

PRICE \$7.99

# THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 22, 2015





---

BEND CURVES  
TO YOUR WILL



---

## 2015 Acura TLX

---

The available Super Handling All-Wheel Drive™ system in the Acura TLX responds faithfully to driver input and gives the car stability on the road. Combining front to rear torque distribution and the ability to send power side to side between the rear wheels, the TLX gives you the optimum amount of torque where needed so you can conquer the road.

**TLX** IT'S THAT KIND OF THRILL



# THE NEW YORKER

JUNE 22, 2015

	7	<b>GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN</b>
	21	<b>THE TALK OF THE TOWN</b> <i>Philip Gourevitch on an African dilemma; private kids; Polynesian sailing; Italian books; James Surowiecki on trade-agreement trouble.</i>
<b>CALVIN TOMKINS</b>	28	<b>WHAT ELSE CAN ART DO?</b> <i>A painter's vision for South Los Angeles.</i>
<b>BRUCE McCALL</b>	35	<b>SHOP TILL WE MAKE YOU DROP</b>
<b>MARGARET TALBOT</b>	36	<b>THE STORY OF A HATE CRIME</b> <i>Why Muslim students died in Chapel Hill.</i>
<b>CONNIE BRUCK</b>	42	<b>THE INSIDE WAR</b> <i>Dianne Feinstein's fight against torture.</i>
<b>RACHEL AVIV</b>	56	<b>THE DEATH TREATMENT</b> <i>Should the incurably depressed be euthanized?</i>
		<b>FICTION</b>
<b>BEN MARCUS</b>	66	"THE GROW-LIGHT BLUES"
		<b>THE CRITICS</b>
		<b>POP MUSIC</b>
<b>ANWEN CRAWFORD</b>	74	<i>Jenny Hval's "Apocalypse, girl."</i>
		<b>BOOKS</b>
<b>JAMES WOOD</b>	77	<i>Alejandro Zambra's "My Documents."</i>
	81	<i>Briefly Noted</i>
		<b>THE ART WORLD</b>
<b>PETER SCHJELDAHL</b>	82	<i>Albert Oehlen at the New Museum.</i>
		<b>THE CURRENT CINEMA</b>
<b>ANTHONY LANE</b>	84	<i>"Jurassic World," "The Tribe."</i>
		<b>POEMS</b>
<b>CECILY PARKS</b>	32	<i>"Morning Instructions for the Doctor's Wife"</i>
<b>DAVID LEHMAN</b>	68	<i>"Poem in the Manner of William Wordsworth"</i>
		<b>COVER</b>
<b>CHRIS WARE</b>		<i>"Playdate"</i>

**DRAWINGS** Jacob Samuel, Zachary Kanin, Liam Francis Walsh, Roz Chast, Robert Leighton, Mike Twohy, David Borchart, Paul Noth, Harry Bliss, Trevor Spaulding, Charlie Hankin, Frank Cotham, Mitra Farmand, Tim Hamilton, Christopher Weyant, Barbara Smaller **SPOTS** Emmanuel Pierre

# Is your portfolio TOO LOCAL for a GLOBAL ECONOMY?

**100%**

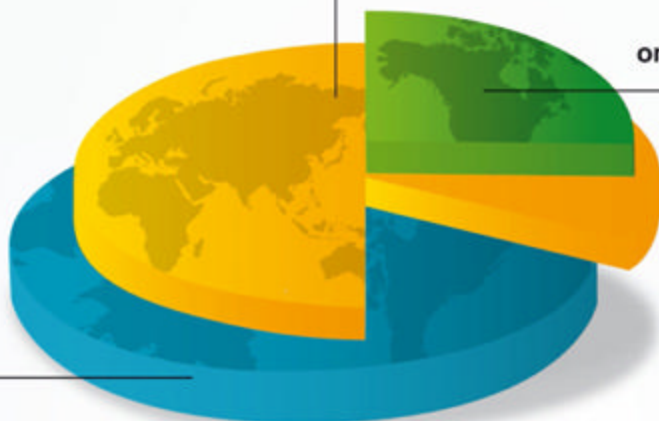
of the time, over the past 30 years, the top-performing equity market has been outside the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

**80%**

of global GDP comes from non-U.S. countries.<sup>2</sup>

only **26%**

of the world's publicly traded companies are based in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>



Diversify your portfolio with Fidelity international funds.



**FDIVX**

FIDELITY® DIVERSIFIED INTERNATIONAL FUND

**FIGFX**

FIDELITY® INTERNATIONAL GROWTH FUND

**FIVFX**

FIDELITY® INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL APPRECIATION FUND

Fidelity has more than 400 research professionals around the world bringing you smart investing ideas. Get our full perspective and fund details now.



Fidelity.com/opportunity  
800.FIDELITY

*Before investing in any mutual fund, consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses. Contact Fidelity for a prospectus or, if available, a summary prospectus containing this information. Read it carefully.*

**Past performance is no guarantee of future results.**

Stock markets are volatile and can decline significantly in response to adverse issuer, political, regulatory, market, or economic developments. Foreign securities are subject to interest rate, currency exchange rate, economic, and political risks, all of which are magnified in emerging markets.

<sup>1</sup>Source: MSCI All Country benchmark returns 1983–2013.

<sup>2</sup>Source: Gross domestic product based on purchasing-power-parity (PPP) share of world total. IMF, Haver Analytics.

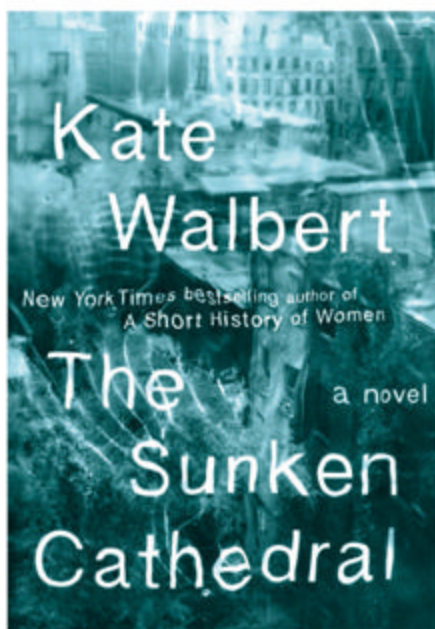
<sup>3</sup>Source: FactSet as of 11/30/2013. Data presented for the MSCI AC World Index, which represents 44 countries and contains 2,436 stocks. The index is not intended to represent the entire global universe of tradable securities.

Fidelity Brokerage Services LLC, Member NYSE, SIPC. © 2014 FMR LLC. All rights reserved. 675573.1.0

New from the  
National Book Award  
nominee and author  
of the bestselling  
*A Short History of Women*

**"Stunning...audacious...  
masterful...a deeply  
human story, full of  
rich and complex  
characters."**

—J. Courtney Sullivan,  
*The Boston Globe*



**"A gem of a novel—  
and unexpectedly funny."**

—Tom Perrotta,  
author of *The Leftovers*

**"Gorgeous and moving...  
magnificent."**

—Lauren Groff, author of *Arcadia* and  
*The Monsters of Templeton*

**"An elegy to life's seasons...  
Walbert excels at lyrical  
descriptions of a city  
she clearly loves."**

—O, *The Oprah Magazine*

Also available as an ebook  
and an audiobook.



SimonandSchuster.com

## CONTRIBUTORS

**CONNIE BRUCK** ("THE INSIDE WAR," P. 42), a staff writer since 1989, is the author of three books, including "The Predators' Ball."

**PARI DUKOVIC** (PHOTOGRAPH, P. 42) is a staff photographer. His work is currently on view in "Emerging," an exhibit at the Annenberg Space for Photography, in Los Angeles.

**PHILIP GOUREVITCH** (COMMENT, P. 21) is working on his second book about Rwanda, "You Hide That You Hate Me and I Hide That I Know."

**CALVIN TOMKINS** ("WHAT ELSE CAN ART DO?," P. 28) writes about art and cultural affairs for the magazine. His books "The Bride and the Bachelors" and "Duchamp: A Biography" were reissued last year.

**MARGARET TALBOT** ("THE STORY OF A HATE CRIME," P. 36) is the author of "The Entertainer." She has been writing for *The New Yorker* since 1997.

**CECILY PARKS** (POEM, P. 32) teaches at Texas State University. Her second poetry collection, "O'Nights," was published in April.

**RACHEL AVIV** ("THE DEATH TREATMENT," P. 56) has been a staff writer since 2013.

**BEN MARCUS** (FICTION, P. 66), the author of the story collection "Leaving the Sea," edited the anthology "New American Stories," which comes out in July.

**JAMES WOOD** (BOOKS, P. 77) is Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism at Harvard. "The Nearest Thing to Life" is his latest book.

**CHRIS WARE** (COVER) is the author of the graphic novels "Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth" and "Building Stories." His weekly comic strip, "The Last Saturday," appears in the *Guardian Magazine*.

### NEWYORKER.COM

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

#### ALSO:

**DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT:** Opinions and reflections by Adam Gopnik, Evan Osnos, Alexandra Schwartz, and others.

**PODCASTS:** On the Political Scene, Ryan Lizza and Hendrik Hertzberg talk with Dorothy Wickenden about Hillary Clinton's and Jeb Bush's dynastic baggage. Plus, a conversation about gay television, with Emily Nussbaum, Daniel Wenger, Amelia Lester, and David Haglund.

**VIDEO:** On "Sunday Supper," Ariel Levy hosts a dinner for friends on Shelter Island. Plus, the latest episodes of "Comma Queen," "The Cartoon Lounge," and "Five-Borough Freestyle."

**FICTION AND POETRY:** Readings by Ben Marcus and Cecily Parks. Plus, the monthly Poetry Podcast, with Paul Muldoon and Michael Roberts.

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

# THE MAIL

## INCARCERATION INEQUALITY

It was encouraging to read Jeffrey Toobin's story about the push by John Chisholm, the District Attorney in Milwaukee County, to combat mass incarceration and its grossly disproportionate impact on African-Americans ("The Milwaukee Experiment," May 11th). As Toobin points out, prosecutors play an important role in determining the fate of people caught up in the criminal-justice system. The result can often be unfair, particularly when it comes to the racial imbalance of those charged with low-level drug offenses. It is admirable that Chisholm is taking steps toward righting these wrongs. However, it is also worth questioning whether arrest and criminal prosecution are a reasonable response to drug use in the first place. Addiction is arguably better dealt with by health professionals than by law-enforcement officials. Cities including Seattle and Santa Fe have implemented a program called Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, which allows police officers to refer people to health services, including voluntary drug treatment, instead of arresting them. Given the economic and social costs of having people cycle in and out of jails and prisons for minor drug-law violations, it's time to get low-level offenders and drug users out of the criminal-justice system altogether.

*Sharda Sekaran*  
*Drug Policy Alliance*  
*New York City*

Chisholm is to be commended for his efforts to reduce mass incarceration in Milwaukee County, and to combat the racial disparities in the justice system there. Toobin's story also mentions the discovery, by Chisholm's staff, that their prosecutions were "devaluing our African-American victims of property crimes." There is a growing national recognition that racial inequality extends to victimization—people of color are more likely to be victims of violent crime than white people. But there is

little talk about solutions outside the narrow question of whether and for how long to incarcerate. The biographies of incarcerated people are filled with stories of unaddressed trauma and victimization. America has not made the treatment of trauma a priority in responding to crime and violence. Equity in criminal justice will remain out of reach until we expand the agenda to meet this urgent need.

*Shari Silberstein*  
*Executive Director, Equal Justice USA*  
*New York City*

## DRY LAND

I read with interest Dana Goodyear's piece on the California drought ("The Dying Sea," May 4th). Goodyear notes that to save a million and a half acre-feet of water Californians must forgo "long showers, frequent laundering, toilet-flushing, gardening, golf." Yet, as she suggests, total urban water usage—including toilets, showers, faucets, washing machines, and lawn treatments—amounts to merely a fraction of the water that is used for agriculture. Alfalfa is among the most water-intensive crops; according to one study, in California, in the course of a year, it can use some 5.2 million acre-feet, or the equivalent of about a hundred billion showers. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is giving out hundred-dollar rebates to residents who install high-efficiency toilets. But, by my calculation, using data from the Center for Agricultural Business at California State University, Fresno, a hundred dollars' worth of alfalfa uses about seven hundred and sixty thousand litres of water, or about a hundred and twenty-five thousand toilet flushes.

*Thomas Sittler*  
*Foster City, Calif.*

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

Advertisement



FOLLOW US FOR



ADVERTISER OFFERS  
& EVENTS:



CONTESTS  
& PRIZES



SPECIAL  
EVENT ACCESS



CULTURE, BOOKS  
& THE ARTS



IDEAS  
& DISCUSSION



INSIDER  
NEWS



@NEWYORKERPROMO

NEWYORKERONTHE TOWN.COM

# CHINA

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS



An “utterly breathtaking exploration of China” —*Washington Post*

“Spectacular” —*The Economist*

[metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org)

ONE MET.  
MANY WORLDS.



#ChinaLookingGlass  
Through August 16

The exhibition is made possible by **YAHOO!**

Additional support is provided by **CONDÉ NAST**  
and several Chinese donors.

Roberto Cavalli, Evening Dress  
(detail), fall/winter 2005-6.  
Courtesy of Roberto Cavalli.  
Photography © Platon.

# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



JUNE      WEDNESDAY   •   THURSDAY   •   FRIDAY   •   SATURDAY   •   SUNDAY   •   MONDAY   •   TUESDAY  
2015      17TH                      18TH                      19TH                      20TH                      21ST                      22ND                      23RD

**FORGET WHAT YOU'VE HEARD** about melancholy Danes. This summer, the Copenhagen-born artist Jeppe Hein has turned Brooklyn Bridge Park into a fun fair, at the invitation of the Public Art Fund. Walls of water rise and vanish at random intervals in the bathing-suit-friendly "Appearing Rooms." A spiral of mirrored stainless-steel planks (pictured)—a space-age Stonehenge—ups the ante in games of hide-and-seek. Spread throughout the park are sixteen bright-orange "modified social benches," which double as play zones for the jungle-gym set (the title of Hein's project is "Please Touch the Art") and seating for tuckered-out parents. "Appearing Rooms" closes in late September; the rest is up through next April.

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

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOBIAS HUTZLER



Jack Waters and Sarah Schulman star in the docudrama “Jason and Shirley,” directed by Stephen Winter.

## BODIES OF WORK

*Great independent filmmakers and actors on display at BAM.*

**THE MOST IMPORTANT RECENT ADVANCES** in independent filmmaking can be found in the realm of performance, as seen in the latest edition of BAMcinemaFest (June 17-28). This annual series reliably unearths hidden treasures, many produced on microbudgets by fledgling filmmakers, and screens them with eagerly anticipated new works by acclaimed young directors.

In one of this year’s finest offerings, Stephen Winter goes behind the scenes of a classic independent film—Shirley Clarke’s “Portrait of Jason”—with “Jason and Shirley” (screening June 18), an ingeniously conceived and acted docudrama about the night, in 1966, when Clarke filmed Jason Holliday, a gay black hustler and aspiring cabaret artist, in her room in the Chelsea Hotel. Winter convened a prominent artist and a novelist—Jack Waters and Sarah Schulman—to play Holliday and Clarke, and to co-write the script with him. The result, filmed like an archival video, is a meticulously detailed imagining of the shoot, especially in Waters’s uncanny, electrifying impersonation of Holliday, as well as a complex and anguished view of the power relations, societal conflicts, and cruel sacrifices from which Clarke’s film arose.

The title character of “Krisha” (June 19) is played by Krisha Fairchild, an actress and the real-life aunt of the film’s writer and director, Trey Edward Shults. He plays Krisha’s son, named Trey; he recruits his mother to play Krisha’s sister, and their real-life mother to play their mother; and he brings this group together with professional actors to tell a fictional story about a family reunion. Filmed at Shults’s parents’ house, in Texas, the film has the amplitude of a saga and the explosive fury of a tragedy. Krisha, a recovering alcoholic with a

lifetime of trouble, has long been estranged from her family—and from Trey—and her tentative return to the hearty, rowdy fold dredges up long-stifled resentments and plunges her into a horrific vortex of pain. Fairchild, who performs like a counterculture Gena Rowlands, is irresistibly passionate and volatile even in repose, and Shults displays a bold visual and dramatic sensibility with his impressionistic rearrangement of time and his repertory of darting, whirling, plunging, and retreating camera moves, which seem to paint the action onto the screen.

With its blend of animation and live action, Terence Nance’s first feature, “An Oversimplification of Her Beauty,” from 2012, revealed him to be one of the world’s most imaginative young directors. His twenty-three-minute film “Swimming in Your Skin Again” (June 24), filmed on location in Miami, goes even further, with its allusive collage of live action and special effects, centered on music and dance (and conceived with his brother, the musician known as Norvis Jr.). Beginning with a lyrical view of a young man and woman who turn up as apparitions at a stirring musical service in a small church, Nance expands his vision to a sort of artistic cosmogony; by way of ecstatic imagery, thrillingly balletic performances, and a mighty sense of humor, he sketches a personal mythology of black American history and culture.

—Richard Brody

  
**S.PELLEGRINO**  
*Live in Italian™*



---

FINE DINING DOESN'T  
HAVE TO MEAN FINE CHINA.

---

FROM TABLECLOTH TO SANDWICH SHOP,  
S.PELLEGRINO MAKES ANY MEAL AN OCCASION  
WITH ITS FINE BUBBLES AND UNIQUE TASTE.

ARE YOU  
a   
FOODIE?

SHOW US WHAT MAKES YOU A FOODIE AT THE INFINITE TABLE.  
[SANPELLEGRINO.COM](http://SANPELLEGRINO.COM)



## NOW PLAYING

### Captain Lightfoot

Douglas Sirk's turbulent historical drama, set in Ireland in 1815, is a Western in disguise. It stars Rock Hudson in the title role—Lightfoot being the nom de guerre of Michael Martin, a highway robber in Ballymoor who delivers his takings to the secret society of rebels against British rule to which he belongs. Facing arrest, he escapes to Dublin, where he joins forces with the revolutionary leader known as Captain Thunderbolt (Jeff Morrow), and falls in love with Thunderbolt's intrepid, hot-headed daughter, Aga (Barbara Rush). For all the colorful romantic adventure, Sirk is less interested in swashbuckling than in strategy: he looks at the uprising analytically, noting the bitter ironies of shrewd commanders compelled to restrain audacious warriors for the sake of the long-term struggle. Depicting local collaborators with the British authorities, conjuring the paranoid circumspection of the highly organized freedom fighters who fear infiltration and denunciation, and evoking threats of prison and torture used to break the will of arrested plotters, Sirk—a German émigré—also offers a veiled view of resistance to the Nazi occupation of Europe during the Second World War. Released in 1955.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; June 19.)

### Heaven Knows What

Josh and Benny Safdie directed this furious drama of young heroin addicts surviving on the streets of the Upper West Side, based on a memoir by Arielle Holmes. She stars as Harley, who is devoted to Ilya (Caleb Landry Jones) with a nearly religious fanaticism, despite his brutal indifference. Harley attempts suicide and recovers in a psychiatric hospital; upon her release, she takes up with Mike (Buddy Duress), a drug dealer who provokes Ilya's jealousy. The script, written by Josh Safdie and Ronald Bronstein, is filled with astonishing, geographically specific details of young addicts' practical agonies—the struggle for shelter and a place to shoot up, the habits of theft and begging, the emotional deprivation of near-feral subsistence. Aided by the raw intimacy of Sean Price Williams's camera work, the filmmakers capture Harley's panic-stricken rage and futile tenderness.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Love & Mercy

Bill Pohlad's film is about the rise and fall of Brian Wilson, although it gently suggests that, from the start, Wilson's life had been marked by risings and fallings of every kind. Paul Dano plays Wilson as a young man—already flush with surfer hits, and heading toward the deeper and more troubled waters of "Pet Sounds" and "Good Vibrations." Dano, plump of face and frame, dives into the

role—his best and most gratifying to date—as if it were a plunge pool. The older Wilson is played by John Cusack, whose looks may be wrong for the part but who catches the hesitant moves of a wounded creature—preyed upon by Eugene Landy (Paul Giamatti), a dangerous quack with tubs of pharmaceuticals, but rescued by Melinda Ledbetter (Elizabeth Banks), the sanest and strongest figure in the story. Scholars of the Beach Boys will, no doubt, find much to quarrel with here, and some of the trippier scenes outstay their welcome, yet the film is wholeheartedly invested in the plight of the characters—and, rarer still, in the joyous mechanics of the songs. When did you last see a musical bio-pic that seemed happiest—and most patiently rapt with detail—in the recording studio? With Bill Camp, as Wilson's unpleasable father.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/8 & 15/15.) (In limited release.)

### Results

One of the strangest and strongest of recent romantic triangles forms in the course of this lyrical, fanatically realistic comedy, written and directed by Andrew Bujalski. His subject is the overlap of business and pleasure. Kat (Cobie Smulders) is a trainer at a gym in Austin, Texas, which is run by Trevor (Guy Pearce), her ex-lover. Trevor sees fitness in philosophical terms, which appeal to a new client, Danny (Kevin Corrigan), who's out of shape, well-to-do, and socially awkward. Kat trains Danny in his palatial but unfurnished home; Danny's big check for advance payments will help Trevor expand the gym. But Kat begins an affair with Danny, and their relationship gets in the way of business. Bujalski pays close attention to money, seeing a small business like a film production. He stages the clashes of idiosyncratic characters that give the enterprise its life while observing the infinitesimal details of which that life is made, as well as the ethereally intimate connections that result.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### San Andreas

Dwayne Johnson may have shed his former sobriquet, The Rock, but it comes back to haunt him in this new movie, which requires him, in essence, to brace himself against a vast geological collapse. The shaking begins with a few teasers, one of which takes out the Hoover Dam, before shifting to the main event: the unzipping of the San Andreas rift. Johnson plays a helicopter rescue pilot named Ray, who, disregarding the needs of the general populace, attends purely to the safety of his immediate family. First, he plucks his wife, Emma (Carla Gugino), from a roof in Los Angeles, and then moves on to San Francisco, where their daughter, Blake (Alexandra Daddario), is trapped in a doomed and flooded building—by a nice coincidence, the handiwork of

the very schmuck (Ioan Gruffudd) who has stolen Emma's heart. Johnson remains as indestructible as ever, which is good news for California, but his equable demeanor is sorely tested by the solemnity of the proceedings. The director is Brad Peyton, and one downside of the thumping special effects is that the script, by Carlton Cuse, appears to have suffered structural damage along the way. There is also a Cassandra-flavored role for Paul Giamatti, as a scientist who warned us of this calamity (the earthquake, not the film) but went unheeded. Will we never learn?—*A.L.* (6/8 & 15/15) (In wide release.)

### Spy

Melissa McCarthy shines in this clever action-comedy showcase provided by the writer and director Paul Feig, but the movie's tightly contrived plot and uniformly positive emotions constrain her comic genius. She plays Susan Cooper, a C.I.A. agent with great combat skills whose low self-esteem relegates her to a desk job as the video eyes of the suave and daring field agent Bradley Fine (Jude Law), on whom she has an unrequited crush. When he's killed in an effort to thwart the sale of a stolen nuclear device, Susan volunteers for action to take his place. She pursues a diabolical criminal (Rose Byrne) to Paris, Rome, and Budapest, and Feig delights in the picturesque settings, but McCarthy's performance, fitting the character, remains frumpily empathetic, until late in the film. Susan's emergency improvisation to get out of a jam lets McCarthy lunge into the potty-mouthed persona of a paramilitary ass-kicker. Her spew of invective and uninhibited aggression is recklessly hilarious but all too brief.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

### Tomorrowland

The new Brad Bird film begins in 1964, with a kid called Frank Walker (Thomas Robinson) attending the New York World's Fair. Wowed by what he sees, he is led by a serene young girl (Raffey Cassidy) to a theme ride, which plunges him into an ideal future, frictionless and fun. Cut to the present, as the grown-up Frank (George Clooney) hides away in a farmhouse, grumpy as hell, wondering what happened to all that promise. He is visited by Casey (Britt Robertson), an inquisitive student, whose hopes are as high as Frank's used to be; together, they set off to find Tomorrowland once more, to recharge the shape of things to come. The film has plenty of zip when it's on the run, and you can hardly move for gizmos; if anyone were going to strike back against the rage for dystopian sci-fi, it was bound to be Bird. But there's a blur of both motive and plot at the core of the movie, and a passage of pure blah at the end—no surprise, perhaps, given that the title refers to a zone at Disneyland.—*A.L.* (6/1/15) (In wide release.)

### An Unmarried Woman

Paul Mazursky wrote and directed this instant-classic drama, from 1978, starring the luminous and lyrical Jill Clayburgh as Erica Benton, an educated and cultured Upper East Side mom and art-gallery assistant, whose husband, Martin (Michael Murphy), a Wall Street executive, leaves her for a younger woman. Mazursky applies a light and graceful touch to matters of intimate agony, which he probes in insightfully crafted dialogue scenes with Erica's three best friends (Kelly Bishop, Patricia Quinn, and Linda Miller), her daughter, Patti (Lisa Lucas), and her therapist (Penelope Russianoff). The action unfolds with a documentary-style geographical specificity, offering a time capsule of Manhattan locations, uptown and downtown alike. Mazursky's achievement is, above all, choreographic: for all the trenchant conversation, he sets the characters into mad motion, alone and together—jogging, dancing, fighting, strolling, embracing—and even the static set-pieces, in bars and at dinner tables, have the sculptural authority of frozen ballets. When the unmoored Erica finds a new lover—the artist Saul Kaplan (Alan Bates)—her struggle for independence, after a life of comfortable subordination, is, above all, physical.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; June 23.)

### The Wolfpack

A documentary, directed by Crystal Moselle, about the Angulo clan: two parents, one sister, and—at center stage—six brothers. The boys closely resemble each other, and their lives, in an apartment on the Lower East Side, could not be more tightly interknit. Homeschooling is the least of it. Seldom do the kids leave the place (once, they didn't go out for a year), and their principal conduit to the outside world is through films—watching them; typing out the scripts; learning the lines; fashioning costumes and props, including cardboard guns; and restaging sequences from favorite flicks. "Reservoir Dogs," complete with black suits and ties and white shirts, goes down especially well. If there is a ghost at the feast, it is the father, a Peruvian immigrant who is often glimpsed in old video clips but is seen infrequently in Moselle's own footage, and whose abusive habits and lofty beliefs are mentioned with quiet trepidation. Any shock comes not from the freakiness of the domestic setup but from seeing how thoughtful and decent, by and large, the boys have turned out—far more so than the menacing electronic score would like us to think. Their virtual imprisonment has shaped but not ruined them, and we slowly see them venture into the wilds of regular existence. Should anyone be looking for half a dozen film critics, these guys would fit right in.—*A.L.* (In limited release.)



*"THERE IS NO AMERICAN HISTORY  
WITHOUT BLACK HISTORY."*

DR. KHALIL GIBRAN MUHAMMAD  
DIRECTOR, SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE

Harlem's world-renowned Schomburg Center houses and promotes the history and culture of people of African descent. But it urgently needed renovations to keep its rich legacy alive. Citi provided the Center with the necessary financial support and guidance to bring its redevelopment plans to life. These changes will protect irreplaceable archives, increase visitor numbers and help to preserve the story of black culture for future generations.

For over 200 years, Citi's job has been to believe in people and help make their ideas a reality.

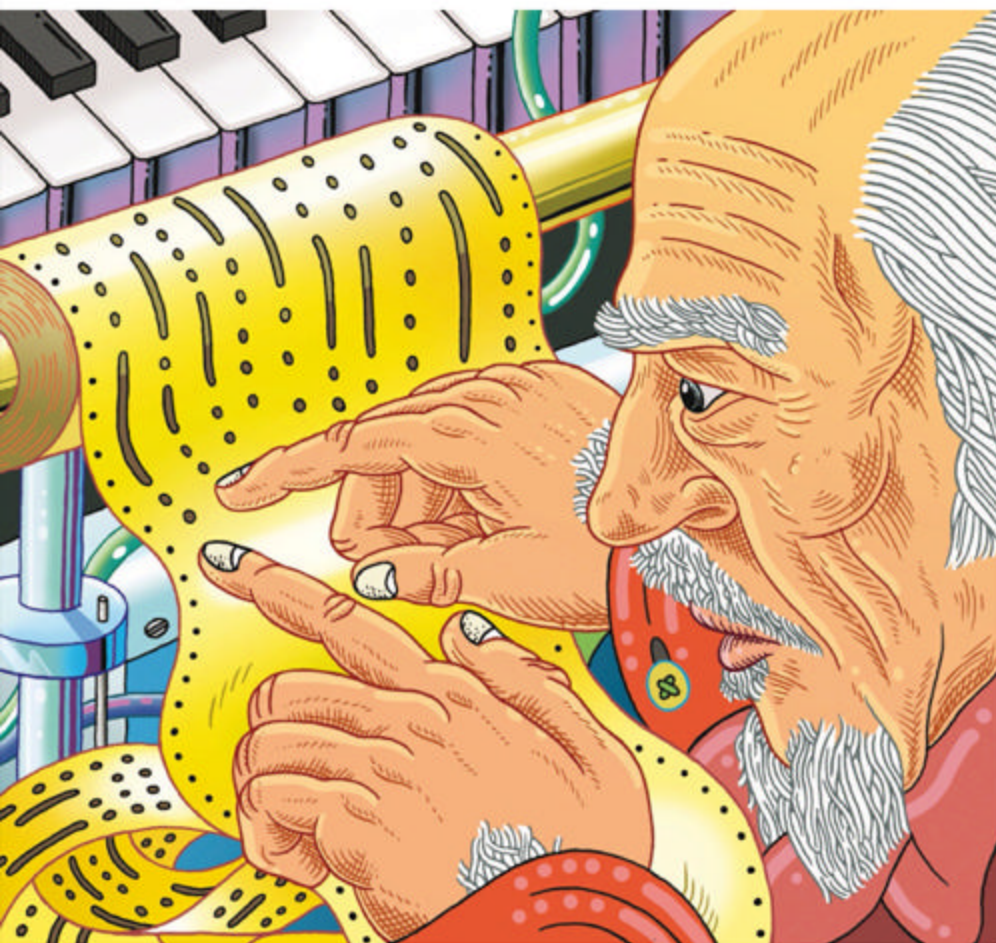
[citi.com/progress](http://citi.com/progress)

**citi**<sup>®</sup>  
The World's Citi<sup>SM</sup>



© 2015 Citibank, N.A. Member FDIC. Equal Opportunity Lender. Citi and Citi with Arc Design are registered service marks of Citigroup Inc. The World's Citi is a service mark of Citigroup Inc.

# CLASSICAL MUSIC



Conlon Nancarrow's music combines mathematical complexity with a playful and generous spirit.

## SEEING MUSIC

*The new Whitney Museum launches an adventurous performance series.*

**THE EYES ARE BOLDER** than the ears: cultural consumers more readily embrace the visual avant-garde than they do the musical equivalent. The audience for Kandinsky and Picasso greatly exceeds the one for Schoenberg and Bartók. Tellingly, contemporary composers have often found a warm welcome within the walls of museums and galleries, as if the visual arena prompted a more adventurous mode of listening. Since the nineteen-sixties, the Whitney Museum has hosted events for Harry Partch, John Cage, Morton Feldman, Steve Reich, and Meredith Monk, among dozens of others. Reich's 1968 essay "Music as a Gradual Process," a seminal contribution to twentieth-century music history, was first published not in a music journal but in a Whitney catalogue.

Yet the old Whitney, on the Upper East Side, lacked a dedicated space for music. The new Whitney, in the meatpacking district, has an excellent one: a high-ceilinged, gray-walled, clean-lined room that can accommodate up to two hundred and four people. Plate-glass windows give a striking view of the Hudson; soundproofing stills the roar of the West Side Highway. In the coming months, Jay Sanders, the curator of the Whitney's performance series, plans to present an array of classical, jazz, and electronic artists, and in some cases will invite them to respond to art on display. Performers will also venture into

the gallery spaces and, weather permitting, onto the outdoor terraces. Few venues in New York offer such a dramatic sense of the surrounding cityscape.

This month, the Whitney will host a two-week festival (June 17-28), curated by Sanders and Dominic Murcott, in honor of the American experimental composer Conlon Nancarrow (1912-1997)—possibly the most ambitious survey of his work yet attempted. Nancarrow, who went into exile in Mexico in 1940, after encountering resistance to his leftist politics, is most famous for a library of some fifty studies that he composed for player piano, in which rhythmic complexity is carried to fabulous extremes. Punching holes into player-piano rolls, Nancarrow created delirious simultaneities of activity, with notes exploding in all registers. He favored arcane relationships: in Study No. 33, the ratio of tempos is 2 against  $\sqrt{2}$ , while the ratios for Study No. 41 resemble an equation scrawled on a blackboard in a mad-scientist movie. Yet the music seldom sounds mathematical: it is visceral in impact and playful in mood, its melodic material often recalling ragtime, jazz, and blues.

In the early and final phases of his career, Nancarrow also wrote for conventional instruments. The ensemble Alarm Will Sound will sample that repertory as well as play live-action arrangements of the studies. Steve Coleman, Henry Kaiser, and Lukas Ligeti are to perform Nancarrow-influenced pieces; dancers from the Merce Cunningham Trust Fellowship Program will revive Cunningham's 1960 dance "Crisis," which had a Nancarrow score; and the composer and Nancarrow scholar Kyle Gann will be on hand to supply context. The festival concludes with a marathon presentation of all the studies, on a vintage player piano. Some may be tempted to dance along, in an irregular frenzy.

—Alex Ross

## OPERA

### Metropolitan Opera Summer Recital Series

For the second stop in its popular series, the Met heads to Brooklyn Bridge Park for a free, open-air concert with the soprano Janai Brugger, the mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, and the baritone Nathan Gunn, the same team that headlined the first program, in Central Park. The pianist Dan Saunders accompanies the trio in arias and duets from “La Bohème,” “Carmen,” “Faust,” and “Porgy and Bess,” as well as selections from the American Songbook. (Brooklyn Bridge Park, Harbor View Lawn on Pier 1, Brooklyn. [metopera.org](http://metopera.org). June 17 at 7. No tickets required.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

### New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks

Half a century strong, the Philharmonic’s parks concerts return with added attractions in Brooklyn and Queens: a “Share the Stage” program that features pre-concert performances by local ensembles, and food trucks (such as Andy’s Italian Ices and Carpe Donut) to tempt the crowd. But the prime focus is on the music, of course, with three listener-friendly programs on offer. June 17 at 8: Alan Gilbert conducts an Americana evening with Joshua Bell as guest star that features music by Barber (the “School for Scandal” Overture), Gershwin, Bernstein (a “West Side Story” Suite for Violin and Orchestra), Copland (the “Appalachian Spring” Suite), Sousa, and Richard Rodgers. (Great Lawn, Central Park.) • June 18 and June 19 at 8: The conductor Charles Dutoit and the violinist Renaud Capuçon perform a back-to-back, borough-crossing program featuring the suave Franco-Russian repertory at which they both excel—works by Berlioz, Saint-Saëns (the Violin Concerto No. 3 in B Minor), Stravinsky (“Petrushka”), and Ravel. (Great Lawn, Central Park; Prospect Park, Brooklyn.) • June 22 and June 23 at 8: Gilbert returns to lead the orchestra in what is largely a repeat of the initial Americana program, but with Bell replaced by the soprano Julia Bullock and the tenor Ben Bliss, in their Philharmonic debuts, singing vocal selections from “West Side Story.” (Cunningham Park, Queens; Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx.) ([nyphil.org](http://nyphil.org).)

## RECITALS

### Composers Collaborative: “Serious Immobilities”

Among the rotating cycle of performers at the Kitchen’s 1998 premiere of Arthur Jarvinen’s mammoth work—a day-long set of eight hundred and forty variations for solo piano on Erik Satie’s bizarre abstract work “Vexations”—was Jed Distler, a pianist, composer, curator, and writer, who vowed to someday revive it. Now, at last, he gets his chance, presenting Jarvinen’s entire piece in addition to Randall Woolf’s “Vexations”—soaked electronic work “Spineless Dog” (for MIDI and Macintosh). The luxury cast of pianists includes, among others, Eve Beglarian, Kathleen Supové, Neil Rolnick, Adam Tendler, and Distler. (West Park Presbyterian Church, 165 W. 86th St. [westparkpresbyterian.org](http://westparkpresbyterian.org). June 20-21, beginning each day at 8 A.M. No tickets required.)

### “Make Music New York”

For nine years now, this project has overrun the city with song and sound on the first day of summer, brimming with more than twelve hundred concerts in all imaginable genres, most of which take place outdoors. Among the attrac-

tions is “Concerto for Buildings,” a presentation on Greene Street by Mantra Percussion and the students of the Face the Music ensemble, in which four composers (including Paula Matthusen) will employ twenty-four percussionists to play buildings as instruments; “Exquisite Corpses,” a series of continuous concerts offered at many of the city’s cemeteries (including Grant’s Tomb and Trinity Wall Street); and “Sousapalooza,” a happening at Bryant Park’s Upper Terrace in which TILT Brass, Iktus Percussion, and some two hundred wind players from around the tri-state area (conducted by Jeff W. Ball) will participate in a concert that includes spirited readings of pieces by the March King himself, John Philip Sousa. (For the full schedule, see [makemusicny.org](http://makemusicny.org). June 21, all day.)

### Bang on a Can Marathon

The iconoclastic downtown musical concern, which has managed to remain vivid for nearly three decades, once again initiates New York’s new-music summer with its free, twelve-hour marathon of music situated at the corner of postminimalism and rock. Among the slew of delights: the Bang on a Can All-Stars playing music by Todd Reynolds, Johann Johannsson, and the Bang on a Can co-founder and recent Pulitzer Prize winner Julia Wolfe (from “Field Recordings”); the guitar quartet Dither playing Lainie Fefferman’s Velvet Underground-inspired “Tongue of Thorns”; Grand Band, a six-piano ensemble, playing works by the co-founders Michael Gordon and David Lang; So Percussion, joined by the guitarist Nels Cline (of Wilco fame), playing the music of Bobby Previte; and the Glenn Branca Ensemble performing Branca’s “Ascension Three.” (Brookfield Place, 230 Vesey St. [bangonacan.org](http://bangonacan.org). June 21 from noon until 10 P.M.)

### Bargemusic: Horszowski Trio

The young piano trio, arguably the most compelling American group to come on the scene since Trio Solisti emerged at the turn of the century, anchors the barge’s offerings this week, performing classic repertory by Beethoven, Shostakovich (the emphatic Trio No. 2 in E Minor), and Schumann (the more subtle Trio No. 2 in F Major, Op. 80). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. [bargemusic.org](http://bargemusic.org). June 20 at 8 and June 21 at 4.)

## OUT OF TOWN

### Caramoor: Opening Night

The elegant Westchester festival launches its seventieth-anniversary year with a concert by its longtime resident ensemble, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, conducted by Peter Oundjian. Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is the program’s main offering, with the world premiere of work by Christopher Theofanidis (“Making Up for Lost Time”) as a prelude; the vocal soloists Jennifer Check, Jennifer Feinstein, Noah Baetge, and Jeffrey Beruan are joined by the Collegiate Chorale. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. June 20 at 8:30.)

### Music Mountain

The exceptional young players of the Calidore String Quartet, recently appointed to the roster of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two program, are joined by the violist Daniel Phillips in a concert at the festival’s acoustically gratifying hall which adds a recent work by Caroline Shaw (“Entr’acte”) to a lineup of pieces by Schubert (the “Quartettsatz”), Mendelssohn, and Brahms (the String Quintet in G Minor, Op. 111). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. June 21 at 3.)



ABT  
AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE  
75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
1940-2015



# ROMEO AND JULIET

THIS WEEK ONLY!  
JUNE 15-20

In Kenneth MacMillan’s masterful interpretation of Shakespeare’s romantic tragedy, the lyric beauty and passion of star-crossed lovers are perfectly underscored by Prokofiev’s stirring music.

212.362.6000  
[www.abt.org](http://www.abt.org)  
Metropolitan Opera House  
Broadway at 64<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln Center

No refunds or exchanges. Casts, prices and programs subject to change.  
Roberto Ballé. Photo by Fabrizio Ferré.



# NIGHT LIFE

## ROCK AND POP

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

### King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard

On June 19, free spirits across the globe celebrate "World Sauntering Day," an observation inaugurated in 1979, at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, Michigan, in response to the jogging craze that had gripped the nation. Participants are encouraged not to loiter or lollygag but to stroll aimlessly, as the holiday's creator, W. T. Rabe, put it, "from point X to point Z." This year, you'd be hard-pressed to find better accompaniment than this preposterously named Antipodean act, the latest group to escape the orbit of Melbourne's thriving psychedelic garage-rock scene. Their music is warped-out and fuzzy, the perfect platform for the band's seven members to simultaneously explore their love of Nuggets-style sixties rock and avoid getting real jobs. They're touring in support of their sixth studio album, "Quarters," which was available in the U.S. in an edition of a thousand copies. The worthy entry to their oeuvre sold out in a day, but it's still well worth sauntering downtown to check them out live. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. ticketmaster.com. June 19.)

### Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett

Gaga took a refreshing detour from her trajectory as a postmodern pop-rock provocateur when she teamed up with the legendary crooner to record their 2014 album, "Cheek to Cheek," a collection of American Songbook standards. While Bennett, who is eighty-eight years old, is clearly the pro, sidling through each classic with effortless cool, Gaga's substantial power as a vocalist is intact, as is her keen sense of timing, humor, and grace. She also gives the duets a progressive feminist kick when taking the lead. On tour, backed by a topnotch jazz orchestra, the unlikely but lovely twosome put on a heck of a show, with Gaga, who changes outfits repeatedly throughout, giving Bennett ample time to shine solo. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave.

at 50th St. 212-247-4777. June 19-20 and June 22-23.)

### No Joy

Shoegaze has come and gone and come again, with the most recent wave of the genre—which features thick, distorted guitar noise, circular melodies, and drifting, often gentle vocals—headed by bands like M83, Deerhunter, and Silversun Pickups. No Joy, which was founded in Montreal in 2009, is a full participant in the movement, though it's set apart by its leaders, Jasmine White-Gluz and Laura Lloyd, who sing like sirens, with their long blond hair hanging down to their fretboards, as the band's tunes move from the vapory to the grinding. The group's third album, "More Faithful," just came out. (Baby's All Right, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. June 23.)

### SummerStage

The thirtieth-anniversary season of this warm-weather concert series is underway. On June 20, the headliners are **Jungle**, an expansive British soul collective with roots in seventies funk. Started by Josh Lloyd-Watson and Tom McFarland, who initially identified themselves simply as "J" and "T," the act gained notice online a couple of years ago with a simple video for their kicking song "Platoon," featuring a six-year-old girl, in a purple jumpsuit, dancing to the music. Jungle's self-titled debut, which came out last year, was short-listed for the Mercury Prize. They are sharing the bill with **Ibeyi**, which is Lisa-Kaindé and Naomi Diaz, the twin daughters of the renowned percussionist Miguel (Anga) Diaz. The two combine their voices in multiple languages and are inspired by Yoruba traditions (their name is Yoruban for "twins"). (Rumsey Playfield, Central Park, mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org.)

### Wolf Alice

Not many alternative British bands take their names from Angela Carter short stories, but this one does. The brainchild of Ellie Rowsell, a winsome vocalist and guitar player, and Joff Oddie, a guitarist and fan of hardcore punk, the act jumps from bright-eyed folk to full-throttle rock, blithely

refusing to stick to one genre. Their debut album, "My Love Is Cool," comes out this month. With **Radkey**, three brothers from Missouri who stick, quite adroitly, to one thing: throbbing guitar-driven rock with punk roots and arena ambitions. Their first album, "Dark Black Makeup," comes out in August, and was produced by Ross Orton (of the Arctic Monkeys and The Fall). (Le Poisson Rouge, 158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. June 18.)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

### Blue Note Jazz Festival

The tenor saxophonist **David Murray**'s penetrating and soulful playing was once omnipresent, but it is heard much less frequently here now that he lives in Europe. Murray was back in New York at the start of this year for the Winter Jazzfest, where a new trio, featuring the pianist **Geri Allen** and the drummer **Terri Lyne Carrington**, found the excitable reeds man in his old element. He brings them to the Blue Note on June 15-17. (131 W. 3rd St.) Every inch of the long, strange trip of **Ginger Baker's** career (captured in the 2012 documentary "Beware of Mr. Baker") is etched on the drummer's face, but at seventy-five years old the irascible icon can still propel a band with vigor and invention. Baker's flinty jazz quartet includes the Ghanaian percussionist **Abass Doodoo**, and the African influence that has always underpinned the drummer's style is more pronounced than ever. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, 237 W. 42nd St. June 17-18.) **Abdullah Ibrahim**, a transfixing pianist in any musical situation, takes his art to loftier levels when he calls his ensemble Ekaya to order. Blending beguiling South African rhythms with rich Ellingtonian textures, Ekaya reflects the dual identities of its leader. (Blue Note. June 18-21.) (For more information, visit [bluenotejazzfestival.com](http://bluenotejazzfestival.com). Through June 30.)

### Clayton Brothers

Two generations of Claytons—the saxophonist Jeff; his brother, the bassist John; and John's son, the pianist Gerald—form the phalanx of a popular hard-bop quintet. The stirring trumpeter **Terrell Stafford** and the dependable drummer **Obed**

**Calvaire** round out the group. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. June 18-21.)

### Stanley Cowell

Ubiquitous during the seventies, the pianist and composer Cowell has become an intermittent, and sorely missed, presence ever since. A perceptive modernist who harbors an abiding affection for tradition, Cowell makes a rare appearance at the Village Vanguard, with a quartet featuring the saxophonist **Bruce Williams**, the bassist **Jay Anderson**, and the drummer **Billy Drummond**. (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. June 16-21.)

### Tony Danza

The bad news for Danza is that "Honeymoon in Vegas," the Broadway musical that he was co-starring in, recently closed. The good news is that he gets to hit the cabaret stage again. A self-professed ham whose enthusiasm ends up being irresistible, Danza sings, dances, and jokes his way into your heart. Warning: you have very little say in the matter. He makes his Café Carlyle debut June 16-27. (Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600.)

### Adam Kolker

The sinuous lines of Kolker's tenor saxophone and bass clarinet are expertly positioned in a balanced quartet featuring the guitarist **Steve Cardenas**, the drummer **Billy Mintz**, and the bassist **Drew Gress**. Expect their lyrically minded interaction and spirited jostling to bring Kolker's fine originals, along with a few well-chosen Monk tunes, to life. (Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. June 17.)

### Daryl Sherman

A witty and knowing singer and a sure pianist who has been honing her art since the early seventies, Sherman looks to mostly forgotten giants such as Mildred Bailey to shape her understated but eminently swinging style. She has an authenticity and a confidence that come with experience, allowing her to regularly investigate nooks and crannies of the standard repertoire that are typically left unexplored. (Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. June 18.)



# DANCE

## American Ballet Theatre

Kenneth MacMillan's 1965 "Romeo and Juliet," set to Prokofiev's soaring score, returns for eight performances. MacMillan's street scenes are action-packed; the numerous pas de deux are swoony; the set and costume designs, by Nicholas Georgiadis, bring to mind early Italian Renaissance paintings. The casts vary widely, from the impetuous Gillian Murphy and James Whiteside, in the matinée on June 17, to the almost erotic pairing of Diana Vishneva and Marcelo Gomes, on June 19. Evgenia Obraztsova, a delicate, sprightly dancer for the Bolshoi, will dance with Herman Cornejo on the 18th. Two days later, at the matinée, Misty Copeland—recently named one of *Time's* most influential people—will dance her first Juliet. That evening, Julie Kent, a twenty-nine-year veteran of the company, will fly into Romeo's arms one last time, in what is sure to be an emotional farewell performance. • June 16 and June 18-19 at 7:30, June 17 at 2 and 7:30, and June 20 at 2 and 8: "Romeo and Juliet." • June 22-23 at 7:30: "Swan Lake." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 4.)

## Polish National Ballet

The company, founded in the late eighteenth century, appears in New York for the first time. Since 2009, it has been led by Krzysztof Pastor, a veteran of the Dutch National Ballet, who has recently favored a contemporary repertory. In its debut at the Joyce, the dancers will perform two works by Pastor, both moodily lit, sleek, and fast-paced, as well as Emanuel Gat's 2004 "Rite of Spring," in which the Israeli-born choreographer pairs Stravinsky's raucous score with the scrolling, fluid partnering of salsa dancing. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. June 16-21.)

## Hudson River Dance Festival

This new, free dance festival takes place on a stage at Pier 63 in Hudson River Park, next to Chelsea Piers. In its inaugural season, it presents an appealing mixed program that includes the Paul Taylor Dance Company, performing Taylor's wartime classic "Company B"; "Nascimento," a crowd-pleasing samba medley by Parsons Dance; and "Sombrierísimo," a high-spirited romp danced by the men of Ballet Hispánico. (June 17-18.)

## Keely Garfield

Garfield is a true eccentric whose highly theatrical dances can be bizarre, hilarious, and stealthily profound, either in quick succession or all at once. She follows last year's "Wow," a sly and captivating take on the strangeness and sincerity of Kate Bush, with "Pow," which reconfigures material from earlier Garfield works, focussing on stories about monsters and angels. The singer-songwriter Matthew Brookshire, an essential ingredient in recent Garfield magic, joins the

fun again. (Roulette, 509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. 917-267-0368. June 17-19.)

## New York Theatre Ballet

At the start of 2014, the future looked dire for this beloved chamber troupe, whose headquarters of thirty years had been sold from under it. Fairly soon, though, a new home was found, on the second floor of St. Mark's Church. The program for the company's first performances in the sanctuary downstairs is a characteristic mix: premières by David Parker and Gemma Bond, a meditative Chopin piece by Richard Alston ("Such Longing"), Frederick Ashton's earliest surviving ballet ("Capriol Suite"), and a company specialty, Antony Tudor's brooding "Dark Elegies." (Dancepace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. June 18-20.)

## Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company

"Analogy/Dora: Tramontane" is based on an oral-history interview with Dora Amelan, a French-Jewish woman who was eighteen in 1940, when Germany invaded her home country of Belgium. The work transforms her story of survival into episodes of speech and dance, accompanied by wartime songs and Schubert lieder. A seaside resort, railway stations, and internment camps are indicated by flexible sets, which are the contribution of Amelan's son Bjorn, Jones's longtime artistic collaborator and new husband. (Alexander Kasser Theatre, 1 Normal Ave., Montclair, N.J. 973-655-5112. June 18-21.)

## "River to River"

As part of the free outdoor festival, Twyla Tharp's ensemble will perform "The One Hundreds" (1970), a work from the choreographer's cheeky experimental phase. (The performance takes place at Nelson A. Rockefeller Park, in the Battery.) The dance is part endurance test and part tongue twister, built out of a series of a hundred simple vernacular phrases that are performed—first in sequence, then all at once—by groups of two, five, and a hundred people. Other works include a site-specific suite of Trisha Brown dances performed by the Trisha Brown Dance Company, at Wagner Park, and Souleyman Badolo's loosely autobiographical solo "Dance My Life," at Pier 15. (rivertorivernyc.com. June 18-23. Through June 28.)

## Celebrate Brooklyn!

The free festival's dance offerings kick off capoeira-style with the topsy-turvy acrobatics and high energy of DanceBrazil. The program, which the troupe will repeat at the Joyce the following week, features the new "Malungos," a celebration of solidarity among African slaves, along with last year's "Gueto." The band Forro in the Dark opens the show with an infectious update of rural party music from northeastern Brazil. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-683-5600. June 20.)

## The Royal Ballet

After an eleven-year absence, the British troupe returns for a week-long run at the Koch Theatre. The works are all by British choreographers: Frederick Ashton, Kenneth MacMillan, Wayne McGregor, and Liam Scarlett among them. Ashton's "The Dream," based on Shakespeare's midsummer comedy, will be paired with MacMillan's elegiac, spare 1965 work "Song of the Earth." On the second program, Scarlett's "Age of Anxiety," set in nineteen-forties New York City, shares a bill with "Infra," an immersive spectacle by McGregor. (Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. June 23. Through June 28.)

**Late 20th Century Signed Earrings**  
(18k Yellow Gold)



Diamond flowers by Van Cleef & Arpels \$18,500

Green enamel frogs with cabochon ruby eyes by David Webb \$8,500

SHOWN ACTUAL SIZE

Diamond "fireworks" by Tiffany & Co. \$10,500

**FIRESTONE AND PARSON**  
30 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116  
(617) 266-1858 • www.firestoneandparson.com

**New Yorker Cartoon Prints**

Find your favorite at  
**NewYorkerStore.com**



SPRING TRAINING

Peter Steiner. Published April 4, 1988

**NewYorkerStore.com**



# THE THEATRE

**ALSO NOTABLE**  
**AN ACT OF GOD**  
Studio 54

**AN AMERICAN IN PARIS**  
Palace

**THE AUDIENCE**  
Schoenfeld

**THE CURIOUS INCIDENT  
OF THE DOG IN THE  
NIGHT-TIME**  
Ethel Barrymore

**FINDING NEVERLAND**  
Lunt-Fontanne

**FISH IN THE DARK**  
Cort

**THE FLICK**  
Barrow Street Theatre

**FUN HOME**  
Circle in the Square

**GHOST STORIES**  
Atlantic Stage 2

**GIGI**  
Neil Simon. Through June 21.

**GLORIA**  
Vineyard

**HAND TO GOD**  
Booth

**HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY  
INCH**  
Belasco

**IT SHOULD BEEN YOU**  
Brooks Atkinson

**THE KING AND I**  
Vivian Beaumont

**ON THE TOWN**  
Lyric

**ON THE TWENTIETH  
CENTURY**  
American Airlines Theatre

**THE QUALMS**  
Playwrights Horizons

**SKYLIGHT**  
Golden. Through June 21.

**SOMETHING ROTTEN!**  
St. James

**THE SOUND AND THE FURY**  
Public

**THE SPOILS**  
Pershing Square Signature  
Center

**THE TEMPEST**  
Delacorte

**THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
WAY**  
Rattlestick

**THE WAY WE GET BY**  
Second Stage. Through  
June 21.

**WOLF HALL: PARTS ONE  
& TWO**  
Winter Garden

## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### Doctor Faustus

Chris Noth stars in Christopher Marlowe's tale of a man who sells his soul to the Devil, directed by Andrei Belgrader. In previews. Opens June 18. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)

### Of Good Stock

Manhattan Theatre Club's Lynne Meadow directs a play by Melissa Ross, in which a novelist's three grown daughters (Heather Lind, Jennifer Mudge, and Alicia Silverstone) reunite at their family home on Cape Cod. In previews. (City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### Preludes

LCT3 presents a new musical from Dave Malloy and Rachel Chavkin, the writer-director team behind "Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812," in which the composer Sergei Rachmaninoff sees a hypnotist after the ill-fated premiere of his first symphony. In previews. Opens June 15. (Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Shows for Days

A new play by Douglas Carter Beane ("The Little Dog Laughed") traces the playwright's early experiences in community theatre, at a small Pennsylvania playhouse filled with big personalities. Patti LuPone and Michael Urie star in Jerry Zaks's production. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Significant Other

The Roundabout stages a new play by Joshua Harmon ("Bad Jews"), directed by Trip Cullman, about a young gay urbanite searching for love as his female friends begin to settle down. In previews. Opens June 18. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

## NOW PLAYING

### ANT Fest 2015

Highlights of the annual showcase for rising talents include Skylar Fox and Simon Henriques's play with animation, "The Retardedly Boring Misadventures of Apathy Boy"; Emilyn Kowaleski's musical docudrama, "Eversion (or that time my heart flew out of my mouth)"; and a recording of the podcast "People Doing Math LIVE!" (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101.)

### Composition . . . Master-Pieces . . . Identity

The actor David Greenspan has never required much in the way of costumes, sets, or props. In this hypnotic, soporific Target Margin piece, drawn from an essay, a lecture, and a poem by Gertrude Stein, he begins in normal dress, with only a chair and a water bottle. Eventually, he gets a desk. Who needs grand appurtenances when you have Stein's dizzying, dazzling, exhausting prose

at hand? Like James Joyce, Stein benefits from being heard aloud, and Greenspan, his voice like a wonky flute, is an orator of unusual intelligence and precision. He brings a tremendous focus and specificity to even the most recursive passages: "When I am I am I I." But, despite Greenspan's talents, the words and themes loop back and around like a string of slippery pearls, and there's no untangling them. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101.)

### Guards at the Taj

In Rajiv Joseph's acerbic two-character piece, a buddy play (think "Godot" with scimitars) takes a gory turn. Legend has it that, as soon as the Taj Mahal was completed, Shah Jahan ordered its thousands of builders beheaded, so that they could never shape such beauty again. The play fixes on the two imperial guards who do the chopping. (Well, one chops, one cauterizes.) Joseph, who has an Indian father and an American mother, is a spirited tale spinner with a postcolonial bent. But, as in previous plays ("Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo," "Gruesome Playground Injuries"), he piles on the catastrophe in ways that feel sometimes inevitable and sometimes forced. Though the emotional and narrative swerves often seem unmerited, Arian Moayed is excellent as Babur and Omar Metwally inspired as Humayun, under the sympathetic direction of Amy Morton. Give them a hand. (Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111.)

### Heisenberg

Simon Stephens's new play, directed by Mark Brokaw for Manhattan Theatre Club, takes its inspiration from Werner Heisenberg's famous uncertainty principle. Crudely put: imprecision is inevitable when you attempt to determine the position and momentum of a volatile entity such as a subatomic particle—or a human life. In this skeptical spirit, Stephens stages a romance on shifting ground. Two strangers meet strangely in a train station. Unexpectedly, Georgie (Mary-Louise Parker) kisses Alex (Denis Arndt) on the neck. They begin a tentative affair, but soon actions belie intentions, and backstories change. Subtly skewing perspectives, the play offers more questions than answers: Is she conning him? Does he love her? Does it matter? Stephens suggests that any relationship's meaning lies in what people do for (and to) each other; our minds change too much, and too often, to take solace in fixed points. (City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

### A Human Being Died That Night

Unnerving, enthralling, and humane, this drama from South Africa's Fugard Theatre adapts a book by the black psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. While serving on South

Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Gobodo-Madikizela conducted a series of interviews with Eugene de Kock, a white former police colonel so notorious for torture that he earned the nickname Prime Evil. Nicholas Wright condenses these conversations to a breathless eighty minutes, as Pumla (Noma Dumezweni) attempts to understand Eugene (Matthew Marsh) as both monster and man. For much of this superbly acted play, they simply sit opposite each other at a table in a cell. Yet their conversation takes us far away, across borders both national and ethical, to situations that are impossibly terrible—all the more so because they are true. There are plenty of shocks in this play, but its compassion may be the greatest of all. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Through June 21.)

### The Old Masters

In the central role of Sam Marks's sharply detailed play, Ben (Rory Kulz) undergoes an amazing onstage transformation. We first see him as an art teacher who is settling down, looking at some paintings by an old friend, Henry, now disappeared, that Henry's partner, Lara (Adelind Horan), has brought over for him to examine. When the paintings cause a critical and financial stir, Ben begins to obsess about his own abandoned career and his future with his pregnant wife, Olive (Alesandra Nahodil). The character morphs before our eyes into a scheming, sweating art monster. Marks's naturalistic dialogue, as delivered by the fine actors, under the rhythmic direction of Brandon Stock, has much to say about responsibility, disappointment, envy, and desire. A domestic drama turns unexpectedly into a kind of horror story. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

### 10 out of 12

Anyone who's ever been involved with the theatre knows the dull terror of tech rehearsals. Delays are endless; excruciating boredom reigns; fights break out of nowhere. The tirelessly inventive Anne Washburn ("Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play") has turned the drudgery into drama, or anti-drama. We're at tech rehearsals for a play, some kind of Victorian-style melodrama with demons, watching the lighting designer fidget with cues and the actors second-guess their costumes. The audience wears headsets, allowing them to overhear the stagehands bantering about sandwiches or casually undermining the director (Bruce McKenzie). Washburn finds droll humor and a surreal, postmodern beauty in the banal side of playmaking. Les Waters directs an expert fourteen-person cast, including Quincy Tyler Bernstine as the unflappable stage manager, Sue Jean Kim as an oddball ingénue, and Thomas Jay Ryan as a hot-headed thespian. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-352-3101.)

# ART

## MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

### METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"Navigating the West: George Caleb Bingham and the River." Opens June 17.

### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"One-Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North." Through Sept. 7.

### GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim." Through Sept. 9.

### WHITNEY MUSEUM

"America Is Hard to See." Through Sept. 27.

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Basquiat: The Unknown Notebooks." Through Aug. 23.

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Museum of Modern Art

#### "Gilbert & George: The Early Years"

"To be with art is all we ask," the British duo wrote, in 1970: just existing, as self-declared living sculptures, was enough work for one life, or two. This show, drawn from MOMA's permanent collection, gathers the first-person-plural experiments of Gilbert & George (born Gilbert Proesch and George Passmore) in a variety of media, from mail art and interventions in magazines to large charcoal drawings and videos of early performances, one of which finds the pair getting plastered on gin while Grieg's "Morning Mood" plays in the background. The artists

could be too deadpan for their own good, and their music-hall irony can be grating, yet Gilbert & George were, and remain, more than mere jokers. They met at art school in 1967—the same year the British parliament passed the Sexual Offences Act, which decriminalized homosexuality. Whether Gilbert & George are seen posing in Cecil Beaton's studio or preening on the south bank of the Thames (a famous cruising spot), they convey the particular power of being "two people, but one artist" when both of those people are gay. Through Sept. 27.

### Morgan Library and Museum

#### "Hidden Likeness: Photographer Emmet Gowin at the Morgan"

Given the run of the museum's archives, the American photographer has assembled a sensitive, occasionally revelatory exhibition that juxtaposes his own work with illuminated manuscripts, Beethoven's sheet music, vintage postage stamps, and pieces by Botticelli, Degas, Doré, and Mondrian. Gow-

in's pictures—including the lovely, probing portraits of his wife and his children for which he's best known—form the heart of the show; their variety and intelligence are all the more striking when viewed in this unorthodox context. Some pairings unite similar subjects: a landscape seen through the dark oculus of a vine-covered bower hangs next to a rococo floral drawing, a study for a carved wall panel. But, more often, the connections here are less obvious, conveying a soulful vision of body, spirit, and nature as one. Through Sept. 20.

### New Museum

#### "The Great Ephemeral"

At this year's Venice Biennale, performers are reciting Marx's "Capital" every day; in a video here, by the Brooklyn artist Chelsea Knight, the preferred reading material is "Atlas Shrugged." Knight assembled a crew of Tea Partiers, Ayn Rand obsessives, and the like into an improvised dance troupe, in which Sarah Palin ventriloquism and twitchy choreography intermingles with the participants' stunningly selfish



COURTESY PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

Tina Barney (who has contributed to this magazine) is best known as an ethnographer of her own habitat: the WASPY enclaves of Manhattan's Upper East Side and Watch Hill, Rhode Island. "Mark, Amy, and Tara" (from 1983, above) is part of a four-decade survey at the Paul Kasmin gallery, through June 20.

assertions. (“Solidarity is not a virtue,” one says. “Neither is unity.”) Knight’s two-channel video is the strongest work in this diffuse but admirable meditation on economic inequality, which also includes Joel Holmberg’s phone call to a customer-service agent to devise a secure password, and a slide show of Yao Jui-Chung’s rigorous black-and-white photographs of abandoned real estate in Taiwan. (He is one of numerous Taiwanese artists included here; the show is co-organized by the Taipei Contemporary Art Center.) Through Sept. 6.

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Candida Höfer

The German photographer, one of the few women to come out of Bernd and Hilla Becher’s influential Düsseldorf School, interrupts her ongoing series of elaborately decorated interiors (libraries, churches, opera houses) to focus on much sparer spaces. Returning to Düsseldorf, she investigated modern and minimal architecture, capturing empty galleries and the underside of a spiralling stairway that verges on abstraction—it seems to have been carved out of negative space. (That image is all the more remarkable for the fact that Höfer does not manipulate what the camera sees.) Elsewhere, Höfer zeroes in on sensual details (a reflective wall, a pink rug), focussing on parts, instead of her signature sweeping views of the whole. Through June 20. (Sean Kelly, 475 Tenth Ave., at 36th St. 212-239-1181.)

### Marcel Odenbach

The German artist, best known for his videos, has lately been making

large collages that fuse provocative, historically freighted images into historically unspectacular scenes. Look closely at his images of trash-strewn gardens, and you’ll see Nelson Mandela and Pope Benedict, protesters, footballers, and starlets; recent covers of *Charlie Hebdo* find their way into a collage of dripping overalls; large Ghanaian seed pods have been papered with Brecht, Brandt, and the King of Pop. (Odenbach lives part time in Ghana.) Odenbach’s collages work best when their constituent elements are untethered to context; when the components are too in synch with the over-all image, as in a massive portrait of Tupac Shakur made up, in part, of American civil-rights imagery, the effect risks coming off as essentialist. Through July 3. (Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663.)

### Lorraine O’Grady

Before she began crashing lily-white gallery openings in the character of a débutante named Mlle. Bourgeoise Noire, in the early eighties, O’Grady worked as an intelligence officer. That job informs the disjunctive cut-up poetry on display here, composed in 1977 and consisting of headlines and ads from the *Times*. (“An Area of Darkness / Dream Still Eludes,” one sheet reads. “Demonic Children / A Pair / Of Voyagers / To the Precipice / Is It Déjà Vu?”) A performance she staged in 1982, documented in four dozen oneiric color photographs, intermingles O’Grady’s familial history and her art-world frustrations. As the artist’s alter egos dance with characters representing art snobs and black

male artists, the gap between the personal and the political disappears. Through June 27. (Gray, 508 W. 26th St. 212-399-2636.)

### Lucas Samaras

At the center of the protean New York artist’s latest show is a recent iteration of his room-sized mirrored cubes, this one sheltered under a large mirrored arch that also reflects the photographs that line the walls. The images are all self-portraits, the largest staring down like gargoyles from high on the wall. At seventy-nine, with his long white hair and beard, Samaras looks like a wizard or like Lear at his maddest. He presides over a roomful of angled vitrines displaying some seven hundred portraits and self-portraits—an obsessive, digitally altered scrapbook recapitulating his life as a psychedelic fantasia. Reflected an infinitum, Samaras is his own most malleable material, but the show feels claustrophobic, like a room with no exit in sight. Through June 27. (Pace, 510 W. 25th St. 212-255-4044.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

### Huma Bhabha

The exceedingly talented Pakistani-born sculptor, now based in the Hudson Valley, presents a few new works in three dimensions, notably a pseudo-tribal totem in patinated bronze. The figure’s eyes and breasts are ringed with yellow, and her head is wound with a bicycle chain that suggests both a hijab and a noose. But this two-part show (which continues at 1 Freeman Alley) concentrates on

the artist’s works on paper. Large drawings, spare and mostly abstract, are the least interesting, and the incorporation of footprints and studio debris does little to make a case for their grandiose scale. The smaller, more colorful drawings of heads, however, are outstanding: uncanny human-canine hybrids, whose weight and woe recall the shaggiest of Jean Dubuffet’s outsiders. Through June 28. (Salon 94 Bowery, 243 Bowery, at Stanton St. 212-979-0001.)

### Tabor Robak

In a quartet of works completed this year, the twenty-seven-year-old digital wizard emerges as a new star, pushing the time-honored format of wall-mounted pictures in strange and ravishing new directions. (Jeremy Blake’s computer-animated paintings are touchstones, but quaint by comparison.) The showstopper is “Where’s My Water,” a twelve-foot-tall grid of a dozen screens, across which plays a strange dance of containers (coffee mugs, pen holders, tumblers) and the objects that fill them (Sharpies, kitchen spoons, toothbrushes). Here, a familiar Pop Art formula—everyday object plus eye-popping color—is complicated by moments of Surrealism gone Silicon Valley (Apple’s screensaver ladybug ascends a blade of grass). In the back room, a hundred palm-sized LCD monitors house as many artificial life-forms, equal parts machine and mitochondrion. It suggests a sci-fi aquarium, incubating the alien kin of the typologies of Ernst Haeckel. Through June 21. (Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND

### “The Big Quiet”

Central Park’s SummerStage, usually the site of ear-rattling music and cheering crowds this time of year, is the setting for what the organizers of the annual concert series are calling “a twenty-minute, practice-agnostic moment of mass meditation and calm for all ages and experience levels.” There will be bleachers, but attendees are welcome to bring their own mats. (Rumsey Playfield, Central Park, mid-Park at 69th St. bigquiet.nyc. June 20, with entry at 4:30; the mediation starts at 5.)

### “Make Music New York”

The day after the Big Quiet, locals are encouraged to sing out at this annual event, which takes place in all five boroughs. Marking the start of summer with more than twelve

hundred concerts, the gathering includes a pickup truck outfitted with electronic pianos and players belting out Sinatra favorites, in honor of Ol’ Blue Eyes’s hundredth birthday. The so-called roving Sinatra karaoke piano bar will be making stops at noted Sinatra hangouts and at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, where there’s an exhibit devoted to the singer. There will also be “Pop-Up Musicals” around town featuring performers, travelling in U-Haul trucks, schooled in the Great American Songbook; bluegrass on Governors Island; and “Concerto for Buildings,” in which the hollow cast-iron façades that give SoHo its charm are transformed into instruments by mallet-wielding percussionists. (Also see Classical.) (For more

information, visit makemusicny.org. June 21.)

### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

As the auction houses wind down for the summer, **Sotheby’s** presents a final spring sale of manuscripts and Americana (June 19). The lots include an early broadside copy of the Declaration of Independence, pages from a draft of George Washington’s first Inaugural Ad-

### READINGS AND TALKS

#### Barnes & Noble

The works of the fiction writers Mia Alvar, Boris Fishman, and Sara Nović all involve dislocation and trauma. On June 18 at 7, they gather to discuss the notion of diasporas. (Broadway at 82nd St. 212-362-8835.)

#### Word

The novelist Kate Walbert reads from her new book, “The Sunken Cathedral.” (126 Franklin St., Brooklyn. 718-383-0096. June 22 at 7.)



**TABLES FOR TWO**

## GAIA ITALIAN CAFÉ

251 E. Houston St. (646-350-3977)

**FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS**, while the cost of a high-end tasting menu shot up as fast as the city's pencil towers, the Milan native Gaia Bagnasacco has been preparing authentic Italian food at bargain prices not seen since the nineteen-nineties. On an unremarkable graffiti- and scaffolding-covered stretch of East Houston Street, her eponymous basement-level B.Y.O.B. café is a true "hidden gem," straight out of "Let's Go: New York City."

From the signs for free Wi-Fi to the red plastic water tumblers and the vitrine tables overflowing with magazines, the café feels like the communal space of a youth hostel. One Saturday evening, a woman wondered aloud how she would be able to enjoy her meal with the severe face of Ruth Bader Ginsburg staring back at her from the cover of *Time*. Soon enough, the table was overtaken by a platter of parchment-thin bresaola carpaccio and an umami bomb of rich, creamy burrata cheese mixed with sautéed mushrooms and enough fresh parsley to qualify as a side salad. Nearly every dish at Gaia comes with plastic serving spoons and a crumpled foil trough full of freshly house-baked focaccia soldiers. The same bread, cracker-thin and lightly toasted, is also used for scandalously cheap five-dollar panini, piled high with wide ribbons of mortadella, prosciutto, or speck.

Hot dishes and pastas arrive briskly, in aluminum pots reminiscent of a cheap camping-stove setup, belying their bona fides. One night, two types of ravioli were sublimely al dente: spinach and ricotta with bacon, in tomato sauce, and walnut, stuffed with sweet mascarpone and strands of radicchio sliced as thin as saffron threads. But it was the fresh-made tagliatelle, in a spicy tomato sauce with clams, shrimp, octopus, and eggplant, that commanded seconds and thirds. Bagnasacco's oven-baked dishes satisfy cravings for simple, homemade food, such as meatballs and potatoes generously dusted with Parmesan crumbles. The only misses on the menu—beans with sausage, cabbage salad—involve too much of what tastes suspiciously like Frank's RedHot.

Bagnasacco controls every last detail about her café, from the early kitchen closings (at seven Tuesdays through Thursdays and eight on Fridays) to the language on the menu ("Fruit juices are delicious," "Let's try if you like them"). She is strict but fair (reservations are required after five o'clock), and famously defensive on her own Yelp page ("Where are the educated customers?"). She appreciates courtesy, and may send you home with cookies and Nutella pastries; if your manners are lacking, she may chide you. One night, she told a lingering group, "Don't get too comfortable, we are closing soon." The café is less a restaurant than Bagnasacco's kitchen, and she rightly commands your respect.

—Silvia Killingsworth

Open Mondays through Saturdays for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées \$5-\$15.



## FOOD & DRINK

**BAR TAB JUST LORRAINE'S PLACE**

2247 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Blvd. (212-234-0720)

North of Neil Patrick Harris's new brownstone, Minton's Playhouse, and the Red Rooster, Lorraine Drayton has served what one customer calls "the cheapest drinks in Harlem" for the past five years, with the help of her sisters Susie and Cheryl. "It's pure family," Charlie, a local with a red feather in his fedora, explained one night. Most evenings, a crowd of familiar faces congregates at the long bar, helping themselves to trays of collard greens, mac and cheese, and fried chicken from a counter in the back, and tapping their feet to "Take the A Train" (though the 2 and 3 are closer). Lorraine's is usually crowded and boisterous when Knicks games are on, though everyone was a little muted in the face of this past season's performance. The bar is often sprinkled with self-conscious new settlers, but the congregation of fortysomething regulars remains the soul of the place. The younger folks prefer Cîroc and Patrón. The older generation like their drinks strong and simple: a whiskey-and-soda means a double. The other night, four bottles of Moët were arrayed on the counter for a birthday, next to a pack of cinnamon-raisin bagels. Susie fondly recalled the day Lorraine's got its liquor license, cementing it as a Harlem institution: "We had to wait six months because there was a church on the block. Now that church is gone."

—Nicolas Niarchos



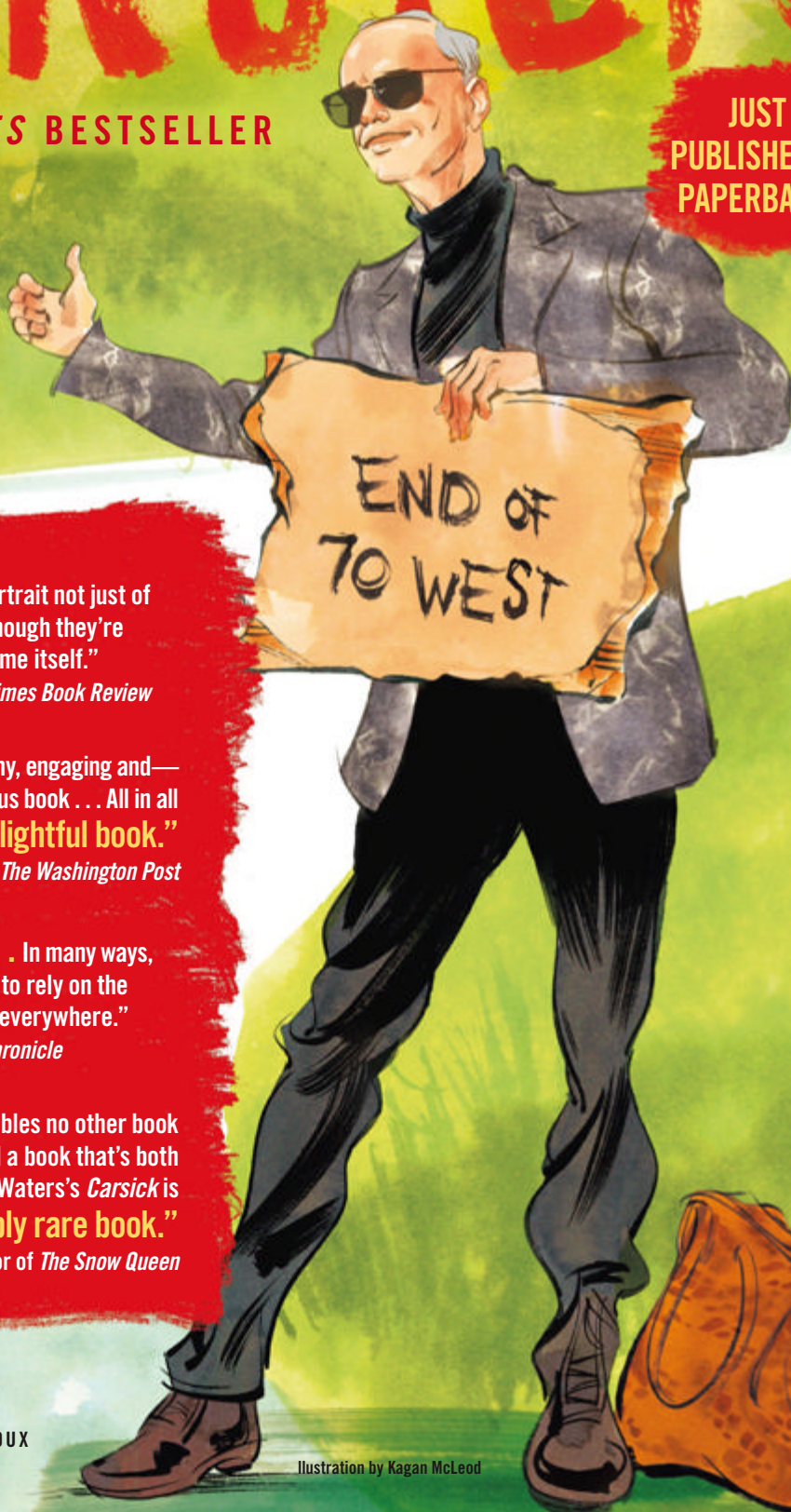
ILLUSTRATION BY JEANNIE PHAN

# CARSICK

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

JUST  
PUBLISHED IN  
PAPERBACK!

Hitch a ride  
coast-to-coast with  
**JOHN WATERS**  
this summer



**“Fantastical and plush . . .** A portrait not just of America’s desolate freeway nodes—though they’re brilliantly evoked—but of American fame itself.”

—LAWRENCE OSBORNE, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Waters has made a funny, engaging and—of course—occasionally outrageous book . . . All in all **a cool trip and a delightful book.**”

—JONATHAN YARDLEY, *The Washington Post*

**“Good, dirty, subversive fun . . .** In many ways, [Waters is] an innocent . . . He also has to rely on the kindness of strangers, and he finds it everywhere.”

—GEOFF NICHOLSON, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“It’s rare to find a book that resembles no other book you’ve ever read. It’s rare to find a book that’s both funny and profound. John Waters’s *Carsick* is **a doubly rare book.**”

—MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM, author of *The Snow Queen*



Also available from Macmillan Audio

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX  
[www.fsgbooks.com](http://www.fsgbooks.com)

Illustration by Kagan McLeod



## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT COMING TO TERMS

Back in the summer of 2009, President Barack Obama went to Ghana and gave Africans a lecture about democracy, in which he paid tribute to determined voters across the continent who shared his enthusiasm for choosing their own leaders. “History is on the side of these brave Africans,” Obama said, “not with those who use coups or change constitutions to stay in power. Africa doesn’t need strongmen. It needs strong institutions.” These were strong slogans, but history’s allegiances are rarely so unmistakable.

What side is history on, for instance, in a country that has no sustained experience of democracy, if the only choice is between those who use coups and others who use coups? And what if one of those coup-using sides opposes the other because the other is trying to change the constitution to stay in power? That’s what happened last October in Burkina Faso, a former French colony next door to Ghana, where each of the first five heads of government after independence was overthrown, and the sixth, Blaise Compaoré, having bumped off his predecessor, had clung to power for twenty-seven years, and didn’t want to let go of it. The law said that Compaoré’s time was up in 2015, so he moved to change the law, but the people weren’t having it. For four days, the streets of Ouagadougou, the capital, filled with protesters, and on the fourth day—after some of them torched the parliament building and others occupied the national TV station, and the airport was declared closed—Compaoré drove into exile, and the military seized power, dissolving his government and promising national elections before long.

The alignment of the military with “people power” in Ouagadougou was generally hailed across Africa, and abroad, as good news: sure, it was yet another coup in Burkina Faso, but it was, just maybe, a coup for democracy. And see-

ing Compaoré fall inspired citizens elsewhere on the continent to defy other Presidents who were maneuvering to outstay their constitutional welcomes. In January, there were scenes of mayhem in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, after President Joseph Kabila proposed a law that would require a complete census before the next national election, a scheme that could keep him in power for years. Kabila is famously indifferent to popular sentiment—his men do crowd control with live ammunition—and at least forty people were killed, in four days, before the protesters withdrew. Kabila finally pulled back, too. He scrapped his proposed census law—as if, at least for the moment, he weren’t sure whose side history was on.

Then, there is Burundi, a country haunted by decades of coups, assassinations, massacres, genocides, and civil war. Twelve years ago, an elaborate peace deal put the country back together, with a new President, the former rebel commander Pierre Nkurunziza. The constitution allowed him two terms, and he liked them so much, apparently, that at the end of April he announced he would run for a third, plunging the country once more into violent political crisis. Some generals attempted a coup, in the Ouagadougou spirit, but loyalist troops defeated them and, with them, any prospect of restoring the hijacked constitutional order. Now Burundi’s economy is in tatters, its independent press has been silenced, dozens of people have been killed by police, and many more have been beaten and terrorized by the youth wing of the President’s party. More than a hundred thousand have fled the country. Nkurunziza doesn’t seem to mind: he says that he is in touch with God, and does as God wishes.

Burkina Faso, Congo, and Burundi are among the world’s poorest, least developed, worst governed countries. Compaoré, Kabila, and Nkurunziza are



corrupt and unaccountable men, more like Mafia godfathers than like public servants, and they hardly bother to pretend otherwise. When they say that they must remain in office, they make no case for what good they'll do, no connection between their interest in power and the public interest.

In Rwanda, meanwhile, baskets and bundles have been arriving at parliament, stuffed with petitions calling on the deputies to amend the constitution so that President Paul Kagame can run for a third term when his current mandate is up, in 2017. More than two million Rwandans (in a country of twelve million) have reportedly signed these petitions, which are the culmination of several years of a relentlessly intensifying campaign by Kagame supporters. They argue that Rwanda owes its many extraordinary transformations since the genocide to his leadership, and that he must stay on if those gains are to be solidified. Kagame maintains that he and his apparatus have nothing to do with this effort, but he has dominated Rwandan political life since 1994, and Rwanda is far from an open society. If he didn't want this third-term campaign, it wouldn't exist.

Still, the only person in Rwanda who regularly and publicly professes not to have made up his mind about a third term for Kagame is Kagame. He says—in a way that recalls Shakespeare's Caesar, repeatedly refusing the crown,

but each time more gently—that he needs to be persuaded of the argument. Yet for many years he insisted that he would step down in 2017. To hold on to power, he said, “would be a failure.” Why is that no longer true? “By design or by default, nothing else has been prepared,” one of his advisers said recently. That's the problem. It's not about term limits—it's a question of mortality. Without a firm idea of succession, the man who is the symbol of stability becomes the symbol of instability.

In Ghana, Obama spoke of the benefits of “peaceful transfers of power even in the wake of closely contested elections,” and said, “This progress may lack the drama of the twentieth century's liberation struggles, but make no mistake: it will ultimately be more significant.” There was plenty of drama in Nigeria recently, when, for the first time in its history, a sitting President, Goodluck Jonathan, was defeated by the leader of the opposition, Muhammadu Buhari, then congratulated him and relinquished power. It's hard to imagine how Jonathan could have better served his country, or shown how far it has come from its desolate decades of military dictatorships and coups. Kagame was right when he used to say that it would be like a mark of success to step down. It is the ultimate act of leadership.

—Philip Gourevitch

## FATHER'S DAY DEPT. HOT TOTS



Last month, Ashton Kutcher took to Twitter to blast news outlets for publishing a paparazzi photo of his infant daughter: “Why is it so hard for publications to respect that I would like the identity of my child kept private for safety reasons?” he asked his seventeen million followers. He joined a growing chorus of similar pleas, spearheaded by the actress Kristen Bell, who last year launched the hashtag #NoKidsPolicy, requesting that publications respect the privacy of children who happen to have famous parents. Even Perez Hilton, the blogger who earned fame in the aughts for outing closeted celebrities and for doodling semen and cocaine on paparazzi shots, announced a year ago that he would be adopting a no-kids policy on his Web site, and would henceforth favor images of celebrity offspring that had been taken on the red carpet or had been shared on their parents' social-media pages. “I am humbled and honored to be the father to a one year old son,” Hil-

ton, whose real name is Mario Lavandeira, Jr., wrote on his site at the time. “The #NoKidsPolicy intersects my personal and professional worlds in a very complex way.”

How, then, to respond to a publicist's invitation to join Hilton and his son, Mario Lavandeira III, who turned two in February, on an outing one recent afternoon? Perez and Mario were scheduled to visit “The Wonder of Learning,” an exhibit about the Reggio Emilia progressive educational method, at a preschool in Williamsburg. Where might the ethical boundaries lie in reporting on a toddler who happens to be the child of a celebrity celebrity-watcher?

When Mario, perched on his father's shoulders, extended his hand for a high five, should that have been interpreted as his giving consent to being the subject of an article? Then again, is a two-year-old capable of giving consent, especially a two-year-old who is receptively bilingual—Hilton speaks to Mario in Spanish and English—but remains largely preverbal?

Fortunately, Mario eased the reportorial dilemma: after hugging his father's leg a few times, he absented himself from the conversation, choosing to sit under a draped canopy in a corner of the room. Hilton, beaming at his son, discussed the

pleasures of fatherhood, which he had achieved with the help of an egg donor and a surrogate. “You don't know what your child is going to be like until you meet him,” Hilton said. “I was expecting a Mini-Me, and he's definitely not that. Well, maybe in appearance he is”—young Mario has an enviable pompadour—“but I was definitely super hyper, and he is very mellow and chill. The universe gave me the yin to my yang.” Mario recently became a big brother: Perez's daughter, Mia Alma, was born on May 9th.

Hilton moved from L.A. to New York to raise Mario. “My favorite thing to do in the city is to go and see shows—we have seen the circus three times, the Gazillion Bubble Show, the ‘Radio City Christmas Spectacular,’” he said. “I will take him to all those adult museums that are more for tourists—Madame Tussauds, Ripley's Believe It or Not!” Mario, having moved to the block area, tossed an isosceles triangle in the direction of his father. “He's definitely in a throwy stage,” Hilton said. “But he's over his opening-and-closing-doors-and-cabinets stage.”

Hilton went on, “When I was young, my dad and mom used to let me watch TV all the time. I don't let him watch any. I wasn't a physical kid, I would never play outside. That's why we go to the playground every day, and we go to the

**"THE WRIGHT BROTHERS SOARS."\***

The story of two courageous brothers from Ohio who dared to fly and changed the world.

**#1**  
NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLER

"Mr. McCullough is in his element writing about seemingly ordinary folk steeped in the cardinal American virtues—self-reliance and can-do resourcefulness."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

"A story of timeless importance, told with uncommon empathy and fluency."

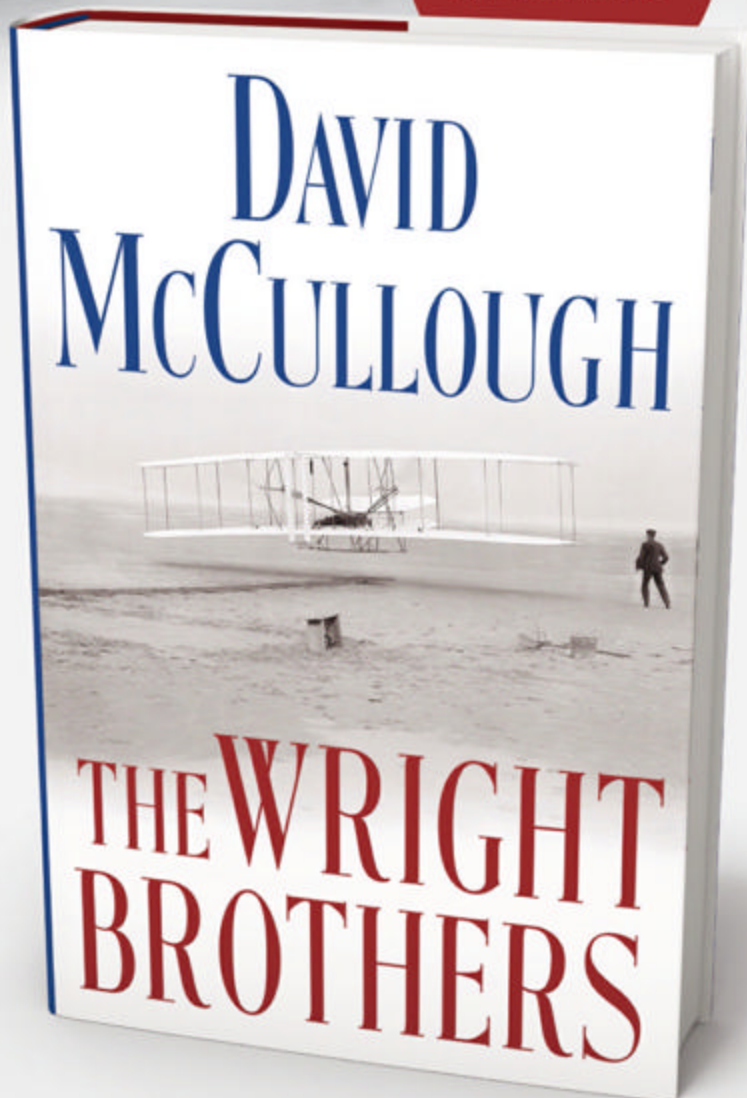
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Superb...Shows as never before how two Ohio boys from a remarkable family taught the world to fly."

—*The Washington Post*

"Brings the two brothers to life."

—*The Columbus Dispatch*



Available in hardcover, ebook, and audiobook editions.

Visit [DavidMcCullough.com](http://DavidMcCullough.com)

 [DavidMcCullough](https://www.facebook.com/DavidMcCullough)

 **SIMON & SCHUSTER**  
A CBS COMPANY

baby gym twice a week.” Mario wandered off and began pressing the keys on a laptop that was projecting slides of New York on a wall. He has no access to a computer at home, Hilton said. “Nor an iPad. A lot of kids his age do. When they say in school he should have one, that is when I will give it to him.”

Hilton has prepared his son for the future in other ways: he has already equipped him with a pseudonym. “At first, it was Perez Junior, but now I call him J.R., because ‘Perez Junior’ sounded stupid as time went on,” Hilton explained. “But his real name is not J.R. I wanted, even at this young age, to educate him about the difference between public and private life. So he’s publicly known as J.R. That’s the hashtag.”

Before heading home for Mario’s 7:15 P.M. bedtime, Hilton described a recent occasion when Mario had, for the first time, asserted a strong difference of opinion with his father. In observation of the separation between public and private lives, the anecdote will not be recounted here. Suffice it to say that it included the phrase “We just make it a fun game and a party—a potty party.”

—Rebecca Mead

## HERE TO THERE DEPT. HUT!



Hokule’a is a sixty-two-foot-long double-hulled canoe, a working replica of a traditional Polynesian sailing vessel. It was built, in 1975, by the Polynesian Voyaging Society, a group of Hawaiians eager to revive awareness of their indigenous culture and to advance a theory of how humans settled the islands of the Pacific. You might say that Hokule’a is a repudiation of Kon-Tiki: it helped to make the case that the earliest Polynesians came from Southeast Asia, not from Peru. Starting more than three thousand years ago, until the time, roughly, of the Norman Conquest, generations of these explorers, on vessels like Hokule’a, fanned out toward Easter Island and Hawaii. They didn’t just bob like corks from reef to reef, as some theories held. Once set-

led, they traded with each other. Voyaging canoes were their horses, their railroads.

For forty years, Hokule’a has been traversing the high seas, as an emissary and a goad. Last year, it embarked on a three-year circumnavigation of the globe. This week, Hokule’a is off the coast of northern Australia. It should reach New York next summer. Anticipating that, some off-duty crew members were in town the other day to lay the groundwork for what they hope will be a festive landfall.

“We never want to assume that the canoe has value to a place we don’t know,” Nainoa Thompson, the current president of the Voyaging Society, said. Thompson captains a crew and is a master navigator, one of just a handful of adepts in the Polynesian way-finding techniques that have been passed down through the millennia. He learned them from a Micronesian named Mau Piailug, who was the navigator on Hokule’a’s maiden journey, in 1976, from Honolulu to Tahiti. (Thompson was on the crew for the return trip.) One relies not on compasses or charts but on observations of stars, waves, clouds, currents, wind, fish, and birds. No sextant. Just hand. The taste of the sea can be a sign.

In Manhattan, Thompson and his mates, after a day of meetings, were itching to get on the water, to scout the harbor and check out possible moorings. They met up at 6:30 P.M., at the Pier 66 Boathouse, in midtown, and headed out for a sunset paddle in a pair of Hawaiian-style canoes, forty-five feet long and made of fiberglass, with outriggers (*ama*) connected by spars (*iako*). The boats skimmed out into the current. In one, a man and five women; in the other, five men, including Thompson. Lithe and shy, with short gray hair, he still has, at sixty-two, a trace of the rosy ocean sylph you see in photographs from his early days aboard Hokule’a.

“It’s very different here,” Thompson said, on the Hudson. “Different tidal range, different currents, colder water.” The harbor was a bedlam of gulls and boats. Brent Beck, a haole from Oahu and the head of New York Outrigger, the provider of these boats, steered from the stern and pointed out landmarks: garbage-transfer station, tunnel vent. “Where did that pilot crash-land the plane?” Thompson asked. Jon Miller, a

Delta pilot who’d paddled over by kayak from Hoboken to join the group, pointed north. Unmenacing flotsam drifted past. Foam baseball bat, soccer ball, scrunchie.

“Navigation signs,” Thompson said.

“What do they tell us?” a fellow-paddler, a native of these islands, asked.

“That this is New York,” Miller said.

The headwind was light, the upriver current stiff. Justin Gurney, in the bow, set the cadence. Every fifteen strokes or so, Miller called out “Hut!” and after the next stroke every paddler switched his paddle to the opposite side. The pace seemed brisk, about forty strokes a minute, but Thompson thought otherwise. “The Tahitians do seventy or eighty strokes per minute,” he said. “They dominate us. They motor. There’s never any slack.”

The women’s boat had decided to go for Liberty Island. “Statue, statue, statue,” they chanted. The men’s crew was skeptical but tried to keep up. After a while, the canoes, with navigation lights on the *iakos*, were far out in the harbor. The Colgate clock over in Jersey City read eight-twenty. Sunset: the contrails gleamed. The Hawaiians have a way of describing a landmass on the



Nainoa Thompson

horizon as an island “rising” from the sea. But Liberty Island did not seem to be rising very quickly. On the water, distances are deceptive. It was scary to imagine being out in the middle of the Pacific two thousand years ago.

The canoes turned and headed for home. They flew on the tide, the city sparkling by. Thompson, in the stern, intermittently called out an incantation of encouragement: “Very nice, very nice. Good paddling.” He steered straight in.

—Nick Paumgarten

INK  
ITALIAN HOURS



“Countless times I walked past these windows with the curtains drawn,” Alessandro Cassin said. “It seemed so unlikely that there would be anything behind them anymore.” Cassin is the director of publishing for Centro Primo Levi, which promotes the historical study of Italian Jews. He is from Florence and moved to New York in 1979. He was standing outside a storefront at 30 West Twelfth Street. Gold letters on the window said “S. F. Vanni,” and behind them were pale-blue curtains. Between 1884 and 2004, S. F. Vanni was a bookstore that sold books in Italian. It was also a publisher of books on Italian subjects. “Everyone involved in Italian culture knew the place,” Cassin said.

The building and the store belong to Olga Ragusa, who is in her nineties and lives upstairs. From 1963 to 1992, Ragusa was a member of the Italian Department at Columbia. Her father, Andreas, bought the building from Sante Fortunato Vanni in 1931. When Centro Primo Levi began publishing books, in 2014, Cassin remembered the bookstore and wrote to her to see if she would consider lending the space. What he didn’t realize was that S. F. Vanni was intact behind the curtains. “She had kept it as a sanctuary,” Cassin said. “Until 2003, there were still some orders, and an old man was occasionally here. It was a very slow dying.” On the shelves were sixteen thousand books.

The other morning, Cassin opened the door on carpenters removing a plywood subfloor, and soon Natalia Indrimi, the executive director of Centro Primo Levi, arrived. “Let’s talk from the very beginning,” Cassin said. “Mr. Vanni is from a small town in Sicily. He has the ambition to sell books in America, and in 1884 he opens the store, on West Broadway. About two hundred thousand peasants are arriving from southern Italy, by and large illiterate, and having to convert from agricultural workers to factory and construction workers. They’re not the sort of people who want to buy books.”



*“Do you have five minutes to talk about taking from the rich to give to the poor?”*

“Vanni creates a book,” Indrimi said. “A Sicilian-Italian-English dictionary.”

“But his masterpiece is a construction manual for illiterate people,” Cassin said. “It’s a picture book that teaches peasants to build a straight wall or a roof, or hang a gutter.”

“There is no such thing, so he invents this idea,” Indrimi said.

“He wants to attract newly arrived immigrants,” Cassin continued. “They don’t read, so he also sells postcards, devotional images, calendars, almanacs. He becomes a scrivener, writing letters home for immigrants, insurance claims, legal agreements. So people trust him.”

“And, eventually, they buy his books,” Indrimi said.

“Then we skip to 1931,” Cassin said. “Andreas Ragusa is also Sicilian. He’s sent to America to sell a national Italian encyclopedia. Imagine trying to sell an encyclopedia in 1931—there are lines for soup. Very quickly, this man realized that this was not going to be a business. He bought the bookstore and a printing press and started to publish.”

For a while, Ragusa had a collaborator, Giuseppe Prezzolini, a journalist and teacher. “They created an Italian Book-of-the-Month Club. In 1941, though, when the U.S. entered the war, they had this problem: How are they going to get new books from Italy? The two of them had fought in the First World War. They had little faith in Mussolini or in the Italian Army. In general, Italians are not

good at war. They’re going to lose. Americans are going to make prisoners. What do prisoners do? They make trouble. How do you keep them quiet? Give them books. They presented this argument to the Office of War Information, in Washington. They got money to publish books for prisoners. They contacted the booksellers in the liberated cities. The first books from Italy arrived in America from these forward-thinking men.”

“They were oblivious of the idea that the bookstore should end because of the war,” Indrimi said. “They thought, No, everything continues.”

Last December, a crew began taking each book from the shelves and wiping the dust from it. The front room was painted. Cassin’s arrangement with Ragusa gave the center a lease until May, since extended through July. In the meantime, the store would operate irregularly as a place for readings and book signings.

For the opening, Centro Primo Levi threw a party. Practically every conversation was in Italian. One table had books from Vanni’s store, and another had books published by the center. Cassin gave interviews to Italian reporters. Indrimi took flowers to Olga Ragusa, who was upstairs and not well enough to attend. When Indrimi returned, she said, “This is so strange, that we actually opened this place again. Six months ago, this was just a dream passing by.”

—Alec Wilkinson

## THE FINANCIAL PAGE

### TRADE-AGREEMENT TROUBLES

In 2012, Australia implemented tough anti-tobacco regulations, requiring that all cigarettes be sold in plain, logo-free brown packages dominated by health warnings. Philip Morris Asia filed suit, claiming that this violated its intellectual-property rights and would damage its investments. The company sued Australia in domestic court and lost. But it had another card to play. In 1993, Australia had signed a free-trade agreement with Hong Kong, where Philip Morris Asia is based. That agreement included provisions protecting foreign investors from unfair treatment. So the company sued under that deal, claiming that the new law violated the investor-protection provisions. It asked for the regulations to be discontinued, and for billions in compensation.

The case has yet to be decided, but the concerns it raises help explain President Obama's embarrassing setback last week, when the House failed to give him fast-track authority over one of two big trade agreements that had been envisaged as a key part of his legacy. Both agreements—the Trans-Pacific Partnership, with eleven Asian and Pacific countries, and an agreement with Europe called the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership—include provisions very like the ones at the heart of Australia's fight with Big Tobacco. Known as Investor-State Dispute Settlement (or I.S.D.S.) provisions, they typically allow foreign investors to sue governments when they feel they have not received “fair or equitable treatment,” and to have their cases heard not by a domestic court but by an international arbitration tribunal made up of three lawyers.

These provisions have been opposed by an unusual coalition of progressives and conservatives, who contend that they will let multinationals override government policy, and, as Senator Elizabeth Warren put it, “undermine U.S. sovereignty.” On the other side, the Obama Administration and business groups insist that this is just fear-mongering. They point out that I.S.D.S. provisions have been around for fifty years, that lawsuits under them are rare, and that companies typically don't win them. I.S.D.S., they argue, doesn't limit the ability of governments to regulate but gives foreign investors some redress if they get treated unfairly. That makes them more likely to invest in countries that don't have robust legal systems, which fuels economic growth. In the old days, aggrieved American investors would call on the Navy to protect their interests—thus the phrase “gunboat diplomacy.” How much better that now they just call their lawyers.

But these days signing such agreements is risky for countries. I.S.D.S. lawsuits used to be rare, but they're becoming a growth industry. Nearly a hundred have been filed in the past two years, as against some five hundred in the quarter century before that. Investor protection, previously a sideshow in corporate law, is now a regular part of law-school curricula. “We've also seen an expansion in the types of claims that have been brought,” Lise Johnson, the head of investment law and policy at the Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, told me. I.S.D.S. was originally meant to protect investors against seizure of their assets by foreign governments. Now I.S.D.S. lawsuits go after things like cancelled licenses, unapproved permits, and unwelcome regulations.

This mission creep has been abetted by the fact that the language of I.S.D.S. provisions is often vague. Jason Yackee, a law professor at the University of Wisconsin who specializes in international-investment law, told me, “The rights given to investors are so open-ended and ambiguous that they allow for a lot of creative lawyering.” Canada lost a case where it had rejected, after an environmental study, a proposed mining and marine-terminal project. The country was also sued when Quebec imposed a moratorium on fracking. Germany is in the midst of a \$4.7-billion lawsuit occasioned by its decision to phase out nuclear power. Uruguay is facing a lawsuit from Philip Morris International, much like the one brought against Australia.

There's nothing wrong with domestic courts reviewing government regulations, but outsourcing the responsibility to international tribunals is troubling. “In effect, you're giving these arbitrators the power of review over domestic law and regulation,” Yackee said. However you spin it, it's an infringement on the democratic process. I.S.D.S. advocates insist that companies can sue only to receive compensation, not to roll back regulations, but Johnson said, “When you talk to government officials, it's clear that there is a chilling effect.” After Philip Morris Asia sued Australia, New Zealand delayed similar regulations.

Furthermore, studies suggest that I.S.D.S. has little impact on investment flows, even for developing countries. And for the U.S. it's totally superfluous, as we have no trouble convincing foreign investors that their money will be legally protected. Investors, too, can now buy political-risk insurance to protect themselves against the possibility of loss.

I.S.D.S.-style provisions may once have made sense. But they're now outdated and unnecessary. And including them in trade agreements undermines the broader case for free trade, by making it look like exactly what people fear—a system designed to put corporate interests above public ones. If the Administration wants these deals to be seen as legitimate, it can start by excising the I.S.D.S. provisions. We no longer send out the gunboats. Let's call back the lawyers, too.

—James Surowiecki



# Can our humanity save humanity?

It's a human truth: Tragedy brings us together. After an earthquake or flood, we forget our incidental differences and act for each other in ways we don't on a day-to-day basis. Our skin color, gender, sexual orientation, and politics fall to the wayside. Our reflex to care kicks in and becomes unstoppable. But can we come together without a crisis?

Every day in our communities, research validates what we've all intuitively felt: simple humankindness—real, genuine connection—heals us from the inside out. Even those who care for our patients have noticed the health benefits circling back. And we each carry this power.

What if each of us could reach out in our own lives to help someone new? To offer a meal, or a shoulder? What would happen on a larger scale? How many of us would it take to turn the tide?

So I ask you, as I ask myself, our entire organization, and community leaders—could we actually change the world? This is bigger than health care. So let's unite and see what our collective humankindness can do.

Let's try. It would be inhuman not to.



Lloyd H. Dean  
President/CEO of Dignity Health

**Hello humankindness™**



**Dignity Health™**

Physicians | Nurses | Hospitals

Learn more at [dignityhealth.org](http://dignityhealth.org).

A CRITIC AT LARGE

# WHAT ELSE CAN ART DO?

*The many layers of Mark Bradford's work.*

BY CALVIN TOMKINS



*Bradford, with a work in progress, at his studio, in South Los Angeles.*

Mark Bradford is the tallest artist I know—six feet seven and a half inches, and pencil thin, which makes him look taller. His paintings, as you'd expect, run large. When I visited Bradford's industrial-sized studio, in South Los Angeles, this spring, one wall was almost entirely covered by a huge outline map of the United States, with clusters of

numbers that represented the AIDS cases reported in each state up to 2009. The map was a study for a much larger one that he planned for a wall at the Hammer Museum, in Los Angeles, where an exhibition of his new work opens on June 20th. "These are for the Hammer, too," he said, waving toward three abstract paintings on another wall. "They're all based on

AIDS cells under a microscope. I don't want to say the show is about AIDS, but it's about the body, and about my relationship to the nineteen-eighties, when all that stuff hit. It's my using a particular moment and abstracting it."

For someone who had just spent sixteen hours on an airplane, coming back from the Sharjah Biennial, in the United Arab Emirates, Bradford seemed unnaturally well rested. He looks a decade or so younger than his age, which is fifty-three. Being tall and African-American and not playing basketball was an issue for him when he was a teen-ager, but now he's comfortable with his height. He was wearing a white T-shirt and white painter's pants, his working clothes, which he buys online for himself and his assistants, two of whom are from the same Mexican family. "When people see us on the street or at Home Depot, they think we're housepainters," he said, happily.

Most of Bradford's art supplies come from the Home Depot. "If Home Depot doesn't have it," he said, "Mark Bradford doesn't need it." Although he hasn't really used artist's paints or brushes since he was in art school, what Bradford makes are abstract paintings. He starts with a stretched canvas and builds up its surface with ten or fifteen layers of paper—white paper, colored paper, newsprint, reproductions, photographs, printed texts—fixing each layer with a coat of clear shellac. Sometimes he embeds lengths of string or caulking to form linear elements in the palimpsest. When the buildup reaches a certain density, he attacks it with power sanders and other tools, exposing earlier layers, flashes of color, and unexpected juxtapositions. Not until the first sanding does he begin to see where the painting is going. He works like an archeologist, rediscovering the past. The method seems haphazard, but it's not, and the results can take your breath away. Bradford's 2013 painting "Shoot the Coin," which was in a show of recent acquisitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art last summer, does that. Twelve feet high by twenty feet long, it appears at first to be mostly white, but as you move closer you see subtle colors, branching lines like blood vessels, printed words; move back again, and it becomes a vast winter landscape. It's startlingly beautiful, and at LACMA

REGEN PROJECTS

its physical presence overpowered everything else in the room.

Toward the rear of the studio were two immense, unfinished paintings, the largest he's done so far. They are for the lobby of 1221 Avenue of the Americas, in Rockefeller Center, which is undergoing extensive renovations; Bradford was commissioned to do them after winning an international competition. "I'd always wanted to do a map of New York, so I thought I'd give it a try," he explained. "This one is upper Manhattan, and the other is lower Manhattan. I worked from a very early gridded map." He pushed a four-wheeled hydraulic cherry picker aside so that we could get a better look. Both paintings are based on patterns of narrow rectangles, which he laid down with house paint over a gridded template; the underlying grid is visible in some areas and covered over in others. The upper-Manhattan painting looked like a night view of the city from above. Bradford refers to his work as "social abstraction"—abstract art "with a social or political context clinging to the edges"—and for this project he read books on New York history, on Harlem, on urbanism, and on the Rockefeller family ("Man, you talk about the bad and the good"). Until this afternoon, he thought he still had plenty of time to work on them, but his dealer, Iwan Wirth, had just told him that they were due in three months. This didn't appear to concern him. "You know how it is with construction dates—there's always some slippage," he said. "Slippage is something I believe in, something I depend on."

The back end of the studio space is divided up into offices, utility rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Bradford said that he had hired an architect "for about twenty minutes" before giving the job to Jesus Lopez, his all-purpose contractor, the father of two of his assistants. Bradford has a second studio on the far side of an adjacent parking area; this one was empty, except for four large plastic objects piled in a corner. There was something comic about them—they looked like enormous punching bags. They were inflatable fenders (Bradford called them "buoys") used to protect the hulls of docked cargo ships. By roughing up and collaging the surfaces of fifteen similar ones, and suspending them on heavy chains, he had turned them into sculp-

tures for his installation at the Sharjah Biennial. But the ones he shipped never got there. "That was really intense," he said. "Thirty-six hours before I was due to leave for Sharjah, at three o'clock in the morning, I got an e-mail marked 'Urgent.' Because of a strike in the port of San Francisco, the shipment had been rerouted, and my buoys were on their way to China. I put the bedclothes over my head for about ten minutes, until I remembered that I had fifteen more of them, and I could do the whole thing again and send them by FedEx. I actually liked the new ones much better. But, you know, it's interesting that boat people haven't found something better than these things. All those big boats that just say 'Fuck you' to everybody, and you're trusting them to a piece of plastic? Really? O.K., good luck with that."

His cell phone rang. It was his mother, Janice, calling from Atlanta. "She's eighty, and she is so full of life," he said, when they'd finished talking. "For forty years, she ran a hair salon here in L.A. She retired a while ago, went to Atlanta to visit a friend, and now she runs a trucking business there. My mom was an orphan, and there was never anybody to tell her what she could or couldn't do. At the core, she's probably an artist—an artist and a feminist." Bradford never knew his father, who left before he was born. In 1965, when he was four, his mother married a man named Banks, and they had a daughter, Lori. Mark didn't get along too well with Banks, whom his mother divorced a year later, but he and Lori were, and are, very close. He has no interest in meeting his real father, who is originally from New Orleans. "I'm not a biological person," he said. "If you love me, you're my family. My mom was a free spirit, and she brought me up to be a free spirit. One thing I do know is that I'm a well-loved person."

It was nearly eight in the evening, time for dinner. Bradford locked up the studio, and we got into his silver Range Rover—he bought it last year, after sitting in a lot of other cars and deciding that it had the most headroom—and drove for fifteen minutes to a restaurant in another part of South Los Angeles, called Leimert Park. Developed in the late nineteen-twenties as a residential community of small bungalows and Spanish Revival houses on tree-lined

streets, Leimert Park has been, since the nineteen-fifties, an upper-middle-class haven and a cultural center for successful African-Americans. (Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, and Tom Bradley, the former mayor of Los Angeles, lived there.) The landscaped green park in the town center was full of people as we drove by—musicians performing, kids running around, families having picnic suppers. Bradford pointed out the building where his mother's third and last salon used to be. (It became his studio in 2008; he moved to his current space in 2014.) The building and several others near it are now occupied by Art and Practice, a private foundation combining art and social services, which Bradford and his partner, Allan DiCastro, and the philanthropist and art collector Eileen Harris Norton inaugurated in January, 2014. The restaurant we were going to, called Post & Beam, was three blocks from the park. Bradford dines there several times a week, and he got the full treatment when we arrived—*abbracci* all around. The cuisine was a mixture of Italian and soul food; the clientele was black, white, and Hispanic. Over dinner, Bradford filled me in on his early life.

He grew up in a boarding house, in an old section of Los Angeles called West Adams. Since the turn of the last century, this had been a fashionable neighborhood for wealthy white people. During the Depression and the Second World War, large numbers of African-Americans moved from the South to neighborhoods near West Adams, all of which came to be known as South Central. Racial tension, the development of the freeways, and other factors combined to prompt white flight to the suburbs north and west of downtown, and, in the fifties, middle-class black families began buying three-story Victorian mansions in West Adams at bargain prices, and renting out rooms. "It was like growing up in a raggedy Titanic, grand but fallen on hard times," Bradford recalled. The people in his boarding house were like an extended family. He thought of the older married couple who owned the place as his grandparents, and of a girl named Tennia, a year younger than he was, whom the owners had adopted when her mother disappeared, as another sister. Bradford was an independent and inquisitive child and took full advantage

of the freedom his mother gave him. Walking to school and then to the hair salon, which had moved to a new location, in the neighboring area of Mid-City, he explored new routes, looking in store windows and noticing everything in sight.

When Bradford was eleven, his mother decided that he and Lori needed a healthier environment. Deepening poverty, which had come with the loss of well-paying industrial jobs, and an increase in street crime had begun to devastate large sections of South Central—the area that is now called South Los Angeles. Many of the boarding houses in West Adams would become crack dens in the eighties. Recently, the neighborhood has been coming back. Bradford and DiCastro now live in a house that is just a block from Bradford's childhood home. DiCastro bought it ten years ago and is slowly restoring it.

Janice and the two children moved to a small apartment in Santa Monica, near the beach. Bradford adapted easily to this virtually all-white environment, although the relative absence of supervision at the local high school coincided with an inclination to cut classes, and his grades suffered accordingly. He became a beach kid, a surfer, a teen-age flâneur. And he did a lot of reading: "When I was thirteen, I was in a supermarket with my mother, and for no reason at all I picked up a science-fiction book at the check-out stand and started reading it. I couldn't believe I was doing that, actually reading a book. And, man, it opened up a whole new thing. Reading became the spark-plug of my imagination." It also helped to compensate for the social difficulties caused by a sudden growth spurt. "I grew ten inches in three months," he said. "And I looked frail, and that made me sort of a target. My public privacy was gone, and so was my boyhood, because no one allows you to be nearly six-eight and also a boy. I have more boyishness now than I did then." He tried playing basketball, but the game's physical aggressiveness bothered him—he was always getting yelled at, so he quit. In his junior year, he switched to a "continuation" school for underperforming students. The curriculum there involved very little teaching and a lot of independent reading, which suited him much better. He graduated in 1979, a year early.

Instead of going to college, he went to work in the hair salon. "I'd been doing that off and on since I was around eleven, but at this point I took classes in hair styling so I could get my license," he said. "I was bridging worlds. I lived in Santa Monica and worked in South Central, but I never defined myself as a black kid in a white neighborhood, or as a West-side kid in a black neighborhood." In the early nineteen-eighties, he went to Europe for the first time. His motives for



doing this were varied. He'd read James Baldwin's novel "Giovanni's Room," and he longed to go to Paris. He was also very worried about AIDS, the first cases of which were reported in 1981. "The churches were saying it was God's wrath," he remembers. "It was so unknown and so new. People said if you stay out all night and go to night clubs, which I did a lot, because I love to dance, you're definitely going to die. Later, I went to a doctor, and he said, 'I got good news and bad news. You don't have AIDS, but you're going to get it.' Between crack cocaine, drive-by shootings, and AIDS, I thought there was no way I was going to make it. I had to get out. I saved up my money from the hair salon and sold my little Toyota, which broke down every two weeks, and I flew to Amsterdam, because it was cheap."

On the customs questionnaire he filled out before landing, he wrote "Black American" in the space for nationality. He'd never had to give this information before, and it just seemed like the correct answer. The woman at the customs window scratched out the word "Black" and said, "You're an American, aren't you?" "That was liberating," he said. He stayed for four months, and went all over Europe, sleeping in railroad stations and on trains to save money. The only place he ever felt threatened was Berlin, where he had a couple of run-ins with skinheads. Every year after that, he'd work in the salon for six or seven months and

then go back to Europe. "I'd always make sure my mom was all right with the business. She'd find somebody to replace me. I met a lot of people in Europe, and I had fun. I was *young*. But at the same time I was always so haunted and scared. I remember there was a heaviness about coming back—back to it. So-and-So's in the hospital, So-and-So didn't make it. It was a very dark period."

Bradford had recently installed a major sculpture at the Los Angeles International Airport, and we went to see it the next morning. On the way, he told me that he used to get his mother to drive him to LAX so that they could have dinner there and watch the planes take off and land. Later, as a teen-ager, he'd skip school and take the bus. "I loved the old Pan Am terminal, the international one," he said. "I'd see a plane land from Switzerland or Ghana or someplace, and I'd run to where the passengers were getting off and pretend to be getting off with them. First time I ever heard foreign languages. I'd push the Smarte Cartes back into the terminal and collect a dollar each for my lunch money."

His sculpture was clearly visible from the main entrance to one of the international terminals—a four-sided wooden structure, suspended from the skylight at the far end of the departure hall. Bradford called Sarah Cifarelli, the airport's art manager, on his mobile phone; while we waited for her to arrive, he said that he'd wanted to make something that felt both ancient and modern—a cross between a medieval bell tower and "that thing for sports events, the Jumbotron." The sculpture, called "Bell Tower," was made of aluminum, paper, and weathered plywood sheets, stained and graffitied from years of being used as barricades. (He'd salvaged them from construction sites.) "This section is politically charged without my doing anything," he said. "It's the most uncomfortable part of the airport, where you have to take off your shoes and show papers and go through the X-ray machines. Everything else here is so finished—I wanted a certain rawness, something that felt massive but at the same time airy."

Cifarelli arrived and led us to the mezzanine level of the departure hall. "Bell Tower" hovers directly above twelve lines of passengers waiting to show their

passports and boarding passes. It's open at the bottom, and I saw several people direct puzzled glances at its roughly carpentered interior. Cifarelli said that there had been no public announcement or press release about the sculpture yet, and that a number of people had questions about what it was, and whether it was finished. Standing under "Bell Tower" seemed to dampen the noise level in the room. The sculpture's raw, makeshift look thumbed its nose at the terminal's gleaming impersonality. Bradford said, "Whether you like it or not, it's contemporary art in an airport, and it does exactly what I wanted it to do—makes people think."

Early in 1990, back from one of his trips to Europe, Bradford saw an ad for a new program at Santa Monica College. The faculty would look at art portfolios by nonstudents, and if the work showed promise the school would provide mentoring and free studio space for two years. Bradford had been "slowly creeping toward the possibility of being an artist," as he put it, and he had a few paintings and drawings to show, so he applied for the program and was accepted. He continued to work at the hair salon, which had moved again, this time to Leimert Park. He had a list of adoring clients by then, and was sharing the managerial responsibilities with his mother. He had found, early on, that his natural reliance on intuition and rapid response made him very good at styling hair. "When you can fix a mistake, that's when you know you're good," his mother had told him. The same rule applied to his art practice, he said: "I look at a painting and I know it's not right. And I'll just dig right into it." His studio time was after work and late at night. Some of the paintings he did caught the eye of a teacher at the college named Jill Giegerich, who told him he should go to a professional art school. Giegerich kept after him about it, and eventually she recommended him to the director of the California Institute of the Arts, in Valencia, who called him in for an interview and promptly offered him a full scholarship. He entered CalArts when he was thirty.

"That was the first time I slowed down," Bradford told me. "I'd been moving real fast since I was fifteen, I wasn't really formed, and I didn't know anything about the art world." At CalArts

in the nineteen-nineties, art practice took a back seat to art theory. Bradford, while continuing to spend three days a week at the salon, immersed himself in the writings of Clement Greenberg, Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster, the French deconstructionists, and other leading theorists, most of whom preached the doctrine that painting was dead and that serious art now was conceptual. He wasn't convinced of that. During his three undergraduate years, though, he experimented with photography, video, installation, sculpture, and performance—everything except painting. "Painting was the thing that had grabbed me the most at Santa Monica College," he said. "But I was so enthralled with learning at CalArts that I decided to put it on the shelf, and then, if I still had the urge to paint after three years, I'd go back to it in grad school. And I still had the urge."

At CalArts graduate school, from 1995 to 1997, Bradford struggled to find his way into abstraction. He felt drawn to the Abstract Expressionism of Pollock and de Kooning, and to the "combines" and combine paintings of Robert Rauschenberg, but the smell of oil paint gave him terrible headaches, and his efforts seemed to go nowhere. "Rauschenberg's *work* was always too heavy for me," he told an interviewer in 2009. "I was always trying to be thin." He spent hours at the Kinko's shop near campus, printing ads and texts and images of all kinds. He'd glue these to large

sheets of paper, and then, at the end of the day, roll them up and throw them away. Thomas Lawson, the dean of the art school at CalArts, and Darcy Huebler, an artist who teaches there, both urged him not to do that. They thought his work was interesting, and this boosted his confidence, but he didn't find any of it worth saving. For his graduate-thesis show, he hired a local high-school marching band to come to his graduation ceremony: the band marched in from the street, up the stairs, and onto the stage, everybody cheered, and at CalArts that qualified as a work of conceptual art.

"When I got out of CalArts, in 1997, I thought nothing was going to happen," Bradford said. He went back to working full time at the salon; he could pay off his art-school loans that way, and, besides, he'd always loved the place. "I was shy, but at the hair salon I could *talk*, make people laugh," he told me. "My mom would look over and say, 'Do you really need to be saying that? T.M.I., Mark—too much information!'" He rented a studio in Inglewood, a working-class area adjoining South Central, and he would go there after work. He was still looking for a way into art. At the salon one day, he noticed an end paper lying on the floor—one of the rectangular, tissue-thin strips of paper that hairdressers use to wrap curls in a permanent wave. Something about the way this one reflected the light made him think about using end papers in a



*"When you get a chance, remember to ask God the meaning of life—it's a riot."*

painting. The next evening, he took several boxes of them to his studio and started experimenting. They were translucent, almost invisible, but he found that if he burned the edges with a match (later, he used a blowtorch) the burnt line established a grid pattern. He applied a thin wash of hair dye over the surface, and started another layer. “End papers were fifty cents for a box of two hundred,” he said. “I couldn’t afford to pay twenty dollars for a tube of acrylic paint, but I could go to Home Depot and get paint they’d mixed wrong for a dollar a can. I liked the end papers. I liked the social fabric they represented, and so I built this vocabulary, using only paper.” This was when Bradford began to realize that the way he made art and the way he styled women’s hair were related. The trick was to keep things moving—reach in, try something, and, if that didn’t work, fix it and try something else, and then bring everything together at the end.

The first two paintings he did with end papers, in 2001, were hanging in a back room of his studio. One is eight feet tall by twelve feet wide, the other nine by eight; each one is an all-over grid of small rectangles in yellow, cream, and white, with titles that refer to hair-dye colors: “43G Spring Honey” and “45R Spiced Cognac.” He had offered to mount them on canvas for the owner, Eileen Norton, who was the first person to buy his work. Norton, who grew up in the Watts section of South Central and later taught in public schools there, had married the computer entrepreneur Peter Norton in 1983; they became known for collecting and supporting contemporary art, interests that Eileen continued to pursue after their divorce. She heard about Bradford from Thelma Golden, the newly installed deputy director and chief curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem. Golden had visited Bradford’s studio in 2000, and she decided on the spot to show his work the following year in “Freestyle,” her eye-opening group exhibition of what she called “post-black art”—work by twenty-eight young African-American artists, from different parts of the country, who were redefining what race meant in their art. “He was a fully mature artist at that point,” Golden told me. “He had an incredible sense of himself as an artist, and an enormous abil-

## MORNING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR’S WIFE

Accept the window  
that gives you glass, the dawn  
that gives you the maple branch  
with a single bud, meadowlarks  
singing where you can’t see them.  
Keep your black nightgown on,  
more night than gown.  
Wolves in the wallpaper.  
Read an article about a man  
who coughed blood. If you don’t learn  
who lives next door to you, you  
can leave the curtains open  
all the time. Only at certain times  
can a body be sexual. The doe  
that meets your gaze in the meadow  
isn’t sexual. When surgeons split  
the coughing man’s chest with a saw  
and then his lung with a scalpel,  
his body wasn’t sexual.  
At night the moon pulls  
leaf buds out of the branch with silver  
instruments. If you don’t learn  
how many bodies the doctor  
places his fingers into  
in a single day, yours will always  
be the only. Inside  
the coughing man’s lung the surgeons  
found a fir tree. The dark interior  
of a lung or a leaf bud, imagined  
long enough, becomes a wilderness.  
Your mind can do this  
in the morning when you don’t have  
a body. Wilderness isn’t paradise.

—Cecily Parks

ity to understand art history—its possibilities and its limits. I knew I was going to work with him for the rest of my life.”

When Norton went to Bradford’s studio, he remembers, “She asked the price of those paintings, and I’m afraid I said something like ‘How much do you have?’ I was so broke then. I didn’t have a car, I didn’t have a dealer.” Norton paid him five thousand dollars for one large and one small painting, and soon came back and bought two more large ones for five thousand apiece. She also became one of his regular customers at the salon, where he was still working on Fridays and Saturdays. “Mark told me, ‘Your hair is not cute,’” she recalls. “I said, ‘Can you do better?’ And he said, ‘Of course.’”

Golden’s “Freestyle” exhibition put Bradford on the fast track to widespread recognition. There was danger in this—art seemed to come almost too easily to him. A small show of his work, in 2003, at the Whitney Museum’s Altria project space, in midtown Manhattan, drew a withering notice from the *Times* critic Roberta Smith. She liked his large painting “The Devil Is Beating His Wife” (the title is a folk saying about days when it rains while the sun is out) but found the rest of his work—including a lawn figurine and some stacked glass boxes, which he presented as sculptures—“vacuous and discombobulated.” “Roberta told me to take my ass home, and she was right,” he said. “It was the

perfect review for me at the time—it was what I needed to make me focus.” Soon afterward, he started work on a very large painting (ten and a half feet by sixteen) called “Los Moscos” (“The Flies”). The title was slang for the Hispanic immigrants who waited for day jobs outside the Home Depot near his studio in Inglewood, a historically black neighborhood that is now fifty per cent Hispanic. For Bradford, the cultural changes were fascinating. Life was lived on the street, in public, and each storefront was painted a different, vivid color—“emergency colors,” as he described them, signifying “We are *here*.” “Everyone is acting, living at a high pitch,” he went on. “I guess the painting came out of that.”

The Inglewood studio was the largest space he’d ever worked in, and his paintings expanded dramatically. “I had no problem working on that scale, none,” he told me. “I just loved being inside it. I felt there was a language I was unearthing.” He was already moving away from the end papers. The dominant tone of “Los Moscos” is black, resulting from the fairly thick, inky paper he used, called Eclipse Black, which he had just discovered. (Not at Home Depot—he bought it from a paper supplier.) He had started bleaching and soaking his colored papers, and using a more powerful sander to bite down and reveal the underlayers. A year or so earlier, Bradford had met the Lopez family, several of whom had emigrated to L.A. from Sinaloa, in Mexico. He had noticed the teen-age Cesar Lopez selling bootleg DVDs on the street in Inglewood, admired his style and energy, and hired him as an assistant. Bradford and Cesar worked on “Los Moscos” for a year, climbing up and down a ladder, because Bradford couldn’t afford a scaffold. In 2005, the painting was in Bradford’s first show at Sikkema Jenkins, the New York gallery that represented him until 2012. (He moved to Hauser & Wirth in 2013.) Bradford was on his way. “Los Moscos,” his coming-of-age painting, is now owned by the Tate, in London.

His productivity soared. He worked for twelve hours at a stretch in the studio, turning out intricately detailed canvases that resembled topographical maps or aerial views of urban centers. Some

of Bradford’s most striking pictures had political themes. At the salon, where he still worked part time, one of his clients told him that he should paint something about the Tulsa race riot of 1921. Bradford had never heard of it, so he began reading and learned the long-suppressed details—dozens of people killed, and an entire district, one of the wealthiest black communities in the United States, reduced to ashes. Bradford had been working in the salon when the backlash to Rodney King’s brutal beating by Los Angeles police officers closed the city down, in 1992. “There was a curfew, and National Guard troops on the street, but we just put up blackout curtains and kept on working,” he recalled. “How can you run a business and not work after six o’clock?” Bradford’s “Scorched Earth” and “Black Wall Street,” both from 2006, evoke the devastation in Tulsa and Los Angeles through abstraction—roiling blacks and reds in densely layered surfaces, penetrated by narrow rivers of white and yellow.

Racial themes ran through much of his work then, but his sense of comic absurdity and “slippage” kept it open, shifting, and nondidactic. In 2003, he made a very funny (and somewhat heartrending) video, called “Practice,” of himself trying to shoot baskets while wearing a voluminous hoopskirted dress in yellow and purple—the Los Angeles Lakers’ colors. Two years later, he began a series of works based on “merchant posters,” his



name for the flyers put up on fences in Los Angeles to advertise local goods or services. Partially obscured by sanding and paper overlays, the crude posters (“Divorcio y Custodia,” “Cheap Auto Parts,” “Life Time Hair”) exert a highly specific sense of time and place. The French *affichistes* had made paintings from torn and defaced commercial ads in the fifties, but Bradford’s merchant posters sing a different and distinctly

American song, about people who live on the fringes and make their lives up from day to day.

Bradford met Allan DiCastro at a Halloween parade in 1997. DiCastro had grown up in a working-class neighborhood in South Chicago, one of five children of a single mother. He worked his way through Illinois State University, and moved to Los Angeles in 1987, where he got a job with a bank and became active in social causes, eventually serving as president of the neighborhood council in Mid-City. “I watched him work forty unpaid hours a week for the council,” Bradford told me. The two of them often talked about doing something together for the community. “At one point, I said, Let’s start a neighborhood art space,” Bradford recalls. “Allan said he certainly didn’t want to do just an art space, but why not put contemporary art and social justice and community activism together, and see what happens?”

In 2009, Bradford received a five-hundred-thousand-dollar “genius” grant from the MacArthur Foundation. Two years later, he was able to buy a fine old Art Deco building in Leimert Park, and, as DiCastro said, “We could finally start doing the things we’d been talking about.” Art and Practice, their private foundation, eventually managed to buy two more buildings in the neighborhood, including the one that housed Bradford’s studio. Extensive renovations are still in progress, but an exhibition gallery opened to the public in February, and several programs, including one that provides studio space for three artists-in-residence, are now in operation. Bradford, DiCastro, and Eileen Norton had decided to focus the foundation’s work on foster children, because their research showed a disturbingly high proportion of students in neighborhood schools who were in foster care. Widespread job losses, increasing poverty, and the crack-cocaine epidemic had destroyed countless black families in the eighties. In South Central, which had been hit the hardest, the pattern of broken families had been self-perpetuating. Bradford and DiCastro joined forces with the Right Way Foundation, a small nonprofit in South Los Angeles, which was helping older children make the transition out of foster

care. Right Way's office is now in what used to be Janice Banks's hair salon; its facilities include a well-equipped computer lab and classrooms for young adults who come for an eight-week course that leads, in many cases, to job placement.

When Bradford and DiCastro learned that Eso Won Books, a Leimert Park landmark, had no long-term lease, they offered to give the owners a space in one of the buildings they were renovating. The new bookstore will open this summer, with an upstairs gallery for lectures and exhibitions. For help in running the art side of Art and Practice, Bradford turned to Ann Philbin, the director of the Hammer Museum. Philbin had shown his work at the Hammer, and she decided to make a major commitment. In addition to bringing in funding from the James Irvine Foundation, Philbin negotiated a two-year agreement under which her museum will organize and curate four fully professional exhibitions a year at Art and Practice, and advise on public programming. "Everyone on my staff is in love with this project," Philbin told me.

Artists who deal with social issues and interact with viewers are no longer an isolated phenomenon. In 1996, the French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud identified the trend as "relational aesthetics," and cited among its practitioners Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. In this country, the two artists whose approach seems closest to Bradford's are Theaster Gates, who has turned derelict buildings into cultural institutions on the South Side of Chicago, and Rick Lowe, whose Project Row Houses revitalized a run-down district in Houston's Third Ward. Bradford knows Gates and Lowe, and Lowe serves on the board of Art and Practice. Where he differs from them, and from the artists on Bourriaud's list, is in the clear distinction he makes between what he does in the studio and what he does with Art and Practice. He blurred that distinction in 2008, when he went to New Orleans and, working with people in the devastated Ninth Ward, built a giant "ark" out of three stacked shipping containers—the kind that had broken loose and done so much damage to houses during Hurricane Katrina. But, for Bradford, social action has not been an art form; he uses his art to support his

social activism. So far, a large part of the funding for Art and Practice has come from him. The artist Paul Chan, who is involved in human-rights causes, believes that Bradford is "trying to situate his life as an artist in other ways besides simply being an artist." The question, Chan says, is "What else can art do?"

Bradford's first major retrospective opened at the Wexner Center for the Arts, at the Ohio State University, in 2010, and travelled to contemporary museums in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, and San Francisco. In the past three years, the market for his art has become what Amy Cappellazzo, the former head of postwar-art sales at Christie's, describes as "white-hot at all levels." His large paintings sell for up to a million dollars on the primary market, and a recent work, "Smear," which he donated this year to a benefit auction for Los Angeles's Museum of Contemporary Art (whose board he serves on), brought \$4.4 million at Sotheby's in May. Bradford tries not to think about his financial success. His income gives him the freedom to explore new ways of making art.

On my last day with him, he told me he'd been working on a standup comedy routine, called "Spiderman," for his upcoming show at the Hammer. It is the first performance work he's done since his basketball video. The original idea was that he would perform it live, at the museum, but he changed his mind. He decided to record it instead, and have the audio play in a darkened room, with the kind of background noises you'd have heard in a sleazy night club in the nineteen-eighties. "I take on the voice of a transgender comic, a woman who's become a man," he explained. "The piece is about that moment of hysteria and fear and homophobia in the eighties, and the black community's relationship to it. I was thinking about Eddie Murphy's 'Delirious' film, from 1983, the one that started out with him saying, 'Faggots aren't allowed,' and everybody was *laughing*. I thought that was so mean. I told my girlfriend, 'You'll be next,' and it wasn't long after that that it became O.K. to call black women hos and bitches. I'm fascinated by these moments when something goes from being taboo to being socially acceptable. In the seventies, it was not O.K. to use the word 'nigger,'

and then, whoo-ee, it's suddenly part of the social contract. I've written a monologue, and I rehearse it seven or eight times a day. Each time, I ad-lib and change it. I'll do one for you right now."

We went to a room at the back of the studio, where a professional microphone was set up on a stand. His script was pinned to the wall nearby, printed large. Bradford took a stance by the mike—impossibly tall, bouncing on his toes, arms moving, getting into the character. He grabbed the microphone with one hand and began:

How you doin', people? How you doin'?.... Ladies, sit down, sit down! Before you pop that Spanx, and look like a can of busted biscuits.

His whole body was in motion, dancing around, and he was talking very fast. The mimicry of eighties black standup was pitch-perfect, his voice veering from streetwise to hysterical. "I'd seen so many black male comics, with their untouchable heterosexual superiority," he had told me earlier. "I thought, well, why not do a piece where we shake that up a little bit?"

Comedy is never far from rage, Bradford had said: "Ha ha ha, but *God damn!*" You don't get rage from Bradford, though—it's either too deeply buried or just no match for the joyous way he embraces his work, his friends, his life. He was flying now, riffing about being a pole dancer in a night club:

I was bouncin' so hard I didn't even look at the floor.... But when I did I almost fell off the pole. The floor was covered in food stamps. This mothafucka was throwin' food stamps. Food stamps! I was so shocked I blurted out "What the fuck am I supposed to do with some food stamps?," and he looked me dead in the eye an' said, "Buy some food, bitch."

.... And as I was leavin' all I could hear in my head was my nana's voice sayin', "Baby, you don't bullshit your way into first class, you think your way out of economy."

It took him a few minutes to get back to being Mark Bradford. We went to look at his two big paintings for the Rockefeller Center building. He had lost an area at the top of the uptown painting, he said, because he'd sanded it down too far that morning. Tomorrow he would redo it, putting down new layers of paper. "I never have artist's block," he said, as though the thought surprised him. "I work when I'm sick, happy, depressed, constipated, jet-lagged. I show up. If I can't work, I go to Home Depot." ♦

## SHOUTS &amp; MURMURS

## SHOP TILL WE MAKE YOU DROP

BY BRUCE MCCALL

North Korean officials have unveiled a mobile-friendly online shopping site.  
—*Business Insider.*

**ITEM 0003, SPYWARE KIT:** This thirty-four-piece K.G.B.-approved set comes complete with fake nose, fake mustache, fake eyeglasses, a see-around-corners periscope, a Junior Sleuth Magnifying Glass, deerstalker hat, and false St. Kitts/Nevis passport. Any attempt by non-foremost Party members to purchase a Spywear Kit will convert offenders into dog food for the People's Palace kennel shelves.



**ITEM 0012, MINIATURE LISTENING DEVICE:** Sew this acorn-size electronic wizard into your inner ear to overhear saboteur stooges of the Nuclear Bomb Camp plotting against the D.P.R.K. without detection. Device includes needle, thread, bandages, bottle of mercurochrome, and mopping-up cloth. Click on KimEars.com for no more information.

**ITEM 0275: LOWER YOUR I.Q.** without a clubbing or a lobotomy. Emptying the brain and erasing memory with our ten-thousand-step program can make eating mud and mining gypsum in unlit underground caves for no pay seem enjoyable. Program comes on two hundred and forty eight-track cassettes.

**ITEM 1733:** Throw your voice with a **LIMITED-EDITION D.P.R.K. ARMY VENTRILOQUIST DUMMY.** Good for duping imperialist spies or for entertaining Party cadres of the Bored Camp. Kit includes dummy and booklet of useful phrases, including, "Hallo, you! Was that a lady I saw you with last night, digging up

parsnips at Farming Field 3908, or was it just a commissar of the Forced Labor Brigade?" Warning: Citizens caught imitating the voice of Our Ever More Dear Leader Kim Jong-un will immediately undergo experimental tongue surgery. Click on KimMumbles.com.

*This is a D.P.R.K. citizen-surveillance mobile-phone/laptop/computer check. Be silent, do not move, hands off the Escape key.*

**ITEM 2188, INFANT TEETHING TOY:** Features a hundred tasty blobs of pre-congealed lead-based paint. Specify January Dun, February Brindle, March Khaki, or November Gray.

**ITEM 2009, OVERFLOWING BASKET OF ARTIFICIAL FOOD:** Ready for Bureau of Joy photo-op visit to snap publicity photos of an average D.P.R.K. dinner table. Choose from baskets of fake meat, fake fruits, fake vegetables, or fake crabgrass.

*Shopper advisory: Pay before selecting merchandise and avoid euthanasia of pets and spouses, depending on total price.*

**ITEM 3867, ONE POTATO:** From the harvest (if any) of 2019. Available when available from AgriKim.com.

**ITEM 0021, LIFE-SIZE STANDUP DOUBLE-THIN CARDBOARD LEADER POSTER:** Features a hole for your head, so that you appear to be kneeling down before Peerless Architect of the Galosh Miracle Kim Jong-un, His Radiant Self. Do not attempt to be photographed in this posture, thereby violating law 45.8966, Insulting a Deity by Making His Likeness a Joke, without attaching the official exemption stamp, which does not exist.

**ITEM 0004, "MADE IN U.S.A." LABELS:** A hundred a roll. Pasted into clothing, boots, D.P.R.K.-manufactured goods, a "Made in U.S.A." label will boost your social prestige.\*

\*Only for the brief interval before you turn yourself in to the D.P.R.K. Fraud Squad, while agents from the Bureau of Domestic Harmony ransack your home and expose your two-faced capitalist-roader materialist betrayal.

**ITEM 5766:** Attention, wise shoppers: *Better not even try to order this.* ♦



Try it for free at [nextissue.com](http://nextissue.com)

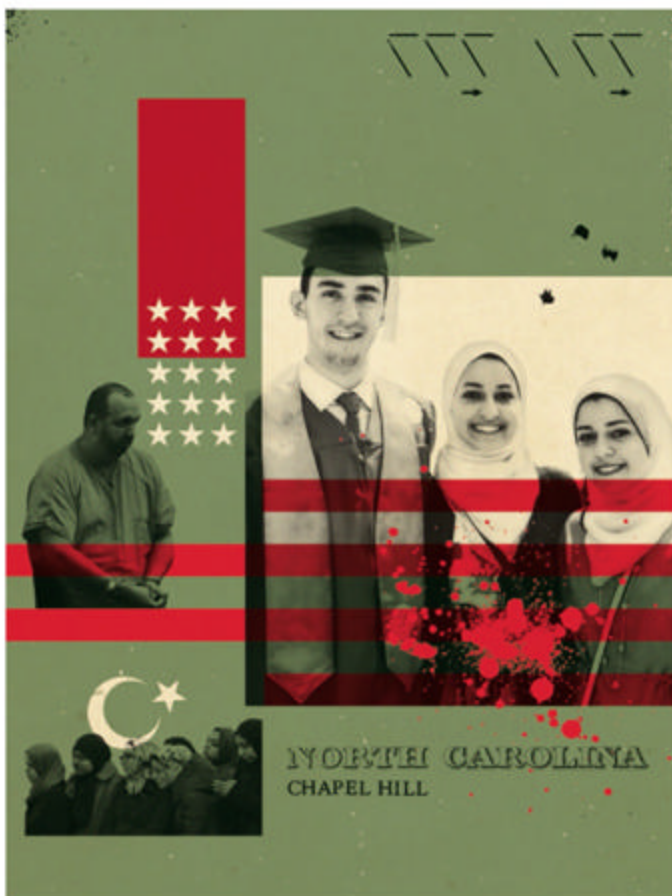
 next issue™

A REPORTER AT LARGE

# THE STORY OF A HATE CRIME

*What led to the murder of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill?*

BY MARGARET TALBOT



Two summers ago, Deah Barakat and his roommate, Imad Ahmad, were moving into a condominium complex in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when another resident stopped by. He was a burly forty-four-year-old named Craig Hicks, and he was intent on underlining the parking rules: spaces were limited to one for the resident and one for a guest. Barakat and Ahmad said that they got it, and continued unpacking.

Barakat, who was six feet three, athletic, and outgoing, was too focussed on his future to concern himself with cranky neighbors. That fall, he was starting dental school at the University of North Carolina, and he was engaged to Yusor Abu-Salha, an undergraduate at North Carolina

State. Fine-boned and slender with wide-set eyes, Abu-Salha wore the hijab, and, like Barakat, she had grown up in an observant Muslim family. Barakat's parents were immigrants from Syria; Abu-Salha's were Palestinians who had lived in Kuwait and Jordan. Yet the couple didn't see themselves as much different from other New Southerners in the Research Triangle area: Barakat avidly followed "SportsCenter" and country music; Abu-Salha was a fan of *Call of Duty*.

Barakat and Ahmad first met in middle school, playing basketball on Friday nights at a gym connected to the Islamic Association of Raleigh, the local mosque. Ahmad was now studying for a Ph.D. in chemistry at U.N.C. When he got

home, Barakat often greeted him with a hug. "I'd never been a huggy kind of guy," Ahmad recalled recently, but he came to appreciate it. The roommates watched basketball together and often made bets; the loser had to prepare a meal. Ahmad once cooked Bourbon chicken (without the alcohol), but Barakat usually just served his favorite food: cereal.

As Barakat advanced in his studies, he began leaning toward pediatric dentistry; his adviser was researching what makes some children cavity-prone, and Barakat had a knack for coaxing jumpy toddlers into a dentist's chair. It helped that he had a childlike streak himself. He loved pranks, and made a point of sticking the windshield wipers up every time he walked past his roommate's car. He knew all the words to "Let It Go," from "Frozen." Although Barakat was twenty-three, he still stopped by his old grammar school—Al-Iman, a private institution in Raleigh that offered "an Islamic environment"—to say hello to Mussarut Jabeen, the principal. Jabeen is on the short side, and Barakat sometimes greeted her by walking up behind her and gently placing his hand on her head. She was delighted to learn that Barakat was planning to marry Abu-Salha, another Al-Iman graduate. "You will be together for the rest of your lives, *inshallah*," Jabeen said.

Barakat was one of three siblings, the oldest of whom, Suzanne, is a resident in family medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. She recalled being "the bossy one," who'd make her brothers solve multiplication problems while they sock-skated across the living-room floor. As "a first-generation kid," she said, she was "the guinea pig, figuring out how the education system worked here." Whenever she was feeling anxious, though, Barakat could disarm her: "He'd be kind of goofy and lighthearted and say, 'Sanny, I love you.' Then I wasn't stressed out anymore."

Barakat's equanimity was tested by Craig Hicks, his neighbor. Every month or so, Hicks came by to complain that visitors were parking in the spaces designated for him and his wife, Karen, a nurse-practitioner. Once, he pulled up his shirt to reveal a holstered gun at his belt. Instead of escalating the conflict, Barakat got a map of the parking lot, highlighted the permissible spaces, and distributed the map to friends and

family. Ahmad told me that Hicks's behavior had sometimes unsettled him, but Barakat had always been a "calming factor—he'd say, 'Look, this guy's smart enough not to do anything.'"

One evening last October, Abu-Salha and several friends played Risk at the condo with Barakat and Ahmad. After Abu-Salha's friends left, Hicks knocked on the door. He was "abrasive and yelling," Ahmad told me. "He said, 'You were too loud—you woke up my wife.' And he flashed his gun. Deah told him, 'O.K., we'll make sure our friends aren't so loud next time.' But afterward I was cleaning up with Yusor and Deah, and I was scared. And I could see that Yusor was, too."

Barakat and Abu-Salha were married last December, at a Marriott in Raleigh. Four hundred guests came. Abu-Salha's four closest friends were in the bridal party. Together, they called themselves the Fab Five; they had grown up attending the Raleigh mosque, and four of them had gone to Al-Iman. They remained close after moving on to public high schools.

Abu-Salha thrived at Athens Drive High School—she became an editor of the student newspaper, the *Oracle*, and her hijab was sometimes in the school colors, blue and orange. But most of her socializing after class was with the Fab Five. The girls helped one another stay connected to their Muslim beliefs. They had typical high-school fun, minus the drinking and dating: they drove around with Nicki Minaj cranked up; they cruised the mall and tried on platform sandals that they didn't buy. Abu-Salha enlisted her friends to watch horror films with her so that they could laugh off the scary parts. Although the girls sometimes felt that people stared at their head scarves, they had all been happy growing up in Raleigh. One of the friends, Rana Odeh, told me, "I love my sweet tea and football as much as anybody. But at the same time I appreciate that it's very diverse in this part of the South."

The girlfriends reunited at N.C. State. Abu-Salha majored in biology, and, like Barakat, she began contemplating dental school. Last summer, she travelled with her mother to Kilis, in southern Turkey, where she volunteered at a dental clinic for Syrian refugees. Othman Shibly, a dentist who helped start the

first such clinics, told me, "You see mostly women and children. They might have terrible infections or had their front teeth knocked out by the butt of a soldier's rifle." Abu-Salha told her friends that, though it had been hard witnessing children in abject conditions, she now knew that dentistry was for her.

Abu-Salha could seem shy, but in the spring of 2014 she surprised many people by auditioning, with Odeh, to be an m.c. of N.C. State's annual Muslim Students Association night—a variety show that attracted hundreds of people. "There's that stereotype that girls aren't funny," Odeh said. "But we were, like, 'No—we're the funniest people ever!'" They got the gig, and that night they strode onto the stage like seasoned hosts, wearing black-and-white neckties. "We riffed on that Jimmy Fallon–Justin Timberlake routine about hashtags," Odeh recalled. "We made fun of U.N.C. We had such a good time."

In college, Abu-Salha and Barakat became a couple. He'd also grown up in Raleigh, where his father, Namee, owned several businesses, including a gas-station minimart and a small trucking company. (Abu-Salha's father, a psychiatrist, had his own practice, which he ran with the help of his wife.) At N.C. State, Abu-Salha and her friends had worked with Barakat on volunteer projects: feeding the homeless, organizing a health fair.

Abu-Salha told her girlfriends that Barakat had approached her and her family to ask if he could get to know her properly—which meant, in Islamic terms, in the presence of at least one other person. Her younger sister, Razan, began accompanying the couple on excursions, and Abu-Salha encouraged her friends to chat with Barakat in a group texting thread. In one exchange, Barakat playfully insisted that Abu-Salha looked like the glamorous basketball player Candace Parker. One of the friends, Amira Ata, told me that the girls had each texted Barakat a long riff "about how much we love Yusor." Ata was impressed when "he responded to every sentence. A lot of guys would've said, basically, 'Yeah.' We wouldn't have approved of a lot of guys even in our community. We approved of Deah." In February, 2013, the Barakat and Abu-Salha families announced that Deah and Yusor were engaged.

For her bridal shower, Abu-Salha wore

a sparkly ice-blue dress modelled on one worn by Elsa, the princess in "Frozen." On her wedding day, she wore a high-necked gown with a beaded white hijab. "Though your hair does add to your beauty, Yusor made it work," Odeh recalled. Most of the music was Arabic, but at one point the women went to a separate room, and a female d.j. played one of the rap songs that Abu-Salha loved. She removed her head scarf, and Barakat came in to watch her dance. With her arms swaying above her head, she made the mean-mug expression that always cracked her friends up, then broke into a radiant smile.

After the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon, in Mazatlán, Abu-Salha left her parents' house and moved into the apartment in Chapel Hill. (Ahmad had found a new place.) She had graduated from N.C. State a semester early and been accepted at U.N.C.'s dental school. She planned to join her husband there in the fall of 2015.

Their apartment was in a shingle-roofed building overlooking woods. They had a grill on the patio and a plaque bearing the phrase "Praise Be to Allah" by the front door. Abu-Salha's friends and her sister, Razan, often came over. So did Imad Ahmad, who was visiting when Abu-Salha cooked the first meal of her married life: chicken parmigiana.

The condominium complex, called Finley Forest, was built in the nineteen-eighties. Originally inhabited mainly by working people, it had become an enclave for graduate students. Though they were not prone to wild parties, they weren't quiet enough for Craig Hicks.

Most of the young residents of Finley Forest were on an upward arc in life. Hicks was not. In the mid-aughts, he had been laid off from a job as an auto-parts salesman. After working for a few years at the deli counter of a Harris Teeter, he was taking classes at Durham Tech Community College, in the hope of becoming a paralegal. Karen was his third wife. He was no longer in contact with a twenty-year-old daughter from his first marriage. He'd recently received a summons to appear in court and pay fourteen thousand dollars in child support for his other daughter, who was ten.

On Facebook, Hicks presented himself as a libertarian gun enthusiast and an "anti-theist" who wanted "religion to

go away.” In one post, he wrote, “The moment that your religion claims any kind of jurisdiction over my experience, you insult me on a level that you can’t even begin to comprehend. Even if your beliefs had substance, the arrogance of that would be insult enough. But the fact that they have no substance, and are merely a transparent raft of delusions and lies, magnifies the insult enormously.”

On Tuesday, February 10, 2015, two members of the Fab Five—Rana Odeh and Nada Salem—were on the N.C. State campus when they got a group text from a friend saying that someone in Chapel Hill had died in a shooting. They weren’t concerned. Chapel Hill wasn’t tiny—what were the chances it was someone they knew? But when Salem received a call from a friend of Barakat’s whom she didn’t know well she felt instant dread. She told me that she “picked up the phone and the friend just started screaming and crying—‘It’s Deah.’”

Salem and Odeh met up, then Odeh called her father, who offered to drive her to Chapel Hill. Odeh asked him, frantically, if it was true about Barakat. “It’s worse,” he said. Abu-Salha and Razan, her sister, were also dead. Someone had shot them all at Finley Forest.

At the complex, Salem and her friends saw Abu-Salha’s mother and went over and knelt beside her. All evening, people

gathered at a clubhouse on the property. Razan Abu-Salha, who was nineteen, also had a tight circle of friends; one of them, Yasmine Inaya, had been training with her for a half marathon. Inaya later told me that they had planned to run that day, but Razan had decided at the last minute to visit her sister instead. Razan was close to her parents—she woke up early most mornings to have coffee with them and watch the news—but the house had seemed quiet after her sister left.

At N.C. State, Razan had been studying architecture—a daring choice. Mus-sarut Jabeen, the principal at Al-Iman, told me, “In our community, we tend to think there are two professions: medicine and engineering.” Razan was thrilled when she won a campus design competition with a time-lapse video of herself fashioning abstract shapes out of cardboard. In September, she tweeted, “Freakin love first year studio.”

Increasingly confident in her taste, Razan began wearing snapback hats and beanies over her hijab, though some people told her it was a weird look. Her Twitter account shows both a youthful insouciance—“I feel so bad for people who only enjoy one music genre like why do you do this to yourself child let me help you”—and a moral seriousness, particularly when it came to Islam’s place in the world. She retweeted comments like “If you think Muslims aren’t con-

demning ISIS, it’s not because Muslims aren’t condemning ISIS. It’s because you’re not listening to Muslims.”

At the clubhouse, police officers escorted the families to a private room and told them what they knew. That afternoon, a woman at the complex had called 911 after hearing shots and “kids screaming.” The police had found Deah Barakat’s body in the entryway of his apartment and the sisters’ bodies on the floor inside. A witness told the officers that he had “noticed a white male, approximately in his mid-forties, wearing a beard and with a balding spot on the top of his head, wearing a gold Carhartt coat, walking fast from the back of the apartment.”

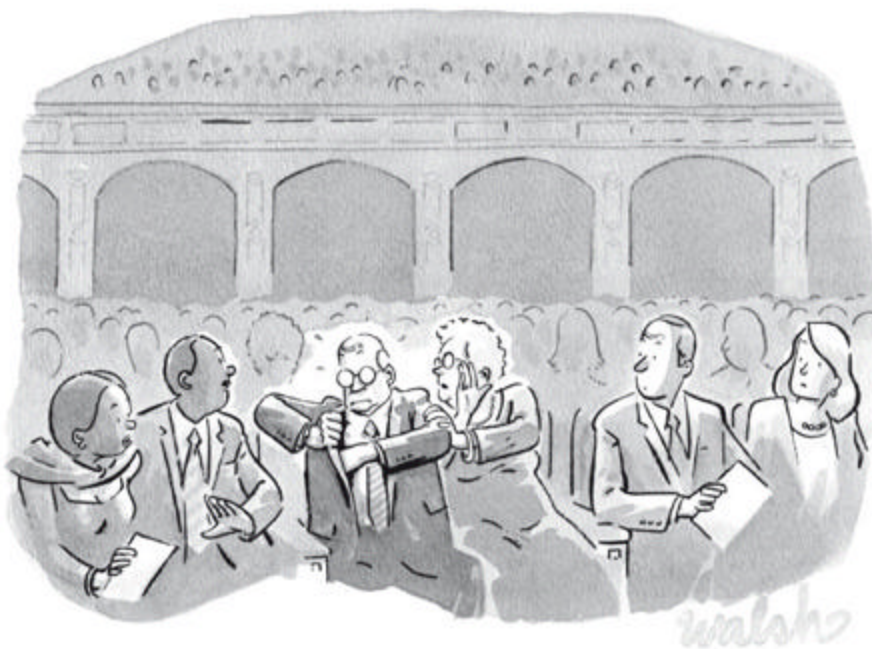
Later that evening, Craig Hicks turned himself in.

The murders of Deah, Yusor, and Razan, like all unprovoked acts of brutality, were pointless, but they were not meaningless. From the moment the news broke, people began the work of assigning that meaning.

The Chapel Hill police had one interpretation: after Hicks’s arrest, they issued a statement declaring that the killings had likely been “motivated by an ongoing neighbor dispute over parking.” Hicks’s wife had told them that her husband was perpetually angry about it.

Many neighbors in Finley Forest knew Hicks as the parking bully. Since moving into his wife’s condominium, in 2008, he had regularly leafletted cars in the parking lot. He called a local towing company so often that it stopped responding. When the police searched the Hickses’ apartment, they found “pictures and detailed notes on parking activity.”

They also found more than a dozen guns, including a loaded semi-automatic rifle. After the killings, a young woman living at the complex told the *Raleigh News & Observer* that residents had held a meeting last year about Hicks; his aggressiveness had been making them feel “uncomfortable and unsafe.” No one, however, seems to have called the police. North Carolina is one of thirty states that have permissive “open carry” laws, which means that you do not need a license to walk around with a gun in plain sight. The law makes an exception when firearms are displayed to terrorize people, but in Hicks’s case nobody tested that prohibition.



*“It’s not your phone—they’re playing ‘Für Elise.’”*

The Barakats and the Abu-Salha found the “parking dispute” interpretation trivializing and implausible. In an interview with CNN, Mohammad Abu-Salha, Yusor’s father, said, “I am sure my daughter felt hated, and she said, literally, ‘Daddy, I think it is because of the way we look and the way we dress.’” At the funeral, which was held on a field in Raleigh, to accommodate the more than five thousand people—many of them non-Muslims—who showed up, Mohammad told the crowd, “We have no doubt why they died.” He went on, “We are not seeking any revenge. Our children are much more valuable than any revenge. When we say that this was a hate crime, it’s all about protecting all other children in the U.S.A.—it is all about making this country that they loved and where they lived and died peaceful for everybody else. We need to identify things as they really are.” The victims had been killed “execution style.” He spoke of them as martyrs.

A month after the funeral, I met Barakat’s sister, Suzanne, at an annual fund-raiser for the Al-Iman school. She told me, “It’s time people started talking about how real Islamophobia is—that it’s not just a word tossed around for political purposes but that it has literally knocked on our doorstep and killed three of our American children.” Suzanne was soft-spoken and deliberate in her public appearances after the killings, though she sometimes broke down. She could barely take in the fact that her brother, his wife, and his sister-in-law had been murdered, and she certainly could not accept that it had been over a parking space.

For Suzanne and many others, the killings fit into a larger story of increasing hostility toward Muslims. According to statistics compiled by the F.B.I., anti-Muslim hate crimes multiplied after September 11th, and they have remained five times as common as they were before 2001. Most religiously motivated hate crimes are against Jews: in 2013, sixty per cent of such crimes were of this type, whereas fourteen per cent were anti-Muslim. But many American Muslims feel that the media’s daily coverage of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State—and the tendency, in popular culture and punditry, to equate Islam with terrorism—is making them more vulnerable.

In 2014, a Pew Research Center sur-

vey found that Americans harbor chillier feelings toward Muslims than toward any other religious group. Some politicians play to such sentiments—summoning, say, the improbable spectre of Sharia law in the U.S. In 2014, David Agema, a member of the Republican National Committee in Michigan, posted on his Facebook page, “Have you ever seen a Muslim do anything that contributes positively to the American way of life?”

Anna Bigelow, a professor of Islamic studies at N.C. State, who taught Barakat, told me, “Whether Hicks was motivated in a particular way might not be the issue. Just as maybe it’s not the issue whether any of the cops in Ferguson or on Staten Island actually were personally motivated by racial animus in the moment. African-Americans know that this is part of a bigger picture and a systemic feeling of insecurity vis à vis the cops. And Muslim Americans have that feeling vis à vis a certain sector of the society that is becoming more vocal and increasingly comfortable expressing not just its dislike for Islam but its profound distrust.”

**I**n the days after the murders, tens of thousands of people began tweeting about them using the hashtag #MuslimLivesMatter. Bloggers complained that the Chapel Hill killings weren’t getting enough media coverage, and that if the roles had been reversed—Muslim shooter, non-Muslim victims—the incident would have been labelled terrorism. In fact, by Thursday, two days after the murders, the story was receiving a lot of attention: the *Times* ran a front-page story; Anderson Cooper interviewed Suzanne Barakat; Mohammad Abu-Salha appeared on CNN and MSNBC. Nevertheless, many of the critics felt that the coverage had come only as the result of pressure from social media. That day, Recep Erdoğan, Turkey’s President, called on President Barack Obama to make a statement about the Chapel Hill murders. Palestinian officials cited the murders as evidence of the “growth of racism and religious extremism” in America. On Friday, Obama did address the shootings, saying, “No one in the United States of America should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship.”

By then, the F.B.I. and the Department of Justice had announced that they

were opening an inquiry into whether the murders constituted a hate crime. One reason that federal hate-crime statutes exist is to insure that local prosecutors respond strongly to such acts. Vandalism typically carries a relatively light sentence; spray-painting a swastika on a synagogue will carry a heavier one. The crime in Chapel Hill was a first-degree multiple murder, which carries a sentence of either life in prison or the death penalty. The Durham County prosecutor has announced that it is pursuing the death penalty, so the federal inquiry, when it is completed, will not increase the potential severity of Hicks’s sentence. But hate-crime statutes are symbolic as well as instrumental: they exist not only to maximize punishment but also to underscore disapproval of bias, allowing us to name an ugly motivation and renounce it. To the families and friends of the victims, it was the naming of the crime, not the punishment, that mattered most.

The day after the killings, Robert Maitland, an attorney in Chapel Hill, was visited by a woman seeking legal assistance for a divorce. When Maitland asked her why she wanted to end her marriage, she replied that her husband had just killed three people. Karen Hicks had come home from work a few hours after the murders to find the police swarming her apartment. After questioning her in a squad car, the police had let her go inside to retrieve her dog and cat and get a change of clothes. She’d then gone to a friend’s place. Her husband called her from jail. According to Maitland, Karen Hicks told him that Craig had “basically said, ‘Have a nice life’—that he was sorry, this wasn’t her fault. He was just curt and tight and sounded to her like he was reading from a script.”

Karen Hicks told Maitland that she didn’t believe her husband had committed the murders out of hatred for Muslims. Craig believed that everybody should be treated equally, she said. But he’d been so agitated about the parking issue that she’d suggested he seek counselling. Maitland told her, “You have about a two-hour window here. There’s nothing we can do about the fact that you’re the ex-wife of a murderer. You’ll be that all your life. But we can make the point that you aren’t the ex-wife of a terrorist.” Maitland recommended holding a press conference, saying that

her message would “offer some comfort and relief for the community.” He told me, “Chapel Hill has students from all over the world. I thought people would be glad to know that this wasn’t some big anti-Muslim campaign.” She followed his advice and held the press conference, but it didn’t gain much traction.

Ascribing motive to a crime is a messier business than we are sometimes willing to concede. Joseph E. Kennedy, a law professor at Chapel Hill, told me, “TV usually depicts killers as cold and calculating, but the mind of a murderer is often a chaotic, rage-filled mess.” Hicks’s fixation on parking suggests a wounded territoriality—the rage of a man who felt that his little corner of the South had been encroached upon by newcomers who were more successful than he was.

Still, it seems significant that Hicks’s anger intensified after Abu-Salha moved in and began receiving regular visits from her friends and her sister. Imad Ahmad, Barakat’s former roommate, told me it was his understanding that Hicks had come “about six times to their house in January and harassed them.” He added, “I also know that he left a note on Yusor’s car at one time. That never happened to Deah or me.” Barakat and Ahmad dressed like other college guys, in sweats and T-shirts. But the head scarves that Abu-Salha and her sister wore signalled their religion. Judging by Hicks’s Facebook page, any display of faith infuriated him. He didn’t single out Islam—“I hate Islam just as much as Christianity, but they have the right to worship in this country just as much as any others do,” he wrote in 2012—but he expressed the wish that Jews, Christians, and Muslims might “exterminate” each other. As it happens, photographs taken the day after the murders show that none of the three students’ cars were parked in spaces allotted to Hicks when he went on his rampage.

Perhaps it makes the most sense to think of anti-Muslim feeling as an enabler of Hicks’s crime rather than its cause. Kennedy, the law professor, observed to me, “It can be easier to commit violence against someone who is an other. Prejudice is one of the easiest ways to dehumanize someone.” But he added that it’s worth distinguishing between a crime that involves ethnic or religious

hatred and one that is motivated by it.

Whatever the nature of the conflagration in Hicks’s mind, hatred of some kind clearly provided fuel. When the autopsy report was released, in early May, it showed that Hicks had sprayed Barakat with bullets, and that he had shot Abu-Salha and her sister in the head at close range. He then shot Barakat a final time as he left the apartment.

Hicks had no prior criminal record, and, despite his pugnacious declarations on social media, he apparently did not belong to any anti-religious organization. According to F.B.I. statistics, only a small minority of the people who commit hate crimes are affiliated with an intolerant group. Jack McDevitt, a criminologist at Northeastern University who studies hate crimes, thinks that Hicks’s act should be classified as one. “With hate crimes, it’s not always an either/or,” he said. “You can decide you want to rob someone, for instance, but only someone you perceive to be gay, because maybe you think they’ll be less likely to go to the police, or only an immigrant, because you think the police won’t take it as seriously. In this case, he’s angry about the way people around him live, but he’s chosen these specific people because they also represent a religion he’s intolerant of.” According to McDevitt, one factor that the F.B.I. considers when assessing a possible hate crime is whether “the level of violence is more than what is required to do the



crime.” By that light, the fact that Hicks fired a number of shots and pressed his gun to the women’s heads seems relevant.

In the months after the killings, the public’s focus turned away from the motivations of the shooter and toward the cultural resonance of the lives he took. The word “exemplary” came up repeatedly in news stories and conversations about the victims. Many Muslim Americans, starting with the families, saw that talking about Barakat and the

Abu-Salhas gave them an opportunity, if a bitter one. The victims were ambitious young people who prayed five times a day and who also loved hip-hop and Tex-Mex. They had donated their time to both Muslim and non-Muslim charities: one of Barakat’s final Facebook posts was a photograph he’d taken while handing out dental supplies and food to the homeless. He’d also made a video in which he talked about his plans for a mission to Turkey to provide Syrian refugees with dental care—an effort similar to his wife’s volunteer work there. He named it Project Refugee Smiles, and had the goal of raising twenty thousand dollars. Within a month of the shootings, donations had exceeded half a million dollars. Since this amount could have funded such a project many times over, the families decided to make Project Refugee Smiles an annual mission and start an endowment that would aid related charities.

In a terrible way, the murders gave Muslim Americans a chance to broadcast an image of themselves as they had long wished to be seen. When I asked Yousef Abu-Salha—Yusor and Razan’s brother, and a medical student—about this, he responded in an e-mail that “watching the news can sometimes be disheartening for us. The ignorance and turmoil in the Middle East give an inaccurate image of Islam.” He and his friends and family had thought a lot in the past about how to “convey the true narrative of Islam,” and had tried to do so “through service work, confidence, humility, and assimilation.” He went on, “We even used to tell people that we believed the best true representation of Islam nowadays is the Moderate Practicing Muslim living in the West.” His sisters and Barakat had embodied that idea, and now people would be more likely to pay attention when you told them about it.

As authentic as the story of the victims was, it still had to be crafted and disseminated. Somebody had to get the word out about the students’ volunteer work and their immigrant dreams. Because people in the North Carolina Muslim community were determined to do something positive—and because many of them were young, energetic, and technologically savvy—they were very good at promoting their message.

The morning after the murders, Faris Barakat, Deah’s brother, and Abu-

Salha's friend Rana Odeh set up a Facebook page commemorating the three students. Farris told me that he originally considered titling the page "Our Three Angels," but reconsidered; though he was certain that they were in Heaven, they weren't technically angels. Besides, the phrase didn't quite capture the pride he wanted to convey. He settled on "Our Three Winners." He told me, "I found 'winners' more comforting than 'angels.' And it was true—they *were* winners. I knew from my business background that you need something memorable like that to draw attention." He wanted a striking graphic for the page, and a friend designed an image based on a graduation photograph of Barakat and the Abu-Salhas. It showed their heads in silhouette, the women's framed by head scarves, Barakat's with his jug-handle ears.

"Our Three Winners" became a popular hashtag, and within days the silhouette image was adorning T-shirts and posters. There were candlelight vigils at N.C. State and Chapel Hill; a Dunking 4 Deah basketball tournament raised money for Barakat's Syrian-refugee mission; a canned-food drive, Feed Their Legacy, mobilized mosques and Muslim student groups across the country.

On a drizzly Saturday afternoon in March, the Islamic Association of Raleigh held an open house that was attended by hundreds of people of all ages. After speakers discussed the tenets and practices of Islam, members of the mosque served refreshments—mint tea, hummus—on the basketball court where Barakat used to play. Many people, who had come with others from their churches or synagogues, seemed moved by the possibility that the victims had been martyrs to anti-religious zealotry. A former Christian missionary in Africa told me that he was "coming out in love and support, though it was a shame it had taken the murders to make people get to know and love their neighbors."

Last spring, Yusor Abu-Salha interviewed Mussarut Jabeen, the Al-Iman principal, for StoryCorps, the oral-history project that is featured every week on NPR's "Morning Edition." Jabeen had heard that the mobile recording studio for StoryCorps was coming to Durham. She thought that it would be an opportunity to talk about her ex-



perience as an immigrant from Pakistan, and about the Al-Iman school. Jabeen told me, "When we were driving over there, we remembered that the interview would be housed at the Library of Congress, and we both got really excited." Jabeen did most of the talking, and Abu-Salha, sounding earnest and happy, asked the questions. After Jabeen mentioned that she hoped to open a school for girls in her grandmother's village, in India, Abu-Salha said, "That's a beautiful dream. Education, to me, is so empowering. And I can't imagine being deprived of that privilege." She talked about how much she had loved Al-Iman as a little girl: "If I could go back, I would love to."

The interview was not initially broadcast, but after the killings Jabeen contacted her local NPR station and told a producer about it. Soon afterward, "Morning Edition" aired a passage of the interview in which Yusor Abu-Salha spoke at length. "Growing up in America has been such a blessing," she began. "Although in some ways I do stand out, such as the hijab I wear on my head, the head covering, there are still so many ways that I feel so embedded in the fabric that is, you know, our culture. And that's the beautiful thing here, is that it doesn't matter where you come from. There's so many different people from so many different places, of different backgrounds and religions—but here

we're all one, one culture. And it's beautiful to see people of, you know, different areas interacting and being family."

In the months after the murders, some of Yusor and Razan's Muslim friends felt afraid in their home towns. They were reluctant to go out at night, sensing that their head scarves made them vulnerable. They stayed together on campus between classes, and if one of them got home and her parents weren't there she'd call one of the others to come over.

But in the face of the wider world the girls did not flinch: they posted photographs of Barakat and the Abu-Salha sisters on their Instagram feeds, and they continued telling the story that they wanted to tell. Earlier this year, Rana Odeh published an essay in the *Guardian*. Yusor, she wrote, was "more than just a woman in a hijab who apparently inspired anger in a man she hardly knew. She loved and was loved; she cared for others and was cared for by them; she had dreams and ambitions and a laugh that changed things for the better." For Razan's friend Yasmine Inaya, the killings inspired a kind of bravado. She told herself, "I'm gonna wear this hijab—I'm gonna do it the right way. Before, I was, like, 'Oh, I do this because it's part of my religion.' Now I *need* to do it. I need to do it for them, I need to do it for me, I need to do it for all those little girls who are terrified to put it on." ♦



PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC

# THE INSIDE WAR

*To expose torture, Dianne Feinstein fought the C.I.A.—and the White House.*

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Dianne Feinstein, the Democratic senator from California, is making a late career of not quite pleasing anyone. After five decades in politics, Feinstein, at eighty-one, is the oldest sitting member of the Senate, where a late term is often less a valedictory than a chance for activism: think of Edward Kennedy or Mitch McConnell. With its elaborate rankings and deferential codes, the Senate rewards longevity; senior members have better committee seats, more loyal patrons, first choice of desk space in the chamber. As they near retirement age—whatever that means, in an institution where nearly a quarter of the members are over seventy—senators can hope to change a thing or two.

When Barack Obama took office, on January 20, 2009, the Democrats held the Senate, and Feinstein had just become chairman of the powerful Intelligence Committee. At Obama's inaugural ceremony, she delivered the welcoming remarks, standing before an eager crowd and declaring, "Future generations will mark this morning as the turning point for real and necessary change in our nation." Skeptics on the National Mall might have noted that this was not a novel sentiment in such speeches, but for Feinstein it was an earnest indicator of political engagement. As the Bush Administration came to an end, the country was reconsidering the decisions of the previous eight years, particularly the ethics of the War on Terror.

Feinstein is sometimes described as a centrist, but it is because her views are varied, not because they are mild; she thinks of herself, more accurately, as a pragmatist. Especially in recent years, on issues she cares deeply about, she will take positions that other senators do not. Feinstein has pursued a deal to prevent

Iran from building nuclear arms more intently than any of her colleagues. In March, after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed a joint session of Congress, in the hope of averting a possible deal, Feinstein appeared on "Meet the Press" and said, "What Prime Minister Netanyahu did here was something no ally of the United States would have done." When I saw her the next day, she told me, "For Netanyahu to come here with a clear view of preventing an agreement was really inappropriate. Particularly because this President's Administration has provided more than twenty-five billion dollars to Israel, far more than to any other country."

Although Feinstein mostly votes with the Democrats, she is less predictable than many of her colleagues. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, she voted to confirm several of President George W. Bush's nominees. In 2007, she endorsed Michael Mukasey for attorney general—even as he dodged the question of whether waterboarding is torture, saying only, "If it amounts to torture, then it is not constitutional." A Democrat from hyper-liberal San Francisco, she has persistently defended government surveillance programs and targeted killings by drones, and she has been one of the C.I.A.'s most faithful supporters. Last year, after President Obama called to move authority for drone strikes from the C.I.A. to the Defense Department, Feinstein placed a classified amendment in a spending bill that helped keep the program where it was. When the activist Edward Snowden revealed that the N.S.A. had amassed the phone records of vast numbers of American citizens, he was hailed on the left as a whistleblower. Feinstein said, "I don't look at this as being a whistle-blower. I think it's an act of treason." Advocates for

*After five decades in politics, Senator Feinstein calls the Intelligence Committee's investigation of interrogation techniques the most important work of her career.*

human rights and civil liberties responded with angry editorials. The journalist Glenn Greenwald has said that her “disgusting rhetoric recalls the worst of Dick Cheney.”

The former Secretary of State George Shultz, who has raised money for Feinstein’s campaigns from Republican friends in California, told me, “Dianne is not really bipartisan so much as nonpartisan.” Slightly formal in style, she adheres faithfully to procedure and protocol; she believes in settling disputes privately, and by argument rather than by force. Even in less than momentous situations, she is a dogged negotiator. William Luers, a former ambassador and the head of the Iran Project, recalled, “I don’t think anyone has a meeting with her where she says, ‘I’m with you all the way.’ Rather, she says, ‘I’m with you, but you have to understand under what terms.’”

In her office recently, she described how she broke with the C.I.A. over the detention and interrogation program that began in the days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From the first time Feinstein was briefed about the program, she opposed it. On September 6, 2006, Michael Hayden, the C.I.A. director, appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee and described a net-

work of “black sites”: secret facilities where C.I.A. interrogators subjected detainees to “enhanced interrogation techniques,” seeking information about possible terrorist attacks. Hayden, self-assured and pugnacious, insisted that the interrogations were carefully run and unassailably effective. Afterward, Feinstein wrote to him that his testimony was “extraordinarily problematic,” and that she was “unable to understand why the C.I.A. needs to maintain this program.” In November, when Hayden appeared before the committee again, Feinstein peppered him with questions. She wanted to know how the agency guarded against abuse, whether detainees were stripped of their clothes, whether they were fed during periods of sleep deprivation. Although she and several colleagues raised objections, Hayden, not long afterward, told a meeting of foreign diplomats, “This is not C.I.A.’s program. This is not the President’s program. This is America’s program.”

In December, 2007, the *Times* revealed that C.I.A. officers had secretly destroyed videotapes of interrogations, against the advice of White House officials. A few days later, Hayden, insisting to the Intelligence Committee that there had been no “destruction of evidence,” turned over cables related to those taped

interrogations. For months, two committee staff members reviewed the cables, which described the interrogations of Abu Zubaydah, whom the C.I.A. suspected was a high-ranking Al Qaeda member, and of a detainee named Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri.

In February, 2009, the staff members appeared before the committee and described what they had found. Nearly twenty-four hours a day for twenty days, Abu Zubaydah was stripped naked and subjected to multiple “enhanced” techniques: slammed into a wall, slapped, deprived of sleep, confined in a coffin-size box, forced into painful postures. He was also waterboarded at least eighty-three times. Two psychologists, contracted by the C.I.A. to develop and run the interrogation program, reported that Abu Zubaydah was “ready to talk” during the first exposure, but “we chose to expose him over and over until we had a high degree of confidence he wouldn’t hold back.” After the first waterboarding sessions, a C.I.A. official wrote, “Several on the team profoundly affected . . . some to the point of tears.” By the seventh day, the C.I.A. team had informed headquarters that it was unlikely Abu Zubaydah had the threat information the agency was seeking, but the team was instructed to continue. During one waterboarding session, investigators found later, Abu Zubaydah “became completely unresponsive, with bubbles rising through his open, full mouth.”

Nashiri was subjected to similar measures. Investigators determined that he was put in a “standing stress position,” with “his hands affixed over his head,” for at least two days. It was implied that his mother would be brought before him and sexually abused. He was waterboarded. After each session, his interrogators reported that he was cooperative, but officials told them to persist, because he had not provided information on imminent attacks. When the interrogators objected, they were replaced.

Feinstein described the interrogations as “ugly, visceral.” As the new chairman of the committee, she had the authority to try to effect change. “You set the table, so to speak,” she said recently. “You make the determinations, what will come up, what the committee will do.” She called for a full investigation of the C.I.A. program, and the committee voted in favor



*“And, little by little, over the next ten minutes, he was able to dig his way to freedom.”*

of it, 14–1. That was the genesis of what became known as the torture report, a sixty-seven-hundred-page tome, laden with footnotes. When the report was completed, in December, 2012, it included an appendix devoted to Hayden, detailing more than thirty misstatements in one session of his testimony. (Hayden argues that the Democrats misinterpreted the intent of his testimony, saying, “I described the norms—how things were supposed to work—and they found the exceptions.”)

Michael Schiffer, who was a member of Feinstein’s staff for a decade, told me that Feinstein retains a stubborn, perhaps naïve faith that the system is run by people who are trying to do the right thing for the country. “When that faith is shaken, she is really determined to do something about it,” he said. “It was that faith that caused her to be so enraged about torture.” A former intelligence officer, who knew Feinstein from her years on the Intelligence Committee, saw her determination a little differently: “The worst thing, from Dianne Feinstein’s perspective, is trying to keep her from doing her job of oversight. And if you lie to her that’s *bad*.”

When Obama took office, Feinstein assumed that he would be a strong ally. During the campaign, he had excoriated the Bush Administration for the C.I.A.’s interrogation program, forthrightly calling the interrogation tactics “torture.” On his second day in the White House, he issued an executive order that banned C.I.A. detention and effectively prohibited the use of waterboarding and other coercive techniques. In the end, though, what Feinstein’s group released was not the full report but a five-hundred-page executive summary, with a fraction of the meticulous, excruciating details. The summary’s release, last December, came after an eleven-month battle, in which Feinstein and several other Democrats on the committee fought strenuously against the C.I.A.—and, unexpectedly, the Obama White House.

While many of those who had condemned Feinstein for her position on the N.S.A. praised her work on the report, the intelligence community, led by her former allies at the C.I.A., vilified her. Jeff Duncan, a Republican congressman from South Carolina, said that she was “as much a traitor to this country at

this point” as Snowden was. Feinstein told me in her office that the torture report was the most important work of her career. But the process of getting it released, with all of the attendant conflict and compromise, was surely not the decisive victory she hoped for. Amy Zegart, an intelligence scholar at Stanford, said, “I can’t think of anyone else who’s been beaten up by so many different factions, over so many different issues, in such a short period of time.”

Feinstein began negotiating the terms of the committee’s investigation in the spring of 2009, during an unusual period of openness. The C.I.A. had a new director, Leon Panetta, a former congressman, whom Obama had instructed to improve the agency’s relationship with the legislature. (Panetta told a colleague that the directive was to “make love to Congress.”) Panetta agreed to give the committee access to millions of pages of documents: unredacted operational cables, e-mails, memos.

But many members of the C.I.A. distrusted the inquiry from the beginning. “Feinstein’s report started as an attempt to get to the bottom of whether these ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ were valuable,” the former intelligence officer told me. “For many at the agency, just asking the question is unpatriotic.” The agency arranged for the Senate staff to work on the report not in the committee’s secure space, in the Hart Senate Office Building, but in a secret C.I.A. facility in northern Virginia, using a computer system that the C.I.A. provided.

Six Republicans on the committee voted in favor of the investigation, but by the fall of 2009 they had recused themselves. Democratic staff members worked alone at the C.I.A. site for three and a half years. In December, 2012, the committee approved the final report (eight Democrats and one Republican voted yes) and sent it to President Obama. The report concluded that the enhanced techniques were far more brutal than the agency had disclosed, and were an ineffective means of obtaining accurate information. The C.I.A. had justified them by enumerating terrorist plots that had been “thwarted.” The report examined twenty of these examples and found them “wrong in fundamental respects.”

Feinstein asked the White House to

gather comments from the executive branch and respond by mid-February. Instead, the response arrived in June, sent by the C.I.A. By then, the agency had a new, less congenial director: John Brennan, a C.I.A. veteran who had served as Obama’s counterterrorism adviser. Brennan was upset about the inquiry at the start, according to a former White House official: “Feinstein had gotten Panetta to give up code names, references to other countries, spycraft stuff. Brennan was very concerned about people’s lives.” The response, which Brennan delivered personally to Feinstein and to the committee’s Republican vice-chairman, Saxby Chambliss, acknowledged that there had been “lapses,” and that some employees were not held accountable. But it strongly disputed the report’s major findings. For several months, the Senate staff members met with their C.I.A. counterparts to review the complaints. Relations grew only more poisonous.

On January 15th, Brennan summoned Feinstein and Chambliss to Room 217, a secure office in the Capitol, for an urgent meeting. Chambliss, a conservative from Moultrie, Georgia, recalled that the meeting began cordially but that Brennan soon began to display “an edge.” He told the two senators that, for several days, C.I.A. officials had been searching hard drives in a computer system that the committee’s staff members maintained at the C.I.A. site in Virginia. They had found copies of sensitive documents—which, he charged, the staff had acquired by hacking into the agency’s computer system. The atmosphere grew tense. “John was very forthright in his opinion that the staff had gone into C.I.A. computers,” Chambliss said. “John didn’t handle that right.”

The files that Brennan was concerned with were known in the agency as the Panetta review. As the C.I.A. turned over records to the committee, Panetta had ordered a team of his own to vet them, in an attempt to predict the committee’s findings. It was, in effect, the agency’s best effort to critique itself as unsparingly as the Senate staff would, and, according to people who have read it, it largely accorded with the congressional report. (The C.I.A. has countered that the Panetta team examined only about half the documents that were given to the committee, and that the review was

an unapproved draft.) Senator Mark Udall, one of the Democrats on the Intelligence Committee, later said that the Panetta review—like the Senate report—found that, in an effort to justify torture, the C.I.A. repeatedly provided inaccurate information to Congress and the President about the efficacy of the enhanced techniques.

A week before Feinstein and Chambliss met with Brennan, a C.I.A. official had told him that the Senate investigators might have obtained the Panetta review. Brennan ordered an investigation, and the next day an agency official reported that five Senate investigators had accessed the documents “thousands of times.” According to a memo from that official, included in a report by the C.I.A. inspector general, Brennan told him to “pursue all available options to determine how the documents came to be on the [Senate] side of the system.” That Saturday, the official recalled, Brennan called him at home, to urge him to find answers by “whatever means necessary.” (Brennan later told the inspector general that he “would never use those words.”)

As Brennan recounted the charges to Feinstein and Chambliss, he grew more agitated. Senator Jay Rockefeller, Feinstein’s predecessor as chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said, “Brennan has such an explosive temper. His face turns really red. Dianne seems to bring that out in him—because she’s so West Coast, calm, cool, stately.” Brennan said that the Senate staffers had printed out copies of the documents, and demanded that Feinstein return every one to the C.I.A.

Feinstein, recalling the meeting, said, “That was terrible! It was something I never expected to see in my government.” Senator Martin Heinrich, another Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, described her as alarmed, but also galvanized: “I think she knew, after that meeting, that it was going to be a real battle to bring the report out.” It was all the more extraordinary, he continued, because “I can honestly say I don’t know a bigger booster of the C.I.A. than Senator Feinstein.”

**D**uring the long process of producing the report, Feinstein had immersed herself in memos and drafts. “You remember that movie ‘The Constant Gardener?’” Rockefeller said. “Di-

anne is the constant student.” Throughout, she remained a staunch supporter of the C.I.A., stressing that a relatively small number of employees were involved in the interrogation program. Obama had ended the program in January, 2009; she was merely trying to make sure that it was never repeated. Even Chambliss—who cast the sole vote against assembling the torture report, arguing that it was time to move forward—emphasized that he and Feinstein have otherwise been united in support of the intelligence community. After he became vice-chairman of the committee, in 2010, he said, “Dianne and I shared the common interest of making sure we did everything we could to give tools to our intelligence community to be able to protect Americans.” He added, “She might not agree with me. But she was not automatically going to be on the Democratic side of whatever the issue was.” Indeed, several of Feinstein’s Democratic colleagues on the committee—Martin Heinrich, Ron Wyden, and Mark Udall—opposed her on surveillance, and had pushed her to get the entire torture report declassified. Feinstein, concerned that the information in the full report would be too inflammatory, decided that the executive summary sufficed for the time being.

Two days after the meeting with Brennan, Feinstein wrote to him, urging him to stop investigating her staff, and noting that the C.I.A.’s search could



well have violated constitutional principles of separation of powers. She and Chambliss wrote several more letters, asking who had authorized the searches, under what legal authority, and who had carried them out. For weeks, Brennan did not respond.

Feinstein spoke with officials at the White House and at the Department of Justice, and with the Senate legal counsel. In late January, the C.I.A. inspector general, David Buckley, learned

about the search, and told Brennan that he was going to investigate the C.I.A.’s actions. According to three Senate aides, Brennan immediately told Buckley that he wanted him to conduct the investigation. “Publicly, Brennan appeared to be grabbing the situation by the horns, but he was actually pushed into it,” one aide said. (The agency maintains that Brennan requested the inquiry unprompted.)

Heinrich, Wyden, and Udall wanted to confront Brennan publicly, but Feinstein refused. Then, on January 29th, they had an opportunity: the Senate Intelligence Committee held its annual hearing on threat assessments, and Brennan was one of the witnesses. Heinrich told Brennan that the agency’s recent actions were “meant to intimidate, deflect, and thwart legitimate oversight.” When he asked about the Panetta review, Brennan deflected the question, saying that he would address the matter with the committee “at the appropriate time, and not at a threat-assessment hearing.”

“Thank you, Mr. Brennan,” Feinstein said. “I believe that’s appropriate.”

Udall asked Brennan if he was aware of the Panetta review when he provided the C.I.A.’s response to the committee, and Brennan said, “I had not gone through it.” Udall, noting that the answer “strikes me as a bit improbable,” pressed forward. “Are you saying that the C.I.A. officers who were asked to produce this internal review got it wrong, just like you said the committee got it wrong? We had sixty-three hundred pages, six million documents, thirty-five thousand five hundred footnotes.” Brennan again said that he would respond “at the appropriate time.”

Feinstein spoke to Udall, off-microphone.

“Madam chair, I still have two minutes remaining,” Udall protested.

Feinstein spoke to him again, and then, loudly enough to be heard, ordered, “Do.” Udall moved to another subject.

At the hearing, Brennan was imperturbable. When Wyden, Feinstein’s strongest adversary on privacy issues, asked whether the Federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act applies to the C.I.A., Brennan said, “I would have to look into what that act actually calls for

and its applicability to C.I.A.'s authorities. And I'll be happy to get back to you, Senator, on that."

The torture issue has dogged Brennan. Obama, at the beginning of his first term, had wanted to make him director of the C.I.A., but backed away after human-rights advocates pointed out that Brennan had been the agency's deputy executive director from 2001 to 2003, when many of the worst abuses occurred. (Brennan has said that he had "some visibility into some of the activities" of the detention program but that he was "not in the chain of command.") Instead, Obama brought Brennan into the White House, as his counterterrorism adviser. Brennan told Charlie Rose recently that in those early days Obama "did not have a good deal of experience" with intelligence-related subjects, but that in the intervening years he had "gone to school and understands the complexities." Brennan met with Obama frequently, helping to orchestrate a vast expansion of the targeted-killing program, and shaping the various "kill lists." In the White House, he was described by other officials as Obama's "father confessor," who allowed the President comfort as his decisions took the lives of thousands of suspected militants, along with an unknown number of civilians.

"John had a Jesuit education, he is a practicing Catholic, and I've heard him in meetings at the agency, talking about the theories of just war," a former C.I.A. officer who has known Brennan for many years said. "He weighs things carefully." The former intelligence officer said that Brennan was "a Dudley-Do-Right character, a guy who is convinced he is wearing the white hat. He has always wanted to be close to power—because, I think, he is convinced he can do good by being there."

Robert Grenier, the former director of the C.I.A. Counterterrorism Center, has been friendly with Brennan since they were junior officers, and he has described Brennan as "highly ambitious and a talented bureaucratic infighter." He told me that the agency's leaders had such confidence in Brennan that, in 1996, they promoted him from an analyst to Riyadh station chief. The political skills



*"I'm afraid that kidney went to somebody who can write code."*

that made him a good choice for that position were evident in his White House job, Grenier continued. "I've never seen anyone from that perch exert the kind of influence and even, to a certain extent, direct control," he said, citing the targeted-killing program. "Unlike most of his predecessors, he actually understands the whole system from the inside. So he was in a position, with the weight of the President behind him, to really push himself into the middle of the process, and to control it."

When Obama nominated Brennan as C.I.A. director, in January, 2013, Brennan made his way dexterously through the confirmation process. During a hearing before the Intelligence Committee, Chambliss mentioned a private conversation in which Brennan had disparaged the committee's report as "a prosecutor's brief, written with an eye toward finding problems." Rockefeller recounted a quite different conversation. "You told me that you were shocked at some of what you read," he told Brennan. "I would hope . . . that you will make parts of this . . . required reading for your senior personnel so they can go through the same experience you went through. Are you willing to do that?"

"Yes, Senator," Brennan replied. "I am looking forward to taking advantage of

whatever lessons come out of this chapter in our history and this committee's report."

At Langley, Brennan's performance caused consternation. "Career people back at the C.I.A., watching this, were dismayed," John Rizzo, the agency's former acting general counsel, recalled. "He seemed overly in agreement with the Democrats, and he made preliminary comments about what he'd seen in the report—said it was shocking." At the hearing, Brennan earnestly promised to be forthcoming with the committee, and to "speak truth about power." Early in his testimony, he acknowledged that there was a "trust deficit" between the committee and the C.I.A. "If I am confirmed," he said, "I would make it my goal on day one of my tenure and every day thereafter to strengthen the trust between us."

At the close of the hearing, Feinstein told Brennan, "I've sat through a number of these hearings; I don't think I've ever heard anyone more forthright or more honest or more direct."

In late January, 2014, as the fight over the C.I.A.'s search of the Senate computers continued, Brennan presented a security briefing to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a strong supporter

of the torture report, and Reid offered some unsolicited advice. “He told Brennan, ‘You’re wrong here,’” a senior Senate staffer recalled. “‘There is no justification for breaking into the staff computers. Just say you did it. Say you’re sorry. John, it’s Dianne Feinstein. You are questioning her credibility, and she is an unimpeachable person.’ But Brennan said no. He was defiant.”

Instead, Brennan intensified his attack. On February 7th, the C.I.A.’s acting general counsel, Robert Eatinger, filed a crimes report with the Department of Justice. He stated that information made available to him suggested that a Senate staff member had exploited a security vulnerability “to access, copy, and bring across the firewall C.I.A. documents to which he or she did not have authorized access,” and that at least four other staff members had “accessed and printed these C.I.A. documents on multiple occasions.”

According to Feinstein, the staff had identified the Panetta documents sometime in 2010 by using a search tool that the C.I.A. had provided. She told me that her staff members were unnerved by the C.I.A.’s attempt to instigate criminal charges. Still, she resisted going public. “Feinstein worked every internal lever she possibly could,” the Senate aide said. “It was frustrating to some of us, because we thought the only way you could have

accountability over the C.I.A. was to start informing the public.”

Feinstein’s staff wrote a speech about the C.I.A.-Senate fight for her to deliver on the Senate floor, but for several weeks she resisted. In early March, articles about the conflict appeared in the press, including two in which unnamed sources suggested that the committee staffers had “hacked” into the C.I.A. network to obtain the Panetta review and that the C.I.A. had spied on the Senate staff’s computers. Brennan said, “I am deeply dismayed that some members of the Senate have decided to make spurious allegations about C.I.A. actions that are wholly unsupported by the facts.” On the weekend of March 8th, Reid called Feinstein several times. “She was saying, ‘I want to be fair, I want to be in the middle—I’m chairman,’” the senior Senate staffer recalled. “And Senator Reid was saying, ‘Look, you can’t stand by anymore! The C.I.A. is leaking stuff. They’re making your staff out to be the bad guys!’”

Feinstein reserved time on the Senate floor for Tuesday, March 11th, but even that morning her staff was not certain that she would give the speech. Ultimately, she told me, in her efforts to reach a private resolution with Brennan, “there comes a point where the stonewalling is such that you have to break through.” At about 9 A.M., Feinstein, dressed in a purple suit, walked

to the lectern. “Let me say up front that I come to the Senate floor reluctantly,” she began. As her anger gradually built, the room was still. She summarily rejected the notion that her staff had hacked into C.I.A. computers; the documents had appeared on the Senate side of the network, and her staff members had printed them out. In 2013, Feinstein said, when the C.I.A. delivered its response to the report, the staff members noted major disparities with the Panetta review. The terms that she had originally negotiated with Panetta suggested that the C.I.A. had to approve any documents that left the facility in Virginia. But the staff members, who knew that the agency had rescinded hundreds of files from the computer system, including the Panetta review, were afraid that it would confiscate the printouts. They redacted the names of non-supervisory C.I.A. personnel, along with information that might help locate detention sites, and then hauled the documents to the secure committee space in the Hart Building. Inside an inner office, they locked the documents in a safe.

Feinstein said that the C.I.A.’s search of the staff’s computers might well have violated the constitutional principle of separation of powers, as well as the Fourth Amendment, the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and an executive order that prohibits the C.I.A. from conducting domestic searches or surveillance. The crimes report that the C.I.A. had filed with the Department of Justice, she said, was an effort “to intimidate this staff.” She noted that it had been filed by the C.I.A.’s acting general counsel, who had been a lawyer in the agency’s Counterterrorism Center, and was mentioned by name more than sixteen hundred times in the report. “How this is resolved,” she concluded, “will show . . . whether our work can be thwarted by those we oversee.”

After Feinstein spoke, she went to the Senate Democratic Caucus weekly lunch. As she entered the room, her colleagues gave her a standing ovation. The Senate aide said, “I think it made her feel like, O.K., I’ve done the right thing. But then, within forty-eight or seventy-two hours, she was hearing from Chambliss and other Republican members of the committee: ‘Why did



*“There’s trouble, boys. Let’s pants up and move out!”*

you have to go out there and do that? It was so partisan of you!’ And she started to feel, again, like, Maybe I shouldn’t have done that.”

Brennan, speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations later that morning, said, “As far as the allegations of C.I.A. hacking into, you know, Senate computers, nothing could be further from the truth. I mean, we wouldn’t do that. I mean, that’s—that’s just beyond the—you know, the scope of reason in terms of what we would do.” Although he stammered slightly, he spoke with his customary conviction, seeming disturbed only by the temerity of the accusation. Several weeks later, on Fox News, the former C.I.A. director Michael Hayden dismissed Feinstein as “emotional.”

On the morning of November 27, 1978, Dianne Feinstein, then forty-five years old, told reporters in the San Francisco City Hall press room that she was thinking about getting out of politics. She had been elected to the board of supervisors in 1969, and had become its first woman president. But she failed in a bid to become mayor in 1971 and again in 1975; the second time, she did not make the runoff. She had entered that race as the front-runner, so “it was a big shock to the town, and to her,” Jerry Roberts, who covered Feinstein’s career for the San Francisco *Chronicle*, said. “She really got squeezed between the left and the right.” Her opponents were George Moscone, a progressive aligned with the labor movement, and John Barbagelata, whom Roberts described as “sort of a Tea Party precursor.” The fight was strenuous. “In the middle was Dianne, basically a technocrat, saying, ‘Let’s have civility.’” Feinstein told me she concluded that she was not electable.

An hour after the press conference, Feinstein, in her small office on the second floor of City Hall, saw her fellow-supervisor Dan White run past. White, a former police officer, had resigned from the board three weeks earlier, but he wanted his job back. She called out to him, but he ignored her. Minutes later, she heard gunshots and smelled cordite. She went to her door and saw White race out of the building. In an office down the hall, she found Supervisor Harvey Milk, the city’s first openly gay elected official, face down on the

floor, surrounded by blood; she reached for his neck, hoping to find a pulse, and her finger went through a bullet hole. She soon learned what had happened: after Moscone refused to give White his job back, White had shot him and then gone on to Milk’s office.

Feinstein grew up in San Francisco, and her private life captured something of the city’s combination of propriety and license. Her father, a professor of medicine, was Jewish; her mother, a volatile, emotionally unstable woman from St. Petersburg, was Russian Orthodox. When Feinstein was entering ninth grade, her mother enrolled her in the exclusive Convent of the Sacred Heart, reasoning that she would benefit from exposure to the social élite. At the convent, situated in a mansion in the Pacific Heights neighborhood, the pupils wore white gloves and curtsied to their instructors. The nuns emphasized to the students that their purpose was to make a difference, and that they should not be limited by their gender. Although Feinstein was never a committed feminist, she resisted restrictions in her professional life. At Stanford, she was the vice-president of her class—the highest office a woman could hold. After graduating, in 1956, she eloped with a prosecutor named Jack Berman, and had a daughter, Katherine; when they divorced, three years later, Feinstein carried on for a time as a single mother. Then, in 1962, she married Bertram Feinstein, a neurosurgeon twenty years her senior.

Soon after finding Milk’s body, Feinstein appeared near the doors of City Hall, where a large crowd had gathered. “It is my duty to make this announcement,” she said. “Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk have been shot and killed.” People shouted in horror, and Feinstein struggled to keep her composure. Her lips moved silently, and then she said, “The suspect is Supervisor Dan White.”

Feinstein, as president of the board of supervisors, became mayor, and served out Moscone’s term, presiding over a city that was torn apart—as she later said, “some of it sorrow, some of it hate.” Just days before the murders, nine hundred followers of the minister Jim Jones, many of them from San Francisco, had committed suicide at Jonestown, in Guyana. In the previous few years, a terrorist group called the New World Liberation Front

had carried out scores of bombings, some of which targeted Feinstein and other supervisors. “The lesson Dianne took from this craziness was that she had been right—that all this polarization and bitterness that was extant in the town had now led to these murders,” Roberts said. “That’s when she started talking about how the center is so important.”

While Feinstein was the acting mayor, Milk’s killer was convicted of manslaughter, rather than murder, and the city erupted in a riot. “Twelve squad cars were blown up, the stores were looted, and the gay community just went nuts,” Feinstein recalled. “The hatred was so big, we really had to bring the bricks of the city together again, and it was difficult.” She was elected mayor in 1979 and again in 1983. When the AIDS crisis began, she said, “I had to close down the bathhouses. You learn how to do the tough stuff and bring people together at the same time.” She worked closely with the city’s downtown business establishment and with law enforcement; having served on a citywide crime commission, she describes herself as “very police-oriented, and very public-safety-oriented.” Jerry Roberts recalled, “We used to say, Dianne’s never met a uniform she didn’t like. She carried a fire-department turnout coat in the trunk of her car, so if there was a fire she heard about on her scanner she could get out and take a look.”

In 1990, Feinstein ran for governor of California. Nine tumultuous years as mayor had honed her instinct for the political center. At the state Democratic Party convention, packed with activists from the left, Feinstein stated that she unequivocally supported the death penalty. The crowd booed her—to the delight of her political consultants. That mass denunciation became a thirty-second TV spot, designed to reach the majority of California voters, who agreed with her.

In the weeks before the primary, Feinstein was far behind, but she was able to make a concerted push. Her second husband had died in 1978, and two years later she married Richard Blum, a wealthy investor. Now she and Blum loaned her campaign three million dollars, some of which paid for statewide television ads showing a clip of Feinstein announcing that Moscone and Milk had been assassinated. Feinstein won the primary, then

narrowly lost to the Republican candidate, Pete Wilson.

Despite her loss, Feinstein was now sure that she was electable—perhaps, even, to the highest office. In 1992, she ran for the Senate against an incumbent Republican, John Seymour. In their biggest debate, her political consultant Bill Carrick recalled, Seymour charged that Feinstein, a strong advocate of gun control, had owned a handgun. “Dianne explained that at one point the New World Liberation Front had planted a bomb in a flower box outside her daughter Katherine’s bedroom window,” Carrick said. “And, yes, she had gotten a gun. But, she said, after a while she realized it would do no good. She launched a citywide campaign, urging San Franciscans to turn in their guns. And she concluded, ‘The Pope was coming to town. So we melted down all these guns we’d collected and gave them to him, in the form of a cross.’” Feinstein won easily.

As a mayor, Feinstein had relished executive decision-making, but in the Senate she had to generate support among ninety-nine colleagues. Shortly after arriving, she secured a seat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and told its chairman, Senator Joe Biden, that she wanted to sponsor legislation to ban assault weapons. Michael Schiffer, her former staff member, told me, “The leadership basically said, If you want to do this, terrific—you’re on your own. She went out, senator to senator, buttonholed people, found out what was necessary to cobble together enough votes.” She sent a draft of her legislation to the N.R.A. for suggestions; instead, it fought tenaciously against the bill. “I was amazed to see the degree to which the National Rifle Association controls this body,” Feinstein said at the time, betraying her inexperience. The legislation passed, in what was both a surprising achievement and a lesson in compromise. The law stopped the manufacture, sale, and transfer of assault weapons. But it did not remove existing weapons from the streets, and it exempted six hundred and fifty kinds of firearms, including high-powered rifles and shotguns.

Feinstein’s greatest political vulnerability has come from her home life. In December, 1978, the United States and the People’s Republic of China announced the start of diplomatic relations,

and Feinstein, who had just become mayor, decided to try to establish a sister-city relationship with Shanghai, China’s leading port and industrial center. Six months later, she led a mayoral delegation to China. Blum, who had been fascinated with Asia since visiting Nepal, in 1968, accompanied her. Feinstein recalled that, after spending time in Shanghai, “we went to Beijing, and we were on the Wall, walking along, and I ran into Tom Bradley, the mayor of Los Angeles. I said, ‘Tom, what are you doing here?’ And he said, ‘We’re going to Shanghai,’ to get a sister-city relationship. I said, ‘Been there, done that!’”

Feinstein became friends with Shanghai’s mayor, Jiang Zemin, and the two visited each other regularly; Jiang once spent Thanksgiving in San Francisco with Feinstein and Blum. In 1986, Feinstein and Jiang agreed to foster trade and business through corporate partnerships. Soon afterward, Shanghai Pacific Partners, in which Blum was an investor, signed a deal with a state-owned investment entity to create a seventeen-million-dollar apartment-and-retail complex, Golden Bridge Mansion, in a Shanghai suburb. As Feinstein told me, “In my day, China made friends first, and then they did business with their friends.”

In 1993, Jiang became the President of China. Feinstein served as an intermediary for him with the White House, and argued in Congress that Beijing should be granted permanent most-favored-nation trading status. Meanwhile, Blum and a partner raised more than a hundred million dollars to invest, primarily in China. For years, Feinstein was dogged by news stories about the apparent conflict of interest. In 1997, Blum pledged to donate to charity all profits he made from his China investments and, two years later, said that he had ended his personal investments there; however, he continued to manage a partnership that invested in China.

Finally, in 2000, he declared that he would not invest in China or Hong Kong, and that any money he received from managing others’ investments there would also go to charity. But the issue persisted, because his holdings and managed funds were so sprawling and complex that they fell outside the scope of mandatory disclosure forms. In Feinstein’s 2000 race, her Republican chal-

lenger, a congressman named Tom Campbell, charged that Blum continued to maintain an interest in at least one company doing business in China. Feinstein dismissed the allegation. She also insisted that there was a “firewall” between her and Blum, and that she made every effort to consult with the Senate Ethics Committee on possible conflicts of interest. “I don’t know what more I can do,” she said. “I mean, get divorced and live in sin, I suppose.”

It was a flippant response, which ignored the obvious: Blum should have resisted the money. But Feinstein was not accustomed to having her integrity called into question. For the most part, her constituents didn’t seem to care. In 1994, Feinstein—tough on gun control, illegal immigration, and crime—was voted California’s most popular politician, and she has held on to that ranking; in 2012, she set a record for the greatest number of popular votes in any Senate election in history.

For months after the torture report was sent to Obama, in December, 2012, the White House issued no clear statement supporting its release. The following April, at the Sedona Forum, in Arizona, Senator John McCain was seated onstage with Vice-President Biden. McCain, a vocal opponent of torture, spoke about how important it was for the report to come out. Biden agreed, but said that there was “an internal debate” in the White House: “Do we go back and do we expose it? Do we lay out who was responsible?” The issue, he said, was “not resolved yet.”

By early 2014, it had become clear that the White House was reluctant to take sides against the C.I.A. According to the official’s memo included in the inspector general’s report, Brennan had notified Denis McDonough, Obama’s chief of staff, while his agents were searching the Senate computers; he also informed the White House counsel before the crimes report was filed with the Department of Justice. Obama halted neither action. “I was astonished that the White House let it go that far,” a former White House official told me. “It was such a loss of control.”

After Feinstein’s floor speech in mid-March, 2014, the Intelligence Committee voted to send the report’s executive

summary to the White House for a declassification review, anticipating public release. The White House instead said that the C.I.A. would take the lead in redacting information. Feinstein argued that the agency had a conflict of interest—redacting the charges of its own violations—and she appealed to Obama to reconsider. She got no response.

In the six million documents that the C.I.A. had turned over, undercover agents were referred to by their official aliases, and the agency suggested pseudonyms for them that Senate staffers could use. In drafting the report, the staffers used several hundred of those pseudonyms, along with the real names of publicly identified senior C.I.A. officials. Their goal was to create a narrative in which major characters appeared repeatedly, many in various contexts, lending coherence to a complex chain of events and revealing the multifaceted roles that some individuals played. This was not without precedent: previous reports of intelligence failures, including the Church committee report, in 1975, had used pseudonyms for central characters.

But on August 1st, when the C.I.A. delivered the redacted report—a few days before its expected release—Feinstein saw that the agency had redacted all the pseudonyms, arguing that readers might be able to combine them with other details and identify the agency personnel. The report, shot through with black lines, resembled a play where the pivotal actors were unrecognizable from scene to scene, making the action almost impossible to follow. The C.I.A. made one concession. The report had used the real names of the two contract psychologists—already identified in the press—who were paid eighty million dollars to develop the interrogation program. The C.I.A. said that the psychologists could be identified by pseudonyms that the agency had provided.

Feinstein rejected the redacted version, and began negotiating, mainly with Denis McDonough. Since the issue of pseudonyms was the most difficult one, they agreed to leave it for last, and discussed other redactions through the fall. Over Columbus Day weekend, McDonough flew to San Francisco to meet with Feinstein. “This has been a very difficult process,” Feinstein told me, not long afterward. She said that she and



*“Before we send a man to prison, shouldn’t we at least be positive that he’s not rich?”*

McDonough had “settled a lot of problems,” but that some remained, and she was determined not to have the report “decimated.”

Feinstein offered to reduce the number of pseudonyms from several hundred to forty or fifty, but McDonough refused. By mid-November, she was fighting for just fourteen. Many of these people had played major roles in the program and currently occupy high-level positions at the C.I.A. One was Alfreda Bikowsky, an agent who had been named in journalistic accounts as early as 2011. As deputy chief of the unit dedicated to finding Osama bin Laden, Bikowsky had participated in brutal interrogations. She was convinced of the program’s virtues. Its strength, she once wrote, was that potential terrorists expected nothing worse than a “show trial” in America. They “never counted on being detained by us outside the U.S., and being subjected to methods they never dreamed of.”

The former intelligence officer told me, “There was this group of four or five women, at the core of hunting Al Qaeda.” Bikowsky was at the center of it. “They all had this burden of guilt, that they were there and didn’t stop 9/11. They saw their jobs as making America safer—and were willing to go to great lengths.” In statements to the committee in 2006, Porter Goss, the C.I.A. director who pre-

ceded Michael Hayden, described the interrogations as “not a brutality. It’s more of an art or a science.” The key, he said, was “knowing what makes someone tick.” He added, “Just the simplest thing will work, a family photograph or something.” In fact, as the report describes, C.I.A. officers threatened at least three detainees with harm to their family members. Other techniques included menacing a subject with a pistol and a cordless drill, and employing “rectal hydration,” which the chief of interrogations later characterized as a marker of “total control over a detainee.” Before one session with Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the lead planner of the 9/11 attacks, who was subjected to waterboarding a hundred and eighty-three times, Bikowsky sent an e-mail that referred to him by a nickname: “Mukie is gonna be hatin’ life on this one.”

According to the report, Bikowsky was the chief architect of the C.I.A.’s effort to justify its use of enhanced techniques. In February, 2007, she accompanied Hayden to testify before the Intelligence Committee. The former intelligence officer said that Bikowsky had come because “Hayden was new and didn’t know all the details. She had all the facts stuffed into her head. Unless you knew what questions to ask, she’d run circles around you.” Citing information

that she said was obtained from the interrogation program, Bikowsky testified, “There’s no question, in my mind, that having that detainee information has saved hundreds, conservatively speaking, of American lives.” The report lists four major claims she made in the hearing, and provides evidence that all are inaccurate. It also asserts that Bikowsky misled the C.I.A. inspector general and other senior officials about the efficacy of the enhanced techniques. (The C.I.A. stands by all but one of Bikowsky’s claims, and says that her assertions about the techniques reflected a widespread understanding. A spokesman said, “The representations as to the value of the information derived from detainees subject to E.I.T.s”—enhanced interrogation techniques—“were representations made by the agency, not one individual. Suggestions to the contrary only serve to distort the record.”)

The argument over how Bikowsky should be identified in the report was particularly freighted. The main character in the movie “Zero Dark Thirty” was based partly on her, and she was the subject of a Wikipedia page. Still, the C.I.A. and the White House re-

fused to allow a pseudonym for her. She has been promoted to a senior position in the global-jihad unit. “The C.I.A. does not hold people accountable the way I think it should,” Feinstein told me. “You want to support them if the wrong thing happens.” But, she added, that is different from supporting them “for doing wrong.”

On November 20th, McDonough went to a Senate Democratic Caucus meeting, in the Mansfield Room of the Capitol. He was there to brief senators on the President’s immigration policy, but he knew that Feinstein and her colleagues on the Intelligence Committee would want to discuss the torture report. Feinstein delivered a prepared speech, about ten minutes long. “She flat-out called out the White House and the C.I.A.,” the senior Senate staffer recalled. “Then Rockefeller, Wyden, Heinrich, and Udall spoke, and they really went after McDonough.” McDonough, according to the staffer, argued that the report would risk lives, pointing out that, while he had Secret Service protection, C.I.A. families did not. The Senate aide recalled that McDonough defended his

impartiality. “He said, ‘Every time I go over to the C.I.A., they tell me I’m doing the Senate’s bidding, and I come over here and you guys tell me I’m doing the C.I.A.’s bidding,’ and neither is true. I’m trying to be an arbitrator.” For many, his protest rang hollow. “Denis and Brennan are very tight, and Denis thinks very highly of Brennan,” someone who knows McDonough well said. “I think whatever Brennan told him, Denis had reason, based on the personal relationship, to trust.” At the close of the meeting, McDonough made it clear that the White House would not allow the remaining, contested pseudonyms to be used, and, if the committee did not agree, the report would not come out.

The pseudonyms for the fourteen key people were deleted. Although Bikowsky was referred to in some places as the “deputy chief of Alec station,” in dozens of other spots any title for her was redacted. Robert EATINGER, the acting general counsel Feinstein mentioned in her floor speech, had all sixteen hundred mentions of his name redacted. It was a bitter defeat, but Feinstein feared that if the report was not released before the Republicans took control of the Senate, in January, 2015, it never would be. Some of her colleagues believed that the White House was deliberately running out the clock. “Obama participated in the slow-down process, and that’s a hard thing to forgive,” Rockefeller said.

On Friday, December 5th, Feinstein had the report sent to the printer, to be released after the weekend. Later that day, she got a call from Secretary of State John Kerry, a good friend. “He talked about the dangers this would cause around the world, which I saw as right out of the White House playbook—or the C.I.A. playbook,” Rockefeller said. Feinstein had heard this argument from McDonough and Brennan many times. But, Rockefeller said, “when it came from Kerry it had a more human sense to it. It got to her.” Rockefeller talked with her over the weekend. “The Kerry call actually turned out to be good, because it made her take her deepest values and square them one against the other—and she came out with the right answer. On Monday, she walked into her office and said, ‘I want the report out.’”

During the weekend, the National



Counterterrorism Center and other intelligence agencies issued a threat assessment, predicting that the report would inspire violence throughout the world and cause significant damage to U.S. relationships. But when the report was issued nothing happened. I asked Feinstein whether she found the threat assessment suspect at the time. “Well, what I thought was that it was a little bit of intimidation.” She paused. “Not a little bit. I thought it was just intimidation.”

On Tuesday, December 9, 2014, the day the report was released, the F.B.I. and the Department of Homeland Security issued an unusual joint warning. That evening, CNN’s Wolf Blitzer asked Feinstein, “Was it worth it to release this report today if, in fact, American lives, whether diplomats, military personnel, civilians, are going to be in danger?” Feinstein responded that there is “no perfect time to release this report,” and added, “I think you’ve done a good job, certainly, of hyping the warnings.” But Blitzer persevered, wondering if she would feel guilty if Americans were killed. “I couldn’t believe that,” Feinstein told me. “He asked me three times!”

Newspaper stories picked out startling details from the report, and the *Times* editorial board called for the prosecution of the “torturers and their bosses,” starting with former Vice-President Dick Cheney. But on the Sunday-morning television shows the C.I.A.’s defenders outnumbered its critics. “Several of us made a concerted decision that, if and when this came out, we weren’t going to take it,” John Rizzo, the agency’s former general counsel, who is named many times in the report, said. Planning for the counter-offensive had begun in the spring of 2014. McDonough insisted that former C.I.A. officials be allowed to read the report; Feinstein acquiesced. Thus, they had time to prepare their rebuttal and create a Web site, C.I.A. Saved Lives, before the release of the report. When Hayden read the report, he was furious about how he had been treated. Feinstein also singled him out in a floor speech the day the report was released, saying, of his initial briefing, in September, 2006, “He referred specifically to a ‘tummy slap,’ among other techniques, and presented the entire set of techniques

as minimally harmful and applied in a highly clinical and professional manner. They were not.” Hayden and Rizzo became the point men on TV.

The former C.I.A. officials attacked the report as partisan. Feinstein had repeatedly tried to persuade the Republicans on the committee to rejoin the investigation, but they refused, and wrote a response to the report that was strikingly similar to the C.I.A.’s. (They also attacked the Senate staff for having taken



the Panetta documents from the C.I.A. facility.) The former officials disputed the report’s evidence that the enhanced techniques had been ineffective. And they denounced the committee for conducting no interviews, relying instead on contemporaneous C.I.A. e-mails, documents, and internal interviews and investigations. The Justice Department had started an investigation of the detention program in August, 2009, and Panetta said that he would therefore not require C.I.A. personnel to speak to the committee. But Rizzo, who retired in 2009, said now that he would have been happy to talk. “I pounded that drum about the interviews every chance I got,” he told me.

The day after the report was released, McCain spoke at a Human Rights First dinner that honored him and Feinstein. “It’s been a tough day for Dianne—they rolled out the big guns,” he said. “I’m proud of her resilience.” General David Petraeus, the C.I.A. director who resigned in 2012, after an F.B.I. investigation discovered he was having an extramarital affair with his biographer, said in a video presentation that when he was military commander, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, “my view was that, if you want to get information from a detainee, the best way to do it is become his or her best friend.” He went on to say that Feinstein’s “leadership on this issue has been very important. She has of course spearheaded the entire effort to go back and look at what the practices were, to get these

out into the open, to insure that we have learned everything that we can.”

Brennan responded to the report in a press conference at C.I.A. headquarters, in Langley—the first such conference to be televised live. Like Hayden and Rizzo, he criticized the report as “partisan” and “flawed.” He denied that the C.I.A. had misled the White House and Congress, arguing that detainees subjected to the enhanced techniques had provided valuable information, and that it was “unknowable” whether they would have done so under other circumstances. Most important, he refused to characterize the procedures as torture, or to say that they should not be used again. “I defer to the policymakers in future times,” he said. President Obama gave no speech of his own about the report, letting Brennan speak for the Administration.

On July 31st, the C.I.A. inspector general, David Buckley, released a summary of findings in the internal investigation he had started in January. He concluded that agency employees had acted improperly in accessing the computers and the e-mail of the committee staff, and that the crimes report that the C.I.A. had filed with the Justice Department was based on erroneous information.

Brennan, four months after his firm denials at the Council on Foreign Relations, apologized to Feinstein and Chambliss. He also said that he was appointing an accountability board, headed by the retired Democratic senator Evan Bayh, to review the situation. Feinstein pointed out that the report “confirmed what I said on the Senate floor in March,” but she also spoke of “positive first steps.”

Some of her colleagues weren’t ready to abandon the fight. Senator Carl Levin demanded that Brennan explain his earlier denial, and Udall and Heinrich called for his resignation. Even Chambliss found the situation “very, very serious.” During a White House news conference the next day, Obama made his most forthright acknowledgment yet of the substance of the report: “When we engaged in some of these enhanced interrogation techniques, techniques that I believe and I think any fair-minded person would believe were torture, we crossed a line.” But

he emphasized his “full confidence” in Brennan: “Keep in mind—John Brennan called for that I.G. report.”

When Obama came into office, he wanted to heal the breach between Congress and the C.I.A. that had developed during the Bush Administration. Yet the agency’s relationship with Congress had grown only more fraught. Senator Harry Reid had stopped taking his intelligence briefings from Brennan. As Majority Leader, Reid regularly got calls from the White House asking him to assume onerous legislative tasks; now he made a preemptive move. “He called Denis McDonough and said, ‘I told Brennan back in January what he should do!’” the senior Senate staffer recalled. “Don’t call me on this—I’m not defending him. I’m not going to undermine Dianne Feinstein. You have done nothing but obstruct this report.” When Reid had a similar conversation with the President, the staffer said, “the President tried to justify what the C.I.A. had done, saying the staff had gotten the Panetta review, and the C.I.A. had no choice.”

Brennan’s predicament was resolved six months later. In mid-January, 2015, the accountability board dismissed Buckley’s conclusion that the officers who searched the Senate computers had acted improperly. On the contrary, the board said, there was no “common understanding” between the committee and the agency about access to the Senate staff’s computers—only an “informal” one. And the board concluded that concerns about the Panetta review justified the search. It confirmed that Brennan had conveyed “explicit instructions” on three occasions to find out whether Senate staff members had accessed the Panetta review. But, it continued, “a misunderstanding between the D/CIA and [redacted] arose because the former did not appreciate what forensic techniques were necessary to answer his questions and the latter did not understand the D/CIA’s expectations that no intrusive methods be employed.”

John Rizzo told me that this accountability board was different from any he had seen during three decades at the agency. Boards were often formed to follow up on an inspector general’s report and recommend disciplinary action for those who had acted improv-

erly. Here the board discredited the inspector general. “I was surprised they came out as hard as they did on Buckley,” Rizzo said. (In January, Buckley left the agency.) “It was a surprise to me, too, that they didn’t mete out discipline. I thought it was a given, especially considering that Brennan went and apologized to Feinstein.” Why did he think no one was disciplined? Rizzo laughed. “From reading the board’s report, it appears that John Brennan himself was the one. He said, basically, pull out all the stops. So how do you hold subordinates liable for something like that?”

On the day the board issued its findings, shortly after the Republicans took control of the Senate, the new chairman of the Intelligence Committee, Senator Richard Burr, wrote to Obama, asking that all copies of the complete torture report that Feinstein had sent to the White House and other parts of the executive branch, including the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense, be returned. (Burr was apparently concerned that the report would become publicly available under the Freedom of Information Act.) Feinstein, now the vice-chair, wrote to Obama, strongly opposing the request. Several weeks later, the Administration pledged that it would not destroy or return copies without permission from the courts. Regarding Burr’s letter, the former C.I.A. officer said, “That is thinking like the agency does! If there is a report that was mistaken or flawed, you pull it out from the computers completely.” Burr said that he also intended to give the Panetta-review documents, still in the committee safe, back to the C.I.A. When I asked Feinstein about Burr’s attempt to claw back the report, she said, “I was surprised, and somewhat suspicious about who put him up to it.”

Brennan had prevailed, in a way that had seemed highly unlikely six months earlier. “John was able to wend his way through a minefield,” his old friend Grenier said. Brennan’s relations with Democrats on the Intelligence Committee remain hostile. In May, Wyden, Heinrich, and Senator Mazie Hirono sent Brennan a letter, demanding he acknowledge that the computer search was improper and affirm that it would not hap-

pen again. His statements after the report’s release continue to resonate. “It surprised me that he wouldn’t use the word ‘torture,’” the former intelligence officer said. “I know he needs to defend the agency to have credibility there—but he has exceeded that.” In the years since 9/11, the former officer continued, “the C.I.A. has done remarkable things and reprehensible things. I think the way the agency went on the offensive after 9/11 surprised Al Qaeda, and ninety per cent of what it did was right on track. But what was done with those two psychologists and the interrogations—the agency lost its sense of where the edge was, and went over it. The report really is important. In the future, if the C.I.A. faces a situation where it comes to the edge, hopefully it will know to go back—and understand that it cannot do *anything*.”

As for Feinstein, the officer continued, “She was a serious overseer, knowledgeable, interested in the work. She was really hard-nosed on targeted killings—and someone who was a quasi liberal from California. She was such an important asset, for the C.I.A.” Listening to Feinstein’s speech last March, he said, “I thought, for the agency to lose that is horrifying.”

One day in early March, I met with Feinstein and several staff members in her office in the Hart Building. A large, vividly detailed painting of landscapes in Nepal, which she and Blum had visited on one of their early trips, hung behind her desk. When I told Feinstein what the former intelligence officer had said about her, she smiled and said, “That’s nice to know. See, you don’t hear this. That’s for sure.” She continued, “It’s a lonely place. And it’s a lonely place for my staff, because they get beaten up.” It appears that Burr and other Republicans may still try to punish the staff for taking the Panetta documents back to the Hart Building, even as Feinstein has said that removing the documents was justified by the committee’s oversight responsibility. Alissa Starzak, who worked on the report before leaving the committee, in 2011, was nominated last July to be general counsel of the U.S. Army. Her confirmation was slowed by Republicans angry about her role in the report; Burr has said that

he is striving to keep her from getting confirmed. Feinstein and Chambliss, who has retired, worked well together. No one would say that about Feinstein and Burr. “Some people around here look at oversight as being the best buddy, and always supporting them, no matter what,” Feinstein said. “That isn’t oversight. Oversight can’t just be going to a hearing and listening to what somebody says, when you don’t know whether they’re telling you the truth or not.” After all, she noted, “part of the C.I.A. tradecraft is deception.”

It was almost a year since Feinstein had given her speech on the Senate floor. I asked why Brennan chose the course he did. “It’s the protection of the brotherhood, at the C.I.A.—you protect me and I protect you,” Feinstein said. “And Brennan wanted to destroy the report. In my view, the beauty and the strength of this country—what makes it so different—is that we admit our mistakes and we go on. And it’s tough.”

Some have hoped that Feinstein’s experience with the torture report might lead her to view intelligence agencies more skeptically. There is little sign of that. In a recent speech, she reflected on her tenure as chairman of the Intelligence Committee and said that she would change only one thing: “I would hold more open hearings.” She is as confident as ever about the ethics of the targeted-killings program. “This is good oversight,” she told me. “The staff team has made fifty-nine visits to see the real-time operations of the Predator, the intelligence, the training. We stay on top of it. And the collateral damage—it’s classified, believe it or not, but the numbers are very good.” (After the recent announcement that two hostages were killed in a drone strike in Pakistan, Feinstein renewed her call for a public annual report on the number of combatant and civilian deaths from these strikes.) And she remains a champion of the N.S.A. and its call-records program, still objecting even to the term “surveillance.” Two independent panels concluded that the program has never been crucial in any terrorism-related investigation. But Feinstein continues to justify it, referring to the case of Najibullah Zazi, who pleaded guilty to plotting suicide-bombing attacks in the New York City subways in



*“You were right—we should have just split one.”*

2009. “What is that worth, saving subway cars stuffed to the gunwales with people?” she demanded.

With the torture report, Feinstein abandoned her long-standing allies in the intelligence community. She defended her work by emphasizing its thoroughness; she has noted, with pride, that the Senate historian told her it was the longest report a committee had ever produced. When she was attacked, she said, repeatedly, “Read the report!” That was her hashtag as she took to Twitter to fact-check Brennan, during his televised press conference. Now she told me, “We sent out this big report to those departments that should care. But I am disappointed, because I suspect that not very many people have looked at it.” The public seemed uninterested, too. A poll conducted by the *Washington Post* and ABC News after the report’s release found that fifty-nine percent of Americans supported the C.I.A.’s use of the coercive methods—slightly more than before. Elisa Massimino, the chief executive of Human Rights First, faulted the President for the fact: “Obama hasn’t provided the leadership we would expect from somebody who set this out as a priority issue. I think his job is to lead the country to a stron-

ger consensus that we don’t want to do this again, and he failed at that.”

After the report was released, Feinstein sent Obama a letter with her recommendations. Probably the most important was passing legislation to close the loopholes that had made torture possible, and to build on the executive order that Obama issued in January, 2009. (Without legislation, another President could reverse that order.) In this year’s State of the Union address, Obama said, “There’s one last pillar of our leadership, and that’s the example of our values. As Americans, we respect human dignity, even when we’re threatened, which is why I have prohibited torture.” But the President has given no sign that he has any interest in Feinstein’s recommendations, even as she and McCain recently introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would permanently ban the enhanced techniques. I asked her whether she was disappointed in Obama’s lack of support for the torture report. She paused, and replied, “Well, let me say that there are people who don’t want to look at the whole truth. And I don’t know whether the President read our report or not. I certainly haven’t heard from him since.” ♦

## THE DEATH TREATMENT

*When should people with a non-terminal illness be helped to die?*

BY RACHEL AVIV

In her diary, Godelieva De Troyer classified her moods by color. She felt “dark gray” when she made a mistake while sewing or cooking. When her boyfriend talked too much, she moved between “very black” and “black!” She was afflicted with the worst kind of “black spot” when she visited her parents at their farm in northern Belgium. In their presence, she felt aggressive and dangerous. She worried that she had two selves, one “empathetic, charming, sensible” and the other cruel.

She felt “light gray” when she went to the hairdresser or rode her bicycle through the woods in Hasselt, a small city in the Flemish region of Belgium, where she lived. At these moments, she wrote, she tried to remind herself of all the things she could do to feel happy: “demand respect from others”; “be physically attractive”; “take a reserved stance”; “live in harmony with nature.” She imagined a life in which she was intellectually appreciated, socially engaged, fluent in English (she was taking a class), and had a “cleaning lady with whom I get along very well.”

Godelieva, who taught anatomy to nurses, had been in therapy since she was nineteen. With each new doctor, she embraced the therapeutic process anew, adopting her doctor’s philosophy and rewriting her life story so that it fit his theory of the mind. She continually dissected the source of her distress. “I am confronted almost daily with the consequences of my childhood,” she wrote to her mother. She’d wanted to be a historian, but her father, domineering and cold, had pressured her to be a doctor. Her mother, who was unhappy in her marriage, reminded her of a “slave.” “New insight,” she wrote in her diary. “Do not want to always nod yes like her and be self-effacing.”

Godelieva was preoccupied with the idea that she would replicate her parents’ mistakes with her own children. She

married when she was twenty-three, and had two children. But the marriage was tumultuous and ended in divorce, in 1979, when her son was three and her daughter was seven. Two years later, their father, Hendrik Mortier, a radiologist, committed suicide. As a single parent, Godelieva was overwhelmed. In a diary entry from 1990, when her children were teen-agers, she instructed herself to “let my children be themselves, respect them in their individuality.” But she found herself fighting with her daughter, who was independent and emotionally distant, and depending on her son, Tom, a “victim of my instability,” she wrote. She worried, she told her psychologist, that her children were “now paying for all that has happened generations earlier.”

The happiest time in Godelieva’s life began when she was in her early fifties and had a new boyfriend. She felt as if she had finally moved beyond the dramas of her childhood, an achievement for which she credited her new psychiatrist. “He opens the wound completely, cleans it thoroughly and closes it so it can heal,” she wrote to a friend. Godelieva, who had blond hair and a wistful smile, made many friends during these years. “She was the most beautiful woman,” Tom told me. “People would say to me, ‘Oh, I could fall in love with your mother.’” Christiane Geuens, a close friend, said, “People always wanted to know her. When she walked into a room, everyone knew.”

Godelieva was delighted when Tom and his wife had a child, in 2005. She promised that she would make up for her failures as a mother by being an attentive grandmother. In photographs, she is physically affectionate with Tom’s daughter, holding her as she brushes her teeth, or sitting on the bed with her, braiding her hair.

Then, in 2010, her boyfriend broke up with her, and she felt black again. She stopped wearing makeup and doing her hair, and she cancelled dates with friends,

she said, because she felt ugly and old. She felt that she had lost her *levensperspectief*, a Dutch word that refers to the sense that there is something to live for. Tom was only thirty minutes away, but she no longer had the energy to drive to his house. She accused Tom of being insufficiently sympathetic, and Tom, who had just had a second child, blamed her for abandoning him and his family. After several months of fights, they stopped speaking. In her diary, she wrote, “I don’t think there can be fruitful contact with the children with all his aggression toward me.” Tom’s sister, a lawyer who does human-rights work in Africa, also avoided her; she found it too painful to be sucked back into her mother’s depression, which had dominated her childhood. (She has asked not to be named.)

Godelieva felt as if her emotional progress had been an illusion. She had seen the same psychiatrist for more than ten years and had consulted him on every decision, even those involving financial investments and home renovations, but she had now lost faith in his judgment. She complained to friends, “I give him ninety euros, he gives me a prescription, and after ten minutes it’s over.” Her psychiatrist acknowledged that there was no cure for her condition; the best he could do, he said, was listen to her and prescribe antidepressants, as he had been doing for years.

In the summer of 2011, when she was sixty-three, Godelieva met a new doctor. She attended a lecture by Wim Distelmans, an oncologist and a professor of palliative medicine at the Free University of Brussels. Distelmans was one of the leading proponents of a 2002 law in Belgium that permits euthanasia for patients who have an incurable illness that causes them unbearable physical or mental suffering. Since then, he has euthanized more than a hundred patients. Distelmans, who wears leather coats and boots and artfully tossed scarves, has



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY TOM MORTIER

*Belgian law allows euthanasia for patients who suffer from severe and incurable distress, including psychological disorders.*

become a celebrity in Belgium for promoting a dignified death as a human right, a “tremendous liberation,” and he gives talks at cultural centers, hospitals, and schools around the country.

In September, 2011, Godelieva saw Distelmans at his clinic. Four months later, she sent an e-mail to her children: “I have filed a euthanasia request with Prof. Distelmans based on psychological distress. I have gone through the entire procedure and am now waiting for the result.”

Tom and his wife had just had their third child. They both taught chemistry at Leuven University College, part of the oldest university in Belgium. When Tom received his mother’s e-mail, he showed it to his supervisor, Lies Verdonck, a doctor who was familiar with Distelmans’s work, and asked her what to do. She said there was no way that Distelmans would approve the euthanasia request without first speaking with the patient’s family. “Stay focussed on your job and your children,” she urged Tom.

At the time, Tom was in the process of searching for a nursing home for Godelieva’s mother, from whom Godelieva was estranged. He was angry that the task had fallen to him, and felt that his mother was being manipulative. She had expressed suicidal thoughts before, and they’d passed, so he decided not to respond to the e-mail. His sister, who was in Africa, replied that she would respect her mother’s decision, but that it hurt her.

On April 20, 2012, three months after Godelieva sent the e-mail, Tom received a short letter from his mother that was written in the past tense. She reported that her euthanasia had been carried out on April 19th, at the university hospital of the Free University of Brussels. “I donated my body to science,” she wrote. On the back of the letter, she’d left the phone number of a friend who had the keys to her house.

Tom immediately drove to the house of the friend, who offered him a drink and then explained that she and her husband had driven Godelieva to the hospital. Tom accused the couple of coöperating with a suicide. They were defensive: they said that it was Godelieva’s choice, and they didn’t want her to have to take a taxi to the hospital alone. Later, they admitted to Tom that in the car Godelieva

was chatting and laughing, and they had begun to wonder if they knew her as well as they’d thought.

Tom felt his mind shutting down. He drove to his mother’s house, which he hadn’t visited in more than a year. She had just completed an addition to the first floor: before they separated, she and her ex-boyfriend had wanted to grow old in the house without worrying about stairs. The interior of the house was decorated



with framed photographs of her grandchildren. Large drawings of Tom and his sister hung on the living-room wall.

In the drawer of Godelieva’s bedroom desk, Tom found drafts of several farewell letters that she had written to friends, her neighborhood association, and a chorus that she sang in, as well as a master list with an “X” by each name, as if she were composing thank-you notes after a party. She thanked her friends for their companionship, apologized for causing them pain, and explained that “the loneliness, no chance of a cure after forty years of therapy, nothing to look forward to—all this has led me to see that the only thing remaining is a dignified end of life.”

There was also a draft of a long letter to her children, which was far more emotional than the one she had sent. “I have not been able to handle the rift with you, Tom,” she wrote. “I have loved you very much but you have not seen it as such.” She then addressed her three grandchildren: “I have missed you very much.” She also wrote, before crossing it out, “I will not see my grandchildren grow up and that causes me pain.”

In his mother’s living room, Tom found an article about Distelmans in *De Morgen*, a leading Flemish newspaper, which featured a large photograph of him sitting on a bed, wearing jeans, a patterned shirt, and a silver bangle bracelet. The reporter described Distelmans as a doctor who “cannot stand injustice.” Distelmans spoke about his disdain for

doctors who assume that they know what their patients need, and told the reporter that the “euthanasia law has such a symbolic value. People have a voice.”

Tom also discovered a booklet, produced by LEIF (Life End Information Forum), an organization founded by Distelmans, that outlined the medical and legal options available to people who are dying or want to die. On the final page, the authors introduced an excerpt from “Utopia,” by Thomas More, who describes a world in which “officially sanctioned euthanasia is regarded as an honorable death.” In More’s ideal society, government officials and priests visit suffering invalids and say, “Why don’t you break out and escape to a better world?”

In Belgium, euthanasia is embraced as an emblem of enlightenment and progress, a sign that the country has extricated itself from its Catholic, patriarchal roots. Distelmans, who was brought up as a Catholic and then rejected the Church, told me that his work is inspired by an aversion to all forms of paternalism. “Who am I to convince patients that they have to suffer longer than they want?” he said.

Belgium was the second country in the world, after the Netherlands, to decriminalize euthanasia; it was followed by Luxembourg, in 2009, and, this year, by Canada and Colombia. Switzerland has allowed assisted suicide since 1942. The United States Supreme Court has recognized that citizens have legitimate concerns about prolonged deaths in institutional settings, but in 1997 it ruled that death is not a constitutionally protected right, leaving questions about assisted suicide to be resolved by each state. Within months of the ruling, Oregon passed a law that allows doctors to prescribe lethal drugs for patients who have less than six months to live. In 2008, Washington adopted a similar law; Montana decriminalized assisted suicide the year after; and Vermont legalized it in 2013.

The right-to-die movement has gained momentum at a time of anxiety about the graying of the population; people who are older than sixty-five represent the fastest-growing demographic in the United States, Canada, and much of Europe. But the laws seem to be motivated less by the desires of the elderly than by the concerns of a younger generation, whose members

derive comfort from the knowledge that they can control the end of their lives. Diane Meier, a professor of geriatrics at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York, and one of the leading palliative-care physicians in the country, told me that “the movement to legalize assisted suicide is driven by the ‘worried well,’ by people who are terrified of the unknown and want to take back control.” She added, “That is not to say that the medical profession doesn’t do a horrible job of protecting people from preventable suffering.” Like most doctors who specialize in palliative care, a field focussed on quality of life for patients with severe and terminal illnesses, she thinks legalizing assisted suicide is unnecessary. “The notion that if people don’t kill themselves they’re going to die on a ventilator in the hospital would be humorous if it weren’t so serious,” she said. She believes that the angst propelling the movement would be diminished if patients had greater access to palliative care and if doctors were more attentive to their patients’ psychological suffering.

In Oregon and Switzerland, studies have shown that people who request death are less motivated by physical pain than by the desire to remain autonomous. This pattern of reasoning was exemplified by Brittany Maynard, a twenty-nine-year-old newlywed who moved to Oregon last year so that she could die on her own terms rather than allowing her brain cancer to take its course. Her story appeared on the cover of *People*, which described her as having the “soul of an adventurer and the heart of a warrior.” She became the poster child for assisted death—a far more palatable one than Jack Kevorkian, who had previously filled that role. Unlike the patients whom Kevorkian attended to with his makeshift “suicide machine,” Maynard appeared neither passive nor vulnerable. Since her death, seven months ago, lawmakers in twenty-three U.S. states have introduced bills that would make it legal for doctors to help people die.

Opponents have warned for years that legalization will lead to a “slippery slope,” but in Oregon fewer than nine hundred people have used lethal prescriptions since the law was passed, and they represent the demographic that is least likely to be coerced: they are overwhelmingly white, educated, and well-off. In Belgium and in the Netherlands, where patients can be euthanized even if they do

not have a terminal illness, the laws seem to have permeated the medical establishment more deeply than elsewhere, perhaps because of the central role granted to doctors: in the majority of cases, it is the doctor, not the patient, who commits the final act. In the past five years, the number of euthanasia and assisted-suicide deaths in the Netherlands has doubled, and in Belgium it has increased by more than a hundred and fifty per cent. Although most of the Belgian patients had cancer, people have also been euthanized because they had autism, anorexia, borderline personality disorder, chronic-fatigue syndrome, partial paralysis, blindness coupled with deafness, and manic depression. In 2013, Wim Distelmans euthanized a forty-four-year-old transgender man, Nathan Verhelst, because Verhelst was devastated by the failure of his sex-change surgeries; he said that he felt like a monster when he looked in the mirror. “Farewell, everybody,” Verhelst said from his hospital bed, seconds before receiving a lethal injection.

The laws seem to have created a new conception of suicide as a medical treatment, stripped of its tragic dimensions. Patrick Wyffels, a Belgian family doctor, told me that the process of performing euthanasia, which he does eight to ten times a year, is “very magical.” But he sometimes

worries about how his own values might influence a patient’s decision to die or to live. “Depending on communication techniques, I might lead a patient one way or the other,” he said. In the days before and after the procedure, he finds it difficult to sleep. “You spend seven years studying to be a doctor, and all they do is teach you how to get people well—and then you do the opposite,” he told me. “I am afraid of the power that I have in that moment.”

Although doctors in Belgium had been covertly performing euthanasia before it was legalized, the majority of them opposed the euthanasia law, according to a survey conducted at the time. The chairman of Belgium’s largest medical association cautioned against making “the exception the rule.” But the political composition of the Belgian government had recently shifted; for the first time since the Second World War, secular politicians (liberals, socialists, and the Green Party) had more power than Christian Democrats, who resisted legalization. Peter Backx, the former editor of Belgium’s largest medical journal, said that the law seemed like a “bit of political revenge.” At the Senate hearings on the law, the phrase “self-determination” was repeated ninety-seven times.

The right to a dignified death is



*“Hey—you can actually hear the ocean better if you put the shell down.”*



*"You boys who have to take your medications with food, now's the time."*

viewed as an accomplishment of secular humanism, one of seven belief systems that are officially recognized by the government. Belgian humanism, which was deeply influenced by the nineteenth-century Freemasonry movement, offered an outlet for those who felt oppressed by the Church, but it has increasingly come to resemble the kind of institution that it once defined itself against. Since 1981, the Belgian government has paid for "humanist counsellors," the secular equivalent of clergy, to provide moral guidance in hospitals, prisons, and the armed forces. Humanist values are also taught in state schools, in a course called non-confessional ethics, which is taken by secular children from first through twelfth grade, while religious students pursue theological studies. The course emphasizes autonomy, free inquiry, democracy, and an ethics based on reason and sci-

ence, not on revelation. Jan Bernheim, an emeritus professor of medicine at the Free University of Brussels, who studies ethics and quality of life, told me that euthanasia is "part of a philosophy of taking control of one's own existence and improving the objective conditions for happiness. There is an arrow of evolution that goes toward ever more reducing of suffering and maximizing of enjoyment."

The Belgian Council of Ministers appointed Wim Distelmans to serve as the chairman of the Federal Control and Evaluation Commission, which reviews euthanasia deaths to insure that doctors have complied with the law. In terminal cases, two doctors need to confirm that the patient's suffering stems from an incurable illness. For non-terminal cases, three doctors must agree. But doctors have adopted increasingly loose interpretations of disease. Distel-

mans told me, "We at the commission are confronted more and more with patients who are tired of dealing with a sum of small ailments—they are what we call 'tired of life.'" Although their suffering derives from social concerns as well as from medical ones, Distelmans said that he still considers their pain to be incurable. "If you ask for euthanasia because you are alone, and you are alone because you don't have family to take care of you, we cannot create family," he said.

Last year, thirteen per cent of the Belgians who were euthanized did not have a terminal condition, and roughly three per cent suffered from psychiatric disorders. In Flanders, where the dominant language is Dutch, euthanasia accounts for nearly five per cent of all deaths. (The percentage is lower in the southern, French-speaking parts of Belgium.) The Flemish media have adopted a mostly uncritical approach to euthanasia, running numerous articles about the courage of people who have chosen to die. Last year, *De Standaard*, a prominent Flemish newspaper, published a long tribute to a depressed mother who was euthanized after being abandoned by her boyfriend and becoming disillusioned by her psychiatric care. "I am forever grateful to her that she handled this so well," her twenty-four-year-old son told the paper. "I am so glad we were able to say goodbye in a beautiful way."

The suicide rate in Belgium (excluding cases of euthanasia) is the second-highest in Western Europe, a phenomenon often attributed to the Flemish personality type known as "*binnenvetter*," a person who holds emotions inside. Joris Vandenberghe, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Leuven and a member of the Belgian Advisory Committee on Bioethics, said that he finds euthanasia requests therapeutically useful, because they prompt patients who would not otherwise seek medical help to consult with doctors about their feelings of hopelessness. He said that most of his patients, even those who are approved for euthanasia, end up deciding that they want to live. But he rejects the idea that suicide is always an indication of pathology. "There's a whole philosophical history of looking at suicide

as a rational choice,” he said. “We, as humans, have the possibility to weigh our own life and decide to end it.”

Tom believes that everyone is suicidal in at least some small way. In his early twenties, the impulse was strong. “There was a red light constantly flickering above me,” he said. He undertook what he called “aggressive reading”: Dostoyevsky, Antonin Artaud, Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, Tolstoy, Carl Jung. He found himself drawn to theories of suffering. He wanted to know what it was that made one person survive and another give up.

When Tom was twenty-two, he enrolled in graduate school, for chemistry, but instead of studying he researched his father’s suicide. He often took the train to Ghent, where his father had worked, and interviewed his colleagues and friends. Godelieva, following the advice of her psychiatrist at the time, hadn’t told her children how their father died; she said only that he suffered from headaches. Tom and his sister quickly figured it out. Tom began to see his father as a kind of Dorian Gray figure: he had lived extravagantly, seeking pleasure, success, and distraction. He drove a new Mercedes while he owed millions of Belgian francs and was under the threat of legal action. “He could not see himself as he really was,” Tom recalled. He left a suicide note on his bathroom mirror that said, “I am a victim of the shit that exists in the world today.”

In her diary, Godelieva wrote that she couldn’t comprehend why her husband would kill himself. But at other times she felt that she understood perfectly—“I am just like him,” she wrote—but she said that, for the sake of the children, she could never do the same. Neither Tom nor his sister thought that she would have killed herself on her own. She was passive, dependent, and averse to risk. She didn’t like to make a mess. Most of all, she trusted her doctors’ authority. Distelmans was the last in a series of charismatic and accomplished doctors whose theories she had revered. After finding strength in their guidance, she eventually became disillusioned by each treatment. “I can still hardly believe how many amateurs are walking around in this medical field,” she wrote to a friend in the late nineties, after giving up on another therapist.

When Tom read his mother’s daily

planner, he saw that she had met with Distelmans at least six times in the past eight months. Seven weeks before her death, she donated twenty-five hundred euros to LEIF, the organization that Distelmans had founded. On the bank-transfer form she had written, “Thanks to the staff at LEIF.”

Until Godelieva’s death, Tom had never given much thought to euthanasia, though he was vaguely in favor of it. “Distelmans was just a voice I heard on the radio from time to time,” he told me. Tom was brought up as an atheist, and in school he had studied non-confessional ethics. When the euthanasia law was passed, he and his wife, who were in the same graduate program, had recently fallen in love. They assumed that the law was for old people who were already dying.

Now it seemed to Tom that there were few people reflecting critically on the law. Three days after his mother’s death, the leading Belgian humanist association named Distelmans one of ten “heroes of self-determination” in the past fifty years, at a celebration for Flemish Heritage Day. When Tom complained to the ombudsman at the hospital of the Free University of Brussels, the ombudsman replied that everything had proceeded according to his mother’s “free will.” Even Godelieva’s friends reserved judgment; few had realized that she suffered from clinical depression. At her memorial service, people skirted the issue. They told one another that you never know how someone is feeling inside, and that “every house has its own cross,” an attitude that Tom described as typically Flemish. Tom likes to joke that he must have some secret French roots, because he finds it nearly impossible to contain his feelings.

Godelieva’s friend Christiane Geuens told me that she knew that Godelieva was upset about her breakup, but she never imagined that she was considering euthanasia. Less than two weeks before she died, Godelieva had spent all day at Geuens’s home. Godelieva lit a fire and then sat on the couch, wrapped in a blanket, and told stories. The only indication that something was off was the movie she decided to watch. She wanted to see “Sophie’s Choice.” She had already seen the movie and read the book, and afterward she went on about her identification with Sophie, who was so burdened by her past that she com-

mitted suicide. Geuens didn’t see how their situations were comparable, but Godelieva said that they were the same.

A week after his mother’s death, Tom e-mailed a psychiatrist named Lieve Thienpont, whose name he had seen several times in his mother’s daily planner. “May I ask why you approved active euthanasia for my mother and why I was never involved in that decision?” he wrote. Thienpont invited him to meet with her and Distelmans, both of whom are founding members of Ulteam, a clinic for patients who have questions about ending their lives. In the past three years, nine hundred patients have come to Ulteam, half of whom complained that they were suffering psychologically, not physically.

On May 15, 2012, Tom went to Distelmans’s clinic, a small brick modernist building in a residential suburb on the outskirts of Brussels. He brought his colleague Steven Bieseman along for moral support. “I was there to help Tom control his emotions, because he can be quite hot-tempered,” Bieseman, a doctor, told me.

They sat at a conference table, and Distelmans explained that he never rushes his decisions. He said that he had urged Godelieva to contact her children, but that she had not wanted to inform them. He asked Tom why he had scheduled the meeting.

“Because you killed my mother,” Tom replied.

Distelmans responded calmly that it was Godelieva’s “absolute wish” to die.

Tom said that his mother’s “absolute wish” was also to be a good grandmother. He had brought some of her papers and letters, and he began reading from the draft of her suicide letter to him and his sister. “I feel frustration and sadness because I have not been able to build a connection,” he read. Then he showed them an apology letter that he had written to his mother when he was twenty, after one of many fights. “Forgive me,” he read. “You have dealt with the worst. . . . You care about me. I am not living up to your expectations. That hurts. I don’t know how to deal with that.”

Distelmans was silent. “He was very cool, very distant,” Bieseman said. “He didn’t seem to be touched.”

When Tom saw that his reading had elicited no response, he pushed his chair back from the table and stood up. Bieseman

recalled, "He was screaming, 'You went along with the madness of my mother! You went along with her tunnel vision, her defeatism. You've just taken away the suffering of one person and transposed it to another!'"

Distelmans repeated that he was certain that Godelieva had wanted to die, and that this was her right. Then he said that it seemed there was nothing left to discuss. They all stood up and shook hands, and Tom and Bieseman left the clinic.

Distelmans told me that he had no doubts about the way he handled Godelieva's case. He explained that she was "a very nice person, a very warm person," and that she had "wanted to do one decent thing in her life, and that is to die in a decent way, because the rest of her life was such a horrible mess." When I asked if he worried about transference—perhaps she had idolized him or depended too much on his opinion—he laughed and said, "I've never met a patient who is willing to die to please someone else."

Thienpont, whose practice is mostly devoted to issues surrounding euthanasia, was similarly confident about the decision to end Godelieva's life. Since Ulteam opened, in 2011, Thienpont said it has been "overrun by psychiatric patients"—a phenomenon that she attributes to the poor quality of psychiatric care in the country. In Belgium, it is not uncommon for patients to live in psychiatric institutions for years. Out-patient care is minimal, poorly funded, and fragmented, as it is in most countries. In a new book, called "Libera Me," Thienpont urges doctors to accept the limits of psychiatry, and argues that some patients live with so much pain, their thoughts unceasingly directed toward death, that their mental illnesses should be considered "terminal." Before approving a euthanasia request, she does not require patients to try procedures that they think are invasive. Godelieva had never had electroconvulsive therapy, though it is effective for about half of patients with depression. "Sometimes it really is too late," Thienpont told me. "If the patient's energy is gone, then it is not humane to say, 'Well, maybe if you go to a hospital that specializes in your problem for two more years it will help.' I think we have to respect when people say, 'No—that is enough.'"

Euthanasia for psychiatric patients was rare in the early years of the law, but patients complained that they were being unfairly stigmatized: psychic suffering, they argued, was just as unbearable as physical pain. Like cancer patients, they were subjected to futile treatments that diminished their quality of life. Dirk De Wachter, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Leuven and the president of the ethics commission for the university's psychiatric center, said that he reconsidered his opposition to euthanasia after a patient whose request he had rejected committed suicide. In 2004, she set up a camera in front of a newspaper office in Antwerp and set herself on fire.

De Wachter believes that the country's approach to suicide reflects a crisis of nihilism created by the rapid secularization of Flemish culture in the past thirty years. Euthanasia became a humanist solution to a humanist dilemma. "What is life worth when there is no God?" he said. "What is life worth when I am not successful?" He said that he has repeatedly been confronted by patients who tell him, "I am an autonomous decision-maker. I can decide how long I live. When I think my life is not worth living anymore, I must decide." He recently approved the euthanasia of a twenty-five-year-old woman with borderline personality disorder who did not "suffer from depression in the psychiatric sense of the word," he said. "It was more existential; it was impossible for her to have a goal in this life." He said that her parents "came to my office, got on their knees, and begged me, 'Please, help our daughter to die.'"

De Wachter told me, "I don't want to kill people—I don't think psychiatrists should kill people—but when the suffering is so extreme we cannot look the other way." When he gives lectures, he tries to appeal to Christian audiences by saying, "If Jesus were here, I think he would help these people."

René Stockman, the director of a Catholic organization, Brothers of Charity, which says that it runs a third of the psychiatric institutions in Belgium, told me, "They are using our Christian vocabulary in a new context. They say they are 'saving' people from their bad lives, through 'mercy' and 'compassion.' I cannot accept that." He sees euthanasia as a failure of both psychiatry and medical education. "Any questions about ethics—

they say, 'Oh, we need a specialist for that.' They are not learning to reflect morally on what they are doing."

In the months after his mother's death, Tom searched online for criticism of the Belgian approach to euthanasia, but it seemed to take only two forms: objections from Catholics, who argued that life is sacred and only God should end it, and from Holocaust survivors and their descendants, who were disturbed to see doctors delving into the business of judging whether certain lives were worth living. Although the latter concern blurs a fundamental distinction—under the Nazis, the sick and the disabled never asked to die—it was exacerbated by the fact that Distelmans led seventy medical professionals and scholars on a "study trip" to Auschwitz last year. A brochure for the trip explained that for those who are "constantly confronted with existential pain and questions about the meaning of life" Auschwitz is an "inspiring place to contemplate these issues."

In October, 2012, Tom compiled a list of thirty Belgian physicians and academics who had publicly questioned the law and sent them a long e-mail about his mother's death. "The fact that W. Distelmans has euthanized my mother without contacting me or my sister keeps festering," he wrote. "It is difficult for me to grasp that right now there is no public basis and political support to combat these absurd practices."

Herman De Dijn, a Spinoza scholar, responded. He cautioned Tom that the Belgian media would not be receptive to his opinion. De Dijn, an emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Leuven, said that Godelieva's story sounded like "utopia realized: everything is neat and clean and terrible." He was troubled by the way that his colleagues' theories about autonomy seemed to have stiffened into ideology, a mentality that the euthanasia law both reflected and encouraged. "Once the law is there, you have people asking themselves new questions," he told me. "Do I really have quality of life? Am I not a burden on others?" He believed that "human dignity should include not only respect for personal choices but also for connectedness to loved ones and society." He worried that the concept had been "reduced to the ability to have certain experiences."

Emboldened by De Dijn's response, Tom wrote an essay that built on his theories. The seed for the essay was a notice for a lecture, called "On the Sofa with Wim Distelmans," that he saw on the Web site of a youth organization. Over pastries and coffee, Distelmans would discuss euthanasia with teen-agers. Tom sent a version of the essay, originally titled "Euthanasia on the Sofa," to Flanders's leading newspaper and magazine, both of which rejected it. Eventually, it was published in *Artsenkrant*, a magazine for physicians. "I am afraid that the notion of 'free will' has become dogma, behind which it is easy to hide," he wrote. "Wouldn't it be better to invest in mental health and palliative care?"

The Flemish newspaper *De Morgen* picked up the story and ran an article summarizing Tom's complaints. Two days later, Jacinta De Roeck, one of three senators who sponsored the euthanasia law and the director of Belgium's Liberal-Humanist Association, published an op-ed in the paper, asserting that there had been no abuses of the law since it was passed, ten years earlier. "Fortunately our society has started to understand that there can be mental suffering that is unbearable, and cannot in any way be lessened," she wrote. "Sometimes a patient sees only one possible solution: euthanasia, within the perfectly drawn lines of the law. No one has the right to disapprove of this choice."

The next week, Tony Van Loon, a professor of moral sciences at the Free University of Brussels, who is Thienpont's longtime partner, wrote an article in *De Morgen* titled "The Right to Self-Determination Is the Ultimate Answer." Van Loon, who works with Ulteam, alluded to Godelieva's case by describing her as "a mother who says her suffering is unbearable, in part because of the troubled relationship with her son." He said that the patients at Ulteam had been ignored and silenced by other doctors. "May they be allowed to die like human beings?" he wrote. "Or must they wait until they are nothing more than a corpse so that their next of kin can comfort themselves with their remains?"

In the summer of 2013, Tom asked a doctor named Georges Casteur to inspect his mother's medical records. Casteur, the former president of the provincial council of the doctors of West Flanders, had performed euthanasia

several times in his career, but he believed that it should be used only for patients who are close to death. "There's a great difference between helping people who are already dying and helping people to die," he told me. He didn't understand why physicians were framing the latter as a patient's right. "My colleagues are so against paternalism that they say, 'You want to die? O.K., I'll kill you.'"

Casteur reviewed Godelieva's medical file at Distelmans's clinic, with Distelmans sitting beside him. Casteur says that he learned that Godelieva had struggled to find three doctors who would say that she had an incurable illness, as the law required. One psychiatrist wrote that her desire for euthanasia was "not mature," because she had "ups and downs." According to Casteur, a second concluded that she could still be helped; the psychiatrist observed that when Godelieva discussed her grandchildren she became emotional and expressed doubts about her decision to die. In addition to Thienpont, Distelmans consulted Godelieva's former therapist, who wrote that, "after recent rejection by her latest partner and by her children, her psychiatric issues will not improve." Two weeks before Godelieva's death, Distelmans asked if he could call her children, but she refused. "It would not change her decision anyway," Distelmans wrote. She died with three photographs in her pocket: a picture of her holding Tom on her lap when he was a baby, a picture of her feeding one of Tom's young daughters ice cream, and a photograph of

her and her daughter walking together through a field.

Based on Casteur's notes, Tom submitted a complaint with the Belgian Order of Physicians and the public prosecutor of Brussels, alleging that Godelieva's condition had not been incurable. A reunion with her children and her grandchildren, he argued, might have alleviated the loneliness that was at the core of her suffering.

When a Dutch news service reported on Tom's complaint, Tom found himself reading all the comments online. People accused him of using Distelmans as a scapegoat, of placing his own needs before his mother's, of not understanding the law, of being secretly Catholic. Then he saw a comment by a woman named Margot Vandevenne. "To those who reacted in such a way: you have no idea how it is to experience something like that!" she wrote. "This is an unbearable pain that you can only know when you have experienced this YOURSELF." In a second comment, she wrote that Distelmans "euthanized my mother half a year ago because of depression, and I wasn't told until a day after her death, and not even by the doctor."

Vandevenne, who was nineteen and had a young son, had filed a criminal complaint against Distelmans, but she worried that nothing would come of it. The investigative process is confidential, and, in the past thirteen years, no case has been referred for prosecution. Tom encouraged Vandevenne to file a complaint with the Order of Physicians and offered to help her write it. Her mother,



"Now what?"



*"Keep your eyes peeled for a place to charge our phones, men."*

who was fifty-four when she died, had been mourning the recent deaths of both of her parents and suffered from depression, unexplained pain, and an inability to "find a meaningful purpose in her life," as one doctor wrote. On March 8, 2014, Margot sent the Order of Physicians a letter protesting the circumstances of her mother's death. "My son and I have not even had the chance to say goodbye to my mother," she wrote. "I wonder every day whether I would have been able to change her mind if I had been informed."

Less than a week later, the philosopher Etienne Vermeersch, the former president of the Belgian Advisory Committee on Bioethics, wrote an editorial in *De Morgen* accusing Tom and others of conducting a "smear campaign." "They are filing complaints with the Order of Physicians and with the court in order to frighten generous doctors with the spectre of prosecution," he wrote. "If this disastrous strategy succeeded, hundreds of people in extreme need would once again no longer be helped." He wrote that Belgium "stands, ethically, at the top of the world." He republished the editorial on a Web site and urged anyone who objected to the recent criticism to sign a petition. More than seven thousand people did, including senators and representatives, the country's minister of social affairs and health, the former mayor of Antwerp, academics, artists, actors, journalists, novelists, sports figures, and doctors from Ulteam.

Vermeersch, who is eighty-one and was recently voted the most influential intellectual in Flanders, was one of the country's earliest proponents of euthanasia, and he sees the law as his progeny. Last year, he successfully campaigned for legislation that made children with incurable illnesses eligible for euthanasia, and he, along with several politicians, is now working to expand the law so that people with dementia can be euthanized, provided they articulate their wishes in advance. When I met him at his home, a spectacularly messy house, with piles of boxes blocking the view out his windows, he told me that he did not think Godelieva's case was particularly complex; he said that he'd seen cases that were more "delicate." He described a couple who came to him for guidance after their bipolar daughter had been euthanized. They were sure that if she had waited a few months her pessimism would have lifted. Of this case, Vermeersch said, "I see that there is a problem, but you also have to look at the two sides."

Vermeersch seemed to refer to death as an option that had upsides and downsides, like any other choice, and I mentioned that it appeared that a lot of people in Belgium were less afraid of death than I was.

Vermeersch looked at me as if he were recalculating my age downward. "How can you be afraid of nothing?" he said. "Nothing can do you no harm."

I said, "I'm afraid of not existing."  
 "Millions and billions of years you did not exist—what was the problem?"  
 "But now I've formed relationships," I said.  
 "After death, your relationships are finished," he said brightly. "You are in the state you were before conception."

Tom likes to joke that he has "seven thousand enemies," the people who signed Vermeersch's petition. He refers to his insecurity complex so often that it seems to have taken on a concrete existence of its own. He alternates between denouncing the leading philosophers in Belgium and feeling ashamed of the idea that he would judge anyone. "I don't want to get trapped in a situation where I feel that I am worth something," he told me.

Vermeersch's petition gained Tom some notoriety, and people began introducing him to others who had become disenchanted by aspects of the law. Recently, he began corresponding with the daughter of Lily Boeykens, the country's most prominent feminist, who asked for euthanasia because she showed preliminary signs of Alzheimer's. After two doctors rejected her request—she was still living on her own, giving interviews, and throwing dinner parties—Boeykens, who was seventy-four, found a neurologist at the University of Antwerp, Peter De Deyn, who agreed to euthanize her. She told the doctor, who studied Alzheimer's, that she would give him her brain for his research. In an audiotaped conversation, she explained to her daughter that "De Deyn will keep the part of my body that he needs."

On the morning on which the euthanasia was scheduled, Boeykens's daughter, Kerstin, said that she called De Deyn, crying, and begged him to move her mother's 9 A.M. appointment a few hours later, so that she would have time to drop her children off at school and then drive to the clinic. But De Deyn said that he was booked for the rest of the day. (De Deyn denies that this happened.) Records show that Boeykens died at 9:20 A.M., at which point De Deyn removed her brain and performed an autopsy. Kerstin filed a complaint with the Belgian Order of Physicians, writing that "my mother and Dr. P. P. De Deyn made a deal: brains in exchange for assistance with suicide."

De Deyn, who has euthanized thirty

patients suffering from dementia, maintained that the euthanasia date had been determined before they discussed the donation of Boeykens's brain. He dismissed Kerstin's account, telling me that she was a psychiatric patient—the same thing that Distelmans said about Tom when discounting his complaints. (Kerstin said that she has no history of psychiatric treatment, a fact that her primary-care doctor confirmed.) The chairman of the Belgian Order of Physicians told Kerstin that she would not be informed of the consequences of her complaint because the process was secret. "I am pro-euthanasia—I don't want to get rid of it," she told me. "I just want to shut down these cowboys. They're a clique; they protect each other."

Last fall, Tom filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that the law in Belgium lacked safeguards to prevent abuse. His complaint referred to a recent study in the *British Medical Journal*, which found that only half of euthanasia cases in Flanders had been reported to the Federal Control and Evaluation Commission. There were no repercussions for failing to report euthanasia deaths to the commission, a situation likely aided by the fact that nearly half of the sixteen members on the commission are affiliated with right-to-die associations.

Tom felt so aggrieved by Distelmans's prominence that he tried not to talk about him while driving. Each time Distelmans received a prize or a grant—and there have been many—Tom took it as a personal insult. His anger at his mother was channelled toward her doctor, who seemed to be everywhere. Last spring, Tom was reviewing his eight-year-old daughter's journal for school, as he does every night, when he saw in the pages a flyer with Distelmans's face on it. "Euthanasia lecture: With Wim Distelmans," it said. It had been put there by his daughter's non-confessional-ethics teacher, who is also the chair of the local humanist chapter. Tom and his wife e-mailed the school's principal to complain that the ethics teacher was promoting a lecture by the doctor who had euthanized the grandmother of one of her pupils. The principal apologized for causing discomfort but explained that the "flyer has only an informative character which gives parents the opportunity to

get informed about this contemporary humanist subject." She wrote that the subject of euthanasia was in keeping with the curriculum, but she said that she would advise teachers not to discuss it until after the second grade.

Tom thought about pulling his daughter out of non-confessional ethics but decided not to, because it wouldn't make sense for her to study Catholicism—the other class offered during that period—and he didn't want her to have to sit alone for two hours every week. She was popular, and he didn't want her to feel like an outsider. His wife, who has an aura of quiet competence, had managed to keep their domestic life remarkably regular in the years since Godelieva's death. They live in a suburb of Leuven, in a clean, bright, square house that they designed themselves; when they were shopping for architectural models, the word they kept repeating was "practical." Tom's tone of voice shifts when he talks about his children. He seems suddenly light.

At times, Tom appeared almost bewildered by his stability—a fulfilling job, a loving marriage, three healthy children. He assumed that at some point he must have decided to live, a choice that still surprises him. He attributed it to some sort of primitive drive to know how things would turn out. "I wanted to see if I was capable of becoming someone," he said, before adding that he still doesn't know. When he becomes depressed or dramatic,



his wife tells him to think of their children, and says, "You have no choice but to continue," a phrase that Tom repeats often.

On one of my last days in Belgium, Tom took me to meet his grandmother, whose flaws Godelieva had described so relentlessly that Tom had trouble seeing her as a person in her own right. Tom had always felt a little wary of her, but his grandmother had been a steady presence in his life, and he had come to appreciate that. Tom visits her about once a month, for half an

hour, until they run out of things to say.

As soon as we arrived, Tom spotted her walking down the hallway toward the cafeteria. She was dressed like a schoolgirl, in a long skirt, a maroon cardigan, and a starched white shirt buttoned to the base of her neck. Her excitement at seeing her grandson was mild. She nodded, smiled timidly, and led us upstairs to her room.

She sat on a cushioned chair, her ankles crossed, while Tom opened her cabinet and took out an antique box of photographs, most of which had been taken at the farm where she had grown up and spent most of her life. "Good pictures, Oma," he said as he shuffled through several piles, searching for older photographs. He finally found what he wanted: photographs of British soldiers who had recuperated at the farm after the Second World War. His grandmother had fallen in love with one of the soldiers, and they had planned to marry. But, at the last minute, to please her parents, she married Tom's grandfather instead.

Years later, his grandmother searched for the soldier, and, when they were in their seventies, after the deaths of their spouses, they reunited. "They had one romantic summer before he died," Tom told me. He showed me a picture of his grandmother and the veteran standing in front of the farm, holding hands and beaming.

I said that it was a very nice picture.

"Yeah, but it destroyed everything," Tom said, explaining that his grandmother had spent fifty years married to a man she didn't love. He repeated a phrase that his mother had written several times in her diary: "You can feel whatever you want on the inside, but never let it show on the outside."

After we left, Tom explained that his mother had always said that she wasn't "conceived out of love." At the thought, he seemed to soften toward her. "She really had a tough time," he said. "She was in pain—I'm not going to say anything different."

He began speaking about how traumas are passed from one generation to the next, and how suicides, perhaps more than any other death, reverberate through a family. It was an idea that we'd discussed many times, and, when I didn't immediately respond, he seemed to tire of it. "Well, it is what it is," he said. "We have to continue. People will always start over." ♦



Carl Hirsch didn't do holiday parties. At least, not correctly. All the so-called people, wind streaming from their faces. Fleishy machines spewing pollution, fucking up the environment. If he squinted, the celebrating bodies of his co-workers very nearly blistered into molecules, shining with color. Too often the whole of it—people, places, and things—looked to scatter. Everyone on the verge of turning to soup. So what if there was no precedent for a full-scale human melt, bodies reduced to liquid pouring from a window? You could still worry about it. Sometimes you had to.

Tonight's party was in one of those long, skinny city apartments you're supposed to verbally fellate with praise. It was like walking into a tiny, dismal doghouse, a real doghouse, and then kissing the furred ass of the dog who lived there, who was super annoyed to have you clogging up his tiny room. You were allowed to stay as long as you kept using your tongue.

Hopefully, this doghouse had sick drinks. And free money. And those soft bones in sauce they sometimes served at company parties. Even if he was only permitted to sniff them, because of his feeding regimen.

"The light, the space, my God!" Carl found himself saying to the small, perfectly dressed host, who stood on the landing.

The host greeted Carl with alarm.

Carl reached up, too late, to cover his face. He didn't want to be a burden—at least, not to just anyone. And yet, fuck this guy. Didn't Emily Post have a whole chapter on hiding all reaction to astonishing creatures who appeared at your door? Shutting your little face down so as not to reveal the horror and disgust you might really feel?

To the host, Carl said, grinning far too hard, "Just show me to my rooms and I'll get out of everyone's way. Jones is on his way up with my luggage. This is going to be such a fun year, roommate!"

The host didn't hear him, missed the joke. He was already looking over Carl's shoulder to where people were crowding up the narrow staircase, trying to push their way inside. Because heaven. Because drinks. Because loneliness and flesh pleasure. Because the invite said, "Levitate, my friends! Let us see the soles of your feet!" Because Mayflower, where

they all worked, was pure shithouse. The future was ripe for sexual conquest, and they were busy greasing up their parts.

Carl knew he wasn't the type to get fondled when he passed out. Mostly it was because of his face, thanks to his job. Rough on the eyes, tough to the touch. Scratchproof, though, which was a bonus. Particularly if some long-shot apocalypse reared up and he had to go face first into the bramble or some such. For now, partygoers pressing in behind him, he could do nothing but raise his arms and surf forward into the mob, hoping with all his might that the wave would carry him, safe and sound, back home to his bed.

In some ways, it was inevitable that Carl, a few nights later, would take a picture of his balls and send it to the Mayflower e-mail list. After a hot bath, he propped up his phone in the dank zone and captured the crag and the woof, the topographical crimson scorch. He got the shot, pressed "share," and released the picture into the ether. It felt all right. A certain unburdening. Maybe even like postcoital clarity, chaste and lonely as it was. Afterward, he was tempted to stand at his apartment window and listen through the glass, into the pulse of the evening, as his message landed at key e-mail terminals throughout the metropolis.

If you counted from the beginning, going back to the supposedly sunny morning when Carl was born, this was day ten thousand seven hundred and something of his tremendously joyful stretch of time, his project aboveground.

To hear his mother tell it, because certain mothers break into story when you enter their homes, the birds were in ecstasy the day he was born, squawking over the hospital. The air was so crisp and cool that day, his mother would add, that you felt hugged by the wind. Her phrase. When little Carl was born, the whole neighborhood, per his mother, held its breath. *Someone new is among us. Someone special.* It was a revisionist birth narrative, likely concocted when it struck Carl's mother, poor thing, that her son was just another piercingly boring need machine, underperforming and overwhelming, programmed to crave so much from her that she would soon forget her interests and reengineer her whole self

in order to supply the mothering that would keep her child, at the very least, out of jail, out of a coffin, and out of the sex-change doctor's office. At which point she would subtly punish him with nearly imperceptible indifference and ambivalence. Parenting! As far as motives go, his mother had a pretty good one for her wholesale, self-serving fictionalization of Carl's birth, and he forgave her, not that she ever asked him to, for glorifying his unremarkable debut.

In his twenties, just before his mother died, when she was listless and storied out, staring through a different hospital window as if surveying the land for her own burial, Carl finally Googled the weather on the day of his birth. And, well, lookee there: rain, rain, rain, ash, fire, murder, murder, rain. A godless Tuesday. Unprecedented torrents flooding down from the north. Dirt and mud and broken trees and houses split in half. Sunshine, maybe, but not in his part of the world.

And birds? The Internet had little to say on the matter.

As it turned out, Carl's photo backfired. The folks at work who opened his attachment—the upper-level creatives at Mayflower as well as the engineers holed up in the silo in Albuquerque—mistook it for an image of Carl's pitiful neck. Or maybe a scalded bit of acreage under his arm. In other words, no one seemed to see anything uniquely scrotal in the photo. Just grim, if understandable, symptom documentation from a man who was perhaps Mayflower's most martyred employee. Slash medical subject. Slash guinea pig. Slash hero. Slash fool. Carl the Boiled, as he had started to think of himself. Taking one for the team.

At work the next day, expecting to be shunned and sort of figuratively barfed on, maybe swept into the farewell room, where underachievers got hand-stabbed by Kipler, the C.E.O., Carl instead collected a few drive-by hugs. He was heavily touched, right on the body, by people he'd hardly even met. A kind of unprecedented love was brought to bear all over his person.

"Oh, my gosh," Kora, from Nutrients, said, holding him at arm's length and staring wildly just above his head. She was always the one putting the needle in

and sometimes forgetting to take it out.

“Carl? Honey?”

“I’m O.K.,” Carl whispered, suddenly shy.

“I know!” Kora said. “You are! You will be! You are so brave. I can’t believe you are being so open about what this is doing to you. It serves them right.” She shook her fist.

Kora the Explorer. He wouldn’t think of her that way anymore. He actually appreciated her kindness, if misdirected. If incorrect. Did it matter?

She squeezed his waist, and he felt himself pee a little. His bladder seemed to belong to someone else entirely.

Later in the morning, an older man ducked into Carl’s cubicle, a man who seemed to have been designed, by experts, to embody sorrow and regret. He shook his head with deep, theatrical empathy. His name was maybe Murray. Maury? Perhaps it was Larry. He was a tech. He performed overnight adjustments to the computer displays that were slowly roasting Carl’s face, in the service of the greater good. Money piles for Mayflower. Loss of bodily function for Carl.

“I’m just thinking about you and feeling for you,” the man said to Carl, stooped in a kind of prayer bow. “And knowing that there’s no way I can really know, I mean, I can’t . . .” He paused. “What you’re going through. None of us can.”

“Everything we can’t know,” Carl said, shaking his head as cheerfully as he could. “Maybe it’s time to cry uncle. Mysteries one, us nothing. We lose!”

The man dipped his head again, pressed his hands together.

“Anyway, it’s what we signed up for, right?” Carl said, trying and failing to picture the exact moment when he’d agreed to take part in the experiment. Had it ever happened? He couldn’t remember the last time he’d written his name, said yes, nodded his head, assented. Maybe by simply staying alive he implied his agreement and cooperation? Simply by walking the halls at Mayflower, and not crawling into a hole, he was saying, Yes, yes, please test your equipment on me. Especially the equipment that burns. I would be most pleased if you would.

How sweet of this man to visit and thank Carl for his service. The old Carl would have smiled and thanked him, but his thanking utensil, connected in-

## POEM IN THE MANNER OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I ran with the wind like a boy  
in the journey of my solitude  
when joy surrounded me like an ocean  
I could not stand in but could drown in.

And thus was born my theory of joy  
alloyed with fear and more subdued  
than a breeze lifting a lone leaf  
to a hill of high altitude.

If such a thought were vain,  
to me it yet remains the breath  
of life itself, greater than grief  
and lonelier than a cloudless sky.

Not even—my sister, my life—not  
even if death should be thy lot,  
would I lose faith that I,

in body bruised but with dignity high,  
with visage grim to meet the pains  
of sleep, will yet sustain  
the never-ending poem of my brain.

—David Lehman

exorably to his face, was broken. He had the paralyzed head of a mascot. What he needed now, in order to engage in human congress, was emoticons on Popsicle sticks that he could wave around, lest everyone start to think that he was dead on the inside, too.

**B**oiled Carl, alpha tester in this freak show, wasn’t exactly sure how the whole U.V. feeding thing had even come about. Why would Mayflower’s cold commanders, motherfuckers extraordinaire, reveal their true road map to him, anyway?

He’d joined Mayflower’s wearables team five years back and had been whiteboarding applications that tracked emotions, or tried to, so that the world’s feelings could finally get accurately logged. And mined. And then probably ransomed back to the people who had the feelings in the first place. Using the data they collected, Carl’s team had been able to match users’ emotion narratives—the plotted vectors of what they felt over the course of days and weeks and years—with those of other users. Maybe even

in their own apartment building. Certainly in their neighborhood. Unless they lived in the middle of fucking nowhere. Or unless their feeling vectors were highly unusual. Carl’s team proposed a kind of mood pairing. Who else is bummed out? Who doesn’t give a shit? Who feels pretty good today, maybe borderline ecstatic, even though something bad happened in Angola? Who’s lost the taste for staying out late, wants to be alone but is lonely anyway? Who eats his daily caloric value in one sitting at 3 A.M. and has an unfun reaction to that?

This wouldn’t be just a dating service, even though, *ka-ching*, hello! Get paid, hashtag gritty times! They were pretty sure they were onto something. Carl thought that, with enough users shooting their feelings into the cloud, Mayflower would be sitting on a gold mine of data. It was the ultimate privacy grab, better even than a blood sample from every living person on the planet. Which the rumor sites also had Mayflower pursuing.

But management smelled too much choice. The whole thing stank of opt

out. Self-knowledge was for the dead, they said. People don't like themselves enough to have to deal with other people with feelings so similar to their own. It makes them feel less special. A product shouldn't be trying to tell the truth so aggressively. That was a turnoff. Besides, the feeling sensors weren't where they should be, technology-wise, and only young people would want to wear the neck collars that Carl was proposing. Management pulled the kill switch. Management being Kipler, Kipler, Kipler, and Kipler, depending on his mood. Depending on his sweater.

Creative staged charrettes. Disruption was the watchword. Carl and his team were pressured to lift their legs and pee-shame the status quo. For a cash-yielding invention to work, for it to leak gold pudding and really destroy the economy, in Mayflower's favor, maybe even change the meaning of money, Kipler once said, it had to look inevitable, ridiculously obvious in hindsight. They all kept coming back to food. What a problem it was. And not just because there was so little of it left hiding on the planet.

Carl was there when Kipler first brought the life hackers into the charrette. Brutal, loud, beautiful, aspirationally immortal. Just a bunch of ageless kid-looking creatures who were like Version 2.0 people. How old were they, really? Eleven? Kipler called them Mayflower's future. Early adopters of every health trend, enthusiasts of untested medical protocols. They micro-fasted, binged on superfoods, fussed over their own blood tests, which they posted cockily on the longevity message boards. Carl once saw them tearing down a hallway, something clear and greasy on their upper lips. They seemed deranged. Soon the life hackers were obsessed with a service called Jug. Every morning, a jug was delivered to your cubicle. It was all you needed for the day. Nutritionally bozo. Freakishly optimized, and they could load your meds into it, just to keep all your material input in one receptacle. Sometimes the jug held a thick lotion, more of a cream than a drink. Other times it was slippery and clear, with a foamy head. It depended on your bloodwork. As you graduated through jugs, the color and the quality of the liquid changed, responding to feedback. When you finished a jug, you spat your last sip back into the bottle, to be

analyzed before the next day's potion was brewed. Or supposedly. The life hackers had brought their jugs to the charrette one day and swigged from them, burping a grassy steam.

The legend that developed is that Kipler smashed some jugs that day, swung one against his own head, grinning madly. Carl would love to have seen that. Some of the goo in those bottles looked as if it couldn't even spill. It would just hang in the air like a cloud. He pictured Kipler cream-soaked, coated in white foam.

What did happen is that Kipler said that the startup that had invented Jug had missed the whole point. They were drawing your attention to your food, giving you a heavy accessory, isolating you socially, et cetera—he went on for like ten minutes of scathing criticism. Kipler destroyed the premise, the execution, the future of this product, and the life hackers, poor guys, seemed to wither at the table.

“Get rid of the jug,” Kipler finally said. “Get rid of the liquid. Get rid of everything. What's left?”

No one answered.

Kipler smiled.

“Exactly,” he said. “Nothing. There's nothing left.”

He gestured into empty space, then pointed at the overhead fixture.

“We're all sitting here, soaking in light. We could have been eating this whole time.”

Kipler was pretty quiet after that, and everybody was freaked out, looking up into the light, squinting.

**M**ayflower Systems regularly bought and destroyed small companies, mostly to crush progress. And maybe also simply to frighten the universe and increase world sadness? One of the patent portfolios that had come online at around that time involved grow lights. Using light as a delivery system for nutrients, not just for plants but for animals. A light bulb went off, and a U.V. healing wand for sick animals became, at Mayflower, something utterly else and freaking wonderful. A nutrient-delivery system for the skin, for people skin. A goddam human grow light, as Kipler put it, though he thought the word “human” sounded too technical. The way skin makes Vitamin D from

sunlight. Except this would be other vitamins, too, and micronutrients. And then, one day, the three amigos: fat, protein, and carbohydrates, who usually got inside us only through flesh eating and the like. The marketing hook was that meals were obsolete. Meals were a headache and a hassle. Meals were disgusting. Because of sauce. Because of stench. In the future, Kipler would yell, everyone would eat by accident, while doing other things. While working!

Who would volunteer? Who would saddle up and taste the greatness? Who was stupid? Who had nothing to lose? Who lacked a family to mourn him should things go blue? Who wanted to be a hero? Who could withstand tremendous levels of pain without blacking out? Who could abide a chronic, deep itch under the skin that scratching merely exacerbated?

Those, in fact, were not the criteria. None of them. They blood-tested Creative and looked for subjects with gross nutritional deficits. In other words, people who ate like shit and had the blood numbers of a gremlin. The first goal was to see if the grow light could move the needle, boost a dude's Vitamin A or whatnot. Actually satiate. And not, you know, hasten to expire. And then luminous efficacy would be stretched. Light-form carbohydrate spectrum, rays of protein. Yup. Radical color temps and other PAR value mods to the spectrum. The talk got geeky. If all went well, they'd pilot a dark strobe, something like a noise gate that regulated the feed? Just pulse darkness so as not to turn the poor subject into some kind of demon, twitching under a heat lamp.

Carl's bloodwork deemed him the most deviant, healthwise, and the applause he got, a king's greeting, which must have been cheers of relief, sort of decided the thing. It was Carl who'd be going under the light. All you can eat. Everyone hollered to give it up for Carl and then everyone sort of did, vocally. The entire room, as if they'd planned it, yelled, “Bon appétit, Carl!” Flashlights were clicked on, and these flannel-shirted semi-strangers gathered around him, shining their things in his face, as a kind of joke, Carl guessed, but it was sickening a little.

Mayflower put Carl on a detox. Not Jug. Just some potions cooked up in

the cafeteria, sometimes administered to him in the men's room, when privacy was called for. Bone-broth jello. Quite a lot of citrus. Cold coffee shot into his dark parts. A vitamin lotion smeared onto his newly shaved head, because raw skin says yes, one of the nutrient nurses explained. Your pores just gape open. Oxygen, she explained, was richer when emulsified into a cream.

Carl felt shaky, poisoned in a way he didn't quite mind, and when the day came he was ready.

The first time he ate the light, sitting at his desk starving his ass off, staring at his laptop screen, it felt like getting slapped. A lot. That was the nutrient penetration, they explained. Like shotgun pellets. To Carl, it felt as if someone had pinned him to the floor and was just pimp-slapping him into submission. Carl asked for goggles. His eyes hurt. His feet shrank and weakened. By the end of the first week his tongue clogged his mouth. Enough to foul his speech and make him sound like an animal. And he suffered from a bottomless, gnawing hunger. Maybe because he was getting only enough nutrition, at that point, to sustain a cricket.

It was hard, hard, hard to convert fat into light. The body, Carl's body, wanted good fats, bad fats, a salt lick, a fat friend. His cravings went berserk. He dreamed of fat, thought of eating parts of himself. The tech for the fat conversion was pretty crude. Understatement. Carl pictured Mme. Blavatsky at a loom. How do you speed up fat, make it invisible, but also really fast, really powerful? You could do it, but badly, and this sort of light just balls-out hurt going in. Hurt and burned. Or the reverse. The flesh was chilled by it, for some reason, and there could be rot. Of the skin.

There were some glitches. Display burnout, necrosis. The paint on the cubicle wall behind Carl's head, which collected the light when he wasn't sitting there, bubbled up and peeled. There were side effects. Including the dark hardening of Carl's face. They called it "blizzard face." A team was already at work on a grow-light recovery lotion to market as a solution to the problem they'd created.

Carl felt like an astronaut, a child, a

corpse. He asked the obvious questions. Why not some other patch of skin? Something less, maybe, facial? But Kipler was adamant. The face was already getting bathed in light all fucking day by people looking at their computers and phones. "All day! Take what's there and body-slam it!" he shouted. That was the entire point.

"We use the gestural habits that are already in place. What's already happening! There's nothing new to learn, nothing to do, nothing to think, nothing to feel. Victory! Do you not see that? Get out of my house if you don't see that. People don't want to think about eating. We are giving them a gift. The invention is hidden. It's nothing! Think nothing."

During an early charrette, after the experiment began, a tech ran in yelling about an update to the display, some U.V. dilation they'd pulled off to widen the protein band, muscling it into something called gray light. They'd crowded one more amino acid onto the spectrum, apparently.

"Carl," the tech said, bowing. "Your presence is humbly requested in Albuquerque. We've freaking iterated the shit out of this display. It's like pure food. We cooled the bitch right down. You're going to feast, my man. Bring your goggles."

And then, in a fight announcer's voice, the tech boomed, "Let's get ready for Pro-Tein!"

High fives all around.

Carl stood up and shadowboxed, ducking and weaving, but the effort left him dizzy and breathless. He sat back down.

When he returned from Albuquerque, he was hungrier than ever. He had a potbelly. A sore had formed on his chin. He'd enjoyed a small boost in his folate level. In iron. Magnesium. But he was still losing muscle mass, and he felt a tight bulge in one of his eyes. The medics kept waving him through, chortling about miracles. The project was considered a success. Carl was a great explorer. They pushed him in a wheelchair down hallways, just to keep his energy up. Sometimes he slept through a feed, waking up famished with a hot, tight face. Carl dreamed of the sort of hood used for falcons. Someone could push the shrouded

man around and everybody would whisper, "That's Carl. Look at Carl. Oh, my God, there he is."

"I want what he's having," Carl would say to himself, in a voice he could no longer recognize.

When Carl finally sent his crotch shot out into the world, the testing had been going on for endless hungry, scorched weeks. The computer displays were fucking hot, and for a while, before the hardening, Carl rashed up. His skin tightened, his face itched, and something behind his face, the fascia, they called it, seemed to kind of break up. Which caused a kind of feature slide. He submitted to daily bloodwork. They gave him some drug called Shitazine, or that wasn't exactly what it was called, which turned him totally off mouth food. So they could do a full nutritional assay. On weekends, ravenous and puckered, he got a smoothie, jacked with protein, just to keep him off life support. Monday mornings they chelated him, or something that sounded like that, to zero out his nutritional stats, so that he could sizzle-fry in front of the panels all week and they could clock what was coming in.

If he thought about it, having survived the genital share, there wasn't a simple answer to why he'd sent the picture. But there wasn't a complicated answer, either. To Carl himself, it seemed both obvious and mysterious, inevitable and random. He could embrace nearly any interpretation. But since no one appeared to have seen it for what it was, trying to understand it suddenly felt bizarre. He was embarrassed that he'd done it and also disappointed that he hadn't done it well. He was ashamed and indifferent. Disturbed and content.

But most of all his body was empty and dry, and he was powerfully, powerfully hungry.

Carl was due at the lab on Thursdays, but this week they called him in early.

"You are technically malnourished," the doctor told him, smiling. "But here's the thing. So are most people, and they actually eat food. Being malnourished is not per se a concern of ours. You've lost a few pounds—well, more than that—but that could be attributed to stress at work. And, anyway, ideal body

weight? Still not quite there. So O.K. Pretty much. Muscle mass, sure. And your fingernails are brittle, which, of course. Well. What's important, what's kind of amazing, is that you're not starving. Your magnesium levels are ridiculous. I mean, just a joke, in terms of not eating at all. This isn't possible. What we're doing. It's not possible!"

"O.K.," Carl said.

"I mean, you're hardly in ketosis here!" the doctor shouted, waving his clipboard.

Carl wanted to enjoy this news. Some carbs were flowing in. Whoopee. He was not technically dead. He looked at the two-way mirror, wondering who was back there. Kipler, no doubt, every single version of him. He had a lot riding on Carl. He needed this to work. Why was he hiding? Carl wondered. Afraid of a man whose face has died?

Then Carl did that thing he'd seen on TV where the suspect in the interrogation room gets up and confronts the two-way mirror. Pounds on it to call out the lurkers standing in judgment, deciding his future. Come on out, and all that. What are you afraid of? Except Carl did it sort of mildly. It was hard to walk. He tottered over to the glass, cupped his hands against it. He didn't want to break anything. Just a few taps on the glass. Hello? he thought. Hello? Did he really need to say it out loud? How much of this shit needed to be spelled out?

"Uh, what are you doing?" the doctor asked.

To answer that in detail, Carl would have had to wave a pretty complicated set of emoticons. Desperation, suspicion, apology, and, hovering over all the others, exhaustion. Just a yellow ball of tired face. Not yawning, though. Not that kind of tired.

"Tired face, tired face," Carl said to the doctor. "Just fucking tired face."

"There's nothing back there," the doctor said. "It's a closet. I'll show you."

Carl waved him away. He apologized. He was being paranoid, he explained. It's just that he was always so hungry, and it wasn't pain so much as tremendous pressure flushing through him. "It's like someone keeps pouring hot water inside me. Inside my whole body. I'm getting rinsed out by very hot water. Agony face. Face for I don't know how much longer I can do this."



*"Must everything with you be a landmark decision?"*

The doctor looked at him but made no note.

"I'm just being foolish," Carl said. "You know me."

The doctor nodded. They hardly knew each other at all.

Carl ducked out and resumed his session at his desk. The light from his computer today was cool, almost soothing. Maybe they'd iterated a healing blue ray. Maybe this would all start feeling better. To kill time, he fired up a lost-person Web site and put in his own name. The tracking on these things was pretty poor. You could register, supposedly, and get better data. Live tracking was promised. Was it real? Could he pay the money and then see, in digital scribble, the path he'd been taking these past few months? Would the bird's-eye view reveal something new? Because he'd been through it on the ground, in person, and even he couldn't be sure.

The problem was that there were too many Carl Hirsches to choose from. Maybe thirty in Carl's region alone. You could pick only one at a time, then pay your money for the reveal. But behind each clickable Carl Hirsch was the same

picture, the only extant picture of a Carl Hirsch anywhere, apparently.

The picture looked a good deal like Carl's own father, dead a long time now, who never lived in this area. Never even visited, as far as Carl knew. Was it really him? The picture was from that era when subjects did not look at the camera, so here was someone who looked very much like his dad, from so long ago, staring into the distance, at something behind Carl that he couldn't see. No matter how he jogged his head, he could not quite get those eyes to look at him.

The rest of the week went O.K. The sympathy dried up, but all seemed well. Carl fried at his desk, sipped distilled water. His guards didn't seem to be minding him so carefully, and Kora hadn't come by to stick him with Shitazine, so he grabbed a scone at one point, and it burst into powder in his mouth. He fell to the ground coughing, a cloud of crumbs spraying everywhere, but no one at Mayflower particularly minded him. They knew his life was hell.

In the coatroom as Carl was leaving

that Friday, Kipler pulled him aside. Out in the open, in front of the rush-hour crowd of employees, who pretended that their boss wasn't standing right there, huddled up with Blizzard Face himself.

"So what's with the crotch shot?"

"What?"

"Why did you send a picture of your testicles to so many strangers? People were revolted and confused. And over e-mail. The least secure form of communication ever devised, including whatever the apes used."

"You knew?"

"A scrotum isn't some rare species, nor does any living person have a neck that fucked up. We know what your symptoms are. We caused them. I've probably seen forty unique pairs of balls. Just a round number. Not all of them up close, but I know what they look like."

"I'm sorry," Carl said.

"So are we. You're out. It breaks your nondisclosure. Honestly, even if it doesn't, it breaks something. Something is wrong. Your data is mud."

"I agree," Carl said.

"Go have a sandwich, already. You're off the feed. We neutralized your panels a few days ago from a kill switch in Albuquerque."

"I was going to say," Carl said. "Something seemed like an improvement."

"The alpha unit wasn't friendly. We know that. Sorry for, you know. Mostly it was proof of concept. And guess what. Proof achieved. Through the mother-fucking roof. Maybe your numbers weren't good, but they were numbers. You fed. Badly, and with little retention. But you fed. We're moving to beta. The life hackers are going to strap in. This thing will make it to market. I'm sorry you can't take the ride with us."

"So am I fired?"

"Don't push your luck. The N.D.A. still stands, for like three lifetimes. Your children's children, not that offspring are a likely outcome for you, can't even whisper it to each other. I'll be dead myself, but I'll leave instructions that they be slapped across the room and out a window if that happens. Slapped right the fuck off the planet. So nary a whisper. Not that you're having kids. We find that it's easiest for you to keep quiet about all this if you, you know, don't even remember it. That way it's not a

secret you're keeping. You don't even know about it yourself. Which is very nearly true. That's the argument from our side. Not even the argument, just the language. It never happened."

"Thanks," Carl said.

"I love you, man," Kipler said. He closed in on Carl, wrapped him in his arms. "What a bullet you took for us," he whispered. "A huge bullet. The biggest."

As the employees of Mayflower filed out of the building for the night, Carl held on to Kipler in the coatroom, squeezing him tightly, feeling the man's heartbeat throb against his face.

For a while, everything went quiet. Carl returned to mouth food with an animal focus, but he couldn't keep it down, and all the time he fretted about the U.V. panels. Showing up, who knows, in traffic lights. On televisions. At home, pulsing from his mirror. He stayed cautious of screens, skipped past them quickly.

The winter failed, and along came April, one of the twelve punishments. Carl had seen this month too often by now and had hardened against its pleasures. April was a bastard name for a month so numb. Slush on the ground, a salty slurry in the air. Slush, most likely, in his insides, which he pictured as mud-died guts down a hole.

Day after day, Carl tromped to work. He tromped home. His pants grew stiff with salt. He lost his security clearance and was migrated through Mayflower's



cubicles once, twice. Finally, they exiled him, with the older, idea-free crowd, to a featureless room overlooking the vast, immaculate cafeteria. In Carl's new work corridor, the employees went uninstructed and drastically unpoliced. Did they really work there? They shared a single computer and a pristine in-box. To Carl, the workspace was a petting zoo, without visitors. People moved from table to window to door, moaning. He did his best not to touch anyone.

He soon lost his taste for food. Maybe he'd outgrown it, which possibly meant that his clock had finally run down, and O.K., that was O.K. A creature senses an ending. A window, a door, a hole opens, and he steps through. For now, he sipped the occasional yogurt drink and kept some bread nearby, but something had died in him, and he worried that eating, even a little, would feed it, would stoke the thing and bring it back to life. He felt safer with it gone.

Sometimes Carl woke up confused. He spent time trying to figure out how to reverse what had happened. What was the opposite of a human grow light? He tried the obvious: darkness, the deepest kind. He tried it and tried it and tried it. At home for days with the shades down, then—where the darkness was so much better, so exquisite and fine—out of town, along the sand roads, under the salt pines, in the dunes, or deep in the woods off the highway.

One night, the police picked him up, and they were not pleased. What face could Carl show them but his own, burned and unmoving? What he told them, at length and through his charred mouth, was not true and it was not enough. They drove him home in silence, and when they dropped him off they saw him all the way to his door and inside, and after Carl locked up he listened for a long time, but never did hear them walk away.

At the age of forty-one, Carl left Mayflower and accepted an I.T. job in a school system near the water. Tech support turned out to be light bulbs, wind blinds, a chimney. Chairs, phones, walls. The yard, too. Carl would maintain all of them.

The school kept Carl away from the children. He understood. Children's fears should be managed. Sometimes their eyes need to be covered. So much is better left unseen. There would be more and greater to fear when they were older. Best to save room. But Carl found a way to tend the landscape in the mornings, at a squinting distance from the school doors. From afar, he was a faceless man in a jumpsuit, leaning into his shovel, Carl the Small, the frantic waver. Every day, the kids, fired like missiles from the yellow school buses, waved at Carl, and he saluted them all, righty-o.

Hello there, you guys! People should always greet one another that way. If he could store a message for creatures thousands of years in the future, it would be simple. Upon meeting one another in whatever passes, in your world, for a room, a hallway, a road, a field, do not play dead while you are still alive. Just try to say hello.

It turned out that there was a woman at the school who did not die from seeing Carl up close, again and again. They had lunch together, and lunch together, and lunch and a walk, and a weekend coffee, and lunch again, until something felt wrong when they didn't meet up, even if it was to do nothing much at all but take the woods path, or walk, once night had come on, right through town.

Her name was Maura, and she ran art and languages for the sixth graders. She asked what had happened to him, and he shook his head. He wanted to pull a long-story face. The hardened shell of him had withered by then, gone soft. It looked as if someone had died just outside his body and he was still wearing that person's skin. He shook his head, that was all, and this was fine with her. She said she understood. Which meant, to Carl, that in one way or another maybe Maura was keeping to her own nondisclosure agreement, one that she'd struck with herself or others, sometime in the past, far from here.

It was no romance, which relieved them both. Maura and Carl were plain about what they needed to feel pleasure. If their intimacy could feel turn-based and a little like a chore, just friends bestowing favors, like old women doing each other's hair, it was at least a manageable sorrow that he could endure. He could keep an eye on it and be sure that it didn't grow.

Maura was older than Carl. She was kinder, finer-looking, more at peace, as far as he knew, with having been born. What a gift, not to be constantly scouting for an exit! And if Carl felt private or mean he knew to leave the house and pour out his cruelty in a safe place, where Maura could not be hurt. Perhaps what was most animal in him had been cooked out by Kipler and his rig, burned or boiled or just reduced so that it hardly ever appeared. He hated to think so posi-

tively, because he felt as if it did a kind of violence to his brain, but perhaps something good had come of all that heat, all that light. An off-script use case to the human grow light that no doubt they'd never suspect over at Mayflower: you could use that fierce power to eliminate the wrong and rotten parts of yourself. Not a grow light at all but the reverse, which felt better to Carl than he would have liked to admit.

It was probably not the Lord who allowed Maura to conceive a child, even though she thanked Him. Carl tried thanking Him, too. His policy on the matter—as they tended her pregnancy all summer and into the fall, walking to school together on weekday mornings before silently parting for the day, then meeting again for the walk home—was that gratitude needed only to be released from one's person, spoken out loud. From there, it could find its proper destination on its own.

When his son was born, on a cold, cloudless October night, Carl could not help himself. Some very old words came back to him. What a tremendously ridiculous person he'd become, even though nothing that had happened to him had been ridiculous at all. The words he recalled were somehow suddenly available, wanting out. He whispered them, over and over, until the little creature, still unnamed, mouth bubbling on Maura's tummy, fell asleep for the very first time in his life: *Someone new is among us. Someone special.*

It hurt him to say this, because he was Carl. He knew the odds, the science, the facts. Or at least he used to. Was such a statement really as grossly untrue as it seemed? Just him being wishful, being scared? What, really, was so special about one more boy in the world?

Maybe the verdict on this could stay out for now. Just scattered into the distance, a verdict you could never really reach, even if you wanted to. Maybe, in whatever time he had left, Carl would work as hard as he could to keep the verdict on that question, along with every other question that pressed in, as far away from his family as humanly possible. ♦

**NEWYORKER.COM**

Ben Marcus on "The Grow-Light Blues."

Advertisement

## SUMMER SHOWCASE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEW PRODUCTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS



See the Museum of the City of New York's "Saving Place: 50 Years of New York City Landmarks," a comprehensive exhibition exploring the preservation movement that has shaped the city's success.

[mcny.org/exhibition/saving-place](http://mcny.org/exhibition/saving-place)



Renowned psychiatric and addiction treatment for adolescents and adults in an exceptional setting.

[SilverHillHospital.org](http://SilverHillHospital.org) • 800.899.4455

SILVER HILL HOSPITAL



XII XI MCMLXXXIX

DECEMBER 11, 1989. 9,496 days have passed, yet it feels like only yesterday.

Your Anniversary in Roman Numerals

[john-christian.com](http://john-christian.com) • 888.646.6466

JOHN  CHRISTIAN



Travel light and be organized with our Aeronaut 30 carry-on luggage. Designed to fit European airline luggage requirements. Made in the U.S.A.

[TomBihn.com](http://TomBihn.com) • 800.729.9607

 TOM BIHN



**@NEWYORKERPROMO**  
NEWYORKERONTHTOWN.COM

# THE CRITICS



POP MUSIC

## SOFT APOCALYPSE

*Jenny Hval wanders through the fallout of the twenty-first century.*

BY ANWEN CRAWFORD

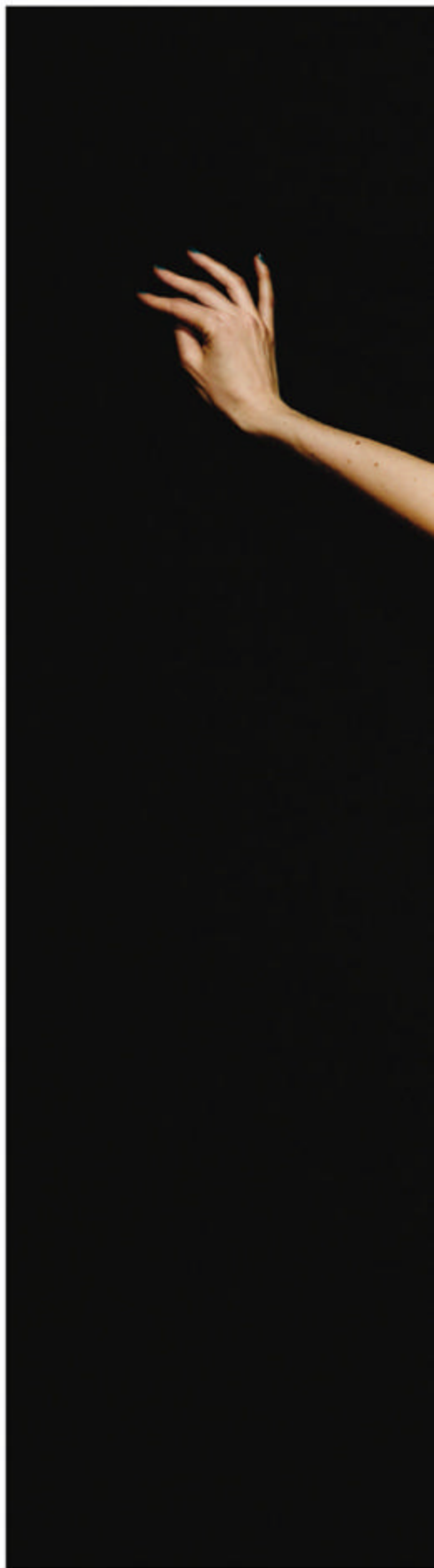
“What is soft dick rock?” Jenny Hval asks, on “Kingsize,” the opening track of her new album, “Apocalypse, girl.” She speaks the phrase, and lingers over the consonants. The effect is both comic and startling—a vivid, abrupt deflation of the machismo that has characterized so much of popular music: the hip swivels, the bare-chested strutting, the guitars that function as penis extensions or substitutes. Hval’s question arrives during a brief pause in an otherwise fidgety arrangement, which includes snippets of synthesizer, the sound of a bow being scraped across cello strings, and a series of rattling noises, as if someone were rifling through a cutlery drawer. The effect is to make the question feel balder, and bolder.

The overlap of intimacy and unease is important to Hval; her albums often begin there. “I arrived in town with an electric toothbrush pressed against my clitoris,” she announced, on the first track of her 2011 record, “Viscera.” Her next release, “Innocence Is Kinky,” from 2013, took off with a whispered confession: “That night, I watched people fucking on my computer.” Hval’s aim seems not to offend but to estrange, creating distance between herself and the listener; her narrators are unreliable but fasci-

nating. Once she has opened up that distance, she roams the breadth of it. The spoken monologue of “Kingsize” unfolds somewhere between the terrestrial world and a dream, and, as in dreams, sexual symbols fuse with the bizarre. “I sing to the bananas,” Hval continues. “The skin is getting thin and brown.”

Hval is a thirty-four-year-old Norwegian musician and writer, and “Apocalypse, girl” is her third album under her own name; she has also released two albums as Rockettothesky, and recorded in various partnerships. Gender is a central theme in her music: “Innocence Is Kinky” grew out of her work on a sound installation, a response to images of women’s faces that were taken from sources including Paris Hilton’s sex tape and Carl Dreyer’s silent film “The Passion of Joan of Arc.” “The camera is a mirror/But mine, not yours,” Hval sings, on “Renée Falconetti of Orléans.” “Innocence Is Kinky” feels brittle, moving from outbursts of electric guitar to spoken word to eerie, pretty melodies that recall the occult chill of PJ Harvey’s album “White Chalk” (2007). (Hval’s record was produced by John Parish, Harvey’s longtime collaborator.) Like Harvey, Hval pursues two of the big themes, power and desire, but where Harvey, especially on her

*On “Apocalypse, girl,” Hval creates a kind of experimental folk music, which resists the rhythmic and melodic efficiencies of chart pop in favor of something stranger.*





PHOTOGRAPH BY OLAF BLECKER

Advertisement

## SUMMER SHOWCASE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEW  
PRODUCTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS  
FROM OUR ADVERTISERS



### Show Your Child the World!

Award-winning subscription includes letters, souvenirs, activities, and more from a new destination each month.

[LittlePassports.com](http://LittlePassports.com)

**Little Passports**  
Awards-Winning Subscription



### Let Us Set Your Table!

Looking for vintage and new patterns of china, crystal, flatware, and collectibles? Contact Replacements, Ltd. World's largest tableware selection! FREE pattern lists. Shop our retail store near Greensboro, N.C.

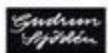
[replacements.com](http://replacements.com) • 800-REPLACE



### Gudrun Sjödén

Enjoy unique, artistic, and colorful clothes and homeware! Order online or visit our store: 50 Greene Street, SoHo, N.Y.C.

[gudrunsjoden.com](http://gudrunsjoden.com) • 877.574.1486



### New York City Underground Art Tours

You know there's great art aboveground. But are you aware of the great art belowground? Let us show you.

Apple Subway Tours • [AppleSubway.com](http://AppleSubway.com)

Apple Subway Tours



**@NEWYORKERPROMO**  
[NEWYORKERONTHE TOWN.COM](http://NEWYORKERONTHE TOWN.COM)

early albums, seemed to parody or role-play masculine bravado, Hval's music is far less aggressive than her lyrics might suggest. As an answer to the question "What is soft dick rock?" "Apocalypse, girl" presents a kind of experimental folk music, which resists the rhythmic and melodic efficiencies—or, one might say, the conquests—of chart pop in favor of something slower and more irregular, with few hooks or choruses.

Hval has toured recently with Mike Hadreas (who performs as Perfume Genius), another artist who isn't shy about challenging gender conventions. In his songs, Hadreas details the dangers that may confront gay men who express their sexuality openly; sometimes he turns the tables, adopting with pride the flamboyant queer-ness that bigots find threatening. Hval, too, is interested in danger. What both artists describe is the trouble and the pleasure experienced by people who might be classified as unmanly: gay men, women, and, in Hval's case, the rare straight man who "dares stay soft." "Can we go there?" she sings, on "Take Care of Yourself." "We don't have to fuck. Can we just lie here being?"

Hval is an artist of many questions—the ones she asks, and those she provokes in the listener. "Apocalypse, girl" swerves from decipherable politics to recondite personal imagery. It's not a paraphrasable album, but it is a listenable one, its avant-garde tendencies held in check by Hval's beguiling voice, and by instrumentation that accrues in layers. Nine musicians are listed in the album credits, playing keyboards, harp, and mellotron, among other things, but the instruments tend to blur together, as do the songs, which flow into one another without pause. Hval's voice is high, and, though her melodies don't seem fixed, she sounds assured, as if she trusts where she's headed. "I want to sing religiously," she sings, on a track called "Heaven." She ventures into the realm of unembarrassed feeling, letting her voice curl upward to the limit of her register, glorying in the sound and the momentum of her words as much as in their meaning. "Heaven" builds to a crescendo, with

percussion crashes and harp trills; if this is the music of apocalypse, it's quite lovely.

"Apocalypse, girl" wanders through the fallout of the twenty-first century without ever quite arriving at a showdown. "Statistics and newspapers tell me I am unhappy and dying," Hval sings, on "That Battle Is Over," against the warm chords of a mellotron. Her tone is wry, though it soon turns piqued. "And it's biology, it's my own fault," she continues, an exasperated reply to the media's frequent exhortation of women: Improve, improve, improve! If you don't, you've got only yourself to blame. The album cover is a harshly lit photograph of a woman slumped over an exercise ball; it looks as if she's been murdered, but perhaps she's just given up.

For this album, Hval drew on the film "Safe," from 1995, which was directed by Todd Haynes. The parallels are both visual (that cover shot, which, like the film, evokes a quietly threatening space between external violence and personal surrender) and thematic. In one scene, the lead character, Carol White, a wealthy Los Angeles housewife (played by Julianne Moore), who has mysteriously become ill, fails to complete an aerobics class. The film is set in 1987, and the participants are dressed in high-cut leotards and pastel leggings. They kick and clap, but Carol falls behind. Is her failure her own fault, or is something killing her?

"Safe" shows a kind of apocalypse without a climax. There are no weapons or explosions, just a woman suffering from vague but pervasive allergies, gradually disintegrating. The film is a portrait of Reagan-era narcissism, and Hval's album suggests that we haven't travelled very far since then. "You say I'm free now/That battle is over/And feminism's over," Hval sings, on "That Battle Is Over." It is the most straightforward pop song on the album, girded by a loping drumbeat, but the lyrics form a scathing critique of political indifference, and Hval's vocal could be heard as a spoof on the vacuous good feeling that so many pop songs aim to create. At full tilt, her melody line suggests enjoyment, but her words don't. "Yeah, I say, I can consume what I want now," she sings, and it sounds like a hollow victory. ♦

# STORY OF MY LIFE

*The fictions of Alejandro Zambra.*

BY JAMES WOOD



People kept mentioning his name, but I was slow to encounter the Chilean writer Alejandro Zambra. I hadn't read anything by him before opening his new story collection, "My Documents" (McSweeney's). The title story is immediately captivating; it bolts straight out of the book, running at the reader in gusts of life and joy. Though the narrator and the author may not be identical, the wonderful details have the liberated onrush of memory: they tumble like things randomly released, not lengthily chosen. The narrator reaches back to memories of his Santiago childhood and brings

us vivid scenes: life at secondary school, where his friend Dante, a very tall, autistic boy, wanders about, telling everyone his exact weight ("Hi, today I'm weighing 227 pounds"); the narrator's mother, who becomes obsessed with Simon and Garfunkel and plasters the marital bedroom with posters of her idols, despite her husband's irritation; and going to Mass, where the priest (who can be seen zooming around the neighborhood on a scooter) hurries through the homily, "delivering it with a pleasant disdain, and even making, quite often, a hand gesture that meant 'et cetera.'"

*Zambra's examination of Chilean history is driven by a vibrant sense of story.*

ILLUSTRATION BY ALVARO TAPIA HIDALGO

The story begins like this: "The first time I saw a computer was in 1980, when I was four or five years old." The little boy sees the strange object in his father's office. But his mother, though trained on a computer, prefers a typewriter, on which she types up songs, poems, and stories written by the narrator's grandmother, who "was always entering some contest." (Hence the narrator's formulation "My father was a computer and my mother was a typewriter.") This grandmother is remembered as a woman of ready phrases. If someone suggested that it was cold outside, she would return with: "Well, it certainly isn't hot." And instead of just saying the word "no"

she was quick to reply "Not at all, as the fish said," or just "As the fish said," or simply "Fish," to summarize this saying: "Not at all, as the fish said when asked how he'd like to be cooked, in the oven or the fryer."

The grandmother, though a believer, has little time for organized religion. "I don't need to say prayers," she tells her grandson. "It's enough to have a conversation with Jesus, freely, before I go to sleep," a statement that the boy finds curious and a bit intimidating. At school, in 1985, there is a new teacher, Juan Luis Morales Rojas, who instructs the class to repeat his name, which the children do with burgeoning confidence and volume: "And after a while we were shouting and jumping while he moved his hands like an orchestra director, or like a musician who was enjoying listening to the audience sing along to the chorus of one of his songs." When the kids get tired of shouting and laughing, the teacher tells them that now they will never forget his name: "In all my years at that school, I don't remember a happier moment than that one."

The title story (also the first) is worth lingering over, because it's so appealing and funny, and because it displays in miniature Zambra's delicate talents. On the one hand, the writer opens his senses wide, to the jubilant secularism of remembered detail, to a cataloguing of life that seems free, unjudged, open-ended—those schoolchildren, for instance, shouting the teacher's name again and again, the scene apparently placed in the story for no better reason than that it still delights. On the other hand, these are Chilean schoolchildren,

and Alejandro Zambra was born in 1975, two years after the coup that brought down President Salvador Allende and installed the murderous Augusto Pinochet, so history will fatally interrupt—interrupt, then warp and dominate. The narrator tells us that after the attempt on General Pinochet’s life, in 1986, Dante went around asking everyone in the neighborhood “if they belonged to the right or the left.” Now the narrator begins to hear about those who have been arrested, tortured, disappeared. He is filled with feelings of “impropriety, of ignorance, smallness, estrangement.” With his friends, he is left-wing, but at home he is more right-wing. Mainly, he keeps quiet and tries to fit in.

Two years later, in 1988, he enters the National Institute, Chile’s oldest secondary school (which Zambra himself attended). “And that’s when, at the same time, democracy and adolescence arrived. The adolescence was real. The democracy wasn’t.” Many Chilean Presidents were educated at the National Institute, including Salvador Allende. To be at such a school is to be political, whether one wants to be or not. The unstoppable jubilation of the kids who endlessly shouted their teacher’s name has become something else, something warier, more knowing, disillusioned. And by 1994, when the narrator enters the University of Chile, even the sweetness of his musings about childhood computers and typewriters has been subtly stained. As a student, he uses a computer, but he always erases his files: “I didn’t want to leave any records.” The narrator’s “documents” are at once innocent and corrupted. They are nothing more than a joyous calendar of reminiscence, and at the same time a bitter reckoning with history, and the reader understands that there can be no purely innocent fictional record, however much the author may long for it. “I was a blank page, and now I am a book” is the last line of this story, one that stands as a kind of admonition for the rest of Zambra’s collection: blank pages get written on, scored, scrawled over, filled up, and used up. And, in ways both good and bad, books can’t be erased as easily as computer files.

“My Documents” is the fourth book

by Alejandro Zambra to be translated into English (this one very ably by Megan McDowell). All of them are very short and strikingly original, and display a wry self-consciousness about the obligations, difficulties, and pleasures of writing fiction. Zambra often features protagonists who are writers, and often these writers are seen to be writing the stories we are reading. In his earlier work, this metafictional element, though likable, occasionally seemed a bit modish and weightless, as if the young author were dutifully channeling his fellow-Chilean Roberto Bolaño (the obvious influence, gratefully studied) and Paul Auster (the more complicated influence, ultimately resisted). There’s a little too much of this kind of thing: “Anita’s husband was called Andrés, or Leonardo. Let’s agree that his name was Andrés and not Leonardo. Let’s agree that Anita was awake and Andrés half-asleep.”

Zambra’s first novel, “Bonsai,” translated into English by Carolina De Robertis and published here in 2008, holds stories-within-stories; it hides nested simulacra, like those wallets in stores which contain fake credit cards. It tells about two young lovers, Julio and Emilia, who are briefly and passionately together, and about how, after their relationship ends, Emilia commits suicide. Julio and Emilia are brought together, in part, by their love of literature. They happen to read a story by



Macedonio Fernández, about a couple who buy a small plant as a symbol of their love and, realizing that if the plant dies their relationship is symbolically doomed, decide to lose the little plant amid a lot of other identical plants. Julio and Emilia dislike the story—a sign, perhaps, that their own love is waning. Later, when, indeed, Julio is no longer living with Emilia, we see that he is working on a novel called “Bonsai,” which appears to be about a man who

is mourning the death of the woman he loved in his youth. When this couple were together, they took care of a little plant, a bonsai. Julio’s novel is his homage to the memory of Emilia.

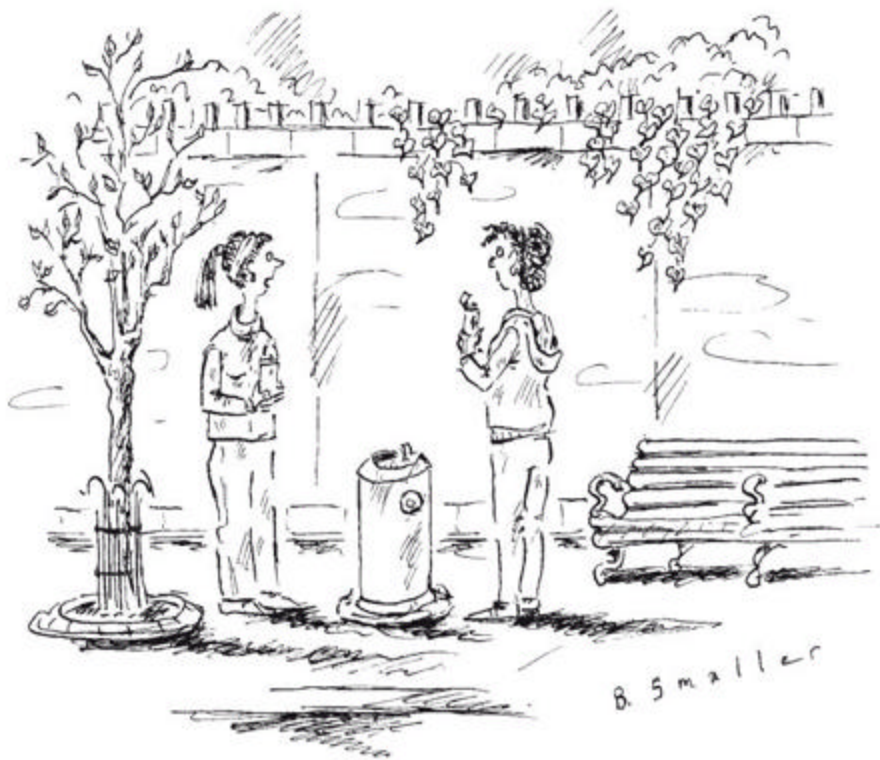
“Bonsai,” though it attracted plenty of attention in Chile when it was published there, in 2006, seems fairly slight. The self-reflexive fictionality, in its multiple iterations, appears obsessive, and strikes one as an elaborate way to make a point already familiar in much post-modern work of the past forty years: that life resembles a fiction, and that fiction resembles another fiction, too. But Zambra’s novel is always lively, often funny and aphoristic, and it introduces the kind of intriguing young man who will appear often in Zambra’s later work, a Chilean, updated version of Russian literature’s Superfluous Man—spectatorial, somewhat literary (i.e., always “writing” something), hovering on the edge of things, passionate in love but destined to lose what he loves, and thus fatalistic and defensively unserious. Julio, we are told, avoids serious relationships, “hiding not from women so much as from seriousness.” This posture could describe several of the men who appear in the stories in “My Documents”: Rodrigo, in “The Most Chilean Man in the World,” who wanders around a city in Belgium, having feebly tried to win back his girlfriend; or the feckless (and finally sinister) Max, in “Memories of a Personal Computer,” who “smoked a lot while he wrote, or, rather, he wrote a little while he smoked a lot,” and is apparently unbothered by the disintegration of his relationship with his lover; or Martín, in “Family Life,” who is cat-sitting for a family and spends the four months of his tenure doing little more than watching TV, smoking, and fantasizing about inhabiting the lives of the house’s owners—that is to say, impersonating them.

These men seem in some mysterious way corrupted by writing (and by reading). There is a quality of masquerade to their lives, as if all that time spent in parallel fictional worlds had infected the stability of nonfictional reality. Zambra’s second novel, “The Private Lives of Trees” (published here in 2010, in a translation also by Megan McDowell), carries an epigraph from John Ashbery: “Life as a book that has been put down.”

In Zambra's world, it seems all too easy to put that book down. Indeed, Zambra's work displays a deep ambivalence, amounting to a kind of shame, toward fiction-making. The bonsai's uselessly autotelic function can seem uncomfortably close to that of the novel. The bonsai is "an artistic replica of a tree, in miniature. It consists of two elements: the living tree and the container." Julio feels that writing is like tending a bonsai, and that his own novel (the one titled "Bonsai") has become "unnecessary."

Zambra's work abounds in qualifications and complaints of this kind. Julian, the protagonist of "The Private Lives of Trees," described as "a professor, and a writer on Sundays," waits up one evening for his wife, Veronica, to return home. To pass the time, and to keep his young stepdaughter distracted, he tells her a story that he has been improvising at bedtime, which he calls "The Private Lives of Trees." But Julian is also writing a real book, which sounds a lot like Zambra's own first novel—it's "about a young man tending a bonsai." This level of self-reflexivity can sometimes seem about as resonant as the prospect of repeatedly having to smell one's own breath, and perhaps Zambra is knowingly protecting himself from such criticism when he has one of Julian's friends complain to him that he's been reading "too much Paul Auster."

But Zambra's second novel is not content to doodle metafictionally; it gains surprising power from its reflections on storytelling. Like Julio, Julian seems disappointed with the book he is writing. When he remembers 1984, and the Los Angeles Olympics, he thinks that the only truly "necessary" book would be not about tending a bonsai but "a long story about those days of 1984." Elsewhere, Julian remembers a period when he lived alone, above a bar. He would write at night, sometimes with feverish productivity, at other times haltingly. He liked hearing the music and the voices: "the sour voice of an older woman who used to tell anyone who would listen about her father's death, and the panic of an adolescent who, one winter dawn, swore that he would never screw without a condom again." Zambra's writing flares up here, in a premonition of the life-filled energy of "My Documents." And



*"I don't know if I want to marry, but I would like a combined household income."*

Zambra seems to sense it, too, because he has Julian reflect that it would have been a good idea just to write down everything he heard: "There would surely be more life in those accidental pages than in the book he was writing. But instead of being content with the stories that destiny put at his disposal, Julian remained fixated on his bonsai."

What appears to torment Zambra is, in fact, the old realist dream of an infinite novel, a fiction that haplessly captures all of life, a novel that has escaped the artificiality of form, that has vanquished the aestheticism of authorial selection: a long book about a whole year, say; a book made up of nothing but inventoried reminiscences; the blank page before it has become a book, as open to life as a camera or a microphone, waiting to be filled up with existence—the "accidental" book that would perforce become a "necessary" one. Recall Zambra's description of the bonsai: "the living tree and the container." The container—form, machinery, convention—is what avant-garde fiction has been trying to explode

since at least the nineteen-fifties, the better to isolate and nurture the living tree. (Most avant-gardisms, even the antirealist ones, march under the banner of better, or different, or new realisms; writers are sure they know how to make their particular tree grow best.)

Zambra's breakthrough occurred with his third novel, "Ways of Going Home" (2011; published here in 2013, in Megan McDowell's sparkling translation), which seems a different order of achievement from his earlier work. Here, at last, Zambra's authorial self-consciousness, his reflections on the perils and pleasures of fiction-making, finds a theme that gives it moral gravity and not just formal ingenuity. The novel begins with some of the charm and joyousness of "My Documents." A nine-year-old boy in a suburb of Santiago witnesses the earthquake of March 3, 1985. He is afraid, but he also enjoys the new excitements on the street—the grownups gathered around a fire, the kids put in tents for the night. The boy notices Claudia, a twelve-year-old girl; a couple of years later, they become

friends. Claudia is interesting for several reasons, one of them being that she has an uncle, Raúl, who lives alone: "Raúl was the only person in the neighborhood who lived alone. It was hard for me to understand how someone could live alone. I thought that being alone was a kind of punishment or disease." Mysteriously, Claudia asks the boy to spy on her uncle, who is rumored to be a Communist: "To me, a Communist was someone who read the newspaper and silently bore the mockery of others—I thought of my grandfather, my father's father, who was always reading the newspaper. Once I asked him if he read the whole thing, and the old man answered that yes, when it came to the newspaper you had to read it all." The boy later discovers that Raúl is in fact not Claudia's uncle but her father, Roberto, a left-wing activist who has been living under a new identity in order to escape the dictatorship's scrutiny.

In the novel's second section, the narrator is the writer of the story we have just read in the novel's first section; and Zambra's book proceeds like this, the fiction about Claudia and Raúl/Roberto alternating with sections narrated by a man who is writing those very fictions. But what might have been dryly self-involved steadily opens out into Chilean history and political reality. This man, this writer, is trying to come to a reckoning with recent political events, and with the knowledge that his parents were politically quietist (and possibly right-leaning) during the Pinochet years. He has searing memories from his childhood. When he was thirteen, he became aware for the first time that his schoolmates included the children of murdered and tortured parents, and of murderers, too. One day, when he was sixteen, the police chased some thieves into the school's parking lot and fired shots. The class's history teacher started crying and hid under the table. "He slowly managed to calm down as we explained to him that no, the military had not taken over again. . . . Of course I knew, we all knew; he had been tortured and his cousin was taken prisoner and disappeared." The teacher asks the boy about his parents, and the boy replies that during the Pinochet years they "kept to the sidelines." The teacher seems

to look at the boy with curiosity and disdain.

The man who is writing the story about Claudia and Raúl and the earthquake wrestles with the function and utility of writing fiction. He comes to the conclusion that "the novel" (by which I think he means the stable, solid, old-fashioned realist novel) belongs to his parents' generation. As they suffered, their lucky children played and drew pictures: "While the country was falling to pieces, we were learning to talk, to walk, to fold napkins in the shape of boats, of airplanes. While the novel was happening, we played hide-and-seek, we played at disappearing." If "the novel" belongs to the parents, to the generation that witnessed and suffered and did things (or, in the case of the narrator's parents, did nothing very much), then what is left for the next generation? To begin with: something that will not look quite like a "novel." The containers will have to be broken up. But perhaps the odor of triviality will cling to the fictions of the younger generation? Perhaps the young writer is just playing in the shadows, as he did when he was a child?

Once again, as in Zambra's earlier books, the writer-narrator tells us that he is disappointed by his work. He deletes a lot of what he has written. He switches to writing verse, and this suddenly feels like a reprieve from fiction-making—"no compositions of place, no unnecessary scenes." Sometimes, he thinks,

when we write, we wash everything clean, as if by doing so we could advance toward something. We ought to simply describe those sounds, those stains on memory. That arbitrary selection, nothing more. That's why we lie so much, in the end. That's why a book is always the opposite of another immense and strange book. An illegible and genuine book that we translate treacherously, that we betray with our habit of passable prose.

But this isn't merely passable prose; it's rigorous and essential prose, and if Zambra is disappointed by literature he is also saved by it. "Ways of Going Home" becomes a "genuine" book, a necessary one. It is structurally exquisite. The alternating fictions are beautifully mixed, hardly separable: Zambra seems only to be pouring slightly different-colored liquids from one urn to another. And the metafictional meditation takes on a justified ethical an-

guish: in a political culture of actual disappearance, how can the writer not be acutely sensitive to questions of fictional ethics—to the whole complicated business of fictional lying, of inventing parallel worlds, of game-playing, of narrative presence and absence? How could the responsible writer not bind these scruples into the very form of his work?

In his new book, Zambra returns to the twin sources of his talent—to his storytelling vitality, that living tree which blossoms often in these pages, and to his unsparing examination of recent Chilean history. These come together magnificently in a story titled "National Institute," which reads like a snatched memory of the years that Zambra spent at the school. A few pages into it, the author starts listing apparently random memories, each of which begins with "I remember." He remembers friends at school, severe male teachers, a female teacher he fell in love with: "I remember the list of Chilean presidents who had studied at my school. I remember that when teachers reeled off that list, they omitted the name of Salvador Allende." He remembers one friend in particular, a brilliant, difficult student named Pato Parra, who committed suicide. One morning, near the end of his time at the National Institute, the boys get into a fight and are hauled up before the school's inspector general, Mr. Musa, who happens to be visiting. He magnanimously informs the boys that he is not going to expel them but is instead going to tell them something they will never in their lives forget. The story ends as, of course, it must: "I forgot it immediately. I sincerely don't know what Musa told me then." What begins as a slight exercise in reminiscence becomes a deeper tale about presence and absence, appearance and disappearance, in which unofficial memory (the author's casual "I remember") triumphs over official memory. It's a vindication of what the committed and talented fiction writer can do best, and the victory is all the sweeter because Alejandro Zambra peels off this utterly charming fragment as if it were nothing very much, as if he were just offering us one of his candies, on the way home from school. ♦

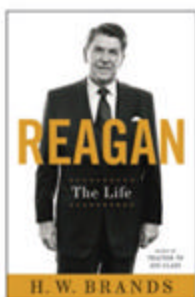
## BRIEFLY NOTED



**A HAND REACHED DOWN TO GUIDE ME**, by David Gates (*Knopf*). “It seems to be about damaged and selfish people,” one of David Gates’s narrators says, voicing the premise for this remarkable collection of stories and a novella. An aging actor gets involved with a young Olivia during a community-theatre production of “*Twelfth Night*”; an ailing bluegrass musician asks to spend his last days at the farmhouse of a former bandmate; a poet and his drug-addled daughter hit the road to escape his “middlebrow” wife. Gates turns a clear yet compassionate eye on a motley crew of characters who cheat, drink, snort, and lie their way through the autumn of their lives. “You get to a point where you can’t do anything about who you are anymore,” one says. The result is a moving account of flawed existence.



**WHAT ABOUT THIS**, by Frank Stanford (*Copper Canyon*). Stanford, a Southern poet with a singular voice, an inquisitive mind, and emerging cult status, shot himself in 1978, at the age of twenty-nine. This vibrant volume forms a comprehensive selection from his huge output, and includes published and unpublished poetry and prose, archival photographs, original manuscripts, a rejection letter, an interview, and excerpts from the “ungovernable” fifteen-thousand-line epic poem, “The Battlefield Where the Moon Says I Love You.” Steeped in Arkansas landscape and vernacular, Stanford’s poems are by turns earthly and visionary—as he put it, “the poetry of being awake and asleep at the same time.”



**REAGAN**, by H. W. Brands (*Doubleday*). Drawing on memoirs, oral histories, and Reagan’s speeches and diaries, Brands maps a “long march across the political spectrum,” from Roosevelt-admiring Democrat in rural Illinois to anti-Communist “political unknown in California” and Republican revolutionary. Reagan emerges as a flexible pragmatist and natural performer who “rarely looked backward” and “pursued the ends of Barry Goldwater by the means of Franklin Roosevelt.” Particularly absorbing is Brands’s account of the relationship with “Moscow’s gift,” Gorbachev. The book is expansive but doesn’t penetrate far into Reagan’s psyche, and its tone sometimes seems apologetic: Reagan, exposing film-industry “subversives” to the F.B.I., “didn’t think he was doing anything wrong.”



**ROMANTIC OUTLAWS**, by Charlotte Gordon (*Random House*). This double biography, of Mary Wollstonecraft and her daughter Mary Shelley, opens in tragedy, with the death of the former, ten days after giving birth to the latter. Gordon unfolds the two stories in tandem, deftly balancing the gossipy aspects of her subjects’ lives with their serious intellectual concerns. Wollstonecraft dedicated herself to educating women and championing their freedom; she had a baby out of wedlock and tried, unsuccessfully, to avoid marriage. Her daughter’s life mirrored hers in boldness and in literary triumph, but also in the struggle for autonomy: Mary Shelley’s father, despite his support of Wollstonecraft’s ideas, banished his daughter because of her affair with a married man.

Advertisement

## SUMMER SHOWCASE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEW PRODUCTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM OUR ADVERTISERS



Beautifully crafted and technically precise, Maximum is the trusted source for quality weather instruments and stations.

For a FREE catalogue, call 508.995.2200 or visit [maximum-inc.com](http://maximum-inc.com).

MAXIMUM  
WEATHER INSTRUMENTS



### EdgeSelect® Model 120

Professional three-stage knife sharpener uses 100% diamond abrasives and precision angle guides to quickly create an edge of unprecedented sharpness and durability on fine-edged and serrated knives.

ChefsChoice.com  
800.342.3255  
ChefsChoice



“The New Yorker of the 8-to-13 set.” —Ms.

### Stone Soup Magazine

By kids, for kids. Print and digital. Foster a love of reading, writing, and art.

StoneSoup.com • 800.447.4569



Are you battling alcoholism or drug addiction? Could you have other co-occurring disorders? Receive treatment from U.S. News’ top-ranked psychiatric hospital.

SignatureRecovery.org • 800.906.9531

McLean Hospital  
Signature Recovery Programs



@NEWYORKERPROMO  
NEWYORKERONTHTOWN.COM

## PAINTING'S POINT MAN

*Albert Oehlen at the New Museum.*

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



Oehlen's "Born to Be Late" (2001). No unity of composition, but unremitting energy.

The German artist Albert Oehlen is the foremost painter of the era that has seen painting decline as the chief medium of new art. It's a dethronement that he honestly registers and oddly celebrates, as can be seen in "Home and Garden," at the New Museum. The first New York museum show for the sixty-year-old artist, it features twenty-seven works from key phases of his career. Large oils, at times combined with silk-screened digital imagery, may initially look like unholy messes: blowsy abstraction jostling with derelict figuration. Even Oehlen's passionate fans will confess to having felt a fierce dislike on first seeing his work, which goes beyond offending good taste to obliterating it. His handling of paint, at times with his fingers, yaws between

gesture and smear. Canvases in shrieking reds and greens alternate with ones in muddy hues or just grays—such as "Bad" (2003), in which a woman's head, a bathtub, and a leg in a high-heel shoe, all crudely drawn, wander in a brushy miasma of tones. (The artist has said that when he eschews color it is to intensify his appetite for it. You never know how seriously to take what he says, but it always tantalizes.) A black-and-white series, begun in 1992, deploys hectic designs created with primitive drawing software on a Texas Instruments computer; it made him the first significant artist to exploit, and incidentally to burlesque, the emergent lingua franca of computer graphics.

Give Oehlen a chance. There is as much philosophical heft to what he

won't allow himself, in the ways of order and balance, as in the stuttering virtuosity of what he does. His pictures possess no unity of composition, only unremitting energy. Everywhere your eye goes, it finds things to engage it; they just don't add up. There are stabs of beauty in passages that reveal Oehlen to be, almost grudgingly, a fantastic colorist, as with tender pinks and yellows, which echo halcyon Willem de Kooning, in "More Fire and Ice" (2001); fugitive dreamy purples, in "Untitled" (2009-11); and a clarion blue, in an otherwise murky "Untitled" (1989). If Oehlen has a method, it is to recoil, stroke by stroke, from conventional elegance—strangling one aborning stylistic grace after another. He has said that he was fascinated, early in his career, by American Action painting of the nineteen-fifties—a histrionic mode of pictorial rhetoric, superficially imitative of de Kooning, whom Oehlen cites as a hero. (The term was misapplied to Jackson Pollock's drip paintings, which exalt a canny control.) Oehlen's variant—call it "reaction painting"—fights back toward the Master's rigorous originality. (Oehlen's one prominently lacking resource is de Kooning's forte of drawing.)

Not for nothing is Oehlen a mighty influence on younger artists, showing them the rewards in freedom that may follow upon a willing sacrifice of propriety. (Witness, apart from outright imitators, the devilish impetuosities of Josh Smith, Joe Bradley, Oscar Murillo, and others in a recent survey at the Museum of Modern Art, "The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World.") He shrugs off appealing to anyone who doesn't really—even helplessly—like painting, fulfilling a prophecy made years ago by the critic Dave Hickey: "Painting isn't dead except as a major art. From now on it will be a discourse of adepts, like jazz." In an interview in the New Museum catalogue, Oehlen speaks of "qualities that I want to see brought together: delicacy and coarseness, color and vagueness, and, underlying them all, a base note of hysteria." His is a dandyish aesthetic, savoring its own, unresolvable contradictions. But it resonates with general conditions of art and life today. Among other things, Oehlen offers an insight

into why digital pictorial mediums can be exciting—and certainly are triumphant in global visual culture—but still fail to sustain intellectual interest or to nourish the soul. They are all in the head. Oehlen attacks with paint the shallow clamor of transferred digital pixelation and, in some works, glued-on advertising posters. He wrestles their visual quiddities—how they look, irrespective of what they represent—down into the body and makes them groan.

Oehlen came out of the creative hotbed that flourished in northern West Germany, especially Cologne, for two decades beginning in the early nineteen-sixties. Mentored at the start by Joseph Beuys, the scene gave rise to Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Blinky Palermo, Anselm Kiefer, Jörg Immendorff, the Neue Wilde neo-expressionists, and, as it disintegrated, Oehlen's close friend and collaborator, the lyrically self-loathing artistic provocateur and intermittent genius Martin Kippenberger, who died, at forty-four, of liver cancer, in 1997.

Oehlen was born in 1954, in Krefeld, a city intimate with neighboring Belgian and Dutch cultures. His father was a graphic designer; his mother died of complications from a neglected ear infection when he was four. At art school in Hamburg, in the late seventies, his primary teacher was Polke, whom he says he first enthusiastically emulated and then systematically opposed. Smoky, Maoist political frenzies, promoted by Immendorff, engaged him for a while, though not exclusively. "Mao was O.K.," Oehlen told me when I spoke with him recently, "but not without Frank Zappa and Andy Warhol." (When I asked who his favorite musician is, his answer seemed perfectly unsurprising: the free-jazz revolutionary Ornette Coleman.) An ambient skepticism about the viability of serious painting affected Oehlen, even as his gifts inclined him toward it. Such early, determinedly cloddish figurative works in the New Museum show as "Self-Portrait as a Dutch Woman" (1983)—in which he sports a white bonnet, against a field of sprocket gears left over from an abandoned earlier version of the picture—won from Kippenberger the thrilled endorsement "It is not possible to paint worse than that!"

At the time, there seemed little to distinguish Oehlen from a Cologne crowd of painterly rascallions, whose equivalents in New York were led, and laced with home-brewed grandiosity, by Julian Schnabel. A decisive turn toward abstraction occurred in 1988, when Oehlen shared a house in Spain with Kippenberger, and the two artists closely tracked and critiqued each other's development. The result seems to have been less a Picasso-Braque melding of styles than an oil-water divergence. Kippenberger amplified his impulses as a hopscotching hellion, in work that included a torrent of images of his beer-bellied self, and Oehlen honed his focus on the problems of painting. An untitled work from that year makes a joke of the struggle: long white and gray strokes, which must have suggested tubular forms, receive lots of sketchy little red bracket shapes that would hold them down if they could attach to anything. Ever since, Oehlen's process has evinced endless sorts of borderline-desperate improvisation—until a painting isn't finished, exactly, but somehow beyond further aid. He told me, "People don't realize that when you are working on a painting, every day you are seeing something awful." The dramatic mood of the work is comic, beset by existential worry. It's as if each picture wondered, "What am I? Am I even art? O.K., but what does that mean?"

Lately, the demand for Oehlen's work has bubbled up from the middling range of the art market to the luxury zone. The happenstance disgruntles some observers—including, remarkably, the New Museum's superb director of exhibitions, Massimiliano Gioni, who notes, in the show's catalogue, that "the recent commercial success and mainstream assimilation of these works complicate their reception, stripping them of their critical edge." That would seem so only if relative penury and unpopularity define intellectual probity. Today, moneyed interest can befall just about anything, not always fatally. We will see if it corrupts Oehlen, stirs in him a supplementary type of rebelliousness, or, as I suspect, makes no practical difference in how his pictures affront the eyes and unsettle the minds of rich and poor alike. ♦

Face your addiction from a place of strength.

Introducing the McLean Signature Recovery Programs, the best choice for unparalleled addiction treatment.

Fernside, Princeton, MA  
Borden Cottage, Camden, ME **NEW**

800.906.9531 | [signaturerecovery.org](http://signaturerecovery.org)

 McLean Signature Recovery Programs  
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATE

 buy online: [hullo.nyc](http://hullo.nyc)



Your favorite pillow. Guaranteed.

**NYC Underground Art Tours**

You know there's great art above ground. But are you aware of the great art below ground? Let Us Show You.

**Apple Subway Tours**  
 [AppleSubway.com](http://AppleSubway.com)

**SILVER HILL HOSPITAL**  
RESTORING MENTAL HEALTH SINCE 1931

**Renowned Psychiatric Care in an Exceptional Setting**

Psychiatric and Addiction Treatment for Adolescents and Adults

[www.silverhillhospital.org](http://www.silverhillhospital.org)  
New Canaan, CT • (866) 548-4455

**WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?**

Small space has big rewards.

To find out more, contact Sara Nicholson at 877.843.6967.

## FIGHTING MONSTERS

*"Jurassic World" and "The Tribe."*

BY ANTHONY LANE

The star of "Jurassic World" is Indominus rex. She is not a reconstituted dinosaur, of the sort that roamed through "Jurassic Park" (1993) and its two sequels, but a newfangled strain. The fangling was done in the lab, and the outcome is "a genetically modified hybrid." We know that she is part *Tyrannosaurus rex*, but the rest of her DNA is classified. My best guess, having seen the movie, is that she is six per cent chameleon, three per cent Tasmanian devil, and one per cent Joan Crawford. Indominus has her own compound, with lush vegetation and high walls, from which she cannot possibly escape. Yeah, right. She did have a sibling, but, in a gesture of solidarity with sisters everywhere, she ate it.

Indominus lives and chomps on an island off Costa Rica—once the site of the first Jurassic Park, and now the home of Jurassic World. Visitors flock there for a stress-free dino-sensation. Kids ride little triceratopses, complete with saddles, and there is even a petting zoo where you can hug a herbivore. The aquarium contains not dolphins but a mosasaur the size of a train, which leaps playfully from the water to grab a dangled shark; spectators in the front row wear plastic ponchos to withstand the splash. What larks! One advantage to naming a film after a theme park, of course, is that the script becomes an advertisement for its own wares: "Guest satisfaction is strong, in the low nineties," according to Claire Dearing (Bryce Dallas Howard), a senior executive at Jurassic World. The main threat is posed by insouciance. "No one's impressed by a dinosaur anymore," we are told, which

is why the scientists—like the movie-makers—are compelled to devise new creatures. "Consumers want them bigger, louder, more teeth." Bring on the singing vampires.

Claire is meant to be looking after her nephews, Zach (Nick Robinson) and his younger brother, Gray (Ty Simpkins), who have been sent to the island by their



*Chris Pratt, with velociraptors, in Colin Trevorrow's movie.*

parents and instructed to have fun. Claire, however, has problems. First, she is not the mothering type. In case we fail to realize how buttoned up she is, her all-white outfit is tightly buttoned up. Second, the park is experiencing "technical difficulties," later upgraded to "a containment anomaly." Claire enlists the help of an ex-Navy man, Owen Grady (Chris

Pratt), telling him, "We'd like you to examine the paddock for vulnerabilities." Quite right, too. Nobody likes an unexamined paddock. Owen has been busy—get this—training velociraptors, formerly the bad boys of the park, to follow his command. He credits them not just with logistical nous but with "social skills," and it's a matter of huge regret that the scene in which they pass around the olives didn't make the final cut. Owen's efforts are hampered by the dastardly Hoskins (Vincent D'Onofrio), for whom every homicidal dinosaur is a weapon just waiting to be cocked. "Imagine if we'd had these puppies in Tora Bora," he says, observing the raptors on the run. He has a point.

The director of "Jurassic World," which is doggedly dull for the first hour and beefy with basic thrills for most of the second, is Colin Trevorrow. Should you watch it through Oedipal eyes, the entire movie can be parsed as an agonized wrestle with the influence of Steven Spielberg, who, having directed the first two chunks of the franchise, remains as an executive producer. Whether he physically loomed over Trevorrow's shoulder (Behind you—Auteurus rex!) one cannot say, but there is something craven and constricting in the attitude of the new film to the old. Michael Giacchino's score, one long riff on John Williams's original theme, is played at billowing volume to accompany Zach and Gray on a fascinating journey up the escalator and into their hotel room; and when they stumble upon the dome, now overgrown, where "Jurassic Park" reached its climax they stare in wonder, as though at an Aztec temple. Other Spielbergian niceties are handled with a fraction of the Master's care. The prospect that the boys' parents might be divorcing is raised from nowhere, wept over for a single scene, then dropped, and Trevorrow even makes so bold as to repeat the famous shot of a predator glimpsed in a vehicle's mirror. Spielberg capped it by showing the warning "Objects in mirror are closer than

they appear” inscribed on the glass; in the new movie that is lost, and with it goes the joke.

On the other hand, we have Chris Pratt. The most hopeful moment for moviegoers last year came in the opening minutes of “Guardians of the Galaxy,” when, as a lonely figure on a blasted planet, he donned a Sony Walkman and began to boogie to Redbone’s “Come and Get Your Love.” Galactic pretensions were booted aside for the sake of a comic jaunt. At last, it seemed, here was the guy—hardly a hero, let alone a super one—who could prick the Marvel bubble. So can Pratt do the same for all things Jurassic? Well, he’s relaxed enough, and he certainly comes in handy once Indominus rex, as feared, goes on the lam. “She’s learning where she belongs in the food chain,” he says—a line last heard, incidentally, during the Martha Stewart trial. Even Pratt, though, is outmuscled by the movie, which trundles onward to a late slugfest that bows not only to “Jurassic Park” but to the rules of engagement laid down by “King Kong,” requiring humans to yield the arena to the beasts. In short, there is plenty here to divert, but little to leave you enraptured. Such is the fate of the sequel: Bigger. Louder. Fewer teeth.

A boy in his teens arrives at a boarding school. Solidly built and friendless, he is soon taken up by a gang of other boys and, after a series of initiations, accepted into their ranks. The pupils are largely unsupervised, and at night they slip with impunity from the premises, bent on theft and drinking. The staff are either out of sight or in blatant col-

lusion with the gang; the woodworking teacher acts as pimp to two of the female students, who serve the needs of truck drivers in a parking lot. Trouble arises when our hero grows attached to one of the girls and wants her for himself. What must he do to keep her?

Such are the bare bones of “The Tribe,” a new Ukrainian film, directed by Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy. What fleshes out the movie, and lends it such an extraordinary pulse of life, is the want of words. All the main characters, and the actors who portray them, are deaf. The school is solely for the deaf, and the school bell is replaced by flashing lights. Only in the closing credits do we learn that the new boy is named Sergey (Grygoriy Fesenko), and that the girl he has fought for is Anya (Yana Novikova). We have no voice-over to guide us, no music, and no subtitles to explain the sign language. Yet so vigorous are those signs, and so unmistakably sore is the inflammation of feeling behind them, that, far from being shut out, we are pulled all too fiercely into the drama’s heart. Why Sergey has to strip, for instance, before the gaze of other boys remains unclear, but the humbling is as fresh as a wound.

Only once, near the beginning, do we see an actual classroom. (There is a map of Europe on the wall, and the starred flag of the European Union: a hint of the tensions that ignited the current strife in Ukraine.) Apart from that, the normal structures of society, whether inside the institution or beyond, seem irrelevant and cracked, and, as with Jean Vigo’s “Zéro de Conduite” (1933), still the most insolent of all boarding-school films, the scurrility of the pupils bears a whiff

of revolution on a wider scale. Vigo, however, took a jester’s joy in disobedience, and found time for a pillow fight that snowed unhurtful feathers, whereas Slaboshpytskiy, not content with all the natural rawness raging in the students, loads his plot with extra violence. We get a mugging, a head knocked in by a hammer, and one poor fellow who, being deaf, is unwarned by the beeps of a truck that reverses toward him. The finale is frankly medieval, and, as for the illegal abortion, performed over a filthy bathtub, on someone who cannot call out in her distress, there may have been bleaker scenes in the history of cinema, but I would not care to see them.

To be honest, there are times when you feel moved to ask: Can the frustrations of the inarticulate really be vented in no other way? Is the director not overdoing the brutishness in order to make a point? Against that, you have to set the calm formality of his method: almost never cutting within a sequence but allowing his camera to pause or glide with the flow. Then, there is the sex—so often a laugh or a liability onscreen, but touched here with an unexpected grace. One such scene is set on a concrete floor, surrounded by heating pipes, and another against a backdrop of blue wall. We hear the brush of skin on skin, the sweet and wordless nothings of Anya’s gasps, and the kiss she bestows at the end—a good and naughty deed in a world gone bad. Whatever else “The Tribe” may be, it is not a silent movie. ♦

---

**NEWYORKER.COM**

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

---

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC. COPYRIGHT ©2015 CONDÉ NAST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

VOLUME XCI, NO. 17, June 22, 2015. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 23 & March 2, June 8 & 15, July 6 & 13, August 10 & 17, and December 21 & 28) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Elizabeth Hughes, publisher, chief revenue officer; Beth Luskó, associate publisher advertising; James Guilfoyle, director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, chief executive officer; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; Jill Bright, chief administrative officer. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Beth Luskó at (212) 286-4454. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker’s name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenast.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING.



## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Toro, must be received by Sunday, June 21st. The finalists in the June 1st contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 6th & 13th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"Invent a job!"*  
Andrew Seward, Frederick, Md.



### THE FINALISTS

*"My life's a joke."*  
Thad Woodman, Westerville, Ohio

*"That explains the signature on the floorboard."*  
Lawrence Wood, Chicago, Ill.

*"More hair, please."*  
Joseph Wagner, West Hartford, Conn.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

What did one lizard  
say to the other?



**Our savings are no laughing matter.**  
Go online, get a quote today, and see how much *you* could save.

**GEICO**

geico.com | 1-800-947-AUTO | Local Office

**TIM  
ROBBINS**

**JACK  
BLACK**



**WELCOME TO  
A WORLD OF  
TROUBLE**



**THE  
BRINK**

A NEW COMEDY SERIES LAUNCHING  
**JUNE 21 10:30PM** **HBO**  
OR WATCH IT ON **HBO NOW**

HBO NOW is only available in the U.S. and certain U.S. territories. Some restrictions may apply. ©2015 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. HBO, HBO NOW and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc.