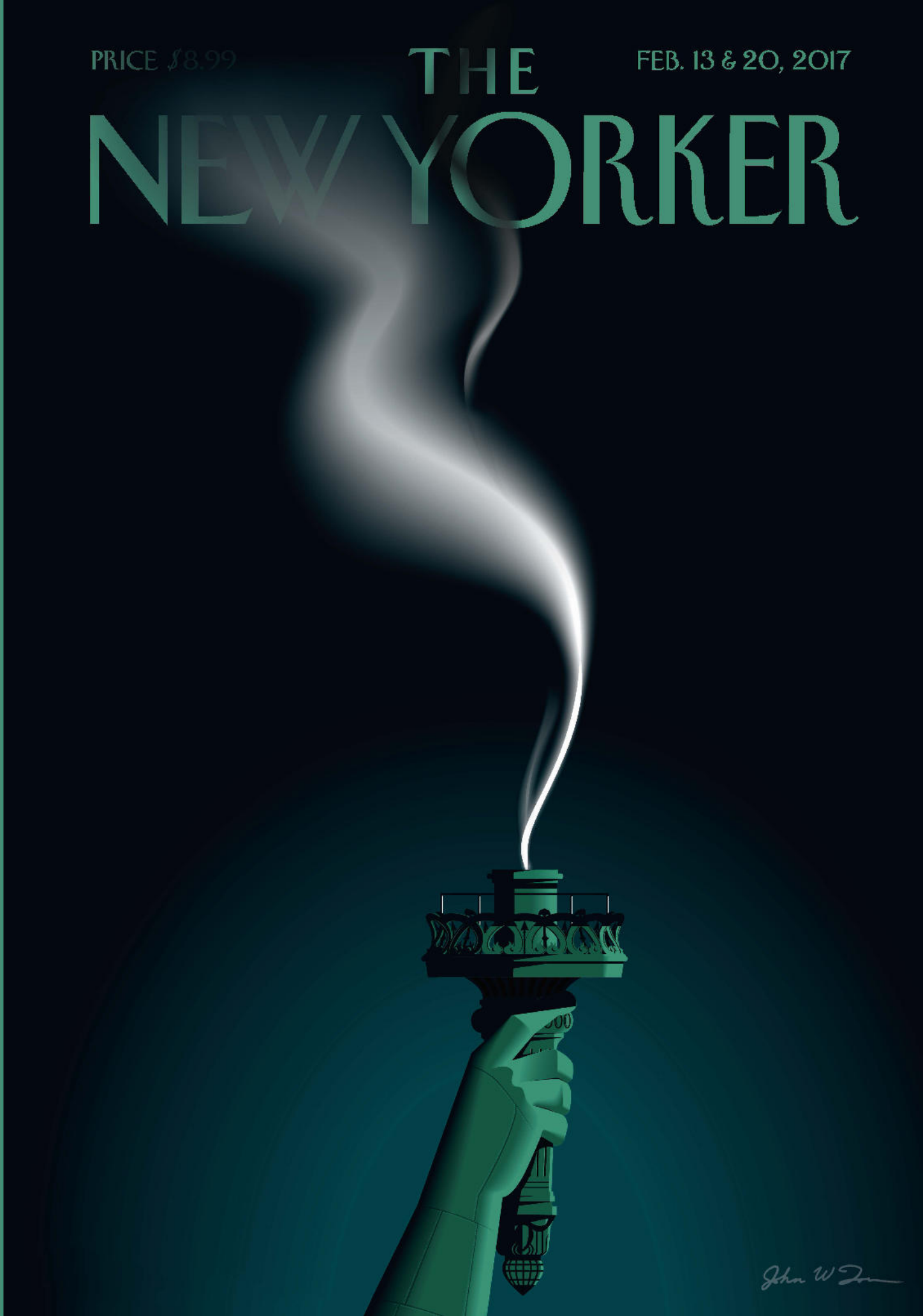
PRICE $8.99

THE NEW YORKER

FEB. 13 & 20, 2017



learn more at microsoftcloud.com

This cloud helps save time and lives.

With new diseases like Zika spreading faster than ever, no one medical professional can have all the answers. The Microsoft Cloud connects Partners In Health's 18,000 staff on a single platform so every patient receives the healthcare they deserve. Working together in real time is raising the standard of healthcare where it matters most.

This is the Microsoft Cloud.

Microsoft Cloud

THE NEW YORKER
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

FEBRUARY 13 & 20, 2017

11 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

29 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Adam Gopnik on Trump's anti-Americanism; Bannon's Bannon; travel-ban panic; public-interest siblings; James Surowiecki on budget cuts.

NEW YORK JOURNAL
Nick Paumgarten 36 All Aboard
The Second Avenue subway finally arrives.

SHOUTS & MURMURS
Susanna Wolff 43 Is This Hygge?

ANNALS OF WILDLIFE
Dana Goodyear 44 Valley Cats
The mountain lions of Los Angeles.

PROFILES
Patrick Radden Keefe 52 Journeyman
Anthony Bourdain's moveable feast.

PERSONAL HISTORY
Kathryn Schulz 66 Losing Streak
Reflections on two seasons of loss.

ARTIST'S EASEL
Kara Walker 72 "The Crossing"

FICTION
Curtis Sittenfeld 76 "The Prairie Wife"

THE CRITICS
A CRITIC AT LARGE
Hilton Als 84 *Film, race, and the legacy of James Baldwin.*

BOOKS
Thomas Mallon 89 *George Saunders's "Lincoln in the Bardo."*
Joyce Carol Oates 93 *Viet Thanh Nguyen's "The Refugees."*
95 Briefly Noted

THE ART WORLD
Peter Schjeldahl 96 *The drawings and tweets of Raymond Pettibon.*

ON TELEVISION
Emily Nussbaum 98 *"Legion."*

THE CURRENT CINEMA
Anthony Lane 100 *"A United Kingdom," "Land of Mine."*

Continued on page 4

CITI | WHARTON TRAINING PROGRAM

Be guided by skilled Citigold Relationship Managers and Citi Personal Wealth Management Financial Advisors, trained through the Citi | Wharton Training Program. Plus gain access to the latest market perspectives from Citi's global research and investment strategists.

Inform your next move at citi.com/Citigold

citi®
The World's Citi®

INVESTMENT PRODUCTS: NOT FDIC INSURED • NO BANK GUARANTEE • MAY LOSE VALUE

POEMS

Rae Armantrout 59 "Promotion"
John Ashbery 81 "Just So You'll Know"

COVER

John W. Tomac "Liberty's Flameout"

DRAWINGS *Michael Crawford, Robert Leighton, Harry Bliss, Drew Dernavich, Barbara Smaller, Farley Katz, Will McPhail, Victoria Roberts, Roz Chast, Benjamin Schwartz, Joe Dator, David Sipress, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Tom Toro, Liana Finck*
SPOTS *Ron Barrett*

"I need you to take over, Jeff, while I'm on the road to fuller, thicker hair."

BOTTEGAVENETA.COM

BOTTEGA VENETA

CONTRIBUTORS

Patrick Radden Keefe (*"Journeyman," p. 52*) is an Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellow at New America and the author of "Chatter" and "The Snakehead."

Dana Goodyear (*"Valley Cats," p. 44*), a staff writer, has published three books, including "Honey and Junk" and "Anything That Moves."

Thomas Mallon (*Books, p. 89*) is a novelist, an essayist, and a critic. "Finale: A Novel of the Reagan Years" came out in paperback in August.

E. Tammy Kim (*The Talk of the Town, p. 33*), a member of the magazine's editorial staff, co-edited the book "Punk Ethnography."

John W. Tomac (*Cover*) has contributed illustrations to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Washington *Post*, and the *Village Voice*.

Rae Armantrout (*Poem, p. 59*) is the author of "Partly: New and Selected Poems." A poetry chapbook, "Entanglements," will be published this month.

Kathryn Schulz (*"Losing Streak," p. 66*), a staff writer, won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing.

John Ashbery (*Poem, p. 81*) is the author of the poetry collection "Commotion of the Birds." His new collages are currently on exhibit at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, in New York.

Joyce Carol Oates (*Books, p. 93*), a visiting professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of, most recently, "A Book of American Martyrs."

Adam Gopnik (*Comment, p. 29*), a staff writer, has been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 1986. His most recent book is "The Table Comes First."

Susanna Wolff (*Shouts & Murmurs, p. 43*) has contributed humor pieces to the magazine and to newyorker.com since 2012.

Lizzie Widdicombe (*The Talk of the Town, p. 32*) is a *New Yorker* writer and an editor of The Talk of the Town.

Nick Paumgarten (*"All Aboard," p. 36*) has been writing for the magazine since 2000.

Kara Walker (*Artist's Easel, p. 72*) is a New York-based artist best known for her candid investigations of race, gender, sexuality, and violence through silhouetted figures.

Hilton Als (*A Critic at Large, p. 84*), *The New Yorker's* theatre critic, is an associate professor of writing at Columbia University's School of the Arts.

Curtis Sittenfeld (*Fiction, p. 76*) is the author of five novels. Her first story collection, "You Think It, I'll Say It," will be published next year.

Peter Schjeldahl (*The Art World, p. 96*), the magazine's art critic, is the author of "Let's See: Writings on Art from *The New Yorker*."

Emily Nussbaum (*On Television, p. 98*) is the television critic for the magazine. In 2016, she won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

NEWYORKER.COM

Everything in the magazine, and more.

DAILY SHORTS

A video about President Trump, featuring fifty puns about historical dictators in two minutes.

PODCAST

On our latest episode, Curtis Sittenfeld reads "The Prairie Wife," her story from the issue.

DAILY SHOUTS

The illustrator Joana Avillez decodes common wintertime facial expressions.

LEFT: ANDY ZOU


TONY AWARD®
WINNER
GLENN CLOSE
is back!
ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S
10086
SUNSET BLVD.
SUNSET BOULEVARD
music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER book & lyrics by DON BLACK & CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON
based on the BILLY WILDER film directed by LONNY PRICE
STRICTLY LIMITED ENGAGEMENT
PALACE THEATRE, 47TH & BROADWAY | 877.250.2929 | SUNSETBOULEVARDTHEMUSICAL.COM
Photo: Nick Wall

THE MAIL

APOCALYPSE NOW

The cowardice and the greed of most of the subjects in Evan Osnos's article on the hyper-wealthy's preparations for disaster and apocalypse scream out from the page ("Survival of the Richest," January 30th). Where are the philanthropists and the large-minded benefactors? Eradicating diseases is great and eye-catching, but where is the concern for one's own community? If today's billionaires worked together to house the homeless or to guarantee a basic income for the less fortunate, the "revolution" wouldn't be necessary. And, with the so-called leaders of society refusing to pay their share of taxes, it's easy to imagine the majority of people following suit. With no morally sound role models to emulate, it's now up to each individual to formulate her or his own ethos. Woe to the people at the top if those farther down decide that a radical approach is the way to go.
Diana Zix
Chicago, Ill.

It's ironic that income inequality, Trumpism, and the risk of natural disasters are chief sources of worry among Osnos's subjects, considering that many of these people have been instrumental in the rise of all three. They have benefitted from and abetted the extreme wealth gap; they have traditionally supported regressive Republican policies (and, more recently, backed Trump); and they live lives of opulence that contribute disproportionately to climate change. Still, it's hard to imagine that escape is possible, even with their money. Self-sufficiency is a fatal conceit: yes, the hardened silo turned luxury condos will house an operating room and a few doctors, but they depend on many other people and products to be effective. The title of the article, "Survival of the Richest," cleverly echoes Darwin's "survival of the fittest." Increasingly, the study of biological systems reveals that the theory does not mean dog-eat-dog. Rather, the fittest species are those which coöperate: they cohabit in intricate ecosystems; they are symbiotic and mutualistic. Of all species, human beings are among the most intensely social.
Brian P. H. Green
Thunder Bay, Ont.

Reading Osnos's article, I was struck by the possibility that extreme wealth can damage one's mental health just as poverty can. Many of the people he writes about seem to have grown hypersensitive to any loss of control; they pathologically fixate on absurd attempts to regulate the uncontrollable. But reckoning honestly with vulnerability is essential to psychological maturity, and, what's more, the illusion that we can live in a bubble of self-reliance, so often fostered among the rich, is a large part of what has led to our current global and national insecurities. It is intriguing, then, to see that the beneficiaries of economic injustices are suffering emotionally from the imbalances to which they have contributed. This is no doubt a prime example of what Martin Luther King, Jr., described as injustice dehumanizing not just the oppressed but also the oppressor.
Kevin Gill
Seattle, Wash.

I'm as paranoid as the next guy. My family and I live in Portland, Oregon, doomed to destruction since it lies within the Cascadian subduction zone. After reading, in this magazine, Kathryn Schulz's article about our fate, and subsequently freaking out, we calmed down and did some calculations. If we decided to leave the Northwest, we would also have to quit driving on roads, which, statistics indicate, are more dangerous than living in a seismic death trap. So we decided to stay put, filling barrels with water and stocking up on canned food. We keep an ample supply of chicken feed, so maybe we'll have fresh eggs in our postapocalyptic squalor. At some point, disaster preparation becomes a tax on stupidity, sort of like playing the lottery. Paying three million dollars for a windowless condominium in a disused missile silo seems like a punitive tariff by comparison, but one that the ultra-rich can clearly afford to pay.
Anthony Effinger
Portland, Ore.

PHILIP ROTH ON TRUMP

I was interested to read Philip Roth's take on Donald Trump ("Talk of the Town," January 30th). Trumpism is fertile ground for Roth, and it is regrettable that he has retired from writing. In his e-mails to Judith Thurman, Roth encapsulates the dangers that Americans face, warning of an assault on citizens' rights, and of the United States "drowning in Trump's river of lies." Since the Inauguration, there has been a flood of them—embarrassing, mean, and meaningless. Trump, as Roth points out, is "incapable of expressing or recognizing subtlety or nuance, destitute of all decency, and wielding a vocabulary of seventy-seven words that is better called Jerkish than English." Oscar Wilde, in his 1891 essay "The Decay of Lying," says that "the true liar" can be recognized by his "frank, fearless statements, his superb irresponsibility, his healthy, natural disdain of proof of any kind!" The occupier of the White House, who is staging an assault on our senses with his "alternative facts," exemplifies this. Only by adhering to what can be proven will we be able to withstand the deluge.
John O'Byrne
Dublin, Ireland

CHILD'S PLAY

As a child psychologist, I find Barry Blitt's cover depicting Donald Trump in a child's toy limo terribly sad ("At the Wheel," January 23rd). It suggests that the problem with Trump is that he is a child. This is an affront to children everywhere: children are not inherently narcissistic, ignorant, cruel, or vindictive. They tend to accept other human beings with an open mind and heart, without prejudice. Would that a five-year-old were our President.
Jean M. Donnelly
New York City

•

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.


GOOD HELP
THESE DAYS
IS HARD TO...
OH WAIT...
THERE IT IS.
HR IS LIVE.
With SAP® SuccessFactors®
and SAP Fieldglass® solutions,
you can attract the right people,
at the right time, for the right
role – across your entire
workforce. And reward them
instantly. So you can take constant
care of the heartbeat of your
business – your people.
sap.com/livebusiness
© 2017 SAP SE or an SAP affiliate company. All rights reserved.
SAP
Run Simple

THE MET

Here is the sideshow that takes center stage

Here is The Met

SEURAT'S CIRCUS SIDESHOW

metmuseum.org #SeuratsSideshow February 17–May 29, 2017

The exhibition is made possible by the Janice H. Levin Fund, the Gail and Parker Gilbert Fund, and an Anonymous Foundation.

Georges Seurat, *Circus Sideshow (Parade de cirque)*, detail, 1887–88, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Stephen C. Clark, 1960.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

Twin City locals might describe their home-town temperament as a genial passivity combined with a fondness for the last word. The Minneapolis group **Bad Bad Hats** brings fluid indie rock to Baby's All Right on Feb. 12, in which the vocalist Kerry Alexander's doe-eyed stylings defang her first-person screeds. "I bought this dress to spite you, I wear it 'cause I hate you," she sings lovingly on "Things We Never Say"; such couplets litter the band's superb début, "Psychic Reader," and suggest that the young songwriter is rarely left speechless.

PHOTOGRAPH BY RYAN PFLUGER

The director Manfred Kirchheimer's grandparents, uncles, and cousins—seen here circa 1928—were among the German Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime.

COURTESY MANFRED KIRCHHEIMER/MOMA

Sanctuary City

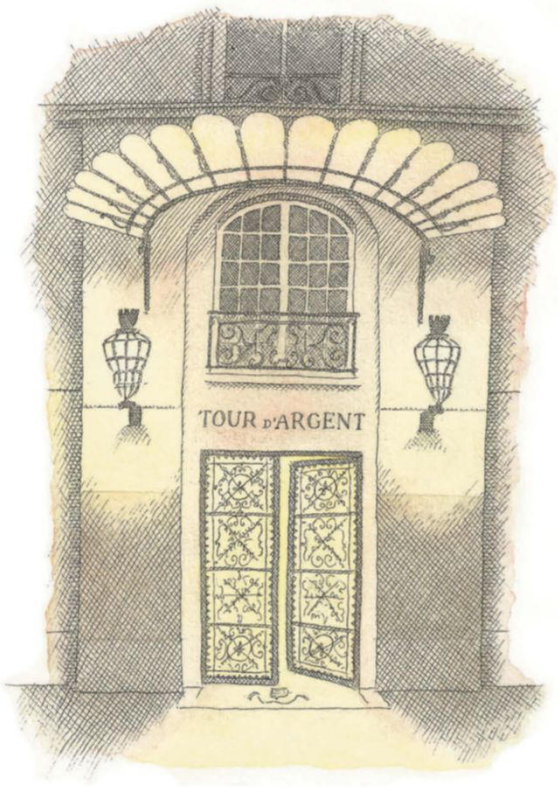
Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany make a new life in New York.

THE DEAD ARE haunting "We Were So Beloved," Manfred Kirchheimer's personal documentary, from 1986, about the Washington Heights community of German Jewish people who escaped or survived Nazi Germany. It's a film about Kirchheimer himself, who arrived in New York in 1936 with his parents, and about the new life that they built as refugees. It's also a film about those who didn't make it to the United States and were killed by the Nazis. Interviewed in his apartment, Kirchheimer's father, Bert, states that forty-six members of his family were killed by the Nazi regime. A family friend, Mrs. Krakow, says that she lost more than twenty family members in the Holocaust. And virtually all the interviewees attest to the fact that many more European Jews could have been saved were it not for the United States' stringent immigration quotas.

Immigration policies established in 1924, which one of Kirchheimer's childhood friends, Louis Kampf, calls discriminatory, prevented many German and Austrian Jews—who were, for a time, being encouraged by the Nazis to emigrate—from escaping Hitler's reach when it was still possible. Sary Lieber recalls that she and her husband went to the American consulate and received their "waiting number"—their place in line based on country of origin. Max Frankel, another of Kirchheimer's childhood friends (who went on to become the *Times's* executive editor), tells of his family's being denied immigration papers because their American sponsor wasn't deemed wealthy enough. There were, Kirchheimer says, two hundred and fifty thousand Jews still living in Germany and Austria when the war broke out—but because of American quotas it would have taken twenty-six years to admit them all to the U.S. Ilse Marcus and her family were among the nine hundred Jewish refugees on the ocean liner St. Louis, which, in 1939, was turned away from Cuba and then the U.S. The Marcuses ended up in Auschwitz; Ilse was the family's sole survivor.

Yet many of the film's participants consider the canker of authoritarianism to be a part of their own heritage as Germans. Frankel admits that, as a German child, he looked longingly at a parade of Brown Shirts from which he was, of course, excluded. Some cite deference to authority as the reason that many Jews hesitated to leave Germany. Some of the survivors in the Kirchheimer circle remain, at the time of the film, vehemently unforgiving of Germans. Others think that many Germans acted against their will under government pressure, and many interviewees tell of Germans who courageously defied Nazi law to help them. Bert admits that he himself would never have been able to hide a fleeing Jew, because he considered himself a coward; Frankel recognizes that a totalitarian regime puts each citizen to the test—"Are you willing to put your life on the line for decency?"—and says that he'd "hate to be tested." The filmmaker himself wonders what, under such circumstances, he might have done, and adds, "Do I want to know?" The film screens Feb. 9 and Feb. 11 in MOMA's retrospective of Kirchheimer's films.

—Richard Brody



Laurent-Perrier

chosen by *La Tour d'Argent Paris*

Photo credit: Iris Velghe / Illustrator credit: Pierre Le-Tan

CUVÉE ROSÉ
CHOSEN BY THE BEST

CHAMPAGNE

Laurent-Perrier

MAISON FONDÉE
1812

PLEASE ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

OPENING

Fifty Shades Darker An erotic-thriller sequel, based on the novel by E. L. James, starring Dakota Johnson as a woman in a masochistic relationship with a rich man (Jamie Dornan). Directed by James Foley. *Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)* • **John Wick: Chapter 2** Keanu Reeves stars in this action sequel, about a former hitman forced to kill again. Directed by Chad Stahelski; co-starring Ruby Rose, Bridget Moynahan, and Ian McShane. *Opening Feb. 10. (In wide release.)* • **Land of Mine** Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. *Opening Feb. 10. (In limited release.)* • **A United Kingdom** Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. *Opening Feb. 10. (In limited release.)*

NOW PLAYING

Beware of a Holy Whore

This is how the cinema looked, in 1971, to the twenty-six-year-old director Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who already had ten feature films under his belt. The cast and crew of a politicized costume drama are holed up in a Spanish villa while awaiting their star, their equipment, and their money; meanwhile, they drink joylessly and engage in provocative sexual escapades, subtly Machiavellian manipulations, and cruel displays of power that threaten the film with emotional sabotage. The director, Jeff (Lou Castel), betrayed by his financiers and obliged to complete a doomed production, plays these games as recklessly as his employees do. He risks alienating his star, Eddie Constantine (playing himself), with his allusive script and its violent action. The increasing dissolution of the shoot is captured in the kaleidoscopic fragmentation of the story, which shatters the filmmaking process into a whirl of dispersed moments of latent or blatant conflict—which is the stuff that Jeff's film is made of. Co-starring Fassbinder himself, as an assistant whose practical wiles don't prevent his own breakdown.—*Richard Brody (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 17 and Feb. 19.)*

The Bowery

The director Raoul Walsh, born in 1887, infused this rowdy comedy with his memories of roughhouse New York of the Gay Nineties and inflated it with legends of earlier times. The stout, glad-handing Chuck Connors (Wallace Beery) runs the street's gaudiest saloon but is outsmarted at every turn by the slim, suave gambler Steve Brodie (George Raft), who steals Connors's thunder with the ultimate P.R. stunt—jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge. The race between their rival volunteer fire brigades to a Mott Street conflagration instantly becomes an epic battle royal. The sentimental side involves a refined young woman (Fay Wray) who stumbles onto the road to ruin, and a ragamuffin (Jackie Cooper) whom Connors takes in and calls his own. But the casual and constant violence, the drunkenness and gambling, the punished, unkempt bodies, and the mercurial swings between gutter and glory make Walsh's raw, raunchy film the authentic "Gangs of New York." He caught the chewy, gimcrack accents, the grotesquely atavistic manners, and the ugly, unquestioned racism, which is repellently prominent from the film's first shot onward. Released in 1933.—*R.B. (MOMA; Feb. 17.)*

The Comedian

Robert De Niro, who did brilliantly unfunny standup for Martin Scorsese in "The King of Comedy," in 1982, is only passable as an actual funny man in Taylor Hackford's sprawling sentimental comedy. He plays Jackie Burke, an eighties sitcom star who's reduced to nostalgia gigs. At one of them, Jackie pounds a heckler and does jail time; while doing court-mandated community service after that, he meets and befriends Harmony Schultz (Leslie Mann), a lonely woman who also has anger-management issues. One subplot involves Jackie's brother, Jimmy (Danny DeVito), who runs a deli with his wife, Flo (Patti LuPone); another involves Harmony's father, Mac (Harvey Keitel), a gangster. But the main event is Jackie's effort to get back into the comic limelight doing his own new (and blue) material—with the help of his devoted agent, Miller (Edie Falco)—while trying to spark a relationship with Harmony. The leading actors are unfailingly hearty and appealing, and Cloris Leachman, as a ninety-five-year-old actress getting roasted at the Friars Club, nearly steals the show, but the plot is forced and flimsy, the characters are thinly conceived, and the comic writing is often cringeworthy.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

Dark Night

Tim Sutton's new film tracks a bunch of disparate characters in a Florida suburb. We watch them go about their business, in the course of a single day. Kids gather to skateboard, dye their hair, and vape; a young woman endures the agonies of physical exercise; a disaffected youth, interviewed in the company of his mother, defends his devotion to video games; and a green-eyed man prowls his neighborhood with a gun—wait for the muzzle, slowly intruding through an open window, into a room where two girls are playing guitar. As he and the other folk converge upon a movie theatre, toward the end, we are meant to think of James Holmes, who committed multiple murders in 2012 at a similar theatre in Aurora, Colorado, where "The Dark Knight Rises" was playing. What Sutton is offering, we realize, is a kind of meditation, at once menacing and spaced out, on that terrible event. The resulting film, thanks to the cinematography of Hélène Louvart, is marked by both exactitude and grace, although its most disturbing implication—that these doomed lives are already half empty—demands to be argued with. With Robert Jumper, as the gunman.—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 2/6/17.) (In limited release.)*

Fences

Chatting it up from the back of the garbage truck they operate for the city of Pittsburgh, Troy Maxson (Denzel Washington) and his best friend, Bono (Stephen McKinley Henderson), launch this adaptation of August Wilson's 1983 play with a free-flowing vibrancy that, unfortunately, doesn't last long. Under Washington's earnest but plain direction, scenes of loose-limbed riffing—such as a sharp-humored trio piece in the Maxson back yard for the two men and Rose (Viola Davis), Troy's steadfast wife—soar above the drama's conspicuous mechanisms and symbolism. Troy, a frustrated former baseball player from an era before the major leagues were integrated, tries to prevent his son Cory (Jovan Adepo) from seeking a football scholarship to college. Meanwhile, the embittered paterfamilias threatens his marriage by having an affair with a local woman. Much of the action takes place in the stagelike setting of the Maxson home and yard; despite the actors' precise and passionate performances, Washington neither elevates nor overcomes the artifice, except in his own mighty declamation of Troy's harrowing life story.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

Gold

Matthew McConaughey stars as Kenny Wells, who has a receding hairline, a drinking problem, and a long-suffering girlfriend (Bryce Dallas Howard).

He lives in Reno, Nevada, and works for a mining company, but his heart—or his hungry imagination—is far away, in the jungles of Indonesia. Buried there deep in the rock, awaiting extraction, is a bonanza of gold; that, at any rate, is the claim made by Michael Acosta (Edgar Ramírez), a dapper geologist with whom Kenny, at the end of his tether, teams up. Stephen Gaghan's movie, grounded in a real-life scandal that began in the late nineteen-eighties, seems endlessly busy, ranging over continents and years, and it's hard to keep pace with the rise and vertiginous falls of Kenny's fortunes. Despite the dedication of McConaughey's performance, we feel more hurried and hustled than involved. The film, it turns out, is less of a treasure hunt and more of a manic reverie, showing what the mere prospect of treasure can do to men's morals and minds. When Kenny says that he never cared about money, only about the gold, you believe him. Corey Stoll is cast, once again, as a nasty piece of work.—*A.L. (2/6/17) (In wide release.)*

Hidden Figures

A crucial episode of the nineteen-sixties, centered on both the space race and the civil-rights struggle, comes to light in this energetic and impassioned drama. It's the story of three black women from Virginia who, soon after Sputnik shocked the world, are hired by NASA, where they do indispensable work in a segregated workplace. Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe), endowed with engineering talent, has been kept out of the profession by racial barriers; Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer) heads the office of "computers," or gifted mathematicians, but can't be promoted, owing to her race; and the most gifted of calculators, Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson), is recruited for the main NASA rocket-science center, where, as the only black employee, she endures relentless insults and indignities. Working from a nonfiction book by Margot Lee Shetterly, the director, Theodore Melfi (who co-wrote the script with Allison Schroeder), evokes the women's professional conflicts while filling in the vitality of their intimate lives; the film also highlights, in illuminating detail, the baked-in assumptions of everyday racism which, regardless of changes in law, ring infuriatingly true today. With Kevin Costner, as Katherine's principled boss, and Mahershala Ali, as her suitor.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

Kanal

In 1957, Andrzej Wajda made the first movie to dramatize the Warsaw Uprising against the Nazi occupiers and to give credit to Poland's major resistance force, the Home Army, which the Red Army abandoned during the Uprising and disbanded after the war. Wajda follows an already ravaged company of fighters in late September, 1944, as they strive to bear their wounds, shake off their losses, and reach safety through the Warsaw sewer system. The film turns combat-film clichés upside down. Men and women strike up battlefield friendships and romances aboveground that don't stand a chance in fetid tunnels. In one excruciating sequence, a lieutenant and two of his men reach a sewer exit, only to find it barricaded and rigged with grenades. A composer who falls into the Home Army company starts quoting Dante's Inferno as he goes crazy in the tunnels. In this gruesome chronicle of the Uprising's final days, Wajda cuts through any official mythology of military discipline and honorable defeat.—*Michael Sragow (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Feb. 11 and Feb. 15.)*

La La Land

Breezy, moody, and even celestial, Damien Chazelle's new film may be just the tonic we need. The setting is Los Angeles, with excursions to Paris and Boulder City, and the time is roughly now, though the movie, like its hero, hankers warmly after more melodious times. Sebastian (Ryan Gosling) is a jazz pianist who dreams of opening a club but, in the meantime, keeps himself afloat with undignified gigs—rolling out merry tunes, say, to entertain diners at Christmas. Enter Mia (Emma Stone), an actress who, like Kathy Selden in "Singin' in the Rain," is waiting for that big break. Haltingly, they fall in love; or, rather, they rise in love, with a waltz inside a planetarium that lofts them into the air. The color scheme is hot and startling, and the songs, with music by Justin Hurwitz and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, ferry the action along. If the singing and the dancing lack the otherworldly rigor of an old M-G-M production, that is deliberate; these lovers are much too mortal for perfection. With John Legend, as a purveyor of jazz-funk, and J. K. Simmons (who commanded Chazelle's "Whiplash"), as a withering maître d'.—*A.L. (12/12/16) (In wide release.)*

Lion

A small boy called Saroo (Sunny Pawar), born into a poor Indian family, falls asleep on a train and wakes up more than a thousand miles from his home. Eventually, after escaping various perils, he winds up in an orphanage; from there, he is adopted by an Australian couple (Nicole Kidman and David Wenham) and goes to live with them in Tasmania. We jump ahead twenty years, to Saroo as a young man (now played by Dev Patel), who has an American girlfriend (Rooney Mara) and an unappeasable wish to discover where he came from. Whether that desire has grown with time is unclear, but now, at last, it can be fulfilled, thanks to the miracle of Google Earth (for which the movie is an unabashed commercial). As is proved by documentary footage at the end, Garth Davis's film is based on a true story; though wrenching, there is barely enough of it to fill the dramatic space, and the second half is a slow and muted affair after the Dickensian punch of the first. The undoubted star is Pawar, whose début commands attention much as Sabu's did, in "Elephant Boy," some eighty years ago.—*A.L. (In limited release.)*

Manchester by the Sea

Kenneth Lonergan's new film is carefully constructed, compellingly acted, and often hard to watch. The hero—if you can apply the word to someone so defiantly unheroic—is a janitor, Lee Chandler (Casey Affleck), who is summoned from Boston up the coast of Massachusetts after the death of his brother Joe (Kyle Chandler). This is the definition of a winter's tale, and the ground is frozen too hard for the body to be buried. Piece by piece, in a succession of flashbacks, the shape of Lee's past becomes apparent; he was married to Randi (Michelle Williams), who still lives locally, and something terrible tore them apart. Joe, too, had an ex-wife, now an ex-drinker (Gretchen Mol), and their teen-age son, Patrick—the most resilient character in the movie, smartly played by Lucas Hedges—is alarmed to learn that Lee is to be his legal guardian. What comes as a surprise, amid a welter of sorrow, is the harsh comedy that colors much of the dialogue, and the near-farcical frequency with which things go wrong. Far-reaching tragedy

adjoins simple human error: such is the territory that Lonergan so skillfully maps out.—*A.L. (11/28/16) (In wide release.)*

Man's Castle
As tuxedoed New York swells dine out in style, the unemployed go hungry and sleep in a camp of shacks under a bridge where crime, drunkenness, and prostitution run rampant. That's the grim Depression setting for this gravelly but rhapsodic romance, from 1933, between Bill (Spencer Tracy), a hobo with wanderlust, and Trina (Loretta Young), a stalwart dreamer who loves him to pieces. The cast of outcasts includes an aged preacher now working as a night watchman (Walter Connolly), a shambling alcoholic with a lust for money and a heart of gold (Marjorie Rambeau), and a feral low-life who plays every angle (Arthur Hohl). The action turns on the dream of making a home—with a stove that Trina covets and for which Bill is willing to do anything (even work) and a baby on the way which demands commitment from the lifelong drifter. Filming the streetwise action and the colorful, caustic language from Jo Swerling's script, the director, Frank Borzage, finds sanctified tenderness in the poignant absurdities and grubby brutalities of gutter-level striving. He veers from humor to heartbreak in record time.—*R.B. (MOMA; Feb. 15.)*

Neruda
Another new bio-pic, of sorts, from Pablo Larraín, whose "Jackie" is still in theatres. Once again, the angle of approach is oblique, avoiding the standard procedures of the genre, although in this instance there is an extra dash of playfulness and mischief. That certainly fits the subject, Pablo Neruda (Luis Gnecco), whose poetry would later earn him a Nobel Prize, but who begins the film, in 1948, as a member of the Chilean Senate; as a Communist, he finds himself scorned by the recently elected President. The dismissal becomes a witch hunt, with Neruda—sly, grand, lecherous, and overweight—fleeing from one safe house to another, lovingly supported by his wife (Mercedes Morán) and harried by an irrepressible policeman (Gael García Bernal). Much of this story, including the journey over the Andes into Argentina, is a matter of record, but other parts, like the character of the cop, were brewed up for the sake of the movie. The result is both highly unreliable and enjoyably persuasive; we are lured into Larraín's imaginings, such as a final showdown in the snow, much as Neruda's devotees succumb to the declamations of his verse. In Spanish.—*A.L. (1/2/17) (In limited release.)*

A New Leaf
Elaine May's frenzied 1971 comedy, in which she co-stars with Walter Matthau, reveals the essence of marital love more brutally than many confrontational melodramas. The film opens with a loopy view of a rich man's caprices, notably the red Ferrari of Henry Graham (Matthau), an effete and idle Manhattan heir. But he's stopped cold by the news—delivered in riotous euphemisms by his lawyer (William Redfield)—that he's run out of money. After a terrifying vision of buying ready-to-wear, he accepts a usurious loan from his contemptuous uncle (James Coco) and has to marry rich, fast. Henry impresses his chosen prey, Henrietta Lowell (May), an awkward, desperately lonely heiress as well as a botanist, with his bravura displays of chivalry. In anticipation of the big day, he, too, takes up the study of botany—and, most unchivalrously, the study of toxicology. Having started out with the hatred, dependency, and surrender it takes most couples years to achieve, Henry and Henrietta are no less suited than regular folks for love until death do them part—one way or another.—*R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 11 and Feb. 13-14.)*

Paraguayan Hammock
In its sixty-eight minutes, Paz Encina's first film, from 2006, carries Ramón and Cándida (Ramón Del Rio and Georgina Genes), an aging couple living in the deep country, from sunrise, when they hang their old hammock between two trees in a clearing, to sunset, when they take it in. Settled in its tenuous grasp, they talk about the heat, the rain, the dog that won't stop barking, the war, and their son, Máximo, who is doing his military service and hasn't been heard from lately. The father lives in hope, the mother in fear, and scenes of their daily rounds of labor and rest—images of a contemplative pictorial exaltation—are joined by voice-over flashbacks revealing the story of their son's departure and the rumors that followed. Encina's film, balanced exquisitely between the concrete and the abstract, between the specific and the absolute, is a quietly devastating indictment of the eternal waste of youth as cannon fodder in this and all wars. In Guarani.—*R.B. (In limited release. MOMA; Feb. 11-12.)*

The Salesman
To those who saw Asghar Farhadi's earlier movies, like "About Elly" (2009) or the Oscar-winning "A Separation" (2011), his new work will come as something of a surprise. Set in modern-day Tehran, it begins with a stage set, for a production of "Death of a Salesman," in which Willy and Linda Loman are played by another married couple—Emad Etesami (Shahab Hosseini) and his wife, Rana (Taraneh Alidoosti). Only lightly, however, does Farhadi touch on their life in the theatre; most of the action unfolds elsewhere, as they are forced to move from their unstable apartment into temporary accommodations. There, Rana is surprised by an intruder and apparently attacked, leaving her fearful and her husband bent on revenge. For a while, as Emad tries to track down the culprit, the movie becomes a low-key thriller, halting and desperate, only to shift registers again, in the final half hour, during which the truth—more pitiful than anyone was prepared for—comes out. At such times, in Farhadi's expert hands, you feel your certainties crumble and your sympathies sway, and you wish Arthur Miller were alive to watch the result. In Farsi.—*A.L. (1/30/17) (In limited release.)*

Split
The latest M. Night Shyamalan film stars James McAvoy as just about everybody. He plays a man with twenty-three personalities, and you can wager that, had the movie provided sufficient time and space, he would have been happy to parade them all. In the event, we have to make do with a handful: Patricia, Barry, Kevin, and nine-year-old Hedwig. As a bonus, there is also the Beast, who, with his bulging veins, represents more than a morphing of the mind. One day, this divided being kidnaps three teen-age girls (Haley Lu Richardson, Jessica Sula, and Anya Taylor-Joy) and locks them in a basement. (For anyone versed in "The Sixth Sense," the director's haunting exploration of grief, this part of the plot, as creaky as an old exploitation flick, will feel like a backward step.) We also follow Barry, with some of his fellow-selves in attendance, as he consults a therapist (Betty Buckley), although the film remains perilously cloistered; would it not have been fun to see him—all of him—try his luck in the wider world? Devotees of the Shyamalan twist will be reassured by the ending, though ordinary viewers may well be left simply bemused.—*A.L. (1/30/17) (In wide release.)*

Toni Erdmann
Maren Ade's new film is a German comedy, two hours and forty minutes long, and much of it is set in Bucharest. These are unusual credentials, but the result has been received with rapture since it showed at Cannes. What it grapples with, after all, is matters of universal anxiety: the bonds, or lack of them, between parent and child, and the ways in which the modern world—in particular, the world of business—can compress the spirit. Sandra Hüller plays Ines, who works as a smoother of deals in the oil industry; her father is Winfried (Peter Simonischek), a shambling hulk who thinks that wearing false buckteeth is amusing, and who tracks her to Romania in a bid to disrupt her life and, perhaps, to alleviate its ills. His method involves assuming a new identity (hence the title) and invading the space where his daughter makes her deals. We get, among other things, sexual humiliation involving petits fours, and a party that takes an unexpected turn. If the film has a fault, it lies with Ade's reliance on embarrassment as a weapon of attack. For a generation reared on "The Office," that may not be a problem. In German.—*A.L. (In limited release.)*

20th Century Women
In Santa Barbara in 1979, Dorothea Fields (Annette Bening) presides, with genial tolerance, over a mixed household. She is in her mid-fifties, with a teen-age son, Jamie (Lucas Jade Zumann), who is nurturing an interest in feminism, and a couple of lodgers—Abbie (Greta Gerwig), a russet-haired photographer with violent tastes in music, and the more serene William (Billy Crudup), whose talents range from meditation and effortless seduction to fixing the ceiling. Mike Mills's movie, like his earlier "Beginners" (2010), is a restless affair, skipping between characters (each of whom is given a potted biography) and conjuring the past in sequences of stills. Plenty of time is also devoted to the friendship, threatened by looming desire, between Jamie and Julie (Elle Fanning), who is older and wiser than he is, but no less confused; at one point, they take his mother's car—a VW Beetle, naturally—and elope. Amid all that, the movie belongs unarguably to Bening, and to her stirring portrayal of a woman whose ideals have taken a hit but have not collapsed, and who strives, in the doldrums of middle age, to defeat her own disappointment.—*A.L. (12/19 & 26/16) (In limited release.)*

We Won't Grow Old Together
In Maurice Pialat's fiercely impassioned, impulsively modernist melodrama, Jean (Jean Yanne), a fortyish filmmaker who's struggling to make a feature, is married to the smoothly bourgeois Françoise (Macha Méril) but is brazenly carrying on an affair with Catherine (Marlène Jobert), an aspiring actress. Toward Françoise, Jean is merely chilly; toward Catherine, with whom his relationship is vitally carnal, he's both verbally and physically abusive. Refusing to live in fear, Catherine leaves him (but still hopes to sleep with him every now and then). Pialat captures the push-and-pull of their impossible relationship with pugnacious images and abrupt editing. The doomed couple's story is punctuated by visits to Catherine's parents and grandmother and to Jean's father, all in the loamy tranquillity of provincial France. For Pialat, the wolf is on the prowl; the feral lover—and artist—is at home amid the deep-hued muscularity of the countryside but also steeped in the freethinking ways and expressive ideals of the refined capital, which he shambles through like a wounded and wounding beast. Released in 1972. In French.—*R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 10 and Feb. 12.)*

Kristiansand, Vest-Agder  Kingdom of Norway

Certificate of Marriage

This marriage certificate authorizes any clergyman within the Lutheran Church who is in good standing in Kristiansand Parish in Vest-Agder County to solemnize the marriage of the parties listed below, after the regulation reading of the banns.

LAURIE METCALF

and CHRIS COOPER

in the city of Kristiansand, Vest-Agder, Norway in the presence of

JAYNE HOUDYSHELL

and CONDOLA RASHAD

Witness, my hand with the seal of the office hereto affixed on this 21st day of December in the year 1871.

A Doll's House

PART 2

A new play by LUCAS HNATH

Directed by SAM GOLD

This is to certify that the undersigned unite in marriage the above named persons, and I further certify that I am legally qualified to solemnize marriages.

16 WEEKS ONLY

PREVIEWS BEGIN April 1 OPENS April 27

GOLDEN THEATRE • 252 W 45TH ST • TELECHARGE.COM

BETTE MIDLER

HELLO, DOLLY!

PREVIEWS BEGIN MARCH 15 • OPENS APRIL 20

SHUBERT THEATRE • 225 W 44TH ST • **HELLODOLLYONBROADWAY.COM** • 212.239.6200 • TELECHARGE.COM

ESTATE OF JOHN GRUEN/© ESTATE OF JANE WILSON/ COURTESY DC MOORE GALLERY, NY

Jane Wilson's 1957 portrait of her fellow-painter Jane Freilicher, at N.Y.U.'s Grey Art Gallery.

Down and In

The invention of a New York art scene.

IN 1964, PETULA CLARK had a hit with "Downtown." But the songwriter Tony Hatch has said he was inspired by Times Square—a solecism forgivable from a Brit. In native parlance, the word denotes Manhattan below Fourteenth Street. "Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965," a jam-packed show at New York University's Grey Art Gallery, surveys a defining epoch in the geographical mythos. Streets previously almost barren of art spaces—in Greenwich Village, on the Lower East Side, and in what came to be christened by real-estate agents the East Village—sprouted do-it-themselves co-op and shoestring galleries, some with the life spans of mayflies but others in for long hauls. (The Tanager gallery, hospitable to overlapping circles of abstract and figurative painters, lasted ten years; the similarly oriented Hansa, largely showing former students of Hans Hofmann, made it to seven.)

The cause was the burning new significance, for the art world, of uptown. The Abstract Expressionists had burst upon fame and fortune in galleries there. Paintings barely dry were trucked up the avenues. Money and gossip flowed down. Bohemia—shocked, thrilled, jealous—bestirred itself. Those who hadn't yet made the cut uptown (or never would) concatenated scenes that were partly compensatory, partly rebellious, often innovative, and, here and there, a farm system for the big league. The new scene was cut short by the triumphs of Pop art and minimalism, which were spirited up to Fifty-seventh Street by one of the last standing of the fourteen establishments featured in this exhibition, the Green gallery, run by the wizardly Richard Bellamy.

In this downtown heyday, creative synergies transpired: the performative craze of "happenings," by Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg, and others at the Reuben gallery; high jinks galore at Red Grooms's populist City gallery and Delancey Street Museum; avant-garde dance and nascent conceptualism hosted by Yoko Ono at 112 Chambers Street; the politically conscious eclecticism of the Spiral Group, made up of fifteen African-American artists, including Romare Bearden and Norman Lewis; Boris Lurie's ferociously activist and anticommercial March Group; the higher-minded agitation at the Judson Memorial Church's Hall of Issues; and a blossoming of technological aesthetics amid the Park Place group, many of whom were transplanted Californians. In each case at the Grey Art Gallery, you get a whiff of what it was like to be there.

What is most compelling is the vicarious sense of judgments made on the fly, according to the standard that shapes any art scene not distorted by marketing: the esteem of peers. Each cluster of works represents an ephemeral gang, with an alpha, a beta, and members embraced or, at least, tolerated by their associates. To peruse them is to imagine the smoky air and enthused or barbed repartee at clannish openings, which of course still occur (with less smoke) in nether and outer reaches of the city. But you can't beat the passage of half a century to glamorize the energy and pathos of a striving milieu that's been unjustly disregarded.

—Peter Schjeldahl

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Whitney Museum
"Fast Forward: Painting from the 1980s"
Starting in the late nineteen-seventies, young American artists plunged, pell-mell, into making figurative paintings. That seemed ridiculously backward by the lights of the time's reigning vanguards of flinty post-minimalism, cagey conceptualism, and chaste abstraction. The affront was part of the appeal. As with contemporaneous punk music, sheer nerve rocketed impudent twenty-somethings to stardom on New York's downtown scene. The powerful excitement of that moment has been languishing in a blind spot of recent art history, but this show of works by thirty-seven artists from the museum's collection comes to the rescue. Some of the names are famous: Julian Schnabel, David Salle, Eric Fischl, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring. Others, less widely renowned, are solidly established: Susan Rothenberg, Elizabeth Murray, Terry Winters, Carroll Dunham. But even the relatively obscure—including such sleeper heroes as Leon Golub, Robert Colescott, Mary Heilmann, and Moira Dryer—enhance the show's sense of timely revaluing. What the moment meant, what happened to eclipse it, and how its legacy might nourish the present are questions sharply posed. *Through May 14.*

International Center of Photography
"Perpetual Revolution: The Image and Social Change"
A team of curators, led by Carol Squiers and Cynthia Young, have marshalled a bleak vision of contemporary life, filtered through vintage photographs, photojournalism, viral videos, Instagram feeds, and the occasional (and, alas, often superfluous) art work. It's a hard show to love, owing, in large part, to our times themselves, whose myriad conflicts and travails have been pared down by the curators into six thematic sections: climate change, the refugee crisis, ISIS propaganda, police brutality and the response of Black Lives Matter, L.G.B.T.Q. activism, and alt-right Internet memes. (The latter section, which has the impact of a swift punch in the gut, was added post-election.) The show is low on visual flair, but viewers are likely to leave feeling edified, if not uplifted. Most eye-opening, even for jaded news junkies, are the chillingly sophisticated ISIS videos, which bolster the show's tacit argument that there is an arms race of images being waged between the progressive inheritors of the lineage of "Concerned Photography" championed by the museum's founder, Robert Capa, and the rising tide of radical conservatism of varying stripes that seeks to drag us back into the Dark Ages. *Through May 7.*

Morgan Library & Museum
"I'm Nobody! Who Are You? The Life and Poetry of Emily Dickinson"
This intimate exhibition undercuts the popular image of the American poet as a recluse, presenting her as an engaged, rebellious, and eccentric member of an affectionate and intellectual circle of friends. Dickinson often included poems in letters, as gifts, and the handwritten correspondence and original drafts (which display the idiosyncratic annotations and punctuation controversially conventionalized by her later editors) are lovely to behold. "A pang is more conspicuous in spring," circa 1881, is neatly transcribed in pencil on a piece of paper cut into the shape of an arrowlike flag, as if to catch the breeze. Visitors can wander, via a touch-screen display, through the poet's collection of pressed plants and wildflowers, their preserved beauty evoking the intense, spiritual quality of her relationship to the natural world. *Through May 21.*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Che Lovelace
Lovelace, born and based in Trinidad, paints with a rich palette and an authority that makes for distinct, arresting work. His subject, rendered in acrylic on board, is the body in motion and in nature. Poised on the border between Cubism and realism, Lovelace doesn't really belong to any school; part of the beauty of the show lies in watching the artist establish his own rich vocabulary and letting the work stand on its own. He's not afraid of pleasure and knows how much the soul craves color—a refuge during these dark days. *Through Feb. 11. (Half Gallery, 43 E. 78th St. 212-744-0151.)*

"Finesse"
The curator Leah Pires organized a group of cagey conceptual works around a thought from Louise Lawler about institutional critique. Referring to its goals to "subvert or intrude," the artist noted, in 1994, "Those strategies are now recognized and invited. Now it is a matter of finessing, which is certainly not enough." While it's the fatalism in her last clause that speaks most clearly to our present political despair, art marches on, and Pires's exploration of the artist as influencing infiltrator is timely in this era of *kompromat* and "alternative facts." Masterful trompe-l'oeil pin boards by Lucy McKenzie display manufactured evidence, framing her dealer for a petty crime; Jill Magid's blown-up passages from a spy novel relate to a project she undertook with the Dutch secret service, which the agency subsequently censored. Don't worry if the lights in the gallery go dark while you're viewing the show—it's just setting the stage for "Blackout," Karin Schneider's fifteen-minute-long cameraless film projection. *Through March 11. (Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University, Schermerhorn Hall, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7288.)*

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Cynthia Daignault
For this meditation on authorship in the digital age, titled "There Is Nothing I Could Say That I Haven't Thought Before," Daignault invited fellow-artists to lend her their work. The thirty-six who agreed sent her digital images, on which she based a series of oil paintings, each titled with the name of its contributor artist: Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, and so on. (It's worth noting that the show's title is itself borrowed from a Nirvana song.) Daignault's reproductions of the young Brooklyn photographer Sara Cwynar's image of a woman's fingers on a picture of "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and of the German conceptualist Peter Dreher's one-thousand-six-hundred-and-fourth painting of a water glass are especially funny. Elsewhere in the space, Daignault takes on the male gaze and institutional critique with equal gusto, if not quite equal brilliance. *Through May 13. (Flag Art Foundation, 545 W. 25th St. 212-206-0220.)*

Adrian Ghenie
The Romanian phenom, whose paintings began fetching seven figures at European auctions three years ago, before many Americans had even heard of him, shows large landscapes and small portraits of heads, in furiously slathered oils, and dense, hyperactive collages. Influenced by Francis Bacon, Ghenie extends the Englishman's way with localized frenzies to entire canvases, though in moods that seem only mildly distraught when compared with Baconian agony. Ghenie has an Old Masterly feel for composition. No matter how heavy the weather on his surfaces, all the elements of his pictures have museum-grade equipoise. The aesthetic gist is a soothing conservatism brought off with exciting-enough pizzazz. *Through Feb. 19. (Pace, 510 W. 25th St. 212-255-4044.)*

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Marina Adams
The American painter, who splits her time between New York and Italy, unabashedly incorporates references to textiles and glazed ceramics into her work, à la Mary Heilmann. The big canvas "Soft Power" pulls your eye around its bright field of wavy, interlocking diamonds; primary colors dominate, but the abstract painter sneaks slices of periwinkle and pale lemon into the loose composition, which could be a cartoon closeup of a harlequin costume. "Bigger" features a kooky vase: two stacked shapes, violet and green, form an hourglass down the middle of the canvas; two green drips pop out from the white background, like a winking pair of quotation marks. *Through Feb. 22. (Salon 94 Bowery, 243 Bowery, at Stanton St. 212-979-0001.)*

Ryan Sullivan
Call it post-zombie or born-again formalism: this young artist's paintings remind us of abstraction's reason for being. Sullivan's big pictures—in cast urethane resin, fibreglass, and epoxy—appear fast and loose at first and last glance, but they deliver epiphanies, deploying pours, drips, swashes, and buckles in clamorous, saturated hues, with full-arm gestures so deft as to feel wristy. It takes some minutes to realize, and then to marvel at, the fact that the dozen works on view possess as many distinctive stylistic logics, as if each one were the only painting in the world. The effect is that of a ruminative intelligence functioning at warp speed. *Through Feb. 22. (Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977.)*

"Truth Bistro"
This group show, curated by the Brazilian artist Gabriel Lima, is opaque but intriguing. There are some low-key delights, including a cheery landscape by the Portuguese artist Pirata, of plastic flowers on corkboard, and scribbled drawings by Blake Rayne and Viola Yeşiltaç, his in pencil and silver cigarette foil, hers in royal-blue fountain-pen ink. More sobering is "Evening Falls," by Pablo Accinelli, a blank piece of photosensitive paper mounted on wood and adorned with four small brass padlocks at the corners, which seems to pay homage to neoconcretism while alluding to the "disappeared" of the artist's native Argentina. A Roomba modified by Craig Kalpakjian to carry a claque of live cockroaches around the room is equal parts sinister and hilarious. *Through Feb. 26. (Matsumiya, 153½ Stanton St. 646-455-3588.)*

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

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

Margaret Glaspy
On "You and I," this twenty-six-year-old Red Bluff, California, native rips and stomps like Pink covering a "Pinkerton" deep cut—it's a crunchy, catchy rock single that's digestible enough to compete for airtime against mainstream pop and R. & B. Glaspy honed her musical passion for three years in Boston, sneaking into extra workshops and master classes after a semester at Berklee, then toured as a backup vocalist for several local bands. Her latest release, "Emotions and Math," arrives via ATO Records, home to Alabama Shakes and King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard; it lives up to its company, nailing crispy grunge gestures with an ambitious sheen and whip-smart songwriting. *(Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-260-4700. Feb. 16.)*

Ladies Night R. & B. Super Jam
On the heels of a New Edition mini-series and a Craig David comeback, a stacked lineup of former heartthrobs and current crooners play to R. & B.'s loyal audience of enthusiasts who took down posters from their bedroom walls long ago but may still relish the chance for an up-close encounter. But, really, it's sheer vocal talent that makes these singers a worthy draw more than two decades after their commercial peaks: **Brian McKnight, Keith Sweat, Eric Benét, Jagged Edge, Dru Hill, Silk, Mario Winans,** and **Big Daddy Kane** can all claim their own corner of urban-contemporary radio to this day, with songs that score celebratory days and nights and make the occasional late-night club set. *(Barclays Center, 620 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. barclayscenter.com. Feb. 9.)*

LQQK Studio
This print operation is a go-to for creative kids hoping to silk-screen T-shirts, reproduce art, or cut business cards—flashier corporate clients include everyone from Tom Sachs and Lucien Smith to *Richardson* magazine. The team also nurses a passion for music: fans can purchase LQQK-designed turntable isolation weights made of marble, a testament to the studio's eye for detail and reverence for d.j. culture. This February, the crew hosts a weekly residency at Black Flamingo, and invites the house d.j. **Eric Duncan,** of DFA Records and Know-Wave Radio, for a guest set at its second installment. *(Black Flamingo, 168 Borinquen Pl., Brooklyn. 718-387-3337. Feb. 9.)*

Public Access TV
This group's début full-length album, "Never Enough," earned critical fanfare in September, including coveted back-to-back plays on Zane Lowe's BBC radio program. The self-contained social dynamics of the downtown post-punks are in evidence with this homecoming show (and, perhaps, in the populist undertones of their name), as their usual tour videographer sets his camera aside to perform as Promise Land, a solo act both combustible and odd. Also supporting are **Splashh,** perhaps the beachiest band from Hackney, London, and the **Britanys,** another local outfit. *(Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-260-4700. Feb. 9.)*

PWR BTTM
Ben Hopkins and Liv Bruce, a guitarist-drummer duo, make knotty, snotty garage pop that's downright vital. Bruce, an affecting lyricist, gives their brimming theatre punk a lively humor and a dark edge: "We can do our makeup in the parking lot / We can get so famous that we both get shot / But right now I'm in the shower," Bruce sings on "Dairy Queen." On their newest single, "Projection," the Bard alums take on the tortured viewpoint of a protagonist who feels shunned by the world beyond his bedroom, and sees no option but "to stay inside." During live sets, the pair perform in floral dresses and gobs of glitter; a sort of drag-in-drag gimmick made forgivable by their stone-serious talent. *(Shea Stadium, 20 Meadow St., Brooklyn. liveatsheastadium.com. Feb. 18.)*

Sampha
A cherished new voice in soul and a welcome new perspective in electronica, this British musician was lauded by music élites well before he had released a proper work of his own; his vocals are often accompanied by little more than an upright piano. After collaborating with such like-minded minimalists as the xx, Sampha released "Too Much," a ballad about taking things lightly, which soon served as the foundation for the standout track near the end of Drake's "Nothing Was the Same." Kanye West tried his hand at this kind of wrenching final act on his latest album, enlisting the singer to soften his booming manifesto "Saint Pablo." But Sampha does fine solo work, too, as displayed on his début album; the lead single, "Timmy's Prayer," boasts imagery as rich as its chords: "My vital organs are beating through / My rib cage opened, my heart ballooned," he sings with vivid tenderness. *(Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. Feb. 9.)*

White Denim
This goofball band from Austin bangs out sweaty, protean rock; the lead singer, James Petralli, sounds, disarmingly, a bit like Stevie Wonder meets the Allman Brothers. The outfit formed as a trio after the musicians met in the bustling live-music scene of their home town. In 2008, they released their début album, "Exposion," and the entrancing balance between loose and tight on such songs as "Shake Shake Shake" revealed an impressive maturity for an unsigned group that had been together for only two years. Since then, they've consistently been one of the best bands playing, tackling a range of styles with the same lax grip: the loopy psychedelia of "Drug" (2011) and the big-city funk of their 2016 cut "Ha Ha Ha Ha (Yeah)" couldn't sound further apart, which is probably just the way they like it. *(Brooklyn Bowl, 61 Wythe Ave., Williamsburg. 718-963-3369. Feb. 10.)*

YOB
Fans and practitioners of heavy metal may use the gloom-and-doom posturing and piercing volume of their chosen genre to mask a handful of emotional and behavioral disorders—but, more curiously, they may also preach spiritual growth. This Oregonian avant-doom act, which has been performing crushing, muscular music for nearly twenty years, is a vehicle for the radically vulnerable inner work of its leader, Mike Scheidt. Behind a shock of chest-length hair and Lennon-style glasses, Scheidt is a regular meditator, and his guttural screams and croaks touch on themes of positivity, personal improvement, and transcendence. The group has fully hit its stride, in the wake of its magisterial 2014 effort, "Clearing the Path to Ascend," and is popular enough to sell out three nights at this North Brooklyn metal club. *(Saint Vitus, 1120 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn. saintvitusbar.com. Feb. 17-19.)*

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Joe Farnsworth and Kenny Washington
There's always been a gladiatorial aspect to jazz. For an extra emphasis on blood sport, head uptown for this mano-a-mano fight to the finish between two supremely accomplished drummers with a mutual taste for hard-bop intensity. Urging on the contestants will be such familiar cohorts as **Eric Alexander,** on tenor saxophone; **Steve Davis,** on trombone; and **Peter Washington**—Kenny's unrelated bandmate in the Bill Charlap trio—on bass. *(Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Feb. 10-12.)*

Marquis Hill Blacktet
The winner of the 2014 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Trumpet Competition, Hill built his considerable reputation in Chicago, where he was raised. His performances and recordings reveal a smart post-bop player who circumvents genre clichés by incorporating elements of hip-hop and contemporary R. & B. into his musical purview. Hill's 2016 Concord Records début, "The Way We Play," is sprinkled with standards, each imaginatively tweaked for reinvention. *(Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. 212-252-5091. Feb. 20-21.)*

Keith Jarrett
The celebrated Keith Jarrett trio, with the bassist Gary Peacock and the drummer Jack DeJohnette, is officially a thing of the past. Going it alone, with a recent concentration on condensed improvisations and standard readings, the pianist is achieving a new peak of resourcefulness and beauty. Although he has his laudable competitors—Brad Mehldau and Fred Hersch among them—no one can really touch Jarrett when it's just the man and his instrument on a stage. The ECM solo recordings, as fine as they are, are merely a simulacrum of the routinely elating live experience. *(Carnegie Hall, Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. Feb. 15.)*

John Lloyd Young
Is there life after Frankie Valli? Young, who won a Tony and a slew of other theatrical awards for his portrayal of the Four Seasons singer in the Broadway mega hit "Jersey Boys" (as well as reprising the role in Clint Eastwood's film adaptation), has been attempting to satisfactorily answer that question ever since he left the show. To his credit, Young doesn't lean on his alter ego's hits, instead forging his own identity by way of a sharp taste in classic pop that showcases his flexible voice. *(Café Carlyle, Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. 212-744-1600. Feb. 14-25.)*

DANCE

New York City Ballet
Peter Martins's 1991 staging of "The Sleeping Beauty" is a compact, streamlined version of what many consider to be the most sparkling of Tchaikovsky's ballets. The original four acts have been telescoped into two, with the help of projections that move the action swiftly from scene to scene. Inevitably, some of the ballet's Old World charm has been sacrificed, particularly in the chatty mime sequences, of which the original had many. But the designs are elegant, the divertissements are clever, and George Balanchine's "Garland Dance," from 1981—which the production incorporates—is a little jewel. • Feb. 8-9 and Feb. 14-16 at 7:30, Feb. 10 and Feb. 17 at 8, Feb. 11 and Feb. 18 at 2 and 8, Feb. 12 at 1 and 7, and Feb. 19 at 3: "The Sleeping Beauty." *(David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Feb. 26.)*

Centre Choreographique National—Ballet de Lorraine
The contemporary dance company, a laboratory for new work based in Amiens, in northern France, makes its first visit to New York. Particularly interesting is "Sounddance" (on Program A), a furiously paced Merce Cunningham work from 1975 in which the dancers enter and exit the stage through a weird tentlike structure. Program B consists of a single evening-length dance cobbled together from the efforts of five choreographers whose identities are kept intentionally hidden, allowing the audience to experience the dance without preconceptions. *(Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 7-12.)*

Andrea Kleine
As its title suggests, "My Dinner with Andrea: The Piece Formerly Known as Torture Playlist" began as a response to the C.I.A.'s use of music as torture but morphed into something closer to the talky 1981 film "My Dinner with André." Performance pieces by the smart, self-aware Kleine, who is also a novelist, tend to be self-reflexive, questioning their own purpose. This one has an original score by the eclectic drummer Bobby Previte, who joins other musicians to play it live. *(New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 9-11.)*

Monica Bill Barnes & Company
"Bringing dance where it doesn't belong" is Barnes's characteristically tongue-in-cheek motto, and her latest project, "The Museum Workout," certainly has chutzpah. She and her longtime dance partner, Anna Bass, lead tours of the Metropolitan Museum of Art which incorporate choreographed exercise. Their collaborator is the illustrator and frequent *New Yorker* contributor Maira Kalman, who designed the course and provides recorded commentary on a soundtrack of Motown and disco. *(Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Feb. 9-12.)*

Matthew Rogers
Long a striking performer in works by Tere O'Connor, Rogers has a sensitive, dishevelled, possibly ironic presence, reminiscent of Owen Wilson. Since 2012, he's been living in Germany and Slovakia, and he returns to New York with "A Fragile Son," a piece made up of movements, words, and objects collected in Europe. *(JACK, 505½ Waverly Ave., Brooklyn. jackny.org. Feb. 9-12.)*

A.B.T. Studio Company / Royal Ballet School
The Royal Ballet School and American Ballet Theatre's studio company (made up of top students from A.B.T.'s school) collaborate for an evening of mixed repertory and a première, in which the companies dance together, by Liam Scarlett. For the most part, the young Britons will stick to pieces from the canon of British ballet: the gooey pas de deux from Kenneth MacMillan's "Concerto," set to Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto, as well as excerpts from Frederick Ashton's formal and bubbly "Birthday Offering." In contrast, the American ensemble will perform new works created specifically for it by up-and-coming dance-makers: Marcelo Gomes (a current member of A.B.T.) and Ethan Stiefel (a recent alum). *(N.Y.U. Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-998-4941. Feb. 10-11.)*

Martha Graham Dance Company
This season's theme, "Sacred and Profane," is another catchall label for the ninety-one-year-old company's recent habit of juxtaposing classics by its late founder with lesser, contemporary stabs at relevance. Among the premières, a riff on Graham's 1941 comic dance "Punch and the Judy," by the always smart Annie-B Parson (with text by Will Eno), sounds more promising than a take on Sufi mysticism by the gifted but sentimental Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. Among the repertory pieces (two of which are distressingly excerpted), the standout is the first revival in more than a decade of "Primitive Mysteries" (1931): an intense, all-female ritual that shows Graham's genius in its early, most severe form. *(Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 14-19 and Feb. 21. Through Feb. 26.)*

Michelle Dorrance with Nicholas Van Young
Over the decades, the spiralling center of the Guggenheim Museum has housed much great art and many concerts, but never before has it been played as a musical instrument. For the "Works & Process Rotunda Project," audience members stand on the curving ramps as performers from Dorrance Dance above and below them beat surfaces with sticks, sing, dance, and direct viewer participation in making the building resonate in rhythm. Dorrance, who won a MacArthur award in 2013, and her collaborator, Nicholas Van Young, are topnotch tap dancers, but this project, presented three times in one night, draws more on their shared experience in the found-percussion show "Stomp." *(Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3500. Feb. 16.)*

José Maya
Maya is a virile performer with crisp footwork. Like several other flamenco dancers born into the Gypsy tradition in the past few decades, he has dabbled in other forms and dallied with pop stars—the perfect setup for a prodigal-son return to roots. "Latente: A Flamenco Journey" is that kind of show, a back-to-basics inward search, with the famed Gypsy singer Juana la del Pipa serving as ancestral guide. *(Schimmel Center, Pace University, 3 Spruce St. 866-811-4111. Feb. 17.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera
Richard Eyre's semi-traditional staging of **"Werther,"** in which video segments and nineteenth-century-style costumes co-exist, has a mellow, sostenuto quality appropriate for the most warmly lyrical of Massenet's operas. It returns to the Met with the Italian tenor Vittorio Grigolo—a dynamic, irresistible young lover in the Met's recent production of Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette"—as the work's moony, melancholic poet. Isabel Leonard, Anna Christy, David Bizic, and Maurizio Muraro fill out a promising cast; Edward Gardner conducts. *Feb. 16 and Feb. 20 at 7:30.* • Bellini's **"I Puritani"** is known in opera circles as little more than a showcase—albeit, a stunning one—for a gifted coloratura soprano, thanks to a breathtaking twenty-minute mad scene that comes smack-dab in the middle of the work. The German soprano Diana Damrau, a house favorite, shares the stage with the tenor Javier Camarena, an assured bel-canto stylist who has the taste and technique to leave a lasting impression as well. Also with Alexey Markov and Luca Pisaroni; Maurizio Benini. *Feb. 10 and Feb. 14 at 7:30 and Feb. 18 at 1.* • **Also playing:** Bartlett Sher's first production for the Met, a fleet-footed and sun-soaked **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** remains one of his best. Three distinctive singers—Pretty Yende, Peter Mattei, and Dmitry Korchak—head up the cast as Rossini's lovable rapscallions; Maurizio Benini. (These are the final performances.) *Feb. 8 at 7:30 and Feb. 11 at 8.* • The title role of Dvořák's **"Rusalka,"** a tender opera with roots in fairy tales and folklore, was once a great vehicle for the career of the soprano Renée Fleming; now, in a new production by Mary Zimmerman, it may serve the same purpose for Kristine Opolais. The first-rate cast also includes Jamie Barton, Katarina Dalayman, Brandon Jovanovich, and Eric Owens; Mark Elder. *Feb. 9, Feb. 13, and Feb. 21 at 7:30 and Feb. 17 at 8.* • The French mezzo-soprano Clémentine Margaine takes on the fiery Gypsy of Bizet's **"Carmen,"** leading a fine cast that also includes Roberto Aronica (Don José), Maria Agresta (Micaëla), and Kyle Ketelsen; Asher Fisch. (Louis Langrée takes the podium in the final two performances, with Marcelo Álvarez scheduled to perform the role of Don José.) *Feb. 11 at 1, Feb. 15 at 7:30, and Feb. 18 at 8. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)*

Juilliard Opera: "Agrippina"
The conservatory has made a minor specialty of Handel's operas, a wise way to prepare its students for a professional environment in which his works continue to be quite popular. Jeffrey Grossman conducts Juilliard415, the conservatory's well-schooled early-music ensemble, and Louisa Proske directs a production co-presented by Carnegie Hall's "La Serenissima" festival. (Note: Laurence Cummings conducts a concert performance of the work at Alice Tully Hall on Feb. 11.) *Feb. 18 at 2 and Feb. 20 at 7:30. (Willson Theatre, Juilliard School, 155 W. 65th St. events.juilliard.edu.)*

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic
The orchestra's Tchaikovsky festival, under the direction of Semyon Bychkov, wraps up with a program that features a work that Bychkov recently recorded to excellent effect: the Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique." The concerts begin with the "Oresteia" Overture, by Taneyev, a gifted friend and pupil of Tchaikovsky's, and with Tchaikovsky's turbulent tone poem "Francesca da Rimini." *Feb. 9 at 7:30 and Feb. 10-11 at 8.* • Manfred Honeck, a talented Austrian conductor of solidly conservative instincts, leads mid-February's second subscription program, which has an accent on youth. Inon Barnatan, the widely admired young pianist, joins the orchestra in Beethoven's Concerto No. 1 in C Major; after intermission comes Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in D Major, another irrepressible early-career work. *Feb. 15-16 at 7:30, Feb. 17 at 2, and Feb. 18 at 8.* • In a recital co-sponsored by the Philharmonic and Lincoln Center, a star of the violin—Leonidas Kavakos—and a superstar of the piano—Yuja Wang—team up to perform sonatas for violin and piano by Janáček, Debussy, and Bartók (the First Sonata) as well as Schubert's Fantasy in C Major. *Feb. 8 at 7:30. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)*

"La Serenissima: Music and Arts from the Venetian Republic"
Carnegie Hall's fabulous winter festival ends its run with a plethora of concerts by groups, both European and New York-grown, with genuine expertise in the Italian Baroque. Among the highlights at Carnegie's three spaces are appearances by the chamber ensemble Quicksilver, performing stylistically progressive works by Castello, Cima, and Vivaldi; by the gambist Jordi Savall and his impeccable ensemble Hespèrion XXI, who explore the influence of Venetian composers across Europe; by the choral group TENET, which pays tribute to the pioneering seventeenth-century composer Barbara Strozzi; and by Concerto Italiano, which closes the festival with a concert performance of Monteverdi's thrilling opera "The Coronation of Poppea." *(Through Feb. 21. For tickets and a complete listing of concerts and other events, visit carnegiehall.org.)*

Orchestra of St. Luke's: "A German Requiem"
Pablo Heras-Casado leads the outstanding orchestra—along with the vocal soloists Sophie Karthäuser and Florian Boesch and the chorus Musica Sacra—in Brahms's stately and deeply moving work, which draws its texts from Luther's German version of the Bible. The program begins with Lutosławski's "Musique Funèbre," for strings. *Feb. 16 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

Orchestre National de Lyon
Leonard Slatkin, the distinguished music director of the Detroit Symphony, has also enjoyed a substantial relationship with this superb French ensemble. Two star vocalists—Renée Fleming, who sings, and Thomas Hampson, who narrates—join him in a concert dominated by music by Ravel: "Shéhérazade," the Suite No. 2 from "Daphnis et Chloé," and a true rarity, the composer's arrangement of music from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Antar" Suite. In addition, a work by the French composer Guillaume Connesson will have its U.S. première. *Feb. 20 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

RECITALS

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
A prime selection of the Society's artists—including the cellist and Society co-director David Finckel—gather in honor of Mendelssohn. The program closes with Mendelssohn's crowd-pleasing Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor; the lead-ins include the composer's Quartet in E Minor, Op. 44, No. 2 (performed by the exacting Escher String Quartet), and pieces by Schubert and Mozart (the Adagio in B Minor, played by the pianist Jeffrey Kahane). *Feb. 10 at 7:30 and Feb. 12 at 5. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)*

Igor Levit
The brilliant young Russian pianist, who has a renegade streak to go with his exemplary technique, comes to Zankel Hall to perform preludes and fugues by Shostakovich; the U.S. première of a work by a legendary piano paragon, Frederic Rzewski (Part II of "Dreams"); and Beethoven's towering "Diabelli Variations." *Feb. 10 at 7:30. (212-247-7800.)*

Kronos Quartet
America's archetypal new-music string quartet arrives at Zankel Hall to play new works, including six commissioned by Carnegie Hall, before its rendition of the minimalist master Steve Reich's Triple Quartet. World-première compositions are expected from, among others, Garth Knox, Kala Ramnath, Nicole Lizée, and the celebrated pop singer and roots musician Rhiannon Giddens. *Feb. 11 at 7:30. (212-247-7800.)*

Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt
The stirring duo, consisting of Tezlaff, the exuberant violin iconoclast, and Vogt, his intense but unshowy pianist friend, presents a hot ticket at the 92nd Street Y. Beethoven's bracing Violin Sonata No. 7 in C Minor is the main draw, while Bartók's Violin Sonata No. 2 and pieces by Mozart and Schubert (the Rondo in B Minor, D. 895) offer variety and virtuosity. *Feb. 15 at 7:30. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)*

PubliQuartet: "What Is American?"
The outgoing young string quartet, in residence at the Metropolitan Museum this year, leads a maverick program that explores American identity. Teaming up with a string ensemble from the Mannes School of Music, it presents works by Marc Mellits and by the young African-American composer Jessie Montgomery ("Voodoo Dolls" and "Banner"), in addition to an offbeat performance of Dvořák's "American" Quartet that will involve improvisation. *Feb. 16 at 7. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)*

Piotr Anderszewski
The celebrated Polish pianist returns to New York for a recital in the grand style: music by Mozart, Chopin (including the Three Mazurkas, Op. 59), and Bach (the English Suite No. 6 in D Minor). *Feb. 17 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

New York Festival of Song: "Picnic Cantata"
This quirky piece, with music by the eccentric author and composer Paul Bowles and texts by the poet James Schuyler, is a cynosure of the postwar New York School and the foundation of the festival's latest concert, which also includes new music by William Bolcom (a preview of his forthcoming opera "Dinner at Eight") and the singer-songwriter Gabriel Kahane ("Six Packets of Oatmeal"). The performers include the soprano Amy Owens, the baritone Jesse Blumberg, and, at the keyboard, the group's directors, Steven Blier and Michael Barrett. *Feb. 21 at 8. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330.)*

Paging Geraldine

Angelica Page conjures the late, great star who was also her mother.

GERALDINE PAGE, WHO was born in Missouri in 1924, was an original and ferocious actress—some thought the greatest of her generation—whose sense of the gothic was profound. She played everything from Alexandra Del Lago in Tennessee Williams's "Sweet Bird of Youth" to the disturbed head of a school for young women in Clint Eastwood's early film "The Beguiled." In role after role, Page pierced the skin of a character's more disconcerting qualities, illustrating the psychic disturbances and the hidden joys of being human, of feeling strange in a strange land.

Page had her first big success in the 1952 revival of Williams's "Summer and Smoke." Reflecting on her work in that show, the revolutionary director José Quintero said that no actress used props the way Page did: she made them more real, somehow. (Page was nominated for an Oscar for her starring role in the 1961 screen adaptation.) She won an Emmy each time she played Miss Sook, Truman Capote's Alabama-born cousin, in television adaptations of Capote's classic short stories "A Christmas Memory" and "The Thanksgiving Visitor," and the writer marvelled at Page's ability to inhabit so accurately a woman she had never met. In 1959, James Baldwin was working as a kind of apprentice on Elia Kazan's production of "Sweet Bird," and he later wrote that at first he felt sort of sorry for Page—how could that girl with the open Midwestern face become a fading movie star, a gargoyle of need? But she did it, going on to star, too, in the director Richard Brooks's 1962 film adaptation of the project, which also starred Paul Newman. In the movie you notice not Newman but Page, whose outrageously stylized performance is meant to match the high drama inherent in Williams's words.

Indeed, Page very much admired the American authors whose work she gave voice to through her imagination. When she finally won the Best Actress Oscar, in 1986, for portraying Carrie Watts in Horton Foote's "The Trip to Bountiful," a year before her death, she spent a great deal of her acceptance speech thanking Foote.

Now her daughter, the stellar actress Angelica Page, is paying homage to this monumental artist in her stage piece "Turning Page" (at Dixon Place, beginning previews Feb. 10). The fifty-two-year-old actress, Page's only daughter, with her second husband, the actor Rip Torn, plays herself and her mother in a self-penned monologue that goes to the heart of all sorts of complications. In the piece, the younger Page, who was outstanding in "Edge," a one-woman show about Sylvia Plath, in 2003, tells funny anecdotes about the eccentric older Page. (Capote said she had legs that were the equal of Marlene Dietrich's but chose to hide behind eccentric costumes; she was also a famously bad housekeeper.) By telling her mother's story, Angelica Page is, of course, telling her own story, and not just that of a daughter yearning for a mother's love. She's telling how one artist inspired another to get out there night after night and express the inexpressible: that tremendous, sometimes heartbreaking, but ultimately fulfilling desire to display body and soul, all in an effort to call them one's own.

—Hilton Als

ILLUSTRATION BY SARA ANDREASSON

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

All the Fine Boys
Abigail Breslin stars in Erica Schmidt's play at the New Group, in which two teen-age girls in nineteen-eighties South Carolina pursue their crushes and grapple with adulthood. *(Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Previews begin Feb. 14.)*

Big River
Encores! presents this 1984 musical version of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," with songs by the country singer Roger Miller. Lear deBessonet directs. *(City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Feb. 8-12.)*

Bull in a China Shop
Bryna Turner's comedy, directed by Lee Sunday Evans for LCT3, follows forty years in the lives of the women's-education pioneer Mary Woolley and her partner, Jeannette Marks. *(Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Feb. 11.)*

Come from Away
The Canadian duo Irene Sankoff and David Hein wrote this new musical, about a tiny Newfoundland town that was forced to accommodate thousands of stranded passengers on September 11, 2001. *(Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Feb. 18.)*

Escaped Alone
The Royal Court Theatre's production of the Caryl Churchill comedy alternates between scenes of women chatting in a back yard and monologues recounting apocalyptic disasters. *(BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Opens Feb. 15.)*

Evening at the Talk House
The New Group stages Wallace Shawn's play, in which a playwright and a group of actors reunite ten years after a flop. The cast features Shawn, Matthew Broderick, John Epperson, and Claudia Shear. *(Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. In previews. Opens Feb. 16.)*

Everybody
In Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's latest work, a modern spin on the fifteenth-century morality play "Everyman," the actor playing the main character is assigned by lottery each night. Lila Neugebauer directs. *(Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529. In previews. Opens Feb. 21.)*

Fade
Primary Stages presents Tanya Saracho's play, directed by Jerry Ruiz, about the friendship of two employees of Mexican heritage at a Hollywood studio, a writer and a janitor. *(Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111. Opens Feb. 8.)*

The Glass Menagerie
Sally Field plays the redoubtable Southern matriarch Amanda Wingfield in Sam Gold's revival of the Tennessee Williams drama, opposite Joe Mantello as Tom. *(Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)*

Good Samaritans
The downtown auteur Richard Maxwell remounts his 2004 play with music, in which the manager of a rehabilitation center has an affair with one of the addicts. *(Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand St. 212-352-3101. In previews. Opens Feb. 15.)*

Joan of Arc: Into the Fire
David Byrne and Alex Timbers follow up their Imelda Marcos disco musical, "Here Lies Love," with this rock-concert retelling of the rise of Joan of Arc (Jo Lampert). *(Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Previews begin Feb. 14.)*

The Light Years
The Debate Society's latest piece, written by Hannah Bos and Paul Thureen and directed by Oliver Butler, is set at a theatrical spectacle at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. *(Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Previews begin Feb. 17.)*

Man from Nebraska
David Cromer directs a 2003 play by Tracy Letts ("August: Osage County"), about a Midwestern man (Reed Birney) who sets off on a quest to restore his sense of faith. *(Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. In previews. Opens Feb. 15.)*

A Man of Good Hope
South Africa's Isango Ensemble adapts Jonny Steinberg's book, which recounts a Somalian refugee's journey to Johannesburg, in a marimba-infused co-production with the Young Vic. *(BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 15-19.)*

The Object Lesson
Geoff Sobelle created this installation theatre piece, which transforms the space into a cluttered storage facility where audience members can roam and explore. David Neumann directs. *(New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475. In previews. Opens Feb. 9.)*

On the Exhale
Marin Ireland plays a professor whose life is upended by gun violence in Martín Zimmerman's play, directed by Leigh Silverman for Roundabout Underground. *(Black Box, Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. In previews. Opens Feb. 19.)*

The Penitent
Neil Pepe directs a new play by David Mamet, in which a psychiatrist faces a professional and moral crisis when he refuses to testify on behalf of a patient in court. *(Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111. In previews.)*

The Price
Mark Ruffalo, Danny DeVito, Jessica Hecht, and Tony Shalhoub star in the Roundabout's revival of the 1968 Arthur Miller play, in which a man returns to his childhood home to sell off his parents' estate. *(American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Previews begin Feb. 16.)*

See Reverse
Broken Box Mime Theatre presents short works of modern mime, covering everything from political protest to film noir. *(A.R.T./New York Theatres, 502 W. 53rd St. 800-838-3006. Previews begin Feb. 17. Opens Feb. 21.)*

Significant Other
Joshua Harmon's angsty comedy moves to Broadway, starring Gideon Glick as a gay New Yorker searching for a life partner as his female friends keep finding husbands. Trip Cullman directs. *(Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Feb. 14.)*

The Skin of Our Teeth
Theatre for a New Audience stages Thornton Wilder's 1942 comic allegory, which traces humankind from prehistory to twentieth-century New Jersey and beyond. Arin Arbus directs. *(Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111. Previews begin Feb. 14.)*

Sunday in the Park with George
Jake Gyllenhaal plays the Pointillist master Georges Seurat and Annaleigh Ashford is his muse, in a limited run of the 1984 Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine musical. *(Hudson, 139-141 W. 44th St. 855-801-5876. Previews begin Feb. 11.)*

Sunset Boulevard
Glenn Close returns to the role of Norma Desmond in the 1993 Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, based on Billy Wilder's classic portrait of Hollywood desuetude. Lonny Price directs. *(Palace, Seventh Ave. at 47th St. 877-250-2929. In previews. Opens Feb. 9.)*

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
London's Tooting Arts Club transfers its version of the Stephen Sondheim musical thriller, staged in an immersive pie-shop environment where the audience is served pie and mash. *(Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-352-3101. Previews begin Feb. 14.)*

The View UpStairs
This new musical by Max Vernon, directed by Scott Ebersold, revisits the New Orleans gay bar that was the site of a deadly arson attack in 1973. *(Lynn Redgrave, 45 Bleecker St. 866-811-4111. Previews begin Feb. 15.)*

NOW PLAYING

Jitney
The director Ruben Santiago-Hudson handles the large cast of August Wilson's 1982 drama with verve—an actor himself, he is sensitive to their needs—while he keeps the story moving. The central plot concerns Becker (John Douglas Thompson), the earnest owner of a gypsy-cab business in Pittsburgh. It's 1977, and the world is changing: the block Becker's business is on may be razed in the name of progress. Still, he and his drivers, all played by actors of great skill and humor, want to hold on to the past. Particularly excellent are Michael Potts, as the emotionally tightfisted Turnbo, and the rising new star André Holland, who plays Youngblood. Holland brings to mind late black actors like Howard Rollins and Paul Winfield—performers who didn't play their race but added it to a character's complexities. There's a little too much blues music to mark the transitions, but that's a minor drag compared to the uniformly good work of Manhattan Theatre Club's ensemble. *(Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)*

The Liar
After "The School for Lies" and "The Heir Apparent," David Ives returns with a new "translaptation," as he puts it, of an old French play. Corneille's 1643 story is a standard comedy of errors, rife with mistaken identities, randy lords, and saucy ladies. The titular character is a patho-

logical fabulist (Christian Conn) saddled with a truth-telling servant (Carson Elrod). The point, however, isn't so much the plot as Ives's facility with verse—the show delivers a barrage of inspired rhymes, some of them delighting in anachronisms. ("Find an asbestos tux and button it well, / Because I'll only marry you in Hell," our con man is told by his feisty flame.) They dazzle so much that you may overlook the relatively sluggish pace set by characters who often just stand there and orate, drunk on their own fizzy wordplay. *(Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111.)*

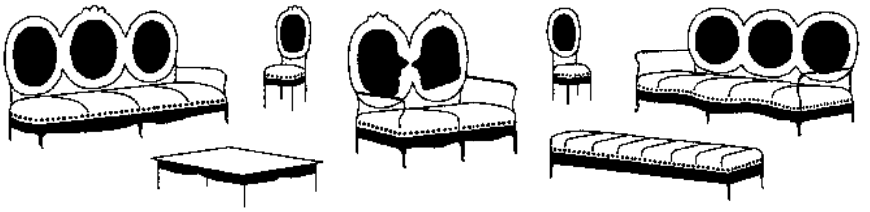
The Tempest
Given its themes of imprisonment and liberty, this play makes an ideal conclusion to the director Phyllida Lloyd's acclaimed trilogy of all-female Shakespeare shows set in a women's prison. Harriet Walter conjures Prospero by way of a respected old lifer named Hannah Wake. She and her fellow-inmates seem to be imagining their lives into Shakespeare's scenes (the storm that opens the play is a cell-block riot, and shipwrecked characters arrive as new inmates), sometimes losing themselves in fantasy, until harsh prison horns abruptly end their playacting. The most painful interruption comes during Miranda and Ferdinand's betrothal masque, which takes the form of a dazzling consumerist reverie projected onto giant white balloons, and which Prospero literally punctures, forcing the women back to the hard reality of the cell block. *(St. Ann's Warehouse, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through Feb. 19.)*

Yen
Hench and Bobbie are brothers who live alone in a decaying London flat, sharing a shirt between them and subsisting on pornography, video games, and shoplifted snacks. Neglected by their alcoholic mother (Ari Graynor), they in turn neglect their pet dog, Taliban, attracting the attention of a concerned neighbor (Stefania LaVie Owen). At first, Anna Jordan's lurid and bleak drama at MCC seems like a mere dirt wallow among the disadvantaged. But the play also explores the social factors that have debased these characters and what remedies, if any, exist. The director, Trip Cullman, can't disguise the discursive structure, but his production is strong and stylish, especially in its more abstract moments. The cast, which includes Justice Smith and Lucas Hedges ("Manchester by the Sea") as the brothers, struggles with the meaty English accents, but all the actors get their teeth into the disquieting relationships. *(Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101. Through Feb. 19.)*

ALSO NOTABLE

Dear Evan Hansen Music Box. • **If I Forget** Laura Pels. • **In Transit** Circle in the Square. • **Kid Victory** Vineyard. • **Linda** City Center Stage I. • **Made in China** 59E59. *Through Feb. 19*. • **Mope** Ensemble Studio Theatre. *Through Feb. 19*. • **Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812** Imperial. • **Orange Julius** Rattlestick. *Through Feb. 12*. • **The Oregon Trail** McGinn/Cazale. *Through Feb. 12*. • **The Present** Ethel Barrymore. • **Ring Twice for Miranda** City Center Stage II. • **Tell Hector I Miss Him** Atlantic Stage 2. *Through Feb. 19*. • **The Town Hall Affair** The Performing Garage. • **Wakey, Wakey** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Yours Unfaithfully** Beckett. *Through Feb. 18*.

ABOVE & BEYOND



Venetian Valentine Commedia Masked Ball
The Grand Prospect Hall, in Brooklyn, hosts a surrealistic formal as part of Carnegie Hall's "La Serenissima: Music and Arts from the Venetian Republic." Dances of Vice, a night-life agency specializing in baroque costumed events, has helped conjure this Valentine's Day ball inspired by the Carnevale di Venezia. Participants are treated to live music, opera, circus acts, sinuous burlesque performances, and immersive theatre, with appearances by the troupe Company XIV. Black tie, fantasy dress, and Carnevale-themed attire are welcome, and tables can be reserved for a 7 P.M. dinner, which will be served before doors open to the general public. *(263 Prospect Ave. 718-788-0777. Feb. 11 at 9.)*

The Orchid Show
This edition of the New York Botanical Garden's annual Orchid Show, now in its fifteenth year, focusses on Thailand's rich history and the flower's cultural status as one of the country's leading exports. Held in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, the display features blooming orchids by the hundreds in lush tropical environments, leading into an arched installment styled in the manner of a traditional Thai pavilion. The schedule includes several panel discussions, tours, and after-hours viewings with music and cocktails. *(2900 Southern Blvd., the Bronx. 718-817-8700. Feb. 18-April 9.)*

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

On Valentine's Day (Feb. 14), **Swann** will hold an auction of photographs. There's nothing particularly romantic here, unless you count a gorgeous albumen print of San Francisco, taken from atop Telegraph Hill circa 1868 by the California photographer Carleton Watkins, with San Francisco Bay and the Marin Peninsula in the distance. Students of twentieth-century history might go for a series of portraits taken by the filmmaker, photographer, and Nazi propagandist Leni Riefenstahl during the 1936 Olympics, in Berlin—including one of the runner Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals, much to the consternation of Adolf Hitler. *(104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)*

READINGS AND TALKS

Berl's Brooklyn Poetry Shop
"Walls are built in the mind," the Nigerian playwright and poet Wole Soyinka observed; this week, a group of mixed-race writers addressing the current political climate use poetry as a medium to break walls down. For an event titled "The Pure Products of Miscegenation Go Crazy," poets such as Geneva Chao and Cynthia Arrieu-King consider their place in a social and political discourse that, from the national level to the kitchen table, has increasingly stratified Americans, and overlooked the experiences of those who may not fall so neatly within established borders. *(141 Front St., Brooklyn. berlspoetry.com. Feb. 9 at 7.)*

92nd Street Y
"A Christmas Carol," published by Charles Dickens in 1843, is so ubiquitous that it has grown past literature into something more closely resembling folklore. But, despite countless references to the text in popular culture, few consider its contexts or its author's motivations, and the story is rarely compared with other prevalent works. Adam Gopnik, a staff writer for this magazine, starts a discussion about Dickens's enduring vision of Christmas in his holiday classic and other works, discussing the author's legacy and excavating details on his largely forgotten Jewish protégé, Benjamin Farjeon. *(Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 92y.org. Feb. 12 at 11 A.M.)*

New York Public Library
Robert Storr, the provocative former dean of the Yale University School of Art, spent more than two decades working closely with Louise Bourgeois on the first comprehensive book cataloguing the French artist's works over a career spanning nearly seventy-five years. "Intimate Geometries: The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois" arrived last year, and includes more than a thousand illustrations, plus richly detailed personal anecdotes about the artist's life. Storr discusses the publication and reflects on Bourgeois's contributions at this reading with the editor and *Bookforum* columnist Christopher Lyon. *(Schwarzman Building, 476 Fifth Ave. nypl.org. Feb. 15 at 6.)*

Strand Bookstore
The blogger Jessa Crispin stopped publishing her book-review site, Bookslut, last April, after fourteen years of working to infuse the literary world, which she saw as insular and monotone, with alternative voices. "We're not allowed to say, 'The Paris Review is boring as fuck!'" she observed to the *Guardian* shortly after closing her site. (She also likened this publication to a "dentist magazine.") If the provocative writer's success is stoked by forbidden phrases, she has possibly struck gold with "Why I Am Not a Feminist," which denounces modern concepts of gender equality. Crispin indicts feminism as a codification of struggle, insisting that true resistance doesn't involve a desire for participation in the status quo but instead should aim to dismantle oppressive systems altogether, a stance that she'll advocate at this reading and discussion, featuring Rachel Dry, the editor of the *Times* Sunday Review. *(828 Broadway. 212-473-1452. Feb. 21 at 7.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO AMARGO

TABLES FOR TWO

Chinese Tuxedo

5 Doyers St. (646-895-9301)

DOYERS, ONE OF Chinatown's oldest streets, has a new resident. Once upon a time, the quaint bend in this serpentine alley (previously known, unsubtly, as the Blood Angle) abetted all manner of ambushes and skullduggery during gang warfare. It is now home to Chinese Tuxedo, a reincarnation of a restaurant that was located across the street a century ago, when it boasted of being the finest eatery in Chinatown and its name evoked colonial Shanghai glamour and lascivious vices.

Today's Tuxedo is in a former opera house, and a certain theatrical allure extends to the parade of well-heeled patrons who glide into its dim, capacious parlor. The restaurant is the brainchild of the Australian restaurateur Eddy Buckingham and Jeff Lam, from China, who insists that the cuisine is not Chinese but "globalized Asian contemporary." This makes sense, given the culinary résumé of its executive chef, Paul Donnelly, a millennial Scotsman and an alum of the acclaimed Asian-fusion eatery Ms.G's, in Sydney. "If you dig deep enough in a dish, you find its nostalgia," Donnelly is fond of saying.

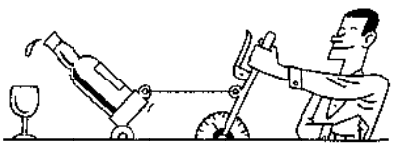
Like the establishment itself, Tuxedo's menu is a palimpsest, revealing both the past and the present. Of the snacks, the steak tartare stands out, not only for its unabashedly Western appellation but also because its medallions of ginger-and-lime-dressed chopped raw beef, dusted with peppercorns and nestled on homemade rice crackers, are unequivocally delicious.

The unassumingly named crispy eggplant plumbs the depths of the Sichuanese classic eggplant with garlic sauce, and delivers a delectable original, fried to a flavorful crunch and tossed to a glistening plum gold in a peanut-soy-garlic caramel. The best dumplings on the menu are called raviolis, but are actually enveloped in translucent wonton skins. This is a good thing, because it allows for maximum absorption of the addictive jicama-and-shallot dressing, topped off with silken garlic chives.

Salads are scarce in most East Asian cuisines, but here the roasted-duck-and-Chinese-celery dish is a knockout. Who knew that the breast meat of a bird could melt in your mouth, and that it pairs splendidly with lychees? Still inventive but less inspired is the mapo lo mein, a cross between the Sichuanese staple mapo tofu and spaghetti Bolognese: a tad too salty without the complex heat of a traditional mapo. The baby bass, the second-most-expensive item on offer, is more perfunctory than memorable. Not every dish that upends expectations can exceed them. At Tuxedo, at least, the past is distilled well (and often) enough on the plate that it pays to take a chance on its latest iteration. *(Dishes $19–$58.)*

—Jiayang Fan

BAR TAB

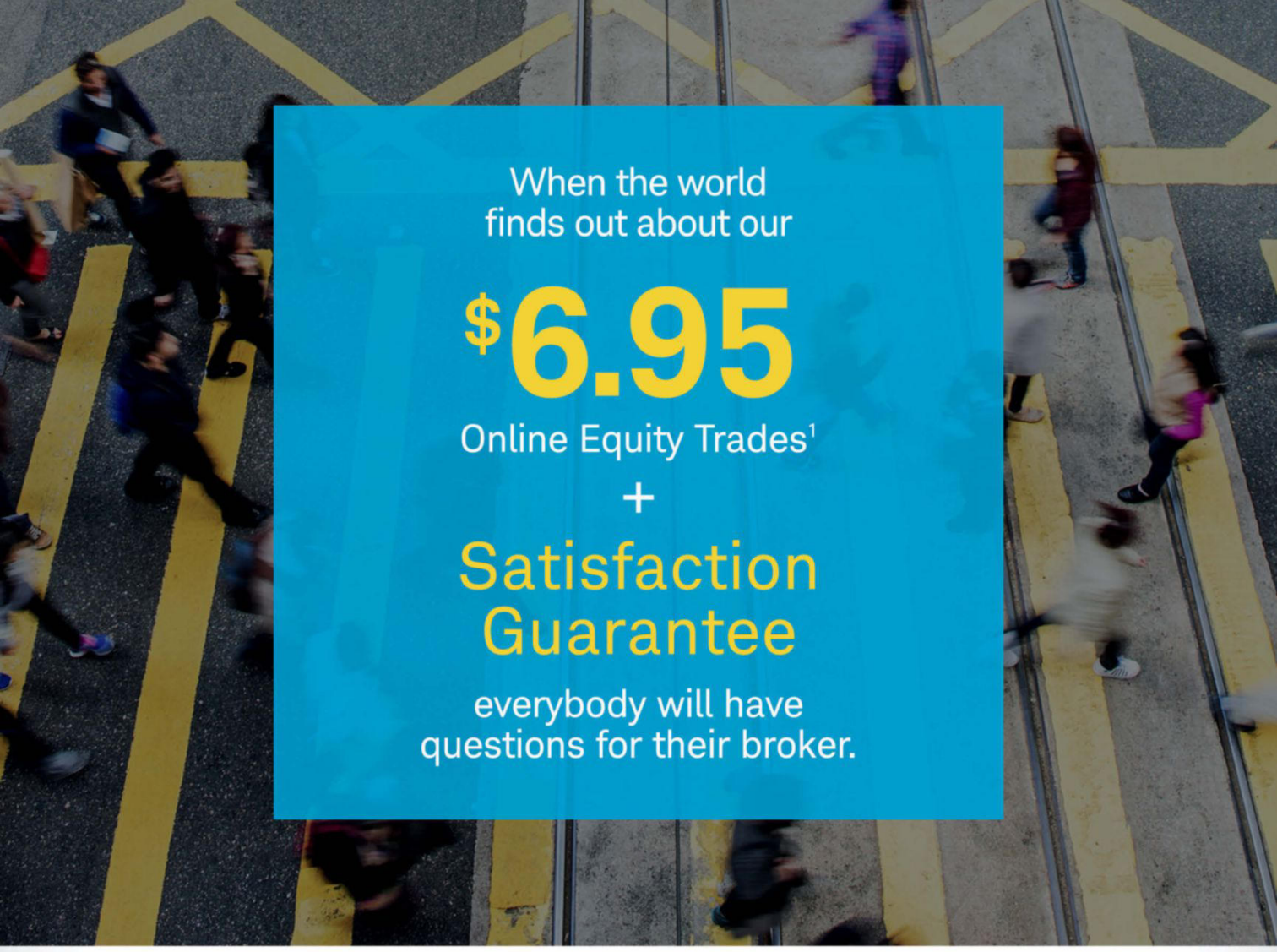


Karasu

166 DeKalb Ave., Brooklyn (347-223-4811)

These days, clandestine bars are more likely to elicit groans than curiosity. We have, in other words, surpassed peak speakeasy. So a drinking establishment must be very good to be worth seeking out, by, say, first roaming through Walter's, a brunch mainstay in Fort Greene. Behind a door at the back of the restaurant, Karasu's lounge materializes like a photographic negative of what came before. Where there was light, there is inky, elegant darkness. Where there was bright chatter, there are jazz records spun at a volume that underpins conversation without overtaking it. On a recent Saturday night, the bartender Frank Cisneros, who once worked in Japan, waxed rhapsodic about the beauty of ceremony in that country's drinking culture. That fascination pervades Karasu, where even a whiskey neat is crafted with a many-stepped ritual. In quiet moments, a bartender may walk you out after you settle up. It's a welcome gesture, since the cocktails can be quite strong. The Dippermouth (bourbon, crème de banana, coffee) and the Ginger Baker (ginger, tequila, jasmine) are sophisticated and complex, and eminently drinkable. Even if your order is simply a can of Orion beer, the bartender carefully turns the label to face you. "There's a Japanese saying, '*Ichi-go ichi-e*,' " Cisneros offered. "It means 'One time, one meeting.' The concept is: everything is ephemeral." So, the logic goes, one must endeavor to make every interaction last. Later that evening, a patron stepped out into the falling snow only to hear someone calling her name. It was Cisneros, dashing onto the sidewalk. "You forgot something," he said, presenting her pen in outstretched hands. On gloomy winter evenings, it is a rare pleasure to feel so thoroughly looked after.—*Wei Tchou*

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTAAN FELBER FOR THE NEW YORKER; ILLUSTRATION BY JOOST SWARTE



When the world finds out about our

$6.95

Online Equity Trades[1]

+

Satisfaction Guarantee

everybody will have questions for their broker.

	Schwab	Fidelity	TD Ameritrade	E*TRADE	Vanguard
Online Equity Trades	$6.95	$7.95	$9.99	$9.99	$7-$20 depending on number of trades
Satisfaction Guarantee	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

Competitor firm information is standard pricing obtained from their respective websites as of 1/31/17. Competitor pricing and offers subject to change without notice.

Do you know how much you're paying in fees? Do you get them back if you're not satisfied? Ask your broker, and if you don't like their answers, ask again at Schwab.

Learn more at **schwab.com/compareus**

charles SCHWAB

Own your tomorrow.

Brokerage Products: Not FDIC Insured • No Bank Guarantee • May Lose Value

1. Restrictions apply: The $6.95 commission does not apply to foreign stock transactions, large block transactions requiring special handling, or restricted stock transactions. Foreign ordinary shares that trade online in the U.S. over-the-counter (OTC) market and do not settle in the U.S. will have a $50 foreign transaction fee added to the cost of the transaction. All broker-assisted and automated phone trades are subject to service charges. See the Charles Schwab Pricing Guide for Individual Investors for full fee and commission schedules. Employee equity compensation transactions are subject to separate commission schedules.

If you are not completely satisfied for any reason, at your request Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. ("Schwab") or Charles Schwab Bank ("Schwab Bank"), as applicable, will refund any eligible fee related to your concern within the required timeframes. Schwab reserves the right to change or terminate the guarantee at any time. Go to schwab.com/satisfaction to learn what's included and how it works.

Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. and Charles Schwab Bank are separate but affiliated companies and subsidiaries of The Charles Schwab Corporation. Brokerage products are offered by Schwab, Member SIPC. Deposit and lending products and services are offered by Charles Schwab Bank, Member FDIC and an Equal Housing Lender.

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
AMERICANISMS

Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, the couple who did so much to bear witness to the terrible truths of the Second World War, came to town last week to introduce their new memoir to an American audience. In it, there is a photograph that can only be called heartbreaking in its happiness, unbearable in its ordinariness. It shows an eight-year-old Serge with his sister and their Romanian-Jewish parents walking along a promenade in Nice, in 1943, still smiling, still feeling confident, even at that late date, that they are safe in their new French home. Within a few months, the children and their mother were hiding in a false closet, as Gestapo agents took their father to Auschwitz, and his death.

What the photograph teaches is not that every tear in the fabric of civility opens a path to Auschwitz but that civilization is immeasurably fragile, and is easily turned to brutality and barbarism. The human capacity for hatred is terrifying in its volatility. (The same promenade in Nice was the site of the terrorist truck attack last year.) Americans have a hard time internalizing that truth, but the first days of the Trump Administration have helped bring it home.

Within two weeks of the Inauguration, the hysterical hyperventilators have come to seem more prescient in their fear of incipient autocratic fanaticism than the reassuring pooh-poohers. There's a simple reason for this: the hyperventilators often read history. Regimes with an authoritarian ideology and a boss man on top always bend toward the extreme edge, because their only organizational principle is loyalty to the capo. Since the capo can be placated only by uncritical praise, the most fanatic of his lieutenants end up calling the shots. Loyalty to the boss is demonstrated by hatred directed against his enemies.

Yet what perhaps no one could have entirely predicted was the special cocktail of oafish incompetence and radical anti-Americanism that President Trump's Administration has brought. This combination has produced a new note in our public life: chaotic cruelty. The immigration crisis may abate, but it has already shown the power of government to act arbitrarily overnight—sundering families, upending long-set expectations, until all those born as outsiders must imagine themselves here only on sufferance of a senior White House counsellor.

Some choose to find comfort in the belief that the incompetence will undermine the anti-Americanism. Don't bet on it. Autocratic regimes with a demagogic bent are nearly always inefficient, because they cannot create and extend the network of delegated trust that is essential to making any organization work smoothly. The chaos is characteristic. Whether by instinct or by intention, it benefits the regime, whose goal is to create an overwhelming feeling of shared helplessness in the population at large: we will detain you and take away your green card—or, no, now we won't take away your green card, but we will hold you here, and we may let you go, or we may not.

This is radical anti-Americanism—not simply illiberalism or anti-cosmopolitanism—because America is not only a nation but also an idea, cleanly if not tightly defined. Pluralism is not a secondary or a decorative aspect of that idea. As James Madison wrote in Federalist No. 51, the guarantee of religious liberty lies in having many kinds of faiths, and the guarantee of civil liberty lies in having many kinds of people—in establishing a "multiplicity of interests" to go along with a "multiplicity of sects." The idea doesn't reflect a "weak" desire for niceness. It is, instead, intended to counter the brutal logic of the playground. When there are many kinds of bullied kids, they can unite against the bully: "Even the stronger individuals are prompted, by the uncertainty of their

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

condition, to submit to a government which may protect the weak as well as themselves."

There is an alternative view, one long available and articulated, that America is not an idea but an ethnicity, that of the white Christian men who have dominated it, granting a grudging or probationary acceptance to women, or blacks, or immigrants. This was the view of Huck Finn's pap, as he drank himself to death; of General Custer, as he approached Little Big Horn; of Major General Pickett, as he led the charge at Gettysburg. Until now, it has been the vision of those whom Trump would call the losers.

As the official ideology of the most powerful people in the White House, can that vision of America win? With the near-complete abdication of even minimal moral courage in the Republican Party, and the strategic confusion of the Democrats, all that Americans can turn to is the instinct for shared defiance, and a coalition of conscience, the broader the better, to counter the chaotic cruelty. (If the Koch brothers have some residual libertarianism left in them, let them help pay for it.) Few events in recent years have been more inspiring than the vast women's marches that followed the Inauguration, few events more cheering than the spontaneous reactions to the executive order on immigration, such as the cabbies' strike staged after Kennedy Airport seemed to have been turned into a trap for refugees.

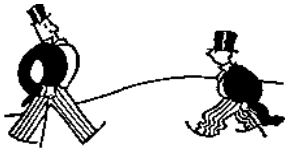
Such actions are called, a little too romantically, "resistance," but there is no need, yet, for so militant a term. Resistance rises from the street, but also from within the system, as it should, with judicial stays and State Department dissenters. Opposing bad governments with loud speech, unashamed argument, and public demonstration is not the part that's off the normal grid: it's the pro-American part, exactly what the Constitution foresees and protects. Dissent is not courageous or exceptional. It is normal—it's Madisonian, it's Hamiltonian. It's what we're supposed to do.

Democratic civilization has turned out to be even more fragile than we imagined; the resources of civil society have turned out to be even deeper than we knew. The battle between these two shaping forces—between the axman assaulting the old growth and the still firm soil and deep roots that support the tree of liberty—will now shape the future of us all.

—Adam Gopnik

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL

PRESIDENT BANNON'S BANNON



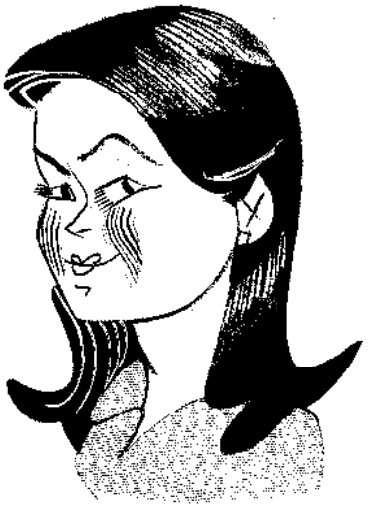
There's an old saw about Washington, D.C., that staffers in their twenties know more about the minutiae of government than their bosses do. Whether they wield real power is a different question. Julia Hahn, the twenty-five-year-old Breitbart News reporter who has just been named a special assistant to the President, could be a test case. Hahn is a protégée of Stephen Bannon, the White House chief strategist and former Breitbart chairman, who has been referred to as "Trump's Rasputin." (On Twitter, he is often called #PresidentBannon.) When Hahn wrote for Breitbart, her primary beats were immigration (she wanted less of it, especially from Muslim countries) and the perfidy of Republicans who, in her view, sold out American interests—especially the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan. In dozens of vituperative articles, Hahn called Ryan a "third-world migration enthusiast" and a "double agent" who was secretly campaigning for Hillary Clinton.

Some have suggested that hiring Hahn is Bannon's way of putting Paul Ryan "on notice," to use a Trumpian locution. William Kristol recently told the Washington *Post* that Hahn will "be Bannon's Bannon and will make Bannon look moderate." This would be a feat, given that Bannon has declared that his "goal" is "to destroy the state." When he was running Trump's campaign, he called Trump "a blunt instrument for us," adding, "I don't know whether he really gets it or not."

Hahn was raised in Beverly Hills and attended Harvard-Westlake, an exclusive private high school in Los Angeles. (She did not respond to requests for comment.) She excelled at mock trial, and organized a fund-raiser to bring orphan children from other countries to live with American host families. She majored in philosophy at the University of Chicago and studied in Paris. "We had dinner together a few times, and she was always kind and approachable," a Chicago classmate said. "The only unusual thing I remember is that she once worked at a shooting range. She described herself as 'a very talented markswoman.'"

Hahn's senior thesis, about "issues at the intersection of psychoanalysis and post-Foucauldian philosophical inquiry," drew on the work of Leo Bersani, whose ideas she called "hugely transformational." Bersani, a left-wing cultural theorist who taught at Berkeley, is known for his provocative writings on Freud and sexuality; his books include "Homos" and "Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays."

After college, Hahn moved to Washington, D.C., hoping, she told friends, to "get a job in media." She didn't seem to care what kind. At around this time, a Chicago classmate who worked at a think tank saw Hahn at a party; Hahn said that she was a producer for Laura Ingraham, a fixture of far-right talk radio. "I asked, 'Oh, is that what your politics are?'" the classmate recalled. "She went, 'Nah, I'm apolitical.' I thought,



Julia Hahn

NEIL GAIMAN

NORSE MYTHOLOGY

"Superb. Just the thing for the literate fantasy lover."
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"A master storyteller with a special talent for reinventing and refreshing old stories."
—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Addictive retellings that preserve the monumental grandeur.... Who else but Neil Gaiman could become an accomplice of the gods?"
—MARIA TATAR, chair, Program in Folklore & Mythology, Harvard University

WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

W. W. Norton • Independent publishers since 1923 • www.wwnorton.com

O.K., there are two possibilities. Either she's dissembling because she doesn't feel comfortable being outed as a hyperconservative or she actually is just a pure social climber."

William Sims, one of Hahn's close friends, said, "She loved having intellectual debates and challenging assumptions, her own included. We didn't talk primarily about politics, but I would say that she was never a by-the-book liberal—I think people just looked at her, saw this very sweet Jewish girl from California, and made assumptions." Hahn and Sims remain close, though they often disagree. "As she travelled the country as a reporter, meeting people who were in real economic pain, she became more vocal about her views," Sims said. "She doesn't hate refugees. She has her beliefs, and one of them is that excessive immigration poses a threat."

"Seeing her writing for Breitbart—and writing some of the most aggressive, white-nationalist stuff on the site—was quite a shock," Eliza Brown, one of Hahn's Chicago classmates, said. "My friends and I talked about it a lot, along the lines of 'Was this festering in her all along?' 'Can you ever truly know anyone?'" She continued, "Not to wax too poetic about academia, but part of the idea of learning the canon is that it will, ultimately, make you a better person."

—Andrew Marantz

UP LIFE'S LADDER
CITIZENS IN TRAINING

One of the many organizations thrown into chaos last week because of the Trump Administration's travel ban was the Arab-American Family Support Center, in Brooklyn. "It's been incredibly hectic," Ambreen Qureshi, the center's deputy executive director, said recently. Her office had been inundated with stories of anti-Muslim harassment and travel emergencies. "A lot of anxiety, a lot of worry, stress, tension," she said.

There were subtler challenges, such as figuring out how to explain the travel ban to people who had come to the A.A.F.S.C. to study for the U.S.-citizenship exam. Volunteers spend weeks drilling the students on American rights and values, such as freedom of religion. They lead field trips to the Statue of Liberty. Qureshi said, "It's very hard for us to reconcile what we're teaching them with what's actually happening on the ground."

The heating had stopped working at the A.A.F.S.C.'s offices. Nevertheless, three classrooms and the kitchen were packed with people in winter coats, who had come for free English lessons.

The citizenship-exam study group was huddled in the hallway. There were nine young women, all but one from Yemen. Their English was shaky, so A.A.F. S.C. volunteers and staff helped translate; among these was a Manhattan-based psychotherapist, who'd come to help after reading about Trump's executive order. The women explained that they were all green-card holders. None of them had jobs; they were dependent on husbands or male relatives who worked in bodegas, as taxi-drivers, or as janitors. One woman had brought her toddler. Eight wore a hijab, and one also wore a niqab, or face veil. She carried a notebook that said "Nacho Girl," over a picture of nachos and cheese.

It was time to practice. One of the A.A.F. S.C. volunteers, Amy Bonanno, a retired producer of TV commercials, asked the women questions that they might hear from an immigration agent.

"Why are you here today?" she asked.

"I'm here today for my citizenship interview," a woman with braces, wearing a hijab in a faux Burberry plaid, replied.

"Why do you want to become a citizen?"

"Because I want to vote."

"Very nice," Bonanno said. "Lovely." She turned to a shy woman in a leopard-print hijab. "Heba, have you ever been declared legally incompetent or confined to a mental institution?"

"No."

"What does that mean?"

"I have no mental problems."

"Ayesha, have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" she asked another student.

"No."

"What does 'Communist Party' mean?"

"Like Cuba!"

"What does 'terrorist organization' mean?"

"Like 9/11?"

The women swore that they had never aided a terrorist group or failed to file tax returns while living in the U.S. They vowed to bear arms to defend the country, if asked, and to follow its laws. "Do you understand the full oath of allegiance?" Bonanno asked. "What is an oath?"

"Legal promise!" they chanted.

"Ladies, what is a legal promise?"

"Tell the truth!"

The women sailed through trivia about U.S. history. They named their senators and congressmen, and the Speaker

"Any improvement since I brought the balloon?"

of the House. When Bonanno asked, "What is the supreme law of the land?," they said, "The Constitution!" They stumbled a bit when asked to name a U.S. territory.

"Turkey?"

Bonanno shook her head.

Finally, somebody said, "Guam!"

During a break, the group talked about how the travel ban was affecting them. Many had been separated from relatives. The woman in the plaid hijab said, "My mom is crying every day. She wants to go back to her country."

The therapist said, of Trump, "He's picking on poor countries. Qatar is financing ISIS—why is Qatar allowed to come? Why is Saudi Arabia allowed to come?" She went on, "Even under Obama, whom I adore, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia bombed the hell out of Yemen. So why is he picking on them?"

One woman suggested, in English, "They picked the countries that don't have any President."

Bonanno asked her students, "Does this ban diminish your faith in the principles of this country? The Constitution?"

There was some discussion. The women liked America's tradition of women's rights, but said that religious discrimination was worse for them here than in Yemen. They thought Trump was not good for U.S. history. Heba said, in English, "Forty-four Presidents: good. This one: not good." She asked Bonanno, through a translator, "How did he become the President if all the people are protesting against him?"

Bonanno struggled to explain. "Well, that's our Electoral College and our system of voting," she said. It wasn't covered in the citizenship exam.

—Lizzie Widdicombe

THE BENCH

FAMILY BUSINESS

TWENTY YEARS AGO, when Michelle Gelernt was a rookie public defender, she would often meet her older brother, Lee, an A.C.L.U. attorney, at a Tribeca pub called Walker's. "We'd work till 2 A.M. and then come here," Michelle said one evening last week. They had a lot to catch up on. The Trump era, just eleven days old, had thrown the Gelernts into the highest-profile litigation of their careers. Michelle, who is now a federal defender, had spent Inauguration Day (a.k.a. the National Day of Patriotic Devotion) at Brooklyn's federal courthouse, advocating on behalf of Joaquín Guzmán, known as El Chapo, the extradited Mexican drug lord. A week later, in the same building, Lee, the deputy director of the A.C.L.U.'s Immigrants' Rights Project, argued for an emergency stay of Trump's "Muslim ban."

When the President's immigration order began circulating, at 5 P.M. the previous Friday, Lee and his colleagues started developing a strategy for visa holders and refugees who were stuck overseas. But at ten that night Lee got a text: a few Iraqis were being held at J.F.K. and threatened with deportation. "The Administration hadn't thought through the policy," Lee said. "They didn't know these two guys—one was an interpreter for the U.S. military!—were coming. It had to infuriate the military." The A.C.L.U. agreed to co-counsel the case. "I thought immediately that we should sue," Lee said. "Everyone stayed up all night, and we filed at 5:45 A.M."

He showed up at the courthouse a couple of hours later, with just enough notice to shave and put on a suit. Before the Honorable Ann Donnelly, he argued that Trump's order discriminated against his clients—the interpreter and another Iraqi—and merited an emergency stay. By then, thousands of protesters had flocked to J.F.K. Michelle, rushing to Brooklyn from a jail visit with El Chapo in Manhattan, said that she got into the packed courtroom only "because the court officers recognized me." After hearing from both sides, Judge Donnelly ruled against President Trump, preventing the government from deporting—"in any manner or by any means"—refugees, visa holders, and "other individuals" from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

Lee and the A.C.L.U.'s executive director, Anthony Romero, emerged from the hearing onto Cadman Plaza, to find more than a thousand people waving signs and shouting, "Thank you!" Someone was playing a trombone.

"Dad would've been very proud," Lee said. Their father, Irwin Gelernt, a surgeon at Mount Sinai, died in 1996. Their mother, Lois, recently retired, was a teacher and administrator at the Manhattan Country School, which she helped found, in 1966, and which the Gelernt children attended. "We went into public-interest-type jobs because of the school," Lee said. "It's a private school, but you only pay what you can afford. There are twenty kids per grade, and it never has any majority race, religion, or ethnic group."

Part of the curriculum included visits to other students' homes. "It's something a lot of kids in our socioeconomic class didn't get—sleepovers in public housing," Michelle, who is forty-nine, said. On one trip, she said, "I asked my friend, 'Are there any white people in the building?,' and my friend said to me, 'Yeah, but she's on vacation.'"

Michelle's clients have ranged from drunk teens who threw paint cans off a Manhattan high-rise to a gun-smuggling cop and a postal worker who stole Christmas cards.

"I've had some real doozies," she said.

"One Thanksgiving, we're going to have all your old clients over," Lee added.

Lee checked his phone for an e-mail from the Department of Justice, which had promised to send a list of everyone who was still detained. "If we don't see that list by tomorrow morning, then we may have to go back to court," he said. "That is the biggest civil-liberties threat—if there's not going to be real respect for the rule of law."

The attorneys general of sixteen states had vowed to oppose the executive order. "Regardless of who appointed them or where they are ideologically, judges will step up, and, if they see anything unlawful, they will enforce the law," Lee said. "My wife says I'm naïve, but there has to be some of that when you do civil rights. I just have faith in the courts."

Michelle said, "We call that 'trial psychosis.'"

—E. Tammy Kim

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
TRUMP'S BUDGET BLUFF

President Trump's executive order on immigration overshadowed almost everything else in the first week of his tenure. But tactically the order has a lot in common with more day-to-day policies, especially his plan to slash federal spending. Both rely on scapegoats (immigrants, on the one hand; on the other, things like foreign aid and legal assistance for the poor). Both cater to the misconceptions of Trump's base: no fatal terrorist attack here has involved anyone from the seven countries covered by the executive order, nor does the alleged waste that Trump has vowed to cut amount to more than a tiny fraction of the total budget. And both are acts of political theatre, enhancing Trump's image as a tough-talking outsider while doing little to solve the underlying problems.

During the campaign, Trump made promises that he has no way of keeping. Inveighing against the rising national debt, he promised to balance the budget by getting rid of "tremendous waste, fraud, and abuse." But he also pledged to boost infrastructure spending, protect Social Security and Medicare, and—the centerpiece of his economic program—provide a budget-busting multi-trillion-dollar tax cut. Something's got to give, but what?

Trump won't be sending a formal budget to Congress for a few weeks. But he's already announced a hiring freeze for federal employees, with the notable exception of the military. Right-wing media have claimed that he wants to cut the budgets of executive departments by ten per cent and payrolls by as much as twenty per cent. Kellyanne Conway said that the President would call for converting Medicaid to a block-grant system. And Trump staffers have been working Capitol Hill, arguing for steep cuts in discretionary spending, including privatizing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and getting rid of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Legal Services Corporation.

These moves would have a drastic effect on many people's lives. But they're not going to do much to balance the budget. Most federal spending is nondiscretionary, meaning that it goes to entitlements (such as Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance) and to pay the interest on the national debt. Discretionary spending totals just $1.2 trillion a year (out of a budget of almost four trillion), and roughly half of that goes to national defense, which Trump insists that he won't touch. The federal budget deficit is around six hundred billion dollars a year, and analysis by the Tax Foundation suggests that Trump's proposed tax cut would reduce federal revenue by another half trillion or so. So it's simply impossible for Trump to balance the budget while protecting defense and entitlement spending.

Fortunately for Trump, most voters have no real idea how the government spends its money, and plenty of his supporters believe that you can balance the budget by just hiring fewer people, making government more efficient, and getting rid of the odd department. In a 2013 survey of Fox News viewers, forty-nine per cent said that "cutting waste and fraud" would eliminate most of the national debt. Polls of the general population have found that people believe that more than twenty-five per cent of the federal budget goes to foreign aid (it's less than one per cent); that ten per cent goes to pensions and benefits (today, it's 3.2 per cent); and that five per cent goes to PBS and NPR (it's 0.01 per cent). The median guess about how much food and housing assistance cost was three to four times as much as the true figure.

The sociologist Arlie Hochschild, in her recent book "Strangers in Their Own Land," about working-class Republicans in Louisiana, documented wider misconceptions. Many of the people she talked to believe that the federal government employs forty per cent of American workers; it's closer to two per cent. "They think that the government is full of waste and freeloaders," Hochschild told me. "And they believe that most government money is going to programs—welfare, foreign aid, the arts, even environmental protection—that aren't for them but for the people they feel superseded by."

It's not hard to see how these misconceptions arose. For decades, the G.O.P. and right-wing media have been saying that the government is riddled with fraud and wastes money on handouts. So, although moves like a hiring freeze or axing the N.E.A. and legal aid would have no real impact on the deficit, Trump's supporters don't see these moves as trivial—let alone as window dressing designed to distract them from other, less populist measures, like a tax plan that would benefit mainly the rich. "When Trump voters hear that he wants to cut the federal payroll and shut down the N.E.A., a bell goes off that says he's a deficit hawk, even if his tax plan will supersize the debt," Hochschild said. A few distracting gestures may enable Trump to reassure people that he's keeping his campaign promises, even if his budget never comes close to being balanced. How is he going to solve his budget dilemma? By pretending that he has.

—James Surowiecki

NISHANT CHOKSI

EIGHTY TWO

The Fidelity Retirement Score.℠
Another way we're making retirement planning clearer.

We introduced the Fidelity Retirement Score to make it easy to know where you stand. But getting your score is just the beginning. If you move your old 401(k) to a Fidelity Rollover IRA, you'll get:

- Clear, transparent language to help you understand your options
- A one-on-one assessment of your plan to help you determine what to do next, and why
- Simple, straightforward pricing with no fees to open or maintain your account

It's your retirement. Know where you stand.

Fidelity INVESTMENTS

800.FIDELITY | Fidelity.com/score

Be sure to consider all your available options, including staying in plan, and the applicable fees and features of each before moving your retirement assets.

There is no opening cost or annual fee for Fidelity's traditional, Roth, SEP, and rollover IRAs. A $50 account closeout fee may apply. Fund investments held in your account may be subject to management, low-balance, and short-term trading fees, as described in the offering materials. For all securities, see Fidelity.com/commissions for trading commission and transaction fee details.

IMPORTANT: The projections or other information generated by the Fidelity Retirement Score regarding the likelihood of various investment outcomes are hypothetical in nature, do not reflect actual investment results, and are not guarantees of future results. Results may vary with each use and over time.

The Fidelity Retirement Score is a hypothetical illustration and does not represent your individual situation or the investment results of any particular investment or investment strategy, and is not a guarantee of future results. Your score does not consider the composition of current savings and other factors.

Guidance provided by Fidelity through the Fidelity Retirement Score is educational in nature, is not individualized, and is not intended to serve as the primary basis for your investment or tax-planning decisions.

Investing involves risk, including the risk of loss.

NEW YORK JOURNAL

ALL ABOARD

On time or maddeningly late, the Second Avenue subway rolls in.

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

New yorkers view their subway system with reproachful pride. We fixate on its virtues and faults, as though the subway lines were our children. We want so much for them, and yet they so often disappoint. When their latest report cards arrived, just after Christmas, the top grades went to the 1 line, the 7, and the L. The goats were the 5 and the A. The A train at least has an anthem, and the vestigial grandeur of connecting old Harlem to Bed-Stuy. The 5, odeless, has passengers massed five deep on the platform, with herders in fluorescent vests blowing whistles and barking out commands ("Let the people off the train first!") and riders adding their own gloss ("If you don't fit, get out the fucking train!"). Along with the 4, it provides express service up and down Lexington Avenue. It also provides the routine rush-hour humiliation of getting stalled between stations as the 6, the Lexington Avenue local, rattles past on a parallel track. The Lex line carries more riders per day—1.3 million—than any other train in the United States. You tend not to look around much on a crowded car, but when you do you will typically see, on faces pointing every which way and often rearing back to avoid backpacks or arms thrusting up toward grab handles, a portraitist's range of had-it-up-to-here.

Conceived nearly a century ago, the line became Governor Cuomo's obsession.

The subway-line rankings, based on such categories as cleanliness, crowding, and frequency of service, come from the Straphangers Campaign, a project underwritten by the New York Public Interest Research Group. Straphangers also issues year-end top-ten worst and best lists. By its lights, the tenth worst public-transportation event in 2016 was the release, by a performance artist aboard the D train, of a box of live crickets, which caused another passenger to pull the emergency brake, stranding the train for half an hour on the Manhattan Bridge. Considerably worse were spikes in both hate crimes and air-conditioning failures, record system-wide overcrowding, the looming shutdown of the indispensable L train, and—salt in the wound—a fare hike, effective next month. The ten-best list was perhaps harder to pull together, there being a shallower pool. Hats off to more Wi-Fi service and countdown clocks, and a fleet of newly designed cars. Top of the list, however, was momentous, and a bit of a no-brainer: the début of the Second Avenue subway, which opened to great fanfare at noon on New Year's Day—ninety-seven years after it was first conceived.

The line's notorious state of non-fruition had made it a perennial punch line, a home-town Godot, shorthand for decades of public-works failure. And so its completion—on time and on budget, by some metrics; anything but, by others—was a cause for celebration, self-congratulation, and heavy Instagramification. It is the biggest addition to the New York City subway system in several generations. Certain subsets—Upper East Siders, transit geeks, the *Times*—treated its arrival like the moon landing.

Still, this Second Avenue subway is just a stunted version of the one that was originally envisaged. It consists of only three new stations and two miles of new track, running from a new platform deep in a preëxisting station under Lexington Avenue at Sixty-third Street, east to Second Avenue, and then north to new stops at Seventy-second, Eighty-sixth, and Ninety-sixth. This is the terminus of Phase I. The projection is that the Second Avenue line will convey two hundred thousand passengers a day, most of them fugitives from the 4/5/6. Phase II,

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN WISEMAN

which would extend the line another mile and a half north, to 125th Street, is supposed to begin in two years, but only a fraction has been funded, and there's no time frame for laying track. As for Phases III and IV, which would extend the line downtown, to lower Manhattan, those are probably decades away. (The Trump Administration, as it happens, has included all this on its infrastructure wish list.) For now, though, this Second Avenue subway is really just an extension of an existing line—the Broadway express known as the Q. It's an appendix, or, as some have said, a stub-way. Call it the Q tip.

And yet reasonable people everywhere—depending on your definitions of reasonable and everywhere—seem to agree that what we need now, most of all, from our government at every level is heavy investment in new infrastructure. Here, for our delectation, was an unlikely gleaming specimen, a municipal unicorn. Run and see.

That first morning of 2017, a crowd of citizens gathered at the station entrance on the southwest corner of Ninety-sixth Street and Second Avenue. There'd been a few open houses in the stations the previous week and an invitation-only train party the night before, at which political dignitaries and some of the workers who'd got the thing done drank New York State sparkling wine and took an inaugural ride. But this was the line's first go as public transit. Just before noon, Governor Andrew Cuomo, who in recent months had made its completion an obsession and a point of pride, spoke briefly, and then the barricades came down, a cheer went up, and the crowd, phones aloft, streamed onto an escalator and a stairway. Downstairs, transit workers waved them through the turnstiles (a free ride, no less) and down one more flight to an immaculate platform and a waiting train, which was not itself new but which was covered, inside and out, with art work and advertising celebrating the new line. In the space formerly reserved for Dr. Zizmor and Invisalign, there was testimony from forgiving Second Avenue residents and business owners, who had been so notoriously inconvenienced during the new line's near-decade of construction. ("We've been anxiously awaiting this to open," Zen Master Samu Sunim declared. "It feels great.") The mood aboard was giddy, too. Rounds of cheers greeted the routine recorded announcement ("Stand clear of the closing doors, please"), the first hint of movement (Euro-smooth, not lurching), and, finally, the remarks over the public-address system from Governor Cuomo, who was up front in the engineer's booth ("Rest assured, I am not driving the train").

Another crowd was waiting to board at Eighty-sixth Street, and then at Seventy-second Street. Elation gave way to humdrum—just another subway ride, after all. Nonetheless, many passengers got off at Sixty-third Street to have a look around the new platform and then ride the next Q back uptown. Those boarding a car in the middle of the train encountered a transient passed out across the seats, a coat over his head and, on the floor next to him, a mess of chicken and rice spilling from a partially crushed Styrofoam clamshell. Ten minutes in, and the city had asserted itself. The passengers, maintaining what they deemed a safe distance, made buoyantly cynical remarks—"Wow! Already?"—and snapped a few photos on their phones. A rider who'd got on at Coney Island said to them, "That's not his food. He got on in midtown. Food's been here since Brooklyn."

For the next several hours, people rode up and down, stopping in at the stations, wandering at a snow-day pace, often reëncountering each other on intersecting orbits. Smiles, hugs, tears, a reawakened attunement to the marvels of the city and its skunkworks—not the usual nostalgic pride, the pining for Fishbowl buses and Checker cabs, but a kind of municipal mindfulness. It was the happiest New Yorkers had looked in months.

What was there to see? The stations, in caverns deep below the surface, are vast and airy, with spacious mezzanines and high ceilings. Most of the city's subway stations are ancient snug burrows forested with steel columns, but these new ones, benefitting from advances in construction techniques and materials, have unbroken sight lines and tracts of open space, which mitigate whatever claustrophobia one might feel, deep in the belly of the bedrock. One could linger over the clean, rat-free track bed or a drain grate reminiscent of a coat of arms. Wi-Fi, climate control, an uncharacteristic hush. Each station has a permanent installation of mosaics or ceramic tile work by a prominent artist. The art, no way around it, is beautiful, accessible, and indigenous, especially the giant Chuck Close mosaics of New York artists like Lou Reed, Cindy Sherman, and Philip Glass (and himself) and the life-size Vik Muniz mosaics of regular New Yorkers (and himself). The art has been a hit among locals, tourists, critics, and stoned teens.

Another well-represented constituency, not much interested in the art, were the train buffs. Metrophiles clustered by the openings to the tunnels and filmed the trains coming in. As passengers, they tended to congregate in the front car. "I have been to every station in the system," Arnie Zambrano, a thirty-five-year-old tour guide from Jackson Heights, said. "I made it my mission in high school." He had a photographic memory, he said, and, to prove it, recited all the stops on the Q line. He soon found himself in an impromptu train-fact duel with a computer technician named Danny Schwartz.

"The D train is the only line that passes the same-named station twice: Seventh Avenue in Manhattan and Seventh Avenue in Brooklyn," Zambrano said.

"No, currently, it's the B train."

"Correction. Touché. Got me on that one."

"And the R train has a Thirty-sixth Street in Queens and one in Brooklyn."

Zambrano pointed out the train window and said, "Notice the bell mouth." This is the term for a fork in the track, with the alternative branch a dead end. It was an intimation of Phase III, there for whatever distant day when the line would continue south along Second Avenue rather than turning west. "It took us ten years to build three stations," he said. "Our forefathers would be ashamed." Still, he found a lot to like: the deep cut, the quiet ride, the station design, which reminded him of the E, though, truth be told, he was a little put off by the new typeface, a kind of squished-together, overlapping version of the old Helvetica. Change is hard.

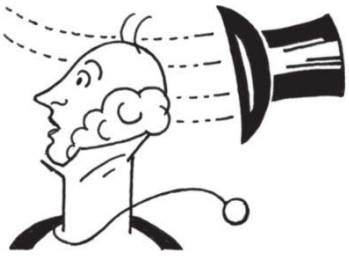
There were railfan families. Larry

Victorson ("I'm retired, I ride trains") and Elizabeth Elizondo ("You should see his train set"), who live at Ninety-sixth and Second, had got up before dawn and, with an adult son, Eric, of Seventy-ninth and First, gone out to Brooklyn, to start their ride at Coney Island. "Bell mouth," Eric said as the fork in the tracks went by again. The Neumans, of Washington Heights, had come down to ride back and forth. Spencer, thirteen, standing by the door, filmed departures and arrivals and watched the tunnel lights flash by. He and his younger brother have subway duvet covers, and Spencer has held a birthday party at the Transit Museum. Their father, who works for the New York Power Authority—"We provide the subway's power"—said that, when Spencer first learned to walk, he and his wife decided to let him roam, see where his legs would take him. Hallway, elevator, lobby, street: Spencer led them to the 190th Street station so that he could watch the A train come and go. His favorite line is the Times Square Shuttle, because it begins with "S."

The train stopped in the tunnel. There came a familiar, inexplicably cheerful recorded announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are delayed because of train traffic ahead of us."

THIS SUBTERRANEAN LOVE-IN is what Governor Cuomo hoped for when, beginning late in 2015, he became increasingly involved in pushing the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the state entity behind the project, to make its deadline of January 1, 2017. When he heard "New Year's Day," he said recently, "it caught my ear." It had been on New Year's Day of 2015 that he was sworn in for his second term—the same day that his father, Mario, the former governor, died. The M.T.A. wanted to move the deadline. "They were talking years. I said, 'You can't move a deadline!' 'No, no, you can move a deadline' was their argument. 'You just have to do it early enough.'" In another meeting, Michael Horodniceanu, who, as the president of M.T.A. Capital Construction, was overseeing the project with the M.T.A.'s chairman, Tom Prendergast, estimated that their chance of making the deadline was eighty per cent. That wasn't good enough for the Governor, who is known less for speaking softly than for carrying a big stick. He entrusted two deputies, Rick Cotton and Larry Schwartz, with the task of meeting the deadline.

"When was the last time New York did something big and said, 'Geez, that's us, boy. That's New York at its best,'" Cuomo said. "I thought it would be uplifting to the body politic if you could actually make something great happen.



I didn't want another admission of failure. I didn't want the jokes to be true. 'I'll pay you back when they finish the Second Avenue subway.'"

The New York City subway opened in 1904. City-built but leased to private enterprise, the system grew fast, and then more or less stopped growing before the Second World War began, when the city took control. Maintenance fell off, too, so that by the time the state took over, in the sixties, the upkeep backlog strained the M.T.A.'s finances and capabilities and made any visions of new stations or lines unrealistic. We all know about the seventies: the system went to pieces, ridership and revenue plunged, and the Warriors came out to play. In the nineties, boom times, better governance and policing, new equipment, and the introduction of the MetroCard reversed the trend. In the past quarter century, ridership has almost doubled—it's nosing up toward two billion a year now—while capacity has hardly increased. Lucius Riccio, a former transportation commissioner, told me that New York will need a new subway line every ten years for the next hundred years just to keep up. The subway system is a little like Social Security: ingenious, necessary, expensive, historically robust, yet, by virtue of demographics, shadowed by future collapse.

Dark prophecies, and talk of a Second Avenue panacea, go back a century. In 1920, a city engineer named Daniel L. Turner proposed a citywide rail expansion, which came to include a six-track subway under Second Avenue from the Bronx to lower Manhattan. Since 1880, there had been an elevated railway on the avenue, which brought soot, noise, and gloom to the neighborhood—and therefore diminished the value of its real estate. Turner wrote, "It should be borne in mind that it is not contemplated that the comprehensive transit scheme in its entirety should be undertaken at once but that it should be proceeded with gradually and continuously." Gradually, indeed: a modified version of the plan, approved in 1929, was quickly undone by the Depression, and then by the war. Still, the city went ahead and demolished the Second Avenue El, in 1942, and the Third Avenue El, in 1956, leaving the East Side, amid a boom in new apartment buildings, with nothing but the Lexington subway line, which, even in 1920, was described by Turner as "heavily overcrowded." "In a relatively short time the existing subway will be wholly unable to meet the transit requirements of the East Side of Manhattan," he wrote.

The yoke wasn't really taken up again until the sixties. In 1965, as the era of Robert Moses and his car-centric building schemes wound down, Governor Nelson Rockefeller created the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority. In 1968, the M.C.T.A. took over the N.Y.C. Transit Authority and the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (Robert Moses's base of operations) and dropped the C. The M.T.A., an arm of the state, was now in charge of the subways. It was able to raise money for transit as a result of the federal government's Mass Transit Act of 1964. Mayor John Lindsay supported the so-called Program for Action, or the Grand Design, an ambitious regional rail plan, conceived by the M.T.A., which imagined an array of new subway lines, including forty miles of new track in Queens and the revival of the Second Avenue idea. This iteration would run from the Bronx to the Battery, and be ready to roll by 1982. Phase I would cost two hundred and twenty million dollars. Construction commenced on three tunnel segments in 1972 but was soon halted, because of the fiscal crisis. Ed Koch, who became mayor in 1978, suggested that the abandoned tunnels be used to grow mushrooms.

The Second Avenue subway persisted, like a fungus. Governor George Pataki took it up in the nineties, pushing for the so-called East Side Access project. (East Side Access, our Big Dig, is made up of a new East River tunnel and a new subterminal at Grand Central to allow the Long Island Rail Road, which terminates at Penn Station, access to the East Side. Its final cost is now estimated at eleven billion dollars, nearly three times the original estimate, and it is still five years from completion.) Transportation planners knew that an L.I.R.R. station would add even more riders to the Lexington line. At the beginning of the last decade, consensus emerged among planners that the Second Avenue subway was the most practicable solution to the problem, even if every mention of it provoked what one planner called a "Pavlovian chuckle."

Breaking ground in April, 2007, the M.T.A. fell down a rabbit hole of engineering challenges, operational folly, and NIMBY (or really IMBY) grievance. The decision was made to go deep: dynamite and bore the Seventy-second and Eighty-sixth Street station caverns ("shoot and blast") rather than dig a trench from above ("cut and cover"), in order to avoid the jungle of utilities immediately below-ground and also to spare the people living along the route—more than a hundred thousand per square mile—as much as possible from the damage, dirt, and noise. This was hard to do. Crews had to blast the bedrock and remove all the spoils while a busy, dense neighborhood aboveground tried to pretend it wasn't under siege. Surveys of two hundred and twenty-five buildings identified foundations that needed bolstering, leaning tenements that had to be propped up, and detaching façades that had to be reinforced, all on the taxpayer dime. The M.T.A. built half-block-long muck houses to contain the debris and the fumes from the dynamite blasts, and the spoils as they were loaded onto supertrucks and borne away from Manhattan. Eventually, the neighborhood revolted over the explosions, which were going as late as 10:30 P.M. ("That was stupid and inappropriate on our part," Horodniceanu said), and so the M.T.A. decreed that the daily blasts end between 7 and 8 P.M.—the kind of modification thereafter cited to account for its trouble meeting the deadline.

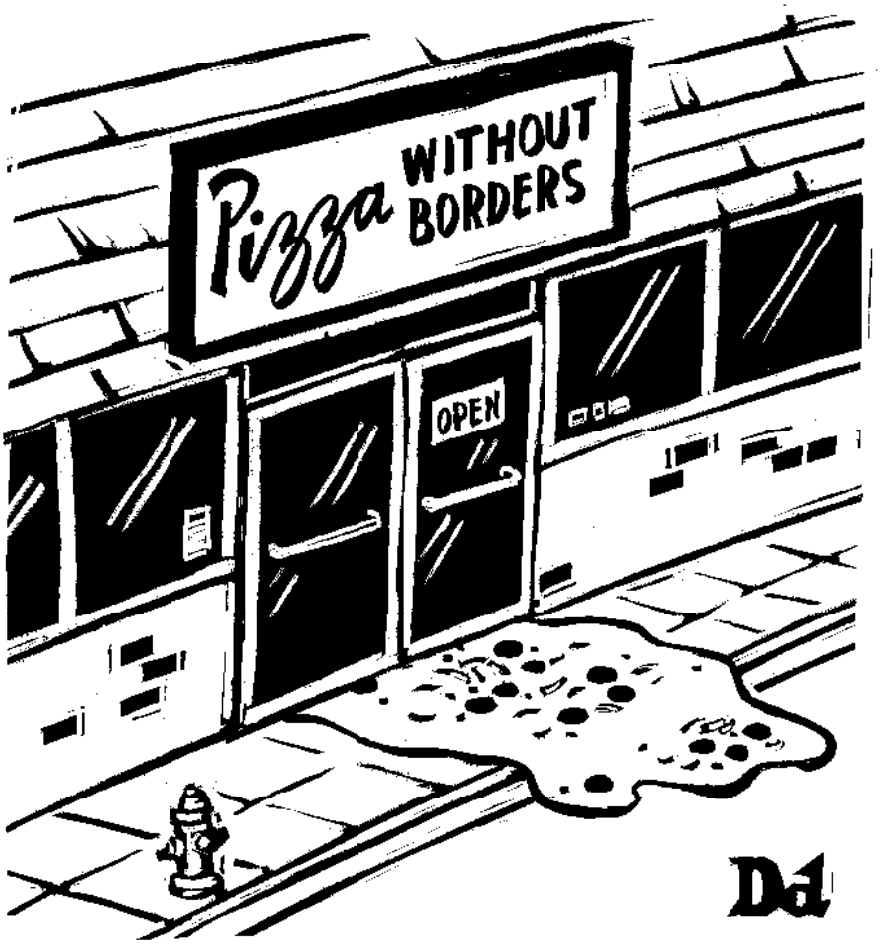
Horodniceanu, a courtly civil engineer who was born in Romania and later fought with the Israeli Army in the Six-Day War, took up the cause of community relations. He became something of a Second Avenue subway celebrity, known to all as Michael H., a bow tie among the hardhats and the lapel pins. The four-hundred-and-eighty-five-ton tunnel-boring machine was named after his granddaughter, Adi. He led seventy-three Saturday tours of the tunnels, went door to door to assuage local shopkeepers, and cooked for the construction workers at a neighborhood restaurant, though there wasn't much he could do about a plague of flies—a result, he theorized, of the excavation of all the old hops the neighborhood's long-gone breweries had dumped into the ground.

The Ninety-sixth Street station, situated in shallower ground, was cut and cover. The ground in a tunnel section just south of it was too soft for the boring machine, which was engineered for schist, so to solidify the ground the engineers had to freeze it, which they did by drilling holes and inserting a web of more than a hundred refrigeration tubes, averaging around seventy feet long. This took four or five months. Each lateral twenty-foot segment of excavation required the insertion of slurry walls and a system of horizontal struts to support them so that the surrounding earth, and therefore the sidewalks and buildings, wouldn't collapse into the excavated pits. All the utilities—asbestos-shrouded steam pipes, old cast-iron water mains, electricity cables, natural-gas lines, and the Empire City ducts containing cable and telephone wires—had to be diverted as well. At one point, a diver had to descend into a slurry wall—a frogman Santa wielding an underwater welding torch fifty feet down a chimney full of muck—to free up some steel that had got caught.

"We don't every day build a new line," Horodniceanu said.

Such contortions came at a steep price. Phase I cost $4.5 billion, by the state's accounting. Per mile, it's the most expensive rail project ever built, and several times the cost of new subway lines in London and Paris. Phase II, though

"Was it 'meh' for you, too?"



shorter in distance and with the advantage of some tunnel segments left over from the false start in the seventies, has been projected to cost even more: six billion dollars. In an era of straitened budgets, obligations of this magnitude can make ambitious infrastructure hard to justify, no matter the system's requirements. There are many culprits: population density, the nature of the schist, the desire to appease the neighbors, the size of the stations, which the M.T.A. attributes to ever more stringent fire and safety regulations. (The stations, not the tunnels and the tracks, accounted for the greatest share of the cost.) You could write a treatise on the convoluted inanities and inefficiencies of state-run construction projects. In this one, for example, each station had a different contractor, who in turn, and often obliviously, tapped the same subcontractors and suppliers, leading to shortages, logistical headaches, and, yes, delays. One imagines cheaper options. Benjamin Kabak, the author of the blog Second Ave. Sagas and a critic of the project's high cost, recently tweeted a photo of a cop talking to El Chapo, a celebrated tunneller, after he was extradited to New York: "So we just opened this new subway," the caption read. "It took 10 years to build 2 miles."

Cuomo distances himself from the outlay, if not the goods. "I wasn't there when they designed it," he said. "Are we building extravagant facilities? Are we wasting money? These are legitimate questions. But I don't think it applies here. The Second Avenue subway has a very austere construction. Only thing you can point to as extravagant is the public art. And I would argue that this isn't extravagant." (Altogether, the installations at the four stations cost $4.5 million, a tenth of one per cent of the budget, according to the M.T.A.)

His own biggest extravagance, perhaps, was to insist on the deadline, since the work-acceleration agreements with the contractors cost the M.T.A. sixty-six million dollars (though this might have saved them money in the long run). The hands-on approach can have other, hidden costs. Cuomo's objection, during a final walk-through last year, to some design elements in a new concourse at Penn Station prompted twenty-five million dollars in expenditures and a delay of more than half a year. (The Governor's office said that the modifications were necessary and that the objections were not solely Cuomo's.)

The Second Avenue subway was the brainchild and the ward of many who preceded Cuomo; he adopted it late and then smothered it with so much attention that you'd have thought the baby was his. By this past fall, Cuomo was holding weekly meetings with contractors and subs. "It was the L.B.J. approach," his adviser Rick Cotton said. "Love and fear." The Governor began showing up at the stations unannounced, several days a week, at off hours, and getting on the phone with contractors and suppliers to convey what you might call urgency.

Cuomo said, "We told them, if you fail on this project, that's going to be taken into consideration on all the other state projects you bid on."

Tom Prendergast, the M.T.A.'s outgoing chairman, characterized the ultimatum thus: "You want to work here? Deliver."

The tricky stuff, as the deadline neared, wasn't the tracks or the signalling. It was the complexity of integrating various computerized systems in the stations, and the vexing nature of vertical transportation: that is, the elevators and escalators. The Governor, in weekly meetings, went around the room grilling the vertical-transportation contractors. This fall, it came to light that someone had forgotten to order a required elevator-safety device called a shunt trip breaker. "The shunt trip breaker. The nemesis to all modern-day construction," the Governor said. Soon, Michael H. was on the phone with a supplier in the Dominican Republic—a sub to a sub to a sub—negotiating the price of a pair of bespoke shunt trip breakers.

Cuomo, in his second term, has become infatuated with public works. He casts himself not only as a bulwark of progressivism in the age of Trump but also as a master builder, in the tradition of Robert Moses. He emphasizes Moses's visions and successes, while

glossing over his methods and abuses. He likes to say, as he did last month at his State of the State speech, at One World Trade Center, "New York has lived off its inheritance for too long." He told me, "Somewhere along the way, we lost our confidence or our ambition or our mojo for big projects. We used to build big things." Governors are remembered for what they build, not for what bills they pass, especially if they aspire to higher office—which Cuomo, of course, will not cop to. He has some big projects under way (a new Tappan Zee Bridge, a new Penn Station, a new LaGuardia Airport, the East Side Access) and some others in mind (a new J.F.K., a freight tunnel under New York Harbor), any one of which, some speculate, might one day bear the name of his father, if not the son. The début of the Second Avenue subway was the show pony of his New Year's master-builder tour, trotted out among references to the state's great historical public works. Still, it's a bit of a stretch to compare three subway stops to the Erie Canal or the Brooklyn Bridge.

Politicians get clear of boondoggles when they can. No one, you'll note, has jumped up to take the blame for the Oculus debacle, Santiago Calatrava's four-billion-dollar railway hub and dinosaur skeleton. The authorities, the infrastructure entities initially devised to transcend politics, spread accountability so thin that the elected officials who stack them with appointees get to bob and weave. The city itself doesn't always have much say in what it becomes. And the way projects are given priority has less to do with real regional planning or economic good sense than with the caprices of government horse-trading and funding.

Everyone always talks about how much better other cities' subway systems are: Paris, London, Tokyo, Singapore, Seoul. New York has a few competitive disadvantages: its trains run 24/7, and, in spite of its self-regard, it is not its nation's undisputed urban center and showpiece, and therefore not the beneficiary of outsized attention and funds. Also, the governance of the city's transit system is so convoluted, amid a tangle of state and city

ownership, obligation, and deflection, that decisions, much less good ones, are hard to come by. When an L.I.R.R. train derailed last month while entering a station in Brooklyn, it was almost comical to watch Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio try to outmaneuver each other for political advantage. (Cuomo rushed to the scene, while De Blasio decided he had better things to do: let the jockeying begin.) Though fellow Democrats and Clintonites, they have nevertheless carried on a long-running feud that can only partly be explained by customary tensions between city and state. It was hard to see much beyond personal pique that led them (and their staffs) to squabble in December over the jurisdiction of a stray deer that turned up in a Harlem housing project. (The deer died while in city custody awaiting state intervention.) The acrimony doesn't help advance otherwise popular and commendable ideas, such as MetroCard discounts for the poor. (The city and the state each say the other should fund it.)

You had to wonder if one of the reasons Cuomo spent so much time peacocking on Second Avenue was to stick it to de Blasio in his own back yard. De Blasio, for his part, downplayed the advent of the new subway, even though its northern terminus is three blocks from Gracie Mansion, the Mayor's residence. Technically, the state runs the subways, so his deferral to Cuomo makes sense in terms of structure, if not exposure. The Mayor has so far declined to work the Q into his commute to City Hall. This is in large part because he chooses to travel most mornings by chauffeured S.U.V., under police escort, from the Upper East Side to the Y.M.C.A. in his old neighborhood of Park Slope, Brooklyn, in order to work out. Afterward, he is driven back across the East River to City Hall. His exercise regimen is reportedly a half hour on a stationary bike. The geographical illogic smarts. He might as well make a side trip to Staten Island for an egg-and-cheese.

To many new yorkers, it was galling to see one of the city's whiter and more affluent neighborhoods get a new line, when so many precincts outside Manhattan are so ill-served. The cutoff at Ninety-sixth Street, the traditional dividing line between East Harlem and the Upper East Side—between brown and white—was conspicuous, reminiscent of the scene in the 1984 John Sayles film "The Brother from Another Planet," in which a subway magician says to the protagonist, as the uptown A train pulls into Columbus Circle, "Wanna see me make all the white people disappear?" ("125th Street next.") Phases II, III, and IV, if they ever come to pass, should mitigate this sense that Yorkville has been granted its own special commuter spur, a Trump-era twist on the Waldorf-Astoria's private stop. It will be interesting to see if these other neighborhoods get the same consideration, when it comes time to cut and cover, or shoot and blast. Who will be Harlem's Michael H.?

In planning terms, however, the question is how many people, not what kind. The line went where the people were. By the end of January, it was taking on a hundred and fifty-five thousand riders a day. As it stands, the new subway is a godsend for Yorkville residents commuting to Times Square or Madison Square Garden or anywhere else downtown and west—a trip that until January, 2017, always involved some kind of less-than-optimal but certainly conversation-inducing combination of rides.

To the extent that mass transit is a city's lifeblood, its role is not just to drain but to nourish. It not only follows density; it creates it. One of the main rationales for expanding subway lines is to foster economic development, which, really, means new and bigger buildings. This is why the Second Avenue subway has always been popular with real-estate developers and construction unions. Certain portions of the route are maximized, more or less, but the upper end, near the current terminus at Ninety-sixth Street, is still in flux. Rents and lot values rose prior to completion, and now seem to be climbing further.

It's an odd, semi-gentrified corner of the city, a mix of giant apartment towers and older tenements. A block east of the subway's Ninety-sixth Street entrance is a storied open-air roller-hockey rink, site of dimly remembered rumbles, and, past that, a busy F.D.R. Drive interchange, the former stomping grounds of the infamous squeegee men, the windshield entrepreneurs who were run off by Rudy Giuliani when he was living a half-dozen blocks south, at Gracie Mansion. In between the rink and the Mansion are the Isaacs Houses and the Holmes Towers, housing projects still considered by the police to be a "high-crime zone," though the dime-bag corner at Ninety-second and First is now a Greenmarket. Barack Obama lived in a drug-infested tenement on Ninety-fourth Street between First and Second when he attended Columbia, in the early eighties. Just to the west of the station is Normandie Court, a block-square apartment megalith of some three dozen stories, once known as Dormandie Court, for the postcollegiate settlers who keg-partied there, during the great yuppie migration of the eighties and nineties. Just uptown, on the other side of Ninety-sixth, is the biggest mosque in New York.

Last Monday morning, a little before nine, TV-news trucks were parked there, in pursuit of reactions to the mosque shooting in Quebec. Pedestrians, paying little mind, flowed toward the Q, a fresh tributary of the old familiar flow to Lex. On Track 2, a train was slowly filling up: seats for all. L.E.D. signs indicated that the time between departures, known as the headway, was eight minutes. No more exultation: New Yorkers on a workday, amid crappy news, their own meshugaas, and the doldrums of winter. At Eighty-sixth Street, the first to board was a blond woman with a pink yoga mat, and behind her a preppy guy with a crimson sweater emblazoned with the letter "H." By Seventy-second Street, the train was full, though not sardinishly so, in the manner of the Lexington line. A seated passenger, conducting the usual absent-minded survey of riders' shoes, concluded that the footwear was more expensive here on the Q.

Soon, the Q was pulling into Times Square. It was just another train, neither new nor old. People got on and off. Nothing moved. After a moment, a familiar announcement came over the P.A.: "Ladies and gentlemen, we are delayed because of train traffic ahead of us." ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

IS THIS HYGGE?

BY SUSANNA WOLFF

Hygge . . . is the Danish word for cozy. It is also a national manifesto, nay, an obsession expressed in the constant pursuit of homespun pleasures.

—*The Times*.

I SIT UNDER A thick, lumpy blanket with my new book about *hygge* and light the "cabin-scented" candle I got from my office Secret Santa, Gail. Is this *hygge*?

The candle smells more like new rain boots than like a cozy cabin, so I put it out, cupping my hand around the flame and blowing slowly, savoring this moment of domestic defeat. I pull on another pair of socks. I think this is *hygge*.

It's kind of too hot for this blanket. As I undrape it from my legs and wedge it behind me, I make sure to appreciate each nubby crocheted loop, wondering whose hands lovingly assembled it.

Actually, where did this blanket come from? I definitely didn't buy it. Did someone give it to me as a gift? A crocheted blanket is a terrible gift. As I push the mystery blanket even farther away, it slips behind the sofa, where I really should vacuum but don't, and I remind myself that it's not the gift but the ritual of gift-giving that matters. I feel pretty confident that this is *hygge*.

I take a sip of tea, breathing in the rich aroma. I didn't brew it with loose leaves, like I imagine cozy Danish people do, but I left the tea bag in for a solid five minutes before bringing the steaming liquid to my lips. I hold the mug with both hands. This has got to be *hygge*.

My *hygge* book doesn't say anything about not looking at screens, but it feels implied. I should Google it.

I open a fifteenth tab about Laura Linney. I don't know how I got here, but I embrace the journey.

I languidly eye the leaky part of the radiator that I wrapped in an old T-shirt. This is a prewar apartment, so I can't control the temperature. It's fine. *Hygge* isn't about control. It's a celebration of everyday life. And my everyday life is very hot.

Should I open a window? That seems wasteful, but it's hard to feel a northern-European sense of coziness when I'm sitting pantsless in a sweltering apartment. I don't think you're supposed to get up once you've started *hygge*-ing, though. It seems like a sitting thing, right?

Wow, I have been putting on ChapStick for, like, a full forty-five minutes.

This doesn't feel very *hygge*. This is just a regular night of seasonal-depression-induced antisocial behavior. I begin to suspect that being covered by a blanket may be integral to the *hygge* process.

I discover that *hygge* is pronounced "hoo-gah," not "higgy," like I've been saying this whole time. Well, I haven't been saying it out loud. Just thinking it as I order more blankets on Amazon. *Hygge* isn't about talking about *hygge*. It's about quiet, internal moments. Or at least I think it is. I'm still not sure, but I have three more blankets being delivered on Tuesday.

Free two-day shipping! I'm an Amazon Prime member. This is not *hygge*, but it's a very efficient service.

Am I allowed to just go to sleep? That seems like it's not a part of the *hygge* philosophy, but I've only read the first four pages of this *hygge* book. It's really boring. Wait—is that *hygge*?

I unfurl my body across the couch. Being all curled up seems *hygge*-ier, but my knee is stiff. It does that clicky thing when I stretch out, but I welcome the loud snap as a reminder that I am alive and life is magnificent. I don't need to go out and do exciting things in order to be content. I have freezing air streaming in through my open window, hellfire steam seeping from the radiator T-shirt, a warm laptop resting on my stomach, and a very boring book about *hygge* discarded on the floor. The ordinary blandness of life is a blessing!

Oh, man, I forgot that Laura Linney was in "The Truman Show."

I get into bed and watch "The Truman Show." It's available on Amazon Prime Video. Score.

I am no closer to understanding *hygge*. I light the candle again. Good enough. ♦

CACHETE JACK

ANNALS OF WILDLIFE

VALLEY CATS

Are L.A.'s mountain lions dangerous predators or celebrity guests?

BY DANA GOODYEAR

A lion known as P-45 has killed scores of domestic animals—and attracted passionate fans.

COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

It was drizzling and gray, late fall, on the old Rickards Movie Ranch, high in the Santa Monica Mountains, in rural, red-state western Malibu. Bleached skulls were tacked to the outside wall of a stage-set saloon; rusting wagon wheels leaned at angles. A hand-painted sign announced a "Public Hanging, 5PM." Inside the saloon—the shooting location of TV Westerns and Gravy Train commercials and *Playboy* spreads—a secret meeting was under way.

"This cat is dangerous," a woman said, her voice carrying tremulously over the saloon door. "He should not be part of the gene pool."

"Absolutely! Get him out of here," a man said.

"For years and years, I've lived like this," another woman said. "Now I'm afraid."

The saloon doors swung open, and Wendell Phillips beckoned me inside, where nine people sat around a large table, in a room crowded with memorabilia of the Old West: hides, brands, a full-mount coyote. Phillips, who is sixty-seven, with a bald head and a sizable mustache, is a former SWAT-team member and now has a law practice defending police officers. He and his wife, Mary Dee Rickards, were leading the meeting, for the victims of a mountain lion known as P-45.

P-45, the King of Malibu, is a hundred-and-fifty-pound male with golden eyes and mittlike paws who dominates the western swath of the Santa Monicas. After killing an alpaca at a Malibu winery in late 2015, he was captured and fitted with a G.P.S. collar by the National Park Service, which designated him the forty-fifth subject in a long-running study, led by a wildlife ecologist named Seth Riley, on the mountain lions of Los Angeles. (The "P" comes from *Puma concolor*, the species whose common names include puma, panther, catamount, cougar, and mountain lion.) Since P-45 was collared, according to Phillips, he has killed some sixty goats, sheep, llamas, and alpacas, a miniature horse, and a four-hundred-and-fifty-pound heifer: members of the class of rustic pet known as "hobby animals." Gallingly, he has eaten little—a nibble of heart meat here, a nip of scrotum there. Except in the case of pygmy goats, for which he has a taste, he seems to kill for sport.

Rickards, who has short blond hair and a cheerful manner, grew up on the ranch and runs a cat rescue there. She and Phillips have horses and dogs and, until recently, had alpacas. Then one night P-45 jumped into the alpaca pen, killing two of them. When it happened again last spring, and three more died, Phillips gave away the rest of the herd and turned his attention to pursuing the culprit. To Phillips, P-45 is a sociopath, a freak—"the John Wayne Gacy of mountain lions."

The Santa Monica Mountains extend from the Pacific Coast through the Hollywood Hills, to end in Griffith Park. Urban though Los Angeles is, its mountains are furrowed with densely vegetated canyons full of deer and coyotes, cactuses, live oaks, wheeling hawks—a patchwork of public and private holdings claimed both by top carnivores and by their human counterparts.

The real estate is increasingly contested. At some two hundred and forty square miles, the range is the perfect size for one or two dominant males and several females, along with their young. The National Park Service study is currently tracking ten mountain lions in the area, including three breeding males. There is also an unknown number of uncollared lions. Living at such close quarters intensifies the lions' natural territorialism; in this population, the leading cause of death is conflict with other lions. But adolescent lions who set out in search of their own hunting grounds often come to an impasse. The range is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the south and the Hollywood Freeway (the 101) to the north, and bisected by the 405 between Brentwood and Bel Air. Just as the roads keep native lions in, they also keep outside lions from entering, and first-order inbreeding has become common. Lush but confined, the mountains are a cushy prison, a Hotel California for apex predators, whose future is threatened by a double deficiency: not enough space for a group of lions with not enough genetic differences among them.

As a result, the mountain-lion population in the Santa Monica Mountains is in danger of entering an extinction

vortex, a downward spiral in which everything starts to fail. "They could be in the process of genetic flatlining," Robert Wayne, an evolutionary biologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, says. "Without our assistance, the Santa Monica Mountain pumas are likely to go extinct." This is what nearly happened to the Florida panthers, in the mid-nineties, when intensive inbreeding caused physical changes that hindered reproduction. According to Riley, who recently published a paper on the subject, if similar problems occur and no new lions enter the area the likelihood of L.A.'s lions disappearing in fifty years is 99.7 per cent. But genetic rescue can come in the form of just one new animal in each generation—in Florida, where the population was larger, it took just six females from Texas to reverse the spiral.

From this point of view, Los Angeles can't spare a single cat, and certainly not one matching P-45's profile. According to a preliminary genetic analysis done at Wayne's lab, P-45 comes from north of the 101: he is an outsider, a lion who successfully navigated the freeway and miles of suburbs to introduce his precious DNA to the Santa Monicas. Under threat, P-45 has inspired a committed following. In November, an editorial in the Los Angeles *Times* titled "Save P-45" defended his behavior as entirely natural. "Killing P-45 is not the answer," the editorial said. "Surely there is a better way to manage the conflicts that arise when humans and their domestic animals move into areas that have long served as habitat for wildlife."

P-45's alien provenance aggravates the unease that Phillips and his neighbors feel. "I *know* P-45 is not indigenous to here," Phillips told me. "I think he was a killer someplace else." He added, "I'm not too happy about P-45's genes getting passed down." Though the young generally travel with their mothers—mountain-lion fathers are more likely to kill their kittens than to train them—he saw the potential for P-45 to accustom his offspring to a life of theft and slaughter. Besides, he said, "I'm tired of living inside a biology project." If the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which manages the state's mountain-lion population, or the National Park Service, which he blames for protecting P-45, refused to solve the problem, he warned that vigilante justice would prevail.

"Somebody's going to shoot him soon," Phillips said. "They're just not going to report it. They're not going to call N.P.S., not going to call Fish and Wildlife. They're just going to shoot him, pound the collar off with a hammer, put it in a lead box in a bucket of water, and bury P-45 ten feet deep. That will be the end of that story. He will pass from reality into legend."

Puma concolor, an evolutionary adept that, unlike the sabre-toothed cat, survived the Late Pleistocene Extinction, is found from Tierra del Fuego to the Canadian Yukon. Until successive extermination campaigns largely eradicated mountain lions from the Midwest and the East, they ranged throughout the United States. Now, as urbanization in the West encroaches on their remaining habitat, some are making audacious attempts to reclaim ceded lands. In 2011, a cat from South Dakota travelled more than fifteen hundred miles, to Greenwich, Connecticut, before being struck and killed by an S.U.V. on the Wilbur Cross Parkway.

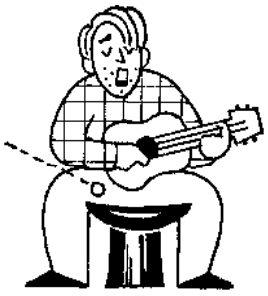
Los Angeles is one of two megacities in the world that have a population of big cats. In the other, Mumbai, leopards live in Sanjay Gandhi National Park and occasionally eat the humans who make their homes around its edge. Though there have been instances of mountain lions targeting people in California—between 1986 and 2014, there were three fatal attacks—it has never happened in Los Angeles County. (Since the beginning of the twentieth century, according to the Mountain Lion Foundation, there have been fewer than thirty fatal attacks in North America; it is an often cited fact that vending machines kill more people than mountain lions do.) "They're called ghost cats for a reason—they're very elusive," Jeff Sikich, a carnivore biologist with the National Park Service, who manages the field work for the mountain-lion study, told me. "We've seen with our data that they do a great job at avoiding us." But, he said, "in this urban, fragmented landscape, they see us almost every day."

In Los Angeles, a place long mocked as hostile to nature, the lions are a symbol of stubborn, resilient wildness. Powerful enough to jump fifteen feet in the air from a standstill, they provide a bracing reminder of humans' place in the food chain. Back-yard wildlife cameras have become popular, which, along with grainy security-camera footage, create a kind of lion TMZ. In December, the actor Will Smith, who lives on a hundred-and-fifty-acre estate in Calabasas, in the middle of the Santa Monica Mountains, went on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and gleefully shared images of what appeared to be a large mountain lion skulking through the brush beside his house. "Look at that thing!" Smith said. "I'm asleep right now, and I think I'm safe—while this is going on!" A ranger, Smith said, had recommended that he encircle his house with lion urine as a deterrent. Smith suggested that a better way to deal with the animal would be to "relocate it to Denzel's house."

The lions would probably still be living in obscurity had it not been for P-22, a strong, lean cat with a white muzzle and a pelt the color of orange-blossom honey, whose unlikely story has made him a celebrity. P-22 was born in the Santa Monicas, about seven years ago; scientists believe that as an adolescent he headed east, away from the scratch marks, growls, and scent trails of intimidating older males like P-45. Astonishingly, P-22 crossed both the 405 and the 101, and took up residence in Griffith Park, which sits across the highway from the rest of the Santa Monica range like the heel sliced off a loaf of bread. In February, 2012, Miguel Ordeñana, a biologist who was studying the flow of animals in and out of the park, noticed a mountain lion among the images recorded by his wildlife camera. It was like seeing Big Foot. "It's almost a mythical animal—people send in photos, and they're usually house cats or coyotes," he told me. "This image really proved that Griffith Park is more connected than we thought, and valuable not only to the wildlife that live in the park but to wildlife that live in neighboring parks." Several weeks later, Sikich captured P-22 and fitted him with a G.P.S. collar, so that he could monitor his movements and study his diet.

The park, which was given to the city in 1896 by an eccentric entrepreneur named Griffith J. Griffith, is five times the size of Central Park, and contains the Hollywood Sign, the Observatory, and the L.A. Zoo. A few years before donating the land, Griffith led a hunting party

to go after two mountain lions suspected of killing pigs there. These days, P-22 is welcomed as an honored guest of the park, even as millions of people visit each year, including joggers, cyclists, and goat-sized children vaguely supervised on its playgrounds and its trails. In the fall, Los Angeles celebrated the first official P-22 Day: more than two thousand people attended, among them scores of elementary-school children, in craft-paper ranger vests, who read letters of appreciation to an animal who has become part of the curriculum in many public schools. Mary Button, a representative of Friends of Griffith Park, said, "We're thrilled to have P-22 here in his home."



The park is eight square miles, but for P-22 it's a Hong Kong microflat—the smallest known home range for an adult male mountain lion. If he wants to breed, he will have to face death on the freeways again, or hope for a mate as daring as he was. A lion alone, P-22 is living out the classic science-fiction narrative of the protagonist who wakes up to discover that he is the last of his kind. By day, when the trails are overrun with humans, P-22 hides in plain view, resting in the dense brush down in the shady draws. After dark, he stalks the park and its environs, haunting the deer that graze in Forest Lawn cemetery and ambling around the Hollywood Sign, on Mt. Lee. It was on Mt. Lee that Steve Winter, a big-cat photographer for *National Geographic*, set up a flash-equipped camera trap. After waiting for more than a year, he got a shot of P-22, bathed in light, in front of the Hollywood Sign: a magnificent holdover from the Ice Age posed with the unmistakable emblem of the American megalopolis.

Griffith Park is adjacent to the residential neighborhoods of Beachwood Canyon and Los Feliz, and P-22 regularly visits both. One morning, at Jason and Paula Archinaco's house—a six-thousand-square-foot structure built into a hillside across the street from the park—two contractors for A.D.T. home security came tearing out of a crawl space where they'd been working, frantic with fear. They had seen a mountain lion, and needed to take the rest of the day off. Jason called the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the media. By the time Paula got home from a meeting down the hill, the street was clogged with news vans, and a helicopter hovered overhead. For the next twelve hours, she worked the door like a bouncer at a hot night club; for every two reporters who came out, two more could come in. "It was like we had a Kardashian in our house," she said.

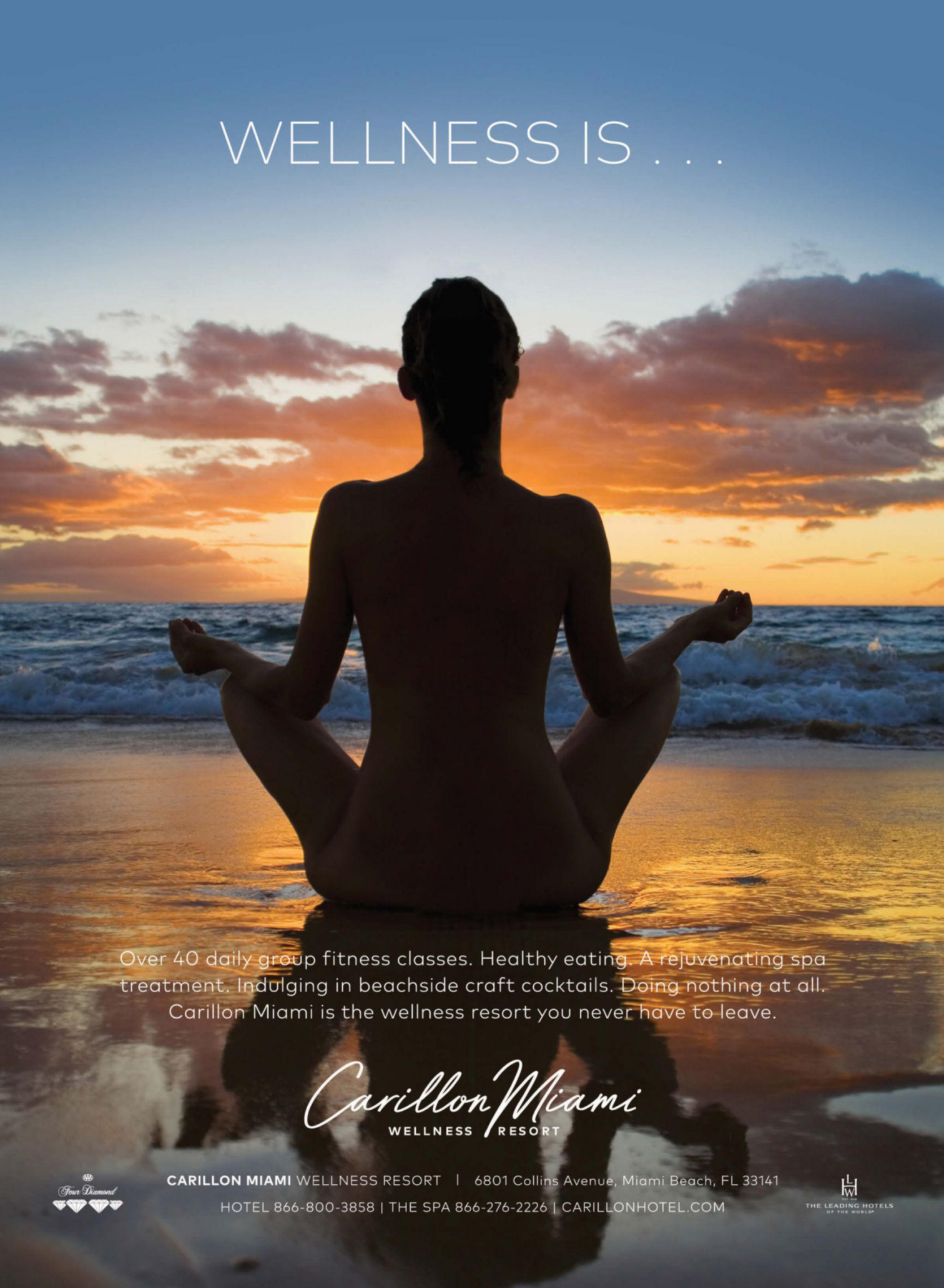
To the Archinacos, who have three domestic cats, a no-shoes policy, and a Buddha garden, P-22's brief residence under their house felt like a visitation from a spirit animal. Paula said, "He had these big amber eyes. He looked sad, like, 'Why did I get caught?'" Fish and Wildlife tried to dislodge him by pelting him with beanbags, but he wouldn't budge. Finally, when the crews went home, P-22 sneaked out unobserved and went back into Griffith Park.

P-22 has attuned the people of Los Angeles to the unsustainable predicament of their lions. "He is that relatable victim," Beth Pratt-Bergstrom, the California director of the National Wildlife Federation, says. "He's a social-justice story, an environmental story, a love story, stranded, as he is, in the park. He is a champion for so many issues—nobody has enough space." An ebullient outdoorswoman with sun-streaked blond hair, Pratt-Bergstrom has worked in Yellowstone and Yosemite. "I'm a National Parky," she said, explaining that most of her career has been devoted to a traditional approach to conservation, in which you keep wildlife in preserves and let the cities go. "If you told me I'd be doing wildlife conservation in L.A. three years ago, I would have laughed. 'L.A. doesn't have any wildlife! What's there to do?'"

P-22 changed Pratt-Bergstrom's mind. Now, with a fresh P-22 tattoo on her shoulder, she uses his plight to advocate for connectivity (the conservation principle that calls for linking areas of habitat), especially in cities, where habitat may exist but the boundaries to it are often fatal. Her initial plan to reserve the domain name L.A. Cougars was modified after a Google search returned NSFW results; now she uses Save L.A. Cougars. In P-22's name, she also maintains a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; one Valentine's Day, she set up a Tinder account for him. On his Facebook page, which has more than six thousand likes, she includes a friendly bio: "Hi! I'm LA's loneliest bachelor. I like to hang out under the Hollywood sign to try and pick up cougars. Likes: Deer, catnip, Los Feliz weekends. Dislikes: Traffic, coyotes, P-45." Last fall, Pratt-Bergstrom retraced P-22's presumed route from the western Santa Monicas into the park: forty-seven miles, which she completed in three days, with a lion-tracking G.P.S. collar around her neck and a cardboard cutout of P-22 strapped to her back.

The danger of overidentifying with animals, particularly carnivores, is that it leads people to expect human behavior of them. When, inevitably, the animals disappoint, the reaction is often punitive. Last spring, the affection of the public and the forbearance of officials were tested when P-22 got past a nine-foot-high fence at the L.A. Zoo and ate the face off an endangered Australian koala named Killarney. After a brief discussion about whether it was time to remove P-22 for his own sake, and possibly for ours, city leaders decided that he should stay. Pratt-Bergstrom took it as a significant victory. "In any other city, he would probably have been shot," she said. "The zoo said, 'Our bad—we didn't have a tall enough fence.' This is the second-largest city in the country, and it has said it's O.K. with an admittedly dangerous predator living in its midst. This is a real shift, and it's revolutionary for wildlife. *L.A.* is making a home for a mountain lion. C'mon, everyone else!"

Every other day, Jeff Sikich, of the National Park Service, searches the steep, prickly hills of western Malibu for a cat named P-19 and her kittens. The Park Service refers to P-19 as the Selfie Cat: in a fetching picture captured by a wildlife camera, she looks almost as if she were sucking in her tawny cheeks to pose. Not long before P-45 was collared, he mated with P-19; the kittens are the only known carriers of P-45's prized north-of-the-freeway DNA. In a complicated family tree, their success could help reverse the damage caused by two generations of inbreeding: before finding P-45, P-19 twice mated with her father, who


WELLNESS IS . . .
Over 40 daily group fitness classes. Healthy eating. A rejuvenating spa treatment. Indulging in beachside craft cocktails. Doing nothing at all. Carillon Miami is the wellness resort you never have to leave.
Carillon Miami
WELLNESS RESORT
Four Diamond
CARILLON MIAMI WELLNESS RESORT | 6801 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33141
HOTEL 866-800-3858 | THE SPA 866-276-2226 | CARILLONHOTEL.COM
THE LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD

then also mated with one of their kittens.

P-19's kittens by P-45 are a female and a male, known as P-46 and P-47. A few weeks after their birth, Sikich sneaked into their den and, with a veterinarian, surgically implanted very-high-frequency radio transmitters in their abdomens. The transmitters' batteries tend to falter after about fifteen months—also the age at which mountain lions typically leave their mothers, a behavior that scientists call dispersal. P-19's kittens will reach fifteen months in March, and Sikich needed to capture them before then to fit them with G.P.S. collars of their own. The challenge was greater than usual: six months ago, P-19's G.P.S. stopped working. Luckily, she also had a radio transmitter on her collar, which, along with the kittens' implants, would give Sikich the information he needed to set a trap for them.

Early one morning, I met Sikich in a lot near a state park in the mountains, and got into his white government truck. He is forty-one, six feet two and lanky, with green eyes and close-cropped grayish hair. Stealthy and circumspect, he has captured more than a hundred lions in his career. "You have to be the cat to catch the cat," he says. Once, when P-22's G.P.S. was down, he ambushed him from a tree limb with a blow dart loaded with sedatives, and replaced the collar while P-22 slept. There is an inherent tension in his work, which explains the caginess in his bearing: wanting the public to care about mountain lions in general, he is wary of anyone's knowing too much about any particular lion. He often parks far from his tracking grounds and hikes indirectly, lest he be followed, and he never publicizes the lions' exact locations. He said, "We don't want people hiking to these points, hoping for photo ops or selfies, and we don't want people who don't like lions to be able to find them."

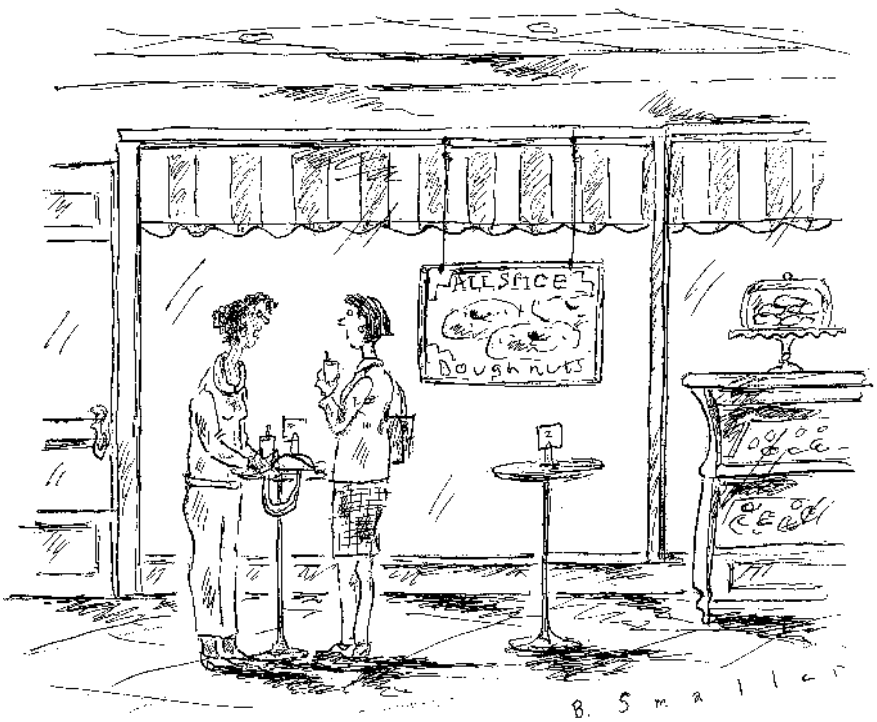
On the roof of the truck was a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree antenna. Sikich turned it on and entered a code associated with P-19's radio transmitter, and one for each of the kittens. We drove through Westlake Village, an affluent suburb in the San Fernando Valley, and into a subdivision, listening for their signals. When we heard them, Sikich stopped on the side of the road. From the back of the truck, he pulled out a contraption that looked like a project from a middle-school science fair: the Wright brothers' airplane, rendered in hangers from the dry cleaner. This was a directional antenna—which once nearly got him shot by the L.A.P.D. in Griffith Park when he was tracking P-22. While officers trained guns on him, he dropped the antenna and threw his hands in the air, shouting "Biologist! Biologist!"

Sikich pointed the antenna at a steep green hill behind the houses and arced it slowly through the air. We heard a faint clicking, P-19's signal, which strengthened as he moved the antenna north, then fell away. He reversed directions, again finding the signal's peak. For the next hour, we drove through neighborhoods, trying to find additional listening points that could help narrow down the whereabouts of the lion family. This was mountain-lion country, but the landscape, with its red tile roofs and basketball nets and mini-S.U.V.s, was in the process of forgetting it. At the end of a cul-de-sac, we scaled a low cinder-block wall and entered open space. Eventually, Sikich was able to point to where the lions were: in a drainage near the top of the green hill, where the terrain formed gentle pleats, like fabric beneath a cinched belt.

We were at the mountains' northern edge, overlooking the 101. Below us, beside the road, was the entrance to an underpass that Sikich believed may have been P-45's way into the Santa Monicas—and could be the kittens' way out. The road *shhhhhhhhed* insistently, soul-killing as a vacuum. A hundred and seventy-five thousand cars pass here every day, and a collision with any one of them would almost certainly be fatal to a lion. In December, Sikich verified the death of one of the lions in the study when he found her collar smashed against a Jersey barrier in the middle of a ten-lane freeway; a few weeks later, one of her young kittens died as it attempted to cross; a few weeks after that, another of her kittens was killed on the same road.

For P-19's kittens, staying behind in the crowded Santa Monicas would also likely mean death, in a fight with their father or with another breeding male. Since 2002, when the Park Service study began, only one male lion born in the Santa Monicas has lived past the age of two.

In late January, P-19's radio transmitter failed. All that remained were the kittens' implants, whose signals were easily obstructed, often faint, and, in any case, soon to go dark. The matter of



"When you say he's smart, do you mean in a tests-well way or in a lot-of-money way?"

catching the family became urgent: any day, they could go from study subjects to ghost cats once more. For weeks, the cats had been evading Sikich, bypassing the bait he laid and spending long stretches of time on private land, where he could not follow. Then, one morning, a carnivore intern working with him located the kittens on land belonging to the Park Service, in a wilderness between Phillips's property and the Pacific Ocean. Sikich dragged in a roadkill deer and buried it with leaf litter, scraping the earth as a lion would, so that P-19 might think she'd stumbled on another lion's cache. In a tree above a rocky promontory, he hung a speaker attached to an MP3 player loaded with a track he calls Deer in Distress: *Ma ma maaaa maaaaah.* That night, a camera he had set there recorded P-19 and the kittens, eating heartily. At last, Sikich had his chance.

The next day, while the cats were resting nearby, he divided up the remaining meat between two cages, placing it behind a treadle at the back: if a lion stepped there, the door would close, and Sikich would get an alert on his cell phone. In the evening, we met along the Pacific Coast Highway, where he had service. Just as the sun went over the horizon, his phone signalled. We drove up a steep canyon, followed by a truck carrying several of his colleagues, and pulled over at a soft shoulder. It was a starry night, and water rushed in a nearby stream. A cold wind blew—good for lion work, it carried away our scent. We scrambled up an incline, breathing the dark-green smell of crushed sage. The researchers wore headlamps, which raked searchingly across the terrain, lighting a sign that read "Danger Mountain Lion Capture Area."

Sikich went ahead to check the traps. When he rejoined us, he was beaming. "P-19 just went in," he said. "We've got her and one of the kittens."

Sikich loaded a dart with anesthetic and sedative, and he and a colleague headed into the woods. Fifteen minutes later, they came back, staggering under the weight of the animal they held between them on a tarp: P-47, the male. "Man! P-47's a beast," Sikich said. Nose to tail, he was nearly seven feet long, covered in a thick mustardy coat flecked with black. His paws looked as big as a hand spread wide. Bottom heavy, his body tapered to an elegant head with a Greek nose. Under his neck the fur was rabbit-white and soft.

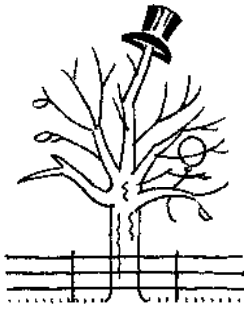
Sikich fitted the kitten with a G.P.S. collar, took samples of blood and hair, and pulled back his gums to measure his teeth. Perfectly white canines nearly an inch long formed a circular bite, like the wax Dracula teeth you see on Halloween. P-47 snored, his belly full of deer. I thought of my children, asleep in their beds. The researchers weighed the cat at a hundred and eight pounds—thirty-five pounds heavier than a male kitten from an earlier P-19 litter at the same age. "That's P-45's DNA for sure," Sikich said.

When it was time to wake P-47 up, Sikich wrestled him into his empty cage. "This is great," he said. "A young dispersing male with a collar. It'll be super interesting to see where he goes." Injected with a reversal drug, P-47 blinked, hissed, hammocked his shoulders, and reared to bare his teeth: *Haaaahhhr*. Staring at us, he banged his head on the top of the cage and started gnawing on its bars. For a moment, it looked as if he would tip it, and then Sikich, to my horror, propped the door open with a stick and encouraged him to leave the cage. The researchers turned down their lamps and stood back a few feet. Through the gloom, I could see P-47's eyes, like unlit yellow traffic lights. He quieted, and from the cage we heard a chirp, like a songbird's warmup. A moment later came a high-pitched answering squeak: his sister, P-46, uncaged, disconcertingly close, invisible to us. The siblings talked this way, back and forth, as if to reassure each other that everything would be all right. When P-47 finally bounded out of the cage and disappeared, I noticed that for a long time my heart had been beating with an unaccustomed, satisfying fear.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, P-45 indulged himself. Down the road from Wendell Phillips's place is a tumbledown alpaca farm that for the past four years has belonged to Victoria Vaughn-Perling, who lives in a suburb that is a twenty-minute drive away. She is a weaver, and it was always her dream to retire to the countryside. But alpaca wool—she hadn't known—is susceptible to moths, and whatever work she finished the moths were just as fast to undo. Her plans to move to the farm never took shape, either. She and her

husband, Joseph, separated, and it was all they could do to keep renters in the place. Many nights, it sat empty.

After losing nine alpacas to mountain-lion attacks over the summer, the Vaughn-Perlings tried to upgrade the pens where the animals stayed at night. They added motion-sensor lights and a line of electric fencing, and played talk radio turned up loud. Above the electric line, Victoria strung colored pennants, to make the barrier appear higher than it was. Some nights, she stayed out in her car, with the lights on, ready to blare the horn if the lion returned. Joseph, a technologist, looked for ideas on the Internet. In retrospect, Victoria told me, she could see that they had been naïve. "We didn't know what we were doing," she said.



Thanksgiving weekend was rainy, and she didn't make it to the farm, believing that a lion wouldn't hunt in the rain. The radio shorted out; the lights and the electric fence, powered by the sun, failed to turn on. P-45 came.

Two nights later, Wendell Phillips brought me to the farm. Construction lights illuminated a pitiful scene of alpaca carnage. In a corral surrounded by a waffling, loose-weave wire fence some eight feet tall, a chocolate-brown alpaca lay in a heap, matted with blood, its long neck rumpled like a cast-off knee-high. Nearby was a fluffy white alpaca named Cuzco. Its neck arched like a ballerina's, and there was a gaping hole in its abdomen. In the attack, P-45 had killed ten more of the Vaughn-Perlings' alpacas, including a baby, which had been found strung up on the fence; he had eaten only from Cuzco. The following night, he went down the road to the Shalom Institute, a Jewish retreat center, which has a petting zoo where visitors can learn about animals in the context of Torah study. Phillips told me that the zoo, which had also suffered previous attacks, was far better defended than the Vaughn-Perlings' farm. "I've seen medium-security correctional facilities that weren't as secure," he said. Still, P-45 leaped onto the roof of the animals' enclosure, spooking them so badly that they broke the gate from the inside and delivered themselves to him in an open pen.

"That smell, if you've never been to a homicide scene, is the smell of death," Phillips said, standing over Cuzco. He pointed out the killer's signature: the blood around the head; the tooth marks where he'd crimped the windpipe, suffocating it; the open cavity, intestines removed. "I doubt he'll be back tonight," he said. "Ate enough from the body cavity. Probably gorged up asleep somewhere." He showed me his weapons, a .40 Smith & Wesson Springfield XD tactical—a SWAT entry gun—and a semi-automatic Bushmaster. "The black rifles that the media hates so much," he said.

In California, mountain lions have special protection. Although for much of the twentieth century the state paid bounty hunters to kill them, since 1990 trophy hunting has been banned. There is, however, a provision for "depredation permits"—permission, retroactive or in advance, to kill a mountain lion that threatens or attacks a person or his property. In 2015, a hundred and seven mountain lions were killed on depredation permits. The Vaughn-Perlings had lost nineteen animals to P-45. Victoria got a depredation permit from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and asked Phillips to execute it. He had experience.

Last spring, after the second attack on his place, Phillips took out his own permit to shoot P-45. Inside an old stall used for hay storage in the Western Town on his property, he had rigged a blind, cutting a window into a wall that looked over a pasture, where he left one of his dead alpacas as bait. For three freezing nights, he lay in wait, sometimes dozing off in the chair he'd dragged in, an elaborately carved wooden throne, which, Mary Dee Rickards said, had appeared in Errol Flynn's "The Adventures of Robin Hood." The alpaca started to stink. On the third night, at a little past one, Phillips startled awake to see an enormous creature leap over a five-foot fence. "I was not prepared for him to be as large as he was," he told me. "He looked almost like an African lion, and his coat was almost as brown as deer hide. He was obviously an apex predator in the prime of his life. Not much body fat." P-45 rolled the alpaca over with his paw as if it were a beach ball. Phillips took aim, but just as he fired P-45 ducked his head to eat.

P-45 fell to his side, and Phillips was sure he had delivered a mortal wound. But then P-45 clawed his way over the fence and into the surrounding bushes. After Phillips reported shooting him, Sikich, worried that he was injured, tracked him into dense undergrowth a quarter mile away, where he had hunkered down. When Sikich hiked in, P-45 took off, apparently unscathed. "We didn't hear of a domestic animal being killed for two or three weeks after that," Phillips said. "And then he started killing again."

The night of my visit to the alpaca farm was unusually cool, with the temperature dropping into the forties. Around 10 P.M., Victoria came out of the house, wearing prescription sunglasses—she'd mislaid her eyeglasses—a light shirt, and a skirt that flared around her knees. She whispered, as if the lion could hear. "If there's something that's aggressive, capriciously aggressive, and is attacking so many different people's homes, eventually it's going to be a child," she said. She wished that the people who were actually responsible, whoever they might be, would move the lion somewhere else. "It's not killing to eat," she said. "It's killing for the pleasure."

To understand P-45's behavior, though, one need not enter the psyche of a criminal mastermind. Just picture a cat, after dinner, toying with a ball of alpaca yarn. "This is a mountain lion being a mountain lion," Sikich told me. "It's programmed to jump on prey items. The only unnatural thing here is having non-native animals in a native animal's territory unprotected."

It is a message that he and his colleague Seth Riley have been trying to impart for quite some time. Months earlier, they'd scheduled a workshop for animal hobbyists living in mountain-lion country, in the hope of educating them about how to keep their animals safe. They had thought that fifteen people might attend, to see their demonstration of a lion-proof enclosure made with kennelling materials available at Home Depot. Instead, a few nights after P-45's Thanksgiving spree, hundreds of people turned out for the workshop, ready to defend his life. Centuries of frontier

history began to flow the other way.

"I hear P-22 is going to take a hit out on anybody who takes out P-45," one man joked as he found a seat in a barn at the Paramount Ranch, a National Park property that once belonged to the movie studio. Activists had come from all over the state. One protester held a sign that said "Paws Up Don't Shoot." There was a tone of self-abnegation, and an inversion of Phillips's resentment of the beast marauding his paradise. Humans were the interlopers, murderers, and thieves. "We invaded *their* home and *their* land," a woman cried. At stake was the life of a lion they had come to adore—and the salvation he might represent for the entire mountain-lion population in the Santa Monicas.

"We need the DNA!" a woman shouted. "Keep the DNA in the mountains!"

"Is the homeowner aware that the extinction of mountain lions is *on her head*?"

Anyone who saw the matter differently was shouted down, deemed insufficiently wild to live among predators. "Go to L.A.! Go back to the city! Get out!"

After the workshop, Victoria pledged not to act on the depredation permit, but not without a bitter sense of having been victimized again, this time by P-45's fans. P-45 was famous, and evidently he could do as he pleased.

The last best hope for the mountain lions of Los Angeles is a little strip of undeveloped land, a quarter of a mile wide, wedged between two housing developments on the south side of the 101 Freeway, at Liberty Canyon, in Agoura Hills. It is here, beside the freeway underpass that Sikich suspects was used by P-45, that the State of California plans to build a land bridge over the freeway, connecting the Santa Monica Mountains with the open space on the other side. Beyond it lie the Santa Susana Mountains and, farther still, the Los Padres National Forest, a three-thousand-square-mile wilderness that Sikich calls the Promised Land. The project, which will cost some fifty million dollars and is currently under environmental review, will be privately financed. Beth Pratt-Bergstrom, of the National Wildlife Federation, who leads the fund-raising effort, says she will walk across the bridge in 2021, no doubt with the cardboard cutout of P-22 strapped to her back. P-22, who has rallied the conservation community and the larger public around the need for connectivity, won't benefit from a crossing. However, Sikich says, "the crossing will prevent other lions from potentially ending up in a dead-end spot the way he did."

According to a preliminary design, an apron lushly planted with sweet-smelling mulefat and coastal sage will funnel animals up a gentle incline to the crossing, where the landscaped habitat will continue high above ten lanes of freeway, before depositing the animals, ideally none the wiser, in the open space on the far side. An extraordinarily complicated piece of engineering, the land bridge is based on a conceptually simple design. Back in the seventies, when this part of the 101 was built, a chunk of earth had to be removed to make room for the road; it was dumped nearby, and is still there today. To build the land bridge, the design proposes to take the dirt and put it back—only, this time, it will be suspended on pillars twenty-four feet above the road. Visually, the bridge will be a kind of truce, between the future we thought we wanted and the past we had.

When completed, the project will be the largest urban crossing for wildlife, a mega High Line for animals. Riley, who has been working on the crossing for fifteen years, told me, "It would be a very specific visual reminder that people in Southern California care enough about wild places and wild species to do this. Even in the second-largest metropolitan area in the country, we can do what it takes to preserve wildlife—the whole range, all the way up to and including mountain lions."

Meanwhile, the animals are coming. For the past eighteen months, Sikich has been monitoring a series of cameras he installed in the underpass and in the natural habitat that will one day form on-ramps for the bridge. The cameras have captured bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, and deer. They have also captured two uncollared lions, one coming from the north, the other from the south. Each reached the freeway barrier and, finding it as yet too inhospitable, turned away. ♦

JOURNEYMAN

Anthony Bourdain's moveable feast.

BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

When the president of the United States travels outside the country, he brings his own car with him. Moments after Air Force One landed at the Hanoi airport last May, President Barack Obama ducked into an eighteen-foot, armor-plated limousine—a bomb shelter masquerading as a Cadillac—that was equipped with a secure link to the Pentagon and with emergency supplies of blood, and was known as the Beast. Hanoi's broad avenues are crowded with honking cars, storefront venders, street peddlers, and some five million scooters and motorbikes, which rush in and out of the intersections like floodwaters. It was Obama's first trip to Vietnam, but he encountered this pageant mostly through a five-inch pane of bulletproof glass. He might as well have watched it on TV.

Obama was scheduled to meet with President Trần Đại Quang, and with the new head of Vietnam's national assembly. On his second night in Hanoi, however, he kept an unusual appointment: dinner with Anthony Bourdain, the peripatetic chef turned writer who hosts the Emmy-winning travel show "Parts Unknown," on CNN. Over the past fifteen years, Bourdain has hosted increasingly sophisticated iterations of the same program. Initially, it was called "A Cook's Tour," and aired on the Food Network. After shifting to the Travel Channel, it was renamed "Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations," and it ran for nine seasons before moving to CNN, in 2013. All told, Bourdain has travelled to nearly a hundred countries and has filmed two hundred and forty-eight episodes, each a distinct exploration of the food and culture of a place. The secret ingredient of the show is the when-in-Rome avidity with which Bourdain partakes of indigenous custom and cuisine, whether he is pounding vodka before plunging into a frozen river outside St. Petersburg or spearing a fatted swine as the guest of honor at a jungle longhouse in Borneo. Like a great white shark, Bourdain tends to be photographed with his jaws wide open, on the verge of sinking his teeth into some tremulous delicacy. In Bourdain's recollection, his original pitch for the series was, roughly, "I travel around the world, eat a lot of shit, and basically do whatever the fuck I want." The formula has proved improbably successful.

People often ask Bourdain's producers if they can tag along on an escapade. On a recent visit to Madagascar, he was accompanied by the film director Darren Aronofsky. (A fan of the show, Aronofsky proposed to Bourdain that they go somewhere together. "I kind of jokingly said Madagascar, just because it's the farthest possible place," he told me. "And Tony said, 'How's November?'") A ride-along with Bourdain promises the sidekick an experience that, in this era of homogenized tourism, is all too rare: communion with a foreign culture so unmitigated that it feels practically intravenous. Parachuted into any far-flung corner of the planet, Bourdain ferrets out the restaurant, known only to discerning locals, where the grilled sardines or the pisco sours are divine. Often, he insinuates himself into a private home where the meal is even better. He is a lively dining companion: a lusty eater and a quicksilver conversationalist. "He's got that incredibly beautiful style when he talks that ranges from erudite to brilliantly slangy," his friend Nigella Lawson observed. Bourdain is a font of unvarnished opinion, but he also listens intently, and the word he uses perhaps more than any other is "interesting," which he pronounces with four syllables and only one "t": *in-ner-ess-ting*.

Before becoming famous, Bourdain spent more than two decades as a professional cook. In 2000, while working as the executive chef at Les Halles, a boisterous brasserie on Park Avenue South, he published a ribald memoir, "Kitchen Confidential." It became a best-seller, heralding a new national fascination with the grubby secrets and "Upstairs Downstairs" drama of the hospitality industry. Bourdain, having established himself as a brash truth-teller, got into public spats with more famous figures; he once laid into Alice Waters for her pious hatred of junk food, saying that she reminded him of the Khmer Rouge. People who do not watch Bourdain's show still tend to think of him as a savagely honest loudmouthed New York chef. But over the years he has transformed himself into a well-heeled nomad who wanders the planet meeting fascinating people and eating delicious food. He freely admits that his career is, for many people, a fantasy profession. A few years ago, in the voice-over to a sun-dappled episode in Sardinia, he asked, "What do you do after your dreams come true?" Bourdain would be easy to hate, in other words, if he weren't so easy to like. "For a long time, Tony thought he was going to have nothing," his publisher, Dan Halpern, told me. "He can't believe his luck. He always seems happy that he actually *is* Anthony Bourdain."

The White House had suggested the meeting in Vietnam. Of all the countries Bourdain has explored, it is perhaps his favorite; he has been there half a dozen times. He fell for Hanoi long before he actually travelled there, when he read Graham Greene's 1955 novel, "The Quiet American," and the city has retained a thick atmosphere of colonial decay—dingy villas, lugubrious banyan trees, monsoon clouds, and afternoon cocktails—that Bourdain savors without apology. Several years ago, he seriously considered moving there.

Bourdain believes that the age of the fifteen-course tasting menu "is over." He is an evangelist for street food, and Hanoi excels at open-air cooking. It can seem as if half the population were sitting

Bourdain, in Hanoi. He says, "I travel around the world, eat a lot of shit, and basically do whatever the fuck I want."

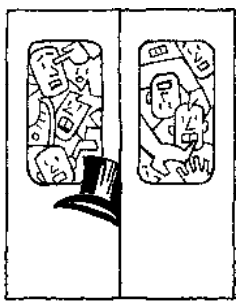
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM MEBANE

around sidewalk cookfires, hunched over steaming bowls of phở. As a White House advance team planned the logistics for Obama's visit, an advance team from Zero Point Zero, the company that produces the show, scoured the city for the perfect place to eat. They selected Bún chả Hương Liên, a narrow establishment across from a karaoke joint on a busy street in the Old Quarter. The restaurant's specialty is bún chả: springy white noodles, smoky sausage, and charred pork belly served in a sweet and pungent broth.

At the appointed hour, Obama exited the Beast and walked into the restaurant behind a pair of Secret Service agents, who cleared a path for him, like linemen blocking for a running back. In a rear dining room on the second floor, Bourdain was waiting at a stainless-steel table, surrounded by other diners, who had been coached to ignore the cameras and Obama, and to focus on their bún chả. Like many restaurants in Vietnam, the facility was casual in the extreme: diners and servers alike swept discarded refuse onto the floor, and the tiles had acquired a grimy sheen that squeaked beneath your feet. Obama was wearing a white button-down, open at the collar, and he greeted Bourdain, took a seat on a plastic stool, and happily accepted a bottle of Vietnamese beer.

"How often do you get to sneak out for a beer?" Bourdain asked.

"I don't get to sneak out, period," Obama replied. He occasionally took the First Lady to a restaurant, he said, but "part of enjoying a restaurant is sitting with other patrons and enjoying the atmosphere, and too often we end up getting shunted into one of those private rooms."



As a young waitress in a gray polo shirt set down bowls of broth, a plate of greens, and a platter of shuddering noodles, Bourdain fished chopsticks from a plastic container on the table. Obama, surveying the constituent parts of the meal, evinced trepidation. He said, "All right, you're gonna have to—"

"I'll walk you through it," Bourdain assured him, advising him to grab a clump of noodles with chopsticks and dunk them into the broth.

"I'm just gonna do what you do," Obama said.

"Dip and stir," Bourdain counselled. "And get ready for the awesomeness."

Eying a large sausage that was floating in the broth, Obama asked, "Is it generally appropriate to just pop one of these whole suckers in your mouth, or do you think you should be a little more—"

"Slurping is totally acceptable in this part of the world," Bourdain declared.

Obama took a bite and let out a low murmur. "That's good stuff" he said, and the two of them—lanky, conspicuously cool guys in late middle age—slurped away as three cameras, which Bourdain had once likened to "drunken hummingbirds," hovered around them. Noting the unaffected rusticity of the scene, Obama was reminded of a memorable meal that he had eaten as a child, in the mountains outside Jakarta. "You'd have these roadside restaurants overlooking the tea fields," he recalled. "There'd be a river running through the restaurant itself, and there'd be these fish, these carp, that would be running through. You'd pick the fish. They'd grab it for you and fry it up, and the skin would be real crispy. They just served it with a bed of rice." Obama was singing Bourdain's song: earthy, fresh, free of pretense. "It was the simplest meal possible, and nothing tasted so good."

But the world is getting smaller, Obama said. "The surprises, the serendipity of travel, where you see something and it's off the beaten track, there aren't that many places like that left." He added, wistfully, "I don't know if that place will still be there when my daughters are ready to travel. But I hope it is." The next day, Bourdain posted a photograph of the meeting online. "Total cost of Bun cha dinner with the President: $6.00," he tweeted. "I picked up the check."

"THREE YEARS I HAVEN'T had a cigarette, and I just started again," Bourdain said when I met him shortly afterward, at the bar of the Metropole Hotel, where he was staying. He cocked an eyebrow: "Obama made me do it." Bourdain, who is sixty, is imposingly tall—six feet four—and impossibly lean, with a monumental head, a caramel tan, and carefully groomed gray hair. He once described his body as "gristly, tendony," as if it were an inferior cut of beef, and a recent devotion to Brazilian jujitsu has left his limbs and his torso laced with ropy muscles. With his Sex Pistols T-shirt and his sensualist credo, there is something of the aging rocker about him. But if you spend any time with Bourdain you realize that he is controlled to the point of neurosis: clean, organized, disciplined, courteous, systematic. He is Apollo in drag as Dionysus.

"He has his *mise en place*," his friend the chef Éric Ripert told me, noting that Bourdain's punctiliousness is a reflection not only of his personality and his culinary training but also of necessity: if he weren't so structured, he could never stay on top of his proliferating commitments. In addition to producing and starring in "Parts Unknown," he selects the locations, writes the voice-overs, and works closely with the cinematographers and the music supervisors. When he is not on camera, he is writing: essays, cookbooks, graphic novels about a homicidal sushi chef, screenplays. (David Simon recruited him to write the restaurant scenes in "Treme.") Or he is hosting other TV shows, such as "The Taste," a reality competition that ran for two years on ABC. Last fall, during a hiatus from filming, he launched a fifteen-city standup tour. Ripert suggested to me that Bourdain may be driven, in part, by a fear of what he might get up to if he ever stopped working. "I'm a guy who needs a lot of projects," Bourdain acknowledged. "I would probably have been happy as an air-traffic controller."

As he sipped a beer and picked at a platter of delicate spring rolls, he was still fidgeting with exhilaration from the encounter with Obama. "I believe what's important to him is this notion that otherness is not bad, that Americans should aspire to walk in other people's shoes," he reflected. This idea resonates strongly with Bourdain, and, although he insists his show is a selfish epicurean enterprise, Obama's ethic could be the governing thesis of "Parts Unknown." In the opening moments of

an episode set in Myanmar, Bourdain observes, "Chances are you haven't been to this place. Chances are this is a place you've never seen."

From the moment Bourdain conceives of an episode, he obsesses over the soundtrack, and for the sequence with Obama he wanted to include the James Brown song "The Boss." When the producers cannot afford to license a song, they often commission music that evokes the original. For a "Big Lebowski" homage in a Tehran episode, they arranged the recording of a facsimile, in Farsi, of Dylan's "The Man in Me." But Bourdain wanted the original James Brown track, no matter how much it cost. "I don't know who's paying for it," he said. "But somebody's fucking paying for it." He sang the chorus to himself—"I paid the cost to be the boss"—and remarked that one price of leadership, for Obama, had been a severe constraint on the very wanderlust that Bourdain personifies. "Even drinking a *beer* for him is a big thing," he marvelled. "He's got to clear it." Before he said goodbye to Obama, Bourdain told me, he had underlined this contrast. "I said, 'Right after this, Mr. President, I'm getting on a scooter and I'm going to disappear into the flow of thousands of people.' He got this look on his face and said, 'That must be nice.'"

Tom Vitale, the episode's director, who is in his mid-thirties and has an air of harried intensity, stopped by to check with Bourdain about a shoot that was planned for later that evening. It generally takes Bourdain about a week of frantic work on location to film each episode. He has a small crew—two producers and a few cameramen—who recruit local fixers and grips. His team often shoots between sixty and eighty hours of footage in order to make an hour-long episode. Vitale, like others on the crew, has worked with Bourdain for years. When I asked him what his interactions with the White House had been like, he said, with bewilderment, "I'm shocked we all passed the background check."

Bourdain was eager to shoot at a bia-hơi joint, a popular Hanoi establishment specializing in chilled draft beer. "We're hoping for beer?" he asked.

"We're hoping for beer," Vitale confirmed. They had already scouted a place. "But, if the energy there is only fifty per cent, maybe not."

Bourdain agreed. "We don't want to manufacture a scene," he said. He makes a fetish of authenticity, and disdains many conventions of food and travel programming. "We don't do retakes," he said. "We don't do 'hello' scenes or 'goodbye, thank you very much' scenes. I'd rather miss the shot than have a bogus shot." When he meets someone at a roadside café, he wears a lavalier microphone, which picks up the sort of ambient noise—blaring car horns, shrieking cicadas—that sound designers normally filter out. "We want you to know what a place *sounds* like, not just what it looks like," Jared Andrukanis, one of Bourdain's producers, told me. "The guys who mix the show hate it. They hate it, but I think they love it."

Bourdain is exceptionally close to his crew members, in part because they are steady companions in a life that is otherwise transient. "I change location every two weeks," he told me. "I'm not a cook, nor am I a journalist. The kind of care and feeding required of friends, I'm frankly incapable of. I'm not *there*. I'm not going to remember your birthday. I'm not going to be there for the important moments in your life. We are not going to reliably hang out, no matter how I feel about you. For fifteen years, more or less, I've been travelling two hundred days a year. I make very good friends a week at a time."

Until he was forty-four, Bourdain saw very little of the world. He grew up in Leonia, New Jersey, not far from the George Washington Bridge. His father, Pierre, an executive at Columbia Records, was reserved, and given to reading silently on the couch for long stretches, but he had adventurous taste in food and movies. Tony recalls travelling into New York City with his father during the seventies to try sushi, which at the time seemed impossibly exotic.

The only experience of real travel that Bourdain had as a child was two trips to France. When he was ten, his parents took him and his younger brother, Chris, on a summer vacation to Normandy, where French relatives of his father had a home in a chilly seaside village. Tony had what he has since described as a Proustian encounter with a huge oyster, eating it freshly

"We have no choice but to resort to war kitties—may God have mercy on our souls."

• •

plucked from the sea. ("Tony likes to play up the oyster episode," Chris, who is now a banker, told me. "I have no idea if that's fact or fiction.") The brothers played in old Nazi blockhouses on the beach, and spent hours reading "Tintin" books—savoring tales of the roving boy reporter and poring over Hergé's minutely rendered illustrations of Shanghai, Cairo, the Andes. The stories, Bourdain recalls, "took me places I was quite sure I would never go."

His mother, Gladys, a copy editor at the *Times*, was formidable and judgmental, and often clashed with her son. In high school, Bourdain fell in love with an older girl, Nancy Putkoski, who ran with a druggie crowd, and he started dabbling in illicit substances himself. At one point, Gladys told her son, "I love you dearly, but, you know, I don't like you very much at present." In 1973, Bourdain finished high school a year early and followed Putkoski to Vassar. But he dropped out after two years and enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America, in Hyde Park, New York.

It was not his first experience in the kitchen: the summer after finishing high school, he had been a dishwasher at the Flagship, a flounder-and-fried-clams restaurant in Provincetown. In "Kitchen Confidential," he recounts a defining moment, during a wedding party at the Flagship, when he witnessed the bride sneak outside for an impromptu assignation with the chef. The punch line: "I knew then, dear reader, for the first time: I wanted to be a chef."

The story captures Bourdain's conception of the cook's vocation as both seductively carnal and swaggeringly transgressive. One of his favorite movies is "The Warriors," the cult 1979 film about street gangs in New York, and it was the outlaw machismo of the kitchen that attracted him. For a time, he walked around with a set of nunchucks in a holster strapped to his leg, like a six-shooter; he often posed for photographs wearing chef's whites and clutching the kind of long, curved knife you might use to disembowel a Gorgon. (The cover of "Kitchen Confidential" showed Bourdain with two ornamental swords tucked into his apron strings.) Long before he was the kind of international celebrity who gets chased by fans through the airport in Singapore, Bourdain knew how to arrange his grasshopper limbs into a good pose, and from the beginning he had a talent for badassery.

After graduating from the Culinary Institute, in 1978, he moved with Putkoski into a rent-stabilized apartment on Riverside Drive. They married in 1985. She had various jobs, and Bourdain found work at the Rainbow Room, in Rockefeller Center. When I asked about the marriage, which ended in 2005, he likened it to the Gus Van Sant film "Drugstore Cowboy," in which Matt Dillon and Kelly Lynch play drug addicts who rob pharmacies in order to support their habit. "That kind of love and codependency and sense of adventure—we were criminals together," he said. "A lot of our life was built around that, and happily so." When Bourdain tells stories about the "seriously knuckleheaded shit" he did while using narcotics—being pulled over by the cops with two hundred hits of blotter acid in the car, being stalked by the Drug Enforcement Administration while trying to retrieve a "letter from Panama" at the post office—he vaguely alludes to "another person" who was by his side. He is careful not to mention Putkoski by name. Aside from the drugs, they lived a relatively quiet domestic life. In the evenings, they ordered takeout and watched "The Simpsons." Every few years, after they saved up some money, Tony and Nancy went on vacation to the Caribbean. Otherwise, they did not travel.

But Bourdain did travel around New York, as a journeyman chef. At the Rainbow Room, he worked the buffet table, and he was a sous-chef at W.P.A., in SoHo. He worked at Chuck Howard's, in the theatre district; at Nikki and Kelly, on the Upper West Side; at Gianni's, a tourist trap at the South Street Seaport; at the Supper Club, a nightspot in midtown where the emphasis was not the food. Eventually, he acquired a crew of associates who migrated with him from one restaurant to the next. His friend Joel Rose, a writer who has known Bourdain since the eighties, told me, "He was a fixer. Anytime a restaurant was in trouble, he came in and saved the day. He wasn't a great chef, but he was organized. He would stop the bleeding."

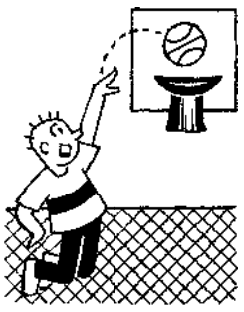
In 1998, he answered an ad in the *Times* and got the executive-chef job at Les Halles. It was an ideal fit for Bourdain: an unpretentious brasserie with its own butcher, who worked next to the bar, behind a counter stacked with steak, veal, and sausages. "Kitchen Confidential," which was excerpted in this magazine, was inspired by "Down

and Out in Paris and London," in which George Orwell describes chefs as "the most workmanlike class, and the least servile." Karen Rinaldi, the editor who acquired the book, for Bloomsbury, told me that she underestimated the impact it would have. "It was a flyer," she said—the profane musings of a guy who broiled steaks for a living. "But a lot of the books that end up shifting the culture are flyers."

"Kitchen Confidential" was filled with admonitions: Bourdain assailed Sunday brunch ("a dumping ground for the odd bits left over from Friday and Saturday") and advised against ordering fish on Mondays, because it is typically "four to five days old." The book was marketed as a dispatch from the scullery, the type of tell-all that might be more interesting to the naïve restaurant-goer than to the battle-seasoned cook. ("I *won't* eat in a restaurant with filthy bathrooms," Bourdain warned. "They let you *see* the bathrooms. If the restaurant can't be bothered to replace the puck in the urinal or keep the toilets and floors clean, then just imagine what their refrigeration and work spaces look like.") But, for Bourdain, the most important audience was his peers. The final line of the acknowledgments page was "Cooks rule," and he hoped, desperately, that other professionals would see the book in the spirit he had intended, and pass gravy-stained copies around the kitchen.

Bourdain did not quit his job at Les Halles when the book became a success. "I was careful to modulate my hopes, because I lived in a business where everybody was a writer or an actor," he recalls. For decades, he'd seen colleagues come into work crowing about their latest callback, only to see their grand designs amount to nothing. "So at no point was it 'So long, suckers.'" His confederates at Les Halles were amused, if mystified, by his blossoming career as a writer, and the owners were accommodating about the book tour. When Bourdain started travelling to promote the book, something curious happened. He'd amble into a restaurant alone and order a drink at the bar. Out of nowhere, a plate of amuse-bouches would appear, compliments of the house. It marked an affirmation for Bourdain: chefs were reading the book, and they liked it. But it also signified a profound inversion. He had spent the first half of his life preparing food to feed others. He would spend the second half getting fed.

Kang ho dong baekjeong is a bright, cacophonous restaurant on Thirty-second Street, a hipster riff on a Korean steak house. One frigid evening last February, I arrived, on time, to discover Bourdain waiting for me, already halfway through a beer. He is more than punctual: he arrives precisely fifteen minutes early to every appointment. "It comes from his kitchen days," Tom Vitale, the director, told me. "If he doesn't show, we know something's wrong." Bourdain used the word "pathological" to describe his fixation with being on time. "I judge other people on it," he admitted. "Today, you're just late, but eventually you will betray me."



I had dined at Baekjeong once before, but I was about to discover that eating at a restaurant with Bourdain is a markedly different experience. Throughout the meal, the head chef—Deuki Hong, an amiable, floppy-haired twenty-seven-year-old—personally presented each dish. One conspicuous hazard of being Anthony Bourdain is that everywhere he goes, from a Michelin-starred temple to a peasant hut on the tundra, he is mercilessly inundated with food. Because he is loath to spurn courtesy of any kind, he often ends up eating much more than he might like to. Bourdain calls this getting "food fucked." Now that he trains nearly every day in jujitsu, he tries to eat and drink more selectively. "Off camera, I don't go around getting drunk at night," he said; during the meals we shared when he wasn't shooting, Bourdain didn't so much gorge himself as graze. A big bowl of pasta is hard to enjoy if you know it will render you sluggish the next morning, when a crazy-eyed mixed martial artist is trying to ease you into a choke hold. Since he started doing jujitsu, three years ago, Bourdain has lost thirty-five pounds. (He now weighs a hundred and seventy-five pounds.) But he adores the food at Baekjeong, and was ready to indulge himself. After Hong arranged silky thin slivers of marinated beef tongue on a circular grill that was embedded in the table between us, Bourdain waited until they had just browned, then reached for one with chopsticks and encouraged me to do the same. We savored the rich, woodsy taste of the meat. Then Bourdain poured two shots of soju, the Korean rice liquor, and said, "That is *good*, huh?"

It is somewhat ironic that Bourdain has emerged as an ambassador for the culinary profession, given that, by his own admission, he was never an inspired chef. Alan Richman, the restaurant critic at *GQ*, who is a champion of white-tablecloth haute cuisine, told me that Les Halles "was not a particularly good restaurant when he was cooking there, and it got worse when he stopped." This seemed a little unfair: I frequented Les Halles before it closed, in 2016, and until the end it was rowdy and reliable, with a good frisée salad and a sturdy cassoulet. But it was never a standout restaurant. Bourdain used to genuflect like a fanboy before innovative chefs such as Éric Ripert, of Le Bernardin. On page 5 of "Kitchen Confidential," he joked that Ripert, whom he had never met, "won't be calling me for ideas on today's fish special." After the book came out, Bourdain was in the kitchen at Les Halles one day, when he got a phone call. It was Ripert, inviting him to lunch. Today, they are best friends, and Ripert often plays the straight man to Bourdain on "Parts Unknown." A recent episode in Chengdu, China, consisted largely of shots of a flushed and sweaty Ripert being subjected to one lethally spicy dish after another while Bourdain discoursed on the "mouth-numbing" properties of Sichuan pepper and took jocular satisfaction in his friend's discomfort.

Ripert said of Bourdain, "I have cooked side by side with him. He has the speed. He has the precision. He has the skill. He has the flavor. The food tastes good." He hesitated. "*Creativity*-wise . . . I don't know." Over the years, Bourdain has regularly been approached about opening his own restaurant, and these offers might have yielded him a fortune. But he has always declined, mindful, perhaps, that his renown as a

bard of the kitchen might be difficult to equal in the kitchen itself.

Even so, everywhere Bourdain goes young cooks greet him as "Chef." When I asked him if that felt strange, he bristled slightly. "Look, I put in my time, so I'm not uncomfortable with it," he said. "What makes me uncomfortable is when an actual working chef who cooks better than I've ever cooked in my life calls me Chef." As if on cue, Deuki Hong—who, before opening Baekjeong, worked under Jean-Georges Vongerichten and David Chang—appeared with a platter of steamed sweet potatoes, and addressed Bourdain as Chef.

Halfway through the meal, we were joined by Stephen Werther, a bespectacled entrepreneur who is Bourdain's partner in a new venture: a Manhattan market modelled on Singapore's hawker centers, or open-air food courts. It is scheduled to open, sometime in the next few years, at Pier 57, a cavernous former shipping terminal on the West Side. If Bourdain's show offers a vicarious taste of an intrepid culinary expedition, the market will provide an ersatz consumer experience of his show. The best street-food venders will be recruited from around the world and awarded visas—assuming that the United States is still issuing them—allowing New Yorkers to sample their octopus tostadas and their yakitori chicken hearts. Bourdain Market, as it will be known, is a preposterously ambitious venture; it will be three times the size of the original Eataly—Mario Batali's superemporium of Italian food in the Flatiron district. Werther was accompanied by Robin Standefer and Stephen Alesch, a married couple who run Roman and Williams, a design firm that creates seductive contemporary spaces, such as the Ace Hotel in New York. They had agreed to work on the market. Their background is in Hollywood set design, an ideal match for Bourdain's sensibility.

"Imagine a post-apocalyptic Grand Central Terminal, if it had been invaded by China," Bourdain said.

"But underwater," Standefer joked.

Bourdain elaborated that the market should bring to mind "Blade Runner"—high-end retail as grungy, polyglot dystopia. When Bourdain was growing up, his father used to rent a 16-mm. projector and show movies by Stanley Kubrick and Mel Brooks. "I've never met anyone who has this catalogue of films in his head," one of his longtime cameramen, Zach Zamboni, told me. A Rome episode of "No Reservations" made black-and-white allusion to Fellini. The Buenos Aires episode on "Parts Unknown" was a nod to "Happy Together," by Wong Kar-wai. Most viewers are unlikely to catch such references, but for Bourdain that is not the point. "When other cinematographers like it, that feels good," he said. "It's just like cooking—when the other cooks say, 'Nice plate.' It's kind of not about the customers." The producer Lydia Tenaglia, who, along with her husband, Chris Collins, recruited Bourdain to television for "A Cook's Tour," and now runs Zero Point Zero, told me that part of the reason Bourdain's experience is so often refracted through films is that, until middle age, he had seen so little of the world. "Books and films, that was what he knew—what he had read in Graham Greene, what he had seen in 'Apocalypse Now.'"

Singapore's orderly hawker markets combine the delights of roadside gastronomy with an approach to public-health regulation that could pass muster in post-Bloomberg New York. "They cracked the code without losing this amazing culture," Bourdain said. Some of his partners in the market will be established restaurateurs, like April Bloomfield, the Michelin-starred chef of the Spotted Pig and the Breslin. But Bourdain also wants the market to have an old-fashioned butcher shop, with "guys in bloody aprons breaking down sections of meat," and Asian street food that will attract not just the *Eater*-reading cognoscenti but also displaced Asians in New York who yearn for a genuine taste of home. "If the younger Korean hipsters *and* their grandparents like us, we're gonna be O.K.," he said.

I wondered aloud if grilled heart could turn a profit in New York. Wouldn't the adventurous offerings be loss leaders, while more conventional attractions, like an oyster bar, paid the rent?

"I'm an optimist," Bourdain replied. Tastes evolve, he insisted. Exposure to foreign cultures makes inhibitions fall away. "I grew up watching 'Barney Miller,' and it was Asian jokes all day long. They made fun of Asian food. It smelled like garbage. That's not funny anymore." With his chopsticks, he gestured toward a bowl of kimchi between us. "Americans want kimchi. They want it on their *hamburgers*. It's like when Americans started eating sushi—a huge tectonic shift." The new frontier for American tastes is fermentation, Bourdain continued. "That *funk*. That corruption of the flesh. That's exactly the flavor zone that we're all moving toward."

"This is the secret of the food world," Stephen Werther said. "Rot is delicious. No one will ever say that to your face. *Aged* steaks. 'Age' is code for 'rot.'"

"Cured," Bourdain said, warming to the riff.

"Alcohol is the by-product of yeast," Stephen Alesch chimed in. "It's the piss of yeast."

"Basically, what we're saying is that filth is good," Bourdain concluded.

Deuki Hong reappeared with a plate of marbled rib eye. "Korean restaurants don't usually dry-age," he said. "But we're trying dry-aged. This is, like, thirty-eight days."

"You see? The rot!" Werther exclaimed. "What happens after thirty-eight days?"

"Good things," Bourdain said.

"For Valentine's Day once, we made a stew by cooking this big beef heart," Alesch said.

"That's very romantic," Werther observed.

"It was," Alesch said. "We ate it for, like, four days."

We left the restaurant, with Hong in tow, and had a round of soju bombs at an unmarked bar on the third floor of a nearby office building. Our little party then proceeded to a Korean night club on Forty-first Street. A vast warren of karaoke rooms surrounded a central dance floor, where flickering lasers illuminated a crowd that was young, prosperous-looking, and entirely Asian. In a V.I.P. room overlooking the dance floor, Bourdain quizzed one of the owners, Bobby Kwak, a young Korean-American man in a black T-shirt, about the clientele. "If they go to a downtown club

PROMOTION

Then the evening
and the morning
were the last day.

But wasn't I promoted
after I named everything?

In cartoons, each
impulse

gets its own
signature shape.

They foil one another
yet remain intact—

static dressed up
as "zany"
or "hectic."

Here is the fur coat
gnawing wears.

Point to its pointed teeth.

—Rae Armantrout

like Marquee, they stick out like a sore thumb," Kwak explained, shouting over thudding techno. He pointed at Bourdain. "*You're* the minority here."

Bourdain said that this was exactly the kind of crowd he wanted to attract to the market. He had no interest in catering to "the gringos." Instead, he wanted to teach the gringos that they could love a place that was legitimate enough to be popular with a crowd like this.

"It's going to be hard," Kwak said. "You'll get the Asian-Americans . . ."

Bourdain insisted that he also wanted the young Koreans who had grown up in Seoul, not Fort Lee. It was nearly 2 A.M. "So, after they get out of here, where do they go?" Bourdain asked.

Kwak laughed, and shouted, "They go right to where you just ate."

In the summer of 2006, Bourdain flew to Lebanon to make a "No Reservations" episode about Beirut. He planned to focus on the city's cosmopolitan night life, nibbling kibbe, drinking arrack, and taking in the vibe at beachside night clubs. In the episode, he explains in a voice-over, "Everyone's been through here—the Greeks, the Romans, the Phoenicians. So I knew this was going to be a great place to eat." But, while Bourdain was strolling down the street one day, a convoy of vehicles rolled by, flying the yellow flags of Hezbollah. They were celebrating an ambush in which Hezbollah forces had crossed into Israel, killing three Israeli soldiers and capturing two others. The next day, Israel launched missiles at Beirut, killing dozens of civilians. Bourdain and his crew ended up at the Royal Hotel, on a hilltop not far from the U.S. Embassy, playing cards while they waited to be evacuated. In a surreal accident of geography, they could watch the war unfold from the relative safety of the hotel pool.

All travel requires a degree of improvisation, and Bourdain and his cameramen are well versed in reconceiving a show on the fly. Once, when he was snorkeling off the coast of Sicily, in search of seafood, he was startled to see a half-frozen octopus splash into the water beside him. His host, a deeply tanned, eager-to-please Sicilian, was dropping fish onto the seabed for him to "discover" on camera. Naturally, this violated Bourdain's dogma of verité. He was outraged, but decided to incorporate the moment into the episode, to hilarious effect. ("I'm no marine biologist, but I know a dead octopus when I see one.")

In Beirut, there was no way to edit around the war. But Bourdain and his producers felt that they had a story to tell, and they put together a show about being stranded by the conflict. In the episode, viewers see Bourdain's cameramen worrying about getting home, and the local fixers and producers worrying about the safety of loved ones. At one point in the narration, Bourdain says, "This is not the show we went to Lebanon to get." Until he travelled to Beirut, wherever he had ventured, no matter how bleak, he had always ended the episode with a voice-over that was, if not upbeat, at least hopeful. At the conclusion of the Beirut episode, he said, "Look at us in these scenes. . . . We're sitting around in bathing suits, getting tanned, watching a war. If there's a single metaphor in this entire experience, you know, that's probably it." Darren Aronofsky describes Bourdain's show as a form of "personal journalism," in the tradition of Ross McElwee's 1985 documentary, "Sherman's March," in which a story is pointedly filtered through the individual experience of the filmmaker. In Beirut, at a beach where a line of people stood clutching their belongings, Bourdain and his crew were ushered by U.S. Marines onto a crowded American warship.

At the time, Bourdain was in a new relationship. Éric Ripert had recently set him up with a young Italian woman named Ottavia Busia, who was a hostess at one of Ripert's restaurants. She and Bourdain both worked incessantly, but Ripert figured that they might find time to enjoy a one-night stand. On their second date, Busia and Bourdain got matching tattoos of a chef's knife. Eight months later, Bourdain returned, shaken, from Beirut, and they talked about having children. "Let's spin the

wheel," Busia told him, adding, dubiously, "Your sperm is old, anyway." Their daughter, Ariane, was born in April, 2007, and they were married eleven days later.

Busia is also a jujitsu fanatic, and, when I contacted her, she suggested that we meet at the school where she and Bourdain train, not far from Penn Station. "I'm here every day," she said. Busia is thirty-eight, with big brown eyes, a warm, toothy grin, and the dense, bunched-up shoulders of a gym rat. She sat cross-legged on a mat, wearing a black T-shirt that said, "In Jujitsu We Trust," and leggings that were decorated with cat faces. Busia first tried martial arts after giving birth, hoping to lose some weight, but she soon became consumed by jujitsu, and induced Bourdain to take a private lesson. (She bribed him, she maintains, with a Vicodin.) "I knew he was going to like the problem-solving aspect of it," she told me. "It's a very intellectual sport."

Years ago, while filming an episode in Rajasthan, Bourdain met a fortune-teller who told him that one day he would become a father. "That guy's full of fucking shit," Bourdain told one of the producers afterward. "I would be a horrible father." But Ariane is, by her parents' accounts, a well-adjusted kid. For a time, Busia brought her along on some of Bourdain's journeys, but when Ariane started elementary school that became impractical. Once, Busia was startled awake in the middle of the night with the horrifying realization that a strange man was in her bed. Then she rolled over and remembered that it was just Tony; she had forgotten that he was home. (Last year, Bourdain spent only about twenty weeks in New York.) Now that Busia is in peak physical condition, she is hoping to climb Mt. Everest. Last summer, Bourdain told me that she was sleeping in a hypoxia chamber—a device that mimics the oxygen depletion of high altitudes. "It basically re-creates thirty-two thousand feet," he said, then shrugged. "Anyway, nobody's sitting at home waiting for me to *define* them."

When I asked about fatherhood, Bourdain grew reflective. "I'm shocked by how happy my daughter is," he said. "I don't think I'm deluding myself. I know I'm a loving father." He paused. "Do I wish sometimes that, in an alternative universe, I could be the patriarch, always there? Tons of kids? Grandkids running around? Yes. And it looks good to me. But I'm pretty sure I'm incapable of it."

Perhaps the most beautiful thing that Bourdain has written is a 2010 essay called "My Aim Is True," which is a profile of Justo Thomas, a fastidious middle-aged man from the Dominican Republic, who descends early each morning to the basement beneath Le Bernardin, where he prepares a series of sharp knives, and then, with the precision of a heart surgeon, disassembles seven hundred pounds of fresh fish. The fish come to the restaurant, Thomas says, "the way they catch," which, Bourdain explains, means whole, straight from the ocean—"shiny, clear-eyed, pink-gilled, still stiff with rigor, and smelling of nothing but seawater." It is Thomas's job to break each carcass down into delicate cuts that will be served upstairs, and the essay is a warm tribute to him and to the details of his largely invisible craft. ("The walls, curiously, have been carefully covered with fresh plastic cling wrap—like a serial killer would prepare his basement—to catch flying fish scales and for faster, easier cleanup.") By the time Thomas completes his shift, it is noon, and Bourdain invites him to have lunch in the dining room. In six years of working at Le Bernardin, Thomas has never eaten there as a guest. Bourdain gestures toward the patrons around them, and notes that some of them will spend on a bottle of wine what Thomas might make in a couple of months. "I think in life they give too much to some people and nothing to everybody else," Thomas tells him. But, he adds, "without work, we are nothing."

In Bourdain's estimation, writing is a less gruelling art than cooking. "I think I've always looked at everybody I met through the prism of the kitchen," he told me at one point. " 'O.K., you wrote a good book, but can you handle a brunch shift?' " Writing is ephemeral, he said. More ephemeral than *brunch*? I asked. "Three hundred brunches, nothing came back," he said, his voice hardening with the steely conviction of a combat veteran. "Three hundred eggs Benedict. Not one returned. It's mechanical precision. Endurance. Character. That's *real*."

When Bourdain tells his own story, he often makes it sound as if literary success were something that he stumbled into; in fact, he spent years trying to write his way out of the kitchen. In 1985, he began sending unsolicited manuscripts to Joel Rose, who was then editing a downtown literary journal, *Between C & D*. "To put it to you quite simply, my lust for print knows no bounds," Bourdain wrote, in the cover letter for a submission of cartoons and short stories, noting, "Though I do not reside on the Lower East, I have in the recent past enjoyed an intimate though debilitating familiarity with its points of interest." Rose eventually published a story by Bourdain, about a young chef who tries to score heroin but is turned away, because he has no fresh track marks. ("There's tracks there! They just old is all cause I been on the program!")

Bourdain bought his first bag of heroin on Rivington Street in 1980, and plunged into addiction with his usual gusto. "When I started getting symptoms of withdrawal, I was proud of myself," he told me. Addiction, like the kitchen, was a marginal subculture with its own rules and aesthetics. For Bourdain, an admirer of William S. Burroughs, heroin held a special allure. In 1980, he says, he copped every day. But eventually he grew disenchanted with the addict's life, because he hated being at the mercy of others. "Getting ripped off, running from the cops," he recalled. "I'm a vain person. I didn't like what I saw in the mirror." Bourdain ended up on methadone, but he resented the indignities of the regimen: being unable to leave town without permission, waiting in line to pee in a cup. He quit cold turkey, around 1987, but spent several more years addicted to cocaine. "I just bottomed out on crack," he recalled. Occasionally, between fixes, he would find himself digging paint chips out of the carpet in his apartment and smoking them, on the off chance that they were pebbles of crack. Things grew so bad that Bourdain recalls once sitting on a blanket on Broadway at Christmastime, with his beloved record collection laid out for sale.

Given Bourdain's braggadocio, there were times when I wondered if the bad years were quite as grim as he makes

them sound. "There are romantics, and then there are the hard-core addicts," Karen Rinaldi said. "I think Tony was more of a romantic." Nancy Putkoski told me in an e-mail that Tony is "pretty dramatic." She wrote, "It does look pretty bleak in the rearview mirror. But, when you're living it, it's just your life. You struggle through." Once, Bourdain was riding in a taxi with three friends, having just scored heroin on the Lower East Side. He announced that he had recently read an article about the statistical likelihood of getting off drugs. "Only one in four has a chance at making it," he said. An awkward silence ensued. Years later, in "Kitchen Confidential," Bourdain pointed out that he made it and his friends had not. "*I* was the guy."

After getting clean, around 1990, Bourdain signed up for a writing workshop led by the editor Gordon Lish. "He took it very seriously," Putkoski told me. In letters to Joel Rose, Bourdain referred to the workshop as a transformative experience, and talked about "life after Lish." (When I reached Lish by phone, he recalled Bourdain as "an altogether charming fellow, very tall," but he had no recollection of Bourdain's writing.)

Through a college friend, Bourdain met an editor at Random House, who gave him a small advance to write a crime novel set in the restaurant world. Writing had always come easily to Bourdain; at Vassar, he wrote term papers for classmates in exchange for drugs. He didn't agonize over the novel, he said: "I didn't have time." Every day, he rose before dawn and banged out a new passage at his computer, chain-smoking, then worked a twelve-hour restaurant shift. The novel, "Bone in the Throat," was published in 1995. ("Two-hundred-and-eighty-pound Salvatore Pitera, in a powder-blue jogging suit and tinted aviator glasses, stepped out of Franks Original Pizza onto Spring Street. He had a slice of pizza in one hand, too hot to eat.") Bourdain paid for his own book tour, and recalls sitting behind a table at a Barnes & Noble in Northridge, California, with a stack of his books, as people walked by, avoiding eye contact. That novel and a follow-up, "Gone Bamboo," quickly went out of print. (They have since been reissued.)

In 1998, Les Halles opened a Tokyo branch, and one of the owners, Philippe Lajaunie, asked Bourdain to spend a week there, mentoring the staff. Bourdain fretted over how he'd survive the thirteen-hour flight without a cigarette, but once he landed in Tokyo he was exhilarated. "This place is like 'Blade Runner,'" he wrote to Joel Rose, in an e-mail. "I'm speaking French, hearing Japanese, and thinking English all while still horribly jet-lagged, crazed on iced sushi, jacked up on fugu, and just fucking dazzled by it all." He described the thrill of walking into the most uninviting, foreign-seeming, crowded restaurant he could find, pointing at a diner who appeared to have ordered something good, and saying, "Gimme that!"

Rose had recently had a child with Rinaldi, the book editor. He showed her the e-mails, and Rinaldi was impressed by Bourdain's bawdy vernacular. "Do

After filming with President Obama, Bourdain said, "I'm going to disappear into the flow of thousands of people."

you think he has a book in him?" she asked.

"You have no idea," Rose said.

Writing may have long been part of Bourdain's plan, but TV, according to Putkoski, "was never really in the picture until it was offered." Shortly after "Kitchen Confidential" was published, Lydia Tenaglia and Chris Collins started talking with Bourdain about making a show. He told them that he was planning a follow-up book in which he travelled around the world, eating. If they wanted to pay to follow him with cameras, why not?

Putkoski was less enthused. "She identified television early on as an existential threat to the marriage," Bourdain said. "I felt like the whole world was opening up to me. I'd seen things. I'd smelled things. I desperately wanted more. And she saw the whole thing as a cancer." If you watch episodes of "A Cook's Tour," you can sometimes spot Putkoski hovering at the edge of the frame. She had no desire to be on camera. She told me recently that her ideal degree of fame would be that of a Supreme Court Justice: "Almost nobody knows what you look like, but you always get the reservation you want."

For a time, Bourdain tried to save the marriage. He remodelled their apartment with the extra money he was making. But it didn't work. "I was ambitious, she was not," he said. "I have a rampaging curiosity about things, and she was content, I think, to be with me. To go to the Caribbean once a year. There were things that I wanted, and I was willing to really hurt somebody to have them." Bourdain describes his separation from Putkoski as "the great betrayal" of his life.

In an e-mail, Putkoski wrote to me, "I'm big on shared experiences, which I'd thought had bulletproofed our partnership. . . . We'd been through an awful lot of stuff together, a lot of it not so great, a lot of it wonderful fun." She concluded, "I just didn't anticipate how tricky success would be."

Outside the beer hall in Hanoi, under a tree festooned with Christmas lights, a stout elderly woman in billowy striped pants presided, with a cleaver, over a little stand that served roasted dog. Bourdain was relaxing nearby with Dinh Hoang Linh, a sweet-tempered Vietnamese bureaucrat who has been a close friend of his since 2000, when Linh was Bourdain's government minder on his first trip to Hanoi. Over the years, the recipe for Bourdain's show has subtly changed. When he first went to Asia, he joked that he was going to eat "monkey brains and poisonous blowfish gizzards." At a restaurant in Vietnam called Flavors of the Forest, he was treated to a delicacy in which the proprietor grabs a writhing cobra, unzips its belly with a pair of scissors, yanks out its still beating heart, and drops it into a small ceramic bowl. "Cheers," Bourdain said, before knocking it back like an oyster. If, in subsequent seasons, Bourdain has eaten some other appalling things—bear bile in Vietnam, bull's-penis soup in Malaysia, the unwashed rectum of a warthog in Namibia—he is careful to distance himself from any suggestion that he trucks in gag-reflex entertainment. When he was getting started, a degree of sensationalism was "exactly the cost of doing business," he told me, adding, "I'm not going to sneer at it. Whatever gets you across the river." (He noted, diplomatically, that the Travel Channel currently has a show, "Bizarre Foods," devoted to that kind of thing.)

He has never eaten dog. When I pointed out the dog-hawker in our midst, he said, "I'm not doing it just because it's there anymore." Now, when he's presented with such offerings, his first question is whether it is a regular feature of the culture. "Had I found myself as the unwitting guest of honor in a farmhouse on the Mekong Delta where a family, unbeknownst to me, has prepared their very best, and I'm the guest of honor, and all of the neighbors are watching . . . I'm going to eat the fucking dog," he said. "On the hierarchy of offenses, offending my host—often a very poor one, who is giving me the very best, and for whom face is very important in the community—for me to refuse would be embarrassing. So I will eat the dog."

Bourdain has softened in other ways. Although he still baits the food press with a steady stream of headline-ready provocations—"Anthony Bourdain: Airplane Food and Room Service Are Crimes"; "Anthony Bourdain Wishes Death Upon the Pumpkin-Spice Craze"; "Anthony Bourdain on Dining with Trump: Absolutely F*cking Not"—he often makes peace with people to whom he has taken a blowtorch in the past. In "Kitchen Confidential," he relentlessly pilloried the TV chef Emeril Lagasse, noting several times his resemblance to an Ewok. Then they met, Bourdain ate Lagasse's food, and eventually he took it all back and apologized. Lajaunie, the former Les Halles owner, said of Bourdain, "He's extremely kind, but it's the genuine kindness that comes from deep cynicism."

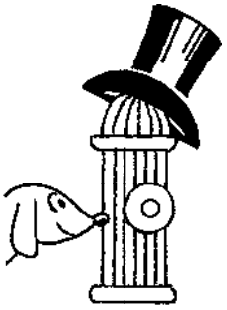
Lajaunie went on, "He has accepted that everyone has broken springs here and there. That's what most of us lack—the acceptance that others are as broken as we are." After Bourdain read "How to Live," Sarah Bakewell's 2010 book about Michel de Montaigne, he got a tattoo on his forearm of Montaigne's motto, in ancient Greek: "I suspend judgment."

Even Alan Richman, the *GQ* critic, whose snobbery Bourdain once savaged in an essay entitled "Alan Richman Is a Douchebag," has become a sort of friend. When Bourdain was writing for "Treme," he concocted a scene in which a character named Alan Richman visits a restaurant in New Orleans and has a Sazerac thrown in his face. He invited Richman to play himself, and Richman did.

In an era of fast-casual dining, Richman pointed out, the "roughneck" cuisine that Bourdain celebrates has enormous appeal. Bourdain has helped create the circumstances in which one of the most widely praised restaurants in New York City is the Spotted Pig, April Bloomfield's West Village gastropub, which is known for its unfussy cheeseburgers. To the degree that one can extrapolate from the personal quarrel between Richman and Bourdain a larger philosophical debate about the proper future of American tastes, Richman readily concedes defeat. "I don't know anybody who is more a man of the twenty-first century," Richman told me. "The way he acts. The way he speaks. His insanity. His vulgarity."

As "Parts Unknown" has evolved, it has become less preoccupied with food and more concerned with the sociology and geopolitics of the places Bourdain visits. Lydia Tenaglia calls the show an "anthropological enterprise." Increasingly, Chris Collins told me, the mandate is: "Don't tell me what you ate. Tell me who you ate with." Bourdain, in turn, has pushed for less footage of him eating and more "B roll" of daily life in the countries he visits. It has become a mantra for him, Collins said: "More 'B,' less me."

Since visiting Beirut, Bourdain has gone on to Libya, Gaza, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, seeking to capture how people go about their daily lives amid violent conflict. To viewers who complain that the show has become too focussed on politics, Bourdain responds that food *is* politics: most cuisines reflect an amalgamation of influences and tell a story of migration and conquest, each flavor representing a sedimentary layer of history. He also points out that most shows about food are premised on a level of abundance that is unfamiliar in many parts of the world.



The program's shift in tone coincided, fortuitously, with the move to CNN. In 2012, the network was struggling with a dilemma that is common to cable news. "Big events happen in the world and viewers flock to you in droves, and as soon as the event is over they disappear," Amy Entelis, an executive vice-president at CNN, told me. The network wanted to create "appointment viewing": original shows that audiences would seek out week after week. "Tony's name came up right away," Entelis said. It has been a happy arrangement: the network gives Bourdain ample resources and near-total creative freedom. "I've never gotten the stupid phone call," he said. The show has been a ratings success, and it has won five Emmys and a Peabody Award. Eerily, one of the highest-rated episodes of "Parts Unknown" aired soon after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. It was an episode about Los Angeles, which Bourdain had shot exclusively in Koreatown, and it's great, but nobody believes that this accounts for the ratings. Millions of people had followed the manhunt, and the devastating aftermath of the attack, on CNN. By Sunday, they needed a break.

Bourdain is comfortable being seen as a purveyor of escapism; he is less comfortable with the responsibility that attends the show's more serious material. In an episode set in Laos, he ate freshwater fish and bamboo shoots with a man who had lost an arm and a leg when a U.S. explosive, left over from the war, detonated. In Hanoi, one of Obama's staffers told him that, until the episode aired, some people in the White House had been unaware of the extent of the unexploded-ordnance problem in Laos. "Very casually, he said, 'So I guess you do some good after all,' " Bourdain recalled. "I'm a little embarrassed. I feel like Bono. I don't want to be that guy. The show is always about me. I would be bullshitting you if I said I was on some mission. I'm not."

Nevertheless, Bourdain knows that most viewers who caught his Congo episode had read little about the conflicts there. I was reminded of how Jon Stewart, whenever someone observed that many young people got their news from "The Daily Show," protested, unpersuasively, that he was just a comedian cracking jokes. Bourdain's publisher, Dan Halpern, said, "Whether he likes it or not, he's become a statesman."

Bourdain insists that this is not the case. "I'm not going to the White House Correspondents' dinner," he said. "I don't need to be laughing it up with Henry Kissinger." He then launched into a tirade about how it sickens him, having travelled in Southeast Asia, to see Kissinger embraced by the power-lunch crowd. "Any journalist who has ever been polite to Henry Kissinger, you know, fuck that person," he said, his indignation rising. "I'm a big believer in moral gray areas, but, when it comes to that guy, in my view he should not be able to eat at a restaurant in New York."

I pointed out that Bourdain had made similarly categorical denunciations of many people, only to bury the hatchet and join them for dinner.

"Emeril didn't bomb Cambodia!" he said.

One morning in August, I got an e-mail from Bourdain letting me know that he and Busia were separating. "It's not much of a change of life style, as we have lived separate lives for many years," he wrote. "More of a change of address." Bourdain felt some relief, he told me: he and Busia no longer needed to "pretend." In our conversations up to that point, he had celebrated the fact that Busia pursued jujitsu and her other interests in the same headlong manner in which he pursued his. But in the e-mail he wrote, "She's an interesting woman. I admire

her choices. But I married Sophia Loren. She turned into Jean-Claude Van Damme." (I learned subsequently that this was a standing joke between Bourdain and Busia, and not intended harshly.) Bourdain added that he was about to promote a new "family cookbook," called "Appetites," which would "lead to some awkward interviews."

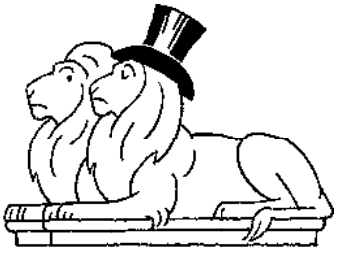
Chris Bourdain told me that, when Anthony first became famous, his attitude was: "I have no idea how long this is going to go on, so I want to max it out while I can." Whenever a new opportunity presented itself, he said yes. By the time Bourdain met Busia, he had achieved a level of recognition and wealth that might have enabled him to slow down. But he didn't stop moving. "Parts Unknown" films two seasons a year. Even first-class travel can be punishing after a while, and Bourdain acknowledges that although he may still behave like a young man, he isn't one. "I think you're officially old at sixty, right?" he told me, soon after his birthday. "The car starts falling apart." However, TV stars forge bonds with their audience through habitual exposure, and it can feel risky to take a break. "It's a bit like 'Poltergeist,'" Nigella Lawson, who was Bourdain's co-host on "The Taste," told me. "You get sucked into the TV and you can never get out."

At this point, Éric Ripert observed, Bourdain's show has "done the entire planet already!" Now, Bourdain says, the pleasure of making "Parts Unknown" lies in revisiting places to see how they've changed—Cuba five years ago is a different country from Cuba today—or in returning to a place with a fresh perspective. For a recent episode on Houston, Bourdain decided that he wanted "no white people," and provided instead a look at the city "as a Vietnamese and Central American and African and Indian place." Chris Collins suggested to me that the perpetual discontinuity of Bourdain's life may have assumed a continuity of its own, as if jet lag were his natural condition. "I've often thought, How would he ever go on without the show?" Lydia Tenaglia said. "It is such an inextricable part of him—who is Tony, apart from this?"

For years, Bourdain has had a recurring dream in which he finds himself in a Victorian-era hotel, wandering through well-appointed hallways, unable to find the front desk. A year ago, when I asked him how long he would stick with the show, he said, "Until it's not fun." In September, I posed the same question at a sushi restaurant in Manhattan, and this time he was more contemplative. "I have the best job in the world," he said. "If I'm unhappy, it's a failure of imagination." He was delighted with the Vietnam episode, which was about to air. CNN had wanted to lead with the Obama meeting, but Bourdain, ever one to play it casual, waited until nearly forty minutes into the episode to introduce the President. He got the James Brown song he wanted. ("I may have fibbed and told the network that I promised the President personally that we would get that for his walk-on music.")

After the Vietnam trip, Bourdain had competed in a jujitsu tournament, in Manhattan, and had been defeated by a strongman who wrenched his head with such ferocity that he thought his fillings might pop. As an added indignity, Bourdain came away from the tournament with a skin infection that left him looking, he says, "like Quasimodo." (Ripert is puzzled by jujitsu: "It's supposed to be good for the body, but he seems to be in pain all the time.")

In a fit of self-exile, Bourdain flew to France and made his way, alone, to the village in Normandy that he had



visited as a child. He had rented a big villa, with the intention of doing some writing. Bourdain cherishes the trope of the misanthropic émigré. "To me, 'The Quiet American' was a happy book, because Fowler ends up in Vietnam, smoking opium with a beautiful Vietnamese girl who may not have loved him," he told me.

But in Normandy he found that he couldn't write. His body was itchy and swollen from the rash, and he had a throbbing pain in his head. Because he looked hideous, he left the villa only after dark, like a vampire. Finally, Bourdain sought out a French doctor, who gave him a battery of painkillers and anti-inflammatories. After impulsively swallowing a week's supply, Bourdain realized that he had not eaten in thirty-six hours. He drove to a café in a nearby town, Arachon, and ordered spaghetti and a bottle of Chianti. He was halfway through the wine when he realized that he was sweating through his clothes. Then he blacked out.

When he woke up, Bourdain was lying with his feet in the café and his head in the street. A waiter was rifling through his pockets, in search of a driver's license, as if to identify a corpse. Bourdain's father had died suddenly, at fifty-seven, from a stroke, and Bourdain often thinks about dying; more than once, he told me that, if he got "a bad chest X-ray," he would happily renew his acquaintance with heroin. Taking meds and booze on an empty stomach was just a foolish mistake, but it left him shaken. He stood up, reassured the startled onlookers, drove back to the villa, and immediately wrote a long e-mail to Nancy Putkoski.

When I asked him what he wrote, Bourdain paused and said, "The sort of thing you write if you, you know, thought you were going to die. 'I'm fucking sorry. I'm sure I've acted like I wasn't.' We've had very little contact—you know, civil, but very, very little. 'I'm sorry. I know that doesn't help. It won't fix it, there's no making amends. But it's not like I don't remember. It's not like I don't know what I've done.'"

Anthropologists like to say that to observe a culture is usually, in some small way, to change it. A similar dictum holds true for Bourdain's show. Whenever Bourdain discovers a hole-in-the-wall culinary gem, he places it on the tourist map, thereby leaching it of the authenticity that drew him to it in the first place. "It's a gloriously doomed enterprise," he acknowledged. "I'm in the business of finding great places, and then we fuck them up."

For the restaurant that welcomes Bourdain and his crew, there are conspicuous upsides to this phenomenon. Our food at the sushi place was middling;

Bourdain avoided the fish and ordered chicken katsu, most of which he left uneaten. As we were leaving, Bourdain amiably obliged the owner's request for a selfie, and I witnessed a comically subtle tango, as she maneuvered his body so that the photo would capture the restaurant's sign (creating an implicit endorsement) and Bourdain gently swivelled her the other way, so that the backdrop would be Third Avenue instead.

In Hanoi, a few days after Bourdain's dinner with Obama, I mentioned that I was going to swing by the Bún chả restaurant. As if recalling a bygone establishment, Bourdain murmured dreamily, "I wonder what it's like now."

I chuckled at this, but when I visited the next day the restaurant had indeed changed. A sign outside said, in Vietnamese, "WE HAVE NO MORE BÚN CHẢ!," and gawkers loitered around the entrance. In the kitchen, the woman who runs the restaurant, Nguyên Thi Liên, was smiling, perspiring, and clearly overwhelmed. Her family had owned the place for decades. She told me that Hanoi kids had been stopping by at night, long past closing, to have their picture taken.

One evening in Vietnam, Bourdain finished a shoot outside a noodle shop, and loped over to the other side of the street, where I was sitting. "Want to go for a ride?" he asked. The crew had rented him a blue Vespa, and Bourdain told me that the only way to see Hanoi was on the back of a scooter: "To be anonymous, another helmeted figure in the middle of a million little dramas and comedies happening on a million bikes moving through this amazing city—every second is pure joy." I climbed on behind him. "I've only got one helmet," he said, handing it to me. I had scarcely strapped it on when he hit the gas and we were swept up in a surging river of vehicles. "I love this!" he shouted over his shoulder, picking up speed. "The smells! The traffic!" We shot through a perfumed cloud of smoke from a cookfire. Bourdain swerved to avoid an oncoming truck, and almost hit a woman on a scooter with a bale of green vegetables balanced precariously on the back. As we veered into a gutter, without breaking speed, it occurred to me that this would, at any rate, be a memorable way to die. Bourdain slowed down to ask a pedestrian for directions, and the man indicated that, to reach the Metropole Hotel, we should hang a left around Hoàn Kiếm Lake. But when we reached the lake—a tree-lined oasis with a tiny island in the center—Bourdain said, "Let's go this way," and turned right. Clutching my seat as we zoomed into another congested avenue, I realized that Bourdain had deliberately taken a wrong turn. He was courting uncertainty, trying to get lost.

The next morning, I met Bourdain in the lobby of the Metropole, and we drove to the outskirts of the city. He can hit the ground anywhere in the world, from Kathmandu to Kiev, and find a gym where people train in Brazilian jujitsu. "Everywhere you go, the etiquette is the same," he said. "We bump fists, then we try to kill each other for five minutes."

On the second floor of a local athletic complex, we found a mirrored, padded room that served as a jujitsu gym. Bourdain changed into a white terry-cloth gi, strapped on his blue belt, and greeted several much younger Vietnamese guys. He sparred with each man in a five-minute round. Bourdain had explained to me the complex protocols of jujitsu—describing how a blue belt can ask a white belt to spar, and a black belt can ask a blue belt, but a white belt can't ask a blue belt. He had always loved the kitchen because it was a tribe, and in jujitsu he had found another sweaty, gruelling activity with its own hierarchy and lingo, a vocabulary of signs and symbols that would be impossible for an outsider to understand. I watched Bourdain, with his limbs tangled around the body of a Vietnamese blue belt who was roughly half his age, his toes splayed, his eyes bulging, his fingers grasping for purchase on the guy's lapel. In the heat of the clench, they whispered playful banter to each other; there was something intimate about it, like pillow talk. Then, abruptly, Bourdain flipped the guy's body over, pinning one of his arms and bending his elbow at an unnatural angle. The guy gently tapped Bourdain's shoulder, and Bourdain released the grip. They uncoupled and lolled on the floor for a second, like a pair of dead men. Then Bourdain looked up at the time clock. There was still nearly a minute left in the five-minute round. He rolled onto his knees, bumped fists with his opponent, and started again. ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

LOSING STREAK

Reflections on two seasons of loss.

BY KATHRYN SCHULZ

A couple of years ago, I spent the summer in Portland, Oregon, losing things. I normally live on the East Coast, but that year, unable to face another sweltering August, I decided to temporarily decamp to the West. This turned out to be strangely easy. I'd lived in Portland for a while after college, and some acquaintances there needed a house sitter. Another friend was away for the summer and happy to loan me her pickup truck. Someone on Craigslist sold me a bike for next to nothing. In very short order, and with very little effort, everything fell into place.

And then, mystifyingly, everything fell out of place. My first day in town, I left the keys to the truck on the counter of a coffee shop. The next day, I left the keys to the house in the front door. A few days after that, warming up in the midday sun at an outdoor café, I took off the long-sleeved shirt I'd been wearing, only to leave it hanging over the back of the chair when I headed home. When I returned to claim it, I discovered that I'd left my wallet behind as well. Prior to that summer, I should note, I had lost a wallet exactly once in my adult life: at gunpoint. Yet later that afternoon I stopped by a sporting-goods store to buy a lock for my new bike and left my wallet sitting next to the cash register.

I got the wallet back, but the next day I lost the bike lock. I'd just arrived home and removed it from its packaging when my phone rang; I stepped away to take the call, and when I returned, some time later, the lock had vanished. This was annoying, because I was planning to bike downtown that evening, to attend an event at Powell's, Portland's famous bookstore. Eventually, having spent an absurd amount of time looking for the lock and failing to find it, I gave up and drove the truck downtown instead. I parked, went to the event, hung around talking for a while afterward, browsed the bookshelves, walked outside into a lovely summer evening, and could not find the truck anywhere.

This was a serious feat, a real bar-raising of thing-losing, not only because in general it is difficult to lose a truck but also because the truck in question was enormous. The friend to whom it belonged once worked as an ambulance driver; oversized vehicles do not faze her. It had tires that came up to my midriff, an extended cab, and a bed big enough to haul cetaceans. Yet I'd somehow managed to misplace it in downtown Portland—a city, incidentally, that I know as well as any other on the planet. For the next forty-five minutes, as a cool blue night gradually lowered itself over downtown, I walked around looking for the truck, first on the street where I was sure I'd parked, then on the nearest cross streets, and then in a grid whose scale grew ever larger and more ludicrous.

Finally, I returned to the street where I'd started and noticed a small sign: "no parking anytime." Oh, shit. Feeling like the world's biggest idiot, and wondering how much it was going to cost to extricate a truck the size of Nevada from a tow lot, I called the Portland Police Department. The man who answered was wonderfully affable. "No, Ma'am," he veritably sang into the phone, "no pickup trucks from downtown this evening. Must be your lucky day!" Officer, you have no idea. Channelling the kind of advice one is often given as a child, I returned to the bookstore, calmed myself down with a cup of tea, collected my thoughts amid the latest literary débuts, and then, to the best of my ability, retraced the entire course of my evening, in the hope that doing so would knock loose some memory of how I got there. It did not. Back outside on the streets of Portland, I spun around as uselessly as a dowsing rod.

Seventy-five minutes later, I found the truck, in a perfectly legal parking space, on a block so unrelated to any reasonable route from my house to the bookstore that I seriously wondered if I'd driven there in some kind of fugue state. I climbed in, headed home, and, for reasons I'll explain in a moment, decided that I needed to call my sister as soon as I walked in the door. But I did not. I could not. My cell phone was back at Powell's, on a shelf with all the other New Arrivals.

My sister is a cognitive scientist at M.I.T., more conversant than most people in the mental processes involved in tracking and misplacing objects. That is not, however, why I wanted to talk to her about my newly acquired propensity for losing things. I wanted to talk to her because, true to the stereotype of the absent-minded professor, she is the most scatterbrained person I've ever met.

There is a runner-up: my father. My family members, otherwise a fairly similar bunch, are curiously divided down the middle in this respect. On the spectrum of obsessively orderly to sublimely unconcerned with the everyday physical world, my father and my sister are—actually, they are nowhere. They can't even *find* the spectrum. My mother and I, meanwhile, are busy organizing it by size and color. I will never forget watching my mother try to adjust an ever so slightly askew picture frame—at the Cleveland Museum of Art. My father, by contrast, once spent an entire vacation wearing mismatched shoes, because he'd packed no others and discovered the mistake only when airport security asked him to remove them. My sister's best T.S.A. trick, meanwhile, involved borrowing her partner's laptop, then accidentally leaving it at an Alaska Airlines gate one week after 9/11, thereby almost

Over a lifetime, we will lose some two hundred thousand items apiece, plus money, relationships, elections, loved ones.

ILLUSTRATION BY BIANCA BAGNARELLI

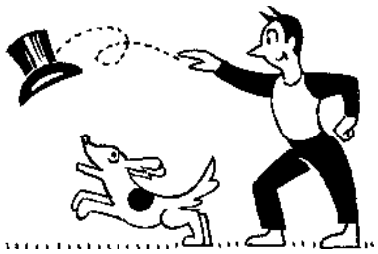
shutting down the Oakland airport.

That's why I called her when I started uncharacteristically misplacing stuff myself. For one thing, I thought she might commiserate. For another, I thought she might help; given her extensive experience with losing things, I figured she must have developed a compensatory capacity for finding them. Once I recovered my phone and reached her, however, both hopes vanished as completely as the bike lock. My sister was gratifyingly astonished that I'd never lost my wallet before, but, as someone who typically has to reconstruct the entire contents of her own several times a year, she was not exactly sympathetic. "Call me," she said, "when they know your name at the D.M.V."

Nor did my sister have any good advice on how to find missing objects—although, in fairness, such advice is itself difficult to find. Plenty of parents, self-help gurus, and psychics will offer to assist you in finding lost stuff, but most of their suggestions are either obvious (calm down, clean up), suspect (the "eighteen-inch rule," whereby the majority of missing items are supposedly lurking less than two feet from where you first thought they would be), or New Agey. ("Picture a silvery cord reaching from your chest all the way out to your lost object.") Advice on how to find missing things also abounds online, but as a rule it is useful only in proportion to the strangeness of whatever you've lost. Thus, the Internet is middling on your lost credit card or Kindle, but edifying on your lost Roomba (look inside upholstered furniture), your lost marijuana (your high self probably hid it in a fit of paranoia; try your sock drawer), your lost drone (you'll need a specially designed G.P.S.), or your lost bitcoins (good luck with that). The same basic dynamic applies to the countless Web sites devoted to recovering lost pets, which are largely useless when it comes to your missing Lab mix but surprisingly helpful when it comes to your missing ball python. Such Web sites can also be counted on for excellent anecdotes, like the one about the cat that vanished in Nottinghamshire, England, and was found, fourteen months later, in a pet-food warehouse, twice its original size.

Perhaps the best thing that can be said about lost entities and the Internet is that it has made many of them considerably easier to find: out-of-print books, elementary-school classmates, decades-old damning quotes by politicians. More generally, modern technology can sometimes help us find misplaced objects, as you know if you've ever had your girlfriend call your lost cell phone, or used that little button on your keys to make your Toyota Camry honk at you. Lately, we've seen a boom in technologies specifically designed to compensate for our tendency to lose stuff: Apple's Find My iPhone, for instance, and the proliferation of Bluetooth-enabled tracking devices that you can attach to everyday objects in order to summon them from the ether, like the Accio spell in the "Harry Potter" books.

These tricks, while helpful, have their limitations. Your phone needs to be on and non-dead; your car needs to be within range; you need to have the foresight to stick a tracking device onto the particular thing you're going to lose before you've lost it. Moreover, as anyone who's ever owned a remote control can tell you, new technologies themselves are often infuriatingly unfindable, a problem made worse by the trend toward ever smaller gadgets. It is difficult to lose an Apple IIe, easier to lose a laptop, a snap to lose a cell phone, and nearly impossible *not* to lose a flash drive. Then, there is the issue of passwords, which are to computers what socks are



to washing machines. The only thing in the real or the digital world harder to keep track of than a password is the information required to retrieve it, which is why it is possible, as a grown adult, to find yourself caring about your first-grade teacher's pet iguana's maiden name.

Passwords, passports, umbrellas, scarves, earrings, earbuds, musical instruments, W-2s, that letter you meant to answer, the permission slip for your daughter's field trip, the can of paint you scrupulously set aside three years ago for the touch-up job you knew you'd someday need: the range of things we lose and the readiness with which we do so are staggering. Data from one insurance-company survey suggest that the average person misplaces up to nine objects a day, which means that, by the time we turn sixty, we will have lost up to two hundred thousand things. (These figures seem preposterous until you reflect on all those times you holler up the stairs to ask your partner if she's seen your jacket, or on how often you search the couch cushions for the pen you were just using, or on that daily almost-out-the-door flurry when you can't find your kid's lunchbox or your car keys.) Granted, you'll get many of those items back, but you'll never get back the time you wasted looking for them. In the course of your life, you'll spend roughly six solid months looking for missing objects; here in the United States, that translates to, collectively, some fifty-four million hours spent searching a *day*. And there's the associated loss of money: in the U.S. in 2011, thirty billion dollars on misplaced cell phones alone.

Broadly speaking, there are two explanations for why we lose all this stuff—one scientific, the other psychoanalytic, both unsatisfying. According to the scientific account, losing things represents a failure of recollection or a failure of attention: either we can't retrieve a memory (of where we set down our wallet, say) or we didn't encode one in the first place. According to the psychoanalytic account, conversely, losing things represents a *success*—a deliberate sabotage of our rational mind by our subliminal desires. In "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life," Freud describes "the unconscious dexterity with which an object is mislaid on account of hidden but powerful motives," including "the low estimation in which the lost object is held, or a secret antipathy towards it or towards the person that it came from." Freud's colleague and contemporary Abraham Arden Brill put the matter more succinctly: "We never lose what we highly value."

As explanations go, the scientific one is persuasive but uninteresting. It sheds no light on how it feels to lose something, and provides only the most abstract and impractical notion of how not to do so. (Focus! And, while you're at it,

rejigger your genes or circumstances to improve your memory.) The psychological account, by contrast, is interesting, entertaining, and theoretically helpful (Freud pointed out "the remarkable sureness shown in finding the object again once the motive for its being mislaid had expired") but, alas, untrue. The most charitable thing to be said about it is that it wildly overestimates our species: absent subconscious motives, apparently, we would never lose anything at all.

That is patently false—but, like many psychological claims, impossible to actually falsify. Maybe the doting mother who lost her toddler at the mall was secretly fed up with the demands of motherhood. Maybe my sister loses her wallet so often owing to a deep-seated discomfort with capitalism. Maybe the guy who left his "Hamilton" tickets in the taxi was a Jeffersonian at heart. Freud would stand by such propositions, and no doubt some losses really are occasioned by subconscious emotion, or at least can be convincingly explained that way after the fact. But experience tells us that such cases are unusual, if they exist at all. The better explanation, most of the time, is simply that life is complicated and minds are limited. We lose things because we are flawed; because we are human; because we have things to lose.

• • •

Of all the lost objects in literature, one of my favorites appears—or, rather, disappears—in Patti Smith's 2015 memoir, "M Train." Although that book is ultimately concerned with far more serious losses, Smith pauses midway through to describe the experience of losing a beloved black coat that a friend gave her, off his own back, on her fifty-seventh birthday. The coat wasn't much to look at—moth-eaten, coming apart at the seams, itself optimized for losing things by the gaping holes in each pocket—but, Smith writes, "Every time I put it on I felt like myself." Then came a particularly harsh winter, which required a warmer jacket, and by the time the air turned mild again the coat was nowhere to be seen.

When we lose something, our first reaction, naturally enough, is to want to know where it is. But behind that question about location lurks a question about causality: What happened to it? What agent or force made it disappear? Such questions matter because they can help direct our search. You will act differently if you think you left your coat in a taxi or believe you boxed it up and put it in the basement. Just as important, the answers can provide us with that much coveted condition known as closure. It is good to get your keys back, better still to understand how they wound up in your neighbor's recycling bin.

But questions about causality can also lead to trouble, because, in essence, they ask us to assign blame. Being human, we're often reluctant to assign it to ourselves—and when it comes to missing possessions it is always possible (and occasionally true) that someone else caused them to disappear. This is how a problem with an object turns into a problem with a person. You swear you left the bill sitting on the table for your wife to mail; your wife swears with equal vehemence that it was never there; soon enough, you have also both lost your tempers.

Another possibility, considerably less likely but equally self-sparing, is that your missing object engineered its own vanishing, alone or in conjunction with other occult forces. Beloved possessions like her black coat, Patti Smith suggests, are sometimes "drawn into that half-dimensional place where things just disappear." Such explanations are more common than you might think. Given enough time spent searching for something that was *just there*, even the most scientifically inclined person on the planet will start positing various highly improbable culprits: wormholes, aliens, goblins, ether.

That is an impressive act of outsourcing, given that nine times out of ten we are to blame for losing whatever it is that we can't find. In the micro-drama of loss, in other words, we are nearly always both villain and victim. That goes some way toward explaining why people often say that losing things drives them crazy. At best, our failure to locate something that we ourselves last handled suggests that our memory is shot; at worst, it calls into question the very nature and continuity of selfhood. (If you've ever lost something that you deliberately stashed away for safekeeping, you know that the resulting frustration stems not just from a failure of memory but from a failure of inference. As one astute Internet commentator

asked, "Why is it so hard to think like myself?") Part of what makes loss such a surprisingly complicated phenomenon, then, is that it is inextricable from the extremely complicated phenomenon of human cognition.

This entanglement becomes more fraught as we grow older. Beyond a certain age, every act of losing gets subjected to an extra layer of scrutiny, in case what you have actually lost is your mind. Most such acts don't indicate pathology, of course, but real mental decline does manifest partly as an uptick in lost things. Dementia patients are prone to misplacing their belongings, and people with early-stage Alzheimer's often can't find objects because they have put them in unlikely locations; the eyeglasses end up in the oven, the dentures in the coffee can. Such losses sadden us because they presage larger ones—of autonomy, of intellectual capacity, ultimately of life itself.

No wonder losing things, even trivial things, can be so upsetting. Regardless of what goes missing, loss puts *us* in our place; it confronts us with lack of order and loss of control and the fleeting nature of existence. When Patti Smith gives up on finding her black coat, she imagines that, together with all of the world's other missing objects, it has gone to dwell in a place her husband liked to call the Valley of Lost Things. The shadow that is missing from that phrase darkens her memoir; in the course of it, Smith also describes losing her best friend, her brother, her mother, and that husband (at age forty-five, to heart failure).

On the face of it, such losses fit in poorly with lesser ones. It is one thing to lose a wedding ring, something else entirely to lose a spouse. This is the distinction Elizabeth Bishop illuminates, by pretending to elide it, in her villanelle "One Art," perhaps the most famous reckoning with loss in all of literature. "The art of losing isn't hard to master," she writes in the opening line; the trick is to begin with trivial losses, like door keys, and practice until you can handle those which are tragic. No one could take this suggestion seriously, and we aren't meant to do so. Through its content as well as its form, the poem ultimately concedes that all other losses pale beside the loss of a loved one.

Moreover, although Bishop doesn't make this point explicitly, death differs from other losses not only in degree but in kind. With objects, loss implies the possibility of recovery; in theory, at least, nearly every missing possession can be restored to its owner. That's why the defining emotion of losing things isn't frustration or panic or sadness but, paradoxically, hope. With people, by contrast, loss is not a transitional state but a terminal one. Outside of an afterlife, for those who believe in one, it leaves us with nothing to hope for and nothing to do. Death is loss without the possibility of being found.

"You'll get three meals a day, but they will all be continental breakfast."

My father, in addition to being scatterbrained and mismatched and menschy and brilliant, is dead. I lost him, as we say, in the third week of September, just before the autumn equinox. Since then, the days have darkened, and I, too, have been lost: adrift, disoriented, absent. Or perhaps it would be more apt to say that I have been *at a loss*—a strange turn of phrase, as if loss were a place in the physical world, a kind of reverse oasis or Bermuda Triangle where the spirit fails and the compass needle spins.

Like death more generally, my father's was somehow both predictable and shocking. For nearly a decade, his health had been poor, almost impressively so. In addition to suffering from many of the usual complaints of contemporary aging (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, kidney disease, congestive heart failure), he had endured illnesses unusual for any age and era: viral meningitis, West Nile encephalitis, an autoimmune disorder whose identity evaded the best doctors at the Cleveland Clinic. From there, the list spread outward in all directions of physiology and severity. He had fallen and torn a rotator cuff beyond recovery, and obliterated a patellar tendon by missing a step one Fourth of July. His breathing was often labored despite no evident respiratory problem; an errant nerve in his neck sometimes zapped him into temporary near-paralysis. He had terrible dental issues, like the impoverished child he had once been, and terrible gout, like the wealthy old potentate he cheerfully became.

He was, in short, a shambles. And yet, as the E.R. visits added up over the years, I gradually curbed my initial feelings of panic and dread—partly because no one can live in a state of crisis forever but also because, by and large, my father bore his infirmity with insouciance. ("Biopsy Thursday," he once wrote me about a problem with his carotid artery. "Have no idea when the autopsy will be and may not be informed of it.") More to the point, against considerable odds, he just kept on being alive. Intellectually, I

knew that no one could manage such a serious disease burden forever. Yet the sheer number of times my father had courted death and then recovered had, perversely, made him seem indomitable.

As a result, I was not overly alarmed when my mother called one morning toward the end of the summer to say that my father had been hospitalized with a bout of atrial fibrillation. Nor was I surprised, when my partner and I got to town that night, to learn that his heart rhythm had stabilized. The doctors were keeping him in the hospital chiefly for observation, they told us, and also because his white-blood-cell count was mysteriously high. When my father related the chain of events to us—he had gone to a routine cardiology appointment, only to be shunted straight to the I.C.U.—he was jovial and accurate and eminently himself. He remained in good spirits the following day, although he was extremely garrulous, not in his usual effusive way but slightly manic, slightly off—a consequence, the doctors explained, of toxins building up in his bloodstream from temporary loss of kidney function. If it didn't resolve on its own in a day or two, they planned to give him a round of dialysis to clear it.

That was on a Wednesday. Over the next two days, the garrulousness declined into incoherence; then, on Saturday, my father lapsed into unresponsiveness. Somewhere below his silence lurked six languages, the result of being born in Tel Aviv to parents who had fled pogroms in Poland, relocating at age seven to Germany (an unusual reverse exodus for a family of Jews in 1948, precipitated by limited travel options and violence in what was then still Palestine), and arriving in the United States, on a refugee visa, at the age of twelve. English, French, German, Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew: of these, my father acquired the first one last, and spoke it with Nabokovian fluency and panache. He loved to talk—I mean that he found just putting sentences together tremendously fun, although he also cherished conversation—and he talked his way into, out of, and through everything, including illness. During the years of medical crises, I had seen my father racked and raving with fever. I had seen him in a dozen kinds of pain. I had seen him hallucinating—sometimes while fully aware of it, discussing with us not only the mystery of his visions but also the mystery of cognition. I had seen him cast about in a mind temporarily compromised by illness and catch only strange, dark, pelagic creatures, unknown and fearsome to the rest of us. In all that time, under all those varied conditions, I had never known him to lack for words. But now, for five days, he held his silence. On the sixth, he lurched back into sound, but not into himself; there followed an awful night of struggle and agitation. After that, aside from a few scattered words, some mystifying, some seemingly lucid—"Hi!"; "Machu Picchu"; "I'm dying"—my father never spoke again.

Even so, for a while longer, he endured—I mean his him-ness, his Isaac-ness, that inexplicable, assertive bit of self in each of us. A few days before his death, having ignored every request made of him by a constant stream of medical professionals ("Mr. Schulz, can you wiggle your toes?" "Mr. Schulz, can you squeeze my hand?"), my father chose to respond to one final command: Mr. Schulz, we learned, could still stick out his tongue. His last voluntary movement, which he retained almost until the end, was the ability to kiss my mother. Whenever she leaned in close to brush his lips, he puckered up and returned the same brief, adoring gesture that I had seen all my days. In front of my sister and me, at least, it was my parents' hello and goodbye, their "Sweet dreams" and "I'm only teasing," their "I'm sorry" and "You're beautiful" and "I love you"—the basic punctuation mark of their common language, the sign and seal of fifty years of happiness.

One night, while that essence still persisted, we gathered around, my father's loved ones, and filled his silence with talk. I had always regarded my family as close, so it was startling to realize how much closer we could get, how near we drew around his dying flame. The room we were in was a cube of white, lit up like the aisle of a grocery store, yet in my memory that night is as dark and vibrant as a Rembrandt painting. We talked only of love; there was nothing else to say. My father, mute but alert, looked from one face to the next as we spoke, eyes shining with tears. I had always dreaded seeing him cry, and rarely did, but for once I was grateful. It told me what I needed to know: for what may have been the last time in his life, and perhaps the most important, he understood.

All this makes dying sound meaningful and sweet—and it is true that, if you are lucky, there is a seam of sweetness and meaning to be found within it, a vein of silver in a dark cave a thousand feet underground. Still, the cave is a cave. We had by then spent two vertiginous, elongated, atemporal weeks in the I.C.U. At no point during that time did we have a diagnosis, still less a prognosis. At every point, we were besieged with new possibilities, new tests, new doctors, new hopes, new fears. Every night, we arrived home exhausted, many hours past dark, and talked through what had happened, as if doing so might guide us through the following day. Then we'd wake up and resume the routine of the parking garage and the elevator and the twenty-four-hour Au Bon Pain, only to discover that, beyond those, there was no routine at all, nothing to help us prepare or plan. It was like trying to dress every morning for the weather in a nation we'd never heard of.

Eventually, we decided that my father would not recover, and so, instead of continuing to try to stave off death, we unbarred the door and began to wait. To my surprise, I found it comforting to be with him during that time, to sit by his side and hold his hand and watch his chest rise and fall with a familiar little riffle of snore. It was not, as they say, unbearably sad; on the contrary, it was bearably sad—a tranquil, contemplative, lapping kind of sorrow. I thought, as it turns out mistakenly, that what I was doing during those days was making my peace with his death. I have learned since then that even one's unresponsive and dying father is, in some extremely salient way, still alive. And then, very early one morning, he was not.

What I remember best from those next hours is watching my mother cradle the top of my father's head in her hand. A wife holding her dead husband, without trepidation, without denial, without any possibility of being cared for in return, just for the chance to be tender toward him one last time: it was the purest act of love I've ever seen. She looked bereft, beautiful, unimaginably calm. He did not yet look dead. He looked like

The day of the Inauguration, the mixed-media artist Kara Walker started painting. The result is a nine-by-twelve-foot work,

alluding to Emanuel Leutze's 1851 "Washington Crossing the Delaware" (inset).

my father. I could not stop picturing the way he used to push his glasses up onto his forehead to read. It struck me, right before everything else struck me much harder, that I should set them by his bed in case he needed them.

So began my second, darker season of losing things. Three weeks after my father died, so did another family member, of cancer. Three weeks after that, my home-town baseball team lost the World Series—an outcome that wouldn't have affected me much if my father hadn't been such an ardent fan. One week later, Hillary Clinton, together with sixty-six million voters, lost the Presidential election.

Like a dysfunctional form of love, which to some extent it is, grief has no boundaries; seldom this fall could I distinguish my distress over these later losses from my sadness about my father. I had maintained my composure during his memorial service, even while delivering the eulogy. But when, at the second funeral, the son of the deceased stood up to speak, I wept. Afterward, I couldn't shake the sense that another shoe was about to drop—that at any moment I would learn that someone else close to me had died. The morning after the election, I cried again, missing my refugee father, missing the future I had thought would unfold. In its place, other kinds of losses suddenly seemed imminent: of civil rights, personal safety, financial security, the foundational American values of respect for dissent and difference, the institutions and protections of democracy.

For weeks, I slogged on like this, through waves of actual and anticipatory grief. I couldn't stop conjuring catastrophes, political and otherwise. I felt a rising fear whenever my mother didn't answer her phone, hated to see my sister board an airplane, could barely let my partner get in a car. "So many things seem filled with the intent to be lost," Elizabeth Bishop wrote, and, as much as my specific sadness, it was just that—the sheer quantity and inevitability of further suffering—that undid me.

Meanwhile, I had lost, along with everything else, all motivation; day after day, I did as close as humanly possible to nothing. In part, this was because I dreaded getting farther away from the time when my father was still alive. But it was also because, after all the obvious tasks of mourning were completed—the service over, the bureaucratic side of death dispatched, the clothing donated, the thank-you cards written—I had no idea what else to do. Although I had spent a decade worrying about losing my father, I had never once thought about what would come next. Like a heart, my imagination had always stopped at the moment of death.

Now, obliged to carry onward through time, I realized I didn't know how. I found some consolation in poetry, but otherwise, for the first time in my life, I did not care to read. Nor could I bring myself to write, not least because any piece I produced would be the first my father wouldn't see. I stretched out for as long as I could the small acts that felt easy and right (calling my mother and my sister, curling up with my partner, playing with the cats), but these alone could not occupy the days. Not since the age of eight, when I was still learning to master boredom, had life struck me so much as simply a problem of what to do.

It was during this time that I began to go out looking for my father. Some days, I merely said to myself that I wanted to get out of the house; other days, I set about searching for him as deliberately as one would go look for a missing glove. Because I find peace and clarity in nature, I did this searching outdoors, sometimes while walking, sometimes while out on a run. I did not expect, of course, that along the way I would encounter my father again in his physical form. To the extent that I thought about it at all, I thought that through sheer motion I might be able to create a tunnel of emptiness, in myself or in the world, that would fill up with a sense of his presence—his voice, his humor, his warmth, the perfect familiarity of our relationship.

I have subsequently learned, from the academic literature on grief, that this "searching behavior," as it is called, is common among the bereaved. The psychologist John Bowlby, a contemporary of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, regarded the second stage of grief, after numbness, as "yearning and searching." But I had never knowingly engaged in it before, because, in my experience, my dead had always come looking for *me*. After other people I'd loved had died, I had often felt them near me, sometimes heard their voices, and even, on a few exceedingly strange occasions, been jolted into the uncanny conviction that I had encountered them again in some altered but unmistakable form. (This, too, turns out to be common among the grieving. "I never thought Michiko would come back/after she died," the poet Jack Gilbert wrote of his wife in "Alone." "It is strange that she has returned/as somebody's dalmatian.")

These experiences, to be clear, do not comport with my understanding of death. I don't believe that our loved ones can commune with us from beyond the grave, any more than I believe that spouses occasionally reincarnate as Dalmatians. But grief makes reckless cosmologists of us all, and I had thought it possible, in an impossible kind of way, that if I went out looking I might find myself in my father's company again.

The first time, I turned around after five minutes; I have seldom tried anything that felt so futile. After he lost his wife, C. S. Lewis, who had likewise previously felt the dead to be near at hand, looked up at the night sky and, to his dismay, knew that he would never find her anywhere. "Is anything more certain," he wrote, in "A Grief Observed," "than that in all those vast times and spaces, if I were allowed to search them, I should nowhere find her face, her voice, her touch?" Between his late wife and himself, he felt only "the locked door, the iron curtain, the vacuum, absolute zero."

Thus do I feel about my father. "Lost" is precisely the right description for how I have experienced him since his death. I search for him constantly but can't find him anywhere. I try to sense some intimation of his presence and feel nothing. I listen for his voice but haven't heard it since those final times he used it in the hospital. Grieving him is like holding one of those homemade tin-can telephones with no tin can on the other end of the string. His absence is total; where there was him, there is nothing.

This was perhaps the most striking thing about my father's death and all that followed: how relevant the idea of loss felt, how it seemed at once so capacious and so accurate. And in

fact, to my surprise, it *was* accurate. Until I looked it up, I'd assumed that, unless we were talking about phone chargers or car keys or cake recipes, we were using the word "lost" figuratively, even euphemistically—that we say "I lost my father" to soften the blow of death.

But that turns out not to be true. The verb "to lose" has its taproot sunk in sorrow; it is related to the "lorn" in forlorn. It comes from an Old English word meaning to perish, which comes from a still more ancient word meaning to separate or cut apart. The modern sense of misplacing an object appeared later, in the thirteenth century; a hundred years after that, "to lose" acquired the meaning of failing to win. In the sixteenth century, we began to lose our minds; in the seventeenth century, our hearts. The circle of what we can lose, in other words, began with our own lives and one another and has been steadily expanding ever since. In consequence, loss today is a supremely awkward category, bulging with everything from mittens to life savings to loved ones, forcing into relationship all kinds of wildly dissimilar experiences.

And yet, if anything, our problem is not that we put too many things into the category of loss but that we leave too many out. One night, during those weeks when I could find solace only in poetry, my partner read "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" aloud to me. In it, Walt Whitman leans against the railing of a ship, exalting in all he sees. So expansive is his vision that it includes not just the piers and sails and reeling gulls but everyone else who makes the crossing: all those who stood at the railing watching before his birth, all those watching around him now, and all those who will be there watching after his death—which, in the poem, he doesn't so much foresee as, through a wild, craning omniscience, look back on. "Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt," he admonishes, kindly.

And, just like that, my sense of loss suddenly revealed itself as terribly narrow. What I miss about my father, as much as anything, is life as it looked filtered through him, held up and considered against his inner lights. Yet the most important thing that vanished when he died is wholly unavailable to me: life as it looked *to* him, life as we all live it, from the inside out. All my memories can't add up to a single moment of what it was like to be my father, and all my loss pales beside his own. Like Whitman, his love of life had been exuberant, exhaustive; he must have hated, truly hated, to leave it behind—not just his family, whom he adored, but all of it, sea to shining sea.

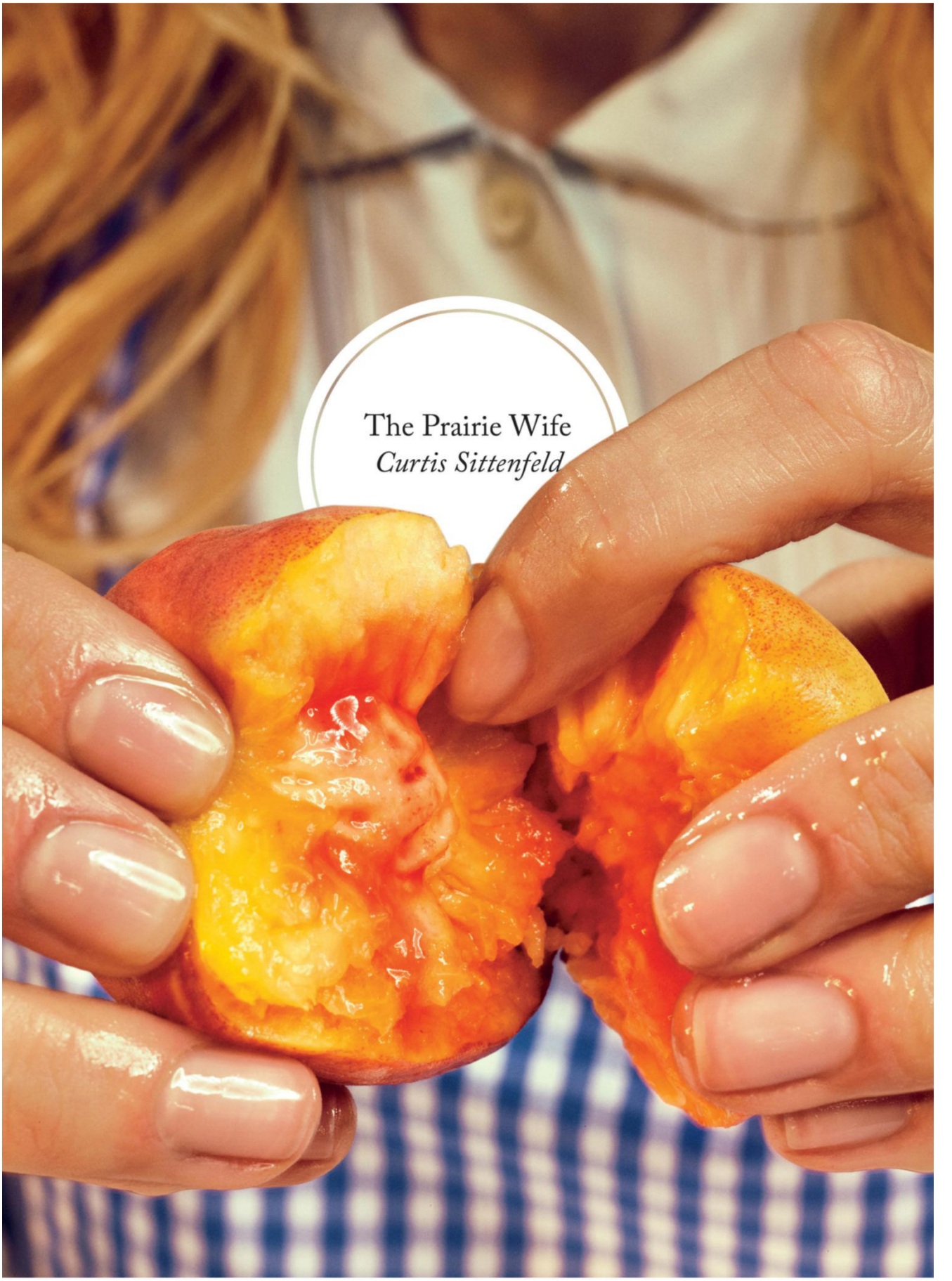
It is breathtaking, the extinguishing of consciousness. Yet that loss, too—our own ultimate unbeing—is dwarfed by the grander scheme. When we are experiencing it, loss often feels like an anomaly, a disruption in the usual order of things. In fact, though, it *is* the usual order of things. Entropy, mortality, extinction: the entire plan of the universe consists of losing, and life amounts to a reverse savings account in which we are eventually robbed of everything. Our dreams and plans and jobs and knees and backs and memories, the childhood friend, the husband of fifty years, the father of forever, the keys to the house, the keys to the car, the keys to the kingdom, the kingdom itself: sooner or later, all of it drifts into the Valley of Lost Things.

There's precious little solace for this, and zero redress; we will lose everything we love in the end. But why should that matter so much? By definition, we do not live in the end: we live all along the way. The smitten lovers who marvel every day at the miracle of having met each other are right; it is *finding* that is astonishing. You meet a stranger passing through your town and know within days you will marry her. You lose your job at fifty-five and shock yourself by finding a new calling ten years later. You have a thought and find the words. You face a crisis and find your courage.

All of this is made more precious, not less, by its impermanence. No matter what goes missing, the wallet or the father, the lessons are the same. Disappearance reminds us to notice, transience to cherish, fragility to defend. Loss is a kind of external conscience, urging us to make better use of our finite days. As Whitman knew, our brief crossing is best spent attending to all that we see: honoring what we find noble, denouncing what we cannot abide, recognizing that we are inseparably connected to all of it, including what is not yet upon us, including what is already gone. We are here to keep watch, not to keep. ♦

"That was Brad with the Democratic weather. Now here's Tammy with the Republican weather."

• •



The Prairie Wife

Curtis Sittenfeld

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRANT CORNETT

The understanding is that, after Casey's iPhone alarm goes off at 6:15 A.M., Kirsten wakes the boys, nudges them to get dressed, and herds them downstairs, all while Casey is showering. The four of them eat breakfast as a family, deal with teeth-brushing and backpacks, and Casey, who is the principal of the middle school in the same district as the elementary school Jack and Ian attend, drives the boys to drop-off. Kirsten then takes her shower in the newly quiet house before leaving for work.

The reality is that, at 6:17, as soon as Casey shuts the bathroom door, Kirsten grabs her own iPhone from her nightstand and looks at Lucy Headrick's Twitter feed. Clearly, Kirsten is not alone: Lucy has 3.1 million followers. (She follows a mere five hundred and thirty-three accounts, many of which belong to fellow-celebrities.) Almost all of Lucy's vast social-media empire, which of course is an extension of her life-style-brand empire (whatever the fuck a life-style brand is), drives Kirsten crazy. Its content is fake and pandering and boring and repetitive—how many times will Lucy post variations on the same recipe for buttermilk biscuits?—and Kirsten devours all of it, every day: Facebook and Instagram, Tumblr and Pinterest, the blog, the vlog, the TV show. Every night, Kirsten swears that she won't devote another minute to Lucy, and every day she squanders hours. The reason that things go wrong so early in the morning, she has realized, is this: she's pretty sure Twitter is the only place where real, actual Lucy is posting, Lucy whom Kirsten once knew. Lucy has insomnia, and, while all the other posts on all the other sites might be written by Lucy's minions, Kirsten is certain that it was Lucy herself who, at 1:22 A.M., wrote, "Watching Splash on cable, oops I forgot to name one of my daughters Madison!" Or, at 3:14 A.M., accompanied by a photo of an organic candy bar: "Hmm could habit of eating chocolate in middle of night be part of reason I can't sleep LOL!"

Morning, therefore, is when there's new, genuine Lucy sustenance. So how can Kirsten resist? And then the day is Lucy-contaminated already, and there's little incentive for Kirsten not to keep polluting it for the sixteen hours until she goes to bed with the bullshitty folksiness in Lucy's life: the acquisition of an Alpine goat, the canning of green beans, the baby shower that Lucy is planning for her young friend Jocelyn, who lives on a neighboring farm.

As it happens, Lucy has written (or "written"? Right? There's no way) a memoir, with recipes—"Dishin' with the Prairie Wife"—that is being published today, so Kirsten's latest vow is that she'll buy the book (she tried to reserve it from the library and learned that she was three hundred and fifth in line), read it, and then be done with Lucy. Completely. Forever.

The memoir has been "embargoed"—as if Lucy is, like, Henry Kissinger—and, to promote it, Lucy travelled yesterday from her farm in Missouri to Los Angeles. (As she told Twitter, "BUMMM-PEE flyin over the mountains!!") Today, she will appear on a hugely popular TV talk show on which she has been a guest more than once. Among last night's tweets, posted while Kirsten was sleeping, was the following: "Omigosh you guys I'm so nervous + excited for Mariana!!! Wonder what she will ask . . ." The pseudo-nervousness, along with the "Omigosh"—never "Omigod," or even "OMG"—galls Kirsten. Twenty years ago, Lucy swore like a normal person; but the Lucy of now, Kirsten thinks, resembles Casey, who, when their sons were younger, respectfully asked Kirsten to stop cursing in front of them. Indeed, the Lucy of now—beloved by evangelicals, homeschooler of her three daughters, wife of a man she refers to as the Stud in Overalls, who is a deacon in their church—uses such substitutes as "Jiminy Crickets!" and "Fudge Nuggets!" Once, while making a custard on-air, Lucy dropped a bit of eggshell into the mix and exclaimed, "Shnookerdookies!" Kirsten assumed that it was staged, or maybe not originally staged but definitely not edited out when it could have been. This made Kirsten feel such rage at Lucy that it was almost like lust.

Kirsten sees that, last night, Lucy, as she usually does, replied to a few dozen tweets sent to her by nobodies: Nicole in Seattle, who has thirty-one followers; Tara in Jacksonville, who's a mom of two awesome boys. (Aren't we all? Kirsten thinks.) Most of the fans' tweets say some variation of "You're so great!" or "It's my birthday pretty please wish me a happy birthday?!" Most of Lucy's responses say some variation of "Thank you for the kind words!" or "Happy Birthday!" Kirsten has never tweeted at Lucy; in fact, Kirsten has never tweeted. Her Twitter handle is not her name but "Minneap" plus the last three digits of her Zip Code, and, instead of uploading a photo of herself, she's kept the generic egg avatar. She has three followers, all of whom appear to be bots.

Through the bathroom door, Kirsten can hear the shower running, and the minute that Casey turns it off—by this point, Kirsten is, as she also does daily, reading an article about how smartphones are destroying people's ability to concentrate—she springs from bed, flicking on light switches in the master bedroom, the hall, and the boys' rooms. When Casey appears, wet hair combed, completely dressed, and finds Ian still under the covers and Kirsten standing by his bureau, Kirsten frowns and says that both boys seem really tired this morning. Casey nods sombrely, even though it's what Kirsten says every morning. Is Casey clueless, inordinately patient, or both?

At breakfast, Jack, who is six, asks, "Do doctors ever get sick?"

"Of course," Casey says. "Everyone gets sick."

While packing the boys' lunches, Kirsten says to Ian, who is nine, "I'm giving you Oreos again today, but you need to eat your cucumber slices, and if they're still in your lunchbox when you come home you don't get Oreos tomorrow."

She kisses the three of them goodbye, and as soon as the door closes, even before she climbs the stairs, Kirsten knows that she's going to get herself off using the handheld showerhead. She doesn't consider getting herself off using the handheld showerhead morally problematic, but it presents two logistical complications, the first of which is that, the more often she does it, the more difficult it is for Casey to bring her to orgasm on the occasions

"My son is a millennial—I should just go to jail for him."

• •

when they're feeling ambitious enough to have sex. The second complication is that it makes her late for work. If Kirsten leaves the house at 7:45, she has a fifteen-minute drive; if she leaves at or after 7:55, the drive is twice as long. But, seriously, what else is she supposed to do with her Lucy rage?

Kirsten's commute is when she really focusses on whether she has the power to destroy Lucy Headrick's life. Yes, the question hums in the background at other moments, like when Kirsten is at the grocery store and sees a cooking magazine with Lucy on the cover—it's just so fucking weird how famous Lucy is—but it's in the car that Kirsten thinks through, in a realistic way, which steps she'd take. She's figured out where she could leak the news, and narrowed it down to two gossip Web sites, both based in Manhattan; she's even found the "Got tips?" link on one. If she met somebody who worked for such a site, and if the person promised she could remain anonymous, it would be tempting. But, living in Minneapolis, Kirsten will never meet anyone who works for a Manhattan gossip Web site.

Kirsten's co-worker Frank has volunteered to leak the news for her; indeed, he's so eager that she fears he might do it without her blessing, except that he knows she knows he pads his expense reports when he travels. And it's Frank's joyous loathing of Lucy that reins in Kirsten's own antipathy. Frank has never met the woman, so what reason does he have to hate her? Because she's successful? This, in Kirsten's opinion, isn't sufficient. Kirsten hates Lucy Headrick because she's a hypocrite.

In 1994, the summer after their freshman year in college, Kirsten and Lucy were counsellors at a camp in northern Minnesota. It was coed, and Kirsten was assigned to the Redbirds cabin, girls age nine, while Lucy was with the Bluejays, age eleven. Back then, Lucy weighed probably twenty-five pounds more than she does now, had very short light-brown hair, and had affixed a triangle-shaped rainbow pin to her backpack. The first night, at the counsellors' orientation before the campers arrived, she said, "As a lesbian, one of my goals this summer is to make sure all the kids feel comfortable being who they are." Kirsten knew a few gay students at her Jesuit college, but not well, and Lucy was the first peer she'd heard use the word "lesbian" other than as a slur. Although Kirsten took a mild prurient interest in Lucy's disclosure, she was mostly preoccupied with the hotness of a counsellor named Sean, who was very tall and could play "Welcome to the Jungle" on the guitar. Sean never reciprocated Kirsten's interest; instead, and this felt extra-insulting, he soon took up with the other counsellor in the Redbirds cabin.

Kirsten became conscious of Lucy's crush on her without paying much attention to it. Having given the subject a great deal of thought since, Kirsten now believes that she was inattentive partly because of her vague discomfort and partly because she was busy wondering if Sean and Renee would break up and, if they did, how she, Kirsten, would make her move.

Lucy often approached Kirsten, chattily, at all-camp events or when the counsellors drank and played cards at night in the mess hall, and, more than once, she tried to initiate deep conversations Kirsten had no interest in. ("Do you believe in soul mates?" or "Do you usually have more regrets about things you've done or things you haven't done?") When Kirsten and Lucy ran into each other on the fourth-to-last night of camp, on the path behind the arts-and-crafts shed, when they were both drunk, it was maybe not as random or spontaneous as it seemed, at least on Lucy's part. Kirsten had never kissed a girl, though she'd had sex with one boy in high school and another in college, and she's wondered if she'd have kissed just about anyone she ran into behind the shed. She was nineteen, it was August, she was drunk, and she felt like taking off her clothes. That it all seemed especially hot with Lucy didn't strike her then as that meaningful. They hooked up in the dark, on a ratty red couch, in a room that smelled like the kiln and tempera paint. Kirsten was definitely aware of the variables of there being more than one set of boobs smashed together and the peculiarly untroubling absence of an erection, but there were things she heard later about two girls—about how soft the female body was and how good another girl smelled—that seemed to her like nonsense. She and Lucy rolled around a lot, and jammed their fingers up inside each other, and, though both of them had probably swum in the lake that day, neither was freshly showered.

There really wasn't much in the way of softness or fragrant scents about the encounter. What she liked was how close they could be, almost fused, with nothing between them.

The next morning, while Kirsten was standing by the orange-juice dispenser in the mess hall, Lucy approached her, set a hand on her forearm, and said, softly, "Hey."

Kirsten, who was intensely hungover and sleep-deprived, recoiled, and she saw Lucy see her recoil. Under her breath, in a hiss, Kirsten said, "I'm not gay."

If Lucy had done anything other than laugh lightheartedly, that might have halted things. But Lucy's willingness to act as if neither their hookup nor Kirsten's homophobia were a big deal—it made it seem O.K. to keep going. The whole whatever-it-was was so clearly short-lived, so arbitrary.

During the next five nights—the counsellors stayed an extra forty-eight hours to clean the grounds after the kids went home—Kirsten and Lucy were naked together a lot. The second night was both the first time someone went down on Kirsten and the first time she had an orgasm; the orgasm part happened more than once. She was less drunk than the night before, and at one point, while Lucy was lapping away at her, she thought that, all things considered, it was good that it was happening with a girl first, because then when a guy went down on her, when it mattered, Kirsten would know what she was doing.

After Kirsten had basically spasmed in ecstasy into Lucy's face, she said, "Could you tell I'd never done that?"

It was less that Kirsten was confiding than that, with Lucy, she didn't feel the need to feign competence. Lucy was lying on top of her, propped up on her elbows, and she seemed amused—flirtatious-amused, not mean-amused—as she said, "Seriously? Never?"

Kirsten said, "Well, I've given blow jobs."

"Then that *really* doesn't seem fair."

The sureness of Lucy's hooking-up personality, the way it might even have been more confident than her regular personality, impressed Kirsten; the nearest Kirsten got to such confidence was when things felt so good that she forgot herself.

Lucy added, "Just in case none of the recipients of your blow jobs ever mentioned it, you're very, very fun to have sex with," and Kirsten said, "This isn't sex."

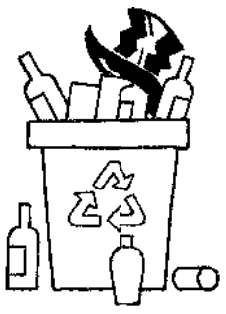
As she had by the juice dispenser, Lucy laughed.

"I mean, it's fooling around," Kirsten said. "I'm not denying that."

"You think if there's no penis it doesn't count?"

Lucy's apparent lack of anger surprises Kirsten more in retrospect than it did at the time. Lucy explained that she was a gold-star lesbian, which meant one who'd never had sex with a guy; in fact, Lucy added proudly, she'd never even kissed a guy. Kirsten asked how she'd known she was gay, and Lucy said, "Because, even when I was in grade school, the people I always thought about before I fell asleep at night were girls."

That what was transpiring between them would be kept secret was both understood and probably not very realistic. Before they lay down on the red couch, Kirsten would block the door with a chair, but sometimes dim figures, other couples in search of privacy, opened the door partway. When this happened, Kirsten would freeze, and Lucy would call out sharply, "There are people in here," and a retreat would occur. Once, someone very tall opened the door all the way and just stood there, not moving, someone else behind him, and Kirsten realized, with one of her nipples in Lucy's mouth, that the person in front was Sean, and Kirsten's fixation with him, a fixation that had lasted until just a few days before, seemed distant. Lucy lifted her head and said in a firm voice, "Can you please leave?" Sean and Renee did go away, but the next morning Renee asked, with what seemed more like curiosity than disapproval, "Was that you with Lucy?"



All these years later, while driving to work and considering ruining Lucy's life, Kirsten thinks that Renee would be her corroboration, and maybe Sean, too. Conveniently, Kirsten is Facebook friends with both of them, privy to the extremely tedious details of their separate suburban lives.

At the time, fake-casually, fake-confusedly, Kirsten said, "With who?"

That fall, back at school, Kirsten opened her mailbox in the student union one day to find a small padded envelope, the return address Lucy's, the contents a brief, unremarkable note ("Hope you're having a good semester . . .") and a mixtape. Kirsten was surprised and very happy, which made her inability to listen to the mixtape perplexing; the first song was "I Melt with You," and the second line of the song was "Making love to you was never second best," and though she tried several times not to, Kirsten always had to turn off her cassette player after that line. She never acknowledged Lucy's gift.

The next summer, Kirsten returned to the camp, and Lucy didn't; someone said that she was volunteering at a health clinic in Haiti. Kirsten had a boyfriend then, a guy named Ryan, who was working in the admissions office of their college and to whom she hadn't mentioned Lucy.

After that summer, Kirsten's only source of camp updates was a winter newsletter that she read less and less thoroughly as the years passed. She became aware of the Prairie Wife, in the amorphous way one becomes aware of celebrities, without having any idea that Lucy Headrick was Lucy from camp, whose surname had been Nilsson. But, last December, Kirsten read the newsletter in its entirety. It was the day after Christmas, and she was trying to get Jack to take a nap, which he didn't do much anymore, but he'd been cranky, and they were due at a potluck in the evening. She was sitting halfway up the steps of their house so as to intercept Jack whenever he tried to escape from his room; she'd pulled the newsletter from a stack of mail by the front door to occupy herself between interceptions.

The camp had been owned by the same family for several generations, and an eccentric great-uncle who taught archery wrote the newsletter. The item about Lucy was just a paragraph and

not particularly fawning—"It's always fun to see what former camper and counsellor Lucy 'the Prairie Wife' Headrick née Lucy Nilsson is up to"—but Kirsten couldn't believe it. Though she didn't own any of Lucy Headrick's cookbooks and had never seen her television show, she knew enough about her to find it hilarious. She knew that Lucy Headrick was gorgeous (she had long blond hair and magnificent cheekbones), was married to a man, and was, in some conservative-flavored way, religious. Kirsten was so excited to tell Casey that she let Jack get out of bed. They went into the den, where Casey and Ian were watching football, Kirsten carrying the camp newsletter. But it turned out that, although Kirsten *had* mentioned Lucy to Casey, Casey had never heard of the Prairie Wife, so Kirsten's ostensible bombshell was less satisfying to drop than she'd anticipated.

That might have been that—a funny coincidence—except that a week later, at the digital-map-data company where she works, Kirsten passed Frank's office while he was watching Lucy Headrick make chicken-and-dumpling soup online. "I'm decompressing," Frank said. "I just turned in a test tally."

Kirsten held up her palms and said, "Hey, no judgment." She almost didn't say it, but then, pointing at the computer screen, she did. "I kind of know her."

Frank raised one eyebrow, which was a gesture Kirsten suspected that he had, in his adolescence, practiced at great length as part of shaping his persona. Frank was her age, the son of Thai immigrants, and he was married to a white guy who was a dermatologist. Kirsten liked Frank O.K.—she respected his attention to detail—but she didn't really trust him.

Frank said, "Do go on."

She tried to think of reasons that not trusting Frank mattered and couldn't come up with any. Once, she had considered her interactions with Lucy to be her most damning secret, but now, ironically, they were probably the most interesting thing about her, even if Casey had been underwhelmed.

"I haven't seen her since the mid-nineties, but we worked at a camp a few hours north of here," Kirsten said, then added, "We slept together a bunch of times."

"No. Fucking. Way." Frank looked elated. He made a lascivious "Mmm-mm-mm" sound, and said, "You and the Prairie Wife as baby dykes. I love it."

"Actually," Kirsten said, "I looked it up, and I'm pretty sure Lucy lives about forty-five minutes west of St. Louis. Which, for one thing, that's not exactly the rural farmlands, right? And, also, it's been a while since I took social studies, but is Missouri even a prairie state?"

"She's a fraud," Frank said happily. "A fraudulent butter-churning bitch."

That was three months ago, and, since then, without really meaning to, Kirsten is pretty sure that she and Frank have become close friends. The reassuring part is that, if anything, he monitors Lucy's activities more avidly than Kirsten does—surely his avidity has egged on her own—and Lucy represents ninety per cent of all discussions between them. The unsettling part is that Frank also follows several other celebrities as enthusiastically yet spitefully; Kirsten isn't sure where he finds the time.

When kirsten arrives at work twenty-five minutes late, Frank appears on the threshold of her office and gleefully whispers, "There. Is. A. Shit. Storm. Brewing."

Calmly, Kirsten says, "Oh?" This is the way Frank greets her approximately twice a week. But it turns out that a shit storm *is* brewing: someone on Kirsten's team stored sample data, data belonging to a national courier company, in the area of the server where production can access it, even though the agreement with the courier company hasn't yet been formalized. Their boss, Sheila, is trying to figure out who messed up, whether anyone from production has used the data, and, if so, how to remove it.

As Kirsten steels herself to speak with Sheila, Frank, who is still standing there, says, "Has your copy of your girlfriend's book arrived?"

"I didn't pre-order it. I'm stopping at the store on the way home."

"Well, as soon as you finish give it to me. Because I am not putting *one penny* in the coffers of that whore."

"Yeah, so you've said." Kirsten squeezes past him.

She definitely isn't the one who failed to sequester the sample data, but it's unclear if Sheila believes her. They have a forty-minute conversation that contains about two minutes' worth of relevant information and instruction and thirty-eight minutes of Sheila venting about how at best they've embarrassed themselves and at worst they're facing a copyright lawsuit. When Kirsten has a chance to check Lucy's various Web sites, she finds that they're all filled with book promotions. On Twitter and elsewhere is a selfie of Lucy and the host of "The Mariana Show" in the greenroom; their heads are pressed together, and they're beaming.

After two meetings and a conference call, Kirsten gets lunch from a sandwich place around the corner, and it's while she's waiting in line for turkey and Swiss cheese on multigrain bread that she receives Frank's text: a screenshot from the Web site of a weekly celebrity magazine, with a headline that reads, "Prairie Wife Comes Out as Bisexual." The first one and a half sentences of the article, which is all that's visible, read, "Sources confirm that cookbook writer and television personality Lucy Headrick, known to fans as the Prairie Wife, revealed during today's taping of 'The Mariana Show' that she has dated multiple women. The married mother of three, who—"

Another text arrives from Frank. It reads, "OMFG!"

Back in the office, Frank says, "Do you think she mentioned you?"

"No," Kirsten says, though, since receiving Frank's text, she has felt very weird, almost nauseated.

"What if she's carried a torch for you all this time and she looks directly at the camera and says, 'Kirsten, please make haste to my quaint rural farmstead, pull off my muslin knickers, and lick my evangelical pussy'?"

"Jesus, Frank," Kirsten says. "Not like there's anything private about what I told you."

Her phone rings, and she can see on the caller I.D. that it's Casey. To Frank, she says, "I need to answer this."

"Ian has strings practice after school,

JUST SO YOU'LL KNOW

Listen to it the way everybody
here was naughty today,
of how broad it is.

Foreign man with an affluent cigar,
he used to live on top of this bed
on the local rails he was so proud of
among the recyclables, this morning,
spouting words that I thought were other.
Yes, and they became addictive. Oh,

make me a boy again! Do something!
But the little candle just stood there,
reflected in its lozenge-shaped mirror.
Maybe that was "something,"
a lithe sentence.

He's only going to do it for the first time.
It's snowing hard.

Hand me the orange.

—John Ashbery

and he forgot his violin," Casey says. "I know this is annoying, but could you get it? I have a meeting with the superintendent."

"I don't think I can," Kirsten says. "Sheila's in a really bad mood today. Anyway, maybe Ian should deal with the consequences. You want him to develop grit, right?"

"You think he should just sit there while everyone else practices?"

"I can imagine more traumatizing childhood experiences." Kirsten is nevertheless about to relent when Casey says, "God damn it, Kirsten."

"I thought we didn't swear anymore," Kirsten says. There's a silence, and she asks, "Did you just hang up on me?"

"No," Casey says. "But I need to prepare for my meeting. I'll see you at home."

Which, if either of them, is delivering the violin? This is how Casey wins, Kirsten thinks—by *not* insisting on resolution, which compels Kirsten toward it. On a regular basis, Kirsten wonders if Casey is using middle-school pedagogical techniques on her.

She stews for the next ninety minutes, until she has to go home and get the violin or it will be too late, then she stands and grabs her purse. Like an apparition, Frank is back in her office.

He says, "If we leave now, we can go to Flanagan's and watch Lucy on 'Mariana.' And I do mean *on*."

"I'm sure it'll be online later today."

"Don't you want to know if she mentions you?"

Kirsten hesitates, then says, "Fuck it. I'll come with you."

"For realsies? What were you about to do instead?"

Kirsten sighs. "Good question."

It is seven minutes to three when Kirsten and Frank enter Flanagan's Ale House. Four other patrons are there, two old men sitting side by side at the bar and two younger men sitting by themselves at tables.

Frank gestures toward the TV above the bar and says to the bartender, "Can you change the channel to 'The Mariana Show'?"

"We'll buy drinks," Kirsten adds. But then the thought of returning to the office with beer on her breath makes her wonder if Sheila will fire her, and she orders seltzer water and French fries; Frank asks for a gin and tonic, and when their drinks are in front of them he clinks his glass against hers and says, "To lesbians."

Kirsten has only ever seen clips of "The Mariana Show," and it turns out that there's a lot to get through before Lucy appears—Mariana's monologue, then a trivia contest among audience members, then a filmed segment in which Mariana takes a belly-dancing class. Plus endless commercials. As the minutes tick by, the afternoon is drained of the caperlike mood it had when she and Frank left the office. They speak intermittently. She says, "I don't think she *could* mention me, even if she wanted to. Like, from a legal perspective, since I'm a private citizen. And I'm sure she was involved with other girls."

Finally, after more commercials, Mariana introduces Lucy, and Lucy walks out to energetic cheering and applause. She sits on a purple armchair next to Mariana's purple armchair, and the cover of "Dishin' with the Prairie Wife" is projected onto an enormous screen behind them.

Lucy looks great—she's wearing a short-sleeved, belted blue dress with a pattern of roses—and she's also palpably nervous in a way that Kirsten finds surprisingly sympathetic. Lucy is smiling a lot, but she keeps widening her eyes in an oddly alert way, and she appears to be shaking.

Lucy and Mariana discuss a recipe in the memoir for raccoon stew; Lucy says that she personally isn't crazy about it but that it was given to her by her mother-in-law.

"You weren't raised on a farm," Mariana says.

"I wasn't," Lucy says. "I grew up in the suburbs of Phoenix. My dad was an engineer, and my mom was a teacher." Her matter-of-factness also elicits Kirsten's sympathy. Even if her fame is country-fried, even if she speaks in a nebulous drawl, Kirsten cannot remember ever seeing Lucy outright lie. "A few years after college, I enrolled in social-work school at the University of Missouri," Lucy continues. "It was while I was doing field work way out in the country that I met my husband. And that was it for both of us. I never expected to fall in love with a farmer, and he never expected to fall in love with a food blogger."

As the image on the screen behind

them changes from the book to a photograph of Lucy and a handsome man wearing a checked shirt and a cowboy hat, Mariana says, "Something in your book—and it's a fantastic read—but something that surprised me is before you got married to the Stud in Overalls, as we fondly refer to him, you describe how you dated women."

Lucy nods and says both matter-of-factly and shakily, "I did, in my late teens and early twenties. I consider myself bisexual."

"Oh yeah, you do, bitch," Frank says. "Booyah!"

"Can you not talk over her?" Kirsten says.

Mariana, who Kirsten hopes is feigning naïveté for her viewers, says, "But if you're married to a man you're not still bisexual, are you?"

"Well, my husband and I are monogamous, but I think even if your circumstances change your core identity remains. Like, heaven forbid, if my husband passed away I'd still be madly in love with him."

Really? Kirsten thinks. *Madly*?

Mariana asks, "Do you worry about how your fans will react to this news?"

"I love my fans," Lucy says, and turns and waves at the studio audience, who explode in applause. Though, surely, an audience in Southern California is not representative of Lucy's base.

Over the cheering, Mariana says, "This is just a hunch, but it seems like they love you, too." More thunderous cheering ensues.

"Really," Lucy says. "I gave this serious thought. I prayed on it, I talked to my preacher, I talked to my family. And obviously things are a lot better now for the L.G.B.T. community than they once were, but you still hear about teen-agers taking their lives, or being made to feel like they're less than. So I decided to let them know, Hey, you're not alone."

Kirsten thinks of Lucy at the camp-counsellor orientation in 1994, and then she thinks, What if Lucy *isn't* a greedy, phony hypocrite? What if she's still herself, as surprised by the turns her life has taken as Kirsten sometimes is by hers? In Flanagan's, it occurs to Kirsten that she might be witnessing a genuinely important cultural moment, which makes her wish that she were with someone other than Frank.

"I'm so verklempt," he says. "I need a hug." She assumes he's being sarcastic, but when she glances at him he's teared up for real. He makes a sheepish expression and says in a thick, wet voice, "I can't believe your girlfriend is ruining my mascara."

What choice does she have? In her arms, he smells like gin and some leathery cologne, and she's still holding him when he lets loose with a huge, guttural sob.

"Oh, Frank," Kirsten says.

After she leaves work, Kirsten doesn't stop to buy Lucy's book. When she arrives home, the boys greet her at the front door.

"Mama, how many tickles do you need to make an octopus laugh?" Jack says.

"I don't know, how many?"

"I forgot my violin, but Mom brought it to me," Ian says.

"I hope you thanked her," Kirsten says.

"You need ten tickles," Jack says.

In the kitchen, Casey is dumping mayonnaise into a large clear bowl, onto chunks of canned tuna.

"Melts?" Kirsten says by way of greeting, and Casey nods. As Kirsten washes her hands, Casey says, "Will you pull out the salad ingredients? There's a yellow pepper."

"I appreciate your getting Ian's violin."

"We need to be better organized in the morning," Casey says. "I'm setting my alarm for fifteen minutes earlier tomorrow."

"O.K." After a pause, Kirsten says, "Did you hear that Lucy Headrick came out on 'The Mariana Show'? Or whatever coming out is called if it's retroactive."

"Who's Lucy Headrick again?"

Oh, to be Casey! Calm and methodical, with a do-gooder job. To be a person who isn't frittering away her life having vengeful thoughts about people from her past! It happens that Casey is both a former farm girl, of the authentic kind—she grew up in Flandreau, South Dakota—and a gold-star lesbian. She and Kirsten met thirteen years ago, at the Christmas-carolling party of a mutual friend. Kirsten got very drunk and climbed onto Casey's lap during "Good King Wenceslas," and that night she stayed over at Casey's apartment.

"Lucy Headrick is the Prairie Wife,"

"Whoops—I accidentally pressed 'elevator pitch.'"

Kirsten says. "She just wrote a book."

"Got it," Casey says.

"She was actually very eloquent. And her fans are definitely the kind of people who are still bigots."

"Good for her."

"Are you pissed at me?"

"No," Casey says. "But I'm trying to get dinner on the table."

KIRSTEN PUTS THE boys to bed, then lies down in the master bedroom and looks at her phone. It's difficult to estimate what portion of the tweets Lucy has received this afternoon are ugly—they're mixed in with "Yay for standing your truth Lucy!" and "I love you no matter what!!!" Maybe a third?

"why u like to eat pussy did u ever try a hard cock"

"You are A LESBIAN ADULTERER. You are DISGUSTING + BAD for AMERICA!!!!!"

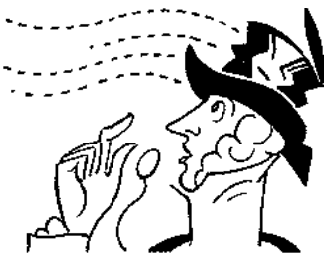
"Romans 1:26 two women is 'against nature'."

Quickly, before she can talk herself out of it, Kirsten types, "I thought you were very brave today." After hitting Tweet, she feels a surge of adrenaline and considers deleting the message, but for whose benefit? Her three bots'? In any case, Lucy hasn't tweeted since before noon, and Kirsten wonders if she's gone on a Twitter hiatus.

In the summer, Kirsten and Casey usually watch TV together after the boys are asleep, but during the school year Casey works in the den—responding to parents' e-mails, reading books about how educators can recognize multiple kinds of intelligence. Sometimes she keeps a baseball or a football game on mute, and the sports further deter Kirsten from joining her. Thus, almost every night, Kirsten stays upstairs, intending to fold laundry or call her mother while actually fucking around on her phone. At 9:45, she texts Casey "Going to bed," and Casey texts back "Gnight hon," followed by a sleeping-face emoji with "zzz" above the closed eyes. This is their nightly exchange, and, every night, for about four seconds, Kirsten ponders Casey's choice of the sleeping-face emoji versus something more affectionate, like the face blowing a kiss, or just a heart.

While brushing her teeth, Kirsten receives a text from Frank: "Bitch did u see this?" There's a link to what she's pretty sure is a Prairie Wife article, and she neither clicks on it nor replies.

She is still awake, in the dark, when Casey comes upstairs almost an hour later, uses the bathroom, and climbs into bed without turning on the light; Kirsten rarely speaks to Casey at this juncture and always assumes that Casey thinks she's asleep. But tonight, while curled on her side with her back to Casey, Kirsten says, "Did you sign Ian's



permission slip for the field trip to the science museum?"

"Yeah, it was due last Friday."

"Oh," Kirsten says. "Imagine that."

They're both quiet as Casey settles under the blankets, then she says, "Did the prairie lady mention you on TV?"

"I probably would have told you if she had."

"Good point." Unexpectedly, Casey leans over and kisses Kirsten's cheek. She says, "Well, no matter what, I owe her a debt of gratitude for initiating you."

For some reason, Kirsten tears up. She swallows, so that she won't sound as if she's crying, and says, "Do you really feel that way, or are you joking?"

"Do you think you'd have dated women if she hadn't hit on you behind the arts-and-crafts shed?"

"And your life is better because you ended up with me?"

Casey laughs. "Who else would I have ended up with?"

"Lots of people. Someone less flaky and petty."

"I like your flakiness and pettiness."

Kirsten starts crying harder, though still not as hard as Frank was crying at the bar. But enough that Casey becomes aware of it and scoots toward Kirsten, spooning her from behind.

"Baby," Casey says. "Why are you sad?"

"This will sound self-centered," Kirsten says. "But Lucy was really into me. I'm sure it was partly because I wasn't that into her, and I wasn't even playing hard to get. I just—" She pauses.

"What?" Casey says.

"I know we have a good life," Kirsten says. "And the boys—they're amazing. They amaze me every day. Did I tell you, when we were at the mall last weekend Jack wanted to buy you this purse that was like a fake-diamond-encrusted jaguar head? Its eyes were emeralds."

"Oh, man," Casey says. "I can't wait for my birthday."

"It's not that I'm jealous of Lucy Headrick because she's a rich celebrity," Kirsten says. "It seems awful to be famous now." Her voice breaks as she adds, "I just wish that there was someone who was excited about me. Or that when someone *was* excited about me, I wish I hadn't taken it for granted. I didn't understand that would be the only time."

"*Kirsten*." Casey uses her top hand to pet Kirsten's hip.

"I don't blame you for not finding me exciting," Kirsten says. "Why would you?"

"We have full-time jobs and young kids," Casey says. "This is what this stage is like."

"But do you ever feel like you'll spend every day slicing cucumbers for lunchboxes and going to work and driving to Little League on the weekend and then you'll look up and twenty years will have passed?"

"God willing," Casey says. She moves both her arms up so she's cupping Kirsten's breasts over her pajama top. "Do you want me to pretend to be Lucy at camp? Or Lucy now? Do you want me to make you a chocolate soufflé?"

"Soufflé is too French," Kirsten says. "Lucy would make apple pie."

They're both quiet, and, weirdly, this is where the conversation ends, or maybe, given that it's past eleven and Casey's alarm is set for six-fifteen or possibly for six, it isn't weird at all. They don't have sex. They don't reach any resolutions. But, for the first time in a while, Kirsten falls asleep with her wife's arms around her.

In the middle of the night, because she can't help herself, Kirsten checks to see if Lucy has responded to her tweet; so far, there's nothing. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Curtis Sittenfeld on her story "The Prairie Wife."

A CRITIC AT LARGE

FADE TO BLACK

"I Am Not Your Negro" takes on James Baldwin, race, and cinema.

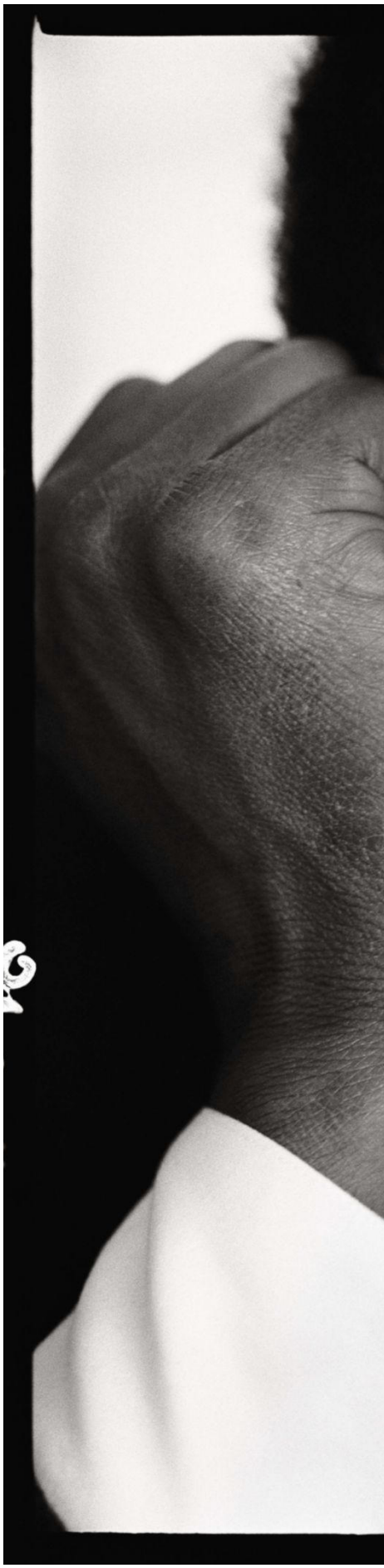
BY HILTON ALS

THE MOVIE MOVES, and James Baldwin moves in it. Sometimes he looks like a graceful queen, as he sits, poised, his back erect with grand indulgence or tolerance or love. His expressive hands cut through the air during this or that interview, speaking a wordless language of their own, as the former boy preacher from Harlem, small, dark, and compact, talks and talks about race, sounding like no one else on earth. It's Baldwin's voice—his luminescent words describing and analyzing dark matters—that ties together Raoul Peck's latest film, "I Am Not Your Negro," which is about many things, including the writer's relationship to racial politics and the fantastic yet undermining power of the cinema's racially defined images. One of the chief pleasures of the movie is watching Baldwin, who died in 1987, appear on talk shows and in public forums: he had an extraordinary physical presence, of a piece with his singular mind. We watch him because he saw us, wanted to see us.

Baldwin's prescient, pre-African-American-studies insights about the construct and the reality of whiteness are among many ideas that Peck zeroes in on in his swift-moving, multilayered, and appreciative film. (It's a wonderful introduction to Baldwin, if you've never read him.) "I Am Not Your Negro" is dominated by words, and by its director's interest in how language can support or contradict what we see. The script—which is culled primarily from Baldwin's writing and read by Samuel L. Jackson, without his usual bombast—outstrips Peck's images, in depth, mystery, and knowingness, but that is often a problem with sensational writing, especially if it wasn't written specifically for the screen. Our ear fixes on the sentences, and we don't allow the images to tell the story. But what if the words *are* the story?

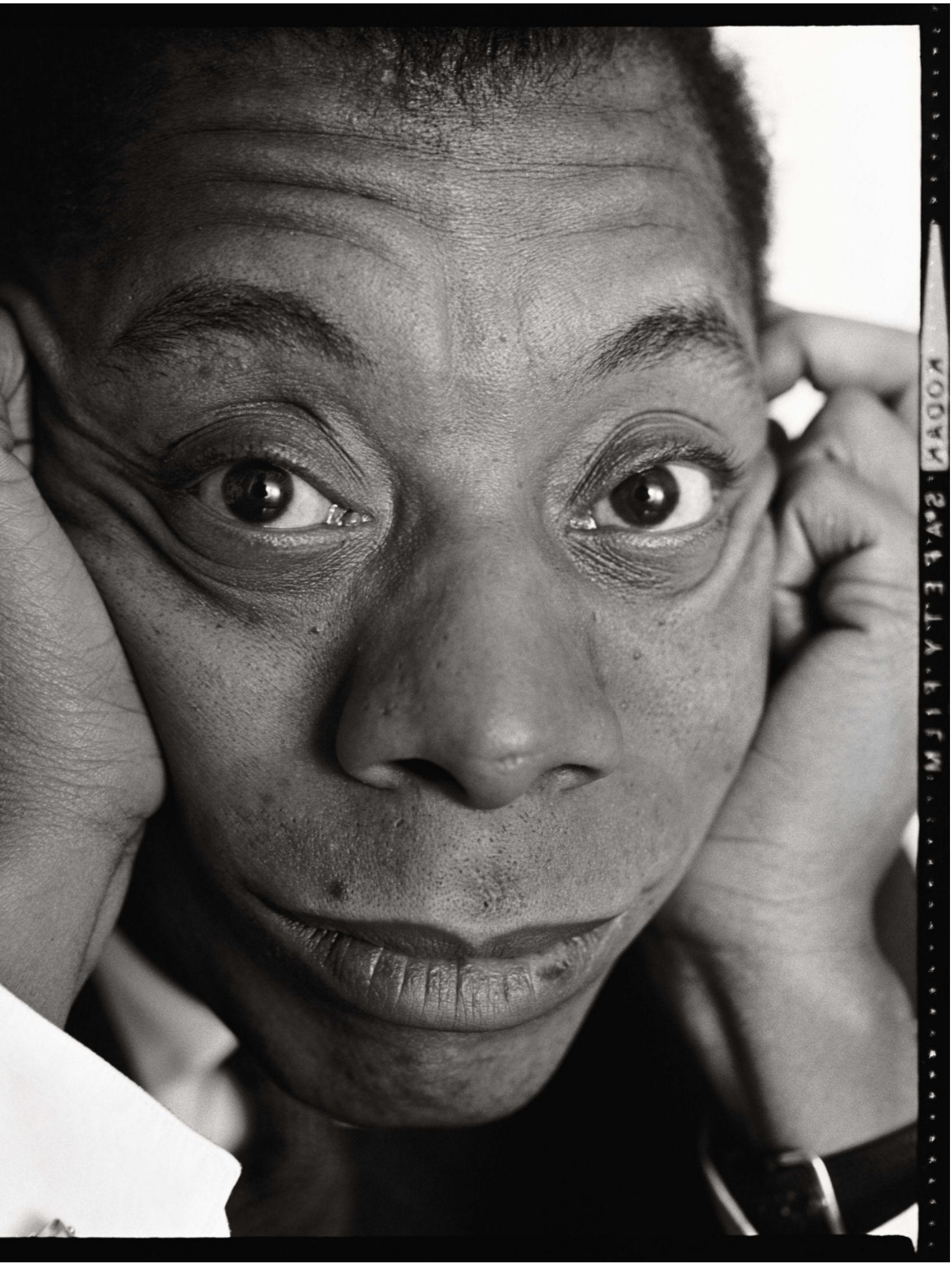
"I Am Not Your Negro" more or less begins with the question of home. It's 1968. Baldwin is on "The Dick Cavett Show," and Cavett is trying to ask him if we should feel equal measures of hope and despair about race relations in America. As Cavett stumbles over how to phrase the question, Baldwin smiles his magnificent smile and says that, to tell the truth, he doesn't have much hope. His point is: What's going to happen to this country if it can't cope with the language of race, let alone race itself? Being correct doesn't inspire art, or the tension that contributes to the making of art. Then, as a blues tune plays, Peck, rather predictably, cuts to still photographs of recent demonstrations: blood and rage in Ferguson, Baltimore, and elsewhere. He is, appropriately, showing what has become of race relations in this country, but the result feels banal, a coda to an unfinishable story.

Cut to a black screen, then a typewritten message—an unpublished letter from Baldwin to his literary agent, Jay Acton. (Gloria Karefa-Smart, Baldwin's younger sister and his executor, gave Peck unprecedented access to her brother's work.) It's the summer of 1979, and Baldwin is working on a book that he does not want to write but knows he must write. Titled "Remember This House," it will tell the story of America through the lives of



James Baldwin, New York, December 20, 1962 (contact print). He had an extraordinary physical presence, of a piece with his singular mind.

ABOVE: RICHARD MCGUIRE; OPPOSITE PAGE: © THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X, all of whom were Baldwin's friends, and whom he wrote about in his underrated 1972 book, "No Name in the Street." (One wonders why he chose to revisit the material—or why it wouldn't leave him alone.) As Peck shows us elevated train tracks in what appears to be a deserted city, Jackson reads the letter, which describes the work to come: "I am saying that a journey is called that because you cannot know what you will discover on the journey, what you will do, what you will find, or what you find will do to you." (The scene reminded me of Chantal Akerman's heart-stopping 1977 film, "News from Home," which shows tranquil shots of an emptied-out New York as the director reads letters from her mother, who is back home in Belgium.)

Baldwin, who moved to France in 1948, at the age of twenty-four, tells Acton how he knew when it was time for him to return home, a journey that led to his becoming friends with King and the other leaders: It was 1957, and he was in Paris. He saw, on the front page of a newspaper, a photograph of Dorothy Counts, the fifteen-year-old daughter of a professor of theology and philosophy and the first black student admitted to Harry Harding High School, in Charlotte, under the Pearsall Plan to Save Our Schools. Instituted in 1956, the Pearsall Plan was North Carolina's attempt to integrate public schools in a "moderate" way, after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, in 1954. For many blacks, its approach was just more of that Faulkner jazz about going "slow," which Baldwin took apart in his 1956 essay "Faulkner and Desegregation":

> When Faulkner speaks . . . of "the middle of the road," he is simply speaking of the hope—which was always unrealistic and is now all but smashed—that the white southerner, with no coercion from the rest of the nation, will lift himself above his ancient, crippling bitterness and refuse to add to his already intolerable burden of blood-guiltiness. But this hope would seem to be absolutely dependent on a social and psychological stasis which simply does not exist.

Counts was harassed and stoned, and she withdrew from the school after four days. "Spit was hanging from the hem of Dorothy's dress," Baldwin reports a witness telling him. He writes to Acton, "Some one of us should have been there with her." Baldwin knew that he had to go to the South in order to understand not only what he came from—his mother, Emma Berdis Jones, was born in Maryland—but also those who could no longer allow themselves to be spat on, even if it meant risking death: the "niggers" who had done so much to define whiteness. (Some of the power of "I Am Not Your Negro" lies in the view it allows us of King, Malcolm, and Evers. It's incredible and horrifying to see them again, first moving and speaking in the real spaces of their lives, and then dead—martyrs to what use and what end? History ate those men while they were alive and continues to chew over their bones in death.)

But first, after nine years away, Baldwin went to New York, which, he confessed to Acton, he hadn't missed until he was back in Harlem. There, surrounded by the music, the conversation, and the style of the world that had given him so much and taken so much, he began to feel a different kind of exile, the way all returned expatriates do: he was at home, but he was no longer sure what home was.

At this juncture, Peck introduces a theme that was a steady yet disconcerting force in Baldwin's young life: movies. Moviegoing began as a family affair; Baldwin shared its pleasures with his mother or an aunt. (Baldwin's stepfather, a street preacher and a factory worker, forbade secular music in the house; presumably he considered movies similarly evil.) Then, when Baldwin was ten, he was taken up by a white schoolteacher, Orilla Miller—her students called her Bill—who, as he writes in his late masterpiece "The Devil Finds Work" (1976), which Peck draws on for the film-related segments of the movie, introduced the burgeoning artist to politics and aesthetics:

> She gave me books to read and talked to me about the books, and about the world . . . and took me to see plays and films, plays and films to which no one else would have dreamed of taking a ten-year-old boy. I loved her, of course, and absolutely. . . . It is certainly partly because of her, who arrived in my terrifying life so soon, that I never really managed to hate white people.

At the movies, the seven-year-old Baldwin saw Joan Crawford and fell in love. (Later, at a grocery store, he saw a black woman who resembled Crawford and almost followed her home.) At ten, Baldwin was transfixed by the "tense intelligence" in Bette Davis's forehead and amazed by her "pop-eyes," which resembled his own and his mother's. Plus, "when she moved, she moved just like a nigger." Then, there were all those cowboys-and-Indians flicks, and it took the young Baldwin some time to realize that by rooting for the good guys—the white guys—he was rooting against himself.

"The Devil Finds Work" disappointed some of Baldwin's readers. The black writer and editor Orde Coombs deemed it more than a failure in his *Times* review: it was evidence of how the mighty Baldwin had fallen.

A decade ago, as an undergraduate, my colleagues and I spent hours poring over the works of James Baldwin. He seemed so sure-footed then, so certain in his vision of this country, that his lacerating words were like balm to the black students who were on a whirligig in search of

their identities. . . . Now Baldwin has published a long essay . . . but the event does not call for rejoicing. In fact it brings forth not a little pain, for this work teems with a passion that is all reflex, and an anger that is unfocused and almost cynical. It is as if Baldwin were wound up and then let loose to attack the hypocritical core of this nation. And to what avail? None that I can see, for although the book purports to be an examination of the way American films distort reality, its eclecticism is so pervasive that all we are left with are peregrinations of the mind and ideas that jump around and contradict each other.

Coombs's frustration is, by necessity, personal. For years, Baldwin had purposefully styled himself as a representative of others, more of a "we" than an "I." But in "The Devil Finds Work" he tried something different: an amalgamation of essay, criticism, memoir, and plain old talk that presages so many of the delicious unclassifiable works by such subsequent writers as Renata Adler, John Keene, Sarah Manguso, Leslie Jamison, and Maggie Nelson.

In the book—which is divided into three parts, moving from his experience of Hollywood films to his work as a screenwriter in Hollywood to a more global take on blacks in movies—Baldwin cuts repeatedly from tenderness and hope, inspired by his beloved teacher Bill, to fierce rhetoric and a despair that centers on a question of faith: how can we believe in America's most powerful product if its vision misshapes or betrays some of its citizens? But it is the jumpiness and the contradictions of Baldwin's text that play so well in Peck's movie: film, too, often jumps around and contradicts itself—or reality.

One has the sense, in the sections of "I Am Not Your Negro" that are devoted to Baldwin's relationship to film, that Peck is stepping in to make the film that Baldwin couldn't make. From the beginning of his career, Baldwin longed to make movies. In the introduction to his 1955 landmark collection, "Notes of a Native Son," he wrote, "About my interests: I don't know if I have any, unless the morbid desire to own a sixteen-millimeter camera and make experimental movies can be so classified." To my knowledge, Baldwin never satisfied that desire (morbid, perhaps, because he knew of the herculean effort that goes into getting any movie made), but he never stopped yearning to be a filmmaker. Like a number of other significant twentieth-century authors—James Agee, Truman Capote, Susan Sontag, and his friend Norman Mailer—he knew that the page was not enough in the modern world; cinema was a powerful medium with many more "readers." What would his life as an artist have been like, and what would American cinema be like now, had it opened itself up to him?

Baldwin was drawn to Ingmar Bergman's films, because they were the work of a feeling thinker who mined his past—especially his troubled relationship with his authoritarian pastor father. In a 1960 *Esquire* profile of Bergman, Baldwin describes how, after an interview with the filmmaker, he got into his car and imagined a movie he might make about his own past. But Baldwin had neither Bergman's studio support nor his skin color. (We still live in a world where it's hard to cast black actors in mainstream films, because distributors say they can't sell movies with black actors overseas, and no one in Hollywood is embarrassed to admit this.)

Some Baldwin film projects: In 1955, Baldwin and his close friend the editor Sol Stein—who put together "Notes of a Native Son"—adapted his essay "Equal in Paris" for television. (The script was never produced, but it was included, in 2004, in "Native Sons," a helpful book that covers Baldwin's early days as a writer.) After that, Baldwin published what I consider a kind of screenplay: the text for Richard Avedon's 1964 book of civil-rights-themed photographs, "Nothing Personal." Baldwin and Avedon had worked together on their high-school newspaper and stayed in touch. The text begins with a scene drawn from the image world:

> I used to distract myself, some mornings before I got out of bed, by pressing the television remote control gadget from one channel to another. This may be the only way to watch TV. I certainly saw some remarkable sights. Blondes and brunettes and possibly redheads—my screen was colorless—washing their hair, relentlessly smiling, teeth gleaming like the grillwork of automobiles, breasts firmly, chillingly encased—packaged, as it were—and brilliantly uplifted, forever, all sagging corrected, forever, all middle-aged bulge defeated, eyes as sensuous and mysterious as jelly beans.

Baldwin was able to create images while describing them. This can be a hazard when you're working on a commercial movie script: producers want a

showcase for stars, not analysis through imagery. I'm sure that Baldwin's method didn't help "One Day, When I Was Lost," his unmade 1972 film adaptation of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X." Recalling the experience, Baldwin wrote, in "No Name on the Street," "This was a difficult assignment, since I had known Malcolm, after all, crossed swords with him, worked with him, and held him in that great esteem which is not easily distinguishable, if it is distinguishable, from love. (The Hollywood gig did not work out because I did not wish to be a party to a second assassination. . . .)" In "The Devil Finds Work," Baldwin describes how his collaborators tried to reduce his complex subject—the story of Malcolm X and the black-male fraternity he inspired—to a Hollywood formula, a kind of buddy road movie. He eventually walked away from the project, and twenty years later the subject was still considered so difficult to represent on film that Spike Lee had to fight for the right to do so: a white director, Norman Jewison, was originally chosen for the project. (Lee incorporated elements of Baldwin's script in his 1992 movie, "Malcolm X," but also did what Baldwin tried to avoid, stressing the buddy-film aspects of the story, at least in the beginning.)

Had Peck made his film longer—and he should have—he could have delved further into the ways that other black artists, like Lee, tend to put their own fingerprints on Baldwin. Because he has remained such a star in the firmament of black arts and letters, there is almost no way for an admirer not to vie with his legend. (Also little explored, here or elsewhere, is the extent to which King and Malcolm X tried to compete with his exquisite language: brilliant rhetoricians are always suspicious of other brilliant rhetoricians.) Peck himself doesn't compete with Baldwin—he loves him in a much less complicated way than Baldwin loved his own artistic fathers, such as Richard Wright. But that isn't always a good thing: reverence is less sexy than an Oedipal grudge.

As we listen to Baldwin's thoughts on the country's relationship to the images it has produced—images that tell us so much about how whiteness views itself—we watch Peck's beautifully chosen and edited clips of the young Joan Crawford and Sidney Poitier (Alexandra Strauss, the film's editor, has done a fine job) with a double consciousness: there's what we see and there's what Baldwin says about what he sees. Especially riveting is Baldwin's discussion of Poitier in "The Defiant Ones," a film that divided black and white audiences when it was released, in 1958. In "The Defiant Ones," Poitier plays an escaped black convict who is handcuffed to a racist white convict (Tony Curtis). Gradually, the two become friends, of a sort, and toward the end of the film Poitier's character sacrifices his own freedom to help Curtis's character. In "The Devil Finds Work," Baldwin points out that black audiences wanted Poitier's character to abandon his former tormentor, while white audiences thought that his loyalty was laudable.

Although Baldwin dealt with whiteness in many ways, among them his phenomenal 1961 *Esquire* piece about Mailer, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," he never directly addressed the anguished ties between blacks and whites in his own life. Perhaps this was out of fear of proving Eldridge Cleaver's claim, in "Soul on Ice," that Baldwin was essentially a faggot to the white man, because of the circles he moved in. His first experience of kindness, outside his family, was with his white teacher Bill. Later, at DeWitt Clinton High School, in the Bronx, where some white boys mocked his teen-age evangelism, there were others, such as Avedon and the writer Emile Capouya, who defended him. Avedon once told me that, when they were in school, Baldwin had come to visit him at home and been instructed by the doorman to use the back entrance. When Avedon's mother let him in and asked why he hadn't come to the front door, Baldwin told her that this was where "the man" had sent him. Mrs. Avedon rang for the doorman and lambasted him.

It was Capouya who pushed Baldwin to leave the church, since he no longer believed in it. In "The Devil Finds Work," Baldwin recalls his friend's challenge:

> To stay in the church merely because I was afraid of leaving it was unutterably far beneath me, and too despicable a cowardice for him to support in any friend of his. Therefore, on the coming Sunday, he would buy two tickets to a Broadway matinee and meet me on the steps of the 42nd Street Library, at two o'clock in the afternoon. He knew that I spent all day Sunday in church—the point, precisely, of the challenge. If I were not on the steps of the library (in the bookshelves of which so much of my trouble had begun!) then he would be ashamed of me and never speak to me again, and I would be ashamed of myself. . . . That was how I left the church.

By leaving the church and letting white friends love him, Baldwin separated himself from his stepfather (the only father he had) and gained access to a kind of power that his stepfather would never know. He found other fathers. In his twenties, he began to write for Sol Levitas, at *The New Leader;* Randall Jarrell, at *The Nation;* and Philip Rahv, at *The Partisan Review:* white publications headed by white men. In the introduction to his collection "The Price of the Ticket," which was published in 1985—two years before his death, at the age of sixty-four—Baldwin recalls that time:

> I had been to two black newspapers before I met these people and had simply been laughed out of the office: I was a shoeshine boy who had never been to college. I don't blame these people, God knows that I was an unlikely cub reporter: yet, I still remember how deeply I was hurt. . . . Therefore, though it may have cost [Sol] Levitas nothing to hurl a book at a black boy to see if he could read it and be articulate concerning what he had read, I took it as a vote of confidence and swore that I would give him my very best shot. And I loved him—the old man, as I sometimes called him (to his face) and I think—I know—that he was proud of me, and that he loved me, too.

Imagine if those words were read over the clip we see at the end of "I Am Not Your Negro," from a 1963 conversation with the black psychologist Kenneth Clark. In it, Baldwin smokes his ever-present Bette Davis cigarette and takes America to task for its wrongs and its failures. What if Baldwin had stopped generalizing about the black condition and gone deeper into the complications of black and white love? Isn't that one of the terrible fears this country was built on? The fear that white servants and black slaves might love and procreate and eventually outnumber and overpower their masters? But I can see now that I am trying to produce my own movie. That's the problem with love: you always want to remake it in your own image. ♦

GO TO HIS GRAVE

George Saunders's "Lincoln in the Bardo."

BY THOMAS MALLON

Saunders, in his début novel, boldly enters the psyche of our sixteenth President.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUI TENREIRO

Seekers of presidential frisson cherish the synchronous deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, on July 4, 1826, a temporal thrill doubled by the date's being the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Another eerie conjunction belongs to February 20th, which delivered to the White House, on two occurrences a century apart, some of the keenest joy and deepest sorrow to enter the building.

At 4:10 p.m. on Tuesday, February 20, 1962, John F. Kennedy was on the phone congratulating John Glenn, who had just completed three orbits of Earth. Amid a clamor of national pride, the President quietly observed, "I have just been watching your father and mother on television, and they seemed very happy." A hundred years earlier, almost to the hour, the set of parents then occupying the White House, Abraham and Mary Lincoln, were being plunged into an extreme grief by the death of their third son, Willie, who was eleven years old.

The boy had been seriously ill, probably from typhoid fever, for more than two weeks. On the evening of February 5th, the Lincolns had shuttled between his upstairs sickbed and the East Room. Signs of improvement several days later engendered only false hope. "Well, Nicolay," a weeping Lincoln said to one of his secretaries on the afternoon of the twentieth, "my boy is gone—he is actually gone." Four days after that, Willie's body lay in the Green Room, next door to where Lincoln's and, eventually, Kennedy's would lie.

Willie's fairness of face and sweetness of disposition made him his parents' darling. After his death, both mother and father tended to view him as having been a sort of extraterrestrial visitor. "He was too good for this earth," Lincoln remarked. Mary, in a letter to the painter Francis Carpenter, recalled the boy's "always unearthly" nature. Hours before the assassination, during their afternoon carriage ride, the President invoked not only the just ended war but also Willie's death as what he and Mary must finally try to rise above. Willie's coffin was entombed for three years in Georgetown's Oak Hill cemetery; it then shared the eighth car of Lincoln's funeral train home to Springfield, where both father and son were laid to rest.

Willie's temporary afterlife in Oak Hill has become the subject of George Saunders's first novel, "Lincoln in the Bardo" (Random House), now being published after a half-dozen books of accomplished, high-concept short fiction. The idea took hold, Saunders has said, when a friend told him how "newspapers of the time reported that Lincoln had returned to the crypt several times to hold his son's body. As soon as I heard that, this image sprung to mind: a melding of the Lincoln Memorial and the Pietà." The novel that has resulted is anything but a quiet tableau. It depicts a ferocious, keenly felt, and sometimes comic struggle over Willie's spirit while he is in a Bardo, the Tibetan Buddhist transition from death to rebirth, during which one's next life is very much up for grabs.

The premise of the book is like many that give rise to historical fiction: intriguing and a little shaky. The prolific Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer believes that the President did visit the Oak Hill mausoleum but did not handle Willie's body, whereas, he points out, the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, had once exhumed the coffin containing his infant daughter so that her corpse could

stay for two years inside his house. Whatever the exact case, Abraham Lincoln's active engagement with Willie's postmortem existence is a multi-sourceable matter of record. Bishop Matthew Simpson, in his funeral sermon for the President, cited Lincoln's remark, "Since Willie's death I catch myself every day involuntarily talking with him, as if he were with me," and David Herbert Donald, in his biography of Lincoln, offers evidence that in the period after Willie's death "he increasingly turned to religion for solace."

Ever since the President's assassination, on Good Friday, there has been an emotional and literary yearning to see him in terms of resurrection, to have him consort with the living and the dead and even the undead. (Several years ago, Seth Grahame-Smith's genre novel, "Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter," which also mentions Lincoln's reopening of Willie's casket, achieved a wide, weird popularity.) Saunders cites the influence of "Our Town" on his cemetery imaginings, but they are also surely underpinned by Edgar Lee Masters's "Spoon River Anthology" (1915), in which the spirit of Ann Rutledge, Lincoln's legendary first love, insists from her Illinois burial plot on historical credit: "Bloom forever, O Republic, / From the dust of my bosom!"

Saunders's witty and garrulous graveyard is filled with semi-spirits in a state of denial. They believe that their dead bodies are merely a "sick-form," and that the coffins and crypts containing them are "sick-boxes," as if Oak Hill were a hospital instead of a cemetery. They have chosen to resist passage to a genuine afterlife, and with their defiance has come boredom: "Each night passed with a devastating sameness," Hans Vollman, one of those who have adamantly "soldiered on," says. A printer with an enormous penis, he was, back in the eighteen-forties, just beginning to experience the joy of bedding his much younger wife when a ceiling beam fell and killed him. Vollman's best posthumous pal is the campy, once closeted Roger Bevins III, now sporting multiple limbs like a Hindu god. The two are frequently in the company of a straitlaced "old bore," the Reverend Everly Thomas, the closest thing to a Stage Manager in Saunders's netherworld. Unlike Vollman and Bevins, he knows he is dead, as well as damned.

Saunders does a fine job—and has a fine time—quickening his little necropolis to literary life, supporting his three codger principals with figures like Mrs. Blass, a once miserly widow; Jane Ellis, a woman wearied by her husband, enchanted by her daughters, and killed by some "minor surgery"; and a slave, Thomas Havens, who was reasonably content until he remembered that the few truly "discretionary" moments he had are what "other men enjoyed whole lifetimes comprised of."

It is not Willie's arrival that causes a sensation but what occurs during a subsequent visit from his father. "It was the *touching* that was unusual," the Reverend Thomas explains. It becomes the talk of the cemetery, a kind of redemptive validation for its self-loathing inhabitants: "To be touched so lovingly, so fondly, as if one were still—." To his new neighbors, Willie becomes a "prince," and his as yet unmartyred father a sort of savior.

But the young "are not meant to tarry" in Oak Hill, and Saunders's three main characters are astonished to find Willie continuing to sit "cross-legged on the roof" of his own tomb, refusing to depart, awaiting another visit and tender touch from his father. Even Vollman believes that the boy's remaining, in the face of inevitable "degradation," is unwise. "We wished the lad to go, and thereby save himself. His father wished for him to be 'in some bright place, free of suffering, resplendent in a new mode of being.' " And so the shades of Vollman and Bevins venture into Lincoln's body and attempt, with spectral willpower, to urge him back to Willie's tomb; once he gets there, they can insert "the lad into the gentleman" and thereby convince Willie of his father's desire for him to proceed toward a new realm of peace.

Only during this extramural errand do Vollman and Bevins realize that Lincoln is the President, five or six chief executives after Tyler and Polk, the incumbents they remember. They will also learn that there is a civil war going on (and going badly for Lincoln's side), that theatres have been transformed by gaslight, and that the railroad extends past Buffalo. And, to the Reverend Thomas's surprise, the two men succeed in returning Lincoln to the tomb:

> The moon shone down brightly, allowing me a first good look at his face.
>
> And what a face it was.

Saunders has downplayed his mid-career move to the larger form of the novel. (He says he's still "just trying to let the story tell me how long it wants to be.") Although readers may feel that "Lincoln in the Bardo" has little in common with the author's dystopian short stories, there's actually quite a lot of similarity in preoccupation and technique. Saunders often pays imaginative attention to corporations, bureaucracies, and nomenclature (Pfizer should hire the coiner of Docilryde™, Bonviv™, and Darkenfloxx™ the way the Ford Motor Company once enlisted Marianne Moore), and he has a predilection for creepy theme parks: the title stories of "Pastoralia" (2000) and "CivilWarLand in Bad Decline" (1996) involve troubled attractions where caveman life and the American Civil War are reënacted; the latter venue is replete with ghosts and apparitions.

In Saunders's hands, Oak Hill, too, is a kind of theme park, with various rules and precincts and spectacles, as well as opportunities for the author's parodic gifts. There is the jargon he loves ("this serendipitous mass co-habitation"); the comic grandiloquence ("Had he offered any hope for the alteration of the boy's fundamental circumstance? If so, might said hope extend to us as well?"); and a species of his usual interoffice communications in the form of a fictional watchman's logbook.

Seizing on the possibilities of his subject and period, Saunders indulges Lincoln's own love of bawdy humor when a clutch of spirits invade the President's body ("Mrs. Crawford entered, being groped as usual by Mr. Longstreet"), and he gives the precocious versifying that Willie practiced in life a Whitmanic afflatus when the boy ponders the possibilities of the hereafter: "Swinging from the chandelier, allowed; floating up to the ceiling, allowed; going to window to have a look out, allowed allowed allowed!"

Though Saunders has frequently taken pleasure in the bravura display of grotesque agonies, tenderness is much more fundamentally his line. He likes to create desperate people trying their best to

be dignified and gentle, and is drawn to the rescue of children from impending disaster: the fantasy-prone boy doesn't finally freeze to death in "Tenth of December"; the sweet girl in "Victory Lap" ultimately doesn't get raped, and the boy next door manages to rescue her without killing the assailant.

In his essay collection, "The Braindead Megaphone" (2007), Saunders cites Esther Forbes, the author of the venerable Y.A. historical novel "Johnny Tremain" (1943), as his "first model of beautiful compression," someone whose work suggested that "with enough attention, a sentence could peel away from its fellows and be, not only from you, but you." "Lincoln in the Bardo" may be Saunders's longest work of fiction, but it is also his most compressed—a series of snippets labelled with the identity of their speakers, almost as if the gravestones in this particular theme park have a push-button audio function for visitors:

> It was not quite *comme il faut* that the Barons should presume to speak to the boy.
>
> the reverend everly thomas

Other brief narrative utterances are taken from memoirs and histories, ranging from the reminiscences of Elizabeth Keckley (Mary Lincoln's African-American dressmaker) to Doris Kearns Goodwin's "Team of Rivals." A number of authentic-feeling ringers have also been mixed in. At its most solemn moments, the effect is akin to hearing the tagged, voice-overed quotations in Ken Burns's "The Civil War"; in more antic places, one might be reading the creative nonfiction of David Shields.

Even with this granular structure and its comic interludes, the book gathers a satisfying momentum, enough to reveal what Saunders has called, in one of his essays, a novel's Apparent Narrative Rationale—"what the writer and the reader have tacitly agreed the book is 'about.'" "Lincoln in the Bardo" has great matters on its mind: freedom and slavery, the spirit and the body. But it is, finally, "about" Abraham Lincoln, that great spectral presence in a whole subgenre of American fiction.

Obliquity has led to greater success in novelizing the sixteenth President than have attempts to see him from the inside out and through his own point of view. Lincoln's murder kept him from writing a memoir, but it is doubtful that he would have undertaken one in any case. Shrewd caution made him dislike, as he put it, "getting on paper, and furnishing new grounds for misunderstanding," and whatever autobiographical impulses he may have experienced seem to have been satisfied by the few abashed or just-the-facts campaign bios he wrote in 1859 and 1860, one of them in the third person, for potential supporters.

Even the most commercial novelists have instinctively known to stay away from Lincoln's consciousness, as if it were the "tired spot" that the exhausted President, in the middle of the war, deemed to be unreachable. Honoré Morrow (1880-1940), the wife of the publisher William Morrow, brought forth a trilogy of Lincoln novels between 1927 and 1930. The first is essentially a spy yarn involving a Virginia slaveholder and Confederate agent named Miss Ford, who manages to insinuate herself into the Lincoln White House and then fall in love with the President. Cross-dressing, racial disguise, and suicide reduce Fort Sumter and Bull Run to minor matters. And yet, overheated as everything might be ("ejaculated" is a favorite speaking verb), the novel shows a curious restraint when it comes to dealing with Lincoln himself, an inclination to keep his inner life at arm's length, as if to do otherwise would be a profanation. When his son dies (in Miss Ford's treacherous arms), Lincoln's grief is presented via an oddly distant narrative "telling" rather than interior dramatization: "Willie's death was, it seemed to Lincoln, the greatest grief of his life. Even the death of Ann Rutledge, that most poignant loss of his youth, had not torn at his very vitals as did this." Though unafraid of almost any preposterousness and presumption, Morrow cannot allow herself much lèse-majesté with Lincoln. Even when we learn about his amalgamation of "ruthlessness," "sweetness," and "patience," we hear of these things, as Lincoln does, from an analytical speech made by Mary.

One authorial approach has been to present Lincoln as the secondary character in a novel that nominally belongs to someone else. Mary Lincoln is the protagonist of Irving Stone's "Love Is Eternal" (1954), an overdecorated but

non-flimsy piece of historical fiction, its author in command of his material even when he's unable to animate it. In Stone's telling, the Lincolns' relationship remains close and conspiratorial for longer than it probably did, and the husband—ambitious, often defeated, and melancholy—can be neglectful of his wife. When Willie dies, after making a saintly last request ("Dr. Gurley, please give the money in my savings bank to the missionary society for the Sunday school"), the President's grief, with Mary as its springboard, reaches loftily toward the war dead: " 'It's not only Willie, it's all those boys on the battlefields . . . Bull Run, Ball's Bluff, others to come . . . dying so senselessly, so needlessly.' "

The underrated Stephen Harrigan uses a version of Stone's technique, with more sophistication, in "A Friend of Mr. Lincoln" (Knopf), published early last year. An invented character, the poet Cage Weatherby, serves as a sort of Nick Carraway to a rising and rather slippery Lincoln during his early days in New Salem and Springfield. Harrigan's future President remains believably enigmatic to both the ostensible protagonist and the reader. By deciding not to get too close, Harrigan effects a tentative advance toward greater, if still speculative, understanding. The shrewd, careful talker he presents, ethically ambiguous but credibly breathing, feels very much an extension of the epistolary Lincoln. This is how we see him in a moment of Weatherby's close-third-person anger: "Here was a man who would happily fill every newspaper in Illinois with anonymous attacks upon political enemies, who had nimbly avoided time and again taking any sort of meaningful stand on slavery, whose moral self-evidence made his endless partisan fights over internal improvements and specie payments and tariffs nothing but puzzling distractions."

Through Weatherby's monocular lens, Harrigan achieves with Lincoln's early career something of what Gore Vidal accomplished with his Presidency in "Lincoln" (1984). In that novel, the crucial points of view radiate from apostles and antagonists instead of Lincoln himself. Willie's deathbed is projected to us through the eyes of John Hay, another of the President's secretaries. Amid Mary's "eerie keening, addressed to the underworld itself," Lincoln pulled back the sheet:

> The boy's eyes had been closed; the hair combed. Delicately, with a forefinger, Lincoln touched his son's brow. Keckley pushed a chair in place so that Lincoln might sit. As he lowered himself into the chair, Hay saw that the tears had begun to flow down leathery cheeks that looked as if they had never before known such moisture. "It is hard," Lincoln whispered. "Hard to have him die."

Lincoln wrote no letter that we know of about Willie's death, but his most personal utterance about grief—a letter to Fanny McCullough, whose father, an old friend, had been killed in the war—was composed ten months after the death of his son:

> You can not now realize that you will ever feel better. Is not this so? And yet it is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have had experience enough to know what I say; and you need only to believe it, to feel better at once.

He was recommending a strategic feint, a mental foray into the future in order to avoid a present reckoning.

As recently as 2014, Jerome Charyn tried to avoid adding to the sonorous Lincolns of fiction and film with a novel, "I Am Abraham," that sometimes lurches into an overcompensating rusticity and doubles down vocally by presenting all four hundred and forty-nine pages in the first person. "I didn't take kindly to him *monsieuring* me," Lincoln thinks of a cosmopolite's greeting. "I felt every bit a backwoodsman, and it threw me off the mark." Making Lincoln sound a little like Asa Trenchard, in "Our American Cousin," may save him from his repeated fictional fate of talking like a marble statue, but Charyn's depiction ends up being only dully daring. He does, though, appear to anticipate Saunders's Bardo battles when Lincoln looks into his dying son's blue eyes: "I could feel the Almighty lurking in that pitiless color, as my son was *wrassling* with the angels."

If the posthumous Lincoln, like the crucified Christ, seems to say *noli me tangere* to the novelist, Saunders has both followed and boldly violated the admonition. Narrative indirection, the time-honored choice, often governs "Lincoln in the Bardo," as when Saunders clips dozens of different and sometimes contradictory sources to handle Lincoln's physical description:

> His hair was black, still unmixed with grey.
> In "Chiefly About War Matters," by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

> His hair, well silvered, though the brown then predominated; his beard was more whitened.
> In "A Wisconsin Woman's Picture of President Lincoln," by Cordelia A.P. Harvey, in "The Wisconsin Magazine of History."

But he also elects to venture into Lincoln's awareness and perceptions, and, when he does, it's an all-in enterprise, a physical incursion undertaken not only to extract characterizing thoughts but also to influence them. After Lincoln says, hesitantly, of Willie's remains, "Absent that spark, this, this lying here, is merely—," the inserted shade of Hans Vollman orders, "Think it. Go ahead. Allow yourself to think that word." A tremendous struggle for Willie, one with effects worthy of a Tim Burton movie, still lies ahead—"demonic beings" will soon trap him inside a stubborn carapace—but when his father lets go, accepts the boy's death and helps to usher his spirit to a real afterlife, the consequences are world-shaping. Vollman and Roger Bevins perceive a Lincoln who now fully understands and embraces suffering, and feels a new bloody-minded determination to win the war.

The historical evidence for such cause and effect is debatable. David Donald asserts something like the opposite in his biography: "At about the time of Willie's death Lincoln's optimism about military affairs also began to vanish." But Saunders is giving us an imaginative truth in keeping with a number of startling and benevolent short stories he has written, ones that end with characters reaching a low point and then pulling themselves back up. Vollman and Bevins, momentarily conjoined with Lincoln, may know that all three men are guilty of "wishful thinking" about a galvanized President, but all are equally certain of the wishing's necessity:

> But we must do so, and believe in it, or else we were ruined.
> roger bevins iii
>
> And we must not be ruined.
> hans vollman

These are the voices of fiction, not history, but they are also the voices of history still having to be made, with whatever hopelessness, in whatever time. ♦

NOT ALL THERE

Viet Thanh Nguyen's "The Refugees."

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

Consider the distinctions between the words "expat," "immigrant," "refugee." "Expat" suggests a cosmopolitan spirit and resources that allow mobility; to be an "immigrant" suggests some measure of need. A "refugee" is, by definition, desperate: he has been displaced from his home, has been rendered stateless, has few or no resources. The expat retains an identity as he retains his citizenship, his privileges; the refugee loses his identity amid the anonymity of many others like him. In the way that enslaved persons are truncated by the term "slaves," defined by their condition, there's a loss of identity in the category term "refugees." It might seem to be more humane, and accurate, to give someone who is forced to seek refuge a more expansive designation: "displaced person."

Viet Thanh Nguyen, one of our great chroniclers of displacement, appears to value the term "refugee" precisely for the punitive violence it betrays. Born in 1971, he is, by self-description, the son of Vietnamese refugees, and he has been a refugee himself; he has married a refugee, a fellow-writer named Lan Duong. In the acknowledgments of "The Refugees" (Grove), his beautiful and heartrending new story collection, he speaks of his son, Ellison: "By the time this book is published, he will be nearly the age I was when I became a refugee."

It is hardly surprising that the refugee is obsessed with identity, both personal and ethnic. He is likely to be highly sensitive to others' interpretations of him and of his "minority" culture. And so his peripheral status confers certain advantages, for he is in a position to see what others do not. As Nguyen has recounted, in an afterword to his début novel, "The Sympathizer" (2015), "I watched 'Apocalypse Now' and saw American sailors massacre a sampan full of civilians and Martin Sheen shoot a wounded woman in cold blood. I watched 'Platoon' and heard the audience cheering and clapping when the Americans killed Vietnamese soldiers. These scenes . . . left me shaking with rage."

Nguyen evokes a world of death-haunted precarity.

Thrilling in its virtuosity, as in its masterly exploitation of the espionage-thriller genre, "The Sympathizer" was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and has come to be considered one of the greatest of Vietnam War novels. The book's (unnamed) narrator speaks in an audaciously postmodernist voice, echoing not only Vladimir Nabokov and Ralph Ellison but the Dostoyevsky of "Notes from the Underground":

> I am a spy, a sleeper, a spook, a man of two faces. Perhaps not surprisingly, I am also a man of two minds. I am not some misunderstood mutant from a comic book or a horror movie, although some have treated me as such. I am simply able to see any issue from both sides. Sometimes I flatter myself that this is a talent, and although it is admittedly one of the minor talents, it is perhaps also the sole talent I possess.

The speaker is indeed a spy: he was, in the Republic of Vietnam, a Communist mole on the staff of a South Vietnamese general, before being evacuated from Saigon and taking refuge in post-Vietnam War America.

His confession is fraught with irony and his history is tragicomic; unlike the refugees of "The Refugees," he regards himself with the distance of self-loathing, for he has participated in assassinations while following orders. Obsessed with "universal and timeless" questions, he is the epitome of twentieth-century man: "What does the revolutionary do when the revolution triumphs? Why do those who call for independence and freedom take away the independence and freedom of others? And is it sane or insane to believe, as so many around us apparently do, in nothing?"

The stories in "The Refugees," too, feature protagonists who are poised between the past of a devastated homeland, Vietnam, and an affluent, adopted country, the United States. The book takes one of its epigraphs from James Fenton's "A German Requiem":

> It is not your memories which haunt you.
> It is not what you have written down.
> It is what you have forgotten, what you must forget.
> What you must go on forgetting all your life.

To survive, for the refugee, is to be buffeted between the grief-suffused admonition to remember the losses of the homeland and the self-protective

ILLUSTRATION BY JUN CEN

counter-admonition to "forget," the effort of which will be enormous and lifelong.

Ordinary existence, to the death-haunted, is populated by ghosts. These are not ideas of ghosts, or poetic metaphors. These are ghosts who leave behind damp carpets and the brine-soaked clothing in which, twenty-five years before, they drowned while escaping a war-torn homeland. They are family ghosts: a fifteen-year-old boy, for instance, who had traded his life to save a sister threatened with kidnapping and rape by pirates. "These fishermen resembled our fathers and brothers, sinewy and brown, except that they wielded machetes and machine guns," we read in the almost unbearably moving opening story, "Black-Eyed Women."

The story's narrator is herself a "ghost writer," taking on projects to which her name is never attached. As her refugee mother has warned, "In our homeland…there was a reporter who said the government tortured the people in prison. So the government does to him exactly what he said they did to others.…That's what happens to writers who put their names on things." Even in America, there is fear within the refugee community, fear of the young men among them "who had learned about violence from growing up in wartime." Looking back, the ghostwriter can see that the Vietnam where she spent her childhood was a "haunted country," but that her American adolescence is haunted, as well, with "tales of woe": "proof of what my mother said, that we did not belong here. In a country where possessions counted for everything, we had no belongings except our stories."

In "War Years," set in an urban Vietnamese-refugee community in the United States, in 1983, a family's well-being is menaced not by white Americans but by fellow-refugees, diehard anti-Communists who request a "donation" from Vietnamese merchants to fund an obvious lost cause: an uprising in Vietnam. It is typical of Nguyen's subtlety, however, that the presumed extortion is on behalf of a sincere, if misbegotten, venture involving the sewing of uniforms for South Vietnamese soldiers by a woman, Mrs. Hoa, who has been deranged by grief over the loss of her husband and two sons in the war that had ended a decade before:

> "American sizes are too large for Vietnamese men and the proportions aren't right. Plus the men want their names sewn on, and their ranks and units." Mrs. Hoa reached under the sewing table and lifted a cardboard box, and when we leaned over the table to peek inside, we saw plastic sandwich bags filled with chevrons and the colorful badges of Vietnamese units.

Vividly, the narrator recalls the fanatic Mrs. Hoa: "While some people are haunted by the dead, others are haunted by the living."

In the tenderly elegiac "I'd Love You to Want Me," a marriage deteriorates with the memory of a Vietnamese professor of physics afflicted by early-onset dementia. Susceptible to random, possibly erroneous but powerful memories out of his past, the professor, now living a comfortable American suburban life, begins to mistake his wife of many years for another woman, "Yen." The indignant wife, who has never heard of Yen, finds herself not only mourning the deterioration of her husband's memory but insulted by this curious sort of infidelity, as the professor gradually becomes a stranger to her:

> "And who am I?" she demanded. "What's my name?"
>
> He squinted at her. "Yen, of course."

She recalls a visit that she and the professor made to Saigon a few years before, when they'd had difficulty finding their old house on a street that had been renamed. It's a world in which names and identities are not fixed and are easily lost. Although the professor comes to realize that his mind is going, his memories of the mysterious Yen become obsessive. In an ironic reversal, the wife is astonished to discover that the professor is keeping a notebook about her:

> *Matters worsening. Today she insisted I call her by another name. Must keep closer eye on her…for she may not know who she is anymore.*

There is a beautifully poignant line about this: "so slowly the book of her life was being closed."

Where another writer might end his story on this bleakly graceful note, Nguyen moves into a coda in which the wife decides to surrender her identity and acquiesce to the professor's delusion: "It's just me.…It's Yen." Devoting herself to her impaired husband, she would read to him from a book of stories, short enough to accommodate his fractured attention span: "She would read out loud, from the beginning. She would read with measured breath, to the very end. She would read as if every letter counted, page by page and word by word."

It's a recurring theme in "The Refugees" that the traumatized individual must make his way slowly, word by word. Nguyen's narrative style—restrained, spare, avoiding metaphor or the syntactical virtuosity on display in every paragraph of "The Sympathizer"—is well suited for portraying tentative states. His characters are emotional convalescents, groping their way to an understanding of their woundedness. "Writing was entering into fog, feeling my way for a route from this world to the unearthly world of words, a route easier to find on some days than on others," the narrator observes, in "Black-Eyed Women."

Compulsive and unflinching introspection—another symptom of "refugee" consciousness—may lead survivors to realize harsh truths about themselves, as with an eighteen-year-old refugee who, in "The Other Man," has been taken into an affluent San Francisco household:

> He tried to forget the people who had clutched at the air as they fell into the river, some knocked down in the scramble, others shot in the back by desperate soldiers clearing a way for their own escape. He tried to forget what he'd discovered, how little other lives mattered to him when his own was at stake.

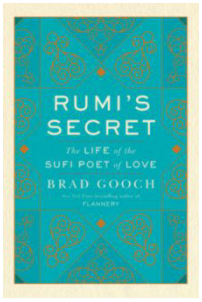
Truths about others are no more comforting. At any time, the refugee is likely to be confronted—confounded—by the myopia of non-Vietnamese. In "The Transplant," Arthur, the beneficiary of a liver from a Vietnamese donor, has "trouble distinguishing one nationality of Asian names from another," and is "also afflicted with a related, and very common, astigmatism wherein all Asians appeared the same." In "Fatherland," a Vietnamese girl working in an upscale Saigon restaurant overhears tourists speaking of "delicate and tiny" Vietnamese women, whose "dresses look stitched onto them." A Vietnamese tourist guide entertains his credulous American customers for whom "act was fact"—"we're all the same to them…small, charming, and forgettable." As the sharp-eyed narrator of "The

Sympathizer" tells us, the "all-American characteristic" is not sympathy or generosity but racial paranoia: "In America, it was all or nothing when it came to race. You were either white or you weren't."

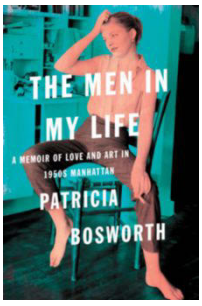
Which you were, of course, could be a matter of context. In "Fatherland," a young Vietnamese-American woman, Vivien, goes to Saigon to visit the children of her father and his second wife, her half siblings. (Vivien's mother had fled to America with her kids after the war.) Her visit is a grand occasion for the family. She gives them expensive gifts and treats them generously, taking them to the sort of restaurants that native residents can't afford. In particular, Vivien's half sister, seven years younger than she, is in awe of Vivien's glamour, and has fantasized about coming to the United States to live with her, and to emulate what she believes to be Vivien's success as a doctor in Chicago. Disillusion comes when she discovers that Vivien isn't a doctor but, rather, an unemployed receptionist with prospects as limited as her own. After the American half sister leaves, the Vietnamese half sister burns photographs of the two together: "Vivien's features melting before her own, their faces vanishing in flame." It is the final image in "The Refugees," ashes blown into the sky above Saigon.

Although only now published together in book form, the earnest, straightforward, relatively conventional stories of "The Refugees" would appear to have been written before the more stylized and experimental "The Sympathizer." But all Nguyen's fiction is pervaded by a shared intensity of vision, by stinging perceptions that drift like windblown ashes. By the end of "The Sympathizer," we have doubled back to its thematic beginning, as the narrator, now a survivor of torture in a Communist reëducation camp, becomes a refugee again amid anonymous "boat people"—a name, the narrator notes, that "smacks of anthropological condescension, evoking some forgotten branch of the human family." Nguyen leaves us with a harrowing vision of the sprawling tragedies of wartime, and of the moral duplicities of which we are capable. And yet "The Sympathizer" ends with a proclamation that would work as well for the displaced Vietnamese of "The Refugees": "*We will live!*" ♦

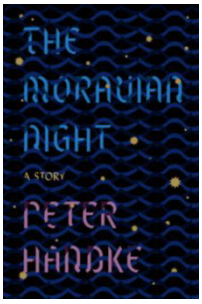
BRIEFLY NOTED



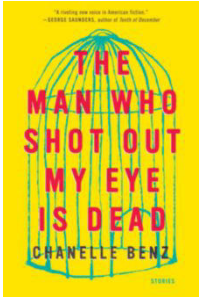
Rumi's Secret, *by Brad Gooch (Harper)*. Rumi, the great Persian poet, was a religious scholar in Anatolia when, in 1244, he encountered a man named Shams who recognized him as "a poet and a mystic, not a gatekeeper for rules." Their friendship transformed Rumi's life, and transports this biography into an exquisite, joyous realm. Shams, gruff and guileless, badgered Rumi into risking a more vulnerable approach to the concealed and inexpressible—that is, the essence of God and of love. Gooch narrates their friendship as a love story gone awry: Rumi releases his most uninhibited poetic self only after Shams disappears. Thankfully, more nurturing, less abrasive friendships followed, allowing Rumi to compose the spiritually pantheistic, enigmatic, and witty work for which he is famous.



The Men in My Life, *by Patricia Bosworth (Harper)*. In this memoir of the fifties and sixties, a biographer of Hollywood stars recounts her early life as a Broadway and film actress. Although she comes across as a fiercely ambitious and restless young woman, she emphasizes the role of luck, good and bad; she won a movie role as a nun on the strength of a photo, but had to prepare for the part while recovering from a black-market abortion. Bosworth's command of detail—the butterflies on her wedding dress, the caramel she spoons out during a waitressing gig, Diane Arbus's habit of wearing clothes until they're in shreds, a workshop scene with a randy Steve McQueen—makes the book more than merely a dishy showbiz memoir.



The Moravian Night, *by Peter Handke, translated from the German by Krishna Watson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)*. The protagonist of this novel about storytelling is a retired writer, who, returning from an expedition across Europe, summons friends to his houseboat, in Serbia (the title of the book is the boat's name), to hear an all-night retelling of his tour. With allusions to "The Arabian Nights," Cervantes, and Chaucer, his tale weaves memory, dream, philosophy, and illusion. Locations, names, and relationships are often left to the imagination, but there is a persistent sense that "momentous things must have occurred, and apparently almost every minute." The theme of the book is self-examination, and the way that our lives are shaped by the land beneath our feet.



The Man Who Shot Out My Eye Is Dead, *by Chanelle Benz (Ecco)*. This début short-story collection moves through a hodgepodge of settings and periods, depicting characters on the edge of society and of disaster. A teen-age girl turns bank robber in the Wild West; a formerly enslaved poet makes a perilous journey through the antebellum South; a young monk struggles to hold on to his faith during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. Savagery pervades what one character calls a "world for whose wickedness there is no remedy." Full of archaisms, the language has a neo-Nabokovian extravagance, occasionally overindulgent. While Benz's execution is a little uneven, her unconventional tales consistently startle and charm.

THE ART WORLD

MAN OF MANY WORDS

A Raymond Pettibon retrospective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

A tone of quizzical detachment: Pettibon's "No Title (...and the little)" (2005).

COURTESY COLLECTION FLORENCE AND PHILIPPE SÉGALOT, NEW YORK

The enigmatic, fantastically erudite artist Raymond Pettibon takes to Twitter like a bird to sky. My favorite of some fifty tweets that he posted on a recent day offers a reason that Donald Trump can't be the Antichrist: "Not charming, goodlooking, endearing enuff." In his art, Pettibon only sometimes addresses topical politics, or topical anything, but he knows his archetypes, and it's nice to have eschatological expertise on current events. How seriously to take it is an uncertainty that haunts all of Pettibon's art, which is surveyed in "A Pen of All Work," a retrospective at the New Museum of some seven hundred creations, mostly drawings with text. He has intrigued and befuddled a growing audience since the late nineteen-seventies, when he emerged, in Hermosa Beach, California, as a bookish surfer who made flyers and album covers for the punk band Black Flag (his older brother Greg Ginn was the founder and guitarist) and a flurry of zines. His fame took hold slowly, and it remains confined largely to fine-art circles. Seeing the show is like being lost in a foreign but strangely familiar city, where polyphonic disembodied voices whisper, yell, or sputter wit and wisdom that you're rarely sure that you heard quite right.

The title, "A Pen of All Work," is from Byron's "The Vision of Judgement," in which the mediocre poet Robert Southey proposes to ghostwrite a memoir for Satan and, upon being rebuffed, extends the same offer to the archangel Michael. This befits Pettibon, who says that roughly a third of his texts are lifted, or rephrased, from cherished writers: a pantheon in which St. Augustine consorts with Henry James and Mickey Spillane. But every Pettibon phrasing sounds like a quotation from someone else, often in the formal, slightly stilted tones of a Victorian wordsmith.

Take the inscription on an inky drawing, from 1992, of a shut eye with long lashes: "Where the record is one of emotions and sentiments, delicately traced and disentangled, one blush may do more than enough to expose the immediate view." That sounds true, but what is the question that it answers? An inscription on a 2015 image of the formidable St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Bob Gibson, in mid-delivery, reads, "The fruit of the foreign tree is shaken down there with a force that smothers everything else." Pettibon loves baseball, with a mystic's intensity; surfing, too. In a favorite motif, a tiny surfer rides a monstrous wave, as philosophical thoughts attend: "The sand and water to which we are reducible are as a rock to me" or "Don't complicate the moral world." Pettibon's way with words, somewhat like the poetry of John Ashbery, instills a conviction of cogency untethered to understanding.

The images that Pettibon draws are also either borrowed or look like they are. Comic-book characters have been a frequent source: Batman, Gumby, and the little guy from the old "Felix the Cat" television cartoon series, whose face is all gaping mouth and whose vocabulary consists of the single locution "Vavoom!" Another recurring persona is Jesus, who, in a 1990 drawing, appears on the Cross, musing, "I am after eight years' hammering against impenetrable adamant, become suddenly somewhat of a success." Pettibon's graphic style is no style, a clunky mélange of cartooning and illustrational modes that lack honed skill and nuanced feeling. It works extremely well, appearing gauche only until you accept its service to blunt statement: manner at one with matter. Though never employing caricature, the work's effect updates a tradition of pointed grotesquerie that has roots in Hogarth, Goya, and Daumier

and branches in the modern editorial cartoon: aesthetic pleasure checked by the absurdity or the horror—the scandal—of the subject at hand.

Pettibon's approach is also reminiscent of the directness of children's art, a quality emphasized in the show by drawings that he made as a kid but only recently inscribed. (A wild battle scene, which he drew as a preteen, now bears the confession "As a boy I passed my life in day-dreams of military glory. There will be a war for you, my Father said, when you grow up.") Curators and critics often group Pettibon with Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw, California-based contemporaries who display similar veins of punk-seasoned satire and poisoned narcissism. But he differs from them in the ruminative and sensitive qualities of his work, which suggest at once the sagacity of an old mind and the vulnerability of a young heart.

Pettibon was born in 1957, the fourth of five children. His father, who taught English at a junior college in Los Angeles and published the occasional spy novel, nicknamed his son "Petit Bon," which the artist adopted as his surname at the age of twenty-one. His mother was a housewife. He earned a degree in economics from U.C.L.A., in 1977, and briefly taught math at a junior high school. He then plunged into artmaking, living in his parents' basement, in slacker fashion, but he was compulsively productive. When I spoke with him recently, he said that his mother had been more or less his only admirer at the time, when his first zine, "Captive Chains" (1978), a racy noir narrative now highly prized by collectors, sold just a few copies.

Pettibon is a big, doughy, shambling guy, who, when he's with you, can seem also to be somewhere else, but he's cordial. In 2011, he moved to Manhattan with his wife, the video artist Aida Ruilova. They now live near the Brooklyn Bridge, with their five-year-old son. Pettibon's parents were Christian Scientists, though the faith didn't do much to form him, he said, except for its ubiquitous reading rooms, which "helped with my relationship to reading." He has made his way "many times" through the Bible and—I believe I gasped when he said it—"Finnegan's Wake." He absorbed aesthetic theory from Edmund Burke, prosodic elevation from John Ruskin, and social description from John Dos Passos. But Pettibon responds to instances of rhetorical glamour in any sort of writing that strikes his ear with the "raggedy-assed edges of the sublime."

I have had spells of swearing off Pettibon, owing to the exhausting onslaught of things to see and read, from a sum of works that the New Museum show's co-curator, Massimiliano Gioni, estimates to number around twenty thousand. Pettibon sympathizes. He said to me of his drawings, "Even to look at them can be an ordeal, like reading Milton at a sitting." Each one demands absorption. After fully contemplating a few, you inevitably numb out. But there's no help for an art that, as fast and as loose as it appears at first glance, distills long periods of conception and reflection. Pettibon told me that images can await the right words for years, and vice versa.

The new show, on three floors of the museum, eases a viewer's toil by grouping works according to theme—sports, religion, sex, politics, nuclear apocalypse—though items that fit no genre are necessarily scattered throughout. There are videos made with friends, for which Pettibon wrote the screenplays. In one, "Judgement Day Theatre: The Book of Manson" (1989), a band's guitarist drops dead, but his guitar keeps playing until the plug is pulled on it. A survivor remarks, "Guess we're a power trio now, huh?" The script is a jumble of profane, stoned rants and the occasional Old Testament prophecy. Amateur actors deliver it woodenly, reading from cue cards. Stupid? And how. With his videos, Pettibon positively luxuriates in brainlessness—as he does on Twitter, in raunchy bursts of uncorked id. He thereby usefully disperses impulses that his pictorial work disciplines.

Charles Manson, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and the Weathermen preoccupied Pettibon early on, as aspects of the ruined hippiedom and misfired far-left militancy that punk scorned. But a signature tone of quizzical detachment marks even his most violent imaginings. In a drawing from 1986, a naked Manson girl, with the group's signal "X" on her forehead and brandishing a switchblade, comes with a sociological gloss, likely imported from somewhere: "Kansas prepares them for it perfectly." In another drawing, a pot-smoking cool dude gravely testifies, "I've never heard so many nuances in Donovan." Pettibon didn't express the era so much as seem to struggle through it toward air more breathable, with humor that was a recourse from discomfort.

Far left himself, to the extent that he is political, Pettibon subjected Ronald and Nancy Reagan to some obscene mockery in the nineteen-eighties. In a drawing from 1986, he hit on another public figure, viewed from behind against a moonlit city skyline; the work is inscribed, at the top, "A certain Donald Trump" and, below, "The first real gentleman I'd met in years." But his pitch deepened in reaction to the Iraq War. True rage informs a burlesque, from 2007, of the iconic Second World War photograph of marines raising a flag on Iwo Jima. In Pettibon's version, the men are naked but for peaked hoods. The inscription reads, "For once Cheney bows to multiculturalism etiquette, adds representatives from Al Qaeda, Iran to flag taking-down monument." Elsewhere, a group of naked American torturers with erections, surrounding a hooded victim, is laconically lamented: "They brought their game with them, and what they didn't learn back in the States in their black box of growing up, they learnt as they went along." The blandness of the language intensifies the awfulness of the scene—a device that recalls Goya's dry captions on his "Disasters of War" series. It's not a note that you can hit by wanting to. Pain must administer it.

It's odd that work so teeming with aspects of contemporary popular culture should stir associations to remote art history, but the contrast points up Pettibon's singularity. I think, too, of medieval paintings that garland the actions of saints with scrolled scriptural passages, bracketing meanings, between image and word, for a community of the faithful. Pettibon's coarsely robust picturing and suavely refined prose do the same, but for initiates who are more strictly fanciful. The fiction of an audience that knows what he's about may be his chief invention. ♦

ON TELEVISION

X MARKS THE SPOT

"Legion," the trippy origin story of one of the X-Men.

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM

David Haller is plucked from a mental hospital, his illness redefined as a power.

NOAH HAWLEY'S "LEGION," on FX, the latest Marvel production based on the X-Men, has an aesthetic that might be described as caustic whimsy. It's a sleek, stylized diorama of alarming imagery, as much about fear orange and misery avocado and rage yellow as it is about anything else. You don't actually have to understand much about the X-Men to enjoy watching it.

This is good news, since the X-Men, a byzantine superhero mythology that launched, in 1963, as a comic-book series, has always intimidated me. I've got a layman's knowledge of the movies, and I enjoyed Marvel franchises like "Jessica Jones" and "Luke Cage," spinoffs from adjacent mythologies. On occasion, I've tried to absorb the Wikipedia page about the comic books, a document that makes the Talmud look like SparkNotes. The central concept—mutants who are troubled by their own powers, which emerge in adolescence—is a reliably effective device. But it's hard to keep those suckers straight. There are dozens (maybe hundreds?) of X-Men, working in teams, tackling global crises. Society's cruelty to mutants can be a metaphor for racism, or homophobia, or totalitarianism, or all at the same time. It's *big*.

"Legion" is not small, exactly, but it's dreamy and precise, with an Ionesco wit and Red Bull energy. It's the backstory of one of the mutants, Legion, a fringe X-Man who is a mentally unstable antihero: he has varying selves and more than one power, which he has trouble controlling. On the show, however, we are introduced to him simply as David Haller (played with a smeary boyish charisma by Dan Stevens, whom most Americans know from "Downton Abbey"; a lucky few know him from "High Maintenance"), a twitchy fellow who has been medicated into dullness.

The series opens with a montage of David's life, scored to the dread-pop of the Who's "Happy Jack": first he's a baby, then a sweet little kid, then a beaming soccer player. Then, suddenly, he's a wild-eyed tween cackling as his science experiment goes up in flames; a smirking anarchist; a party boy grinding toward suicide. He's a raging twenty-something, surrounded by whirling knives. He's an adolescent, clutching his ears as a crowd forms a circle to scream at him, as if he were Frankenstein's monster. And, finally, he's a mental patient, locked in an asylum as stylized as what's come before—"Clockworks Psychiatric Hospital," filmed as if it were surveillance footage.

These uncanny images will be repeated again and again, a pattern that the show keeps wheeling back to, solving for the sources of David's anger as if struggling to finish a Rubik's Cube. David has been taught that he's schizophrenic, but in reality he has supernatural powers, among them the ability to move things with his mind. At the hospital, he's buddies with a kohl-eyelinered junkie-lesbian (Aubrey Plaza, from "Parks and Recreation"), and he falls for another patient, Rachel Keller's Syd Barrett (yes, that's her name), who can't be touched. As David walks through the halls, we get slippery cuts to his distorted perceptions, although we can't tell whether they're flashbacks or hallucinations or a reality that others can't see. All we know is that they are beautiful, the colors and shapes treated as visual rhymes. There's a shot of a man buried in emerald-green shrubbery, then a shot of dark-green ivy on a hospital wall; a horror-film flash of a Hitler-like mask mimics the mod black-and-white outfits worn by the orderlies. This gemstone surreality turns everything into theatre; it also forces us, like David, to

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

absorb what we see without knowing if we can trust our perceptions.

The showrunner, Noah Hawley, created the Coen-brothers pastiche "Fargo" for FX. The first season of that series was visually dazzling but ultimately nihilistic, an exercise in hollow machismo; the second season was original and ambitious, a darkly funny exploration of domestic evil. Evil is clearly Hawley's thing. When FX asked him to adapt a Marvel property, he selected Legion, a character so disturbing that, in 1991, one of the X-Men comic-book writers refused to write him in, judging him too dysfunctional for the team. One of the show's producers has described Hawley's vision for "Legion" as akin to "Breaking Bad," a villain's origin story, and he has cited influences that include "Alice in Wonderland" and David Lynch. There's Wes Anderson in there, too, along with traces of "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and Edgar Allan Poe.

But, unlike some other recent flashily directed series about bad men—"Boardwalk Empire," "True Detective," "Vinyl"; I could go on—"Legion," so far, doesn't feel like empty virtuosity. Hawley finds contemporary ways to explore ancient, potentially hokey ideas, particularly the notion that sanity and madness are not that far apart. Three episodes in, it's hard to say where the plot is going, other than down the rabbit hole of David's worst thoughts. But "Legion" is a nightmare absorbing enough that you don't feel the need to question the endgame. It's likely to appeal to fans of Bryan Fuller's greatly missed "Hannibal," another show that was as much about ritual as about story, and that didn't bother to explain everything along the way.

The bravura final sequence of "Legion"'s first episode features David ducking down beneath the safe, amniotic blue surface of a swimming pool—an image that glimmers with allusions to everything from "The Graduate" to the album cover of Nirvana's "Nevermind." There's a blast of magic fire and a brilliant escape, with the help of fellow-mutants, from the hospital. As it turns out, David's being taken to another sort of hospital: a pricey rehab, metaphorically speaking. Although it's called Summerland, it feels very much like the most famous place in the X-Men series: the X-Mansion, or Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. Like the hospital, it's a pleasure to gaze at. It's idyllic and woodsy, full of modernist pale-wood furniture and a New Age therapeutic vibe.

Once he's there, David is encouraged to revisit his memories—the Nazi puppet, the whirling knives—and to find out who he is. Every time it gets too difficult, his companions (including the wonderful Jean Smart, who was also in the second season of "Fargo") tell him, in so many words, to "keep working the program." "Legion" is one of those shows that treat mental illness, and addiction, as a metaphor for being special, so if you have a problem with that approach it will not be your jam. But it taps a fantasy that's everywhere in the culture. It's a story about being rescued from anonymity, like Harry Potter, or the horny teen-agers on "The Magicians," or Elliot, on "Mr. Robot," or even Olivia Pope's Gladiators, on "Scandal." It's about learning that your freakishness—the damage that has made society reject you—can be redefined as a special power. It's about being part of an élite team, learning things about the world that others don't—and, often, having outsiders think you're crazy. It's about proving them wrong.

Frequently, such stories are about solidarity, about finding the people with whom one might team up to fight fascism or evil. But these mythologies are equally about the craving to be healed. This is true whether you are a naturally gifted orphan whose parents were killed by Voldemort or a homeless assassin who used to drill people to death for SD-6. The mental hospital where David was trapped is run by conspirators who want to trick him into thinking he's sick. But the woodland facility is also run by psychiatrists, just a more benign set. If this were a certain kind of story, we'd watch David become a hero, learning to control his powers and to use them for good. That's the version that people often lean on during hard times, for inspiration and escape.

The trick of "Legion" is that we know that it can't be that kind of story: unless the Wikipedia pages are wrong, David won't save the world—he has a different destiny. Not every character gets a happy ending; some of us are just fated to be a hot mess. ♦

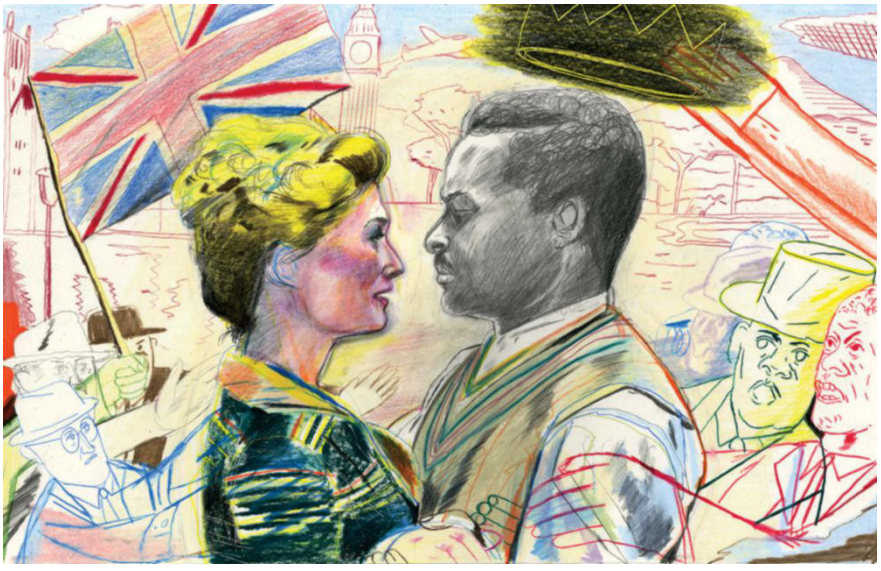
THE CURRENT CINEMA

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

"A United Kingdom" and "Land of Mine."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Whoever loved that loved not at first sight? For Ruth Williams (Rosamund Pike) and Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo), the sighting occurs in London, in 1947. Near the start of "A United Kingdom," which is based on a true story, they meet at a Missionary Society dance, an event not easily mistaken for the toga party in "National Lampoon's Animal House." Eyes lock, hearts stop, and soon—after a few decorous dates—Seretse is down on one knee, offering Ruth a ring and the prospect of a life together. "I don't need to think about it," she says, with a briskness befitting her profession as a clerk. So that is that.



Rosamund Pike and David Oyelowo in Amma Asante's new movie.

Except that it isn't. That must never, if humanly possible, be that, according to plenty of people in Britain and elsewhere. People like the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee (Anton Lesser); Sir Alistair Canning (Jack Davenport), a senior presence at the Foreign Office, whose demeanor is modelled on a Rolls-Royce crunching lightly but implacably up a gravel drive; Ruth's father (Nicholas Lyndhurst), who threatens to banish her if she proceeds with the wedding; and Tshekedi Khama (Vusi Kunene), the regent of the Bamangwato tribe, in Bechuanaland, which is now known as Botswana, and which Ruth, in the first blush of her passion, has to locate in an atlas.

The problem for Seretse is that he is Tshekedi's nephew, and the heir to the tribal throne. He has been studying in England in preparation for a return to his homeland, there to assume his regal duties. And the problem for Attlee's government is that Bechuanaland, a British protectorate, abuts South Africa, which is setting up the gruesome machinery of apartheid. A mixed-race royal marriage, just across the border, would not merely enrage the South Africans but might inspire them to annex the country, upon which they have always harbored designs. Add the British reliance upon South Africa's gold and uranium, not to mention the discovery of diamonds in Bechuanaland, and the result is a nasty, complex, and rapacious episode, smoldering with all the huff and dudgeon that you expect to find at the butt end of any imperial project.

"A United Kingdom" is written by Guy Hibbert and directed by Amma Asante, who was born in Britain of Ghanaian parents. It is one of those films which are more beguiling to ponder in retrospect, perhaps, than to watch at the time. The day after the screening, I found myself truffling in the archives online, seeking a copy of the Harragin Report—a secret document from 1949, in which British representatives, dispatched to Bechuanaland, summarized the tensions of the case and the merits of the main participants. (In the film, we see the report being handed over, illicitly, on a bench in a London park, and spotted with rain: an image nicely soaked in Britishness.) This was the official line on Seretse:

> It would be incorrect to think of him as an African well satisfied with a mud and wattle hut, and with crude sanitary conveniences. Though a typical African in build and features, he has assimilated, to a great extent, the manners and thoughts of an Oxford undergraduate. He speaks English well and is obviously quick to appreciate, even if he may not agree with, the European point of view. Thus he was an easy witness to examine, he immediately understood the questions and answered them without hesitation, clearly and fairly, and we have no hesitation in finding that, but for his unfortunate marriage, his prospects of success as a Chief are as bright as those of any Native in Africa with whom we have come in contact.

To the historian, that is invaluable: an unfaded snapshot of colonialist condescension at its smoothest. Movie theatres, however, tend not to brim with historians, and many viewers will sag in confusion as the backdrop of "A United Kingdom," fascinating though it is, smothers the smaller and more intimate saga that is meant to be the core of the action. Indeed, with every hint of romance wrapped in layers of tough constitutional politics, does the film even qualify as a love story? I had my doubts early on. At one point, Seretse says to Ruth, "Tell me something about you that I could never guess," whereupon we cut away, before she can reply, as if she were poised to reveal some ravening middle-class perversion that would shock her noble beau. Such rapture as there is feels comically mild, and no film whose erotic highlight consists of a woman demurely pulling her skirt above

ILLUSTRATION BY YANN KEBBI

the knee to mid-thigh—no further than that, mind—can be said to break new ground. Once the lovers, spurning all advice, are bound in matrimony, they move to Bechuanaland, only to be kept apart for long periods, with Seretse detained against his will in England and his wife marooned in Africa: a desperate plight for the two of them, but not much fun for us, either, as we listen to them hollering down the phone.

What Oyelowo fans will want to know is how his portrayal of Seretse stacks up against his previous historical performance, as Martin Luther King, Jr., in "Selma" (2014). Well, the new film confirms that Oyelowo is one of those rare actors who can unleash a formal speech before a crowd, fortissimo, without seeming hammy or haranguing. That impact was heightened, in "Selma," by the rival orators—Tim Roth as George Wallace, and Tom Wilkinson as Lyndon B. Johnson—who were ranged so formidably against him, whereas Rufus Lancaster (Tom Felton), the nefarious district commissioner who greets Seretse in his native land, is no competition at all, and looks about twelve years old. Felton was considerably scarier in the days when he played Draco Malfoy, in the "Harry Potter" franchise, and the addition of a mustache does not, per se, convince one of his adult villainy.

"A United Kingdom" has a nourishing tale to tell, and you could argue that the telling halts too soon; Seretse's finest hour, as the first President of a democratic Botswana, is yet to come. On the whole, Asante's movie, though crammed with the white man's treachery, has a dulled and inoffensive sheen, and cannot match the visual rigor that Ava DuVernay brought to "Selma." Here, almost every touch is soft: firelight becomes a glowing haze, London is veiled in a seemly fog, and, as Ruth peers down from an airplane, on her initial approach to Africa, what she spies—as everyone in movies, and in wildlife documentaries, always does from that vantage—is a slowly cantering giraffe. Quite delightful. At moments like that, I regret to say, even Sir Alistair Canning would approve.

THE BAD NEWS about "Land of Mine" is that it's all about land mines. In the original Danish, Martin Zandvliet's film is called "Under Sandet," which means "Under the Sand," but American distributors, in their wisdom, opted for a play on words. The setting is an unregarded nook of northern Europe, in May, 1945. The German occupiers, anticipating invasion, laid more than two million land mines on the west coast of Denmark. Now that the country has been freed by the Allies, moral logic (and simple practicality) demands that the defeated forces should be the ones to unearth the mines and defuse them. The movie narrows its focus to a dozen or so weary German prisoners, most of them teen-agers, tossed into the front line in the dying months of the conflict. Taking charge of them is a Danish sergeant, Carl Rasmussen (Roland Møller), who complains to his superior, "You should have told me I was getting little boys."

For historical reasons unexplained in the film, Rasmussen wears the uniform and cap of the British Parachute Regiment; by a loyal coincidence, he also resembles Field Marshal Montgomery, who led the liberating troops into Denmark. Rasmussen begins the film in an unmilitary fury, assailing the enemy with the wildness of an animal newly released from its cage. Slowly, as he gets to know his youthful squad, his wrath recedes. Their task, after all, is a perilous one: to make safe a strand of coastline, where forty-five thousand mines lie buried. The sand must be probed with metal rods. Detonators need to be unscrewed and, ever so gently, lifted clear.

Fretful viewers may have to watch this through their fingers, although it must be said that, as time crawls by, you start to foresee the unforeseen. Even a hair trigger can become predictable. Nor is Zandvliet a master of character; as individuals, the Germans make scant impression, aside from a pair of supposedly inseparable twins, played by Emil and Oskar Belton, and Sebastian (Louis Hofmann), the decent conscience of the group. You might expect that one of them, at least, would bear a lingering trace of Nazi defiance, but no. And yet, for all that, "Land of Mine" deserves its Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. Again and again, its stark and suspenseful compositions strike the eye—figures in dark clothing, prone on a pale beach, with lines of wire, black warning flags, and the chill gray waves beyond. Caspar David Friedrich once painted a similar seascape, with a monk gazing oceanward and contemplating the infinite. For these lads, the infinite is right there, in their trembling hands, ready to explode. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Richard Brody blogs about movies.

VOLUME XCIII, NO. 1, February 13 & 20, 2017. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 13 & 20, June 5 & 12, July 10 & 17, August 7 & 14, and December 18 & 25) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Elizabeth Hughes, publisher, chief revenue officer; Risa Aronson, associate publisher advertising; James Guilfoyle, director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman emeritus; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president & chief executive officer; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; James M. Norton, chief business officer, president of revenue. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684, call (800) 825-2510, or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Please give both new and old addresses as printed on most recent label. Subscribers: If the Post Office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within one year. If during your subscription term or up to one year after the magazine becomes undeliverable, you are ever dissatisfied with your subscription, let us know. You will receive a full refund on all unmailed issues. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks after receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Risa Aronson at (212) 286-4068. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For permissions and reprint requests, please call (212) 630-5656 or fax requests to (212) 630-5883. Visit us online at www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines, visit www.condenast.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037 0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

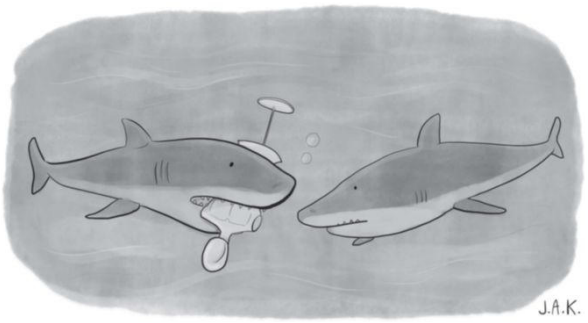
Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Harry Bliss, must be received by Sunday, February 19th. The finalists in the January 30th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 6th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

“ ”

.....

THE FINALISTS



"I miss the screaming."
Dennis Henley, Chicago, Ill.

"The doctor said it might help me quit."
Vincent Conitzer, Chapel Hill, N.C.

"Needs dressing."
James Keegan, Milton, Del.

THE WINNING CAPTION

"Maybe his second week will go better."
Audrey Orr, Naperville, Ill.

The government measures survival rates for six critical medical conditions.

Only one hospital in the nation outperforms on all of them: NewYork-Presbyterian.

NewYork-Presbyterian is the only hospital in the nation with statistically better mortality rates in all six of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 30-day mortality measures: heart failure, pneumonia, COPD, heart attack, stroke and coronary artery bypass graft.

While these statistics are only for Medicare patients, they tell a compelling story: a combination of clinical excellence, dedicated patient care, and the experience and resources of two great medical schools. We invite you to learn more at nyp.org/amazingadvances

Weill Cornell Medicine | NewYork-Presbyterian | ColumbiaDoctors

slack

Slack is where work happens, for millions of people around the world, every day.