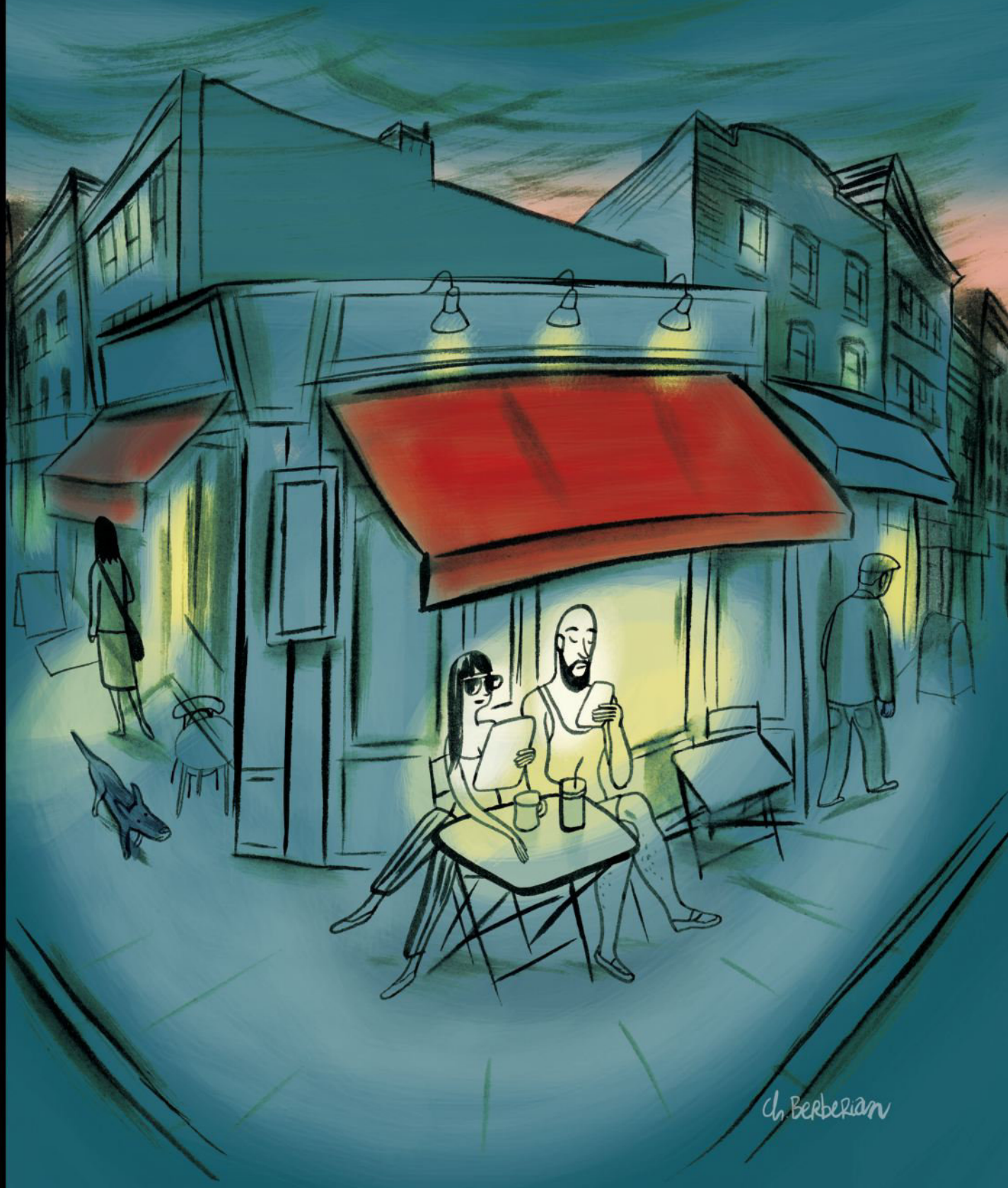


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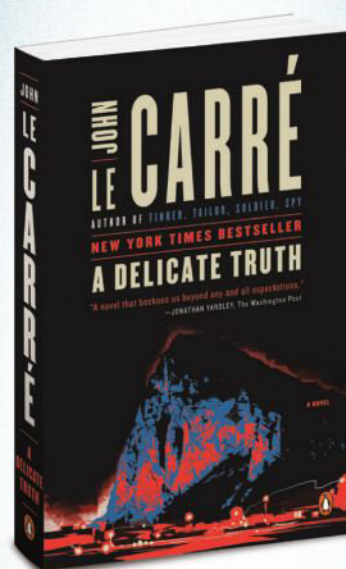
DRAWINGS John Klossner, Corey Pandolph, Mick Stevens, Barbara Smaller, Benjamin Schwartz, Roz Chast, Tom Toro, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Jack Ziegler, Zachary Kanin, Edward Steed, Charles Barsotti, Frank Cotham, Farley Katz, Carolita Johnson, Harry Bliss, Michael Crawford, Tom Cheney **SPOTS** Tibor Kárpáti

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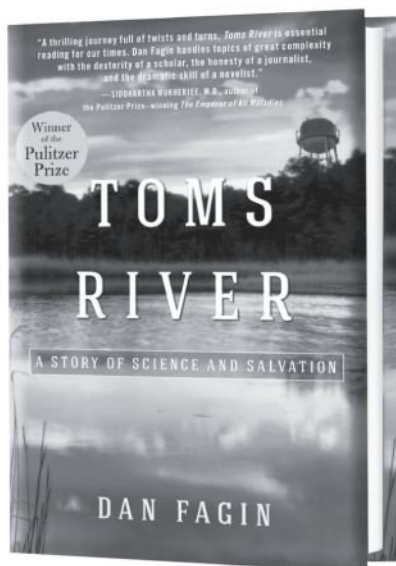
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CONTRIBUTORS

PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE ("THE HUNT FOR EL CHAPO," P. 38) is a staff writer and a senior fellow at the Century Foundation. "The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream" is his most recent book.

KELEFA SANNEH (COMMENT, P. 19) has contributed to the magazine since 2001.

SARAH PAYNE STUART ("PILGRIM MOTHERS," P. 24) will publish "Perfectly Miserable: Guilt, God and Real Estate in a Small Town" in June.

YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE ("A NEW KIND OF SPY," P. 30), a staff writer for *Science*, is currently working on a nonfiction thriller entitled "The Spy Who Couldn't Spell."

ELLEN BASS (POEM, P. 45) teaches in the M.F.A. program at Pacific University. Her latest poetry collection, "Like a Beggar," came out in March.

RACHEL AVIV ("PRESCRIPTION FOR DISASTER," P. 50), a staff writer, received the 2013 Carroll Kowal Journalism Award for "Netherland," her article about homeless youth in New York City, which appeared in the magazine in December, 2012.

SAM LIPSYTE (FICTION, P. 60) has published three novels and two short-story collections, including "The Fun Parts," which came out in paperback in February.

THOMAS MALLON (BOOKS, P. 71) is a novelist, an essayist, and a critic. "Watergate" is his most recent novel.

JUDITH THURMAN (AT THE GALLERIES, P. 76), the author of "Cleopatra's Nose: 39 Varieties of Desire," has written for the magazine since 1987.

CHARLES BERBERIAN (COVER) will have an exhibit of his work at the Galerie Barbier & Mathon, in Paris, in May.

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THE MAIL

CONSIDERING CESAR CHAVEZ

Nathan Heller's article on Cesar Chavez, which relies heavily on "The Crusades of Cesar Chavez," by Miriam Pawel, is full of half-truths and distortions ("Hunger Artist," April 14th). Let me, as Chavez's eldest son, cite just one example: Heller writes that Chavez was "ambivalent" about the Vietnam War and that "he refused to support his son's conscientious-objector application." In fact, it was my dad who encouraged me to apply for conscientious-objector status, after we met with a priest to discuss my feelings about the war. My father asked if I was prepared to go to jail, and I said I was. "Then your mother and I will support you," he said. In 1971, my dad attended my trial, and testified in my defense. (I was acquitted when my attorney proved government misconduct in singling me out because of who my father was.) Heller writes about the "familiar hagiography" surrounding my father. My dad certainly never saw himself as a saint. But if fighting for the rights of farm workers to gain respect, dignity, and a better life makes some people think of him as a saint, then all those who fought by his side should be considered saints, too.

*Fernando Chavez
San Jose, Calif.*

It was shocking to realize that Heller did not once use the word "nonviolence" in his article on Cesar Chavez. In mentioning Chavez's fast in 1968, Heller puts the word "penance" in quotation marks, but he does not say why Chavez felt the need to make such a sacrifice. The union was being challenged not just by the growers' legal maneuverings but also by thugs hired to threaten the strikers. One response by the strikers was to fight back physically. Chavez, fearful that violence would endanger the strikers and their cause, reaffirmed his commitment to nonviolence by fasting. He ended his fast only after receiving pledges of nonviolence from his supporters. Nonviolence was the key not only to how the union won the strike but also to why Chavez and his cause had supporters all over the world. It is the reason Robert Kennedy is sitting next to Chavez in the

photograph featured in the article (whose caption is, unfortunately, full of nonsense about Chavez's personality flaws). Chavez's insistence on nonviolence was perhaps the most significant thing about him, and it is what made him the American hero that Heller admits he was—yet Heller misses that point entirely.

*Elisabeth A. Miller
Providence, R.I.*

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

I read with interest Philip Gourevitch's essay about commemorating the genocide in Rwanda (Comment, April 21st). In the spring of 1997, I travelled to Tanzania to observe the prosecution of Jean-Paul Akayesu, who had been the mayor of the Rwandan town of Taba during the genocide. I was overseeing a research project on behalf of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Akayesu was charged with ordering or allowing to take place (and in some cases being present for) the killing of Tutsi civilians and the rape of Tutsi women held in Taba's cultural center. (In the course of a hundred days, as many as half a million women and girls nationwide were raped, sexually mutilated, and/or murdered.) The verdict, handed down in September, 1998, was not only the first international conviction for genocide but also the first to recognize rape and sexual violence as constitutive acts of genocide, and the first to broaden the definition of sexual violence to include, in addition to rape, nonphysical acts such as intimidation and extortion. Judge Navi Pillay, now the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said after the verdict, "From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as the spoils of war. Now it will be considered a war crime. We want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war."

*Marguerite M. Dorn
Needham, Mass.*

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

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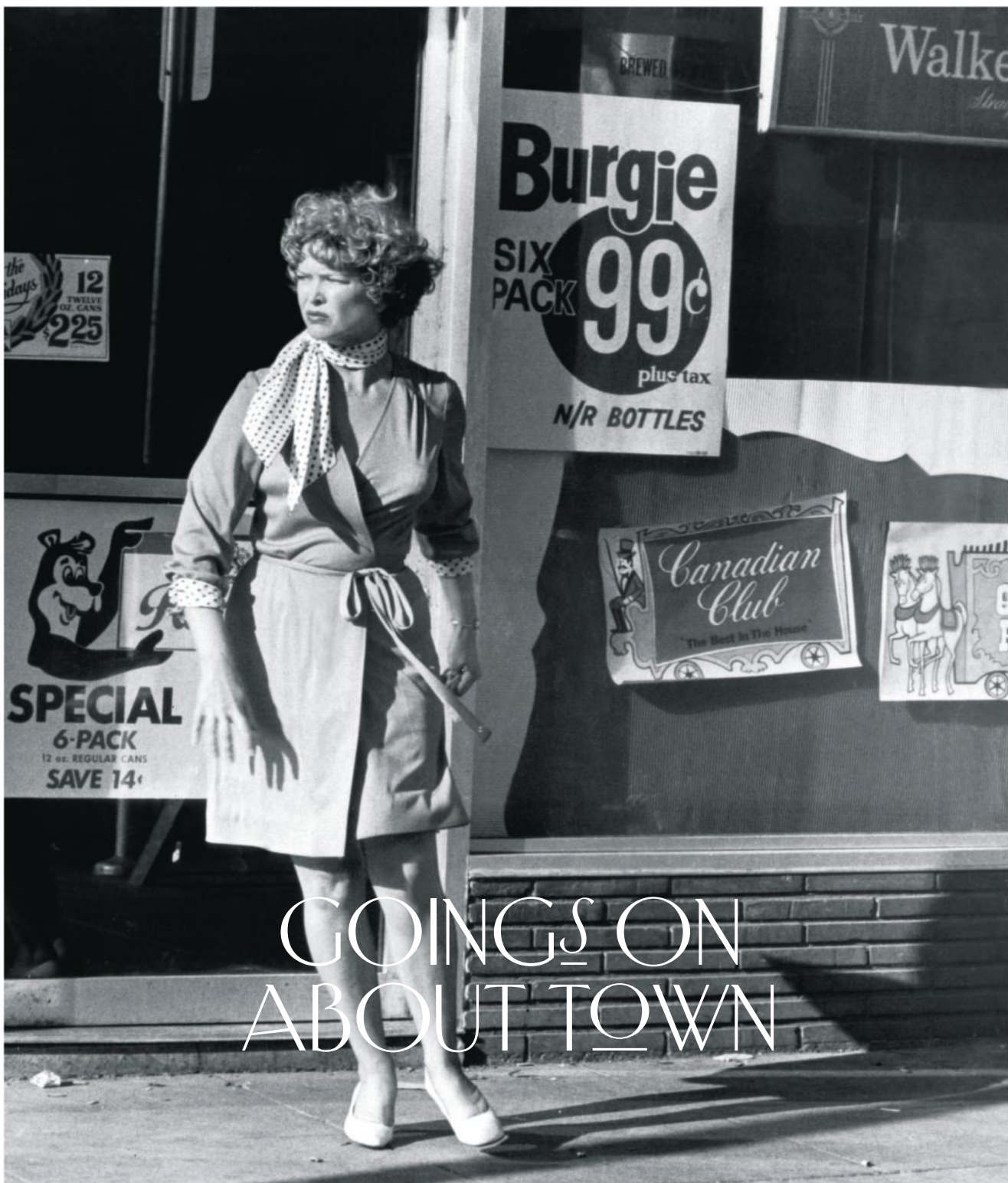
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EVERY ERA HAS its quintessential stars, and Ellen Burstyn was one of the exemplary actors of the rising age of feminism, starting with her supporting role in "The Last Picture Show," from 1971. After starring in "The Exorcist" two years later, she took greater control of her career, choosing a script about an independent-minded woman and selecting the director, Martin Scorsese, with whom she rewrote it. The resulting film, "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore," brought her an Oscar for Best Actress and helped to set a style of performance—determined and practical, self-searching and self-deprecating—that remains current today. These three movies are among the offerings in BAM Cinématek's weeklong tribute to her work, which also includes Alain Resnais's "Providence" and Darren Aronofsky's "Requiem for a Dream."

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CLASSICAL MUSIC



OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

When the Met last revived its 1976 production of *"Il Puritani,"* in 2006, it was as a vehicle for the glamorous Anna Netrebko. But the company did another Russian soprano, Olga Peretyatko, no favors when it upgraded the role of her company debut from a splashy cameo in Strauss's *"Arabella"* to the full-fledged diva role of Elvira in Bellini's opera. Though fair of face and figure, and possessing a lovely voice, Peretyatko struggles to make a firm impression with her soft-edged singing. Also with Mariusz Kwiecien, Michele Pertusi, and the dazzling young tenor Lawrence Brownlee, who brightens up the opera every time he takes the stage; Michele Mariotti conducts. (May 3 at 1.) • **Also playing:** *"Così Fan Tutte,"* with Susanna Phillips, Isabel Leonard, Danielle de Niese, Matthew Polenzani, Rodion Pogosssov, and Maurizio Muraro; the incomparable James Levine conducts. (April 30 at 7:30 and May 3 at 8. Guanqun Yu replaces Phillips in the second performance.) • **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Hui He, Gwyn Hughes Jones, Maria Zifchak, and Dwayne Croft; Fabio Luisi. (May 1 and May 5 at 7:30.) • Javier Camarena, the breakout tenor who has brought his gorgeous legato and pinging high notes to the role of the Prince in the house's satisfying revival of *"La Cenerentola,"* passes the baton this week to Juan Diego

Flórez, he of the rippling fioritura and rock-star charisma. Joyce DiDonato, a wholesome, sympathetic Cinderella, offers expert and honest singing, receiving fine support from an ensemble cast that features such artists as Alessandro Corbelli and Pietro Spagnoli; Fabio Luisi maintains Rossinian clarity and speed in the orchestra pit. (May 2 and May 6 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

Manhattan School of Music Opera Theatre: "Orlando Paladino"

Haydn may not have been the equal of his younger colleague Mozart when it came to opera, but this piece, a bold mixture of comic and serious genres that takes its inspiration from Ariosto's *"Orlando Furioso,"* was the composer's most popular stage work during his lifetime. Robin Guarino directs the student cast in a revamped production that suggests a reality television show; Christian Capocaccia conducts. (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. April 30 and May 2 at 7:30 and May 4 at 2:30. For ticket information, call 917-493-4428.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES New York Philharmonic: "Pixar in Concert"

With the musicians of the orchestra providing noble service in the Spring

for Music Festival, the rest of their week will be taken up with this program, a tribute to the composers doing fine journeyman work for the Pixar movies (such as Michael Giacchino and Randy Newman). Excerpts from *"Up,"* *"The Incredibles,"* *"Toy Story,"* and other movies will be screened, with the Phil providing live accompaniment; David Newman conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. May 1 at 7:30 and May 2-3 at 8.)

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra: Britten's "War Requiem"

Concerts with the outstanding Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus are highlights of the orchestra's appearances at Carnegie Hall. For this performance of Britten's searing masterwork, they are both joined not only by the conductor Robert Spano but also by the vocal soloists Evelina Dobracheva, Anthony Dean Griffey, and Stephen Powell, in addition to their young colleagues in the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. (212-247-7800. April 30 at 8.)

Philadelphia Orchestra

Yannick Nézet-Séguin's concert with his sterling ensemble features two weighty works as bookends: Barber's *Adagio for Strings* and Bruckner's *Ninth Symphony*. In between comes something of a curiosity, the first and lesser-known of Bartók's violin concertos—here with a magnetic soloist, Lisa Batiashvili. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 2 at 8.)

"Spring for Music" Festival

For the last time—alas—a group of distinguished American orchestras will gather at Carnegie Hall under the festival's aegis to perform fresh and

innovative repertory. May 5 at 7:30: First up is our own New York Philharmonic, with Alan Gilbert conducting the New York premiere of Christopher Rouse's *Requiem*, an ardent tribute to the music of the composer's beloved Berlioz. With the baritone Jacques Imbrailo (recently heard at BAM in the title role of *"Billy Budd"*), the Westminster Symphonic Choir, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus. • May 6 at 7:30: Ludovic Morlot and his lauded Seattle Symphony bring to town John Luther Adams's contemplative orchestral essay *"Become Ocean,"* which just won the Pulitzer Prize for Music. Works by Varèse and Debussy (*"La Mer"*) complete the program. (212-247-7800. Through May 10.)

RECITALS

"Look & Listen" Festival

This series, a going concern since 2002, builds on the spirit of the postwar New York School by placing vibrant concerts of new music into forward-looking art galleries. The third of four this year, at Brooklyn's Invisible Dog Art Center, offers a chance to hear a diverse group of performers (including TILT Brass, the Daedalus Quartet, and the accordionist William Schimmel) playing pieces by such composers as Chris McIntyre, James Tenney, and Joan Tower (the *String Quartet No. 5, "White Water"*). (51 Bergen St. May 1 at 8. For ticket information and full schedule, see lookandlisten.org.)

Richard Goode

The intellectual and sonic richness of this veteran New York pianist's performances are not easily ignored. His latest Carnegie Hall recital offers selections from Janáček's *"From an Overgrown Path"* (Book I) as well as Schumann's *"Davidsbündlertänze"* and Book I of Debussy's *"Preludes."* (212-247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

"Music Before 1800" Series: Masques

Among the torrent of recent musical milestones, one shouldn't forget the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the death of Jean-Philippe Rameau, who, as an innovative composer-theorist, could be thought of as a Schoenberg avant la lettre. The admired Canadian quartet presents a suitable tribute at Corpus Christi Church, performing the five *Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts* for harpsichord, violin, flute, and bass viol. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. May 4 at 4.)

Emerson String Quartet

In the last of a trio of concerts focusing on the quartets of Shostakovich, the acclaimed foursome takes on two haunted, "late-style" works: Shostakovich's valedictory *Quartet No. 15* (a series of six sepulchral adagios) and Schubert's *Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, "Death and the Maiden."* (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. May 4 at 5.)



Children of all ages can enjoy music from *"Up"* and *"Toy Story"* at the Philharmonic's *"Pixar in Concert"* program.



ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

New-York Historical Society "Homefront and Battlefield: Quilts and Context in the Civil War"

Broader than its title suggests—in addition to quilts, the show features flags, uniforms, posters, stereoscopes, and the noose that broke John Brown's neck—this moving show affirms that textiles simultaneously fuelled the division between the North and the South and served as an index of the conflict. Before 1860, cotton picked by slaves accounted for more than half of America's exports, from elegant embroidered coverlets to a scratchy child's tunic, spun and woven by his family in bondage. When war came, it required blankets as well as men; one broadside from a Pennsylvania newspaper implores women to give up their bedcoverings and to "supply the soldier of the Republic with this necessary article." Ribbons worn by mourners of President Lincoln are displayed in the show's final vitrine, some printed with his image in a cartouche, one affixed with a little albumen photograph, and one made simply of black stars on a black sash. Through Aug. 24.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Peter Coffin

A New York artist who can't be pinned down to one medium or stylistic approach (his 2012 exhibition at Venus Over Manhattan included sculpture, drawing, a video projection, and a sound piece) shows a subtly provocative group of photographs that riff on Pictures Generation appropriation. Shots of magazines and books, open to full-page illustrations, are juxtaposed on dead white backgrounds, as if for a slide show on pop culture. With a racy cartoon from *Oui* magazine, a grid of grainy stills from the film "Hiroshima Mon Amour," and photographs of a tropical cocktail and a knitted afghan, Coffin's selection may feel random, but the images of clear, clouded, and prismatic perception suggest a self-conscious theme. Through May 1. (Half Gallery, 43 E. 78th St. 212-744-0151.)

Kim Keever

Working inside a large fish tank, Keever used to construct and photograph painterly underwater landscapes: romantic vistas spread out under stormy skies. That tank re-

mains his staging ground for these far more spectacular images of what look like explosions in a cotton-candy factory. Paint injected into water turns into billowing clouds, volcanic eruptions, and pouring rain—a gush of phenomena that's as exhilarating as a fireworks display. Keever cuts his chiffon pinks and greens with acid yellows and squid-ink blacks, but the palette is so overwhelmingly gaudy that it flirts with kitsch. Through May 6. (Waterhouse & Dodd, 958 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-717-9100.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Matthew Brandt

Maybe it's a reaction to relentless digital perfection, but, like a lot of photographers who have returned to hands-on processing, this Los Angeles-based maverick embraces accidents and all the unexpected pleasure they entail. The most striking works in the show—a series of large images of the fossilized skeletons at the La Brea Tar Pits museum—were made by baking tar from the pits on aluminum plates, an elaborate process that dates from photography's early days. A pale, impressionistic series, based on archival photographs of demolished sites in New York, employs dust recently collected from the locations—fading memories rescued from the ruins. Through May 10. (Milo, 245 Tenth Ave., at 24th St. 212-414-0370.)

Marc Camille Chaimowicz

Literary, wide-ranging, and more than a little dandyish, the art of this veteran Frenchman elides the distinction between fine and applied art—though not always to the advantage of either. Here, Chaimowicz is having a Flaubert moment: fashion photocollages and intricately whirling prints derive, somehow, from "Madame Bovary." Stacks of pastel-veneered plywood, each one pretentiously called a "concerto," derive from who knows where. Turning to Flaubert is rarely a bad move, but, as the writer himself might have observed, if you're going to strip out morality and sentiment you'd better be making more than just pretty pictures. Through May 10. (Kreps, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849.)

David Maisel

A cache of X-rays of antique statuary from the archives of the Getty

Museum provided Maisel with the ghostly imagery for his handsome new photographs. Isolated against pitch-black backgrounds, Buddha heads, a horse, a young warrior, and several classical maidens appear at once hollowed out and full of small surprises. Studs, nails, and other bits of metal support are bright accents in alternately opaque and transparent layers of stone or clay. Squiggles of wire wind around the spine of one female figure, suggesting coils of DNA. With all their inner workings revealed, the sculptures appear touchingly vulnerable—more fragile and, thus, more lifelike. Through May 10. (Richardson, 525 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

Howardena Pindell

It's been far too long since New York has seen these paintings from the seventies, on unstretched, irregularly sliced canvas. Pindell made them by overlaying multicolored paper chad on thickly coated backgrounds—one coral work is so copiously painted that it resembles stucco—and repeating the process to generate rich, topographical abstractions. In the back gallery, marvel at an intricate gridded collage composed of thousands of hand-numbered dots. It's an obsessive, whip-smart conceptual feat that opens the path to the artist's polemical video works of the eighties, which are overdue for a show of their own. Through May 17. (Greenan, 529 W. 20th St. 212-929-1351.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Corin Hewitt

This Vermont-born artist, a scrupulous student of how people inhabit architecture, installs an identical pair of large, unwelcoming one-story buildings inside the gallery, each with a sign that reads "Police." The windows are papered over, and security cameras surveilling the interiors show no signs of life. But, clearly, someone was here: used bottles of cosmetics rest in the sill of the blocked windows, and rubber gloves lie in the dirt. Each of the structures feels alive and dead at the same time. In Hewitt's uncanny doubling, this quality of absent presence shifts from a mere exercise in repetition to something trickier and more enduring. Through May 11. (Gitlen, 122 Norfolk St. 212-274-0761.)

MUSEUMS SHORT LIST

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

"The Roof Garden Commission: Dan Graham with Günther Vogt." Opens April 29.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

"Alibis: Sigmar Polke, 1963-2010." Through Aug. 3.

MOMA PS1

"Gavin Kenyon: Reliquary Void." Through Sept. 14.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

"Italian Futurism, 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe." Through Sept. 1.

WHITNEY MUSEUM

2014 Whitney Biennial. Through May 25.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

"Ai Weiwei: According to What?" Through Aug. 10.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

"Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs." Through Jan. 4.



FRONT ROW

Richard Brody discusses the films of Kenji Mizoguchi, screening at Museum of the Moving Image.



GOINGS ON, ONLINE

Visit our Web site for additional Dance events, including an in-progress showing by Liz Gerring and a panel on the experimental-dance scene. Plus more Night Life, including the return of the storied Louisville indie-rock band Slint, and a "Wall to Wall Cabaret" program at Symphony Space.



DANCE



On May 8, Justin Peck presents “Everywhere We Go,” his new work for New York City Ballet.

THE CANDIDATE

New York City Ballet’s search for a new voice.

IN THE NINETEEN-EIGHTIES AND NINETIES, all the greatest ballet choreographers of England and America died: George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton, Antony Tudor, Jerome Robbins. Since then, everybody has been looking for replacements, dance-makers who, while remaining faithful to the classical steps, will save us from the classical bores, “Don Quixote” and the like. The newest candidate is Justin Peck, a soloist with New York City Ballet. Peck has a short résumé, but he is only twenty-six, and he is working like mad. In three years, he has created five ballets for N.Y.C.B., and right now he is making another. “Everywhere We Go,” to a score by the electronic/folk composer Sufjan Stevens, will have its première on May 8th. Peter Martins, N.Y.C.B.’s director, clearly values Peck.

You can see why. N.Y.C.B. is known for its musical sensitivity, and Peck uses this. He likes to throw the dancers rhythmic curveballs—nines, fives—and they bat them back happily. His other forte is ensemble choreography. To move fifteen or twenty people around a stage in an interesting way, and not just as one subgroup relates to another but as such configurations relate to the music: this is a rare skill. Balanchine, N.Y.C.B.’s founding choreographer, was famous for it. At the

end of his “Four Temperaments,” the company forms what looks like an airport runway, and, one by one, the men lift the women high and carry them down this corridor, into the wings, as if they were airplanes. Peck has said that his main inspiration was Balanchine, and the patterns that he has created onstage would make the great man proud. Almost giddily, they coalesce and dissolve, and then a new one appears. Spectators laugh for joy.

With this endowment, Peck has a corresponding handicap. He’s not very good at the male-female duet, which, for about two centuries, has been ballet’s central carrier of meaning. He has said that he wants to liberate ballet from its traditional hierarchies. He wants the ensemble to be as important as the principals. This is admirably modern, and also a problem. You can’t figure out what his ballets are about—a common difficulty with beginners. He says that because ballet is so big and expensive, one is tempted to play it safe. He has no use for the old story ballets, but he knows that even the most abstract-seeming dances, if they are powerful, have a story hidden inside them. He should try for such a thing. Right now, he has the tux, as it were, and the corsage and the limo, but pretty soon he’ll have to get a date.

—Joan Acocella

New York City Ballet

In the first week of its spring season, the company presents a series of ballets created since the beginning of the new millennium. These include stylish works by Benjamin Millepied ("Two Hearts") and Christopher Wheeldon ("This Bitter Earth" and "DGV"), as well as an only slightly older pas de deux by William Forsythe ("Herman Schmerman"). Liam Scarlett's darkly romantic "Acheron," created last season, is worth a second look, as is "Year of the Rabbit," the whimsical ballet that marked Justin Peck as a major new talent. Then there is the wondrous "Namouna": Alexei Ratmansky's fantasy-ballet, inspired by nineteenth-century divertissements, reimagined with his characteristic warmth and wit. It is not to be missed—easily one of the most original ballets of the new century. • April 30 at 7:30: "Les Bosquets," "Year of the Rabbit," "La Stravaganza," and "DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse." • May 1 at 7:30 and May 3 at 8: "Les Bosquets," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Vespro," "Two Hearts," and "Acheron." • May 2 at 8 and May 4 at 3: "Les Bosquets," "This Bitter Earth," "Barber Violin Concerto," "Herman Schmerman" pas de deux, and "Namouna, a Grand Divertissement." • May 3 at 2: "Year of the Rabbit," "La Stravaganza," and "DGV: Danse à Grande Vitesse." • May 6 at 7:30: "Raymonda Variations," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," and "Symphony in C." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through June 8.)

Limón Dance Company

Along with two of its founder's finest and most enduring works—the poetic Chopin piece "Mazurkas" (1958) and the pain-filled "Psalm" (1967)—the company presents "Nocturnes for Ancestors," a full-company premiere by Seán Curran, with a live score by the world-music chamber orchestra Manhattan Camerata. Roxane D'Orléans Juste, celebrating her thirtieth year with the troupe, dances a new solo by Dianne McIntyre, "She Who Carries the Sky." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. April 30 at 7:30, May 1-2 at 8, May 3 at 2 and 8, and May 4 at 2.)

Alain Buffard

"Danse," a three-week festival of French contemporary work taking place all around town, presents the final dance of this French choreographer, who died last December. The piece, "Baron Samedi," is named after a ribald spirit of the dead in Haitian voodoo. On a raked white stage, a charismatic cast of African women, a few New York ringers (Will Rawls, David Thomson), and two musicians milks the double entendres in Kurt Weill's songs for sex, saturnalian license, colonial ironies, and also death. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 1-3 at 7:30.)

Nrityagram

The artists who form the nucleus of this Indian classical-dance company—Surupa Sen and Bijayini Satpathy—return to New York with an evening-length duet, "Songs of Love and Longing." The two are among the greatest *odissi* interpreters of our time. Sen is an innovative choreographer—the female duet is a highly unusual form in Indian classical dance. She finds ways to create contrasts between male and female, fast and slow, sharp and soft. The evening-length work, accompanied by an excellent musical ensemble, is inspired by the Gita Govinda, a twelfth-century text that explores the relationship between Krishna and his beloved *gopi* (milkmaid), Radha. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 866-811-4111. May 1-2 at 8.)

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MOVIES



OPENING

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening May 2. (In wide release.)

BELLE

A historical drama, directed by Amma Asante, about a mixed-race woman (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) who is adopted by an aristocratic English family. Opening May 2. (In limited release.)

IDA

In this drama, a Polish nun learns that she was born to a Jewish family. Directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. In Polish. Opening May 2. (In limited release.)

THE M WORD

Tanna Frederick stars in this comedy, as a TV producer who makes a documentary about menopause. Directed by Henry Jaglom. Opening April 30. (In limited release.)

WALK OF SHAME

Elizabeth Banks stars in this comedy, as a journalist who is stranded en route to a job interview. Directed by Steven Brill. Opening May 2. (In wide release.)

REVIVALS AND FESTIVALS

Titles in bold are reviewed.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

Special screenings. May 2 at 9, May 3 at 8:30, and May 4 at 6:30: "Big Trouble" (1986, John Cassavetes).

OF NOTE MANAKAMANA

The cable-car line linking a mountain village in Nepal with the isolated seventeenth-century temple of the title, devoted to the Hindu goddess Bhagwati, is both the subject and the sole location of this serenely revelatory documentary. A camera remains fixed in place and records a dozen unedited ten-minute trips over the lush and rugged valley taken by a diverse array of travellers (and by a shipment of goats). Vast change is captured in the slightest of signs (an elderly man's traditional hat, a boy's baseball cap), in a frank discussion among older women of the benefits of modern times—freedom from the struggle for mere survival—and in the ten-minute jaunt itself, which, one woman explains, replaced an arduous three-day journey. Three young local rock musicians' jocular cynicism and a North American woman's fixation on her camera and her notebook contrast with the ways of the pilgrims, who approach the shrine with ardor, leave it with awe, and gaze with wonder at the development in the landscape below. The directors, Pacho Velez (who did the camera work) and Stephanie Spray (who recorded the sound), condense world history into the confined space of a glassed-in bubble.—*Richard Brody* (IFC Center.)

NOW PLAYING

Blue Ruin

This eccentric and gory low-budget thriller, which was written, directed, and photographed by Jeremy Saulnier, is about a drifter, Dwight (Macon Blair), who pulls himself together when the man who murdered his parents gets out of prison. He plans his revenge, and no one could be less suited for the job. For better or worse, we are complicit with him from the beginning, which means that we experience with comic horror his various blunders and catastrophes, including an encounter with a cross-bow arrow that he cannot remove from his thigh. (Stallone would have handled it easily.) Saulnier spills a lot of blood, but he's an extraordinarily responsible and appealing craftsman. He shoots everything from Dwight's point of view, and the action scenes are detailed and convincing. The hyper-violent ending, however, is a mistake—a reversion to the horror genre, which Saulnier has been teasing all along. With Devin Ratray and Amy Hargreaves.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/28/14.) (In limited release.)

Draft Day

Ivan Reitman's dull-witted movie about the flurries of player trading on N.F.L. draft day might be a commercial for professional football. The camera soars over one league stadium after another; a variety of football notables turn up, including old stars, ESPN commentators, and even the league's commissioner, Roger

Goodell, who has contended with mortifying scandals in recent years. Kevin Costner is the ace general manager of the Cleveland Browns (surprise: he goes his own way); Jennifer Garner plays the brilliant football mind who runs his office; Denis Leary is an outraged head coach who talks in insults; Chadwick Boseman and Josh Pence are the college players whose character the general manager judges shrewdly. While the executives wheel and deal like gambling virtuosos, the injuries and miserable post-retirement lives of the athletes—who are increasingly victims of a sport of unlimited aggression—never get mentioned.—*D.D.* (4/21/14) (In wide release.)

The Firemen's Ball

In 1967, the year before Soviet tanks rampaged through Czechoslovakia, the Czech director Milos Forman subtly, scathingly used the premise of a quaint provincial party to mock the Party. The pompously uniformed committee of elder firefighters and their cronies who are organizing festivities to honor a doddering retiree is nothing less than a politburo, which, in a series of sly, uproarious sketches, is revealed to be incompetent, unscrupulous, and worse. A table piled high with goodies to be raffled off—a cake, a bottle of cognac, a slab of head cheese—is stripped bare by theft, and a beauty pageant to crown "Miss Fireman" seethes with corruption and depravity that boil over into coercion. Meanwhile, a house catches fire; in the resulting catastrophe, a touching rendition of the Lord's Prayer suggests a promise of reconciliation that still resounds hauntingly. In Czech.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; April 30-May 2.)

Little Lise

The inky despair at the heart of film noir flows freely in prewar French working-class dramas, and this one, from 1930, directed by Jean Grémillon, adds a raw and thrashing physicality to its implacably bitter moods. The hulking and brooding Victor Berthier (Pierre Alcover), exiled to a Cayenne penal colony for murdering his wife, is pardoned for his bravery in a prison fire and sent home to Paris, where his now-grown daughter, Lise (Nadia Sibirskaia), the apple of his eye, inhabits a grungy Right Bank hotel and—unbeknownst to him—is a prostitute. André (Julien Bertheau), her pimp and lover, needs money quickly to buy a garage and win the couple a foothold on respectability, and his criminal plot soon spoils her father's happy homecoming. In Grémillon's grim vision, day and night are equally submerged in sepulchral melancholy, and the solemn camaraderie of factory life and the sweaty oppression of prison are bound together by a volatile air of imminent violence that's as likely

to explode for love as for money. In French.—*R.B.* (French Institute Alliance Française; May 6.)

Locke

A man gets into a car and stays there. Such is the burden of Steven Knight's film, which stars Tom Hardy as Ivan Locke, a brawny Welshman in a BMW. We hear other voices calling him on the phone as he drives to London by night, but his is the only face we see. There are no chases or accidents, and no flashbacks or cutaway shots, although the story is not without incident; over the course of eighty-five minutes, Locke's marriage crashes, and his job—as the site manager on a major building project—begins to collapse, all because of a single mistake in his past. Knight is highly adept at releasing this information drop by drop, and viewers will learn more about concrete than they ever dreamed. After a while, cracks appear in the dramatic conceit, and the scenes in which our hero addresses the unseen ghost of his dead father in the back seat are more hokey than Hamlet-like. The movie's greatest asset by far is Hardy, whose rich, unflappable tones, even in times of high emotional pressure, bear a distinct echo of Richard Burton; here is a man who rolls up his sleeves at the wheel and sets about trying to save his own life.—*Anthony Lane* (In limited release.)

Marvin Seth and Stanley

Stephen Gurewitz directs and co-stars in this touching and hilarious Minnesota Jewish version of "Shit My Dad Says." The story is simple: two grown sons, Stanley (Gurewitz), a neurotic struggling actor, and Seth (Alex Karpovsky), an aggressive media guy whose marriage is breaking up, return home to Minnesota for a camping trip with their aging, divorced father, Marvin (who is played by Gurewitz's real-life father, Marvin). The observational comedy is enriched by actual lifelong observation, a pitch-perfect ear for the impacted emotion of offhand remarks, and a patiently avid camera eye that pounces on quiet moments of revelation. Karpovsky is fiercely uninhibited as a bastard in pain who's fortunate to have a family to take it out on, and Stephen Gurewitz brings dignity and decency to Stanley's quiet despair and proud frustration. As for Marvin Gurewitz, he's got the role of a lifetime, and he invests it with a lifetime of experience and just enough bemused skepticism to steer the story away from bathos and sentiment.—*R.B.* (ReRun Gastropub Theatre.)

Only Lovers Left Alive

Jim Jarmusch, having flirted with various genres, now has his eye on vampires. His milk-pale heroes are Adam (Tom Hiddleston) and his wife, Eve (Tilda Swinton), who live

in Detroit and Tangier, respectively, although, as the story shows, they are never more than a night flight apart. The whole film defers to the rules of the game; not a single shot takes place in daylight—a zone that Jarmusch, in any case, seems always to have regarded as uncool. Blood, too, is the only nourishment, although Adam and Eve sip it like vintage port, whereas her younger sister, the feckless Ava (Mia Wasikowska), insists on the old-fashioned ploy of fangs in the mortal neck. The film is not just louche but lofty, clearly bored by the doings of ordinary folk, and littered with name drops from the world of music and books; some viewers will themselves be bored, rather than entranced, by this flow of weary condescension. Yet the result has undoubted panache, and wit to spare, especially when Swinton is in the frame. She genuinely appears to have worked out how to live forever, and to do it in style.—*A.L.* (4/14/14) (In limited release.)

Othello

No film of “Othello” that starts with the villain being hauled into a cage, like an ape, and swung high above the hero’s funeral could be accused of slavish loyalty to the text. The paradox of Orson Welles’s version, however, is that from unfaithfulness springs truth; Shakespeare is subjected not to a decorous homage but to an enraptured wrestle. The movie was years in the making, including periods of collapse; shooting began in 1949, but the finished product was not screened until 1952 (in Venice, appropriately), with a different cut finally released in America in 1955. Micheál MacLiammóir, who plays Iago to Welles’s Othello, published a wonderful diary of the whole ordeal, “Put Money in Thy Purse,” where he refers to “the merging of the two men into one murderous image like a pattern of loving shadows welded.” Those shadows, stretched out in deep focus, lock the tragedy in a clammy embrace; for the slaying of the innocent, at the end, closeups are wielded like a weapon. Suzanne Cloutier makes a watery Desdemona, but, in compensation, we get a formidable Emilia from Fay Compton. This revival presents a new restoration of the film; there is no excuse not to see it.—*A.L.* (Film Forum; April 30-May 8.)

The Other Woman

What begins as a smoothly oiled romantic comedy quickly morphs into a clatter, grinding screwball contrivance. The suave Connecticut venture capitalist Mark King (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) begins an affair with the New York corporate lawyer Carly Whitten (Cameron Diaz) but neglects to mention that he’s married. When she chances to meet his wife, Kate (Leslie Mann), the two women bond over his duplicity and team up

to catch him in other extramarital pursuits. The essential shift in the story is from verbal jousting to physical confrontation; unfortunately, the director, Nick Cassavetes, has no feel for either one, confining Mann’s pinball-pinging comic ricochets to metronomic lockstep and packaging Diaz’s blithe composure in a blithering rictus. A glimmer of substance peeks through when the lawyer helps the suburban princess get her head out of the clouds, her feet on the ground, and her eye on the bank account, but it’s quickly smothered in other noxious fantasies, and the underlying erotic challenge—whether a total dick is better in bed—remains unmet. With Kate Upton, as another other woman; Taylor Kinney, as a hunky Mr. Nice Guy; and Don Johnson, as Carly’s father on the prowl.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Street of Shame

The shrill music over the opening credits of Kenji Mizoguchi’s final film, from 1956, evokes the harsh view of modern life that follows. The drama is centered around a Tokyo brothel where the prostitutes cling desperately to their dreams. One wants to move in with her grown son, another wants to marry her steady john, a third is trying to make a home for her unemployed husband and their newborn, and a fourth wants to fleece enough clients to buy a respectable business. Only a newcomer, Michiko (Machiko Kyo), known as Mickey and thoroughly Westernized (having been kept by a G.I. during the postwar occupation), maintains a clear view of the miserable fate of these women and of all Japanese women. With a quasi-Brechtian ferocity, Mizoguchi likens marriage to free prostitution with housework thrown in, sees capitalism as an official form of whoring, and considers the red-light district to be the corrupt government’s substitute for social programs. For his last film, he sharpens his style to confront a coarsened world in which his earlier lyricism has little place. In Japanese.—*R.B.* (Museum of the Moving Image; May 3.)

Transcendence

In the near future, a genius researcher in artificial intelligence, Will Caster (Johnny Depp), who has been shot by neo-Luddites, uploads his brain to a supercomputer, achieves “transcendence”—of the brain’s biological limits—and sets out to control the world. His adoring wife, Evelyn (Rebecca Hall), communicates with him when he shows up on video screens. She can’t have sex with him, as Joaquin Phoenix’s lonely guy did with his operating system in “Her,” but they can snuggle intellectually in cyberspace. This is the first film directed by the great cinematographer Wally Pfister, and his dramatic inexperience shows. The movie is rhythmless, shapeless,

and, with the exception of a few shots, cheesy-looking. With Paul Bettany and Morgan Freeman. Written by Jack Paglen.—*D.D.* (4/28/14) (In wide release.)

The Unknown Known

It’s those words again, which now seem as nonsensical as a riddle meant for children: “There are known knowns. There are known unknowns. There are unknown unknowns.” In the beginning of Errol Morris’s brilliant documentary portrait of Donald Rumsfeld, the former Secretary of Defense sits before the camera, reads this notorious formulation, and then postulates its concluding term, “the unknown known,” which turns out, of course, to be Rumsfeld himself, a man who doesn’t know his own mind and who wound up charting his way through the inanities of the second Iraq War with formulas and definitions, only to get virtually everything wrong. Morris goes through Rumsfeld’s long career, surrounding the interview and the memos (which Rumsfeld reads aloud) with historical footage, charts, and printed documents, and he doesn’t always challenge the bureaucrat’s assertions as aggressively as he might. His slight reticence will lead some viewers—their moral bloodlust frustrated—to condemn the movie as soft. Still, if Morris doesn’t quite nail Rumsfeld, his questions cause the Secretary to nail himself. Despite its flinty subject and its devotion to texts of every kind, the movie has a smoothly beautiful, almost velvety texture, and a mournful emotional tone.—*D.D.* (4/21/14) (In limited release.)

The Woman on the Beach

The spare, stark, sordid Hollywood melodrama, from 1947, fills a romantic triangle with lots of personal and political history. It stars Joan Bennett as Peggy Butler, the sleek young wife of Todd Butler (Charles Bickford), an aged and renowned painter who is now blind, idled, clingy, and bitter. When she meets the tall and strapping Lt. Scott Burnett (Robert Ryan), of the local Coast Guard, who was wounded in the Second World War and is now tormented by nightmares and depression, the sexual spark between them is immediate and intense, and he tries to pry her away from her husband. The tale of marital fury, wretched dependence, and howling guilt gets extra juice from the backstory of its director, Jean Renoir—the son of the great painter—who returned home after being wounded in the First World War and fell in love with his father’s teen-age model. The filmmaker, living in California in self-imposed exile from France, cuts loose with vicious moods and creative rages that feel like the destruction of an old world and the violent birth of new possibilities.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; May 5.)

BAM CINÉMATEK

The films of Ellen Burstyn. April 30 at 4:30 and 7:30: “The Exorcist” (1973, William Friedkin). • May 2 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: “The Last Picture Show” (1971, Peter Bogdanovich). • May 3 at 2, 4:30, and 7:30: “Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore” (1974, Martin Scorsese). The 7:30 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with Burstyn. • May 4 at 2 and 7: “Providence” (1977, Alain Resnais). • May 4 at 4:30 and 9:15: “The King of Marvin Gardens” (1972, Bob Rafelson). • May 5 at 4:30 and 9:30: “Requiem for a Dream” (2000, Darren Aronofsky). • May 6 at 7 and 9:30: “Same Time, Next Year” (1978, Robert Mulligan). • In première. May 5 at 9:15: “The Immigrant” (2014, James Gray), followed by a Q. & A. with the director.

FILM FORUM

In revival. April 30-May 8 (call for showtimes): “Othello” (1952, Orson Welles). • May 5 at 7:45: “The Woman on the Beach,” introduced by the film historian Victoria Wilson, Shelley Wanger (the daughter of the movie’s producer and star), and Peter Davis (the son of the movie’s writer).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

In revival. May 6 at 4: “Little Lise.” • May 6 at 7:30: “Dainah la Métisse” (1931, Jean Grémillon), introduced by the filmmakers Josh and Benny Safdie.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

“An Auteurist History of Film.” April 30-May 2 at 1:30: “The Firemen’s Ball.”

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

The films of Kenji Mizoguchi. May 2 at 7: “Ugetsu” (1953). • May 3 at 2: “Sansho the Bailiff” (1954), introduced by the film scholar David Bordwell. • May 3 at 7: “Street of Shame.” • May 4 at 2: “Song of Home” (1925; silent). • May 4 at 3:30: “Oyuki the Virgin” (1935). • May 4 at 6:30: “Sisters of the Gion” (1936).



DVD OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Terence Davies’s “The Long Day Closes,” from 1992, in our digital edition.

THE THEATRE



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(Reviewed in this issue.)

CASA VALENTINA

Samuel J. Friedman

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New World Stages

HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

Belasco.

(Reviewed in this issue.)

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THE SUBSTANCE OF FIRE

Second Stage

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

The City of Conversation

Lincoln Center Theatre presents a play by Anthony Giardina, directed by Doug Hughes. Jan Maxwell plays a Washington, D.C., political hostess who has been on the scene since the Carter Administration. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Few

Samuel D. Hunter ("The Whale") wrote this drama, about a man who returns to the small-town life he had abandoned, as the editor of a periodical for truckers. Davis McCallum directs the Rattlestick production. In previews. (224 Waverly Pl. 866-811-4111.)

Forbidden Broadway Comes Out Swinging!

A new edition of Gerard Alessandrini's spoof of Broadway productions sends up "Les Misérables," "The Bridges of Madison County," "Bullets Over Broadway," and many more. In previews. Opens May 4. (Davenport, 354 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

An Octoroon

Soho Rep presents the world premiere of a drama by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, a riff on a play by Dion Boucicault from 1859, in which a plantation heir falls in love with a slave. Sarah Benson directs. In previews. (46 Walker St. 212-352-3101.)

Red-Eye to Havre de Grace

The collective known as Lucidity Suitcase Intercontinental, in collaboration with the Minneapolis-based musical duo Wilhelm Bros. & Co., performs an "action opera" about Edgar Allan Poe in his final days. Thaddeus Phillips directs. Opens April 30. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-279-4200.)

Too Much Sun

The Vineyard presents a new play by Nicky Silver, in which a famous

actress preparing for "Medea" repairs to her married daughter's vacation home. Starring Linda Lavin, Jennifer Westfeldt, and Richard Bekins; Mark Brokaw directs. Previews begin May 1. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

NOW PLAYING

Annapurna

Emma (Megan Mullally) hasn't spoken to her reclusive ex-husband (Nick Offerman) for twenty years, and yet, after she hears that he's dying, she shows up at his trailer in the Rocky Mountains with groceries and enough money to see him through to the end. There is so much hurt and anger between them—he was a blackout drunk; she took their five-year-old son and left without saying goodbye—that the big question is, Why is she there? In Sharr White's bittersweet drama, you can see the ending from a mile away, but, under the direction of Bart DeLorenzo, for the New Group, Mullally and Offerman, who are married in real life, have good chemistry. The writing is funny and sometimes beautiful, paying subtle attention to the subject of unconditional love. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

The Civilians' the Great Immensity

What's the ideal form for a climate-change musical? The new Civilians show, written and directed by the group's artistic director, Steve Cosson, and funded in part by the National Science Foundation, takes place in two scientific-research centers: Barro Colorado Island, in the Panama Canal, and Churchill, Canada, Arctic home to an increasingly frantic polar-bear population. Cosson's script is packed with interesting details (about howler monkeys, melting permafrost, the fate of the Sayesi Dene people) gleaned from interviews with botanists, climatologists, and others. But the plot, in which a shark-week nature-show cameraman (Chris Sullivan) goes rogue, leading his anxious wife (Rebecca Hart) to track him down, piles on layers of drama that the play doesn't need—you find yourself thinking, Get back to the destruction of the earth!—and that the actors, many of whom aren't Civilians company members, can't fully support. But David A. Ford's beautiful location footage and Michael Friedman's smart and mournful songs provide the right elegiac punch. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

The Mystery of Irma Vep

Charles Ludlam's 1984 play, in revival by Red Bull, is directed by Ludlam's

former partner, Everett Quinton. It's an unintentionally creaky operetta, or overlong show tune, where the crowing is about Ludlam's love of movies like "Rebecca," "Frankenstein," and "Wuthering Heights." Two actors, Robert Sella and Arnie Burton, both physically game, play all seven roles, with many costume changes (while sometimes wearing wigs with the netting showing), in this story of Lady Enid Hillcrest (Burton), a naive young lady living in nineteenth-century England with Lord Edgar Hillcrest (Sella), a stately bore who owns a grand house which was once ruled by Irma Vep, his first wife. Ludlam's masquerade is ultimately a celebration of storytelling, a Grand Guignol giggle about werewolf movies and castles on a hill. The central problem with putting on "Irma Vep" today is that it has lost its cultural relevance—and its power to shock and amuse. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/28/14.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101.)

Of Mice and Men

Anna D. Shapiro directs Steinbeck's stage version of the second book in his Dust Bowl trilogy. In the nineteen-thirties, in California's Salinas Valley, George (James Franco) and Lennie (Chris O'Dowd) are buddies who've never spent much time apart. George has a fleet, crafty mind, intent on survival, while Lennie is slow, a lover of soft things like mice and rabbits and girls, who unintentionally destroys what he touches—he has no understanding of his own physical power. They had to split from their work as itinerant laborers because of some trouble Lennie got into, and now they're starting again, on a ranch that's being overseen by a short, angry man named Curley (Alex Morf), whose wife (the pretty and pretty hopeless Leighton Meester) wants nothing so much as to hang around the guys, in their bunkhouse. Franco's and O'Dowd's characterizations are all on the outside; none of what they do grows out of the intimacy we look for in acting. In fact, the show demeans the art of acting, with a cast that demonstrates no relationship to what authentic make-believe can do to a script or to an audience. It's yet another example of the ever trendy and ultimately dispiriting belief that if you throw any number of stars on a stage something will stick, the receipts will be fat and healthy, and, beyond that, who cares? (4/28/14) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Velocity of Autumn

At eighty-six, Estelle Parsons has the shaggy vitality of a dog running after a Frisbee. The same goes for Alexandra, the self-described "demented old lady" whom she plays in Eric Coble's underwritten comedy, directed by Molly Smith. Dressed in a bright-purple frock, Alexandra has taken herself hostage in her Brooklyn

OF NOTE THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN

Key to staging a play by Martin McDonagh, the Irish bard of whimsical cruelty, is finding the harsh music of his dialogue. Life in his gray coastal hamlets may be nasty, brutish, and short, but it sings. Michael Grandage's revival of his 1996 comedy, imported from the West End, finds the linguistic joy beneath the woeful story of Billy (Daniel Radcliffe), a disabled boy living in the Aran Islands in 1934. When a Hollywood crew lands on a neighboring isle, Billy plots a misguided escape to America. Radcliffe leads an expert cast, including Ingrid Craigie and Gillian Hanna, as Billy's hard-bitten aunts, who run the barren general store where he works. There's no sweetness in this tale, but it offers many bitter pleasures. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

brownstone apartment, which she scatters with homemade explosives. If anyone tries to drag her to a nursing home, the building gets it. Her estranged gay son, Chris (Stephen Spinella), climbs through the window to act as hostage negotiator, while Alexandra rages against the indignities of old age. These two fine actors can't elevate Coble's script, which is full of hoary symbolism (that radiant old elm tree outside the window) and meandering dialogue. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Violet

In this Roundabout revival of a 1997 musical, set in 1964, the ebullient

Sutton Foster plays the title character, a young woman who boards a Greyhound bus in the hope that a revivalist preacher will heal her disfiguring scar. Riding through Tennessee, Violet meets two soldiers (Colin Donnell and Joshua Henry); a diesel-fuelled love triangle ensues. The composer, Jeanine Tesori, offers an affable score that quotes from folk, country, blues, and gospel. If Brian Crawley's book leans toward pop psychology, his conversational lyrics sound plausible in the actors' mouths. Every so often, as in the lush closing song, their music rises to something more rapturous. The director, Leigh

Silverman, continuing work she began in an "Encores!" concert, offers a modest, stripped-down production, which highlights the fine voices and fresh faces of the three vibrant leads. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

Your Mother's Copy of the Kama Sutra

Carla (Zoë Sophia Garcia) won't agree to marry Reggie (Chris Stack) until he promises to reenact with her every single memorable sexual encounter each of them ever had. Reggie agrees to this cockamamie plan, even though he knows he'll

eventually have to share the experience he had being sexually molested by his older brother. The playwright, Kirk Lynn, would like us to believe that Carla's plan is a mark of a courageous truth-seeker, but, under Anne Kauffman's direction, both the plan and the playwright's notions about it come across as pretentious. In the second act, though, which takes place years later, Ismenia Mendes gives a very strong performance as the couple's teen-age daughter, struggling with having been raped at a high-school party. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)



FOOD & DRINK



TABLES FOR TWO

GATO

324 Lafayette St. (212-334-6400)

BOBBY FLAY OPENED HIS FIRST restaurant, Mesa Grill, when he was just twenty-six, but it was his Spanish bistro Bolo that earned him serious respect. When Bolo closed, in 2007, it wasn't owing to flagging attendance but because the old Flatiron-district building that housed it was being demolished for a condo tower. Meanwhile, as a Food Network linchpin, with slick shows like "Throwdown with Bobby Flay," "Brunch @ Bobby's," and the latest, "Beat Bobby Flay," the New York native has become one of the most recognizable chefs in America. You might presume that with great fame comes cynicism. (See: Guy Fieri's Times Square theme-park fiasco.) But at Gato, Flay's eclectic new NoHo restaurant, the chef himself is cooking some amazing food, as though he's still got something to prove.

One recent spring morning, Flay said, "I'm using the entire Mediterranean as my inspiration . . . Italy, France, and Greece, a little bit of Morocco, of course Spain." Accordingly, the menu is a little bit all over the place. But Flay knows that while some people crave small plates of seared duck liver (with red grapes and black pepper) and beef crudo (cubed and tossed with pickled Fresno chilis), others will migrate toward pizza (even if

it's topped with goat cheese and capers), a comforting cube of eleven-layer potato (like a cheeseless gratin, with cream, butter, and garlic), and "charred beef" (tender strip-steak medallions, made decadent with melted butter and blue cheese, and modern with nutty farro and broccoli rabe).

As though in a tacit throwdown with ABC Kitchen, nearby, Flay has concocted some killer vegetable dishes. Purple, white, and orange heirloom carrots are blanched, then rubbed with smoked paprika, fennel, and mustard seed, seared, and then roasted, until they're soft inside and crusty outside. They come on harissa-swirled yogurt, topped with a pomegranate-molasses vinaigrette and fresh mint. A very polite server delivering a pan of kale and wild-mushroom paella painstakingly explained the allure of the dish: "The soccarat is the crispy rice at the bottom. I'm scraping the pan so you can get two textures." There's also a deeply flavored crab risotto with Calabrian chili and tarragon, a juicy grilled and braised Berkshire pork chop, and a delicate yet substantial steamed halibut served over a smooth piquillo-saffron-tomato sauce. Missteps are rare, and tend to come from overreach, as in the fried artichokes with uni and quail egg, which sounds promising but quickly becomes a salty, soupy hodgepodge.

Reservations are difficult. One Saturday at 5:30, when the vast space was mostly empty, an icy hostess told a walk-in couple: "We are fully committed in the dining room, but it's first come, first served at the bar if you want to take your chances." Chef would not approve. "The one thing I keep telling my staff is that the award I want to win is nicest restaurant in New York," he said. That's probably not going to happen, but if it's about the food it's Bobby for the win.

—Shauna Lyon

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NIGHT LIFE

DOCTOR WHO

The hypnotic dance music of a mysterious Nigerian studio master, at BAM.

IN THE LATE SEVENTIES, as Nigeria slowly recovered from civil war and famine, a six-foot-five, two-hundred-plus-pound figure named William Onyeabor installed advanced analog synthesizers in an elaborate studio in the former Biafran capital of Enugu, established his own record-pressing plant, and started single-handedly producing electronic dance music. The country's music scene was booming, but no one had heard anything like what Onyeabor was creating. "Something You'll Never Forget," one of his earliest tracks, is a gently funky, ten-minute-long flowering bud of fluttering guitars, shuffling percussion, soulful horns, and playful keyboard glissandos. "Good Name" is an equally epic song, released six years later, which takes listeners on a thrill ride of complicated electronic beats, slap-happy synthesizer passages, and surprising video-game-like effects.

Onyeabor's eighth and final album was released in 1985. He became a devout Christian and refused to say another word about his music. There had been signs that this change might be coming. His choruses alluded to Proverbs ("A good name is better than silver and gold"), and the "something you'll never forget" in that early track is that "one day you'll be lying dead." After he departed the studio, his records started commanding prices as high as a thousand dollars as his unusual and hypnotic songs percolated through Western dance-music communities. Last fall, Luaka Bop, David Byrne's global-oriented independent record label, released the first authorized collection of his music on CD, "Who Is William Onyeabor?"



The music of William Onyeabor is performed live for the first time in the United States.

The myths that surround Onyeabor have helped drive interest in his music. There are rumors that he studied film in Moscow, and had a law degree. It's impossible to confirm details about his past because he rarely gives interviews, and, when he does, he refuses to discuss it. In a recent Skype conversation from Enugu, Onyeabor, who is sixty-eight, said, "I did study so many things, but they have nothing to do with my natural talent, because you don't study talent. Talent comes from God." Onyeabor's music is unique in part because it is the vision of one individual, who controlled all aspects of the recording process and had access to enormous resources. "It was very atypical gear, and he used it in an atypical way," the keyboardist Money Mark, who is a musical director of a touring tribute to Onyeabor, said. "What he was doing with the equipment was very modern."

The Onyeabor tribute show comes to the Brooklyn Academy of Music May 2-3. Ahmed Gallab is its other leader, and his tight funk-oriented group, Sinkane, is its

heart. "Onyeabor travelled a lot in his day and he became a sort of universal person, and you can see this in the music," Gallab said. The drummer Pat Mahoney, who has worked with LCD Soundsystem, will also be there. One of the singers, Luke Jenner, of the dance-rock group the Rapture, has a high falsetto that matches the exuberance of Onyeabor's music. "His voice just shoots out of the pocket," Gallab said. "It's very powerful." The Lijadu Sisters, twins from Nigeria who were popular some forty years ago and who have reunited for this tour, are part of the show, along with the singer Devonté Hynes, the jazz saxophonist Joshua Redman, and David Byrne. Money Mark, citing a line from Onyeabor's song "Body and Soul," said, of Byrne, "He's going to bring the spirit of the idea that you can dance your troubles away." Onyeabor, who is working on a forthcoming record, this time to praise God, approves. "I'm happy that a new generation is discovering my music," he admitted.

—John Donohue

ROCK AND POP

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

Bladerunner

The tenacious avant-garde composer and downtown legend John Zorn has titanium lungs that can coax heavenly and demonic sounds from his saxophone. His experimental power trio, which is making its United States debut, includes the bassist Bill Laswell, a monster player and producer who has kept the musical company of everyone from Herbie Hancock to Mick Jagger, and the drummer Dave Lombardo, the concussive force behind the metal band Slayer's arena-quaking assault. Thoughtfully challenging the imagination of listeners, the trio's music evokes the underbelly of urban life, along with an even darker and deeper spiritual dimension. (Le Poisson Rouge, 158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. May 4.)

Chvrches

A Scottish synth-pop act that was "born on the Internet," as its lead vocalist, Lauren Mayberry, has described it (most notably, in an essay last year on the *Guardian's* Web site decrying online misogyny), Chvrches posted a single, "Lies," on the Neon Gold music blog in May, 2012, and instantly formed a devoted fan base, which has continued to grow. The band consistently delivers engaging originals and distinctive covers of songs by artists including Whitney Houston and Haim. Its debut album, "The Bones of What You Believe," is vaporously light in sound and heavy

in mood, and Mayberry's voice, a quavering soprano, is as vulnerable as it is brave. (Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. May 2-4.)

The Knife

This brother-sister electronic-music duo, from Sweden, has returned to the States for the first time in eight years. Its rousing live show features six dancers in shimmering jumpsuits and eye glitter, including Light Asylum's striking Shannon Funchess, backing the siblings, Karin Dreijer Andersson and Olof Dreijer. Whereas minimalist techno has all the heart of a defunct power plant, the Knife brings life, humor, and a fistful of gender and political subversion to its gut-whooping beats, moody rhythms, and emotive vocals. The title of its 2013 album, "Shaking the Habitual," sums up its approach. (Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. April 30-May 1.)

Paul Muldoon & Wayside Shrines

Four years ago, the rock-and-roll veteran Chris Harford, who so favors musical evolution that one of his backing groups is called Band of Changes and features a perpetually rotating cast of players, began a collaboration with the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Muldoon—the poetry editor for this magazine, a lyricist for the late Warren Zevon, and a part-time guitarist. Harford seized on the title of one of Muldoon's poems for their new band's name. The group, which includes the singer Ila Couch, the bassist Nigel Smith, the keyboardist Noriko Manabe, and the drummer Ray Kubian, released

"Word on the Street," an album and a book of poems by Muldoon, last year. At Joe's Pub, they appear in the company of the fiddler Julie Myers for an evening of verse and music. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. April 30.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Gary Bartz

It's safe to say that Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, and the other bebop pioneers who used the original iteration of Minton's to work out the kinks in their new music would not recognize the upscale veneer of the freshly rejuvenated spot. The saxophonist Bartz, who is seventy-three, is too young to have played at the club in its heyday, but his excitable blowing—honed with the likes of Miles Davis and McCoy Tyner—has more than its share of high-style bebop clinging to it. His quartet includes the consistently undervalued drummer **Greg Bandy**. (206 W. 118th St. 212-243-2222. April 30.)

George Colligan Trio

The chance to hear a major jazz stylist, one accustomed to the role of the leader, take a place as a backing musician in another's ensemble can be an edifying and instructive experience. Here, the great drummer **Jack DeJohnette** provides support for the younger pianist Colligan. They'll be joined by the vaunted bassist **Linda Oh**, who, in just a few years on the scene, has garnered considerable attention through her work with Dave Douglas and Joe Lovano's Sound Prints band and other groups. (Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. April 30.)

Eric Harland's Voyager

The leader of this quintet, a veteran drummer, has enlivened the bands of Charles Lloyd, Dave Holland, and many others. He's joined by the pianist **Jason Moran** and the guitarist **Julian Lage**, two high-profile players who are drawing considerable critical acclaim, and the saxophonist **Walter Smith III** and the bassist **Harish Raghavan**, both of whom are valued additions to Ambrose Akinmusire's ensemble. Harland will most likely draw material from his 2010 debut album, "Voyager, Live by Night," which featured all of the present personnel except Moran. (Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592. April 29-30.)

Enrico Pieranunzi

The recent reissue of both volumes of the Pieranunzi trio's splendid "Play Morricone" albums, which were recorded shortly after the turn of the century, as a double-disk set is a vivid reminder of the gifts of this lyrically attuned Italian pianist, who stands beside Martial Solal as one of the great European jazz keyboardists of our time. Although Pieranunzi had a special rapport with the bassist Marc Johnson and the drummer Joey Baron, who were his partners on the Morricone project and other recordings, he's in fine company here with the bassist **Scott Colley** and the drummer **Joe LaBarbera**, the latter of whom teamed with Johnson in the final trio of one of Pieranunzi's major influences, Bill Evans. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. April 29-May 4.)

ABOVE & BEYOND

"Wham City Comedy Tour"

"Live Forever as You Are Now with Alan Resnick" is a short video that premiered on Adult Swim last December. It was created and directed by Resnick and Ben O'Brien, both members of Baltimore's Wham City arts collective, a group so far best known for the work of the electronic-music artist Dan Deacon. In the video, Resnick is a "young hot tech wizard who revolutionized the tech industry" and is offering a way to live forever as a floating avatar head in a computer monitor. The faux-infomercial originated as a comedy sketch that Resnick performed on a Wham City comedy tour, and the roving show returns to New York with a ninety-minute multimedia presentation of videos, skits, and monologues. The lineup features Resnick, O'Brien, Robby Rackleff, Mickey Freeland, Naomi Ekperigin, and Aparna Nancherla. (Union Hall, 702 Union St., Brooklyn. 718-638-4400. April 30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

One day ahead of its main rival, **Christie's** steps into the grand arena of big-ticket Impressionist and modern art (May 6). With only fifty-four lots, the sale is trim, but the overall estimates are quite the opposite, boosted by consignments from three major estates, including that of the reclusive New York heiress Huguette Clark. (The daughter of a copper baron, Clark lived out her days, by choice, in a series of New York hospitals while her forty-two-room, art-filled apartment lay vacant.) A Monet water-lily painting ("Nymphéas") from her collection, out of sight since 1930, is the sale's cover lot; there are also thirteen Picassos to choose from, including a rare neoclassical piece, "Deux Femmes et Enfant," heavily influenced by Italian Renaissance painting. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • **Bonhams** holds its own Impressionist-modern auction the same day (May 6), of-

fering more moderately priced lots; the selections include a futurist composition of trains, steam, and skyscrapers by Gino Severini ("Train

de Blessés") and a monolithic portrait of a young boy ("El Amigo de Frida") by Diego Rivera. (580 Madison Ave. 212-644-9001.)

READINGS AND TALKS

PEN World Voices Festival of International Literature

More than a hundred and fifty writers from thirty nations, including Martin Amis, Siri Hustvedt, Tracy K. Smith, and Colm Tóibín, will participate in the tenth anniversary of this festival, honoring authors whose work has put them at political risk. (For a complete list of events, visit worldvoicestival.org. April 28-May 4.)

A Celebration of Muriel Spark

Issue Project Room and New Directions have organized a program in honor of the Scottish novelist, featuring the New Directions president and publisher, Barbara Epler, the *Times* columnist Maud Newton, the *Paris Review* contributing editor Sadie Stein, the *T Magazine* senior editor Emily Stokes, and the *Vogue.com* culture editor, Thessaly LaForce. (22 Boerum Pl., Brooklyn. issueprojectroom.org. April 30 at 8.)

Bernard Malamud Tribute

Boris Fishman, Alan Cheuse, Philip Davis, Clark Blaise, Liesl Schillinger, Kevin Baker, Téa Obreht, and Bharati Mukherjee mark the centennial of the novelist's birth. (The Center for Fiction, 17 E. 47th St. 212-755-6710. May 1 at 7.)

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

One of the surprises of President Obama's second term has been the prominence of a question that seemed peripheral to his first: the meaning of religious freedom. For years, opponents of the Affordable Care Act framed their objections in terms of economic freedom, but now some of the most noticeable challenges are coming from Christian groups who oppose the law's contraception-coverage requirement. In January, the Supreme Court extended a temporary injunction for the Little Sisters of the Poor, a Catholic order that objects to having to file a form to obtain a religious exemption from the requirement. (When an organization files, the government effectively subsidizes its insurance provider, so that the employees' contraception is still covered.) The Supreme Court will soon hand down a decision in the case of Hobby Lobby, the craft-store chain that strives to operate "in a manner consistent with Biblical principles." One of those principles, in Hobby Lobby's view, forbids it to pay for those contraceptives which it considers tantamount to abortion. If the Court rules in the store's favor, the decision would be a small setback for the A.C.A. But it would be a big advance for the religious-freedom movement, which wants courts to recognize that for-profit corporations can be believers, too.

The argument over same-sex marriage is likewise shifting. Last year, when Charles J. Cooper appeared before the Court to defend California's ban on same-sex marriage, his argument was scrupulously secular. Cooper told the Justices that California had good reason to treat heterosexual relationships differently, because California cares about children, and because "the natural procreative capacity of opposite-sex couples continues to pose vitally important benefits and risks to society." He didn't persuade the majority, and perhaps he didn't persuade himself: a new book, "Forcing the Spring," by Jo Becker, reports that Cooper's

position on gay marriage continues to "evolve," just as Obama's once did. (Cooper's stepdaughter has become engaged to a woman.) Many opponents have evolved, too. They have decided that if same-sex marriage can't be stopped in the name of "society" it can be resisted in the name of religious freedom.

The heroes of this movement are people like Jack Phillips, a baker from Colorado, and Elaine Huguenin, a photographer from New Mexico—Christians who refused to supply their services to same-sex weddings and were sued for discrimination. In response to these cases, a number of Republican-controlled state legislatures introduced "religious freedom" laws. Governor Jan Brewer vetoed Arizona's bill after leading politicians, including John McCain, objected and business leaders warned of ill effects, including the possible loss of next year's Super Bowl. Measures in Kansas and Idaho failed, too. But last month, in Mississippi, Governor Phil Bryant signed a bill decreeing that "state action shall not substantially burden a person's right to the exercise of religion" without "compelling justification." Supporters cited the example of a church whose relocation had been blocked by a local zoning ordinance. Opponents asserted that the law would harm the state's gay

population: GLAAD called it a "thinly masked attempt to discriminate against L.G.B.T. people under the guise of 'religious freedom.'"

The First Amendment—which holds that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"—was worded so as not to circumscribe the religious arrangements in place in some states. (In Massachusetts, taxes subsidized "Protestant teachers" until 1833.) Over time, though, and in light of the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantees of "equal protection of the laws," the courts have broadened its meaning. They have regularly been petitioned, often successfully, by



believers seeking exemption on religious grounds from military service, educational requirements, or taxes. Then, in 1990, the Supreme Court issued an unexpectedly broad ruling against members of the Native American Church who had been denied unemployment benefits after the drug-rehabilitation center where they worked fired them for ingesting peyote, which their church considers a sacrament. Writing for the majority, Justice Antonin Scalia said that a ruling for the plaintiffs “would open the prospect of constitutionally required religious exemptions from civic obligations of almost every conceivable kind.” Legislators from both parties, spurred on by an unusual coalition of religious leaders and civil libertarians, responded by drafting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which President Clinton signed into law, in 1993. The law provides that “government shall not substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion.” But in 1997 the Court ruled that the law could be applied only to the federal government. A number of states then enacted their own versions of it; Mississippi was not among them, until last month.

There is something unsettling about a conception of religious freedom that grants some people exemption from laws that others must obey. Much of the time, opinions about exemption from a particular law mirror the politics of the moment. People who opposed the Vietnam War tended to be sympathetic to devout pacifists who resisted the draft. (In 1971, the Supreme Court affirmed that secular pacifists could

be conscientious objectors, too.) Right now, religious freedom seems particularly important to anyone troubled by the spread of gay-rights laws or by the implementation of the A.C.A. But the idea is too big, and too nebulous, to claim any political group as its permanent ally.

Not long ago, Republicans were warning that Sharia law posed a threat to America, which led many states, including Mississippi, to introduce bills that ban the courts from applying “foreign laws.” But during the debate last month in Jackson legislators insisted that “religious freedom” should be interpreted as broadly as possible. State Senator Gary Jackson, a Republican, said, “This law has everything to do with government not interfering with the Buddhist, with the Christian, with the Islamist.” In coming years, that proposition will likely be tested, perhaps by an inmate asking for special meals, or by a Sikh wishing to carry his ceremonial knife through a checkpoint, or by a religious pacifist who wants to resist some new concealed-carry legislation. When politicians talk about religious freedom, broad language often conceals narrower interests. The result is laws that will inevitably be used in ways their proponents can’t predict, and may not like. In Mississippi, as elsewhere, arguments over same-sex marriage and the A.C.A. will eventually give way to general acceptance of a new status quo. But the meaning of “religious freedom” will keep on evolving.

—Kelefa Sanneh

INK OCCUPY THE BEST-SELLER LIST



The economist Paul Krugman burst into an office at the CUNY Graduate Center one recent evening with a pronunciation question. “Is it *Pik*-etty?” he asked, so that the name rhymed with “rickety.” “Or is it *Pikit-tay*? And are we going with *Tho-mah*, or *Thom-as*?” Three academics stood nearby, clutching wineglasses. They had assembled as part of a welcoming party, but no one knew how to pronounce the name of the guest of honor, the French economist Thomas Piketty. “How about Dr. P.?” Chase Robinson, the interim president of the Graduate Center, suggested.

Dr. P. was in town to deliver a talk about his new book, “*Capital in the Twenty-first Century*,” which has been credited with providing the hard numbers behind the slogans of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The seven-hundred-page volume has created so much international buzz that its Amer-

ican publisher released it a month early. The CUNY talk sold out weeks in advance, so the university had set up live streaming online. “I feel like I’m the most powerful person in the city,” Tanya Domi, a CUNY official in charge of the event’s logistics, said. “Journalists have been sending me their résumés, begging to be let in. This never happens.” She tallied the Nobel laureates in the house: Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, and Edmund Phelps. Earlier in the day, Piketty had been at the United Nations, lecturing on income inequality. The next day, he would set off to visit three more American cities.

It was a lot of media glare for a group used to data sets and multiletted equations, and the social scientists were enjoying it. “We’re really capturing the Zeitgeist here!” Robinson said. Janet Gornick, the director of CUNY’s Luxembourg Income Study Center, said, “After Occupy Wall Street, people were calling us to ask about the one per cent, and we had nothing to say. Meanwhile, Piketty was quietly building his data. Now he can thank the Occupy people for the book sales!” One of the novelties of the book is that it quotes directly from the tax returns of the world’s richest one per

cent, an undertaking that is a bit like staring at the sun. “My Ph.D. thesis was on this subject; it was published forty-five years ago,” Stiglitz said later. “But those articles were not part of the mainstream conversation then, because there was no mainstream conversation on income inequality.”

The room began to fill up, and Piketty still hadn’t arrived. In walked two more economists—Branko Milanovic, a dapper Serbian, and Steven Durlauf, an American, in from Wisconsin. Krugman took Milanovic’s hand and apologized for suggesting, in *The New York Review of Books*, that Piketty was the only living economist who was literate. “When was the last time you heard an economist invoke Jane Austen and Balzac?” Krugman had written. Milanovic feigned indignation. “I used Jane Austen in my book, too—and Tolstoy! ‘Anna Karenina!’” he protested.

“Why Jane Austen?” Durlauf asked.

“Austen has a lot of details about income and money,” Milanovic said.

“But Anthony Trollope has many more,” Durlauf replied.

“My wife made me read Jane Austen,” Milanovic said. “And then I actually realized that I could use it for my

own work. Mr. Darcy had ten thousand pounds! Also, I use Balzac. I didn't cite it in my book, but I did all the calculations. I have it on my Excel."

Piketty appeared in the doorway, looking dazed. He is forty-two and trim, with a head of wavy dark hair, which put him in the top one per cent, hairwise, in the room. Sartorially, he looked to be on the cutting edge as well, turned out in a slim charcoal suit, with an open white shirt. There was a momentary hush, then a salvo of introductions.

"It's about time!" Krugman said. "Someone I know only by repute!" The two squared off, Krugman asking, again, the pronunciation question. "*Peek-et-tee*," he said. "We've all been wrong! Incredible!"

Piketty to Krugman: "So you're moving to CUNY?" Krugman had recently announced that he'd be leaving his post at Princeton. "Wonderful, a public institution," Piketty said.

A guest asked him, "How does it feel to be the brains behind Occupy Wall Street?" Piketty's wife, Julia, who is also an economist, interceded with a sly smile. "Thomas is too modest for such questions," she said.

After thirty minutes of happy commiseration, Dr. P. seemed fortified. "You know, the aristocracy in France in 1789 was about one per cent of the population," he said. Then he corrected himself: "Well, between one and one and a half per cent of the population." With the proper data, you could, at last, "make comparisons" between then and now. The Bastille was no longer an abstraction.

The group made for the elevators. The masses were waiting downstairs.

—Jonathan Blitzer

IN THE DUGOUT FAT, MEET SKINNY



C. C. Sabathia, the Yankees' Opening Day starter for the past six seasons, is something of a shrunken giant: six feet seven inches, but, lately, without the spectacular paunch for which he may be best known. "Everybody keeps talking

about how much weight I lost," Sabathia said the other day, while sitting on a sofa in the M.L.B. Fan Cave, on the corner of Fourth and Broadway. "I mean, I'm two hundred eighty pounds. That's still pretty big for a pitcher." Sabathia, who once weighed three hundred and twenty, had just finished taping a segment for "Off the Bat," a new variety show on MTV2, blending baseball and pop culture. The segment was called "Name That C.C." In it, the show's four co-hosts—the rapper Fat Joe, the radio host Sway, the comedian Chris Distefano, and the model Melanie Iglesias—took turns describing people and foodstuffs that shared Sabathia's first two initials, which stand for Carsten Charles. For example: "Halloween, very sweet, orange, white, and yellow." That would be candy corn. "Yo, she's hot, she was on 'Friends.'" Courteney Cox. Then came this clue, from Distefano: "All right, look, fat, O.K.? Fat guy."

"You talking about me?" Sabathia asked.

"No, you're a skinny dude now." Distefano meant Chris Christie.

Sabathia, who has cut back on carbs and Cap'n Crunch, was dressed in a black leather cap, a loose-fitting black T-shirt, jeans, and Jordans, with gleaming diamond earrings and a gold watch that complemented the thick chain around Fat Joe's neck. He confessed that he hadn't yet seen the video of the Mets' roundest moundsman, Bartolo Colon, giving his jumbo spare tire a celebratory two-handed jiggle in the dugout. "I still feel like I'm the biggest pitcher in the league," Sabathia said, wistfully. "I would still like to have that title." Colon is listed in the Mets' media guide at two-eighty-five—an understatement, if anything.

Luckily for Sabathia, he had a new title to fall back on. Earlier, with the cameras rolling, he had recited from memory the opening verse to the twenty-year-old Mac Dre song "2 Hard 4 the Fuckin' Radio," prompting Fat Joe to declare Sabathia the first baseball player ever to rap credibly on television. Sabathia self-censored on the fly, omitting the F-word from the title and choosing not to enunciate at a key moment in the second line ("It ain't nothin' but some shit I wrote"). "There's rappers that can't do that," Fat Joe said afterward, admiring Sabathia's skill and instinct. "See, on the radio, you tell a rapper to freestyle, and he'll start

cursing. C.C. knew to take them bleeps."

Fat Joe grew up in the South Bronx, near Yankee Stadium. At one point during a break in filming, he said, "Hey, yo, C.C., ain't nothing like being a Yankee, right? Just be honest, man. You could have been playing for, like, Cleveland or something."

"I *did* play for Cleveland," Sabathia replied. "For eight years!"

"Yo, Cleveland ain't popping, B.," Fat Joe went on. "They got the one food spot,



C. C. Sabathia

and, like, once it hits eleven, Cleveland's over. They got one gyro spot."

Later, between bites of a cookie, Fat Joe said that he found Sabathia's newly slender profile "very disappointing." To be fair, Fat Joe himself is not especially fat these days, having shed more than a hundred pounds in an effort to set a better example for his three children. But you wouldn't confuse his physique with that of an athlete. "You know, when I first started losing my weight, I caught a lot of backlash from the big people, because for so many years I've been Fat Joe, representing, you know, what's beautiful in big guys," he said. "And then they felt like I was abandoning them—I was leaving the fat community. And that's how I felt today when I seen C.C."

Regardless, Fat Joe believes that baseball, with its aging fan base, could benefit from a little more hip-hop in its reputation. "Our executive producer, Big Papi, he told me that in Boston, in the locker room, he has put in his own sound system, and he's the d.j.," the not-so-fat rapper

said, referring to the plus-sized Red Sox slugger David Ortiz, who will be visiting the Fan Cave in June. “Big Papi don’t speak too much English like that, you know, to be spitting rhymes, but the love for the music is there, and he’s best friends with Weezy”—Lil Wayne. “I don’t know if Jeter could rap,” he continued, referring to Sabathia’s teammate, the Yankee captain. “I know he probably dated some rap chicks. I’m willing to bet on that one.” Having finished his cookie, Fat Joe took a swig from a Diet Pepsi can, and added, of Ortiz, “He lost a lot of weight also, but he’s still a big guy.”

—Ben McGrath

HUNGER GAMES WHAT SHE’S HAVING



In SoHo, the lines stretch around the block for a Cronut™—the croissant-doughnut hybrid, trademarked, to distinguish it from copycat Singaporean “cro-dos,” British “dosants,” and Venezuelan “Mister Cronuts.” A few blocks north, tourists lap up pink buttercream frosting at the Magnolia Bakery, a shop made famous by “Sex and the City.” Due east

from there, at Momofuku, pilgrims arrive in the wee hours to sample David Chang’s pork buns.

David Sax, the author of the new book “The Tastemakers: Why We’re Crazy for Cupcakes but Fed Up with Fondue,” was in New York the other day, visiting from his home in Toronto. He was way up-town, in Yorkville, a neighborhood where food trends go to live out their golden years and, eventually, die.

“There are certain neighborhoods where trends filter out to, and where they’re less volatile once they’re established,” he said, referring to the Upper East Side. “The muffin”—a trend that peaked in 1987—“will always do fine here.”

His first stop on a tour of frumpy foodstuffs was the specialty store Agata & Valentina, on First Avenue near Seventy-ninth Street. Sax, who is thirty-four, with salt-and-pepper hair, passed shelves of balsamic vinegar (“so big in the nineties”) and tubs of wasabi peas (“Wasabi won’t sell a product today the way sriracha would”) before stopping in front of a dairy cooler.

“In the past five years, Greek yogurt has completely changed this case,” he said. “Yogurt used to be this hippie-commune, sour, watery, health-conscious thing in the sixties.” By the nineties, you had squeezable kids’ packs of heavily

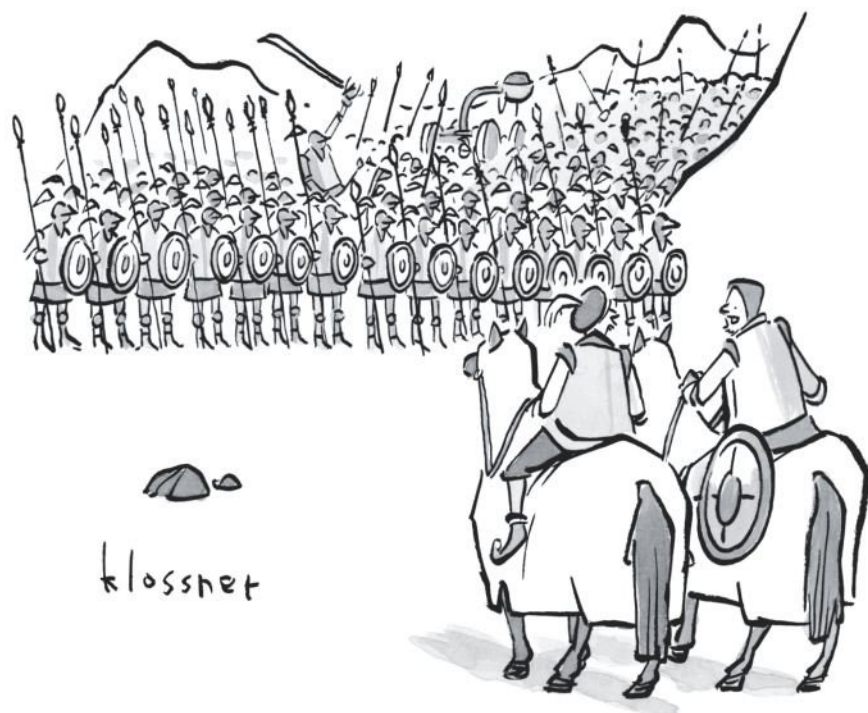
processed Go-Gurt. Greek yogurt started the cycle over again. “A trend spreads its tentacles out,” he said. “So you have not only all these brands but frozen Greek yogurt, Greek-yogurt cereal bars, until it becomes this sugary, blown-up thing.”

He picked up a carton of water-buffalo yogurt marked \$4.99. Two days earlier, after a shvitz at the Russian baths in the East Village—arguably a trendsetter in the realm of personal hygiene—he’d eaten some bad yakitori. “Maybe it’ll help my stomach.”

Sax has a unified field theory of food fads. “The most successful food trends reflect what’s going on in society at a given time,” he said. “The cupcake trend reflected a desire for comfort and childhood simplicity in the years after 9/11. The fondue trend took off at a time when Americans were looking to be cosmopolitan, in the sixties, when people were moving out to the suburbs and wanted something that could make this living room in suburban New Jersey a little more sophisticated than, say, a Jell-O salad would.” Of course, Jell-O salads and boxed cake mixes, which he describes as “the industrial food of the space age, things that came out of making bombs or napalm or whatever,” were all the rage in his grandmother’s postwar kitchen.

In his book, Sax identifies four types of food trends: cultural (Cosmopolitans), agricultural (heirloom tomatoes), chef-driven (Cajun spice, via Paul Prudhomme), and health-driven (“superfoods,” like açai berries). “A fad”—food “foams,” liquid-nitrogen ice cream—“doesn’t necessarily change the culture, but a trend does,” he pointed out. While foot-long pepper mills in restaurants may be on the way out (they arrived in the early seventies, around the same time that “pasta” replaced spaghetti), they put their stamp on the way we season food; pre-ground pepper is as common these days as a sprinkle of MSG.

Sax next stopped at a 7-Eleven on York Avenue, arguably the least trendy food chain in the tri-state area. The air smelled of vanilla-hazelnut coffee (espresso-based coffees moved from being an ethnic trend to being a cultural trend) and pizza (originally an ethnic one). Something called “buffalo-chicken rollers” rotated on a heated platter up front. “Buffalo chicken,” Sax said.



“Maybe you shouldn’t send out e-mails when you’re tired.”

"It's the Cronut of the poultry world."

Coconut waters and energy drinks packed the shelves in back, and, for a moment, Sax grew nostalgic for a beverage long past its prime. "Remember the great iced-tea craze from the nineties?" he asked. "Snapple—look!" He gestured at the bottom shelf. "It's down there in the ghetto. And only three flavors?"

He then headed over to the Heidelberg Restaurant, on Second Avenue. Established in 1936, it is one of the city's only remaining purveyors of fondue, that shared pot of cholesterol-heavy melted cheese which became a hit, in part, Sax says, because of the advent of the Pill and swinging. Fondue cannot be enjoyed solo.

Sax peered at a menu in the window. A pot of fondue, complete with crudités and bread cubes, cost fifty-two dollars. He put a hand on his still tender stomach, saying, "I couldn't manage six cents of fondue, let alone fifty-two dollars."

It was time to pick up his ten-month-old daughter, Noa, so Sax brought out a few squeezable pouches of baby food that he'd bought at Agata & Valentina, after checking to make sure they contained no chia seeds, which are now usurping flax as the trendiest health ingredient.

"We were in California at this health-food store, and everything had chia in it, even these," he said. "She spit it right out. But she spits out a lot of things."

—Sophie Brickman

THE PICTURES MAMA'S BOY



There was a time, in the nineteen-sixties, when Sophia Loren, having had two miscarriages, thought that she would never have a child. This was particularly devastating because her father had abandoned her mother, and Sophia, born Sofia Scicolone and raised in Pozzuoli, near Naples, had always dreamed of having a family. So when "Human Voice," a short film directed by the younger of Loren's two sons, Edoardo Ponti, and starring Loren, opened at the Tribeca Film Festival, earlier this month, the oc-

casional had the feel of a consummation.

Last Monday morning, mother and child were sitting across from each other in a suite in a Tribeca hotel. Loren, who is seventy-nine, was wearing a bright-red pants suit over a red top, a necklace with a jewelled cross around her neck. She had come to New York from Switzerland,



Edoardo Ponti and Sophia Loren

where she has lived since the birth of her first child. Her husband, the producer Carlo Ponti, died in 2007. Edoardo and his brother, Carlo, a conductor, live with their families in Los Angeles.

Loren has made dozens of movies and won a Best Actress Oscar for "Two Women," the 1960 film in which she played a mother in Rome trying to protect her daughter after the Germans have been driven out of the city. "Human Voice," adapted from the Cocteau play of the same name, is the second film that she has made with her son, and—with the exception of fleeting appearances by three minor characters—she is the only actor in it. The end credits read, "*Per mamma.*"

"Finally, my nature comes out," Loren said. "He knows." She addressed her son: "Don't you think I'm vulnerable?"

Ponti, who has light-brown eyes and an oblong face, likes to explicate everything his mother says. "In any complex person, there's a combination of vulnerability and strength, and it's those people who show their vulnerability that are the strongest."

"Neapolitan people go from tragic to tears," Loren said. "And I think that I am really the essence of my place."

Loren told a story about Marlon Brando patting her on the behind when they were making "A Countess from

Hong Kong," which Charlie Chaplin directed. "He gave me a thing on the bottom"—she leaned to one side and gently tapped her backside with a kind of reverence—"and so I stopped everything and said, 'If you do that again, I think I'm going to leave the film.'"

"Human Voice," set in 1950, is about a woman in her twilight years who is talking on the phone with her lover, desperately trying to win him back from another woman. Ponti said, "My mother has never used the Stanislavski technique. What Neapolitans do is they tap into the collective unconscious. It's very personal, it's very detailed, and it's very universal. I think that's why people relate to Sophia Loren."

Loren looked at her son. "We are in love," she said.

"We are very, very, very similar," Ponti said.

"I am Sophia Loren by chance!" Loren declared.

"You worked very hard for it," Ponti protested.

Ponti, who has two young children, said, "There is always this concept of nature and nurture. The answer is that it's exactly both."

"I think that when you have a baby," Loren said, "it is in the hand of God how they develop. Because you can have a baby that thinks like you or not. It is a *colpo di fortuna.*"

Mother and son spent six weeks rehearsing together before they started shooting. Ponti coached Loren on one of the phone-call scenes: "I kept telling my mother, 'If you are too emotional, you are going to turn him off. He is not going to want to come back. Nobody wants to come back to a woman who is in pain, who is crying.'"

"At the end of the final take, Edoardo came into the room," Loren said. "I embraced him, and I cried for half an hour. He was crying, too."

"I have tears in my eyes," Ponti said, his voice breaking. "I am always moved with my mom." He burst into tears and wept, wiping his eyes with his hands.

"We are alike in emotions," Loren said, laughing tenderly. "Very much so." There was a touch of triumph in her voice.

"The older I get, the more I cry," Ponti said. "At sixty, I'll be a basket case."

"Amore," Loren cooed.

—Lee Siegel

PILGRIM MOTHERS

The Ladies Four O'Clock Club.

BY SARAH PAYNE STUART

*The author, center, in a photograph for a family Christmas card, 1953.*

In 2001, a kind of miracle happened to me—a miracle so silly it befit the larger comedy I had set in motion by returning to Concord, Massachusetts, where I grew up and where my parents still lived. After all the shenanigans I'd put them through in my life, trying constantly to win their approval but never doing one actual thing that might earn it, I finally succeeded far beyond their expectations. In the spring of that year I was elected to the Ladies Four O'Clock Club, an ancient Concord institution (whose very name I must disguise).

How can I explain to the real world about the Ladies Four O'Clock Club, with its five-dollar annual dues, for which you were dunned mercilessly at the year's first meeting; the Ladies Four O'Clock Club, which carefully kept even its existence secret, to spare the feelings of the non-elected; the Ladies Four O'Clock Club, with forty elect members (someone had to die before a new member could be elected, but the average age hovered above seventy, so slots did open up); the Ladies Four

O'Clock Club, which met once every non-summer month (not including busy September and December), for purely social reasons. That last part was strongly emphasized. It meant: No gardening or painting or volunteer work, please! The Ladies Four O'Clock Club was filled with the brisk New England ladies I feared most in the world.

When my mother called on the night I received the news, there was awe in her voice, and in my father's silence as he listened on the extension. Women all over town had been up for election multiple times without ever being invited to join, I was informed in a tremulous voice. My mother had not become a member until she was seventy. Her election was the crowning achievement of her life.

But in my mother's voice there had also been fear. Perhaps she understood me well enough to know that joining the Ladies Four O'Clock Club could be the last thing in the world I would want to do. Of all the many things I had denied her—no going out to lunch with her, because I “worked” (earning from

my writing an annual income of about five thousand dollars); no meeting young couples she was sure my husband and I would love; no dressing nicely (or even decently, without the big wet spot over my bosom where I had swiped a tomato-sauce spot with a paper towel). For her, the possibility that I would turn down this invitation was a terror greater than the sum of all the other disappointments I'd inflicted. When I accepted the invitation of the Ladies Four O'Clock Club, my parents each said, “I've never been so proud of you in all my life.”

My husband, Charlie, and I and our three children had lived in Concord for several years. As we were redoing our house, we decided to add a front porch. This would have been a simple enough proposition elsewhere, but not in our town, where historical markers on buildings and along the roads were as common as stop signs. Even my parents' country club had a boulder at the entrance with an inscription reading “1895” because, I was informed, it was “the second oldest country club in the United States.” (Not true, as it turns out, but never mind.)

Our house, though relatively new, was in a designated historic district because it stood across the street from a house that was built in 1763. We understood what this meant: our porch would have to meet the approval of the ladies of Concord. The town was held hostage by these women—staunch New England ladies of indiscernible ages, out walking their large dogs, slickered and zippered against even the most promising weather. One of the goals of the women of my mother's generation was to stand monument to the fact that, though never idle, they did not work for money—to demonstrate, in my father's parlance, that they were ladies. Having a feeling of accomplishment was important for a lady, as long as what she accomplished was ephemeral, like running a booth at a church fair or finishing the spring cleaning of a summer cottage. When I asked my mother what her friend “the poetess” had published, she loftily answered, “She would *never* publish her poems. It would ruin them.”

Everywhere I went in town, the ladies were there: purchasing day-old bread at the bakery (and wasting not); carrying Magic Markered “Vote Yes on

Question Four” posters down Main Street on cold November mornings; protesting “mansionization” in letters to the editor; not mincing their words at social gatherings (“She’s so direct,” the ladies said admiringly of another). On the town census, they listed their occupation as *volunteer*. Approaching their nineties, they could be seen standing, stalwart or bent, outside their pretty houses at 9 A.M., waiting to be picked up by another octogenarian millionaire in an inexpensive car on the way to a meet-the-candidate coffee or a prison-out-reach meeting.

Merrie, Bunny, Baby, Perky, Cricket, Teeny, Twinky, Jab—with mother Jib! Tough old birds to the world, they cultivated girlishness with one another, exchanging five-dollar birthday presents, or tiny jars of homemade eggnog at Christmas. “It’s the thought that counts” was the creed. Who were *their* mothers that these women could find it in their hearts to indulge no one but their dogs? For surely these Bunnys and Twinkys deserve commendation for surviving them.

“I just think that Cricket is so *attractive*,” my mother had said to me during my first summer back, as I, in makeshift maternity garb, gazed listlessly at a crisp and boxy woman in pimento Bermuda shorts and a Lanz flower-print blouse, standing by the country-club swimming pool, deep in thought. Recently, Cricket (not her real name) had been elected an officer of the pool committee, my mother reported. She might have been a member of my mother’s generation, with her pictorial sweaters and her short, set-to-withstand-the-elements hairdo, but she was my age, or perhaps younger. She was also a member of the Seeds and Weeds garden club, and outside her house I’d seen the long line of badly parked cars from which emerged my mother’s friends cradling their flower arrangements. (“Steel Magnolias,” my mother had announced over the phone, explaining the title of her creation with a movie theme. “With tin foil for leaves!”) I wanted to ask her, “Why can’t you wish I were Mother Teresa or Katie Couric or Maya Angelou?” Anyone but Cricket. If Cricket was the bar, I could not reach it.

Now I had to take these women on, because I did want a new porch on my

house. One frosty morning, a brigade of ferociously frill-less women in L. L. Bean coats arrived—the ladies of the Historic Districts Commission, and probably of just about every other commission in town. I served coffee and homemade coffee cake on my wedding china. “Decaf?” they asked shortly. (They even saved on the air they breathed.) “But certainly,” I lied. The cake was downed with an extra glass of juice (“Won’t need lunch,” the ladies murmured); the plates were brought to the sink, the napkins returned, smoothed and refolded. I trailed behind them as they marched out the door and stood before our plain gray house. “I just don’t see why you have to change anything,” grumbled one woman. “I don’t, either,” another said.

Part of the Puritan creed is that every activity, even the most minor domestic drudgery, should be carried out with the grand piety of those who know that they are God’s chosen. This was why my mother and her friends cleaned the house before the weekly cleaning lady came. And perhaps it was also the reason that even a woman with full-time servants, like Ralph Waldo Emerson’s second wife, Lidian, lived paralyzed with fear about her own household management. The Sage of Concord may have brought the world to his table, but it was the melancholic Lidian who worried about what would be served upon it. (She should have married Thoreau, whose secret to entertaining was never to mention “dinner.”) The Emersons’ eldest daughter, Ellen, said of her mother’s attitude toward domestic duties, “It was her nature to take them with a curiously exaggerated view of their importance and to expend on them an amazing amount of indignation and shame.” When I read about Lidian Emerson, I know I am a Protestant. I think of my mother stoically moving through her daily life clutched with fear over—nothing.

My parents had been through a war, the births of my three brothers and me, my mother’s nervous breakdown, and five real-estate transactions by the time they moved to Concord, in the late fifties. With my mother’s Bostonian roots, they fit in in Concord, as they had never fit in in Hamden, Connecticut,

where everyone had gone to Yale; or in Westchester County, where the curtains matched the slipcovers. My parents were “well-bred,” as only a New Englander (my mother) or a Southerner (my father) could be—meaning they were nice to everyone, and especially nice to anyone who worked for them. They knew how to serve a tennis ball and throw a fun, fuss-free party (with my father on Dixieland banjo and an enormous sausage-and-rice casserole from the “I Hate to Cook” cookbook, to soak up the alcohol). Tall and spiffy, they looked so much like the million bucks they didn’t have that they were recruited once to appear in a retirement-fund ad. (I’d idly opened my college alumni magazine one afternoon to check the obits, and there was an ad featuring my father, laughing in a golf cart.) Some of my parents’ friends were rich and some weren’t, but everyone was so frugal that it was hard to tell the difference. So although my father did not rise a jot in his career as a mattress salesman, and my mother didn’t shine in any of her artistic efforts, in Concord they were somebodies.

My mother’s life was one of leisure, absurdly fortunate, filled with friends and worthwhile things to do—contributing to society, if only to the society of other matriarchs. Suburban ladies in novels set elsewhere might go shopping and return home bemused because there was nothing left to buy, but the Concord matrons had no time for such frivolity. Since the beginning of time, the ladies of Concord have been sketching and painting with the clear-sighted purpose of finishing pictures to put them in art shows and sell them to one another.

My mother led the perfect life, as she would have termed it, although she had been dealt manic-depressive genes and a difficult family of her own, and although her daily joys were overshadowed by the anxiety of not measuring up. Shortly before I returned to Concord, my mother had been made chair of the Ladies’ Committee for the “Cripple School,” co-founded by her grandfather (and, of course, no longer called the Cripple School). But even this mark of approval had pierced her like an arrow, shooting anxiety pains through her neck and back, and rattling the nerves of her feet so badly that she

hobbled about at the Cripple School meetings, crippled herself, passing the hors d'œuvres.

After I had accepted the undreamed-of invitation, my mother told me more about the Ladies Four O'Clock Club. I tried to absorb the brutal fact that, at its meetings, unlike every other Protestant (non-church) event I had ever attended, no alcohol would be served. Instead, each lady, co-hosting every two years, would provide a snack, something "simple"—but, alas, not so simple as something bought ready-made—a light soup or, perhaps (as would transpire when it was my turn to host), writhing bite-size egg-salad sandwiches on Very Thin bread, de-crusted the night before. I learned that the letters of recommendation written on my behalf had noted

that I walked my dogs in the woods and that I "really loved Concord," but—since the description might have fit every woman in town—gave no clue to why I had been admitted. And where, if the Ladies Four O'Clock Club had been looking for someone relatively young, were any of the nonworking mothers, who had fluttered at parents' nights at my sons' school, leaping to the fore in unflattering slacks to sign up for pumpkin festivals and teacher-appreciation breakfasts?

But most of all I wondered how my mother herself fared at the Ladies Four O'Clock Club meetings. When the formidable list of my new compatriots—several with surnames straight from Concord's history (including an Emerson)—arrived in the mail, I was

surprised to find that it included only a handful of my mother's close friends. And I knew that my mother feared the disapproval of just about everyone else.

I had not understood the depth of my mother's domestic anxieties until she and my father moved into a fancy assisted-living facility, where such anxieties should have been moot. My parents had been happily living on a small pension in a sunny apartment, but, shortly after I returned to town, my mother inherited some money from a rich aunt. Within weeks, she and my father appeared on my (new) front porch, announcing that they had bought a "unit" in the retirement complex under construction across from the country club, where the suites were named for the streets of Back Bay, Boston. My parents were healthy and loved where they were living, but, now that they could afford it, they felt that buying the unit was the right thing to do, so that they would never be a "burden" to their children.

They showed off blueprints for the six-hundred-square-foot apartment, and up I went with them in a hard hat to see the view from the fourth floor, still under construction. My parents had finally summoned the courage to switch from a unit with a parking-lot view to a pricier one with a view of the woods. In a flash of independence, my mother blew thirty thousand dollars on a top-notch decorator, who, to the shock of all Christendom, mirrored over an entire living-room wall.

Then they moved in. The problems began with the eating arrangements. My mother was resolved to eat dinner alone with my father every night, and so, with head-splitting guilt, she set about politely declining invitations to dine with the other residents. My parents would have loved to have been able to stay upstairs and eat Lean Cuisines in front of the MacNeil/Lehrer News-Hour, instead of smiling through the drawn-out three-course dinner flourished before them each night—too buttery and too puréed—but their monthly fee included one meal a day. So they would dress for dinner and bravely go down to chat up the pretty waitress (with two baby girls living back in the Dominican Republic; weren't they cute?) and wave merrily—but not too



"The first one to pick up the penny from the wet tile will be our next C.E.O."

merrily—at the rejected diners. My parents' closest friends were still too young to be in assisted living, and it was the more sickly of their acquaintances that we would happen upon when my parents, having chits to use up, invited us to dinner. We would be ushered in, and there was Mr. X—once so burly and adventurous in tall rubber boots and lumber jacket as he fished at his electrified wilderness camp—with his arms stretched lifelessly across the table, face down on the white linen tablecloth for all to view in the pale-green dining room with the soft, expensive carpet and the soundless gas fire. It was a lovely, bright place, my parents' retirement home, but everyone knew that it was the last stop before MacRae-Tunncliffe's Funeral Parlor.

Even Marcus (not his real name), the maître d' of the home's luxurious dining room, was able to vanquish my mother. For some reason, this young, smiling, slightly aloof but hardly intimidating man of unknown ethnic origin (my parents dared not ask) held sway over many of the residents. "Where *are* you!" my mother would gasp over the phone on an Easter Sunday. "It's ten o'clock and we're due in the dining room at eleven!"—though we lived only five minutes away. Easter had become a big deal after we'd grown up. When we were children, the holiday had been dismissed as too commercial and we'd received no baskets or chocolate bunnies. Now, in January, my mother would ask, "When are you coming for Easter?," and there would be bunnies at every place setting and jelly beans hidden around the apartment. "I suppose you'll have to bring Sam," my father said, sighing, to one of my brothers about his three-year-old son, whom my parents worshipped. But they had gotten the impression that Marcus frowned upon small children in the dining room.

Like Lidian Emerson's, much of my mother's life had centered on the moral imperative of meals. She believed fervently that the high divorce rate sprang from a blasphemous disregard for the evening meal. "Do you sit down to dinner together every night?" she had asked her divorcing sons in a low voice, as if she were inquiring about their sex lives.

Not that my mother's cooking was gourmet, or even particularly fresh. "I'll

bring the sweet potatoes!" she'd insist when coming to our house for Thanksgiving, only to show up with three cans of yams and a bag of marshmallows. So it is somehow fitting that a falling mayonnaise jar from a jam-packed refrigerator was what broke my mother's toe and eventually did her in. Or so the doctors said a year and a half after the jar had fallen, when they operated and found her heart fatally clogged from lack of exercise.

The surgery had been elective. Her new heart medicine had depressed her and interfered with her usual determination to live a full life. And yet, long before her heart problems, my mother had not been the involved grandmother she longed to be. She had always considered herself "a baby person," once dreamed of having eleven children, and, after settling on four, also worked for seven dollars a week in the Sunday School nursery at Trinity Church, the only paid job she ever had. But when the first grandsons arrived she was too cautious: desperate for a hug but standing back because she "didn't want to force it." My daughter Emily was her last chance, and my mother had screwed up her courage and boldly reached for her in infancy. While the boys played raucously outside, inside, the grandfather clock ticked its old-fashioned comfort as Emily and my mother played by the fire—Emily, in voluminous beribboned dresses, gently patting my mother's hair with her silver-plated baby brush.

When I pulled Emily out of the too-coöperative local nursery school, my mother begged to take her three mornings a week, and then, well, two mornings, or at least Fridays, but barely a week passed without a calamity intervening. One morning, she called and said, "You'll *never* guess what happened," as if she'd lost a child instead of her address book. Or she couldn't take Emily because her back was out or she had to decorate thirty lunch bags for the Cripple School ladies' committee or write the personalized Christmas cards that had plagued her and my father for half a century.

And then, periodically, my mother fell into depressions—depressions that she had been able to suppress in the

early days of running the home show of suppers and kids. Now, when the domestic game should have been over; when even the eternal money problems were behind her; when her only obligation was to live a nice life—the depressions had come on fast and furious. A week of polite excuses would be made until my father called, distraught, and I was summoned to see my mother, dissolved in hopeless tears, in her perfectly appointed, all-white, mirror-walled apartment.

She could find relief only on a trip, away from the grind of daily expectations. Nothing could beat a trip for my mother. Down the Rhine, down the Nile, my parents floated merrily, a target for terrorists in their white golfing hats and bright-yellow, perfectly pressed spring clothes. It didn't matter that my mother had been depressed for two months; it didn't matter that her feet hurt her so much that she could barely walk. Out came the shot of cortisone and the wash-and-wears, and off they went.

My mother had waved off the ten-per-cent risk of death attached to her heart operation. And, just as New England Protestants don't have funerals but memorials "celebrating the life of the dead," so my mother's looming operation had been an occasion for festivity. Her outlying children had flown in the week before to celebrate her eighty-third birthday a month early.

She had already delayed the operation for two weeks in order to prepare for her convalescence, when visitors would be privy to what she considered the unsightly corners of her apartment. She'd needed the extra two weeks for her youngest son, "the mechanical one," to get the VCR to work in the bedroom and the newly installed call-waiting disconnected. My parents had found the call-waiting as difficult to comprehend as the A.T.M. My mother needed my brother to install the new phone (shaped like a large Dixieland-style Mickey Mouse playing a banjo) in case the far-away friends who had sent it suddenly decided to visit. My brother, generally the most presentable of the four of us, spent five days in the retirement home in a clean T-shirt and the same awful pair of brown-and-black

ribbed shorts. (His wife at the time had bought him two identical pairs for travel.) Sauntering into the lobby of the retirement home, through the gas-fired common rooms and the gaily informal café filled with my parents' neighbors, came my brother's long, white, handsome, hairy legs and brown-sandalled feet. Down the halls and up and down the elevator came the hirsute legs, crossing themselves at the knee to chat up Mrs. S. and Mrs. D. over a grilled cheese-and-tomato in the café.

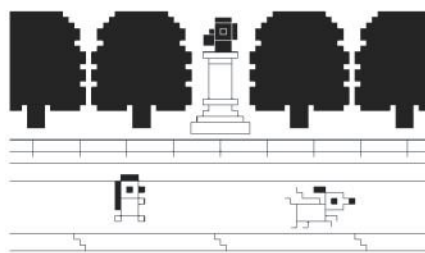
For five days, I watched my mother making a brave effort in this, her last week, not to say anything about her son's terrible shorts. "What people wear really doesn't matter in the large scheme of things," I could see her trying to tell herself. My poor parents, who had wanted to parade their charming heartthrob son like booty, who cared so much about appearances! Ten years earlier, hours after my father had a minor stroke, my mother had worried about getting garments to their cleaners in time for an upcoming trip, and when I offered to take them to the cleaners I preferred she cried out, "Oh, not *there*—they don't know how to do pleats!"

She had wanted the extra two weeks to roll up the socks in her top drawer, and organize her closets, and knife out the hardened sticky glob way back under a kitchen cabinet, and get the winter coats to storage, and have one tooth root-canalled and another capped. She needed the time to give a bureau away to a son and to bestow upon me (four months early) the silver in one of her drawers for my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. "Here," my mother said, yanking open the drawer of clanging metal. "Take all this—I was going to give it to you anyway." And so I had held open a pillowcase while she plunked in two-fisted clomps of mismatched silver: old carving knives stabbing through the bottom of the pillowcase, salad forks, fish forks, finger bowls, ornate tea-strainer spoons, and other oddly fashioned implements for outmoded dining practices—a Santa's bag of treasures streaming out like unconditional love.

There is a terrible excitement that fills the New Englander at the idea of death, even one's own—discussing my will, I always feel a tingle of excitement.

Just as catastrophe makes us cozy, so does death warm up our insides like a crackling fire. Perhaps it is relief that the punishment we have so long awaited has finally befallen us, or the belief that death will resolve, at last, the tangled web of our emotions. Or maybe it is as simple and as crass as the hope of a bequest. For, in the old Yankee families, only with death does money begin its dribble downward. "I don't want anyone to love me for my money," say the well-to-do New Englanders, and while they live they are resented for their penury. But, when they die, delayed love for them pours out from the hearts of their heirs, themselves now too old to do much with the money except keep it from their own progeny.

My mother was exhilarated by the prospect of her own death. When my brothers and my father and I arrived at the hospital on the morning of her operation, carrying Trivial Pursuit and Scrabble and bottles of Poland Spring, the mood was almost giddy. My mother welcomed us sitting up in bed, her face aglow, with no thoughts of last kisses or parting words. The operation and the aftermath, we had been warned, would be painful and long. But nothing is more beloved by the Protestant God than a cheerful, joking demeanor in the midst of tragedy. And so we made cracks as we followed her on the gurney and heard her flirtatiously ask the doctor if she could please keep her wedding



ring on—this would be the first time it was removed in fifty-eight years, and who knew what might happen!

We had barely settled into the private waiting room before the doctors streamed in to tell us that she was dying. The surgeon complained that he was being pressured to operate when there was a ninety-per-cent chance that she wouldn't make it if he did. He wanted our permission not to operate, which, reflexively polite, we found ourselves giv-

ing. *Why not try anyway*, we might have said. But already another doctor was in the room informing us that my mother had died before even getting into the O.R. They'd opened her up in a routine pre-op procedure and her poor clogged-up-because-of-the-falling-mayonnaise-jar heart had never had a chance.

"I guess I'm a hypochondriac," my mother had apologized a few months earlier, before dragging herself to the doctor. The diagnosis had proved she was not. She was a Concord lady who would die in the saddle. "Whatever happens, I'm happy," she'd confided to me the day before the operation.

Three months later, I attended my first meeting of the Ladies Four O'Clock Club. It was held not at one of the glorious old houses of Concord, to the disappointment of my real-estate-loving heart, but at a function room in the town's library. Still, it was a beautiful, memory-filled library, where my decades-old red candy stain could still be found on a copy of "Little Men" and where, in the sixties, my father's pamphlet, "Businessman's Banjo Book," had briefly graced the Concord Author shelves along with Thoreau and Emerson. So when I pulled open the tall double front doors in my resuscitated black business suit, it was with a full heart, rendered a little less full as I got lost in a maze of back rooms. By the time I arrived, breathless, at the correct location, the crowd of festively clad ladies was beginning to move toward the folding metal chairs (which were generally provided gratis by the nearby funeral parlor, I learned later).

One welcoming member explained to me that socializing (and the snack!) did not commence until after business had been attended to. This, if memory serves, consisted of the club's president—a gentle, white-haired lady, unknown to me—reading the minutes of the previous meeting, which contained the news of my election; the treasurer's not-without-irony report of the club's eight-hundred-odd dollars of accumulated dues; and a vote (unanimous!) to spend fifty dollars of the club's funds on flowers to be sent to the memorial service of its latest departed member, more recently departed, even, than my poor mother, whose memorial the club had

attended en masse the month before. I say “if memory serves” because the moment I entered the function room and saw the familiar if mostly unidentifiable group, tears sprang to my eyes and continued to flow through the club reports, the snack, the stumble back to my car, and the one-mile ride home, passing my childhood house on the way.

My mother had always insisted that she had no favorite child. Like most New Englanders, she had been the captain of fairness (while at the same time often remarking, “Life isn’t fair”). But after she died I was, for the nine glorious months that my father survived my mother, his undisputed favorite. My father liked the company of women and he loved ladies, and I was now, after all, a member of the Ladies Four O’Clock Club.

And so, on the blue-skied afternoons of his last fall and winter, my father and I drifted through Concord doing errands together. Everything made us laugh and everything made us cry—a kind of Heaven state. When a slight disagreement arose among my brothers and me regarding my mother’s memorial service, my father sighed and said, “Well, we’ll all live—except for your mother!” Then there was the enigma of my mother’s recently purchased two-thousand-dollar dress: first of all, since when would my frugal parents spend two thousand dollars on a dress, or had my father remembered the price incorrectly? The dress was a long, formal silver-gray knit that would have fallen beautifully over my mother’s elegant eighty-year-old body had she ever worn it. For three years, it had been altered and re-altered to fit her, but my mother had never been satisfied. The question now was: Who owned the dress? That is, had my parents ever paid for it or had the extremely polite, extremely expensive store in town been waiting for my mother to be content with the alterations? And, if my father did own the dress, could he possibly return it now that it had been altered? When we finally summoned the courage to visit the handsome shop, the saleswomen wept at the sight of us (and we at the sight of them), one of them bursting out, “It’s all right, Mr. Payne. Just keep the dress!” Which was so very nice (though slightly less nice if we already owned



“Don’t make me send over the bad waitress.”

it, which, apparently, we would never know), and yet who wanted the dress? Thirteen years have passed, and it hangs in my closet waiting for me to grow three inches taller and become a lady.

For I am not, as should be clear by now, a lady. If I were, I would still be living in Concord, awaiting my leap into the extra slot in my parents’ grave. I would not have moved, a few years after their deaths, to a small city outside Manhattan, so different in every way from my home town that my friends were struck dumb by my choice. I would still be barely attending the Unitarian Universalist First Parish, where, in a line from the Puritan founders, everyone agreed fiercely with everyone about everything. I would still be swimming at White Pond, where a movie-star couple (in town to make a film one summer) and their children had been turned away on a hot afternoon because they didn’t have the right sticker on their car. I would still be drowsing and weeping through the latest Concord Players production of “Little Women,” in which, half a century ago, my mother’s friends, each a mother several times over, had valiantly played the teen-age girls.

I would still be faithfully attending the meetings of the Ladies Four O’Clock Club, as I had during my last years in

town—standing out from the crowd in my Nine West stack-heeled boots and long, split-ended, Japanese-straightened hair, yet somehow blending in. Attendance was not required at every meeting, or even expected, but at the crack of each opening hour I could be found loosening my coat on the threshold of that month’s designated spot, ready to be coaxed out of my professed shyness to hold forth on the topic of myself. So much knowledge did I have to impart to various interested ladies on this subject, I hardly had time to exchange a sentence with my mother’s old friends, whom I seldom saw enough of, or with an unexpected and new friend of my own—a woman my age who had left a career as a lawyer to raise her kids. Originally from outside New England, she had taken to Concord’s self-deprecatory, old-station-wagon ways with the joy of a convert.

She was on her way in, and I was on my way out. When I announced, at my last club meeting, the imponderable fact that I would be leaving town voluntarily, there were no gasps of disapproval or demands for an explanation. “Well,” I cried out, “at least now I can become an honorary member of the club!” After a moment, one of the ladies explained, in the nicest way possible, that I hadn’t been a member long enough. ♦

A NEW KIND OF SPY

How China obtains American technological secrets.

BY YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE



Greg Chung was at home on February 1, 2003, when the space shuttle Columbia fell from the sky. His son Jeffrey called to tell him the news: the ship had broken apart while returning to Earth, and all seven astronauts on board had died. “That’s not a good joke to make,” Chung said. An American citizen who was born in China, Chung lived with his wife, Ling, on a cul-de-sac in Orange, California. Until his retirement, a few months earlier, he had worked on NASA’s space-shuttle program. Among other things, he had helped to design the Columbia’s crew cabin. When he realized that Jeffrey was telling the truth, he hung up the phone and wept.

In 1972, NASA outsourced the design and development of its space shuttles to the Rockwell Corporation, which was later acquired by Boeing. For three decades, Chung was a structural engineer in the stress-analysis group. The work was repetitive, but he was well suited to it. He rarely left his office, even for coffee; instead, he sat at his desk, running computer models that predicted how the fuselage would hold up under various intensities of heat and pressure.

After the Columbia accident, NASA asked Boeing to improve the design of the next shuttle. Chung had been one of the best analysts in his group, and his former supervisor called to hire him

back as a subcontractor. Though he was seventy, he was glad to postpone retirement. He returned to his former habits, coming home late for dinner and then working until midnight. He was driven not by the prospect of a promotion or a raise but by the pleasure of the work. “He’d tell me how much money he had saved for Boeing,” Ling told me later. “I always teased him: ‘your Boeing, your Boeing.’”

In April, 2006, two F.B.I. agents visited Chung at home. He had designed the house in Orange, and it included a deck that he and Ling had built themselves. In the large front yard, Chung had planted lemon trees and a tomato patch, which he sprinkled with water recycled from the shower. Their two sons—Jeffrey and his older brother, Shane—lived nearby with their families.

Chung, a tall man with a lean, impassive face, invited the agents inside. They asked him about Chi Mak, an acquaintance of Chung’s, who had been arrested several months earlier. Mak had moved to California from Hong Kong in the seventies, and had worked as an engineer at Power Paragon, a company that builds power-distribution systems for the Navy. For years, China had been trying to modernize its naval fleet, and the F.B.I. suspected that Mak had been trained by Chinese intelligence services and sent to the United States as a spy.

For more than a year leading up to Mak’s arrest, F.B.I. agents had tapped his phone and followed him on his errands. Once, while Mak and his wife were on vacation in Alaska, agents entered their house in the middle of the night. They were careful to leave no trace—even the cobwebs in the living room remained intact after the search—as they photographed hundreds of Mak’s documents, including his address book, in which they found the names of several Chinese-American engineers. One of the names was Greg D. Chung.

Chung, whose given name was Dongfan, had gone by Greg since arriving in the United States, forty years earlier. He told the F.B.I. agents that he and Ling went out to dinner with the Moks once or twice a year, but that, because Chi Mak was an electrical engineer, not a structural engineer, the two men never discussed work. The agents thanked Chung and left. They had learned a few

Greg Chung was eager to help China. “He has a big heart,” his wife said.

useful pieces of information, but nothing that implicated him in any wrongdoing.

A few weeks later, F.B.I. agents conducted another search of Mak's house. In a stack of old bank statements, they found a photocopied letter, written in Chinese on the stationery of a Beijing hotel, from Gu Wei Hao, an official in the Chinese aviation ministry. It was dated 1987, and it was addressed not to Chi Mak but to Lingjia and Dongfan Chung.

In his letter, one of several documents that the F.B.I. recently shared with me, Gu asked Chung to collect information that would help China develop its space program. The Chinese government had embarked on a plan to build an Earth-orbiting space station, and Gu was looking for any relevant technical knowledge. "For all the expenses that you incur in collecting or purchasing information, I will find a way to pay you cash in person, and you will be allowed to carry it outside the country," Gu wrote. He invited Chung to Guangzhou, where they could discuss technical matters "in a small setting" that would be "very safe." Because Chung was an American citizen, Gu advised him to apply for a tourist visa; on the application, he should claim to be "visiting relatives in China." Gu concluded, "It is your honor and China's fortune that you are able to realize your wish of dedicating yourself to the service of your country."

Chung was now an espionage suspect. The F.B.I. opened a new investigation, under the direction of an agent named Kevin Moberly, an athletic man in his early forties with cropped hair and a neat goatee. One night in August, 2006, Moberly woke up at 2 A.M. and got dressed. He and another agent, Bill Baoerjin, drove to Orange and parked on Grovewood Lane, less than a hundred yards from Chung's house. They sat in the car for twenty minutes, scanning the neighborhood and letting their eyes adjust to the darkness. Then, using flashlights covered with red filters to make the beams less conspicuous, they rifled through two trash cans outside Chung's gate. They found a bundle of Chinese-language newspapers, which they took back to the office.

Slipped between the newspaper pages were several technical documents from

Rockwell and Boeing. Moberly, who had been an intelligence officer in the Air Force before joining the F.B.I., recognized the abbreviations: "O.V.," for Orbital Vehicle; "S.T.S.," for shuttle transportation system. There was no evidence that Chung was attempting to make a dead drop. He seemed simply to be getting rid of sensitive documents, possibly as a reaction to the Mak case, which had been in the news for months.

Moberly and Baoerjin returned the next week for another search. This time, a neighbor's car passed by at 4 A.M., and the agents had to duck behind the trash cans. Moberly decided that curbside rummaging was too risky. He made an arrangement with the trash collectors: after the garbage truck left the Chungs' neighborhood but before it reached a processing center, it would stop at an agreed-upon spot; F.B.I. agents would remove the trash they needed without divulging which house was under investigation.

The following week, shortly after sunrise, Chung wheeled out a large recycling bin and placed it next to the two trash cans, which he had put out the night before. He then stepped behind the bushes in his front yard and waited for a minute, watching the street, before he returned to the house. When the investigators retrieved the contents of the recycling bin, they found more than six hundred pages from Boeing, full of graphs and line drawings. The words "proprietary" or "trade secret" appeared on several of the pages.

In September, Moberly and Gunnar Newquist, an agent with the Naval Criminal Investigation Service, went to Chung's house to conduct another interview. The two agents sat on a white sofa; Chung sat on the other side of a wide coffee table, looking relaxed. Moberly began with casual questions about Chi Mak. An hour into the interview, he steered the conversation to Gu Wei Hao, the Chinese aviation-ministry official. Chung said that he'd met Gu during a trip to China in 1985, and then again in the early nineties.

"Did he ever ask you for anything?" Moberly asked.

"No," Chung said.

Chung went to the kitchen for a glass of water. When he sat down again, Moberly pulled out the letter from Gu and placed it on the coffee table. He

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asked Chung to read it aloud, in English. Chung translated in a faltering voice.

"Do you have any other documents in the house that you shouldn't have?" Moberly said. He handed Chung a consent form allowing a search, and Chung signed it.

Moberly called in a team of agents that had been waiting outside since morning. Ling had returned home with their grandson, and the three watched in silence as more than a dozen agents searched the house and the one-acre property.

Under the deck at the back of the house, an agent found a small door, which was blocked by a piece of wood. He opened it, descended a few wooden steps, and found himself in a crawl space that extended the length of the house. At first, there was enough room to stand up straight, but, farther in, the dirt floor sloped upward. The space was not accessible from inside the house. It looked like an unfinished basement, and was lit by bare bulbs. One side was filled with junk—old mattresses, tricycles, lumber. Toward the front of the house, behind a particle-board partition, was a small room with crude wooden floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, crammed with binders.

The agent led Moberly into the crawl space. The binders contained thousands of documents, including many design manuals related to U.S. military aircraft—the B-1 bomber, the C-17 military cargo plane, the F-15 fighter jet, and the Chinook 47 and 48 helicopters. "It was like walking into King Solomon's mine," Moberly told me later. He did not know if Chung had broken any laws, but he was confident that a line had been crossed.

Moberly grabbed a binder, rushed upstairs, and dropped it on the coffee table. "Why didn't you tell us you had these?" he said. Chung looked away, saying nothing.

The phone rang, and Chung went into the dining room to answer it. Moberly's colleague Jessie Murray, the only agent on the search team who knew Mandarin, overheard Chung's

end of the conversation. He was talking to his older son, Shane. "They are coming to talk to you," Chung said. "They are going to ask you about the school trip to Beijing"—the 1985 trip, during which Chung had met with Gu Wei Hao. "Tell them you forgot. Just tell them you don't know." Murray grabbed the phone and hung up, warning Chung that he could be charged with obstruction of justice.

The search went on all day. The agents found partially burned documents in the fireplace and more files in an office upstairs. By evening, they had removed more than a hundred and fifty boxes of paper. As Moberly was leaving the house, he says, he met Shane Chung in the driveway.

"Dad hangs his heart out too much for China," Shane told him. "He needs to realign his loyalties."

Chung was born in a small town in Liaoning, a province in northeastern China. He was a shy boy who liked collecting things: stamps, rocks, toothpaste caps. His parents were Buddhists who taught him to respect nature. He was fascinated by flowers and trees, and expressed disapproval when he saw other children squashing ants.

During the Second World War, as the Japanese Army advanced through the eastern provinces, the Chungs, along with millions of other Chinese, were forced to flee. At one point on their journey south, they encountered machine-gun fire, and they hid in a cornfield. A farmer sheltered the family and fed them cakes of corn flour, refusing to accept payment in return. The farmer's kindness made a strong impression on Chung, who was eight years old.

Chung's father, a civil engineer in the railroad ministry, was a Nationalist. In 1946, with Maoists fighting for control of mainland China, the Chungs were forced to move to Taiwan, where the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang, was forming a government in exile. There were now two Chinas—the People's Republic of China, ruled by the Communist Party, and the Republic of China, on Taiwan—both of which claimed to represent the interests of the Chinese

people. Chiang Kai-shek, Taiwan's military dictator, encouraged anti-Communist propaganda. Like all Taiwanese schoolchildren, Chung was taught to despise the Maoist regime, but culturally and ethnically he still felt Chinese.

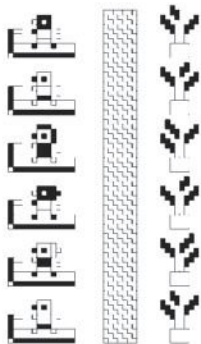
In high school, Chung underwent compulsory military training. He briefly considered enlisting in the Taiwanese Navy, to help liberate mainland China from Maoist rule. "Our father thought it would be a better use of his talent to study engineering," one of Chung's brothers told me. So Chung enrolled at National Taiwan University, the country's most prestigious college. After graduating, he took a job working on a dam project in northern Taiwan, where he met Lingjia Wang, a painter who was working as a kindergarten teacher. They soon married.

Chung loved engineering, and he was one of the top students in his class, but his professional prospects within Taiwan were limited. Like many of his peers, he dreamed of pursuing a career in the United States. While working on the dam, he learned English from the wife of an American adviser.

In 1962, he enrolled at the University of Minnesota. He earned a master's degree in civil engineering and accepted a job with Boeing, in Philadelphia, as a stress analyst in the Vertical Takeoff and Landing Division. Ling took painting classes. At the time, the People's Republic of China did not allow its citizens to emigrate. The Chungs had a few American-born acquaintances, but most of their friends were expatriates from Taiwan. They spent vacations with these friends, travelling to New York to visit museums or to the Delaware shore to go crabbing.

One childhood friend, Thomas Xie, at that time a student at New Mexico State University, wrote to several friends, including Chung—Xie had been admitted to a graduate program at the University of Chicago, but needed two thousand dollars to enroll. Chung had little more than two thousand dollars in the bank, but he wired the full sum right away. "Greg always liked to help people," his brother told me.

Ling, an extrovert, wanted to expand her social circle, and the couple joined a local Taiwanese association. At chapter meetings, the Chungs spoke in favor of reunification, the notion that Taiwan and



mainland China should become one country. They seemed to oppose the very idea of national borders. Ling later told me, “We thought the whole world should be more harmonious. Every conflict just seemed like nonsense to us.” Their views offended some members of the association, who accused them of being insufficiently loyal to Taiwan.

In 1972, Chung joined the Rockwell Corporation, which had just won a contract from NASA to build the first shuttle orbiter. He moved with his family to Southern California. By this time, Chung and Ling had successfully applied for American citizenship. Chung’s career was advancing quickly, and Ling was fulfilled socially and artistically. They planned to stay in the U.S. for good. Like many of their expat friends, they were comfortable balancing three national identities: Chinese, Taiwanese, and American.

Throughout the late seventies, as the Communist Party underwent a series of economic and political reforms, the Chungs’ hostility toward the regime softened. “Suddenly, the doors opened to China,” Ling told me. “We were curious and searching for self-identity.” They came to believe that the Nationalists were no more democratic than the Communists. Ching Wang, a high-school classmate of Chung’s who is now an emeritus professor of pharmaceutical chemistry at the University of California, San Francisco, told me that such shifting allegiances were not unusual among Taiwanese of their generation, especially those who settled abroad. “We started rebelling and pooh-poohing what we had been taught,” Wang said. The Taiwanese media had always portrayed the People’s Republic of China as a squalid backwater, but in televised images of Richard Nixon’s visit to Beijing the city looked clean and prosperous.

Chung’s practice of Buddhism helped him to forgive the trespasses of the Maoist regime. “Our close relative was killed by Communists,” Chung’s brother told me—but that generation died long ago. “We cannot just keep that hatred always in our mind. Greg probably felt the same way.”

In their late thirties, the Chungs longed to understand their Chinese

roots. “You have to,” Ling told me. “Otherwise, you are just a pumpkin—big but with no heart.”

In 1976, after attending a performance by visiting Chinese musicians in Los Angeles, Chung bought an *erhu*—a traditional Chinese instrument with two strings—and taught himself to play it. He and Ling began to collect P.R.C. literature—leaflets from the Cultural Revolution, magazine clippings mourning Mao’s death—and made notes in the margins. Since the fifties, most mainlanders had written a simplified version of Chinese. Most Taiwanese still used the traditional characters, but Chung and Ling adopted the new style.

Mao’s death, in 1976, marked the official end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of Deng Xiaoping’s efforts at modernization. China sent delegations of scientists and engineers to Western nations. Chinese intellectuals spoke of *kexue jiuguo*, or “saving China through science.” Chung followed China’s scientific progress with pride, pasting newspaper clippings about Chinese satellite launches in his journal, and he began to attend events for visiting Chinese diplomats and scholars. At one forum, in 1979, he met Chen Len Ku, an engineering professor from the Harbin Institute of Technology. Chen was looking for instructional

materials on stress analysis. Chung photocopied his notes from a course he’d taken at Minnesota and sent them to Harbin by sea freight.

“I don’t know what I can do for the country,” he wrote in a letter to Chen. “Being proud of the achievements by the people’s efforts in the Motherland, I am regretful for not contributing anything.”

Chen shared Chung’s letter with colleagues in Harbin. Presumably, Chinese government officials heard about it as well. The next year, Chung was invited to a meeting at a hotel in Los Angeles. The main speaker was Gu Wei Hao, of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China. The state-owned company, founded in the nineteen-fifties with help from the Soviet Union, had languished since the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations in the sixties, but was now hoping to modernize. Gu said that China was determined to acquire advanced technology, especially in the field of aerospace. After the lecture, Chung spoke to Gu at length. China needed to improve its airframe design, which was one of Chung’s areas of expertise. At the gathering, Chung also met Chi Mak, who had already begun collecting information for China, though Chung did not know it at the time.

In the nineteen-fifties, the Communist Party of China began to amass



“It’s Mother’s Day, let us order the takeout.”



"Say 'eh.'"

strategic information from abroad. The Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, founded in 1958, acquired thousands of foreign documents and translated them into Chinese. Officials and academics attended conferences in Europe and the U.S.; they took notes at panel discussions, chatted with other attendees, eavesdropped, and, occasionally, pilfered unpublished reports. By the mid-sixties, the government had access to eleven thousand foreign journals, five million foreign patents, and a few hundred thousand research reports, including conference proceedings and dissertations.

Mao's government was primarily interested in information with direct military applications. After Mao's death, the focus broadened. In March, 1986, Deng established the National High-Tech Research and Development Program—code-named 863, for the year and month of its founding—which identified seven target areas for development: space, biotechnology, laser technology, information technology, automation, energy, and new materials. The government sponsored research in

those areas and founded state-owned companies to develop or import relevant technologies.

When possible, these companies acquired new products by collaborating with Western firms, by purchasing the intellectual property they wanted, or through reverse engineering. When none of those methods was possible, the government resorted to espionage. The Ministry of State Security and the military intelligence service trained spies and sent them to the U.S. and Europe. They also recruited Chinese-born scientists, engineers, and other professionals who happened to be living abroad, especially those with security clearances or access to trade secrets. Sometimes these scientists were asked to procure specific information, but often the government employed a "thousand grains of sand" approach: they waited for disparate details to accumulate, more or less at random, until a picture emerged.

Wang, the emeritus professor of pharmaceutical chemistry, was a researcher at Merck in the seventies. After studying soil microbes for many years, he and his colleagues patented an antiparasitic med-

ication called ivermectin. Not long after they published a paper about the discovery, Wang got a phone call from an employee at a government-owned pharmaceutical company in Manchuria. He asked Wang to travel to China with a sample of the microbe that's used to produce the drug. "He didn't think he was asking me to do anything horrible," Wang said. "To put salt on the insult, they even asked me to fly over to China on my own money. I said I'd think about it, and I put the phone down."

Chung, by contrast, was eager to help. By the early eighties, the Chungs were thriving financially—they owned a rental property in Alhambra and a profitable auto-repair shop in Long Beach—yet they remained thrifty, giving each other haircuts to save money. During the 1984 Summer Olympics, in Los Angeles, the Chungs were among a select group of expats invited to a dinner honoring the Chinese athletes. Several times, at the behest of the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco, the Chungs helped newcomers from China get settled in California, giving them rides to the grocery store or donating kitchen supplies.

In February, 1985, Chung got a letter from a Chinese official named Chen QiNan, inviting him to China for a "technical exchange." Chen suggested a short list of topics that he hoped to discuss, including fatigue testing—evaluating how an airframe might break down after repeated use.

"The coming July would be the most proper time," Chung responded, a few days later. "I can arrange a vacation of several weeks and I'll take a good look at the Motherland with my own eyes." He requested a seven-week vacation from Rockwell.

Chung saved the letters he received, as well as drafts of his replies. Reading them, it is unclear who felt more grateful. In a letter to one of Chen QiNan's colleagues, Chung wrote, "It is a great honor and I am excited if I can make some contributions to the modernizations of the Motherland." His primary motivation appears to have been a sense of duty. "He's very loyal," Ling said. "He has a big heart."

Chen and Chung continued to exchange letters. Chen asked about aircraft and helicopter design, and Chung, perhaps hoping to impress, offered to

discuss his work on the NASA space-shuttle program as well. "My suggestion is still for you to introduce the conventional flight design mainly," Chen wrote. However, not wanting to dampen Chung's enthusiasm, he wrote that a presentation on the shuttle would also be welcome.

In late June, 1985, Chung and Ling flew to China with their teen-age sons. While Shane and Jeffrey attended a language-immersion program in Beijing, Chung and Ling went on a tour of half a dozen cities, including hubs of aircraft manufacturing—Nanchang, Chengdu, and Xi'an. The aviation ministry arranged and paid for the trip. Chung gave presentations at publicly funded factories and universities, using slides he'd prepared back in the U.S. In one, he discussed the design of NASA's space shuttle, describing how the shuttle was oriented relative to Earth during flight. Technologically, the factories that Chung saw were decades behind the Boeing facility where he worked. In many cases, the equipment had not been updated since the nineteen-fifties.

It was Chung's first experience of China as an adult, and he relished it both professionally and personally. Between factory visits, the aviation ministry arranged sightseeing excursions, and the Chungs visited landmarks they had wanted to see since childhood—the huge Buddha carved out of a mountain in Leshan, the terra-cotta soldiers and the Dayan Pagoda in Xi'an. As they drove through the countryside, they saw villagers harvesting lotuses from the mud. Ling told me that Chung, while meditating, had had a vision of himself from a past life, as a monk in a Chinese temple. During the trip, they speculated about where that temple might have been.

At the end of the summer, Chung brought home a tie clip from Xi'an Aircraft Industrial Corporation, a tiepin from the Chinese Academy of Engineering, and an eight-page list of questions—what intelligence agents call a tasking list—from the engineers at the Nanchang Aircraft Manufacturing Company. Chung spent several months researching the engineers' requests, and, in December, he drove to the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco to deliver materials to Nanchang by diplomatic pouch.

What Chung sent would have alarmed U.S. authorities, had they seen it: twenty-seven book-length texts, most of them engineering manuals from Rockwell about the design of the B-1 bomber.

"This is the Holy Grail for an aircraft company, to figure out how to do what the U.S. is able to do," Moberly told me. Chung was giving away knowledge that had taken Rockwell several decades and cost tens of millions of dollars to develop. "The whole atmosphere was friendship," Ling told me. "In China, everybody would ask for help. 'Oh, you are an engineer? You can help our country.'"

During the next year and a half, the Chungs acquired more real estate. In October, 1986, they bought a single-family home in Cypress, California. Five months later, they paid nearly six hundred thousand dollars, in cash, for the one-acre lot in Orange, with enough money left over to have a house built from scratch. Still, their taste in cars and clothing remained unassuming, and their colleagues and neighbors were unaware of their growing wealth.

Gu Wei Hao visited the couple, and they accompanied him on trips to Disneyland and to the beach. The Chinese government provided Gu with a paltry travel budget—four dollars a day for incidentals—so either the Chungs paid for the excursions themselves or Gu came up with the funds through other means.

The family moved into the new house in 1989. In the evenings, Chung used a telescope to study the night sky, identifying constellations from ancient Chinese astronomical maps. Ling, who had earned a graduate degree in fine arts from California State University, Long Beach, turned the garage into a painting studio. She taught painting at a nearby community college, specializing in neo-expressionism, an abstract style developed in the U.S. and Europe in the late nineteen-seventies. "She had a following of people who really enjoyed her style of teaching," a colleague told me.

In 1998, two years after Boeing acquired Rockwell, the new management decided to relocate the office. Employees were given moving instructions: reference materials that they wished to keep were to be placed in dedicated boxes; burn bags were provided for the rest. During the next few weeks, Chung took home dozens of boxes of docu-

ments and stored them on the bookshelves in his cellar. His contacts in China had asked him to collect anything that might be of use; now he had enough to feed them for years.

In 2002, as Chung approached his retirement date, he printed documents from Boeing's database at a frenzied pace. On each printout, he whited out warnings that prohibited sharing the documents outside the company; he also redacted the names of engineers who had worked on them, and indications of who had printed them out and when. He photocopied the printouts so that he could send documents to Chinese officials and keep the originals for his records. The volume of the material was so large, Moberly told me, that Chung "must have gone through hundreds of bottles of whitening fluid."

In 2007, during a six-week federal trial in Santa Ana, California, prosecutors argued that Chi Mak was a spy employed by the Chinese government. They alleged that the information Mak gathered had helped China build its own version of Aegis, an American radar system used to protect combat ships. The jury convicted Mak of acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign government, and he was sentenced to more than twenty-four years in federal prison. It was the most significant conviction of a Chinese spy in the United States in decades.

One of Mak's brothers and his wife had been caught at Los Angeles International Airport with a CD full of sensitive information, some of which was classified. In the Chung case, however, investigators reached an impasse. F.B.I. agents had spent months examining the three hundred thousand pages recovered from Chung's house, and determined that none of the documents were classified. Chung could not be charged with conveying national secrets to a foreign power. And though prosecutors could show that he had shared trade secrets with Chinese officials in the eighties, the five-year statute of limitations for export-control violations had long since passed. "It was very clear that he was doing something wrong," Moberly said. "I just had to figure out whether he was breaking the law."

While flipping through a federal-statute book, Moberly came across a

paragraph titled “Economic Espionage,” which had become a crime in 1996, when Congress passed the Economic Espionage Act. Moberly recalled a thirty-minute class that he’d taken on the topic during his counterintelligence training. The class had been so short because no one in the U.S. had ever been convicted of economic espionage.

The statute defined an economic spy as anyone who “takes, carries away or conceals” or otherwise “misappropriates” a trade secret with the intent of aiding a foreign government. For Chung to be charged under the statute, prosecutors would not have to show that he had transmitted information to China within the past five years; the fact that he had concealed trade secrets in his cellar might be enough.

The Chung case went to trial in June, 2009, before the same judge, Cormac J. Carney, who had sentenced Chi Mak. During his testimony, Ronald Guerin, a former F.B.I. counterintelligence expert, described how Chinese intelligence officers recruited informants. “What they try to do is work on the China aspect—‘You are not so much hurting the United States; you are helping China,’” he said. “You can just stroke the person and tell them they’re doing it for the good of the Motherland or the good of their country. You give them awards, give them letters, give them plaques, whatever. . . . Or you pay them a lot of money.” In Chung’s case, it was clear that the Chinese handlers had used flattery to great effect. The prosecution did not show any evidence that cash had changed hands.

The defense conceded that Chung had done some “foolish things in the past,” but denied that he had planned to share the information. He was simply a pack rat. “He’s not a pack rat,” the lead prosecutor, Greg Staples, said in court. “He’s a pack elephant.”

Chung became the first American to be convicted of economic espionage at trial. He was sentenced to fifteen years and nine months in prison. Since then, federal prosecutors have brought four more economic-espionage cases, resulting in the convictions of five individuals.

Moberly later told me that, under questioning during the Chung trial, he had acknowledged the existence of classi-

fied evidence indicating that Chung had been paid. To protect the F.B.I.’s sources and methods, he could not reveal, even to a judge, what this evidence was. But the allegation was consistent with the letter that Gu Wei Hao had sent to Chung in 1987, in which Gu guarantees that Chung will be allowed to take cash out of the country. Also, even accounting for Chung’s frugality, it is not clear how his salary at Rockwell—less than sixty thousand dollars a year during the mid-eighties—would have allowed him to own an auto-repair shop, a triplex of rental apartments, and two houses, all at the same time. “I never believed he did what he did for money,” Moberly told me. Even so, payments from the Chinese government, perhaps on the order of tens of thousands of dollars, might have been an additional incentive.

Chung did not respond to my requests to visit him in prison, but Ling, who was never accused of a crime, reluctantly took my phone calls. One afternoon, I parked at the end of Grovewood Lane and walked to the iron gate in the Chungs’ driveway. There were cobwebs on the buzzer. The front yard was full of weeds, and an overturned wheelbarrow near the garage apparently hadn’t been used in years.

When I rang the bell, Ling Chung came out and waved from the front step. She was wearing a green nightgown and her hair was dishevelled. She invited me to sit on the white couch in the living room. Sunlight slanted in through the windows, lighting up patches of the carpet.

Ling got me a glass of water and sat across from me. With a forlorn smile, she recalled applying for U.S. citizenship with her husband. On one of the forms, they were asked whether they would be willing to bear arms for the United States. Chung had left the space blank. The interviewer asked Chung whether he would fight against China in the event of a war. Ling recalled Chung’s answer: “If this happens, I will grab a gun and shoot myself.”

We walked from the living room to her studio, which opens onto the front yard. Large abstract paintings lay on the floor or rested against the walls. Ling told me that she had been working on many of them for years. She pointed to one that

looked like a violet cross superimposed on a purple night sky. “The title of that one is ‘45436-112,’” she said—her husband’s inmate number at a low-security federal prison in Butner, North Carolina. She visits him there every few months.

There were tears in her eyes. “The first day we met, we decided to get married,” she said. The tenderness lasted throughout their time together. Even in their sixties, a family friend told me, “they were like college sweethearts.” Ling said that when Chung worked at Boeing he sometimes napped in his office, and he would complain about being woken up by the illusion that she was singing. “He would say, ‘I always tell you, ‘Don’t sing around me—I cannot go to sleep,’” Ling told me. “In his mind, he thought I was singing behind him.”

I asked her whether Chung felt the same loyalty toward China that he felt toward her, and whether Chinese officials had taken advantage of that loyalty. She remained silent. I asked whether her husband was innocent. “I cannot answer that question,” she said.

She suggested that the prosecutors had looked at his actions too superficially to understand the motives behind them. “They just stayed on the surface,” she said. Later, she elaborated: Chung’s intention was to help China, not to hurt the U.S. “It’s not that complicated,” she said. “You make a friend, and they ask you, if you are an engineer or an artist, ‘Do you know this?’ And you tell them what you know. Simple as that.”

Before I left, she showed me a sheet of paper taped to the wall near the studio entrance. It had several neat rows of Chinese characters on it: a list of Buddhist precepts that Chung had copied for her by hand. I wondered whether the Buddha’s teachings had helped Chung resolve any conflicts he might have felt between his loyalties to the U.S. and to China. I asked Ling if she thought it was possible to hold two national identities at once. Her eyes brightened. “I’m Chinese, I’m American,” she said. “How beautiful is that! Why make it a confrontation?” ♦

HEADLINE OF THE WEEK

From the Stillwater (Okla.) News Press.

EDUCATION TO IMPORTANT
TO CUT

OVERFLOW

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

April 4th
Dear Sirs:

I am not interested in buying a walk-in bathtub. I can't imagine what gave you the idea that I was. This morning, I received yet another e-mail asking if I am "ready" for a walk-in bathtub. As I e-mailed the folks who have been e-mailing me about a six-day all-inclu-

ventional medicine." (I myself have no such credentials, since I have decided not to pursue the advice of the people who regularly e-mail me about how easy it is to become a licensed veterinarian's assistant.)

I'll admit that at some point during your blizzard of e-mails I began wondering what a walk-in bathtub is. I assume

peace of mind as it is? As it happens, I received an e-mail today offering yacht charters "for all budgets." Until I received that e-mail, it had never occurred to me that yacht chartering was within my means. Just last week, I received an e-mail offer to reveal my credit rating while consolidating my debts. But this e-mail definitely said "all budgets." You can't imagine the peace of mind it gives me to think of myself as someone who could, if he so desired, charter a yacht. That peace of mind was not even threatened by the information, provided by a friend of mine whose name need not come into this, that the "exotic land" referred to in the e-mail about beautiful women looking for love was Canada.

But that same peace of mind is threatened by the very thought of sitting in a walk-in bathtub after my bath, wondering how long I'm going to have to wait there, shivering, before the water drains from the tub and I can safely open the doors. Given the fact that the bather is soaking wet while the water drains out, exiting the tub must be an even more dreaded exercise than entering the tub. Your decision not to refer to your contraption as a walk-out bathtub leads me to believe that you are aware of that.

May 10th

Dear Sirs:

Why can't you people get it through your heads that I am not interested in buying a walk-in bathtub? I wasn't going to say anything about this, because it seems rather personal, but I finally see no other course: I don't take baths; I take showers. As you may know—even though your e-mails don't reflect it—showers use less water. (As I explained in an e-mail declining an offer to deliver cases of water in plastic bottles to my door monthly, I like to think of myself as, if not exactly a friend of the earth, at least a longtime acquaintance.) My bathroom has a shower stall that is separate from the bathtub. It is, by its very nature, walk-in.

May 14th

Dear Sirs:

I am not interested in buying a non-slip, waterproof chair for my shower. I can't imagine what gave you the idea that I was. ♦



sive package vacation in Cancún, one of these days I actually might need a six-day all-inclusive package vacation in Cancún—preferably in a hotel with no Internet hookup—if I keep getting asked if I'm ready for a walk-in bathtub.

It might interest you to know, by the way, that just yesterday I received an e-mail that offered to put me in contact with "beautiful women from an exotic land looking for love." Does that sound like someone who is ready for a walk-in bathtub?

April 13th

Dear Sirs:

I remain deeply uninterested in purchasing a walk-in bathtub. Yet your e-mails continue to arrive. I've had to consider availing myself of the advice offered in the e-mails I receive at least once a week about how to lower my blood pressure without drugs, diets, or the care of anyone who is suspected of being licensed in any aspect of "con-

that it's the bather who does the walking in, rather than the tub itself. I assume that the bather opens doors on the side of the empty bathtub to enter, and, after closing the doors, sits quietly—or somewhat embarrassingly, if someone's watching, since there's not much for a bather to do without water—as the tub slowly fills. Otherwise, how would the bather get into the tub without causing a flood? At first, I imagined a sort of sling contraption, but that would presumably be called a sling-in bathtub. Please do not e-mail me with an explanation or a diagram. The more I think of it, the more I'd rather not know.

May 4th

Dear Sirs:

I am not—I repeat: not—in the market for a walk-in bathtub. Or, to put it in the language of your latest e-mail, I am not "looking for the peace of mind that comes with a walk-in bathtub." What makes you think that I don't have

THE HUNT FOR EL CHAPO

How the world's most notorious drug lord was captured.

BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

One afternoon last December, an assassin on board a K.L.M. flight from Mexico City arrived at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. This was not a business trip: the killer, who was thirty-three, liked to travel, and often documented his journeys around Europe on Instagram. He wore designer clothes and a heavy silver ring in the shape of a grinning skull. His passport was an expensive fake, and he had used it successfully many times. But, moments after he presented his documents to Dutch customs, he was arrested. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration had filed a Red Notice with Interpol—an international arrest warrant—and knew that he was coming. Only after the Dutch authorities had the man in custody did they learn his real identity: José Rodrigo Arechiga, the chief enforcer for the biggest drug-trafficking organization in history, Mexico's Sinaloa cartel.

To work in the Mexican drug trade is to have a nickname, and Arechiga went by the whimsically malevolent handle El Chino Ántrax. He supervised the armed wing of the Sinaloa—a cadre of executioners known as Los Ántrax—and coordinated drug shipments for the cartel's leader, Joaquín Guzmán Loera, who was known as El Chapo, or Shorty. Arechiga was a *narcotraficante* of the digital age, bantering with other criminals on Twitter and posting snapshots of himself guzzling Cristal, posing with exotic pets, and fondling a gold-plated AK-47. Guzmán, who is fifty-seven, typified an older generation. Obsessively secretive, he ran his multibillion-dollar drug enterprise from hiding in Sinaloa, the remote western state where he was born, and from which the cartel takes its name. The Sinaloa cartel exports industrial volumes of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine to America; it is thought to be responsible for as much as half the illegal

narcotics that cross the border every year. Guzmán has been characterized by the U.S. Treasury Department as “the world's most powerful drug trafficker,” and after the killing of Osama bin Laden, three years ago, he became perhaps the most wanted fugitive on the planet. Mexican politicians promised to bring him to justice, and the U.S. offered a five-million-dollar reward for information leading to his capture. But part of Guzmán's fame stemmed from the perception that he was uncatchable, and he continued to thrive, consolidating control of key smuggling routes and extending his operation into new markets in Europe, Asia, and Australia. According to one study, the Sinaloa cartel is now active in more than fifty countries.

On several occasions, authorities had come close to catching Guzmán. In 2004, the Mexican Army descended on a dusty ranch in Sinaloa where he was holed up, but he had advance warning and fled along a rutted mountain track in an all-terrain vehicle. Three years later, Guzmán married a teen-age beauty queen named Emma Coronel and invited half the criminal underworld of Mexico to attend the ceremony. The Army mobilized several Bell helicopters to crash the party; the troops arrived, guns drawn, to discover that Guzmán had just departed. American authorities have no jurisdiction to make arrests in Mexico, so whenever D.E.A. agents developed fresh intelligence about Guzmán's whereabouts all they could do was feed the leads to their Mexican counterparts and hope for the best. In Washington, concerns about the competence of Mexican forces mingled with deeper fears about corruption. A former senior Mexican intelligence official told me that the cartel has “penetrated most Mexican agencies.” Was Guzmán being tipped off by an insider? After a series of near-misses in which Chapo foiled

his pursuers by sneaking out of buildings through back doors, officials at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City took to joking, bitterly, that there is no word in Spanish for “surround.”

Guzmán developed “a Zorro-like reputation,” Gil Gonzalez, who pursued him in Mexico for the D.E.A., told me. In dozens of *narcocorridos*, the heraldic Mexican ballads that glorify traffickers, singers portrayed Guzmán as a country boy turned cunning bandit who had grown rich but not soft, his *cuerno de chivo*, or “goat horn”—Mexican slang for an assault rifle with a curved magazine—never far from his side.

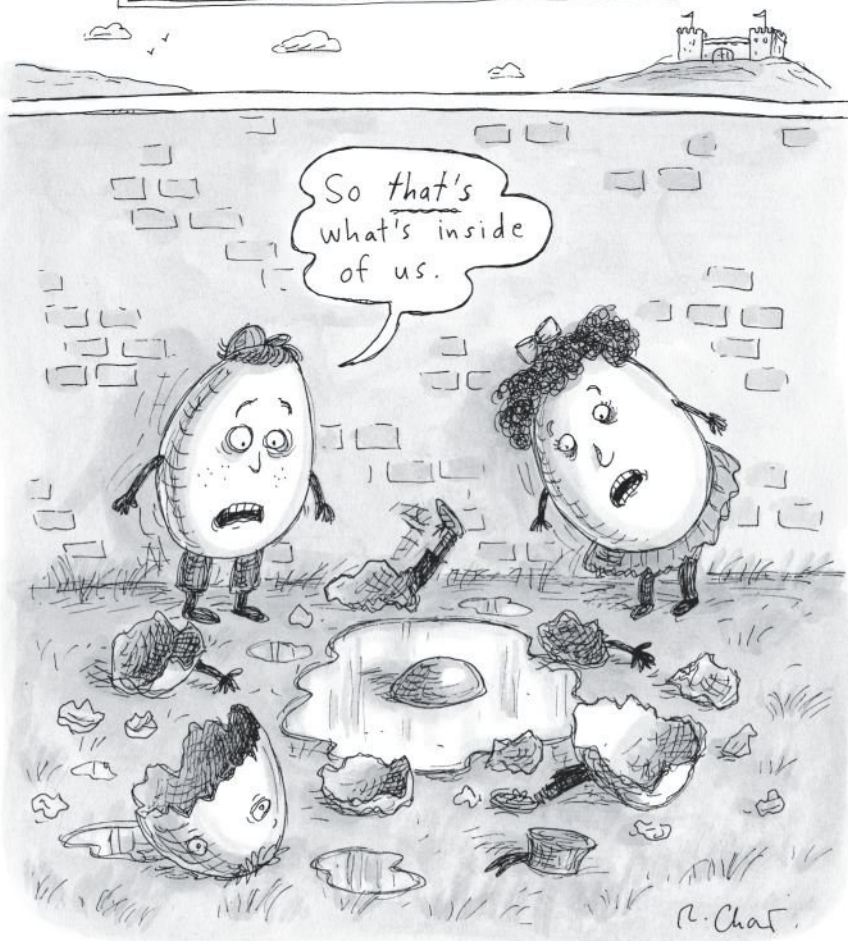
Yet Guzmán himself remained mad-deningly obscure. Only a few photographs of him circulated publicly. A famous series taken after an arrest in 1993 shows a stocky, dark-eyed, square-jawed young man standing awkwardly in a prison yard; he gazes at the camera with a shyness that seems at odds with his fearsome reputation. Chapo escaped eight years later, and had been on the run ever since. Because he might have had plastic surgery to alter his appearance, the authorities could no longer be sure what he looked like. One *narcocorrido* captured the predicament: “Only he knows who he is / So go looking for someone / Who looks just like him / Because the real Chapo / You'll never see again.”

The authorities tried to track Guzmán by monitoring telephone lines. Narcotics smuggling necessitates regular phone communication between farmers and packers, truckers and pilots, accountants and enforcers, street dealers and suppliers. But traffickers at the top of the hierarchy maintain operational security by rarely making calls or sending e-mails. Guzmán was known to use sophisticated encryption and to limit the number of people he communicated with, keeping his organization compartmentalized and allowing

El Chapo escaped from a maximum-security prison and evaded many attempts at capture, often hiding out in the Sierra Madre.



CHILDHOOD'S END



subordinates a degree of autonomy, as long as the shipments kept running on time. “I never spoke to him directly,” one former Sinaloa lieutenant told me. “But I knew what he wanted us to do.”

The Sinaloa cartel is sometimes described as a “cellular” organization. Structurally, its network is distributed, and has more in common with a terrorist organization like Al Qaeda than with the antiquated hierarchies of the Cosa Nostra. When the cartel suffers the loss of a major figure like El Chino Ántrax, it can reconstitute itself—but not without a few phone calls among the leadership. At the D.E.A., which taps hundreds of phone lines and e-mail accounts associated with traffickers, the process of applying pressure to a criminal organization and then monitoring furtive attempts at outreach is known as “tickling the wires.” When El Chino Ántrax was arrested in Amsterdam, the cartel was still coping with two

other high-level losses: in November, the twenty-three-year-old son of one of Guzmán’s closest associates was arrested while trying to cross the border in Nogales; in December, Mexican troops in a helicopter shot and killed another key cartel enforcer, on a stretch of highway by the Sea of Cortez.

As the cartel attempted to regroup, authorities on both sides of the border intercepted scores of phone calls, texts, and e-mails. They learned that Guzmán would soon be coming to Culiacán, the state capital of Sinaloa, for a meeting with his sons Alfredo and Iván—ascendant traffickers who were both close friends of El Chino Ántrax. The D.E.A. presented an intelligence dossier to authorities in Mexico, and in mid-January a special-forces unit of commandos from the Mexican Marines, or SEMAR, began to assemble at a forward operating base near the resort town of Los Cabos, along the

southern tip of the Baja Peninsula. The marines, who are the Mexican equivalent of Navy SEALs, were joined by a small group of American advisers. Mexican authorities code-named the mission Operation Gargoyle. Its object was to capture Guzmán.

According to the *Dallas Morning News*, the government of Mexico’s President Enrique Peña Nieto informed the marines and their American partners that they would have approximately three weeks to bring down the drug lord. A U.S. official involved in planning the operation told me that this was true. Fighting drug traffickers in Mexico has become a matter of triage, and the SEMAR unit was soon to be redeployed to battle another cartel, the Knights Templar, in the restive state of Michoacán. (Eduardo Sánchez, the chief spokesman for the government of Mexico, denied that any such time limit was in place. “There was no window,” he said.)

As the marines and their advisers moved into Los Cabos, they tried not to attract attention. A battleship anchored off the coast was used as a decoy, so that curious observers might conclude that the sudden influx of commandos was part of a standard naval exercise. But one reason that Guzmán had remained at large so long was his unparalleled network of informants. One person involved in the operation told me, “As soon as we landed, he knew.”

Guzmán had always been a master of escape. Born in the mountain village of La Tuna, in Mexico’s wild and craggy Sierra Madre Occidental, he was the oldest child of a subsistence farmer who dabbled in the drug trade. For generations, Sinaloan ranchers had cultivated cannabis and opium, and children were taken out of elementary school to assist in the harvest. Guzmán left school for good in third grade, and in the seventies, in spite of his illiteracy, he became an apprentice to two drug chieftains: Amado Carrillo Fuentes, who owned a fleet of airplanes and was known as the Lord of the Skies; and Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, a police officer turned drug baron, who ran the Guadalajara cartel and was known as El Padrino—the Godfather.

Guzmán started as a kind of air-traffic controller, coordinating cocaine flights from Colombia. But he was clever and

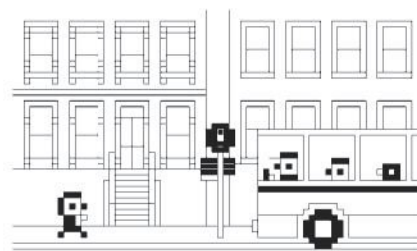
aggressive, and quickly began to acquire power. One night in November, 1992, Guzmán's henchmen massacred six people at a crowded discothèque in Puerto Vallarta. They severed the telephone lines so that nobody could call for help, then walked inside and opened fire on the dance floor. The targets were Tijuana-based traffickers whom Guzmán was challenging for control of the lucrative smuggling routes through Baja California. They were in the bathroom when the shooting started, and fled without being harmed. The next spring, the traffickers arranged for their own hit men to murder Guzmán at the international airport in Guadalajara. As gunfire erupted, Guzmán scrambled out of his vehicle and crawled to safety. Seven people were killed, including Archbishop Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo. (The gunmen apparently mistook him for Guzmán.) Ocampo's murder caused a political uproar, and it was not long before Guzmán, who had gone into hiding, was picked up by authorities in Guatemala and turned over to Mexico. He was sentenced to twenty years in prison, on charges of conspiracy, drug trafficking, and bribery, and ended up in Puente Grande, in Jalisco, which was considered one of the most secure prisons in Mexico.

Behind bars, Guzmán consolidated both his empire and his reputation. He bought off the prison staff and enjoyed a life of relative luxury: he conducted business by cell phone, orchestrated regular visits from prostitutes, and threw parties for favored inmates that featured alcohol, lobster bisque, and filet mignon. While he was there, the Mexican attorney general's office subjected him to psychological interviews. The resulting criminal profile noted that he was "egocentric, narcissistic, shrewd, persistent, tenacious, meticulous, discriminating, and secretive."

One day in January, 2001, a prison administrator pulled aside a makeshift curtain that Guzmán had draped across the entrance to his cell and shouted, "He's escaped!" A subsequent investigation determined that Guzmán had hidden in a laundry cart pushed by a paid accomplice. But many in Mexico speculate that he didn't have to bother with subterfuge. Guzmán controlled Puente Grande so thoroughly by the time of his exit that he might as well have walked out the front door. Criminal charges were eventually brought against

seventy-one people who worked at the prison, including the warden.

If Chapo's escape suggested that the Mexican political system had been corroded by drug money, his subsequent years as a fugitive did not diminish this impression. He retreated to Sinaloa and expanded his operations, launching violent turf wars with rival cartels over control of prized entry points along the U.S. border. The sociologist Diego Gambetta, in his 1993 book "The Sicilian Mafia," observes that durable criminal enterprises are often woven into the social and political fabric, and part of their "intrinsic tenacity" is their ability to offer certain services that the state does not. Today on the streets of Culiacán you see night clubs, fortified villas, and an occasional Lamborghini. Chapo and other drug lords have invested and laundered their proceeds by buying hundreds of legitimate businesses: restaurants, soccer stadiums, day-care centers, ostrich farms. Juan Millán, the former state governor of Sinaloa, once estimated that sixty-two per cent of the state's economy is tied up with drug money. Sinaloa remains poor, however, and Badiraguato, the municipality containing Guzmán's home village, is one of the most desperate areas in the state. There had always been some sympathy for the drug trade in Sinaloa, but nothing deepens sympathy like charity and bribes. Eduardo Medina Mora, Mexico's Ambassador in Washington, described Guzmán's largesse in the state: "You are



financing everything. Baptisms. Infrastructure. If someone gets sick, you provide a little plane. So you have lots of local support, because you are Santa Claus. And everybody likes Santa Claus."

Mexico's municipal police were poorly trained, poorly paid, and poorly equipped, rendering them susceptible to bribery. "In practical terms, organized crime literally privatized the municipal police forces across many parts of the country," one senior Mexican official told me. Guzmán's

influence over the public sector was not confined to law enforcement. Last year, a former bodyguard for the current governor of Sinaloa, Mario López Valdez, released a series of YouTube videos in which he described accompanying López Valdez, who had just taken office, on a trip to meet with Guzmán. In one video, the bodyguard played a recorded conversation in which the Governor appeared to instruct his subordinates not to antagonize the Sinaloa cartel—and, instead, to crack down on its rivals. López Valdez insisted that the recording was doctored. Last August, the bodyguard was discovered beside a road in Sinaloa. He had been decapitated.

As long as Guzmán remained in the mountains, the inhospitable terrain and the allegiance of locals appeared to guarantee his safety. In 2009, Dennis Blair, President Barack Obama's national intelligence director, met with Guillermo Galván, who was then Mexico's Secretary of Defense. Galván told him that everybody knew, roughly, where Guzmán was. The challenge was taking him into custody. According to a diplomatic cable that was later released by WikiLeaks, Galván explained that Guzmán was believed to move among a dozen or so ranches, and to be protected by up to three hundred armed men. The peaks of the Sierra Madre Occidental are steep and jagged, and the roads that vein their contours often taper to a single dirt track. An armored convoy would be spotted by Guzmán's lookouts well before it arrived at its destination. And if a Blackhawk helicopter was dispatched to attack his outpost he would hear it thundering across the valley from miles out, leaving plenty of time to flee.

More recently, however, intelligence collected by Mexican authorities and the D.E.A. indicated that Guzmán might be changing his habits. There is a saying in the Mexican drug trade that it is better to live one good year than ten bad ones. Many young men enter the industry expecting to enjoy a decadent life for a short time before being incarcerated or killed. Young narcos behave recklessly: they go to night clubs, they race Bentleys, and they post pictures of themselves online with their co-conspirators (and with the occasional dead body). The only traffickers in Sinaloa who beat the odds are those who are content to follow a

"We need to rethink our strategy of hoping the Internet will just go away."

It has been reported, erroneously, that Guzmán used a satellite phone; in fact, his favored communication device was the BlackBerry. Like many narcos, he was suspicious of satellite phones, because most of the companies that manufacture them are American and the devices are relatively easy for law-enforcement officials to compromise. But the BlackBerry is made by a Canadian company, and Guzmán felt more comfortable using one. This trust was misplaced: by early 2012, the D.E.A. had homed in on Guzmán's BlackBerry, and could not only monitor his communications but also use geolocation technology to triangulate his signal.

candy,” one said.) The D.E.A. agents who monitored his e-mails and texts marvelled at the extent to which his communications seemed focussed not on managing his multinational empire but on juggling the competing demands of his wife, his ex-wives (with whom he remained cordial), his girlfriends, and his paid consorts. “It was like ‘Peyton Place,’” a former law-enforcement official who kept track of the communications told me. “It was a non-stop deal.”

At one point during the chase, Guzmán must have realized that his BlackBerry had been compromised, and decided to turn this setback to his advantage. He met up with a subordinate and gave him the BlackBerry. Someone involved in the operation said of Guzmán, “He took us for a ride.” The authorities, unaware of the handoff, chased the signal around Los Cabos, until they finally pounced on the sacrificial subordinate. While they were occupied with arresting him, Chapo made it into the desert, where a private plane picked him up and flew him back to the safety of the Sierra Madre.

Like bin Laden, he might have chosen to rely on couriers. But a courier system is too inefficient for the fast pace of the narcotics trade, and so, as U.S. and Mexican authorities eventually discovered, Chapo devised an elaborate solution. In the past, he had occasionally restricted his contact with others in

the cartel by relaying his commands through a proxy. For a time, a woman known as La Voz (the Voice) served as his gatekeeper, sending and receiving messages on his behalf. After Los Cabos, Guzmán reinstated this arrangement, but with additional precautions. If you needed to communicate with the boss, you could reach him via B.B.M., BlackBerry's instant-messaging application. (Guzmán had apparently learned to read and write well enough to communicate in the short-hand of instant messages.) Your message would go not directly to Guzmán, however, but to a trusted lieutenant, who spent his days in Starbucks coffee shops and other locations with public wireless networks. Upon receiving the message, the lieutenant would transcribe it onto an iPad, so that he could forward the text using WiFi—avoiding the cellular networks that the cartel knew the authorities were trolling. The transcribed message would be sent not to Guzmán but to a second intermediary, who, also using a tablet and public WiFi, would transcribe the words onto his BlackBerry and relay them to Guzmán. Although Guzmán continued to use a BlackBerry, it was almost impossible to track, because it communicated with only one other device. When he received your message, his reply would be relayed back to you through the same indirect means. Many members of the cartel did not realize that when they wrote to the boss and received an answer, every word had been transmitted via two intermediaries. This is sometimes described as a “mirror” system, and it is fiendishly difficult for authorities to penetrate (especially when the transcribers keep moving from one WiFi hot spot to another). Nevertheless, by studying the communications patterns of the cartel, analysts at the Special Operations Division of the D.E.A. eventually grasped the nature of the arrangement. They resolved to focus on the small ring of logistical facilitators surrounding Guzmán, to identify the mirrors that he was using, and, ultimately, to target their communications.

In early February of this year, when the special-forces unit from SEMAR began making forays into Sinaloa, it was the first time that Mexico's marines had ever pur-

sued such a significant operation in the state. Unlike the Mexican Army—which tended to move slowly, and always informed state authorities before conducting an operation, even when those authorities were corrupt—the marines were nimble and secretive. They mobilized rapidly, on Blackhawk helicopters, and did not ask permission before initiating raids. The marines pursuing Guzmán had seen intense combat in recent years, battling the Zetas cartel in northeast Mexico. They were veterans of a 2009 firefight that had killed a former associate of Guzmán's, Arturo Beltrán Leyva, during a raid in Cuernavaca. One of the marines in the unit, a young officer from Tabasco named Melquisedet Angulo Córdova, was killed in the shoot-out. He was buried with full military honors. Shortly after his funeral, gunmen charged into a home where his family had gathered to mourn, and murdered his mother, his brother, his sister, and his aunt.

The warning could not have been clearer, yet, according to people who know the SEMAR unit, the marines grew more determined to bring down the traffickers. They now made a fetish of secrecy. Whenever they were photographed in public, they followed the custom of other elite security forces in Mexico and wore black masks over their faces. They implemented clever safeguards against penetration by the cartels. Apart from the admiral who commanded them and a few senior personnel, none of them knew where they were headed or who their target might be until they boarded a Blackhawk to undertake the mission. Several days before an operation, the commandos were obliged to surrender their cell phones, to protect against leaks.

The first important arrest of Operation Gargoyle occurred on February 13th, when the SEMAR unit apprehended a group of Sinaloa assassins on a highway outside Culiacán. The marines confiscated the men's phones and sent them off for analysis. Because cartel members frequently shed phones, a single device can offer an intelligence windfall if it contains current numbers for other members of the organization. In American debates over the National Security Agency's warrantless collection of “metadata,” this is one reason that many authorities have been quick to defend these techniques; a constellation of dialled phone numbers

can be used to build a “link chart” exposing the hierarchy of an organization.

Using information extracted from the phones collected in the arrest, the marines and the D.E.A. began to focus on a trafficker named Mario Hidalgo Argüello. A plump-cheeked man with a droopy mustache and a crooked boxer's nose, he was a veteran of Mexico's special forces who had switched sides to work for the traffickers. Within the cartel, he was known as El Nariz—the Nose. Now that Guzmán was spending more time in urban areas, his entourage had become very small. Nariz was part of this privileged circle, serving as Guzmán's personal assistant and errand boy.

In Culiacán, Guzmán rarely spent consecutive nights in the same bed. He rotated from house to house and seldom told those around him—even Nariz—where his next destination was, until they were en route. Guzmán had a personal chef, an attractive young woman who accompanied him everywhere he travelled. He is said to have feared poisoning, and sometimes made his underlings taste food before he would eat it. But one D.E.A. agent said of the chef, “She's absolutely a great cook. So maybe the whole personal-chef thing was more hedonism than paranoia.”

Guzmán also liked takeout food, and, on the night of February 16th, he sent Nariz out to pick up an order. Guzmán's life had become largely nocturnal, and he ate dinner very late. That evening, he was sleeping at a safe house that belonged to his ex-wife Griselda López. By the time Nariz left work, it was already past midnight. Nariz returned to his own house in Culiacán, and discovered that the commandos from SEMAR had been waiting for him.

Under questioning by the marines, Nariz admitted that Guzmán was hiding in the city, and gave the address. “He flipped right away,” an American law-enforcement official told me. Just before dawn, the marines arrived at a cream-colored two-story house on Río Humaya Street, in the middle-class neighborhood of Libertad. There were bars on the windows, but that was standard in Culiacán. The marines readied their weapons and produced a battering ram, but when they moved to breach the front door it didn't budge. A wooden door would have splintered off its hinges, but this door

was a marvel of reinforced steel—some of the marines later likened it to an airlock on a submarine. For all the noise that their efforts made, the door seemed indestructible. Normally, the friction of a battering ram would heat the steel, rendering it more pliable. But the door was custom-made: inside the steel skin, it was filled with water, so that if anyone tried to break it down the heat from the impact would not spread. The marines hammered the door again and again, until the ram buckled and had to be replaced. It took ten minutes to gain entry to the house.

The marines streamed through a modest kitchen and into a series of windowless rooms. They noticed surveillance cameras and monitors everywhere. A gaudy oil painting of a bucking bull, stuck full of swords but still defiant, hung on one wall. But there was nobody in the house. In a bathroom on the ground floor, they discovered a bathtub that had been raised from its base, on hydraulic lifts, at a forty-five-degree angle, revealing a dark opening leading to a steep set of stairs: a tunnel.

In the early days of Guzmán's career, before his time at Puente Grande, he distinguished himself as a trafficker who brought an unusual sense of imagination and play to the trade. Today, tunnels that traverse the U.S.-Mexico border are a mainstay of drug smuggling: up to a mile long, they often feature air-conditioning, electricity, sophisticated drainage systems, and tracks, so that heavy loads of contraband can be transported on carts. Guzmán invented the border tunnel. A quarter of a century ago, he commissioned an architect, Felipe de Jesús Corona-Verbera, to design a grocery store that served as a front company, and a private zoo in Guadalajara for his collection of tigers, crocodiles, and bears. By this point, Guzmán was making so much money that he needed secure locations in which to hide it, along with his drugs and his weapons. So he had Corona-Verbera devise a series of *clavos*, or stashes—secret compartments under the beds in his homes. Inevitably, a bolder idea presented itself: if you could dig a *clavo* beneath a house near the U.S. border, why not continue digging and come out on the other side? Guzmán ordered Corona-Verbera to design a tunnel that

ran from a residence in Agua Prieta, immediately south of the border, to a cartel-owned warehouse in Douglas, Arizona. The result delighted him. “Corona made a fucking cool tunnel,” he said. Since then, U.S. intelligence has attributed no fewer than ninety border tunnels to the Sinaloa cartel.

When the marines began breaking into the house on Río Humaya Street, Guzmán was inside, as was a bodyguard. As the battering ram clanged against the door, they moved quickly into the ground-floor bathroom. Chapo activated the escape hatch by pushing a plug into an electrical outlet by the sink while flicking a hidden switch on the side of the vanity mirror. Suddenly, the caulk around the rim of the bathtub broke and the tub rose from its tiled frame. The caulk had camouflaged the escape hatch; even the bodyguard might have been unaware of its existence before Guzmán turned on the hydraulic lift.

They scrambled down the steps into a narrow passage. The space was lighted, but very tight, and they moved quickly, knowing that they had only a slight head start on the marines. They reached a small portal resembling the door of a bank safe, where the tunnel they were in connected to the main sewer system of Culiacán; crawling through this opening, they entered a cylindrical tunnel. The passage was unlit and less than five feet high; nevertheless, they splashed through the dirty, shallow water at high speed, as if Guzmán had rehearsed this escape.

By the time the SEMAR commandos entered the tunnel, Guzmán had been running for more than ten minutes. A tunnel is an exceedingly dangerous environment in which to stalk someone who is armed: if he should turn and fire at you, he doesn't even need to aim—one of the ricocheting bullets will likely hit you. But the marines did not hesitate. In the streets of Culiacán, meanwhile, dozens of troops were in position, ready to pursue Guzmán when he returned above ground. In the sky, a covert U.S. drone looked down on the city, poised to track the fugitive if he emerged from a manhole and fled through the streets.

Meanwhile, Chapo ran through the sewers, like Harry Lime in “The Third Man.” The tunnel forked, and at one

juncture the marines were momentarily flummoxed, unable to tell which path he had taken. Then they spotted a tactical vest on the ground—Guzmán or the bodyguard must have shed it—and charged onward in that direction. Eventually, the marines emerged at a storm drain by the banks of a muddy river, more than a mile from the point where Guzmán had entered the tunnel. Once again, he had vanished.

Two days later, on February 19th, President Obama, who was visiting Mexico City, held a press conference with President Peña Nieto. Obama praised the “excellent coöperation between the United States and Mexico” on criminal-justice issues. When Peña Nieto came into office, in 2012, many Washington officials had doubts about his determination to fight the cartels. His predecessor, Felipe Calderón, had launched an unprecedented assault against drug trafficking, deploying fifty thousand troops to battle the traffickers in the streets; the armed forces pursued a “king-pin strategy,” seeking to dismantle drug syndicates by killing or capturing their leaders. Calderón's approach received strong financial and material support from Washington. But the campaign was a resounding failure: the death toll in Mexico spiralled as the cartels fought daylight gun battles with the authorities and among themselves. In Ciudad Juárez, one of the flashpoints in the conflict, the annual murder rate jumped from about three hundred in 2007 to more than three thousand in 2010.

The carnage might have been somewhat redeemed had Calderón succeeded in curtailing the *narcotraficantes*. But, as Ioan Grillo observes in his recent book, “El Narco,” “In the drug business, it seems, a war economy functions perfectly well.” The flow of narcotics across the border never diminished significantly, and, as cartels like Sinaloa and the Zetas vanquished smaller competitors, they consolidated territorial control, growing more powerful and more grotesque in the process. “Corpse messages”—piles of dismembered bodies—were left on major street corners. Mexican voters who went to the polls in 2012 were weary of the violence; Peña Nieto, a youthful-looking former governor who represented the Partido Revolucionario Institucional,

BLAME

All around the cavernous room of the Cal-Expo off-track betting, TVs blare simulcast as the crowd in jeans and sloppy sweatshirts treks to the betting windows, trampling an autumn's worth of losing tickets. The old man doesn't miss the emerald grass and red geraniums, the women with big hats at Churchill Downs. He never tasted a mint julep as the mahogany horses stepped out like carved statues. And he doesn't mind the smell of stale beer or the damp cold that seeps through his jacket and stiffens his already stiff hands. He's spent weeks lying on his bed in the board and care waiting for this moment when *Zenyatta*, the mare who never lost a race, called in the *Times* "the coolest horse in the world," goes for twenty out of twenty. So the only question is who to place, who to show, to make a trifecta that will bring back the days when he skipped out on grinding afternoons at the dry cleaner's, sweating at the mangle, saturated with solvent fumes, as he bagged woollen coats and linen dresses and the jockeys' silks—gleaming pinks, buttercup yellows, and aquamarines. When they picked up their colors, they slipped him tips on who was hot, and he'd escape to the track at Aqueduct to see those myths of muscle, flanks quivering, flashing their tails. And now and then he'd score, gather up the family and head to Chinatown for lobster and black-bean sauce. Once he even took them to Lancaster to see the Amish in their buggies, their aprons and little white hats. But you could write the story of all the paychecks fed like hay to the horses. And he'll lose this one, too. In the final stretch, Blame, a homebred chestnut colt in the lead. Mike Smith up on *Zenyatta* closing hard, going to the whip.

—Ellen Bass

or PRI, which had dominated Mexican politics for much of the past century, promised a fresh start. He pledged to focus not on attacking the cartels but on reducing the killing—though his plan for achieving this met with skepticism. In the past, PRI officials had largely countenanced drug trafficking, in exchange for well-placed bribes, and it wasn't clear if Peña Nieto was sincere about pursuing a different path.

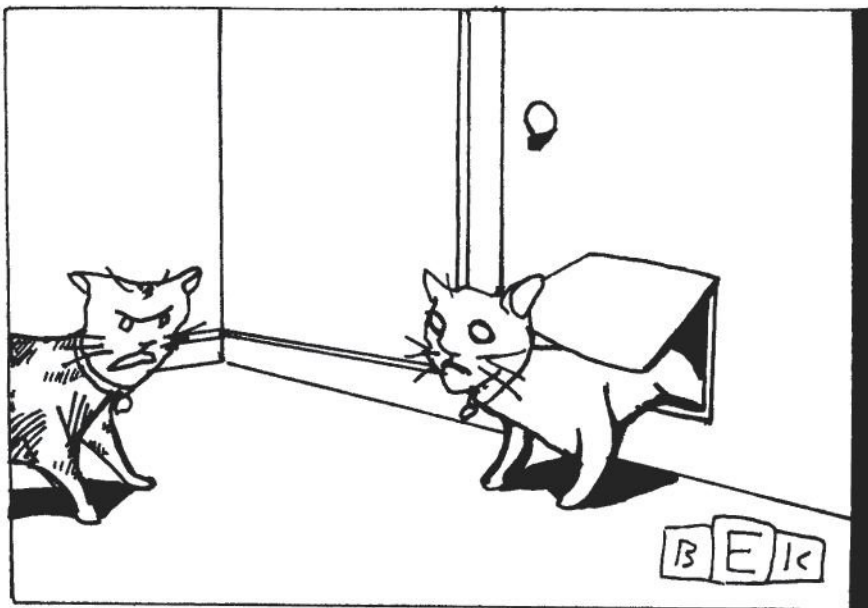
For years, U.S. law-enforcement officers had chafed at the pretense that they were merely "advising" their Mexican counterparts in the fight against the narcos; some of them wanted American armed forces to have wide operational latitude on the ground, as they had once had in Colombia. Calderón had come closer to tolerating such a scenario than any previous Mexican head of state had. But Peña Nieto indicated that he preferred to maintain greater distance. When young Mexican officers study their nation's mil-

itary history, the curriculum dwells, inescapably, on the many invasions by the United States; the prospect of an overbearing American law-enforcement presence south of the border offended many Mexicans' sense of sovereignty.

Soon after Peña Nieto assumed office, he declared that all initiatives led or assisted by the U.S. must be routed through an office in Mexico's Ministry of the Interior, which became known as "the single window." It was especially surprising, then, when Peña Nieto's administration began capturing or killing some of the country's most brutal drug kingpins, often in close collaboration with the U.S. Last July, the authorities arrested Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales, one of the leaders of the Zetas, who sometimes burned his victims alive. The next month, military operatives apprehended the leader of the Gulf cartel—El Pelón, or Baldy—who was known for blindfolding his enemies and torturing them to death. For

Peña Nieto, establishing rhetorical distance from the gringos may have created the political latitude for him to collaborate with them.

At the time of the Obama meeting, the SEMAR unit was still pursuing Guzmán in Culiacán. (This was a departure: Mexican armed forces had generally retreated to their bases following a failed attempt to apprehend him.) After the marines emerged from the sewers without capturing him, they discovered that the house on Río Humaya Street was connected not just to Culiacán's sewer system but, through the sewers, to six other houses, each similarly furnished and appointed, and each with its own bathtub escape hatch. Guzmán had been shuttling nightly among these houses. Information from one of Guzmán's captured associates led the marines to a nearby warehouse, where they uncovered a cache of heavy weaponry and more than three tons of cocaine and



"You expect me to believe you were at a mouse convention?"

methamphetamine. Some of the drugs had been concealed inside plastic cucumbers and bananas, in preparation for a surreptitious journey across the border.

The marines knew that, in addition to the safe houses and the escape routes, Guzmán had aides who could provide him with a new BlackBerry or a ride out of town. So SEMAR occupied each safe house it discovered, and focussed on pursuing the men in Guzmán's entourage, on the theory that if they cut him off from his support network he would no longer have a place to hide. What had started as a covert operation became overt as Mexican forces attempted to heighten the pressure on Chapo. Eduardo Sánchez, the government spokesman, told me that authorities established conspicuous roadblocks "so that Mr. Guzmán could feel that we were after him."

Soon after the escape in the tunnel, the marines arrested Manuel López Osorio, another former special-forces officer who had joined Guzmán's inner circle; he went by the name El Picudo (Pointy Nose). He, too, became coöperative under questioning, and gave up a significant detail. Picudo said that he had picked up Guzmán and the bodyguard by a storm drain on the outskirts of Culiacán. He had driven them south of the city, where they met up with another aide and switched vehicles. According to

Picudo, the bodyguard Guzmán was travelling with was his most trusted employee: Carlos Hoo Ramírez, who was called El Condor.

The marines knew who Condor was, and raided his house in Culiacán. It was empty. They had also been monitoring his BlackBerry communications, but the device appeared to be turned off. Suddenly, on February 20th, it came to life: he was sending a text. The authorities traced the signal and saw that it came from the port city of Mazatlán, a hundred and forty miles to the southeast. In light of the debacle in Los Cabos, the SEMAR operators and their American colleagues worried that Guzmán might have already left Mazatlán. He enjoyed considerable protection in the city, where he had often received shipments from India and China of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture meth. But it would be folly to move from one major population center to another, and, judging from Guzmán's past behavior, he was probably already back in the Sierra Madre.

By this point, federal authorities in Mexico City had learned about the botched operation in Culiacán, and the three-week window before the SEMAR redeployment was nearly closed. But, if Condor was so indispensable to the drug lord, capturing him could provide valuable intelligence and squeeze Guzmán

even further. So the marines flew down to the coast.

Mazatlán is a resort town popular with retirees from the U.S. and Canada. It has long been a corridor for narcotics trafficking, but, as uncontested Sinaloa territory, it has been spared the severe internecine violence that has plagued more disputed areas. On the night of Friday, February 21st, about forty marines assembled in the city, along with a small contingent of agents from the D.E.A., the U.S. Marshals, and the Department of Homeland Security. The marshals, who specialize in locating fugitives, had been able to trace the signal on Condor's BlackBerry to the Hotel Miramar, a white, twelve-story condominium building with three columns of half-moon balconies overlooking the Pacific. Geolocation technology can trace a signal to a given city block or building, but not necessarily determine where in the building the device is situated. So, in the early hours of Saturday morning, the marines fanned out, forming a perimeter around the property. Someone consulted the registry and discovered that two apartments had been rented the previous day. A team of marines climbed to the sixth floor and burst into one of the apartments, where they discovered two groggy tourists, who were recovering from an evening of partying. (One of them, an American, thought that their room had been stormed because they had been smoking marijuana. The marines were perplexed when he produced, from his wallet, a California medical-marijuana card.)

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor, a team of six marines approached Apartment 401, where they discovered Condor standing guard and holding an assault rifle. He raised his weapon only for a moment, since it was obvious that he was outnumbered. Guzmán's decision to jettison his huge security force had allowed him to move around quickly and inconspicuously, but he was left essentially defenseless. The commandos needed no battering ram as they crashed through a flimsy wooden door, shouting, "Marines!"

They entered a two-bedroom apartment with potted plants, cheap furniture, and a white tile floor. In one bedroom, the marines found two women: the chef and a nanny, who had been sleeping with Guzmán's two-year-old twins, Mali and

María Joaquina. A pink Pack 'n Play—which matched the girls' miniature pink suitcases—had been set up. The marines raced to the master bedroom in the back, where they discovered Emma Coronel, who had been sleeping. “Don’t kill him!” she shrieked.

Guzmán had scrambled out of bed in his underwear, grabbed an assault rifle, and darted into a small bathroom. “Don’t kill him!” Coronel pleaded again. “He’s the father of my children!” The standoff lasted only a few seconds, with the marines bellowing and Coronel screaming. Then Chapo shouted, “O.K., O.K., O.K., O.K.” and extended his empty hands through the bathroom doorway.

It had been a stunningly swift operation: less than three minutes after the marines stormed the apartment, Guzmán surrendered. No one would have imagined such a legendary outlaw going out in anything but a firefight. But SEMAR had developed a reputation as an outfit that shoots first and asks questions later. “They notoriously kill everybody in the room when there is the slightest provocation,” an American law-enforcement official who has worked with SEMAR told me. With his wife and daughters present, Guzmán may have realized that the only way to spare their lives was to surrender.

When the marines searched the Miramar apartment, they found a blue vinyl wheelchair: Guzmán had entered the building pretending to be a frail old man. But when they took him into custody they discovered that he looked much as he had in the earlier photographs. His teeth were a little pearlier—he’d had them capped. His hair and his mustache were still thick and jet black. (In the house on Río Humaya Street, in Culiacán, the marines discovered a bottle of hair dye.) They got him dressed in a pair of black jeans and a white shirt, then escorted him out of the building and around the corner to a dirt soccer field, where he was placed on a Blackhawk and transported to a nearby naval base. A Learjet then took him to Mexico City. As the marines frog-marched him out of a hangar at the airport, journalists photographed him looking furtively at his captors. His face was bruised and swollen, which SEMAR attributes not to any rough handling but to dings that he had received while sprinting through the dark tunnels beneath Culiacán. The marines

also noticed bruises and cuts on his feet, and learned that when he fled the house on Río Humaya Street he didn’t have time to grab his shoes; he had run through the tunnels barefoot.

Guzmán was gruff but respectful with his captors. He had been planning to leave for the mountains that day, he told them. If the marines had arrived just a few hours later, he would have been gone. “I can’t believe you got me,” he said.

At eleven-forty-two that morning, Peña Nieto announced the capture on Twitter: “I acknowledge the work of the security agencies of the Mexican state in pulling off the apprehension of Joaquín Guzmán Loera in Mazatlán.” U.S. officials had already leaked the news to the Associated Press, but Peña Nieto wanted to be certain that his troops had the right man. In the summer of 2012, Mexican authorities announced that they had captured Guzmán’s son Alfredo, and held a press conference in which they paraded before the cameras a sullen, pudgy young man in a red polo shirt. A lawyer representing the man then revealed that he was not Guzmán’s son but a local car dealer named Félix Beltrán. Guzmán’s family chimed in, with barely suppressed glee, that the young man in custody was not Alfredo. In another recent case, officials in Michoacán announced that they had killed the infamous kingpin Nazario Moreno, a triumph that was somewhat undercut by the fact that Moreno—who was known as *El Más Loco*, or the Craziest One—had supposedly perished in a showdown with government forces in 2010. (D.E.A. agents now joke that *El Más Loco* is the only Mexican kingpin to have died twice.)

Fingerprints and a DNA swab confirmed that the man captured at the Miramar was indeed Guzmán. It was a huge victory for Peña Nieto and for the D.E.A., if largely a symbolic one. Nobody had any illusions that the arrest would slow down the drug trade. “If you kill the C.E.O. of General Motors, General Motors will not go out of business,” a Mexican official told me. Guzmán’s genius was always architectural, and the infrastructure that he created will almost certainly survive him. Earlier this month, five weeks after Guzmán’s apprehension, two new drug tunnels were discovered in Sinaloa territory, starting in Tijuana and

emerging in the industrial outskirts of San Diego. Some believe that, even before Guzmán’s capture, his role in the organization had become largely symbolic. “He was a non-executive chairman,” Ambassador Mora told me. “An emblematic figure.”

Even so, the arrest signified a powerful reassertion of the rule of law in Mexico. Alejandro Hope, a former senior official in Mexican intelligence, told me that the message of Operation Gargoyle is simple and resounding: “No one is beyond sanction.” Yet, almost as soon as Peña Nieto’s government took Guzmán into custody, questions arose about its ability to hold him. According to a memo sent to Attorney General Eric Holder a few hours after the Mazatlán raid, Guzmán is the subject of indictments in Arizona, California, Texas, Illinois, New York, Florida, and New Hampshire. The morning after his capture, Michael McCaul, the Texas Republican who chairs the House Homeland Security committee, announced that Guzmán should be extradited to America, telling ABC, “There is a history here—he escaped from a prison in 2001.” A federal prosecutor in New York declared that Guzmán should be tried in New York. The head of the D.E.A. office in Chicago vowed, “I fully intend for us to have him tried here.” But Mexico’s attorney general, Jesús Murillo Karam, was quick to object. Guzmán still needed to complete his original twenty-year sentence, and then face multiple new charges, before the Mexican government would consider turning him over to the U.S. Earlier this month, he announced that Mexico has “no intention” of extraditing Guzmán, citing a concern that other Mexican officials raised with me: that American authorities might flip Guzmán and grant him a reduced sentence, in exchange for his cooperation. The U.S. has a history of “reaching deals with criminals,” Karam noted. The opposition to extradition, however, could be driven by less noble concerns: flipping Guzmán might provide the American government with evidence against top Mexican officials.

In a story that aired on the Televisa network, the Mexican journalist Carlos Loret de Mola reported that, during the flight from Mazatlán to Mexico City, Guzmán told the marines that he had killed between two and three thousand people. If this figure includes not just

individuals he murdered personally but people he authorized subordinates to kill, it is surely a gross underestimate. Nobody knows exactly how many people have been killed in Mexico's drug wars over the past decade, but between the dead and the disappeared the number likely exceeds eighty thousand. As both the instigator and the victor of some of the bloodiest battles on the border, Guzmán bears responsibility for an appalling proportion of these atrocities. His victims were overwhelmingly Mexican; one reason that the drug war has been so easy for most Americans to ignore is that very little of the violence visited upon Mexico has spilled into the U.S. During the years when Juárez was the most dangerous city on the planet—and a resident there had a greater statistical likelihood of being murdered than someone living in the war zones of Afghanistan or Iraq—El Paso, just across the border, was one of the safest cities in America. Given this record, it makes intuitive sense that Guzmán should answer for his crimes where the worst of them were committed.

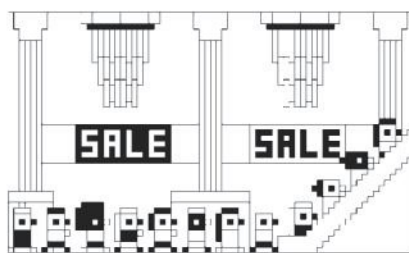
But the Mexican officials I spoke with acknowledge that the criminal-justice system in their country is fragile, and that corruption remains endemic. Last summer, an old friend of Guzmán's, Rafael Caro Quintero, was released in the middle of the night from the prison where he had been serving a forty-year sentence for murdering a D.E.A. agent. He was sprung on a technicality by a panel of Mexican judges, under circumstances that struck many observers as suspicious. The U.S. Justice Department furiously objected that Caro Quintero still faced charges in America and declared that the Mexicans should extradite him. But he had already disappeared into the mountains.

The prospect of a similar dead-of-night release for Chapo may not be far-fetched. The level of distrust between U.S. and Mexican officials on this issue is pronounced; indeed, one theory I heard for the Americans' decision to leak the news of Guzmán's capture to the Associated Press was that going public would foreclose any possibility of Mexican authorities quietly letting him go.

"Once bitten, twice shy," Ambassador Mora told me, maintaining there was no possibility that his country would risk the political embarrassment of allowing its most notorious convict to escape a second

time. But there are plausible scenarios short of actual escape that would be troubling. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, Caro Quintero continued to operate his drug business during his years in prison, much as Guzmán did while he was at Puente Grande. Guzmán is ostensibly being held "in isolation," at Mexico's most secure prison, Altiplano, about fifty miles west of Mexico City. He is permitted visits not just with his lawyer but also with members of his family, many of whom have been implicated in the activities of his cartel. Shortly after the arrest in Mazatlán, Guzmán's son Alfredo lashed out on Twitter. "The Government is going to pay for this betrayal—it shouldn't have bitten the hand that feeds it," he wrote. "I just want to say that we are not beaten. The cartel is my father's and will always be my father's. GUZMÁN LOERA FOREVER." His brother, Iván, vowed revenge: "Those dogs that dared to lay a hand on my father are going to pay."

One curious feature of Guzmán's capture was the fact that he was betrayed, in rapid succession, by at least two of his closest aides: Nariz and Picudo. Had either one refused to cooperate, Guzmán would likely remain free today. I was impressed, initially, by the speed with which the marines had elicited leads from these subordinates, both of them ex-members of Mexico's special forces who had been hardened by years in the cartel. One U.S. law-enforcement official told me that it is



not unusual for cartel members to start cooperating as soon as they are captured. "There's very little allegiance once they're taken into custody," he said.

But when I raised the subject with a former D.E.A. agent who has spoken to Mexican counterparts involved in the operation, he had a different explanation. "The marines tortured these guys," he told me, matter-of-factly. "They would never have given it up, if not for that." The D.E.A. refused to comment on the tor-

ture allegation. However, two senior U.S. law-enforcement officials told me that, though they had no specific knowledge of the Mexican authorities using torture in the operation, they "wouldn't be surprised." Eduardo Sánchez, the spokesman for the Mexican government, denied the allegation, and maintained that, in this and other operations, "federal officials, agents, and officers perform their duties strictly within the applicable legal framework and with utmost respect for human rights." But the Mexican armed forces have been implicated before in the use of torture as an interrogation technique in the pursuit of drug traffickers. A 2011 Human Rights Watch report found that members of Mexico's security services "systematically use torture to obtain forced confessions and information about criminal groups," and documented the use of such techniques as "beatings, asphyxiation with plastic bags, waterboarding, electric shocks, sexual torture, and death threats." The broad employment of brutal techniques, coupled with the high profile and the urgency of the hunt for Guzmán, makes it seem all the more plausible that Mexican authorities used unsavory, and illegal, means to pursue him.

What will become of the Sinaloa cartel remains unclear. Chapo's top associates, Ismael Zambada and Juan José Esparragoza, are both older than he is, and seem unlikely to assume day-to-day management. Guzmán's sons would appear to be candidates, but, as the coddled children of a wealthy trafficker, they may be more enamored of the narco life style than of the business itself. "The drug trade is one of the few really meritocratic sectors in the Mexican economy," Alejandro Hope said. "Being the son of Chapo Guzmán doesn't necessarily guarantee you'll be his successor."

But the question of who will inherit the Sinaloa cartel may be somewhat beside the point, because, well before Guzmán's capture, the landscape of crime in Mexico had begun to shift. Whereas Sinaloa is a traditional drug cartel, focusing chiefly on the manufacture and export of narcotics, newer groups, such as the Zetas and the Knights Templar, have diversified their money-making activities to include extortion, human trafficking, and kidnapping for ransom. With cocaine consumption declining in the U.S., and marijuana on a path toward

widespread legalization, a Darwinian logic is driving the cartels' expansion into more parasitic varieties of crime. Organizations that once concentrated exclusively on drugs now extract rents from Mexico's oil industry and export stolen iron ore to China; the price of limes in U.S. grocery stores has doubled in the past few years because the cartels are taxing Mexico's citrus farmers. "We don't have a drug problem—we have a crime problem," more than one Mexican official told me, and, as the criminal syndicates continue to evolve, this dynamic could end up rendering organizations like Guzmán's obsolete. The prohibition of narcotics may have created a monster, but, as Alejandro Hope pointed out, even if you decriminalized all drugs tomorrow the monster would find a way to survive. "You can't legalize kidnapping," he said.

Some speculate that Guzmán wasn't really captured against his will: seeing that his time had come, he chose to enjoy a quiet retirement behind bars. One by-product of the culture of corruption in Mexico is a reflexive cynicism about any official story put out by the government. Several years ago, a fearless journalist named Anabel Hernández published a book about the Sinaloa cartel, called "Los Señores del Narco." (It was recently published in English, under the title "Narcoland.") Hernández argued that Guzmán's influence was so pervasive, and the Mexican political system so thoroughly rotted by graft, that the whole Chapo saga could be interpreted as a grand charade. Guzmán was "imprisoned" at Puente Grande, but he was actually running the place. He "escaped," when in reality, Hernández suggests, the President of Mexico at the time, Vicente Fox, personally authorized his release, in exchange for a colossal bribe. (Fox has angrily denied this accusation.) Guzmán spent years as a "fugitive," though everyone knew where he was, and the authorities were simply lying when they claimed that they "could not catch him." Hernández's book sold more than a hundred thousand copies in Mexico—her taste for conspiracy and her tone of bitter knowingness struck a chord. So it should come as no surprise that many observers believe that Guzmán's "capture" in Mazatlán was a theatrical event directed by the drug lord himself. When I reached Hernández and asked her what she made of the arrest, she chal-



lenged the premise of my question. "If Chapo Guzmán has been captured," she said. "If that is the real story." She is not convinced that the man who was photographed in Mazatlán, and whose DNA was tested, is the real Chapo.

When Guzmán was questioned in prison by authorities, he, too, seemed to suggest a case of mistaken identity. He maintained his innocence, his rote replies taking on a smug absurdity:

Q: May the deponent say to which organization he belongs.

A: I don't belong to any cartel.... I am a farmer.

His products were not cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and meth, Guzmán insisted, but corn, sorghum, beans, and safflower. He made twenty thousand pesos a month, he continued, or about eighteen thousand dollars a year. In a poll of Mexicans conducted after the arrest, half the respondents said that Guzmán was more powerful than the government of Mexico; in Culiacán, in the days after his capture, hundreds of protesters took to the streets, holding signs demanding his release.

Guzmán's wife, Emma Coronel, was born in California, and she retains U.S. citizenship. After the raid in Mazatlán, the authorities let her go, along with her daughters, and she has since disappeared from public view. She was only seventeen when she caught Chapo's eye, in 2006,

while competing in a beauty contest at the annual Festival of Coffee and Guava, in her home state of Durango. Her uncle Ignacio (Nacho) Coronel was one of Chapo's closest associates at the time, and when the cartel boss conveyed his interest she may have had little choice but to indulge it. A *norteño* band, Los Alegres del Barranco, was playing at the festival. Like Chapo, the band members came from the Badiraguato area, and they had found success playing *narcocorridos* about the cartel. They are rumored to have performed at private parties for Guzmán and his associates; they even toured the U.S., with gigs in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Miami.

After the raid, Los Alegres posted a new single, "La Captura de Joaquín Guzmán," on YouTube. A jaunty guitar-and-accordion number, it's not so different from their other ballads, apart from the words. "They don't know what they've done, and what kind of trouble they've got themselves in, the people who ordered my arrest," the band sings, assuming the voice of the kingpin. "It won't be long before I return to La Tuna and become a fugitive again. That's what the people want." ♦

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A conversation with Patrick Radden Keefe.

PRESCRIPTION FOR DISASTER

The heartland's pain-pills problem.

BY RACHEL AVIV

In 2005, the medical examiner in Wichita, Kansas, noticed a cluster of deaths that were unusually similar in nature: in three years, sixteen men and women, between the ages of twenty-two and fifty-two, had died in their sleep. In the hours before they lost consciousness, they had been sluggish and dozey, struggling to stay awake. A few had complained of chest pain. "I can't catch my breath," one kept saying. All of them had taken painkillers prescribed by a family practice called the Schneider Medical Clinic.

The clinic was in Haysville, a working-class suburb of Wichita. The main industries in the area were aircraft and plastics, neither of which was doing well. A mile south of the clinic, there was little except wheat fields. The chief doctor was Stephen Schneider, a fifty-one-year-old osteopath with sandy hair and dimples. He treated the county commissioner and the chief of police, gave physicals to the boys at the Haysville high school, and did rounds at local nursing homes. One of his patients, Jeffrey Peters, told me that Schneider reminded him of the "kind of family doctor we had forty years ago, when I was growing up—a doctor who will sit down and listen to you and joke around and make you feel comfortable."

On September 13, 2005, Schneider arrived at work to find the clinic cordoned off with police tape. He called his wife, Linda Atterbury, a blond, peppy forty-seven-year-old nurse, who was at home with their two young daughters, and told her to come to work. Agents from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration led Schneider into one of the clinic's fourteen exam rooms and asked him why he had been prescribing so many opioid painkillers. He responded that sixty per cent of his patients suffered

from chronic pain, and few other physicians in the area would treat them. The agents wrote, "He tries to believe his patients when they describe their health problems and he will believe them until they prove themselves wrong." When asked how many of his patients had died, Schneider said that he didn't know.

After the raid, fifty patients signed a petition that said, "We stand united in support of Dr. Schneider." A receptionist hung a banner on the front of the clinic, and patients scrawled appreciative notes on it. The Schneiders also received numerous letters from patients. One wrote, "I believe that you have saved my life many times. Sometimes just by listening." A woman with a connective-tissue disease explained, "If you have never lived with chronic pain, you have absolutely nothing to say. . . . Chronic pain changes who you are. Without the medications I am on I have no life left!"

Schneider hadn't thought of becoming a doctor until 1979, when his three-year-old daughter, Leigh Anne, developed pneumonia. She was confined to an oxygen tent for a month. He thought the hospital was a "neat and fantastic atmosphere." At the time, he was next in line to become the manager of the meat department at Dillons, a local grocery store. He had imagined working there with his first wife, who was a cashier, for the rest of his life. But, once his daughter recovered, he enrolled at Wichita State University and, in 1983, became the first person in his family to graduate from college.

After his first wife left him, Schneider married Atterbury, who was drawn to what she called his "animal heart"—his tenderness toward pets, children, and the elderly. She encouraged him to apply to medical school, even though she worried that a "professional that

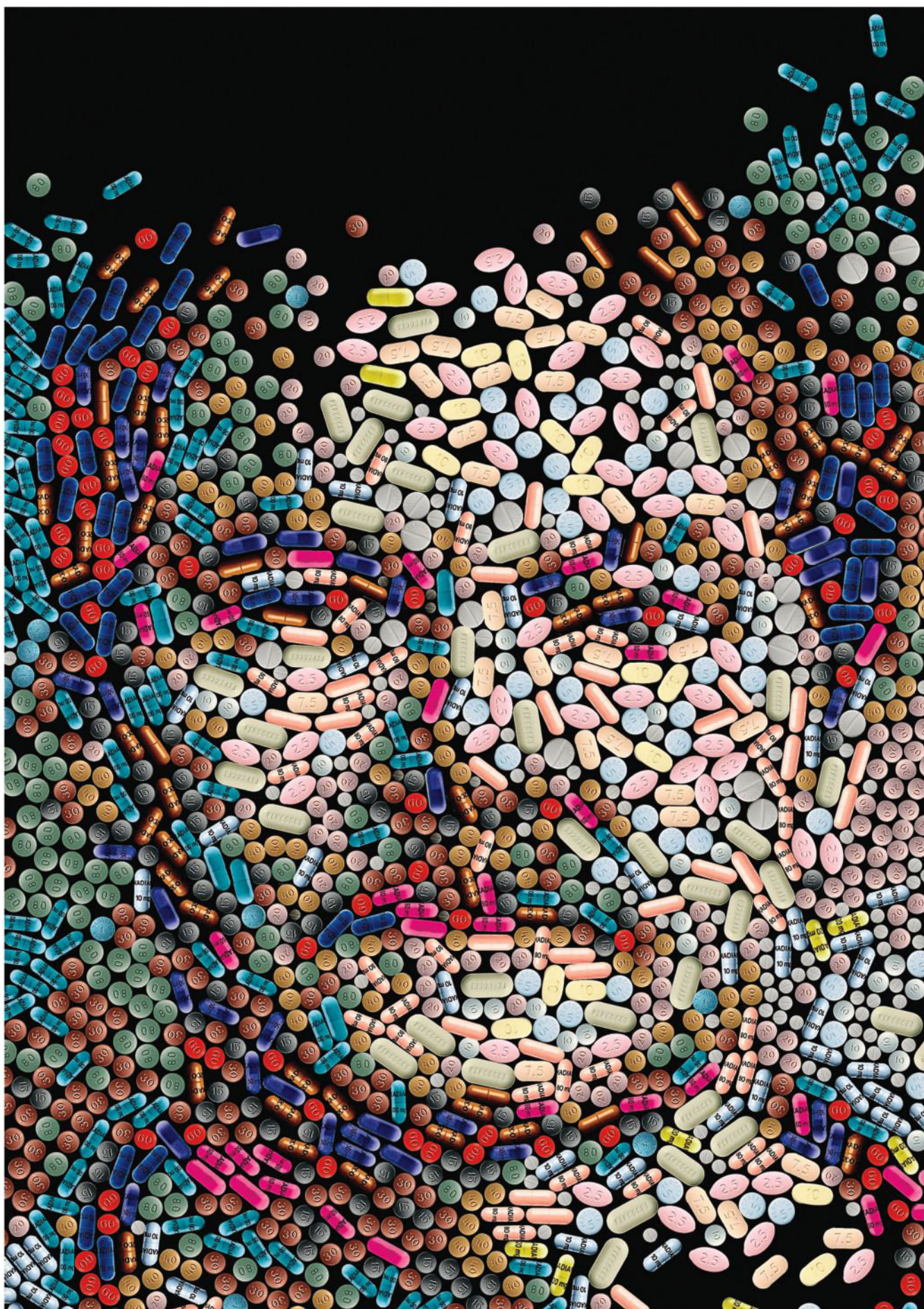
high up may get a big head." At the University of Health Sciences, a school of osteopathy in Kansas City, Schneider felt alienated by what he called the "Dr. God feeling." He found some of his attending physicians "demanding and demeaning to patients and nurses." Leigh Anne, who is now a doctor, told me that her father was "never comfortable with the level of status" that came with the job.

In 1995, the Schneiders adopted two girls, both toddlers, from an orphanage in Câmpulung, Romania, and raised them on a plot of land that Atterbury's parents owned, in Haysville. Her parents and three siblings lived in houses surrounding a wheat field. Atterbury had been raised on the Midwestern carnival circuit. Her aunt was a trapeze artist, her grandfather owned a circus known for its elephant, and her father ran concession and game stands. Atterbury believed that her upbringing made her tougher and more discriminating than Schneider. She liked to joke, "My husband believes everybody, I believe nobody, so we kind of equal each other out."

Schneider was hired by Riverside Hospital, in Wichita, to work at a small subsidiary clinic in Haysville. In a letter of recommendation, one of his mentors wrote that he had "the highest moral character." Most people in town, including Atterbury and her family, referred to him as Doc. He treated routine ailments, like rashes, colds, and diabetes. Several patients came to him with chronic-pain conditions, but he didn't feel comfortable prescribing opioids long-term, so he referred those patients to specialists in Wichita.

After Schneider had worked for the clinic for thirteen years, Riverside was bought by a larger hospital system, and he and his new employer couldn't agree on a contract. In 2001, he set up a makeshift office at an optometry clinic. It was so

Relatives of Stephen Schneider's patients asked him about all the opioids they were taking. He said everything would be fine.



small that people would bring lawn chairs and wait for their appointments in the parking lot.

He was at the optometry clinic for only a few months before he and his wife took out a two-million-dollar loan to build a larger medical center. Atterbury, who would manage the office, said that she found an “architect to build my dream for him.” The clinic, which had its own X-ray room and blood lab, was designed in the Pueblo Revival style, with tan stucco walls, two fountains, and a sky dome. Schneider asked a Catholic priest to bless the property and sprinkle the ground with holy water. He envisioned an alternative to the emergency room: the clinic would be open seven days a week, and all patients could be seen the day they called. He recruited three physician assistants and a family doctor, as well as a cardiologist and a spine surgeon, who would visit the clinic once a week. The *Haysville Times* featured a photograph of the mayor of Haysville, the chief of police, and Schneider, in white construction hats, standing in front of a billboard that said, “Future Site of Dr. Schneider.”

Schneider was one of the few doctors in the area to readily accept Medicaid, which, he said, reimbursed less than a fifth of the cost of his appointments, and he quickly attracted a large population of patients who were on disability. Many suffered from lower-back pain after years spent as-

sembling aircraft machinery. In medical school, Schneider had been taught that opioids were so addictive that patients should not be prescribed them unless they were dying, but the thinking in the field had evolved. Doctors began using opioids more liberally in the seventies, after the emergence of the palliative-care movement, the first branch of medicine to make the relief of suffering its primary aim. In the eighties, physicians treating patients who had cancer (whether or not it was terminal) prescribed opioids more freely, too. A 1989 article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* stated, “To allow a patient to experience unbearable pain or suffering is unethical medical practice.”

By the nineties, this ethos was being applied to all kinds of pain. In 1995, the American Pain Society, an organization of health professionals across disciplines, recommended that doctors consider pain the “fifth vital sign,” monitoring it as regularly as they measure pulse.

Schneider said that, when he opened his own practice, “pharmaceutical reps came in and enlightened me that it was O.K. to treat chronic pain, because there is no real cure. They had all sorts of studies showing that the long-acting medications were appropriate.” In 2002, shortly after the clinic opened, a pharmaceutical representative from Purdue Pharma, which produces OxyContin, arranged for Schnei-

der and Jon Parks, a pain doctor in Wichita, to have dinner at a steak house. Parks described his practice and gave Schneider a copy of his pain-management contract, which required his patients to submit to urine tests. Schneider distributed the contract to his own patients and, with little training, began treating chronic pain. When a Wichita pharmacist asked Schneider if he would be willing to take all the pain patients of a local family doctor who had recently died, Schneider said, “Sure, just send them over.”

Like most doctors, Schneider asked his patients to rate their pain on a scale from one to ten (“pain as bad as it can be”). Many patients scored their pain a ten or ten-plus, and complained that they felt emasculated or useless, and often depressed. Schneider said, “The aircraft industry, like any industry, wears out its people.” But he did find himself wondering why his patients seemed to have become “wimpier.” They were no longer willing to endure any pain; they wanted it instantly eradicated. Schneider occasionally referred them to physical therapists or anesthesiologists, but for the most part he gave them the relief they requested. In a letter of thanks to Schneider, one patient wrote, “I call you the pick-up doctor, why? Because after these other doctors screw your life up from negligence in surgery (like the disc on my back), they do not want to bother with you anymore. So you get referred to Dr. Schneider.”

Pain is inadequately treated, particularly among the poor and the mentally ill, in part because there are lingering doubts about whether such a subjective experience is proportional or “real.” Bob Twillman, the founder of the inpatient pain-management program at the University of Kansas Medical Center and the director of policy and advocacy for the American Academy of Pain Management, told me, “The system is not well designed to treat these patients. What you end up with is a primary-care doctor who is stuck wanting to do something for his patients but doesn’t have the resources to do much of anything but write another prescription.” Although about a hundred million Americans



“If you laugh at all of God’s jokes, he’s never going to learn what’s funny.”

suffer from chronic pain, according to a recent report by the Institute of Medicine, medical schools devote, on average, only nine hours to pain, and only about four thousand physicians are board-certified as pain specialists. Twillman said that he knew few doctors in Wichita who were willing to accept “all the hassle and uncertainty associated with chronic pain.” He sensed that Schneider was “trying to do the right thing,” and he referred patients to him.

In its first full year, the Schneider Medical Clinic took in \$1.37 million in patient fees, and had a net income of two hundred and twenty thousand dollars. There was often a sign in the lobby informing patients that there would be at least a two-hour wait. Atterbury knocked on the doors of exam rooms if she thought that clinicians were spending too much time with their patients. When the chairs in the waiting room filled, patients sat on the edge of the fountains or milled about under the portico. Appointments were generally scheduled every ten minutes. Justin Brawner, a machine operator with a herniated disk, told me that in the waiting room some patients nodded off in their chairs. Others were sweaty, jittery, and irritable. He observed patients who moved freely until they were called into the doctor’s office, at which point they developed an exaggerated limp. Brawner said that he heard them “planning their tactics.” They’d make up stories about how they needed extra pills because they were leaving the state or their medication had slipped into the sink. Brawner asked for early refills, too. Schneider would chide him for coming in too soon and then say, “We’re going to go ahead and write the script, because I know you need it.”

Schneider didn’t socialize much with other doctors. He felt that many of them were sheltered and “didn’t know how to talk to real people.” He almost always took his patients’ side when they complained about doctors who had “discriminated” against them for needing opioids. Schneider told me, “I don’t even know the actual quote for the Hippocratic Oath, but aren’t you doing harm if there’s a treat-



“Do you mean good, or good for a pumpkin?”

ment for something and you refuse to use it?”

His patients’ numbers descended on the pain scale, but their ability to function normally did, too; several quit their jobs, applying for disability with Schneider’s help. When family members questioned the amount of opioids that their loved ones were taking, Schneider assured them that everything would be fine. A recent college graduate who accompanied his depressed mother to appointments said that he repeatedly asked if she should see a psychiatrist. Schneider told him, he said, that the sadness would subside with the pain: “There’s a light at the end of the tunnel—you’ll see it. I’ve brought people back from this before.” The patient eventually killed herself. Her son said that the problem wasn’t that Schneider was deceptive; it was that he was “so flipping happy.”

Nearly a dozen sales representatives from pharmaceutical companies came to Schneider’s office each day. They took him out for meals, sent him to

seminars and conferences, and gave him free samples and gifts. Schneider’s cluttered office contained a Lexapro clock, Viagra pens, and a cup featuring the logo for Nasonex nasal spray. The clinic never had to buy its own tissues, because drug companies contributed boxes branded with their name. Atterbury wondered how physicians could stay grounded when the pharmaceutical representatives were always flattering them. She said, “They treat the doctors like they are above everyone else, listening to them, catering to them, dressing well for them, saying, ‘Where do you want to eat tonight?’”

After listening to presentations by the company Cephalon, Schneider became one of the few family physicians in Wichita to regularly prescribe Actiq, a raspberry-flavored lollipop that contains fentanyl, which is eighty times more potent than morphine. The Food and Drug Administration has approved Actiq only for acute cancer pain, but Cephalon’s pharmaceutical representatives, who called themselves “pain-care

specialists,” told Schneider that it worked well for all sorts of pain, particularly migraines. Although it’s legal for doctors to prescribe medications for uses that have not been approved by the F.D.A., pharmaceutical companies are prohibited from marketing drugs for such purposes. According to whistleblower suits later filed against the company (and settled, in 2008, for more than four hundred million dollars), the “pain-care specialists” sought out doctors who did not treat cancer. They were instructed to respond to questions about off-label use of the drugs by saying, “Yes, we are indicated for cancer pain, but wouldn’t you agree that pain is pain?” The company sent Schneider’s physician assistant to New York for an “Actiq consultants meeting”; it paid for her to stay at the W hotel and to ride a boat on the Hudson. In 2003, Schneider was sent to an Actiq conference in New Orleans, sponsored by Cephalon. He said that a specialist there told him, “You could stick multiple Actiq suckers in your mouth and your rear end and you still wouldn’t overdose. It’s clinically impossible.”

Three years after his clinic opened, Schneider attended the first meeting of the Sedgwick County Pain Society, a group of doctors and law-enforcement officers working to minimize the abuse of prescription drugs. Schneider was one of the first people to speak, and he asked if anyone would be willing to take some of his Medicaid pain patients. He told me that all the doctors in the area had taken the “good insurance patients” and given him their leftovers, the ones with multiple illnesses and unreliable histories. Gregory Lakin, a family physician and a former prosecutor who runs the largest addiction-treatment center in Kansas, was moderating the meeting, and he asked for a show of hands. There were twenty doctors, nurses, and physician assistants in the room, but no one volunteered to take any of Schneider’s patients. “I felt embarrassed about it,” Lakin told me. He had previously accepted Medicaid, and he did not want to do it again. He told me, “I do think Steve had a little bit of the martyr in him. He’s isolated, being in a

small town, and he saw himself as a rescuer, a savior of the downtrodden, and that overrode his ability to assess the warning signs.”

In the fall of 2004, FirstGuard, a Kansas Medicaid contractor, told the Schneider Clinic that it was concerned about its quality of care, particularly its off-label prescriptions of Actiq. FirstGuard’s medical director visited the clinic and later told the D.E.A. that his “over-all impression” was that it was a “sophisticated practice with gaps in its process, but making an effort to serve” an area in which there were few medical services. He also thought that the clinicians “needed to be better educated.” (Since 2011, the F.D.A. has required doctors to get extra training before prescribing rapid-onset opioids, like Actiq.)

In response, the clinic recruited a nurse practitioner to perform psychological evaluations once a month, but patients didn’t show up for her visits, and after a few months the nurse stopped coming. Schneider guessed that patients skipped her visits because “they didn’t want to be thought of as nuts.” The clinic also tightened its policies, requiring patients to submit to pill counts and frequent urine tests. But the clinic’s records were so chaotic that clinicians occasionally ended up seeing patients without their charts. A few times, when there was a long line of patients, Atterbury reportedly instructed medical

assistants to copy whatever vital signs had been marked during the previous visit, rather than perform the tests again. There was one fax machine for more than ten thousand patients. When the coroner’s office called the clinic to request records for a deceased patient, Atterbury took the calls and, according to one reception-

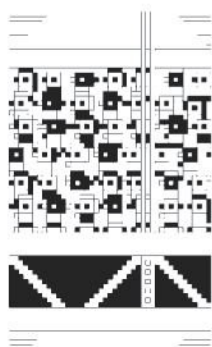
ist’s testimony, didn’t always relay the news to her husband. She was in charge of hiring decisions, and she gravitated toward single women who were struggling. “I hire misfits,” she told the agents who investigated the clinic. “I’m like the mother to all these single women. . . . I take care of most of my girls there because they can’t make it in the real world.” The administrative staff had a

high turnover, and Atterbury ended up hiring six members of her family, as well as an illegal immigrant whom she had met on a trip to Mexico and called her “adopted son.”

The clinic “fired” more than nine hundred patients for misusing their drugs. But discharged patients often returned to the clinic and requested to see a new provider, who would unknowingly prescribe the prohibited medications again. The clinic began putting the medical records of terminated patients in bright-red folders. When some patients were discharged, they became belligerent, yelling at the providers, throwing soda cans, or spitting in their faces. The physician assistant Kim Hébert later testified that she called the local police more than twenty times. “Patients threatened to stalk me, patients threatened to cut me up in multiple pieces, patients threatened harm on my family,” she said. Schneider offered to bring a can of Mace to work. Hébert described Schneider as a “gentleman,” a “good person,” but she thought that he was too laid-back. He was so proud of the clinic and of his wife, whose management decisions he deferred to, that he was unable, or unwilling, to reflect on its flaws.

Patients from the clinic were often admitted to the emergency room at Wesley Medical Center, in Wichita. Schneider’s daughter, Leigh Anne, who was doing her residency there, said that doctors would “roll their eyes and say, ‘Oh, that’s another Schneider patient. He’s probably a drug-seeker.’” Leigh Anne said that her father was “so naïve” about his wife’s ability to manage the clinic. She said, “He is insanely in love with her, and always has been,” adding, “I have a whole list of drugs I would never prescribe, because you need to know so much.”

Opioids are unique among medications, because there is no maximum dose. Unlike painkillers such as aspirin or Tylenol, consuming large quantities is unlikely to permanently damage the organs. In 2001, the Joint Commission, which accredits health-care organizations around the country, urged doctors to recognize that subjective reports of pain should be the standard upon which interventions are based. The Joint Commission’s guidebook to pain management, which was sponsored by





"Good arm."

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Purdue Pharma, suggested that doctors have been operating under exaggerated and outdated fears of addiction, and says that if patients became tolerant of the medications the dose could be increased.

Schneider taught the providers at his clinic to prescribe "whatever it takes to improve function and quality of life without sedating." When a former cocaine addict and exotic dancer named Kandace came to the Schneider Clinic after spine surgery, in 2003, complaining that "every bone in my body feels crushed," she was prescribed, at various times, OxyContin, Actiq, and a Duragesic patch, which releases fentanyl through the skin. Months later, Kandace complained to Kim Hébert that her pain was still "out of control." Hébert had just been to a seminar called "Kadian Connect," sponsored by the pharmaceutical company Faulding, and she gave Kandace a voucher for Kadian, a long-acting morphine.

Kandace began taking the drug immediately, even though the other medications were still in her blood. Later that day, Kandace's mother noticed that Kandace's thinking was "kind of foggy." The next day, Kandace complained to her mother of chest pain, and a few hours later she died in her sleep. Hébert went to the funeral, and, the next time she saw the Kadian pharmaceutical representative, she told him about the death and said that she was "not interested in hearing about his product."

In 2002, Asa Hutchinson, the administrator of the Drug Enforcement Agency, told members of the American Pain Society that the agency had been tracking the proliferation of opioids and

had seen a shift from "recreational abuse to addiction." While acknowledging that the "D.E.A. does not intend to play the role of doctor," Hutchinson said that the agency would target "unscrupulous medical professionals." Later that year, a report by the Department of Justice's inspector general found that only ten per cent of D.E.A. field investigators were addressing the abuse of prescription painkillers. The report recommended that the agency devote far more resources to the problem, employing the same tactics used to catch drug dealers: undercover agents, surveillance, and confidential informants.

The D.E.A.'s new campaign stood in uneasy relation to the medical establishment's move to treat pain more aggressively. The D.E.A. began investigating about six hundred and fifty doctors a year, particularly those at "pill mills"—clinics where doctors sell drugs in exchange for cash, with little regard for the practice of medicine—but the agency's tactics did little to slow drug abuse. Deaths from opioids have quadrupled in the past ten years. Prescription drugs contribute to half of all deaths by overdose, accounting for more fatalities than heroin and cocaine combined. The D.E.A.'s efforts represent a costly and baroque way of addressing only a small, anomalous piece of the problem. The agency has cracked down on the part of the supply chain that is out in the open and easiest to reach. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, less than twenty per cent of people who misuse painkillers received them from doctors. The majority borrowed, bought, or stole the drugs from relatives,

friends, or dealers. When doctors prescribe too many opioids, it is not typically because they are corrupt; more often, they are rushed, uninformed, or concerned about their patient-satisfaction ratings. In rural regions, where there are few specialists, opioids become a default solution: unlike psychological or physical therapies, which are poorly reimbursed, writing a prescription is cheap and quick.

After the Schneider Medical Clinic was raided, in September, 2005, Atterbury discouraged her husband from continuing to see pain patients. But he told her, "We are doing the right thing—we don't have to be fearful." Schneider was under the impression that there had been fewer than a dozen deaths, and that nearly all of these patients had abused their medications. He said, "It hurt me that they were pulling the wool over my eyes." There was only one patient whose death had shaken him deeply, a woman named Robin, who had been taking Actiq as prescribed. "I still have a hard time believing she overdosed," he told me. "She was a fantastic person. I really loved her."

Following news reports of the raid, several patients filed malpractice suits, and three clinicians resigned. Schneider decided to sell the clinic, but, as he waited for a buyer, he went on treating patients, mostly those with chronic pain, because his other patients found new doctors. With a diminished staff, Schneider didn't have enough time to see all of his patients in one day. Sometimes there were so many people lined up in the morning that Atterbury told the D.E.A. agents, "I felt like we were selling concert tickets."

In March, 2006, there was a second



"You folks are grazing on my land."

raid, which seemed never to end. Although the clinic remained open, federal agents kept returning to pull more charts. The Schneiders became accustomed to officers following them. They noticed agents parked at the car wash across from the clinic, and on a side street near their home. Their daughter Zoyie, who was fourteen, said that an agent stood in the back of the church while her family attended a Sunday service. Atterbury's sister, Pat, who runs a funnel-cake business, said that she was alarmed when a man in a van, with a computer on his lap, was parked in front of her house for several hours. "It was like they were waiting for the Mexicans to ride on their horses into Linda's yard," Pat told me.

The D.E.A. sent at least one undercover officer to the clinic to request heavy quantities of painkillers. The recording is barely audible, but Schneider's voice can be heard giving instructions for using a Duragesic patch. The fake patient said that she wanted Actiq, too, but he told her, "I like to only do one thing at a time. . . . So try the Duragesic patch. . . . And then the next time we can talk about that possibility." He gave her Percocet for breakthrough pain, and, when she asked for a higher dose, he refused and then laughed,

seemingly embarrassed by the interaction. "I mean, I just don't want to get you into a stupor," he told her. "I don't want you to be a zombie or anything."

On December 19, 2007, the Schneiders and their two children spent the day doing Christmas errands. For hours, an unmarked police car followed them. The Schneiders said they took several wrong turns while trying to find a clothing shop, and then left the store immediately. The agents concluded that the family was attempting to evade them, and decided that they were a flight risk. Later that day, the Schneiders went to a friend's house and took family pictures. As they were pulling out of the driveway, two cars blocked their way.

Schneider and Atterbury were taken to the county jail, where Schneider recognized, among the inmates, two of his former patients. He and his wife were charged with causing the deaths of three people through the unlawful distribution of controlled substances—a charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of twenty years. The indictment described the Schneider Clinic as a "narcotics delivery system" and linked it to the deaths of sixty-eight patients. In addition to the opioid-overdose deaths, there were patients who had died after

mixing their painkillers with street drugs or alcohol, or after taking pills from friends who had been patients of Schneider's. Others had heart disease, which made their heavy use of narcotics lethal. Schneider said that he found the charges so confusing that he made it through only a few passages of the sixty-page indictment. "I started, but it appeared terrible," he said. "I couldn't read that."

After Schneider's arrest, the Sedgwick County Medical Society was overwhelmed by calls from former patients requesting referrals. The society held a meeting to discuss what to do about Schneider's patients, who complained in letters to him that no one wanted them. Jon Parks, the Wichita pain specialist, said he told the doctors at the meeting, "There has always been a Dr. Schneider in our community." He said that doctors in the area dealt with chronic pain inappropriately, by administering nerve blocks, one of the few forms of pain treatment that were reimbursed well. "These doctors stick needles in, take their cash, and run," he said. When the procedures failed, patients were on their own, and ended up in Haysville. He said to the doctors, "No offense, but this is self-wrought."

George Watson, formerly the chief of staff at Riverside Medical Center, in Wichita, wrote a letter to the Kansas Board of Healing Arts, explaining that Schneider "sees the rejects of medicine that WE won't see. He sees the people who have had all the surgeries and epidural steroid injections that insurance would buy, before it ran out, AND they still have pain."

Although Schneider had never been interested in politics, he found himself adopting his patients' rhetoric about their "right to pain relief," a notion that has been championed by leading pain doctors. In a widely cited 2007 paper in *Anesthesia & Analgesia*, three scholars wrote that "the unreasonable failure to treat pain is poor medicine, unethical practice, and is an abrogation of a fundamental human right." One of the co-authors, Daniel Carr, the director of the Pain Research, Education, and Policy program at the Tufts University School of Medicine, told me that people have misinterpreted this statement

to mean that patients have the right to narcotics rather than the right to thoughtful and competent care. “Opioids are a tiny little piece of pain management,” he said.

Although opioids are beneficial when taken for less than three months, studies of long-term use show that the drugs, while they may relieve pain, do little to improve function. Those who take the drugs for the longest periods of time, and in the heaviest doses, tend to be patients with psychiatric and substance-abuse disorders—a phenomenon that Mark Sullivan, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Washington, has called “adverse selection.” Sullivan told me that in poor, rural regions doctors are using opioids to treat a “complex mixture of physical and emotional distress.” He said, “It’s much more convenient for both patient and physician to speak in the language of physical pain, which is less stigmatized than psychological pain.” Some of these patients could be said to be suffering from what his colleague calls “terribly-sad-life syndrome.” “These patients are at a dead end, life has stymied them, they are hurting,” he said. “They want to be numb.” He believes that doctors are inappropriately adopting a “palliative-care mentality” to “relieve the suffering of people who have had very tough lives.”

Two months after the Schneiders’ arrest, Siobhan Reynolds, the president of the Pain Relief Network, an advocacy organization in New Mexico, moved to Wichita. She told the Schneiders that the case was “going to be the big one,” her “chance of a lifetime.” Reynolds’s late husband had suffered from a connective-tissue disorder, an extremely painful condition, and his doctor, William Hurwitz, had been imprisoned in 2004 for excessively prescribing opioids. Reynolds’s husband died two years later, of a brain hemorrhage, which she believed was induced by elevated blood pressure caused by his pain. Testifying before a House Judiciary subcommittee in 2007, she declared that the “D.E.A.’s actions have served to warn the rest of the medical community not to treat serious pain in all its forms.”

Reynolds did not have a degree in law—her background was in theatre—but the Schneiders let her pick their defense team and rented an apartment for her and the attorneys in Wichita, next to the courthouse. While Atterbury was

in jail, her sister, Pat, told her on the phone, “Your guardian angel showed up.” Pat explained that Reynolds had been fighting for prosecuted doctors around the country. “She is so much like us,” Pat said. “She is a spitfire.”

In another telephone call, Pat explained that “she’s calling this a play. She says she’s putting all the people in their positions to do the play.”

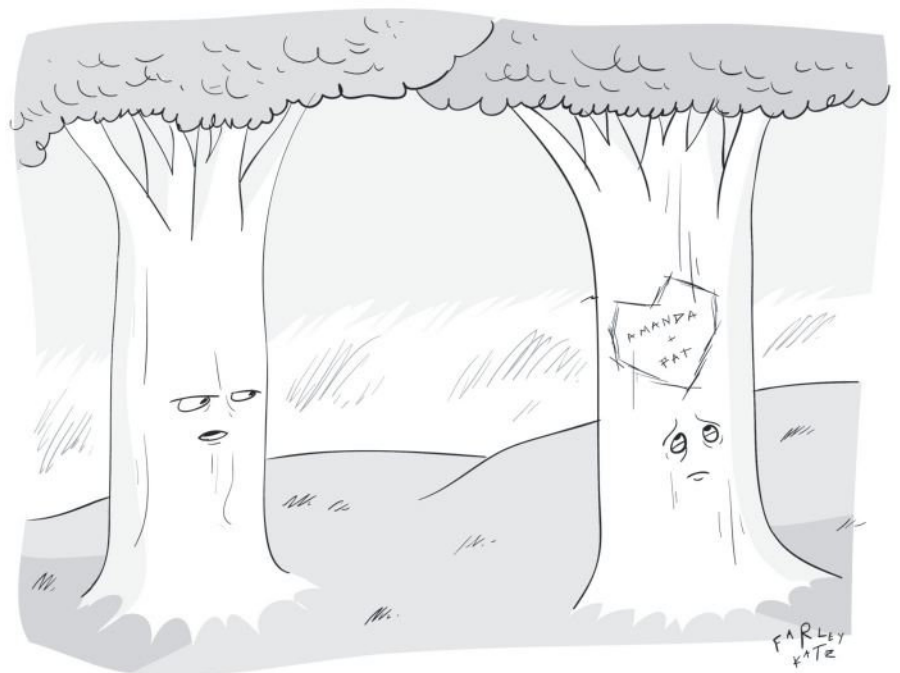
Reynolds erected a billboard on the central highway in Wichita that said, “Dr. Schneider Never Killed Anyone.” When one of Schneider’s pain patients was admitted to the emergency room, Reynolds organized a vigil at a Walgreens across from the hospital. Six people stood outside, praying and singing. A Schneider patient who was treated for back pain after a car accident said that she became disillusioned with the Pain Relief Network on the night of the vigil, when another patient tried to sell her his Klonopin.

Less than two months after the billboard went up, Tanya Treadway, an assistant U.S. Attorney, initiated a grand-jury investigation into the Pain Relief Network, which she accused of obstructing justice. Reynolds and the defense team’s paralegal were served with subpoenas requiring that they turn over all correspondence with the Schneiders and their patients. Reynolds refused, arguing that her First Amendment rights were

being violated, and that the prosecution was trying to intimidate potential witnesses. Reynolds was fined two hundred dollars a day for four months before she agreed to turn over the documents. By the time the trial began, in April of 2010, the Pain Relief Network was insolvent.

Treadway did not disclose the grounds for the grand-jury investigation, which remains sealed. She had already asked the judge to issue a gag order preventing the Pain Relief Network from communicating with the media. It was refused. A former high-school teacher, Treadway began crying when she discussed the deaths. She said that the Schneider patients fell into two groups. “There were patients who absolutely loved Dr. Schneider and believed in him and thought he was a wonderful doctor and person,” she said, “and there were patients who thought he was the Devil incarnate.”

At a hearing, the judge, Monti Belot, expressed concern that Treadway had “overcharged this case.” In a phone conversation with her boss, he spoke of the “oppressive nature of this prosecution” and recommended that Treadway be more closely supervised. In her preparation, Treadway used the depositions taken by Larry Wall, the attorney handling most of the malpractice cases, who was similarly emotionally invested; both his brother and his



“Good luck getting a job now.”

son, who have since died, struggled with addictions. Wall said, “I know survivors of the heroin epidemic of the seventies, and, when they found out about the Schneider case, they said, ‘It’s going to create a legacy of death for years to come. People will try and fail to kick their addictions.’”

The Schneiders’ defense team was ill-equipped to counter all the evidence that the prosecution had collected. They seemed to hope that they could win based on a theoretical argument about the inaccessibility of pain care to people without good insurance. Atterbury’s lawyer, Kevin Byers, who was romantically involved with Reynolds, opened the trial by declaring that the case was about “chronic pain treatment, propriety of it, the availability or unavailability of it in America.” Schneider’s lawyer (who has since left the field to become a screenwriter) filed a motion to have the jury leave the courtroom and tour the Schneider Medical Clinic. The motion was denied, but the Schneiders were convinced that once people saw the facility they would realize that it didn’t house a criminal enterprise.

Treadway told the jury that the clinic “looks a little like a Mexican restaurant. And, much like a Mexican restaurant, people lined up at the front door waiting to get in.” She said that the Schneiders “created an environment where their need for volume, their choice of quantity over quality, simply left no

time to practice medicine.” She argued that the Schneiders were in such a rush to make a profit that they treated overdoses as “acceptable casualties.”

Seven weeks of testimony established Atterbury as an irresponsible and imperious manager, while employees who had known Schneider for years testified that he didn’t want to hear bad news. After learning of an overdose death, he told a physician assistant, “We are doing a good job. . . . We are going to attract the wrong crowd, but . . . when you get a bunch of grapes, you’re going to have some bad grapes and we’re going to have to weed them out.”

Much of the testimony was devoted to reexamining the death of Robin, a forty-five-year-old woman with chronic migraines, who had visited numerous specialists before coming to the Schneider Clinic. She was prescribed a hundred and sixty Actiq suckers a month and became increasingly tolerant of the drug; eventually her dose was doubled. In August, 2006, she wrote a letter to Schneider, thanking him. “You prescribed medicine for me that I had not ever heard of,” she wrote. “From that day on I have received my life back.”

Her husband testified that, after two years of improvement, Robin became too sleepy to socialize; she slurred her words, and, a few times, for no reason, she spoke with a British accent. After she died, beside him in bed, he sued the clinic for malpractice, but Robin’s

mother, Phyllis Rowland, refused to participate in the lawsuit. At the trial, she testified on behalf of the defense. “I know how bad the pain was before she was at Schneider’s,” she said.

On the way to the courthouse each morning, Atterbury said, she was “amazed at how many people would drive by and yell out their window and honk their horn and say, ‘Good luck Doc.’” Their lawyers assured them that they were winning. “They didn’t want to pop the top of the bubbly, but they were pretty giddy,” Atterbury wrote to me. But Schneider said that he had little hope once he heard the evidence against him. He was “horrified” when he heard the testimony of the defense’s expert witness, whom Reynolds had chosen. The witness insisted that it was impossible to tell whether patients had died of overdoses or of underlying heart diseases, a line of argument that Schneider found strained. It upset him every time his practice was called a “pain clinic,” since his primary concern had always been family medicine.

Schneider and Atterbury waited at home for seven days while the jury deliberated. They weren’t sure their wedding rings would meet prison regulations, so, just in case, Schneider went to Kmart and bought two simple gold bands. Atterbury was making dinner when her lawyers called to say that the jury had reached a verdict. As Schneider drove to the courthouse, she and their two daughters bowed their heads and prayed.

They were both found guilty. Schneider was sentenced to thirty years in prison and Atterbury to thirty-three. The judge, Monti Belot, said, “I have the distinct belief that had she not been involved in the operation of the clinic, or had she approached her role there in a professional and responsible way, none of us would be here.” He criticized the Kansas Board of Healing Arts for insufficiently investigating the clinic, the Pain Relief Network (“a ship of fools if there ever was one”), and the doctors in the community, who never reported their concerns. Belot acknowledged that drug-seekers are savvy about inventing their symptoms, but he said that Schneider had plenty of time to learn about their deceptions. He



“This job is going nowhere.”

concluded that Schneider deserved a harsher punishment than ordinary drug dealers, because they have “no duty or obligation, legal or otherwise, to do no harm to their customers.”

Schneider was sent to the Forrest City Federal Correctional Complex, in Arkansas, and Atterbury to a prison in Connecticut and then to an institution in Texas. They can’t speak to each other on the phone, but they write each other several letters every week. Letters to friends are often signed “Linda & Steve,” no matter who wrote them. “If they could just put us together in the same cell, we would be good forever,” Atterbury told me.

Early this spring, I visited Schneider in prison. His hair was thinning, and his mustache had turned gray. When I said that Atterbury had asked me to buy a Diet Coke for him, he smiled, shook his head, and said, “She is the gas that makes me go.”

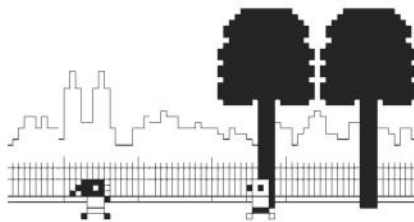
Schneider’s friends say that he was too trusting, a justification that I viewed with skepticism until Schneider began talking about the prison culture. “It’s surprising how nice these inmates are,” he told me. “It’s almost unbelievable, the camaraderie. People act like they’re in gangs, but I can’t say I ever felt I was in jeopardy. The blacks associate with whites, the whites with Mexicans.”

Schneider worked as a clerk in the library, earning about forty cents an hour. Twenty-five dollars was taken out of his paycheck every three months and paid into a restitution fund for his victims. He was hurt when he read his patients’ claims. “I had no idea they felt that way,” he said. He was especially surprised by a lawsuit filed by a young woman whom he had treated since she was a child. She had panic attacks about going to work—she was an exotic dancer—so he prescribed Xanax for her, and, later, hydrocodone, for migraines. Then she became addicted. He’d heard that, after she got money from her lawsuit, she had trouble with the law, and ended up in jail. He added, “I thought she was a really nice girl.”

Schneider said that he hadn’t experienced severe physical pain for more than a few days in his life. “Mental pain—that’s the one that bothers me now,” he told me. He said that most of his

chronic-pain patients had a “chart this thick”—he held his hands a foot apart—“and, more often than not, they were bipolar.” He went on, “We probably were not diligent enough in digging into the mental part of it. We saw the physical part, but the mental part was on the edge.”

I excused myself to go to the bathroom, and when I returned Schneider was staring at the ceiling with an expression of despair. He said that a guard had



asked him why he agreed to the interview and told him, “You know she’s just going to tear you apart.” A few minutes later, when I asked what he would do differently if he were to start the clinic again, he seemed offended by the question. “I would have been more political,” he finally responded. “I would have been more involved in the medical community. I can’t say I ever felt like I was part of the clique.”

His sense of exclusion had heightened after his daughter, Leigh Anne, was fired from her residency. After his trial, she said that the doctors at her hospital suddenly began criticizing her work, even though she’d previously received exemplary reviews. When she applied for residencies at other Wichita hospitals, her recommendations never failed to include a sentence about her father’s prosecution. She hadn’t practiced medicine in two years. “I can’t even identify who I am now,” she told me.

Schneider was struggling with his new identity, too, though some inmates still called him Doc and came to him with medical questions. The day before, he’d been approached by an inmate who had just shot up morphine, and the skin on his arm was infected. Drug use was flourishing in Atterbury’s prison, too. She wrote me, “Even here in a controlled environment, I can’t BELIEVE all the narcotics being sold.”

Schneider seemed most at ease when we talked about his wife. He described

their first date, on the top floor of the Holiday Inn in Wichita, repeating the jokes she had told him that night. “It was magical,” he said. For a second, his shoulders shook involuntarily. When the conversation returned to the clinic, he had trouble focussing. He seemed to feel there was something inevitable about the clinic’s trajectory, and couldn’t easily imagine how things would have unfolded differently. The clinic had offered negligent and reckless pain care, but there had been little incentive to do otherwise. He had become the kind of bad doctor that the system compensates best: he saw huge numbers of patients for brief periods of time by pleasing the customer, writing the prescriptions they desired.

All his appeals had been exhausted. In 2011, Siobhan Reynolds and one of the Schneiders’ lawyers, the one she’d been dating, died in a plane crash. The Schneiders couldn’t help wondering if this was the government’s final attempt to silence her. They both had a tendency to see conspiracy theories and cosmic connections. Last year, Atterbury was told by another prisoner, a Cambodian psychic, that they’d be released by the beginning of 2014. Atterbury prayed for verification of the message through a sign: squirrels having sex. Within two days, she saw two squirrels copulating in a tree.

Schneider and Atterbury decided that when they got out they would be missionaries. Schneider missed his conviction that he was alleviating people’s suffering. He seemed torn between the belief that his patients should have the right to make their own choices about what they put into their bodies—if they asked for the pills and used them improperly, he didn’t see why he was culpable—and the sense that he was the only one who could help them. In his own way, he seemed to thrive on what he had referred to as the “Dr. God feeling.” His patients told him that he was the only doctor who understood the depth of their pain. “They gave me so much positive feedback,” he said. “It was gratifying to help those people who really needed me—people who I thought needed my help,” he said, correcting himself. “I probably needed them more than they needed me. What a humbling experience.” ♦

Messages (1) **daphne**

Contact

The Naturals

Delivered

Sam Lipsyte



| Text Message

Q W E R T Y U I O
A S D F G H J K

Caperton's stepmother, Stell, called. "Your father," Stell said.

"Larry?" Caperton said.

"He's dying. You can say Dad."

"He's done deathbed before."

"It's different," Stell said. "The doctors agree now. And your father, well, no grand speeches about not going gentle, for one thing. For another, he looks out of it, pushed down. He shops online. He watches TV. I think you should be here."

"Command performance?"

"Don't be a crumbum."

Caperton took the short flight from O'Hare to Newark on one of the new boutique lines. Shortbread, cappuccinos, and sea-salted nuts in great jars sated travellers, gratis, at the gate. The in-flight magazine resembled an avant-garde culture journal Caperton once read with fervor. The cover depicted the airline's female pilots as cockpit kittens with tapered blazers and tilted caps. It was blunted wit, but startling for a commercial carrier. Caperton took note. Among other things, he consulted for a living. That morning, he'd been in meetings about a redo for a small chunk of lakefront. They'd discussed the placement of a Dutch-designed information kiosk; one of the city-council guys kept calling it "the koisk."

"The koisk should be closer to the embankment," the guy, a boy, bony in his dark suit, said.

"We can work on that," a rival consultant Caperton had not known would be present said. "The main thing is we're trying to tell a story here. A lakefront narrative."

Were they supposed to make bids in the room together?

"My opinions are vaguely aligned with that," Caperton said.

"But what color will the koisk be?"

Caperton felt the surge of a strange desire to shelter this apprentice politician from future displays of idiocy, as you might a defective son, though Caperton had no children. He liked kids, just not what they represented. He wasn't exactly sure what that meant, but it sounded significant, even if Daphne had finally left him over it, had a baby by herself with some Princeton-rower sperm.

A loft in coach, Caperton found himself squeezed up against the trunk of a human sequoia. The man's white T-shirt stretched to near-transparency over his twitch-prone pecs. His

hair shone aerosol gold. His cheek pulsed with each chew of a gum wad he occasionally spat into his palm and sculpted. He winked at Caperton, pressed the pink bolus flat, and slit a crude face in it with his thumbnail.

"I'm doing voodoo on the pilot."

"A good time for it," Caperton said.

"Don't be scared. The plane flies itself. I'll cure him before we land."

"I'd appreciate that."

"What brings you up into the sky today?"

"A personal matter."

"Fuck, I should hope so. Can you imagine wasting a minute of your life on something that wasn't personal? Something that didn't mean anything to you? And, I mean, especially if you're helping other people. Like a mission of mercy. That should always be personal. Otherwise you're just doing it for the likes. What's your line of work?"

"It's tricky," Caperton said. "It's kind of conceptual marketing, kind of design. I'm a free-range cultural consultant. But my passion is public space."

"Wow. Do you have all that bullshit on one business card?"

The man's enormous biceps jumped.

"Sorry," he said. "That comment was a little aggro of me. The juice does that sometimes."

"The juice?"

"I don't hide it. In my field, I don't have to. We're entertainers."

"What's your field?" Caperton asked.

"Dude, I'm a pro wrestler. What the fuck else would I be?"

"A bodybuilder?"

"Jesus, no! Those guys are pathetic narcissists. They were all abused by their fathers. Every one of them. Don't you know me? I'm the Rough Beast of Bethlehem. I wrestle on the Internet. You don't watch, I take it?"

"No," Caperton said.

"You think it's stupid."

"Not at all."

"You think that, now that we're post-kayfabe, it's ultra-moronic, right?"

"Post-kayfabe?"

"Kayfabe was the code we followed. Don't break character. Pretend it's not staged. Now we wink at the audience and they wink back."

"Oh, when did that go into effect?" Caperton said.

The Rough Beast snorted. "You

don't get it at all, buddy. It's not about wrestling. It's about stories. We're storytellers."

Caperton studied him. "Somebody at my job just said that."

"It's true! You have to be able to tell the story to get people on board for anything. A soft drink, a suck sesh, elective surgery, gardening, even your thing—public space? I prefer private space, but that's cool. Anyway, nobody cares about anything if there isn't a story attached. Ask the team that wrote the Bible. Ask Vincent Allan Poe."

"But doesn't it seem kind of creepy?" Caperton said. "All of us just going around calling ourselves storytellers?"

The Rough Beast shrugged. "Well, you can be negative. That's the easy way out."

Caperton thought it might be the hard way out. The Beast slipped his gum into his mouth.

"Gardening?" Caperton said, after a moment, but by then the Beast had his earbuds in.

Stell met Caperton in front of his childhood house, in Nearmont. She leaned against the doorway the way his mother once did. They were not quite the same type, but ballpark, as his father would say. Larry preferred tall, semi-controlling women with light, wavy hair. Stell preferred to smoke pot, laugh, cook, yell at Larry, read good novels, and watch her shows. She'd proved a perfect stepmother, and she and Caperton flourished in their family roles, except for the deal with the refrigerator—or, rather, Stell's deal with Caperton rummaging freely in the refrigerator. "Deal" was weak wording for it. "Nearly unassuageable rage" seemed more accurate. Stell just thought it would be better if Caperton waited outside the kitchen area. She'd be more than happy to get him whatever he wanted. It would just be better, it really would, if he waited over there at the edge or even beyond the edge of the kitchen area.

Caperton harbored a secret ancestral claim to what his forebears had known as the icebox. There had been only so much depredation and madness an American child could endure in the past century. That's why the government had invented the after-school snack. But he supposed he'd evolved. This was

Stell's house now, and, whatever her idiosyncrasies about the accessibility of chilled provisions, she'd kept his father's energy up for years, saved him from a fatal spiral when Caperton's mother died, even, or especially, if she'd been his mistress at the time.

For his part, Caperton's father called Stell the Bossman. Whenever she left the room he would twinkle his snow-blue eyes at Caperton and, his throat choked with affection, say, "What a goddam cunt, huh?"

Larry had been married three times, cancered twice. Now the liver, as he put it, was negotiating a severance package. Larry had spent decades on the road, and Caperton used to picture a bawdy shadow life for his father, whiskey sours at a sleek, cushioned bar, a woman with his tie in her teeth. These were bitter visions, but he knew, guiltily, that the anger wasn't really for his mother's sake. He just didn't understand why the man seemed so antsy at home, as though he couldn't enjoy even a few moments of family life, drinking hot cocoa and over-praising young Caperton's tediously improvised puppet shows or the lumpy space soldiers he pinched without talent from bright clay. Why were there so few trips to the toy store, or the zoo, or the toy store at the zoo, or, better yet, the snack stand beside the toy store at the zoo?

"First World problems," Daphne once told him.

"That's why they're so painful."

Caperton had wanted to be, with his father, a team. But Larry had a team, his work buddies, gruff chums whose cruel whinnies carried through the house those Sundays they came to watch football or smoke cigars on the patio. Like Larry, these hard cases were not gangsters but grade-school-textbook salesmen. Larry worked his regions year-round, his returns heralded by the appearance of the exquisite red-and-gold Jade Dragon takeout cartons. Every business trip ended with egg rolls and spareribs and enough monosodium glutamate to goon them all into an animate diorama of menu item No. 14: Happy Family.

His father would debrief them, long, duck-sauced fingers curled around a frosted stein. He'd sing of the specialty foods of the nation—the Cincinnati chilies, avocado-and-sprout sandwiches,

GOSSIP IN THE VILLAGE

I told no one, but the snows came, anyway.
They weren't even serious about it, at first.
Then, they seemed to say, if nothing happened,
Snow could say that, & almost perfectly.

The village slept in the gunmetal of its evening.
And there, through a thin dress once, I touched
A body so alive & eager I thought it must be
Someone else's soul. And though I was mistaken,

And though we parted, & the roads kept thawing between snows
In the first spring sun, & it was all, like spring,
Irrevocable, irony has made me thinner. Someday, weeks

From now, I will wake alone. My fate, I will think,
Will be to have no fate. I will feel suddenly hungry.

The morning will be bright, & wrong.

—Larry Lewis

and spice-rubbed hams of the culinary mosaic—or describe the historic hotels he'd slept in, name the ones with the tastiest pillow mints, the fluffiest towels, the most impressive water pressure. Caperton had found receipts in his father's overcoat, though, and they all said Howard Johnson. Larry hardly mentioned the people he'd seen or what he and the other salesmen had done, unless they'd scored big on a sale. Many schools, he explained, still taught from textbooks that conjectured a moon shot. Once, he said, he told a school board in Delaware that he'd be delighted to inform Commander Neil Armstrong himself what passed for scientific knowledge in their district. Caperton and his mother whooped, and Larry grinned into his stein. A triumph for Enlightenment values, plus commission.

After Caperton's mother died, his father retired and built birdhouses for a while. He meant well, but to a grown Caperton these designs were rather Cabrini-Green-ish, huge and institutional, as though Larry meant to warehouse the local jays and sparrows in balsa-wood towers of utter marginalization. It troubled Caperton to the point that he considered talking to his father about it, but then construction halted. Crises of the body beckoned.

Lung inflammations, nano-strokes, mystery cysts, myeloma scares. Caperton raced home for it all. But Larry couldn't deliver, until, apparently, now.

Caperton kissed Stell and followed her into the house, past the foyer bench and ancient wall hooks. He saw the mauve sofa where he and his father watched movies while his mother died upstairs—Westerns and sports sagas, mostly. Larry loved the one about the ancient, pretty baseball player who steps out of some Hooverville limbo to lead his club in a pennant race. Bad fuckers bribe him to tank the big game, but the hero jacks one, as Larry liked to say, into the stadium lights. Sparks shower down. The republic is renewed.

"In the book, he strikes out," Caperton once told his father.

"I know. That's why it's a stupid book. Why go through all that trouble to make a great story and then give it an ending like that? That takes real bitterness."

Caperton had said nothing, but thought there might be something brave about the bitterness.

"Your father's sleeping now," Stell said. "Would you like some coffee? Maybe a sandwich?"

He noticed a new strain in Stell's face. Her hands nipped at each other

like little animals. Could he stop himself even if he wanted to?

"I can make one later," Caperton said.

"I don't think that'll work. I can make one now."

"I can make it. I'll just look around in the fridge."

"I don't . . . that can't . . ."

"It's no problem," Caperton said.

"Just let me make you a sandwich now. No big deal."

"Exactly. I can make it, no biggie."

"But you don't know what's there."

"I can look."

"No, honey, please don't do this. It's hard to see what's in the fridge. The bulb is out. But I know what's there. Tell me what you want."

"I want a turkey-pastrami sandwich with capers and spicy pickles and sharp English mustard on a fresh-baked croissant."

"What?"

"Stell, just let me look in the fridge. I have a right. I was looking in that fridge when you were just an old hippie in Jersey City."

Stell stared at the carpet. She looked widowed already. Caperton agreed to let her make him a turkey on wheat, which she would store until he was ready.

"I just hope there's room in the fridge," Stell said.

"Hope is what we have," Caperton said, because he was a crumbum.

Caperton stood in his old bedroom, now Stell's study. Photographs of her family—nieces, cousins, a stern, tanned uncle—covered the bookshelves. Her people were much comelier than the dough-nosed Capertons. He recognized a few of his old textbooks behind the photographs, but most of the library was Stell's, an odd mix of self-help and hard science. He pulled out one on the human genome and flipped through it, pulled out another called "Narrative Medicine: How Stories Save Lives." Stell had a master's in this discipline. She counselled doctors not to be arrogant jerks, to listen to their patients, or clients, or consumers, or whatever doctors called the people they often helped and occasionally killed. She taught patients how to craft their personal tales. It seemed both noble

and, perhaps, a lot of bullshit on one card.

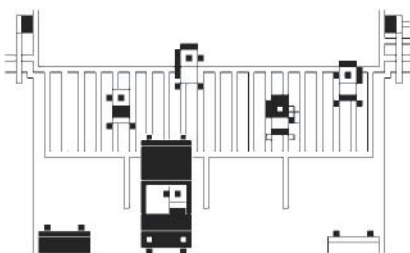
Now a pain sliced along his upper torso. He'd felt it before, like being cinched in a hot metal belt. Sometimes the pangs brought him to his knees, left him breathless, but they always faded. Caperton wheezed and clung to a bookshelf for a moment. He was stressed, the doctor had said, because he was anxious. Or maybe the other way around.

A lakefront, he wished he'd said at the meeting, was a place where you could stroll and enjoy the sunshine and the lake. Wasn't that enough? Why bring history into it? History was slaughter and slaves. Stories were devices for deluding ourselves and others, like Larry's pillow mints.

Was this pretentious? Caperton had worried about being pretentious since college, when somebody told him he was pretentious. He knew he was just naïve. Why did he continue to struggle for perspective when others had moved on? A secret dunce gene? A genome? Maybe the scary belt that squeezed him was a warning: stop thinking your shallow thoughts.

Stay in the story, moron.

He pulled a faded red sneaker box from under the bed. Here resided all the junk, the objets d'crap of his years in this room: buttons, paper clips, lozenge tins, cassette tapes, rolling papers, a tiny airport brandy bottle, the watch-



band from his uncle's Seiko, guitar picks and toothpicks and a photograph of his mother leaning on the birch tree in the yard. Probably a box in Daphne's parents' house brimmed with similar detritus. A rabbit's-foot key chain, the fur dyed electric blue. A comic-book version of "The Waves." Desiccated lip balm and a plastic ruby ring.

They'd met at an office party not that many years before, traded a few catchphrases from the sitcoms of their youth.

That and the sex seemed enough. But then came the dumb baby question. People thought they could work on you. Wear you down. They assumed you didn't really mean what you said.

Caperton found a condom in the shoebox, the wrapper worn and crinkled, the expiration date three or four Presidents ago, a Herbert Walker rubber, a forgotten land mine that required defusing before some innocents got maimed, or had a baby too early, led stunted lives with little chance for either of them or their issue to someday stand in a room and listen to an elected official say "koisk."

Caperton unbent a paper clip and pricked at the wrapper. He noticed something gunked on the tip of the paper clip, like tar or bong resin. How could that shit stay gooey for so long? The universe was an unanswered question. Had Caperton read that? Heard it on public radio? He couldn't track what spoke through him anymore. He moaned and held the condom up to the window. Daylight poured through the constellation of holes.

Stell stuck her head in.

"He's up," she said.

Larry sat in bed with a tablet in his lap. Caperton noticed the device first, then his father's freckled stick arms and ashy cheeks.

"I'm ordering tons of garbage. Stuff for the house. Gadgets. Why not? I should get some congressional shopping medal."

"I'll make it my life's work that you get one," Caperton said.

"What is your life's work, anyway?"

"Stell says it's serious this time."

Larry looked down at the tablet, swiped the screen with a long, chapped finger.

"It's always been serious," he said. "Since you get born it's serious. I mean, I have a greater understanding now. Dying is natural. We're built to do it. We discuss this in my six-months-and-under group."

"Your what?"

"It's online. No pity parties. Death is just a part of the story."

"I thought it was the end of the story."

"Mr. Doom-and-Gloom."

"Jesus, Dad, you're the one in bed. What do the doctors say?"

"Have you met my doctors? They

have pimples. Peach fuzz. They're all virgins."

"How do you know?"

"My tumors know."

"O.K.," Caperton said.

"The way you kids say O.K.," Larry said. "Sounds like it's not O.K."

"It's nice to be called a kid."

"I'm indulging you," Larry said. "Sit down."

Caperton took the rocker near the window.

"How long can you be here?" Larry said.

"I'll be back and forth. I'll be here."

"I realize I was the boy who cried death. I'm sorry to put you out. But I think I need you. Or Stell will need you."

"I'll be around," Caperton said. "I'll be there and back again."

"Guess you've seen all of this before."

"In this very room," Caperton said.

"I know," Larry said. "In this very bed."

The painting above the headboard was new, and Caperton couldn't quite tell what it depicted, with its fat swirls of white and gray. It was some kind of ship, or the spume of a whale, or a spiral-whipped wave in a storm.

Maybe it had been on the wall for a long time, but certainly not when his mother died. Or had it? He'd once been proud of the precision with which he recalled his mother's final weeks: the order of familial arrivals, their withered utterances, the last four things his mother ate (mashed potatoes, applesauce, cinnamon oatmeal, cherry ice cream, in that order), the exact position of the water pitcher on the walnut table. But now he couldn't remember if that painting had been there.

"You know," Larry said, "I had this English professor who used to talk about the death of the individual. 'The death of the individual,' he'd say. I had no idea if he was for it or against it. But at least now I know what he was talking about."

"I don't think he was talking about this."

"The hell you say," Larry said.

Back in his room, Caperton checked up on the lakefront. There were no new developments, just as after all these meetings there would be no new development. It was all a joke. Most of his working hours he spent tracking down his paychecks.

He composed a text to Daphne, which he still did sometimes, though she never responded, even when he lied and said that Gates Mandela McAdoo was a wonderful name for her child. Now he wrote, "Here with Larry and Stell. Not good." He erased "Not good" and replaced it with "More soon." The moment he sent it an e-mail zipped in from the airline, a survey about his flight. He was about to answer the questions when he remembered the purpose of his trip. Still, he'd rather not be rude. "Flight was great," he replied, "but I'm dealing with some difficult personal matters." Probably only robots would read the message, but sometimes it was crucial to clear the emotional desk.

He lay down on his old bed, a narrow, thin-mattressed cheapo he'd once cherished as a snuggle palace. He closed his eyes and had one of those mini-dreams he sometimes had before falling asleep. His teasers. This one featured the Rough Beast. They trudged through the rubble of a ruined city. Before them rose a bangled tower, a high, corroded structure made of pig iron, tiles, beach glass, and bottle caps. The Rough Beast paused after each step.

"Public or private?" he whispered. "Public or private?"

Caperton flew at the Beast, bashed him to the ground.

"That's it, baby!" the Beast cried. "Hurt my shit!"

Now there were different voices, and Caperton woke. A man who looked familiar but unplaceable stood just outside the open door.

"Hello," he said. "This must seem strange. But don't be alarmed. Stell told me to rouse you."

Stell brought out tea and joined the man on the sofa in the living room. Caperton sat down on an ottoman. The man had stiff white hair, a velvet black unibrow. He jiggled Stell's hand in his lap.

"It's such a joy for me to see you again. I wish it were under better circumstances. Do you remember me?"

"You're Burt," Caperton said. "You used to come over with the other guys."

"That's right. Last time I saw you, you were yay high." Burt lifted his boot off the carpet.

"Really? That's very tiny. I must have been a barely viable fetus then."

Burt chuckled, nudged Stell.

"Larry said he was a tough cookie. Your father loves you, you know."

"I know."

"Do you?" Burt said.

"Maybe you know better."

"Your father's from a different generation, that's all. We weren't allowed to show our emotions."

"I've met men your age who overcame that."

"Outliers," Burt said. "Or possibly fags. I always liked you, you know. Even when you were a little kid and I could tell you were judging us."

"Us?"

"The gang."

Burt pulled Stell's knuckles to his lips.

"Hey, pal, my father's not dead yet."

"Cool it, Omelet," Burt said. "Stell and I go back. I introduced your father to her. We're like family. Anyway, I hear you're a consultant."

"Yes."

"It's a very worthy path. I retired from the sales department about ten years after your father. Since then, I've taken up a new calling."

"What's that?"

"Burt's a storyteller," Stell said.

"No shit."

"I must admit it's true," Burt said. "Every Saturday I go down to the library and tell stories to the children. I'm sure I bore the pants off them, but I get a thrill."

"Tell me a story."

"Well, I don't know if this is really a good time for—"

"Just tell me a story."

Burt told Caperton a story. It had a boy in it, an eagle feather, a shiny blue turtle. There was an ogre in a cave. Rivers were crossed on flimsy ropes, wise witches sought for counsel, bandits hunted and rehabilitated. The blue turtle led the boy to a princess. The princess fought the ogre and saved the boy. Caperton soaked up every word and couldn't take his eyes off Burt's brow, which lifted at the close of the tale.

"Bravo," Stell said.

"Pulled that one out of my butt," Burt said.

"That's why you're a genius," Stell said. "Am I right?"

Caperton shrugged. "I don't know. Seemed a little cheesy to me."

"Helps if you're five," Burt said. "Not some snide turd turning forty."

Caperton stood.
“You’re right, Burt. What can I say? I’m feeling peckish.”

Stell shrieked. “Please, don’t go in there! What do you want? I’ll get your sandwich! Or do you want something else? Just tell me what you want! Let me make it for you!”

Caperton opened the fridge and in the darkness saw what he wanted. What he could make. He scooped up a bag of bread, a tomato, a hard-boiled egg. Stell charged him, crumpled against his hip, wrapped up his knees. The egg flew away. Caperton slit the bread bag open with his thumbnail, balled up a soft slice of seven-grain and shoved it in his mouth. He bit into the tomato and seeds ran down his wrists, pulp splotted the wall.

“Stop!” Stell said. “What are you doing?”

“I’m having an after-school snack,” Caperton snarled, and fisted up another bread ball, licked the tomato’s bright wound.

“You’re sick!” Stell said, and from her knees tried to shove him clear of the kitchen.

Caperton bent over her, whispered, “Thanks for the medical narrative.”

He ripped open his shirt and crushed the mutilated tomato against his chest. Juice glistened in dark burls of hair. He thought that maybe he was about to make a serious declaration, or even try to laugh the whole thing off, when he felt a twinge, a test cinch for another spell of nervous woe. The Belt of Intermittent Sorrow, which he somehow now named the moment it went tight, squeezed him to the kitchen floor.

That night he texted Daphne: *Can’t sleep in this bed. It’s crazy here. Creepy. Like a bad play. Or a bad production of a good play. How is little Gates? I’m sure you’re a wonderful mother. Maybe if mine hadn’t died I would have felt differently. Who knows? You know I’ll always love you. More later. Talk soon.*

Minutes later Caperton heard his text tone: shod hooves on cobblestones.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Miles and I’m the nanny. I was a Division II nose tackle not very long ago. If you keep texting Daphne I’ll come to your house and feed you your phone. Daphne

does not wish to receive messages from you, now or in the future. Good day.

Good day?

Caperton shivered in his shoddy childhood cot. *Let the sobbing begin*, he texted to himself, and sank into hard slumber beneath his dank duvet.

The next morning Caperton stood beside a taxi in the driveway. Stell gathered him in for a hug.

“I’m sorry,” Caperton said, fingering the pierced condom in his pocket.

“Stop saying that. Just go see a doctor. And a therapist.”

“I will. I’ll be back for the weekend. I’ll be back and forth.”

“I know,” Stell said.

Burt stood on the lawn in cop shades.

Was he protecting Stell from her hair-trigger stepson? Standing vigil for his dying amigo?

Just before coming outside, Caperton had checked on his father. Larry had maybe taken a little bit of a bad turn. He looked pretty damn sick.

“Work beckons, huh?” Larry nodded at Caperton’s coat.

“Afraid so. Be here Saturday.”

Caperton took his father’s hand.

“Listen,” Caperton said. “I realize I’ve been an idiot, Dad. All my pointless rage. I’ve wasted so much time trying to get a certain feeling back. But it’s a child’s feeling, and I can’t have it anymore. But I love you. I really do. Know that. And let’s not hold back. With the time we have, let’s say everything to each other. That’s all I want.”

Something like a ship’s light, far away, began to glow, stately and forlorn, in Larry’s eyes. He gripped his son’s hand harder.

“I know you’re strapped for time,” Larry said, his voice raspier in just the past day. “But there’s this new show on cable, you really should watch it. It’s amazing.”

“A show?”

“No, really,” Larry said, strained upward, and coughed in Caperton’s ear the name of the showrunner, and how this fellow had also created another hit series.

“The character arcs are groundbreaking,” Larry said. “It’s a golden age of cable television.”

“Sounds great.”



"I'd wait to watch it with you," Larry said. "But, well, you know..."

"I'll be back," Caperton said.

"And forth," Larry said. "I'm glad. I need you, son."

Caperton was not surprised to see the Rough Beast in the terminal. The Internet wrestler sipped from a demitasse at a granite countertop near the gate. Caperton thought to approach him, but the quest for symmetry seemed a mistake. Besides, the Beast wouldn't remember a snide turd like him.

Caperton had two seats to himself on the plane. He wished he could relish the boon, but it made him anxious. A free seat meant that anybody could take it at any time, lumber up from the back rows looking for relief—a fatty, a talker, the ghost of his mother, Death itself, Burt.

Caperton took the aisle seat, the better to defend the window and, about twenty minutes into the flight, heard a loud grunt, felt a hard pinch on his earlobe.

"How are you, man?" the Beast said. "What's the story?"

A pill from Stell had introduced Caperton to a new flippancy.

"The story, Mr. Beast? It's ongoing. Arcing hard. It's an arcing savage, an astonishment machine."

"Booyah! And how's your personal matter?"

"Everything's going to be O.K., my man, within the context of nothing ever being O.K."

"Brother has been on a philosophical fact-finding mission, come back with the news." The Beast proffered five, belly-high.

"Please," a flight attendant said, approaching from business. "No congregating."

"Nobody's congregating," the Beast said.

"We can't allow congregating for security reasons."

"Just shooting the breeze here, sweetness. No box cutters."

"Sir."

"Maybe you're too young for that reference."

"Please sit down."

"O.K., fine," the Beast said, and walked back to his row.

When the plane landed, Caperton lifted his half-unzipped bag from under the seat and noticed a sandwich tucked under some socks. Pastrami and capers. On a croissant. Caperton chewed and waited for the plane to reach the gate. It would be an odd time now. Larry, the Fates willing, might hold on for a while. They would have a chance to grow close again. Caperton knew he would not run from this. Even if his father doubted him, he knew he would be there when it counted.

He checked his phone and saw the messages stack up in comforting fashion. Life might be looking down,

but at least coms were up. It took just the briefest skim of his messages for all comfort to vanish. Now he could only ponder how strange it was that you could move at these outrageous speeds through the air and know everything known and still control nothing. For example, during this one quick flight his father had died, and the bony young councilman, the Prince of Koisks, had kicked him off the project. Also, there was an e-mail from the airline he'd just flown explaining how much they respected his time and offering consolation for his current difficulties. Worse than robots, really.

Caperton called the only person he could call. Daphne answered and told him to hold on. Another voice came on the line.

"This is Miles."

"Jesus, I thought she made you up."

"No, I'm very much an entity of your dimension. Somebody who could find you and stomp on your urethra in what we foolishly call real time. Did you not receive the text message?"

"I did," Caperton said.

"But you thought calling was O.K.?"

"Did you say you were the nanny?"

"Goodbye, Mr.—"

"No, Miles, please don't hang up. Just stay on the line for a minute. For sixty seconds. That's all. I'm having a bad moment. I don't need Daphne. You'll do fine. My father just died. Please just . . . I just . . ."

"Why don't you emulate your old man," Miles said, hung up.

Caperton groaned, shook, curled up in his seats, and watched people stand and grope at the overhead bins. He heard the Beast barrel through the throng behind him. Here he loomed again.

"Caught the end of your call."

"Yeah," Caperton said.

"We'll be here awhile, waiting for all these people. Shove over."

Caperton slid toward the window and the Rough Beast sat down. He patted Caperton's knee.

"Terrible about your pops. Mine went easy. Keeled over on his city snowplow up in Rochester. But that doesn't make it any better for you."

"No."

"It's O.K. You're with me now. Everything will be O.K. Cry for your father. What man doesn't cry for his father? Let it out."

Caperton cooled his forehead on the window. The Beast stroked his back.

"They say it's a cycle, but there is no cycle. You get jerked in and reamed out. That's all."

Caperton could not cry again. Also, he thought he might be onto a new phase. Lumped nullity. Drool drooped from his lip. He looked up and saw that the plane was empty.

"I'm sorry," one of the flight attendants said. "But it's time to leave."

"We'll leave soon," the Beast said. "When it's time."

"But it's time now."

"No, it's not!" the Rough Beast shouted, cocked his hand for a karate chop. "This man's in the middle of a fucking hinge moment! I'll waste you all!"

One of the flight attendants called security on her walkie-talkie. The others dashed for the door.

Caperton, who now felt a wider and more fiery belt of perhaps increasingly frequent sorrow begin to singe him, slid to his knees and crushed his face into the seat back. The underside of the locked and upright tray, cool and vaguely pebbled, was heaven on his skin. ♦

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Sam Lipsyte on "The Naturals."



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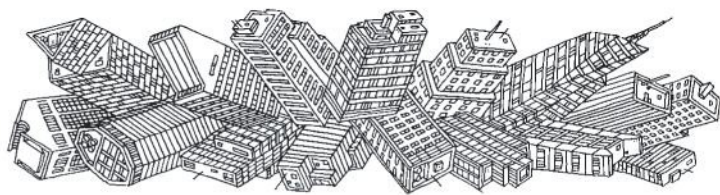


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THE CRITICS



THE THEATRE

STARS

Michelle Williams and Neil Patrick Harris play performers on Broadway.

BY HILTON ALS

When it comes to technique, actors know what you might call one another's family secrets. They know what goes into creating a sustained stage illusion, and how to make a scene partner give and then give some more. They know why a script works and when it doesn't. Even so, the best actors understand that it's the accidents, the sudden improvisations and flights of fancy, that can make a performance real, or transcendent—a happening that cannot be fully explained. As the storied Geraldine Page said, in Lillian and Helen Ross's essential 1962 book, *"The Player,"* "When the character uses *you*, that's when you're really cooking. You know you're in complete control, yet you get the feeling that you didn't do it. . . . You don't completely understand it, and you don't have to." Michelle Williams and Neil Patrick Harris, who are starring in *"Cabaret"* (a Roundabout Theatre Company production, at Studio 54) and *"Hedwig and the Angry Inch"* (at the Belasco), respectively, draw on everything they've got to portray characters who are performers themselves—outsider artists who are less interested in developing the technique that would ground their passionate display than in climbing the highs of their ever-escalating fantasies and "inspirations."

What holds Sally Bowles, Christopher Isherwood's most famous creation, together? Her rouge pot, her ratty fur coat, and her hope in the face of unconquerable odds, which include her lack of singing and dancing talent. In Isherwood's novel

"Goodbye to Berlin" (1939), a London girl takes up residence in the German metropolis at an eerie moment in history: it's the early thirties, the city is in the midst of economic collapse, and the political tides are turning away from the Weimar Republic's artistic and sexual experimentalism, and toward fascism, a craving for xenophobic order. Sally, deadly honest in her way, fits right in with the town's gadflies, emotionally displaced Jews, half-hearted gigolos, and kindly landladies. She has come almost too late to the party, but she doesn't hear all that *Volksgemeinschaft* talk; she's too busy grabbing at life's balloons, her nails varnished a sickly green. Sally is apolitical, because politics requires analysis and curiosity about other people, and mostly all she can think about—or believe in—is the event of herself. "She sang badly, without any expression, her hands hanging down at her sides," Isherwood's narrator observes. "Yet her performance was, in its own way, effective because of her startling appearance and her air of not caring a curse what people thought of her."

Julie Harris won her first Best Actress Tony for her portrayal of Sally in *"I Am a Camera,"* John Van Druten's 1951 stage adaptation of the Isherwood book. The 1955 movie version of the play, which also starred Harris, is a valuable record of what made her unique in the role: her impassioned innocence. Harris's Sally may sleep with the wrong guy, and he may even throw her over, but it's nobody's fault, really—and why cry over spilled *Bier* when

there's so much pleasure to be had out there? In 1966, John Kander and Fred Ebb adapted the play into the musical *"Cabaret,"* which Bob Fosse, in 1972, turned into a diamond-hard film, starring Liza Minnelli. Some complained that Minnelli sang and danced too well to be Sally: her Sally is more desperate and less free than Harris's, precisely because she has talent, oodles of it, but is trapped in a world that values trend over individuality or vision.

Michelle Williams's Sally, in Sam Mendes and Rob Marshall's revival of *"Cabaret,"* wears her loneliness like a cloak over her fur coat. She's an emotionally broken person with excellent posture who performs in order to momentarily dispel her fear that the world isn't always paying attention. When she wants to feign indifference or innocence, she bats her eyes slowly, like a nineteen-twenties boudoir doll, and she speaks in a metallic voice, like the clatter of a typewriter; the voice is a defense, a remnant of the Jazz Age, out of synch with this corroding world. The weight of actual talent would be too much to add to this Sally's burdens; her singing and dancing are just a way of marking time until she can be herself again, "madly" alive. Williams gives a perspicacious, authentic performance in a synthetic medium, the American musical. She is not a creature of Broadway, so she doesn't play anything bigger than it needs to be played; it would go against her m.o. Instead, she digs and digs for those moments, in herself and in the script, that will lift the production to a level that can't be explained. Her performance may baffle those who know only the Minnelli version and don't realize that Williams is playing Sally as Isherwood envisioned her: talentless, more verbal about sex than sexual (she longs to be considered "shocking"), adrift—and intent on being fascinating.

As the pale-skinned, greasy-haired Emcee, the fierce Alan Cumming—who played the part in two previous revivals—has a flashier attack than Williams, but that's as it should be: the Emcee wants to draw us into his world and then trap us there. We first see him at the Kit Kat Klub, where he and Sally work; he's dressed in black trousers, suspenders, and a bow tie—that's it. Stealing a glance at the balcony, the Emcee, a snob, waves and says, "Hello, you poor people up there!" He keeps up the patter as he sings *"Willkommen,"* a paean to

Life is a cabaret, old chum: Michelle Williams gives a perspicacious, authentic performance in a synthetic medium.





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his form of paganism, which includes eying and probably bedding the hunky solo musicians, as well as the female dancers, who are his *corps de perversité*. Cumming's Emcee is a bisexual sheikh, up for the drama of being taken: sexual depravity is the force that drives his polluted world view.

It takes Clifford Bradshaw (Bill Heck), an American writer who has travelled to Berlin to finish a novel, a while to understand that the Emcee's louche, seen-it-all attitude is a Berlin social style. Cliff finds digs at the boarding house of Fräulein Schneider (the outstanding Linda Emond), who has known better days but no greater love than that of her Jewish lodger, Herr Schultz (Danny Burstein)—yet how can it work? They both hold back at first. (Burstein is a new Karl Malden, subtle and down to earth.) One way to get to know the city, then as now, is to go to its clubs. Cliff does just that—and meets and falls in love with Sally. Sally has lots of lovers, but the only man who gets under her skin is Max (Benjamin Eakeley), who runs the Kit Kat Klub, and whose approval she seeks because it's hardest to attain. In scenes illuminated by Williams's reach as an artist, Sally moves in with the sympathetic Cliff, then, in what feels like very little time, goes back to Max: his demeaning power over her is easier to take than Cliff's sensitivity.

When Williams sings the title song, at the end of the show—a song about Sally's late pal Elsie, with whom she shared “four sordid rooms in Chelsea” (“The day she died the neighbors came to snicker/‘Well, that's what comes of too much pills and liquor’”)—it's Sally's corpse that we, and Sally, imagine. Williams plays the song as the last vestige of the privilege that is Sally's ignorance—an ignorance that will lead to her death. Sally is not alone. The Emcee's hedonism, Fräulein Schneider's anti-Semitism, and Herr Schultz's willingness to turn a blind eye to it are all nails in the coffin of European civilization. Looking out at the audience, as a bright light blasts like hate from upstage, the Emcee shows us what will become of him: he removes his leather overcoat—the skin of his German decadence—to reveal a pink triangle and a Star of David. Sally stands on the gallery above him, her face impassive, as if she'd been swallowed whole by the horror of the world.

Neil Patrick Harris's Hedwig wouldn't look out of place in this lineup: he and

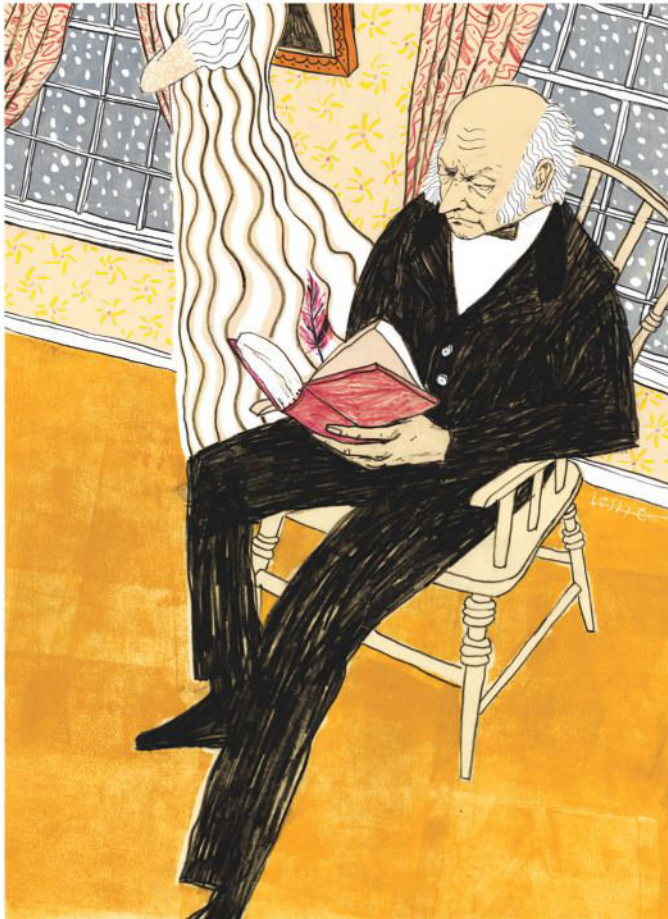
Sally are both benighted, painted figures, spoiled and deprived—performers whom Andy Warhol might classify as “the leftovers of show business.” When we first meet Hedwig, a down-on-his-luck transgender rock musician, he's playing on a set whose décor consists of old auto parts and a wrecked car. The concert is the story of his culturally confused but ultimately triumphant life, punctuated by eleven vivid songs. (The music and lyrics are by Stephen Trask, the one-of-a-kind book by John Cameron Mitchell, who starred indelibly in the original show and in the 2001 movie.) A native of Communist East Berlin, the young Hedwig became the love object of an American soldier. In order to go back to the U.S. as the soldier's wife, he agreed to a sex-change operation, which was botched—hence his “angry inch.” The marriage collapsed, leaving Hedwig stranded; love is now a stranger to his hungry heart, despite the affection that Yitzhak (the wonderful Lena Hall), his partner and backup singer, demonstrates on their endless tour through life.

“Hedwig”'s director, Michael Mayer, is pushing for the show to be a hit—with a big, almost “Jesus Christ Superstar”-like sound and lots of light cues—but, in trying to turn it into a feel-good production, he takes the focus away from Hedwig's deeply strange and touching tale. Mayer treats Hedwig and Yitzhak not like adults struggling with meaning and purpose but like the adolescents in the tiresome 2006 musical “Spring Awakening” (which won him a Best Direction Tony): they are “kooks,” petulant teens who'll feel better when they finally grow up. It's an old story—equating difference with arrested development. Under Mayer's direction, Harris doesn't quite capture Hedwig's profound androgyny of the soul. His Hedwig is a physically disciplined gay man in a wig, who's afraid of tripping in his Elton John “Pinball Wizard” space boots. (Harris grows more “male,” and thus more audience-friendly, in the course of the musical.) The project likely has deep resonance for Harris, who is one of the few openly gay actors to play straight and cross over to the mainstream. But his imagination has been constrained by Mayer's condescension. I have no doubt that Harris will mature in the role and, eventually, outgrow, as all stars must, his need for the director's approval. ♦

BORN TO DO IT

New biographies of John Quincy Adams and his wife.

BY THOMAS MALLON



Historians generally agree that the single figure bridging America's creation and near-dissolution is John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), who before his eighth birthday heard cannon fire from Bunker Hill and, seven decades later, as the only former President to serve in the House of Representatives, suffered a fatal stroke in the presence of Congressman Abraham Lincoln. But Adams was a stony, unlovable bridge. More of a democrat than his father, he was also more of a stick. His latest biographer, Fred Kaplan, whose previous subjects have ranged from Charles Dickens to Gore Vidal, argues that Adams doesn't fully deserve his reputation for coldness, but, for all its dil-

igence, "John Quincy Adams: American Visionary" (Harper) never really succeeds in raising the sixth President's temperament. One of his own sons had trouble seeing behind his "iron mask," and Adams pronounced himself a man of "austere and forbidding manners" that he had "not the pliability to reform." Emerson suspected that there was "sulphuric acid in his tea."

Kaplan, amid his balance-scale attempts to portray Adams as a man of "feeling" and "deep reserve," a public servant more "respected" than "liked," concedes the presence of "a slight touch of paranoia" in this American scion's makeup. Adams twice made enemies lists

in his diary, a voluminous document so certain of its own significance that it sometimes seems more tweeted than written. He spent many hours indexing it even before he became Secretary of State, let alone President.

As the dauphin of a republican dynasty, Adams lived his long life inside a contradiction, and, however much he wished to shake loose from his peculiar position, he had an equal dread of being dislodged from it. His mother's shadow was even denser than his father's. During the days when Colonial spoons were being melted for bullets, she regularly made her young son declaim patriotic poetry. "At a very early period in Life," Abigail Adams wrote, "I devoted him to the publick." (Even so, she was taken aback when citizenship trumped blood and he named his first son George Washington Adams.) She was still urging him to dress better when he served in the Senate, and didn't hesitate to ask President James Madison to recall him from his post as Minister to Russia when she thought he wasn't being paid enough.

John Adams, the onetime schoolmaster who had engineered the family's great leap forward, saw many of his children—and grandchildren—beset with college expulsion, alcoholism, depression, and debt, but even before those troubles arose John Quincy appeared the most plausible heir. The civic ambitions for him were enormous; his parents gave him an apprenticeship instead of an adolescence. He twice made perilous crossings to Europe with his father, who needed first to cement the rebellious Colonies' alliance with France and then to make a peace treaty with Britain. Kaplan quotes a letter from father to son, written in 1804, that recalls how during one of their voyages they held onto each other and "braced our feet against the Bed boards and Bedsteads to prevent us from having our Brains dashed out against the Planks and Timbers of the Ship." The elder Adams was not, however, such a clinging parent that he wouldn't allow John Quincy, at the age of fourteen, to travel to Russia as private secretary to Francis Dana, then seeking Catherine the Great's support for the American cause. The younger Adams had better diplomatic French than his new boss, who continued to take an interest in him after both returned to the

The union of John Quincy and Louisa Adams was "a fifty-year drama."

States and John Quincy graduated from Harvard.

A legal career was John and Abigail's choice for him. A part of John Quincy, though no more than that, would have preferred the kind of belletristic life his grandson Henry eventually led. His reading ran from Cicero to "The Faerie Queene," even if an inclination toward satire was checked by primness and moralism. The plays of Molière were a guilty intellectual pleasure, and "Othello" a cautionary tale about transracial lust. (Desdemona was the one to blame; a trace of misogyny runs through Adams's life and thought.) While in the Senate, he managed also to serve as Harvard's Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. His interests in science, particularly astronomy, continued through his Presidency and beyond. As chairman of the congressional committee charged with recommending uses for James Smithson's great donation, Adams urged the creation of a national observatory, from which the two moons of Mars were eventually discovered.

But, if the range of his enthusiasms suggests a philosopher-king, one is held back from regarding him as such by a resemblance to George Eliot's Mr. Casaubon: his mind could be more pedantic than capacious. When Adams learned, as Secretary of State, that his department had been charged with producing a report on units of measurement (even then there was talk of America going metric), he de-

cided to research and write it himself, over uncountable hours. "Thank God we hear no more of Weights and Measures," his wife wrote to the elder John Adams, once the document was submitted to Congress.

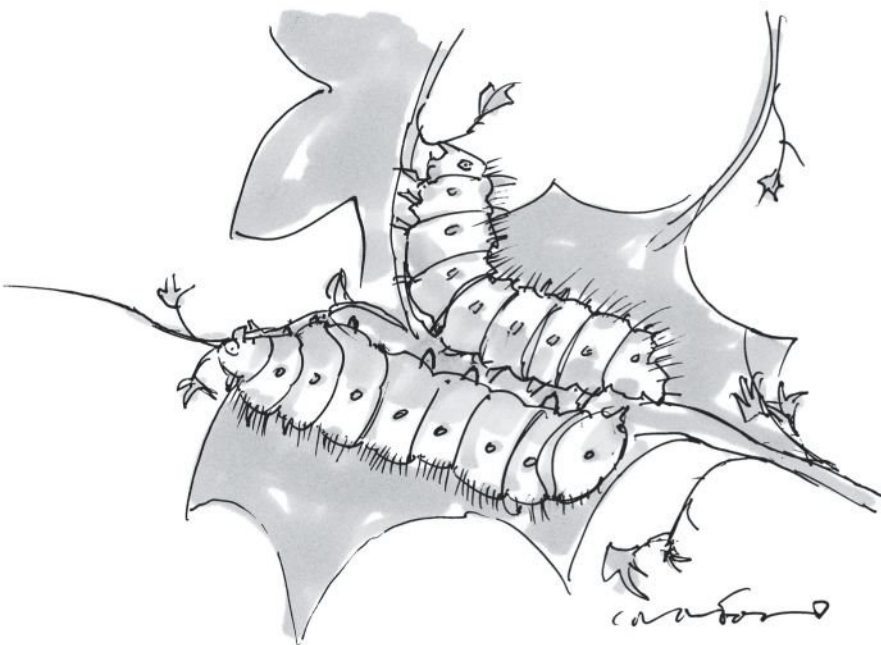
American Secretaries of State have typically been more buttoned up than bon vivant, but John Quincy Adams's diplomatic successes—bigger than anything Presidential or legislative that he achieved—still surprise a student of his personality. He was the nation's Minister to the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain, and, if he chafed at court routines and entertainments (he was usually the only republican in the ballroom), he could often summon the "pliability" that a situation demanded. Tsar Alexander's keen attraction to Adams's pretty sister-in-law, who accompanied the envoy and his wife to Russia, perturbed Adams less than her eventual marriage to his own nephew. It was between postings to St. Petersburg and London that Adams performed his most important bit of statecraft, participating in the negotiations to end the War of 1812 with the Treaty of Ghent. By the time James Monroe, the fourth President he served, asked him to return home and become Secretary of State, Adams was amply prepared to take over a department whose disorganized Washington office consisted of four clerks. During seven years there, Adams negotiated a treaty with

Spain that acquired Florida for the United States, and helped to formulate the famous doctrine of hemispheric inviolability that wound up getting named for the much less decisive Monroe.

No Secretary of State has attained the Presidency since James Buchanan, and, while that could change soon, the job will never again become the routine springboard to the White House that it was in the early days of the republic: Adams was the fourth President in a row to have held it. His time at State vaulted him as much as his family name, though even he had to secure the Presidency through the kind of tortured mechanisms that later attained it for Rutherford B. Hayes and George W. Bush.

Politically, Adams had always been a difficult fit. During his stretch in the Senate (1803-08), he infuriated his fellow-Federalists (as well as his parents) with qualified support for Thomas Jefferson, and he annoyed Federalists and Republicans alike with an in-between position on the Louisiana Purchase: he favored the immense acquisition but thought it required a constitutional amendment. Increasingly disgusted by what he called "the great art of legislation," he resigned his seat before the Massachusetts legislature could relieve him of it.

But he craved the Presidency and laid plans to get it in 1824. Early that year, he and his wife threw a spectacular ball in honor of his flashiest potential rival, Andrew Jackson. The party, famous for decades thereafter, was designed to show the Adamsses' social suitability for the world stage and perhaps flatter General Jackson into contentment with being John Quincy's Vice-President. It didn't do the trick. The election occurred late in the misnamed Era of Good Feelings, a brief period with just one major party but plenty of factions. Adams finished well behind Jackson in both the popular and the electoral votes, but when the election went to the House he came out on top by making an alliance with one of the two lesser candidates, Henry Clay, a former negotiating colleague at Ghent. Looking ahead to another election, Clay settled for the State Department stepping stone. The arrangement looked awfully like a quid pro quo, the "corrupt bargain" soon scorned by Adams's foes. Kaplan sees only a "sensible and natural alliance," whereas Paul C. Nagel, the dean



"I thought we could just stay home tonight and pupate."

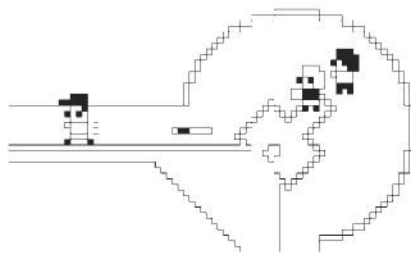
of modern Adams-family scholars, discerned “a demeaning negotiation among politicians” about which John Quincy “remained forever silent.” The sixth President did, however, make a disarming acknowledgment of the situation in his Inaugural Address: “Less possessed of your confidence in advance than any of my predecessors, I am deeply conscious of the prospect that I shall stand more and oftener in need of your indulgence.”

He didn’t receive it. Much of Congress continued to resent the manner of Adams’s ascension, and little of significance can be detected in his single term, despite Kaplan’s rose-colored rendering of it: “The administration’s lack of spectacular achievements characterized its success. There were no wars or threats of war. If there had been, Adams would have been a formidable commander in chief. His calmness, rationality, analytic skills, and administrative competence would have served the country well.” Granting Adams what another dynastic American President called “the vision thing,” Kaplan writes that “land-grant universities, the Panama Canal, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Federal Reserve, and the Interstate Highway system” can all be extrapolated from the sixth President’s big ideas. Even Adams’s decisive defeat by Jackson in his bid for reelection inspires a wan bit of spin: “A switch of a small number of votes in Ohio and Maryland would have given him those states and made the race closer.”

John Quincy Adams ranks with Jimmy Carter on the roster of ex-Presidential redemption. Instead of completing a biography of his father, he let himself be elected to the House, where he spent nine terms in Whiggish opposition to the Democrats, supporting a national bank and a protective tariff and internal improvements. (Kaplan is so intent on making his book “as much about twenty-first-century America as about Adams’ life and times” that one can almost see Sarah Palin in a coonskin cap when the Jacksonians arrive on the scene.) Adams also opposed the doctrine of nullification—which would allow states to ignore federal laws they deemed unconstitutional—being advocated by the man who had been his Vice-President, John C. Calhoun.

A “prudent” abolitionist by Kaplan’s

reckoning, Adams rejected both instant emancipation and the colonization of freed slaves in Africa, on the ground of impracticality. (Mrs. Adams, who also grew sympathetic to abolition, had sometimes hired the slaves of others to help out with her parties while her husband was at the State Department.) But the congressman made a long, implacable defense of the citizenry’s right at least to petition the House against slavery, and, if the free-



dom of the slaves who revolted aboard the *Amistad* was granted on highly specific grounds, it was argued by Adams, before the Supreme Court, on the broadest premises of natural law. From the time of the Missouri Compromise, in 1820, he had prophesied the breakup of the Union.

A reader of Kaplan’s book does see John Quincy Adams evolve from a sort of disagreeable probity into a more appealing fierceness, but the biographer’s approach remains gravely respectful throughout. A dry piety closes off any real spelunking of the subject’s darker recesses: “It was a simple formula: if called, he would serve. No matter what the objections, no matter the personal sacrifices.” Here and there, one gets a crisp formulation (“The threat of disunion struck horror into peaceful and commercial hearts”), but the reader is too often wearied by phrasing like “the ameliorating feeling of generational change.” Kaplan can be a terrible storyteller, maddeningly proleptic, interrupting marriages to go back to engagements, topic-sentencing a paragraph with one person’s illness and devoting all the rest of it to another’s giving birth.

The author’s tendency to take nobility at face value, to regard his subject’s diary as a dispositive, blue-ribbon report, makes one welcome a pair of new books devoted to Adams’s wife: Margery M. Heffron’s “*Louisa Catherine: The Other*

Mrs. Adams” (Yale) and “*A Traveled First Lady*” (Harvard), a selection of Louisa Adams’s private writings. Kaplan’s treatment of her is appreciative but largely external, and these works allow Louisa to emerge as a subject herself. In the process, she also becomes newly convincing as a source, especially in connection with her husband’s complicated, grinding ambition, a quality she discerned beneath his cloak of rectitude.

The only First Lady born outside the United States, Louisa Catherine Johnson worshipped her father, Joshua, a high-living, sharp-practicing American businessman who had settled in London before the Revolution and during it took his family to France. In Nantes, they took an apartment in an extravagant building called *Le Temple du Goût*. When the family returned to England, Louisa became known in school as “Miss Proud.” She was, in her own estimation, “universally respected, but . . . never beloved”—the same formula so often applied to her future husband, who first came to the Johnsons’ London home for dinner in November, 1795. Louisa was twenty and John Quincy Adams, then Minister to the Netherlands, was twenty-eight.

But Louisa also possessed a great many traits that John Quincy did not, ones that complemented and vexed him. She was intuitive about people in a way he never could be; she read gothic novels instead of Cicero. John Quincy did not share what Heffron calls Louisa’s “irrepressible sense of the ridiculous,” and he was forced to deal with her need to be cherished and her tendency toward brutal self-disgust.

The marriage got off to a disastrous start when Joshua’s “façade of a gentleman merchant” suddenly collapsed, leaving Louisa a dowry of debts and disgrace. As she and John Quincy departed London for Prussia, one of the Johnsons’ angry former servants shouted insults at their carriage. The new Mrs. Adams arrived in Berlin filled with loneliness and shame, and forever after worried that her husband thought he had been tricked into marriage.

Louisa gamely did her job as diplomatic consort, rarely putting a foot wrong, even though Adams’s salary and allowance were so inadequate that she once, in the manner of Scarlett O’Hara, had to make a ball gown from a set of

drapes. Before the couple, who now had three sons, went to Russia, John Quincy insisted that she leave behind the two older boys in Massachusetts. Louisa described her arrival with the youngest at a hotel on St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospekt: "The Chamber I lodged in was a stone hole entered by Stone passages and so full of rats that they would drag the braid from the table by my bed side which I kept for the Child and fight all night long."

A high point of resourcefulness in her life came in 1815, when she was forty, with a six-week coach journey from Russia to Paris, where John Quincy awaited her after his negotiations in Ghent. Along the way, she dodged wolves, pro-Napoleonic mobs, and a treacherous servant (she hid her money in her dress), and, much later, composed an account of her travels that reads like a chapter out of "Vanity Fair." Her health seems to have been fine for most of this trip, no matter that she was always prone to fever, fainting fits, and what Nagel, in the main a great admirer, calls "neurotic indispositions." Heffron treads cautiously here but does note, "Whenever she had a purpose in life, Louisa rose to meet its challenges. When, on the other hand, she felt herself unneeded and unappreciated by her husband, she seems to have sought unconsciously to command his attention through bouts of sickness." In 1815, it was only when her coach got close to Paris, and John Quincy, that she grumbled about being under the weather. Her husband described his time alone in Paris, waiting for her, as "in many respects the most agreeable interlude of my life."

The union was so long and contentious—a "fifty-year drama," Heffron says—played out in so many different geographies and social positions, with so many pullings together and estrangements, that any over-all assessment of it has proved difficult. Kaplan acknowledges the couple's "natural frailties" and clashes of temperament but sees a fundamental soundness to the partnership, which is what John Quincy Adams saw. Nagel's view was darker: he could not exempt John Quincy and Louisa from his pronouncement that there were "no happy marriages in the second generation" of Adamses. In his view, Louisa's emotional neediness suffered too many

defeats from John Quincy's "monumental tactlessness" and what she imagined to be his enduring resentment over her father's debacle; John Quincy was "a husband whom she feared as much as she loved."

There was no ease to either of them, and their combination often produced a volatile misery. Heffron detects a "congenital inability to hear what the other was saying" and makes plain that they communicated better on paper than in person. Even so, their physical ardor for each other was decided and prolonged. Before and between and after producing three sons and a daughter, whose death in infancy almost maddened her with grief (the child was buried in Russia), Louisa suffered nine miscarriages, the last of them at forty-six. She acknowledged that her bodily agonies could leave her husband "sick with anxiety."

If John Quincy had to contend, at the start, with his father-in-law's financial calamity, Louisa for decades had to endure the formidable strictures of her mother-in-law. Abigail Adams, wary of the bride's foreign upbringing, regarded the marriage as a mistake. The first meeting between the two women was a fiasco, and as the years went by Abigail remained perplexed by Louisa's inconvenient "habit" of miscarriage. Things improved somewhat with time—Abigail absolved Louisa of any guilt in the matter of the dowry, and extended a real and woeful sympathy when Louisa's infant daughter died in Russia—but the initial disapproval was too strong to give way to anything much warmer than a *modus vivendi*. The elder Mrs. Adams had trouble recognizing or crediting Louisa's strengths, which displayed themselves intermittently and only after breaking through a set of unfamiliar mannerisms. Abigail's starchy command was an everyday matter, not something to be exercised just in emergencies. At sixty-four, the self-doubting Louisa could still lament, "No one understands me one bit better than they did the day I arrived; and I feel a desolate loneliness in the very midst of a family, that I have too much idolized." She accepted a measure of blame herself, conceding too emphatically "the irritation of a diseased mind, which cannot regulate itself." The bright spots for her within the Adams clan were, early on, John Quincy's much more charming brother

Thomas and, later, "the old Gentleman," John Adams himself, whose appreciation of Louisa was more enthusiastic than his wife's. In his last years, he was mightily entertained by the "journal-letters" his daughter-in-law sent from the capital he had left long ago.

Of Louisa's three sons, only the youngest, Charles Francis—Lincoln's Minister to Great Britain and the first of the Adams family's historians—achieved any distinction. George Washington Adams, long subject to erratic moods, appears to have leaped to his death from a steamship in 1829; his debt-ridden, alcoholic brother John died five years later. All three boys cherished their mother and their grandfather, who by the end of his life had become more doting than dynastic. John Quincy was not so resigned to any loss of prominence by the family, and he had imposed upon his three sons a tutoring regimen that Louisa regarded as preposterous, and even Abigail found excessively strict.

To some degree, Louisa's own public life involved managing the more unpleasant aspects of her husband. Early in his time as Secretary of State, some of John Quincy's political allies complained that his lack of sociability was getting in the way of his current job and his Presidential possibilities. Louisa attempted to remedy things with even more hostessing than she was already doing: the self-important Elizabeth Monroe had discontinued the bustling hospitality of Dolley Madison, and it had fallen to Louisa to offer an ongoing series of "sociables" and to handle the thorny issue of "first visits"—the baroque but unsettled business of whether a cabinet officer or a senator should be the one to initiate contact with the other. "The etiquette question has become of so much importance as to be an object of State—This I know you will scarcely believe," Louisa wrote to John Adams. Never having got over her father's fall, she was aware of the irony in her position: "There is such an attempt to introduce distinctions here and to class our society it is to me perfectly sickening—I am the reputed author of it which is the most laughable part of it—as my own family connections rank according to this new scale among the inadmissibles."

Proud of her husband's achievements and aware that his drive for distinction was more complicated than the crude

scramblings for office she saw all around her, Louisa took a practiced delight in sizing up the diplomatic corps who passed through her drawing room, two blocks from the White House, during Adams's time at State: "The Swedish looking frightened out of his wits as if afraid his *place* was not secure; and the Minister from the Netherlands, elegant and courteous; his face dressed with diplomatic smiles with a heart enveloped in gloom; while the English Chargé enconced in the brazen effrontery of public licentiousness appeared to find no shelter but in his impudence."

Heffron's agreeably written biography—cut short by the death of the author, in December, 2011—leaves Louisa on the threshold of the Adamses' unhappy years in the White House. Another writer will have to finish her story. But few glimpses of the Adamses' marriage will be more telling than the dual view one can get from the diary entry that each made after their strategic ball for General Jackson, on January 8, 1824. Weeks of preparation had turned the house upside down; festoons had been fashioned from laurel and roses, each with a small lamp at the center. Louisa describes the evening:

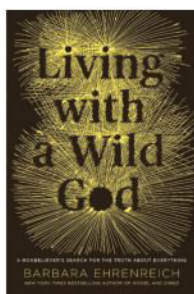
At half past seven every thing was ready and the guests began to arrive in one continued Stream. . . . Mr Adams and I took our stations near the door that we might be seen by our guests and be at the same time ready to receive the General. . . . While sitting in the dancing Room one of the lamps fell upon my head and ran all down my back and shoulders—This gave rise to a good joke and it was said that I was already anointed with the sacred oil and that it was certainly ominous—I observed that the only certain thing I knew was that my gown was spoilt—I changed my dress in a few minutes and returned to the Ball Room.

John Quincy Adams's report on the party is briefer:

This being the anniversary of the victory at New Orleans, we gave an evening party or ball to General Jackson at which about one thousand persons attended. General Jackson came about eight o'clock, and retired after supper. The dancing continued till near one in the morning. The crowd was great, and the house could scarcely contain the company. But it all went off in good order, and without accident.

This prickly visionary had once observed a solar eclipse with his naked eye; within his own four walls, he often couldn't see past his nose. ♦

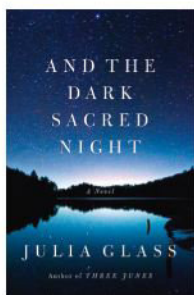
BRIEFLY NOTED



LIVING WITH A WILD GOD, by Barbara Ehrenreich (*Twelve*). The heart of this unusual memoir is a journal in which, as a teenager, Ehrenreich recorded a series of seemingly transcendental manifestations, which she terms "dissociative episodes." They culminated, on a walk through Lone Pine, California, in a metaphysical showstopper in which "the world flamed into life." For decades, as she built a reputation as a left-wing activist and writer, Ehrenreich dismissed the encounter as a mental glitch. This book announces her reluctant willingness to concede that it might have been a "mystical experience." What can such a thing mean for a staunch atheist? She arrives at no clear conclusions, but her questions, always scrupulously rooted in the scientific tradition in which she was trained, are potent enough to justify the attempt.



ELIOT NESS, by Douglas Perry (*Viking*). The campaign to break Al Capone's bootlegging business during Prohibition made Ness famous, thanks largely to the publication of his posthumous memoir, "The Untouchables," which was much embellished by a ghostwriter. Perry's biography conveys the misfortune of a shy, nervous man who spent the rest of his life trying to "recapture the emotional high that came from crashing through Al Capone's doors." Later assignments, such as a stint as Cleveland's director of public safety, were arguably more significant but hardly as exciting. By the time he died—from a massive heart attack, at the age of just fifty-five—he was alcoholic and broke.



AND THE DARK SACRED NIGHT, by Julia Glass (*Pantheon*). At the beginning of this elegant and moving novel, Kit Noonan is an unemployed father of two, in the throes of a midlife crisis. Prompted by his wife, he embarks on a search for the "invisible scaffolding to his life." He was brought up by a single mother who refused to tell him anything about his biological father, but, beginning with a visit to the Vermont woodsman who was his stepfather for a while, he comes to discover a kind of extended family. The novel, which prominently features a gay couple and a woman who once ran a charity for pregnant teen-agers, repeatedly interrogates received ideas about what constitutes a family.



OCTOBER, by Zoë Wicomb (*New Press*). Mercia Murray, the protagonist of this elegiac novel, is, like the author, a middle-aged professor living in Glasgow. She returns to her childhood home in South Africa after her partner, a poet, leaves her for a younger woman. Uprooted, stricken, childless by choice, she forces herself to confront the traumatic past of her mixed-race family, and a story of sexual abuse emerges. Wicomb adeptly navigates time, place, and the minds of various characters to illustrate the impact of apartheid on one family. She also puts motherhood on trial. Why reproduce when there's a chance that, as Mercia thinks, your baby "may well turn into a viper?" One South African woman wonders whether she has "the makings of a mother, the milky swagger."

AT THE GALLERIES

DRESSING UP

How Charles James elevated American fashion.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

I have never met any of the lucky women who owned a dress by Charles James. A college friend, though, had an aunt who wore a James to her engagement party, in the late nineteen-fifties. It must have been one of his last creations, since he went out of business in 1958. “Imagine that! A James in the family!” my friend said, as if she were speaking of a Vermeer. “I’ve always wondered what happened to it.”

I’ve always wondered what happened to James. His name draws a blank outside the fashion world, although Christian Dior called him “the greatest talent of my generation,” and Balenciaga, a miser with his enthusiasms, considered James “the only one in the world who has raised dress-making from an applied art to a pure art.” But by the time this compliment reached James’s ears he was living at the Chelsea Hotel, nearly destitute, and estranged from all but a few devotees. They were mostly members of a wild younger generation that included Halston, a former protégé, who briefly gave James a job and, in 1969, produced a retrospective of his work in an East Village night club. James turned on him, though, as he had on so many friends and benefactors. He was demanding at his best, and substance abuse heightened his volatility.

Like Proust, who gave his mother’s furniture to a brothel, James sometimes lent a couture outfit to a club kid. But he also liked to model the clothes himself; his physique was elfin. Diana Vreeland recalled meeting James in the late nineteen-twenties, when he was voguing on a beach in the Hamptons in women’s hats of his own creation and “beautiful robes.” He was about to make his début as one of those boy wonders who have played an outsize role in the history of fashion. And there always was something of the boy

wonder about him: a puerile sense of entitlement that did him in, a prodigious imagination that never gave out, and a conviction that he was immortal. James died at seventy-two, and at the end of his life he was wizened and frail, but he still had the luxuriant dark hair of a *matinée* idol. His grudges were luxuriant, too. He had so much bitterness to discharge, so much glory to recall, and such philosophy to impart—a whole science of couture—that he talked through the night to whoever would listen.

James’s years of obscurity never shook his confidence that posterity would give him his due, and, sure enough, the largest James retrospective ever mounted, “Charles James: Beyond Fashion,” opens on May 8th at the newly refurbished Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The show’s curators, Harold Koda and Jan Glier Reeder, and its conservators, Sarah Scaturro and Glenn Petersen, have, in effect, rescued, restored, and annotated a lost gospel. Reeder, a James expert, spent three years demystifying a biography that James embroidered. Her catalogue essay is the first reliable chronology of the life and the work, and James’s range will astonish anyone who knows him only through a few photographs by Cecil Beaton. One of those images—a classical frieze, in which eight swanlike beauties are posed in a grand salon—is on the cover of the catalogue. Each ball gown is a pearly cascade of satin or taffeta, undergirded by an armature of bone, padding, or tulle.

Beaton’s picture, however, plays to received ideas about James that Koda and Reeder otherwise take pains to dispel. The mature James lacks the irony of a postmodernist, yet his samplings from the past (bustles, panniers, and crinolines) have the same nerve. The young James was a leader of the avant-garde, whose ingenious tailoring—“off-

grain” cuts, displaced seams, asymmetric draping that eliminated darts—is hard to read in a photograph. (Fashion history has a prejudice for the photogenic, and the tour de force of simplicity is often slighted.) James designed several outfits with an adjustable fit, so that two sizes accommodated most figures. The infinity scarf and the wrap dress were his inventions, as was the down jacket—a puffer for evening in ivory satin, which Dali admired as a “soft sculpture.” One of James’s novelties was a proto sports bra.

By rights, he should be remembered, like Chanel, as one of those revolutionary pragmatists who changed the way that women dress. But James was often too early to get credit for his breakthroughs. He introduced an A-line coat ten years before Yves Saint Laurent, who had just taken over at Dior, made headlines with the Trapeze dress. It must also be said that Chanel and Saint Laurent focussed on women’s lives, while James fixated zealously on their proportions. “The feminine figure,” he believed, is “intrinsicly wrong,” i.e. not platonically ideal by his standards. His mission to correct its flaws with a nip and a tuck, an arcing seam, a buckram implant, a cushion of air between skin and cloth diminished his relevance, even as it enhanced his prestige as an anatomist. The young find remedial fashion intrinsically uncool.

Charlie James, as he was known to his familiars, was born on July 18, 1906, at Agincourt House, not far from the Royal Military College in Sandhurst, England, where his father, Ralph, was an Army staff officer. The baby was named in honor of his late maternal grandfather, Charles Wilson Brega, a Chicago shipping and real-estate magnate. His daughter Louise had met Ralph on a world cruise with her family; he was returning from a posting in China.

In 1910, the Jameses moved into a sixteen-room mansion in London. At five or six, Charles began composing for the piano. He was sent to boarding school at eight, and, at fourteen, enrolled at Harrow, though he left before graduation, with dismal grades. He later suggested that his departure was



James in 1948. Dior called him "the greatest talent of my generation," but he was often too early to get credit for his breakthroughs.

PHOTOGRAPH BY IRVING PENN

precipitated by a “minor escapade,” although Reeder found no official record of it. James was openly gay from his late teens, she notes, and for the friends in his clique—Beaton among them—beautiful manners and bad behavior were the essence of chic. They shared a taste for fancy dress, makeup, and dramatics. (In the nineteen-thirties, James became a successful costume designer.) Ralph James considered his son a disgrace, and the antipathy was mutual. James turned to fashion, he explained to a correspondent, “out of a compulsion to be involved in a business of which my father disapproved.”

By 1924, James was living in his mother’s home town, and working for Commonwealth Edison, in a desk job arranged by the company’s president, a family friend. When the flamboyant teen-ager staged a fashion show—of batik beach wraps—at the office, he was reassigned to the architecture department, where he absorbed some of the technical concepts that he would apply to couture. In 1926, however, he did something unthinkable for a member of his class, male or female: he opened a millinery shop. Ralph forbade his wife and daughters (one older, one younger than their brother) to patronize it. Louise sent her friends, however, and the doyennes of Chicago society loyally helped to underwrite the ventures of her prodigy. James shaped his hats directly on clients’ heads, cutting, twisting, and scrunching the felt or straw into whimsical shapes. A red cloche had a Jack Russell’s cocked earflap; a turban molded to the skull suggested Amelia Earhart’s flight helmet.

Most American couturiers have been, at best, middle class. Adrian was the son of a milliner, Norell of a haberdasher; Mainbocher worked in the complaints department at Sears, Roebuck; Galanos’s parents ran a Greek restaurant in New Jersey. Debonair Bill Blass, the son of a travelling salesman, could recall a time when he and his lowly ilk were asked to use the service elevator. James’s connections gave him a ready clientele for the couture business that he launched in 1928, when he

added a line of clothing to his hats and opened a salon in Manhattan, on the second story of a former stable owned by Noël Coward. Beaton promoted his work in *Vogue*, and James, who had considerable flair as a huckster, seduced the fashion press on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 1929, he was back in London, preceded by his reputation. Lady Ottoline Morrell became a client, and Virginia Woolf first heard of “the man milliner who was dropped by Heaven” through her friend Mary Hutchinson, a cousin of Lytton Strachey. “So geometrical is Charlie James,” Woolf reported to her lover Vita Sackville-West, “that if a stitch is crooked, Vita, the whole dress is torn to shreds, which Mary bears without wincing.” Hutchinson wore a James blouse for her portrait by Matisse, at the artist’s request. But, she later recalled, “Charlie was sometimes so entranced by the shape he was ‘sculpting’ over one’s own” that when a dress arrived “it was impossible to get into.”

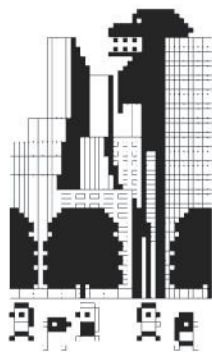
James’s entrée to Bloomsbury was sponsored, in part, by his Harrow schoolmate Stephen Tennant, the gay aesthete who was a model for eccentric characters in novels by Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford. James ran up a fetchingly polymorphous wardrobe for him that included slinky beach pajamas. Tennant gushed in a letter to Beaton about an “ineffably limp” dress shirt in creamy satin and the “stunningest” black trousers, which “seem glued to every fissure & ripple of thigh & bottom.” Yet, if James flirted with cross-dressing, he didn’t let his female clients take the same liberty. He claimed to prize character above beauty in a woman, but he was an absolutist in his reverence

for an old-school ideal of femininity. Between the two world wars, James owned exclusive salons in Paris, London, and New York. He tacked between them, stretching his resources (which is to say borrowed resources) thin. Financial improvidence eventually destroyed his business, and his artistic scruples—the only kind he possessed—routinely jeopardized his deadlines and contracts.

Balenciaga’s couture ateliers produced some three hundred ensembles a year. James managed to create fewer than two thousand in the course of four decades. He once reworked a sleeve so many times that the labor and the materials invested in it supposedly amounted to twenty thousand dollars. The cost of such obsessiveness couldn’t be recouped, even at the astronomical prices that the world’s best-dressed women were happy to pay, while his opportunism strained their good will. The Countess of Rosse, a devoted patron, once brought a rich friend to James’s atelier. He told her, “I couldn’t possibly make anything for a frump like you.”

No one, least of all James, has ever accounted for his artistry as a tailor. Apparently, he spent time in Paris studying his trade, though where or under whose aegis is uncertain. He thought of his vocation as sartorial engineering, but Harold Koda believes that there was more instinct than science to James’s craft, and Richard Martin, the late fashion historian, dared to suggest that James “pretended to give serious thought to the structural elements of the dress, but a study . . . shows that he simply applied more and more layers until he achieved the needed density and shape.”

Instinct and reason, however, are both aspects of spatial intelligence. James could visualize a complex pattern in three dimensions, then wrap or drape it directly on a body. The manipulation of material was one of his signatures, and he had no qualms about distressing it, or combining classic luxury fabrics with funky synthetics, like a fuzzy white plush that resembled wet feathers. The architect of the Pantheon’s dome would have admired his cantilevered skirts, one of which, belonging to the Petal dress, had a circumference of nearly eighty feet. James’s masterpiece, by his own just assessment, was the famous Clover Leaf ball gown. I tried but failed to follow the cutaway drawings that illustrate its construction—it had thirty pattern pieces and weighed ten pounds—or Reeder’s description of “the semi-bias in the asymmetrical outer layer” and the “sequence of undulating curves, that work in



symphony . . . with top and bottom curves undulating in opposite directions.” For a 2011 James show at the Chicago History Museum, the curators resorted to CT-scan technology to expose the bones of a James under its flesh. A photograph shows three bemused-looking technicians grappling with what looks like a supine débutante who wound up in the E.R. after the ball. It is actually James’s Swan dress strapped to a gurney.

Koda told me that “to really understand” a James “you have to take it apart.” But his catalogue essay, “The Calculus of Fashion,” does an excellent job of noninvasive deconstruction. And if you strip a James to its foundation what you find is sex. The true function of fashion, James said, is to arouse the mating instinct. The Broadway star Gertrude Lawrence was quoted as saying that she had never bought anything more respectable than a James—or as “utterly indecent.” His Taxi dress, of the early thirties, spiralled seamlessly around the body and clasped at the hip. (Later models zipped across the torso on a rakish diagonal.) The dress got its name, James explained, because he wanted to design a garment that a woman could slip into—or out of—in the back of a cab. A deceptively austere sheath, like the Coq Noir, of 1937, swaddled the figure like a mummy’s wrapping, but James bunched the excess silk at the back, forming an obscenely gorgeous labial bustle. A James gown invites you to imagine the lobes and crevices of the nude body beneath it, and it wasn’t for the faint of heart. “Elegance,” he wrote, “is not a social distinction but a sensual distinction.” Gypsy Rose Lee, the queen of burlesque, was a favorite client.

Upper-class life carried on during the Depression with an insouciant disregard for the general misery. Vreeland and her husband, a banker, who were living abroad, kept a liveried chauffeur for their Bugatti. By the end of the decade, James was juggling fully staffed couture ateliers in London and in Paris, where he stayed at the venerable Hôtel Lancaster. His friend Jean Cocteau lived across the hall, and Cocteau’s influence is apparent in a series of grosgrain opera coats that Beaton

photographed against a background by Christian Bérard. The coats were an experiment in using humble materials for exalted purposes, and they have an aura—stark, dreamy, faintly vampiric—of costumes for a Surrealist chatelaine.

Cocteau also allegedly saved James from a suicide attempt, which was not his first. In Chicago, James had tried to kill himself over an unrequited love, having taken pains with the décor of his death scene: flickering candles, gilded mirrors, an ether-soaked handkerchief. “Racked by the pain in his nose,” Reeder writes, he was rushed to a hospital that his grandfather had funded. In some respects, however, James had an unusually robust survival instinct. He decamped from Paris for London in August of 1939, then sailed for New York.

The Second World War was a golden age for American fashion. Stylish women who had shopped in Paris were forced to become locavores. James opened a couture salon on East Fifty-seventh Street, but he also established relationships with leading retailers. In 1941, B. Altman mounted a show of his trouser-skirts. Wearing pants was still largely taboo for middle-class women—slacks were acceptable on the factory floor and for the construction jobs that women had stepped up to fill—but James devised a clever solution for the conflicting demands of comfort and propriety. The skirt was essentially a bifurcated sarong, threaded between the thighs. It freed the legs and their stride, but a crossover front panel dissembled their separation. A sporty knee-length version anticipated the culotte; a resort-wear evening ensemble came with a midriff-baring top. The respectable and the indecent were never far apart.

New York was tonic for James. He liked to deplore the vulgarity of garments, but he was nothing if not a man on the make. He found a kindred spirit in Florence Nightingale Graham, a former nursing student and makeup salesgirl from a small town in Ontario who had reinvented herself as Elizabeth Arden. James was her walker in New York and Chicago, although his mother failed to get her into the

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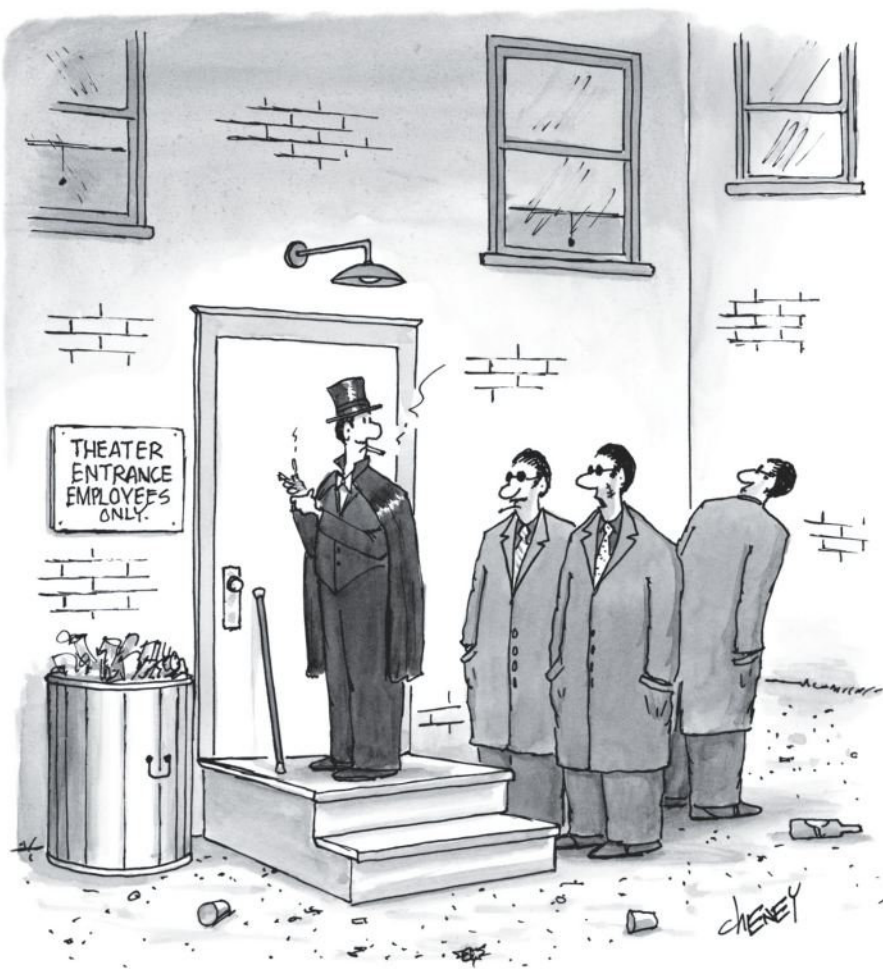
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CONDÉ NAST



"We heard you're good at making people disappear."

society pages—she was “trade.” When Arden became engaged to a Russian prince, James designed her trousseau. She shared James’s ambition to correct women’s flaws, and in 1943, when she decided to expand her beauty business to include custom-made clothes, she hired him to head the department. Their partnership ended in bickering over money and credit for his designs (she was not the first or the last of his associates whom he accused of piracy), and she was incensed by a backlit red vase that he had placed prominently in the window, giving her tony establishment, she felt, the air of a bordello. But, thanks in part to Arden’s patronage, James met Millicent Rogers, Babe Paley, Marietta Tree, Slim Keith, and Austine Hearst, among other glamorous clients, who inspired and subsidized some of his greatest work. Hearst commissioned the Clover Leaf gown

for Eisenhower’s Inaugural ball, though she had to wear something else—it wasn’t ready.

When the war ended, James hired Japanese-Americans recently liberated from internment camps to staff his new atelier, on Madison Avenue. They worked, he wrote, on “my most important bigger clothes, ball dresses and such”—including the sumptuous baroque gowns in an advertising campaign, photographed by Beaton, for Modess sanitary napkins. The idea was “that any woman at a difficult moment can imagine herself a Duchess,” although, at a difficult moment, you could never have squeezed a James gown into the stall of a ladies’ room. The Japanese had “a special quality of precision” that James found lacking in the New York labor pool. Harold Koda, however, told me that James was a selective perfectionist. He violated the integrity of

his fabrics, and, Koda said, “I was shocked to discover how shoddy some of his seams are.”

After the war, French fashion regained its predominance, which is to say its American market. Although James was among the world’s most expensive couturiers—he charged seven hundred to fifteen hundred dollars for a dress—he fulminated at the disproportionate profits and the obsequious coverage that his counterparts in Paris were reaping. The problem, as he saw it, was partly a lack of competition from an American fashion industry enfeebled by mediocrity and rife with plagiarism. To encourage native talent and originality, he joined forces with Michelle Murphy, of the Brooklyn Museum, and he created the prototype for a dress dummy whose figure held the promise, he thought, of transforming the fit of American sportswear. The Jennie was a slim but realistic modern Eve, with a small bust, a convex tummy, and a slouch. It never caught on commercially, though James’s advocacy did have a lasting consequence: He persuaded Millicent Rogers to donate twenty-four of her James gowns to the Brooklyn Museum. Her bequest set a precedent for treating couture as art—and as a tax deduction.

James’s career was approaching its zenith. In 1950, he won a prestigious Coty Award, the first of two, and, in 1953, the Neiman Marcus Award—fashion’s Oscar. (He startled the black-tie audience by appearing in jeans at the ceremony. “The bluejean is the only art form in apparel,” he explained.) He also branched out into other fields. The philanthropists Dominique and John de Menil hired James to decorate their house in Houston, designed by Philip Johnson. James’s voluptuous biomorphic furniture and hot color scheme—fuchsia, crimson, and tobacco halls; pewter, gold, and chartreuse upholstery—eroticized the modernist architecture. Johnson excluded the house from surveys of his work.

But no departure was more radical for James than his church wedding, in 1954, to Nancy Lee Gregory, a wealthy divorcée from Kansas, twenty years his junior. Some of their friends suspected venal motives, though James

insisted he had married for love. “My wife knew I was homosexual,” he said in an interview years later, adding that “all of society is double-gaited.” When a son, Charles, Jr., was born, in 1956, James celebrated his new status with a collection of children’s wear. One of the pieces was a baby’s cape, in robin’s-egg blue, eccentrically cut, like the carapace of a tortoise, with front-set armholes designed to limit an infant’s “flailing.” Princess Grace of Monaco ordered eighteen items for the layette of her daughter, Caroline.

A late marriage and fatherhood sometimes mellow a restless bachelor, but they seemed to exacerbate James’s disaffections. The fine print of his financial dealings, documented by Elizabeth Ann Coleman, the curator of an important James show at the Brooklyn Museum in 1982, trace the death spiral of a grandiose enterprise out of control. The business had been diversified into a labyrinth of corporations that handled contracts for couture, ready-to-wear, faux furs, costume design, maternity fashions, the children’s wear, prom dresses, accessories, and other projects, many unrealized, including a foundation. In the first year of the marriage, when the couple was living at the Sherry Netherland Hotel, and James had just leased a sprawling new atelier, Charles James Manufacturers recorded revenues of \$112,963, against expenditures of \$310,266.

Bitter litigation with his licensees contributed to the brewing debacle. For much of the next four years, the couple lived on the run from their creditors—a list of their addresses includes more than a dozen hotels in New York, New Orleans, Kansas City, and Chicago. In 1957, days before the birth of their daughter, Louise, the Internal Revenue Service seized the contents of James’s showroom; a year later, city marshals raided his office, and the business sank under its debts. Nancy’s money was gone, and Charles was using amphetamines prescribed by Max Jacobson, the infamous Dr. Feelgood. “I do not know,” James said, “if I did right to marry and ruin Nancy, but . . . the necessity of success and achievement came first.” Nevertheless, their mutual tenderness survived divorce, and Nancy

helped to preserve the James legacy. But she took the children and moved back to Kansas.

James landed at the Chelsea in 1964. The maids refused to clean his squalid rooms, which he shared with a beagle named Sputnik. He continued to produce custom clothing for the occasional client, but, fuelled by speed, he indulged in an orgy of blame. James ended his fifty-year friendship with Beaton over a perceived disloyalty, accused the Brooklyn Museum of stealing materials that he had left there for storage, returned his awards in a fit of pique, and denigrated Vreeland for a long list of slights.

Yet, in destitution, James discovered a talent for generosity as a teacher. He embarked on a series of projects focussed on “fashion engineering” with the Art Students League and Pratt Institute, and he won a Guggenheim Fellowship to write a textbook on the same subject. His young friends saw him as a link to the heroic age of couture. Antonio Lopez, the illustrator, preserved a record of James’s work in hundreds of drawings. Homer Layne, a Pratt student from Tennessee, became his chief assistant and the steward of his archives, which he gave to the Met last year. The photographer Bill Cunningham documented the late-night “seminars” at which James held forth on “the fine points of couture, the follies of the rich, and ‘the plagiarists of Seventh Avenue.’”

James never produced the textbook, and he never finished a memoir he was writing, which he intended to call “Beyond Fashion.” But in 1974 a British magazine published his autobiographical sketch, “A Portrait of a Genius by a Genius.” That is how he had lived—with a messianic faith in his uniqueness—and that is how he left the scene. On Friday, September 22, 1978, the day before he succumbed to pneumonia and heart disease, an ambulance was called to the hotel. “It may not mean anything to you,” James told the medics, “but I am what is popularly regarded as the greatest couturier in the Western world.”

Layne spent the weekend clearing out the rooms before the hotel could seize their contents. James owed six months of back rent. ♦

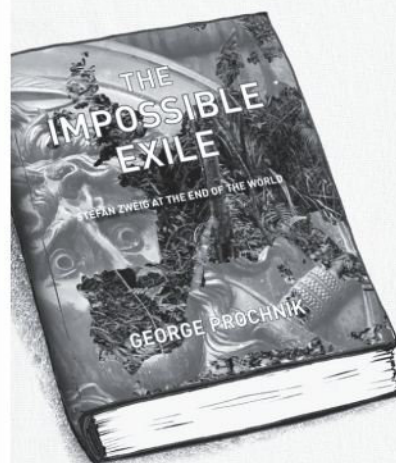


NEW FROM OTHER PRESS

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RELAXED FIT

Sharon Van Etten's basic tools.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES



Sharon Van Etten is a bright-eyed, compact, outgoing woman. But the songs on her astonishing new album, “Are We There,” are hardly sparkly—they are slow-moving, efficient vehicles that carry the listener through stages of a long-running and complex romance, which Van Etten seems both to live on and to be trapped in. They tend toward emotional distillation, and are often too intense to admit anything beyond her expansive voice and a single instrument. Van Etten describes intimate scenarios, yet she sings without a hint of either theatrics or excessive restraint. You are instantly her emotional partner, torn between learning from her and wanting to

help her out of the maelstrom that she seems to be wandering through. Her vocal range begins slightly lower than that of most female singers, and it reaches up high. But the pleasure is all in the tone, a rich, physically grounded sound that seems to begin somewhere in her legs and to travel up through her body. The effect is not at all stagy—her delivery is a complete articulation of whatever emotion she is feeling in any moment.

In 2009, Van Etten released her first album, titled “Because I Was in Love.” Her subject matter is the tar pit of the long-term relationship, the struggles and the brief glimpses of joy and equanimity. Her debut relied mostly on her voice and

guitar, with minimal ornamentation. In its phrasing, her singing bears more than a slight resemblance to that of Chan Marshall (Cat Power), as words rise and fall with unpredictable wobbles but largely ride long, pure tones. Compared to her work to come, “Because I Was in Love” is a slowed-down, reduced version of her template. On the song “Tornado,” she creates a wash of harmonies with her own voice; it’s reassuring but not really necessary. She sings, “I’m a tornado. You are the dust, you’re all around and you’re inside. You are the nature, I’m the roar that comes from you.” There is pain at the center of her songs, and also vision, but they haven’t yet been filled out. The shadowy figure who is featured in all four of her albums, her lover and tormentor, is coming into focus. It’s just that Van Etten’s anger hasn’t manifested itself fully.

“Are We There” is the completion of a process that unfolded over “Epic” and “Tramp,” the two albums that followed her debut. “Epic,” from 2010, picked up the pace considerably and put Van Etten in a brisk, more luminous context. Guitars are strummed, there is a full band much of the time, and the songs are in a vein of American rock songwriting that is open-minded with respect to form but is largely disconnected from electronic instruments and syntactical gimmickry. (R.E.M., Lucinda Williams, and Neko Case all fall into this very roomy category.) These are acts that disdain conservative impulses but do represent a kind of traditionalism—the idea that the work can be done with songwriting and live performance. Though these artists can sound dissimilar, you sense that none of them will record a dance album.

After “Epic,” it seemed like Van Etten had earned the blessings of all of indie rock’s secular priests. Their approval buttressed the enthusiastic support she already had from NPR and Pitchfork, outlets with the power to encourage people to buy albums rather than just know the artists’ names. “Tramp,” her third release, was recorded with the National’s Aaron Dessner. Her collaborators were so well-known within indie-rock circles that you could be forgiven for feeling as if you’d missed a decade of activity—but it’s simply that her ascent had been accorded into roughly two years. In that time, she worked with or had songs covered by Justin Vernon, Julianna Barwick, members

“Are We There,” Van Etten’s new album, is mostly words, voice, and heartbreak.

of the Walkmen, and Beirut's Zach Condon. An independent musician with only two previous albums had accrued the status of a storied veteran simply by being that good.

On "Tramp" (2012), Van Etten stepped back to a slower rhythm. Her songs burned slightly hotter, and she brought in more sounds, more color. "Tramp" was the first of her albums to appear on the *Billboard* 200 chart, and its single "Serpents" can regularly be heard in coffee shops.

"Are We There," which Van Etten made with the producer Stewart Lerman, is a well-paced series of triumphs, interspersed with pleading and occasional moments of romantic bliss. The first track, "Afraid of Nothing," sounds like the summation of five years of work, a sort of emotional to-do list. Against a backdrop of electric guitar, piano, and strings, Van Etten lays down her state of the union. In her middle register, she sings softly but firmly, "You told me the day that you show me your face, we'd be in trouble for a long time." The words are stretched out over several measures, and it takes a full minute for the drummer to bring in an actual beat, slow as a funeral march. The piano chords begin to ring louder, and harder. Now Van Etten is asking for change, and pointing to the solution: "I can't wait 'til we're afraid of nothing. I can't wait 'til we hide from nothing." "Nothing" becomes the repeated mantra, echoed by Heather Woods Broderick and Mackenzie Scott, her backup singers.

She reminds us that this is a relationship that we have been witnessing over the course of four albums: "Turning my way, you show me your face. We've known each other for a long time." Though the subtext is dark, the feeling is almost sleepy and resigned. She sounds like a frustrated mate, not like someone bouncing from person to person looking for love. This is an album that centers on fixing a permanent feature, not searching aimlessly.

On "Tarifa," which is equally slow, the mood turns genuinely warm, though charged. The song uses the reedy sound of a Hammond organ, and then blends in bass clarinets. Van Etten references soul music as an inspiration for the woodwinds and, though the affinity isn't initially au-

dible, it becomes more apparent with repeated listening. Van Etten sings alone, lazily, "Shut the door, now in the sun tanning." Her singers come in, and they finish developing the picture: "You were so just, looking across the sky." On the chorus, it seems as if Van Etten is in the middle of the best kind of lost weekend, clarinets and voices moving up with her: "Can't remember. I can't recall. No, I can't remember anything at all."

On "Break Me," we hear what may be the key to Van Etten's struggle, a kind of stasis that only couples can achieve. The pace is the same stately clomp, though there is a sonically varied set of instruments countering her voice—a brittle electronic drone, a woody electric bass being picked, a chiming, echo-soaked guitar ostinato. Van Etten is diagnosing something while begging to be released: "He can break me with one hand to my head. He can make me move into a city, taking me as I am, as he lets me in."

And then, in one verse, Van Etten uses her own pain to turn the knife back on her tormentor, by being declarative: "I am writing about him home. I am. I am writing a song for him." If this is combat in close quarters, in the dark, how does it turn out? One song is titled "Your Love Is Killing," and in another, "You Know Me Well," the chorus is: "You know me well. You show me hell when I'm looking, and here you are lookin'." But even though it's one of the most dire lines on the album, Van Etten uses the music to her own advantage, landing on a satisfying major chord for the words "and here you are," as if to suggest that she won't budge until this fight is over. Van Etten's scenarios rarely get better, but the songs grow in size and her voice suggests that as long as this war goes on she'll remain planted.

"Are We There" is, at the level of innovation, unremarkable. There are no sounds here you haven't heard before, no radical leaps in the approach to recording or playing. The value is in the execution, the quality of which is made more obvious by the nature of the topic: love—or bad-love—songs. Van Etten goes several layers deeper, and faster, than most songwriters. "Are We There" is the kind of album that many people have been trying to make for years and only a dozen or so have pulled off: words, voice, and heartbreak. ♦



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TROUBLE CALLS

"The Amazing Spider-Man 2" and "Young and Beautiful."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The greatness of *Gatsby* is more of a dream than a fact. The fabulousness of the Baker Boys is a tired tagline, based on a distant memory, at least until Michelle Pfeiffer turns up. By what criterion, therefore, should Spider-Man be deemed amazing? How can you stuff an adjective like that into a movie title without a tremor of irony? Yet along

ing set of priorities, and Garfield spends most of the film looking deeply confused, his pretty face scrunched up with the pain of indecision. Either that or his allergies are playing up. I lost count of the scenes in which Gwen and Peter thrash out the question of whether they should be a couple, and there is a sigh of relief in the cinema when she, deploying



Andrew Garfield and Jamie Foxx face off in Marc Webb's new movie.

comes "The Amazing Spider-Man 2," directed by Marc Webb, and bursting with the belief that we must and will be amazed all over again. The main players are here to help, unchanged from the previous outing: Andrew Garfield is Peter Parker, otherwise known as Spider-Man (just add spandex); Emma Stone is Gwen Stacy, his on-off girlfriend; and Sally Field is Aunt May, a wise and kindly soul, though not wise enough to work out why, on the one occasion when Peter does his own laundry, everything turns red and blue.

To purge New York City of crime, swinging down its avenues like Tarzan on his loops of vine, while remaining utterly incapable of using the delicacies cycle on a washing machine argues an interest-

what philosophers would call a performative utterance, says simply, "I break up with you," leaving us to wonder if she pulls the same trick in bed: "And now we approach the orgasm." None of this can be good for Peter's bonhomie, and, unusually for a sequel, his character appears to be going backward. He lives at home with May; he used to have a job as a photographer, but that has faded; we see him graduate along with Gwen, but while she applies for further studies at Oxford, he lies around and practices his moping. He's a volatile mixture of stasis and overkill; a chronic Eeyore who, when duty calls, releases his inner Tigger. The idea of just getting on with your life, at a regular pace, has never been of concern to the Marvel mind.

Take Max (Jamie Foxx), a dweeb so hapless and friendless that he sends himself birthday cards. (Foxx is scouting the area that Eddie Murphy explored in "The Nutty Professor" and "Bowfinger," but without the aid of laughs.) Max works at Oscorp, a nefarious research company that specializes in "the generation of electricity by living organisms," which is more than most of the actors can achieve. One day, he tumbles into a tank of electric eels, emerging as a glowing core of energy who, for no reason other than childish resentment, vows vengeance on Spider-Man, and who calls himself Electro. It may be bad form to point this out, but the world of classic comic books, for all the witty kinesics of its designs, remains shockingly low on imaginative buzz in the titling of heroes and villains. There's one furious freak, toward the end, who straps himself into a giant armored rhino suit. His name is Rhino.

The person who plays him is one of our finest actors, but I will not be so mean as to give away his name. Suffice to say that even he is trapped by the miasma of unsubtlety that creeps into the film and causes all involved to lose their professional bearings. Dane DeHaan, whose sickly sly demeanor served him well in "Kill Your Darlings," plays Harry Osborn, the heir to Oscorp, who morphs into the Green Goblin—a sort of grass-stained werewolf, barrelling around on a floating skateboard and barking his lines like a neurasthenic drill sergeant. ("You. Betrayed. Me.") Even worse is Dr. Kafka (Marton Csokas), an Oscorp employee, plucked straight from the bottom drawer of mad Teutonic scientists. "I'm here to study you, to understand vot you are and why you are," he cries. Together with Harry, Electro, and Rhino, he clutters up the landscape of malevolence, blurring our sense of where the heart of the story lies. And so, time and again, the shy, anonymous do-gooder defeats the crazed attention-seekers, thus preserving our way of life. Votever.

The first fifteen minutes of "Young and Beautiful" are a movie unto themselves. We follow a teen-age girl, Isabelle (Marine Vacth), in the soporific heat of the South of France. She is there on vacation, in a villa, with her mother, Sylvie (Géraldine Pailhas), her

stepfather, Patrick (Frédéric Pierrot), and her younger brother, Victor (Fantine Ravat). Two things happen to Isabelle on vacation. One, she turns seventeen, and, two, she loses her virginity to a German boy—a nice guy, who seems to mean nothing to her. When the family leave to go home, they pass the boy cycling along the road, and Isabelle doesn't turn around.

That shot is remarkably like the ending of last year's "The Way, Way Back," with Steve Carell and Sam Rockwell—another tale of a transformative summer. How slack and strung-out it looks now, packing less into its hundred minutes than the director of "Young and Beautiful," François Ozon, delivers in a quarter of an hour. His theme could hardly be less original (think of "Bonjour Tristesse"), but the tautness is that of a horror film. Look at Victor's shadow, creeping across the flesh of Isabelle as she suns herself on the sand, or his prowling around the house during siesta time—glancing upstairs toward his sister's room, as if wondering what mysteries it holds. Most absorbing of all is the moment on a dark beach, in the midst of Isabelle's deflowering, when she glances aside and sees herself approaching like a ghost, standing in sadness, and then disappearing. Did body and soul just come asunder?

The movie is split into seasons, and the leap into fall could not be more abrupt. Isabelle is now in Paris, in the uniform of an adult: jacket, skirt, gray blouse, lipstick, heels. She enters a hotel as if its curving corridors led to a new life. Very quickly, we gather that, al-

though still at school and living at home, she has become a prostitute. Neither her friends nor her family have any inkling. She makes her own bookings online and confirms them by text. She earns a lot of cash, but she neither needs it nor, apparently, spends it. As far as we can see, she sells herself because she wants to. But how far *can* we see? Ozon is ruthless at blocking all access to the sorts of response that we feel impelled to give. Social realists, seeking evidence of the many risks, including those of infection and violence, that prostitutes face, will despair. Moralists, eagerly counting on the wages of sin, will go away empty-handed. Political theorists, schooled in the thesis that all women, not just sex workers, are enslaved to a patriarchal economy, will get no help from Isabelle. She keeps her counsel, as teen-agers do, and shrugs, as only the French can, and merely says, more than once, "*C'est ma vie.*"

The effect of this, ever since "Young and Beautiful" screened at Cannes, last year, has been to drive viewers nuts. Many are aggrieved by the film's recalcitrance, and Marine Vacth, in the leading role, makes matters worse with her extreme beauty and her glowering, unshatterable calm. Ozon, in his camera movements as in his editing, is no less scrupulous and serene, and, to that extent, he is cleaving to a distinguished French tradition: the fine art of outraging an audience by refusing to be outrageous, however startling your subject matter. Isabelle, reclining and unclothed, is hardly the first Parisian nude to stare us down: to offer herself to bewildered spectators, as to clients, with-

out apology, explanation, or plea. Manet would have got her completely.

As autumn makes way for winter, a plot stirs. One of Isabelle's customers dies in mid-bliss, of a heart attack. Cops get involved, unsavory facts are revealed, and parents alerted. In the eyes of the law, Isabelle is the victim of a crime, but to her mother she is a disgrace. For some time, however, we have noticed cracks in the surface of home life: Isabelle seeing Sylvie being caressed, at the theatre, by a family friend; Patrick walking in on Isabelle showering or Victor jerking off; and a closeness between brother and sister that verges on the incestuous. ("You'll tell me everything?" Victor asks when she goes out with the German boy. "Promise," she replies.) We also learn of Isabelle's father, whom she barely sees, but who, every Christmas and birthday, gives her the same kind of sum that she earned for turning tricks—often from men his age.

Are such incidents genuine clues to Isabelle's behavior, though, or just background noise? She seems unmoved, not to mention unabashed, at having her secrets exposed. "Young and Beautiful," taking its cue from her, remains classical, concise, and practically refrigerated, yet somewhere inside it there's a hint of heartbreak, and I keep thinking of that lost self of hers, on the beach, who vanished into the dark. It's as though the Isabelle who succeeded her, venturing into the grownup world and trying her luck in the sexual marketplace, were not truly alive at all, but a changeling. She bade farewell to innocence that night, and to the child she would never be again. ♦

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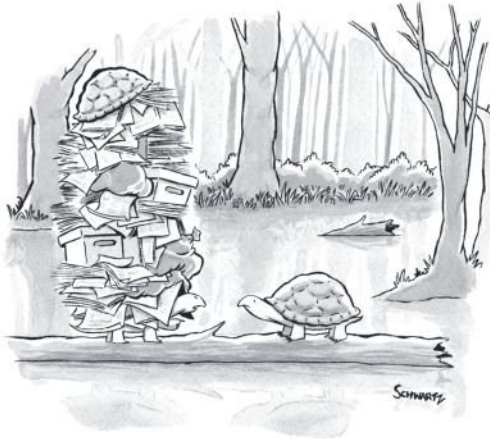
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Liam Francis Walsh, must be received by Sunday, May 4th. The finalists in the April 21st contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 19th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I'm working from home."
Mary Melton, Newtown, Pa.



THE FINALISTS

"It just seems like it's using an excessive amount of water."

Rob Huffman, Stafford, Va.

"Solar panel sold separately."
Tom Vida, Tucson, Ariz.

"Burning Man isn't what it used to be."
Ron Childress, Washington, D.C.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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