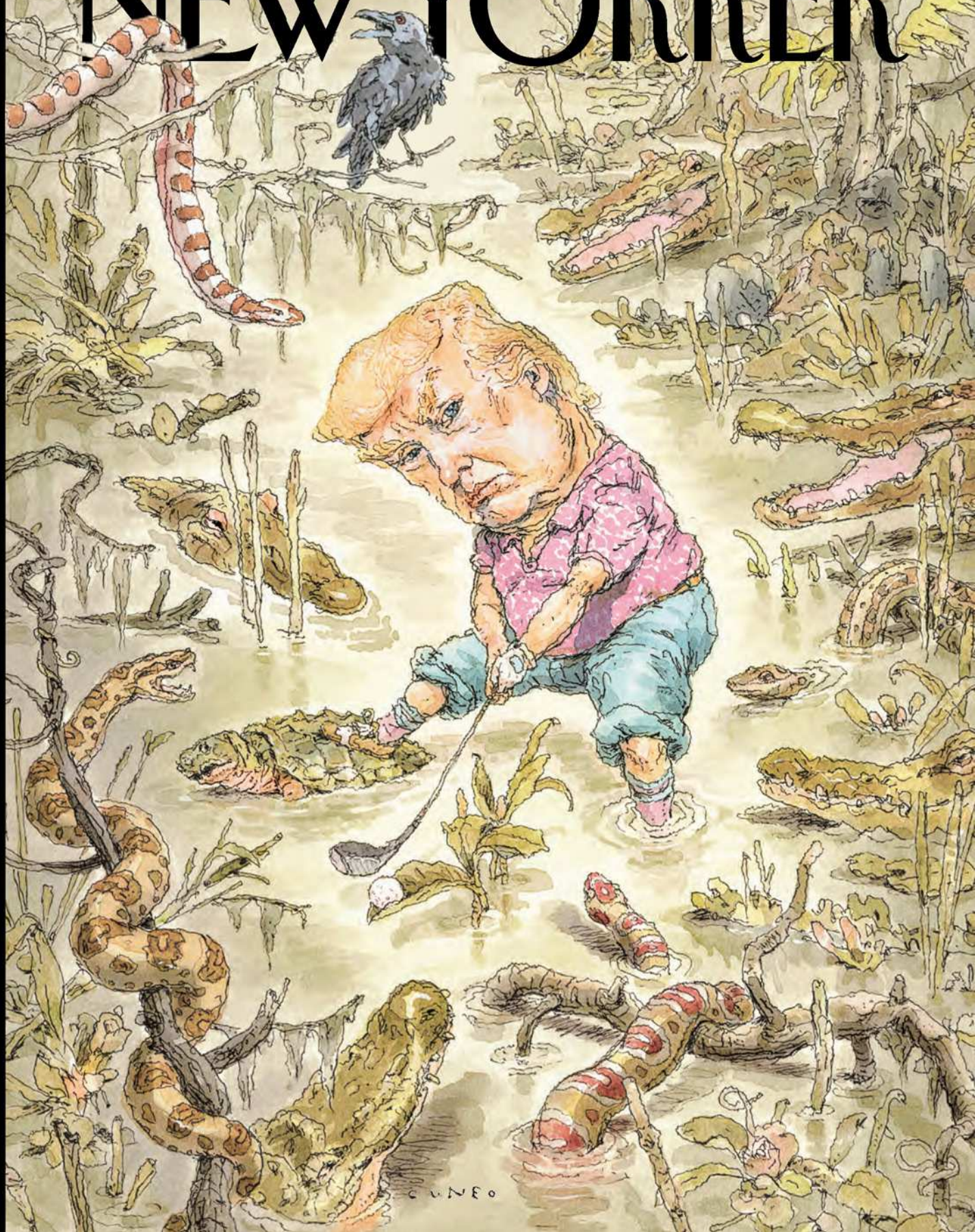


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# THE NEW YORKER







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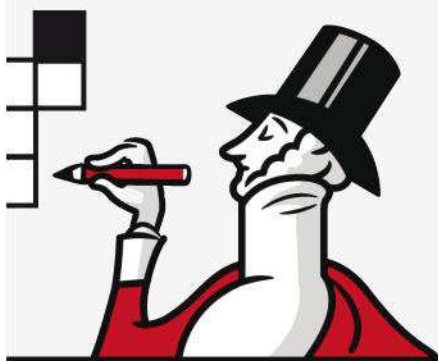
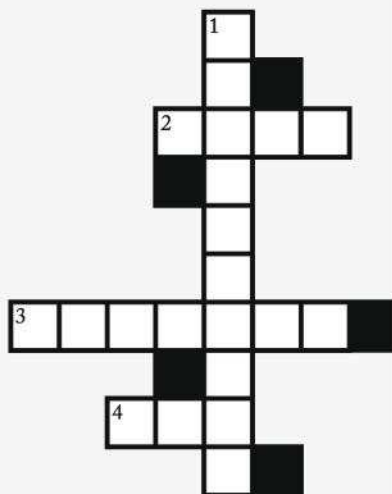
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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jill Lepore** (*"Sirens in the Night,"* p. 48) is a professor of history at Harvard. Her new book, *"These Truths: A History of the United States,"* will be published in September.

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**John L'Heureux** (*Fiction,* p. 74) has published eleven novels and three story collections.

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### NEWS DESK

Jane Mayer and Ronan Farrow report on four women who accused New York's attorney general, Eric Schneiderman, of physical abuse. Read the story that led Schneiderman to resign.

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# THE MAIL

## THE HISTORY OF HITLER

Alex Ross, in his survey of recent literature on Adolf Hitler, conducts a detailed examination of American influences on Nazi ideology (*A Critic at Large*, April 30th). My only note is that he might have placed greater emphasis on the American eugenics movement, and specifically on Granville Stanley Hall, the first president of the American Psychological Association and the founding editor of the journal *Eugenics*. In the early twentieth century, Hall wrote extensively about how a society might develop a healthy citizenry, and he vocally supported forced sterilization of the poor, the sick, and the developmentally disabled. His work arrived in Germany at the height of the *völkisch* movement, which romanticized German ethno-cultural heritage and hailed his writings as scientific rationales for racial cleansing. After the Second World War, Nazi attorneys at the Nuremberg trials used Hall's writings, and those of *Eugenics* contributors, as palliatives for Nazi atrocities.

*Roger R. Rideout*  
Norman, Okla.

Ross's account of Hitler's rise to power ascribes particular importance to his skill as an orator. Paraphrasing Peter Longerich's book "Hitler: Biographie," Ross writes, "Even those who found his words repulsive were mesmerized by him." Another relevant work is George Steiner's 1981 novel, "The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H." In Steiner's alternative history, Hitler does not commit suicide as the war ends but flees to a remote reach of the Amazon rain forest. An Israeli Nazi-hunting team is commissioned to find him, and is warned to keep him gagged. "You must not let him speak," their leader says. "His tongue is like no other." They silence him until, in the last section of the novel, they put him on trial in the jungle. When they remove his gag, he delivers a speech that they find irresistibly compelling. (The novel ends before the trial's verdict is announced.) A

play, adapted from the novel by Christopher Hampton, was staged in London in 1982. People were so shocked by Hitler's eloquent monologue that they condemned, boycotted, and picketed the production.

*William Fried*  
Bronx, N.Y.

As Ross notes, liberals and neo-Nazis alike have compared Donald Trump to Hitler. But another analogy from the period might be more apt. In the early thirties, the Nazi Party was financially distressed, losing voters, and dissatisfied with Hitler's leadership. More mainstream conservative politicians attempted to co-opt the Party to broaden their electoral base. Alfred Hugenberg, a wealthy media mogul and the leader of the German National People's Party, supported a plan to bring the Nazis into the governing coalition as a bulwark against leftist movements. (The plan backfired, and Hitler maneuvered his way into the chancellorship.) Hugenberg's behavior is typical of elitist politicians in a world of mass politics. Convincing the public to support policies that primarily benefit the wealthy is an uphill struggle. The alternative is appealing to voters' bigotry, populist nationalism, and irrational fear. This has been the strategy of the Republican Party for the past fifty years. Trump has flirted with white nationalism during his Presidency, but so far his only major legislative achievement has been a tax cut for the rich. His Presidency doesn't yet signal a victory for fascism but, rather, the continuing success of a dangerous form of traditional conservative politics. Trump isn't a Hitler; he's a low-rent version of Alfred Hugenberg.

*Roger L. Albin*  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

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

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**-ROGER**

KEYTRUDA will not work for everyone. Results may vary.

KEYTRUDA is used to treat a kind of lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). KEYTRUDA may be used alone as your first treatment option when your lung cancer has spread (advanced NSCLC) **and** tests positive for “PD-L1” **and** your tumor does not have an abnormal “EGFR” or “ALK” gene.

PD-L1 = programmed death ligand 1; EGFR = epidermal growth factor receptor; ALK = anaplastic lymphoma kinase.

**71% of patients treated with KEYTRUDA were alive at the time of patient follow-up, compared to 58% treated with chemotherapy that contains platinum.**

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

**Call or see your doctor right away if you develop any symptoms of the following problems or these symptoms get worse:**

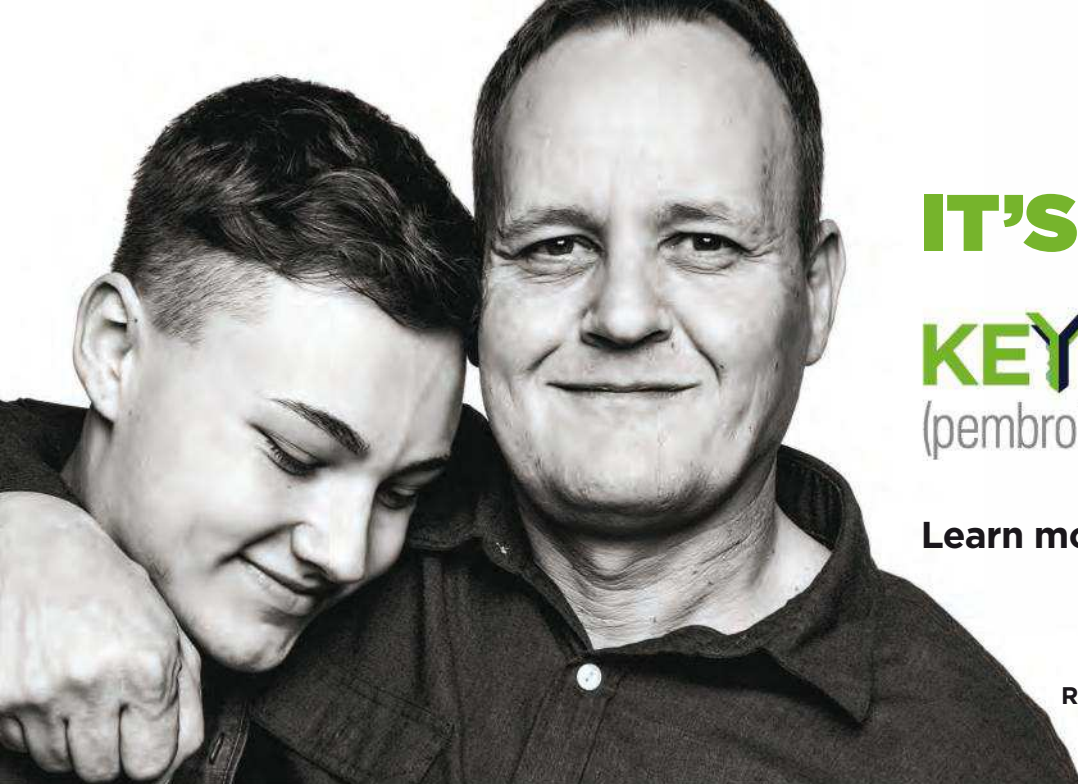
- **Lung problems (pneumonitis).** Symptoms of pneumonitis may include shortness of breath, chest pain, or new or worse cough.
- **Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine.** Signs and symptoms of colitis may include diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual; stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus; or severe stomach-area (abdomen) pain or tenderness.
- **Liver problems (hepatitis).** Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes, nausea or vomiting, pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen), dark urine, feeling less hungry than usual, or bleeding or bruising more easily than normal.
- **Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, and pancreas).** Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include rapid heartbeat, weight loss or weight gain, increased sweating, feeling more hungry or thirsty, urinating more often than usual, hair loss, feeling cold, constipation, your voice gets deeper, muscle aches, dizziness or fainting, or headaches that will not go away or unusual headache.

- **Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure.** Signs of kidney problems may include change in the amount or color of your urine.
- **Skin problems.** Signs of skin problems may include rash, itching, blisters, peeling or skin sores, or painful sores or ulcers in your mouth or in your nose, throat, or genital area.
- **Problems in other organs.** Signs of these problems may include changes in eyesight, severe or persistent muscle or joint pains, severe muscle weakness, or low red blood cells (anemia), shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, feeling tired, or chest pain (myocarditis).
- **Infusion (IV) reactions that can sometimes be severe and life-threatening.** Signs and symptoms of infusion reactions may include chills or shaking, shortness of breath or wheezing, itching or rash, flushing, dizziness, fever, or feeling like passing out.
- **Rejection of a transplanted organ.** People who have had an organ transplant may have an increased risk of organ transplant rejection if they are treated with KEYTRUDA.

**Getting medical treatment right away may help keep these problems from becoming more serious.** Your doctor will check you for these problems during treatment with KEYTRUDA. Your doctor may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines.

*Important Safety Information is continued on the next page.*





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**Roger is a real patient.**

The clinical trial compared patients with advanced NSCLC who received KEYTRUDA (154 patients) with those who received chemotherapy (151 patients). All patients in the trial tested positive for the biomarker PD-L1 at a level of 50% or more and had no previous drug treatment for their advanced non-small cell lung cancer. Patients with an abnormal EGFR or ALK gene were not included in this trial.

KEYTRUDA is a type of treatment called immunotherapy that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. KEYTRUDA can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death.

## **IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (*continued*)**

Your doctor may also need to delay or completely stop treatment with KEYTRUDA if you have severe side effects.

**Before you receive KEYTRUDA, tell your doctor if you** have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus; have had an organ transplant; have lung or breathing problems; have liver problems; or have any other medical problems. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, tell your doctor. KEYTRUDA can harm your unborn baby. Females who are able to become pregnant should use an effective method of birth control during treatment and for at least 4 months after the final dose of KEYTRUDA. Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant during treatment with KEYTRUDA.

If you are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed, tell your doctor. It is not known if KEYTRUDA passes into your breast milk. Do not

breastfeed during treatment with KEYTRUDA and for 4 months after your final dose of KEYTRUDA.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Common side effects of KEYTRUDA include feeling tired; pain in muscles, bones, or joints; decreased appetite; itching; diarrhea; nausea; rash; fever; cough; shortness of breath; and constipation.

These are not all the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA. Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

**Please read the adjacent Medication Guide for KEYTRUDA and discuss it with your oncologist.**

**KEYTRUDA has more FDA-approved uses for advanced lung cancer than any other immunotherapy.**

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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## MEDICATION GUIDE

### KEYTRUDA® (key-true-duh) (pembrolizumab) for injection

### KEYTRUDA® (key-true-duh) (pembrolizumab) injection

#### What is the most important information I should know about KEYTRUDA?

KEYTRUDA is a medicine that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. KEYTRUDA can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death.

**Call or see your doctor right away if you develop any symptoms of the following problems or these symptoms get worse:**

**Lung problems (pneumonitis).** Symptoms of pneumonitis may include:

- shortness of breath
- chest pain
- new or worse cough

**Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine.** Signs and symptoms of colitis may include:

- diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual
- stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus
- severe stomach-area (abdomen) pain or tenderness

**Liver problems (hepatitis).** Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include:

- yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes
- nausea or vomiting
- pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen)
- dark urine
- feeling less hungry than usual
- bleeding or bruising more easily than normal

**Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, and pancreas).** Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include:

- rapid heart beat
- feeling more hungry or thirsty
- feeling cold
- muscle aches
- weight loss or weight gain
- urinating more often than usual
- constipation
- dizziness or fainting
- increased sweating
- hair loss
- your voice gets deeper
- headaches that will not go away or unusual headache

**Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure.** Signs of kidney problems may include:

- change in the amount or color of your urine

**Skin problems.** Signs of skin problems may include:

- rash
- itching
- blisters, peeling or skin sores
- painful sores or ulcers in your mouth or in your nose, throat, or genital area

**Problems in other organs.** Signs of these problems may include:

- changes in eyesight
- severe or persistent muscle or joint pains
- severe muscle weakness
- low red blood cells (anemia)
- shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, feeling tired, or chest pain (myocarditis)

**Infusion (IV) reactions, that can sometimes be severe and life-threatening.** Signs and symptoms of infusion reactions may include:

- chills or shaking
- itching or rash
- dizziness
- feeling like passing out
- shortness of breath or wheezing
- flushing
- fever

**Rejection of a transplanted organ.** People who have had an organ transplant may have an increased risk of organ transplant rejection if they are treated with KEYTRUDA. Your doctor should tell you what signs and symptoms you should report and monitor you, depending on the type of organ transplant that you have had.

**Complications of stem cell transplantation that uses donor stem cells (allogeneic) after treatment with KEYTRUDA.** These complications can be severe and can lead to death. Your doctor will monitor you for signs of complications if you are an allogeneic stem cell transplant recipient.

**Getting medical treatment right away may help keep these problems from becoming more serious.** Your doctor will check you for these problems during treatment with KEYTRUDA. Your doctor may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. Your doctor may also need to delay or completely stop treatment with KEYTRUDA, if you have severe side effects.

#### What is KEYTRUDA?

KEYTRUDA is a prescription medicine used to treat:

- a kind of skin cancer called melanoma that has spread or cannot be removed by surgery (advanced melanoma).
- a kind of lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).
  - KEYTRUDA may be used alone when your lung cancer:
    - has spread (advanced NSCLC) **and**,
    - tests positive for “PD-L1” **and**,
      - as your first treatment if you have not received chemotherapy to treat your advanced NSCLC and your tumor does not have an abnormal “EGFR” or “ALK” gene,
  - or**
  - you have received chemotherapy that contains platinum to treat your advanced NSCLC, and it did not work or it is no longer working, **and**
  - if your tumor has an abnormal “EGFR” or “ALK” gene, you have also received an EGFR or ALK inhibitor medicine and it did not work or is no longer working.
- KEYTRUDA may be used with the chemotherapy medicines pemetrexed and carboplatin as your first treatment when your lung cancer:
  - has spread (advanced NSCLC) **and**
  - is a type of lung cancer called “nonsquamous”.
- a kind of cancer called head and neck squamous cell cancer (HNSCC) that:
  - has returned or spread **and**
  - you have received chemotherapy that contains platinum and it did not work or is no longer working.
- a kind of cancer called classical Hodgkin lymphoma (cHL) in adults and children when:
  - you have tried a treatment and it did not work **or**
  - your cHL has returned after you received 3 or more types of treatment.



- a kind of bladder and urinary tract cancer called urothelial carcinoma. KEYTRUDA may be used when your bladder or urinary tract cancer:
  - has spread or cannot be removed by surgery (advanced urothelial cancer) **and**,
  - you are not able to receive chemotherapy that contains a medicine called cisplatin, **or**
  - you have received chemotherapy that contains platinum, and it did not work or is no longer working.
- a kind of cancer that is shown by a laboratory test to be a microsatellite instability-high (MSI-H) or a mismatch repair deficient (dMMR) solid tumor. KEYTRUDA may be used in adults and children to treat:
  - cancer that has spread or cannot be removed by surgery (advanced cancer), **and**
  - has progressed following treatment, and you have no satisfactory treatment options, **or**
  - you have colon or rectal cancer, and you have received chemotherapy with fluoropyrimidine, oxaliplatin, and irinotecan but it did not work or is no longer working.

It is not known if KEYTRUDA is safe and effective in children with MSI-H cancers of the brain or spinal cord (central nervous system cancers).

- a kind of stomach cancer called gastric or gastroesophageal junction (GEJ) adenocarcinoma that tests positive for “PD-L1.” KEYTRUDA may be used when your stomach cancer:
  - has returned or spread (advanced gastric cancer), **and**
  - you have received 2 or more types of chemotherapy including fluoropyrimidine and chemotherapy that contains platinum, and it did not work or is no longer working, **and**
  - if your tumor has an abnormal “HER2/neu” gene, you also received a HER2/neu-targeted medicine and it did not work or is no longer working.

### What should I tell my doctor before receiving KEYTRUDA?

#### Before you receive KEYTRUDA, tell your doctor if you:

- have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus
- have had an organ transplant
- have lung or breathing problems
- have liver problems
- have any other medical problems
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
  - KEYTRUDA can harm your unborn baby.
  - Females who are able to become pregnant should use an effective method of birth control during and for at least 4 months after the final dose of KEYTRUDA. Talk to your doctor about birth control methods that you can use during this time.
  - Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant during treatment with KEYTRUDA.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.
  - It is not known if KEYTRUDA passes into your breast milk.
  - Do not breastfeed during treatment with KEYTRUDA and for 4 months after your final dose of KEYTRUDA.

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

#### How will I receive KEYTRUDA?

- Your doctor will give you KEYTRUDA into your vein through an intravenous (IV) line over 30 minutes.
- KEYTRUDA is usually given every 3 weeks.
- Your doctor will decide how many treatments you need.
- Your doctor will do blood tests to check you for side effects.
- If you miss any appointments, call your doctor as soon as possible to reschedule your appointment.

#### What are the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA?

##### KEYTRUDA can cause serious side effects. See “What is the most important information I should know about KEYTRUDA?”

Common side effects of KEYTRUDA when used alone include: feeling tired, pain in muscles, bones or joints, decreased appetite, itching, diarrhea, nausea, rash, fever, cough, shortness of breath, and constipation.

In children, feeling tired, vomiting and stomach-area (abdominal) pain, and increased levels of liver enzymes and decreased levels of salt (sodium) in the blood are more common than in adults.

These are not all the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

#### General information about the safe and effective use of KEYTRUDA

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. If you would like more information about KEYTRUDA, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or nurse for information about KEYTRUDA that is written for healthcare professionals. For more information, go to [www.keytruda.com](http://www.keytruda.com).

#### What are the ingredients in KEYTRUDA?

**Active ingredient:** pembrolizumab

**Inactive ingredients:**

KEYTRUDA for injection: L-histidine, polysorbate 80, and sucrose. May contain hydrochloric acid/sodium hydroxide.

KEYTRUDA injection: L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sucrose, and Water for Injection, USP.

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For KEYTRUDA for injection, at: MSD International GmbH, County Cork, Ireland

For KEYTRUDA injection, at: MSD Ireland (Carlow), County Carlow, Ireland

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For patent information: [www.merck.com/product/patent/home.html](http://www.merck.com/product/patent/home.html)

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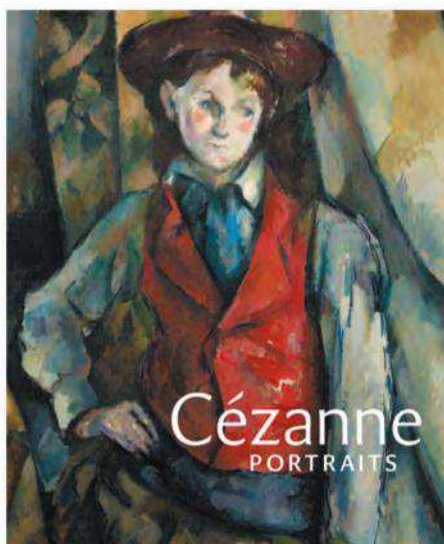
Revised: September 2017

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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# CHANGING THE CONVERSATIONS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD



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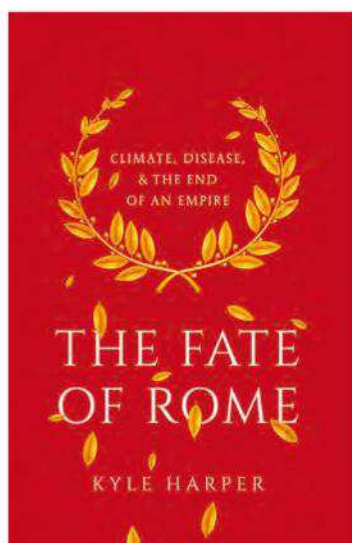
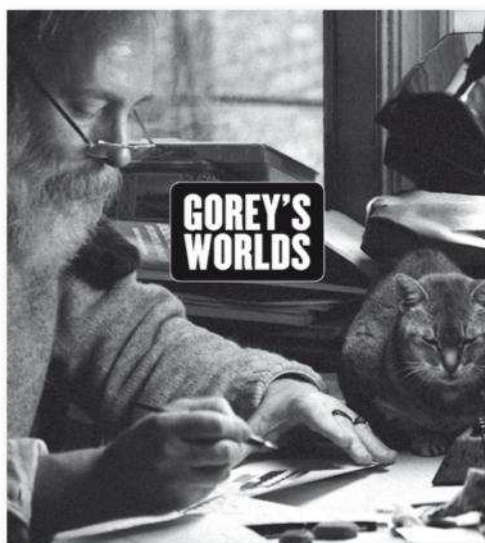
—Daniel Beer, *The Guardian*

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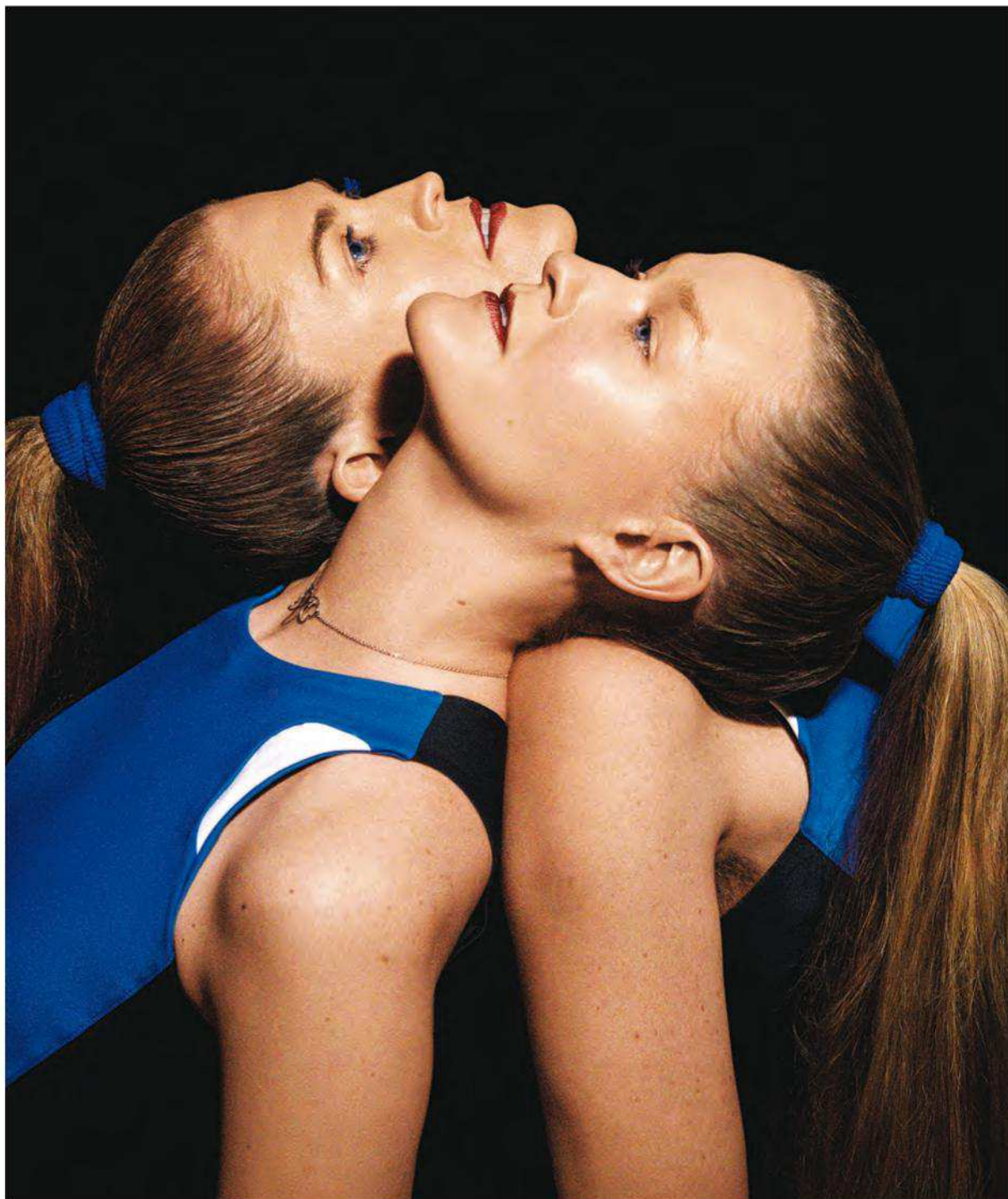
—James Romm, *Wall Street Journal*





MAY 16 – 22, 2018

# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



It's impossible to take your eyes off the performance artist Erin Markey, who matches sirenlike self-possession with off-the-wall non-sequitur humor. Imagine Tilda Swinton crossed with Yogi Berra, but weirder. In **"Singlet"** (at the Bushwick Starr, May 16-June 3), Markey draws on everything from Jean Genet's 1947 play *"The Maids"* to downloadable couples counselling and Olympic weight lifting to explore "the erotic undertones of a friendship," in a piece featuring Markey and Emily Davis (above, back to front).

PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC



## DANCE



The season includes works by Rennie Harris, Alexei Ratmansky, and Lucinda Childs.

There is no more joyous celebration of summer in the city than **"Midsummer Night Swing"** (June 26–July 14), a series of social-dance evenings with live music held in Lincoln Center's Damrosch Park. These open-air soirées bring out lovebirds of all generations, the clumsy but enthusiastic, and, best of all, dapper, highly proficient devotees (often of a certain age) who come to strut their stuff. Every evening features a different style, from big-band swing (on June 30) to Indian folk dance (July 3) to the Lindy Hop (July 11).

In **"Funkedified,"** the hip-hop choreographer **Rennie Harris** pays tribute to the dance parties of his nineteen-seventies Philadelphia youth and their funk-music soundtrack, a bass-and-downbeat-heavy mix of James Brown, Parliament-Funkadelic, and Dennis Coffey. The show (at the New Victory, June 1–10) is part autobiography, part cultural history. But it's the dancing, and its deep, playful connection to the music, that really gets under your skin.

The latest project by Alexei Ratmansky, American Ballet Theatre's choreographer-in-residence, is a reconstruction of Marius Petipa's comic 1900 ballet **"Harlequinade"** (at the Metropolitan Opera House, June 4–9), based on a mountain of archival sources, leavened by his own fanciful imagination. The costumes, by Robert Perdziola, are as delicious as the steps.

The dance-rich Lincoln Center Festival is no more, alas, but some of the slack is being picked up by the newly expanded **Mostly Mozart Festival** (July 12–Aug. 12). Despite its name, none of the dance offerings—**Lucinda Childs's** "Available Light" and a program by **Mark Morris Dance Group**—are set to Mozart. But no matter. The Childs is a study in cool minimalism, arranged above and below a two-tiered set designed by Frank Gehry, with shimmering musical accompaniment by John Adams. The M.M.D.G. program includes a Morris première, which tackles one of the most beloved scores in the chamber-music repertory, Schubert's alpine-themed "Trout" quintet.

With its idyllic setting in the Berkshires, the **Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival** (June 20–Aug. 26) is a good excuse to get out of town. This summer's edition includes appearances by the tap innovator **Michelle Dorrance** ("Myelination" and a première), the French hip-hop ensemble **Cie Art Move Concept**, and a rare and welcome visit by a group of dancers from the **Royal Danish Ballet**, who will present excerpts of works by the Danish choreographer August Bournonville ("Napoli," "A Folktale," "La Sylphide"), lovingly preserved in the company's buoyant, sunny mid-nineteenth-century style.

—Marina Harss

**American Ballet Theatre**

All but one of the season's eight weeks feature a different evening-length story ballet. The Romantic **"Giselle"**—the tale of a young woman who is betrayed, dies, and returns as a spirit—is up first, performed by seven casts. On May 18, David Hallberg and Natalia Osipova will reunite for a single performance. (Many will remember their first **"Giselle"** here, in 2012; the roof practically came off.) But the other casts also have much to offer. Stella Abrera, a delicate and naturalistic actress, dances with the handsome and noble Cory Stearns on May 17; Misty Copeland is paired with Herman Cornejo on May 15. On May 21, the company holds its spring gala, at which it will unveil a new work by Wayne McGregor (**"Afterite"**), a pièce d'occasion by the tap dancer Michelle Dorrance, and excerpts from Alexei Ratmansky's new reconstruction of Petipa's 1900 commedia-dell'arte ballet, **"Harlequinade."** • May 14–15 and May 17–18 at 7:30, May 16 at 2 and 7:30, and May 19 at 2 and 8: **"Giselle."** • May 21 at 6:30 (spring gala): **"Harlequinade"** excerpts, pièce d'occasion by Michelle Dorrance, and **"Afterite."** • May 22 at 7:30: **"Firebird"** and **"Afterite."** (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-477-3030. Through July 7.)

**New York City Ballet**

This is the last week of the **"Robbins 100"** retrospective, a rare chance to see the Jerome Robbins pieces **"Dybbuk"** and **"Les Noces."** Both ballets reference folk traditions—Jewish and Russian, respectively—a subject close to Robbins's heart. **"Dybbuk"** is his take on S. Ansky's play about a malevolent male spirit who inhabits the body of his beloved, promised to another man; the music is by Leonard Bernstein, whose centenary is also this year. **"Les Noces,"** which is set to Stravinsky's thrilling orchestral-and-choral work of the same name, depicts a Russian folk wedding—a heavy, unjoyful affair that stresses the oppressive weight of ritual. • May 16 at 7:30: **"The Goldberg Variations"** and **"Les Noces."** • May 17 at 7:30: **"Interplay,"** **"In the Night,"** **"The Cage,"** **"Other Dances,"** and **"Fanfare."** • May 18–19 at 8: **"Opus 19/The Dreamer,"** **"Dances at a Gathering,"** and **"Glass Pieces."** • May 19 at 2: **"In G Major,"** **"Afternoon of a Faun,"** **"Antique Epigraphs,"** and **"The Concert."** • May 20 at 3: **"Dybbuk,"** **"Fancy Free,"** and **"West Side Story Suite."** • May 22 at 7:30: **"Dance Odyssey,"** **"Pictures at an Exhibition,"** and **"Year of the Rabbit."** (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through June 3.)

**Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana**

To create the centerpiece of its thirty-fifth-anniversary season, this stalwart local troupe has hired Belén Maya, a long-established innovator with a Gypsy pedigree. Her new piece **"Mujeres Valientes"** celebrates defiant Latin-American women—in particular, the seventeenth-century poet-philosopher Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the nineteenth-century revolutionary Manuela Sáenz. Also on the program are two younger Spaniards: the hunky, virtuosic José Maldonado and the passionate Guadalupe Torres. A five-member band accompanies. (**BAM Fisher**, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. May 15–20.)

**Parsons Dance**

Enthusiastic, athletic, and eager to please, the company of David Parsons returns to the Joyce with a few premières. One is **"Microburst,"** created by Parsons in collaboration with the tabla player Avirodh Sharma, who contributes live



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classical Indian rhythmic complexity. Another is "Reflections," a solo that Parsons has made with the longtime company member Abby Silva Gavezzoli, who performs it as a farewell to the troupe. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 15-20 and May 22. Through May 27.)

#### **Basil Twist / "Symphonie Fantastique"**

This musical puppet extravaganza premiered twenty years ago. To Berlioz's fantastical score, Twist creates a world out of bits of fabric, plastic, and tinsel, all of which move in mesmerizing slow motion inside a giant tank of water, resulting in a kind of magical mystery realm. The music, in a piano arrangement by Franz Liszt, is played live by Christopher O'Riley. Not to be missed. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 866-811-4111. May 15-20 and May 22. Through June 17.)

#### **Milka Djordjevic**

Djordjevic is fond of the slow build, and is often good at it. In her structurally intricate but physically rough-edged "Anthem," four women move through evolving repetitions in a hybrid of folk dance, social dance, and postmodern pedestrian tasks. The work takes place within a boundary of four equal sides, but it isn't itself totally square. It picks up some attitude and sexual charge from the distortion and drive in Chris Peck's score. (The Chocolate Factory, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. May 16-19. Through May 26.)

#### **Full Circle Souljahs**

Ana Garcia, a.k.a. Rokafella, and Gabriel (Kwik-step) Dionisio have been presenting hip-hop theatre for more than twenty years, and the premise of their new show, "Boxed In," is an old-school chestnut. It's a demonstration (for those who still need one) that hip-hop, ballet, and classical music aren't mutually exclusive. Dancers, a d.j. (Dionisio), a pianist (Michael Bond), and a beatboxer (Gene Shinozaki) all try to break out of the preconceived boundaries that might be seen to limit their chosen forms and themselves. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. May 17-19.)

#### **La MaMa Moves! Dance Festival**

The second week of the festival opens with a miscellaneous program shared by the veteran choreographer-performers Parijat Desai, Angie Pittman, and Paz Tanjuaquio. Then comes "Obeah," by the rising dancemaker Jonathan González. A cross between a solo for the self-possessed dancer Katrina Reid, a duet for her and the sound artist Rena Anakwe, and an immersive social gathering amid plants, the work draws upon Afro-Caribbean folklore and sorcery but has its eye on the present and the future. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 800-838-3006. May 17-20. Through June 3.)

#### **Andrea Miller/Gallim**

For her second work as artist-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Miller responds to the exhibition "Like Life: Sculpture, Color and the Body." While that show collects representations of bodies through the ages, Miller works with the living bodies of dancers, usually in a sweaty, intentionally awkward style that's meant to seem organic but frequently comes off as mannered. For "(C)arbon," created with the filmmaker Ben Stamper, Miller's subject is the body, in its cycles from dust to dust. Three different pieces in three different gallery spaces repeat in ninety-minute loops during museum hours. (Met Breuer, 945 Madison Ave., at 75th St. 212-731-1675. May 18-20 and May 22. Through May 24.)



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## ART



Shows by *Bodys Isek Kingelez*, *David Wojnarowicz*, *Brancusi*, and *Giacometti* are upcoming.

In 1955, the Guggenheim held the first-ever museum exhibition of the Swiss artist **Alberto Giacometti**, installed in a temporary location while its Frank Lloyd Wright building was under construction. Nineteen years later, it mounted a posthumous, full-dress retrospective of the painter and sculptor, by then recognized as a titan of modernism, both for his early, brutal Surrealist works and, especially, for his later attenuated figures in plaster and bronze, works of such bare-bones intensity that his friend Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote that “to sculpt, for him, is to take the fat off space.” This summer, a hundred

and seventy-five sculptures, paintings, and drawings by Giacometti will once again grace the museum’s rotunda. (Opens June 8.)

A smaller, but still vital, exhibition at MOMA spotlights the great Romanian sculptor **Constantin Brancusi**, who was twenty-five years older than Giacometti and a strong influence on his development. Indeed, it’s impossible to imagine the course of art in the twentieth century without Brancusi’s vision, in which the known world—fish, birds, a newborn baby—is compressed to its essence in objects of stone, brass, and wood. Eleven sculp-

tures are accompanied by drawings, photographs, and archival material. (Opens July 22.) But the big news at MOMA this summer is the retrospective of **Bodys Isek Kingelez**, the Congolese sculptor who died in 2015, at the age of sixty-seven. Kingelez was working as a museum conservator in Kinshasha when he began to construct intricate, candy-colored models of fantasy buildings—and, later, cities—out of paper, soda cans, bottle caps, packaging, and plastic. His hope, according to the show’s curator, Sarah Suzuki, was to inspire people to imagine “a more harmonious, peaceful, beautiful, lively world.” (Opens May 26.)

**Bill Cunningham**, the beloved style photographer for the *Times*, who died in 2016, was just as captivated by a chic person shopping for vegetables at the Union Square greenmarket as he was by a society swan in haute couture at a gala. The New-York Historical Society celebrates his long career in a show that includes hats from his days as a milliner (under the moniker William J), selections from the series “Façades” (devoted to the city’s architecture), pictures documenting his long friendship with the floral designer Suzette, and such memorabilia as a bicycle, a camera, and Cunningham’s signature blue French workman’s jacket. (Opens June 8.)

New York inspired both a ferocious beauty and an urgent activism in the paintings, photographs, films, writings, and performances of **David Wojnarowicz**, the subject of the retrospective “History Keeps Me Awake at Night,” at the Whitney. The New Jersey native died in 1992, at the age of thirty-seven, a casualty of the AIDS epidemic; the country’s denial of the crisis fuelled his passionate art. After he was rejected from an exhibition for being too political, Wojnarowicz wrote, “I’m in the throes of facing my own mortality and in attempting to communicate what I’m expressing or learning in order to try and help others I am effectively silenced. I am angry.” (Opens July 13.)

—Andrea K. Scott



## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**Museum of Modern Art**

"Adrian Piper: A Synthesis of Intuitions, 1965-2016"

This expansive and invaluable retrospective of the American Conceptualist occupies the museum's entire sixth floor—still not enough space to contain her media-spanning works, which confront and engage in equal measure, illuminating issues of race, gender, and power with insistent complexity. In short, Piper has expanded the very definition of political art, making this retrospective feel superbly acute. In the earliest works on view, she experimented with LSD-inspired figuration and systems-based art, but her performances of 1970 marked a turning point, as she began testing the bounds of social acceptability by riding public transport in clothes reeking of vinegar, for example, or with a towel stuffed in her mouth. Documentation of these and other actions spawned related, performance-based pieces, in which the artist captioned photos of herself with thought bubbles to reveal unspoken truths, whether about the racist dynamics of interpersonal interactions or American disregard for Cambodian refugees. Piper's art can be concurrently playful and angry, propelled by her dynamic triangulation of personal material, mass-media imagery, and direct-address performance and text. To enter "The Humming Room," conceived in 2012, visitors must hum a tune of their choice as they approach the guard posted at the entrance. Once inside, they're instructed to imagine what it was like to be Trayvon Martin as they view a small print of his face in the crosshairs of gun, copies of which are free for the taking. *Through July 22.*

**Jewish Museum**

"Chaim Soutine: Flesh"

The centerpiece of this small, potent, and timely retrospective of the Russian-French painter, elegantly curated by Stephen Brown, is "Carcass of Beef," made circa 1925. (The picture is on loan from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, in Buffalo.) Painted in reds and blues as luminous as those of Gothic stained glass, it crackles with formal improvisations (one swift white line rescues a large blue zone from incoherence) and wild emotion. It's an event—an emergence, an emergency—that transpires ceaselessly while you look. Clement Greenberg, in 1951, adjudged Soutine's work "exotic" and "futile," owing to its lack of "reassuring unity" and "decorative ordering." But today the painter feels of the moment, amid quite enough reassurance and decorativeness in recent art. Soutine was once cited as a major forebear of Abstract Expressionism; Willem de Kooning called him his favorite painter and also made a remark that applies not only to the likes of Titian, whom he probably had in mind, but also very neatly to Soutine's meat pictures: "Flesh is the reason oil paint was invented." Greenberg, while maintaining his authoritative dismissal of Soutine, had to begrudge that "one has to go back to Rembrandt to find anything to which his touch can be likened." (That's spot on. Like Rembrandt's, Soutine's brushstrokes can feel sensate, as if talking back to the painter with ideas of their own.) But being favored by fashion incurred a cost when Pop and Minimalism conquered the art world, in the early sixties. Ever since, the painter has occupied a blind spot in contemporary tastes. That should end now. *Through Sept. 16.*

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

**Anne Collier**

At the entrance to this wistful and intelligent show, a Benday-dot field of yellow and red is disrupted by a pendulous blob of white. It's a photograph—a cropped closeup of a cartoon tear rolling down a cheek, one of a series of eleven on view. If you're familiar with Collier's cool, post-Pictures Generation brand of Conceptualism, you might assume that the image zooms in on a reproduction of a Roy Lichtenstein painting. But Collier isn't appropriating a patriarch's art to make her own work, as Sherrie Levine did when she rephotographed Walker Evans. Instead, she bypasses the man and goes straight to the source, shooting the same kind of vintage romance comics on which Lichtenstein based his paintings. Still, Collier's impulse is similar in spirit to Levine's project, as she casts a slyly feminist eye on clichés about emotional women. *Through May 19. (Kern, 16 E. 55th St. 212-367-9663.)*

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

**Jane Freilicher**

Lyrical interiors and cityscapes, painted in the nineteen-fifties by this beloved New York artist, who died at the age of ninety in 2014, are a balm for the eyes. "Early New York Evening," made in 1954, frames a vista of reddish-brown apartment buildings between a vase of irises in the foreground and four distant smokestacks in a violet sky. In an interior painted the same year, the threshold between a living room and a bedroom becomes an adventure of yellow highlights and lavender shadows. The show's graceful mood is so seductive that you might overlook how daringly improvisational a painter Freilicher really was. *Through June 9. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474.)*

**Mernet Larsen**

Heads become cubes and torsos are blocks with razor-sharp edges in Larsen's large acrylic paintings. It's a trick—marrying abstract planes of color to intensely observed figuration—that the Queens-based painter perfected decades ago. What's new in this terrific show, titled "Situation Rooms," is the complexity of her compositions. Men and women (differentiated from their colleagues by absurdly raised blips on their chests) sit at a series of tables in postures that sometimes defy gravity. In "Cabinet Meeting (with Coffee)," twenty-three black-clad strategists are seen ringing a table in a disorienting, fish-eye perspective, their bodies ranging from fantastically small to impossibly large, as if to dramatize anxiety's perception-skewing effects. *Through June 16. (Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)*

**Charles Ray**

Five new sculptures flabbergast in exquisitely machined solid metal, almost realist but subtly abstracted. They include a stainless-steel, larger than life-size, middle-aged nude, stoically posed like a pinup (her obviously near-sighted gaze makes us less shy about staring); an aluminum copy of the ancient Greek "Great Eleusinian Relief," which is owned by the Met; a silver mountain lion savaging a silver dog; and two stainless-steel, filmily white-painted garage mechanics at work. Collectively, they effectively condense two and a half millennia of sculptural

modes and meanings, if you think about them. But thinking is no cinch when you're rocked with wonderment. *Through June 16. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)*

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

**Ivy Haldeman / Douglas Rieger**

Two exciting newcomers, both in their early thirties, are united by an exhibition title lifted from a young poet ("This Liquid Life," by Daniel Feinberg) and a voracious taste for the weird. Rieger, a sculptor who clearly worships at the altar of the great, category-defying H. C. Westermann, combines carved-and-polished wood with hot-pink silicone in freestanding and tabletop funkfests that invite anthropomorphic associations. Haldeman, a painter who mines the same richly informed vein of figuration as Emily Mae Smith—whip-smart, but also smart-alecky—has yet to exhaust her unlikely muse, an ultra-feminine hot dog, rendered in a coyly restricted palette of orange-red, mustard yellow, and bun beige. Cracking wise about gender and bodies—consider that the skin of a hot dog is an intestine—Haldeman's seriously silly pictures are, above all, about the process of producing a painting—seeing how the sausage gets made. *Through June 17. (Anrather, 28 Elizabeth St. 212-587-9674.)*

**Jerry the Marble Faun**

The scent of flowers and cool earth greets visitors at the entrance to this enchanting show, in which weathered sculptures, the size of small boulders, rest on the floor. The Queens-based artist was christened "the Marble Faun" by Edith (Little Edie) Bouvier Beale when he was a handyman at the tumbledown Grey Gardens mansion, in the nineteen-seventies; he took the nickname as a sign to pursue art. In 1987, he began hand-carving dragonlike creatures and otherworldly abstractions inspired by gargoyles, sarcophagi, and classical sculptures. Here, three ornate, rectangular lion heads, chiselled from rose-hued limestone, share space with the ancient-looking "Spirit," from 2016, which evokes Mesoamerican iconography. A regal horse's face, muzzle to brow, has a special significance. The sculptor says the piece, now installed in the ad-hoc garden in the gallery's window, may someday serve as his headstone. *Through June 3. (Situations, 127 Henry St. situations.us.)*

**Laurie Simmons**

In a departure from the aloof images for which she's best known—exquisitely staged, strangely poignant scenes starring dummies, dolls, or doll-like models—the American photographer shoots her friends and family. But that doesn't mean she's dispensed with artifice: she portrays her daughters, Grace and Lena Dunham, as Rudolph Valentino and Audrey Hepburn, respectively. Clad in trompe-l'oeil body paint instead of clothing, they appear at once protected and exposed. The vibrant palettes of these striking prints are mirrored in the panoramic photograph facing them—a twenty-foot-wide mural of household plastics, from squeeze bottles to ice-cube trays, arranged by color. Drone footage of this rainbowscape plays in the gallery window, its alien topography recalling the tableaux of miniatures from early in Simmons's career, with their illusion of scale and uncanny depictions of domesticity. *Through June 2. (Salon 94 Bowery, 243 Bowery, at Stanton St. 212-979-0001.)*



## THE THEATRE



*"Pretty Woman" comes to Broadway, Armie Hammer stars in "Straight White Men," and Chukwudi Iwuji plays Othello in Central Park.*

The thought of Young Jean Lee on Broadway is enough to boggle the mind. The forty-three-year-old playwright is one of downtown's most trenchant, least crowd-pleasing talents, whose stubbornly genre-resistant work melds identity politics, Dadaist humor, and metatheatrical mind games. "Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven" (2006) was a self-excoriating satire of Asian-American stereotypes. "Untitled Feminist Show" (2011) explored gender expression using six nude actors and minimal text. **"Straight White Men,"** which played at the Public Theatre in 2014, is a kind of topsy-turvy inversion of a naturalistic drama, written by someone who is neither a straight white man nor a naturalistic playwright. Second Stage brings it to the Helen Hayes this summer (starting previews June 29), with direction by Anna D. Shapiro and a cast that combines Broadway star power (Armie Hammer, Josh Charles, Tom Skerritt) with Lee's avant-garde milieu (the transgender performance artist Kate Bornstein).

Other summer fare is easier to categorize. The Public's free Shakespeare in

the Park series, at the Delacorte, returns with a tragedy and a comedy. First, Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs **"Othello"** (previews begin May 29); the Nigerian-British actor Chukwudi Iwuji takes the title role, and Corey Stoll, who played Brutus in last summer's hot-button "Julius Caesar," is Iago. Then, starting July 17, Oskar Eustis and Kwame Kwei-Armah stage a musical version of **"Twelfth Night,"** with songs by Shaina Taub. The production originated as part of the Public Works series, which brings together professional actors (including Nikki M. James, as Viola) and community members from recreation centers, military-family support groups, and other organizations.

Who's that walking down the street? Those may be the clacking heels of **"Pretty Woman"** (starting July 20, at the Nederlander), a musical adaptation of the 1990 movie, with songs by Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance and direction and choreography by Jerry Mitchell. Samantha Barks, who played Éponine in the film version of "Les Misérables," steps into the Julia Roberts role, with Steve Kazee ("Once") as her playboy. More nostalgia

comes to Broadway in **"Head Over Heels"** (June 23, Hudson), which uses songs by the Go-Go's to tell a story about a kingdom trying to stop a prophecy from coming true. (Spoiler: that never works.)

Off Broadway, a slew of notable playwrights return. In **"Skintight,"** by Joshua Harmon ("Significant Other"), Idina Menzel plays a newly divorced woman whose father is dating a twenty-year-old man (May 31, Laura Pels). Jordan Harrison ("Marjorie Prime") debuts **"Log Cabin,"** featuring Jesse Tyler Ferguson, in which a conservative streak is revealed within a circle of gay friends (June 1, Playwrights Horizons). In **"Mary Page Marlowe,"** by Tracy Letts ("August: Osage County"), an Ohio accountant (played by six actresses, including Tatiana Maslany) revisits eleven moments in her life (June 19, Second Stage). In case summer is getting too fun and you need a downer, look no further than **"The Damned,"** Ivo van Hove's adaptation of the 1969 Luchino Visconti film, which follows a steel dynasty during the rise of the Nazis (July 17, Park Avenue Armory).

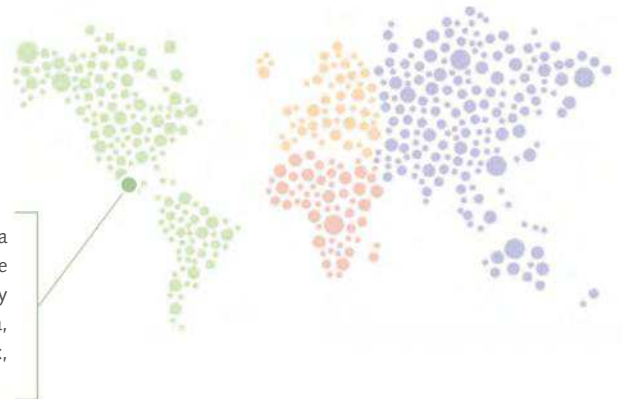
—Michael Schulman





# SETTING A NEW STANDARD IN ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

A Zapotec woman wearing a crown of live iguanas is one of Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide's most iconic works. Author Isabel Quintero and illustrator Zeke Peña explore the stories and creative process behind this and other images in their acclaimed graphic biography *Photographic: The Life of Graciela Iturbide*. Learn about the collaboration among Quintero, Peña, and Iturbide herself to create a book that Quintero describes as a "mash-up of an art book, biography and graphic novel" at [getty.edu/world](http://getty.edu/world).



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Pictured: Graciela Iturbide. Text and design © 2018 J. Paul Getty Trust



## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

**The Beast in the Jungle**

John Kander and David Thompson wrote this dance-theatre piece, directed and choreographed by Susan Stroman and inspired by Henry James's 1903 novella, about a man convinced he has a terrible destiny. (*Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. In previews.*)

**The Boys in the Band**

Joe Mantello directs a fiftieth-anniversary revival of the seminal gay drama by Mart Crowley, starring Jim Parsons, Zachary Quinto, Matt Bomer, and Andrew Rannells. (*Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.*)

**Dan Cody's Yacht**

In Anthony Giardina's play, directed by Doug Hughes for Manhattan Theatre Club, a Boston schoolteacher gets an unexpected financial proposal from a student's father. (*City Center Stage I, at 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. In previews.*)

**Hercules Didn't Wade in the Water**

The Negro Ensemble Company stages Michael A. Jones's drama, about two couples who are separated during Hurricane Katrina. (*Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens May 18.*)

**Link Link Circus**

Isabella Rossellini, who previously explored wildlife copulation in "Green Porno," performs this one-woman show (with a dog named Pan) about scientific breakthroughs in animal cognition. (*Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 866-811-4111. May 16-23.*)

**Our Lady of 121st Street**

In Stephen Adly Guirgis's 2002 play, a group of former classmates reunite at a funeral home to honor their late teacher, only to find that her body has been stolen. Phylicia Rashad directs. (*Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. In previews. Opens May 20.*)

**Peace for Mary Frances**

The New Group presents Lily Thorne's play, directed by Lila Neugebauer and featuring Lois Smith as a nonagenarian born to Armenian refugees who is ready to die at home. (*Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. In previews.*)

**SummerWorks Festival**

Clubbed Thumb's annual showcase of new work features plays by Trish Harnetiaux, Angela Hanks, and Will Arbery. (*Wild Project, 195 E. 3rd St. 212-260-0153. Opens May 19.*)

**Tchaikovsky: None But the Lonely Heart**

The Ensemble for the Romantic Century produces Eve Wolf's play, about the composer's epistolary relationship with his patroness Nadezhda von Meck. Donald T. Sanders directs. (*Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Previews begin May 17.*)

## NOW PLAYING

**Dance Nation**

Clare Barron is a young scenarist and actress, not yet thirty-three, but on the strength of this intermissionless, hour-and-forty-five-minute piece, she's on her way to becoming a signif-

icant playwright. And that's because theatre is in her bones. The story concerns a small group of amateur pre-teen female dancers (and one dude) who want to win Tampa Bay's Boogie Down Grand Prix, but at great expense to themselves, and to the group. Friendships are challenged, bodies are damaged, and male approval is striven for as the performers, led by their unsmiling dance teacher, Pat (the wonderfully cast Thomas Jay Ryan), deal with stereotypical female behavior, often without questioning it at all. The director, Lee Sunday Evans, has assembled a fabulous cast of various ages to play the dancers, whose dreams are less life-affirming than life-distorting. (*Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.*)

**The Iceman Cometh**

Although there are many performers in George C. Wolfe's staging of Eugene O'Neill's phenomenal 1946 four-act and nearly four-hour drama, there is only one actor, and his name is Austin Buttrick. As Don Parritt, an eighteen-year-old boy who takes up residence at Harry Hope's dive bar and hotel on Manhattan's Lower West Side, Buttrick quietly conveys what many of his castmates try to show by shouting and grandstanding: his character's inner life. It's the summer of 1912, and the barflies share a belief in the redemptive quality of fantasy—it keeps you from yourself, whoever that may be. Hickey (Denzel Washington), a travelling salesman, wants the men to face the truth. In his stage work, Washington has sometimes risked letting unpleasantness show, but Hickey requires something both more and less than that—a searching, lost quality masquerading as a certainty that he himself can't define. What Washington lacks—and it's essential—is a sense of Hickey's madness. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/7/18.) (*Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.*)

**Light Shining in Buckinghamshire**

The seventy-nine-year-old British playwright Caryl Churchill is a tremendous talent whose brilliance is deep and strange and certainly not for everyone. This 1976 drama is set during the Protestant Reformation in England, which disrupted centuries of religious hierarchy and said that individuals could communicate one on one with God. Naturally, folks took sides during these enormous changes, and the characters that Churchill has drawn, from women approaching the idea of independence to religious zealots holding on to the old order, are fully realized. But the mystery at the core of the piece—which stars a fantastic ensemble cast, well handled by the director, Rachel Chavkin—only deepens over the piece's nearly three-hour expanse. (Special note should be given to the incredible lighting designer, Isabella Byrd.) You either want to see the show again, to further parse its layers, or you can't deal with it at all. (*New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475.*)

**My Fair Lady**

Lerner and Loewe's hit 1956 musical (in a Lincoln Center Theatre revival, directed by Bartlett Sher) examines the reality of one man's fantasy of remaking a woman in his own image. Part of the pleasure of watching this staging is observing not how Eliza Doolittle (Lauren Ambrose, who has a beautiful, if limited, soprano) becomes more herself as the show goes on but how she learns to ex-

press that self—strong, indomitable, softened by dreams and wishes—in the language of the class that helps her cross over. It can seem as though Harry Hadden-Paton were overplaying Henry Higgins's snottiness, until you remember meeting any number of people like him, who frighten you with their chill while they try to draw you in with their smarts. Ambrose's Eliza, on the other hand, hurts us in the best possible way, when we realize too late, just as she does, that her love for Higgins amounts to a confusion between the construction of speech and the true language of feeling. (*4/30/18*) (*Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.*)

**A Pink Chair (In Place of a Fake Antique)**

The Wooster Group pays tribute to the major Polish theatre artist Tadeusz Kantor, who died in 1990, mostly by mimicking filmed fragments of an intriguing-looking play called "I Shall Never Return"—the penultimate production Kantor created with his experimental ensemble, Cricot 2. The Polish theatre scholar Anna R. Burzynska writes that Kantor's "model for the actor was a doll, a tailor's mannequin, and also a soldier, moving in a mechanized way, devoid of expression," so in theory the Wooster Group's stone-faced and scrupulous simulations would seem to be an apt way to illuminate his work. In practice, they're mostly a distraction. The performances of Kantor's company, though confined to the TV screen, are nearly always more compelling than the live actors onstage, with the exception of the unfailingly magnetic Kate Valk. (*The Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. thewoostergroup.org.*)

**Summer and Smoke**

Tennessee Williams's 1948 play was produced a year after "A Streetcar Named Desire" opened on Broadway and took the world by storm, and it is a quieter play than the one that showcased Marlon Brando's Stanley Kowalski—less resolved, but still fascinating. Alma (Marin Ireland) is a preacher's daughter who lives across the way from John (the handsome Nathan Darrow), a doctor who believes in both science and the ways of the flesh. Alma has longed for him since childhood, and the director, Transport Group's Jack Cummings III, makes something beautiful out of those early flickerings of love—but then he ruins it, by permitting Ireland's shtick-ridden performance to get in the way of the other actors and of the text, drowning out the story's nuances. (*Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.*)

## ALSO NOTABLE

**Angels in America** Neil Simon. • **The Band's Visit** Ethel Barrymore. • **A Brief History of Women** 59E59. • **Carousel** Imperial. • **Children of a Lesser God** Studio 54. • **Escape to Margaritaville** Marquis. • **Frozen** St. James. • **Happy Birthday, Wanda June** Gene Frankel. • **Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Parts One and Two** Lyric. • **Long Day's Journey Into Night** BAM Harvey Theatre. • **Mean Girls** August Wilson. • **The Metromaniacs** The Duke on 42nd Street. *Through May 20.* • **Mlima's Tale** Public. • **Saint Joan** Samuel J. Friedman. • **The Seafarer** Irish Repertory. • **SpongeBob SquarePants** Palace. • **Summer Lunt-Fontanne.** • **Three Tall Women** Golden. • **Transfers** Lucille Lortel. *Through May 20.* • **Travesties** American Airlines Theatre.



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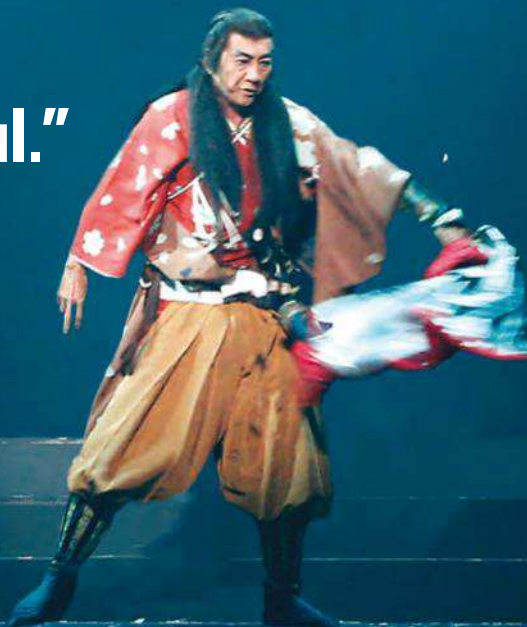


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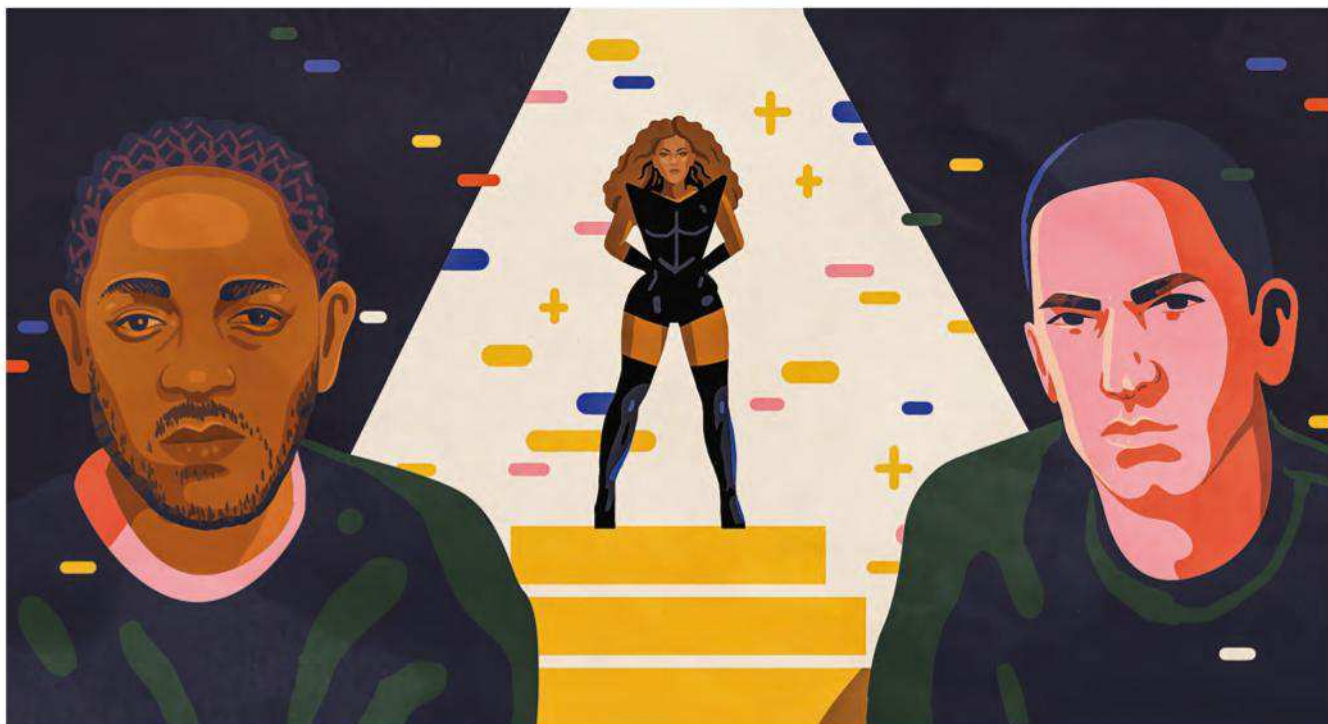
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## NIGHT LIFE



The Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar takes his victory lap, Beyoncé tours with Jay-Z, and Eminem headlines the Governors Ball.

Here in the birthplace of hip-hop, it should come as no surprise that m.c.s could dominate the summer, even if New York's influence on the direction of the genre has been almost nonexistent for quite some time. And yet even a year ago no one could have predicted the pop-cultural sway enjoyed by rappers like the recent Pulitzer Prize winner **Kendrick Lamar**, who will be taking what could be called a victory lap while headlining Top Dawg Entertainment's Championship Tour, at Madison Square Garden (on May 29). And what about **Jay-Z**, who heads out to MetLife Stadium with his wife, **Beyoncé**, on OTR II (Aug. 2), the biggest road show of the year and a sequel to their 2014 marital-bliss-if-you-say-so On the Run Tour? Could it be that this period's bad, bourgie rappers have become—to quote the former Beastie Boy Mike D in a recent interview—“the Lionel Richies of their day”?

The signs are abundant. **Eminem** and the Houston-bred trap star **Travis Scott** head up one night each of the three-night Governors Ball, on Randall's Island (June 1-3), which contains a mixed

bag of rockers (**Jack White**, **Yeah Yeah Yeahs**), soul children (**Khalid**, **James Blake**), and d.j.s (Diplo and Mark Ronson's **Silk City**). SummerStage has regularly scattered veteran m.c.s throughout the city's parks (this year brings **Big Daddy Kane** to Coney Island, and **EPMD** to Queens). At Celebrate Brooklyn!, in Prospect Park, **Common**—the summer's other rap Academy Award winner, alongside Eminem—opens up the season (June 5), and the Wu-Tang Clan's **RZA** gets things started at Lincoln Center Out of Doors (July 24).

Of course, this being New York, there's a sound somewhere to fit every taste. Randall's Island is also home to the Panorama Festival (July 27-29), the middle day of which places **Janet Jackson** atop a bill that includes **St. Vincent**, **Japanese Breakfast**, and **Floating Points**. Adventurous music fans will find much of interest spread across the venues in Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and Bushwick that are participating in the Northside Music Festival (June 7-10). Among the highlights are the sound sculptor and vocalist **Katie Gately**, the

beat-conscious absurdist **Nnamdi Ogbonnaya**, and **Liz Phair**, celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of her landmark album “Exile in Guyville.” **Erykah Badu**, **Miguel**, and **Tyler, the Creator** preside over the popular Afropunk Fest, in Brooklyn's Commodore Barry Park (Aug. 25-26). For those who crave Latin music, it's possible to catch **Willie Colón**, **Oscar D'León**, **Andy Montañez**, and other bandleader heavyweights at the Barclays Center for the 34th New York Salsa Festival (June 9), or to spend a more raucous and freewheeling evening at Le Poisson Rouge, when the guitarist **Marc Ribot** reunites **Los Cubanitos**, a band that brilliantly and unironically “faked” the music of the Cuban icon Arsenio Rodríguez (June 17). And though it's been seven years since the funky R. & B. auteur **Raphael Saadiq** released an album, the back-to-the-future style he's brought to the music of Solange Knowles and the TV show “Insecure” insures that his free show for Lincoln Center Out of Doors (July 25) will be one of the series' most anticipated.

—K. Leander Williams





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## ROCK AND POP

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

**Courtney Barnett**

Two years after her excellent début album, "Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit," earned her a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist, Barnett returns from Melbourne this week with a follow-up, entitled "Tell Me How You Really Feel." The thirty-year-old singer weaves dreamily observed stories about topics ranging from depression to the inanities of male privilege. Novelistic details spill out, delivered in a hangdog Australian accent that personifies bemusement, and grungy, crackling guitars keep the rhythm going. Her music packs a powerful and refreshing punch. (*Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. May 19.*)

**Festival of Disruption**

The David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace has been active since 2005, when the film director and Transcendental Meditation practitioner founded it with the intention of initiating stress-reduction programs for prisoners, students in troubled schools, war refugees, and other at-risk populations. This weekend, the chain-smoking art star comes to Brooklyn with a fund-raiser for his foundation, featuring two days of music, meditation, and events, including a special screening of "Blue Velvet" hosted by Isabella Rossellini; an art show featuring work by Lynch, William Eggleston, and Sandro Miller; and a stunning selection of musical talent. **Angel Olsen, Animal Collective, and Jon Hopkins** lead the program, joined by many artists from last year's reboot of Lynch's medium-defining murder-mystery soap, "Twin Peaks." **Au Revoir Simone, Flying Lotus, and the enchanting vocalist Rebekah Del Rio** will all perform. (*Brooklyn Steel, 319 Frost St., Brooklyn. 888-929-7849. May 19-20.*)

**FIXED with Lena Willikens**

Willikens is a d.j. from Cologne, Germany. She made her name at the Düsseldorf club Salon des Amateurs, and has taken its anything-goes demeanor with her into the world's night spots. Her sets, built around tracks that unspool dramatically, often favor florid left turns. Her August, 2017, performance at Dekmantel Festival, in Amsterdam, for instance, peaked with the deliciously over-the-top dramatics of the group Mother Destruction's über-goth set piece, "The Serpent Dance." Her choices haunted the program's two hours like a dark beacon, before giving way to some crunching acid-electro. Expect a similar level of dance-floor mischief when Willikens plays at Good Room, as part of a larger lineup dubbed FIXED. (*98 Meserole Ave., Brooklyn. goodroombk.com. May 18.*)

**Liam Gallagher and Richard Ashcroft**

In the nineties, Liam Gallagher and Richard Ashcroft served Britain as pop princelings, the former as the big, brash voice of Oasis, the latter as the equally cocksure front man of the Verve. Gallagher shared Oasis with his brother Noel; it might be his destiny to forever play Eric to his alpha sibling's Donald, Jr. And yet Gallagher won plaudits last year for "As You Were," his first proper solo album,

which cast his pub anthems in a contemporary sheen. On the other hand, the Verve was essentially a one-hit wonder—yet its hit, "Bitter Sweet Symphony," has shown remarkable durability, springing up with a regularity surpassing the songs of its era's shinier names. In his solo work, Ashcroft continues his quest for majestic rock moments. Both singers seemed like fogies before their time—classic rock stars marooned in the nineties—which makes them well-equipped to tour as nostalgia-tinged for-tysomethings. They play the season's first concert at Central Park's Rumsey Playfield, a ticketed benefit ahead of SummerStage's series of free programming. (*Mid-Park at 69th St. summerstage.org. May 16.*)

**Iceage**

These ambitious young punks boast a fan base that includes consecrated old punks like Richard Hell and Iggy Pop. (Pop has claimed the Danish group as the only current punk band "that sounds really dangerous"—strong words, given the source.) No doubt much of their forebears' admiration owes to Iceage's attitude. The musicians approach rock and roll with an all-in swagger, as if the world still swayed to the genre's pulse. This quaint delusion is its audience's prize. On "Beyondless," Iceage's fourth album (and its third with Matador Records), the quartet further expands upon its hardcore roots, with horns blaring above the sullen guitar din. The album also continues the ascent of Elias Bender Rønnenfelt, the group's high-cheekboned lead singer, as a clever lyricist. "Help," he announces in the song "Thieves Like Us," "I think I blindfolded the chauffeur." (*The Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-3111. May 16.*)

**Oneohtrix Point Never**

The electronic-music auteur Daniel Lopatin is academic, even near-clinical, with his use of sound. Like Brian Eno before him, he conceives of his schizophrenic productions not as passive facilitators but as active exhibitions. Still, Lopatin's techniques have been deftly utilitarian: to promote his album "Garden of Delete," he uploaded a batch of the project's foundational sound files for his fans to rip, flip, and rearrange before hearing the official release. He's been keeping the music on his forthcoming album, "Age Of," a bit closer to the vest. Lopatin premières the record during a multimedia extravaganza he calls "MYRIAD," at the helm of his first live touring band. (*Park Avenue Armory, 643 Park Ave. 212-616-3930. May 22.*)

**SOB X RBE**

Coming straight out of Vallejo, California, this foursome is channelling the same kind of intensity and streetwise storytelling that helped N.W.A. become a legendary act. SOB X RBE is a marriage between Lul G and Slimmy B's Strictly Only Brothers group and Yhung T.O. and DaBoii's Real Boi Entertainment. In 2015, while still in high school, they started recording together in Yhung T.O.'s grandmother's garage, and their early YouTube videos earned them an obsessive clique of Bay Area teenagers. Since then, they've perfected their chaotic live show, dropped a blistering feature on Kendrick Lamar's "Black Panther" soundtrack, and fired rhetorical shots at Migos, their trap rivals. They're hitting Rough Trade in support of their latest release, "Gangin'," an album

that is both abrasive and thoughtful. (*Rough Trade NYC, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtrade-nyc.com. May 21.*)

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**Bruce Barth and Dave Baron**

Barth, a mainstream modernist who wondrously calls to mind a host of classic stylists without any loss of distinctive personality, is an unabashed swinger who can light up a room with his rhythmic panache. He's joined by the adroit bassist Baron for an evening of snug duets. (*Mezzrow, 163 W. 10th St. mezzrow.com. May 18-19.*)

**Broken Shadows**

Free jazz has beckoned successive generations of innovative musicians since the early-sixties breakthrough of Ornette Coleman, the visionary lodestone who died in 2015. Four disciples who have gone on to establish their own personal voices—the saxophonists Tim Berne and Chris Speed and the Bad Plus bandmates Reid Anderson, on bass, and Dave King, on drums—unite as Broken Shadows to reinterpret the work of Coleman, his associates Dewey Redman and Charlie Haden, and another free-jazz titan, Julius Hemphill. (*Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. May 15-16.*)

**Vijay Iyer**

"Far from Over," the 2017 ECM release from the socially conscious pianist and composer, may not broadcast a specific political message, but its pointedly intense nature speaks directly to our roiling times. Iyer reconvenes the sextet that graces the acclaimed album, including the saxophonists **Mark Shim** and **Steve Lehman**. (The drummer **Jeremy Dutton** will sub for **Tyshawn Sorey** from Tuesday through Friday.) (*Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at W. 11th St. 212-255-4037. May 15-20.*)

**Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra: Celebrating Ornette Coleman**

An innovator who steadfastly rejected harmonic boundaries, Ornette Coleman was also one of jazz history's supreme composers of indelible melodies. The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will no doubt put its own elaborate spin on such classics as "Peace," "Una Muy Bonita," and, of course, Coleman's signature piece, "Lonely Woman." (*Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. May 18-19.*)

**Linda Lavin**

You don't have to cherish the classic SCTV sketch featuring the comedienne Andrea Martin as the beloved, Tony-winning Lavin to appreciate the fact that the veteran actress takes vocalizing very seriously. Her Carlyle début program, "My Second Farewell Concert," also features the redoubtable pianist and cabaret mainstay **Billy Stritch**. (*Café Carlyle, Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. May 15-19.*)

**Dave Liebman Group**

Dave Liebman doesn't think small. Completing his "Elements" tetralogy, the champion saxophonist presents "Earth," an ambitious linked piece that strives to drape iconic locales (the Grand Canyon, Mt. Everest, etc.) in musical garb. Joining him are such committed cohorts as the pianist **Bobby Avey** and the reed player **Matt Vashlishan**. (*Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. May 18-20.*)



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## MOVIES



The season's highlights include "Leave No Trace," "BlacKkKlansman," and "Ant-Man and the Wasp."

The summer's visionary speculations run the gamut from the fanciful to the bleak. The science-fiction romantic comedy **"How to Talk to Girls at Parties"** (May 25), about teen-age boys who find themselves flirting with aliens, is based on a short story by Neil Gaiman; it stars Elle Fanning, Nicole Kidman, and Matt Lucas, and is directed by John Cameron Mitchell. Tessa Thompson and Lakeith Stanfield star in **"Sorry to Bother You"** (July 6), a metaphysical comedy, directed by Boots Riley, about telemarketers endowed with supernatural powers; Armie Hammer, Terry Crews, and Danny Glover co-star. The director

Peyton Reed, whose comedic touch enlivened "Ant-Man," returns with **"Ant-Man and the Wasp"** (July 6), in which Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) and Hope van Dyne (Evangeline Lilly) team up to ward off evil. Amandla Stenberg ("The Hunger Games") and Harris Dickinson ("Beach Rats") star in **"The Darkest Minds"** (Aug. 3), a dystopian fantasy about a society that imprisons everyone under the age of eighteen and a group of incarcerated teen-agers who rebel against it. Jennifer Yuh Nelson directed.

The summertime blues come to the fore in a variety of teen-centered movies,

including **"Leave No Trace"** (June 29), the director Debra Granik's drama about a teen-age girl (Thomasin McKenzie) and her father (Ben Foster) who clash with the authorities while living off the grid in rural Oregon. The comedian Bo Burnham's first feature, **"Eighth Grade"** (July 13), is a comedy about a thirteen-year-old girl named Kayla (Elsie Fisher) who's dealing with her impending transition to high school. **"The Miseducation of Cameron Post"** (Aug. 3), directed by Desiree Akhavan, stars Chloë Grace Moretz as a high-school student who is caught by her parents in a relationship with another girl and sent to a conversion-therapy camp. In Josephine Decker's drama **"Madeline's Madeline"** (Aug. 10), Helena Howard delivers an inspired performance as a high-school student struggling with mental illness who seeks a creative outlet by acting in a New York theatre troupe. Miranda July co-stars, as the girl's mother; Molly Parker plays the theatre company's director.

Political tales take many forms this season, as in the drama **"The Catcher Was a Spy"** (June 22), based on the true story of the major-league baseball player Moe Berg (played by Paul Rudd), a graduate of Princeton and Columbia Law School who was recruited by the U.S. Army to do espionage during the Second World War. Ben Lewin directed. Lauren Greenfield, who made the documentary **"The Queen of Versailles,"** returns to the subject of outrageous fortunes with **"Generation Wealth"** (July 20), a historical essay-film about the latter-day obsession with the ultra-rich. Spike Lee's new drama, **"BlacKkKlansman"** (Aug. 10), based on a nonfiction book by Ron Stallworth, tells the story of an African-American detective in Colorado who goes undercover as a member of a Ku Klux Klan chapter and is eventually elected as its leader. John David Washington stars as the detective; Adam Driver, Laura Harrier, Topher Grace, Paul Walter Hauser, and Harry Belafonte co-star.

—Richard Brody



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## NOW PLAYING

**Avengers: Infinity War**

Behold, the latest monster of a movie to lumber forth from the Marvel stables. This one is directed by Joe and Anthony Russo, and stars pretty much every actor that the studio could round up. Robert Downey, Jr., returns as Iron Man, Tom Holland is Spider-Man, Chadwick Boseman is Black Panther, Elizabeth Olsen is Scarlet Witch, Benedict Cumberbatch is Dr. Strange, Zoe Saldana is Gamora, Chris Hemsworth is Thor, Tom Hiddleston is the nefarious Loki, and so on. Mark Ruffalo is back, too, as Hulk, although he has immense difficulty turning angry and green, and may need to consult the appropriate physician. Ant-Man should be somewhere, but he may have been trodden underfoot. The plot is the usual small-scale, everyday affair: there are six Infinity Stones available to collect, and a mountainous thug named Thanos (Josh Brolin) wants them all, with a view to commanding the cosmos. The effort to stop him takes two and a half hours, though it seems considerably longer, and the climactic battle is set in Wakanda, which appears to be, in every sense, where the money is. The threat of a sequel seems all too real.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 5/7/18.) (In wide release.)

**Beast**

Michael Pearce's debut feature, set on the British island of Jersey, stars Jessie Buckley as a young woman named Moll, whose anger feels difficult to explain and even harder to appease. She was in serious trouble as a schoolgirl, and a childish restiveness still lingers in her adult behavior. It's therefore no surprise when, to the disapproval of her mother (Geraldine James), she takes up with a local poacher, Pascal Renouf (Johnny Flynn), whose own past is, if anything, even darker than Moll's. To add to the fretful mood, their romance—if you can call it that—unfolds against a background of recent crimes. Three women have been abducted and killed, and Pascal is one of the suspects; Moll stands by him, and you start to wonder, with growing trepidation, what it would take to pull her away. The plot veers into contrivance, and there's a slight surfeit of scenes in which social niceties are cracked or overturned, but the atmosphere on the sunlit island grows creepier by the minute, and Buckley holds the unlikely tale together. She turns Moll into a creature of earth and fire.—*A.L.* (5/14/18) (In limited release.)

**The Day After**

The South Korean director Hong Sang-soo infuses this impulsively romantic melodrama with the ironic echoes of comedy. Bongwan (Kwon Hae-hyo), the middle-aged head of a small Seoul publishing house, has been having an affair with his assistant, a young woman named Changsook (Kim Sae-byuk). Heartbroken after she leaves him, Bongwan—still in need of office help—hires another young woman, Areum (Kim Min-hee). During Areum's first day on the job, Bongwan's wife, Haejoo (Cho Yun-hee), barges into the office, certain that Bongwan has been having an affair with his assistant, and mistakes Areum for his lover. Hong tells the story in long dialogue-filled takes, done in a soft black-and-white that feels like pencil drawings, to extract deep and earnest confessions with a graceful touch that shudders with the life-shaking emotions at their core. (Those emotions also burst forth physically, with violence and drunken frenzy.) Avow-

als of literary ambitions and familial devotion, stories of death and faith, and a bold dramatic structure—based on flashbacks and leaps forward in time—set the vagaries of work and love on the firm footing of destiny.—*Richard Brody* (In limited release.)

**Fig Leaves**

In his second feature film, from 1926, Howard Hawks's effervescent blend of sly sex comedy and riotous slapstick is already on gleeful display. The title refers to Eve's garments in the Garden of Eden, and the story begins there, with the primordial couple living like the Flintstones, with a pet brontosaurus, before leaping ahead to the Roaring Twenties. Adam Smith (George O'Brien), a strapping young plumber, is married to the willowy Eve (Olive Borden), who stays at home and yearns for high-fashion finery. Comic accidents bring her to the attention of Josef André (George Beranger), a king of haute couture, at whose Fifth Avenue salon she soon becomes the leading model and object of desire—unbeknownst to her husband. Adam's gender-bending games with his gruff business partner, Eddie (Heinie Conklin), and the viperish wiles of the flapper next door (Phyllis Haver) add ribald laughs, and a loopy fashion show (originally shot as a color insert but surviving only in black-and-white) suggests the enticing plumage of exotic birds. Though the film is silent, Hawks's epigrammatic rapidity is already in evidence—the characters talk non-stop with such lively, pointed grace that viewers might swear they hear the intertitles spoken.—*R.B.* (MOMA, May 20.)

**Filmworker**

Tony Zierra's documentary about Leon Vitali, Stanley Kubrick's longtime right-hand man, covers a wide range of movie-centric ideas. Vitali, a busy young London actor in the early nineteen-seventies, parlayed a role in Kubrick's 1975 drama "Barry Lyndon" into the fulfillment of a dream: working with the director behind the scenes. Vitali quickly made his mark—he found and coached the child actor Danny Lloyd, who starred in "The Shining," and brought R. Lee Ermey's talent to Kubrick's attention for "Full Metal Jacket." Vitali's devotion surpassed the bounds of reason, and Kubrick took advantage. Vitali worked on a seven-day-a-week, nearly round-the-clock schedule until Kubrick's death, in 1999, and even beyond. Kubrick's absurdly extreme quest for control—over not just the making of his films but also their distribution, advertising, preservation, and revival—found its all too willing enabler in Vitali. Whatever Kubrick wanted, Vitali realized, at great personal sacrifice—but Vitali expresses no regrets. Though the film suggests that Kubrick was a brilliant manipulator, Zierra himself never questions the artistic virtues of Kubrick's own obsession; his film, too, partakes in the cult of Kubrick.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

**I Feel Pretty**

Amy Schumer works hard to infuse this comedy, built around dated self-help clichés, with a bit of vitality. She stars as Renee Bennett, a frustrated employee of a high-end New York cosmetics company who's relegated to its grim basement annex in Chinatown. She's unhappy with her face, her body, and her life; seeking change in a spin class, she falls off a bike, bumps her head, and awakens with boundless confidence in her beauty and her abilities. Suddenly frank and

assertive, she chats up a shy young man (Rory Scovel), who becomes her boyfriend; talks herself into a job at the company's glamorous midtown headquarters; and is soon propelled into a prominent position representing the firm's new low-priced line. She also becomes an arrogant jerk who alienates her best friends (Aidy Bryant and Busy Philipps) and is tempted to sleep with one of the company's heirs (Tom Hopper). As written and directed by Abby Kohn and Marc Silverstein, Renee and her friends remain featureless ciphers, though Schumer delivers several moments of antic inspiration (including a wild dance scene that, unfortunately, is filmed clumsily).—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

**Let the Sunshine In**

The new movie from Claire Denis stars Juliette Binoche as Isabelle, who seems destined to be unlucky in love. She is an artist by trade, although only once do we see her at work, feverishly engaged in a bout of Action painting. She starts the film by having sex with a banker (Xavier Beauvois), and ends it by consulting a fortune-teller (Gérard Depardieu). In between, there is dancing, dining, a brief trip to the country (the rest of the tale is incorrigibly Parisian), and a string of disappointments and demurals. Denis's approach is cunningly attuned to this uncertain mood; more than once, characters simply appear, unidentified and unannounced, as if wandering onto a stage, while others, like the heroine's daughter, are confined to the wings. Binoche, meanwhile, turns Isabelle into a mutable mixture of the forthright, the tearfully plaintive, and—all too rarely—the blissed out. The film is loosely based on "A Lover's Discourse," by Roland Barthes, and, as such, provides an uneasy guide to the shifting sands of the romantic life. With Nicolas Duvauchelle, as a vain and drunken actor. In French.—*A.L.* (5/7/18) (In limited release.)

**Le Pont du Nord**

This nearly lost film by Jacques Rivette, from 1981, captures the visions and moods of a nearly lost Paris—and of a mode of thought that was also on its way out. It starts as a whimsical urban riff on the theme of chance connections: Marie (Bulle Ogier), a toughened woman of a certain age, heads to Paris after getting out of prison and is joined by Baptiste (Pascale Ogier, her real-life daughter), a fiercely determined dark angel who travels by scooter. Marie reunites with her boyfriend, Julien (Pierre Clémenti), a pathological gambler whose mysterious briefcase entangles him in big trouble that Baptiste decides to unravel. The women's poetic excursions through the ruins of industrial sites and Impressionist landscapes morph into a spy-versus-spy caper involving left-wing terrorist plots and government infiltration. Rivette shows the romantically labyrinthine city and the bloody ideals of revolutionary heroism vanishing together, even as the chill of rational order reveals another shimmery layer of ingrained authority. Pascale Ogier brings an exhilarating feral passion to her role, starting with her pugnacious confrontation with a suave motorcyclist (Jean-François Stévenin); she died in 1984, at the age of twenty-five, and this movie may be her greatest showcase. In French.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives, May 17, and streaming.)

**Sollers Point**

The title of Matthew Porterfield's quietly anguished drama refers to a Baltimore neighborhood that's near a now-shuttered steel mill and





is still home to many of its former employees. There, the twenty-six-year-old Keith Cohoe (McCaul Lombardi), recently released from prison (apparently for a drug-related offense), is under house arrest and living with his father, Carol (Jim Belushi), a retired mill worker. Keith is white; many of his friends and neighbors, including his former girlfriend, Courtney (Zazie Beetz), are black, but, in prison, Keith belonged to a white-supremacist gang, and when his house arrest ends its ex-con members expect him to re-join them. Meanwhile, unable to find work and in need of quick money, Keith begins dealing drugs again. His increasingly desperate rounds thrust him into wary yet yearning contact with a wide range of characters, including his grandmother (Lynn Cohen), two young women who work as strippers, a terrifying white-supremacist leader, an art-school student, and a heroin addict hoping to break her habit. Sketching Keith's inner conflicts and practical struggles with a graceful, mood-rich lyricism, Porterfield presses gently but painfully on some of the most inflamed and sensitive parts of American society.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Stations of the Elevated

The documentary filmmaker Manfred Kirchheimer's New York street poem, from 1981, begins with a painterly, sun-dappled celebration of graffiti on subway trains. But the film's range of subjects and ideas quickly expands to probe the exhilaration of city life. The accidental magic of reflections and shadows meshes with the pure forms of architecture and the overlooked artistry of advertisements to conjure a feeling of unrelenting sensory adventure. Shots of abandoned buildings, turned into playgrounds by neighborhood kids, evoke the care and thought that went into their construction, lending the ambient degradation an extra layer of tragedy. Music by Charles Mingus melds with the urban racket to provide rhythmic counterpoint to Kirchheimer's incisive editing. In his vision, the aesthetic and the utilitarian fuse in a riot of abstract figures and incidental symbols; a shadow on a red brick building of a person leaning on the railing of an overhead subway station evokes the craggy grandeur of Rodin's "The Thinker."—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives, May 18, and streaming.)

### Tully

A new collaboration between the writer Diablo Cody, the director Jason Reitman, and the actress Charlize Theron, who previously worked together for "Young Adult" (2011). This time around, Theron plays a mother named Marlo. She and her husband, Drew (Ron Livingston), already have two children, and, after Marlo gives birth again, she falls into every kind of slump—in body, mind, and spirit. Salvation arrives in the shape of Tully (Mackenzie Davis), a night nurse who gives Marlo a chance to sleep and thereby restores order and pleasure to her days. Tully reminds Marlo of her younger self, and the pact between them seems weirdly exclusive. The movie is founded on a stark dichotomy: motherhood is either a blessing or a burden, and nothing in between. The idea that paid help will assuage all problems in the home—including sex, or the want of it—is hardly the most fruitful of revelations, and the late twist unravels the moment you tug on it. On the other hand, Theron is as gutsy and unabashed as she was in "Monster" (2003), holding little back, and supplying Marlo's lethargy with dramatic zest. With Mark Duplass.—*A.L.* (5/14/18) (In wide release.)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC



This summer, Rubinstein's opera "The Demon" offers an infernal reply to Bernstein's "Mass."

Leonard Bernstein's hundredth birthday has proved an irresistible invitation to programmers this summer season. **Tanglewood**, an early haven for the composer, has gone for a more-is-more approach. The highlight may be the **Boston Symphony Orchestra's** performance of "Divertimento" (Aug. 18), his gift to the ensemble on the occasion of its own centennial, in 1980. **Maverick Concerts** nods to the anniversary with programs that include a new arrangement of "Songfest" (on Aug. 25, Bernstein's actual birthday), but the series focusses more on the music of Lenny's friend and contemporary Ned Rorem, whose "Mourning Scene from Samuel" will be delivered by the **Dover Quartet** and the baritone **Andrew Garland** (July 15). In Bernstein's adopted home town, **Mostly Mozart** is filled this year with spectacular evocations of the natural and the spiritual worlds, culminating in **John Luther Adams's** "In the Name of the Earth," which will be premiered at Central Park's Harlem Meer (Aug. 11). It also features his wild, questioning, syncretic "Mass" (July 17-18), at David Geffen Hall.

Eschewing Bernstein fever, the **Chelsea Music Festival** honors Bach, with events including an evening of music written and inspired by the composer (at St. Paul's German Lutheran Church, on June 9) which, with "culinary interludes," lasts three hundred and thirty-three min-

utes: one for each year since his birth. Elsewhere in the city, the **Metropolitan Opera's Summer Recital Series** of six free, outdoor concerts (two in Manhattan, with one apiece in the other boroughs) showcases a diverse selection of young and exciting singers (various dates, June 11-29). And the idea of an underground venue takes on a new realism with the premiere of **David Hertzberg's** opera "The Rose-Elf," in the catacombs beneath **Green-Wood Cemetery** (starting on June 6).

Back upstate, **Glimmerglass Opera's** own Bernstein component, "West Side Story," runs alongside operas by Rossini and Janáček. Mark Campbell and Kevin Putz's "Silent Night," which won the 2012 Pulitzer for its depiction of the Christmas truce of 1914, completes the lineup (July 7-Aug. 25). Meanwhile, **Bard SummerScape** mounts "The Demon" (July 27-Aug. 5), a supernatural melodrama by the great pianist and composer Anton Rubinstein. The Russian theme continues with the **Bard Music Festival's** exploration of the music of Rimsky-Korsakov (Aug. 10-19). And true history buffs can get their fix from **Teatro Nuovo**, newly established at SUNY Purchase by Will Crutchfield. The company presents "Tancredi Riffatto" (Aug. 5), which includes rarely heard alternative numbers that Rossini minted when his Sicilian drama went on tour.

—*Fergus McIntosh*

## OPERA

**American Lyric Theatre: "InsightALT"**

In celebration of the tenth anniversary of its Composer Librettist Development Program, the company presents "Opera in Eden," featuring concert performances of three new one-act works by the program's current resident artists. "Bloodlines," by Shuying Li and Lila Palmer, is followed by "The Gospel According to Nana," by Liliya Ugay and Lorene Cary, and "The Tree of Eternal Youth," by Andy Tierstein and Julian Crouch. *May 17 at 7:30. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. merkinhall.org.)*

**Center for Contemporary Opera**

Opera fans who know Gertrude Stein's writing only from her linguistically loose libretto for Virgil Thomson's "Four Saints in Three Acts" will be surprised to encounter the more suggestive language in Pascal Dusapin's 1994 chamber opera, "To Be Sung," based on one of Stein's short stories. As a work of literature, it still retains the author's casual relationship to syntax, but Dusapin plays off the sexually implicit text with three tightly harmonized female voices that intertwine in an intimate musical setting; Jorinde Keesmaat directs, and Sara Jobin conducts. Also this week, the company's development series presents Act I of Scott Wheeler's opera "The Sorrows of Frederick," with the baritone Keith Phares as Frederick the Great of Prussia, who composed music, fell in love with Lieutenant Hans von Katte, and pursued an aggressive agenda of military conquests; Beth Greenberg directs, and Mark Shapiro conducts. *May 17-19 at 8. (Irondale Center, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn. centerforcontemporaryopera.org.)*

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**New York Philharmonic**

The estimable Russian conductor Semyon Bychkov, a frequent and valued guest at the Philharmonic, arrives for the first of two programs. This one is anchored by Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony—a work in which Bychkov is especially persuasive—and features the stylish pianist Bertrand Chamayou in Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1; Brahms's portentous "Tragic Overture" opens the proceedings. *May 17 at 7:30, May 18-19 at 8, and May 22 at 7:30. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)*

**Trinity Church Wall Street**

To celebrate Leonard Bernstein's centennial, the downtown church hosts "Total Embrace," a series of free concerts pairing the composer with others whose work resonates in some way with his own. This week, the winsome "Arias and Barcarolles" shares a program with a new Mass by Jonathan Newman, who, like Bernstein, distills the strains of pop, blues, and jazz into classical structures. Julian Wachner conducts NOVUS NY, the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, and the singers Melissa Attebury and Christopher Herbert. *May 17 at 1. (St. Paul's Chapel, 209 Broadway. No tickets required.)*

**The Met Orchestra**

At the end of each Metropolitan Opera season, the house orchestra does a mini-residency of sorts at Carnegie Hall, giving its members the opportunity to stretch themselves in repertoire they would not normally encounter. In the first of three concerts, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla conducts

Debussy's "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune," a mirage of subtly changing colors; Tchaikovsky's impassioned Symphony No. 4; and Shostakovich's vividly orchestrated version of Mussorgsky's "Songs and Dances of Death," with the powerful mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili. *May 18 at 8. (212-247-7800.)*

**Freiburg Baroque Orchestra**

The German ensemble, which brings modern verve to period-instrument performance, rounds out Lincoln Center's "Great Performers" series. Kristian Bezuidenhout, a versatile South African keyboardist, plays two of Mozart's piano concertos (No. 17 in G Major and No. 9 in E-Flat Major) on the fortepiano, a forerunner of the modern pianoforte. Symphonies by Haydn and J. C. Bach, whose work is said to have inspired Mozart, complete the program. *May 19 at 7:30. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)*

## RECITALS

**Spectrum: "BerioFest"**

The Baltimore duo Louna Dekker-Vargas and Ledah Finck, known as the Witches, specialize in repertoire for violin, flute, and voice. They have mustered an impressive cast of colleagues for the first of two events devoted to the music of Luciano Berio. The program provides a generous sampling of the versatile Italian composer's extravagant Sequenzas and congenial violin duets, alongside selections from his "Folk Songs." *May 17 at 7. (Spectrum, 70 Flushing Ave., Brooklyn. spectrumnyc.com.)*

**Aspect Foundation: "Fête Galante"**

The Four Nations Ensemble, a mainstay of New York's early-music scene, is joined by the lushly expressive soprano and Baroque specialist Sherezade Panthaki in a program drawing on the artistic efflorescence that followed the reign of Louis XIV, the Sun King. Cosmopolitan chamber works by Devienne and Telemann are set against Clérambault's eloquent cantata "L'Isle de Délos" and courtly music by Leclair. Tav Holmes, an art historian, delivers a companion lecture. *May 17 at 7:30. (Italian Academy, Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave. aspect-foundation.net.)*

**Yuja Wang**

The flamboyant pianist, whose technical prowess is matched by her musicality, presents a selection of works by great pianist-composers, including Rachmaninoff and Scriabin. Three of Ligeti's inventive, fiendishly difficult études also feature in a program capped by Prokofiev's impassioned Piano Sonata No. 8. *May 17 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

**Bargemusic: Brahms and Schubert**

If Schubert's friend Vincenz Schuster hadn't been a fan of the arpeggione—an instrument, strung and fretted like a guitar but played like a cello, which had a brief vogue in eighteen-twenties Europe—it's unlikely that the composer would have written anything for it. It's a good thing he did, though, since the resulting sonata is lyrical and sweet-tempered, despite the occasional gimmick. Nowadays, the piece is mostly performed on the cello or, as here by Marcus Thompson, on the viola. Doris Stevenson accompanies on the piano, in a program that concludes with a Brahms sonata (Op. 120). *May 18 at 8. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org.)*

**Rite of Summer Music Festival**

This monthly new-music series, held on a grassy lawn endowed with ample shade, opens with performances by Sandbox Percussion, an exacting and exuberant quartet. The program includes works by Steve Reich, Andy Akiho, Alex Weiser, and two members of the ensemble, Victor Caccese and Jonny Allen. *May 19 at 1 and 3. (Colonels Row, Governors Island. riteofsummer.com.)*

**"Wall to Wall Leonard Bernstein"**

This year's edition of Symphony Space's free marathon concert focusses, inevitably, on Bernstein. The program will be divided into three thematic segments. The first concentrates on the forties and fifties, including selections from "Candide" and "West Side Story"; the second spans from the sixties through the eighties, a period of heightened intensity and lofty ambition; and the last surveys Bernstein's Broadway songs from "On the Town," "Peter Pan," "Wonderful Town," and more. *May 19 at 3. (2537 Broadway. symphonyspace.org.)*

**"Joan Tower UpClose"**

The KeyedUp Music Project presents a program that circles the composer's works and influences, in celebration of her eightieth birthday (Tower will be in attendance). The pianist Marc Peloquin, who directs the series, will perform "Ivory and Ebony," a virtuosic essay in chromatic invention, and accompany Claudia Schaer in Debussy's succinct Violin Sonata. Together with the clarinetist Meighan Stoops, they present "Rain Waves," a sonic exploration of liquid forms. *May 19 at 8. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 43A W. 13th St. keyedupmusicproject.com)*

**Evgeny Kissin**

The Moscow-born virtuoso, now in his mid-forties, has left wunderkind status to younger colleagues like Daniil Trifonov and Behzod Abduraimov. His annual Carnegie program is a mighty and serious one: Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" paired with a selection of Rachmaninov preludes. The eclectic fireworks of Kissin's youth are likely to be found in the encores. *May 20 at 2. (212-247-7800.)*

**Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center**

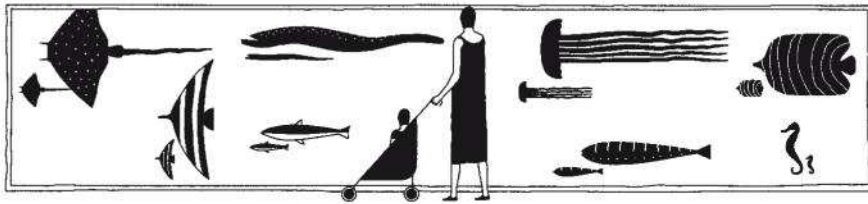
The Society concludes its regular season with a celebration of the concerto, ranging from Baroque showpieces by Leclair (for violin) and Bach (for keyboard) to a chamber-scale arrangement of Mozart's tempestuous Piano Concerto in D Minor (K. 466). The form finds more modern expressions in pithy, quirky creations by Janáček (his Concertino, for piano, winds, and strings) and Steven Mackey ("Micro-Concerto," for solo percussion, winds, strings, and piano). *May 20 at 5. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)*

**Midori Takada**

Copies of "Through the Looking Glass," an exquisitely recorded 1983 album of meditative compositions by the Japanese percussionist Midori Takada, have commanded prices in excess of a thousand dollars among collectors. Its reissue, last year, has sparked fresh interest in Takada—whose music melds Western classical, African, and Asian disciplines—resulting in her first tour of the United States. Her first stop is at the Kitchen, followed by a show at the Murmrr Theatre, in Brooklyn. *May 21 at 8; May 23 at 8. (512 W. 19th St. thekitchen.org; 17 Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn. murmrr.com.)*



# ABOVE & BEYOND



## Pop-Up Magazine Spring Issue Tour

The stories in "Pop-Up Magazine" are far from ephemeral, but there's an element of the hit-and-run in their presentation. Each issue is staged live before an audience, the tales performed aloud and fleshed out with photographs, illustrations, films, or animations. They're even scored with live original music by the Magik\*Magik Orchestra. The storytellers have consisted of Oscar winners, best-selling authors, radio personalities, and journalists; the producers reveal the participants in advance, though an air of secrecy surrounds the exact scope of the pieces until they're performed. Among the contributors to the Spring 2018 installment are the filmmakers Lauren Greenfield and Veena Rao, the photographer Andres Gonzalez, the actors Joy Bryant and Franchesca Ramsey, and the writer John Jeremiah Sullivan. Helen Rosner, a contributor to *newyorker.com*, will also be on hand with a story that connects the President's dinner table to the U.S.-Mexico border. Because these events aren't taped, the only way to catch them is to attend. (David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, Broadway at W. 66th St. 212-721-6500. May 21.)

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's leads into its all-important evening auction of contemporary art (May 16) with a sale devoted to the collection of the Cleveland-based tycoon Morton Mandel, which includes pieces by such blue-chip artists as Rothko, de Kooning, and Judd. Then it launches into the main event: a selection of contemporary works, led by Jean-Michel Basquiat's 1983 painting "Flesh and Spirit," inspired in part by Robert Farris Thompson's influential study of African art. Also included are Kerry James Marshall's "Past Times," a pastoral scene depicting various African-American figures enjoying an afternoon at the park, and the gumball-colored "Pacific Coast Highway and Santa Monica," by David Hockney. On May 22, the house returns to the less overheated arena of European academic art and Old Masters, followed by American art, including John Koch's intimate painting of an artist and his nude model peering out of a window, "The Accident No. 2." (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • Warhol, Bacon, and Rothko duke it out for the top spot in Christie's evening sale of postwar and contemporary art on May 17. There are two major Warhol canvases on offer, one depicting Elvis, pistol drawn, cowboy-style, and the other a double mug shot from his "Most Wanted" series, from 1964. The Rothko, "No. 7 (Dark Over Light)," has the distinction of being one of the artist's largest works, at more than eight feet tall. For the more lighthearted, there is also a giant pile of pretend Play-

Doh ("Play-Doh"), by the art world's designated prankster, Jeff Koons. On May 22, American art, including a charming genre scene by Norman Rockwell depicting an elderly gentleman tuning a piano, goes under the gavel. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • Phillips gets in on the action on May 16, with two sessions filled with contemporary art. The more high-powered evening sale on May 17 includes "Flexible," a painting by Basquiat that comes directly from the artist's estate and has never before been seen at auction. It depicts a single figure, an African griot, arms extended overhead in an enigmatic gesture. Other highlights include a black-and-white Motherwell ("At Five in the Afternoon") and Mark Bradford's "Black Venus," made with detritus harvested from the streets of Los Angeles. (450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.)

## New York Public Library

The rock singer Lou Reed put a good deal of his verse to music, but a recent book culled from his archive, "Do Angels Need Haircuts?," uncovers the unpublished poems he wrote exclusively for the page shortly after he quit the Velvet Underground, in 1970. Anne Waldman and Laurie Anderson, who wrote the collection's foreword and afterword, respectively, read from the work, along with Don Fleming, Merrill Reed Weiner (the rocker's sister), and Hal Willner. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. [nypl.org](http://nypl.org). May 22 at 7.)

## Greenlight Bookstore

Mary Gaitskill's fiction is noted for its ease with the uncomfortable. Last year, she displayed the same willingness to reveal societal fissures in her first book of nonfiction, the essay collection "Somebody with a Little Hammer," which covers sex and gender, music (Talking Heads, Björk, Céline Dion), writers (Norman Mailer, Joyce Carol Oates, Nicholson Baker), travel, and politics. The volume's title comes from this apt passage in the Chekhov short story "Gooseberries": "At the door of every contented, happy man, somebody should stand with a little hammer, constantly tapping, to remind him that unhappy people exist, that however happy he may be, sooner or later life will show him its claws, some calamity will befall him—illness, poverty, loss—and nobody will hear or see, just as he doesn't hear or see others now." Gaitskill reads and takes questions on the occasion of her book's paperback edition. (686 Fulton St. at S. Portland St., Brooklyn. May 22 at 7:30.)

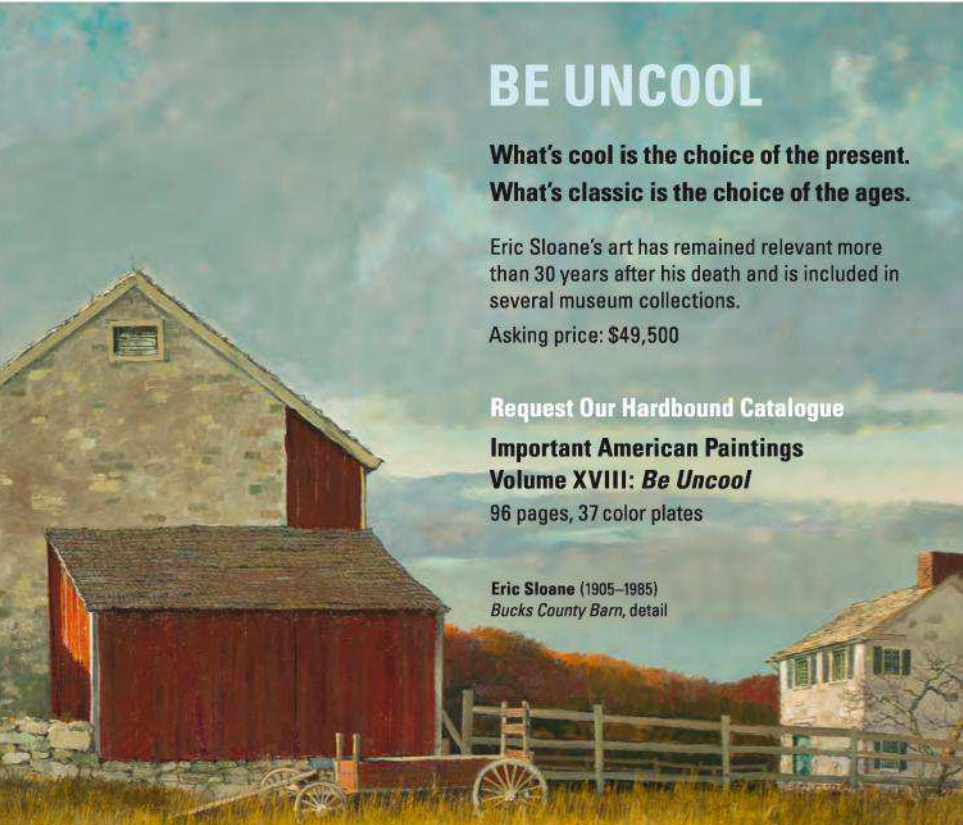
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## FOOD & DRINK



### TABLES FOR TWO

#### Shabu Shabu Macoron

61 Delancey St. (212-925-5220)

On a recent evening, the chef Mako Okano stood behind the counter at Shabu Shabu Macoron, on the Lower East Side, looking a little like Rosie the Riveter: bandanna knotted around her head, the sleeves of her denim kimono rolled up to her elbows. After two years cooking at the soba restaurant Cocoron and its outpost, Goemon Curry, she opened this eight-seat place across the street last fall, with a small staff made up only of women. And that's not even the most unusual thing about it: according to Okano, it's the world's only restaurant to serve an omakase, or tasting menu, that centers on shabu-shabu, or Japanese hotpot.

The concept might at first sound antithetical; isn't the whole point of hotpot to cook the food yourself? But maybe, Okano seems to be gently suggesting, you could use the help of a professional. The other night, a heady flight of appetizers more than proved her authority. A spoonful of cured salmon and roe mixed with starchy, sour fermented rice was dressed with a single minuscule purple flower and served with a thimble of warm, cloudy sake nigori. In a cast-iron pan, Okano gently cooked eggs she had frothed with long chopsticks, then rolled the resulting omelette in a bamboo mat and sliced it into segments, each placed in a cup of

bonito broth with a jagged-edged shiso leaf. A springy tangle of yuba, the skin that forms on the surface of soy milk as it's boiled to make tofu, came in a pool of the milk, warm and sweet, topped with lobes of briny uni from Hokkaido and a shaving of real wasabi. It was an overture for the tofu itself, a jiggling slab as soft and creamy as butter, seasoned with just a few drops of ponzu, a bit of grated garlic, and grassy green onion.

By now, Okano had the diners eating out of her hand. In simmering cauldrons heated by electric burners, she and her staff carefully plunged vegetables and paper-thin slices of meat, then presented them one at a time, like mother birds feeding their chicks, and offered instructions on seasoning. Fatty strip loin with an exceptionally clean, beefy flavor? "Try it with ponzu." Fluffy curl of pork? Sesame paste. Both sweet soy and tomato sauce for julienned carrot wrapped in Chinese cabbage. When the last wonton filled with mochi and seaweed had been eaten, the now murky cooking liquid was whisked away—only to return for a grand finale. The closing course before dessert was a deep bowl of the very same stuff, repurposed as soup, featuring fresh green-tea soba noodles. It had been doctored slightly with soy sauce, bonito broth, and duck oil, but it didn't need much, Okano explained. "It has all the umami of what was in there." (*Omakase* \$128.)

—Hannah Goldfield

### BAR TAB



#### Jimmy's Corner

140 W. 44th St. (212-221-9510)

There is a gritty purism about Jimmy's Corner, where the walls are covered in boxing memorabilia and an old jukebox permeates the atmosphere with the velvety tones of Sam Cooke and Sinatra. The proprietor, Jimmy Glenn, is a former prizefighter and cornerman for Floyd Patterson. He opened Jimmy's in 1971. From a distance of half a century, the bar's survival, in the heart of Times Square, has the feel of an underdog story. The decades-long makeover of the neighborhood, from a convivial Gomorrah to an outpost of Disneyland, couldn't dislodge the place. Even the price of booze—draft beers for three dollars, mixed drinks from the rail for fifty cents more—remains stubbornly out of step with inflation. Glenn, now in his eighty-eighth spring, still drops in nearly every night. On a recent Monday, he arrived at the usual hour, just before ten, and took a chair next to a large stone sculpture of a sparring glove. With his silvery horse-shoe mustache and marble-handled walking cane, he called to mind a king presiding over his courtiers. A woman with a lilting Scottish accent asked to take a photo with him. A bearded Dutchman in a Yankees cap just wanted to shake his hand. Glenn obliged the admiring tourists, and then turned his attention to a newly wed Manhattan couple. "Jimmy, you think my wife could be a heavyweight champion?" the man asked. Glenn sized up the sylphlike woman, who had pink hair and was gamely jabbing at the air. He chuckled softly and shook his head. "They'd sit on her," he pronounced, and the woman dropped her arms in mock defeat. Another K.O. for Jimmy Glenn.—David Kortava



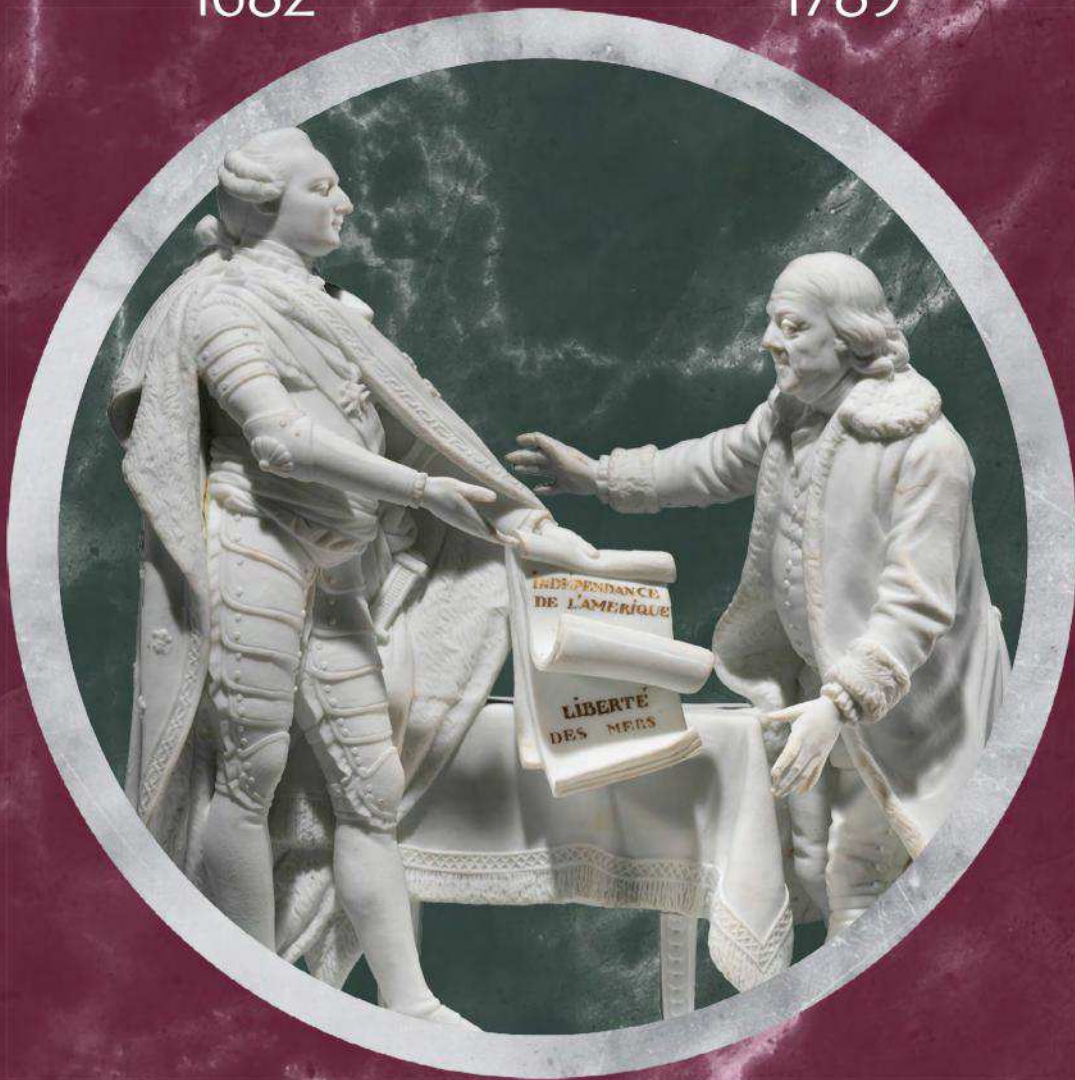
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# VISITORS TO VERSAILLES

1682

1789



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

#VisitorsToVersailles

Through July 29

The exhibition is made possible by The International Council of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Additional support is provided by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, Beatrice Stern, the Diane W. and James E. Burke Fund, the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund, The Florence Gould Foundation, The Danny Kaye and Sylvia Fine Kaye Foundation/French Heritage Society, and The Al Thani Collection. It is organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Palace of Versailles.

Charles-Gabriel Sauvage, called Lemire pere, *Figure of Louis XVI and Benjamin Franklin (detail)*, 1780–85. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of William H. Huntington, 1883.





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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT BAD BETS

On January 20, 1981, John Limbert and fifty-one other American diplomats were taken to Tehran's international airport on a bus, after being held in captivity by young revolutionaries for four hundred and forty-four days. The diplomats were all blindfolded. "Listening to the motors of the plane warming up—that was the sweetest sound I've ever heard," Limbert recalled last week. The Air Algérie crew waited to uncork the champagne until the flight had left Iranian airspace. The next day, however, the *Times* cautioned, "When the celebrations have ended, the hard problems unresolved with Iran will remain to be faced."

That's still true, nearly four decades later. Since Iran's 1979 revolution, six U.S. Presidents have traded arms, built back channels, and dispatched secret envoys in an effort to heal the rupture. "It's a bad divorce, like 'The War of the Roses,'" Vali Nasr, the Iranian-born dean of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, said. "Neither side has ever gotten over it." Finally, in 2015, Barack Obama led six major world powers into the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the most significant nonproliferation pact in more than a quarter century. The deal limited but did not eliminate Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for relief from some but not all punitive U.S. economic sanctions.

On May 8th, Donald Trump, in his biggest foreign-policy decision to date,

withdrew from the accord and reimposed sanctions, saying, "This was a horrible, one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made." In a high-risk gamble, the President is basically betting on the Islamic Republic's demise. The United States has now violated its obligation; Iran, according to ten International Atomic Energy Agency reports, has not. Tehran is not likely to go back to the negotiating table under these circumstances. The credibility of the White House, the country's commitment to diplomacy as an alternative to war, the strength of America's alliances, and the mechanisms to limit nuclear proliferation have all been deeply damaged.

This uncertainty comes at a particularly perilous moment, as Trump prepares for a summit with the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, in Singapore, on June 12th. Unlike Iran, North

Korea has nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States. Trump will be lucky to get a deal as straightforward or as verifiable as the one that he has just abandoned.

The fallout was immediate: Britain, France, and Germany rebuked Trump and vowed to honor the deal. China and Russia—the other co-sponsors—will stick to it, too. The European Union is also considering legislation to nullify the effects of Trump's sanctions on E.U. companies for engaging in transactions with Iran. Tensions between Israel and Iran threatened to turn Syria's civil war into a regional conflagration. For the first time, Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Syria fired rockets into Israel. Israel responded with a barrage of air strikes on Iran's extensive infrastructure across the border. And Saudi Arabia said that it would seek its own nuclear weapon if Tehran resumed any aspect of a program aimed at developing either peaceful nuclear energy or a bomb.

Trump has condemned the accord—and Iran—since the start of the 2016 campaign. But his new foreign-policy team, assembled during the past two months, seems to be pursuing a confrontational course. John Bolton, the national-security adviser, and Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State, championed regime change in Tehran before they joined the Administration. No opposition group has seriously challenged the theocracy from the outside. But, almost inexplicably, Bolton and Rudolph Giuliani, who is now one of the President's lawyers, were among a number of Americans



who accepted speaking fees to mobilize support for Mujahideen-e-Khalq, or the People's Holy Warriors, a cultlike Iranian-exile group that mixes Islam and Marxism, and was on the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organizations list from 1997 to 2012. Both men lobbied to get it taken off the list. Last July, Bolton told M.E.K. followers in Paris that U.S. policy "should be the overthrow of the mullahs' regime in Tehran" by its fortieth anniversary—next February.

Trump and his team are old enough to have watched the hostage saga drag on, day after day, and remember America's vulnerability. "Whoever wrote the President's statement is still obsessed with it," Limbert, who now teaches at the U.S. Naval Academy, said. "We're still wrestling with the ghosts of that history." Last week, Bolton explained Trump's decision in the *Washington Post*, writing, "This action reversed an ill-advised and dangerous policy and set us on a new

course that will address the aggressive and hostile behavior of our enemies."

The Islamic Republic is certainly an American nemesis, albeit not the only one, and not the worst. It redefined warfare with hostage-taking and suicide bombings. It introduced Islam as a form of modern governance, and fostered extremism. It created, aided, or armed militias in Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian National Authority, Syria, and Yemen that targeted U.S. interests. The United States should counter such activities. But the President's foreign policy—big on headlines and brash in demands but short on long-term strategy—risks failing, in Iran, North Korea, and beyond.

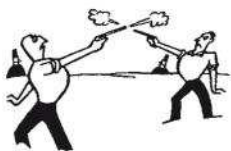
Trump and Kim Jong Un may announce a historic breakthrough in June, but they have vastly different ideas about what "denuclearization" means. Agreeing to broad principles in Singapore will be the easier part; negotiating the complex details of disarmament will take years—

a challenge for an impatient President. (The Iran deal took nearly two years of intense diplomacy after a decade of false starts.) The North Korean regime is unlikely to totally dismantle or permanently surrender nuclear warheads—or the missiles that deliver them—without receiving significant and simultaneous concessions from the United States. The two nations may be out of step on basic sequencing, too: who gives what, and when. Last Thursday, Trump predicted a success, but added, "If it isn't, it isn't."

Meanwhile, there's no Plan B on Iran. After decades of trying to engage with Tehran met with only erratic and frustrating results, the accord finally tested whether wider cooperation was possible, while limiting Iran's bomb-making capabilities. Now the United States and Iran are on an ever more dangerous trajectory that could create a new generation of ghosts.

—Robin Wright

## LOCK AND LOAD DEPT. INCREDIBLE



The National Rifle Association held its annual conference earlier this month, at a Dallas convention center. Thousands of people milled around hundreds of exhibitors, including Armageddon Gear (beer bivy sacks), WMD Guns (not nuclear weapons), and RCBS Precisioneered Reloading supplies ("leaving varmints mystified since 1943"). A long line snaked around the booth of a firearms company called Brownells. At about 9 A.M., a staffer looked at his watch. "He usually gets a pretty good line," he said, referring to Lou Ferrigno, the former Mr. Universe and star of "The Incredible Hulk" TV series (which aired on CBS from 1978 to 1982), who would soon arrive to sign autographs. Nearby, at another table, attendees filled out paper slips for the "Gun-A-Day Giveaway."

James and Natalie Cannariato were waiting for Ferrigno. A chemical engineer in his mid-twenties, James wore a hat that said "Fuck Y'all I'm From Texas." He described another event

they'd attended in Dallas, a month earlier. "We met Chuck Norris, Jason Momoa, and Richard Dean Anderson—you know, MacGyver," he said. "People were having him sign the old MacGyver knives. I got him to sign a picture of his character Jack O'Neill, from 'Stargate SG-1.' I had to pay, but it was worth it." His wife was telling someone in line about getting a high five from Norris.

Ferrigno showed up at nine-thirty wearing a black polo shirt with the Brownells logo, jeans, and black shoes. He had a graying goatee and a tan, and, for a sixty-six-year-old, he was ripped. He said that he'd worked out that morning, to pump up his "flexing muscles." He now lives in Santa Monica, but he grew up in New York, the son of a Brooklyn cop who taught him about guns.

"When I was twelve, I remember watching my dad shoot at the range," he said. He described seeing holes in the head of the target. "My dad said to me, 'You ever misbehave, the same will happen to you.' That was kind of a joke." He went on, "He always left his gun and his badge on the refrigerator. Today, it's a different story; you can't leave guns in plain sight." A few hundred firearms could be seen on the surrounding convention floor. The air was full of clicking.

Ferrigno, who often carries a concealed handgun, joined the N.R.A. years ago. Since 2006, he's been a deputy sheriff in Los Angeles. "I wanted to give back," he said. "I'm active with search and rescue. I do thirty hours a month when I'm not making films or TV." He mentioned an "Apprentice"-style show called "Pumped," which he's shooting for the Discovery Channel next month. "I'm the Trump guy," he said. "But more heartfelt."

It was time for autographs. Ferrigno stood beside a small table with a bottle of water, hand sanitizer, two pens, and a stack of posters bearing his silhouette and the N.R.A. logo. An assistant would relay the name of an approaching fan. Ferrigno would say, "How are ya?," then sign and pose. He'd throw an arm around women. He'd clap the men on the shoulder and flex his right arm. Some men copied him. Alan Lau, a thirty-nine-year-old engineer from Boston, was one of them. "I used to do bodybuilding back in my high-school days," Lau said. "I was really fat. Lou Ferrigno, Arnold—they were an inspiration."

"He's the only real Hulk," a middle-aged man who'd travelled from Illinois with his wife and their two children, who stood quietly beside him, said. "The new Hulk is all C.G.I." Gesturing toward



Ferrigno, he continued. "I just learned he's a Second Amendment supporter!"

Another man standing to the side of the line, Billy Pennington, from Arkansas, wanted to pitch Mean Green Pepper Spray, a self-defense product that he hoped Ferrigno would endorse. "It's a pepper spray with a green dye that marks your attacker," Pennington said. "He'd be perfect, the green man." Ferrigno told him that he'd talk to him about the spray later.

Up walked Robin Toneff, from Indiana, holding two mint-condition "Hulk" comic books. "That's great—true fan of the Hulk," Ferrigno muttered.

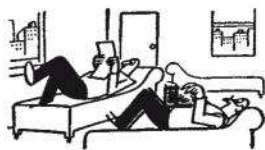
Eventually, Ferrigno's flexing arm began to tire and he took a break. When he returned, Major John L. Plaster, the proprietor of *ultimatesniper.com*, tripped and fell into his arms. "Thank God, a strong man to hold me up," Plaster said. He enthused over Ferrigno's marksmanship: "He's a genuine shooter. He shoots long range with great precision. He knows not to muscle the gun."

After the autograph session, Ferrigno offered a brief defense of firearms. "You've got to remember, before the Constitution was written this country was being run by a bunch of English rebels," he said. "So John Adams and those people came and wrote the Constitution and included the Second Amendment." He went on, "My opinion is that guns don't walk around killing people."

According to a large sign, the next personality who would be offering autographs was "Benghazi Hero John 'Tig' Tiegen." A line had begun to form.

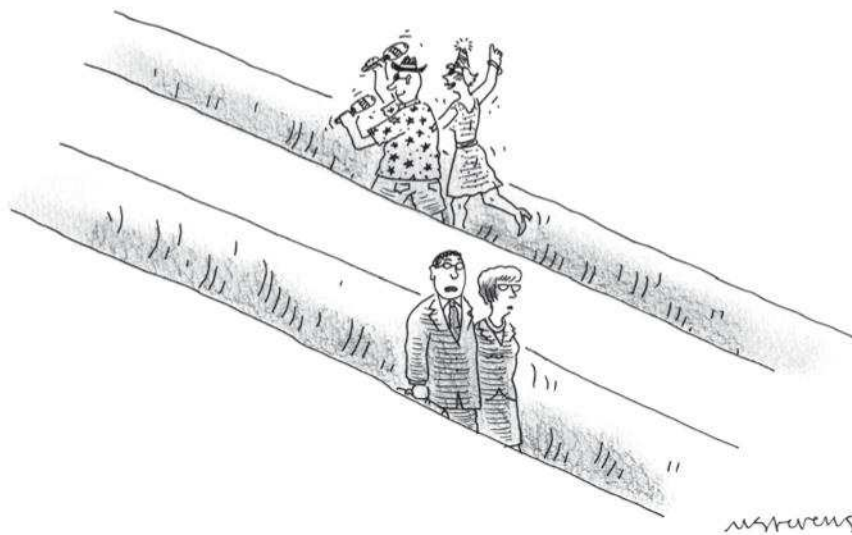
—Charles Bethea

## CANYON POSTCARD THE ROYAL WE



When much of your professional life has been spent as half of a duo, a creative uncoupling can take on the tenor of a breakup. It's not hard to imagine Garfunkel having a good cry while cutting Simon out of snapshots. How, then, to broach going solo when your erstwhile partner is your sibling?

One recent morning, Jay Duplass,



*"Their rut looks like a lot more fun than our rut."*

one half of the filmmaking Duplass brothers, stood by a trailhead in Altadena, stretching his hamstrings and describing how he'd been hiking the Pacific Crest Trail (of "Wild" fame) in sections.

"People do it all in one hike—it takes them six months—but they're all, like, twenty-two," Jay, who is forty-five, explained. Mark, who is four years his junior, strolled up.

"Hey, Dupiss," Mark said, handing over his car keys. "Jay always has the zippy pockets—he's the leader of these expeditions."

In their new book, "Like Brothers," which is a grab bag of D.I.Y. filmmaking tips, musings on "The Karate Kid," and confessional e-mail exchanges about their relationship, they write, "Hikes are a great way to hammer out our big issues . . . we must look down at the terrain and thus we don't have to look at each other while we are airing our grievances." The book's working title was "The Royal We."

They set out up a gently sloping path. A ZZ Top look-alike powered past, and good mornings were exchanged.

"There's something about the energy of the people on this trail that's very Austin, circa the mid-nineties, when we lived there," Mark whispered. "It's a bit of an outliers' path." The brothers, who were reared in a suburb of New Orleans, came up in Austin, working side by side to make scrappy, funny movies with a lot of heart and little budget ("The Puffy

Chair," "Baghead," "Safety Not Guaranteed"), which eventually led to big-league success (Netflix deals, HBO series, acting careers).

"But pretty recently we came to this feeling that maybe we should actively put our energy into being brothers," Jay said.

"The nature of our engine is still revving from our teens and our early twenties, like, driving up the fucking hill no matter what!" Mark said, as the trail wove past Jet Propulsion Lab. "It took putting a knife into the engine to slow us down."

Jay said, "A huge part of what we're going through is, like, although we're not immigrants, we kind of come from this immigrant mentality of you just put your head down and do it. Almost all immigrants work with family, live with family, and, when you come at it as brothers, it's like a team, where you sublimate your personal needs for—"

"There is no 'I' in T-E-A-M!" Mark yelled, sending a lizard skittering. "We keep coming up with this word 'individuate'—like, we've got no room to individuate. Which is a fancy way of saying, 'I might need some space.'" A woman walked by, leading an unsaddled horse.

"I have a confession," Mark went on. "I watched 'Ordinary People' on a flight about three months ago. I just wanted to go there. Do you ever feel that you just want to purge?"

"Oh, yeah," Jay said. (There's no

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HAMILTON Chicago Company  
Photo by Joan Marcus 2016



Step Afrika!

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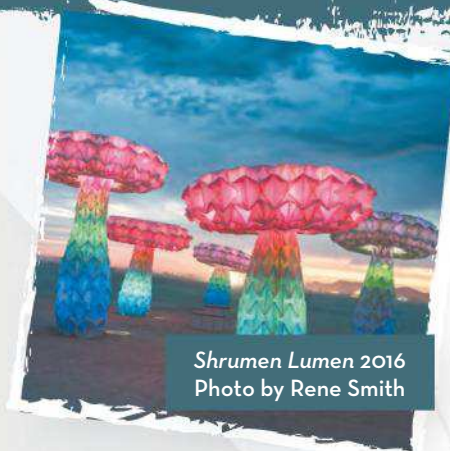
*Americans exhibit*  
Photo by AP Paul Morigi

### NO SPECTATORS: THE ART OF BURNING MAN

**The Renwick Gallery**

**Open through Jan. 21, 2019**

One of the year's most anticipated exhibitions, *No Spectators* brings hand-crafted artifacts from the desert gathering to the Renwick and the nearby neighborhood.



*Shrumen Lumen 2016*  
Photo by Rene Smith

### AMERICANS

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**Open through 2022**

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*Let's Go-Go*

[WASHINGTON.ORG/THE-ARTS-DISTRICT](http://WASHINGTON.ORG/THE-ARTS-DISTRICT)

shortage of cathartic weeping in the book, often with the brothers cuddled up in a twin bed.)

Mark continued, "I was all geared up for the brother stuff to set me off, and then I immediately became Donald Sutherland, because I have kids now."

Jay described his tearjerker of choice, a cancelled reality show called "The Locator": "This weird guy flies in his own private Learjet, with heavy-metal music playing, and he goes and he helps people reconnect with their families. Three hard, ugly cries guaranteed, *per episode*."

At the end of the hike, Jay returned Mark's keys and they resumed stretching. Mark said, "I don't watch television anymore—or movies, really. I finally got my books back, because my kids are old enough that I can sit and read." Currently: "Why Buddhism Is True," Tom Hanks's short stories, and "Nausea," by Sartre ("Like, the original found-footage novel").

"I'm not reading anything," Jay said. "I'm watching trail-running videos. The one I was watching this morning when I was brushing my teeth is a guy who ran a race in Moab that was two hundred and forty miles long, and he's filming it on his phone."

Mark: "Like Norwegian slow TV!"

Jay: "It's very un-curated. It's, like, 'It's sunrise. I just had breakfast. I just threw up that sausage; I shouldn't have had that sausage.'"

Mark: "That's a pretty good amount of action."

The brothers stood a moment. "Do you want to go on a run?" Jay asked.

Mark contemplated the offer. "I am

not going to run," he said, finally. "I am, unfortunately, just buried in shit." And off they went, on their separate ways.

—Emma Allen

## NIGHTLIFE DEPT.

### KUSH



The Germans had meetings in Manhattan. The last one was at the Hofbräu Bierhaus, a very intentional beer hall in midtown. It hadn't been their idea, but there they were, sitting at a picnic table in the middle of the afternoon facing down meaty steins of lager, talking about techno with Austin Kramer, Spotify's global head of dance-music curation. "He's doing all the large playlists," one of them said. "He's the kingmaker."

The principal German was Paul Kalkbrenner, the techno artist from Berlin, who was in town to perform for two nights in Brooklyn. The others were his manager, Marcus Ruschmeyer, and his friend Olaf Heine, a photographer.

Kalkbrenner, his head shaved but stubbled, had on black drop-crotch sweatpants, flower-patterned hightops, a black hoodie, and an olive-green bomber jacket. *Sehr Kreuzkölln*. He sipped his beer carefully. It was his first drink in a month. "I hate alcohol," he said. But he loves marijuana. He had a little white clutch that held cannisters of varietals. "I smoke all day, but I don't get stoned. I was smoking the Granddaddy Purple since five this morning. Now I'm looking for some nice Kush."

Kalkbrenner, who is forty, has been producing electronic music in dance clubs since the early days of German reunification. Reared in East Berlin, he was twelve when the Wall came down, and passed his adolescence dancing in the city's new techno clubs, such as Tresor and E-Werk, while learning to cut and perform tracks himself. He is careful to insist that he is not a d.j. He doesn't stitch together the music of others. He makes his own, mixing it live, on an analog Midas Venice 240 console. His turn as Icarus, the addled d.j. protagonist of the 2008 cult film "Berlin Calling," made him an icon of the city's chimeric club

scene and also earned him a hit, "Sky and Sand." For a time, he veered toward Moby-ish major-label electronic pop. For his 2015 release, "7," Sony let him loose in its vault so that he could borrow vocal parts from the likes of Luther Vandross, D Train, and Grace Slick. Now he has veered rootward again, first with the 2016 mixtape series "Back to the Future," a tribute to the early days of the Berlin underground scene, and now with the release, this month, of an album called "Parts of Life."

The Germans got into an S.U.V. to head out to Brooklyn, to set up for the gig, which was scheduled to begin at 2 A.M.

"Two to 4 A.M. is something that happened in Paul's life a lot ten years ago," Ruschmeyer said.

"Two A.M. is hard now: no more marching powder," Kalkbrenner said, his accent bringing to mind Werner Herzog discussing the stupidity of chickens. He and his wife, Simina Grigoriu, a Romanian-Canadian techno d.j. and producer, have a three-year-old daughter. "I like to play daytime into nighttime, but not nighttime into daytime. The light comes in and you see all the ravers." He contorted his face into the expression of a fiend shrinking from the sun. "When you are leaving a club and see the people out with their kids, you feel worse." He had a theory about festivals. "It is better to be second last," he said. "Yes, to be last means you are the big one, but it is better to be second last, so that when you are done you don't have to watch everyone cleaning up and putting the chairs upside down."

The S.U.V. inched forward on the F.D.R. Drive. Kalkbrenner, slouched in the back seat, said that he first came to New York in 1999. He and a friend stayed at a hotel by Newark Airport. "We walked around. Looked at shit. Hoped no one in the shops would talk to me. 'Only looking.' That was the only English I knew." He came back in 2006 to perform. "Nobody came. It was very depressing." He lives in Mitte and still prizes Berlin's laid-back vibe. "In New York, you have to pay much, much more for your much, much smaller apartments, and so you have to work much, much more."

New York is also vast. As the S.U.V. nosed through Brooklyn, Kalkbrenner's



Jay and Mark Duplass



energy began to flag. Jet lag, beer. The plan was to set up, run through a few songs, then return to the hotel for a disco nap. The club, called Elsewhere, was in a rugged corner of East Williamsburg, with a fleet of cement trucks parked out front. They arrived to find their crew—more Germans—milling around a stage, assembling lights, cameras, and mixing machines. Kalkbrenner retreated to a backstage room and got to work rolling a joint of Granddaddy Purple and mentholated tobacco. Ruschmeyer popped in. “I have some very interesting news for you that will make you very happy,” he said. “The man with the briefcase is coming.”

“Kush,” Kalkbrenner said, smiling.

Not long afterward, he went out onto the stage and began to play. Exuding rejuvenation, he manipulated knobs and dials, tapped buttons and screens, and bobbed to the sounds produced by these exertions. Three times he ran through the track called “Part Ten.” Techno. Beams of light swirled around the nearly empty club. In the back, by the bar, there was a man with a briefcase, sipping on a can of Red Bull.

—Nick Paumgarten

## KIDS TODAY DARNEDEST



A few years ago, Carol Burnett was doing a live Q. & A. in Texas, and a nine-year-old boy in the audience raised his hand. “You know who I am?” Burnett asked, incredulous. He answered, “Surprisingly, yes!” “The audience went crazy,” Burnett, who is eighty-five, said the other day. “I wanted to take him on the road. He didn’t censor himself.” Now that the kids who grew up on “The Carol Burnett Show” are well into middle age, Burnett has been courting a new generation of fans. Her new Netflix series, “A Little Help with Carol Burnett,” convenes a panel of brutally honest children, ages five to nine, to solve grown-up dilemmas for celebrity guests. (When Lisa Kudrow asks about double-booking friends for lunch, one boy advises, “Don’t have a friend.”) Along the way, the kids

learn about rotary phones, while Burnett picks up Instagram and some hip new slang. “I learned ‘stay woke,’” she said. “I used it in front of the same kids a few weeks later, and they said it was passé.”

Burnett was sitting in the principal’s office at P.S. 212, in Hell’s Kitchen, waiting to meet a group of first graders. She wore a white blazer, dark slacks, and tinted glasses, and was accompanied by her longtime manager, Steve Sauer, who wore a suit and tie. “Evidently, I swore as a kid,” she said. “I don’t remember who I learned it from, but I could cuss.” Her three daughters also used to say the darnedest things, she said, recalling a time when she had to chide her youngest, Erin, for refusing to eat her dinner: “Toward the end of the meal, she looked at her father and said, ‘I love you.’ And he said, ‘I love you, too.’ And she said, ‘I also love your wife.’ I laughed so hard I let her have dessert.” Burnett now has two grandsons, with whom she texts. She pulled out a photograph of Dylan, eleven, who had bleached hair and wore a Tupac Shakur T-shirt. “Last year, he had his hair *green*,” she said, giving the last word a comic warble.

She was led down to the classroom, past two kids who were building the Great Wall of China out of cardboard, and sat in a director’s chair. A teacher, Bryan Andes, said that the children had prepared by watching clips from “The Carol Burnett Show” and “Once Upon a Mattress,” the 1959 musical that gave Burnett her breakout role. Fifty-five first graders swarmed in and sang “Hello, Dolly,” rewritten as “Hello, Carol.” “We’ve been studying Jerry Herman,” a blond boy explained.

Burnett read a storybook version of “The Princess and the Pea,” then submitted to questions. A girl with a blue bow in her hair asked, “How did you get your role in ‘Once Upon a Mattress?’”

“Well, I was just starting out trying to be an actress in New York, and I got a phone call to come down to the Phoenix Theatre, downtown on Twelfth Street,” Burnett recalled. “I read the scene, and I was so excited, because the director was a man named George Abbott.” The kids seemed unfamiliar with George Abbott. “I was in the show for a year, and we did eight shows a week.”

“There are not even eight days in a week,” a boy said, skeptically.

“You’re right!” Burnett said. A girl with a ponytail asked, “How did you learn to be so funny?”

“The first time I got a laugh I was actually an old person—I was eighteen,” Burnett said. “I was a freshman in college, and I took an acting course.” She leaned in. “Are you funny? Make a funny face.” The children obliged.

A girl wearing a headband asked, “How do you change your voice to be so many different characters?”



Carol Burnett

Burnett pondered. “Do you know who Tarzan is?” They were familiar with Tarzan. “When I was a little girl, we’d go to the movies and then play-act the movies that we liked. So, when we saw ‘Tarzan,’ I became Tarzan, and I taught myself the yell. You want to hear it?” She cleared her throat and bellowed, to screams of laughter. “I could do Charo, too.” They were unfamiliar with Charo.

A girl in a Hello Kitty shirt asked, “Why do you tug your ear?”

“I was raised by my grandmother,” Burnett explained. “When I got my first job on television, she said, ‘Well, you’ve got to say hello to me!’ And I said, ‘Gosh, Nanny, I don’t think the television people are going to let me say hi to my Nanny.’ So we picked this secret signal: I would pull my ear, and that was for her. This earlobe is actually a little bit longer.” When time was up, the children sang the farewell song from “The Carol Burnett Show,” “I’m So Glad We Had This Time Together,” and they all tugged their ears goodbye.

—Michael Schulman

## WEAPONIZED

*How Fortnite has created a mass social gathering.*

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

*The craze has elements of Beatlemania, the opioid crisis, and eating Tide Pods.*

It was getting late in Tomato Town. The storm was closing in, and meteors pelted the ground. Gizzard Lizard had made his way there after plundering the sparsely populated barns and domiciles of Anarchy Acres, then by avoiding the Wailing Woods and keeping the storm just off to his left. He spied an enemy combatant on high ground, who appeared to have a sniper's rifle. In a hollow below the sniper's perch was an abandoned pizzeria, with a giant rotating sign in the shape of a tomato. Gizzard Lizard, who had quickly built himself a redoubt of salvaged beams, said, "I think I'm going to attack. That's one of my main issues: I need to start being more aggressive." He ran out into the open, pausing before a thick shrub.

"This is actually a really good bush. I *could* bush-camp. But naw, that's what noobs do."

Two men enter, one man leaves: the fighters closed in on each other. In the video game Fortnite Battle Royale, the late-game phase is typically the most frenetic and exciting. Suddenly, the sniper launched himself into a nearby field and began attacking. Gizzard Lizard hastily threw up another port-a-fort, amid a hail of enemy fire. The goal is always to get, or make, the high ground.

A moment later, Gizzard Lizard was dead—killed by a grenade. Afterward, he replayed the ending, from various vantages, to analyze what had gone wrong. To be so close to winning and yet come up short—it was frustrating

and tantalizing. One wants to go again. The urge is strong. But it was time for my son to do his homework.

I spent more time as a kid than I care to remember watching other kids play video games. Space Invaders, Asteroids, Pac-Man, Donkey Kong. Usually, my friends, over my objections, preferred this to playing ball—or to other popular, if less edifying, neighborhood pursuits, such as tearing hood ornaments off parked cars. Every so often, I played, too, but I was a spaz. Insert quarter, game over. Once gaming moved into dorms and apartments—Nintendo, Sega—I learned that I could just leave. But sometimes I didn't. I admired the feat of divided attention, the knack that some guys (and it was always guys) seemed to have for staying alive, both in the game and in the battle of wits on the couch, as though they were both playing a sport and doing "SportsCenter" at the same time.

I thought of this the other day when a friend described watching a group of eighth-grade boys and girls (among them his son) hanging around his apartment playing, but mostly watching others play, Fortnite. One boy was playing on a large TV screen, with a PlayStation 4 console. The other boys were on their phones, either playing or watching a professional gamer's live stream. And the girls were playing or watching on their own phones, or looking over the shoulders of the boys. One of the girls told my friend, "It's fun to see the boys get mad when they lose." No one said much. What patter there was—*l'esprit du divan*—came from the kids' little screens, in the form of the pro gamer's mordant narration as he vanquished his opponents.

Fortnite, for anyone not a teen-ager or a parent or educator of teens, is the third-person shooter game that has taken over the hearts and minds—and the time, both discretionary and otherwise—of adolescent and collegiate America. Released last September, it is right now by many measures the most popular video game in the world. At times, there have been more than three million people playing it at once. It has been downloaded an estimated sixty million times. (The game, available on PC, Mac, Xbox, PS4, and mobile devices, is—crucially—free, but many players pay for additional, cosmetic features,



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including costumes known as “skins.”) In terms of fervor, compulsive behavior, and parental noncomprehension, the Fortnite craze has elements of Beatlemania, the opioid crisis, and the ingestion of Tide Pods. Parents speak of it as an addiction and swap tales of plunging grades and brazen screen-time abuse: under the desk at school, at a memorial service, in the bathroom at 4 A.M. They beg one another for solutions. A friend sent me a video he’d taken one afternoon while trying to stop his son from playing; there was a time when repeatedly calling one’s father a fucking asshole would have led to big trouble in Tomato Town. In our household, the big threat is gamer rehab in South Korea.

Game fads come and go: Rubik’s Cube, Dungeons & Dragons, Angry Birds, Minecraft, Clash of Clans, Pokémon Go. What people seem to agree on, whether they’re seasoned gamers or dorky dads, is that there’s something new emerging around Fortnite, a kind of mass social gathering, open to a much wider array of people than the games that came before. Its relative lack of wickedness—it seems to be mostly free of the misogyny and racism that afflict many other games and gaming communities—makes it more palatable to a broader audience, and this appeal both ameliorates and augments its addictive power. (The game, in its basic mode, randomly assigns players’ skins, which can be of any gender or race.) Widespread anecdotal evidence suggests that girls are playing in vast numbers, both with and without boys. There are, and probably ever shall be, some gamer geeks who gripe at such newcomers, just as they gripe when there are no newcomers at all.

A friend whose thirteen-year-old son is deep down the rabbit hole likened the Fortnite phenomenon to the Pump House Gang, the crew of ne’er-do-well teen surfers in La Jolla whom Tom Wolfe happened upon in the early nineteen-sixties. Instead of a clubhouse on the beach, there’s a virtual global juvenile hall, where kids gather, invent an argot, adopt alter egos, and shoot one another down. Wolfe’s Pump House kids went on beer-soaked outings they called “destructos,” in which they would, at local farmers’ behest, demolish abandoned

barns. Now it’s Juul-sneaking little homebodies demolishing virtual walls and houses with imaginary pickaxes. Young people everywhere are swinging away at their world, tearing it down to survive—creative destruction, of a kind.

Shall I explain the game? I have to, I’m afraid, even though describing video games is a little like recounting dreams. A hundred players are dropped onto an island—from a flying school bus—and fight one another to the death. The winner is the last one standing. (You can pair up or form a squad, too.) This is what is meant by Battle Royale. (The original version of Fortnite, introduced last July, for forty dollars, wasn’t fight to the death; it is the new iteration that has caught fire.) A storm encroaches, gradually forcing combatants into an ever-shrinking area, where they must kill or be killed. Along the way, you seek out caches of weapons, armor, and healables, while also collecting building materials by breaking down existing structures. Hasty fabrication (of ramps, forts, and towers) is an essential aspect of the game, and this is why it is commonly described as a cross between Minecraft and the Hunger Games—and why aggrieved parents are able to tell themselves that it is constructive.

Before a game begins, you wander around in a kind of purgatorial bus depot-cum-airfield waiting until the next hundred have assembled for an airdrop. This is a strange place. Players shoot inconsequentially at one another and pull dance moves, like actors walking aimlessly around backstage practicing their lines. Then come the airlift and the drifting descent, via glider, to the battleground, with a gentle whooshing sound that is to the Fortnite addict what the flick of a Bic is to a smoker. You can land in one of twenty-one areas on the island, each with a cutesy alliterative name, some suggestive of mid-century gay bars: Shifty Shafts, Moisty Mire, Lonely Lodge, Greasy Grove. In patois and in mood, the game manages to be both dystopian and comic, dark and light. It can be alarming, if you’re not accustomed to such things or are attuned to the news, to hear your darlings shouting so merrily about head shots and snipes. But there’s no blood or gore. The violence is cartoonish, at

least relative to, say, Halo or Grand Theft Auto. Such are the consolations.

The island itself has an air of desolation but not of extreme despair. This apocalypse is rated PG. The abandonment, precipitated by the storm, which has either killed or scattered most of the world’s population, seems to have been recent and relatively speedy. The grass is lush, the canopy full. The hydrangeas are abloom in Snobby Shores. Buildings are unencumbered by kudzu or graffiti and have tidy, sparsely furnished rooms, as though the inhabitants had only just fled (or been vaporized). Apparently, everyone on the island, in those prosperous pre-storm times, shopped in the same aisle at Target. Each time I watch a player enter a bedroom, be it in Junk Junction or Loot Lake, I note the multicolored blanket folded across the bed. Those cobalt-blue table lamps: are they for sale? Maybe one day they will be.

Players, young ones anyway, don’t seem to notice such things. They’re after assault rifles (preferably the Legendary SCAR), pump shotguns, bolt-action sniper rifles (the scope is a boon), chug jugs, slurp juices, bandages, medkits, and shield potions. They see, and covet, skins that look cool but have no bearing on game play; for twenty bucks, you can don the Leviathan or the Raven. Or they fixate on dance moves, the so-called victory emotes you can have your avatar perform, in the heat of battle or after a kill. The Floss, the Fresh, the Squat Kick, the Wiggle—these have spilled out into the world. You may notice people around you, or professional athletes on TV, breaking into strange dances. The one known as Take the L is big these days in the Bundesliga and at Minute Maid Park.

Plenty of accomplished gamers look down their noses at Fortnite, the way, perhaps, that some jazz and blues diehards, in 1964, dismissed the Beatles. The dances, the alliterative place-names, the dearth of true postapocalyptic menace: these can indicate a lack of seriousness that to some seems spell-breaking. A classmate of Gizzard Lizard’s, ZenoMachine, a gamer for longer than seems plausible (he began playing Team Fortress 2 in kindergarten and now develops his own games), is the eighth grade’s resident Fortnite Scrooge. “First of all, I’m not a fan of



the polygons,” ZenoMachine told me. We were on a park bench, after school—a rare hit of sunlight. “It has a hi-res texture but low-res polygons.” Gizzard Lizard had warned me that I wouldn’t understand ZenoMachine, but I gathered that he was critiquing the game’s aesthetics. He liked a realer look. He objected to certain inconsistencies. The pickaxe, for example, which players use to demolish walls and buildings, causes almost no damage to other players as a weapon. “How can that be?” he said. “I see why a lot of people like Fortnite. It targets players who aren’t experienced. But it violates the laws of consistency.” He said that the first time he played he won—by hiding out until everyone else had pretty much been killed off. This is known as camping, and is frowned upon by regular players. “If something as simple as player choice affects the other players’ experience, you’ve got a design flaw,” ZenoMachine said.

ZenoMachine develops his own games using a platform called the Unreal Engine. Fortnite, as it happens, is built on the Unreal Engine, too. The game is the creation of a company called Epic Games, based outside Raleigh, North Carolina. In 1998, Epic released a first-person shooter called Unreal, which enjoyed only moderate success but which, almost by accident, had an enduring influence on the evolution of video games. Epic used Unreal’s underlying architecture, and some of its parts, to make what came to be known as the

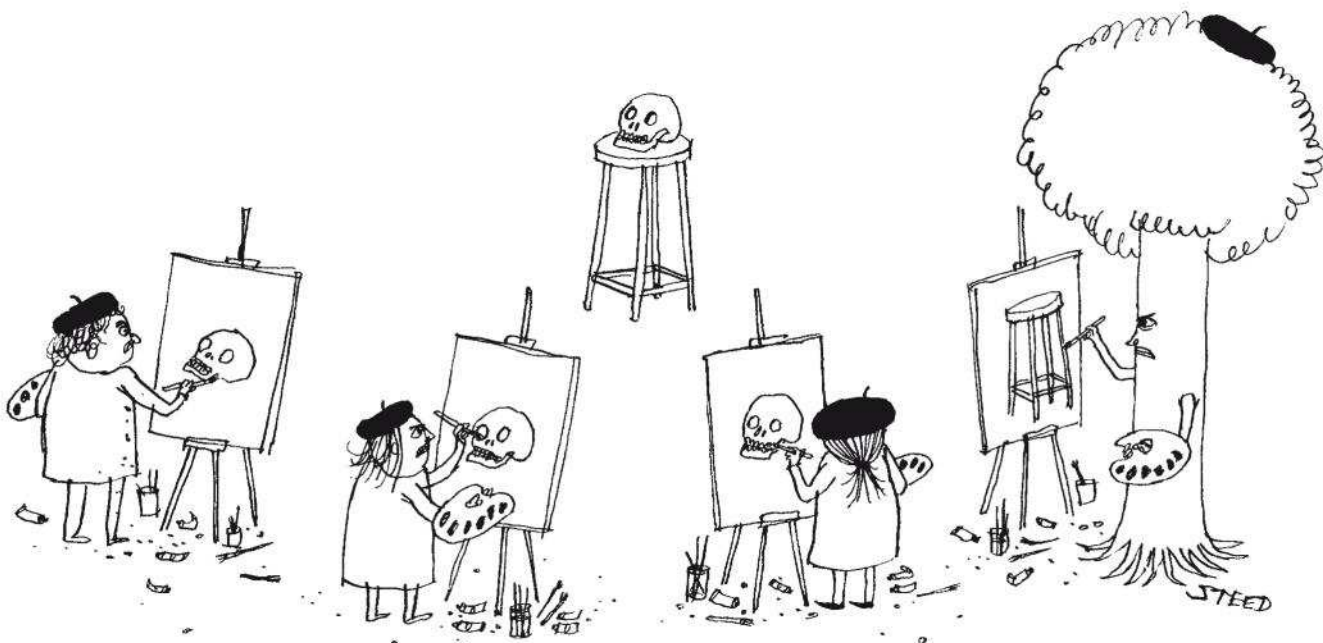
Unreal Engine, a basic platform that supports all manner of games, be they shooters, brawlers, platformers, or sandbox R.P.G.s. It’s basically a suite of tools that developers can use to design and build games and other simulations. Rather than starting from scratch in, say, C++, the popular graphic-coding language, independent developers and other companies use the Unreal Engine to make their own games. (The licensing of the engine, in turn, gives Epic the cash flow to commit time and resources to the development of hit games like Fortnite.) Each year, Epic uses existing games, some of them all but forgotten, to soup up the Unreal Engine, so that it can handle an ever more sophisticated array of demands. Fortnite was the first Unreal Engine 4 release. Among other things, Epic had to adapt the engine to help its servers accommodate the huge amount of data that has to be processed instantaneously when a hundred players are competing in a single Battle Royale round. The question of which actions affect others, and from what distance, on this vast storm-sieged island—the old if-then problem—is much more complicated than it would seem.

“Think of Fortnite as a visual form of media,” Jamin Warren, the editor of the culture-and-gaming journal *Kill Screen*, told me. Whatever Fortnite’s allure as a game to play, it is also apparently the most beguiling one to watch. As video-game spectatorship fills are-

nas, and siphons a generation away from actual sports, Fortnite has become the most viewed game on YouTube—by March, there had been almost three billion views of the millions of sessions that players had uploaded—and the top game on Twitch, the streaming platform. Watching isn’t just for spazzes anymore. “It’s created a kind of global arcade,” Warren said. “Instead of a few kids looking over the shoulder of the hot-shot older brother or whatever, down at the mall, you have millions of people watching, and the person playing the game is a millionaire.”

The medium’s breakout star is known as Ninja. He is a former professional Halo player named Tyler Blevins, who has said that he makes more than half a million dollars a month by streaming his Fortnite sessions, and his free-associative commentary, on Twitch (which is owned by Amazon). His YouTube channel has more than ten million subscribers. Last month, he hosted a Fortnite tournament in Las Vegas, in an e-sports arena, and almost seven hundred thousand people tuned in to his Twitch stream. I’ve heard many teens refer to him as America’s biggest entertainer—which is not as hyperbolic as it sounds. In April, Ninja ranked higher than any athlete in the world in “social interactions,” a measure of social-media likes, comments, shares, and views. Cristiano Ronaldo was No. 2. In March, Ninja consented to a Fortnite session with Drake.

Blevins, who is twenty-six, comes



from outside Detroit and lives near Chicago (he won't say where) with his wife, who handles his business affairs. He streams ten to fourteen hours a day, typically from about 9 A.M. to 3 P.M. and then from 6 P.M. until whenever. All told, he logs about three hundred hours a month. What one sees is his game screen, with his avatar in whatever skin he has chosen, and, in an inset, a perpetual shot of Blevins himself. A ninja headband girds a Bieber-ish shock of hair that he dyes different colors: emerald green, platinum, yellow. He's a lean, boyish guy who seems to make an effort to maintain some semblance of a smile at all times. His spiel is goofy, caffeinated, and moderately cocky. He does impressions. In March, he was mumbling some rap lyrics as he played, and somehow the word "indica" came out as the N-word. Amid the backlash, he apologized, sort of, and, when it came time for me to talk to him last week, his manager's one condition was that I not ask him about it, as he'd already said what there was to say, which was, in part, "I promise that there was no mal intent (I wasn't even trying to say the word—I fumbled lyrics and got tongue-tied in the worst possible way)." A scrupulous journalist might have called off the interview, but the teens I'd been talking to about the game were so impressed that I might talk to Ninja that I caved. At the last moment, though, Ninja bailed, claiming illness. Burn! ("I'm pretty sure that was BS," one of those teens texted me. "I think he was streaming today.") At any rate, Ninja's sensitivity is a sign that gamers like him are entering the mainstream. They have to watch what they say.

Onscreen, the millionaire maintains the environs of the gamer boy. The camera takes in an acoustic-tile ceiling, wall-to-wall carpeting, bare drywall, and a fourposter bed. There's a framed Detroit Lions poster propped against a wall, alongside a mini-fridge stocked with Red Bull. Ninja is a lifelong gamer, but he makes a point to remind his fans, lest they get the drop-everything bug, that he did well in school, played soccer and other sports, finished college while holding down a job at Noodles & Company, and even appeared, with his family, on "Family Feud." The game skill is legit. He wins something like

half of the hundreds of games he plays every week, against all comers. He's a crack shot and has a nose for the high ground. As often as not, it seems he's hardly paying attention. He's reading fans' messages out loud, like a talk-radio host, or jabbering with another Fortnite star, such as Dr. Lupo or KingRichard, if they've teamed up for a game or two: "The recoil on this thing is stupid"; "You said you had a full shield, ass"; "So hold my dick"; "That guy was trying to drink a chug jug. What a noob." All accompanied by occasional bursts of gunfire. "To anyone watching the stream, I hope you guys are enjoying the content, man."

Gizzard Lizard's shoot-out in Tomato Town took place on the last night of April, which was the last night of Season 3. Anticipation was running high. One of the ingenious innovations of Fortnite is to introduce seasons of about two months, as on a cable-television series, and to integrate new plot and game elements. (Last week, in a cross-over masterstroke, Thanos, the indestructible villain of the new Avengers movie, dropped in on the game—that is, players could adopt a Thanos skin—and so, for a while, the Fortnite set gleefully schooled various Thanoses in a way that the Avengers could not.) On April 30th, a comet that had been hovering over the island was supposed to strike after midnight. For days, meteors had been showering the game. Teasers—the latest being "brace for impact"—had inspired a raft of speculation and conspiracy theories. At first, people expected the comet to hit the crowded urban setting known as Tilted Towers, but some clues led others to predict, correctly, that the comet would wipe out Dusty Depot, which was thereafter to be known as Dusty Divot.

It was hard to do homework on a night like this; Gizzard Lizard returned to the game. He played on a PC he'd built at school. It didn't have a graphics card. He'd never been a big gamer—his parents were fairly strict about screens and had never consented to an Xbox or even a Wii—though he'd played Minecraft for a while. This level of obsession was something new. He saw on his find-your-friends bar that a bunch of schoolmates were playing, so he FaceTimed one who goes by ism64. They teamed

up and hit Lucky Landing. Gizzard Lizard wore an earbud under a set of earphones, so that he could talk with ism64 while listening for the sound of approaching enemies. From a distance, it appeared that he was talking to himself: "Let's just build. Watch out, you're gonna be trapped under my ramp. I'm hitting this John Wick. Oh my God, he just pumped me. Come revive me. Build around me and come revive me. Wait, can I have that chug jug? Thank you."

I'd been struck, watching Gizzard Lizard's games for a few days, by how the spirit of collaboration, amid the urgency of mission and threat, seemed to bring out something approaching gentleness. He and his friends did favors for one another, watched one another's backs, offered encouragement. This was something that I hadn't seen much of, say, down at the rink. One could argue that the old arcade, with the ever-present threat of bullying and harassment and the challenge of claiming dibs, exposed a kid to the world—it's character-building!—but there was something to be said for such a refuge, even if it did involve assault rifles and grenades.

And then the John Wick was upon him. "Oh God! Oh God!" Foiled again.

A John Wick was an accomplished player who had earned a skin that bears a resemblance to the character played by Keanu Reeves in the "John Wick" movies. (Officially, the skin is called the Reaper, presumably to avoid licensing fees, but players call it John Wick.) It was available to anyone who had attained all hundred tiers of the game in Season 3—a combination of achievement and experience which would have required playing for between seventy-five and a hundred and fifty hours.

As the last hours of Season 3 expired, players scrambled to reach Tier 100, and get their John Wick skins. Gizzard Lizard was nowhere close. He'd started the season as a noob. Come the next morning, Day One of Season 4, he had a plan to put in the hours to get to Tier 100. It would take serious commitment. For the first time, he purchased a thousand Fortnite V-bucks, for \$9.99, with which to buy skins. He went with the Carbide, a sleek one that brought to mind a wet-suit. This was the first time he—or, more to the point, his parents—had ever spent anything but quarters on a game. ♦



A composite image featuring a lighthouse on a grassy cliff on the left and a surfer performing a high takeoff over a green wave on the right. The lighthouse is white with a dark red band and a black lantern room. The surfer is wearing a blue wetsuit and is captured mid-air with their surfboard. The background is a cloudy sky.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

BY JOSH GONDELMAN

Hey, buddy, So great to hear from you. It's a bummer that we'll miss you while you're in town. We're sneaking away for a little babymoon before Keithlyn arrives. It sounds corny, but we seriously need it. (What do you think of Keithlyn as a unisex baby name, by the way?) I guess we're going to be ships in the night this time. Like, actual ships—my wife and I are going to be on a prenatal-yoga harbor cruise. We're super stoked for it.

Anyway, I know you're around for just a couple of days, but here are the restaurants you should definitely check out while you're here:

For breakfast, you've got to try Frnch Tst. They open at eight, but if you're not in line by quarter to six—forget it. There's only one item on the menu: a single slice of French toast, served in a waxed-paper sleeve. They only let

you buy one, and they sell them until they run out, usually around 8:06 A.M. They don't have any maple syrup, but this French toast doesn't *need* maple syrup. It's that good. They do offer a house-made sriracha, which sounds like a gross combination but is actually amazing.

My favorite lunch spot is Mama Rosa's. Not the original Mama Rosa's. The Finnish mob burned down that building when Little Helsinki started to spill over into Little Havana. It's still the best Cuban food in the city, though. I go there, like, three times a week. O.K., technically, it's not in the city; it's in the main concourse of a minor-league baseball stadium in the burbs, about an hour and a half away. You're going to need to take a commuter train and buy a ticket to the game, but that absolutely shouldn't deter you. Everything on the menu is

awesome, but the tres leches cake is *ridic*. Get it to go, though. Consuming that much dairy in the sun will make you pass out.

If that's not your speed, check out Greenliness. The food is all vegan, but it's so good you'll swear it's vegetarian. They grow the ingredients right in the restaurant, so it's fully table-to-table. Plus, it's right around the corner from this great used-book store that's never open.

For dinner, there's a super-authentic pho place, but you can only get in with a Vietnamese passport. They're tough to track down, but it's totally worth it. Let me know if you want me to introduce you to my guy.

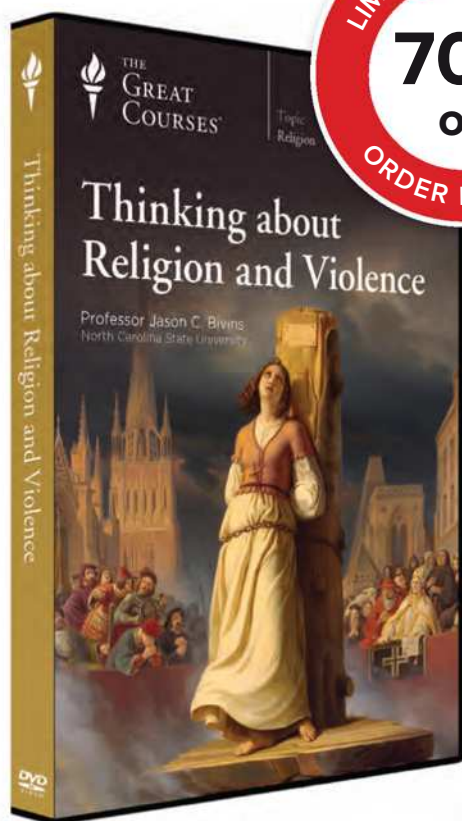
If you can't get the paperwork in order, no problem. Make a reservation at Le Coquette. It's the new French place by that lady who got kicked off "Top Chef" after her blowfish sushi killed one of the judges. It's a little pricey, but every course will change your life, some of them in ways you might not like. The duck pâté made me realize that I'm not really afraid of *failure*; I'm afraid of *success*. I mean, wow, right? Plus, the signature cocktails all have truffle oil in them, which is the most amazing thing you'll ever pretend you can taste.

Otherwise, Bub's Tavern is a fun little neighborhood hole-in-the-wall. Heads up: the service is kind of slow. The original waitstaff from the sixties is mostly still there, and when a server dies they don't replace him, so the kitchen can get pretty backlogged. If you want the full Bub's experience, order the burger. They put sawdust in it, which Bub insists is some kind of Old Country tradition. It tastes horrible. The worst you'll ever have. It's great. Just try not to mention that you're Jewish. Mrs. Bub has some *opinions*.

You're going to want to save room for dessert, too. There's this new spot right by your hotel called Umamicake. They have an incredible buffet of savory toppings. Gravy, paprika, balsamic vinegar, you name it. It's that whole salty-sweet craze. Just F.Y.I., it's B.Y.O.C. (bring your own cake). If you like it, maybe we can go together next time you're in town!

Let me know what you end up doing. And have fun! ♦





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## SIRENS IN THE NIGHT

*How the victims'-rights revolution has remade American justice.*

BY JILL LEPORE



**T**his is not theatre,” Judge Richard Matsch announced on the first day of the trial of twenty-nine-year-old Timothy McVeigh in the daffodil spring of 1997. “This is a trial.”

McVeigh, charged with bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in Oklahoma City, two years earlier, stood accused of taking the lives of a hundred and sixty-eight people and injuring some seven hundred more in the worst act of domestic terrorism in American history. The blast demolished nearly half of the nine-story building, shattering its glass front and shearing off its north face. Rescue workers who raced to the scene could hear people moaning and crying,

pinned beneath concrete slabs, impaled with steel girders, suffocating from dust. Jerry Flowers, an Oklahoma policeman, dug through rubble at what became known as the pit, near where, earlier that morning, there had been a day-care center. Someone handed him a small body, wrapped in a blanket. Flowers unwrapped the blanket. “He was a little boy, about five, six years old, and he had a Teddy bear on his shirt,” Flowers later said. “His face was gone.”

Many bodies were recovered in pieces. Kathleen Treanor’s elderly in-laws were taking care of her four-year-old daughter, Ashley, that day, and they’d stopped at the Murrah building for an appoint-

ment at the Social Security office. They were all killed. Months later, after a funeral with a closed casket, Treanor got a phone call from the medical examiner’s office.

“We have recovered a portion of Ashley’s hand,” the voice at the other end of the line said. “And we wanted to know if you wanted that buried in the mass grave, or if you would like to have it to do with what you need to do.”

“Of course I want it,” Treanor said. “It’s part of her and I need to have it where I know it is.”

The Oklahoma City bombing produced an unprecedented number of victims: thousands. Under terms established by the victims’-rights movement, that number included not only the dead and wounded but also grieving family members and devastated rescue workers. They had lost; they had suffered; they were haunted.

The victims’-rights movement, which began decades ago, has lately reached new heights. In November, voters in five states will decide on ballot-initiated victims’-rights amendments; activists hope, one day soon, to amend the U.S. Constitution. McVeigh’s trial marked the movement’s turning point. Many of the victims wanted to speak at the trial. The government fully expected a conviction, and decided to seek the death penalty, but hoped to avoid a trial like O. J. Simpson’s, with its bloody footprints, its leather gloves, its preening attorneys—a media circus, a legal travesty. Matsch, sixty-six, wore cowboy boots beneath his robes. He kept a portrait of George Patton in his office. He had a Burt Reynolds mustache. He was known to be stern, efficient, and decisive. “Lance Ito he’s not,” the *Washington Post* reported.

The Simpson trial had blundered along for eight months; McVeigh’s, once it started, was over in six weeks. Matsch, spurning theatre, attempted to limit the victims’ role in the proceedings. He made it difficult for them to attend or watch the trial; he declared some of their evidence inadmissible and cautioned the jury about what are known as victim-impact statements, deeming them too emotional. He prohibited anyone involved in the trial from speaking to the press. At one point, when a prosecutor told the jury there would be included, in his evidence, several of the victims’

*Victims’ rights grew out of an unlikely marriage of conservatism and feminism.*



wedding photographs, Matsch cut him off: “No, there won’t.”

Few of the limits that Matsch imposed two decades ago would be imposed today, or could be, given changes in state and federal law. This winter, in a camera-cluttered courtroom in Michigan, during the sentencing of the former Olympics gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, convicted of sexual assault, Judge Rosemarie Aquilina allowed a hundred and fifty-six women to make victim-impact statements. In her court, Nassar, fifty-four, had been convicted of sexually assaulting only seven women. He had also already been sentenced to sixty years in prison on child-pornography charges. Nevertheless, nearly a hundred and fifty women spoke of the harm Nassar had done to them in committing crimes for which he had never been charged, delivering heartrending statements, broadcast live, over seven days. “I can’t imagine a punishment great enough for you,” the former gymnast Kameron Moore told Nassar. Anna Ludes, a former Michigan State rower, said, “Because of Nassar, I have to spend the rest of my life trying to heal, and I want nothing more for him than to spend the rest of his life behind bars.” The women cried, and the Judge cried.

“I know that the world is watching,” Aquilina said, the day she sentenced Nassar to up to a hundred and seventy-five years in prison. She said she’d been gratified by the reaction to the televised and live-streamed proceedings on Twitter and Facebook. She congratulated the press. “I respect all of the media outlets, you have just done a fabulous job here.” She congratulated herself. “I give everybody a voice,” she said. “I give defendants a voice, their families when they’re here, I give victims a voice.”

Matsch spurned theatre; Aquilina turned her courtroom into a stage. American justice has been remade. Some of what happened in the Nassar trial is as new as #MeToo. Much of it is as old as stoning.

On February 20, 1996, Matsch had ruled that McVeigh’s trial would be moved from Oklahoma City to Denver, to insure an impartial jury. That made attending impossible for many victims, but Matsch’s ruling also presented the victims’-rights move-

ment with an unparalleled opportunity. “When you have the Oklahoma bombing victims as your illustration, you have access to Congress,” the University of Utah law professor Paul Cassell told me. Cassell led a legal team advocating for the victims. At their urging, Congress, which was then considering an Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, added a provision requiring that if a trial is moved more than three hundred and fifty miles from the scene of a crime the federal courts (from which cameras are banned) have to make closed-circuit broadcast available to the victims. Matsch entertained arguments concerning the constitutionality of the provision. In the age of “Oprah,” which placed trauma at the center of American popular culture, both sides rested their arguments less on legal claims than on psychological ones. The prosecution insisted that the victims needed to attend the trial for purposes of therapy: “Part of their recovery depends on their seeing—first hand, if possible—our system of justice at work.” The defense suggested that the presence of the victims, or even of cameras, would unsettle jurors, subjecting them to “enormous psychological pressure” by reminding them that “a large, faceless group of grievously injured persons are depending on the jury to return the only verdict (guilty) and sentence (death) this group will find acceptable.”

Matsch grudgingly allowed the installation of a single camera, mounted at the back of the Denver courtroom, which captured a fixed-focus shot of the bench, the witness box, and the tables at which the defense and the prosecution sat. Twelve hundred people requested credentials to watch; eight hundred and thirty-two were allowed, taking turns occupying a three-hundred-and-twenty-seat auditorium in Oklahoma City.

Those seats were provided by the victims’-rights movement, the child of an unlikely marriage of conservatism and feminism. The movement usually dates its origins to 1975, when, with the aid of the Heritage Foundation, a lawyer named Frank G. Carrington published a book called “The Victims.” But the movement really began in 1966, when Carrington founded Americans for Effective Law Enforcement, to protest

what’s known as the due-process revolution. Between 1961 and 1966, the Warren Court issued a series of decisions that protected the rights of defendants, producing the Exclusionary Rule, which deems evidence obtained without a search warrant inadmissible; the requirement that police notify suspects of their rights; and the provision of court-appointed attorneys for defendants who can’t afford them. Carrington and other law-and-order conservatives, led by the California governor Ronald Reagan, argued that liberals on the Supreme Court, on judges’ benches, and in the legal academy were soft on crime. “For Law and Order” became a slogan of Richard Nixon’s 1968 Presidential campaign. “As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame,” Nixon said, accepting the Republican nomination. “We hear sirens in the night.”

Against the noisiness of a (criminal) minority, Nixon posited the silent, victimized majority, a note his Administration sounded over and over. The minority had more rights than the majority; a balance had been lost. This led to talk of victims, whose voices needed to be heard. In 1970, Spiro Agnew complained that “the rights of the accused have become more important than the rights of victims in our courtrooms.” In 1971, Lewis Powell, whom Nixon had nominated to the Supreme Court, wrote that “the victims of crime have become the forgotten men of our society.” By 1972, when the Warren Court ruled the death penalty to be essentially unconstitutional, Carrington had coined the term “victims’ rights.” His book “The Victims” amounted to a manifesto against the Warren Court. William F. Buckley’s brother James, a U.S. senator, supplied a foreword, which called for the restoration of the death penalty and complained about “a severe imbalance in favor of the rights of those accused of crime over the rights of those victimized by crime and of the public at large.”

This historical, restore-the-balance argument—the central tenet of the victims’-rights movement—is both superficially right and profoundly wrong. For centuries, criminal trials were, like civil ones, contests between individual parties: Victim v. Defendant. By the early modern era, the state had become the prosecuting party in criminal trials, which

then took the form of *Crown v. Defendant* (and, in the United States, of *State v. Defendant*). As John Locke pointed out, this change was foundational to civil society, in which, “all private judgment of every particular member being excluded, the community comes to be umpire, by settled standing rules, indifferent, and the same to all parties.” Wherever people yield to public authority the judgment and punishment of crime, Locke wrote, “there and there only is a political, or civil society.”

During the centuries when victims were gradually excluded from criminal proceedings, defendants didn’t have much of a role, either. Generally, defendants were not allowed counsel before the eighteenth century and could not offer sworn testimony before the end of the nineteenth century; most trials, in any case, lasted only about twenty minutes. Against the fearsome power of the state, defendants are nearly powerless, which is why most rules of evidence are designed to protect them, a principle central to the founding of the United States and embodied in the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments and, later, in the Fourteenth. The rights of defendants are protections against the state, not harms done to victims.

At a pretrial hearing in October, 1996, Matsch attempted to explain this principle. Many victims who wanted to watch the trial also hoped to speak at the sentencing; Matsch was inclined to rule that they could not do both, and would have to make a choice, because watching the trial would have an effect on them, tainting their testimony. “I don’t see any way in which you can cabin that kind of emotion,” Matsch said. This struck a lot of victims as both heartless and senseless. “I have a hole in my head that’s covered with titanium,” a man who lost an eye in the blast said. “I think about it every minute of the day.” But when the prosecution complained that Matsch was favoring the rights of the defendant over the rights of the victims, Matsch objected to this formulation. “We’re not talking about defendants’ rights as such,” he answered. “We’re talking about the integrity of the process by which defendants are judged and the evidence is judged. And that’s the responsibility of a judge, and that’s the responsibility I’m attempting to meet

by what seems as a very hard-hearted rule.” Matsch stuck with his decision.

“Nobody has said a good word about that ruling,” Cassell told me. “And it appeared to be in contravention of federal law.” Cassell helped the victims file an appeal with the Tenth Circuit, arguing that “the law should not be construed to thrust this terrible choice on victims, who have already suffered far too much.” While they waited for the appeals court’s final decision, the victims went, once again, to Washington.

Removing victims from criminal prosecutions had been the work of centuries; putting them back in has been the work of decades. In 1981, Reagan’s Justice Department appointed Carrington to a Task Force on Violent Crime and, in 1982, to the President’s Task Force on the Victims of Crime. Disavowing legal reasoning—“You cannot appreciate the victim problem if you approach it solely with your intellect”—the Task Force on the Victims of Crime recommended introducing victim-impact statements into sentencing and parole hearings. That year, a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee prepared a report called “The Right to Keep and Bear Arms,” establishing another means by which potential victims of crime could assert their rights: the subcommittee claimed to have discovered “clear—and long-lost—proof that the Second Amendment to our Constitution was intended as an individual



right of the American citizen to keep and carry arms in a peaceful manner, for protection of himself, his family, and his freedoms.”

While gun-rights arguments met with objections, victims’-rights arguments generally did not. Many of the movement’s reforms—like requiring that courts notify victims of trial dates and allow them to attend—seemed sensible. Also, Carrington’s interests aligned

with those of many feminists. For all the stability of the *State v. Defendant* regime, the courts had for centuries slighted crimes against women, whose powerlessness before the state—in the form of an all-male bench and bar—really did rival that of criminal defendants. At the time, most prosecutors and judges appear to have believed that marital rape was not rape, domestic violence was a family affair, and sexual harassment was part of life. Rape convictions were extremely difficult to obtain. Both law-and-order conservatives and women’s-rights activists sought more aggressive prosecutions of and stricter sentences for rape and sexual assault, along with broad protections for victims, by deploying the language of victims’ rights. In New York, for instance, the campaign for victims’ rights was led by the longtime civil-rights activist Elizabeth Holtzman. As a member of Congress, Holtzman introduced a bill in 1976 to protect rape victims from cross-examination about their sexual history, and a Victims of Crime Act in 1979. Later, as a district attorney, she established a crime-victims counselling unit and introduced victim-impact statements at sentencing hearings. “For too long, the criminal-justice system ignored or mistreated victims,” Holtzman said in a speech before the New York City Task Force on Sexual Assault in 1987.

Because victims’ rights is a marriage of feminism and conservatism, the logic behind its signal victory, the victim-impact statement, rests on both the therapeutic, speak-your-truth commitment of a trauma-centered feminism and the punitive, lock-them-up imperative of law-and-order conservatism. Arguably, this has been a bad marriage.

The rise of victim-impact evidence can’t be understood apart from Reagan’s efforts to establish federal sentencing guidelines, and, more broadly, to refashion the federal judiciary. In the nineteen-eighties, when liberals dominated both the federal bench and the Supreme Court, Reagan’s attorney general, Edwin Meese, was determined to rid the courts of liberal justices and liberal jurisprudence. In the long term, that meant appointing new judges, but, in the short term, it meant constraining the power of old judges. In the first two years of Reagan’s first term, Congress considered





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more than two dozen bills limiting the authority of federal judges. In 1982, the Task Force on the Victims of Crime had recommended legislation “to abolish parole and limit judicial discretion in sentencing.” Two years later, Congress established a federal Sentencing Commission, which was supposed to figure out appropriate minimum and maximum sentences for certain crimes, but, even before receiving the commission’s recommendations, Congress went on a criminal-penalty binge, passing stricter and stricter sentencing laws: mandatory minimums. At least one federal judge resigned rather than comply. Bill Clinton, though, did not contest the sentencing guidelines. Instead, he joined the war on crime by signing an omnibus Crime Bill, which both expanded the number of crimes punishable by death and provided federal funding to fight violence against women.

The 1994 Crime Bill also included a ban on assault weapons. Timothy McVeigh, enthralled by the new interpretation of the Second Amendment, used the language of both the gun-rights and the victims’-rights movement to justify his crime. He blew up the Murrah building on the second anniversary of the A.T.F.’s assault on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, in which seventy-six people were killed. Convinced that the American government was trying to disarm the American people, he also believed rumors of “Waco-style raids scheduled for the spring of 1995 to confiscate firearms.” He said that he bombed the Murrah building because the government, in declining to prosecute federal and state agents involved in Waco, had “failed the victims who died during that siege.”

After the reeling, gut-punch horror of Oklahoma City, no one in Clinton’s Administration had a word to say against the victims’-rights movement. Feeling other people’s pain, after all, was Clinton’s trademark. “You are my heroes and heroines,” Attorney General Janet Reno said at a victims’-rights conference in August, 1996. “You are but little lower than angels.” That fall, the more Matsch limited the role played by victims in the McVeigh trial, the more traction the movement gained with the public. Eight states joined nineteen others on Election Day in 1996 in adding victims’-

rights provisions to their state constitutions. With Reno’s support, Bill Clinton, standing in the Rose Garden, endorsed a victims’-rights amendment to the Constitution, jointly proposed by the California senator Dianne Feinstein and the Arizona senator Jon Kyl. “When a judge balances the rights of the accused and the rights of the victim,” Clinton said, “we want the rights of the victim to get equal weight.” He might have been Spiro Agnew.

On March 11, 1997, the Tenth Circuit upheld Matsch’s ruling that victims who wanted to watch the trial could not also speak at the sentencing. Eight days later, Congress essentially overruled the circuit court by passing the Victim Rights Clarification Act, decreeing that no district court could order victims to make such a choice. Clinton signed the bill on March 20th. Matsch largely ignored it, not least because it was by no means clear that Congress had the power to tell him how to run a trial.

Jury selection began on March 31, 1997. On June 2nd, after deliberating for nearly twenty-four hours, the jury found McVeigh guilty. Many of the victims shed tears of relief. Robbin Huff was almost eight months pregnant with her first child when she was murdered by McVeigh. “It would have taken members of many victims’ families 10 seconds to reach the verdict,” Huff’s uncle wrote, “which is why we would have made terrible jurors.”

On June 4th, the first day of the trial’s sentencing phase, the victims began to speak. Other victims had spoken during the guilt phase of the trial, as eyewitnesses. These victims, though, spoke about harm, in statements the jury would consider to be aggravating evidence, as against the mitigating evidence presented by the defense. (McVeigh’s family pleaded for his life to be spared, and his attorneys introduced family snapshots.) The lead attorney for the prosecution, Patrick Ryan, gathered the victims at the back of the courtroom, where they all held hands. Then he turned to the jury. “We present this information on behalf of the United States not to evoke your sympathy,” he said. “The victims of this crime have had all of the sympathy

they can stand in the last two years.”

The state brought victims to address the jury at McVeigh’s sentencing and to support its request for the death penalty, which, though all but abolished in 1972, had been reinstated by the Supreme Court four years later, in *Gregg v. Georgia*. Still, recognizing that “death is different,” *Gregg* required that the sentencing phase of a capital trial be separated from the determination of guilt or innocence. Once a jury reaches a verdict, the rules of evidence change, in the sense that most of them no longer apply. There is no cross-examination, for instance, and there are no prohibitions on evidence about character or past misconduct. Also, the standard of evidence drops from “beyond a reasonable doubt” to a “preponderance of evidence.” Post-*Gregg*, the courts require what is sometimes called “super due process” in death-penalty cases, given the gravity of the punishment.

For a long time, as the Court tried to hammer all this out, victim-impact evidence was inadmissible in death-penalty cases, an exclusion that the Court had twice upheld. In 1987, in *Booth v. Maryland*, the Court ruled victim-impact evidence in a capital trial to be unconstitutional, a violation of the Eighth Amendment. After John Booth was convicted of murdering an elderly couple, the couple’s son, daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter talked about their grief. Booth’s attorney tried to have the evidence suppressed, calling it “both irrelevant and unduly inflammatory.” In a 5-4 ruling, the Court agreed, and suggested that its introduction could turn the sentencing phase of a capital trial into “a ‘mini-trial’ on the victim’s character.” Antonin Scalia, a Reagan appointee who had only just joined the Court (Cassell had clerked for him from 1984 to 1985, when Scalia was a judge for the D.C. Circuit), wrote a blistering dissent:

Many citizens have found one-sided and hence unjust the criminal trial in which a parade of witnesses comes forth to testify to the pressures beyond normal human experience that drove the defendant to commit his crime, with no one to lay before the sentencing authority the full reality of human suffering the defendant has produced.

Two years later, the Court upheld this decision, 5-4. Then, in 1991, in *Payne v. Tennessee*, the Court reversed itself.



Pervis Tyrone Payne murdered Charisse Christopher and her two-year-old daughter, Lacie. During sentencing, Charisse's mother delivered a heart-breaking victim-impact statement, and the jury sentenced Payne to death. In a 6-3 opinion, written by Chief Justice Rehnquist, the Court deemed victim-impact evidence "simply another form or method of informing the sentencing authority about the specific harm caused by the crime in question." A victim should not be a "faceless stranger," Rehnquist insisted. To right the balance in the sentencing phase of a capital criminal trial, courts should admit a "quick glimpse of the life the defendant chose to extinguish" and let prosecutors convey "the loss to the victim's family and to society which has resulted from the defendant's homicide."

It was Thurgood Marshall's turn to dissent. The Court, he noted, did not ordinarily reverse course so quickly. What changed was "neither the law nor the facts" but "only the personnel of this Court." In his view, victim-impact evidence draws "the jury's attention away from the character of the defendant and the circumstances of the crime to such illicit considerations as the eloquence with which family members express their grief and the status of the victim in the community." Legal scholars tended to agree. A leading critic, the DePaul law professor Susan Bandes, wrote that victim-impact statements "appeal to hatred, the desire for undifferentiated vengeance, and even bigotry," and "may block the sentencer's ability to perceive the essential humanity of the defendant." Moreover, she argued, "in their insistence on evaluating the worth of the victims," victim-impact statements "offend the dignity of the victim as well."

In both capital and non-capital cases, victim-impact evidence has been shown to affect sentencing: that's why prosecutors introduce it. Research also suggests that, though victims of violent crime are disproportionately poor and nonwhite, white victims are twice as likely as black victims to make victim-impact statements. Where jurors identify victims as "respectable," they tend to identify with them (finding their lives to be similar to their own), while they rarely identify with defendants (whose lives tend to be very different

from theirs). Jurors also report being less compelled by victim-impact statements made by black victims than by those made by white victims. And victim-impact evidence appears to amplify the commonly held prejudice that people with darker skin are more "deathworthy." Finally, Bandes explains, the statements leave judges wondering whether, for example, they are supposed to mete out a more severe punishment on behalf of the rape victim who gives a more compelling statement.

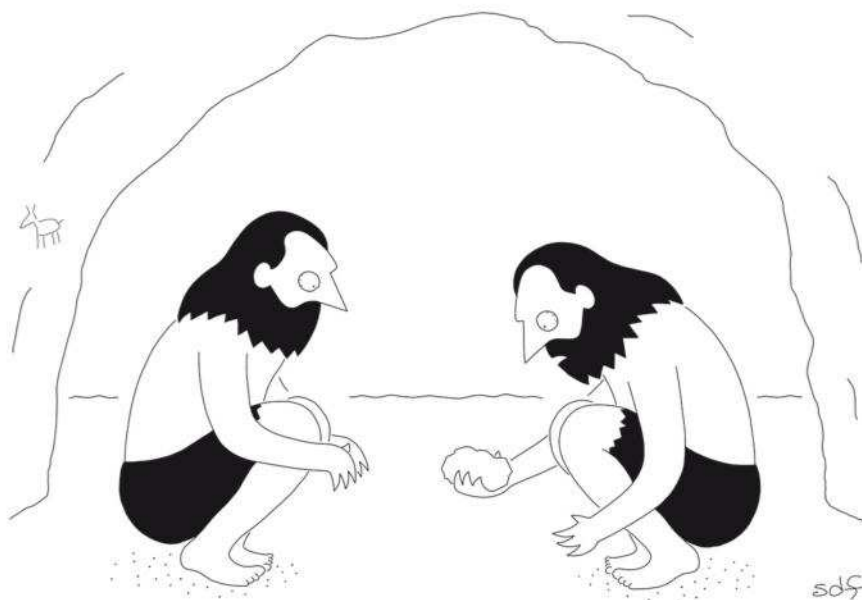
Plainly, Matsch was worried. "We have to guard this hearing to ensure that the ultimate result and the jury's decision is truly a moral response to appropriate information rather than an emotional response," he warned. He wanted a verdict and a sentence that would stick. He attempted to follow the test established in Payne: victim-impact evidence can be admitted in a capital case unless it is so "unduly prejudicial that it renders the trial fundamentally unfair." But, as Bandes and Jessica Salerno, a psychologist at Arizona State, have argued, it's hard to say what lies between probative value and prejudicial force: "If the probative purpose of the evidence is to evoke the life lost with vividness and particularity, what is the measure of undue prejudice?" Isn't the whole point of this kind of evidence to stir the emotions?

Nor have clear guidelines been es-

tablished about the form, quantity, or use of victim-impact evidence. Some of the things admitted as victim-impact evidence, including testimony that the victim was an excellent piano player, was "good honest hardworking God fearing people," was a "smart person with higher IQ than others in her family" or had "a 3.8 grade point average," would appear to advance the fundamentally anti-democratic notion that the lives of the eloquent, the intelligent, the beautiful, the cherished are more worthy of the full protection of the law than others.

How much evidence is enough, or too much? Challenges in some states have sought to limit admissible victim-impact witnesses to numbers that range from three to eleven, but, effectively, the number is limitless. What kind of evidence is allowed? Courts have admitted poems, "handcrafted items made by the victim," "letters children wrote to their murdered mother," and "photographs of the stillborn child victim dressed in clothes that the victim-mother had intended him to wear home from the hospital." Judges often report that they themselves find it difficult to recover their emotional equilibrium after hearing victim-impact statements. Sorrow knows no bottom.

Matsch struggled to draw a line. He questioned people who had attended the trial, one by one, before allowing them to give victim-impact evidence. "A



*"You ever pick up a rock and then forget why?"*

penalty-phase hearing cannot be turned into some kind of a lynching,” he announced, explaining that he would exclude testimony that would inflame “the passions of the jury with respect to vengeance or the passions of the jury with respect to empathy for grief.” He agreed to let a ten-year-old boy testify about the loss of his mother, but only after being assured that the boy would not cry. He ruled as inadmissible poems, wedding photographs, and memorial videos, and “a photograph of a mother releasing a dove, in lieu of a funeral, because her child’s body was not yet found.” He did allow a video of a day in the life of Brandon Denny, who was three when the bomb went off. A ceiling tile had pierced the child’s skull and, at the time of the trial, he had undergone seven brain surgeries.

Memorial videos, initially a product of the funeral industry, have proved particularly controversial. In *Hicks v. State* (1997), the prosecution introduced a fourteen-minute montage of a hundred and sixty photographs spanning the victims’ life from infancy. The Arkansas Supreme Court upheld its admission. In *Salazar v. State* (2002), the prosecution, in a Texas case, introduced a seventeen-minute video of a hundred and forty photographs (almost half of which depicted the victim in infancy or early childhood, including with a puppy), set to music, including Céline Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On.” Both the trial and the appeals courts deemed it admissible; a higher-level state appeals court did not. In *Kelly v. California* (2008), the prosecution introduced a twenty-two-minute video about the life of Sara Nokomis Weir, who, at age nineteen, was murdered by a personal trainer who worked at the gym she frequented. The montage of stills and video footage is mostly narrated by Weir’s mother; the soundtrack includes recordings of Enya. The trial court admitted the video, and the California Supreme Court upheld the decision, noting that the video illustrated the victim’s pleasing “demeanor”: “Sara appears at all times to be reserved, modest, and shy—sometimes shunning the camera.” Although the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review this and another case, Justices John Paul Stevens and Stephen Breyer both disagreed with the decision. “The videos

added nothing relevant to the jury’s deliberations and invited a verdict based on sentiment, rather than reasoned judgment,” Stevens wrote.

The use of such videos has led not only to the “mini-trial” on the victim’s character that the Court had warned about but also to a mini film festival. Offenders make videos, too. Sentencing-mitigation videos are the product of a for-profit industry. For about twenty thousand dollars, a filmmaker will pull together family photographs, home videos, narration, and music, in an attempt to paint the offender in a sympathetic light. “Our job is to make judges suffer,” one filmmaker says. In one recent sentencing-mitigation video, a friend of a convicted kidnapper says, “Joseph as a person, exempting this one situation, is an outstanding person, and outstanding friend, son, and outstanding pillar for his family. When you think about that word, ‘kidnapping,’ and you think about what it entailed, it doesn’t fit Joseph at all.” Videos from opposing sides can look uncannily alike. In *State v. Leon* (2006), the prosecution introduced a four-and-a-half-minute video of Angie Leon, who was murdered by her husband, Abel Leon. Most of the images and footage showed Angie and her three young children, often with their father. The video was meant to chronicle the children’s loss of their mother, and the Idaho Court of Appeals allowed it on these grounds. But, if their father was sentenced to death, they would lose him, too. As the University of Pennsylvania law professor Regina Austin has pointed out, either side could have used the film to equal effect. There are concerns, too, about new forms of digital evidence—PowerPoint slides, a Facebook time line, a digitally enhanced reconstruction of the crime, an augmented-reality program in which jurors endure the suffering of the victim of a violent crime, and more. The lack of rules leads to a technologically enhanced battle for the court’s sympathy. Cassell finds this objection specious. He asks, “If the defendant gets to use augmented reality, why can’t I? The point from the victims’ perspective is an equality point. If this is too emotional and too overpowering and too glossy and slick to go into our court system, then make that point, but don’t make it only about victim evidence.”

Still, judges struggle with the problem of how to prepare jurors for what they’re about to see and hear. In 2003, after Gary Sampson was convicted of three premeditated murders in Massachusetts, the judge warned jurors, as the sentencing phase began, not to “permit the victims’ families’ testimony to overwhelm your ability to follow the law,” even as he instructed a clerk to hand out Kleenex.

In 1997, at McVeigh’s sentencing, Matsch addressed the jurors. “We’re not here to seek revenge on Timothy McVeigh,” he told them. “We’re here to consider these lives, what’s happened to these people.” Thirty-eight victims made their statements. They had lost; they had suffered; they were haunted.

“I feel like my heart looks like that building,” Diane Leonard said, about the death of her husband, Donald R. Leonard, a Secret Service agent. Kathleen Treanor told the story about Ashley, and the phone call, and the tiny hand; Jerry Flowers remembered unwrapping a blanket to find a child without a face. David Klaus talked about the loss of his daughter, Kimberly Burgess, twenty-nine, who worked in the credit union on the third floor of the Murrah building. “There is just this huge hole in my heart that is never going to get filled up,” he said. “I think about her first thing in the morning, and the last thing I think about at night is Kim and the fact I’m never going to see her again.” Mathilda Westberry, whose husband, F.B.I. Special Agent Robert Glenn Westberry, fifty-seven, had been killed, talked about her four-year-old grandson, David, who could not understand what happened to Papa. Laura Sue Kennedy had lost her only son; he was eighteen months old. “Blake was my life,” she said. Alan Prokop, an Oklahoma City police officer, described holding the hand of a woman who died pinned beneath a slab of concrete. It was Prokop who had found little Brandon Denny. “He had a brick sticking out of his forehead,” Prokop said, and “was holding a little green block.”

The witnesses cried, the jury cried, the Judge cried. “We have to be careful and not let ourselves be overly stimulated by some of the testimony that we’ve heard here,” Matsch told the jury. Before calling the first witness, Ryan,



the prosecutor, told them, “It would be easy for you as a jury to think of this as one mass murder. Don’t. There are a hundred and sixty-eight people, all unique, all individuals, all had families, all had friends, and they’re different. They went to church, they coached Little League, they designed highways, they liked to watch their children dance, they tried to prevent disease, they played on their beds with their kids.”

On June 13, 1997, the jury sentenced Timothy McVeigh to death. Outside the Murrah building, where victims and family members had gathered by a chain-link fence next to the rubble, they sang “God Bless America.”

In a national conversation about criminal-justice reform, the Reagan-to-Clinton-era guidelines for federal sentencing have been questioned, but the gains of the victims’-rights movement are generally taken for granted. Thirty-two states have passed victims’-rights amendments; five more ballot initiatives may pass in November. Once enough states have acted, activists will again press for a federal amendment. The last time the measure reached Congress, one of the prosecutors in the Oklahoma City bombing case argued against it (victims had tried to prevent one of McVeigh’s associates from signing a plea agreement in exchange for his testimony against McVeigh, which proved crucial in the trial). Cassell believes that there is much more work to be done. The movement’s latest campaigns would expand the range of victim-impact evidence allowed in both capital and non-capital cases, and more strictly enforce victims’ rights that are already on the books. In the age of #MeToo, victims’ rights are making remarkable political headway, for many of the same reasons they did after the Oklahoma City bombing. Tragedy is a fierce tailwind. And, as Susan Bandes puts it, “Nobody really wants to have to tell victims, or survivors of violent crime, that they cannot be heard.”

Critics remain. Nancy Gertner, a former district-court judge from Massachusetts, is among those who have questioned Judge Aquilina’s conduct at Larry Nassar’s sentencing. Gertner told me, “The question is whether the victims needed that, as bloodletting, and the



*“My greatest weakness? Being beached. No, wait—working too hard.”*

question is should the justice system allow that? Or is it a throwback to public hanging?” Scott Sundby, a former prosecutor who studies capital juries, told me that the Nassar sentencing reminded him of Biblical punishments. “Hey, we all get to pick up a rock and throw it at this person!”

Sundby says that victim-impact evidence has changed how juries think about the death penalty. In jury rooms, they ask, “How can we go out and look the mother in the eye unless we give a death penalty?” Among the achievements of the victims’-rights movement is the fact that victim-impact evidence is no longer much questioned. Sundby thinks that’s because people gave up trying to argue that the courts are wholly rational. He says, “The legal system has cried ‘Uncle.’”

Such critics are careful to note the important reforms ushered in by the victims’-rights movement (which generally fall under the heading of victims’ services). “When this movement was first starting, I was a prosecutor,” Sundby told me, “and all of a sudden it made me much more cognizant that there are people who have a stake in this case and justice needs to be done.”

Raphael Ginsberg, who runs a prison-education program through the University of North Carolina and has written a history of the victims’-rights movement, takes a darker view. He sees the movement as part of a larger conservative attack on expertise and on the

notion of a public good. It’s as if it came down to this: Don’t trust the mainstream media, don’t trust intellectuals, don’t trust judges: protect yourself and your family and your freedoms; buy a gun; speak your truth.

Not everyone finds relief in a courtroom, but many people who have endured a violent crime or lost someone they loved report feeling tremendous catharsis after having the chance to describe their suffering in court. Those who worry about the practice say that there should at least be better, fairer, and more clearly enforced rules about doing it. “If we really do think it’s important for victims in a courtroom to be able to do this,” Bandes says, “let’s take it seriously, and figure out how to get courts to do it right.”

Something was buried beneath the rubble in Oklahoma City, and it has never been found. Parkland is the next population of victims poised to mount the witness stand, in another unprecedented slaughter. So far, they’ve been mounting other sorts of podiums. The students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School hardly ever talk about the shooter, at least in public. They don’t seem particularly eager to attend his trial, if there is a trial. Maybe they’ll leave it to the state to conduct a prosecution. Meanwhile, they’re having their say, in their own way. They are asking for an end to a set of arrangements under which what was once civil society has become a state of war. ♦

# ONLY THE BEST PEOPLE

*Donald Trump's war on the "deep state."*

BY EVAN OSNOS

**T**wo months after Donald Trump's Inauguration, the White House took a sudden interest in a civil servant named Sahar Nowrouzadeh. At thirty-four, she was largely unknown outside a small community of national-security specialists. Nowrouzadeh, born in Trumbull, Connecticut, grew up with no connection to Washington. Her parents had emigrated from Iran, so that her father could finish his training in obstetrics, and they hoped that she would become a doctor or, failing that, an engineer or a lawyer. But on September 11, 2001, Nowrouzadeh was a freshman at George Washington University, which is close enough to the Pentagon that students could see plumes of smoke climb into the sky. She became interested in global affairs and did internships at the State Department and the National Iranian American Council, a Washington non-profit. George W. Bush's Administration appealed for help from Americans familiar with the culture of the Middle East, and, after graduation, Nowrouzadeh became an analyst in the Department of Defense, using her command of Arabic, Persian, and Dari. (Her brother, a Navy doctor, served in Iraq.) For nearly a decade, Nowrouzadeh worked mostly on secret programs, winning awards from the Departments of Defense and State, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the F.B.I.

In 2014, she was detailed to the National Security Council, as an Iran specialist, and helped to broker the nuclear deal. One of the most intensely debated questions among American negotiators was how far they could push Iran for concessions, and Nowrouzadeh proved unusually able to identify, and exploit, subtle divides in Tehran. "She was aggressive," Norman Roule, the C.I.A.'s highest-ranking Iran specialist at the time, told me. "She worked very hard

to follow policymakers' goals. She could speak Persian. She could understand culture. She is one of the most patriotic people I know." In 2016, Nowrouzadeh joined the policy-planning staff of the State Department, a team of experts who advised Secretary of State John Kerry. At times, she advocated a harsher approach to Iran than Kerry was pursuing, but he cherished Nowrouzadeh's "unvarnished judgment," he told me. "I liked someone who relied on facts and could tell me when she disagreed with my interpretation. Give me that any day over a bunch of yes-men."

On March 14, 2017, Conservative Review, a Web site that opposed the Iran deal, published an article portraying Nowrouzadeh as a traitorous stooge. The story, titled "Iran Deal Architect Is Running Tehran Policy at the State Dept.," derided her as a "trusted Obama aide," whose work "resulted in an agreement that has done enormous damage to the security interests of the United States." David Wurmser, who had been an adviser to Vice-President Dick Cheney, e-mailed the article to Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House. "I think a cleaning is in order here," Wurmser wrote. Gingrich forwarded the message to an aide to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, with the subject line "i thought you should be aware of this."

As the article circulated inside the Administration, Sean Doocey, a White House aide overseeing personnel, e-mailed colleagues to ask for details of Nowrouzadeh's "appointment authority"—the rules by which a federal worker can be hired, moved, or fired. He received a reply from Julia Haller, a former Trump campaign worker, newly appointed to the State Department. Haller wrote that it would be "easy" to remove Nowrouzadeh from the policy-planning staff. She had "worked on the Iran Deal," Haller noted, "was born in Iran,

and upon my understanding cried when the President won." Nowrouzadeh was unaware of these discussions. All she knew was that her experience at work started to change.

**E**very new President disturbs the disposition of power in Washington. Stars fade. Political appointees arrive, assuming control of a bureaucracy that encompasses 2.8 million civilian employees, across two hundred and fifty agencies—from Forest Service smoke jumpers in Alaska to C.I.A. code-breakers in Virginia. "It's like taking over two hundred and fifty private corporations at one time," David Lewis, the chair of the political-science department at Vanderbilt University, told me.

Typically, an incoming President seeks to charm, co-opt, and, when necessary, coerce the federal workforce into executing his vision. But Trump got to Washington by promising to unmake the political ecosystem, eradicating the existing species and populating it anew. This project has gone by various names: Stephen Bannon, the campaign chief, called it the "deconstruction of the administrative state"—the undoing of regulations, pacts, and taxes that he believed constrain American power. In Presidential tweets and on Fox News, the mission is described as a war on the "deep state," the permanent power elite. Nancy McElDowney, who retired last July after thirty years in the Foreign Service, told me, "In the anatomy of a hostile takeover and occupation, there are textbook elements—you decapitate the leadership, you compartmentalize the power centers, you engender fear and suspicion. They did all those things."

This idea, more than any other, has defined the Administration, which has greeted the federal government not as a machine that could implement its vision but as a vanquished foe. To control it, Trump would need the right help. "I'm





*Amid purges, infighting, and loyalty tests, civil servants liken the Administration's tactics to a "hostile takeover and occupation."*



*"You don't see many season tickets to the opera just handed out like that."*

going to surround myself only with the best and most serious people," he said, during the campaign. "We want top-of-the-line professionals."

Every President expects devotion. Lyndon Johnson wished for an aide who would "kiss my ass in Macy's window at high noon and tell me it smells like roses. I want his pecker in my pocket." But Trump has elevated loyalty to the primary consideration. Since he has no fixed ideology, the White House cannot screen for ideas, so it seeks a more personal form of devotion. Kellyanne Conway, one of his most dedicated attendants, refers reverently to the "October 8th coalition," the campaign stalwarts who remained at Trump's side while the world listened to a recording of him boasting about grabbing women by the genitals.

Over time, Trump has rid himself of questioners. He dismissed James Comey, the head of the F.B.I., and then Andrew McCabe, his acting replacement. Gary Cohn, the head of the National Economic Council, resigned early this March, after months of private resistance to Trump's plan for sweeping trade tariffs. A week later, Tillerson was fired by tweet, receiving notice by phone while he was

on the toilet. Nine days after that, the national-security adviser, H. R. McMaster, who had pressed the President to maintain the nuclear deal with Iran, was asked to go, followed quickly by David Shulkin, the head of Veterans Affairs. John Kelly, the once assertive chief of staff, has lost control of access to the Oval Office and of the President's phone calls; Trump has resumed using his personal cell phone for late-night calls to such confidants as Sean Hannity, of Fox News, who is known in the capital as his "unofficial chief of staff."

In Washington, where only four per cent of residents voted for Trump, the President hews to a narrow patch of trusted terrain: he rarely ventures beyond his home, his hotel, his golf course, and his plane, taking Air Force One to Mar-a-Lago and to occasional appearances before devoted supporters. He has yet to attend a performance at the Kennedy Center or dine in a restaurant that is not on his own property. As a candidate, Trump rarely went a week without calling a news conference. But in office, as he contends with increasingly intense investigations, he has taken to answering only scattered questions, usu-

ally alongside visiting heads of state. He has now gone more than four hundred days without a solo press conference. (Obama held eleven in his first year.)

A culture of fealty compounds itself; conformists thrive, and dissenters depart or refuse to join. By May, the President was surrounded by advisers in name only, who competed to be the most explicitly quiescent. Peter Navarro, the head of the White House National Trade Council, told an interviewer, "My function, really, as an economist is to try to provide the underlying analytics that confirm his intuition. And his intuition is always right in these matters." Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General, remained in office despite the President's descriptions of him as "weak," "DISGRACEFUL," and an "idiot." Sessions has been forgiving, telling a radio show in his home state of Alabama, "That's just his style. He says what's on his mind at the time." Trump has turned, more than ever, to those he knows, often to their detriment. On a whim, he nominated his White House physician, Ronny Jackson, to head the Department of Veterans Affairs. The White House reportedly had not bothered to vet Jackson, leaving it to Congress to discover allegations that he drank on the job and dispensed medication so freely that he had acquired the nickname Candyman. Jackson, who denied these allegations, withdrew his nomination, his reputation wrecked.

After sixteen months, Trump is on his third national-security adviser and his sixth communications director. Across the government, more than half of the six hundred and fifty-six most critical positions are still unfilled. "We've never seen vacancies at this scale," Max Stier, the president and C.E.O. of the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan group that works to make the government more effective, said. "Not anything close."

Some of the vacancies are deliberate. As a candidate, Trump promised to "cut so much your head will spin." Amid a strong economy, large numbers of employees are opting to leave the government rather than serve it. In Trump's first nine months, more than seventy-nine thousand full-time workers quit or retired—a forty-two-per-cent increase over that period in Obama's Presidency. To Trump and his allies, the departures



have been liberating, a purge of obstructionists. “The President now has people around him who aren’t trying to subvert him,” Michael Caputo, a senior campaign adviser, told me. “The more real Trump supporters who pop up in the White House phone book, the better off our nation will be.”

Americans are inured to the personnel drama in the White House—the factions and flameouts and new blood and walking wounded. But the larger drama, Stier said, is unfolding “below the waterline,” far from the cameras and the West Wing, among little-known deputies and officers in the working ranks of government. A senior Administration official called them the “next-level-down guys.” These are the foot soldiers in the war over the “deep state.” “They’re not talked about,” he said. “But they’re huge.”

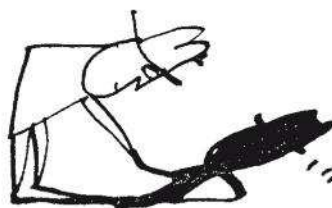
When Nowrouzzadeh saw the article about her in *Conservative Review*, she e-mailed her boss, a Trump appointee named Brian Hook. “I am very concerned as it is filled with misinformation,” she wrote. She pointed out that she had entered government under George W. Bush, and added, “I’ve adapted my work to the policy priorities of every administration I have worked for.” Hook didn’t reply. Instead, he forwarded her message to his deputy, Edward Lacey, who dismissed her complaint, writing that she was among the “Obama/Clinton loyalists not at all supportive of President Trump’s foreign policy agenda.”

In the 2013 novel *“A Delicate Truth,”* John le Carré presents the “deep state” as a moneyed, cultured elite—the “non-governmental insiders from banking, industry, and commerce” whose access to information allows them to rule in secret. Trump’s conception is quite different. A real-estate baron, with the wealthiest Cabinet in U.S. history, Trump is at peace with the plutocracy but at war with the clerks—the apparatchiks who, he claims, are seeking to nullify the election by denying the prerogatives of his Administration.

From the beginning, Americans have disagreed about how to balance partisan loyalty and nonpartisan expertise. When the populist Andrew Jackson reached the White House, in 1829, he packed the government with friends and loyalists,

arguing that “more is lost by the long continuance of men in office than is generally to be gained by their experience.” A Jackson ally in the Senate, William Learned Marcy, said, famously, “To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.” Thus began the “spoils system,” in which a winning candidate dispensed most government jobs as gifts. It lasted until 1881, when President James Garfield was shot by a man who believed that he was due a diplomatic post as a reward for supporting Garfield’s campaign. In response, Congress created a civil service in which hiring was based on merit, in the belief that only a workforce free from political interference could earn public trust.

To admirers, America’s civil service became the ballast in the ship of state, exemplified by the National Laboratories, Neil Armstrong, and generations of humble bureaucrats who banned unsafe medications, recalled defective motor vehicles, and monitored conditions at nursing homes. According to the Partnership for Public Service, the federal workforce has included at least sixty-nine winners of the Nobel Prize, most of them scientists with little public profile. All U.S. public servants are bound by an official code of ethics that demands “loyalty to . . . country above loyalty to persons, party or government department.” Ryan Crocker, a diplomat who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, told me, “I was an Ambassador six times—three times for Re-



publican Administrations, three times for Democratic Administrations. No one elects us. We will, obviously, give policy advice, but when policy is decided we do everything we can to carry it out. I didn’t think the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a spectacularly good idea, but once our troops crossed the line of departure that argument was over.”

But the old tension between loyalty and expertise never subsided. Since the Great Depression, the government has

expanded the ranks of specialists. According to the historian Landon R. Y. Storrs, of the University of Iowa, that effort shifted power from lawmakers to career civil servants, who were often more educated and skillful. Advocates of limited government, Storrs notes, have long regarded the civil service as a “snivel service” of Ivy Leaguers, “a bureaucracy of short-haired women and long-haired men, bent on replacing the traditional American family.” In 1951, *“Washington Confidential,”* a best-seller by two journalists working for the conservative press mogul William Randolph Hearst, presented the civil service as a domain of “mediocrity and virtual anonymity,” in a city of “economic parasites.”

When George W. Bush appointed Lynn Scarlett as an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, in 2001, she concluded that this view was a caricature. “If there are seventy thousand employees and they average, let’s say, ten years of experience, that means they have seven hundred thousand years of experience,” she said. “I had zero. Now, I wasn’t naïve. There were some people who were not as vigorous as others. There were some who had their own agenda. But, for the most part, I really found people kept their politics at home. And, if you asked, they would come and say, ‘Well, here’s how I see this tough problem.’ Or ‘Here’s how it was done before.’”

The modern conservative movement has spent decades calling for the reduction of the federal workforce, in the belief that it is feckless, bloated, and out of touch. Richard Nixon’s aides produced an eighty-page manual on the removal of “undesirable” careerists, which proffered a system for grading civil servants on political “dependability,” ranging from “L” (for “Let’s watch this fellow”) to “O” (for “Out”). To marginalize the troublesome ones, it suggested a “New Activity Technique”: create an “apparently meaningful, but essentially meaningless, new activity to which they are all transferred.” Such an activity, Nixon’s aides wrote, could serve as “a single barrel into which you can dump a large number of widely located bad apples.” After the manual became public, during the Watergate hearings, Congress passed a law to prohibit discrimination against federal workers for “political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital

status, age, or handicapping condition.”

But Presidents have retained broad latitude to reshuffle civil servants without breaking the law in obvious ways. That would prove indispensable for the Trump Administration as it set out to “deconstruct the administrative state.” Trump, who hung a portrait of Andrew Jackson in the Oval Office, left no doubt about where he stood on the matter of loyalty versus expertise. “Oh, we need an *expert*. The experts are terrible!” he said, at a campaign rally in Wisconsin, in April, 2016. “They say, ‘Donald Trump needs a foreign-policy adviser.’ Supposing I didn’t have one?”

**I**n the weeks after the Conservative Review article about Nowrouzzadeh appeared, it generated a barrage of threats. On Facebook, the accusations circulated beneath the headline “Trump Caught Obama’s Iranian Spy at WH, Patriots Love What He Did Next.” In comments, people wrote, “Shoot the bitch,” and “Hang [her] on the White House lawn.” Nowrouzzadeh asked the State Department to publicly rebut the accusations, but it offered little help. On April 6, 2017, she was told to clean out her desk and move downstairs to an unspecified position at the Office of Iranian Affairs. With her credentials, it was the bureaucratic equivalent of Siberia.

Nowrouzzadeh filed a complaint with the department’s Office of Civil Rights, alleging unlawful discrimination. Among civil servants, the case attracted attention as a rare window onto the Administration’s strategy for confronting the “deep state.” Crocker said, “They weren’t saying that she doesn’t have the expertise or the qualifications. They were saying that she had served the Administration for which she was working. It could have some extremely harmful consequences, both for the individuals and for the country, if the best and the brightest are blackballed.” (In response to questions about Nowrouzzadeh, a spokesperson said that the State Department does not discuss individual cases, adding, “The department is committed to principles of diversity and inclusion.”)

Nowrouzzadeh and the department reached a settlement in August, and she has stayed in government. She took a leave of absence for a research fellowship at Harvard, but told friends that she

hopes to return to State, saying, “My heart is still in public service.”

Her case might have ended there, but a whistle-blower gave Democratic members of Congress copies of the White House’s e-mails about Nowrouzzadeh’s background, her work under the Obama Administration, and the need for a “cleaning.” This March, Representatives Eliot Engel, of New York, and Elijah Cummings, of Maryland, called for an investigation. In a letter to the White House and the State Department, they argued that the messages revealed an “extremely disturbing” effort to purge career civil servants for being “insufficiently ‘supportive.’” The department’s Inspector General launched an investigation. As a current employee, Nowrouzzadeh declined to comment for this article. But, in an e-mail to colleagues about her leave, she referred to an address given by President Truman in 1951, during Senator Joseph McCarthy’s attacks on government workers. “When even one American—who has done nothing wrong—is forced by fear to shut his mind and close his mouth, then all Americans are in peril,” Truman said.

Since taking office, Trump has attacked the integrity of multiple parts of his government, including the F.B.I. (“reputation is in tatters”) and the Department of Justice (“embarrassment to our country”). His relationship with the State Department is especially vexed. In January, 2017, when he issued an executive order barring travellers from seven Muslim countries, more than a thousand U.S. diplomats criticized it in an official dissent cable. In response, Sean Spicer, the press secretary at the time, said that public servants should “either get with the program or they can go.” In the months that followed, Tillerson dismantled large parts of the department: as the White House proposed a thirty-one-per-cent budget reduction, the department accepted the lowest number of new Foreign Service officers in years. Sixty per cent of the highest-ranked diplomats have departed.

Veteran U.S. diplomats say that the State Department is in its most diminished condition since the nineteen-fifties, when McCarthy called it a hotbed of “Communists and queers” and vowed to root out the “prancing mimics of the Moscow party line.” McEldowney, the

retired Ambassador, said, “I believe to the depth of my being that by undermining our diplomatic capability we are putting our country at risk. Something awful is inevitably going to happen, and people will ask, ‘Where are the diplomats?’ And the tragic answer will have to be ‘We got rid of them in a fire sale.’”

Nowrouzzadeh’s case is not unique; in a kind of revival of Nixon’s New Assignment Technique, hundreds of State Department employees have been banished to a bizarre form of bureaucratic purgatory. Last October, Tillerson’s office announced the launch of a “FOIA Surge,” a campaign to process a backlog of Freedom of Information Act requests, which would require three hundred and fifty State Department staffers. The work was rudimentary (“You could do it with smart interns,” one participant said), but the list of those assigned to it included prominent Ambassadors and specialized civil servants. They quickly discovered something in common: many had worked on issues of priority to the Obama Administration. Lawrence Bartlett had been one of the department’s top advocates for refugees. Ian Moss had worked to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay. (Bartlett and Moss declined to comment.) “It seemed designed to demoralize,” one participant said.

In Washington, the tactic of marooning civil servants in obscure assignments is known as sending them to the “turkey farm.” The turkey farms are reminiscent of the “rubber rooms” of New York City. Until the practice was banned, in 2010, the city’s Department of Education exiled hundreds of troublesome teachers to reassignment centers, where they idled, sometimes for years, reading newspapers and dozing. An Asia specialist assigned to the turkey farm likened the experience to a Japanese tradition in which unwanted workers are relegated to a “banishment room,” to encourage them to resign out of boredom and shame. Another turkey-farm inhabitant, who has held senior intelligence and national-security posts, told me that he joined the government during the Reagan Administration and never conceived of himself as an opponent of Trump. “I’m a Reagan holdover,” he said, shaking his head in bewilderment. “I sometimes don’t go in before ten, and then leave before five.



You just float.” (Asked about the complaints, the spokesperson said that the State Department is “continuing to highly value career employees.”)

“It seems to be happening throughout the civil service,” Representative Adam Smith, of Washington, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, told me. “They’re taking out people, and I think that is undermining the over-all competency and capability of the government, irrespective of ideology.” In some cases, sidelined experts have found new posts at the Pentagon, where Secretary of Defense James Mattis has deflected White House attacks on public servants. “Mattis has done a remarkable job of being the exception to this rule,” Smith said.

Civil servants who think that they have been mistreated can appeal to a semi-judicial agency called the Merit Systems Protection Board. By law, though, the board needs two members to function, and one left just before Trump’s Inauguration, so for sixteen months it has issued no judgments. For a while, the staff continued to work—reading complaints, marking them with notes—assuming that a new hire would arrive soon. (Since 1979, the board had never been without a quorum for longer than a few weeks.) But, as complaints kept coming in, the staff was forced to store them, unresolved, in vacant rooms of the office, which occupies part of a commercial building in downtown Washington.

When I dropped by, Mark A. Robbins, the remaining board member, flipped on the lights in a storeroom. Cardboard cartons towered in sagging, listing piles. “As of last Friday, the backlog is eight hundred and ninety-six,” Robbins said. “We’re running out of space.”

Robbins is a lawyer with small round glasses, a shaved head, and an air of earnest perseverance. Despite his predicament, he has continued to read cases and recommend judgments, so that things will move faster when operations resume. In March, he got what appeared to be good news: the White House had nominated a new member. Then he discovered that the appointment was not to the empty post but to his post. As a result, all the work he has conducted since January, 2017, will be legally void. At first, he wondered if there had been a clerical

error, but officials at the White House confirmed that there had not, offering no further explanation. “It is mind-boggling that everything I’ve been doing for a year and a half will be wiped off the map,” he told me.

A few days after my visit, the White House finally appointed a second new member. If the nominee is confirmed, the board can resume operations, but it will take an estimated two years to get through the backlog. Jeff Ruch, the executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, an advocacy group, told me, “This seems to be either monkey-wrenching or just incredible incompetence. You have a civil-service system without the means to adjudicate disputes. The Trump philosophy is they just don’t want the agency to function at all.”

While the Administration wrestled the civil service into submission, it began introducing Washington to Trump’s “best and most serious people.” He had four thousand jobs to fill, and the White House was determined to subvert the traditional ways of doing so.

To vet candidates, the Obama campaign had used a questionnaire with sixty-three queries about employment, finances, writings, and social-media posts. The

Trump team cut the number of questions to twenty-five, by dropping the requests for professional references and tax returns and removing items concerning loans, personal income, and real-estate holdings. The questionnaire was speckled with typos, and seemed carelessly put together. Robert Rizzi, a prominent lawyer who has helped with every transition since Bill Clinton took office, told me, “They would call it ‘the paperwork.’ We’d say, ‘Well, it takes months.’ They’d say, ‘Just to do paperwork?’ I’d say, ‘It has huge consequences if you do it wrong.’”

The vetting was led by Donald F. McGahn II, the White House counsel, who struck observers as keen to abbreviate the process. According to one lawyer, the transition sought “work-arounds”—ways that incoming officials could retain investments without breaking the laws against conflicts of interest. “If you look at them as technical rules that lawyers should be able to ‘get around,’ that gives you a whole different approach,” the lawyer told me. “It’s like tweeting after a couple of beers. It’s not going to end well.”

Republican think tanks and donors succeeded in installing preferred nominees. The earliest wave arrived from the Heritage Foundation; subsequent ones came from Charles and David Koch’s network of conservative advocacy groups



and from the American Enterprise Institute. But the White House maintained a virtual blockade against Republicans who had signed letters opposing Trump's candidacy. "I've been asked, 'Can you recommend somebody for this or that position?'" Elliott Abrams, a foreign-affairs official under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, told me. "I've come up with the perfect person, and the people I'm talking to at State or Defense say, 'Oh, my God, she's great. But she didn't sign one of the letters, did she?' 'Yeah, she did.' 'O.K., we're done here.'"

The White House brought in an array of outsiders, who, at times, ran into trouble. As an assistant to the Secretary of Energy, the Administration installed Sid Bowdidge, whose recent employment had included managing a Meineke Car Care branch in Seabrook, New Hampshire. Bowdidge departed after it emerged that he had called Muslims "maggots." In December, Matthew Spencer Petersen, a nominee to the federal bench, became a brief online sensation when Senator John Kennedy, a Republican from Louisiana, asked him a series of basic law-school questions, which revealed that Petersen had never argued a motion, tried a case, or taken a deposition by himself. Embarrassing details came out about other judicial nominees: Brett Talley, who had never tried a case in federal court, wandered cemeteries hunting for ghosts; Jeff Mateer had called transgender children part of "Satan's plan." All three nominations were withdrawn.

Despite the attention that these cases attracted, the vast majority of appointees, other than those who are named in Senate hearings or serve in the President's executive office, are not reported to the public. "The idea that the American people do not know the names of those running the government is nutty," Stier, of the Partnership for Public Service, said. "Many appointees get parachuted in below the radar, and no one knows they're there until they hit a trip wire."

Some of those who have hit the trip wire are recent college graduates, installed in jobs usually reserved for officials with decades of experience. Taylor Weyeneth, a twenty-three-year-old whose only previous employment was with the Trump campaign, became one of the White House's top-ranking officials addressing the opioid epidemic. He

## MARINA

The sky's grey mantle over me  
sewn with lapis lazuli—  
the terrible sky, where you walk  
in our city not thinking of me—

Your indifference bedecks me—  
the locomotive  
of my heart rattles past the crape myrtle,  
the leaves startled, buds like jewels.

The sun has no business in the sky  
nor does the moon, nor the myrtle  
or its spattered blooms, nor your gaze

now that you have turned from me.  
I am gauze printed by twilight, barely a body—

—Cynthia Zarin

served as deputy chief of staff in the Office of National Drug Control Policy until January, when the *Washington Post* discovered that his résumé listed a job at a law firm from which he had been discharged for not showing up and a master's degree he did not possess. The *Post* also noted that the White House Office of Presidential Personnel, which hired Weyeneth for the job, was itself a youthful operation: a "social hub" where young Trump aides "hang out on couches and smoke electronic cigarettes." At a happy-hour party in January, the office celebrated one aide's thirtieth birthday with a drinking game that involved "hiding a bottle of Smirnoff Ice, a flavored malt liquor, and demanding that the person who discovers it, in this case the deputy director, guzzle it." When I asked the senior Administration official about the story, he said, "That was pretty common knowledge. That was their style."

Trump sometimes tested ethical standards in the hiring process. In January, shortly before the Justice Department named Geoffrey Berman to be the interim U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of New York—a position with jurisdiction over the headquarters of Trump's business empire—Trump personally interviewed Berman for the job. Criminal-justice experts were alarmed. "I am not aware of any President in recent history that personally conducted

such interviews," Marcos Daniel Jiménez, a former U.S. Attorney appointed by George W. Bush, told me. William Cummings, a U.S. Attorney appointed by Gerald Ford, said, "In the situation where the sitting President has publicly been noted to be the subject of an investigation by the F.B.I. or special counsel, I think it is unseemly."

By April, at least six of Trump's Cabinet secretaries were being investigated for their expenses. Scott Pruitt, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, was the most embattled: he was facing eleven federal investigations, many of them related to his security arrangements. Pruitt had acquired a custom S.U.V., biometric locks on his office door, a forty-three-thousand-dollar soundproof phone booth, and a retinue of round-the-clock guards. He insisted on flying first class, because, he said, of threats in coach. When Ben Carson, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was found to have outfitted his office with a bespoke dining set (\$31,561), defenders said that he was not to blame. The Republican congresswoman Claudia Tenney, of New York, told an interviewer that the fault for the furniture lay with "somebody in the deep state. It was not one of his people, apparently."

Trump's struggle to attract competent people reflects a broader problem.



For decades, Presidents and Congress have created a steadily increasing number of political appointees. Kennedy submitted two hundred and eighty-six appointments for Senate approval; Trump is allotted more than twelve hundred. Stier said, “The system we have now is crazy. It’s unique among democracies. There is an entourage of these special assistants, special counsels, confidential assistants, and others. To insure that the President’s policy is carried out, the number of appointees could be in the dozens or the hundreds.” He added, “We have a resurgent spoils system. It is the breaking of an organization that was already under stress. It is unmanageable and dangerous in a world when crises are happening in the blink of an eye.”

During the winter and spring, I spoke to dozens of men and women throughout the federal government about Trump’s war on Washington. None of them described a more abrupt change than the civil servants at the Department of the Interior—a behemoth that oversees all of America’s federal public lands, which constitute an area larger than Western Europe.

One of Trump’s most ardent lieutenants is Ryan Zinke. Six feet two, with broad shoulders and a cleft chin, Zinke is a fifth-generation Montanan who was recruited as a linebacker at the University of Oregon and spent twenty-three years in the Navy SEALs. In 2008, he entered politics, in the Montana State Senate. After one term in Congress, he was appointed Secretary of the Interior, and arrived for his first day of work on horseback, riding down C Street in a ten-gallon hat and jeans. Since then, Zinke has attracted attention mostly for his zealous embrace of Trump’s energy agenda. He has opened up America’s coasts to offshore oil and gas drilling; overturned a moratorium on new leases for coal mines on public land; and recommended shrinking national monuments in Utah by two million acres, the largest reduction of protected lands in American history.

Within the department, Zinke has adopted the President’s approach to expertise, loyalty, and dissent. In April, 2017, a scientist named Joel Clement, the director of the department’s Office of Policy Analysis, visited Zinke for a briefing. He noticed that Zinke had redecorated

the office with a grizzly bear, mounted on its hind legs, and a collection of knives. Zinke has no professional experience in geology, but he routinely describes himself as a “geologist,” because he majored in geology in college. (In a 2016 memoir, “American Commander,” Zinke wrote that he chose it by “randomly pointing to a major from the academic catalog.”) “He doesn’t read briefing materials,” Clement told me. “He comes over and sits down, and he says, ‘O.K., what are we here for?’” To keep Zinke’s attention, staff hewed to subjects related to his personal experience. “I briefed him on invasive species,” Clement said. “It was one issue where it looked like we might actually get a little traction, because in Montana they had just discovered mussels that could really screw up the agricultural economy.” The strategy failed. “He didn’t understand what we were talking about. He started talking about other species—ravens and coyotes. He was filling the intellectual vacuum with nonsense. It’s amazing that he has such confidence, given his level of ignorance.”

A couple of months later, Zinke ordered the involuntary reassignment of dozens of the department’s most senior civil servants. Clement, who had been his agency’s public face on issues related to climate change, was assigned to the accounting office that handles royalty checks for oil and gas and coal extraction. His new job had no duties and appeared on no organizational chart. Clement filed a whistle-blower complaint; he believed that his post was retaliation for speaking about the dangers that climate change poses to Alaska Native communities. In October, he quit. “I really didn’t feel like I had a choice,” he told me. “I wanted to keep my voice more than I wanted to keep the job.” In a resignation letter, Clement accused Zinke and Trump of having “waged an all-out assault on the civil service by muzzling scientists and policy experts.” (A department spokesperson declined to comment for this article, citing “loaded and flat-out false information.”)

Like his Commander-in-Chief, Zinke makes no secret of his distrust. “I got thirty per cent of the crew that’s not loyal to the flag,” he said, in September,

to an advisory board dominated by oil and gas executives. He likened his leadership of the department to capturing a ship at sea, and vowed to prevail over resistant employees. Zinke’s comment drew a rebuke from fifteen former Interior appointees, in Republican and Democratic Administrations, who appealed to him to let public servants “do their jobs without fear of retaliation on political grounds.” In a private mutiny, some of his staff printed T-shirts that read “30% DISLOYAL” and took to calling themselves “the disloyals.”

One of the department’s largest divisions, the Bureau of Land Management, has distributed plastic badges, called “vision cards,” for employees to wear, bearing an image of an oil rig on one side and cattle ranchers on the other. The bureau said they are not mandatory, but an employee told me, “If you’re not wearing them, I think management in some places looks at you like maybe you’re not loyal to the flag.” Under Zinke, the employee said, policy debate has dried up: “We’re supposed to provide back-and-forth perspective, so that you make the best decision based on science and based on the law. But that’s a pretty big struggle right now.” The employee went on, “I hunt and fish—I’m actually kind of a redneck. But I believe in the public good and public land. When Trump talks his b.s. about the ‘deep state,’ that’s who he’s referring to. I totally reject that kind of characterization. That’s how these guys see it: if you’re not a tool of the most high-powered

lobbyists in Washington or following orders, then they really don’t want you around.”

Zinke has also adopted the White House’s preoccupation with quashing unflattering information. In April, 2017, he came under criticism after internal memos were leaked, revealing his intention to roll back protections on public land. To

prevent that from happening again, Matthew Allen, the B.L.M.’s communications director, was ordered to stop the leaks. Allen pointed out that very little of Interior’s work is classified. “I can’t stop these leaks, because I don’t have the resources or the authority,” he said. “I don’t think it’s legal.”

Last fall, Trump appointees in the



department became frustrated by bad press over efforts to expand mining and drilling, and by Freedom of Information Act requests that sought details of their contacts with powerful industries. Allen received another order: send FOIA requests about political appointees to the subjects themselves before releasing the results to the public. He was taken aback. "It was just a blatant conflict of interest," he said. "The person who may be under suspicion, that they're requesting records on, is going to be an approval authority in the chain. That just doesn't seem O.K."

After another leak, Allen was turkey-farmed—reassigned to the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, in a newly created position with no staff and no responsibilities. Allen filed a complaint with the Office of Special Counsel. "I did not swear an oath to Ryan Zinke, Donald Trump, or any other person," he told me. "My oath is to the Constitution. I work for the American people. I still feel like I am helping to uphold the Constitution, even if it's by insuring the First Amendment by having this conversation."

In one agency after another, I encountered a pattern: on controversial issues, the Administration is often not writing down potentially damaging information. After members of Congress requested details on Carson's decorating expenses, Marcus Smallwood, the departmental-records officer at HUD, wrote an open letter to Carson, saying, "I do not have confidence that HUD can truthfully provide the evidence being

requested by the House Oversight Committee because there has been a concerted effort to stop email traffic regarding these matters." At the Department of the Interior, the Inspector General's office investigated Zinke's travel expenses but was stymied by "absent or incomplete documentation" that would "distinguish between personal, political, and official travel." According to Ruch, of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, when environmentalists filed suit to discover if industry lobbyists had influenced a report on Superfund sites, they were told, "There are no minutes, no work product, no materials." Ruch added, "The task-force report was a product of immaculate conception." He believes that the Administration is "deliberately avoiding creating records."

For many in government, Trump's antagonistic relationship to facts is no longer just a matter of politics. It now affects day-to-day governance. One afternoon in February, James Schwab, the spokesman for the San Francisco office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, confronted a dilemma. The mayor of Oakland, Libby Schaaf, had infuriated the White House by warning undocumented residents of a forthcoming sweep. Jeff Sessions accused her of sabotage, saying, "ICE failed to make eight hundred arrests that they would have made if the mayor had not acted as she did." That figure became an instant talking point on cable news. And, in comments the next day, Trump elevated the eight hundred to "close to a thousand people."

At the ICE office in San Francisco, Schwab knew that the numbers were nonsense. Internally, the agency had projected that, out of a thousand and twenty targets in the area, it would be lucky to find two hundred. (In the event, it arrested two hundred and thirty-two.) Schwab has been a government spokesman for more than a decade, first in the Army, where he served at the North Korean border, and then at NASA. "I contacted the headquarters and said, 'How are we going to respond to this when we know this is inaccurate?'" he recalled. Schwab was told not to elaborate or correct the error; instead, he should refer reporters to existing statements. "That just shook me," he told me.

Rather than aiding in the deception, Schwab resigned. "A lot of people in the federal government are holding on tight, trying to keep everything going properly," he told me. "And people are fearful to say anything. I was fortunate enough to be able to quit my job and say something, but most people aren't able to do that." The White House has politicized work that was once insulated from interference, Schwab said. "We see that in the F.B.I. very publicly, and then I saw that at ICE from the highest levels of the White House. Who knows where else it's happening in the rest of the government."

A White House that is intent on politicizing and falsifying information can achieve its objectives before other branches of government know enough to stop it. From 2002 to 2005, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson was Colin Powell's chief of staff. He helped prepare the fateful speech to the U.N. Security Council in which Powell argued for the invasion of Iraq, saying, "Unless we act, we are confronting an even more frightening future." Wilkerson is concerned that the Trump Administration is using "much the same playbook" to heighten a sense of menace around threats posed by Iran. "The talk has been building," he told me. In December, Nikki Haley, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, claimed that there is "undeniable" evidence that Iran has supplied weapons to insurgents in Yemen. The claim was met with skepticism at the U.N., where other member states worry that the U.S. will use that charge to build a case for attacking Iran. "It just brought



*"Oh! Sad! Sad man! Man who is sad! Sad man who is sad inside!"*



back the image of Powell holding that alleged anthrax bottle up at the U.N. Security Council,” Wilkerson told me. “It’s some of the same characters as in 2002 and 2003. History repeats itself, first as tragedy and then as farce.”

On May 8th, Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, saying that it was “defective at its core.” Observers of the region warned of a potential crisis, but Trump expressed confidence in his intuition; he had opposed the accord since the campaign, and, he said, “I’ve been one hundred per cent right.” Nowrouzadeh issued a brief statement, lamenting the withdrawal: “Our ability to influence or incentivize Iran’s nuclear decision-making in a manner favorable to U.S. interests will be severely undermined.” But State Department regulations prevented her from saying more, and most of her colleagues in negotiating the deal had left. The Trump advisers who favored preserving it had been effectively silenced; McMaster and Tillerson were gone, and Mattis had given up making the case.

In their place was John Bolton, a former State Department official who was recently appointed the national-security adviser after a long term as a Fox News backbencher. Bolton, known in Washington as a maximalist hawk, is arguably the most volatile addition to the Administration since its inception—an unrepentant advocate of the Iraq War who has also argued for regime change in Iran and in North Korea. “He lied repeatedly during his time at State,” Wilkerson told me. In 2002, when Bolton was the department’s top arms-control official, he planned to accuse Cuba of developing a secret biological-weapons program. When a lower-ranking intelligence official, Christian Westermann, spoke up to say that the accusation was unsupportable, Bolton tried to have him fired, telling his boss that he wouldn’t take orders from a “mid-level munchkin.”

To Wilkerson, Bolton’s arrival at the center of American national security is alarming. He recalled an encounter in 2002, when Bolton was publicly calling for Bush to confront North Korea. At the time, Wilkerson, who had served thirty-one years in the Army, cautioned Bolton that an attack on Seoul would result in enormous casualties. “John stops me mid-sentence and says, ‘Wait a min-

ute, I don’t do casualties and things like that. That’s your bailiwick,’” Wilkerson told me. “The man has no comprehension of the young men and women that have to carry out his goddam wars.” He continued, “He thinks it’s right to shape a narrative that’s false, so long as that narrative is leading to a ‘better’ purpose.”

During Trump’s march to Washington, he framed his mission as nothing less than regime change: America’s capital was a defeated empire in need of occupation. In the months after the Inauguration, as I watched that rhetoric turn to action, the tactics and personae started to remind me of another experience with regime change. As a reporter embedded with the Marines, I arrived in Baghdad in April, 2003, on the day that Saddam’s statue fell. I covered Iraq off and on for two years, a period in which the U.S. occupation was led from the Green Zone, a fortified enclave in the country’s capital, where Americans lived and worked in a sanctum of swimming pools and black-market Scotch. The Green Zone—officially, the home of the Coalition Provisional Authority—functioned as an extension of the White House, led by political appointees, staffed by civil servants, and attended by waiters in bow ties and paper hats. It was Iraq as the war planners had imagined it would be: orderly, on-message, and driven by the desire to remake the country in the name of capitalism and democracy.

After a year, the Green Zone had acquired another connotation, as a byword for disastrous flaws in the invasion: the failure to stop looters or to restore Iraq’s electricity; the decision to disband the Iraqi Army; the blindness to a growing resistance to the occupation. As the problems accumulated, so did the vacant offices in the Green Zone, because people in Washington were unwilling to join. The Administration turned, more than ever, to loyalists. Officials screening new American prospects sometimes asked whether they had voted for Bush and how they saw *Roe v. Wade*. A cohort of recent college grads, recruited because they had applied for jobs at the Heritage Foundation, were put in charge of Iraq’s national budget. The rebuilding of the stock market was entrusted to a twenty-four-year-old. “They wanted

to insure lockstep political orientation,” Wilkerson recalled. “And what we got out of that was a lockstep-stupid political orientation.”

In the outside world, the mistakes were well documented. But inside the Green Zone the lights and air-conditioning were always on, there was no unemployment, and no one debated America’s role in Iraq. It was rhetoric over reality (“Mission Accomplished!”), and appearances mattered most: the press office distributed rosy, misleading statistics and obscured the dismal progress in restoring electricity and recruiting new police. The philosophy of governance—defined by loyalty, hostile to expertise, and comfortable with lies—created a disaster, even as its adherents extolled American values. Those who recognized the self-delusion and incompetence began referring to the Green Zone as the Emerald City.

The early mistakes in Iraq were like land mines sown in the soil. They continued erupting for years, in the form of division and decay. Similarly, the mistakes that the Trump Administration has made are likely to multiply: the dismantling of the State Department; the denigration of the civil service; the exclusion of experts on Iran and climate change; the fictional statistics about undocumented immigrants; and the effort to squelch dissent across the government. Absent a radical change, the Administration has no mechanism for self-correction. It will not get normal; it will get worse.

Trump is less impeded than ever, a fact that impresses even those he has mocked and spurned. Stephen Bannon (who Trump said had “lost his mind”) recently told me, “He is unchained. This is primal Trump—back to the leader he was during the campaign, the same one the American people voted into office. There are no more McMasters in the apparatus. He’s got shit he’s got to get done, and he’s just going to get it done.”

Midway through its second year, Trump’s White House is at war within and without, racing to banish the “disloyals” and to beat back threatening information. Bit by bit, the White House is becoming Trump’s Emerald City: isolated, fortified against nonbelievers, entranced by its mythmaker, and constantly vulnerable to the risks of revelation. ♦

## BOTTLED DREAMS

*Randall Grahm's quest for a truly American wine.*

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Many students have been driven to drink by the effort of understanding Martin Heidegger's "Being and Time." Only one, perhaps, has been driven to wine, exclusively and for life, and that is the inimitable California vintner, punster, screw-top evangelist, and all-around Don Quixote of the vineyards, Randall Grahm. In the nineteen-seventies, when he was a philosophy major at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and struggling with an honors thesis on the concept of Dasein, the most obscure idea in Heidegger's obscure classic, he happened to wander into a wine store in Beverly Hills called the Wine Merchant. It was a time when the great crus of France were relatively cheap, and the owner, Dennis Overstreet, soon to be his employer, was generous. "There was a kind of Bordeaux scandal at the time, and he had taken some really crappy stuff off the exporters' hands in exchange for several cases of Musigny," Grahm explains. As he and Overstreet shared a bottle of the 1971 Comte Georges de Vogüé Musigny, Vieilles Vignes, the mystery of Dasein was replaced by the mystery of Musigny: how, Grahm wondered, had something so haunting and complicated been produced by growing grapes, juicing them, and then letting them grow old in bottles?

Within a short time, Grahm had enrolled at the University of California at Davis, the M.I.T. of American fermentation, where winemaking had become an object of academic research. There, he began an obsession with creating an American wine that has some of the qualities of great red Burgundy—or even those of the great wines of France's Rhône Valley. As he points out, several figures in the making of California wine culture were also renegade philosophy students, including Paul Draper, the recently retired head winemaker of Ridge Vineyards and one of the few whom Grahm un-

stintingly admires. He offers a simple reason for the connection between philosophers and wine: "Wine is a mystery that holds the promise of an explanation."

His improbable quest has led him to become a pioneer of Rhône Valley varietals in Northern California; an apostle of the screw cap as the one right "closer" for good wine; and, for a while, a very successful beverage businessman (at one point, largely on the strength of his popular wine Big House, he was selling four hundred and fifty thousand cases a year). Next came a semi-orderly downsizing of his wine label, Bonny Doon, prompted by fears of its being corrupted by too much commercialism. Most recently, he has decided to take possession of four hundred acres of land near the little mission town of San Juan Bautista—it's the place where Hitchcock's "Vertigo" reaches its climax, though the tower from which Kim Novak falls was added to the mission by the film's art-department team. Thirty or so miles from Santa Cruz, on a hillside where nothing but grass and weeds has ever grown, Grahm is going to try to make an American wine that is an entirely original expression of its terroir, of the land on which it's raised and the place from which it came.

The effort at the new vineyard, called Popelouchum, involves a three-pronged assault. First, Grahm intends to plant and test a series of uncelebrated grapes that have languished in the shadows of European viticulture. Next, he will "autotune" some familiar European grapes by breeding them incestuously and then testing for slight improvements in each successive generation. Finally, he hopes to produce an entirely new American varietal by growing and crossing unlikely pairs of grapes from seed—which is a bit like an ambitious Yankees general manager trying to raise starting shortstops from embryos. "There may not be one great American grape," Grahm says, philosophically. "It may be

the intermingling of a thousand grapes that becomes *the* great grape."

The Don Quixote comparison is self-imposed—Grahm once wrote a ten-thousand-word poem with himself in the role of a character called Don Quijones—and so, given the scale of this year's windmills, any small sign of reassurance raises his spirits. "I had a geomancer out to Popelouchum," he recalled not long ago, from the driver's seat of his 1972 Citroën, "and he said that we must orient the entrance of the site in only one direction." Geomancy is an ancient means of divination involving throwing soil and rocks and interpreting their omens; Grahm, in the Northern California way, is an agreeable mixture of tough-minded agricultural science and what he calls "Santa Cruz woo-woo." He went on, "So, the geomancer goes like this, definitively: 'Northwest! That's the way in which prosperity lies!' I'm sure that he had no *idea* that he was pointing directly at Cupertino!" Cupertino is the site of Apple's headquarters, just around the bend.

"And then we had the Bourguignons out to the vineyard!" Claude and Lydia Bourguignon are a legendary and aptly named French surveying couple who evaluate sites for wine growing. "They identified five distinct terroirs within the property," Grahm said. "And the really exciting thing is the extravagance of limestone—there's limestone *everywhere*." Limestone, he explained, is typical of the greatest vineyards, which tend to be stony rather than loamy, stress making finer grapes. "Rocks are always good, but I think it's the porousness of limestone that explains its power," he added. "It breathes. Of course, on the other side, there are so many forbidding negatives! There's the fault line—we're *right* on the San Andreas fault line. No one knows just how that will change things. And there's the rats! We have these giant mutant vineyard rats that basically ate the entire first crop. We can't poison





*Grahm aims to produce an entirely new, climate-adapted American varietal by crossing unlikely pairs of European grapes.*

them, of course.” The new vineyard is meant to be not only organic, without pesticides of any sort, but also “dry farmed,” without irrigation. “So I’m renting some Jack Russell terriers who are *demon ratters*.”

Grahm was driving on the Pacific Coast Highway, with his fourteen-year-old daughter in the back seat. He has the long face, ponytail, and ironic, shrugging manner of a surviving comedian of the nineteen-seventies, a sort of George Carlin fed on red wine rather than on coke and whiskey. He has many manners of melancholy. He can look distressed even when he is drinking wine—*especially* when he is drinking wine, including his own. There is an ever-hopeful first swirl and sniff, and a half glimpse of pleasure as he begins to drink; then he becomes pained, and eventually his expression conveys something close to the resigned despair of a Shakespeare hero in the fifth act of his tragedy. As he once explained to someone puzzled by his seeming distress at drinking a perfectly nice wine, “I don’t *want* another nice wine. I want a wine that’s like the old Saint-Émilion Cheval Blanc, a wine that when you drink it you just want to inject it directly into your veins!”

He is a passionate Francophile—his daughter is named Amelie—and the ’72 Citroën, perhaps the most curvaceously beautiful family car ever made, needed an undue amount of fidgeting and tending. “The car is part of my shtick,” Grahm said with a laugh. He is one of those people—more often found in the upper reaches of show business—who are sincerely shrewd, or, better, shrewdly sincere. His passion and erudition are real, but he is aware that being passionate and erudite is, in the wine world, a good look, a useful kind of product differentiation.

“I’m Santa Cruz crazy,” he explained. “The thing is, I’m *normative* here. It’s been a retreat for crazy winemakers as long as there’s been wine. It’s our tradition. It’s a less stressful place than most of the rest of the winemaking areas. It’s not Napa.” He began to enumerate Santa Cruz eccentrics: “There was Martin Ray, the first California winemaker to catch the Burgundian bug to the point of ob-

session. He made very expensive wines that alternated between profoundly great and undrinkable. He was sort of the Hunter S. Thompson of the Santa Cruz Mountains. And then Dan Wheeler. I got the idea from him to age wine *en bonbonne*”—in big glass flasks instead of oak barrels. “Angry, irascible individuals. Not company men.”

It is Randall Grahm’s view, and not his alone, that California winemaking has become altogether too corporate. “We’re sort of at the last-of-the-gun-slingers stage,” he said, referring to the recent sale of Josh Jensen’s Calera Vineyard to a conglomerate. The revolution begun by the winemakers and the vineyard scientists of Davis back in the nineteen-sixties and seventies has in some ways paid off beyond anyone’s ambitions. More than a billion and a half dollars’ worth of American wine, almost all of it Californian, is now exported, most of it to the European Union, which had once seemed to have plenty of wine of its own. But the dream of making a great wine culture, as opposed to a thriving beverage industry, seems to recede more with each year. Most of the wine that’s sold is monotone, and the wine that claims not to be monotone is, Grahm believes, pretty monotone, too, made in the style of the one-dimensional “fruit bomb” wines that he associates with

the reign of the wine critic Robert Parker.

Driving through the mountains, he occasionally jerked his head toward a vineyard, or referred to one elsewhere, and said, “They grow chocolate and vanilla there.” By “chocolate” he means Cabernet Sauvignon, and by “vanilla” he means Chardonnay. These are by

far the most common varieties in California viticulture; the words suggest his opinion of the flavor of most of the wines.

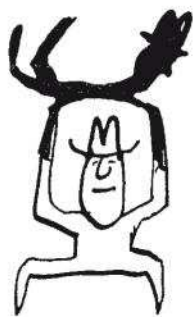
According to the archeological evidence—flasks and stoppers and sealants—the earliest wine production occurred in what is now Armenia, with the first vintage sometime around 4000 B.C. One of the few things that can be said with any confidence about it is that some ancient Armenian pronounced, shortly after the second vintage was produced,

that the previous vintage was better. Arguments about vintages and varieties are as old as wine.

“Wine has always been a ritual as much as a recreational object,” Paul Draper, the Nestor of California wine, said recently. “Something that you talk about and write poems about. I feel the same way Randall does about the mystery of wine. I would even extend it to my interest in myth.” After his retirement from Ridge Vineyards, Draper and his wife went on a Jungian retreat in Ireland. “I’m always carried back to why wine was seen as magic or divine from the beginning. I suspect it’s because it is the most familiar act of transformation. And it is one of the very few remaining rituals that many of us have. It makes the meal into a ritual that it otherwise would not be.”

Winemaking in California, unsurprisingly, began in a religious context. “Mission” grapes, grown by Spanish monks, were the first kind made into wine. (“They make horrible wine, unfortunately,” Grahm says.) The Zinfandel grape, which came to California as a variant of the Primitivo grape of southern Italy—though the shared precursor seems to have originated in Croatia—has been cultivated here for more than a century, and has a right to be taken as California’s native grape. But, in Grahm’s view, “it’s a holiday wine. Cranberry-sauce wine. It makes a rich wine, but never a complicated one.”

Grahm sometimes talks about the mission of “American” wine, but California is his true terroir. He has lived his entire life there, growing up in Los Angeles, although he showed few signs of succumbing to the madness of wine before his fateful trip to the Beverly Hills wine store. “We had Manischewitz, and that was about it,” his mother, Ruth, recalls. “My childhood was very Glass family,” Grahm says, using the term, correctly, to mean not a coven of intellectuals but a showbiz family that encouraged spiritual eccentricity. Ruth Grahm spent most of her life as a lyricist. Working with her composer father, Lou Herscher, she wrote, among other songs, “Mama Never Said a Word About Love,” “Fifty Games of Solitaire,” “Elmer the Knock-Kneed Cowboy,” and “Baby, I’m the Greatest.” “When he came home and told us that he wanted to become a winemaker—well, as far as I was concerned he could do anything he wanted, but my husband was livid,” Ruth



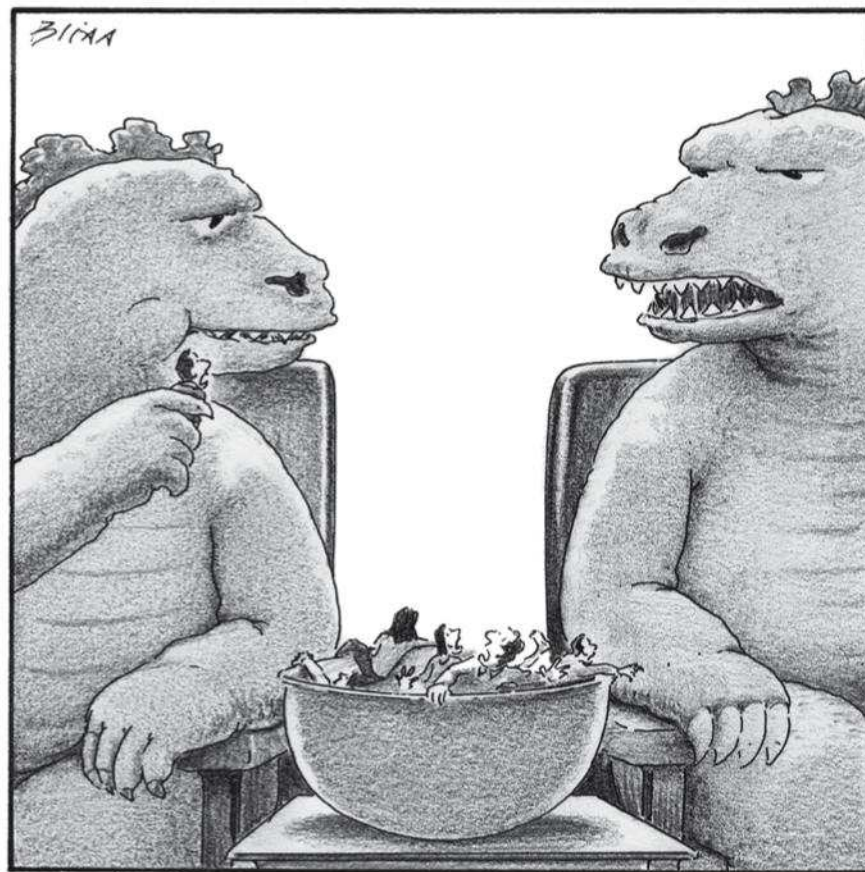


says. "He wanted him to be a doctor, and he would have taken a professor."

After getting his degree, and with the eventual help of his wary father, Grahm bought some land in the town of Bonny Doon, in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The land still gives his wine its name, though he long ago surrendered the original vineyard after a series of insect infestations destroyed all the grapes. ("We got wiped out by the blue-green sharpshooter and we were recovering, and then, two years later, they discovered *another* variant of sharpshooter called the glassy-winged sharpshooter, and the glassy-winged fed even more voraciously and flew ten times further, and I'm thinking to myself, We got wiped out by the wimpy vector? And now there's a super vector. We're *so* screwed.") Wine grapes are as sensitive to assaults as authors: in addition to sharpshooters, the tiny phylloxera louse, whose unintentional import from the New World nearly ended wine production in France a century and a half ago, is still rampant in California. (Most wine grapes in France now are grafted onto foreign rootstock, from native American plants that can resist phylloxera.)

"I was young and looking for property, and because the temperatures were cool, I thought it would work," he said. He planted several hectares of Pinot Noir, the great red grape of Burgundy, and waited for the results. He lived, mostly alone, with his two cats, Franny and Zoey. The results were crushingly disappointing. "What we were making was nothing like Burgundy. It was palatable at best and insipid at worst and had no sense of complexity or mystery or authenticity."

An article of faith for Grahm is that Pinot Noir just can't be grown in California. This opinion is, to put it mildly, far from universal. California Pinot includes a few cult wines that sell for significant sums to collectors who otherwise focus on high-end French wines. When such successes are mentioned, Grahm makes the long-suffering polite face of a Heideggerian being told that there's a really good philosophy of life in "Tuesdays with Morrie." "You can make a *vin d'effort*," he explains. "You can, with huge effort, make a Pinot Noir that has some of the characteristics of a Burgundy. But it's, like—well, you know the Borges story about the second author who comes along and copies 'Don Quixote' word for word?



*"Get those things away from me—I can't stop eating them."*

So the book, when it's done, it's much more effortful—and much less good."

Having been devastated by his first attempt to make a California Burgundy, Grahm essentially dug up the lawn and replanted instead the dark and meaty grapes of the Rhône Valley. He was not the first winemaker to plant Syrah, Grenache, Roussette, and Cinsault, but he was, perhaps, the first to do it with a fully self-conscious intention of making a blend that would imitate the great wines of the Rhône: in particular, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, from the South. In 1984, he began to bottle a Rhône blend that remains his signature wine, the Cigare Volant, or flying cigar, which is what the French call a flying saucer. The conceit derived from a joke bylaw that actually got passed in southern France, at the time of the U.F.O. scares of the fifties, forbidding any alien to land in a vineyard. This produced the name, the label (a photo collage using a nineteenth-century print and an image of a tractor beam emanating from a flying saucer above

the vineyard), and the Bonny Doon signature graphic, of an oblong-headed alien with huge, sinister teardrop eyes, which is still on the cap of every Cigare-related wine that Bonny Doon bottles.

Even Grahm skeptics, who are many, agree that the Cigare Volant was a breakthrough in California wine: complicated, many-sided, it changed its mood and character markedly from year to year, like a great European wine. (*Food & Wine* once listed it as among the "40 Wines That Changed the Way We Drink.") Grahm admits that it's a good wine, though, he complains, "it always has personality, but it doesn't yet have *identity*." It was with Cigare Volant, too, that Grahm began his practice of making labels designed by well-known illustrators, bearing names and legends that involve elaborate literary puns. "I loved the look of old wine labels, all the heterogeneous typography, different fonts crowded together, and wanted to play with them," he says. One of his favorites is the label for his Grenache blend, Clos de Gilroy

(the name is a play on the French word “*clos*,” meaning “enclosed vineyard,” with the vineyard in question being close to Gilroy, a town outside Santa Cruz), which features a portrait of Proust. The label has a bilingual punning motto, “*Le gil des rois, le roi des gils*,” a parody of the motto on Châteauneuf labels (“*Le vin des rois, le roi des vins*”)—“The wine of kings, the king of wines”). Perhaps one in a hundred wine drinkers got all this, but the other ninety-nine noticed the label in the wine store.

The nineteen-eighties were a time of extravagant acceptance and sudden growth. Graham appeared on the cover of *Wine Spectator*, standing beside a white horse, with the legend “The Rhône Ranger.”

It was also the period when he began to think of replacing traditional corks with more plebeian screw caps, on the ground that, however much fun the cork ritual might be, about five to ten per cent of all wine bottles would always become “corked”—spoiled by “cork taint”—and rendered undrinkable. Screw caps present a smaller problem of “reduction” of the wine in the bottle, which Graham thinks is easily resolved simply by decanting. In typical fashion, he publicized this cause, in 2002, with a mock funeral for the cork at Grand Central Terminal, in New York, climaxing with a dinner of all-black dishes inspired by the decadent French fantasist J. K. Huysmans.

Even though the sharpshooters had wiped out the original vineyard, Graham used his new fame to begin making wine of fantastically varied kinds, almost all from purchased grapes. The wine-world term “purchased grapes” is somewhat misleading. “Commissioned grapes” comes much closer to defining the practice, which involves often torturous negotiations between the winemaker and the farmer about what to grow, how to grow it, and when to pick it. “You plead that they keep the yields under control, you plead with them not to overirrigate,” Graham says. “It’s never perfect, like any relationship. This guy’s got a great attitude and he’s got a crappy vineyard; great vineyard, crappy attitude. Invariably.” In addition to the Rhône-type blends, he began to make and give punning names

and labels to straight Syrahs, sweet wines, rosés (his Vin Gris de Cigare is probably his single most successful bottling), various sparkling ciders, champagne-style blends, and even a good Merlot called, in honor of the famous rant in the movie “Sideways,” “I Am Not Drinking Any %&\*#! Merlot.”

The eighties were also when Graham had his first encounter with the nemesis of his story, the formidable wine taster and critic Robert Parker. At first, Parker, who had become a critical dictator along the lines of Clement Greenberg in the mid-century New York art world, was very much pro-Graham. They shared an affection for the Rhône Valley, which had become Parker’s promised land of winemaking, and Graham’s effort to make a California kind of Rhône wine brought them into concert.

Later, in the nineties, Parker, like Clement Greenberg turning on the older Jackson Pollock, decided that Graham’s wine, what with all the punning labels and that new line of popular wine, Big House, had succumbed to the gods of commerce and advertising. He wrote a series of put-downs in his annual wine buyer’s guide. This was bad for the Bonny Doon business, and was also extremely offensive to Graham, who thought of himself as the true obsessive, surrounded by businessmen, and saw his quirky (and expensive to produce) labels as a tribute to art rather than as a bid for Mammon.

Graham brooded on the insult for years. Eventually, in 2003, he responded with what he now agrees was “the single biggest mistake of a life that has known many fine vintages of big mistakes.” He wrote and published a leaflet called *The National Vinquirer*, mimicking the typeface and voice of the *National Enquirer*. There, among puns and jokes (“BRUCE & DEMI-SEC MARRIAGE ON THE ROPES”), was a parody article headlined “NOTED WINE CRITIC EXPLODES,” detailing the supposed death of Parker while overeating at a bistro in the Rhône Valley. The accompanying obituary mocked Parker’s overuse of the words “hedonistic” and “sexy” to describe the big, fruity wines that he had helped promote. “However, it would be accurate to report that there were literally

gobs of fruit as well as gobs of poor Robert just about everywhere,” one onlooker is supposed to have reported of the explosion—“gobs of fruit” being another Parker unit of praise.

Mock a man’s appearance and he can forgive you; mock his adjectives and he is an enemy for life. Graham’s relationship with Parker never really recovered. One Parker guide said, glacially, that Bonny Doon’s first Cigare Volant, in 1984, remained its best. Although Graham doesn’t entirely disagree—“I had no idea what I was doing then, so I didn’t do it all wrong”—it was still wounding.

Having broken with Parker, Graham felt free to be more openly critical of his wine standards, which involve numerical grades and favor “fruit bombs”—big, jammy, rich wines—over the more complicated and, on first taste, astringent wines that Graham considers the main line of vinous greatness. “The one thing I won’t forgive Parker for is being a moral scold for perceived concentration,” he says. “If your wines are not concentrated enough, you’re morally deficient. This drives me shit-fucking mental. It’s ridiculous. It’s like evaluating music based on how loud it’s played.”

One recent morning, Graham got in his Citroën and drove out to look at the Popelouchum property. Northern Californians are so habituated to the beauty of their environment that they can miss what they have, seeing only the crowded roads and the rising real-estate prices and the forest fires, in the same way that New Yorkers get so consumed with delays on the No. 6 line that they stop looking at the spire of the Chrysler Building. But an outsider’s breath is taken away by the beauty of the landscape unspooling around San Juan Bautista. It has all the elements that most people are said instinctively to associate with an idea of Eden: gently rolling hills stepping away toward a distant, shimmering ridge of blue-gray mountains; in the near distance, a valley of cultivated plains overhung with a flotation of white cumulus clouds, each distinct and ice-cream shapely, and all together creating a soft-edged patchwork of beaming light and peaceful shadow below. In the hills, wildflowers grow in abundance.

“Furmint, Rossese, Ruché, all of these obscure grapes, we have them all planted





already,” Graham said, showing off the fields, where the only signs of planting were the crossed wooden sticks on which the vines would grow. “Furmint is the great sweet wine grape of Hungary, and we think that we have a spot where the geology looks perfect for it. We’re growing these grapes in a slightly old-fashioned way. We’re dry-farming them—we’re spacing them farther apart, interplanted with fruit trees and flowering shrubs—and the economics are challenging. But I think not impossible.”

As for his second project, “varietal auto-tuning,” he explained, “We started doing this with Grenache, and a number of professional colleagues told me it was a really bad idea, and about a year later, they’re saying, ‘You know, I’ve changed my mind. It’s maybe a good idea.’ It turns out that grapes are heterozygous. The seeds’ genetic information recombines, so that even if it’s Grenache crossed with itself it’s not the same Grenache anymore. Some of the offspring are inferior, or they’re sterile, but a small percentage actually have more interesting character than the parents. So we were doing that with Grenache—until the rats just decimated us.”

But the most ambitious, and quixotic, of his projects is breeding, the attempt to create new varieties by crossing existing ones and planting the seeds that result. Most wine grapes are grown from “clonal types”—exact genetic copies of successful vines, with cuttings taken from the precisely tuned familiar varieties. “Cross with seeds, though, and you often get far more diversity, which is how the original good varieties occurred,” Andy Walker, the resident genius of wine genetics at Davis, and Graham’s adviser at Popelouchum, explains. “Pinot Noir, for instance, is a very jumpy grape. To this day, if you plant it in a vineyard you’ll get some Pinot Gris and some Pinot Blanc as well. The reason Pinot Noir is so variable in the bottle is that it’s a variable grape! We’re unfortunately stuck in the idea that the ancient great varieties are sacrosanct. But it turns out that all the ancient ones aren’t ancient. Cabernet Sauvignon is a relatively recent cross of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. Chardonnay is Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc. The monks may have started doing that a thousand years ago. We’re going to do it again, because now we need more

variation and diversity—for making wines of place, as Randall says, but, above all, for climate change. A hot-weather Pinot Noir clone—that’s not going to happen. But we could find two varieties and cross-breed for heat.”

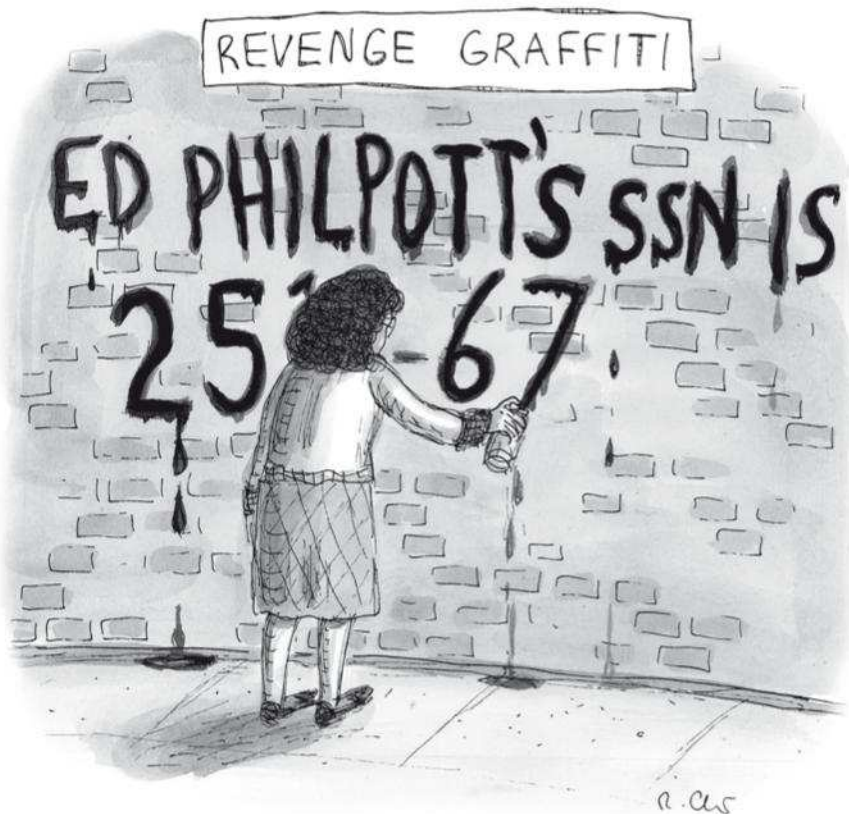
A practical concern with climate change helps drive the Popelouchum project. “We harvest now throughout Northern California three to four weeks earlier than we ever used to,” Graham said grimly. “It’s everywhere. Burgundy may be fucked. The northern Rhône Valley is partly fucked, though many of the great vineyards face away from the sun. The southern Rhône is *completely* fucked.” New varieties that can still produce warm-climate wines that are complex and not too alcoholic may happen only with new kinds of grapes. Graham, climbing the highest hill in his new vineyard, one still covered with yellow wildflowers, with a surprisingly cool mountain-top breeze blowing across the rough surface of raw grass and weeds, put the dream of the new variety succinctly: “We’re going to pair a Zorba the Greek grape with a French bohemian grape, and see how well their kids like living in California.”

The hope is to have wine on the market from Popelouchum within two years, and to begin to show results from the

breeding program within a decade. “Look, we have two barrels already,” Graham said. “There are Burgundy producers who don’t produce more than that. They’re not very *wealthy* Burgundy producers. . . .” For the moment, all that was visible of this utopian program was the crossed sticks and props intended for the vines as they mature over the summer.

Graham looked out over the vineyard, and pointed out a cross on the highest nearby hilltop. “Yeah, this has always been a holy site,” he said, more quietly. “First to the local indigenous people, and then to the Spaniards, who attempted mass conversion. They put the cross up.” He paused, and added, “You know, I haven’t brought my mother up here yet, because of that.”

There are people who think that Graham is crazy and people who think he’s a genius, and the people who think he’s a genius are also the ones most inclined to think he’ll fail. Eric Asimov, the *Times* wine writer, is a typically bemused fan. “It would be completely predictable that he would come up with something like this,” he says. “It’s fascinating, creative, iconoclastic, and makes for great talk. Why it may not be *feasible* is the timeline he’s put on it. Achieving something within





*"And do you both promise to believe you can be better than all the other married couples you've ever seen?"*

•      •

ten years? The monks took centuries in Burgundy. Maybe tech can speed that up a little bit, but it's hard to expect that within a decade there will be some kind of new, magic grapevines that express the soul of this place that's never before grown grapes or anything except grass and weeds."

Paul Draper, the Ridge winemaker, has another take, which is that for all Graham's talk of passion for a *vin de terroir*, his real gift is for blending and mixing wines, more often with shrewdly purchased grapes than with homegrown ones. He's a winemaker, more than a wine grower. "I've always felt that one of his greatest joys is his amazing creativity in putting together wines that represent his ideal, almost a Platonic form," Draper says. "I can't actually *imagine* Randall in Burgundy tied to one plot of grapes, trying to reproduce the same wine year after year. Randall would be bored to tears doing that. What he did by creating these wines of such quality was to really free himself from what terroir would have tied him down to."

Many people would insist that American wines of place already exist. Though Paul Draper is too modest to say it, he thinks of his Monte Bello Cabernet Sau-

vignon as very much a *vin de terroir*, produced in one small vineyard year after year. Graham's real complaint is that ambitious California wines have been versions of French ones, hyped up on steroids, and that these wines lead the French to make hyped-up versions of their own. The Great California Wine, he feels, should be a thing in itself. A Barolo doesn't aspire to be a Burgundy, and a California wine should be an American thing that just wants to be an American thing.

In a way, Graham has already made that American thing, as have many other American winemakers. His existing wines express six different places at once, which is, after all, a very American idea of place. If the great California grape is many grapes, perhaps the great American terroir already exists in the very act of widely sourced and "manipulated" winemaking, while purity of place remains the illusion. "Life on the Mississippi," is, after all, a greater American book than "Little House on the Prairie."

If Graham's long-term ambition at Popelouchum is to breed entirely new varieties of grape—or perhaps an entire vineyard of ever so slightly different grapes, chiming together, as he says,

"polyphonically, not cacophonously," in the Great American Wine—his short-term vision, whose realization is already under way, is to use obscure European varietals that, when adapted to New World conditions, might make wines that have the complexity and the mystery of an Old World wine.

"My ambition is always the same—to make a wine in California that's comparable to a great Burgundy," he says. "But the means change." Where once the grapes were the foreground and the place the background, now the place is the subject, and the grapes merely a means of transmission.

When Graham is on a tasting jag, he likes to lay out ten or twelve different bottles of wine based on a grape he's exploring, and ask a friend to taste with him, usually a friend whose tastes are practical and analytic, as Graham's are searching and romantic. His favorite tasting companion—in a symmetry that not even Heidegger could have imagined—is a fellow Santa Cruz wine pro, John Locke, who shares with the great English empiricist of the same name many a hard-edged, skeptical attitude. Locke worked at Bonny Doon for many years, the Sancho to Graham's Don, and now runs his own winery, Birichino, in another part of Santa Cruz. He is the reality principle to Randall's dreamy invocations of mystery. Graham reaches for the empyrean, and Locke brings him back to earth, a table full of wine bottles between them.

"One of the grapes I have the highest hopes for is Rossese," Graham said. "It's one of those genius grapes, hiding in plain sight. Rossese! When I first tasted it, it was too subtle for my taste at the time. It was very . . . *light*. But now I feel that Rossese is the missing link between Italy and France. It has the warmth of Grenache but the nerviness of a Dolcetto and, literally, it is the crossing point between France and Italy. Most Rossese is virused up the wazoo."

The wine, poured in a back office at Bonny Doon, was light but complex, with an appealingly spicy and smoky nose. "If you can clean up the virus, there's a treasure hiding underneath," Locke commented, as he sniffed and swirled the wine in his glass. He is blond, round, politely terse, and has a smiling, slightly taunting manner. Grapevines, like the



heroines in D. W. Griffith movies, are subject to every kind of trial: in addition to the pests that wipe out whole vineyards, more than sixty specific viruses unique to grapevines have been identified. Most are noxious, but some can be peripherally beneficial, or at least have consequences that are interesting to taste.

"No, John," Graham objected. "Sometimes the opposite happens. The virus *is* the treasure. In working on auto-tuning, you'll see that recessive genes get expressed. Most are inferior, but a small percentage are better suited. And in the propagation the virus falls out. So you're losing something, but something purer might emerge." He sniffed. "There's roses and cherries and acid. This is probably how this wine has been made for two hundred years. These are rustic wines. It really is Burgundian in spirit."

"Ah, Randall," Locke said. "Burgundian in spirit?" Locke deplores the adjective "Burgundian," which he thinks is basically meaningless. "There is a little place in northern France, and that is called Burgundy. And you know what? That's where you'll find the Burgundian spirit."

"Yes, but there *is* some quality that unifies all those different, disparate styles," Graham insisted. "It's ethereal, it's eloquent—it's earthiness *and* elegance. You can't always drink Burgundy, but there are other wines. Like high-altitude Grenache. Ones with unequivocally non-Burgundian Burgundian qualities."

Locke swirled and swallowed. "Let's break it down into triads," he said. "With every interesting flavor, there usually turn out to be three specific, nameable elements that create the mystery, and all the rest of that. One food, one spice, one flower. Like Côte-Rôtie: bacon and pepper and—what?—wild thyme? The word you want is 'triads.' The adjective that maybe you're looking for to describe this mystery is more floral than fruit. It's simply 'Alpine.'"

"You mean 'mentholated'?" Graham cried out, almost in pain.

"Alpine." That's really what the so-called 'Burgundian aspect,' with scare quotes, really is. Floral top note, high-altitude, but at the same time there's the basso-continuo note of the forest floor. Alpine."

A lighter Rossese was opened and poured. It came out pinkish orange in the glass.

"It's good!" Graham said. "It's light, but delicious." Then he sighed. "This watery is a hard sell in a Parkerized world."

"It depends on how much you have to sell," Locke said, and shrugged. "A hundred cases in Brooklyn or Oakland? We can do it. In Dallas or Los Angeles? You'd have to do data mining on men who spend a lot on beer and facial-grooming products." Oakland is the Brooklyn of San Francisco, and assumed to be a hot spot for *recherche* wine.

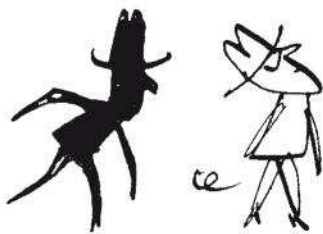
"It does have surprising minerality," Graham asserted.

"Twenty years ago, you want to sell wine to a geeky buyer, you said 'hang time'"—meaning how long the wine remained on the palate—"and ten years ago you said 'terroir,' and now it's 'minerality.'"

"O.K., call it a kinetic quality on the palate. Minerality *is* a thing."

"Chablis, champagne, Sancerre—minerality is *chalk*," Locke tasted, and then said, "That's my second most hated word in the wine world right now, 'minerality.'" He paused, and waited. "My *most* hated is 'Burgundian.' 'Minerality' means something. Maybe. 'Burgundian' means: something to sell."

Graham stared at his friend. "You're denying *minerality*?" he said at last, like a theologian in the presence of an ex-priest denying the Holy Spirit. But then he sighed again. "We have all these explanations for everything, and still things make no sense," he added.



"You don't *want* it to be solved," Locke urged. "What would that feel like? 'The great wine mystery solved! Let's move on to Cheddar cheese.'" He swirled and, this time, downed his glass.

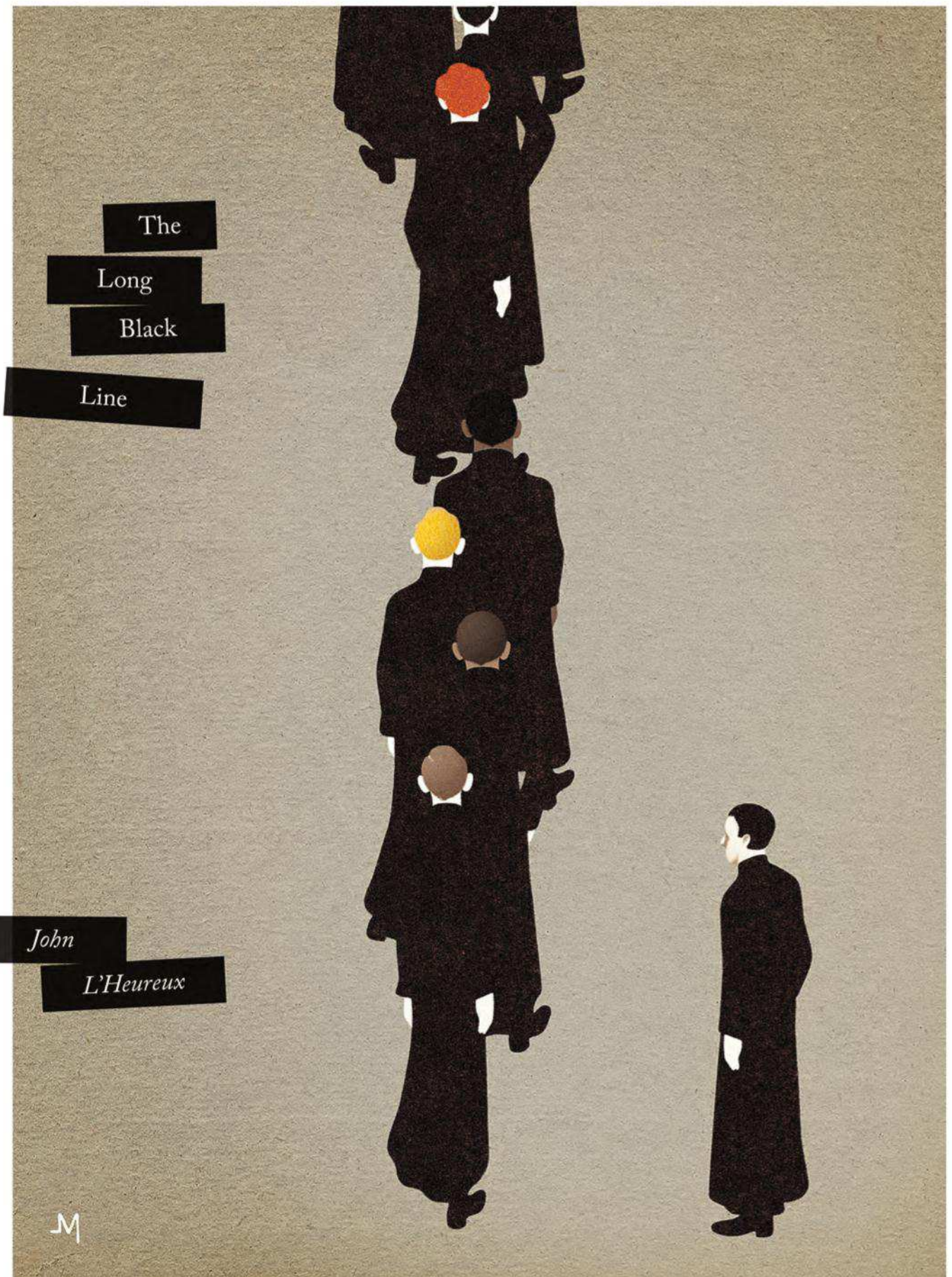
Not long after the tasting, Graham returned, for the first time in a quarter century, to his original vineyard in the actual town of Bonny Doon. He drove up a steep and winding road

in the Santa Cruz Mountains, deep in a redwood forest, to see the old place. Where the hillside of Popelouchum feels vast and soft and visionary, a look-out with prosperity unrolling all around, the older vineyard, set back from the road, seems shaded and secret and a little small, a young man's green laboratory. The giant redwood trees cast shade—the coolness they help create was one of the reasons he thought the land would work for Pinot Noir—and make the place feel more like a retreat than a launching pad. Perhaps most places where a creative life begins have some of that quality: we pick out starting points that are a bit hidden, so that others won't see us practicing our leaps.

The fields having long ago been sold and replanted, nothing of his failed Pinot Noir—or the Grenache and the Syrah that replaced it—remains. His original tasting room, down the road from the vineyard, is still used by the current grower, who produces his own Pinot Noir, which Graham tries to treat politely. Driving slowly around the old place, another dream plot up in the Santa Cruz Mountains, he seemed unusually quiet. For many imaginative people, artists or winemakers, life always feels like a failure seen from inside; where the rest of us can see only the accomplishments, they see the unrealized scale of the ambitions that preceded the accomplishments.

"I know perfectly well that there are elements in my character that have isolated me from people," he said. "That the intensity of my obsessions often crowds out the expression of my affections. There's no one in the world I love more than my daughter, but I struggle to explain the importance of all this to her." He paused. "You know, most of the greatest wines are not drinkable when they're young at all. They're like Henry Miller or Picasso. You have to wait seventy years before they're civilized." In the presence of his first ambitions, long plowed under, his determination to put his working life on the line on a single hilltop, untested but still his own, suddenly seemed logical. As we age, the search changes: the inebriating mysteries matter less, and the small sustaining explanations matter more. ♦







## BROTHERS

Finn said an awkward goodbye to his parents and watched them drive off in the new Buick they had bought in case he changed his mind. They were pleased, of course, at Finn's decision to study for the priesthood, but they were wary, too. It was 1954, and priests were still thought to be holy, and Finn . . . well . . . Finn knew that he wasn't holy, but during a retreat in college he had succumbed to a fit of piety and, dizzied by the idea of sacrifice, applied to join the Jesuits. They had put him through a series of interviews, and let him know that he seemed altogether too caught up in theatre, but in the end they had accepted him. So now here he was, almost a Jesuit, and this annoying Brother Reilly kept calling him Brother.

Brother Reilly had given him a short tour of the public areas—the chapel, the guest parlor, the dining hall—and then escorted him to the front veranda, where the other postulants had gathered to admire the grounds. A green lawn cascaded down the hill to a small wilderness of trees, with a lake beyond. Everyone agreed that it was beautiful. They stood in little groups, sweating in their jackets and ties, while the novices—the real Jesuits—made awkward attempts at conversation. Finn introduced himself to the group around Brother Reilly, and, after the expected hand-shaking, silence descended. Finn was not good with silence, so he cleared his throat and wondered aloud if they all felt as strange as he did in his jacket and tie. There was eager agreement and a little self-conscious laughter that encouraged him to wonder further when they would get to wear a cassock, “if it's O.K. to ask,” he said.

“A habit, Brother Finn, not a cassock,” Brother Reilly said quietly, a gentle rebuke.

“Sorry. A habit,” Finn said. “But when?”

“In good time, Brother Finn.”

Finn realized that he should shut up, but he couldn't help himself and, attempting friendliness, he said, “Just call me Finn. Brother Finn creeps me out.”

Brother Reilly, with a show of patience, explained that in the Jesuit order all novices were called Brother. He pointed them out—Brother Quirk,

Brother Matthews, Brother Lavelle, etc. And then, lapsing from charity, he added, “You are now my brother, Brother Finn, and I don't like it any more than you do.” Nervous laughter, a fit of coughing from Brother Lavelle, and then silence.

Finn blushed and muttered to himself, “Ah have always depended on the kindness of strangers.”

That night, Brother Reilly made a note in his manuductor diary about Brother Finn's “singularity”—Jesuit speak for self-importance—and he added, “I wonder how long Brother Finn will be among us.” Then, during examination of conscience, Brother Reilly went to confession and accused himself of disedifying conduct, sins against charity, and anger against one of his new brothers. Anger was a habitual failing, he admitted. He would try harder.

Brother Reilly had been appointed manuductor—“he who leads by the hand”—because even now, as a second-year novice, he was brusque and withdrawn, inclined to hang back from group activities. He had served as a marine in Korea, and he remained gaunt and hungry-looking, with an intensity that seemed to border on the dangerous. His superiors had judged that he was ill-suited to the role of manuductor, and that therefore it would be a useful trial for him and an instructive one for the novices.

“Feelings,” Father Superior explained, “are always to be distrusted. Jesuits are men of the will. The good Jesuit may feel excited or depressed, but—remember—he never shows it. He is never singular. He disappears into the long black line.”

This was a talk that Father enjoyed giving. It was essential that novices learn self-denial. And denial of feelings came first.

“*Agere contra*—‘to act against’—here is your safeguard against the dangers of feeling. If you feel sad, smile. If you feel elated, exercise self-restraint. If you dislike someone, pray for him, take note of his virtues, imagine that he has virtues even if he has none. *Agere contra*. Be a man of the will.”

Finn listened, eager and anxious, certain that they would never have let

him in if they knew what a shit he was.

But maybe this was a feeling he should just ignore. By an act of will.

“Brother Reilly must be a holy man,” Brother Quirk said to Finn.

“What makes you think that?”

“Well, they chose him as manuductor, and he never violates silence.”

“Maybe he just has nothing to say.” Finn thought for a moment and added, “That was uncharitable of me. I'm sorry.”

Brother Lavelle cleared his throat and spat.

Brother Quirk and Brother Lavelle and Finn had been assigned weeding duty during recreation—weeding the tomato patch, where there were in fact no weeds—and, since they were outside the house, talking was allowed. Inside the house, talking was forbidden except in emergencies, and then you had to speak in Latin. If your Latin wasn't good, you were expected to learn it or shut up.

“Also, he was in Korea,” Brother Quirk said.

“God help the Koreans,” Finn said. Then, to change the subject, he added, “These tomatoes are on their last legs. What do you think, Lavelle?”

Brother Lavelle never talked, but now he sat back on his heels and said, slowly, deliberately, “I think this whole fucking thing is a mistake.” He stood up and looked around. “Christ,” he said, and without asking anyone's permission he walked back to the house.

Finn, for once, remained silent, but later he noticed that Brother Lavelle was absent from dinner and evening prayers.

“One down,” Finn said, as they left chapel that night. Brother Reilly heard him and gave him a hard, knowing look.

In conference, Father Superior explained the use of what were facetiously called “scoop beads.” A tiny string of beads attached to a safety pin and worn inside the habit allowed you, unobtrusively, to pull down a single bead each time you broke silence or sinned against charity or had an unkind thought. The beads kept you scrupulously aware—hence, “scoop”—of your failings and came in handy at the

twice-daily examination of conscience. Wearing them was, of course, optional.

Finn waited for Father Superior to say "Just joking," but Father Superior was not given to jokes.

The new men, still wearing jackets and ties, finally began their eight-day retreat. The silence was absolute, and time stretched out endlessly before them. Their world contracted to an intense focus on Father Superior's conferences, three a day, followed by an hour of private meditation, as they tried to engage each of their five senses in the day's topic: sin, Heaven and Hell, the life and teachings of Christ, the Gospel mysteries, the wonders of living the Christian life.

Finn thought of Brother Lavelle. Maybe this was all a fucking mistake. But as the eight days passed he found himself surrendering to the power of silence and meditation.

Most nights, he lay awake while the others slept. On the last of the eight nights, his mind wandered from Christ's Resurrection and the empty tomb to the summer theatre in Vermont. Gillian Cantrell had been his girlfriend that summer, a sophomore at Brown. She was a good actress, full of life and wit, and she was very sexy—too sexy for him. Gillian.

Sexy Gillian. He thought of his last night with her. He found that he was getting aroused and forced himself to think of Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb.

The problem was that Finn had always wanted to be an actor. He had spent the summer after high school studying at the New Theatre Academy in New York, and after his first year of college he had acted in summer stock in Vermont. Acting was fun. Acting was thrilling. In his sophomore year, he'd acted in every play the drama department had put on. At the same time, he'd had this secret life in which he gave himself over to prayer. One night on his way back from the library he'd decided to make a quick stop at the college chapel. The place was dark, with only the red sanctuary light blinking next to the altar. It was sort of spooky, and Finn was glad that nobody could see him. He knelt in the back pew and closed his eyes. After a while, he felt foolish, as if he were faking some kind of piety, and he decided to leave. But when he opened his eyes he was startled to see the flickering red altar light move toward him. He blinked and it moved again. The dark, and the single red light moving toward him in that dark: it had to be an optical illusion. But for a moment his heart stumbled and, looking back, he knew that that was when he'd seen it clearly: acting was

not enough. The best thing he could do with his life was sacrifice it, and what better way to sacrifice it than as a Jesuit.

Suddenly, from the bed nearest the door, there came a terrible shout. It was more than a shout; it was a wail of pure terror and it seemed to go on and on, before trailing away into silence.

Someone turned on the light. Someone else said, "It's Brother Reilly. It's the manuductor."

Brother Reilly, the manuductor, still fighting his way out of his dream, pulled himself together and said in a shaking voice, "Everything's fine. There's nothing the matter." He turned off the light, saying, "Sleep, everybody," and he left the room. Incredibly, they all slept, even Finn.

The next morning, their trial period behind them, the new novices were accepted into the common life of the Jesuit community. It was a free day, with a sung Mass in the morning and a special feast in the evening and Benediction before bed.

Finn was at last a member of the long black line.

## ONCE IN A DARK WOOD

Brother Reilly had had a fit. The word went around during *laborandum*, the afternoon work period.

"It happened once before," Brother Quirk said, "when he was in his first year."

"It was worse," Brother Matthews said. "He woke us all up howling. He dreams he's back in Korea."

"My brother was in Korea and my father was in the last war—in Germany—but they never wake up howling."

"I wonder why he does it. Why it happens, I mean."

"It's a cross to bear." Brother Quirk paused, then added, grimly, "The real cross is that he may have to postpone vows. For a year."

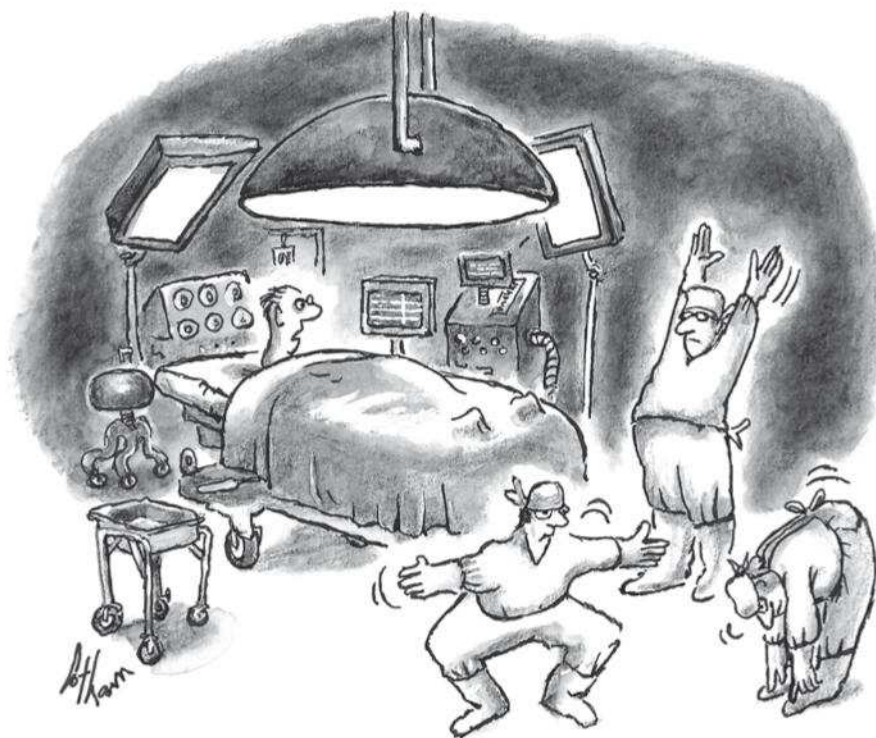
"For howling?"

"It's canon law. His mental state . . . his fits may be an impediment to ordination. Like epilepsy or schizophrenia or even facial disfigurement."

"You mean if you're too ugly you can't be ordained?" Finn doubted this. "That would mean a lot of priests got through by accident."

"Father Taylor, for instance."

"Or Father Hanson."



"How much limbering up do you need?"



"You'll be a close call yourself, Quirk."

"Very funny, Brother Finn. We should pray for Brother Reilly, and we shouldn't be talking about it anyway. It's not charitable."

Brother Reilly, meanwhile, was resting in the infirmary. It was called rest, but he knew that, in fact, he was under observation. Superiors wanted to know if his fits were incapacitating or if, as the neurologist had assured them, he was merely having flashbacks to the war. They should just wait and see, the doctor said.

Brother Reilly knew all about waiting. When he first applied to the Jesuits, he interviewed with the psychiatrist whose job it was to vet all incoming novices, and it emerged that, as a Marine lance corporal in Korea, Reilly had spent a good deal of his downtime with local prostitutes. The psychiatrist thought it would be wise for Reilly to see if he could get by without sex for a year, and so he recommended postponing entrance. Reilly endured his year of chastity and applied again. This time, he was approved by the psychiatrist. He was a dutiful novice, if quiet and withdrawn, but then one night he woke up screaming. It was his first fit, which he passed off as a bad dream.

But now it had happened again.

Finn was tempted to make a smart-ass remark about Reilly, but for once he held his tongue. He was briefly proud of himself. Then ashamed of his pride. Mentally, he pulled down a scroop bead.

Brother Quirk was appointed manuductor. Suddenly he was everywhere, making announcements, reminding his brothers about changes to the schedule, posting a new De More notice. It was the same old schedule, but elaborately printed to resemble an illuminated manuscript and translated, unnecessarily, as "Regular Order."

Finn stood before the notice board doing his rabbit imitation.

5:30	Rise
6:00	Visit chapel
6:15-7:00	Meditation
7:00-7:45	Mass
7:45-8:00	Breakfast
8:00-8:30	Free time

He drew a deep breath. The rest of

the day was divided into blocks of time for conference, rosary, class, examination of conscience, lunch, two hours of assigned work, study, more meditation, dinner, chores, spiritual reading, a second examination of conscience, and, finally, at nine-thirty, following a last visit to chapel, bedtime.

"At least they give you time to hit the toilet," Finn said to anybody listening, and, as God would have it, that happened to be Brother Reilly, who looked at him as if he were an insect.

Finn's rabbit imitation had come to him during a visit to chapel. He was wondering what made Brother Quirk so annoying and, with no shame at all, he stared at him. He looked like Bugs Bunny. His front teeth stuck out a little and he had a nervous tic that sometimes made his lips twitch, just like a rabbit's. A pious rabbit. With a pronounced Dorchester accent.

Finn pushed his upper lip forward and exposed his front teeth, and for an awful moment he became Brother Quirk. It was unkind. He wouldn't do it again. But later, alone in a toilet stall, he tried it one more time. Just for practice.

"Grace is God's free gift. We can't earn it. We can't deserve it. God gives it to whom he wills."

Finn knew this well and he found it depressing.

"We can open ourselves to grace by constant prayer, but we can't merit it. It's given gratuitously."

Finn's mind wandered. Was novitiate life making him infantile? Other men his age were fighting in Korea, and here he was on his knees, confessing to uncharitable thoughts. What ever happened to making his life a sacrifice?

It was visiting day. On the great south lawn, guests gathered in groups, anxious to greet the new Jesuit in the family, with his new black habit and his new air of holiness.

Finn's group included just his parents and himself. They had brought him presents—a black sweater, winter gloves,

a huge box of chocolates—and Finn thanked them lavishly. But he was proud of his new poverty and couldn't resist telling them that gifts of any kind became common stock.

"We don't own anything. Isn't that wonderful? If somebody needs a sweater, he just asks, and they'll give him this one."

"Oh, but we got it for you."

"There isn't any me anymore, Mother. Not like that."

Her eyes filled and she said, "Don't."

"He's just being dramatic, Claire," his father said. "Let it go."

Finn bristled at "dramatic," but he knew that his father was right and found himself blushing.

"I love the sweater," he said. "Maybe they'll let me keep it."

"You don't want to ask for exceptions," his father said. "A rule is a rule."

It was the old family dynamic: his mother hurt and his father stepping in to lighten her disappointment and shift the blame to Finn. This was how it would go. She would be depressed tonight and need her tranquilizers. And his father would lie awake beside her, talking until she could finally get to sleep. And the unspoken blame would be laid on Guess Who.

Finn leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. "My sweet old Mutti," he said. "She's the best." She raised a hand to protect herself, but Finn was determined to salvage their day. "Come on, Momoo," he said, and, pretending to twist her ears, he made motor sounds—"Start your engine! Come on! Lift off!"—until she pushed him away, saying, "People will see!" But she laughed and his father laughed, and so the visit was saved.

The afternoon was made easier by brief visits from the young priest, Father Lomax, who taught the novices Latin, and by Father Spalding, the old priest who taught them Greek. They said hello and welcome and goodbye, smiling and nodding as they moved on to the next group.

"They're all so nice," Finn's mother said. "What about that young man, the one who showed us around last time? He was very nice."

"Brother Reilly has fits."

"Oh, no."

Finn thought, Here's a good story,

but he knew it was a story that he had no right to tell.

"He has screaming fits in the night," he said.

"That's awful."

"He had one a few weeks ago. He started screaming, and I mean major full-on screaming. It was the middle of the night, and we all woke up—we were terrified, you can imagine. Reilly, of all people! Then he stopped and everything went quiet and he said—calm as could be—he said, 'Everything's fine. There's nothing the matter. Just go back to sleep.' And he left the dorm and went down to the infirmary and he was there for days. It was incredible." Finn paused. This was all wrong. He added, lamely, "He had a fit."

"Poor man. Isn't there anything they can do for him?"

"It's shell shock or something."

They were quiet for a while, thinking.

Finn broke the silence. "I probably shouldn't have told you that."

"It's sad. It's a sad story."

"I shouldn't have told it," he said again.

Toward the end of the afternoon, when they all seemed talked out, his father said—and it was obvious that they had planned this—that if ever Finn wanted to leave they would completely understand, that what they cared about was his happiness, that's all. They wanted him to be happy. Finn assured them that he was happy.

Finally, it was over.

Visiting day had been a great success. Finn, however, felt sick. He had squandered what little progress he had made in the spiritual life. He had trivialized it. He had talked it away.

*De more* for months now. Mass and meditation, spiritual conference, and on and on, until litanies in chapel, and so to bed.

Then Father Larsen arrived. He appeared one day at noon, silent, forbidding, entering the refectory behind everyone else. He looked ancient. His back was crooked, and he walked slowly, bent over. His habit hung on him like a shroud. But it was his face that was shocking. A thick scar ran from his left eyebrow down to his chin, pulling his mouth a little to the side so that he appeared to be sneering.

The novices, observing custody of the eyes, pretended not to see him. They stood for the prayers before meals and, when they sat down, Father Superior declared, "*Deo gratias*," which meant that they were free to talk. Finn, who was waiting on the faculty table, noted that although the priests spoke quietly among themselves, Father Larsen hardly spoke at all.

Later, as Brother Quirk gave out *laborandum* assignments, he explained that Father Larsen was ill. He was completely off limits. No confessions and no spiritual advice. These were orders from Father Superior. Father Larsen had been a prisoner on the Bataan death march. He had survived torture and starvation, but he had never really recovered. So he was here to rest. Period. The novices had many questions about the death march and about the torture—what had happened to his face?—but it was work time and Brother Quirk sent them on their way.

So Finn felt deeply betrayed the next day, when, coming out of chapel, he saw Brother Reilly leave the line of novices and join Father Larsen, who was waiting for him on the veranda. They exchanged a few words and then, like old chums, took the path down to the lake. Finn went off to *laborandum* to dig up more goddam potatoes and wrestle with his jealousy of that fucking Reilly.

Winter was long and cold, but at last the snow melted and Lent began and Finn was a changed man. He no longer imitated Brother Quirk or broke the rule of silence or said witty things at the expense of his brothers. Moreover, he was content. He felt no need to perform. He listened while Brother Haberman told his stories about life in Dorchester, and he dutifully learned the names of Irish parishes in Southie, and, when he and Brother Reilly were assigned to the same work crew, Finn did his best to draw him out. They were planting those everlasting potatoes.

The day was cool, but Finn felt uncomfortably hot, except for his hands, which were freezing. He was tempted to complain, but he concentrated on Brother Reilly instead.

Finn scooped out a hole and buried a chunk of potato, the eye facing

up. "I guess this isn't much like the Marines," he said.

"It is, as a matter of fact. Mindless tasks and no women."

Finn pondered this, shocked. How about that! "I notice you walk with Father Larsen. What is it like?"

"It was an order from Father Superior. For my mental health."

"Oh." And then, "What do you talk about? I mean, what does he talk about?"

"Baseball. Sports."

"Sports? But he must talk sometimes about . . . well . . . about being a prisoner."

Brother Reilly punched a hole in the dirt and said nothing. He was pale with anger.

"Or about the death march."

"Cut it out! Would you just cut it out! All this shit! Honest to God."

Finn fell silent, and at the end of *laborandum*, when Brother Reilly said, "I apologize, Brother Finn," Finn resisted the urge to tell him to shove it and merely said, "I shouldn't have pried. My fault."

Later that day, he learned that Brother Reilly had been told he would have to wait another year before taking vows. Poor Brother Reilly. Finn went to chapel to pray for him. He didn't feel well. He had a pain in his chest and his breathing was strained. He was coming down with a cold. Never mind. It was another thing he could offer up.

## SEMPER FIDELIS

Brother Infirmarian was old and he was tired. Over the years, he had given pills to countless novices who had dealt with doubts about their vocation by working themselves up into a fever. Finn's temperature was a hundred and one, nothing surprising. So Brother gave him the strongest cold pills he had—the yellow-and-black ones—and told him to take a lie-down instead of *laborandum* for the next few days. A day passed and then another, and though Finn took the yellow-and-black pills, he was racked by a constant cough and dizzy with fever. His coughing distracted everybody during meditation, so he was sent back to the infirmarian. His fever was now a hundred and three, and he was badly dehydrated, so Brother Infirmarian, against his instincts and



## BEAR

Twenty, on a Paris backstreet I took in a bear  
brought out to entertain our gathering crowd.

I shit you not, I say in my language of that time,  
this really, really, happened. Snouted,

declawed, castrated probably, he danced  
on hind feet to the musics of a short whip.

Twenty, a student whose bad French was his worst pain  
since he had a childhood he couldn't remember

and he told everyone that he was happy.  
That was before three friends overdosed,

four more were suicides, before  
we lost a child and in twelve months

I lost my mother, father, sister,  
before analysis brought my childhood back—

abused by my sister until I had that pain  
*liquidated*, in the words of the kind witch doctor.

"I had to puke," I said to the girl I was with that night,  
a bid for the quick sex of her understanding.

"He kept on dancing, dancing, bleeding, dancing."  
"Poor baby," she said. She was nineteen.

Where is she now? Years back, I heard: L.A.,  
married, three kids, like me. I have these nights

like tonight, again, the bear comes back  
to make me wonder: does she read my poetry?

Probably not. Does she remember me,  
she was nineteen, probably not, poor baby.

—Peter Cooley

principles, admitted him as a patient deserving of antibiotics and his devoted attention. Finn began to feel better at once, and after his second day he hoped for visitors. Maybe someone interesting would get ill, Finn thought—just slightly ill—and he'd have a roommate to talk with. He should have guessed it would be Brother Reilly.

Brother Reilly had had another fit, even worse than the previous ones. He woke, raging in the night, loud and obscene, with a soaring fever and

a compulsion to talk. He was brought straight to the infirmary.

Far from being company for Finn, Brother Reilly continued his fit, mumbling angrily about whores and gooks and dead marines. This called for Sec-onal, Brother Infirmary decided, along with his own private concoction of honey and water and a little whiskey, for the love of God. Brother Reilly slept through the entire day and then through the night, muttering the whole time. By the following morning, he had quieted down

and showed signs of returning to himself. Around noon, he growled something unpleasant to the infirmary and toward evening, with a grunt and a moan, he acknowledged the presence of Finn. At ten o'clock, lights out for the Great Silence, Brother Reilly had recovered sufficiently to attempt a chat. He was groggy but plainspoken.

"I disliked you from the day you arrived," he said.

"I know you did. I disliked you, too. But I prayed about it."

"Did it work?"

"Not really. I'm sorry about your vows."

"Fuck the vows."

This was too much for Finn. "We're not supposed to be talking during the Great Silence. I'm not going to talk."

"Fuck the Great Silence."

Brother Reilly fell asleep then, and when he woke in the middle of the night he was shaking with fever and his teeth were chattering. He called out to Finn.

"I'm sorry for what I said, Finn. Finn?"

"Thank you for calling me Finn."

"I'm having a fit. How are you?"

"We're not supposed to talk during the Great Silence."

"We could say the Rosary together."

Finn got out of bed and padded, barefoot, across the dark room to kneel down beside Brother Reilly's bed. They said the Glorious Mysteries, with Finn starting the prayers and Brother Reilly responding. Finn was eager to finish and prayed fast. "Amen," Finn said finally, and Brother Reilly said, "Amen."

Finn knelt in silence, in the dark, unsure what to do now.

Brother Reilly made a choking sound, as if he were trying not to sob.

"Are you all right?" Finn couldn't bear the silence.

"I wanted to be a Jesuit to make up for my life."

"To sacrifice it."

"No. To make up for it. To atone for all I've done."

"I wanted to make my life a sacrifice. Self-obliteration. For God."

"You gotta be careful what you ask for. Sometimes you get it."

Another long silence.

"It's late," Finn said.

"Do you want to get in bed with me?"

"Yes." Finn astonished himself,



*"When you enthusiastically declare Pam's layered jello salad is 'better than sex,' I fear some may see it as a commentary on me, and not the layered jello salad."*

because that was indeed what he wanted. "But I don't think it's a good idea."

"It wouldn't be anything sexual. We'd just hold each other."

Finn felt himself getting hard.

"I just want to hold you," Brother Reilly said.

"I don't think I can do it."

"The truth is," Brother Reilly paused, his voice shaking, "the truth is I need to be held."

Finn thought about this and shook his head. "I can't," he said, and then, determined, "I won't."

He went back to his bed and tried to sleep. He could hear Brother Reilly moaning, perhaps crying. Finn blocked his ears and turned from side to side. Finally, he got up and took one of the two Seconals from Brother Reilly's nightstand and in minutes he fell soundly asleep.

Finn woke the next morning, groggy and numb, barely aware that something was happening around him. Brother

Infirmarian and Father Superior were wheeling Brother Reilly out to the corridor, where an ambulance was waiting to take him to the hospital. Finn turned his face to the wall, guilty. What had he done? But he had no time to consider what he had done or, more important, what he had not done, because Brother Infirmarian had decided that it was time for Finn to go. He wanted his infirmary back the way it should be: empty.

In no time at all, Finn was standing at the De More bulletin board, where a notice from Father Superior suggested that, to prepare for the feast of St. Ignatius, they should all meditate on the vows.

Finn was distracted in his meditation by thoughts of Brother Reilly. *Do you want to get in bed with me?* He had wanted to and he had nearly done it. He felt his face burn. He would go to confession during this evening's examination of conscience.

But, when the time came, Finn couldn't bear to tell all this to Father Superior, so he went to old Father Spalding, the Greek teacher, who had taught at several different Jesuit colleges and had heard everything. Besides, he was a little deaf.

Finn confessed that in the infirmary one of his brother novices had asked him to get into bed with him. "He just wanted to be held, but I knew it was clearly an occasion of sin," Finn said, "and I knew it was my own fault." Father Spalding belched softly. "That's all, Father."

Father Spalding sighed and said, "I know." He gave Finn a long talk about loneliness in religious life and the importance of chastity and the danger of friendships that became emotional. He paused and, as if he were merely distracted, he said, "Religious life is not for everyone. But be of good cheer and pray for a peaceful heart."

Vow day came and went while Brother Reilly remained in the local hospital. After two weeks, he was transferred to Shrewsbury Mental and then was released to his family.

On his first day at home, he shot and killed himself with his Marine service pistol, but not before writing a letter to Finn, saying, "My death happened years ago and has nothing to do with you. Have a happy, holy life." It was signed, "Love, Brother Reilly."

Father Superior opened the letter, as he opened all novice mail, and after he had considered the matter at prayer he called in Brother Finn and told him of Brother Reilly's death. Finn went white and slumped in the chair but said nothing. He put the letter in his inside pocket, next to his scroop beads, and went downstairs to chapel. He sat in the back pew and tried to think. But he didn't know how to think anymore, and old words kept circulating in his brain. Finally, it came to him that he was to blame. For everything.

Finn knocked at Father Larsen's door and waited. He knocked again and heard a kind of grunt, so he pushed the door open and entered. The room was thick with smoke and smelled of



whiskey. Father Larsen was at his desk. He looked annoyed. He pushed his drink aside.

"I don't hear confessions."

"I know, Father."

"Or give spiritual advice. Or listen to novices' sob stories."

"No."

Father Larsen turned his scarred face toward Finn, so that he seemed to be sneering. "Well, what then? I'm not able to help you, whatever it is."

"It's about Brother Reilly."

Father Larsen pushed aside the book he'd been reading, the New Testament in Latin and Greek. He lit a cigarette and told Finn to sit down.

"What's this about Reilly?"

"It's about his death."

"Who told you he's dead?"

"He wrote me a letter before he did it."

"Reilly was a good man. A good marine."

An awkward silence, and then Finn blurted out, "It was all my fault." He began to sob, softly at first, then louder. He choked finally and blew his nose. He said, "I'm a mess. I'm sorry."

Father Larsen pulled deeply on his cigarette and waited.

Finn told him of their instant mutual dislike. "Mostly my fault," Finn said. He searched for the least offensive words and told him about the encounter in the infirmary and his refusal to get into bed with Reilly. "He wanted to be held," Finn said, "and I refused." He looked at Father Larsen and his scar and said, "It's all my fault."

"Is it?" Father Larsen said. "Or would that make you more important than you are?" This caught Finn's attention.

Father Larsen tapped the ash from his cigarette and looked at him. As if that were an invitation to tell him everything, Finn began with wanting to be an actor and exchanging that for scroop beads and his struggle with the rules and on and on, until he reached that desperate scene with Brother Reilly.

"He wanted to be held. What he said was he needed to be held. And I refused."

Father Larsen sat back in his chair.

He said to Finn, "Would it have been so bad to get into bed with Reilly? Would there have been terrible harm to anyone?"

"Do you mean I should have? Is that what you're saying?"

Father Larsen hesitated and then said, "I would have, poor shit that I am. Sometimes we have to risk our soul to save somebody else."

"But it would have been a mortal sin." Finn blushed. "Because I wanted it." He paused. "I wanted to get in bed with him. I was aroused. I had an erection. So I walked away and left him there." He paused again. "I stole one of his pills and went to bed. The next morning they took him to the hospital. I'm to blame. I blame myself."

"A man kills himself. A sick man. And you—in a monstrous act of proprietary guilt—you blame yourself." Father Larsen lowered his voice, to a whisper. "You. You. You. It's all about you. I really think you should go. I think you should leave now before it's too late."

Finn made a choking sound.

"Leave. Before you turn totally inward . . . and rot."

"Leave," Finn echoed.

"Everything you've told me is about you. Your guilt. Your blame. Your pitiful erection."

"But I was following the Jesuit rule. Or trying to."

"You've turned it inside out. You're supposed to be growing in Christ, and instead you've been growing in self-satisfaction."

The clock ticked on Father Larsen's desk, and from the chapel came the sound of the bell for litanies. Then there was silence in the room and it was terrifying.

"Is this because of Reilly?" Finn asked.

"Reilly has nothing to do with it."

Father Larsen made as if to wash his hands. "You should go. You should leave the Jesuits. That's the only help I can offer. That's it. *Finis*. The end."

He sat back again. He was done with Finn. He had said the painful, necessary thing, and now they both had to live with it. He lit another cigarette. He was exhausted. He said, "This is why they don't want me dealing with novices."

Finn thought, So this is despair.

Reading his mind, Father Larsen

said in a hard voice, "Don't despair, kiddo. There are plenty of other ways to sacrifice your life."

•

Two days went by. Finn found that he could not pray. He went through the motions of meditation, Mass, and thanksgiving, but he was not conscious of praying. He was merely existing, a testament to shame and disgrace. And then, on the third day, he woke at five-thirty, *de more*, yawned, and before going back to sleep—at that precise moment and with a joyful heart—he decided to leave the Jesuits, admit his failure, and let sacrifice find him when he was ready for it. He slept until nearly eight and got up just in time for breakfast.

It was Friday, which meant pancakes, and he had three of them, with extra syrup. He looked frankly around the refectory at his brother Jesuits. He admired them this morning, men who had made a free choice and, at great cost, were trying to disappear into the long black line. Finn did not want to disappear.

"I'm free," he said aloud. The other novices continued eating. Everyone knew that Brother Finn was impossible.

Finn left that afternoon. He had Father Superior's blessing, and he made a last visit to chapel with no sense of regret. He felt comfortable in his jacket and tie.

As he stood alone at the train station, he was visited suddenly by feelings of remorse. He wouldn't have it. "I'm free," he said aloud again, just to hear it. And then he shouted it—the platform was empty—and it felt right and true. But with a year's grace behind him—unearned, undeserved—he recognized that this freedom was only temporary, and that the words he shouted to the empty air would in time come back to him, and back, in a pale echo: Brother Reilly, Father Larsen. But for now life was good and Finn chose it.

The train arrived and Finn got on and left. ♦



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John L'Heureux on his time as a Jesuit novice.

# THE CRITICS



BOOKS

## ROYAL PAINS

*Marrying into the monarchy is no fairy tale.*

BY LAUREN COLLINS

The thing about royal weddings is that there aren't that many of them. Practically anyone who marries into the House of Windsor represents a first in one sense or another. Philip Mountbatten was the first Greek prince (and the bride's third cousin). Diana Spencer was the first to drop the word "obey" from her vows. Sarah Ferguson was a redhead. Sophie Rhys-Jones was a commoner with a serious career. Kate Middleton was a commoner without one. Camilla Parker Bowles, now a grandmother, was without precedent in having referred to herself, in a love letter, as "your devoted old bag." It's not so surprising, then, that Prince Harry is marrying Meghan Markle—a divorced biracial American actress, as she is forever being referred to in articles and books, written, for the most part, by married white British journalists.

Reading these accounts, it becomes clear that Markle stands out in plenty of other ways. She could also be described as "daughter of a lighting director who reportedly won seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the lottery and later went bankrupt," or "among the youngest members of the National Organization for Women, which she joined after seeing a sexist commercial for dish soap at the age of eleven." Maybe it's because she grew up in Hollywood, but her life, even before she met Harry, had a dramatic quality. The father of one of her best friends was shot, while working at his auto-body shop, by a Vietnam veteran who had just murdered his own family. There cannot be many future duchesses who have been touched so closely

by random gun violence, that most typical of American freak occurrences. Markle is certainly the only Sandringham guest to have once worked at a fro-yo shop called Humphrey Yogart.

Until now, the most glamorous wedding with which Markle had been associated was that of Robin Thicke and Paula Patton, for which she did the calligraphy, in 2005. At the time, she was also working as a restaurant hostess and teaching gift wrapping at a stationery store. She appeared in the Tori Amos video "1000 Oceans," and unlatched briefcases on "Deal or No Deal." Her acting career developed slowly: passenger on a plane, FedEx girl. There was yoga, blogging, wine, car trouble, a starter marriage. In 2011, she finally landed a leading role, on the legal drama "Suits." Around the same time, she launched a life-style site called the Tig. (It's a shame that she recently had to shut it down, because she's a good writer.) By last November, when she wrapped her final episode of "Suits," she had been supporting herself for the better part of two decades, amassing an estimated five million dollars. Her hustle distinguishes her from Princess Margaret, who used to pass the time cleaning her seashell collection, or Camilla, whom one relative apparently called "the laziest woman to have been born in England in the 20th century." Markle will be the first gig-economy aristocrat.

There are already nonwhite European royals, including Princess Angela of Liechtenstein, who worked in fashion in New York before meeting her

husband, Prince Maximilian. It is possible that some of the Windsors, whose high-colonial racism appears as regularly as the Queen's midday gin-and-Dubonnet, are privately aghast at the prospect of a woman of color joining their ranks. But Markle's arrival has not created the sort of crisis that arose in 1936, after Edward VIII fell in love with the twice-divorced Wallis Simpson—"a pretty kettle of fish," the Queen Mother said—or, in 1953, when Princess Margaret wished to wed the divorced R.A.F. group captain Peter Townsend. (The taboo against divorce was finally retired when Prince Charles married Camilla.)

In certain respects, Markle is already a member of the global elite. Her self-made trajectory has taken her everywhere from the United Nations, where she delivered a speech about gender equality, to the royal box at Wimbledon, to which she was first invited not as a royal consort but as a guest of the fashion brand Ralph Lauren. In March of 2017, Markle and Harry attended a friend's wedding in Jamaica. "While Harry flew to the island in premium economy, his girlfriend borrowed a pal's private jet," a British tabloid reported. Wealth has replaced race, class, or marital status as the metric of suitability for a royal partner. The exceptionable thing, it seems, would be to be poor.

Markle attended Catholic school and graduated from Northwestern University. She has drunk rosé on a bachelorette weekend in Greece, toured New Zealand by camper van, and visited Afghanistan with the U.S.O. While





*In Meghan Markle, the Royal Family has found someone who can refresh their corporate culture.*



*"I see that on Sunday, June 7, 2009, you Googled the answer to 16 Across—a five-letter word for the ancient capital of Assyria."*

shooting "Suits," she spent several years living in Canada. She is more worldly than some of her future in-laws, including the Duchess of Cambridge, who, upon her marriage, had never been to the United States. (George V, when asked to make an official trip to Holland, replied, "Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and all the other Dams—damned if I'll do it!")

A royal marriage is an acquisition, not a merger. In Markle, the Royal Family has found someone who can refresh their corporate culture even while being subsumed by it. Marrying into a family whose identity demands the effacement of your own is a tricky venture in the most straightforward of circumstances. Several of Harry's previous girlfriends, in fact, were explicitly uninterested in the prospect, however much they may have adored Harry. Markle will immigrate to England and become a British subject. She was recently baptized into the Church of

England. When other women realized what a royal life would entail, they took off; Markle took on a new country, a new nationality, and a new religion. Her most distinctive attribute may be that she sees becoming Harry's wife as an opportunity.

Royal romances are not fairy tales. As several recent biographies show, they don't always, or even very often, have happy endings. They are less about passion than about risk—low-libido, high-stakes transactions, in which the ratio of investment and return, give and take, has to achieve near-perfect balance in order that the protagonists may proceed much beyond the first kiss.

After Princess Margaret gave up on marrying Townsend, she became the proudest sybarite of the family, skewering its values by living them to their logical ends. She is the confounding antiheroine of Craig Brown's "Nineteen Glimpses of Princess Margaret."

Brown, who is best known for his satirical diary entries in the magazine *Private Eye*, dispenses with the conventions of royal biography to create a slightly Dada portrait of the Queen's younger sister, in chapters that flit between interviews, lists, letters, headlines, journals, and made-up dreams and vignettes. Brown perfectly channels Margaret's sour, campy voice. His deployment of her sullen quotations ("I have now great pleasure in declaring this hut open") can make you laugh aloud.

Margaret was also drawn toward cutting dialogue. Her husband-by-default, the photographer Antony Armstrong-Jones, had a habit of leaving notes on her desk and in her glove box, including one entitled "Twenty Four Reasons Why I Hate You." It's the hideous put-downs from him ("You look like a Jewish manicurist") and from her society entourage (describing Margaret's complexion as "a dirty negligee pink satin") that make the book so weirdly sad. "Born in an age of deference, the Princess was to die in an age of egalitarianism," Brown writes. "Attempting to straddle the two, wanting to be treated as both equal and superior, and vacillating, from one moment to the next, between the easy-going and the hoity-toity, her behaviour often led to tears before bedtime."

Margaret is a breeze compared with the pomp-obsessed, overreaching protagonist of Tom Bower's "Rebel Prince: The Power, Passion and Defiance of Prince Charles." Bower, an investigative journalist, has probed the weaknesses of a number of mighty figures in the British establishment. He says that he is writing as "a committed monarchist" who, after speaking to more than a hundred and twenty royal intimates—many of whom seem to be former employees—shares "their trepidation over whether Charles can become a unifying monarch." This may be the harshest portrayal of Charles ever written. I was searching the book's index for something else when I came across "CHARLES, PRINCE OF WALES":

*character:* refusal to accept blame, xii, 7, 11, 25, 43, 270, 335; self-doubt, xii, 11, 16, 90, 153-4; disloyalty, xiii-xiv, 4-5, 13, 14, 26-7, 51, 96-7, 162, 210, 310, 335, 337; victims of, xiii-



xiv; 50-1, 93-4, 96-7, 210, 264, 310-11; dislike of criticism/dissenting views, xiv, 9, 11, 46, 52, 55, 74-5, 92; scapegoats, 7, 14, 18, 129, 162; self-pity, 7-8, 12-14, 16, 36, 38, 41, 43, 67-8, 243, 257; intolerance/bad temper, 9, 11, 13, 14, 29, 49, 52, 125, 335; sense of superiority, 11, 43, 57, 58, 76; grudges, 13, 14, 49, 335; selfishness, 14, 27, 62, 177, 210, 230, 319, 322; resentment of Diana, 18-19, 62; derogatory comments about Diana, 24, 42, 61; on himself, 44-5, 67-8; discourteousness, 52, 88, 126, 138, 314-15, 322

Bower portrays Charles as a pernickety rank-puller, who, apparently, once had his own bedroom furniture sent to a friend's house in advance of a weekend stay. (Of claims that he brings his own toilet seat, Charles has said, "Don't believe all that crap.") He seems to spend much of his time using his royal position to get people to pay for things he doesn't want to be seen indulging in, because of his royal position. He and Camilla hit people up for plane rides and weeks on yachts, birthday parties and bathroom tiles, despite the fact that Charles enjoys an annual personal income of around twenty million pounds. (Brown suggests that Margaret, for her part, embarrassed the aristocrat Colin Tennant into giving her a villa on Mustique, where she cultivated a dissolute crowd, including an ex-con who had once "pleaded guilty to employing a section of pavement as an offensive weapon.") Bower reports that Charles tried to swap one of his watercolors for a work by Lucian Freud. "I don't want one of your rotten paintings," Freud replied.

While the Queen treats her birthright as an honor, her eldest son appears to feel perpetually hard done by it. "Nobody knows what utter hell it is to be Prince of Wales," Bower quotes Charles as saying. It's not that Charles thinks himself unworthy of the job. "This is all to do with learning culture in schools," Charles wrote to an aide, after a woman on his staff inquired about paths to promotion. He blamed "a child-centered system which admits no failure and tells people they can all be pop stars, high court judges, brilliant TV personalities or even infinitely more competent heads of state without ever putting in the effort or having natural abilities." Charles must be relieved that the positions of Head of

the Armed Forces and Defender of the Faith are currently filled, by his mother. Presumably, he thinks he has been featured on postage stamps on the basis of his skills.

Theoretically apolitical, Charles has sought to influence governments in ways that are both laughable and worrisome. According to Bower, he once had a private secretary call Downing Street to insure that Prime Minister Tony Blair adhere to royal etiquette by signing letters to him "Your obedient servant." He is constantly haranguing ministers about urban planning, alternative medicine, climate change, the overfishing of the Patagonian toothfish. (A cache of letters known as the "black spider" memos, because of Charles's handwriting, became public through the Freedom of Information Act, from which members of the Royal Family are normally exempt.)

Over the years, he has managed to divert significant public money to his pet initiatives. Bower writes, for example, that the Department of Health, under pressure from Charles, agreed to give many millions of pounds to the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital. In a speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects, he famously denounced a proposed addition to the National Gallery as "a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend." He ended up getting the project killed; likewise, a three-billion-pound modernist plan to redevelop the Chelsea Barracks. (He attached his own preferred design to a letter he sent to a Qatari sheikh whose family had agreed to fund the scheme.) Charles is understandably passionate about his causes. Every time he makes the case for "the 'old fashioned'—I would call them *timeless*—virtues of squares, mansion blocks, and terraces," he is making the case for himself.

Charles's entitlement makes more sense in light of the humiliating treatment he received from his parents. It must be a mindfuck to have been raised to believe you were destined to lead a nation, and then to be fifty and have your mom and dad skip your birthday rather than be seen in the company of your girlfriend. The Queen looks fairly petty, subjecting Camilla, as she attempts to gain acceptance into the

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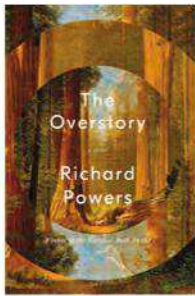
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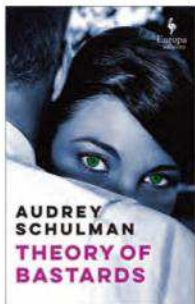
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## BRIEFLY NOTED



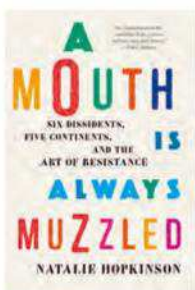
**The Overstory**, by Richard Powers (Norton). The preservation of primeval trees and dwindling forests unites nine characters in this capacious novel. Two protesters spend ten months living in the canopy of a redwood wider than a house. A psychologist travels to study the activist group they belong to, wanting to understand their immunity to the bystander effect (the assumption that someone else will fix a problem). After a violent action against the logging industry, the characters are forced to scatter. Powers edges their experiences toward the supernatural, while pressing an ethical imperative, voiced by one character: “When you cut down a tree, what you make from it should be at least as miraculous as what you cut down.”



**Theory of Bastards**, by Audrey Schulman (Europa). The protagonist of this genre-blurring novel—set in a vaguely dystopian near-future characterized by extreme weather and an overdependence on technology—is Frankie, an evolutionary psychologist who studies mating habits but whose own sex life has been impaired by severe endometriosis. Following a hysterectomy, she throws herself into the observation of bonobos, primates known for their peaceable ways and their vigorous orgies; she communes with her ape subjects and even experiences desire for a kind married colleague. Then a cataclysm occurs, creating a world in which the “careful theater” of civilization has been stripped away and leaving Frankie, her colleague, and the bonobos dependent on one another.



**A Lab of One's Own**, by Patricia Fara (Oxford). This timely history explores the contributions of British women to science, medicine, and industry during the First World War. Drawing on a wealth of previously neglected archival sources, Fara shows how suffragettes, having laid the groundwork for change early in the century, helped usher women into posts left vacant by men; by the war's end, some three million women were employed in industry, and female scientists had risen to the highest levels in universities, laboratories, and hospitals. A few received proper recognition (the chemist Martha Whiteley was awarded an O.B.E. for her work on tear gas), but the vast majority were pushed from the historical record as swiftly as they were pushed from their jobs by returning men.



**A Mouth Is Always Muzzled**, by Natalie Hopkinson (New Press). Through the lens of Guyana's 2015 national elections, this essay collection shows how the country's political and cultural life is still influenced by the twin legacies of British colonialism and the sugar trade. In profiles of artists such as the writer Ruel Johnson, who posts Facebook essays about political corruption, and the painter Bernadette Persaud, who mourns the decay of the national art collection, Hopkinson illustrates the ways that intellectuals chafe against a state that is unable to provide basic necessities, let alone a flourishing cultural sector. “When do ideas become action?” she writes. “When must the state protect society from subversive ideas? When must society protect subversive ideas from the state?”

family, to a series of ever more recondite snubs. Camilla, who doesn't like “hot countries,” according to Bower, also has her moments, but she is a winningly frowsy inamorata. Charles seems to feel that the injuries he has incurred while pursuing their relationship are grave enough that the monarchy will always owe him one.

In April, as anticipation of Harry and Meghan's wedding ramped up, a psychiatrist issued warnings in the press that a fascination with the Royal Family could lead to mental-health problems. For a lot of us, though, going deep into the weeds of seigneurial law (technically, the Queen owns all porpoises, whales, sturgeon, and dolphins that pass within three miles of Britain's shores); precedence (Kate must curtsy to Beatrice and Eugenie if she encounters them alone, but they must curtsy to her if she's with William); and etiquette (little-boy royals wear shorts, not pants) is a highly relaxing leisure activity, whose value is in direct correlation with its vapidness. It is a form of what the Queen would be unlikely to call self-care. If the sentence “Quite frankly, I think he will be cream crackered and want a good night's kip”—this was a private secretary, excusing Prince Harry from a night out—isn't reading pleasure, then I don't know what is. What lover of language, or of people, would not want to know that the favorite expression of Cressida Bonas, one of Harry's old flames, is “cringe de la cringe”?

The master of the lives-of-the-royals genre is Andrew Morton, who in 1992 published “Diana: Her True Story,” an era-defining “biography” basically dictated to him by its subject. (Diana had a friend smuggle tapes, detailing her mistreatment at the hands of her husband and his family, out of Kensington Palace on a bicycle.) “Diana” is the kind of book you read lying down, preferably in a bathing suit. I recently found two copies—one paperback, one hardcover—in a vacation-rental house. Morton, who is now married to an American, spends part of the year in California, where he has pivoted to unauthorized lives of movie stars. Improbably, he has found himself, in exile, perfectly positioned to



deliver another exhaustive contribution to the royals literature. "To Carolyn and all our friends in Pasadena," reads the dedication of "Meghan: A Hollywood Princess."

Morton was a tabloid journalist in Britain, and "Meghan" is a labor of shoe leather, or tire rubber, or whatever one goes through a lot of when reporting the bejesus out of a book in and around the San Fernando Valley. It constitutes the fullest account there is of Meghan's pre-Harry years, and even of her family's pre-Meghan ones, which offer an eerily emblematic capsule course on American history, from the Georgia cotton plantation where her maternal ancestors were enslaved to the Self-Realization Fellowship Temple on Sunset Boulevard where, in 1979, her parents married, after meeting on the set of "General Hospital." Meghan was born two years later. Her mother, Doria Ragland, worked as a makeup artist and later became a social worker. Her father, Tom Markle, had two teen-age children from a previous marriage—a daughter who was getting into witchcraft and a son with a water bed and a go-kart.

No anecdote is too minor to include. We learn that Tom once went to a restaurant with an imaginary parrot on his shoulder ("It was hilarious," his first wife recalls), and that Meghan was born at 4:46 A.M. We learn the names of both the bird and the obstetrician. Morton's accretion-of-random-detail approach gives a vivid sense of how life chez Markle differed from a royal upbringing:

Not only did Tom spend every waking minute with his daughter, in his own quirky fashion he tried to impose a little discipline on the somewhat laissez-faire household in order to protect his little "Flower." Though he had always said to his son that if he and his friends wanted to smoke weed they should do so only in the house, this instruction changed on the arrival of the baby. On one occasion Tom Junior and his friends were smoking a spliff in the sitting room while Meghan was in the nursery crying. His father announced loudly that he was going upstairs to change her diaper. Shortly afterward he appeared in the sitting room carrying a full diaper. He joined the boys on the sofa, took a spoon out of his pocket and started eating the contents of the diaper. Grossed out, the boys fled the house. Only later did he reveal that he had earlier spooned

chocolate pudding into a fresh diaper. It was his way of stopping the boys from smoking weed when Meghan was around.

As California gothic, this tops Joan Didion. It may also help explain why Tom Markle, Jr., recently published a handwritten letter in *In Touch Weekly*, calling his half sister a "jaded, shallow, conceited woman" and urging Prince Harry to back out of "the biggest mistake in Royal Wedding History."

Tom, Jr.'s childhood couldn't have been as grotesque as the one his future brother-in-law suffered. For Harry, the family drama began in utero. Charles wanted a girl; Diana reportedly knew she was having a boy and didn't tell him. William and Harry were both sent to boarding school at the age of eight. When Charles and Diana decided to separate, their mother broke the news in their headmaster's study; when she died in Paris in the summer of 1997, they had not seen her in a month. Even after losing her, the princes weren't able to trust their close relatives. Several years later, Charles's brother Edward showed up at St. Andrews, where William was a first-year student, planning to pay the Prince's friends to appear in a documentary.

Harry sympathizers will appreciate "Harry: Life, Loss, and Love," by Katie Nicholl, who began her royal-journalism career, rather abruptly, in 2003. "I was a young show business reporter covering a party at the Kensington Roof

Gardens in London when Harry, who was hosting his own soiree in the VIP room, invited me to join him," she recalls. Over the years, she has turned out decorous chronicles of the monarchy's younger generation. Her books tend to include revelations that are just interesting enough to qualify as scoops, without jeopardizing her network of well-placed sources. In order to reach the part in "Harry" where Harry and Meghan go on an early date at Soho House, one must endure an awful lot about his military career and charity work. "Harry's search to find a wife and a meaningful role in his life has been long and at times arduous; a battle on many fronts. Yet it is only when we understand this battle that we can truly understand Prince Harry," Nicholl writes, in a passage that could also characterize the experience of reading her book.

According to Nicholl, Harry has grown "from a sometimes wayward royal into an impressive young man." In the years leading up to his relationship with Meghan, he lacked direction, a problem that Nicholl attributes to unresolved anger over his mother's death. Even when Nicholl is attempting to make Harry sound forlorn, he comes off as slightly debauched. Nicholl writes, of an island vacation that Harry took with the family of a girlfriend, "In the evening the family would get together for 'jolling'—drinking games on the beach, when they would



knock back ‘volcanoes’—vodka shots with chili sauce. It was the sort of family holiday Harry had never experienced, and he was happier than he had been in a long time.” You feel for Harry, a little, but you’re not sure whether he’s craving love, or vodka.

Harry is a magnet for trouble that he never seems to have made, like the time when, at the age of twenty, he went to a birthday party dressed as a member of Rommel’s German Afrika Korps. The theme of the party, “native and colonial,” was awful enough, even without the swastika, but Nicholl isn’t one to question the upper classes. She mostly blames Harry’s protection officers. In 2009, a video emerged in which Harry could be seen calling one fellow-soldier a “raghead” and another “my little Paki friend.” Nicholl writes, “What should have been an exciting new chapter in the prince’s career was overshadowed by a race row, and once again, Harry was in the middle of it.” Well, yes.

It is also the bodyguards’ fault when, several years later, the tabloids print photographs of Harry, naked except for a leather necklace, playing strip pool with a group of young women in a Las Vegas hotel suite. Nicholl is so indulgent of Harry’s misbehavior that she seems not to recognize the implications of a “hilarious episode” recounted to her by the late Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, a Windsor family friend:

His friend Melissa Percy lives next door to me, and one night, I think it was after the royal wedding, Harry was over and they were having a party. Our roof terraces link and suddenly I heard a crash. Harry had jumped over the flowerpots and was on my terrace knocking on my patio door. Of course, I was a little surprised to see him and let him in. The next thing I knew he was kissing me, a proper French kiss! He traced a star on my forehead with his finger and said, “Close your eyes, beautiful girl, tickle, tickle, kiss, kiss,” and the next thing he was gone. I was rather taken aback to say the least, but that was typical of Harry—he is a lovable rotter.

You wonder, if Palmer-Tomkinson had lived to see the reckonings of 2018, what she might have made of that kiss.

Markle, whose father is of Dutch and Irish descent and whose mother is African-American, describes herself as biracial. She has been politically

outspoken from a young age. “I watch in horror as both sides of a culture I define as my own become victims of spin in the media, perpetuating stereotypes and reminding us that the States has perhaps only placed bandages over the problems that have never healed at the root,” she wrote several years ago. In the fall of 2016, not long after it became known that Markle and Harry were seeing each other, Harry issued a statement condemning the invasion of her privacy. “It was explosive, unprecedented, and highly flammable,” Nicholl writes. (Howlers like this are another attraction of the genre.) It was certainly unusual for the Royal Family, in its sensitivity to political correctness. Acknowledging that Markle was his girlfriend, Harry excoriated the press, criticizing, in particular, “the racial undertones of comment pieces; and the outright sexism and racism of social media trolls and web article comments.”

Obviously, this entailed a certain amount of hypocrisy, given Harry’s history and that of his family. For almost a century, Prince Philip has been making “gaffes” that would not be out of place at a U.K.I.P. rally; Princess Michael of Kent recently showed up for the Queen’s Christmas luncheon, which Markle also attended, wearing a blackamoor brooch, supposedly by accident. (“A Cheeta’s Tale,” the Princess’s recently published memoir of big cats in colonial Mozambique, includes such reminiscences as “Of course it had been Rosemarie’s idea to borrow him from friends in exchange for one of her houseboys whom she wanted to learn English.”) Nicholl, for once, doesn’t take a particularly charitable view of Harry’s maneuver, suggesting that it made him look hotheaded. But you can see it as a sign of change, a productive channelling of Harry’s rowdy energy. The party prince finally did something cool.

“I wanted to give her a chance to think about it—to think if it was all going to be too awful,” Charles told reporters, of his decision to ask Diana to marry him just as she was leaving for a vacation. In 1981, this sounded like the stammerings of a self-satisfied toff. Today, when his sons voice simi-

lar sentiments, they appear sincerely apologetic. There is nothing tackier than being a royal, and the younger ones seem to know this. In the same video in which Harry mocked his “Paki friend,” he made a pretend phone call to the Queen: “Granny, I’ve got to go, send my love to the corgis and Grandpa.” He is aware that his own identity leaves him open to derision, which he tries to forestall with kitsch. “Is there any one of the royal family who wants to be king or queen?” Harry said, in a 2017 interview. “I don’t think so, but we will carry out our duties at the right time.”

On the occasion of Charles and Diana’s nuptials, the royal biographer Hugo Vickers wrote, in a diary entry, “The Royal Wedding is no more romantic than a picnic amid the wasps.” For centuries, royal weddings have been exercises in assortative mating, in which young people are matched, for the good of the line, with partners who are much like themselves. In 1959, because of a complicated procedural saga involving her maiden name, the pregnant Queen was warned that Prince Andrew, deprived of a patronymic, would be born bearing “the Badge of Bastardy.” She ended up allowing her descendants to be known as Mountbatten-Windsor. It’s interesting to think about how Markle would have been received had she fallen for William instead of Harry, the heir instead of the second son. She is nearly thirty-seven. Would the palace mandarins have made analyses of her fertility? Would they have urged the use of certain reproductive technologies, or forbidden others? Can a dynasty perpetuate itself on love instead of blood?

Privilege is not a good look these days, even for an institution based upon it. But the Windsors are evolving slowly. In March, Kensington Palace announced that, in an attempt to make Harry and Meghan’s wedding more inclusive, more than a thousand members of the British public—schoolchildren, charity workers—had been invited to Windsor Castle. While the ceremony goes on in the castle’s chapel, they will stand around outside for more than four hours. They have been told to pack their own lunch. ♦



## BLACK ORPHEUS

*The philosopher-impresario of the Harlem Renaissance and his hidden hungers.*

BY TOBI HASLETT



Alain Locke led a life of scrupulous refinement and slashing contradiction. Photographs flatter him: there he is, with his bright, taut prettiness, delicately clenching the muscles of his face. Philosophy and history, poetry and art, loneliness and longing—the face holds all of these in a melancholy balance. The eyes glimmer and the lips purse.

It was this face that appeared, one summer morning in 1924, at the Paris flat of a destitute Langston Hughes, who put the scene in his memoir “The Big Sea.” “*Qui est-il?*” Hughes had asked through the closed door. He was stunned by the reply:

A mild and gentle voice answered: “Alain Locke.”

And sure enough, there was Dr. Alain Locke of Washington, a little, brown man with spats and a cultured accent, and a degree from Oxford. The same Dr. Locke who had written me about my poems, and who wanted to come to see me almost two years before on the fleet of dead ships, anchored up the Hudson. He had got my address from the *Crisis* in New York, to whom I had sent some poems from Paris. Now in Europe on vacation, he had come to call.

During the next two weeks, the middle-aged Locke, then a philosophy professor at Howard University, snatched the young Hughes from dingy Montmartre and took him on an extravagant march through ballet, opera, gardens,

and the Louvre. This was the first time they’d met—but, after more than a year of sighing letters, Locke had come to Paris flushed with amorous feeling. The feeling was mismatched. Each man was trapped in the other’s fantasy: Hughes appeared as the scruffy poet who had fled his studies at Columbia for the pleasures of *la vie bohème*, while Locke was the “little, brown man” with status and degrees.

Days passed in a state of dreamy ambiguity. “Locke’s here,” Hughes wrote to their mutual friend Countee Cullen. “We are having a glorious time. I like him a great deal.” The words are grinning—and sexless. Hughes had found a use for the gallant Locke: an entrée to the bold movement in black American writing then rumbling to life. Cullen was gaining renown; the novelist Jessie Fauset was the literary editor of *The Crisis*; and Jean Toomer’s “Cane”—a novel in jagged fragments—had trumpeted the arrival of a new black art, one chained to the fate of a roiling, bullied, “emancipated” people. “I think we have enough talent,” W. E. B. Du Bois had announced in 1920, “to start a renaissance.”

Locke drove it forward and is remembered, dimly, as its “dean.” Whoever knows his name today likely links it to “The New Negro: An Interpretation,” a 1925 anthology that planted some of the bravest black writers of the nineteen-twenties—Hughes, Cullen, Toomer, Fauset, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston—squarely in the public eye. “The New Negro,” which appeared just a year after Locke’s summer visit with Hughes, launched the Negro Renaissance and marked the birth of a new style: the swank, gritty, fractious style of blackness streaking through the modern world.

Jeffrey C. Stewart’s new biography bears the perhaps inevitable title “The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke.” But the title makes a point: the New Negro, that lively protagonist stomping onto the proscenium of history, might also be thought of, tenderly, as a figure for Locke himself. Stewart writes,

Locke became a “mid-wife to a generation of young writers,” as he labeled himself, a catalyst for a revolution in thinking called the New Negro. The deeper truth was that he, Alain Locke, was also the New Negro, for he embodied all of its contradictions as well as its prom-

*Alain Locke was an aesthete in a climate that valued political engagement.*

ise. Rather than lamenting his situation, his marginality, his quiet suffering, he would take what his society and his culture had given him and make something revolutionary out of it.

Here was a man who enshrined his passions in collections, producing anthologies, exhibitions, and catalogues that refracted, according to Stewart, an abiding “need for love.” But even love could be captured and slotted into a series. Stewart tells us that among Locke’s posthumous effects was a shocking item that was promptly destroyed: a collection of semen samples from his lovers, stored neatly in a box.

Meticulousness was a virtue among Philadelphia’s black bourgeoisie, the anxious world into which Locke was born. On September 13, 1885, Mary Locke, the wife of Pliny, delivered a feeble, sickly son at their home on South Nineteenth Street. Arthur LeRoy Locke, as the boy was christened, spent his first year seized by the rheumatic fever that he had contracted at birth. The Lockes were Black Victorians, or, as Alain later put it, “fanatically middle class,” and their mores and strivings shaped his self-conception and bestowed upon him an unusual entitlement to a black intellectual life. Pliny was well educated—he was a graduate of Howard Law School—but he suffered, as a black man, from a series of wrongful firings that scrambled the family’s finances.

Roy (as Alain was known in childhood) was Pliny’s project. “I was indulgently but intelligently treated,” Locke later recalled. “No special indulgence as to sentiment; very little kissing, little or no fairy stories, no frightening talk or games.” Instead, Pliny read aloud from Virgil and Homer, but only after Roy had finished his early-morning math exercises. He was being cultivated to be a race leader: a metallic statue of polished masculinity. But he was powerfully drawn to his mother. Pliny opposed this, and worked to shred the bond. Locke later recounted that his father’s death, when he was six, “threw me into the closest companionship with my mother, which remained, except for the separation of three years at college and four years abroad, close until her death at 71, when I was thirty six.” Under the watchful care

of the struggling Mary, Roy became a precocious aesthete. And he proceeded, with striking ambition, from Central High School to the Philadelphia School of Pedagogy to Harvard.

Alain, as he was now called, fashioned himself as a yearning man of letters. Enraptured by his white professors, he decorated his modest lodgings in punctilious imitation of their homes. Not quite five feet tall, he had bloomed into a dandy, strutting down the streets of Cambridge in a genteel ensemble—gray suit, gray gloves, elegant overcoat—while displaying a shuddering reluctance to associate with the other black students at Harvard. They weren’t “gentlemen,” and, when a black classmate introduced him to a group of them, he was appalled:

Of course they were colored. He took me right up into the filthy bedroom and there were 5 niggers, all Harvard men. Well, their pluck and their conceit are wonderful. Some are ugly enough to frighten you but I guess they are bright. . . . They are not fit for company even if they are energetic and plodding fellows. I’m not used to that class and I don’t intend to get used to them.

This is from a letter to his mother, and the bile streams so freely that one assumes that Mary indulged the young Locke’s contempt. But his arrogance followed from the strangulating tension between who and what he was: blackness was limiting, oppressive, banal, a boorish hurdle in his brilliant path. “I am not a race problem,” he later wrote to Mary. “I am Alain LeRoy Locke.”

He’d arrived at Harvard when William James and then John Dewey had electrified philosophy in America under the banner of pragmatism, a movement that repudiated idealism and tested concepts against practice. Locke, who also became a devotee of the philosopher and belletristic aesthete George Santayana, went on to become the first black Rhodes Scholar—though as soon as he got to Oxford he was humiliated by white Americans, who shut him out of their gatherings. The scorn was instructive: the foppish Locke joined the Cosmopolitan Club, a debate society composed of colonial elites, who exposed him to the urgencies of anti-imperial

struggle and, crucially, to the gratifications of racial and political solidarity. He finished a thesis—ultimately rejected by Oxford—on value theory, while slaking his sexual thirst in pre-Great War Berlin. He returned to Harvard to earn his Ph.D. in philosophy, for which he submitted a more elaborate version of his Oxford thesis, before joining the faculty at Howard. Mary moved down to Washington, where she was cared for by her doting son.

Locke’s other devotions were ill-fated. Much of his erotic life was a series of adroit manipulations and disastrous disappointments; Langston Hughes was just one of the younger men who fell within the blast radius of the older man’s sexual voracity as they chased his prestige. He fancied himself a suitor in the Grecian style, dispensing a sentimental education to his charges, assistants, protégés, and students—but hungering for mutuality and lasting love. Locke had affairs with at least a few of the writers included in “The New Negro.” His desultory sexual romps with Cullen stretched over years—though Cullen himself would flee the gay life by marrying W. E. B. Du Bois’s daughter Yolanda, in a lavish service with sixteen bridesmaids and thirteen hundred guests. Her father described the spectacle in *The Crisis* as “the symbolic march of young black America,” possessed of a “dark and shimmering beauty” and announcing “a new race; a new thought; a new thing rejoicing in a ceremony as old as the world.” To Locke, it was a farce.

He found his own way to stay afloat in the world of the black elite. Pliny had wanted his son to be a race man, and now Alain was lecturing widely and contributing articles to Du Bois’s *Crisis*, which was attached to the N.A.A.C.P., and Charles Johnson’s *Opportunity*, the house organ of the National Urban League. But he stood aloof from the strenuous heroism of Negro uplift, and what he thought of as its flat-footed insistence on “political” art. Locke was a voluptuary: he worried that Du Bois and the younger, further-left members of the movement—notably Hughes and McKay—had debased Negro expression, jamming it into the crate of politics. The titles of Locke’s essays on aesthetics (“Beauty





Instead of Ashes,” “Art or Propaganda?,” “Propaganda—or Poetry?”) made deflating little incisions in his contemporaries’ political hopes. Black art, in Locke’s view, was mutable and vast.

Not unlike blackness itself. In 1916, Locke delivered a series of lectures called “Race Contacts and Interracial Relations,” in which he painstakingly disproved the narrowly “biological” understanding of race while insisting on the power of culture to distinguish, but not sunder, black from white. Armed with his pragmatist training, he hacked a path to a new philosophical vista: “cultural pluralism.”

The term had surfaced in private debates with Horace Kallen, a Jewish student who overlapped with Locke at both Harvard and Oxford. Kallen declared that philosophy should, as his mentor William James insisted, concern itself only with differences that “make a difference”—which included, Kallen thought, the intractable facts of his Jewishness and Locke’s blackness. Locke demurred. Race, ethnicity, the very notion of a “people”: these weren’t expressions of some frozen essence but were molded from that suppler stuff, *tradition*—to be elevated and transmuted by the force and ingenuity of human practice. He could value his people’s origins without bolting them to their past.

His own past had begun to break painfully away. Mary Locke died in 1922, leaving Alain crushed and adrift. But her death also released him, psychically, from the vanished world of the fin-de-siècle black elite, with its asphyxiating diktats. As he moved into modernism, he found that his life was freer and looser; his pomp flared into camp. At Mary’s wake, Locke didn’t present her lying in state; rather, he installed her, alarmingly, on the parlor couch—her corpse propped like a hostess before a room of horrified guests.

“The New Negro,” which appeared three years later, stood as proof, Locke insisted, of a vital new sensibility: here was a briskly modern attitude hoisted up by the race’s youth. The collection, which expanded upon a special issue of the magazine *Survey Graphic*, revelled in its eclecticism, as literature, music, scholarship, and art all jostled beside stately pronounce-

ments by the race’s patriarchs, Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson. The anthology was meant to signal a gutting and remaking of the black collective spirit. Locke would feed and discipline that spirit, playing the critic, publicist, taskmaster, and impresario to the movement’s most luminous figures. He was an exalted member of the squabbling clique that Hurston called “the nigge-rati”—and which we know, simply, as the Harlem Renaissance.

The term has a crispness that the thing itself did not. It was a movement spiked with rivalries and political hostility—not least because it ran alongside the sociological dramas of Communism, Garveyism, mob violence, and a staggering revolution in the shape and texture of black American life, as millions fled the poverty and the lynchings of the Jim Crow South. The cities of the North awaited them—as did higher wages and white police. With the Great Migration came a loud new world and a baffling new life, a chance to lunge, finally, at the transformative dream of the nation they’d been forced,

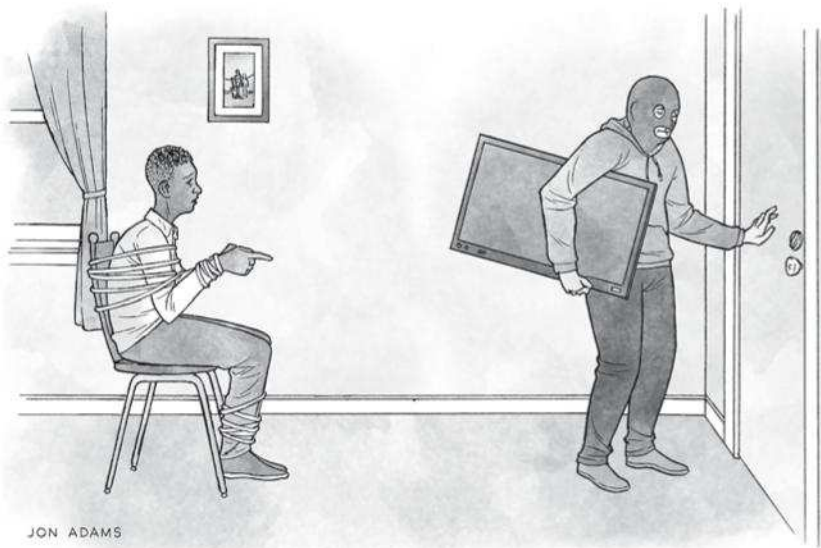
at gunpoint, to build. Modernity had anointed a new hero, and invented, Locke thought, a New Negro.

But he hoped that this new figure would stride *beyond* politics. Radicals irked him; he regarded them with a kind of princely ennui. In his mind, the New Negro was more than mere effect: history and demography alone couldn’t possibly account for the wit, chic, or thrilling force of “the younger generation” to whom he dedicated the volume. In the title essay, Locke presented a race whose inner conversion had flown past the lumbering outside world. The Negro leaped not just from country to city but, crucially, “from medieval America to modern.” Previously, “the American Negroes have been a race more in name than in fact,” he wrote, but now, “in Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. It is—or promises at least to be—a race capital.”

Black people had snapped their moorings to servitude and arrived at the advanced subjectivity lushly evinced by their art: their poems and paintings, their



*“I’m late! I’m late! For a very important—we’re not putting labels on it right now!”*



*"Nope. No, the top one. No, the other way."*

novels and spirituals. Aaron Douglas had made boldly stylized drawings and designs for the anthology, which rhymed with the photographs of African sculptures that dotted its pages: masks from the Baoulé and the Bushongo; a grand Dahomey bronze. Negroes were a distinct people, with distinct traditions and values held in common. Their modern art would revive their "folk spirit," displaying a vigorous continuity with their African patrimony and an embrace of American verve. "So far as he is culturally articulate," Locke wrote in the foreword to his anthology, "we shall let the Negro speak for himself."

The sentence shines with triumph; it warms and breaks the heart. Behind Locke's bombast was the inexorable question of suffering: how it forged and brutalized the collective, forcing a desperate solidarity on people not treated as such. The task that confronted any black modernist—after a bloody emancipation, a failed Reconstruction, and the carnage of the First World War—was to decide the place, within this blazing new power, of pain. Locke preached a kind of militant poise. His *New Negro* would face history without drowning in it; would grasp, but never cling to, the harrowing past. In the anthology, he cheered on "the lapse of sentimental appeal, then the development of a more positive self-respect and self-reliance; the repudiation of social dependence,

and then the gradual recovery from hypersensitiveness and 'touchy' nerves." So the book's roar of modernist exuberance came to seem, in a way, strained.

But also lavish, stylish, jaunty, tart; bristling with whimsy and gleaming with sex. "The *New Negro*" thrust forth all the ironies of Locke's ethos: his emphatic propriety and angular vision, his bourgeois composure and libertine tastes. "What jungle tree have you slept under, / Dark brown girl of the swaying hips?" asks a Hughes poem, titled "Nude Young Dancer." Locke liked it—but was scandalized by jazz. And though he wrote an admiring essay in the anthology on the passion of Negro spirituals, he also chose to include "Spunk," a short fable by Hurston about cheating and murder.

Locke relished every titillating contradiction but shrank, still, from political extremes. Hoping to avoid the charge of radicalism, he changed the title of McKay's protest poem from "White House" to "White Houses"—an act of censorship that severed the two men's alliance. "No wonder Garvey remains strong despite his glaring defects," the affronted poet wrote to Locke. "When the Negro intellectuals like you take such a weak line!"

And such a blurred line. In a gesture of editorial agnosticism, Locke brought voices to "The *New Negro*" that challenged his own. Among the

more scholarly contributions to the anthology was "Capital of the Black Middle Class," an ambivalent study of Durham, North Carolina, by E. Franklin Frazier, a young social scientist. More than thirty years later, Frazier savaged the pretensions and the perfidies of Negro professionals in his study "The Black Bourgeoisie." A work of Marxist sociology and scalding polemic, it took a gratuitous swipe at the *New Negro*: the black upper class, Frazier said, had "either ignored the Negro Renaissance or, when they exhibited any interest in it, they revealed their ambivalence towards the Negro masses." Aesthetics had been reduced to an ornament for a feckless élite.

The years after "The *New Negro*" were marked by an agitated perplexity. Locke yearned for something solid: a home for black art, somewhere to nourish, protect, refine, and control it. He'd been formed and polished by élite institutions, and he longed to see them multiply. But the Great Depression shattered his efforts to extend the *New Negro* project, pressing him further into the byzantine patronage system of Charlotte Mason, an older white widow gripped by an eccentric fascination with "primitive peoples." Salvation obsessed her. She believed that black culture could rescue American society by replenishing the spiritual values that had been evaporated by modernity, but that pumped, still, through the Negro's unspoiled heart.

Mason was rich, and Locke had sought her backing for a proposed Harlem Museum of African Art. Although the project failed (as did his plans for a Harlem Community Arts Center), Mason remained a meddling, confused presence in his life until her death, in 1946. During their association, he passed through a gantlet of prickling degradations. Her vision of Negro culture obviously didn't align with his; she demanded to be called Godmother; and she was prone to angry suspicion, demanding a fastidious accounting of how her funds were spent. But those funds were indispensable, finally, to the work of Hughes and, especially, Hurston. Locke, as the erstwhile "mid-wife" of black modernism, was dispatched to handle the writers—much to their dis-



may. He welcomed the authority, swelling into a supercilious manager (and, to Hughes, a bullying admirer) who handed down edicts from Godmother while enforcing a few of his own.

The thirties also brought revelations and violent political emergencies that plunged Locke into a rapprochement with the left. Locke the glossy belletrist gave way to Locke the fellow-traveller, Locke the savvy champion of proletarian realism. There was a fitful attempt to write a biography of Frederick Douglass, and a dutiful visit to the Soviet Union. But he was never a proper Communist. After the Harlem riot of 1935, he wrote an essay titled "Harlem: Dark Weather-Vane" for *Survey Graphic*, in which he pronounced the failure of the state and its economic system, but congratulated Mayor LaGuardia on his response to the riot, while also cautioning against both "capitalistic exploitation on the one hand and radical exploitation on the other." Frazier thought this a mealy-mouthed capitulation; taking Locke on a ride around Washington in his Packard coupe, Frazier screamed denunciations at his trapped, flustered passenger.

Locke was middling as an ideologue, but remained a fiercely committed pragmatist. The rise of Fascism saw his philosophical work make crackling contact with politics. "Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace," a lecture delivered in the early nineteen-forties, took aim at the nation's enemies and their "passion for arbitrary unity and conformity." He sometimes groped clumsily for the radical language of recrimination: inching further from his earlier aestheticism, he praised Richard Wright's "Native Son" as a "Zolaesque *J'accuse* pointing to the danger symptoms of a self-frustrating democracy." And he remained riveted by the Negro's internal flight. One of his most gratifying contributions was his advocacy of the painter Jacob Lawrence, and his sixty-panel tribute to the Great Migration. (Inspecting a layout of Lawrence's series in the offices of *Fortune*, Locke exulted that "*The New Masses* couldn't have done this thing better.") Lawrence had expressed what Locke, with his fidgeting dignity, couldn't quite: the anger, the desolation, and the bracing thrill of a people crashing into history.

Locke was still driven by a need for order, for meticulous systems: the project that towered over his final years was "The Negro in American Culture," a book he hoped would be his summum opus. "The New Negro" anthology had been a delectably shambling sample of an era, confected from disparate styles and stuffed with conflicting positions. But "The Negro in American Culture"—he'd signed a contract for it with Random House, in 1945—was to be the lordly consummation of a life spent in the service of black expression. The book is a fixture of his later letters: either as an excuse for his absences ("It's an awful bother," he apologized to one friend, "but must turn out up to expectation in the long run") or as something to flaunt before a sexual prospect. Mason's death had sapped some of his power, so this new mission refreshed his stature and his righteous purpose.

But he couldn't finish the thing: his health was failing, he was stretched between too many obligations, and he was consumed, as ever, by the torment of unrequited love. His life was still replete with younger men to whom he was an aide and a guide—but not a sexual equal. "What I am trying to say, Alain," the young Robert E. Claybrooks wrote, "is that you excite me in every other area but a sexual one. It has nothing to do with the differences in ages. Of that I'm certain. Perhaps physical contact was precipitated too soon—I



don't know. But I do know, and this I have withheld until now, an intense feeling of nausea accompanied me after the initial affair, and I know it would be repeated each time, if such were to happen again." Solomon Rosenfeld, Collins George, Hercules Armstrong: the names flit through the last chapters of Locke's life, delivering the little sting of sexual insult. By the end, he called himself "an old girl."

Yet Stewart's biography aims to heave

Locke out of obscurity and prop him next to the reputations he launched. At more than nine hundred pages, it's a thudding, shapeless text, despotic in its pedantry and exhausting in its zeal, marked by excruciating attention to the most minuscule irrelevances. This is touching—and strangely fitting. Stewart's research arrives at a kind of Lockean intensity. But even Stewart's vigor falters as Locke's own scholarly energies start to wane. "Locke's involvement with the race issue," Stewart finally admits about "The Negro in American Culture," "had been pragmatic, a means to advance himself—to gain recognition, to be esteemed, and ultimately to be loved by the people."

Love: the word is applied like glue, keeping this vast book in one preposterous piece. Locke's most lasting lover was Maurice Russell, who was a teenager when he found himself looped into Locke's affections. "You see youth is my hobby," Locke wrote him at one point. "But the sad thing is the increasing paucity of serious minded and really refined youth." Russell was there—along with a few other ex-beaux—in 1954, at Benta's Funeral Home, on 132nd Street in Harlem, after Locke's death, from congestive heart failure. W. E. B. Du Bois and his wife, Shirley; Mrs. Paul Robeson; Arthur Fauset; and Charles Johnson all paid their respects to the small, noble figure lying in the coffin, who perhaps would have smiled at a line in Du Bois's eulogy: "singular in a stupid land."

The *New Negro* was a hero, a fetish, a polemical posture—and a blurry portrait of a flinching soul. But Locke took his place, at last, in the history he wished to redeem. "We're going to let our children know," Martin Luther King, Jr., declared in Mississippi in 1968, "that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe." Locke's class had cleaved him from the "masses"—and his desires had estranged him from his class. From this doubled alienation sprang a baffled psyche: an aesthete traipsing nimbly through an age of brutal rupture. Wincing from humiliation and romantic rejection, he tried to offer his heart to his race. "With all my sensuality and sentimentality," he wrote to Hughes after Paris, "I love sublimated things." ♦

## PLUCK

*Rival harpsichordists tackle Bach's Goldberg Variations.*

BY ALEX ROSS



If you know Bach's Goldberg Variations only through the eternally best-selling recordings by Glenn Gould, you have not really heard the work. Gould was a brilliant but idiosyncratic player whose approach to Bach might be compared to Laurence Olivier's renditions of Shakespeare: the art can obscure the matter. Furthermore, the Goldbergs drastically change character when they are transferred from the harpsichord, for which they were written, to the piano. The equal-tempered tuning of the modern piano is markedly different from tuning systems of the early eighteenth century, and the instrument's opulent sonorities cast a Ro-

mantic blur over Bach's harmony and counterpoint. To avoid muddying the texture, pianists rely on a clean, detached style, and as a result the music too often sounds subdued, fastidious, even soporific.

This is not to say that presenting Bach on the piano is any sort of categorical mistake. The composer took an interest in new instruments, including the fortepiano, and his music should not be confined to the technologies of his time. When a pianist on the order of Murray Perahia or András Schiff undertakes the Goldbergs, it is hardly an inauthentic experience. Nor does the use of a harpsichord guarantee his-

torical accuracy; no one knows for certain how these pieces should go. Even so, Bach on a harpsichord sounds clearer, brighter, more incisive—curiously, more modern. When Virgil Thomson heard the pioneering harpsichord revivalist Wanda Landowska play the Goldbergs in 1942, he spoke of “pungency and high relief.” The mechanism of the piano bops strings with felt-covered hammers. That of the harpsichord plucks the strings; notes pierce the ear more than they stroke it. Up close, the harpsichord can be a wild, prickly beast.

A new generation of harpsichordists is coming to the fore, one that has given an almost hipsterish profile to an instrument that is popularly stereotyped as archaic and twee. The Iranian-American harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani has started beefs with early-music eminences and adopted such provocative repertoire as Steve Reich's “Piano Phase.” The young French keyboardist Jean Rondeau plays jazz on the side. These performers have room to mature, but their recent concerts and recordings—both with an emphasis on the Goldbergs—suggest that the venerable harpsichord, which Landowska called “the *roi-soleil* of instruments,” will have a long future.

Every profession needs an enfant terrible. Esfahani, who was born in Tehran in 1984 and grew up in Rockville, Maryland, happily fills the role, casting himself as a fearless renegade in an insular field. Last year, in an interview with the online magazine VAN, he said, “I’ve heard leading figures in the harpsichord world give recitals that were played as if someone had died.” He also said, “Having funky hair or playing a little bit of jazz doesn’t make you iconoclastic if your harpsichord playing is perfectly orthodox”—an apparent reference to Rondeau, who favors unruly hairdos. The celebrated German keyboardist Andreas Staier reprimanded Esfahani, judging Rondeau “the more competent musician.” In the end, the debate was more entertaining than edifying: no one came across as particularly large-minded, except for Rondeau, who said nothing.

On May 1st, Esfahani appeared at Weill Hall, with a program that included Bach's French Overture and a selection of pieces by Rameau, Fresco-

*Jean Rondeau and Mahan Esfahani give a hipsterish air to an old instrument.*



baldi, and Jiří Antonín Benda. Esfahani spoke from the stage in his usual garrulous fashion, though this time he avoided passing judgment on colleagues. On the subject of Bach's suite, he said that its successive presentation of various dance forms and instrumental styles—gavotte, passepied, bourrée, gigue, and so on—might remind listeners of a multinational pageant. Esfahani's playing is notable for its crisp articulation, headlong momentum, and savvy theatrical effects. He knows how to take a microscopic pause before a climactic chord, making it sound louder and more final. (Crescendos are famously impossible on a conventional harpsichord, because the strings are plucked the same way no matter how hard you strike the keys; good harpsichordists can shape phrases and textures to create the illusion of increasing or decreasing volume.) Esfahani's vitality is infectious: the crowd responded with whoops and with shouts for encores.

Esfahani seems less at ease in lyrical or gently dancing episodes. He slightly rushed the Sarabande of the Overture, as if he were impatient to get back to the up-tempo bits. The slower Rameau selections—"Les tendres plaintes," "Les soupirs"—lacked a measure of languid grace. The same reservation applies to his generally fine 2016 recording of the Goldbergs, for the Deutsche Grammophon label. In the twenty-fifth variation—the doleful G-minor episode that Landowska named the Black Pearl—Esfahani nudges the tempo ahead, dispatching the piece in less than seven minutes; by contrast, the American harpsichordist Jory Vinikour, in a superb 2000 recording for Delos, makes it into a ten-minute-long Passion aria. In a certain way, Esfahani feels like the harpsichord's answer to the young Gould—exuberant, antisentimental, bracing.

Rondeau, a twenty-seven-year-old Parisian, belongs to a French-based harpsichord tradition that reaches back to the mighty Landowska. His penchant for mountain-man outfits, and the breathlessness of the French classical-music marketplace, have conspired to win him descriptions like "*le bad boy de la musique baroque*." In fact, he is a deeply serious musician who fell in

love with the harpsichord at the age of five. His interest in jazz and improvisation is hardly a distraction from his main work: the sort of slavish attention to the score encouraged by modern classical tradition is inadequate to the demands of Renaissance or Baroque music, in which players must embellish bare-bones notation with idiomatic style.


Rondeau has made disks of Rameau and the Bach family for the Erato label. For the online archive All of Bach—a gorgeous compendium of videos curated by the Netherlands Bach Society, eventually to encompass Bach's entire output—he has recorded the Goldbergs. In April, he played the same work on a brief U.S. tour; I heard him at the First Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a concert presented by the Boston Early Music Festival, one of the nation's foremost early-music organizations.

Esfahani's taunt notwithstanding, Rondeau's approach to the Goldbergs is highly unorthodox—even more so than Esfahani's own. Rondeau's recordings had prepared me for a pliable, unpredictable treatment of tempo, but in Cambridge the Goldbergs repeatedly slowed to a near-crawl, and I often longed for a steadier pulse. The Quodlibet, the culminating variation, typically unfolds as a rousing climax to the cycle, its interpolated folk-song airs adding a tone of merriment. Rondeau, however, rendered it almost as a counterpart to the Black Pearl, meandering and melancholy. In all, this was a fascinating but at times frustrating experience. The hazy acoustics of the First Church probably diminished the overall effect. The All of Bach video delivers a more intimate perspective, and there I found Rondeau's approach to be consistently more absorbing.

The Goldbergs end with a restatement of the Aria on which the variation sequence is based. In most performances, the return of that stately, pensive music after the preceding boisterousness has a jarring effect. Rondeau's surprising choice to solemnize the Quodlibet eases the transition. Bach's intellectual tour de force becomes a more inward, circular narrative—one that flows back inexorably to the place where it began. ♦


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## WRY WONDER

*Courtney Barnett assesses the inanities and the ecstasies of life on earth.*

BY AMANDA PETRUSICH



The Australian musician Courtney Barnett often sings about anxiety and depression. One track on “Tell Me How You Really Feel,” her new album, is titled “Crippling Self-Doubt and a General Lack of Confidence.” But those conditions rarely manifest themselves in predictable ways. Dread can yield frantic, needling work: deranged guitar, a yelping vocal. Yet Barnett’s most defining characteristic is her nonchalance. She sounds gloriously, enviably unbothered, even as the circumstances around her openly deteriorate.

In 2013, Barnett released a twelve-track compilation, “The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas.” “Avant Gardener,” a single from the collection, became a

minor hit. It’s a wordy and ambling jam about navigating a domestic drama—specifically, going into anaphylactic shock while weeding a flower bed—in which Barnett drolly assesses the inanities and the ecstasies of life on earth. Even as her throat swells shut, she remains hungry for detail: “I’m breathing but I’m wheezing, feel like I’m emphysem-ing / My throat feels like a funnel filled with Weet-Bix and kerosene,” she sings in a low, calm voice.

The song’s opening lines (“I sleep in late / Another day / Oh what a wonder / Oh what a waste”) are a fairly neat summation of Barnett’s world view. She is preceded in her lyrical practice by songwriters like Paul Simon, Bob

Dylan, Liz Phair, and Craig Finn, of the Hold Steady—artists who find clever and effective ways to turn arcane impressions into narrative fodder, thus revealing the strange poignancy in minutiae. A keen but ordinary observation can be powerful, especially when it addresses a vague sense of ennui. Heartbreak looks different for everyone. Boredom is universal.

Barnett released her first full-length album, “Sometimes I Sit and Think and Sometimes I Just Sit,” in 2015, on Milk! Records, her own label. (She was nominated for a Grammy for Best New Artist the following year, though she lost, regrettably, to the retro-pop singer Meghan Trainor.) Barnett, who recently turned thirty, recorded “Tell Me How You Really Feel” at a studio that is a thirty-minute walk from her home, in Melbourne. She’s never been very interested in fussiness, and the new album has an easy garage-rock feel. Barnett’s lyrics recall the talky folksingers of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, but she has a punk-rock heart, and on occasion a loose melody gives way to squall. When I watched her and her band at a few concerts during an American tour, in late 2014, a couple of months before the release of “Sometimes I Sit and Think and Sometimes I Just Sit,” their performances reminded me of Nirvana: scrappy, liberated, thrilling.

Barnett’s narrative sensibility is wry, but, unlike so many of her indie-rock forebears, she isn’t out to antagonize her listeners. Her work lacks the cynicism of more sardonic writers, like Stephen Malkmus or Frank Black. Instead, she’s witty and confiding. It often feels as if she’s leaning over, conspiratorially, and whispering something just to you: “Dude, can you believe how ridiculous it is to be alive?”

“Tell Me How You Really Feel” is less specific and quotidian than Barnett’s previous albums; this time, she’s turned her observational jones inward, attempting to make sense of her mental landscapes. It’s a kind of soul-searching that comes from spending many hours gazing blankly out of plane or bus windows. “City Looks Pretty” feels like a letter to herself:

Everyone’s waiting when you get back home  
They don’t know where you been, why you  
gone so long

*Barnett’s new album addresses both personal concerns and the broader Zeitgeist.*



Friends treat you like a stranger and  
Strangers treat you like their best friend,  
oh well

This kind of shift happens often to successful musicians. A regular life is supplanted by a rarefied one, in which the routines of daily existence are given over to things like appearing on late-night talk shows, chatting with journalists, and playing enormous outdoor festivals. When your life becomes unrecognizable, a funny distance seeps in. On “Depreston,” a song from “Sometimes I Sit and Think and Sometimes I Just Sit” (it recounts a bout of house-hunting with her longtime partner, the musician Jen Cloher), Barnett sang about the spiritual and practical perils of being on the front lines of gentrification:

We don't have to be around all these coffee shops  
Now we've got that percolator  
Never made a latte greater  
I'm saving twenty-three dollars a week

The verse works because it's sharply observed and acutely familiar. It evokes all the preposterous mathematics—what can I live with, and what can I live without?—we engage in while trying to build comfortable lives. Barnett's success has, in some ways, cost her that vantage point. Now she sings more frequently about her own dissociation from a more anchored existence. In a lesser writer's hands, this change would be disappointing, even alienating, but Barnett makes the exhaustion of life on the road feel relatable. “I spend a lotta my time doin' a whole lotta nothing,” she offers.

“Tell Me How You Really Feel” addresses both personal concerns and the broader Zeitgeist. At the end of 2017, Barnett was one of several hundred musicians who signed a frank open letter decrying sexism in the Australian music industry, and two new songs directly address systemic misogyny. “Nameless, Faceless” quotes Margaret Atwood: “Men are scared that women will laugh at them; women are scared that men will kill them.” At the end of the chorus, Barnett's voice rises just slightly, as she hollers, “I hold my keys between my fingers!” Any woman who has ever had to speed walk down a side street late at night knows this

trick—using your keys to make a kind of wolverine paw of your hand—but hearing it bellowed aloud, in a song about the suffocations of patriarchy, makes it clear just how insane a solution it is. Barnett tends toward lines that can be read in earnest or with ironic detachment—even the album's title allows for some ambiguity of intention—and I still can't figure out whether the bit about the keys is a joke (it seems unlikely that this technique has ever actually saved anybody), some sisterly advice, or both. The simplicity of her desire (“I wanna walk through the park in the dark”) becomes trenchant when, immediately, she points out its apparent impossibility.

Barnett likes to defuse things—“I don't know, I don't know anything,” she sings on “Crippling Self-Doubt and a General Lack of Confidence”—and, in the animated video for “Nameless, Faceless,” she finds a way to make the absurdity of the female predicament laughable. The director Lucy Dyson gives ordinary bushes menacing eyes (they also quake with rage), and, eventually, Barnett waves her arms around while hot dogs (no buns) drift limply across the screen, a winking stand-in for maleness. But on “I'm Not Your Mother, I'm Not Your Bitch,” Barnett sounds genuinely furious. Usually, when she sings, she edges away from stylization—her phrasing and tone feel instinctive, conversational. Here you can hear her carefully gathering herself, harnessing her fury and directing it with purpose: “I try my best to be patient, but I can only put up with so much shit,” she screams, dissolving into an angry rasp. The way she delivers the line reminds me of the riot-grrrl singers of the early nineteen-nineties.

“Tell Me How You Really Feel” opens with “Hopefulness,” which is as good a word as I can think of to describe the tumult of the past couple of years and what it feels like to keep insisting on optimism (or pretending to insist on optimism) even when you feel like getting back into bed and pulling the covers over your head. Right away, Barnett delivers an important reminder: “You know what they say/ No one's born to hate.” She has somehow found a way to cling to her empathy, even as everything else changes. ♦

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# DISENCHANTMENTS

*"First Reformed" and "The Seagull."*

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new film from Paul Schrader, "First Reformed," is about believing in God, saving the world, and a pregnant woman named Mary. Unlike "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988), however, which Schrader wrote for Martin Scorsese, the story is set not two thousand years ago but in the present, against a backdrop of watery skies and leafless

names in this film.) At his father's urging, Joseph enlisted in the military and went to Iraq, where he was killed in action. Toller's marriage broke under the strain, and he has washed up in Snowbridge, alone and sick. Pastor Jeffers (Cedric Kyles), a genial fellow who runs the local megachurch, which seats five thousand worshippers, is con-



*In Paul Schrader's film, a pastor is drawn to the cause of ecoterrorism.*

trees. Ethan Hawke plays Reverend Toller, who tends to the souls of Snowbridge, in Albany County, New York. Not many souls, mind you; when he bids the congregation rise, a bare handful stand in the pews. "They call it the souvenir shop," he says of his graceful church, which was founded in 1767, and there's a woebegone scene in which he gives three visitors a guided tour. One of them buys a commemorative hat. Another tells the Reverend a dirty joke about the organ. "I hadn't heard that one," he says, his misery now complete.

As time goes by, we learn a little more about Toller. He springs from devout stock; he used to be an Army chaplain; and he was married, with a son, Joseph. (Keep your ear tuned to the

cerned by Toller's state. Even Jesus, Jeffers points out, didn't spend all his time in the garden of Gethsemane, "but you—you're *always* in the garden. For you, every hour is the darkest hour." Toller is a drinker, and his stomach pains him; the two problems merge in a single closeup, as he pours Pepto-Bismol into a tumbler of booze—a slow glug of lurid pink, billowing into scum.

This image, with its unlovely froth, is all the more potent because it hints at another crisis, infinitely larger than the trials of Toller. He is asked by a parishioner, Mary (Amanda Seyfried), to advise her husband, Michael (Philip Ettinger). She is expecting their first child, but Michael, a pale-faced fretter, can find no justification for adding

a new life to the planet, whose environmental demise he regards as imminent and catastrophic. "The bad times, they will begin," he declares, sounding like a prophet of apocalypse. Michael has already been imprisoned for his activist deeds, and now he is planning something worse: in the garage, Mary discovers a suicide vest. She requests Toller's help, but, far from allaying the situation, he is drawn into Michael's cause, backing it up with a line from Revelations, which foretells that the Almighty will "destroy the destroyers of the Earth." Hence the strange sight of this man of God, wandering around in the near-dark, beside a ruined seashore and the rusting hulls of boats. He says to himself, "I have found another form of prayer."

That is just one of his lugubrious voice-overs. Intoned throughout, they are actually excerpts from the journal that Toller has decided to keep, and that we observe him writing. Exactly the same holds true for the hero of Robert Bresson's "Diary of a Country Priest" (1951), who, like Toller, suffers from a querulous gut. Both men are seen consuming bread and alcohol at their kitchen table, as if every meal were an act of Holy Communion. We should not be surprised by the tribute. Bresson was one of the directors whom Schrader honored in his exemplary book of criticism, "Transcendental Style in Film," which is being reissued—ripe for arguing with—after more than forty-five years, and he deftly stole from Bresson's "Pickpocket" (1959) for the finale of his pulsing 1980 thriller, "American Gigolo." Countless movie-makers grapple with the presentation of violence, but few can rival Schrader (who was reared as a Calvinist, and who wrote "Taxi Driver") in attending to the punishment of the self. Such attention reaches a new and incisive extreme in "First Reformed." I will say only that a coil of barbed wire is involved. Even Mel Gibson might look away.

The movie has other debts. The priest in Ingmar Bergman's "Winter Light" (1963), for instance, tries to counsel a Michael-like character who is led to the brink of despair by global anxiety; for him, it is nuclear war, rather than ecological collapse, but maybe every generation prides itself on the uniqueness of



its eschatological dread. Bergman's story also features a female parishioner who offers care and affection to the priest, without success, and she is mirrored, in "First Reformed," by the sorrowful figure of Esther (Victoria Hill), who is so brusquely rebuffed by Toller that we find ourselves flinching from him, and doubting the purity of his mission. ("Leave me alone," he says to her, adding, "I despise what you bring out in me.") In short, Toller is fortified against love, and the asperity in Ethan Hawke responds to that rigor. He's always been blue around the edges, as far back as "Reality Bites" (1994), yet the blueness was lightened with charm, whereas his smile, in the latest film, is as bleak as a November afternoon, and the worry groove in his forehead seems like a permanent rift. Until I saw Toller, I didn't know the human soul could frown.

Nobody, not even a hard-core Schrader fan, could claim that "First Reformed" makes for easy listening, or viewing. If anything, it outstrips its predecessors in severity. There's one composition in which Toller is framed so gloomily against a wall of gray, with his dog collar providing the sole touch of white, that you wait for him to bump into Whistler's Mother. In Bresson's movie, the camera keeps approaching the minister, as if moved by a compassionate curiosity about his plight, whereas most of "First Reformed" is constructed from static shots; the camera scarcely stirs an inch. Only twice does it revolve around the characters—once in the closing scene, about which I have grave doubts, and once during a startling excursion, in which Toller and Mary suddenly rise like spirits and take flight. In a fugue, or a dream, they float over moun-

tain peaks, green gullies, surging seas, oceans of gridlocked cars, landfill, and smoldering tires—from Heaven to Hell, or, in Toller's mind, from God's creation to the unforgivable mess we have made of it. Such, at any rate, is the import of this weird sequence, and I wish it didn't remind me so inescapably of the magic-carpet ride from Disney's "Aladdin." Sitting on a rug and belting out "A Whole New World" to Princess Jasmine is not the sort of leisure pursuit one associates with Reverend Toller, but, hey, you never know. It could be just what he needs.

If your appetite for disenchantment is not sated by "First Reformed," you can turn to "The Seagull," a new adaptation of Chekhov's play. Most of the lives that we witness here, even the gilded and the promising ones, face a downward slope, and it feels only right that the movie should start with a salvo of applause and end, more or less, with the crack of a gunshot. When the fêted actress Irina Arkadina (Annette Bening), on whose country estate the tale is set, admits, "I never think about the future," is it blitheness that compels her, or fear?

Sidney Lumet filmed the play in 1968, with James Mason and Vanessa Redgrave. By tradition, strong casts are lured toward Chekhov, and the new version is no exception. Saoirse Ronan is the seraphic Nina, who yearns to go on the stage, while Corey Stoll plays Irina's lover, Trigorin—the part that was taken by Stanislavski, no less, in the legendary production of 1898. Brian Dennehy is Irina's ailing elder brother, Sorin, although Dennehy, at seventy-nine, still looks too bearishly robust to ail. The wonderful Mare Winningham,

in the downward glance of whose eyes you can glimpse a vista of sadness, plays the estate manager's wife, while the almost impossible role of her daughter, Masha, who wears black in mourning for her own lost life, goes to Elisabeth Moss. She quaffs vodka from a teacup, and the quavering mirth in her voice is but a beat away from madness.

"Much conversation about literature, little action, and five tons of love." That is how Chekhov described "The Seagull" in a letter to a friend, and it's the littleness of the action that seems to vex the film's director, Michael Mayer, and its screenwriter, Stephen Karam. They have pruned, or purged, the drama until it runs just over an hour and a half, and, in so doing, mislaid its nervous languor. Bustle and haste are the visual order of the day, and our gaze is often curtailed when it most needs to linger; as Irina's son, Konstantin (Billy Howle), trades quotations from "Hamlet" with her, proclaiming that "the heyday in the blood is tame"—meaning that his mother, like Gertrude, has grown too old for passion—we cut away from Bening's face. Why not stay with Irina, and watch how she masks her sense of hurt? Where the movie does score, however, echoing the temper of our times, is in alerting us to the murmur of predation. That's not something we usually listen for in Chekhov, but, as Trigorin suavely sizes up Nina, saying, "I'd love to be in your shoes, for just an hour," we want to warn her to get out while she can. He's aiming for more than her shoes. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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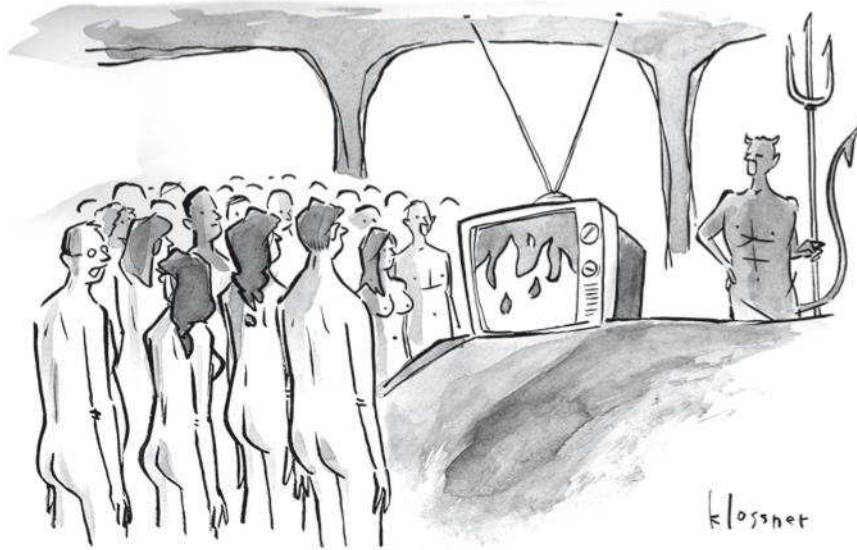
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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by John Klossner, must be received by Sunday, May 20th. The finalists in the May 7th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 4th & 11th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).*

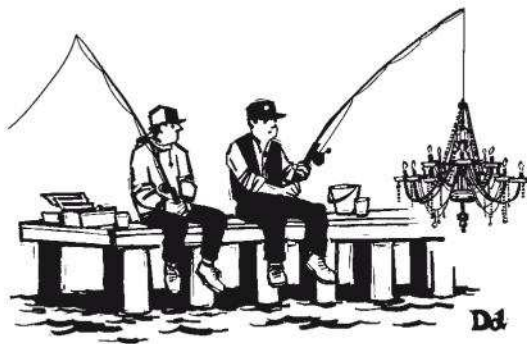
### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

### THE FINALISTS



*“Throw it back—we’re fishing for mid-century modern.”*  
Michael Gosselin, Needham, Mass.

*“First, I set the mood.”*  
Darren Gersh, Chevy Chase, Md.

*“Looks like the wealth is starting to trickle downstream.”*  
Jay Jasinski, Beverly Hills, Calif.

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*“If you want to see a giraffe, we’re going to need a lot more information.”*  
Brian Mazmanian, Belmont, Mass.

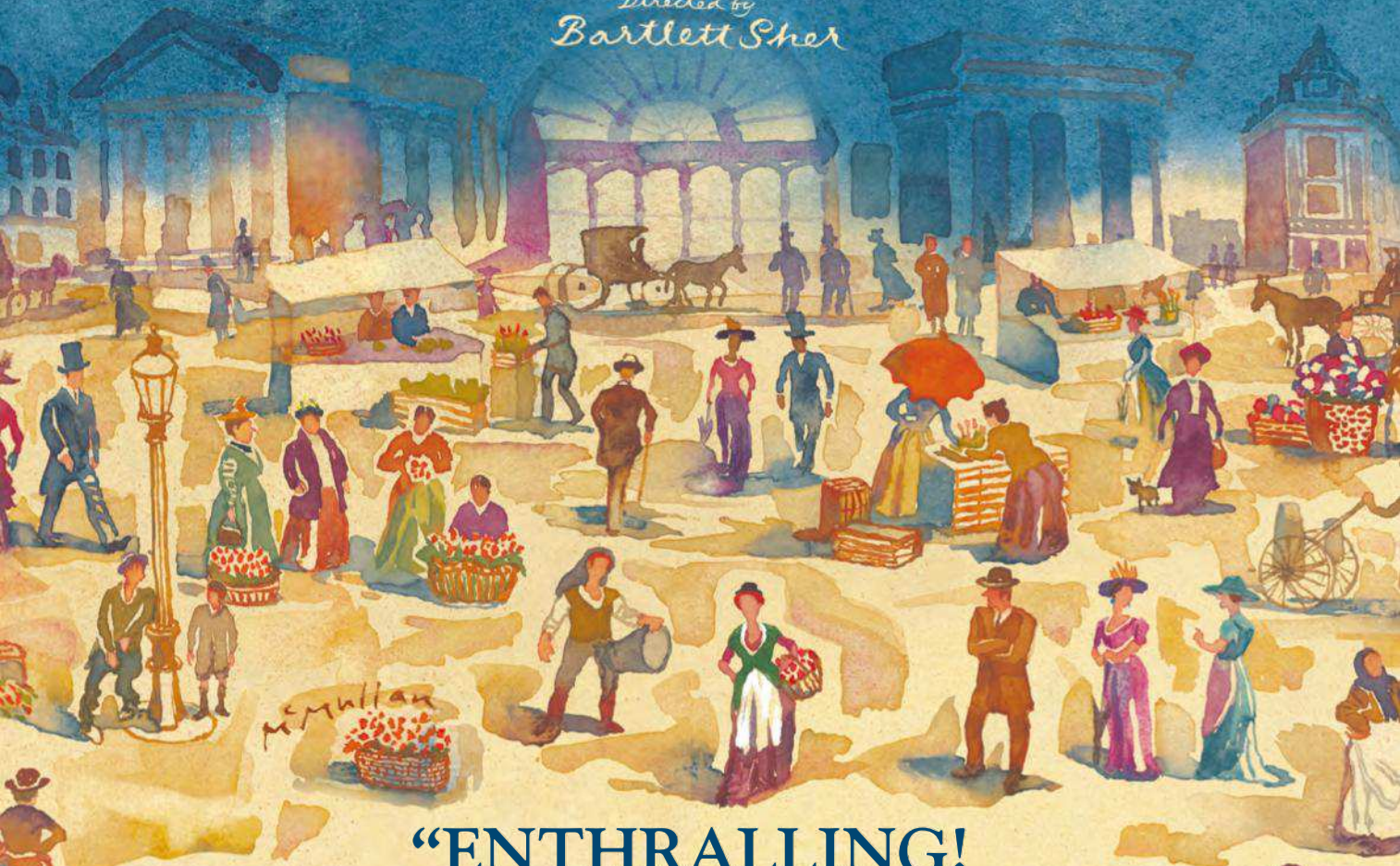


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