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SEPT. 19, 2016

# THE NEW YORKER



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# THE NEW YORKER

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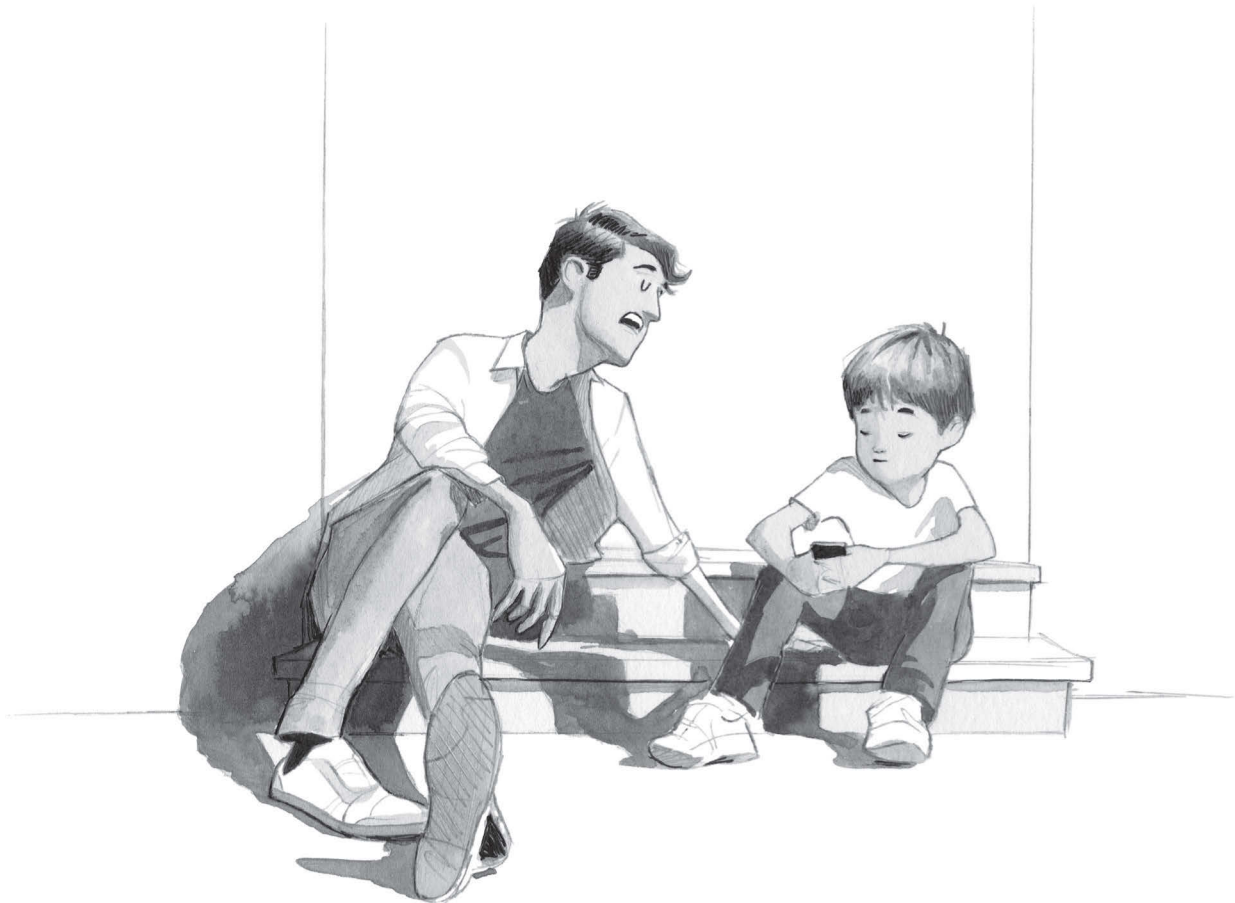
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*W. McPhail*

*“When I was your age, things were hard for my dad when he was my age.”*





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# CONTRIBUTORS

**Jill Lepore** (*"The State of Debate,"* p. 38), a professor of history at Harvard, is writing a history of the United States.

**Amy Davidson** (*Comment,* p. 31), a staff writer, contributes regularly to *Comment* and to [newyorker.com](http://newyorker.com).

**Lauren Collins** (*The Talk of the Town,* p. 32) is the author of "When in French: Love in a Second Language," which has just been published. She reports from Paris for the magazine.

**Calvin Trillin** (*Shouts & Murmurs,* p. 45) is a longtime *New Yorker* writer. His book "No Fair! No Fair!: And Other Jolly Poems of Childhood," with illustrations by Roz Chast, comes out later this month.

**James Surowiecki** (*The Financial Page,* p. 36), the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds," writes about economics, business, and finance for the magazine.

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**Judith Thurman** (*"Cover Look,"* p. 60) has written several books, including "Secrets of the Flesh," about the life of Colette, and "Cleopatra's Nose."

**Doreen St. Félix** (*The Talk of the Town,* p. 34) writes about culture for MTV News.

**David Kutz-Marks** (*Poem,* p. 43) is the author of "Violin Playing Herself in a Mirror," which won the 2014 Juniper Prize for Poetry.

**Ian Frazier** (*"Patina,"* p. 46) recently published "Hogs Wild: Selected Reporting Pieces," and is working on a book about the Bronx.

**Jane Kramer** (*Books,* p. 80), the author of "Europeans" and "The Politics of Memory," has written for the magazine since 1964. A collection of her *New Yorker* food essays is due out next year.

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**Rivka Galchen** (*Fiction,* p. 74) is the author of "Little Labors," her third book, which was published in May.

**Alexandra Schwartz** (*Books,* p. 86), a staff writer, won the Nona Balakian Citation for Excellence in Reviewing from the National Book Critics Circle last year.

**M'Bilia Meekers** (*Poem,* p. 70) is a Cave Canem Fellow and an M.F.A. candidate in poetry at New York University.

**Emily Nussbaum** (*On Television,* p. 90), who won this year's Pulitzer Prize for criticism, became the magazine's television critic in 2011.

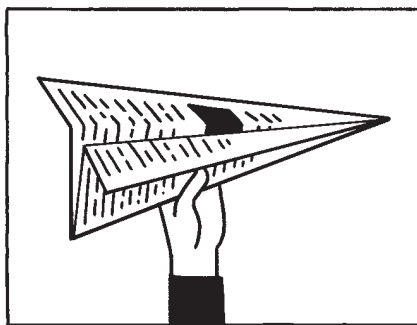
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### PORTFOLIO

Photographs of models from Underwraps, an agency that represents Muslim women who cover.



### NEWS DESK

Reports on and analysis of politics and more by Amy Davidson, John Cassidy, Benjamin Wallace-Wells, and others.



### SHORTS & MURMURS

In our latest video sketch, a couple in Brooklyn breaks up. The hardest part? Dividing up the Mason jars.

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# THE MAIL

## FALSE IDOLS

Having been a friend of and a collaborator with the architect Luis Barragán for more than thirty years, I was appalled at what I learned from Alice Gregory's article on Jill Magid's project to reclaim the Barragán archive for Mexico ("Body of Work," August 1st). Barragán was a most reserved man, who avoided publicity. (To understand Barragán, one has only to read his acceptance speech upon receiving the Pritzker Architecture Prize.) The fact that a portion of his ashes has been turned into a diamond engagement ring is not only vulgar but offensive to the reputation of the artist. It shows a stunning lack of comprehension of Luis Barragán and encapsulates everything that he was not.

*Adriana Williams*  
*San Francisco, Calif.*

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## WARMER WATERS

As a supporter of Hillary Clinton who lives in an open-carry state and drives past Trump lawn signs every day, I was bemused by the hold-your-nose-and-vote tone of Steve Coll's Comment (August 8th & 15th). Unlike Coll, I did find Secretary Clinton's speech at the Democratic National Convention "transporting." It wasn't a beautiful speech—she will never be Cicero—but it was a thoroughly persuasive address to the concerns of voters like me. And seeing the first woman nominated for President by a major political party gave me the kind of thrill I haven't felt since the general election of 2008. Coll found her biographical film "exhausting," but many voters needed to see who she was; personally, I wasn't exhausted to learn of the good she has done during her public life. While I wouldn't vote for anyone solely on the basis of gender, race, or other identifiers, the possibilities that Clinton's nomination holds for our society's greater freedom are tremendous. It's time that Coll and *The New Yorker* understand the fact that, and the reasons

that, Secretary Clinton's nomination is actually inspiring to millions of voters.

*Sharona Muir*  
*Perrysburg, Ohio*

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## THE CONFESSION

I agree with Tony Schwartz when he says, in his tell-all to Jane Mayer, that he is at fault for some portion of the Donald Trump phenomenon ("Trump's Boswell Speaks," July 25th). But Trump would have found another way to transform himself into a mythic figure. He has the charisma and the ego, as well as the pathological ability, to say anything at any time to appeal to a certain group. Hillary's private e-mail server and her questionable judgment on a few key decisions, such as voting to invade Iraq, have turned what should have been a runaway victory for her into a nail-biter. From the beginning, the media, instead of uncovering and providing the details about Trump throughout his career, has focussed on his celebrity and his bombastic rhetoric. Now his base is secure and well dug in. Even if he is trounced in November, there will be conspiracy theories about a "stolen" election, which Trump and his campaign have already begun promulgating. He's covering every angle he can think of, and ten per cent or more of American voters will buy into it.

*David Aronson*  
*Holliston, Mass.*

Schwartz knows that Donald Trump is a really bad guy. Thirty years ago, Trump gave him intimate access for an extended time while they worked together on Trump's first book—an early step in Trump's ascent. And now, seeing the rise of Trump, Schwartz feels contrite. But Trump was right: Schwartz should have kept mum. That obligation was implicit in their working relationship. It's easy, with or without Schwartz, to make Trump look bad. He is practically attracting sympathy as a victim at this point; one suspects he can't possibly be as awful as people say. Although I am not aware of any redeeming fea-

tures of his candidacy—and I won't be voting for him—maybe the bigger picture is that he represents a whole other mind-set for dealing with Washington and the world. Maybe his appeal comes from the very fact that he doesn't behave and he isn't patient and nice. He may be a bull in a china shop, but a lot of people think the federal government is a china shop that could use having a crazed bull in it.

*Joshua Stein*  
*New York City*

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## IN PRAISE OF RIDICULE

I appreciated David Remnick's Comment on the Ailes-Trump relationship (August 1st). How apt that Ailes consulted the films of the Nazi propagandist Leni Riefenstahl. But, at Remnick's mention of the words "demagoguery" and "dangerous," both of which characterize Donald Trump, I worried that, by repeatedly labelling Trump with these terms, we end up dignifying him, however counterintuitive that sounds. What Riefenstahl understood is that such words become flattery, however much they are meant to discredit. In a speech in 1970, Muriel Spark described ridicule as "the only honorable weapon we have left." Though many pooh-pooh Spark's idea about the efficacy of language to stop demagoguery, we could use more derision and satire, and not just on the late-night talk shows. Even there the penchant for evenhandedness, leveling mockery at both candidates, seems misguided. Spark says, "The art of ridicule, if it is on the mark . . . can penetrate to the marrow. . . . It can paralyze its object." Here's to the art of ridicule, prime time, gloves off.

*Marilyn Reizbaum*  
*Portland, Maine*

•  
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BOTTEGA VENETA



SEPTEMBER 14 – 20, 2016

# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Amid the chic horde descending on New York for Fashion Week, Adele Meyer stands out. On Sept. 16, the Jewish Museum opens a show centered on John Singer Sargent's exquisite 1896 portrait "**Mrs. Carl Meyer and Her Children,**" on loan from the Tate to the U.S. for the first time in more than ten years. The British beauty was married to a wealthy banker, but don't mistake her for a Gilded Age real housewife—Meyer was a patron of the arts and a passionate crusader for the suffragist movement.



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# THE THEATRE

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## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### All the Ways to Say I Love You

In Neil LaBute's latest play, directed by Leigh Silverman for MCC Theatre, Judith Light plays a high-school teacher who reveals her marital secrets to a former student. (*Lucille Lortel*, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101. In previews.)

### Bright Colors and Bold Patterns

Drew Droeg (known for his Chloë Sevigny-parody videos) wrote and performs this solo show, set on the eve of a gay wedding in Palm Springs. Michael Urie directs. (*Barrow Street Theatre*, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. Sept. 16-18.)

### The Cherry Orchard

The Roundabout stages a new adaptation of the Chekhov play by Stephen Karam ("The Humans"), directed by Simon Godwin and starring Diane Lane, Tavi Gevinson, Joel Grey, Chuck Cooper, and John Glover. (*American Airlines Theatre*, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. Previews begin Sept. 15.)

### The Encounter

Simon McBurney conceived, directs, and performs this theatrical event, in which the audience members wear headphones as three-dimensional soundscapes re-create a 1969 journey into the Brazilian rain forest. (*Golden*, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Sept. 20.)

### The Front Page

Nathan Lane, John Slattery, John Goodman, Jefferson Mays, Sherie Rene Scott, Holland Taylor, and Robert Morse star in Jack O'Brien's revival of the 1928 comedy, about Chicago newspapermen on the crime beat. (*Broadhurst*, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Sept. 20.)

### Hamlet

The Public's Mobile Unit performs the Shakespeare tragedy, directed by Patricia McGregor and starring Chukwudi Iwujii, after a three-week tour of correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and community venues. (*Public*, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Previews begin Sept. 19.)

### Hit the Body Alarm

Winsome Brown created and performs this solo play, which melds texts by John Milton and James Joyce with the stories of a struggling actress and a critique of the American penal system. (*Performing Garage*, 33 Wooster St. [theperforminggarage.org](http://theperforminggarage.org). Previews begin Sept. 20.)

### Holiday Inn

The Roundabout presents a new musical, featuring the songs of Irving Berlin and based on the classic 1942 film; Bryce Pinkham and Corbin Bleu fill in, respectively, for Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. (*Studio 54*, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. In previews.)

### Marie and Rosetta

George Brant's play with music, directed by Neil Pepe, traces the bond between the pioneering gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe (Kecia Lewis) and her protégée, Marie Knight (Rebecca Naomi Jones). (*Atlantic Theatre Company*, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111. Opens Sept. 14.)

### Nat Turner in Jerusalem

Nathan Alan Davis's play, directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian, imagines the rebel slave (Phillip James Brannon) during his last night in jail, after the uprising he led in Virginia, in 1831. (*New York Theatre Workshop*, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475. In previews.)

### The Roads to Home

Primary Stages presents Horton Foote's 1955 play, about three women in Houston in the nineteen-twenties, directed by Michael Wilson and featuring the playwright's daughter Hallie Foote. (*Cherry Lane*, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111. In previews.)

### A Taste of Honey

Austin Pendleton directs Shelagh Delaney's 1958 play (written when she was just eighteen), about a working-class woman in a hostile world. (*Pearl*, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-563-9261. In previews. Opens Sept. 18.)

### That Golden Girls Show!

A parody of the beloved Miami-set sitcom, with puppets re-creating the adventures of Sophia, Dorothy, Blanche, and Rose. (*DR2*, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-727-2737. Previews begin Sept. 19.)

### A 24-Decade History of Popular Music

Taylor Mac ("Hir") created this epic performance-art concert, covering American music and activism from 1776 to the present. It can be viewed in three-hour installments, or during a daylong marathon Oct. 8-9. (*St. Ann's Warehouse*, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Opens Sept. 15.)

### Underground Railroad Game

Jennifer Kidwell and Scott Sheppard created and perform this satire, in which two middle-school teachers use games to teach uncomfortable lessons about American racial history. (*Ars Nova*, 511 W. 54th St. 212-352-3101. In previews.)

### What Did You Expect?

Richard Nelson directs the second installment of his three-play cycle "The Gabriels," which charts the current election year in the life of a family in Rhinebeck. (*Public*, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. In previews. Opens Sept. 16.)

### Where Did We Sit on the Bus?

Brian Quijada wrote and performs this solo spoken-word piece, which examines civil rights from a Latino perspective. (*Ensemble Studio Theatre*, 549 W. 52nd St. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens Sept. 19.)

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## NOW PLAYING

### Caught

Christopher Chen's enjoyably manipulative new play keeps finding ingenious ways to pull the rug out from under the audience's feet. Whether they're dissident conceptual artists or writers for this very magazine, American or Chinese, Chen's characters share a loose relationship with the truth. They don't see themselves as lying, though. Rather, they merely "embellish" facts to serve a noble cause—which usually boils down

to ambition and self-aggrandizement. Form follows function in the director Lee Sunday Evans's clever production, which starts bamboozling the atregoers before they even reach their seats. The tone effortlessly switches from political lecturing to melodramatic posturing (imagine "The Front Page" starring a histrionic Susan Hayward), before taking a hairpin turn into millennial-activist jargon. Chen loses steam toward the end—exiting a hall of mirrors gracefully is not easy—but at least he has great fun stretching the truthiness. (*La Mama*, 66 E. 4th St. 866-811-4111.)

### The Jamb

Commanding the stage like a muscled-up rooster in combat boots, J. Stephen Brantley stars in his own play as a forty-year-old gay punk rocker on an angry mission to stop the love of his life—a wounded charmer played with desperate ebullience by Nic Grelli—from wasting away on Stolichnaya and crystal meth. Though the script is conscious of giving voice to a specific generation (the title refers to the "doorjamb" in which the leads came of age; i.e., out of the closet but not yet all the way in the room), the production bursts with enough heart and good humor that such parochial concerns are secondary to the raw love story at its core. Everyone here is playing a type—including Todd Flaherty and Carole Monferdini, both very funny in supporting roles—but only to the extent that most of us are. (*Kraime*, 85 E. 4th St. 866-811-4111. Through Sept. 17.)

### The Layover

Shellie (Annie Parisse) and Dex (Adam Rothenberg) meet on an airplane, where their polite arguments about crime novels and terrorism quickly morph into weighted flirtation. When their flight is cancelled, they go to a bar and discuss the perfect murder, which leads, naturally, to a one-night stand in a hotel room. Then, on a split stage, their true lives are revealed: Shellie is not a single Hunter College professor but a married bathroom cleaner living in Kankakee, Illinois; Dex's "girlfriend" is actually his fiancée. The playwright Leslye Headland ("Bachelorette") oscillates between a smart, melancholy observation of love and a clunky pitch-black noir. The director, Trip Cullman, finds humor (Quincy Dunn-Baker's gay private investigator is a high point) as well as oddly beautiful moments of reverie, as when Shellie's father (John Procaccino) recounts his extramarital affairs. But the unrealistic surprise ending comes out of nowhere, like a stranger in the night. (*Second Stage*, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through Sept. 18.)

### Measure for Measure

The Drilling Company takes on this most twisted of "comedies," in which Shakespeare seems to want to defy, as the bard named Beck once sang, the logic of all sex laws. The production is inspired by New Orleans, which matches well enough with the vice-crime motif and offers a nice excuse for Wesley Zurick's interstitial banjo tunes, although it is staged rather incongruously on the terrace of squeaky-clean Bryant Park, where the clamor of midtown inevitably intrudes. But stop complaining: this is free Shakespeare in a park in the fading days of summer, and you don't even have to show up early. The script is only slightly abridged, the most significant change being the conflation of Pompey and Mistress Overdone into a single character; the stand-out is Michael William Bernstein, who, with a mug like Timothy Carey and a purple plastic

cup glued to his hand, makes a wonderfully seedy Lucio. (*Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. drillingcompany.org. Through Sept. 17.*)

### Phaedra(s)

At the Next Wave Festival, the French film star Isabelle Huppert plays the doomed queen of Greek myth. The Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe production, staged by the Polish director Krzysztof Warlikowski, offers three side-by-side takes on the story, drawn from texts by Wajdi Mouawad, Sarah Kane, and J. M. Coetzee. In French, with English supertitles. (*BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Through Sept. 18.*)

### Quietly

The Irish Rep has imported a cracking production from Dublin's Abbey Theatre. Jimmy (Patrick O'Kane) is the only customer in a Belfast bar, where he's come to have a pint or two of Harp and watch the soccer match between Northern Ireland and Poland with the barman, Robert (Robert Zawadzki), a Polish immigrant. Their macho bantering might have been enough to carry the play, but when Ian (Declan Conlon) enters the focus shifts, abruptly and dangerously. He and Jimmy have never met, but their lives were inextricably and tragically fused when they were both sixteen, in 1974, during the dark heart of the Troubles. Owen McCafferty's tense, taut one-act play covers some predictable ground, but it explores unexpected emotional corners as well, and the director, Jimmy Fay, guides the three superb actors through an evening that is both harrowing and heartening. (*Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.*)

### Sense & Sensibility

Those who prefer their Jane Austen demure should keep a restorative slug of Madeira wine at the ready. The rest of us can relax and disport ourselves at Bedlam's galloping adaptation of Austen's 1811 novel—back for an encore run—about the romantic trials of the Dashwood sisters, Elinor (a superb Andrus Nichols) and Marianne (Kate Hamill), spirited young women pauperized by their father's death. The director, Eric Tucker, isn't one to let his actors sit around and embroider. They are nearly always on their feet—rolling wheeled scenery, trading bits of gossip, whirling in anachronistic dances, or tussling in a rugby scrum. Tucker should have let them have an occasional rest and allowed the climactic scenes to unfurl with more gravitas. But the show has ample energy and mischief, and, if some nuance is lost, much is gained in giving inventive performers such rein. (*Gym at Judson, 243 Thompson St. 866-811-4111.*)

### ALSO NOTABLE

**An American in Paris** Palace. • **Aubergine** Playwrights Horizons. • **Bears in Space** 59E59. • **Cats** Neil Simon. • **Cirque du Soleil—Paramour** Lyric. • **The Color Purple** Jacobs. • **A Day by the Sea** Beckett. • **Fiddler on the Roof** Broadway Theatre. • **Hamilton** Richard Rodgers. • **The Humans** Schoenfeld. • **Maestro** 59E59. • **School of Rock** Winter Garden. • **Small Mouth Sounds** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Something Rotten!** St. James. • **The Trojan Women** Flea. • **Unicorn Gratitude Mystery** Laurie Beechman. *Through Sept. 18.* • **Waitress** Brooks Atkinson. • **The Wolves** The Duke on 42nd Street.

## ART

### MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

#### Metropolitan Museum

##### “Phil Collins: How to Make a Refugee”

In a video projection, a shirtless boy in a backward cap smiles from behind a bouquet of flowers—he could be a modern-day version of Caravaggio's Bacchus. Then we hear the click of a camera shutter, a baby's cry, and muffled English and Albanian—the boy is in a refugee camp in Macedonia, and he's following the instructions of an off-screen photojournalist. This early work by Collins, a British artist, unobtrusively documents the process of reporting on the lives of people displaced by the 1998-99 Kosovo war. His camera sometimes strays up to a wall or down to fidgeting children, as two families pose for a group portrait, which an assistant interrupts to remove a light meter and batteries from a coffee table. Collins's revelation that a war correspondent might tweak the truth doesn't have the shock value it might have in the era of Dorothea Lange and the Dust Bowl. But the video does put a face to the global refugee crisis, which has only worsened in the decades since the piece was made. *Through Nov. 6.*

#### Whitney Museum

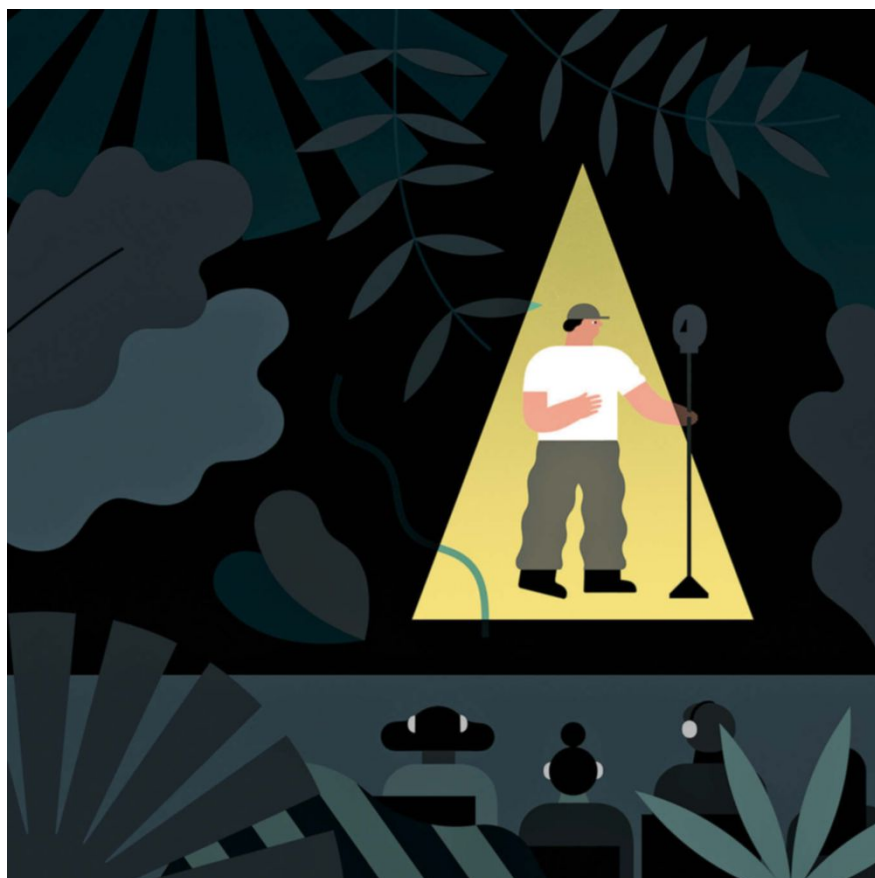
##### “Sophia Al-Maria: Black Friday”

The promising Qatari-American artist offers an initially tantalizing but ultimately heavy-handed vision of shopping mall as abyss. In its vertical format, her sixteen-minute film suggests a cell-phone screen, with renderings of escalators to nowhere and scenes of an opulent Persian Gulf shopping center, filmed with the aid of a drone. A couple walks past a Gucci display; a worker buffs floors; a Marx-spouting narrator (the actor Sam Neill) says that we are “encased in the frameless frame of forever.” A score of blaring horns accompanies a woman in an abaya and platform heels as she crosses a marble floor, then collapses in some prêt-à-porter version of Stendahl syndrome. At the foot of the projection, a pile of sand is studded with cell phones whose screens flicker with porn and with beauty-company logos—a touch that is hardly subtle. *Through Oct. 31.*

#### Studio Museum in Harlem

##### “inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk, Rudy Shepherd”

From the elegant mind of the curator Amanda Hunt, a sculptural treasure hunt: four public projects dot Harlem's quartet of historic parks. In Morningside Park, Kevin Beasley has placed three big concave disks, covered in grandmotherly housecoats and slathered in resin; modelled on “acoustic mirrors,” which concentrate sound waves, they're Rauschenbergian combines for audio geeks. At first glance, Simone Leigh's striking trio of thatched-roof cylinders in Marcus Garvey Park look inhabitable; but, though based on traditional Zimbabwean mud huts, they don't have windows or doors. Just as the implication of function in Beasley's and Leigh's pieces comes down to conceptual sleight of hand, Rudy Shepherd's “Black Rock Negative Energy Absorber,” in Jackie Robinson Park, may or may not clear bad vibes for those who interact as suggested: nestle into the person-size niche in the hulking, handcrafted megalith. Hunt and her artists are clearly concerned with context, but none of these works transcends “plop art,” public sculpture that seems to have dropped down like Dorothy's house



Simon McBurney's “The Encounter,” which comes to the Golden from London's Barbican Theatre, uses immersive sound technology to tell the true story of a photojournalist lost in the jungles of Brazil.



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into Oz. The exception is Kori Newkirk's stately "Sentra," a trio of shimmering plastic curtains that transform an ordinary stroll up the steps of St. Nicholas Park into a pop-up parade. *Through July 25, 2017.*

### New York Public Library

"Alexander Hamilton: Striver, Statesman, Scoundrel" Who cares if this one-room exhibition rides the coattails of Lin-Manuel Miranda's Tony's-sweeping civics lesson (the libretto's on sale in the gift shop)? Any Hamiltonian will enjoy seeing primary documents from the life of the man on the ten-dollar bill. A 1781 engraving, from the Battle of Yorktown, pictures Hamilton at ease, arms folded as he leans against a mound of earth. But he was a hyperactive writer and statesman, both at the Treasury, where he championed a central bank, and alongside the first President, whose farewell address appears here, both in Hamilton's initial draft (tightly scrawled) and Washington's final copy (a loopier, freer hand). After 1796, things got messy: in a pamphlet, Hamilton copped to an "amorous connection" with the wife of an extortionist, and by the turn of the new century he had a new rival. "Aaron Burr is closeted with his satellites in dark divan," reads a broadside here. Soon afterward, in the shadow of the Palisades, the Vice-President gave his response with a pistol. *Through Dec. 31.*

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

### David Goldblatt

The oppression of apartheid manifested in many ways, one of which was to force black Africans to make unnecessarily long, uncomfortable commutes to their jobs. Goldblatt joined workers in the mid-nineteen-eighties, photographing them as they waited for transportation before sunrise, crammed into buses and trains, and rode home, exhausted, at night. The powerfully understated, black-and-white series offers a glimpse of an everyday brutality that has lost none of its impact. It's shown alongside recent portraits of former prisoners of all races posed at the scenes of their crimes and accompanied by detailed descriptions of their offenses. It's challenging material, but it's also an exercise in cultivating compassion. *Through Oct. 29. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)*

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Alex Webb

In 1978, Webb took a picture of a boy staring warily in a Mexican graveyard, with a horse sil-



*On Sept. 16, "Carmen Herrera: Sightlines" opens at the Whitney, showcasing the vibrant, proto-minimalist work of the Cuban-born artist, including "Green and Orange," from 1958 (pictured).*

houetted high on a hill in the distance. The image is typical of the Magnum photographer's three decades of work in Mexico, an engine of both awe and empathy. Webb shot mostly in color, with an eye for hot reds, sky blues, and dusty terra cotta. But in nearly every image such brightness is offset by deep shadow. Some compositions are as stark and strange as anything by de Chirico, but, more typically, the frame is alive with incident: four gesturing figures are anchored by the glass canisters of a cold-drink stand; three women bend down in grief around a body lying crumpled in the gutter. *Through Oct. 26. (Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555.)*

## GALLERIES SHORT LIST

📍 UPTOWN Alma Allen Blum & Poe. *Opens Sept. 15. (19 E. 66th St. 212-249-2249.)* • Carroll Dunham Gladstone. *Opens Sept. 17. (130 E. 64th St.*

*212-753-2200.)* • Maria Lassnig Petzel. *Through Oct. 29. (35 E. 67th St. 212-680-9467.)* • Zoe Leonard Hauser & Wirth. *Opens Sept. 13. (32 E. 69th St. 212-794-4970.)* • Alan Shields Van Doren Waxter. *Opens Sept. 14. (23 E. 73rd St. 212-445-0444.)* 📍 CHELSEA Hans-Peter Feldman 303 Gallery. *Opens Sept. 15. (555 W. 21st St. 212-255-1121.)* • Sol LeWitt / Liz Deschenes Cooper. *Through Oct. 22. (534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)* • Goshka Macuga Krepis. *Opens Sept. 15. (535 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849.)* • Oscar Murillo Zwirner. *Opens Sept. 14. (525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)* • Sara VanDerBeek Metro Pictures. *Opens Sept. 15. (519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)* 📍 DOWNTOWN Shadi Habib Allah Spaulings. *Opens Sept. 18. (165 E. Broadway. 212-477-5006.)* • Liz Deschenes / Sol LeWitt Abreu. *Through Oct. 23. (36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774.)* • Ajay Kurian 47 Canal. *Through Oct. 16. (291 Grand St. 646-415-7712.)* • Ulrike Müller Callicoon. *Opens Sept. 15. (49 Delancey St. 212-219-0326.)* • Walter Robinson Deitch. *Opens Sept. 17. (18 Wooster St. 212-343-7300.)*

# CLASSICAL MUSIC

## CONCERTS IN TOWN

### New York Philharmonic: "The Art of the Score"

For several years, New York's flagship orchestra (with Alec Baldwin as artistic adviser) has offered screenings of classic films accompanied by live performances of the soundtracks. This season—the orchestra's hundred-and-seventy-fifth anniversary—opens with two iconic movies that take the life of the city as their template. First comes "West Side Story," with the renowned film composer David Newman conducting Leonard Bernstein's glorious score. Then, Alan Gilbert, the orchestra's music director, takes the helm for the first-ever live-performance screenings of Woody Allen's "Manhattan," a movie

whose soundtrack is made up exclusively of excerpts from beloved scores by George Gershwin—which the New York and Buffalo Philharmonics recorded for the original 1979 film. (Tony Roberts, who starred in several Woody Allen movies, joins Baldwin in introducing the film on Sept. 16.) *(David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656. Sept. 13-15 at 7:30; Sept. 16-17 at 8.)*

### Kinnara Ensemble

Sunday will be a red-letter day for choral music in Gotham. First off is a program from this group, a fine professional choir based in Princeton, under the leadership of J. D. Burnett, which draws singers from around the country for a lightning round of rehearsals and concerts. Its New York appearance, a recital featuring Britten's "Flower Songs" and Tallis's "Lam-

entations of Jeremiah," takes place at Christ Church, United Methodist. *(524 Park Ave., at 60th St. kinnar-ensemble.org. Sept. 18 at 4.)*

### Vox Clamantis

Estonia—as fertile a ground for choral music as exists today—has given rise to many outstanding ensembles, including this Grammy-winning chamber choir, which you may have heard on the soundtrack for the 2013 Italian film "The Great Beauty." Acclaimed advocates for the music of Arvo Pärt, they offer a program at St. Francis Xavier Church devoted exclusively to music by their great countryman: selections from "The Deer's Cry," a new ECM album. *(46 W. 16th St. Sept. 18 at 6:30. No tickets required.)*

### St. Thomas Choir: John Scott Memorial

The august Episcopal church's Choir of Men and Boys has been providing distinguished service music for many decades; from 2004-15, it was led by John Scott, an expert choirmaster and virtuoso organist



Uñ numerus sim p pasala loca uagatur.  
 P recipiente iacob puer ampir ille meau.  
 E uideat fies sic uiter ipē pat.  
 E ur ebion uenitq sichen dñ pasala que.  
 Ontingit in greges longa staae moiu.  
 Ustiais i dothā extimo dñe emē.  
 P gic i dothā puer map ipē uidei.  
 N emo putat uitā uenetas posse tui.  
 S ompnia q ceatur dī cece uenit.  
 P remia q menur finis aculato: hēbit.  
 P ōpma si pñt ipō mouētē patebit.  
 I āmanibz nris itenmēdō erit.  
 I n medio sim pueru tubē mīstus.  
 N e petat pnuē plena pietate pat.  
 S e remouedo narē fundit ad ista pēs.  
 A bñt aie sim manibz qñe pñmatur.  
 I nfundū neas astne pñmatur.  
 N e pante ro pmauētē i eo.  
 S mēb; audito Judas ysmachius.  
 V endam puerū si patē forte uellit.  
 U uer i egyptū sit pegrinū ibi.

**Joseph ueniat in egyptum pharisar cum  
duo pharaois.**



I lla pat tunica e q lingue tingit ead.  
 C ristaq aie pueri fera pestilima comedit.  
 Q ui in ppaia tēpa stenda dedit.  
 P peciante pñe lacrimas gemmaiq; doloris.  
 P buafar eunuch; emē huc pñe pñe pharaois.  
 P ficit a domibz inumeratq; bonis.

**Joseph mittitur in carcerem pharaois.**



Q uiauger est iuuenis forma spiq; decora.  
 E cpiat hūc dñā feci cour laborat.  
 S epe reuertena nō dñf ulla mora.  
 I n medio thalami dñi scia pua reledit.  
 V este trahit iuuenē tracia sine ueste recedit.  
 S pñe dolēs mulier uocatur dñy redit.

C urrite uos famuli succurrite dñe amia.  
 C rmina testatē iuuenē lucamie uia.  
 S ortio: exilt; uelē manētē in.  
 C unime mīto mōstrauit i ista mīto.  
 S it ei mulier cognosce sū uenit.  
 V lno sic celebne pñnaq; digna ato.  
 C ante regali puer ē dñpñat ebicus.  
 N ulla serē reus q; uetus erat pharaois.  
 V nde suis mīus affiat ipē dñe.  
 C aree consimili pñstoz pñcarnaq; uerq;  
 C onsonz Joseph dñsatur sua dñmata legio.  
 E t q; dōctōrē semp honore fouēt.  
 P y duo bina simul cū sompna nare uident.  
 C onsalū ioseph panē nutamē hīe.  
 I nte siml iuueni sompna uia forent.  
 A uoz aie uidi bonos tres palmite natos.  
 I ncaatē inco quos pñmo uuificatos.  
 E x mēno inde bibit pñda cana sibi.  
 C unē puer cece tubz sic canē stāte diebz.  
 C e fānet pharao pñmū sūstē rebz.  
 S is modo carus ei. qño in mēno mei.  
 P istoz ut exposita feliat omia laue.  
 P ossit ut groluar q; sōpna pñna uide.  
 N ā putat a simlū lecta uenire sibi.  
 P anes decetos me sñficiat mīstos.  
 A nte meū regē uideōz gestare camisno.  
 C uos i auis celi distapar inq; edir.  
 I oseph ait. fānet pharao te mane uocari.  
 E t sup cauleū pñt malefacta lenā.  
 S ic tua tūc idēto uicera carper auis.  
 O banet effectū sīmo recollēto ebet.  
 P ost ānos binos pharaois uisio uenit.  
 A nte effiatē rex timor istar ei.

**Joseph interpretatur sompna pharaois  
et fit pñncip; carceris.**



N e pñcarna mēno sua gesta refert pharao.  
 E t mouet ne ioseph iā nūc hātur bonoz.  
 V r p cū ualeant sompna uia colli.  
 C ante regali quo emē ipē mozan.  
 T ollitū ornari mīstus lauacraq; leuari.  
 P egis i aspectu. mane uocat ali.  
 Q uestio regia uisio mīstica mota patēfat.  
 C uria regia sompna regia solue nēfat.  
 A r puer ebicus soluet i ipē dñe.



BRUNELLO CUCINELLI

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who died unexpectedly last year. Simon Rattle, currently preparing “Tristan und Isolde” at the Met, has consented to conduct an extraordinary memorial concert, with orchestra, at the church; the repertoire includes three masterworks of serenity, Elgar’s Serenade for Strings, Vaughan Williams’s “The Lark Ascending,” and Fauré’s Requiem. (*Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. saintthomaschurch.org. Sept. 18 at 7.*)

RECITALS

**Paul Jacobs**

The great Jacobs, who has essentially split the U.S. organ market with his more flamboyant contemporary Cameron Carpenter, is the chair of Juilliard’s organ department. He uses the moderately sized instrument at the school’s Paul Hall to offer a powerhouse recital of major works: Liszt’s Fantasy and Fugue on the chorale “Ad nos, ad salutarem undam”; selections from Brahms’s valedictory (and deeply expressive) Chorale Preludes, Op. 122; and the Sonata in C Minor by Julius Reubke, a star student of Liszt, who died at the age of twenty-four. (*155 W. 65th St. events.juilliard.edu. Sept. 14 at 7:30.*)

**Roulette**

Last week, Roulette hosted a succession of young vocal trailblazers; this week, however, it gives the

stage to several noted veterans of the electronic and experimentalist traditions. The lineup features concerts by Suzanne Ciani and Ikue Mori, masters, respectively, of the synthesizer and the laptop; and by the guitarist Elliott Sharp, who teams up with the JACK Quartet and the New Thread Quartet (a saxophone ensemble) to present “Vivarium,” a collection of new and recent works. In addition, there will be a sixtieth-birthday tribute to the renowned composer and woodwind multi-instrumentalist Ned Rothenberg, who’ll be joined for a round of improvisational performances by such colleagues as John Zorn, Muhal Richard Abrams, Sylvie Courvoisier, and the Mivos Quartet. (*509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. Sept. 14-16 at 8 and Sept. 18 at 7. For tickets and full schedule, see roulette.org.*)

**Miller Theatre: “Steve Reich: Variations”**

Opening night of the Miller season is a concert honoring one of New York’s minimalist icons: Steve Reich, whose eightieth birthday falls in October. The Columbia University performance space has programmed many Reich classics in the past, but this time the focus is on two meditative large-scale works from the first decade of the century: the “Daniel Variations,” a memorial to the American journalist Daniel Pearl (who was brutally murdered in Pakistan in 2002), and “You Are (Variations),” each under the sure authority of Brad Lubman and

Ensemble Signal, longtime Reich collaborators. (*Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com. Sept. 15 at 8.*)

**Bargemusic**

There’s a deftly curated mix of music from the eighteenth through the late twentieth centuries at the barge this weekend. On Friday, the cellist Brannon Cho offers three movements from Bach’s Suite No. 6 in D Major for Solo Cello, along with other unaccompanied masterworks, by Carter (“Figment”), Dutilleux, and Kodály (the Sonata in B Minor). On Saturday and Sunday, what looks like a conventional program of works by Schubert, Mozart (the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major), and Brahms is actually rather edgy—the Brahms work, the Piano Quartet No. 3, Op. 60, will be performed not in the published key of C minor but in C-sharp minor, the tonality that the composer first intended; the intrepid musicians involved include Cho, the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Mark Holloway, and the pianist Marika Bournaki. (*Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org. Sept. 16 at 8; Sept. 17 at 8 and Sept. 18 at 4.*)

**“Celebrating David Del Tredici”**

Del Tredici, another New York master with an eightieth birthday this season, is a longtime professor of composition at City College of New York. The school hosts a concert in tribute to him this week; it features two of his effusive recent works, the ebullient “Gotham Glory” (2004) and the very serious “Bullycide” (2013), an angry, glittering elegy for gay teens who committed suicide. The excellent musicians include the pianists Steven Beck and Steven Gosling and the cellist Chris Finckel. (*Shepard Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 140th St. Sept. 18 at 2. No tickets required.*)

**Contemporaneous: “Orbit”**

The vibrant young new-music ensemble offers a most unusual concert: the audience, divided into three groups, will be moved around St. Peter’s Church during performances of pieces by the composers Eve Beglarian, Fjóra Evans, Janice Giteck, Nicole Lizée, and Angélica Negrón—several of which will be played simultaneously. (*Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Sept. 20 at 7:30. A donation is suggested.*)

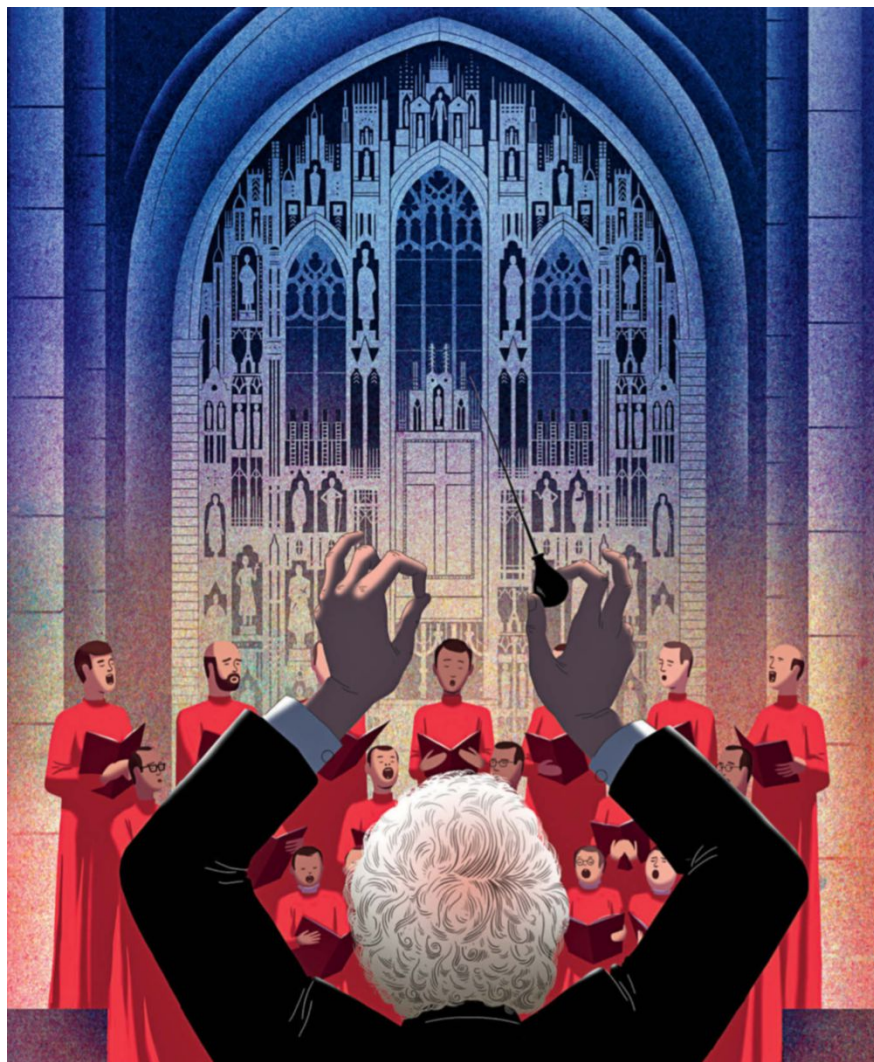
OUT OF TOWN

**Tannery Pond Concerts**

This intimate series, held in a tastefully refurbished Shaker tannery barn, alternates concerts by ensembles of renown with those by up-and-coming artists. Three of the latter—the violinist Axel Strauss, the cellist Yegor Dyachkov, and the pianist Ilya Poletaev—offer an evening that features Beethoven’s Piano Trio in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2, along with the relatively exotic (and solitary) trios by Fauré (in D Minor, Op. 120) and Taneyev (in D Major, Op. 22). (*New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-820-1696. Sept. 17 at 6.*)

**South Mountain Concerts: Dover Quartet**

Only blue-chip groups appear at South Mountain, a series that was founded, in 1918, by the eminent patroness Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. The Dover, an ensemble not long out of the Curtis Institute, already possesses considerable artistry and complete technical command; its musicians will devote their energies to the first string quartet by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1) and the second quartets by two great friends, Britten (in C Major, Op. 36) and Shostakovich (in A Major, Op. 68). (*Pittsfield, Mass. 413-442-2106. Sept. 18 at 3.*)



Simon Rattle, currently preparing “Tristan und Isolde” at the Met, takes time to conduct the St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys in a memorial concert for its late director, John Scott, on Sept. 18.

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL KIRKHAM





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## NIGHT LIFE



This April, Dean Blunt released “BBF,” an agitating rap tape, as part of a new trio named Babyfather.

## Get Me

Dean Blunt performs a British statement record in Brooklyn.

IT WOULD BE difficult to catalogue all of Dean Blunt’s schemes since 2009, when he released his earliest avant-garde EPs as part of the duo Hype Williams. The fringe U.K. vocalist and producer has typically left bewildered fans on their own to make sense of the scattershot allusions, subversions, and red herrings that litter his work. In 2015, he published a book called “Ciroc Boyz,” featuring scans of exorbitant night-club tabs collected from bars around the world; earlier that year, he sent an anonymous stand-in to accept a trophy in his place at the NME Awards; and, at his most recent New York concert, in March, he forced media guests to check in under aliases that they’d received with their ticket confirmations.

These tactics are effective—obfuscation often attracts attention—but such campaigns beg for a worthy cause. Until now, Blunt may have been taking the piss, grinning into infamy. But on his latest release, “BBF Hosted by DJ Escrow,” credited to a trio called Babyfather, he nods more accessibly toward the ironies of black Britain, mining immigrant iconography and American rap tropes to toy with these diasporic symbols.

“Who’s from Jamaica, though? Who’s from Ghana, Nigeria and all that?” DJ Escrow asks halfway through the patch-

work-style “BBF.” Blunt is from Hackney; his parents are Nigerian. His experience seeing rough East London roads give way to hip art scenes informs his output—the sounds on his albums shift between hissy lovers’ rock, dub, sinuous guitar, and melodic, ambient compositions. “BBF” is Blunt’s most pronounced turn toward hip-hop, coinciding with a swell of global interest in U.K. rap and grime. Across the twenty-three tracks, the artist seems both critical and protective of his city’s street music, subtly reminding his peers that subcultures wane once they cross over into caricature. Some fans have speculated, inaccurately, that Escrow is just another one of Blunt’s personas: his slang-laden interludes border on a satire of the typical London rude boy, and at moments his ruminations are particularly timely. Quoting from the Cormega album “The Realness”—a fairly deep cut—Escrow asks, “Everybody’s your man when things is going right, but what about when things are going wrong?”

Blunt stages his “BBF” project in the Panther Room at Output on Sept. 14. It’s a risky ticket—at his show in March, the venue’s thermostat was set to eighty degrees. Whether or not his agenda is worth the agitation, Blunt is certainly engrossing to watch, if you can see him through the fog. “I make sure the place is too smoky for me to even feel anyone else being there,” he explained recently. “And so I can smoke.”

—Matthew Trammell

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

## Adele

Adele Adkins has set aside six nights in New York to perform songs from her latest record-breaking album, “25.” Whether twenty million albums sold indicates a new standard or an outlier for music consumers and execs remains debatable—but the singer clearly made enormous impact with piano ballads like “Hello,” and with the rebellious spirit that counters her graceful voice. Adkins, sure of her ability to spot talent, once dreamed of signing artists as an A. & R. woman. But when demos of her own singing as a student at London’s BRIT School for Performing Arts and Technology were posted online without her knowledge, the scouts swarmed to her. A deal with XL Recordings led to her landmark debut album, “19,” and then to its follow-up, “21,” which positioned her as a modern genius with traditional sensibilities. (Madison Square Garden, Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. 800-745-3000. Sept. 19-20, 22-23, and 25-26.)

## Car Seat Headrest

In the song “Something Soon,” the singer-songwriter Will Toledo plots to kick his father in the shins, and shortly afterward admits that he can’t talk to his folks. It’s a shame—Toledo employs words so effectively in the material he records as Car Seat Headrest that a simple talk might have eliminated the need for familial violence. He has self-released hours of muted, needling indie-rock songs, and betrays a shameless affection for sunny sixties pop; on “No Passion,” one of the bedroom demos repackaged by the label Matador on his album “Teens of Style,” the rays bleed through a haze of monotone and reverb. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-260-4700. Sept. 15-16.)

## Death Grips

This chaotic noise-rap trio has split up, retired, and feuded with its label after the release of each album. In 2013, the band bailed on a live set at Lollapalooza, in Chicago, leaving fans to trash its instruments. The group’s sound is similarly unstable: Stefan Burnett, known as MC Ride, shouts half-decipherable parables over the bursting drums of the producers Zach Hill and Andy Morin, like a collaboration between Ian MacKaye and the Bomb Squad. Since 2011, when they debuted with the mixtape “Ex-military,” they’ve enjoyed breathless praise from indie outlets, and their summer tours are all mosh pits and ripped T-shirts. The band’s latest album, “Bottomless Pit,” released in May, features a pair of songs that finds it in top form: “Giving Bad People Good Ideas” is a jagged masterwork, throwing a spunky surf-punk chorus between pounding kick drums and guitar shreds, and “Eh,” a buzzy trip-hop comedown, gives Ride room to flaunt his whip-smart lyrics. (Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. Sept. 16.)

## Alex G

The songwriter-guitarist Alex Giannascoli has a golden ear for concise, shy phrasing and casually stitched-together arrangements that find intimacy in mornings spent riding shotgun or late nights lounging on a buddy’s Persian rug. Even when the Domino signee hints at the sinister, it’s with old, close friends: “I was waiting for a baggie / a powder bunny,” he whispers on “Memory,” the scratchy opener of “Trick.” “I have a buddy I grew up with / He hooked it up for me.” Early adopters may smirk



at his inclusion on Frank Ocean's much hyped video album, "Endless," but Giannascoli has needed little validation from collaborators or critics since courting modest writeups in his alma mater's publication, the *Temple News*. He shares the stage with the bands **Built to Spill** and **Hop Along**. (*Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl. 212-777-6800. Sept. 16.*)

#### Mykki Blanco

Michael Quattlebaum, Jr., was early to alt-hip-hop—he's been making waves with his queer-influenced take on rap's hypermasculine aesthetics since 2010. His work with rising electronic producers got more play at underground raves than it ever did on mainstream radio. "What the fuck I gotta prove to a room full of dudes who ain't listening to my words 'cause they staring at my shoes?" he raps on "Wavvy," from 2012. Quattlebaum briefly attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Parsons School of Design, and his videos and stage shows maintain an art-school exhibitionism. The line between the personal and the public blurred further when, in June of last year, he revealed, via Facebook, that he'd been H.I.V.-positive since 2011. The revelation has only drawn fans closer to the fringe icon, who celebrates the release of his first full-length album, "Mykki," with a set at this recently reopened Brooklyn incubator. (*Market Hotel, 1140 Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn. facebook.com/markethotel.com. Sept. 16.*)

#### Psychic TV

The brainchild of the London singer and performance auteur Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, this seminal nineteen-eighties outfit gradually progressed from anarchic post-punk to more palatable M.T.V.-era house and pop. But it never stopped experimenting with sounds and formats, including then-cutting-edge video art that blended live action, animation, and intricate scans, and a monthly series of live albums that earned it a spot in the "Guinness Book of World Records" for the most albums released in a year. The band has had dozens of members and collaborators; in August, the current lineup, PTV3, released "Alienist," a spiky acid-house number with psychedelic guitar and downtrodden vocals about psychologists and cults. (*Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Sept. 16.*)

#### Tenement

This Wisconsin band is well on its way to cult status with a wide array of punk releases. Formed in 2006 in the sleepy suburb of Neenah, the group has found footing in many different subgenres. Tenement's most recent record, a surprising double LP called "Predatory Headlights," which drew earnest comparisons to the classic output of Hüsker Dü and the Minutemen, highlights the strongest aspects of the group's songwriting. After spending a decade on the basement circuit, Tenement is now poised to reach a wider audience—the better for fans who can make it to this gig, where the band will be joined by **DUSK**, **Kaleidoscope**, and **Fur Helmet**. (*Saint Vitus, 1120 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn. saintvitusbar.com. Sept. 15.*)

#### Yusuf

Yusuf wasn't originally a divisive artist. His early image as a shaggy, inoffensive Brit folk rocker has given way to a career laden with controversy, and audiences tend to forget that his first single was innocuously titled "I Love My Dog." From 1970 to 1976, Yusuf still performed under the moniker Cat Stevens; he changed his name to Yusuf Islam in 1978, after he became a Muslim, and began releasing spiritual and religious albums, temporary-

ly leaving behind a secular life of hard-partying stardom. Since coming back to pop music, in 2006, Yusuf—as he now calls himself, saying that you "call a friend by their first name"—has returned to his classic songwriting style, especially on his 2014 release, "Tell 'Em I'm Gone." These intimate shows, dubbed "A Cat's Attic," are his first public performances in New York since 1976—his previous scheduled show, at the Beacon, was cancelled after he learned that New York had outlawed paper ticketing. (*Broadway at 74th St. 212-465-6500. Sept. 19-20.*)

### JAZZ AND STANDARDS

#### Cyrus Chestnut Trio

Though cherubic in appearance, Chestnut—once a young lion of nineteen-nineties jazz—is now a seasoned veteran, and he remains a model of artless swing. His windy way with standards and bop workouts (as heard on his fine new album, "Natural Essence") underscores a conviction that improvising is nothing if not spontaneously expressed joy. (*Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Sept. 16-18.*)

#### Entre Colegas: Celebrating Andy Gonzalez

All was right in the world of Latin fusion when Gonzalez manned the bass. A rock-solid yet imaginatively flexible pulse has been his calling card for the past five decades, as has his expansive vision (shared with his brother and onetime co-bandleader, Jerry), which marries traditional Puerto Rican and Cuban idioms to all manner

of contemporary musical genres. A full contingent of players turns out to pay tribute to this hidden-in-plain-sight hero. (*Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Broadway at 60th St. 212-258-9595. Sept. 15.*)

#### Steve Coleman

Combining his advanced instrumental and band-leading skills with an insatiable intellectual curiosity, the saxophonist Coleman will use his month-long residency at this spartan spot to share his far-flung musical discoveries. This week features his malleable Five Elements outfit. (*The Stone, Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. Through Sept. 25.*)

#### The Cookers

This group revels in the edgier boundaries of modal hard bop, with peers of a certain age, including the saxophonist **Billy Harper**, the trumpeter **Eddie Henderson**, the pianist **George Cables**, the bassist **Cecil McBee**, and the drummer **Billy Hart**, playing alongside admiring younger confederates such as the trumpeter and arranger **David Weiss** and the alto saxophonist **Donald Harrison**. (*Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. 212-581-3080. Sept. 13-17.*)

#### Ned Rothenberg's Sixtieth Birthday: A Benefit for Roulette

A formidable improviser and an M.V.P. of New York's avant-garde music scene, the saxophonist and clarinetist Rothenberg gathers together a swath of heavyweight colleagues, including **John Zorn**, **George Lewis**, **Muhai Richard Abrams**, **Erik Friedlander**, and **Marty Ehrlich**, to celebrate his sixtieth birthday. (*Roulette, 509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. 917-267-0363. Sept. 18.*)

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Charles Addams, "This is your room. If you should need anything, just scream," watercolor, ink and wash, full-page cartoon for *The New Yorker*, March 1943. Estimate \$8,000 to \$12,000.

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# MOVIES



In Edith Carlmar's drama "Death Is a Caress," Bjørg Riiser-Larsen plays a bourgeois woman who cheats on her husband with a working-class man.

## The Full Screen

*Rare classic films by women directors.*

THE REDISCOVERIES in the insightfully curated series "Woman with a Movie Camera: Female Film Directors Before 1950," playing at Anthology Film Archives Sept. 15-28, are a welcome corrective to facile assumptions about the role of women directors in the early days of cinema. The program features films that are far more than historical artifacts—they're major artistic creations.

Lois Weber's short silent film "Suspense," from 1913, offers some of the most original stylistic inventions of its time, and these devices are used to illuminate an appalling subject: the threat of rape. The writer-director Weber—a natural performer who was a concert pianist and an evangelist before turning to movies—also stars as a young mother, at home with her infant child in a cozy but isolated house, while her husband is busy in his office. Her maid quits in a huff; a passing tramp peeps in the window, sees the undefended woman, and breaks in. Weber films the house from dramatic angles that shift the

action from lyrical objectivity (as in views of the tramp from overhead) to the hyperexpressive subjectivity of point-of-view shots (as in a distorted image of him from the woman's frenzied perspective). In the heroine's two telephone calls with her husband—one deceptively innocent, one panic-stricken—on which the action pivots, Weber introduces an ingenious invention to match, a triple-split screen that evokes the disorientations of communication at a distance as well as the shattering conflict of the drama. The simple but vital action is resolved with a climactic car chase, which is as cleverly constructed in its daring, stunt-based action as in its jolting visual compositions.

The Norwegian director Edith Carlmar's first feature, "Death Is a Caress," from 1949, is a romantic film noir set in Oslo and centered on Erik, a confident and vigorous auto mechanic in his late twenties. He's engaged to a pert young woman from his own milieu but is wildly aroused by a wealthy, somewhat older woman named Sonja, who brings her car to the garage. Their bond is lust at first sight; as Erik works under the hood

of Sonja's car, they exchange furtive yet electrifying glances that fill the air with impending doom. The story is framed by Erik's jailhouse interview with his lawyer and is told in flashback, from Erik's perspective, but Carlmar aims the movie's energy at Sonja and her destructive impulses. The movie's looming menace offers a glimpse at the essential tragic conflict between sex and society, between a woman's public life and her intimate yearnings.

Germaine Dulac, a French filmmaker best known for the surrealistic effusions of "The Seashell and the Clergyman," reveals a more distinctive sensibility in "The Smiling Madame Beudet," from 1923. It's the story of an artistic middle-aged woman in a provincial town who's married to a stuffy businessman. The tale involves stifled hatred and potential violence, but Dulac films it with a lyrical and impressionistic inwardness, using unnatural lighting effects, dreamlike double exposures, and grotesque distortions to evoke the heroine's frustrated desires and irrepressible fears.

—Richard Brody



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## OPENING

**The Beatles: Eight Days a Week, the Touring Years**

A documentary about the band's early work, directed by Ron Howard. *Opening Sept. 16. (In limited release.)* • **Bridget Jones's Baby** Renée Zellweger stars in this comedy sequel, as a British businesswoman who is unsure which of two men is the father of her unborn child. Directed by Sharon Maquire; co-starring Colin Firth, Patrick Dempsey, and Emma Thompson. *Opening Sept. 16. (In wide release.)* • **Miss Stevens** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening Sept. 16. (In limited release.)* • **Operation Avalanche** Matt Johnson directed this found-footage mockumentary, about a C.I.A. plot to fake a moon landing. *Opening Sept. 16. (In limited release.)* • **Snowden** Oliver Stone directed this drama, about Edward Snowden's revelations of extensive clandestine surveillance and his escape from the United States. Starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt; co-starring Shailene Woodley, Zachary Quinto, and Melissa Leo. *Opening Sept. 16. (In wide release.)*

## NOW PLAYING

**À Nos Amours**

The teen-age Sandrine Bonnaire made her explosive début in this impassioned 1983 melodrama by Maurice Pialat, which is one of the cinema's greatest depictions of a father-daughter relationship. As Suzanne, the younger child in a Polish immigrant family in Paris which is torn apart by conflict, Bonnaire portrays with feral grace and erotic daring a girl with an adult's cold lucidity and a child's unfulfilled emotional needs—a young woman of extraordinary passions who is condemned to an ordinary life. The story spans many years, following Suzanne from a summer-camp idyll through marriage. Although the story is filled with young men who are the objects of her desire and her contempt, its tensile arc is formed by her father (played by Pialat), a frustrated aesthete who places tight demands on his family as he pursues the freedom that has eluded him in decades of responsibility. The powerful cast raises a vortex of fearsome emotional storms; rarely has family love been depicted as such a violent, catastrophic necessity. In French and English.—*Richard Brody (French Institute Alliance Française; Sept. 20.)*

**Cameraperson**

The documentary cinematographer Kirsten Johnson's cinematic memoir—a compilation of sequences from films that she shot over the past twenty-five years—is somewhat less than the sum of its parts, yet those parts are, in themselves, transfixing. Johnson avoids voice-over commentaries, using only the sound recorded on location, yet the effect is often deeply personal. The most extended sequences were shot in a village in Bosnia, where Johnson worked on a movie about the systematic rape of women during the civil war in the nineteen-nineties. Her warm relations with the town's residents—and her appreciation of their rustic way of life—poignantly balance, as she tells her hosts, the horrific accounts that she documented. Among the other memorable characters here are a prosecutor in the Texas murder of James Byrd, a doctor who delivers babies in a woefully under-equipped clinic in Nigeria, and Johnson's mother, Catherine, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Johnson's brief discussions with directors about the choices and ruses that go into the making of images suggest a depth of knowledge and an artistic morality that the movie only hints at.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

**La Collectionneuse**

Eric Rohmer's second feature, from 1966, announces its carnal conceit from the first scene's anatomical closeups of the waiflike, bikini-clad Haydée (Haydée Politoff). She shares a friend's villa on the Riviera with Daniel (Daniel Pommereulle), a single artist, and Adrien (Patrick Bauchau), a dilettantish art dealer who is engaged to be married, and the two men vie for her in a most dignified way. The natural splendors of blue water, rocky shore, bright sky, and hilly terrain provide a serene setting for the eternal struggles of man versus man, man versus woman, and man versus his own worst instincts. Adrien is the film's central consciousness and its narrator, and the personal price of his impending summer fling forms the core of Rohmer's moral psychology. A Ming vase and a voracious American collector (played by the film critic Eugene Archer) offer the symbolism. As a tête-à-tête between Daniel and the writer Alain Jouffroy suggests, Rohmer sees the artistic avant-garde as the front line of the sexual revolution—for better or for worse. In French.—*R.B. (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Sept. 16-22.)*

**Don't Breathe**

In this taut and claustrophobic thriller by the director Fede Alvarez, a home invasion by three attractive twentysomething criminals goes horribly wrong. An aging blind veteran (played with gusto by Stephen Lang) is the would-be victim of the heist, but, using his unusually keen remaining senses, he turns the tables on the thieves, and a tightly choreographed game of track-and-attack begins. The suspense is built as carefully as it is in a good John Carpenter movie; Alvarez uses the camera like a stealth weapon, exploring dark corners and hidden areas of the house with devilish glee. The film is violent and disturbing, as if Rambo had been let loose in a confined space, and the scares build to a frightening conclusion. With Dylan Minnette, Jane Levy, and Daniel Zovatto, as the in-too-deep intruders. The wonderfully expressionistic cinematography is by Pedro Luque.—*Bruce Diones (In wide release.)*

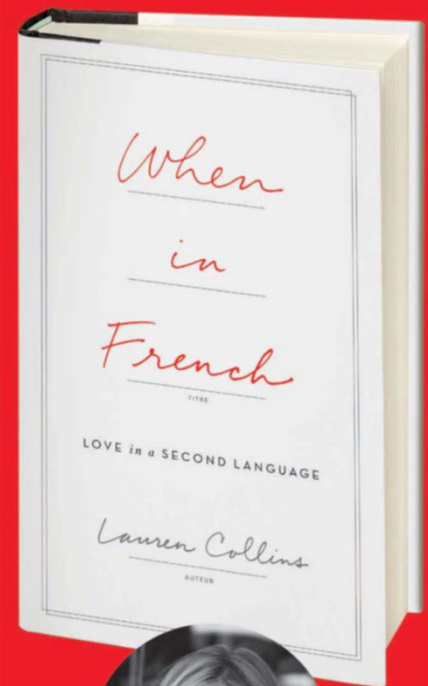
**Florence Foster Jenkins**

The new Stephen Frears film tells the tale of Florence Foster Jenkins (Meryl Streep), and seeks to explain why, in 1944, a sellout crowd came to hear her sing at Carnegie Hall, in spite—or precisely because—of the fact that she could not sing. She herself did not know this, and what Streep captures best, without a quaver of condescension, is not just the depth of Florence's innocence but the peculiar strain of courage that arose from it and struck a chord with the wartime audience. There is not much of a plot here. We watch Florence rehearsing (as if practice were ever going to help), performing for a select—and mostly aged—few, and then girding herself for the main event. Nor is there much social snap, as Frears inspects the follies of the rich with a surprisingly kindly eye. What lends the film its emotional twist is the presence of Hugh Grant, finally finding his ideal role as Florence's husband, St. Clair Bayfield, whose anxious and adoring love for his wife saved her, time after time, from humiliation. Simon Helberg enjoys himself as Cosmé McMoon, the loyal pianist who accompanied Florence in her happy musical massacres.—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 8/22/16.) (In wide release.)*

**Hell or High Water**

The Howard brothers, of West Texas—Toby (Chris Pine), who's divorced and unemployed, and Tanner (Ben Foster), who's fresh out of prison—are in mourning for their late mother. They're

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also pissed off at the Texas Midlands Bank, which will foreclose on her ranch unless they can fork over forty-three thousand dollars by the end of the week. The brothers set out to raise the money by robbing a bunch of the bank's branches, and Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges), a marshal on the verge of retirement, sets out to stop them. The script, by Taylor Sheridan, piles a load of snappy incidents and tangy dialogue on this neo-Western, neo-noir setup; the action is as schematic and artificial as a chess game, and the characters have as much identity as its pieces. The director, David Mackenzie, gives each of his actors time to shine and fills the film with picturesque details, but the movie might as well be a table read set before a green screen. Only Bridges emerges whole; with his typical brilliance, he leaps from the laconic to the rhetorical, making even the shady brim of his hat speak volumes.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

### Indignation

The filming of late-period Philip Roth continues apace. In 2014 we had "The Humbling," starring Al Pacino as an actor with failing powers, and now we have James Schamus's adaptation of Roth's blistering short novel, first published in 2008. (When will somebody bring "Nemesis," his heartbreaking account of a wartime polio epidemic, to the screen?) Logan Lerman plays a bright Jewish boy named Marcus Messner, who goes to college in Ohio, in 1951, thus avoiding the draft; friends of his have already been killed in Korea. He is a loner, toiling hard and making few friends, and that air of isolation brings him to the attention of the Dean (Tracy Letts), who calls him in for a talk; their long conversation, spiced with prejudice and resentment, becomes the core of the tale. Marcus also has a brief encounter with a fellow-student, Olivia (Sarah Gadon), a troubled soul, who bewitches and baffles him with her forwardness. There are times when the movie, patient and decorous, all but seizes up; and yet there are outbursts and declarations that, true to Roth, bring the period—and the hero's predicament—to life. Most fearsome of these is the proud and possessive speech delivered by Marcus's mother (Linda Emond), as she fights to save her boy.—*A.L. (8/1/16) (In wide release.)*

### Jason Bourne

It was widely assumed, at the end of "The Bourne Ultimatum" (2007), that Jason Bourne (Matt Damon), the man who owns more passports than the rest of us have saucypanes, had finally come to rest. His identity was confirmed, his past explained, his freedom assured, and his torso tired of being used as a permanent punching bag. Well, these were wrong. Jason is, as one awed observer says in this latest addendum to the saga, back in play. A voice from the past—that of Nicky Parsons (Julia Stiles)—summons him to the fray, and the fray turns out to include a riot in central Athens, vehicular chaos in Las Vegas, and other relaxing pastimes. These are choreographed with clarity and propulsive élan by the director, Paul Greengrass, an old Bourne hand, and Damon is probably indestructible, but it's hard to shake the feeling that we are watching a kind of superior replay, at once urgent and oddly redundant. There is no Joan Allen this time, sad to report, but we do get Alicia Vikander, as an ambitious young hot shot at the C.I.A., and, at the other end of the spectrum, Tommy Lee Jones, as her wonderfully weary boss.—*A.L. (8/8 & 15/16) (In wide release.)*

### Kate Plays Christine

The new movie by Robert Greene is a tour de force in the blending and bending of genres. He plans to film a drama about the real-life character

of Christine Chubbuck, a Sarasota newscaster who killed herself on the air in 1974, at the age of twenty-nine, and he recruits the actress Kate Lyn Sheil for the role. To prepare, Sheil does her own research into Chubbuck's life story; Greene films that investigation, and it takes over his movie. Instead of a drama, Greene makes a double documentary—about Chubbuck and about Sheil's effort to understand and inhabit the character. In the process, Sheil turns into a journalist herself. A key focus of Sheil's interviews with former colleagues of Chubbuck's is the existence and the whereabouts of a perhaps apocryphal videotape of the on-air suicide; meanwhile, Sheil's quest for props leads her into the wilds of current-day gun culture. The film builds to a kaleidoscopic crescendo of shifting identities: the emotional price of incarnating Chubbuck weighs heavily on Sheil, even as the movie's vivid and complex documentary portrait threatens to render the incarnation superfluous.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

### Kiss Me Deadly

Robert Aldrich's 1955 film noir, the most flamboyant and hectic work of the genre, opens with a pre-credit sequence that announces its blend of sexual voracity, sadism, found poetry, sharp-edged performances, and visual invention. It's an adaptation of a pulp novel by Mickey Spillane, and its detective, the brutish Mike Hammer, has none of the suave command of Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe. He crashes blindly through his case—a forbidden quest for a mysterious object—leaving a trail of collateral damage, both human and cultural. Along the way, the film offers verse by Christina Rossetti; a record of Caruso; Schubert's Unfinished Symphony; souped-up cars, and a man crushed under one; a woman on a meat hook; a whiff of narcotics; a primordial answering machine; bloody street fights; and nuclear catastrophe. The actors' idiosyncratic voices, wrapped around such chrome-plated poetry as "the great whatsit" and "va-va-voom," are as hauntingly musical as Aldrich's images. In his vision of ambient terror, the apocalyptic nightmares of the atomic Cold War ring in everyone's heads, like an alarm that can't be shut.—*R.B. (Metrograph; Sept. 18.)*

### The Light Between Oceans

Derek Cianfrance's new film is plainer in construction than his previous ones, "Blue Valentine" (2010) and "The Place Beyond the Pines" (2012), and far more secluded in its setting. Michael Fassbender plays Tom, an ex-soldier who finds refuge, after the First World War, as a lighthouse keeper. He is the sole resident of an island off the Australian coast, until he is joined by his new bride, Isabel (Alicia Vikander) and then, some time later, by a baby daughter. There is only one problem: she is not their child but a foundling, washed ashore

in a boat, and their wrongful claim on her sweeps them to the shores of disaster. Although this peculiar plot, adapted from a novel by M. L. Stedman, bears traces of Shakespearean romance, Cianfrance grounds the action firmly in the emotional wranglings of his central couple. Theirs is a love story, and the irony is that both actors—Vikander, with the alarmingly free flow of her tears, and Fassbender, in his injured stillness—seem more suited to the agony of loss and separation than to marital delight. Rachel Weisz, as the girl's real mother, does fine work, making the most implausible decisions feel stirring and true.—*A.L. (9/12/16) (In wide release.)*

### Little Men

An actor named Brian (Greg Kinnear) moves to Brooklyn with his wife, Kathy (Jennifer Ehle), who is a psychotherapist, and their thirteen-year-old son, Jacob (Theo Taplitz), after the death of Brian's father. Such is the familiar geography, social and emotional, of Ira Sachs's film, and he maps it out with care—too cautiously, perhaps, for more impatient tastes. Paulina Garcia plays Leonor, a Chilean woman who runs a dress shop on the ground floor of Brian's property; she pays a meagre rent, and doesn't take kindly to being asked for more. Meanwhile, her son, Tony (Michael Barbieri), befriends Jacob, and the boys' companionship, against expectation, not only becomes the core of the story but somehow nudges the other characters, especially Brian and Kathy, aside. Sachs's title is nicely poised; the adults in the movie seem diminished by their trials and responsibilities, and by squabbles over money, whereas someone like Tony, in Barbieri's tough and soulful performance, is all wised up and ready to grow.—*A.L. (8/8 & 15/16) (In limited release.)*

### Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World

Rather than attending to a lone individual, or to the mysteries of a particular place, the new Werner Herzog documentary manfully tackles the vast and uncontainable theme of the Internet. Seeking a shape for his inquiries, Herzog splits them into ten chapters, taking on such topics as the dawn of online technology, its moral traps, and the temptations that it dangles in front of adventurous hackers; last of all comes a semi-gleeful glance into the future. Herzog, conducting interviews with experts, soothsayers, and victims of digital excess, remains as amiable as ever, and—as far as one can tell—quite genuine in his request for a one-way trip to Mars. As expected, there is a long litany of subjects that he makes no attempt to cover; so briefly does he brush against social media, for example, that you have to ask if he understands what it entails. But that touch of innocence only enhances the air of wonder—a kind of open-eyed dreaming that links the film to "Aguirre, the Wrath of God" and other fables told by the younger Herzog. If he secretly thinks that virtual explorations lack the sweat and peril of the real thing, he doesn't say so.—*A.L. (8/29/16) (In limited release.)*

### Max Rose

The title character is a widower, played by Jerry Lewis. He is a one-time jazz pianist and a round-the-clock grinch, making life hard for his patient daughter (Kerry Bishé) and treating his son (Kevin Pollak) with undisguised contempt. Things improve slightly when he moves to a retirement home, where at least he can be querulous amongst his peers—played by Lee Weaver and Mort Sahl, among others. What ruffles Max most is the thought that his late wife (Claire Bloom, of whom we don't see enough) may have loved another man, and what equips the

### THE FRONT ROW



*A video discussion of Jacques Demy's "Model Shop," from 1969, starring Anouk Aimée, in our digital edition.*

film with its only hint of plot is his quest to find the culprit (Dean Stockwell). Their eventual meeting, by night, has a certain creaking tension, but it can't undo the sullenness that prevails elsewhere, or the slackness of Daniel Noah's direction. Worshipers of Lewis will be rewarded with flickers of his old derisive mastery, but not much more. Morgan Whirlledge's soundtrack seems to be scored for piano, strings, and molasses.—*A.L.* (9/12/16) *(In limited release.)*

#### Mia Madre

A pall of sadness hangs over Nanni Moretti's new work, as it did over "The Son's Room," his grief-mantled drama from 2001. Margherita Buy plays a movie director, also named Margherita, who is meant to be concentrating on her latest project—the story of an Italian company that is bought by an American entrepreneur. (Like most films-within-films, it's not something you would rush to watch.) Her professional poise is beginning to crack, however, because of worries about her aging mother (Giulia Lazzarini), a much-loved teacher whose end is nigh; Margherita's brother, played by Moretti, is relatively sanguine in the face of this impending loss, yet she herself seems already bereft. Set against that gloom is the effrontery of her loudmouthed leading man, played—more ripely, perhaps, than the movie requires—by John Turturro. The result is slender but piercing, and there is no mistaking the economy of Moretti's narrative skills; he will cut a scene short rather than have it outstay its welcome, or step in and out of a dream sequence with such aplomb that we instinctively greet it as real. In Italian.—*A.L.* (8/29/16)

#### Miss Stevens

The title character of Julia Hart's first feature is a young English teacher in a suburban California high school, Rachel Stevens (Lily Rabe), whose taut composure is punctured by her piercing gazes, which suggest that she cares too much. When Rachel chaperones three of her class's actors on a trip to a drama competition, the hothouse isolation both deepens and roils her relationships with them. The script, by Hart and Jordan Horowitz, defines the students schematically: the brusquely efficient Margot (Lili Reinhart); the sassy and flirtatious Sam (Anthony Quintal), who's gay; and the challengingly talented but tormented Billy (Timothée Chalamet), whose crush on his teacher is all too evident from the start. Rachel is a lonely woman in mourning for her mother, with a fragile veneer of quiet yearning and awkward energy; when that veneer cracks, the effect is powerful despite its air of calculation. Rachel's scenes with Billy have little drama other than her resolve not to cross any lines, but her tense discussions with Walter (Rob Huebel), another teacher at the conference, offer substance to ponder beyond the story's narrow limits.—*R.B.* *(In limited release.)*

#### Morris from America

Plenty of movies trace the progress of a fish out of water, but in Chad Hartigan's film there is something unusual and refreshing about both the water and the fish. In the stately setting of Heidelberg, Germany, an African-American boy named Morris (Markees Christmas), age thirteen, struggles to make himself at home. His mother has died, and he lives with his father, Curtis (Craig Robinson), who coaches the local soccer team. We follow Morris as he learns German with a tutor (Carla Juri) and, at his father's suggestion, joins a youth club, where the general—and mistaken—assumption seems to be that, because the kid is a black American, he must play basketball. What Morris does like to do is rap, and he causes a minor outrage when performing in a

talent show at the club. He is drawn toward an older girl, Katrin (Lina Keller), though it's hard to shake the suspicion that she's leading him on for a laugh. The movie tends to amble, yet everything coheres when Curtis unleashes a long speech to his son about crazy love, togetherness, and the art of screwing up. With that one scene, Robinson becomes a leading man.—*A.L.* (8/22/16) *(In limited release.)*

#### La Notte

In Michelangelo Antonioni's 1961 drama, the romantic conflicts of an intellectual couple in bourgeois Milan come to life in a visually dazzling yet psychologically dislocating pageant of clashing architectural styles. The Pontanos—Giovanni (Marcello Mastroianni) and Lidia (Jeanne Moreau)—are in trouble from the start. He's an esteemed writer, she's an educated and frustrated housewife, and a hospital visit to their terminally ill friend Tommaso (Bernhard Wicki) quickly lays bare the couple's fault lines. When Lidia, fleeing Giovanni, wanders through various neighborhoods, Antonioni submerges the couple in exotically inventive angles that transform the city into impenetrably alluring abstractions. The erotic roundelay that follows, at a wild party thrown by a philosophically inclined industrialist (Vincenzo Corbella), plays out as if following the blueprints of his villa's layout and the scheme of its décor. Antonioni captures vast currents of shifting power—whether sexual or cultural—in chilling and resonant details. The Pontanos' climactic confrontation on a golf course turns that wry setting into a primeval forest of their conflicting desires. In Italian.—*R.B.* *(Film Forum; Sept. 14-22.)*

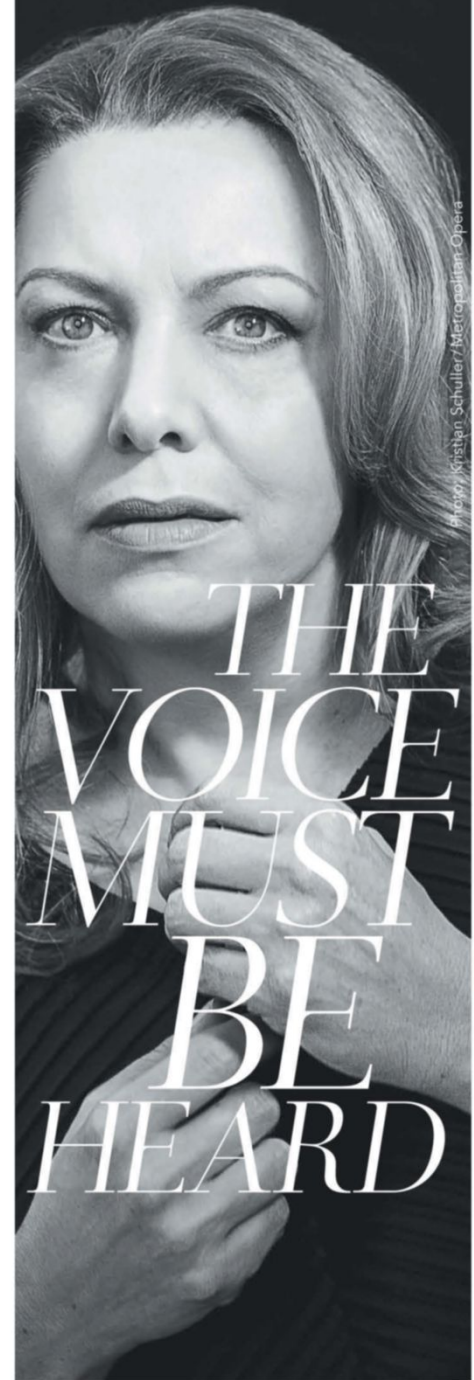
#### Pete's Dragon

The director David Lowery brings natural sweetness and heartfelt wonder to this remake of the 1977 fantasy. Young Pete's parents are killed in a car accident in the rural Pacific Northwest, and Pete, who survived, heads for the woods, where he's rescued by a furry green dragon—more like a gigantic, winged, fire-breathing dog—which he calls Elliot. Five years later, Pete (Oakes Fegley), a wild child whom Elliot raises, shelters, and entertains, is spotted by a local girl named Natalie (Oona Laurence), who informs adults, who drag him into society. Elliot, something of a rural myth, comes out of hiding to search for the boy, and the chase is on. Meanwhile, Pete becomes attached to Natalie's family circle, which includes an outdoorsman (Robert Redford) who's the only villager to have seen Elliot for himself. Lowery lovingly crafts a neorealist fantasy, in which Elliot's vast powers—including flight and evanescence—have practical limits. The director revels in the freewheeling frolics of Pete and Elliot, and resolves their conflicts with a hard-earned sentimentality. It's as if Disney were launching a new artisanal line; if so, this finely crafted and keenly felt drama inaugurates it in style.—*R.B.* *(In wide release.)*

#### The Roaring Twenties

Raoul Walsh's 1939 crime drama, starring James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart, looks back at Prohibition-busting gangsters as quaint and curious objects of nostalgia, a mere six years after alcohol became legal again. Yet its wide historical span, invoking the social shocks and moral crises that arose from the First World War, spoke to contemporary matters—including the Depression—as another European war was heating up. Cagney plays a downwardly mobile mechanic—unemployed, struggling, and lonely—whose un-

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happy new job as a cab driver gets him into inadvertent trouble. Bogart plays the crime boss who makes him a partner. Walsh unfolds the practical details of bootleggers' nocturnal maneuvers with quiet comedic flair alongside harrowing violence. The over-all tone of the drama—concerning fox-hole friends who end up as partners in crime but rivals in love—evokes the flailings of unformed men whom a heedless society tossed in harm's way and then cast aside.—*R.B. (MOMA; Sept. 15.)*

### Rose Hobart

The found-footage remix starts here, with Joseph Cornell's 1936 short film, a reduction of the 1931 feature "East of Borneo" into an eighteen-minute hallucination. He culled the scenes that feature the eponymous actress—mainly moody nocturnal ones—and cut them up and reordered them to tell a fanciful, Freudian story about her dreams, slowing the footage down and projecting it through a blue filter to juice the swoony mood. The incongruous Brazilian music that replaces the feature's soundtrack redoubles the kitschy air of travelogue exoticism and lends the project a deceptive frivolity. Cornell sees the very fact of popular movies, with their original and epochal power of limbic haunting, as an essential and irreducible art. Suddenly, modern art left the light of galleries for the furtive allure of dark spaces; Cornell's inspiration, to break through the glossy surfaces of mass culture and dredge its murky depths, has proven enduring.—*R.B. (MOMA; Sept. 17.)*

### Southside with You

Though the premise seems like a stunt—a dramatization of the first date of Barack Obama and Michelle Robinson, in Chicago, in the summer of 1989—the writer and director Richard Tanne realizes it with insight, wit, and the serendipitous delight of a hidden wonder caught by chance. The young Barack (Parker Sawyers) has a summer job in the law firm where Michelle (Tika Sumpter, who also co-produced the film) is a second-year associate. Barack, thoughtful and passionate, endowed with a preternatural sense of strategy and empathy, is also the more callow of the two. Arranging for Michelle to join him at a community meeting where he gives an inspired speech, he seeks to push his public qualities—and his promise—to the fore. His incipient ambition is matched by Michelle's sense of responsibility and worldliness. Their depth of character is realized in the actors' controlled and alert performances, the probing and self-revealing dialogue, and Tanne's agile directorial impressionism, which captures their discerning and questioning glances. The climactic sequence, at a screening of "Do the Right Thing," is a small masterpiece of comic psychology. This tender, intimate drama has the grand resonance of a historical epic.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

### Sully

Clint Eastwood transforms the events, in 2009, of Flight 1549—which Captain Chesley Sullenberger and First Officer Jeff Skiles safely landed in the Hudson River after losing both jets in a bird strike—into a fierce, stark, haunted drama of horror narrowly avoided. Eastwood's depiction of Sully (played, with terse gravity, by Tom Hanks) begins with a shock: the captain's 9/11-esque vision of his plane crashing into New York buildings. The action of the film involves another shock: federal officials question Sully's judgment and subject him and Skiles (Aaron Eckhart) to an investigation that could cost him his job and even his pension. Eastwood films the doomed flight with a terrifyingly intimate sense of danger, focussing on its existential center, the little red button under the pilot's thumb.

The film movingly depicts Sully's modest insistence that he was just doing his job and the collective courage of flight attendants, air-traffic controllers, police officers, and the passengers themselves. But, throughout, Eastwood boldly thrusts attention toward the aftermath of the flight: the nerve-jangling media distortion of events and personalities, plus the investigators' ultimate weapon, a computer simulation of the landing, a movie on which Sully's honor depends. The result is Eastwood's dedicated vision of movie-making itself.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

### War Dogs

This political caper is a failed triple cross between "The Wolf of Wall Street," "The Big Short," and "Three Kings." Todd Phillips, the director of the three "Hangover" movies, based it on the true story of Efraim Diveroli (Jonah Hill) and David Packouz (Miles Teller), two small-time hustlers who became big-time arms dealers in the late days of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. David, the narrator, is working in his native Miami as a massage therapist when he runs into his old friend Efraim, who is making money chasing low-end military contracts and who invites David to join him. David takes to the business and helps it grow, but he comes to distrust Efraim—a dangerous state of affairs, when David is in Albania trying to disguise a huge shipment of banned Chinese weaponry and Efraim is in Miami behind a desk. Phillips delivers the story loudly but minimally, offering little context or psychology. He reduces all of the characters—including the two leads, David's wife (Ana de Armas), a silent partner (Kevin Polak), and a shadowy big-time dealer (Bradley Cooper)—to their tics. As a result, the film, at the end, seems still unmade.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

### White Girl

The title of Elizabeth Wood's first feature refers to the cocaine around which the plot revolves, as well as to the protagonist, a college student named Leah (Morgan Saylor) who moves to a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood in Queens. There, Leah gets romantically involved with a neighbor, Blue (Brian "Sene" Marc), a sharp-witted low-level drug dealer who, at her urging, takes unusual risks. When Blue gets arrested, Leah consults a high-priced lawyer (Chris Noth) on his behalf and raises funds by selling Blue's stash of coke. Meanwhile, Leah, maintaining a heavy drug habit of her own, gets entangled with Kelly (Justin Bartha), her boss at her digital-media internship. Wood films Leah's panicky lurches with a frenzied camera and a lurid palette; the sordid action, including scenes of rape and sexual abuse, offers personal glimpses of Hell but ultimately reduces them, and the characters, to clichés. Nonetheless, the movie persuasively depicts the appallingly casual reduction of a woman's body to a commodity and the oppressive inequalities of a justice system that clobbers the poor and the nonwhite into desperate submission. The power of these premises makes the movie's vain sensationalism all the more unfortunate.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

## REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles with a dagger are reviewed.

**Anthology Film Archives** "Woman with a Movie Camera." Sept. 15 at 9:15 and Sept. 18 at 4:15; "Broadway Love" (1918, Ida May Park). • Sept. 16 at 7:15: "The Adventures of Prince Achmed" (1926, Lotte Reiniger). • Sept. 16 at 9:15: Films by Lois Weber, including "Suspense" (1913). • Sept. 17 at 9: Films by



Germaine Dulac and Rosa Porten, including “The Smiling Madame Beudet” (1923, Dulac). • Sept. 19 at 9:15: “Merrily We Go to Hell” (1932, Dorothy Arzner). • Sept. 20 at 7: “Death Is a Caress” (1949, Edith Carlmar). **Film Forum** In revival. Sept. 14-17 and Sept. 19-22 at 12:30, 2:45, 5:20, 7:35, and 9:50 and Sept. 18 at 2, 4:15, 6:30, and 8:45: “La Notte.” (†) **Film Society of Lincoln Center** “Eric Rohmer’s Six Moral Tales.” Sept. 16 at 2:30, 4:30, 6:45, and 8:45; Sept. 17 at 2:30 and 6:45; and Sept. 18-22 at 6:45 and 8:45: “La Collectionneuse.” (†) • Sept. 17 at 8:45 and Sept. 18 at 4:30: “Claire’s Knee” (1970). **French Institute Alliance Française** “Beyond the Ingénue.” Sept. 20 at 4: “À Nos Amours.” (†) **Metrograph** The films

of Robert Aldrich. Sept. 15 at 2 and 9:15 and Sept. 16 at 2:15 and 7:30: “Ulzana’s Raid” (1972). • Sept. 17 at 7:30: “Attack!” (1956). • Sept. 18 at 4 and 9: “Kiss Me Deadly.” (†) **Museum of Modern Art** “Modern Matinees: B Is for Bogart.” Sept. 15 at 1:30: “The Roaring Twenties.” (†) • Special screenings. Sept. 17 at 4: “A MOVIE Shorts Program 1,” including “Rose Hobart.” (†) • Sept. 17 at 7:30: “A MOVIE Shorts Program 2,” introduced by the critic Leo Goldsmith. **Museum of the Moving Image** The films of Philip Seymour Hoffman. Sept. 17 at 2: “The Master” (2012, Paul Thomas Anderson). • Sept. 17 at 5: “The Savages” (2007, Tamara Jenkins). • Sept. 18 at 2: “Boogie Nights” (1997, Anderson).

## DANCE

### New York City Ballet

Season after season brings new ballets by promising young men, but new works by aspiring female choreographers have proven to be a rarity. This fall will be different: two of the four new pieces slated for the company’s fashion-themed gala are by women. One is the creation of the Belgian choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, a fixture on the European contemporary-dance scene but less known in the U.S. And then there’s Lauren Lovette, a promising young principal dancer in the company, making her first work for her colleagues. She’s not the only company dancer getting a first chance: Peter Walker, a member of the corps de ballet, is also making a work, set to original music by the guitarist Thomas Kikita. A première, with costumes by Dries Van Noten, by Justin Peck, the company’s current choreographer-in-residence—and still dancing—rounds out the program, which will be repeated throughout the season. • Sept. 20 at 7: fall gala. (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Oct. 14.)

### Nora Chipaumire

Muscular, powerful, imposing: the adjectives used to describe this Zimbabwe-born dancer and choreographer are more often associated with men. In her turbid “Portrait of Myself as My Father,” Chipaumire attacks stereotypes of black masculinity acerbically. She and the Senegalese dancer known as Kaolack, outfitted in athletic gear, are tethered and confined to a boxing ring, surrounded by viewers. Shamar Watt acts as m.c., while references to Chipaumire’s father, a man she barely knew, shadow the proceedings. (BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Sept. 14-17.)

### Dances Patrelle / “Macbeth”

Francis Patrelle, a beloved local teacher and choreographer, is the creator of the “Yorkville Nutcracker,” a cozy New York-centric retelling of the holiday story. Patrelle’s ballets are old-fashioned, but in a good way: they’re real story ballets, sincerely told, with vivid characters and lots of mime. At Kaye Playhouse, he revives his “Macbeth,” which premiered in



ILLUSTRATION BY PIETER VAN EENOGGE

Nora Chipaumire draws on boxing and contemporary African movement in a work at BAM Fisher.

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**Love**

**Curiosity**

**Heart**

**Spirit**

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1995. The score is a patchwork of various Tchaikovsky symphonies. Martin Harvey, who plays the titular king—murderer of Duncan, tyrant, madman—is an alumnus of the Royal Ballet and an occasional film actor. (*Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-722-4448. Sept. 15-18.*)

#### “About Kazuo Ohno”

Rock legends inspire impersonators, and it turns out that some dance legends do, too. At the Japan Society, the contemporary dancer Takao Kawaguchi channels Kazuo Ohno, one of the great figures of Japanese dance history. Ohno, who would have been a hundred and ten this year, was one of the inventors of Butoh, a form of expressionist dance-theatre in which the body becomes an extreme tool of expression: distorted, often painted white or covered in rags, and vulnerable. The piece includes reinterpretations of various famous Ohno solos. The American ensemble Big Dance Theatre also presents “Resplendent Shimmering Topaz Water-

fall,” a sketch based on the choreographic notes of another Butoh master, Tatsumi Hijikata. (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Sept. 16-17.)

#### New Chamber Ballet

The enterprising Miro Magloire returns to City Center Studio 5 for one of his intimate evenings of music and dance. All the music is played live by the excellent Melody Fader (piano) and Doorri Na (violin). Magloire’s musical tastes tend toward the contemporary; one of the works on the program, by the German composer Reiko Fueting, was written just two years ago, and the other, by Michel Galante, is brand new. His five dancers—all women—are musically sensitive, beautifully trained, and understated. (130 W. 56th St. 212-868-4444. Sept. 16-17.)

#### The Holy Body Tattoo

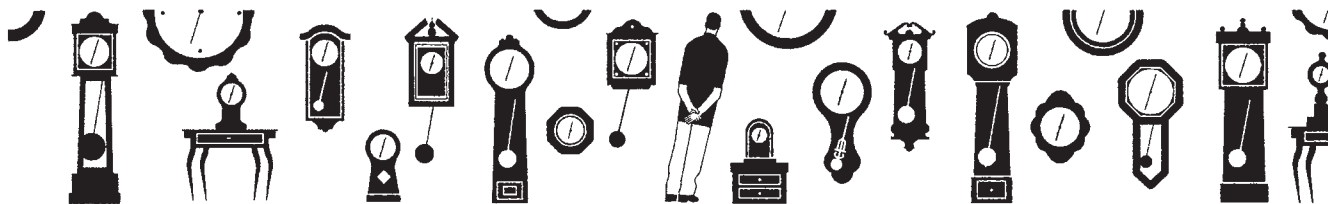
As much rock concert as dance show, “monumental” is a collaboration between this Canadian contem-

porary dance troupe and the band Godspeed You! Black Emperor. To the huge and dirty sound of five guitars, two drum kits, and a violin, nine dancers in office attire thrash on and off of small pillars, expressing their discontent with cold, corporate life. Though the theme is not exactly original, the insistent delivery is unusually intense. (*BAM’s Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Sept. 16-17.*)

#### “Works & Process” / Kate Weare Company

The most distinctive aspect of Weare’s choreography is often the undercurrent of primal attraction among her dancers. That’s the proposed theme of her new piece “Marksman,” excerpted in preview here before its premiere, at the Joyce, in November. The score is by the saxophonist Curtis Robert Macdonald, who joins the choreographer in a discussion moderated by the artist Clifford Ross. (*Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3575. Sept. 18.*)

## ABOVE & BEYOND



#### Coney Island Film Festival

With its scrappy new amphitheatre, chic bumper-car discos sponsored by local clothing brands, and boardwalk sticky with margarita mix, Coney Island happened this summer. New Yorkers will take a vacation where they can get it, and, throughout the hottest summer on record, they rediscovered the wonders that await at the end of the D train, including a beachfront refuge that’s a bit more norm-core than the Hamptons. Keep an eye on Coney Island through the fall, as offbeat events continue in milder weather. Sideshows by the Seashore and the Coney Island Museum host the film festival this week, showing original shorts, classic campy features, and live stage shows, and serving food and drinks. The program includes a slate of comedies, horrors, and documentaries set in Brooklyn and beyond—don’t miss Saturday night’s Sideshow screening of “The Warriors” before your own moonlit journey back to home turf. (3006 W. 12th St., Brooklyn. 718-372-5159. Sept. 16-18.)

#### Honey Fest

Celebrate nature’s great sweetener and the year-round stylishness of a beekeeper hat at this boardwalk festival. The main event of New York’s annual Honey Week features children’s arts and crafts; a honeybee-product marketplace, selling everything from beverages to cosmetics; a tasting contest; and beekeepers’ demonstrations of extraction processes and other intricate hive techniques. Children can enjoy bee-hat making and an interactive booth with lessons on pollination. The free, daylong festival is a sweet way to close out the season. (*Boardwalk 86th, Rockaway Beach. 8601 Shore Front Pkwy., Queens. nyhoneyweek.com. Sept. 17.*)

#### AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Phillips makes its first foray into the fall auctions scene with one of its occasional “New Now” sales (Sept. 20), a session that features various pieces from the collection of the late Finnish economist and financier (and Dia Art Foundation trustee) Pentti Kouri. These include a sculpture by the Italian conceptualist Giuseppe Penone (“Fingernail and Marble”) that looks very much like the giant stone finger of a colossus. (450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.) • The two top houses are overflowing with Asian vases, screens, and calligraphic compositions, all part of the extravaganza known as Asia Week. At **Christie’s**, the sales on Sept. 15-16 are dominated by Chinese art and objects, including a day of ceramics (Sept. 15) that culminates in an offering of more than four hundred lots from the collections of the Metropolitan Museum. An auction of furniture from a private collection (Sept. 16) also includes a delicate and semi-abstract landscape, “Far-Off Journey,” by the contemporary artist Liu Dan. Finally, the house kicks off its online auction (Sept. 19-28) of items from the homes of Ronald and Nancy Reagan, which includes everything from the family’s Thanksgiving platter to a dainty gold-mesh evening bag, a large porcelain bald eagle, and a first edition of the “Complete Poems of Robert Frost,” signed by the poet. A larger brick-and-mortar auction takes place the following week. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • A sale of Chinese paintings at **Sotheby’s** (Sept. 15) is led by a work from the eighteenth century, “Tiger and Fish,” in which a family of large cats dips their paws into a silvery current in hopes of nabbing lunch. The house’s Asia Week offerings conclude with an edition of

its “Saturdays at Sotheby’s” series (Sept. 17), a grab bag of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean works. (*York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.*)

#### READINGS AND TALKS

##### Le Poisson Rouge

As part of the Brooklyn Book Festival, the fire-brand illustrator Molly Crabapple and the controversial memoirist Ali Eteraz host a discussion of modern terror, examining its many angles. The two authors take on taboos relating to race, religion, gender, and sexuality through the lenses of art and activism. Billed topics include Richard Wright, military torture, guerrilla calligraphy, and underground culture in the age of Guantánamo. Ibrahim Ahmad, the senior editor of the independent publishing house Akashic Books, moderates; the talk is presented in conjunction with the PEN American Center and the Muslim Writers Collective. (158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. Sept. 14 at 6:30.)

##### French Institute Alliance Française

A lecture series coincides with an exhibit of a recently discovered plaster of “Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen,” one of the artist Edgar Degas’s most famous bronze sculptures. On display at F.I.A.F. Sept. 12-17, the plaster is an early draft, revealing adjustments in pose and implied motion that Degas made to the final version. Two talks find inspiration in the process: the art historian and critic Arthur Beale delivers a lecture titled “How Understanding Sculptural Techniques Can Lead to Important Art Discoveries,” followed by a talk from the figurative artist Eric Fischl, “From Degas to Me with Some Artists in Between.” (22 E. 60th St. 212-355-6100. Sept. 14-15 at 6:30.)

# FOOD & DRINK



## TABLES FOR TWO

### Lunch à la Mode

*Acuario Café, 306 W. 37th St. (212-564-9040); El Sabroso, 265 W. 37th St. (212-284-1118)*

THIS WEEK, as the downtown fashion set performs acrobatics on heels, the garment district, where Fashion Week began, more than seventy years ago, lives on, clogged with delivery trucks, as it's been since the twenties. In 1950, a letter to the *Times* complained, of the area's lunchtime streets, "The situation is like trying to pass a six-inch stream of water through a two-inch pipe." But there's a charm in dodging Z-racks and darting past wholesale prom dresses—especially if you duck into one of the hidden eateries, a fixture of the neighborhood since its start.

At Acuario Café, who needs signs when deliverymen and construction workers form a line that stretches out the door? It's run by Rodolfo Perez, who was a factory worker upstairs before he bought the building's service-entrance hamburger stand and turned it into a Dominican joint. This is not exceptional food, but that's not the point. It's hearty and filling, cheap and fast: half a fried chicken and a pound of rice and beans is five bucks.

Better is El Sabroso, a pan-Latin eatery in the back of a loading dock, run by the Ecuadorian Tony Molinas. He arrives at seven in the morning, and marinates the pork and chicken for three hours be-

fore throwing them into a tiny oven, on very low heat, until the lunch rush starts, just before noon. It's cash only, and offers slightly less hefty portions than Acuario, but it's still canteen-cheap, doled out on Styrofoam plates. The clientele includes drivers, painters, and office workers with I.D. badges dangling from their belt loops. "Calvin Klein e-mailed me yesterday," a ponytailed blonde waiting in line said recently. Most people get their food to go, but there are counter stools, and a table.

All mains come with yellow rice and red beans (vegetarians, take heart, Molinas swears they're meatless), and a handful of iceberg lettuce. The pork-chop frisbees and cartilaginous ribs are unfortunate missteps, but the stewed beef and the oxtail are tender and tomato-rich. "Everyone loves the baked chicken," Elizabeth, the cashier, says, and everyone's right. It's as moist as if it were braised, but the skin is crispy from the slow roasting. The real star, though, is the hot sauce. It's the marigold color of a Buddhist monk's cloak, with a complex, bitter heat, and it should be spooned onto everything. Molinas bought the recipe from the Dominican girl in Queens who taught him to cook when he first moved to town, in the nineties. A Panamanian patron, inspired by a hot-sauce-loaded bite of chicken, proclaims El Sabroso "simultaneously the best of New York City, and the best escape from it." (*Acuario Café, dishes \$4-\$8; El Sabroso, dishes \$6-\$7.50.*)

—Becky Cooper

## BAR TAB



### King Tai

*1095 Bergen St., Brooklyn (718-513-1025)*

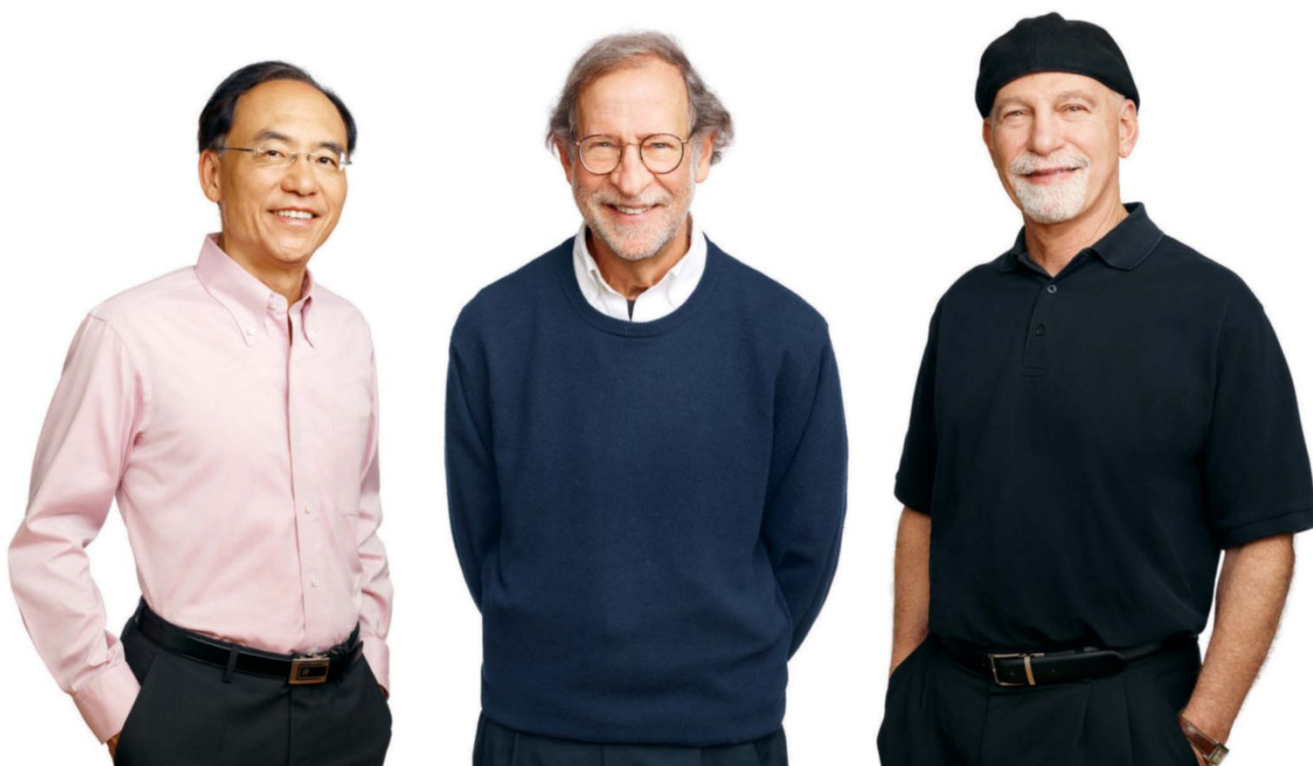
A few weekends ago at King Tai, a short and stout bar in Crown Heights, some one-hit wonders from the early eighties played as people who weren't alive then considered what to drink. Above the bar, next to some metal elephant heads, was a chalkboard listing King Tai's five cocktails, named #1 through #5. "We can't all get a #3," an organizationally minded customer objected. "If you get a #1, I'll get a #3, and he'll get a #5." The cocktails, which are ten dollars apiece, make up for their minimalist names with particularly elaborate flavors that achieve mostly high highs, marred by only one low low. The #5 (Barr Hill gin, Cocchi Americano, Dimmi, grapefruit bitters) is a caustic confusion, but the #1 (Yaguara Cachaça Branca, apricot, Licor 43, grated nutmeg) was described by a drinker as "lovely stuff." More people seeped into the space, which is attractively decorated in a style that could be called nostalgia with a twist—it has a nineteen-forties tropical-malt-shop aesthetic. But, surprisingly, there were no teen-agers in Hawaiian letterman jackets to complement the surroundings. If you stay alert, you can succeed to King Tai's throne: a coveted curved booth in the back of the bar which wraps cozily around a six-person group, or two people, if you don't mind resentful stares. Between the booth and the unusually appealing seafoam-hued bathroom is a framed photo of King Tai's predecessor: a "Chinese American Fish Kitchen," also called King Tai. The apple fell far from the tree: there's no fish on the new menu, only beef and cheese empanadas and spiced pumpkin and sunflower seeds. "I'm nuts about these seeds," a man said. Forgive the joke, someone asked what his number was—a #4.—Colin Stokes



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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT UPHOLDING STANDARDS

HILLARY CLINTON WAS ON her new campaign plane last Tuesday, talking to reporters about Donald Trump and his record: “the scams, the frauds, the questionable relationships.” His businesses had murky debts, and he hadn’t released his tax returns. There were reports that his personal foundation had violated the law by channelling a twenty-five-thousand-dollar campaign donation to Pam Bondi, the Florida attorney general, just as her office was deciding not to investigate Trump University. “He clearly has something to hide,” Clinton said. He had to “come clean,” and the press and the public had to insist that he did.

Clinton then took questions from the reporters, as she had briefly done the day before. That was a welcome development; it had been two hundred and seventy-five days since she’d held a full press conference, provoking worry not just about access to the campaign but about how transparent a Clinton Administration might be. The first question was why the news of the day was still focussed on what Bernie Sanders once called her “damn e-mails.” (There had been a micro-development in the story, in the form of a new investigative demand from the Republican congressman Jason Chaffetz.) Her expression was one of hard bemusement, as though she were watching someone struggle with a math problem she had long since worked out. Perhaps, she said, it was because there was “a different standard for Trump than for me.”

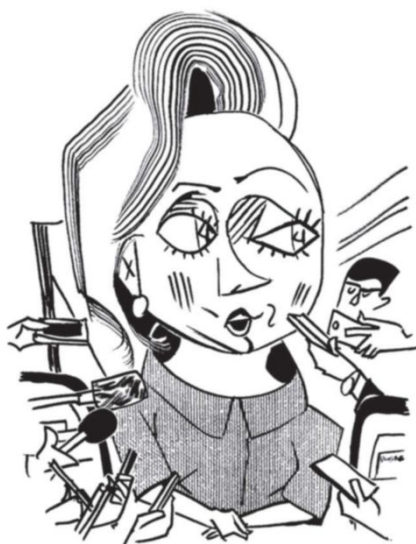
That suggestion has become ever more central to the election, in part because the race looks close. While Clinton leads in most polls—including one that gives her an edge in Texas, of all places—they have grown tighter. It came to the fore last Wednesday night, on NBC’s “Commander-in-Chief Forum,” during which each candidate was questioned for just under thirty minutes before an audience of veterans. Matt Lauer,

the moderator, asked Clinton repeatedly about her e-mail server, saying, “Why wasn’t it disqualifying?” Between his questions and one from a veteran who informed Clinton that she had “clearly corrupted our national security,” the e-mails consumed about half her time. Lauer then asked Clinton to keep it short when she spoke about subjects he seemed to regard as boring, such as the Iran nuclear deal. But, when Trump said that America’s generals had been “reduced to rubble,” Lauer himself seemed to crumble. He sat back as Trump falsely claimed to have opposed the Iraq War, reiterated that sexual assault was the inevitable consequence of enlisting women in the military, and expounded on the leadership skills of Vladimir Putin.

Just a few weeks ago, it looked as if the Trump operation might collapse, amid the candidate’s attacks on the Khan family, whose son died a hero in Iraq, and the departure of Paul Manafort, his campaign manager. Trump replaced Manafort with Kellyanne Conway and Stephen Bannon, the chairman of Breitbart News, the far-right Web site. The new team has been as little interested in a pivot to moderation as Trump has been, yet this seems to be working for him, poll-wise. It is still

plausible that Trump, an entrenched bigot, a conspiracy fabulist, and a casual disparager of international alliances, could become President. The search for those responsible for this course of events might start with the leaders of the Republican Party. Some have rejected Trump as a dangerous con man, but many others are more or less shamefacedly supporting him, citing Supreme Court appointments or their mistrust of Clinton.

Clinton’s supporters blame the media for playing to that antipathy. According to an R.C.P. average of polls, more than fifty-eight per cent of voters view Trump unfavorably, and nearly fifty-five per cent have a similar view of Clinton. Polls indicate that temperament is a





bigger problem for Trump, and that honesty is bigger for Clinton. A good number of voters seem to have decided that the choice this year is between two candidates they don't like, one of whom they see as crazy and the other as corrupt. (And in the American psyche the winner in that matchup is not always an obvious call.) The dichotomy is infuriating to Clinton's supporters, given that, despite any number of investigations, she appears to be neither a kook nor a crook, while Trump appears to have a better shot at both titles. Clinton's flaws aren't just smaller than Trump's, they are not on the same scale. It's as if the American Presidency might suffer the same fate as the NASA orbiter that was lost because someone mixed up metric and non-metric measurements.

Trump, for his part, brags about what he portrays as a storied career in public corruption. Anyone going to a Trump rally is likely to hear him riff about how he bought off one unnamed politician or another and got what he wanted—though he has denied that this was the case with Bondi, for whom he also hosted a fund-raiser. Speaking with reporters on the plane, Clinton offered that “somehow the American public has factored into their assessment, you know, that's just the kind of guy he is.” Hours later, Trump was on Twitter, attacking the media for failing to cover Clinton's on-camera coughing fit the day before. (“What's up?”) In fact, the cough-

ing had been exhaustively covered. So had the theories that a Secret Service officer standing behind her was a nefarious doctor equipped with an autoinjector to revive her after seizures.

“This is not new to me,” Clinton said. “You can go back and look at a lot of what's been said about me, by so many people, going back twenty-five years, and so it's something that I've just accepted.” (Harvard's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy found that last year Clinton received a far higher proportion of negative coverage than any other candidate.) With that acceptance, however, has come a certain level of carelessness, coupled with over-cautious defensiveness. The e-mail story may be overblown, yet it is a cautionary tale about the risks of giving in to those instincts. Lauer was a flop, but Clinton's performance, though informed and thoughtful, was at times detached and legalistic. More freewheeling encounters with groups of reporters will serve her well, particularly in preparing for the debates. Clinton is not going to solve her trust problem by chastising members of the media for being aggressive or skeptical. That is a move more worthy of Trump, who works up crowds to berate reporters as “scum.” The press doesn't get to dictate how it is judged, either. But there's something to be said for a high standard all around.

—Amy Davidson

## LOST HISTORY DEPT. AMERICAN COUP



ON NOVEMBER 10, 1898, a coup d'état took place on United States soil. It was perpetrated by a gang of white-supremacist Democrats in Wilmington, North Carolina, who were intent on reclaiming power from the recently elected, biracial Republican government, even if, as one of the leaders vowed, “we have to choke the Cape Fear River with carcasses.” They had a Colt machine gun capable of firing four hundred and twenty .23-calibre bullets a minute. They had the local elite and the press on their side. By the end of the day, they had killed somewhere between fourteen and sixty black men and banished twenty more, meanwhile forcing the mayor, the police chief, and the members of the board of aldermen to resign.

The new government remained in control, of both the town and the story. Subsequent generations of white residents knew about the events of 1898 as a “revolution” or a “race riot,” if they knew about them at all. In the black commu-

nity, the episode remained a suppressed trauma. “It was just, like, something we talked about on the porch, like a folk thing, but it wasn't really in the mainstream,” Christopher Everett, the director of “Wilmington on Fire,” a new documentary, said not long ago. Before Rosewood, before Tulsa, press materials for the film note, there was Wilmington—a massacre kept secret for over one hundred years.”

Everett, who is thirty-three, was standing on Market Street in Wilmington, in front of a Greek Revival building that had served as an arsenal for the white conspirators. He had driven down from Laurinburg, North Carolina, where he was raised by his grandparents, a wireplant worker and a nurse. In 2010, he was living in Atlanta, working in graphic design, when he saw a reference to the coup online. He got interested, and downloaded a report that the State of North Carolina had published several years earlier, to try, belatedly, to reckon with the legacy of the incident. That year, he was laid off. He moved back in with his grandparents, and put his unemployment money toward making the film.

“I was, like, a hundred pounds lighter then,” Everett said. “I had done some acting and modelling”—his first gig was a Japanese clothing commercial, starring

Kate Moss—“so I had a network.” After three years, he ran out of money. An N.B.A. player who prefers to remain anonymous, having seen a clip that Everett posted on Facebook, gave him the fifteen thousand dollars he needed to finish. (The film will be available, via Amazon, on November 10th.) Squinting in the sun, Everett said, “It's not just about history. A lot of the disparities that African-Americans are going through right now are the result of things like the Wilmington massacre. This was meticulously planned, but for years it was branded as something that just spontaneously happened.”

He faced the armory, where on the morning of November 10th a mob of several hundred white men had gathered with the intention of targeting the city's considerable black middle class. “Then they walked to Manly's spot,” he said. (Alexander Manly, the acknowledged descendant of a former North Carolina governor and a slave, was the proprietor of the *Daily Record*, in 1898 the city's only black-owned newspaper.) “They went to burn down that joint, and, after that, they just dispersed to the Brooklyn neighborhood and started going wild.”

Everett turned onto Fourth Street, heading north toward Brooklyn. He

passed by the county courthouse (the day before the coup, the conspirators convened there to sign “The White Man’s Declaration of Independence”), Victorian houses, shotgun shacks, overgrown tracks, barbershops, churches, abandoned lots. He kept walking.

“Fourth and Harnett, right here, is where they started shooting black folk,” he said. “And then, if you go all the way down there, you get to the cemetery where they fled.”

There was hardly anyone around. Everett turned left, continuing until he reached a park, where six paddle-shaped bronze pillars were arranged in a semi-circle. They were a monument, conceived of by a committee of local citizens, for the centennial of the coup. “At least ten blacks died, scores more, according to African-American oral tradition,” a panel explained. “Wilmington’s 1898 racial violence was not accidental. It began a successful statewide Democratic campaign to regain control of the state government, disenfranchise African-Americans, and create a legal system of segregation which persisted into the second half of the twentieth century.” Nearby, someone had nailed a piece of plywood high on a telephone pole. Against a hot, blue sky one could just make out the stencilled message: “1898 WAR CRIME.”

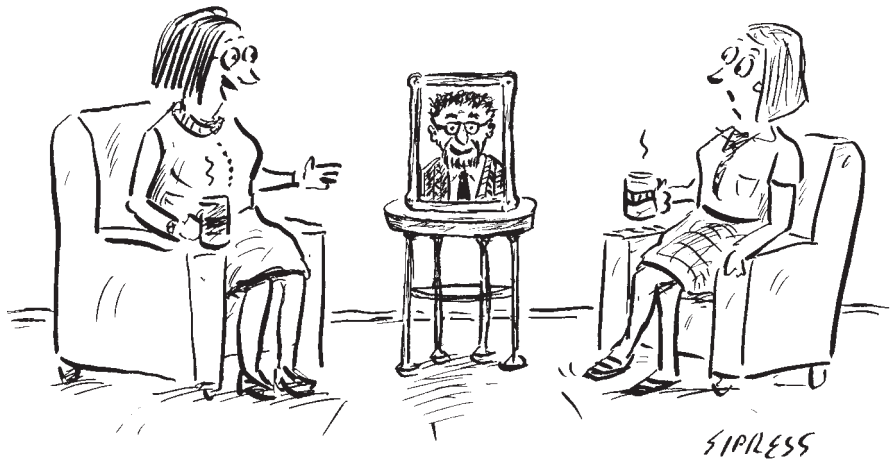
—Lauren Collins

## PEST CONTROL BITING BACK



*Aedes albopictus* is an early riser. Of the fifty-one mosquito species in New York, *albopictus*—a close cousin of *Aedes aegypti*, the species responsible for spreading Zika—prefers to restrict its activity to power breakfasts, in the mornings, and to teatime, in the late afternoons. (The common house mosquito is active in the evenings.)

On a recent afternoon, Mario Merlino, the assistant commissioner for New York City’s Bureau of Veterinary and Pest Control Services, and Zahir Shah, the director of the city’s Medical Entomology Laboratory, jumped a small fence inside Bellevue South Park, in Kips Bay,



“We met through Secular Humanist Mingle.”

and wandered into the shrubbery. Shah pointed to what appeared to be a black collapsible laundry hamper, hidden behind a bush. “There it is,” he said. “Our pride and joy.”

*Aegypti* is not prevalent in New York, but the health department isn’t taking any chances. The city recently pledged to spend twenty-one million dollars to combat Zika, and Shah’s lab has been beefing up its operations. It’s hiring more entomologists and lab assistants. It has also acquired new mosquito-hunting swag: the laundry-hamper thing was one of a hundred BG-Sentinels (two hundred dollars each), mosquito traps designed to target both *albopictus* and *aegypti*.

The new trap is cylindrical and shiny, with sides made of black fabric and a white plastic top. If you were a mosquito, you might find it good-looking—especially compared with regular mosquito traps, which resemble buckets. This is intentional. According to Shah, *albopictus* prefers “attractive visual cues.”

Regular traps release small amounts of carbon dioxide, to mimic humans breathing. The *albopictus* lure is more sophisticated: it releases a bouquet of substances commonly found on human skin, like ammonia and lactic acid, which are present in sweat and breath. The mosquitoes come to feast, and get sucked in. Shah unscrewed the trap’s bluish-white lure and took a whiff. It smelled like a hot subway car during rush hour. “Whoa,” he said. “It gets me every time.”

The medical-entomology lab is housed in an aging government building on First

Avenue. It was set up in 2000, in response to the West Nile outbreak. Today, about twenty employees monitor the city’s mosquito populations. Five hundred and fifty New York City residents have tested positive for Zika, but so far no local mosquitoes have been discovered carrying the virus.

The lab’s staff have set traps at some hundred and twenty strategic locations around the city. Cemeteries, with their greenery, are mosquito hot spots, Shah said. Plus, there are the flower vases that people leave behind, which create ideal mosquito-breeding conditions. Lately, the trappers have been knocking on people’s doors in “hot” areas, asking to place *albopictus* traps in their back yards. So far, no one has refused. There are now a total of twenty traps on private properties.

The traps are set once a week and emptied after twenty-four hours. The trappers then place the mosquitoes in plastic tubes and put them on dry ice, which kills them. Each trap catches an average of seven mosquitoes per day. “We all get bitten all the time,” Merlino said. “But we obviously encourage everyone to carry bug spray. Nothing fancy—just the regular stuff from Duane Reade.”

Back at the lab, the samples were being catalogued and tested for both Zika and West Nile. Five on-site taxonomists identify around two thousand mosquitoes daily. They separate the genders: only female mosquitoes carry viruses, so the males can be tossed. “The males are easy to spot,” Shah said. They have “bushier”



antennae. Peering into a microscope, he examined a fresh batch of *albopictus*. They didn't look particularly hairy. "Ah—these must be females," he said.

Two floors down, Jie Fu, a research scientist, oversees testing. First, she feeds a tube's worth of mosquitoes into a machine that grinds them into a gelatinous glop. "It's like when you make mashed potatoes," she said. A machine called the BioRobot (imagine a convection oven) separates out the RNA and dollops it onto rectangular plates, which later go into a machine called an amplifier (imagine an office printer). Two hours afterward, the results appear on a small screen. "See?" Fu said, pointing to a bunch of squiggly lines. "No Zika." She added, "*Albopictus* is slowing down. It doesn't like the cold."

As part of the larger effort to educate New Yorkers about Zika, the health department has been promoting a hot line that people can call to report incidents of standing water: puddles, brimming gutters, birdbaths. The police department was the first to benefit: before the hot line, people used to call 911 to complain about mosquitoes. "They'd say, 'Quick! I have mosquitoes! Do something about it!'" Shah said. "Well, we're doing something about it."

—Laura Parker

## BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT. MANI MATISSE



NAOMI YASUDA IS A thirty-two-year-old nail artist whose colorful, extravagant, often three-dimensional work was featured in a show at the Cooper Hewitt Museum this year. One afternoon at her apartment downtown, as she prepared to give a manicure to a hairdresser friend, she dunked her own fingers, with nails painted periwinkle blue, into a bowl of tepid water. Yasuda does not have a favorite nail color—"The mood determines," she said—but her apartment is swathed in a spectrum of grays, and her dark hair has been dyed a tint that recalls an iceberg. "I call it 'Naomi Gray,'" Kelly O'Connell, the hairdresser, said.

When Yasuda lifted her hand out of the bowl, her fingernails were periwinkle slashed with vivid pink stripes. She explained that the polish she used changes color according to the temperature. "Like a mood ring, but in lacquer," she said. After examining O'Connell's naked fingers under a bright lamp, Yasuda talked about her plans for Paris fashion week. Before heading to France, she had to fabricate seven hundred nail tips for the Kenzo show: some in the brand's classic floral motif, some in a zebra stripe.

Yasuda views nails not just as miniature canvases but as the scaffolding for ambitious and inventive micro-constructions. Painterly strokes of color cover sculptural acrylic bases; the results are often hardened under UV or L.E.D. lights. Her creations have appeared on the covers of dozens of magazines. She did the geometric-patterned pointy acrylics that the British singer FKA Twigs flaunted on the August cover of *Elle*. O'Connell said, "Naomi doesn't like to put her face in the public eye. But she's the face of celebrity nails."

Yasuda started doing nails when she was eleven, "as a hobby," in her home town of Gifu, Japan. "I was inspired by my grandmother, who tailored kimonos," she said. She studied for two years at a Japanese beauty school and did a compulsory apprenticeship, eventually completing a three-level certification process. Yasuda custom-makes her own acrylics for each client, first mixing acrylic powder and water until the right elasticity is achieved, and then, using a small brush, pressing the powder into a shape over the client's nail. "You can get a fungus if the acrylic isn't clean," O'Connell said, as Yasuda buffed her right thumbnail. "A lot of the young nail techs don't want to learn the basics."

"Japanese nail technicians are the most prideful," Yasuda said. "Before being an artist, I am a technician." She applied a clear polish on O'Connell's left index finger, her wrist barely moving as she brushed. She never uses stencils and once meticulously re-created ten different paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat on a friend's nails. She buys accessories at the Toho Shoji craft store, in midtown, a place that stocks beads and trimmings.

Yasuda moved to New York in 2007. After acquiring an American beautician's license, she started taking six to

seven clients a day in the back of a Williamsburg beauty salon. She quickly built a reputation, and she now works for herself, sometimes charging celebrities four figures for a manicure. "In Japan, they are more conservative about nail culture and tattoos," Yasuda said. If you have "extreme" nails, "you cannot work in an office."

Yasuda does manicures for friends and fellow-beauticians in her apartment.



Naomi Yasuda

For her celebrity clients, she makes house calls. She has done Kendall Jenner's nails on both coasts. Some clients have a standing design. Amanda Lepore, the performance artist, "is all about beauty," Yasuda said. "We do the same long, red manicure with a clear or white half-moon every time." Steven Tyler used to get tiny chains and black studs pierced into his nails. As Yasuda used tweezers to place a length of bronze-colored tape on one of O'Connell's nails, she talked about Alicia Keys's preferences. "She plays piano, so we kept the manicures short but eye-catching, like in the 'Empire State of Mind' video," she said.

Yasuda has a notebook in which she sketches nail designs, writing notes in Japanese and in English. As O'Connell's manicure—an inverted metallic pattern—dried under the lights, Yasuda pointed to doodles that eventually ended up on famous fingertips. "Madonna always knows what she wants," she said, and described the jacquard gold manicure that the singer ordered for her performance at the 2012 Super Bowl. Pulling up a still on her phone, Yasuda said, "My elbow was in the 'Bitch I'm Madonna' video."

—Doreen St. Félix



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ON AUGUST 26TH, Colin Kaepernick, a quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, refused to stand for the national anthem, as a protest against police brutality. Since then, he's been attacked by just about everyone—politicians, coaches, players, talk-radio hosts, veterans' groups. But the harshest criticism has come from Bay Area police unions. The head of the San Francisco police association lambasted his "naïveté" and "total lack of sensitivity," and called on the 49ers to "denounce" the gesture. The Santa Clara police union said that its members, many of whom provide security at 49ers games, might refuse to go to work if no action was taken against Kaepernick. A work stoppage to punish a player for expressing his opinion may seem extreme. But in the world of police unions it's business as usual. Indeed, most of them were formed as a reaction against public demands in the nineteen-sixties and seventies for more civilian oversight of the police. Recently, even as the use of excessive force against minorities has caused outcry and urgent calls for reform, police unions have resisted attempts to change the status quo, attacking their critics as enablers of crime.

Police unions emerged later than many other public-service unions, but they've made up for lost time. Thanks to the bargains they've struck on wages and benefits, police officers are among the best-paid civil servants. More important, they've been extraordinarily effective in establishing control over working conditions. All unions seek to insure that their members have due-process rights and aren't subject to arbitrary discipline, but police unions have defined working conditions in the broadest possible terms. This position has made it hard to investigate misconduct claims, and to get rid of officers who break the rules. A study of collective bargaining by big-city police unions, published this summer by the reform group Campaign Zero, found that agreements routinely guarantee that officers aren't interrogated immediately after use-of-force incidents and often insure that disciplinary records are purged after three to five years.

Furthermore, thanks to union contracts, even officers who are fired can frequently get their jobs back. Perhaps the most egregious example was Hector Jimenez, an Oakland police officer who was dismissed in 2009, after killing two unarmed men, but who then successfully appealed and, two years later, was reinstated, with full back pay. The protection that unions have secured has helped create what

Samuel Walker, an emeritus professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and an expert on police accountability, calls a "culture of impunity." Citing a recent Justice Department investigation of Baltimore's police department, which found a systemic pattern of "serious violations of the U.S. Constitution and federal law," he told me, "Knowing that it's hard to be punished for misconduct fosters an attitude where you think you don't have to answer for your behavior."

For the past fifty years, police unions have done their best to block policing reforms of all kinds. In the seventies, they opposed officers' having to wear name tags. More recently, they've opposed the use of body cameras and have protested proposals to document racial profiling and to track excessive-force complaints. They have lobbied to keep disciplinary histories sealed. If a doctor commits malpractice, it's a matter of public record, but, in much of the country, a police officer's use of excessive force is not. Across the nation, unions have led the battle to limit the power of civilian-review boards, generally by arguing that civilians are in no position to judge the split-second decisions that police officers make. Earlier this year, Newark created a civilian-review board that was acclaimed as a model of oversight. The city's police union immediately announced that it would sue to shut it down.

Cities don't have to concede so much power to police unions. So why do they? Big-city unions have large membership bases and are generous when it comes to campaign contributions. Neither liberals nor conservatives have been keen to challenge the unions' power. Liberals are generally supportive of public-sector unions; some of the worst police departments in the country are in cities, like Baltimore and Oakland, run by liberal mayors. And though conservatives regularly castigate public-sector unions as parasites, they typically exempt the police. Perhaps most crucial, Walker says, "police unions can make life very difficult for mayors, attacking them as soft on crime and warning that, unless they get their way, it will go up. The fear of crime—which is often a code word for race—still has a powerful political impact." As a result, while most unions in the U.S. have grown weaker since the seventies, police unions have grown stronger.

All labor unions represent the interests of the workers against the bosses. But police officers are not like other workers: they have state-sanctioned power of life and death over fellow-citizens. It's hardly unreasonable to demand real oversight in exchange. Union control over police working conditions necessarily entails less control for the public, and that means less transparency and less accountability in cases of police violence. It's long past time we watched the watchmen.

—James Surowiecki



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## THE STATE OF DEBATE

*How should Presidential candidates—and voters—argue about politics?*

BY JILL LEPORE



**T**HIS ELECTION'S FIRST Presidential debate will be held on September 26th, the anniversary of the first televised Presidential debate, between Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy, in 1960. Nixon and Kennedy met in a bare CBS studio in Chicago, without an audience; the event was broadcast, live, by CBS, NBC, and ABC. Each candidate made an eight-minute opening statement and a three-minute closing statement. The rules were the result of strenuous negotiating. The very scheduling required Congress to temporarily suspend an F.C.C. regulation granting equal time to all Presidential candidates (there were at least fourteen). Much of

the negotiation involved seemingly little things. Nixon wanted no reaction shots; he wanted viewers to see only the guy who was talking. But Kennedy wanted them, and prevailed, with the concession that neither man be shown wiping the sweat from his face. Then there were bigger things. The networks wanted Nixon and Kennedy to question each other; both men insisted on taking questions from a panel of reporters, one from each network, a format that is more generally known as a parallel press conference. ABC refused to call the event a "debate"—the network billed it, instead, as a "joint appearance"—but everyone else did. Sixty-six

million Americans watched Nixon scowl, and the misnomer stuck.

This year, the candidates will appear together on the stage of a university lecture hall. The event will be called a "debate" and it will be broadcast live, but it won't really be a debate and a lot of people will watch clips later. There will be no commercials. Hillary Clinton will be there, overprepared; Donald Trump says the whole thing's rigged, but he'd be hard-pressed to stay away. "There are those who will say it will be one of the highest-rated shows in television history, if not the highest," he told the *Washington Post*. "It will be the most watched event in human history," former Clinton adviser Paul Begala told me. "Bigger than the moon landing, the World Cup, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, and the latest royal wedding!" It will be gruelling. It will be maddening.

Presidential debates are more often lost than won. The gaffe costs more than exposition gains. It's easy to practice your kicking; it's harder to brace yourself for getting kicked. Over the summer, there were rumors that the Clinton campaign had arranged for Alan Dershowitz to play Trump during rehearsals. Nothing but rumors, Dershowitz told me, though he'd love to do it, and he knows how he'd do it, too. "I'd try to provoke her," he said. "I'd ask about Bill and Monica. I'd ask about her health. Did she bang her head? Does she have blood clots?" The health of the candidates has been an issue during the campaign, proxies for their age: Trump is seventy, Clinton sixty-eight. Trump and Clinton and their key advisers, who like to emphasize their stamina, were kids when Nixon, then forty-seven, debated Kennedy, forty-three. Roger Ailes, who is helping Trump prepare against Clinton, is seventy-six. In the nineteen-sixties, when Ailes was just starting out, he told Nixon that he lost the election to Kennedy because he was lousy on television. He went on to found Fox News but was forced out this summer after an investigation into charges that he'd sexually harassed female employees. It may be that Ailes will advise Trump not to refer to his penis again on national television, but, honestly, who knows? The candidates are old. This era in American politics is new.

A third-party candidate, Gary Johnson

*Presidential debates are more often lost than won. The gaffe decides the outcome.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTIAN NORTHEAST

or, less likely, Jill Stein, could be invited to this fall's debates, depending on the polls. Probably there will be chairs, but that's negotiable. Much, however, is not negotiable. The audience will be silent. Jim Lehrer, who has moderated more Presidential debates than anyone, and who used to be a marine, likes to tell the story of how he'd drill his audiences before each debate. He'd tell them, "If you don't do what I say, if you cheer or anything like that, I'm going to stop the debate, and I'm going to take the time out of the guy you're cheering for." He once got Barbara Bush, sitting in the front row, to agree to write down the names of any infractors. "Trust me, you could hear a pin drop in that place for ninety minutes," Lehrer says.

Online, though, the audience won't hush up. In 2008, after Bob Schieffer, the longtime host of CBS's "Face the Nation," moderated a debate between Obama and McCain, his staff gave him a sample of tweets. "Someone said I was one of those old duffers in the balcony on 'The Muppet Show,'" Schieffer told me, laughing. "Someone else called me the Brad Pitt of Boca Raton." Eight years later, the political pother is angrier and meaner. The virtual once imitated the real, what with "bulletin boards" and "chat rooms." Lately, the real imitates the virtual. "The debate takes the form now of a thread," Schieffer said, turning serious, when I asked him about the state of political argument. "Someone says something, and someone else says, 'That's stupid,' and the next person says, 'No, you're stupid.'" Whatever's going on, it's getting worse.

This year's primary debates broke ratings records, and they broke all records for god-awfulness, too. (The two are not unrelated.) The Presidential debates follow different rules, meant to insure fairness, gravity, and substance. The difference can be jarring. It's like turning on "Cutthroat Kitchen," expecting to see the host telling the contestants to make ice cream using traffic cones for bowls while wearing dog cones around their necks, only to find that all that's on is "The Great British Baking Show," the contestants cheering one another on while making crumpets and scones under a tent pitched in a field of daisies. The reason for the difference is that the primary debates are sponsored

and run by the parties and by the media organizations that broadcast and profit from them, but the Presidential debates are governed by the nonpartisan, non-profit Commission on Presidential Debates. The commission makes the schedule, chooses the venues, sets the rules, and picks the moderators, with an eye to a certain decorum, the state of the Union, the dignity of the office.

The commission is co-chaired by Frank Fahrenkopf, Jr., who used to be the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and Mike McCurry, who was once Bill Clinton's press secretary. A few months back, I asked McCurry whether he thought Trump, if he got the nomination, would haggle over or flout the rules. McCurry laughed: "I will say that I just ordered 'The Art of the Deal' on Amazon." Since then, Trump has complained about the schedule. "As usual, Hillary & the Dems are trying to rig the debates so 2 are up against major NFL games," he tweeted in July. "Same as last time w/Bernie. Unacceptable!" Actually, the schedule for this fall's debates was announced six months before the N.F.L. schedule. Still, the complaint doesn't come out of nowhere. During the primary season, both Bernie Sanders and Martin O'Malley said the Democratic debates were rigged, since the schedule advantaged Clinton. (There's no evidence for the charge. Hacked e-mails released by WikiLeaks demonstrate that the D.N.C. favored Clinton in a thousand ways, but, according to PolitiFact, the debate schedule wasn't one of them.)

"They accomplished one thing," Fahrenkopf said to me about the primary debates. "They made CNN and Fox a lot of money. 'Candidate A said this about you, Candidate B.' Jesus." Or did they accomplish something more? "There are people who argue, 'Oh, my God, these debates are coarsening the discourse,' and 'Oh, my God, these debates are distorting the process,'" Lehrer told me. "Hey, get over it!" Lehrer thinks that "the more people are talking, even sometimes over the top, or ill-informed, the better," since even a debate that some viewers find vulgar or unhinged "exposes and illuminates, and people get something out of that."

The real trouble is deeper and wider. Political argument has been having a

terrible century. Instead of arguing, everyone from next-door neighbors to members of Congress has got used to doing the I.R.L. equivalent of posting to the comments section: serially fulminating. The U.S. Supreme Court is one Justice short of a full bench, limiting its ability to deliberate, because Senate Republicans refused to hold the hearings required in order to fill that seat. They'd rather do battle on Twitter. Democratic members of Congress, unable to get the House of Representatives to debate gun-control measures, held a sit-in, live-streamed on Periscope. At campaign events, and even at the nominating Conventions, protesters have tried to silence other people's speech in the name of the First Amendment. On college campuses, administrators, faculty, and students who express unwelcome political views have been fired and expelled. Even high-school debate has come under sustained attack from students who, refusing to argue the assigned political topic, contest the rules. One in three Americans declines to discuss politics except in private; fewer than one in four ever talk with someone with whom they disagree politically; fewer than one in five have ever attended a problem-solving meeting, even online, with people holding views different from their own. What kind of democracy is that?

"TRUMP IS A brawler," Roger Stone said this summer, predicting that the Trump-Clinton debates will be bloodbaths. "Hillary's a lawyer," the Clinton people kept reminding me. "She'll prosecute him." Which of them has the advantage, going in, depends on which rules apply: the rules of battle or the rules of argument. In a boxing ring, a brawler beats a lawyer. In a courtroom, a lawyer beats a brawler. A debate hall is like a courtroom. But a political campaign is more like a boxing ring. The best Presidents—think of Lincoln, or L.B.J.—have been good at both: fleet, sure-footed, and unrelenting.

How to argue is something people are taught. You learn it by watching other people, at the breakfast table, or in school, or on TV, or, lately, online. It's something you can get better at, with practice, or worse at, by imitating people who do it badly. More formal debate follows established rules and standards of evidence. For



centuries, learning how to argue was the centerpiece of a liberal-arts education. (Malcolm X studied that kind of debate while he was in prison. “Once my feet got wet,” he said, “I was gone on debating.”) Etymologically and historically, the *artes liberales* are the arts acquired by people who are free, or *liber*. Debating, like voting, is a way for people to disagree without hitting one another or going to war: it’s the key to every institution that makes civic life possible, from courts to legislatures. Without debate, there can be no self-government. The United States is the product of debate. In 1787, delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed “to argue without asperity, and to endeavor to convince the judgment without hurting the feelings of each other.” The next year, James Madison debated James Monroe for a congressional seat in Virginia. By the eighteenth-thirties, debating classes were being offered as a form of civic education.

In 1858, tens of thousands of people watched Lincoln debate Douglas when the two competed for a Senate seat in Illinois. The opening speaker had sixty minutes, the second speaker had ninety minutes, and then the opening speaker had thirty more minutes. The really significant thing about the Lincoln-Douglas debates wasn’t the debates themselves but the fact that they were published two years later, when Lincoln and Douglas

were running for President. The book was published in six states. Lincoln won all six and, with them, the election.

In the era of radio, debate entered American kitchens and parlors. In the nineteen-twenties, the League of Women Voters began staging debates between candidates and debates on issues and broadcasting them on the radio. When Herbert Hoover lobbied for the Federal Radio Act of 1927, which includes an equal-time rule known as Section 315, he said that broadcasting “the political debates that underlie political action” would make Americans “literally one people.” To counter Fascists’ use of the radio to indoctrinate, American broadcasters used the radio to foster disagreement. “America’s Town Meeting of the Air” debuted on NBC radio in 1935. Each broadcast began with a town crier ringing a bell and hollering, “Oyez! Oyez! Come to the old town hall and talk it over!” The programs adopted the Oxford-style debate, in which each side takes a position in answer to a proposition or a question, such as, “Does America need compulsory health insurance?” The program took pride in forcing the two parties to debate issues. As its moderator put it, “If we persist in the practice of Republicans reading only Republican newspapers, listening only to Republican speeches on the radio, attending only Republican political ral-

lies, and mixing socially only with those of congenial views, and if Democrats . . . follow suit, we are sowing the seeds of the destruction of our democracy.”

This spirit did not extend to the Presidency. Franklin D. Roosevelt refused to debate, on the ground that he might let slip a state secret. In 1936, Republicans, frustrated, spliced bits of his speeches into a rebuttal made by the Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg and gave it to radio stations to broadcast as a “debate.” Sixty-six stations were supposed to air the program; twenty-one refused. In 1948, Thomas Dewey and Harold Stassen, competing for the Republican nomination, debated a single policy question on national radio: “Shall the Communist Party in the United States be outlawed?” But Eisenhower, like Roosevelt, declined invitations to debate on the radio.

After the television debut of “Meet the Press,” in 1947, broadcast “debate” took the form of a panel of reporters asking a politician questions. Maybe McCarthyism got Americans worried about the state of debate, worried enough to insist that politicians talk to one another on television. “I would like to propose that we transform our circus-atmosphere presidential campaign into a great debate conducted in full view of all the people,” Adlai Stevenson wrote in 1959. The following year, Congress suspended the Section 315 rule, in order to allow Nixon to debate Kennedy.

“The TV debate was a bold innovation which is bound to be carried forward into future campaigns, and could not now be abandoned,” Walter Lippmann wrote. “From now on, it will be impossible for any candidate for any important office to avoid this kind of confrontation.” No general-election Presidential debate was held for the next sixteen years.

“POINT TAKEN,” PBS’s new late-night public-affairs program, is a series of ten half-hour debates. It debuted in April. One of the show’s taglines is “Substance without the abuse.” Its intentions are unimpeachable. Denise DiIanni created the series, which is produced by WGBH, in Boston, and underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts. She told me that “Point Taken” is meant to be “counter-programming” to the mean-spirited and



*“Fellas, I invited Max here to give us a fresh, millennial take on how to get out of the inning.”*



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gridlocked political conversations you find everywhere else. “We would like, in a media landscape, to model what civil dialogue can look like,” she says.

The moderator of “Point Taken” is Carlos Watson, a graduate of Harvard and of Stanford Law School and a former political analyst and anchor for CNN and MSNBC. Forty-six, handsome, fiercely affable, he was wearing jeans and sneakers and a V-necked sweater the day I went to watch a taping. The question at hand: “Is technology making us smarter or dumber?” The stage was surrounded by giant computer screens; one screen displayed the word “SMARTER,” the other “DUMBER.” The Marist Institute conducts a public-opinion survey in advance of each episode, and the in-studio and online audiences are polled before and after the debate. Watson sits on a stool at the head of what looks like a dinner table, with four guests, two on each side of the issue. “Do they have to call us Team Dumber?” the startup guy, Jeff Glasse, stage-whispered to his teammate, the neuroscientist Daniel Levitin. Team Smarter was two women, Emily Dreyfuss, an editor at *Wired*, and Kathryn Finney, a founder of Digital Undivided. The conversation wasn’t a formal debate, although it observed a format. “Give me your top three points in thirty seconds,” Watson said. What followed was zippy and snappy and super-duper friendly and, as a matter of intellectual exchange, superficial. “Good point!” Watson would interrupt. The discussion soon became a debate about debate. Team Dumber argued that technology is narrowing our political vantage: “This election season, have you watched the people who disagree with you slowly disappear from your feed?”

The problem with “Point Taken” is the problem with a lot of proposed remedies to the coarseness of political debate: it wants everyone to be nice. “Let’s use our inside voices,” one plug for “Point Taken” reads. Defanged debate bears an uncomfortable resemblance to what’s known as Circle Time, a pedagogical practice that begins in preschool and can last through high school. It has three rules: “Only one person speaks at a time; everyone can have fun; no one

can spoil anyone else’s fun.” The trouble, it seems, is finding a middle ground between Circle Time and a cage match. Disagreeing without being disagreeable, which is one of “Point Taken”’s laudable objectives, has become difficult. That’s in part because, in a polarized political and media arena, both politicians and political commentators are rewarded for being outrageously disagreeable. But it’s also because some people think—and everything from Circle Time to the culture of trauma teaches them—that to disagree with them is to harm them.

“We are debating free speech because its values are under siege,” Wendy Kaminer said during an Intelligence Squared U.S. debate at Yale in March. Intelligence Squared has been hosting fantastic Oxford-style debates since 2006, underwritten by a New York philanthropist named Robert Rosenkranz. Its debates, which last for an hour and forty-five minutes, are moderated by ABC News’s John Donovan, broadcast on public radio, available as a podcast, and archived on YouTube. Teaming up with Kaminer to defend the resolution “Free Speech is threatened on campus,” John McWhorter argued that “many of the things that we’re being told we shouldn’t even discuss, and that the mere discussion of it constitutes a space becoming unsafe, are really things which, in an intelligent and moral environment, people will reasonably have discussions about.”

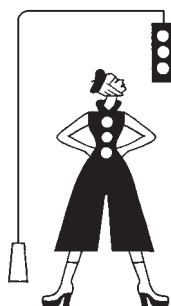
Inspired by Intelligence Squared, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education recently launched a series of Oxford-style debates on college campuses. The motto of the debates is “Free to Disagree!” Greg Lukianoff is the president of the foundation. (With Jonathan Haidt, Lukianoff wrote “The Coddling of the American Mind,” a spirited polemic about the decline of free speech on campus published in *The Atlantic*.) “Debate doesn’t have to be this miserable, burdensome thing,” Lukianoff told me. Like most people involved in the movement to revive debate, he thinks that what’s happening on college campuses can’t be separated from what’s happening on the campaign trail or during televised debates.

Intelligence Squared has gathered some sixty thousand signatures on a

petition at Change.org, calling on the Commission on Presidential Debates to adopt Oxford rules, so that, during a series of hour-long debates on simple resolutions—“Give undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship” or “The United States intervenes abroad too often”—each candidate would make a seven-minute opening statement, and the two would then question each other. “The format and the strictures of debating on a specific motion allow an audience to listen to two sides of a debate,” Donovan told me. “And that’s twice as many sides as many people have ever heard.”

THE FIRST GENERAL-ELECTION Presidential debate after Nixon debated Kennedy was held in 1976, when Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter faced off. Kennedy had committed himself to debating Barry Goldwater. But after the assassination Lyndon B. Johnson refused, and in 1968 Nixon, advised by Ailes, followed his lead, ignoring the taunt when Humphrey called him “Sir Richard-the-Chicken-Hearted.” There was also a regulatory hurdle. Newton Minow, who had helped Adlai Stevenson write the speech in which he called for nationally televised political debates, became the chairman of the F.C.C. in 1961, and the next year he made a decision in a case involving Section 315—the equal-time rule—that debates are not covered under what is known as the “bona-fide news event” exception. This ruling made it harder to hold a debate, even if the incumbents had agreed to it, because there was no way to winnow the field of challengers owed equal time. “There is no decision I made in public life that I regret more,” Minow has said.

Meanwhile, televised debate adopted a new style. In 1965, James Baldwin defeated William F. Buckley, Jr., in an Oxford-style debate at Cambridge University; the topic was “The American Dream is at the exception of the American Negro.” The next year, Buckley launched “Firing Line,” adapting the form to a television studio, with its living-room intimacy. In 1968, when ABC didn’t have enough money to cover the Conventions gavel to gavel, the network hired Buckley and Gore Vidal to debate. During one of their exchanges, over Vietnam, Vidal called Buckley a



## AHAB'S PURSUIT OF THE WHALE

A sparkler too charred to give back to England. Larded with visions of hills,  
the waves the heat makes, the subtle mirages we feel even when we don't look at their faces, which are the faces of grief and elation and so on unpacking luggage beyond some trip in a story, probably a night sea journey or something, in other words heat of the first or second order, something Yeats might worship, and Mill might turn away. In short, a fantasy in which they all were players, maybe a morality play on a stage that protrudes from a tent, a cylindrical tent, kind of like a sleeping bag  
in which the whole family lives and spends its time  
rehearsing for the play, always saying Father, always saying Mother.

—David Kutz-Marks

“crypto-Nazi,” whereupon Buckley called Vidal a “queer.” And so it went.

Ford agreed to debate Carter in 1976 because he had no choice. He'd pardoned Nixon and fallen thirty points behind in the polls. Carter wanted to debate Ford because hardly anyone knew who Carter was. The League of Women Voters formed a steering committee, which included Minow, to help clear the regulatory hurdle. There remained the matter of the rules that the League negotiated with the candidates, including something known as the belt-buckle principle, which, according to Minow, “required each man's lectern to intersect his torso at such a height as to make neither man appear taller than the other.” After the first of three debates, a lot of people complained that the candidates weren't actually debating; they were answering questions from the reporters, in the style of “Meet the Press.” Minow asked the candidates to drop the panel format and talk to each other. Neither was willing to do so.

The League didn't like the panel, either, but the long tradition of candidates' refusing to participate made it easy for candidates to boycott. In 1980, when the independent candidate John Anderson ran against Carter and Reagan, the League ruled that, in order to participate in a general-election debate, a candidate had to have earned at least fifteen per cent in a national poll. As even pollsters admitted, this was unjustifiable, since polls are simply not reliable enough to support that decision. Nevertheless,

Anderson met that bar and was invited to debate, whereupon Carter refused to participate. Carter called the Reagan-Anderson debate “the Great Republican Debate”; the whole affair became known as “the Great Debate Debate,” and it consumed more hours of news coverage than the Iran hostage crisis.

The Reagan Administration, keen to deregulate the F.C.C., proposed handing control of the debates to broadcasters. During Senate hearings, Dorothy Ridings, the president of the League of Women Voters, warned against that move: “Broadcasters are profit-making corporations operating in an extremely competitive setting, in which ratings assume utmost importance.” They would make a travesty of the debates, she predicted, not least because they'd agree to whatever terms the campaigns demanded. Also: “We firmly believe that those who report the news should not make the news.”

Much of what Ridings predicted has come to pass. Broadcasters got control of the primary debates, whose format they designed with an eye to driving ratings and raising advertising revenue. The networks' practice of accommodating candidate demands during the primary debates spilled over into the negotiations undertaken by the League during the general election.

In 1984, the League allowed the Reagan and Mondale campaigns to veto format options and vet moderators. Reagan's negotiator was Jim Baker; Mondale's was Jim Johnson. Ridings's notes from her meetings and telephone conversations

with the two men are housed in the Schlesinger Library, at Radcliffe. September 7th: “Baker said the format is ‘almost non-negotiable. We're not in the business of experimenting; we're in the business of electing a president.’” September 8th: “Johnson also said they want us to hold out for a ‘moderator-only’ debate, and I repeated that unfortunately—while the moderator-only was what we had wanted—both campaigns had ruled that out so we had reluctantly agreed to go to the panel format.” September 11th: “Agreement on panel of four; each side contributes names and we choose two from each. Moderator: each side whispers in our ear the people they would not accept.” Names were mentioned; names were struck. Brit Hume? No. John Chancellor? No. What about some women, minorities? October 2nd: “Would try Cokie Roberts, Nina Totenberg, Linda Wertheimer, Diane Sawyer and Lesley Stahl.” No. October 4th: “What about Bryant Gumbel? . . . Eliz. Drew?”

It was this state of affairs that, three years later, led Fahrenkopf, as the head of the R.N.C., and Paul Kirk, then the head of the D.N.C., to found the Commission on Presidential Debates. In 1988, the commission was supposed to sponsor the first Bush-Dukakis debate and the League the second. The two campaigns negotiated with each other about matters of format, and then delivered to both sponsors a Memorandum of Understanding dictating terms. Among its provisions was a ban on follow-up questions. Baker, who negotiated on behalf of Bush, later said this:

We got everything agreed to right down to the very end, and then they told us that they wanted to put a box, a little stand, underneath his, you know, where he would be. I said, “What? You want to put a box?” I said, “Your guy is running for president of the United States. What are you going to do when he meets with Gorbachev, bring out a little box for him to stand on so that he's eye level with Gorbachev?” And they couldn't respond to that. We finally let him have his box.

The League rejected the Memorandum of Understanding and withdrew its sponsorship of the debates. “It has become clear to us that the candidates' organizations aim to add debates to their list of campaign-trail charades devoid of substance, spontaneity and answers to tough questions,” its press release read. “The League has no intention of becoming an



accessory to the hoodwinking of the American public.”

Dan Rather hosted the first of the 1988 Presidential debates, between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. Rather seemed embarrassed about it. “This will not be a debate in the sense the word is often used in the English language, because all of this is so tightly controlled by the candidates themselves and their managers,” he told the television audience. “These things have developed over the years into what some people believe can more accurately be described as a joint campaign appearance or an orchestrated news conference.” Meanwhile, backstage, Ailes gave Bush some last-minute advice. As governor of Massachusetts, Dukakis had urged the repeal of Colonial-era anti-sodomy laws; Ailes had produced a campaign ad suggesting that Dukakis supported bestiality. “If you get in trouble out there,” Ailes whispered in Bush’s ear, “just call him an animal fucker.”

If you read only the records of the Constitutional Convention and the Lincoln-Douglas debates, you’d have a pretty sophisticated understanding of American history and politics. The same cannot be said of watching any or all of the televised Presidential debates from 1976 to 2012. Still, the debates are important and illuminating, and they’ve become a regular part of the political process. No longer is there a debate, every four years, about whether the candidates will debate. Ridings, who serves on the commission, attributes this to the League. “The League was the laboratory,” she told me. But there’s still a lot of negotiating, despite the commission’s efforts to rein in the candidates. In 1992, Bill Clinton picked out very big stools, “designed to make Perot look like a kid,” according to a Clinton aide. By then, the Presidential debates were high stakes. It was the age of the zinger: Reagan’s “There you go again”; Lloyd Benson to Dan Quayle, “Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy.” There were gaffes, too, many of them having to do with the staging or the filming. Debating Clinton and Perot in a “town hall” format—taking questions from the audience, a format that Clinton loved and George H. W. Bush did not—Bush was caught on camera looking at his watch. He later admitted that he was probably thinking, “Only ten more minutes of this crap.”

Bush wasn’t alone. “The debates are

part of the unconscionable fraud that our political campaigns have become,” Walter Cronkite wrote in 1998. “Here is a means to present to the American people a rational exposition of the major issues that face the nation, and the alternate approaches to their solution. Yet the candidates participate only with the guarantee of a format that defies meaningful discourse. They should be charged with sabotaging the electoral process.”

In theory, the commission no longer allows campaigns to dictate terms. A turning point came in 2004, when Vernon Jordan, on behalf of John Kerry, and Jim Baker, on behalf of George W. Bush, negotiated terms and delivered to the commission a thirty-two-page Memorandum of Understanding; the commission unanimously rejected it. Still, there’s usually a certain amount of tinkering at the last minute. In 2012, the commission arranged for the candidates to be seated at a table; Jim Lehrer agreed to moderate. But when Obama decided that he’d rather stand behind a lectern during the first debate, and Romney agreed, the commission caved. Lehrer considered backing out. He says that you can cover a lot more ground when people are sitting down, “because you can employ body language, you can move them along with a shake of your head, or with your eyes, which you cannot do in a podium format.” In the end, he agreed to the lecterns. He told me, “I had the right to say, ‘No, I’m not going to do it,’ but I said, ‘The hell with it, I’ll do it.’”

More than ten million tweets were posted during that debate, making it, at that point, the most tweeted-about political event in American history. Lehrer was criticized for not challenging the candidates. During the primary season, viewers had grown used to the way celebrity television personalities push and taunt the candidates, and didn’t realize that the rules set by the commission discourage that. Traffic cones and dog cones, scones and daisies.

**T**HIS YEAR, AS is now customary, there will be three Presidential debates. “I will absolutely do three debates,” Trump said in August. “I want to debate very badly. But I have to see the conditions.” He wanted to “see who the moderators are,” he said. NBC’s Lester Holt will mod-

erate the first debate, Fox News’s Chris Wallace the third. The second debate, moderated by Anderson Cooper and Martha Raddatz, will be a town hall. During the first and third debates, Holt and Wallace will ask the candidates questions in six fifteen-minute topic blocks, which is the commission’s best approximation of Oxford rules. “I am a firm believer in the Oxford style of debating,” McCurry told me. “In a perfect world, we’re looking for that. That to me would be more the ideal, not exactly Lincoln-Douglas, but as close as you could get.” On the whole, the commission’s efforts to get the candidates to argue with one another, over the issues, have failed. In 2008, Lehrer tried to get McCain and Obama to talk to each other; McCain simply wouldn’t do it.

There’s another way of getting the candidates to clash—boxing ring, courtroom, all at once. In 1992, the night before the New York Democratic primary, Phil Donahue hosted Democratic candidates Bill Clinton and Jerry Brown in a debate shown live on C-SPAN. “I am pleased to present Governor Brown, and Governor Clinton,” Donahue said. Then he sat back in his chair and never uttered another word. Clinton and Brown talked to each other for forty-five minutes, unmoderated, and uninterrupted. “It was as good a conversation as I have ever seen,” Paul Begala told me, looking back. “Someone could try it this time,” Begala said. “The lights would go on and the moderator could say, ‘Madam Secretary, Mr. Trump, have a good conversation,’” and walk off. Begala laughed, picturing it. “Except no one could do that this time because Trump couldn’t sit and talk, civilly, for ninety minutes because, with Trump, you need a lion tamer, a whip, and a chair.” Except, maybe the electorate is the lion tamer, the whip, and the chair. Or maybe the electorate’s the lion, wild and prowling.

Madam Secretary, Mr. Trump: Have a good conversation. ♦

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### Constabulary Notes from All Over

*From the Fort Atkinson (Wisc.) Daily Jefferson County Union.*

A woman from the 900 block of South Main Street reported six people in her apartment, two of whom were dressed as clowns, eating half a bag of cookies, and she had not let them in. No one was in the apartment when an officer searched and the apartment was cleared.

# A TRUMPIAN CANDIDATE ON TRUMP'S CORSET

BY CALVIN TRILLIN



PEOPLE ARE ASKING—I shouldn't be saying this, but a tremendous number of people are asking—why does Donald Trump always have on that floppy suit jacket? Why doesn't he button it? *Can* he button it? Other candidates, when they visit a state fair, wear bluejeans and a work shirt. A work shirt. They want to show that they're in good physical condition, because a President needs stamina. He has to be high energy. No work shirt for Doughboy Donald. He wears a floppy suit jacket and a baseball hat. What's he hiding? And have you noticed that his neckties—wide neckties, really huge neckties, huge—come clear down to his belt buckle? How does that happen with a man who is six feet three? That's all I'm asking. Is he malformed? Does he have a short upper body to go with the short fingers? Does he buy extra-long ties? Or are the neckties specially designed to hide the outlines of some stays around his midsection? I don't know, but that's what some people say. And why is his face that

funny orange color? Could it be that he has to hold his breath because of a tight corset? I'm just passing along what some people are asking. These people don't care whether a candidate is fat or thin. What they care about is whether or not they can trust the nuclear codes to a man who is deceptive about his own shape.

Why does he look so much more bloated in his neck and in his face than in his midsection? Is it because we can't really see his midsection? Thousands of people in other countries have noticed this, and they're laughing at us. Believe me, they're laughing at us. China is laughing at us, because they make corsets in China—which, by the way, they're undercutting us on. For millions. Millions. Dozens of people have tweeted at me about this corset. Hundreds. I'm not saying that Trump wears a corset, but I've received thousands of letters and tweets saying that the size of his neck doesn't match the size of his stomach. A pattern of deception! And a tremendous number of those letters and

tweets compliment me on my own neck. I have a great neck.

I'm told, by some people who should know, that the man is wearing a corset. They say there's a tremendous chance of that. Tremendous. A huge chance of that. Huge. They suspect that bigly. Sure, Trump's doctor released a so-called medical report—written, the doctor now says, in five minutes—which says Donald has lost fifteen pounds in the past twelve months. But it doesn't give his weight. It doesn't give his weight, because what if a man who looks like he weighs maybe two hundred and thirty pounds really weighs two hundred and eighty pounds. People are going to ask where he's hiding that extra fifty pounds. Believe me, they're going to ask that. And I don't even want to think about the answer. It's disgusting.

In fact, the whole medical report is a one-page letter that is short on numbers. Very short. Really tremendously short. Shorter than Marco Rubio. The letter's language, so close to Donald's language, brings up the question of who wrote a letter, years ago—if there was such a letter—telling Doughboy Donald's draft board that he was ineligible for the Vietnam draft because of bone spurs in his heels. And did that letter really use the phrase “best bone spurs ever”? I can hardly bring myself to discuss this, because it's disgusting. Very, very disgusting. The last time bone spurs were in the news was when Joe DiMaggio had a bone spur. Don't get me wrong: I loved and admired Joe DiMaggio. And he loved and admired me. Baseball players love me, because I'm a winner. Joe DiMaggio had an operation to remove the bone spur. Did Doughboy Donald have an operation? There's no record of that. So where are those bone spurs now? Did they just squirt out between his toes, or does he still have bone spurs in there somewhere? I've had people looking for those bone spurs, and you won't believe what they're finding. When their report is released, those bone spurs will make the corset look like small potatoes. But the corset is still disgusting. Very, very disgusting. And deceptive. But I don't want to talk about that. I'd rather talk about the issues. ♦



OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

# PATINA

*How the Statue of Liberty colors the city.*

BY IAN FRAZIER



*When you have the Statue's green on the brain, you see it everywhere.*

RECENTLY I'VE BEEN thinking about the color of the Statue of Liberty. That elusive, flickering, familiar, sea-polished shade of copper-green got into my head last year when I was standing on the roof of an apartment building in the Bronx. Edwin Velasquez, a young man who works for Bronx Pro Group, a developer of affordable housing, was showing me a roof painting he had superintended. The job was a minor triumph of his. A designer had given him a plan on paper and he had successfully transposed it to the fifteen-thousand-square-foot roof. Now the heat-reflecting paint would help cool the building in summer, and the design's images stood out in satellite pho-

tos of the city seen from above. We strolled around on the painting, examining it. The next phase would be to continue the painting onto the roof of the building across the street. "That building is ours, and so is that one, and that," he said, pointing up and down Andrews Avenue South. "You can always tell Bronx Pro buildings because we paint our fire escapes and window trim Statue of Liberty green."

Sometimes the right words can transform your eyes. When I heard the name of the color, the fire escapes popped into focus for the first time. Forty years ago, when I lived in a loft on Canal Street, my fire escape was a faded red, as were many fire escapes,

as many still are. Now I saw how the contrasting Statue of Liberty green trim set off the brown or clay-yellow brickwork of the buildings, making them appear elegantly turned out, as if for review in an apartment-building parade. Later, as Velasquez and I walked through Morris Heights, I noticed a lot of buildings with fire escapes of that particular green, or variations on it.

Velasquez's boss, Peter Magistro, chose the color for his company's signature trim fifteen or twenty years ago. He doesn't remember where he got the sample. He ordered the paint from New Palace Paint Supply, on East 180th Street, which also sells paint in bulk to the Department of Transportation, the Parks Department, and the New York City Housing Authority. When I made a visit to the store one afternoon, I saw that its own window trim is Statue of Liberty green. Joseph R. Ascagnano, the son of the owner, said they call the color Home Builders Green, for the name of Magistro's general-contracting company. "People love the color," Ascagnano told me. "We've had people walk in here and see our trim and say, 'I want that color.'"

New Palace sells mostly Benjamin Moore paint, which had no factory-made color to match Magistro's sample, so the eye of the store's spectrophotometer read the sample, found a mixture of colors to duplicate it, and gave a formula. The formula was typed on the paint-spattered keyboard of a Gennex Fluid Management tinter, which then squirted the constituent colors—school-bus yellow, dark green, and black—into a can of oil-based white paint. Another machine shook the can to mix them. From there the new color began to spread across the Bronx.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY'S exterior is made of copper, and it turned that shade of green because of oxidation. Copper is a noble metal, which means that it does not react readily with other substances. The Statue's copper is only three-thirty-seconds of an inch thick and unusually pure. A copper magnate named Pierre-Eugène Secrétan donated most of it—the sculpture required about a hundred tons. Secrétan probably took it from a mine in which he held an interest on an island

off the coast of Norway. Later, he was ruined in the copper crash of 1889.

At the Statue's unveiling, in 1886, it was brown, like a penny. By 1906, oxidation had covered it with a green patina. The thin layer of oxidation that covers copper (and bronze, an alloy made mostly of copper) can preserve the metal for centuries, even millennia, as shown by objects from the ancient world. A monumental bronze statue, the Colossus of Rhodes, which portrayed Helios, the sun god, provided Auguste Bartholdi with the inspiration for the Statue. The Rhodes Colossus stood for about fifty-six years, until 226 B.C., when it broke off at the knees and collapsed in an earthquake. By then, it probably was a shade of blackish-green. Neither bronze nor copper rusts. Pieces of the Colossus lay for nine hundred years where they had fallen, until the seventh century, when they were sold for scrap.

As might be expected, when the Statue of Liberty turned green people in positions of authority wondered what to do. The Army was in charge of the Statue then, because it had been erected on Bedloe's Island, which was an active military base. In 1906, New York newspapers printed stories saying that the Statue was soon to be painted. The public did not like the idea. The officer in charge of the base, Captain George C. Burnell, told the *Times*, "I wish the newspapers had never mentioned that. I am in receipt of bushels of letters on the subject, and most of them protest vigorously against the proposed plan. I can't say now just what we will do, but we will have to do something."

The *Times* reporter then went to the country's largest bronze and copper manufacturer, on West Twenty-sixth Street, and asked if the Statue should be painted. The company V.P. said that painting it would be vandalism, and completely unnecessary because of the protective quality of the patina. The executive went on:

You may be surprised to know that for years we have been trying to imitate the color effect of the Statue of Liberty by artificial means in our copper work. By architects and artists generally this color effect is considered the type of perfection for this kind of metal. I remember once asking the late Stanford White [White had been murdered just the month before] how he wished us to finish the decorative metal

work on a noted building that he was putting up. "Go down to Bedloe's Island," he said, "and study the Statue of Liberty. You will find the most beautiful example of metal coloring in existence in the world today."

The Statue's exterior was not painted in 1906, nor has it ever been. Despite several rehabilitations and restorations inside and out, and other threats of painting over or polishing off the patina, the Statue has been left its own, irreproducible color.

**I** MADE TRIPS TO the Statue to check it out in person. The first time, I took the ferry from lower Manhattan on a cloudy, drizzly day. As the boat got closer, the Statue loomed; there is nothing as tall anywhere around it, and when it came into full view it seemed almost to lunge out of the water. All the colors in its surroundings collaborated with the Statue's own green: the bruise-blue of the clouds, the faded green of the leaves of the island's London plane trees, the crayon green of the lawn, the forest-green seaweed on the rocks, the jade green of the waves.

When I went back a week later, I came by ferry from Liberty State Park, in New Jersey. This time, the sky was clear and the sun shone full on the Statue from directly overhead and its color blew me away. It kind of effervesced. I could not look at it enough. It did not resemble the swatch of Home Builders Green from New Palace Paint Supply that I had brought with me. I held the swatch up for comparison. The paint was shiny, tight, flat, while the ageless patina of the copper had a texture like extremely fine velvet. Some of it shaded to a green-black, parts were dark blue, parts olive. Some of the green had evidently washed down onto the pedestal and stained the bas-relief granite shields once intended to hold the seals of the thirty-eight states (plus two extra for the future) that had entered the Union by 1886.

On the walkway that goes around the Statue I went clockwise and then counter-, to see how she looks from the south, the side immigrants saw first, with the right knee bent and the figure in stride. Then I stopped to view her from the front, the way the immigrants saw her as their ships passed by. From

that angle she appears to be standing immobile. I did not leave until late in the afternoon, when the sun had moved lower in the sky. Now, as I watched from the ferry, light streamed around her. She was a giant silhouette with all of America behind her.

**J**OHAN ROBBINS, the historical architect who was a leader of the crew that restored the Statue between 1984 and 1986, and who now is in charge of construction, personnel, and security at the National Gallery, told me by phone that different degrees of patination cause the dark patches that people have noticed on her, especially on her face. Weather hammers her, too. "The wind up and down the Hudson River—down from Canada, up from the Atlantic Ocean—is quite severe," he said. "The moist air has salt, and pollutants like acid rain and dissolved gases, and very tiny abrasives like the pieces of rubber from the tires of the city's millions of cars. Not to mention the snow and hail and hurricanes. She's an amazing artifact to have stood it all so well for so long."

His team of restorers washed bird streaks and tar from the outside, removed bird's nests from the base of the arm, replaced pieces of the nose, and redid the torch. Robbins said that the French artisans who made the torch were rumored to have saved buckets of their urine to patinate it, Gallic pee being thought the best for that task. If they did, it appeared to have had no effect, he added.

And what about the color? Why does it beguile us, and why did people become so devoted to it, early on, that they defended it from the Army's customary practice of painting anything that doesn't move?

"The object, all hundred and fifty feet of it, is handmade," Robbins said. "The repoussé technique, hammering the copper on the molds that shaped it, was done by hand and square inch by square inch. Even in places nobody can see, the sculpture isn't blank, it's richly detailed—the strands of hair on the top of her head, the bun, the soles of her sandals. By her feet, the broken shackles, which are concealed from viewers on the ground, could be stand-alone works of art. The patina is an



organic part of its handmade quality. Patina is a crystalline structure; it's not opaque like paint. You're looking *into* it. The copper, which is quite pure, is almost all still the original, after all this time. The patina has been growing for a hundred and thirty years."

ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1909, Wilbur Wright took off from Governors Island in his canvas biplane, flew to the Statue of Liberty, and circled it while hundreds of thousands of spectators in boats and along the shore looked on. He then returned to Governors Island, after less than five minutes in the air. No American had ever flown in a plane over water before. The feat provided a highlight for the city's Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909, which commemorated the three-hundredth anniversary of Henry Hudson's landing on Manhattan Island and the hundredth anniversary of Robert Fulton's first successful steamboat trial.

The Hudson-Fulton Celebration had a special flag, with orange, blue,

and white horizontal stripes, and the letters "HF" in the middle. New York City itself lacked a colorful flag at the time. All it had was a plain white banner with the city's seal in blue in the center. In 1915, the Art Commission associates of the City of New York created a new flag, also using orange, blue, and white. Like the designers of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration flag, the associates chose the colors because they were the flag of the Netherlands when the city was founded, in 1626. For a change, the associates arranged the stripes vertically rather than horizontally, with the blue closest to the flagpole, the white in the middle, and the orange next.

The flag the associates designed has now been flying over New York for a hundred and one years. Its orange, white, and blue became the city's official visual signature. Sometimes the Empire State Building is lit up with these colors in honor of sporting events or anniversaries in local history. Orange, white, and blue are the colors of

the New York baseball Mets and basketball Knicks, and of the hockey Islanders, in from the suburbs. The blue, which is almost indigo, makes the orange jump out at you, and vice versa, while the white assists them both. As colors go, these could not be louder, and in combination they shout.

The colors of the city flag imply history, politics, religion, and civic weal. The Statue of Liberty, by contrast, has a kinship with the color of money. Its outward and visible part almost *is* money, to the extent that pennies still have value today. The Statue is always described as the gift of the French people to the people of the United States, because the French raised the money to pay for the sculpture by their private donations, and their government was not involved. The American people eventually responded by raising money for the Statue's pedestal. Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the *New York World*, led a fund-raising campaign in his newspaper, and it succeeded spectacularly, producing a hundred and two thousand dollars in donations between March and August of 1885. Pulitzer said that he would publish the name of every donor, no matter the amount donated. Names in small type, all jammed together, took up page after page in the paper. Sometimes the donations were only a few cents. The Statue owes its existence to French and American spare change.

Nothing shakes money loose like the Statue. Advertisements employing the Statue have been around since before she stood in the harbor. People in Statue of Liberty costumes often work the city's sidewalks. Liberty Tax Service, the national tax-return preparers, sends temps in Statue costumes to pass out handbills every April; you come upon these Statues leafletting and smoking cigarettes at choke points around town. Year round, in Times Square and by the ferry dock in Battery Park, tall Statue impersonators, with their robes and torches and crowns, pose for tourists and accept gratuities while networks of tiny cracks appear in their pale-green face paint. The stuff is waxy and pasty, the color of a hospital wall.

If immigrants who came by ship had heard that the streets of America were paved with gold, seeing a huge



copper statue in the harbor when they arrived probably seemed about right. Copper is not as imperishable as gold, but it's more demotic, a people's metal. Why would a democracy need streets of gold? Copper, like the penny, is for everybody, and probably just as good for paving.

THE ART COMMISSION of the City of New York, which created the city's flag, still exists, but under a different name. Now it is called the Public Design Commission, or P.D.C. Established by city charter, the commission oversees the design aspects of structures, parks, streetscapes, and works of art on and over city property. The P.D.C.'s dozen members, appointed to the job and serving on a volunteer basis, come from the executive staffs of the city's libraries and museums, or are independent artists. Their decisions control much of the over-all look of the city. During the Bloomberg administration, for example, the P.D.C. recommended against using crazy colors on infrastructure. As an older city, New York should stay more temperate and dignified, the commissioners said. The P.D.C. is why we don't have flame-yellow bridge supports in New York.

Byron Kim, a painter with a studio in Brooklyn, served on the P.D.C. from 2003 to 2014. He remembers the colors that the Department of Transportation was using on bridges and other structures when he started out. "There were only four colors, and they were all pretty bad," he said. "We had to negotiate with the Department of Transportation, and a lot of their considerations were budgetary, or based on how much of the old paint they had in storage. We came up with some new colors—George Washington Bridge Gray, the traditional color of the G.W.B., which is a subtle silver-gray that everybody loved, and Deep Cool Red, a richer, more saturated red, and Federal Blue, which is a strong blue (I had a lot to do with our choosing it), and Green Aluminum. That color, and Sage Green, an older Parks Department color, may be the ones you're seeing that remind you of the Statue."

Kim's most famous work, "Synecdoche," consists of more than four hundred painted squares depicting the var-

ious skin colors of strangers and of his friends, family members, and acquaintances. I asked him if he saw any connection between that work and the color of the Statue. "Human skin colors are hard to pin down and they have a lot of emotional connotations," he said. "As I looked at them and tried to reproduce them with paint, they were never simple. Skin is not any single color, even on one person. We assume we know what color certain things are.



Everybody knows the sky is blue. But the sky is different from one part to another; it's hard to describe. Think of all the ideas that have been in people's heads when they looked at the Statue of Liberty. What color could stand for those ideas? What color is freedom?"

I liked his sky analogy, because the Statue belongs as much to the sky as to the land. That's why Wilbur Wright flew around her, and why a solar-powered airplane on a globe-spanning journey did a flyby over her a few months ago. If the Statue were any identifiable human skin color, such as white or black or brown, her meaning would be limited. Instead she's green, the usual color of space aliens.

WHEN YOU HAVE Statue of Liberty green on the brain, you see it all around you, especially on infrastructure. Being aware of the color somehow makes the city's bindings and conduits and linkages stand out as if they'd been injected with radioactive dye. When you look for the color, the city becomes an electric train set you're assembling with your eyes.

You notice the city's many parts that are made of copper. In the skyline of downtown, the roofs of the Woolworth Building, the World Financial Center, and 40 Wall Street all stand out copper-green. Decorative borders on the tops of certain apartment buildings, and ornamental sculptures, and gutters on

brownstones in older neighborhoods, and moldings of certain skylights and windows, and even a few doors and door frames, come close to duplicating the Statue's shade. I used to regard the city as something apart from me, like a mountain range. I assumed that the way it looked—not too good, back in the seventies and eighties—was its own doing. Eventually, I understood that every part of it is the result of a decision somebody made. The discovery gave me an unexpected sense of connection and responsibility. Now my eye constantly picks out elevated-train girders, footbridges, drawbridge houses, pipelines, fuel tanks, lampposts, window gratings, fence bars, guardrails, and I-beams holding up interstate overpasses, all in their own versions of Statue of Liberty green, and they fasten me to the city.

In 1906, the *Times* noted that visitors to the Statue took a "little steamer" that carried forty or fifty passengers and went every hour. Today, the Statue ferries carry hundreds on each trip and leave every half hour from both sides of the Hudson. According to data based on ticket purchases and customer surveys compiled by the ferry company, more than a million people from foreign countries visit the Statue every year, and almost three million Americans. This year, the combined total will be about four and a half million—about four times the number of immigrants who entered through Ellis Island in 1907, its busiest year. The executive staffers who run the Statue think that the sight of her still standing in the harbor after September 11th imprinted her powerfully on people's minds.

The original point of the Statue was to celebrate the end of slavery after the Civil War and remind the Statue's country of origin of the lost promise of its own revolution. In time, with Emma Lazarus's poem welcoming the poor and the tempest-tossed on a plaque at the pedestal, the Statue came to stand for much more. When we think that we have to treat immigrants cruelly in order to survive, we go against a root structure that's deep within the city and deep within ourselves. New York City's official colors are orange, blue, and white, but its secret, sustaining color is Statue of Liberty green. ♦



# COSTUME DRAMA

*Alessandro Michele, of Gucci, looks at modern fashion with a deeply historical eye.*

BY REBECCA MEAD

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Gucci, which started in Florence in the nineteenth century as a small leather-goods concern, moved its design headquarters to Rome, where it occupies a grand Renaissance building called the Palazzo Alberini-Cicciaporci. The palazzo was completed around 1520, following a plan ascribed to Raphael, and many art historians discern his touch in the elegantly geometric façade. Other aspects of the building have been attributed to his chief assistant, Giulio Romano, who worked in Raphael's studio for years before going on to forge the new style of Mannerism.

The palazzo's former chapel—a light-filled chamber with a coffered ceiling that is edged by newly restored frescoes—is now the office of Gucci's creative director. Since January, 2015, this position has been held by Alessandro Michele, a forty-three-year-old native of Rome, who has worked at Gucci for fourteen years. Before his ascension, he was second-in-command at the company, overseeing its lucrative line of accessories.

When Michele took over the chapel office, he did away with the sleek modernist couches that had been installed there, filling the space instead with his impressive collection of antiques. Empire chairs upholstered in golden brocade now rest on Oriental carpets. He brought in an enormous double desk from the nineteenth century, designed so that two people could work opposite each other. When I visited the office, in April, the desktop was stacked with beautiful old objects, from a gilded Roman-style wreath to a nineteenth-century English translation of the Decameron, published in the nineteenth-thirties, with Art Nouveau woodcut illustrations. (Michele is reading it to polish his English.) Michele bought the desk at one of the

many antique stores he frequents in Florence. "I was in love with this desk from the first time I saw it, but I didn't have the space," he told me. "When I got this office, I called the owners and said, 'Now I have the space.'"

Michele's predecessor, Frida Giannini, was the creative director for eight years, and during that period she and Patrizio di Marco, Gucci's C.E.O., began a relationship and had a child. Near the end of her tenure, fashion critics grew bored with her clothes, many of which reworked themes that Gucci had been exploring since the nineties, when Tom Ford, the American designer, revitalized the brand with outré glamour. Sales fell, and in December, 2014, Giannini and di Marco were fired.

Michele, having labored for years in the Giulio Romano role—sublimating his creative vision in the service of another while quietly learning how the company worked—stepped into the Raphael position with aplomb. Within a week, he had overseen the design of an entirely new men's collection, a fop-pish conception that was a decisive swerve from the bourgeois luxury of Giannini's menswear designs (sweaters in muted colors, tasteful cashmere peacoats). Michele's clothes would have pleased the earliest inhabitants of the Palazzo Alberini: a blouselike pink shirt fastened at the neck with a pussy-cat bow; mink-lined mules with horse-bit buckles. Michele gave the runway show of the collection a modern edge by presenting the garments on both male and female models. On January 21, 2015, two days after the show, Michele was officially promoted to creative director.

That February, he produced his first women's collection, which was shown on

a parade of wan models—some of them slightly funny-looking, many of them in nerdy glasses. The designs, like Michele's antiques collection, suggested a voracious curatorial eye. One model wore a floral tea gown with furry slippers—a supple combination of thirties débutante and fifties housewife. A transparent peach-colored blouse with a ruffled neckline was boldly paired with a scarlet leather skirt. Michele was offering a startling miscellany inflected with a high-end vintage sensibility. Although he had invented the clothes, it was as if they had been culled from a thrift store to which centuries of Roman princesses had consigned their most extravagant castoffs.

The collection was initially greeted with warm, if guarded, curiosity. Vanessa Friedman, the *Times* critic, wrote, "It wasn't Fashion, it was fashion; a parade of pieces with a nostalgic romance that could be plucked from a wardrobe, or plunked into one, with ease." Within a few months, though, the fashion world had fully embraced Michele's cluttered, retro sensibility. After Gucci's Cruise collection was shown in New York in the summer of 2015, Nicole Phelps observed, in *Vogue*, "We all shoot the hell out of it, and, more critically, we want to wear it." Adrian Joffe, the president of Comme des Garçons and of the high-fashion retail chain Dover Street Market, told me, "The whole spirit of it was a complete revolution, a deep change." Most designers present a new set of looks each season, with the implication that last season's clothes have fallen utterly out of style. Michele lightly tweaks his template from season to season. "Alessandro tells a story," Joffe said.

Michele's clothes are pretty but not overtly sexy. Although they have a youthful verve, he has a preference for



*Michele in his office, next to a brocaded chair that he found in an antique shop. His clothing designs reflect his curatorial eye.*



long sleeves, high necklines, and below-the-knee skirts of the sort that can also flatter grown women. In the twelve collections that he has presented so far, he has not isolated a single silhouette and made it his signature, nor has he mined a single historical period. Rather, his clothes reflect a broad study of costume and, in particular, of the ways adornment and embellishment have been used over centuries. Instead of making references to the movies or photography—common inspirational recourses for contemporary designers—Michele’s clothes are shaped by the decades he has spent exploring the flea markets, museums, and archives of European cities. A person who visits the eighteenth-century galleries at the Victoria & Albert Museum, in London, might pause before one opulent display—a two-hundred-and-eighty-year-old waistcoat in yellow satin, richly embroidered with full-blown flowers and feathered scrolls—and wonder just how long Michele has spent gazing at it, taking notes.

Michele’s approach to design can be almost comically cerebral. He has a fondness for issuing explanatory texts for his shows which allude to postmodernist philosophy—a tendency that reveals the influence of his partner, Giovanni Attili, a professor of urban planning who is well versed in critical theory. A note for a recent men’s collection cites Gilles Deleuze’s idea of “assemblage,” observing that Michele’s clothes “become an assemblage of fragments emerging from a temporal elsewhere: resurfacing epiphanies, entangled and unexpected.”

Immersed as Michele is in the “temporal elsewhere,” his clothes are firmly aligned with current cultural themes. The actor and model Hari Nef, who is transgender, appeared in the Fall 2016 men’s show. She told me, “There is nothing inherently subversive about a robin’s-egg-blue blouse with a black grosgrain ribbon that you tie in the front—but, when you put it on a skinny teen-age boy, there is something really sinister about that, and punk about that.” She went on, “Alessandro is placing these priceless garments that you can’t argue with in a very radical context. You are going home with this coat that you want to wear, and your mom wants to wear, and your grandma wants to wear—but that coat was shown on a boy, or it has a giant green snake on

the back, and the inner lining of it is blood red. It is a little nasty and it is grotesque, but it’s beautiful.”

WHEN I VISITED Rome, Michele was preparing this year’s Cruise collection, which was to be shown later in the spring, in London. In an alcove above his office desk, he had propped one of the inspirations for the collection: a small English painting, from the early seventeenth century, of a youthful figure



of indeterminate gender, dressed in a ruff collar and a tomato-red jacket ornamented with gold stitching and buttons. The youth’s face was realistically rendered but the body was stylized, with awkwardly braced elbows. The figure held a prayer book that looked remarkably like an iPhone.

“It is a young guy who looks like a girl, because, at that time, until you were older, you were completely dressed like a girl,” Michele said. He has striking looks himself—long, thick dark hair and a heavy beard, like Christ as rendered by Leonardo, with a voluptuous mouth. He speaks excellent English, with the sort of colorful idiosyncrasies to be expected from someone who hones his grasp of the language by reading a nineteenth-century English translation of fourteenth-century Italian literature. He said of the painting, “The face, it’s softer, more real—like Italian Renaissance painting, but the body is still a very Northern European pose—it’s very flat. I prefer this to a lot of Italian painting, because it is more that you are inventing the character. It’s more unreal. The body is more like a sheet of paper.”

Michele is a student of the portrait genre. “This painting is like a Polaroid,” he said. “It is a very pop way to show your personality.” Discussing the youth’s costume, he pointed out that similar sartorial tastes prevail in England today. “This dress is completely red. With Raphael or Titian, if you have someone in

turquoise you have a piece of yellow, just to balance. But if you go to London you see that kind of old woman dressed all in red. She doesn’t care. If she loves jade green, she is completely jade green.” (A walk through the Royal Enclosure at Ascot will confirm this insight.) “It is something that doesn’t happen on the other side of Europe. We are more obsessed with, ‘If you have red shoes, you have to have something camel on top.’”

The painting in the alcove was a replica. The original, which Michele bought a few years ago, in London, hangs in his bedroom. He is interested in the way power was managed through image in England, particularly during the Tudor era. “It was a super cruel, and heavy, and dangerous period,” he said. “But they all looked completely sure about their power. They were less elegant, less soft, than Italian people.”

English modes of self-presentation have fascinated Michele since his youth. Growing up in the nineteen-eighties in Monte Sacro, on the outskirts of Rome, he began reading British magazines, and admired London’s post-punk, New Romantic street style. By his early teens, he had begun wearing drainpipe jeans and pointy shoes, and had cut and bleached his hair into a blond Mohawk. “The first time I went to London, when I was eighteen or nineteen, I was completely in love,” he said. “I was shocked by the way the English guys and girls dressed.” He roamed the market at Camden Lock, where antique dealers had stalls and independent fashion designers sold clothes. His first job at Gucci was in London, in the design department, and he lived there from 2002 to 2006. He was impressed by the style of Britons of all types. “The Queen is one of the most quirky people in the world,” he told me. “She is very inspiring. It is clear that she loves color.”

Michele’s study of English style had informed many of the pieces in the Cruise collection. By April, most of the designs had been completed, and I joined him as he looked over sample garments with members of his team. Michele is now the boss of his former colleagues, who have happily adopted the new house aesthetic. When we arrived in the studio, upstairs from his chapel-office, he complimented Katia Minniti, Gucci’s ready-to-wear fur and leather designer, on her bright-red socks, which were wrinkled

around her ankles and worn with gold high-heeled sandals, a pleated skirt with a pink print, and a blue blouse. Michele was dressed in jeans and a white T-shirt, over which he wore a pale-blue bomber jacket; it had a paisley lining embroidered with his nickname, Lallo.

Propped against the walls were pushpin boards to which dozens of appliqué animals, insects, and birds had been affixed. Michele refers to this menagerie as the Gucci Garden, because many of the images draw on the brand's heritage. There was a sequined tiger, and a pair of embroidered cocker spaniels modelled on pottery figurines made in Staffordshire, England, in the nineteenth century. The dogs had been introduced into the garden by Michele. (He has an extensive collection of the figurines.) On a large table, there were boxes filled with ribbons, buttons, strips of lace, and other trims.

Models appeared in the new dresses. One gorgeous evening gown, in cinnamon-and-sapphire-colored silk woven with intricate patterns, had a dramatic scooped collar and a high neck. It simultaneously suggested the British Raj and the first Queen Elizabeth. Another dress, fashioned from translucent pink chiffon with a high neck and long sleeves, was demure and daringly revealing at the same time. "*Bellissimo!*" Michele exclaimed as he adjusted the collar and positioned black appliqué patches around the neck. At times, he can seem like a haberdasher with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

"One of the themes is the Victorian Age," Michele explained. Pink is one of his favorite colors, and he scours antique stores in London to look for evocative shades. One particularly Victorian design was a long ivory dress, whose sleeves alone might have served as the calling card for a seamstress seeking employment. I counted at least six different needlework techniques—including smocking, pin pleats, and rosettes—that descended from puffed shoulder to netting-frilled wrist.

Adjusting the music that was emanating from the speaker of his iPhone—the Smiths—Michele got up from his seat to make more refinements. He snipped off a black velvet bow that was attached to a dress's neckline and moved it a few inches down the breastbone. After

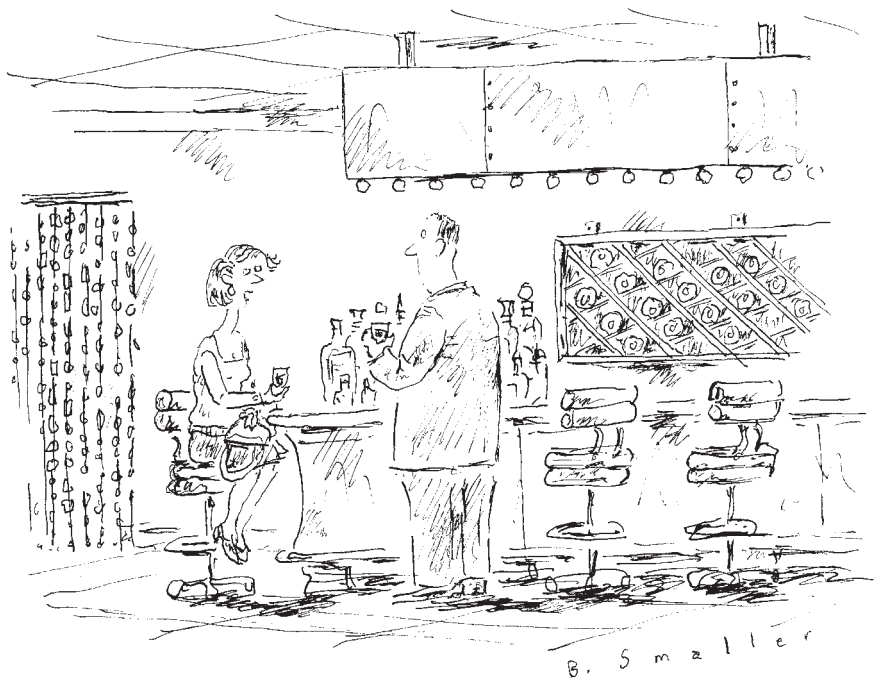
examining a black-and-gold dress, he grabbed bits of black velvet and stiff tulle and improvised a pair of cap sleeves, creating a striking sculptural shape. Sometimes he took out his phone to snap a photograph of a detail. Michele has more than seventy-five thousand followers on Instagram, and his account is unusually esoteric. A closeup of his own feet inside black Mary Janes with silver snake buckles is intermixed with images of albino peacocks, Baroque sculptures, and seventeenth-century paintings. (In December, the Web site Fashionista declared, "Why the Hell Isn't Everyone Following Alessandro Michele on Instagram?")

In the studio, Michele's manner was collaborative rather than imperious. After surveying the dresses, he and Davide Renne, the designer of the women's ready-to-wear collection, sifted through bolts of fabric—a visual migraine of chinoiserie, psychedelia, and plaid—making selections for designs that had yet to be conceived. Michele admired a bright-green print featuring elephants, monkeys, and birds. Another fabric consisted of the Union Jack blotted with black silhouettes of parrots, like images from a Rorschach test. "For the Queen," Michele said, with a smile.

There was a decent chance that the Queen might, in fact, become aware of Michele's Cruise collection. Gucci had

secured for its show the unlikely location of Westminster Abbey, which has been the site of every English coronation since 1066. This was the first time that the abbey would be hosting a fashion show. Even though Gucci would be occupying the cloister, rather than laying a runway along the length of the spectacular Gothic nave, the choice had made headlines in England when it was announced, in February.

"I was thinking to have a very significant place in London," Michele told me over lunch. We were not far from the Palazzo Alberini, at a favorite restaurant that is owned by Katia Minniti, the Gucci designer. (She emerged from the kitchen as we were giving our order, still in red socks and gold heels. Michele recommended the pasta *cacio e pepe*, a Roman specialty, but ate tofu with vegetables.) He told me that he had first considered presenting the show in a Victorian building on Southampton Row that used to house the Central St. Martins school of art. During the nineties, his formative years, many important British designers had studied at the college. "I was thinking how great it would be for a brand like Gucci to show in the same school where Alexander McQueen finished his work, or John Galliano—there is still a soul in this place," he said. "But after I had the opportunity of Westminster I



*"To be honest, I'm not looking so much to connect as to segue."*



said, 'Westminster is exactly what I love about this culture.'

The authorities at the abbey had been surprisingly permissive, he said, though they had sought assurance that his designs would not breach acceptable bounds of modesty. (So far, there had been no problems: for all his love of translucent fabrics, Michele's clothes do not show a lot of unveiled flesh.) "Everything in England happened inside this church," Michele went on. "I love church, and I love Gothic, and I love this kind of aesthetic, so it is kind of a dream to show in this place. One of the girls who works with me, she said, 'Probably you will also want to ask for Buckingham Palace?' I said, 'No, I prefer Westminster.'"

As a child, Michele often visited the churches of Rome with his father, who was interested in historical art, and who also took him to galleries and museums. Although Michele is not religious, the habit of visiting places of worship has endured. "You can feel the power of the people who were inside to express themselves, or to ask for something," he said. One of his favorite places in Rome is the Basilica di San Clemente, a twelfth-century structure with Byzantine-style mosaics. It was built over a fourth-century church that itself sat atop a temple to the Roman god Mithras. The historical layering has created a serendipitous aesthetic—and had informed Michele's love of graceful juxtapositions. "It is beautiful how religion transforms from other cultures," he said. "And I also love the Pantheon—in the center of this big, crazy city, a temple for all the gods." The Pantheon's cupola, with its apex open to the sky, is "like a big mother," he said. "It hugs you, with the light inside. It is a very animistic idea of God. Sometimes when you get inside there you want to cry."

Michele's father worked as a technician at Alitalia, but his passions lay elsewhere: he sculpted and wrote, and he felt a close tie to nature. This was the legacy of Michele's paternal grandmother, who served as a kind of wise woman to her community, in the city of L'Aquila. "My father was a shaman," Michele told me. "He told me that time doesn't exist. He didn't use a clock. He didn't know when my birthday was. He would say, 'You were born in the autumn—it was a hot autumn, it was the beginning of



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAOLO PELLEGRIN/MAGNUM FOR THE NEW YORKER

*Michele is a connoisseur of English style, and a Gucci runway show was recently*





held at Westminster Abbey. "Westminster is exactly what I love about this culture," Michele says.





*Michele's collections for Gucci offer a startling miscellany of styles inflected with a high-end vintage sensibility.*

the seventies.' He told me that if you try to stop with the idea that time exists you will live forever. I said to him, 'How can I do it? I need to make appointments.' But he was always late for things, because he didn't care about appointments. So I think he was quite ready for his appointment with death." He died a decade ago. Michele recalls, "He said to me, 'You and I are very lucky, because we spent a lot of beautiful seasons together, and they are so many that I can't remember how many they are.'"

Michele's mother, who is also deceased, was more urbane. She worked as an assistant to a movie executive, and her sense of style was influenced by Hollywood. "She had this beautiful blond hair," he said. "Fake blond—she's Italian." He went on, "I think I am completely the mix of both of them. I am obsessed with fashion, like my mother, and I am obsessed with art, like my father. I have something inside of me that every day tells me that nature and beauty is the soul, the meaning, of our life. And I also love Hollywood and cinema." In February, Michele attended the Academy Awards, at the invitation of Jared Leto,

who was recently appointed a brand ambassador for the fragrance Gucci Guilty.

A few months later, on a steamy June evening in New York, Michele was honored at the American fashion industry's equivalent of the Oscars: the Council of Fashion Designers of America Awards. The ceremony took place at the Hammerstein Ballroom, on West Thirty-fourth Street. A red carpet had been set up along the sidewalk, and as the cocktail hour got under way designers and celebrities lined up to take their turn before the ranks of hollering photographers. Hari Nef wore a peppermint-green tulle gown with a glittering appliqué panther on the bosom; Gia Coppola, another Gucci devotee, was in a long dress confected of black netting embellished with red and pink sequins. Lena Dunham embraced Michele and complimented him on his cologne. Even his fragrance is antique: it was created in 1828 by the Florentine apothecary Santa Maria Novella.

Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*, wore a Gucci design: a sleeveless ivory column, in satin duchesse, embroidered with birds and flowers. She presented

Michele with the International Award, declaring that he "has helped us dream more freely." Michele ascended to the stage, his head slightly bowed. "I am quite nervous," he said, clutching the award between fingers laden with vintage rings. "I would never have guessed that I would be given an award for doing the job that I love, and for my creativity." The humility of his manner was in direct contradiction to the flamboyance of his dusty-pink silk tuxedo, which suggested a dandy who had run off to join the Hells Angels. On the back of the jacket, pearl beads formed the image of a coiled snake.

WHEN MICHELE FIRST became interested in fashion, as a teenager, his impulse was to go into costume design. After high school, he enrolled in the Accademia di Costume e di Moda, in Rome. "I think that I still work like a costume designer," he said. "I try to put some soul in the outfit—the idea of a character." Upon graduating, though, he began working for an Italian knitwear company in Bologna. He then returned to Rome, to work at Fendi, where he met

Frida Giannini, who was designing handbags. In 2002, Giannini was hired by Gucci. She moved to the company's design offices in London, and took Michele with her.

The company had evolved significantly in the eighty years since Guccio Gucci opened his Florence shop. In the nineteen-twenties, Gucci sold luggage of the sort that Guccio had observed being used by guests at the Savoy Hotel in London, where he had worked as a young man. As Sara G. Forden relates, in "The House of Gucci" (2000), in the mid-thirties countries in the League of Nations protested Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia by imposing sanctions against Italian industry; Gucci, facing a leather shortage, was forced to innovate. The company began making fabric handbags with spare amounts of leather trim. It developed its signature diamond print and incorporated materials such as raffia and wicker into its designs. The new designs were very popular, and in 1938 Gucci opened a luxuriously appointed boutique on Via Condotti, in Rome. By the fifties, when it added its first New York store, the company had become a status symbol for royalty and celebrities, including Elizabeth II, Grace Kelly, and the future Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

But by the eighties Gucci had gone into decline, having become a predictable standby of the duty-free store. (Its horsebit loafers were part of the Washington lobbyist's uniform.) Seeking to revive the brand, Maurizio Gucci, then the company's chairman, lured away Dawn Mello, an executive at Bergdorf Goodman. In 1990, Mello hired Tom Ford, then a little-known designer at Perry Ellis, to create Gucci's first ready-to-wear collection for women. When Mello left the company to return to Bergdorf Goodman, as president, four years later, Ford became Gucci's creative director.

Ford gave Gucci a radical makeover, emphasizing slinky, bias-cut gowns, in black or white jersey, that featured plunging necklines, cutouts at the hip, and buckled waists. His designs evoked the louche allure of Studio 54 in the disco era. Ford, who grew up in New Mexico, and attended N.Y.U. and the Parsons School of Design, had a peculiarly American attachment to ideas of European sophistication. In 1996, he proclaimed, to the *Times Magazine*, "Too much style

in America is tacky. It's looked down upon to be too stylish."

Ford's ostentatiously sexy designs had a broad influence. If, twenty years ago, you lived in narrow, low-waisted pants with a leg-lengthening flare at the calf, that was Tom Ford's gift to you. Michele has a very different sensibility, but he admires Ford's conjuring of the sartorial past. "I feel myself very close to Tom," Michele told me. "He didn't have another Faye Dunaway, or another Lauren Hutton, or another Bianca Jagger, but he wanted to create the illusion that they are still around us. He tried to make, in that time, something that didn't exist anymore."

Sales initially surged under Ford, and Gucci once again became a formidable brand. In 1999, the company was acquired by Pinault-Printemps-Redoute, a French conglomerate. Luxury sales slumped after September, 2001, and in the early aughts Ford seemed, at times, to be losing his touch. (The *Times* decried "silly affairs involving cursive logos" and "too much fur.") Ford and Domenico De Sole, Gucci's C.E.O., were soon at loggerheads with their corporate parent, and in 2004 they exited the company. Ford's post was split among three designers, including Giannini; two years later, she was appointed sole creative director, and Michele became her No. 2. "I did a lot of huge and beautiful bags," Michele told me of this period. "I don't have a problem to say I am a good merchandiser, because I love objects." But the job was not a venue for self-expression. "I was not creative—I was more executive," he said. "My job was to more or less work quite exactly from the idea of another person. I didn't have freedom. I just put in ten per cent of my creativity."

When Giannini was fired, the fashion press bruited about many names as possible successors, including Riccardo Tisci, who had revitalized Givenchy, and Hedi Slimane, of Yves Saint Laurent. In some quarters, there were calls for a restoration of Tom Ford, who had gone on to establish his own label, and to direct movies. It was suggested to Marco Bizzarri, Gucci's new president and C.E.O., that he should talk to Michele, whose long standing at the company might be useful in informing the search. "It was unplanned," Bizzarri told me in London this spring. "Someone said to call him.

They said, 'He's a good guy.'" The two met, and talked for hours. "I didn't have the mind to appoint him," Bizzarri recalled. "But when I was listening to him I really understood that he *is* Gucci. He has been living the brand for many years, understanding the history. He is more Gucci than anybody else."

Michele's collections have highlighted his knowledge of Gucci's past. A dress in delicate grass-green lace with a frilled plunging neckline has a ribbed waistband in the brand's signature red-and-green stripe. The famous double-G motif proliferates on belt buckles and handbag prints, including one that Michele collaborated on with Trevor Andrew, a graffiti artist who goes by the name GucciGhost. Alexandra Shulman, the editor-in-chief of British *Vogue*, told me, "When I saw the first women's collection, in all honesty, I thought it looked a bit too vintage. There weren't that many accessories—I couldn't quite understand how that could be Gucci. But the way that he has taken the core of that idea, and in such a short time has made it what we think of as Gucci, is extraordinary." Since Michele's appointment, revenues at Gucci have risen: in the fourth quarter of 2015, sales were up thirteen per cent from the fourth quarter of 2014. Last fall, Bizzarri announced that, in defiance of retail convention, Gucci would not mark down prices, so that a Gucci garment bought at the start of the season would not lose its value when Black Friday dawned. François-Henri Pinault, the C.E.O. of Kering, as Gucci's parent company is now known, told me, "When you look for a designer, you need someone who really understands the brand, and loves the brand. When you realize that what the designer is proposing is his own life, and his own creativity—it is not something that he does for the brand, but it's his own personality—it's very rare."

For their initial conversation about the future of Gucci, Bizzarri visited Michele in the apartment that Michele shares with Giovanni Attili. It is a tiny, obsessively curated space at the top of a building that overlooks a square not far from the Palazzo Alberini. The front door opens into a small wood-paneled library that feels like a Renaissance *studiolo*. The living-room floorboards are laid in a herringbone pattern; a marble fireplace has a mantel decorated with



taxidermied birds, a gilt clock, an ornate porcelain candlestick, and other objects from Michele's antique-store forays. A wall behind a couch is hung with dozens of objects: a pair of Baroque angels in plaster, mounted sets of antlers. An antique cradle from India sits under the window—it serves as a bed for Michele's two pugs. In a narrow dining room, a farmhouse table stands under an enormous gilt mirror from the early nineteenth century; when I went to the apartment, Michele told me that the mirror had been deaccessioned from the Palazzo Pamphili, which was built for Pope Innocent X. In Michele's bedroom, concealed behind panelled doors, is a large walk-in closet—the kind of place a child might explore if he or she wanted to escape Narnia, rather than clamber into it.

Michele has two nephews, who, he said, are scared of a lot of things in the apartment—an animal skull sits atop a dresser—though they are also helplessly fascinated. “If you think about art, art is about being made a little bit uncomfortable,” he said. “When you are a kid, you always want to be in touch with something that makes you feel not comfortable. I have a machine from the seventeenth-hundreds to make curly hair. You put the tip of it in the fire, and you can travel with it. It is very like a torture object. But when my nephews arrive at my apartment, they say, ‘Please, can we see the machine to make curly hair?’ There is something about discovering different things—things that make you feel curious and uncomfortable—that is very human.”

JUNE 2ND WAS the sixty-third anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey. That day, at noon, bells from the northwest tower pealed for half an hour to mark the occasion. They resounded in the cloister below, where hundreds of Gucci staff and hired hands were readying the site for the fashion show, which was to take place at three. It was an unseasonably cold day, and a square of leaden sky loomed above the lush green lawn, edged by four Gothic passageways, through which the models were to parade. Two rows of benches had been set up for guests: no fashion critic would have to perch on the chilly stone perimeter that had served generations of

monks. Each seat was marked by an emerald velvet cushion that had been embroidered with a snake, a monkey, or a bee from the Gucci Garden.

Michele was bundled against the cold in an off-white biker jacket covered in metal studs and embroidered with a cat's face. Underneath the jacket, he wore a vivid green hoodie. “Look at my beautiful dressing room,” he said with a laugh, as he conducted me into the abbey's Chapter House. An enormous octagonal space with huge stained-glass windows, medieval wall paintings, and a vaulted ceiling supported by one delicate central column, it was built by Henry III in the thirteenth century, and is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of English Gothic.

“I think it is the most beautiful place I have ever seen in my life,” Michele said. “It is like the Sainte-Chapelle, in Paris, but probably better, because of the shape. It is like an animal, like a plant.” Another medieval glory of the Chapter House—its floor of glazed tiles—had been covered with carpeting. Dozens of clothes racks held the outfits that Michele planned to present that afternoon. He walked among the racks, pausing to examine a dress made from lavish, multicolored Indian silk. Then he glanced up at the stained-glass windows, which were inlaid with images of British kings and queens. “Look at Elizabeth I, with the *gorgiera*—the collar—around her neck,” he said. “Beautiful.” Also circulating backstage was Giovanni Attili, who appeared to observe his partner's occupation with a detached anthropological interest. He later told me, “Alessandro's professional world is very different from mine. In this difference I find a source of nourishment. Not only is his imagination explosive and contagious—his grounded references always convey such meaningful suggestions to my work.” When not accompanying Michele, Attili spends months at a time in Canada, conducting research among the Dakelh and Haida peoples. He was toweringly tall and as immoderately bearded as Michele. “He's Neptune,” Michele said, upon introducing Attili. “There is a sculpture in Piazza Navona—that is him.”

The guests arrived. Women wearing gauzy Gucci dresses shivered in the cold as they took their seats. Shortly after three, loudspeakers that had been set up

around the cloister's edge started playing a recording of the English folk song “Scarborough Fair,” as arranged for boy choristers. Floodlights illuminated the Gothic passageways. Then a cavalcade of nearly a hundred models emerged from the cloister, wearing studded heels or towering platform sneakers or fur-lined backless loafers. They walked along slippery flagstones that had been worn smooth over centuries of use, and stepped on the flat tombstones of departed pre-Reformation monks.

In this costume-drama context, Michele's vision looked more familiar, if hardly less peculiar. A pleated blue silk skirt, patterned with flowers, was paired with a boxy jacket in the same fabric; the jacket was edged with blue-and-green grosgrain ribbon, and a bow in the shape of a chrysanthemum was pinned at the neck. A long skirt in paisley-patterned silk was worn with a jacquard bomber jacket and spiky metallic-blue ankle boots. There was a profusion of accessorizing: handbags, eyeglasses, jewelry. More than one model wore a silk scarf tied over her hair and under her chin—a practical style sometimes favored by the Queen.

For all the inspiration that Michele had taken from English style, the collection did not look especially British—though a slouchy Union Jack-patterned sweater was a clear homage to Vivienne Westwood, the British designer known for translating native English eccentricity into high fashion. Michele's show was a fantasia that drew on ideas of Britishness while exploiting Italian luxury and craftsmanship. Occasionally, it seemed that his purpose was to render the models ridiculous, such as when he sent out some in platform sneakers with the kind of rainbow-colored soles that club kids wore in the nineties. At other moments, the plethora of bows, beads, and embroideries was irresistibly silly. Christina Binkley, of the *Wall Street Journal*, cheekily tweeted, “DO IT YOURSELF @gucci resort17: Take your 6th grade togs, add iron-on heart and animal patches from @Etsy.”

Though one could mock all the frippery, the show was disconcertingly lovely. Many outfits were covetable for their curiousness, like objects in a *Wunderkammer*. There were gasps when a model walked down the passageway in a full-length mink coat inset with coiling snakes: mink



*Michele's clothes are pretty but not overtly sexy. He has an affinity for long sleeves, high necklines, and below-the-knee skirts.*

cutouts that had been dyed red, black, and white. The seductiveness of Michele's vision was signalled by a barely subdued clamor among the guests over the emerald seat cushions, which were to be taken home as gifts. Several guests attempted surreptitiously to switch the cat or rabbit they had been assigned for a more desirable snake.

THE DAY AFTER the show, I met Michele in a suite at the Savoy Hotel—the young Guccio Gucci's training ground in luxury. Michele had retired in the early hours of the morning, having been up late dancing at a party held at 106 Piccadilly, a Georgian home that had once been a private club. Annie Lennox had made a surprise appearance, playing the piano. Michele was wearing a sweatshirt and jeans, his hair flowing over his shoulders. In his ring-loaded fingers, he was clutching an iPhone case in the shape of a dragon—a gift from a fashion correspondent from Singapore, who had been using it for his own phone until Michele's magpie eye alighted upon it during the interview.

"I am too old for this," Michele said of the phone case. "But today I am sure I will be happy to go around the city with it." He had work to do—the men's ready-to-wear show would take place in a few weeks—but he hoped to steal some time to go to his favorite antique store, near Bond Street.

"I bought this there," he said, extending his hand to point out an English funeral ring. It was backed by woven human hair and bore a tiny image of a skeleton holding what looked like a telescope. On the inside of the ring was a date: February, 1695. The person commemorated by the ring, Michele speculated, "was a soldier, or a sailor." He asked me, "Is it not beautiful? I love that the English celebrate death."

Michele owns dozens of funeral rings, and he has posted images of some of them on Instagram. His private collections have become part of his public reimagining of Gucci. He told me that he did not regret the loss of privacy. "I feel that, as an artist, the big point is to share, and to let people think about what you are showing," he said. "Sharing isn't anything that scares me. My

house, my life, my way to live, for me is kind of a masterpiece."

As he went on, his observations sounded more and more like those of his father: "I take care about what I put in my life, because life is an illusion, you know. It's real that we are on the Earth, but we don't know for how long. The idea of tomorrow is an illusion. So I want to put this kind of illusion into my life." Michele grasped for the right word in English to explain himself. "How do you say *illudere*? To 'illuse' myself? To make an illusion for myself?"

I replied that the closest word in English was "delusion," but noted that it had negative connotations. Michele was surprised. "In Italian, we can say that beauty is something that you create—that you create the illusion of your life," he said. "It is to believe in something that doesn't exist, like a magician, or a wizard." He went on, "I was thinking over the past few days that the purpose of fashion is to give an illusion. I think that everybody can create their masterpiece, if you build your life how you want it. Just to create that illusion of your life—this is beautiful." ♦



# COVER LOOK

BY JUDITH THURMAN

FASHION SETS, LIKE French beaches, are not typically bastions of modesty; you don't go into modelling if you're shy of *deshabille*. Yet on a torrid Saturday in August, while mayors in the South of France were busy enforcing a burkini ban that has since been ruled illegal, Nailah Lymus and Jaharrah Ali, both hijabis (women who cover, in the Muslim tradition), were modelling at a photo shoot.

Lymus, a thirty-two-year-old designer from Brooklyn, is the owner of Underwraps, a modelling agency that she founded, three years ago, in part to dispel the received idea that glamour and Islam are incompatible. Underwraps had the support of Lymus's imam, and of her family. The name Nailah, in Arabic, suggests attainment, and, she told me, "my mother is proud that I live up to it." Her parents were African-American converts from Prospect Park South, and the women in the family gave her a template for sartorial self-expression. She describes her mother's style as "Islamic folksy: flowy dresses, lots of layers, chunky gemstones." One of her two older sisters was "a Muslim tomboy" who wore her hijab with jeans. The other is a Chanel aficionado.

In private and at work, Lymus adheres to the principle of *adab*. "It describes your demeanor," she explained. "We don't expose our hair or skin, yet it's more about how you comport yourself than about what you wear.



*Nailah Lymus (facing) is the founder of the modelling agency Underwraps. Jaharrah Ali (above) is one of her models.*

There are very few dress guidelines in the Koran." Lymus herself projects queenly panache—with a Brooklyn attitude. "I have a very strong personality," she said. It's a quality that she looks for in her models.

Underwraps does most of its recruiting through social media, but Lymus also sometimes finds potential models on the street—she will invite a young hijabi with striking looks to a casting call. Extreme youth, thinness, and height are not prerequisites. Of the seven women on Underwraps' roster, four are Muslim. The three of other persuasions—whom Lymus calls "my modest models"—don't cover themselves but are still discreet. "They might go out in a one-piece bathing suit, or boy shorts, but not a bikini," she said. Agency guidelines mandate that models on jobs be provided with a single-sex dressing room, a full-length robe, and privacy from male crew members.

Whether or not a model is covered, her beauty is on public display. How, I asked Lymus, does she reconcile that exposure with a faith that guards its daughters from becoming objects of temptation? Underwraps exists to counter the stereotype of Muslim women as "oppressed," she said. "Covering identifies us, but it doesn't define us." ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

Additional photographs of Underwraps models, by Pari Dukovic.





WHEN YVON CHOUINARD, the climber and environmentalist and the co-founder of the outdoor-apparel company Patagonia, spends days by himself at a house he owns in Moose, Wyoming, his wife, Malinda, the other co-founder, often sends mass e-mails to their friends, with the number of the landline there. “He likes phone calls and will be alone,” she’ll write. Chouinard, who is seventy-seven, has a cell phone but hardly ever turns it on. He does not use e-mail and disdains the proliferation of devices. He considers Apple to be a manufacturer of toys. “I’m getting more and more marginalized,” he told me. “My friends are constantly e-mailing with each other, and I’m excluded.” To the suggestion that he take it up, he says, “It’s too late.” On his own in Moose, he fly-fishes, reads, ties flies—and fly-fishes some more. He can fish all day. He does not require an audience, although he likes to have someone around to outfish. Taciturn as he may be, he still prizes company. He has a lifelong habit of collecting garrulous friends and yet a tendency to induce some measure of taciturnity in all but the most voluble of them. His style of reticence is contagious.

Chouinard spent the heart of this past summer as he often does, wandering around the northern Rockies, visiting old friends, and fishing the prime trout streams of the greater Yellowstone region. He did so with one good arm (rotator-cuff surgery, in June), a scarred cheek (basal-cell removal, in July), and a heavy reliance on his tenkara fly rig—a simple pole with no reel, the latest implement in his long-running crusade for simplicity and thrift. Now and then, he checks in with the office—Patagonia headquarters and his primary home are in Ventura, California—but for days at a time no one really knows where he is. Malinda sends e-mails to the people he is supposed to be with, in case there are things he should hear or do. He’s less involved in the management of the company than he used to be, but since he got into the gear business, more than fifty years ago, he has frequently disappeared for months, sometimes for half the year, to climb, kayak, surf, ski, fish, and ramble around the



*Yvon Chouinard showing Crow children how to fish in Montana. He has frequently*





ANNALS OF RETAIL

# WILD MAN

*Patagonia's conflicted philosopher-king.*

BY NICK PAUMGARTEN

*disappeared for months, sometimes for half the year, to fish, climb, kayak, surf, ski—and preserve—the planet's untamed precincts.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN FRANCIS PETERS





planet's wilder precincts, whose preservation he has dedicated the better part of his life to. He comes off, these days, as deeply disheartened, perhaps even defeated, and yet Patagonia is bigger, and more active in environmental and labor advocacy, than it has ever been.

On a Thursday night in late July, Chouinard sat in an easy chair by the window of the Moose house, ice pack on his cheek, glass of red wine in hand, left leg up on the arm of the chair. He had on flip-flops, tan fishing pants, and a green Salmonid Restoration Federation T-shirt, which a young busboy at a café had complimented an hour before, to no reply from Chouinard. A high-country twilight had him half in shadow. The window faced west, out onto a sage-and-wildflower meadow of several acres, and, beyond that, a phalanx of cottonwoods and spruce, and, beyond those, the Tetons, with the sun now sunk behind the dusky silhouette of the Grand. Chelsea Clinton was on the radio, introducing her mother at the Democratic National Convention, in Philadelphia.

The property is just north of the Jackson Hole airport, on the east side of the Snake River, up by the entrance to Grand Teton National Park. He and some friends built the house in 1976, out of beetle-kill lodgepole pine. It was

one of the first log houses in the valley, on six acres he'd bought for fifteen thousand dollars an acre. It's simple and small, a relic of a different idea of mountain living. ("Now everyone builds these huge trophy log houses," he said.) The house was strewn outside with gear and inside with bric-a-brac: nature books, binoculars, the sheet music to "Don't Fence Me In," which the family sings at weddings. The only neighbor, in the early days, was Malcolm Forbes. Now there are seldom-used vacation houses on all sides. "They got me surrounded, the fuckers," Chouinard said.

Jackson has boomed as a skiing and recreation town, as a national-park gateway, and as a tax haven for rich people attracted by Wyoming's absence of a state income tax. Though probably eligible for residence, Chouinard would never consider such a thing. "Oh, God, no," he says. "I happily pay my taxes." The northern Rockies aren't Clinton country. "I was at a rodeo in Livingston, and they burned Hillary in effigy on the rodeo grounds," he said. He first met the Clintons in 1992, when Bill was running for President. A banker had a dinner for them in Jackson. "I guess we were the only Democrats in the county, so they invited us," Chouinard said. "Chelsea was twelve at the time, same age as my daughter, Claire."

(He also has a son, Fletcher, who's a few years older.) "The day before, Claire had dyed her hair orange with Kool-Aid. Claire and Chelsea got along great. Other than that, I don't remember much."

Hillary Clinton came on the radio. Chouinard hadn't turned on any lights. The darkness in the house deepened as she spoke. He absent-mindedly flicked at a lamp cord, like a cat with a toy, and dispensed occasional blunt opinions. Of Tim Kaine, he said, laughing, "That guy's a full-on nerd!" When Clinton mentioned the value of compromise, he said, rolling his eyes, "It's the work of the Devil." He and Patagonia have fiercely opposed the Trans-Pacific Partnership. "I'm on Obama's shit list," he said. "I've become an isolationist, actually. Anything of any seriousness that happens has to happen on a local level. I think we're seeing the end of empire, the end of globalism. It can't hold. People will revert: protecting your family, protecting your village. Like the Dark Ages. I honestly believe that." He added, "Trump is the perfect person to take us to the apocalypse."

He listened to Clinton. The high-pitched political oratory seemed almost to pain him. He'd long ago despaired of the process, and of its inadequacy to address what he deems the existential threats to our climate, our food and water supplies, and the survival of life on earth, in any recognizable form. After listening for a while, he said, "Nobody's mentioning global warming. No one wants to deal with it." As though on cue, Clinton said, "I believe climate change is real!" But then she moved on to other wedges: immigration, the minimum wage.

"That was her environmental message?" Chouinard said. "Oh, God."

Outside, the mountains had disappeared. Vague shadows flitted past the window—bats. The phone rang. Chouinard stood stiffly and answered. It was Malinda. He shut off the radio and turned on a few lights. "One half a sentence about global warming," he complained. "That's dismal. Jesus Christ. We've got another Obama—another city kid who's never been out in nature." They talked for a while, and then Chouinard rinsed out his wineglass

and went to bed. Plan was to be up by five for a road trip to Montana, to the Crow Indian Reservation, where he had a date to teach some Crow kids to fish. The local level.

FOR A COUPLE of months in the fall of 1992, I had a job answering phones at Patagonia's mail-order office, in Bozeman, Montana, where I'd just moved after graduating from college. I had it vaguely in mind (too vaguely, it turned out) to join the mountain tribe of itinerant dirtbag outdoorsmen I'd been reading about in magazines. But first: the rent. I saw Patagonia's classified ad in the local paper, the *Daily Chronicle*. (I worked briefly at the *Chronicle*, too—manning the stuffing machines.) As far as qualifications, I was another city kid, but I'd been out in nature a bit and was, in descending order of aptitude, a skier, whitewater kayaker, backpacker, mountain biker, and fly-rod flailer. I had come of age poring over the Patagonia catalogue, with its action shots and exotic locales, and I already had Yvon Chouinard right up there with Jack Kerouac and Jimi Hendrix on my list of great Americans. Plus, I liked the idea of getting good gear at a discount.

Patagonia needed seasonal help. I was trained quickly, not only in the input formats and retail protocols but also in the company's commitment to production quality and environmental ethics. Headset on, I sat at a computer terminal taking orders and advising strangers on matters of paramount importance: layering, wicking, breathability, size. The calls sometimes got intimate: there was talk here and there of how some long underwear rubbed various body parts. Some of the customers were serious gear addicts. One called from the bathroom, so his wife wouldn't know about his latest fix. I grew conversant in the taxonomy of color: eggplant, larkspur, cobalt, mango. The ski anorak I got, wholesale, was ultramarine, with a coral-pink lining. I'd apologize for the color schemes of those years, but apparently they're now big in Japan. I recently found a near-mint version of that jacket selling online for 25,704 yen (around \$250). I quit the job before I was supposed to, in order to go on a ski trip. Of the two

women who'd hired me, one was angry and the other understanding. Their reaction embodied an intrinsic schizophrenia at Patagonia. Chouinard had always encouraged his employees to cut work and go surfing when the swell came in. But it was also a company trying to claw its way out of a hole.

Patagonia at the time was going through an upheaval. It had grown too rapidly, in the late eighties, and in 1991, in the midst of a recession, it found itself overextended. Bankruptcy loomed. Bankers balked. Chouinard's accountants took him to meet a representative of the Mafia, who offered a loan with an interest rate of eighteen per cent. In the end, the Chouinards borrowed from a friend and from some Argentines who wanted to get their money out of the country. The company laid off twenty per cent of its workforce, which no longer consisted mainly of friends and friends of friends. "It was hard," Chouinard said. "I realized we were just growing for the sake of growing, which is bullshit."

The ordeal, and the perspective of middle age, snapped him to attention and caused him to refine the company's mission. In the eighties, he'd been feeling increasingly uneasy about being a businessman and about the transformations and compromises that seemed inevitably to accompany corporate success. The company, he worried, was straying from its hard-core origins. "I was faced with the prospect of owning a billion-dollar company, with thousands of employees making 'outdoorlike' clothing for posers," he said early in 1991, in a speech to the employees, in which he outlined his misgivings and his new resolutions. These subsequently appeared in the Patagonia catalogue, as a manifesto, under the heading "The Next Hundred Years."

The Chouinards undertook an environmental audit of their products and operations. For a few years, they'd been tithing ten per cent of their profit to grassroots environmental organizations. Now they enshrined a self-imposed "earth tax" of one per cent of their sales: a bigger number. "The capitalist ideal is you grow a company and focus on

making it as profitable as possible. Then, when you cash out, you become a philanthropist," Chouinard said. "We believe a company has a responsibility to do that all along—for the sake of the employees, for the sake of the planet."

Eventually, they went so far as to openly discourage their customers from buying their products, as in the notorious 2011 advertising campaign that read "Don't Buy This Jacket." It went on, "The environmental cost of everything we make is astonishing." Manufacturing and shipping just one of the jackets in question required a hundred and thirty-five litres of water and generated nearly twenty pounds of carbon dioxide. "Don't buy what you don't need." (Some people at Patagonia had been considering declaring Black Friday a "no-buy day," to make their point about consumption.)

Guilt and high principle mutate into marketing: this was the Patagonia feedback loop, on high screech. To some, the slogan sounded an awful lot like "Buy this jacket, not that other one, from the North Face." One plausible response was "Don't worry, I won't. I can't afford it." Chouinard may walk the walk, as far as not buying things—his own Patagonia gear tends to date back to the last century—but his customers are often the kinds of people who can afford as many jackets as they want. The credo "One Percent for the Planet" can misread. There are class implications, problems of privilege and access, the lingering taint of monikers like Fratagonia and Patagucci.

One catalogue, in the nineties, had a little chart of what Patagonia was versus what it was not: Fly fishing, not bass fishing. Long-haul trucking, not deliverymen. Surfing, not waterskiing. Upland bird hunting, not deer hunting. Gardeners, not survivalists. Patagonia's people were the West's recolonizers, the next wave of pioneers, the self-appointed protectors asserting a blue-state ethos in red-state territory—tree huggers pitching their tents in a logging camp. By now, this war for the West is a tired one, but it is in some ways a microcosm of the





greater global battle between those who want to preserve lands and conserve resources and those who would prefer to exploit them.

The Patagonia catalogue can induce awe and envy. Authentic as its photographic subjects are—"We were the first to use real people, and captions saying who and where they were," Chouinard said—it is a classic kind of aspirational branding. The life style, to a large swath, is unaffordable, if not in pure monetary terms (outdoor adventure is not in itself expensive, necessarily, although the clothing for sale certainly is), then at least in terms of time, talent, energy, and gumption. It isn't really a lack of funds that prevents most of us from spending half the year sleeping in vans and dodging the park rangers to free-solo the big walls at Yosemite.

In its presentation of hale young adventure athletes, living righteously in Edenic locales, all of them with just the right amount of dishevelment and duct tape, the catalogue can emanate the passive-aggressive piety of a food-co-op scolding. It unwittingly celebrates a kind of countercultural conformity. This neo-Rockwellian idyll of desert-dawn yoga sessions, usefully toned arms and abs, spectacularly perilous bivouacs and bouldering slabs, hardy kids and sporty hounds can feel like a rebuke if you are on a sofa in the city.

Eco-conscious fun-hoggery, as an ethos, a culture, a life style, and an industry, spans the world, and even rules some corners of it. Chouinard is its best-known avatar and entrepreneur, its principal originator and philosopher-king, and is as responsible as anyone for guiding it from the primitive tin-can and hobnail aesthetic of the mid-twentieth century to the slackline and dome-tent attitude of today. He has made it more comfortable, and more glamorous, to be outside, in harsh conditions. His influence is way out of proportion to his revenue footprint. He has mixed feelings about all this—some apprehension about the world he has made. He celebrates the spread of an ecological consciousness but laments the disappearance of danger and novelty, and the way that the wilderness has become a hobby, or even a voca-

tion. He disdains ski areas ("They're golf courses"), the idea of professional climbing ("I just don't like the whole paid-climber thing"), and the proliferation of extreme sports as programming and marketing ("Red Bull's in the snuff-film business").

When I ventured to mention how the catalogue sometimes irked me, he was quiet for a while, and then said, "When you see the guides on the Big-horn, they're all out of central casting. Beard, bill cap, buff around the neck, dog in the bow. Oh, my God, it's so predictable. That's what magazines like *Outside* are promoting. Everyone doing this 'outdoor life style' thing. It's the death of the outdoors."

**I**N THE INTRODUCTION to a revised edition of Chouinard's 2005 memoir/manifesto, "Let My People Go Surfing," which Penguin published this month, he writes, "I've been a businessman for almost sixty years. It's as difficult for me to say those words as it is for someone to admit being an alcoholic or a lawyer. I've never respected the profession."

He was first (and perhaps in his own mind remains foremost) a climber, a renowned pioneer of rock and ice routes around the world, and one of the luminaries of the great generation of American postwar outdoor adventurers. Then a blacksmith: he designed, and made by hand, a host of ingenious new climbing tools, and for a time was the leading manufacturer of climbing equipment in North America. Next, itinerant thrill-seeker: the relatively meagre proceeds from equipment sales allowed him to continue to pursue an intrepid life of risky recreation in the outdoors. (On a van trip from California to the tip of South America, in 1968, ostensibly to climb Mt. Fitz Roy, he and his mates carried a homemade flag that read "Viva Los Fun Hogs." Chouinard told me, "People we met, hitchhikers we picked up, they asked us, 'What does this mean, 'Fun Hogs'?' We said, '*Puercos deportivos*.' Heh-heh. Sporting porks.") Finally, eco-warrior: his travels and travails in supposedly wild places awakened him to their ongoing devastation, and he made it his mission, as a man selling consumer goods that he acknowledged people

don't need, to try to counteract humanity's regrettable propensity to soil its own nest. In each of these guises, at least, he was authentically countercultural and anti-corporate, a credible advocate for a kind of lawless self-reliance and uncompromising common sense.

His childhood dream was to be a fur trapper, like his French-Canadian forebears. He was reared in Lisbon, Maine, the home town of his mother, Yvonne. School was all in French. His father, a third-grade dropout, was a journeyman laborer who at night repaired the looms at a wool mill there—a *dur à cuire* whom Chouinard remembers sitting at the kitchen table with a bottle of whiskey, using a pair of pliers to pull his own teeth, because he objected to the expense of dentures. "I was brought up surrounded by women," Chouinard writes. "I have ever since preferred that accommodation."

In January, 1946, Yvon's older brother Gerald, stationed in San Diego, in the Navy, sent his family a box of oranges. Fresh fruit in winter: "That's it," Yvonne said. Citing her husband's asthma, she insisted that the family move, that spring, to California: Burbank. Yvon, a shrimp with a girl's name and no English, fled public school after a week and wound up at parochial school under the tutelage of nuns. He was, as he recalls, a loner and a geek, a D student who spent all his free time biking to city parks and private golf-course ponds to bait-fish and to hunt for frogs, crawdads, and rabbits. Before long, he was diving for lobster and abalone off the Malibu coast.

High school brought more misery—zits, detention, math, no girls—but also a lifeline of sorts: the Falconry Club. Weekend outings in search of hawks' nests led to an obsession with rappelling down cliffs. He and his rappelling buddies hopped freight trains to various foothill precipices and, with rope stolen from the phone company, practiced their speed descents.

One day, Chouinard encountered a Sierra Clubber who was climbing up, a possibility that Chouinard hadn't yet considered. One of the older falconers taught him some things about climbing. The summer he turned sixteen, Chouinard drove to Wyoming in a

Ford he'd rebuilt in shop class, and was soon lost in the wilderness of the Wind River Range. His first summit attempt turned into a solo ascent of a hitherto unclimbed route up Gannett Peak, the tallest mountain in Wyoming. He went on to the Tetons and bluffed his way into technical climbs with some experienced Ivy Leaguers. The Tetons, in the summers to come, served as a home base and proving ground; it's also where he learned, from the old-time climber Glenn Exum, how to fish with artificial flies.

Back in Southern California, Chouinard tried community college for a spell, while working as a private detective for an agency run by his older brother. "Hanky-panky stuff," he says. "Peeing in milk bottles." Howard Hughes hired them to keep an eye on his girlfriends and certify that his yacht was germ-free. But mostly Chouinard devoted himself to Baja surfing trips and climbing excursions on the rocks near Palm Springs, where he joined a keen band of Sierra Clubbers who soon revolutionized the sport, on the towering granite walls of Yosemite.

In 1957, frustrated by the expense and unremovability of European pitons, the spikes one pounds into the wall to secure a rope, Chouinard bought a used forge, an anvil, and some hammers and tongs and taught himself how to be a blacksmith. He began making his own, reusable pitons, out of chrome steel, and before long he was selling them to friends and strangers, at a dollar-fifty a pop.

Eventually, he borrowed eight hundred and twenty-five dollars from his parents and had Alcoa build him a drop forging die, with which he began to produce carabiners that, like his pitons, were superior to anything then available. He set up shop in the chicken coop behind his parents' house in Burbank, but he often travelled with his equipment, so he could surf and blacksmith his way up and down the coast during the winter, return to Yosemite in the spring, and then, in late summer and fall, go on climbing trips to Canada, the Shawangunks, and the Alps.

They were lean years: dumpster diving, cat food, "porcupines assassinated à la Trotsky with an ice axe." Home was an Army-surplus sleeping bag. (He



*Chouinard in Yosemite, in 1969, with climbing gear that he made himself.*

claims not to have owned a tent until he was almost forty.) At one point, he and a climbing companion spent eighteen days in jail in Arizona; the charge was wandering around "with no visible means of support" and "without any lawful business."

Drafted in 1962, he was sent to South Korea for more than a year. He was not what you might call Army material, but he cadged enough free time to bag a slew of first ascents with a cohort of Koreans, in the mountains around Seoul. An honorable discharge returned him to Yosemite, where, with the big-wall pioneers, Royal Robbins,

Tom Frost, and Chuck Pratt, he completed a celebrated first ascent of the North American Wall on El Capitan, after nine nights on the face. Here now was fame, of a kind. He and his peers, colonizing the infamous Camp Four, called themselves the Valley Cong.

In 1966, he moved his blacksmith shop to Ventura, to a tin shed behind an abandoned slaughterhouse. He and his partners, Tom Frost, who was an engineer, and Frost's wife, Doreen, called the business Chouinard Equipment, and, in due course, their hardware became the industry standard. (Their 1969 bamboo ice axe is now in



the Museum of Modern Art.) Concerned about the degradation of rock, they stopped making pitons and instead came out with aluminum chocks that you could wedge into and remove from cracks without leaving any gear or scars behind. Their first catalogue, in 1972, opened with a clean-climbing manifesto, a rockhead's version of leave-no-trace. A gambit for better gear had begun to extend into an argument for a better world.

By then, Chouinard had taken up with Malinda Pennoyer, an art and home-economics student, and Yosemite lodge maid. "We were hanging out in Camp Four one day when a car full of tough girls drove up and the driver threw out a beer can," he recalled in his book. "Malinda ran over and told them to pick it up. They gave her the finger, so with her bare hands Malinda ripped off their license plate and turned them in to the rangers. I was smitten."

In the early seventies, they started selling apparel. During a climbing trip in England, Chouinard came across a mill that made vintage corduroy, which he fashioned into heavy-duty shorts and knickers. Later, in Scotland, he found a rugby shirt that was also suitable for climbing. These caught on with climbers, and soon the Chouinards and their band of friends and metalworkers had turned the old slaughterhouse into a retail store that sold bivy sacks, wool gloves, and other workaday gear. They began sewing garments upstairs and adding new products: sweaters, rain gear,

so-called standup shorts of stiff canvas.

As sales of such soft goods began to outpace those of the hard, it was determined that the concern needed a name of its own. Chouinard suggested Patagonia. It sounded exotic, and it name-checked a place that had become dear to him since his Fun Hogs trip in 1968 with Doug Tompkins, an East Coast prep-school dropout who'd headed west to ski and climb. In the sixties, Tompkins and his then wife, Susie, started the North Face, an outdoor-gear retailer, as well as the clothing company Esprit, which Chouinard looked to as a model for his fledgling business. When Chouinard was in the Army, Tompkins used to spring him from base to go climbing by phoning his commanding officer and impersonating a colonel. Tompkins was more acerbic and domineering than Chouinard, who has always had a Zen calm about him, but they were both opinionated, talented, and tough, and did not easily suffer fools—a formidable duo.

Chouinard and Tompkins were the founding members of a loose band of adventurers known as the Do Boys, a coinage they derived, with some self-mockery, from the Japanese translation of action sports as "do sports." Besides Tompkins and Chouinard, the Do Boys included Rick Ridgeway, an accomplished mountaineer (now a vice-president at Patagonia, in charge of public engagement), and Tom Brokaw, the journalist, especially valued by the mountain men for his anecdotal knack. The thing was the experience,

not the accolades. After a climbing trip to Bhutan, Chouinard, Tompkins, and Ridgeway burned their self-made maps so no one would know where they'd been. In 1981, Chouinard and Ridgeway were part of a team that was caught in an avalanche on a peak called Gongga Shan, in China. One climber was killed, the rest badly hurt—and lucky. Chouinard, taking into account his kids, his risk appetite, and his encroaching distaste for these bigger expeditionary attempts, began to dial it back as a climber.

But there were always escapades. Tompkins had got Chouinard into whitewater kayaking, and they logged dozens of first descents, some famous, some obscure. They took on just about every navigable river in Chile. On one of them, some forty years ago, upstream of Santiago, they stopped to scout some falls. A soldier with a machine gun detained Tompkins, who ran for it, jumped into his boat, and paddled into the falls. Chouinard, trailing him, flipped his kayak and went through the rapid upside down, in case the guard decided to shoot. Later that night, they learned that they'd paddled through President Augusto Pinochet's summer compound. "Tompkins had no regard for authority," Chouinard said.

IT WASN'T LONG before Patagonia encountered its first crisis—a surplus of poorly made rugby shirts from a factory in Hong Kong. It nearly bankrupted them. As Chouinard later wrote, "We learned the hard way that there was a big difference between running a blacksmith shop and being in the rag business." (A pan of a Chouinard pack in *Backpacker*, in 1974: "How well would you expect ironmongers to sew?") Amid the fallout, the Frosts sold the Chouinards their share, making Yvon and Malinda the sole owners.

Functional innovations became fashions, which matured into cultural conventions. For example, fleece, the hydrophobic washable insulating material that the Chouinards later branded Synchilla. It took them a while to get it right. Their first pile jackets were of fabric that had been intended for toilet-seat covers. Since the nineties, they have been making fleece out



"Mornin', hon—can I fix you some eggs?"

of recycled plastic bottles. It works, and it sells. And along came Capilene, a state-of-the-art thermal underwear, a new base layer for the now routine system of layering, which Patagonia popularized.

By the end of the eighties, Patagonia was approaching a hundred million dollars in revenues, dwarfing the sales of Chouinard Equipment, which had stagnated as Chouinard soured on the popularization of climbing and focussed on the soft-goods side of the business. In 1989, Chouinard Equipment declared Chapter 11. A group of employees and supporters bought the company's assets out of bankruptcy and, amid some tension with the founder, renamed it Black Diamond Equipment and moved it to Utah. It went public several years ago and, like Patagonia decades earlier, began expanding too fast. "Companies like that, they have to be privately held," Chouinard said. "Venture capitalists are such assholes."

By 1980, day-to-day management of Patagonia's operations had fallen to a close friend, Kris McDivitt. The daughter of an oilman, she'd grown up on a family ranch near Santa Barbara, with three years in Venezuela. Her refusal to go to a posh boarding school in La Jolla, at age fifteen, led to her meeting Chouinard, who was renting a place near her parents' beach house, in Ventura. She fell in with his older gang of surfers, skiers, and climbers. "If that hadn't happened, I'd probably be an alcoholic old woman with pearls around her neck," she told me.

She eventually became Patagonia's first C.E.O. and, really, with the Chouinards, part of its founding triumvirate. In the early nineties, she married Doug Tompkins and left Patagonia the company to dedicate herself, with Tompkins, to saving Patagonia the place. She remembers the first time she realized that any place needed saving. The Chouinards told her, one day in 1970, to find an office and some room in the budget for an activist who was spearheading a local effort to reintroduce steelhead trout to the Ventura River. "I said, 'Why is this important?' I didn't even know what a steelhead was. I thought it was a machine part." Since then, the company's causes have



*"There you are!"*

proliferated. Dams, pesticides. Organic cotton, humanely sourced wool and down. Since 1985, under its one-percent program, it has given away more than seventy-five million dollars to some thirty-four hundred environmental organizations.

TYPICALLY, THE FIRST person you meet at Patagonia's headquarters, in Ventura, is a receptionist and former freestyle Frisbee world champion who goes by Chipper Bro. When I visited, in May, he invited me to surf with him at dawn the next day. When I left reception, he said, "Nice hanging with you."

Chouinard may be the face of Patagonia, and its presiding saturnine spirit, but the mood around the place is distinctly upbeat, optimistic, and youthful—a distillation of his can-and-must-do side, minus the ain't-no-use. The idea is to recruit activist outdoorspeople and teach them business. "I'm terrible at hiring," Chouinard told me. "I only trust women to hire people here. In an interview I have no idea. They can bullshit me, and I believe them."

To a jaundiced East Coaster, the fervor can feel almost cultish. One ex-

ecutive told me, "If there were a hundred employees in the parking lot, you'd be hard-pressed to find two who aren't as idealistic as the next person." A few employees told me that the only difficulty was the occasional excess of the altruistic urge. Various issues around the question of animal rights had recently turned thorny, in part because animal rights are perhaps not highest on Chouinard's list of concerns.

The campus is at the west end of town, less than a mile from a couple of famous surf breaks. It has grown from the tin shed into a small village of about a dozen buildings. Inside, it's like the catalogue, in V.R.: a hale crew, attired in Patagonia, talking up their trips. Here and there are vitrines with old articles of gear. Some have Post-its affixed—handwritten annotations provided by Malinda Chouinard. Malinda is virtually invisible, in standard accounts of the company, but in Ventura, and in routine conversation with anyone who has ever been involved with Patagonia, she looms as large, in many respects, as her husband. She rides herd. Her e-mail blasts—known as Malindagrams—are exhaustive, as is her head for detail. When I first met



her, she told me, with something like ferocity, that I was not to quote her. "I don't exist," she said. (Thereafter, she was very kind and civil.)

"Malinda is much more involved than I am," her husband said. "She's more of a micromanager." Still, he told me one day, "She has never got up and addressed the company. She won't let anyone take her picture. She's a little bit of a Howard Hughes type. Her mother was the same way."

Malinda is principally responsible for making the company a notably humane place to work. Many there cite the advantage of having day care on site. In 1985, Malinda created (and has since put aside a vast patchwork of space for) what became known as the Great Pacific Child Development Center, to which I didn't give much consideration, until I got a tour. A staff of twenty-eight oversees some eighty kids, on sprawling grounds of more than twelve thousand square feet, roughly half of it outdoors, among the fruit trees. A recent baby boom had led to another expansion, which displaced the H.R. department to a trailer. "We've raised fifteen hundred kids so far," Chouinard told me. "None of them have been in prison—that I know of, anyway."

In early 2012, Patagonia, at Malinda's urging, became the first California business to become a B Corp, a class of company certified by a non-profit organization called B Lab. To become a B Corp, you must adopt stringent objectives with regard to labor practices and social and environmental impact. The following year, Patagonia, also a founder of the Fair Labor Association, discovered, further down its supply chain, that many of its textile mills, principally in Taiwan, engaged in human trafficking. Even though Patagonia was one of the smaller customers, it led a movement, in conjunction with other clients, N.G.O.s, and governments, to reform them. "No other brand was monitoring its mills," Doug Freeman, the chief operating officer, said. He estimated that the company's attention to manufacturing its goods responsibly adds



twenty to thirty per cent to the cost of production.

Meanwhile, Chouinard had become an adviser and scold to big business. "It started out with the Walton family," Chouinard told me. Rob Walton had been talking to a conservationist and a kayaking buddy of Chouinard's, Jib Ellison. "They sent a directive to their C.E.O. to green Walmart. He was clueless. He sent all his top managers out to find out what that means." Walmart executives paid a couple of visits to Ventura, and Chouinard went to their headquarters, in Bentonville, Arkansas, to give a talk. Rick Ridgeway spent a couple of years advising them. The two companies, unlikely partners at first blush, also co-hosted a sustainability conference in New York. "I realized how much power we had as a company," Chouinard said.

Patagonia helped launch something called the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, a consortium of big retailers, like Walmart, Macy's, and the Gap, which, among other things, is now devising a system to give a sustainabil-

## MEDITATION ON AUNT SHIRLEY

She threw him in the fire. Myth  
wavers where it isn't wanted.  
Back arched against the table,  
I am twenty-three, heels stirruped,  
getting an I.U.D. *You're going to feel  
a little pinch.* Blood bites back  
like ambrosia under my tongue.  
She didn't want an infant. *Deep breath.* Blunt passed.

She was known to dance. His skin tightened  
white beneath the flames. Black boy in diapers.  
Plastic hook  
through my cervix. She tossed him  
into fire, wanted to forget the meaning of the word  
"mother." Ghost kick. Hair singe. She learned to spit  
curses back at whoever questioned. In some versions,  
the boy does not burn. *Please rate your pain  
on a scale of 1 to 10.* I hope, she said, you come to suckle  
Sorrow's asshole. And meant it. Uterine contraction.

ity grade to every purchasable product. "But I've become cynical about whether we can have any influence," Chouinard said. "Everyone's just greenwashing. The revolution isn't going to happen with corporations. The elephant in the room is growth. Growth is the culprit."

CHOUINARD HAS A desk in an office he shares with the C.E.O., Rose Marcario, and their two assistants, but there's no computer on it. Sometimes he wanders over to the old tin shed, a kind of shrine. "When I die, they're gonna stuff me and stick me in here, do tours." He still fires up the forge now and then, either to do donnish demonstrations for new hires or to make things: door hinges, fireplace sets, a shovel for his son's pizza oven.

One day, I found him sitting outside on a bench under the jacarandas by the parking lot, watching his company bustle around him, while kids' shouts bubbled up from one of the day-care center's outdoor classrooms. He had on a worn chili-red polo shirt, khaki standup shorts, and flip-flops—burly forearms crossed over a paunch. "Tough as a pine knot," a friend had

Peeled skin. Ash anointed his forehead.  
*Most women experience a 6, but*

I have been bleeding for fifteen days straight.  
I may never understand  
Shirley's experience of pain.  
In some versions, the smoke spirals up and

the boy is named Demophon. Tinder. Fluid-  
filled blister. The word "myth" unravels  
a knot in my chest. *Normal symptom*  
the nurse says. She was dancing in the water,

mud on her thighs, diamonds in the riverbed,  
blinking like devils' eyes. *If you bleed*  
*through more than one pad an hour—hip switch.*  
Blunt passed. In some versions,

the boy is never made immortal. Ghost kick.  
Myth spit. *If you burn up with fever,*  
*you may have infection or uterine*  
*rupture.* Deep breath. Little pinch. Black boy in diapers.

—M'Bilia Meekers

said of him. He is not tall. Tom McGuane, a fishing buddy, calls him the Tiny Terror but insists that the coinage is Tom Brokaw's.

"This is my job," Chouinard said. "I just sit here. I take care of my correspondence, and I'm out of here. Some days, I'm here from eleven to two. If I want to go surfing all day tomorrow, I'll go surfing all day tomorrow."

I asked him how much power he had. "Power? I don't have any power. If I complain about something, I often get a passive-aggressive response. I put up with it, because the alternative is to micromanage. I'm just the owner." He called his executive style "management by absence." He used to read business books and study various executive styles and corporate structures, here and abroad, but he prefers to take his lessons from nature—from ant colonies, for example. "There's no management," he said. "Every ant just does his job. They communicate and figure it out. It's like a Navy SEAL team. The whole team has to agree on what the mission is." It's also true, however, that Chouinard's occasionally whimsical notions send the ants scurrying. Absent or not, he's still the big ant.

He has a succession plan in place to insure that Patagonia remains in the family after he dies. "Going public would be the death of this company," he said. "It's impossible to be a public company and be responsible. My kids realize that. They are taking over more and more. I never dreamed they'd be interested."

I met them that night at the Chouinards' house, for dinner. Fletcher, who is forty-one, shapes boards for Patagonia's growing surf business. Claire, thirty-eight, works in the design department. "It helps that we're working here," Fletcher said. "We're not just owners, or board members. We have normal salaries. We weren't brought up to give a shit about money. Actually, I think we were raised to be slightly embarrassed about it." Claire said, "If the company became something I didn't believe in or approve of, I wouldn't want to be here." They both live with their own families up the street from their parents' house on the ocean, a few miles north of town. In a storm, in 1983, waves came up over the roof. "I don't believe people should have houses on the beach," Chouinard said. "But until they change the laws I'm doing it." Its foot-

print is modest: just over two thousand square feet, mostly old-growth Douglas fir, with a big plate-glass window facing the sea. Around the house Malinda has taped up newspaper clippings about exercise, memory, alcohol, and age. Chouinard cooked. He said, "We have a rule here. Whatever you touch first in the freezer you eat. It's mostly game. I touched a goose. Watch your teeth." There was no buckshot in mine. The meal also included cured duck, pasta with anchovies and fish roe, and a nice Italian red he'd found for fifteen bucks. The cat-food days are long gone.

Over the years, the Chouinards had taken very little money out of the business. "Until the last couple of years, it was just houses," Chouinard told me. In addition to Ventura and Jackson, they have a small place up the coast at the Hollister Ranch, a famous surfing spot that is off-limits to the public. He's probably worth hundreds of millions, but he's one of those could-be high rollers who fly coach. Every now and then, he still sleeps in his car. (McGuane told me, "He lives an unpretentious life, but does it on a lot of expensive real estate.") He distrusts the stock market. "I had a 401(k), but I took that money out of the market and put it into trees. Second-growth timberland in the Pacific Northwest"—in part to protect salmon and steelhead watersheds. He says that he and his wife give away half their salaries to charity.

Chouinard isn't a sentimental man, although he confessed, at one point, that he tends to cry at Fourth of July parades—"when the flag girls go around on horseback." He fainted when Claire was born. I asked him one day if the prospect of death bothered him, especially with many of his friends and contemporaries dying or getting ill. "Nah, I've always considered death to be a part of life," he said. "Tell you the secret to a good life: always be the oldest one in the room."

DOUG AND KRIS TOMPKINS spent decades assembling land in Chile and Argentina, in an unprecedented, and not uncontroversial, effort to create vast nature preserves and national parks. The governments there have supplemented the Tompkinses' gift of 2.2 million acres with commitments



# TRUMP'S OTHER DOCTORS



of as much as twelve million more. This is equivalent, in area, to six Yellowstones. “No human has ever done anything like this,” Chouinard told me.

Last December, the Do Boys set out on a paddling trip on a remote lake in southern Chile. It was supposed to be a mellow five-day affair, but a sudden Patagonian gale kicked up. Chouinard and Jib Ellison, in a two-man kayak, managed to reach an island. But Ridgeway and Tompkins capsized, and spent almost an hour in the near-freezing water, battling the tumult. “Every day, many times a day, I go back to that accident, go through it in my mind,” Ridgeway told me. “I assumed I was dead. I did something I’d never done. I gave up. I thought, I can’t make it. I was starting to drown. I decided to take it all in. It was so deeply beautiful. That was when I saw my comrades coming around the corner. So I still had a chance. I snapped out of it.”

Tompkins was in worse shape. After they were towed to shore, he was suffering so badly from hypothermia

that he was helicoptered to a hospital, and he died there that night. For all the perils that he and the others had faced down, over the decades, this end, on a supposedly gentle excursion, came as a shock to everyone in their circle.

“We thought we’d die together,” Kris Tompkins told me. She and her husband lived in Patagonia and flew in a small plane together almost every day. “We were obsessed with one another for twenty-five years. It’s the Great Amputation.”

Doug Tompkins’s death left his widow with the daunting task of continuing the work. “Doug left a real mess,” Chouinard said. “He was an entrepreneur. He starts something, and you need an entourage to clean it up. He micromanages and left no clear marching orders. Kris is now delegating. They’re going to pull it off.”

“Yvon is a kind of genius,” Kris Tompkins told me. “He can also be a knucklehead. The thing about Yvon and Doug, though they weren’t alike in personality at all, they shared an extraordinary confidence in themselves

and were completely unburdened by conventional thinking or the wise advice of others. They calculated risk better than most. I was in both cases the conservative one, the one always wringing my hands.”

WE LEFT MOOSE at 6 A.M. Chouinard was driving a silver Honda Element that belonged to Fletcher. The front windshield was pocked with dings and cracked all the way across, and the side pockets were stuffed with maps. “I just got a recall on the passenger airbag,” he said as I got in. There was a peach pit in the passenger seat and, from the back, the clanking of glass. “That’s the wine.”

Our destination was the Bighorn River near Fort Smith, where it flows out of the Yellowtail Dam and north through the Crow Reservation, one of the biggest and poorest tribal territories in the country. The federal government cheekily named the dam after the Crow chairman who had fiercely opposed it. The river holds more trout per mile than any other river in the country, Chouinard told me. And yet the Crow don’t much fish it or participate in the economy that the trout attract. Tourists pay around five hundred dollars a day to float downstream with a guide.

Chouinard disdains fishing with guides. “And I won’t fish from a boat. But Wyoming and Utah and some of these states have awful access laws. You can’t fish any other way. Homeowners own to the middle of the river—you can’t even put down an anchor. That’s why fly-fishing is dying.”

There was some smoke in the air from a forest fire in the mountains to the southeast. The plan was to drive over the Teton Pass, from Wyoming into Idaho, and north along the Madison River through Ennis, and then through Bozeman and east: the long way, to avoid the traffic in the park, he said, and to look in on a few fishing stores that carried Patagonia merchandise. Each mile seemed to bring a fond memory (a remote lake where trout ate hoppers from his hand; a woman who wore her husband’s severed index finger around her neck, after a grizzly attack; a beer-drinking barstool dog) or a dire sign

(dead pines, dry stream, dumb dam).

“Look at this,” Chouinard said, as we raced through rolling seed-potato farmland on the Idaho side of the Tetons. “It’s gorgeous. But it’s all toxic. Pesticides. People can’t drink water out of their wells. In Ashton, you can’t drink the water. It’s like Flint, Michigan, except at least here the water company told everybody.”

He went on, “That’s why I’m getting into food.” He was referring to Patagonia Provisions, a new venture to source and sell sustainable food—his latest fixation. He’s big on canned fish. “Organic cotton: You can insist on it, but do people care? If we’re going to have a revolution, it’s going to be in food, and I want to be the guy making the guillotine in my blacksmith shop.”

We rolled up to the goat ranch of Mark Harbaugh, an Idaho native and excommunicated Mormon who is the global sales manager of the fly-fishing division at Patagonia. He sends his goats into the foothills to eat noxious weeds, on a Bureau of Land Management contract. (He trains the goats to eat thistle by spraying the weeds with salt.) The company’s fly-fishing line has boomed—it has tripled in volume since 2012.

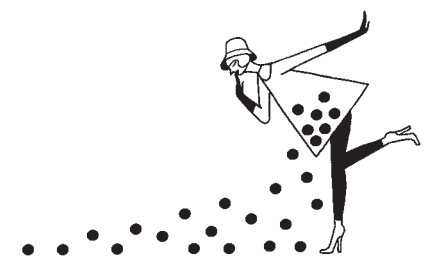
Harbaugh had a truckload of gear for the Crow event. The most important element was a supply of tenkara rigs: telescoping graphite rods with a fixed twenty-foot line, leader, and no reel. The name, and the technique, came from Japan, but it mimicked the way people have been fishing all over the world for thousands of years. You just cast, let the fly drift, and then cast again. When you catch a fish, you haul it in by hand. If it’s fighting hard, you can even drop the rod in the river, and the fish will return to its resting spot. Wade in, fetch the rod, land the fish. The line, when idle, can be looped around a pair of paper clips on the handle. It’s cheap and easy to use.

“Fly-fishing has become so esoteric,” Chouinard said. “People have decided to learn more and more about less and less. Guys write tomes this thick on midges, and they don’t even fish. Then, there are the guys who cast. That’s all they care about—cast-

ing. They don’t fish. They cast. Then, there are the flytiers, with flies so real you wanna swat ‘em.” Chouinard has been on a kind of tenkara crusade, both for fishing’s sake and for the broader metaphorical implications. He spent 2015 fishing with just one type of fly, for all kinds of fish in all kinds of water, to prove the point that people spend way too much on way too much gear. The fly he used, and still relies on almost exclusively, is a brown pheasant-tail-and-partridge soft hackle. Each one takes him four minutes to make. The soft hackle makes it a wet fly; you fish it beneath the surface. He gives it a little twitch during its swing through the current, and the fish, allegedly, cannot resist. “It’s like playing with your cat, with a toy mouse,” he said. “Drag it along and the cat watches. Stop it and give it a twitch, and the cat pounces.”

As Chouinard steered us through the sublime vistas of Montana, enumerating extinctions and threats, one felt not depressed—or even, as one often is, in the presence of ecological jeremiads, exasperated—but, rather, almost inexplicably exhilarated. Maybe it was the trench humor, the dark comedy of the climber in dire straits. Whenever Chouinard says, “We’re fucked,” he laughs.

“He’s one of the most pessimistic people I’ve ever known,” McGuane



said. “And yet one of the most fun people to do things with.”

The optimism, when it comes, is in his accounts of tiny victories, rare as they may be, and his belief in the effort, if not the outcome. “We stopped a dam the other day,” he said, at one point, as we drove along the Madison. “In Alaska, on the Susitna River. We gave a grant of twenty-five thousand dollars to a filmmaker who was making a film called ‘Supersalmon.’ The film

comes out, the guy shows it around, and the governor, just like that, he kills the dam. You don’t get many clear-cut victories like that. But sometimes all it takes is one person.”

AFTER TEN AND A HALF HOURS, we reached the Bighorn River Lodge, which was helping Chouinard and his friends stage the Crow event. The lodge had set them up with a cabin nearby. He’d been coming to this stretch of river for many years, to fish and to hunt for pheasant. We wandered down to the river for a look at where the Crow kids would be learning the next day. It was a wide riffle, swift, wadeable. “This looks perfect,” Chouinard said. “We can catch a lot of fish here.”

“I just teach women and kids,” he’d told me. “I don’t teach guys. Too frustrating. They don’t listen. You tell them to cast, take two steps, then cast again, but either they take no steps or they take ten.” He went on, “Women don’t want to go out there with a redneck guide who’s chewing tobacco and telling them how to cast. But they want to fish. They just don’t seem to like the toys as much as the boys do.” The tenkara, he felt, was the trick to getting women and kids to like fishing. And fishing was the way to get them to care about the water.

Only seven kids were there by the river the next morning, out of an anticipated fifteen. Two of them were with their father, Dana Wilson, the tribe’s vice-chairman. Someone had laid out some tables of Patagonia swag and eco lit under a makeshift tent. After Wilson led an informal ceremony with a sheaf of burning sage, Chouinard, in chest waders, showed them a willow stick with a line attached, a version of the rig he had as a kid. “O.K., so, hey, this is how I learned to fish. I used to use worms. This don’t cost much compared to all the ones those dudes got in those boats drifting by all day. Those cost a lot.” He went on, “The line is made of horsetail hair—from a stallion, since mares pee on their own tails. You can walk out there with a stick and a horsehair line and catch anything.”

“What do you call that?” Wilson asked.

Chouinard looked at him for a moment, and then said, “A pole.” ♦



# How Can I Help?



*Rivka Galchen*

CONSIDER HAYLEY, OUR hire of two months, a relative endurance run. Hayley is twenty-four years old, and she is earning \$8.35 an hour. Every morning, she comes in with a large coffee from a retailer whose name I will not mention, usually with “skim latte” indelibly on the cup. A latte of that size, from that retailer, costs \$4.25. Which is roughly thirty-one minutes of labor for Hayley. Pre-tax. This chronic decision of Hayley’s will translate into an annual expenditure of approximately eleven hundred dollars. On an expected income of sixteen thousand five hundred dollars. All of which is fine. Someone may choose to spend that proportion of her income that way; you never know what coffee, or anything, means to another person. In a very nondirective manner, I remarked to Hayley last Friday that the coffee provided for free by our center was from the retailer she chose to frequent—the same retailer. I just mentioned it, I didn’t press the point. At no point did I make any open judgment about the value of the coffee per se, as I understand that it is about the value of the coffee *to her*.

Over the following week, however, I observed that this information had no influence on Hayley’s coffee-obtaining habits. I refrained from pointing out that the coffee she drank was promoted in conjunction with a life style that it was not, without additional funds, naturally yoked to, any more than polar bears are yoked to a certain red-canned cola drink. I know that such observations just make me sound like a killjoy and a pedant. I get it. I like and admire Hayley; she is a team player. I don’t judge. But I have of late been tempted to judge. When Hayley comes in to my office crying, saying that Dusty (her cat) has cerebellar issues—that Dusty is just walking in circles, Dusty is not eating properly—and she needs the rest of the week off to take care of her, I say yes, even though I am short on people trained to handle our new insurance contract. What else can I say? Hayley’s coffee behavior reveals that she is not a rational person, who would understand that the best thing she can do, for her and for Dusty, is to keep coming in to work. I know from experience not to give ad-

vice. People have to come to things on their own; I understand that. For example, I should admit to myself that it makes a difference to me that Hayley is my sister. I like to think that this does not affect my objectivity, but maybe it does.

Perhaps I should also admit that sometimes I have a fantasy that I have been invited to speak to a room full of people, or of Hayley, eager to learn from me. I am, technically, a young woman, I say to them, or her. But, owing to the exceptionally high turnover rate at my job, and the nature of the job itself, I have dealt with more than most people have, and for that reason I believe it is not misleading to say that I am of a class of individuals who were once termed wise old men. I work at a call center. Incoming calls, not sales. Service. Helping people. “Helping people” was recently ranked the No. 1 factor in job satisfaction! But I understand why many people fail to maintain their positions here for more than ten days. And I don’t pass judgment on those people for their failure. Or, for that matter, on myself, for my success. The four hamburgers of life—there’s the hamburger that tastes good now but makes you feel bad later, the one that tastes bad now but makes you feel good later, the one that is good both now and later, and the one that is bad both now and later, and of course we’re all meant to find the good/good and feed ourselves appropriately—vary for everyone. I find this hamburger idea very useful. It comes from a book called “Happiness.” The author explains that we all need to pursue metaphorical hamburgers that balance current pleasure with future happiness, which is to say: Meaning. Or, at least, that is his argument. He used to teach at Harvard. Another book I read says there are only the drowned and the saved. That also sounds true.

The reason I excel in my work, I want to explain, is that I am naturally empathic. To be empathic you have to understand people. I believe I was rapidly promoted—I no longer have to field phone calls; I teach people how to field phone calls, and I even teach people how to teach other people how to field phone calls, as well as taking consults on particularly challenging phone en-

counters—because I understand people. Someone shouts at me that I’m exactly the kind of crook who calmly buries people in mass graves, upon the occasion of my sincerely trying to help him/her co-discover why he/she has not received a reimbursement for the pre-operative laboratory tests associated with emergency gall-bladder surgery—I understand that person. I understand everyone. Or, rather, I used to.

ONE FRIDAY AFTERNOON a few months ago, I came home and found Hayley microwaving a bagel. I said, “You shouldn’t microwave a bagel—you should toast a bagel. That brings out the texture.” She’s my sister, after all, and so sometimes I feel that I can speak more openly with her than I would with other people. Hayley started crying.

She said, “Travis is going to think I did it on purpose.”

“He’s not going to care about a bagel,” I said.

“It’s twins,” she said. “And if I tell him it’s twins he’ll definitely leave.”

But Travis had already left. I hadn’t seen him for weeks, and I felt pretty certain that Hayley hadn’t seen him, either.

Hayley continued, “I think it’s fair for me to keep that it’s twins a secret. It’s my body. I can keep him out of the delivery room. And anyway I don’t want him to see my private parts in that way.”

I pointed out to her that she was living not with Travis but with me. That it was me, not Travis, who was there for her, sharing a microwaved bagel.

“It’s true,” she said. “Travis has always been very conservative with his food.” She paused, as if in reflection. “Can I say the second baby is yours? We could say you chose to adopt a baby, and it just happened to be at the same time that I was having one, which would make sense, because of your admiration for me. But which baby would I keep? What if I can’t help but choose the cuter one? That’s really wrong. Think how terrible you would feel if Mom had done that with us. We need to just flip a coin, no thinking, no deciding.”

It was the irrationality of it all that was drowning me. Or her. I continued to sit with her, because she is my sister and she was distressed, but I was



conscious that I wanted to be rereading about the four kinds of hamburgers instead, reminding myself how to make good-now, good-later decisions. My sister said that the thing that seemed really gross to her about kids was having a minivan—the way the passenger door is on the opposite side from the driver’s door, so that you have to get out of the driver’s seat and go all the way around to the other side to open the kids’ door. She had seen so many women doing this, and it seemed like a real bore. Was what she was saying about minivans and their doors even true? Don’t most minivans have doors on both sides? I didn’t say that I didn’t know why she would have to have a minivan, and I didn’t say that I hoped she didn’t think I would be leasing the minivan for her. I didn’t say that because I knew I would be leasing it for her. Even if I successfully negotiated the minivan down to a hatchback. Maybe if I could actually be nice to my sister, in my heart, I wouldn’t have to be so nice to her in the pastures and parking lots of our real world.

I said, “You know what? I think this is such good news. We’re losing sight of how this is happy news. We just have to *decide* that it’s good news, and then it is—it’s good news.”

Hayley cried a little more. I talked a little more. Wandering among false sentiments and unwanted thoughts, I found myself doing something really not very nice at all. I found myself telling Hayley that I thought she should come work at the call center with me. I believe that I proposed this so that I could hold it against her when she inevitably turned it down, treating it as if it were beneath her, which I knew she would do, and I knew that it would make me furious when she did this, and I entrapped her anyway. What can I say? I am the youngest of three. When we were little, my sister had an easy way with a soccer ball, and my brother fixed up an old car on his own, and he never had trouble filling the seats with girls who had shiny hair. Both of my siblings were more fun and more naturally attractive, and happier, than I was. My brother loved ordering me to remove his dirty socks and then inhale from them—that kind of thing. I miss those days. Now my brother has two children whom he believes his wife

conceived with her own father. He went so far as to order DNA tests. He didn’t believe the results; he has no job; his wife has taken the kids back to Wichita, where she is living with her parents; he is in Wichita, too, which I know only because his wife calls sometimes to cry and to ask for money. My sister is more conventionally in decline. I know it sounds as if I don’t care for my siblings, but unfortunately I do. (Where are our parents? You know, they aren’t here.)

So I said the thing to my sister, about how she should come work at the call center, because, after all, it was about helping people, and helping people is a great way to get one’s mind off one’s own troubles, as she herself had said to me during that time when she went to three A.A. meetings, because she liked one of the men there and she wanted me to lend them my car, which I did, though most people wouldn’t lend a car to recovering alcoholics—would they?—and they got a speeding ticket which they did not notify me about but which later showed up in the mail. The certainty I had that she was going to say no, that the job wasn’t right for her, was so strong that I felt electric and happy—a currently tasty emotional hamburger that would taste very bad later.

“You know?” she said. “Yeah, no. That makes sense.”

“I just wish you would think about *why* you won’t give it a try.”



“I will give it a try. I’m saying I’ll try.”  
“Because what do you lose from trying?”

“Right. I agree. I’m going to try. It could be my lucky thing.”

**W**E DIDN’T ACTUALLY need anyone at the time. We had just lost a big contract with a particular phone-service supplier, and we were suddenly low on work. Though at least wait times on calls had been reduced. Also, a study

had come in about health risks associated with working at call centers—it was a study out of Sweden, which I think is not a proper compare group, since those people go months without sunshine, and then months with too much sunshine—and so resources had been allocated to transform the unofficial smoke-break room into an official smoke-free meditation space, to conform to a new and surely reasonable regulation that a prescribed percentage of profit go to worker well-being. That plus the fact that other regulatory legislation had recently made it legal for the state’s prisons to run call centers, staffed by inmates, and for various reasons the prison call centers only had to pay the inmates/workers ninety-five cents an hour. . . .

“We just have to hold up our brand, which is experience,” I said to Kyle, my boss. Kyle values my input. In discussing Hayley, I pointed out to Kyle what he already knows—how valuable it is not to have to again and again be training new people, that my sister would be a person we trained who then . . . I don’t know why I was making an argument for her as a steadfast, reliable person or why I didn’t mention her pregnancy, which was—soon—going to be obvious.

Kyle said that my recommendations had never failed him.

On Monday night, I told Hayley that the following Monday could work as a start day, though honestly Tuesday would maybe be better, less hectic, and that for the training weeks it would be just half pay, but that period could be as short as two weeks—

“I meant to tell you that I prayed about that,” Hayley said. “I’m going to take three more weeks before I start. For myself. To focus on me. It wasn’t a decision I made—I want you to understand that. It was a commandment I obeyed. I got us something really great, though, for our home.” It was a special frying basket for a taco-salad bowl. You placed an extra-large tortilla in it, you heated up a pot of oil to a hundred and eighty degrees Fahrenheit, you lowered the frying basket, you lifted out an edible bowl. “I thought it would be fun for us. And I know how much you love to cook.”

I don’t love to cook. I just cook as a service. I don’t even like to eat that

much—it's just a necessity. I can think of no hamburger that is good now or good later. They're all terrible.

WHEN HAYLEY FINALLY showed up for her first day of work, she wore a crop top. I told her that this was inappropriate, and she told me that she believed the body of a woman carrying a child was a beautiful and holy thing, and that it was sad that I could not see it that way. On the second day, she stayed home sick. But in the weeks after that, I should acknowledge, Hayley had decent metrics. We mainly follow Average Handle Times (A.H.T.s) and First Call Resolutions (F.C.R.s); following these metrics is part of my job, and not just snooping. Hayley's A.H.T.s were not within goal parameters, but her F.C.R.s were those of a more experienced handler. Did these numbers truly represent her? I know that metrics can measure only what they measure, and that they can't measure what one might collectively call immeasurables. That said, I tend to think there is an instinctive—but misguided—tendency to overvalue "immeasurables," as if they should be equated with love or dignity or art when, in fact, they are as much a grab bag of data as more easily captured factors are. It may be true that you can't—yet—measure human kindness in a customer call, or other interaction, but I do think, for example, that kindness manifests itself in aggregate F.C.R. numbers.

But Hayley's metrics weren't so impressive that they could explain why Kyle kept stopping by her cubicle. One day, he brought her a stress ball to squeeze. He squeezed the ball and talked about its texture, and laughed. Another afternoon, I heard Hayley's laugh; it was coming from Kyle's office. Left behind at her cubicle, I saw, was Hayley's coffee, resting on a high ledge. I crossed the office with the purpose of throwing the branded paper cup away, but I found that it was unexpectedly heavy; it still had coffee in it, six ounces or so, just abandoned there. Did she even like coffee?

I felt that I understood something. Hayley was trying to represent herself as a woman who had a certain amount of money, enough money to waste, and

in advertising herself in this way she was wagering that a man with a certain amount of money would say to himself, "She is one of us." And he would then be moved to club her on the head and throw her over his shoulder, and basically this would be good. Instead of trying to work her way toward greener pastures, she was trying to sexually advance herself to greener pastures. Even while pregnant. I told Hayley that evening that her behavior with Kyle would only foul and not further her development.

BUT WHO CARES? On the first of February, only thirty-one weeks along—not a particularly good number, not really a good number at all—Hayley, well . . . it became necessary to go to the hospital. Humanity was making its way toward us.

"I told you not to drink so much coffee," I said as I drove.

"You never said anything about coffee," Hayley replied.

"I did. I knew a woman who worked at that diner on Berry, and when pregnant women came in asking for coffee she would secretly give them decaf, as a public-health intervention."

"What's happening to me has nothing to do with coffee."

"What's happening is a result of your decisions. You've made choices. One right after another. And now it's not as if Kyle is going to solve this for you."

"Jesus. Sometimes life just happens."

"That's what losers think."

"You're the one who's making decisions. You're making a decision to be a terrible, terrible mother—"

"What are you talking about? I'm not a mother," I said.

"You're my mother," she said.

"But I'm not your mother," I said.

"You know what I mean," she said.

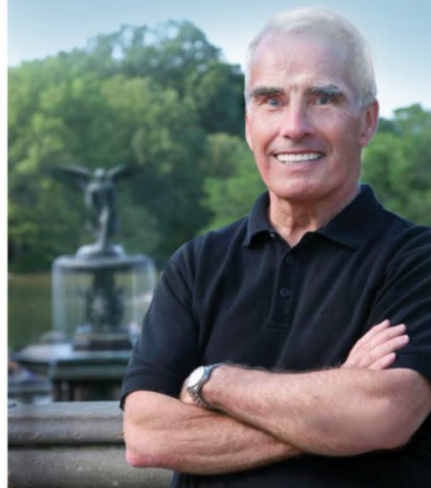
"I'm really good with people," I said.

"I'm actually really good with them. People like working with me."

Hayley said that I was only good with people on the phone.

I told Hayley something true, which was that I thought she looked really bad, and had for a while. That she looked much worse than other pregnant women, and that now, because of her decisions, she was going to have two tiny premature little nonpersons

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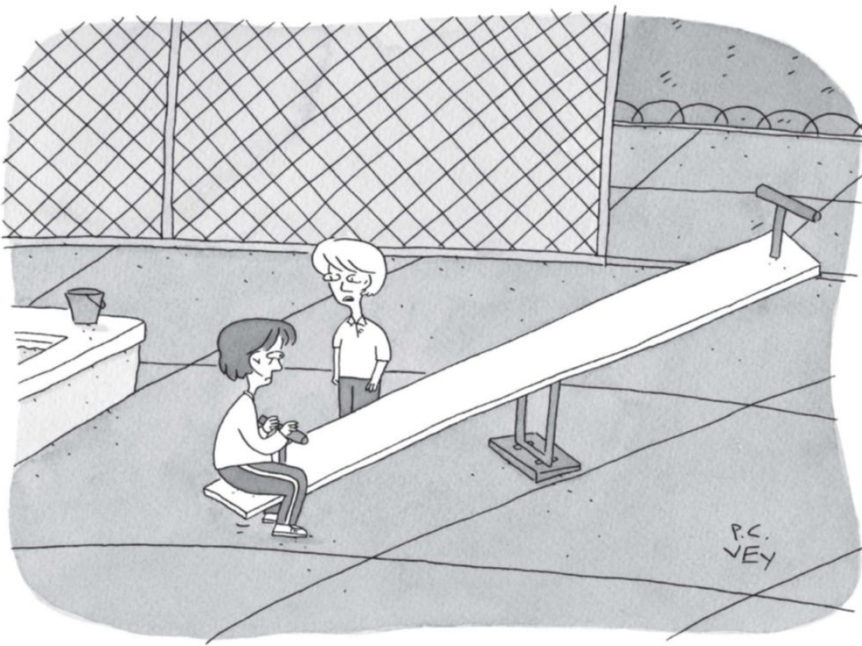
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*"You have to let other people into your life."*

with all sorts of problems, and that I hoped she would enjoy what she had sowed.

"Please stop the car," Hayley said.

"I'm sorry, are you O.K.? Is something happening?"

"Please stop the car now." Then, "Now I am making a decision. If you don't stop the car, I'm calling the police."

Of course I wasn't going to stop the car. But at the red light on Eufaula I had to stop the car. Hayley opened the door, she got out of the car, she didn't even close the door, she walked to a white truck in front of us, she spoke through the window, she climbed into the truck.

WAS I SUPPOSED to follow Hayley, pursuing her across the twenty-five-mile-per-hour zones to the hospital, where things would proceed pretty much exactly the same as if I had not followed her? Was I supposed to return to work, where, through no fault of my own, I would be perceived as cold and un-empathic? Was I supposed to pull over and do a five-minute "breather" as a way of understanding that in such moments our vision invariably clouds? Or was this a situation in which our first

instinct is our best instinct and the clouding occurs in deliberation? Who was I to Hayley, really, but a chance shaking of the biological dice? Let her go.

As these thoughts presented themselves, one after another, like a series of flashcards for learning nothing, I found myself passing a mock-Tudor house with a trim lawn, bordered with topiary. It was a house that I recognized. Beyond the house were horses, then ten miles of sod farms. In middle school and then steadily through high school, I had been infatuated with a boy who lived in this house, a perfectly untouchable Joshua Michaelson. My love for him was not entirely unrequited: once, after finishing a chemistry-lab writeup we were partnered for, I was invited, albeit by his father, to stay for dinner. Joshua showed me a special freezer, for the quarter of a cow they had purchased, and there was also a greenhouse with geraniums and tomato plants. Next to the kitchen table, on a high shelf, was a red plate that I was told was part of a Quaker tradition; it read, "You Are Special Today," and one ate off it only on one's birthday, or on some other very special occasion. I had loved Joshua before, but now I

loved him with the intensity of someone who would have felt honored to be a piece of furniture in his realm. In my house, at that time, there were hundreds of goldfish that our mom had brought home in plastic bags, in one of her streaks of spending and what she called "bouts of personality." Joshua was the oldest of five brothers; also at the table was a live-in nanny, a woman from Hungary, whose name I didn't catch. I had never met a nanny before. She had corn-silk hair pulled up in one of those ponytails that lend a special shape to the head, a sort of volume which I've never succeeded in reproducing. I don't know where the mom was. The nanny seemed at least one part tennis star. I felt, at that dinner, that I was sitting amid the most beautiful, intelligent family in the world.

Joshua's father drove me home. I asked him to drop me off at the house two doors down from my actual house. The porch light was not on at my house. Inside, my mother was sleeping. Outside, Hayley had gathered the plastic bags of goldfish from all the corners of the house and was finishing placing a stack of them on our front lawn, next to a sign that read "Free! Please take!" She was never a keeper of family secrets. Only I was. I never used to tell Hayley, or anyone, anything. But for some reason, I suppose because Hayley had an undeniable talent with the other gender, that evening I confessed to her that I was in love with Joshua Michaelson. She stood quietly next to the fish. Quiet was rare for Hayley. She knew the Michaelson family.

Finally, she said, "You're too good for him. Just remember that. He's not rejecting you, you're rejecting him."

It wasn't true, I know, but something about my sister's way of being—it was *our* household that was secretly the golden one. I was able to believe that. For a moment.

MY PHONE WAS ringing. I was in a Dunkin' Donuts parking lot across the street from the call center. "How can I help you?" I answered automatically. It was a nurse speaking to me. Hayley was either well or she wasn't well. She was absolutely fine, things

were under control—also, I should get over there right away. The nurse’s phonic demeanor was calm, measured, efficient, and empathic. I drove to the hospital in a kind of dream state, like that of those elderly callers who, having left longer and longer gaps between phrases, at some point stop responding altogether, even as they remain on the line; one tries not to be the person who ends a call, though devotion to that ethic can ruin one’s numbers. The closing words should always be “Is there anything else I can do for you?” It is an honor to be in that position. At the hospital parking lot, a gate lifted, as if it knew me, as if it were in agreement with who I was.

What a miracle of organization and civilization that hospital seemed to me. I had done nothing to help build or sustain it, and still it received me, as if it didn’t matter what I did or did not do or say. It was like coming across a cathedral on a high, empty tundra. You could just go inside. People with specialized skill sets were here, night and day. The lighting inside was so evenly distributed, so uniformly bright. Staff clocked in and clocked out, name tags were printed. Arrows on the floor directed people to magnetic resonance imaging, or to endoscopy. How had all this happened and been made available? To me, and to my family? Yes, I knew that these places also spread infectious diseases and ruined people’s credit ratings, but all that was dim at the perimeter of my vision, and I felt instead that I had entered a mansion and, against all expectations, my sister was in residence. The receptionist asked me who I was there to see.

“I’m here for Hayley Ward,” I said. “I’m the nanny for the Ward twins.” Though I had made no decision, I felt happy, expectant. I needed a family. And here Hayley was bringing one to me. Love was about practice, the book on happiness had said. Or maybe it hadn’t said that. I think it was that winning at squash was about practice, and then it turned out that victory had been insufficient? I didn’t know. Maybe I could learn on the job. ♦

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Rivka Galchen on her story, “How Can I Help?”



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# THE CRITICS



BOOKS

## EAT, MEMORY

Paul Freedman's "Ten Restaurants That Changed America."

BY JANE KRAMER

I LOVE RESTAURANTS. I'm a serial eater—out, prowling New York for an uncommonly delicious dinner, at a decent price, cooked by someone else. And never mind if the meal turns out to be disappointing. There is always the promise of the next meal, the next new place, and, besides, the pleasures of eating privately in public tend to compensate for most culinary catastrophes that do not involve a trip to the emergency room after the latest hole-in-the-wall around the corner serves me last week's clams. My husband says that I never learn; if there's a new restaurant in our neighborhood, I try it.

Given that Paul Freedman's new book, "Ten Restaurants That Changed America" (Liveright), is largely a history of eating out in this country, it's worth noting that the word "restaurant," at least as food scholars define it, is as recent historically as the experience it describes. It comes from the French *restaurer*, to restore, and was coined in the seventeen-sixties, supposedly when a nutritionally minded Frenchman known only as Boulanger (his first name has disappeared from the annals of gastronomy) decided to open a place in Paris offering a menu of "restorative" meat broths, along with tables to sit at, wine to sip, and, possibly, a bit of cheese or fruit to end the meal. ("Boulanger sells restoratives fit for the gods," the sign on the door said.)

People, of course, had been eating out for several millennia by the time the mysterious, and perhaps apocryphal, M. Boulanger boiled down the bones for his first soup. Cooking pots, set deep into stone counters, lined the main thoroughfares of ancient Rome. Street venders in Southeast Asia were hawking all the fixings you would need for a tasty lunch or dinner, much as they do today. For centu-

ries, inns served travellers from whatever provisions happened to be in the kitchen of the innkeeper's wife; respectable women, forced by circumstances to travel alone, were expected to dine in their rooms—the beginning of room service?—and couples ate together, downstairs, in a room off a bar that was reserved for men. What the French call *maisons de rendez-vous*, not to mention the better brothels, served lunch and dinner to their guests—something I discovered toward the end of lunch one day at a place, near Tangier, I knew only as an excellent Spanish restaurant, when couple after couple (there were only couples) scampered upstairs with their bottle of amontillado before the cheese and the quince paste were even cleared. The great feasts of the aristocracy were cooked in the castle by a battery of chefs and consumed in vast dining rooms, where men and women could mingle freely. Status came with an invitation, not a reservation. The wealth that counted was measured in hectares, exclusivity was what you conferred on the friends (and, more important, the enemies) you fed at your domain, and, as likely as not, your menus were based on Cardinal Richelieu's famous dinner parties—fancy and, obviously, French.

The first commercial appropriation of seigneurial haute cuisine was a Paris restaurant that opened in 1782—seven years before the storming of the Bastille and, appropriately, situated on the Rue de Richelieu. It was called La Grande Taverne de Londres, perhaps to signal its neutrality in the coming domestic head roll, a mile away on the Place de la Concorde. Fifty years later—with new money already flowing into New York by way of mining and stockyard barons, railhead property speculators, futures traders, and the poli-

ticians whose pockets they lined—two entrepreneurial brothers from Switzerland, Giovanni (soon to be John) and Pietro (soon to be Peter) Del-Monico, raised the money to open the first important French restaurant in the United States. It was at 2 South William Street, in the heart of the financial district, and it came with tens of thousands of square feet of seriously opulent dining space, including, in the Paris tradition, private rooms available upstairs for negotiating business deals or, perhaps, enjoying the pleasant combination of adultery and dinner. The brothers and their descendants—in particular, a nephew by the name of Lorenzo, who turned out to be a visionary restaurateur—followed the money steadily and successfully uptown until, at one point, there were four Delmonico's in the city, and, in the third to open, a French chef named Charles Ranhofer, who in short order became the most celebrated chef in the United States. Together, Lorenzo Delmonico and Charles Ranhofer generated a passion in the public for their consummate, if somewhat overwrought, interpretations of French food, a passion that began to chip away at the social wall between the city's established first families and its new moneyed classes. If you were able to read a menu that ran to more than a hundred dishes (one of the pleasures of "Ten Restaurants" is its reproductions of dozens of menus), and had the time to linger over fourteen courses, you could go to Delmonico's, and everyone who could did.

DELMONICO'S, FITTINGLY, IS the first of Freedman's ten restaurants. It lasted, in its various locations, for nearly a hundred years, during which time it established its style of haute cuisine as the gold standard in American dining

ABOVE: MIGUEL PORLAN



*Freedman's restaurants serve as emblems of the racial, regional, class, and immigrant realities of America's kitchens.*





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and spawned generations of imitations in big cities across the country. It remained the standard until its name was sold by the family, in the nineteen-twenties, and its lingering reputation was eventually surpassed by the sanctum sanctorum of Henri Soulé's Le Pavillon, another of Freedman's ten. Le Pavillon was a seriously snooty place that began as a tourist restaurant in the French pavilion of the 1939 World's Fair, in Queens, but by the nineteen-fifties it had morphed into an East Side gastronomic temple, where the possibility of dinner was conferred on a chosen few by its imperious patron, and nobody else could get a table. The fact that I ate there often (or at all) was entirely thanks to my friend (and budding gourmand) R. W. Apple, who at the time was a correspondent for the NBC Nightly News and testing the limits of an already famous expense account. I was a graduate student living down the hall and subsisting on Milton, Hawthorne, Faulkner, and tuna curry (a can of tuna, a can of cream-of-mushroom soup, and a tablespoon of McCormick's curry powder, on rice).

Le Pavillon set the mid-century style for fine French dining in New York—much of it classic brasserie fare refined by its estimable chef, Pierre Franey, into an almost ambrosial simplicity. Meanwhile, the front of the house, ruled by Soulé's moody assessments of who mattered and who did not, kept customers in line through what Freedman calls the "intimidating ordeal of trial by snobbery," and replaced the dread of a curdled sauce with the dread of a table in Siberia (a fate visited upon Harry Cohn, the president of Columbia Pictures, when he bought the building that housed Le Pavillon, in the mid-fifties). It may be that Soulé himself shared the anxieties of a new, urban, postwar society eager to reconfigure old distinctions between different kinds of money and status. But, as chef after chef escaped his reign of terror and opened admirable French restaurants of their own—twelve in New York alone—that legacy was bound to pall.

**P**AUL FREEDMAN IS a social historian, a medievalist by training known, in academic circles, as the author of books such as "Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination," a classic study

of the spice trade as it affected taste and status in European culture in the Middle Ages; and now, among foodies, as a champion of the Sustainable Food Program at Yale, where he teaches and where he has broken down another kind of exclusivity by inviting chefs, food scientists, and writers to teach and speak. He has spent the better part of the past decade eating out, and it is clear from the first few pages of "Ten Restaurants" that those restaurants are not the whole story he has to tell but what you could call "transformative prototypes"—platforms from which to open a discussion of the way America eats, the ethnic and racial and regional and class and immigrant realities that its kitchens represent, and the entrepreneurs with the passion or the wisdom or simply the ambition to embrace (and profit from) the simmering stockpot of social change.

A particularly illuminating example is the story of the Mandarin, the San Francisco restaurant presided over for thirty years by an elegant and, by all accounts, warmly hospitable woman named Cecilia Chang, who had grown up before the Second World War in a fifty-two-room Peking palace, and who eventually made her way to California, to serve what the *Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen famously anointed as "the best Chinese food east of the Pacific." Established in 1960, the Mandarin was one of the first upscale Chinese restaurants in America, as well as one of the first to offer the *yangguizi*—"foreign devils" is the common term—the choice of authentically Chinese fare, as opposed to the bland Chinese-American dishes invented and served, at the time, almost anywhere beyond the precincts of the country's teeming Chinatowns. (In Providence, where I grew up, the Sunday-night takeout menu of our one neighborhood Chinese restaurant consisted entirely of a bag of cold, crispy noodles and a combination carton known as "chow mein-chop suey mixed.") Freedman's chapter on the Mandarin is a forty-page lesson in the history of Chinese immigration—from the indentured coolies who laid the tracks for the Western end of the Transcontinental Railroad to the young chefs of an ongoing Chinese diaspora who have been introducing the wildly various food cultures of China to the West. There are now more Chinese restaurants

in the country—forty thousand, Freedman says—than there are McDonald's, Burger Kings, and KFCs combined.

Chinatowns today have become thriving examples of our national ethnic-eatery tourist trade. But, in New York, the prize for selling the facts and fictions of ethnic bonhomie used to belong to the Italian restaurant Mamma Leone's, which, as the story has it, "opened" in 1906 when Enrico Caruso encouraged fifty friends to shell out fifty cents a head for a down-home dinner in his friend Luisa Leone's living room. By the time Mamma Leone's closed, nearly a century later, it was the city's largest restaurant, with eleven dining rooms and twelve hundred and fifty seats, not to mention more strolling accordionists than Manhattanites in sight. There were years when nearly every tour bus in the city disgorged its passengers for an obligatory meal there, which also made it an irresistible photo stop for sports celebrities, politicians, and college kids in New York for the weekend. Having once made that stop myself, I can report that the food, while leaden, introduced people who weren't Italian to the idea of Italian food at a time when the pasta most Americans dipped into was a can of precooked Franco-American spaghetti clinging to a thin coating of sugary tomato sauce.

Today, the most touristic American restaurant may be Antoine's, in New Orleans. It is certainly one of the oldest restaurants in the country—it dates from 1840—and continues to provide the kind of antebellum menu that Freedman describes and clarifies as haute-Creole cuisine, thus performing what for me was the invaluable service of explaining the cultural and culinary differences between Creole and Cajun cooking. As spectacle, Antoine's made upstarts like Mamma Leone's look like summer-stock productions. I ate there once, with my husband, and sat with the other tourists in one of the fourteen high-kitsch dining rooms where the old white pols of Louisiana used to negotiate their deals, eating dishes so oversauced as to lose any particularity of flavor. (Freedman, who includes an appendix of recipes from each of his chosen restaurants, received, from Antoine's, a recipe called Oysters Foch, which involves glopping a Sauce Colbert—itsself a blend of a complicated tomato sauce and a warm Hollandaise,

whipped slowly over a double boiler—onto cornmeal-fried oysters perched on foie-gras-laden toast.) I ordered the Oysters Rockefeller, a recipe from Antoine's turn-of-the-nineteenth-century kitchen and still promoted as a closely guarded secret, despite the dozens of versions available online today. The truth is that I remember nothing about those oysters or, in fact, about the rest of the meal, perhaps because later that night I conceived a beautiful daughter, somewhat hurriedly, in the middle of a hotel fire that we then managed to flee with two book manuscripts intact. How could a meal compete with that?

If you're looking for true Southern comfort in "Ten Restaurants," you might want to forget about Antoine's and go straight to the chapter on Sylvia's, the enduring soul-food restaurant on Lenox Avenue, near the Apollo Theatre, which a waitress named Sylvia Pressley Woods and her husband, Herbert, bought for twenty thousand dollars in 1962, transforming a local luncheonette into a celebration of the African-American kitchen that had seen her through a hardscrabble South Carolina childhood. Woods's grandfather was hanged for a murder he did not commit; her father died of complications from German gas attacks suffered during the First World War. But her mother, raising her on a farm with no electricity, no water, and only a mule for transportation, kept the culinary legacy of black America—what we now call Southern food—alive, warm, and sustaining on the kitchen table. (According to Freedman, "routine breakfasts" on the Pressley farm included "biscuits and syrup, grits, okra, tomatoes, and fried fish.") By the time Woods died, four years ago, at the age of eighty-six, black communities North and South knew her as "the queen of soul food," a title that few who ever entered her restaurant would dispute. I ate at Sylvia's for the first time in the early sixties, not long after it opened, invited by a boyfriend at a time when Harlem was widely considered a no-go zone for white people of either sex. ("Don't tell your mother," my boyfriend, who was black, said when we got on the uptown train.) The menu was plain but irresistible. We had fried chicken and smothered chops and candied sweet potatoes and, tucked among the greens and black-eyed peas, a side of macaroni and



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cheese. What you felt, at the time, was the security and comfort of a woman's presence in the kitchen—whether in fact or in spirit, or whether it was a Luisa Leone or Sylvia Woods herself. Since then, Sylvia's has become a sprawling, landmark restaurant that can seat four hundred and fifty people. And, yes, the tour buses stop there now.

NEW YORK, LIKE Paris or London, has always set the style for the rest of the country, which may account for the fact that six of the restaurants Freedman chose are or were once New York restaurants. Schrafft's, which began as a candy company in Boston, arrived in New York in the eighteen-nineties, and by its heyday, in the mid-fifties, owned more than fifty restaurants in and around the city. In many ways, it was the prototype for the best of the national and regional chains that followed it, insuring bourgeois Americans affordable and dependable quality—along, alas, with the increasingly numbing conformity of most American kitchens—the difference being that Schrafft's was primarily a place for women to eat. The Schrafft's I knew best was at 61 Fifth Avenue, a few blocks north of my grandmother's Greenwich Village apartment, and I got to eat there whenever I visited as a child. It remains, in memory, one of my favorite places—an intensely and intentionally feminine restaurant where you took off your white gloves to lunch on tea sandwiches, iceberg salads, creamed chicken or, more exotically, chicken à la king, unencumbered by brothers or even waiters, or, for that matter, by any noisy males demanding attention, and consequently so tidy and appealing in retrospect that, read-

ing about it now, I had to remind myself that this was the Eisenhower fifties, when women were not seated in most New York restaurants without a man to order, and pay, for them, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of working women in the city were consigned to eating their paper-bag sandwiches on park benches or at their desks. Schrafft's thrived under three generations of Shattucks, its founding family (most significantly, its women), and died, you could say, from feminism, in the late sixties. Freedman tells us that when women started demanding, and at long last receiving, equal rights as customers in the city's restaurants, the chain tried to attract men by installing bars and even advertising the perks of a cocktail hour. No one came.

Schrafft's was among the few restaurants in Freedman's ten to open with an explicit social purpose, and to succeed in serving it. Another, surprisingly, was Howard Johnson's, the brainchild of the testy and obsessively controlling entrepreneur from Quincy, Massachusetts, who gave it its name, its steep-roofed architecture, its orange and turquoise paint, and (for children) its thrillingly predictable menu—as in twenty-eight “personally created” ice-cream flavors, butter-grilled hot dogs, and deep-fried clams—and who, in the process, became the franchise food king of the American highway, providing millions of travelling families with a guarantee of the same fresh, tasty meals under any of its thousand orange roofs.

Johnson was not a populist. He began life with the burden of a family debt to pay and ended it a multimillionaire, with a yacht, three big houses, a penthouse

on Sutton Place, a table at the Stork Club, and a taste for restaurants like Le Pavillon. (When it came to dessert, however, he much preferred HoJo's twenty-eight different ice creams, and always kept ten cartons in the freezer at home.) But he was in many ways a pioneer. He controlled every franchise, supplying everything from the napkins to the food, and retained the right to cancel any contract at the slightest breach. He saw, before anyone else, that we were now a country of cars, a people on the road, and that nobody else had thought to feed us properly. Like Schrafft's, Howard Johnson's was part of my childhood. Whenever we got in the family Buick and headed out of Providence, I counted the miles until the iron pole with its hanging logo—Simple Simon, the Pie-man, and Simon's drooling dog—signalling the choices I would have to make between peppermint stick with hot fudge and marshmallow sauce in a sundae, or a double-scoop sugar cone with sprinkles. It was done in, Freedman says, by McDonald's. Not the same thing at all.

MEANWHILE, IN THE MORE rarefied pockets of Manhattan, prominent people were beginning to take up “power lunching”—a term coined by the *Esquire* editor Lee Eisenberg, to describe the apotheosis of that mid-day ritual as it unfolded in the sleek, modernist splendor of the Grill Room at the Four Seasons Restaurant. There, at the penultimate eatery on Freedman's list, diners picked at simple, seasonal American food, high-priced and superbly cooked, while surrounded by the seasonal fauna selected by Philip Johnson, who designed the restaurant. Freedman rightly regards the Four Seasons, which opened in 1959, as an aesthetic and entrepreneurial triumph: a combination of the vision of the young Seagram heir Phyllis Lambert, who talked her father, Samuel Bronfman, into commissioning the most beautiful new building in New York for his headquarters; the partnership of the two men she chose to create it, Mies van der Rohe and Johnson, his on-site architect and designer; and the determination of the businessmen—Joe Baum, of Restaurant Associates, being the first and most determined—who nurtured its restaurant until a real-estate speculator took over



*“I haven't always been a cowboy, you know.”*

the building and, this year, forced it to move out. But Freedman also knows that “seasonal” does not necessarily mean “local” in a city like New York, and that, for its powerful clientele, the prospect of being seen by similarly powerful people, all of them negotiating lucrative, glamorous deals in hushed tones, was perhaps the truly satisfying part of lunching back-to-the-wall at one of the Grill Room’s coveted banquettes. What the Four Seasons did accomplish was the end of the three-hour, three-Martini lunch, followed by a nap at your desk. It is worth noting that by the time the restaurant closed, this summer, the power brokers lunching at those banquettes were as toned and trim as a teen-age California surfer. They had daily sessions with their trainers, jogged in the Park, played squash, and ate plenty of salad greens.

Which brings us to Alice Waters’s Chez Panisse, the tenth restaurant on Freedman’s list and by now the only one with a particular social mission to have succeeded not only in maintaining it but in spreading it to, among other places, the California school system, the White House garden, and the kitchen of the American Academy in Rome. I often ate at Chez Panisse during a stint as a visiting professor at Berkeley, in the early nineteen-nineties, and by then it was an institution, the unassuming, vine-draped shrine of a global culinary creed. It opened in 1971, in a quirky, meandering house on a quiet Berkeley street, and, after a few rough years, was filtering not only the taste of France but traces of Italy, Mexico, and Japan, to name just a few places, through an ur-locavore sensibility soon to be known as California cuisine. (The Momofuku-brand kitchen wizard, David Chang, called it “figs on a plate” eating.) It was the first American restaurant to change the way I cooked at home, and given that the cookbooks produced by Waters and her chefs were filled with dishes begging to be made in season—carrot soup with chervil, pasta with snow peas and salmon roe, pear ice cream with pear-caramel sauce—it nurtured my patience, in Italy in the summer, to wait for the surprises that a vegetable garden brings.

Reading Paul Freedman about America, stalking myself through the taste of meals at eight of his ten restau-

rants, each sampled for different reasons at different moments in my life, I began to draw the outlines of a world I shared with other people, people more or less like me, and to wonder what “like me” meant when it came to expectations of inclusion, of common flash points of reference, of understanding and participating in the coded language of what we eat and how it is prepared and who is sitting at all those tables around us. I think that’s what Freedman intended us to do.

I missed, of course, Delmonico’s, which closed years before I was born, and, to my regret, I also missed the Mandarin, in San Francisco, where I spent January of 1967, the month of the Human Be-In, and, perhaps because of this, rarely ventured out of Haight-Ashbury, where even the soy sauce came laced with Aca-pulco Gold. And I wish that Freedman had gone further afield in his travels, told the story of the exemplary Mexican restaurants in, say, Austin or Santa Fe; or the first great steak houses in Omaha or Chicago; or one of the millennial beard-and-baby places, across the bridge in Brooklyn, that have transformed (and democratized) eating out in this century. For me, restaurants like Schrafft’s and Howard Johnson’s, with their wide demographic reach and the sense of community, however brief, that they created in the people who enjoyed them, balanced some of the privilege I had to acknowledge, the exceptional accidents and circumstances and associations of an educated East Coast life that accounted for my evenings at Le Pavillon, and my one power lunch at the Four Seasons, where I consumed an unseemly amount of lobster salad and steak frites while suffering the stares and whispers of the Grill Room regulars trying, unsuccessfully, to place me.

I’m not sure how either of those restaurants changed America, although they certainly changed New York. In fact, it’s hard to imagine that most Americans had ever heard of Le Pavillon or its overweening proprietor, even during his reign of terror among the city’s moneyed classes. “Ten Restaurants” is a book as much about the contradictions and contrasts in this country as it is about its places to eat. It is designed to keep you up, thinking, and, as I did this summer, returning to its rich, and often troubling, pages. ♦

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## VILE BODIES

*Faith and sustenance in Emma Donoghue's "The Wonder."*

BY ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ

*Donoghue's novel asks why a child would choose to starve.*

ON A FEBRUARY day in 1867, three months before her tenth birthday, Sarah Jacob took to her bed complaining of terrible stomach pain and bloody froth from filling her mouth. The third of seven children born to Evan Jacob, a tenant farmer in Wales's Carmarthenshire county, and his wife, Hannah, Sarah had always been a healthy, energetic girl, known in her parish for her intelligence and good moral sense. Now she lost consciousness and suffered convulsive fits. Her parents moistened her lips with beer, but she couldn't swallow food or drink. Her body grew skeletal. A doctor diagnosed her with inflammation of the brain.

In May, Sarah woke up. She called out for milk. Hunger after a long illness is

always a heartening sign, but the miracle of Sarah's recovered health was soon followed by the mystery of her vanished appetite. For the next two months, she could hold down no more than six, then four, teacups of rice or oatmeal and milk a day. By August, she would agree only to bits of cooked apple. By September, her daily diet consisted of a single pill-size morsel of the raw fruit served in a teaspoon. On October 10th, she refused that, too. No one ever saw Sarah Jacob eat again.

Strangely, she didn't seem much the worse for it. Sarah's dark-brown hair, which had fallen out during her sickness, grew back as long as ever. Her adult teeth came in. Newspapers published article after article about "the Welsh Fasting-

Girl," and the stories brought visitors, pilgrims who came to the Jacobs' thatched farmhouse to touch Sarah's face and hands as she recited original poems or read aloud from the books of Scripture she kept with her in bed. The delighted guests left coins on the way out.

Suspicious arose, as suspicions do. Doctors wrote contemptuously in medical publications of the religious "superstitions" that led the faithful to believe that anyone could survive without food. Sarah Jacob was only the latest in a series of fasters said to survive on nothing but air. "The public journals have lately told a strange story of the fasting girl of Wales," Charles Dickens wrote, in the magazine *All the Year Round*, "but it seems to be little known how frequent the instances of a similar kind have been, in the past years."

One such case was notorious. Half a century earlier, Ann Moore, a celebrated English faster in her fifties, had agreed to have her veracity put to the test by a monthlong "watch": round-the-clock observation carried out by a cohort of reputable gentlemen. It turned out that she had been surviving by sucking liquid-soaked handkerchiefs and receiving mash from her daughter, communicated, bird-like, in the form of a kiss. The scrutiny thwarted Moore's means of deception. By the time the truth was revealed, she had starved nearly to death. But Moore was an unwed mother of suspect character. Why would a guileless child commit such a fraud?

In the spring of 1869, Sarah Jacob herself submitted to a watch, carried out by a pair of local men, who, at the end of two weeks, declared her fast to be genuine. Still, doubts lingered: her little sister had been allowed to sleep with her, and the men had been forbidden to examine her bed. That November, a second, more thorough watch was proposed and agreed to by Evan and Hannah Jacob, eager to clear their names. Four trained nurses would sit with Sarah night and day to see whether she might be sneaking nourishment, and, if she was, how.

ABSURD, IMPOSSIBLE, a hoax perpetrated by an attention-craving minx who has turned herself into "as much of a paying attraction as any carved cross or standing stone." This is what the English nurse Lib Wright, the protagonist

of the Irish writer Emma Donoghue's new novel, "The Wonder" (Little, Brown), thinks of the claim that eleven-year-old Anna O'Donnell has been living without food for a full four months. Donoghue drew her inspiration from the Jacob case, but she has set her story a decade earlier, in the late eighteenth-fifties, and moved it from the farmland of western Wales to the peat bogs of the Irish midlands, seven years after the end of the Great Famine. The month is August—"the hungry season," Lib is informed, before the potato harvest comes in. A serious, sharp-tempered widow of twenty-nine, Lib is disdainful of most things where the Irish are concerned. Having served in Crimea under the great Florence Nightingale, she is a skeptic by temperament and by training, a woman of science committed to the rule of empirical evidence, and none too pleased to find that the gig she has left her London hospital job for doesn't involve caring for a sick patient. Instead, a committee of prominent local men, hoping to prove that the fasting O'Donnell girl is indeed miraculous, has hired her, along with a nun, to act as a "nursemaid-cum-gaolour," as Lib puts it, working in shifts to keep watch over Anna and, at the end of two weeks, report their findings.

English snobbery versus Irish tradition, science versus faith, a single woman versus a powerful male cohort: conditions could hardly be better for breeding dramatic antagonism, and Lib has no trouble racking up nemeses from the stock cast of small-village types she finds herself thrust among. There's the physician presiding over the case, who believes that Anna may be converting sunlight into energy, like a plant, or developing a reptilian metabolism, and the local priest, whose murmurings on sin and penance are repulsive to Lib's unreligious mind. Anna's father is too doltish to doubt his daughter; her mother, as crafty as her husband is simple, solicitous of gift-bearing guests and sour toward prying Lib, is the kind to know more than she lets on.

But Lib's chief adversary is Anna herself. She's convinced that the girl is lying; her face, when Lib first sees it, is full, "chubby," even. How to weigh this proof of deception against the girl's air of innocence? If Anna isn't a saint

yet, she makes a strong case for her own canonization. Confined under the watch to her small bedroom, with an occasional stroll outdoors, she is invariably cheerful. She doesn't grow restless or shy while Lib asks her to undress to examine her body, and she doesn't complain as the days stretch on, the monotonous chain of hours unbroken by mealtimes. What she does is pray, murmuring hymns to herself or calling out verses as the family kneels to say Hail Marys by the hearth outside her door. She recites one prayer, a benediction to keep souls out of purgatory, thirty-three times a day, one for each year of Jesus' life. The girl is so pious she won't even cop to having a favorite saint. "They all have different things to teach us," she says, when Lib prompts her. If there was any question that Anna isn't a normal kid, that preternaturally equitable answer lays it to rest.

Donoghue, the author of more than a dozen books, has developed something of a specialty in putting children in situations of harrowing confinement. "Slammerkin" (2000), set in eighteenth-century London and Wales, opens with a sixteen-year-old girl locked up in an airless, shit-filled cell in Monmouth Gaol. "Frog Music" (2014), her previous novel, features an urban "baby farm" in eighteen-seventies San Francisco, a fetid apartment where infants are kept together in pens, unwashed and untended, as long as their parents can cough up the few dollars a week required to keep them there.

Most extreme is "Room," Donoghue's blockbuster from 2010, and the basis for the Oscar-winning movie of the same name. The room in question is an eleven-by-eleven-foot locked, soundproofed suburban shed where five-year-old Jack and his mother, Ma, live as prisoners of the man who abducted her from her college campus seven years earlier. The novel—published two and a half years before the discovery and arrest of Ariel Castro, the captor of three teen-age girls in Cleveland, whose story it anticipated in a number of ghastly particulars—is testament to Donoghue's imaginative power, her ability to look open-eyed at the sadistic terrors of such an ordeal without missing its more banal aspects. You cringe at the beep of the shed's door code

being punched in, the signal that Ma's captor is about to enter, and you cringe, too, if more gently, when Jack demands that she read him the charmless picture book "Dylan the Digger" for the umpteenth time.

Donoghue's ingenious move, in "Room," was to enlist Jack as narrator. Presented through a child's eyes, the novel became a tale not so much of horror and imprisonment—owing to an extraordinary feat of self-control on Ma's part, Jack doesn't realize that the images he sees on the television correspond to actual things that exist beyond the walls—but of discovery, when Ma finally lets him in on the truth of the outside world, with its real animals, real plants, real roads, real buildings, and real people.

The secret at the heart of "The Wonder" is lodged in the inner world, not the outer one. Once again, an adult is made responsible for the welfare of a trapped child, but only the child knows what confines her. "Strange creature; she showed no sign of resenting the watch that had been set over her," Lib thinks. "Behind that calm confidence, surely her mind had to be scurrying like a mouse?" Lib would like to imagine herself as the cat, ready to pounce at the first sign of weakness. Really, she and Anna are evenly matched, locked in a contest of radically different psychologies. It's obvious to Lib that Anna must be faking, because what child would choose to starve? She registers Anna's piety as hardly more than a tic, ignoring her compulsive praying to take notes on her physical condition. Her brittle hair, falling out in sheets. Her swollen belly and legs. The way she shivers on warm afternoons. The sour smell of her breath.

*Few signs of maturity*, Lib jotted down; Anna seemed more like eight or nine than eleven. *Smallpox vaccination on upper arm*. The milk-white skin was dry to the touch, brownish and rough in places. Bruises on the knees, typical in children. But those tiny spots on the girl's shins, blue-red—Lib had never encountered them before. She noticed that same fine down on the girl's forearms, back, belly, legs; like a baby monkey. Was this hairiness common among the Irish, by any chance? Lib recalled cartoons in the popular press depicting them as apish pygmies.

The modern reader will recognize these as symptoms of anorexia, the means by which the body struggles to stave off the effects of its own starvation. As Lib



is furiously trying to figure out how the girl is managing to survive, we see that she's already started to die.

**I**N A HISTORY of anorexia, "Fasting Girls" (1988), the historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg draws a crucial distinction between the modern disease of anorexia nervosa, first identified in the eighteen-seventies as an emerging condition on the rise in bourgeois families, and anorexia mirabilis—"miraculously inspired loss of appetite"—a far older form of self-starvation rooted in Christian notions of suffering and service. For medieval female mystics like the fourteenth-century saint Catherine of Siena, who ate only herbs and sometimes made herself retch by shoving sticks down her throat, appetite was metaphorical, a thing to be reserved for God. Refusing food was an expression of purity, a way of touching the divine. In the nineteenth century, Brumberg explains, fasting girls became a symptom of the growing conflict between Victorian scientific principles and traditional religious belief. Doctors interpreted spiritual fasting as irrational, "a distinctive form of female religious empowerment that was incongruent with the material facts of the contemporary world." For centuries, fasting had been a mark of piety. The

Victorians turned it into a pathology.

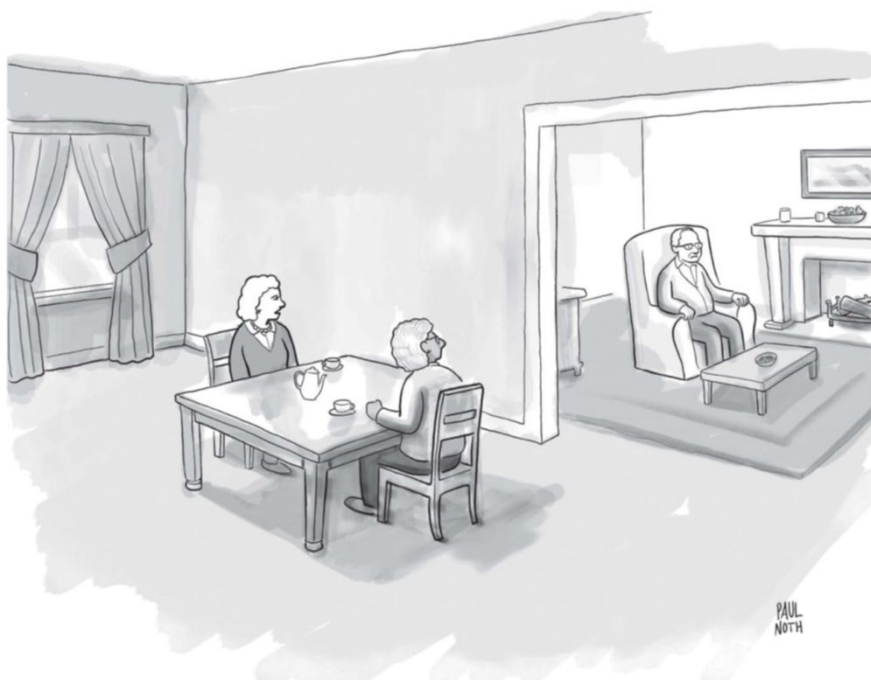
You can see just how quickly this shift happened by comparing the two most famous fasting cases of the nineteenth century. "A Statement of Facts, Relative to the Supposed Abstinence of Ann Moore, of Tutbury, Staffordshire: And a Narrative of the Circumstances Which Led to the Recent Detection of the Imposture," a wonderfully titled, hundred-and-fifty-page-long account of the unfortunate woman, compiled in 1813 by a local clergyman who had participated in the watch, dwells at anxious length on the harm Moore had done her religion by professing her fast to be holy. "The Bible is still the word of God, and loses none of its intrinsic worth, although it once made an ostentatious appendage to the furniture of Ann Moore," the reader is assured in the introduction. In 1871, a book on Sarah Jacob, this one more than three hundred pages long, was published by a doctor who had examined her during her fast and pronounced her a hysteric "unduly stimulated, as well as disordered, by religious reading." For her presumed impiety, Ann Moore was said to have sinned against Christianity. For her presumed piety, four decades later, Sarah Jacob had sinned against science.

This is the central conflict that Donoghue dramatizes in "The Wonder." Anna

speaks the language of faith, Lib the language of fact. Donoghue, narrating her novel from the nurse's perspective in a close third person, makes sure that we notice clues that Lib, blinkered by her own parochialisms, doesn't. Anna, we learn, wears the boots of her older brother who has "gone over," a phrase that Lib at first takes to mean emigration to the United States but which the reader will suspect indicates a more final destination. Could the boy's permanent disappearance have something to do with his sister's determination to starve herself? Anna says she's being fed on "manna from heaven"; could she be eating without thinking of what she's ingesting as food? Lib realizes, long after the reader has, that her own surveillance might be thwarting Anna from getting food by whatever method she'd been using: "Could the watch be having the perverse effect of turning the O'Donnells' lie to truth?"

Donoghue, a writer of great vitality and generosity—one gets the sense that she would gladly have her characters over for dinner, as long as they'd agree to eat—has been drawn repeatedly to the genre of historical fiction not so much to inhabit or reinterpret the past as to try to fit together its overlooked, missing pieces. She likes to find and complete her narratives in the dim outlines of real stories the way an art restorer might fill in the pigment of a faded fresco. In the afterword to "Frog Music," she explains that nearly all her characters came from the historical record, and then shows us what she found, what she surmised, and what she invented. This declaration of authorial transparency is followed by a collection of historical notes on each song that appears in the book.

She enjoys doing her research, and it shows. The difficulty, as with any work of historical fiction, is in getting the facts to hum and resonate in our contemporary minds, to illuminate our own mysteries. Perhaps that's why the explanation for Anna's fast, when it finally comes, is given in terms of trauma at last dredged up: sexual violation, shame, and repression—the whole familiar package of modern psychodrama. It's a revelation that accounts for everything and, for that reason, feels unsatisfying, minimizing of the unfathomable nature of Anna's feat. History's anomalies are clipped to fit our own diagnostic sense of the world.

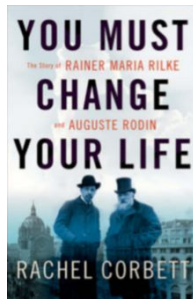


*"He just doesn't know what to do with himself since he got elected to Congress."*

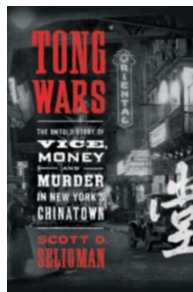
If Donoghue is drawn to dark extremities, it's salvation that she's truly after. She dedicated "Room" to her two children, and "The Wonder" to her daughter, accompanied by a beautiful Gaelic blessing that reads, in English, "May there be no frost on your potatoes, no worms in your cabbage." That benediction makes the book seem like a talisman, a way of warding off evil as a character might in a fairy tale, which, in a way, is what "Room" and "The Wonder" are. As in fairy tales, the child protagonists are put in terrible danger in order to be saved before they come to real harm. Donoghue is invested in the notion of reincarnation—not in the next life but in the one we have now. In "Room," Jack must learn to imitate a corpse as a lure to escape the shed, and "The Wonder" also turns on a symbolic death that allows for the second chance of a pure rebirth, as sudden and simple as being shaken awake after a bad dream.

This is a lovely idea, if not a particularly convincing one, at least in a novel aspiring to psychological realism. The past is a difficult thing to leave behind, under any circumstances. But Donoghue has strong reasons to want to believe in that kind of redemption.

Sarah Jacob died on December 17, 1869, ten days after her second watch began. The cause of death given was not starvation—her body, the coroner noted, had fat on it still—but "Nervous Exhaustion, caused by the watching, and its attendant excitement." Her nurses, seeing that she was growing worse under their observation, had begged for the watch to be called off so that she could go back to sneaking food. Her parents denied that any food had been sneaked, and refused. They were later convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to hard labor. "She seemed to me to be a person capable of expressing her wishes, and so far as she could, of having them fully carried out," Sarah's vicar attested. Was this his self-serving way of disguising his own negligence toward the little parishioner he hoped to make into a saint, or did Sarah Jacob actually wish to die? Did she know what was happening? Was she afraid? "To these men the girl was a symbol; she had no body anymore," Lib thinks, of Anna's own committee. Donoghue isn't willing to renounce the flesh that easily. Fiction is small solace for history's grief, but it's one way to set the record straight. ♦



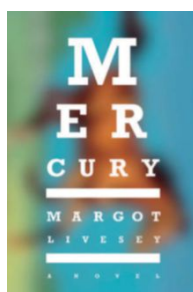
**You Must Change Your Life**, by Rachel Corbett (Norton). The author, an editor at *Modern Painters*, tells the story of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke's fractious friendship with the man he called his "Master," the much older sculptor Auguste Rodin. The book, which covers the lives of both men, illuminates their central—if not always enthusiastic—roles as the Belle Époque gave way to the avant-garde. The true subject, though, is Rilke's desolate but fascinating inner life and the effect it had on his poetry: as Corbett writes, he "believed that art was its own kind of death because it consumed the artist." This empathetic and imaginative biography, deeply researched, is anchored by the friendship between two of the twentieth century's greatest artists.



**Tong Wars**, by Scott D. Seligman (Viking). This wild ramble around Chinatown in its darkest days—when *tongs*, or gangs, warred for control of opium dens and illegal gambling rooms—is a colorful study of Tammany Hall-era Manhattan. Constructed from a vast trove of primary-source materials, such as the *New York Post* (which was as gleeful about Chinatown bloodbaths then as it is about celebrity gossip today), the book chronicles gang brawls that took the form of pranks (enemies trapped in a basement, in two feet of standing water) and murder (during a play at the Doyers Street Chinese Theatre, gang members fired guns into the audience, knowing that rivals were in attendance). Other details reveal some of the stereotypes that the Chinese, or "Celestials," in nineteen-thirties slang, faced, including a bizarre court proceeding in which a white attorney insisted that the Chinese defendants be sworn in by burning paper and lopping off a rooster's head.



**The Heavenly Table**, by Donald Ray Pollock (Doubleday). Set on the border between Alabama and Georgia, during the Great War, Pollock's second novel is centered on the Jewetts, a family of poor sharecroppers. When the father dies of a heart attack, his three sons shoot their landlord and begin a picaresque life on the run. Pollock's characters—often down-on-their-luck types—are rendered with a cartoonish intensity, from a well-endowed outhouse inspector to a boy discovered in a Cincinnati hotel "with a woman's wig glued to his head and his pecker tossed under the bed like a cast-off shoe." The novel is bawdy but grim; the "heavenly table" that the Jewetts believe is their inheritance stands in contrast to the miserable kingdom that Pollock describes, in loving detail, here on Earth.



**Mercury**, by Margot Livesey (Harper). After his estranged wife makes a terrible mistake, the protagonist of this consuming novel must choose between the well-being of his family and his own integrity. Through recollections from both spouses, the events that led to the destruction of their serene, shared life are revealed: his father's long battle with Parkinson's; her fixation on a beautiful horse in the stable where she works. The novel explores themes of honesty and understanding by showing the impact that obsessions—grief, rapacity—can have on a marriage.



ON TELEVISION

## CRIB NOTES

*The slo-mo specificity of "Atlanta."*

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



*The show overflows with deadpan banter, dry pauses, and undermining jabs.*

WHEN LOUIS C.K.'s warped anti-sitcom, "Louie," debuted, in 2010, it kicked the door open to a new style of TV comedy, one that looked and felt more like an independent film. Two years later, Lena Dunham's "Girls" took a similar not-everyone-needs-to-like-it approach. Copycats popped up everywhere. Some of these auteurish dramedies were watery or sour—hipper music and longer pauses don't make everything profound. But the best of them possessed "Louie"'s stubborn specificity: these shows didn't try to speak to or for everyone.

Donald Glover's "Atlanta," on FX, is the most interesting of this fall's wave of hyper-personal half hours. (Several are premiering one after another, in-

cluding Tig Notaro's "One Mississippi," Pamela Adlon's "Better Things," Issa Rae's "Insecure," and Cameron Esposito and Rhea Butcher's "Take My Wife"—a promising batch.) "Atlanta" is filmed near Stone Mountain, Georgia, where Glover grew up, and is set among characters who are mostly black and mostly poor, including rappers, drug dealers, and single moms. Glover knows plenty about making smart sitcoms: at twenty-two, he was writing for "30 Rock"; at twenty-six, he became famous as the sweet nerd Troy, on "Community." Both shows were sitcoms about sitcoms, deconstructions of hacky network structures, bristling with meta-jokes. Glover's musical persona, Childish Gambino, did something similar for hip-hop: he took

a fanboy's approach to the art form, both adoring and mocking.

In "Atlanta," however, Glover is less concerned with pure joke density; instead, he emphasizes character and mood, place and flow, a different type of originality. To create the show, he assembled a team of black men (and one black woman), including his brother, Stephen, the majority of whom have never worked in a network writers' room. The show's director, Hiro Murai, has primarily made music videos, including those for Childish Gambino. The result is a series that is shrewd, emotional, and impolite, with a style that veers toward pretentiousness but never crosses over. "Atlanta" has quiet craftiness and the power of precision, right down to the faded giraffe-print sofa in a drug dealer's apartment.

Earnest (Earn) Marks, the character Glover plays, isn't a wunderkind, like his creator. But he is, like Glover, a sardonic observer addicted to the side-eye, the sort of person who says, "That's not a thing." While other black men read him as a college-kid hipster, he's in economic free fall. He has a young daughter with his on-and-off girlfriend, Van. His job, signing people up for credit cards on commission, pays little. At some point, he attended Princeton, a backstory he's cagey about explaining, even to his parents, who babysit but won't let him in their house. In the pilot, Earn approaches his older cousin, a rapper named Paper Boi, about becoming his manager. "Ain't you homeless?" Paper Boi asks. "Not real homeless," Earn replies. "I'm not using a rat as a phone or something." "Don't be racist, man," Paper Boi says. "That make you schizophrenic, it don't make you homeless." Darius, Paper Boi's stoned consigliere, dreamily considers the possibility for real: "Everybody would have an affordable phone. I mean . . . it'd be *messy*. But worth it."

That's a typical joke for the show, which overflows with shooting-the-shit banter, dry little pauses, and undermining jabs, with Earn and Paper Boi providing the deadpan and Darius the clownish free association. There are plenty of memorable scenes with Earn, especially when he's placed in an unfamiliar environment—a pawnshop, for instance, or the loft of a dealer in samurai swords—and he's most interesting when he's as disoriented as he is judgmental. The

standout is a long, surreal sequence in which he's stuck in a police-station holding room full of other black people, all of whom know the rules better than he does.

Still, as good as Glover is, it's Paper Boi who feels like the most original character. Played with weary authority by Brian Tyree Henry, Paper Boi seems, at first, like a confident O.G. He's a low-level drug dealer; he's a musician and the proud inventor of the compound sexual verb "mucking" (for "massage and . . ."). But Paper Boi, with his paunch and sweaty brow, also comes off as fascinatingly depressed by impending fame, thrown by how fans perceive him as a symbol of street authenticity—it's as if he's become a nostalgic nineties sensation before he's even been signed by a label. "You've been arrested for weed. It's not that bad, right?" Earn asks nervously. "It's not as good as not getting arrested for weed," Paper Boi says, with a shrug.

In one perfectly edited bit of surrealism, Paper Boi hangs out at home, slouched on a beaten-up leather sofa. There's a knock on the door. Darius answers it, and waiting outside is a guy in a Batman mask, in extreme closeup. "Paper Boi in today?" Batman asks, inscrutable. "Yeaaaaah?" Darius drawls, hilariously spooked. "O.K.!" Batman replies, then spins around and scampers away. Paper Boi joins Darius at the door and they both stand there, silhouetted from the back. "You too hot," Darius concludes.

**E**ACH EPISODE HAS AN A plot and a B plot, but no C plot, as a conventional sitcom would. The pacing has a sly slo-mo quality, with a joke often planted up front—like a debate about

whether black people know who the film star Steve McQueen is—then kicked to the next goal. The conversations between Earn and Van, in particular, are just realistic arguments between exhausted parents trying to figure out where they stand; they can be a bit mumblecore, because Van doesn't get to be funny. But "Atlanta" has enough laughs not to stall. The best are often understated gags, like when Earn is eating cookies at Paper Boi's house, and Darius suddenly says, "Damn, man, it's four-thirty. We late." The next scene reveals the three of them smoking a joint on a battered sofa in the middle of a field: four-twenty is what they were late for.

Glover is seductively masculine in this role—he's frequently shown half-naked in bed, lazily fondling Van so that she'll let him stay the night. If "Atlanta" were just about Earn, with his anime-pretty features and his boyish inability to commit, it might get static. Instead, deeper themes keep welling up, especially the conundrum of a society that fetishizes ghetto cool but marginalizes the men who embody it. (Black masculinity is a set of poses that everyone imitates, including black men.) In a nicely nasty sequence in the pilot, a douchey white d.j. tells Earn a story that ends with the word "nigga." It's a pure expression of privilege: Earn needs the d.j. as a contact, so he has to let this awful guy act like his buddy. Later, however, Earn forces the d.j. to tell the same story to the tougher, scarier Paper Boi, along with Darius—to tell it to three black men instead of one black man. The d.j. leaves out the crucial word, his eyes fluttering in panic. It's

the closest the show comes to victory.

In the fourth episode, a different kind of antagonist emerges, one who uses the same word, and he's much more alarming to Earn and Paper Boi than some random white guy. Zan (Freddie Kuguru), a monstrous, racially ambiguous hip-hop entrepreneur with a malevolent Bugs Bunny intensity, skillfully inserts himself into a casual conversation as if he were already part of the crew. He won't stop texting and taking pictures—One for the 'gram! And one more for the Snapchat!—spouting memes, and hustling branded "sneakies," like a walking, talking embodiment of World-StarHipHop, inflected with Perez Hilton. As with the viral hype-men that Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele parodied during MTV's Video Music Awards, it's hard to tell if Zan's a parody, since he's parodying a self-parody.

Still, Zan does have a viral following, one that he threatens to turn against Paper Boi. "I mean . . . is he Dominican, man?" Paper Boi sputters in bafflement. Whatever his race, resistance is just more fodder for Zan, because there's no distinction for him between exploitation and art. "We're all just hustling," he explains semi-sincerely. "It's all part of the game, brah." Paper Boi protests that, compared with Zan, he has fewer choices: his looks—heavy, dark-skinned, male—dictate his path. It's "Atlanta"'s most promising theme. The fact that the show itself is filmed in a gritty, low-key style only deepens that tension: it's a debate about authenticity framed by a TV genre whose creators, like rappers, are fixated on the creative possibilities of keeping it real. ♦

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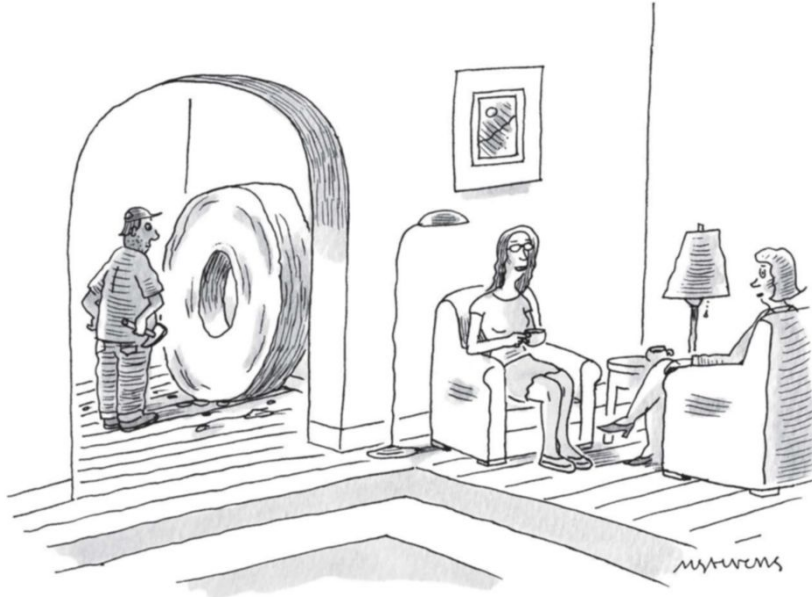




## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mick Stevens, must be received by Sunday, September 18th. The finalists in the September 5th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the October 3rd issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).*

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

### THE FINALISTS



*“He wants to know if you can move your seat up.”*  
Rebecca Holzschuh, San Francisco, Calif.

*“Trust me—in five years echolocation will have completely replaced G.P.S.”*  
Craig M. Berg, Romney, W.Va.

*“Then why did you have the bumper sticker?”*  
Michael R. Ligon, Waynesboro, Tenn.

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*“Sorry for the wait, but it's been like Grand Central station in here.”*  
Robert Becker, Northford, Conn.

WHAT DOES GENUINE ROSEWOOD HAVE  
TO DO WITH A BETTER-DRIVING SUV?

Signature model shown.

## THE ALL-NEW THREE-ROW MAZDA CX-9

A turbo engine. Agile handling. Genuine Rosewood? Whether it's a great-driving SUV or a great-sounding guitar, the joy is in the details. In the case of the all-new Mazda CX-9 Signature, we partnered with the meticulous craftsmen at Fujigen Guitars to hand-select the same Rosewood for our interior trim. The warm subtle hues and smooth grain finish indulge the senses. So every drive is a better drive. Why does paying attention to every detail matter? Because Driving Matters.



A Fujigen Masterfield guitar with a genuine Rosewood fretboard.

*ZOOM-ZOOM*

DRIVING MATTERS®







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