had been shouted down and threatened with expulsion. When one Arab member, Haneen Zoabi, was attacked in the Knesset as a "traitor" for participating in the flotilla from Turkey protesting the Israeli blockade of Gaza, Rivlin demanded that she and her allies be allowed to speak "even if what they say hurts me."

Last year, Rivlin denounced fans of Beitar Jerusalem, the soccer team of the city's right wing, after they held up signs reading "Beitar Forever Pure" to protest the signing of two Muslim players from Chechnya. Rivlin, a Beitar supporter,

said at the time, "Imagine the outcry if groups in England or Germany said that Jews could not play for them."

Had a Jewish left-wing critic made the sort of statements that Rivlin has, he would not wait long before being denounced as a "self-hater." A non-Jew could expect to be branded anti-Semitic. Because of his conservative bona fides, Rivlin cannot easily be dismissed. "Rivlin may turn out to be the most influential President in Israeli history," Avishai Margalit, a liberal philosopher and a founder of Peace Now, told me. "He is a true believer but genuinely non-racist, not merely tolerant. He has sincere respect for the Arabs, which is so rare in so many circles. Of course, as the Russian adage goes, Influence moves like the knight in chess—forward and then to the side, never in a straight line. So we'll have to wait to see what impact Rivlin really has."

Rivlin's central allegiance is to the career and thought of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, who was the patriarch of the Revisionists, the most militant and militarist stream of early Zionism. Unlike the leaders of mainstream Labor Zionism, Jabotinsky recognized the deep, irreconcilable interests of the Arab presence in Palestine. Insisting on the superiority of the Jewish claim on the land, he foresaw the inevitability of confrontation: "Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonized," he wrote in his 1923 essay "The Iron Wall." "That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of 'Palestine' into the 'Land of Israel.'"

This is where Ruvy Rivlin's legacy becomes more complex. Although Jabotinsky considered himself a liberal and a democrat, his nationalism was so fierce that he occasionally betrayed an admiration for Benito Mussolini. Rivlin is no doubt sincere when he says that he would give Arabs full civil rights in a Greater Israel, but he can be viewed as the more benign face of a right-wing one-state ideology. Others on the right who talk of one state want mainly to sanctify the annexing, in some form, of occupied territory. As Margalit puts it,

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“The rest really believe in apartheid in the West Bank. They believe in full surveillance, full dominion, something resembling a Stasi state as in that film ‘The Lives of Others.’”

The one-state/two-state debate is highly fraught not least because of proximity. Too much history, too little land. This is not India and Pakistan; the map of Ireland is a veritable continent compared with Israel and the Palestinian territories. Gaza is about as close to Herzliya as Concord is to Hanover; the West Bank, as Israelis are quick to point out, is seven miles from Ben Gurion Airport. Any two-state solution with a chance of working would have to include federal arrangements not only about security but also about water, cell-phone coverage, sewage, and countless other details of a common infrastructure. Talk of a one-state solution, limited as it is, will never be serious if it is an attempt to mask annexation, expulsion, or population transfer, on one side, or the eradication of an existing nation, on the other. Israel exists; the Palestinian people exist. Neither is provisional. Within these territorial confines, two nationally distinct groups, who are divided by language, culture, and history, cannot live wholly apart or wholly together.

To most Israelis and many Palestinians, a one-state solution is no solution at all. It seems like the by-product of left-leaning desperation or right-leaning triumphalism. Even many of those who know that a two-state peace settlement is far from imminent believe that a binational state represents not a promise of democracy and coexistence but a blueprint for sectarian strife—Lebanon in the eighties, Yugoslavia in the nineties. And yet the idea has a rich history.

Many of the early Zionists either failed to recognize the Arab population in what they regarded as their future homeland or willfully ignored it. Others made a Realpolitik assessment about the urgent need for a refuge from European anti-Semitism, in the wake of the Dreyfus affair and pogroms in the Russian Empire. In effect, many of those early Zionists adopted the illusions of Mark Twain, who, when visiting Palestine in 1867, saw only “a silent, mournful expanse,” and those of the Earl of Shaftes-

YOUR CALL

My mother worked the Tilt-A-Whirl
at the Jefferson County carnival—

or so someone said.
The rock-ribbed bass of generators
underneath the calliope
tooting “Goodbye Cruel World”
over carpet clowns, spec girls, and an armless
knife-thrower retreating to his tent between shows.

Let the people point at me and stare—

From home
to the edge of town
is a bike ride,
or the *Shoot me out of a cannon!* trip of a lifetime.
Your call.

—Robert Polito

bury, who spoke about “a land without a people for a people without a land.”

David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizmann, and the other leaders of mainstream Zionism failed to reckon with the Arabs directly in their field of vision. One Zionist faction that did recognize the dilemma was the Revisionists, led by Jabotinsky, who was born in Odessa and had a reputation as a poet, playwright, novelist, and electrifying polemicist. “The tragedy is that there is a clash here between two truths; but the justice of our cause is greater,” he argued in 1926.

On today’s right, the one-state vision encompasses greater Jerusalem and the West Bank but discounts Gaza, not least for demographic reasons. Who wants to deal with poor, furious Gaza, to say nothing of its million-plus population? Besides, Gaza, unlike the West Bank, is not rich with Biblically resonant cities and sites.

Caroline Glick, who is a columnist for the *Jerusalem Post*, a conservative English-language daily, and was a member of the Israeli negotiating team from 1994 to 1996, recently published “The Israeli Solution: A One State Plan for Peace in the Middle East.” Glick is not prone to equivocation. Her columns and Facebook page make her views plain: “The Death of Klinghoffer”

is “anti-Semitic smut,” an “operatic pogrom.” The Obama Administration wants to “screw the Jews in Israel.” She is a voice from the part of the population that sees a peace deal as impossible and Israel as noble and friendless, destined to go it alone in a treacherous world.

“We don’t have anything to talk about with the Palestinians,” Glick told me over lunch in Jerusalem. “There was never anything to talk about. . . . We have been trying to do this since 1993. It’s lunatic, trying to pretend away reality in order to reach a deal attractive on prime-time television. In the messiest political situation ever. It’s stupid. It’s childish. I want to incorporate Judea and Samaria into Israel. I want to be done with this nonsense.”

Glick grew up in Hyde Park, Obama’s old neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. She immigrated to Israel in 1991. Like many Israelis, she finds the moralizing of foreigners oppressive. “It’s evil to concentrate on Israel,” she said. “I am not saying we are pure as the driven snow—you can’t be if you are a sovereign nation—but there is no rational way of explaining that obsession, that unswerving gaze, that desire to spend billions of dollars to stigmatize our country and leaders. There is an unhealthy obsession with Jews and power.

People coming in and committing these slanders are the ones responsible for the deaths of those Palestinians. They encourage Hamas to do this.”

Like Netanyahu, Glick sees a Palestinian state as little more than a staging ground for assaults on Israel. “The border will be permeable,” she said. “Jerusalem will be divided and people will walk in the Damascus Gate and then through the Jaffa Gate and murder people. There is no way of securing the country. If you look at what’s happening in Syria and Iraq and everywhere else, people like Abbas”—Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority—“would share the fate of Qaddafi. His corrupt sons would all be shot by a firing squad, and we would have a situation where we would be facing a jihadist enclave in the middle of Israel.”

The left-wing version of a one-state, or binationalist, idea emerged at around the same time as Jabotinsky’s version, when a small collection of left-wing intellectuals, many centered at the Hebrew University, insisted that the ethical principles of Zionism demanded ethical behavior toward the Arabs. The group, called Brit Shalom (Covenant of Peace), supported the idea of shared political power in Palestine. Its members were deeply influenced by Ahad Ha’am, an early Zionist thinker and essayist who emphasized a cultural-spiritual revival in Palestine rather than a majority-Jewish state. In his travels to Palestine, Ahad Ha’am warned that if the Zionists failed to act justly toward the Arabs there would be trouble: “The natives are not just going to step aside so easily.” Decades later, Martin Buber, a philosopher and leader of Brit Shalom, warned of excessive nationalism in Zionist thought and counselled against the creation of a “tiny state of Jews, completely militarized and unsustainable.”

The idea of two states for two peoples came together in official form in 1936, when Lord Peel was charged by the British Mandate with investigating unrest between Arabs and Jews. His commission set out the initial boundaries of partition. By the time the United Nations voted in support of partition, in 1947, the binational idea, and its array of supporting factions, including Brit

Shalom, had dissolved. The surrounding Arab states rejected partition and invaded the new state of Israel, which emerged victorious.

The reappearance of a one-state discussion in Israel came out of frustration over the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank following the Six-Day War and the failures to gain an agreement with the Palestinians. Meron Benvenisti, who was the deputy mayor of Jerusalem from 1971 to 1978, years when Israel kept expanding the city, spoke out against the occupation of lands won in the 1967 war and what he saw as Israel’s broader intentions. By the early eighties, he concluded that the leaders of both Labor and Likud were complicit in the ever-widening construction of settlements throughout the territories and were making it impossible to lay any groundwork for Palestinian independence. Benvenisti established an organization to study the situation in the West Bank, and, in a book of essays published in 1989 called “The Shepherd’s War,” he warned that the occupation was becoming “irreversible.” The settlers, including the most bourgeois, state-subsidized suburbanites, had coöpted the language and spirit of the kibbutzim of the early state; the settlers were the new pioneers. Benvenisti derided the term “occupied territories,” because it assumed a temporary passage of history; it promoted a comforting notion about “when peace



comes.” In the meantime, he saw that the Palestinians—in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, in Gaza, in Israel, in the refugee camps abroad, and in the diaspora—were thoroughly splintered in their day-to-day aspirations, their political leaderships, and their identities.

“What Israel did, through the logic of an occupier, was to divide and rule—so much so that the British would have been green with envy the way the Israelis have succeeded,” Benvenisti told me

one evening in East Jerusalem. The settlements are so established, he said, that even if, magically, an Israeli and Palestinian agreement based on the 1967 borders could emerge, it would swiftly collapse. “A Palestinian state based on such a plan is going to be a collection of Bantustans,” he said, echoing the view of many leading Palestinian thinkers and politicians. “It’s not going to be viable. The irredentist urges, if they are squeezed and suffocated by Israel, will rise up again.”

Benvenisti is no less brutal about liberal Zionists. “They have these demonstrations against the ‘fascistization’ of Israel,” he said. “A Palestinian Arab listening to them crying now would laugh. They know that the two-state solution is in itself racist.”

We talked for a while about David Grossman, one of Israel’s best novelists and a leading voice against the settlements and occupation. Benvenisti shrugged. For him, Grossman’s tribe of liberal Zionists is deluded. “All your enmity and anger is directed at the settlers,” he said. “But what is your role as an Israeli in perpetuating it and benefiting from it? Grossman says that occupation is the source of all evil. This is not true. The problem is the privileged condition of the Jewish ethnic group over the others, those defined as the ‘enemies,’ the ‘terrorists.’ You divert attention, so that it is easier to define, and you restrict your anger and fight a battle that to me is irrelevant. For the Israeli left, it is important that the game [of negotiations] goes on because it soothes their consciences. They are serious people. But they are serious in trying to salvage the Zionist creed. They need to remain Zionists, and for them the definition of Zionism is a Jewish state. They insist on seeing the beginning of the conflict in 1967. They can’t cope with 1948.”

I asked Benvenisti how his vision of one state would work. “Sometimes it is enough to be a diagnostician,” he said. “When you get into prescriptions, people tend to dismiss the diagnosis.”

My conversation with Benvenisti took place on a late-summer night in the courtyard of the American Colony, a beautiful old hotel in East Jerusalem. The next morning, as

if to underline the excruciating proximities of the conflict, I crossed the street and called on Sari Nusseibeh, a professor of Islamic philosophy who was the longtime president of Al-Quds University and once an adviser—a particularly moderate adviser—to Yasir Arafat. Nusseibeh comes from one of the grandest of Palestinian families. His relatives hold the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He has always been overmatched by the fiercer voices around him. Now he appeared to have come very close to giving up.

On a broiling day, we sat in his cool anteroom drinking tea with his wife and daughter. “The classical two-state solution is exhausted,” he said. “I’d like it to be working, but I don’t see it working. The wheels of history are grinding much faster than our ability to think or our ability to impose our ideas on history.”

Nusseibeh did not give in easily to defeatism. His liberalism, his alliances over the years with like-minded Israelis—a decade ago, he sketched out a peace agreement with Ami Ayalon, a former chief of Shin Bet—never made him popular in the Palestinian resistance. But, with the collapse of John Kerry’s recent attempt to forge an agreement, the Israeli and the Palestinian leaderships had proved, yet again, utterly unable to advance; Hamas, despite its weakness, had regained a place in the center of the Palestinian consciousness; and the entire region was inflamed, which was a pretext for Israel to stand pat. And so Nusseibeh has switched his focus from two states to something more limited and basic: the civil rights of Palestinian Arabs both in the occupied territories and in Israel proper.

When I mentioned that I had seen Meron Benvenisti the previous evening and that he had given up on a two-state solution more than thirty years ago, Nusseibeh replied, “In the eighties, Meron was already telling us that the settlements were developing in a way that was irreversible. We thought Meron was an Israeli agent

trying to dissuade us from a Palestinian state! But then we began to see the new geography, the infrastructure of roads and roadblocks and checkpoints that was being built. It all became tangible.”

Nusseibeh was also hard on his own leadership. “In the eighties, the idea of a Palestinian state seemed beautiful,” he said. “It would be free and equal, with no occupation. Today, not as many people are enthused about it. People are disappointed by our failures—our internal failures, too. We used to think we would be the best and most democratic state in the Arab world, but now we are like the worst state in

Africa. The older generation failed to translate the idea into reality.”

The instability throughout the region, meanwhile, conspires against any Israeli leap of faith. “The Arab world, the Muslim world, seems to be falling apart,” Nusseibeh said. “I grew up thinking there was something solid in the Arab world except for the Palestinian situation. Now all of these governments have failed. My generation grew up thinking that Muslims were tolerant. Now it’s scary, something totally different, a monster growing up all around you. Somehow it is less dangerous for the Palestinians here. It’s safer for people here than in the Arab world, if you take Gaza away. Under occupation, your land and your resources are taken, there are no rights, but we generally don’t live in fear.”

In the West, the one-state idea has been boosted over the years by academics such as Edward Said, Tony Judt, John Mearsheimer, and Virginia Tilley, and by activists such as Ali Abunimah, the Palestinian-American co-founder of a Web site called Electronic Intifada. In Palestine, polls differ radically, but nearly a half century of occupation and a crushing sense that a one-state reality is effectively the status quo have pushed more people to support binationalism. Ahmed Qurei, a central player in the Oslo process, is among the Palestinian politicians who

have given up on a two-state solution.

One night, I went to Ramallah to call on Husam Zomlot, a high-ranking adviser in the Abbas government. Zomlot’s father was born in a village near Ashkelon and, as a toddler, fled in 1948 to Gaza. The family thought that they would be able to return home. They were among hundreds of thousands of refugees who could not. Zomlot’s father became a successful textile manufacturer, but, during the conflict in 2006 over the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, the I.D.F. bulldozed his factory. He went abroad and watched the bombing of Gaza on television. “He sits in London watching his grandchildren going through the same experience that he went through as a refugee,” Zomlot said.

When I asked Zomlot about a one-state solution, he laughed. Zomlot would love to commute from Ramallah to Haifa and teach—“and live like a human being”—but conceded that such a commute is beyond discussion, a fantasy. “There is only one government that controls this state now, and it has a plan to colonize the rest of historic Palestine,” he said. “This is not a racial dispute, it’s not sectarian like in Iraq, and it is not straightforward occupation like America in Afghanistan. It’s a displacement and a replacement exercise. This is what we live every day. On a mass scale sometimes and gradually at other times, like now, but it has never stopped since 1948.

“For the last forty-seven years, there’s been an international consensus about a two-state solution,” he went on. “So how do you throw that away? Can you? Why would I as a Palestinian want to compromise my nationality—and heritage and identity and distinctiveness—and then create a hybrid identity when I see the fate of the Palestinians in Israel? Look at their fate. Look at them in recent weeks. Sacked from workplaces. Verbally assaulted. In their own state! When the Israeli foreign minister”—Avigdor Lieberman—“comes out and says, ‘I want to get rid of these people, through transfer, or exchange,’ excuse me, do I want willingly to live under such a culture and mind-set and state? No, I don’t. There is no glimpse of hope of being an equal citizen under such an



ideology. Israel has not moved to the right. It has gone to a madhouse! Why would I want to serve an Israeli flag or vote for the Knesset or serve in the Israeli Army?"

One evening, I met with Rivlin's predecessor, Shimon Peres, who, at ninety-one, presides at a peace center named for him in Jaffa. Peres, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the Oslo process, now sees his life's work receding into impossibility. His frustration is deepened by Netanyahu's contempt for the Palestinian leader, Abbas, and by the chilly relations between the Israelis and the Obama Administration. Peres has always been a smooth operator, selling optimism door to door in Western capitals, but he seemed to have nothing in his sample case. Still, he rejected Rivlin's alternative. "One state is nonsense," he told me, adding, "Czechoslovakia had a divorce and they were better off."

The Palestinians are well aware that no Israeli government would consider a binational alternative in which they were in the majority. The history of Jews living as a minority in Arab states is not a pretty one. Edward Said, when he was asked in 2000 by a writer from *Haaretz* what would happen to a Jewish minority in a binational state, replied, "It worries me a great deal. The question of what is going to be the fate of the Jews is very difficult for me. I really don't know." What persists is the one-state reality, the status quo, and, with it, the corrosive rhetoric and behavior that has turned Ruviv Rivlin into an unexpected prophet.

Toward the end of the recent war, I went to a peace demonstration on Rabin Square, in Tel Aviv. This is where Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was shot to death, in 1995, by Yigal Amir, a religious-nationalist fanatic. Several years after the killing, Amir told his mother, from prison, that had he not murdered Rabin "there would have been a Palestinian state for a while already, no Jewish settlements, we would have lost everything." The demonstrators carried signs in favor of peace. David Grossman made a speech. But it was a small and listless affair.

"In the nineties, I thought our problem would be solved before South Africa's," Peres had told me. "There were economic sanctions, but what really brought down the Afrikaners was the sense of isolation. Suddenly, they had nowhere to go." Peres, of course, opposes any boycott of Israel, but his concern was clear. Many Israeli friends have remarked on the elite in the country—doctors, artists, engineers, businesspeople; call it two hundred thousand people—who provide Israel with its economic and cultural vibrancy. That elite is no less patriotic than the rest, but if its members begin to see a narrowing horizon for their children, if they sense their businesses shrinking, if they sense an Israel deeply diminished in the eyes of Europe and the United States, they will head elsewhere, or their children will. Not all at once, and not everyone, but there is no denying that one cost of occupation is isolation.

In the meantime, Ruviv Rivlin is paying another kind of cost. Following his trip to Kafr Qasim, members of the resentful right have circulated on social media and various Web sites a Photoshopped picture of him wearing a red kaffiyeh. This brand of vitriol is reminiscent of the days, two decades ago, when fanatics demonstrating against the Oslo peace accords brandished pictures of Yitzhak Rabin wearing a kaffiyeh or a Nazi S.S. uniform—the sort of images that appealed to his assassin. Last week, at a service commemorating the nineteenth anniversary of Rabin's death, Rivlin, who opposed the accords, gave a speech celebrating Rabin's courage and leadership. Dalia Rabin-Pelossof, his daughter, and a former member of the Knesset, called on Netanyahu to condemn the harassment of Rivlin. Then she turned to Rivlin and said, "It is true you did not come from the same background, and we do not share the same political views. But we have always been members of the same sect, for whom the rules of democracy are sacred and from which we may not deviate under any circumstances." ♦

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A conversation with David Remnick.



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DOUBLE JEOPARDY

In Alabama, a judge can override a jury that spares a murderer from the death penalty.

BY PAIGE WILLIAMS

On an April night in 1997, when Shonelle Jackson was eighteen, he went out to a local club in Montgomery, Alabama. As he and several friends watched a d.j. perform, a young man called Cocomo—a gang member from across town—walked up behind him and slapped him in the head, then ran off. The next day, Jackson, who had no car, approached a known thief named Antonio Barnes and asked him to steal him a ride. Jackson wanted to find Cocomo and “holler at him.”

Barnes hot-wired a Buick LeSabre, and, with Jackson driving, they picked up Barnes’s friends Poochie Williams and Scooter Rudolph. All had been drinking or smoking weed, and they were armed: Jackson had a .380-calibre handgun, Barnes had a .357, Rudolph had a 9-millimetre, and Williams had a shotgun. Cocomo could not be found, but at around 11 P.M. a small-time drug dealer named Lefrick Moore rolled past in a red Chevrolet Caprice with a booming and clearly expensive stereo system.

Jackson followed the Caprice onto a service road, sped past, and cut it off, forcing it to a stop. Guns began firing. Moore sprang from the Caprice; he was hit once, in the chest, but he attempted to run away. His friend Gerard Burdette, who was in the passenger seat, headed in the opposite direction. “No need in you running now, motherfucker!” Jackson allegedly yelled while firing his weapon.

Burdette escaped, but Moore collapsed in the street and died. Jackson and Rudolph fled in the Buick. Williams and Barnes took the Caprice, ripped out its stereo, then ditched the car in a pasture on the edge of town. After Williams showed Barnes a .380 that he said he’d found in the Caprice, they stashed their weapons in the woods and walked home. The next morning, Barnes and Jackson went to strip the vehicle, but they were run off by a farmer who had come to the pasture to feed his hogs.

Investigators had little evidence to work with: the spent casing of a single Mag Tech .380 bullet, shattered automobile glass, the fatal projectile in Moore’s heart. But two days later Barnes turned himself in, giving a “full confession,” according to a detective’s sworn affidavit, and naming Williams, Rudolph, and Jackson as accomplices. The next day, Williams and Rudolph surrendered.

The three suspects in custody identified Jackson as the sole shooter. The police went looking for him at the apartment where his mother, Marilyn, lived with his two sisters, Wanda and LaQuanda. Jackson sometimes stopped by with food or money, but mostly he stayed at Trenholm Court, a housing project on the north side of town. He had grown up there and had been reluctant to leave after his mother was evicted and moved to the west side. (“The west side got Bloods—they wear red,” Wanda told me. “On the north side, the Crips, they do blue and black. Shon affiliated with the blue and socialized with the black.”)

Jackson had started “holding” for drug dealers at Trenholm at the age of twelve. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade, and spent a year in juvenile lockup after helping to assault and rob a guy who, he claimed, had beat up a friend’s sister. He was currently on probation for participating in a break-in at a pawnshop. On the street, he went by Wendell—his father’s middle name. Tall and solid, with round cheeks and a bright smile, he had a deep voice and kept his hair cut low; his left forearm bore an amateur tattoo of an “S,” which his father had inked, years earlier, with a needle and thread.

Marilyn consented to an apartment search. After investigators confiscated a box of .380-calibre Mag Tech ammunition from a bedroom closet, she called Jackson and urged him to talk to the police. Together they went to the station.

It was just after two o’clock in the afternoon, and his mother says that he had

been smoking marijuana. At first, Jackson denied knowing Barnes, Williams, and Rudolph. Then a detective told him that his fingerprints had been found on a Dairy Queen cup in the stolen Buick. This was a lie, but it had its intended effect: Jackson eventually admitted that he had run Moore off the road. But, he added, “I ain’t kill no one.” His account of the incident is much different: he says that gunfire flew from all directions, including from Moore’s passenger, Burdette, who started shooting after Williams fired the shotgun into the air.

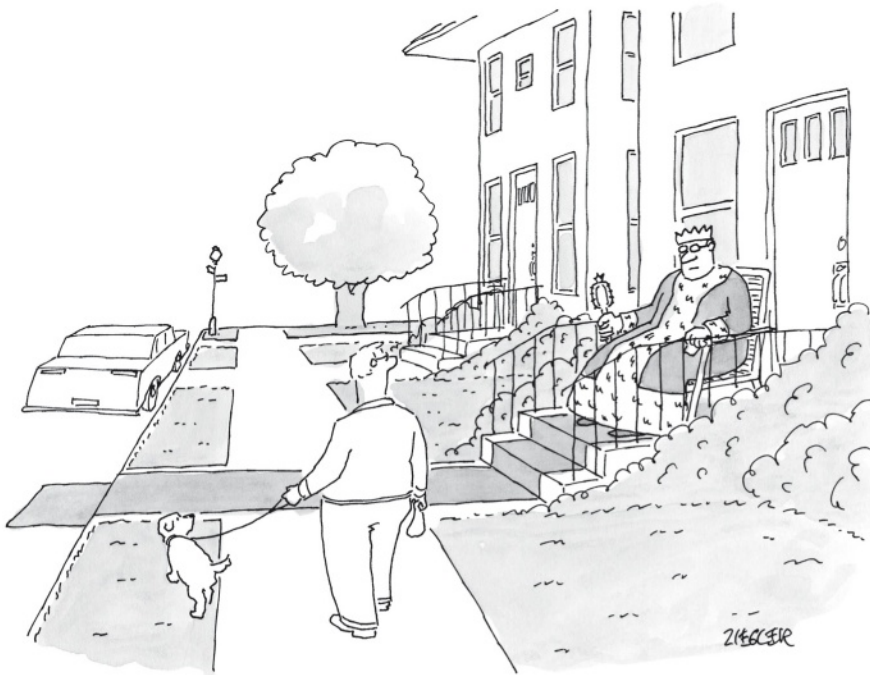
All four defendants were charged with capital murder—an intentional killing accompanied by another felony. In order to secure the death penalty, the state would have to prove that the defendants had intentionally killed Moore while robbing him.

Jackson went to trial first. He knew his co-defendants in passing, but hung out with a different crowd, and insisted that they had turned on him to save themselves. (After testifying against Jackson, all three pleaded guilty to lesser offenses, with the understanding that their lives would be spared.)

The prosecutors’ case rested overwhelmingly on the co-defendants’ story. Investigators could not definitively connect the spent casing to the fatal projectile, and the only link that prosecutors could establish between the casing and the ammunition confiscated at Marilyn’s apartment was the Mag Tech brand name. (The ammo box yielded no viable fingerprints; Jackson’s mother and sisters told me it had long been in the apartment and belonged to Jackson’s father, who had been in and out of jail for years.) The state’s ballistics expert eventually testified that the lethal bullet could have been fired from three types of gun present on the night of the crime: a .380, a .357, or a 9-millimetre. Hours after the shooting, the central eyewitness—Moore’s friend Burdette—told the police



If Shonelle Jackson's sentence is carried out, he will be the first American to be executed despite a jury's unanimous vote for life.



that multiple people had fired guns from the Buick.

The only other principal eyewitness not facing the death penalty was a truck driver who worked at a chicken-processing plant across the road from the crime scene. After the cars collided, he saw flashes of gunfire on the driver's side of the Buick; he heard a boom and several pops. He had observed the quickly unfolding action from inside his truck, about sixty-five yards away, on the other side of a chain-link fence. It was late at night, and the street light nearest the crime scene was out.

The D.A.'s office, possibly foreseeing the difficulty of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, offered Jackson a plea bargain: life in prison without the possibility of parole. With the death penalty on the table, he should have taken the deal. But Jackson declined.

At the time, the state carried out its death sentences with a century-old electric chair, Yellow Mama, so named because it was coated in the paint used to mark centerlines on highways. Alabama, which has since switched to lethal injection, condemns more people to death, per capita, than any other state. As Jackson went to trial, in February, 1998, nearly two hundred prisoners were awaiting execution.

The trial took place in the courtroom

of William Gordon, a circuit judge in his mid-fifties who had been on the bench for two decades. Alabama elects its judges, and Gordon, a reserved and plainspoken Democrat, had spent most of his career running unopposed. He had presided over several noteworthy cases—in 1993, he banned the governor from flying the Confederate flag atop the capitol—and his colleagues told me that he was considered “brilliant” and “very fair, very scholarly.”

Testimony began on a Tuesday afternoon, and by Friday morning the trial was over. Jackson's two court-appointed lawyers—general practitioners who had never served as lead counsel in a capital trial—called no expert witnesses and did little to exploit weaknesses in the state's case. Burdette, the key eyewitness, had disappeared, as had a recording of his interview with the police. (Jackson's lawyers, who never spoke to Burdette, presented the jury with only a transcript of his statement.) As is common in murder trials, Jackson did not testify—his lawyers advised against it. The defense failed to call any witnesses who might have attested to the possible motives of Jackson's co-defendants in testifying against him. “Basically, nobody got up in his defense,” Monroe Clark, a letter carrier who served on the jury, told me. “And he didn't get up on the stand and defend himself, so we

never really knew what went down.” The jury accepted the co-defendants' narrative and convicted Jackson of capital murder.

In a death-penalty trial, a conviction is followed immediately by the sentencing phase, in which the prosecution urges execution and the defense argues for life in prison without the possibility of parole. The state's lawyers argued that Jackson should die, because he had shown that he could not “live in an orderly society.” Jackson's attorneys called four witnesses; they were on and off the stand in minutes. His mother, Marilyn, told the jury, “Spare my son's life. I love him. And he is my only son I have, and I need him.” Jackson's father, Louis Taylor, testified that his son was guilty only of hanging out with “the wrong type” of people, adding that perhaps he was to blame for his son's problems: “I wasn't around as much as I should have been.”

Most states with the death penalty require a unanimous vote of twelve in order to impose capital punishment. Alabama requires ten. In this case, the jury unanimously rejected the state's request to send Jackson to the electric chair. The jurors were reluctant to condemn a teenager to death, especially in a case with such conflicting evidence. “I had concerns about whether Shonelle Jackson was the shooter,” a juror named Jan Burkes later said, in a sworn deposition, adding, “Other jurors also had concerns about whether Mr. Jackson was responsible.”

Judge Gordon thanked the jurors and sent them home.

In Alabama, though, a capital case doesn't necessarily end there. The state's judges can exercise an unusual power: they can “override” a jury's collective judgment and impose the death penalty unilaterally.

In the days after the jury rendered its verdict, Gordon began independent deliberations over whether Jackson should live or die. At his request, a state probation-and-parole officer prepared a “presentence” investigative report, which summarized the case in eight pages. The report included something that prosecutors had been prohibited from presenting at trial: Jackson's juvenile record. He had been arrested yearly since the age of twelve, first for misdemeanors (joyriding on a tractor, trespassing), then for felonies (the assault, the pawnshop robbery). The jury had been

allowed to factor only the robbery conviction into its deliberations, because that case had been handled in adult court and wasn't sealed.

In the "Personal/Social History" section, the officer summed up Jackson's life in two hundred and sixty-six words. ("It appears the only job he has ever had was working with his uncle in Millbrook, at Owens' Body.") The section reserved for a psychological assessment said, "None." The presentence report didn't mention that when Jackson was in juvenile lockup the state had found his I.Q. to be just above the threshold for mental retardation. Nor did the report include details about Jackson's complicated childhood: Marilyn smoked marijuana while she was pregnant with him and used crack in his early youth; she sold the family's food stamps, forcing Jackson to provide for his sisters; his parents often had physical fights and smoked crack together in the kitchen. Later, Marilyn got clean. But her son's mental deficiencies were never addressed. (Wanda told me that her mother "wasn't gonna get him tested." As a girl, Marilyn had been enrolled in special-education classes, and Wanda believes that her mother didn't want people thinking of her children as "slow.")

The officer's report noted that Jackson had already been given chances at redemption, including boot camp and probation. It failed to mention that Jackson had responded well to the structured environment of juvenile detention: Department of Youth Services caseworkers found that he needed to work on his "inconsistent behavior" but commended his "favorable response to treatment," his "valuable" contributions in anger-management class, and his efforts to earn a G.E.D.

As Gordon assessed the report alongside case law and the evidence presented at trial, he considered the mitigating and aggravating factors. Proof of mental instability, for instance, is a mitigating factor that may spare a defendant the death penalty; "especially heinous, atrocious, or cruel" violence is one of the ten aggravators encoded in Alabama law that may do the opposite. Instead of merely tallying the factors, jurors, and then the judge, weigh them against one another. Jackson's jury had arrived at its unanimous vote to spare his life by finding that mitigating factors outweighed aggravating ones.

Capital-case judges aren't officially allowed to add aggravating factors to the jury's list, but they often do so obliquely, by rebutting claims of mitigating evidence with subjective assessments not prescribed by law. For instance, they may cite a defendant's apparent lack of remorse. In one Alabama capital case, a jury found mental retardation to be a mitigating factor—the defendant's I.Q. was sixty-five—but the judge dismissed this by suggesting that people can easily fake the condition. In his decision, he recalled reading that "gypsies intentionally test low on standard I.Q. tests."

Four months after the jury's verdict, Gordon drafted a sentencing order. He suggested that Jackson, in pleading not guilty, had refused to take responsibility for his actions. He observed that three of Jackson's priors involved violent crimes, and

that he was on probation—an aggravating factor—at the time of Moore's death. Jackson's voluntary statement to police was deemed a mitigating factor, as was his "truthfulness" with his mother and the fact that he was "no trouble at home." Jackson had a girlfriend and a baby, and there were no reports of domestic violence; this was also considered mitigating. Gordon diminished the importance of Jackson's youth, a mitigating factor by law, partly by commenting on his size: "At the time of the homicide, Jackson was 6 feet tall, weighed 175 pounds and was within 35 days of being 19 years old," the Judge wrote, calling him "a physically mature adult."

In a curious turn, Gordon twice acknowledged that Jackson might not be the killer. The passenger in the Caprice, Gerard Burdette, "did not identify anyone with a .380 automatic, and he did not



walsho

"What does that one look like to you?"

specifically enumerate how many people fired shots," he wrote. "He said he heard 4 to 5 shots . . . and because he said he saw 2 persons with weapons"—someone with a .357 and someone with a 9-millimetre—"it could be reasonably inferred that the one or both fired."

The Judge went on, "According to Burdette, and the medical examiner's opinion of the type of bullet that killed Moore, the person with the .38 or .357 would have fired the fatal shot. That person was Barnes, assuming the testimony can be reconciled, because the evidence from Barnes and Williams is that Barnes had a .357." In a footnote, Gordon wrote that the evidence "suggests that Barnes, not Jackson, fired the shot that killed Moore." He further acknowledged that the three co-defendants "had an interest in casting Jackson as the leader and prime culprit." (Williams received a sentence of life imprisonment. Rudolph will be eligible for parole in September, 2015, and Barnes in December, 2017. None of them responded to my attempts to speak with them.)

Gordon's reasoning plainly contradicted itself. Even so, he determined that the aggravating factors outweighed even the ambiguity about who fired the fatal shot. Setting aside the jury's unanimous vote, the Judge ordered that Jackson be put to death.

The Jacksons learned of Gordon's override from Marilyn's sister, Thelma Owens, who had heard it from a co-worker, who had heard it on the radio. They called Ben Bruner, the lead defense attorney, who hadn't heard about the ruling; he rushed to the county jail, but by the time he arrived his client had already been given the news.

A good capital-defense lawyer establishes a close, mutually informative relationship with the defendant and his family, but Bruner and the Jacksons had no such bond: the first time the Jacksons met their lawyer was at the courthouse, as the trial began. The family felt blindsided by the death sentence because they had never been told that, in Alabama, a judge could override a jury. Jackson was vaguely aware of the override provision, but his lawyers had said not to worry about it—the state's initial plea offer had suggested to them that the death penalty was off the table.

On July 2, 1998, a week after the Judge

released his death order, Jackson returned to the courtroom for the formal sentencing. The jury box was now empty.

"Mr. Jackson have anything to say in this case why sentence of law should not be imposed against him?" Gordon asked.

Standing before the court, Jackson choked up. "Your Honor, I'm very sorry for what happened," he said. "And what happened I know shouldn't have happened. And, Your Honor, it wasn't planned like that at all. . . . Your Honor, I don't want to die. Let me live, please, Your Honor. I don't want to die."

The Judge was not swayed. As Gordon condemned him to death, Jackson struggled to absorb what was happening. "My mother and them crying—I started zoning out when I seen my folks crying," he told me recently. "I didn't really comprehend. But I knew it was something bad."

Judicial override first entered the American legal system in the nineteen-seventies, and was conceived as a way of guarding *against* the overuse of the death penalty. In 1972, in *Furman v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court struck down the state's death-penalty law, because it was "so wantonly and so freakishly imposed." Racial disparities were especially at issue and remain so: in some states, black defendants are about four times more likely than whites to be sentenced to death; the odds are even greater when the victim was white. The *Furman* ruling effectively invalidated death-penalty stat-



utes, and executions stopped nationwide.

States were allowed to rewrite their death-penalty laws. To satisfy the Supreme Court's concerns about arbitrariness, Florida's new version shifted final sentencing authority from jurors to judges—the jury's sentence became merely an advisory verdict. Florida's judges were not afforded complete discretion, though; they had to give a jury's recommendation "great weight" and could exercise override only when the justification for a death sentence

was "so clear and convincing that virtually no reasonable person could differ." Satisfied with these and other changes, the Supreme Court, in 1976, found the statutes in Florida, Texas, and Georgia constitutional. Today, thirty-two states sanction capital punishment.

Alabama modelled a new death-penalty statute on Florida's and adopted it in 1981, but without the "great weight" and "clear and convincing" safeguards. Alabama required only that a judge "consider" the jury's sentencing verdict. A jury's life-without-parole vote—even a unanimous one—was given no statutory standing. As Gordon noted in Shonelle Jackson's death order, "Neither the Alabama Death Act nor Alabama case authority informs the trial court how it is to consider the advisory verdict."

According to a 1994 paper in the *Alabama Law Review* by Katheryn Russell-Brown, a University of Florida law professor, the state's law putatively offered the "perfect combination of jury and judge input: the jury represents the community's conscience and the judge represents legal balance and wisdom." But, in adopting no statutory standards for override, Alabama constructed a legal "façade" that "allows the judge to operate without adequate checks and balances." Russell-Brown, one of many scholars who have expressed concerns about override, wrote that the state's approach would probably "leave capital jurors skeptical at best about the value of their time, effort, and energy."

During jury selection in the Jackson case, a man in the candidate pool asked, "Suppose the jury votes against the death penalty. Can the court overrule that?"

"It can," Judge Gordon replied. "But that should not be a consideration in your vote."

"Why do we go through this exercise, then?"

"Because the legislature passed the law, and I'm here to enforce it," Gordon said, adding, "It's not a good answer, but it's the best answer I can give you."

Currently, Florida and Delaware are the only other states with override, but their judges use the provision very sparingly, and when they do it's almost always to convert death sentences to life. Nobody in Delaware is on death row because of override, and it has been fifteen years since a Florida judge has exercised override to

impose the death penalty. In thirty-one of the past thirty-two years, Alabama's judges have condemned someone to death through override at least once.

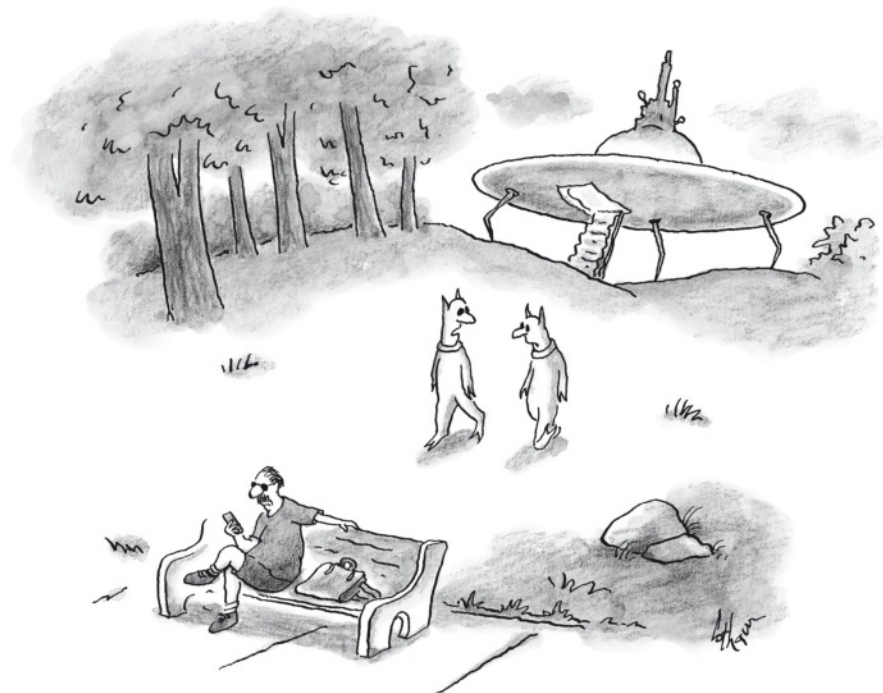
Nearly seventy Alabama judges have single-handedly ordered an inmate's execution, and collectively they have done so more than a hundred times. Thirty-six of the nearly two hundred convicts on death row are there because of override.

The potential for error in death-penalty cases is known to be so great—according to the National Academy of Sciences, one in twenty-five defendants in America will likely be wrongly convicted—that capital punishment is declining nationwide. Since the late nineties, the number of executions has dropped by about half. Alabama, meanwhile, has executed twelve men in the past four years, three of them through override.

Certain Alabama judges have exercised override repeatedly. The late Ferrill McRae, of Mobile County, used the provision six times. McRae was one of nine local circuit judges but “presided over thirty per cent of the capital cases because he assigned a large number to himself,” according to a 1995 *Boston University Law Review* paper by Stephen Bright, an Atlanta-based human-rights attorney. Another Mobile County judge, Braxton Kittrell, Jr., who had exercised override five times, was called Max Brax.

Override execution orders have been carried out ten times so far. Among those put to death was Robert Lee Tarver, Jr., a black man accused of shooting a white convenience-store owner, Hugh Kite, in 1984. Tarver was convicted largely on the testimony of his co-defendant, who pleaded guilty to lesser charges and received a sentence of twenty-five years. Tarver appealed the judge's override on the grounds of racial bias and incompetent counsel—his lawyer had never tried a murder case and was a friend of the victim. The appeal failed despite an affidavit from the prosecutor admitting that he had illegally struck qualified black people from the jury (a longtime problem in Alabama). In April, 2000, Tarver went to the electric chair, maintaining his innocence until the end. In “Race to Execution,” a PBS documentary about the case, a relative of Tarver's said of the Kite family, “I'm sure they grieved for their loved one. But I would want to make doggone sure you got the right man.”

The State of Alabama has not al-



“Be prepared to encounter cultural references that we're just not going to get.”

ways had the right man. In 1987, Walter McMillian, a black pulpwood worker, was accused of killing Ronda Morrison, a white eighteen-year-old dry-cleaning clerk, in Monroeville. The judge, Robert E. Lee Key, Jr., had McMillian await trial on death row, as if a death sentence were a foregone conclusion, and relocated the trial from a county that was forty per cent black to an overwhelmingly white one. The trial lasted a day and a half. Twelve defense witnesses swore that McMillian was at home on the day of the crime, hosting a fish fry. There was no physical evidence. Nevertheless, the jury found McMillian guilty based on the testimony of three state's witnesses, two of whom reported seeing McMillian's truck at the dry cleaner's around the time that Morrison was strangled and shot. The jury recommended life in prison. In overriding this decision, Judge Key remarked that McMillian deserved to be executed for the “brutal killing of a young lady in the first full flower of adulthood.” The Judge's confidence was misplaced—McMillian was exonerated after his appellate lawyers discovered that prosecutors had withheld evidence and that the state's star witnesses had lied. By the

time McMillian was set free, in 1993, he had spent six years on death row.

More than twenty override decisions have involved white defendants, but in some of these cases, too, the judge's reasoning has had a racial subtext. In 2000, a judge ordering the death of a white defendant noted that if he hadn't overridden the jury he'd have “sentenced three black people to death and no white people.” The comment has been interpreted as an attempt to cover up racial disparities in the death penalty. Race is “a real consideration here,” Douglas Johnstone, a retired Alabama Supreme Court justice, told me. Some judges, he said, “want to make sure they put enough white people to death to hang on to the prerogative” of override.

The U.S. Supreme Court has considered the constitutionality of override several times. In *Spaziano v. Florida*, a 1984 case that upheld the provision, Justice Harry Blackmun declared that the Supreme Court was not about to establish “any one right way for a state to set up its capital sentencing scheme.” (Ten years later, Blackmun announced his opposition to the death penalty, calling it “fraught with arbitrariness,

discrimination, caprice, and mistake.”)

In 1995, the Court addressed how heavily an Alabama judge should weigh a jury’s sentencing verdict. The override case in question involved Louise Harris, a woman with a lifelong history of trauma and abuse, who had hired someone to kill her husband. In an 8–1 decision, the Court declined to require Alabama to adopt Florida’s “great weight” standard. Such a ruling would constitute “micromanagement,” Justice Sandra Day O’Connor wrote. In capital cases, she declared, the Court “trusts the judge” to level the correct punishment. (The opinion validated the viewpoint of override proponents, who have argued that judges possess experience, expertise, and a dispassionate approach that jurors may lack.) The lone dissenter was Justice John Paul Stevens. Override, he observed, allowed a prosecutor “who loses before the jury” to get “a second, fresh opportunity to secure a death sentence,” in some cases by presenting “the judge with exactly the same evidence and arguments that the jury rejected.” He wrote, “A scheme that we assumed would ‘provide capital defendants with more, rather than less, judicial protection’ has perversely developed into a procedure” in which a “defendant’s life is twice put in jeopardy.”

Death-row inmates have challenged override through the Fifth Amendment (double jeopardy), the Sixth (right to a jury), the Eighth (cruel and unusual punishment), and the Fourteenth (equal protection). All such efforts have failed. In *Ring v. Arizona*, a 2002 case involving the killing of an armored-car guard, the Court held that only a jury can decide if there are aggravating circumstances that warrant the death penalty. By stripping judges of the power to add aggravating factors, *Ring* seemed to open a new path to challenging overrides, since they largely happen when a judge recalculates a jury’s evaluation of mitigating and aggravating circumstances. But since then the Supreme Court has not addressed the issue directly, other than to declare that *Ring* was not retroactive.

Last November, the Court had an opportunity to revisit Alabama’s override provision, through the appeal of a death-row inmate named Mario Woodward. In 2006, he shot and killed a Montgomery police officer during a traffic stop. Woodward had previously served six years in prison for killing his girlfriend. In the case involving the police officer, the jury voted

FEEL FREE

To deal with all the sensational loss I like to interface with Earth. I like to do this in a number of ways. I like to feel the work I am exerting being changed,

the weight of my person refigured, and I like to hang above the ground, thus; hammocks, snorkeling, alcohol. I also like the mind to feel a kind of neutral buoyancy

and to that end I set aside a day a week, Shabbat, to not act. Having ceded independence to the sunset I will not be shaving, illuminating rooms, or raising

the temperature of food. If occasionally I like to feel the leavening of being near a much larger unnatural tension, I walk off a Sunday through the high fields

of blanket bog, saxifrage, a few thin Belted Galloways, rounding Lough Mallon to stand by the form of beauty upheld in a scrubby acre at Creggandevsky, where I do

duck and enter under a capstone mapped by rival empires of yellow feather-moss and powdery white lichen. I like then to stop, crouched, and press my back on a housing

of actual rock, coldness which lives for a while on the skin. And I like when I give you the nightfeed, Harvey, how you’re really concentrating on it: fists clenched, eyes shut, like, *this* is bliss.

II

I like a steady disruption. I like it when the solid mantle turns to shingle and water rushes up it over and over, in love. My white-noise machine from Argos is set to Crashing Wave

but I’m not averse to the presence of numerous and minute quanta moving very fast in unison; occasions when a light wind undulates the ears of wheat, or a hessian sack of pearl-

barley seed is sliced with a pocket knife and pours. I like the way it sounds pattering on stone. I like how the starlings over Monti cohere and separate their bodies into one cyclonic

symphony, and I like that the hawk of the mind catches at their purse, pulse, caul, arc. I like the excitation passing as a shadow-ripple back and how the bag is snatched, rolls

8–4 for life imprisonment, in part because Woodward’s childhood was marked by abuse. Judge Truman Hobbs, Jr., overrode the recommendation, citing access to information during the sentencing phase that the jury had not heard.

Woodward mounted an appeal, but the Court declined to hear the case. Justices rarely issue opinions when rejecting

a petition for writ of certiorari, but this time Sonia Sotomayor and Stephen Breyer did. Sotomayor, pointing out that the prevalence of override in Alabama may be due to politics, wrote that giving unilateral death-sentence power to judges who are seated through partisan elections “casts a cloud of illegitimacy over the criminal justice system.” Noting that the

slack; straight, falciform; mouthing; bulbing; a pumping heart. I like to interface with millions of colored pixels depicting attractive people procreating on a screen itself

dependent on rare metals mined by mud-gray children who trudge up bamboo scaffolding above a grayish-red lake of belching mud. I like how the furnace burning earth instills

in me reflexive gestures of timidity and self-pity and deference as I walk along the kinder surfaces, grass, say, or sand, unable ever to meet with my eyes the gaze of the sun.

III

I can imagine that my first and fifth marriages will be to the same human, a woman, the first marriage working well enough that we decide to try again as soon as it's,

you know, mutually convenient. I can see that. I like the fact that we're "supercooled star matter," even if I can't envisage you as anything other than warm and bleating. The thing is

I can be persuaded fairly easily to initiate immune responses by the fake safety signals of national anthems, cleavage, family photographs, country lanes, large-eyed mammals, fireworks,

the King James Bible, Nina Simone singing "The Twelfth of Never," cave paintings, coffins, dolphins, dolmens. But I like it also when the fat impasto of the canvas gets slashed by a tourist

with a claw hammer, and a glimpse is caught of what you couldn't say. Entanglement I like, spooky action at a distance analogizing some little thing including this long glance across the escalators

or how you know the song before you switch the station on. When a photon of light meets a half-silvered mirror and splits one meets the superposition of two, being twinned: and this repeats.

Tickling your back, Katherine, to get you to sleep, I like to lie here with my eyes closed and think of my schoolfriends' houses, before choosing one to walk through slowly, room by sunlit room.

—*Nick Laird*

Court had not examined Alabama's death scheme in eighteen years, she argued that it was time for "a fresh look."

After Shonelle Jackson learned that he would be executed, he filed jailhouse motions asking for a new trial and new counsel. The lawyer appointed to the case was Bryan Stevenson, the founder

and director of the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit organization in Montgomery that represents indigent defendants facing the death penalty. E.J.I. has won dozens of retrials, death-sentence reversals, and exonerations, including Walter McMillian's. In that case, Stevenson uncovered the prosecutor's pressure tactics simply by listening to the

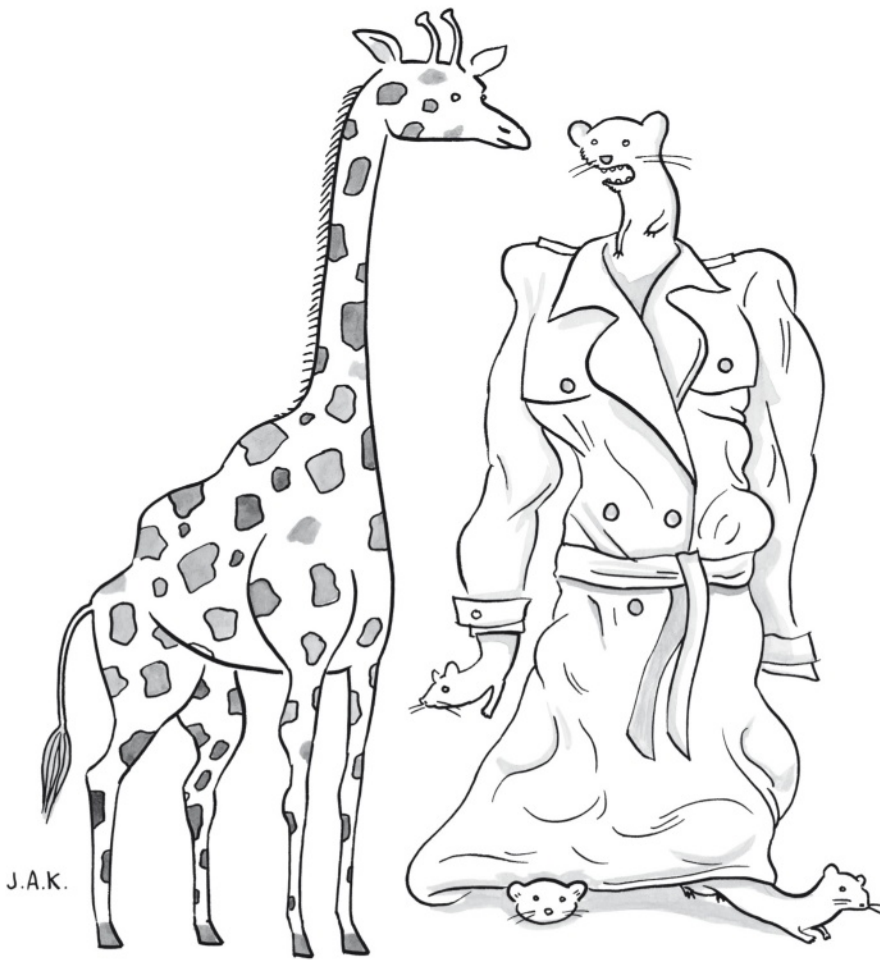
flip side of a police interrogation tape.

Stevenson is the nation's most prominent opponent of override. Much of what is known about override originated with studies conducted by E.J.I. Stevenson, a Delaware native, moved to Montgomery three decades ago, not long after graduating from Harvard Law School. In 1995, he was awarded a MacArthur "genius" grant for his defense work. Every autumn, he commutes weekly to New York to teach at N.Y.U.; his students discover that in Alabama's capital-justice system virtually all defendants are black and poor, and virtually all administrators—including all nineteen appellate judges—are white. Stevenson, a lanky fifty-four-year-old who keeps his hair shaved like a Buddhist monk's, is one of the few African-American lawyers a criminal defendant in Alabama might meet.

Stevenson considers override to be the most pressing death-penalty issue. In his new book, "Just Mercy," he argues that "judge overrides are an incredibly potent political tool." One morning this spring, he told me, "Override introduces such arbitrariness into a death-penalty system that's already flawed by the arbitrariness of poverty and race and power and politics." We were at E.J.I.'s headquarters, which is in a brick building on a rejuvenated block of downtown Montgomery, between a tapas bar and the Hank Williams Museum. Slaves once disembarked at the end of the street, on a broad bend in the Alabama River, to be marched into town and auctioned off at the public fountain.

Proponents of override argue that the provision insures that "the worst of the worst" will receive proper justice. But too often, Stevenson said, judges are "imposing the death penalty because the death penalty is good for your brand." He went on, "If you're a prosecutor or judge who has to run for reelection, and you have to worry about your identity in the community—frankly, nothing says 'tough on crime' like the death penalty."

Every six years, Alabama elects circuit judges (who hear capital cases) and members of the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals and the Alabama Supreme Court. Judicial overrides tend to spike in and around election years. According to a 2011 study by E.J.I., thirty per cent of the state's death sentences in 2008, an election year, were imposed through



“Now that we’ve fallen in love, I have a confession. I’m not a giraffe—I’m fifty-eight weasels in a trenchcoat.”

override, compared with seven per cent the previous year.

Most overrides are upheld. Douglas Johnstone, the retired Alabama Supreme Court justice, told me that judges on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals tend to “know, or think, that reversing a criminal case is a way to throw away votes.” He said, “Affirming a verdict is a way to stay down in the foxhole and not get your head shot off.”

Shonelle Jackson was sentenced to death in the summer of 1998, an election year. Bruner, his lead attorney, told me he assumed that Judge Gordon exercised override because “he was planning to run for something else.” In fact, Gordon decided to retire.

An ex-prosecutor named Tracy McCooley ran for his seat. That fall, as judicial-campaign ads appeared throughout Alabama, a TV spot for McCooley aired in

Montgomery County, featuring her former boss, the longtime district attorney Ellen Brooks. The D.A., standing in a courtroom, before an American flag, told viewers, “Tracy McCooley and I tried hundreds of cases in courtrooms like this. Tracy won’t need to be taught.”

In a 1996 address to the American Bar Association, Justice Stevens said that a prospective judge’s “campaign promise to ‘be tough on crime’ or to ‘enforce the death penalty’ is evidence of bias that should disqualify a candidate from sitting in criminal cases.” But in Alabama pledging to be tough on crime is how judges get elected. Every election season for decades, television ads have shown aspiring judges posing with a hunting rifle or saying things like “I’ve looked killers in the eye and sentenced them to death.”

Alabama doesn’t cap campaign contributions, and its judicial-election spending

leads the nation’s. According to a report by the nonprofit Justice at Stake and the Brennan Center for Justice, at N.Y.U., appellate-court candidates alone collected two hundred and six million dollars in campaign contributions between 2000 and 2009, more than double the amount raised in the previous decade. The study found that special-interest groups and political parties contribute through an “arcane maze” of PACs, making influence hard to trace.

Some transactions are less difficult to track, as I learned by reviewing the campaign-finance records of more than a hundred judges. The state allows lawyers to contribute money to the campaigns of judges who may preside over their cases, and they do so routinely. Randy McNeill, the prosecutor who asked Judge Gordon to sentence Shonelle Jackson to death, had contributed to Gordon’s campaign fund. McNeill, a deputy district attorney who some thought would make a good D.A., donated the money in April, 1991, with his wife, Margaret, who had clerked for Gordon. The McNeills gave fifty dollars, because Gordon, who was running unopposed, had personally capped contributions at that amount. McNeill told me that he supported Gordon politically because he was a mentor and “the most honorable man I’ve about ever known.”

The judges themselves often make donations to candidates who may be in a position to uphold their decisions: between 1993 and 2012, nearly forty judges who had practiced override donated money to candidates for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, the Alabama Supreme Court, and attorney general. In 1993 and 1994, two years for which records are available, Judge Gordon contributed a total of three hundred and fifty dollars to two Alabama Supreme Court candidates. In 1999, he retired and became a private judge; he is sometimes appointed by the state to hear cases. Since then, he has contributed more than two thousand dollars to candidates for the Alabama Supreme Court, the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, and attorney general. He donated to the reelection efforts of Ellen Brooks, the Montgomery County D.A., and gave two hundred dollars to McCooley, the judge who succeeded him. McCooley, who was reelected several times and recently retired, told me that she returned any contributions she received while running

unopposed, including Gordon's. "Perception is everything," she said. "The perception when you're getting money is not good."

The Alabama State Bar Association does not consider campaign contributions by judges and lawyers to be unethical. But Stevenson, of E.J.I., told me, "It clearly undermines the impartiality of the courts. A donor's interest in supporting you is exactly what is implied: favorable treatment, more considerations, some accountability." Justice O'Connor, since her retirement, has made similar warnings about an elected judiciary: in a speech last year, she said that electing judges fosters a public image of courtrooms governed by "politicians in robes."

Every year since 2000, Hank Sanders, a Democratic state senator from Selma, has introduced legislation calling for death-penalty reforms and for the abolition of override in Alabama. In his view, the state's capital system heavily skews the odds in the prosecution's favor: the attorney general's office has an entire litigation unit devoted to making the death penalty stick, but there is no statewide criminal-defense system. A poor defendant receives a court-appointed or contracted attorney who needs to have only five years' experience in criminal-defense law; the American Bar Association recommends that a capital defense team consist of at least two "high quality" attorneys supported by investigators, as well as experts in such areas as mental health, forensics, and substance abuse. Stephen Bright, the Atlanta attorney, has said that it's "unconscionable that a defendant facing serious criminal charges can get stuck with a tax or real-estate lawyer." (Defendants may also get stuck with an unscrupulous attorney: a review of Alabama State Bar Association disciplinary records shows that a fifth of the lawyers whose clients have received the death penalty have been reprimanded, suspended, or disbarred.)

None of State Senator Sanders's proposed reforms have been adopted. Cam Ward, a Republican state senator from Alabaster, told me, "This is a deeply red state—the death penalty's still very popular." He said, "I'm not a fan of all these anti-death-penalty bills, but if you've got a judge who's in a hot election, and the jury returns a verdict of life without parole, and the judge overrides for the sole purpose of politics—I can see where that could happen." Even judges who have exercised override have acknowledged the problem of

outside pressure. Politics "has to have some impact, especially in high-profile cases," Tommy Nail, a circuit judge in Birmingham, once said. "Let's face it, we're human beings."

William Gordon, the judge in the Shonelle Jackson case, told me that he did his job without politics in mind: "That wasn't the way I worked." McNeill, the prosecutor—who has since left the D.A.'s office for private practice—told me, with some exasperation, that there "was no agenda" behind his campaign support of Gordon. He said, "Now, is there some case where agenda did, or could, come into play for some judge? Sure. But you've got that in every aspect of the law. We are a system of man. Man is fallible. The last perfect person to live on this earth, we nailed Him to a cross."

In May of 2001, the Alabama Supreme Court found that Judge Gordon had exercised bad judgment at one point during Jackson's trial. The defense had requested a hearing on the admissibility of Jackson's police statement—the one that was elicited by lying to Jackson—and Gordon had refused to allow it. The case was remanded to Montgomery County—to what was now Judge McCooley's court. McCooley held the hearing and ruled the statement admissible.

Jackson again appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court, whose nine justices included Douglas Johnstone. Formerly a Mobile County circuit judge, Johnstone



had once overridden a jury in a case involving execution-style shootings during a robbery. It was the kind of gruesome crime cited by override proponents. Not long afterward, Johnstone ran for the Supreme Court. One of his campaign ads featured an image of a locked jail cell and footage of him, in robes, grimly assuring viewers that he had been "meting out the full measure of justice."

Yet, in February, 2002, when the Alabama Supreme Court upheld Jackson's

conviction and death sentence, by a vote of 7–2, Johnstone was one of the dissenters. He wrote, "In assigning no weight nor binding effect to a life-imprisonment recommendation by a jury, Alabama law reduces to a sham the role of the jury in sentencing and allows baseless, disparate sentencing of defendants in capital cases." The other dissenter was Justice Champ Lyons, who argued that override was wrong in a "close case like this one, where the evidence suggests a possibility that Jackson might not have fired the fatal shot." Later that year, Jackson's appeal reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

Jackson soon sought a new trial or sentencing hearing through the next tier of Alabama's capital appeals process. He filed a Rule 32 petition, which, under the Alabama Rules of Criminal Procedure, allows a defendant to return to the trial court and raise new issues of concern. In January, 2007, the case came back before McCooley.

Before being sworn in as a judge, McCooley prepared for the job by shadowing Gordon for a month. She noticed that Gordon wrote "draft after draft" of his orders. "He's a very learned judge, extremely smart about the law," she told me. "He's a good person. . . . When he writes an opinion, he literally spends weeks and weeks researching, reading, writing. He does not take anything lightly." In dismissing Jackson's attempt to secure a retrial or a new sentence, McCooley explained that her decision was informed by her discomfort with "second-guessing" Judge Gordon. She told the courtroom, "I'm not going to go in back of what Judge Gordon did, because I know what kind of judge he was and I know the kind of decisions he makes." In essentially upholding the override, McCooley declared, "That man would not have made that decision unless he had good grounds to make it."

During the next several years, Jackson's case moved through the appeals system, based on claims about juror misconduct, incompetent trial counsel, and discovery. In 2009, the eyewitness Gerard Burdette died, in a drug-related shooting. Ultimately, all appeals to the state failed. At one point, an appeals court argued that the jury's 12–0 verdict against the death penalty proved the competence of Jackson's lawyers.

In October, 2013, Jackson and his

legal team began appealing through the federal courts. He petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus, which allows a defendant to argue that a state judgment violated federal or constitutional law. This past May, a federal magistrate recommended denying the petition. The case, which is now before a district-court judge, may one day come before the Eleventh Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, in Atlanta. Its chief judge is Ed Carnes, whom the *National Law Journal* once called “the premier death-penalty advocate in the country.” Carnes, who has tried to restrict death-row inmates’ access to federal appeals, once ran Alabama’s capital litigation unit, and he wrote what later became the state’s death-penalty law.

If the Eleventh Circuit rejects Jackson’s appeals, he can once again petition the U.S. Supreme Court. There is also the possibility of clemency from Alabama’s governor. (The current governor, Robert J. Bentley, is a Republican who strongly supports the death penalty.) If Jackson’s sentence is carried out, he will be the first person to be executed despite a jury’s unanimous vote for life.

“I don’t like judicial override,” Douglas Johnstone told me one afternoon in May. “I think it’s a bad thing, but it’s the law, and since it’s the law even a judge who doesn’t like it may have to use it.” He said, “My criterion was that if my observation of the jury and my knowledge of the facts of the

case satisfied me that the jury had failed to do its duty, then I would override.”

Johnstone and I were on the splintery dock of his home, on a river south of Mobile. Silver-haired and in his early seventies, he had on jeans, sandals, and a T-shirt. We walked up to his house—tin roof, open windows, stacks of *Audubon* and *The American Scholar*—and he brewed two mugs of Irish breakfast tea. As we sat in Adirondack chairs overlooking the water, he said, “To me, it’s perfectly absurd that a jury’s recommendation of life without parole isn’t even a factor—the jury is wasting its time.”

He went on, “Why have we become a nation that’s just obsessed with punishment? The reason is that we’ve become a fearful nation. The people that were once free and brave are so afraid of something bad happening to them. They’re attracted to politicians who say, ‘I will be tough on crime.’ And if a politician promises to be tough on crime he’s got to have something to show for it.”

Johnstone seemed surprised to hear that Gordon was the trial judge in the Jackson case.

“Kiwi did the override?” he said. Gordon picked up the nickname Kiwi in 1959, while enrolled at an Alabama military academy. (“You went through a week of hazing, and everybody got a nickname,” Gordon told me. “They named me for shoe polish.”)

Johnstone and Gordon serve on a task force charged with rewriting jury instructions in plain language. “I had observed

over the years that Kiwi is a real judge, and a good judge,” Johnstone later told me, in an e-mail. “By ‘good judge,’ I mean that he is so smart and so scholarly that he consistently gets the facts, the law, and therefore the judgment itself, right.”

One night in January, 1982, on the north side of Montgomery, a sanitation worker named Paul Edward Murry tried to sell marijuana to two plainclothes vice detectives. The officers, Tony Burks and Mary McCord, attempted to arrest him, and, during a scuffle with Burks, Murry fired a pistol several times. A bullet struck McCord in the chest. Murry got hold of Burks’s gun and shot him in the back.

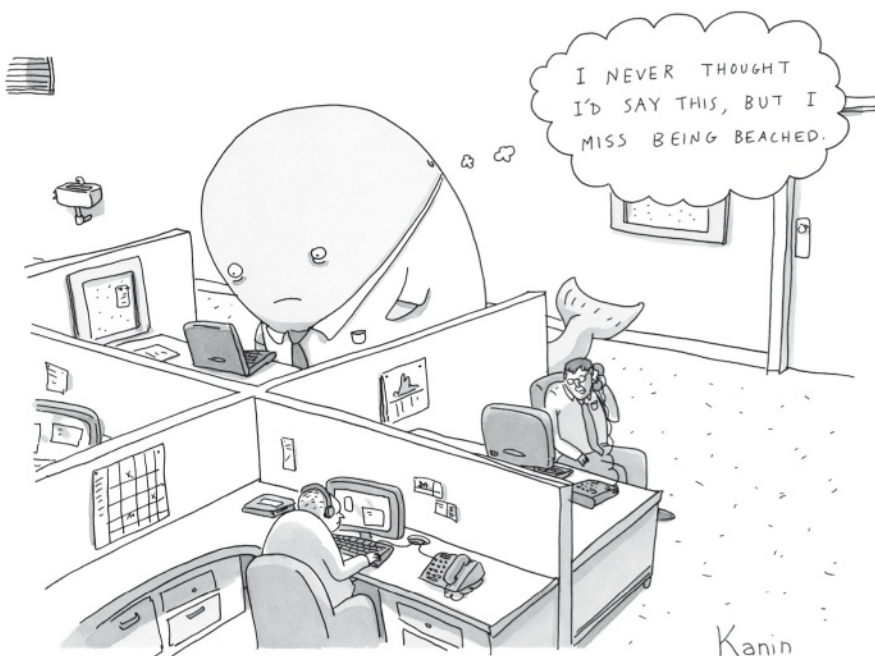
McCord died, becoming the first female police officer in Alabama to be killed in the line of duty. Immediately after the shooting, and again during the trial, Murry insisted that he had thought Burks and McCord were robbers.

The case came before Judge Gordon. The jury voted, 11–1, to sentence Murry to life without parole. Gordon overrode the jury and sentenced Murry to death, arguing that the defendant’s drug use and dealing, and his tendency to gamble, had helped to make him “not a person of good character.”

The Alabama Supreme Court overturned the sentence, by a vote of 6–3, finding that Gordon had failed to tell the jury that the crime could be raised to the capital level only if Murry knew that McCord was a cop. The reversal prompted about two hundred law-enforcement officers from across Alabama to protest outside the state capitol.

Gordon imposed the death penalty a second time. An appeals court remanded the case because the Judge had written a relatively short and opaque sentencing order. Alabama appellate judges had a history of signing off on cursory overrides, but in this case the court demanded elaboration: Gordon had to be explicit about the aggravating and mitigating factors.

The Judge provided a more detailed account of his reasoning. He listed Murry’s lack of a significant criminal record as a mitigating factor. He also noted that Murry had performed “kind acts” for his family and neighbors, including caring for his invalid mother, and that he had adjusted well to prison, where he had learned to read and write. The Judge



then resentenced Murry to life without parole.

Gordon told me that when the Supreme Court rejected his override he had asked himself, "What did I miss? Was my judgment bad?" He went on, "You read what experienced judges have to say, and their criticisms, and you take those things to mind and make a decision."

Now in his seventies, Gordon is white-haired and compact, with the ruddy complexion of an outdoorsman. (He hunts deer.) Since leaving the bench, he has worked as a private civil judge and a mediator. We met in the corner office that he rents in a bank tower in downtown Montgomery. His tidy desk held a glass gavel.

It has been sixteen years since he ordered the death of Shonelle Jackson, and he told me that he could not fully recall his reasoning. "Whatever I put into that sentencing order is what I thought about," he said, adding, "I made the best decision I could. Somewhere down the line, if somebody says I was wrong, then you can accept that." I asked how much pause the jury's unanimous recommendation for life had given him. "I don't know that I could quantify it for you," he answered. Why had he factored Jackson's juvenile record into the decision when prosecutors had been barred from using it at trial? "As I wrestled with this case, I researched, and there was this case from Florida that dealt with a juvenile record and sentence," he said. "My recollection is I looked at it and thought it was appropriate to rely on." At one point, he said, "What you're trying to get at is what happened *here*," and tapped his head. "And I can't answer that."

In a later conversation, the Judge told me that his position on override is to "let the jury decide." He said, "If you're going to have the jury system, you've got to put all your faith in it."

Then why had he lacked faith in the Jackson jury? And why had he overridden the jury despite his explicit acknowledgment that Jackson might not be the killer?

"I'm not going to go beyond what I wrote," he said. "That was a long time ago."

Gordon told me he left the bench, in part, because adjudicating criminal cases for twenty-two years had exhausted him. Jackson's case was "not the worst case I ever had," he said. He then mentioned one in



"You should know—I don't feel rich."

which three men drove around Montgomery, randomly shooting people with an assault rifle, including a woman whose brains had been "blown out." The Judge said, "People do some terrible things."

He went on, "People talk about being hard on crime. O.K.—are you willing to pay the price? Are you willing to construct the prisons? Staff the prisons? Budget for food and medical care? You can't put everybody in the penitentiary. You just can't." He looked away, shook his head, and said, "Sometimes you just have to put 'em down."

The State of Alabama recently ran out of pentobarbital, one of the drugs used in lethal injection. Cam Ward, the state senator from Alabaster, once warned that the legislature's failure to grant anonymity to the manufacturers of such drugs could result in the return of the electric chair. In September, the state tried to resume executions, turning to a new three-drug lethal cocktail used in Florida. Some death-row inmates are challenging the change in federal court.

Yellow Mama remains on standby at Holman Correctional Facility, in Attmore, fifty miles northeast of Mobile.

Shonelle Jackson is incarcerated there. In a recent phone conversation, he said, "You talking about killing me for something you ain't even sure that I did? That's crazy."

On May 30th, he turned thirty-six. He's a bit heavier now, with glasses and more tattoos. He didn't want to talk about his role in Moore's killing. Instead, he spoke of his childhood: "I stole food first, because I hated going to ask the next-door neighbors do they have some bread—a boy like that be the laughing-stock of the school the next day. It went from stealing one pack of bologna to two packs. I used to go from apartment to apartment, trying to steal perfume, sell it on the street. Me and my sisters go to Burger King and eat. That make you feel good, and special, to be able to do that for your sisters. I was eleven and twelve, doing that shit. By the time my mother did get clean, it was too late."

Phone calls were timed, and Jackson had to keep calling me back. "I feel like everybody is born good, but at some point you get corrupted," he said. "The solution is not just to kill the problem. But society don't look at it like that." A few minutes later, he had to hang up for good. ♦

WHIPPING BOY

A writer spends forty years looking for his bully. Why?

BY ALLEN KURZWEIL

In 1971, I met a boy who changed my life forever. I was ten and he was twelve when, for a few indelible months, we roomed together in a British-style boarding school perched on an alpine meadow high above Geneva.

None of the schools I had previously attended—two public, one parent-run, and one private—prepared me for the eccentricities of Aiglon College. Early mornings were given over to fresh-air calisthenics, cold showers, and meditation. Afternoons were reserved for skiing and hiking. A retired opera singer with ill-fitting dentures taught elocution. A Second World War fighter pilot—shrapnel lodged in his shoulder, Bible quotes lodged in his brain—served as the interim headmaster while Aiglon's founder, a frail vegetarian bachelor drawn to Eastern religions, undertook a rest cure.

A wildly favorable exchange rate made it possible for my mother, recently widowed, to send me to a school far beyond her means. My dormitory housed a Bahraini royal, the heir to a washing-machine fortune, and an Italian aristocrat whose family tree included a saint, a Pope, and several princes.

To neutralize the income inequality of its charges, the school prohibited parents from sending their sons and daughters spending money. That was just one of the dozens of directives and restrictions detailed in "Rules and Ranks," a thirty-six-page handbook that all students were required to memorize. Minor delinquencies, such as tilting back in chairs, flicking towels, or the failure to wear one's rank badge on the "left breast at all times," resulted in fines deducted from the pocket money doled out each Wednesday afternoon. More flamboyant insubordination ("being slimy," "wolf whistling during meditation," "loutish behavior") would lead to "laps," punish-

ment runs to and from a stone bridge up the road.

Yet none of these gaudy particulars can explain the plastic milk crates filled with documents that litter my office—the physical evidence of a fixation tethered to my fleeting co-residency with a burly Filipino boy, two years my senior, named Cesar Augusto Viana.

How does a middle-class Jewish kid from New York end up at a fancy Christian-inflected boarding school in Switzerland? The truth is, I campaigned to attend Aiglon. The school was situated a snowball's throw from the chalet inn where my family had vacationed each winter while my father was alive. (A Viennese émigré who had relocated his wife and children from New York to Milan under the Marshall Plan, he died, of cancer, when I was five.) I associated the locale with a bountiful time unburdened by loss.

I had my first noteworthy encounter with Cesar Augusto not long after I dragged my brass-cornered trunk to the top of Belvedere, a dilapidated hotel that the school converted into a dormitory in 1960. Cesar, a returning student with an easy smile, a husky build, and an unruly mop of black hair, took an instant interest in me.

"You know what that tree is used for?" I recall him saying as he pointed at a towering pine out the window of our penthouse room. "If there's a fire and we can't use the stairs, I'll have to throw you into that tree. But don't worry," he added. "The small branches at the top will break your fall, and the bigger ones down below will catch you."

The nightmares started a few days later. To stave off the panic that accompanied lights-out, I took to staring at the comforting glow of my Omega Seamaster, a watch that I had inherited from my father.

There's no mystery to why Cesar held certain Belvedere boys in his thrall. He knew the ropes. Moreover, he was rumored to be the son of Ferdinand Marcos's head of security. His name, his size, his command of the school's pseudo-military regulations, the accuracy he demonstrated when strafing enemies with ink from his Montblanc fountain pen, enabled him to transform our dorm into a theatre of baroque humiliation. Nor is it hard to figure out why he singled me out for special attention. I was the youngest boy in the school. I was a Jew (one of a handful). And I bunked a few feet away.

Up in our room one evening, several weeks into the term, I watched Cesar roll bits of brown bread, filched from the dining room, into pea-size balls. As I remember it, he then lined up the pellets on a windowsill and saturated each with hot sauce. After lights-out, he approached my bunk, cupping the pepper pills in his palm.

"Eat it, Nosey," he commanded, curving his thumb and index finger around his nose to reinforce the ethnic slur that would become my nickname.

When I refused, he motioned to his sidekick, the lantern-jawed son of an American banking heiress and a Hungarian cavalry officer (and the biggest of our three other roommates), to pin me down. Only after I had swallowed three or four of the fiery pellets did Cesar permit me to rinse my mouth. The force-feeding left me with a bitter taste for days.

That was the first of many acts of persecution. The most ambitious exploited the popularity of "Jesus Christ Superstar," which had just opened on Broadway. One interlude, in particular, caught Cesar's fancy. Its title: "Thirty-Nine Lashes." During "close time," an afternoon recess reserved for indoor recreation, he staged a pared-down version of the song. Cesar

The author (front row, circled) and the roommate who tormented him (fourth row, left, magnified), at a Swiss boarding school.



cast himself as the whip master, gave his sidekick the role of centurion, and decreed that I play Jesus Christ. Once my wrists were secured to the metal posts of my bunk, he ordered another roommate, a stockbroker's son with a Philips cassette player the size of a shoebox, to cue up the music. In the Broadway musical, Jesus is flogged with clockwork precision. But Cesar sometimes lifted his makeshift flail (a belt, if memory serves) only to stop midway through the downstroke. Each time I flinched, Cesar's face contorted into a grimace of ecstasy. The whip barely made contact, but the point was to humiliate and degrade me. As soon as I was unshackled, I ran out of the room and hid in a root cellar filled with potatoes and mice. I stayed there until dinnertime, fighting back tears, listening to the *tick-tick-tick* of my wristwatch.

Despite the daily torments, I never complained. Aiglon placed a premium on stoic self-reliance, a code of conduct that was clarified during the first week of school, when my housemaster forced another lowerclassman, bedridden with the flu, to clean up his own vomit.

Only once did I acknowledge my roommate problems. Toward the end of the first term, my mother visited and noticed that I wasn't wearing my father's watch. I tried to convince her that I had

left it in my room, but she pressed for the truth. I finally told her what happened: One day, after showering, I went to retrieve the watch from under my pillow, stowed there for safekeeping, and discovered that it was gone. I became hysterical. The more upset I got, the more Cesar and his confederate giggled. I pleaded for the watch's return until Cesar silenced me by making the "Nosey" sign.

Within the week, his henchman admitted that he'd hurled my watch off a balcony on a dare. I ran down the stairs, dashed outside, and dug through knee-deep snow until my fingers turned white and tingly. The watch never surfaced. The loss left me more than bereft. I felt annihilated.

Not long afterward, the sidekick was asked to leave the school, and Cesar disappeared—quarantined, I learned, years later, by a case of measles. I finished out my year at Aiglon without incident—in fact, I loved my final months at the school—and moved back to New York.

It didn't take long to shed the habits I'd picked up in Switzerland. Plimsoles, anoraks, and rucksacks reverted to sneakers, parkas, and backpacks. The crossbars disappeared from my sevens. Yet reminders of Cesar kept popping

up: while watching "Tom Brown's School Days," a BBC serial packed with boarding-school abuse; while reading novels for literature classes. (Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin is subjected to cold showers and gymnastics in an alpine sanatorium.) I composed a list of dictators who endorsed the benefits of a Swiss boarding-school education (the Shah of Iran, Kim Jong-un). I found myself wondering, Was Darwin's theory of natural selection inspired by the adversity he faced at Dr. Butler's school? Would Orwell's world view have been so Orwellian had the headmaster of St. Cyprian's resisted the impulse to break a bone-handled riding crop on the student's buttocks?

In 1991, while promoting my first novel in Italy, I found myself with a few days off and returned to Aiglon. Much had changed in the twenty years since I'd left. No more laps. No more cold showers. No more rank systems. One thing remained, though—my sense of dread. Looking out the window of the room I had shared with Cesar, I experienced a wave of nausea so intense that I had to sit down for a few minutes with my head between my knees.

The following day, I interviewed a veteran housemistress named Mrs. Senn, a marvel of institutional memory, who diverted me for hours with recollections about the year I spent at the school. One student lost the tips of two toes to frostbite. Another almost died when he fell head first into a seventy-five-foot-deep crevasse. A third was permanently disfigured on the local slalom course after she took a bamboo gate too closely. ("Poor girl. The doctors did what they could, but her nose was never quite the same.") Mrs. Senn also informed me that my closest friend at Aiglon, Woody Anderson, had tumbled backward down a dormitory stairwell a few months after I left. "Poor, poor Woody," she said. "He was dead by the time he hit the ground." When I asked Mrs. Senn about Cesar, she drew a blank. And no one else at the school seemed to remember the boy I couldn't forget. The visit yielded nothing more than Cesar's 1973 mailing address in Manila, c/o the Realistic Institute.

Back home, I found a Manila telephone directory at the New York Public Library and discovered that the



"This isn't about your stealing anything. It's about your not buying anything."

Kissingeresque-sounding Realistic Institute was actually a “vocational school for hair and beauty culture.” (So much for the family’s connection to the Marcos regime.)

I decided to give Cesar a call. After some dithering—should I start with small talk or get right down to the business of the whipping and the watch?—I dialled his number. Following a few rings and some long-distance static, the line went dead, and with it died the search. I directed my energies toward more pressing matters: writing, marriage, fatherhood.

I started thinking about Cesar again in 1999, soon after my son, Max, turned five. In the middle of a school holiday pageant, a dispute over a Pokémon card incited a boy known around the jungle gym as Thomas the Tank Engine to throttle Max with a necktie.

“How do you deal with bullies?” he asked me that night as I was tucking him into bed.

I didn’t know what to say. Max was looking for counsel from someone who was demonstrably unqualified to provide it. Eventually, I found an answer of sorts; I wrote a children’s book, “Leon and the Spitting Image,” in which a boy battles a thuggish composite of the real-life goons who had terrorized us. When the book was released, in 2003, I visited classrooms around the country and discovered that bullying had become a topic of national discussion. During the Q & A.s, each time I mentioned that the antagonist in my book was inspired by an actual nemesis, hands shot up: What was the worst thing he did? Did you tell on him? Where is he now?

The questions couldn’t have come at a better time. The reason: a newish technology called Google. Moments after typing Cesar’s name into the search engine, I got a hit. Cesar, it appeared, was a *professor extraordinário* at the University of Lisbon, an electrical engineer who, in his spare time, served as the international president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic aid organization.

Further investigation revealed, to my relief, that the Portuguese Cesar was too old to have been my roommate. In quick succession, I vetted, and rejected, a flute player from Spain, a Brussels-based music director, and the

co-author of “Human Saliva as a Cleaning Agent for Dirty Surfaces.” As far as the Web was concerned, my Cesar did not exist.

In 2005, I got a more promising lead. A research fellowship provided me with access to a slew of licensed databases. One of them had archived a 2001 New York *Post* article bearing the headline “‘KNIGHT’ FALLS AS FEDS BUST UP A ROYAL RIPOFF.” The story began:

A trio of American fraudsters posing as fake European royalty were busted on charges they swindled more than \$1 million out of unsuspecting investors, authorities said yesterday.

According to the article, and other online sources, the three con men had allegedly hoodwinked a number of sophisticated investors into entering loan agreements with the Badische Trust Consortium, a Swiss-based investment house claiming to manage assets of sixty billion dollars. The crooks rented suites at the Waldorf Astoria, travelled with fake diplomatic passports, and adhered to a fourteen-point dress code that encouraged the use of gold pocket watches, homburgs, and Montblanc fountain pens.

The chairman of the “bank” called himself Prince Robert von Badische, the Seventy-fourth Grand Master of the Knights of Malta (Ecumenical). His chief lieutenant was variously identified as Baron Moncrieffe, the Prince of Serbia, and Dr. Moncrieffe. And the pair of them, both pushing eighty, were assisted by a man roughly half their age who used four aliases; most often, he introduced himself as Colonel Sherry.

According to the *Daily News*, Cesar was one of the two brokers the Badische Trust tasked with ensnaring victims with “false promises of big money.” In other words, he was the shill.

A theatrical fraud based in Switzerland that makes use of Montblanc fountain pens: Could there be anything more Cesar-like? I double-checked the roper’s age; it aligned perfectly with my ex-roommate’s. I also learned that this Cesar, along with three of the other four crooks named in the indictment, had been convicted and sent to prison.

At this point, my intermittent curiosity morphed into fixation: I was determined to confirm the match. For the

better part of a week, I sat at my computer, entering search terms in the hope of confirming the link between my Cesar and the shill. I couldn’t.

My luck changed some six months later, when a friend at the New York law firm of Debevoise & Plimpton offered to help me make sense of some trial briefs I had unearthed. While skimming an appeal generated by one Badische Trust defense attorney, I discovered that Baron Moncrieffe had received pro-bono assistance from a Debevoise & Plimpton lawyer named Mark Goodman. My friend put me in touch with Goodman, who provided a thumbnail sketch of the scam: “Everything these guys touched, promised, concocted, represented, and did was a lie, a contrivance, a fiction. I’ve been around a lot of con artists. I handle a ton of white-collar crime. This was the most massive fraud I have ever come across. Massive. Fake knights. False banks. Imaginary kingdoms. These guys travelled on bogus passports. They hosted lavish dinner parties at five-star hotels. They performed knighting ceremonies.” (When I interviewed the assistant U.S. attorney who filed the initial charges, he summed up the crime as “‘Dirty Rotten Scoundrels’ meets ‘Clue.’”)

Goodman invited me to visit his office and examine the court records. A few weeks later, I set up shop in a Debevoise & Plimpton conference room and spent the weekend sifting through fourteen cartons of discovery material. They contained copies of, among other things, a fake deed of trust from a nonexistent African kingdom, the circumcision certificate for a putative Aryan royal, and a welfare check issued by the City of New York to one of the self-styled principals of the sixty-billion-dollar trust. (Years later, I asked Goodman why he had been so forthcoming. After noting that he had removed privileged material and checked with his client the Baron before providing me with access to the files, Goodman said, “We’ve all had bullies. It seemed the right thing to do.”)

The documents included dozens of photographs, mostly from the nineteen-sixties, of the Prince and the Baron glad-handing world leaders. “The [Badische] Chairman with his wife and Pope Paul during the bestowal of decorations at the Vatican,” one caption read. “The

Executive Committee Director with British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and General (later U.S. President) Eisenhower,” read another. Many of the photo ops featured Prince Robert tapping a dubbing sword on the shoulders of movie stars who assumed that he was a genuine Knight of Malta. Duped celebrities included Anthony Quinn, Sammy Davis, Jr., Liza Minnelli, Ernest Borgnine, and Gene Kelly. There was no photograph of Cesar.

The fictionalized bloodlines and regalia of the fraudsters kept reminding me of the aristocrats I had known at Aiglon. Prince Robert, the chairman of the trust, was a onetime P.R. flack and recidivist swindler who claimed that he could trace his lineage back twenty-two generations, to Vlad the Impaler. Baron Moncrieffe, an underemployed window dresser from Toledo, Ohio, passed himself off as the adopted son of Peter II, the deposed king of Yugoslavia. And Colonel Sherry, a former salesman at a RadioShack in Queens, New York, claimed that he'd earned an M.B.A. from Wharton after a distinguished military career, statements that were later disproved at trial. (Private First Class Brian D. Sherry, a high-school dropout with a G.E.D. certificate, was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army for reasons of financial hardship.)

As for Cesar, court records indicated that he had been a sales manager at Infoex International, a short-lived currency-market brokerage that was shuttered after the Commodity Futures Trading Commission charged it with “fraud” and “material misrepresentation.” A few years later, he became the director of the Barclay Consulting Group, a San Francisco financial boutique that clients assumed had ties to the London bank Barclays. Actually, Barclay was a one-man operation with a sixty-dollar-a-month mail drop situated a few blocks from a genuine branch of Barclays.

The Badische Trust spared no expense in establishing its bogus bona fides. It hired a dozen or so white-haired extras to serve on a sham executive committee (sometimes called the “cabinet fiduciary”) and furnished each gentleman with a matching blue tie. Some of the supernumeraries were legitimate, if unwitting, professionals (an

ex-U.N. ambassador, a godson of King George VI). Others, such as Admiral Cruikshank and Major Druck, were poseurs. Still others were out-and-out crooks. The director of the Badische Trust's executive committee, Duke Eric Alba Teran d'Antin, a former husband of (the real) Princess Michaela von Hapsburg, had racked up arrests in Italy, Switzerland, and England before joining Badische. He had also done hard time in the United States after being caught in a sting operation, in which he attempted to launder the illegal proceeds of South American drug traffickers.

Falsified titles and backstories constituted only a part of the Badische scam. The Prince made use of a monocle, a cape, a sash of medals, and a gold-handled walking stick. The Baron favored spats. The Colonel sported a rakish mustache and silk neckwear purchased from A. Sulka & Company, “haberdashers to royalty.” All three handed out gold-embossed *cartes de visite* bearing a heraldic shield (spread eagle, lions rampant), which, I noticed, was reminiscent of the Aiglon coat of arms.

Beginning in the late nineties, the Badische Trust invited its American patsies to loan meetings at the Waldorf Astoria and at the Delegates Dining Room of the United Nations, seemingly exclusive venues that were, in fact, open to anyone with a credit card. Then, in 2000, the self-styled bankers pulled off a mind-boggling feat of chicanery. For more than a year, they ran their swindle out of the Park Avenue boardroom of Clifford Chance, which was, at the time, the largest law firm in the world. By leveraging a professional friendship that the Baron had cultivated over twenty years (sweetened by a modest ten-thousand-dollar retainer), the trust was able to conduct its negotiations in a setting of unimpeachable gravitas.

Clifford Chance wasn't the only law-abiding enterprise to be bamboozled by the trust. A senior partner from PricewaterhouseCoopers was persuaded to attend Badische client meetings. A financial consultant from Merrill Lynch endorsed the trust's principal holding, a one-page “special deed of trust” with a stated value “in excess of 50 billion USD”

issued by a grade-school teacher from Ottawa, moonlighting as “His Majesty King Henri-François Mazzamba, Sovereign Ruler of Mombessa.” (There is no such place as Mombessa.)

The mechanics of the scam were straightforward. Cesar would introduce his clients—some lured in through a shady network of referrals, others by the lending opportunities detailed on his Barclay Web site—to the officers of the Badische Trust, which offered loans of between a hundred million and five hundred million dollars. Before receiving their funds, aspiring borrowers were required to pay certain fees, including a so-called “performance guaranty”—one-tenth of one per cent of the face value of the loan (that is, between a hundred thousand and five hundred thousand dollars). They also had to supply a “bank letter” from a financial institution that the Badische Trust deemed acceptable. By design, this proved impossible. The trust rejected every letter submitted, enabling the ersatz aristocrats to pocket the advance fees. Still, none of this proved that the shill from San Francisco was the bully of Belvedere. Without that confirmation, the swindle remained a red herring, albeit one served up with lots of room-service champagne.

I plowed through some fifty thousand documents before I found what I was looking for. It was hidden in a supplemental appendix, within a defendant's memorandum in aid of sentencing: “Cesar A. Viana III was born on April 24, 1958, in Manila, Philippines.” The Badische Trust's roper, a convicted felon, was indeed the twelve-year-old who had whipped me in the tower of Belvedere.

It was around this time that I began to acknowledge the obvious: Cesar had taken over my life. I tried to convince myself that the interest—my *déformation professionnelle*, as my wife called it—was journalistic. It was a great story, and one I knew that I would write. But I also had an emotional connection to the victims of the fraud. Their desperate narratives sparked memories of my own childhood abasement.

Badische clients testified about being mocked for sloppy dress and bad manners. Barbara Laurence, a former



cable-network president, and the victim who first brought the scam to the attention of the U.S. Attorney's Office, not only lost a half-million-dollar performance guaranty (plus a sixteen-thousand-dollar late fee) but also found herself subjected to a creepy late-night phone call from Colonel Sherry. She later described the call under oath: "He said—this is kind of an embarrassing and humiliating thing—'What kind of punishment should I give you? When my little girl does something wrong, I spank her.'" Laurence told me, "They were nothing but a bunch of bullies playing dress-up."

John Kearns, a retired commercial developer from Lake Tahoe, went to great lengths to obtain the "bank letter" required to secure a twenty-five-million-dollar loan from the trust, traveling to Toronto, Halifax, New York, London, and Hong Kong. Every letter was rejected by the trust. Colonel Sherry hand-delivered the final default notice to Kearns at a cancer clinic in the Bavarian village of Bad Heilbrunn, where he was caring for his

wife, who was dying of Stage 3 multiple myeloma.

Cesar, another shill named Christopher Berwick, and Colonel Sherry were tried in Manhattan, during a three-week period in August of 2002. All three men were found guilty by the jury. (Baron Moncrieffe pleaded guilty after his arrest. Prince Robert fled and is presumed dead.) Cesar didn't testify, but, after he was convicted (five counts of wire fraud, one count of conspiracy), he made a lengthy statement at sentencing, saying, in part:

I feel naïve and incompetent about not being able to discern the real aspects from the illegitimate parts of the transaction. I did not do my duties as a broker and assist clients with overseas company formation work intending to harm or hurt anyone. I still believe that the transaction was a viable one, that some of the key people I was introduced to—the V.P.s of the banks, different advisers to the lenders, the Knights of Malta, the clients and their own attorneys—were all impressive, real, professional, and credible.

He concluded his statement to the court by claiming that he was "not guilty, with all my heart and soul."

His avowal of innocence failed to sway Judge Shira Scheindlin. "Some people have started out with less than zero and were able to move on," she noted. "But this defendant was raised in reasonable middle-class circumstances and had a good education." (Cesar attended Schiller International University, in London, and the University of San Francisco, before earning an M.B.A. at Golden Gate University.) She rejected his petition for leniency and, adhering to federal sentencing guidelines, gave him thirty-seven months, followed by five years of supervised release. She also signed a mandatory-restitution order requiring that Cesar pay \$1,222,494—nearly half the sum stolen from the trust's American victims. (Foreign losses, which would likely have doubled that figure, were excluded from the restitution calculations.)

The judge did grant Cesar's request that he be allowed to serve his time at F.C.I. Lompoc, a cushy low-security prison in Southern California favored by discerning white-collar criminals such as Ivan Boesky. With its views of mountains and cow pastures, Lompoc sounded, to me at least, a lot like Switzerland.

It seemed fitting that my former tormentor had gone from a boarding school regulated like a prison to a prison run like a boarding school. I was all set to visit Cesar at Lompoc, but then I discovered, through an online "inmate locator" maintained by the Bureau of Prisons, that he had been released after serving seventeen months—barely half his sentence.

"Whoa!" my son said when I told him that Cesar was out. "Let's prank him. We can get a dozen pizzas sent to his house." My wife vetoed that idea, and insisted that I make no contact until I knew what I was dealing with.

She was right to worry. The consolidated rap sheet of the Badische gang included embezzlement, racketeering, arson, forgery, fraud, extortion, perjury, check kiting, probation violation, grand larceny, assault and battery, and domestic abuse. The most dangerous of Cesar's associates was probably Richard Mamarella, the trust's Weehawken-based "litigation expert." Mamarella was a gun-toting repeat



"It's disappointing that even the secret shadow government can't get anything done."

offender (perjury, extortion, insurance fraud, loan sharking) with a history of violence and long-standing ties to the New Jersey Mob.

Letters of support to the judge from friends, employers, and family (including his sister, his mother, and his aunt) had highlighted Cesar's "innocence," "selflessness," and "gullibility." But Cesar's pre-sentencing report indicated that, ten years before his conviction for fraud, he had spent two years in an Oslo jail for smuggling cocaine into Norway. Either way, once I was able to eliminate acts of physical violence from Cesar's criminal record, I talked my wife into approving a trip west for me, so that I could finally confront Cesar. But first I had to make sure that he would talk.

While I had been digging into his past, Cesar had focussed on his future. After leaving Lompoc, he moved back to San Francisco and co-founded a film-production company. He also became a "life-style entrepreneur," promoting seven-figure "income opportunities" in three-minute YouTube clips; wrote a screenplay; coached executives; published a couple of essays online and a book called "Plan B: Five Differences That Make a Difference in Your Small/Home Business." (Sample quote: "YOU are the creator of your own destiny!") He sold nutraceuticals. He traded foreign currencies. And, despite his conviction, his Web site continued to advertise loan opportunities to businesses seeking between ten million and a hundred million dollars.

After I discovered that Cesar was using various aliases, my son, now twelve, helped set up half a dozen Google alerts for the various avatars. In early 2010, an alert notified me that Cesar had signed up, using one of his post-penitentiary professional names, with the Aiglon College alumni group on a networking site called Plaxo. I joined the site, added my name to the alumni group, and, a few weeks later, sent Cesar an e-mail proposing that we reconnect. He didn't respond, and he removed himself from the group. By now, I had spoken to dozens of people who were directly connected to his prosecution, and I worried that one of them might have tipped him off.

For much of my life, I had been afraid to confront Cesar. Now I was afraid not to. I felt like a predator stalking his mark. But I came to the conclusion that any attempt to con a con man would end badly. If I ever got the chance to speak to Cesar, I decided, I would face him as a writer and a former roommate working through memories of a boyhood injustice.

Not long after my failed Plaxo overture, Cesar created a Facebook account. This time, instead of messaging him, I friended a few dozen Aiglon graduates and waited for the social network's algorithm to play matchmaker. Two weeks later, I received a Facebook notification suggesting that I contact him. A few hours after that, my childhood enemy became my Facebook friend.

Barbara Laurence, the first of a half-dozen Badische victims whom I interviewed, had likened Cesar to "a sleazy version of Richard Gere in 'American Gigolo.' Very slick. Armani-like suit. Designer glasses. Shiny hair. Cufflinks. He wore accessories like armor." The man I saw hunched over a menu at a Thai restaurant in the Panhandle section of San Francisco looked nothing like that. He wore pleated khakis and a faded black paisley sport shirt. He was not the fat kid I remembered, though, like me, he could have stood to lose a few pounds. He had an incipient goatee, a sallow complexion, and sleepy brown eyes. And he wasn't wearing a watch. (I had nurtured the fantasy that he'd be wearing my father's Omega.)

The rendezvous had been easy to arrange. Four cheery e-mails and a few minutes of chitchat about boarding school was all it took. Cesar looked up when I reached his table, smiled wanly, and extended a hand. "We've got to stop meeting this way," he said.

I smiled back, sat down, and asked him what he was up to.

"I do a couple things," he answered, placing two business cards on the table.

I reached for the closer of them. "Founder, NextLevel Consulting?"

Cesar described his work: "I manage a team of experts who offer a broad

range of strategic services to small-to-medium-size businesses." He added, "We target firms generating revenues of fifty million and up."

I picked up the second card. "Regional sales manager at Forever Living Products? What's that?"

"We're the world's largest distributor of aloe vera," Cesar said. He enumerated the health benefits of the desert succulent until a waitress came to take our orders.

When the food arrived, I told Cesar why I'd asked him to lunch. I said, "I'm planning to write about my experiences at Aiglon. I want to write about the boys of Belvedere and the men they became."

"I recall a lot," Cesar said amiably. "But just in bits and pieces. You might need to prod me a bit."

I pulled out a 1972 photograph of fifty-one Belvedere boys posed in front of our dorm.

"That's me," Cesar said, pointing to his face in the photograph. "And that there is the guy who built a little gas airplane that made a friggin' racket." He tapped another face. "That's the kid who got care packages of marshmallow spread and peanut butter." He smiled. "And that's what's-his-name, the Pakistani kid. Remember what we used to call him?" He twisted his wrist as if turning the ignition key on a car. "T-t-t-t-Ta-yub!" he sputtered. "T-t-t-t-Ta-yub!"

I pointed at the face of my best friend at Aiglon.

"Anderson," Cesar said with a chuckle. "He was a little slow."

I bristled. "That's not how I remember him." I added, "You may not know what happened."

"I know *all* about it. I was right next to him when it happened."

I asked if Woody Anderson had died before he hit the ground, as Mrs. Senn had told me.

"Yeah. Instantly. Like that." Cesar snapped his fingers. "He landed on his head. I helped scrape up his brains."

"What?"

"We were there scooping his brains into a bag."

The rest of the meal was less macabre. Cesar told me about working as an executive coach, about his surefire method for trading foreign currency ("the high, the



low, and the close—that's all my system needs"), and about some film scripts he was writing. He explained the plot of one called "Parallel Lies." "It's about two characters pretending to be people they're not," he said. "They get to know each other really well and fall for each other. But what will they do when they find out who each one really is?"

He also talked about his early life.

"I was sheltered. We had servants. When I first got to Switzerland, I was a fish out of water. I actually had to go to therapy, because I felt like my mom abandoned me." Aiglon, he later said, "was like the military. Like a concentration camp. 'Do this! Do that! Make your bed! Tip your chair? Fifty centimes!'"

He told me about the boys and the faculty members who picked on him at Aiglon. There was the "klepto" from Finland who stole his pocket knives. The two upper-schoolers who *tried* to beat him up. ("They couldn't," Cesar noted proudly. "I'd studied judo.") The boys who whacked his legs with stinging nettles during a game of capture the flag. The duty prefects who forced him to submit to an ice-cold "punishment shower" until his "skin turned red," or gave him laps "for swearing," even though he had just been stung by hornets.

Cesar recalled his laundry-tag I.D., the number of tables in the Belvedere dining hall, some words that appeared on the mimeographed list of Britishisms that the American students had to learn by heart. ("Fortnight?") But, when I asked him to name his roommates, he failed to mention the one boy I was most keen for him to remember.

When I told him that I roomed with him, too, he gave me a doubtful look.

"There were five of us," I insisted. "In a room at the top of Belvedere."

"That's right," he acknowledged. "I do remember that part where people would pick on you."

I pointed to the kid sitting cross-legged in the group photograph.

"That's you?" Cesar said.

"That's me," I said.

"You were really little."

The lunch left me reeling. I felt that I had blown it. I hadn't questioned Cesar about his felony convictions. And I had tiptoed around the pain he caused me. Cesar and I saw

each other a few more times during the following years and, for whatever reason—my timidity, his chutzpah, my tenacity, his naïveté—I slowly gained his confidence.

It took me some time to get Cesar to talk about the Badische Trust. I had asked him if he'd been back to Switzerland. "No," he said. After an awkward silence, he corrected himself: "Sorry, I have been to Zurich. I went there for meetings." He said something about "partner financing" he had arranged in 1999 and 2000. He went on, "A couple times a year, I'd go to New York and Switzerland to meet with this lending group headed up by a prince."

I eventually asked Cesar if Prince Robert really was a prince.

"I believe he was," Cesar told me. "I mean, you can tell if someone is a prince, right? The way they act?"

"I don't know," I said. "There are a lot of people who pretend to be something they are not."

Cesar shook his head. "The guy was a gentleman. We were meeting in the boardroom of Clifford Chance, the largest law firm in the world. How could Badische *not* be on the up-and-up?"

I asked him how many loan deals the trust completed.

"The deals just didn't seem to go through," he said. Cesar blamed his clients, refusing to acknowledge his partners' guilt. The Badische scandal, he maintained, was nothing more than a "contract dispute."

When we started discussing the investigation and the trial, Cesar said, "It really was rather unfair, which, of course, is nothing new to me. I've got to accept that that's the way the universe works."

I asked about prison life.

"When I was on sabbatical?" he said with a laugh. Lompoc was "the original Club Fed," he said, complete with tennis courts, basketball, and military-style dorms with bunk beds. A lot like Aiglon. "Only Aiglon was stricter," Cesar added. "You got to chew gum at Lompoc."

At one point, I asked if he was guilty of fraud.

"No!" he exclaimed. "I am not guilty of fraud." He went on, "Juries don't make decisions based on fact. They

make decisions based on emotions."

Cesar always seemed to be getting the short end of the stick. His alcoholic father neglected him. His mother dumped him in a hateful boarding school. The Cornell Admissions Office rejected him. The doorman at Studio 54 barred him from entering the disco. The loan clients he tried to assist failed to satisfy their contractual obligations. Federal prosecutors "fried" him over a "misunderstanding." His fiancée dumped him after he went to prison.

Cesar talked about how a string of bad luck had led him to self-help, therapy, and prayer. He'd tried Landmark, qigong breathing, Buddhist meditation, biofeedback, and psychotherapy. He took a Dale Carnegie seminar. Cesar is especially devoted to the work of Tony Robbins, the multimillionaire "leadership coach." He has attended many Robbins events, owns a complete set of his motivational tapes, and has a picture of Robbins on his "vision board"—an aspirational collage that includes images of a Mediterranean-style beachfront home, an Aston Martin convertible, family members, and Penélope Cruz.

Not long before we reconnected, Cesar began independent coursework in neurolinguistic programming. "N.L.P. allows you to reframe your thoughts—to have total control," he told me. "Basically, it teaches you that people do things for a positive outcome, but behaviors don't always match intentions." He added that even Hitler's intentions were positive; they just didn't match his outcomes.

The more Cesar opened up, the sorer I felt for him. He was not the all-knowing menace I had expected. He was a two-time loser who was about to be indicted for a third time, if only in the pages of a memoir. I was losing sight of the reason I had contacted him. What stopped me from bringing up what he had done to me? Or what I was doing to him?

A year and a half ago, I e-mailed Cesar to say that I wanted to talk to him again. It had been seven years since we made contact. I flew out to San Francisco and met him at a café a block from Alamo Square. Cesar had bulked up considerably. The goatee was gone, his head was shaved, and he

was dressed entirely in black. He reminded me of Odd Job, the “Goldfinger” villain, without the bowler and the mustache.

“All righty,” he said, hand extended. “What’s been going on?”

“I have to get something off my chest,” I said. I told him about the book.

“Am I in it?” he asked.

“Yes, Cesar, you’re in the book. In a sense, you *are* the book.” I said. “You really did a number on me at Aiglon.”

“Well, lots of kids did a number on me, too,” he replied. “I think everybody picked on somebody.”

I told him about the nightmares he had provoked by proposing to throw me out the window of our dorm room. He chuckled uneasily and said that, while he recalled a fire drill involving the window, he had no recollection of the taunt.

I reminded him of the nickname he gave me.

“Nosey? Why did I call you that?” he asked. “Is it because you *were* nosey? Because of the kind of inquisitive person you are now?” A hint of aggression crept into his voice.

“Well, I guess I was nosey. And, obviously, I still am. I’m also still Jewish,” I said, curving my thumb and index finger around my nose. Cesar looked at me blankly.

When I brought up the whipping he had staged in the tower of Belvedere, he tittered and slapped the table.

I told him, “We can laugh now, Cesar, but it was fucking traumatic for me!”

“Sorry,” he said, stifling his amusement. “I do remember ‘Jesus Christ Superstar.’ It was a big deal at the time. But I don’t remember the other stuff.”

“You performed ‘Thirty-Nine Lashes.’”

“And you were Jesus Christ?” he said, without prompting.

“Yes, Cesar. And I was Jesus Christ.” He shrugged.

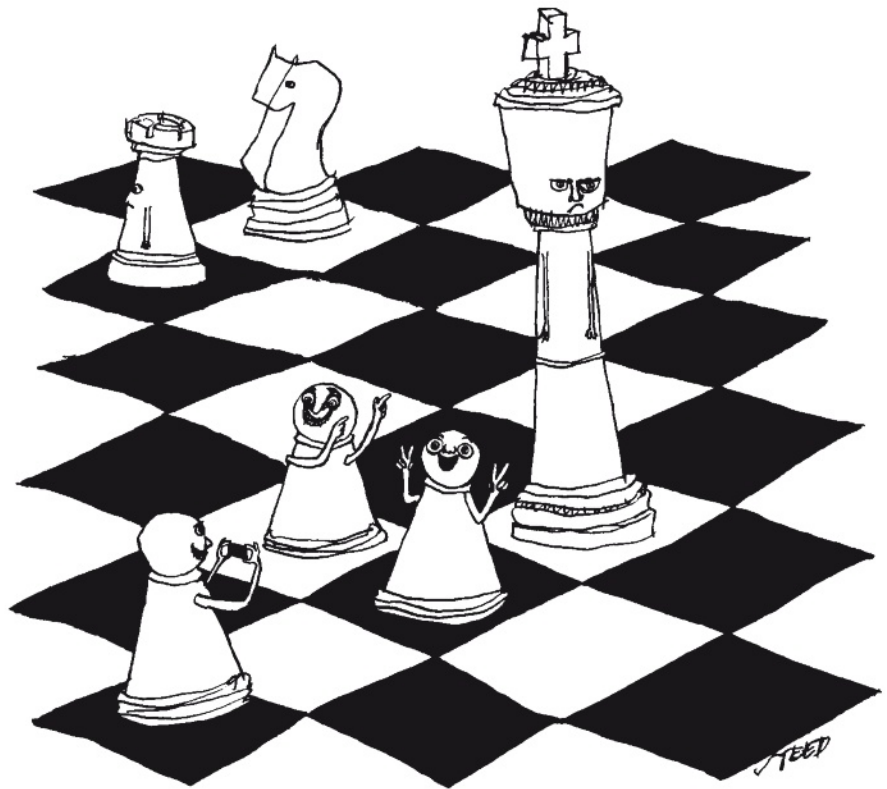
I asked him if he remembered the watch theft. He said that he didn’t. “I cherished that watch,” I told him. “It had been my father’s. It was by far the most meaningful thing I inherited after he died.”

“Wow, that stinks,” Cesar said. “Was it found?”

“No.”

“But what does your missing watch have to do with me?” he asked.

I reminded him that the boy who tossed it from the balcony never did anything without his approval.



“So, basically, I’m being blamed for your memories?”

“Pretty much.”

“Well, it doesn’t sound like you’re writing about me,” he said. “This is really only your interpretation based on your recollection of events.”

I did not disagree.

“Look, Allen,” Cesar said. “When it comes to memory, we put things together that have absolutely no relation to one another. We take one plus one and we get a hundred. I know. It’s like that with me and Badische. It’s easy to draw negative conclusions after the fact, but I know that what I did for my clients I did with good intentions.”

“And at Aiglon?” I asked.

“You shouldn’t focus on Aiglon,” he advised. “Think about the good times you had *before* you went there.”

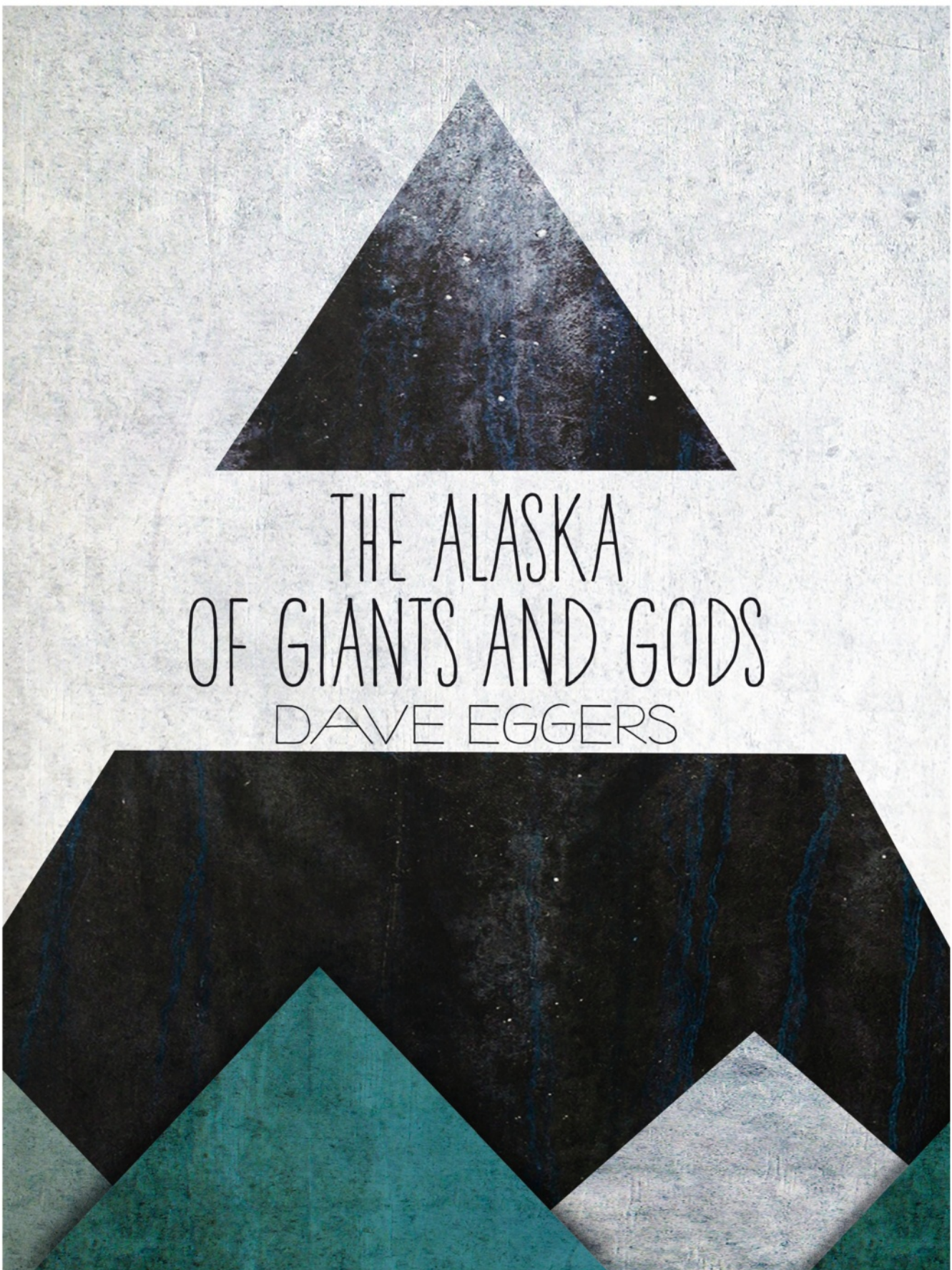
An hour later, I received a voice mail on my cell phone:

Hi, Allen. Cesar. It’s one-fifteen, about. I’m back home. Just realized that the most important thing hasn’t been said. And that is that I apologize to you for whatever pain I may have caused. . . . I really didn’t realize

until you told me that you’ve been looking for me since ’91, and how important this is for you. I fully respect that. . . . It may seem like a long time ago, but it’s still perfectly valid and very important. . . . Because there is no such thing as time.

The first few times I listened to Cesar’s mea culpa, I heard only the remorse of a bully. More nuanced interpretations of his phone message only emerged much later. Cesar found himself in my crosshairs because of a watch. His childhood cruelties, however elaborate, could not explain my lifelong fixation. Nor could his subsequent crimes. My father’s Omega turned out to be more than a talisman. It was a time machine that had transported me back to a moment when my family was intact and I was happy.

So I reject Cesar’s claims that there is no such thing as time. Without time, we cannot learn. Without time, we cannot heal. When I told my wife and son that I was banishing Cesar from our lives, they celebrated his eviction by giving me an extravagant gift. I am wearing it on my wrist. ♦



THE ALASKA
OF GIANTS AND GODS
DAVE EGGERS

There is proud happiness, happiness born of doing admirable things in the light of day, years of good work, and afterward being tired and content and surrounded by family and friends, enjoying a sumptuous meal, ready for a deserved rest—sleep or death, it would not matter.

Then there is the happiness of one's personal slum. The happiness of being alone, and tipsy on red wine, in the passenger seat of an ancient recreational vehicle parked in a campground outside Seward, Alaska, staring into a scribble of black trees, unable to go to sleep for fear that at any moment someone will get past the toy lock on the R.V. door and murder you and your two small children, sleeping in the alcove above.

This was Josie's situation. They'd landed in Anchorage yesterday, a gray day without promise or beauty, but the moment she'd stepped off the plane she'd found herself inspired. "O.K., guys," she'd said to her exhausted, unhappy children. They had never expressed any interest in Alaska, and now here they were. "Here we are!" she'd said, and she'd done a celebratory little march. Neither child had smiled.

She'd piled them into this rented R.V. and driven off, no plan in mind. The manufacturers had named the vehicle the Chateau, but that was thirty years ago, and now it was falling apart and dangerous to its passengers and to all who shared the highway with it. But after a day on the road her kids seemed fine with the crumbling machine, the close quarters, the chaos. Her kids were strange but good. There was Paul, seven years old, a gentle, slow-moving boy with the cold caring eyes of an ice priest. He was far more reasonable and kind and wise than his mother, but then there was Ana, only four, a constant threat to the social contract. She was a black-eyed animal with a burst of irrationally red hair and a knack for assessing the most breakable object in any room and then breaking it.

The Lower Forty-eight was full of cowards and thieves and it was time for mountains and people of truth and courage. So Alaska. She had been a dentist and was no longer a dentist. She'd been sued by a desperate woman who claimed that Josie should have seen the tumor on her tongue during a routine cleaning. Unwilling to fight a dying woman, Josie surrendered. *Take it all*, she'd said, and the dying woman had done just that. And then the

father of Josie's children, her ex-husband, a spineless, loose-bowelled man, had, improbably, found a new, second woman to marry him. He wanted the kids there, but Josie, who'd got nothing from him for years, thought, Well, no. And what could better grant her invisibility than this, a rolling home, a white R.V. in a state with a million other white R.V.s? He could never find her.

But she had yet to see the Alaska of giants and gods. What she had seen so far did not feel like frontier. It felt like Kentucky, only colder and far more expensive. Where was the Alaska of magic and clarity and pure air? This place was choked with the haze of some far-off forest fire, and it was not majestic, no. It was cluttered and tough. And where were the heroes? Find me someone bold, she asked the dark trees before her. Find me someone of substance, she asked the mountains beyond.

She had been born a blank. Her parents were blanks. All her relatives were blanks, though many were addicts, and she had a cousin who identified as an anarchist. But otherwise Josie's people were blanks. They were from nowhere. To be American is to be blank, and a true American is truly blank. So Josie was a truly great American.

Still, she'd heard occasional and vague references to Denmark. Once or twice she heard her parents mention some connection to Finland. Her parents knew nothing about these nationalities, these cultures. They cooked no national dishes, they taught Josie no customs, and they had no relatives who cooked national dishes or had customs. They had no clothes, no flags, no banners, no sayings, no ancestral lands or villages or folktales. When she was thirty-two, and had wanted to visit some village, somewhere, where her people had come from, none of her relatives had any idea at all where to go. One uncle thought he could be helpful. Everyone in our family speaks English, he said. Maybe you should go to England?

The next day was nothing, nothing at all, only the bright sun and the cold wind coming desperately over the obsidian water. They slept in and walked around. They discovered a train car set up by the shore which the kids wanted to explore but found was closed. They went into town, into Seward, a mix of actual fishermen and fish, and souvenir shops selling

shirts bearing cartoons of moose. They meandered down the boardwalk, and for a time watched a happy little tugboat chugging to and fro across Resurrection Bay. Josie was drawn to it and wasn't sure why.

"Look out!" Paul said.

Her son was speaking to otters.

The bay was full of otters, and Paul was worried the tug would run them over. But the animals moved themselves effortlessly out of the path of the tug and then reformed, six of them floating like furry detritus amid a mess of chartreuse seaweed. The otters were absurdly cute, stupidly cute, swimming on their backs, holding actual rocks on their bellies, using these rocks to break open shellfish and then enjoying their meals like mustachioed men. Such an animal could not be conceived by any self-respecting Creator. Only a God made in our image could go for that level of animal kitsch.

Now an older man sitting on a bench was looking at Josie's children.

"You kids like magic?" the man asked. He seemed to be leering. These lonely old men, Josie thought, with their wet lips and small eyes, their necks barely holding up their heavy heads full of their many mistakes and the funerals of friends.

Josie nudged Paul. "Answer the nice man."

"I guess," Paul said to the mountains beyond the man.

Now the old man was delighted. His face came alive, he lost twenty years, forgot all the funerals. "Well, I happen to know there's a magic show tonight on our ship."

"You own a ship?" Josie asked.

"No, no. I'm just a passenger. I'm Charlie," he said, and extended his hand, a pink and purple tangle of bones and veins. "Haven't you seen the Princess docked here? It's hard to miss."

Josie came to understand that this stranger was inviting them, her and her two kids, all of them unknown to this man, onto the cruise ship docked in Seward, where, that evening, there would be an elaborate magic show featuring a half-dozen acts, including, the old man was thrilled to convey, a magician from Luxembourg. "*Luxembourg*," he said, "can you imagine?"

"I want to go!" Ana said. Josie didn't think it mattered much that Ana wanted to go—she had no intention of following this man onto a magic-show ship—but when Ana said those words Charlie's face



"I met someone famous today, but I don't think he'll remember me."

• •

took on a glow so powerful Josie thought he might ignite.

Josie didn't want to disappoint this man and her daughter, who continued to talk about the show, and who were virtually floating upward with joy and inspiration. But was she really about to follow an old man onto a cruise ship in Seward, Alaska, to see a Luxembourgian magic show?

"We're allowed to have guests, I think," the man said as they walked up the gangplank. The kids were astounded, stepping slowly, carefully, as if they were walking on the moon, holding the ropes on either side. But now their host, this man in his seventies or eighties, was suddenly unsure if he could have friends over. He stopped in the middle of the gangplank. A few dozen elderly passengers in windbreakers went around them, carrying their small bags of Seward souvenirs. "Let me talk to this man," Charlie said, and motioned to them to hang a few yards back.

So Josie stopped, and her kids peered down into the black water between the

dock and the gleaming white ship. Josie watched as Charlie approached a man in a uniform. Charlie and the man swung around a few times to inspect Josie and her children. Finally Charlie turned back, waving to them, a relieved smile overtaking his face. He called them to come aboard.

The ship was garish and loud, and crowded, full of glass and screens—the décor was casino crossed with Red Lobster crossed with the court of Louis XIV. The kids were loving it. Ana was running everywhere, touching delicate things, bumping into people, making elderly women and men gasp and reach for walls.

"I think it starts in twenty minutes," Charlie said, and then again looked lost. "Let me see if we need tickets." He wandered off, and Josie knew she was a fool. Parenting was chiefly about keeping one's children away from unnecessary dangers, avoidable traumas, and disappointments, and here she had dragged them to Alaska, and had driven them, and their feces—the R.V.'s bathroom meant convenience but

also the transportation of human waste—around the worst parts of the state, and then to Seward, where no one had recommended they go, and now she had them following a lonely man onto a ship designed, it seemed, by the insane. All to see magic. Luxembourgian magic. Josie paged through the years of her life, trying to remember a decision she had made that she was proud of, and she found nothing.

Finally Charlie returned, holding the tickets in his hand like a bouquet. "Are we ready?"

There was an escalator, an escalator inside a ship. Charlie was ahead of them, and rode upward while looking back at them, smiling but nervous, as if worried they might flee.

The theatre seated at least five hundred and all within was burgundy—it was like being inside someone's liver. They sat in a half-moon booth near the back, Paul next to Charlie. A waitress in bright red hurried by, but Charlie made no move to order anything. Josie asked for lemonades for the kids and a glass of Pinot Noir for herself. The drinks arrived and the lights went down. Josie relaxed, anticipating a few hours of not having to do anything but sit and watch in silence.

Charlie had a different plan. The show started, and Josie realized that Charlie intended to talk throughout. And the words he most wanted to say were "See that?" Charlie would see something that every member of the audience had seen, and then would ask Josie and her kids if they'd seen it, too. Ana would say, "See what?," and Charlie would then explain what he had seen, talking through the next five minutes of the show. They made a beautiful pair.

The first magician, a pretty man in a tight silk shirt, had, it seemed, been told to make his act more personal, so his monologue returned again and again to the theme of how he had always welcomed magic into his life. He'd opened the door to magic, said hello to magic. He'd learned to appreciate magic in his life. Did he say he was married to magic? Maybe he did. It all made little sense, and the audience seemed lost. "Life is full of magic if you look for it," the magician noted, breathlessly, because he was moving around the stage in a thousand tiny steps, as a woman in a sparkly one-piece bathing suit vamped behind him with long strides.

The pretty magician produced some kind of flower from behind a curtain, and Josie struggled to see this as magical. She and Charlie clapped, but few members of the audience joined them. Her children didn't clap; they never clapped unless she told them to. Were they not taught clapping in school? The magician was not impressing this audience, though who could be easier to impress than five hundred elderly people in windbreakers? But they were waiting for something better than carnations produced from behind curtains.

Josie began to feel for this man. He'd been a magician in grade school, no doubt. He'd been pretty then, too, with lashes so long she could see them now, fifty feet away, and as an adolescent, apart from his peers but not concerned about this, he had driven with his mother forty miles to the nearest city, to get the right equipment for his shows, the right boxes—with wheels!—the velvet bags, the collapsing canes. He'd loved his mother then and had known how to say so, with conviction, perhaps with a flourish, and his unguarded love for her had made his friendlessness unimportant to him and to her, and now she was so proud that he had made it, was a professional magician, travelling the world making magic, welcoming magic into his life. And after all that, Josie thought, these elderly assholes won't clap for him.

Josie downed half her Pinot and gave the pretty magician a whoop. If no one else appreciated him, she would. Every time he asked for applause, which was often, she yelled and whooped and clapped. She found the waitress, ordered again, and downed a second glass. She cheered louder and whooped again. Her children looked at her, unsure if she was being funny. Charlie turned to her and smiled nervously.

Now the long-legged woman was helping the pretty magician into a big red box. Now she was turning it around and around. It was on wheels! Everything in the act had to be on wheels, so it could be turned around. It was a rule of magic that all boxes must be turned around and around, to prove there were no strings, that no one was hiding just behind. But if something wasn't turned around would the audience revolt? Did they ever ask, Excuse me, why hasn't

someone turned the box around? Turn the box around! My God, turn that box around!

Now the sparkly assistant opened the box. The pretty man was not in the box! Josie whooped again, clapping over her head. Where had he gone? The suspense was fantastic.

And now he was next to them! Suddenly a spotlight was on their table, or near it, because the pretty man was next to them. "Holy shit," Josie said, loud enough that the pretty man, whose hands were outstretched, again asking for applause, heard her. He smiled. Josie clapped louder, but again the rest of the audience didn't seem to care. He was up *there*, she wanted to yell to them, now he's *here!* You fuckers.

Up close, she saw that the magician was wearing a tremendous amount of makeup. Eyeliner, blush, maybe even lipstick, all seemingly applied by a child. Then the spotlight went dark, and he stayed for a moment next to their table, hands up, while a second magician appeared onstage. Josie wanted to say something to the pretty man, to his heaving silken silhouette a few feet away, but by the time she arrived at the right words—"We loved you"—he was gone.

She turned to the stage. The new magician was less pretty.

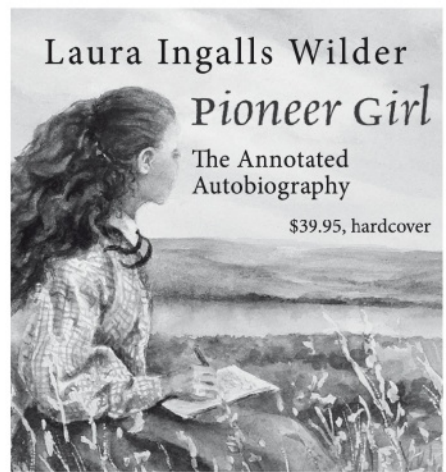
"This is the one from Luxembourg," Charlie whispered.

"Hello everyone!" the new magician roared, and explained he was from Michigan.

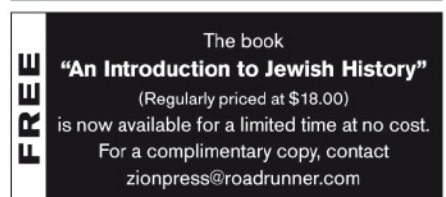
"Oh," Charlie said, sighing.

The Michigan magician, in a white shirt and stretchy black pants, was soon in a straitjacket, hanging upside down twenty feet above the stage. With his breath labored and his arms crossed like a chrysalis,

he told the audience that if he did not escape from the straitjacket in a certain amount of time something unfortunate would happen to him. Josie, trying to get the attention of the waitress, had not caught exactly what that consequence was. She ordered a third Pinot, and soon some part of the contraption holding the magician was on fire. Was that intentional? It seemed intentional. Then he was struggling in an inelegant way,



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ramming his shoulders against the canvas jacket, and then, aha, he was free, and was standing on the ground. An explosion flowered above him, but he was safe and not on fire.

Josie thought this trick pretty good, and clapped heartily, but again the crowd was not impressed. What were they waiting for? she wondered. Bastards! Then she knew: they were waiting for the magician from Luxembourg. They did not want domestic magic. They wanted magic from *abroad*.

The man from Michigan stood at the edge of the stage, bowing again and again as the applause dissipated until he was bowing in silence. Josie thought of his poor mother, and hoped she was not on this cruise. But she knew there was a very good chance that the Michigan magician's mother *was* on this cruise. Like the pretty magician's mother, she was proud, she was retired, she travelled the world clapping for her son. How could she *not* be on this cruise?

Now a new magician appeared. He had a high head of gleaming yellow hair and his pants were somehow tighter than the pants of his predecessors. Josie had not thought this possible.

"I hope this guy's from Luxembourg," Charlie said, too loudly.

"Hallo," the magician said, and Josie was fairly sure he was from somewhere else. Perhaps Luxembourg? The magician

explained that he spoke six languages and had been everywhere. He asked if anyone in the audience had been to Luxembourg, and a smattering of applause surprised him. Josie decided to clap, too, and did so loudly. "Yes!" she yelled. "I've been there!" Her children were horrified. "Yes!" she yelled again. "And it was great!"

"Lots of visitors to Luxembourg, I am pleased," the magician said, though he didn't seem to believe those who had applauded, least of all Josie. But by now, her spirit dancing in the glorious light of her third glass of wine, Josie believed she *had* been to Luxembourg. In her youth, she'd backpacked through Europe for three months, and wasn't Luxembourg right there in the middle of the continent? Surely she'd been there. Did that one train, the main train, go to Luxembourg? Of course it did. She pictured a beer garden. In a castle. On a hill. By the sea. What sea? Some sea.

The magician from Luxembourg did his tricks, which seemed more sophisticated than those of his predecessors. Maybe because they involved roses? Before him there had been merely carnations. The roses, this was a step up. Women holding roses appeared in boxes, boxes on wheels, and the man from Luxembourg turned these boxes around and around. Then he opened the boxes, and the women were not there; they were somewhere else. Behind screens! In the audience!

Josie clapped and hollered. He was

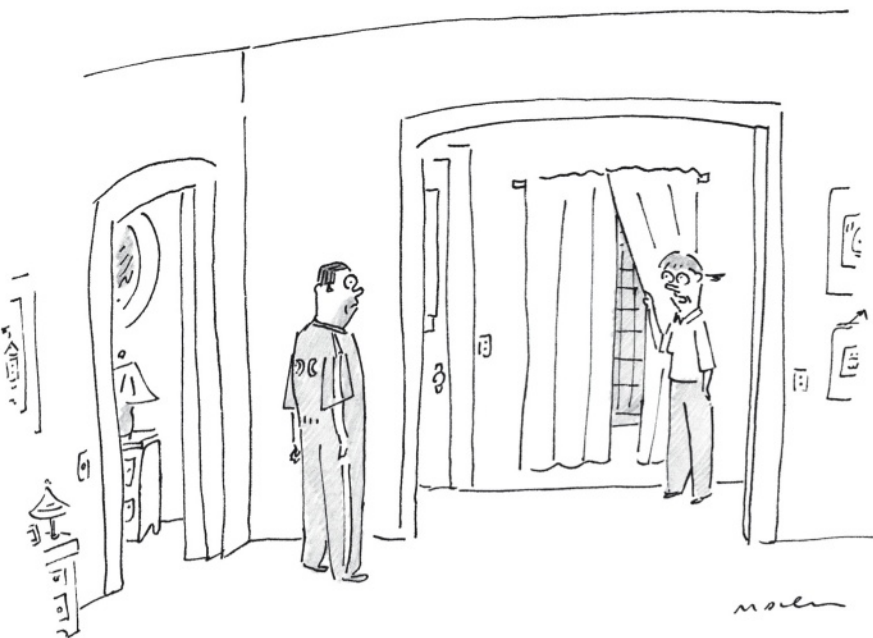
wonderful. The wine was wonderful. What a good world this was, with magic like this on ships like this. What an impressive species they were, humans, who could build a ship like this, who could do magic like this, who could clap listlessly even for the magician from Luxembourg. These fucking assholes, Josie thought, trying to single-handedly make up for their sickening lack of enthusiasm. Why come to a magic show if you don't want to be entertained? Clap, you criminals! Even Charlie wasn't clapping enough. She leaned over to him. "Not good enough for you?" she snarled, but he didn't hear.

Now Luxembourg was gone and another man was making his way onto the stage. He was rumped, his hair reaching upward in seven different directions, and he was easily twenty years older than the others. Another man. Where were the women? Were women not capable of magic? Josie tried to remember having seen or heard of any female magician and couldn't. My God, she thought! How can that be? What about Lady Magic? Why do we accept all these men, all these silken heavy-breathing men? And now this one, this crumpled one—he made no effort at all to be pretty like the others. He had no lovely assistant, and, it soon became clear, he didn't intend to do any magic. She looked for the waitress. Where was the waitress?

There was only the rumped man standing at the edge of the stage. He was telling the audience that he'd worked for some time at a post office, and had memorized most Zip Codes.

He'll get murdered, Josie thought. What kind of world is this, when a man from the post office follows Luxembourgian magic, and why were they, she and her kids, on this ship in the first place? With incredible clarity she knew, then, that the answer to her life was that at every opportunity she'd made precisely the wrong choice. She had been a dentist for a decade but for most of that time had not wanted to be a dentist. What could she do now?

Then it came to her. She was sure, at that moment, that she was meant to be a tugboat captain. My God, she thought, my God. At thirty-eight, she finally knew! She would lead the ships to safety. That was why she'd come to Seward! There had to be a tugboat school in town. It all made sense. She could do that, and her days would be varied but always heroic.



"The police are here. You might want to put on something less fugitivey."

She looked at her children, and saw that Paul was now leaning against Charlie, asleep. Her son was asleep against this strange old man, and they were in Seward, Alaska. For the first time, she realized that Seward sounded like “sewer,” and thought this an unfortunate thing, given that Seward as a place was very dramatic, and very clean, and she thought it very beautiful, maybe the most beautiful place she’d ever been. It was here that she would stay, and train to become a tugboat captain at the school that she would find tomorrow. All was aligned, all was right. And now, looking at her son sleeping against this man, this old man who was leaning forward, listening to this other man talk about the post office, she felt her eyes welling up. She took a final sip from her third Pinot and wondered if she’d ever been happier. No, never. Impossible. This old man had found them, and it could not be coincidence. This town was now their home, the site of this ordained and holy reunion, and all the people around them were congregants, all of them exalted and now part of her life, her new life, the life she was meant for. Tugboat captain. Oh, yes, it had all been worth it. She sat back, knowing she’d arrived at her destiny.

Onstage, the post-office man was telling the audience that for any of them who gave him a postal code he could tell them what town they were from.

Josie assumed that this was some sort of a comedy bit, that he was kidding about the postal job, but immediately someone stood up and yelled, “59715!”

“Bozeman, Montana,” he said. “West side of town.”

The crowd erupted. The cheers were deafening. None of the magicians had elicited this kind of enthusiasm, nothing close. Now ten people were standing up, shouting out their Zip Codes.

Josie, despairing of the waitress’s return, downed half a glass of water, and that act, the dilution of the holy wine within her, took her away from the golden light of grace she’d felt moments before, and now she was sober or something like it. Tugboat captain? A voice was now speaking to her. What kind of imbecile are you? She didn’t like this new voice. This was the voice that had told her to become a dentist, that had told her to marry that man, the loose-bowelled man, the voice that every month told her to pay her water bill.

She was being pulled back from the light, like an almost-angel now being led back to the mundanity of earthly existence. The light was shrinking to a pinhole and the world around her was darkening to an everywhere burgundy. She was back inside the liver-colored room, and a man was talking about Zip Codes.

“O.K., you now,” the postal man said, and pointed to a white-haired woman in a patterned muumuu.

“62914,” she squealed.

“Cairo, Illinois,” he said, explaining that though it was spelled like the city in Egypt, it was pronounced “kay-ro,” the Illinois way. “Nice town,” he said.

The audience screamed, hooted. It was a travesty. Now Paul was awake, groggy and wondering what all the noise was about. Josie couldn’t bear it. The noise was not about fire and magic and tugboats: it was about Zip Codes.

“33950!” someone yelled.

“Punta Gorda, Florida,” the man said.

The crowd roared again. Ana looked around, unable to figure out what was happening. What was happening? Postal codes were making these people lose their minds. They all wanted to have their town named by the rumpled man with the microphone. They yelled their five digits and he guessed Shoshone, Idaho; New Paltz, New York; and Gary, Indiana. It was a melee. Josie feared that people would storm the stage and rip his clothes off. Go back to sleep, Paul, Josie wanted to say. She wanted to flee. Everything about all this was wrong, but she couldn’t leave, because now Charlie was standing up.

“63005!” he called out.

The spotlight found him and he repeated the numbers: “63005!”

“Chesterfield, Missouri,” the postal man said.

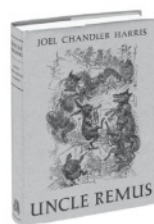
Charlie’s mouth dropped open. The spotlight stayed on him for a few seconds, and Charlie’s mouth remained agape, a black cave in the white light. Finally the light moved on, he was in darkness again, and—as if a spirit had held him aloft and suddenly let go—he sat down.

“Hear that?” he said to Paul. He turned to Josie and Ana, his eyes wet and his hands trembling. “Hear that? That man knows where I come from.” ♦

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THE CRITICS



BOOKS

LAUGH FACTORY

How Bob Hope made a career in comedy.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

When I was a teen-ager, I sort of hated Bob Hope. All of us did. Generationally crazy about the classics of American comedy—Groucho and Chaplin and Keaton and W. C. Fields—movie-loving kids could, in the nineteen-seventies, afford to be pious about the industrious, blue-collar types of that dispensation. Abbott and Costello and the Three Stooges had their Dada charm—they were working so hard that you couldn't help but laugh. Henny Youngman, with his violin and grinning, rapid-fire delivery, was cool in his dirty-uncle-at-the-bar-mitzvah way. (Philip Roth went on the record as a Youngman fan.) If you were lucky enough to get to stay home with a cold and watch reruns on morning television, you could catch Lucille Ball's and Jackie Gleason's fifties sitcoms, which were truly funny, and had neat theme music, too.

But Hope was beyond hope. There he was, year after year, on those post-Christmas U.S.O. specials, with shrieking starlets and shirtless soldiers, swinging his golf club like a swagger stick. He seemed barely interested in his jokes, which he recited rather than performed, their standardized rhythmic forms—"Hey, you know what A is? It's B!"; "Yeah, let me tell you: C reminds me of D"—more like the mumbled monotonous of some ancient scripture than like anything funny. James Agee's canonical essay on silent comedians used Hope as an example of everything that had gone wrong with movie comedy since sound came in.

Worse, Hope seemed like the perfect

jester for the Nixon court: contemptuous of his audience and even of his role. A rule of American life is that the same face often appears as comic and tragic masks on two public figures at the same time. The unsmiling and remote Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry and the ever-smiling but equally remote Johnny Carson were look-alikes of this kind through the seventies, and so in the early nineties were the shoegazing stoner twins of the rocker Kurt Cobain and the comedian Mitch Hedberg—both sweet and self-destructive and dead too young. Hope and Nixon had that kind of symmetry: the ski-jump nose; the hooded, darting, watchful eyes; the five-o'clock castaway shadow (in the thirties, Hope did razor-blade ads because of it); the flat, nowhere American accent; above all, the constant show of regular-guy companionability, unable to disguise for long the coldness and isolation at its core.

Woody Allen's was the one voice speaking up for Hope's genius in those years; he even did a Hope homage in "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex." But one felt that Allen liked Hope because he *needed* something from Hope's work for his own—perhaps a sense that this much verbal aggression was going to work out O.K., perhaps a desire to be pious about someone other than the obvious.

America, however, is the country of the eternal appeals court, where judgment, once it has worked its way through the system, has to work its way through it all over again. With a comedian or a

humorist, the newsweekly eulogy usually oversweetens the case, then the memorial makes some of the right jokes, and then the biography comes to make the last, best case for his importance. Richard Zoglin's biography "Hope" (Simon & Schuster) does such an effective job of arguing the appeal that even the Hope-hater comes away eager to see more of his good early work, and more sympathetic to the forces in his life and in the country's which left him hard to like at the end.

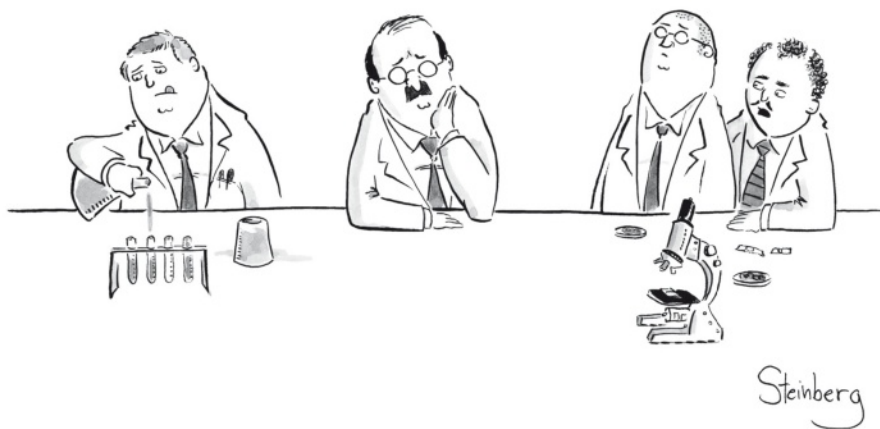
Bob Hope, we learn, was born outside London in 1903, and remained in one respect more English than American: the truest thing that can be said about his inner life is that he chose not to have one. His hard-drinking father was a stone cutter—a mediocre artisan in a dying field, who, failing to make a living in London, immigrated to Cleveland only to fail further there. Hope's mother brought up seven boys in drear, impoverished conditions. The outer fringes of London and then industrial Cleveland were not places designed to bring out the beaming aesthete in any man. The grim determination with which Hope pursued his career is perfectly understandable if you first grasp the grim lack of determination with which his father pursued his own.

Some successful performers are perpetually on, and some are just perpetually pushing. Hope was the second type. You almost have a sense, following his progress, that he became a comedian not because he much liked entertaining people but because he had to do *something*, and it beat all the other jobs on offer. Then he discovered that the same gift of sober perseverance that would push you up in any other business would push you up onstage. In the mid-twenties, he hopped onto what was left of the vaudeville circuit, which, one gathers, was a bit like writing for the Huffington Post today: to do it, you did it. The early notices suggest that Hope was an efficient comic rather than an inspired one—a swift retailer of as many jokes as he could borrow from other comedians or steal from magazines. This made his rise surprisingly swift without, at first, being particularly notable. He was successful before he had a style.

His real reputation was made on Broadway, when, in 1936, he was lifted out of



Hope was, in his own mind, the author of his material even if he didn't write it. He created the character the writers merely fed.



"His is a thought experiment."

the ranks of scuffling comics to star with Ethel Merman and Jimmy Durante in Cole Porter's "Red, Hot and Blue." (In a duet he sang with Merman, he introduced the Porter standard "It's De-lovely.") He was what was called brash, and could dance lightly on the surface of conventional comedy, without melodrama or pathos. "He knows a poor joke when he hides it," a critic wrote of Hope on Broadway, and he always would.

It was the final, onstage translation of all that pure ambition. Hope knew that there were many laughs to be had by laughing at the whole business of making people laugh. Early on, he had hired stooges to heckle him from the wings during his act. "Don't you boys know you can be arrested for annoying an audience?" Hope would snap. "You should know!" was their reply. (Johnny Carson took this manner over whole, knowing how to get laughs out of the failure of a one-liner.)

Onstage, Hope was a wise guy and a go-getter—"cocky, brash, and bump-tious" was his own summing up. Durante, Bert Lahr, and, later, Jackie Gleason played at being lovable naïfs of a kind. The personae presented by Groucho and W. C. Fields represented another form of displacement: Fields a nineteenth-century con man lost in the new world of immigrant energies, Groucho a rabbinic disputant without a congregation to listen to him. Hope, by contrast, was all the things comedians are not supposed to be: sure of himself, self-satisfied, a man justified in his complacency. He got his laughs by hovering knowingly over his

material, without worrying it too much. Hope was entirely a city smart-aleck. (It was already an American voice, right out of Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt.")

The Marx Brothers were satiric—they were against war and authority—but they were not particularly topical. Hope was always "on the news" in a nicely breezy way. Zoglin retails some of his lines from his first movie hit, the horror-flick parody "The Cat and the Canary": Someone asks whether he believes in reincarnation—"You know, that dead people come back." Hope: "You mean like the Republicans?" Will Rogers preceded him in this, but that was slow-spoken country-boy wisdom. Hope was tabloid-alert, and very New York. He later referred to his "suave, sterling style" on Broadway; Hollywood to his mind was mere "Hicksville."

He was also what was called in those days an "inveterate skirt-chaser." After an early and unsuccessful marriage to a vaudeville partner, he made an early and successful marriage to a minor singer, Dolores Reade. It was successful in the sense that they stuck together and raised children—she was devoutly Catholic—and that she permanently stabilized his life. Along the way, however, he had an apparently unending series of sexual escapades. Most of his assignations were with little-remembered beauty queens and chorus girls, though he did tell a friend that he had had sex with the brass-tongued Merman in doorways all the way up Eighth Avenue. Although all this was widely known, Zoglin points out, no one chose to notice. Some work went

into this. Hope's agent Louis Shurr once said, brutally, to a new Hope publicist, "Our mission in life is to keep all news about fucking and sucking away from Dolores."

It was in Hollywood, hick town or no, that he got paired with Bing Crosby, a much bigger star, in a small buddy comedy called "The Road to Singapore" (1940). This was the first of the series of "Road" movies—"The Road to Morocco," "The Road to Utopia," "The Road to Rio"—which made him a household name, and are his best shot at posterity. They really are funny, and curiously modern, and a key part of this, strange to say, is Hope's sex appeal. He's a self-confident wise guy—exposed as a coward but not as a nebbish. Riding the back of a camel with Crosby in "Road to Morocco," he's as at ease in his undershirt as Brando.

Zoglin is right that the meta-comedy, "the fourth-wall-breaking," of those movies is still charming, and must have seemed startling at the time. After Hope stops to recapitulate the plot in "Morocco," Crosby protests that he knows all that. "Yeah, but the people who came in the middle of the picture don't," Hope replies. This is a stunt, and we buy it because the characters are so companionable—the real subject of the movies was Bob and Bing's friendship, and our sense that, as with Redford and Newman later on, they were funny, attractive equals. Crosby isn't truly a straight man; Hope isn't truly a clown. The Hope character doesn't see himself as ineligible for Dorothy Lamour, just squeezed out.

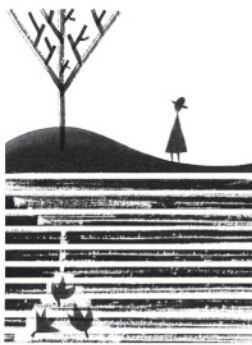
The simulation of that brotherly relationship turns out to be an artistic invention of the movies. In truth, the two men barely tolerated each other. "He was a son of a bitch," Hope remarked after Crosby's death. Hope's brand of sullen and Crosby's brand of sullen were different: Hope's outwardly genial and inwardly inert, Crosby's fuelled by alcohol and anger, and perhaps by enough intelligence to make this great jazz singer, once described as the "first hip white person in America," think that he was wasting his talent on these matters.

Hope, in the "Road" movies of the forties and in such solo projects as the fine costume-drama parody "Monsieur Beaucaire" (1946), inhabited a

character—the panicked, helpless Lothario, too busy trying to talk his way out of trouble to actually do something to avoid it. It's a stock character, a Shakespearean character, really: Sir Toby Belch or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, the loud-mouthed coward, juxtaposed as usual with the smooth fraud. (How well Hope and Crosby would have played Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in "Twelfth Night," if anyone could have got them to do it.) But he made the classical type an American type, and it was immensely cheering in the midst of the war.

For a decade, from 1939 to 1950, Hope was consistently and even irresistibly funny, in a way now hard to analyze, since its later inferior, mechanical TV version is so close to it in style. Part of it is period parody. Hope is to the tough guys and hardboiled dicks of the forties what Woody Allen was to the smooth seducers of the sixties—at once boldly aspiring and obviously inadequate. "It only took brains, courage, and a gun," Hope announces in his 1947 parody film noir, "My Favorite Brunette." "And I had the gun." We know that's not a Groucho line, typically an overwrought boast that dissolves into wordplay. ("One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I don't know.") The key is the feint at courage, and the rueful confession of inadequacy. (As with his simple statement in "The Road to Zanzibar," as he leads Crosby into the unknown: "Oh, come on, you follow me. In front.")

Amputated abruptness is Hope's speaking style, mixed with a bemused Have-I-got-this-right? curiosity—the wise guy who knows what he doesn't quite get. In "Brunette," having been shown the death chamber at San Quentin, he says, "Gas! You haven't even put in electricity!" In "The Cat and the Canary," the heavy describes zombies ("You see them sometimes, walking around blindly with dead eyes, following orders, not knowing what they do and not caring"), and Hope, in a line balancing the joke about Republicans, says, "You mean like Democrats?" The joke depends on the openness of his expression. He isn't so much making fun



of tabloid politics as playing a guy whose whole experience is defined by them. He's the true American Babbitt: good-natured, ignorant, forever optimistic, his understanding of the universe limited to a tiny range of insular referents.

If the "Road" movies made him a forties star, the U.S.O. tours he undertook throughout Europe and the Pacific made him a forties hero. The U.S.O. tours have become a staple of American entertainment, but Zoglin points out that they were an entirely new thing at the time, and Hope and his troupe took real and at times hair-raising risks. Zoglin enumerates the list of runways barely found on foggy flights that seem doomed midway, of German attacks just missed.

The real parallel to Hope—the great American comedian whose career most closely resembles his—is, of course, Bugs Bunny. Like Hope, he arrived in Hollywood in the late thirties and became a huge star with the war. Like Hope, he was usually paired with a more inward character who loves to sing (Daffy Duck is Bugs's Bing, though blustery rather than cool), and, like Hope, his appeal rises entirely from the limitless brashness and self-confidence with which he approaches even the most threatening circumstances. Together, they are the highest expression of the smart-aleck sensibility in American laughter. Their fame in wartime may have something to do with the way that, as A. J. Liebling documents, the American Army itself was essentially an urban creature dispatched to deserts and jungles: Bugs, with his Bronx-Brooklyn accent, has somehow been sent out there in the countryside, among the hunters, as Hope ends up in the sands of Morocco with no weapon but street-corner sass.

There may be some deeper connection between the high-energy comedian and the needs of a wartime audience. The young Chaplin, whose rise coincided with the First World War, was a hyperactive mischief-maker, closing doors on the feet of gouty heavies and hooking up women's skirts and throwing feed to orphans as if in a farmyard, even going in one film to France and arresting the

of tabloid politics as playing a guy whose whole experience is defined by them. He's the true American Babbitt: good-natured, ignorant, forever optimistic, his understanding of the universe limited to a tiny range of insular referents.

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Kaiser. When civilians face mass conscription, the nonconscripted audience may feel the need for a comic hero who, though scared to death of everything, still has an answer for anything. Peacetime welcomes little fellows; wartime needs a wise guy. So in the peaceful post-Vietnam era, the sublime silliness of Steve Martin could blossom, while once the wars came back, in the nineties, the louder realists reigned again, as with the later, enraged George Carlin.

Following the national pattern, the urban New Dealer became an Eisenhower-era suburban golfer and real-estate mogul—at one time, Hope was said to be the largest single private landowner in California. As Zoglin notes, Hope's trajectory rose ever higher, while in some ways his first reputation, as a kind of joke machine, a repository of other writers' wit, returned. Hope made no secret of his writers' existence. ("I keep an earthquake emergency kit in my house. It's filled with food, water, and a half a dozen writers.") Nor did the manner of his telling disguise the fact that someone had told him what would be funny to say. He became a cue-card comedian—"Stay on the cards, kid," he warned the improvisational young Jonathan Winters—and could be seen to be reading off them even when you wouldn't think he had to. Even when he was playing golf with C.E.O.s, his writers would provide him with one-liners. (Before Hope died, he left to the Library of Congress eighty-five thousand pages of jokes.)

The curious thing about a comedian with a large, well-paid writing staff is that he is sure that he alone knows what's funny for him. Hope was like that. He remained, in his own mind, the author of his material, even if he didn't put down a word of it, because he had invented the character to whom the writers were merely feeding lines. Making up the character took years; finding new things for him to say is easy. The performer's prejudice, though exasperating to the writers—was Groucho the vehicle of George S. Kaufman or his creation?—isn't entirely unjust. The comedian really does know his character inside out. Like the Old Master painter Raphael or Rubens, in his studio, passing out to the lesser assistants the lesser angels, the Master retains the authorship, because he thought up the way

to paint each dimple on each cherub's rear. All the writers or assistants have to do is do it again. Of course, from the writer's point of view, everything has altered as the situations and circumstances of the comedy alter—as, from the assistant's point of view, each angel's ass is unique to the angel. This tug-of-war between the Master and his paid seconds is eternal.

By the time Hope became, above all else, a television comedian, in the nineteen-fifties, his staff had congealed, and one has the sense that Hope himself lost track of the character. Where the forties Hope is a highly specific urban wise-guy type (what a good Nathan Detroit the forties Hope would have made!), the fifties Hope is a comedian in front of a curtain telling jokes. Cooling himself down for the new medium, he gave a performance that often feels jelled. The jokes in the Library of Congress have no particular "voice." Hope appreciated his writers, but it became hard for him to distinguish one from the next; the story is that he would bring his head writers in at Christmastime to get a gift, and then open the room in which he kept all the gifts he had received from sponsors and the like, and invite the writers to take what they wanted. It was generous and contemptuous at the same time. Though his bull pen of writers was not quite Sid Caesar calibre—Caesar had the Simon brothers, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks—it still contained stars, including the young Larry Gelbart, who is said to have witnessed, with Hope on a U.S.O. tour in the early fifties, the black comedy of a mobile-hospital unit in Korea that he later transferred to "M*A*S*H."

But this was the birth of the cue-card age, a time when politicians, too, could expect to recite words written entirely by others and still get full credit for the performance. Hope's Ted Sorensen was the writer Mort Lachman, nicknamed the Owl, who supplied him not just with jokes but with narration for his "ambassadorial" television specials, giving him words that were often simpler and more humane than most Cold War narration. Lachman wrote the concluding lines of Hope's delicately negotiated 1958 special from Moscow: "I found out that the little kids with the fur hats and the sticky faces have no politics, and that their party line is confined to 'please pass the ice cream.' . . . It would be nice if somebody

could work out a plan for peaceful coexistence, so that human beings like these don't become obsolete."

The U.S.O. tours continued through Korea and Vietnam and even into the first Gulf War, some forty years of Christmases, as people never tired of intoning, away from home. (But he didn't much want to be home.) There is a reasonable case to be made that the one who profited most from the perpetual U.S.O. touring was Bob Hope. He was well paid for the specials, which were broadcast on NBC every January. In a sense, the soldiers were being recruited as extras in a television program about Bob Hope. But there were easier ways for a man who was coming to own half of Southern California to make two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

The trouble was that the jokes, which had been so appealing when they came from a guise of helplessness, had become pure exercises in power. Usher on a starlet, usher off a quarterback, tell six indifferent one-liners ("I asked McNamara if we could come, and he said, 'Why not, we've tried everything else'"), and then try to stay awake as the troops cheer. A good joke comes back to me after all the decades, because it spoke for soldiers rather than for their keepers: "I tell you, when the enemy started firing I started running backwards so far that I almost bumped into a general." Still, the sixties were a time of more cultural multiplicity than memory likes to admit: "Love Is Blue," Paul Mauriat's "semiclassical" instrumental, was the No. 1 song for many weeks in 1968, and, as late as 1970, with the Beatles breaking up, Bob Hope's Christmas special drew close to a fifty share, with almost half the households with televisions in America watching. Many were, in effect, watching the old Hope, or their recollections of him. "Thanks for the Memory," indeed—it seems that rituals of generational piety can withstand vast amounts of audience abuse. People still show up to hear Bob Dylan display *his* sullen indifference to his aging audience, and cheer him as though they were, well, soldiers at war.

But it was not a time of cultural coexistence: things banged together instead of bouncing around congenially. Hope was one of the things that got banged. The later movies, and the later "memoirs" that went with them, the excruciatingly lazy joke

books—Ian Frazier wrote a very funny parody of them in these pages—are, as Zoglin knows, terrible, and he doesn't pretend to admire them. *Nolo contendere* is a good plea for late bad work. As Zoglin also notes sadly, it was Hope's seeming sponsorship of the Vietnam War that dampened his reputation in his lifetime, and lost him the claim on younger generations that Groucho reclaimed by being openly anti-war. Still, the movies and the television specials kept being made long after the ratings had plummeted and the comedian, in his eighties and nineties, was too obviously fragile to be funny. (He died just past his hundredth birthday.) Many institutions have one senior member who can't be used and can't be removed: the elderly Churchill was of that kind for the British Conservatives. Hope was that for NBC.

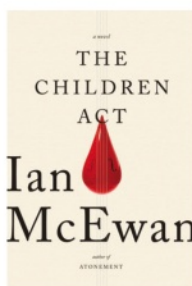
"How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!" Shakespeare has Hal, newly crowned, announce of Falstaff. The weird thing is that nobody minds a white-haired musician. Old baritones (even pop baritones, such as Sinatra) and aging conductors seem more lovable than old clowns. Crooners, perhaps because their work depends on the illusion of emotion, seem defiant of time. A comic, whose work depends on energy, seems victimized by it. When Sinatra had to stand still and speak his songs, he was still great; when Bob Hope seems to stumble, he's sad.

The best hope for aging clowns is to come back to sing. The ghost of Jimmy Durante was still moving as he chortled through "As Time Goes By" in "Sleepless in Seattle," even when he was no longer much remembered as a comic. When Groucho made his last Carnegie Hall appearance, the stories were shaky, but the songs ("Show Me a Rose") were beautiful. Of Hope's surviving performances, it may be, paradoxically, his songs that last longest and seem purest. Cole Porter's songs aside, Hope had at least two wonderful tunes written especially for him: Frank Loesser's "Two Sleepy People" and Leo Robin's "Thanks for the Memory," Hope's theme song. Even as late as 1985, when he sang a version of it with special Christmas lyrics, Hope comes alive a little as he sings: though his body seems aged, locked in place, his voice still rises from the weary rhythms of joke-telling to conjure again the eager song-and-dance man who once lit up Broadway. You've got to love him, some. ♦

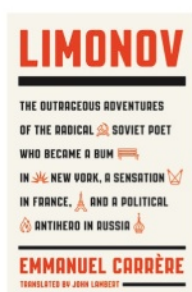
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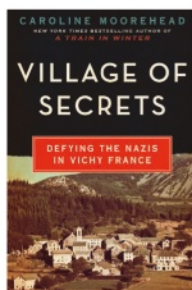
THE BOOK OF STRANGE NEW THINGS, by Michel Faber (*Hogarth*). In this futuristic novel by the author of the epic "The Crimson Petal and the White," Peter Leigh, a priest, has been chosen by a mysterious corporation to serve as a missionary to the inscrutable native inhabitants of a distant planet. He leaves his brilliant, devoted wife, Bea, back on Earth, and a great deal of the novel is made up of their increasingly strained correspondence. Peter is thrilled to find the locals amenable to his proselytizing, while Bea describes terrifying developments at home, including natural disasters and food shortages. Faber illustrates, movingly, the impossibility of adequate communication in the face of life-changing experience. The novel's pace can be overly deliberate, but its details are rich and memorable.



THE CHILDREN ACT, by Ian McEwan (*Nan A. Talese*). A moral dilemma lies at the heart of this novel: a young man refuses medical treatment because of his religious beliefs, and the secular establishment tries to save him from the "cult"-like influence of his parents. The judge presiding over the case is herself in crisis: her husband has told her he wants to start an affair with a younger woman, and she reflects that she has been "drifting deeper into family law as the idea of her own family receded." The book's tight scheme leaves some characters underdeveloped, but the ideas about religion and society are absorbing. Moral systems, McEwan writes, are "like peaks in a dense mountain range seen from a great distance, none obviously higher, more important, truer than another."



LIMONOV, by Emmanuel Carrère, translated from the French by John Lambert (*Farrar, Straus & Giroux*). Like this maddening, electrifying book—equal parts biography, adventure yarn, and ode—the Russian writer and sometime political agitator Eduard Limonov is a shape-shifter. Born in 1943, he has been a foundry worker and a poet in the U.S.S.R.; a bum and a butler in New York; a literary star in Paris; a fighter in the Balkans; the leader of an ultra-nationalist party in Moscow. Carrère recognizes the risk of being seduced by his subject's outsize life and macho self-mythologizing. "There were times when I hated Limonov," he confesses, but he is drawn to Limonov's determination to be "a hero, a truly great man." Carrère's prose has a brash punk energy; his refusal to flatten Limonov with easy judgment gives the book its life.



VILLAGE OF SECRETS, by Caroline Moorehead (*Harper*). In 1941, in German-occupied France, Jewish children were smuggled to le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a small town high on a plateau in the center of the country. Le Chambon has long been mythologized in France for the actions of its inhabitants, who sheltered the refugees and helped many escape to Switzerland. But, as this riveting history shows, the story is more complex. Instead of one village, there were several, and the inhabitants were far from united in the decision to help: some, indeed, were anti-Semitic. But if the picture Moorehead paints is messier than the myth, this only serves to enhance the heroism of the main actors, who not only deflected prying by the Nazis but overcame dissension in their own ranks.

ON TELEVISION

RETURN OF THE REPRESSED

"The Comeback" comes back.

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



HBO's "The Comeback," which was co-created by Lisa Kudrow and Michael Patrick King, ran for one razor-sharp season, in 2005. Luckily, largely owing to HBO GO, the series outlived its cancellation. Among comedy cultists, it gained a reputation as the great lost cringe comedy, at once hilarious and heartbreaking, with Kudrow's Valerie Cherish, a washed-up sitcom star, the peer of Larry David in "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and David Brent in "The Office." Like those two shows, "The Comeback" was fake *cinéma vérité*: the "unedited footage" of a reality show that documented the production of a sitcom, "Room and Bored," that Valerie hoped would make

her a star again. Instead, she finds herself cast as Aunt Sassy, a dirty-joke sidekick. As the writers turn against her, Valerie steps into trap after trap, until, by the finale, she's become so desperate to be liked that she stage-dives into humiliation, signing vomit bags for reality fans.

Then, last year, a miracle happened: a resurrection. Nearly a decade after cancelling the series, HBO agreed to produce a comeback of "The Comeback"—a second season with the same core cast. The result, which debuted last weekend, is as spiny and audacious as the original, but very different, because it isn't aimed at "celebrity" or network sitcoms, now dated targets. Instead, King and Kudrow go for

something with more cachet: the auteurist pay-cable antihero series. In the first episode, as Valerie prepares to pitch a new reality series to Bravo, she discovers that there's already a show in development based on her life—"Seeing Red," an HBO dramedy, created by her former nemesis, the sitcom writer Paulie G. It's a scripted re-creation of the terrible events of the original "Comeback," but from Paulie's perspective. Naturally, Valerie ends up starring in the show, as Mallory Church, in a red wig that looks exactly like her own red hair, insisting, once again, that the character she's playing is nothing like her.

Of course, every bit of this is absurdly self-referential. In the nineties, Kudrow starred on "Friends," which inspired a lawsuit over a sexist writers' room whose members, like those on the fictional "Room and Bored," blew off steam by fantasizing the sexual humiliation of the show's actresses. "Seeing Red" is an HBO dramedy inside an HBO dramedy. King was the showrunner for "Sex and the City": when the self-involved Valerie spots a poster for that show in HBO's halls, she coos that now she'll be "one of the girls." (She hasn't seen Lela Durham's "Girls," but she's heard good buzz.) Bravo's Andy Cohen plays himself; Seth Rogen plays Seth Rogen, who plays Paulie in "Seeing Red." When observers praise Valerie for her "real" looks and her "brave" performance, it echoes the coded praise that Kudrow received for "The Comeback."

If you're a certain type of reader, this description may make you recoil—so "meta," so "ironic," so many "air quotes." "The Comeback" is, it's true, a scripted series about a reality series about a reality star making a scripted series about the time she made a reality show about a scripted series. It's less a hall of mirrors than a kaleidoscope, with each surface reflecting a TV set. But it's worth remembering that meta-comedy isn't a modern innovation: "I Love Lucy," the original sitcom, was a meta-comedy fuelled by the contrast between Lucy Ricardo's desperation for fame and Lucille Ball's actual fame. In the decades since Lucy threw her first tantrum, the anger of TV writers, and their frustration at TV's limitations, has inspired a startling proportion of TV's best comedies. "Monty Python" mocked the pomposity of the BBC; "All in the Family" exploded "Father Knows Best";

"The Comeback" is less a hall of mirrors than a kaleidoscope, reflecting a TV set.

“30 Rock” took aim at NBC. “The Dick Van Dyke Show” was Carl Reiner’s attempt to exorcise the experience of working on Sid Caesar’s “Your Show of Shows,” and Dan Harmon’s “Community” is, often enough, a show about how difficult it is to make “Community” with Dan Harmon. At their best, such shows double as manifestos against broken systems—they’re do-overs for traumatized creatives, who, like Valerie, keep reliving the same painful story, hoping to find a better ending.

Certainly, that’s part of what made the original “Comeback” so pungent: it was a denunciation of a new genre—the star-studded reality show—that fed on L.A. desperation and threatened the livelihood of writers. It was also a searing critique of the crazy-making environment for older actresses. Halfway through the first season, Valerie—whose complaints about crass gags alienated the men who wrote them—went to the writers’ room, at 2 A.M., with cookies, hoping to make amends. As reality cameras peeked through the blinds, she caught a glimpse of the phenomenon that the director James Burrows (who played himself) called “The Hate Show.” The writers were miming rough sex with her: one pulls an orange T-shirt over his head to simulate her hair while another bends “Valerie” over the table. The sole “girl writer” watches silently. Valerie’s response is to act as if this weren’t happening—or, if it is, as if it’s no big deal. But her facial expression is broken glass. It’s the explicit form of Aunt Sassy’s catchphrase: “I don’t need to *see* that.”

In the new season, Valerie faces similar pressures, but in a different context. There is no writers’ room now. Instead, Paulie G, who has been through rehab for heroin addiction, is a freshly anointed auteur, writing each episode himself, and directing, too, even though he has no experience behind the camera. The HBO imprimatur gives Valerie, and her reality producer, the chance for a big paycheck, plus tickets to the “Golden Globes.” But “prestige dramedy” has its own humiliations. In “The Comeback”’s standout sequence, Valerie films the sort of graphic sex scene that’s become a numbing cable convention. A two-minute-long, mostly wide-frame shot—in which Valerie, clothed as Aunt Sassy, stands flanked by two naked porn actresses, who moan or-

gasmically—is at once hilarious and excruciating, deliberately lingering past the point of comfort. The sequence paralyzes the viewer, pulling off a satirical triple lutz, a critique that doubles as the thing being critiqued. Valerie knows enough to praise those naked girls: “So free! So beautiful, really.” Her job, she’s learned, is to be a good sport. Any hint of resistance might get her tagged as “difficult.”

There are plenty of shows that this sequence echoes, but the one that immediately came to mind was Showtime’s “Californication,” whose recent final season was also about a womanizing addict (David Duchovny, as the novelist Hank Moody) writing for an antihero series. Like the HBO show “Entourage” (which debuted a year before “The Comeback”), “Californication” was a meta-comedy packed with celebrities doing playful take-downs of their images, insider references to Hollywood decadence, and female characters who were a mixture of friendly bimbos and feminist sharks, the latter of whom generally stripped down to reveal their expensive lingerie and inner bimbo. But, unlike the puppyish “Entourage,” “Californication” became a toxic mess, with great actresses like Kathleen Turner reduced to roles as one-note ball-busters. In the final season, the wonderful Mary Lynn Rajskub showed up in the mortifying guise of “girl writer” Goldie, who was whiny, allergic to everything, and obsessed with the idea that she wasn’t hot enough for the showrunner to screw. The season felt like the opposite of “The Comeback”: it happily fellated the corrupt system that it pretended to satirize. Only one of these shows is still on TV. Progress!

The original “Comeback” may have emerged too early, before the rise of the alienating heroine, from Mindy Lahiri to Carrie Mathison, Hannah Horvath, and Olivia Pope. Even among this sorority, however, Valerie stands apart. With her Katharine Hepburn warble and her synthetic grin, Kudrow’s Valerie is a marvel: the performance veers toward cruel camp, then shivers with vulnerability. Like Holly Golightly, Valerie is no phony, because she’s a real phony. From a certain angle, even her narcissism begins to seem valiant—a stubborn resistance to an industry that wishes she’d disappear. In Valerie’s lifelong staring contest with the camera, she won’t be the first to blink. ♦

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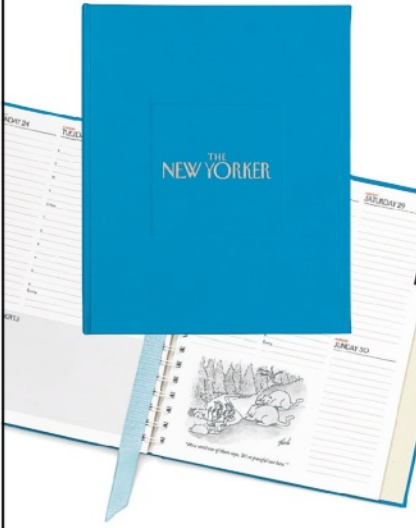


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HARD KNOCKS

"Foxcatcher" and "The Homesman."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Steve Carell stars in Bennett Miller's new movie, based on a true story.

There are four main characters in “Foxcatcher,” all based on historical fact. First, Mark Schultz (Channing Tatum), a freestyle wrestler who won a gold medal at the 1984 Summer Olympics, in Los Angeles. Second, his brother, Dave Schultz (Mark Ruffalo), who won a gold at the same Games, at a lighter weight. Third, John du Pont (Steve Carell), an heir to the du Pont family fortune. And fourth, John’s nose, which really is one of the leading schnozzes in movie history, up there with the front end of Dumbo and the eponymous hero of “The Concorde: Airport ’79.”

The nose matters, because people don’t gawk at it even when it pokes into their business. And why? Money. John is filthy rich, thanks to the gunpowder that his forebears manufactured in the nineteenth century, and to the vast chemical company that ensued; it prospers to this day. When you see the house and grounds where John resides, in Pennsylvania, with his mother (Vanessa Redgrave), an obsequious staff, and a stable of Thoroughbreds, you have to ask if the worst habits of the Old World,

where dynastic misfits called the shots, have ever been properly erased by the New. John, for example, is a total loser posing as a winner, but at no point in the film does anyone have the nerve to say so.

Then, there is Mark. Three years after the Olympics, his fettle is undiminished, with no slack in the vales of his muscle, and his neck still apparently hewn from the trunk of an oak, but his spirit has run to fat. We find him living alone, supping on noodles, and earning twenty dollars for showing his medal to schoolchildren. Picture his bemusement when, out of the blue, he is invited to the du Pont estate, and gently deposited by private chopper on the sward. In a sublime shot, he stands in the hush of the library, not daring to move: the bull completely cowed by the china shop. Enter John, who confides, “I have a deep love of the sport of wrestling.” Contact. Rich is calling to poor; the strong man has been summoned by the weak. From here, “Foxcatcher” will track the colliding of two antithetical worlds. The cause of that collision is sports.

The director is Bennett Miller, whose

previous film, “Moneyball,” centered on the shining season of 2002 that was enjoyed by the Oakland A’s, with a little help from a friendly statistician. What happens, the movie inquired, when the realm of physical prowess is invaded by those of flabbier gifts? Does the geek drain the magic from the jocks, or spur them to new heights? In “Foxcatcher,” which could be seen as a doomier sequel to “Moneyball,” John dreams of putting together a wrestling team that will excel at the World Championships, and then at the next Olympics. He has already built a spotless training facility, plus accommodations, when Mark arrives, and the idea is that Dave, who has a job and a home elsewhere, will also be lured along. “You can’t buy Dave,” Mark says. You expect John to sneer, or flash with anger, but Carell gives the moment a beautiful twist: dead-eyed, he gazes into the air, as if sniffing an unfamiliar smell, and answers, simply, “Huh.” The concept of a man without a price has never, until now, passed across the desert of his mind.

Undaunted, John raises his offer until Dave is persuaded. He moves in, bringing his wife (Sienna Miller), his kids, and a surge of pragmatism and warmth—which is pretty much guaranteed when you cast Mark Ruffalo, who does for “Foxcatcher” what he did for “The Avengers.” He becomes the credible hulk. There is nothing more painful than the sight of Dave squirming in front of a camera, as an interviewer, making a promotional video, asks whether John du Pont has indeed been his mentor and his inspiration. The correct answer would be “No, he’s more like Norman Bates with a trust fund,” but Dave is too nice to tell the truth.

How relations between John and the Schultzes went rotten, and how grim the outcome was, is a matter of public record. If you don’t know the facts, try to keep it that way until you see “Foxcatcher,” the better to savor its strangeness. We soon realize that John is attracted to Mark, half hiding his desires in pitiful horseplay, and that Mark, his arms and his jaw hanging low, will never be able to vent himself in words as he can on the mat, but so skilled are both Carell and Tatum that the movie itself falls prey to the characters’ repression. Though never less than careful and

clever, it's also a stunted and fiercely unhappy piece of work, straining hard to deliver home truths about a common-weal that has beaten itself out of shape. "I'm here to talk about America," Mark says to the schoolchildren at the start, and the action closes, more than two hours later, to roars of "U.S.A.!", which are suddenly cut off, mid-cry. John, for his part, admits that "I want to see this country soar again," and likes to cast himself in a patriotic mold: "Most of my friends will call me Eagle, or Golden Eagle." This is clearly absurd, and it earns Carell a laugh (a rare treat, in this morose atmosphere), but does John represent anything larger than himself—a wider moral warping—or is he merely, as I suspect, a one-off whack job and a crushing bore?

Despite that, there is plenty here to draw and hold the eye. Miller, ever fastidious, is keen to avoid the traditional traps of the sports movie (the coach as barnstormer, the bunch and pump of the fists, the slow-motion paeans to glory), but that's all the more reason to relish those occasions when he does let the athletes off the leash. Look at Mark, framed in long shot as he rehearses his moves on John's humongous lawn, much as a lonesome Brad Pitt, in "Moneyball," wanders the green expanse of the Oakland Coliseum. At the other extreme, rich in closeups, is the Schultzes' first scene together, when they lock and grapple, almost wordlessly, in the gym. It's a daily workout, but they don't hang back, and what begins as a near-embrace—the embodiment of brotherly love—ends in sweat and blood. Sometimes "Foxcatcher" is so

busy wrestling with hefty themes that it forgets to entertain, but all its virtues are held in that magnificent clinch.

The new Tommy Lee Jones film, "The Homesman," is set in the Nebraska Territory, which existed from 1854 to 1867. Whether you can call it existence is debatable; what we see is a pale-dusted flatland, unrelieved and fruitless. Even the sunshine feels bleached, emitting no ray of hope. Any "Star Wars" character, swinging by from the planet Tatooine, would feel right at home here, but the resident humans have had enough. Three women are driven mad; children perish, and in one terrible image a baby is thrown away, like so much waste. It is therefore decreed, by the menfolk and the local preacher (John Lithgow), that the women should be transported back east, across the Missouri River to Hebron, Iowa. One of them, at least, is headed for an asylum. The world is all frying pans and fires.

Taking charge of the trio is another woman, Mary Bee Cuddy (Hilary Swank), who, far from having lost her mind, knows it very well. "I live uncommonly alone," she says. Mary Bee is a spinster, plain of speech and mien, who runs her own farmstead. "You're as good a man as any man," she is told, and it's meant as a compliment. Fate hooks her up with George Briggs (played by Jones), a scoundrel and a claim jumper, whom she rescues from hanging on the condition that he help her on the difficult trek. His condition is that she provide a jug of whiskey. And, with that, our odd couple is in place. They embark,

with the unfortunate women secured in a wagon that looks like a jail cell on wheels, drawn by a pair of mules whom Mary Bee, a God-fearing soul, christens Redemption and Grace.

All this makes "The Homesman" sound antique—not just a period drama but a drama that could have been made in another age. Certainly, there is a sturdiness to it, and a stubborn want of haste, that might have earned an approving growl from John Ford. But Jones, though defiantly unhip, gives off a desperate bleakness—visible in "The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada" (2005), his debut as a big-screen director—that roots him squarely in our time. Along with that goes a taste not merely for wilderness but for wildness (twice, he drops into a capering jig), and an ornery humor. Dry smiles crack the creases in his face, and his opening scenes in "The Homesman" are, if anything, a bit too ripe with comic effort, as though the story were set on a path so brutish that it needed reining in. Why else would he start the movie in his long johns? And yet what matters most about "The Homesman," which Jones co-wrote and directed, is how willingly, and movingly, he cedes the stage to Hilary Swank, as Clint Eastwood did in "Million Dollar Baby." She cuts the kind of figure who used to make Gary Cooper take off his hat, fiddle with the brim, and gaze in confusion at his boots. First rule of a tough guy: know when you've met your match. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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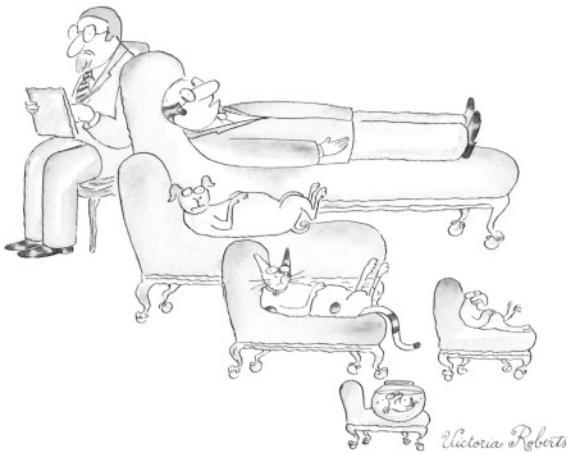
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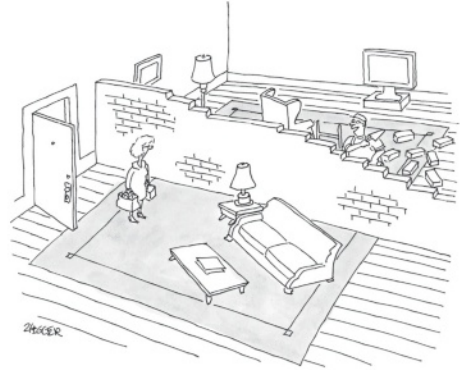
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by J. C. Duffy, must be received by Sunday, November 16th. The finalists in the November 3rd contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 1st issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"My pets found out they were adopted."
Alonso Cisneros, New York City



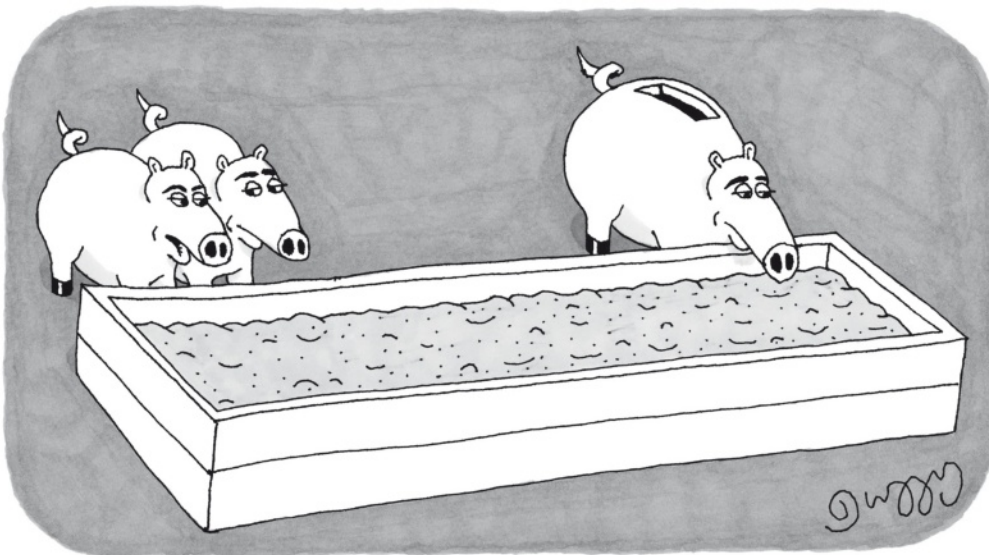
THE FINALISTS

"Which kid do you want?"
Sam Reisman, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"I think we should stop seeing each other."
Anthony Nelson, Brisbane, Australia


"Happy anniversary!"
Julia Finkelstein, New York City

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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