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ALSO:

DAILY COMMENT / CULTURAL COMMENT: Opinions and reflections by *Richard Brody* and *Michael Specter*.

PODCASTS: On the Political Scene, *Patrick Radden Keefe* talks with *Dorothy Wickenden* about El Chapo’s escape and Mexican-American relations. Plus, on *Out Loud*, *Alan Burdick* and *Nicola Twilley* discuss the New Horizons space probe and NASA’s mission to Pluto with *Amelia Lester* and *David Haglund*.

POETRY: A reading by *Diane Seuss*.

HUMOR: A Daily Cartoon on the news, drawn by *Tom Toro*.

VIDEO: In the latest installment of “Five-Borough Freestyle,” *Havoc*, a Brooklyn flexer, dances in East Williamsburg at dusk and talks about communicating through movement. Plus, in this week’s episode of “The Cartoon Lounge,” *Bob Mankoff* reflects on cartoons about outer space.

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THE MAIL

FEINSTEIN'S BATTLE

Connie Bruck's piece on Senator Diane Feinstein tracks the often morally irreconcilable positions she has held on human-rights violations committed by U.S. intelligence services and the military ("The Inside War," June 22nd). In spite of her inconsistent stances, Feinstein has done a commendable job of fighting for greater transparency concerning the C.I.A. torture program under the George W. Bush Administration. Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that the people who authorized and engaged in torture under the U.S. flag will be held accountable. A more urgent problem is that neither President Obama's 2009 executive order nor the Senate's recent passage of the McCain-Feinstein amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act has completely closed torture loopholes. The 2006 Army Field Manual—in effect, the guiding standard for interrogations—lies outside the norms of international law and practice. Beyond the manual's permission to create and manipulate phobias and engender hopelessness and helplessness its Appendix M allows for the extended use of solitary confinement and sleep deprivation in cases involving "unlawful combatants." The American public may not find these tactics as shocking as waterboarding and rectal feeding, but the United Nations and human-rights organizations such as Amnesty International describe them as torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Many victims are known to suffer chronic trauma or psychosis, or to become suicidal. The McCain-Feinstein amendment codifies a ban on some of the more lurid interrogation methods, but, between the lines, official authorization of torture remains.

Yosef Brody
President, *Psychologists for Social Responsibility*
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The "inside war" that Bruck describes is about values—and whether certain national leaders in the United States

have any. When Senator Feinstein looks askance at torture, she is reminding us of the obligation of States under the U.N. Charter (Article 55), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 5), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 7) that "no one may be subjected to cruel or degrading treatment or punishment." Aside from the fact that confessions extracted via torture are questionable, the U.S. should consider its standing in the world. To call torture an "enhanced technique" is to make a mockery of both language and justice.

Bill Younglove
Lakewood, Calif.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

For more than twenty years, I have lived in Chapel Hill, near the University of North Carolina, where, as Margaret Talbot writes, three Muslim students were killed this past winter ("The Story of a Hate Crime," June 22nd). I am a professor at U.N.C.'s School of Medicine. Just after September 11, 2001, I was invited to give a lecture in Saudi Arabia and was given traditional Muslim outfits for a man and a woman as souvenirs. On Halloween night, which is a very large celebration here in Chapel Hill, my wife and I decided—very naively—to dress as Muslims and go out downtown. We were berated with Islamophobic insults and told to go back home. Being Hispanic, my wife and I are used to being treated with mistrust, but that night made us aware of the serious problems that Muslims face in our country. As the killing of young Muslims shows, even in our most liberal and intellectual towns we still have a long way to go.

Mauricio Castillo, M.D.
Chapel Hill, N.C.

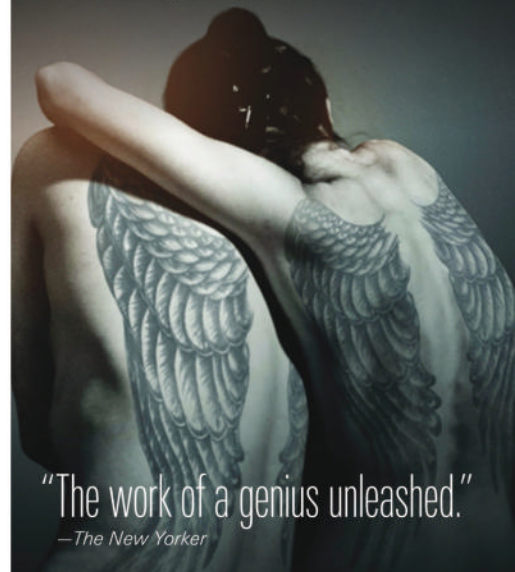
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

JULY 2015 WEDNESDAY 22ND THURSDAY 23RD FRIDAY 24TH SATURDAY 25TH SUNDAY 26TH MONDAY 27TH TUESDAY 28TH

THE SWEDISH SISTERS Klara and Johanna Söderberg, who perform as First Aid Kit, were fifteen and seventeen, respectively, when they uploaded a candid cover of Fleet Foxes' "Tiger Mountain Peasant Song" to YouTube, in 2008. The bashful, stunning performance won the teen-agers international recognition, and they have since developed as songwriters in their own right, delivering heartfelt country and folk numbers with ravishing harmonies. Their third album, "Stay Gold," recorded late last year with members of the Omaha Symphony Orchestra, is the duo's most mature and opulent work to date. First Aid Kit plays Central Park's SummerStage on July 27, sharing the bill with the poppy L.A. folk-rock act Dawes.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY LAERKE POSSELT



The grand scale of Greek tragedy suits the passionate flamenco of Soledad Barrio.

BLACK NIGHT

Noche Flamenca interprets Sophocles' "Antigone."

FOR MANY YEARS, SPANIARDS HAVE been agitating for the mass graves left over from the Spanish Civil War to be opened up and DNA tests done, in the hope that people who disappeared during those years—the poet Federico García Lorca is only the most famous case—might be identified and properly buried. In 2008, Baltasar Garzón, one of the country's most prominent investigating magistrates, ordered the exhumations. A month later, the case was removed from Garzón's jurisdiction, with some saying that, whatever the crimes involved, they were covered by an amnesty passed in 1977. Two years later, Garzón was suspended from judicial activity in Spain—a great victory for the country's right wing.

"I read that in the paper," Martín Santangelo, the artistic director of New York's Noche Flamenca, says, "and I thought, It's 'Antigone'—demagogues not just killing people but leaving them in the dirt, dishonoring them." And that, he

says, was the genesis of his "Antigona," a flamenco version of Sophocles' play, which opens at the West Park Presbyterian Church on July 21, and will play through August 8. It has eight dancers (a hip-hop specialist as well as flamencos), four musicians, and song lyrics adapted from Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald's translation of "Antigone." In the role of Creon, the king of Thebes, is the singer Manuel Gago, suitably self-important, in big black boots. Creon's niece Antigone, whom he tries to prevent from burying her brother Polyneices, because Polyneices warred against him, is played by New York's greatest flamenco dancer—indeed, one of the city's greatest theatre artists—Soledad Barrio. Barrio is also Santangelo's wife. He built Noche Flamenca around her.

Greek tragedy and flamenco, it turns out, are well matched, both dealing with grief and defiance on an unashamedly grand scale. And flamenco, with its music and dance, supplies the ritual element that we are told was essential to Greek tragedy but which is often absent from modern productions of it. Never, until I saw Santangelo's ensemble, their heels stamping, their arms cutting through the air, had I seen a chorus whose physical force could support the fate-heavy songs that Sophocles wrote for his plays. As for Barrio, though she spoke rarely, dancing seemed better than words: no rhetoric, no explanations, but just passion, majesty, absorption. At the end, Antigone, sealed up in a cave by Creon—she did manage to bury her brother—performs a long, nearly demented solo, as she tries to muster the courage to hang herself. She succeeds. Then her fiancé, Creon's son, finds her and kills himself over her body. His mother, Creon's wife, enters and, drawing a knife, tops off the pile. "There is no happiness where there is no wisdom," the blind prophet Tiresias says. Poor Creon falls to the floor.

—Joan Acocella

MOMIX

In "Alchemia," the latest spectacle by Moses Pendleton, the titular theme comes with scenic categories—the traditional elements of earth, air, fire, and water—but the alchemy that's needed is the kind that transforms kitsch into art. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. July 21-25 and July 27-28. Through Aug. 1.)

"Victory Dance"

Max Pollak's fusion of tap, body percussion, and Latin music anchors Program C of New Victory Theatre's lively, low-cost, kid-friendly festival. Also on the bill are Jessica Lang Dance and Parsons Dance. (209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. July 22-24.)

Bragha Bessel and Sonali Skandan

Abhinaya, the Indian art of mime and physical storytelling, is the focus of this bhārata-nāṭyam concert. Bessel, an esteemed teacher, is joined by Skandan, a skilled disciple, and three musicians. (Onassis High School, 120 W. 46th St. 646-251-7463. July 22.)

DANCENOISE

Unruly East Village performance art of the nineteen-eighties and early nineties comes to the Whitney Museum in the form of DANCENOISE, the comic duo of Anne Jobst and Lucy Sexton. Their series, titled "Don't Look Back," begins on July 22, with a variety show like the ones Jobst and Sexton used

to host at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. The rest of the week mixes films and re-creations of earlier DANCENOISE shows, with their helter-skelter pandemonium and pop-culture commentary, at once violent and friendly, and some new material, too. (99 Gansevoort St. 212-570-3600. July 22-26.)

Lincoln Center Out of Doors

Free dance shows in the Damrosch Park Bandshell and Josie Robertson Plaza begin on July 24, when Michelle Dorrance and her crackerjack crew of tap dancers present their terrific "Blues Project," with music by Toshi Reagon and her band, BIGLovely. On July 25, Lil Buck, the reigning master of Memphis jookin, applies his winning innocence to a family-friendly demonstration in the afternoon and uncorks all of his astonishing liquid flow for an evening show. That afternoon, Heidi Latsky subverts the notion of disability with a routine choreographed for wheelchair-bound athletes. On July 25-26, Bridgman|Packer Dance inhabits a large truck parked on the drive underneath Lincoln Center, transforming the vehicle with video projections and choreography. (Lincoln Center, Broadway, at 64th St. 212-721-6500. July 24-26.)

Gabriadze Theatre / "Ramona"

Since founding his puppet theatre in Tbilisi, in 1981, the Georgian playwright, director, and puppeteer Rezo Gabriadze has created countless

marionette plays on the themes of love, war, and loss. His "Ramona," at the Lincoln Center Festival, is a story of two lovers, both old-fashioned steam locomotives. The setting is a small train station in rural Georgia shortly after the Second World War. (Clark Studio Theatre, 165 W. 65th St. 212-721-6500. July 27-28. Through Aug. 1.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

At the Ted Shawn, Intensio, a new side project from the American Ballet Theatre principal Daniil Simkin, presents a quadruple bill. Simkin and seven of his equally impressive colleagues from A.B.T., plus a dancer from Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, perform three works by European choreographers (Alexander Ekman, Jorma Elo, and Annabelle Lopez Ochoa). The fourth is by Gregory Dolbashian, the founder of the New York-based Dash Ensemble. Simkin combines ballet, improvisational techniques, technology, and immersive lighting designs, or, as he puts it, "cohesive happenings, where it's not just about the steps and dancers in unitards." • At the Doris Duke, the Stuttgart-based Gauthier Dance—appearing at the festival for the first time—will present works in a similar vein by Alejandro Cerrudo (of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago), Alexander Ekman, Marco Goecke, and others. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. July 22-26.)



MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

New Museum

"Sarah Charlesworth: Doubleworld"

The greatest revelation of this posthumous survey of the New York artist, who died in 2013, may be her little-seen 1980 series "Stills." Fourteen grainy black-and-white photographs, clipped from newspapers and enlarged to six and a half feet high, portray bodies falling through space. They ring a room at the museum like windows on hell, echoing Andy Warhol's "Death and Disasters" series and, far more uncannily, anticipating the indelible 2001 image of a man falling from the World Trade Center. In their ambiguity, they're at once horrifying and exhilarating. Throughout her career, Charlesworth sought an equilibrium between what she described as "desire and alienation." This exhibition succeeds by keeping viewers off balance and on guard. Through Sept. 20.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Gerard Petrus Fieret

The Dutch photographer, who died in 2009 at the age of eighty-five, was an eccentric outsider, covering his pictures with a scrawled, outsize signature and a flurry of rubber stamps. As this selection of unique prints from the sixties and seventies makes clear, his favorite subject was women, seen either stripping for the camera or

already nude. Those teasing images are joined by several dashing self-portraits and sombre pictures of friends. Fieret's work had a rough, improvised quality; he favored darkroom experiments and disdained technical perfection. In his eyes, eroticism embodied anarchy. Through July 31. (Bell, 16 E. 71st St. 212-249-9400.)

"Frankenthaler, Rockburne & Sterne"

Dorothea Rockburne steals this concise show—six works by three American abstract painters—with "Mozart" and "Mozart Upside Down and Backwards," a jewel-toned diptych of shaped and stacked canvases from the mid-eighties. Cerebral yet voluptuous, it smolders against an indigo wall. Helen Frankenthaler, who died in 2011, impresses with a modest 1969 canvas of centrifugally arranged stains. Unfortunately, Hedda Sterne, who also died in 2011 and was the only woman featured in "The Irascibles," *Life's* famous photograph of the Abstract Expressionists, looks derivative in the works chosen here, a horizontally banded painting and a spattered-ink drawing that suggest the anemic kin of Rothko and Pollock. Through Aug. 28. (Van Doren Waxter, 23 E. 73rd St. 212-445-0444.)

"Raymond Roussel"

One of Germany's leading contemporary galleries plants a flag in New York with this

engrossing show about the French author, who is far better known for his influence than for his writing. Dandyish, neurotic, and fabulously rich—he inherited a billion francs after the sale of his mother's estate, in 1912—Roussel had no use for realism, and his avant-garde strategies were admired by the Surrealists and by Marcel Duchamp, who wrote, in a letter seen here, that Roussel "liberated me from a whole physico-plastic past." After Roussel died of an overdose in a Sicilian hotel, in 1933, his reputation flourished, thanks to the interest of John Ashbery, in New York, and of Michel Foucault, in Paris. Browse these cases of books and ephemera, and learn an extravagant secret of modernism. (With Roussel-inspired works by Joseph Cornell, Trisha Donnelly, Sigmar Polke, and other artists.) Through Aug. 29. (Galerie Buchholz, 17 E. 82nd St. 646-964 4276.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Nikolay Bakharev

The Siberian artist's intimate black-and-white pictures of bathers huddled in leafy bowers were among the most memorable works in the New Museum's 2012 exhibition of art from the former Eastern Bloc. This show includes examples from that series, as well as nude portraits of people at home from the eighties and nineties, when taking

such photographs was illegal. Bakharev's vivacious subjects knew that they were challenging the limits of acceptable imagery, and his charming pictures are clearly collaborations. When seen outdoors, the friends, couples, and families radiate an unself-conscious sensuality; once they're inside, the heat turns up, but the play never becomes pornographic. Through July 24. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

Burk Uzzle

This excellent fifty-year survey wisely skips over the photojournalist's most famous images (like the *Life* magazine shot of two hippies wrapped in a purple paisley quilt at Woodstock) to shine a light on his new and little-known work. When he wasn't out on assignment, Uzzle had an eye for the quirky and unexpected, notably in graphic black-and-white compositions that verge on abstraction but are always anchored by a human presence—a woman bather bisected by a diving board, a boy nearly swallowed by fog. Uzzle's best pictures have a visual verve that places him alongside such greats as Robert Adams, Harry Callahan, and Ray K. Metzker. Through July 31. (Kasher, 515 W. 26th St. 212-966-3978.)

"Empty House Casa Vazia"

In this jam-packed survey of postwar Brazilian sculpture, geometric abstractions by the Neo-Concretists Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Lygia Pape prefigure later experiments with form and contradiction. Amílcar de Castro integrated circles and squares in a hundred and forty small works in Cor-Ten steel. Adriano Costa's punctured plate, also made of steel, rests on the gallery floor; walking on it is recommended for all but those wearing stilettos. The subtle showstopper is a 1959 relief by Willys de Castro, a strip of wood painted in stark black and white, whose size—just twenty inches high and a scant half inch wide—offers no hint of its magnetic attraction. Through Aug. 28. (Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100.)

"Over & Under"

This group show, organized by the artist Matt Keegan, homes in on simple arrangements of modest materials. Whether you find this strain of minimalism winningly humble or merely ho-hum depends on your taste for unmonumentality. Keegan has covered the walls with a lattice of cardboard, against which Virginia Overton and Charles Harlan have placed sculptures that make use of found wood; in the center of the gallery, Tony Feher riffs on Donald Judd's stacks, using milk crates. A 1978 film by Babette Mangolte, of Trisha Brown's repetitive, unspectacular dance moves, provides some historical ballast. Through July 24. (Sikkema Jenkins, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

"The Secret Life"

"Art completes what nature cannot finish," Aristotle wrote. So do the artists in this impressive botanically minded show, organized by the imaginative painter Leidy Churchman. Elegant close-up photographs of flora by the German naturalist Karl Blossfeldt find their successors in James Welling's hazy, half-reflective images of plants. Rochelle Goldberg, an exciting young Canadian sculptor, encircles her ceramic vessels with sprouting chia. (On a recent visit, an attendant was carefully pruning the growth and spraying the sculpture with nutrients.) Don't miss the fine painting of a purple flowering plant, from 1961, by the fictitious Pop artist Vern Blossum, whose

true identity is still unknown. Through Aug. 7. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

"Facing East: Chinese Urbanism in Africa"

The People's Republic has become Africa's biggest trade partner, and African cities have gained highways, garish new skyscrapers, light-rail projects, and clothing factories in Shenzhen-style economic zones outside Lagos and Addis Ababa. The curators of this instructive exhibition, Michiel Hulshof and Daan Roggeveen, eschew sweeping narratives to concentrate on lived, local experience, seen in dozens of photographs documenting a Great Wall apartment complex in Lagos, umbrellas with Chinese cartoons in the markets of Accra, Kenyan merchants on trips to Guangzhou, and televisions blaring propaganda from African affiliates of CCTV. The

benefits of all this for most Africans is a question for another show. Through Aug. 1. (Storefront for Art and Architecture, 97 Kenmare St. 212-431-5795.)

"Tableau"

A *tableau-piège* ("snare picture"), from 1974, by the Romanian-Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri, who is best known for turning his leftover meals into art, sets the tone for this perceptive, if scrappy, show. Brent Owens makes realist sculptures of absurdist hamburgers; the collective Gelitin juxtaposes a bottle of Stella Artois with a comically shoddy plastic replica. Airy drawings by Rainer Ganahl incorporating the words "Grexit," "Syriza," and "Tsipras" are accompanied by an arrangement of fruit. Recently, as Greece's economic crisis played out in the headlines, the surface of a rotting Greek fig was scored with a euro sign and attended by flies. Through Aug. 9. (Matsumiya, 153½ Stanton St. 646-455-3588.)



Ruth Root's effervescent new paintings at the Andrew Kreps gallery (including this untitled nine-foot-tall piece) combine digitally printed fabric of the artist's design with enamel and spray paint on Plexiglas, piling pattern on pattern and playing the virtual off the handmade.

ROCK AND POP

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

A\$AP Rocky

The economics of hip-hop are changing. Rappers are expanding their brands, exploring various nonmusical revenue streams. Take, for example, Rakim Mayers, the Harlem-born m.c., designer, and actor, who has become ubiquitous in the music and high-fashion landscapes as the rapper A\$AP Rocky. At the outset of his career, Rocky planted his feet so firmly in the world of fashion that he began to shape it, using the stage as a runway to model limited-edition street wear from houses like Hood by Air and Jeremy Scott. All this would be nothing, however, without good music to back it up, and, while some previous attempts missed the mark, his new record, aptly titled "At.Long.Last.A\$AP," finds Rocky stepping out with an upgraded technical ability and focus, joined by the likes of Lil Wayne, Kanye, and M.I.A. (Best Buy Theatre, Broadway at 44th St. 800-745-3000. July 23.)

Gigawatts Festival

1.21 Gigawatts, a small music and culture magazine based in Brooklyn, likes to put on shows and throw parties. In the past three years, its annual outer-borough soirée has evolved into a full-scale, three-day showcase. This year, more than seventy artists will pass through the doors of the Wick, a sprawling Bushwick venue. Each night is headlined by an indie-rock heavy hitter. July 24 features the garage-rock barn burners the **Black Lips**. July 25 belongs to the Nintendo-obsessed chiptune stars **Anamanaguchi**. On July 26, the Illinois emo quartet **Braid** closes out the show. (260 Meserole St., Brooklyn. gigawattsfestival.com.)

Modest Mouse

Active in Washington State since the mid-nineties, these darlings of the indie circuit broke into the mainstream with their fourth album, "Good News for People Who Love Bad News," from 2004. The band ascended in part because of the signature style of its vocalist, Isaac Brock; he can seamlessly shift from quiet, close talking to energetic yelping, allowing a wide range of emotion to be explored in a single song. Their latest album, "Strangers to Ourselves," released

earlier this year, starts off mellow, with whispery strings, and soon gives way to fearless pop. Modest Mouse visits the Prospect Park Bandshell on July 22, in a benefit appearance for the Celebrate Brooklyn! concert series. With the chameleon-throated songwriter **Gene Ween**. (Prospect Park W. at 9th St. bricartsmedia.org.)

SummerStage

In the late seventies, the **Rock Steady Crew** drew on kung-fu movies and James Brown's stage shows to develop and perfect the art of breaking, a highly aerobic style of dance based on flashy spinning and behind-the-back and under-the-leg moves. The collective is from the Bronx, where the deepest roots of hip-hop are situated, but they are celebrating their thirty-eighth anniversary in the company of two groundbreaking Brooklyn acts: **Whodini**, whose hits include "Five Minutes of Funk," "Friends," and the epochal "Freaks Come Out at Night," and Bed-Stuy's inimitable **Big Daddy Kane**. The passage of time has dulled neither beat nor rhyme. (Rumsey Playfield, Central Park, mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org. July 26.)

U2

Some acts are miniaturists, making music with subtle melodies and intimate lyrics. Then there's this Irish foursome, which never goes for a small gesture when there's a sweeping one in the vicinity. The group's strategy doesn't always pay off: last year, they engendered an uncharacteristic amount of ill will when their thirteenth album, "Songs of Innocence," was given away for free to all iTunes customers. Undaunted, the band announced a tour that almost didn't get off the ground after Bono injured himself in a cycling accident last fall. The shows went on, however, with the band bringing the requisite giant video screens and an innovative new speaker system, along with a glorious back catalogue, to venues across the country. They are playing arenas only, for the first time in a decade, including eight shows at Madison Square Garden this month. (Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. 800-745-3000. July 18-31.)

"Watkins Family Hour"

Since 2002, the sibling musicians **Sara** and **Sean Watkins** (formerly of the folk band Nickel Creek) have hosted a lively monthly showcase at the Largo, a club in Los Angeles. Their guests, who have included Fiona Apple and

Jackson Browne, would join them to perform covers of their favorite songs. Some of the material, such as Fleetwood Mac's "Steal Your Heart Away" and the Grateful Dead's "Brokedown Palace," have been compiled into an album, "Watkins Family Hour," the first release on their own imprint. Now the siblings are taking the show on the road. The fiddle-playing sister and her guitarist brother have assembled an impressive entourage for a New York hootenanny at City Winery, including **Fiona Apple**, the veteran drummer **Don Heffington**, the former Soul Coughing bassist **Sebastian Steinberg**, and others. (155 Varick St. 212-608-0555. July 28-30.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Barry Altschul 3Dom Factor

Forty years ago, you could hear the drummer Altschul bobbing and weaving his way alongside Sam Rivers's saxophones and flute and Dave Holland's bass in their celebrated threesome, which was captured on the 2012 recording "Reunion: Live in New York." His taste for improvisatory trios abides; 3Dom Factor merges Altschul's percussive explorations with **Joe Fonda's** bass and the unconfined saxophone work of **Jon Irabagon**. (Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. July 24.)

Heads of State

This cooperative ensemble unites four players of a certain age—the saxophonist **Gary Bartz**, the pianist **Larry Willis**, the bassist **Buster Williams**, and the drummer **Al Foster**. The assurance they've gained from their experience is evident in their collective spirit: the band's recently released debut album, "Search for Peace," is a solid post-bop romp that is anything but the standard get-together of familiar veterans that it might have been. (Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. July 24-26.)

"Jazz in July"

Under the stewardship of the pianist **Bill Charlap**, who begins his second decade as artistic director this year, this much loved festival remains a bastion of mainstream jazz and quality songcraft. Its first week features piano showcases, jam sessions, and a tribute to Duke Ellington. **Ernie Andrews**, **Anat Cohen**, **Steve Nelson**, and the venerable pianist and former festival director **Dick Hyman** are among the many luminaries making the trip

uptown. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 92y.org/jazzinuly. Through July 30.)

Nellie McKay

Always ready to throw her devoted fans a curve ball, the vocalist McKay filled her latest album, "My Weekly Reader," with interpretations of sixties pop and rock songs, both iconic (the Kinks' "Sunny Afternoon") and obscure (Moby Grape's "Murder in My Heart for the Judge"). The result is delightful and eccentric, a reflection of the performer herself. She's joined at Le Poisson Rouge by her band, the Cosmic X-Rays, and by the pianist, vocalist, and professional hipster **Boborough**, who has kept company with Sugar Ray Robinson, Lenny Bruce, and Miles Davis (with whom he recorded the song "Blue Xmas," in 1962), and who was instrumental in creating the beloved "Schoolhouse Rock!" public-service television clips. (158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. July 23.)

Houston Person

The virile tenor tone that made Person's name in the sixties remains this saxophonist's calling card. In his assured hands, warhorse ballads and blues numbers take on new majesty. His efficient quartet includes the pianist **Larry Fuller**. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. July 23-26.)

Jenny Scheinman

The violinist Scheinman has delved into singer-songwriter territory recently, and her latest recording, "The Littlest Prisoner," which came out last year, was a folksy and rootsy affair. At the Village Vanguard this week, however, she's concentrating on her improvising and on the instrumental interplay with a cohort of adventurous and like-minded players, including the pianist **Myra Melford**, the drummer **Rudy Royston**, and the saxophonist and clarinetist **Doug Wisselman**. It's a welcome return to form. (178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. July 21-26.)

Katie Thiroux

This first-rate bassist and beguiling singer delivered a rousing debut, earlier this year, with her album, "Introducing Katie Thiroux." She's a proudly mainstream stylist whose forthright swing recalls that of Ray Brown. Visiting from the West Coast, Thiroux is at the Kitano this week, and her quartet includes the saxophone and clarinet master **Ken Peplowski**. (66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. July 22.)



Harry Partch's world of sound can only be summoned by the unique and exotic instruments he created.

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER

A classic work of West Coast experimentalism reinvents music drama.

ON THE FACE OF IT, a comparison between the composers Richard Wagner and Harry Partch would seem absurd. Wagner, the German operatic titan, enjoyed royal patronage, lived in comfort, and became the most influential cultural figure of the late nineteenth century. Partch (1901–74), the most extreme of American mavericks, lived much of his life in obscurity and near-poverty, patching together an existence with short-term academic gigs, foundation grants, and private gifts. But both men were driven by the need to control their own artistic worlds: Wagner by building a theatre where his “total works of art” would be most perfectly presented, and Partch by creating his own set of instruments (magnificently eccentric objects, mostly struck, plucked, and slapped, with names like Marimba Eroica, Cry-Chord, Chromelodeon, and Spoils of War), which employed exotic scales that divided the octave into forty-three degrees. Wagner’s reputation is indomitable, Partch’s worryingly fragile.

When Partch’s “Delusion of the Fury,” arguably the finest and most representative of his later works, was last performed in New York (at the Japan Society, in 2007), the production made use of the composer’s original instruments, which were then housed at Montclair State University, in New Jersey. Seven years later, an adventurous group from Cologne, Ensemble Musikfabrik, oversaw the creation of an entirely new set for the Ruhr Triennial’s production of “Delusion,” directed by Heiner Goebbels, which the Lincoln Center Festival will present at City Center on July 23–24. Goebbels, who has achieved wonders in radical adaptations of music and words by such figures as Hanns Eisler and Gertrude Stein, has restrained himself a bit here, letting Partch’s piece—its two acts inspired, respectively, by Japanese Noh drama and an Ethiopian folktale—speak largely for itself. (Rather innocently, he likens Partch’s music to that of the Beach Boys.) But the instruments (which, Partch maintained, “are the set”) are fantastical, the costumes outrageous, and the music, simultaneously primitive and elusively complex, weaves a strange and dreamy spell.

—Russell Platt



CLASSICAL MUSIC

CONCERTS IN TOWN

International Keyboard Institute and Festival

Now in its second week, the festival, which has for years been a summer must-see event for lovers of all types of piano music, continues to offer varied fare. On Wednesday, Alessio Bax plays music by Mussorgsky, Scriabin, and Beethoven (the “Moonlight” Sonata), while on Saturday Alon Goldstein performs works by Schubert, Ravel, Liszt, and Gyorgy Ligeti. Those seeking deeper knowledge can arrive early to catch pre-concert talks by the authoritative commentator and pianist David Dubal. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. July 22 and July 25 at 8. For a complete schedule, visit ikif.org.)

Bargemusic

Brooklyn’s floating chamber-music series presents three distinctive New York-based pianists in its regular lineup of “Masterworks” concerts, to be enjoyed with river breezes and the customary gentle rocking. On Friday night, Beth Levin, who enjoys something of a cult following, plays works by Chopin, Schumann, and the twentieth-century Swedish composer Anders Elliason; on Saturday evening, Alexander Peskanov plays an all-Chopin program (including the Twelve Études, Op. 25); and on Sunday afternoon Steven Beck offers the second and final part of his survey of Beethoven’s complete variations and bagatelles (including the majestic Diabelli Variations). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org. July 24–25 at 8 and July 26 at 4.)

Mostly Mozart Festival Preview Concert

New York music lovers know that summer is officially under way when Mostly Mozart begins; true to its name, the festival employs top-flight international talent to explore not only the genius of its namesake composer but also other relevant music, ranging from the Baroque to the contemporary. This week, the music director, Louis Langrée, leads the festival orchestra in a free concert featuring Mozart’s Symphony No. 34 and Brahms’s Symphony No. 4 in E Minor—for some, the apex of the Classical-Romantic Viennese symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. July 25 at 7:30. Free tickets are available at the box office beginning at 10 A.M.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood

July 22 at 8: Chamber-music ensembles don’t come grander than the Emerson String Quartet, which begins the classical week at the grandest of American summer festivals. The program offers two pieces on the sunny side—Ives’s Quartet No. 1 and Beethoven’s Quartet in F Major, Op. 135—but also includes Lowell Liebermann’s moodier Quartet No. 5, which the group recently premiered. • July 23 at 8:

Tanglewood's annual Festival of Contemporary Music, now in full swing, continues with a concert for large chamber ensemble conducted by the festival's enduring éminence grise, Oliver Knussen. Featured are pieces by Carter, Maderna, and Perle (the witty "Critical Moments 1"), as well as new works by Charles Wuorinen and by Knussen's predecessor as head of contemporary music, the great Gunther Schuller, who died last month ("Magical Trumpets"). The pianist Peter Serkin and the tenor Nicholas Phan are special guests. (For a complete schedule of festival concerts, visit bso.org.) • July 24 at 8:30 and July 26 at 2:30: Christoph von Dohnányi, among the last of the European postwar podium giants, comes to the Shed for two concerts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The first, all Beethoven, offers the Fourth Symphony and the Violin Concerto (with Vadim Gluzman); the second, all Mozart, includes the composer's triple farewell to the symphonic art, the Symphonies Nos. 39, 40, and 41 ("Jupiter"). • July 25 at 8:30: Michael Tilson Thomas, who in recent years has rekindled his once legendary relationship with the B.S.O., conducts a specialty of his, Mahler's Fifth Symphony, in a program that begins with Mozart's much lighter and more diverting Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-Flat Major (with a noted guest, Emanuel Ax). (Lenox, Mass. bso.org.)

Glimmerglass Festival

July 23 at 7:30 and July 28 at 1:30: Glimmerglass gives an unusual spin to an English-language adaptation of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," directed by Madeline Sayet, who brings her Mohegan heritage and a master's degree in art, politics, and postcolonial theory to bear on the Enlightenment-era work. Tweaking the opera's fairy-tale setting and Masonic imagery, Sayet moves the action to the Northeastern woodlands, where the characters commune with, rather than escape, the natural world. Sean Panikkar and Jacqueline Echols lead the ensemble cast. • July 24 at 7:30 and July 27 at 1:30: Glimmerglass has a proud history of reviving Baroque operas, both familiar and obscure, so it's fitting that the festival has made room for a little-known Vivaldi work in its anniversary season. The stately, sparkling "Cato in Utica" gives a talented cast, including Thomas Michael Allen, John Holiday, and Sarah Mesko, plenty of opportunities for virtuosic vocal display. Tazewell Thompson directs; Ryan Brown conducts. • July 25 at 8: For its second English-language offering of the season, the festival takes a cheeky approach to Enlightenment philosophy with Bernstein's "Candide," based on the novella by Voltaire. The operetta delivers the Frenchman's satirical jabs with a brisk and witty Broadway-tinged score, as the hapless Candide (Andrew Stenson), his wife, Cunegonde (Kathryn Lewek), and his pedantic tutor, Pangloss (David Garrison), try to maintain an optimistic outlook despite enduring an endless string of calamities, including war, an earthquake, and the Spanish Inquisition. The company's artistic and general director, Francesca Zambello, directs; Joseph Colaneri. • July 26 at 1:30: Following a much ballyhooed role début as King Philip, in Verdi's "Don Carlo," at Opera Philadelphia earlier this year, the magnificent bass-baritone Eric Owens plans to put another feather in his Verdian cap with his first outing as the dastardly Thane of Cawdor, in the composer's flinty treatment of "Macbeth," directed by Anne Bogart. With Melody Moore and Michael Brandenburg; Colaneri. (Cooperstown, N.Y. glimmerglass.org.)

Bard SummerScape

Leon Botstein, a discriminating excavator of forgotten scores, conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in the first fully staged U.S. production of Ethel Smyth's 1906 grand opera, "The Wreckers." (The marauders of the title are a band of

Cornish villagers who trick ships into crashing on the rocks in order to plunder them.) A pioneering composer and suffragette, Smyth wrote confident, bracing music that belies her current obscurity: the work's sweeping Romanticism and full-cry brass writing nod to Wagner, while its English coastal setting and musical evocations of the sea anticipate Britten's masterpiece "Peter Grimes." Louis Otey portrays the leader of the village; Katharine Goeldner and Neal Cooper star as the lovers who resist the mob and light beacons to guide the vessels to safety; the inventive Thaddeus Strassberger directs. (Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 24 at 7:30 and July 26 at 2. Through Aug. 2.)

Norfolk Chamber Music Festival

Norfolk is to Connecticut what Marlboro is to Vermont: every summer, admired faculty from the Yale School of Music gather with their talented students to make chamber music in the countryside. The Brentano Quartet, which last year replaced the storied Tokyo Quartet as the school's quartet-in-residence, comes to the Music Shed this weekend. The first concert finds them collaborating with fellow-faculty in music by Dutilleux, Poulenc, Debussy, and Brahms (the Piano Quartet No. 2 in A Major); in the second, they go it alone in string quartets by Schumann, Britten (the spectral, valedictory No. 3), and Mendelssohn. (Norfolk, Conn. norfolkmusic.org. July 24-25 at 8.)

Caramoor

The festival's opera wing steps outside its bel-canto comfort zone to present its first twentieth-


century work, "Dialogues des Carmélites." Poulenc's searing opera, about Carmelite nuns persecuted during the Reign of Terror, is justly famed for its compact dramatic force, but the eminently lyrical writing for the female voice is also a magnificent vehicle for singing actresses. Caramoor's first-rate cast includes Jennifer Check, Hei-Kyung Hong, Jennifer Larmore, and the riveting Wagnerian Deborah Polaski, in the searing role of Madame de Croissy. Will Crutchfield conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. July 25 at 8.)

Weekend of Chamber Music

This hardy little series near the Pennsylvania border is headed by the husband-and-wife team of the composer Andrew Waggoner and the cellist Caroline Stinson. They put an accent on contemporary music; this year's composer-in-residence is John Corigliano, whose celebrated song cycle "Mr. Tambourine Man" (seven settings of Bob Dylan texts) is featured in an intimate concert that also includes Fauré's Piano Trio in D Minor and songs and salon pieces by Schubert, Fauré, and Fritz Kreisler. (Jeffersonville, N.Y. wcmconcerts.org. July 25 at 8.)

Maverick Concerts

Latitude 41, a recently formed piano trio that combines elegance and drive in equal measure, presents a program at the series' serene woodland hall which includes two bedrocks of the repertory, Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio (Op. 70, No. 1) and Mendelssohn's Trio No. 1 in D Minor, with Daron Hagen's lyrical Duo for Violin and Cello in between. (Woodstock, N.Y. maverickconcerts.org. July 26 at 4.)

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X MOVIES

OPENING FIVE STAR

A drama, directed by Keith Miller, about a young man in Brooklyn who is lured into a gang. Starring James (Primo) Grant and John Diaz. Opening July 24. (In limited release.)

A GAY GIRL IN DAMASCUS: THE AMINA PROFILE

A documentary about a Syrian blogger whose identity turned out to be a hoax. Directed by Sophie Deraspe. Opening July 24. (In limited release.)

HORSE MONEY

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening July 24. (In limited release.)

PAPER TOWNS

An adaptation of the novel by John Green, about teenagers who travel on their own to find a classmate who has gone missing. Directed by Jake Schreier; starring Cara Delevingne, Nat Wolff, and Halston Sage. Opening July 24. (In wide release.)

PHOENIX

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening July 24. (In limited release.)

SOUTHPAW

A drama, directed by Antoine Fuqua, about a former boxer (Jake Gyllenhaal) who needs to remake his life after the death of his wife (Rachel McAdams). Co-starring Forest Whitaker. Opening July 24. (In wide release.)

UNEXPECTED

A drama, starring Cobie Smulders as a pregnant schoolteacher in Chicago whose student (Gail Bean) is also pregnant. Directed by Kris Swanberg. Opening July 24. (In limited release.)



MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Jerry Lewis's "The Patsy," from 1964, in our digital edition and online.

NOW PLAYING

Horse Money

Pedro Costa's first dramatic feature since "Colossal Youth" (2006) is an inside-out film noir, in which the crime story—a knife fight in a Lisbon park between two middle-aged Cape Verdean immigrant workers—is subordinated to its economic implications, familial ramifications, and political phantasms. It features the same lead actor as in "Colossal Youth," Ventura, who again plays a version of himself. Now frail and afflicted with tremors, Ventura is brought to a modern but desolate hospital via ancient catacombs that bear the scars of long-forgotten labors. There, he's visited by friends, including Vitalina (Vitalina Varela), supposedly the widow of Ventura's opponent, Joaquin (Tito Furtado)—though Joaquin may still be alive. Ventura reminisces in flashback about the fight, recalling—with references to pop songs and tragic ballads—the burdens that he and his fellow-workers face as black people in Portugal, and observing the imprint of his own labor on the face of the city. Costa extends the tale into mythopoetic dimensions, aided by a repertory of images—featuring immobile, hieratic poses in glowing cityscapes throughout Lisbon—that lend the movie frozen glints of studio-era rhapsody. In Portuguese.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

Inside Out

Much of the new Pixar film is set in the mind of a child. Riley (voiced by Kaitlyn Dias) and her parents have just moved to San Francisco. It's hardly a traumatic upheaval, but it's enough to cause havoc among her governing emotions. There is Joy (Amy Poehler), Anger (Lewis Black), Fear (Bill Hader), Sadness (Phyllis Smith), and—a curious choice—Disgust (Mindy Kaling). We watch the crew of them at work as though they were in the control room of a spaceship, coping with the sensations of Riley's everyday life and overseeing the construction of her personality. Almost everything that we expect from Pixar is here: the dazzle of the design, rich in chromatic range; the bountiful dishing up of gags; and the moral reminder that melancholy and regret are not things to be blocked out, let alone suppressed, but a necessary part of who we are, at any age. If there is a hitch, it's that the inventiveness is so unrelenting that it verges not just on the manic but on the clever-clever, and there are stretches when some

viewers will crave a cleaner narrative line. Not for the first time, adults may feel like sneaking out to a Pixar movie by themselves, and leaving the younger kids behind.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/29/15.) (In wide release.)

Irrational Man

Woody Allen's light-toned, dark-themed new comedy begins with duelling voice-overs, which keep wrangling throughout the film: those of Abe Lucas (Joaquin Phoenix), an existential philosopher with a taste for trouble, and Jill Pollard (Emma Stone), his disciple, admirer, and, perhaps, partner in crime. Abe arrives at Graylin College, a small Rhode Island liberal-arts school, in a funk. Depressed, reckless, and isolated, he instructs his students (especially the gifted Jill) in the futility of a life of the mind, and reluctantly begins an affair with Rita Richards (Parker Posey), a colleague with romantic dreams. But a chance encounter in town with a victim of local misrule inspires a debate with Jill that prompts Abe to take direct action, turning the skit-like satire into an eerie and suspenseful thriller. As taboos fall, so does Abe's resistance to Jill's flirtations. Allen's sketch of the campus owes nothing to observations of real students or teachers; the setting and the setup are living abstractions that the trio of lead actors invest with their own vital whimsy. But, when the Dostoyevskian drama kicks in, Allen's venomous speculations take over, and bring to the fore a tangle of ghostly conundrums and ferocious ironies, as if the director, nearing eighty, already had one foot in the next world and were looking back at this one with derision and rue.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Losing Ground

The only feature directed by Kathleen Collins, from 1982, went unseen for more than thirty years; it's a rediscovered masterwork. It's the story of a middle-class black couple in New York—Sarah (Seret Scott), a young philosophy professor, and Victor (Bill Gunn), an older artist—whose careers shake the fault lines in their romance. Sarah plans to spend the summer in the library doing research for an essay on ecstatic experience, but Victor, an abstractionist in search of new inspirations, finds them a country house in an upstate town where he plans to use the locals as models—especially one young woman, Celia (Maritza

Rivera). While Sarah struggles with her writing, Victor's art flourishes, and Celia soon becomes an uneasy presence in their home. Collins is equally inventive as a writer and a director. She dramatizes crises of gender and race—as well as of intellectual pursuit and artistic ambition—with a decisive and nuanced touch, and her attentiveness to light and color (aided by the cinematography of Ronald K. Gray) is itself painterly; the movie conveys a thrillingly tactile sense of high-relief surfaces. When Sarah accepts a role in a student film along with a suave and graying actor (Duane Jones) who offers consolation, the fusion of cinema and life, of symbol and substance, rises to a shriek of redemption.—*R.B.* (BAM Cinématek; July 25.)

Lucky Luciano

Francesco Rosi's brilliantly staged and photographed portrait of the infamous Mob boss, played with brass-knuckles ingratiation by Gian-Maria Volonte. It's a peculiar political bio-pic. By casting Luciano's real-life nemesis—the narcotics agent Charles Siragusa—as himself, Rosi hits on a docu-Brecht technique. The linchpin scenes dramatize Mob-government collusion that amounts to Mafiagate (both here and in Italy). In between come Siragusa's bouts of edifying speechmaking—and his non-pro acting makes them oddly persuasive. In English and Italian. Released in 1973.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; July 27.)

Magic Mike XXL

Whatever misgivings the director Steven Soderbergh may have expressed in "Magic Mike" about the milieu of male strippers, they're gone from this rollicking sequel, which he shot and edited (and which his longtime associate Gregory Jacobs directed). Mike Lane (Channing Tatum), now a full-time furniture-maker in Tampa, joins five members of his former dance troupe on a road trip to a stripper convention in Myrtle Beach. It's the last show for all of them—Mike's cohorts are disbanding to pursue their separate dreams—and, learning of this, Mike lends them artistic vision, urging them to put a personal imprint on their routines. But the trip is no mere diversion; with its varied display of Southern manners, it's the core of the story. A private women's club in Savannah, run by Mike's former girlfriend Rome (Jada Pinkett Smith), features male dancers, all of whom

are black, catering to a clientele of black women, though Rome coaxes Mike—whom she calls “white chocolate”—to perform there, too. Other connections bring Mike and his friends to the mini-mansion of a sexually deprived divorcée (Andie MacDowell) and her equally hungry friends. The climactic scene at the big dance-off is a production number for Mike and Malik (Stephen Boss), one of Rome’s crew; it’s a mirror dance that reveals the movie’s—and Mike’s—exuberant, heartwarming, ahistorical racial fantasies.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Mr. Holmes

The Sherlock Holmes industry shows no sign of withering, but the man himself, according to Bill Condon’s movie, was all too subject to the corrosive powers of time. The guiding conceit is that Holmes was a real person whose deeds were transcribed by Dr. Watson; the need for Conan Doyle thus evaporates. Holmes is played by Ian McKellen, who rejoins forces with the director; their previous collaboration was on “*Gods and Monsters*” (1998), where McKellen was James Whale—another Englishman whose wisdom, late in life, was put to the test. The new film opens in 1947, at a time when the aging Holmes, recently returned from Japan, is cared for by his housekeeper (Laura Linney) and her young son (Milo Parker); in contrast to the look of the movie, which is decorous to a fault, Holmes is aggravated by the memory of an old case, from thirty years earlier, when he was asked to explain the curious conduct of a mother (Hattie Morahan) in mourning for her dead children. The heart of the tale is a finely wrought encounter between the sleuth and his prey, yet the central mystery feels, by Holmesian standards, barely worth unravelling. Much of the rest of the film, for some reason, is about bees.—*A.L.* (7/20/15) (In limited release.)

Phoenix

The German director Christian Petzold’s new drama, a historical twist on Alfred Hitchcock’s “*Vertigo*,” is the cinematic equivalent of a page-turner, no more and no less. It stars Nina Hoss as Nelly Lenz, a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, who suffers gunshot wounds to the face in the last days of the war. After facial-reconstruction surgery, she returns home to Berlin and finds her husband, Johannes (Johnny Lenz (Ronald Zehrfeld), a pianist, working as a waiter at a night club in the American sector. She doesn’t identify herself, and he doesn’t recognize her; rather, he thinks that she resembles Nelly sufficiently that, with a little effort, she could impersonate his late wife and claim her inheritance (since, as he knows, her entire family was killed by the Nazis). Petzold achieves a narrow but evocative realism on a slender budget, but the narrowness extends to his characters as well. His pristine academicism illustrates the story without deepening or internalizing it. The script is dosed out in spoonfuls of dialogue that take the place of visual conception or symbolic resonance, and the lack of directorial style renders the story all the less plausible. (A scene of a false kiss borrowed from Hitchcock’s “*Notorious*” merely adds unanswered questions.) Despite—or perhaps because of—its absurdities, though, the plot tautly builds suspense, and the ending is a legitimate corker. In German.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Tangerine

The director Sean Baker brings empathetic curiosity to the story of Sin-Dee (Kitana Kiki Rodriguez), a transgender prostitute in Hollywood who, hours after her release from jail, learns that her pimp and boyfriend, Chester (James Ransone), has been unfaithful to her during her twenty-eight-day absence. To make matters worse, the other woman, Dinah

(Mickey O’Hagan), is everything that Sin-Dee is not—white (like Chester) and physically female from birth—and Sin-Dee careens through town to find her and kick her ass. While considering the practicalities and degradations of street life as endured by Sin-Dee and her best friend, Alexandra (Mya Taylor), Baker also looks at their johns—in particular, Razmik (Karren Karagulian), an Armenian cabbie who flees his overbearing mother-in-law (Alla Tumanian) for the prostitutes’ company. The action is set on Christmas Eve, and Baker leans hard on sad sentiment and cheap irony. For all the ugliness he depicts—none worse than the ordeal of Dinah, who works as part of a team of prostitutes in a sordid motel room—Baker revels in the power of clichés and the generic energy of his lo-fi cinematography, which was done with iPhones. The results are picturesque and anecdotal.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

Trainwreck

After three successful seasons of “*Inside Amy Schumer*,” its creator gets a starring role outside the realm of TV. Schumer plays Amy—a romantically reckless, dirty-mouthed, and alcohol-laced writer living, working, and sleeping around in New York. Aghast at the idea of seeing a guy more than once, let alone settling down, she is shocked to find herself falling for a sports surgeon (Bill Hader) whom she interviews for a magazine. Anyone hoping that the movie, written by Schumer and directed by Judd Apatow, would have the courage of its own waywardness, or that Amy might push her lonely transgressions to the limit, will be disappointed to watch the plot acquire the softness of a regular rom-com, and even Schumer’s fiercest fans may wonder if they are still watching a bunch of funny sketches being strung together, as opposed to a feature film. There are sprightly supporting turns from Tilda Swinton, scarcely recognizable as an editor with a heart of flint, and from John Cena, as Amy’s muscular squeeze; on the other hand, Apatow seems to have issued an open invitation to random celebrities—LeBron James, Chris Evert, Amar’e Stoudemire, Matthew Broderick, and Marv Albert—to join the film and make it into a party. Nice try.—*A.L.* (7/20/15) (In wide release.)

The Wings of Eagles

John Ford’s 1957 bio-pic of the pioneering naval airman, screenwriter, and crucial Second World War strategist Frank (Spig) Wead (played with red-hot ferocity by John Wayne) is one of the director’s most capacious and multifaceted—and romantically tormented—films. An insubordinate and rowdy young flyer, the ambitious and visionary Wead expands the Naval Air Corps’s public profile, but is much less attentive to the emotional needs of his wife, Min (Maureen O’Hara). The couple’s separations and reconciliations are among Ford’s most passionate inspirations, but Wead’s homecoming is bitterly ironic—a domestic accident soon thereafter leaves him a quadriplegic. His agonized rehabilitation, thanks largely to the devotion of a seaman (Dan Dailey), leads to more marital conflict—and to a career as a writer of tales of airborne adventure and employment in Hollywood by a director named John Dodge (played by Ward Bond), Ford’s self-portrait in bluster and alcohol. Then the Pearl Harbor attacks bring Wead back to active duty—and to his shockingly intense bonds with fellow-officers. The raw but hearty brutality of flying and fighting marks Wead with the inner scars of broken love and with physical scars akin to stigmata; every step of his turbulent journey plays out like a mini-Calvary. Ford’s sense of martial duty is a vision of secular faith.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; July 25.)

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Cymbeline

Daniel Sullivan's production, the second free Shakespeare in the Park offering of the summer, features Lily Rabe, Hamish Linklater, and Raúl Esparza. Previews begin July 23. (Delacorte, Central Park. Enter at 81st St. at Central Park W. 212-967-7555.)

Hamilton

Lin-Manuel Miranda's acclaimed hip-hop musical, in which Miranda plays the Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, moves to Broadway after a sold-out run at the Public. Thomas Kail directs. In previews. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 800-745-3000.)

John

Sam Gold directs a new play by Annie Baker ("The Flick"), set in a bed-and-breakfast in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In previews. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

Kafka on the Shore

At the Lincoln Center Festival, the director Yukio Ninagawa stages Haruki Murakami's surreal novel, which follows a fifteen-year-old runaway and an elderly man looking for a lost cat. In Japanese, with English supertitles. July 23-26.

(David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500.)

The New York Story

Jerry Seinfeld directs Colin Quinn in a comic monologue about the evolution of New York City, from Dutch settlers to hipster Williamsburg. In previews. Opens July 23. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111.)

Ubu Roi

Cheek by Jowl performs Alfred Jarry's absurdist classic at the Lincoln Center Festival, directed by Declan Donnellan. In French, with English supertitles. July 22-26. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College, 524 W. 59th St. 212-721-6500.)

NOW PLAYING

Awake and Sing!

The National Asian American Theatre Company's production of Clifford Odets's occasionally pat 1935 melodrama about a Depression-era Bronx family struggling to survive is well directed by Stephen Brown-Fried, but sometimes the actors lose control, and Odets's brand of poetic realism runs away with them. Central to the story is the bitterly drawn matriarch, Bessie Berger (the wonderful Mia Katigbak), who steps on her children's dreams because she doesn't want them to be

soft—they haven't inherited her survival instincts. When her daughter, Hennie (Teresa Avim Lim), reveals that she's pregnant, it's just one more nail in the family crypt. But Bessie's anger isn't reserved for her young; she's equally infuriated by her politically minded father (Alok Tewari), the last vestige of poor idealism. That the actors are all of Asian descent adds something interesting to the characters' feelings of difference, given their Jewish roots and Yiddish-inflected English. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Penn & Teller on Broadway

The magician-comedian-libertarian Penn Jillette and his silent sidekick, Teller, return to New York after an absence of fifteen years, to preach their goofy gospel of skepticism. As always, their illusions are case studies in rational thought. They want their audiences to know that what they do isn't magic, because—duh—magic doesn't exist. (Jillette uses a mind-reading trick to rail against psychics, a.k.a. "predators.") That doesn't make their shtick any less fun, especially when they perform deconstructed classics, such as pulling a rabbit out of a hat or sawing a woman in half. Though the show has elements of their popular Las Vegas act, it ends not with a bang but with a mellow fire-eating feat that feels as if the whole audience is cozying up around a campfire—which Jillette then consumes. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)

Scenes from an Execution

In sixteenth-century Venice, two artists assess a giant canvas painted by a rival, Galactia. "It's excessive," one says. "And so is she." Galactia, loosely based on the baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, is the heroine of Howard Barker's parable of art and

society, revived by PTP/NYC. She's played by Jan Maxwell, an actress not given to restraint. Galactia has accepted a commission for a massive work celebrating the Battle of Lepanto. Her version deliberately emphasizes human agonies rather than naval triumphalism, which doesn't endear her to church or state. Barker's methods can appear blunt, his language flowery, his emphasis on suffering de trop. But PTP/NYC has always embraced his intemperance, and so has Maxwell, a forceful, fervent performer. Having just announced her retirement from the stage, she chose Galactia (a role she first played in 2008) for her final bow. It's a muscular and passionate farewell. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 866-811-4111.)

The Tempest

Marcus Garvey Park is full of "noises, sounds and sweet airs," including the occasional wailing baby. It's also full of Shakespeare, courtesy of the Classical Theatre of Harlem. The director Carl Cofield's production, set on the island of Hispaniola, isn't always enthralling, but it's more spirited and cogent than the Shakespeare in the Park rendition that just closed. Ron Cephas Jones, tricked out in shaman-esque finery, is an assured and unusually relaxed Prospero, working his sorcery with a ram's-head staff as he presides over the enslaved spirits Ariel and Caliban (Fedna Jacquet and Carl Hendrick Louis, both nimble and splendid). The colonial parallels aren't always thought through, the technical elements are lacking, the lovers are a bit dull, and everyone could use more rehearsal. But, often enough, Prospero makes good on his promise to "bring forth a wonder, to content ye." (Richard Rodgers Amphitheatre, enter at 124th St. at Fifth Ave. 347-688-6304. Through July 26.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

Waterfight NYC

When Brian De La Cruz and Joshon Abreu, who are cousins, created this annual event, four years ago, they were surprised to receive some two hundred R.S.V.P.s on Facebook. That was nothing—this year, they already have tens of thousands of potential attendees. Promoted primarily on social media with the hashtag #StayWet, the free-for-all calls for water-gun enthusiasts to load up their plastic weaponry and shoot it out on the Great Lawn of Central Park. The organizers recommend that participants bring five or more water bottles, a backpack, goggles, and trash bags to clean up

after themselves. All are welcome (though it's advised that kids under sixteen have parents with them), but water balloons are verboten. (facebook.com/WaterfightNYC. July 25.)

"Tape Festival: A Celebration Of Public Radio"

Thanks largely to an influx of popular podcasts, public radio is seeing a surge of interest in the age of digital and mobile. Mooj Zadie, the radio documentarian and co-host of "Tape," a podcast that spotlights the industry's players, founded this event, which takes public radio live for one night in

Brooklyn, and pays homage to the art of storytelling. Billed as "one big listening party," the evening features performances by David Kestenbaum and Jacob Goldstein, of NPR's "Planet Money"; P. J. Vogt and Alex Goldman, of Gimlet Media's "Reply All"; Nate DiMeo, of Radiotopia's "The Memory Pal-

ace"; Andrea Silenzi, of the podcast "Why Oh Why"; Sharon Mashihi and Kaitlin Prest, of Radiotopia's "The Heart"; the radio producer Yowei Shaw; and the poet, blogger, and YouTube artist Steve Roggenbuck. (The Bell House, 149 7th St., Brooklyn. 718-643-6510. Two shows on July 26.)

READINGS AND TALKS

Greenlight Bookstore

Justin Alvarez, a publisher at *Lucky Peach*, moderates the discussion "Book(less) Dystopias and Linguistic Armageddons," with Alena Graedon ("The Word Exchange"), Jonah Kravant ("The Last Book Ever Written"), and Jeffrey Rotter ("The Only Words That Are Worth Remembering"). (686 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-246-0200. July 27 at 7:30.)



TABLES FOR TWO

CHARLIE PALMER AT THE KNICK

6 Times Square (212-204-4983)

AT THE NEW KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL restaurant, there's nothing heavier than the weight of history, although the halibut croquettes come close. Where does the fry end and the fish begin? The chili-lime aioli on the side isn't saying. Order a champagne cocktail on a Tuesday night at the bar, and the spiral of lemon rind bobbing on the bubbles looks like it's having more fun than the clientele. It's hard to believe that the Knick, recently converted from offices back into a hotel, was once a drinking spot so beloved that, six years into Prohibition, this magazine was still lamenting its closure and, with it, the loss of Maxfield Parrish's famous mural of Old King Cole and his jolly attendants. (The mural now hangs across town in the St. Regis's bar, which has been more persuasively resurrected.) Encased in marble, sheathed in chain-metal drapes, the dining room is so insistently anonymous that you'd never know it looks out on the Crossroads of the World, or even on one of the city's larger H&Ms—let alone that Enrico Caruso sang from the balcony of this hotel on Armistice Day. One of the Martini's many origin myths swirls, vermouth-like, around the bar, circa 1912. And, in 1919, perhaps anticipating the need for a stiff drink, the owner of the Red Sox, Harry Frazee, met the team's manager at the Knickerbocker to tell him that he was selling Babe Ruth to the Yankees.

In the restaurant today, the tuna tartare, served icebox cold, is not nearly as disappointing an event. On the bright side, hotel restaurants, including this one, are probably the only places where you can begin dinner with fried chicken, chase it with a salumi plate, follow up with Asian-inspired sea scallops, and end with crême brûlée. They are certainly the last venues serving grilled romaine or deconstructed niçoise salads, in which the splayed string beans are rigorously and mysteriously quarantined from all the good stuff (quail egg, anchovy, tuna). But that which is familiar needn't feel so confining. On a recent evening, a family new to the city said they were hoping for some ice-cream sundaes. An oversized map of Manhattan could only entertain the kids for so long. But there were no sundaes, only chocolate mousse, with chocolate ice cream, and chocolate sauce on top. It looked severe, and, even for a dessert, seemed like a slog. The family retreated to their room, and the dining area was quiet, except for the rustle of someone reading that morning's *Financial Times* in the corner.

—Amelia Lester

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HELGAS



**FOOD &
DRINK**

BAR TAB JOHNNY'S BAR

90 Greenwich Ave. (212-741-5279)

"At a bar like this, what could disappoint you?" a man asked the other night, at Johnny's, in the West Village. There might be one or two things, but it depends on your expectations: earlier in the evening, a slick of yuppies, perhaps attracted by the exposed brick, had walked into the narrow room looking confused, and walked out, noses pointing upward to the chess set that's glued to the ceiling. But those with an appreciation for a good dive bar stuck around, unlike a couple of the ceiling's knights and bishops, which have fallen in a battle against gravity. Happily, the drinks are priced for a pawn: Rolling Rock on draft is \$3.50, refreshing in a city overflowing with precious beer. Also appealing to the boozing bargain hunter is the Shot of the Day, at the same price, which is often reminiscent of a concoction that you might have drunk in college on a dare. At Johnny's, you can draw Burt Reynolds on a napkin for the Burt Reynolds wall, or admire a Yoda doll driving a small blue Thunderbird. But it's not so hip that you fear being throttled by a man bun. One guy told a story about how he used an antique shotgun to ward off a burglar in his apartment. A wincing group knocked back shots of tequila mixed with milk. The report: "Not as bad as you'd think."

—Colin Stokes



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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT THE DEAL

In the late nineteen-eighties, in Switzerland, Iranian officials met with collaborators of A. Q. Khan, the scientist who fathered Pakistan's nuclear-bomb program. The parties may also have met in Dubai, where Khan maintained a secret office above a children's store called Mummy & Me. In 1987, the Iranians received a one-page document that included the offer of a disassembled centrifuge, along with diagrams of the machine. They reportedly ended up paying as much as ten million dollars for information and materials that helped Iran advance its nuclear program during the nineteen-nineties. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, a scientist sometimes described as the closest thing to an Iranian Robert Oppenheimer, oversaw the Orchid Office, working secretly on detonators and on the challenge of fitting something like a nuke on a missile. In 2003, the agency confronted Iran with evidence that it maintained a clandestine nuclear program. Tehran denied any wrongdoing and parried inspectors, then built a centrifuge facility under a mountain near Qom, whose existence was revealed by the United States, Britain, and France in 2009.

This record of deception is one reason that the nuclear accord that Secretary of State John Kerry brought back to President Obama last week runs to a hundred and fifty-nine pages of text and annexes. Paragraph after paragraph seeks to close loophole after loophole. "Every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off, and the inspection and transparency regime necessary to verify that objective will be put in place," the President said last week. If Iran tries to build a bomb before 2025, he insisted, inspections and surveillance will provide the world with at least a year's advance warning.

The deal's fine print does include remarkable Iranian concessions, such as the sale or the downblending of

almost all Iran's enriched uranium, and the disabling of a heavy-water reactor at Arak, which could be used to make plutonium. Yet the deal has weaknesses, too. Its protocols for surprise inspections of military facilities could allow Iran to delay the arrival of investigators for more than three weeks, ample time to hide contraband equipment. And although Iran must now provide the I.A.E.A. with answers about its secret atomic history, the accord does not spell out how forthcoming it must be. Inevitably, some uncertainty about Iran's past weapons experiments—and, therefore, its present bomb-making capacity—will remain.

Congress has until mid-September to act on the deal. It seems unlikely that legislators will scuttle it; Republicans appear implacably opposed to Obama's diplomacy, yet they may not have the votes to override the veto that he has promised. But, to see the deal through, the President will have to persuade wary Democrats to back him. They face lobbying by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his allies. Netanyahu continues to intervene in American politics on the Iran matter, despite his slim odds of success and the damage he continues to cause to the U.S.-Israeli alliance. Yet he is a canny campaigner. Speaking on National Public Radio, he homed in on the accord's surprise-inspection regime as "woefully inadequate" and "completely porous."

In fact, the accord is tighter and more prescriptive than many I.A.E.A.-enforced agreements, including the one with North Korea that broke down a decade ago. Obama's best argument, however, is not the fine print but the fact that the deal is better than any other realistic course of action. Certainly it is better than preemptive war. A more nuanced question that Congress will now debate is whether Obama could have done better by maintaining economic sanctions longer and negotiating for tougher terms. That is an



illusory choice, the President argued last week, because, “without a deal, the international sanctions regime will unravel.” If he is right about that, the accord is more attractive still. The coalition that negotiated the deal now on the table—the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union—represents an extraordinary front of unity against nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Holding that rare alliance together will make it easier to challenge Iran later if the ayatollahs do cheat or go for a bomb after the termination of the agreement.

The most persuasive argument against the deal is that relieving economic sanctions would replenish Iran’s treasury without any requirement that it stop sponsoring terrorism, as the State Department reports that it continues to do. Shiite Iran and insecure Sunni states led by Saudi Arabia are locked in intensifying sectarian conflicts from Yemen and Iraq to Syria. Iran arms Hezbollah and Hamas in their dead-end mini-wars of rocket terror against Israel. An expansionist Iran with new resources and legitimacy might make the Middle East’s present deterioration even worse. Obama has not always acknowledged this risk, but, in an interview with Thomas Friedman in the *Times* last week, he said, “People’s concerns here are legitimate. Hezbollah has tens of thousands of missiles that are pointed toward Israel.” Smaller Sunni

states, too, he said, have “legitimate concerns” about Iran’s “dangerous” behavior, and he added that he would further strengthen the defenses of Israel and support Sunni allies.

But nuclear-arms control in the Middle East is inseparable from the region’s suffering and its conventional conflicts. This has been the case since the beginning of Iran’s program; the revolutionary regime first turned to A. Q. Khan’s salesmen in the wake of Saddam Hussein’s grotesque use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War. In Syria, aid workers have reported that the Bashar al-Assad regime, an Iranian ally, has again used crude chlorine-gas bombs against civilians and insurgents. In Yemen, Saudi bombers are killing and maiming innocents indiscriminately. In Iraq and Syria, ISIS has enslaved women from religious minorities. No nuclear-control contract crafted in European luxury hotels is likely to survive for a decade amid spreading sectarian violence of that character.

The Obama Administration has yet to address the mass suffering in the region with anything like the energy and the risk-taking that it displayed in its breakthrough diplomacy with Iran. The deal is imperfect but good enough, and it offers a tentative promise of a less dangerous Middle East. It cannot by itself deliver that.

—Steve Coll

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR! THE RIGHT POEM



When Greeks want to gesture “No,” they nod: a little upward snap of the head. The confusion that this can produce in visitors has long been an object of amusement for the locals—and the source of rueful anecdotes by tourists who have found themselves inadvertently refusing bellhops or a sweating glass of frappé after a hot afternoon on the Acropolis. Lately, you’d be forgiven for thinking that the Greeks themselves have been having a hard time understanding the difference between “yes” and “no.” On July 5th, at the ostensible encouragement of the Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, an overwhelming majority voted no to punishing new austerity measures in return for continued membership in the euro zone—“a bed of Procrustes,” as *The American Interest* described the dilemma. A week later, however—after an escalating struggle between Tsipras’s government and European creditors that the *Telegraph* compared to “a tragedy from Euripides”—

the same electorate was being called upon by Tsipras to say yes to a bailout offer more “draconian” (CNBC) than the last one.

“Draconian,” “procrustean,” “Euripides”: however confusing the state of affairs in Athens and Brussels right now, it’s clear that the temptation to invoke the glories of ancient Greece in connection with the current Greek economic crisis is one that journalists have found impossible to resist. Most of the allusions are unlikely to send readers racing to Wikipedia. “‘GREXIT’ BRINKMANSHIP IS CLASSIC GREEK TRAGEDY,” went one headline, on Breitbart.com. (The article contained a link to the Web page for a Greek-tragedy course at Utah State University.) Some betray a sentimental high-mindedness about Greece’s position in the history of civilization: “IN GREECE, A VOTE BEFITTING THE BIRTHPLACE OF DEMOCRACY?” Reuters mused.

Of the more substantive attempts to link Greece’s grandiose past to its humbled present, nearly all have focussed on a notorious incident from the Peloponnesian War—the ruinous, three-decade-long conflict between Athens and Sparta. In 416 B.C., the Athenians brutally punished the tiny island state of Melos for trying to preserve its neu-

trality. In a famous passage of Thucydides’ history of the war, known as the Melian Dialogue, the Athenian representatives blithely tell their Melian counterparts, “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must,” before killing all the adult males of the city and enslaving the women and children. Perceived similarities between the Athenians of the fifth century B.C. and today’s Germans have provoked a flurry of think pieces. “What Would Thucydides Say About the Crisis in Greece?” an Op-Ed in the *Times* asked.

Yet, despite the baggy analogizing and the rhetoric about eternal verities, attempts to use Pericles’ Athens to explain Tsipras’s Greece often obscure important differences. “Melos was a neutral state,” the *Times* Op-Ed tartly observed, “while modern Greece not only joined the European Union but over the years merrily plundered its treasury.”

It’s easy to see where the impulse to conflate “Greek history” with “Classical Greek history” comes from: appeals to Thucydides or Plato can confer authority in real-world decision-making. (In 2001, some conservatives cited the Athenians’ take-no-prisoners rhetoric at Melos to justify the invasion of Afghanistan.) But the presumption that

nothing much of interest happened in Greece between the end of the Classical era, in 323 B.C., and the founding of the modern nation, in the early nineteenth century, has long irritated both Greeks and students of Greek history.

One thing that gets left out of that myopic picture is Byzantium, which in many ways is the true parent of the modern Greek nation. That Christian, Greek-speaking empire was a conduit for Greek culture from the fifth century A.D. to 1453, when Constantinople was sacked by the Ottoman Turks and the Greeks became a subject people. Indeed, journalists eager to understand the roots of Greece's political habits and economic failures—the deep clannishness that easily ferments into cronyism, say, or the resistance to the tax collector, or the explosions of quixotic defiance—would be better off studying the centuries of subjugation and humiliation endured by the Greek people than reading the Melian Dialogue.

Modern Greek poets have long understood what the pundits are failing to grasp. Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933), an Alexandrian who described himself as a “poet-historian,” often used incidents from the post-Classical and Byzantine Greek past—the periods that are now being ignored—to comment sardonically on history, power, and what the Greeks call *ellinismos*, or “Greekness.” It is to Cavafy, and not Thucydides, that some Greeks have been turning lately, trading screen shots of poems on Twitter, wondering which of his disappointed lyrics about this or that failed regime is the “right” poem for the current Greek crisis.

Just before the referendum, a favorite was one of the short “ethical” poems (“For certain people there comes a day/when they are called upon to say the great Yes/or the great No”). Earlier this week, an editor in Athens suggested “In a Large Greek Colony, 200 B.C.,” about “political reformers” who meddle in others’ economies:

And as they proceed with their investigation,
they keep finding waste, and call for its elimination;
things, however, that are hard to do without.

Cavafy knew that, more than once during the long trajectory of their his-

tory, the Greeks have managed to “do without” while maintaining a sense of their identity. The 1926 poem “Of Colored Glass” is about a late-Byzantine emperor whose treasuries were so depleted by his predecessor that he had to wear fake jewels to his coronation. In that humiliation, however, the poet finds “nothing that was abject or unsuitable,” seeing, instead, in those “little pieces of colored glass” the “fitting symbols” of the emperor’s proud Yes in the face of history’s harsh realities.

—Daniel Mendelsohn

OFF DUTY PIPSTERS



There must be a list somewhere of the professions of New York City residents. Non-farm jobs. There are a lot of them here. Tortilla manufacturer, beauty ambassador. One you probably won't see, though, is “professional mountaineer.” This isn't much of a town for Alpinists, except when they come to give their slide shows and raise funds. Still, you can't quite say that their number here is zero.

Two years ago, Jimmy Chin, a prominent climber and photographer from Jackson, Wyoming, married a New Yorker, a documentary filmmaker named Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi. They had a daughter. Now Vasarhelyi lives with the child on Park Avenue, while Chin lives in Jackson, to the extent that he can be said to live anywhere. But he is so often in New York these days, for regular conjugal stints, that he risks developing an opinion of Mayor de Blasio. For a man of the mountains, the city can be claustrophobic—how many times can a guy jog around Central Park?—but such are the wages of love.

Chin, who is forty-one, was born and reared a flatlander, in Mankato, Minnesota, where his parents, Chinese immigrants, worked as librarians. Later, they made the mistake of taking him on a vacation to Glacier National Park. Real peaks: he was smitten. After college, at Carleton, he became a climbing vagabond (his parents had hoped for a law-

yer or a doctor), and then discovered photography as a way of making a living at it. Expeditions around the world brought him some renown, and also a mention in *People* as one of the hottest bachelors of 2003.

Vasarhelyi, who is thirty-six, grew up on the Upper East Side, and went to Brearley and Princeton. Her parents worked in academia. She has made films about Kosovo and Senegal. She and Chin met at an ideas conference near Lake Tahoe, where Chin was giving a talk about his attempts to climb a notorious route in the Garhwal Himalaya, in India—up the sheer granite face of Meru Central, known as the Shark's Fin. In 2008, he and two companions, Renan Ozturk and Conrad Anker, had been forced to turn back a hundred yards short of the summit. In 2011, they returned, and got it done: a celebrated first ascent. Chin had made a film about the climb,



Jimmy Chin and Chai Vasarhelyi

full of mind-bending big-wall footage, and he gave Vasarhelyi a rough cut, hoping for feedback. Three months went by. He took her silence for indifference, or worse.

In fact, she'd gone to Senegal, to shoot a film. (“Incorruptible,” about the 2012 elections there, premiered last month.) When she returned, she watched his movie, and liked it. “I was far more interested in the film than I was in him,” she said recently. She suggested that Chin structure it differently: the human story. They began working together. By the time the film, called “Meru,” screened at Sundance, last winter (it won an audience award, and will be in theatres next month), they were

co-directors, and husband and wife.

On a recent summer evening, they left their daughter with a sitter and headed downtown for a night out. Soup dumplings on Mott Street. They got an order in just as the restaurant was closing. Chin, compact and muscular, was in jeans, a white T-shirt, and a flat-brim trucker hat. Vasarhelyi had on jeans, flats, and an Army-green Rick Owens leather jacket. After a while, the owner gestured at the ceiling and said something to Chin in Chinese, and he laughed and stood up to leave. Apparently, nozzles in the ceiling were about to begin spraying roach poison.

Chin and Vasarhelyi walked east, to a restaurant called Sweet Chick, to meet some friends. "If I have a crew in New York, this is the one," Chin said, as he opened the door. The crew consisted of the members of a creative agency and collective called TheGoodLife!, founded by the photographer Craig Wetherby and Tim Brodhagen, a writer who goes by Timbo Baggins. Every Tuesday night, they set up somewhere on the Lower East Side for what they call Family Dinner and host games of dominoes. Chin goes when he's in town.

"Chai cleaned up last time," Chin said. Chin's table name—everyone gets one—is Jackie Chan, which is what the locals in Mexico call him when he's there surfing. Vasarhelyi's is Snow Bunny. "I should be Snow Leopard," she said.

"Or Snow Ninja. I told Craig I was bringing Snow Bunny, and he was, like, 'Oh, shit.'"

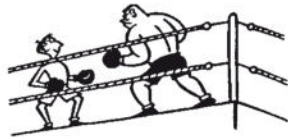
Tattoos, beards, hats. Nineties hip-hop. Watermelon beer. The crew members shuffled the dominoes and the games commenced. The buy-in for each round was twenty bucks. Wetherby (table name: Comeback King) and his girlfriend, Chenoah Rommereim, a jewelry designer, each teamed up with a newb, whose incompetence they bore with aplomb. Jackie Chan and Snow Bunny played as a pair.

"Chinese math class here—look out," Chin said.

Spinners. Snake eyes. The slam of tiles on the table. Comeback King took a lead and never lost it. Chin stuck around for another couple of games—there were worse ways to lose twenty dollars—and then it was time to head uptown and pay the sitter.

—Nick Paumgarten

THE PICTURES SHELLING UP



At the Church Street Boxing Gym, a basement grotto in lower Manhattan, goads to activity include peeling posters of Marvelous Marvin Hagler, the trainers' "FIGHTING SOLVES EVERYTHING" shirts, and the rap soundtrack. Also, there aren't any chairs. Jake Gyllenhaal, who worked out there twice a day for six months, said that his trainer, Terry Claybon, insisted, "Never sit down, never lean against the ropes, never cross your arms." Surrounded by boxers who were skipping rope and hitting mitts, the thirty-four-year-old actor wore his Nikes unlaced and had Ray-Bans hooked over the collar of his T-shirt, but he stood erect as a poplar.

In "Southpaw," which opens this week, Gyllenhaal plays a light-heavyweight champ named Billy Hope, an impulsive mauler. After his wife is shot and killed during his scuffle with another fighter's posse, Billy loses control—then loses his boxing license, his house, and custody of his daughter. He takes work as a janitor at a gym in return for training sessions with the gym's contemplative proprietor, Tick Wills (Forest Whitaker), who teaches him how to stop punches with his gloves rather than his face, and, over time, how to be a man.

As Gyllenhaal walked across the gym, a sweaty bantamweight called out, "I saw the trailer. You looked so cut!" The actor, whose regimen included a hundred pullups and a thousand situps per day, thanked him. After a moment, he confided, "A boxer walks into a ring, he looks fit—*then* they fight. There's a whole language here that I was trying to learn and respect. Because I had very large doubts about whether I could pull off the behavior."

He explained, "The first thing I learned was how to drag the back foot." He skipped through a series of chain-gang lurches. "Never pull the back foot off the ground, or you'll get tagged. Then 'shelling up,' defending like Floyd Mayweather." He turned half-sideways, hunched his left shoulder and tucked his elbow to protect his chin and ribs, and

peeked around his own ramparts. "And slipping the ropes: tedious, tedious footwork, turning side to side so your back remains against a rope running across the ring—totally not instinctual. I hated it."

Sitting on a medicine ball, he acknowledged the appeal of redemption through savage self-discipline. However, he noted, "In 'Rocky,' which I loved for the characters, you had the problem of it being all three-punch combinations thrown from the floor and the actors overreacting to the blows. In a real fight, you rarely register that a boxer has been hit until he falls down." He stood and put his nose against a heavy bag. "Terry had me get real close, and he taught me it only takes five pounds of pressure to bang someone's brain into his skull and knock him out. I came in thinking boxing is about aggression and strength, and I learned it's about grace and movement and *accuracy*."

"I began, in Terry's words, as 'awful,' and got to 'moderately interesting.' Beginners throw a punch from their arms"—he demonstrated, effortfully—"while fighters' shoulders and torsos separate. Months in, I was suddenly able to have my shoulders pop!" His arms rippled out rapidly, like tentacles. "It's just so relaxing. It's a salsa dance."

In "Southpaw," Billy himself starts to pop when he seeks out Tick. The scene of their meeting was largely improvised. "I'm standing in the threshold," Gyllenhaal recalled, "using the doorway as a defense against his challenging words. And I'm carrying, like, fifty pounds of shit in my gym bag—all my boxing gear, three sweatshirts, a map, framed photographs from the house. Rule No. 1 for me is I don't believe bags in movies should be filled with little ghost turds." He shrugged, wryly—*Method actors*.

The room began to fill, and Gyllenhaal found a perch on the stairs. He watched the fighters circle, boxing with shadows. "I wish I could measure, in buckets, how much I sweated here," he said. "Four shirts every time. Conservatively, I lost eight hundred pounds trying to join my body to my mind. Think how much in a fighter has been consumed and consolidated and excreted!" He laughed, acknowledging that his words hadn't quite attained five pounds of pressure. "It's not as beautiful a thought as it would look like translated to a Gatorade ad. But still."

—Tad Friend

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

HOW CAN GREECE TAKE CHARGE?

If there's one message that Greece should take away from its recent confrontation with the euro zone, it's that it will never get the help it really needs. Assuming that the deal goes through, Greece should be able to reopen the banks and keep the economy from total collapse. But, with that economy having shrunk by a quarter in five years and an unemployment rate over twenty-five per cent, it needs real stimulus spending and a much looser monetary policy. Neither is on offer. Even if Greece gets the debt relief that the I.M.F. is recommending, the next few years will be grim. As James Galbraith, an economist at the University of Texas at Austin, who assisted the former Greek finance minister during this year's negotiations, told me, "What's going to happen in Greece is going to be very sad."

So what can Greece do? It really has only one option—to make the economy more productive and, above all, to export more. It's easy to focus on Greece's huge pile of debt, but, according to Yannis Ioannides, an economist at Tufts University, "debt is ultimately the lesser problem. Productivity and the lack of competitive exports are the much more important ones."

There are structural issues that make this challenging. Greece is never going to be a manufacturing powerhouse: almost half of all Greek manufacturers have fewer than fifty employees, which limits productivity and efficiency, since they don't enjoy economies of scale. Greece also has a legal and business environment that discourages investment, particularly from abroad. Contractual disputes take more than twice as long to resolve as in the average E.U. country. Greece has been among the most difficult European countries in which to start and run a business, and it has myriad regulations designed to protect existing players from competition. All countries have rules like this, but Greece is an extreme case. Bakeries, for instance, can sell bread only in a few standardized weights. Recently, Alexis Tsipras, the Greek Prime Minister, had to promise that he would "liberalize the market for gyms."

The scale of these problems makes Greece's task sound hopeless, but simple reforms could have a big impact. Contrary to its image in Europe, Greece has already made moves in this direction: between 2013 and 2014, it jumped a hundred and eleven places in the World Bank's "ease of starting a business" index. And reform doesn't mean Greece needs to abandon the things that make it distinctive. In fact, in the case of exports, the country has important assets that it hasn't

taken full advantage of. Greek olive oil is often described as the best in the world. Yet sixty per cent of Greek oil is sold in bulk to Italy, which then resells it at a hefty markup. Greece should be processing and selling that oil itself, and similar stories could be told about feta cheese and yogurt; a 2012 McKinsey study suggested that food products could add billions to Greece's G.D.P. Similarly, tourism, though it already accounts for eighteen per cent of G.D.P., has a lot more potential. Most tourists in Greece are Greek themselves, a sign that the country could do a much better job of tapping the booming global tourism market. Doing so would require major investments in improving ports and airports, and in marketing. But the upside could be huge. Greece also needs to stem its current brain drain. It produces a large number of scientists and engineers, but it spends little on research and development, so talent migrates abroad. And there are other ways that Greece could capitalize on its climate and its educated workforce; as Galbraith suggests, it's an ideal location for research centers and branches of foreign universities.

To implement such changes, Greece will have to overcome other problems. Reforms work best when the level of trust in political institutions is high. But the Greek state has a poor reputation among citizens, who see it as a pawn of special interests. (This distrust of the government is one reason for the country's notoriously high rate of tax evasion.) On top of this, the chief advocate of structural reform to date has been the much hated troika, whose obsession with austerity has made the mere notion of reform anathema. Opening up the Greek economy would benefit ordinary citizens, since the economy's myriad rules and regulations serve mainly to protect

the wealthy and those lucky enough to have won a sinecure. But that's a hard sale to make at a time when people are worried about holding on to what they have.

Nonetheless, it's a sale that Alexis Tsipras should try to make. As Ioannides told me, "We know from looking at other countries that, for reform to work, the government and the public really need to own it." Right now, no one in Greece really owns reform. Still, Tsipras has considerable political capital. He could use that capital to spend the rest of his time in office inveighing against austerity. But Germany has made it painfully clear that that will have no effect. Instead, Tsipras should forget about what Europe isn't going to do, and focus on what Greece can do for itself. He should make the case for why Greece needs to focus on exports; make it easier for young people to find jobs and start businesses; and even allow loaves of various weights and liberalized gyms. This isn't the platform that Tsipras ran on. But it's the platform that Greece needs him to govern on.

—James Surowiecki



LETTER FROM IRAN

TEHRAN'S PROMISE

The revolution's midlife crisis and the nuclear deal.

BY ROBIN WRIGHT



As the diplomacy on Iran's nuclear program entered a final phase, in Europe, I visited the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini, the ideologue of Iran's 1979 revolution, in Tehran. One of the grandest mausoleums in the world—its shimmering dome is visible for miles—was under expansion. The Imam's bare receiving room, in his home, was preserved after he died, in 1989, in tribute to his modesty, but renovations at his tomb featured vaulted ceilings, lined with intricate mosaics, that soared stories high, and epic arches adorned with tiles in many shades of blue. In death, Khomeini's body is in surroundings grander than the palaces of Per-

sian kings. Editorials compared the opulence to Hollywood sets and condemned the costs at a time of poverty among the living.

The shrine has a metro stop. The faithful still visit. But numbers are down, and so is the fervor that mobilized millions during the revolution. In a space that holds thousands, I saw some two hundred pilgrims and a group of Dutch tourists.

Meisam Shahbani, a twenty-seven-year-old factory worker, tries to visit the tomb once a year, with his wife. "For each country, one person is important," he said. "Maybe for the United States it was the first President. Kho-

meini was our leader." Shahbani also likes the pop music of Enrique Iglesias and Christopher Nolan's films, including "Batman Begins." He favored a nuclear deal with the United States, too, especially if jobs are created by the lifting of sanctions. "Anything that will improve the situation in Iran," he said.

The next day, Iran commemorated the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven on a mythical steed. I spent the evening with two Iranian professors, Nasser Hadian and Bahram Taheri, old friends who had taught at Columbia and the University of Michigan, respectively. We went to an open-air restaurant, then strolled through Water and Fire Park, one of hundreds of landscaped spaces in Tehran. The center fountain is surrounded by towers that shoot off balls of fire. Opened in 2009, the park has playgrounds, terraced gardens, a planetarium, an outdoor arena, and a man-made lake, with swans. At midnight, thousands were still picnicking. Little kids on pastel bikes were weaving through the crowd. Western pop music echoed from the concrete hills of a roller park. We stopped to watch skateboarders and rollerbladers vying, at dangerous speeds, on steep half-pipe curves. A cell-phone company was hosting a show of comedians and other celebrities in the arena; it was packed. Camera crews were taping it for television.

I remarked on how much Iran had changed since the revolution, when I was nervous driving after dark, because cars were stopped at nighttime checkpoints to verify that the women inside were related to the men. Neighborhood *komitehs* raided homes suspected of partying and prowled streets to confront women who wore lipstick or exposed their ankles.

"You just have to go to this park to understand the state of mind among Iranians today," Hadian, a political scientist now at the University of Tehran, said. "The revolution is in a midlife crisis. What is a midlife crisis? When you think idealism and youthfulness are gone. The revolution doesn't want to accept that it has grown older, that it won't achieve everything it wanted to achieve. Or that it has to adapt to survive."

We reached the end of the park just as fireworks celebrating the Prophet's

A tech entrepreneur: "Don't judge Iran just by what the clerics say at Friday prayers."

heavenly journey went off over Tehran. People scrambled to get selfies against the flashing night sky.

In “The Anatomy of Revolution” (1938), the Harvard historian Crane Brinton likened revolution to fever. The first stage is raging delirium, as ruthless radicals eliminate the ancien régime and purge their moderate collaborators. In the second, societies begin a long, fitful convalescence, often under dictatorial rule, as the “mad religious energy” subsides. The final stage is recovery and a return to normalcy, which may even include remnants of the past, as “the religious lust for perfection” dies out, “save among a tiny minority.”

Iran’s revolutionaries are aging. Most are in their late fifties, sixties, or seventies. The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, turned seventy-six this month. More than sixty per cent of Iran’s eighty million people are under the age of thirty-five. A baby-boom generation, born after the revolution, doesn’t share all of its priorities.

“It’s a tsunami,” Said Rahmani, the C.E.O. of Sarava, Iran’s first venture-capital fund, told me. “This generation is worldly. They’re educated. They work. They have spending power. They’re not dependent on anyone. They have a different range of thinking.”

These days, the energy—and the locus for charting Iran’s future—is less in heady debates about an ideal Islamic state than in a practical scramble to exploit twenty-first-century technology to change society. More than a third of the population uses the Internet. Giant billboards for a new smart-phone model were plastered across Tehran this summer: “NEXT IS NOW.”

One afternoon, I drove to a huge warehouse on Tehran’s outskirts to see Saeed and Hamid Mohammadi, thirty-six-year-old identical twins. They are groundbreakers in the first generation of startups in Iran. In 2007, they created Digikala, the Amazon of Iran. It accounts for more than eighty per cent of online retail, according to Hamid. *The Economist* reported its value last year at a hundred and fifty million dollars.

The twins took me on a tour of the warehouse. A red motorcycle—the company’s iconic delivery vehicle—decorated

the lobby. Aisle after aisle had shelves stacked with computers, refrigerators, books and DVDs, home appliances, perfumes, electric toothbrushes, guitars. Digikala sells Steinway pianos. An Iranian-American in California had just ordered a Mother’s Day present for delivery in Tehran, Hamid said.

For centuries, the bazaar was the heart of Iran’s economy, and one of the three traditional arms of power, with the clerics and the military. In 1979, the Shah was forced to abandon the Peacock Throne after the *bazaaris* and the clergy turned on him. The bazaar is still a big player, but Digikala and other startups have created a new space in society; the twins are proudest of the flow of information in customer reviews. E-commerce increasingly defines market prices, too.

“Five years ago, the profit margin for consumer electronic goods sold in Iran was nine or ten per cent,” Hamid said. “Because of e-commerce, the traditional market now can’t sell for more than three or four per cent. We forced the market down—and made a fortune in the process.”

The Internet is also “one of the central battlegrounds between hard-liners anxious to control all expression and access in Iran and the majority of the population,” according to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. Many Iranians use virtual private networks to circumvent censorship of millions of Web sites and social media—and so do many of the theocrats. The Supreme Leader and the President have taken to using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to propagate their messages, in Farsi and in English.

The rivalry for Iran’s future has played out over WhatsApp, Viber, and Tango. All three are used heavily to make free calls, send messages, and post photos or videos. They’re also ways to share the deliciously naughty political humor that Iranians love, without getting caught by the Committee to Determine Instances of Criminal Content. The committee, which is part of the Ministry of Justice, can prosecute people for an array of vague offenses, including “disturbing the public.” It was sanctioned by the United States in 2013 for barring freedom of expression. Last

year, the regime proposed “smart filtering,” instead of blocking sites altogether. But it may already be too late to totally monitor the Internet in Iran.

“Iran is going through the kind of I.T. boom that the United States went through in the nineteen-nineties,” Rahmani said. Some companies have floundered, others have flourished. Aparat is the Iranian YouTube. Hamijoo, the equivalent of Indiegogo, is a crowd-funding site that raises money for film projects and the arts in Iran. Nazanin Daneshvar launched a Groupon clone in 2011, when she was twenty-six. Called Takhfifan—from *takhfif*, or “discount,” in Farsi—it works with more than ten thousand merchants and has more than a million subscribers. “No one could believe this could exist in Iran,” Daneshvar told me. “When I’m questioned, I say, ‘Do you think we’re riding camels?’ Obviously, don’t judge Iran just by what the clerics say at Friday prayers.”

Mohammad-Reza Khatami and Zahra Eshraghi are one of Tehran’s power couples. Khatami, who has salt-and-pepper hair and a short beard, led the Islamic Iran Participation Front, a leading reformist political party; he was the deputy speaker of parliament from 2000 to 2004. His older brother, Mohammad Khatami, was President of Iran from 1997 until 2005. Eshraghi is the granddaughter of Ayatollah Khomeini and a women’s-rights activist. A striking woman, she was dressed in a leather skirt and spike heels when I visited their apartment, in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains.

“Everything is better!” Khatami told me, over melon smoothies and cake. “Nobody thought that the situation might have changed this much after the very bad times we had for those eight years.” He was referring to the tumultuous two terms of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who succeeded his brother.

Yet the revolutionary deep state remains ubiquitous. It continues to devour its own élites. Former President Khatami can’t appear at public events. He is not allowed to travel, and the Iranian media are not allowed to quote him. Former Prime Minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi, who led Iran during

the eight-year war with Iraq, and the former speaker of parliament Mehdi Karroubi, a cleric, have been under house arrest since 2011. Both ran for President in 2009, losing to Ahmadinejad. They were labelled “seditionists” for alleging election fraud. Two of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani’s children have been jailed. His daughter, a former member of parliament who served on Iran’s Olympic Committee, was convicted, in 2012, of “spreading propaganda against the regime.” His son, a businessman, was sentenced in June to ten years for security offenses and corruption.

No administration has been immune. Two of Ahmadinejad’s vice-presidents were charged this year with crimes, one with embezzlement and money laundering.

“Famous politicians are under siege,” Khatami said. “All of us in the Islamic Iran Participation Front have files open in the judiciary. There are no charges—yet. But the file is open. And every week we go to the judiciary for questioning and to be asked different things. It’s to pressure us.”

The “principlists”—revolutionary purists elected to public office, or serving invisibly in the judiciary and the intelligence services—can be even more ruthless with ordinary Iranians. Last month, the U.S. State Department, in its annual Human Rights Report, cited Iran for, among other things, politically motivated repression; disappearances; “cruel, inhuman, or degrading” punishments; arbitrary arrests; impunity for security forces; denial of fair public trials, which resulted in executions without due process; and the lack of an independent judiciary. Three Iranian-Americans, including Jason Rezaian, a Washington *Post* correspondent, are now detained in Tehran. A former F.B.I. agent disappeared after a trip to an Iranian island in 2007.

This fall, an election season kicks off. The poll—for parliament and the Assembly of Experts—is due in February. It could alter the internal balance of power. Hard-liners have had a tight hold on all three branches of government since President Khatami’s reform era ended, in 2005. Hassan Rouhani’s election to the Presidency, in

2013, began to swing politics back to the center. Now a second branch is up for grabs. In a May poll, half the Iranians surveyed said that they preferred candidates who support Rouhani. Only a quarter favored his critics. “If there’s a nuclear deal, twenty to twenty-five per cent of people’s votes will go to candidates who favor the Rouhani government,” Hamid Reza Taraghi, of the hard-line Islamic Coalition Party, told me.

The election for the Assembly of Experts, a council of eighty-six theologians, is equally important. The assembly selects (and, in theory, can oust) the Supreme Leader, and is widely expected to pick Khamenei’s successor, shaping the next political era—and its limits.

“The original generation of revolutionaries will disappear in the next ten years,” Saeed Laylaz, an economist and a former adviser to President Khatami, said. Laylaz, who was imprisoned for a year after the 2009 election, added, “The new assembly will reflect the new generation.”

All of Khomeini’s grandchildren—there are fifteen—back reformers, Eshraghi said. Half a dozen of the great-grandchildren were educated in the West. Some of the grandchildren have considered running for parliament or the assembly. Eshraghi, who is the most outspoken, registered to run for parliament in 2004. But the Guardian Council, a supervisory body of theologians and jurists, disqualified Eshraghi and her husband, then an incumbent, along with more than two thousand other reformist candidates. In 2010, Khatami’s Islamic Iran Participation Front was banned altogether. A loose coalition of reformers, moderates, and centrists hopes to flood the field with candidates, so that even if they are disqualified in large numbers many of them can still compete.

“The famous names will not appear in the next election—especially the ones hard-liners accuse of trying to change the regime,” Khatami told me. He, too, has been banned from leaving the country. He found out last September, when he showed up at Tehran’s airport, named after his wife’s grandfather, for a flight to Istanbul. A nephrologist by training, he was scheduled to deliver a paper on kidney trans-

plants. “My passport was taken, without any previous notice,” he told me. “This is ordinary in Iran.”

One evening, I went to Tehran’s Honar (Art) Hall to see a performance of “Huckleberry Finn.” The lobby was filled with boisterous kids playing tag, eating popcorn, and buying toys at a concession stand. The girls were in bright dresses and shorts. Hijab, or modest Islamic garb, is not required until puberty. A poster, in Farsi and English, featured Huck in a straw hat and suspenders.

Backstage, the lead actor was in a chair getting freckles. “It’s not the whole story from Mark Twain,” Ehsan Majidi, the play’s director, told me. The Iranians wanted their own version—or thought they could do better than Twain. A local playwright had added plot twists and new characters.

After decades of living in a pariah nation, Iranians seem to crave normalcy—but on their own terms. Figuring out their relationship with the outside world is a big part of the transition. They have tried repeatedly and failed.

America, particularly, haunts Iran. One of the world’s first great powers—the Persian Empire spanned three continents—it is both infatuated with and infuriated by the current superpower. Khomeini preached the dangers of *gharbzadegi*, which translates as “West-toxication” or “West-struckness,” in music, theatre, movies, art, and society. “Iran has been hurt more by Westernized intellectuals than by any other group of men,” he said.

The hostile rhetoric hasn’t changed. At Friday prayers, as on previous visits, I heard thousands chanting “Death to America.” This year, twenty times.

But America has crept back in, shaping everything from Iran’s self-perception to its cultural appetites and fast-food cravings. Last year, I attended a musical at Tehran’s Opera House which included hits by Frank Sinatra and Bob Dylan, and pictures flashing in the background of Ray Charles, Simon and Garfunkel, and Neil Diamond. This year, I went to one of the more than a dozen franchises of Pizza Hot, which ripped off Pizza Hut’s trademark logo, brown boxes, and slogans, in English: “Share a Slice of Hope.” I also stopped

at Mash Donald's, a burger joint adorned by a faux Ronald McDonald; the staff's uniforms and caps bore the golden arches. (Mash is short for Mashhadi—someone who is from the holy city of Mashhad or has made the pilgrimage there.)

After the revolution, the Shah's art collection—which included works by Lichtenstein, Pollock, Warhol, de Kooning, Cassatt, and Calder—was considered sacrilegious and packed away. Many of them are being shown again, at the Museum of Contemporary Art. This spring, Tehran displayed paintings by Sargent, Rothko, Hopper, and other Americans on billboards promoting art: "A gallery as big as a city."

Mojtaba Mousavi, then the manager of urban art for Tehran's municipal council, told me, "The selection of works was totally artistic." Mousavi and I met in the elegant building where Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin stayed during the 1943 Tehran conference, when they plotted strategy against Germany and Japan.

Iran pines for that place of pride in the world again. Before the nuclear deal was announced, its standing had never been lower. A Pew Research Center poll reported in June that the view of the Islamic Republic was "mostly negative worldwide," and that there had been a "precipitous" decline in its popularity even in the Muslim world.

Iran's public clearly wants reentry. A recent poll found that fifty-seven per cent favored a nuclear deal. Only fifteen per cent opposed one. Three-quarters also supported more talks between Tehran and Washington, more educational and cultural exchanges with the United States, and much more trade.

"Death to America"? This is politics and not related to people's thinking," Elnaz Mobahat, the owner of Manhattan Grill, one of Tehran's chic new restaurants, told me. The place is adorned with American kitsch. One wall features photographs of sports stars, including Tiger Woods. "There are fourteen million people in greater Tehran, and maybe one hundred thousand attend Friday prayers," she said. "Most people say we should talk to the Americans and solve our differences. We can both benefit. There are many investment opportunities in the oil and

food industries." She pointed to the ketchup bottles on every table. "Look, we use Heinz!"

The Iran deal, announced on July 14th, capped a dozen years of secret overtures, false starts, clandestine meetings, and unpublished correspondence between Washington and Tehran. Despite an eventual rapport between U.S. and Iranian envoys, the talks nearly collapsed at least five times in the final nine months. There were many quarrelsome late-night sessions.

"The Americans are much better carpet merchants than any Iranian could dream of!" the Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, told me, during a troubled period in the final weeks.

The Iranians, a senior State Department official at the negotiations said, "are quite good at trying to get you to pay for what you got—twice."

Years earlier, Secretary of State John Kerry and Zarif had both played pivotal roles in getting the process started, through back channels: in 2003, as Iran's U.N. Ambassador, Zarif orchestrated a secret overture, nicknamed "the grand bargain." It went nowhere, but the ini-

tiative marked him in Washington as a potential interlocutor. In late 2011, Kerry, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made an unannounced trip to explore an offer by the Sultan of Oman to host covert diplomacy. That led to five secret rounds of lower-level U.S.-Iran talks, in Muscat, in 2013.

The most serious diplomacy since Washington severed relations with Tehran, in 1980, began shortly after Kerry and Zarif were appointed as their nations' top diplomats. Their first meeting, in September, 2013, was supposed to be a handshake and an exchange of pleasantries in a United Nations hallway. The idea was to "get out without causing any incidents and build from there," a Kerry aide recounted. But, at the last minute, Kerry decided to pull Zarif into an empty office, near the Security Council chamber, for a substantive conversation.

"Kerry's whole approach to diplomacy writ large is premised on the belief that personal relationships matter, because they enable you to get things done, even in very difficult situations," the aide said. "It was Kerry's belief that this was going to be a relationship that would really matter." Zarif was willing. The two men



"So leaving it with a broker didn't do any good at all?"

talked, alone, for almost thirty minutes.

It got much harder over time. The world's five other major powers—Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia—were technically equal players. But the United States increasingly took the lead in one-on-one meetings with the Iranians. More than a year after that first encounter, the chasm on core issues was still deep, despite an interim Joint Plan of Action, a confidence-building step that curtailed Iran's nuclear program in exchange for modest sanctions relief. It did not address long-term limits or rewards.

As the original deadline for a final deal loomed, last November, Kerry and Zarif met in Oman. The senior State Department official described the meeting as “extremely contentious.”

Kerry's aide said, “Both sides left thinking that we had just spent a lot of hours and a lot of time under very tense conditions and in very tense conversations that made little progress.” A deal looked doubtful. A few days later, the six powers agreed to extend the deadline until June 30th.

In February and again in March, Kerry was on the verge of backing away from the conversations entirely, U.S. officials told me. On February 21st, as Kerry was scheduled to fly from London to Geneva, Wendy Sherman, the Under-Secretary of State and chief nuclear negotiator, called him to say, “We are nowhere.” Iran was backtracking. “I really don't think you can come under these circumstances,” she said. Kerry instructed her to tell the Iranians that he would skip Geneva and fly home. The next morning, Iran was more forthcoming, and Kerry subsequently flew to Switzerland.

On March 27th, in Lausanne, tempers flared three nights before the deadline of a so-called Framework to define what each side would accept in a final deal. At the last minute, negotiating with the Americans, Iran took an important matter off the table. The five other major powers were supposed to show up within a day, but there was so much left unresolved that Kerry decided he might have to abort. He arranged to go to Zarif's suite. At 10 P.M., they met alone. Kerry's style is to coax rather than

threaten. But this time, two U.S. officials told me, Kerry was blunt. He told Zarif that unless there was progress the sessions were “basically done.” The next day, the issue was back on the table. Six days later, the major powers and Iran announced the outlines of a potential agreement.

“There were moments when you just had to push through,” Kerry's aide said. The most confrontational exchange took place on May 30th. The talks were “brutal, just brutal,” the State Department official recalled. According to Kerry's aide, “It was a lot of the two sides banging their heads against each other.” At one point, Zarif got up, walked around the room, and announced, “I have to leave.” He then sat on a chair against a

wall and put his head in his hands. Kerry, known for being unflappable, lost it, too. Toward the end of six difficult hours, he slammed his hand down on the conference table so hard that his pen flew across the table and hit one of the Iranians. “It stunned everyone, because it was so out of character,” the State Department official said.

Both sides left Geneva feeling deeply pessimistic. The next day, Kerry vented his frustration by taking a vigorous ride from Geneva into France on his racing bike, which he often brings on trips. As he was starting up the challenging Col de la Colombière, he rode into a curb and flew off the bike. His right femur was badly broken, and he had to be medevaced to Boston for surgery. After the news broke, one of the first e-mails he received was from Zarif, wishing him well.

The final deadline was supposed to be June 30th. The negotiating teams worked throughout June to get the talks back on track. Kerry and Zarif returned to Vienna for the final round on June 28th, two days before the deadline. They missed it. The major powers had to extend it three times. Ministers from other countries flew in and out of Vienna as the U.S. and Iranian teams debated their differences.

The diplomacy was supposed to be transactional. But at moments it was

transformational, for two countries at odds about so much else. For twenty months, the Americans and the Iranians ate separately, often in small, adjacent dining areas. “At a certain point, it just started to feel strange that they had never actually shared a meal together,” Kerry's aide said. Zarif invited Kerry and his team to lunch on July 4th in the Iranians' dining room, where he had ordered Persian food.

“It was ten times better than the food we ate on our side of the house,” the aide told me. “It was a moment where it was clear—we knew it, sort of, without remarking on it—that these relationships had really developed over time.” Kerry and Zarif commiserated about pressures at home. Kerry mentioned members of Congress who were complaining that local political ads already opposed any deal with Iran. Zarif told Kerry about an Iranian newspaper warning that he shouldn't come home if he compromised too much with the Americans.

The chasm was still deep. “Even when we can be, you know, just conversational with each other, there can come a moment in the middle of that—I would say them, more—when we revert back to form,” the State Department official said. “It can all of a sudden come out of the blue, when I think they can realize they've gotten too familiar.”

The next meltdown was on July 5th. The Iranians regularly griped about the indignity of international sanctions tarnishing a historic civilization and causing unnecessary suffering. During one long-winded tirade by Zarif, Kerry cut him off: “You know, you're not the only nation with pride.” Tensions increased that afternoon. When Kerry and Zarif started shouting at each other, a Kerry staffer slipped in to say that they could be heard down the corridors of the Palais Coburg.

The next night, with another deadline imminent, Kerry offered Zarif a package deal, to get beyond the interminable issue-by-issue squabbles. In a meeting with the major powers, Iran accused them of pulling back from agreed terms. At one point, Zarif shouted, “Never threaten an Iranian!” (When news of the flap spread, #neverthreatenaniranian quickly became a popular Twitter hashtag.)

“Or a Russian!” Sergey Lavrov, the



Russian Foreign Minister, said, in an attempt to break the tension. Subsequent reporting implied that Russia sided with Iran, a long-standing ally. In fact, the Americans claimed, Lavrov regularly played a constructive role in calming the emotional Zarif.

The U.S. and Iran remained so far apart that Kerry told Zarif and the other foreign ministers that he was prepared to leave the next day. He would be available by phone if Zarif wanted to negotiate seriously. "A lot of us felt, at that point, like we were in real trouble," Kerry's aide said. The next day, Zarif brought a point-by-point response to the proposal.

"It's such a complex set of relationships," the State Department official said. "We know each other. All of the mistrust that has been there for these decades remains. It's not gone. It's incredibly present all the time. But it fights against the fact that we've spent two years getting to know each other."

Over the next week, negotiations sometimes drifted, as the parties nibbled away at differences. The terms to limit Iran's nuclear program were wrapped up first. The most sensitive issues often had a link to Iran's military, especially the powerful Revolutionary Guards. The final differences were sorted out in a meeting, shortly before midnight, on July 13th, with Kerry, Zarif, and Federica Mogherini, of the European Union. "They basically kicked everybody out who wasn't a minister and figured out the end," Kerry's aide said.

The next morning, Iran and the six major powers met to formally confirm the terms. The final statement read, "With courage, political will, mutual respect, and leadership, we delivered on what the world was hoping for: a shared commitment to peace and to join hands in order to make our world safer."

Afterward, each minister made remarks about the collaboration. Kerry, who spoke last, recalled going off to war as a young man, the traumatic experience of Vietnam, and his commitment, when he returned, to end that war. The diplomacy with Iran, he told his peers, was one time that he could prevent the horrors of war.

At the end of Kerry's comments, his eyes welled up, his aide said. Others

teared up, too, including the Iranians. Then everyone applauded.

Zarif went off to make a brief announcement with Mogherini, while Kerry watched, on an iPad, President Obama's remarks from the White House about the potentially historic deal. When Zarif finished, he walked backstage and patted Kerry on the shoulder. They shook hands, the aide recounted. "And that's how he said goodbye."

As the negotiations played out, I toured the old U.S. Embassy in Tehran. A boxy red brick building, it resembles a mid-twentieth-century American public school. American diplomats nicknamed it Henderson High, for Loy Henderson, the Ambassador who lived there in the early fifties. Henderson helped orchestrate Operation Ajax, the 1953 C.I.A. coup that ousted the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he nationalized the oil industry, dominated by Western interests. The C.I.A. and British intelligence then restored the Shah, who had fled the country, to the throne. Mossadegh was imprisoned; his foreign minister was executed.

A quarter-century later, students seized the American compound when the United States took in the ailing former Shah for medical treatment. Two ringleaders told me they believed that Washington was plotting, again, to restore the monarchy. It was supposed to be a brief protest—three to five days. Then Ayatollah Khomeini endorsed the takeover on national radio. Fifty-two American citizens were held captive for fourteen months, effectively ending the Presidency of Jimmy Carter. I stood at the foot of the plane that flew the hostages to freedom, in Algiers, in 1981.

The embassy building is now a museum. The rooms used for spycraft are particularly well preserved: cryptology and encoding machines, passport-forgery equipment, secret passageways, and shredders all look as if they were still in use and diplomats had just gone for a coffee break. Three mannequins with bad wigs are seated around a table in the insulated "glassy room," once used for secret conversations.

The embassy sits in a compound supervised by the Organization of Student

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Basij. The Basij, a paramilitary arm of the Revolutionary Guards, helps enforce revolutionary order, often ruthlessly. Other buildings in the compound are used as offices, including one for the group's news service. Next to the chancery the Basij has erected a cupola of aqua tiles above five black stone markers, which bear the names of hostage-takers who later died in the war with Iraq.

Under the new agreement, the U.N. nuclear watchdog will monitor Iran's facilities. But the United States will be the main enforcer in the event of cheating, breaching, smuggling, or double-dealing. The options range from "snapback" sanctions to war. The question is how much the painful past will affect the future of a deal. Decades of verification lie ahead.

I asked my guide, a thirty-eight-year-old docent named Mohammad Reza Shoghi, about the diplomacy with the United States. He replied, "President Obama and his wife gave us greetings at Nowruz"—the Persian New Year—"but then he said all options, including military force, were still on the table. Which did he mean? Which should we trust?"

Celebrations erupted across Tehran after the announcement of the nuclear deal, including one at the Water and Fire Park. The deal, if it gets past Congress and Iran's parliament, would be the most significant nonproliferation agreement in decades. Diplomacy failed to prevent the four most recent members of the nuclear club—Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea—from producing a bomb. None are members of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. (Iran is.) Islamabad is now estimated, by Ploughshares Fund, to have a hundred and twenty nuclear bombs; New Delhi a hundred and ten; Jerusalem eighty; Pyongyang around ten. Nine countries, altogether, have almost sixteen thousand nuclear weapons—most of them made by the major powers at the Iran talks.

The number of bombs worldwide has actually declined since the peak of proliferation, in the eighties, thanks to other agreements. So the Iran deal is important for global trends, too. The Obama Administration is calculating

that it could help to check a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

The White House claims that, with a deal, future Presidents will be better off even when the various provisions expire. "The breakout time"—the time required for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon—"in 2025 and for some years after will be longer than it is today," a senior Administration official told me. "By then, we'll know a lot more about what Iran is doing. The U.S. will be in a better position, owing to the scrutiny and visibility of Iran's program. And inspections are set up forever." Plus, he added, "our military capabilities will be much enhanced in ten or fifteen years if Iran goes for the bomb."

Over time, however, the deal may be vulnerable to distractions, regional sideshows, and failure—as a result of issues that have nothing to do with the bomb. A major hurdle throughout the diplomacy was disentangling the nuclear dispute from other flashpoints. The United States and the Islamic Republic have divergent political tenets, world views, and alliances. Those differences will linger.

The deal is inextricably enmeshed in Middle East tensions. The State Department's annual terrorism survey, released last month, chronicled Tehran's increased aid to Iraq's militias, the Assad regime in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Gaza, along with "subtle efforts at growing influence elsewhere, including in Africa, Asia, and, to a lesser extent, Latin America." Tehran provided a billion dollars in credit to Damascus this month to ease the economic strains of war, on top of more than three billion in credit in 2013. Israel has repeatedly vowed to take unilateral military action if its interests are threatened.

The deal is also embroiled in disputes between Islam's Sunni majority and its Shiite minority. The Middle East is riven by sectarian wars—most notably in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen—that threaten to reconfigure its map. Each of those wars pits allies of Saudi Arabia, the Sunni guardian of Islam's holiest sites, against Iran, the world's largest Shiite power. In the final weeks of diplomacy, the foreign minister of an Arab country told me, earnestly, that he believed Iran was intent on taking over Mecca.

Iran has the biggest military in the Gulf (twelfth worldwide), vast petroleum resources, and a consumer-goods-hungry population larger than its seven Gulf neighbors combined. Arab sheikhdoms are nervous that a deal will begin realigning U.S. interests with those of their Persian rival. Iran had been a pillar of U.S. policy until the revolution and the hostage crisis. After the rupture, Washington intensified its ties with Saudi Arabia, a desert sheikhdom that rose to prominence after the 1973 oil-price wars, and with Egypt after it concluded the 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Arabs fear that those alliances are at stake. The Persians could make a comeback. The deal could shift the geostrategic balance of power in the Middle East.

American negotiators were keenly aware of the pitfalls. Throughout the diplomacy, the Defense Department continued contingency planning. It tracked Iranian ships attempting to send aid to Houthi rebels in Yemen. It announced new aid to rebel militias fighting in Syria. It also amassed bunker-buster bombs, the deadliest device in the U.S. arsenal short of an atomic weapon. The bomb's formal name is Massive Ordnance Penetrator, or MOP, in Pentagonese. It can weigh up to fifteen tons; it has never been used in combat. The concept originated during the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan's impenetrable caves. MOPs can penetrate underground tunnels, bunkers, and plants, such as the Fordo enrichment facility, under a mountain near the Iranian holy city of Qom.

"We will always have military options," General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during the final days of diplomacy. "And a massive ordnance penetrator is one of them." A new bomb to take out a future Iranian bomb.

"Everyone who believes that overnight this relationship is going to change is naïve as hell," the senior State Department official told me. "It's not. It's just too deep—particularly among Iranian government officials, many of whom were part of the revolution. So there may be a generational shift that has to take place everywhere. It's going to take time. It's going to take a lot of time." ♦

MITT ROMNEY'S SLUMBER-PARTY DIARY

BY PAUL RUDNICK

Mitt Romney is having a slumber party this weekend at his New Hampshire compound with some very interesting guests: Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey and Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, along with their families.

—*The Times*.

I decided to ask the Republican Presidential hopefuls Chris and Marco to sleep over because I wanted to get to know them and offer some tips. Because folks are always saying to me, “Mitt, you almost became President, but not really. What happened?” Plus, I thought it might be a heckuva lot of fun to stay up late and raid the fridge and loosen our neckties. Who knows? By the end of the night, we might all have frosted bangs!

I knew that Chris might be sensitive about his weight, and I didn’t want Marco to be terrified in the bottom bunk, so I suggested that we curl up together on the living-room floor in sleeping bags, or, in Chris’s case, in two sleeping bags and the all-weather cover for one of my Jet Skis. I provided matching nightshirts with a little-elephant pattern. I didn’t want to offend Chris, so I reminded him that elephants are the traditional symbol for the G.O.P. “You should take advantage of that!” I told him. “And, Marco, I know you’re Cuban, so maybe your campaign symbol could be an elephant smoking an expensive cigar!”

My wife, Ann, brought us some steaming mugs of hot cocoa and a tray of those special marshmallow-and-graham-cracker treats that we call S’Mormons. “I hope you guys don’t get overexcited,” Ann warned. “That’s what almost happened with Mitt on the night of the last election, until he nodded off around 9:30 P.M. and I finally had to shake him and say, ‘Sweetheart, it’s over. I won the bet.’” Once Ann was gone, I turned to my guests and asked, “So, what should we do first? I have a bottle of Grecian Formula, and I nabbed a disk of that great new flick about Republican politics!”

“Jurassic World?” Marco asked.

“No, silly,” I replied. “I think it’s called ‘Magic Mike XXL.’ It’s about the place where Mike Huckabee gets his blazers.”

“I don’t want to watch a movie,” Chris said. “Let’s talk about boys.”

“I hate that Scott Walker,” Marco said. “I think he’s snooty just because he busted all those unions. I mean, what kind of unions do they have in Wisconsin, anyway? Cows and chickens?”



“You know who I hate?” Chris said. “Rand Paul. I mean, get a haircut, Mr. Cabbage Patch doll. And a coherent foreign policy!”

“And a chance in hell,” Marco said. “Oops! Sorry, Mitt! I know you don’t like rough language!”

“I’m down with it,” I told him. “As long as it’s just us guys. Us *darned* guys!”

That’s when I started tickling Marco, who started tickling Chris, and that’s how the floor lamp got broken.

“O.K.,” Chris said. “If you were a girl and you had to sleep with any Republican candidate, who would you pick?”

“Past or present? Dead or alive?” I asked.

“Are we talking about John McCain?” Marco asked.

“No! I’m talking about me!” I said.

“You’re our host,” Chris said. “So you’re out of the running. Although, Mitt, I just have to say it—in a *heartbeat*.”

“You’re such a handsome man,”

Marco added. “I especially like the way that your hair and your face are the same color.”

I tried not to preen, but I did shoot the guys a profile, which caused a pretty major pillow fight and plenty of pinching and giggling.

“Pretend this is Hillary,” Chris said, shoving Marco’s face into a bolster.

“*Mwah, mwah, mwah*,” Marco said, smooching the cushion. “I’m a Democrat, and I lo-o-ove you so-o-o much. Just because you’re a wo-o-o-o-man.”

“Do you remember George Bush in that leather bomber jacket?” Marco said, sighing. Chris and I sighed, too, although hearing the name Bush was a buzzkill.

“Mitt, do you think that Jeb has a shot?” Chris asked. “I mean, sure, he’s lost some weight, but I’ve lost way more. I’ve lost, like, three Bush grandchildren.”

“Well, I do like his new campaign strategy,” I said. “To just use his first name with an exclamation point. Whenever I see his posters, with ‘JEB!’ on them, I think that Barbara Bush is scolding him.”

“Marco, I admire you as a candidate,” Chris said. “Even with all of your suspicious business deals and the fact that everyone in Cuba hates you.”

“And, Chris,” Marco said, “I’m a big fan of yours, even if while you were announcing your candidacy thousands of your New Jersey constituents were rallying right outside the building, denouncing you.”

“Fellas,” I said, “there’s only one way to settle this, and it’s not the New Hampshire primary. You’re my top two choices, and that’s why I’ve invited you here—for a pants-off dance-off.”

I put one of my son Tag’s mixtapes into the cassette player, and some sort of disco-rap boogie started playing. Chris stood up, and really started to move. “Yeah, baby!” he yelled. “This jelly is going straight to Pennsylvania Avenue!”

Marco did some impressive salsa shimmying, calling out, “This is why I’m getting the Latino vote, the African-Americans, and maybe some of the gays! Talk to the hips, bitches!”

I sat on the sofa sipping my cocoa, which is considered a pretty outlaw Mormon dance move.

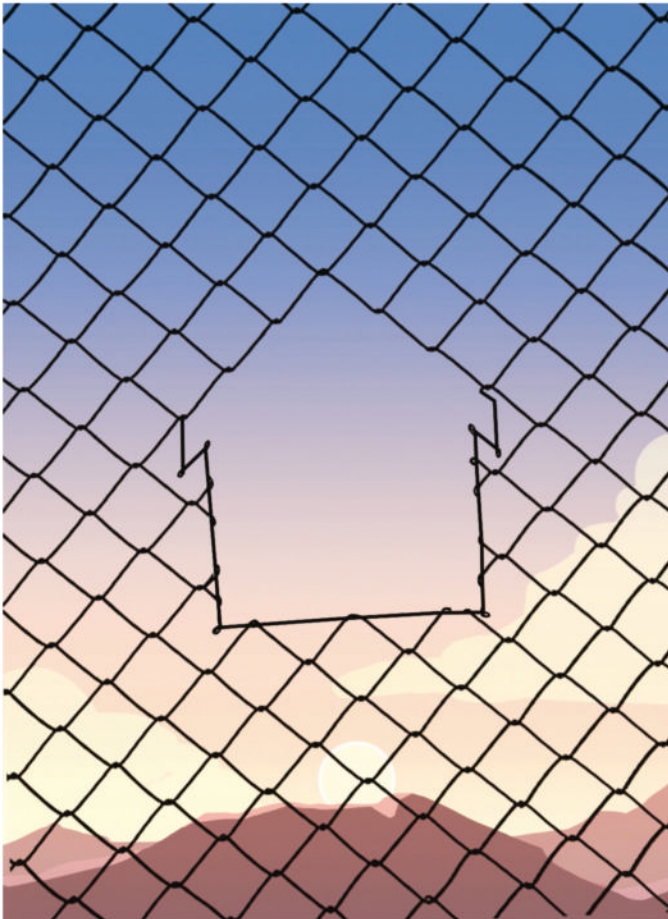
“Boys!” Ann said, poking her head into the room and clapping her hands briskly. “Lights out!” ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

AMERICAN LIMBO

While politicians block reform, what is happening to immigrant families?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN



Olga Flores, the seventh of eleven siblings, was born in a small town in the central Mexican state of Hidalgo thirty-nine years ago. “There was no work,” she told me recently. “The only thing for a woman to do was to get married, have children, and cook for her whole life.” A job in a nearby city would have required a high-school certificate, but her education ended in middle school. So in January of 1998, when she was twenty-one, Flores arranged to come to the United States illegally. She took her first trip on an airplane, to Sonoyta, a town on the Arizona border.

One of her brothers had immigrated

to Columbus, Ohio, a few years earlier, and he helped her make arrangements to cross into the U.S. “There were about a dozen of us,” she recalled. “It was a small truck, with the seats taken out. They told us to lie down in the back, head to feet, feet to head, so there would be room for everyone.” They drove for about three hours, stopped at a mobile home in the desert, then continued on to Phoenix. A friend had set up another ride, which would take them across the country, to Ohio. “It was so cold, and I didn’t have a jacket,” Flores said. “We slept in the car and ate at McDonald’s. It was the first burger I ever had. It was very tasty.” When she reached Colum-

bus, she paid her brother a thousand dollars, which he turned over to the guides, or coyotes, who had made the trip possible.

Eventually, Flores got a job as a cashier at a Wendy’s. “It was really hard for me, because I couldn’t tell what the Americans wanted,” she said. “When I learned more English, I started taking orders.” She soon met David Flores, who was also in the United States illegally. They got married and had twin boys, David and Luis, in 2000, and a third son, Iker, four years ago. “David has always been a really good person and a really good father,” Flores said. “In Mexico, we are used to men not washing dishes and not doing anything around the house, and he is the opposite.” Today, David operates a taco truck, which he stations in a parking lot near the small duplex apartment where the family lives, just outside Columbus. David is in the truck from 11 A.M. to 9 P.M. on weekdays, and on Sundays he works at McDonald’s. When Olga is not caring for the children, she is in her kitchen, preparing the rice, intestines, and tongue for the truck.

Like many people who have arrived illegally from Mexico, Flores has built a productive life here. She is a longtime resident, has no criminal record, and is the parent of American citizens. Through much of Barack Obama’s Presidency, there was a political near-consensus regarding the need to address the status of immigrants like Flores. Under the immigration-reform law passed by the Senate in 2013, she would have had a path to become a citizen; under the executive actions announced by President Obama in 2014, she could have obtained work papers and a driver’s license. But the House failed to vote on the Senate’s immigration bill, and a federal court in Texas has placed Obama’s initiative on hold.

The result is a comprehensive breakdown in public policy. During the Obama Administration, which purports to be dedicated to easing the plight of residents like her, Flores and her peers have faced greater threats of deportation than at any time in decades. Republicans, for their part, have ended their brief experiment, reflected in the Senate bill, in bipartisanship on immigration. The Party is now close to united in opposition to any initiative that might offer Flores and

Olga Flores’s children are U.S. citizens, but she remains at risk of being deported.

others the chance to become American citizens. Flores, and the roughly eleven million people in similar situations, have no choice but to wait and worry.

Donald Trump, in his speech announcing his candidacy for the Republican Presidential nomination, in June, addressed the issue of illegal immigration from Mexico. "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best," he said. "They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." (The crime rate among first-generation immigrants is significantly lower than that of the general population, according to Bianca Bersani, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.) Trump's remarks prompted several of his business partners, including Univision and Macy's, to sever their ties with him, but the comments have led to relatively little examination of the lives of the immigrants themselves.

For many years, Flores's legal status existed for her as a kind of background anxiety, affecting her life in modest ways. Because traffic stops by the police could lead to deportation, she drove the family car as little as possible, and never out of state. "Here, at least, we know the city, we know the streets, we know which are one-way or two-way," she said. "If we go somewhere else, we are scared that we don't know the area." Now her situation has taken on a new urgency. Early this year, her son Iker had a series of infections that proved resistant to treatment. "The first two times that I took him to the doctor, they said it was an ear infection and then a throat infection, and they did not draw blood. On the fourteenth of February, we noticed that he had some red dots on his ears. That's when they drew blood. Four days later, they told me he had cancer of the blood"—acute lymphocytic leukemia. Iker has begun a course of chemotherapy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, in Columbus, which is likely to take three or four years.

"Before I had children, I thought about what if the police would pick me up—I would just leave, go back to Mexico, even though I haven't been there in a long time," Flores told me. "Now that

my child is sick, I really do worry. Medicine back home is very different. When you go to the doctor, you have to take money before things happen. He has a higher probability of surviving in the United States. Now we *have* to stay."

When I visited the Floreses' apartment, Olga demonstrated a trick with sour cream that she had learned during a stint working at Chipotle. She emptied a five-pound jar into a metal bowl, then whipped it with a wooden spoon. "If you whip it first, it comes out of the squirt bottles easier," she said. The family's duplex is in a town-house development. There are two refrigerators squeezed into the kitchen, to accommodate the restaurant-size quantities of food that the family must buy and prepare every week for the taco truck. Iker sat on the sofa watching cartoons on a big-screen television. He's an outgoing kid, who moves seamlessly between English and Spanish, but he has been having a tough time with the chemotherapy. He's weak and very thin, and has trouble keeping food down. Lately, he has been struggling to walk up the stairs to his bedroom, so Olga is carrying him around more than she once did. His brothers help out, but at this moment they were at the truck, helping their father.

Shortly after Iker's cancer was diagnosed, Flores went to see Julie Nemecek, an immigration lawyer in Columbus, to ask about her options for establishing a more secure basis for remaining in the United States. Nemecek had handled many similar cases before. "Most of the people I hear from have been in Ohio for a long time, and the vast majority are undocumented, because they snuck across the border," she said. "They have made lives here. They have been in hiding, hoping that when they drive to work or take their kids to school they won't get stopped." Nemecek offers clients like Flores little reassurance. "Everything is in limbo, so people are uncertain, and they feel hopeless," she said.

When Barack Obama ran for the Presidency, he pledged to enact comprehensive immigration reform, but he didn't push the issue in his first two years in office, when Democrats had strong majorities in both houses of Congress. Instead, he made what became known as a "down payment" for a bipartisan im-

migration bill later in his Presidency.

"There was definitely in the Obama Administration an intention to do tough enforcement as a down payment for comprehensive immigration reform later," Marc Rosenblum, of the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, said. Rosenblum is the deputy director of the institute's U.S.-immigration-policy program. "The idea was to prove to Republicans that he could be trusted on enforcement, so that he could get a path to citizenship in return."

The first part of the down payment was to toughen enforcement at the Mexican border. Under Obama, a record number of agents are patrolling the border: nearly twenty thousand, roughly five times as many as there were two decades ago. In the light of this change, the Obama Administration has claimed that the number of illegal immigrants crossing the border has reached a forty-year low. (The faltering economy during Obama's first term, which made the United States a less promising destination, was certainly another important factor in the decline.)

The more controversial part of Obama's down payment involved immigrants who had already arrived and settled in the United States. The Administration greatly expanded a program known as Secure Communities, in which information was shared between Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the F.B.I. Whenever anyone was arrested and booked, his or her fingerprints would be sent to the F.B.I., as before, but now the information would also go to the immigration authorities. "It was a huge force multiplier," Rosenblum said. "The program was pitched as a tool to find serious criminals, but, at least initially, the vast majority of people were picked up for traffic violations and very minor offenses. A lot of these people ended up being deported." Julie Nemecek recalled, "Around 2010, the number of my Mexican clients increased, with enforcement getting really, really heavy because of Secure Communities. People were getting picked up left and right when their only offense was driving without a license or drunk driving." As a result of tougher enforcement, deportations soared under Obama. Since 2009, removals of illegal immigrants have averaged more than four hundred thousand per year, compared with an average of two hundred and fifty

thousand per year under George W. Bush.

Secure Communities had an enormous impact on the day-to-day lives of Latinos in the United States. “There are people who are not a safety threat who are snared into the deportation apparatus,” Clarissa Martínez, the deputy vice-president of the National Council of La Raza, a leading Hispanic-rights organization, told me. “Also, when you start deputizing local law enforcement to help apply immigration law, you are going to have abuses, and that’s what happened. People feel that regardless of whether you are first-, second-, third-generation American, the folks who are going to be stopped are going to be Latinos.” Rosenblum said, “Until the last decade or so, the chances were, if you made it past the border, you were not going to get deported, unless you were committing serious crimes. But, with the crackdown, the broader immigrant community felt under attack. They lived here, and suddenly they were unable to work, unable to drive.”

Still, the underlying theory was that Secure Communities would be the stick, and comprehensive immigration reform would be the carrot—and the goal appeared within reach after Obama was reelected, in 2012. The defeat of Mitt Romney brought Republicans to the realization that they had to broaden their

appeal to Hispanics, the fastest-growing group of potential voters in the nation. In March of 2013, Reince Priebus, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, released a report that said the Party “must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform.” In short order, many Republicans in the Senate, including such prominent figures as John McCain and Marco Rubio, did just that, and a bill that included a path to citizenship for people like Olga Flores passed by a vote of sixty-eight to thirty-two.

The battle over immigration reform presents a clash of fundamentally different visions of the role of the federal government. The President and his allies assert that their position is based on a combination of realism and compassion. They argue that it’s impossible to deport all of the country’s illegal immigrants. In addition, they say, it’s heartless to break up families who are long settled in the United States.

Opponents of reform, who are led by Jeff Sessions, a Republican senator from Alabama, believe that national security, along with the rule of law, compels a different approach. “If everyone who enters the country illegally can stay and become a citizen, that just encourages more people to come illegally,” Sessions

told me. “If people see that they have nothing to fear after they cross the border and settle here, then that creates an incentive for more people to come, and that’s wrong. If they are here illegally, they should be deported.” What’s more, he argues, a porous border invites criminals, including terrorists, to settle in the promised land of the United States.

Yet John Boehner, the Republican Speaker of the House, and Eric Cantor, the Majority Leader, described themselves as supporters of immigration reform, and it was clear after the 2012 election that the votes were there to pass it. “Boehner promised the President that he was going to bring a bill to the floor,” a former White House aide told me. “There’s always a significant House-versus-Senate rivalry, so the Senate bill itself was going to be a nonstarter in the House. But some sort of reform bill was sure to pass if it came to a vote.” Virtually all of the Democrats in the House, as well as some Republicans, supported comprehensive reform along the lines of the Senate bill, but immigration reform was anathema to the Tea Party. Boehner asked staff from the House leadership to come up with a proposal that modified the Senate bill without gutting it. The result was an outline of recommendations, but conservatives in the House persuaded Boehner to back away from them.

After the passage of the Senate bill, chances for any sort of reform bill in the House began to recede. The government shutdown, for two weeks in October of 2013, poisoned relations between the President and congressional Republicans. Then, on June 10, 2014, Cantor lost a primary to a poorly funded and largely unknown challenger, who focused his campaign on Cantor’s alleged softness on illegal immigration. The victor, David Brat, went on to win the seat. Republican support for reform suddenly vanished. As the former White House aide told me, “There was always this germ of hope, but then Eric Cantor lost his primary. There was probably a five-per-cent chance before that, and it went to zero.”

Olga Flores speaks English imperfectly, so some of our conversations were interpreted by Jessica Pantaleon Camacho, who works as an assistant in Julie Nemecek’s law office. Pantaleon

Under The Radar



Camacho was born in Mexico twenty years ago and brought to the U.S. illegally as a three-year-old. "When I started going to high school, I convinced myself that school was the only way I could get my family out of the situation," she told me. "I took all Advanced Placement classes starting in my sophomore year. I graduated near the top of my class." Her teachers wrote enthusiastic recommendations to colleges, and Pantaleon Camacho was accepted at several schools, with scholarship offers. "When I was about to graduate, we had to decide what school," she said. "That's when they told me that I needed a Social Security number. I wasn't able to provide it."

Pantaleon Camacho is among the "Dreamers," the term that has come to define the group of people who were brought illegally to the United States when they were children. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, known as the DREAM Act, was presented several years ago as a modest alternative to the round of comprehensive immigration reform that was stalled in Congress at the time. The law would provide a path to citizenship for people like Pantaleon Camacho, who had essentially lived their entire lives as Americans. It failed, and the President began taking a series of unilateral executive actions designed to ease the plight of the Dreamers. On June 15, 2012, the Obama Administration announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA. The program would give as many as 1.7 million people work authorization and a two-year reprieve from deportation, which was renewable for another two years. In most cases, this meant that the Dreamers were also eligible for driver's licenses and, in some states, for in-state tuition at state universities. Almost eight hundred thousand individuals applied for DACA coverage, and about eighty-four per cent of them were approved.

Pantaleon Camacho was one of them. "It has changed my life," she told me. "I have a Social Security number and a driver's license. I am able to drive without fear of being pulled over and being sent back to Mexico." Her job in the lawyer's office is on the books. She was admitted to Bowling Green, a state university in Ohio, but she is ineligible for any scholarship assistance, so she takes

classes at a local community college. "It all comes out of my own pocket," Pantaleon Camacho told me. Her situation is much improved but still tenuous: her DACA status expires roughly at the end of the Obama Administration, and no one knows what the next President will do with the program.

DACA did nothing to help families like the Floreses, in which the parents came to the U.S. as adults and the children were born here. By 2014, immigration activists began putting greater pressure on Obama to take executive action to help more families. "When Boehner pulled out of the process, that's when there was a total focus on the President, because the legislative door had been shut," Clarissa Martínez, of La Raza, said. The White House felt the heat. "There was a period in 2014 when the immigration activists gave up on Congress and said it's now on the President," the former White House aide said. "They started calling him *Deporter-in-Chief*. The President brought them all in. He said by criticizing him they were letting the Republicans off the hook. He said he needed more time. He said, 'I will do everything I can at the end of the summer.'" But Democratic Senate candidates in competitive races, like Kay Hagan, in North Carolina, implored the White House not to take any controversial steps on immigration before the midterm elections. Obama agreed; activists seethed; virtually all the Democratic candidates, including Hagan, lost anyway.

Finally, on November 20, 2014, just a few weeks after the elections, Obama launched his long-awaited series of executive actions on immigration. As the President explained in a rare prime-time address from the White House, the centerpiece was an initiative called Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, known as DAPA. This program, which would be run by the Department of Homeland Security, was aimed at the parents of American citizens who were themselves illegally in the country but had been law-abiding residents of the United States since 2010. Following a case-by-case review, they would receive an immigra-

tion status known as "deferred action," enabling them to apply for work permits and driver's licenses. DAPA was intended to cover about 3.6 million people, more than thirty per cent of the illegal immigrants in the United States. The D.H.S. made plans to hire as many as three thousand new employees, some of whom would work in Arlington, Virginia, in an eleven-story building that the government leased for \$7.8 million a year. (Also on November 20th, Obama expanded eligibility for the DACA program, and replaced Secure Communities with a program that targets serious criminals.) According to Obama's plan, the government would begin accepting applications for deferred action under DAPA in February, 2015.

"DAPA is of tremendous magnitude," Clarissa Martínez said. "It's what Americans want of the undocumented community—that they come forward, go through criminal-background checks, and those who are working do so legally. For the American public, it sounds practical and pragmatic to give people who have deep roots in the community and have good moral character a chance to get right with the law. The announcement of these programs was an incredible step forward and the biggest progress we've seen on the issue in two decades."

The Floreses pride themselves on using fresh, authentic ingredients for their food truck. Olga showed off a large maguey leaf, from a variety of agave, which David was about to cut up, toast, and use as a seasoning for the meat before he grilled it. "The best things," Olga said.

Olga Flores has not closely followed the twists and turns in immigration policy, but, like most immigrants, she was aware of DAPA and planned to take advantage of it. There is a cruel asymmetry to immigration law: the people with the most at stake have the most trouble understanding it. This is because, even for lawyers, immigration law is notoriously complicated. It's related to, but ultimately very different from, other criminal or civil litigation; immigration law has its own traditions and doctrines—and the rules often change. For civilians,



the morass is difficult to navigate, and for non-English-speaking immigrants the law can be nearly impenetrable. Still, everyone knew that Obama's November 20th directives were hugely significant. On the night of Obama's speech, many immigration-rights groups around the country held viewing parties to celebrate the news. Flores was hopeful, too. "We were very excited," she told me.

But two weeks after Obama's announcement Texas and sixteen other states sued the federal government to stop the DAPA program. Eight states joined later. The heart of the case against the Administration is the contention that Obama overstepped his authority in establishing the program. "The case isn't about any particular immigration policy; it's about the rule of law," Scott Keller, the Texas solicitor general, told me. "DAPA rewrites the immigration statutes, and the executive does not have unilateral authority to do that. Congress has not granted the executive the power to deem people who are unlawfully in the country to be eligible for work permits, Medicare, unemployment benefits, and access to international travel. Congress has done quite the opposite. The executive can't do it alone."

Obama Administration lawyers fired back from several directions. First, they argued that Texas and the other states lacked standing—that is, that they had no right to file the case in the first place, because DAPA imposed no obligations on the states. "The core of Texas's argument is that they will have to pay for driver's licenses for the beneficiaries of DAPA," an Administration official told me. "But that's not enough to get them standing. It's a very incidental expense, and they could raise their prices to cover it, anyway. States don't get to sue just because they don't like the policies of the federal government, and that's what this case is really about." The plaintiffs have argued that they have standing because DAPA will encourage illegal immigration, which would be an imposition on states. Yet fourteen states and the District of Columbia filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of DAPA, asserting that the program would actually help, not burden, individual states. "When immigrants are able to work legally—even for a limited time—their wages increase, they seek work compatible with their skill level, and they en-

hance their skills to obtain higher wages, all of which benefits State economies by increasing income and growing the tax base," the brief explains.

On the merits, too, Administration lawyers argued that the President was within his rights to extend these benefits to undocumented people. "This whole case is a matter of enforcement priorities," the official said. "We can deport four hundred thousand people a year, but we can't deport all eleven million undocumented people here, so the President has a right to establish his priorities for the limited time he is in office. And he's saying that he is not going to deport people with children and ties to the community who are willing to undergo a background check." George H. W. Bush had a similar program for a select group of immigrants, and it proceeded with little fanfare and no legal challenge.

Like the plaintiffs in many civil cases, the Texas solicitor general had wide latitude in choosing the court where he wanted to file the suit. Lawyers often do some judge-shopping if they think it will help them win their cases, and it was quickly evident that the Texas lawyers shopped wisely. Keller's predecessor brought the lawsuit in Brownsville, close to the Mexican border. The local federal judge assigned to the case, Andrew Hanen, had already shown a marked hostility toward President Obama's immigration policies. Hanen had been appointed to the district court in 2002 by George W. Bush, and, in earlier rulings, he had called the President's deportation policy "misguided" and asserted that it "endangers America."

According to the President's plan, the government was going to begin accepting applications for deferred action under DAPA on February 18th. Less than forty-eight hours before the program went into effect, Judge Hanen filed a hundred-and-twenty-three-page opinion issuing a preliminary injunction that put DAPA on hold. In the case known as *Texas v. United States*, he ruled that Texas and the other states did have standing to challenge the law, and then he ruled against the Administration on an esoteric but important matter. Hanen held that the Administration had failed to follow the correct procedures in putting DAPA into effect; he said that the Department of Homeland Security

should have given the public the chance to be heard in what's known as notice-and-comment rule-making before implementing the new policy. The opinion did not directly address the underlying legality of DAPA, but the judge offered clear hints that he was dubious about the program. DAPA "does not represent mere inadequacy; it is complete abdication," Hanen wrote. "The D.H.S. does have discretion in the manner in which it chooses to fulfill the expressed will of Congress. It cannot, however, enact a program whereby it not only ignores the dictates of Congress, but actively acts to thwart them."

In a further rebuff to the Administration, Judge Hanen issued a stay on DAPA covering the entire country, even though his jurisdiction covered only part of Texas. Administration lawyers rushed an appeal of Hanen's stay to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit—one of the most conservative circuits in the country. On May 26th, a panel of the appeals court ruled, two judges to one, that Hanen was correct to enjoin DAPA. Earlier this month, during a hearing before another three-judge panel, the same two judges maintained their skepticism about Obama's immigration initiative. Regardless of what the Fifth Circuit ultimately rules, the losing party will still have the right to appeal to the Supreme Court. As Jeff Sessions, Obama's chief adversary in Congress, put it, "The courts may take longer than the President will be in office." The Department of Homeland Security has put the plan to hire three thousand people to administer DAPA on indefinite hold.

It's always been a key part of the Administration's plan to establish DAPA before the end of Obama's term, making it difficult for any successor to withdraw a benefit that has already been granted. But by delaying his actions until after the 2014 midterms the President may have given his opponents, in Congress and in the courts, the time and the tools to unravel his most important work on immigration.

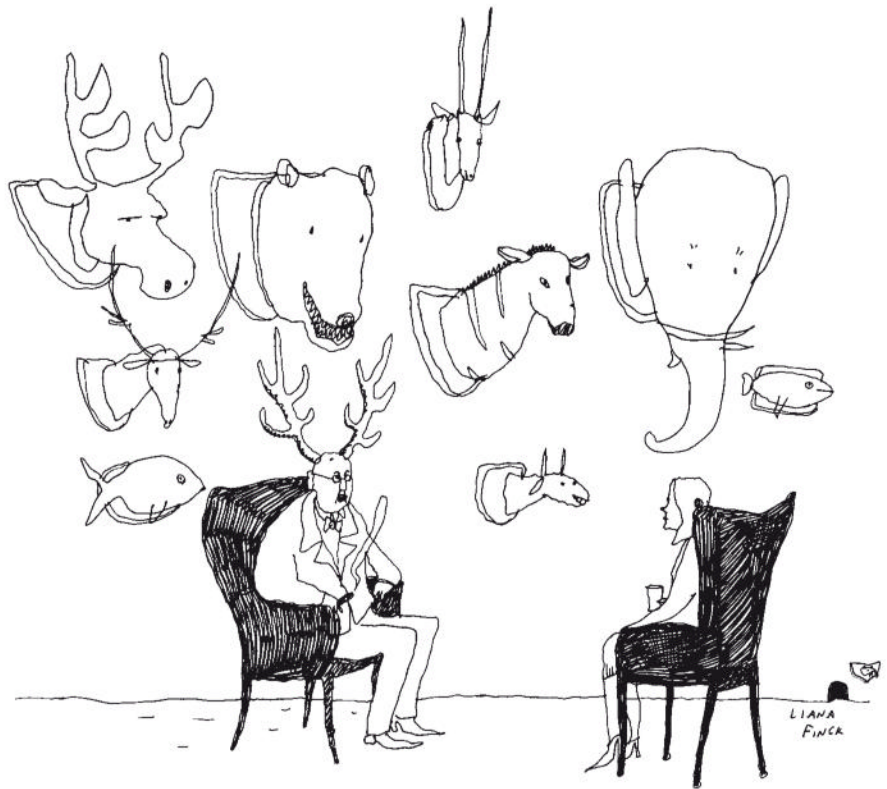
The oncology and hematology clinic of Nationwide Children's Hospital is a determinedly sunny place. The furniture in the waiting room is colorful, the pictures on the walls cheerful.

Entertainment options for the young patients abound. Iker Flores perched himself on an examination table and quickly lost himself in a video game. His prognosis is good; his cancer has a very high survival rate. Iker has become used to the chemo port affixed to his chest. But the treatment sessions, which last as long as twelve hours at a time, are gruelling. This visit was to check his blood to see if he was ready for a chemo session the next day. The doctors decided to put off treatment for a little while to allow Iker to regain some strength.

The strain on the family, financial and otherwise, is considerable. The Flores children have health insurance through a nonprofit company in Ohio called CareSource, and the hospital has not pressed them for additional payments. But Olga had to give up part-time work cleaning houses to take care of Iker. He had been attending a Head Start program when he became sick, but he's had to drop out. "The timing for DAPA was perfect for us," Olga told me. "Even a few days before he was diagnosed, he was going to school nine to two. Now he can't even go to school. I was helping my husband. Now I can't work."

At one point, immigration represented a kind of exception to the polarization that dominates contemporary politics in Washington. Both George W. Bush and Barack Obama pushed Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. And the Senate passed its bipartisan immigration bill only two years ago. But, as the Presidential campaign has heated up, the issue has come to split the parties in stark ways. "The experience under Obama and Bush has upped the ante on what we want to hear from candidates that are vying for the Presidency in 2016," Clarissa Martínez said. "Both Obama and Bush said they wanted to get it done, and their hearts may have been in the right place, but they both ran into trouble with Congress. That's why hearing that somebody believes in immigration reform is not good enough. We want to know what they will do on their own as President."

Trump's comments about immigrants from Mexico drew condemnation from many Republicans for his impolitic tone, but, in their substance, his views are widely shared within the Party. At various times, Jeb Bush, the former Flor-



"Well, I didn't have any more wall space, and I was also tired of being bald."

ida governor, Marco Rubio, the Florida senator, and Scott Walker, the Wisconsin governor, all supported versions of immigration reform that would allow people like Olga Flores to become citizens. All have tacked right. Bush has talked recently of a path to "legalized status" for undocumented aliens rather than a path to citizenship; he also said recently that he would repeal DACA and DAPA. Rubio has said that he now favors a piecemeal approach to immigration, rather than a comprehensive bill; and Walker recently said, "I don't believe in amnesty" for those who have entered the country illegally. Rubio and Walker have also denounced DACA and DAPA. The other Republican candidates have talked about immigration almost exclusively in terms of border enforcement. Ted Cruz, the Texas senator, recently asked a group of supporters to "imagine a President that finally, finally, finally secures the borders," and he criticized Obama's "lawlessness and the President's unconstitutional executive amnesty."

Hillary Clinton, in contrast, has staked

out a position to the left of President Obama. In an appearance in Las Vegas, in May, Clinton said, "We can't wait any longer for a path to full and equal citizenship." She said it was "beyond absurd" to think that all eleven million illegal immigrants in the country could be deported. And she said that she would expand DACA and DAPA. "If Congress continues to refuse to act, as President I would do everything possible under the law to go even further," she said, suggesting, for example, that she would extend protection to the parents of Dreamers.

For now, though, the only certainty for Olga Flores and others in similar situations is more uncertainty. If Clinton wins, and Congress remains in Republican hands, the new President will be reduced to attempting the same kind of piecemeal executive actions as Obama—if the courts even allow those to proceed. If a Republican wins, Flores's chances of deportation will rise. Either way, the issue will remain on the national agenda, even as the opportunity to come to any solution continues to recede. ♦

THE DOUBLE STING

A power struggle between Russia's rival security agencies.

BY JOSHUA YAFFA

The line for lawyers and family members to get into Lefortovo prison starts to form around five in the morning. The building, on a quiet street just east of Moscow's Third Ring Road, now officially belongs to the Ministry of Justice, but it's still informally known as the prison of the F.S.B., a successor agency to the K.G.B. Early on June 16, 2014, one of the prisoners awaiting visitors was Boris Kolesnikov, a general who had been the deputy head of the Interior Ministry's anticorruption department. Along with nearly a dozen other officers from his unit, he had been charged with entrapment and abuse of authority, running an "organized criminal organization" that illegally ensnared state bureaucrats in artificially provoked corruption schemes.

Kolesnikov's lawyer, Sergei Chizhikov, arrived around dawn and stood in line for several hours. At 9 A.M., guards began letting in a few people at a time. By eleven, Chizhikov was still waiting. Eventually, a guard told him that his client had been taken to another site, the headquarters of the Investigative Committee—the Russian equivalent of the F.B.I.—for questioning. "Look for him there," the guard said.

When Chizhikov finally made it to an interrogation room on the Investigative Committee's sixth floor, he found Kolesnikov seated at a table with an investigator and two guards. Kolesnikov, who was thirty-six, was clean-shaven and dressed in a blue tracksuit. He had the muscular frame of a cop, but a smooth, youthful face and puffy cheeks.

Six weeks earlier, on May 4th, Kolesnikov had suffered a dual fracture to his skull. Prison officials claimed that he had fallen off a stool while trying to wash the small window of his cell; his family and their lawyers feared that he had been beaten. Kolesnikov hadn't said much about his injury—he told Chizhikov and his other lawyers that he didn't remem-

ber what happened to him, and seemed wary of going into more detail. "He chose his words very carefully, answered questions slowly, always afraid he was being watched or recorded," Chizhikov recalled. "He wasn't very open in conversation. He thought whatever he might say would only bring him harm." After his head trauma, Kolesnikov became depressed and passive. At pretrial hearings in court, he was "inactive," Chizhikov said. "They brought him in, told him to sit there, and so he sat there. He wasn't trying to assert his rights. It was like he was indifferent to it all—O.K., something is happening, let it happen." Kolesnikov spent two weeks in various hospitals before being sent back to his cell, but he still experienced frequent bouts of debilitating nausea and had trouble standing, even for short periods.

When Chizhikov found him in the interrogation room, Kolesnikov seemed more invigorated than he had in recent weeks, but once they started talking he said he felt sick and asked to be taken back to Lefortovo—he didn't want to answer any questions from investigators. As they waited for a van from the prison service to return him to his cell, the chief investigator for Kolesnikov's case, a man named Sergei Novikov, entered the room. He asked if Kolesnikov would like to talk in private. This was unusual, and against protocol; Chizhikov said that he didn't recommend it but wouldn't stop his client if he wanted to. Novikov and Kolesnikov stepped into the corridor. "As far as I could understand, they had some kind of agreement that Novikov was supposed to show up so the two of them could talk," Chizhikov recalled.

A few minutes later, Novikov rushed back into the room. His face betrayed a sense of shock. "He jumped!" he said. Chizhikov didn't understand what he meant. Novikov made a diving motion with his hand and said that Kolesnikov had hurled himself from a sixth-floor

balcony and lay dead on the concrete below. He rushed off to report to his superiors.

Chizhikov, left alone, tried to collect his thoughts for what would surely be a forthcoming investigation. "I can guess they brought him to the Investigative Committee on this day so that this conversation could happen," he told me later. "But why did it end in tragedy?" Outside, cameramen from Russia's tabloid news outlets were photographing Kolesnikov's body.

He was buried three days later, at Moscow's Vostryakovsky cemetery. The Interior Ministry denied him the usual honors paid to police generals—there was no farewell salute and no military escort for the casket—but friends and colleagues pooled together money to hire a small orchestra. A number of officers from Kolesnikov's unit told me later that they had been warned by their superiors not to show up, but some three hundred came anyway. As Kolesnikov was being lowered into his grave, they gave him the traditional officer's sendoff: a triple shout of "Ura!" Kolesnikov's wife, Viktoria, didn't say much, except to offer her own view of her husband's death to the few journalists present. "They killed him," she said.

Boris Kolesnikov's rise in the Interior Ministry was unusually rapid. The ministry is a sprawling federal agency with more than a million employees, whose responsibilities range from overseeing local policing to mounting high-level nationwide prosecutions. His stepfather, Ivan, who raised him from the time he was eight years old, was an officer in the Soviet-era police force and teaches criminology at Russia's main police academy. Boris and his two brothers joined the force in the nineteen-nineties. His stepfather recalls telling them, "If I were an artist, then you would all be artists. But, seeing as I am a police officer, therefore you will all be police



Boris Kolesnikov's rise as a corruption fighter in the Interior Ministry was unusually rapid—and ultimately fatal.

officers, so as to carry on the dynasty.”

On Kolesnikov’s first assignment as a detective, at a precinct in Moscow’s northern district, he was paired with another novice, Denis Sugrobov, who became his partner and friend. According to several of Sugrobov’s colleagues, it was clear from the outset that, given his talents for police work, he was destined for a stellar career in the Interior Ministry. He had a disarming smile, and was known for both his formidable investigative skills and his obsessive care in tending to the boring minutiae of drug busts and antifraud stings. “He had no equal in his thoughtfulness, his knowledge of the law, his ability to carefully and precisely document everything,” a former police investigator who worked on several organized-crime cases with Sugrobov said. Sugrobov’s wife, Maria, with whom he has five children, told me, “Youth gives a certain fervor, a sense of daring toward everything, an understanding that a person can move mountains.”

Kolesnikov and Sugrobov grew to trust each other as they handled narcotics cases in the violent gangland of late-nineties Moscow. A former police captain who supervised them during this period said, “Denis was a leader; Boris was a follower. Boris wasn’t an intellectual, and was not all that great at writing reports—but he certainly wasn’t a coward, either.” Once, during a sting operation, Kolesnikov was found out while playing the role of a drug dealer in an apartment with four suspects. They tried to attack him with knives, but he ran out onto a balcony and held them off until police officers came to his assistance.

Other than the occasional hunting trip or birthday, Sugrobov and Kolesnikov didn’t socialize much. But they were close, bound by the triumphs and anxieties of their work. Kolesnikov confided to Viktoria, “This is my second hand, my shoulder, this is a person whom I trust fully. God forbid, if something were to happen to me, this person won’t abandon you or the children.”

The former police investigator told me, “If Sugrobov was working on a case, he didn’t think about anything else.” He added, “He was careerist, in the good sense of the word.” Sugrobov was said to have a benefactor and protector in Yevgeny Shkolov, who is reputed to have served in the K.G.B.

with Vladimir Putin in Dresden in the nineteen-eighties, and came to work in the Presidential administration as a powerful adviser in charge of monitoring the real-estate and business dealings of state officials. As Sugrobov took on new assignments and earned awards and promotions, so, too, did Kolesnikov. “Denis was the motor, the ideologue, the one in charge of things,” a former Interior Ministry employee told me. As for Koles-



nikov, “he didn’t have Sugrobov’s connections or access—he was just his friend.”

In June, 2011, by the order of President Dmitry Medvedev, Sugrobov was named the head of the Interior Ministry’s economic-crime and anticorruption department, known by its clunky acronym, GUEBiPK. Kolesnikov was appointed his deputy. The department had six hundred officers and its own multi-story headquarters, near Moscow’s Kazan train station. It was a sizable promotion for both men and came with great responsibility. It also involved no shortage of hidden internecine dangers, given that, in Russia’s Putin-era autocracy, as Nikolay Petrov, the head of the Center for Political Geographic Research, put it to me, “the fight against corruption is less a technical question than a political one.”

In the Soviet era, corruption was often a matter of privilege: access to nice food when none was on the shelves, the right to be treated at a special clinic when the wait to see a doctor would otherwise be several weeks. After 1991, the transition from an authoritarian state with a centralized economy to a nominally capitalistic, democratic one allowed for a flourishing trade of official position and access to power for material gain. By the end of Boris Yeltsin’s time in office, in 1999, Russia’s oligarchs essentially ran the country, leaving the state itself weak and feeble.

In Putin’s first term as President, which

began in 2000, he consolidated his rule on the basis of a public campaign to wrest back control for the Russian state, a goal he achieved by bringing the nineties-era oligarchs to heel and centralizing power under his personal authority. But he pursued this course—one generally popular with the Russian public—with the effect of further embedding the culture of corruption in civic life. The oligarchic class was subsumed by the bureaucratic and political élite, who, in effect, renationalized corruption.

State procurement and big-ticket infrastructure projects are the areas most susceptible to graft. Boris Nemtsov, a former first deputy prime minister and a high-profile opposition politician, who was gunned down in Moscow in February, 2015, released a report in 2013 alleging that as much as thirty billion dollars of the fifty-billion-dollar budget for the 2014 Winter Olympics, in Sochi, had effectively been stolen. According to Moscow’s chief of police, the average cost of a bribe in the city last year was the equivalent of around five thousand dollars. Public surveys consistently rank corruption as an important concern. As a way of keeping the most egregious, undisciplined offenders in check, Putin has launched sporadic anticorruption campaigns. But a genuine fight against corruption would mean targeting those whom he depends on in order to stay in power. Aside from a few high-profile arrests, those who are tried and punished for graft and accepting bribes are lower-level bureaucrats on the take.

Elena Panfilova, the chair of Transparency International’s Russian chapter, explained that the fight against corruption in Russia takes three forms: the passage of legislation and regulations that often exist only on paper and are scarcely ever implemented; individual law-enforcement investigations that from time to time produce big scandals and are often initiated not out of a desire to punish criminals but to achieve some political goal inside the ruling élite; and authentic civil-society activism, which puts pressure on the ruling system to make everything from health care to education more transparent and less vulnerable to graft. The attitude of Russia’s top officials, Panfilova told me, is that “they don’t really love the first, think that the second should be enough, and must outlaw the

third.” Sugrobov and Kolesnikov’s activities fit into the second category. She was impressed by their energy at first. “The idea was to outwit the system that allows corrupt officials to escape criminal responsibility,” she said. But she came to think of them as “cowboys.” They wanted results, big ones, and fast—and so they began to cut corners, pushed by a combination of youth and ambition.

Before Sugrobov was named head of GUEBiPK, according to Mark Galeotti, a professor at New York University and an expert on Russian intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, the department had a “notoriously terrible reputation.” Officers ran the place like an entrepreneurial empire. “If you wanted a job there, you had to pay for your position, and that was considered a good business investment,” Galeotti said. Sugrobov and Kolesnikov felt that they had Kremlin approval to transform the department. Viktoria said that, for the first time, the department sensed it had a “green light” to go after big targets and, in Sugrobov and Kolesnikov, “the guys who were capable of carrying out such orders.” As several former officers in the department told me, after Sugrobov’s arrival the department concentrated less on doctors who took small bribes from patients or traffic police who shook down motorists, and began targeting people closer to the real levers of power in the Putin system.

Yet Sugrobov and Kolesnikov were loyal officers of the state, not oppositionists, and they did not dare touch the highest caste of officials and associates close to Putin. Their cases were piecemeal—a big arrest here, a high-profile firing there—and didn’t represent any kind of systemic reform. Alexei Kondarov, a former K.G.B. counter-intelligence officer who is now critical of Putin’s rule, told me that for a while they were allowed to simulate a genuine war on corruption. “They played this game successfully and enthusiastically,” he said. “But they were a component part of this system, its flesh and blood.”

Sugrobov and Kolesnikov did, however, bring a new style of investigation to the fight against corruption: the “operational experiment,” a sting in which, acting on the instructions of GUEBiPK, a

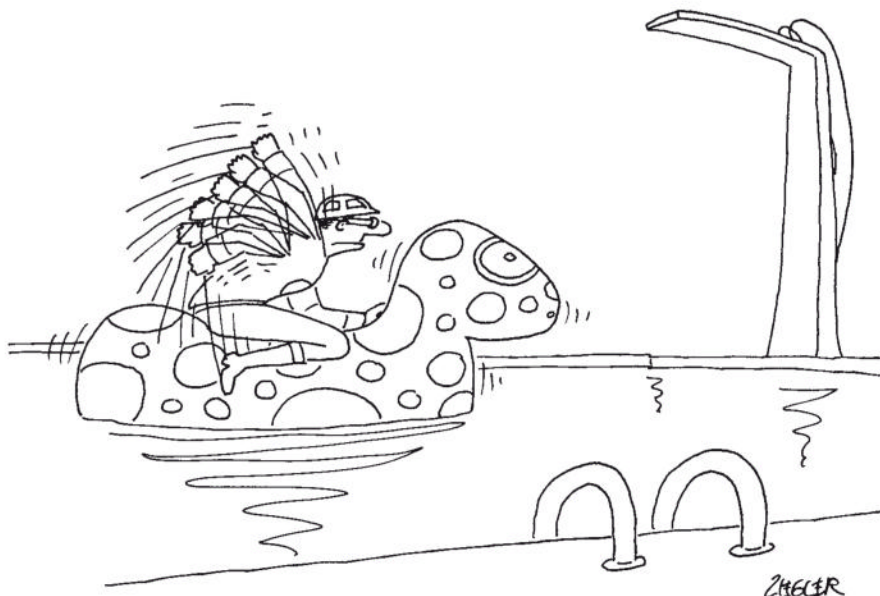
businessman or a state official working undercover tries to pass a bribe to a higher-level bureaucrat. It was standard practice from their days on the narcotics beat. Detectives would make a bust, then pressure a low-level suspect to cooperate as a “torpedo” to incriminate higher-ups while police recorded the deals. Torpedoes had never been used on such a scale to investigate economic crime before. This was the kind of police work that could veer toward entrapment—what’s known as a “provocation” in Russian law. A police officer should not be the instigator of a crime.

Sugrobov and Kolesnikov believed that Russia’s legal system wouldn’t allow them to go after large-scale cases. To pursue investigations in strict accordance with the criminal code would allow those suspected of corruption to learn of investigations against them. Better to skip a few steps and send in their torpedoes to gather evidence. But that approach had its own dangers, Panfilova said. “I understand—sometimes I also want to jump over someone’s head and get a big result and somewhere along the way break the law just a little bit,” she said. “But you can’t break the law a little bit, even in the service of a good cause, because from one violation you get a whole tree of future violations.”

In one of their first big cases, officers from the department issued an indictment against more than a hundred suspects, who were accused of embezzling five billion rubles in the purchase of costly tomography equipment by state hospitals.

More high-profile arrests followed. In June, 2012, Kolesnikov oversaw an investigation into regional officials and ministers in Kabardino-Balkaria, a Russian republic in the North Caucasus. They were accused of fraud and corruption in a deal that would have transferred ownership of the building housing the republic’s philharmonic orchestra. Kolesnikov organized an operation to apprehend the officials in Nalchik, the regional capital. He put more than a hundred agents from Moscow on a plane, without telling anyone where they were going or why. When bad weather kept them from flying home that evening, Kolesnikov slept in a bus at a military airfield with the rest of the officers. “He carried himself like an ordinary detective, just like the rest of us,” one of the participants in the operation said.

The agents worked fast, moving up the chain of suspected corruption and making multiple arrests in the span of a day or two. In the fall of 2013, a man named Sergei Zakusilo, a former adviser to the country’s Accounts Chamber, a state budgetary watchdog, was going around town advertising his services as a bureaucratic problem solver for hire. According to the investigation built up by officers from Sugrobov and Kolesnikov’s department, Zakusilo offered to help Laardi, a construction and engineering firm that had missed out on potentially lucrative preparations for the 2018 World Cup, to be held in Russia. For twelve and a half million rubles—around four hundred thousand dollars at the time—Zakusilo would arrange for the company’s rival, a firm



named Sport-Engineering, to face a series of unannounced and onerous inspections. Five million of those rubles would allegedly go to Alexander Korovnikov, a senator in Russia's upper house of parliament. But managers at Laardi reconsidered and went to the police. Approached by agents from GUEBiPK, Zakusilo agreed to act as a torpedo.

The anticorruption officers sent Zakusilo, wearing a hidden camera, to Korovnikov's downtown Moscow office to discuss the particulars of the deal. A recording captured the exchange. "Tell me what's needed," Korovnikov said. Zakusilo told him that the managers of Laardi had already given him "five"—five million rubles—and would pay "ten" more later. They discussed the inspection they would arrange for Sport-Engineering. "We'll try to make it as fucked up as possible!" Korovnikov exclaimed. The two men headed to the toilet, and the camera followed the conversation. Korovnikov seemed excited by their collaboration. "Let's get more deals like this one!" Back in Korovnikov's office, Zakusilo took out stacks of five-thousand-ruble notes and began placing them in Korovnikov's briefcase. Korovnikov counted out the amount in million-ruble increments: "One, two, three, four, five." The police had their evidence.

A few minutes later, officers from GUEBiPK burst into Korovnikov's office. "Guys, I am a member of the Federation Council!" Korovnikov protested. That gave him parliamentary immunity. The officers explained that they had evidence of a serious crime and offered him a choice: they could open a formal investigation, confiscating the money in his briefcase and beginning the process of stripping him of immunity, or he could play the role of middleman, passing the cash to its ultimate recipient. Korovnikov replied, "I am always ready for constructive and real cooperation." He agreed to assist the operatives in gathering evidence against Alexander Mikhailik, a department head at the Accounts Chamber, who, according to police, was meant to arrange the inspections of Sport-Engineering.

The two met that evening, with Korovnikov wearing a wire. Korovnikov told Mikhailik that he had five million rubles—three for Mikhailik and two for himself. Mikhailik said that he would

STILL-LIFE WITH TURKEY

The turkey's strung up by one pronged foot,
the cord binding it just below the stiff trinity
of toes, each with its cold bent claw. My eyes

are in love with it as they are in love with all
dead things which cannot escape being looked at.
It is there to be seen if I want to see it, as my

father was there in his black casket and could not
elude our gaze. I was a child, so they asked
if I wanted to see him. "Do you want to see him?"

someone asked. Was it my mother? Grandmother?
Some poor woman was stuck with the job.
"He doesn't look like himself," whoever it was

added. "They did something strange with his mouth."
As I write this a large moth flutters against
the window. It presses its fat thorax to the glass.

"No," I said, "I don't want to see him." I don't recall
if I secretly wanted them to open the box for me
but thought that "no" was the correct response,

pass along a portion to his bosses. Officers arrested Mikhailik as he headed home to his apartment in downtown Moscow.

Sugrobov and Kolesnikov—and the hundreds of officers under them—saw their work as a chance to take on the sort of cases that so many in the police and security services chose to avoid. Rare for an Interior Ministry official, Sugrobov gave frequent interviews to journalists and would often appear on television after a big arrest. Kolesnikov and Sugrobov were very successful at a relatively young age—they were in their mid-thirties—especially considering the bureaucratic torpor of the Russian state. Their quick rise blinded them to the limits and inflexibility of the system and to the danger that their brash approach to police work put them in.

"The higher up you go, the fewer people there are who can give you orders, who can prevent you from making mistakes," the former police captain who had supervised them early in their careers said. He told me that Kolesnikov's personality changed as he advanced in command at the Interior Ministry. Over time, he became "arrogant and contemp-

tuous, he could act boorishly and unprincipled," the former captain said. A former police officer who knew Kolesnikov for years told me that he watched him become dismissive of other people's opinions and too sure of his own. As for Sugrobov, he felt protected by the President. The former supervisor remembers him boasting that he had a direct line to Medvedev on his cell phone. "He was certain that no one would give him up, that no one could touch him."

In 2013, when Kolesnikov was thirty-six and Sugrobov thirty-seven, they were made generals—the youngest in the history of the post-Soviet ministry. Some began to speak of Sugrobov becoming minister one day. Mark Galeotti said that Sugrobov and Kolesnikov came to "relish the myth they were developing around themselves—and success fuelled that myth, which in turn fuelled their egos and the need to work at an ever faster tempo, to come back with bigger and bigger scalps."

I sat with Kolesnikov's widow, Viktoria, one evening, sipping black tea in her in-laws' kitchen. She told me that her husband used to leave at seven in the morning and come home late at

or if I believed I should want to see him but was too afraid of what they'd done with his mouth. I think I assumed that my seeing him would

make things worse for my mother, and she was all I had. Now I can't get enough of seeing, as if I'm paying a sort of penance for not seeing then, and so

this turkey, hanged, its small, raw-looking head, which reminds me of the first fully naked man I ever saw, when I was a candy stripper

at a sort of nursing home, a war veteran, young, burbling crazily, his face and body red as something scalded. I didn't want to see,

and yet I saw. But the turkey, I am in love with it, its saggy neck folds, the rippling, variegated feathers, the crook of its unbound foot,

and the glorious wings, archangelic, spread as if it could take flight, but down, downward, into the earth.

—Diane Seuss

night. Plenty of people inside the state machine wanted to see GUEBIPK fail, out of either bureaucratic rivalry or corrupt self-interest. He spent many evenings tossing sleeplessly. "I have so much to think about," he told her. "Can you imagine?" she remembers him telling her once. "Two months we spent developing a case. My guys didn't sleep at night. They were really toiling. We got a result, and then a phone call from on high: that's it, it's over."

The case that seems to have most angered the department's foes inside the security services was an investigation into *obnal*, or dark money. Essentially, *obnal* is a way for a business to take a portion of cash off the books. The shadow economy's demand for *obnal* is likely tens of billions of dollars a year—driven by the incentive to avoid high taxes on business operations and profits, and the need to pay bribes and kickbacks. Maxim Osadchiy, the head of the analytical department at Moscow's C.F.B. bank, explained the underlying logic of *obnal*: "Normally, money laundering is about making dirty money clean. But this market, you could say, takes clean money and makes it dirty."

The basic idea is that a firm, operating officially and legally, purchases some service—it could be consulting advice, or roof cleaning—from a company that exists only on paper and doesn't, in fact, deliver anything. The firm transfers money to a bank, ostensibly to process the transaction for this service, and the money returns as *obnal*, minus a fee.

Russian banks providing *obnal* can't operate without the protection of at least certain elements within the security services. "It's easy to catch, hard to hide, and generates huge profits," Osadchiy said. Although the scale and the reach of the market are no secret in Moscow financial circles, the finer points of *obnal* operations are left unspoken. "It feels dangerous to talk about," a longtime Russian banker told me. "Even with people you know well, you choose your words cautiously." The 2006 murder of Andrei Kozlov, a first deputy chair of Russia's central bank, is believed to be linked to his efforts to rein in the *obnal* market. Over time, an anarchic and criminal marketplace

came to be dominated by a single higher power: among those in Moscow's financial sector, the banker told me, it is "common knowledge" that the upper reaches of the *obnal* trade are controlled by the F.S.B. Boris Grozovsky, a financial journalist, explained the interest of F.S.B. officials in establishing the agency as the arbiter of *obnal* schemes: "Not only do they earn money for themselves but they also get to see who is doing what in this business, which, as we say in Russian, allows them to grab anybody by the balls at any time."

For many years, one of the biggest players in the *obnal* market was Master Bank, a midsize institution with assets of about two and a half billion dollars and branches around Moscow. Russia's central bank later claimed that Master Bank would not have been profitable if not for its shadow trade—its retail services operated at a loss in order to provide cover for its much more lucrative *obnal* business. It was an open secret that the company issued bank cards with no daily limit and kept a network of A.T.M.s at Moscow's Domodedovo airport filled with five-hundred-euro notes—convenient for obtaining large amounts of untraceable cash. In July, 2012, agents from GUEBIPK raided Master Bank's offices and opened criminal cases against several of its executives. More searches followed throughout the next year. Police in black masks and with automatic weapons slung over their shoulders stormed through Master Bank's headquarters, emerging with piles of documents and bundles of cash.

As a result of the GUEBIPK investigation, the central bank announced, in November, 2013, that it was revoking Master Bank's license. Several of its top managers were charged with carrying out illegal financial operations. Its chairman fled the country. In an article on the case for the *New Times*, a leading liberal magazine, Grozovsky wrote of Master Bank's involvement in the *obnal* trade: "All players in the market and regulators knew about this, and the only thing that kept them from being stopped earlier was someone's protection." A longtime Moscow financier told me that practically every bank in Russia has some outside





*"I've seen it a thousand times: Child star. Newfound fame.
Drug addiction. Rock bottom."*

force backing it up, and in the case of Master Bank "it was always known that this role was played by some people from the security services."

Sugrobov and Kolesnikov also went after Sergei Magin, who was nominally the head of a small firm that provided communal services to Moscow apartment buildings but was believed to be one of the biggest players in the illegal-cash trade. Sugrobov lured him to a meeting at a Moscow restaurant by claiming that he wanted to discuss some kind of illegal cooperation. (Magin had been asking for a meeting for some time, apparently fearful that Sugrobov and his team were investigating him.) Sugrobov put the handcuffs on Magin himself.

During the next two days, agents from GUEBPK and special forces from the Interior Ministry searched more than forty other locations: banks, offices, and Magin's apartment and those of six suspected chief accomplices. When officers used sledgehammers to break down the reinforced metal door at one Moscow office, they found employees manically destroying hard drives and throwing stacks of papers into an industrial shredder. The Interior Ministry said

that, over the past five years, a network of banks operating under Magin's control had generated thirty-six billion rubles—more than a billion dollars—in *obnal* and, with commissions of around two per cent, earned some eighteen million dollars in profit. Magin was charged with sitting atop an "organized criminal group" of subordinates who answered for different parts of the *obnal* chain and reported to him personally.

It's highly unlikely that Sugrobov and Kolesnikov would have acted against Master Bank and Magin without the approval of—or even instructions from—the country's top political leadership: if not Putin, then at least those close to him. In fact, both operations were carried out as part of an interagency task force on financial crime and money laundering, chaired by Yevgeny Shkolov, Putin's old K.G.B. colleague, who was said to be Sugrobov's patron in the Kremlin. The ability to go after banks involved in money-laundering operations was said to be a condition of Elvira Nabiullina, a longtime Putin adviser, in agreeing to head the central bank, in June, 2013. Whatever the authorization, the arrests were not

met with euphoria. Those who had long profited from the trade stood to lose billions of dollars.

Some months after Magin's arrest, an Interior Ministry investigator assigned to the case was visited by an agent from the F.S.B.'s internal-security department. The agent came bearing an official letter from the prosecutor's office requesting that the F.S.B. be given an opportunity to question Magin, and that he be moved from Moscow's Butyrka jail to Lefortovo, the facility under the F.S.B.'s control. The letter also asked that the "criminal group" allegation be removed from his indictment. Without that charge, the court would have to release Magin on bail pending trial. A person with knowledge of the case was skeptical. "More likely, they wanted to free Magin from criminal responsibility," that person told me. The F.S.B. request was denied. Eventually, an Interior Ministry investigator spoke to the F.S.B. officer by phone. "I would say that he was in shock that a simple investigator from the Interior Ministry had the courage to refuse the F.S.B.," the person familiar with the case said.

The Master Bank investigation also attracted the interest of the F.S.B. In the fall of 2013, Evgeny Rogachev, a vice-president at the bank, who was among those charged with fraud and money laundering, was called to a meeting at a Moscow café. According to several people with knowledge of this meeting, the men who invited him were from another division of the Interior Ministry but let it be known that they represented the interests of the F.S.B. They made Rogachev an offer: his fate in criminal proceedings would be improved if he testified that in the months before the raids against Master Bank Sugrobov had come to the bank's leadership with an offer to take the bank under his protection. No one told Sugrobov and Kolesnikov's department or the investigators assigned to the case about this unofficial meeting with Rogachev, but, after a few weeks, word leaked out. If Rogachev went for it, it was obvious that Sugrobov would be in legal jeopardy, and the whole case would be in danger. "Let me put it this way," an Interior Ministry investigator who worked on the case said. "When I heard about this meeting, I knew that we were fucked."

In a system like Russia's, in which the institutions of the state function less according to immutable bureaucratic rules and more in response to instruction from above, "the most important thing is control," the investigator explained. Because the Master Bank case was sealed, a rival agency like the F.S.B. had no way of knowing how high up the trail of evidence might go. "If you get rid of the boss, his subordinates, and a whole team of investigators—if you get rid of them all, you end up with control of the investigation." Rogachev ultimately declined to make the statements requested of him, and officers continued to gather evidence and file charges against new suspects. (He is currently under house arrest, awaiting trial.) But that didn't mean that Sugrobov and Kolesnikov and those working with them were in the clear. The people who felt threatened by the Master Bank case, the investigator knew, "wouldn't stop at this."

Toward the end of 2013, just weeks after Master Bank lost its license, an informer came to Kolesnikov and Sugrobov's department with tantalizing news: an agent in the F.S.B.'s internal-security department was running a protection racket, offering his services for a sizable fee to Moscow businessmen. The internal-security department was the same one whose officers had poked around the various *obnal* investigations, and within the F.S.B. it was known as the most cloistered and powerful organ, the watcher of the watchers. Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, investigative journalists who cover the Russian security and intelligence services, explained the department's role to me. "Let's say an F.S.B. officer commits a murder somewhere," Soldatov said. "The police on the scene are required to call the F.S.B.'s internal-security department, which will dispatch its own officer to the scene—not to investigate the crime or take the guy into custody but to show up with a resignation letter that's backdated by a day, and force the suspect to sign, so that as of the time he allegedly committed a crime he's no longer an F.S.B. officer."

The informer was Pavel Globa, who had once been an F.S.B. agent. He alleged that the bribe-taking F.S.B. officer, Igor Dyomin, was "ready for dialogue"—interested in whatever financial propos-

als might come his way. With Kolesnikov's supervision, officers in the department—who were surely intrigued, if not giddy, at the thought of getting themselves involved in a case against their rivals at the F.S.B.—began to pursue an investigation. They recruited a former court bailiff, Ruslan Chukhlib, to act as a torpedo, and arranged for him to meet with Dyomin. To help sell his undercover identity as a successful businessman, they bought him new clothes and leased a Lexus ES250 in his name.

A recording made on January 22, 2014, at GUEBIPK's headquarters captured a conversation between Globa and Alexey Bodnar, a department head who reported to Kolesnikov. They discussed the operation and its likely fallout. Bodnar suggested that once they had the necessary evidence in hand the "head of state"—perhaps even Putin—would be informed. A case file would go to Shkolov, Bodnar said. "A phone call here, a phone call there. And you want audio? Please, here you go." He went on, "We're not provoking anyone, are we? If the guy takes it, he takes it; if he doesn't, then he doesn't." Globa said, "This is going to be a bomb," and that he expected a "reply" from the *kontora*, or bureau, the nickname within the security services for the F.S.B.

At the first meeting between Chukhlib, the torpedo, and Dyomin, the target, the two toasted each other with shots of Baron Otard cognac. Chukhlib explained that his company had the chance to sign a

contract with the Russian postal service, but that it doubted it would be awarded the job without some help from above. "Your organization is very serious," he told Dyomin. "I'm not here just to talk and joke and drink cognac." Dyomin answered by telling him that, yes, the "three letters" of the F.S.B. did have "a certain ring." Chukhlib suggested that "joint work" could be beneficial for them both. Later, when they met again, he tried to push the conversation toward a particular sum. "What kind of conditions should there be from our side?" he asked Dyomin. Chukhlib said, "We'd like to know that you are with us, and if something happens we can turn to you." The conversation continued euphemistically, and then Chukhlib announced, "I have a proposal of the following nature." He said that he could offer Dyomin a monthly payment of ten thousand dollars.

In hindsight, former colleagues of Sugrobov and Kolesnikov and their lawyers suspect that Globa was himself a torpedo, sent by the F.S.B. to entrap the officers of GUEBIPK in an operation that could be used against them. While they were watching an agent from the *kontora*, the *kontora* was watching them.

"They thought they would be supported in everything, that it would all work out for them," the former Interior Ministry employee told me. "And it did—until they raised their hand at the F.S.B. That's a border that can't be crossed." Since tsarist times, the informal rules that pertain to



"Next stop, Ptarrytown."

Russia's governing elite have dictated that, if police come across evidence of wrongdoing by members of the secret services, they cannot investigate it themselves. Instead, they should deliver their material to a higher arbiter in the political system. Soldatov said he could imagine the argument that F.S.B. officials would make to the Kremlin: "Look, these generals from the Interior Ministry are out of control, they are behaving like rogues." He added, "I don't think there would be any questions after that."

Chukhlib and Dyomin's next meeting, on February 14, 2014, took place at Sisters, a café not far from F.S.B. headquarters. Officers from GUEBiPK were recording the conversation, but F.S.B. agents were monitoring it, too. A little after one in the afternoon, Chukhlib and Dyomin sat down during the lunch rush. Chukhlib proposed that they drink fifty grams of whiskey. Dyomin said that he was in a hurry. Toward the end of the conversation, Chukhlib told Dyomin that he was putting something in the basket on the table.

"What's there?" Dyomin asked.

"Ten," Chukhlib said.

"What?"

"Thousand dollars."

"Ah, I get it," Dyomin answered.

Chukhlib told him that he would pick up the check—"For me, it's simply an honor to have lunch with you." A few moments passed, as the two debated whether they should converse using the informal "ty" or the more formal "vy," and Dyomin answered a phone call. With that, F.S.B. agents swept into the restaurant and arrested Chukhlib. By the end of the day, Bodnar and half a dozen other officers from GUEBiPK were in custody. All were charged with abuse of office and entrapment for trying to lure Dyomin into accepting a bribe. The story was everywhere in Russian news reports the next day, and the ripples of the operation were felt almost immediately: on February 21st, Putin dismissed Sugrobov from his position as the head of GUEBiPK.

Kolesnikov was on assignment outside Moscow the day of the arrests. When he got back, his parents, who had seen the news on television, told him they were worried. "Borya," his mother said, "look what's going on!"

He told her not to worry, that his subordinates wouldn't be in jail for long, that he could fix it all in no time. "Mom, just wait, I'm going to go there now and rescue my guys," he said. He told Viktoria that the whole affair was just a "misunderstanding." He was "absolutely certain," she remembers.

Kolesnikov gave testimony to investigators working on the case, and on February 25th he was called to the Investigative Committee for questioning as a witness. He went, without a lawyer, still sure that he had little to fear. While he was there, investigators told him that they were changing his status: he was now a suspect and under arrest. He called Viktoria. "Don't worry, everything will be O.K.," he told her. "I'm sure that by tomorrow I'll already be out of here." The next day, he requested that she bring him some clothes, but also not to get too upset. "They'll sort it out—everything will fall into place," he said.

At Kolesnikov's first court appearance, he addressed the police colleagues who had come to support him and the journalists who had gathered for the hearing. "The case against me is related to the existence of a huge number of 'well-wishers,' who want to settle scores with me and my subordinates," he said. "I can imagine the happiness of corrupt officials, who get in the way of the development of our state, seeing as how a whole series of criminal cases will now be sent to the trash can." The judge ordered that he be held in jail while awaiting trial, and he was sent to Lefortovo. He couldn't see his wife or his parents, but he could write them, and his early letters were hopeful. Life was good in his "hotel room," as Kolesnikov jokingly called his cell: he was sleeping well, doing a hundred pushups a day, studying English, and feasting on the sausages that Viktoria supplied to him through the prison commissary. "You know my spirit," he wrote to her. He said that when he got out he would take her to Paris. And don't forget, he wrote, we still want another child.

As the weeks went on, however, his mood became less optimistic, even as he tried to keep up his fighting spirit. "The situation I've ended up in is not a good one," he wrote Viktoria. "I'm very sorry that things have ended up the way they are now." He told her that she would

have to be strong and look after their children. In a letter to his mother, he wrote, "I don't have much good news," and went on to say that he wished he had quit the police force earlier. In another letter, he wrote that he should have listened to all the warnings he'd heard about how he and others in the department "crossed a line for too many people." In the end, he wrote, "it's no surprise that we have far more enemies than friends."

Officers in the department understood that the real target was Sugrobov. Once he was in prison, the unit of anticorruption fighters would be decapitated, and everyone in the security services would recognize the dangers of challenging the F.S.B. But to make that case investigators needed Kolesnikov. The mid-ranking officers under arrest had rarely seen or directly spoken with Sugrobov. As one of Kolesnikov's lawyers, Anna Stavitskaya, explained to me, "They could only offer some kind of speculation, but not real testimony." Investigators pressured Kolesnikov to admit his guilt and cooperate with the prosecution. "During all these months, they repeated one thing: 'Confess everything, give up everybody else, and we'll give you happiness,'" Pavel Lapshov, another lawyer, said. "They wanted him to say, 'He gave me an order, he made me, he was aware of everything.'"

In April, investigators added a new charge: membership in an "organized criminal group," the same charge once faced by many of those whom Kolesnikov and his colleagues had investigated, including Magin. It carried a potential sentence of twenty years. The news further deflated Kolesnikov. "He understood the punishment would be stiff, and no court would ever try and get to the bottom of it," Chizhikov told me.

In early May, Sugrobov was arrested as he was driving back to Moscow from a fishing trip on the Volga delta with his wife and twelve-year-old son. His charges mirrored those filed against Kolesnikov—he was accused of provoking officials into taking bribes and of leading a criminal group within the Interior Ministry. Like Kolesnikov, he was interrogated by Sergei Novikov, the case's chief investigator. A recording of one of their meetings suggests that there



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THE HUMIDITY

was a higher, unseen power behind the case. “Decisions are taken not only by us, not only by me personally,” Novikov told Sugrobov. “If tomorrow I write a report saying, ‘Excuse me, I don’t see evidence of a crime,’ I’m telling you, in exactly one hour I would get a ruling saying the case was being taken from me and moved to someone else.”

With time, those who wanted to break Kolesnikov found another way to pressure him. For the first several weeks that Kolesnikov was held in Lefortovo, he walked around in his one pair of shoes, without laces—prison rules forbid laces, and they were confiscated as soon as he arrived. The shoes flopped around loose on his feet. The first two pairs of Velcro sneakers that Viktoria tried to get to her husband never made it past Lefortovo security inspections. Some weeks later, during a break in a scheduled interrogation, Novikov said to Chizhikov, joking, “What kind of general walks around with his shoes untied?” He told Chizhikov that he would allow

Kolesnikov to receive new shoes. So Viktoria bought a third pair, and a few days later, during a break in a court hearing, she gave them to him. But those didn’t last long, either. Lefortovo guards took them from Kolesnikov as soon as he returned from court that day, and sent them off to be inspected. Almost a month later, prison authorities alleged that a drug-sniffing dog had found a secret hiding place in the sneakers, and that they were being sent for chemical analysis. Officials in the prison service said that they suspected traces of narcotics. Kolesnikov and his defense team immediately understood that Viktoria, who had passed him the sneakers, was now under threat of serious legal prosecution. “It was an obvious psychological game, with a person who knows what kind of results there can be—he worked in the system, he understood the system,” Chizhikov told me. “He wouldn’t give the testimony they wanted from him, and so they put him in front of a kind of choice.” The dilemma was obvious, and pushed Kolesnikov deeper into a spiral of anxiety: give

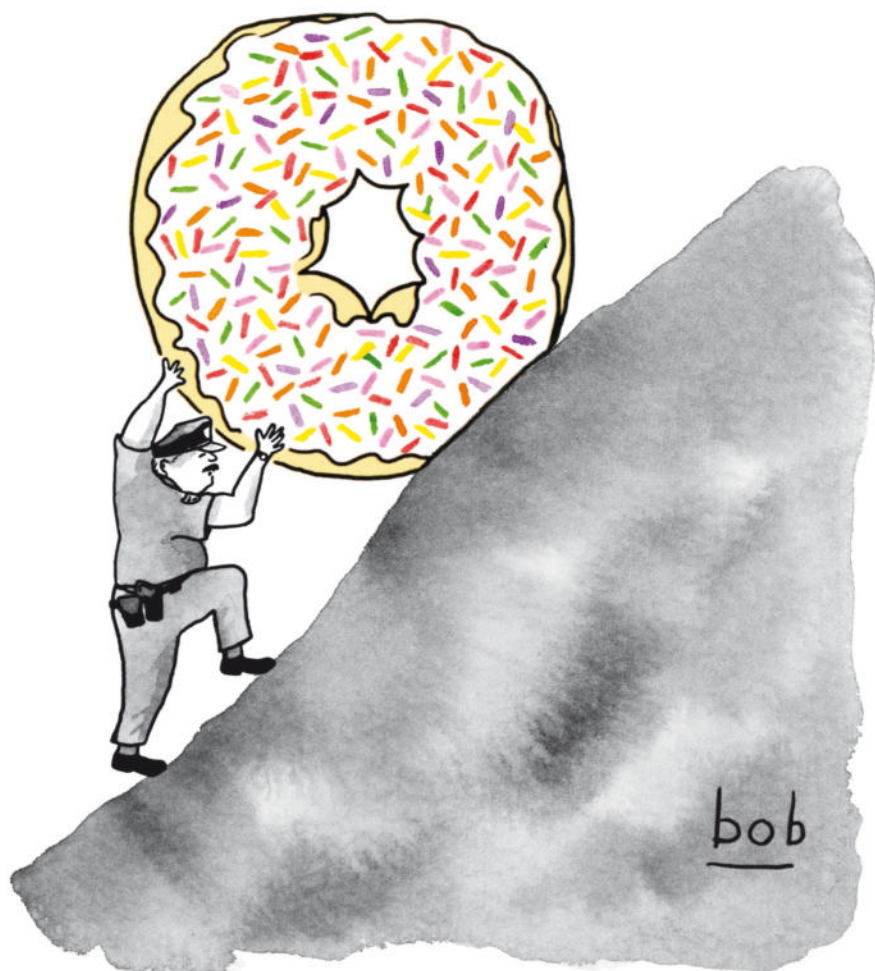
evidence against Sugrobov or risk seeing his wife sent to prison. “He fell into a trap,” Pavel Lapshov said. “These shoes became his biggest source of stress.”

On May 4th, Kolesnikov was found in his cell, with his head covered in blood. His skull had been fractured in two places. Chizhikov saw him at a Moscow hospital the next day. Kolesnikov looked terrible; he would try to sit up in bed, and quickly collapse again. The doctor told Chizhikov that it wasn’t possible to get such a head injury from a fall. Later, Kolesnikov’s legal team received an independent medical analysis from a doctor affiliated with the Defense Ministry. He concluded that Kolesnikov’s injuries were consistent with a blow from a “dull hard object.” Georgy Antonov, a former police investigator who worked on Kolesnikov’s defense team, was allowed to visit him at the hospital on May 13th. “I saw before me a cowardly, demoralized person,” he said. He told Kolesnikov that journalists were waiting outside and wanted to know about his injury. Whatever you do, Kolesnikov said, don’t say anything to anybody.

Another visitor, Zoia Svetova, a liberal journalist who is a member of a public council that monitors prisons, told me, “He couldn’t say much, just that he felt bad and wasn’t safe.” She remembered Kolesnikov as looking “totally wrecked, with an unkempt beard and wild eyes.” At her third visit, Kolesnikov told her and her colleagues not to come again, that their visits only made things worse for him. On June 3rd, during an interrogation, Kolesnikov vomited. “Even the investigator was in shock,” Anna Stavitskaya said.

As the weeks went on, and Kolesnikov’s trauma went essentially untreated, an impossible and macabre choice bore down on him: testify against your friend and colleague of fifteen years, likely sending him to prison for more than a decade, or refuse, and see your wife prosecuted on a fabricated charge and sent to prison. Viktoria described the implicit threat: “We’ll put your wife in the cell next to you and send your kids to an orphanage.”

On June 16th, his lawyers and former colleagues now believe, Kolesnikov chose a third option. As seems likely, Kolesnikov and Novikov were on the sixth-floor balcony, speaking in private, for just a few minutes, and he jumped. “He tried



to protect his family and those with whom he served with his own life," an officer who worked under Kolesnikov told me. What Kolesnikov and Novikov spoke about, or if they spoke at all, remains unknown: perhaps Novikov tried again to persuade Kolesnikov to turn against Sugrobov, or he raised the spectre of the shoes with drugs supposedly hidden in them. Or maybe Kolesnikov had already made up his mind. (The Investigative Committee's report had a different account. It claimed that Kolesnikov did not leave the interrogation room to speak with Novikov; rather, he asked to use the toilet, then rushed past the guards and jumped to his death.) Lapshov told me that on the morning of June 16th, when Kolesnikov was taken to the Investigative Committee, he bumped into a former colleague and co-defendant from their department, Ivan Kosourov, who was also in the building for questioning. According to Kosourov, Kolesnikov told him, "Ivan, say farewell." They had only a few moments to speak. Before they parted, Kolesnikov added one more thing: "They wanted to get me—well, they got me."

With Kolesnikov dead, the case against Sugrobov grew more difficult for investigators, who now had to assemble evidence piece by piece, instead of having their case handed to them by one person's testimony. "Kolesnikov, with his act, complicated the goal of the prosecution," Lapshov said. "He broke the chain that existed between himself, Sugrobov, and their subordinates. Sugrobov doesn't even know what these guys sitting in jail physically look like."

In the seventeen months since launching the case, investigators have added dozens of new charges. They allege not only that Sugrobov, Kolesnikov, and their subordinates exceeded their authority and tried to illegally provoke Dyomin into accepting a bribe but that a number of their earlier cases—including the construction-bribery investigation against Korovnikov and Mikhailik—were fabrications and provocations, with the original suspects now assuming the role of victim. Twenty-one of the department's investigations currently form the basis of the state's criminal complaint.

One of the victims named is Anatoly Brontvein, a former chief doctor at the Kremlin's hospital, whom officers from

GUEBIPK arrested in 2013 for soliciting a ten-million-ruble bribe (around three hundred thousand dollars). His lawyer, Andrey Bakradze, said that he believes his client had been entrapped. "An operative taking part in a sting shouldn't form the intent of committing a crime," Bakradze told me. He insisted that Brontvein didn't even have a chance to react when a torpedo showed up at his office uninvited and handed him money; agents burst in to arrest him that very moment. (Brontvein has since been exonerated and has received compensation.) But Bakradze added that his client did not harbor any ill will toward Kolesnikov and Sugrobov, and thought that they were simply doing their jobs. "To separate a true fight against corruption as part of your service to the state as opposed to a desire to move up the career ladder is very hard," he said.

Whatever the official indictment says, Sugrobov and his men are in jail not for the tactics they used in their police work but for losing a power struggle. The Interior Ministry and the intelligence services, first the K.G.B. and now the F.S.B., have been rivals for decades. It doesn't help that Sugrobov was seen to be close to Medvedev, whose influence—such as it was—has dwindled since he returned the Presidency to Putin, in 2012. The contest for attention, resources, and access to the Kremlin has become especially acute under Putin's regime, a political epoch that has seen many of the institutions of governance, while remaining as formal bodies, replaced by a patchwork of informal understandings and relationships. In the fifteen years that Putin has been in power, clan politics and the intrigues that fuel them have become Russia's deep state—out of sight but far more decisive than what sits on the surface. "Formally, Russia is a federation," Nikolay Petrov said. "But for a long time it has not been a federation of regions but one of corporations, in which each corporation has a certain measure of independence and sovereignty and, within this framework, is effectively out of the state's control." These could be literal corporations, such as the state oil giant Rosneft, or bureaucratic ones, such as the Interior Ministry or the F.S.B. Now, as Russia's economy—pushed downward by Western sanctions and falling global oil prices—enters a period of long-term recession, with the G.D.P. expected to fall

as much as four per cent this year, competition among these corporations has grown. "The over-all number of people in control should shrink in accordance with the falling profits of those whom they are controlling," Petrov said. Otherwise, the profits of the controlling class will also decline.

The trial of Sugrobov, who has maintained his innocence, will begin sometime in the coming months. No one is likely to emerge from court proceedings looking especially heroic, let alone saintly. "I'm critical of them, but I'm also sorry for them—one killed himself, the others are behind bars," Alexei Kondaurov, the former K.G.B. agent turned Putin critic, told me. "In a moral system, they could have become good officers, but in our system, well, they became the guys they became. It's a shame the system breaks people like this." I heard one of Sugrobov and Kolesnikov's fellow-officers, a man named Salavat Mullayarov, testify in court earlier this spring. "At the time, we thought we were doing everything in accordance with the law," he said. "But it's a subtle game."

One morning in late April, I went with Viktoria to visit her husband's grave. It was cloudy and windy, but a few streaks of yellow sunlight poked through the sky as we walked through the iron gates of Vostryakovsky cemetery. Kolesnikov is buried in a narrow alley of grave sites toward the back, past the tombstones of famed Soviet pilots and actresses and engineers.

In accordance with a common Russian Orthodox tradition, the family was waiting until the one-year anniversary of death to place the final headstone on the grave, and so Kolesnikov's grave was marked by a mound of dirt and a simple wooden cross. Viktoria brought some small cakes that their thirteen-year-old daughter had baked the day before and placed them on top of the soil. She doesn't bring the children here often; let them grow a little older and decide for themselves, she said.

We stood a moment and talked about her husband. "He was for me, in my eyes, a man, a general," she said. "He was so patriotic, he so hated those guys with fattened bellies. He believed in the purity of people's intentions. A fool, a little fool." ♦

little joe gould has lost his teeth and
doesn't know where
to find them

— E. E. Cummings

For a long time, Joe Gould thought he was going blind. This was before he lost his teeth, and years before he lost the history of the world he'd been writing in hundreds of dime-store composition notebooks, their black covers mottled like the pelt of a speckled goat, their white pages lined with thin blue veins.

He wrote with a fountain pen. He filled it with ink he stole from the post office. "I have created a vital new literary form," he boasted. "Unfortunately, my manuscript is not typed."

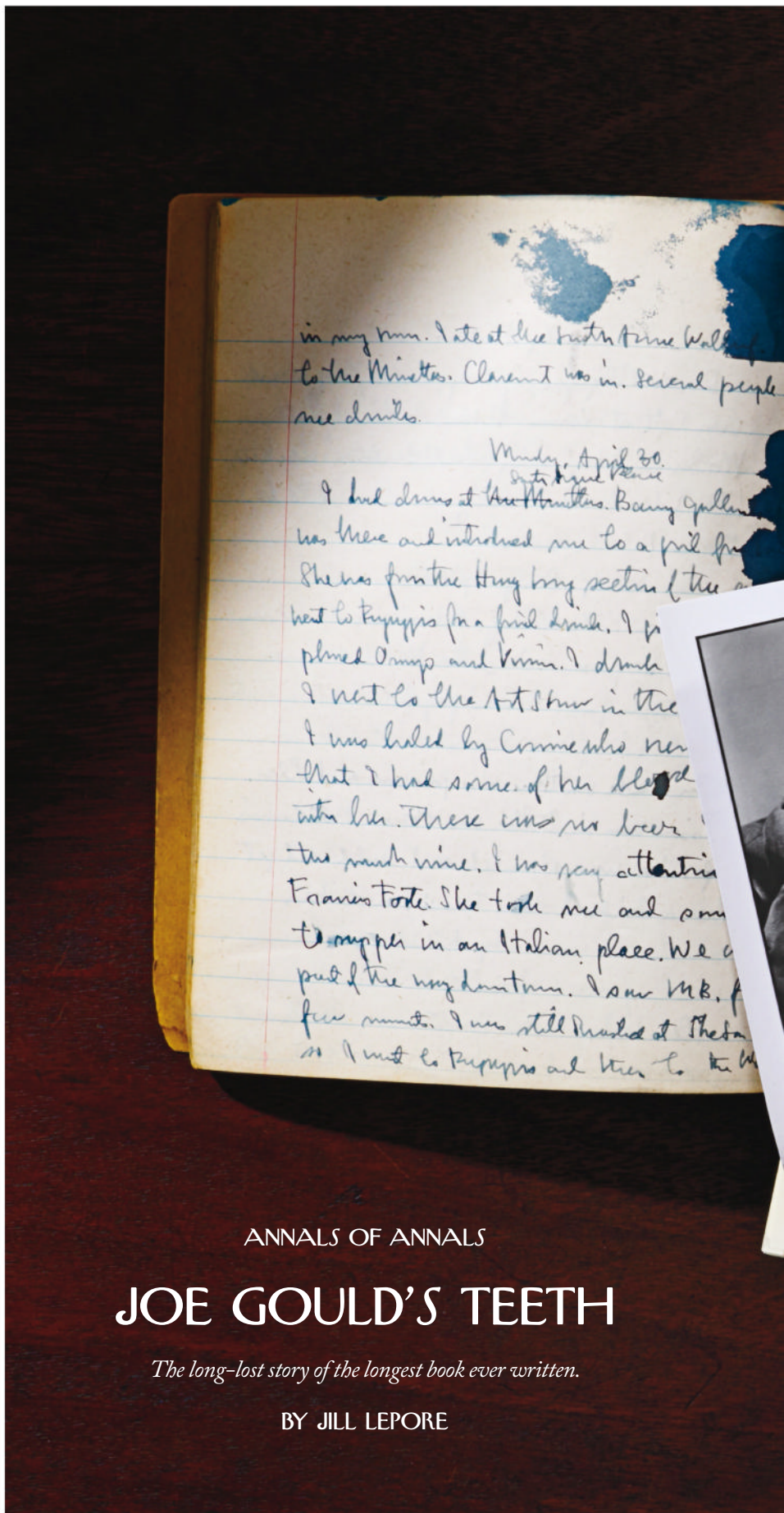
He told everyone who would listen that he was writing down nearly everything anyone said to him. "I am trying to record these complex times with the technique of a Herodotus or Froissart," he explained to the Harvard historian George Sarton, in 1931, soliciting support. Herodotus wrote his Histories in ancient Greece; Jean Froissart wrote his Chronicles in medieval Europe. Gould was writing his history, a talking history, in modern America. "My book is very voluminous," Gould told Sarton:

I imagine that the most valuable sections will be those which deal with groups that are inarticulate such as the Negro, the reservation Indian and the immigrant. It seems to me that the average person is just as much history as the ruler or celebrity as he illustrates the social forces of heredity and environment. Therefore I am trying to present lyrical episodes of everyday life. I would like to widen the sphere of history as Walt Whitman did that of poetry.

He called it "The Oral History of Our Time." (The title, with its ocular "O"s, looks very much like a pair of spectacles.) He told the poet Marianne Moore that he'd come up with a better title when she was editing two chapters of it for *The Dial*. "MEO TEMPORE seems to me intrinsically a good title, but not better than the one we have," Moore wrote back.

Writers loved to write about him, the writer who could not stop writing. "The history is the work of some fifteen years of writing in subway trains, on 'El' platforms, in Bowery flop houses," the poet Horace Gregory wrote in *The New Republic*, in 1931. Five years later, Gould told a reporter, "Havelock Ellis has compared my book to Samuel Pepys' Diary, because I try to get the forgotten man into history." He wrote, he drank, he wrote,

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: COURTESY FALES LIBRARY, NYU; PHILIPPE HALSMAN/MAGNUM; COURTESY JOSEPH FREEMAN COLLECTION/HOOVER INSTITUTION ARCHIVES



ANNALS OF ANNALS

JOE GOULD'S TEETH

The long-lost story of the longest book ever written.

BY JILL LEPORE

Joseph Mitchell thought that Gould's Oral History didn't exist. He was wrong. One woman

he begged, he wrote, he starved. “Met Joe il y a quelques jours & b jeezuz, never have I beheld a corpse walking,” E. E. Cummings wrote to Ezra Pound in 1935. Dwight Macdonald, an editor at the *Partisan Review*, addressed the question of storage: “He has in 25 years managed to fill incalculable notebooks which in turn fill incalculable boxes.” He kept them in numberless closets and countless attics. “The stack of manuscripts comprising the *Oral History* has passed 7 feet,” a reporter announced in 1941. Gould was five feet four. His friends wished to have that stack published. “I want to read Joe Gould’s *Oral History*,” the short-story writer William Saroyan declared. “Harcourt, Brace; Random House; Scribner’s; Viking; Houghton, Mifflin; Macmillan; Doubleday, Doran; Farrar and Rinehart; all of you—for the love of Mike, are you publishers, or not? If you are, print Joe Gould’s *Oral History*. Long, dirty, edited, unedited, *any* how—print it, that’s all.” No one ever did.

And no one knew quite where it was. “The *Oral History* is a great hodgepodge and kitchen midden of hearsay,” Joseph Mitchell reported in his first piece about Gould, published in *The New Yorker* in 1942. “It may well be the lengthiest unpublished work in existence.”

Mitchell hadn’t read more than a few pages. Gould had little use for readers. “I would continue to write if I were the sole survivor of the human race,” he said. It’s not as though no one had read the *Oral History*, but no one had read all of it, nine million words and counting. “Mr. Ezra Pound and I once saw a fragment of it running to perhaps 40,000 words,” Edward J. O’Brien, the editor of “Best American Short Stories,” testified, deeming it to have “considerable psychological and historical importance.” It was also a mess. Pound put it delicately: “Mr. Joe Gould’s prose style is uneven.” Gould had an answer for that. “My history is uneven,” he admitted. “It should be. It is an encyclopedia.”

It was, in any case, missing. Nearly everything Gould ever held in his hands slipped away. He lost his glasses; he lost his teeth. “I keep losing fountain pens, change, and even manuscripts,” he wrote. “I lost my diary in the toilet,” he reported one day. He himself appeared and disappeared.

He was forever falling apart, falling

down, disintegrating, descending. “If I am not careful, I will be again checked by a bad nervous breakdown,” he wrote to William Carlos Williams. If he hadn’t lost his spectacles, he had broken them. “I had a very bad fall, a day or so ago, and smashed my glasses completely,” he wrote to the critic Lewis Mumford. This got worse as he got older, and drunker. Writing—meaninglessly, endlessly—was all that held him together.

Early in 1943, just after *The New Yorker* published “Professor Sea Gull,”



Mitchell’s Profile of Gould, a policeman found Gould outside a bar on Twenty-third Street, bleeding from his head while reciting the *Oral History*. He’d fallen and cracked his skull. Not long after that, he and Mitchell had a talk. “I’m beginning to believe,” Mitchell blurted out, “that the *Oral History* doesn’t exist.” Mitchell told this story only after Gould’s death, in a second Profile, called “Joe Gould’s Secret”:

I knew as well as I knew anything that I had blundered upon the truth about the *Oral History*.

“My God!” I said. “It doesn’t exist.” I was appalled. “There isn’t any such thing as the *Oral History*,” I said. “It doesn’t exist.”

I stared at Gould, and Gould stared at me. His face was expressionless.

It didn’t exist. Or did it?

“I wrote all day,” he would write in his diary. “Wrote all day. Went to the library.” “Wrote.”

There ought to be a “Danger” sign. Writers tumble into this story, and then they plummet. I have always supposed this to be because Gould suffered from hypergraphia. He could not stop writing. This is an illness, a mania, but seems more like something a writer might envy, which feels even rottener than envy usually does, because Gould was a toothless madman who slept in the street. You are envying a bum: Has it come to this, at last? But then you’re relieved of the misery of that envy when you learn that what he wrote

was dreadful. Except, wait, that’s worse, because then you have to ask: Maybe everything you write is dreadful, too? But then, in one last twist, you find out that everything he wrote never even existed. Still, either way, honestly, it’s depressing as hell. So I got interested in knowing if any of it was true.

It began this winter, when I was teaching a course called “What Is Biography?” to sophomores at Harvard. For reading, I assigned not, strictly speaking, biographies but books that I love and that say something cautionary and wise about the error of believing that you can ever really know another person. (This happens to have been Gould’s definition of insanity. “The fallacy of dividing people into sane and insane lies in the assumption that we really do touch other lives,” he once wrote. “Hence I would judge the sanest man to be him who most firmly realizes the tragic isolation of humanity and pursues his essential purposes calmly.”) I’d included on the syllabus Julian Barnes’s “The Sense of an Ending,” a devastatingly beautiful novel, and Joseph Mitchell’s two Profiles of Joe Gould. Rereading Mitchell for the class, I remembered that much of the story has to do with Harvard, beginning with Gould’s claim that he had graduated with the Class of 1911. Then, there are the loose ends:

In his breast pocket, sealed in a dingy envelope, he always carries a will bequeathing two-thirds of the manuscript to the Harvard Library and the other third to the Smithsonian Institution. “A couple of generations after I’m dead and gone,” he likes to say, “the Ph.D.’s will start lousing through my work. Just imagine their surprise. ‘Why, I be damned, they’ll say, ‘this fellow was the most brilliant historian of the century.’”

Whatever happened to that will? Had Mitchell seen it? Had Gould made it up? Had Mitchell made it up? For that matter, what about the *Oral History*? Mitchell hadn’t seen it, and said Gould had made it up, but maybe Mitchell had made *that* up. Wouldn’t my students ask, “Isn’t it possible that the *Oral History* had once existed, and even that it still exists? Shouldn’t someone check?”

The day before class, I went to the library. I had this crazy idea: I wanted to find the lost archive.

Mitchell had gone to the library, too. And he’d read some “essay chapters” of the *Oral History*. But when Gould

failed to produce any “oral chapters” Mitchell told him that he would have to abandon the Profile. Gould then began reciting chapters from memory:

“This part of the Oral History is pretty gory,” he said. “It is called ‘Echoes from the Backstairs of Bellevue,’ and it is divided into sections, under such headings as ‘Spectacular Operations and Amputations,’ ‘Horrible Deaths,’ ‘Sadistic Doctors,’ ‘Alcoholic Doctors,’ ‘Drug-Addicted Doctors,’ ‘Women-Chasing Doctors,’ ‘Huge Tumors, Etc.,’ and ‘Strange Things Found During Autopsies.’”

When Mitchell went to the library, everything checked out. But when I went to the library, and into the archives, hardly anything checked out. And there’s the chasm. I fell right into it.

Joseph Ferdinand Gould did not graduate from Harvard in 1911. Instead, he had a breakdown. The Goulds had been strange for as long as anyone could remember, and Joe Gould was decidedly so. In his room at his parents’ house, in Norwood, Massachusetts, Gould had written all over the walls and all over the floor. He had a little sister, Hilda. She found him so embarrassing that she pretended he didn’t exist. He could master the smallest of details; he was put in charge of the town’s telephone service. He kept seagulls as pets, or said he had, and that he spoke their language: he would flap his hands, and skip, and caw.

Categories of illness are a function of history. That aside: hand-flapping—and screeching and tiptoe-walking—are today understood as symptoms of autism. Long ago, wouldn’t it have been clever, and comforting, for a boy who had no control over those behaviors to make up a story about how he was imitating a seagull?

Whatever was wrong with him he had suffered from childhood, and it affected his schoolwork. His senior year of high school, on admissions tests, he got four D’s and one E (which is what F’s used to be called). He was admitted to Harvard only because both his grandfather, who taught at Harvard Medical School, and his father, also a doctor, had gone to Harvard.

Young Joseph was meant to become a doctor, too. But during freshman year he flunked physics and chemistry. In history, he failed to turn in his final paper. “Joseph was in the office yesterday,” a college dean informed Gould’s father. “He has failed in practically all of his courses.” During his senior year, he had a break-

down and was kicked out. “Under the circumstances,” the chair of the Administrative Board informed Gould’s father, “I do not think that the Board would be inclined to allow him to return to College until he has shown his ability to do continuous work in a satisfactory manner.”

His father was furious. “A College should never become so big or impersonal that it tends to break, rather than make a boy,” he said. Hadn’t the faculty been able to see? “He is left handed, very near sighted and not very strong,” Gould’s father explained. “He writes slowly because of this so can not take very good notes.” He needed help.

I wrote all day. Wrote all day. Wrote. Wrote what?

I decided to retrace his steps. If Gould had actually written a history of the world and then lost it, maybe I could find it somewhere, along the side of the road.

“I began work on the Oral History—Meo Tempore—in October, 1916,” Gould once explained. Another time, he said that he started in 1914. Edward J. O’Brien was pretty sure he’d started in 1912, or even 1911.

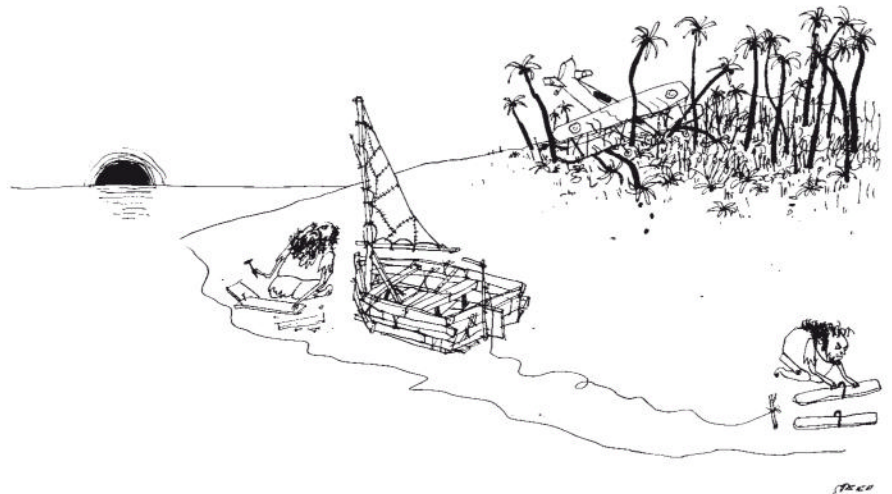
O’Brien and Gould had overlapped at Harvard, and knew the poet and critic William Stanley Braithwaite. Braithwaite’s father came from a wealthy British Guiana family; his mother was the daughter of a North Carolina slave. In 1911, O’Brien and Braithwaite began planning to launch a poetry magazine, and there seems to have been some suggestion that Gould would join the editorial staff.

Or maybe Gould imagined that. Many of his relationships with other people ex-

isted almost entirely in his head. His first collapse, in 1911, marked the beginning of his obsession with one particular kind of relationship: he believed that the contemplation of interracial sex elicits a disgust that “is felt with such violence that it is comparable to the extreme repugnance some people have to snakes.” It’s possible that he had been sexually rejected. “The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line,” W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in 1903. The problem of the color line was also the problem of Joe Gould’s unravelling mind.

Two months after Gould was kicked out of Harvard, the Boston *Globe* published a collection of essays on the “race question,” including one by Joseph F. Gould, the president of the Race Pride League. (As far as I can tell, the Race Pride League did not exist.) Gould wrote, “The man who opposes equal treatment for the colored race says, ‘If you ride on the same car with a negro you have to do business with him. If you do business with him you have to invite him to supper. If you invite him to supper he may marry your sister.’” The way to defeat this argument, Gould concluded—his was a strange, concocted Plessy v. Ferguson Garveyism—is to disentangle racial equality from racial mixture: keep the races apart and whites won’t object to equality with blacks.

Gould’s parents sent him on a five-hundred-mile walking trip to Canada. He talked to a lot of people, listened to their stories. He also had sex. “I have been bucked off a Cayuse three times in succession, and then on the fourth trial ridden it,” he wrote to Harvard in 1912, when he got back. His petition for readmission





"It's your captors. They want to know where you are."

was rejected. He had the idea of applying to the graduate school. "I think you could at any rate give me credit for persistence," he complained. Then he floated the idea of writing a thesis in history to make up his missing credits; no one on the faculty wanted to work with him.

I finished my day at the library, taught my class, and found that I could not stop. Gould was almost impossibly easy to trace. Every time I checked another archive, another library, it had sheaves of letters.

I pictured it like this: I'd dip those letters in a bath of glue and water—the black ink would begin to bleed—and I'd paste them over an armature I'd built out of seagull feathers and rolled-up old *New Yorkers*. I called my papier-mâché "White Man (Variation)."

In 1913, Gould began writing to Charles B. Davenport, the leader of the American eugenics movement. Gould wrote to eminences all over the world; very few people answered. He once tried to recruit Franz Boas for a campaign he was waging to aid Albania. "I think we have seen sufficiently clearly what that kind of 'help' leads to," Boas wrote back. Then he dropped the correspondence. You can usually tell, when you get the kind of letter Gould wrote, that you are dealing with someone unhinged. Davenport couldn't tell.

Gould had learned about Davenport's work when he took a class called "Variation and Heredity." Davenport had founded the Eugenics Record Office, in Cold Spring Harbor, New York. "The race question," Gould told him, "is largely one of eugenics." People fall in love across the color line, and other people don't love them back. He had an idea. He would write a very long book, an epic novel: "I have in mind the writing of a fictitious genealogy of the descendants of a slave brought here in 1619, with an attempt to show all the phases of degeneration or progress which resulted from the introduction of the Negro into this country." He didn't say what he planned to call it. I think of it as "Un-Beloved."

Gould also told Davenport that he had made a "startling discovery": people who hate Jews don't hate blacks, and people who hate blacks don't hate Jews. This led him to a hypothesis: "The Jew and the Negro are physically and temperamentally antipodes." He wished to test this theory in the field.

Davenport had no interest in Gould's ideas about racial prejudice; what he wanted was help documenting the degenerative effects of the darker races on the whiter ones. Gould invited him to speak at Harvard (where Gould was trying to make up his missing credits

by taking exams), at the Cosmopolitan Club, whose members included students from all over the world. Gould also told Davenport that he was about to become the editor of a new, cosmopolitan magazine, *Four Seas*, whose features would include "the life-story in serial numbers of Plenyono Gbe Wolo," a Harvard student from Liberia. He invited Davenport to write a regular column called "The Newer Race."

Gould never became the editor of anything. Instead, he wrote book reviews for *The Nation* and for *The Crisis*, the magazine of the N.A.A.C.P. He condemned "America's Greatest Problem: The Negro," by R. W. Shufeldt ("He adopts any pseudo-scientific work which strengthens his case") and praised Carter G. Woodson's history of black education ("One colored man at least sees that the hope of his race lies in the appeal to history"). He gave a lecture on "Some Phases of Negro and Negro-Indian Family History" before the Boston Negro Business League, promising Davenport, "There will be enough sugar-coating of interesting history to suggest to the members the desirability of collecting their family records."

In 1915, Gould applied for work at the Eugenics Record Office. "Has done some historical writing," one of his interviewers noted. "Is a radical in politics." Another wrote, "Spells of depression . . . violent temper." Ought he to be allowed to breed? "Glasses at 17," Gould wrote on his application form, noting his inherited defects. He had already lost most of his hair. On the other hand: "Good teeth." He supplied the required pedigree chart, tracing the trait of his "temper" back through three generations: the madness of the Goulds.

He was sent to North Dakota to conduct measurements on Indians. Using calipers, he was supposed to measure their arms, legs, heads, and noses. Using a top designed by Milton Bradley as a child's toy, he was to record skin color. The idea was to attach differently colored cards to the top and then spin it, switching one card for another, until the color of the spinning top matched the color of the subject's skin. This, this: this was the madness of the color line.

Gould wrote Davenport that he wished his training had included information about venereal disease. (He may

have contracted a form of syphilis that later infected his brain.) “The life of the Indian is more influenced by sex than ours,” Gould reported. He’d met a man named Four Times (“an allusion to four successive acts of sexual intercourse”), and a woman named Big Vagina. Then, too: “One man was named Goes-to-bed-with-a-man.” Years later, when he was floridly mad and living in Greenwich Village, Gould would turn up drunk at parties, strip naked, stand on a table, demand a ruler, and measure his penis.

He encountered many obstacles. The shades on his set of Bradley tops were all wrong: “The red used for Negroes is too dark for the Indian.” Also, people refused to be measured. They had abundant reason. The purpose of the work Gould was doing was to help the U.S. government resolve a series of lawsuits involving the selling off of reservation land by “mixed-bloods” whose authority was disputed by “full-bloods”: Gould, with his little top, was supposed to determine which Indians were the reddest.

He wrote to Harvard, asking to be allowed to make up his outstanding credits by taking the examination in a class taught by the anthropologist Earnest Allen Hooton. Hooton had no use for people he called “ethnomaniacs,” who “talk of the psychological characteristics of this or that race as if they were objective tangible properties, scientifically demonstrated.” There was no evidence whatsoever to support that position, he said, and, in any case, “most if not all peoples are racially mixed.”

Gould passed Hooton’s exam, changed his mind about race mixture, got his degree, and, in 1916, moved to New York, where he wrote an essay about the institutional care of the insane and began telling everyone who would listen that he was the most brilliant historian of the twentieth century, that he was writing a history of the world, and that it would last as long as the English language.

Two writers guard an archive. One writes Fiction; the other writes Fact. To get past them, you have to figure out which is which. Mitchell said that Gould made things up. But Gould said that Mitchell did.

Mitchell said he believed that Gould only thought he had written the Oral History. He said he believed this because

he had done the same thing himself regarding the novel he’d meant to produce. “Sometimes, in the course of a subway ride, I would write three or four chapters,” Mitchell explained. “But the truth is, I never actually wrote a word of it.” Asked why he was so fascinated by Gould, Mitchell said, “Because he is me.” Gould saw this—“He has pictured me as the sort of person he would like to be”—and he resented it. “I feel as if I was only a figment of your imagination,” he told Mitchell. He was not wrong: it has since come out that Mitchell routinely invented quotes and even whole scenes, and once wrote an entire Profile about a man who did not exist.

“Joe Gould’s Secret” is a defense of invention. Mitchell took something that wasn’t beautiful, the sorry fate of a broken man, and made it beautiful—a fable about art. “Joe Gould’s Secret” is the best story many people have ever read. Its truth is, in a Keatsian sense, its beauty; its beauty, truth.

I began to regret having gone to the library, that first day, to see if it was true, in the drearier, Baconian sense: “Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men’s minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves?” The more I learned, the uglier it got.

“Not an alcoholic, not psychopathic,” Mitchell wrote in his notes, recording things that Gould told him. Why take Gould’s word for it? Because modernist writers and artists preferred to believe that Gould was an artist, suffering for his art, suffering for *their* art.

“I thought of Joe as a kind of hero,” Mitchell said. Not me. But I was too curious to stop.

I have never listened to Joe Gould call out, skipping along the streets, flapping like a seagull, “Scree-eek! Scree-eek! Scree-eek!” I couldn’t hear him. But I could read him. And Mitchell could not. All those letters that I found in archives all over the country? They weren’t in archives when Mitchell was writing about Gould; they were stashed in people’s desks and closets and attics. Mitchell’s own papers arrived at the New York Public Library only this

April. Once the semester had ended, I took a train to New York to see them.

In 1964, in “Joe Gould’s Secret,” Mitchell said that he’d tried and tried to read the Oral History in 1942, without success, but that he took its existence on faith, because he’d done a great deal of other research about Gould’s life, and everything else checked out. Only after “Professor Sea Gull” appeared did he change his mind. Mitchell then decided, out of kindness, not to reveal Gould’s secret. He revisited this decision in August, 1957, when, after Gould’s death, Edward Gottlieb, the editor of the Long Island *Press*, asked him to join a search for the Oral History. This is how Mitchell ends “Joe Gould’s Secret”:

Joe Gould wasn’t even in his grave yet, he wasn’t even cold yet, and this was no time to be telling his secret. It could keep. Let them go ahead and look for the Oral History, I thought. After all, I thought, I could be wrong. Hell, I thought—and the thought made me smile—maybe they’ll find it.

Gottlieb repeated his question, this time a little impatiently. “You will be on the committee, won’t you?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said, continuing to play the role I had stepped into the afternoon I discovered that the Oral History did not exist—a role that I am only now stepping out of. “Of course I will.”

This is true only in spirit. Aside from a brief telephone conversation with Dav-enport, who told him that Gould was “erratic,” Mitchell’s only source for Gould’s life before New York was Gould. Nearly all the research Mitchell said he’d done in 1942 actually occurred in the years after Gould’s death, when he searched—genuinely, and tirelessly—for the Oral History. He looked everywhere. He went to the house where Gould had grown up. The woman who lived there told him that she’d found in the attic dusty cardboard boxes full of Gould’s old books and notebooks. In the end, she said, “I took it out to the Norwood Public Dump.”

Then: Mitchell waited. It was a gamble to say that the Oral History didn’t exist when he couldn’t prove it. He clipped obituaries. Cummings died in 1962. After *The New Yorker* published “Joe Gould’s Secret,” in September, 1964, what Mitchell must have feared came to pass: people began writing and calling to tell him that he was wrong.

One letter that arrived that fall was from a woman named Florence Lowe. “My husband and I were his closest friends,” she wrote. Gould had given her

one of his notebooks in 1923. Mitchell asked to see it. Lowe mailed Mitchell the notebook in December. She didn't hear from him for two months, so she wrote again, asking him if he'd got it. He wrote back and asked whether he might keep it, to give to the New York Public Library. She consented. "If you ever need any pre-Village Joe Gould, let me know," she added. "I have trunks full!" He did not ask for more.

The notebook is dated 1922. It is titled "Meo Tempore. Seventh Version. Volume II." Sitting at a library table, I laid that notebook flat, gripped with an uncertain fear. I pictured Mitchell at his desk, his head in his hands:

When Mr. Coan was a reporter, he heard President Taft speak to a group of suffragists. He happened to mention some man who opposed that measure, and they hissed, not intending disrespect to him, but to show their disapproval of that particular gent. Taft seemed quite huffed about it. He stopped his speech off short to say, "If you women desire a share in the representation of government, you should learn self-control."

This isn't uninteresting, but its worth would seem to depend on whether there's a vast amount more of it. Still, it *is* oral history.

"I wish I had had this information when I wrote the second Profile," Mitchell told people who wrote to him, "and if I ever write another article about Joe Gould, which I may do, I'd like very much to have a talk with you."

It's a piece of lore that after Mitchell wrote "Joe Gould's Secret" he never wrote another story ever again, not any-

thing about Gould, not anything about anything, even though he came to the office every day until his death, in 1996. That's not quite true, but it's nearly true. In the Keatsian sense.

I picked up the notebook, and turned the page.

"Meo Tempore. Seventh Version. Volume II" also contains an essay written in Gould's hand. It is titled "Insanity." I peered at the page of white with veins of blue. And there I read, "If we could see ourselves as we really are, life would be insupportable."

"Insanity is a topic of peculiar interest to me," Gould explained. He had toured New York's insane asylums as part of his eugenics training. He'd met a woman in a ward at Central Islip: sometimes she thought she was a cat, sometimes a mouse. "Is there really much difference between her and a sane person, after all?" Gould asked. "We all spend our lives chasing into darkness."

He tried to enlist in the Army: he was rejected three times. For a while, he worked as a reporter for the *Evening Mail*. "One of my most interesting stunts is visiting Negro Harlem," he wrote in 1923. "I know a very attractive sculptress there named Augusta Savage." ("I fell in love with her at first sight," he later wrote.) In Greenwich Village, he met up with men he'd known at Harvard, like E. E. Cummings. He was always most comfortable with Ivy League men, New England men, "old American stock." They found him amusing, his eccentricity, his anger—his

madness—exotic. Cummings turned one of Gould's witticisms into verse:

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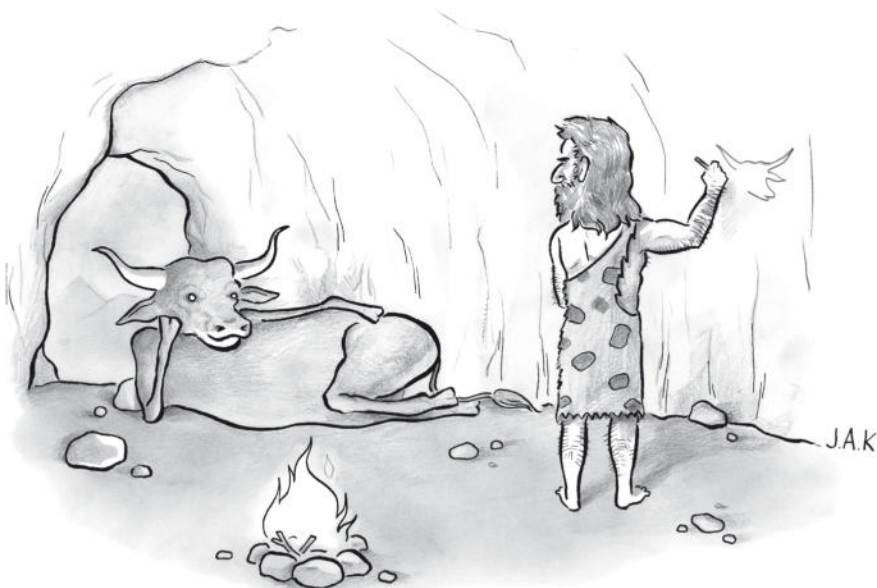
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Cummings and the writer Slater Brown had spent four months together in a prison in France during the war: Cummings had written an autobiographical novel about it, called "The Enormous Room." Brown and Malcolm Cowley were editors of an avant-garde literary magazine called *Broom*. In 1923, *Broom* published "Chapter CCCLXVIII of Joseph Gould's History of the Contemporary World." It reads like a parody.

Still, it earned Gould the rather serious attention of Ezra Pound, in Italy. Pound, having also read chapters of the history that Gould had sent to Edward J. O'Brien, deemed Gould vastly more original than, say, Robert Frost. He appears to have been drawn to Gould's theory about hating blacks versus hating Jews. "There is an infinite gulf between Mr Frost on New England customs, and Mr Gould on race prejudice," Pound wrote. He wished to see the entire Oral History published. He proposed sending the manuscript to the publisher Horace Liveright. "I am not on very good terms with him," Gould answered. "He kept insisting that because I was intelligent I must have Jewish blood." Gould told Pound, on one occasion, that he hated "that boot licking keik Paul Rosenfeld" (Rosenfeld was a critic), and, on another, that he wished "the literary world were not quite as lousy with keik pants-pressers" (the poet Louis Zukofsky's father was a Yiddish-speaking pants presser).

Cummings tried to arrange for Simon & Schuster—he called the firm Shoeman & Scheister—to read the



history, but Gould refused to hand over his notebooks. His grandiosity made any editorial conversation difficult. "I do not see any point in submitting my work to your splendid mausoleum of European reputations," Gould told Marianne Moore, at *The Dial*. But, once he bared his teeth at her and she didn't flinch, he was courteous to Moore, who published two chapters of the Oral History, in 1929. Moore asked to see more, but *The Dial* folded three months later. This inspired Gould's only well-known piece of writing:

Who killed the *Dial*?

I, said Joe Gould, with my inimitable style.

Then he had another breakdown, and became convinced that he was going blind.

Maybe what looked like contradictions weren't contradictions at all but were, instead, evidence of a pattern. He wrote it; he lost it. He was a genius; he was going blind. Mitchell either didn't notice this—he didn't have Gould's letters, and had very little sense of him as a man with a past, a man trapped by time, worsening each year—or he didn't care. I don't think he was especially interested in reading the Oral History when he first met Gould. It made a better story in 1942 if it existed; it made a better story in 1964 if it didn't.

"Millen Brand has read a great deal of the history," Gould told Mitchell in 1942. Mitchell wrote that down but made no effort to speak with Brand. In 1964, Brand was one of the people who wrote to Mitchell to complain. "Much as I hate to detract from the fine effect of your articles," Brand wrote, "Joe showed me long sections of the Oral History that were actually oral history," full of "fragments of heard speech here and there, and the longest stretch of it, running through several composition books and much the longest thing probably that he ever wrote, was his account of Augusta Savage, the Negro sculptress. This was full of orality and talk and was a fairly fascinating and skillful piece of writing."

Savage was three years younger than Gould. She had a very soft voice. As a girl, in Florida, she loved to sculpt out of mud. She married when she was fifteen, had a child, and was widowed. In 1921, she'd moved to New York, where she pretended to be unmarried and later introduced her daughter as her sister. "Miss Savage" en-

rolled at Cooper Union, supporting herself by cleaning houses and doing laundry. In April, 1923, she won admission to the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts, in France, but was rejected when the selection committee found out that she was black. Urged on by W.E.B. Du Bois, she protested, publicly. That October, she married a Marcus Garvey supporter named Robert L. Poston, a writer for *Negro World*; he died the following spring, of pneumonia, while returning from Liberia. Savage gave birth to a daughter named Roberta; the baby died ten days later.

In 1926, Savage had nearly left New York for the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, an escape arranged by Du Bois. Instead, she'd had to stay in New York, taking in laundry and supporting seven members of her family—refugees from a hurricane—in her tiny apartment on 137th Street. That apartment was at the heart of the Harlem Arts movement. "Now to Augusta's party," the poet Richard Bruce Nugent wrote, "fy-ahs / gonna burn ma soul." With Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, Savage planned a magazine called *Fire!!* She made a work of clay called "The New Negro." This, like the majority of Savage's art, is now lost. She never cast most of her work; she couldn't afford bronze, or time in a foundry. And then there was the difficulty with Gould.

Gould wanted to marry her. He wrote her endless letters. He telephoned her constantly. When she drew away from him, he blamed her for the loss of his sanity, the state of the world, the condition of humanity. "If you really believe in racial equality," he once wrote to her, "you will try and come to my party." He hardly ever left her alone. Gould told Millen Brand that he and Savage had had a misunderstanding. "In my then young, still somewhat naïve state, I bought this story," Brand wrote to Mitchell.

Brand's most critically acclaimed work is a best-selling novel, "The Outward Room" (1937), in which, in an Islington asylum (a thinly disguised Central Islip), a patient listens to the same record over and over, "on and on, unchanging, in a continual unchanging repetition." Brand had worked as a psychiatric aid and knew well that, at the time, the treatment for insanity was confinement itself, the relentlessly dull routine a remedy for the disorder of a diseased mind. Brand wasn't sure what to make of Gould's behavior.

"How much of this was incipient pathology in Joe and how much plain villainy is hard to tell," he wrote to Mitchell.

In 1929, Savage won an artistic fellowship. She went to Paris, where she worked with black female models to produce work in wood and clay and bronze: figures of black women reclining, dancing, fighting, thinking. "It is African in feeling but modern in design," Savage said of her work. "But whatever else might be said it *is* original."

That year, Gould wrote a short story titled "The Proud Man and the Colored Singer." It's the story of a not at all disguised Gould, the proud John Blye, who falls in love with an artist, not a sculptor here but a singer without a name. God decides to break Blye's pride by sending him a beautiful black woman. "He had never expected to fall in love with any woman whose ancestral bones were not mingled with those of his own progenitors," Gould wrote. But "when John Blye first met the Colored Singer a most remarkable transformation came over him and in a flash all his pride disappeared." To earn her love, he uses genealogy, hoping to prove that some African blood flowed in his veins, too. When that fails—"chronology seemed to interfere with the pedigree that his hypothesis demanded"—he decides to "think of himself as the Negro that he wanted to be": he wills himself to turn black. At the end of the story, the Colored Singer smiles and says, "You are looking darker, Mr. Blye."

By then, Gould was in the Outward Room. He never acknowledged having been committed. He liked to say, "I'm my own sanitarium. I sort of carry it around with me." He had certain ruses, little concealments. "I have been in a very unsettled condition," he wrote to William Carlos Williams in August of 1929, from a Central Islip post-office box. He said that he was living on a chicken farm, and would be back soon. He'd always told Mitchell that he stored most of his notebooks on a chicken farm in Long Island. That chicken farm was a thousand-acre farm in Central Islip, known as the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane.

For a time, Gould got back on his feet. Malcolm Cowley hired him as a regular reviewer for *The New Republic*, where his reviews appeared alongside essays by Edmund Wilson. But then he

was arrested for assaulting two women. “Are you plunderable?” he would say to men, asking for money. But “Are you gropable?” was closer to the question he asked women, especially “colored girls,” except that he usually didn’t ask. Entries from his diary read like this: “I felt some breasts”; “I got two other women to kiss me.” Brand tried to protect Savage. Gould’s other friends, instead, protected Gould. Mitchell knew about this, and ignored it. In 1942, Horace Gregory told Mitchell that in 1930, after an “old maid” had Gould arrested, he and Edmund Wilson signed statements attesting to Gould’s sanity in order to keep him out of an asylum. (Cummings testified, too.) Gould was released.

This little fraternity then began attempting to get Gould publicity. The idea seems to have been that, if Gould were better known, he could get off the street, and he would either stop bothering women or (as would turn out to be the case) he could more easily get away with it.

“Some of my friends were rather worried about the threat to my liberty,” Gould wrote to Pound, “and as a result Horace Gregory placed an article on me with ‘The New Republic.’” Gregory’s essay, “Pepys on the Bowery,” appeared in April, 1931. “The history, a library in itself, is written in longhand on the pages of fifty to a hundred high-school copy books,” Gregory reported. “It is in its eighth definitive version.” In 1942, Gregory told Mitchell that he had read at least fifty of Gould’s notebooks and found them “extremely interesting,” with “flashes of New England wit” and “great clarity of expression,” but that much of it was unprintable “because of obscenity.” Mitchell set this aside.

Savage returned from Paris in September, 1931. “Something typical, racial, and distinctive is emerging in Negro art in America,” she said. She opened a school, the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts. Her most important work, she always said, was as a teacher. She was named the first director of the Harlem Community Art Center. She founded a club called the Vanguard, to talk politics and ideas. The F.B.I. began investigating her. Gould kept bothering her. Brand went to talk to Savage, in an attempt to patch things up between them. Brand wrote Mitchell, in a letter I read

in Mitchell’s papers at the N.Y.P.L., “Her face clouded up and she hesitated, but angrily she seemed to decide to tell me what was really doing. Joe was making her life utterly miserable.” After Savage refused to see Gould, Gould asked Brand to deliver to her the chapters of the Oral History that concerned her. He wrote Brand that Savage, in denying that she and Gould had been intimate, was lying: “White women have had affairs with colored men, and then have accused



them of rape to protect themselves, and she is doing something equally yellow.”

Brand told Gould to leave Savage alone. (“It was evident that as a Negro she hesitated to take court action,” Brand explained to Mitchell.) Gould then started calling Brand and his wife, the deaf poet Pauline Leader, in the middle of the night, shouting obscenities, and sending them endless letters: “These were of the most open depravity from end to end.”

I figured Brand must’ve saved those letters. I got on a bike and rode to Columbia, where, in an uncatalogued box of Brand’s papers, I found a thick folder marked with a note: “Not to be released for use until my death.” Inside the folder were four chapters of Gould’s Oral History, together with a clutch of horrible letters. “If I prefer to woo an American woman to a greasy neurotic Jewess with breath stinking of herring,” Gould wrote to Leader, “do I have to ask your approval?” At any rate, he now insisted, he didn’t want Savage anymore: “I would prefer not to marry her because she is sterile.”

Brand saw a side of Gould he had never seen before. He went to the police and got a summons for Gould’s arrest—“I was not a Negro woman, and I wasn’t taking it,” he later wrote—but Gould begged him to drop the charges, “saying he had already been taken to court on a similar charge and had received a suspended sentence, but if I went through with this, he would certainly be put in jail and he needed care-

ful treatment of his eyes and would probably go blind.” Brand backed down.

Gould applied for a Guggenheim Fellowship. Henry Allen Moe, the head of the Guggenheim Foundation, asked Gould to submit portions of the manuscript. Gould stalled, missed a deadline, and was rejected, twice. He began sending Moe vicious letters, yelling at him in public, asking for cash and then demanding it, and, meanwhile, attacking the foundation for discriminating against men of “old American stock . . . in favor of the predatory type of recent coolie immigrant such as the original Guggenheim.”

He was getting worse. He was sad; he was scary. Cowley fired him. He smelled; he was covered with sores and infected with bedbugs. He was terribly, terribly ill. E. E. Cummings made him sit on the windowsill so that he wouldn’t leave lice on the furniture. People would spray the room with a DDT gun as soon as he left. When the artist Erika Feist saw Gould coming up the stairs, she would call out to her husband, “Quick, Henry, the Flit!”

I’d head to this library or that, to photograph Gould’s letters and diaries, and I’d imagine that my camera was a can of Flit. I began to think, Joe Gould is contagious.

He lost his teeth. “The first thing they did with all patients was take out all their teeth,” the psychiatrist Muriel Gardiner wrote of her residency at a psychiatric hospital at the time. (The theory, she said, was that “mental illness of any sort was always the result of a physical infection.”) He lost his fakes. He went on the dole. Cummings, whose sister was a social worker, wrote to Pound, “My sister says that if Joe can only keep on relief for a few years he’ll have a new set of somebody’s teeth.”

In 1936, Gould got a job with the Federal Writers’ Project. He told the *Herald Tribune* that he was writing a biographical dictionary of New York’s earliest settlers. He said that he was doing it alone—“I’m a one-man project”—because he was a better writer than everyone else.

Augusta Savage worked for the W.P.A., too, as the assistant director of the Federal Arts Project. She helped found the Harlem Artists Guild, and organized an exhibit at the 135th Street branch of the public library, telling Arthur Schomburg that she wanted the

world “to see Harlem through Harlem’s eyes.” She was commissioned to make a sculpture for the 1939 World’s Fair. She was featured in *Life*.

Gould was trying to get into national magazines, too. “GING to git you to git some of JOE’s oral HISTORY fer Esquire,” Pound wrote to Cummings. O’Brien proposed *Vanity Fair*. Or maybe he could get himself profiled in *The New Yorker*. Gould took to saying, “I make good copy.”

“YOU might write a nize lil piece say harft a page about Joe’s ORAL hizzery, And mebbe that wd/start som-fink IF you make it clear and EGGs plain WHY Joe izza hiz torian,” Pound suggested to Cummings in 1938. “The COUNTRY needs (hell yes) an historian,” he’d written to Cummings earlier. In 1939, Pound visited the United States. He had become a Fascist. He wanted to make an argument about history, which was that democracy was impossible, since the world was secretly run by Jews.

When Pound returned to Italy, he and Cummings redoubled their attempts to get the Oral History published. It was likely through their efforts that, in 1941, William Saroyan published an essay called “How I Met Joe Gould.” “Joe Gould remains one of the few genuine and original American writers,” Saroyan said, in a tribute that sums up exactly what modernists saw in Gould. “He was easy and uncluttered, and almost all other American writing was uneasy and cluttered.” Meanwhile, in speeches on Italian radio Pound began attacking the Allies. “You let in the Jew and the Jew rotted your empire,” he said in March, 1942. Mitchell began interviewing Gould that June. “Within the year there will be a profile of me printed in the New Yorker,” Gould wrote in October.

“Professor Sea Gull” appeared in *The New Yorker* in December. “Joe Gould is a blithe and emaciated little man who has been a notable in the cafeterias, diners, barrooms, and dumps of Greenwich Village for a quarter of a century,” the piece begins. It is immensely charming, and in it Gould is a delightful eccentric, a strange little man wandering the streets, harmlessly, in a world at war.

“The article was about ten per cent accurate,” Gould wrote to Mumford when

the magazine hit newsstands, “but it has established me along with the Empire State building as one of the sights of the town.” That kind of attention was not something a man in severe decline could easily take. Gould got so drunk that he fell down the stairs of a bar. On January 13, 1943, he went to Slater Brown’s for dinner. (Brown lived two floors above Cummings.) He said he felt dizzy. Later that night, he was found lying in a pool of blood in the street. He was taken to St. Vincent’s and released, but was so concussed and psychotic that, after wandering the city, he was taken to Bellevue, where he was unable to identify himself. After Brown finally found him—he went looking for him because Gould had failed to turn up for dinner for weeks—Cummings arranged for a psychiatrist to see him. The psychiatrist had Gould committed.

“I am now at the Manhattan State Hospital,” Gould wrote to Mitchell on April 3, 1943. He said that he hoped Mitchell might consider revising “Professor Sea Gull,” to correct its errors of fact. Mitchell went to see him. “They had cut his hair and shaved off most of his beard, leaving him a clipped mustache and a Van Dyke,” Mitchell wrote. “He said they have changed him in appearance from Trotsky to Lenin.” He was given the diagnosis of “a psychopathic personality.”

By summer, Gould was out. He began,

once again, hounding everyone he knew. It was around this time that Savage left Manhattan, her friends, her studio, and her school, and moved to Saugerties, New York, into a house that had no electricity and no plumbing, where she scratched together a meagre living, farming. She died in poverty and obscurity in 1962.

Brown arranged for Max Perkins, at Scribner’s, to read some of Gould’s notebooks. “I believe there is a fifty-fifty chance of Scribner’s taking my book,” Gould wrote to Mitchell. “I hope so. They are a good firm and deserve a break.” He would drop off a chapter; Perkins would have it typed. Then they would have an editorial talk. “He liked it very much,” Gould wrote in his diary, but “he was still puzzled by the problem of the unity of the book.” And then Perkins would buy the notebook: he paid Gould a dollar.

On March 4, 1944, Gould heard that “a wealthy refugee doctor, who loved to shell out . . . thought she could publish my book.” She offered to pay for his room and board, anonymously, to allow him to finish writing. Two weeks later, Gould went into the hospital and stayed for a month. In his diary, he wrote about meeting a female doctor: “Doctor Gardner.”

Gould never learned the identity of his patroness, but she was the psychiatrist Muriel Gardiner. Gardiner was born Muriel Morris, in Chicago in



“First, let him look at the night sky, so he’ll realize how insignificant he is.”



"I remember when you could only lose a chess game to a supercomputer."

1901, an heir to two meatpacking fortunes. She studied at Wellesley, then at Oxford. In 1926, she went to Vienna, to be analyzed by Ruth Mack Brunswick, a disciple of Freud's. Sergei Pankejeff, a Russian aristocrat who was also a patient of Brunswick's, taught Gardiner Russian. Pankejeff is better known as the Wolf-Man: he had been the subject of one of Freud's most important case studies. In 1926 and 1927, Gardiner lived in Greenwich Village. Returning to Austria, she went to medical school at the University of Vienna. In the nineteen-thirties, she worked for the Resistance, securing false passports for Jewish families and arranging their escape. For a time, she also hid Joseph Buttinger, the head of Austria's Socialist underground; they later married. Gardiner and Buttinger moved to the United States in 1939. They kept an apartment in New York. Buttinger headed an international aid organization; Gardiner began a psychiatric internship in New Jersey. She also set up a charitable foundation to give away her money, anonymously. She was zealous about her privacy.

Gardiner's interest in the strange case of Professor Sea Gull was clinical. "There is a type of alcoholic or psychopath who can go ahead and accomplish something if he has a little security," she explained.

She'd always been fascinated by the hardest patients. During the years in which she was supporting Gould, she was also translating a memoir written by Pankejeff; she later wrote about what painting meant to him. She believed in rescue, and especially in rescuing intellectuals.

In May of 1945, while Gardiner was supporting Gould, Pound was arrested in Italy. He was jailed in an iron cage, and examined by a team of psychiatrists, who found him mentally unstable. In November, 1945, he was remanded to the United States and committed to an insane asylum outside Washington, D.C. Gould wrote a poem:

Once lost now found
 Poor Ezra Pound
 Is not a hound.
 His mind's unsound.

He felt that he understood Pound: "I believe he would have snapped out of it if the course of events had been different." *Because he is me.*

Gould considered his anonymous patroness's support the fellowship he had never got; he said that he was "being moderately guggenheimed." Still, he started hounding people for money again—not for himself, he said, but for Pound. Two undergraduates, reporters for the *Harvard Crimson*, E. L. Hendel and M. S. Singer, went to New York to

interview him. "They seemed naïve," Gould wrote in his diary. But they weren't so very naïve. They reported, "One of these days, someone is going to write an article on Joseph Ferdinand Gould '11 for the Reader's Digest. It will be entitled 'The Most Unforgettable Character I Have Met' and it will present Joe Gould as an unusual but lovable old man. Joe Gould is not a lovable old man."

In October, 1947, Gardiner told Gould's friends that she intended to stop supporting him at the end of the year. They begged her to reconsider. Gardiner refused. On December 2, 1947, Gould wrote to Cummings, "I managed to get a pair of glasses and lost them." Then he crossed that out, because he'd found them: "Besppectacled apologies!!!" Six days later, Pound asked Cummings whether "Jo iz nuts." Cummings wrote back, "The question Is Joe Gould Crazy strikes me as, putting it very mildly, irrelevant. For 'crazy' implies either(crazy) or(not)." And then: Professor Sea Gull disappeared.

Gould spent the last years of his life at Pilgrim State Hospital, in Islip, the largest mental institution in the world. I don't know what was done to him there. The hospital declined my request for his medical records, citing not federal law (which would have allowed the release of those records) but a state policy that effectively protects not Gould's privacy but the hospital's. Gould's confinement at Pilgrim State coincided with the most troubling era in the troubling history of the treatment of mental illness.

Pilgrim State, which opened in 1931, began administering electroshock treatments in 1940. Patients suffering from manic depression responded best, the hospital's director, Harry J. Worthing, reported; psychotics less well. Electroshock was used even on those for whom "recovery cannot be anticipated"; it left patients "quieter and more manageable." Doctors at Pilgrim began conducting prefrontal lobotomies in 1945, and launched a formal, two-year study in 1947. Their research set the standard for the procedure. By the end of the study, three hundred and fifty patients had been lobotomized: sixty-five had gone home; the rest were either still in the hospital or dead. But this counted as success, since what Worthing reported was relief from

the previous treatment (“chronic sedation and restraint”) and a mitigation of pain: after the surgery, patients suffered less, because they felt less.

“Cases are chosen primarily on the basis of their intractable course and their resistance to the usual procedures,” Worthing explained. As with shock, lobotomy was recommended even for patients for whom no recovery was expected, since it made them easier to manage. By 1948, doctors at Pilgrim were lobotomizing more than two hundred patients a year. The patient’s consent was not required.

Reporting on his work in a scientific journal, Worthing presented the case of a man who was Gould’s age, fit his description, and had his symptoms:

Case No. 231. Aged 57, this man was diagnosed dementia praecox, paranoid, onset “more than 10 years ago.” There were delusions of persecution, economic incapacity, withdrawal from the family, letters to authorities. He was admitted to Pilgrim State Hospital in 1947. In the hospital, he was furiously resistive, actively hallucinated, resentful, grandiose, unapproachable. Attempts to administer electric shock resulted in such combat that cardiac collapse was feared, in view of his age. Finally, he went on a hunger strike for several months and resisted tube-feeding so violently that this procedure was undertaken very reluctantly. Death seemed likely. Lobotomy was done on February 8, 1949, followed by the immediate cessation of the hunger strike. The patient admitted that he had been “imagining things.” He became friendly and approachable. On close examination, residual psychotic content was noted. There was cessation of paranoid letter-writing. This man was released June 4, 1949. On first report, he was comfortable, but economically dependent. He was well-behaved. “No loss of intelligence in conversation” was observed, but “no will to work.”

Between December 2, 1947, when Gould wrote to Cummings—“Bespectacled apologies!!!”—and May, 1949, when he sent a pained letter to William Carlos Williams—“I am now slowly coming to life again. I will have to rewrite a great deal of my history. That scares me as I seem to have lost much of my initial urge”—no letter in his hand survives. If Gould was not Case No. 231, he was very like him. After writing to Williams, Gould wrote one more letter—to Cummings, in September, 1949—and then, as far as I can tell, none, ever again. If he was indeed lobotomized, the treatment alleviated at least one of his symptoms: “letter-writing.”

In February, 1950, Gould was admitted to Bellevue. In October, 1951, Colleen Chassan, who was the daughter of Gould’s sister, Hilda, and grew up not knowing that she had an uncle, read “McSorley’s Wonderful Saloon,” a collection of Mitchell’s stories, and went to every place Mitchell had mentioned in “Professor Sea Gull,” trying to find Gould. Finally, she saw him. “He was very dirty, his suit was too large,” she remembered. “His nose was running, and he didn’t do anything about it.” He had difficulty speaking. She said, “I felt that I had come too late.”

In 1952, Gould was admitted to Columbus Hospital and transferred to Pilgrim. He never left. He had no visitors. On Monday, August 19, 1957, Worthing sent a telegram to Slater Brown telling him that Gould had died: “IF YOU CAN CARE FOR REMAINS OR KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF HIS FAMILY PLEASE CONTACT HOSP IMMEDIATELY.” Mitchell got the news, by telephone, from Edward Gottlieb:

We spoke for a few minutes about how sad it was, and then I asked him if Gould had left any papers.

“No,” he said. “None at all. As the man at the hospital said, ‘Not a scratch.’”

He left no will. On Wednesday, Mitchell was asked to deliver the eulogy at Gould’s funeral; he said that he would be out of town. *Time* ran an obituary: “Gould had no known relatives but many friends, including Poet E. E. Cummings, Artist Don Freeman, Writers Malcolm Cowley and William Saroyan.” Not one of them showed up for his funeral.

“Gould always said that he wanted his Oral History of the World printed posthumously,” the editor of the New York *World Telegram* wrote to Cummings. “Could you tell me perhaps where I could locate it?” Cummings wrote to Pound, who was still locked up in an insane asylum in Washington. On April 14, 1958, Pound wrote to Cummings, “Am doin wot I kan to hellup yr friends edit Joe Gould.” Four days later, Pound was released.

Colleen Chassan engaged a family friend, Mary L. Holman, to conduct a search for the manuscript. The Harvard Library examined its records and determined that Gould had never arranged any gift. In Greenwich Village, the search for the Oral History was led by a sketchy

character named James Nalbud, who sent a letter to the *Harvard Crimson*, inviting undergraduates to join a treasure hunt. He posted flyers all over New York, offering a twenty-five-dollar reward for any leads. He sent out a form typed on a postcard:

What was the largest number of Joe’s note books you saw? _____

In crates, suitcases, bales, loose (check)

Did you examine and read any of the books? _____

How many? _____ Form an opinion? _____

Did you at any time own or store any of the books? _____

Mitchell’s own search lasted years. He must have been so haunted.

“You solve the problem of escape by being an expatriate,” Gould once wrote to Pound. “I am an extemporate.”

He believed he’d lived outside of time. He believed he’d escaped.

At the end, at the very end, I found in the archives a chapter of Joe Gould’s Oral History of Our Time called “Why I Write.” It held an answer to the question I’d started with. “If one were to pick anyone up at random and study him intensely enough in all the ramifications of his life, we would get the whole story of man,” he wrote. What is biography? A man in time.

Summer came, and stillness. I packed my stacks of notes and photocopies and photographs into a box. Gould’s school transcripts. The Gould Family Pedigree. His Guggenheim application. The diaries, the letters, the letters, the letters. A copy of Harry J. Worthing et al., “350 Cases of Prefrontal Lobotomy,” in *Psychiatric Quarterly*. I dragged the box into a closet. I carried my books back to the library: discharged.

I spoke on the telephone to an old man in a faraway land. He told me that he had some of Gould’s notebooks. I believed him. I did not call him again.

I still sometimes picture a door with the word “Archive” etched on smoky glass. I picture it like this: I open the door, sneak inside, and enter an enormous room, cluttered with notebooks stacked on the floor, on shelves, on desks. I reach into my pocket for what I’ve brought. It feels like porcelain. It opens like a clam. And then I back out of that room, as soundlessly as I came, having left behind: Joe Gould’s teeth. ♦



Ann Gallagher was listening to the wireless, cutting out a boxy short jacket with three-quarter-length sleeves, in a pale-lilac wool flecked with navy. She had cut the pattern from her own design—there was a matching knee-length pencil skirt—then pinned the paper shapes onto the length of cloth, arranging and rearranging them like pieces of a puzzle to make them fit with minimum waste. Now her scissors bit in with finality, growling against the wood surface of the table, the cloth falling cleanly away from the blades. These scissors were sacrosanct and deadly, never to be used on anything that might blunt them. Ann and her friend Kit Seaton were renting the back basement of a big house in a residential area of Bristol for their dressmaking business; because the house was built on a hill, their rooms opened onto a garden, and sunlight fell through the French windows in shifting patches onto Ann's cutting table.

Someone came down the steps to the side entrance, then tapped on the opaque glass panes of the door; Ann looked up, irritated at being interrupted. Kit said that they should always switch over to the Third Programme when clients came—it was more sophisticated—but there wasn't time, and Ann could make out enough through the bubbled glass to know that the woman standing on the other side wasn't sophisticated anyway. She was too bulky, planted there too stolidly, with an unassuming patience. Some clients pushed their faces up against the door and rattled the handle if they were kept waiting for even a moment.

"Ann? Do you remember me? It's Nola."

Nola Higgins stood with military straightness, shoulders squared; she was buttoned up into some sort of navy-blue uniform, unflatteringly tight over her heavy bust. "I know I shouldn't have turned up without an appointment," she apologized cheerfully. "But do you mind if I ask a quick question?"

Ann and Nola had grown up on the same street in Fishponds and had both won bursary places at the same girls' grammar school. Nola was already in her third year when Ann started, but Ann had ignored her overtures of friendship and avoided sitting next to her on the bus that took them home. She'd hoped that Nola understood about her need to make

new friends and leave Fishponds behind. Nola had trained to be a district nurse when she left school, and Ann didn't often cross paths with her; now she guessed, with a sinking heart, that Nola had come to ask her to make her wedding dress. There had been other girls from her Fishponds past who'd wanted her to do this—it wasn't even, strictly speaking, her past, because for the moment she was still living there, at home with her family. She and Kit needed the work, but Kit said that if they were seen to be sewing for just anyone they'd never get off the ground with the right people. Perhaps when Nola knew their prices she'd be put off. Hesitating, Ann looked at her wristwatch. "Look, why don't you come on in for ten minutes. I am busy, but I'll take a break. I'll put some coffee on to perk."

She showed Nola into the fitting room. They had a sewing room and a fitting room and a little windowless kitchenette and a lavatory; a dentist on the ground floor used the front basement rooms for storage, and they sometimes heard his heavy footsteps on the stairs. The Third Programme helped drown out the sound of his drill when clients came for fittings. Ann and Kit had made gold velvet curtains for the fitting-room windows and covered a chaise longue in matching velvet; on the white walls there were prints of paintings by Klee and Utrillo and a gilt antique mirror with a plant trailing round it. Morning light waited, importantly empty, in the cheval glass. Kit sometimes brought her boyfriends to this room at night, and Ann had to be on the lookout for the telltale signs—dirty ashtrays, wineglasses, crumpled cushions. She was convinced that Kit had actually been making love once on top of someone's evening dress, laid out on the chaise longue after a fitting.

Ann wondered whether Nola Higgins was impressed by the glamorous new style of her life or simply accepted it, as calmly as she'd have accepted any place she walked into. She must have seen some things during the course of her work as a nurse, some of them horrors. Nola's home perm made her look closer to their mothers' age; the dark curls were too tight and flat against her head, and when she sat down she tugged her skirt over her knees, as if she were self-conscious about her broad hips. But her brown eyes were very alert and steady, and she had the kind of

skin that was so soft it looked almost loose on her bones, matte pink, as if she were wearing powder, though she wasn't.

Ann put on the percolator in the kitchenette. Kit had grown up in France, or claimed she had, and insisted that they always make real coffee. They served it in little turquoise coffee cups, with bitter-almond biscuits, on a Japanese lacquer tray that Ann had found in a junk shop. Sometimes the coffee was so strong the clients could hardly swallow it.

"I won't keep you long," Nola said. "But I have a favor to ask."

She didn't have the same broad Bristol accent as her parents—Ann's mother would have said that she was nicely spoken. It was about a wedding dress, of course. The wedding would be in June, Nola said. It would be a quiet one, at least she hoped so. She knew that this was short notice and probably Ann was all booked up, but they had decided in a hurry. "Not that kind of hurry," she added, laughing without embarrassment. "I suppose you sometimes have to let out the waists as the brides get bigger."

Ann was accomplished at congratulating other women on their engagements. She hardly felt a pang—felt instead something sprightly and audacious, more like relief. "Do you know about our prices?" she said tactfully. "I could show you a price list."

"Oh, that won't be a problem," Nola began to say. "Because the man I'm marrying, my fiancé . . ."

And then she had to break off, because her eyes brimmed with tears and a red heat came into her cheeks; Ann had an intuition that the flush ran thrillingly all over her body. Who'd have thought that Nola Higgins would be susceptible to that kind of thrill? She was bending over her handbag, fishing for a handkerchief. "How silly," she said. "It's ridiculous, Ann. But I'm just so happy. I can't quite believe that I'm saying those words, that we're really going to be married. He's such a lovely chap. And he'll be able to pay your prices. I knew you wouldn't be cheap."

"Well, aren't you the lucky one," Ann said admiringly. "A lovely chap, and he can pay as well!"

"I am lucky! Don't I know it. I was his nurse, you know, when he was very poorly. That's how we met. But it's not how it sounds: that isn't what he wants me for, just to look after him. I mean, to see him

now you couldn't tell he was ever ill, except he has a little limp, that's all."

"I'm happy for you," Ann said.

Nola sat very still, holding her coffee cup in both hands, smiling almost dazedly, accepting the tribute. She had brought some fabric with her in a paper bag—the brides often did, and Ann usually had to talk them out of it. Her fiancé had a lot of material in his home, Nola said, put away in trunks and cupboards. And there were some lovely old clothes, too; Ann should come out and see sometime. Ann made a politely interested noise, wondering if he kept a secondhand shop; she was imagining someone much older than Nola, respectable and considerate, quiet, perhaps a widower. The material in the bag smelled of mothballs, but it looked expensive—thick silk brocade, off-white, embroidered with cream flowers. "It's old," Nola said, "but it's never been used. And there's some lace, too, good lace. I didn't bring that—I wanted to ask you first." She fingered the brocade uneasily, staring down at it. "It's too much, isn't it? I'll look like a dog's dinner, that's what I said. I just want to wear something sensible, look like myself. But he insisted, said I had to bring it."

Ann really was convinced that if you could only find the right clothes you could become whatever you wanted, you could transform yourself. She let the heavy fabric fall out of its folds and made Nola stand up, then held it against her in front of the cheval mirror, pulling it in around her waist, frowning expertly at Nola's reflection across her shoulder, tugging and smoothing the cloth as if she were molding something. "You see? The off-white is very flattering against your dark hair and your lovely skin. There isn't enough for a whole dress if you want full length, but I think we could get a fitted bodice and a little peplum out of it and find a matching plain fabric for the skirt. With your full figure you want to go for a nice clean silhouette, nothing fussy. This could look stunning, actually."

"Do you think so?" Nola's eyes, doubting and trusting, looked out from the reflection into hers.

Kit came slamming through the glass door after lunch, in the middle of telling some crazy story, screaming with laughter, half cut already, with a couple of men friends in tow. Ann was just start-

ing on the lining for the lilac suit. One of the friends was a medic, Ray, Kit's current boyfriend, or he thought he was—Ann knew about other things, one married man in particular. The second friend was also a medic. Ann hadn't seen him before: Donny Ross, who played the piano, apparently, in a jazz band. Donny Ross had a body as thin as a whip and cavernous cheeks and thick jet-black hair with a long quiff that flopped into his eyes. His mouth was small and his grin was surprisingly girlish, showing his small teeth, though he didn't grin much—or say much. He was mostly saturnine and judgmental. It was obvious to Ann right away that Donny didn't like Kit. He saw through her bossy know-how and the whole parade of her snobbery: going on about how Proust was her favorite author and her mother used to have her hats made on the Champs-Élysées and weren't the little bureaucrats who wanted our taxes so ghastly—as if she couldn't guess what Ann had guessed already, that Donny was a socialist.

He got up while Kit was still talking and went into the kitchenette, banging through the cupboards, looking for something he didn't find—alcohol, probably; he came out with the bag of sugar and a cup of the coffee that Ann had made for Nola earlier, which must have been quite cold. Then he sat spooning sugar out of the bag into his cup, no saucer, spilling it all over the table, six or seven spoonfuls just to make the coffee bearable, and Kit didn't say a word about the sugar bag, though she was so particular about everything being served up in the right way. Perhaps Donny Ross frightened her, Ann thought.

She told Kit about Nola's wedding then; best to get it over with while she was in this mood, and there was company. "I know it's not exactly our style," she said. "But we could do with the work."

She gave Kit the piece of paper where Nola had written down the details, and expected her to make her usual disdainful face when she read through it, as if something smelled funny. Kit had a long, horsey face, tousled honey-colored hair, and a stubby, sexy, decisive little body, like an overdeveloped child's; she expressed all her tastes and distastes as if they afflicted her physically, through her senses. To Ann's surprise, she sat up ex-

citedly. "Oh, Lawd, this is a marvel. I can't believe you don't know where this wedding is, you angel-innocent. It's the most perfect little bijou Queen Anne house, tucked away in its own deer park on the way to Bath. Look what you've done, you clever daft thing! The pictures will be in all the good papers."

"But Nola Higgins is from Fishponds. We were at school together."

"I don't care who she is. She's marrying a Perney, and they've owned Thwaite Park for centuries."

Then Ann began to understand why Nola thought she was so lucky. She explained it all to Kit, and showed her the old brocade that Nola had left. "She said he had lots more fabric in his house. And old clothes, too—she thought I might like to see them. And I turned her down! I thought he must be running some kind of secondhand shop!"

"Which, in a funny way, you could say he was," Donny Ross said.

Kit flopped back onto the chaise longue in exaggerated despair, limbs flung out like a doll's. "When she comes back, you're to tell her you've changed your mind. I'd die for an invitation to go out there and poke around. Imagine what they've got in their attic!"

"Skeletons," Donny Ross said.

Later that afternoon, while Kit put on different outfits to entertain Ray—and at some point Ray exhibited himself, too, in a green satin gown, made up with Kit's lipstick and powder—Donny Ross came prowling around where Ann was cutting out the lining for the suit. "Do you mind?" he said. And he called her an angel-innocent and a clever daft thing, in a comical, mincing, falsetto voice. Ann didn't usually let people into the sewing room; she was anxious about keeping the fabrics pristine. With his hands in his pockets, frowning, Donny was working through some jazz tune to himself, in a way that you couldn't really call singing; it was more as if he were imitating all the different instruments in turn, taking his hands out of his pockets to bang out the drum part on the end of her cutting table. Ann might just as well not have been there: he threw his head back and stared up into the corners of the room as if all the evidence of her sewing, spread out around him, were simply too frivolous for him to look at. It was peculiar that she didn't feel any

urge to entertain or charm him, though she knew how charming she could be when she tried. She carried on steadily, concentrating on her work, feeling as if some new excitement were waiting folded up inside her, not even tried on yet.

Nola met Kit when she dropped in to look at Ann's designs. She was still wearing her nurse's uniform; she wanted to keep on working until she married. Kit went all out to win her over, and Nola sat blinking and smiling—her plain black shoes planted together on the floor, her back straight—under the assault of Kit's mad exuberance, her flattery. Kit really was good fun; when you were with her something new and outrageous could happen at any moment. Going through the drawings, Nola was full of trepidation. The models in Ann's designs were haughty and impossibly slender, drifting with their noses tipped up disdainfully. This was how she'd learned to draw them at art college; it was only a kind of shorthand, an aspiration. If you knew how to read the designs, they gave all the essential information about seams and darts.

"She knows what she's doing," Kit reassured Nola. "She's a genius."

Kit sewed well, and she had a good eye for style; she could work hard when she put her mind to it, but she couldn't design for toffee or cut a pattern. "Ann's going to make my fortune for me," she said. "You wait until we move the business up to London. We'll be dressing all the stars of stage and screen. I'd put my life in her hands."

"These do look beautiful," Nola conceded yearningly.

Eventually, they decided on something classic, full-length, very simple, skimming Nola's figure without hugging it. Ann would use the brocade that Nola had brought for the bodice and the sleeves, and a matching silk satin, if they could find it, for the skirt. "Unless there's any more of the brocade?"

Of course they'd planned all along to ask her this, angling for an invitation to Thwaite Park. And, eagerly, Nola invited them. "Blaise would love to meet you," she said. Privately, Kit chose to doubt this. "He probably thinks it's pretty funny," she said, "being invited to meet his fiancée's dress-maker. I mean, their love affair's the most darling romantic story I've ever heard, and Nola's an angel—but what I wouldn't



"Oh, here—take a penny and make it an even three hundred."

give to be a fly on the wall at that wedding! Fishponds meets Thwaite Park."

"What do you know about Fishponds?" Ann said sharply.

"Come on, Annie-Pannie. You think it's pretty extraordinary, too, I know you do. Don't be chippy, don't get on your old socialist high horse, just because you've got a pash on Mr. Misery-Guts Donny Ross."

So Kit and Ann drove out one Sunday, with Ray and Donny Ross, for a picnic at Thwaite Park. Kit was engaged to Ray by this time, though Ann didn't take that too seriously; she'd been engaged several times already, and, anyway, Ann knew that the other thing was still going on with Kit's married man, Charlie, who was a lawyer. Ann had bumped into Charlie recently, out shopping with his wife and children. She'd been waltzing around the fitting room with him only the night before, while Kit played Edith Piaf on the portable Black Box gramophone he'd bought her, yet when he

passed her in the street he pretended not to know her, staring at her blankly. His wife was hanging on to his arm, and Charlie held his gloves in his clasped hands behind his back; as Ann looked after them, he waggled his free fingers at her in a jaunty, naughty secret signal.

On the day of the picnic it was warm for the first time since winter and the clear air was as heady as spirits. Ray put down the roof on his convertible and drove fast. Kit tied on a head scarf, but Ann hadn't thought to bring one, so her hair whipped in her face, and by the time they turned in between the crumbling stone gateposts—there were no gates; they must have been requisitioned for the war effort—she was bewildered with the speed and the rushing air. The house was a Palladian box, perfectly proportioned, understated to the point of plainness, its blond stone blackened with soot; sooty sheep grazed on a long meadow sloping down in front of it. A few skinny lambs scampered under the ancient oaks, where new leaves were just beginning to

spring out, implausibly, from the gray crusty limbs. There were other cars in the drive and in the car park, because the house and the grounds were open to the public. Laughing and talking confidently—at least, Kit was laughing and confident—they walked right past the main entrance, where tickets were on sale; peacocks were squawking and displaying on the stable wall. Nola had instructed them to come around the side of the house, then press the bell beside a door marked “Private,” in white painted letters. Ann half expected a butler. Donny was stiff with disapproval of class privilege.

Blaise Perney—who opened the side door himself, promptly, as if he’d been waiting for them—wasn’t in the least what they’d prepared for. To begin with, he looked younger than Nola: very tall and ugly, diffident and smiling and stooped, with a long bony face and hair like crinkled pale silk. He welcomed them effusively, blushing as if they were doing him a favor, and said that he was so looking forward to getting to know them. Ann thought with relief that Blaise could easily be won over; she always made this assessment, when she first met men, of whether or not she could get around them if she chose to test her power. Charlie, for instance—although he liked her and flirted with her madly—she could never have deflected from his own path in a million years, whereas Ray was a walkover. Blaise said that Nola was packing a picnic in the kitchen. He led them through a succession of shadowy, chilly, gracious rooms with shuttered windows, apologizing for the mess and the state of decay: his dragging foot seemed to be part of his diffidence.

These were private rooms, not open to the public, not arranged to look like scenes from the past but with the past and the present simply jumbled together: a cheap little wireless set balanced on a pile of leather-bound books, a milkman’s calendar among the silver-framed photos on a desk whose rolltop was broken, an ordinary electric fire in a huge marble fireplace dirty with wood ash. Ann found this much more romantic; it set her imagination racing. What she could have done with this place if it were hers! In the cavernous, dark kitchen, where the giant-sized iron range was cold and there were fifty dinner plates in a wooden rack, Nola was boiling eggs on a Baby Belling, look-

ing surprisingly at home. Ann’s envy was only fleeting—it was benevolent, gracious. Whatever lay ahead for her, she thought, was better than any house.

When they took their picnic outside, Blaise said that they should have seen the gardens when his mother was alive. Nola, in a funny, shapeless flowery dress, squinting and smiling into the sun, looked more like a mother than like anyone’s wife; they saw how she would restore things and bring back order. Scrambling up among birch trees in a little wood, they were out of the way of the visitors on the paths below; the bluebells were like pools of water among the trees, reflecting the sky. Ray and Donny raced like schoolboys and wrestled each other to the ground, while Kit kept up her bubbling talk, making it sound to Blaise as if she and Ann were specialists in old fabrics. Hoping for more brocade, she said, they hadn’t started yet on Nola’s dress. Blaise said they must go in search of the brocade later. There were all sorts of old clothes and fabrics and embroideries upstairs in the cedarwood presses, he told them; he’d hardly looked in there himself but would love them to discover something valuable, which he could sell. “You can help yourself to anything you like. I expect it’s all old junk. I’ll show you around properly when the public have gone. Not that I’m objecting to the public, because they are my bread and butter.”



“What happened to your leg, old man?” Ray asked.

Blaise apologized, because he wasn’t a war hero. He’d managed to catch the dreaded polio—wasn’t that childish of him? Nola spread out a tablecloth, in a little hollow among the bluebells, while the young doctors interrogated her sternly about neck stiffness, light intolerance, respiratory muscle weakness. Blaise rolled up his trouser leg and Ray and Donny examined his twisted, skinny calf; Kit turned

her face away, because she didn’t like looking at sickness or deformed things. Yet Blaise Perney was hardly deformed at all; he’d made a wonderful recovery. He told them that Nola had saved his life, and she laughed with shy pleasure. She said he was just lucky, that was all.

The surprise was that Blaise turned out to be as much of a socialist as Donny Ross, even if he did own a deer park. He didn’t object to any of the taxes, he said. The only damn problem was finding enough money to pay them, because old houses these days didn’t come with money attached. Thwaite was a bottomless pit when it came to money. He ought to give the place up, sell it as a hotel or something, but he was too sentimental. Anyway, there were an awful lot of big old houses on the market, and it wasn’t a good time in the hotel business. He and Nola called each other “Dear” and passed each other salt, in a twist of greaseproof paper, to go with the eggs. Kit had made little crustless sandwiches with cucumber and foie gras from a tin, and pinched bottles of champagne from her father’s wine cellar. She still lived at home in the suburbs with her widowed daddy, retired from his insurance job, whom she adored—though Ann thought he was a horrible old man. He’d told her once that little tarts ought to be flogged, to teach them a lesson.

They drank his champagne anyway, from eighteenth-century glasses, which they’d brought from the house because Blaise couldn’t find anything else. When the champagne was finished, Kit brought out a bottle of her father’s Armagnac—“I won’t half be in trouble,” she said—and they started in on that. And somehow that afternoon they achieved that miraculous drunkenness you get only once or twice in a lifetime, brilliant and without consequences, not peaking and subsiding but running weightlessly on and on. Afterward, Ann could hardly remember any subject they’d talked about, or what had seemed so clever or so funny. When they wandered on the grounds in the evening, after the public had gone, Nola took off her black shoes and walked carefree in her stockings. And Donny Ross’s pursuit of Ann was as intent and tense as a stalking cat’s: invisible to everyone else, it seemed to her to flash through all the disparate, hazy successive phases of the afternoon like a sparking, dangerous live wire. They lay close together but not

touching, in the long grass under a tall ginkgo tree, whose leaves were shaped like exquisite tiny paddles, translucent bright grass-green. The light faded in the sky to a deep turquoise and the peacocks came to roost in the tree above them, clotted lumps of darkness, with their long tails hanging down like bellpulls.

Their drunkenness ought to have ended in some shame or disaster—Ray had drunk as much as the rest of them, and he was driving them home—but it didn't. They didn't break any of the lovely glasses etched with vine leaves; no one threw up or said anything unforgivable; no one was killed. They didn't even feel too bad the next day. Ray delivered the girls decorously back, eventually, to the doorsteps of their respective houses in Fishponds and Stoke Bishop. On the way home, Kit said what a sweetheart Blaise was—and what a fabulous place, imagine landing that! Didn't Ann just wish she'd got to him first, before Nola Higgins? Then Ann, with her drunken special insight, said that Blaise wasn't really what he seemed. He wasn't actually very easy. He'd seen right through them and he didn't like them very much. He saw how they condescended to Nola, even if Nola didn't see it. Kit said indignantly that she'd never condescended to anybody in her life.

They had not, after all, gone back inside Thwaite House to look in the cedarwood presses. No one had had any appetite, in the intensity of their present, for the past. When they had parted finally, because the medics were on night duty and had to get back, they all made passionate promises to return. The next time they came, Blaise said, he would show them everything. They couldn't wait, they told him. Soon. That was in 1953.

When Sally Ross was sixteen, in 1972, her mother, Ann, made her a jacket out of an old length of silk brocade, embroidered with flowers. The white brocade had been around since Sally could remember, folded in a cupboard along with all the other pieces of fabric that might be used sometime, for something or other. Now they decided to dye it purple. This was the same summer that Sally's father, the doctor, had moved out to live with another woman. Ann had sold all his jazz records and chopped his ties into bits with her dress-

making scissors, then burned them in the garden. Of course, Sally and her sisters and brother were on their mother's side. Still, they were shocked by something so vengeful and flaunting, which they'd never before imagined as part of her character. Her gestures seemed drawn from a different life than the one they'd had so far, in which things had been mostly funny and full of irony.

Sally and her mother were absorbed together that summer in projects of transformation, changing their clothes or their rooms or themselves. Sally stood over the soup of murky cold-dye in the old washing-up bowl, watching for the blisters of fabric to erupt above the surface, prodding them down with the stained handle of a wooden spoon, feeling hopeful in spite of everything. She wasn't beautiful like her mother, but Ann made her feel that there was a way around that. Ann always had a plan—and Sally yielded to the gifted, forceful hands that came plucking at her eyebrows or twisting up her hair, whipping the tape measure around her waistline. The jacket was a success: Sally wore it a lot, unbuttoned over T-shirts and jeans. They both dieted, and her mother lost a stone; she'd never looked so lovely. Ann got a babysitter and went out to parties with spare knickers and a toothbrush in her handbag, but came home alone. At the end of the summer, their father moved back in again.

Sally had always known that the white brocade had belonged to a lady who died before her wedding. The man she was meant to marry had owned a stately home with a deer park, and the twist in the story was that she'd been a nurse, had saved his life when he was ill. Ann and Kit Seaton—who was Sally's godmother—had picnicked with them once in the deer park. Then the nurse had caught diphtheria from one of her patients and was dead within a week. Her fiancé had written to them, returning their designs and saying that he would not need their services after all, "for the saddest of reasons." They hadn't known what to do with the fabric, Ann said. They couldn't just post it to him. They hadn't even sent a note—they couldn't think what words to use; they were too young. Ann hadn't kept his letter or her designs; she regretted now that she'd hardly kept anything when she got married and she and Kit gave up the business. There were only a few

woven Gallagher and Seaton labels, tangled in a snarled mass of thread and bias binding and rickrack braid in her workbasket. She and Kit had never even thought to take photographs of the clothes they'd made.

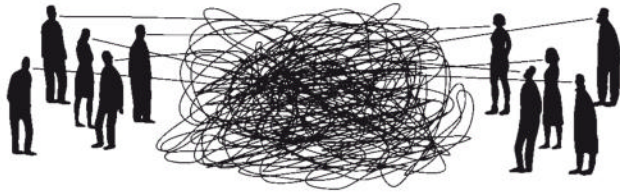
One weekend that summer Sally found herself at the very scene of her mother's stories, Thwaite Park, which was now used as a teacher-training college. Sally's boyfriend was an art student, and he worked part time for a company that catered conferences and receptions; she helped out when they needed extra staff. She wore her jacket to Thwaite deliberately, and hung it up on a hook in the kitchen. Her job that day was mostly behind the scenes, washing plates and cups and cutlery in a deep Belfast sink, while the hot-water urn wheezed and gurgled through its cycles. The kitchen was as dark as a cave, its cream-painted walls greenish with age, erupting in mineral crusts.

After the conference lunch, in a lull while the teachers drank coffee outside in the sunshine, Sally wandered upstairs to look around. Although the rooms of the house had been converted into teaching spaces, with bookshelves and blackboards and overhead projectors, you could see that it had been a home once. One of the rooms was papered with Chinese wallpaper, pale blue, patterned with birds and bamboo leaves. In another room, polished wood cupboards were built in from floor to ceiling; these were full of stationery supplies and art materials. Someone from the catering staff had followed Sally upstairs, and she found herself explaining the whole story to him—about her parents separating and the jacket and her mother's sad association with the house. This wasn't her boyfriend but another boy who worked with them, better-looking and more dangerous. Sally was trying her power out on him; she shed tears of self-pity, until he put his arms around her and kissed her. And, amid all the complications and adjustments that ensued, she forgot to collect her jacket when they left, though she didn't confess this to her mother until months later. A jacket hardly mattered, in the scheme of things. ♦

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Tessa Hadley on "Silk Brocade."

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

SWEET HOME ALABAMA

Harper Lee's "Go Set a Watchman."

BY ADAM GOPNIK

The heavily hyped appearance of Harper Lee's new or very old, or, anyway, indistinctly dated, novel, "Go Set a Watchman" (HarperCollins), reflects an ambitious publishing venture—complete with slow, striptease-style press leaks and first chapters and excited pre-publication surmise—in which all the other apparatus of literature, reviewers included, is expected to serve, and has. Not since Hemingway's estate sent down seemingly completed novels from on high, long after the author's death, has a publisher gone about so coolly exploiting a much loved name with a product of such mysterious provenance. It may well be that what the procurers of the text have said about it—that it is an earlier novel set in the world of "To Kill a Mockingbird," only recently discovered, and published with the author's enthusiastic assent—is so. But, if it is, the procurers seem oddly reluctant to be terribly exact about their accomplishment. The finished book that has now emerged, with a charming retro cover, showing a lonely engine on a twilight Alabama evening, has not a single prefatory sentence to explain its pedigree or its history or the strange circumstance that seems to have brought it to print after all this time, as though complete novels with beloved characters suddenly appeared from aging and reclusive and apparently ailing writers every week of the year. (This in a book that includes a fourteen-line note on the type.) And then the story that has been offered about it in the papers—a story that seems to

change significantly as time goes by—presents certain difficulties to the reader's understanding of the book.

The excitement is, in a way, a salute to America's literary memory: in what is supposed to be an amnesiac society, the memory of a fifty-five-year-old novel burns so bright that an auxiliary volume is still a national event. Of course, the memory is assisted by the universal appearance of "To Kill a Mockingbird" in eighth-grade curricula, but most of what appears in eighth-grade curricula vanishes quickly from memory—has basic biology or beginning algebra ever held our minds as Scout and Atticus have? The reason for that extraordinary hold is made plain, at least, by the incidental beauties of the newly discovered book, which are real. Though "Watchman" is a failure as a novel (if "Mockingbird" did not exist, this book would never have been published, not now, as it was not then), it is still testimony to how appealing a writer Harper Lee can be. That appeal depends, as with certain other books of the time—"The Catcher in the Rye," "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn," "A Death in the Family"—on the intensity of the evocation of coming of age, and of the feel of streets and summers at that moment. Harper Lee did for Maycomb (her poeticized version of her home town, Monroeville, Alabama) what J. D. Salinger did for Central Park—made it a permanent amphitheatre of American adolescence. One realizes with a slight, shamed start that we would now condescend to this kind of effort as belong-

ing merely to a Y.A., or young-adult, novel. It's not that we don't have books like it anymore; it's that we segregate their shelving—both John Green and Judy Blume have kept alive the tender evocation of an adolescent world, but they have been relegated to a smaller, specialized niche.

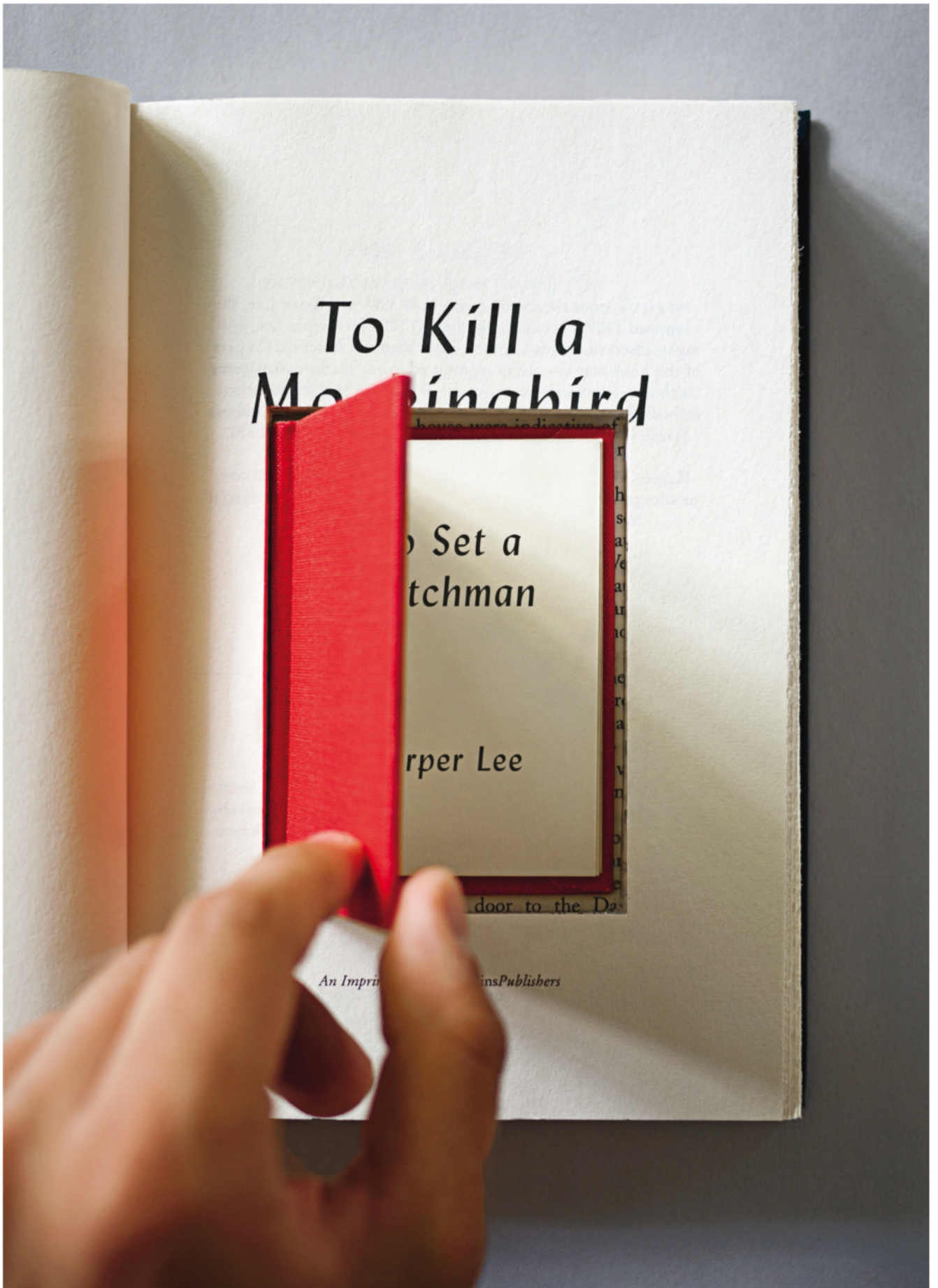
Though the new book is, to be blunt, a string of clichés, some of them are clichés only because, in the half century since Lee's generation introduced them, they've *become* clichés; taken on their own terms, they remain quite touching and beautiful. The evocation of Maycomb, with which the new book begins, and which recurs throughout its pages, is often magically alive. There is a little set piece about the arrival of a train at a flag stop that makes one feel nostalgic for one's Southern childhood even if one never had a Southern childhood:

The countryside and the train had subsided to a gentle roll, and she could see nothing but pastureland and black cows from window to horizon. She wondered why she had never thought her country beautiful. . . . The train clattered through pine forests and honked derisively at a gaily-painted bell funneled museum piece sidetracked in a clearing. It bore the sign of a lumber concern, and the Crescent Limited could have swallowed it whole with room to spare. Greenville, Evergreen, Maycomb Junction.

She had told the conductor not to forget to let her off, and because the conductor was an elderly man, she anticipated his joke. . . . Trains changed; conductors never did. Being funny at flag stops with young ladies was a mark of the profession, and Atticus, who could predict the actions of every conductor from New Orleans to Cincinnati, would be awaiting accordingly not six steps away from her point of debarkation.

The tone is right and lovely, and is just as right and lovely in other pastoral pieces, in the later pages (though almost exclusively flashbacks), about games played with the heroine's brother, Jem, and the Truman Capote character, Dill. The other, less potent clichés are either the stage-dramatic clichés of the fifties—the kind of dramaturgy you find in an Elia Kazan movie, with neat "reveals" and passionate scenes in which people driven to a climax of anger suddenly tell one another long-buried secrets—or, more drearily, the clichéd rationales that liberal Southerners used for years to justify a social order that they knew to be unjust.

The story related is simple, and suspiciously self-referential—it's difficult



“Go Set a Watchman” is an earlier novel, of mysterious provenance, set in the world of “To Kill a Mockingbird.”



"This is the Internet wing."

to credit that a first novel would so blithely assume so much familiarity with a cast of characters never before encountered. Scout, the child heroine of "Mockingbird," now mostly called by her proper name of Jean Louise, comes back to Maycomb from New York, where she is engaged in some undefined career-girl enterprise. For most of the first few chapters, she is fending off her lowborn but well-meaning suitor, Henry Clinton, and fighting with her tight-assed and conventional aunt Alexandra.

Jean Louise then discovers that her father, Atticus, her hero and as close to a perfectly honorable man as she can imagine—"Integrity, humor, and patience were the three words for Atticus Finch"—has joined one of the marginally respectable Citizens' Councils, a kind of less covert version of the Klan. Shocked, she confronts him, and starts on a series of static and prosy debates—first with her uncle Jack (a "character" who combines odd scraps of nineteenth-century English literary and religious knowledge with a bachelor doctor's existence) and then with Atticus himself—about integration, the N.A.A.C.P., the Tenth Amendment, and other fifties-era subjects, all

offered mechanically as set pieces, accented with oaths and "Honey, use your head!"s to make them sound a little more like dialogue. When the action moves to these abstract arguments about civil rights, the book falls apart as art—partly because today it is impossible to find the *anti*-civil-rights arguments anything but creepy, but more because any novel that depends for its action on prosy debates about contemporary politics will fail. A screenplay-style reversal (Uncle Jack, it turns out, was in love with Jean Louise's sainted, long-dead mother all along!) jolts the action toward the end, and then, as in another kind of fifties movie, Jean Louise is urged to Come Home to Make Things Better—you can't create a new South by hanging up there among the Yankees!—and it seems that she does.

That Southernness, however much it is now the material of cliché, is still the most pleasing thing about the book—the kind of easy, Agee and McCullers Southernness (as against Tennessee Williams's more Gothic version) that was as much a part of the postwar American novel as Jewishness, of which it was the alternative construction. Jews (in Bellow, Malamud, early Roth) were

urban, worried, and compellingly neurotic; Southerners (in Capote, McCullers, Harper Lee) were rural, carefree, and absolutely crazy. As always with such things, neither construction makes sense unless you see the missing central panel that both are reacting to: the Wasp ascendancy, only just about to be called so—that average American whiteness from which Southern drinking and Jewish schmalz alike could seem welcome refugees.

The element that intrudes for us now on these Southern vistas—where are all the black people, and why are the few we see treated the way they are?—was certainly a vital part of the story, but it was only a part of the story. Reëxperiencing this kind of Southern eccentricity is to be reminded how persuasive and touching it could be. The Southern Pastoral, in which the children play barefoot in the pastures and the summer is always called summertime, remains one of our strongest forms:

Calpurnia had placed three tumblers and a big pitcher full of lemonade inside the door on the back porch, an arrangement to ensure their staying in the shade for at least five minutes. Lemonade in the middle of the morning was a daily occurrence in the summertime. They downed three glasses apiece and found the remainder of the morning lying empty before them.

"Want to go out in Dobbs Pasture?" asked Dill.

No.

"How about let's make a kite?" she said. "We can get some flour from Calpurnia . . ."

"Can't fly a kite in the summertime," said Jem. "There's not a breath of air blowing."

The thermometer on the back porch stood at ninety-two, the carhouse shimmered faintly in the distance, and the giant china-berry trees were deadly still.

"I know what," said Dill. "Let's have a revival."

The question is how to preserve this pastoral idyll, and that's where things get sticky, in several senses. The view that both Uncle Jack and Atticus offer, and which Jean Louise/Lee doesn't endorse but does take seriously, is that this superior civilization of the agrarian South is being stampeded by Yankee industrialists and the N.A.A.C.P.—all the Outside Agitators—into undue disorder. (One night, Henry Clinton and Jean Louise see a group of blacks driving a fast car, and Henry implies that this is what happens when you let the Supreme Court tell the South what to do.)

So the idea that Atticus, in this book,

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“becomes” the bigot he was not in “Mockingbird” entirely misses Harper Lee’s point—that this is exactly the kind of bigot that Atticus has been all along. The particular kind of racial rhetoric that Atticus embraces (and that he and Jean Louise are careful to distinguish from low-rent, white-trash bigotry) is a complex and, in its own estimation, “liberal” ideology: there is no contradiction between Atticus defending an innocent black man accused of rape in “Mockingbird” and Atticus mistrusting civil rights twenty years later. Both are part of a paternal effort to help a minority that, in this view, cannot yet entirely help itself.

Atticus is simply being faithful to one set of high ideals in the South of his time. “Jean Louise,” Atticus says in the midst of their argument, “have you ever considered that you can’t have a set of backward people living among people advanced in one kind of civilization and have a social Arcadia?” Not long afterward, he adds, “Jefferson believed full citizenship was a privilege to be earned by each man, that it was not something given lightly nor to be taken lightly. A man couldn’t vote simply because he was a man, in Jefferson’s eyes. He had to be a responsible man.” Blacks are fully human, Atticus allows (nice of him), just not yet ready to vote. Elsewhere, Uncle Jack explains to Jean Louise the metaphysics of the Civil War, which supposedly had nothing to do with slavery or emancipation: didn’t she know “that this territory was a separate nation? No matter what its political bonds, a nation with its own people, existing within a nation? A society highly paradoxical, with alarming inequities, but with the private honor of thousands of persons winking like lightning bugs through the night? . . . They fought to preserve their identity. Their political identity, their personal identity.”

These were the ideas of the Southern Agrarians—that extraordinarily accomplished and influential set of writers and critics who embraced the modernism of Yeats and Pound and Eliot, exactly because it seemed to them a protest against modernization of all types, while they dreamed of a reformed “organic” society in the South, with that “identity,” that cult of “private honor,” still accessible. (It is good to be reminded of a time when “identity politics” belonged to the right.) Writers

like Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren—though deluded about the concentration-camp society of the prewar South as it really was—had a worked-out and potent ideology, and one readily assented to by people who should have known better. Had they foundered, as their white-supremacist successors do today, in cheap nostalgia, they would not have had much influence, but they made a brilliant marriage with modernism, and that gave them immense academic authority at a time when little magazines moved big boulders, or seemed to. Theirs was among the most powerful intellectual movements of the thirties and forties, along with, predictably, the companion Jewish one in New York.

And so beneath Atticus’s style of enlightenment is a kind of bigotry that could not recognize itself as such at the time. The historical and human fallacies of the Agrarian ideology hardly need to be rehearsed now, but it should be said that these views were not regarded as ridiculous by intellectuals at the time. Indeed, Jean Louise/Lee herself, though passionately opposed to what her uncle and her father are saying, nevertheless accepts the general terms of the debate as the right ones. Asked her response to “the Supreme Court decision”—one assumes that *Brown v. Board* is meant—she says that she thought, and still thinks, “Well sir, there they were, tellin’ us what to do again.”

And it should also be said, out of human sympathy, that to demand that people reject their traditions and their understanding, however misconceived, of their own history—to insist that the Atticuses of this world go to reeducation camp—is foolish. The problem is not people who think wrong thoughts, since we all think what will, retrospectively, turn out to be wrong thoughts about something or other. The problem is people who give their implicit endorsement to violence or intolerance in the pursuit of wrong thoughts. And, as far as one can tell, Harper Lee never intends Atticus to be taken for that sort. Atticus’s central commitment is to the law, and that commitment is never questioned. We are meant to see Atticus as someone with skewed convictions about Jefferson, but not as someone who would participate in a cross burning or in fire-hosing protesters.

The Southern Agrarians—it was part of their complexity—didn’t see themselves as racists; quite the opposite. (Robert Penn Warren certainly more than made his peace with the civil-rights movement.) They saw themselves merely as cautious and watchfully conservative about the pace of change. That the pace of change had to be accelerated because it had been held back by terror for so long was not a truth that they wished to be told, or to see. Atticus’s attitude seems entirely authentic, his heroism and his prejudices, as so often with actual human beings, part of the same package. Credibility is the ethic of fiction, and he is a credible character.

In any case, as with most social upheavals that are allowed to work their way through a society, the things that Atticus and the Agrarians feared may have happened, but they didn’t happen because of the Supreme Court. Atticus and his friends vastly overestimated the power of liberal ideology and badly underestimated the power of their other enemy, capitalist commerce. The Monroeville Walmart Supercenter has doubtless altered Monroeville more than all the fiendish Yankee conspiracies to undermine the Tenth Amendment. Certainly the supremacists’ hysterical fears of anarchy, as much as the fondest hopes of civil-rights utopians, have been left unrealized. Hysteria about change is rarely earned by the change when it comes.

Yet here is where the questions of the book’s provenance begin to arise, and they, too, get a little sticky. The emotional force of “Watchman” depends entirely on the reader’s sharing Scout’s shock at the revelation of Atticus’s new friends and new affiliation, and, since Atticus is scarcely dramatized at all before his fall from grace, the reader already suspicious about the pedigree and the background of the book becomes doubly so. If you don’t know Atticus as a hero—and in this book you really don’t, except by assertion—why would you care that he seems to defect to villainy, however well he defends it? Taken as a composite from both books, Atticus may be a credible hero, but you have to read both books to know that. The charm of the flashbacks that ornament “Watchman” is real for those who know Jem and Dill and Cal

BRIEFLY NOTED

from “Mockingbird”—but what effect could Lee have expected them to have on readers who don’t? Indeed, the book as a book barely makes sense if you don’t know “Mockingbird.” If “Watchman” is a first novel, even in draft, it is unlike any first novel this reader is aware of: very short on the kind of autobiographical single-mindedness that first novels usually present, and which “Mockingbird” is filled with, and very long on the kind of discursive matter that novelists will take up when their opinions begin to count.

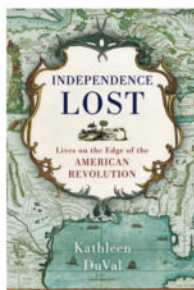
It is, I suppose, possible that Lee wrote it as we have it, and that her ingenious editor, setting an all-time record for editorial ingenuity, saw in a few paragraphs referring to the trial of a young black man the material for a masterpiece. But it would not be surprising if this novel turns out to be a revised version of an early draft, returned to later, with an eye to writing the “race novel” that elsewhere Harper Lee has mentioned as an ambition. (The manuscript might then have been put aside by the author as undramatic and too abstract.) It is sad, though, to think that the preoccupations of this book, however much they may intersect our own preoccupations of the moment, might eclipse her greater poetic talents, evident here, and so beautifully fulfilled in “To Kill a Mockingbird.” There is a genuine dramatic climax, worthy of the writer’s gifts, offered and then evaded in “Watchman.” In the book’s toughest scene, Scout goes to visit Calpurnia, the black woman who brought her and Jem up, with infinite-seeming love, after Atticus agreed to defend Cal’s grandson from a charge of manslaughter. Scout is heartbroken to find that her beloved mother figure is cautiously distanced from her:

“Cal,” she cried, “Cal, Cal, Cal, what are you doing to me? What’s the matter? I’m your baby, have you forgotten me? Why are you shutting me out? What are you doing to me?”

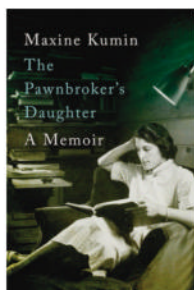
Calpurnia lifted her hands and brought them down softly on the arms of the rocker. Her face was a million tiny wrinkles, and her eyes were dim behind thick lenses.

“What are you all doing to us?” she said.

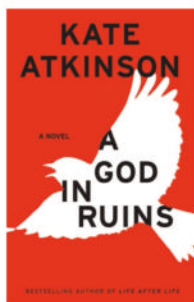
Then Scout asks, “Did you hate us?,” and Calpurnia shakes her head no. This is credible. But the scene, and the book, would have been stronger if she hadn’t. ♦



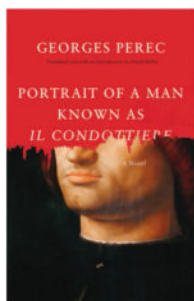
INDEPENDENCE LOST, by Kathleen DuVal (Random House). This intrepid history of the American Revolution shifts the focus from the rebellious thirteen colonies to the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi valley, where Native Americans, African slaves, and Spanish, French, and British colonials were fighting very different battles. Here, DuVal writes, the vision for the continent was one of “multiple empires and powerful Indian nations”; it was highly unlikely that the rebels would win, much less that what Thomas Jefferson termed their “empire of liberty” would later destroy an intricate array of economic alliances and territorial agreements. The rebels’ vision of independence came at the expense of others’. Its realization involved the erasure of one people and the enslavement of another, and was a disaster for women of all races.



THE PAWNBROKER'S DAUGHTER, by Maxine Kumin (Norton). Kumin, who died last year, began her career as a stifled housewife selling light verse to magazines, grew into a voice of confession and feminist dissent, and, finally, became Poet Laureate and an eminent New England nature writer. This memoir lingers on moments of private joy. The first half is dominated by courtship: Kumin’s husband, a soldier working on the Manhattan Project, wrote funny love letters from Los Alamos. Later, a prestigious awards banquet is recounted merely to explain the arrival of a dog, Rilke, in her life. Some of her political poems are reproduced here, their fierceness almost incongruous alongside descriptions of the charmed placidity of her farm.



A GOD IN RUINS, by Kate Atkinson (Little, Brown). Atkinson’s previous novel, “Life After Life,” was built around an arresting narrative conceit: Ursula Todd, a young Englishwoman, repeatedly dies and starts her life again. This follow-up tracks Ursula’s younger brother, Teddy, a favorite son who flies an R.A.F. bomber during the Second World War and remains kind, thoughtful, and patient through a life of quiet sadness: he is widowed early, has a selfish daughter, and struggles to connect with his grandchildren. Teddy, unlike his sister, lives only one life, but Atkinson’s deft handling of time, as she jumps from boyhood to old age and back, is impressive.



PORTRAIT OF A MAN KNOWN AS IL CONDOTTIERE, by Georges Perec, translated from the French by David Bellos (Chicago). This unpublished early novel by a famous French experimentalist is a youthful riff on Dostoyevsky and Poe. An art forger murders his dealer, in an act of existential despair, after failing to create a convincingly “authentic” Antonello da Messina painting, and spends most of the novel agonizing over the murder and his artistic shortcomings. Though the novel was originally rejected for “excessive clumsiness and chatter,” there are glimpses of Perec’s future greatness, as when he writes of the protagonist “transcending pastiche and reaching out beyond his subject and beyond his own intellectual grasp and ambition, finding only the murky ambiguity of his own self.”

IT'S ALL NOISE

How loudness conquered everything.

BY HUA HSU

*As pop music has become louder, bands like HEALTH no longer seem so extreme.*

We live in the loudest of times. It all began about twenty years ago, when new digital technologies started to radically alter the way music was made, refined, and shared. It suddenly became fairly easy to endow songs with a more aggressive presence: with a click of the mouse, you just made it all—especially the quiet parts—louder. Since then, there's been a debate over the effects of the "loudness wars" on our ability to appreciate nuance, particularly the dynamic range between loud and soft that, in the parlance of audiophiles, gives music the room to "breathe." As musicians from Iggy Pop to Christina Aguilera began making their music as thunderous as possible, our standards and preferences gradually changed. Loudness has won. We have come to crave music that is garish, punchy, and, according to the anti-loudness partisans, poorly engineered. But now that we listen to music everywhere—often in a semi-distracted state, across a range of devices and settings—it should come as no surprise that artists want their music to come pre-coated with a

glossy immediacy. First impressions matter. Why not insure that you can't be ignored?

Think of how many contemporary pop hits sound as if they were being belted from within a jet engine. The quiet parts of a Taylor Swift song buzz more boldly than the brashest moments of a heavy-metal album from the nineteen-eighties. The imperfections that resulted when artists pushed their recordings past peak levels have given way, in pop music, to new techniques, textures, and tastes. It's just how music sounds now, from the noisy, self-conscious revolt of Kanye West's "Yeezus" and the distorted crunch that occurs when a pop song hits the chorus to the way that MP3s gleam with a pre-formatted sizzle.

Although the Los Angeles band HEALTH has always been very loud, the group might seem to have little to do with these evolving norms. In the past decade, HEALTH has operated on the outer fringes of rock music, indulging an adolescent fascination with noisy, industrial textures. Listening to HEALTH,

I often find it hard to believe that the band members play traditional instruments: Jacob Duzsik, guitar and vocals; John Famiglietti, bass; Jupiter Keyes, guitar and keyboards; and Benjamin Jared Miller, drums. It's easier to imagine them hammering away on pieces of heavy machinery. Their songs are aggressive and turbulent, as though all four were competing to conjure the most impressive racket. (The band's intensity extends to typography: everything is capitalized, which can give the impression that iTunes is yelling at you.)

Yet there are moments amid the seeming chaos that reveal the band's care and precision—a sliver of silence on either side of a monstrous drum-roll, the way that Duzsik's dreamy, whispered vocals rise above the hellish shambles, oblivious of it all. HEALTH's self-titled debut, from 2007, was all catharsis, the sound of a band twitching, shaking, and shivering through all its noisiest ideas at once. There was something absorbing about how they structured their ideas, the way their songs could move from deafening and claustrophobic to spacey in a matter of seconds. As a result of the album's modest success, the group spent part of the following year on tour, opening for Nine Inch Nails, the industrial-rock band that achieved an unlikely pop crossover in the early nineties.

Rock music is littered with young men luxuriating in the awesome power of amplified sound; that aspiration for a brooding, steady headbang can sometimes feel a bit macho and silly. What made "HEALTH" and its follow-up, "GET COLOR" (2009), unusual was their feeling of neurotic skittishness. The band sounded as though it were continuously shedding its own skin. Its members created their own language of sound. Zoothorn, for example, referred to a specific feedback effect, somewhere between a squeal and a scrape, that they discovered by experimenting with their instruments' wiring.

Each album was followed by a set of open-minded remix compilations—titled "DISCO" and "DISCO2"—that repurposed the band's pummeling, thrashing music for the dance floor. By breaking HEALTH's music down to its constituent parts, the remixers discovered something

unexpected about the band: its music could be seen as an over-the-top pastiche of all the standard arena-rock moves, from the epic drumrolls-to-nowhere to solos rendered in metallic squeaks rather than electric guitar.

Noise can be petulant or cleansing, annoying or energizing. It can force us to wonder what we mean when we call something "music." In 2011, the band made a seemingly peculiar decision, pausing work on its third album to record the score for the video game *Max Payne 3*. The opportunity offered HEALTH a degree of financial freedom as well as a new kind of challenge. Without having to fit ideas into the container of the song—a concept the band has rarely adhered to—the group refined its approach to tension and texture, finding the grooves buried deep within its factory-floor freak-outs. And instead of pushing toward their typically jagged and raw extremes—*Max Payne* devotees would be sitting with this game for a dozen hours, after all—they tinkered with droning synthesizers and drum machines, exploring the capabilities of the gear with their usual maniacal gusto.

There have been many times while playing HEALTH's new album, "DEATH MAGIC," which comes out in August, when I've completely forgotten what I was listening to. This wasn't because it is somehow forgettable—far from it. It's because the album's extremes are so varied and unexpected. Some of the songs are riotous and merciless, suggesting the experience of being perforated alive. But at other times HEALTH lands on moments of triumphant arena pop so saccharine and innocent that I wasn't sure I was listening to the same band.

There's nothing novel about being noisy, a standard that is ultimately relative. HEALTH falls within a lineage of groups, like the Boredoms or Lightning Bolt, that have found moderate success despite having alienated broad swaths of humanity. But the blissful extremes of "DEATH MAGIC" feel different. HEALTH spent nearly five years trying to perfect the sound of "DEATH MAGIC," reportedly making the album many times over before reaching its final version, which features contributions from the Haxan Cloak (the British musician

Bobby Krlic), known for his masterly use of gloomy bass frequencies, and from the producers Andrew Dawson and Lars Stalfors, known for their work with Kanye West and the Mars Volta, respectively. The band members studied the aggressive wallop of big-tent electronic dance music and hip-hop, trying to understand them at a granular level. They even updated their sonic vocabulary, experimenting with the way synthesizers could be processed to the point that they rattled and quaked, resulting in what they began calling the "dragnet." The result is an album that feels like an initiation. No matter where I listened to it—in the car, on a computer, on my home stereo—it felt thick and expansive, as if it were colonizing the airspace around it.

It's a different, more inviting kind of loudness than HEALTH fans will be accustomed to. For many, the band represents the Los Angeles of underground art spaces, of noodling around in the shadows, making a racket while everyone else is asleep. But it's also a city of celebrity, of bright lights and glamour, debauchery and excess. Nowadays, these two spheres no longer seem all that discrete, if they ever actually were. On "DEATH MAGIC," it's the moments when they merge that the music begins to feel unnerving—when you realize that HEALTH has actually made a very loud pop album, one that is turned up to daring extremes.

Most of the time, pop music that aspires to live so loudly, on so vast a scale, sells us dreams. For all the pop euphoria on "DEATH MAGIC," though, there are the hangovers. When the band announced the album, in April, it released a video for one of its least abrasive songs, "NEW COKE." "Life is good, life is good," Duzsik sings sweetly, though he sounds unconvinced. The strobe-flash video features the band and its friends parading under neon lights, enjoying a night out, invincible. It looks like a lot of fun. And then, at the end, when it's all too much, everything skids into slow motion, and the band members take turns vomiting in spectacular detail. ♦

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"Ant-Man" and "The Look of Silence."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Some enterprising scholar should compile an anthology of film. The starting point would be the crowd of ants in Buñuel's "Un Chien Andalou" (1929), pouring forth from a hole in a human palm: an image provoked by a dream of Salvador Dalí's. Pride of place would go to "Them!," the mysterious 1954 movie about ants in New Mexico that grow as huge as horses after a nuclear test; the stridulation of unseen creatures in the desert makes music—a high, wavering whistle—that you cannot wipe from your mind. Then comes "Phase IV" (1974), directed by Saul Bass, who keeps his ants small, although their capacity for global takeover, we learn, is immense. Merriest of all is a made-up film: "Mant," the horror flick at the heart of Joe Dante's "Matinee" (1993), which is launched by a bumptious producer in the midst of the Cuban missile crisis, bearing the magnificent tagline "Half Man, Half Ant, All Terror!"

So where does "Ant-Man," the latest item to roll off the Marvel assembly line, fit in that distinguished list? Well, there are plenty of ants around, but their sole task is to provide tactical support to Scott Lang (Paul Rudd), a thief with a master's degree in electrical engineering. Scott is taken up by Hank Pym (Michael Douglas), a reclusive scientist with a high-tech company to his name, and invited to wear a special suit—even more special, it would seem, than Iron Man's. (When fans talk about the Marvel universe, what they really mean is the Marvel wardrobe. You could hang all the characters on one costume rack.) Thus clad, Scott presses a button and is instantly diminished to the size of an insect. The first time he does so, he is caught up in a cavalcade of perils: swept toward a bathtub drain, roared at by a rat, swallowed by the maw of a vacuum cleaner, and dropped onto a revolving LP, where, in the

deepest sense, he gets into the groove.

That is fun to behold, but it hardly breaks new ground. Behind Scott lies another Scott, the hero of "The Incredible Shrinking Man" (1957), who began to dwindle after passing through a radioactive cloud. (How much did B movies owe to the A-bomb?) He dwindled gradually, however, as if to demonstrate that bourgeois existence *could* grind you



Paul Rudd plays an unlikely superhero in a movie directed by Peyton Reed.

down, whereas the new shrinker can pop back to regular proportions as and when he desires. That ability is far less socially suggestive, and it's deployed for the dreariest of reasons, allowing our hero to vanish to a speck and then to reappear in mid-combat. It's a knack that serves him well when he has to break into the headquarters of Pym's organization, now under the wicked thumb of Darren Cross (Corey Stoll), who has developed his own suit, which—wait for it—allows him to turn into a yellow jacket. Game on.

Until the eleventh hour, the movie was set to be directed by Edgar Wright, the maker of "Shaun of the Dead" and "Hot Fuzz," and you can spot the skid

marks of those works in "Ant-Man," especially in the whooshing sound of the flashbacks. But Wright, though he retains a screenplay credit along with Joe Cornish, Adam McKay, and Rudd, relinquished command of the film to Peyton Reed. Whether Reed is remotely concerned with the whiz-bang demands of the Marvel formula is open to question, and he wrings more laughs from one scene at a Baskin-Robbins than from the entire saga of the Pym corporation, with its gleaming labs. Also, despite Reed's relish for romantic jinks (he created such confections as "Down with Love"), he can't do much with the bonding of Scott and Pym's daughter, Hope (Evangeline Lilly), who has a withering glance, a black bob, and not much else. You wait for her to emerge from

her chrysalis as a femme fatale, but it never comes to pass, just as you long for Michael Douglas to stop being kindly and sage and dredge up his inner Gekko.

What, if anything, holds "Ant-Man" together? First, Paul Rudd, who is laughably unheroic, and has the grace to know as much; that knowledge is part of his charm, although the poor fellow still has to utter lines like "I think our first move should be calling the Avengers." Half comedy! Half sci-fi! All nonsense! Then, there is Thomas the Tank Engine, who gives the most thoughtful performance in the movie. He is part of a train set in the bedroom of Scott's young daughter, and, as such, he is perfectly adapted to the dimensions of

Ant-Man's world. There is an unmistakable sense of release at the finale, as Reed brushes aside the bulk of the plot and replaces it with as many gags as possible. Some of them involve Thomas, and one of them, the most audacious, involves a table-tennis paddle—a single forehand swipe of which, we suddenly realize, can swat or flatten any human who has summoned the courage to assume an insect form. Late in the day, “Ant-Man” starts to toy with the squashable frailty of its protagonist, and to play it off against the masterful powers that we associate with a superhero. So many men cast themselves as big shots, and we should welcome anything—a magic suit, or a good joke—that cuts them down to size.

It would be wrong to call Joshua Oppenheimer's “The Look of Silence” a sequel to his previous film, “The Act of Killing” (2012). Rather, the two movies comprise a documentary diptych on a single theme: the butchering of hundreds of thousands of people—Communists and those accused of sympathizing with them, and ethnic Chinese—in Indonesia in the mid-nineteen-sixties. Oppenheimer puts the number as high as a million, but he also realizes that, beyond a certain point, the scale of any massacre makes it hard to grasp; the larger the crime, the more it risks a loss of dramatic pressure in the telling. His solution, in the new film, is to follow the quest of one Indonesian man. Adi is an optometrist; he has a wife and children, and his parents are still alive, but there is a gap in the family. In 1965, some two years before he was born,

his elder brother, Ramli, perished at the hands of his countrymen, and Adi now makes it his mission to hear for himself the distressing details of when, where, and precisely how his brother died.

One can think of many action movies in which the slaying of a relative sparks a violent payback, but “The Look of Silence” holds no such brief. It is an inaction film, and Adi, in line with his profession, does not deal in an eye for an eye. If anything, he stays preternaturally calm while he tours the local district, offering vision tests to various old men, most of whom are implicated in Ramli's demise and are all too keen to talk. Take Inong, who keeps a monkey on a leash. His temper is still hot, and his memory fresh. “If we didn't drink blood, we'd go crazy,” he says, recalling how his victims were vampirized, and adding, in the tone of a connoisseur, “Human blood is salty and sweet.” Inong led the death squad in the village where he continues to dwell, and where his deeds command respect. “Everything is safe now,” he tells Adi, and chides him for raising the spectre of unpleasantness: “You're talking politics again.”

There is a wry satisfaction to be gained from “The Look of Silence,” as it assembles a catalogue of all the excuses and dismissals with which the guilty, now as ever, slough off their sins: “What could we do? It was a revolution”; “Better just to follow orders”; “Forget the past, let's all get along,” and so forth. Yet the movie does something more unusual. It jabs at our Whiggish self-consoling—the natural assumption that we live and learn, that we are better for the learning, and that history,

once comprehended, will not repeat itself. Try telling that to the former leader of an anti-Communist paramilitary group, now the Speaker of a regional legislature, who listens politely to Adi's recital of wrongdoing and announces, “If you make an issue of it, it will happen again.” That sounds to me like a threat. Live and learn, by all means, but remember: you could also learn and die.

“The Look of Silence” is a simpler work than “The Act of Killing,” and a better one. The earlier film had a complicated trick to play: murderers were encouraged, often with props such as fake flesh and gore, to assume the role of those who had suffered at their hands. The results were startling, but is the gruesomeness, in the new movie, any less arresting for being recounted rather than replayed? (“If you chop from behind, there's no noise,” one man confides.) The mood is one of tense tranquillity, thanks to Adi's stoical insistence on paying homage to his brother, and his conversations, always difficult, are set against more placid sights: the bat-filled blue of an evening sky, or Adi's mother washing his father—a withered stick figure, who may or may not recall his vanished child. There is a hint of ritual in these ablution scenes, and a note of classical justice in the mother's verdict on the evildoers: “In the afterlife, their victims will take revenge.” What's unnerving is not how rare that ancient sentiment sounds, in a documentary, but how badly you want it to be true. ♦

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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Carolita Johnson, must be received by Sunday, July 26th. The finalists in the July 6th & 13th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 10th & 17th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Are you better off now than you were four innings ago?"
Shaina Rafal, Wilmington, Del.



THE FINALISTS

"Your card's been declined."
Ned Goldreyer, Los Angeles, Calif.

"This would be so romantic if this were the right table."
Kip Conlon, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Your profile said you liked surprises."
Matthew LaPine, Kenosha, Wis.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



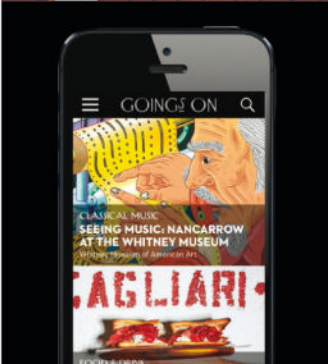
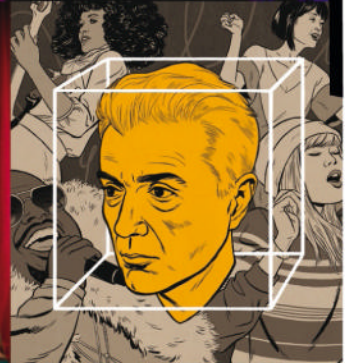
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