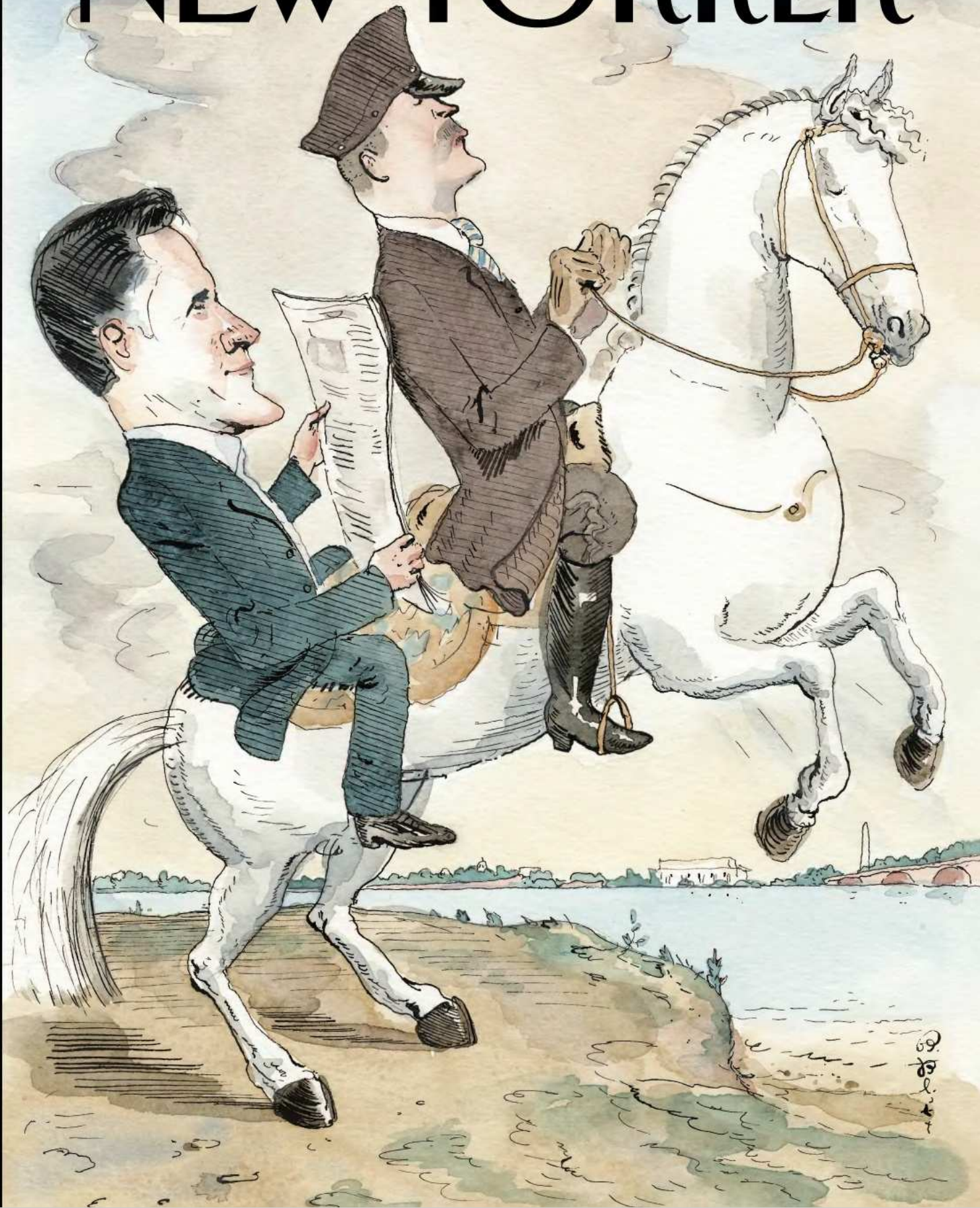


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THE

OCT. 1, 2012

NEW YORKER



Robert Crumb

The background is a vibrant blue gradient, darker at the top and bottom, with a bright white glow in the center. Numerous letters of various fonts and sizes are scattered throughout, appearing to fall from the top. In the upper center, a small, glowing book is open, emitting a soft light. The text is centered and reads:

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THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 1, 2012

- 4 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
- 21 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Steve Coll on Islam and the West; Bob Dylan records; Brooklyn art.

- Jerome Groopman 26 MEDICAL DISPATCHES
*Sex and the Superbug
The threat of drug-resistant gonorrhea.*
- Bill Barol 31 SHOUTS & MURMURS
My Name Is Joe Biden and I'll Be Your Server
- Margaret Talbot 32 PERSONAL HISTORY
*The Screen Test
An actor's arrival in old Hollywood.*
- Nicholas Lemann 38 A REPORTER AT LARGE
*Transaction Man
The mind of Mitt Romney.*
- Ian Parker 52 PROFILES
*Mugglemarch
J. K. Rowling's first adult fiction.*
- Stefano De Luigi 58 PORTFOLIO
In Homer's footsteps with an iPhone.
- Tony Earley 64 FICTION
"Jack and the Mad Dog"

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

- Dorothy Wickenden 72 *The life of William H. Seward.*
- 78 Briefly Noted
- John Lahr 80 THE THEATRE
*"If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet,"
"Detroit."*
- Emily Nussbaum 82 ON TELEVISION
The third season of "Treme."
- Anthony Lane 84 THE CURRENT CINEMA
*"Looper," "Investigation of a
Citizen Above Suspicion."*

POEMS

- Lia Purpura 35 "Allegories"
- John Ashbery 57 "The Short Answer"

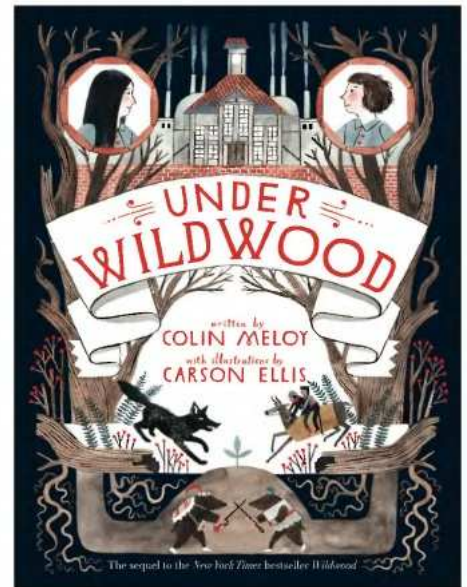
COVER "Driven," by Barry Blitt **DRAWINGS** Robert Mankoff, David Borchart, Robert Leighton, Zachary Kanin, Julia Suits, Emily Flake, Tom Cheney, Ariel Mokvig, Victoria Roberts, Bruce Eric Kaplan, David Sipress, Matthew Diffie, Danny Shanahan, Paul Noth, Roz Chast, Lee Lorenz, Tom Toro, Harry Bliss, Barbara Smaller, Jack Ziegler
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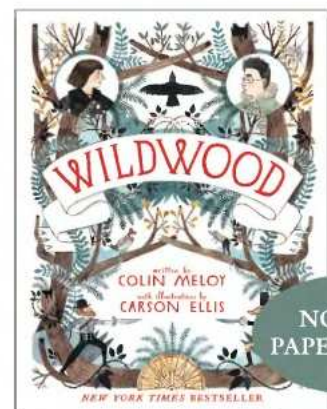


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ON THE TOWN

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Robert Capa, "Pablo Picasso and Françoise Gilot, Golfe-Juan, France," 1948 © ICP/Magnum Photos (Aperture limited-edition print, 1996)

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Jerome Groopman ("Sex and the Superbug," p. 26), the Recanati Professor at Harvard Medical School, is the co-author, with Pamela Hartzband, of "Your Medical Mind," which is just out in paperback.

Ian Frazier (The Talk of the Town, p. 23) will publish his first novel, "The Cursing Mommy's Book of Days," next month.

Bill Barol (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 31) is the author of the novel "Thanks for Killing Me."

Margaret Talbot ("The Screen Test," p. 32), a staff writer since 2003, will publish her first book, "The Entertainer: Movies, Magic, and My Father's Twentieth Century," in November.

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THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

The Political Scene: Analysis, podcasts, cartoons, video, and more about the 2012 campaign, at newyorker.com/politics. / The New Yorker Out Loud: *Margaret Talbot* and *Richard Brody* talk with *Michael Agger* about Hollywood in the nineteen-thirties. / Blogs: A new look for Photo Booth; Daily Comment by *Amy Davidson* and *Steve Coll*; *John Cassidy* on politics; *Sasha Frere-Jones* on music; *Evan Osnos* in China; the Borowitz Report; humor at Daily Shouts; essays on books at Page-Turner; and more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and cover jigsaw puzzles. / Our complete archive, back to 1925.



THE MAIL

DRUG TRIALS

I read Oliver Sacks's article on his youthful experiments with psychoactive drugs with more than casual interest, because my father, Charles Savage, was one of the pioneering physicians to use LSD as a tool in psychotherapy ("Altered States," August 27th). He began his work in the Navy during the Korean War, then continued it at the National Institute of Mental Health and at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, at Spring Grove Hospital Center. Those years, during the nineteen-fifties, sixties, and early seventies were, as Sacks writes, heady times. Aldous Huxley visited our home, and people from all over the world wanted to be subjects in the LSD research at Spring Grove. The efficacy of the drug as a therapeutic tool was grounded in the deep trust that patients developed with their therapists, a loving and supportive environment, and the profound sense of well-being and insight that some patients achieved. Most clinicians associated with my father's work were responsible and reliable, but there were always a few who were tempted to dip into the LSD stash for recreational use. This resulted in two psychotic episodes and one death. My father left the Maryland Research Center and abandoned his LSD research in the early seventies. I have often wondered whether, had history been different, LSD might be in use today as a part of psychotherapy. But, as Sacks's article shows, the temptation to experiment with this kind of drug is just too great. Lacking the context of a culture that supports shamanistic guidance for the young, the curious, and the foolish, the possibility for dangerous and even fatal consequences is great. And, regrettably, ours is a culture that is deeply suspicious of the unconscious, of mystery and the spiritual, and resentful of the time it takes for the intimate engagement required for such a therapy to work.

*Emmy Savage
Crestone, Colo.*

Sacks's article illustrates how the climate regarding the use of chemical aids to attain "intimations of immortality" has changed since the nineteen-fifties and sixties. Today, many people believe that day-to-day living is insufficient for human beings, that "we need to transcend, transport, escape"; we need meaning, understanding, and explanation, and we are ready to take risks in the search for larger views of ourselves and our world. When I published "The Psychedelic Teacher," in 1972, I felt pretty much alone in making that case. I was particularly touched by Sacks's search for "indigo." It reminded me of Heinrich Klüver's "Mescal and Mechanisms of Hallucinations," which was published in 1966. Surely, the recipes for indigo are there.

Ignacio L. Götz

*Stessin Distinguished Professor Emeritus
New College of Hofstra University
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Sacks's article detailing his personal experiences with mind-altering drugs, as a neurologist, will be helpful to my college world-religion students. However, practitioners of traditional religions might take issue with the Western tendency toward individual exploration in this area. Native American and other traditional cultures would always have a spiritual guide to support community members in their use of entheogens to generate the Divine within. The ritual use of entheogens could result in dramatic change, such as the birth of a new shaman, or the bringing back of an important message for the tribal community. The experience always had a larger purpose.

Father Brad Karelius

*Associate Professor of World Religions
Saddleback Community College
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•
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Moderated by

Simon Critchley

(The New School for
Social Research)

Truth vs. Experience in Probing Reality

with **Brian Greene**

Brian Greene, professor of mathematics and physics at Columbia University and co-founder of the World Science Festival, joins **Critchley** to discuss how human perception deceives us regarding the true nature of reality.



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ON TRUTH (AND LIES)



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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30	1	2	26	27	28	29

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE WE KNOW NOTHING

The innovative downtown composer and performer Dave Malloy takes on Tolstoy's "War and Peace," in "Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812." The show, resulting from Malloy's year as a composer-in-residence at Ars Nova, is billed as an electro-pop opera. Rachel Chavkin directs. (See page 6.)

NIGHT LIFE PLUS ÇA CHANGE

The Global Citizen Festival, organized to coincide with

the United Nations' General Assembly, brings Neil Young and Crazy Horse, the Black Keys, Foo Fighters, and others to Central Park for a free concert to fight world poverty. Tickets were awarded in exchange for good works, though V.I.P. tickets can still be purchased. (See page 8.)

ART DELICATE BALANCE

The Japan Society surveys the career of Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828), the samurai turned monk who revived the painting style called Rimpa, which was popular in the seventeenth century.

The show includes "Waves," a pair of silver-leaf screens installed next to the piece that inspired it, "Rough Waves," by the Rimpa master Ogata Kōrin; Hōitsu's diptych is so fragile that it is on loan for only the first six weeks of the show. (See page 11.)

DANCE MORE IS MORE

The "Fall for Dance" festival presents five surprisingly and productively mixed bills. Where else could one catch a program featuring the kuchipudi dancer Shantala Shivalingappa and the Pacific Northwest Ballet? (See page 13.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC LITTLE FEAT

David T. Little, a young composer and rock drummer who trained at the University of Michigan and at Princeton, has been gaining prominence for his raucously imaginative music-theatre pieces. He takes the plunge into grand opera with "Dog Days," which will be staged at Montclair State University, in collaboration with the producer Beth Morrison. (See page 13.)

"Big Band Hot 100," at Liberty Hall at the Ace Hotel. Photograph by Pari Dukovic.

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK LOCKED AND LOADED

Jack White's life has changed radically in the past few years. He's not married to the model and singer Karen Elson anymore, and he is no longer a member of the White Stripes, a band that he told the *Times* he would have been in "for the



rest of my life" if the drummer Meg White hadn't pulled the plug. Now, on tour after the release of a lean and loose solo album, "Blunderbuss," White decides at breakfast who will play with him. Sometimes it's a group of men called the Buzzards; other nights, it's an all-female band called the Peacocks. (The Peacocks skew slightly country, with the addition of a lap steel guitar.) In his shows, White draws on everything he's written—solo, White Stripes, Raconteurs, Dead Weather—and hits the stage full of energy, shtick much diminished. His March appearance on "Saturday Night Live" was last season's best moment of music, and the Webster Hall show filmed by Gary Oldman (and available on YouTube) proves that White has been reanimated by all the changes. He comes to Radio City Music Hall Sept. 29-30.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ADA (AUTHOR DIRECTING AUTHOR)

Neil LaBute directs Marco Calvani's "Things of This World," and Calvani directs LaBute's "Lovely Head"; the cast includes Craig Bierko, Estelle Parsons, Gia Crovatin, and Larry Pine. Previews begin Sept. 28. Opens Sept. 30. (La Mama, 66 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710.)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Jamie Lloyd directs Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of the classic 1897 play by Edmond Rostand, starring Douglas Hodge, Clémence Poésy, and Patrick Page. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DON'T GO GENTLE

MCC presents a new play by Stephen Belber, in which a widowed conservative judge takes on a pro-bono case. Lucie Tiberghien directs a cast that includes Michael Cristofer, David Wilson Barnes, Angela Lewis, and Jennifer Mudge. Previews begin Sept. 27. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

EDWARD ALBEE'S WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

The Steppenwolf Theatre production, starring Tracy Letts, Amy Morton, Carrie Coon, and Madison Dirks, is directed by Pam MacKinnon. Previews begin Sept. 27. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Manhattan Theatre Club opens its season with an adaptation, by Rebecca Lenkiewicz, of the 1882 Ibsen play, about a doctor who discovers contaminated water in his town. Boyd Gaines and Richard Thomas star; Doug Hughes directs. In previews. Opens Sept. 27. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

GRACE

Craig Wright's dark comedy follows a young Florida couple as they attempt to open a chain of Gospel-themed motels. Paul Rudd, Michael Shannon, Ed Asner, and Kate Arrington star; Dexter Bullard directs. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

HARPER REGAN

Atlantic Theatre Company kicks off the season with a play by Simon Stephens, in which a woman walks away from her family. Mary McCann stars; Gaye Taylor Upchurch directs. In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200.)

HERESY

Jim Simpson directs a new comedy by A. R. Gurney, which explores how far the American government will go to achieve its goals. Previews begin Sept. 29. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

HIM

Primary Stages presents the world premiere of a drama by Daisy Foote, about siblings who, in an attempt to save their family's store, find themselves torn between their father and a faltering financial situation. Evan Yionoulis directs. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

LOVERS

TACT begins its twentieth-anniversary season with Brian Friel's dark comedy from 1968, about two couples whose relationships follow very different courses. Drew Barr directs. In previews. Opens Sept. 27. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

MARRY ME A LITTLE

Keen Company kicks off the season with the musical by Stephen Sondheim, directed by Jonathan Silverstein. In previews. Opens Oct. 2. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

MODERN TERRORISM, OR THEY WHO

WANT TO KILL US AND HOW WE LEARN TO LOVE THEM

Second Stage begins its season with this dark satirical comedy by Jon Kern, about a group of terrorists. Directed by Peter DuBois. In previews. (305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812

The composer Dave Malloy ("Beowulf") and the director Rachel Chavkin bring this folk-indie-rock-

opera adaptation of Tolstoy's "War and Peace" to Ars Nova. Previews begin Oct. 1. (511 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD MOON

PigPen Theatre Company created this play with music and puppetry, a fable about a man who works for the moon. In previews. (Gym at Judson, 243 Thompson St. 212-691-1555.)

TEN CHIMNEYS

Peccadillo Theatre Company presents this comedy, by Jeffrey Hatcher, based on the lives of the Broadway legends Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, set at their Wisconsin estate in 1938. Byron Jennings and Carolyn McCormick star; Dan Wackerman directs. In previews. Opens Sept. 30. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-352-3101.)

THROUGH THE YELLOW HOUR

Adam Rapp wrote and directs this play, about a woman hiding out and waiting for her husband to return after the U.S. has been attacked. In previews. Opens Sept. 27. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

NOW PLAYING

CHAPLIN

Although Charlie Chaplin achieved worldwide success and mythic stature in the course of his very long life, he lived, for most of that time, in the shadow of the wounds and injuries that he suffered in his childhood. Rob McClure, the young star of this new musical, is a fantastic performer, but he is blocked in his attempts to be great in this show by two things: the direction, by Warren Carlyle, and the score, by Christopher Curtis. Carlyle and Curtis have given Chaplin's muddy past a sentimental spit shine. The truth about Chaplin's hapless film persona is that it masked a deep and abiding coldness. Poverty and abandonment had left their mark, and no amount of success could warm him to his past or quench his need for approval and control. Had these elements been more pronounced in the show's book, by Curtis and Tom Meehan, McClure might have had to work a little harder to win our love. But we'll have to wait for him to find those tensions elsewhere—and we will. "Chaplin" is only his beginning. (Reviewed in our issue of 9/24/12.) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

DETROIT

Lisa D'Amour wrote this comedy, directed by Anne Kauffman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE EXONERATED

The Culture Project stages a tenth-anniversary revival of Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen's acclaimed 2002 documentary play, in which actors read from interviews with six former death-row prisoners, all wrongly convicted of murder and ultimately freed. As in the original, a rotating cast—on a recent night, it included Stockard Channing and Brian Dennehy—is ably directed by Bob Balaban. The injustices presented here are legion: Kerry Max Cook, damned by a misleading fingerprint and a false identification, was defended by the former D.A. who'd jailed him twice before; Sunny Jacobs and her husband were condemned by the actual killer, who testified against them in a plea deal; Robert Earl Hayes (played by J. D. Williams, of "The Wire"), a black racetrack worker, was freed after sixteen-inch strands of the killer's red hair were determined not to be his. Greater subtlety could improve the production—we don't need thundering rain sounds, or for racist testimony to be shouted in a Southern accent—but nothing can undermine the power of the stories themselves. (45 Bleecker St. 866-811-4111.)

FLY ME TO THE MOON

In Marie Jones's dark comedy—part of the 1st Irish Festival—two sweet but not very smart Irish care workers, Loretta (Tara Lynne O'Neill) and Francis (Katie Tumelty), are faced with a difficult choice: they can simply notify their boss of the sudden death of the elderly man they've been looking after, or they can pick up his weekly check and his gambling earnings, split the money, and then make the call. They make the wrong choice—covering up such a crime turns out to be too much for the

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added friends. Under the direction of Jones, the play has the flavor of an extended Laurel and Hardy skit, and O'Neill and Tumelty are first-class clowns, sympathetic and infuriating all at once. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Sept. 30.)

IF THERE IS I HAVEN'T FOUND IT YET Michael Longhurst directs this play by Nick Payne. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

RED-HANDED OTTER

When his beloved cat dies, Paul (Matthew Maher), a sensitive security guard, is overcome by grief. To help him feel better, four of his less-than-self-aware co-workers—including his ex-girlfriend (Rebecca Henderson) and the “friend” who stole her (Bobby Moreno)—swap stories about their childhood pets, throw him a party, and even surprise him with a new cat. All these good intentions backfire, though, and Paul's grief turns to malevolent rage. The Obie-winning playwright Ethan Lipton clearly understands the dark side of warm and fuzzy, masterfully and humorously using bizarre pet stories to get to the heart of his characters' emotional obliviousness. Directed by Mike Donahue. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-352-3101.)

Also Playing

THE BOOK OF MORMON: Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **BRING IT ON: THE MUSICAL:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **HEARTLESS:** Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. Through Sept. 30. **MARY BROOME:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111. **NEWSIES:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 866-870-2717. **ONCE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **PETER AND THE STARCATCHER:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 877-250-2929. **TRIBES:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **WAR HORSE:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

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

ACE HOTEL

20 W. 29th St. (212-679-2222)—Sept. 24: **Big Band Hot 100**—a monthly party in the hotel's Liberty Hall event space, featuring an eleven-piece band and guest vocalists who swing their way through the pop hits of today—turns the spotlight on Madonna. The performance is part of “The Breslin Presents Funderdomet,” a Monday-night comedy-and-music series. (For more information, call 646-214-5764.)

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL 237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Sept. 28: Johnny Rivers was born John Henry Ramistella in New York City in 1942, but he grew up in Baton Rouge.

In the sixties, Rivers recorded a great live album at the Whisky a Go Go, on the Sunset Strip, honing a rocking style that sold millions of records. Onstage, Rivers is still a freeracker, a link between Holly and Springsteen, leaning into his vocals and ripping off guitar leads.

THE BELL HOUSE

149 7th St., Brooklyn (718-643-6510)—Sept. 29: Corin Tucker shared lead-singer duties with Carrie Brownstein in Sleater-Kinney, the punchy, punky riot-grrrl band formed in 1994, in Olympia, Washington. While Brownstein's vocals tended to be slyer, quirkier, and more stylized, Tucker favors high-range, full-throttle power singing. “Kill My Blues,” the second album from the Corin Tucker Band, is just out.

BEST BUY THEATRE

Broadway at 44th St. (800-745-3000)—Sept. 28: When the heavy-metal juggernaut *Down* debuted,

in the mid-nineties, it was a side project of its founders: Pantera's Phil Anselmo, Corrosion of Conformity's Pepper Keenan, and members of Crowbar and Eyehategod. The band, which loads classic hard rock with sludgy riffs and ponderously heavy grooves, is touring in support of its highly anticipated fourth album, “Down IV Part 1.”

DEATH BY AUDIO

49 S. 2nd St., Brooklyn (No phone)—The long-time Los Angeles rockers the Melvins are currently halfway through an attempt to set a Guinness World Record for the fastest tour of the United States by a full band: fifty states in fifty-one days. Notably absent from this endeavor is the Melvins'



The painting “Acid for an Act” (2012), by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, at the Shainman gallery.

backing rhythm section, **Big Business**, which is ducking the prospect of Guinness fame to go on a six-week tour. On Sept. 30, the group headlines an evening of pounding noise-rock at this underground venue (it's also an effects-pedal shop), joined by Henry Wilson's new project, **House of Lightning**, and **Vaz**, a muscular local trio with origins in the scene surrounding Minneapolis's Amphetamine Reptile Records.

EUROPA NIGHT CLUB

98-104 Meserole Ave., at Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-5723)—Sept. 30: The Dum Dum Girls. “Lord Knows,” the soulful and slow-burning new single from Kristin Gundred's noisy and retro group, brims with so much sentiment and power that it's a testament to the band's maturing sound.

GLASSLANDS GALLERY

289 Kent Ave., between S. 1st and S. 2nd Sts., Brooklyn (No phone)—Sept. 29: The sprightly Becky Stark, who has collaborated with the Decemberists and M. Ward, is the voice of **Lavender Diamond**, an L.A.-based soft-rock group, which takes the stage here the day after the release of its latest album, “Incorruptible Heart.”

The band's slow-paced ballads are given a country flavor, and Stark's crystal-clear voice evokes longing, while avoiding clichés. With **Helado Negro**.

GLOBAL CITIZEN FESTIVAL

Neil Young and Crazy Horse, Foo Fighters, and the Black Keys headline a free concert on the Great Lawn in Central Park to fight global poverty. As of press time, V.I.P. tickets were still available, with the proceeds going to charity. (For more information, visit globalfestival.com. Sept. 29, starting at 3:30.)

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl. (212-777-6800)—Sept. 27: Four years ago, Himanshu Suri founded the management and recording company Greedhead Music to support his small-fry rap band, **Das Racist**. Since then, the group has signed a deal with Sony, and Greedhead has grown into a mini-conglomerate. This fall, **Das Racist** is travelling with some of the label's heavy hitters on the American Rap Songs Tour, among them **Lakutis**, **Safe**, and, best of all, **Le1f**, a gay New York rapper who has played a role in hip-hop's recent shift away from homophobia. This summer, the talented wordsmith ignited a certain subsection of the Internet with his video for “Wut.” In it, **Le1f**, clad in daisy dukes, perched atop an oiled-up male model in a Pokémon mask. Sept. 29: Johanna and Klara Söderberg, the Swedish sisters who make up the folk act **First Aid Kit**, rocketed to YouTube fame as teen-agers, in 2008, with their rendition, set in a forest, of the Fleet Foxes' “Tiger Mountain Peasant Song.” Since then, they've proved that they can carry their own weight as singer-songwriters, having released two albums, “The Big Black & the Blue” and “The Lion's Roar.” Whether it's original material or that of an artist who has influenced them (in August, they covered Paul Simon's “America,” in honor of his receiving the 2012 Polar Music Prize), the duo create uncanny harmonies, and have an aptitude for emotional music-making that belies their years.

“LET'S ZYDECO!”

Sept. 30: The accordionist and singer **Jesse Lége** and his excellent band, **Bayou Brew**, play Cajun dance-hall music with sweet, stomping purity. (Connolly's, 121 W. 45th St. 212-685-7597. For more information, visit letszydeco.com.)

MANHATTAN INN

632 Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-0885)—Somewhere between cozy and classy lies this lodge-like restaurant and bar, which often hosts piano brunches, piano karaoke, and a music series. On Sept. 30, it presents the local folk act **Drew Victor**, who combines gentle guitar tunes and confident falsetto vocals. The indie-rock stalwart and onetime Beck co-conspirator **Sam Jayne**, of the band **Love as Laughter**, opens.

MERCURY LOUNGE 217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Sept. 26: **Lavender Diamond** (see **Glasslands Gallery**). With the Brooklyn post-punk duo **Christy & Emily**.

Sept. 29: **Low Cut Connie**, the product of the songwriters Adam Weiner, from New Jersey, and Dan Finnemore, from Birmingham, England, serves up fifties rockabilly, with boisterous Jerry Lee Lewis piano lines and mind-in-the-gutter lyrics. Oct. 2: **Laura Pergolizzi**, who goes by the stage name **LP**, started in the music industry as a songwriter for pop artists such as Christina Aguilera, Rihanna, and the Backstreet Boys. Last year, Citibank featured her song “Into the Wild” in a national ad campaign, and the native New Yorker has since been widely recognized as a rock performer, and a superb vocalist, in her own right.

MOMA PS1

22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens (718-784-2084)—The NY Art Book Fair, which runs Sept. 27-30,



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MUSEUM OF ART

Through December 31

metmuseum.org/warhol

The exhibition is made possible by
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Additional support is provided by the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund
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Andy Warhol, *Big Campbell's Soup Can, 19c*, 1962, acrylic and graphite
on canvas, The Merrill Collection, Houston. © 2012 The Andy Warhol
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presents special screenings, talks, and an impressive selection of monographs, zines, books, and periodicals. Last year, more than fifteen thousand artists, book nerds, and design freaks were in attendance. This year, the ubiquitous underground promoter Todd P has teamed up with his frequent collaborator *Showpaper*, the ubiquitous, print-only bible of all-ages shows, to curate performances at the event. The one on Sept. 29 features a set from the noise-rap prodigy DJ Dog Dick (Max Eisenberg) and Pictureplane, a one-man techno project founded by the multitasking producer Travis Egedy, who has recently relocated to Brooklyn after nearly a decade leading Denver's colorful art and music scene.

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Sixth Ave. at 50th St. (866-858-0007)—Sept. 29-30: Jack White, formerly of the White Stripes.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Sept. 25-29: "Bouncin' with Bud." The masterly bebop pianist Bud Powell is worshipped as a spectacular instrumentalist, but he was also a distinctive composer. A promising quintet headed by the saxophonist Greg Osby, the trumpeter Tim Hagans, and the distinctly un-Powell-like pianist Dan Tepfer looks at his work through a contemporary lens. Sept. 30: "Urban Dreams," a double bill that pays tribute to the brilliant hard-bop baritone saxophonist Pepper Adams. The first ensemble features the saxophonist Lew Tabackin and the Arturo O'Farrill trio; the second brings together the bassist George Mraz and the baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan, joined by a string quartet.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St. (212-475-8592)—Sept. 24-25: One of the great collaborations in jazz history, that of the pianist Chick Corea and the vibraphonist Gary Burton, is celebrating its fortieth year. A new album, "Hot House," finds their intuitive partnership as formidable as ever. Sept. 26-30: From jazz pro to old-school funk hitmaker, the vibraphonist Roy Ayers has ridden many an unpredictable wave in his fifty-year career.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Sept. 27-30: The tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders is now considered a grand old master, something that was inconceivable when he was scorching the earth with molten free-jazz improvisations, in the mid-sixties. These days, his spirited blowing has a soulful feel.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Sept. 29: The saxophonist, flutist, and composer Henry Threadgill—an omnivorous musical powerhouse who draws together seemingly incompatible forces—convenes his unclassifiable ensemble Zooid for one night.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Sept. 28-29, in the Allen Room: The seventy-seven-year-old harmonica giant James Cotton was born in Tunica, Mississippi, learned his trade in Arkansas from Sonny Boy Williamson, then had an auspicious career as a member of Howlin' Wolf's band, in the nineteen-fifties. He performed with Muddy Waters for many years before striking out as the leader of his own band. Having survived throat cancer, Cotton leaves the singing to other members of the group, but the old man can still

blow. Sept. 28-29, in the Rose Theatre: A great harmonica player of a different cast, Toots Thielemans, the ninety-year-old dean of jazz harmonica, and one of the most expressive of all improvising musicians, conjures his magic here.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The pianist Gerald Clayton, an exciting and vibrant contemporary player, is here Sept. 25-30 with his quintet. On Sept. 28-29, they'll be joined by the vocalists Sachal Vasandani and Gretchen Parlato.

THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—In 1968, Henry Grimes, a lyrical and visionary bass player who performed and recorded with Sonny Rollins,

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—For those not yet under the spell of the jazz-guitar hero Kurt Rosenwinkel, seeing his Standards Trio (here Sept. 25-30) may be the best route to appreciating his harmonic dexterity and fleet phrasing.

WORLD FINANCIAL CENTER
220 Vesey St. (212-417-7000)—Sept. 27: The downtown quartet Sex Mob (Steven Bernstein on trumpet, Tony Scherr on bass, Briggan Krauss on sax, and Kenny Wollesen on drums) can make the most avant-garde jazz breezily easy to grasp, and can also transform familiar pop into something cubistic and delightfully weird. At this free show, they'll turn their attention to the music of Nino Rota, who scored more than a hundred and fifty films, most notably those of Fellini, and won an Oscar for "The Godfather."



Lavender Diamond, at Glasslands Gallery and the Mercury Lounge.

Benny Goodman, and Albert Ayler, among numerous others, left New York in a small car with a friend and headed to California for several gigs. During the trip, Grimes's bass was strapped to the car's roof, and while he was driving the pair got stuck in Death Valley for three days and the instrument was damaged by the heat. Unable to afford the necessary repairs, Grimes pawned his bass, hoping to later buy it back and fix it. Instead, he began a long and harrowing downward spiral—for much of the next thirty-five years, Grimes lived in an S.R.O. hotel in downtown Los Angeles, and supported himself mainly by working as a janitor and a maintenance man. Many jazz fans assumed that he had died, but in 2002 an intrepid social worker and fan from Athens, Georgia, tracked Grimes down, and he has since played more than five hundred performances all over the world, with the likes of Marc Ribot, Marilyn Crispell, and Cecil Taylor. On Sept. 27, he'll be joined by the pianist Dave Burrell and the drummer Tyshawn Sorey, and will also read some of the poems he wrote during the many years when he was without an instrument.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—"Regarding Warhol: Sixty Artists, Fifty Years." Through Dec. 31. ♦ "Bashford Dean and the Creation of the Arms and Armor Department." Opens Oct. 2. ♦ "Tomás Saraceno: Cloud City." Through Nov. 4. ♦ "Chinese Gardens: Palace Pavilions, Scholars' Studios, Rustic Retreats." Through Jan. 6. ♦ "After Photoshop: Manipulated Photography in the Digital Age." Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900-2000." Through Nov. 5. ♦ "Quay Brothers: On Deciphering the Pharmacist's Prescription for Lip-Reading Puppets." Through Jan. 7. ♦ "Projects 98: Slavs and Tatars." Through Dec. 10. ♦ "Performing Histories (1)." Through March 11. ♦ "Alighiero Boetti: Game Plan." Through Oct. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

MOMA PS1
22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens (718-784-2084)—"James Turrell: Meeting." Ongoing. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3587)—"Rinck Dijkstra: A Retrospective." Through Oct. 3. (Open Fridays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturday evenings until 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—"Yayoi Kusama." Through Sept. 30. ♦ "Oskar Fischinger: Space Light Art—A Film Environment." Through Oct. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Mickalene Thomas: Origin of the Universe." Opens Sept. 28. ♦ "Materializing 'Six Years': Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art." Through Feb. 3. ♦ "Jean-Michel Othoniel: My Way." Through Dec. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 10.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"Creatures of Light: Nature's Bioluminescence." Through Jan. 6. ♦ "Spiders Alive!" Through Dec. 2. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—“Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life.” Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JAPAN SOCIETY

333 E. 47th St. (212-832-1155)—“Silver Wind: The Arts of Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828).” Opens Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 to 6, Fridays, 11 to 9, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—“Crossing Borders: Manuscripts from the Bodleian Libraries.” Through Feb. 3. ♦ “Izhar Patkin: The Messiah’s Glass.” Through Nov. 11. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 8, and Fridays, 11 to 4.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—“Josef Albers in America: Painting on Paper.” Through Oct. 14. ♦ “Robert Wilson/Philip Glass: Einstein on the Beach.” Through Nov. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—“Ferdinand Hodler: View to Infinity.” Through Jan. 7. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—“Come Closer: Art Around the Bowery, 1969-1989.” Through Jan. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

SCULPTURECENTER

44-19 Purves St., Queens (718-361-1750)—“A Disagreeable Object.” Through Nov. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

JUDY FISHKIN

The small black-and-white photographs in this survey of Fishkin’s work from the seventies and eighties are drawn from series (“Stucco,” “Long Beach,” “Dingbat”) that focus on vernacular architecture and landscaping. Fishkin’s oeuvre falls somewhere between Ed Ruscha’s and Bernd and Hilla Becher’s, with particular attention paid to vintage Los Angeles kitsch, although it rarely feels nostalgic. Her pictures are crisp, absorbing, and so intimately scaled that looking at them can feel like peering into a peephole. In a short film titled “The End of Photography,” the camera cruises past sites in L.A. as a female voice lists what the medium has lost with the obsolescence of darkrooms. Through Oct. 27. (Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444.)

MARK GROTJAHN

He sculpts! The twisty painter shows eighteen painted bronzes of distressed cardboard boxes. They represent heads, too crude to be called cartoonish, with tubular noses, punched-out eyes, and vestigial mouths. Rhapsodically slathered or speckled paint, in potent colors, makes even the boxes’ insides feel like outsides. (Some pieces retain the draining channels used in casting, evoking external rib cages.) There’s a fair degree of sculptural invention; the look is high-modernist, by accident. But this is a painter’s work—akin in spirit to Cy Twombly’s sculpture, though lots more rambunctious. Through Oct. 27. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313.)

Short List

PETER COFFIN: Venus Over Manhattan, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-980-0700. Through Nov. 2. **MIKE KELLEY:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through Oct. 20. **GERHARD RICHTER:** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Oct. 13. **CHRIS WARE:** Baumgold, 60 E. 66th St. 212-861-7338. Through Oct. 27. **TALBOT’S WORLD: A GALLERY OF**

NATURAL MAGIC”: Kraus, 962 Park Ave., at 82nd St. 212-794-2064. Through Nov. 2.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ROBERT ADAMS

Of the two series in the photographer’s new show, “Light Balances” is the larger. Nearly sixty small black-and-white pictures of trees and forests are arranged around the gallery in a rhythmic sequence of grouped and individual shots. It’s an essay on sunlight and shadow, an immersion in the lush, dense natural landscape of the Pacific Northwest. In the smaller series, “On Any Given Day in Spring,” images of migratory birds at the seashore are brighter and more lyrical—a celebration of freedom and abundance, as the birds scatter like confetti. Even in his most conservative mode, channelling another Adams—Ansel—as he does here, his work remains intelligent and engaging. Through Nov. 3. (Marks, 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

ROGER FRITZ

More than a hundred photographs, shot in 1982 as production stills on the set of “Querelle,” Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s last movie, fill the gallery with melodramatic moments and old-school Hollywood artifice. Arranged in chronological order, the pictures follow the film’s plot scene by scene, restaging the action on Fassbinder’s deliberately theatrical studio sets, using his lurid lighting. The effect is gorgeously vulgar—part Douglas Sirk, part Jean Cocteau, part Village People, and pure, over-the-top Fassbinder. Fritz doesn’t bring the movie to life; he embalms it brilliantly, in a style that looks at once classic and contemporary. Through Oct. 13. (White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212.)

GELITIN

The four-man crew (three Viennese and one German), acutely advancing the anarchic genius of the late Franz West, mounts winsomely free-form, found-object, and junk sculptures, in many mediums, on pedestals that pack a participatory surprise, not to be spoiled by telling. If you miss this show, you may well someday lie and say (or even think) that you saw it, such is the surefire conversational currency of its delightful shocks and sneaky philosophical resonance. Through Oct. 13. (Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

THOMAS HIRSCHHORN

The master of brainy mazes goes purely theatrical with a colossal tableau of the gaudy interior of the cruise ship Costa Concordia, which capsized in January. The tipped space—a cadenza of chaos—spills furniture, unused life jackets, decorative bric-a-brac, and what look to be tangles of wires or seaweed in forms variously real, realistic, and hand-made ersatz. Uses of the artist’s signature brown packing tape abound, as do his pedagogical manias. A full-sized reproduction of Géricault’s “Raft of the Medusa” occupies a horizontal wall, and pages of Marx’s “Das Kapital” are strewn about. To enjoy Hirschhorn’s enthusiastic riff on a disaster, it may help to ignore the fact that thirty-two people died in it. Through Oct. 27. (Gladstone, 530 W. 21st St. 212-206-7606.)

PAUL PFEIFFER

In his first New York show in five years, the artist remains obsessed with absences, from the empty spectacle of sports to fractured families. The show’s centerpiece is a meticulous model of Wilt Chamberlain’s infamous “playroom,” a water bed surrounded by a hexagon of mirrored walls. Here, the player’s shrine to his sexual conquests looks more like a mausoleum. The sense that something is missing may be felt most keenly in the video “Home Movie,” in which a group of white women and children of color visit a zoo: one small figure has been erased from the footage, a ghost drifting below a balloon on a string. Through Oct. 13. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

JAMES WELLING

Welling’s last foray into architectural photography involved Philip Johnson’s Glass House, seen in kaleidoscopic layers and psychedelic colors. The primary subject of his new show is the world of Andrew Wyeth—the houses and landscapes that the

**CRITIC’S NOTEBOOK
FRENCH LESSONS**

This year, the New York Film Festival pays tribute to the French New Wave—a key inspiration when the festival began, in 1963—in several sidebars, including one devoted to the programmer and filmmaker Pierre Rissient and his



friends at Paris’s Cinéma Mac Mahon, which, in the fifties, fed the passion for a quartet of Hollywood auteurs: Raoul Walsh, Fritz Lang, Joseph Losey, and Otto Preminger. Among the offerings is Preminger’s “Whirlpool,” from 1949 (screening on Sept. 30), starring the alabaster-cool Gene Tierney as a psychoanalyst’s elegant wife and a kleptomaniac who falls under the malevolent sway of a spiritualist-cum-hypnotist with a cult following (José Ferrer), resulting in murder. The French were right about Preminger’s artistry. His incisive direction mines the script’s hoary melodrama for a surprising critique of marital paternalism and eyewitness testimony, and his ecstatic flights of visual invention—such as shuddery transformations via light and shadow and sinuous crane shots that morph into furtive surveillance—appear to analyze the story from the outside. The method seems like a ready-made film school for critics aspiring to direct.

—Richard Brody

SB



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painter lived in, worked in, or painted—and the photographer's approach is as restrained, precise, and chilly as Wyeth's. The painter was a key early influence on Welling, so this is a sincere and meditative homage, alternating detailed views of an easel, a whitewashed plaster wall, and a bookshelf (Eakins, Dürer, Hopper) with broad vistas. Six big and splashy abstract photographs introduce the series, like fireworks before a string quartet. Through Oct. 27. (Zwimer, 533 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

Short List

JONAH FREEMAN AND JUSTIN LOWE: Marlborough, 545 W. 25th St. 212-463-8634. Through Oct. 27. **SARAH OPPENHEIMER:** P.P.O.W., 535 W. 22nd St. 212-647-1044. Through Oct. 13. **LUCAS SAMARAS:** Pace, 508 W. 25th St. 212-255-4044. Opens Sept. 28. **LYNETTE YIADOMBOAKYE:** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701. Through Oct. 13. **"AFTER THE FALL: THE LURE OF PARIS":** Howard, 525 W. 26th St. 212-695-0164. Through Dec. 3.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ARA DYMOND / JESSE WILLENBRING

In this overcrowded, if appealing, two-person show, the eye ricochets between Dymond's jocular sculptures

TABLES FOR TWO MISSION CHINESE FOOD

154 Orchard St. (212-529-8800)—Danny Bowien, the thirty-year-old Korean-born chef and main owner of Mission Chinese Food, grew up in Oklahoma eating the Chinese dishes of Middle America, fried rice and lo mein. After stints at white-tablecloth restaurants in New York and San Francisco, Bowien wanted to cook at a place where he and his friends would actually eat on their day off, i.e., cheap and gutsy. He started experimenting—tasting his way through San Francisco's Chinatown—and took over an existing Chinese joint in the Mission district, which went on to incite widespread cultish devotion. For his much ballyhooed outpost here, he chose a curious Lower East Side space that has housed more than one failed Asian expansion project (Bia Garden, Rhong-Tiam). The room, down a dim hallway/kitchen-viewing galley, isn't much to look at—Chinese propaganda poster, big gold dragon—but it doesn't matter, because the food is the star of the show.

Bowien took cues from the tried-and-true tradition of greasy Chinese-American food and one-upped it for some of his best dishes: Kung Pao Pastrami (house-smoked meat, celery, peanuts, red hot chilis); Thrice Cooked Bacon (poached, steamed, and wok-fried—"It's like super-bacon," an ardent fan marvelled); Broccoli Beef Brisket (fat-laced slabs of brisket and Chinese broccoli, doused in garlicky smoked-oyster sauce). The heat of Mapo Tofu—large cubes of silken bean curd tossed with equally large hunks of pork shoulder—spreads

made of synthetic materials and Willenbring's screen-printed doodles on wood. Several of Dymond's lime-green and pink plinths display images of absurdly cute dogs printed on aluminum cutouts; others sport digitally carved designs reportedly inspired by Lucio Fontana. One catchy drawing, sketched by Willenbring straight onto the wall, repeats a motif of overlapping light bulbs—an A.D.H.D. bright idea. Through Oct. 14. (Gitlen, 261 Broome St. 212-274-0761.)

KIKI KOGLNIK

The artist, who died in 1997, at the age of sixty-two, is better known in her native Austria than in her ad-

opted home of New York. But, by all rights, this fascinating mini-survey will change that. Kogelnik's spirited brand of Pop-feminist figuration—neon colors, mod patterns—dovetails with the renewed interest in artists like Evelyn Axell and Dorothy Iannone. Kogelnik was fascinated by rocket ships and robots, and her imagery favors androgynous silhouettes. In one dynamic work, a hand outlined in orange seems to sprinkle bodies into a vibrating stratosphere. Through Oct. 28. (Subal, 131 Bowery, at Grand St. 917-334-1147.)

Short List

RAY AKDOGAN: Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Through Oct. 14. **KERSTIN BRÄTSCH / THOMAS BAYRLE:** Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Opens Sept. 29. **BEVERLY SEMMES / FREDDIE BRICE:** Schuss, 34 Orchard St. 212-219-9918. Through Oct. 28. **MARY WEATHERFORD:** Brennan & Griffin, 55 Delancey St. 212-227-0115. Through Oct. 14.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The Stravinsky/Balanchine retrospective continues with two performances of a Russian-themed program ("Firebird," "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser



like fire in your mouth and stays awhile. Bowien's spiciest dishes inspire discussions of various hot peppers: "Like, you know, that black one. The one that coats your mouth and numbs it, like novocaine," one member of Bowien's target audience mused. "Married Couple's" Beef (tongue, heart, and tripe) produced a split decision—"It's kind of cold and slimy, right?" a woman said with a "yuck" face, to which her husband replied, "Mmm, so soft." Excellent lamb breast, with a crunchy cumin crust, served with pickled beans and charred dates, comes on little bones, good for picking up and gnawing—a delicate treat for Bamm-Bamm Rubble.

The food assaults, and yet kindness abounds. The nearly inevitable wait for dinner (two or three hours at prime time, unless you e-mail ahead for a reservation) is made more pleasant by a free kegger. The restaurant donates seventy-five cents from every entrée to the Food Bank for New York City. The general manager, making the rounds one evening, talked about answering a Craigslist ad that stated, "Must speak Cantonese" (originally, there were to be Cantonese cooks, but it didn't end up that way), which led to a couple of weeks in San Francisco, to learn the ropes. When asked about the difference between New York and San Francisco patrons, he demurred: "New Yorkers are nicer." (Open for lunch and dinner every day but Wednesday. Large dishes \$6-\$15.)

—Shauna Lyon

de la Fée"), along with a mixed bill of so-called "leopard ballets" (Sept. 26 and Sept. 29-30). These spare, modernist works embody the essence of N.Y.C.B.: limpid compositions in which the movement reflects the inner workings of the music. "Stravinsky Violin Concerto" contains dabs of Russian folk color and an intricate pas de deux; "Monumentum pro Gesualdo" is courtly and grave; "Duo Concertant" is playful and sentimental. ♦ Sept. 26 at 7:30, Sept. 29 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 30 at 3. "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," "Monumentum pro Gesualdo," "Movements for Piano

MATTHEW HOLLISTER

and Orchestra," "Duo Concertant," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ Sept. 27 at 7:30 and Sept. 28 at 8: "Scherzo à la Russe," "Diver-timento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "Danses Concertantes," and "Firebird." ♦ Oct. 2 at 7:30: "Rubies," "The Cage," "Andantino," and "Symphony in C." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Oct. 14.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN

In this well-deserved repeat run of the 2011 work "Beginning of Something," viewers watch four women who loom large and walk loudly along a narrow platform, their furious pacing suggesting Rilke's panther. Other kinds of catwalks are implied by their torn furs, beaded headdresses, and evening gowns, and by the way they strip to nothing and stare. Despite the repetitive patrolling, the piece has an inexorable momentum, the music alternating between Burt Bacharach schmalz and Krzysztof Penderecki announcing the awful end of something. This is one scary dance. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 26-27 and Sept. 29 at 7:30 and Sept. 28 at 7:30 and 10.)

ANNMARRIA MAZZINI

One of Paul Taylor's most fearless dancers strikes out on her own with a small pickup company that performs her work. At Dance New Amsterdam, Mazzini presents several pieces, including "Changeling," an octet set to Gavin Bryars's "Alegrasco," and "Cut Open," a solo for herself, depicting a woman facing an important life transition—like Mazzini. (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-227-9856. Sept. 26 at 8.)

DD DORVILLIER/HUMAN FUTURE DANCE CORPS

The music of Beethoven tends to overwhelm whatever choreography is paired with it. Dorvillier's ambitious and intriguing "Danza Permanente" borrows the structure of the composer's String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132, but not the sound. Four dancers, each in a single-colored pairing of shirt and shorts, interpret the score in near-silence. (Zeena Parkins adds some odd sounds and German words, mostly between movements.) Rhythms and dynamics can be heard in footfalls, overlapping instrumental lines seen in spatial formations. The vocabulary—part balletic, part pedestrian, and a little boogie-down—speaks most strongly in the slowest sections. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Sept. 26-30 at 8.)

"FALL FOR DANCE"

The festival's expansion to twelve days is a mark of its success, as is, most likely, the increase in the ticket price, from ten dollars to fifteen. Still, it's a damn good deal. The mixed bills bring together companies that would not usually cross paths. The first week offers three programs; among the standouts are high-powered tap by Jared Grimes (Sept. 27-28), an antiwar dance by Martha Graham, from 1936 ("Chronicle," Sept. 29-30), and the Moiseyev Dance Company, a Russian folk troupe, which performs alongside the Utah-based Ballet West, whose dancers test their virtuosity with the grand pas from Petipa's "Paquita" (Oct. 2-3). For complete programs, see citycenter.org. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Sept. 27-29 and Oct. 2-3 at 8 and Sept. 30 at 7.)

STACY SPENCE

This season, Danspace Project presents work by members of the Judson Dance Theatre, but it also traces the group's influence on new choreographers—including Spence, a longtime Trisha Brown dancer who has recently made work of his own. In "Eden as We Recall," he and his fellow Brown alum Brandi Norton ruminatively peruse the interior of St. Mark's Church. The sound artist Tei Blow, also onstage, builds and breaks down spare sonic loops, tracing Spence's slender form with a microphone, like an unusually respectful T.S.A. agent. (Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Sept. 27-29 at 8.)

ANTHONY ROTH COSTANZO / TROY SCHUMACHER

The countertenor Costanzo sings arias by Purcell, Handel, and Vivaldi, and Schumacher contributes a kind of danced drama to accompany Vivaldi's

cantata "Qual per Ignoto Calle," performed by his fellow City Ballet dancer Jared Angle. (The Players, 16 Gramercy Park S. 888-718-4253. Sept. 28 at 7.)

"WORKS & PROCESS" /

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

Since 2009, Alexei Ratmansky has created six dances for A.B.T., including a new "Firebird" and a jewel of a ballet set to Scarlatti ("Seven Sonatas"), and also revived his highly entertaining socialist-realist spoof "The Bright Stream." At the Guggenheim, several dancers, including David Hallberg, will discuss Ratmansky's tenure and perform excerpts from his works, including, hopefully, a sneak preview of the new Shostakovich ballet. The Sept. 30 show will be live-streamed at ustream.tv/worksandprocess. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Sept. 30-Oct. 1 at 7:30.)

PHILADANCO

Philadelphia's answer to the Alvin Ailey troupe returns to the Joyce with a program of works by some big names in modern dance. Matthew Rushing, a top-of-his-class dancer with Ailey, hasn't earned much of a reputation as a choreographer, but perhaps his new "Moan," set to Nina Simone, will change that. It's a much safer bet that "Wake Up," a premiere by Rennie Harris, Philadelphia's hip-hop patriarch, will bring out the best in these dancers; it's set to Fela Kuti and begins with a death by shooting. But, if not, Ronald K. Brown's spiritually rich "Gatekeepers" (1999) certainly will. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 2 at 7:30. Through Oct. 7.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Sept. 26 at 7:30 and Sept. 29 at 8: If any Franco Zeffirelli production lasts forever at the house, it

will be his staging of Puccini's "Turandot," which, while sometimes gaudy, is supremely grand and well suited to the Met's colossal stage. Maria Guleghina, an enduring provider of steely hauteur, will fling out the Ice Princess's arias, heading a cast that also features Hibla Gerzmava, Marco Berti, and James Morris; Dan Ettinger conducts. ♦ Sept. 27 and Oct. 1 at 7:30: John Copley's stodgy 1991 production of "L'Elisir d'Amore" was good enough to support the celestial voices of Kathleen Battle and Luciano Pavarotti, but it's long overstayed its welcome. Peter Gelb has turned to Bartlett Sher—whose productions, with their busy visuals and glib theatricality, have come to define the Gelb era at the Met—for a new staging that maintains the opera's rustic milieu. As in the old days, success depends on great voices, and the management has not spared them: Anna Netrebko, Matthew Polenzani, Mariusz Kwiecien, and Ambrogio Maestri take the leading roles, with the experienced (if not dazzling) Maurizio Benini in charge of the orchestra. ♦ Sept. 28 at 7:30 and Oct. 2 at 8: Anita Rachvelishvili, a confident interpreter of the title role of "Carmen" when she made her debut, in 2011, returns to the Richard Eyre production, a very cinematic updating of the piece to the Civil War Spain of the nineteen-thirties. Kate Royal lends her dulcet voice to Micaëla, with Yonghoon Lee as Don José and Kyle Ketelsen as Escamillo; Michele Mariotti makes his podium debut. ♦ Sept. 29 at 12:30: David McVicar's solidly traditional 2009 production of "Il Trovatore" rescued the opera from years of ignominy at the house. Carmen Giannattasio makes her Met debut in the role of Leonora, joining a cast that features the veteran mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick, as well as Gwyn Hughes Jones, Franco Vassallo, and Morris Robinson; Daniele Callegari. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

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IAO

experience the first full-length opera by Little, one of the most imaginative young composers on the music-theatre scene. He brings his sometimes raucous, rock-infused style to a post-apocalyptic story by Judy Budnitz, crafted into a libretto by Royce Vavrek. The performance artist John Kelly is joined by such singers as James Bobick, Peter Tantsits, and Lauren Worsham; Alan Pierson conducts the "punk-classical" Newspeak ensemble. (Alexander Kasser Theatre, 1 Normal Ave., Montclair, N.J. Sept. 29 at 8 and Sept. 30 at 3. For tickets and transportation information, see peakperfs.org. Through Oct. 7.)

GOTHAM CHAMBER OPERA

(Le) Poisson Rouge, a big player in new-music and chamber concerts, enjoys a growing opera presence. Neal Goren's light-footed company, which has performed at Lincoln Center, comes to the downtown music bar to offer "Orientale," a pastiche entertainment (in collaboration with the ensemble Maya and the dance-theatre collective Company XIV) that features works by Monteverdi ("Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda"), Rameau, Delibes, Szymanowski, and Bizet, as well as a selection of Armenian folk music. The singers include the mezzo-soprano Jennifer Rivera and the baritone Michael Kelly. (158 Bleecker St. lprnyc.com. Oct. 1 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Having dipped a toe into the new season with a subscription program featuring the pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, Alan Gilbert's orchestra takes the full plunge with a gala concert that spotlights the violinist Itzhak Perlman, who plays a collection of short works by Tchaikovsky, Massenet, and John Williams, among others. Gilbert and his group go it alone in two color-charged pieces by Respighi ("Fountains of Rome" and "Pines of Rome"). (Sept. 27 at 7:30.) ♦ Gilbert returns the next night to commence an all-Russian program; this one offers Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain," Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto (a classic debut vehicle, here featuring Danil Trifonov, the winner of the 2011 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition), and Rimsky-Korsakov's "Scheherazade." (Sept. 28 at 2, Sept. 29 at 8, and Oct. 2 at 7:30.) ♦ The week also includes a Saturday-matinee concert, in which a repeat of "Scheherazade" is preceded by a chamber performance of Brahms's Clarinet Quintet (with Pascual Martínez Forteza as the soloist). (Sept. 29 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

STRING ORCHESTRA OF BROOKLYN

Once called the City of Churches, Brooklyn is now fostering a growing band of chamber orchestras. This group's next concert combines the familiar with the exotic, presenting pieces by Pierre Jalbert ("Elegy") and Arturo Rodriguez, along with works by the canonical composers Takemitsu (the haunting "Requiem for Strings"), Penderecki, and Nino Rota (the Concerto for Strings). (Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn Heights. Sept. 29 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

RECITALS

TRINITY CHURCH: "TWELVE IN 12"

The conductor Julian Wachner, the church's music director, leads his Novus NY ensemble in a series of concerts this month that acknowledge Pulitzer Prize-winning composers. The last of the series showcases four maverick voices, in works by John Adams, Henry Brant, Steve Reich, and Ornette Coleman. (Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 27 at 1. No tickets required.)

GWENDOLYN TOTH

Toth, a superb keyboardist and conductor who heads the long-established New York early-music ensemble Artek, offers a solo organ concert at

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, featuring music by Scheidemann, Pachelbel, and J. S. Bach. (3 W. 65th St. Sept. 27 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

MIKHAIL RUDY: "PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION"

The Russian pianist—who is also an experimental filmmaker—was allowed extraordinary access to examine a rare set of Kandinsky watercolors housed at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris. Inspired, he offers two performances of the original keyboard version of Mussorgsky's masterpiece at the Guggenheim Museum, accompanied by a video that uses animated versions of the drawings to pay tribute to the artist's legendary staging of the piece at the Bauhaus, in 1928. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. guggenheim.org. Sept. 27-28 at 8.)

ANTHONY ROTH COSTANZO

The storied Players Club is the setting for an unusual concert by this winning young actor and countertenor, who became a bona-fide star in last year's Met production of "The Enchanted Island." Accompanied by the harpsichordist Bradley Brookshire and collaborating with the choreographer Troy Schumacher and the dancer Jared Angle, he sings music by Handel, Purcell (including "Music for a While"), and Vivaldi; Brookshire also goes solo, playing pieces by Bach (the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue) and Scarlatti. (16 Gramercy Park S. 888-718-4253. Sept. 28 at 7.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM:

"HOMAGE TO CATALONIA"

To honor the centenary of Xavier Montsalvatge, the eminent Catalan composer, the Morgan hosts a concert that intersperses performances of his compositions (such as "Cinco Canciones Negras") with film clips and interviews with the Master, as well as with works by Mompou, Gerhard, and the contemporary composer Benet Casablancas (a world première). The soprano Harolyn Blackwell and the violinist Tim Fain are among the soloists; Angel Gil-Ordóñez conducts the Perspectives Ensemble. (Madison Ave. at 36th St. 212-685-0008. Sept. 28 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC

The intrepid violinist Gregory Fulkerson, a long-time faculty member at Oberlin, kicks off the weekend at the floating chamber-music series with a bold solo recital that intersperses sonata movements by Bach with jewel-like works by Elliott Carter (including "Rhapsodic Musings" and "Riconoscenza per Goffredo Petrassi"); the concert concludes with Bartók's magisterial Sonata for Solo Violin. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. Sept. 28 at 8. For tickets and full schedule, see bargemusic.org.)

ARTS AT THE PARK: MUSIC BY JOHN

CAGE

Concerts commemorating the centenary of John Cage, under way since January, continue into the fall. The performance series at Park Avenue Christian Church makes its contribution with an intimate program that features the cellist Jay Campbell, the pianist Vicky Chow, the percussionist Payton MacDonald, and the organist Paul Vasile; the works on offer include the rarely heard "Études Boreales," for solo cello, and the popular "Sonatas and Interludes," for prepared piano. (Park Ave. at 85th St. 212-868-4444. Sept. 29 at 8.)

MOVIES

OPENING

HEADSHOT

A thriller about a Thai policeman who becomes a hit man after being framed for a crime. Directed by Pen-Ek Ratanaruang. In Thai. Opening Sept. 28. (In limited release.)

THE HOLE

Joe Dante directed this thriller, about two children who discover a hole in their basement which yields macabre secrets. Opening Sept. 28. (In limited release.)

LOOPER

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 28. (In wide release.)

THE OTHER DREAM TEAM

A documentary about Lithuania's 1992 Olympic basketball team, which won the bronze medal

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

ATLAS RETURNS

The centennial of John Cage, on Sept. 5, generated a flurry of events around the city, but the major tribute is still to come: "Beyond Cage," a two-week festival under the aegis of the S.E.M. Ensemble, whose history reaches back to the



glory days of the avant-garde. The series begins on Oct. 22, with a performance of Cage's panoramic chance piece "Atlas Eclipticalis," at Carnegie Hall. Petr Kotik, S.E.M.'s trenchant director, led a memorable rendition of "Atlas" in the same space twenty years ago, shortly after Cage's death; now he traces the composer's vast sphere of influence, presenting European avant-garde classics, a work by the artist Christian Marclay, Kotik's own "Many Many Women" (a five-to-six-hour-long setting of the entire Gertrude Stein novella), and fresh provocations from several young New York composers. Particular attention is paid to the pointillism of sound against silence. An event at Alice Tully Hall on Nov. 5 gathers four orchestral soundscapes by Morton Feldman, who brought that style to a vanishing peak.

—Alex Ross

by defeating Russia, its former occupier. Directed by Marius Markevicius. Opening Sept. 28. (In limited release.)

PITCH PERFECT

A comedy, set in the world of competitive collegiate a cappella singing, directed by Jason Moore and starring Anna Kendrick, Brittany Snow, and Rebel Wilson. Opening Sept. 28. (In limited release.)

THE WAITING ROOM

A documentary about an inner-city hospital in Oakland, directed by Peter Nicks. Opening Sept. 26. (In limited release.)

WON'T BACK DOWN

Maggie Gyllenhaal and Viola Davis star in this drama, as parents who want to remove their children from a failing public school and create a charter school in the neighborhood. Directed by Daniel Barnz; co-starring Oscar Isaac, Holly Hunter, and Rosie Perez. Opening Sept. 28. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

ARBITRAGE

In a single week, the life of Robert Miller (Richard Gere), a swathed-in-Brioni hedge-fund manager, goes to hell. After making some bad bets and manipulating the books, he wants to sell his company to a bank. He tries to steal away for a night with his mistress, Julie (Laetitia Casta), a swank French gallery owner, but his car spins out of control, Julie dies, and Miller runs away from the accident. The director Nicholas Jarecki's first feature is part thriller, part character study, and it moves swiftly and confidently, with many details that feel exactly right. Miller practices

moral arbitrage in his life, weighing the penalties of lying to his family against the losses from a blown business deal; he's a hyper-rational man who keeps on calculating everything he does until he winds up in a void. With Tim Roth, as a ferrety New York cop; Nate Parker, as a young man who holds Miller's fate in his hands; Susan Sarandon, as Miller's wife; and Brit Marling, as his financial-whiz daughter. When things don't work out for the hedge-fund manager, Gere looks drawn and desperate—you see the skull of a handsome man now aging, and it's a shock. His impatience and anger are much closer to the surface than in the past; at times, he achieves the self-justifying rage that comes so easily to Al Pacino. It's his best performance yet.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/24/12.) (In wide release.)

BACHELORETTE

Some terrific actors are left to spin their wheels frenetically in the director Leslye Headland's loud and inconsequential adaptation of her own play, about a trio of bridesmaids (Kirsten Dunst, Lizzy Caplan, and Isla Fisher) whose hard-partying ways clash, on the weekend of the wedding, with the newly straitlaced habits of the bride (Rebel Wilson), their friend since high school. The big prenuptial party in a Manhattan hotel is spoiled by the trio's bad behavior (drugs are involved); when, unbeknownst to the bride, they tear the wedding dress on the eve of the ceremony, their odyssey through town in search of a remedy gives their cheerful riot and pat sourness still freer rein, even as a trite bit of soul-searching pulls them effortlessly out of their ten-year funk. The women's dialogue is pungently ribald but diffuse; too often, shouting and shrieking and gesticulating take the place of engaged performance. Caplan, though, shines with a dark lustre in several sharp

scenes with Adam Scott (who plays her former sweetheart), which hint at a self-punishing fear that Headland doesn't develop.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

COMPLIANCE

A fascinating, engaging (in a good way), morally instructive fable. The setting is a fast-food chicken franchise in Ohio. The sixtyish Sandra (Ann Dowd), the restaurant's manager, receives a phone call from a man (Pat Healy) who identifies himself as a police officer. He says that Becky (Dreama Walker), one of the teen-agers working the front counter, has stolen some money from a customer's purse, and he asks Sandra to detain her and, eventually, to strip-search her. Other members of the restaurant staff, all fond of Becky but obedient, take part in the girl's humiliation. Is the caller actually a cop? A prankster? A psychology professor doing an experiment? None of this would have worked if every moment of hesitation and then resolution didn't feel—as it does—absolutely authentic. The naturalistic writing and acting are superb. This is a small movie, but it provides insight into large and terrifying events, such as the voluntary participation of civilians in the monstrous crimes of the last century. The material is based on actual cases from the past decade. Written and directed by Craig Zobel.—*D.D.* (8/27/12) (In limited release.)

THE DEADLY AFFAIR

An electric poignancy permeates this adaptation of John le Carré's novella "Call for the Dead," and its prime source is James Mason's performance as a British agent who cracks the mystery of a Foreign Service official's apparent suicide. In the role of le Carré's spy George Smiley, renamed Charles Dobbs for the movie, Mason does a middle-aged variation on the odd men out he played for Carol Reed when he first became a star. Life

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keeps letting Dobbs down: his adored wife (Harriet Andersson) has serial affairs; his work has lost its honor. Mason grounds the character's disappointment and concealed strength in his weathered features and brushed-fur voice; everything about him says "bloodied but unbowed." The producer-director, Sidney Lumet, surrounds Mason with a cast of his peers, including Simone Signoret, as the official's widow, and Harry Andrews, as the retired inspector who becomes Dobbs's right-hand man. The cinematographer, Freddie Young, gives the film an aptly brooding, almost decolorized look; Paul Dehn wrote the taut script. This is one of Lumet's best movies. Released in 1966.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM; Sept. 30.)

DETROPIA

This documentary film, about the deconstruction of a great American city, is surprisingly lyrical and often very moving. It has its share of forlorn images—the office buildings with empty eye sockets for windows; the idle, rotting factories with their fantastic networking of chutes, pipes, and stacks. Yet the filmmakers, Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing (who comes from Detroit), are so attuned to color and shape that they have made a beautiful film. We're looking at new ruins, American ruins—the remains of industrial ambition, a kind of impromptu graveyard of capitalism—and the survivors, hanging on, exhibit a mixture of awed mournfulness and good cheer. Detroit's history is evoked by such chroniclers and guides as George McGregor, a warmly sympathetic union veteran; Crystal Starr, a young video blogger, who breaks into abandoned buildings and installs herself in offices now trashed and empty, as if she had worked there years ago; and Tommy Stephens, a former teacher, who warns of revolution if the middle class continues to be eviscerated. At the end, as young people move in to claim the cheap real estate, the movie hints at a fresh surge of capitalist ebullience and a possible revival.—*D.D.* (9/10/12) (In limited release.)

END OF WATCH

Jumpy and exciting. Again and again, two gutsy Los Angeles cops, Brian Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Mike Zavala (Michael Peña), plunge into sordid stucco houses in South Central Los Angeles and find traces of a Mexican drug-cartel operation. The cops don't always know what is going on or what one confrontation has to do with another; they're not part of a "plot" but just slogging through the unstable, day-by-day existential mess of police work. The writer-director, David Ayer, has a talent for violent confrontations and filthy talk. A local gang (working under orders from south of the border) definitely sets a standard for squalid thuggery. Conversations consist almost entirely of variations on the F-word. Ayer sets up the gang as the essence of self-destroying evil—nihilism as a working method and a game—and the two cops as order and good will personified. Catching things on the fly, Ayer uses a handheld camera, spinning down alleys, up stairways, in and out of apartments. One officer is also intermittently making his own movie, which is confusing and unnecessary: we share the men's point of view without it.—*D.D.* (9/24/12) (In wide release.)

THE EYE OF THE STORM

A brilliantly acted semi-dud. In an upper-class suburb of Sydney, in 1972, Elizabeth Hunter (Charlotte Rampling), an intelligent, vicious, rich old woman, very ill but never without awareness of her power, wills herself not to die. She wants to spite her two estranged children, Sir Basil (Geoffrey Rush), a great actor, and Dorothy (Judy Davis), a nervous, unhappy divorcée, both of whom have arrived from Europe to claim what they expect will be a large inheritance. In her large mansion, Mrs. Hunter lies in bed or on a couch, dolled up in a lilac wig and jewelry; she can't stop competing with her children, and

they fight back with as much bluster or deceit as they can get away with. If the director, Fred Schepisi, had played the story more broadly—for the cruelty and deviousness of the three posers—the movie might have been more fun, but he stays close to the soulful and ruminative tone of the novel, by Patrick White, on which it's based. Rampling gives a great performance in search of better material. Rush, with his baritone amplitude and fondness for mock pomp, makes the actor a vain, hollow man, grasping at something that he knows has eluded him his entire life. Whatever it is, it seems to have eluded the filmmakers, too.—*D.D.* (9/10/12) (In limited release.)

LAWLESS

In comparison with the director John Hillcoat's last film, "The Road," his new work is a feast of carefree merriment; his fans, however, can be reassured that it still contains the regular ingredients—seething longeurs, jolts of brutality, and a vengefulness that verges on the Biblical. Three brothers, played by Tom Hardy, Jason Clarke, and Shia LaBeouf, run a spirited moonshine trade in Franklin County, Virginia, in 1931. Nowhere are the strictures of Prohibition more freely and profitably flouted, and all is well until a new deputy sheriff named Rakes (Guy Pearce), a strutting and murderous dandy from out of town, arrives to clean the place up. There is no denying the commanding style exerted by the director; both the framing of figures and the arrangement of colors are as immaculate as ever. The performances are no less carefully matched, with LaBeouf's boyish lunges set off against Hardy's bestial growls. But the center of narrative gravity is hard to locate; for whom are we rooting, and does anything really ripple outward from this nasty local fight? Do these thuggish types deserve the mythical status that the movie seeks to confer? With Jessica Chastain, resplendent against the dusty backdrops, and Gary Oldman, captivating as a phlegmatic gangster with a tommy gun; would that Hillcoat had made more of them both.—*Anthony Lane* (9/3/12) (In wide release.)

THE MASTER

Freddie Quell (Joaquin Phoenix), released from the Navy after the Second World War, finds it hard to settle, drifting or running from one job to the next; look at his features, clenched in a permanent rictus, and you see a frustrated man. Relief arrives in the shape of Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the charismatic founder of a small cult known as the Cause. Dodd's views on humanity—on its distant origins and its chances for enlightenment—may not bear logical scrutiny, and yet, expressed with sufficient fervor, they have the power to pull a crowd, and to command the brutal loyalty of a wounded soul like Freddie. You keep thinking that Paul Thomas Anderson's film is about to swell into something crowded and expansive, but it remains as compact, unnerving, and volatile as a hand grenade—all the more so because of the precise, almost obsessive, arrangement of composition and color. You could argue that, once the two central figures have collided, the narrative flattens out, and that the film becomes, for better or worse, an acting master class; no one, however, could deny the solemn strangeness of the whole endeavor, its aching fug of discontent lifted by the joyousness of the filmmaker's verve. To whom, you want to ask, does the title rightfully cling: to the head of the Cause, or to the masterly director himself? With Amy Adams as the daunting Mrs. Dodd.—*A.L.* (9/17/12) (In wide release.)

THE PROWLER

From the start of this bitter 1951 film noir, directed by Joseph Losey, the forces of order are as much a menace as a comfort. Two officers respond to the suspicions of Susan Gilvray (Evelyn Keyes), a comely, no longer quite young

blonde who is left alone in a suburban house at night by her aging disk-jockey husband. Later, one of the men—the bristling and randy Webb Garwood (Van Heflin)—comes back for a courtesy call that results in a big affair and, unsurprisingly, a case of homicide. By way of starkly shifting visual perspectives and chilly, hands-off compositions, Losey calmly observes the destructive mechanisms of desire and despair, which mesh like gears when these two frustrated souls meet. With a blandly dismissive anti-romanticism, the director sees through the pretenses of civility to the mediocrity, disappointment, venality, gullibility, duplicity, and boredom that pass for daily life. Yet the lovers on the run, heading toward the wilderness, find no romantic liberation there, only the menacing ghosts of distant conflicts. Heflin's unctuous performance comes off as a model of cowardly villainy—and a portrait of the American dreamer caught in a plasticized nightmare.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Oct. 1.)

SAMSARA

Moviegoers expecting a "Koyaanisqatsi"-like cinema experience—a succession of thrilling images from around the world, accompanied by music alternately propulsive and meditative—will certainly get it in this new film by Ron Fricke, but they will also, most likely, be confronted by more than they bargained for. Fricke was the cinematographer on that first film of Godfrey Reggio's trilogy, from 1982, but here the sense of wonder is tempered by something darker, more challenging. In this wordless travelogue, exquisitely shot across twenty-five countries, scenes of vast, eternal beauty and primordial purity are intercut with sequences of dronelike industrial and moral complexity. Punctuating these views of the immensity of nature and teeming civilization are extreme closeups of the human face, always concentrating on the eyes. A Balinese dancer, an African tribesman, a disfigured marine, a Japanese stripper all stand composed, confident, and dignified, daring you to break the gaze.—*Ken Marks* (In limited release.)

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN

In 1970, a mysterious singer-songwriter in Detroit named Rodriguez released an album called "Cold Fact," which got nice notices, but, in the words of a number of bewildered music-biz people connected with the record, "did absolutely nothing." He gave up the dream and resigned himself to a solitary, hardworking existence. Somehow, though, the record found its way to South Africa, where, via cassette copying, it went viral, striking a chord among young Afrikaners, who found in it a sense of longed-for justice stifled in their apartheid-defined society. For a generation of South Africans, Rodriguez was as big a music hero as the Beatles and Simon & Garfunkel, but his fans knew nothing about him. In the late nineties, several of these fans decided to try to find out what happened to Rodriguez, around whom legends swirled. A decade later, Malik Bendjelloul, a Swedish director, got wind of the story, and this is his moving, lyrical account of that quest, using documentary footage, interviews, staged sequences, animation, and the beautiful songs of Rodriguez, whose music has been reissued in the U.S.—*K.M.* (In limited release.)

STEP UP TO THE PLATE

Paul Lacoste's understated debut documentary follows the renowned chef Michel Bras as he prepares to hand over his flagship restaurant, Bras, in the South of France, to his equally talented son Sébastien. Lacoste captures the men as they meticulously craft their signature dishes in near-silence. Their hushed, almost religious ritual dispenses with master-chef histrionics and brings a calm intelligence to their culinary work. But the real subject here is the deep emotional tension between a still creative man who must let go of the family business and a son who needs to step out from his father's shadow. An air of exquisite melancholy permeates the film as they move into their new positions, and the quiet French countryside seems to amplify their conflicted feelings.



It's an intimate and immaculate film, modest in its goals and greatly affecting. In French.—*B.D.* (In limited release.)

USELESS

In this promotional film, from 2007, commissioned by the fashion designer Ma Ke, the Chinese director Jia Zhangke eludes the genre's constraints to provide an exemplary and beguiling documentary view of inner and outer life in contemporary China. Showcasing Ma's handmade haute-couture line is the pretext for a triptych that begins in the vast and oppressive clothing factories of Guangdong. After viewing laborers in their numbing routines, Jia follows Ma at work in her serene studio and records her insightful meditations on the moral aspect of handicrafts. (A glimpse of her lavish Paris show offers a seemingly obligatory tribute to what Ma calls "the creativity of the Chinese people.") The film concludes with Jia's visit to a coal-mining town in his native Shanxi province, where he speaks with a traditional tailor who has abandoned his needle and thread to work as a miner. Jia's plaintive images suggest the dehumanization that has come with China's industrial revolution and the soul-killing authority on which it depends: a long, poignant shot of laborers squeezing through or climbing over a pointlessly locked gate is a stunning visual metaphor for a society of excessive restrictions, in which living normally means breaking the rules. In Mandarin and Shanxi dialect.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 30.)

YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

Digital technology meets lyrical drama and classical myth in this puckishly daring, intricately original work of docu-theatre from the ninety-year-old director Alain Resnais. His exquisite setup involves a baker's dozen of France's greatest actors—including Michel Piccoli, Sabine Azéma (Resnais's wife), Pierre Arditi, and Mathieu Amalric—as themselves, gathering at a rural mansion for the funeral of a friend, the (fictitious) playwright Antoine d'Anthac (Denis Podalydès), who addresses them posthumously by way of a video that presents a youthful theatre company's rehearsal of his play "Eurydice." It had, years earlier, been a vehicle for the assembled mourners, and, as the recording of it (made by the director Bruno Podalydès) unfolds, they can't keep from accompanying it with their own impromptu performance of the play. The expanses of the house fuse with the inner expanses of the mind to become the living stage of memory: long-ago love affairs, wrenching separations, tawdry betrayals, wild jealousy, and violent death surge forth from the past and, in the process, revive the veteran actors' youth. Resnais (working with texts by the playwright Jean Anouilh) revisits the artistic shocks and personal passions of his own youth and offers loving tributes to cinematic landmarks he passed along the way, setting up, by means of some deliciously jolting special effects, a darkly whimsical new one in uncharted ground. In French.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Oct. 2.)

Also Playing

I'M CAROLYN PARKER: IFC Center. **THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER:** In wide release. **RADIO UNNAMEABLE:** Film Forum. **17 GIRLS:** In limited release. **TROUBLE WITH THE CURVE:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Giallo Fever!" All films are in Italian. Sept. 27 at 9:15 and Sept. 30 at 6:30: "A Quiet Place in the Country" (1968, Elio Petri). ♦ Sept. 29 at 7:15: "The Girl Who Knew Too Much," a.k.a. "The Evil Eye" (1963, Mario Bava). ♦ Sept. 30 at 8:45: "Blood and Black Lace" (1964, Bava). ♦

"Jean Epstein, Part 2: The Sound Films." Sept. 28 at 7:30 and Sept. 30 at 2:15: Short films, including "The Storm" (1947). ♦ Sept. 29 at 6: "The Woman from the End of the World" (1938).

BAM CINÉMATEK

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"10 Years of Film Movement." Sept. 26 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Be with Me" (2006, Eric Khoo; in Cantonese, Hokkien, and Mandarin). ♦ Sept. 26 at 6:50: "Alamar" (2009, Pedro González-Rubio; in Italian and Spanish). ♦ "John le Carré." Sept. 27 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Constant Gardener" (2005, Fernando Meirelles). ♦ Sept. 28 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy" (2011, Tomas Alfredson). ♦ Sept. 29 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Looking Glass War" (1969, Frank Pierson). ♦ Sept. 30 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Deadly Affair" (†).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Sept. 26-27 at 1, 4, and 7:20: "The Tin Drum" (1979, Volker Schlöndorff; in German). ♦ Sept. 28-30 and Oct. 2-4 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40 and Oct. 1 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, and 9:40: "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion" (1970, Elio Petri; in Italian). ♦ The films of Harold Lloyd. Oct. 1 at 7:30: "Safety Last" (1923, Fred C. Newmeyer and Sam Taylor; silent).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—The New York Film Festival. Main Slate. Sept. 28 at 6, 6:30, 9, and 9:30: "Life of Pi"

"You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet" (†). ♦ Special screenings. Sept. 29 at noon and Oct. 2 at 3:30: "The Savoy King: Chick Webb and the Music That Changed America" (2012, Jeff Kaufman). ♦ Sept. 29 at 4:15 and Oct. 2 at 9: "Roman Polanski: Odd Man Out" (2012, Marina Zenovich). ♦ Sept. 29 at 6:30: "Ingrid Caven: Music and Voice" (2012, Bertrand Bonello; in French). ♦ Oct. 1 at 6:15: "Liv and Ingmar" (2012, Dheeraj Akolkar). ♦ "Masterworks." Sept. 29 at 6: "Liebelei" (1933, Max Ophüls; in German). ♦ Sept. 29 at 7: "The Rolling Stones—Charlie Is My Darling—Ireland '65" (1966/2012, Peter Whitehead and Mick Gochanour). ♦ Sept. 30 at noon: "The Satin Slipper" (1985, Manoel de Oliveira; in French and Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 30 at 8:45: "Whirlpool" (1949, Otto Preminger). ♦ Oct. 1 at 6:30: "The Prowler" (†). ♦ Oct. 1 at 8:30: "Pursued" (1947, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Oct. 2 at 6:15: "Objective, Burma!" (1945, Walsh). ♦ Oct. 2 at 8: "The Overcoat" (1926, Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg; silent). ♦ Oct. 2 at 9:15: "The Tiger of Eschnapur" (1959, Fritz Lang; in German).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Films for Foodies." Oct. 2 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Marie Antoinette" (2006, Sofia Coppola) and "The Battle of the Century" (1927, Clyde Bruckman; silent).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Alfred Hitchcock. Sept. 28-30 at 11 A.M.: "Number 17" (1932).



The collage "I'm Not the Woman You Think I Am" (2009), in the exhibition "Mickalene Thomas: Origin of the Universe," at the Brooklyn Museum.

(2012, Ang Lee). ♦ Sept. 29 at 12:45 and Oct. 2 at 6: "Here and There" (2012, Antonio Méndez Esparza; in Spanish). ♦ Sept. 29 at 3:30, Oct. 1 at 6:15, and Oct. 2 at 12:30: "Camille Rewinds" (2012, Noémie Lvovsky; in French). ♦ Sept. 29 at 6:30, Sept. 30 at 9, and Oct. 1 at 8:45: "Caesar Must Die" (2012, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 29 at 9: "Passion" (2012, Brian De Palma). ♦ Sept. 30 at 3:45: "Hyde Park on Hudson" (2012, Roger Michell). ♦ Sept. 30 at 6:30: "Frances Ha" (2012, Noah Baumbach). ♦ Oct. 1 at 6: "Barbara" (2012, Christian Petzold). ♦ Oct. 1 at 9: "Beyond the Hills" (2012, Christian Mungiu; in Romanian). ♦ Oct. 2 at 6:

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"An Auteurist History of Film." Sept. 26-28 at 1:30: "Straight Shooting" (1917, John Ford; silent) and "The Battle of Elderbush Gulch" (1914, D. W. Griffith; silent). ♦ "Yeonghwa: Korean Film Today." Sept. 26 at 4:30: "A Fish" (2011, Park Hong-min). ♦ Sept. 28 at 4:30 and Sept. 30 at 5:30: "Fire in Hell" (2012, Lee Sang-woo). ♦ "Oberhausen Manifesto 1962: Short Films by the Signatories." Sept. 27 at 4 and Sept. 29 at 3:15: Program 1. ♦ Sept. 27 at 7 and Sept. 29 at 1:30: Program 2. ♦ Sept. 28 at 4 and Sept. 29 at 5: Program 3.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—“Film After Film.” Sept. 28 at 7: “Once Upon a Time in Anatolia” (2011, Nuri Bilge Ceylan; in Turkish). ♦ Sept. 29-30 at 1: “Coraline” (2009, Henry Selick). ♦ Sept. 29 at 4: “Ten” (2002, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi) and “C’est Vrai! (One Hour)” (1990, Robert Frank). ♦ Sept. 29 at 7: “The Idiots” (1998, Lars von Trier; in Danish). ♦ Sept. 30 at 4: “Useless” (†). ♦ Sept. 30 at 7: “Goodbye, Dragon Inn” (2003, Tsai Ming-liang; in Mandarin).

92Y TRIBECA

200 Hudson St. (212-601-1000)—Special screening, Sept. 27 at 7:30: Three short films by Cristian Nemescu.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—“Cabaret Cinema.” Sept. 28 at 9:30: “Strangers on a Train” (1951, Alfred Hitchcock).

READINGS AND TALKS

“UPSTAIRS AT THE SQUARE”

The great soul singer Bettye LaVette marks the publication of her autobiography, “A Woman Like Me,” with an appearance at the Union Square Barnes & Noble. She’ll talk about her work with the journalist Katherine Lanpher. Expect a few songs, too. (33 E. 17th St. 212-253-0810. Sept. 27 at 7.)

“5X15”

This London-based nonfiction story series, in which five speakers have fifteen minutes each to discuss something dear to their hearts, makes its New York City debut, with Siri Hustvedt, on her new book “Living, Thinking, Looking”; the historian Andrew Roberts, on how it was decided

that D Day would be June 6, 1944; *The New Yorker’s* poetry editor, Paul Muldoon, on poetry and song lyrics; Peter Godwin, on Zimbabwe; and Philip Gourevitch, on writing about crime scenes. The writer Amanda Foreman is the host. (The Players, 16 Gramercy Park S. For more information, visit 5x15stories.com. Oct. 1 at 7.)

BOOKCOURT

A. M. Homes reads from her new novel, “May We Be Forgiven.” (163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. Oct. 2 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HIP HOP BOOK CLUB

Sex, drugs, and money are common themes in contemporary rap music, but at this new Manhattan spinoff of the Bushwick Book Club, a monthly literature-inspired singer-songwriter event, freestyle rhyming is dedicated to a wider range of subjects. On Sept. 26 at 7, Rumpelstiltskin, Rapunzel, the Frog Prince, and others get top billing, in an evening devoted to Grimms’ Fairy Tales, hosted by the beatboxer Kid Lucky and the B.B.C. founder Susan Hwang. (Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St. 212-780-9386. For more information, visit bushwickbookclub.com.)

CHILE PEPPER FIESTA

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden celebrates the global reach of capsaicin, the spicy component that gives chili peppers their kick. There will be live music and tasty treats. (900 Washington Ave. 718-623-7200. Sept. 29 at noon.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The items for sale at Sotheby’s this week are a panoply of American craftsmanship and inspiration. Practical objects—furniture and decora-

tions—come first (Sept. 27), followed by paintings, drawings, and sculpture (Sept. 28). Folk art is given pride of place in the earlier sale, embodied by such items as painted carousel figures (notably, an eccentric ostrich-shaped example) and a cheerfully painted Chippendale blanket chest made in 1775. The second sale also has a folksy side; one of the leading lots is a charmingly naïve pastel-colored landscape, “On the Banks of the Hudson River,” by Grandma Moses. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ On Oct. 2, Swann brings out a trove of books and manuscripts on American themes, including a number of lots relating to the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Buffs of the latter conflict will be drawn to an archive of correspondence and personal effects belonging to a New York Infantry captain, Isaac Plumb, who died of injuries suffered at Cold Harbor. The missives include many vivid impressions; after the battle of Fredericksburg, Plumb observed that “many a poor fellow was wallowing in the mud, in the last agonies of death.” (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.) ♦ Phillips holds one of its periodic sales of photographs (Oct. 2); this one opens with a series of images (some quite abstract) of the female form, as seen by everyone from Horst to Outerbridge. The sale then cycles through fashion spreads, reportage, and stirring nature imagery, most notably a series of collage-like African images by Peter Beard. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.)

GOINGS ON DIGITAL

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ON THE HORIZON



THE THEATRE

PORTRAIT OF A LADY
Oct. 6

Though she’s best known for playing mid-twentieth-century characters in movies such as “Tree of Life” and “The Help,” Jessica Chastain has the chops and the poise—not to mention the bone structure—to play a Henry James heroine; she makes her Broadway debut in “The Heiress,” adapted by Ruth and Augustus Goetz from “Washington Square.” Moisés Kaufman directs a cast that includes David Strathairn, Dan Stevens, and Judith Ivey, at the Walter Kerr. (212-239-6200.)

NIGHT LIFE
SPANISH NIGHTS
Oct. 6

A twelve-member multigenerational ensemble of singers, dancers, and musicians from Jerez, Spain, gathers at N.Y.U.’s Skirball Center to open the World Music Institute’s Festival Flamenco Gitano. (worldmusicinstitute.org.)

MOVIES
SPEAKING ITS NAME
Oct. 9-16

BAM Cinématek’s series “Born in Flames: New Queer Cinema” presents independent films about modern gay life, such as

Todd Haynes’s “Poison,” Jennie Livingston’s “Paris Is Burning,” and Ira Sachs’s “The Delta.” (718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
GREAT DANE
Oct. 10-13

Some of Alan Gilbert’s finest moments on the Philharmonic’s podium have come when conducting the music of Carl Nielsen. Gilbert continues his journey with a program featuring the Flute and Violin Concertos, as well as Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 2, “Little Russian.” (nyphil.org.)

ART
COSMIC MUST
Oct. 24-Jan. 13

The German artist Rosemarie Trockel has co-organized her own retrospective at the New Museum with the curator Lynne Cooke. Titled “A Cosmos,” it juxtaposes Trockel’s seminal “knit paintings,” sculptures, drawings, and videos with such items as nineteenth-century glass models of sea creatures and works by the self-taught American artists James Castle and Judith Scott. (212-219-1222.)

“The Heiress,” at the Walter Kerr.



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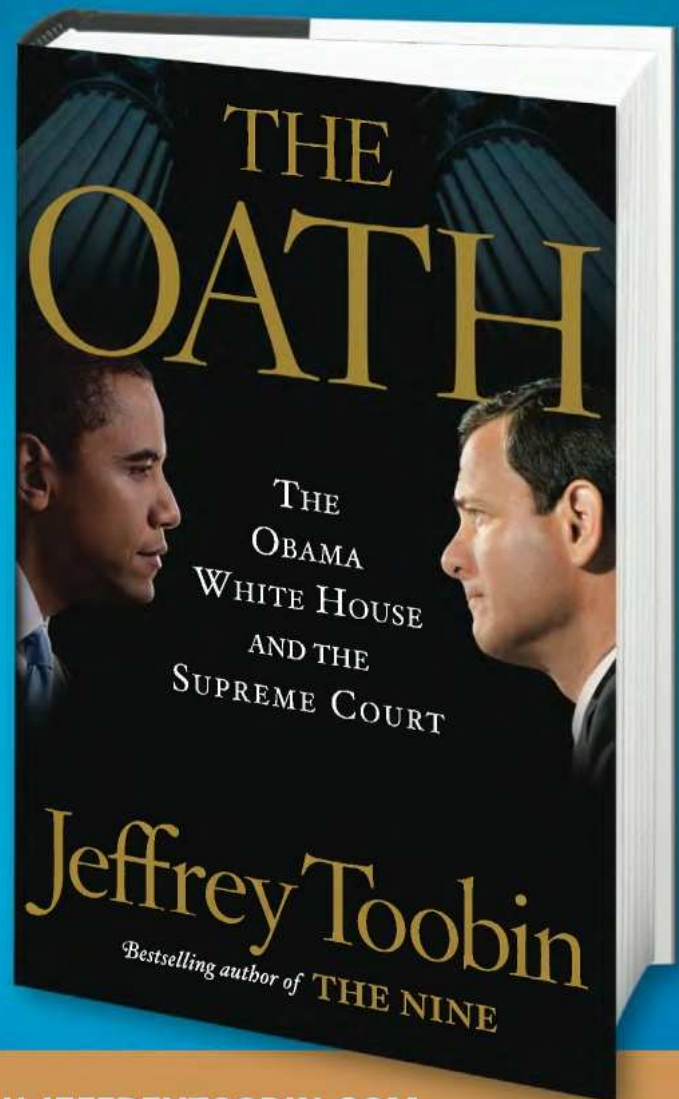
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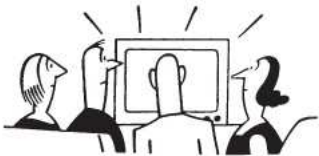


Doubleday



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT DAYS OF RAGE



In “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” an essay published in 1990, the historian Bernard Lewis describes a “surge of hatred” rising from the Islamic world that “becomes a rejection of Western civilization as such.” The thesis became influential. It posited a crisis within a global Islamic community that made conflict with the United States and Europe inevitable. Academics and policymakers expanded on these ideas after September 11th, which brought urgently to the fore questions about how Al Qaeda’s radical ideas should be understood in relation to wider, diverse Muslim thought. (Lewis wrote an essay on the subject for this magazine in the autumn of 2001.) George W. Bush adopted some of the discourse in crafting his Global War on Terrorism. “They hate our freedoms,” the President said.

But the notion that a generalized Muslim anger about Western ideas could explain violence or politics from Indonesia to Bangladesh, from Iran to Senegal, seemed deficient. It was like arguing that authoritarian strains in Christianity could explain apartheid, Argentine juntas, and the rise of Vladimir Putin. Nevertheless, the meme sold, and it still sells. Last week, *Newsweek’s* cover splashed “Muslim Rage” in large type above a photograph of shouting men. Inside came

advice on how to survive “Islamic hate.” Cable news channels—Fox and MSNBC alike—showed similar images, hour after hour. By now, many Americans must find nothing remarkable about the conflation of Muslim faith and contorted faces.

A short film on YouTube, called “Innocence of Muslims,” is the cause of the latest outbreak of violence. An Egyptian Coptic Christian on probation in California for bank fraud is apparently behind the movie. It is offensive both to followers of Islam and to cinephiles: the dialogue is laced with sectarian slander, and the low-budget aesthetic recalls “Santa Claus Conquers the Martians.” The film came out in June, but took weeks to reach extremists in North Africa. In Libya, on September 11th, attackers armed with rocket-propelled grenades carried out a strike that may have been planned; the American Ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, died. He was the first Ambassa-

dor to be killed while on duty since 1979. Attackers struck the American Embassy in Cairo, and demonstrators looted an American school in Tunis.

Crowds have protested since then in several capitals, at times violently. Some of the protests appear to have been organized by fringe political parties and radical activists; for them, “Death to America” is a mobilizing strategy. The rioting they encourage is about Muslim rage only in a tautological sense: raging Muslims do the burning and looting, but they do not typically attract even a large minority of the local faithful. The faces on American screens are often shock troops, comparable to Europe’s skinheads or anarchists.

Stevens’s killers apparently belonged to a Salafi or jihadi network that the fragile, newly democratic Libyan government had failed to disarm. Salafis preach a return to seventh-century life styles, and their street gangs have proved menacing since the arrival of the Arab Spring. The Salafis have room to roam now, because some of the North African dictators who used to jail and torture them are gone. Yet they are not popular: on Friday in Benghazi, thousands of Libyans sacked the offices of Ansar al-Sharia, a jihadi militia accused of participating in the attack on Stevens. In Egypt, the Salafis have won a disturbing number of votes, but they are constrained by competition from the Muslim Brotherhood. Because the Brotherhood has moved from opposition to power, while the Salafis remain on the outside, it is in their interest to create unrest that forces the Brotherhood to act like the secular oppressors before them.

During these recent days of hate



speech, there have been laments about the failure of Arab liberals and Arab youth—who stood so firmly against authoritarians in Tunisia and Egypt—to stand now against the radicals. But the essential problem of the Arab liberals has been disorganization, not timidity. It should also be noted that international liberalism tends to get weak knees when it must confront Islamist radicals who are ready to kill and be killed. Salman Rushdie, in his new memoir, “Joseph Anton,” describes chillingly how, after Ayatollah Khomeini issued the fatwa calling for his death, in 1989—in response to his novel “The Satanic Verses”—some American and British publishers and writers backed away from him, as if he had brought the fatwa upon himself. There is no honor in relativism when radicals of any faith exploit religion to justify murder.

Revolutions sometimes consume their pluralists and their democrats. In the gathering Arab Autumn, the possibility of religious dictatorship in Egypt can hardly be dismissed, and Syria’s descent into civil war is a humanitarian and geopolitical crisis. Iran’s meddling has exacerbated sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites, and its nuclear ambitions may upend the region’s military balance. But here, too, the familiar pessimism about Arab politics should be weighed against other evidence. A human-rights activist now leads Tunisia; the elections there and in Libya produced balanced parliaments, and democratic constitutions

are being conceived for the first time.

Americans are also inclined to see the Middle East as a region in perpetual turmoil. But, except for two American-led invasions (to liberate Kuwait, in 1991, and to overthrow Saddam Hussein, in 2003), there has not been a major armed conflict between states in the Arab world since the end of the Cold War. (The thirty-four-day war between Israel and Hezbollah, in 2006, came close.) The price of stability in Arab countries has often been iron-fisted rule and brutality of the sort on display today in the streets of Bahrain and Syria, but the region’s traditions of tribal subsidies and balancing have also contributed to surprisingly durable, if anachronistic, monarchies, from Saudi Arabia to Jordan and Morocco.

As for the idea that Islam itself should be understood as an inevitable font of conflict, most of the world’s Muslims live in relatively peaceful Asia. Al Qaeda has all but disappeared east of Burma; it is hard to find much rage in the air-conditioned shopping malls of Jakarta or Kuala Lumpur. As mobile South Asian and Southeast Asian middle classes grow, so do the numbers of English-speaking Muslims seeking to construct modern and hybrid identities that don’t conform to the West’s narrower conceptions.

The uproar over “Innocence of Muslims” matters not because of the deep pathologies it has supposedly laid bare but because of the way the film went viral. A sectarian auteur with modest means used

the Web to provoke enemies directly. The filmmakers employed the same strategies that liberal bloggers and Facebook users seized upon during the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and that Syrian revolutionaries use daily to rally resistance to the butchering government in Damascus. Free speech in a digital public square—not fringe violence—is what’s new under the Mediterranean sun. And with free speech comes provocation.

Last week, *Newsweek* launched a Twitter hash tag, #MuslimRage, to spur chatter about its cover story. What followed may constitute the most inspiring revolt yet of new media against old. Scores of English-speaking Muslim Twitter users, offended by the magazine’s clichéd imagery, hijacked (“pun intended,” one wrote) the online forum to post jokes about Muslim rage in the real world. One lamented a shortage of “Sharia Garcia” ice cream. A woman in a head scarf wrote, “I’m having such a good hair day. No one even knows.” Another, much re-tweeted entry read, “Lost your kid Jihad at the airport. Can’t yell for him.” We await an explication of the roots of Muslim irony.

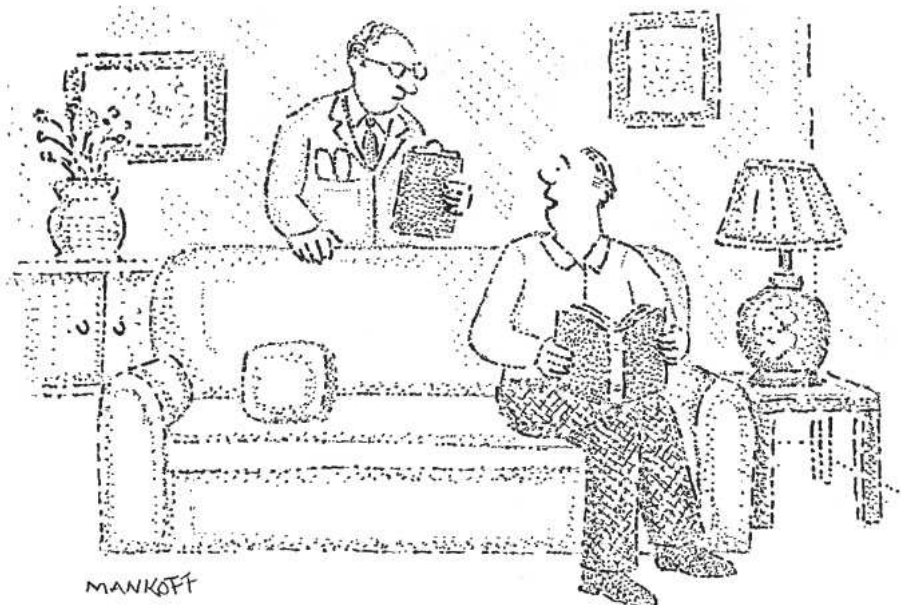
—Steve Coll

DEPT. OF SOUND HELLO, BOBBY



When Scott Litt built a recording studio in back of his house, in Venice, California, seven years ago, he did it with Bob Dylan in mind. He pictured Dylan sitting there at the Hammond organ, accompanied by nothing but drums and a standup bass. Or maybe in an arrangement featuring a banjo and a trumpet. “I always imagined him having a Louis Armstrong ‘Hello, Dolly’ sound,” Litt said the other day. “Musically, that’s as American as it gets.”

Litt, who is fifty-eight and originally from New York, wasn’t a Dylan nut, by any stretch. He’d produced records by R.E.M., Nirvana, and the Replacements, and had worked with the Kinks and the Stones, but he caught a late-career-Bob bug when he heard the 2001 album “Love and Theft.” “To



MANKOFF

“I know we agreed to a period of watchful waiting, but this is more watchful than I bargained for.”

me, it was 'Huckleberry Finn,'” Litt said.

In recent years, Dylan has produced his own albums, under the *nom de son* Jack Frost, but he sometimes brings in a seasoned producer to serve as recording engineer. Last winter, Litt got a call from Dylan’s representative, who invited him in for a meeting with Dylan, before a gig. “I met Bob in his trailer. He was there with his band. They were playing ‘It’s Too Late,’ by Chuck Willis—rehearsing. I just sat there and kept my mouth shut.” Litt signed on as the engineer for Dylan’s latest album, “Tempest,” which came out last month.

Dylan, alas, never made it to Litt’s house—they recorded the album at Jackson Browne’s studio, up the road in Santa Monica. And when Litt got up the nerve to mention his “Hello, Dolly” idea, it didn’t go over very well. “He just went, ‘Heh heh heh. ‘Hello, Dolly.’” Litt’s biggest contribution to “Tempest” may have been a prized pair of old Neumann microphones that he owns, worth twenty-five thousand dollars or so each. They are “omnidirectional”: you can set one up in the middle of the room and record many musicians at once, in the round. It was an unorthodox, old-fashioned approach, but Dylan apparently liked what the mikes picked up. “It created a soundscape, and he kind of fit over it,” Litt said. Dylan’s voice stood out. Litt didn’t mess with it. Listeners will not dispute that few tricks were deployed to enhance it.

Dylan typically listened to the rough cuts in his pickup truck, or else on a boom box, something that Litt had been instructed to provide. “It’s hard to find a boom box!” Litt said. “Then Bob took it when the sessions were over. I thought I’d get it as a souvenir.” After they were done, Litt didn’t hear anything about the record for several months, until he saw press reports that it was about to be released.

Litt had met Dylan once before, more than twenty years earlier. He was producing an album by the Replacements, and Dylan, who was recording nearby, dropped in to check them out—at the very moment, as it happens, that Paul Westerberg, the Replacements’ leader, was launching into a Dylan parody of theirs called “Like a Rolling Pin.” Westerberg, his back turned to the control room, failed to notice Dylan standing there, and Litt, to Westerberg’s later chagrin, didn’t stop him. When the song was over, Dylan, who was wearing a hoodie, said, “You guys

rehearse much?” and then walked out.

“I didn’t bring that up when Bob and I were working together,” Litt said, smiling. He was in his Venice studio, surrounded by his recording equipment, much of it, such as the vintage Neve console, all but obsolete, in a ProTools world. In seven years, he had had only one artist come in to record. “It just kind of goes away,” he said.

He had been spending his time instead at the Boys and Girls Club in Venice, where he’d set up another studio, to teach kids how to have a career in the music business, on the other side of the console. “I’ve seen too many young African-Americans working with Jewish engineers like



Bob Dylan and Scott Litt

me,” he said. “It can’t just be us recycled guys.” His top student had been a kid named Oscar Duncan, who started with Litt when he was sixteen and by twenty-three was running the studio. Last June, Duncan, an anti-gang activist, was killed in a drive-by shooting. Stevie Wonder sang at his funeral. “I don’t have kids, but this kid was as close as could be,” Litt said. “My job is to find another Oscar at the Boys and Girls Club.”

He put on some Nat King Cole, for a quick tutorial on ribbon microphones, and then played “Hello, Dolly,” feeding the sound through the Neve, nice and loud. “You still blowin’, you still crowin’, you still goin’ strong,” Louis Armstrong growled, as Litt tapped his feet and wagged his head.

“I mean, don’t you think?” he shouted out, as the trumpet kicked in.

—Nick Paumgarten

CLINTON HILL POSTCARD NEIGHBORS



You may know Evelyn Talarico from coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement or from going to Zuccotti Park yourself. She is the sixty-six-year-old Brooklyn folk artist who was born in Puerto Rico and who, day after day, joined the protests, carrying her paintings and signs, and always failed to get arrested, owing to her basic lovability. Even the police liked her paintings. At five feet five, with hazel eyes, short white hair, and gaps between her front teeth, and wearing a black-and-white “OWS” T-shirt, gray shorts, pink-and-white running shoes, and a jade pendant around her neck on a piece of speaker wire, she can pass untouched through chaos. Her focus is elsewhere, on her visions, which her paintings record. For about forty-five years, she has lived in a house next to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. If you’re stuck in a traffic jam, heading west, about half a mile from the Tillary Street exit, you might get a good look; it’s the one with the small satellite dish on the roof and the siding that runs diagonally.

“Welcome to my mini-museum, or to my mega-mess, as my family calls it,” she said to a visitor who stopped by the other day. A rug with a reproduction of the “Mona Lisa” covered the floor of her front hall. “Leonardo, he’s supposed to be the king of painters, but Michelangelo to me is greater,” she said as she led the way. “Michelangelo, he’s always stressed, the Pope owns him, so in some of his paintings he makes angels who go like this.” She thrust her finger upward. “Now, in this room I show you my first paintings, from after my mother died, seven years ago. I was so sad I was thinking of suicide, and I start to paint, I don’t even know why. You see how in this picture all of the trees are crying? And this little girl in the pink dress is Alma, the girl who is my soul. I put her in many paintings, and here she is going to Heaven. I been a good person, my soul will go to Heaven. But my friend said, ‘No, Alma cannot die,’ so I bring her back to life.”

The fact that the loud B.Q.E. was just

a few jumps away could be forgotten. The room was serene, an artist's study, with a tall, narrow window open to a back courtyard enclosed by a vine-covered brick wall. Talarico brought out paintings by the score—of tropical plants, rivers, her dog, a woman carrying a cross up some stairs to a door she doesn't know she won't be able to open ("I am sorry to make her suffer, but women suffer"), the Berlin Wall, Mexicans trying to cross into the United States, and members of Talarico's family stepping on her because they disapprove of her constantly painting. In another studio, in the basement, she had paintings in racks and bales. One was of a person who can't stop painting and is saying, "Stop, stop, stop!" There were works on canvas, paper, plastic, cardboard display panels from Staples, and fine linen from a nearby factory that makes burial shrouds. One painting had been done on a computer screen's surface, to which Talarico had also glued rocks.

Outside, Talarico took the visitor to see some of the murals she has been asked to paint around her neighborhood. Some were Sistine Chapel ambitious, like the one on the hundred-foot wall next to the Sacred Heart Church on Adelphi Street. "If I had good paint, a lot of paint, I'd paint my whole neighborhood," she said. Near a mural on Myrtle Avenue, she said, "Sometimes I sell my paintings here for forty dollars each. Six years ago, I went to the neighborhood gallery, and the owner, Ms. L. B. Brown, she told me, 'You are a folk artist, a self-taught outsider artist.' I did not even know what that was. For a while, Ms. Brown tried to sell my paintings, but I don't care about money. You see how my hand has this lump from arthritis? I was a seamstress, but I stop, because of arthritis, and later I start to paint. Grandma Moses also was a seamstress, and she also stop because of arthritis and began to paint. When Grandma Moses was one hundred years old, the President call her on her birthday. I will keep painting from my heart, and do my best, and if I live to be one hundred, that I gotta see."

About three-fifths of a mile up Myrtle Avenue, the visitor found L. B. Brown's shop, Clinton Hill Simply Art and Framing Gallery, near the corner of Classon Avenue. It mainly does framing. L. B. Brown closed her

other gallery, the one that showed the work of Talarico and other Brooklyn artists, in 2009. Brown wears her gray hair short and has a salesperson's frank-faced, engaging manner. "No, I could not keep my other gallery open," she told the visitor. Just then, a rush of customers came in, and she asked the visitor to wait in her office, where a paint-dotted palette of Talarico's and a lot of other things hung in frames on the wall. "I am just swamped these days, but that's good!" Brown said somewhat later, sitting down in the office. "O.K.—you asked about Evelyn. She is a very gifted artist, all of my artists were gifted, but that business was ultimately unsustainable. Let me walk you back and give you an idea of



L. B. Brown

how I got to here. I am a native New Yorker, and, as far as I know, mine is the only full-service, wholly owned African-American art-and-framing business in the New York City area. A business, I remind you, that is usually dominated by white men.

"For my first real job, I was an executive secretary to the vice-president of business affairs at ABC television, but my boss was transferred, and then I went to Benton & Bowles ad agency, handling accounts like Procter & Gamble. Then I was an advertising manager for *Black Enterprise* magazine. After that, I was a sales manager at *Ebony* magazine. I am a lover of and collector of art, and I noticed that African-American art was becoming popular. So, in 1991, I went into business for myself, and opened this gallery. Well, the bottom fell out of that business very

quickly—I believe that with the price of gallery space these days most dealers in ethnic art show only in their homes. So then I moved more into the poster-art business. Then the digital revolution came along, and more people started ordering posters online, and my poster business started going down, too. I was at a loss—I thought I might have to close.

"You know what saved me? It might sound funny to say this, but it was September 11th. Many people in this neighborhood—everybody, really—was affected personally by that tragedy, and as a result they started looking at their memorabilia. Maybe it was a picture of a friend that had passed, and they wanted that picture framed. The framing side of my business took off. I believe that the September 11th idea of remembering, of keeping mementos—the word for them in the business is 'cherishables'—spread out into the culture. People want their precious things not lost in some closet somewhere but framed on the wall.

"I can't tell you all the items I've framed. There are many young professional people moving into this area, and they want to have their children's drawings framed. Baby shoes, sports jerseys, ribbons from ribbon-cutting ceremonies, an art work made of uncured goat-skin that I don't even like to think about—the creepiest thing I've ever framed. Everybody wants their cherishables framed. And to do this right I've got to be like a fortune-teller. I have to take time with you to get a sense of what works in your dining room or your man cave. Are you a wood person or a chrome person? Do you want to go all the way up to museum glass to conserve whatever it is you want in that frame? This is the type of question I ask.

"You might not think that huge, historic events have an impact on my little business here in Clinton Hill, but they do, and I am on the lookout for them. So what is coming next? The opening of the Barclays Center, the new arena for the Nets, less than a mile from here! We live in the shadow of that behemoth. The concerts there are sold out through the fall. Now I am thinking I should be more sensitive to sports memorabilia. I was at a gift show at the Javits Center recently and a man from Canada asked where my store was, and I told him, and he said,

'Oh, near the Barclays Center.' Not 'near the Brooklyn Bridge' or 'near the Navy Yard.' The Barclays Center is the new heart of Brooklyn. My business will get something even from the vapors of it all."

—Ian Frazier

DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE INDIGENOUS



One of the only farmers in New York City raising crops that are native to central Mexico is Gudelio García. His plot, called El Poblano Farm, occupies about an acre on Staten Island, in New Springville. It is part of Decker Farm, which has been cultivated since the early eighteen-hundreds. The herbs and vegetables that García grows he sells at farmers' markets and to restaurants such as Bear Restaurant and Bar, in Long Island City. Lonestar Taco, a stand at the New Amsterdam Market, near the Brooklyn Bridge, also used his produce at its pop-up restaurant in Williamsburg last month.

García grows papalo; pepicha; flor de calabaza, or squash blossom; quelites; jicama; chayote; epazote, a spicy herb that smells like gasoline; ejote; and three kinds of Mexican peppers—jalapeño, serrano, and poblano. Papalo and pepicha are similar-tasting herbs. They are used fresh, mainly in soups and tacos. Flor de calabaza is a yellow-orange flower used in quesadillas. Quelites are edible greens, and jicama is a root, something like a turnip. Chayote is a pear-shaped squash, epazote is an herb often cooked with beans, and ejote is a string bean. All of these plants are common in Puebla, where García comes from, and many would prefer more sun and heat than they receive in New York. This is the first year that García has planted chayote, and, to his delight, it thrived. So far, only two antagonists have appeared on the farm. One is deer, which arrive each night around nine, García says, and the other is wind, which recently blew down a lot of his blue corn. "The wind hit the corn and it broke," García said. El Poblano is surrounded by windrow stands of black

cherry, black walnut, oak, and elm, but it sits on top of a knoll, and the wind comes in hard off the water.

In 2010, through an organization called GrowNYC, García took a seven-week course designed to teach immigrants who know how to farm about the specifics of commercial farming in New York. The course was taught by a young man named Christopher Wayne, who paid García a visit recently. Wayne was joined by a young couple, Ken Kinoshita and Erica Dorn, who have taken an interest in García. Dorn works for Accion, a microlending outfit, and Kinoshita is an architect who was raised in Mexico City. García's English is serviceable but not fluent, and Wayne and Kinoshita translated his remarks.

García, who is forty-six, has a round face and a black mustache, and he was wearing jeans and a polo shirt and a straw hat with a broad brim. He said that he was brought up on a farm. At seventeen, he went to work at the gigantic Mexico City produce market La Central de Abasto. First, he hauled pushcarts, then he became a buyer and seller of papayas and watermelons. Twelve years ago, he arrived in the United States, and worked in restaurants and in construction. Mondays, he and his farmhand, Marvin Bonilla, pick

for the farmers' markets, and García and another helper, Yadira Godinez, spend the rest of the week selling. García sells at four markets: in the Bronx, at University Avenue and 181st Street, and on White Plains Road, in Parkchester; in Socrates Park, in Queens; and at 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Boulevard, in Manhattan.

García pointed out pumpkins called chombo, which Mexicans grow mainly for their seeds, and he pulled aside some vines to reveal a dark-green melon about the size of a soccer ball. "Sugar-baby watermelons," he said. "I grew these in Mexico." After García extended his toe to point out some deer tracks, he, Wayne, Kinoshita, and Dorn went to sit in the shade in the corner of the field. There was a long table with a white tablecloth and chairs. Godinez, wearing shorts and a T-shirt, an apron, and a straw cowboy hat, put grapefruit soda on the table, along with bowls of salmon and chicken and flor de calabazas. There were tortillas warming on a propane hot plate. Dorn showed García photographs on her phone of La Central de Abasto. In one, some watermelons had been cut to reveal the fruit. "I did just like that," García said. "Only I made my cuts with the blunt side of the knife. It bruised the fruit and made it redder."

—Alec Wilkinson

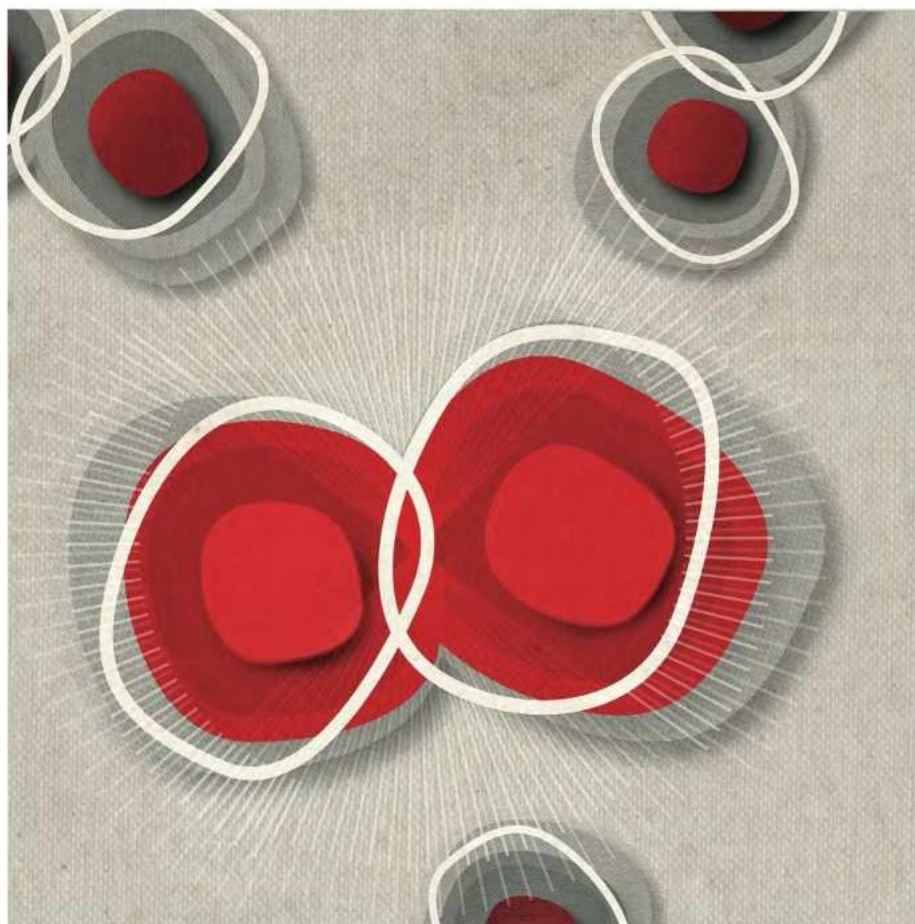


"I think you're using lawnmower repair to avoid intimacy."

SEX AND THE SUPERBUG

The rise of drug-resistant gonorrhea.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

*Gonorrhea mutates in the pharynx, making oral sex far more risky than people think.*

In January, 2009, a thirty-one-year-old prostitute visited a clinic in Kyoto, Japan, for a routine checkup. Because sex workers are so likely to acquire sexually transmitted diseases, many have themselves checked for infections even in the absence of symptoms. Indeed, although the woman displayed no outward signs of gonorrhea, her lab test came back positive; she carried the gonococcus microbe in her throat, a common reservoir. After a second visit, doctors at the clinic gave her an injection of ceftriaxone, an antibiotic considered by infectious-disease experts to be the definitive treatment for gonorrhea. It didn't work; two weeks later, when she returned to the clinic, a throat culture again tested positive. She was given another dose, but it, too, failed, and, at first, doc-

tors assumed that she had been newly infected. Now, however, public-health experts view the Kyoto case as something far more alarming: the emergence of a strain of gonorrhea that is resistant to the last drug available against it, and the harbinger of a sexually transmitted global epidemic. "The microbe appears to be emerging as a superbug," Dr. Magnus Unemo, the head of the World Health Organization's Collaborating Center for Gonorrhea and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections, in Sweden, told me recently. "This is what we have feared for many years."

Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported infectious disease in the United States, after chlamydia. More than three hundred thousand new cases are reported each year to the Centers for Disease

Control, although the actual incidence is probably twice as high. A hundred million annual cases are estimated worldwide. Symptoms, when they occur, are very painful: swelling and a burning sensation in the urethra or the urinary tract, often accompanied by the release of pus. Untreated, gonorrhea in men can lead to scarring of the urethra and, eventually, to epididymitis, a painful condition of the testicles that can result in sterility. In women, the infection can migrate from the cervix into the uterus and the fallopian tubes, causing pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. Infants born to mothers with gonorrhea can contract the infection in the eye and become blind. In some cases, among both men and women, the microbe enters the bloodstream, infecting the joints, the skin, the heart valves, and even the brain; it also increases one's susceptibility to H.I.V. Remarkably, more than fifty per cent of women infected with gonorrhea display no symptoms at all; they carry and transmit it unaware. While gonorrhea in the throat may cause soreness, ninety per cent of throat infections, like the Kyoto case, produce no symptoms whatsoever.

Gonorrhea has been recognized since antiquity. The second-century physician Galen, mistaking pus for semen, derived the name from the Greek words *gonos* ("seed") and *rhoia* ("flow"). In the time of the Tudors, gonorrhea was called "the clap," a term that was still in use when, in 1760, at the age of nineteen, James Boswell, the journalist and the biographer of Samuel Johnson, was first infected by a London prostitute. He apparently contracted the disease at least a dozen more times; the infection spread to his testicles and prostate and scarred his urinary tract. (In his diary, he referred to his malady as "Signor Gonorrhea" and "a memorandum of vice.") He died, at fifty-four, of kidney failure brought on, some medical historians believe, by complications from the disease. In 1901, the New York City medical examiner, the founder of a "social hygiene" movement, estimated that eighty of a hundred men in the city had contracted gonorrhea at some point in their lives.

Cures ranged from the absurd to the excruciating. At various times, Boswell tried bloodletting, a low-calorie diet, and a daily bottle of Kennedy's Lisbon Diet Drink, which cost a lot, contained mostly sarsaparilla, and did nothing. In some cases, a doctor might use a thin tube to

open the blocked urethra and, with a syringe, inject a solution of vitriol—sulfuric acid—or salt solutions made with mercury or lead, which over time could do as much damage as the disease. The historian Allan Brandt describes a cure proposed by one physician for chordee, a complication of gonorrhea that causes the head of the penis to curve downward. The affected member, the physician wrote, should be placed “with the curve upward on a table and struck a violent blow with a book . . . and so flattening it.”

In the nineteen-thirties, antibiotics changed the clinical picture of gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases, and, with it, social attitudes. Once feared for its devastating complications, gonorrhea was now viewed as a bothersome but temporary price to pay for sexual freedom. The sexual revolution of the nineteen-sixties ushered in rising rates of gonorrhea, as condoms, which effectively prevent transmission, were abandoned in favor of oral contraceptives. Only after the risk of death from AIDS began to increase, in the nineteen-eighties, did condom use again become a norm. A federally funded gonorrhea-control program, started in 1972, perhaps made a difference; by 1997, the number of yearly cases of gonorrhea reported to the C.D.C. had fallen by nearly three-quarters compared with its peak, in 1975. In 2009, the number of gonorrhea cases in the U.S. was at an all-time low. “Ten or fifteen years ago, we thought it was going to be eradicated in some Western countries,” Unemo told me.

But as modern medicine has adapted so has the microbe. Natural selection has given rise to strains of the bacterium that are resistant, in varying degrees, to some or all of the treatments applied to them—sulfa drugs, penicillin, tetracyclines, fluoroquinolones, and macrolides. Now only one class of drugs, called cephalosporins—cefixime, a tablet, and ceftriaxone, administered by injection—is known to reliably treat it, and for several years resistance to cefixime has been rising. (In the lab, resistance is measured by testing how susceptible the microbe is to various concentrations of a drug.) Between 2000 and 2010, the number of cases of decreased cefixime susceptibility in California and Hawaii rose from zero per cent to more than four per cent and seven per cent, respectively, probably as a result of traffic from Asia, where cefixime resistance is more wide-

spread. Five per cent is cause for concern; in August, the C.D.C. recommended phasing out cefixime nationwide and, instead, treating gonorrhea with a combination of ceftriaxone and either azithromycin or doxycycline. According to a recent British report, last year eleven per cent of isolates of the microbe showed reduced susceptibility to cefixime; among gay men, the figure is seventeen per cent.

“We are seeing decreased sensitivity to cefixime in all twenty-one countries in Europe,” Dr. Catherine Ison, a researcher in the U.K.’s surveillance program for sexually transmitted infections, told me. “It’s worrying.”

The Kyoto case, in 2009, marked the appearance of a microbial strain that was resistant to ceftriaxone—the first instance of broad resistance. In June, 2010, a second case emerged, in France; a third appeared in Sweden in July of that year, in a man who had recently had protected vaginal sex and unprotected oral sex with a casual partner in Japan. A fourth case occurred in Slovenia last September, and a fifth and sixth in Spain this past May. All appear to be descendants of a single cefixime-resistant strain, and they “are probably only the tip of the iceberg,” Unemo said. “Japan has been the epicenter for their emergence, and now these antibiotic-resistant gonococcal clones are spreading.” No cases have yet been reported in the U.S., but resistant gonorrhea is likely to arrive and spread long before physicians and the C.D.C. recognize it; some public-health officials predict that in five to eight years the superbug will be widespread. Whatever freedoms were won during the sexual revolution, bacterial evolution promises soon to constrain.

Under the microscope, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* looks like buckshot—small, round bacteria that tend to form pairs. The microbe carries specialized proteins that help it attach firmly to the surface of cells and other proteins that blunt a host’s immune-system response and prevent white blood cells from ingesting and degrading it. Together, these tools grant the gonococcus the ability to fasten to and invade the cells that line the human urethra, cervix, rectum, and throat, and the lining of the eyelid and eye.

In some respects, *N. gonorrhoeae* is a fragile organism; dry conditions, changes in temperature, and the ultraviolet rays in sunlight destroy it. As a result, it is trans-



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mitted only through intimate contact with body fluids; it doesn't thrive on inanimate objects and can't be picked up from toilet seats. Yet it is far more contagious than H.I.V. A woman who has unprotected sex with an H.I.V.-infected man has roughly a one-in-a-thousand chance of contracting the virus. The transmission rate among gay men having anal sex is an order of magnitude higher, about one in a hundred. In contrast, with gonorrhea a man has a twenty-five-per-cent chance of catching the microbe from an infected partner. For women, the odds are as high as sixty-six per cent.

Gonorrhea is commonly thought of as a painful genital infection. But the microbe also grows robustly in the pharynx, at the back of the throat. With hairlike structures that extend from the cell surface, it scavenges DNA that has been cast loose by the death or dissolution of other microbes, and incorporates them into its own genome. This turns out to be a highly efficient way of acquiring resistance to antibiotics. Multiplying in the pharynx, the gonococcus regularly encounters infectious microbes; these include other strains of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea and unrelated microbes that have accumulated mutations to withstand antibiotics of the kind taken indiscriminately for sore throats and other ailments. A 2011 study by researchers in Japan contends that the Kyoto strain acquired its resistance to ceftriaxone in the pharynx, from other bacteria of the *Neisseria* family that live there.

In effect, the human pharynx is a spawning ground for resistance. "*Neisseria gonorrhoeae* is just infinitely mutable," Dr. Katherine Hsu, an infectious-disease expert and the medical director of the S.T.D. Prevention Division at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, told me. The throat, she said, is where "the gonococcus is having sex, so to speak, with other bacteria." And, because pharyngeal gonorrhea rarely produces symptoms, it is more likely both to go untreated and to be passed on unknowingly.

A driving factor behind the rise in gonorrhea infections, as well as the trend toward total antibiotic resistance,

is our complacent attitude toward oral sex. Saliva contains enzymes that destroy gonorrhea, so kissing and cunnilingus don't spread it. But fellatio, which brings the tip of the urethra near the pharynx, carries a high risk of infecting one partner or the other. According to Dr. Peter Rice, a gonorrhea expert at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, fellatio "is the only predictable way to transmit gonococcal infection to the pharynx."

In many circles, however, especially since the era of H.I.V., oral sex has been embraced as a safe alternative to intercourse. In August, the C.D.C. reported that, of more than six thousand teens interviewed between 2007 and 2010, nearly half said that they had experienced oral sex; the study's authors concluded that "adolescents perceive fewer health-related risks for oral sex compared with vaginal intercourse." Recent statistics from Los Angeles County suggest that the proportion of pharyngeal to genital gonorrhea cases among adolescents has increased sevenfold since 1988. "This represents a change in sexual practices in American youth and may provide antimicrobial-resistant gonococci an added advantage," Rice told me.

The emerging drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea are most common among commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men, perhaps because these groups are more likely to be infected repeatedly. But the wider picture is more complex. In the U.S., gonorrhea in general is linked to poverty and youth; it is far more common among blacks than among whites, and men and women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four make up the largest percentage of cases. According to the C.D.C., adolescents and young adults account for nearly half of all new cases of sexually transmitted disease, even though the group represents just twenty-five per cent of the sexually active population. The adaptive nature of the gonococcus, coupled with the prevalence of unprotected oral sex, all but insures that drug-resistant gonorrhea will eventually take root in the general heterosexual population. Unemo

warned, "When you get into the population of young heterosexuals, it can very quickly spread."

The progression of a disease like AIDS is straightforward: in the absence of drugs, it kills. Gonorrhea produces a subtler array of outcomes. Even without antibiotics, most people who contract gonorrhea will recover spontaneously, as their immune systems eliminate the microbe. This can take weeks or months; in the meantime, the infection can damage vital tissues, causing scarring and a painful stricture of the urethra in men and pelvic inflammatory disease in women. James Boswell, like many in his situation, often found that if he abstained from sex for a few weeks his condition cleared up by itself. Unemo posits that the Japanese prostitute who tested positive in 2009 for ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhea naturally fought off the infection after several months, perhaps without experiencing any symptoms.

Effective antibiotics can eliminate the microbe within hours. The surest defense against cephalosporin-resistant gonorrhea would be a new antibiotic, but there are no commercially available treatments to take the place of ceftriaxone. The economics of drug development favor daily medications that are taken for long periods—such as Lipitor, for high cholesterol, and Prozac, for depression—over antibiotics that are typically prescribed for only days or weeks. As a result, efforts to develop new antibiotics against superbugs have been all but abandoned by most major pharmaceutical companies. "We're down to the last class of antibiotics known to treat gonorrhea," Dr. Gail Bolan, the director of the Division of S.T.D. Prevention at the C.D.C., told me. In February, Bolan was among the authors of an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that alerted the clinical community to the threat of resistant gonorrhea. A bill, called the GAIN Act, has been introduced in Congress that would speed up the approval of new antibiotics, to encourage drug companies to join the fight. At least one study at the National Institutes of Health is investigating whether combinations of existing drugs might have the ability to treat ceftriaxone-resistant gonorrhea. But such solutions may be years away, Bolan said.

Scientists likewise have made little progress in developing a vaccine that would gird the human immune system



against a gonococcus infection. The challenge is daunting, Dr. Fred Sparling, an infectious-disease researcher at the University of North Carolina who has labored for years to develop a gonorrhea vaccine, told me. Although the body can gradually clear gonorrhea on its own, most people are easily reinfected, which suggests that whatever immune response occurs the first time does not last for long. In experiments where healthy male volunteers were infected with gonorrhea, the subjects showed no sign of an increased resistance to a second infection—such as a rise in the number of antibodies—even when the second infection followed within just two weeks of treatment of the first. A vaccine trial among high-risk U.S. military personnel stationed in Korea was equally disappointing. “The result was not even a hint of protection,” Sparling wrote in a journal article last year.

In a potentially promising study, Peter Rice has been following the wives of men in China who contracted gonorrhea from other women. Although the wives have been exposed to the microbe, a third of them don’t become infected; Rice suspects that some in this group may produce an antibody against a certain sugar on the microbe’s surface, which might provide the basis for a vaccine. But, Sparling notes, because the gonococcus naturally infects only human cells, a gonorrhea vaccine will be difficult to test on animals. “I am still optimistic that a gonococcus vaccine is possible,” Sparling told me. “But it suffers from lack of will and money. Certainly, the time has come to get serious about this.”

In June, the World Health Organization issued a Global Action Plan against drug-resistant gonorrhea, offering a long list of recommendations, many of which are already being followed in the U.S. and Europe. One was a call for more drug research and development. The report also encouraged early screening of patients and educating them about the risks of the disease. The main concern is identifying drug-resistant strains as they emerge and reporting them to public-health authorities, so that the recommended treatment can be changed, if necessary.

This summer, I visited the walk-in clinic at Fenway Health, a community health center housed in a modern building on Boylston Street, in Boston. People often go to a walk-in clinic to be tested and treated for sexually transmitted infections, either

because they don’t have a primary-care doctor or because they prefer the anonymity. This makes clinics ideally suited to identifying emerging superbugs. Fenway Health sees twenty thousand patients a year, about half of whom are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and keeps extensive electronic records. Thanks to state-government support, anyone without insurance can drop in to be evaluated for free. That afternoon, one of the patients was a man in his late twenties who wasn’t sure that he was gay but, he said, had become addicted to sex with men. In the past year, he’d had more than forty anonymous encounters, arranged through Craigslist or a smartphone app. Marcy Gelman, a nurse practitioner, took a urine sample and two swabs, one from his throat and the other from his rectum, and sent them to be tested.

There are two kinds of tests for gonorrhea. One involves culturing the bacterium in a slurry of hemoglobin, amino acids, and vitamins, which reveals the specific strain of the gonococcus and the drugs to which it is more or less susceptible. It is a laborious process, and most clinics have abandoned it in favor of a DNA test that rapidly indicates whether the patient has gonorrhea, but not which variety. Fenway Health is the rare clinic that regularly performs both tests; public-health officials depend on it as a surveillance outpost for tracking the spread of gonorrhea. Other clinics have the option of sending specimens to state labs to be cultured; the results are factored into the C.D.C.’s Gonococcal Isolate Surveillance

Project, which tracks antibiotic resistance in gonorrhea in the U.S. But many clinics have been closed in recent years owing to budget cuts, and few public-health labs test for antibiotic resistance.

“Both in terms of recognizing the problem when it emerges and dealing with it once it arrives, clinicians and the larger health-care community are getting to a cliff here,” Dr. Judith Wasserheit, an expert in sexually transmitted diseases at the University of Washington and the author, with Bolan and Sparling, of the recent *New England Journal of Medicine* article, told me. “Gonorrhea is doing again what it does so well—it’s getting ahead of us. What’s changed is that we don’t have a drug, and we have dramatically reduced the capacity to recognize, on a routine clinical basis, when resistance emerges.”

The primary hope for stemming the expected epidemic of resistant gonorrhea lies in persuading people to alter their behavior. “The public doesn’t really understand the links between gonorrhea and infertility, or that gonorrhea means an increased risk of acquiring H.I.V. and transmitting the virus,” Wasserheit told me. She added, “If your alternatives are vaginal sex, anal sex, or oral sex, most people feel like oral sex is the safest of the three. And, you know, in some ways they’re probably right.” Still, Wasserheit said, “it’s important to communicate that oral sex is not necessarily safe sex.”

The first educational message, Bolan told me, “is to use condoms correctly and



“Think we could get anyone to buy our vote?”

consistently," because this is known to reduce transmission. The next step is to promote condom use not only for vaginal and anal intercourse but also for fellatio. That will be a challenge, as public-health experts concede. Of the dozen patients I saw being screened during my visit to Fenway Health, not one had used a condom for oral sex.

Fenway identifies the most high-risk carriers—crystal-meth addicts, people with multiple partners—and tries to persuade them to abandon unprotected sex. At the clinic level, safe-sex education "is a kind of bargaining," Dr. Kenneth Mayer, an infectious-disease expert who oversees Fenway's research program, told me. "You're trying to get the person to the next place"—to where talking about the necessity of using condoms during oral sex is even plausible. Dr. Stephen Boswell, the president and C.E.O. of Fenway Health, added, "It's a tradeoff if your goal is to protect somebody from acquiring or transmitting H.I.V., and you are really trying to use a condom every time you have anal sex. But saying to somebody, 'Use a condom every time you have oral sex,' we don't think that is necessarily going to be tenable."

This summer, I also visited the Boston Medical Center, which draws from some of the city's poorest neighborhoods; in the past year, nearly twenty-five hundred patients were tested for gonorrhea. Over the years, Faye Huang, a nurse practitioner, has seen high-school students, eighty-year-olds, prostitutes, men cruising for men, as well as what Huang calls the "worried well"—patients who have had limited or bad sexual experiences and are "constantly worried that, even if the condom was on, they might have gotten something." Recently, a twenty-four-year-old Indian man had come in after noticing some swelling at the tip of his penis. He had had only two partners in his life: a woman in India and another in the U.S., with whom he had not used a condom. Huang got a urine specimen and drew blood to test for syphilis and H.I.V. "You never know," she said. The urine test came back positive for gonorrhea. Huang gave him the C.D.C.'s recommended treatment: a shot of ceftriaxone and tablets of azithromycin. When he declined her suggestion that his partner be informed, she referred his case to Mark Thacker, a disease-intervention specialist with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Soft-spoken and with the build of a football player, Thacker tries to cajole patients who test positive for gonorrhea into letting him notify their sexual contacts. He starts by discussing their social and medical history, and talking about the disease, then asks about the partners the infected person has had in the past sixty days. When one man couldn't remember the screen names of his anonymous partners, Thacker took out his BlackBerry and offered to go online and try to pull up their profiles. "We actually show them pictures and get a little graphic, to get some leverage and, hopefully, coax them to be a little more compassionate about what might happen to the other person," Thacker said. Only about half of the infected people he approaches readily divulge information about their sexual contacts. "A lot of people take it very, very lightly," Thacker said. "Yup, I'll just go get the shot, I'll just take these pills, and I'll be fine." Pursuing a case can take hours, as Thacker contacts doctors and nurses to request the release of information, then waits for return calls and follows up with the patients who have not been treated. Sometimes he drives out to the infected person's home and takes him or her to a clinic for treatment. He routinely gives people his cell-phone number. In Massachusetts, there are as many as four thousand cases of gonorrhea each year to track, and only five disease-intervention specialists like Thacker. "We are caseworkers, case managers, and counselors. You have to wear quite a few different hats to really do this work." But, he said, "we are not the sex police."

In the early nineteen-eighties, as a physician at the U.C.L.A. Medical Center, I cared for some of the first people diagnosed with AIDS. The disease was horrific, an unrelenting series of infections that filled lungs, inflamed bowels, and destroyed the brain. Yet it took years for sexual practices to change. Condoms, long dismissed as unnecessary for birth control and suboptimal for pleasure, ultimately returned as a proven way to stem the spread of H.I.V. The challenge now facing the public-health community is how to persuade people to rethink an insidious disease—and, to a great extent, a sexual practice—that has come to be viewed as trivial. As the distinction between safe sex and safer sex becomes ever less meaningful, the responsibility to be vigilant grows more personal, and more urgent. ♦

PORT

Issue 7, Autumn 2012

CILLIAN MURPHY
Profiled by Richard Grant

DANIEL DAY-LEWIS
On a great man of boxing

JONATHAN FRANZEN
On freedom from technology

STEVEN BERKOFF
On the god of acting

WILL SELF
Writes a letter to Capitalism

WELLS TOWER
New fiction

APRIL BLOOMFIELD
On autumn food



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fiction and poetry



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MY NAME IS JOE BIDEN AND I'LL BE YOUR SERVER

BY BILL BAROL

Hey, chief. There's the guy. How you doin'? Got your friends here, party of six. Lady in the hat. Great to see you. My name is Joe Biden and I'll be your server tonight. Lemme tell you a story. *(He pulls up a chair and sits.)*

Folks, when I was six years old my dad came to me one night. My dad was a car guy. Hard worker, decent guy. Hadn't

There's something else you need to know.

Our fish special is halibut with a mango-avocado salsa and Yukon Gold potatoes, and it's market-priced at sixteen-ninety-five. Sounds like a lot of money, right? Sounds like "Hey, Joe, that's a piece of fish and a little topping there, and some potatoes." "Bidaydas," my great-grandmother from County Louth would have



had an easy life. He climbed the stairs to my room one night and he sat on the edge of my bed and he said to me, he said, "Champ, your mom worked hard on that dinner tonight. She worked hard on it. She literally worked on it for hours. And when you and your brothers told her you didn't like it, you know what, Joey? That hurt her. It hurt." And I felt *(lowers voice to a husky whisper)* ashamed. Because lemme tell you something. He was right. My dad was right. My mom worked hard on that dinner, and it was delicious. Almost as delicious as our Chicken Fontina Quesadilla with Garlicky Guacamole. That's our special appetizer tonight. It's the special. It's the special. *(His voice rising)* And the chef worked hard on it, just like my mom, God love her, and if you believe in the chef's values of hard work and creative spicing you should order it, although if you don't like chicken we can substitute shrimp for a small upcharge.

Thank you. Thank you. Now, hold on.

called 'em. You know what I'm talking about. Just simple, basic, sitting-around-the-kitchen-table-on-a-Tuesday-night food. Nothin' fancy, right? But, folks, that's not the whole story. If you believe that, you're not . . . getting . . . the whole . . . story. Because lemme tell you about these Yukon Gold potatoes. These Yukon Gold potatoes are brushed with extra-virgin olive oil and hand-sprinkled with pink Himalayan sea salt, and then José, our prep guy. . . Well. Lemme tell you about José. *(He pauses, looks down, clears his throat.)*

I get . . . I get emotional talking about José. This is a guy who—José gets here at ten in the morning. Every morning, rain or shine. Takes the bus here. Has to transfer twice. Literally gets off one bus and onto another. Twice. Never complains. Rain, snow, it's hailin' out there. . . The guy literally does not complain. Never. Never heard it. José walks in, hangs his coat on a hook, big smile on his face, says hello to everybody—Sal the dishwasher,

Angie the sous-chef, Frank, Donna, Pat. . . And then do you know what he does? Do you know what José does? I'll tell you what he does, and folks, folks, this is the point I want to make. With his own hands, he sprinkles fresh house-grown rosemary on those potatoes *(raises voice to a thundering crescendo)*, and they are golden brown on the outside and soft on the inside and they are delicious! They are delicious! They are delicious!

Thank you.

Now, folks, I gotta do a table touch on 17 and get some more breadsticks to 26, so I'm gonna wrap up here. But there's something I want you to think about. I want you to think about something. You, me, José, Lord love him, Donna, Pat. . . we're in this thing together. We're in it together. You order the food, I bring the food, you eat the food. . . That's America. That's America. You know, my folks had some ups and downs. My dad started out doin' pretty good, you know, but then, way of the world, things got tough there in Scranton. And we had to move in with my mom's parents, the Finnegans. It wasn't easy for any of 'em. My dad was a proud guy, and it wasn't easy for my mom to see him struggle so hard. Cleanin' boilers, sellin' cars. But he worked and he worked, and my mom was right there at his side, and eventually things got a little better. That's all they wanted, you know? Just for things to get a little better for their boys and for my sister, Val. And they did. They did. Now, we lost my mom a couple of years ago. But if she was here you know what she'd say? I do. You wanna know what she'd say? She'd say, "Joey, I hope your friends saved some room for dessert, because the Molten Chocolate Explosion Cake with Burnt-Caramel Gelato is outta this world, Joey. It is literally out of this world." And lemme tell you something: she may have just been little old Jeannie Finnegan from North Washington Avenue, but that woman knew about quality food at reasonable prices, and if you believe like my mom did that desserts should be sinfully delicious and big enough to share, then you must tell me, right here, tonight *(raises voice to a thundering crescendo and pounds the table)*, "Joe, we'll take the Molten Chocolate Explosion Cake, and bring us a couple of extra plates and some forks!" Thank you! Thank you! God bless America, and don't forget to validate your parking! ♦

THE SCREEN TEST

How my father came to act alongside Stanwyck, Davis, and Lombard.

BY MARGARET TALBOT

*Lyle Talbot starred, with Carole Lombard, in "No More Orchids" (1932).*

As the train wound through the San Gabriel Mountains in the fading light, Hollywood was still far off, a winking gem. From the train window, my father, Lyle Talbot—a sweet-tempered Nebraskan who had left his small town for the carnival, then the vaudeville tent, then theatres across the South and the Midwest—gazed out at miles of pine, sagebrush, and yucca. For two days, he had been travelling from Dallas, where he'd been the leading man in a theatre company that had gone bankrupt, thanks to the Depression and the rise of the talkies. It was February, 1932, and Lyle, thirty years old, had lived on the road since he was seventeen, exuding charm in light comedies about sparring newlyweds and the gin-splashed fast set. Critics had not proclaimed him a master thespian, but they had noticed something that, in the new era of mass entertainment, was perhaps more important: he was easy to watch. He was a "pleasant" man "whose good looks are not wasted on the feminine portion of the audience." Five feet eleven

and slim, he had a "virile and buoyant personality" and a "collegiate" air. His baritone voice was as toffee-smooth as his smile. Just before the theatre in Dallas shut down, a talent scout for the movies saw him onstage. Lyle soon received a telegram inviting him out to Hollywood for a screen test.

The train passed through the outskirts of Los Angeles. As the journalist Carey McWilliams described the scene, "The roadside signs tell the story of the city's improvised economy: canary farms, artificial pools for trout fishing, rabbit fryers, dogs at stud, grass-shack eating huts, psychic mediums, real-estate offices, filling stations, vacant-lot circuses." Lyle noticed—how could anybody from Nebraska not?—that the sky in early February was a bright, enamelled blue, and that even the empty lots were vibrant with poppies, red bottlebrush, and wild mustard.

When he arrived at La Grande station, his new agent, Arthur Landau, met him there. Like a character in a movie, Lyle had shown up in town with only a five-

dollar bill in his pocket. He confessed to Landau that he couldn't afford a hotel.

Landau told Lyle that he'd stake him a place to stay, and sent him over to the Ravenswood Apartments, an Art Deco monolith in Hollywood, where you could rent by the week. (Later that year, another new arrival to Hollywood, Mae West, moved in; she stayed there until she died, in 1980.) After a day or so, the agency would send Lyle to Warner Bros. Studios for the screen test. Until then, he could have a look around.

Hollywood's movie business was still in its youth. The town had been settled in the eighteen-eighties by Harvey and Dacida Wilcox, a wealthy couple from Topeka. The Wilcoxes had purchased a hundred and sixty acres of land, where they tended fig and apricot orchards and attracted a community of God-fearing teetotallers like themselves. In 1903, when Hollywood officially became a city, it was a dusty, pious burg that prohibited both alcohol and factories. One industry that its city fathers could not keep out—and could hardly have anticipated—was the movies. In 1907, the Selig Polyscope Company, of Chicago, started producing movies in nearby Edendale (now Silver Lake). Two years later, D. W. Griffith began travelling from New York to L.A. every winter with his company. The new arrivals filmed scenes on open-air wooden platforms, and when interior shots were needed they draped canvas over the platforms, as if they were covered wagons, to block natural light. In 1911, the first studio opened in Hollywood, and three years later Cecil B. De Mille, who had set himself up in an old livery stable on Vine Street, filmed a feature, "The Squaw Man."

Southern California offered the obvious attractions of year-round sunshine and a rich variety of outdoor settings: mountains, deserts, trolley-filled streets, beaches. Unions had little presence in L.A., so labor was cheap. Moreover, the independent studios—including those of De Mille, Griffith, and Samuel Goldwyn—were eager to put a continent between themselves and Thomas Edison's Motion Picture Patents Company. Back East, hired toughs were known to shoot holes in cameras and hijack cars from filmmakers who resisted the Edison Trust's monopoly.

The new arrivals to Hollywood banded together like colonists, and struck the natives as peculiar and threatening. Locals

were sometimes amused when “picture people” took over a street for a Keystone Kops chase, or a romantic rescue on horseback, but they didn’t want anything to do with the wastrels. In Hollywood, signs for rooms to rent sometimes specified that actors and animals were not welcome.

By the time my father got there, the movies had become a global phenomenon. Yet, as Lyle later recalled, his first impression was that Hollywood had a “small-town atmosphere,” and felt like a “separate world.” There were no buildings more than four stories high, and the streets were dotted with stucco bungalows painted in the pastel shades of candy hearts. Hollywood Boulevard functioned as a kind of Main Street for picture people. There was the Pickwick Bookshop, owned by a Russian immigrant who admired Dickens; the ice-cream parlor C. C. Brown’s, which served hot-fudge sundaes in chilled tin bowls; and the old Hollywood Hotel, where actors congregated on the wide front porch.

The movie business, and the people it attracted, made Hollywood a uniquely fanciful, sensual place. In 1931, Lillian Symes, a writer for *Harper’s Monthly*, joked that there was “a fresh supply of pulchritude arriving on every train.” Another visiting writer noted that, if you drove on Sunset Boulevard near Gower, where the so-called Poverty Row studios turned out B movies, you’d often spot people, in costume, talking shop—“cowboys in chaps and sombreros and extra girls in the traditional slacks and dark glasses, bright kerchiefs protecting their freshly waved hair.” My father instantly loved the place: the bougainvillea, the shaggy date palms, the ersatz-Moorish mansions. He had been on the road for more than a decade, a pack-your-trunk-in-ten-minutes, sleep-sitting-up-on-the-train trouper. But here he could stay—if they’d let him.

Three years into the Depression, a job was no easy thing to get, especially in the movies. Books offering practical advice on making it were laden with cautionary tales. One such guide, “What Chance Have I in Hollywood?” advised aspirants to be prepared for a hundred rejections from casting directors before securing a job, and offered dire, titillating stories of girls who had lost their way. Typical was “Mamie Swamp,” who left “Cottage Grove, Kansas,” seeking stardom in L.A. but ended up as a prostitute in Baja. In the twenties,

mail leaving Hollywood was affixed with a sticker: “Tell your friends. Don’t try to break into the movies in Hollywood until you have obtained full, frank, and dependable information from the Hollywood chamber of commerce.”

The story of dashed celluloid dreams became a journalistic genre—the flip side of the overnight-discovery tale, and, in its way, an equal testament to the power of Hollywood. The ultimate such story was that of Peg Entwistle, a New York stage actress who had relocated to California in 1931. A pretty, stage-trained blonde, Entwistle acted in a play with Humphrey Bogart, receiving respectful notices. But by 1932 she had landed only one bit movie role, in “Thirteen Women,” a lurid ensemble piece about a murderess out to kill a group of sorority sisters who had snubbed her. She was dropped by R.K.O., the studio that had signed her. One day that September, Entwistle climbed the scrub-covered Hollywood Hills to the base of the sign that then read “HOLLYWOOD-LAND.” The fifty-foot-high letters, erected in 1923 to advertise a housing development, was coming to symbolize moviedom. Climbing a ladder used by workmen, she leaped from the top of the “H.” A few days later, a hiker found her body.

Lyle wasn’t naïve about his chances. He knew that a screen test was a colossal gamble. M-G-M reportedly auditioned five thousand people a year; one per cent of them took screen tests, and only a few got contracts.

Though Lyle was a Midwestern optimist, he was so anxious about his audition that he greeted his agent at the station in tones barely above a whisper. As he later recalled, “Here I was on my way to talking pictures, on borrowed money from a man I’d never seen, and I lost my voice!” Landau, the agent, was kind, but this was ridiculous: *An actor who can’t talk? In the talkies?* Still, as Landau dropped Lyle off at the Ravenswood, he drew on an instinctive courtliness, assuring his new client that he just had “a train cold,” or “nerves.” His voice would quickly come back.

Lyle wandered through the streets near the Ravenswood the next day, subsisting on black coffee and liverwurst sandwiches from a lunch counter down the street. He smiled and pointed when he wanted something, so as not to strain his vocal cords. He hummed experimentally to himself. The air was clear and dry, and

sprinklers tossed their rainbow-beaded garlands of water over the lawns of stucco apartment courts. The grass was springy beneath his feet. Gradually, his voice returned. He started singing the song that he’d been humming: “If I never had a cent, / I’d be rich as Rockefeller, / gold dust at my feet / on the sunny side of the street.” He felt buoyant again, like a Ping-Pong ball on a column of air.

The next afternoon, he was standing on a Warner Bros. soundstage.

Lyle arrived at the studio looking his best, his dark hair shimmering with brilliantine, his two-tone wingtips just as shiny. In his years as a travelling theatre actor, my father had cultivated habits that helped carry him through life. He didn’t have the steadiest of moral compasses, or much in the way of self-knowledge, and he would later be undone, more than once, by his love of a strong drink or the wrong woman. (By the time he arrived in Hollywood, he’d already ended a two-year marriage, to a stage actress, and had four more marriages ahead of him. My three siblings and I were the products of the fifth.) But he always maintained his habits of professionalism, and of small attentions to himself—the sort of routines that can hold a person together when little else does. Lyle always showed up on time, and he always knew his lines. He never left the house unless he was well turned out, anointed with Lilac Vegetal, a clean white handkerchief in his pocket.

One thing Lyle felt certain of: the material he had chosen for his test was perfect. It was a scene from “Louder, Please,” a play he’d done in Dallas. He had played Herbert White, a brash and charming publicity man for a movie studio who runs afoul of the studio’s obnoxious head of production. Both men are crazy about the same actress, and she is keen on the publicity man and forever fending off the production head. The dialogue was quippy, and the pace was modern and frenetic, with a lot of ringing phones and shouting. In Dallas, Lyle’s performance had earned him some of the strongest reviews of his career; one newspaper called it “a striking individual triumph for this deft young player who wooed, lied, ranted, raved, cajoled, implored, threatened, and almost never left the stage during the evening.” The same review noted that the play’s author,

Norman Krasna, who had himself worked in Hollywood, “must have been fired, for nothing short of a dischargee’s grudge could have inspired the healthy, boisterous, infectious malice of his composition. He writes directly for your anti-cinema bloodlust, tearing limb from limb the entire system of screen publicity and exposing to your sadistic delight the incredibly genuine processes of synthetic fame.”

Did it cross Lyle’s mind that somebody *in* Hollywood might take offense at such an acid portrait of Hollywood? It did not. After all, the studio in the play, Criterion Pictures, was fictional: who could possibly mind? Lyle really didn’t know much about Hollywood in those days.

After Lyle had delivered all his lines, crisp and fast, the director walked over and said, “Talbot, that scene you did—from that from a play called ‘Louder, Please?’”

“Yes, yes,” Lyle said, pleasantly surprised.

The director spoke slowly, as though Lyle himself might be slow: “You don’t know the story of that play?”

“No,” Lyle said, feeling a tomtom of alarm in his chest. “I don’t know anything about it.”

“Well, that play is kind of taboo on the lot here,” the director said. “The man you referred to as King in there, the one you’re having a conflict with, is the head of this studio.”

Krasna, it turned out, had been employed in the publicity department at Warner Bros. before turning to playwriting. Herbert White was a thinly veiled version of Hubert Voight, a legendary movie P.R. man. And Kendall King—described in the *dramatis personae* as “no good,” “foppish,” and “rattish”—was a satirical portrait of Darryl Zanuck, the head of production at Warner Bros.

Zanuck, like Lyle, was a small-town Nebraska boy. He was born in Wahoo, Nebraska, in 1902, which made him the same age as my father, and, like him, Zanuck had scant formal education. In the twenties, he’d started out by writing stories for “Rin-Tin-Tin.” Now he was becoming one of the most powerful men in Hollywood. (A year later, in 1933, Zanuck left Warner Bros. to found Twentieth Century Pictures.) Though brilliant at his job, he could be domineering and crude.

The director told Lyle, “I don’t think,

uh, this test is something you’d want Mr. Zanuck to see.”

Lyle swallowed. “Can’t we do it over?”

But the director was already looking down at his clipboard, scanning the names of other hopefuls. He was done with this yokel. “No,” he told Lyle. “I have no authority to do it over.”

“My God, I was then in the depths,” my father told *American Classic Screen*, years later.

Lyle got on the phone and called Lew Schrieber, an assistant in Arthur Landau’s office. Schrieber was fiercely ambitious, and he was determined to parlay his position into a job working for Darryl Zanuck. He was Lyle’s minder that day.

“How was the test?” Schrieber asked, rat-a-tat-tat.

“Well, gee, Mr. Schrieber. I don’t know. I may have made a big boo-boo here.” That was how Lyle talked. Although Schrieber was a young guy, he was still “Mr.” to Lyle. And Lyle was not given to coarse language, other than an occasional “hell” or “damn.” A couple was “having a love affair,” even if he was clearly referring to a one-time sex act, as in “I opened the door, and there they were, having a love affair right there on the floor.”

On the other end of the line, Schrieber’s voice hardened. “What happened?”

“Well, the scene I did was from that play—Norman Krasna’s play.”

“What did you do that for?”

“You said to take a scene from a comedy and—”

“Well, you didn’t say you were going to do *that* comedy!”

Lyle stammered something about how he had been focussing not on the content of the play but on the rhythm of the scene—its pace, its wit.

“What the hell?” Schrieber boomed. With ominous calm, he informed Lyle that he’d just screwed them both. He hung up.

“I was terribly upset,” my father recalled. “So I went to the office, on the corner of Vine and Sunset. Mr. Landau was in, and I went to him and I was really low. I told him the story. He was such a sweet man. He said, ‘Lyle, don’t worry. Tomorrow, I’ll take you to Paramount.’”

Meanwhile, Zanuck went in to see the day’s screen tests. He had recently taken up polo, and strode in wearing riding britches and swinging a mallet. He seemed

to be in an unusually good mood. When Lyle’s test came on, Zanuck watched it all the way through. And he didn’t say a word about Krasna’s play. He just laughed.

As my father put it, “Maybe he thought, Here was this actor who was naïve enough, or stupid enough, or *something* enough to do that kind of scene for his screen test, for gosh sakes! And, for whatever reason, that particular day, that struck him as funny.”

Lyle had another piece of good luck. Directors and producers on the lot often stopped by when screen tests were being shown, to check out the latest prospects, and that day Zanuck was joined by the director William Wellman. In 1927, Wellman had made “Wings,” the first film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture; he went on to direct “A Star Is Born” and “Beau Geste.” In the early thirties, he became a master of the taut, socially conscious drama for which Warner Bros. was famous. He also despised authority—his cussedness had earned him the nickname Wild Bill. When the First World War broke out, Wellman had volunteered for the Lafayette Flying Corps, a group of Americans who flew missions for France. Wellman was shot down by anti-aircraft fire, and ended up with a limp and a metal plate in his head. After the war, while working as a flight instructor in San Diego, he decided to try the film business. According to his biographer, Frank Thompson, Wellman put on his uniform and his medals, flew his plane to L.A., and landed on the polo field outside Pickfair, the home of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. The stunt worked: Fairbanks was so impressed by Wellman’s nerve that he got him a job in the movies.

Wellman, for all his bluster, was intensely loyal to the people he worked with. Once, the studio installed a coffee machine on the set of one of his movies, obliging the crew to pay for coffee that had formerly been free. Wellman rolled the machine off the soundstage and into the men’s room. He told a studio official who came down to investigate that he’d throw him in there next, and after that Jack Warner—the studio’s president. The crew got their free coffee back.

That day in the screening room, as Wild Bill watched my father charge through the lines from “Louder, Please,” he turned to Zanuck and said, “Hey, if

ALLEGORIES

That crag, in its hunching,
suggests a shawl
under which we can slip
our burdens, since
we alone among creatures
bestow likenesses
for assurance
we really exist,
and name boulders and peaks
Widow's this, Widow's that,
so others might navigate
by the forms
of our grief.

—*Lia Purpura*

you sign this guy, I want him for my next picture.”

“We’re gonna sign him,” Zanuck replied. “If you want him, you got him.”

The film that Wellman had in mind was called “Love Is a Racket”—a cynical little tale about the intersecting lives of New York columnists, gangsters, and theatre people. Lyle began working on it within weeks, playing a suave gangster, opposite Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. In the film, Lyle directs a languorous, appraising gaze at a young woman he’s just met, and deftly delivers the best line in the picture: “If I felt half as good as you look, I’d go out and kill myself while it lasted.”

About a week into the shooting, Wellman ambled over to Lyle and clapped him on the back. “You know, Talbot?” he said. “You’re really something. You’re terrific.”

“Thanks, Mr. Wellman,” Lyle said. “I’m enjoying working with you, too.”

“Oh,” Wellman said, with another bearish swat. “You’re O.K. in the part. But you’re really *something*. You guys from the theatre—you know what I mean.” He went on in this vein, as Lyle nodded politely, ever more puzzled. “That test of yours . . .”

Oh, Lyle thought. *That*.

“You really gave it to Zanuck! Good for you.” Wellman loved the idea that Lyle was of the same breed. The fact that Lyle was not was no discouragement.

One day, after Lyle felt more comfortable with Wellman, he tried to level with him about the screen test: “Bill, look, you don’t think I would be stupid enough to

do that, do you? I was broke, I didn’t have a sou. I could have been blackballed in Hollywood the rest of my life.”

“Sure, Lyle,” Wellman said, smiling. “Have it your way.”

My father immediately established himself as a fixture at Warner Bros.; in 1932 and 1933, he made sixteen movies for the studio. Meanwhile, his night-life became a gossip factory: among the women he was linked to were the platinum-blond torch singer Alice Faye, the beautiful rising star Loretta Young, and the formidable silent-era actress Estelle Taylor—Jack Dempsey’s ex. “Lyle seems to be getting over in the City of Shadows That Talk,” one squib noted. “This lad’s affections should be filed under: Subject to Change Without Notice,” another said. An Indianapolis newspaper described him as “smooth and nonchalant—the perfect movie man-about-town.” The columnist Jimmy Starr called Lyle a “sensational newcomer whose rapid rise to the cinematic front rivals that of Clark Gable and George Brent.”

It was fitting that Lyle’s first job for Warner Bros. was playing a gangster. The studio was known for its crime movies and prison pictures. In 1932, Zanuck wrote an article for *The Hollywood Reporter* in which he described the Warners specialty as the “‘headline’ type of screen story. . . . Somewhere in its makeup, it must have the punch and smash that would entitle it to be a headline on the front page of any successful metropolitan daily.”

A screenwriter at the studio named Jerry Wald remembered being called in by his bosses and given instructions: “We could not compete with Metro”—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer—“and their tremendous stable of stars, so we had to go after the stories. Topical ones, not typical ones. The stories became the stars.”

With this mandate, Warner Bros. became the studio that most often depicted working people and underdogs, and which dealt most forthrightly with the pain of the Depression. It was a vision that depended on directors like the Hungarian-born Michael Curtiz, who adopted a shadowy, menacing aesthetic that anticipated film noir. It depended, too, on actors like James Cagney and John Garfield, who effortlessly embodied tough, city-boy characters. The year before my father signed with Warners, the studio made a star of the pug-faced, wound-up Cagney with “The Public Enemy,” the bleak and unforgettable gangster film in which Cagney, after he is fatally shot, mutters the now iconic line “I ain’t so tough.”

Although Lyle was more of a lover than a fighter, and considered himself unsuited to the gangster roles that abounded at Warners, he was also a news junkie who relished the tabloid energy of its films. He was thrilled to discover that the studio had stashed Robert Burns, a fugitive from a Georgia chain gang, somewhere on the lot during the production of a film about his life. (The title was typically blunt: “I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang.”) Lyle kept hoping to run into Burns in the commissary, but he never did.

He also got a kick out of the contract writers the studio kept on the lot, many of whom were raffish types who’d kicked around the streets of Chicago or New York. The most colorful storyteller was Wilson Mizner, who’d done a bit of everything—very little of it reputable—on his way to a gig at Warners. With his brother, Addison, Mizner had swindled miners during the Klondike gold rush, bilked wealthy investors during the Florida land boom, and sold overpriced Guatemalan relics. At Warners, Mizner was celebrated for his zingers: “Be nice to people on your way up, because you’ll meet ‘em on your way down”; “Treat a whore like a lady and a lady like a whore.” His best, however, was his assessment of his job: “Working for Warner Brothers is like fucking a por-

cupine: it's a hundred pricks against one."

The studio was proud of its cheap-and-fast identity. Harry Warner, one of the founding brothers, was known to comb the lot, turning off the lights in the bathrooms. Writers, as Cagney recalled, were "doing the best they could under perpetual rush-rush conditions . . . to crank out their stuff by the yard."

For many years, this reputation for thrift seemed to undermine appreciation of the films themselves. Even Jack Warner wondered, in a 1934 memo, whether "we are cutting our pictures too fast and making them too snappy." But in recent decades those snappy pictures—most of which were trimmed to seventy minutes or less—have been rediscovered and admired. In 1998, the critic Andrew Sarris wrote, "Warners was the most reliable source of entertainment through the thirties and forties, even though it was clearly the most budget-conscious," adding that, from today's perspective, the studio's "razor-sharp cutting and frantic pacing look inspired to the point of absurdism."

The shooting schedule at Warner Bros. was just as rapid-fire. Lyle, like all the contract players, worked six days a week, often for twelve hours at a stretch. He'd ride his bicycle between soundstages, carrying two or three scripts in the front basket—for pictures he was acting in—and two or three in the rear basket, for pictures he was signed up to make.

Warner Bros., Lyle recalled, was a "kingdom unto itself." He explained, "You practically lived at the studio—it was like your home. You had your own dressing room and your own chairs with your name

on them. If there were any personal things to take care of—like when you got a traffic ticket, and probably up to murder—the studio would take care of it."

The nightlife that Lyle enjoyed was sometimes studio-sanctioned—squirring gorgeous starlets to the Trocadero or the Coconut Grove, where Warners photographers just happened to turn up—and sometimes got out of hand. After a Gay Nineties costume party at the Vendôme restaurant, which Lyle had attended with his girlfriend at the time, the Countess Dorothy di Frasso, he crashed his car. Soon afterward, the studio had him photographed in bed, a bandage looped rakishly around his forehead, reading his fan mail. In a statement for the press, Lyle credited the derby hat he'd been wearing with saving him from worse injury. It had served him, he said, "like an iron lid."

Lyle eventually became a devoted family man—his marriage to my mother, who was twenty-six years younger than he, lasted forty-one years. But as a young actor he was most convincing when playing sexy but weak men who projected a hollow sensuality. In several pictures, he was a playboy doctor with a drinking problem—a common type in movies of the era. Screenwriters clearly found the feckless medical man a good stand-in for all the authority figures, from bank presidents to the President, who had lately let Americans down.

My favorite of my father's Warner Bros. movies is "Three on a Match," in which he appeared with Warren William, Joan Blondell, Ann Dvorak, and a twenty-four-year-old Bette Davis. Though Davis

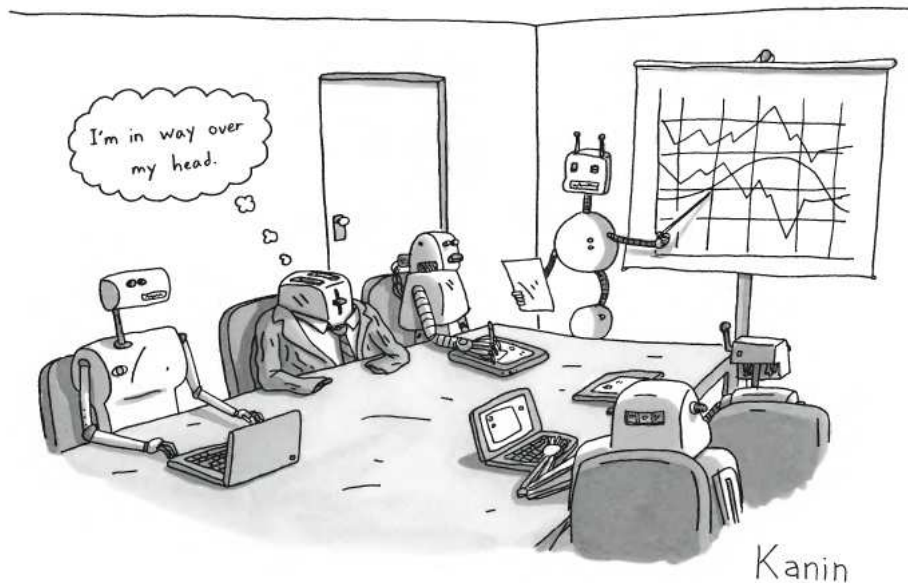
later dismissed it as a "dull B picture," "dull" is hardly the word. The film historian Mark Vieira calls the movie "the quintessential Warner Bros. film of 1932, cramming headlines, history, sociology, sex, alcohol, drugs, adultery, kidnapping, blackmail and suicide into sixty-three busy minutes." And "Three on a Match" is remarkable for its frankness about drug addiction, and for its sympathetic treatment of the libidinal desires of an unhappy wife.

The performances in "Three on a Match"—particularly those of Ann Dvorak, as the straying wife, and Lyle, as the handsome low-rent chiseller she strays with—provide a psychological shading that you don't often get in the quickie Warners movies of the era. One scene, a model of potent, emotional brevity, informs the audience that Vivian—the Ann Dvorak character, who has left her wealthy straight-arrow husband for Mike, my father's character—is now having satisfying sex, probably for the first time. The scene cuts from a shot of the abandoned husband—played by Warren William, his large white hands twisting in distress as he talks about his missing wife and young son—to Lyle's hands, wrapped around a cocktail shaker. The camera pulls back to show a hotel room in which Vivian is lying on a sofa, wearing a filmy peignoir, a dreamy, postcoital smile on her face. When her little boy toddles over and says, "Mommy, I'm hungry," Vivian's erotic bliss clouds her response. She coos ineffectually at him and gestures to a decimated tray of hors d'oeuvres.

"Can't I have bread and milk?" the boy whimpers.

A small spasm of conscience passes over Lyle's face. He does something subtle with his expression that is not quite a wince, not quite an admission of shame—something shifty-eyed. We see in an instant that, as weak and hedonistic as Lyle's character is, he isn't heartless. It is a very nice bit of acting.

For a while, Warner Bros. tried to make my father a star. The publicity department crafted a persona for Lyle—a collection of alluring biographical details tailored for public consumption. Newly signed performers were asked to fill out a questionnaire about where they'd been raised and what they did for fun, about their fathers and mothers, their first jobs, their phobias, and—in a nod to the Depression—their "pet economics" (cheap



socks, bologna sandwiches). The studio then wrote up a biography based, often loosely, on the answers.

As a fledgling entertainer in Nebraska, Lyle had been a magician's assistant, and the P.R. guys loved telling the story of his first act: rocks were broken on his chest while he was supposedly in a profound, induced slumber. In the talkie era, stage experience had a newfound cachet, and one of the studio bios boasted, "Talbot is a product of the stage. . . . He has never known anything else." The studio's literature freely combined the true with the ought-to-be-true: Lyle had grown up in a Nebraska town that was almost entirely Bohemian (that was true) and spoke fluent Czech (that wasn't). He was bright and liked to read (that was true) and had attended the University of Nebraska for two years (that wasn't). He cared so deeply about animals that once, when he was playing golf in South Dakota, and his ball conked a sheep on the head, he drove the sheep seventeen miles to the nearest vet, delaying the start of a play he was appearing in that night. (That was true-ish; he *had* gone to the aid of the sheep, but once he saw it back on its feet he headed for the theatre. He would never have been late for a curtain.)

The studio did not try to turn Lyle into a man's man or a rugged outdoors type—not seriously, at least. (One unfortunate batch of publicity stills shows him fly-fishing, standing in a stream in waders and grinning madly.) Clark Gable, by contrast, had not grown up as an outdoorsman, but when the studio biographies made him over in that mold he took to it, and started actually hunting and fishing. As the film historian Jeanine Basinger notes, Gable was "a bio success—life imitating art."

With Lyle, the bios took a different tack. "Really, he's nothing at all like any of the roles he's played," one said. "He's tall and well set up, with straight brown hair and well-cut features—good looking enough to play with anyone from Garbo down. He's not a tough—I've already said he's no Gable. His interest is in the stage and books, and he's a collector of the latter. He's modest, lives simply, and works hard." The studio presented him as a playfully sophisticated indoorsman. He was a collector of first editions, which he liked to have specially bound; an enthusiast for parlor games, like charades and concentration; a "devotee" of Ernest Hemingway and

William Faulkner. (That was a stretch—he had a lot of books, but preferred newspapers and magazines to serious literature.) He was fond of ballroom dancing, cocker spaniels, fillet of sole, silk pajamas.

Yet Gable was the defining male star of the era, and, behind the scenes, Warner Bros. kept wishing that Lyle could be a bit more like him. In 1934, after Jack Warner watched Gable in Columbia Pictures' "It Happened One Night," he sent a memo to Hal B. Wallis saying that Lyle "should grow a mustache just like his"—Gable's. "It gives him a sort of flash and good looks." Lyle dutifully grew one, but it didn't endow him with Gable's manly sexiness, and the mustache soon disappeared. Lyle, no matter how he was groomed, had a foppish, even juvenile, aspect, with a trace of the feminine that sometimes played as inadvertently goofy. He seemed like an urban type, but he did not project power, like Garfield or Cagney. He also lacked the paradoxical quality that often makes a star: the muscular brute with a tender smile, the all-American hero with a vicious streak. Nor did he have an adorable imperfection—jug ears, a crooked smile—that can attract fans. He did not have an outsized personality that he could carry from role to role.

It didn't help that Lyle was not at all picky about parts. "I was an actor who very seldom turned down anything, because I wanted to work," he later recalled. "So consequently I worked in all kinds of pictures—good, bad, and indifferent." Unlike many successful actors, he possessed neither soaring artistic ambition nor a bottomless desire to be admired. Joan Crawford, for example, could declare that she remembered "every one of my important roles the way I remember a part of my life, because at the time I did them, I *was* the role and it *was* my life for fourteen hours a day." Lyle spoke of his career with genuine modesty: "I thought I was lucky to have a job. It was the Depression and people were broke."

In 1935, Lyle was cast in "The Petrified Forest," a film adaptation of a Broadway play. He was to play Duke Mantee, a fleeing gangster who takes hostages at a diner in the Arizona desert. "Several weeks later, the casting director says, 'No, Lyle, you're not going to play it after all,'" he recalled, adding, "I wasn't upset—I'd still be working, still getting paid, just in something else." Lyle was told that Leslie How-

ard, who'd played the lead in the New York stage production of "The Petrified Forest," had insisted on bringing his co-star to Hollywood with him. The co-star was Humphrey Bogart, and the movie made him famous.

In retrospect, my father felt, he might have fared better at a studio other than Warner Bros.—Paramount, perhaps, or Columbia, which released a lot of light romances. In 1932, on loan to Columbia, he'd starred in "No More Orchids," wittily wooing Carole Lombard. It was the sort of role that he felt he had a flair for, and the genre in which he'd made the best impression onstage. But the truth is, though Lyle is capable in the role, he's also a little stiff, affecting the not-quite-British accent that American actors sometimes have in thirties movies. The early Warner Bros. pictures—with their fidgety pacing and crowded casts of stock players in small, vivid roles—showed Lyle at his best. He had created a singular roster of weak-willed malefactors: the dissolute actor who hangs himself after accidentally killing his party-girl date, in "Big City Blues"; the oleaginous freeloader turned reluctant thug, in "Three on a Match"; the preening, skirt-chasing football player, in "College Coach." All three movies are tight exercises in cynicism and urban verve, as bright and sharp as polished knives.

In 1936, after Lyle had completed his thirty-fourth film for Warner Bros., the studio cancelled his contract. Although he had worked with everyone from Barbara Stanwyck to Spencer Tracy, he would not be rising with them into the Hollywood firmament. Lyle kept working, however, never slackening the brisk pace he had picked up at Warner Bros.—and taking pride in never having to supplement his actor's income with, say, selling real estate. By the time he died, in 1996, he had amassed hundreds of Hollywood credits, including a recurring role on the TV series "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" and a few parts in the epically misbegotten films of Ed Wood. He was never bitter about his career: all his life, he felt lucky to have been plucked from obscurity, lucky to be an entertainer. Yet he never forgot the heady days when he seemed destined for greatness. In 1933, a spread in *Motion Picture* anointed two silvery stars of tomorrow. The woman was Katharine Hepburn. The man was Lyle Talbot. ♦

TRANSACTION MAN

Mormonism, private equity, and the making of a candidate.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

I. CHURCH

This summer, I spent most of an afternoon in Salt Lake City with Douglas Anderson, a friend of Mitt Romney's. Anderson lives in a housing development in the foothills of the mountains that rise to the east of the city. We met in his living room, which leads to a patio with a view across the Great Basin—a view that isn't so different from the one that the first Mormon settlers in Utah had as they crossed the mountains, except that what you see now is prosperous urban sprawl, not a desert. Anderson, a bald, amiable man in his early sixties, is a Democrat, but, like Romney, he is a Mormon, with deep roots in Utah; he is part of the business-school and management-consulting worlds; and his father always made it clear that holding a high political office would be the excellent culmination of a career. In Belmont, Massachusetts, where both men lived for years, Anderson was the Romney family's "home teacher," assigned by the Church to pay monthly visits to support the family and its religious life and to offer a little guidance. In 1989, Anderson and his family moved to Salt Lake City. On the coffee table in the living room was a large, leather-bound copy of the Book of Mormon. Above the desk in Anderson's study was a picture of Jesus Christ standing on a high bluff and looking down into a valley, with the caption "Oh, Jerusalem! Oh, Jerusalem!"

Anderson told me an almost surreal story about his first encounter with Romney, in 1968. Anderson was a freshman at Stanford. Romney had been a student there in 1965-66, before he left for France, to do the missionary work that young Mormons pursue. Anderson was walking across the campus one day when a student he hardly knew ap-

proached him. "Are you a Mormon?" the young man asked. Anderson said yes. "Do you know Mitt Romney?" No. "Mitt Romney is the finest person I have ever known!" Then he walked away.

Another Mormon friend who shares Romney's background (church, business school, long residence in Belmont, Massachusetts) is Clayton Christensen, the Harvard Business School professor and renowned management guru. He remembers first encountering Romney in an economics class at Brigham Young University, in 1970, just after Romney returned from his mission and married Ann Davies, his high-school sweetheart. "He was the big man on campus," Christensen told me. He owned an A.M.C. Javelin, the hottest car made by the auto company that his father, George Romney, had run. "He had a beautiful wife. His father was famous, he was handsome. Everybody wanted to be what Mitt was."

Inside the world that Mitt Romney inhabits, he has always been a person of destiny. It isn't just that he is the son of a corporate chief executive, governor, and Presidential candidate. He is the scion of one of the most prominent Mormon families, with a direct connection to the Church's founding prophets, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. The Romneys converted in England and came to the United States in 1841. The first American member of the family, Miles Park Romney, was born in the short-lived paradise of Nauvoo, Illinois, over which Joseph Smith presided. After Smith's martyrdom, the Romneys took part in the terrible forced exodus that ended in Utah. Mitt Romney was born in 1947, the year of the centennial of the Mormons' arrival there. The youngest of four siblings by six years, he was born when his parents were middle-aged. Romney,

with his square jaw and brilliantined hair and old-school cultural references, is a throwback to an earlier time. His father and mother were born in 1907 and 1908; his oldest sister was born before either of Barack Obama's parents.

Romney often comes across as not being able to relate to mainstream American life. In his astonishing performance before a group of rich donors in Boca Raton, Florida, in May, recently made public by *Mother Jones*, he said that the forty-seven per cent of Americans who pay no federal income taxes are never going to vote for him, because they think of themselves as "victims" and "believe that government has a responsibility to care for them." That forty-seven per cent includes millions of people who do pay payroll taxes, and retirees, and people who are disabled and unemployed. You'd expect somebody who proposes to run the federal government to know that. One could see Romney simply as a rich person who thinks the way many rich people must think; one could see him as a super fund-raiser who is good at telling a certain kind of wealthy audience what he believes it wants to hear; or one could see him simply as somebody who can't connect to outsiders in any natural way, who goes through life trying one somewhat forced and awkward technique after another, because he thinks he has to keep his real self private. It isn't easy to comprehend what sort of heart and soul and mind produced those remarks. Romney is very deeply a product of a series of interconnected, tightly enclosed worlds, with their own rules: Mormonism, business school, management consulting, private equity. Understanding him requires understanding the subcultures that produced him.

Romney, on his mission in France, lived a life oddly similar, in its daily

Mitt Romney's time at business school coincided with the waning of big corporations and the beginning of the rise of finance.

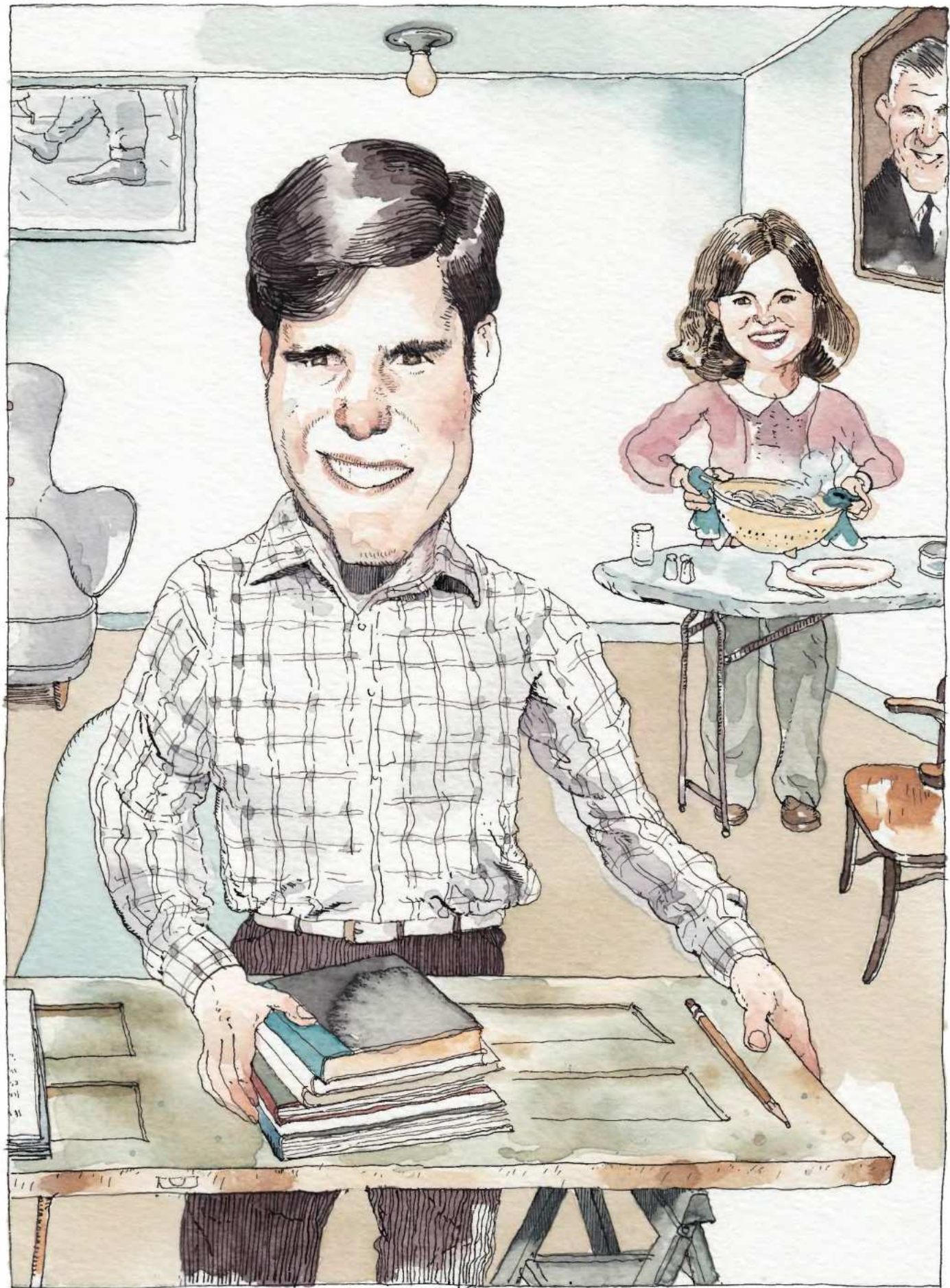


ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT



*"New York Times," Saturday crossword, 1999,
twenty-two minutes, ballpoint."*

texture, at least, to Obama's as a community organizer in Chicago: long, penurious days spent knocking on strangers' doors, "tracting" in the hope of finding someone who wanted to hear Joseph Smith's miraculous story. But in 1968, toward the end of his mission, Romney had several unsettling experiences. He was in an auto accident in which a passenger in the car he was driving was killed. When the French student protests broke out, members of Romney's mission (who were garbed, "Matrix"-like, in white shirts, black suits, and skinny ties) saw them as a terrifying example of the threat posed by the left. And Romney's father, long considered the front-runner for the Republican Presidential nomination, was dropping out of the race, before the first primary.

These days, people often describe Romney as an old-fashioned "Rockefeller Republican"—moderate on social

issues, internationalist on foreign policy, and pro-Wall Street—who is pretending to be more conservative out of expediency. This is misleading on two counts. In the heyday of Rockefeller Republicanism, George Romney's billboards in New Hampshire said, "The Way to Stop Crime Is to Stop Moral Decay." And that campaign resulted in an enduring sense in the family of personal bitterness and betrayal toward Nelson Rockefeller, the governor of New York.

Just after the 1966 midterm elections, Rockefeller summoned George Romney to one of the family's properties, the Dorado Beach hotel, in Puerto Rico, and promised him full support in the 1968 Presidential primaries and election. This meant that Romney would begin the race with the delegations of Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania in his pocket (the governor of Pennsylvania had allied himself

with Rockefeller), plus a panoply of Rockefeller connections, funding sources, and policy advisers, including Henry Kissinger. Yet he was not remotely an establishment figure. In "The Making of the President 1968," Theodore H. White wrote, wonderingly, "Somewhere out beyond the Alleghenies the old culture of America still persists, people who think Boy Scouts are good, who believe that divorce is bad, who teach Bible classes on Sunday, enjoy church suppers, wash their children's mouths with soap to purge dirty words, who regard homosexuals as wicked, whose throat chokes up when an American flag is marched by on the Fourth of July." (All five of Mitt Romney's sons were Boy Scouts and three became Eagle Scouts.) The Old Guard, White thought, would never put up with this sort of character: "There is a natural timberline in national politics beyond which certain kinds of men cannot thrive."

More specifically, Rockefeller, who could never completely give up the idea of himself as President, began to hint that he might get into the race after all. At a certain point, it was made clear to Romney that all those Rockefeller resources were not going to be available to him. Romney bowed out, feeling that he had been played for a fool; Rockefeller never entered the race. In March, 1968, Michael Bush, a member of Mitt Romney's mission in France, wrote to his mother, "Mitt Romney is working in Bordeaux now. We were together a while this morning and of course we discussed politics. (Politics is often a missionary discussion topic.) It was interesting to hear about George Romney from the inside. It appears that Rockefeller gave Romney a dirty deal. In a letter Elder R. received just after his Dad's withdrawal, Gov. Romney explained that the poor predictions for New Hampshire were not the reason he withdrew. It was because Rockefeller was stepping out of the non-candidacy ranks. Rockefeller had ardently promised his support, right down to the line—winner or loser, but when he said that he would accept a draft, Romney doubted his sincerity and told Rocky that he knew then that he had been a stalking horse."

Was that when the seed of Mitt

Romney's Presidential candidacy was planted? We'll never know, because Romney and his friends are wedded, no doubt sincerely, to the standard Republican rhetoric about his political ambition as a matter of "being of service" and "giving back." If the seed was planted back then, one of the lessons plainly was that you want to be the guy in the race who has the most money, not the guy who is dependent on the guy with the most money.

Like most élites, the Mormon élite is a small world where everybody knows and has close ties to everybody else. One of the important Mormon families is the Eyrings. Henry Eyring, like George Romney, was born in Mexico in the first decade of the twentieth century. Mormons had established a colony there, so that they could continue to practice polygamy. In the nineteenth-thirties and forties, Eyring was a distinguished chemistry professor at Princeton. His son Henry B. Eyring, who taught at Stanford Business School, is now the second-ranking official in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, with the title First Counsellor in the First Presidency. In 2006, Henry B.'s son, Henry J., gave up a career at the management-consulting firm Monitor, where Mitt Romney's eldest son, Tagg, has worked. The Church assigned him to a team in charge of transforming a small two-year Mormon college in Rexburg, Idaho, into a major Mormon university, called B.Y.U.-Idaho. In 2005, Kim Clark, the dean of Harvard Business School, became president of B.Y.U.-Idaho; for many years in Belmont, Mitt Romney was home teacher for Clark's seven children.

When I visited Rexburg, Henry Eyring, a rail-thin, bald man in his late forties, gave me a tour of the campus, which consists of new brick and stone buildings separated by well-tended lawns and paths. A large temple stands next to the campus. Our tour ended in the main auditorium, which seats fifteen thousand, so that the entire student body can worship together. We sat down in the balcony and talked. "My great-great-grandmother was a Romney," Eyring said. "That's the family connection. In fact, my grandfather's father was married to two Rom-

ney sisters. They were driven out of the United States, to Mexico. Then they were driven out of Mexico, by Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution. They lived in a stockyard in El Paso for a year, and then in Pima, Arizona. The middle of nowhere. But they got an education. There is within us, as a people, a drive to get all the education you can, to conquer the wilderness, if you will. We must become all we can be. We must master our circumstances—we as a family. Not for aggrandizement. For self-actualization, as Abraham Maslow would say. Let's go to Zion."

The heads of B.Y.U.-Idaho and Brigham Young's other sister school, in Hawaii, are former Harvard Business School professors. Three of Mitt Romney's sons have Harvard M.B.A.s. I asked Eyring why so many prominent Mormons are attracted to business school. The educational ethic, he said, is "to be intellectually curious but to be practical. That will take a disproportionate portion of the population into commerce—schools of business. Make the desert blossom as the rose, in the words of Isaiah. The two most significant graduate schools in the Mormon educational system are business and law. There is a great interest in executive leadership. You're talking to a J.D./M.B.A. Mitt is a J.D./M.B.A. When a Mormon goes to law school, he rarely thinks about law firms. It's more about government and diplomacy." Eyring noted that Joseph Smith's expulsion from one state after another, and his murder in Illinois, impressed on Mormons the importance of being empowered participants in government. "We are interested in law because of governance, business because of building things. Mitt's father moved back and forth across the line. You have to be a builder. You can build it in business, or you can build it in government. You are not going to be driven out of your home. You will not be persecuted. You will be safe. You will get an education. You can advance."

Some weeks later, in Boston, I asked Clayton Christensen the same question. "Let me give you a two-minute history of Christianity," he said. "In 300 A.D., the leaders decided they had all the an-

swers. God doesn't give you a new answer until you ask a question. The leaders had the New Testament. It had all the answers. God had given them revelation. What's unique about Mormonism is that, starting with Joseph Smith, we started asking questions of God that we didn't have the answers to. The intellectual curiosity: we, or the Prophet, ask God." He went on, "Most religions come to believe in the Zeus model of God. He was outside the universe and created everything. Latter-Day Saints believe that God is in the universe and his power comes from understanding the rules of the universe perfectly. Everything we learn makes us more like God. The impetus to learn is so strong because it helps us to become more like God."

There is a special intensity in the playing out of Mormon culture across American society, because it is an American religion, whose canonical events took place here, not all that long ago. Back in Rexburg, I asked Kim Clark what in Mormon culture generates such an intense preoccupation with business. Henry Eyring identified business with building and practicality; Clark identified business with personal leadership, which is also a preoccupation of Mitt Romney's. "There are aspects of the doctrine, the practice, the experience that prepare people well for leadership," he said. "My mother, every day, would look me in the eye and say to me, 'You are a leader! Stand up for what you believe in. Don't let people drag you around by the nose. You have a responsibility to your heavenly father. You have a responsibility to do your very best.' And on my way out the door she'd add, 'You remember who you are. People sacrificed for you. They died so you could have what you have.' I'm sure I'm not the only L.D.S. child who heard that from his mom. That came out of the pioneer experience. It's deeply ingrained. Being persecuted, driven across the country. I was five! And then the Church gives you those leadership opportunities. For little kids, three years old, there's something called Primary. I gave my first talk to an organization when I was four or five years old. At twelve, they put you in a leadership position. At nineteen, you get sent

on a mission. At twenty, you're responsible for other missionaries, and it's serious. It's people's lives. All through your experience, you're trained to be a leader."

II. BUSINESS

All of us see the course of our lives as particular, and Mitt and Ann Romney tell their story that way. But Romney's life as a young man took a typical path for a devout Mormon: freshman year of college, then a mission abroad, then an early marriage and enrollment at Brigham Young (where it is not uncommon for more than half the class to be married when they graduate). Ann, also the child of a businessman, and brought up as a lightly affiliated Episcopalian, converted to Mormonism. The marriage took place twice, once in Michigan, so that her parents could attend, and then in the magnificent temple in Salt Lake City (which only Mormons with a "temple recommend" can enter). From Brigham Young, Romney went to Harvard, where, as a compromise with his father, he enrolled in both the law school (his father's preference) and the business school. Romney was a golden boy there, as he had been at Stanford, on mission, and at Brigham Young.

When Romney was at Harvard Business School, all second-year students were required to read Alfred P. Sloan's "My Years with General Motors." In the decades after the Second World War, G.M. was one of the most successful institutions in America, the sort of place where the brightest Harvard Business School graduates dreamed of working. The most influential figures in business were the chief executives of large corporations. Wall Street, in those days, was a sleepy backwater, and it was almost unimaginably less important to American economic life than it is now.

In the nineteen-seventies, the balance of power began to shift from production to capital, and corporate America started to seem lumbering and inefficient. This shift was the business world's version of the sixties—one

(younger and impatient) group of politically conservative businesspeople challenging another (older and more traditional) group. The field of battle was not politics, culture, dress, or taste in music. It was the American corporation, and the consequences for the whole society were profound. The business sixties wound up rearranging most of the American economy. General Motors has fewer than half as many employees today as it did in 1955, and, among the American corporations that were great at mid-century, it's hardly alone. George Romney was an organization man. Mitt Romney became a transaction man: someone who moves assets around with a speed and force that leaves many of the rest of us bewildered. The insurrection in business has profoundly affected the lives of most people who work, pay taxes, and get government benefits. It is the backdrop to this Presidential election.

By the time Romney graduated, in 1975, the best students at Harvard Business School were dreaming not of rising through the management ranks at an industrial company but of working in the financial world or at strategic-consulting companies. The most prestigious of these was a relatively new boutique firm called Boston Consulting Group, and Mitt Romney got his first job after business school there. The mystique of B.C.G. and its founder, Bruce Henderson, couldn't have been more different from that of Alfred Sloan and G.M. B.C.G. was small, and it didn't run or make anything; it merely gave advice. Corporations with tens of thousands of career employees brought in teams of five or six people from B.C.G. to spend a few months studying their business and then tell them how to become more economically powerful, by making structural and strategic changes. The consultants interviewed employees and customers and suppliers, and got competitors' public data filings. They analyzed the information using techniques that Henderson and his colleagues had developed, with names like the experience curve and the growth-share matrix. B.C.G., its older and bigger competitor McKinsey, and many

imitators helped to break apart the corporate structures of postwar America and reconfigure them.

Romney was an ideal consultant: polite, well trained in presentation skills, and, as the son of one corporate executive and the namesake of another (he is Willard Mitt Romney, after Willard Marriott, the leading Mormon business executive of the late nineteen-forties), comfortable in a boardroom. Kim Clark says that Romney was "very smart, but also great with senior executives, really capable of developing relationships with them. You have to be really good on your feet, good at understanding what people's concerns are and how they think."

In 1973, Bruce Henderson's second-in-command at B.C.G., Bill Bain, left to start his own strategic-consulting firm. Slight, neat, and quiet, Bain was a former fund-raiser for Vanderbilt University, with no formal training in business or economics. Bain & Company worked for only one company in an industry, under conditions of high secrecy. Its consultants were recruited with obsessive attention to brains, impeccable dress, manner, and credentials. Whether it was the atmospheric sizzle or the analytic steak, Bain & Company prospered.

Often, the top few strategic-consulting firms were competing for the same work, so a slight edge in the youthful perfection of one's M.B.A.s could tip the balance. In 1977, B.C.G. put Romney in charge of recruiting at Harvard Business School. Midway through the recruiting season, Bill Bain persuaded Romney to leave B.C.G. and become Bain's chief recruiter at Harvard. "So the person who was saying, 'Join B.C.G.,' was now saying, 'Join Bain,'" Clayton Christensen says. "Mitt is so persuasive. He could get rich selling used bubble gum. That gave Bain the critical mass to compete with B.C.G."

Sometimes large historical developments are obvious only in retrospect. In 1979, an obscure division of the U.S. Department of Labor in charge of regulating pension funds loosened something called the "prudent man rule," enabling funds to invest more aggressively, for higher returns.



Organizations like the California state employees' pension fund and the teachers' retirement system of Texas suddenly became power players in American capitalism. So did university and foundation endowments and, later, sovereign-wealth funds. The people running these large pools of capital invested to get the best returns, and so helped to drive the remaking of companies, the restructuring of the workforce, and globalization. When the country was dominated by large, established institutions, workers were, often implicitly, guaranteed job security and comfortable benefits. In the new economy, these arrangements were eroded, which put pressure on the political system to pick up the slack.

Meanwhile, the hot shots at strategic consulting firms were becoming frustrated. Sometimes their clients made a great deal of money thanks to their advice, while the firms got only a fraction of what they saw as the value of their work. Conversely, clients were free to ignore their advice, or to be slow about implementing it. In 1976, two members of the faculty at the University of Rochester's business school, Michael Jensen and William Meckling, published an article in the obscure *Journal of Financial Economics* called "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure." It provided the intellectual foundation for bringing together one set of ideas about how to change the ownership structure of a company with another set of ideas about how to change the way it operated. That consolidation led to the creation of Bain Capital, in 1984, and made Mitt Romney very rich.

Jensen and Meckling argued that publicly held corporations were poorly managed, because their chief executives, with their generous salaries and high job security, had no real incentive to "maximize the value of the firm." If a company could be restructured so that it was run by the owner, and if it could take on a lot of new debt that it had to pay down with cash, then it would maximize its value, rather than the comfort and prestige of its C.E.O. In the nineteen-eighties, Harvard Business School hired Michael Jensen as a faculty member, and the battles be-

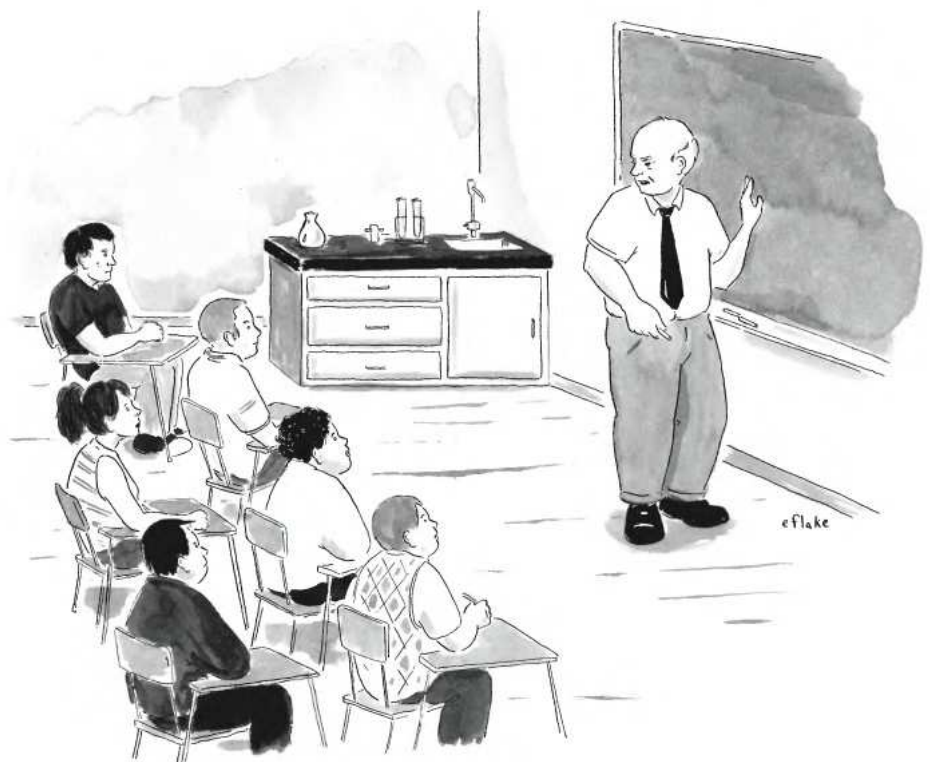
tween him and the pro-corporate professors defined the intellectual life of the school just as much as the battles over critical legal studies defined Harvard Law School when Obama was a student there. Jensen argued in favor of junk bonds, hostile takeovers, leveraged buyouts, and stock options for chief executives. Mitt Romney and others, with these new techniques at their disposal, were able to raise pools of capital and use it to slice, dice, and rearrange the American economy. In a speech in 1993, Jensen announced that the country was experiencing a "third industrial revolution." It was as economically consequential, he said, and likely to become as politically and culturally controversial, as the industrial revolutions of the nineteenth century.

One day in the early eighties, a note appeared on the bulletin board at Bain & Company, saying that anyone interested in starting a new venture-capital fund should get in touch with Mitt Romney. Bain Capital was modest when it launched (the first investment pool was thirty-seven million dollars), and agnostic about whether it borrowed money to buy existing businesses or built new businesses with its own money. One of its first two ven-

tures, a small airline that ran military shuttles between Tonopah, Nevada, and Las Vegas, was in the first category. The other, an eye-surgery business headquartered in Boston, was in the second. So was Staples, Romney's favorite example of a Bain Capital investment. The consultants were going to bring their consulting skills to bear on the companies they owned, and, as owners, they could guarantee that their advice would be taken. (Bain & Company had unsuccessfully suggested the eye-surgery company, MediVision, to one of its clients, Bausch & Lomb.)

But, within a few years, Bain Capital had become almost completely a buyout firm: it bought businesses, retooled them, and resold them. The returns were typically much higher than they were from investing in start-ups. Buying assets with borrowed money can be spectacularly profitable if the asset can be resold at a higher price. After Romney left Bain Capital, the head of the management committee was Bob Gay, whose father, a prominent Mormon and a friend of George Romney's, ran Howard Hughes's business empire. Gay was brought in because he was a Wall Street guy who knew the deal business.

When a company is acquired by a



"For the hundredth time—I have no idea how to make crystal meth."

private-equity firm, something dramatic is guaranteed to happen to it. The debt increases the cost of doing business, because of interest payments. The investors have to get their money back within ten years. And the deal has to generate income for the private-equity firm. Some moribund companies are turned around or fruitfully combined with a powerful new partner; some close plants and lay off workers; some take on debt just to pay fees to the investors; some are sold and then go bankrupt.

Even as Bain Capital was making a lot of its money in buyouts, it still took pride in its consulting skills. Romney likes to say that he was a consultant or a venture capitalist, not that he was in private equity. Consultants think that people in private equity make most of their money from the way a deal is structured (Bain Capital aggressively pursued that aspect of its business), not from how well they analyze a company and its problems. Some Bainies liked to talk about “the nuclear reactor”: their all-powerful analytic methods, which the dummies on Wall Street didn’t have. They weren’t traders; they were

efficiency experts. What they did wasn’t mere “financial engineering”; it was “operational engineering.” They replaced management, reorganized the supply chain, upgraded equipment, changed the accounting system. Romney loved to order up charts and graphs; in his personal pantheon of admirability “data” ranks right up there with “leadership.” During meetings, he still challenges the person making the PowerPoint presentation, poking holes in the argument, demanding different ways to solve the problem. In his own mind, he is a master chief executive who started a very successful business that brought a particular approach to problems—not a guy who used debt to buy and resell businesses.

Bain Capital did many dozens of deals under Romney. One of them involved a carpet company in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, called Masland, which had been owned and operated by one family for four generations. It went public in the nineteen-sixties. In 1986, it was acquired in a hostile takeover by Burlington Industries. The next year, Burlington itself came under attack

from a corporate raider, and it arranged a leveraged buyout with Morgan Stanley. Desperate for cash, it put Masland up for sale. Bain Capital bought the company, which by that time was largely selling interior components to the auto business. Before making the deal, Romney flew to Detroit with the C.E.O. of the company, Bill Branch, and met with Masland’s biggest customer, Ford, to make sure that it would stay on board after the deal. Then Romney helped the company acquire another interior-components supplier, in Wisconsin, which had General Motors as a customer. In 1993, only two and a half years after the acquisition by Bain, Masland went public. On the profits from that transaction, Bain made seven times its initial investment. In 1996, Masland was merged with an auto-parts company called Lear. In 2005, Lear formed a partnership with W. L. Ross & Company, a big New York private-equity firm. In 2008, the original Masland manufacturing plant, in Carlisle, which at its peak had employed a thousand workers, shut down. So goes the transactional society, as it plays out across the middle range of the economy and the middle of the country.

Three years after Bain Capital was founded, Oliver Stone’s movie “Wall Street” came out. Gordon Gekko, its protagonist, expressed his greed by doing buyout deals. A few years later, in “Pretty Woman,” Richard Gere was a private-equity guy who redeemed himself by falling in love with Julia Roberts and cancelling his plans to buy a company and do all the things that private-equity firms do. In popular culture, private equity had become the most conveniently available symbol of everything that people didn’t like about the transactional economy. In 1994, when Romney ran for the U.S. Senate against Ted Kennedy, Kennedy’s campaign figured out (as President Obama’s campaign has this year) that an essential element of a race against Romney was to run against the private-equity business.

Within private equity, people don’t talk about the questions that are on the mind of the public. One professor at a leading business school whose subject is private equity put it simply: “Can I change the free cash-flow equation of the company? If I do, I win. If I don’t, I



“I’ve secretly arranged to have my ashes carelessly spilled on and stubbornly ground into my children’s carpets.”

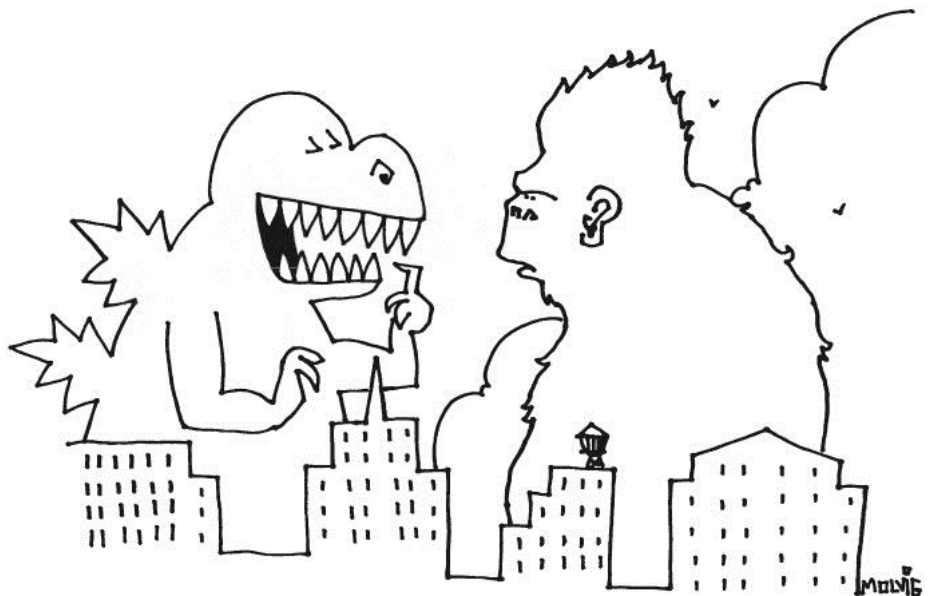
lose. It's not the job of private equity to create jobs. The job is to create value. That sometimes creates jobs, and sometimes not." A comprehensive study of private equity published last year found that the industry has a negligible effect on employment. Private equity is business on steroids: seek efficiency and economic return, not large social goals (unless you think those are large social goals). Because Mitt Romney is incapable of explaining his career in a way that makes it sound admirable to people who aren't in business, the country, for now, is directing at him its very mixed feelings about the financialization of the American economy.

Everyone who knows Romney agrees that his father is unusually important to him. "His dad is his biggest hero," says Ben Coes, who managed Romney's successful 2002 campaign for governor of Massachusetts, seven years after George Romney's death. "He thinks about him at least once an hour, if not more. He worships the guy." In 1994, just after his unsuccessful Senate campaign, Romney called William Weld, then the governor of Massachusetts, to ask if he could stop by with his dad to talk about volunteerism. "Mitt and his father came in," Weld remembers. "I got out from behind my desk. George talks for forty-five or sixty minutes, with one or two interjections by me. Mitt not only didn't say a word; his eyes never left his father's face. The expression in his eyes was hero worship. . . . And six months later his father was dead."

When Mitt Romney announced that he was going to run against Ted Kennedy, George Romney started making appearances at the Bain Capital office. He was delighted by Mitt's decision, and evidently thought of politics as a higher calling than business. For Mitt, honoring and pleasing his father seems to have been the highest calling of all. Finally, in George Romney's mind, his son's real career had begun.

III. POLITICS

Just about the only thing in life that Mitt Romney is obviously not very good at is the public aspect of running for office. During his four campaigns for office—U.S. senator, in 1994; gov-



"Anyone in my teeth?"

ernor, in 2002; President, in 2008 and 2012—he must have undergone endless hours of training and practice, but the magic just isn't there. In June, I spent a few days on the campaign trail with him, in Wisconsin and Iowa. Romney's trip had several purposes. A film crew was gathering footage for campaign commercials to run in the fall; Romney stopped in Janesville, Wisconsin, talking privately and doing an event with Paul Ryan, soon to be his running mate; and it was another attempt, apparently fruitless, on the part of the campaign to demonstrate the candidate's concern with ordinary people. This segment was officially called the "Every Town Counts" tour. Romney rode around in a sleek bus painted with all-American scenes of mountains, church steeples, and ships in harbors.

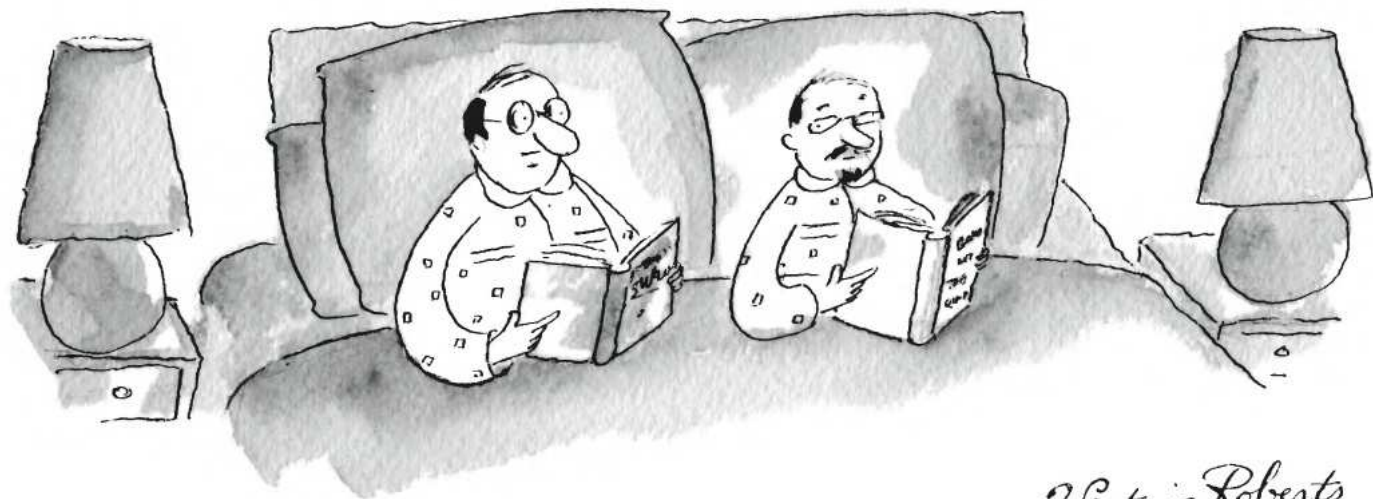
Romney cannot light up a crowd. He dresses the way one is supposed to dress (checked shirt, no tie), he dutifully repeats his applause lines at every stop ("Last time there was hope and change—this time it's 'We hope to change the subject'"), he takes his body through motions and gestures meant to read as forceful and high-energy—and nothing happens. This summer, his audiences were strikingly small, and white, and middle-aged or older.

One problem is that Romney's voice

lacks resonance and range. Another is that, even in brief appearances, he tends to offer up three- and five-point policy plans that bore the audience. He talks to voters businessman to businessman, on the assumption that everybody either runs a business or wants to start one. Romney believes that if you drop the name of someone who has built a very successful company—Sam Walton, of Wal-Mart, or Ray Kroc, of McDonald's—it will have the same effect as mentioning a sports hero. And Romney's political references (the Dodd-Frank financial-reform law, the organized-labor cause known as "card check," Obama's failure to negotiate new free-trade agreements) don't register much with the people who turn up at rallies. He sounds like someone speaking at a Rotary Club luncheon in the nineteen-fifties.

The weekend before the Republican Convention, I travelled to Powell, Ohio, a picture-postcard small town just outside Columbus, where there was a Romney rally early on a Saturday morning. Ryan spoke before Romney. He was loud and kinetic, and full of cultural references (football, deer hunting, Catholicism), which got far more applause than his comments on economics and policy.

When Romney took the stage, he picked up on the distant shouts of a



Victoria Roberts

"I did the math. If we want to read all of Proust in this lifetime, we have to start tomorrow morning."

group of protesters who were outside the security perimeter of the rally, and began to riff. He referred to the protesters as a Greek chorus, went on to recall the grandiose Greek columns that stood behind Obama when he accepted the Democratic nomination in Denver, in 2008, and finally arrived at the Greek fiscal crisis and how the Obama Administration was leading America in that direction. His punch line was "Everything they do reminds us of Greece!" Then he predicted that although Obama would accept the nomination this year at the Bank of America Arena, in Charlotte, he would not call the arena by its name, because he would never acknowledge a bank. Then it was on to Chinese-currency policy.

After the rally, I interviewed Romney. He was sitting at a folding Formica-topped table in a corner of the town's city-council chamber, with his travelling press aide, Rick Gorka, at his side. Romney has done a lot of meeting and a lot of selling during his rise in business and politics, but mainly indoors, in small groups of peers. He's as adept in that setting as he is unnatural talking to a big crowd. Unlike most candidates, he did not communicate a sense either of being too restless to give you his full attention or of having to establish that he is the alpha and you the beta. He was direct and pleasant and engaged. His voice sounded

husky, rather than flat. His gestures seemed spontaneous, not staged.

Because Romney's answers to the standard political questions are usually scripted and unrevealing, I asked him about business. Why had General Motors, the economic titan of his youth, fallen so low?

"My dad had a statement he would make that proved to be true in this industry, as in all others," Romney said. "I remember, as a boy, saying to him, 'Dad, we make the best cars, don't we?' And he said yes. And I said, 'Then why don't we sell the most cars?' And he said, 'Well, someday we may. And he said, 'Because, Mitt'—and this is a quote—'there's nothing as vulnerable as entrenched success.' And the auto industry, in particular General Motors, was so successful for so long that it didn't recognize the need to innovate, to become more productive, to become more efficient, or it would ultimately be vulnerable to foreign competition. So the industry itself, its managers, made some critical mistakes."

Romney ticked off the mistakes. "One, they agreed to union contracts that were uncompetitive with those of other companies around the world, and ultimately with the so-called transplants, foreign companies doing business in the U.S.," he said. "By calculations that some consulting firms did, a U.S. car was two thousand dollars more expensive to build than a comparable

foreign product." He added, "The benefit packages, the work rules, the wages, and other decisions by the management were not consistent with the need to be more competitive."

I asked Romney how he would reconcile this account with the central theory of his first employer, the Boston Consulting Group, that experience gives a company a powerful economic advantage. Actually, he said, Bruce Henderson's insight was tempered by the word "could." A successful company could have low costs, it could make a better product, and it could have a highly profitable run. "But if companies become complacent," he went on, "in my dad's lexicon, they could become more vulnerable. And the history—I.B.M., Western Union, A.T.&T., the history of the great nations of the earth, the great empires of the earth—there's nothing as vulnerable as entrenched success."

"And there are some enterprises that have found that they can, despite their huge success, reinvigorate themselves, reinvent themselves, and maintain their lead. G.E. did that under Jack Welch," he said. "Bruce Henderson's vision was important because it said what's important is not just how good you are as a company; it is how good you are relative to your competition. . . . And Bill Bain's innovation was to go one step further, and to say, 'We don't just give the company a road map; we help them

implement that road map.' Because giving someone an answer without actually helping them implement it will often not yield a result. So both firms, Boston Consulting Group and Bain, and then ultimately McKinsey and others, all caught on to the same vision, which is: help American and foreign companies recognize that they must change to survive."

Romney clearly loved talking about this, and he was showing how he thinks about running things, including the federal government. The motif of understanding business and government in terms of a competition between entrenched, unproductive costs and efficient investments, which animates the video of the talk to donors in Boca Raton, ran through our conversation. He went on, "I've seen, for instance, in a company like Marriott International—you have Bill Marriott, who is the chief executive officer there, and there's the Host Hotels, which was part of the company at one point. It's now a separate company. It's headed by another Marriott brother, Dick Marriott. Both of them have been highly successful over many decades . . . and their chief executives are constantly pushing the businesses to become more efficient, more customer-friendly, to expand into new markets."

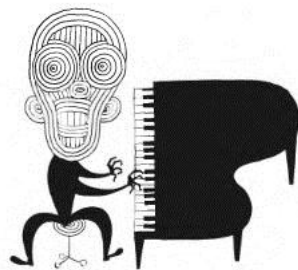
He led into a discussion of politics by talking about the strategic myopia of many business executives. "They agree to actions which are good on a short-term basis but may be more hazardous long term. And so, for instance, if you're the chief executive officer of General Motors back in the nineteen-seventies and a contract comes forward which has onerous legacy costs, why, you know that those costs are not going to be borne on your term, because it's going to be done for future retirees. And so you might agree to something that is harmful to the company long term but, by the way, beneficial short term, because who wants to take a strike, to prevent a provision that's going to hurt ten years or twenty years down the road?"

"This is particularly true, by the way, in politics," he went on, "where politicians regularly agree to huge contracts

with back-end-loaded benefits, and the day of reckoning finally comes, but they're long gone." He allowed a hint of sarcasm to creep into his voice. "While they were there, everything was great. But look at the contracts they entered into!"

I asked whether it was possible to run the vast, diffuse American government the way you would run a business. "The private sector is less forgiving," he said. "If you make serious mistakes in the private sector, you'll lose your job, or, if you're in a position of responsibility, you might lose other people's jobs. In politics, politicians make mistakes all the time and blame their opposition, or borrow more money, or raise taxes to pay for their mistake. In the business world, the ability to speak fast and convincingly is of very little value. I remember the first time I met Jack Welch. I expected him to be a super-salesman. Instead, he spoke quietly, somewhat haltingly, but brilliantly. Stuff matters a lot more than fluff in the private sector."

It was clear where Romney placed himself. "I can't imagine making politics my profession," he said. "I can't imagine having to think about winning elections through a lifetime, to be able to put food on the table and provide for my family." Because his profession was in the private sector, "I don't get wound up about winning an election. Instead, I think about what I want to do, hope-



fully communicate that as well as I can to people, and, if they vote for me, fine, and if they don't they don't. That's their right."

He recalled watching his father on Election Night in 1964, when George was running for reelection as governor of Michigan. Lyndon Johnson had won the Presidency by a landslide. "The numbers had come in, and in Michigan Johnson was way ahead of what our pollster, Walter DeVries, had esti-

mated. And Walter DeVries came in. Our family was in a hotel room. He said, 'George, you probably can't win. Most likely you've lost tonight.' And I, as a seventeen-year-old, was thinking about how embarrassing it would be to go to school and have your dad having lost as governor, and those kinds of personal things. My dad, I looked at him, he was not in the slightest affected." George Romney told his son, "I've put out what I think I can do, and if they want someone else that's their right." Mitt Romney said, "He was not defined, in his own mind, by winning elections. He was defined by the things he believed. And if people wished to follow his lead that was up to them."

Romney went on to talk about the social-welfare functions of government. "Government, by and large, is less efficient than churches and private institutions and family members. A family member can say to someone, 'I'm not going to give you another dollar until you clean up your act, son!' A government can't do that. A government has to say, 'If you qualify, you get it.' And, that being said, one has no choice but to have a safety net provided by government for housing needs, for food needs, for welfare to get people back on their feet. I recognize that, support that."

Between Presidential campaigns, Romney wrote a book, "No Apology," without a ghostwriter. It reveals a man doing a slow burn as he watches the man who won the election take office and make the wrong decision on every major issue. So I asked him what he would have done differently in January, 2009. "Let's start domestic," he said. "The President failed to focus on the economy. He delegated to Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid the stimulus. He did not personally guide the process with Republicans and Democrats, hearing the ideas of both, shaping a piece of legislation which he thought would be most effective. Instead, it was done by Congress. He instead devoted his time and his political capital to the Affordable Care Act, to cap and trade, to Dodd-Frank, and to other pieces of legislation that he thought were going to be historic in their scope.

"No. 2, related to foreign affairs. We had men and women in harm's

way, particularly in Afghanistan,” he said. “We knew that there was a decision point about Afghanistan that would be coming forward. We had tens of thousands of men and women in conflict, but he spent almost no time meeting with the commanders and leaders of our military to understand the needs in Afghanistan, to understand what level of a surge, to understand what level of troops might be appropriate for that kind of action. And so when the decision point came he had to delay. I think that was a mistake. He concluded to put in thirty thousand troops instead of the forty thousand that the military had requested. That was a mistake.” On foreign policy, where he has no direct experience and no long-standing team of helpers, Romney consistently shows a moralistic streak; his critique of President Obama is partly managerial, and partly based on the idea that Obama’s foreign policy is all about “apologizing for America.”

Regarding the nations of the Middle East, there needed to be a concerted effort to move them “toward a more representative form of government, particularly among our friends. And then when our enemies—when I say our enemies, I’m thinking of Iran, or Syria—we obviously would have very little influence of that nature with them, but when there were movements

that began to spring forward seeing greater representation in those countries, we should have been all over that, encouraging it, standing with them, shouting from the mountaintops. Instead, the President, wanting to engage with Iran, was silent when the dissidents took to the streets.” He went on, “It was as if the President was trying to show our foes in the world that we are not biased, we’ll work with anyone. In my view, the right course for a President is to show our friends that we are linked arm in arm with them, and to show those that oppose our interests that we are happy to talk with them, to engage in diplomacy with them, but we will not give an inch to their agenda.”

Romney also discussed Russia (whose support of Iran and Syria he strongly objects to) and China (which he feels is playing unfairly in trade with the United States). In both cases, he believes that by getting tougher he could get the other superpower to change. Then our conversation returned to businesses and countries that founder. “We’re all worried,” he said, “but the consequence of not recognizing problems when they’re small and dealing with them can be severe when the problems become large. And that’s frankly what’s happening with the country over all.” He went on, “The President said Medicare is going to be

bankrupt in eight to nine years. And we have to fix it or reform it. And he’s made no proposal whatsoever to do so. I don’t know how you can be President of the United States and not say, Well, here’s something that will make Medicare work permanently. Or here’s something that’ll fix Social Security permanently. And here’s what we need to do to make our tax system fair, equitable, and one that encourages growth. And, by the way, trillion-dollar deficits? For four years?” Romney described this as “a very dangerous course, because, as you know, at some point the people who loan us all this money, if they get nervous that they’re going to get repaid in dollars that might not be worth too much, they are going to ask for higher interest rates, and if that happens our budget is going to get overwhelmed by high interest costs. And it can kill our economy. And, by the way, kill jobs. We see what’s happening in Europe.”

Our time was up. We stood and shook hands. “I enjoy speaking about substance, as opposed to just the political process,” Romney said.

IV. THE RESCUER

Throughout his years at Boston Consulting Group, Bain & Company, and Bain Capital, Romney was an active Latter-Day Saint. The Mormon Church does not have a professional clergy, so its members perform the clergy’s functions themselves, and they also tithe. The late-adolescent mission is, in a sense, meant to get Mormons accustomed to devoting a great deal of time to the Church. In Massachusetts, Romney became a bishop and then “stake president.” He played a role in building a temple in Belmont. There are many stories of his pastoral activities: the time he rushed over to Doug Anderson’s home to help after a fire, the time he deployed a group of Bain Capital employees to go to New York to find Bob Gay’s missing teen-age daughter, the time he straightened out a wayward son of Kim Clark’s. If elected, Romney would arguably be the most actively religious President in American history.

Clayton Christensen told me about his days as a struggling young consul-



“Just sitting here widening. You?”

tant. He is from a modest background in Utah, and had married and started a family while still a student, so when he bought his first house, in Belmont, he and his wife had to fix it up themselves, a process that took twelve years. One night, exhausted, he was on his hands and knees on the living-room floor applying polyurethane. There was a knock on the door; it was Mitt Romney, who explained that he had driven by just to check up earlier in the evening, and had seen Christensen through the living-room window. "There's a better way to do it, Clay," Romney said. "Here, let me show you." He produced a tool that he had devised at home.

As he was telling me this story, Christensen (who once or twice had to wipe tears from his eyes when he was speaking about Romney's church activities) got out a sheet of paper and drew a diagram of Romney's solution. Romney had laid three four-inch paint brushes side by side, then fixed them to each other with duct tape, then attached the brushes to a pole—"so rather than being on my hands and knees, I was standing up, and applying the polyurethane with a wide brush. I was done in half an hour."

Romney's career in the years since Bain Capital has repeatedly followed the narrative of the rescuer, the person who combines moral passion and practical skill to fix seemingly insoluble situations. He referred to the first of these in our interview, the rescue of Bain & Company, saying that he had applied three simple rules: "Focus, focus, and focus." According to colleagues of Romney's, Bill Bain and his group of founders had created a financial structure that enabled them to take out bank loans on behalf of the firm in order to pay themselves the big lump sums that they felt they deserved but that the consulting business doesn't ordinarily produce. Then the business took a dip, and the company began missing its payments on the loans.

In 1990, Romney returned from Bain Capital to save Bain & Company. He worked long hours, studying the data and talking to all the parties. Within a couple of weeks, colleagues say, he was able to persuade Bain and



"Brad's a Peloponnesian War reëactor."

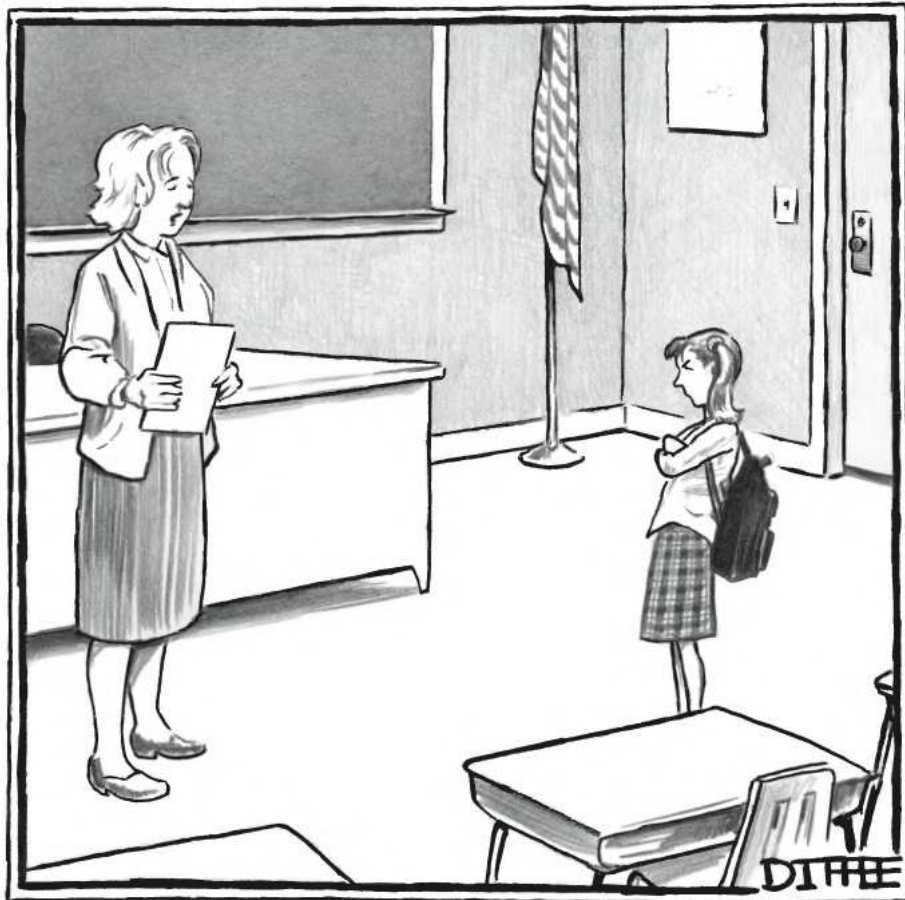
the other founders to give up most of their overly generous payments, and to get the banks to forgive a portion of the loans. That removed enough immediate financial pressure to re-start the firm.

When Romney ran for office for the first time, against Kennedy, in 1994, he felt called to clean up a moral cesspool. The Romneys were disgusted by the stories they were seeing on television about Kennedy's carousing, especially during testimony at the Florida rape trial of Kennedy's nephew William Kennedy Smith. There seems to be a connection in Romney's mind between lack of personal discipline and, in government, a free-spending, fiscally irresponsible liberalism. As Clayton Christensen put it, "People who run against him are liberal in the sense that they vote for legislation that takes money out of one person's pocket and puts it in another person's pocket, and say they're compassionate. They don't get it. They don't have any idea of what life is like at the bottom of the pyra-

mid"—but Mormons, who work hands-on in an elaborate church welfare system, do. If Romney had won the Senate race, he would have instantly become a plausible Presidential candidate, especially since Massachusetts borders the key Presidential primary state, New Hampshire.

Romney's taking over of the 2002 Winter Olympics, in Salt Lake City, followed the same rescue narrative. Salt Lake City had been an unsuccessful bidder for the Winter Olympics three times. Not long after it finally succeeded in its bid, there were reports that members of the Salt Lake City Olympic Committee had given bribes to the International Olympic Committee. The mayor of Salt Lake City resigned and the lead Olympic organizers were indicted.

In Romney's version of the story, he selflessly answers a call to service, and moves to Utah to save the Olympics. Actually, he competed for the job (which another prominent Mormon scion turned politician, Jon Huntsman,



"I'm sorry, Paige, but grades are based on the quality of the writing, not on your Klout score."

also wanted), and he seems to have understood that it had the potential to launch him into public life. In Salt Lake City, he recruited one of the founding crew at Bain Capital, Fraser Bullock, to serve as his chief aide in running the Olympics. But, before he completed his assignment in Utah, he had an even closer Bain associate, Bob White, who was back in Boston, preparing for a race for governor in Massachusetts. The situation in Salt Lake City was not quite so dire as Romney has made it sound: the indicted officials were eventually acquitted, and there was always government funding for the Games. Still, by all accounts he did an excellent job.

Massachusetts, to Romney's way of thinking, also needed to be rescued. The state budget was in deficit, and the heavily Democratic state legislature didn't have the discipline to fix the problem. The sitting Republican governor, Jane Swift, came to understand

that she had to step aside so that Romney could run. The 2002 campaign had a much stronger flavor of the Bain Capital approach to life than the 1994 Senate campaign had, and this carried over into governing. "Mitt Romney believes in his competence as a manager," Rob Gray, one of the people Romney hired to run his gubernatorial campaign, told me. "If he's elected, he'll do an adequate job of dealing with the issues of the day. He's not a vision guy. He's not policy-driven. He thinks he'll do a good job." Ben Coes, the campaign manager, who is in private equity, told me that he got the job because he had gone to Romney's house and given a dazzling PowerPoint presentation. Then he implemented an elaborate system that used databases and poll results to divide the state into eleven cultural groups, identify the six most likely to vote for Romney, and find volunteers to establish personal contact with each identifiable member

of those groups. These techniques, along with the money that Romney was able to spend, helped him win.

In office, Romney was heavily involved both in management—he brought in another of the Bain Capital founders, Eric Kriss, as the state's top administrator—and in the drama of reestablishing morality in government. He pushed out the state's head of patronage, the president of the state university, and the head of the Big Dig highway-construction project. He improved the state's finances and passed health-care reform. Romney was harder-working and far more cautious as a policymaker than William Weld, the previous Presidentially ambitious Republican governor. He saw his major initiatives as exercises in problem-solving, not as expressions of lifelong convictions. Or one could say that the process itself—identify the problem, analyze the data, kick around solutions until the best one emerges, lead—is his conviction, not the principle involved. He took on health-care reform because rising medical costs were putting stress on the state budget. He endorsed an individual mandate to carry health insurance, which was a favored conservative idea at the time, and opposed a similar mandate for businesses, but when the state legislature made it clear that both mandates were going to have to be in any bill that passed Romney accepted that and signed with a smile on his face. Problem solved.

He was always thinking ahead. Within just a few years of taking office, he was laying the groundwork for a Presidential campaign. After the 2008 campaign failed, the Romneys moved to San Diego, where their sons live. And he was soon at work on his book, "No Apology," setting out his Presidential vision for 2012.

This spring, after Rick Santorum dropped out of the race for the Republican Presidential nomination, Romney called Michael Leavitt, who, as governor of Utah, had supported the idea of bringing him in to run the Olympics and, as Secretary of Health and Human Services, had signed the waiver of federal rules he needed to launch the Massachusetts health-care plan. (Leavitt says that Romney was the only governor he dealt with who always

came with a PowerPoint presentation, which he would deliver personally.) Romney asked Leavitt to set up a Presidential-transition office in Washington. He called it the Readiness Project.

One day during the summer, I dropped by the Readiness Project office to talk to Leavitt. It is on the ninth floor of a brand-new, grade-A office building near Union Station and the Capitol. There was no sign on the door or listing in the building directory. The office was neat and hyper-organized, with no piece of paper visible on any desk. There were conference rooms with screens and whiteboards (all blank). On the walls were poster-size color photographs of the Grand Canyon, the Alamo, and the Golden Gate Bridge. At the exact time my meeting was supposed to begin, the receptionist came over and said that she was very sorry, but Governor Leavitt was running late. About two minutes afterward, he came in from the elevator lobby, and asked what conference room we had been assigned to. It was the Constitution Room; the receptionist walked us down a hallway and keyed in a security code that unlocked the door, and we sat down.

Like everyone I met who's close to Romney, Leavitt was clean-cut, friendly, and straightforward. He had a firm handshake and he looked me in the eye. Our conversation had a combination, which I had become accustomed to, of directness and opacity. He told me that when Romney called to offer him the job "he said that the point is not just to get the nomination, and not just to win, but to be prepared. So I want you to start thinking about this." What would Romney do as President? "I believe Mitt truly believes the pattern he has followed in other turnarounds will provide benefit to the country," Leavitt said. "Job one, it's a disheartened country. Give people confidence again. Two, bring things into balance. Give the speech about sizing our response to our resources. Three, build a team that can execute the plan. He believes that formula is a sound one."

Romney is a creature of two realms that he evidently believes American society doesn't understand, and that have been the frequent object of hostility: his church, and the corner of busi-

ness where he has spent his career. He combines an utter confidence in his ability to fix anything with an utter lack of confidence in his ability to explain to people what he intends to do, which is why he appears so stiff and so unspecific in talking about his prospective Presidency. Even Romney's friends and business associates find him guarded. He doesn't give anybody, except his immediate family, access to his emotional life. He has the caution of a crown prince who has always been intensely aware of the demands imposed by his destiny.

This election is activating large parts of the American psyche. After the 2008 financial crisis and the long, painful recession, people's desire for a big fix, a new social compact, is palpable. The main project of the business careers of Romney and the other transaction men—to make American business competitive in the global economy—may have succeeded on its own terms, but most Americans haven't shared in the benefits. Even Michael Jensen, the chief theorist of private equity, expressed some doubts to me about how the transaction economy has played out. Private-equity firms can be more attentive to their fees than to the value of the company, he said, and too inattentive to the overarching purpose of financial engineering. "Value, in the way I've defined it, is the score that shows up on the scoreboard," he said. "It's not the objective. It's not the strategy. Your life can't be just about you, or your life will be shit. You see that on Wall Street."

If Romney loses this election, he will be, to some extent, a victim of the widespread resentment of the new economy, and of the Obama campaign's skill at directing that resentment toward him. But the story won't have ended. It's not clear what will reverse the rise in economic inequality and uncertainty. Government is unpopular, and the Democratic Party has its own ties to big money. The larger forces of global capitalism will continue to unfold. Perhaps a future Republican candidate can persuade the country to see the

world as he sees it. Romney, it seems, can't do that.

Clayton Christensen told me that when Romney was made a bishop, in the early eighties, Christensen took him aside for a little talk about how he needed to open up more. "He never at church was able, in front of the whole congregation, to talk about himself," Christensen said. "You have to push a neuron across the synapse. If you've never landed a neuron across that path . . . It's as if Mitt has never had the thought of talking about himself."

Christensen decided to offer Romney a Biblical parable: the story of Moses, which, as he recounted the conversation to me, he delivered to Romney with a distinct M.B.A. flavor.

"God spoke to the guy: 'I want you to lead Israel out of Egypt.' He tried over and over. Nothing worked. Finally, it worked. The Red Sea parted. Up to that point, you would have had a Plan B and a Plan C. Here there was no backup plan, ladies and gentlemen. Sure enough, God parted the Red Sea.

"So then, on the other side, Moses had no experience in management. His father-in-law shows up, and says, 'Moses, you're a horrible manager. Ever heard the word "delegation"? Can you do this, Moses?' And Moses had never been responsible for the supply chain in any industry, but now we have run out of water. So he banged the rock and out

comes water. Then he goes to Mt. Sinai. He gets the instructions, he sees what the people are doing, and he's so mad. They can't handle anything beyond the elevator pitch for God. So then Moses told everything about himself. Mitt, look at the impact his open-

ness had on Israel! Most of the other prophets, you had no idea what their life was like. All the other prophets aren't in the psyche of Israel. Why?"

I asked Christensen if the talk worked. He shrugged. "It had no effect whatsoever. The neuron can't get across that synapse." ♦



MUGGLEMARCH

J. K. Rowling writes a realist novel for adults.

BY IAN PARKER

The conifer hedges in front of J. K. Rowling's seventeenth-century house, in Edinburgh, are about twenty feet tall. They reach higher than the street lamps in front of them, and evoke the entrance to the spiteful maze in the film adaptation of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," the fourth volume of her fantasy series. Rowling, who, at forty-seven, is about to publish her first novel for adults—it is set in a contemporary Britain familiar with Jay-Z and online pornography, but is shaded with memories of her own, quite cheerless upbringing—lives here with her second husband, Neil Murray, a doctor, and their children. She has a reputation for reserve: for being likable but shy and thin-skinned, and not at all comfortable with the personal impact of having created a modern myth, sold four hundred and fifty million books, and inspired more than six hundred thousand pieces of Harry Potter fan fiction, a total that increases by at least a thousand stories a week. Ian Rankin, the writer of Edinburgh-based crime novels, became friendly with Joanne Rowling when they were neighbors in another part of the city; he recently described her as "quite quiet, quite introspective." He recalled urging Rowling to join him for an onstage interview at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, a few years ago. After Rowling watched Rankin being interviewed at a similar event, she told him, "I don't think I can do that." Rankin said, "I think she feels uncomfortable in a room full of adults. I've seen her in a room of kids, and she's in her element." Rankin noted that Rowling, in her writing, retains "the power of life and death over these characters." She is wary "of situations you can't always control—in the real world."

In the spring, nearly five years after the appearance of the seventh, and final, Harry Potter novel, Little, Brown, Rowling's publisher, announced "The Casual

Vacancy," and offered a glimpse of the plot: an idyllic English town named Pagford; the death of a man named Barry, a parish-council election. In response, a British publisher announced "The Vacant Casualty," billed as a parody, if one can parody something whose contents are unknown. Commenters on the *Guardian's* Web site guessed at Rowling's likely models, with reference to Robertson Davies and "Desperate Housewives." One reader, playing on Rowling's word for non-wizard society, suggested an alternate title: "Mugglemarch." And the hosts of Pottercast, a popular American fan podcast, picked over the press release, registering both delight at fresh data—Rowling has written ten tweets in three years—and a hint of worry that an extraordinary global bond between an author and her readers, and between two generations, was about to be severed. They were opening an invitation to a party where they might not be quite welcome. During the podcast, they looked up "parish council" on Wikipedia, and established that the term refers to the lowest rung of English local government. One of the hosts, Melissa Anelli—a thirty-two-year-old who runs a Potter Web site, stages an annual Potter convention, and has published a sharp-witted book about Potter enthusiasts—pondered the title, asking, "What's casual, ever, about a vacancy?" She and her co-hosts wondered whether they'd go to a midnight party to celebrate the book's launch, as many fans had for the later Potter novels.

In Britain, Ian Rankin typically publishes a new novel in October, and it tends to go to the top of the best-seller list. He said that, this year, his publisher moved the date to November, fearing that the late-September launch of "The Casual Vacancy" will, for weeks, render all other fiction invisible to readers and to the media. Rankin was taken aback but glad for the extra writing time. He won-

dered if "The Casual Vacancy" might have a whodunnit air; Rowling has talked to him of her admiration for British crime writing of the nineteen-twenties and thirties. "She loves Margery Allingham and Dorothy L. Sayers," he said, adding that the Pagford setting had relieved him of his greatest fear: that Rowling had been working on a crime novel set in Edinburgh. He said, "I hope she'll create an English village that she will know intimately—and it will be real to us."

"I have drawn a map of Pagford," Rowling told me when we met, in late August. "It's one of the first things I did." We were not speaking in her Edinburgh house, or at her country place—which stands in grassland, overlooking a fast-running river in a valley north of the city—or in her home in an expensive part of west London. We were at her office, which occupies an unmarked Georgian building on a handsome street in central Edinburgh, not too far from a café that, in mockery of competitors, has hung a sign that reads "J. K. ROWLING NEVER WROTE HERE." The office has high ceilings, Turkish rugs over wooden floors, figurative oil paintings by modern Scottish artists, and the air of a small but very well-funded embassy. According to the London *Sunday Times*, Rowling is worth nine hundred million dollars.

An assistant had shown me to a front room on the parlor floor. Rowling was sitting at the head of a polished table, with a cup of black coffee and a newspaper; as I entered, she took off large black-framed glasses. She was slight, with her blond hair pulled back, and her V-necked sweater was pushed up at the sleeves to show freckled arms. She appeared to be wearing false eyelashes and rather heavy foundation. We talked at that table, and—after a brief, rainy walk—in the lounge of a nearby hotel. There was a

Rowling says, "There is no part of me that feels that I represented myself as your children's babysitter or their teacher."





stiffness to the transaction, but she was not unfriendly; she laughed now and then, and was clearly pleased to be able to talk about her book. It had been fourteen years, she calculated, since she'd been interviewed by someone who'd read the imminent novel. Once the Potter series had taken off, her representatives kept unflinching watch over Rowling's words, in order to enhance the drama of synchronized international releases, and to help suppress piracy. (It was in this context that, in 2005, a British security guard who had stolen two copies of "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" from a book-distribution center fired a gun during negotiations to sell a copy to a reporter from the *Sum*.)

Her writing life was oddly self-contained, even if, by the end of the Potter series, she was receiving between one and two thousand pieces of mail a week. Rowling does not widely distribute her unpublished manuscripts, and her publishers seem to have processed them with little intervention. (Neil Blair, her agent, told me, "She takes a lot of time getting it right and then hands in a book that doesn't need much editing.") A few years ago, in a conversation with Melissa Anelli, the podcast host, Rowling criticized herself for not quite finishing "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix." "I didn't do the final edit that I nor-

mally do before I hand it to the editors, and it definitely shows," she said, sounding almost like a self-published author. In 2007, more than twenty-five million copies of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" were printed, in the first edition, and Rowling estimated that only seven people in the world, including her British agent and her editors in New York and London, had read the novel before stores began selling it.

I asked her if publishing the new book made her feel exposed. "I thought I'd feel frightened at this point," she said. "Not just because it's been five years, and anything I wrote after Potter—*anything*—was going to receive a certain degree of attention that is not entirely welcome, if I'm honest. It's not the place I'm happiest or most comfortable, shall we say. So, for the first few years of writing 'The Casual Vacancy,' I kept saying to myself, 'You're very lucky. You can pay your bills, you don't have to publish it.' And that was a very freeing thought, even though I knew bloody well, in my heart of hearts, that I was going to publish it. I knew that a writer generally writes to be read, unless you're Salinger." After all the fretting—"Christ, you're going to have to go out there again"—she discovered that she was calm. "I think I've spent so long with the book—it is what I want it to be," she said. "You think, Well, I did the best I could

where I was with what I had." She laughed. "Which is a terrible paraphrase of a Theodore Roosevelt quote."

In the decade or so after A. A. Milne published the "Winnie-the-Pooh" books, in the nineteen-twenties, he wrote several plays and novels for adults, as well as an autobiography in which he expanded on a thought expressed by a character in an Arnold Bennett play: that the artist who has early success with a painting of a policeman is expected to paint policemen forever. Milne wrote, "If you stop painting policemen in order to paint windmills, criticism remains so overpoweringly policeman-conscious that even a windmill is seen as something with arms out, obviously directing the traffic." He added, "As a discerning critic pointed out: the hero of my latest play, God help it, was 'just Christopher Robin grown up.' So that even when I stop writing about children, I still insist on writing about people who were children once."

I read "The Casual Vacancy," which is five hundred and twelve pages long, in the New York offices of Little, Brown, after signing a non-disclosure agreement whose first draft—later revised—had prohibited me from taking notes. (With this book, Rowling was hoping for a "more run-of-the-mill publishing experience," but that hope goes only so far.) Within a few pages, it was clear that the novel had not been written for children: "The leathery skin of her upper cleavage radiated little cracks that no longer vanished when decompressed." A little later, a lustful boy sits on a school bus "with an ache in his heart and in his balls." But reviewers looking for echoes of the Harry Potter series will find them. "The Casual Vacancy" describes young people coming of age in a place divided by warring factions, and the deceased council member, Barry Fairbrother—who dies in the first chapter but remains the story's moral center—had the same virtues, in his world, that Harry had in his: tolerance, constancy, a willingness to act.

"I think there *is* a through-line," Rowling said. "Mortality, morality, the two things that I obsess about." "The Casual Vacancy" is not a whodunnit but, rather, a rural comedy of manners that, having taken on state-of-the-nation social themes, builds into black melodrama. Its attention rotates among several Pagford households, in the Southwest of En-

gland: a gourmet-grocery owner and his wife; two doctors; a nurse married to a printer; a social worker. Most of the families include troubled teens.

Barry's civic influence is revealed by his departure, rather as George Bailey's is in "It's a Wonderful Life." The story is driven by the long-standing frustration that some of Barry's disagreeable and right-wing neighbors have about the town's administrative connection to the Fields, an area of public housing and poverty on the edge of a larger, nearby town. Historically, children from the Fields have had the right to attend primary school in Pagford, a place of flower baskets and other middle-class comforts, and the town has also supported a drug-treatment clinic that serves the neighborhood. In the absence of Barry's righteous influence, the anti-Fields faction sees an opportunity to rid Pagford of this burden. This is a story of class warfare set amid semi-rural poverty, heroin addiction, and teen-age perplexity and sexuality. It may be a while before we're accustomed to reading phrases like "that miraculously unguarded vagina" in a Rowling book, and public response to "The Casual Vacancy" will doubtless include scandalized objections to the idea of young Harry Potter readers being drawn into such material. "There is no part of me that feels that I represented myself as your children's babysitter or their teacher," Rowling said. "I was always, I think, completely honest. I'm a writer, and I will write what I want to write."

She was ready for a change of genre. "I had a lot of real-world material in me, believe you me," Rowling said. "The thing about fantasy—there are certain things you just don't do in fantasy. You don't have sex near unicorns. It's an ironclad rule. It's tacky." She then added, carefully, "It's not that I just wanted to write about people having sex." Rather, she began with the idea of writing about a local election, which gave her a "rush of adrenaline." The Harry Potter series had an alluring creation story, known to all fans: in 1990, on a delayed train between Manchester and London, Rowling was overwhelmed by the thought of a boy who learns, at the age of eleven, that he is a wizard. The idea for "The Casual Vacancy" also came to Rowling while she was travelling, but this time she was on a private plane, touring America to promote "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows."

"It's been billed, slightly, as a black comedy, but to me it's more of a comic tragedy," she said. If the novel had precedents, "it would be sort of nineteenth-century: the anatomy and the analysis of a very small and closed society." A local election was "a perfect way in," she said. "It's the smallest possible building block of democracy—this tiny atom on which everything rests." One could say that national politics does not rest upon local politics, and that no modern British town is a closed society; some of Rowling's characters may seem eccentric for the earnestness with which they regard a local election. She acknowledged that the scale of parish-council decision-making is "easy to laugh at" but said that "part of the point is that those decisions that are being made do dramatically affect people's lives, up to life and death sometimes."

She said, "In my head, the working title for a long time was 'Responsible,' because for me this is a book about responsibility. In the minor sense—how responsible we are for our own personal happiness, and where we find ourselves in life—but in the macro sense also, of course: how responsible we are for the poor, the disadvantaged, other people's misery." Two years in, she picked up the

standard British handbook for local administrators. "I needed it to check certain abstruse points. And in there I came across the phrase 'a casual vacancy.' Meaning, when a seat falls vacant through death or scandal. And immediately I knew that that was the title. . . . I was dealing not only with responsibility but with a bunch of characters who all have these little vacancies in their lives, these emptinesses in their lives, that they're all filling in various ways."

She added, with some passion, "And it's death! The casual vacancy, the casualness with which death comes down. You expect a fanfare, you expect some sort of pathos or grandeur to it. And, you know, the first big death I ever suffered was my mother's, and it was *that* that was so shocking: just gone."

Rowling is not a recluse: she read at the opening ceremony of the London Olympics; she was Harvard's commencement speaker in 2008; she appeared in a television documentary about her family tree. But she is not a part of everyday British cultural life. ("I'm not a natural joiner," she told me.) Her non-fiction canon adds up to just a few thousand words, and includes a single book



"O.K., maybe that was inelegantly stated."

review—she praised the letters of Jessica Mitford, the British writer and left-wing activist, for whom Rowling's older daughter is named—and a short essay in a collection of speeches by Gordon Brown, the former Labour Prime Minister, whom she admires, and whose wife, Sarah Brown, is a friend. She has given limited access to her personal history, and in interviews has tended to strike the same few notes: a friend in her teen-age years who freed the two of them by having access to a Ford Anglia, the same car driven by Ron Weasley, Harry Potter's friend; the train ride that delivered Harry to her; a difficult period, in the nineties, as a single mother. Last year, Lifetime constructed a biopic out of these fragments, filling the gaps with surreally misjudged approximations of a middle-class West Country childhood in the sixties and seventies: in the film, Rowling's secondary school has exposed timber beams, and people say "I love you" at the end of phone calls.

Rowling's father was an engineer at the Rolls-Royce aircraft-engine plant in Bristol, and Rowling and her younger sister, Dianne, spent their earliest years in villages just outside that city, which is two hours west of London. When Joanne was nine, the family moved a little farther west, to the edge of the Forest of Dean, a more rural and less prosperous district. Neither of Rowling's parents went to college, but her mother's family was solidly middle class and educated; Joanne's great-aunt Ivy was a classics teacher, and she introduced Joanne to Mitford's writing. The Rowlings now lived in a handsome Gothic Revival cottage, by a church, in the village of Tutshill. "My voice wasn't Forest of Dean, although it became Forest of Dean, believe you me, pretty damn quickly," Rowling said. Her accent is still subtly flexible, and at one point in our conversation she exclaimed like a Scot: "Och!" She said that, after the family's twenty-mile move, "I always felt an outsider." There's a resentfully uprooted teen-age Londoner in "The Casual Vacancy," and Rowling volunteered that this is a partial self-portrait.

Unlike other members of her family, Rowling regularly attended services in the church next door. At eleven, she enrolled at Wydean, a new secondary school. Her mother—a woman of French and Scottish heritage with a smile that was slightly skewed, like her daughter's—later worked in the school, as a technician in the science

department. Steve Eddy, who taught Rowling English when she first arrived, and has since become a writer with an interest in mythology and astrology, remembers Joanne as "not exceptional" but "one of a group of girls who were bright, and quite good at English." Referring to Harry Potter's bookish friend, he said, "I suppose you could say she was a bit Hermione-like. I'd ask a question, and some hands would shoot up, and she was definitely one of the group." He recalled that the class read Stan Barstow's "Joby"—a realist story about a working-class Northern boy—as well as "The Weirdestone of Brisinghamen," by Alan Garner (a wizard, dwarfs, witches), and "A Wizard of Earthsea," by Ursula K. Le Guin, whose hero attends a school for wizards. Eddy said that Rowling, when writing stories, was much more likely than other students to produce fantasy. At the time, she had little taste for realism.

Several of the key characters in "The Casual Vacancy" are in their mid-teens, and the novel seems most comfortable when it's with them. This is partly a question of grouping and movement; these are the novel's tracking shots, when it can follow children on bus rides, on bicycles, and along school corridors; their parents, understandably, are less dynamic. But Rowling also seems profoundly connected to her own teen-age self. ("What does that say about my arrested development, I wonder?" she asked.) One well-observed and recurring motif is the teen-



age instinct to adopt, and find comfort in, the families of others—just as Harry Potter adopted the Weasleys. Rowling referred to Jessica, her daughter from her first marriage, who is now a college student but who, until recently, was in a group of friends who moved "from house to house, all of them being charming to everyone else's parents."

Rowling said that she "hated" being a teen-ager, but then criticized herself for exaggeration, and started again: "I wasn't

particularly happy. I think it's a dreadful time of life." She added, "I came from a difficult family. My mother was very ill, and it wasn't the easiest." In 1980, when Rowling was fifteen, her mother was given a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. She died a decade later, at forty-five. Rowling has occasionally talked publicly about her grief, and her regret that her mother never knew of her writing career. (Among other philanthropic activities, Rowling founded the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic, at the University of Edinburgh, with a gift of sixteen million dollars.) When Rowling filmed a touching episode of "Who Do You Think You Are?," the genealogical TV series, the research was all on the maternal line, with particular attention to her French great-grandfather, Louis Volant. The program showed Rowling's distress at learning that he had not been awarded a Légion d'Honneur, as family lore had it; she had repeated the claim in a 2009 speech, upon receiving her own Légion d'Honneur. And it revealed her pride on discovering that Volant had been awarded a Croix de Guerre, for bravery, in the First World War. "My children have very little sense of my side of the family," Rowling told me. "I married someone who's got a vast Scottish family—a clan, really—which is fabulous, and I love it, and I love them, but I wanted to have something I could show my children and say, 'Look, I also have a family, I also have a background.' Because there are very few people alive on my mother's side of the family. I have a sister, that's clearly very important, but above us nearly everyone's gone."

That show didn't mention Rowling's father, Peter. One of the more interesting characters in "The Casual Vacancy" is Andrew, a restless teen-ager with an abusive, belittling father. "Andrew's romantic idea that he'll go and live among the graffiti and broken windows of London—that was me," Rowling said. "I thought, I have to get away from this place. So all of my energies went into that." She has previously said that her father frightened her. When I asked her about him, Rowling said, "I did not have an easy relationship with my father, but no one in 'The Casual Vacancy' is a portrait of any living person." I asked if she was writing from experience when Andrew, having done harm to his father, then seeks to make peace with him.

THE SHORT ANSWER

I am forced to sleepwalk much of the time.
We hold on to these old ways, are troubled
sometimes and then the geyser goes away,
time gutted. In and of itself there is
no great roar, force pitted against force that
makes up in time what it loses in speed.
The waterfalls, the canyon, a royal I-told-you-so
comes back to greet us at the beginning.
How was your trip? Oh I didn't last
you see, folded over like the margin
of a dream of the thing-in-itself. Well, and
what have we come to? A paper-thin past,
just so, and more's the pity. We regurgitate
old anthems and what has come to pass, and why
dwell on these. Why make things more difficult
than they already are? Because if it's boring
in a different way, that'll be interesting too.
That's what I say.

That rascal jumped over the fence.
I'm wiping my pince-nez now. Did you ever hear from
the one who said he'd be back once it was over,
who eluded me even in my sleep? That was a particularly
promising time, we thought. Now the sun's out
and it's raining again. Just like a day from
the compendium. I'll vouch for you,
and we can go on scrolling as though nothing had risen,
the horizon forest looks back at us. The preacher
shook his head, the evangelist balanced two spools
at the end of his little makeshift rope. We'd gone too far.
We'd have to come back in a day or so.

—John Ashbery

"To a degree," she said. "If you've ever been there, if you've ever been in a difficult and complex family situation, you will understand. I suppose, to an extent, it's like Stockholm syndrome, isn't it? You have to make friends with the warders—this is a matter of survival. And Andrew, having dealt his father this body blow, then turns around and feels it's time to make an alliance. I think that's psychologically accurate. Some won't."

Her father remarried two years after Anne Rowling's death. He attended Joanne's wedding to Neil Murray, in 2001, in Scotland, but they stopped speaking about two years later. "We've not had any communication for about nine years," Rowling told me. She said that the break had already happened when, in December, 2003, Peter Rowling

offered his Harry Potter first editions for sale, at Sotheby's; some of them did not sell, but others did, including a copy of "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire," given to him on Father's Day, 2000, and signed, "Lots of love from your first born," with a drawing of a hand reaching for a running gnome. It went for forty-eight thousand dollars.

Despite Rowling's difficult home life, she did well at Wyedean, where only a minority of students went on to college. But she downplayed the achievement of having been head girl, an appointment by school authorities. It meant, she said, "We have caught you *once* smoking at a bus shelter, and we think you *probably* won't go to Borstal"—juvenile detention. (Steve Eddy, the teacher, doesn't recall the school being so rough.) In 1982, she

took the entrance exams for Oxford but was not accepted, and instead studied French at Exeter, a university with a reputation for being "frantically posh," as Rowling put it. She was suddenly among privately educated girls, in pearls and turned-up shirt collars. Paraphrasing Fitzgerald, she said that she reacted to Exeter "not with the rage of the revolutionary but the smoldering hatred of the peasant." (There's some of this spirit in Rowling's acidic portrait of the haughty youth of Slytherin House, at Hogwarts, Harry Potter's school.) Martin Sorrell, then a professor of French at the university, recalled a quietly competent student, with a denim jacket and dark hair, who, in academic terms, "gave the appearance of doing what was necessary." Her own memory is that she did "no work whatsoever." She wore heavy eyeliner, listened to the Smiths, and read Dickens and Tolkien. In retrospect, she thinks it was fortunate that she didn't get into Oxford: "I was intimidated enough by Exeter. Imagine—I would have fallen apart at Oxford, I never would have opened my mouth." Or might she have become academically inspired? "Well, that would have been *nice*," she replied, and laughed. "This isn't therapy! I don't want to be talked into eternal regret."

After graduating, in 1986, she worked for a while at Amnesty International, in London, on the research desk for Francophone Africa. In 1990, she had her Harry Potter inspiration, and began developing a detailed plan for a seven-book series. She also worked on an adult novel that she never finished. That year, her mother died. In 1991, she took a job as an English teacher in Portugal. "It was total fight or flight," she said. "I'd had a terrible time. Several things happened at once. My mother died, which was obviously the huge one. A long relationship I'd been in ended—and a couple of other things," including being made redundant from an office job in Manchester. In Porto, she met and married Jorge Arantes, a journalist. She taught at night, and during the day she wrote and listened to Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto. Jessica was born in the summer of 1993, and the relationship with Arantes ended soon afterward. He was once quoted in the *Daily Express* describing their last night; he said that he had dragged her out of their home at

five in the morning and slapped her hard.

Rowling warned me not to think of the Portugal period, and her first marriage, as a cautious person's regretted experiment in impetuosity—an E. M. Forster swoon in southern Europe. "I'll agree with you that going somewhere hot when you're British always seems like a good idea," she said. But "that certainly wasn't the first impetuous thing I've done. . . . I had leanings that way for a long time. It wasn't that Hermione suddenly broke out."

At the end of 1993, she returned to Britain with Jessica, and spent Christmas in Edinburgh with her sister, who was working there as a nurse. Rowling, who no longer owned a winter coat, had three chapters of "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" in her suitcase.

We sat in the hotel lounge, in low red chairs. In a neighborhood full of coffee shops, she had brought me to an empty room. She recalled her arrival in Edinburgh. "I was very depressed," she said. "I felt life was a train wreck. I'd carried this baby out of it, and I was in this place that was very alien and cold, and quite grim." She decided to stay, with the intention of becoming a schoolteacher; she would need to complete a one-year training course but chose to delay enrollment until she'd finished her book.

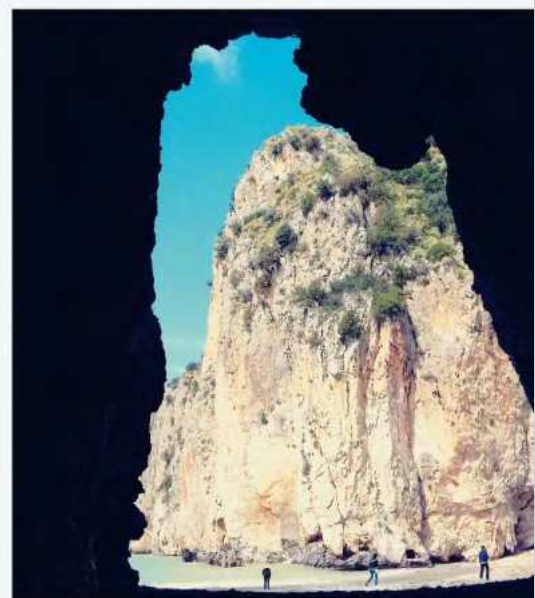
She signed up for welfare benefits, and found an unappealing apartment, where she lived for a few months. "I was trying to write through that time, and I did," she said. "But it was patchy and fitful and sometimes I just didn't have the focus to do it." (Rowling did write a long, illustrated astrological birth chart for the newborn son of a friend.) She said, "It was Jessica—I have to credit her with so much—that gave me the impetus to go and say to a doctor, 'I think I'm not quite right, and I need some help here.' Having done that made a massive difference." She began therapy, and "pressed on with the book, and things came together. In my head, at least. Externally, my life might not have looked a great deal better. My friend, I hope he wouldn't mind me saying, my friend Sean, my oldest friend, he lent me a deposit on a much better rented flat." (Sean Harris was the Wydean friend with access to the Ford Anglia.) "And, you know, things slowly turned round." She finished "Harry

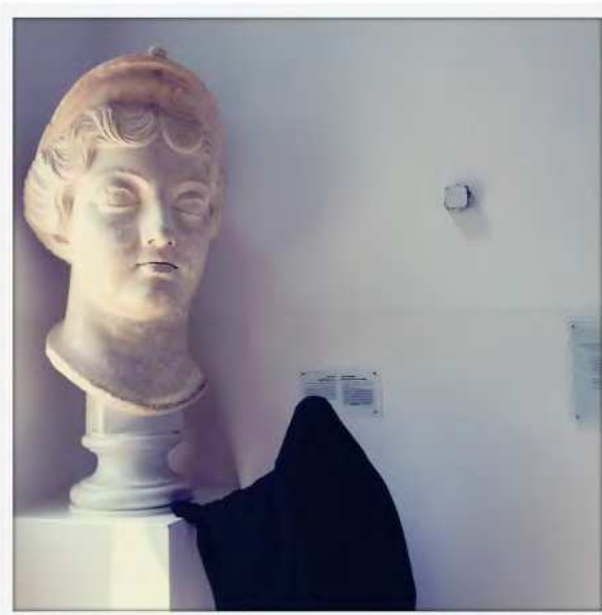
Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" in 1995, shortly before starting her teacher-training course. "Having that child forced me to finish the bloody book," she said. "Not because I thought it was going to save us but because I thought it was going to be my last chance to finish it."

In "The Casual Vacancy," Krystal Wheedon is a teen-ager from the Fields, the housing project near Pagford, and she is the effective head of a household that includes a younger brother and their mother, a heroin addict. Rowling's descriptions of the family are almost ostentatiously unremitting: drugs, prostitution, the stink of diapers. A visitor notices, in the front yard, "a used condom glistening in the grass beside her feet, like the gossamer cocoon of some huge grub." There's little sense that anyone ever made a life in the Fields, or cracked a joke, or hoped for anything but the salvation of Pagford and the middle class; Rowling's empathy can feel like condescension. But there's no doubt that she has an understanding of the extremes of British poverty, from sources that include her husband's experience as a general practitioner in an Edinburgh drug-addiction clinic. (He now practices elsewhere.)

Rowling has mocked journalists who, in her view, overdramatize her period of hardship—"I laughed myself stupid," she has said, after a reporter suggested she couldn't afford to buy writing paper—but she has contributed to this confusion. In 2008, while in a New York courtroom to oppose the publication of an unauthorized Harry Potter encyclopedia, she testified that there had been times when she was "literally choosing between food and a typewriter ribbon." She has described her first year or so in Edinburgh as a time of "abject poverty," or "grinding poverty." Such language seems to blur the distinction between her life and Krystal Wheedon's. When she spoke at Harvard, she declared that she had been as broke "as it is possible to be in modern Britain without being homeless."

This self-portrait—and talk about life on welfare as "the most soul-destroying thing"—may reflect honorable British embarrassment about the scale of her earnings over the past fifteen years. It balances a private ledger of good fortune and bad fortune. Her account of economic despair, and recovery, may also have a noble political purpose: Rowling has publicly defended Britain's welfare system against





PORTFOLIO BY
STEFANO DE LUIGI

In his new project, "iDyssey," De Luigi, a documentary photographer, has been retracing the Mediterranean voyage of Homer's Odysseus, using an iPhone and the app Hipstamatic to make a record of the journey. So far, he has visited Turkey, Greece, Tunisia, and Italy. "The epic has its roots in an oral tradition, transmitted by itinerant poets, singers, and storytellers," De Luigi writes. "In contemporary society, the digital revolution has drastically changed the transmission of knowledge and information. Everyone can now be a storyteller."

threatened cuts. And it's true to say that she was a broke single mother, in poor accommodations, at a time of high unemployment. One could understand if she did not want this period to be mistaken for slacker slumming—and her depression may have obscured any advantages she had over other jobless Britons. But those advantages are clear in retrospect: she was a middle-class graduate, poised to start a teaching career, who claimed modest state benefits while she finished a novel, which she partly wrote in an upscale café owned by her sister's husband. (Such state benefits—for housing and living costs—were then more easily accessible to young British graduates at the start of a professional career than they have ever been in the United States.) This is hard to classify as abject poverty. She has said, "I had to decide whether my baby would rather be handed over to somebody else for most of her waking hours, or be cared for by her mother in far from luxurious surroundings. I chose the latter option." As she told me, of her time after Portugal, "There wasn't really any drift. I came back with a plan, I definitely came back with a plan."

"Dear Mr. Little," Rowling wrote, in a 1995 letter. "I enclose a synopsis and sample chapters for a book intended for children aged 9–12. I would be very grateful if you could tell me if

you would be interested in seeing the full manuscript. Yours sincerely, Joanne Rowling."

Christopher Little, a fairly obscure London literary agent, took her on. A year later, he made a modest deal with Bloomsbury, a British publisher that was only a decade old. "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" appeared in 1997, with an initial print run of five hundred. It won Children's Book of the Year at the British Book Awards, and a gold award in the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize, which is voted for by children. The book also sold to Scholastic, in New York, for more than a hundred thousand dollars. Rowling bought an apartment. She published the second novel, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets," in 1998.

Maria Tatar, a Harvard scholar of children's literature, recently told me, "It took me years to like Harry Potter." She now includes the final Potter novel in an undergraduate course entitled "Fairy Tales and Fantasy Literature." When she first read the books, she recalled, she "could not remember anything." Then she listened to the audiobooks. "All of a sudden, I got it—I could remember it, and I could visualize it. So much of it is dialogue. It's not exploring minds. It's conversations and actions that drive these books." You're in the skin of a wizard—"You're moving along with Harry"—even if you have little access to his mind.

She added, "It's a strange combination of both superficial and deep. That's what people forget about children's literature. It is very surface-oriented, but the great writers, and I include Rowling in them, manage to get the depth in, too"—life and death, good and evil. "It's not a psychological depth but a mythological depth."

Tatar's students grew up with the books. "You can't imagine what happens when I just say 'Harry Potter,'" she said. "They're transported. And they start to speak Harry Potter among themselves, and I feel like an alien." Many of her students report that, as children, they learned about learning from the books' depiction of Hogwarts. "It reshaped their understanding of what education was about—and what adults were about. They could recruit these adults and have them help landscape their lives."

Rowling told me, "Very recently, I met a girl in a shop. She was in her early twenties, and she came up to me and said, 'May I hug you?' And I said yes, and we hugged. And she said, 'You were my childhood.' That's an amazing thing to hear."

Some people find this disheartening. In Edinburgh, I met Alan Taylor, a journalist and the editor of the *Scottish Review of Books*, who despaired of Rowling's "tin ear" and said of her readers, "They were giving their childhood to this woman! They were starting at seven, and by the time they were sixteen they were still reading bloody Harry Potter—sixteen-year-olds, wearing wizard outfits, who should have been shagging behind the bike shed and smoking marijuana and reading Camus."

The Harry Potter books are not rebellious. They validate the concerns of ordinary children: fascination with weird teachers, distress about bullies, desire for status objects. (Broomsticks stand in for the latest electronics.) And Harry, for all the Dickensian under-the-stairs trauma of his early years, starts the series as a winner; he's wealthy, athletically adept, and famous. Rowling's respect for a youthful world view never wavers, and her characters do not learn their way out of it. Her achievement is to transfer the everyday dramas of schoolchildren into an abundantly imagined parallel universe. Rowling describes at least four ways, including broomsticks, to move magically from place to place. She uses dozens of beasts from the mythological canon and establishes new myths with matter-of-fact ease.

NEW 'VORES

Shelfavore

Eats only what is already on the shelves of his or her house.



Guestavore

At a dinner party, will eat whatever is placed in front of him or her unless death is imminent.



Moodavore

Eats only what he or she is in the mood for.



R. Chas

(The idea of a Parselmouth—a person who can speak to snakes—seems ancient and fully formed.) She uses plot devices that could each fuel countless romantic comedies: a truth serum, transfiguration, time travel, invisibility, immortality, alchemy. Readers of the series lived with Harry, but also with Rowling, as the almost-visible engineer of a great fantasy machine that, in the course of seven volumes, runs with remarkable smoothness. Even young enthusiasts seemed to become textual critics of a sort—alert to the idea of an author, at a desk, making decisions about who should live and who should die.

“I do think that’s a lot of what children responded to—that sense that someone was in control,” Rowling said. “That they were walking into a place where they knew the rules, or there were rules to be discovered.” There’s little irony, and the reader rarely knows more or less than Harry. In the seven novels, Christmas Day always falls midway. Stephen King and others have teased Rowling for overusing adverbs when describing speech. The habit seems to show a determination not to be misunderstood. So too, in a way, do her repetitions. (Over a few hundred pages, as Harry enters adolescence, Diggory reddens, Harry reddens, Ron reddens, and Fudge reddens; Percy goes slightly pink, then very pink; Hermione is slightly pink; Malfoy is slightly pink and then brilliantly pink; Hermione is very pink and then rather pink; Colin also goes pink; Hermione is, again, slightly pink; so is Ron, and then Hermione; and then she’s flushed pink with pleasure. Lavender blushes, followed by Hagrid and Hermione.) And if Rowling’s metaphors were sometimes grudging—“like some bizarre fast-growing flower”; “like some weird crab”—it may be because metaphors carry you away, for a moment, from the place where the story has put you. Rowling’s goal was to keep you there.

Rowling’s mindfulness about plot led her to have almost the same relationship with her material as an obsessive fan did. Ian Rankin recalled bumping into her one day in an Edinburgh café: “It was incredible to see her, writing longhand, doing this family tree for a character. I can’t think of any other author I know who would go into that kind of detail for something that’s not going to be there on

the page.” It was like a video game where you never got to the edge of the rendered landscape. Despite the thoroughness of the final reckoning in “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,” and its extended epilogue, there’s much that Rowling knows but has not written. In 2007, after the final book was published, she announced that Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, was gay. I asked her if Dudley, Harry’s cousin, had any children as an adult, and she told me that he had two.

“We coined the phrase ‘denial marketing,’” Minna Fry, a former marketing director of Bloomsbury, recently said of the series. “The more people want, the less you give.” Ahead of each publication, she said, “we were extremely tantalizing—releasing little nuggets.” She laughed. “If you were really lucky, you’d get the *title!*”

As Fry remembers it, the phenomenon changed complexion with the appearance of the fourth novel, “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,” in the summer of 2000. It was the first time that the publication of a Rowling book was synchronized across the Atlantic. Between them, Bloomsbury and Scholastic printed a first edition of more than four million copies.

Bloomsbury decked out a steam train as the Hogwarts Express, and it took Rowling around the U.K. Bloomsbury was still a small company; Fry inflated the balloons herself. “We didn’t have events managers,” she said. On the first day, she and her colleagues were astonished by the size of the crowds at King’s Cross. “We couldn’t even get into the station. Can you imagine what it would be like now, with Twitter?” Fry found a reporter from an American newsmagazine hiding in the coal bin behind the steam engine, her face smudged black.

When the train made stops, children awaiting an audience with Rowling entered her rail car at one end, and left at the other end with a signed book. As Fry recalled, “There were parents beating up other parents to get in the queue.” At one besieged stop, Fry was Rowling’s decoy, waving to the crowd through a window at the front of the train while Rowling escaped from the rear.

Fry said that Rowling was unsettled by the disorder of the tour: “She loved bits of it. But I don’t think any of us realized

quite how freaked out she was.” Fry learned this only later. “She was quite thin-skinned about something that we thought was quite funny. I think she thought we’d put her in jeopardy.”

Fry had enjoyed a friendly relationship with Rowling, but after that book’s launch Rowling “started to have these layers of people to protect her.” She hired her own public-relations team, and became a little sequestered behind “people who I think made her feel safe.” Unlike before, “we weren’t able to ring her up and gossip. But she was still kind, funny—very funny—and slightly bewildered by the whole thing. And still deserving of all the good things.” Fry recalled coming across Rowling and her children, not long ago, in a playground in a London park. Fry introduced her young son (who said, “You’re not J. K. Rowling!”), and she was struck by the force of Rowling’s attention upon him. “She was fascinated by everything he was doing, what he was wearing. He had a new toy. She wanted to know how it worked, everything about it.”

When I asked Rowling about the period after “Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,” she said, “That was a really hard time for me. The pressure of it had become overwhelming, actually. I found it difficult to write, which had never happened to me before in my life. The intensity of the scrutiny was overwhelming. I had been utterly unprepared for that. And I needed to step back. Badly needed to step back.” She had published four books in four years. “I said to Bloomsbury, ‘There won’t be a book next year, I can’t do it,’ which they were great about. It ended up being three years. So it was 2000 for ‘Goblet of Fire,’ and 2003 for ‘Phoenix.’” In that time, Warner Bros. began releasing films based on the novels—with a predominantly British cast, thanks in part to Rowling’s pressure. The movies have since made \$7.7 billion.

She also met Neil Murray, a friend of her sister’s. Rowling resisted being set up: “He was just out of a marriage himself—I just thought that would be complicated. I wasn’t up for that.” But they eventually found themselves seated next to each other at a charity event in Edinburgh. He was aware of the Harry Potter books but hadn’t read them. The couple have a son and a daughter together. A few years ago, a documentary crew travelling with Rowling recorded

what seems to be Murray's only public comment about his wife: "Jo detaches herself," he said, in her hearing, with a smile. "When she's very stressed, she'll detach herself and only trust one person, and that's herself. So everyone else gets blocked out and she becomes more and more stressed and less and less able to accept any help."

Late last year, Rowling appeared at the Leveson Inquiry into British press conduct, set up by the government in response to revelations about reporters hacking into celebrity voice-mail inboxes. Over months, scores of actors, politicians, and journalists offered evidence to the inquiry; Rowling appeared on the same day as Sienna Miller, the actress, and Max Mosely, a former car-racing administrator. Mosley described being secretly photographed with five women in a scenario that the *News of the World* described, falsely, as an enactment of a Nazi-related sexual fantasy with prostitutes. Miller said that, for years, she had to contend with ten or fifteen paparazzi outside her home; she had been chased by them, and even spat upon to provoke a reaction. Her phone was hacked. But Miller was careful to emphasize that others, including the family of Milly Dowler, a murdered teen-ager whose phone was hacked after her disappearance, had experienced worse.

Rowling's evidence was less startling, but it was delivered in a more harrowed, aggrieved tone. It may be that, because Rowling is quite unassuming, she has not thought to learn the art of appearing unassuming in public. (Indeed, her public posture is often that of someone wronged: she has described buying herself a big aquamarine ring as a "no one is grinding me down" gesture made in response to tabloid coverage, and has characterized moving from an apartment to a very large house as being "driven out" by the press.) She told the inquiry that, when Jessica was five, she once came home from school with a note from a reporter in her schoolbag, apparently placed there by the parent of a classmate. One can't argue with Rowling's unhappiness about the episode, but it seems a poor example of Fleet

Street's darkest arts. A few years later, Rowling was photographed on a public beach in Mauritius. One published image showed Jessica, breaking a British press rule about paparazzi shots of children. (It was not republished.) More recently, Rowling and Murray were photographed on an Edinburgh street, and the published shot showed the face of their son, David, at nineteen months.

Rowling had other stories to tell, and spoke of the burden of having to take preventive measures to avoid further intrusion. But when she wrote, in her witness statement, that "it pains me that my family and I do not appear to have the choice of living our lives in the same way that other members of the general public do," the wealthiest novelist in history was perhaps asking for too much. She and her family have spent a private evening at the White House, and she told me that the Obama daughters like her books. Across the world, fans call her "My Queen." And if Rowling, by the standards of her fortune, lives quite modestly—Ian Rankin has told her that, in her position, he would buy a helicopter and gold-plated pinball machines—public documents show that, to expand the grounds of her Edinburgh house, she recently bought and demolished a modern, \$1.6-million house that stood next door.

Her discomfort with fame can give her the air of being more caught up with the idea of her celebrity than those she's addressing. Encouraged by Lord Justice Leveson to make recommendations for reform, she said, "I can't pretend I have a magical answer," and added, "No Harry Potter joke intended."

If Rowling has become exasperated by the media, the feeling has been reciprocated. When the London *Times* interviewed her in 2003, it was asked to sign a contract that, according to an account later written by Brian MacArthur, then the paper's executive editor, "stipulated precisely when the interview would occur and who would be the interviewer and photographer; how and where it would be advertised and promoted in the paper and on radio; and gave Rowling full approval of captions, headlines, straplines, line draw-

ings, graphics, headings, advance trails, quotes and photographs." Just before publication, there was a gruelling, six-hour argument in the *Times* offices about what, exactly, was meant by "quote approval." Rowling was represented by Neil Blair, a British lawyer and a former Warner Bros. executive who had worked on the Harry Potter films, and who joined Christopher Little's agency in 2001. Blair said that in the interview Rowling had misspoken about her contract with Bloomsbury, and, in insisting that the quote be revised, took a stance that MacArthur found extraordinarily aggressive. MacArthur wrote in his paper that this "left us feeling soiled," adding, "our self-respect was eroded, our journalistic integrity insulted." Minna Fry, who was also at the meeting, says that she was, at times, "astonished by what Neil was doing," and had her head in her hands. "I realized how much was now at stake." Blair, remembering that day, said he would "swear on the Bible that I was not aggressive at all." (For this article, Rowling sought quote approval, which was not given.)

Last summer, Neil Blair left Christopher Little and set up his own agency. Rowling joined him as the star client of the Blair Partnership. Little's statement, at the time, was that he was "disappointed and surprised." As Rowling described it to me, "Neil and Christopher reached a point where it wasn't working, the two of them together, and I had to make a decision. It was very, very difficult."

Many beloved children's stories describe an adventure in a supernatural or dreamlike realm, and then a return—with regret, or gratitude, or both—to the everyday. But we know that Harry Potter will be a wizard on his deathbed. For all the satisfying closure provided by "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," gloomier readers may still detect a note of melancholy; there is a narrowness of life for former Hogwarts students, whose career opportunities barely extend beyond the wizard civil service, wizard schoolteaching, and professional Quidditch. This magical society has no use for science; there's little commerce; and thousands of years of wizarding seems to have generated no culture beyond a short volume of fables and a tabloid newspaper. (Wizard technology is



often a cutely flawed approximation of non-wizard technology—owls for e-mail—and one wonders how quickly Harry and his schoolfriends could have won their battles against the evil Lord Voldemort, given two or three cell phones and a gun.) In a time of wizard peace, at least, Harry's separation from the real world—even as he lives in it—can seem tragic.

When I asked Rowling if she'd ever regretted not being able to bring Harry back into ordinariness, she talked about him with surprising passivity: Harry was more a character with responsibilities than a person she knew. In the role given to him, she said, "Harry has that sort of Galahad quality. It seems that you can't escape it." Though it was possible to imagine Ron Weasley, Harry's friend, embracing a Muggle existence, "Harry, as a character, can't. The person who is leading the quest—it seems that they have to have this weird purity about them. And, after all, if Harry really had gone through everything he went through, he probably wouldn't be mentally healthy enough to survive anywhere, would he?"

We were walking along a wet Edinburgh street of pubs and sandwich shops, hemmed in by the construction of a new tramline. Rowling wore a tan raincoat and stiletto-heeled boots. She seemed like someone who would gratefully return to a pre-adventurous life. Referring to the Edinburgh apartment where she finished her first book, the one that she secured with Sean Harris's loan, she said, "I sometimes feel that everything that happened since I left that flat is a little bit unreal. And that's where I'd go back to if it all vanished." She once had the idea of publishing "The Casual Vacancy" anonymously but realized that her anonymity would be short-lived. "In the final analysis, I thought, Get over yourself, just do it." She is working on two books "for slightly younger children" than her Harry Potter readers, and she has begun her next adult novel—although she has written only "a couple of chapters," the story "is pretty well plotted."

"The Casual Vacancy" will certainly sell, and it may also be liked. There are many nice touches, including Rowling's portrait of the social worker's gutless boyfriend, who relishes how, in an argument with a lover, you can "obscure an emo-



"Dear old Havemeyer—he died in the saddle."

tional issue by appearing to seek precision." The book's political philosophy is generous, even if its analysis of class antagonisms is perhaps no more elaborate than that of "Caddyshack." And, as the novel turns darker, toward a kind of Thomas Hardy finale, it hurtles along impressively. But whereas Rowling's shepherding of readers was, in the Harry Potter series, an essential asset, in "The Casual Vacancy" her firm hand can feel constraining. She leaves little space for the peripheral or the ambiguous; hidden secrets are labelled as hidden secrets, and events are easy to predict. We seem to watch people move around Pagford as if they were on Harry's magical parchment map of Hogwarts.

And a powerful and protected writer risks getting things wrong. One teenager bullies another on Facebook, anonymously and repeatedly, which could happen only if the victim refused to make use of the network's privacy settings. Some sentences cause you to picture a Little, Brown editor starting to dial Rowling's number, then slowly putting down the handset: "There, in his poky office, Simon Price gazed covetously on a vacancy among the ranks of insiders to a place where cash was now trickling down onto an empty chair with no lap waiting to catch it." And, in a tellingly odd turn,

three characters read unwelcome, but essentially accurate, judgments about themselves on a tiny local Web site, and all three disintegrate into fear and fury. The novel seems to treat extreme touchiness as a default psychological setting.

Rowling declined, more than once, an invitation to appear at the opening ceremony of the Olympics. "I just thought, I can't. I'll wet myself or I'll faint or something." She agreed after meeting Danny Boyle, the show's director; she was asked to read a passage from "Peter and Wendy," in which J. M. Barrie writes that Neverland is "not large and sprawly, you know, with tedious distances between one adventure and another, but nicely crammed."

Rowling thinks of herself as a "nervous and self-conscious" speaker. Seconds before she went onstage, she received a text message from a friend. It read, "Good luck, Hon, try not to fuck it up with the whole world watching." There were eighty thousand people in the stadium, and hundreds of millions watched on television. "That was what I was thinking as I started speaking: Don't fuck it up with the whole world watching." In a dark blazer, with her hair blown around by the wind, Rowling read her lines, in a slightly sad voice. When she finished, a hundred-foot-tall puppet of Voldemort rose from the stage floor. ♦

FICTION

JACK AND THE MAD DOG

BY TONY EARLEY



Jack, *that* Jack, the giant-killer of the bean tree, spent the better part of the evening squatting in the blackberry briars opposite the house of a farmer's wife who would—for four dollars, but with no particular enthusiasm—lean over her husband's plow and let a boy have a go. Once her husband went to sleep, she would step into her yard and fling a rock across the road; Jack was to meet her behind the barn, cash in hand. This farmer's wife was widely known to possess both a strong arm and noteworthy accuracy, and, to the rabble who frequented the briar patch, her flung invitations often seemed more punitive than hospitable. As Jack waited in the briars, on a spot in the dirt worn bare by other waiting farm boys, the not quite ripe blackberries plain against the less black sky, and the summer air as close and fetid as the breath of a cat, he tried not to think about the whore-flung meteorite that might at any moment drop out of the sky and render him senseless. He waited and drank odd-tasting white liquor out of an indifferently washed Mason jar until he came into a cloudy, metallic, buzzy-headed drunk. The liquor had been a welcome surprise. He'd found it sitting upright in the middle of the road, the lid of the jar screwed on tight, as he set out on his carnal errand. Jack had often found along the road the things he needed most in his travels, so he'd assumed that he needed the moonshine as well. It had smelled all right, just a little off, overcooked maybe, so he'd taken a sip. When he did not die or get carted off by witches, he'd taken another. Now he squatted and waited and drank, sucking on the sour berries, flinching beneath his hat every time he remembered about the rock with his name on it, until both feet went to sleep and the mosquitoes found him in his unlikely lair, thinking, I'm Jack, *that* Jack, the giant-killer of the bean tree, and my life has come down to *this*.

And still the farmer's wife did not sling her stone: her husband, the farmer, did not become sleepy. Jack watched the man smoking on the front porch, the red eye of his homemade cigarette staring out toward the briars where Jack stared back with increasing agitation. The farmer's shape was distinct, the outline of his sad, farmer's hat clear in the light of that one small flare, which—as Jack drank more—began to leave fire trails in the darkness whenever the farmer moved the hand that

held his cigarette from his mouth to the arm of his chair. The farmer smoked, one cigarette after another, until the hour grew late, until the katydids grew tired of their chanting and the crickets tuned down, until all hope abandoned the world, until Jack's hooch and patience dripped away, until that, finally, was that. Jack drained the last of the liquor out of the jar, grimaced, retched, swallowed bile, bad liquor, and a gut-full of green blackberries. He stood up, the briars ripping at his clothes, and, with a great shout that he meant to be a curse (but which came out instead as an animal blare that made no sense at all, not even to him), he threw the empty jar across the road toward the farmhouse, where it landed in the yard without even breaking.

Jack cocked an ear, listened, waited for the man on the porch to curse back, to yell "Who's out there?," to fire his shotgun into the darkness, to storm down off the porch spoiling to fight the man who had come sneaking onto his property looking to buy a four-dollar piece of his wife, but the farmer did not make a sound, did not move, just sat smoking on his porch, as placid as a steer, as shallow as a mud hole, as if strangers shouting from the briars and Mason jars falling from the sky were every-night occurrences. Jack fully expected to have to kill the man—for in the stories he had often killed men who'd kept him away from a woman (in his experience such men always needed killing), unless the woman turned out to be a witch, in which case he killed her instead—but the farmer didn't stand up, didn't speak, didn't flick his cigarette out into the yard, nothing. Son of a bitch, Jack thought. He's sitting there chewing his cud. It was more than Jack could bear.

"Cud chewer!" he yelled.

"Go on home, Jack," the farmer said from the porch.

"How do you know it's me?" Jack called. At the time he considered this a clever question.

No response came from the porch.

"How about I come over there with a silver axe and chop your head off!"

"You ain't gonna do no such a thing, Jack. Go on home and get in the bed."

"How about I send my magic beating stick over there to beat you about the ears until you run off down the road and nobody never hears from you again! Then you'll be sorry!"

"Jack," the farmer said patiently, "everybody knows you ain't got no magic beating stick no more. You ain't had one since I don't know when. Now head on out."

"I'll," Jack said, considering, as he spoke, an unexpectedly depleted list of options, "I'll come over there and play a trick on you! I'm still smarter than you are!"

"Not tonight, you ain't. I'm on to you and your sneaking Jack ways. There ain't gonna be no Jack tale around here tonight."

"Ha!" Jack hollered. "There already is! And you're in it! It just ain't a very good one!"

"I'll grant you that," the farmer said.

Jack stood quietly for a moment. "Oh, come on," he pleaded. "Just one little slice. All you have to do is go to sleep. It's late. Ain't you got milking and plowing to do in the morning? Ain't that rooster gonna crow before you know it?"

"Jack," the farmer chided sadly.

"What?"

"Don't beg. You used to be somebody."

Disappointed in more ways than he could count, drunk but not pleasantly so, both legs asleep all the way up to his hipbones, Jack climbed through the briars and set out. He was not, so far as he knew, setting out to find a job of work, or a girl to marry, or new ground to clear. He was not even leading a cow. He did not expect that he would, as a result of this setting out, encounter an imbecilic king, inexplicably enraged at the sight of Jack whistling down the road; or a giant greedily clutching a gold-shitting goose in an improbably suspended castle; or a coven of witches yowling from a derelict mill in a fury of feline estrus. He did not, to be honest, even feel like fooling with kings or giants, the killing of whom—despite the inevitable mental and physical challenges—amounted to nothing more than a job of work, but he thought that he might be up for taunting and killing some witches, once he sobered up, especially if they were good-looking witches, though he could not remember the last time he had seen a witch, good-looking or not. The witches seemed to have gone off somewhere, along with the silver axes and his magic beating stick and the geese and the giants and the swaying bean trees, along with the kings and their bejewelled, creamy daughters and their glittering hoards of gold. Tonight, all he had was

the setting out itself. So he set out.

He trudged down the road, trying to forget his lust for the doughy expanse of the farmer's wife's lunar bottom, his squatting in the briars like a stray dog waiting to steal a scrap and his rising hatred of farmers and all things agricultural, until he stepped unexpectedly into a compensatory truth: he could see in the dark. In a single miraculous moment, the road beneath his feet, until then virtually invisible, unspooled into the distance before him, silvery and faintly glowing, a still river lit by stars or the thinnest slice of moon. Yet the sky contained neither stars nor moon, just the low, black night pushing down.

"Huh," Jack said.

He could see the tall corn on both sides of the road attentively pressing in; he could see not only the wooded ridges that bordered the fields but the thick summer foliage, blooming on the ridges' steep slopes; he could see the ancient, giant-trod mountains in the distance, separated from the black of the sky by faint bands of light, which shimmered with colors that Jack could not name, colors that vanished if he tried to look at them directly—like angels or ghosts or shy, pale brides undressing in darkened rooms. The light wasn't dawn, or even the idea preceding dawn, which still lay hours away, but something Jack had never seen before, something he was sure no one else had ever seen: the world itself was lit from within. The corn in the fields, the road, the mountains, everything he could see gave off a secret light. When he held his hand in front of his face, it, too, glimmered, and he studied it, his right hand, a fine thing, well shaped and strong, a hand as adept at caressing a virgin as at plunging a silver sword into the disbelieving eye of a giant. All around him, wherever he looked, the world revealed itself the way Creation must have revealed itself to God, everything part of the greater light, and it was good, and he stood there, dazzled and proud and happy, once again Jack the giant-killer, the best man in the world.

So he whistled along, twirling his Saturday hat on his finger until he reached a fair-sized creek spanned by a narrow bridge. As he stepped onto the planking, he savored a momentary twinge of vestigial excitement, the anticipation he had once felt every time he encountered a bridge. Perhaps this first step would set

into motion not only a pedestrian traveling from here to there but a crossing over from this into that, a passage into a proper story. He hoped fleetingly for a troll to flummox, then remembered that trolls were now extinct, save for a non-breeding pair locked up in a zoo in Romania.

Jack was halfway across when a large black dog rose up out of the bridge, simply squeezed itself into being out of the bridge's black wood. Jack stopped in his tracks. He wasn't afraid—startled a little, maybe, at the dog's sudden appearance, but not afraid. Over the years, he had learned that nothing really bad ever happened to him, that he was impervious to injury, if not to embarrassment, no matter how formidable the adversary or unexpected its arrival. Realizing that he had nothing to fear had, however, in an almost tragic irony, also robbed him of corollary excitement. Why, the last time he'd roused out a giant—however long ago that was—it had been all he could do to make himself run.

"Grr," said the dog.

"Howdy," Jack said. (It was his experience that sometimes animals could talk, and sometimes they couldn't, but that it always paid to find out.) He could see the dog's white teeth as it snarled, its slobber-lapping, lengthy red tongue.

"Hello, Jack." The dog had a low voice and it spoke wetly, deep in its throat.

"So tell me," Jack said, noting that the dog knew his name, "why are you impeding my progress across this here bridge?"

"Because that is my solitary calling."

"Where'd you come from?"

"I don't know. A minute ago I wasn't here, but now I am."

Jack nodded. "Limited omniscient narrator," he said. "My point of view."

"Don't rub it in."

The two spent an expectant moment in silence, as if they were actors strutting and fretting, each thinking that the other had forgotten the next line. Finally, Jack clamped his hat on top of his head.

"Well, Skippy, or whatever your name is," he said, "this has been interesting and all, but why don't you step to one side and let me pass so that I can get along with my setting out?"

"I'm afraid I can't do that."

Impatience flickered distantly behind Jack's eyeballs. He remembered that he was still drunk, but not pleasantly so; that the farmer, simpleton though he was, had

smoked him out of dipping his wick; that the summer night was chokingly close and humid. A liquorous headache began to mold itself into something that felt like a thumb jabbing repeatedly against the back side of his forehead bone.

"Look," he said, pinching the bridge of his nose, "I don't know what kind of story you think this is, but I can see in the dark, and I was enjoying it, even though I'm drunk but not pleasantly so, and I don't wanna fool with no talking dog."

"You don't have any choice," the dog said.

"What do you mean, I ain't got a choice? By God, I'm *Jack*. I've always got a choice."

"Not tonight you don't. I'm going to bite you before you get off this bridge. That's how this story goes."

"Shit," Jack said. "You ain't going to bite me."

The dog sank into a crouch. "Jack, I was put on this earth to bite you."

"Whoa, now," Jack said, spitting out a laugh as if it tasted bad. "You ain't supposed to *bite* me. There ain't never been nobody to *bite* me, not ever, in all these many years."

"Grr," said the dog.

"Wait a minute," Jack said. "Just hold what you got and let me think." His setting out had arrived at an arrival that he was unprepared to ponder. No old man had met him on the road to warn him that he would meet a dog on a bridge, then give him a silver sword or magic words with which to kill it. (Jack had always counted on the utilitarian, if narratively implausible, appearance of the old man bearing implements and instructions, but somewhere along the way the old man had also disappeared.) Now he was by himself in the middle of a bridge in the middle of the night, his mind lightly fogged by odd-tasting liquor, struggling to think of a way to outsmart a talking dog. He looked around. There wasn't even a non-magical stick lying about, no tree to climb in the corn bottoms. Come on, Jack, he thought, you're *Jack*. Think of something.

"This is the last Jack tale," the dog said, inching closer. "The end of the story."

Jack backed up a step. "Just hold on there, Spot. Before you bite me, I need to know something. Are you mad?"

The dog stopped. "Angry? Somewhat, I suppose."

"No," Jack said. "I mean rabid."

"Hmm," the dog said. "I think so, yeah. I feel a little hindered in the hindquarters."

"So once you bite me I'll die a slow and excruciatingly painful death."

"That's the idea."

Jack frantically searched through his overalls but found only four dollars. He didn't even have a pocket knife.

Without further warning, the dog scrambled forward and leaped at Jack. Jack managed to take a step backward and wrap his hands around its neck mid-leap and keep it at arm's length; he fell down on top of the dog, pinning its head and chest to the bridge.

"Ow," the dog said.

As the dog scrambled around with its back legs, trying to find purchase, Jack squeezed its neck as hard as he could. Each of his fingers sought its correspondent on the other hand, interlocking as if playing the child's game of building a church. (Here's the people, Jack thought.) He felt the dog tucking its front legs underneath its body, testing Jack's weight. Jack soon realized that he could neither strangle the dog to death nor hold it for very long. It was one big dog.

"Damn you, dog," Jack panted. "You should *not* have done *that*." He felt the dog calmly push up against his chest, preparatory to bucking him off.

"You're done," the dog said. "Once I stand up, it's all over."

"I am not *done*," Jack said. "For the last time, I am *Jack*."

"Which means nothing."

"I'm important to people."

"Not anymore. Not in any substantive way. The day is coming when your stories will be told only by faux mountaineers in new overalls to ill-informed tourists at storytelling festivals."

"Well, what's wrong with that?"

"It's *ersatz*, Jack."

"I don't even know what that means."

"It means that you're dead already and you don't even know it."

As Jack felt the dog's muscles tense, he grabbed a fistful of fur in each hand. When the dog pushed itself to its feet, Jack stood and spun in a tight circle, lifting the dog off the ground by its head, and, with a great shout, swung it off the bridge.

Then he ran.

By the time he heard the dog hit the water he had already crossed the creek.

Jack didn't know where he was going, only that going seemed to be a good idea, that his setting out needed to be speeded up. Hiding also seemed advisable. He ran a few steps down the road, angling toward the creek bottom, gaining speed with each stride. Then he leaped from the road, over the gully, his legs running through the air, his arms waving in a vain attempt at flight; he landed on both feet in the sandy soil of the bottom, and, with another step, crashed into the thick corn. He knew that the dog would soon struggle up through the matted underbrush along the creek bank and set itself on his trail.

The corn was fully tasselled, seven or eight feet tall, its ears hardening, two hot weeks away from coming ripe. It reached out and grabbed Jack as he fought his way through it; it punched him with its thin, pointed fists; it slid its thick stalks and ropy roots beneath his feet to trip him; it became a congregation of angry Baptists—preachers and deacons and teetotallers, desiccated spinsters and disaffected, undipped Methodists, rattling with judgment and contempt as he fought through it.

Jack, the corn called in multitudinous chorus, *you're a fornicator and a murderer and a thief!*

"Let me go, corn!" Jack spat. He lowered his head and struck back with his arms.

And you're a ne'er-do-well and a swindler and a liar!

"I am *not* a swindler!"

The truth is not in you, Jack! For shame! Why, you swindled your own brothers!

"They had it coming."

You disappointed your mother.

"Don't you talk about Mama!"

Repent! the corn cried. Repent!

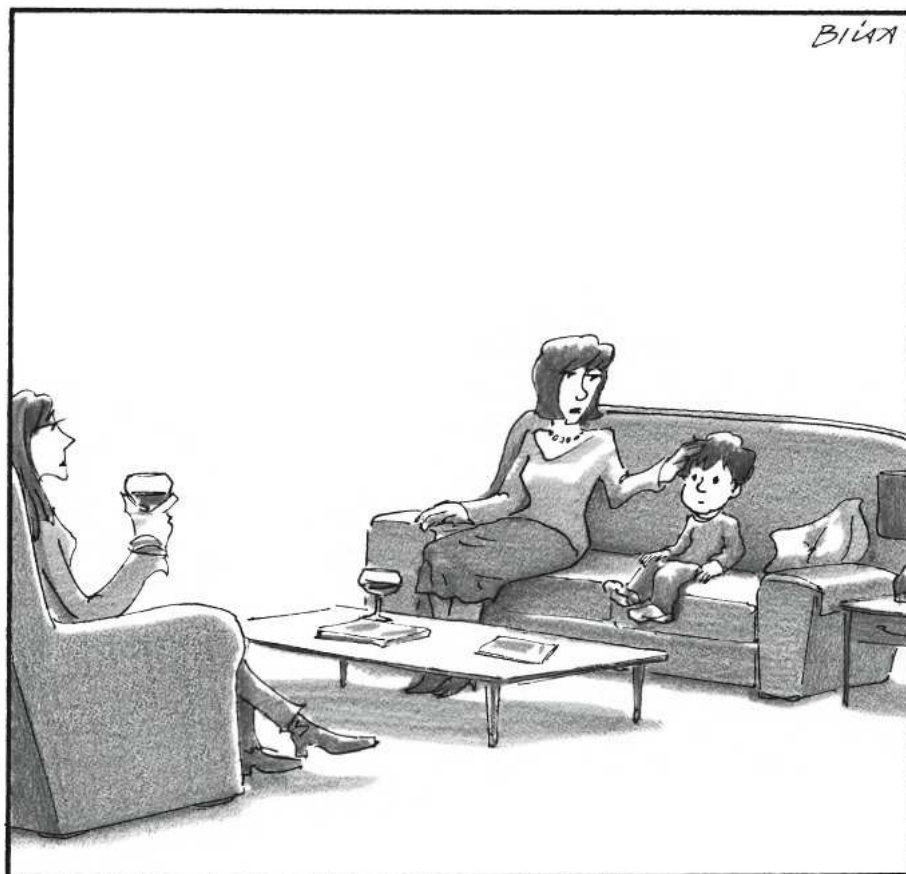
"Go shuck yourself," Jack snarled.

Behind him he could hear—or thought he could hear—the dog huffing with deadly inevitability, bulling its way after him in a straight, unalterable line.

Jack fled and fought and cursed with the rage of the unredeemed and the panic of the pursued. He struggled wildly through miles and hours and years and lifetimes of corn and section breaks and the exposition implied therein, imagining with each step the rabid fangs of the black dog inches from his hamstrings. After an age and a day, he crashed suddenly and unexpectedly out of the corn and sprawled headlong into a thin dawn in a prairie of golden wheat. For a long moment he lay face down on the ground, his nose filled with the rich, anesthetic smells of earth and grain, and considered falling simply into sleep, dog or no dog. He had come a long way. But when he thought about the death that awaited him should the dog



"All I did was remove his flag pin!"



“Actually, no, Sue—four is not a great age.”

catch him—or any death at all, for that matter—he climbed wearily to his feet and stared toward the horizon, where he could at least make out a tree line, no more than a smudge between the field and the sky, who knew how many miles away, but a destination to aim for nonetheless, a place to flee *to*. As he took a first tired step toward the trees, a young girl, of maiden age, sprang with a yelp from the wheat in front of him and lit out across the field. Before Jack could even cry out, the wheat around him exploded with girls—hundreds, thousands, multitudes of girls—flushed like succulent quail, bounding toward the distant trees. They cried out, “Daddy!” and “Help me!” and “Save me!” as they leaped gracefully through the wheat.

Maidens! Jack thought, breaking unconsciously into a jog. Look at all the maidens!

Maidens with flushed and glowing complexions of peach and cream and alabaster and ivory, clad uniformly in simple country dresses of virginal white, each dress cut perhaps a size too small and a

smidgen too short; maidens whose firm flanks fetchingly swayed and flounced, their downy bosoms heaving and swelling; maidens whose flaxen and wheat and chestnut and mahogany and ebony and sable and scarlet and crimson hair billowed and flowed and streamed; maidens whose panted exhalations were sweet and soft and breathy; maidens whose mysterious and dark and depthless and cerulean and emerald eyes were flashing and shining and burning with passion. In other words, lots and lots of maidens. Jack began to run. He loved nothing more than maidens. He wondered wildly if it would be possible to herd all the girls into one place, like a pasture or a feedlot. “Hey!” he called. “Come back!”

Jack soon gained ground and fell in behind a set of twins, who ran in step as their silken hair undulated in fragrant waves behind them. Jack watched their hair for some time—the girls seemed to have no idea that he was there—but the moment his eyes strayed below their narrow waists the girls stopped and whirled on him so quickly that he al-

most crashed into them. He managed to bring himself to a teetering, arm-waving halt.

“What do you think you’re doing?” asked one.

“Doing?” Jack panted. “I’m running away from a rabid, black, talking dog. What do you think I’m doing?”

“That’s not what she meant,” the other said. “What she meant was ‘What do you think you’re looking at?’”

“Looking at?” Jack said, looking away. “I’m not looking at anything.”

“Liar,” the first said.

“You were looking at our fair nether parts,” the second said.

“Asses,” said her sister.

“I was not.”

“You were, too.”

“Then tell me *this*,” Jack said shrewdly. “If you were running *away* from me, how can you *know* I was looking at your asses?”

“Because we know, Jack. *We know*.”

“Girls always know.”

“Hmm,” Jack said. “I guess I knew that.”

“Next you’re going to look at our breasts,” the first twin said.

“I am not.”

“You are, too,” the second said.

The twins stared at Jack until he blinked. Then he looked at their chests. He tried not to, but he did. And there they were, maiden bosoms. Heaving. Swelling. Tumescient. The ripe pomegranates of the Old Testament. The top buttons of the girls’ dresses strained nobly to restrain them.

Jack thought, *Day-um*. He thought, *God Almighty*, italics his. He felt his manhood stirring. Or his loins. He could never tell them apart.

“See?” one said.

“Told you,” said the other.

Jack smiled what he hoped was an old-fashioned Jack smile. “Do I know you?” he asked.

“Do you know us,” the first one said, shaking her head sadly. “Do you know us?”

“Oh, you know us,” the other said. “The first time we set eyes on you, you came whistling down the road, looking for a job of work, after your setting out.”

“You had the dinner your poor old mama had made for you slung over your shoulder on a pole. But the dust on the road had made you powerful thirsty and you had not a drop to drink.”

“Mama never remembered to send

along a jug of water," Jack said. "It was a shortcoming."

"You came upon me first. I was sitting by the roadside, weaving a basket of golden straw for to carry eggs to the market. You asked me to draw you a dipper of water from the well."

"And I was sitting in the doorway of our daddy's sturdy house, churning a bait of butter for to bake a cake," the other said. "Then you asked *me* to draw you a cup of water from the well."

"You sure did drink a lot of water."

"Was your daddy a farmer?"

"Miller," both said.

"Ah," said Jack. For one sweet moment he sensed more than remembered the rhythmic moan of a turning wheel, the gentle *shush-shush-shush* of water splashing, a slant of silver moonlight, an intake of breath as soft as the noise made by the wings of a moth, but he couldn't conjure up the face of a girl. So many maidens, so many mills. Twins, though. He thought he would've remembered twins.

"That night at supper, while our daddy was eating his vittles and eyeballing his shooting-gun leaning by the doorstep, you tricked him into giving you his silver sword and ten bags of gold."

"We still don't know how you pulled that one off."

"Then you slipped him a sleeping draught that made him snore so that the door joggled and the roof shook and nobody never heard the like, then or now."

"You met me in the mill when the black cat mewled, and lay with me in the moonlight on the tow sacks of meal our daddy had ground by day."

"Then you lay with *me* on the same tow sacks when the old owl hooted three times in the sweet-gum tree."

Jack tasted a whiff of the bad liquor he had drunk. He felt another stirring, not of loin but of remorse. The feeling was unfamiliar, and he did not care for it. What was wrong with him? If the three of them managed to get away from this dog, why shouldn't he lay with them again? He was Jack, after all, *that* Jack. But, instead, he swallowed. He said, "Forgive me, but I'm not..."

"...sure you remember us?"

"I, I'm sorry, no, I..." He leaned forward and looked intently into the eyes of one girl and then into the eyes of the other.

"They're not limpid pools of amber, Jack," the first said.

"They're light brown."

"And they're not shining or flashing or burning with passion."

"They're just eyes."

Jack looked back and forth between their lovely faces with increasing consternation. Why couldn't he remember them?

"It's just as well you don't recollect us."

"We were fifteen, Jack. *Fifteen.*"

"I know," he said. "I mean, were you? I mean, I guess I know that now because you just told me."

The girls stared at him, their brows slowly lowering.

"It was wrong, what happened, wasn't it?"

"It was wrong, Jack."

"It was wrong before you even set out on your setting out."

The liquor roiled in Jack's stomach. Inside his head he felt himself starting off down an unfamiliar road. No good lay at its end. The way was dark and cold and he was alone and growing older with each step. He couldn't find his shoes. Jagged stones bruised and cut his feet.

"What happened after I left?" he asked, his voice dropping so that he could barely hear it. "Tell me what happened next."

One girl shrugged. "Why, nothing happened, Jack. Daddy never woke up from the sleeping draught you gave him. He kept snoring so the door joggled and the roof shook and nobody never heard the like. Except us. We were the only people about the settlement once you left. Eventually, the mill rotted down and the dam gave way and the great wheel tipped and toppled into the ivy, where it lays 'til this day."

"But what happened to *you*?" Jack whispered. "Tell me what happened to you."

"Me? I just sat by the side of the road weaving a basket of golden straw for to take eggs to the market."

"And I sat in the doorway churning a bait of butter for to bake a cake."

"And nobody else came down the road."

"Not ever."

"Till the day I looked up and saw a big black dog a-standin' on the hilltop. I did not like the looks of him, so I grabbed up my sister and off we ran down the road."

"And after an age and a day of running down the road and fighting through the corn, here we are," the other girl said, sweeping her arm

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around the wheat field. "Here we are."

Jack looked nervously over his shoulder. A few more girls, stragglers, splashed out of the corn. They looked haggard, their simple country dresses soiled and torn. They ran tiredly by and stared at him as they passed. He saw in their eyes that they recognized him, but none of them smiled and none of them waved and none of them stopped. Nobody asked for his help. He forgot to look at their fair nether parts as they ran away. Jack turned to the twins.

He said, "All these girls, I..."

"Yep."

"Some of 'em twice."

"Are you proud of yourself, Jack?"

"That's what we want to know, Jack, *that* Jack. Tell us, are you proud?"

Jack was ashamed of what he had done—maybe fully ashamed for the first time in his life—but still, in his most secret heart, he wished that he had counted the girls as they ran away.

"Well," he admitted. "Maybe a mite."

"Then what are their names?" one twin demanded.

"Names?" Jack said.

"You heard her. Their names."

Jack realized that he had never known any of their names. They had all been farmers' daughters or millers' daughters or kings' daughters.

"Uh," he said. "Susan?"

"No, Jack. None of us never *got* names."

"The same way none of us never got more than the one white dress to wear, and it too tight, not even after you saw to it that we needed a different color."

"You never saw fit to ask us our names."

"Not even after you lay with us."

Jack remembered then—as clearly as if he were there—the rhythmic screech of a turning wheel, the *bush-bush-bush* of water falling, a dagger of silver moonlight, a girl lying back on a stack of sacked cornmeal, her white dress pushed above her waist. She said, "I don't know, Jack. I don't know." But what had it meant, the *I-don't-know*? He dug the heels of his hands into his eyes. What he wanted most right then was to forget that he had ever set foot in that mill, that he had ever set out down the road that led to that mill, but he could smell the corn dust, hear the wheel, the water, the intake of breath.

"Make it stop," Jack begged. "Make it stop!"

"It ain't gonna stop, Jack."

"You drunk the seeing juice."

"The what?"

"The seeing juice. You drunk it all up."

"Out of the jar we put in the road."

"That's why you can see in the dark."

"Oh, no," Jack wailed. "I shoulda known. Y'all are witches. I thought all the witches was gone! Y'all done gave me a potion!"

"We're not witches, Jack. And not maidens. We're just girls."

"We got the seeing juice from the old



man beside the road. He said it was something you needed."

"That son of a bitch," Jack said.

"We put it in the middle of the road so you would find it on your setting out."

"Then we run into the corn because we could hear the black dog coming."

"But why?" Jack said. "Why would you do that to me?" Knowing even as he asked the question that its answer was obvious.

"Because we wanted you to see."

"So you would know."

"And now you see."

"And now you know."

"But I don't want to see," Jack said.

"And I don't want to know. I just want to set out. I want the sky to be new and the wind fresh on my cheek. I want to feel the red dust scrouging up between my toes. I want to whistle off down the road with the lunch my mama made me slung over a pole and meet an old man who'll say, 'Howdy, Jack. Today you're going to meet a giant with two heads. Here's two silver hatchets.'"

"That ain't going to happen no more, Jack."

"The black dog is going to get us all. He's eating all the stories up from the inside."

"So enjoy it while you can."

"It's almost like living, this knowing."

Behind him, Jack heard a crashing through the corn, too loud to be a maiden. He grabbed the twins by their hands and tried to pull them with him through the wheat.

"It's no use, Jack. Just let us go."

The crashing in the corn grew louder.

"No," Jack said, squeezing their hands so tightly he was afraid he might hurt them. "I ain't gonna turn you loose."

"It's fine, Jack," one said. "It's fine."

"It's not fine."

"We're lucky, in a way," the other said. "We got to be in another story. Even if it was with you."

"We're not weaving baskets and churning butter while nobody never comes. This is better."

"But the way it ends," Jack said.

"Is the way it ends. The black dog's gonna catch us and say whatever it is he has to say and bite us and that'll be that."

"Come with me," Jack pleaded. "Come with me and I won't lay a finger on either one of you, I promise. I'll get us a farm. How about that? I'll get us a farm and clear some new ground and sow some seeds and grow some corn and a few tomatoes and I won't set out no more. We can live happily ever after."

"Oh, Jack," one chided. "You don't *do* happily ever after."

"I do, too," Jack protested. "I've done happily ever after lots of times."

"But then the page turns."

"The page turns and off you go again."

Whatever was coming through the corn was almost upon them. "Shut *up*," Jack said. "Just shut *up* and come *on*."

He tried to jerk the girls after him. Their hands were sweaty, almost hot to the touch, callused from weaving and churning. When they resisted, he squeezed harder and felt the delicate bones rubbing together under their skin.

"Ow," said the girl he clutched with his left hand. "You're hurting me!"

"You let her go!" the girl on his right cried, clouting him on the ear. "Don't you hurt her no more!"

Jack dropped both girls' hands and rubbed his ringing ear. He said, "What the hell'd you do that for? I'm just trying to save you!"

But when he looked up the girls were gone, vanished as completely as if they had been imagined for a moment along the side of a road and just as quickly forgotten. ♦


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Tony Earley on "Jack and the Mad Dog."



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THE CRITICS



BOOKS

UNION MAN

A new biography of an unlikely American statesman.

BY DOROTHY WICKENDEN

On the afternoon of July 23, 1846, William H. Seward rose to give his closing argument in a local murder case. Recently returned from Albany, where he had spent two terms as governor of New York, he had resumed his law practice in Auburn, a hundred and seventy miles west. He was defending a twenty-three-year-old black man who had confessed to killing a white family of four. A mob had come close to lynching the defendant, and Seward was warned that, as the defense counsel, he could face retaliation. "There is a busy war around me, to drive me from defending and securing a fair trial for the negro Freeman," Seward wrote to his closest adviser, Thurlow Weed. At sixteen, William Freeman had been wrongly charged with horse stealing and sent to Auburn Prison, where he was beaten with a wooden board until his skull cracked and he lost his hearing. Seward told Weed that Freeman "is deaf, deserted, ignorant, and his conduct is unexplainable on any principle of sanity. It is natural that he trusts me to defend him." Weed urged Seward against it, but Seward's wife, Frances, commended his decision, and assisted him in his research on the insanity defense, a novel legal tactic at the time.

Seward told the jurors that he was appalled, as they were, by the massacre of "a whole family, just, gentle, and pure," but he argued that Freeman, who was clearly unstable after having been brutalized himself, was "still your brother, and mine, and bears equally with us the proudest inheritance of our race—the image of our Maker." The jury was unmoved, and the

judge sentenced Freeman to hang. Yet newspapers across the country printed Seward's courtroom arguments, and they were applauded by a progressive constituency throughout the North. The case helped re-launch his career in politics, a line of work that he described in his memoir as "the important and engrossing business of the country." He went on to become, as Walter Stahr shows in his masterly new biography, "Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man" (Simon & Schuster), one of the most influential and polarizing American politicians of the nineteenth century.

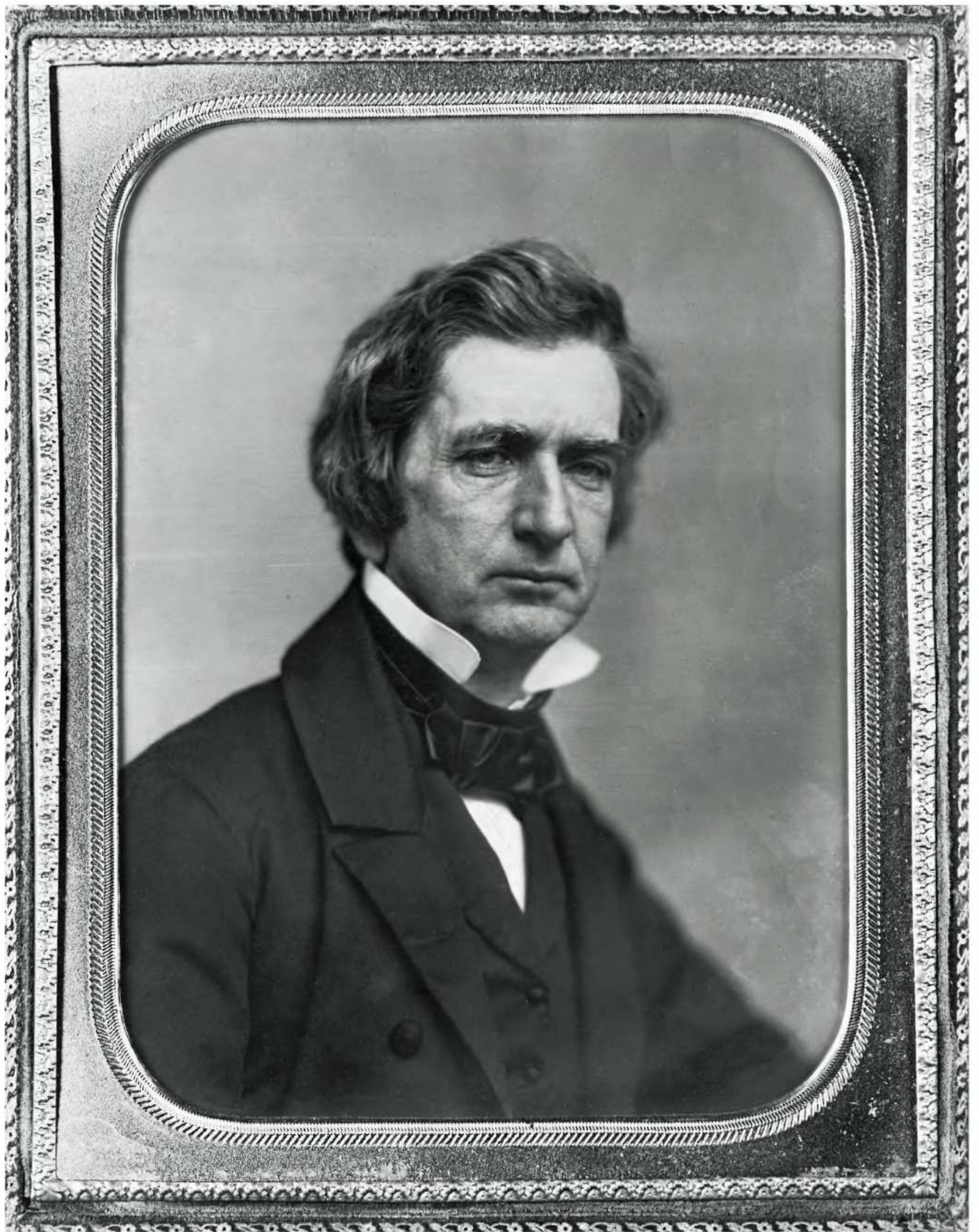
William Henry Seward, known as Henry, grew up in rural New York, in a slave-owning family, although his parents, alone among their neighbors, allowed the slaves' children to go to school, and, Seward recalled, they "never uttered an expression that could tend to make me think that the negro was inferior to the white person." In 1820, when Seward graduated from Union College, in Schenectady, the students were inflamed by the Missouri Compromise, which allowed slavery in Western territories south of the Missouri line. Seward gave a commencement address, with Southern graduates on one side of the dais and Northerners on the other, in which he introduced an argument that he developed during the next forty years: the North and the South should agree to pursue the "gradual emancipation" of slaves.

In 1834, Seward and Weed became founding members of the Whig Party, formed to combat the corrupt Presidency

of Andrew Jackson and his followers in the Democratic Party. But, as governor from 1839 to 1842, Seward incited the wrath of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic Whigs by increasing funding for public education for all children, advocating citizenship for immigrants, and passing a state law giving fugitive slaves the right to a trial. As a newly arrived senator in 1850, he delivered a three-hour stem-winder before packed galleries, denouncing the Fugitive Slave Act and disagreeing with his illustrious elders Clay, Webster, and Calhoun about the extension of slavery. Appealing to the Founders' principles of union, justice, welfare, and liberty, he announced that "there is a higher law than the Constitution." He led a generational change in the chamber, where Radical Republicans rejected the compromises the triumvirate had forged on slavery. Those compromises, Seward said, arose from "the want of moral courage to meet this question of emancipation as we ought." They would lead to civil war, not prevent it.

The first shot may have been fired at Fort Sumter, in 1861, but the Civil War had its origins in Kansas, in 1854, when the Illinois senator Stephen Douglas pushed through the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing slavery in the vast Nebraska territory north of the Missouri line. "Bleeding Kansas" split in two, with pro-slavery advocates setting up their legislature in a schoolhouse just west of Missouri and anti-slavery settlers gathering in Topeka. Seward had predicted such an outcome four years earlier, and he helped lead the opposition to the bill in the Senate.

Seward's anti-slavery sentiment was deep enough that he and Frances harbored fugitives in their home. Frances, the well-educated daughter of a judge, had grown up in Auburn, and her political views were even more fiercely held than her husband's. She and Seward gave financial support to Frederick Douglass's abolitionist newspaper and cultivated a friendship with Harriet Tubman. In November, 1855, when Seward was in Auburn and Frances was away, he wrote to her that "the underground railroad works wonderfully. Two passengers came here last night." He had recently won reelection to the Senate and was considering a run for the Presidency. Given his ambitions and his high public profile, flouting federal law in this



Seward came to see himself as the chief conciliator between the rebellious Southern states and punitive Northerners.

way was a particularly risky enterprise.

Not long afterward, having decided that the Whig Party was weak and outmoded, Seward became a primary force in the birth of the Republican Party. Its immediate purpose was to arrest the spread of slavery and, as he put it, to unseat the “privileged class”—Southern slaveholders, who still dominated the government. In Rochester, New York, in October, 1858, Seward declared that the slave states and the free states were engaged in an “irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces.” The speech caused a frenzy in the press, with one paper applauding it as “clear, calm, sagacious, profound, impregnable,” and another denouncing Seward as a “repulsive abolitionist.” Four months earlier, in Springfield, Illinois, a forty-nine-year-old Abraham Lincoln had given his remarkably similar “House Divided” speech, to a mostly local audience, and he went on to lose the Senate election to Douglas.

By 1860, Senator Seward was the country’s preëminent Republican, and a familiar figure around Washington. Fifty-eight years old, he was invariably dishevelled, in an old jacket and trousers that hung limply on his narrow frame. He had keen blue eyes, deep-set and overhung with unruly gray eyebrows, and a nose that jutted out from his face like the prow of a ship. A reporter for the *Times* of London later described him as “a subtle, quick man, rejoicing in power, given to perorate and to oracular utterances, fond of badinage and bursting with the importance of state mysteries.”

Like many in his party, Seward was shocked when he lost the Presidential nomination to Abraham Lincoln, whom he furiously described as “a little Illinois lawyer.” But some Republicans had feared that his militant reputation would prevent him from winning in key moderate states, including Illinois. (In the South, he was regarded as a dangerous foe. A Mississippi congressman warned that, if Seward was elected President, we “will tear this Constitution to pieces, and look to our guns for justice.”) Seward, though, had a trait that was rare in Washington: an ability to curb his rancor. He threw himself into campaigning for Lincoln, and, more than anyone, helped secure his victory.

A month later, Lincoln wrote to Seward asking him to be Secretary of State, shrewdly commending his “integ-

riety, ability, learning, and great experience.” When Lincoln arrived in the capital, shortly before his Inauguration, Seward officiously escorted him to the White House to see President Buchanan, took him to church, hosted him for dinner, and gave him a tour of the House and the Senate. A writer for the *New York Herald* noted, “The ‘irrepressible’ senator thinks he has Mr. Lincoln sure, and delights in introducing him to everybody, on the same principle which leads children to display their new toys.”

Seward’s buoyancy and his unapologetic indulgence in claret and cigars were almost as much remarked upon as his declamations in the Senate. But, as the country splintered, he assumed a role that belied his reputation as an extremist. After Lincoln’s election, South Carolina withdrew from the Union—quickly followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. Even at his most provocative, Seward had never advocated immediate abolition. He believed that Southerners could be persuaded to see slavery “give way to the salutary instructions of economy, and to the ripening influences of humanity.” Now he infuriated Radical Republicans by working up until the eve of the war to keep the border states from seceding.

On January 12, 1861, three days after his appointment became public, Seward gave a momentous speech in the Senate on the importance of the Union. Invoking Jefferson to explain why he had departed from his “cherished convictions,” he said that politicians must consider not only their personal views but also “those with whom we must necessarily act.” He even advised amending the Constitution so that Congress could not “abolish or interfere with slavery in any state.” Members of the Senate, defying protocol, erupted into applause. Frances Seward, though, disapproved. “Eloquent as your speech was, it fails to meet with the entire approval of those who love you best,” she wrote from Auburn. “Compromise based on the idea that the preservation of the Union is more important than the liberty of nearly 4,000,000 human beings cannot be right.”

Lincoln had few of the insecurities that hobble far more experienced politicians. He surrounded himself with seasoned if fractious advisers, and during his first weekend in Washington he asked

Seward to look over his Inaugural Address. Salmon Chase, soon to be Treasury Secretary and a Seward antagonist, had been urging Lincoln to take a hard line with the South. But Seward thought that Lincoln’s bristling tone was all wrong. He compiled a six-page list of proposed revisions, including a section on the Dred Scott decision, in which the President deplored “the despotism of the few life officers composing the Court.” Lincoln accepted many of Seward’s changes, most important his elimination of the bellicose conclusion: “You can forbear the assault upon [the government], I can not shrink from the defense of it. With you, and not with me, is the solemn question of ‘Shall it be peace, or a sword?’” Seward urged Lincoln to conclude, instead, with “some words of affection,” of “calm and cheerful confidence.” Excising Lincoln’s last lines, he substituted his own:

Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly they must not, I am sure they will not be broken. The mystic chords which proceeding from so many battle fields and so many patriot graves pass through all the hearts and all the hearths in this broad continent of ours will yet again harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation.

Lincoln took the sentiment, stripped it of its orotundity, and produced one of the most stirring political statements in American history:

Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

It was the start of a remarkably successful collaboration between a President and his Secretary of State. Lincoln told Seward early on, “I shall have to depend upon you for taking care of these matters of foreign affairs, of which I know so little, and with which I reckon you are familiar.” That meant, above all, keeping a cotton-dependent Britain and France from recognizing the Confederacy as a legitimate government. In November, 1861, Seward faced his first test when Charles Wilkes, an intemperate Union captain, fired upon an unarmed British mail ship, the R.M.S. Trent, and then boarded and captured the Confederacy’s envoys to Britain and France, James Mason and John Slidell. In his biography,

Stahr describes the immediate aftermath of the incident as “the most dramatic and tense weeks in transatlantic relations of the entire Civil War,” and calls the Trent affair “the Cuban missile crisis of the nineteenth century: a moment when the United States faced possible war with the world’s other major power.”

Seward knew that the Union could not survive if Britain declared war. He began working the back channels, privately assuring British officials that Wilkes had acted on his own. One of Seward’s many influential friends in the press was Henry Raymond, the editor of the *New York Times* and an active member of the Republican Party. On December 17th, in words that could have sprung directly from Seward’s pen, the newspaper editorialized that “the American people do not desire a war with England—that none but secessionists and those who sympathize with them, are disposed to a needless rupture of our friendly relations with any foreign power.” Two days later, Seward persuaded Britain’s ambassador to turn over an unofficial copy of the British government’s demands. Seward promised that he would share the document with no one but the President, and won a little more time to prepare the Administration’s response.

On Christmas morning, Seward presented to the Cabinet his draft response to the British, carefully balancing the conflicting imperatives of foreign and domestic policy. Britain insisted that the Union apologize for violating international law and promptly release the prisoners, but Wilkes was being fêted in Northern cities as a hero. The President and the rest of the Cabinet, alert to popular sentiment, were also repulsed by the idea of bowing to Britain’s terms. Seward agreed that Wilkes had legally searched the Trent and taken the prisoners. Nevertheless, he said, citing a precedent established by Monroe, Wilkes had improperly allowed the ship to continue to England rather than taking it into port, where the matter could be settled in court.

Lincoln at first balked, and said that he would prepare his own letter, but the next day he came around to Seward’s approach. Stahr, the biographer of John Jay, another underappreciated American diplomat who conducted delicate negotiations with the British, is generally restrained to a fault. Here, though, he concludes that the



“No, we’re not Jewish, but we think it would be fun for our reception’s theme to be ‘A Jewish Wedding.’”

letter Lincoln had in mind probably would have led Great Britain to declare war on the United States.

After the Trent crisis, Seward’s relationship with the President grew closer, a source of bitterness among Cabinet members already predisposed to resent him. Stahr draws frequently on the spiteful but astute diary entries of Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, who emerges as one of Seward’s most revealing foils. In September, 1862, Welles wrote that Seward “runs to the President two or three times a day, gets his ear, gives him his tongue, makes himself interesting, and artfully contrives to dispose of many measures or give them direction independent of his associates.”

Seward had come to see himself as the chief conciliator between the rebellious Southern states and punitive Northerners. “Somebody must be in a position to mollify and moderate,” he wrote to Weed. “That is the task of the President and the Secretary of State.” Yet he often ended up infuriating members of his own party. Charles Sumner, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and an old friend, accused Seward of the “grossest mismanagement” of foreign affairs, and taunted his preening and “prancing.” Mary Todd Lincoln told her husband that

she hated to see him “let that hypocrite, Seward, twine you around his finger as if you were a skein of thread.” In September, 1861, a group of New Yorkers warned Lincoln about Seward’s drinking and smoking, a charge that Lincoln waved aside. A year later, a delegation of Radical Republicans from New York went to Washington with ostensible evidence of Seward’s leniency toward Southern “traitors.” Lincoln retorted, “It is plain enough what you want. You want to get Seward out of the cabinet.” He said that every one of them would be content to see the country ruined “if you could turn out Seward.”

As the scheming continued, Seward only rose in Lincoln’s estimation, and Lincoln in his. Gideon Welles judged that “the qualities of Seward are almost the precise opposite of the President.” But their temperamental differences—Lincoln the brooding, lonely depressive; Seward the gregarious optimist—complemented each other like those of a comfortable married couple. They liked nothing better than to relax together in the evening. Seward’s son Frederick, who served as his Assistant Secretary of State, recalled that, as the two “sat together by the fireside, or in the carriage, the conversation between them, however it began, always drifted back into the same channel—the progress of the great national

struggle. Both loved humor, and however trite the theme, Lincoln always found some quaint illustration from his western life, and Seward some case in point, from his long public career, to give it new light." Seward, in a tone of mock regret, told a British journalist, with Lincoln present, that he had "always wondered how any man could ever get to be President of the United States with so few vices. The President, you know, I regret to say, neither drinks nor smokes." Seward, like Lincoln, was a practiced raconteur, and Lincoln told one visitor, "Mr. Seward is limited to a couple of stories which from repeating he believes are true." Their over-all agreement about the conduct of the war, and their habit of checking each other's rasher impulses, defined Administration policy.

In July, 1862, when Lincoln presented the Cabinet with a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, Seward warned that it could prompt foreign governments to intervene on behalf of the South, and said that it should be delivered at a time of military strength, not weakness. "Proclamations are paper," he wrote to Frances, "without the support of armies." Lincoln was persuaded to wait. The preliminary Proclamation was signed on September 22, 1862, after the Union victory at Antietam.

"Nineteenth-century elections were played by rough rules," Stahr writes laconically, and Seward knew exactly how to exploit them. After the New York Draft Riots, in 1863, and a string of de-

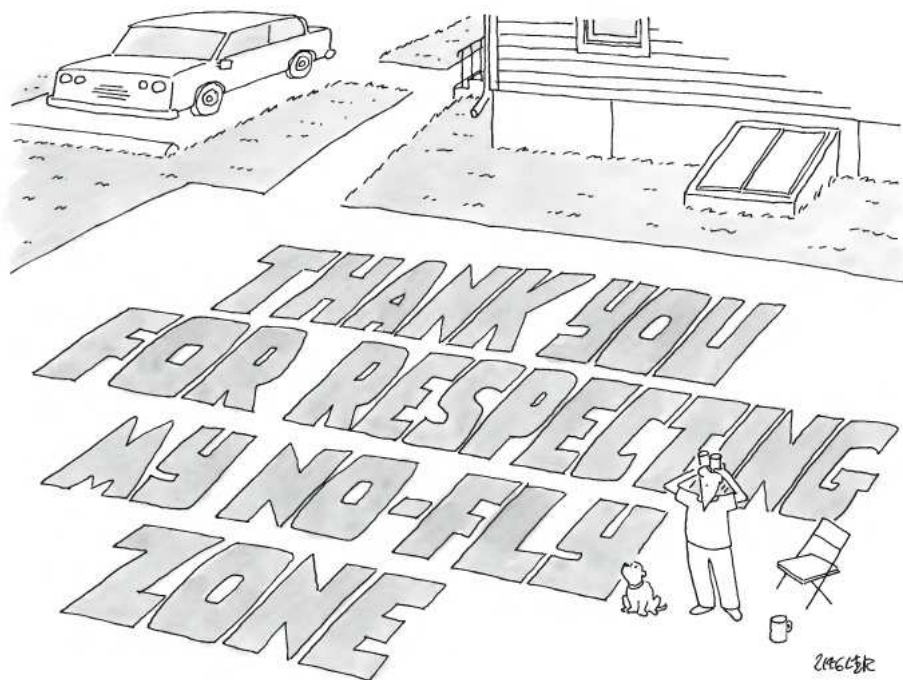
feats by Union troops, many people in the North began agitating for peace. As the election of 1864 approached, even loyal Republicans considered calling for a convention to nominate another candidate. That August, Weed went to the White House to tell Seward and Lincoln that the election was lost. Seward disagreed, and deployed Weed, the consummate party boss, to activate what Gideon Welles aptly described as the "vicious New York school of politics." Welles's Assistant Secretary of the Navy was enlisted to tell workers at the Brooklyn Navy Yard that if they didn't vote for Lincoln they would lose their jobs. Lincoln did his part, too, appointing "a few Seward-Weed men to key posts in New York City." Welles, meanwhile, scribbled in his diary about the "miserable intrigues of Weed and Seward." Outmaneuvered by his nemesis and undercut by a subordinate, Welles wrote after the results came in, "Seward was quite exultant—feels strong and self-gratified. Says this Administration is wise, energetic, faithful, and able beyond any of its predecessors."

The patronage appointments and the unscrupulous tactics continued in 1865, as Congress debated the terms of Reconstruction. Democrats tried to block the proposed Thirteenth Amendment, which would abolish slavery. Radical Republicans resisted the reinstatement of Southern congressmen, and pushed for a federal agency to protect former slaves. Lincoln and Seward, who tried to arbi-

trate between the two extremes, were determined to get the amendment through the House. They offered political positions to editors who supported it, and Seward hired disreputable lobbyists to secure the votes of resistant Democrats and ambivalent border-state Unionists. On January 31, 1865, the amendment passed. Unlike the Emancipation Proclamation, it had the power of law, and Seward predicted, prematurely, that the process of Reconstruction was almost complete.

Stahr writes with understated pathos of the terrible events that came later that year, when Seward was tested "as few men are ever tested." On April 5th, Seward embarked with several members of his family to meet Lincoln near Richmond, where the prospect of serious peace talks beckoned. Not far from home, the door to the carriage flew open, and when the driver dismounted to secure it the horses bolted. Seward leaped out, attempting to grab the reins. Instead, he fell and was carried back to his house unconscious. He had fractured his lower jaw and his right arm, and the doctor considered his condition "perilous in the extreme." Late one night nine days later, at virtually the same moment that Lincoln was shot in his box at Ford's Theatre, Seward was stabbed in bed by one of John Wilkes Booth's co-conspirators, a former Confederate soldier. Seward survived, but his son Augustus was injured, and Frederick, beaten over the head with the attacker's revolver, was in a coma for several days. Frances Seward, already frail, was undone by caring for her family and by the assassination of Lincoln. She died two months later, at the age of fifty-nine.

The following year, Seward's twenty-one-year-old daughter, Fanny, died of tuberculosis. Devastated, badly scared, and noticeably aged, Seward nevertheless continued as Secretary of State. This gives him, as Stahr puts it, "the curious distinction of having worked with and admired both Abraham Lincoln, considered one of the greatest if not the greatest of all American presidents, and Andrew Johnson, generally considered one of the worst." Johnson was a former Democrat from Tennessee, with a boorish manner and blundering political instincts. The *Chicago Tribune* was not alone in thinking that Seward had "effectually commit-



ted political suicide” by agreeing to stay on. A member of the House from Pennsylvania compared him to an old English hunting dog, tolerated because he “never bit the hand that fed him.”

In early 1867, as Radicals in Congress pursued impeachment efforts against Johnson, Seward tried both to beat them back and to persuade the President to tone down remarks in his annual message that berated Congress for forcing Southern states to accept the black vote. But Johnson, who believed that blacks had “shown less capacity for government than any other race of people,” ignored his advice. Seward was exasperated by Johnson, but he agreed, Stahr writes, “that the southern states should be allowed to govern themselves, and to rejoin the national government, without undue delay or onerous conditions.”

Seward persisted, too, in order to act upon his long-held ambitions for the American empire. After helping to preserve the Republic, he now set out to expand it. Since the eighteen-fifties, he had been advocating trade with East Asia. On a political tour with Johnson in the summer of 1867, Seward told an audience in Hartford, to vigorous applause, that the people of the United States had before them the “most glorious” prospect “that ever dawned upon any nation on the globe,” of a free nation “extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and approaching the shores of Japan and China.” He negotiated treaties with Japan, the Sandwich Islands, Madagascar, and Venezuela. “Nothing could be more important in regard to the growth of American influence and the extension of American power in the future.” Eventually, Seward was also vindicated in his determination to acquire the strategically important territories of Hawaii, the Panama Canal Zone, and Alaska.

Not, however, without engaging in some more diplomatic chicanery. He wanted Congress to pass a treaty with Russia for the purchase of Alaska, but his power had waned. In September, 1868, he admitted separately to the President and to an American diplomat that the Russian Ambassador, Édouard de Stoeckl, had siphoned two hundred thousand dollars from the Treasury Department’s seven-million-dollar check to Russia for the acquisition of the territory. The man had some incidental expenses to square

away. The editor of the *Daily Morning Chronicle* requested thirty thousand dollars in return for his support of the treaty, and Stoeckl paid thousands of dollars to ten members of Congress to win their votes. A few months later, when a House investigating committee questioned Seward about the bribes, he denied knowing anything about them. Stahr finds the evidence that Seward perjured himself “troubling,” but reminds us, “Seward was not a saint, he was a practical politician, and he was prepared if necessary to use dubious means to achieve great goals.” One of the achievements of Stahr’s subtle portrait of this confounding figure is that, in the end, our sense of Seward’s charm, and even of his integrity, survives roughly intact.

Although Seward retired at the age of sixty-eight, in 1869, when Grant assumed the Presidency, he continued to be, as Frances had described him a quarter century earlier, “the most indefatigable of men.” He said, “At my age, and in my condition of health, ‘rest was rust,’ and nothing remained, to prevent rust, but to keep in motion.” Still suffering from pain in his face and neck, his hands crippled, and paralysis creeping up his arms, he went on a journey with his family on the newly opened transcontinental railroad—a cause that he had championed in the Senate—and then on to British Columbia, Alaska, Cuba, and Mexico. He returned home for five months before setting off for Japan, China, and Europe with the two daughters of an old political friend. There had been speculation that he would marry one of them, twenty-four-year-old Olive Risley, whom he had been seeing regularly in Washington. (One paper, alluding to the age difference, described Seward as “amiable, sportive, frisky, foxy.”) Instead, Seward adopted her, thus preempting any stories about the impropriety of travelling with two very young women. After the trip, he finally settled down in Auburn, where he worked with Olive on a book about their journeys, and received frequent visitors at home.

Seward’s devoted young friend Henry Adams enjoyed observing “the old fellow” at dinner “rolling out his grand broad ideas that would inspire a cow with statesmanship if she understood our language.” He later wrote of Seward that it was difficult to tell “how much was nature and

how much was mask.” Seward was maligned alternately as an extremist and as a temporizer. He broke the law to help fugitive slaves, yet made concessions that he found personally unconscionable in order to preserve the Union. A man who literally bore the scars of a violently divided society nonetheless held on to a grandiose vision of American destiny and insured that the contours of a young nation were expanded. He was mocked for his boundless self-regard, but there was one man he came to admire even more.

When Lincoln returned from Virginia on the evening of Robert E. Lee’s official surrender, April 9, 1865, he went directly to visit Seward, who was recuperating from the carriage accident. Frederick recalled that “the gas-lights were turned down low, and the house was still, every one moving softly, and speaking in whispers.” Lincoln sat down on the bed. Seward, his face wrapped in bandages, whispered, “‘You are back from Richmond?’ ‘Yes,’ said Lincoln, ‘and I think we are near the end at last.’”

Less than a week later, Lincoln was dead and Seward and two of his sons were struggling to survive. But that night was marked by hope. Frederick recounts how the President, “leaning his tall form across the bed, and resting on his elbow,” lay down beside Seward. Lincoln talked about visiting a Union hospital earlier that day and shaking the hands of hundreds of patients. “He spoke of having worked as hard at it as sawing wood,” Fanny recorded in her diary, “and seemed, in his goodness of heart, much satisfied at the labor.”

It is easy to imagine the moment: the two canny politicians quietly reassuring each other that the country would soon be reunited and the virulent animosities of the war fade away. A few days after the 1864 election, Seward had addressed a crowd gathered at his house in Washington. According to newspaper accounts, he said that everyone would soon see Lincoln as “a true patriot, benevolent and loyal, honest and faithful. Hereafter, all motive of detraction of him would cease to exist, and Abraham Lincoln would take his place with Washington, Jefferson, and Adams, among the benefactors of his country and the human race.” This was not rote political rhetoric. He believed every word. ♦



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BRIEFLY NOTED

Privacy, by Garret Keizer (*Picador*). In this short, unapologetically angry book, Keizer insists that privacy is an essential human value, rooted in "a creaturely resistance to being used against one's will." It is also, he argues, largely a matter of money, enjoyed by the wealthy and chased after by the poor. If we are to preserve it against its ever-increasing threats—corporate data mining, social-networking sites, a voyeuristic media, and government-sanctioned spying and torture, to name only a few—we must treat it as a social obligation. Brief, pointed chapters tackle the subject from various historical and social perspectives—a chapter on writers and privacy feels especially urgent—drawing on Supreme Court cases, literature, and personal experience. Keizer's fundamental assertion, that privacy is "important and worthy of preservation for the simple reason that human beings are important and worthy of preservation," is timely and profound.

Ryszard Kapuściński, by Artur Domostawski (*Verso*). Kapuściński is said to have kept two notebooks: one for the reports he filed with the Polish news agency that sent him abroad, and the other for impressions that he later used in his books on tyranny, power, and revolution. The divergences between them have led to accusations that he fabricated facts. Domostawski's biography, despite concentrating on the scandal to the point of neglecting other aspects of Kapuściński's life and work, tends to suspend judgment. He seems fascinated by moral gray areas—Kapuściński neglected his family, had affairs, spied for Poland's government, and maintained his Party membership until 1981—but always takes a lenient view. He praises Kapuściński's work as "non-fiction which does not hold fiction in contempt" and accepts the writer's view that "committed, 'non-objective' journalism" is a way of restoring "dignity to the man from the Third World, disdained and humiliated for centuries." As Kapuściński once said, "I

don't want to stop at observation, I want to take part."

John Saturnall's Feast, by Lawrence Norfolk (*Grove*). Norfolk, the author of ornate period novels, here uses his talent for detail to evoke the life of a cook at a seventeenth-century British manor. The cook, John Saturnall, cooks dishes derived from a book of ancient recipes owned by his mother, a village midwife and apothecary who was hounded by locals as a witch. The recipes were handed down from a sect of nature worshippers in pre-Christian Britain. Saturnall's elaborate banquets include the fantastically named "Foam of Forcemeats of Fowls" and "Broth of Lampreys and all the Fishes that swam in the Days before Eden." Norfolk creates a Manichaean struggle between Christian and pagan traditions, but this is ultimately less rewarding than the completeness of the physical world he describes—for instance, the way dishes are washed in the scullery troughs, which are "built of jointed elm planks and lined with thick yellow grease."

In Between Days, by Andrew Porter (*Knopf*). Porter's first novel follows two rebellious college-age siblings untethered by their parents' recent divorce. Set mostly in



Houston, the story includes a criminal investigation, gay prostitution, a lascivious writing professor, an unplanned pregnancy, heavy drug use, the end of a thirty-year marriage, a series of hate crimes at a prestigious East Coast college, and, perhaps most harrowing of all, an application to graduate school. The plot, while at times compelling and inventive, could have been more imaginatively rendered. The use of an omniscient narrator precludes suspense and means that characters' emotions are often glossed over. The book's melodramatic tendencies—and lines such as "Was it possible that she'd begun to have feelings for him again?"—seem to betray an anxiety that none of the action is sufficiently interesting.

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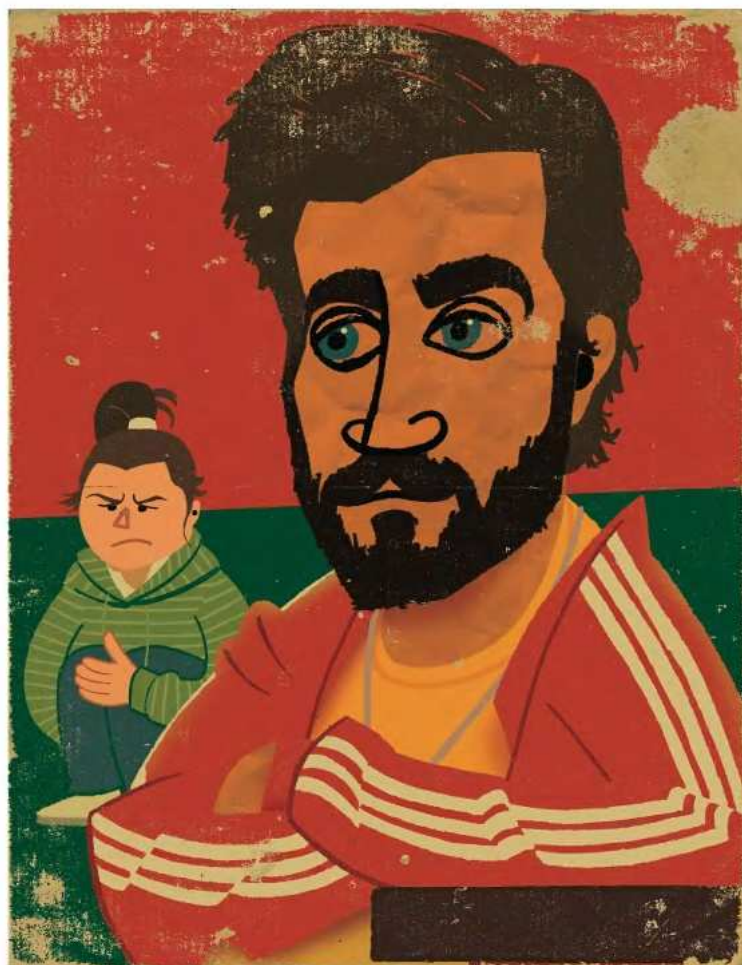
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TIES THAT BLIND

Families in free fall in plays by Nick Payne and Lisa D'Amour.

BY JOHN LAHR



Enter Nick Payne, a strapping British playwright at the beginning of a great career. Still in his twenties, Payne exudes none of his generation's glib nihilism. His voice is quiet and quirky, his imagination bold. His plays aspire to intellectual and visual astonishment, combining curiosity and compassion into satisfying puzzles, which bring together public concerns and private griefs in order to explore the irony between the realms. His play "Constellations" (which was staged at the Royal Court, in London, earlier this year, and is being remounted on the West End in November) is a brilliant metaphysical meditation that touches on science, cancer, death, and ro-

mance. Now Payne is making his American debut, with a 2009 work, "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet" (at the Laura Pels), which uses the front-page issues of climate change, obesity, and school bullying as paths to a deeper inquiry into *Homo sapiens'* self-destructiveness. In addition to the luck of talent, Payne has had the luck of collaboration with the director Michael Longhurst, who matches his playful rigor with an inventiveness all his own.

As the audience arrives, a curtain of rain is pelting down into a glass tank that extends, moatlake, along the front of the proscenium. Center stage, the usual paraphernalia of family melodrama—chairs, tables, beds, bureaus—have been tipped over and

crammed together, in a sort of Rubik's Cube of clutter, as if the entire set were about to be shipped to another location. (From the pile, the actors grab what they need to set each scene.) A fifteen-year-old named Anna (the excellent Annie Funke) wanders around the idiosyncratic set in school uniform, sneakers, and backpack, then sits down in a chair upstage and waits for the show to begin. When it does, what we hear about is not Anna and her problems, which are at the heart of the play, but her father's obsession with saving the planet.

George (the expert Brian F. O'Byrne) is writing a book called "How Green Are Your Tomatoes: The Carbon Footprint of Practically Everything." He's a fanatic. "A latte a day, for instance, equates to roughly the same CO₂ as a sixty-mile drive in an average car," he says. "Everything, you see, everything counts a little more than we think." George preaches the gospel of eternal vigilance. In his self-absorption, however, he pays no attention to his family or to the toxic emotional footprint he is leaving on it. "George, I miss you," his wife, Fiona (Michelle Gomez), a buttoned-down schoolteacher, tells him. "And I understand why you're doing what you're doing and I understand the time it takes. But there's a bit of me that's starting to worry." Fiona, too, is an absent presence. Caught up in a school staging of "War of the Worlds," she doesn't recognize at first that her daughter—who has recently transferred to the school—is being bullied. (Anna has been suspended for two weeks for head-butting a girl who poured custard in her shoes.) "Have I single-handedly turned my only child into an antisocial, overweight loner?" Fiona asks. No, the play makes clear, she's had help from her husband. When they are both called to account, the indictment comes from George's deadhead younger brother, Terry (Jake Gyllenhaal), who returns from a year and a half of wanderlust to crash at their house, and forms a friendship with Anna. "That girl has been criminally fucking neglected!" Terry shouts.

As Gyllenhaal superbly plays him, Terry is a bearded, feral soul, who sidles into view in a gray knit cap and a yellow T-shirt, at once heartbroken and hapless. "I, I. I fuck things up. And it drives me mad," he says. He's full of good intentions and bad advice. (He suggests to Anna that she tell her school tormentor "that if she gives you any more grief, I'll be taking

Funke and Gyllenhaal, as niece and uncle, in "If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet."

shits on her doorstep for the next month and a half.”) He can’t mobilize thought; he is clueless—a state that is betrayed by his syntax. His sentences, like his life, have no direction or resolution. “Prb’ly shoulda rung or something, but,” he says when he sees Anna (whom he addresses as “Hannah”) for the first time. “Phone was fucked and I thought, by the time I’ve arsed around getting change for the fucking. You know the phone, and that, thought I might as well just.”

Terry is a kissing cousin of David Mamet’s feckless idiot Teach, in “American Buffalo.” (When Terry talks about the guy his ex-girlfriend has taken up with—“And fuckin’, fuckin’. Richard fucking . . .”—you can hear echoes of Teach’s famous entrance: “Fuckin’ Ruthie, fuckin’ Ruthie.”) Gyllenhaal parses every piquant note of Terry’s paradoxical nature, keeping his danger and his decency in balance. In unboundaried moments, Terry offers Anna beer, condoms, and a joint, and lets her slip out on a date. At other times, he seems to have a more adult purchase on reality. “What’s y’d daughter’s favorite subject, George?” he asks his brother. “What’s her favorite meal? Favorite film, favorite band. Any of it. Stab in the dark, George. Need to think about what y’doing.”

In a finely pitched, toe-curling scene, in which George struggles to make contact with Anna over an Indian meal—“It was recommended, you see. I’m told they source everything locally”—he excuses himself from the table to take a business call. Anna walks out of the restaurant and into the next scene, upstage, where she proceeds to undress and lower herself into a large tub of water. Anna sinks under the water and stays under for a long time; when she comes up for air, she tries to slit her wrists. As she does, water starts to sluice downstage into the long tank. At this point, “If There Is I Haven’t Found It Yet” turns from play to parable. The stage fills with water; the characters slosh, ankle deep, through the mess they’ve helped to make.

In the course of the evening, the characters occasionally toss a prop or a piece of furniture, without explanation, into the tank at the front of the stage. (The night I saw the show, a stool, a sabre-toothed-tiger skull, a flour cannister, an orange, a ketchup bottle, a bike, and pages of manuscript bobbed in the water.) At the finale, as George begins to read from his book—“Everything that follows is dedicated in its

entirety to my wife and daughter”—the spectacle of sodden detritus below him works as a thrilling metaphor of the trail of destruction that man leaves in his capricious passage through time.

The title of Lisa D’Amour’s sharp, satirizing comedy “Detroit” (well directed by Anne Kauffman, at Playwrights Horizons) refers not to the city but to the state of collapse that it embodies. Here four suburban next-door neighbors get acquainted over a patio barbecue—during which the patio door won’t close, the umbrella collapses, and nothing else in life is working well, either. Kenny (Darren Pettie) and Sharon (Sarah Sokolovic)—who met in rehab and don’t yet have furniture—are being hosted by Mary (Amy Ryan), a paralegal, and her forlorn husband, Ben (the droll David Schwimmer), who has been laid off by the bank where he worked and is apparently setting up a Web site and a financial-planning business. Through energetic palaver about medical problems, cooking, and entertainment, the characters begin to reveal the fragility of their identities: we’re looking at a collection of lost souls trying to dummy up a destiny for themselves.

At another get-together, the couples start to dance. As the boom box pulses, the fun develops, by degrees, into a frenzied and sidesplitting saturnalia. Spinning, kicking, hopping like dervishes, the couples are urged onward by the rhythm and the release of the dance, to which the ensemble fully commits itself. (Ryan is particularly hilarious as she bops and swoops maniacally around the stage.) Kenny and Ben start chanting “I’m feeling, I’m feeling . . .” Ben continues, “I’m feeling like telling the truth.” In chorus mode, the others answer, “Tell it, baby, tell it. Tell it, baby, tell it.” Ben replies, “I have no Web site. I have no business cards. I have no plan, I got nothing! Nothing, nothing, nothing!” And Kenny and Sharon swirl around him, singing, “Ben’s got nothing, Ben’s got nothing.” Sharon adds, “When you are at zero, anything can happen.” Sexual boundaries are broken, furniture is smashed; finally, in one ecstatic and incendiary *coup de foudre*, Mary and Ben’s dream of the good life goes up in smoke. The suburbs once personified the American dream. A dream, “Detroit” seems to be saying, is something you may be forced to wake up from. ♦



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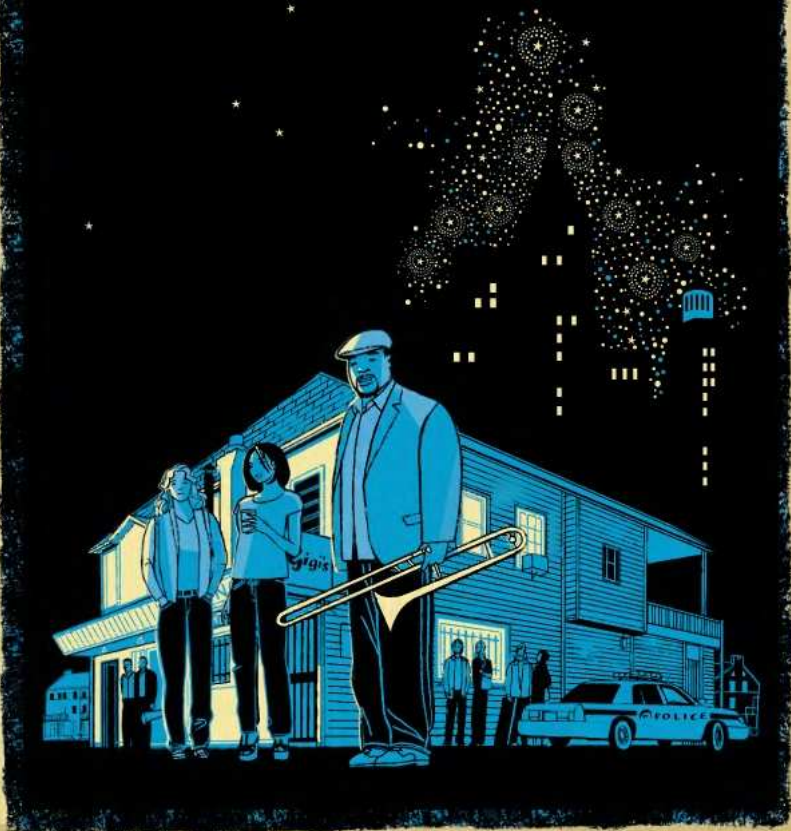
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ON TELEVISION

ROUX WITH A VIEW

The flawed, seductive appeal of "Treme."

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



The show's strongest theme is not politics but the artist's life, not justice but beauty.

In the first episode of the new season of "Treme," a musician gets a rave notice, but it doesn't make him happy. "So now it's not enough to get a good review?" his agent asks. "You need the reviewer to actually understand the work?"

The jazz star Delmond, who is played by Rob Brown, is just one of a number of artists in "Treme" who are struggling to make something original, often by melding an older idea with something new: in Delmond's case, he's mixed modern jazz with the music of his father, the propulsive chanting of the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian subculture. But, when the album comes out, even Wynton Marsalis turns into an underminer. "He gave me one of those Wynton compliments,"

Delmond complains, casting a wary glance over his own release party. "He called it 'an interesting amalgam'—not quite jazz, but intriguing for what it is."

As with so many of "Treme"'s scenes of the creative life, there's a lot of meta in that moment. In the past two seasons, critics have dished up our share of Wynton compliments, as well as a few direct insults, calling the show slow, or preachy, or a little too in love with the city it portrays. Then there's the problem of the series' origins: "Treme," now entering its third and possibly final season, is David Simon's follow-up to his beloved series "The Wire," and when the show debuted on HBO, in 2010, it was like a new student entering a school where everyone

keeps talking about how much they loved his big brother. And there was, in fact, a family resemblance: like "The Wire," "Treme" was an ensemble portrait of a down-and-out city—post-Katrina New Orleans instead of drug-war Baltimore—with an emphasis on the city's neglect of its black population. But what differed was the perspective: while "The Wire" was an indictment, "Treme" was a spiked celebration, made up of loosely linked stories of natives rebuilding their lives. With its focus on musicians rather than cops, the show lobbied for the city's philosophy—life as a parade!—while making regular stops for rants about FEMA. But have you ever heard anyone go on about how great some place is, with passive-aggressive hints that anyone who doesn't like it just doesn't get it? That was a good chunk of "Treme," Season 1.

Then, toward the end of that season, and particularly in the glorious, languorous second season, "Treme" found its footing, as well as its strongest theme: not politics but the artist's life, not justice but beauty. There were still pedantic elements, but they were less of an issue, and characters who had bugged viewers in Season 1 sparked to life. The jazz-nerd d.j. and musician Davis McAlary (Steve Zahn) became charming rather than irritating, and there was a wry self-awareness all around about New Orleans parochialism. There was also an affecting plot involving the rape of LaDonna, a local bar owner. Most of all, there was genuine payoff in the conversations among the show's many musicians and chefs, a sense of exploration—instead of lecturing—about tensions within the creative life. Is it more valuable to educate people or to make them dance? Can specificity make a song universal? Should you try to make something perfect, or beautiful—or new but flawed?

What really started to come through was the show's peculiar, floating narrative structures—its visually lovely sequences that linked together playfully, often without overt dramatic stakes. Unlike every other major cable drama, "Treme" is not a riff on (or a deconstruction of) any familiar TV genre: it's not a Mob show, a cop show, a soap opera, a sitcom, or a screwball comedy. It can be downright mulish about burying its rare moments of violence or sex. Simon has said that his inspiration was the filmmaker Robert

Altman. In “Treme”’s finest party scenes—the show is full of parties, and, when they kick in, watching can feel like being at one—there’s the Altman effect, of the half glance and the unresolved chord. This lends the show an appealing drift, but it also removes a narrative safety net: you’re either in the flow or you’re out.

Season 3—the full season was sent to reviewers—has indelible sequences, but it’s a mixed bag. If you find jazz snobs annoying, or foodies annoying, or quietly dignified people who go “mmm-hmm” annoying, there will be parts of “Treme” that you’ll find annoying. I’ve met people from New Orleans who find the series as agitating as some journalists find “The Newsroom,” with which it shares the gimmick of being set in the recent past, manipulating history; many locals personally witnessed “Treme”’s events. (To my mind, “Treme” pulls this trick off more successfully, but what do I know—I live in Brooklyn.) The show is, as ever, full of raucous musical performances—sequences so good that they rescue the slower episodes. (There is a wider variety of musical genres this season: a new character, an investigative journalist based on the ProPublica writer A. C. Thompson, even likes heavy metal.) But there are also excessively on-the-nose moments, when we’re told what to think and whom to root for, and, in a few plots, there’s a muffled virtue that deadens drama.

The weakest plots involve stock figures, like the rich-bitch sister-in-law of one character, who might as well be a star of “Real Housewives of New Orleans.” Far better are the scenes of Davis’s family of uptown New Orleans natives—racists and snobs who are charmers, not straw men. Among the show’s greatest strengths is Janette (the excellent Kim Dickens), a put-upon chef who left New Orleans for Manhattan, but finds herself drawn back home. (In one of my favorite scenes, she goes home and opens her refrigerator: there’s nothing there.) But it’s disappointing to see other characters curdle into decency. I felt a shameful ping of excitement when a character went off the wagon, if only because I sensed HBO-brand strip-pers and blow on the horizon.

There are still many gemlike elements in Season 3, like a scene in the second episode, in which Antoine—a formerly dissolute second-line musician who is now a sober family man, teaching music in a

run-down public school—is alone in a classroom. When a music student walks in, Antoine begins to sing the call and response in “Marie Laveau,” relishing the comical rumble of his own low, growly voice. The student smiles, and the rhythms between the two characters glide easily back and forth, without the brisk editing that would cut such a scene short in many other series. I enjoyed a goofy plot involving Davis’s attempt to create a Verdi-meets-R. & B. opera about post-Katrina New Orleans, an “interesting amalgam” that is never established as brassy genius or total bullshit—maybe it’s both. There are subjects I’ve rarely seen dramatized, like the slow burn of LaDonna’s frustration as her terrible case wends through the system. But other plots about broken institutions—corrupt funding for post-Katrina construction, the crimes of the New Orleans Police Department—are so muted that it can be hard to tell what’s going on. I admire the restraint of the series, its refusal to pander; I share its politics. But admiration isn’t always the same as enjoyment.

Still, when the show got to Mardi Gras, all my reservations disappeared. The sequences in which the headdress-wearing Indians faced off in the street were baffling, chaotic, and sensual. The screen flooded with red and green. My eyes felt as if they were being stroked and sparked. If I’d been hungry during the restaurant scenes, the sight of dancers swaying made me want to move, or maybe move south. There was also a single, tender-funny sex scene that made the lacquered kink of “Game of Thrones” feel like kid stuff. It was an episode that made me wonder if, rather than a novel or a movie, a TV show could be a poem.

“I know it did not turn out exactly the way you wanted it,” one character reassures another, when a creative project goes bust. “But really it is *fine*.” The two are in a bar, in a mood of ease and resignation. It felt like a valedictory remark. “Treme” may never be appreciated quite the way it wants to be. But that doesn’t mean it didn’t bring something wonderful to the party.

After only a dozen fast-burning episodes, Showtime’s espionage drama “Homeland” became one of last season’s most exciting debuts. A spy-versus-spy story about an unstable former prisoner

of war (Damian Lewis) pursued by an even more unstable intelligence officer (Claire Danes), the show was riveting, elegant, affecting, sexy—really, I don’t have enough adjectives in stock. As impressive as the scripts were, the performances were better, visceral in a way that’s rare for TV. (I could write a whole thesis about Claire Danes’s crumpled chin.)

Based on an Israeli drama, “Homeland” is the work of Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon, who were behind the Fox hit “24.” The adaptation they created shares many structural elements with that earlier network hit, including stylized cliff hangers. But, while “24” was Bush-era propaganda, “Homeland” feels like a rebuttal. Its central theme is the way American policies—particularly our country’s use of drone warfare—can motivate, not eliminate, Islamic terrorism. And where “24” glamorized torture, portraying it as something a hero could shrug off, “Homeland” treats trauma as indelible, a poignant catastrophe that bonds the show’s two supposed enemies. Of course, none of this made it any less exciting. In the show’s most unnerving choice, the finale came down to one man in a vest strapped with explosives, his eyes twitching, standing in a bunker full of the most important people in the U.S. government.

That bomb didn’t go off, or we wouldn’t be talking about Season 2. I spent most of this summer working up a head of steam about how, as terrific as “Homeland” is, that bomb should have exploded. It would have made “Homeland” an uncompromising one-season series—something impossible, because of those damn TV economics. After this season’s premiere, I still clung, if loosely, to my conviction, despite a single Claire Danes facial expression that got me excited all over again. But during the second episode I started punching the air, screaming “No!” and clutching my face, and ignoring implausibilities like a total sucker. I’m not going to spoil it for you, and I have absolutely no idea if they can pull this season off. But I’ll be watching. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER
From the Barre Montpelier (Vt.) Times Argus.

A concerned citizen reported a burdock leaf at the side of the bike path.

KILLING TIME

"Looper" and "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion."

BY ANTHONY LANE

There are many clever things about Rian Johnson's "Looper," but the coup is in the casting. Given that the movie messes with time and space, it seems only right that the leading role, that of Joe, should go to two actors who are skilled in such foolery. The young Joe is played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who starred in Johnson's debut feature,

ourselves. And that is the story of Joe.

He tells some of it himself. "Time travel has not yet been invented. But thirty years from now it will have been," he says. We've barely begun, and already those tenses are enough to make us queasy. The sensation deepens as we realize that Joe is speaking in the year 2044, which looks pretty much like



Bruce Willis and Joseph Gordon-Levitt play the same role in Rian Johnson's movie.

"Brick" (2005), and who showed, by floating through "Inception," that he was not a man to be pegged down by gravity and other mundane demands. The older Joe is played by Bruce Willis, who, though as solid as chuck steak, seems happy to flout any laws of physics that come his way, most notably in "Twelve Monkeys." That film was based on "La Jetée" (1962), the boldest exploration of time travel ever launched, which lasted twenty-eight minutes and ended with someone observing his own death. The director, Chris Marker, saw that the most daunting effect of changing the clock was not that we might salvage a world in peril, or vault ahead to weird new worlds, as envisaged by H. G. Wells, but that we might bump into

2012, but worse; the streets of America have a scavenged and desperate air. Drugs are taken as eyedrops. Getting rid of people is easy, whereas by the twenty-seventies the task will have grown much harder, which is why criminal bosses are sending their enemies, bound and hooded, back to 2044, where they are instantly shot and disposed of by Loopers—contract assassins, run by the mild and menacing Abe (Jeff Daniels). Joe is a Looper, as is his pal Seth (Paul Dano). They have little to lose; they get silver for their sins, like Judas; and their one true fear is of having to close the loop. When that happens, as it does first to Seth, and then to Joe, the fellow who appears before you, ready to be wiped off the map, is you. You in

thirty years' time, but still you. What if you don't want to die, though? What if you hit you in the face, and take off?

Now, some viewers—kids under twenty, and professors of quantum physics—will eat this stuff for breakfast, relishing each spicy counterfactual twist. I am not one of them. The mere effort of trying to sort out the maybes, the would-haves, and the might-yets that populate a film like "Looper" makes me feel that my neocortex has been removed and replaced with Juicy Fruit, much chewed. That dumbness, however, is part of the fun, and there is a strange, befuddling joy in responding to a film with mouth agape, one finger pointing heavenward, as you struggle to formulate a question that will not come. You feel it, in "Looper," when Joe sits down opposite Joe, in a diner. Both of them want steak and eggs, of course, done the same way. "Rare and scrambled," the old Joe says to the waitress. He also calls his youthful self an idiot. Some things never change.

"Looper" is a peculiar product, though, in ways that reach beyond the Möbius strip of its plot. What starts as a city movie, rough and grungy, slows down, takes a left turn, and spends its second half on a remote farm, where a woman named Sara (Emily Blunt) lives with her young son, Cid (Pierce Gagnon). She is first seen swinging an axe, and she confronts young Joe—who by now is on the lam, pursued by Abe's men—with a shotgun when he emerges from a field of tall crops and begs for a place to stay. All this feels ominously random, until Johnson, with stealth and patience, starts to knit his strands together. Both Joes are seeking a child who will, unless destroyed or diverted, grow up to become the Rainmaker—a villain of the future, who will bring universal havoc in his wake. The theft from "The Terminator" is fairly clear, and source-hunters should also pick up scraps of "The Omen," "Signs," "Blade Runner," "Back to the Future," and even "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"—consider the pastoral setting, and the not-quite-cherubic look on the kid's face.

So is Rian Johnson paying homage here, or setting intractable puzzles, or has he forged something that stands up on its own? There's a disastrous decision

to morph Gordon-Levitt's face, with its kind and slender eyes, so as to make him more proto-Willis. Whether this was done with padding and mascara or by some other means, he looks as if he can't wait to pull on fishnets and run to a "Rocky Horror" theme night. You want to call the director and say, We get it—both men are Joe. Sure, one is bald and stocky, and the other has the frame of Fred Astaire, but neither of them, faced with the nuttiness of reality, is ever more than an inch away from a smile, and that's enough. Still, the rest of "Looper," for all its mayhem, runs like a mad and slightly sad machine, whirring with hints of folly and regret, and the ending, remarkably, makes elegant sense to a degree that eludes most science fictions. How to describe it, without giving anything away? Scrambled, but rare.

The paucity of political films, in an election year, is unsurprising. It may well be that viewers, escaping the shrapnel of political commentary and advertising on TV, take refuge in cinema, craving anything but topical themes. Nonetheless, for those who can bear to be reminded of how authority can turn bad, like milk, a sour parable is at hand: Elio Petri's "Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion," from 1970, playing at Film Forum from September 28th to October 4th.

Gian Maria Volonté, who won his spurs in "A Fistful of Dollars," stars as a man with no name. Comfortable though he looked in Western leathers, Volonté seems ten times meaner in a suit. Not just any suit but, for much of the film, a three-button number in midnight blue, with

thin lapels, which he wears with a white shirt and black tie, and which, naturally, is a perfect match for his Alfa Romeo. Add the sweep of black hair, the strut of the gait, the unbreakable jaw, and a distinct aroma of the feral, and the result could be Sean Connery's Italian cousin. Mind you, 007 sported two buttons on his jacket, and he would rather have died than mislay his cool, whereas Volonté, here, at least, is a shouter.

We meet his character during his last day as chief of homicide in the Roman police force. He marks his departure by committing a serious crime: murdering his mistress, Augusta Terzi (Florinda Bolkan), in her florid apartment, for reasons that are never entirely clear. Is this a pure existentialist act, bereft of any cause but its own absurdity? Does he want to flex his fascistic muscles, in order to show—as the title suggests—what a man in his position can get away with? Or does he secretly, unbeknownst to himself, want to be trapped and humbled? There is something bizarre in the clues that he leaves behind, wiping off most but not all of his fingerprints. And, as we learn from flashbacks, Augusta and he were coiled in a game of erotic risk—she used to pose for him as the victim of an assault, but also to taunt him with gibes about his potency.

"Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion" should be paired in a double bill with "The Conformist." Bertolucci's film responded with greater finesse to the lure of the totalitarian state, whereas Petri's ideological drive, more stubborn and sarcastic, emerges as his hero, newly promoted to chief of political intelligence, dictates terms to his colleagues.

"The city is sick," he says, adding, "Repression is our only vaccination." This cleansing rant reminds you of Mussolini and Goebbels, or of the Red Queen berating Alice, and the movie's political stance is not hard to discern. Both Petri and Volonté were members of the Italian Communist Party, and it's especially delicious to learn that their efforts were rewarded with the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film of 1970. The film may have dated as a cautionary left-wing tale, yet it has stayed fresh as a study in the minutiae of power—the hand on the shoulder, the dismissive wave, or the patronizing squeeze of a cheek.

Whether the result is a private case study of the libido besieged and unleashed, or whether we follow Petri and read Volonté's rampage as proof of a wider insanity, is for every viewer to judge. There is certainly no denying the sublime irony of a law enforcer who strives to declare his guilt, in the face of his colleagues' disbelief. They would prefer a confession of innocence; no wonder the story closes with a quotation from Kafka. So striking are these late scenes, indeed, and so stylish is Petri's rearrangement of moral logic, that he is able to split the movie's climax into two alternatives—recounting one in full, then freezing the final frame on another, leaving us doubtful and perturbed. Will the cop still be a cop tomorrow? Where does time go from here? Unlike Rian Johnson, Elio Petri refuses to close the loop. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM/GO/FRONTROW

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Sidney Harris, must be received by Sunday, September 30th. The finalists in the September 17th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 15th 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



Walrus

"I think my wife is having us tailed."
Marianne L. Kelly, Lancaster, Pa.



THE FINALISTS

"Quick, before Bloomberg bans it!"
Rita Costanzo, Staten Island, N.Y.

"When."
Victoria Y. Rice, New York City

"Best decaf in town, Dolores."
Krista Van Wart, Brooklyn, N.Y.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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"THE QUEST
FOR A
GREAT NEW MUSICAL
IS OVER."

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Roald Dahl's
Matilda
THE MUSICAL

BOOK BY DENNIS KELLY MUSIC AND LYRICS BY TIM MINCHIN

LAST YEAR, A NEW MUSICAL OPENED IN LONDON AND MADE THEATRICAL HISTORY, winning more Olivier awards than any show... ever. This March, London's record-breaking hit arrives on Broadway. Based on the beloved book by the brilliantly batty ROALD DAHL, MATILDA is the story of an extraordinary girl who decides that despite a bad beginning, her journey is going to be an astonishing one. Tony Award[®]-winning director MATTHEW WARCHUS (*God of Carnage*, *The Norman Conquests*) helms this exhilarating and ingenious production.

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