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THE NEW YORKER



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FEBRUARY 16, 2015

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PODCASTS: On the Political Scene, Dorothy Wickenden talks with Ryan Lizza and Michael Specter about the measles outbreak and the anti-vaccine movement. Plus, Amelia Lester and Nick Paumgarten on Out Loud.

VIDEO: The latest episode of "The Cartoon Lounge," with Robert Mankoff.

FICTION AND POETRY: Readings by Amelia Gray, Andrea Cohen, and Hai-Dang Phan.

THE MAIL

THE BUSH CLASSROOM

I read Alec MacGillis's piece on the education reforms of Jeb Bush with a careful eye ("Testing Time," January 26th). In my twenty-five years of experience in education, I have found that Florida's success story surpasses that of all other states. When Bush became governor, in 1999, more than sixty per cent of minority and low-income fourth graders couldn't read at a basic level, which doomed them to failure in future grades. Barely half of Florida's high-school seniors were graduating. After Bush's programs were enacted, Florida's gains in math and reading, according to the federally funded Nation's Report Card, were larger than they were anywhere else in the country—save Washington, D.C., which also used rigorous accountability systems and choice to improve education. The graduation rate has improved twenty-five per cent, and is at an all-time high. This reversal came about because Bush measured results, held schools accountable, and exposed them to competition. As adults vested in the system protested, student achievement accelerated. Business does have something to gain from this—an educated citizenry.

Jeanne Allen

Founder, Senior Fellow, and President Emeritus

*The Center for Education Reform
Washington, D.C.*

SAFE ENOUGH TO EAT

Wil S. Hylton's piece about contaminated food raises important concerns ("A Bug in the System," February 2nd). In 1963, I joined the New Jersey State Department of Health as an epidemiologist, investigating outbreaks of infectious diseases. Food-disease outbreaks due to salmonella serotypes were among the most common. Feed, poultry, and poultry products were commonly contaminated. The con-

sensus was that all poultry would be handled as if it were infected with salmonella. Recognized controls would be enforced. Essential to the prevention of food disease is the ongoing education of food handlers. This presents real challenges, due to the high turnover of personnel, whose salaries and educational requirements are minimal. This education must be extended to the kitchen at home, the front line for curbing salmonella. Time and temperature controls, as well as sanitization of work surfaces and hands, are basic measures that should be understood by all who touch food.

Howard Rosenfeld

Margate, N.J.

In 1987, the U.S. Department of Agriculture official William H. Dubbert told a poultry symposium at Colorado State University, "We know more about controlling salmonella than we are willing to implement because of the cost factor." In 2007, an article in the trade publication *WATT Poultry USA* said, "We all know that pathogens of all forms, such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses, are everywhere in the animal-production environment and will remain, regardless of techniques adopted." The poultry industry's response is to bathe the birds after slaughter in a wash of chlorine and other potentially toxic substances, including peracetic acid. Conditions will worsen as the global scale of production increases. If you pack creatures into filthy, sunless places and provide them with only "feed-grade" ingredients—a primary source of salmonella, avian influenza, and other diseases—sickness will follow.

Karen Davis

*President, United Poultry Concerns
Machipongo, Va.*

•
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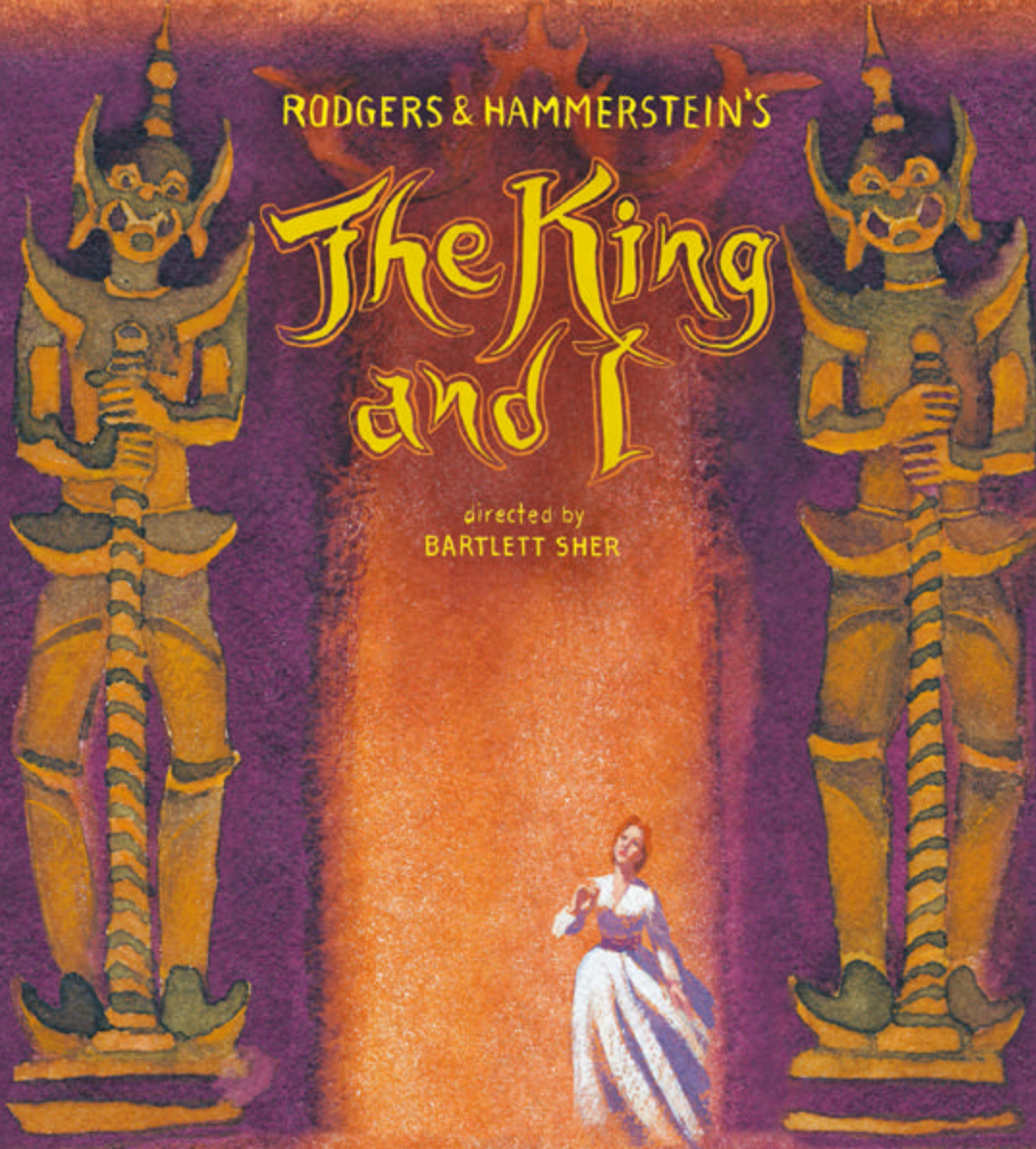
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MOVIES ARE MADE by tricking the eye, and perhaps no director deployed more cheap tricks with more workingman's glee than John Carpenter. Through Feb. 22, BAM Cinémathèque is showing a complete retrospective of his movies. Carpenter made his career with popcorn-spilling horror, but then took his instincts for exploitation in unusual directions. Highlights include "They Live," certainly the only prescient critique of consumerism to star the wrestler Rowdy Roddy Piper, and "Escape from New York," the cult movie from 1981 that imagined a Manhattan of 1997 as a maximum-security prison. There was a sequel, of course, "Escape from L.A.," memorable for the scene of Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) surfing on Wilshire Boulevard. Carpenter's movies are loose, anarchic, and absurdly plotted—never slick or self-aware—yet they have a knack for being unforgettable.

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Animals Out of Paper

Yolo! Productions and the Great Griffon present a revival of a play by Rajiv Joseph, in which an origami artist invites a teen-age prodigy and his teacher into her studio. Merri Milwe directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (West Park Presbyterian Church, 165 W. 86th St. 212-868-4444.)

The Audience

Helen Mirren stars in a play by Peter Morgan, about Queen Elizabeth II and her private meetings with twelve Prime Ministers in the course of sixty years. Stephen Daldry directs. Also starring Dylan Baker and Judith Ivey. Previews begin Feb. 14. (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Bright Half Life

Tanya Barfield wrote this play, about the long relationship of a lesbian couple. Leigh Silverman directs the Women's Project production. Previews begin Feb. 17. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

The Events

David Greig wrote this play, in which a community attempts to heal following a violent incident. A different community choir sings at each performance. Ramin Gray directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-279-4200.)

Everything You Touch

Jessica Kubzansky directs the New York premiere of a play by Sheila Callaghan, about a clothing designer in the nineteen-seventies and a woman in the present day whose size makes her an outsider in the fashion world. In previews. Opens Feb. 12. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111.)

Fashions for Men

Davis McCallum directs a revival of Ferenc Molnár's comedy from 1922, which revolves around a haberdasher in Budapest whose respectability has an adverse effect on his life. In previews. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111.)

Hamilton

Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote this musical about Alexander Hamilton, in which the birth of America is presented as an immigrant story. Thomas Kail directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 17. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

The Insurgents

Lucy Thurber wrote this play, about a wanderer who returns home to her small town and begins to identify with rebels like Harriet Tubman and Timothy McVeigh. Jackson Gay directs the Labyrinth Theatre

Company production. In previews. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-513-1080.)

The Mystery of Love & Sex

Bathsheba Doran ("Kin") wrote this play, about two childhood friends who begin a romance in college. Starring Diane Lane, Tony Shalhoub, Mamoudou Athie, Bernie Passeltiner, and Gayle Rankin. Sam Gold directs the Lincoln Center Theatre production. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Nether

MCC presents a psychological thriller by Jennifer Haley, about a dangerously addictive online world, starring Merritt Wever, Peter Friedman, Ben Rosenfield, and Frank Wood. Anne Kauffman directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

An Octoroon

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's play, based on an 1859 melodrama by Dion Boucicault, premiered at SoHo Rep last year; it gets a return engagement at Theatre for a New Audience. Previews begin Feb. 14. (Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111.)

On the Twentieth Century

Kristin Chenoweth and Peter Gallagher star in the musical comedy by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, with music by Cy Coleman, about a Broadway producer who tries to woo a movie star during a cross-country train journey. Scott Ellis directs, for Roundabout Theatre Company. Previews begin Feb. 12. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

Rocket to the Moon

Peccadillo Theatre Company revives the 1938 play by Clifford Odets, in which a dentist in an unhappy marriage falls in love with his assistant. Dan Wackerman directs. In previews. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 866-811-4111.)

The Winter's Tale

The Pearl, in association with the Shakespeare Society, presents the Shakespeare play, directed by Michael Sexton. In previews. (555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261.)

NOW PLAYING

City Of

In the program, the writer of this play, Anton Dudley, says that it started as an "exploration of The In-Between." That might explain why the four main characters stumble around Paris drunk, sleepwalking, or dreaming (it's not clear which), looking for parts of themselves that are missing: a gay orphan (Jon Norman Schneider) meets a

prostitute who turns out to be his mother; a wannabe opera singer (Colby Minifie) finds her voice while running through the sewers; a naked art collector (Devin Norik) talks to his dead mother while she rubs paint on his arms; an old woman (Suzanne Bertish) asks Paul Verlaine's ghost if he's seen her dead father. The characters speak in dreamy voices, sometimes in unison. Under the direction of Stephen Brackett, this Playwrights Realm production is occasionally funny but more often goofy and sophomoric. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Let the Right One In

John Tiffany's production, based on the 2004 book by the Swedish writer John Ajvide Lindqvist, centers on Oskar, an adolescent loner, and Eli, a vampire, who lives next door with her companion, Håkan, a murderer who drains the blood of his victims so that Eli can be nourished. Tiffany's version, a collaboration with Steven Hoggett, is, note for note, a variation on the Swedish film from 2008. But Tiffany's spectacle is louder, presumably to keep us engaged in what is, ultimately, an intimate story. It's now set in a place that Tiffany calls Scotlandavia—the script is by the British playwright Jack Thorne—and everyone except Eli (Rebecca Benson) has a brogue. The only actor who fully inhabits Lindqvist's story is the short, square, and unconventional-looking Benson. She gives a great performance, because she understands what she's saying and what she must communicate with her body when words are not enough. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/9/15.) (St. Ann's Warehouse, 29 Jay St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

A Month in the Country

There is much talk of love in Ivan Turgenev's play, a forerunner of Chekhov's tragicomedies, but its animating force is lust. Natalya (Taylor Schilling), the bored wife of Arkady (Anthony Edwards), develops a crush on her son's twenty-one-year-old tutor, oblivious that her husband's friend Rakitin (Peter Dinklage) pines for her. Naturally, these unrequited yearnings bubble to the surface in the course of a leisurely few days on Arkady's country estate. Erica Schmidt's attractive production, using a translation by John Christopher Jones, hits the right notes of comedy and muted anguish. It's a pleasure to see Schilling and Dinklage, on loan from prestige television, show their range; Schilling, especially, pulls off some diva-bitch moments that are worlds away from her character on "Orange Is the New Black." (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)

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Lia Gangitano, surrounded by a bevy of Greer Lankton's doll sculptures.

ART



CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE

Participant Inc. is keeping the transgressive spirit of downtown alive.

THE LOWER EAST SIDE is no longer a haven for radiant misfits. The children of “Flaming Creatures,” Jack Smith’s notorious 1963 film, which was made in the neighborhood, have all been priced out. What the area does have is galleries, more than a hundred sprawling from Henry to Second Street, many appealingly scrappy and helmed by the young. Some dealers arrived with deep pockets and dreams of making them deeper, lured by the jet-set patrons of the New Museum, on the Bowery. Last spring, an outpost of Gagosian briefly popped up on Delancey, in a former Chase bank. Meanwhile, in a cavernous, unheated storefront on Houston Street, the dauntless Lia Gangitano, forty-seven, has been forging a

vital link between the eclipsed downtown scene and today’s more polished art world. In 2001, she founded the nonprofit Participant Inc., equal parts gallery, performance space, screening room, and local clubhouse.

Last November, Participant introduced a new audience to the tortured glamour of Greer Lankton’s doll sculptures, most of them made in the eighties. It was the transgender artist’s first solo show in New York since her death, from an overdose, in 1996. The carefully fashioned figures, some of them life-size—of Diana Vreeland, Teri Toye, Jackie Kennedy, and others—were clearly labors of love, if too kitsch for some tastes. The heartbreaking high point of the show was the wealth of ephemera and photographs, including

portraits of the fawnlike artist taken by Nan Goldin, as part of “The Ballad of Sexual Dependency,” her chronicle of the tarnished-dream demimonde. When Gangitano was approached about the project by Lankton’s widower, Paul Monroe, she told me recently, “it felt like the phone call I’d been waiting for all my life.” The show made several best-of-2014 lists.

The Lower East Side is still home to a few artists whose fluid identities can seem like experimental works of art in their own right: the cabaret virtuoso Justin Vivian Bond, the empyreal singer Antony (of Antony and the Johnsons), the feminist shock rocker Kembra Pfahler, the “pandrogynous” avant-gardist Genesis Breyer P-Orridge. Gangitano has worked with all

of them. Not each exhibition is quite as homegrown; the current installation, a jaunty but ponderous arrangement of photograms, stylized clocks, and a wall of neon, is by the Stockholm-based artist and queer activist Emily Roysdon. (It was organized by the critic David Everitt Howe, who moonlights writing grants for the nonprofit.)

As talk of art fairs and auction results becomes deafening, Gangitano’s advocacy of the fringe feels radical. No one’s involved in Participant Inc. to get rich. As Gangitano has said, “money problems are the best problems to have, because when you get some money it goes away. It would be worse if I felt that the work we’re doing was irrelevant.”

—Andrea K. Scott

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MUSEUMS SHORT LIST METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

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

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
"Sturtevant: Double Trouble."
Through Feb. 22.

MOMA PSI
"Anne Imhof: Deal."
Through March 9.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
"On Kawara—Silence."
Through May 3.

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY**
"Nature's Fury: The Science of
Natural Disasters."
Through Aug. 9.

ASIA SOCIETY
"Buddhist Art of Myanmar."
Opens Feb. 10.

FRICK COLLECTION
"Enlightenment and Beauty:
Sculptures by Houdon and
Clodion." Through April 5.

NEUE GALERIE
"Egon Schiele: Portraits."
Through April 20.

**NEW-YORK HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**
"Freedom Journey 1965:
Photographs of the Selma
to Montgomery March by
Stephen Somerstein."
Through April 19.

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
"Speaking of People: Ebony,
Jet and Contemporary Art."
Through March 8.

GALLERIES SHORT LIST UPTOWN

Ryan McNamara
Boone
745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
212-752-2929.
Through Feb. 28.

Francesca Woodman
Marian Goodman
24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.
Opens Feb. 12.

CHELSEA
Alex Soth
Kelly
475 Tenth Ave., at 36th St.
212-239-1181.
Through March 14.

Dan Walsh
Cooper
534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.
Through Feb. 14.

DOWNTOWN
Jon Kessler
Salon 94 Freemans
1 Freeman Alley. 212-529-7400.
Opens Feb. 15.

Emily Roysdon
Participant Inc.
253 E. Houston St.
212-254-4334.
Through Feb. 21.

"The Gentle Way"
Clifton Benevento
515 Broadway, at Spring St.
212-431-6325.
Through Feb. 14.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Morgan Library & Museum "Piranesi and the Temples of Paestum"

Best known for his vertiginous etchings of invented prisons, Giovanni Battista Piranesi was a printmaker with the soul of an architect, and a Venetian obsessed by the ruins of Rome. (When Goethe, a fan of his prints, finally made it to Italy, he was disappointed to discover that Piranesi had oversold Rome's grandeur.) The fifteen imposing drawings on view here, begun a year before his death, in 1778, depict three temple ruins from an abandoned Greek colony outside Naples. They throw aside all pretense of architectural objectivity, making use of weird off-center vanishing points, dramatic closeups of mottled columns and crumbling pediments, and, most strangely, ectoplasmic figures of farmers and cows (which may have been added by Piranesi's son after his death). The real and the fantastic, and the classical and the contemporary, mingle so shamelessly that you wonder if Piranesi cared about history at all, or whether the past served only as fuel for his awing invention. Through May 17.

New-York Historical Society "Chinese American: Exclusion/ Inclusion"

Today, the world's two largest economies are as codependent as they can be, but the fortunes of China and the United States have been interlocked ever since the colonists dumped tea from Guangzhou into Boston Harbor. This substantial exhibition, which spans three centuries, opens with American merchants and missionaries heading West, flying an American flag with English and Chinese prayers written along the white stripes. Soon, the ships are going the other way, as Chinese workers flock to the Pacific Coast, to work on the railroads and in the fields and vineyards. The shameful Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first immigration law to target a single ethnicity, was not the only barrier that American authorities imposed; after 1909, every person of Chinese descent was required to carry an I.D. card, even the movie star Anna May Wong. While the show could benefit from more historical material and fewer didactic mockups—a third of the space is taken up with replicas of holding cells on San Francisco's notorious Angel Island—it succeeds in contextualizing waves of exchange and exodus, and in expanding the story of Chinese immigration. Through April 19.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN "Voyage to the Virtual"

"Objects are lost in double light," the narrator says in Ann Lislegaard's disconcerting 2005 animation "Bellona," in which an antiseptic interior is lit with an oversaturated, constantly changing palette. It's by far the strongest work in this uneven exhibition of Nordic

video art and light sculpture, which is saddled with pseudo-atmospheric indie travelogues and some lame interactive material, including a canoe hooked up to a 3-D virtual-reality screen full of icebergs. Would that more artists took their cue from Olafur Eliasson, whose small halogen bulb caged in a copper lampshade throws thrillingly complex shadows on the walls. Minimal means achieve maximum effect. Through April 4. (Scandinavia House, 58 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-779-3587.)

"Watching You, Watching Me"

This eye-opening show, subtitled "A Photographic Response to Surveillance," kicks off with images from the archives of the East German Ministry for State Security. A grid reproducing a hundred Polaroids made secretly in the homes of people under suspicion is a testament to the Stasi's dogged intrusiveness: every open drawer, unmade bed, and wad of currency is recorded. But the show is dominated by seven huge woven banners, covered with thousands of images—of meals, rooms, toilets—taken by Hasan Elahi. When the Bangladeshi-born, U.S.-based artist learned that he was suspected of having connections to terrorists, he put himself under surveillance and sent the results to the F.B.I. Works by Andrew Hammerand, Mishka Henner, and Paolo Cirio are less obsessive but just as pointed and disquieting. Through May 8. (Open Society, 224 W. 57th St. 212-548-0600.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Paul Thek

In the sixties, Thek, who died in 1988, won acclaim in New York for his uncanny wax sculptures of raw meat. By the seventies, the focus of this welcome exhibition, he had decamped to Italy, where he turned to more personal paintings and drawings. In Rome and on the island of Ponza, he depicted waves and rocks with a naïve but touching directness, and covered pages of the *International Herald Tribune* with images of grapes and eggplants, bearded men, and washes of Mediterranean blue. Thek mingled the bodily and the divine in his art. One extraordinary object in this show underlines the importance of that duality: a notebook in which the artist transcribed the "Confessions of St. Augustine," by that earlier migrant to Italy. Through Feb. 21. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Andrew Borowiec

Working at night, in subtle, silvery black-and-white, the New York photographer makes Provençal hill towns look like eerie stage sets. Borowiec peers down narrow, empty streets and up stone ramps illuminated by nothing more than a few street lamps. The mood is anxious, recalling James

Casebere's fabricated streetscapes, but Borowiec is also echoing classic French nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century views by Charles Marville and Eugène Atget, recalled here as sites of mystery and menace. Through Feb. 22. (Wolf, 70 Orchard St. 212-925-0025.)

Katarzyna Kozyra

In "Looking for Jesus," her gonzo feature-length video, this witty and socially engaged Polish artist travels to Jerusalem to meet the Messiah and finds the city crawling with Saviours, most in mufti but some dressed in pseudo-Nazarene tunics, some certifiably insane and others just aggravating. Kozyra, ever deadpan, hangs out with an assortment of Jesuses, including a jazz musician allied with the Black Hebrew Israelites, an American who annoys commuters with proclamations about the Kingdom of David, and a dreadlocked white guy who knows he's the Messiah but is also a self-described "nice guy that loves beer and likes to fuck ladies." One Jesus runs away from Kozyra, but she isn't worried—after all, He vowed to come back. Through Feb. 28. (Postmasters, 54 Franklin St. 212-727-3323.)

B. Ingrid Olson

The young Chicago-based artist makes a knockout debut in New York with layered color photographs and several intriguing sculptures, notably a pair of spindly columnar assemblages. Most of Olson's images involve self-portraiture, but her face is never seen and her body appears only in fragments, blurred and distorted, amid a welter of props. But, even when the figure isn't lost in a maze of reflections, Olson abstracts it further, by setting her photographs into mats printed with another photograph, or obscuring them behind scraps of other images in Plexiglas boxes. The show's repartee between flat and dimensional is lively and not to be missed. Through Feb. 22. (Subal, 131 Bowery, at Grand St. 917-334-1147.)

"Call and Response"

Five dozen paintings by as many painters make a convincing case for the vitality of the medium. (The show also, perhaps inevitably, reads as a riposte to MOMA's hotly debated exhibition "The Forever Now," eight of whose artists are represented here.) The children of Polke and Kippenberger, these artists rely heavily on cartoonish imagery, bad taste, and juvenile mark-making, as if the only way forward were backward. The big winners: Laura Owens, ever masterly, with a frieze of clouds and curlicues; the Bernadette Corporation alumnus Antek Walczak, whose anime bear is overlaid with captions familiar from sex apps; Ida Ekblad, whose Cobra-like squiggles incorporate a graffitied alien; and her fellow-Norwegian Bjarne Melgaard, whose painting of two homosexual lions displays his customary flair for self-destruction. Through Feb. 28. (Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258.)

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

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

Ecstatic Music Festival

Now in its fifth year, this adventurous gathering, at Merkin Concert Hall, is a platform for new-music collaboration, combining artists from the worlds of neoclassical, avant-garde, and experimental music. Feb. 12 is a powerhouse night, featuring the composer, saxophonist, and downtown guru **John Zorn** and New York's **Talea Ensemble**, which performs turbulent and innovative orchestral works. The frequent Zorn collaborator **Ikue Mori**, a master of electronic sound programming and a founding member of the New York City no-wave pioneers DNA, will also be on hand. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330.)

Father John Misty

Josh Tillman, the former Fleet Foxes drummer, who records and performs under this name, is the latest export from Laurel Canyon, the storied Los Angeles community that incubated Crosby, Stills & Nash, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, and other giants of pop music. Like his predecessors, Tillman has a penchant for ringy, easygoing sounds and lush arrangements. He also shares their lighthearted approach to the music business. To promote his new record, "I Love You, Honeybear," he launched a parody streaming service as a teaser for his fans: Streamline Audio Protocol (SAP) is available through his Web site, and presents the album streaming in full, but without such basic necessities as "performances, original vocal, atmosphere and other distracting affectations." The songs, while gorgeously orchestrated on the record, are cast here as Muzak, with the vocals played through a chintzy, lo-res MIDI track. It's essentially a watery, low-quality version of the album, and a clever commentary on the commodification of modern music. Tillman is in town with **Guy Blakeslee**, of the Entrance Band, another Laurel Canyon mainstay committed to the druggier fringes of L.A. psychedelia. (Feb. 12: Rough Trade, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtradenyc.com. Feb. 14: Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-2111.)

Valerie June

The Tennessee native developed her love of singing in church while she was growing up, and started her career before she was out of her teens. First, she was in a band, Bella Sun, with her former husband, Michael Joyner, but when that act broke up, a little more than a decade ago, June taught herself to play the guitar and learned the banjo and the ukulele. She also started writing songs that combined folk, country, blues, and gospel with an old-timey flair. Her debut album, "Pushin' Against a Stone," from 2013, showcases her fiercely feminine and unmistakably Southern storytelling abilities, as

well as her unique, stunning voice. (Zankel Hall, Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. Feb. 13.)

"Let's Zydeco!"

The concert series, which brings musicians from around New Orleans to town almost weekly, does its home city right with a pre-Mardi Gras party featuring **C. J. Chenier** and the **Red Hot Louisiana Band**. Chenier, the son of Clifton Chenier, known as the King of Zydeco, is a high-powered vocalist and accordionist who has appropriately been dubbed the Crown Prince. His shows are authentically rocking affairs. Costumes are encouraged, as is checking the series' Web site; its usual venue, Connolly's, has lately been unavailable, and there have been last-minute changes in locations for shows. (Midtown Live, 251 W. 30th St., 2nd floor, the Red Room. letszydeco.com. Feb. 15.)

Theophilus London

The Brooklyn m.c. announced himself at the end of the last decade with shrewdly experimental material, such as "This Charming Mixtape," from 2009, which featured work inspired by a range of performers, including such unlikely (for hip-hop) artists as Morrissey. His impeccable style, which extends to fashion, landed him a deal with Warner Bros., which released his debut album, "Timez Are Weird These Days," in 2011. Packed with irresistible tracks, like the jumpy "All Around the World" and the sly "Wine and Chocolates," it set the stage for London's second LP, "Vibes," which came out last fall. The new record finds the rapper, singer, and producer displaying his customary finesse, fusing elements of funk, disco, and synth-pop to create coy and

sexy sources of fun on the dance floor. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-2111. Feb. 16.)

Zap Mama and Antibalas

Born in Zaire and raised in Belgium, Marie Daulne founded Zap Mama in 1989, and the group has been releasing records since 1991. The outfit, which traffics in a fusion of traditional African styles and Europop, is particularly interested in exploring the various tonalities of the human voice, and its capacity for blending. Daulne has made her home in New York since 2000, and she's on a collaborative tour with the Brooklyn-based group Antibalas. The expansive rhythm machine, infused with Daptone Records horns, was founded by the saxophonist Martin Perna and fronted by the charismatic singer Duke Amayo, and is best known for its onstage work, several years ago, as the band for the Broadway show "Fela!" (Highline Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. Feb. 11.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Meshell Ndegeocello

Three years ago this March, in a concert at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, in Harlem, the incomparable bass player and vocalist delivered an electrifying tribute to Nina Simone. The show was such a success that Ndegeocello devoted her tenth album, "Pour une Âme Souveraine," from 2012, to the iconic vocalist, enlisting such singers as Sinéad O'Connor, Lizz Wright, Cody Chestnutt, and Toshi Reagon (who was instrumental in organizing the original concert). On Feb. 11, Ndegeocello, backed by the keyboardist **Jebun Bruni**, the guitarist **Chris Bruce**, and the drummer **Abraham Rounds**,

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returns to “Suzanne,” “Please Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood,” “Feelin’ Good,” and other songs that Simone made her own. (Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

Buster Poindexter

The smooth, relaxed, and slightly seedy alter ego of David Johansen (the leader of the glam-rock group the New York Dolls, in the seventies) is the perfect outlet for Johansen to demonstrate his love of American song—not strictly the classic songbook but blues, novelty, doo-wop, vaudeville, and more. His last appearance at the Café Carlyle included material written or made popular by Frank Loesser, Harry Belafonte, Bert Williams, and Lieber and Stoller. Backed by a shape-shifting quartet comprising **Brian Koonin**, on guitar, **Clifford Carter**, on piano, **Richard Hammond**, on bass, and **Ray Grappone**, on drums, Poindexter turns the upscale *boîte* into one of the friendliest roadhouses you might ever stumble into. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Feb. 10-21.)

Gregory Porter

The recent emergence of Porter has been a welcome gift for a jazz scene that’s starved for distinctive male vocalists. Though his singing on his Grammy-winning 2014 *Blue Note* debut, “Liquid Spirit,” was arresting, the album was somewhat weak in mature original songwriting. Nevertheless, the promise inherent in Porter’s muscular romanticism and playful jocularitas is undeniable. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Feb. 14.)

Dianne Reeves

A bona-fide jazz diva like Reeves might be tempted to rely solely on her gale-force power to wow a crowd, but, to her credit, she often lets expressive restraint win out. She peered beyond the traditional songbook repertoire for her latest release, “Beautiful Life,” which is up for a Grammy for Best Jazz Vocal Album, in which she covers songs by Bob Marley, Fleetwood Mac, Ani DiFranco, and Marvin Gaye. All novelty aside, Reeves could sing a congressional report and make the room swoon. (Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Feb. 13-14.)

Kermit Ruffins

If you’re stuck in the city during Mardi Gras, the closest you can get to New Orleans is the Blue Note, where this exuberant entertainer is setting up a home away from home, starting on Fat Tuesday. The trumpeter and singer, who co-founded the Rebirth Brass Band in the early eighties, while still in high school, in New Orleans, is one of the city’s greatest musical ambassadors (he appeared as himself in the HBO series “Treme”). An ebullient leader in the tradition of the three great Louis-es of American music—Armstrong, Jordan, and Prima—Ruffins will be partying with his longtime band, the Barbecue Swingers, Feb. 17-22. (131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592.)

Loren Stillman Trio

Two of the more beguiling jazz albums released last year featured the alto saxophonist’s sinuous improvisations: “Apocryphal,” by Vinnie Sperrazza, and “Going Public,” by Stillman’s own Bad Touch

band. In an intriguingly spare setting, Stillman, who displays a lithe grace when he plays, is flanked by the guitarist **Nate Radley** and the drummer **Jared Schonig**. (Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. 212-252-5091. Feb. 11.)

“Sweetheart Soirée”

The dapper bandleader **Michael Arenella** frequents junk shops, yard sales, and estate sales in search of 78s recorded by big bands between the world wars. He then transcribes the tunes and performs them at parties around town, often with his eleven-piece Dreamland Orchestra. On Valentine’s Day, he takes the helm of his sextet for a night of dancing at the Norwood Club, which is situated in a landmarked 1847 mansion. The vocalist **Queen Esther** and her trio and the tap-dancing **Minsky Sisters** will provide additional entertainment. (241 W. 14th St. Feb. 14. dreamlandorchestra.com.)

John Zorn

For the second year in a row, the downtown iconoclast brings a slew of ensembles to the Village Vanguard. Many of the participants are not normally found at the hallowed venue, and the engagement is a reflection of the Vanguard’s ever-broadening spectrum. Zorn is presenting ten projects Feb. 10-15, and among the artists playing his music are **Bill Frisell**, **Marc Ribot**, **Stephen Gosling**, and **John Medeski**. Although he is not scheduled to perform on many of the nights, Zorn will appear, on saxophone, in a duo with the drummer **Milford Graves** and with both the electric and the unplugged versions of **Masada**. (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037.)



At the Appel Room, the deep-voiced singer and virtuosic bass player Meshell Ndegeocello pays tribute to a hero of hers, the soulful vocalist Nina Simone.

CLASSICAL MUSIC



OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

In conceiving a double-bill production of Tchaikovsky's "*Iolanta*" and Bartók's "*Bluebeard's Castle*" as the continuous life of one female meta-character, the Polish director Mariusz Trelński has trivialized the first work and intensified the effect of the (much greater) second one. (The general influence is Hollywood film noir; common elements include roses, mounted hunting trophies, and an ominous father figure wearing only one glove.) The Tchaikovsky has fine singing, however, to recommend it. Anna Netrebko's ingénue days are past, but in the role of *Iolanta*, the blind girl who gains her sight from the ministrations of a Moorish doctor—and discovers love through the attentions of a handsome young knight—she works hard to deliver ringing high notes and well-spun phrases; Aleksei Markov and Piotr Beczala, portraying her official fiancé and her new beloved, respectively, sing with glorious confidence and elegant ease. In the Bartók two-hander, Mikhail Petrenko and Nadja Michael, as Duke Bluebeard and his doomed bride, execute the machinations of Trelński's Hitchcockian psychodrama with devastating skill as the haunted-mansion sets shift seamlessly around them. Valery Gergiev conducts both works—the Bartók rather well. (Feb. 14 at 12:30.) • **Also playing:** The New York Philharmonic's Alan Gilbert conducts "*Don Giovanni*," in the adequate but stiffly conventional Michael Grandage production. Hopefully, Gilbert can draw some sparks from the singers, who, in addition to the always potent Peter Mattei, in the title role, include such standouts as Elza van den Heever, Emma Bell, Kate Lindsey, and Luca Pisaroni. (Feb. 11 and Feb. 17 at 7:30 and Feb. 14 at 8.) • Elina Garanča takes the title role in "*Carmen*," heading a cast that also features Ailyn Pérez, in the role of Micaëla, Roberto Alagna (one of the few major singers to authentically communicate French style), as Don José, and Gábor Bretz, as Escamillo. Louis Langrée, Mostly Mozart's music director, is on the podium. (Feb. 13 at 7:30.) • In the midst of a big New York year for the mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato comes her rendition of the title role in "*La Donna del Lago*," a Rossini masterpiece based on the ur-Romantic Walter Scott poem, which has never been staged

at the Met before. Her companions in honor include Juan Diego Flórez (as Scotland's King James V, travelling incognito), Daniela Barcellona, John Osborn, and Oren Gradus; Michele Mariotti. (Feb. 16 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

Met • Juilliard: "Iphigénie en Aulide"

Jane Glover, admired for her crisp and lyrical interpretations of eighteenth-century repertory, leads three concert performances of Gluck's opera, less renowned than his "*Iphigénie en Tauride*" but more than good enough for Gustav Mahler, who revived it in Vienna. Juilliard415, the school's period-performance ensemble, accompanies the singers. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School. events.juilliard.edu. Feb. 10 and Feb. 12 at 8 and Feb. 14 at 2.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

The irrepressibly stylish and fleet-fingered French pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet rarely plays contemporary works, but perhaps the terms of the Auld Alliance—the ancient and cherished relationship between the French and the Scottish royal houses—still apply in the realm of music. He performs the New York première of James MacMillan's Piano Concerto No. 3, "The Mysteries of Light," on a program that also features Fauré's "*Pelléas et Mélisande*" Suite and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony; the conductor is Stéphane Denève, in his Philharmonic début. (Feb. 11-12 at 7:30 and Feb. 13 at 2.) • Two of the stars of the recent Broadway production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "*Cinderella*," Laura Osnes and Santino Fontana, team up with the Philharmonic's favorite musical-theatre hand, Ted Sperling, for "A Broadway Romance," a Valentine's Day concert that will use songs by Gershwin, Bernstein, and other greats to trace the story of one couple's meeting, courtship, and marriage. (Feb. 14 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

Danish National Symphony Orchestra

Scandinavian pride will be on display in this outstanding orchestra's upcoming concert at Carnegie Hall, conducted by Christian Macelaru. The violin soloist, Anne-Sophie Mutter, adds a note of indomitable glum to an

evening devoted entirely to music by Sibelius ("Valse Triste" and the Violin Concerto) and Nielsen (the Symphony No. 4, "Inextinguishable"). (212-247-7800. Feb. 11 at 8.)

"Music Before 1800" Series: Blue Heron

Echoes of tradition and the vitality of new voices combine in this week's early-music concerts. The conductor of this acclaimed Boston chamber chorus, Scott Metcalfe, is well known to New York audiences through his directorship (with Jolle Greenleaf) of the Green Mountain Project; he leads his colleagues here in what should be a vibrant program of sacred and secular works by Binchois, Ockeghem (including the "*Missa De Plus en Plus*"), and Dufay. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Feb. 15 at 4.)

Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity

The tradition of high-calibre Sunday-afternoon Baroque performances at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church goes back five decades, to the first years of New York's period-performance scene. Donald Meineke, the church's newly appointed music director and a fresh voice in the city's musical life, conducts the Bach Choir and Players in a beyond-Bach concert that offers works by Johann Rosenmüller (the North American première of the Baroque master's "*Gloria*") and Praetorius. (Central Park W. at 65th St. Feb. 15 at 5. A donation is suggested.)

RECITALS

Nathaniel Olson

Could this young baritone be the next Donald Gramm? He certainly has the mellifluous density of tone and the enthusiasm for first-rate American repertory. His recital at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall is largely a Germanic-American affair, offering Schumann's Heine "*Liederkreis*" and a clutch of Eisler tunes, as well as songs by Copland, Rorem, and Barber (the magisterial Four Songs, Op. 13). (212-247-7800. Feb. 13 at 7:30.)

Jessye Norman: "Hooray for Love!"

The composers of the American Songbook have become a more central part of the beloved soprano's repertoire. In a rare concert appearance, she is partnered by the pianist Mark Markham in a recital featuring great melodies

by such giants as Kern, Rodgers, Gershwin, and Ellington—and also French treasures by Satie, Poulenc, and Bizet (the Habanera from "*Carmen*"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 14 at 8.)

Music at the Frick Collection: Auryn Quartet

The Frick's ornate Gilded Age auditorium regularly hosts outstanding young musicians making their New York débuts; this time, however, it opens its doors to this admired German ensemble, which has been going strong for thirty-four years. Classic string quartets by Mozart (the "*Hunt*"), Ravel, and Brahms (in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1) are on the program. (1 E. 70th St. 212-547-0715. Feb. 15 at 5.)

Ensemble ACJW

Meredith Monk, an artist of indelible originality, holds the Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall this season. Her work "*Backlight*," a sonic play on the movement of light and shadow, receives its New York première in this concert by Carnegie's superb young-professionals ensemble, whose members also perform music by Roussel and Ravel (the Piano Trio in A Minor). (Weill Recital Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 16 at 7:30.)

"NYFOS Next: Bright Sheng and Friends"

The prestigious New York Festival of Song, which for several years has given contemporary composers room to run in an occasional series of concerts, is marshalling its energies for a mini-festival in February. It wraps up with a concert headlined by the fascinating Chinese-American composer, who presents music of his own (a scene from his opera "*Dream of the Red Chamber*") along with works by two of his mentors, Leonard Bernstein and George Perle, and pieces by three of his students. (National Opera Center, 330 Seventh Ave., at 29th St. nyfos.org. Feb. 17 at 7.)

Jamie Barton

The young American mezzo-soprano—the winner of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in 2013 and a rising star at the Met—takes the stage at Zankel Hall to offer a program that mixes European repertory with Turina, Chausson, Dvořák (the Gypsy Songs, Op. 55), and Schubert with a world première by Jake Heggie ("*The Work at Hand*"). (212-247-7800. Feb. 17 at 7:30.)



MOVIES

OPENING

DA SWEET BLOOD OF JESUS

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Feb. 13. (In limited release.)

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

An erotic drama, adapted from E. L. James's novel, about a college student (Dakota Johnson) who enters into a relationship with a wealthy older man (Jamie Dornan). Directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson. Opening Feb. 13. (In wide release.)

GETT: THE TRIAL OF VIVIANE AMSALEM

Ronit Elkabetz stars in this Israeli drama (which she co-directed with Shlomi Elkabetz), about a Jewish woman whose husband (Simon Abkarian) refuses to grant her a religious divorce. Opening Feb. 13. (In limited release.)

KINGSMAN:

THE SECRET SERVICE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 13. (In wide release.)

THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Richard LaGravenese wrote and directed this musical drama, about the relationship between an actress (Anna Kendrick) and a novelist (Jeremy Jordan). Opening Feb. 13. (In limited release.)

THE REWRITE

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Feb. 13. (In limited release.)

WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 13. (In limited release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

"Valentine's Day Massacre." Feb. 13 at 6:45, Feb. 14 at 4:45, and Feb. 16 at 9:15. "We Won't Grow Old Together" (1972, Maurice Pialat). • Feb. 13 at 9:15, Feb. 14 at 7:15, and Feb. 15 at 4. "Modern Romance" (1981, Albert Brooks). • Feb. 15 at 8:45 and Feb. 16 at 6:45. "Minnie and Moskowitz."

BAM CINÉMATEK

The films of John Carpenter. Feb. 11 at 5, 7:15, and 9:30: "Prince of Darkness" (1987). • Feb. 12 at 7:30 and 9:30: "Dark Star" (1974). • Feb. 13 at 2:30, 5, 7:30, and 9:45: "Big Trouble in Little China" (1986). • Feb. 15 at 2 and 6:30: "Assault on Precinct 13" (1976). • Feb. 15 at 4 and 8:30: "Straw Dogs" (1971, Sam

NOW PLAYING

Beyond Rangoon

John Boorman's unflinching look at Burma's crackdown on pro-democracy forces in 1988 meshes with the story of two unlikely friends—an American physician (Patricia Arquette) and a Burmese professor turned freelance guide (U Aung Ko)—who achieve spiritual communion during a harrowing odyssey. As the military dictatorship reduces the country to an internment camp and its citizens to targets, Arquette and Aung Ko travel by car and raft from Burma's backwater to its capital city of Rangoon, and then on to Thailand. The entire last hour is one hairbreadth escape, and epiphany, after another. Random carnage and clangorous upheavals surround the pair in villages as well as in city streets. Arquette gives the kind of mighty physical performance usually delivered by men in existential action classics like "The Wages of Fear," but she suffuses it with something all her own—she's bulletproof yet vulnerable. And Aung Ko, a Burmese expatriate playing a character named for him, does more than complement Arquette; he arrives at a state of grace. Released in 1995.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Feb. 15.)

Da Sweet Blood of Jesus

Spike Lee's frenzied, urgent new film is a remake of Bill Gunn's 1973 drama, "Ganja and Hess," about an addiction to blood that gets transmitted to a modern black intellectual by means of an ancient African weapon. The weapon in question—a newly discovered Ashanti dagger—comes between the dapper and starchy Hess Greene (Stephen Tyrone Williams), a young Wall Street heir and a collector of African art, and the curator Lafayette Hightower (Elvis Nolasco), who is a guest at Hess's estate on Martha's Vineyard. After Hess drinks the blood from Hightower's corpse, he lives in the grip of his addiction. When Hightower's widow, Ganja (Zaraah Abrahams), comes looking for her husband, she and Hess have an instant attraction, and he initiates her into the hemophage cult. Lee augments the hectic clash of violence and sex with the pressures of intellectual disputations and the unchallenged power of wealth. The result is an outpouring of furiously expressive symbolism. Hess's chameleon-like streak—a series of disguises that bring him to Fort Greene's projects to slake his lust and to a small

neighborhood church in Red Hook to cure it—refracts the director's own multiple worlds and unfolds a troubled metaphysical panorama of black American life.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release and video on demand.)

The Duke of Burgundy

What first appears, in the deft contrivance of the writer and director Peter Strickland, to be the wicked abuse of a housemaid by her employer turns out to be the elaborate erotic ritual of a settled lesbian couple. Cynthia (Sidse Babett Knudsen) is a staid lepidopterist; Evelyn (Chiara D'Anna), of no apparent trade, is a masochist who needs physical and emotional punishment to get off, and her desires dictate the rigid theatrics of the pair's intimate routine. Strickland ensconces the lovers in a sumptuous villa in a rural enclave apparently inhabited only by women. He delights in the luxurious retro-rusticity of lustrous furniture and fancy clothing, and he fashions a glossy yet familiar camera style to match. Fissures in the couple's relationship appear as Evelyn's demands for scheduled abuse grow increasingly stringent, raising the suspense effectively, if belatedly. Portentous images of insects both living and preserved are as heavy-handed as the erotic psychology is flimsy; the movie is as sexy as a chess game and as insightful as a catalogue.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Girlhood

The protagonist of this drama is Marieme (Karidja Touré), a sixteen-year-old black French girl growing up in a housing project on the outskirts of Paris. Relegated to vocational school, facing scant employment opportunities, and chafing under the authority of her elder brother, Marieme falls in with a trio of tough girls in whose company she learns to steal, fight, drink, and, above all, stand up for herself and acknowledge her desires. The writer and director Céline Sciamma's approach is rote and deterministic; her scenes illustrate a checklist of social issues that are brought to life only by her thoughtful and lively actors. Marieme's boyfriend doesn't dare make a move for fear of disrespecting her brother, who is also his friend. As Marieme passes from petty banditry to bigger crimes, the film's bitter irony emerges: she has no other springboard to propel herself from the grips of patriarchal

power and toward the mainstream of French life. Sciamma binds the awakening of Marieme's consciousness to dramatic action, reducing the extraordinary character's mental life to a series of plot points—albeit ones that lead to a fascinating crossroads. A sequel, please. In French.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Humbling

The new Barry Levinson film is based on Philip Roth's short novel of the same name. Who better to dramatize Roth's Newark than the guy who re-created a half-lost, sharply remembered Baltimore? But that is not what we get. Instead, we get Broadway and Connecticut, and the strange saga of Simon Axler, a noted actor who has forgotten how to act—played to the hilt, and all the way to the pommel, by Al Pacino, who has most certainly not forgotten, and is out to prove it. He commandeers the movie, dawdling over his speeches and leaving other performers fighting for space and breath. Simon is threatened not just by a professional impasse but by the arrival of strangers at his country home. There is the lesbian (Greta Gerwig), many years his junior, with whom he starts a desultory affair; her former lover (Billy Porter), who has now changed sex; and Sybil (Nina Arianda), whom Simon met at a sanatorium, and who draws him into her maddening delusions. At one point, our hero is locked out of a theatre and has to race around to the public entrance, in a kind of wounded scurry; Michael Keaton does the same thing, in "Bird-man," at marching pace. Take your pick.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/2/15.) (In limited release.)

Jupiter Ascending

In Andy and Lana Wachowski's new action spectacle, a Cinderella-like character is sent into outer space to take part in Shakespearean intrigues. Jupiter Jones (Mila Kunis) is an undocumented Russian immigrant who lives in Chicago and works as a toilet-scrubber. She's teleported to a super-advanced planet; according to its laws, her genetic code makes her the new queen of Earth, and she becomes the object of a battle royale. The late queen left three heirs—the sinister Balem (Eddie Redmayne), the insinuating Kalique (Tuppence Middleton), and the unctuous Titus (Douglas Booth)—and they need Jupiter's consent in order to "harvest" humans for their rejuvenating lotion.

The Wachowskis create a churning, swooping C.G.I. universe that's decorated to the corners of the frame without taste or imagination. Their sense of style does convey an idea deeply embedded in the digital muck: the conflict of modern democracy and Old World monarchy. The royal heirs are played by a trio of British actors, and their dominion is filled with neo-medieval architecture and the metal knickknacks to match. For her troubles, Jupiter doesn't get a better job or an education; she gets her Prince Channing—an interplanetary warrior, played by Mr. Tatum.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Minnie and Moskowitz

Weary of the aggression that he faces in New York, Seymour Moskowitz (Seymour Cassel), a ponytailed, happy-go-lucky car parker and overgrown mama's boy, moves to California, where he learns that the aggression he faces is, in fact, his own. This romantic drama by John Cassavetes, from 1971, comes with a ready-made dose of fantasy—Seymour and Minnie Moore (Gena Rowlands), the single, middle-aged woman he rescues from a lout and loves at first sight, spend their free time at Bogart revivals. But, where Seymour sees a touch of Lauren Bacall in Minnie, she has few illusions about him. Brutality is everywhere—as many punches are thrown as in a boxing match, and far less fairly—and there's a special place in Hell for Minnie's married ex-lover (played by Cassavetes, Rowlands's real-life husband), yet, in this shambling tale of punch-drunk love, the violence is a part of romantic passion. The sculptural physicality of the images, a 3-D explosion without glasses, embodies that violence while preserving the antagonists' innocent grace; love smooths things out to a dreamy and reflective shine.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 15-16.)

1971

This documentary, by Johanna Hamilton, unpacks a crucial but little-known episode in modern political and journalistic history. On March 8, 1971, eight antiwar activists broke into a small F.B.I. office in the aptly named town of Media, Pennsylvania, and stole files showing that the government was trying to suppress legitimate dissent; they mailed copies to the *Washington Post*, which, despite government pressure, reported on them. The eight perpetrators were never found; here, Hamilton films five of them admitting to the break-in for the first time and describing their actions in detail. The story, including its cat-and-mouse aftermath, adds the intricate excitement of a thriller to righteous historical outrage. The activists' revelations, plus a crucial follow-up by the television reporter Carl Stern—who is interviewed here, as is Betty Medsger, who broke the

story in the *Post*—ultimately led to Senate hearings in 1975 (where dirty tricks against Martin Luther King, Jr., were disclosed). Only unimaginative dramatic re-creations of the events mar the fine fabric of Hamilton's cinematic journalism.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

The Rewrite

Hugh Grant breezes through this traditional romantic comedy with old-school wit and charm—the very qualities that the plot sells cheap. Grant stars as Keith Michaels, an Oscar-winning screenwriter of romantic comedies who hasn't had a hit in fifteen years. Nearly broke, he leaves Los Angeles to take a short-term teaching gig in blustery Binghamton, New York. There, he contemptuously seeks to do the minimum, has sex at first sight with a worshipful student (Bella Heathcote), and fills his class with a bevy of pretty girls—but his attitude is adjusted by another student, Holly Carpenter (Marisa Tomei), a single mother working two jobs and facing life with sunny determination. They develop a mature adult friendship, but their chemistry is so obvious from the start that it instantly dissipates any suspense. As Keith reconciles himself to the downsizing of his ambitions, he becomes, unsurprisingly, a better man. The movie is so amiably written (by Marc Lawrence, who also directed) that it makes this bitter pill go down easily. Bright-toned performances by J. K. Simmons, as Keith's department chairman, and Allison Janney, as a stiff-necked colleague, provide deft distractions from the didactic strain.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Still Alice

Julianne Moore stars as Alice Howland, a professor of linguistics at Columbia, who is stricken with early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Hitherto, life with her husband (Alec Baldwin) and three children (Kate Bosworth, Hunter Parrish, and Kristen Stewart) has run with enviable smoothness; now it hits a wall. What takes her and her loved ones aback is the force of that impact, and the rate at which she goes from forgetting a word, in passing, to not recognizing her own daughter. The intentions of the movie, which was written and directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, are noble to a fault, and guaranteed to spur fellow-feeling in anyone familiar with Alice's condition; yet the outcome errs toward dullness, and the ironies are the size of billboards. (So what if she was an expert on language use? Would the loss be any less grievous if she were a waitress?) The film, as tasteful as the trimmings of her life, shies from the horror of seeing them torn away. People behave sadly, but not badly; would that it were always the case. And would that the actors,

especially Moore and Stewart, had been let off the leash, as they strive toward harder and wilder truths.—*A.L.* (1/19/15) (In limited release.)

Timbuktu

Abderrahmane Sissako has not made a full-length film since "Bamako" (2006), but his new movie is worth the wait. It takes place in Mali, in the city of the title: a place of renown and legend, reduced here to a fearful labyrinth of narrow, dusty passageways. Islamic forces have come to town (as they did in 2012-13), imposing Sharia law and wreaking stern punishments—flaying and stoning—on the most serious offenders. Sissako, however, is no less concerned with the petty, at times laughable, strictures that come into force—what is so enticing about the hands of hardworking women that gloves should be made compulsory? A number of stories are in play, the most touching of which is that of Kidane (Ibrahim Ahmed), an easygoing fellow who gets into a feud over cattle and ends up, under the new regime, at the mercy of the merciless. The film could scarcely be more timely, and its response to the violence and the grinding moral scorn of the militants could not be more instructive; in place of outrage and panic, Sissako offers irony, quick wit, a taste for the oblique, and even a measure of tranquillity. In Arabic, Tamasheq, and French.—*A.L.* (2/2/15) (In limited release.)

The Tree, the Mayor, and the Mediatheque

This political caprice, from 1993, is filled with the intriguing effluvia of French electoral infighting. Yet, surprisingly, it's one of the director Éric Rohmer's most personal films. The story is set in a rustic village where Julien Dechaumes (Pascal Gregory), the Socialist mayor, seeks to build a high-profile cultural center in order to enter the national spotlight. But Marc Rossignol (Fabrice Luchini), the local schoolmaster, loves the verdant field the project would occupy, and opposes it vociferously. Meanwhile, there's side business involving Julien's novelist girlfriend (Arielle Dombasle), a Parisian journalist (Clémentine Amouroux), and a chance encounter between the antagonists' young daughters. The scintillating dialogue holds center stage—mainly through Luchini's verbal virtuosity—and conjures Rohmer's comprehensive vision. A sensual conservative, Rohmer derides bureaucracy, exalts tradition, and comically reveals his techno-utopia. His ideals are, above all, cinematic: the film's ambling tempo and spatial integrity are political as well as aesthetic, and the film's first closeup—near the end—is both a visual jolt and a moral one. In French.—*R.B.* (French Institute Alliance Française; Feb. 17.)

Peckinpah). • Feb. 16 at 2 and 7: "Christine" (1983). • Feb. 16 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Sorcerer" (1977, William Friedkin). • Feb. 17 at 5 and 7:15: "Forbidden Planet" (1956, Fred M. Wilcox). • Feb. 17 at 9:30: "Vampires" (1998).

FILM FORUM

The films of John Boorman. Feb. 11 at 12:30, 2:40, 4:50, 7, and 9:10; Feb. 12 at 12:30 and 2:40, and Feb. 13 at 10: "Point Blank" (1967). • Feb. 13 at 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, and 7:40 and Feb. 15 at 12:30 and 2:50: "Deliverance" (1972). • Feb. 14 at 12:30, 3:45, and 7: "Excalibur" (1981). • Feb. 15 at 5:10: "Beyond Rangoon." • Feb. 16 at 12:30 and 5:20: "Leo the Last" (1970).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

"Tell It Like It Is: Black Independents in New York, 1968-1986." Feb. 11 at 1 and Feb. 12 at 2: "Losing Ground" (1982, Kathleen Collins). • Feb. 11 at 3: "The Cruz Brothers and Miss Malloy" (1980, Collins). • Feb. 11 at 6: "Black Journal Program" (1968; produced by William Greaves and Lou Potter), followed by a panel discussion with Greaves's widow, Louise Greaves, Potter, and others. • Feb. 12 at 6:30: "The Long Night" (1976, Woodie King, Jr.). • Feb. 13 at 6: Short-film program, including "Suzanne Suzanne" (1982, Camille Billops and James Hatch). • Feb. 14 at 8:30: Short films by Greaves, including "Emergency Ward" (1959), followed by a Q. & A. with Louise Greaves. • Feb. 16 at 8:45: "Twice as Nice" (1989, Jessie Maple).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

"Eccentrics of French Comedy." Feb. 17 at 4 and 7:30: "The Tree, the Mayor, and the Mediatheque." The 7:30 screening will be introduced by the critic Nicholas Elliott.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Carte Blanche: Women's Film Preservation Fund." Feb. 12 at 4: "Behind the Veil" (1972, Eve Arnold) and "USA" (1982, Trinh T. Minh-ha). • Feb. 13 at 4: "Harlan County, U.S.A." (1976, Barbara Kopple). • Feb. 13 at 7: "Dogfight" (1991, Nancy Savoca).



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Raoul Walsh's "Big Brown Eyes," from 1936, in our digital edition and online.



DANCE

New York City Ballet

After additional performances of Justin Peck's new "Rodeo, Four Dance Episodes"—sharing a program with Alexei Ratmansky's rollicking "Pictures at an Exhibition"—the company begins a run of its evening-length "Romeo + Juliet." The timeless love story, set to Prokofiev's effective 1935 score, was staged for the company by Peter Martins in 2007. The choreography is fast-paced and stylized—a Martins specialty—and the set designs, by the Danish painter Per Kirkeby, are relatively restrained. A single construction expands and contracts to become Juliet's bedchamber, Friar Laurence's monastery, and Verona's town square. Watch for the "mandolin dance" in the second act, a little jewel performed by five boys from the School of American Ballet. • Feb. 10-11 at 7:30: "Pictures at an Exhibition," "Rodeo, Four Dance Episodes," and "Mercurial Manoeuvres." • Feb. 12 at 7:30: "Serenade," "Agon," and "Symphony in C." • Feb.

13 at 8, Feb. 14 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 15 at 3 and 7:30: "Romeo + Juliet." • Feb. 17 at 7:30: "Hallelujah Junction," "A Place for Us," "Interplay," and "Glass Pieces." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through March 1.)

BalletNext / "Baroque'd"

In 2011, Michele Wiles abruptly left American Ballet Theatre, where she was a principal dancer, and founded a chamber ensemble of her own. In the years since, she has searched for an artistic identity, with varying degrees of success. The only constant has been her own dancing—still strong—and the inclusion of live music. In BalletNext's new season, the program is brave; it contains not only a work by Wiles but one by Jay Donn that combines ballet with Flexing, a Brooklyn-born dance style with roots in Jamaica. (Like ballet, Flexing uses extremes of elasticity and elaborate arm and hand movements.) There will also be a new ballet by the

young Canadian choreographer Peter Quanz. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 10-14.)

Martha Graham Dance Company

"Shape & Design" is this season's theme, and there's no shortage of added attractions. Four choreographers—Kyle Abraham, Liz Gerring, Sonya Tayeh (of "So You Think You Can Dance"), and the tap dancer Michelle Dorrance—offer variations on Graham's iconic "Lamentation," and Frank Gehry contributes designs to her "Steps in the Street." Tiresome recent additions to the repertory by Nacho Duato and Andonis Foniadakis are joined by "The Snow Falls in Winter," Annie-B Parson's sneaky take on Ionesco. Graham's great and strange Emily Dickinson dance, "Letter to the World," gets revived in pieces. The company is in fine form these days, though that doesn't mean Graham's legacy is secure. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 10-17. Through Feb. 22.)

Douglas Dunn & Dancers

For years, the former Cunningham-ite and Grand Union avant-gardist with an impish sense of humor has made poetic, spare works inspired by literature and visual art. With "Aidos," he turns his attention to

Greek mythology, specifically to Aidos, the goddess of shame and humility. The deity's role is shared by two dancers, representing her dual nature. The production's whimsical designs and gold-hued costumes are by Andrew Jordan. Bach's cello suites will be played live by Ha-Yang Kim. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 11-15.)

"Huang Yi and Kuka"

Huang Yi is a fast-rising, mechanically minded Taiwanese choreographer. Kuka is his robot. Made by a German industrial firm, the robot is a non-humanoid crane, shaped for factory life. But Huang is also a programmer and an articulate dancer, and as man and machine share moves and touch they come to seem more and more alike. (3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101. Feb. 11-17.)

ICKAmsterdam

For "Rocco," by Emio Greco and Pieter C. Scholten, all the seats are ringside. This pugilistic dance includes plenty of shadowboxing and homoerotic tension, but also Mickey Mouse ears, lip-synching, and stripping down to hot pants. The tone reels as much as the recipient of an unexpected uppercut. (Alexander Kasser Theatre, 1 Normal Ave., Montclair, N.J. 973-655-5112. Feb. 12-15.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

Dirty Laundry: Loads of Prose

This reading series, which started in New York City and is held at laundromats around the country, celebrates its tenth anniversary with "Every Fold Matters," a collaborative, site-specific performance exploring the strange intimacy of the everyday ritual. The piece, created by the playwright and director Lizzie Olesker and the filmmaker Lynne Sachs, highlights the perspective of laundry workers. It's playing for three nights at a Brooklyn laundromat, performed by the singer and actress Jasmine Holloway, the actress and dancer Veraalba Santa, and the actors Ching Valdes-Aran and Tony Torn. Produced by the series' founder, Emily Rubin. (New Lucky Laundromat, 323 Lafayette Ave., at Grand Ave., Clinton Hill. dirtylaundryreadings.com. Feb. 12-14.)

Welcome to Boog City 8.5 Festival

The heyday of newspapers has come and gone, but *Boog City*,

which was founded twenty-four years ago by the poet David A. Kirschenbaum, still publishes indie and lesser-known voices on newsprint, though now only three times a year, with five other issues released digitally. Kirschenbaum, whose work addresses such subjects as "Gilmore Girls" and "Star Wars," also organizes periodic festivals. This two-day gathering of poets, musicians, and theatre folks takes over Unnamable Books, in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, and the Sidewalk Café, in the East Village. Fifty poets are set to appear, and five local musical acts will perform Bob Dylan's classic album "Blood on the Tracks," in honor of its fortieth anniversary. Four short films by the experimental filmmaker Joel Schlemowitz will be screened, and a Poet's Theatre piece by Martha King is on the schedule, too, along with other attractions. (For more information, visit boogcity.com. Feb. 14-15.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

In a light week for the auction houses, Christie's bestirs itself to present a sale of prints (Feb. 12). Many of the items on offer are eye-catching works by such heavy hitters of twentieth- and twenty-first-century art as Damien Hirst (including prints of two of his

bejewelled skulls), Warhol, Haring, and Rauschenberg. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • Meanwhile, Art Nouveau designs and advertisements for stylish ski destinations (Gstaad, anyone?) dominate at Swann's auction of vintage posters on Feb. 12. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

READINGS AND TALKS

Brooklyn Academy of Music

The alternative-cartoon legend Lynda Barry first had her comics published, at Evergreen College, by her friend Matt Groening, who went on to create "Life in Hell" and "The Simpsons." The two meet in Brooklyn for a conversation titled "Love, Hate & Comics—The Friendship That Would Not Die." (30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Feb. 12 at 8.)

92nd Street Y

Richard Ford reads from his new collection of stories, "Let Me Be Frank with You," and Lorrie Moore selects works from her recent collection, "Bark." (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 12 at 8.)

"Valentine's Day Heartbreak Haven"

The long-running comedy series "The Rejection Show" presents stories and performances about breakups, heartbreak, and, dare we say it, love, with appearances by Eliot Glazer, Michelle Wolf, Phoebe Robinson, and others. (Littlefield, 622 Degraw St., Brooklyn. rejectionshow.com. Feb. 14 at 8.)



TABLES FOR TWO

STELLA 34

151 W. 34th St. (212-967-9251)

THE HAPPINESS OF LADIES WHICH Zola pinned on the *grands magasins* is displayed to full effect at Stella 34, a startlingly good restaurant perched on the sixth floor of Macy's in Herald Square. There's an express elevator to the trattoria from the building's nose, at Broadway and Thirty-fifth Street, which bypasses the perfume sellers, the fur salon, the opaque taxonomy of women's attire ("impulse casual," "junior misses"). But most of the diners seem to have fully committed to the experience: staggering off the rickety wooden escalator, through the linen department next door, travelling in multigenerational packs whose collective optimism faded two floors ago. Who said shopping was fun, again?

Fortunately, a soothing menu of Italian standards awaits. The executive chef, Jarett Appell, seems to understand what is demanded from the department-store restaurant: nostalgia, fried calamari, chopped salads interesting enough to be entrées. And yet dishes consistently produce yelps of delight from the table, as with a B.L.T. on pagnotelle bread, a blistered house-made pocket of pure crunch. Or the vitello tonnato, dressed with a light tuna-confit vinaigrette rather than with the usual sludgy mayonnaise. Of the pizzas coming out of three wood-burning ovens, the one with cauliflower, cream, and Meyer lemon is the clear winner. (Gratin should always be served on bread.) By dessert, the elegant plating of an almond cake with careful frills of poached pear surprises no one.

There is a single moment of tension, when an order of lobster creste di gallo gets a warning from the waiter. "That's going to be a little spicy," he says beneath a furrowed brow. It's not, really, but he was right to say so, because the meal is characterized by mellowness. The space itself is a pleasant anachronism, a ballroom of soaring ceilings and Juliet balconies. It could be the uptown digs of a deposed dictator, except for the Victoria's Secret models captured mid-writhe on the billboard outside, and the wall of cheerful Robert Risko portraits, which, on closer inspection, depict "Macy's personalities": Michael Kors, Ryan Seacrest, Martha Stewart. Just past the gelato counter, her towels are marked down.

—Amelia Lester

Open weekdays for lunch and dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées \$20-\$28.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAUREN LANCASTER



FOOD & DRINK

BAR TAB PLAY LOUNGE

77-17 Queens Blvd., Queens
(718-476-2828)

The neon-lime façade of this Elmhurst bar offers three edicts: eat, drink, party. Yet none seemed quite possible for a pair of new arrivals, one night, when a bachelorette party, composed mainly of young women with aurora-borealis-themed eyeshadow, thronged the strobe-lit dance floor, bowling alley, and a dozen leather banquettes. Dark, dank, and cavernous, Play Lounge is a sort of urban sorority house that not only peddles the idea of everlasting youth but energetically cultivates a blingy wonderland as imagined in an R. & B. music video. Ping-Pong and billiard tables are as much recreational equipment as they are props for the draping of languorous limbs in spandex minis (the dress code forbids "excessively baggy clothing"). Hookah beer towers (strawberry, mint, melon) are hailed like cabs on a busy avenue. On a recent Sunday, a bartender in a leather corset leaned over the fluorescent counter and asked the indecisive pair if they might be interested in a Threesome. "I hate asking that," she winked, referring to a concoction made from a piña colada, Bacardi 151, and Amaretto. "It gets pretty ratchet up in here." "Hatchet?" one friend whispered, after the two had received a Hpnotiq mojito (sugary lemonade with rum) and spiked coffee (Häagen-Dazs with a dash of Captain Morgan). "No," the other sighed. "Look it up in a Beyoncé video."

—Jiayang Fan



GHETTOSIDE



“A SERIOUS AND KALEIDOSCOPIC ACHIEVEMENT . . . that transcends a single death . . . tidal in its force . . . like a *Law & Order* episode of the highest caliber.”

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“Jill Leovy writes with **EXCEPTIONAL SHARPNESS AND TAUTNESS.**

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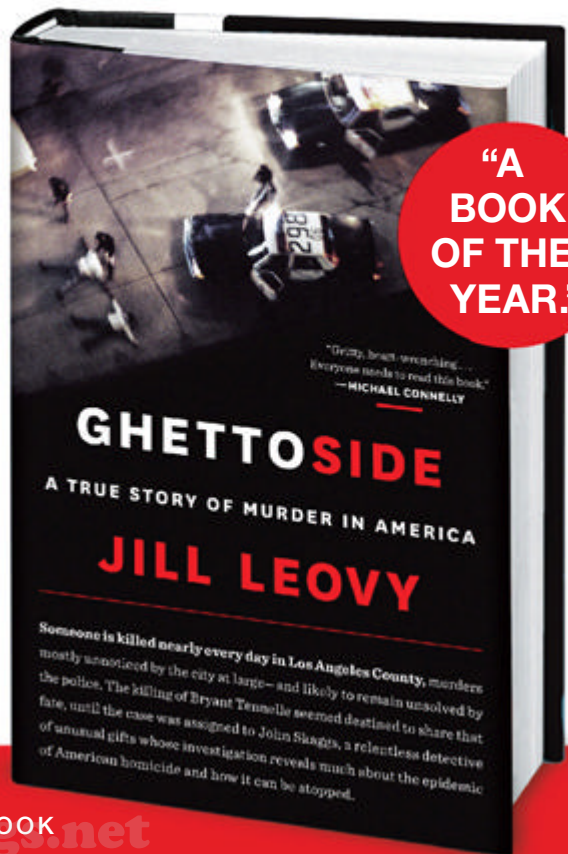
—Chris Cleave*

“IF YOU LIKED ‘SERIAL,’ THIS WILL DRAW YOU IN.”

—theSkimm

“GHETTOSIDE IS FANTASTIC. It does what the best narrative non-fiction does: It transcends its subject by taking one person’s journey and making it all our journeys. That’s what makes this not just a gritty, heart-wrenching, and telling book, but an important one. From the patrol cop to the president, **EVERYONE NEEDS TO READ THIS BOOK.”**

—Michael Connelly





THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT NOT IMMUNE

Twenty-five years ago, when a doctor named Robert Ross was the deputy health commissioner of Philadelphia, a measles epidemic swept the country. Until this year's outbreak, which started at Disneyland and has so far sickened more than a hundred people, the 1989-91 epidemic was the most alarming that the United States had seen since 1963, when the measles vaccine was introduced. Nationwide, there were more than fifty-five thousand cases and eleven thousand hospitalizations; a hundred and twenty-three people died. Most of those infected were unimmunized babies and toddlers, predominantly poor and minority kids living in cities. Ross thought that the blame for the outbreak could be placed partly on poverty and partly on crack cocaine, which was "making a lot of families forget how to raise children."

One cluster of kids was getting sick, though, not because their parents lacked the wherewithal to have them immunized but because the parents, members of the Faith Tabernacle congregation, did not believe in immunization. When children in the congregation started dying—ultimately, five did—Ross and his colleagues began going door to door, telling parents that kids whose lives were in danger could be hospitalized by court order. In one house, Ross found an ashen-faced girl of eight or nine who could barely breathe. He got her to the hospital and, when he saw her the next day in the I.C.U., had no doubt that taking her from her home had saved her life. The memory of those who weren't saved still troubles Ross: "These were kids who had no business being lowered into the ground. And I've never gotten over it."

The epidemic spurred the creation, in 1993, of a federal program, Vaccines for Children, which subsidized shots for children who were uninsured or on Medicare. Immunization rates soared. Then a new skepticism about vaccination settled in—this time, more often than not, among affluent parents who

were drawn to holistic living and were dubious about medical authority. An infamous 1998 study in *The Lancet*, which claimed that the rising incidence of autism was linked to vaccinations, was particularly influential with some of those parents—even though the data were found to be falsified and the author's medical license was revoked. Another theory, tying autism to thimerosal, a preservative added to vaccines, has also been debunked. Since 2001, thimerosal has been used only in the flu vaccine—and there is a thimerosal-free alternative—but the incidence of autism continues to rise.

Nevertheless, the skepticism endured, and one result has been the decisive return of infectious diseases. First, it was whooping cough: in 2012, more than forty-eight thousand cases and twenty deaths were reported to the Centers for Disease Control, the greatest number since 1955. Now it's measles. Both illnesses pose an especially serious threat to babies (infants under a year old cannot be vaccinated) and to people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons—if their immune systems are weakened by cancer drugs, for instance—and the complications are costly to treat. As many as one in every twenty children with measles will develop pneumonia; one in every thousand will develop encephalitis, which can leave a child deaf or brain-damaged. In addition, measles is airborne and extremely contagious; virus transmitted by a

sneeze on the Dumbo ride or in the doctor's-office waiting room can still infect people an hour later. That is why, in the case of measles, a community generally needs more than ninety per cent of its members to be immunized against the virus in order to protect those who can't be. "Herd immunity" doesn't work unless most of the herd is vaccinated.

What does work is legislation. The highest vaccination rate in the country is in Mississippi, a state with an otherwise dismal set of health statistics. It allows people to opt out of



vaccines only for medical reasons—not for religious or personal ones. States that make it easier not to vaccinate have higher rates of infectious diseases. California, which has seen ninety-nine cases in this epidemic, is one of nineteen states that allow people to opt out not only for religious and medical reasons but also on the basis of a loosely defined “personal belief.” In 2012, though, the state legislature passed a law requiring parents to consult with a health-care professional about vaccination before they reject it, and the opt-out rates declined slightly for the first time in years. (Washington passed a similar law and has experienced a bigger decline.) Last week, legislators in California introduced a bill to eliminate the personal-belief exemption—but that may actually be too abrupt and punitive a solution. According to some epidemiologists who study the anti-vaccine movement, it’s probably more effective to continue to enforce a regime that makes it more difficult but not impossible for parents to opt out.

What does not help at all is to treat vaccines and the diseases they prevent as partisan political matters. In 1993, when the Clinton Administration championed Vaccines for Children, it drew bipartisan support; it would have seemed bizarre to cast a measure aimed at preventing epidemics of childhood disease in ideological terms. In fact, until recently, vaccine refusal wasn’t a partisan issue—some objections came from anti-government types but many were from self-identified progressives. In the current discussion, however, con-

servatives have been embracing a precious individual right to shun inoculation. On Fox News, Sean Hannity declared that he wasn’t “trusting President Obama to tell me whether to vaccinate my kids.” Asked about immunization on CNN last week, Senator Rand Paul, a potential Republican candidate for President—and a doctor—painted a pointlessly terrifying scenario: “I’ve heard of many tragic cases of walking, talking, normal children who wound up with profound mental disorders after vaccines.” No doubt, he has heard such stories, but the evidence does not support them. Governor Chris Christie said that he and his wife had chosen to get their kids immunized, but he made it sound like a not especially consequential life-style choice, adding the confusing dictum “Not every vaccine is created equal and not every disease type is as great a public-health threat as others.” A keen understanding of public health is not one of Christie’s virtues: recall his quarantine of the nurse who did not have Ebola.

Robert Ross believes that “doubling down on education” about infectious diseases will help the situation, but he wonders if that’s enough to “reacquaint some parents”—not to mention some elected officials—“with the dangers of these diseases.” Ross had to rely on the law and the courts to help him save children’s lives in Philadelphia. By then, the situation was dire. He worries that more children will die unnecessary deaths before reason again takes hold.

—Margaret Talbot

RUN LIZ RUN THE ARTIST VOTE



Late last month, above a pho restaurant on Grand Street, a group gathered around a life-size cutout of Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of “The Hunger Games,” outfitted with wings, body armor, and the face of Elizabeth Warren, the senior senator from Massachusetts. This was the inaugural meeting of Artists for Warren, a progressive answer to Prayer Warriors for Sarah Palin and Yoopers for Rand Paul. The group aims to persuade Warren to run for President. “I see her like this in my dreams,” Laura Dawn, who runs a collective called Art Not War, said of Kat-Liz, as the group had dubbed the cutout. Warren has become an icon to certain progressives, and the party’s host committee included Julie Pacino, Al’s daughter, and Mark Ruffalo, who was in London filming a movie but sent a video: “Just think of the carbon that we’re saving by me not being there!”

A hundred and fifty people mingled in Pacino’s loft, listening to speeches from Warren supporters. After one audience member posed a question about Warren’s stance on Palestine, the organizers decided that there had been enough dialogue, turned on the music, and told everyone to dance. Many of the attendees had been inspired to attend by Obama’s State of the Union address. “I felt the juice again,” Marc Levin, a filmmaker, said. Levin’s documentary “The Last Party” followed a political know-nothing—Robert Downey, Jr.—on the campaign trail in 1992. Levin filmed sequels in 2000, with Philip Seymour Hoffman, and 2004, with Andre 3000. (The rapper interviewed then State Senator Obama, who asked for his autograph, and President Bush’s daughters, who seemed to be angling for a phone number.) Levin was already mulling over contenders for a 2016 installment. “Who’s plugged into the youth culture but is ready to say, ‘I want to grow up! I want to take a stand!’” he asked, suggesting Justin Bieber and Katy Perry as candidates.

Another option stood nearby. “I’m ready for Warren!” Chloë Sevigny, the

actress, said. She had a “Run Liz Run” T-shirt tucked into her skirt, like a backward apron. Sarah Sophie Flicker wore a T-shirt declaring, “War on Women Is Over! If You Want It.” (“It’s Yoko-approved,” she said.) Flicker helps run a women’s-rights campaign called Lady Parts Justice, “to keep women up to date on what’s happening with their uteruses,” and she sees the Warren movement as “a bit of po-



Chloë Sevigny

litical theatre.” “I’m just interested in moving Hillary to the left,” she said. “But I’m Warren-curious—which I guess is like bi-curious.”

“That’s what I am!” Kathleen Hanna, a musician, said, holding a veggie burger. (Also on offer: “Butterscotch Frozen Thing with Sour Apricot Sorbet.”) In the nineties, Hanna helped to launch the riot-grrrl movement; one of her songs features antiwar speeches by Al Sharpton and Susan Sarandon over a dance beat.

The Ready for Warren Super PAC has an official song, by Jessie Murphy—lyrics: “Americans want our next President to be a woman / Hey babe, here’s looking at you, Senator Elizabeth Warren”—but it’s all tambourine and acoustic guitar. “They usually go with ‘Burning Down the House,’ or Bruce Springsteen,” DJ Spooky, a hip-hop producer in a fedora, said. Spooky said he likes Warren’s “cayenne-pepper vibe,” but isn’t sure how his genre might fit. “There’s Public Enemy, but that would be a little too much for Iowa,” he said. “Anything with a beat is gonna scare people.” He thought 2016 could be the year of the political mashup. “I bet if I sampled the Rolling Stones or Marvin Gaye—something that generation knows—it could work,” he said. “Maybe we can get Adam to rap over it.”

“I personally got Obama elected!” Adam Horowitz, of the Beastie Boys, said, with a cup of Butterscotch Frozen Thing in hand. “When he was campaigning, we did a tour for people to come out and vote. I haven’t been properly thanked, but he e-mails me all the time. So does Michelle. I had to tell them to stop.” Horowitz was standing with Hanna—they’re married—who said that she likes Warren, but that her primary concern is a Democratic victory in 2016. “I just want to make sure some weird fucking Nader thing doesn’t happen.” Horowitz looked down. “I might have been responsible for that one, too,” he muttered. In 2000, the year Nader siphoned votes from Al Gore, Horowitz contributed a song to a Nader campaign compilation. “I mean, he had his moments!” Horowitz said defensively. “He just wouldn’t go away.” He shrugged and took another bite of the Frozen Thing.

—Reeves Wiedeman

ARS BREVIS WRITING ON THE WALL



For the better part of a year, the artists Eve Biddle and Joshua Frankel quietly mourned the desecration of their best-known collaboration, a mural proclaiming, “Queens Is the Future” over a flying subway train, painted on the wall of a handball court outside I.S. 145, a middle school in Jackson Heights. Then, last month, a photograph of the mural in its “adjusted” form, as Frankel put it, appeared in *Time Out*, in an issue devoted to “New York’s hottest borough.” No mention was made of the mural’s provenance, and the artists, who are married, were spurred to revisit the matter. “Those aren’t icons of Queens,” Frankel said recently, arriving at the handball court on a snowy morning and gesturing through a chain-link fence at painted images of the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building, which had been added to the original work. “Also, Jackson Heights is not on the water,” Biddle said, noting some boats in the background. Their slogan remained, in white block letters against a red sash, in the upper left corner, as did the outlines of their elevated No. 7 train. But now, beneath the front-most car, stood Spider-Man, appearing to lift the train off its tracks.

Biddle and Frankel painted the mural in 2007, when they were living in Long Island City and occasionally riding the 7 out to Jackson Heights to have lunch with Frankel’s mother, a public-school teacher. They received permission to paint on the wall through a nonprofit organization called New York Cares, and sought the advice of students at the school, who emphasized the primary importance of handball. They left in place the two pink vertical lines that delineated in bounds and out of bounds, and kept the color scheme spare: only red and white, with the exception of the orange rocket blasters under the train’s wheels. In their conception, the car was launching itself off the tracks of its own accord, as though propelled by the force of history. “That’s the heart of the piece,” Frankel said. The Mu-

nicipal Art Society named its walking tour of the neighborhood “Queens Is the Future,” after the mural, which became one of the tour’s highlights.

The superhero came to the train’s rescue last spring, at the behest of Sony Pictures, which was gearing up to promote “The Amazing Spider-Man 2,” starring Jamie Foxx, Emma Stone, and Andrew Garfield. Sony, blissfully unaware of the hacking-related troubles that would soon follow, planned a “Be Amazing” day, a kind of promotional volunteering initiative, with the blessing of NYC Service, a city agency, which hooked the studio up with I.S. 145. “They are painting a mural, a beautiful mural, for the school,” Garfield, who played Peter Parker, told “Access Hollywood,” during a segment filmed with the cast and the students together on site.

“They took a work of public art in the community and turned it into an advertisement for the film, and called it community service,” Frankel said. But when he and Biddle saw the TV segment, in which the students appeared delighted to be in the presence of movie stars, they felt compelled to suppress their outrage. “It shouldn’t be a situation where someone is wagging their finger at some middle-school kids,” he said.

“But the finger should be wagged at the movie studio—like, right up their nose!” Biddle said. “It’s sad that the mural’s changed in terms of the metaphor that it’s delivering to the kids. It’s much less empowering—totally un-empowering, in fact. But what stinks so bad is that it’s an ad! It’s not like it was another artist.”

It turns out it *was* another artist. His name is Ibrahim Wann, and he has painted a couple of murals of his own, including one at a middle school on Staten Island, featuring “keyboards and lots of music notes,” he said last week. Wann had a friend at NYC Service, who encouraged him to apply for the Sony gig. “They wanted to have specific colors, in terms of the blue and the red,” Wann explained. “And Spider-Man had a new suit in this movie that they wanted me to include.” He added, “Sony wanted me to completely paint over the mural and start from scratch, but I did not want to paint over another artist’s work.” He submitted a couple of sketches for the studio to approve, and,

like the students, was excited when he learned that the actors would be showing up. "It was supposed to be a surprise, but I wanted to tell everyone about it," he said. "I kept my mouth shut."

"I think it's true," Biddle said, eyeing the slogan. "I think Queens *is* the future, even though I'm living in the past, in Brooklyn." She and Frankel moved to Park Slope in 2009. Wann, meanwhile, lives in Staten Island, from which, he complained, it took him three hours each morning to get to Jackson Heights.

—Ben McGrath

WILD NIGHTS DEPT. RUSSOPHILIA



Igor Krutoi, the Russian composer, TV producer, and cultural-mogul billionaire, who paid nearly fifty million dollars for a condo in the Plaza Hotel in 2011 and who holds the Order of Merit for the Fatherland of the 3rd Class, which Vladimir Putin bestowed on him last summer, gave a one-time-only gala concert at the Barclays Center on a recent Saturday night, and sixteen thousand Russian-speaking people showed up. They filled the immense lobby with the cold January air still in their clothes, and flowed slowly through the security checkpoints,

talking quietly. The men wore dark coats and hats, and the women came in furs of every description. The pocketbooks they set down for guards to inspect were of shiny leather, studded, strapped, embossed, metallic-looking, with black-and-white checkerboard patterns, zebra stripes, and paisley swirls. When undone, scarves with modernistic prints sent out gusts of international perfume.

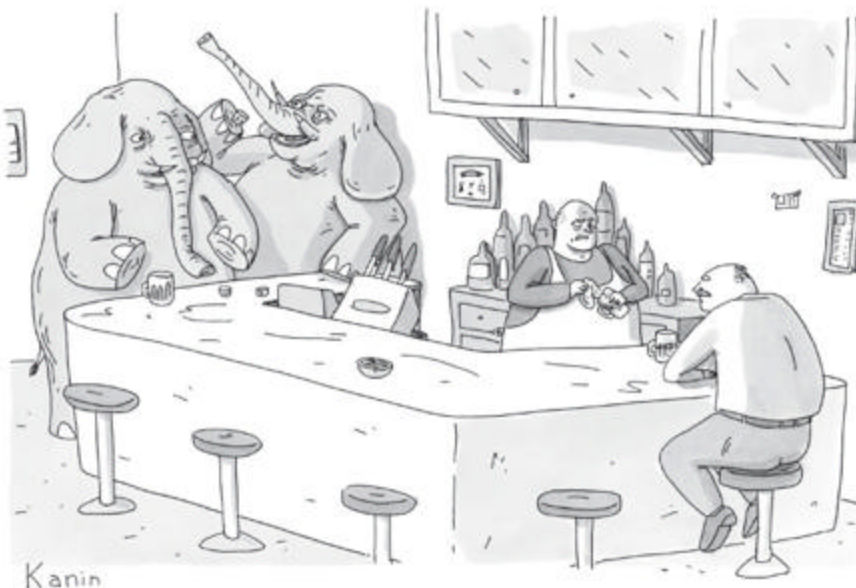
A Russophile with some knowledge of the language bought a seat, one of the few remaining, high up in a section near the American and Canadian flags hanging from the rafters. A commercial for a fancy food store played on three big screens. The words for "meat" and "caviar" were understood. People took their seats. A blond, dark-eyed woman named Nomed and her mother, Virginia, sat next to the Russophile. Eavesdropping, he didn't follow much of what they were saying. When he asked, they said that they were from Lithuania originally. Nomed's English outperformed his Russian. Friends of Nomed's came up the vertiginous aisle, teetering on high heels, and laughed about how high up they were.

Suddenly, Krutoi materialized onstage beside a grand piano. Nobody had introduced him. Dapper in black tie, his shiny bald pate reflecting points of light, he coincided neatly with his photographs. From the nosebleed seats, his head looked smaller than a BB; meanwhile, his relaxed and fatherly smile, magnified on

the screens, radiated everywhere. No national anthem began the show. Krutoi simply sat at the piano and sang about the snow that lies on the roads in his city. The screens showed snow falling on a toylike city. Behind Krutoi, under the screens, a symphony orchestra, identified in the Barclays promotional ads as "A Symphony Orchestra," accompanied him tactfully.

Nikolai Baskov, a heartthrob pop singer, then burst onto the stage. The Russophile remembered when, years ago, Luda, his landlady in St. Petersburg, had a crush on Nikolai Baskov, and how downcast she was to learn that he had married. Baskov, once young and boyish, is now mid-career and leonine. He circulated among the first rows, kissed women, and accepted bouquets. On the stage, giant statues of classical-Greek reference rotated slowly. Beams of light stabbed the audience all over the place. Exit Baskov, to measured applause. Enter a one-name singer, Valeriya, with thatch-like blond bangs. "Otpusti menya!" she sang, addressing some cruel lover—"Release me!" Swimming girls gesturing underwater, speeding clouds, and close-ups of raindrops hitting water appeared on the screens. Exit Valeriya. Enter an equally blond woman in a Gypsy-ish outfit who sang a song with a mariachi rhythm while legions of silhouetted saguaro cacti and purple skulls with pinwheel eyes advanced across the screens.

Krutoi accompanied the singers on the piano and bantered a bit with each one. All made extravagant obeisance to him and said what a great songwriter he was. A blond singer named Lara Fabian announced how glad she was to be in Brooklyn; hers were among the few words spoken in English during the entire evening. Things got kind of wild at several points, with male dancers rocking out in bathing suits held up by suspenders, and singers exhorting people to sing along. But the audience never stood up and boogied, preferring to remain seated and watch with the devout attention that Russians give to any cultural enterprise. Meanwhile, the screens showed running cats silhouetted against the red, yellow, and green circles of traffic lights, vast numbers of candle flames, a biplane crashing in a desert, a locomotive rushing directly at the audience, and a sad clown catching a beautiful falling tight-



"Trust me, they get a lot more forgetful when it comes time to pay their tab."

rope walker. For an interlude, Krutoi performed a few songs solo while smoke-like vapors emerged from below the piano, wrapping him in mystery.

Almost nobody left the gala concert early. When, after three hours, all was done, and Krutoi and company had withdrawn to sincere, dignified applause, the place took forever to empty out. It made no difference if you turned right or left; both directions were packed. Finally, the crowd began to reach the street, and many immediately lit cigarettes. The night had become even colder. Snow crunching underfoot, nostril-freezing air, and heavy cigarette smoke: all at once, an exact duplication of a midwinter night in Russia, there on Flatbush Avenue.

—*Ian Frazier*

THE BENCH STICKS AND STONES



Last spring, a song by a rapper named Bobby Shmurda (given name: Ackquille Pollard) was posted to YouTube. The lyrics were full of violent braggadocio (“I’m a run up, put that gun on ’em”), and alluded several times to GS9, his Brooklyn rap collective (“Grimey shooters dressed in G-Star”). The song became a hit. Although Shmurda was nineteen and had a discography of one mix tape—he calls them “shmixtapes”—Epic Records signed him to a major contract.

A few months later, a defense attorney named Howard Greenberg (given name: Howard Greenberg) got a call. Shmurda needed counsel. Prosecutors alleged that GS9 was a gang, the G Stone Crips, and that Bobby Shmurda was its “driving force.” In an indictment, handed down in December, Shmurda was charged with gun possession and conspiracy to commit murder, among other things. His associates are charged with close to a hundred more crimes, including murder. “I’ve had lots of high-profile clients,” Greenberg said—Levi Aron, the “butcher of Borough Park”; James Colliton, the “Lolita lawyer”; and “one of the Wu-Tang guys, I think.” He was not familiar with Shmurda’s work—“When I first heard

the name, frankly, I thought it was Yiddish”—but he took the case.

Songwriters walk a fine line between fact and poetic license. Art is protected speech. Bob Marley did not actually shoot the sheriff. In 2009, Jay Z rapped that he and President Obama were in touch by text; he later boasted that he “got White House clearance” for a trip to Cuba. “It’s a song,” Jay Carney, then the press secretary, said at a briefing. “The President did not communicate with Jay Z over this trip.”

Still, Shmurda’s lyrics seemed to veer uncomfortably close to the truth. “My music is straight facts,” he told a reporter last year. (He is now on Rikers Island, awaiting trial.)

Greenberg lives in South Jersey, but many of his cases are in Brooklyn. Recently, anticipating snow, he booked a room at a Marriott near the courthouse. “I didn’t want to get jammed up,” he said, ducking into an empty ballroom and taking a seat at a table. He wore a black faux-leather jacket; his hair is shoulder-length and colored in overlapping layers of black, maroon, and natural gray. “At first blush, I might rub people the wrong way,” he said. “But my results speak volumes. There’s no higher calling, by the way, than what I do. Twenty years ago, I heard an angel’s voice, which I can only analogize to Charlton Heston in ‘The Ten Commandments,’ and it said to me, ‘There is no such thing as a dead case! And since then I’ve believed that if you look hard enough at any fact pattern, you begin to see reasonable doubt.’”

He pounded a fist on the table. “The government hates rap. Not that I’m a fan”—he listens to Roy Orbison—“but I don’t give a shit what you say in your music. ‘I’ve got hos in different area codes.’ ‘I’m gonna bust a cap up your ass.’ It’s all bullshit!”

At a press conference in December, an N.Y.P.D. officer, James Essig, said that Shmurda’s music “pointed us in the right direction,” and that the songs were “almost like a real-life document of what they were doing on the street.” More recently, the special narcotics prosecutor Bridget Brennan said, “Song lyrics play no role in the prosecution’s case and are not part of the evidence.” Still, Greenberg said, “Even if they don’t do it to Bobby, the government has used rappers’ words against them before.”

Last May, in Brooklyn, Ronald Heron was tried for murder and narcotics trafficking. Prosecutors attempted to show that he had a lot in common with Ra Diggs, his rap persona, alleging that Heron was a high-ranking member of a gang called the Murderous Mad Dogs (Ra Diggs: “I’m a Murderous Mad Dog”) who controlled his henchmen by dispensing both carrots and sticks (Ra Diggs:



Bobby Shmurda

“My generosity givin’ niggas colostomies”).

One of Shmurda’s lyrics is “I been sellin’ crack since, like, the fifth grade.” Last year, a radio host asked him, “Have you really been selling crack since the fifth grade?”

“Yeah,” Shmurda said. Asked about his legal troubles, he said, “I don’t think I should be talking about that on the radio.”

Shmurda recently hired new counsel. Greenberg continues to represent Bobby’s brother, Javase, on related charges. “The record company came in and anointed new lawyers,” Greenberg said. “What Epic Records knows about criminal defense is what you or I know about flying a fucking space shuttle.” Walking out of the Marriott ballroom, he got a call from a client. Greenberg shouted into his flip phone. “Tony? You owe me a thousand dollars, Tony!”

Tony, on speaker, said, “I’m gonna pay you, Howard. I don’t want you to put that white-man voodoo on me.”

They negotiated. “Five hundred dollars, in cash, by Friday, or I’m putting a curse on your ass,” Greenberg said.

—*Andrew Marantz*

LETTER FROM BERLIN

THE LAST TRIAL

A great-grandmother, Auschwitz, and the arc of justice.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT



Oskar Gröning, who has become known as “the bookkeeper from Auschwitz,” was born on June 10, 1921, in Nienburg, a town about thirty miles south of Bremen. His father, a textile worker, was a fierce German nationalist and a member of Der Stahlhelm (the Steel Helmet), a paramilitary group that opposed the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar government. While Gröning was growing up, his family lived next to a metal shop owned by a Jew. Gröning used to play marbles with the shop owner’s daughter, Anne. When the Nazis were coming to power, picketers appeared in front of the shop with a banner that said, “Germans, do not buy from Jews!”

Gröning continued to play marbles with Anne, only now in a courtyard rather than out on the street. At the age of twelve, he joined the Stahlhelm’s youth league. He loved the uniforms and the military music.

An indifferent student, Gröning graduated from high school in 1938 and went to work at a local savings bank. He became a member of the Nazi Party just as the war broke out, and then, not long afterward, volunteered for the Waffen S.S. He had seen pictures of S.S. men in magazines and he thought they looked dashing.

“It was spontaneous enthusiasm, a sense of not wanting to be the last one

in the game, when the whole thing was practically over,” he recalled more than six decades later, when asked about the decision to sign up. A photograph of Gröning from this period shows a fresh-faced young man wearing wire-rimmed glasses and a cap adorned with an eagle and a skull.

Perhaps because of his banking experience, Gröning’s first assignment with the S.S. was to work in a payroll office. From there, he was transferred to Auschwitz. Once again, his assignment was, in a manner of speaking, bank-related. The prisoners brought with them all sorts of money; Gröning’s job was to sift through it and periodically deliver it to Berlin.

“I saw practically all the currencies of the world,” he once recounted. “I saw them from the Italian lira to Spanish pesetas to Hungarian and Mexican currencies, from dollars to the English pound.”

Gröning knew that the prisoners had come to Auschwitz to die. This didn’t much bother him. Jews, he’d been taught since his days in the Stahlhelm youth league, were the enemy. They were conspiring against Germany and so had to be dealt with. As for the gas chambers, those were, as he once put it, just “a tool of waging war—a war with advanced methods.” But certain things he saw did upset him. One day, he was stationed on the Auschwitz ramp, where incoming prisoners were sorted into groups. When the process was over, the place, in his description, looked “just like a fairground. There was lots of rubbish left. And amongst this rubbish were people who were ill, who were unable to walk.” A child lay on the ramp. A guard pulled the child by the legs, and “when it screamed, like a sick chicken, they bashed it against the side of a truck, so it would shut up.” Gröning complained to his supervisor. If Jews needed to be eliminated, “then at least it should be done within a certain framework.” The officer assured him that such “excesses” were the “exception.” At one point, Gröning requested a transfer. His request was denied. Finally, toward the end of 1944, he was assigned to an active combat unit, which was sent to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Gröning was shot in the foot, and a few months later he was arrested by the Allies. He

Franziska Maass’s message to her children: “I think a lot about you. I am very lonely.”

spent two years in Britain as a prisoner of war.

Back in Germany, in 1948, Gröning took up his life more or less where he'd left off. During the war, he'd married; by 1950, he had two sons. He told his wife that he didn't want to answer questions about his service, and his wife, who'd been a leader of the girls' wing of the Hitler Youth, didn't want to ask any. Gröning got a job as a clerk in a glass factory and eventually became the head of the human-resources department.

He retired in the mid-nineteen-eighties, and it was then that something changed—or maybe broke down—for him. A devoted philatelist, he got to know a fellow stamp collector who, it turned out, was a Holocaust denier. The collector gave him a pamphlet called "The Auschwitz Lie." Gröning felt compelled to point out that the supposed "lies" were true; all the horrors that were said to have taken place at Auschwitz had indeed happened. He should know, since he was there. Gröning sent the pamphlet back to the collector, with his comments. A few months later, the comments appeared as a letter to the editor in an extreme right-wing magazine. Gröning, the onetime Nazi, began getting phone calls from incensed neo-Nazis.

Gröning set out to write a chronicle of what he had seen. He had copies of the manuscript bound and gave them to his sons. His older son didn't respond. His younger son handed his copy back with questions in the margins. Gröning rewrote it. He continued to revise the manuscript for twenty years. Meanwhile, in 2003, and then again in 2004, he sat for lengthy interviews with the BBC. In 2005, he gave another long interview, stretching over more than five hours, to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. (These two sets of interviews are the source for Gröning's words, and also for the thoughts and feelings I've attributed to him.)

In 2013, he gave a brief interview to the *Hannoverische Allgemeine Zeitung*. "I do not feel myself guilty," he said, "because I didn't give anyone so much as a slap in the face."

Gröning is now ninety-three. He is widowed and has trouble walking. A few months ago, he was charged with three hundred thousand counts of ac-

cessory to murder. His trial, to be held in the city of Lüneburg, is supposed to begin in April.

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." So runs Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous line, and it is one way to make sense of the seventy-year interlude between the war's end and Gröning's prosecution. This, at least, was the thought that occurred to me when I first read about the charges filed against him this past September. I was preparing at the time to make a trip to Berlin, to attend the raising—or, really, embedding—of a small memorial, known as a *Stolperstein*, in honor of my grandfather's mother, who was murdered at Auschwitz. Probably, I thought, she had taken her last Reichsmarks with her when she was deported, which meant that those bills had passed from her hands into Gröning's. It was a deeply creepy kind of connection, and I was led from it to others. Like Gröning, my grandparents rarely talked about the war, though they talked about everything else: my grandfather's childhood in a small town near the Oder; my grandmother's more cosmopolitan upbringing in Grünewald; the years just before the war, which my grandfather spent tutoring law students (including, he was proud to report, Kaiser Wilhelm's grandson); the difficult first months in New York, when my grandmother cleaned houses in the furs she'd brought with her from Berlin. I do not know why my great-grandmother stayed behind when my grandparents emigrated. It was too difficult to ask about while my grandfather was alive, and now he is dead. So, too, is my grandmother.

When Germans discuss the Second World War, they often do so in terms of generations. There is the *Tätergeneration*, or perpetrator generation—the cohort that carried out the war. This is Gröning's generation and that of my grandparents, except that in their case, instead of *Täter*, they became refugees. Then, there's the *zweite Generation*. These are children of the war—Gröning's sons and, in a certain sense, my mother, who was born in Berlin. The *zweite Generation*, too, is aging, and power is now passing to the *dritte Generation*, which is to say the perpetrators' grandchildren.

The effort to bring Nazi war criminals to justice, if that is the right word

for it, also divides roughly in three. The initial phase was the one scripted for the movies. The villains were demonic, the rhetoric stirring, and at the end came the satisfying snap of the hangman's noose. At the first Nuremberg trial, which was conducted in front of four judges—one each from France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—twelve Nazi leaders, including the commander of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring, and the Third Reich's minister of foreign affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, were sentenced to death. (Hitler's secretary, Martin Bormann, was tried in absentia; it was later discovered that he had died in the war's final days.) Göring committed suicide before he could be put to death. The rest were executed. Their bodies were cremated and their ashes scattered on the Isar River. The United States conducted a dozen more trials of high-ranking officials in Nuremberg; these resulted in twelve additional death sentences and eighty-five prison terms.

The next phase involved lower-ranking Nazis, those who'd been responsible for the day-to-day business of extermination. A line had to be drawn between the innocent and the guilty. But where? Was every soldier who had worked in one of the camps, or who had rounded up the prisoners sent to them, to be pursued as a criminal? In his interview with the Hannover newspaper, Gröning argued that, if someone like him were to be prosecuted, "then where would you stop? Wouldn't you also have to charge the engineer who drove the trains to Auschwitz? And the men who ran the signal boxes?"

At least in the West, the difficult task of drawing the line was left to the Germans themselves. To say that they failed at it is to be generous. A journalist named Ralph Giordano, whose half-Jewish family spent much of the war hiding in a basement, once called this the country's *zweite Schuld*—its "second guilt." Just as ordinary Germans had looked away during the Holocaust, afterward they looked away as those who had carried it out went unpunished. In the years immediately following the war, former Nazis found jobs in the civil service and also, in many cases, in prominent political offices. A list published a few years ago by the German Interior Ministry shows that, in



the early years of the Bundesrepublik, government officials who had been members of Nazi organizations included at least twenty-five Cabinet members and a President. Hans Globke, one of the top aides to West Germany's first postwar Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, had helped shape the Third Reich's racial laws. (Referring to Globke, Adenauer is supposed to have said, "You don't toss away dirty water when you don't have any that's clean.")

It was not until 1958 that West Germany created a central office for investigating crimes committed during the war. It was granted no real power; all it could do was refer cases to district prosecutors. Meanwhile, the German judiciary, which was also filled with former Nazis, set about tying its own hands.

A crucial decision made early on was to set aside the charge of genocide. The term had been coined to describe the Holocaust by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish refugee who went on to advise American prosecutors at Nuremberg. With the adoption of the United Nations' Genocide Convention, in 1948, many nations used Lemkin's language to draft statutes that expressly addressed Nazi atrocities. But German jurists refused to make use of the category. It was, they argued, legally irrelevant, since, when the atrocities took place, the

statutes against genocide had not yet existed. The same went for "crimes against humanity," another postwar legal construction. To impose the laws retroactively, the jurists maintained, would be to repeat the sins of the Nazis, who had rewritten the legal code whenever it suited them.

If "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" were unavailable, then old-fashioned murder charges were still an option. Millions had, after all, been slaughtered. But the German judiciary was reluctant to pursue this path as well. In 1962, a key decision by the country's highest appellate court held that those who acted "under the influence of political propaganda or because of the power of the ordering authority" should not be considered guilty of homicide, as they did not "exhibit the impulses" envisioned by "standard criminology." An S.S. man who shot hundreds of Jews in the head or gassed thousands with Zyklon B was, by this account, not committing murder so long as he was acting on commands from above.

The net effect of all this was to draw the line between guilt and innocence awfully close to where the Nazis had. At Auschwitz, Belzec, and Treblinka, murder required sadism that went beyond camp protocol. And even in these cases—those of so-called *Exzesstäter*—the courts

hesitated. How was a prosecutor expected to build a case when the witnesses, as well as the victims, had been exterminated? In 1974, an Auschwitz commander named Willi Sawatzki was put on trial for having participated in the murder of four hundred Hungarian Jewish children, who were pushed into a pit and burned alive. (The camp's supply of Zyklon B had run short.) Sawatzki was acquitted after the prosecution's key witness was deemed unfit to testify.

Approximately a million Jews were killed at Auschwitz, and along with them at least a hundred thousand Polish, Roma, and Soviet prisoners. According to Andreas Eichmüller, a German historian in Munich, sixty-five hundred S.S. members who served at the camp survived the war. Of these, fewer than a hundred were ever tried for their crimes in German courts, and only fifty were convicted.

Given this history, Gröning had little to fear from going public. After all, he had not, as he put it, so much as given a prisoner "a slap in the face." What he did not foresee—and what no one else really did, either—was that there would be a third phase of prosecutions.

This phase began with the trial of John Demjanjuk, or, to be more accurate, with his second trial. Trial No. 2, which was held in Munich, began in 2009 and lasted almost two years. It is the subject of a forthcoming book, "The Right Wrong Man: John Demjanjuk and the 'Last Great Nazi War-Crimes Trial,'" by Lawrence Douglas, a professor at Amherst College (and an old friend of mine). As Douglas, a war-crimes scholar, recounts it, the case is a key event in legal history and also the final act of a very black comedy.

Demjanjuk was born a year before Gröning, in a small town in Ukraine. He was drafted into the Red Army in 1940 but didn't show up, because his family was so poor he lacked the requisite two pairs of underwear. He was called up again the following year. By this point, as Douglas notes, the Soviet Union had been invaded, and "no one cared about his underwear." In 1942, Demjanjuk was captured by the Germans in Crimea, and converted from an enemy of the Reich to one of its henchmen. He became a member of a sort of

auxiliary to the S.S., which was made up of East European collaborators, and was sent to work as a guard at Sobibór, an extermination camp in eastern Poland. At Sobibór, more than a hundred and fifty thousand Jews were killed in a matter of eighteen months. Somewhere along the line, Demjanjuk, like Gröning, received a blood-type tattoo on the underside of his left arm.

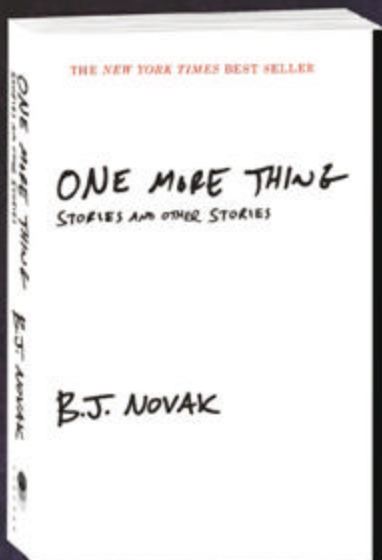
Following the war, Demjanjuk spent several years as a displaced person, bouncing from one D.P. camp to another. When the Cold War prompted the United States to revise its immigration policy in favor of applicants from behind the Iron Curtain, he became a beneficiary. In 1952, he moved to Ohio and got a job at a Ford plant. In 1958, he became a U.S. citizen and Americanized his name, changing it from Ivan to John. He lived with his wife and three kids in suburban Cleveland until the Cold War again intervened.

By the mid-nineteen-seventies, it had become clear that lots of seemingly innocent refugees who had been admitted to the United States were, in fact, anything but. In one particularly infamous case, Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan, a housewife living in Queens, was revealed to have been the Stomping Mare of the Majdanek concentration camp, a guard known for brutally kicking prisoners with her boots. (When Joseph Lelyveld, then a young reporter at the *Times*, showed up at Braunsteiner Ryan's door, her reaction was "This is the end of everything for me.") The Soviets, as Douglas writes, saw the situation as an opportunity. In 1975, they gave a Ukrainian-American newspaper a list of purported war criminals living in the United States. On this list was Ivan Demjanjuk.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service began looking into Demjanjuk's past. In the paperwork he had filled out as a D.P., Demjanjuk had neglected to mention his employment as a camp guard. But he had listed the town of Sobibór as his place of residence for most of the war. Since exterminating Jews had been the town's only business during those years, that was certainly suggestive.

The events that followed could have been scripted by the Coen brothers. Several Holocaust survivors who were shown photographs of Demjanjuk told

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—Michiko Kakutani,
The New York Times

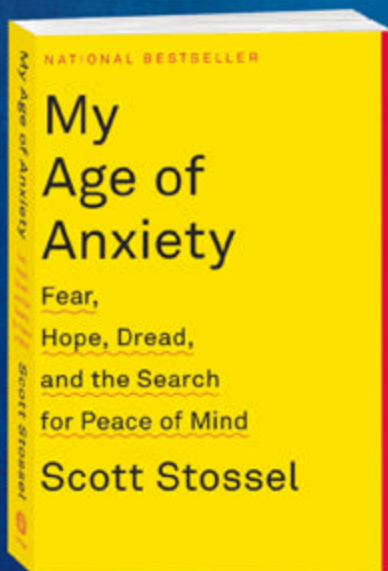
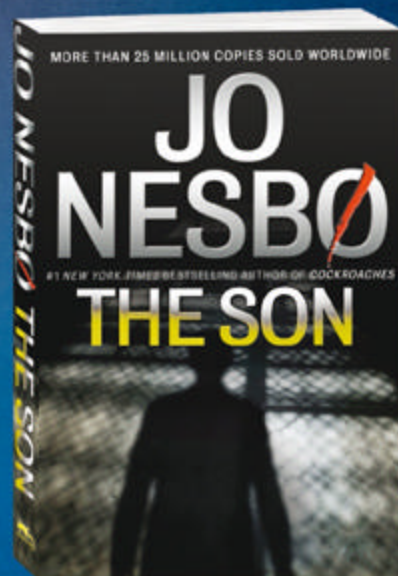
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—*The Washington Post*

investigators that they recognized him; actually, though, they misrecognized him. Demjanjuk resembled another Ivan, who had been a guard a hundred miles to the north, at Treblinka. That Ivan had been so fanatically savage he was referred to by prisoners as Ivan the Terrible. Demjanjuk was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and extradited to Israel to stand trial.

Throughout his trial, in Jerusalem, Demjanjuk maintained that he had never been at Treblinka. What's more, he claimed, he had never been in Sobibór—this was just a name he had picked off a map. “If I had really been in that terrible place, would I have been stupid enough to say so?” he asked. On the basis of often vivid testimony from Treblinka survivors—“I carry this demon within me; I see him everywhere,” one said—Demjanjuk was convicted and sentenced to death. (The last person who had been executed in Israel was Adolf Eichmann, in 1962.) Since the case was a capital one, it carried an automatic appeal, which should have gone swiftly but didn't. As the appeal dragged on, the Soviet Union collapsed, making available vast archives of war-related documents. Among these papers was clear evidence that Demjanjuk had worked as a guard at Sobibór, as well as at two other camps, Majdanek and Flossenbürg. One camp he had *not* worked at was Treblinka. In 1993, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned his conviction.

From then on, Demjanjuk was effectively a man without a country. He was allowed to return to the United States, only to be stripped of his citizenship once more and deported to Germany, where he was tried again—this time as himself. Demjanjuk couldn't be linked to any particular deaths or acts of cruelty. By 2009, virtually all the witnesses who might have been able to place him at Sobibór were dead. Demjanjuk, who spent most of the trial lying on a gurney or propped in a wheelchair, sometimes appeared to be dead, too, Douglas writes. It was widely assumed that his would be the last Nazi trial, and that, like so many earlier ones, it would end in failure.

“It is entirely bewildering how anyone familiar with the German legal sys-

tem could expect a conviction of Demjanjuk with this evidence,” a Dutch expert on Nazi-era crimes, Christiaan Rüter, observed shortly before the proceedings began. In May, 2011, Demjanjuk was convicted of twenty-eight thousand and sixty counts of accessory to murder.

Much of what I know about my great-grandmother came out of a box. After my grandmother's death, in 2009—my grandfather had died a decade earlier—I went with my mother to my grandparents' house, in Flushing, Queens. There, in a chest of drawers, we found cartons full of old papers. One of these was a very elegant, polite letter, dated July 22, 1933, informing my grandfather, who had been working as a judge in Berlin, that he'd been “placed in retirement.” This was “owing to the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.” (The law, published on April 7, 1933, forbade all Jews except those who had served in the First World War to hold government jobs.)

Another was a copy of a letter from the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department in New York, thanking my grandfather for the material he had “so kindly loaned.” My grandfather had sent the division some calendars he'd brought with him when he emigrated; these contained photographs of German vistas that he thought might be useful to the U.S. military in picking bombing targets. There were letters my grandfather had exchanged with New York's Air Warden Service—he was upset that he could not serve as a warden, because the captain of his Queens precinct had dubbed him “an alien of enemy nationality”—and lots of pages of legal correspondence. (In New York, my grandfather went back to law school so that he could pass the bar.) Among the many legal-size and letter-size papers were several smaller pages, about the size of an index card. These were messages my great-grandmother had sent during the war, via the German Red Cross. My grandfather was her only child, and after she'd been widowed, in 1929, she had moved to Berlin to live with him. The notes were typed out on a form that said *Höchstzahl 25 Worte!*



(“Maximum 25 words!”) My great-grandmother's messages usually contained exactly that number.

“With great longing I am thinking of you,” one read, in part. “I pray to God that I will see you again.”

“Still no news from you despite my monthly letters,” another lamented.

“Beloved Children!” a third said. “I think a lot about you. I am very lonely.”

The notes were signed “Franziska Sara Maass.” My great-grandmother's middle name was not Sara. Another Nazi legal invention was the Law on the Alteration of Family and Personal Names, which required Jews with first names of “non-Jewish” origin to take an additional one—Sara for women, Israel for men.

All of the messages from my great-grandmother were dated between March and October, 1942. On December 14th of that year, she, along with eight hundred and ten others from Berlin and surrounding towns, was put on a transport train to Auschwitz. On the record of the transport, she was listed as *arbeitsfähig*, or able to work. She was sixty-two years old.

After that, there were, of course, no more twenty-five-word messages. But my grandfather still hoped that she was alive. On May 5, 1945, three days before V-E Day, he sent nearly identical letters to the U.S. State Department and the Soviet Ambassador in Washington. (Originally Heinz Joachim Maass, my grandfather had by this point, like Demjanjuk, Americanized his name to John.) In the letters, he said that he would be “exceedingly grateful” for help in “tracing and assisting” his mother. He believed, he wrote, that she had been “deported by the Nazis with other Jewish residents of Berlin.” I do not know how he eventually learned that she had died. I also do not know exactly when she died, as that is information the Nazis did not record.

I hadn't thought of doing anything to memorialize my great-grandmother until a couple of years ago, when friends who'd been living in Berlin told me about the *Stolpersteine*. They had spotted them all over the city. On some streets, there would be just one all alone; on others, whole groups.

When I looked into it, I learned that the *Stolpersteine* were a public art project, the work of a German painter named

Gunter Demnig, who lives in Cologne. In contrast to most memorials, which aim to command attention, *Stolpersteine* are understated—literally underfoot. Each one consists of a block of concrete onto which a plain brass plaque has been affixed. The block, which is about the size of a Rubik's Cube, is embedded in the sidewalk, or inserted among the cobblestones, so that the plaque's surface lies flush with the ground. Every plaque is stamped by hand, as a gesture, according to Demnig, of opposition to the mechanized killing of the camps. A typical *Stolperstein*, in the neighborhood where I currently live in Rome, reads:

QUI ABITAVA
GIACOMO SPIZZICHINO
NATO 1920
ARRESTATO 1.1.1944
DEPORTATO
KZ MAUTHAUSEN
ASSASSINATO 19.4.1945

Demnig began laying down *Stolpersteine*—the word translates roughly as “stumbling stones”—in 1995. He placed the first ones on public land in Cologne, without the city's permission. He installed a second group, in Berlin, the following year, also without permission. The very youngest members of the *Tätergeneration* were by then in their mid-seventies, and the ranks of survivors, too, were aging and thinning out. As the number of people who had witnessed the Holocaust shrank, interest in *Stolpersteine* grew, almost in inverse proportion. In Berlin, residents formed groups to find out who had been deported from their neighborhood. They then gave this information to Demnig. (The city eventually legalized the “stones.”) The effort spread to many other German cities—Hamburg, Frankfurt, Stuttgart—and then to other countries: the Netherlands, in 2008; Belgium, in 2009; Italy, in 2010; and France, in 2013. There are now more than six thousand *Stolpersteine* in Berlin, and more than fifty thousand across Europe. The project has been called the “largest decentralized memorial in the world.” Demnig installs most of the stones himself, and the project has more or less taken over his life.

“I never imagined that there would be so many,” he told me, when I finally met up with him. “There's no end.” Recently, I checked the project's Web site; it warned that Demnig's schedule for

the coming year was already “filling up rapidly.”

Anyone can sponsor a *Stolperstein*—the cost is a hundred and twenty euros—and so, in the fall of 2013, I filled out the paperwork for my great-grandmother. Usually, the stones are installed in front of the last place a person lived before being imprisoned or shot or deported. In my great-grandmother's case, this was a single room in an apartment building in a part of southwestern Berlin where all the streets are named for Wagner characters. (She'd probably been forced to move there as the Nazis pressed the city's Jews into tighter and tighter quarters.) When she wrote her message to my grandfather about how lonely she was, the address she used was Sieglinde Strasse 1.

After I filled out the forms, almost a year went by. Then, late last summer, I got an e-mail informing me that Demnig would be laying the stone on October 16th at 11:50 A.M.

Not long after that, out of the blue, I received an e-mail from a couple in Berlin who live on Brünnhilde Strasse. They belonged to a neighborhood group that had researched and financed dozens of *Stolpersteine* in the area. The group had been looking into installing some stones on Sieglinde Strasse, including one for my great-grandmother, and had been searching for information on her. I soon realized that, thanks to the Third Reich's meticu-

lous record-keeping, they knew more about her final weeks than I did.

Even as the Reich was preparing to murder her, its functionaries were giving my great-grandmother forms to fill out. One was a long, detailed questionnaire about her assets, which she completed just a few days before her deportation. She didn't, at that point, have any assets, so she left most of the questionnaire blank. On page 16, she signed a statement swearing that she had not kept any funds secret. She acknowledged by signing the questionnaire that she was “aware that any false or incomplete disclosures will be punished.” (The document is preserved in the Brandenburg state archive, in Potsdam.)

On February 2, 1943, the value of all my great-grandmother's possessions—two single beds, two night tables, a chaise, a rug, an old quilt, some assorted linens—was assessed at four hundred and ninety Reichsmarks, or, according to the official exchange rate of the day, about two hundred dollars. By the time the assessment was made, she was almost certainly dead.

The Demjanjuk verdict upended five decades of legal thinking. Simply by virtue of having been a guard at Sobibór, the court said, Demjanjuk had been part of the “extermination machinery.” It didn't matter that no specific deaths could be attributed to him; he



“What makes you assume that I'm a snow man?”

was still guilty. The response to the verdict, both in Germany and abroad, was, generally, to applaud it. *Der Spiegel* described the ruling as a “turning point.”

“The unspeakable required untold numbers of helpers,” the magazine said. “It was easier to forget these hundreds of thousands than to put them behind bars. Just as so much was forgotten. That has now come to an end.” Writing in the *Times* a few days after the verdict, Deborah Lipstadt, a Holocaust scholar at Emory University, called it “proof that the rule of law works, however slowly.” Somewhat more diffidently, Douglas observes that the verdict “demonstrated the power of legal systems to modestly self-correct.”

In response to the verdict, Germany’s central office for investigating Nazi crimes announced that it was looking to build cases against fifty former Auschwitz guards. “In view of the monstrosity of these crimes, one owes it to the survivors and the victims not to simply say ‘a certain time has passed,’” the head of the office, Kurt Schrimm, said.

But, of course, time had passed—from an actuarial point of view, way too much time. In September, 2013, the office announced that nine of the fifty guards on the roster had, in the intervening months, died. Others simply could not be located. The list of possible defendants was whittled down to thirty. In February, 2014, investigators presented twelve of the suspects with search warrants; the youngest was eighty-eight, the oldest a hundred. Three were taken into custody, then quickly released. One former Auschwitz guard, Johann Breyer, was living in Philadelphia. A judge ordered his extradition, only to be informed that Breyer had died the night before the extradition order was signed. Meanwhile, Demjanjuk, too, had died, in a nursing home outside Munich, while awaiting his case’s appeal.

In principle, the Demjanjuk verdict opened up “hundreds of thousands” to prosecution; as a practical matter, hardly any were left. And this makes it difficult to know how to feel about the latest wave of investigations. Is it a final reckoning with German guilt, or just the opposite? What does it say about the law’s capacity for self-correction that the correction came only when it no longer really matters?

Martin Luther King is eloquent on

the long arc of justice and also on the short time available for action: “In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late.”

Last summer, I tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with Gunter Demnig. The e-mails I sent inquiring about his *Stolpersteine* project went unanswered. After some asking around, I learned that he would be laying several stones in Berlin the day before the installation on Sieglinde Strasse. I got a list of the addresses and decided to show up at the first one.

It turned out to be an apartment building on a busy street in the Kreuzberg section of the city. When I arrived, a few people were standing around in front of the building, chatting. Demnig soon pulled up in a red Peugeot van. He nodded a greeting, and immediately set to work. Demnig has wild gray hair and sad eyes, and he reminded me a bit of Bert Lahr in “The Wizard of Oz.” He was wearing a felt hat, clogs, and khakis, and had a pad strapped on one knee. He knelt down and dug some cobblestones out of the sidewalk. Then, in the hole, he placed the *Stolperstein*, which he’d brought with him in the back of his van. He sprinkled some cement powder around it and replaced most of the cobblestones. The *Stolperstein*, in memory of a writer named Erich Knauf, had an unusually detailed inscription; Knauf, it said, had been denounced, sentenced to death owing to “defeatist utterances,” and beheaded on May 2, 1944. (I later learned that Knauf’s widow had been presented with a bill for five hundred and eighty-five Reichsmarks to pay for the proceedings.)

Demnig still hadn’t said anything, and no one else had, either, though some of the bystanders had brought flowers, which they placed on the sidewalk by the stone. I introduced myself to Demnig, and, with some reluctance, he agreed to give me a ride to the next site. Things went much the same there, as Demnig installed stones for Martin and Erna Wedell, a couple who were both deported on March 2, 1943, and killed at Auschwitz, and at the third site and the fourth. As we drove along, Demnig explained how the project had originated. Back in 1990, he’d decided to commemorate the deportation of hundreds of Roma from Cologne

by painting a white line on the streets showing the path they’d been herded along to the railway station. A few years later, the idea for the stones occurred to him. We talked a bit about his family. Demnig, who is sixty-seven, belongs squarely to the *zweite Generation*. His father fought first in Spain, when the Nazis went to the Nationalists’ aid, and then in France. After the war, Demnig told me, his father refused to talk about it: “You couldn’t get anything out of him.”

“He is long since dead,” he added.

The next day, Sieglinde Strasse was the eighth installation on Demnig’s schedule. My parents had come from New York, and they like to be early for things, which in this case was lucky. When we reached the street, fifteen minutes before the time we’d been given, Demnig was already packing up his tools. He had seven more stops to make that afternoon, and he soon drove off in his red van. Other people began to arrive. My parents had invited some friends from Hamburg and some from Munich. The couple from Brünnhilde Strasse came. They had taped a notice on the door of the building—a four-story apartment house that now looks quite elegant—announcing the laying of the stone. On it, someone had written, “Super! We welcome this action.”

It was gray and raining, and, with the *Stolperstein* already installed, no one seemed sure how to proceed. The only person there who had ever spoken to my great-grandmother was the daughter of my grandfather’s secretary, who had met her as a small child and who still lives in Berlin. She offered a few words. My mother, who was six months old when she left Germany, said a few words. She had brought along some yellow roses and arranged them on the sidewalk. As a ceremony, it was anticlimactic, which, as I was walking away, down the Wagnerian-themed streets, struck me as appropriate.

There was never going to be justice for the Holocaust, or a reckoning with its enormity. The *Stolpersteine*, in a way, acknowledge this. They don’t presume to do too much. That is perhaps why they work. And perhaps the Gröning case and any others that may follow should be approached in a similar spirit. They should be regarded less as trials than as ceremonies—another kind of public art on the theme of its inadequacy. ♦

DIARY OF THE LEFT SHARK

BY KELLY STOUT

A remarkable feat of agility was performed on Sunday night, and it had nothing to do with football. It was the sharks. . . . The dancing sharks at Katy Perry's Super Bowl halftime show . . . danced in unison. But soon, one of the sharks, specifically Left Shark, said enough of that, and began to do his own thing frenetically on national television.

—*Washington Post*.

First rehearsal went great. Katy says to just call her "Katy"—very down-to-earth move. Happy to see Eric! Grateful he got me this gig, as not a lot of work out there for us sharks.

Second rehearsal O.K. Eric picking up dance moves faster than me, which is no biggie, since I'm still getting over quad injury. Still, resolving to work harder. Went for a beer afterward with dancing Blue Surfboard, named Jeremy. He's worked with Miley Cyrus!

Eric texted wanting to know if I could use some "extra practice." Didn't think I needed "extra practice," but Eric = good buddy, so I value his input. Couldn't meet him, though, had book club.

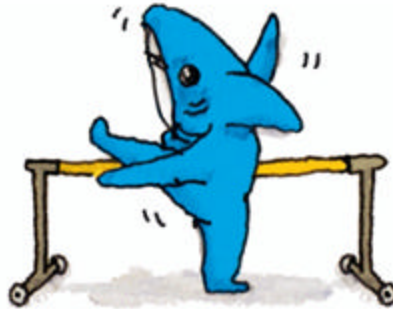
Eric acting high and mighty in rehearsal—keeps referring to himself as "old veteran." Feel he should turn it down a notch. Super Bowl halftime show is not a combat situation, and metaphor makes no sense.

Rehearsal rough tonight. Eric called my grasp of choreography "amateurish." Said he did big favor by recommending me, and now worried Katy won't hire him again. Said work must be "on a professional level" with "zero tolerance for mistakes." I told him I was sorry to have disappointed, that my work will be "professional level" from here on out. Went to bathroom and cried into fins, but no one saw except Jeremy, who was very understanding. J says Katy makes a lot of people crazy—just ask Russell Brand! Found joke to be a little sexist—and, besides, Katy not really the problem—but appreciated support.

Katy took me aside after rehearsal. Uh-oh. But no! Said she likes seeing my extra effort! On verge of major breakthrough vis-à-vis choreography!

Happy to have long weekend off from rehearsal to regroup. Guy at brunch overheard me talking about current gig and asked if I am a real shark! Of course I'm a real shark! Tried not to be offended, but people can be so ignorant.

Back at rehearsal. Things steadily better, but sometimes feel Eric = competitive with me, since so few of us sharks in the industry. But shouldn't that bring us closer? (Rising tide lifts all sharks!)



Big day almost here. Grandma and Mom both called to say everyone back home's rooting for me. Pressure, but in a good way.

Eric recommended some changes to choreography today. Katy considers Eric "genius," so took recommendations. Feel my success with old choreography hard won, so am disappointed. This time, Eric didn't offer any "extra help."

More dance changes today! Can't keep up, and Eric can tell. Hate to sound paranoid, but worry that Eric's trying to sabotage me! Going to have a glass of Shiraz to relax before practicing new moves.

Regret drinking entire bottle of wine last night. Skipped rehearsal, which I realize is not "professional level" behavior,

but Eric and his "zero-tolerance policy" can suck it.

Embarrassed by last diary entry. Eric is not sabotaging me. Am letting my insecurities get in way of friendship.

NOPE. ERIC'S DEFINITELY TRYING TO SABOTAGE ME. Super Bowl is tomorrow and he changed dance moves AGAIN. Trying to make a fool of me. Unsure which makes me sadder, potential end of dance career or potential end of friendship.

Super Bowl over. Grandma and Mom called to remind me that my personal best was all they ever asked for. Am laughing-stock of Internet. Gained hundreds of Twitter followers, but suspect most are "joke" follows. Katy sweet about it.

Jeremy invited me to have a beer with him and other Surfboard. Frankly, feel that other Surfboard's kind of a blow-hard, so declined.

Got voice mail from Mom this morning asking if I'm considering going back for teaching degree. Said I'm "good with kids" and not end of world that dancing didn't work out. Ouch.

Jeremy brought over falafel last night and made me forget Super Bowl debacle with impression of Taylor Swift. Didn't know Jeremy = T.S. fan! Promised I wouldn't tell Katy. Not that I'll be working with Katy again anytime soon.

Text from Eric wanting to know how I'm "holding up." Chose not to say anything, as had nothing nice to say.

Jeremy joining book club! Silver lining of Super Bowl ordeal.

Downloaded application to Columbia Teachers College. Think I could maybe make a difference in lives of youth, plus get mind off Super Bowl. Jeremy, Mom, and Grandma all supportive. Mom asked if Jeremy just a friend or what. Her ideas re male friendship pretty "stone age," but appreciate her interest.

Feeling O.K. about future. Dance world maybe too toxic for shark like me. Perhaps whole episode not humiliation but wake-up call! Considering move to Austin. ♦

A PLACE OF PASTS

Finding worlds in the city.

BY JOSEPH MITCHELL



Joseph Mitchell was born in 1908 into a prosperous family of North Carolina cotton and tobacco growers. At the age of twenty-one, he came to New York City to pursue a career as a writer, and he started contributing to this magazine four years later. In the late sixties and the early seventies, he began writing a memoir. What follows was intended to be the third chapter but was never finished.

In the fall of 1968, without at first realizing what was happening to me, I began living in the past. These days, when I reflect on this and add up the years that have gone by, I can hardly believe it: I have been living in the past for

over twenty years—living mostly in the past, I should say, or living in the past as much as possible.

And now, right away, before I go any further, I must interrupt myself and say that I am not entirely satisfied with the phrase “living in the past” as a description of my way of life—it makes me sound like some kind of sad old recluse—but living in the past is the closest I can come to it; I hope that my meaning will become clearer as I go along.

And I should also say that when I say the past I mean a number of pasts, a hodgepodge of pasts, a spider’s web of pasts, a jungle of pasts: my own past; my father’s past; my mother’s past; the pasts

of my brothers and sisters; the past of a small farming town geographically misnamed Fairmont down in the cypress swamps and black gum bottoms and wild magnolia bays of southeastern North Carolina, a town in which I grew up and from which I fled as soon as I could but which I go back to as often as I can and have for years and for which even at this late date I am now and then all of a sudden and for no conscious reason at all heart-wrenchingly homesick; the pasts of several furnished-room houses and side-street hotels in New York City in which I lived during the early years of the Depression, when I was first discovering the city, and that disappeared one by one without a trace a long time ago but that evidently made a deep impression on me, for every once in a while the parlor or the lobby of one of them or my old room in one of them turns up eerily recognizable in a dream; the pasts of a number of speakeasies, diners, greasy spoons, and drugstore lunch counters scattered all over the city that I knew very well in the same period and that also have disappeared and that also turn up in dreams; the pasts of a score or so of strange men and women—bohemians, visionaries, obsessives, impostors, fanatics, lost souls, gypsy kings and gypsy queens, and out-and-out freak-show freaks—whom I got to know and kept in touch with for years while working as a newspaper reporter and whom I thought of back then as being uniquely strange, only-one-of-a-kind-in-the-whole-world strange, but whom, since almost everybody has come to seem strange to me, including myself, I now think of, without taking a thing away from them, as being strange all right, no doubt about that, but also as being stereotypes—as being stereotypically strange, so to speak, or perhaps prototypically strange would be more exact or archotypically strange or even ur-strange or maybe old-fashioned pre-Freudian-insight strange would be about right, three good examples of whom are (1) a bearded lady who was billed as Lady Olga and who spent summers out on the road in circus sideshows and winters in a basement sideshow on Forty-second Street called Hubert’s Museum, and who used to be introduced to audiences by sideshow professors as having been born in a castle in Potsdam,

The author, photographed on Water Street, near the old Fulton Fish Market.

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Germany, and being the half sister of a French duke but who I learned to my astonishment when I first talked with her actually came from a farm in a county in North Carolina six counties west of the county I come from and who loved this farm and started longing to go back to it almost from the moment she left it at the age of twenty-one to work in a circus but who made her relatives uncomfortable when she went back for a visit ("How long are you going to stay" was always the first question they asked me," she once said) and who finally quit going back and from then on thought of herself as an exile and spoke of herself as an exile ("Some people are exiled by the government," she would say, "and some are exiled by the po-lice or the F.B.I. or the head of some old labor union or the Mafia or the Black Hand or the K.K.K., but I was exiled by my own flesh and blood"), and who became a legend in the sideshow world because of her imaginatively sarcastic and sometimes imaginatively obscene and sometimes imaginatively brutal remarks about people in sideshow audiences delivered deadpan and sotto voce to her fellow-freaks grouped around her on the platform, and (2) a street preacher named James Jefferson Davis Hall, who also came up here from the South and who lived in what he called sackcloth-and-ashes poverty in a tenement off Ninth Avenue in the Forties and who believed that God had given him the ability to read

between the lines in the Bible and who also believed that while doing so he had discovered that the end of the world was soon to take place and who also believed that he had been guided by God to make this discovery and who furthermore believed that God had chosen him to go forth and let the people of the world know what he had discovered or else supposing he kept this dreadful knowledge to himself God would turn his back on him and in time to come he would be judged as having committed the unforgivable sin and would burn in Hell forever and who consequently trudged up and down the principal streets and avenues of the city for a generation desperately crying out his message until he wore himself out and who is dead and gone now and long dead and gone but whose message remembered in the middle of the night ("It's coming! Oh, it's coming!" he would cry out. "The end of the world is coming! Oh, yes! Any day now! Any night now! Any hour now! Any minute now! Any second now!") doesn't seem as improbable as it used to, and (3) an old Serbian gypsy woman named Mary Miller—she called herself Madame Miller—whom I got to know with the help of an old-enemy-become-old-friend of hers, a retired detective in the Pickpocket and Confidence Squad, and whom I visited a number of times over a period of ten years in a succession of her *ofisas*, or fortune-telling parlors, and who was fascinating to me



"Damn it, Carl, pick a leg."

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because she was always smiling and gentle and serene, an unusually sweet-natured old woman, a good mother, a good grandmother, a good great-grandmother, but who nevertheless had a reputation among detectives in con-game squads in police departments in big cities all over the country for the uncanny perceptiveness with which she could pick out women of a narrowly specific kind—middle-aged, depressed, unstable, and suggestible, and with access to a bank account, almost always a good-sized savings bank account—from the general run of those who came to her to have their fortunes told and for the mercilessness with which she could gradually get hold of their money by performing a cruel old gypsy swindle on them, the *hokkano baro*, or the big trick; and, finally, not to mention a good many other pasts, the past of New York City insofar as it is connected directly or indirectly with my own past, and particularly the past of the part of New York City that is known as lower Manhattan, the part that runs from the Battery to the Brooklyn Bridge and that encompasses the Fulton Fish Market and its environs, and which is part of the city that I look upon, if you will forgive me for sounding so high-flown, as my spiritual home.

In my time, I have known quite a few of the worlds and the worlds within worlds of which New York City is made up, such as the world of the newspapers, the world of the criminal courts, the world of the museums, the world of the racetracks, the world of the tugboat fleets, the world of the old bookstores, the world of the old left-behind churches down in the financial district, the world of the old Irish saloons, the world of the old Staten Island oyster ports, the world of the party-boat piers at Sheepshead Bay, and the worlds of the city's two great botanical gardens, the Botanic one in the Bronx and the Botanic one in Brooklyn. As a reporter and as a curiosity seeker and as an architecture buff and as a Sunday walker and later on as a member of committees in a variety of Save-this and Save-that and Friends-of-this and Friends-of-that organizations and eventually as one of the commissioners on the Landmarks Preservation Commission, I have known some of these worlds from the inside. Even so, I have never really felt altogether at home in any of

them. And I have always felt at home in the Fulton Fish Market.

I know the exact day that I began living in the past. I didn't know it then, of course, but I know it now. The day was October 4, 1968, a Friday. I had recently been in what I guess could be called a period of depression, during which, on the advice of a doctor, I had begun keeping a detailed diary, really a journal, and I have continued to keep it, so that I have a record of everything of any consequence that happened to me on that day and on almost every day of my life since then. On that day, according to my diary, a dream woke me up around 4 A.M. In this dream, I was standing on the muddy bank of a stream that I recognized, because of a peculiar old slammed-together split-rail bridge crossing it, as being the central stream running through Old Field Swamp, a cypress swamp near my home in North Carolina. I had often fished in this stream as a boy. In the dream, I was fishing for redfin pike with a snare hook hung from a line on the end of a reed pole. I was watching a sandbar in some shallow water out in the middle of the stream that the sun was shining on, and I was waiting for a pike to show up over the sandbar where it would be clearly visible and where I could maneuver my line until I had the hook under it and could snatch it out of the water. I was intent on what I was doing and oblivious to everything else. And then I happened to look up, and I saw that the bridge was on fire. And then I saw that the mud on the opposite bank was beginning to quiver and bubble and spit like lava and that smoke and flames were beginning to rise from it. And then, a few moments later, while I was standing there, staring, fish and alligators and snakes and muskrats and mud turtles and bullfrogs began floating down the stream, all belly up, and I realized that the central stream of Old Field Swamp had turned into one of the rivers of Hell. I dropped my pole and spun around and started running as hard as I could up a muddy path that led out of the swamp, but the mud on it was also beginning to quiver and bubble and spit, so I plunged into a briar patch beside the path and tried to fight my way through it, whereupon I woke up. I woke up with my heart in my mouth. ♦

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LOST IN SYRIA

A troubled Army vet clandestinely joined the fight against Assad. Then an adventure turned into a tragedy.

BY NICHOLAS SCHMIDLE

In December, 2012, an itinerant American named Eric Harroun checked into a youth hostel in Istanbul. A thirty-year-old U.S. Army veteran with sandy-blond hair, Harroun had left the service in 2003, and since then he had travelled everywhere from Lebanon to Thailand. He was living out of a green duffelbag and a tan camouflage backpack, navigating the world one Lonely Planet guidebook at a time.

At the hostel, Harroun, who made friends easily, met a liberal Syrian activist from Aleppo. “We were hanging out every night, drinking until morning, and talking about the revolution in Syria,” the activist said. The revolt against Bashar al-Assad was approaching its third year, and the activist lamented that Assad was bombarding his people with tanks, jets, and poison gas. Human-rights organizations had accused Syrian soldiers of war crimes, including raping prisoners and massacring children. “The atrocities that were being committed by that totalitarian regime, it made me mad,” Harroun later recalled. “It made me very angry to where I wanted to pick up arms and actually fight against people who would do that.”

On December 5th, Harroun called his mother, Ann, who lived in Phoenix, and informed her that he was going to war. Through the activist, he had met a commander from the Free Syrian Army, which opposed Assad; Harroun had immediately joined the cause. In a message over Skype, he wrote to Ann that, because he was a “qualified expert with an M-16,” he had been placed in “a squad that has scopes, aka sniper rifles.” Harroun assured Ann that he would be fighting alongside honorable men, because “the USA is secretly supplying the FSA.”

Ann urged him to reconsider. She admired his desire to express solidar-

ity with the Syrian opposition but didn’t want him to risk his life. “Can’t you help these people more from the outside, trying to get food and water to them?” she wrote. But Harroun had made up his mind. When his ex-girlfriend Teresa Richard, a Spanish yoga instructor he’d met in Beirut, told him that he would be “crazy” to fight in Syria, Harroun replied, “You have to break an egg to make an omelette.”

The U.S. director of national intelligence, James Clapper, has called Syria “an apocalyptic disaster.” The U.N. estimates that nearly two hundred thousand Syrians have died since 2011. The mayhem has forced virtually all foreign diplomats and intelligence officers to flee; very few journalists continue to report inside Syria, and those who dare to enter become kidnapping targets. (Eighty reporters have been killed.) Joel Simon, the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, told me that Syria has become a “black hole.”

And yet, to a certain kind of person, the extreme danger made Syria only more enticing. Harroun spent the next few weeks preparing for battle. “I am bringing multivitamins and medicine, and I am bringing a rucksack of canned food and bread,” he told Ann.

Harroun and the activist planned to fly to the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep and then cross the border into Syria, where the activist would arrange to leave Harroun with another Free Syrian Army commander. (The activist, whose family remains in Syria, asked for his name to be withheld.) On January 4, 2013, Harroun told his mother, “I will be in Syria for 1 month, then take a break for a couple weeks.” He was bringing his iPhone but doubted that he would find a reliable Internet connection. He warned her that it might be a while before she heard from him.

“Stay safe,” she wrote. “I DO NOT want to lose any of my children before me!!!”

Harroun had caused his mother worry long before he set off to fight in a foreign land. Growing up, he was rarely cowed by authority, and in his teen-age years she was the only one at home to challenge him: Ann had divorced Harroun’s father, Darryl, a truck driver, when Eric was nine.

In the ninth grade, Harroun was arrested for robbery, and found with knives in his sock. When Ann reprimanded him, he tried to choke her. She called the police. Not long afterward, Ann found Harroun asleep on the dining-room floor, near a pistol. She tiptoed across the room, hid the weapon, and contacted the authorities again.

That summer, Ann moved Harroun and his younger sister, Sarah, to Oakes, North Dakota, a small town southwest of Fargo. Ann had a sister who lived there, and she hoped that family support and a tight community would temper her son. But he was picked on as an outsider, and acted up at school. Harroun had multiple piercings, and he shaved his hair on the sides, combing back the rest with gel. Kids called him Slick 50, and, to press the insult, someone poured motor oil on Ann’s car in the middle of the night. Harroun’s grades suffered, and Ann eventually enrolled him in a Christian vocational center for troubled youth. Darryl, who lived in Phoenix and spoke to Eric on the phone several times a week, told me, “He was just lost.”

Eventually, Harroun earned his G.E.D. and enlisted in the Army. In 2000, he went to boot camp at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. “That was the best place for him,” Darryl said. He attended Harroun’s graduation



Images from Eric Harroun's iPhone, which he took with him into Syria. In a video, he warned, "Assad, your days are numbered."

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ceremony and recalls the day as “probably the proudest I ever was of him.” Harroun had an uneventful soldiering career, never deploying overseas. He wanted to become an infantryman but trained instead as a mechanic. A fellow-recruit, Jason Craig, served with Harroun at Fort Riley, Kansas, and said that the two of them were “inseparable.” Though Harroun enjoyed the camaraderie of the Army, Craig said, he lacked discipline. “We got punished quite often,” Craig added. “Lots of pushups.”

Harroun suffered from depression and mood swings, and his military records indicate that he had a “personality disorder.” According to Craig, Harroun was “about a week away from receiving a full-blown dishonorable discharge” when, one Saturday in April, 2003, they left the base to hang out with friends at a waterfall near Manhattan, Kansas. After hours of drinking, Harroun rode back to Fort Riley in a truck with a woman who was, as Craig put it, “tanked.” She crashed into a tree and Harroun’s head hit the dashboard, fracturing his skull. He was medevaced to a nearby hospital, where a surgeon inserted a steel plate in his head.

A few weeks later, Harroun was given a medical waiver with an honorable discharge, entitling him to full benefits. He also began receiving a monthly disability check of about twenty-five hundred dollars. Doctors prescribed antidepressants, and narcotics to manage residual pain from the accident.

Harroun moved back to Arizona. He cycled through jobs: brokering mortgages, waiting tables, selling cars. He dated a student at Arizona State University named Melissa Hutton. After they split up, she told me, he turned “borderline stalkerish” and begged her to take him back; when she refused, he shot himself in the abdomen. On another occasion, Harroun tried to punch a friend of Hutton’s, and he was arrested for disorderly conduct. Subsequently, he was arrested twice for driving under the influence.

While Harroun awaited various court hearings, he began following the news, and developed a fascination with the Middle East. He wondered how his old Army friends were faring in

Iraq, and wanted to make a contribution. In 2005, he boarded a commercial flight to Kuwait. He assumed that, with his background, a military contractor would hire him upon arrival. He even brought a gun, stashed in a checked bag. But, when he landed, authorities in Kuwait questioned him and put him on the next flight home. The experience left him feeling dejected but undeterred: if he couldn’t tap into someone else’s adventure, he would create his own.

In the summer of 2008, Harroun flew to Lebanon. He intended to take courses at the American University of Beirut, but he never signed up. Instead, he enjoyed Beirut’s night life and befriended backpackers and foreign journalists. That September, he accompanied a Japanese photographer to Shatila, a refugee camp in Lebanon for Palestinians. Around this time, Harroun started introducing himself as part Lebanese, though his ancestry was European. He began advocating for Palestinian rights and eventually travelled to Gaza, where, he told Ann, “children on the streets” were “being shot.”

In October, 2008, Harroun returned to the United States. Eight months later, he converted to Islam, in a small ceremony at the Islamic Center of Tucson. He was hardly committed to the religion’s core tenets, however: Harroun celebrated his conversion by getting drunk in a bar. He didn’t pray, or abstain from eating pork, or fast during Ramadan. When he discussed religious matters, he sounded unsophisticated. In 2013, a reporter from Phoenix’s ABC affiliate interviewed Harroun, and the subject of jihad came up. “People throw that word around like you’re a bin Laden,” Harroun said. “‘Jihad’ means struggle, actually. You have jihad of the tongue—like, if I try to make a point and argue with you about something.”

Robert Young Pelton, the author of the book “The World’s Most Dangerous Places,” wrote about Harroun last year for *Vice*. “Eric was a Muslim in much the same way someone who moves to a new city becomes a fan of a sports team in that city—it’s a way to fit in and relate to those around you when you’re in a strange place,” Pel-

ton wrote. Harroun’s attitude toward Islam mirrored his feelings for the Army: he couldn’t handle the rigor, but he revelled in the brotherhood. He had the word “Allah,” in Arabic script, tattooed in red ink on his right forearm; he later told U.S. investigators that it symbolized the spilled blood of Muslims.

In December, 2010, Harroun went to Egypt. That month, protests erupted in Tunisia. It was the start of the Arab Spring, and Egyptian demonstrators soon gathered in Tahrir Square to unite against Hosni Mubarak. Harroun moved into a hostel near the square. “Stuff started popping off,” he recalled, during the ABC interview. “The police were just shooting at random people. I saw a kid, an Egyptian kid, shot, and I helped carry people to this field hospital. It just pissed me off, so I started rocking the police with them. I was like, ‘Hell, yeah, let’s do this, let’s overthrow this government.’”

During one clash, Harroun fractured his wrist, and during another he was briefly arrested. He was detained again a few months later: he and Thomas Wood, a British college student, were kept inside a police vehicle for several hours while riots raged nearby. Wood recalled, “I was worried we might be burned alive.” Harroun and Wood were moved to a police station and left in a locked room. They stayed up all night, chain-smoking, and at one point Harroun removed a Xanax from his shoe and swallowed it. “The Middle East is a drug, in its own way, and Eric had a perplexing draw to it,” Wood told me. Harroun spoke passionately about Syria, arguing that America needed to do more to help the protesters. He also told Wood that he was part Lebanese. Though Wood admired Harroun’s convictions, he thought that his drug use and his dubious claims about his ancestry spoke to “some kind of existential crisis.”

They were released the next day. Harroun left Egypt, and spent the rest of the summer touring Cyprus, Jordan, and Lebanon. In Beirut, he began dating Teresa Richard, the yoga teacher. In October, 2011, Harroun returned to the U.S. and moved in with an Iraqi-American friend in Sacramento.

But he soon yearned to go abroad again. "I don't like living in America," he told Richard, in a Facebook message. Richard said to me that Harroun reminded her of Don Quixote: "He always wanted to have a cause, to fight situations that he found unjust."

That December, she flew to California to visit him for the holidays. When she arrived in San Francisco, Harroun seemed distant and "half asleep"—totally unlike the man she knew in Beirut. Eventually, he admitted to being hooked on heroin. He promised to get help, and, in mid-January, after Richard had gone home, he wrote to her and said that he was going to rehab, adding, "Wish me luck."

In 1999, Anthony Loyd, a war correspondent for the London *Times*, published "My War Gone By, I Miss It So," a raw meditation about war reporting, post-traumatic stress, and heroin addiction. "The shrink is right: I feel sane as anything in war," he wrote. "It is peace I have got the problem with." Although dope softened the crash of coming home, it plunged him into a whole other kind of combat. Loyd compared quitting heroin to "trying to beat yourself at chess."

After completing rehab, Harroun told Richard that he was still struggling to feel like himself: "The Dr. said even though I quit H, it can take months for the serotonin, I think it's called, to get better."

In June, 2012, he travelled to Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh City, he contracted a parasite. Ann received a message from Harroun's Skype account. The manager of his hotel had signed in under his name and written, "Your son in hospital he passout and worms on his brain and in body he had fever for few days but it was infection from worm parasites you call me for question." Two weeks later, Harroun sent an update: "It looks real bad, they said I have months to live."

But he slowly recuperated in his hotel room, spending hours a day tracking developments in Syria on his laptop. He told Ann that one of his friends had lost "everything" in the war. "I feel so bad for him," Harroun said. He didn't want to sit back and watch any longer. He contacted his friend in Sacramento

and asked to borrow two thousand dollars. He claimed that he needed the money to fly home. Instead, he used it to buy a plane ticket to Istanbul.

Harroun is hardly the first man to have set out to join a foreign war. In April, 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette, then a twenty-year-old military officer, left his home in Paris and sailed across the Atlantic to participate in the American Revolution. "Such a glorious cause had never before rallied the attention of mankind," he said. In the eighteen-twenties, hundreds of Europeans, including Lord Byron, joined the Greek struggle for independence. Tens of thousands of foreigners flocked to Spain in the nineteen-thirties to resist the Fascist regime.

Recent conflicts have mobilized a new generation of international fighters. Often, their politics are muddy, their motivations inchoate. In the nineteen-nineties, when Anthony Loyd set off for the Balkans, he went intending to fight, though he was unsure which side to take: "I did not necessarily think

that it mattered for whom or what you fought, just as long as you got into a uniform and fought bravely. Inevitably I was in love with the idea of war without even knowing what it was." In the years after September 11th, Matthew VanDyke, an adventurous Georgetown University graduate, rode a motorcycle across the Middle East, reported from Iraq for the *Baltimore Examiner*, and travelled to Libya to join the revolt against Muammar Qaddafi. He called the experience a "crash course in manhood."

A disturbing number of Americans have joined jihadist groups abroad. In 2000, John Walker Lindh, a Marin County teen-ager, travelled to Yemen and Pakistan, and then to Afghanistan, where he trained with terrorists; in November, 2001, he was captured by American soldiers near Mazar-i-Sharif. (He is currently serving a twenty-year prison sentence.) Another Californian, Adam Gadahn, went to Pakistan and became a spokesperson for Al Qaeda. (He has been indicted on terrorism-related charges but remains at large.) Omar



"Elaine! The avocados are ripe—what do we do? What do we do?"

Hammami, an Alabaman, attended Bible camp and served as the president of his sophomore class before going to Somalia to support Al Shabaab, the militant organization that attacked a Nairobi shopping mall in 2013. (That September, Hammami was killed—by Al Shabaab.)

Since 2011, according to the *Washington Post*, as many as fifteen thousand foreigners have joined the conflict in Syria. Last year, in testimony before Congress, Matthew Olsen, then the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, called Syria the “preeminent location” for “Al Qaeda-aligned groups.” ISIS, in particular, has attracted thousands of volunteers from abroad. One of its top military commanders is an ethnic Chechen from Georgia named Tarkhan Batirashvili. A man who appears in ISIS beheading videos speaks English with a British accent. The French government recently confirmed that several former soldiers had defected and joined ISIS.

Harroun, who described himself to others as a “drinking, womanizing American,” wasn’t a jihadist, and he had no desire to blow himself up. His politics were crudely romantic. Later, when he was asked why he had ventured to Syria, he said, “For them to have freedom, you know?”

On January 5, 2013, Harroun and the activist went to the Istanbul airport to fly to Gaziantep. Harroun had loaded his backpack with canned food and medical supplies. Nina Filinovich, the activist’s girlfriend, saw them off, and told me that Harroun was excited to be finally seeing “everything with his own eyes.”

After arriving in Gaziantep, they took a bus to Kilis, a Turkish town on the Syrian border. They entered Syria on foot, and then the activist hired a taxi to take them a few miles south, to the town of Azaz, where they met an F.S.A. commander named Abu Kamel. Harroun knew very little Arabic, so the activist did the talking. Harroun was handed two weapons: a Dragunov sniper rifle and a Kalashnikov. When he stepped outside to

test-fire them, the activist told me, “it was obvious that he had taken some training.”

As planned, the activist returned to Turkey. Harroun was left with a group of fighters who, as far as he could tell, were mostly farmers with no military experience. Syrian warplanes sporadically dropped bombs. Three days after Harroun arrived, Abu Kamel announced a plan to ambush a Syrian Army camp near Idlib, sixty miles to the southwest.

The fighters set off in a convoy of pickups. Along the way, another rebel brigade joined them. They struck Harroun as more professional-looking than Abu Kamel’s men. They travelled in vehicles mounted with black flags.

In the summer of 2013, the deputy director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, David Shedd, estimated that at least twelve hundred groups were fighting in Syria, many of them holding “far extreme” beliefs. It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between radical groups and avowedly moderate ones like the Free Syrian Army, whose commanders have admitted to collaborating on the battlefield with Jabhat al-Nusra, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria. (In a recent *Times Magazine* article, Theo Padnos, an American journalist who was kidnapped in Syria for twenty-two months, claimed that the F.S.A. handed him over to al-Nusra.) Somar Rahmoon, a former staff sergeant in the Syrian Army who defected in 2012 and now

lives in Gaziantep, told me, “You don’t know who’s loyal to whom anymore.”

Snow was falling as Harroun’s convoy neared the camp, he later told U.S. investigators. The fighters ditched their trucks in a forest, sneaked the rest of the way on foot, and opened fire. Harroun didn’t trust

the scope of his sniper rifle, so he just aimed and shot at opposing muzzle flashes. The Syrian soldiers soon forced the rebels to retreat.

Harroun raced back through the forest as bullets ripped into tree bark. He climbed into the bed of the first familiar truck he saw. It belonged to the convoy’s more hardened fighters.

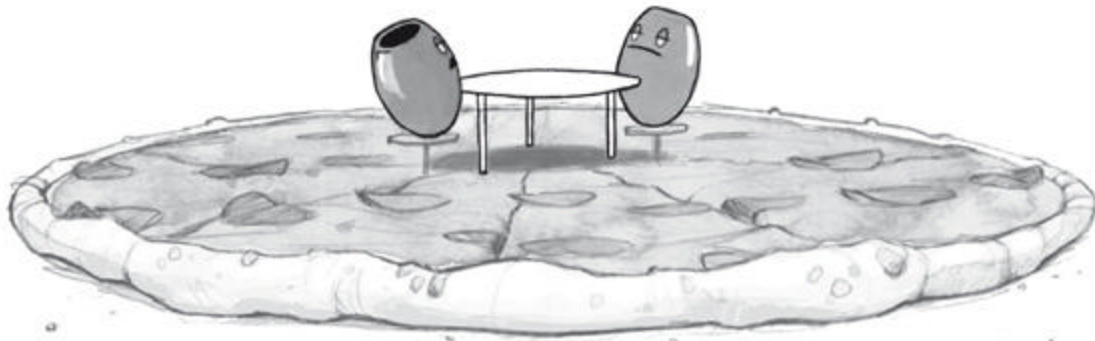
Harroun, in broken Arabic, asked them to take him to Abu Kamel’s group, but instead they brought him to a safe house, stripped him of his weapons, and held him as though he were a prisoner of war.

A few days later, his captors were preparing to raid a militia loyal to Assad and decided to enlist Harroun as an extra gunman. In the battle, a bullet pierced the leg of one fighter. Harroun, who had received combat medical training in the Army, saved the man’s life by applying a tourniquet. After that, the group accepted him.

On January 14th, a week after Harroun entered Syria, a video surfaced online of him in a room with four men who appeared to be rebel fighters. He was dressed in a tan jacket, with a checkered kaffiyeh draped over his right shoulder. Looking into the camera, Harroun said, in the taunting tone of a prizefighter, “Bashar al-Assad, your days are numbered. You’re going down in flames. You should just quit now, while you can, and leave. You’re going to die, no matter what. Where you go, we will find you, and kill you.” The clip originated on an Islamist Facebook page and spread to YouTube. Law-enforcement agencies and media organizations tried to identify the swaggering, fair-skinned American. Later, Harroun said that the rebel group wanted him to be “their version of Adam Gadahn.”

Harroun and his comrades set up a base near a rural intersection twenty miles south of the Euphrates River. Roman ruins overlooked the intersection, and the crumbling gypsum ramparts provided ideal cover for ambushes. One night, the rebels established a checkpoint. While searching a bus, they singled out a man, in plain clothes, whom they suspected of belonging to the Syrian military. They tied his hands, and Harroun filmed the captured man on his iPhone. “Bashar al-Assad, this is your government,” Harroun said, reaching to grab the prisoner’s hair. Harroun later said that he wasn’t sure of the man’s fate, but assumed that he had been killed. (Harroun filmed more than a dozen episodes in Syria. Ann let me extract the files from his iPhone; geolocation data embedded in the videos,





W. M. Mail

"This is the only table they had?"

• •

and in dozens of photographs, enabled me to plot his wartime activities.)

Six days after filming the video of the prisoner, Harroun aimed his camera at a rocky landscape dotted with concrete homes. A fire from an explosion smoldered on the horizon. He began narrating the scene, in the grave tone of Captain Benjamin L. Willard, from "Apocalypse Now": "The Syrian Air Force just dropped some bombs pretty close to us. It's like eight in the morning and it's fricking cold." He then focussed the camera on his rifle: "I got my A.K. all ready. This fucking place is hell. . . . Had one guy die in my arms and had to help one guy tie a tourniquet around his leg to stop the bleeding so far. I'm sure there will be more to come."

By January 27th, Harroun's brigade had ventured farther north, to the outskirts of Tabqa, a city by the Euphrates. That afternoon, as the sun was casting long winter shadows, Harroun and the other men came under heavy fire. He took shelter in a shack with broken windows and bare floors. He was sweating and out of breath when he switched on the camera. "I've been separated from my squad—I've been hit by shrapnel," he said, as gunfire crackled in the background. "I came in this old building. I don't know if this is going to be my last fucking video or not. I'm getting blasted at in here. I got three full clips left and a grenade, so—" His eyes popped at the sound of a metal door budging open. "Fuck," he said. "Bye."

Harroun survived the battle—it's unclear how—and the next month he returned to Turkey. In a text to his sister Sarah, he wrote that he had become a marked man: "I killed an Iranian Officer with my sniper rifle so Iran Government, Syrian Government, and Hezbollah in Lebanon wants to kill me." He discouraged Sarah from taking pity on his enemies: "Those guys we killed murdered women and children. . . . I piss on their graves."

Back in Gaziantep, Harroun logged on to the Internet for the first time in weeks, and wrote to Teresa Richard: "I am not religious but if you saw how many times I almost died in Syria. . . . I heard sniper's bullets past my head [that] hit and killed the guy in front of me. . . . I swear I was never afraid. Something always kept me calm and relaxed. It was like I was invisible to death."

In late February, Harroun flew to Istanbul, intent on meeting with intelligence officials at the U.S. consulate. He felt that he had critical knowledge to share: he had come to believe that the men he had fought alongside in Syria belonged to Jabhat al-Nusra, which the State Department had recently classified as a terrorist organization. It was risky, even foolhardy, for Harroun to reveal this association. A U.S. law prohibited any form of support to designated terrorist groups. Violating that law could lead to a lengthy prison sentence.

Harroun may have assumed that

infiltrating a brigade of militant Islamists in Syria and then reporting that information to the consulate would be enough to shield him from prosecution. Normally, access trumps other concerns when it comes to intelligence. Harroun knew this well, because he had spied for the U.S. government before.

In the autumn of 2008, Harroun contacted the Central Intelligence Agency. He was living in Tucson at the time, having recently returned from his first trip to Lebanon. On October 21st, he received an e-mail from a Gmail address with the handle *travelingcoccina73*: "Eric, You recently reached out concerning your recent trip to the Middle East. We'd like to get together and speak with you concerning your trip. I liked some of your myspace page photos from there. Wayne."

Harroun eventually met with him. He later told *Vice* that Wayne was an African-American who dressed in Hawaiian shirts and sandals. Wayne didn't offer a last name. Bob Baer, a former C.I.A. case officer, told me that the name Wayne and the e-mail address he had provided were most likely "throwaways": identities used to communicate with a source, then discarded. A former analyst at the National Security Agency, who now works for a cybersecurity firm, searched for the Gmail address in several publicly available databases, and told me, "There's no online profile or history for that

address.” He added, “It appears that the account was set up specifically to communicate with Eric.”

Recently, Ann gave me access to Harroun’s e-mail account. I discovered more than forty e-mails between Harroun and Wayne. The messages do not provide a full picture of their relationship or contain specific references to the C.I.A. But they reflect a dynamic particular to handlers and their assets.

Three days after Wayne’s October 21st e-mail, Harroun wrote back. His reply suggests that an off-line conversation had occurred in which Harroun had offered to cooperate. Harroun’s message included some of his correspondence with the Japanese photojournalist, Hidetsugu Suzuki, who had taken him to Shatila, the refugee camp in Lebanon. “I will get more info and names and emails #s etc to you soon,” Harroun wrote to Wayne.

“Thanks brother appreciate the help,” Wayne replied.

Harroun noted that he had pressed Suzuki for details about Shatila. “I told him it’s for a school paper,” Harroun added. I recently asked Suzuki about

the e-mails. He forwarded me his exchanges with Harroun. Their e-mails initially dealt with prosaic matters—Suzuki was robbed at the hostel where he and Harroun had met. Then Harroun seemed to be homing in on something: “Do you know any info on activities or groups that might pose a threat to American interests inside Shatila? Or any other Palestinian camps you went to? I know when we went to Shatila there was a lot of ex Iraqi fighters in there, just out of curiosity.”

“Are you sure that you found ex Iraqi fighters in Shatila?” Suzuki responded. “I didn’t know that.”

“Yea, remember that one guy at the playground he had an Iraqi tattoo? I have seen that tattoo on lots of people when we were there, plus he had that poster of Saddam Hussein remember?” Harroun said. “I was just curious anyway I am writing a story on it for school and that’s why I was asking. If you could tell me more info on activities or daily life or on how the camps operate independently etc it would help.” Suzuki sent him some paragraphs offering general impressions of Palestinian sympa-

thies for Iraq. A few weeks later, Harroun wrote back, “I have to go to jail soon for that DUI”—one of the arrests that had occurred before his first trip to the Middle East. “LOL. It sucks but I can’t wait to get it over with so I can move to Beirut.”

With Wayne, Harroun was less nonchalant about facing jail time. He wrote to him, “I sometimes feel like saying fuck it and just go”—leave the country. Wayne discouraged him from acting rashly, as fugitives can be problematic collaborators, even for intelligence agencies. “Dude, don’t screw up your potential with a charge for flight from the U.S. Sometimes you gotta wait it out so it’s sorted out, even if it’s some bullsh*t,” Wayne said. “We will get together dude and talk, think you could help while you are here because of your skill set.”

In February, 2009, Wayne proposed a meeting: “There may be some stuff here u could help with just by ur willingness to mingle with people.” Six weeks later, Harroun sent Wayne what sounds like a plan to learn Arabic and convert to Islam—both of which would be useful for someone living in the Middle East at the behest of an intelligence agency.

“When I get . . . my 20 days in jail out of the way I will look into Arabic classes,” Harroun wrote to Wayne. “I have most of my GI bill left, would you recommend classical or modern Arabic? Also I spoke to Hamdi”—a Syrian friend of Harroun’s—“last night and I mentioned converting to Sunni Islam. He said he would love to help me with that when I get back to Damascus. So I told him about some Somalis I know here and would most likely convert in AZ”—Arizona.

“Modern Arabic is probably better,” Wayne replied. “Your thinking is on point brotherman. Sorry didn’t get back to you sooner. Believe you will be able to kick some A\$\$.”

In June, 2009, Harroun apprised Wayne of his recent activities: “I contacted the Islamic Center of Tucson about conversion and to speak to the Imam, no word back yet. . . . There is a ton of shady history at that Mosque during the late 80’s and 90’s, I am sure you know about that though.”

Wayne recommended they chat over



“Daddy’s binky is money.”

a “nice good American meal,” and suggested a restaurant across the street from the Tucson Mall. Six days later, Harroun sent a note implying that his interest in the Islamic Center of Tucson was a ruse to spy on the imam, a native of Peshawar, Pakistan, named Farid Farooqi. “With 6 million Muslims in America, what is the chance Imam Farheed is an extremist?” Harroun said. “I would like some motivation here. This is going to be a tedious process. I understand you cant tell me everything but what info you can give me if any on this guy? I am walking into this blind. Thx Bro.”

“Chances are strong he could be, at least know those who are,” Wayne responded. “The majority are not, but at the same time learning who is what is one of the most important aspects. Expect him to be subtle as it could be a while before he or others had trust in u.”

The tempo of their e-mail correspondence slowed after this, and it is unclear if Harroun’s monitoring of the Islamic Center of Tucson progressed. Farooqi told me that Harroun looked “familiar” after I sent him a photograph, though he claimed no specific recollection of him. Farooqi is now employed by the Department of Justice, as a Muslim chaplain. The C.I.A. declined comment, and numerous attempts to contact Wayne at the Gmail address and via a phone number included in the e-mails were unsuccessful.

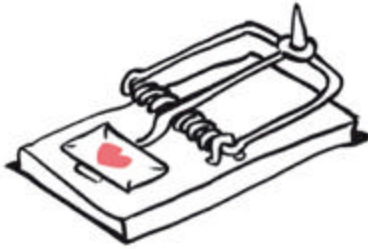
Harroun clearly believed that Wayne was a C.I.A. officer. In late 2009, a triple agent working for Al Qaeda detonated a suicide vest inside a C.I.A. base in Afghanistan, killing seven U.S. intelligence officers and contractors. “Are you alive?” Harroun wrote to Wayne. “Sorry to hear about your fellow agents in Afghanistan. Did you personally know any of them?”

“Yeah, that sucked in Afghanistan,” Wayne responded.

Over the next few years, Harroun periodically contacted Wayne. In December, 2010: “What’s up Bro? I am in Cairo.” In March, 2011: “Are you in Beirut by chance?” In that message, sent from Lebanon, Harroun explained that he had just met an American of Indian origin who had converted to Shia Islam and now had ties to Hez-

bollah, not to mention “very very anti American” views. “LOL he needs to be extraordinary renditioned,” Harroun wrote. Wayne did not respond, at least not by e-mail.

Harroun had other interactions with the F.B.I. In 2010, agents showed up at his apartment in Tucson after a neighbor spotted a Hezbollah flag hanging from his balcony and called the police. Harroun explained that he had no association with Hezbollah, though he



questioned why the U.S. had designated it as a terrorist organization. Agents interviewed Harroun twice in the spring of 2012. In those conversations, he discussed a desire to visit Iran, possibly using fake papers, and spoke of his upcoming trip to Southeast Asia. According to documents later filed in federal court, Harroun expressed “interest and concern” about the prospect of “interacting” with Al Qaeda sympathizers in Southeast Asia. If he met such people, the F.B.I. agents reportedly told Harroun, he should immediately contact the nearest embassy or consulate—words of advice that he may well have recalled as he stood outside the gates of the consulate in Istanbul.

Set on a hilltop at the northern edge of the city, the consulate is one of the largest in the world. Since the closure of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, in February, 2012, it has become a key station for coordinating Washington’s Syria strategy. Harroun arrived there on March 12, 2013. He was escorted inside and taken to see Michael Kolessar, the resident F.B.I. agent.

According to the F.B.I.’s record of the meeting, a document known as an FD-302, Harroun told Kolessar that he had joined the Free Syrian Army, had been separated from his unit in battle, and had ended up with Jabhat al-Nusra—the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria. Three months earlier, the State

Department had named al-Nusra a “foreign terrorist organization,” making it illegal to provide the group with any “material support.” Interpreted strictly, the law could mean imprisonment for merely lending a cell phone to an al-Nusra member; Harroun was saying that he had conducted ambushes and fired rocket-propelled grenade launchers with the organization.

Kolessar brought up an article about Harroun that had been published on the Fox News Web site, a day earlier. It had been written by two journalists who had been curious about the unnamed American in the YouTube clips. After they uncovered a reference to “Eric Harroun” in the comments section of one clip, the reporting was easy: Harroun had a digital footprint that stretched “a mile and a half long,” Ilan Ben Zion, one of the journalists, told me. Zion and his colleague, Greg Tepper, who, at the time, both worked for the *Times of Israel*, contacted Harroun to request an interview. Harroun spoke to them, over Skype, soon after leaving Syria. “Getting into al-Nusra is not rocket science,” he told them. “It just takes balls and brains.” The article quoted inflammatory comments from Harroun’s Facebook page—“The only good Zionist is a dead Zionist”—and described him as a “Muslim warrior who moves between America and countries where the winds of the Arab Spring blow, fighting alongside jihadists and America-hating terrorists while celebrating his bloody exploits on YouTube videos.”

Harroun protested to Kolessar that Zion and Tepper had twisted his words “out of context”: he was “not a radical Islamist” and was “ideologically opposed to any form of oppression,” whether those oppressors were loyal to Assad or to Al Qaeda. He offered to take a polygraph exam, and gave the F.B.I. permission to download data from his phone. In exchange, he said, he hoped that the U.S. government could help him: his friends in the Free Syrian Army needed weapons and night-vision goggles. He had considered seeking assistance from the C.I.A., he told Kolessar, or requesting the items from a Bulgarian arms dealer.

Kolessar asked Harroun whether he knew about the Neutrality Act. Harroun did not. In the nineteen-thirties,



Congress had passed laws designed to prohibit private citizens from meddling in foreign conflicts and, potentially, drawing the nation into war. The implications of Kolessar's question left Harroun unsettled. "I should probably not be looking to buy any weapons then," he said.

After the Fox News story appeared, TV vans lined up outside Harroun's mother's house in Phoenix. In a written Skype conversation, Ann told Harroun, who was still in Turkey, "This is not good. Please don't say things like 'The only good Zionist is a dead Zionist.' Why would you say that?"

Ann shut the blinds, but Harroun refused to hide. When a pro-Assad YouTube channel posted a video announcing that "the American" had been "terminated," Harroun told a British tabloid, "Syrian media must be smoking something, because I am alive and well chilling in Istanbul having a martini at the moment."

Privately, he conveyed a sense of worry. "I got to get the fuck out of here," he told Sarah, who was living with

Ann. His fictions were beginning to catch up with him. Darryl, Harroun's father, had told a reporter that Eric had no Middle Eastern ancestry. "Dad fucked my cover," Harroun wrote. "My cover was [that] my name, Harroun, is Arabic. I told everyone I am half-Lebanese to get into Syria. Then, dumbass dad goes and says different. Now they think I'm a spy."

On March 18, 2013, Harroun returned to the consulate in Istanbul. He again spoke of having formed an association with al-Nusra. This time, a second F.B.I. agent was present, along with Lynn Haaland, a federal prosecutor from the Eastern District of Virginia. They had flown in from Washington. "When a former U.S. Army guy is running around Syria with a terrorist group and bragging about it, alarm bells go off," Neil MacBride, the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia at the time, told me.

The F.B.I. was ready to arrest Harroun but wanted to get him out of Turkey first. On the evening of March 24th, an agent from Washington and Rick

Dow, an F.B.I. task-force officer, stopped by Ann's house. "Don't volunteer any info," Harroun said to his sister when he learned about the visit. "I mean none." But Ann was frantic, and the officials played on her concerns. She told me that the agent had said, "Eric's going to end up getting murdered, and it's going to be one of those where we end up watching him being beheaded on TV. We need to get him back here. How do we do that?"

"Give him a plane ticket," Sarah said.

On March 26th, Harroun visited the consulate a third time and told the F.B.I. that he had recently been approached by a former member of the U.S. Navy, who was interested in fighting in Syria. The man had written to Harroun, "I can shoot, I'm not working, and broke as a joke. Where do I need to fly into?" Harroun asked one of the agents, "Do you want his name and to see the messages?"

The agents told Harroun that the Turkish authorities wanted to arrest him for violating their immigration laws: he had misplaced his passport in Syria and reentered Turkey without proper documentation. The F.B.I. offered him an alternative to a Turkish prison: a plane ticket home. Harroun was thrilled.

The agent who had flown in from Washington told Harroun in an e-mail that he would accompany him, "to ensure there are no hiccups." "I am coming home tonight," Harroun texted his sister. A day later, Harroun and the agent landed at Dulles International Airport. A Suburban took Harroun to a nearby Marriott. Inside his room, he discovered several F.B.I. agents, who offered him cigarettes and beer.

He had a few drinks, showered, and ordered filet mignon from room service, he told *Vice*. When he finished his steak, an agent lunged for his dinner knife and flung it across the room. Harroun was placed in handcuffs and taken to a jail in Alexandria, Virginia.

Prosecutors from the Eastern District of Virginia eventually charged Harroun with conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and with conspiring to use "destructive devices"—the rocket-propelled grenades that he claimed to have launched

in battle. Under U.S. law, these are classified as weapons of mass destruction. If Harroun was convicted, a prosecutor noted, he faced “potential exposure to the death penalty.”

Wardens placed Harroun in solitary confinement, allowing him to leave his cell only between 1 A.M. and 3 A.M. (In 2011, the United Nations rapporteur for torture recommended banning solitary confinement for prisoners awaiting trial.) “Whenever I heard my cell door pop, I was just praying that was gonna be the day they’d say, ‘Hey, you’re free,’” Harroun later said.

He wrote a letter to Ann, apologizing for “this mess I got myself into.” He went on, “I know you must be stressed and mad at me. I told you after I came back from Syria in 2008 how I loved that country. . . . I could not sit back and watch a brutal dictator like Bashar al-Assad murder people and destroy it.” His detention was not only “unfair” but also “a slap in the face” to the Syrian people. “It shows the Syrian people that not only is America not going to help them, but if one American tries to help them he will be punished.”

The judge assigned Harroun a public defender, Jeremy Kamens, who had worked on terrorism cases before: in 2002, he had filed a habeas-corpus petition on behalf of Yaser Esam Hamdi, an American citizen being held, with-

out trial, at a naval detention facility in Virginia; two years later, the Supreme Court ruled in Hamdi’s favor, leading to his release.

Kamens considered Harroun’s predicament to be “unique in American law.” Harroun was being portrayed as an enemy of the United States, yet his objective of overthrowing Assad echoed public statements from President Barack Obama—and any association with al-Nusra had been accidental. (The group he had initially joined, the F.S.A., now receives training from the U.S. government.) “Never, to my knowledge, has the United States ever charged an American citizen for fighting alongside a group that is aligned with the U.S. interest,” Kamens declared.

In addition, Kamens doubted whether the second group was actually al-Nusra. “People who know Jabhat al-Nusra said it wasn’t possible,” Kamens told me. “A guy who doesn’t speak Arabic? Isn’t a strict Muslim? Doesn’t have an entrée?” And, if Harroun truly sympathized with al-Nusra, why had he volunteered to share information about the group with the F.B.I.?

At a detention hearing in April, 2013, Kamens proposed relaxing the terms of Harroun’s confinement. “This is not a case in which the government is silently tracking an individual believing that he is a jihadi,” Kamens argued. “He

actually knocked on the door of the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul.” Carter Burwell, the lead prosecutor, countered that the government had constructed “a very strong case” that consisted of Harroun’s “admissions” to the F.B.I., data retrieved from his iPhone, and his postings on Facebook, which had included videos of him in battle. In addition, Burwell said, the government had “uncovered recently a video of the defendant engaged in some type of press conference with what appears to be the designated terrorist group.”

In truth, the video had not been “uncovered” but, rather, e-mailed by Harroun to the F.B.I. agent who had accompanied him from Turkey. The subject line of the message was “al-Nusra Video.” The clip, which lasts thirty-one seconds, shows nineteen armed rebels—some of them masked, including Harroun—standing in the desert, under a cloudless sky. A spokesman sits in front, at a table, reading aloud a message, in Arabic. The government noted that the statement had not yet been translated.

In May, 2013, Kamens made a copy of the video and presented it to Radwan Ziadeh, the executive director of the Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies, a research institute in Washington, D.C. Ziadeh watched the video, turned to



“Ma’am, are you aware of how many braggy, preachy bumper stickers you’ve got plastered on the back of your car?”

Kamens, and said, "That's not al-Nusra."

Al-Nusra, he explained, released videos through select outlets, and each one featured its logo. More important, the spokesman in the clip was announcing the formation of a new brigade named for Abu Nasser, a martyr. Kamens suspected that Harroun, with his weak grasp of Arabic, had confused "Nasser" with "Nusra."

Prosecutors requested a translation of the video, and it confirmed Ziadeh's interpretation. The transcript read, "With the help of Allah, we formed the al-Nasser brigade, that belongs to the al-Aqsa Islamic Brigades, in the city of Raqqa and its suburbs." Al-Aqsa was not among the groups fighting in Syria that the State Department had designated as terrorists. After Kamens confirmed that the video with Harroun threatening Assad had originally appeared on al-Aqsa's Facebook page, he sent a memo to the court: "Notwithstanding Mr. Harroun's assertions to the contrary, it is apparent that he did not fight with Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria."

Burwell and his colleagues in the U.S. Attorney's office strained to make sense of this turn. Was the situation in Syria so opaque that even those engaged in the war didn't understand what was happening immediately

around them? Burwell declined to comment, as did the F.B.I. and a spokesperson from the Eastern District of Virginia. But Neil MacBride, the former U.S. Attorney, said that he did not regret bringing the case. "We believed it was a righteous, albeit imperfect, case," he said. "Harroun was telling the F.B.I. and reporters, 'I'm hanging out with Jabhat al-Nusra, they have invited me into the fold.' Clearly, the guy thinks he is fighting with an F.T.O."—foreign terrorist organization. MacBride added that al-Aqsa hardly qualified as pro-American: the banner across the top of its Facebook page depicted the U.S. Capitol building engulfed in flames. "They were fighting to establish an Islamic state," MacBride said. (The al-Aqsa Islamic Brigades no longer appear to be active; shortly after Harroun left the country, ISIS took control of the area where he had fought and forced other rebel groups out or into submission.) MacBride conceded, however, that he and his colleagues had determined that Harroun "wasn't a terrorist."

In September, 2013, six months into Harroun's spell of solitary confinement, the government offered him a deal. If he accepted a lesser charge—conspiring to violate American export laws on

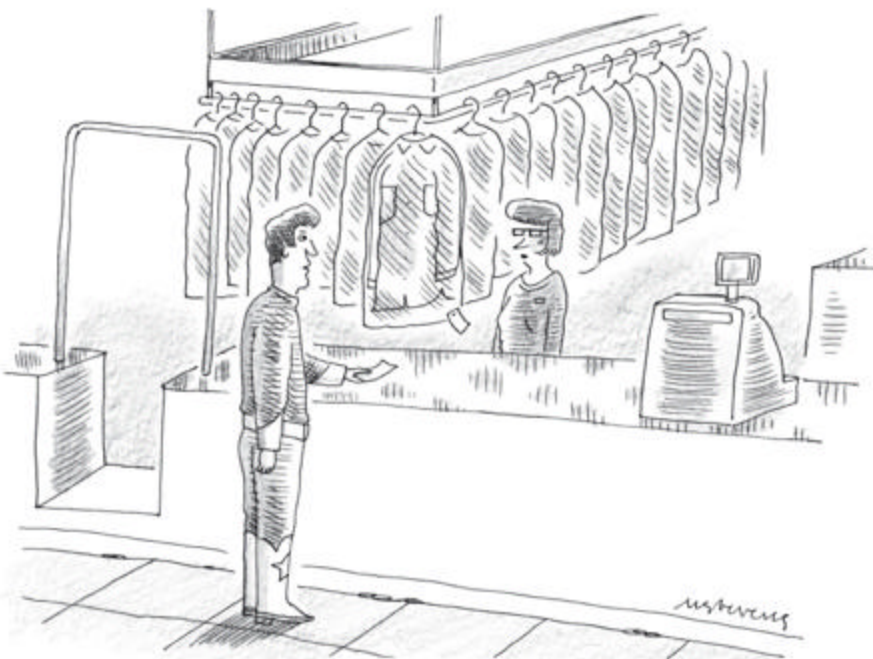
the "transfer and control" of weapons—and agreed to stay in touch with the F.B.I., he could leave prison with "time served" and three years' probation. He accepted.

On September 19, 2013, Harroun walked out of jail, headed to a nearby Greyhound station, and purchased a ticket to Arizona. The coach stopped in Dayton, Ohio, where he met a traveller named Cristy Godby. She was going to Oklahoma on the same coach, and they sat together. He told her about Syria and prison. He felt betrayed by his country, and emotionally vacant after spending six months in solitary confinement. He also dreaded the dreary routines that awaited him in Phoenix. Harroun had bought a small bag of heroin at the bus terminal in Dayton, and he offered to share some with her. Godby told me that Harroun seemed to be using the drug to "face demons."

When Harroun arrived in Phoenix, Ann noticed that his hair was falling out and that his skin was pallid—effects of his time in solitary confinement. "He hadn't seen the sun in months," she told me. The plea bargain required him to report to a probation officer within seventy-two hours of release. Ann drove him to his first meeting. After spending months alone, he was agitated by Phoenix's bright and busy streets. "I can't stand all the cars and the noise," he told her.

Harroun's plea deal also required him to answer questions about "any criminal activity" that the government wished to discuss. Did this mean that he was expected to work for American law-enforcement and intelligence agencies? The terms seemed deliberately cryptic. Last year, I filed a motion requesting access to several sealed court items, and it was granted. A memo from Burwell to the judge commented on Harroun's "substantial assistance" to date, and noted his promise to continue cooperating "with the United States, including members of the intelligence community and foreign governments."

Rick Dow, the F.B.I. task-force officer who had visited Ann and Sarah earlier that year, began meeting with Harroun, often at a Starbucks in Phoenix. Dow was plumbing Harroun's



"It's a cape, it's red, and I'm in a hurry."

contacts and expertise. Harroun occasionally sent Dow tips. Last spring, Harroun texted Dow that he knew of someone heading to Mexico to buy a large shipment of pills: "Want me to get more info?" Dow replied, "Always interested," and suggested another meeting at Starbucks.

Ann couldn't imagine what they spent so much time discussing: Harroun had been in Syria for only a few weeks. Whenever he met with Dow, he seemed "distracted" afterward. Ann suspected that her son was being used to bait other young men tempted to join the Syrian war. "Eric did not like what they had him doing," Ann said. Even espionage loses its glamour when it becomes indentured labor. "He was heartbroken. He would say, 'Mom, it makes me sick what they're having me do.'"

Erik Pell, a former Aryan Brotherhood member who converted to Islam and now lives in Baltimore, showed me several messages that he and Harroun exchanged last winter. In one of them, Harroun said of Syria, "Do you want to go?" (Pell and I met recently, and he said that he never went to Syria and considers members of ISIS to be apostates.)

Harroun grew desperate. He e-mailed Jeremy Kamens, his attorney: "I want to withdraw my plea. I don't care anymore about the consequences—if I am convicted and sent to prison for life."

Kamens replied, "I'm happy to talk to you about this in more detail, but the system is designed so that once your plea is entered and the judge imposes a sentence . . . your case is final and can't be reopened."

On December 22, 2013, Ann attended church and went grocery shopping. Harroun, she recalled, was going through another "bad period": staying out all night drinking, sleeping all day. He was depressed and, according to Sarah, using heroin again. Sarah told me that Harroun had failed multiple drug tests. Presumably, his probation officer kept giving him a free pass. Was it because Harroun was still proving useful to the government? (The probation officer, Mori Emmons, declined to comment.)

Ann returned home around 2 P.M. A young woman was sitting alone in the living room.

"Where's Eric?" Ann asked.

The woman gestured toward the bathroom. Ann knocked on the door, and Harroun mumbled that he'd be out soon. When he didn't emerge, Ann forced her way in. She found Harroun curled up on the floor. "He was the color of a purple grape," she recalled. He had stopped breathing.



Ann noticed a syringe on the countertop. "What have you given him?" she yelled, telling the woman to call 911. Ann sat Harroun up, and slapped him across the face, trying to jolt him awake. When paramedics arrived, he resumed breathing. They transported him to the hospital, but he persuaded a friend to take him to the local V.A. facility, where he stayed through Christmas.

After he checked out, Ann told him to find another place to live. "We can't deal with this anymore," she said. Harroun moved across town to stay with his father. There wasn't really room, though: Darryl was renting out two of his three bedrooms. Harroun slept on a recliner in Darryl's room, which doubled as a kitchen; when I visited the house, last summer, the room was littered with open bags of chips and empty liquor bottles. Harroun looked for his own apartment, but his rental applications were rejected, because of what he called his "bogus charge."

In early April, Darryl left Harroun alone in Phoenix and headed upstate to prospect for gold. A few days later, Jose Rodriguez, a fourteen-year-old whose mother was renting a room from Darryl, found Harroun face down on the floor of Darryl's bedroom. Rodriguez saw a spoon, cotton balls, needles, and a lighter on a table.

That evening, Ann was attending a cooking class that she had signed up

for with Harroun. He hadn't answered his phone all day, so she had gone without him. When the class ended, Ann went to the parking garage, where Sarah was waiting for her. "Mom," she said. "He's gone."

One morning last June, Ann took me to Harroun's grave. She was wearing a long, patterned skirt and a linen cardigan. I drove, and she directed me where to turn, clutching two miniature American flags in her lap.

Harroun's autopsy had revealed acute levels of heroin and sertraline, an antidepressant, in his body. Methamphetamine, amphetamine, codeine, and trazodone, another antidepressant, had also been detected. The medical examiner ruled his death an accident.

Ann learned from the funeral parlor that Harroun, an honorably discharged veteran, was entitled to a plot in Arizona's national cemetery. A year earlier, he had been awaiting trial for supporting an affiliate of Al Qaeda; now he would be buried among war heroes.

It rained on the day of the funeral service. Family and friends gathered under a portico to hear Ann speak about Harroun's compassion, the "many tears" he had caused, and the "many trips to the principal's office" she had made. Flags flew at half-mast. A bugler played taps. Two uniformed soldiers wearing white gloves presented Ann with a folded American flag.

A few days later, Rick Dow, the F.B.I. task-force officer, knocked on Ann's door. According to Ann, Dow conveyed his regret and asked if she planned to keep Harroun's Facebook page open. She did, at least for the time being. Dow told her, "Eric was doing some very good work for us."

In the car, Ann and I turned in to the cemetery grounds, an austere expanse of spindly trees, cacti, and headstones. "Here we are," Ann said. She approached her son's grave, bent down, and placed the two flags in the soil on either side of the headstone. The inscription reads:

ERIC G HARROUN / PFC
US ARMY / JUN 11, 1982 † APR 8, 2014 /
WORLD TRAVELER / ADVOCATE
FOR THE OPPRESSED. ♦



At close range, the Governor is a formidable presence. His speech comes in aggressive, self-confident bursts, especially when he's sizing up

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK PETERSON

WorldMags.net

THE ALBANY CHRONICLES

How Andrew Cuomo gets his way.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN



Andrew Cuomo, the governor of New York, explained his approach to the Legislature as we flew in a state plane from Albany to Westchester County. At fifty-seven, Cuomo still has an athletic build, and, at two hundred pounds distributed over a six-foot-one-inch frame, he fits into an airline seat with some difficulty. It was mid-December, and he was on his way to Manhattan to continue a vigil. His father, former Governor Mario Cuomo, was at his apartment on the East Side, with end-stage heart disease. Mario Cuomo defined his three terms as governor with oratory; Andrew Cuomo has sought to build his reputation in a different way. He made clear that his primary inspiration when it came to dealing with legislators was Bill Clinton, not his father. During Clinton's second term, Cuomo served in his Cabinet, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. "I was watching, and they were impeaching the guy, and he was still there every day, asking them how they were doing, trying to make deals," Cuomo recalled, his voice bearing the hard consonants of Queens, where he grew up. "My job is to get to yes," he said. "If I don't make a deal, I get nothing done. If I get nothing done, I am a failure. If the objective is to make a nice speech, it means nothing."

Because New York State's government had long been controlled by "three men in a room"—the Governor; Sheldon Silver, the Democratic Speaker of the Assembly; and Dean Skelos, the Republican Majority Leader of the Senate—Cuomo often found occasion to praise the other two. "I'm very big on giving other people credit," he told me. "It's the whole collegial thing. That's how I get what I get done done." Most recently, in his State of the State address, on January 21st, Cuomo said that he would soon be

going on a trade mission to Mexico, and he displayed a PowerPoint slide of himself, Skelos, and Silver, all wearing sombreros. "We are going to be our own version of the three amigos!" Cuomo declared, to appreciative laughter from Skelos and Silver, who were seated on the stage beside him. A perfunctory shout-out like this would ordinarily draw little notice, except that, the following morning, federal agents led Silver off in handcuffs.

Silver was charged in a baroque scheme to exploit his office for personal gain. According to the prosecutor's complaint, he arranged for state funding of a research laboratory at Columbia University for victims of an asbestos-related cancer. The director of the lab referred his patients to Silver's personal-injury law firm, which, in turn, filed lawsuits on their behalf. From this and a related arrangement, Silver is said to have netted more than four million dollars. (Silver has denied wrongdoing, though he did step down as speaker; the lab director and the law firm have not been charged.)

Cuomo's solicitude for Silver and others in the Legislature was longstanding. In the summer of 2013, Cuomo created what became known as the Moreland Commission, a bipartisan group of leading citizens, who were to spend up to eighteen months investigating public corruption in the state. The commission's inquiries focused in particular on whether the outside business activities of state legislators should be subject to tighter regulation. By early 2014, Silver and his colleagues had come to loathe the commission, and went to court to thwart its inquiries. Around the same time, Cuomo was seeking to pass his annual budget, and he hoped to do that on schedule. So, just nine months after Cuomo created the commission,

the state of political play, and he is relentless.

REDUX

he abruptly shut it down. Silver passed Cuomo's budget; Cuomo rid Silver of the meddlesome commission.

On the day after Silver's arrest, I met with Cuomo in his New York City office, on Third Avenue. I asked him about the widespread contention that the charges against Silver showed that Cuomo should have let the Moreland investigation run its course.

"They're exactly wrong," Cuomo said. "What happened on the Moreland Commission is they subpoenaed the outside info of the Senate and the Assembly, in a fairly aggressive way. The Senate and the Assembly join together, the Republicans and the Democrats, in a motion to quash the subpoenas. And they are successful in the lower court. And we're stuck for, like, four months."

Closing down Moreland, in Cuomo's view, broke the logjam. After the shutdown, the Legislature passed modest ethics reform, which increased penalties for bribery and established a pilot program for public financing in the next state comptroller's race. Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney in Manhattan, demanded the Moreland files and used them to make the case against Silver and, perhaps, others. "We get the legislation I wanted in the first place," Cuomo told me. "Moreland takes the same cases and the same subpoenas and hands them to local D.A.s and to Preet." Cuomo disclaims any responsibility for Silver's possible misdeeds. "If Anthony Weiner shows his private parts, do you blame Obama? These are criminal acts of individual legislators. What would you have me do?"

Each step in Cuomo's analysis makes a kind of tactical sense. But he shut down the investigation even though the Legislature failed to make significant political reforms. Bharara and the other prosecutors obtained the commission's files only because Bharara publicly expressed his outrage at Cuomo's action. He seized the documents by subpoena and continued the investigations on his own. Cuomo's explanation ignored

the symbolism: How could there ever be a legitimate reason, in a state long beset with corruption in its Legislature, for the governor to short-circuit his own marquee attempt to clean it up?

For better and for worse, Cuomo views his work as a series of transactions. He disdains rhetoric; he prizes results. He has had several accomplishments in his first four years. Against heavy odds, he pushed through a marriage-equality bill in the Legislature; he banned fracking; he tightened the state's gun-control laws; he closed thirteen prisons; he started construction on the first major bridge in the state in fifty years, a replacement for the Tappan Zee, across the Hudson; and he passed four balanced budgets in a row, all on time. Deeds, not words—that might as well be the motto of Cuomo's administration. In nearly every speech, and in many conversations, Cuomo dismisses the importance of political talk. As if adopting a typical voter's view of President Obama, Cuomo told me, "Beautiful rhetoric, beautiful vision—I'm sold on the vision—and what happens? There was no product. There was no actualization of the vision. Now I'm more disillusioned than I was when we started. You brought me up with that beautiful language, and you got me excited and I thought it was possible and then it wasn't."

I mentioned that Cuomo seemed especially pleased to be identified with clearing snow after storms. "Because *talking* about clearing the snow, talking about doing any of this crap, doesn't work," he said. "They've heard it before. They've heard it all. You're not going to say anything that moves the jury. I believe that fundamentally. Show me, it's show-me time.

Show me results. Build a bridge, build a train to LaGuardia, clear the snow, save lives. Huh? A little competence. Work with the other side, not this crazy partisan gridlock, huh? You can actually work together. Balance the budget. Really? Get a budget passed on time." By his own method of accounting, his first term as governor ranks as a considerable success. It also stands in no-

table counterpoint to that of his father, who died on January 1st, the day Andrew was sworn in for his second term.

For decades, the political calendar in Albany followed a predictable pattern. The governor gave his State of the State address shortly after the first of the year and submitted a proposed budget by February 1st, in time for the Legislature to act before the current budget expired, on April 1st. When we spoke in his office, Cuomo offered a dramatic rendering of what usually happened next. "All you knew about state government in this state was what you saw for one week a year—four days leading up to April 1st," he said. "The newscast would start, 'Well, this year, do you think we're going to have a budget on time?' They go to a legislator: 'I think some people are optimistic. I think it might.' April 1st: 'Here we are! Waiting for midnight, let's see if we have a budget deal. And here the Governor's coming out. Governor! Are we going to have a budget on time?' 'No, the Senate is an ass and the Assembly's an ass, and they're all asses.' The budget winds up four months late, five months late."

Cuomo, who took office in 2011, was determined to end this syndrome. Thanks to a constitutional amendment ratified in 1927, New York State has what's known as "executive budgeting," which means, in rough terms, that the governor alone has the right to submit a budget, and the role of the Legislature is limited to voting it up or down. Over the years, though, the power of the Legislature expanded, and the terms of the budget became subject to extensive negotiation and, often, delay. This practice offended James Maguire, who was chief counsel to Governor George Pataki, the Republican who served from 1995 to 2007, and Maguire led a crusade to restore the governor to preëminence in budget matters. Sheldon Silver challenged Maguire, and Pataki, on behalf of the Assembly. The fight went to the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, which, in 2004, handed the governor a major victory. The court made clear that the Legislature "may not alter" the governor's budget proposal in any way.

Still, it took some time for the



significance of *Silver v. Pataki*, as the case was known, to be fully appreciated in Albany. There was only one on-time budget in the Pataki years; the Legislature kept state government functioning after April 1st by passing “extenders”—stopgap measures to fund the operations of the state until the actual budget was passed. “Cuomo was the first one who really used the full extent of the governor’s power over the budget under the constitution,” Maguire told me.

When Cuomo submitted his first budget, he laid down a challenge to legislators. If they refused to pass his budget on time, he would submit the entire budget as an extender. A Cuomo aide said, “We said to them, ‘Here’s your extender, it’s called the budget. If you don’t want to pass it, you will close the whole government—not just the parks, the whole thing.’” The aide went on, “We had to face the question of what we would do if the Legislature didn’t blink. We thought we would have to make good on our threat. But we never got there. They understood that we meant business. They passed the budget, and they did it on time.” Cuomo had tamed the Legislature on the centerpiece of state government.

Cuomo’s obsession with the timing of the budget can obscure the larger issue of state spending. “He fixates on on-time budgets, but he never says why the budgets were delayed in the old days,” Dan Cantor, the national director of the Working Families Party, told me. The Party, a left-leaning consortium of labor unions and others, has had a contentious relationship with Cuomo. “The budgets were delayed because the left held them up, because they wanted more money for things that were important—for schools and roads and libraries. Cuomo is not some kind of progressive. He rejects the view that the middle class in America was built by unions pushing up and the progressive income tax pushing down. His attitude is we have to keep rich people happy. It’s trickle-down economics.”

To a certain extent, Cuomo would not dispute this view, at least when it comes to taxes. His liberalism manifests itself in initiatives that entail relatively little government spending, such as marriage equality, the fracking ban,



“So *that’s* where you were last night.”

and gun control. Cuomo has made a point of cutting some taxes every year, which he regards as crucial in retaining and courting jobs for the state. He also dismisses the idea that the state tax code can address the problem of inequality. “You keep raising taxes, raising regulations, they will leave,” he said in a recent speech in Albany. “Business is more mobile, people are more mobile, and they will leave. And they have left. So that was a cultural shift for us in New York—we’re in a competition with all those other states. Our friends say, ‘Well, we should use the tax code to address social inequities and raise the taxes on the rich.’ If that’s going to happen, that has to happen at the federal level, because we here in this state, we are in a competition, we are in a footrace with every other state. And our taxes and our level of taxation and our regulations are going to say whether we come in first, second, third, or fourth in that race.”

It’s sometimes said of certain politicians that they love humanity but hate people; Andrew Cuomo does not appear especially fond of either. He is the uncommon elected official with

a streak of misanthropy. Cuomo rarely sees ordinary people, and they rarely see him, except in television commercials. “Andrew doesn’t like meeting with voters,” someone who is familiar with his campaigns told me. “He’ll do parades, but that’s about it.” In his 2014 race for reelection, which he won with fifty-four per cent of the vote, Cuomo outraised Rob Astorino, the Republican candidate, by forty-five million dollars to six million, and thus dominated the airwaves with his advertisements. Cuomo agreed to a single debate with Astorino and none with Zephyr Teachout, his opponent in the Democratic primary.

Except during weather crises or after transportation accidents, Cuomo hardly ever consents to be interviewed on television. When he does answer questions on the air, it is often by telephone rather than on camera. Unlike most of his predecessors, Cuomo has given his inaugural addresses to small, invitation-only audiences. (This year, at the World Trade Center, a guard at the front door shooed away the curious with the words “Not open to the public.”)

Cuomo has a tense and distant relationship with the Albany press corps. His

news conferences, which are sometimes just “gaggles,” or scrums in a hallway in the capitol, can be contentious. (Reporters have demanded that Cuomo explain the poor sales of his memoir, “All Things Possible,” which was published last fall.) Cuomo does make semi-regular appearances on an Albany-based public-radio interview program, and he used to be a frequent guest on the radio show of Fredric U. Dicker, the longtime Albany correspondent for the New York *Post*, but the relationship between the two men soured. On the window of Dicker’s office, which faces a well-travelled corridor in the capitol, there is now a photograph of the Governor with a Pinocchio nose and the words “Come clean on Moreland.”

Behind a lectern, Cuomo can sound like an American tourist abroad, speaking loudly and slowly in order to make himself understood. At closer range, he’s a more formidable presence. His speech comes in aggressive, self-confident bursts, especially when he’s sizing up the state of political play. He is relentless. “When he wants to hire you, he starts calling you all the time and acting like you already work for him,” a former aide said. “He just assumes he can persuade you.” His interactions with state legislators also tend to be one on one, and his early success with them on the budget created another opportunity for him. “What people forget is when the budget is months late there is no time to do anything else,” a senior aide told me. “But we knew by March that we were going to get the budget, and that meant that we had time to do marriage equality right away, in 2011.”

Today, same-sex marriage is legal in thirty-six states and the District of Columbia; it would be inconceivable for New York not to be among them. But in 2011 success was a long shot. New York’s Senate had voted down a marriage-equality law two years earlier, when the Democrats controlled the chamber. In the 2010 elections, the Democrats lost the Senate, which meant that getting the issue voted in would be even more difficult. (Passage in the Democratic-controlled Assembly was assured.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF REENACTMENT

On Day 1 the photographer walks into camp and immediately starts shooting. She shoots us

at breakfast eating our C-rations, in our hammocks reading *Stars & Stripes*. She shoots us in her sleep.

When we first cross paths at the creek, she says, “Hello, Tiger! Nice combat boots. Is that thing real?”

pointing to my Special Forces jungle shirt. “I’m afraid so,” I say nonchalantly, trying to mask

my satisfaction. Day 2: no more messing around. The photographer has agreed to join the action.

“So what’s the scenario?” A lone guerrilla left over in a booby-trapped village jumps out of a hidey-hole

and ambushes the platoon on a search-and-destroy. “Good thing I brought my black pajamas and sandals!”

What a trooper. She also plays the captured prisoner, the native informant, and the beautiful turncoat.

The sniper girl is her favorite role because it’s like taking pictures. “The beauty, the beauty!”

“I didn’t know that I could pass it,” Cuomo told me. “I’m not a big fan of fighting the good fight and losing, because one of the Democratic Party’s problems is, I think, it’s done that too often. You know, we were oversaturated with good intent, no action, no results.” Still, he decided to press ahead.

The plan was detailed and methodical, focussed entirely on winning in the Senate, which was run, then as now, by the Republican Skelos. “L.B.J. used to talk about how, in legislative relations, people sort of have a pattern,” Cuomo told me. “They talk about, in certain card games, people have a pattern. Clinton used to talk about, you know, people have a tell.” He went on, “Skelos never goes first, and Skelos never says anything until the last minute.” At first, Skelos would not even commit himself to bringing the issue up for a vote. As Cuomo recalled, “Skelos said, as a put-off, ‘Don’t ask me what I’m going to do. You never get to me until it gets past the Democrats, and it hasn’t gotten past

the Democrats. So I’m not responding, because it’s moot. Call me when it gets past the Democrats. And, by the way, it never will.” (Skelos declined to comment.)

Cuomo and his allies tried to establish Democratic unity, which proved elusive. In the cynical calculus of Albany, failure on marriage equality looked better to some Democrats than victory. “If they kept the issue alive, year after year, they could continue to fund-raise against Republicans on it, and then blame the Republicans for its failure,” one person involved in the process said. Cuomo personally lobbied the holdouts. His staff kept a stash of Pepperidge Farm cookies (as well as Kosher cookies for the observant) for when the lawmakers came to meet with him. “All governors—Pataki, Spitzer, his father, me—let the legislators get on our nerves,” David Patterson, Cuomo’s predecessor, told me. “Andrew maintains a poise of not letting that get into the conversation. Many would have thought that his

her voice volleys spookily from behind some rocks as she picks off one of my men after another.

Sometimes the photographer shoots herself.
I know she must have her own personal baggage—

later I find her sobbing in the bamboo grove.
I tell her it's O.K., these wars only last three days.

"What will you do when it's all over?" she asks.
"I don't know," I say. "Plan the next one."

On Day 3, after another routine patrol we sit
together on my favorite log, in the shade of oaks,

and devise more scenarios. The topo map
unfolds across our laps like a magic carpet.

She's got killer bangs above camera eyes.
I mark all the booby traps and landing zones

as she speaks of controlled light and the hole
that opens up when you press the shutter button.

At twenty-four hundred our hands nearly touch.
There was a meteor shower. I call in mortar fire.

—*Hai-Dang Phan*

temper and his passion would get in the way. He has actually been the governor who has exercised greater patience and decorum than the rest of us." When Cuomo grew frustrated by a few stalling Democrats, he called a press conference to demonstrate that all members of the Party were now united. Unwilling to embarrass the Governor, everyone fell in line.

He then needed at least three Republican votes, a task made considerably more difficult by a public promise from the leader of the state Conservative Party to mount primary challenges against any Republican senators who voted for same-sex marriage. "It was just good old-fashioned political personal persuasion," a Cuomo aide recalled. The marriage bill was the last bill of the session, and Cuomo had few options for horse-trading about other legislation. "He used the governor's mansion. He used his office. His daughters were around. You were greeted. You were given refreshments. You were talking with Andrew, your

friend, alone. 'Which side of history do you want to be on?' I won't forget you.' 'Have another cookie.'"

Roy McDonald, a longtime Republican state senator from a district around Saratoga County, had voted against marriage equality in 2009. "I think with some of these social issues, it becomes so adversarial that it hurts our country," he told me. "But I began to think, If someone is pursuing happiness, God bless them. It's not our business to be telling people what to do." Cuomo met with McDonald repeatedly. "He talked to me, but I don't think it was a matter of convincing us," McDonald said. "He was respectful. I commended him for being a leader on the issue." In time, Cuomo gathered four Republican commitments for his side. (Four was ultimately deemed necessary, because no one wanted to be "the vote" that turned the issue.)



Marriage equality passed by thirty-three to twenty-nine. In 2012, Roy McDonald was defeated for reelection in the Republican primary.

Cuomo's contempt for the power of words alone seems especially notable coming from the son of perhaps the best-known political speaker of his generation. He often uses the same phrase to dismiss comparisons between him and his father. As he put it in his eulogy for Mario, "Over the years, the press would love to give their dime-store psychoanalysis of our quote-unquote 'complex' father-and-son relationship, which was all a lot of hooley." Still, the relationship was complex, and, like most sons, Andrew was formed both by emulation and by rejection of his father's example.

During Andrew's childhood, his father was not a famous man. For most of those years, Mario Cuomo was a work-obsessed lawyer with a modest practice in downtown Brooklyn. He first came to some prominence in 1972, when Mayor John Lindsay asked him to mediate a dispute in Queens. The Lindsay administration had proposed building a large public-housing project in Forest Hills, which was then a mainly Jewish and middle-class neighborhood. The community rebelled, and the fight, which pitted African-Americans against Jews, became both a symptom and a cause of the breakdown of the civil-rights coalition of the nineteen-sixties. Cuomo brokered a compromise (the project was built in a scaled-back form), and he then published a thoughtful diary of his efforts to resolve the controversy. Readers of the diary, which recounted his seven-day work weeks, could be forgiven for concluding that the author had no children. In fact, he had five.

Mario and Matilda Cuomo married in 1954, while Mario was a student at St. John's law school, and they had their first child, Margaret, the following year. She is now a prominent radiologist and cancer specialist. Andrew was born in 1957. In a later edition of Mario's diaries, he wrote,

“Margaret and Andrew Mark took the brunt of the early years of our marriage, years of financial insecurity when I was a law student and young lawyer, and Matilda taught school.” The next child was Maria, a philanthropist married to the designer Kenneth Cole; then Madeline, a lawyer; and, finally, Chris, born in 1970, who is a news anchor at CNN, where we are colleagues. Andrew Cuomo notes in his memoir that protesters in the Forest Hills controversy sometimes came to the Cuomo family home, in Queens, but they wasted their time: “He often left before my sisters and I got up and came back after we were asleep. To make their point, the demonstrators would have had to march at 7 P.M. on a Sunday, the one time of the week that my mother insisted he be home for dinner. And when he was home, he was usually working.”

Andrew went to Archbishop Malloy High School, in Queens, and, the week before he graduated, his father’s close friend Fabian Palomino asked Mario how Andrew was doing. “You know, I really don’t know,” Mario replied, as recounted in Robert S. McElvaine’s 1988 biography. “I’ve been so busy running around the office for a long time—I really don’t know. I haven’t spent a lot of time with him in the last four years. I guess I’ve taken him to two or three ball games. Matilda made me take him.”

After the mediation in Forest Hills, Cuomo became a more or less perpetual candidate for elective office, usually an unsuccessful one. In 1973, he considered a run for mayor of New York, but backed out. In 1974, he lost the Democratic primary for lieutenant governor; the following year, the new governor, Hugh Carey, named him secretary of state. In 1977, Cuomo entered a seven-way Democratic primary for mayor of New York, a contest that remains a classic in New York politics. As Andrew writes in his book, “I learned early that if I wanted to spend time with my father I had to tag along.”

So Andrew, then in his second year at Fordham, in the Bronx, volunteered to be Mario’s driver in the mayor’s race. “Andrew was the ‘body guy’—he was always with his father,” Bruce

Gyory, an Albany-based political consultant who worked on the campaign, told me. “His job was to get his father in and out of events on time. It was not easy, because Mario was warm and gregarious, and he didn’t have that inner clock that most politicians have about when their next meeting is.” In the fall, Andrew returned to college, and organized the borough for his father. Mario finished second to Ed Koch in the primary, lost to him in a runoff, and then ran unsuccessfully as the Liberal Party candidate in the general election. (The race poisoned relations between Mario Cuomo and Koch for the rest of their lives, mainly because Koch blamed Cuomo for campaign signs that supposedly said “Vote for Cuomo, not the homo.” Over the years, Andrew has also been blamed for the signs. Though the signs figure largely in New York political folklore, there is no evidence that they even existed.)

The following year, 1978, Mario ran as the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor—a largely powerless position—and won. Andrew was then a student at Albany Law School, and while the Legislature was in session he and Mario were roommates at the Hotel Wellington. Mario kept a diary during this period, and Andrew is a frequent presence, usually as the object of his father’s affectionate



exasperation. December 6, 1980: “Andrew is looking for another car: he has a real fascination with automobiles that comes higher on his list of priorities than many other things, including studying for his classes. He’ll pass anyway; he always has. But he has never tested himself intellectually. I think if he did he’d be surprised at his own ability.” (Andrew still collects and tinkers with sports cars.) January 22, 1981: “Andrew is working at the gas

station for the week he’s home. He’s going to need the money. He ran up \$165 in tickets in Albany for leaving his car parked overtime while he was studying for exams. The car is in his mother’s name, so they ran a story in the *Times-Union* referring to Matilda Cuomo, scofflaw!”

In 1982, Cuomo and Koch ran against each other again, this time in the Democratic primary for governor. The race was widely seen as a last chance for Cuomo, who was earning a reputation as a perennial loser. In his diary, on January 5, 1982, he noted that a political associate “suggested Andrew would make a good campaign manager. . . . I’m leery about his being too distracted from his law studies, though, and will have to think hard about it.”

It appears, in retrospect, that Mario praised his son more in his diary than to his face. “As our conversations began to center on the upcoming 1982 election, my father never mentioned that he had any particular confidence in my political acumen,” Andrew wrote in his memoir. “Expressing feelings and pride in their children was not something the men of his generation did.” Still, at this moment of political life or death, Mario turned to his son. February 18, 1982: “Andrew is doing an excellent job organizing the campaign. He, more than any of us, has appeared to profit from the political involvement of the last 8 years. He is competent, respectful, dedicated—and liked.”

That last point was debatable. During 1982, Andrew first gained a reputation as a political brawler, playing the bad cop to his father’s philosopher king. Koch began the campaign with a thirty-five-per-cent lead in the polls, and Mario, as well as his twenty-four-year-old campaign manager, had to struggle to be taken seriously. “Andrew is driven and intense, and he was smarter than people gave him credit for when he was running his father’s campaign,” Howard Glaser, who worked for Mario in 1982 and has since been a close aide to Andrew, told me. “He’s never been a person who cared a lot about what the media thinks of him. He just wanted to get the job done.” Aided by a series of

gaffes by Koch, including a *Playboy* interview in which the Mayor disparaged both rural and suburban life, Mario surged to a six-point victory in the primary. September 23, 1982: “Andrew is near exhaustion. He has a tendency to overwork himself. It’s a syndrome I recognize and understand.” In the general election, Mario defeated Lew Lehrman, a corporate executive who lavishly financed his own campaign, by three per cent. December 5, 1982: “Andrew loved the beautiful gold pocket watch his family bought him for his 25th birthday. Engraved on the inside of the front cover was the inscription: ‘We are proud of you. Even more, we love you. Your family.’ It was wonderful to be able to do it.”

In the state capitol in Albany, Andrew Cuomo sits at the same desk, in the same office, that his father did as governor. George Pataki used a grand space next door, but Andrew, like his father, prefers the cozier dimensions of Room 203. On a shelf opposite the desk is a photograph of the two men together, taken on a basketball court, shortly after Mario was elected governor. Though they are both smiling for the photographer, they also clearly know how to play the game—and are intent on the competition. Andrew, his hair styled in a swirling eighties bouffant, is dribbling, while his father leans in on defense. “I weigh two hundred, but he was two forty,” Andrew told me. “If he knocked into you, you hurt for a week.”

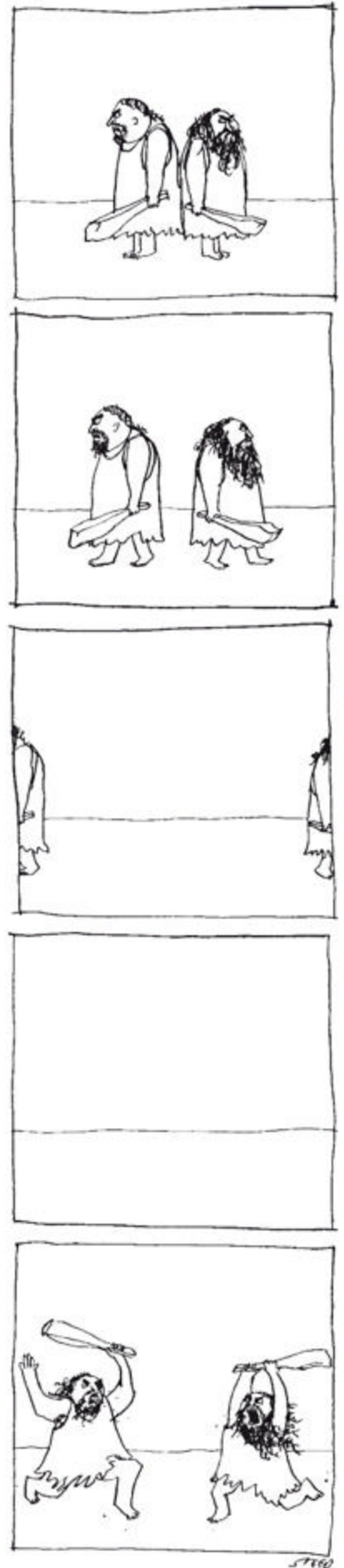
Basketball is a team game. Mario preferred to play one on one, as Andrew recalled at his father’s funeral. “The basketball court remained for him the one place where he could allow himself to be his fully aggressive self,” Andrew said. “We had epic battles, he and I. He hated few things as much as a timid opponent on the basketball court, because you cheated him of a real contest. I was bigger than my father, and I was not intimidated by the fact that he was governor—he couldn’t fire me. We played in the state-police gym in Albany. He liked to play one on one because it was the purest form of competition.... He would make faces at you, he would taunt you, he

would talk constantly, and it would distract me—a maddening banter, designed to unnerve you. He would hit you in places the human body did not have anatomical defenses.”

The two men usually played ball at the end of long days in Albany, where Andrew worked for his father as an unpaid adviser. (The other aides called him Governor; Andrew called him Mario.) As Andrew notes in his memoir, it was around this time that he earned the nicknames “Prince of Darkness,” “Darth Vader,” and Mario’s “hatchet man.” (All undeserved, Andrew said.) In short order, though, Andrew escaped Albany, spending a brief period as an Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan and then as a lawyer in a private firm. He retained a hand in his father’s political career, but soon went out on his own.

In the eighties, New York City, and the state as a whole, suffered an epidemic of homelessness. Many of the homeless had no shelter; others lived in shabby and dangerous hotels that charged the government exorbitant rates. Cuomo decided to help address the problem by establishing a nonprofit organization called Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged, or HELP. The plan was to build transitional housing for the homeless and provide social services to the residents on site. The idea was also to provide a kind of tough love for the residents. In return for housing and assistance, including job training and day care, the residents had to observe a strict code of conduct, which set a 10 P.M. curfew. Cuomo built a successful demonstration project in the East New York section of Brooklyn.

Cuomo’s next project for HELP proved more difficult. He sought to build a development for the homeless in Greenburgh, a town of eighty-five thousand in suburban Westchester County. The locals objected to housing for the poor in their midst, and Andrew found himself in an ugly fight reminiscent of Mario’s struggle in Forest Hills, nearly two decades earlier. He got some idea of what he was up against when he brought two dozen doughnuts to what he thought would be a small community meeting



about the project, and seven hundred people showed up. Still, he approached the controversy much as his father had—with long neighborhood consultations, quiet negotiations, and scaled-back ambitions. It took four years, five lawsuits, and ten million dollars, but finally, in 1991, HELP opened its Greenburgh complex. (HELP still exists, with Maria Cuomo Cole as the board chair, and it has established thirty-two residential facilities for the homeless.)

In the meantime, Andrew began courting Kerry Kennedy, one of Robert F. Kennedy's eleven children, who was working in Boston on a foundation dedicated to her father's memory. In his book, Andrew describes his first visit to the Kennedy compound on Cape Cod. "I was dressed all wrong," he writes. "These people were wearing cut-off denim shorts, ragged T-shirts, and no shoes. I looked like a designer logo smorgasbord. Not to mention the baggy psychedelic bathing suit and loafers. This was Saturday Night Fever meets Hyannis Port." Andrew Cuomo and Kerry Kennedy married on June 9, 1990.

After Bill Clinton was elected Pres-

ident, in 1992, his team recruited Andrew, by then a nationally recognized expert on housing, to become an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. While in Washington, the Cuomos had twin girls and then another daughter. In 1994, when Mario Cuomo ran for a fourth term in New York, Andrew did not return to help him campaign. It was the first time he had not participated in one of his father's races. Mario was swept out in the Republican landslides of that year by Pataki, an unheralded state senator. Andrew's career continued to advance. Two years later, when Clinton was reelected, he named Cuomo to run the Department of Housing and Urban Development. At thirty-nine, Cuomo was the youngest member of any President's Cabinet since John F. Kennedy made Robert Kennedy the Attorney General, in 1961.

As the HUD Secretary, Cuomo presented himself as the spokesman for the nation's poor, travelling around the country to show that, even in a time of prosperity, many people were left behind. He was given to fierce denunciations of those who, in his opinion, used federal dollars to mis-

treat the vulnerable. In 1997, the department sued A. Bruce Rozet, a HUD landlord, accusing him of taking kickbacks from a management company called Insignia Financial, which ran his buildings. According to a press release from HUD, which was cited in a 2006 *Village Voice* story, the department's mission was to provide housing for the needy—"not to provide lives of luxury for con artists stealing from our programs." Cuomo called the case "the largest ever brought by HUD" and condemned "the abysmal conditions" that he said tenants were forced to endure in projects that had been "poorly maintained" by Insignia.

In the period leading up to the 2000 Presidential campaign, Cuomo had grown close to Vice-President Al Gore, and he was mentioned as a possible White House chief of staff in a Gore Administration. But, with George W. Bush's Inauguration, Cuomo returned to New York. And his life fell apart.

Cuomo had not lived in New York State for eight years, but he had a famous father (and famous in-laws), along with an impressive résumé from his federal service, and in 2002 he decided to run for the Democratic nomination for governor. His opponent was Carl McCall, the state treasurer and a veteran of New York politics, who had been waiting his turn for a shot at the top job. McCall was also the highest-ranking African-American official in the state. The rationale for Cuomo's candidacy, which he declared in a Kenneth Cole showroom, was never clear. Cuomo tried to portray himself as an insurgent outsider, but that was a tough sell from a governor's son and veteran political operative. On April 17, 2002, Cuomo committed what was regarded as a fatal gaffe. Comparing the incumbent, Pataki, to Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the aftermath of 9/11, Cuomo said, "He stood behind the leader. He held the leader's coat." This was regarded as an unforgivable politicization of the terrorist attacks. The governor's race went so badly that Cuomo was compelled to withdraw even before the primary. (In the



"Before you connect any more dots, you should know that all the dots have been repurposed."

general campaign, McCall lost handily to Pataki.)

After the election, Cuomo's marriage disintegrated, in a rancorous battle chronicled in detail by the local tabloids. The divorce was eventually settled, without litigation, but Cuomo found himself an outcast—single, unemployed, and repudiated by the New York political establishment. His salvation began in an unlikely place. He was visiting a real-estate executive in New York, and another prominent businessman happened to be in the office—Andrew Farkas, who had been the chief executive of Insignia Financial, the company that Cuomo denounced in such strong terms as HUD Secretary.

Farkas, an heir to the Alexander's department-store fortune, who went on to make one of his own, was spoiling for a fight with his former adversary. Farkas's company had paid more than seven million dollars to settle the charges in the HUD case. (Farkas was never personally charged.) "Our first interaction was somewhat combative," Farkas told me. "We had a very difficult few hours together, then we went back to our respective corners." Still, Cuomo got in touch to continue their conversation. "I was intrigued with the fortitude of a man who was walking into the hornet's nest of dealing with me," Farkas said. "Folklore and myth and legend are full of stories of people who meet on the field and go from combatants to allies. We became quite enamored of each other. We had a great deal in common—families with strong fathers, and we both had our problems with prior marriages."

Cuomo went to work for a new commercial real-estate venture that Farkas established, and, as the *Times* has reported, he was paid more than \$2.5 million in three years. Also in this period, as Cuomo notes in his memoir, he remained an attentive parent to his daughters, in spite of the divorce—a point of great pride with him. (The twins are now in college, and the younger daughter will go next fall.) Cuomo also began seeing Sandra Lee, a food and life-style entrepreneur. They have lived together in Westchester for years. "We are not married, and every-

thing is fine," Cuomo told me. Lee has eschewed the role of First Lady, and continued a successful independent career.

When, in 2006, Pataki decided not to seek a fourth term, Eliot Spitzer, who had enjoyed great success as the state attorney general, had a clear shot at the governorship. Cuomo decided to run for attorney general. The finance chairman of his campaign was Andrew Farkas.

Cuomo had learned from his 2002 defeat. Gone were the announcement parties at fashionable New York locales, replaced by humble entreaties to mid-level upstate pols. At the time, David Paterson was Spitzer's running mate. Paterson told me, "I told him that I thought he should go around and visit some of the people in New York state politics, in a kind of mea-culpa kind of way. That doesn't come naturally to Andrew, to say the least, but he did do it." Notably, Cuomo did not seek the advice of his father on campaign matters. Campaign advisers tell of receiving phone calls from Mario Cuomo, who would report that Andrew wasn't interested in his advice. Andrew, in turn, would ask the staffers what Mario was saying. Cuomo won the primary and the general election with ease.

Cuomo and Spitzer, two ambitious New York politicians of the same generation and party, had eyed each other warily for years. Cuomo now had to figure out how to define himself in an office where Spitzer had become known nationally, as the scourge of Wall Street. His approach was different. "As lawyers, we are very interested in process," a senior member of Cuomo's staff in the attorney general's office said. "But Andrew is not very interested in process. He didn't care that much about how we put cases together and how we planned to litigate. He wanted, instead, to know what were we going to end with, and what's the best way to get there." According to Mylan Denerstein, another top aide in both the attorney general's and the governor's office, "He is fixated on accomplishments and results. He'd always walk around the office saying he wanted to hear '-ed' words from his staff—'completed,' 'filed,' 'accom-

plished'—not '-ing' words—'trying,' 'working,' 'hoping.'" In line with these priorities, Cuomo, as attorney general, succeeded more frequently in negotiating settlements in major investigations than in filing long-shot lawsuits. He obtained a major reform of student-loan practices from eight leading lenders and won an agreement for pharmacies to give prescription information in languages besides English. Since attorneys general can pick and choose among issues to pursue, and the public has few expectations for them, the job carries few political risks, and has been a common stepping stone to the governorship.

Cuomo found ways to afflict Spitzer. After news broke that Joseph Bruno, then the Republican leader in the Senate, might have used state aircraft for personal purposes, Cuomo launched an investigation. He cleared Bruno of wrongdoing but excoriated Spitzer for using the controversy to gain political advantage over Bruno. And when Spitzer's reputation imploded, in a prostitution scandal, forcing him to resign after little more than a year, Cuomo was one step closer to the top position. David Paterson, thrust suddenly into the top job, fared little better than Spitzer—again, without much help from Cuomo. Paterson was accused of covering for an aide accused of domestic violence and, in a separate matter, accepting free Yankees tickets. As the state's chief law-enforcement officer, Cuomo might have offered a lifeline to the newly installed governor, but he let Paterson suffer. Amid chaos in Albany, and a fast-sinking national economy, Paterson decided against running for his own term as governor in 2010. Cuomo ran, and won by a wide margin.

The design of the New York State Capitol, which was completed on the crest of an Albany hillside in 1899, borrows from most of the leading architectural styles of the previous millennia, none entirely successfully. But Andrew Cuomo loves the building in all its Romanesque-Gothic-neoclassical-Victorian glory. He's been a regular in its corridors since his

father became secretary of state, nearly four decades ago. Upon taking the governor's office, in 2011, Cuomo insisted that a renovation, which had been creeping along for eleven years, be completed within a year. "The place smelled like a New York subway in the seventies," he told me. "It was intolerable."

In 1995, George Pataki cut off public access to the corridors of the second floor of the capitol, where he and his staff worked. Cuomo reopened the space to the public and supervised a renovation of what's known as the Hall of Governors. There are portraits of Cuomo's predecessors (except Spitzer), cabinets of mementos from their tenures, and, stencilled on the walls, a time line of significant events in New York history. To wander that hallway is to recognize that for much of American history the governorship of New York served as a kind of proto Vice-Presidency, carrying with it the expectation of a run for the White House. Some governors won (Martin Van Buren, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin Roosevelt), some lost (Charles Evans Hughes, Al Smith, Thomas E. Dewey, Nelson Rockefeller), and some went on to other forms of distinguished service (John Jay, Herbert Lehman, Averell Harriman). With a few exceptions, they were consequential men. (They have all been men.)

In the cabinet devoted to Mario Cuomo's twelve years, there are three printed items: a 1988 message from Cuomo to the Legislature announcing the "Decade of the Child"; the first of Cuomo's twelve vetoes of the reinstatement of the death penalty in New York; and a book of his speeches, which is open to a 1984 address at Notre Dame, in which he described his effort to reconcile his Catholic faith with his support for abortion rights. These are honorable achievements, but modest in scope. Mario was somewhat defensive about a legacy defined more by talk than by action; he called his book of speeches, with some exaggeration, "More Than Words." Through the sleepy Pataki years, and the brief, chaotic reigns of Spitzer and Paterson, there are few

landmarks noted in the Hall of Governors. There is already one for Andrew Cuomo, however: "2011: New York grants marriage equality for all citizens."

After the same-sex-marriage victory, Cuomo became a hero in the gay community, and he was invited to be honored at the annual dinner of the Human Rights Campaign, in Washington. His only obligation would have been an eight-minute speech, and the event presented a priceless opportunity for a politician with national ambitions to meet with some of the most important Democratic fund-raisers in the country. Cuomo declined.

"Maybe I've overdone it, but that Presidential phenomenon got my father into a lot of trouble," Cuomo told me. (Mario Cuomo vacillated about running for President, especially in the 1992 cycle.) "There's only one good way to deal with it: 'I'm running for President, I'm telling you now, before you ask, that I'm running. Goodbye.'" He went on, "The protracted expectation, the flirtation, is very harmful, because fundamentally what I have is my relationship with the people in the state. And they're suspicious of my ego and my ambition. And as soon as you put in their head, 'Maybe he wants to be President and that's why he's doing this, to be President,' I believe your whole



relationship changes." Speaking of the press, he said, "I have bent over backward not to give them anything, because that's what they want to write."

The question of Cuomo's ambition for the White House is largely moot for 2016, because Hillary Clinton, also a New Yorker (of sorts), is the presumed Democratic nominee. Cuomo has not officially taken himself out of the running, and he is stepping up his

international travel, including a forthcoming trip to Cuba, but there is no Cuomo campaign operation, and there probably will not be one during this cycle. (A new biography of Cuomo, by Michael Shnayerson, will be published in March; the book is premised on a possible race for the White House.) Still, even among Cuomo's friends and advisers there seems to be little enthusiasm for a Presidential run. The Governor's reclusive public profile, many agree, makes him ill-suited to running for national office. "Andrew will not run for President," a former aide told me. "He'd have to talk to too many people."

Silver's arrest has already scrambled Cuomo's plans for his second term. Political corruption in Albany has proved to be varied, as well as enduring; in recent years, legislators have been accused of taking bribes and kickbacks, and engaging in sexual harassment and assault, as well as, like Silver, exploiting their office in connection with outside earnings. Cuomo gave a speech last week promising (again) to tighten rules on legislators' outside activities, but the culture of the capitol is notoriously resistant to change. Otherwise, Cuomo plans a strong push to remove failing public-school teachers, a move that is opposed by unions (and their allies in the Working Families Party). Cuomo will look for opportunities where he can find them. "I don't operate in a vacuum," he told me. "I deal one year at a time, in reaction to the times."

Cuomo's transactional approach extends not only to issues but also to individuals; he tends to have nonaggression pacts rather than alliances. As HUD Secretary, Cuomo hired Bill de Blasio to be his New York representative, and, now that de Blasio is the mayor of New York City, the Governor appears determined to remind him of his continuing junior status. When the two men differed over charter schools (Cuomo is an enthusiastic backer, de Blasio is more skeptical), the Governor supported a multi-million-dollar television campaign against the Mayor's position. Cuomo and Chris Christie, the governor of New Jersey,

jointly control the Port Authority, which operates the bridges, tunnels, and airports of the New York metropolitan area. Cuomo refrained from attacking Christie during the scandal involving the closure of an approach to the George Washington Bridge; Christie, although he was chair of the Republican Governors' Association, did not campaign for Cuomo's opponent or offer him financial support. As part of a deal to obtain the endorsement of the Working Families Party last year, Cuomo promised to campaign for Democrats to take control of the Senate; he did almost nothing to that end. "It's clear that Cuomo doesn't really want a Democratic Senate," Zephyr Teachout, his primary opponent, said. "He'd rather be the power broker between the two houses rather than see actual progressive legislation passed."

In light of his father's illness, Cuomo's celebration of his reelection was muted, his attention sometimes distracted. One day in December, at a gaggle outside his office in the capitol, a reporter asked him a question about raising tolls on the Thruway. Cuomo dodged, saying that some people thought the rates should rise, and some people thought otherwise. A reporter in the back of the scrum yelled out, "But what does Governor Cuomo think?"

Cuomo looked up and said, "I don't know. I haven't asked him." Then, with a half-smile, he added, "I thought you were asking about my father."

As Mario Cuomo's life slipped away in the final days of 2014, his elder son was a frequent presence by his side. "He'd sleep for, like, twenty minutes and he'd be up, and this was the constant cycle," Andrew told me. "So it actually worked, because I could go at five in the morning or I could go at two in the morning, but I was going every morning and every night." Andrew wanted his father to be healthy enough to hold the Bible at his swearing-in, on New Year's Day. "I said to him, 'You have to exercise your upper body, because you have to hold the Bible. You have to hold the Bible.'" As father and son talked, Mario had a question: Which version of the Bible?



MOSES AWAITS THE WORD OF GOD

Mario Cuomo was the rare politician who might actually have an informed preference on Biblical liturgy. "We used to argue about the versions of the Bible," Andrew said. "We spent a lot of time separating the findings of the management of the Church from Jesus' teachings. So what Bible we're talking about was important, because some Bibles are more interpretive, some are purer. He wanted the more verbatim, from Jesus. Because that was his whole point—that he had issues with the management of the Church, but he had no issue with the owner of the franchise." They settled on the King James.

Andrew planned two inauguration ceremonies on New Year's Day—the one at the World Trade Center, and the other in Buffalo. As the day drew near, Mario confessed that he was too weak to hold the Bible. Andrew recalled, "New Year's morning—I'm on the way to the inauguration, and I stop by, I thought I'd take one more chance—I said, 'Come on.' I said, 'Let's go. You don't have to hold the Bible, but why

don't you come?' And he said, 'No.' He said, 'I told you I can't go. But I'll be right here.'" So Andrew made him an offer. If Mario felt up to it, Andrew would take him along to Buffalo: "And he loved Buffalo, my father. Buffalo was probably the worst-off part of the state for a lot of years. And the Buffalo Bills were always an underdog, so he was very drawn to Buffalo, as am I." Mario watched the World Trade Center speech on television, with Andrew's sisters, but he didn't say anything about going to Buffalo, so Andrew went on without him.

After Andrew gave the second version of his inaugural address, in Buffalo, in the late afternoon, he stepped down to greet guests at the ceremony. "It's a small room, you came off the stage, I had just gotten sworn in, I had to shake hands," Andrew recalled. A state trooper approached him and said, "You have to go home right away." Andrew pressed the trooper for the reason. "Your father died," he said. Mario Cuomo was eighty-two. ♦

The background of the cover is a complex maze pattern. It consists of thick, dark green lines that form a series of interconnected paths and dead ends. The paths are set against a light, off-white or cream-colored background that has a subtle, fibrous texture, similar to paper or fabric. The maze starts from the outer edges and winds inward, creating a sense of depth and complexity. The overall effect is both visually striking and thematically relevant to the title.

Labyrinth
AMELIA GRAY

Dale had been doing a lot of reading on Hellenic myth, so when he said he had a surprise for us at his Pumpkin Jamboree we knew he wasn't screwing around. The jamboree—a weekend he organizes on his property to bring the town together and raise a little money for the Fire Department—features a hayride, face painting, and a cakewalk that occupies the entire side yard, but his corn maze tends to be the highlight.

A crew of hard-core maze runners formed a line before he had even finished setting up. I deposited my five dollars in the bucket, like everyone else.

"Only it isn't a maze this time," Dale said, arranging a last bale of hay around the pumpkins from the patch. "It's a labyrinth."

A general murmur rose. A woman holding a whorl of candy floss wanted to know the distinction.

"I'm glad you asked," Dale said. "It's largely the fact that the path is unicursal, not multicursal. There's only one road, and it leads to only one place."

"There's no point if you can't get lost," a townie said. He had a reputation for pulling girls into hidden corners of previous corn mazes and taking advantage of their confusion.

"Also," Dale said, "each of you has to go in alone."

A pretty girl was implausibly holding the townie's hand.

"It's no fun alone!" she shouted.

The high-school football coach took a knee to clutch his two boys to his chest.

"My kids aren't going in there by themselves."

Dale held the bucket away from folks reaching to take their money back. "Calm down," he said. "Nobody has to go if they'd rather not. To be clear, the labyrinth is known to possess magic. Some say in the center you discover the one thing you most desire in the world. Others claim that God sits beyond the last bend. Individuals must find out for themselves. Go check out the jam contest if you're not feeling up to it."

"There's no way I'm going in there," a fireman called out, a little drunk. The man was a guest of honor for the weekend and held some influence over the group, which began to turn away and head for the jamboree's other attractions. The rope pull was always a favorite.

Dale watched them leave, fingering a pumpkin's thick stem and surely considering his hours of lost work. He starts his mazes a few months beforehand, cutting into the young corn when it's tall but not yet sprouted, taking a pass first with the tractor and then with the riding mower to pull out the brace roots and tamp the corn down. He draws the maze plans on drafting paper and displays them afterward in his swept-out garage addition—he calls it the Hall of History—with other jamboree memorabilia: the gearshift from the original hayride truck, trotter prints from the winning pigs. We gather around to reminisce about which wrong turn we took and what was waiting for us on the other side.

Knowing what he must have put into it, I thought it was a shame to stand by and see everyone go. The sun was still low in the sky, and it was lonely at home, where the TV had been broken for a week, and the tap water had begun to taste oddly of blood. "I'll go first," I said. "I'll do it."

A few of the others halted their exodus. The pretty girl—whose name, I remembered, was Connie—let loose of the townie's hand. Unfazed, he ambled off to do drugs behind the house.

"That's the spirit," Dale said. "Jim will do it, everyone. He'll start us off."

I shook my friend's hand. "I know you worked hard on this maze, and I intend to take full advantage."

"It's a labyrinth, but thanks. That's the kind of pluck we're known for around here." Dale made a point of looking at the coach, who was still on one knee. Shamed, the man stood.

"All right then," I said, and made to get started, but Dale stopped me. He dug in a bag at his feet to extract a clay trivet, the type that allows a hot dish to sit on the dinner table.

"You'll need this," he said.

The trivet was etched with strange symbols. There were men or warriors and arrows and a shield and something that resembled the buttock of a woman. I became keenly aware that the others were crowding around to observe the etchings. The thing was in my hands now.

"I don't know about all this," I said.

"It's the Phaistos Disk," Dale said. "I paid a pretty penny, so mind where you set it."

It did seem to be imbued with some significance.

"How'd you get that?" one of the women asked.

He waved her off. "Let's say I got lucky during a period of government oversight on the part of the Greeks. It puts a finishing touch on my project. Now, you go on, Jim. This is my life's effort distilled. Find out what it's all about."

It was a few degrees cooler inside the labyrinth, which imparted a sense of magic, though in truth it was only that I was shaded from the low sun by the corn. The soil smelled wet and new, and the path was wide and curved slightly to the right. Following its progress, I found that the bend continued for thirty feet before coming to a switchback. The stalks didn't do much to block sound from outside the labyrinth, and it was possible to hear the others discussing the merits and folly of my decision.

"You remember what he did on the hayride last year," someone said. "Some asshole was screwing around and let his cigarette drop, started a fire in the hay right in front of a bunch of kids. Jim there took it upon himself to jump out of the truck and run for the fence. He didn't come back, and so we put the fire out and went looking for him and when we found him, when we found—" As always, the tale drew some heavy laughter at this point.


"That's enough," Dale said.

"When we found him—"

"Oh, my God," a woman said, preemptively, though at that point the story could have easily been finished in gesture. And so the shame of the fire gained purchase once again. You could live your whole life in the smallest town and never run out of an audience for a story like that.

The trivet was a good weight, conducting my hands' heat. It was further comforting to trace the etched shapes, settling a fingernail in the arc of a scythe or the buttock, which on closer inspection could just as easily have been a winding river, so simply was it carved.

As I turned another switch, it became apparent that I had lost some sense of direction. The corn walls rustled. The voices faded, and the only sound was the incidental splash of the grouse pond




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on the far edge of Dale's property. On I walked, holding the trivet to my chest. I wasn't accustomed to carrying much of anything, and so the disk's weight was fatiguing indeed. I made a sincere promise to myself to start up again with my dumbbells in the garage.

The sun had begun to set, and a cool breeze filtered through the leaves. After another switch and twenty paces, the voices returned.

"You've got to hand it to him for going in there alone," a man said, the same one who had told the terrible story about me. "Maybe he has that adventuring spirit after all."

The surprise I felt at this praise stopped me, and I held my breath to listen, but there was no sound until I started up walking again.

"He's got balls," said Dale, a true friend.

"I never knew he was so brave," a woman said. I stopped again and waited longer this time, counting out the seconds until I reached a minute, then three minutes, five, hearing only silence as if they had all of them lost interest and left. I took a step back in the direction I had come, but it felt as if I were pushing against a strong wind. The trivet was exerting a lateral pressure as if it were magnetized to the far horizon. Still I labored against it. The force nearly tipped me on my rear, causing me to experience a devastating vision of myself emerging from the labyrinth soaked down the back of my jeans, clocking in for another year of ridicule. And so I turned and continued into the labyrinth, at which point the conversation began again.

"I'm proud to know him," I heard Connie say.

It was a thrilling statement, but I knew better than to stop and try to hear more. The journey was providing an immediate reward, and though I was panting and making noise with my heavy footfalls, the conversation seemed to grow louder as I got closer to the center. The voices were the equivalent of a compass star in the dusking sky.

"He has a strong heart," a man said.

"I'm so proud of him," Dale said.

"Actually, I find him pretty handsome," Connie added.

Their voices buoyed me on, and I broke into a trot that carried me around the far side of the labyrinth, taking the



turns without pause, drawn all the while by the trivet, which seemed towed on a wire.

"I wish he'd come out here so I could shake his hand," someone said wistfully, but there was no way to stop. The switches were coming faster now, and the path narrowed, as if Dale hadn't quite figured out the proportions required. The corn's soft tassels brushed my shoulders.

I didn't realize how exhausted I was until, turning the last corner, I found the center. The moon shone a straight beam into the clearing, which was about eight feet wide, with a depression in the dirt the size of a man. The trivet was straining toward the ditch. It took my whole strength to hold it back, and my strength was failing. But I had to keep it safe. Dale had given it to me with two hands, looking me in the eye.

With the last of my power, I turned around, positioning myself between my burden and the hole. The trivet did its work from there, pushing me back and down, into the pit that seemed to have been dug to suit me, complete with a rise in the dirt for my neck and a uniform pile just below my feet. The trivet settled in the center of my sternum. It grew cold there and heavier than before, though I felt no desire to move from under its

mass. I saw now that it was a stone like any other. I found that once I stopped struggling and held very still, barely breathing against its mass, I could hear the crowd again. They were telling stories of my heroism and bravery, of underwater rescue and diplomacy; tales I couldn't remember being a part of, though surely I must have been involved in some way, if so many recalled them so fondly. Eventually, I did try to stand, at which point I understood the trouble.

"Folks?" I said, quietly at first. "I think I got stuck on a root structure or something."

They continued their talk, which grew even grander than before. Someone brought out a guitar and began to improvise songs about my origin story. *Born to a rancher just a little west of here / Jim raised his head and never cowered out of fear*, went one line. My lungs strained to fill against the weight of the stone.

"Dale?" I called out, gasping. "I need help. Can you bring a crowbar?"

I was being driven down into the dirt as if by a machine press. The carved glyphs bit into my chest and branded my skin. I was alone. Then I met the Minotaur. ♦

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Amelia Gray on "Labyrinth."

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THE CRITICS



THE CURRENT CINEMA

SOCIETY OF MEN

“Kingsman: The Secret Service” and “What We Do in the Shadows.”

BY ANTHONY LANE

The conceit upon which “Kingsman: The Secret Service” rests is a simple one. The service in question is international, filthy rich, and independent of any government, although it is based in London and staffed by British agents. They are modelled on the Round Table, with sobriquets to match: Arthur (Michael Caine), Galahad (Colin Firth), Lancelot (Jack Davenport), and so on. They fight evil, crime, and other caddish deeds, and the front for their headquarters is a tailor’s called Kingsman, in Savile Row. The name is cunningly wrought, combining hints of sovereignty, and of Firth’s most lauded role, in “The King’s Speech,” with the actual firm of Huntsman, in the same street. Some scenes were filmed at the Huntsman shop. You can drop by anytime and order a bespoke suit, should you have seven thousand bucks going spare.

In case all this sounds too decorous for its own good, be advised that the director is Matthew Vaughn, who made “Kick-Ass” (2010), and whose idea of decorum, as far as I can gauge, involves switching to slow motion, in the wake of a savage punch, the better to show us an uprooted tooth sailing gracefully by. The appeal of “Kingsman” depends on a calculated clash between this unbridled mayhem and the decency of the nicely bridled spies. In the cruellest sequence, Firth, diverting slightly from his role in “Pride and Prejudice” (1995), goes berserk in a church, shooting or stabbing half the congregation,

burying a hatchet in the skull of one woman, and impaling the preacher on a stake. Heaven forbid! If you deem it unbecoming that Mr. Darcy should conduct himself thus, the film has got you right in the britches. Your shock is part of the plan.

The narrative parades its own absurdity. Eggsy (Taron Egerton), a working-class London lad whose father once spied and died for Kingsman, is encouraged by Galahad to apply for the Round Table, jockeying with a bunch of better-bred candidates for a single vacant spot. Meanwhile, a lisping Internet billionaire named Valentine (Samuel L. Jackson) has imprisoned various global leaders and is preparing to brainwash the wider population into a mass homicidal brawl. The template is early-to-mid James Bond, as borne out by the trappings: exploding cigarette lighters, poisoned pens, and a villain’s lair, complete with a landing strip, hewed into the side of a mountain. In case we’re slow on the uptake, Galahad and Valentine agree, over dinner, on the sullenness that has infected late-period Bond and his kind. “Give me a far-fetched, diabolical plot any day,” Galahad says. Few recent movies have fetched quite as far as “Kingsman,” and countless viewers will relish the brazen zest of its invention. When one man’s head exploded, in David Cronenberg’s “Scanners” (1981), we felt the pressure of some uncontainable horror. When a hundred heads explode, as they do in “Kingsman,”

bursting with the colors of the rainbow and trumpeted by Elgar’s “Land of Hope and Glory,” we are meant to rise and applaud a pretty sight. What’s not to like?

Well, for one thing, the striking of mean political poses. Take the dinner, chez Valentine, at which a silver carving dome is opened to show Big Macs and fries. Would a white bad-die have been saddled with a similar gag? Female characters are no more than also-rans, and most of the male ones are stiff with stereotyping. Eggsy aside, the lower orders are feckless louts, while the look and the sound of their posh counterparts seem to have been devised by someone leafing through a copy of the *Tatler* from 1983. This is pitiful stuff, and, like the violence, it eats away at the blitheness for which “Kingsman” strives, leaving an aftertaste of desperation that the Connery of “Goldfinger,” say, would not have dreamed of bequeathing. The sadness is that Firth, alone in the film, does raise the spectre of those days, radiating a lightly amused reserve amid the havoc. I loved the sigh that he emits in a pub, having put down his pint of Guinness, before laying into a squad of angry assailants. It is the sigh of a gentleman—of a gentleman—who is obliged to play rough, in a tiresome world that is made for naughty boys.

Anybody who hears about “What We Do in the Shadows” from secondhand reports will fear the worst. The movie deals in nothing but exhausted tropes. One, it’s a mock documentary. Two, it’s a vampire flick, a genre that, after five attacks of “Twilight,” has officially succumbed to hardened arteries. And, three, the new film counts as horror comedy; what seemed a delectable mixture, when Bela Lugosi stalked into “Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein” (1948), has grown stale with the years.

It was with both joy and mystification, therefore, that I found myself cackling at “What We Do in the Shadows” like a witch with a helium balloon. The first laugh comes after eighteen seconds: an alarm clock, set for six o’clock, begins to beep, and a groping hand turns it off. We’ve seen that



Colin Firth plays a British agent in a movie directed by Matthew Vaughn. The template is early-to-mid James Bond.

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many times onscreen, but here the hand reaches out from a coffin, raising the creaky lid. The time is six in the evening, and Viago (Taika Waititi) is getting up. “Ziss is always really scary part for me,” he tells us, timidly twitching the curtains to make sure that darkness has fallen. Instantly, we are on his side, for Viago is that rarest of beasts: the true innocent. He has an adorable smile, a flutter of vanity (he is costumed like an eighteenth-century beau), and a bent for politesse. O.K., he asks a girl over and chews her neck, setting off rococo fountains of gore, but, as he says afterward, facing the camera in his drenched lace, “On ze upside, I sink she had a really good time!”

Viago lives in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand. (The film purports to be made by “The New Zealand Documentary Board.”) He shares an apartment with three guys, all of them heavy boozers of blood. There is Deacon (Jonathan Brugh), who hasn’t done the dishes in five years; Vladislav (Jemaine Clement), who gives himself Byronic airs but has never recovered from an apocalyptic feud with someone, or something, called the Beast; and Petyr (Ben Fransham), who is eight thousand years old and looks like Nosferatu’s grandpa. Petyr doesn’t get out much, whereas the others are forever cruising the nightspots of Wellington—smartening up before they leave, though naturally unable to check the result in the mirror. Vampirism has its uses (Viago and his pals can fly and turn into bats), but parts of it really suck. “I can’t sunbathe, I can’t watch daytime TV.” So says Nick (Cori Gonzalez-Macuer), adding, “Don’t believe the hype.”

Nick is new to the game. He came over one evening and stayed for a bite. Now he, too, is one of the gang, grudgingly accepted by his roommates. The person they *do* like is his friend Stu (Stuart Rutherford), a regular human, and so sensationally dull that vampires don’t worry him in the least. Also, they are musty in matters of hi-tech, so why bother to kill Stu when he can show them how to find stuff on Google? (“I lost a really nice szilk scarf in about 1912,” Viago says.) There is one other mortal in the mix, Jackie (Jackie van Beek), a no-nonsense type who helps with domestic tasks. The vampires have

promised her eternal life, but, in the meantime, as she admits, “I’m stuck here ironing their fucking frills.”

Clement and Waititi are not just the stars of this enterprise but also its writers and directors. Flight of the Conchords fans will know Clement as one half of the band; he was also directed by Waititi in “Eagle vs. Shark” (2007). That augurs well, but it still doesn’t prepare you for the uncanny lure of “What We Do in the Shadows.” The hitch with the majority of spoofs—the dismal “Scary Movie” franchise, say—is that they pull their stunts in a void. When one target of lampoon has been hit (or, more likely, aimed at and missed), there is nothing more for the film to do but swivel randomly toward the next. By contrast, what the new movie demonstrates is that eccentricity and outrage prove their worth, and acquire their comic shape, only when squeezed into the confines of the workaday world—the world of Jackie and Stu. What happens when the haywire hits the humdrum? How should the dead, or the undead, adjust to the rhythms of the quick? The quest for answers is what drives this tale, guards its deadpan mood, and guarantees the blast of its finale.

This is set at the Unholy Masquerade, an annual fancy-dress bash where the vampires club together with the zombies, banshees, and other mutants who infest Wellington. At last, the identity of the Beast is revealed, in all its majesty, while that of Stu, who has, perhaps unwisely, come as a plus one, is soon challenged: “Are you a demon?” “I’m a software analyst,” he replies. Nothing rattles Stu. My one regret is that the documentary crew was not present for the year when Viago went to the party as Whoopi Goldberg from “Sister Act,” to the chagrin of his peers. (“Vampires don’t like nuns.”) Still, we do get a snapshot of his outfit, and it repays consideration: here is a half-Maori, half-Jewish actor playing a three-hundred-and-seventy-nine-year-old satanic dandy playing an African-American bride of Christ. If that isn’t multicultural, what is? ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Do the Scandinavians really have it all figured out?

BY NATHAN HELLER



Some say that the American Dream is not what it once was: wages are low, retirement is not a parachute glide but a plunge, and those chosen to fix such problems labor at undoing one another's laws. For these doubters, there are the Swedes. On any given day, a Swedish man—call him Viggo—might be reclining on a sofa underneath a Danish lamp shaped like an artichoke. He is an artist, and he has a pension. He is wearing boldly colored pants. His young wife, Ebba, is a neurosurgeon, though she has never paid a krona in tuition, and her schedule runs between the operating table and the laboratory. Things are busy. She and Viggo have small kids

(the government gives them a combined four hundred and eighty days of maternity and paternity leave for every child), and when the younger ran a fever yesterday he needed to be whisked from day care to the doctor (both charged mostly to the state). Now it's the weekend. They are in their country house. It's nothing fancy, just a little place among the birches near the Øresund, but Viggo spiffed it up with some IKEA deckware, and their friends drop by for oysters and beer. As dawn comes, he brews coffee. He is listening to a radio report on the Prime Minister, who brokered a budget agreement among six parties, and then Stieg Larsson, who is

being memorialized on-air. He turns the dial to the multiethnic band Icona Pop, which has soared across the global charts. Icona Pop sings, "We're just living life, and we never stop," and that is what Sweden now means to Viggo. Freedom to follow your talents. Community and coalition-building all around. American life promises liberty, cultural power, and creative opportunity, but by many measures it's the Swedes who turned this smorgasbord of concepts into a sustaining meal.

And not only the Swedes. Look to the south, and there is Denmark, where wind power is ascendant and the gorgeous armchairs are as plentiful as herring. Norway has been No. 1 on the Legatum Prosperity Index for years. What unifies the Scandinavians is at once specific (social-democratic government, mutually intelligible languages, a love of sauna) and ineffable (something to do with modesty, a naturalistic cast of mind, and candles). If trivial things are vital to the French, as Mark Twain once suggested, Nordic culture runs to the soft power of a hard settee.

The global pull of Scandinavian life, never weak, continues to strengthen. Sweden was once known for ABBA and dispiriting blue films ("I doubt that pornography is turning any Swedes on to sex," Susan Sontag wrote), but it's now the nation of Tove Lo, H&M, and literary mysteries. Finland—which is not strictly Scandinavian, but is often tossed in—gave us Angry Birds and womb chairs. Norway drove Karl Ove Knausgaard to print. Those who loved "Law & Order" or "The West Wing" might today watch "The Killing," "Wallander," and "Borgen." The last issue of *Vogue* declared the new "It diet" to be eating like a Viking.

Peek behind a fad these days, in other words, and you are apt to find a Scandinavian, pedalling hard. Finland has the West's finest education system, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Sweden has taken in more refugees, proportionally, than any European country. Icelanders—spawn of a Scandinavian settler colony—buy more books than anyone and draw most of their energy from geothermal power.

The most galling measure of Nordic superiority, though, comes from the

It's hard to envision the Nordic model ever finding a home on these shores.

Danes. In 2012, Denmark took first place in the United Nations' inaugural World Happiness Report, having topped similar surveys for decades. By the numbers, there is very little rotten in the state of Denmark, and its neighbors aren't far behind. Bliss of this kind is startling from a group of countries that are frozen half the year, subsist substantially on preserved fish, and charge among the highest tax rates in the modern world.

One can be forgiven for wondering whether there's something fishy about the so-called Nordic Miracle itself. Are the Scandinavians really good and prosperous and happy, or do crude measures of goodness, prosperity, and happiness play to their strengths? In "The Almost Nearly Perfect People" (Picador), Michael Booth, a travel journalist, scrutinizes the success of the Scandinavian brand. He points out that many people who speak glowingly of Sweden's welfare state have never actually *been* to Sweden, let alone seen its most famous housing project. This "blind spot" has produced facile assessments, Booth believes. He seeks to reappraise the Nordic peoples by observing their behavior in the wild.

He begins, as many people do, with the Danes' contentment. Look at the data, Booth says, and biases emerge. Prune out wealth as a factor, and countries like Colombia come out on top. Emphasize good health, and Denmark falls farther. In the past decade, the proportion of people who live below its poverty line has nearly doubled, to almost eight per cent. Finland may have fine schools, but it's one of the least diverse places on the planet. Booth wonders why these countries receive dotting praise:

Where were the discussions about Nordic totalitarianism and how uptight the Swedes are; about how the Norwegians have been corrupted by their oil wealth to the point where they can't even be bothered to peel their own bananas (really: we'll get to that later); how the Finns are self-medicating themselves into oblivion; how the Danes are in denial about their debt, their vanishing work ethic, and their place in the world; and how the Icelanders are, essentially, feral?

Booth, a British man, came to this work through honest means. His wife is Danish, and he has lived in Copenhagen, with imperfect happiness. He

has problems with Danish food. He finds its people "solemn." (And Copenhageners are said to be the *fun* Scandinavians, the Ibizans of the tribe.) Danish taxes offend him so deeply that he cannot stop writing about them; at one point, he calculates that a Dane can end up forfeiting up to seventy-two per cent of her income to the state. What does she get in return? Free health care and higher education, a pension that sustains her pre-retirement life style, a living wage if she loses her job—that sort of thing. Booth finds these services "patchy."

Travelling elsewhere in the region, he sharpens his gaze. He blames Iceland's 2008 crash on "the classic small, tightly knit Nordic social model"—certain leaders and bankers were school chums—and the bingeing of a sheltered people loosed at the frat party of the American Dream. He points out that the Norwegians take pride in their doughty environmentalism, yet pump more than a million and a half barrels of oil a day and cede manual labor, such as the peeling of fruit, to foreigners (the banana thing); one-third of people of working age don't work. Finnish leaders have repeatedly sought to portray their people as even drunker than they are, apparently to gain control of the booze industry. And the Swedes? Timid and tense, Booth says. Also, fixated on the character of Donald Duck.

When Booth is not taking the Scan-



dinavians to task, he is being charmed by them, and when he is not doing that he is generalizing from their history. Denmark spent much of its past being bombarded or annexed. Booth writes, "It would be surprising if this long litany of loss and defeat had not had a lasting impact on the Danes, but I would go further. I suspect that it has defined the Danes to a greater extent than any other single factor." This cigar-hour style of theorization turns up frequently;

Booth's Englishness defines his writing to a greater extent than any other single factor. ("Whoa, there," I said, placing my elderflower cordial on the table. "This is heading into fairly dodgy territory, isn't it?") His approach to reporting tends to be to look up an expert, let him or her gas on at length, and quote enormous sections of the transcript, misremembered facts and all.

The low bar lets a lot in. Much is made, by Booth and many Scandinavians themselves, of what he calls "their Viking heritage." He keeps returning to the idea that the Vikings—a rapey seafaring people who assimilated into northern European culture a millennium ago—are the cause of modern Scandinavia's autonomy, egalitarianism, and restraint. (The Danish word for fair and moderate has origins in the Vikings' term for passing mead around a fire.) The past casts a long shadow, no doubt, and family patterns die hard. But a thousand years? If there's a connection between modern Nordic people and the Vikings, it is in the sense that pasta puttanesca from Rao's probably owes a little to the cultural life of the Romans.

The indulgence of half-baked theories is a minor offense, though. Booth's project is essentially observational; it aspires to a comic genre that might be called Euro-exotica. The form was well established by the time Twain published "The Innocents Abroad," in 1869, and it has been carried through the twentieth century by writers as varied as S. J. Perelman and Peter Mayle. It usually involves a witty, stumbling narrator simultaneously charmed and bemused by the foreign nation he encounters. He is a naif but not a boor: he *wants* to do everything right, but he is hamstrung by his ignorance of etiquette, by his squeamishness around unwelcome foods, and—this being Europe—by the daily, soul-crushing throes of bureaucracy. Euro-exotica is generally poured in a confectionery mold, light and tart, but its core is an assertion of the narrator's cultural power. Change the balance of the recipe slightly—make it, say, about the bumbling adventures of a Guatemalan farmer in Florence—and the cookie hardens. Can you *believe* how these people do things? the Euro-exoticist

LIT

Everyone can't
be a lamplighter.

Someone must
be the lamp,

and someone
must, in bereaved

rooms sit,
unfathoming what

it is to be lit.

—*Andrea Cohen*

asks, with the courage of his own convictions. In this sense, Booth's book is as much about Anglo-American power as it is about the Nordic way.

By the measure of Viking time, Scandinavia's current social model is new. Mary Wollstonecraft, visiting in the late eighteenth century, lamented "how far the Swedes are from having a just conception of rational equality," and her complaint was fair for years afterward. Denmark began offering a state benefits program to old people only in 1891. Norway launched insurance for industrial accidents a few years later. Similar schemes proliferated in the early twentieth century, and by the postwar years the modern Nordic welfare state had its distinctive form. The model, crucially, interprets "welfare" to mean not just financial capacity but well-being. It might take into account that a woman forced to defer dreams of motherhood because of work, or vice versa, is hostage to her circumstances even if she's able to pay her bills. And, rather than simply catch people on their way down, it aspires to minimize the causes of inequality—more climbing web than safety net.

Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish Nobel laureate, was an influential early theorist of the approach. As a young economist, he'd championed some demand-side policies. In his 1957 study "Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions" and elsewhere, he suggested

that a Scandinavian-style model was not only good social policy but smart economics. Contrary to the premises of much classical theory, Myrdal argued, deregulated markets *don't* tend to equilibrium. Decreased demand lowers wages and eliminates jobs. Poor people buy and invest little, dragging the market further off balance. Since rich regions attract both prosperous businesses and productive emigrants from poorer areas, the problem can intensify.

In many traditional free-market models, the wealthiest actors are the most productive, and the system is dragged down by anything that impedes them. Myrdal pointed out that this premise, even if true, is socially problematic: inherited advantage makes some people highly productive from the get-go, and—since their higher productivity makes them prosper—another vicious circle forms. You need certain controls to keep unbalanced socioeconomic cycles from accelerating over time, he thought; hence Sweden.

Myrdal's thinking was shaped by years he spent studying the plight of black people in the United States. His best-known work, "An American Dilemma" (1944), explored a disconnect: Why was one group persistently at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum in a country that purported to give everybody an equal chance? In "Economic Theory," he cited the United States as a cautionary tale. "The two forces bal-

ance each other," he wrote. "White prejudice and the consequent discrimination against the Negroes block their efforts to raise their low plane of living; this, on the other hand, forms part of the causation of the prejudice on the side of the whites which leads them to discriminatory behavior."

Myrdal seems to have been right. In those countries with social programs guided in part by his principles, inequality runs low, with few clear market costs. In the assessment of most Scandinavians, the system helps to impart freedom, too. How are you free to realize yourself, they ask, if your education depends on your parents' wealth? Or if you're loath to get divorced for fear of losing your standard of living? (The per-capita divorce rate in Scandinavia is notably high, which, depending on your notions about marriage, is either a healthy or an unhealthy sign.) According to *Newsweek*, Iceland is the best place in the world to be female, and gender equality in Denmark is so deeply rooted that it startles even some enlightened American women: checks on a first date are split, and door-holding is considered rude. Booth tells us that his Danish wife, during their courtship, took his chivalrous habit of walking on the outer edge of the sidewalk as a weird personal tic.

In the United States, we conceive of freedom differently. Booth, quoting one of his sources, distinguishes between the "freedom to be" (Nordic) and the "freedom to do" (quintessentially American). But a more basic distinction rests with the locus of control. In Sweden, control comes through protection against risk. Americans think the opposite: control means taking personal responsibility for risk and, in some cases, social status. For all our rhetoric of levelling, American social tastes tend toward the assortative. Booth recalls a party near Copenhagen whose guest list included an M.P., a gynecologist, a cook, and a roofer. Many white-collar New Yorkers do not actually know a local roofer, except through the Yellow Pages.

In recent years, however, a strange thing has been happening in Nordic countries: they've been getting more unequal. Inequality has risen in Sweden, in the past decade and a half, at a

rate four times as high as in the United States. In Finland, too, the Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, has climbed four points since the late nineteen-eighties. Something has been leaking through a system that's supposed to be the tightest in the world.

Of all the complaints that non-Scandinavians have about our northern cousins, perhaps the most persistent is the idea that they are beset by sameness. The offense is partly stylistic. Booth devotes some pages to Jante Law—a wry portrait of Denmark's self-effacing mores by the early-twentieth-century writer Aksel Sandemose. Among the rules are "You shall not believe that you are someone" and "You shall not believe that anyone cares about you"; America, with its hustling and self-distinction, is the hell of Scandinavian manners. Yet many people are unsettled by a conspicuous ethnic sameness, too. This is a region where, for most of the past couple of centuries, ethnic conflict has meant debate over whether candles can go on the Christmas tree.

Strikingly, much of Scandinavia has been getting less homogeneous in recent years, while its inequality has been increasing. Are the two phenomena related? Denmark's domestic politics are riven by immigration. In the country's last general election, the far-right, xenophobic Danish People's Party received twelve per cent of popular support, and it won last year's European Parliament elections with more votes than any other Danish party. Similar groups have gained sway in Norway and Sweden. A lot of the appeal of the Nordic model comes from its ostensible resilience: it's supposed to be able to provide for anyone who comes to it. The rise of both anti-immigration sentiment and wealth inequality challenges that premise.

On paper, so far, the model stands. A recent study by the Norwegian political scientist Henning Finseraas tried to correlate immigration politics in Europe with stances on inequality policies and found no obvious relationship; some people resented immigrants, but they didn't necessarily see that as cause to scale back welfare. Nor do the economics justify this linkage: another

analysis, by Christer Gerdes and Esbil Wadensjö, in Sweden, found that the net flow of wealth has sometimes been *from* immigrants to natives. (As Booth and others make clear, the chief threat to the stability of the Nordic welfare system is not the presence of foreigners; it's the growing ranks of elderly people, who draw on the system while giving little back.) Even if Scandinavian socioeconomics are immune to hate, though, Scandinavian culture isn't. Sweden could end up as inflamed by prejudice as the United States.

Booth, trying to get his mind around this contradiction, pays a visit to the Rosengård housing project, in Malmö—Sweden's most notorious immigrant complex, a short drive from the Danish border. It has an unusually high incidence of violence; Booth's cabdriver describes it as "Sweden's Chicago." And its residents are disproportionately Muslim. Wandering around during the day, Booth experiences a letdown. Rosengård, he writes, "looked like every other modern Scandinavian high-rise housing project that I had seen from Helsinki to Oslo." The local mayor tells him that the problem isn't the immigrants but the infrastructure: Rosengård lost some of its public funding during Sweden's own crash, in the early nineties, as the state resorted to a privatization-based rescue strategy for real estate, and it never recovered. (In other words, the problem is that Rosengård has not been Swedish-style enough.) An imam who lives there speaks of non-Western Muslims who are "slow to integrate," owing to their unfamiliarity with the language and the life.

"Integration" has become a watchword at Rosengård and in Nordic ethnic politics more generally. It underscores the social and economic pressures to join the Swedish pack, the common turf where its supportive, all-embracing system thrives. The trouble with the Scandinavian model isn't that there are no exceptions to sameness; it's that exceptionalism is not something the system is set up to protect and serve. If, like the non-Western Muslims of Rosengård, you have trouble joining the national schools and domestic culture—if you can't quite fall in with the color blindness of Icona Pop and Nico & Vinz—you tend to fall from the sys-

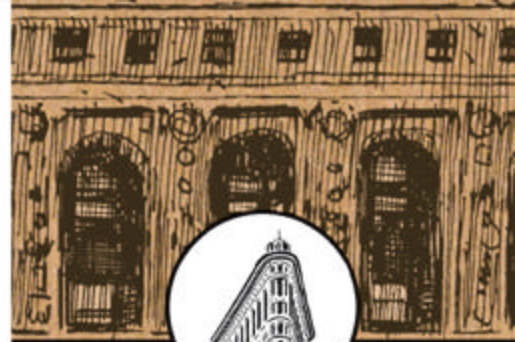
tem's providence. Autonomy and individualism abound, but pockets of difference can become pockets of disadvantage.

What Nordic life tells us, in other words, is how steep and ambitious the path of American liberalism is. Conservative social ideals are notorious for their mercenary spirit and wishful self-justifications—the Thatcherite talks of neighbors helping one another and themselves as homeless people fill the sidewalks. Yet a certain hardness of heart rests in the practice of modern American liberalism, too. We have registered our willingness to make the Faustian deal that the Swedes have not. The possibility of having a truly Iranian-American life, or enjoying deep-Appalachian bluegrass, is important to our national variety. And, to let these cultures thrive on their own, we've agreed to let some of our people, by our withheld intervention, be thrown under the bus.

Because this is America, we hope for better. But we aren't hung up on our tendencies to fall short. A Boothian observer of the U.S. would notice its capacity to overpromise and underdeliver. (By contrast, when the Finns are confronted with their educational achievements their impulse is apparently to doubt the data.) Like many Enlightenment-born nations, we declared our principles at the start—liberty, equality, the pursuit of happiness—and trusted that any friction among these ideas would be sorted out, eventually, in the churn of civic life. The trust continues. Progress is slow. While Nordic people have made the best of what they have, Americans persist in gambling on something better, and yet settling for something worse.

For that reason alone, perhaps, it's hard to envision the Nordic model ever finding a home on these shores. American life is like the American diet—equal parts hopeful and negligent, with something sweet and bubbly on the side. The practicality and the balance of the Scandinavian way, the meat and grain and vegetables of it, isn't what we truly want, though we would gladly wish a meal like that on anyone else. Nordic life falls short of our most vaunted ideals, yet in the end draws very close. It is almost nearly perfect, and, for Viggo and his friends, that's good enough. ♦

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THE FIRST BAD MAN, by *Miranda July* (Scribner). This surreal novel blurs reality and imagination through the voice of Cheryl Glickman, the manager of a company that sells self-defense videos as a fitness aid. Cheryl works from home and lives alone, eating at her sink with a single utensil and dish—part of a “system” so refined that, she notes with pleasure, “after days and days alone it gets silky to the point where I can’t even feel myself anymore, it’s as if I don’t exist.” The arrival of a guest disrupts her life, bringing violence and eroticism. July has perfected the art of the compellingly uncomfortable scene, and though the technique perhaps suits short fiction better than a novel, she succeeds in making Cheryl both achingly familiar and repulsively alien.



UNBECOMING, by *Rebecca Scherm* (Viking). This lively debut combines a knotty coming-of-age tale and a high-society caper. The protagonist, Grace, works in a bric-a-brac shop in Paris, from which she anxiously eyes news from Garland, Tennessee. She and her husband, hoping to prop up their crumbling relationship and her dwindling art career, perpetrated a theft, which went awry. She fled and now awaits the day when her accomplices get out of prison and come after her. Scherm is at her best when she is parsing the fumbblings of a young woman trying to devise a persona in the world. “It wasn’t theater school,” Grace observes when she arrives at college in New York, “but they were all there, she saw, to learn how to act.”



THREE MINUTES IN POLAND, by *Glenn Kurtz* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). In August, 1938, a Jewish tourist from New York arrived in Nasielsk, Poland, with his wife, three friends, and a home-movie camera. Decades later, the author, his grandson, rediscovered the color footage he shot and recognized it as a relic of a community almost all of whose members were murdered. Kurtz tracks down a few scattered, aged survivors and shows them the film. “I feel like screaming almost,” one says. Kurtz weaves their stories into a haunting web of contingency. When one man, seven decades after he escaped, sees his own thirteen-year-old face in a crowd, his wife comments, “You’re in a sea of ghosts.”



SCHUBERT'S WINTER JOURNEY, by *Ian Bostridge* (Knopf). In these essays on Schubert’s song cycle “Winterreise,” a celebrated British tenor places the work in the context of post-Napoleonic Vienna and explains his interpretative decisions in performance. Composed not long before Schubert died, at the age of thirty-one, the cycle depicts a young man treading a path from romantic dejection to profound alienation. Bostridge excels at providing illuminating historical tangents. Discussing the song “Die Post,” he describes how the mail-coach network modernized Europe. Noting that the horn-call motif used to represent the coach recalls another German Romantic trope—the distant hunting horn—he suggests that it becomes a symbol both of changing times and of something timeless.

YOU WILL GET YOURS

A novel of rage and revenge in the N.Y.P.D.

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES



As the sonnet was the quintessential form of the Elizabethan poet, packing distilled and dazzling language into its sleek fourteen lines and challenging every virtuoso of the day, so the quintessential form of the contemporary crime writer is the interrogation: two individuals in a room, one of them the suspect and the other the detective.

Here we have the essence of drama. We know that the stakes are high: a violent act is at issue. The setting is stark; the language is almost purely dialogue, with the unpredictable swerves of actual life and none of its rambling

asides, graced by a swiftness of storytelling in a genre in which exposition, often improbable and sometimes belabored, must be provided somewhere before the final line of the final chapter. (Recall bravura interrogation scenes in such exemplary television dramas as “Homicide: Life on the Street,” an entire episode of which was given over to a protracted interrogation; “NYPD Blue”; and “The Wire.”) If contemporary crime fiction by such masters of the genre as Michael Connelly, Ed McBain, P. D. James, Ian Rankin, and Richard Price is imagined as a kind of Olympic event, the interrogation is the

routine designed to lift a performance above the competition.

Price has been celebrated for his gift for dialogue—in particular, for the sinewy, idiomatic, rapid-fire speech of urban crime novels like “Clockers,” “Freedomland,” and “Lush Life,” in which police-procedural interrogation scenes are integral. He also wrote the screenplay for the Al Pacino police thriller “Sea of Love” (1989), and received an Edgar Award in 2007 for his work on several episodes of “The Wire.” In his new crime novel, “The Whites” (Holt), the first written under the pen name Harry Brandt, Price has constructed a maze of a novel that alternates between scenes of intense introspection and scenes driven by dialogue. The novel is built around a stoic N.Y.P.D. detective, Billy Graves, guilt-ridden over having accidentally shot a child many years before, when he was “coked to the gills,” and Graves’s secret nemesis on the force, a detective named Milton Ramos, who has become gripped by fantasies of revenge against Billy’s wife, Carmen, a woman he believes to have caused several deaths in his family.

As a Harry Brandt novel, “The Whites” is more of a *policier* than Price’s previous fiction—more plot-driven and less deeply engaged by the anthropology of its urban communities. In the incandescent prose of “Freedomland” (low-income housing in the fictitious city of Dempsey, New Jersey) and “Lush Life” (Manhattan’s Lower East Side, both indigenous and gentrified), setting, lavishly detailed, has the force of personality. In “The Whites,” the grim urban landscape is scarcely more than a backdrop. The author focusses on the interwoven lives of a number of characters in language as forthright and free of metaphor as a police report, and on the construction of an elaborate narrative that shifts between present and past action. Like Billy, demoted to Manhattan Night Watch since his controversial shooting of the child, the reader is confronted with a number of subplots that may or may not be related—these are the red herrings of genre fiction that mimic the false leads, dead ends, and frequent muddle of an actual police investigation. Dutifully read forward, detective fiction is written

Richard Price, writing as “Harry Brandt,” has produced a procedural cum thriller.

backward: clues that pass you by on a first reading should become evident if you reread.

“The Whites” doesn’t race so much as lurch and careen along, often with little breathing space between frenetic action sequences, emotional outbursts, and sheer surprise, but Price takes time out for a gem of an interrogation scene in the familiar “claustrophobic examination room that most detectives favored . . . the Box.” Here we observe Billy’s sympathetic yet pitiless evisceration of a former professional basketball player who has “accidentally” dropped his four-month-old baby daughter on the floor. Though unrelated to the tangled plot of “The Whites,” the scene allows us to see the detective in his element as a first-rate, instinctive interrogator of another guilt-ridden father who whispers at last, after Billy has led him to a tacit confession, “This is not me. . . . This is definitely not me.” Billy’s response is gentle: “I know.”

Many of the past actions that propel the present ones involve seven young detectives, among the most intrepid on the force, who formed an anticrime unit twenty years earlier. The “self-christened Wild Geese,” six men and one woman, are zealous and idealistic and physically impressive; assigned to a high-crime precinct of the East Bronx, they are “preternaturally proactive, sometimes showing up at the trouble spots two steps ahead of the actors,” and given to “chasing their prey through backyards and apartments, across rooftops, up and down fire escapes.” They came to be mythologized in the East Bronx: “It was all about family; they would do the job as required, but they would really step to the fore for those they deemed ‘worthy.’ . . . The Wild Geese, in the eyes of the people they protected and occasionally avenged, walked the streets like gods.”

Promoted to detectives, the Wild Geese begin by degrees to lose their idealism, and by middle age they have devolved into a straggling band of vengeance seekers. Their only merit would seem to be their code of loyalty toward one another, which involves, for the “good” cop Billy Graves, not informing on one another. In an odd usage, the author identifies those criminals

with whom the detectives become most obsessed as “Whites”—the allusion is to Moby Dick, the White Whale that is Ahab’s preoccupation. The plot of “The Whites” springs out of this quandary:

They had all met their personal Whites, those who had committed criminal obscenities on their watch and then walked away untouched by justice. . . .

No one asked for these crimes to set up house in their lives, no one asked for these murderers to constantly and arbitrarily lay siege to their psyches like bouts of malaria.

Now, when most of the Wild Geese are retired from the force, each has a White whom the detective feels should be punished. (The reader wonders: only one?) This includes Billy Graves, who laments the continued existence of a killer named Curtis Taft, “the most black-hearted of the Whites,” whom he reëncounters in a hospital bed:

The sight of his White made Billy tingle with a rush of dazed energy, made his eyes brim with light.

“Aw, you again,” Curtis Taft moaned.

A retired detective named Pavlicek, a comrade of Billy’s, speaks of justice as “the getting of grace”—“the closest thing to peace on earth”—but what is meant by “justice” is a primitive sort of revenge, scarcely likely to bring anyone much peace. Billy, the novel’s moral compass, seems to find such vigilante justice both terrible and exhilarating, unacceptable and yet inevitable. When these Whites start turning up dead, he is drawn to investigate.

Although “The Whites” is resolutely a crime novel, steeped in criminal activities of all kinds, including those of the officers who have sworn to combat crime, it is also a psychological thriller. Billy is not just a police detective but also a husband perplexed by his wife’s violent, inexplicable mood swings. Carmen, a nurse, is not one of Price’s more convincing fictional characters; like her Wild Geese rival for Billy’s affections, Yasmeen Assaf-Doyle, she is a hive of emotions buzzing about an empty core. But Billy is obliged to care about the mother of his two sons:

He worried about Carmen having that kind of weight on her, some specific interior thing that made her so anxiously alert during the days and such a tormented thrasher at night, that made every therapy session he had ever attended with her feel like a com-

plete waste of time, filled with sulky bluster and air-ball bullshit, that periodically and without warning dropped a black-dog mantle over her so profound that it might be days before she could bring herself to open the bedroom door.

In “The Whites,” family life is unremitting responsibility, guilt, and dread of what will happen next: Carmen’s outbursts or Carmen’s silences or the erratic behavior of Billy’s elderly father, a former N.Y.P.D. Chief of Patrol gradually deteriorating into dementia.

“The Whites” retains a residue of Price’s absorption with his rough urban settings and with the phenomenon of a particular sort of masculinity, repelled by the misbehavior of other men, yet inclined to be resigned, unjudging. Billy Graves might be a distant cousin of Michael Connelly’s sharply etched Harry Bosch, of the L.A.P.D., a man of brooding action, prone to doubt, errors, and guilt but (we can be assured) an exemplary individual nonetheless.

In crime fiction, there is a tacit contract between the author and the reader assuring that what is puzzling at the start will be explained by the end; what is tangled will be untangled, and what is unresolved will be resolved. Though “The Whites” is fully explicated by its final scene, and Billy has identified (if not apprehended) each murderer of each White, it is not, finally, a novel of clearly delineated solutions but a novel of conscience, fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity. The “blue wall of silence” is notorious and indefensible, but the author has provided the human context for its prevailing in the face of periodic civilian attempts at reform. There is no way out for Billy except to live with a flawed conscience, as he must live with his morally compromised colleagues and his psychologically damaged wife. Yet he will take solace where he can, as in the accidental resolution of a crime on Madison Avenue: Billy decides that “it was a reasonably happy ending.” ♦

HEADLINE OF THE WEEK

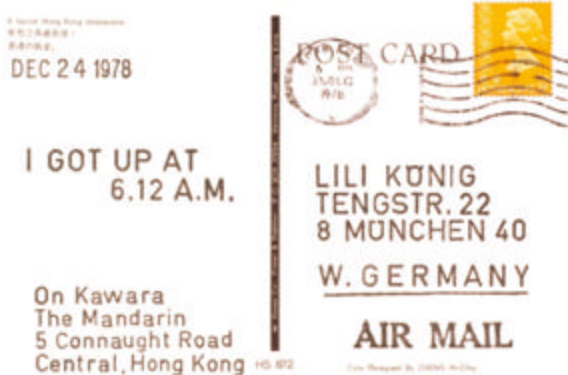
From the Times of London.

NEPAL SEEKS NEW CHILD
GODDESS: MUST HAVE VOICE
LIKE A DUCK

A PAINTING A DAY

On Kawara's extraordinary project.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



On Kawara, the subject of a vast and elegant retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, was born in Japan and lived very, very quietly in Manhattan for fifty years until his death, last June, at the age of eighty-one—or, rather, the age of twenty-nine thousand seven hundred and seventy-one days, by the form of reckoning that he preferred. Starting in 1966, he created nearly three thousand acrylic paintings, which feature only the dates on which they were made: the month, day, and year meticulously inscribed in white on layered grounds of red, blue, or dark gray. The “Date Paintings” are all rendered in the same sans-serif style, without the aid of stencils, and are horizontally oriented. They come in eight sizes: the smallest measure eight by ten

inches, the largest sixty-one by eighty-nine inches. If Kawara couldn't finish a day's painting by midnight, he destroyed it. It was hard work. He missed on many occasions, but managed a marathon stretch of three straight months in 1970.

A frequent traveller, Kawara adapted his orthography to that of the country in which he found himself: “16 FEV. 1969” in São Paulo, “30.DEZ. 1991” in Vienna. He made a cardboard box for each painting and lined it with all or part of a page from that day's edition of a local newspaper, with no apparent attention to what had been reported on it. The pages may stir nostalgia or, as in the case of those accompanying paintings made during the seemingly endless Vietnam

War, revive nightmares. Certain dates, of course, might excite some people more than others. One large painting, “May 1, 1987” (which is not in the show), sold at auction last year for more than four million dollars. It's essentially the same as the others. Was it somebody's birthday?

Kawara's just-the-facts mind-set wasn't limited to his paintings. While travelling, he sent more than fifteen hundred picture-postcards to acquaintances, with no message but a rubber stamp of the time that he had woken up that day. The fact that he kept irregular hours, rising early on some days and in midafternoon on others, is as close to a self-revelation as he ever provided. He also sent more than nine hundred telegrams to people he knew, telling them nothing more than “I am still alive.” And he often kept a record of where he had gone on a given day, drawing his routes in red lines on maps, and wrote down the names of people he had met. Even more oddly, in 1970 and 1971 he typed out a list of the previous million years (from 1969 to 998,031 B.C.); in 1998 he did the same with the forthcoming million (1999 to 1,001,998 A.D.). On a stage on the Guggenheim's ground floor, volunteer readers recite these sequences for five hours a day.

The madly pertinacious show, curated by Jeffrey Weiss, with assistance from Anne Wheeler, presents a great many bound books and ring binders full of the artist's recorded data (far fewer examples might have been sufficiently informative). There are more than a thousand postcards mounted in standing Plexiglas panels, for double-sided viewing. Up and down the museum's ramp, we swim in an archival deluge. What does it all mean? Perhaps nothing. I think of a line by Wallace Stevens: “Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” Or perhaps everything: all of a life, rolled flat. There's an over-all drollery, but what the joke may be, and whom it's on, defies comprehension. What would you be like if you had done what Kawara did?

Kawara was secretive about his personal life and his biography, the details of which are spotty. He was born in the small city of Kariya, the son of an engineer. Twelve years old at the

“DEC 24 1978,” from the “I Got Up” series of more than fifteen hundred postcards.

time of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, he was left deeply unsettled by the war. In 1951, he graduated from high school and moved to Tokyo, where, with little or no formal training, he quickly became recognized on the city's thriving bohemian scene for paintings of a surreal and gloomy sort, some picturing dismembered bodies. (None of his early art is in the show; it begins with tentative drawings, made in 1964, which experiment with abstraction and ideas, never realized, for sculptural works.) In 1959, when he was twenty-six, he went to Mexico City to join his father, who had taken a job at a Toyota branch there. Kawara stayed for three years, attending art school, then, after visiting New York and Paris, travelled widely in Europe.

In 1964, he settled in New York, with his wife, Hiroko Hiraoka, a Neo-Dadaist artist he had known in Japan. They had two children and lived frugally, in a series of spaces downtown, on funds from odd jobs, occasional sales of their work, and, according to Jeffrey Weiss, Kawara's winnings from gambling on games, chiefly mah-jongg. (His other pastimes included chess, Go, roulette, and fly-fishing in upstate New York.) In 1965, he began making paintings of words, phrases, and invented codes on monochrome canvases, but destroyed most of them after he lit upon the date motif. Two early pieces that survive—the last he made which refer to a place rather than a time—are a large set of three canvases lettered “ONE THING,” “1965,” and “VIET-NAM” and a single painting of latitude and longitude nota-

tions for some place in the Sahara Desert.

With his mature work, Kawara joined the newly formed international movement of conceptual art, which made games of separating art from its normal associations with visual imagining and emotional expression in favor of objectified thought. “The idea is a machine that makes the art,” Sol LeWitt declared in “Sentences on Conceptual Art” (1969). Kawara was soon befriended and esteemed by fellow-paladins of the impersonal, including LeWitt and Joseph Kosuth, the creator of “One and Three Chairs” (1965)—a real chair grouped with a photograph of it and a reproduced dictionary definition of “chair.” But Kawara maintained a public profile that was not only low—to the end of his life, he almost never consented to being interviewed or photographed—but invisible, apart from sporadic appearances at group shows. He had resolved to make “Date Paintings” for four years before displaying them in quantity, which he finally did at the Tokyo Biennial in 1970 and at his first solo show, the next year, with the prominent Konrad Fischer gallery, in Düsseldorf.

The conceptualists codified an iconoclastic notion that had taken form intermittently in modern art since Marcel Duchamp: roughly, that art is all in the head. Of course, the head contains a lot else, too, which Kawara made a mission of bringing to rigorous order. He did so with fidelity to the raw facts of living in the present tense. Widely read in philosophy, he had been particularly inspired by existentialism. It

strikes me that Albert Camus's touchstone book-length essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942) affords a snug interpretation of Kawara's rote procedures: repetitive actions—like the rolling uphill of a stone that promptly rolls back—that are always new while apparently pointless. The essay addresses the problem of suicide: Why not opt out of a futile existence? In 1969, before Kawara adopted the “I am still alive” formula, he sent three postcards, the first of which read, “I am not going to commit suicide dont worry.” (The next two wittily rounded out the implied crisis: “I am not going to commit suicide worry” and “I am going to sleep forget it.”) Kawara's subsequent career jibes with the concluding sentence of Camus's essay: “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

How much you like the Guggenheim show will reflect your susceptibility to the charm of that thought. My own is limited. I like art works to be unique, and I want a sense that someone inhabits them. At the core of Kawara's multitudinous production, there's a wintry vacancy; the content is as uniform as death. But there is a term for the effect that it generates, obliterating relative judgments: the sublime. Kawara's art evokes a cosmic perspective, by which his own life and, by extension, the lives of us all register as a negligible spark in time. The pleasures afforded by his steady energy, superlative craft, and fastidious taste come and go, in flickers, within the pall of their monotony. Some art shows fill your spirit. This one empties you. You won't forget it. ♦

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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 Michael Maslin, must be received by Sunday, February 15th. The finalists in the February 2nd contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 9th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"The chair has the floor."
Joe Guarisco, Candler, N.C.



THE FINALISTS

"It's only a twelve-second flight."
Elisabeth Browning, Bala Cynwyd, Pa.

"You've been upgraded to pilot."
Michael Lederman, Half Moon Bay, Calif.

"You did say you wanted an earlier flight."
Jeremy Schlosberg, Merion, Pa.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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When I won my first major, I listened to the same song every day on my way to the course. It played in my head over and over all the way around the course. So whenever I want to remember that winning feeling,

all I need
to hear is
that song.

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*IT IS NOT THE CRITIC
WHO COUNTS;*

*THE CREDIT BELONGS
TO THE MAN WHO IS
ACTUALLY IN THE ARENA,*

WHO STRIVES VALIANTLY;

*WHO ERRS, WHO COMES
SHORT AGAIN AND AGAIN;*

*WHO KNOWS
GREAT ENTHUSIASMS;*

*WHO SPENDS HIMSELF
IN A WORTHY CAUSE;*

*WHO AT THE BEST
KNOWS IN THE END*

*THE TRIUMPH OF
HIGH ACHIEVEMENT,*

AND WHO AT THE WORST,

*IF HE FAILS,
AT LEAST FAILS
WHILE DARING GREATLY.*



Cadillac

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