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# THE NEW YORKER

DECEMBER 4, 2017

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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**David Lehman** (*Poem*, p. 54) is the author of, most recently, "Poems in the Manner Of" and "Sinatra's Century: One Hundred Notes on the Man and His World."

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# THE MAIL

## DOES FARMING CO<sub>2</sub> WORK?

I was surprised that Elizabeth Kolbert, in her article on carbon capture, mentions only one biological approach to reducing carbon dioxide: growing biomass, burning it for fuel, and then capturing the CO<sub>2</sub> and burying it underground ("Going Negative," November 20th). In fact, there are other biological approaches available, such as carbon farming, a collection of practices for growing forests, food, and livestock in ways that have the potential to sequester enormous amounts of carbon in the soil. Carbon farming can reduce the amount of fossil fuel used in fertilizer production and tillage, and can lead to less polluted waterways and a reduced need for herbicides and pesticides. It also improves the water retention of soil, thus lessening the need for irrigation. Finally, since carbon-farming techniques are low-tech and inexpensive compared with most of the technologies discussed in the article, they can be applied on a global scale to help mitigate food scarcity. Of course, carbon farming is not a complete solution. Neither are any of the others.

*Alan Wagener  
Burlington, Vt.*

## THE HIGH COST OF AGEISM

In his piece about the causes and the cultural effects of ageism, Tad Friend fails to discuss one of the most important consequences of that particular prejudice—its economic impact ("Getting On," November 20th). Philip Roth wrote that "old age is a massacre," and this is especially evident when it comes to workplace discrimination. In 2016, only 18.8 per cent of people older than sixty-five were employed, many in part-time or contract jobs well below their skill level. Significantly more wished to be, but were unable to find work. Baby boomers, on the whole, stayed in school longer than previous generations, delayed starting families until their late thirties or forties, and benefitted from improved medical care and nutrition. As a result, many who are now well into

their sixties or their seventies still have financial responsibilities and two or more decades left to live. But they are increasingly being forced out of their jobs, despite their skills, experience, and education. Age discrimination is illegal. Yet two Supreme Court cases, decided in 2009 and 2013, have weakened federal protections for older workers. A bipartisan bill, the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act, has been repeatedly introduced in both houses of Congress, only to be tabled in committee. Passing this bill should be a no-brainer.

*Rita C. Tobin  
Chappaqua, N.Y.*

## WHY PRONOUNS MATTER

I enjoyed reading Taylor Clark's article on Twitch and the strange and fascinating new phenomenon of video-game live-streaming ("Revenue Streaming," November 20th). I was struck, however, by Clark's use of masculine pronouns in a nonspecific context in the same piece that discusses the "shockingly hostile" environment that women and femme-identifying people are facing in the gaming community. Clark writes, "The streamer, seated before his computer, might grow animated as he reacts to the game, but just as often he is fixated and still, his expressionless face blue-lit by monitor glow." I had thought that defaulting to masculine pronouns when discussing a hypothetical situation was becoming a thing of the past. The use of the inclusive pronouns *they/them/their* is vital in shifting our tendencies away from male-oriented language. Writers and editors need to consider the implications of gendered language and the importance of neutral pronouns.

*Michael Prendergast  
Philadelphia, Penn.*

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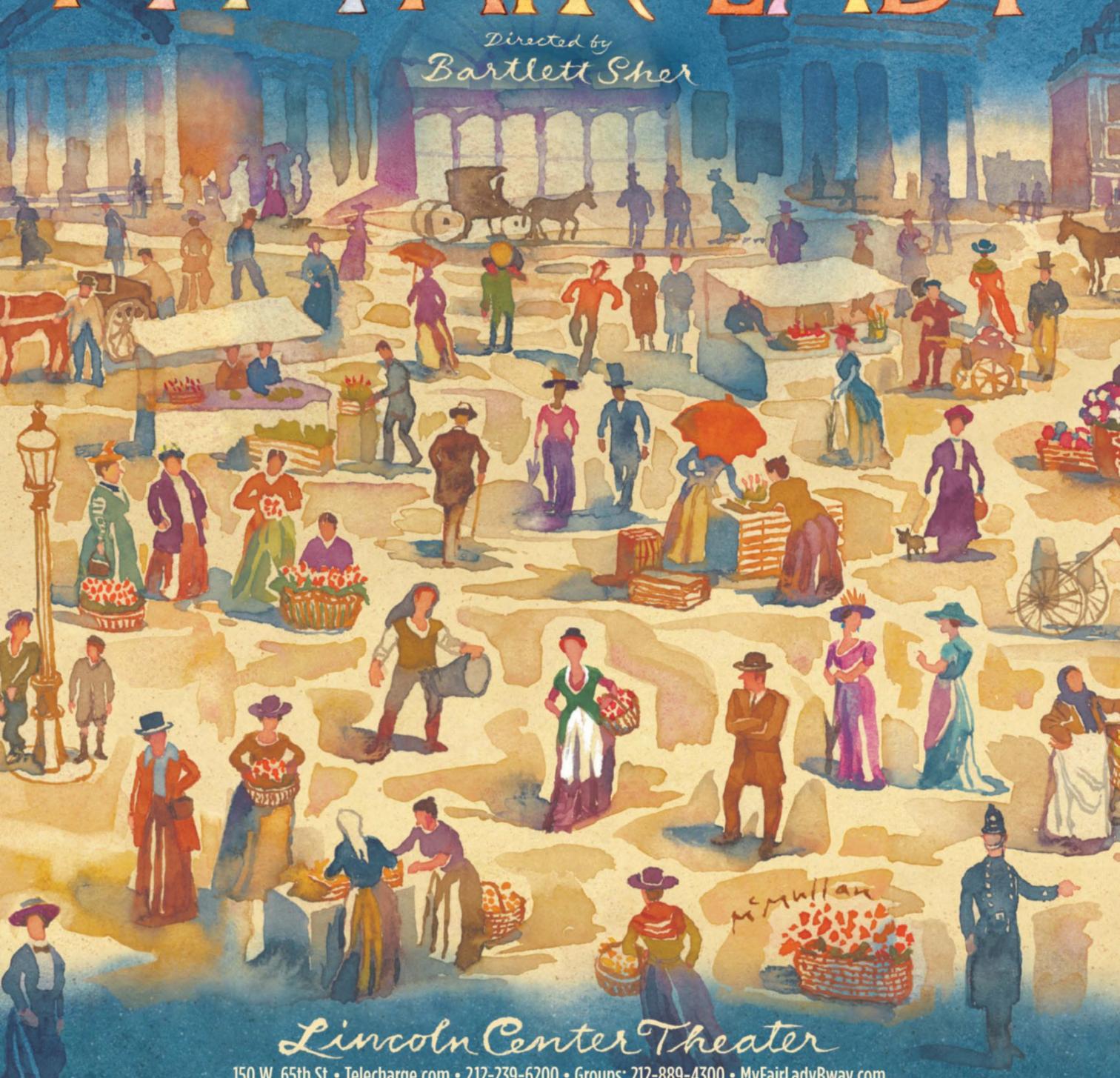
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



**Angel Olsen's** folk rolls by slowly but travels far. On "Phases," the songwriter's new collection of outtakes, rarities, and covers, she excavates several past numbers, and retraces trails found in the work of roammers like Bruce Springsteen and Hoyt Axton. Olsen's rendition of Axton's "Endless Road," which she first heard in an episode of "Bonanza," warmly softens the original ballad's gristle. "Maybe there will be a place to stop and rest awhile," she sings; at Town Hall (Nov. 29–30) and Brooklyn Steel (Dec. 1), fans can tag along to wherever she heads next.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MORGAN ASHCOM

# ART

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Metropolitan Museum

"Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman & Designer"

Michelangelo's sixteenth-century Italian contemporaries very nearly worshipped him for collapsing more than a millennium of distance between classical antiquity and a surge of avowedly Christian but disruptively individual inspiration. You can't miss the atavistic power in this show's hundred and thirty-three drawings, which are beautifully installed with a few of his creations in sculpture, painting, and design and with works by related artists. The drawings are stupendous—no surprise—though strikingly limited in iconography and formal repertoire, except those from a few years when Michelangelo exercised a definitively Mannerist panache in gifts to friends and patrons. (In a smoky portrait dated 1531–1534, the hauntingly ambiguous expression of an adored young friend, Andrea Quaratesi, qualifies the sitter as kissing kin of the *Mona Lisa*.) The effect is exhaustingly repetitive. How many times in a row can you swoon to marks that sound the same chord of rippling anatomy? Whether the Sistine Chapel, undertaken in 1508 and completed in 1512, is the best work of art ever made we can't say, because nothing compares to it. The ceiling is reproduced here with an overhead light-box photograph, at one-fourth scale—a travesty, aesthetically, but a useful reference for mapping the destinations of the preparatory drawings on view. The Sistine opus yields a faint sense of what it must feel like to be God, jump-starting humanity, programming its significance, and then, with "The Last Judgment" (which was added more than twenty years later), closing it out. We will never get over Michelangelo. But we will also never know quite what to do with him, except gape. *Through Feb. 12.*

### Met Breuer

"Edvard Munch: Between the Clock and the Bed"

A modern master of late-blooming reputation receives recuperative, gorgeous attention to his least esteemed body of work. The show takes its title from the last of the Norwegian's major self-portraits—or "self-scrutinies," as he termed them. Completed a year before his death, in 1944, at the age of eighty, it pictures a wizened man standing in semi-silhouette against the bright yellow of a studio wall that is hung with indistinct paintings. There's a faceless grandfather clock to one side of him and, to the other, a bed with a spread that is rendered in a bold pattern, on white, of red and black hatch marks. The painting crowns a long period that began after 1908, when an alcoholic breakdown ended Munch's twenty-year streak as a peripatetic rock star of Symbolist sensations—life-changing then and ever since for many—of which "*The Scream*" (1893) is only the most celebrated. After treatment at a Danish clinic, he withdrew to a nearly reclusive existence in a house outside Oslo. He left

off distilling iconic images from his tumultuous experience in favor of painting, non-stop, whatever appealed to him on a given day: himself, landscapes, interiors, models, and repetitions (rather spunkless) of his early masterpieces. The show claims a place for Munch in the modernist canon of painting for painting's sake, and, in the process, it presents the spectacle of a great visual poet reduced to unstructured, though lyrical, painterly prose. The older Munch took to working for himself alone until, with "Between the Clock and the Bed," he came upon one new fact of his life, incidentally relevant to everybody, that was worth getting just right. It's a feat both in and beyond art: a threshold of eternity. *Through Feb. 4.*

### Whitney Museum

"Laura Owens"

In the mid-nineteen-nineties, Owens heralded the comeback of painting with a succession of unbelievably cool, well-timed canvases that breezily dispensed with outdated notions of style, gesture, and the mutual exclusivity of formalism and illusionistic space. And she's made news ever since: this welcome mid-career retrospective neatly charts the hairpin turns of the Los Angeles artist's rigorous, funny, and very influential career thus far. A mischievously austere painting, from 1997, shows a blue expanse interrupted by seagulls, nominally and stickily rendered, as if piped on with black icing. The artist undercuts our understanding of "sky," though, by airbrushing the birds' shadows onto her monochrome. While it's not so hard to believe that the tricky collisions of painterly quotation from the next few years are from the same artist, by 2002, when Owens deploys decorative painting in an enchanting woodland scene, we're in a different world; then we're in another, with her abstractions of chewed-up grids, digital brushstrokes, and sculptural, stuccolike blobs. The through line, of course, is her passionate loyalty to the medium itself, but, as demonstrated by the exhibition's finale—an installation of two-sided, freestanding paintings, from 2015—she's not afraid to move off the wall; it's anyone's guess what comes next. *Through Feb. 4.*

kiss explodes into a glorious Cubist synecdoche for sex. *Through Jan. 6.* (Petzel, 35 E. 67th St. 212-680-9467.)

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### Nina Chanel Abney

The young Chicago-born artist's collagelike compositions are so boisterous that they need more than one gallery—so two have teamed up for this show. At Shainman, a suite of exciting tableaux, dense with ambiguous allusions to conflict and racial tension, incorporate stenciled shapes—handguns, ravens, tufts of grass, flames, dollar signs, and words. In one, perhaps showing a traffic-stop arrest, there is a confusion of headlights and raised smartphones next to a car emblazoned with anti-Trump graffiti. The bright activity continues at Boone, in a show of more streamlined paintings, which are based on workplace-safety posters from the nineteen-sixties. People grocery shop, walk their dogs, or do yoga—vignettes that sometimes appear as visual non sequiturs to their cautionary text, which Abney cuts, redacts, or underlines. But they also make their own strange kind of sense. In one work, she pairs the bold red command "GET HELP" with an image of kneeling figures, drawing a poignant parallel between emergency first aid and spiritual solace. *Through Dec. 20.* (Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 212-645-1701.) *Through Dec. 22.* (Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.)

### Taro Suzuki / Charlotte Hallberg

This inspired pairing matches Suzuki, a veteran presence on the New York scene, with Hallberg, a young Brooklyn-based painter. Suzuki's small, square canvases feature offset layers of concentric circles in bright, complementary colors. Because you can't perceive both layers at once, the flickering surfaces defy you to focus on anything but the overall picture. By contrast, the rings on Hallberg's larger tondos, which underlay complex grids of interlocking squiggles, pose the opposite problem: you can comprehend the compositions only one element at a time. Between them, the two bodies of work set up a reverberating visual logic problem that may set your mind spinning faster than your retinas. *Through Dec. 22.* (Crush Curatorial, 526 W. 26th St. [crush-curatorial.com](http://crush-curatorial.com).)

### "Embodiment"

The four painters in this small show are too young to feel as conflicted as their elders have about figuration. Cindy Ji Hye Kim takes her cue from cartoons, confidently skewering gender relations in both real life and the media in ominous black-and-white scenes of implicit violence, while Michael Stamm, who's slated for a solo début at the gallery early next year, contributes two canvases in which a moonlit flower garden and plumes of cigarette smoke are arranged to suggest human faces. The greatest thrills come from the all-in portraiture of Louis Fratino and Danielle Orchard: oil-pastel lines crisscrossing the belly of Fratino's male odalisque, in "*Another Sunday*," could be lingerie, armor, or an erotic spiderweb, while Orchard's "*Joy of Life II*," which borrows confidently from both Picasso and Matisse, makes four nude women seated around a table political as well as formal subjects. *Through Dec. 22.* (DC Moore, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-247-2111.)

## GALLERIES—UPTOWN

### John Stezaker

The brilliant English collagist got his start cutting up black-and-white Spanish *photomontages*. The exciting examples here, from the nineteen-seventies, show him building up the possibilities of his fractured photographic proportions step by step. In some cases, simply lifting a picture from its original soft-core, soap-opera context is Stezaker's most significant intervention; note the untitled image of a woman blowing cigarette smoke, which the artist has tidily sliced between her lips and the cloud, both underscoring and severing the visual cliché. Stezaker's treatment of the books' cinematic love scenes is more aggressive. In "*Enter. (Exit). The 3rd Person. VI.*" a

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# CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS



## "Home for the Holidays"

The winners of reality-show competitions past take a victory lap in this Broadway rhythm-and-brass concert, including Candice Glover ("American Idol"), Josh Kaufman ("The Voice"), and Bianca Ryan ("America's Got Talent"). Kaitlyn Bristowe, of "The Bachelorette," hosts, with appearances by Danny Aiello and the YouTube a-cappella phenoms Peter and Evynne Hollens. (*August Wilson*, 245 W. 52nd St. 877-250-2929. Through Dec. 30.)

## "The Nutcracker"

The New York City Ballet production of "The Nutcracker," by George Balanchine, has been popular for more than six decades because it stays true to the basic nature of Tchaikovsky's score, at once childlike and serious. (*David H. Koch, Lincoln Center*. 212-496-0600. Through Dec. 31.) • Francis Patrelle's pared-down version for Dances Patrelle, "The Yorkville Nutcracker," now in its twenty-second season, is set in New York, at the turn of the twentieth century. The girl, here called Marie, is slightly older, in her teens, and dances on pointe. (*Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave.* at 68th St. 212-772-4448. Dec. 7-10.) • The setting for "The Hip Hop Nutcracker" is New Year's Eve in Washington Heights in the eighties, and Candyland is a Harlem dance club hosted by the rapper Kurtis Blow, where the revellers perform in a variety of hip-hop styles. (*United Palace, 4140 Broadway*, at 175th St. 212-568-6700. Dec. 14. *Kings Theatre, 1027 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn*. 800-745-3000. Dec. 16.) • The State Ballet Theatre of Russia, a touring troupe, comes to the Schimmel Center with its traditional staging. (*Pace University, 3 Spruce St.*, 866-811-4111. Dec. 15.) • Although there are only a few token kids in New York Theatre Ballet's "Nutcracker" (choreographed by Keith Michael), this hour-long production is good for small children. (*Florence Gould Hall*, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. Dec. 15-17.)

## "Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes"

It's been a dramatic year for the usually conflict-avoidant Rockettes, after their booking at the Trump Inauguration caused an upset. Now they're back to what they do best: smiling wide, kicking high, and spreading completely nonpartisan and uncontroversial cheer. (*Radio City Music Hall*, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 866-858-0007. Through Jan. 1.)

## Holiday Trees

A seventy-five-foot-tall Norway spruce has arrived in Rockefeller Center; from 7 to 9 p.m. on Nov. 29, thousands of people—and a phalanx of Rockettes—will arrive to watch it light up. (30 Rockefeller Plaza.) A blue spruce in the Metro-

politan Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall is decorated with eighteenth-century Neapolitan cherubs and angels; at its base, there's a Nativity scene. A tree-lighting ceremony is held each afternoon at 4:30, and at 5:30 and 6:30 on weekends. (*1000 Fifth Ave.*, at 82nd St. 212-535-7710.) A monkey, a mastodon, and a sabre-tooth tiger are some of the origami ornaments you might find among the more than eight hundred that hang on the tree at the American Museum of Natural History. (*Central Park W.*, at 79th St. 212-313-7278. All are on view through Jan. 7.)

## "Charles Dickens and the Spirit of Christmas"

After "A Christmas Carol" was published, in 1843, Dickens wrote four more books pegged to the holidays: "The Chimes," "The Cricket on the Hearth," "The Battle of Life," and "The Haunted Man." While none have attained the same pop-culture cred as their predecessor, they were just as popular in their day. Now the Morgan Library exhibits all five manuscripts together for the first time. The museum has also just published a full-color facsimile of Dickens's manuscript for his still beloved first Christmas book, with a foreword by Colm Tóibín. (225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. 212-685-0008. Through Jan. 14.)

## "It's a Wonderful Life"

Anthony Palermo's stage adaptation, directed by Charlotte Moore, resets the Frank Capra film in a nineteen-forties radio station, where the story of angelic intervention in Bedford Falls is being broadcast live. Six actors (aided by period sound effects) play all twenty-five characters, from George Bailey to mean old Mr. Potter. (*Irish Rep.*, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Nov. 29-Dec. 31.)

## "Peter and the Wolf"

The Guggenheim presents its annual performance of Prokofiev's musical folktale, conceived by Isaac Mizrahi, who narrates, and the choreographer John Hegginbotham. An intrepid young boy disregards his grandfather's warning not to wander into the meadow, where a wolf lurks; each animal he encounters there is represented by a different instrument, played live by Ensemble Signal. Hegginbotham's choreography is funny and clever, and it's a short and sweet half hour. (*Fifth Ave.* at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Dec. 2-3 and Dec. 8-10.)

## St. Thomas Church: "Messiah"

The benchmark for the city's annual cavalcade of Handel's beloved "entertainment" on sacred themes has long been set by this august congregation's Choir of Men and Boys, the finest Anglican

choir in the country. Daniel Hyde, who assumed the directorship in 2016, has proved his mettle; a new addition this year is the accompanying ensemble, New York Baroque Incorporated. The vocal soloists include the soprano Ellie Dehn and the baritone Jesse Blumberg. (*Fifth Ave.* at 53rd St. [sainthomaschurch.org](http://sainthomaschurch.org). Dec. 5 and Dec. 7 at 7:30.)

## New York Philharmonic Holiday Concerts

The Phil has never been a hotbed of period performance, but its annual "Messiah" is nonetheless a force to be reckoned with; the conductor this year is the eminent Baroque authority Andrew Manze. The orchestra's New Year's Eve concert has a special touch this time, as it's part of the ensemble's centenary tribute to the brilliance of Leonard Bernstein; Laura Osnes and Aaron Tveit are among the vocalists, and Bramwell Tovey conducts. (*David Geffen Hall*. 212-875-5656. Dec. 12-14 and Dec. 16 at 7:30 and Dec. 15 at 11 A.M.; Jan. 31 at 8.)

## Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

The joyful spirituality and intellectual richness of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos have made them secular holiday favorites for generations. The Society provides dependable performances of them year in, year out; this season's crew includes such distinguished musicians as the violinist Cho-Liang Lin, the violist Yura Lee, the flutist Carol Wincenc, and the oboist Stephen Taylor. (*Alice Tully Hall*. 212-875-5788. Dec. 15 and Dec. 19 at 7:30 and Dec. 17 at 5.)

## Charlie Brown Christmas Live

Vince Guaraldi's holiday standard "Christmas Time Is Here" is as captivating today as it was in 1965, when the beloved "Peanuts" television special debuted. The Pig Brooch Theatre Company performs the show for the tenth time this December, accompanied by a jazz trio playing Guaraldi's score. Schroeder would approve. (*Littlefield*, 635 Sackett St., Brooklyn. [littlefieldnyc.com](http://littlefieldnyc.com). Dec. 16-17 at 1 and 3.)

## Metropolitan Museum

The schedule of holiday performances at the Met lacks some of the grandeur that it had in decades past, but two shows are truly standouts. One is offered by the women of Boston's superb Lorelei Ensemble, who will sing an unexpected mix of music from the medieval era to the modern age. Another is the Met's annual presentation of "The Little Match Girl Passion," David Lang's intimate, Pulitzer Prize-winning cantata inspired by both the Bach Passions and the writings of Hans Christian Andersen. (*Fifth Ave.* at 82nd St. [metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org). Dec. 21 at 8:30 and Dec. 22 at 7.)

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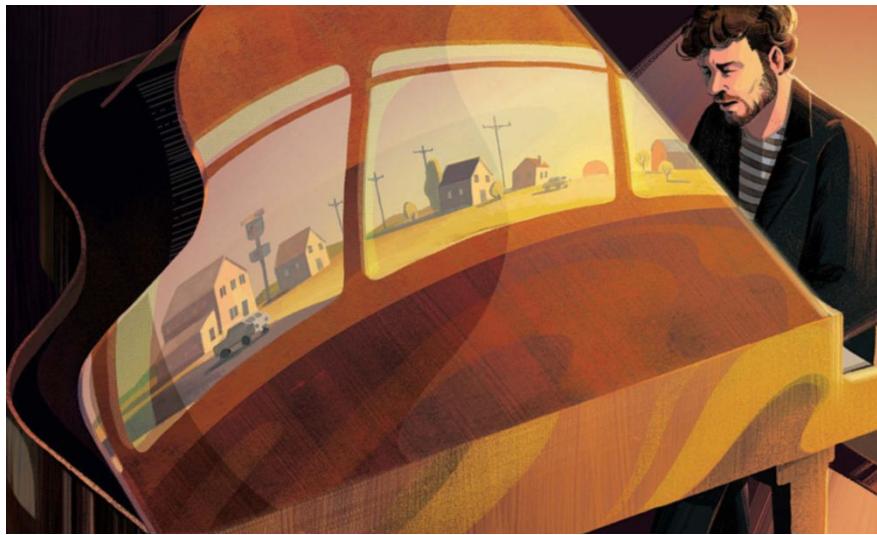
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# CLASSICAL MUSIC



After his epic work "The Ambassador," Kahane now explores America on an intimate scale.

## Coast to Coast

Gabriel Kahane, via Amtrak, listens to the voices of America.

Anyone who willingly undertakes long-distance train travel in the United States is something of a romantic. Anyone who goes on such a journey for two weeks while eschewing both a cell phone and an Internet connection is something of a nut—or an artist. Our Amtrak system is notoriously scuffed and inefficient, but it still gives an American wanderer a generous idea of the country's variety, prosperity, and desolation. It also forces you to mix with people of widely divergent social and political backgrounds, in that cathedral of culinary captivity, the dining car. On the morning after the election of Donald J. Trump, the singer-songwriter and composer Gabriel Kahane embarked on such a journey, which provided the creative fuel for "Book of Travelers," a solo song cycle that débuts this week at the BAM Harvey Theatre (Nov. 30-Dec. 2).

Accompanying himself on piano, Kahane, in his appealing, soft baritone, toggles between his own states of feeling and those of his interlocutors. While Kahane is not alone among singer-songwriters in having a sophisticated harmonic palette—Chris Thile and Rufus Wainwright are also members of that club—it is his strong classical-music background that allows

him to add layering to his basically light and melancholy style. In one of the best of the personal songs, "Little Love," he sweetly offers a vision of getting old with his lover on a stretch of sandy coastline, to the steady rhythms of a church processional. In "Model Trains (Shannon & Michael)," he tenderly relates the story of a train-loving husband and father who goes slowly mad after hitting his head, as the piano part gently wanders through gestures suggestive of Schubert, or Brahms.

But in another song, "Monica," Kahane digs deep. His companion is an affluent African-American woman who is traveling to a funeral by train because her family doesn't want her to drive alone on Southern roads. In "Empire Liquor Mart," from his epic ensemble piece "The Ambassador" (2014), Kahane took on the persona of a black teen-ager who was shot dead in the mayhem in Los Angeles after the beating of Rodney King. But now the blend between composer and interlocutor is more complex. The richly chromatic music for the verses, in which Monica relates her story, is redolent of Chopin and Bach, but the devastating refrain—"Cause they don't need a hood or a cross or a tree"—is etched in clear, blues-tinged chords. In a newly woke world, such a sensitive approach may be a white artist's clearest road to empathy.

—Russell Platt

## Metropolitan Opera

David McVicar's new production of Bellini's "Norma" scored a success when it débuted in October, with two established stars, the soprano Sondra Radvanovsky and the mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, as Norma and her frenemy, Adalgisa. It returns this week, but with two of the house's younger bel-canto standouts, Angela Meade and Jamie Barton, in the leading roles. Joseph Calleja continues his sterling support in the role of Pollione, the male center of this ancient Druid love triangle; Joseph Colaneri conducts. *Dec. 1 at 8 and Dec. 5 at 7:30.* • **Also playing:** The Met first performed Verdi's searing "Requiem" in 1901 to mark the composer's death. But given its mammoth proportions and dramatic style, it's unsurprising to encounter a concert performance of it outside of a commemorative context. James Levine conducts the Met orchestra and the powerhouse soloists Krassimira Stoyanova, Ekaterina Semenchuk, Aleksandr Antonenko, and Ferruccio Furlanetto. *Nov. 29 at 7:30 and Dec. 2 at 1. These are the final performances.* • Nathan Gunn—an irresistibly hammy Papageno—leads the cast in an abridged, family-oriented, English-language version of Mozart's "The Magic Flute," performed in Julie Taymor's often enchanting production. Also featuring Charles Castronovo, Hanna-Elisabeth Müller, and Kathryn Lewek; Evan Rogister. *Nov. 30 and Dec. 4 at 7:30.* • Massenet's "Thais" is unquestionably a star vehicle—Renée Fleming inaugurated John Cox's production, in 2008—but it also requires two compelling singing actors who can carry a story that's light on plot. For the current revival, the Met has entrusted Ailyn Pérez and Gerald Finley to flesh out the inner conflicts of the courtesan title character and the holy man who is captivated by her; Emmanuel Villaume. *Dec. 2 at 8. This is the final performance. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)*

## Experiments in Opera: "The Nubian Word for Flowers"

The late composer Pauline Oliveros's "phantom opera" combines written vocal parts, instrumental improvisation, and a soundtrack to conjure a surreal world in which the British War Secretary Horatio Herbert Kitchener faces a reckoning for his imperialist past. The keen singers and players of the International Contemporary Ensemble perform in the work's world première, which is preceded by selections from Aaron Siegel and Mallory Catlett's new opera, "Rainbird." *Nov. 30 at 8. (Roulette, 509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. roulette.org.)*

## "A Night of Mark Adamo"

The American composer began his career at the top, with the 1998 première of his first and most famous opera, "Little Women." Nearly twenty years later, this concert at National Sawdust takes the measure of his legacy as a creator of lyrical works with significant musical depth. Adamo himself conducts the Momenta Quartet and the singers Matt Boehler, Daniel T. Curran, Kara Dugan, and Jarrett Ott in selections from "Little Women," "Lysistrata," "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," and "Becoming Santa Claus," his most recent work for the stage. *Dec. 2 at 7. (80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. nationalsawdust.org.)*

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

### New York Philharmonic

Edo de Waart, replacing an indisposed Christoph von Dohnányi, is a maestro of merit who began his career back in the sixties as the Philharmonic's assistant conductor. In these concerts, he collaborates with the pianist Emanuel Ax (in Mozart's Piano Concerto

No. 20 in D Minor), leads Brahms's Second Symphony, and, to start, conducts the world première of "Evening Land" by Bent Sørensen, another in the long series of Scandinavian commissions that began under the directorate of Alan Gilbert. Nov. 30 at 7:30 and Dec. 1-2 at 8. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)

## RECITALS

**Kinan Azmeh: "Songs for Days to Come, Vol. 2"**

Azmeh, a gifted Syrian clarinetist and composer and a longtime member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, presents two volumes of songs based on texts by exiled Syrian poets, all scored for soprano, clarinet, cello, and piano, with the poets' recorded voices. The evening also includes a conversation moderated by Juilliard's provost, Ara Guzelimian. Nov. 30 at 7:30. (*Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. symphonyspace.org.*)

**Alexi Kenny**

One of the finest of up-and-coming violinists, a 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant winner and an astute programmer, takes to Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall to present an evening of works by Bach, Schubert (the Fantasy in C Major for Violin and Piano), Respighi, George Crumb ("Four Nocturnes: Night Music II"), and Esa-Pekka Salonen. Dec. 1 at 7:30. (212-247-7800.)

**Miller Theatre "Composer Portrait": Chen Yi**

Though her early training was curtailed by the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi was the first woman to earn a master's degree from Beijing's Central Conservatory, and among the first Chinese composers to establish a firm international profile. This concert features the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble, directed by David Ludwig, performing a range of works spanning the years from 1988 to 2013. Dec. 2 at 8. (*Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com.*)

**Ted Hearne and Philip White: "R WE WHO R WE"**

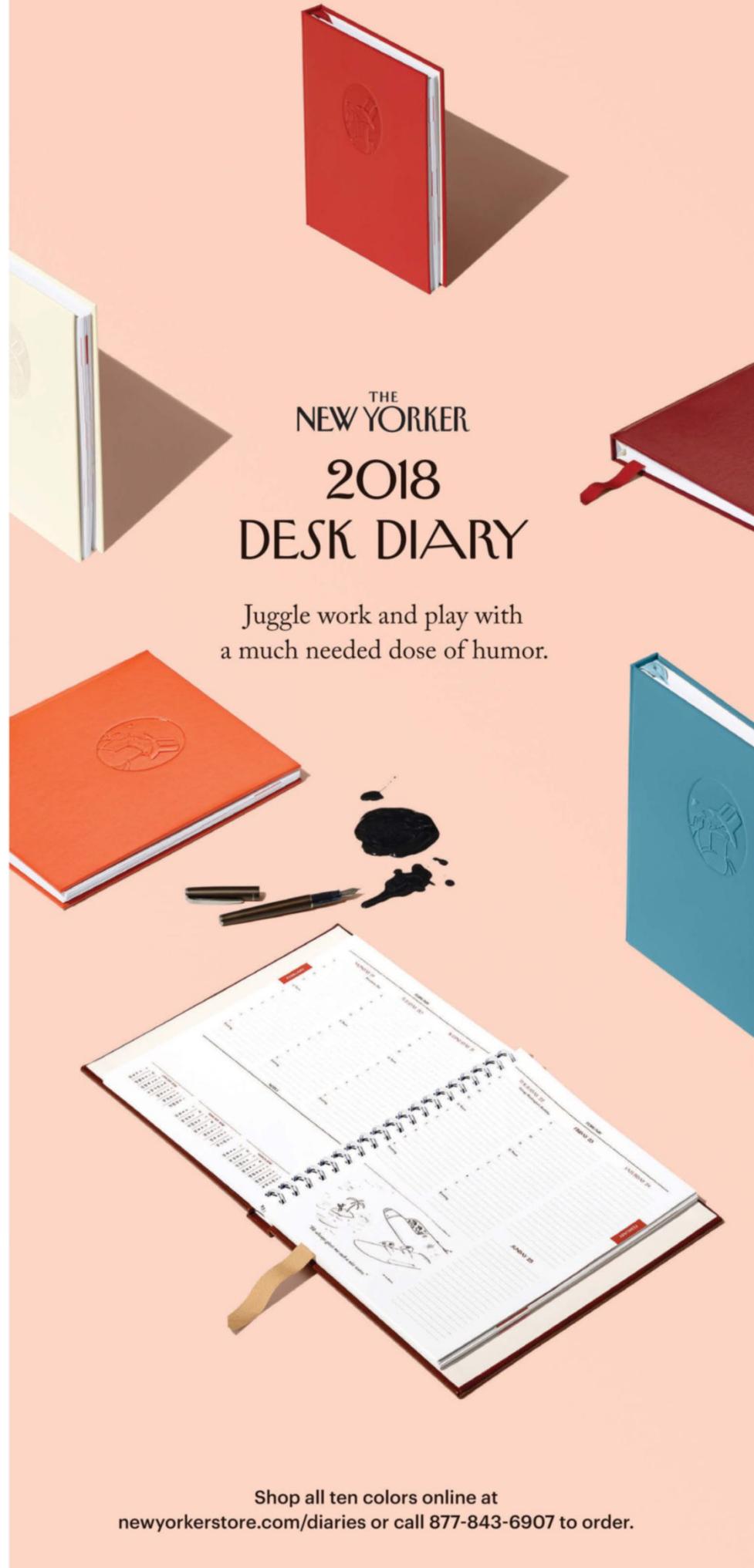
Singer meets soldering iron when these inventive composers rekindle their raucous, nervy interrogation of mainstream pop, celebrating their forthcoming second album, "I Love You," in a Brooklyn concert presented by Le Poisson Rouge. The listening is seldom easy—Hearne's vocals are hyperbolic and hectoring by design; White's homemade electronics crackle and squeal unremittingly—but the results illuminate stress fractures hidden beneath pop culture's sleek façades. Dec. 2 at 8. (*Union Pool, 484 Union Ave. union-pool.com.*)

**Dawn Upshaw and the Brentano String Quartet**

Concerts by the American soprano, renowned for her interpretive insight and vocal purity, have lately not been as frequent as in years past. So it's a treat when she appears, especially with such an outstanding ensemble as the Brentano. She joins it in Respighi's *scena "Il Tramonto"* and in Schoenberg's monumental Quartet No. 2 in F-Sharp Minor; the quartet goes it alone in Mozart's Quartet in C Major, "Dissonance," and in Webern's Six Bagatelles, Op. 9 (interspersed with minuets by Schubert). Dec. 3 at 3. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

**Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: "Baroque Collection"**

The Society occupies the period-performance ground this week as it presents what will be somewhat inauthentic but masterly crafted renditions of works from the Baroque era by Vitali, Vivaldi, Handel (the Concerto Grosso in D Major, Op. 6, No. 5), Telemann, and Couperin (the Concert Royal No. 4 in E Minor). The musicians on hand include the violinists Aaron Boyd and Bella Hristova, the harpsichordist Michael Sponseller, and the cellist Brook Speltz. Dec. 3 at 5 and Dec. 5 at 7:30. (*Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.*)



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# NIGHT LIFE

## ROCK AND POP

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

### Eaters

Jonathan Schenke is a go-to producer for the indie-rock élite, having worked on albums for Dirty Beaches, Parquet Courts, and Frankie Rose, among others. He steps out from behind the mixing boards with this exaggerated electro-funk project, which he shares with the multi-instrumentalist Bob Jones. The duo, which builds synth-based soundscapes that would not be out of place in an early-eighties slasher flick, has released two self-titled records; this year's is grinding and quirky, full of deep club tunes with the Korg-inflected whimsy of early New Wave bands like Oingo Boingo and the Buggles. They perform with **Yvette**, a raw industrial duo whose jagged tracks should come with cautionary signage. (*Elsewhere*, 599 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn. Dec. 3.)

### Habibi

Word has it that Rahill Jamalifard, who fronts this all-female Brooklyn band, and whose family is originally from Iran, is writing and recording for the group's next album in Farsi. This is great, but it's also a shame: Jamalifard teases out the best of the English language in the catchy, kitschy quips up and down Habibi's self-titled débüt, from 2013. They have the Colgate-white glisten of sixties girl-group pop, with the uncensored edge of flower-gal liberation. Their songs are soft, but damn savvy, perfect for high-profile movie soundtracks and sitcoms. (Habibi's music has popped up in a James Franco film and on the runway at the most recent New York Fashion Week.) Perhaps all that's kept the band from receiving more attention is its slow output, but Habibi's débüt still carries sweetly. They perform for the first time since summer ahead of their new record, set to arrive in March. (*Baby's All Right*, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. Nov. 29.)

### Just Blaze

As an in-house hit-maker for Jay-Z's Roc-A-Fella record label, Justin Smith stood out in a stable of young producers—including his peer Kanye West—for his ability to imbue meaning and subtext into his choice of musical samples. He scored a breakout with Jay-Z's "Girls, Girls, Girls," in 2001. From the rich violins and Tom Brock's velveteen backing harmonies to the playful guest vocals of the slapstick rap hookmen Q-Tip, Slick Rick, and Biz Markie, the track utilizes a spectrum of funk, R. & B., and hip-hop for a coquettish sendup of pop misogyny. Last spring, Smith crafted the marching fight song "Freedom," a radical high point on Beyoncé's "Lemonade." He's matured since his earliest efforts, but is still nudging outsized stars to draw from untapped wells. He also occasionally moonlights as a d.j., dipping into electronic club bins that are true to his New Jersey origins. This week, he's at Brooklyn Bowl for a special edition of the "Bowl Train" series. (61 Wythe Ave., Williamsburg. 718-963-3369. Nov. 30.)

### Danny Krivit

In 1971, on the advice of a friend who owned the Stonewall Inn, Bobby Krivit converted the Ninth Circle, his fledgling West Village lounge and steak-

house, into a bar that would serve the neighborhood's growing gay community. Business boomed quickly, and to keep his new basement disco churning, Bobby enlisted his stepson Danny to program tapes with dance music and custom edits. That same year, Danny met James Brown, who gave him a white-label copy of "Get on the Good Foot"; thus began Danny's decorated career as a dance-music jockey and promoter for landmark clubs throughout New York City, including the Loft, Area, Limelight, and the Paradise Garage. This week, he plays a set in support of the **Black Madonna's** "We Still Believe" party. (*The 1896*, at 215 Ingraham St., Brooklyn. Dec. 1.)

### Morrissey

Last year, at an August concert in Manchester, Morrissey, the former front man of the Smiths and a reigning minister of all things macabre, quipped, "I don't normally look this bad. I usually look much worse." He was referring to the bandage just under his throat, which became increasingly soaked with what looked like blood as he performed—the prop, as it turned out, was a dark joke about his ongoing battle with esophageal cancer. Morrissey said recently that treatments have slowed him down, but he asserts that, whatever happens, he's made his peace; he once famously sang, "When I'm lying in my bed, I think about life and I think about death, and neither one particularly appeals to me." He still hasn't gotten up: "Spent the Day in Bed," from his latest record, "Low in High School," resonates with those who hide from the news cycle beneath sheets for which they paid good money. He plays new songs and standards at Madison Square Garden. (*Seventh Ave.* at 33rd St. 800-745-3000. Dec. 2.)

### Stud1nt

The d.j. and multi-instrumentalist Izzy Barreiro, known as Stud1nt, is a modern staple in New York City's spread of transient club experiences. Barreiro grew up being moved by the experimental party GHE20GOTH1K, and since then has been making movements of their own, particularly with Discowoman, the mavens of nascent electronic scenes Stateside and beyond, and with the queer collective KUNQ. Stud1nt's work ranges across disciplines, and might include a sample of church bells one second and of SZA's "Love Galore" the next. But it's threaded together by the d.j.'s keen desire to absorb everything and to continue learning and evolving; for those invested in club music's cutting edge, this is a gig to catch. (*Elsewhere*, 599 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn. Dec. 1.)

### Wolf Alice

Not many alternative British bands take their names from Angela Carter short stories. The brainchild of Ellie Rowsell, a winsome vocalist and guitar player, and Joff Oddie, a guitarist and fan of hardcore punk, the act jumps from bright-eyed folk to full-throttled rock, blithely refusing to stick to one genre. Their débüt album, "My Love Is Cool," was released in 2015, and they've followed it up this year with "Visions of a Life"; it's as amorphous as ever, with hardcore jams and wispy shoegaze riffs in droves. "Beautifully Unconventional," a spunky funk single that arrived this fall, shows off all of Rowsell's attitude and range with a fitting title. (*Brooklyn Steel*, 319 Frost St., Brooklyn. 888-929-7849. Dec. 4.)

### Peter and Will Anderson: The Fabulous Dorsey Brothers

You have to be well up on your knowledge of the swing era to register the importance of Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, two of the most highly regarded big-band leaders and instrumentalists of the nineteen-thirties and forties. Two other brothers, the saxophone and clarinet players Peter and Will Anderson, salute the famously contentious Dorseys in a full-fledged production that includes musical support from the trombonist **Wycliffe Gordon** and the vocalist **Brionna Thomas** and an original script by the noted scholar Loren Schoenberg. (*Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St.* 212-721-6500. Dec. 1-2.)

### Chris Dingman

Unlike, say, the saxophone or the trumpet, the vibraphone has never drawn budding jazz musicians to its side with any regularity. Dingman took the plunge, and elicits unpredictable, multi-culturally tinged music from this hybrid instrument. His trio includes the remarkably gifted bassist **Linda Oh**. (*Cornelia Street Café*, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Nov. 30.)

### Joel Forrester

Although he can be found co-helming the reinvigorated Microscopic Sextet during their occasional reunions, Forrester has spent most of the past two decades fronting a variety of ingenious ensembles that adroitly frame his delightfully idiosyncratic piano compositions. His December Sunday series kicks off with a solo performance. (*Barbès*, 376 9th St., Brooklyn. Dec. 3.)

### Bobbi Humphrey

The First Lady of Flute left for New York City from Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, at the urging of Dizzy Gillespie. She recalls him telling her, "If you go to New York, in about a year or two, the whole world will know your name." The jazz-fusion recordings she released in the early seventies, as one of the first female signees to Blue Note, reshaped pop radio and jazz alike, from classics like "Harlem River Drive" to her work with Stevie Wonder on his seminal "Songs in the Key of Life." She celebrates five decades of flawless, freewheeling melody, as well as the recent reissue of her 1994 album, "Passion Flute." (*Ginny's Supper Club*, 310 Lenox Ave. 212-421-3821. Dec. 2.)

### Danilo Pérez Trio: Panamonk

There really is no end to what can be brought to the durable compositions of Thelonious Monk, and the Panamanian pianist Pérez proved it with his compelling 1996 album, "Panamonk," which adorned these iconic tunes in Latin finery. He calls on one of the recording's participants, the drummer **Terri Lyne Carrington**, and enlists the bassist **Ben Street** to round out his rhythmically charged trio. (*Jazz Standard*, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. Nov. 30-Dec. 3.)

### Buster Williams

He's understandably best known as a sideman, having worked with everyone from Nancy Wilson to Herbie Hancock, yet the bassist Williams is no slouch as a leader of taut small bands. The adaptable virtuoso gathers the saxophonist **Steve Wilson**, the pianist **George Colligan**, and the drummer **Lenny White** to form a roiling post-bop quartet. (*Smoke*, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Dec. 1-3.)

# THE THEATRE



*"The Dead, 1904"* will be performed at the American Irish Historical Society through Jan. 7.

## Memento Mori

Irish Rep brings James Joyce's novella "The Dead" to life.

As Richard Ellmann has it in his sympathetic, astute biography of James Joyce, it took the great modern Irish author many years of not writing "The Dead" before he sat down and composed it. The middle-class-raised rebel had been thinking about it in various stages for years, determining that he would fashion a story about a party in Dublin, a place he left in 1904 with his beloved Nora Barnacle, who was born in a workhouse. But it wasn't until just before the First World War, when he and Nora and their children, Giorgio and Lucia, were at the end of a short stay in Rome, that Joyce's masterly story, which he started writing in 1907, was published. Some of it was inspired by Barnacle's early love for a boy she knew who had died before she met and fell in love with Joyce—her Jim. Joyce drew on Nora's tale of loss and his own feelings about his father and other family members to write what he needed to write, but the facts got transformed by his imagination: he made the specific—or the specific to him—universally specific. Clocking in at nearly sixteen thousand words, the novella appeared in Joyce's 1914 short-

story collection, "Dubliners," a book that proves that fiction is as deep as life.

Reading "The Dead," with the falling snow and discussions about politics, the concern for the old bourgeois ways as expressed by elders, and the preoccupation of the main protagonist, Gabriel Conroy, with what to say and how to say it, is to reexperience one's own nagging self-doubt, wistfulness, and philosophical questioning about this life and other people's lives. Last year, the poet and scholar Paul Muldoon, the former poetry editor of this magazine, and his collaborator and wife, the novelist Jean Hanff Korelitz, first presented their dramatization of the story, titled "The Dead, 1904," in New York. It now returns, presented by Irish Rep through Jan. 7, at—where else?—the American Irish Historical Society, a beautiful, modestly grand building on Fifth Avenue that is opening three floors to fifty-seven guests at a time (who join the cast for a holiday feast drawn from the one described in the novella). There, the actors, playing all those old lovely creatures lost to time, will re-create the Christmas joy and loss that permeates Joyce's lovelorn story about a land he had to leave in order to remember it.

—Hilton Als

### The Children

In Lucy Kirkwood's play, a pair of retired nuclear engineers are visited by an old friend during a world crisis. Directed by James Macdonald, in a Manhattan Theatre Club transfer from the Royal Court. (*Samuel J. Friedman*, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)

### De Novo

Houses on the Moon's documentary-theatre piece, directed by Jeffrey Solomon, follows a teen-age boy who flees Guatemala after a gang sentences him to death. (*Fourth Street Theatre*, 83 E. 4th St. 866-811-4111. Previews begin Dec. 1.)

### Describe the Night

Rajiv Joseph's new play, directed by Giovanna Sardelli, tells parallel stories connecting the Russian writer Isaac Babel, a K.G.B. agent in Dresden, and a 2010 plane crash in Smolensk. (*Atlantic Theatre Company*, 336 W. 20th St. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens Dec. 5.)

### Downtown Race Riot

The New Group presents Seth Zvi Rosenfeld's play, directed by Scott Elliott and starring Chloë Sevigny as a single mother living near the scene of the 1976 mob attack in Washington Square Park. (*Pershing Square Signature Center*, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. In previews. Opens Dec. 3.)

### Farinelli and the King

Mark Rylance stars in the Shakespeare's Globe production of Claire van Kampen's play with music, in which the depressed King Philippe V of Spain is soothed by the beautiful voice of a castrato. (*Belasco*, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin Dec. 5.)

### Hundred Days

The folk-punk duo the Bengsons composed this musical (with a book co-written with Sarah Gancher), about living as if you had only a hundred days left on earth. Anne Kauffman directs. (*New York Theatre Workshop*, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475. In previews. Opens Dec. 4.)

### Meteor Shower

Amy Schumer, Keegan-Michael Key, Laura Benanti, and Jeremy Shamos star in Steve Martin's new play, about a dinner party interrupted by falling space debris. Jerry Zaks directs. (*Booth*, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Opens Nov. 29.)

### Once on This Island

Michael Arden directs a revival of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty's 1990 musical fable, in which a young Caribbean woman falls in love with a man from the other side of her island. (*Circle in the Square*, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. In previews. Opens Dec. 3.)

### The Parisian Woman

Uma Thurman stars in a drama by Beau Willimon (the creator of "House of Cards"), as a Washington socialite navigating power and relationships after the 2016 election. Pam MacKinnon directs. (*Hudson*, 141 W. 44th St. 855-801-5876. In previews. Opens Nov. 30.)

### Pirates of Penzance

The Hypocrites stage a ninety-minute adaptation of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, reset at a beach party with a tiki bar; the audience joins the cast onstage. (*N.Y.U. Skirball*, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-998-4941. In previews. Opens Nov. 30.)

**A Room in India**

Théâtre du Soleil and the director Ariane Mnouchkine present this piece about a French theatre company stranded without its leader after a terror attack in Paris. Performed in French and other languages, with English supertitles. (*Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St.* 212-933-5812. *Opens Dec. 5.*)

**Sleep**

At the Next Wave Festival, the director Rachel Dickstein and the Brooklyn-based company Ripe Time mount an adaptation of a Haruki Murakami story, about an insomniac Japanese housewife. (*BAM Fisher, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn.* 718-636-4100. *Nov. 29-Dec. 2.*)

**SpongeBob SquarePants**

A musical based on the anarchic cartoon, with direction by Tina Landau, a book by Kyle Jarrow, and songs by artists including Steven Tyler, Sara Bareilles, John Legend, Cyndi Lauper, and the Flaming Lips. (*Palace, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.* 877-250-2929. *In previews. Opens Dec. 4.*)

**Twelfth Night**

Fiasco Theatre, known for its D.I.Y. version of "Into the Woods," stages the Shakespeare comedy, directed by Noah Brody and Ben Steinfeld. (*Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St.* 866-811-4111. *In previews.*)

**The Winter's Tale**

The Public's Mobile Unit performs the Shakespeare romance in its home theatre, after a tour through New York City community venues. Lee Sunday Evans directs. (*Public, 425 Lafayette St.* 212-967-7555. *In previews. Opens Nov. 30.*)

**NOW PLAYING****The Band's Visit**

It has a wisp of a plot: an Egyptian police orchestra, conducted by Tewfiq (Tony Shalhoub), lands in the wrong town in the Negev Desert, where the locals, stone-faced and few, put the musicians up for the night. In the morning, they leave. And yet David Yazbek and Itamar Moses's new musical, based on a 2007 Israeli film, fills up the stage with feeling, the muted kind that dwells in missed connections and half-remembered tunes. The director, David Cromer, has enormous trust and patience in his material, letting the emotional music of an uneventful night in the middle of nowhere rise to the surface. But the show's not so secret weapon is Katrina Lenk, who plays Dina, a café owner with a dry stare and a drier wit. When she finally opens up to Tewfiq, in a song about the "jasmine wind" that brought in Umm Kulthum on her mother's radio, she's a radiant presence. (*Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St.* 212-239-6200.)

**Bright Colors and Bold Patterns**

In his uproarious solo show, the writer-performer Drew Droege takes us on a bittersweet exploration of the gay soul on the night before a wedding in Palm Springs; the show's title refers to the dress code, which proscribes guests from wearing either of those things. Enraged by this diktat and fuelled by margaritas and cocaine, Droege's Gerry holds court in a cabana, unleashing hilarious, biting bitchiness for the benefit—and to the growing discomfort—of a couple of frenemies. Under Michael Urie's assured direction, the show rushes along with manic energy, before settling into a more reflective pace. Gerry looks confidently gar-

rulous at first, and he speaks fluent pop culture (the riffs on "Steel Magnolias" and Olympia Dukakis are especially funny), but he also embodies the jitters of aging gay men trying to hold on to a colorful identity in an increasingly beige world. (*SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St.* 212-691-1555.)

**Diaspora**

Directed by Saheem Ali, Nathaniel Sam Shapiro's scathing portrait of a group of young American Jews on a Birthright heritage tour of Israel is ambitious, and never boring, but often disjointed and gleefully tasteless. (If you liked Larry David's joke on "Saturday Night Live" about pitching woo in a concentration camp, here you'll get dialogue about quickies at Yad Vashem and "Holocaust dicks.") The action regularly shifts to the siege of Masada, in the year 73, and the mass suicide of a group of Jewish rebels—yet this counterpoint isn't nearly as illuminating as the amusing contrast Shapiro offers between the American tourists and the Israeli soldiers assigned to protect them, which gets much less stage time. The show improves as it goes, but its funniest moments owe more to the actors than to Shapiro's overstuffed script. (*Gym at Judson, 243 Thompson St.* 866-811-4111.)

**The Home Place**

Charlotte Moore directs the New York première of Brian Friel's 2005 play, fashioning an insightful and inspiring piece of theatre. In 1878 in County Donegal, the native population is becoming increasingly rebellious toward the English gentry who are their landlords, even to the point of murder. The cast of eleven is led by John Windsor-Cunningham, as Christopher Gore—one of those landlords, though a benevolent one—and Rachel Pickup, as Margaret O'Donnell, a local woman who, since the death of Gore's wife, has become the vigilant mistress of his household. Windsor-Cunningham brings a Lear-like range and intensity to his portrayal of a man who finds himself on the wrong side of age, love, and history. And Pickup, after a series of emotional scenes, and with the help of exquisitely modulated lighting and sound, takes the play to a dénouement of surpassing beauty. (*Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St.* 212-727-2737.)

**Illyria**

Joe Papp, the founder of the New York Shakespeare Festival and the Public Theatre, was pugnacious and punny, a lionhearted ideologue with a grand vision and the moxie to build it, smack dab in Manhattan. So a play about Papp, produced by the Public, would seem destined for grandeur. Thankfully, the playwright Richard Nelson doesn't have a grand drop in his pen. Much like his "Apple" and "Gabriel" family plays, this account of the festival's scrappy beginnings is casual, conversational, and laid-back nearly to the point of inaudibility. It's 1958, and Papp (John Magaro) is struggling to keep his fledgling Shakespeare company afloat in Central Park, despite the lure of better-paying jobs and the antagonism of the Parks Commissioner, Robert Moses. Under Nelson's direction, the well-attuned ensemble uses the stage not as a pedestal but as a field of whispered dreams. (*Public, 425 Lafayette St.* 212-967-7555.)

**Peter Pan**

Bedlam, the inventive experimental company led by Eric Tucker, which specializes in stripped-down reimaginings of classic works, misfires with this version of the 1904 J. M. Barrie play. Tucker directs and is part of the company of six, who share credit for the adaptation. Where Bedlam has previously

been successful in the distillation of familiar material, bringing a new perspective and focus, the current production looks, sounds, and feels like an extended actors' exercise, lacking a clear approach to the story. This is an interpretation for adults, emphasizing a latent and burgeoning sexuality not ignored but only hinted at in the original. A late scene, in which a mad Mrs. Darling, distraught over the disappearance of her children, is conflated with the scheming Captain Hook, is especially tortured and unconvincing. (*The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St.* 646-223-3010.)

**Pride and Prejudice**

In a follow-up to her whirling adaptation of "Sense and Sensibility," Kate Hamill transfigures Austen's second novel for the stage, taking the part of the feisty, fallible-in-love Elizabeth Bennet. Amanda Dehnert's production, for Primary Stages, doesn't take time to smell the rose hedges. The delightfully hammy eight-person cast fills the action with pratfalls, silly accents, runway struts, and Motown covers; on their quarrelsome road to matrimony, Lizzy and Mr. Darcy (the appealingly off-putting Jason O'Connell) mime a lightsabre duel. At times, the screwball approach can be cluttered and unfocussed, with too much sisterly shrieking. But the farce works like a charm when it plays off all that repressed nineteenth-century emotion, and Hamill's self-effacing characterization is winning and true. The actors are all shameless scene-stealers, but special mention goes to John Tufts, who renders Mary Bennet as a sultry goth teen. (*Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St.* 866-811-4111.)

**The Wolves**

Since its New York première, with the tiny Playwrights Realm company last fall, Sarah DeLappe's play about teen girls on an indoor soccer team has been on quite a journey: an encore run, acknowledgment as a Pulitzer Prize finalist, and now a transfer to Lincoln Center Theatre. You might say "The Wolves" has gone to Nationals. DeLappe and the director, Lila Neugebauer, have an uncanny grasp of the girls' ambitions, fears, and desires (the three often so intricately melded as to be indistinguishable). Despite being identified only by their jersey numbers, the players, portrayed by actresses who brilliantly capture teen-age mannerisms, quickly acquire endearing personalities and individual voices. DeLappe applies a delicate touch to such tricky subjects as body anxiety, the complicated nature of female friendships, the formation of identity, and even mortality. Life is never far from the pitch for these Wolves. (*Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St.* 212-239-6200.)

**ALSO NOTABLE**

**Actually** City Center Stage II. • **Animal Wisdom** The Bushwick Starr. • **Harry Clarke** Vineyard. • **Jesus Hopped the "A" Train** Pershing Square Signature Center. Through Dec. 3. • **Junk** Vivian Beaumont. • **The Last Match** Laura Pels. • **Latin History for Morons** Studio 54. • **M. Butterfly** Cort. • **Oedipus el Rey** Public. Through Dec. 3. • **Office Hour** Public. Through Dec. 3. • **People, Places & Things** St. Ann's Warehouse. Through Dec. 3. • **School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play** Lucille Lortel. (Reviewed in this issue.) • **Shadowlands** Acorn. • **Springsteen on Broadway** Walter Kerr. • **Tiny Beautiful Things** Public. • **Torch Song** Second Stage. • **What We're Up Against** McGinn/Cazale. Through Dec. 3.

# MOVIES

## NOW PLAYING

### The Cool World

In the hot Harlem summer of 1963, a teen-ager, Duke Custis (Rony Clanton), pesters a local mobster, Priest (Carl Lee), to sell him a gun that will make him the big man in his gang and win him renown as a "cool killer." Shirley Clarke's vibrant, unflinching drama, released in 1964, is a masterwork of cinéma-vérité composition. The cast of mostly nonprofessional actors portrays the full spectrum of Duke's life, from school and home to his posse and a rival gang, and Clarke pitches their performances to a delicately heightened concentration. The script, based on the novel by Warren Miller, is equally wide-ranging, with its depictions of relationships stripped raw by rough circumstances. Friendship, sex, and family life are shadowed by drugs, violence, police brutality, and the relentless struggle for money, and these crises are given voice in soliloquies of vernacular eloquence. Clarke's images endow the characters' energies with a sculptural grandeur and embrace street life with a keenly attentive, unsentimental avidity. Music by Mal Waldron, performed by Dizzy Gillespie, runs from exuberance to despair, and the story's inevitable arc, through all its meanderings, has a rueful, epic power.—Richard Brody (*Film Society of Lincoln Center, Dec. 1 and Dec. 5.*)

### Darkest Hour

How badly we need another Winston Churchill film is open to question. Nonetheless, Joe Wright's contribution to the genre is welcome, largely because of Gary Oldman in the leading role. He seems an unlikely choice, yet the lightness of his performance marks it out from other attempts; this Churchill, oddly quick on his feet, with a hasty huff and puff in his voice instead of a low slow growl, suggests a man in a hurry to fight. None too soon, for we are in the late spring of 1940, with the German war machine in full cry and Britain adrift until Churchill, to the alarm of many contemporaries, takes charge. Wright has a curious weakness for the overhead shot, be it of the House of Commons or of a landscape cratered by bombs, and the musical score sounds too plush by half. But Oldman is braced by his supporting cast. Kristin Scott Thomas, as Clementine Churchill, is witty as well as stalwart; Neville Chamberlain, as played by Ronald Pickup, has never looked graver or more aghast. Best of all is Stephen Dillane, as Lord Halifax, whom Churchill called "the Holy Fox": cadaverous, principled, desperate for peace, and wrong.—Anthony Lane (*In limited release.*)

### The Disaster Artist

In this comedy directed by and starring James Franco, based on the true story of the production of the cult movie "The Room" (2003), Franco displays a wicked joy in portraying the enigmatic Tommy Wiseau, its director, star, producer, and financier—and the unintended butt of cinematic history's joke. Working with a script based on a memoir by Greg Sestero, Wiseau's friend, sidekick, and co-star in "The Room," Franco brings a special verve to scenes of the fictionalized Tommy working on the set with—and against—his cast and crew (in particular, the justly skeptical and sarcastic production manager, played by Seth Rogen).

The movie sticks with Greg's perspective; he is played by Dave Franco as a bland and struggling young actor who yearns for nothing more than stable normalcy but is pulled into the chaotic vortex of Tommy's generosity, vanity, obliviousness, and domineering energy. Yet the comedy, for all its scenes of giddy wonder, never gets past Tommy's mask of mystery; avoiding speculation and investigation, it stays on the surface of his public and private shtick, leaving little more than a trail of amusing anecdotes.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

### Dusty and Sweets McGee

Life on the margins has rarely seemed as unromantic as it does in this harrowingly precise 1971 docudrama, directed by Floyd Mutrux, about heroin addicts in Los Angeles. Some of the performers are actual users, whom he follows on their tawdry rounds of self-inflicted agonies—their scores, fixes, and crimes, as well as their injections, which he presents in unflinching macrophotographic images. One speaker is lucid about an addict's inability to remain long in working life; another, who has kicked the habit, looks back with wistful pride at the drama of her streetwise survival capers; a third details and then demonstrates his ploy for robbing convenience stores without violence. Mutrux captures with a sharp, furtive eye the crevices of public life that the drug trade fills (particular attention is paid to phone booths), and scenes of Mephistophelian kingpins show that the moral rot of drugs runs through all levels of society. The Top Forty hits that are woven through the film's soundtrack have a keenly ironic poignancy as dirges for those who had little chance of making it out of the Summer of Love and into the autumn of their years.—R.B. (*Film Society of Lincoln Center, Nov. 30 and Dec. 3, and streaming.*)

### Lady Bird

As writer and director, Greta Gerwig infuses this comedic coming-of-age drama with verbal virtuosity, gestural idiosyncrasy, and emotional vitality. The loosely autobiographical tale is set mainly in Gerwig's home town of Sacramento, in the 2002-03 academic year, and centered on Christine McPherson (Saoirse Ronan), self-dubbed Lady Bird, a senior at a Catholic high school whose plan to escape to an Eastern college is threatened by her grades and her parents' finances. Lady Bird's father (Tracy Letts), with whom she shares a candid complicity, is about to lose his job; her mother (Laurie Metcalf), with whom she argues bitterly, is a nurse who works double shifts to keep the family afloat. Lady Bird infiltrates the world of rich kids and risks losing true friends; she dates a Francophile rocker (Timothée Chalamet) whose walk on the wild side is comfortably financed. Deftly juggling characters and story lines, Gerwig provokes aching laughs with gentle touches (Metcalf's etched diction nearly steals the show), but her direction remains self-effacing until late in the film, when several sharply conceived scenes suggest reserves of observational and symbolic energy.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

### Mudbound

This historical drama, directed by Dee Rees and adapted from the novel by Hillary Jordan, is centered on two families in rural Mississippi, one black and one white, during the nineteen-thirties

and forties. It offers a keen and outraged view of the laws and practices of Jim Crow and the monstrous dangers awaiting anyone who defied them. The story shows how the McAllan family, who are white—Henry (Jason Clarke), Laura (Carey Mulligan), and their young daughters—slip from middle-class Memphis to a bedraggled Mississippi farm, where they're in close connection with their tenants, the Jackson family, who are black—Hap (Rob Morgan), Florence (Mary J. Blige), and their four children. When the Second World War starts, Henry's brother Jamie (Garrett Hedlund) becomes a pilot, and the eldest Jackson son, Ronsel (Jason Mitchell), becomes a tank commander. Both come back heroes, but tragedy looms when they become friends. Rees uses voice-overs to bring the many characters to life, but the text is thin; the movie's exposition is needlessly slow and stepwise, and the drama, though affecting, is literal and oversimplified. With Jonathan Banks, as Henry's bitter, racist father.—R.B. (*In limited release and on Netflix.*)

### The Other Side of Hope

This comedic drama is centered on the fate of Khaled (Sherwan Haji), a young man from Aleppo who arrives clandestinely in Helsinki and applies for asylum there. The calm and plain style of the director, Aki Kaurismäki, is well suited to the step-by-step observation of the immigration system's oppressively officious approach to Khaled and his fellow-applicants. Khaled's story is told in parallel with that of a gruff, middle-aged salesman named Wikström (Sakari Kuosmanen), whose tale is a multilevel fantasy, starting with his brusque abandonment of his wife (Kaija Pakarinen) and continuing to his purchase of a restaurant after winning at high-stakes poker. When Khaled is turned down for asylum, he goes on the run. Wikström soon finds him hiding behind the restaurant's garbage cans, takes him in, gives him a job, and selflessly helps him find his sister, Miriam (Niroz Haji), from whom he was separated in transit. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous presence of violent neo-Nazis tempers the good feelings. Running gags about oddball twists in the restaurant business serve little purpose but don't detract from the movie's essential quasi-documentary power. In English, Finnish, and Arabic.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

### Wonder Wheel

The salt air and boardwalk clamor of Coney Island mask the atmosphere of death and deceit in Woody Allen's memory-soaked drama, set in Brooklyn in the mid-nineteen-fifties. It's the story of a middle-aged woman named Ginny (Kate Winslet), a long-ago actress whose fading ambitions are stifled in a scuffling life as a clam-bar waitress married to the rough-hewn Humpty (James Belushi), the ticket-taker at an amusement-park carousel near the seaside shack where they live. Ginny begins an affair with the twenty-something Mickey (Justin Timberlake), an N.Y.U. student and aspiring playwright working for the summer as a lifeguard—but she soon finds herself competing for Mickey's affections with Carolina (Juno Temple), Humpty's daughter from a previous marriage, who shows up after fleeing from her ex-husband's gangland associates. The tangled plot is decorated in gaudy colors (thanks to the cinematographer Vittorio Storaro) that contrast sadly with the sordid doings. Allen fills the story with wildly mixed emotions of pride and guilt, psychological clarity and moral horror; under the pressure of violence and remorse, Ginny loses her grip on reality, a form of madness that blots out the story's bitter truths and comes as a sort of deliverance.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

# DANCE

## Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre

Apart from the popular troupe's dependable spirit and skill, its monthlong encampment at City Center looks a bit lacklustre this year. Opening night is a feel-good assemblage of excerpts from pieces set to soul music. The first première of the season, "Victoria," by the Spanish choreographer Gustavo Ramírez Sansano, strains to match the scale of its score, Michael Gordon's melted-down adaptation of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Later weeks feature a première by the star dancer Jamar Roberts and a revival of Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's 1988 protest against homelessness, "Shelter." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Nov. 29-Dec. 3 and Dec. 5. Through Dec. 31.)

## Keely Garfield

Garfield is a true eccentric whose highly theatrical dances can be bizarre, hilarious, and stealthily profound, in quick succession or all at once. The title of her new piece "Perfect Piranha" alludes to the danger of toothy smiles. Her work has speed and bite but also a sincere striving for enlightened compassion. With her cast of straight-faced nonconformists, she builds a dance mandala, an intricate diagram of the universe. (*The Chocolate Factory*, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. Nov. 29-Dec. 2. Through Dec. 9.)

## Barnard/Columbia Dances

In its thirteenth year, this program, which pairs university students with New York-based choreographers, has put together an ambitious quadruple bill. The main attraction is a performance of Lucinda Childs's "Concerto," a bracingly virtuosic piece from 1993, set to a concerto for harpsichord by Henryk Gorecki. But a new work, created for the student dancers by the brilliant actress-storyteller-dancer Okwui Okpokwasili—the author and choreographer of "Bronx Gothic"—is also an intriguing prospect. The other two new works are by Shannon Gillean and Claudia Schreier. (*New York Live Arts*, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 30-Dec. 2.)

## Liz Gerring

For all its athletic exuberance, Gerring's choreography is often spare, analyzing one movement after another. But in "Horizon," a 2015 work now receiving its New York première, she experiments with a higher density of action, filling the stage with independent events. The result is still remarkably legible, more crowded but not cramped, with each motion given full force. At its best, it's like breathing pure oxygen. (*Joyce Theatre*, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 30-Dec. 3.)

## "Tree Pop"

Of all the performing arts, perhaps none engage the imagination as deeply as puppetry. In "Tree Pop," Lake Simons and John Dyer have created a meditation on time and memory in which the human performers become puppetlike, transformed before our eyes into trees and animals. There's not much of a plot, but plenty of whimsy. The simple, folk-infused score is by Dyer. (*HERE*, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 30-Dec. 3 and Dec. 5. Through Dec. 10.)

## Ballet Hispánico

The company's annual appearance at the Apollo Theatre is always a festive occasion. This year's

program is strong on heartfelt evocations of migrant experience. Ramón Oller's "Bury Me Standing," from 1998, vividly expresses the flamenco passions of nomadic Roma culture, while Michelle Manzanales's "Con Brazos Abiertos," which débuted in April, grapples with the Mexican-American choreographer's ambivalent sense of belonging. Ronald K. Brown's "Espíritu Vivo" looks at the African diaspora in Latin America; it's an out-of-darkness-into-the-light trek with a subtle sensuality that evaded the company during the work's 2012 première. Maybe this time they'll find it. (253 W. 125th St. 800-745-3000. Dec. 1-2.)

## "Appalachian Spring"

There are no sugarplums or dancing candy canes in Martha Graham's "Appalachian Spring," but it is a dance brimming with hope and a sense of confidence in the American experiment—something that feels sorely lacking in our times. The score, by Aaron Copland, famously incorporates the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts"; the set, by Isamu Noguchi, is also a marvel of simplicity. This weekend, Martha Graham Dance Company will present three intimate performances of this 1944 work at its beautiful West Village studios. Just the one dance, with a little introduction by the company director, Janet Eilber—a perfect evening. The early show on Dec. 2 includes snacks and a chance for kids to try out a few of Graham's moves. (*Martha Graham Studio Theatre*, 55 Bethune St. 212-229-9200. Dec. 1-2.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND



## Grand Central Holiday Train Show

At this annual train show, now in its sixteenth year, the M.T.A.'s history is brought to life as scale models of classic red subway cars, double-letter trains, and even commuter-rail cars race past iconic stops and dart through labyrinthine tunnels. Back by popular demand is the Transit Museum's Holiday Nostalgia Train, featuring restored vintage subway cars in use between 1932 and 1977, which passengers can ride up Second Avenue. The show is open to the public seven days a week through Feb. 4. (*New York Transit Museum Gallery*, 89 E. 42nd St. [grandcentralterminal.com](http://grandcentralterminal.com))

## Cranksgiving

As the holiday season draws near, tradition nudges us to consider all the things for which we're grateful and to turn our gaze toward the less fortunate. Still, not everyone is stirred by a can drive, a pledge campaign, or a soup-kitchen sign-up sheet—some people want adventure with their altruism. Cranksgiving bills itself as "part bike ride, part food drive, part scavenger hunt," calling on city residents to whiz between markets, purchasing from a list of items to be donated to the Bowery Mission. It's a fun concept for a noble cause, and it has fed hundreds of families each year since its inception, in 1999. (*The ride starts at Bed-Stuy Restoration Plaza, at 1368 Fulton St., Brooklyn.* [cranksgiving.org](http://cranksgiving.org). Dec. 2 at 1.)

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

As part of its decadent "Life of Luxury" week, **Sotheby's** offers a selection of pieces by the jeweler designer Shaun Leane (Dec. 4), best known

for his creations for the couturier Alexander McQueen. (These include such hard-to-wear items as a corset fashioned out of metal coils and a rather prickly-looking crown of thorns cast in silver.) More luxury items go under the gavel the next day (Dec. 5), in a jewelry sale that includes enormous diamonds—one weighing more than a hundred and ten carats. (*York Ave.* at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • A letter in which the then candidate Abraham Lincoln described his preparations for the Lincoln-Douglas debates—specifically the Freeport Question, concerning slavery—goes up for auction as part of **Christie's** sale of books and Americana on Dec. 5. The house also offers its own selection of sparkling gemstones, in a sale of jewels on Dec. 6. (*20 Rockefeller Plaza*, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

### Symphony Space

Neil Patrick Harris—actor, comedian, magician, Doogie—has written a children's book for middle-grade readers, "The Magic Misfits." It's the story of a young street performer named Carter who joins a gang of carnies in a series of adventures. Harris isn't exactly new to the industry: he published his best-selling memoir in 2015. Earlier this year, he starred in a film adaptation of the beloved "A Series of Unfortunate Events." The author of that franchise, Lemony Snicket, has become a fan. "I read this book with excitement, delight, and the increasing suspicion that it was going to make me disappear," he says of "Misfits." Harris celebrates the book at this launch. (2537 Broadway, 212-864-1414. Dec. 4 at 6:30.)

# FOOD & DRINK



## TABLES FOR TWO

### Ferris

44 W. 29th St. (212-213-4420)

Ferris, a tiny restaurant in the basement of a new hotel called Made, has recently opened in NoMad, a neighborhood that, in spite of the efforts of the Ace Hotel and its followers, has been resisting gentrification with an admirable recalcitrance. It's rather fitting, then, that this is a landing place for the chef Greg Proechel, who caused brief excitement at the downtown hangout Le Turtle, after stints at Eleven Madison Park and Blanca, and whose insistently innovative dishes have a distinct air of rebellion. Lobster with kabocha squash, chicharrones with chicken-liver mousse: many of the mashups on the almost too sophisticated menu might sound strange, but the food is, for the most part, quite enjoyable.

The best way to order is to home in on a familiar ingredient, let all the information coming from the highly verbal, enthusiastic waitstaff flow over you, and trust the chef. Broccolini comes charred, with cashews, Moon Drop grapes, and *timur* yogurt. *Timur*, because you asked, is a close relative of the Szechuan pepper; it imparts a pleasant, slightly sweet buzz. Grilled Spanish mackerel sits in warm ponzo next to plums and "yolk jam"—a wonderfully pure, almost solid egg yolk, the texture attained, according to a server, by "cooking the yolk over low heat for a very long

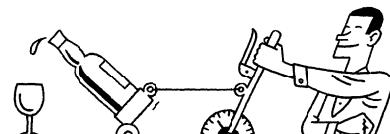
time." Perfect little agnolotti ooze Fontina cheese and carrot butter; Proechel adds tender braised lamb neck and a dice of pickled squash and raw carrot to take it over the top.

And then there's the côte de boeuf, aged for sixty days, "from Kansas," the waiter repeats to each table, in various sizes, starting, on one recent night, at \$183 for thirty-five ounces (including a hefty bone), with "all the fixings." Unlike any fixings ever, these include black-garlic jam (if mahogany had a flavor it would be this), whipped buttermilk with charred cipollini onions (like a tart, zingy whipped cream, utterly delicious), a bowl of broth with bland unsalted potato dumplings and beef-fat-soaked croutons, and an addictive Brussels-sprout slaw.

Not everything works. There's a reason you rarely see rutabaga; its sharpness is jarring next to perfectly seared duck breast. Beets with black-sesame tahini goes too dark. The staff navigates the cozy room decked out in raw wood and minimalist glassware with good humor, knowing when to suggest a Bordeaux and when to leave well enough alone. From most seats you can see Proechel, spiky hair and beard highlighted at the finishing station, tasting, garnishing, zesting. He looks a bit like a mad scientist who knows that without experiments you'll never find out what doesn't work, and what does. (*Dishes \$4-\$29; côte de boeuf at \$5.25 per ounce.*)

—Shauna Lyon

## BAR TAB

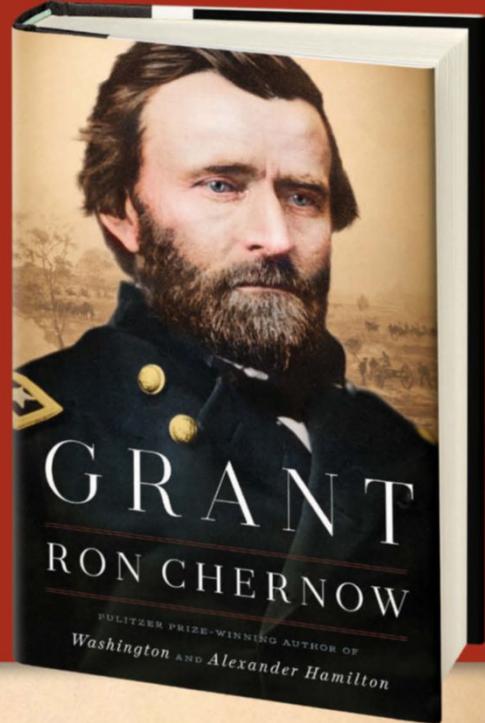


### Dromedary Bar

266 Irving Ave., Brooklyn (347-715-4255)

Tiki bars, with their fair-weather décor and ice-filled offerings, first arose in the wake of Prohibition, in parts of California where snow hardly ever falls. These days, though, one can hardly set foot in Brooklyn, a place with seasons, without stumbling upon an eternally churning dispenser of piña colada, or finding a watering hole like this new tiki-inspired Bushwick spot, which provides brain freeze in a variety of flavors. By February, when blizzards coat the oily streets, the world outside will resemble the bar's Black Manta, a rye drink with black sesame and on-trend charcoal, made unsettlingly frothy with the aid of egg whites. Last month, on a trivia night, frigid rain seemed to have already dampened spirits. Across from a sign that spells "Beach" with naked light bulbs, the m.c., who had wrapped himself in a scarf, fingerless gloves, and a wool-lined brown jacket, leaned against a pinball machine and asked, in reference to a monster-hunting video game, "Where does the Witcher series come from?" One team, their minds on the weather, asked, "Did you say 'winter series?'" Behind the counter, however, the mood remained cheery and defiant. Bartenders in Hawaiian shirts and shorts that ended at the upper thigh prepared drinks like the Analgésico, a mezcal cocktail topped with a flaming lime that gave one patron something to warm her red-tipped nose by. Several evenings later, temperatures plummeted, and undeterred would-be artists came in for a drink and draw, an event now ubiquitous in North Brooklyn saloons. The model sat in black lingerie, apparently comfortable, although, it should be noted, she eschewed the icy drinks, went a few degrees higher, and ordered a beer.—Neima Jahromi

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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### A HISTORY OF PARANOIA

It's often said of the Trump era that the Republic has drifted into uncharted waters, but the more damning estimation is that we are mindlessly revisiting some of the darker regions of our historical map. A century ago, President Woodrow Wilson committed American forces to what was then known as the Great War. The monstrous scale of the battle, coinciding with a rise in the number of immigrants; the mass migration of African-Americans from the South to the North, in pursuit of employment; and the shock of the October Revolution, in Russia, all served to create an atmosphere of tension and suspicion in the United States. The government responded with a crackdown on what it loosely termed "sedition."

The newly formed Federal Bureau of Investigation obsessed over all manner of "radicals," but particularly those African-Americans whose meekest protests of racism were regarded as subversion. African-American newspapers that reported on lynchings were deemed destructive to wartime morale, and the Post Office threatened seizure of subscription copies. This narrowing of free expression had wide-ranging implications, especially for civil-rights organizations and activists.

A 1919 document titled "Final Report on Negro Subversion," which came to the desk of a twenty-four-year-old Justice Department staffer named J. Edgar Hoover, portrayed the civil-rights move-

ment as potentially Bolshevik-inspired, and suggested that black discontent might easily turn into support for Communism. At the same time, the Ku Klux Klan, which had been all but crushed by a series of anti-terrorism laws passed during Reconstruction, surged back to life after the release, in 1915, of the film "Birth of a Nation." Yet its transformation from a Southern phenomenon into a national one elicited little concern from law-enforcement officials, some of whom were members.

The nativist inclinations of the Trump Administration recall fraught moments of this past. So perhaps it is no surprise that the Hoover-era view of African-American radicalism resurfaced a week ago, when Attorney General Jeff Sessions appeared before the House Judiciary Committee. Sessions was on Capitol Hill to answer questions about his

knowledge of any contacts the Trump campaign may have had with representatives of the Russian government, but he was also asked about an F.B.I. report titled "Black Identity Extremists Likely Motivated to Target Law Enforcement Officers."

The report, which was issued in August and leaked to ForeignPolicy.com last month, argues that the increased scrutiny of police shootings of African-Americans in recent years may result in acts of violence directed at law enforcement. It cites a 2014 incident, in which a man attacked four N.Y.P.D. officers with a hatchet, and a 2016 attack on police in Baton Rouge that left three officers dead. But the primary example is the shooting during an anti-police-brutality rally in Dallas last year, when Micah Xavier Johnson, a twenty-five-year-old Army veteran who harbored resentment toward whites, in general, and toward white law-enforcement officials, in particular, killed five policemen and wounded seven more, before he himself was killed.

In discussing such incidents, the report coins the category "black-identity extremist," which is poorly defined but features the three-word rhythm of other usefully ambiguous terms, such as "radical Islamic terrorist." The authors argue that people sympathetic to the Sovereign Citizens movement and to the Moorish Science Temple of America, both of which reject the authority of the federal government, warrant vigilance, even though violence conducted by any such sympathizers "has been rare over the past twenty years." In an effort



to ground their conclusions in history, the authors point to radical organizations of the nineteen-seventies, such as the Black Liberation Army, which has been defunct for longer than Johnson had been alive, and for which they offer scant connection to the B.I.E. cause.

When Representative Karen Bass, of California, asked Sessions about the report, he said that he had not yet read it but he nonetheless stood by its findings. When she pressed him to cite an organization committed to the kind of violence the report warns of, he said, "There are groups that do have an extraordinary commitment to their racial identity and some have transformed themselves even into violent activists," but declined to name any. The black-identity extremist appears to be something of a bureaucratic phantom, yet that kind can be the most difficult to exorcise. The "Final Report on Negro Subversion" prefaced a long engage-

ment between the F.B.I. and organizations seeking to realize black rights, which included the surveillance of Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the Bureau's COINTELPRO efforts to destroy the Black Panther Party. When James Comey was the Bureau's director, he kept on his desk a copy of the approval of Hoover's request to wiretap King, as a reminder of the perils of organizational excess.

The killing of the five Dallas police officers—Lorne Ahrens, Michael Smith, Michael Krol, Patrick Zamarripa, and Brent Thompson—was a tragedy. But Johnson was a troubled, isolated individual with no known allegiance to any terrorist organization. Since 9/11, far-right extremists have been responsible for more attacks in the United States than terrorists acting in the name of any other cause. Yet, when Representative Bass asked Sessions if the Bureau had issued any sim-

ilar report about white-identity extremists, he replied, "I'm not aware of that."

In next month's U.S. Senate election in Alabama, voters will choose between Doug Jones, who, as a U.S. Attorney, prosecuted two Klan members for their involvement in the 1963 bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, in Birmingham, which killed four African-American girls, and Roy Moore, who, after being removed from the State Supreme Court, fought against the removal of provisions for racially segregated education in the state constitution. Nothing dead is buried, and what we thought was dead lives on. If the redundancy of this history offers any lesson, it's how easy it is for concern about a vaguely defined enemy to translate into the suppression of rights—and that the targeting of marginalized groups is often the first indication that such a process is under way.

—Jelani Cobb

## HERE TO THERE DEPT. LEADERBOARD



On a recent Monday, Glenn Reinhart, a former salesman of chemicals for the cosmetics industry, and now, in his mid-fifties, a freelance karate instructor with a fair amount of leisure time, took twenty-two rides on Citi Bikes, one after another, and then went out to breakfast in Chelsea. He had arranged to meet Collin Waldoch, who runs Bike Angels, the Citi Bike program that awards points, redeemable for extended membership and other modest benefits (a commemorative pin; a white bike key), to riders who help the company rebalance its network of twelve thousand bikes. Angels earn points for taking bikes from full stations and parking them at empty ones. A ride from one to the other might earn two or three points. When the scheme was launched, this spring, Waldoch thought that someone might, in the course of a year, earn five hundred points. By the fall, Glenn Reinhart had earned nearly eight thousand—twice

as many as anyone else—and Waldoch sent him an e-mail and invited him to breakfast.

In the Hollywood Diner, Reinhart protested about an unsteady table. "It's like a Citi Bike that has something wrong with it—I have to fix it," he said. He crouched down, then reappeared. "What's your background, Collin?"

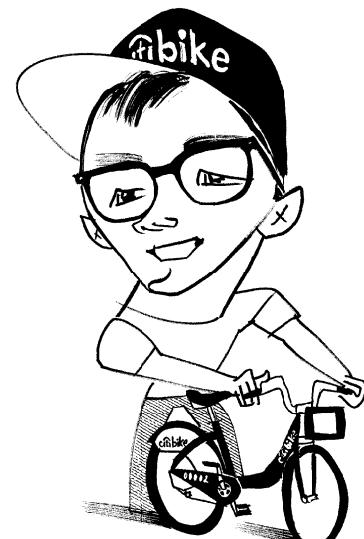
It was eight o'clock. Reinhart had picked up his first Citi Bike at five-thirty, on the corner of West Sixteenth Street and Tenth Avenue, in front of a SoulCycle. "There are people paying to go to SoulCycle; I'm getting paid to cycle!" he said. He rode to Twentieth Street and Eleventh Avenue, briskly walked back, and did the same again, and then again. Later, he moved bikes from Sixteenth Street to a station three blocks south. (A station's value, in Angel points, is adjusted every half hour, in response to use and anticipated use.) Then he switched to Hudson Street. The weather was damp. "It was beautiful," he told Waldoch. "It reminded me of the Scottish Highlands. A beautiful light mist."

Reinhart suggested to Waldoch that "you don't want guys like me" in the program. "You want the average Joe, who will walk an extra block and make a couple of points, and at the end of

the month will have made one or two weeks' free membership. You want twenty thousand of those."

"I will say, candidly, that was the original intent," Waldoch said. But, at some point, "we realized, Oh! There are two fundamentally different groups: the casual user and the Power Angel."

There are days when Reinhart spends four hours earning points. "If you wanted to take a really philosophical approach, you could see the Citi Bike network as a chaotic system," he told Waldoch. "Chaos theory—it's how brains work.



Collin Waldoch

Chaos is not disorder, and it's not order; it's somewhere right between." An Angel ride, he went on, serves to "bring balance to the city, make it a more efficient organism, community, whatever you want to call it. In my view."

Waldoch nodded, and shared a theory about why cyclists seem reluctant to ride uptown at the end of a workday. "It sounds insane, but I think part of it is that it feels more uphill because you're going north. People think it's easier to go south."

For two weeks at the end of October, Waldoch offered bonus points for any ride that started below Thirty-fourth Street and ended above Fifty-ninth. Reinhart's afternoon routine had been to move bikes from the West Village to the station by the tennis courts in Hudson River Park. On October 31st, encouraged by the bonus, he rode north. He was on the Upper West Side when a driver turned onto the Hudson River Park bike path at Houston Street and, going south, killed eight people. (Photographs taken at the scene showed a crumpled Citi Bike.) If not for the bonus program, "I might be dead," Reinhart said, and he thanked Waldoch.

An online Angels leaderboard identifies riders by their initials and the last digits of their Zip Code. For a while, "there was no other Glenn," Waldoch said. But, in October, a rider known as JMo09 won more monthly points than Reinhart, and seemed likely to threaten his lead in total points.

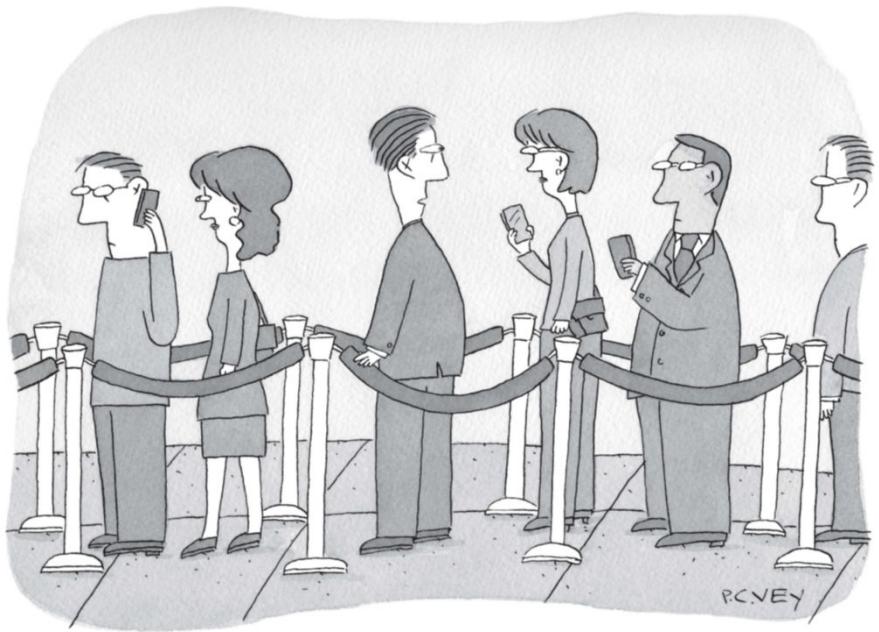
"He's an ultra-marathon runner," Waldoch told Reinhart. (His name is Joe Miller. For work, he takes dogs for runs; he wears shoes with separated toes, and refers to Angel sessions as "farming" for points.)

"If you run, it's easier," Reinhart said. "I can't run. I had a hip surgery that didn't come out perfectly. And it's hard on the body, if you're my age."

"Yes, he is younger," Waldoch said, apologetically.

"I've watched this guy," Reinhart said. "He did a hundred and twenty points a day in October, as an average. That's really difficult." He sighed, and went on. "It's a relief: if you're No. 1 in anything, someone's going to knock you off, and there's pressure. And now I don't have to feel it anymore."

—*Ian Parker*



*"Can you hold my place in line while I run off to live the life I always wanted?"*

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### THE PICTURES

#### SKILLFUL



Martin McDonagh, the filmmaker and playwright, sank into a ratty couch at Fat Cat, the game-filled dive bar on Christopher Street. It was late afternoon, with scattered customers playing Foosball and Ping-Pong. McDonagh, who is forty-seven, silver-haired, and less foulmouthed than his scripts, was a regular at Fat Cat in the late nineties, when his play "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" was on Broadway. "It was a really joyful time, because I was only, like, twenty-eight, and I'd quit working a proper job about three years before," he recalled. "I like a bit of table tennis, and they have nice jazz here, too. It's a good place to come on magic mushrooms." Does he remember any particular hallucinations? "Just faces. Demons. Babies kissing demons. In a happy way." He smiled.

McDonagh, who was born in London, to Irish parents, made his bad-boy reputation with pitch-dark comedies like "The Pillowman" and "The Cripple of

Inishmaan," many set in the Aran Islands. He wrote almost all of them in a nine-month sprint when he was twenty-four, alone in a house in Camberwell. Almost as soon as he became an internationally known playwright, he turned to making movies ("In Bruges," "Seven Psychopaths"), which were just as bloody and "feck"-filled as his plays. His new film, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," stars Frances McDormand, as a woman who takes drastic measures to shame the town sheriff (Woody Harrelson) for not investigating the rape and murder of her daughter. It's a comedy, in a babies-kissing-demons kind of way.

McDonagh got up to play a round of pool. He picked up billiards when he was seven; a friend's father owned a pub in Elephant and Castle, and they would play during off hours. "Brilliant break!" he commended himself, splitting the rack. In America, he noted, you typically have to call your shot, unlike in Britain. "'Cause England's game is based on shit play. You have to be a bit more skillful in America. Same as in the movie business." With "Three Billboards," McDonagh wanted to make "a proper American film," he said, "rather than an outsider's view of America." Ebbing, Missouri, does not exist, but McDonagh

wrote the screenplay during a two-month tour through Montana, Colorado, and New Mexico. He would write longhand in a notepad, in parks or by rivers, or in hotel rooms or on trains.

"I did a hike with a friend in Glacier National Park"—he pronounced it "glassier"—"and a deer came up in the evening time. That deer made it into the movie." (McDormand's character tells a deer walking by her billboards, "You aren't trying to make me believe in reincarnation, are you? Because you're pretty, but you ain't her.")

"Blue," McDonagh said, calling the two. The cue ball bounced around, hitting nothing. "In England, you would get two shots now, which is stupid," he told his opponent. "That just rewards ineptitude. Like everything in England. Oh, England's getting a bashing! It's the Irish coming out." The film originated nearly two decades ago, he went on, when he saw an unusual billboard during a bus trip through the South. "I didn't know where I was—Georgia or Alabama or Mississippi, or it could have been Florida—but it was an angry, pain-filled call-out of the cops for not doing enough to solve a horrible crime." He was en route to Nicaragua, as part of a peacekeeping mission with a group called Pastors for Peace. "This was just after 'Beauty Queen' was on Broadway, and I felt like I was getting a little too big for my britches. I wanted to do something a little outside of myself."

A guy from the next table, who had overheard McDonagh giving tips, asked, "Are you a pro?"

"No," McDonagh said. "But it's good that you thought I was."



Martin McDonagh

He sat at a table topped with a Scrabble board. His first play set in America was "A Behanding in Spokane," which was on Broadway in 2010. He has never been to Spokane ("I liked the name—the K-A-N-E. That's all"), but went through it on a train to Portland. "That's the good thing about American trains," he said. "You can be on there for two and a half, three days, and you have to think. I didn't have a mobile phone until a year ago." Recently, he rode from Chicago to Los Angeles, observing the scenery and the passengers, some of whom were Amish. "As a Londoner, even that seems cinematic: the Amish on a train." Is there a psycho-Amish project in his future? "No, I'm getting away from the psycho thing. It's rom-coms all the way! An Amish rom-com." He smirked. "Kissin'. That's as dirty as it's going to get."

—Michael Schulman

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#### NOT IN MY NAME DEPT. DUPED



Jason B. Kessler is a food and travel writer and a co-host of "Trip Testers," a show on the Travel Channel. His tweets, from the handle @JasonBKessler, are mostly self-promotion and innocuous musings. ("I would absolutely patronize a pickle vending machine if such a thing existed.") On the morning of August 12th, as hundreds of white supremacists massed in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia, he tweeted, "For the record, I am not \*that\* Jason Kessler."

"You think you have it bad . . ." a data scientist named Jason S. Kessler (@Jason-Kessler) replied.

"Jason Kessler sympathy group right here," Jason N. Kessler, a high-school football player (@JasonKessler22), added. A few more Jason Kesslers—a screenwriter, a Dallas sports fan, a nursing-association employee—weighed in. There was a short-lived hashtag: #JasonKesslersAgainst-RacistJasonKesslers.

The racist in question was Jason E. Kessler, the Charlottesville resident who had organized the rally there. Before this year, apart from voting for Barack Obama, Kessler was not very politically active.

His most notable public achievement was writing two books, the noir thriller "Badland Blues" ("a homeless dwarf madly in unrequited love with a local waitress") and the poetry collection "Midnight Road" ("once I'd been touched by pain/I could never be the same./it smashed a deep abyss in the bedrock of my heart,/into which I've fallen"). In the past few months, Kessler has emerged as one of the country's most outspoken white nationalists. His Charlottesville rally led to violence, including the death of a counterprotester named Heather Heyer. Kessler refused to apologize. "Heather Heyer was a fat, disgusting Communist," he tweeted. "Looks like it was payback time."

"I'm vain enough to have a Google alert for my name, so I've been aware of the white-supremacist Jason Kessler for a while," Jason B. Kessler, the travel writer, said. "I'm also vain enough to have noticed that I was once the top result when you Googled 'Jason Kessler,' and, at a certain point, he eclipsed me. It's O.K., though. I've grown accustomed to dealing with Internet idiots."

Jason S. Kessler, the data scientist, works at a software company in Seattle. He describes himself as "center-left, although I try not to post about politics on social media." The day of the Charlottesville rally, he received several unpleasant tweets from strangers. ("You are on the wrong side of history"; "Your brain and dick are clearly both minuscule.") Two weeks later, at a data-analysis conference, he gave a short talk called "Jason Kessler Problems: What's Wrong with Twitter." He suggested a few small tweaks to Twitter's interface that could minimize cases of mistaken identity. "It's not just us Kesslers who are affected," he said recently. "Every few days, you see someone on Twitter named Richard Spencer, or Mike Pence, or George Papadopoulos, going, 'You've got the wrong guy!'"

Twitter already has a mechanism for reducing ambiguity; at least, that's what it was supposed to be for. It's called verification. A "verified" account—one that Twitter has judged "authentic" and to be "of public interest"—is given an official blue check mark. The idea is that when you search for Donald Trump you don't get fake accounts like @DonaldTrump or @TrumpFetish; instead, you get @realDonaldTrump, the one with the blue check mark, which the President

actually uses. Twitter claims that a verification is not an endorsement. Over time, though, the check mark has become a status symbol. Conservatives sometimes disparage mainstream journalists as “verified liberals.”

Earlier this month, Twitter verified @TheMadDimension—the white-nationalist Jason Kessler. “I thought it made sense,” Jason S. Kessler, the data scientist, said. “He should be held accountable for the terrible things he says. That’s the point, isn’t it?” Far-left Twitter disagreed. One user, who goes by the name (((Feminist Porg Queen Demands Nazis Be Banned))), reacted to the news by sending a message to Twitter’s C.E.O.: “Fuck you @jack, you nazi-loving dickweed.” Last week, Twitter unverified Kessler, along with a few other white nationalists, including Richard Spencer. The company announced a new set of guidelines for verified accounts, including a rule against “promoting hate and/or violence.” White-nationalist Kessler tweeted, “Twitter has changed their verification policy just to be able to censor me.” (((Feminist Porg Queen))) reacted to this development by tweeting at Twitter’s C.E.O., “You’re still a vile fucking nazi & we should fight.”

Jason S. Kessler still gets tweets intended for the other Jason Kessler, but he has come to enjoy them. “Anytime I see a bunch of notifications, it’s like Christmas morning—a new batch of people to mess with,” he said. Once, when he was on a date in a restaurant, he saw a tweet that accused him of being “in hiding.” He responded with a photo of himself, smiling and hoisting a beer. “I am neither in hiding nor the Jason Kessler you’re looking for,” he wrote.

—Andrew Marantz

## L.A. POSTCARD STRATEGY



Young professionals of the nineteen-sixties had three-Martini lunches; today’s have after-work panel discussions sponsored by liquor companies. On a recent evening, eighty-eight women gathered at an auditorium in the

Santa Monica headquarters of Hulu, the content-streaming service. Doyenne, a year-old private club for women, had partnered with Hulu’s women’s arm, Hula, to host a panel about the advancement of women in the entertainment industry. It had been planned in August. “Every week, there’s been something to inspire us to go further,” Betsy Rosenberg, one of the club’s founders, said before the event. She wore a drapey cardigan over a green slip dress. “It’s Harvey Weinstein now,” her co-founder, Natacha Hildebrand, who wore a red lace sheath, said. “A month and a half ago, it was that engineer at Google; three weeks before that, it was Travis Kalanick; before that, it was Donald Trump.”

Rosenberg, a former manager for Talpa Media, and Hildebrand, who previously worked for the Creative Artists Agency, started Doyenne to introduce accomplished executive women to up-and-comers in need of advice. The qualifications for membership, beyond not being male: “You have to be kind, you have to be inclusive,” Rosenberg said.

“She’s being polite,” Hildebrand said. “No dicks allowed.”

Johnnie Walker provided whiskey cocktails with girlish adornments (purple flowers, Earl Grey as a mixer); young women in smart blazers piled crudités onto plastic plates. Leah MacIsaac-Ruff, a Hulu manager and a Hula board member, had organized a similar gathering after the allegations against Weinstein first surfaced. Eighty or so employees had discussed things people routinely say to excuse workplace sexual harassment: “I didn’t think it was such a big deal”; “That’s just who they are.” “Now we’re going back to our human-resources organization with proposals,” MacIsaac-Ruff said. “Like, maybe we want an anonymous phone line.”

The panel’s moderator, Christina Woody Train, a brand strategist, conducted a show-of-hands survey. “How many of you have been working for less than ten years?” Half. “How many of you are under thirty?” Most. “How many of you have ever felt stagnant or uninspired in your career?” All. Some panelists offered platitudes typical of women’s conferences—“Success is really exhausting,” Natalie Tran, from C.A.A.’s philanthropic foundation, said. But Lisa Filipelli, the founder of Flip Management, offered

concrete advice. “If you’re asking for a raise, think strategically,” she said. “What are your friends being paid? Women don’t often talk to each other about what they’re making. Talk to them, talk to men, ask.”

Attendees divided into groups with each of the panelists. Fifteen women encircled Filipelli, who wore an olive-green dress and over-the-knee boots.

“I’m way over-delivering and way underpaid,” an employee at a food-themed social network said. “How do you even start that conversation?”

“I actually grew up kind of poor,” said Filipelli, who described commuting four hours, by bus, between her college, in Pennsylvania, and her first internship, in Manhattan. “My family lived off food stamps at one point. I worked multiple jobs through a lot of my career. Every time I negotiated, I proved my value in what I was delivering. I outlined it: ‘Hey, I generated three hundred thousand dollars for you, and you’re paying me sixty thousand. That’s unfair.’”

A Hulu employee asked, “How have you navigated the gender gap?”

“When I was in my early twenties, I was very aware of my physical appearance, because I knew that would get the attention of people so that I could then let them know how smart I was,” Filipelli said. “The politics are so dumb. I don’t think any woman should have to dress a certain way, or behave a certain way, or know a certain person to get ahead in their career. They should just be good at what they do. I think we’re starting to finally see that shift in Hollywood, but it’s slow and it’s painful and it sucks to have to use certain things to your advantage.”

Some of the women sighed, others nodded knowingly. A woman in jeans and a green sweater asked a follow-up: “Have you ever walked into a room and felt that, because you’re so confident and good at what you do, you’re made to feel like you’re aggressive?”

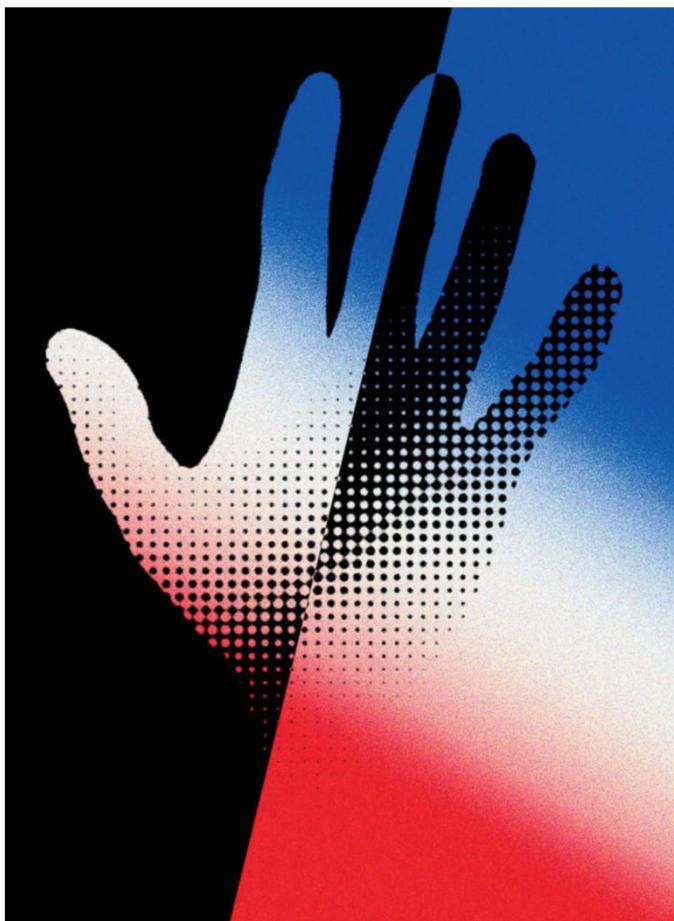
“Every single day of my life,” Filipelli answered. “I’m so fine with being called aggressive. I don’t need to be nice, I don’t need to be pretty. It’s not a thing that’s ever bothered me. It can be tough for some women, to get those labels. But I’m just sort of, like, ‘Fuck it.’” She grinned and threw her hands up. “Honestly, I’m a *bad bitch*, if I am a bitch.”

—Sheila Marikar

# “YOU WILL NOT REPLACE US”

*The French origins of the white-nationalist rallying cry.*

BY THOMAS CHATTERTON WILLIAMS



The Château de Plieux, a fortified castle on a hilltop in the Gascony region of southwestern France, overlooks rolling fields speckled with coves and farmhouses. A tricolor flag snaps above the worn beige stone. The northwest tower, which was built in the fourteenth century, offers an ideal position from which to survey invading hordes. Inside the château's cavernous second-story study, at a desk heavy with books, the seventy-one-year-old owner of the property, Renaud Camus, sits at an iMac and tweets dire warnings about Europe's demographic doom.

On the sweltering June afternoon that I visited the castle, Camus—no

relation to Albert—wore a tan summer suit and a tie. Several painted self-portraits hung in the study, multiplying his blue-eyed gaze. Camus has spent most of his career as a critic, novelist, diarist, and travel essayist. The only one of his hundred or so books to be translated into English, “Tricks” (1979), announces itself as “a sexual odyssey—man-to-man,” and includes a foreword by Roland Barthes. The book describes polyglot assignations from Milan to the Bronx. Allen Ginsberg said of it, “Camus’s world is completely that of a new urban homosexual; at ease in half a dozen countries.”

In recent years, though, Camus’s

*Richard Spencer, the white nationalist, prefers the French term “identitarian.”*

name has been associated less with erotica than with a single poignant phrase, *le grand remplacement*. In 2012, he made this the title of an alarmist book. Native “white” Europeans, he argues, are being reverse-colonized by black and brown immigrants, who are flooding the Continent in what amounts to an extinction-level event. “The great replacement is very simple,” he has said. “You have one people, and in the space of a generation you have a different people.” The specific identity of the replacement population, he suggests, is of less importance than the act of replacement itself. “Individuals, yes, can join a people, integrate with it, assimilate to it,” he writes in the book. “But peoples, civilizations, religions—and especially when these religions are themselves civilizations, types of society, almost States—cannot and cannot even want to . . . blend into other peoples, other civilizations.”

Camus believes that all Western countries are faced with varying degrees of “ethnic and civilizational substitution.” He points to the increasing prevalence of Spanish, and other foreign languages, in the United States as evidence of the same phenomenon. Although his arguments are scarcely available in translation, they have been picked up by right-wing and white-nationalist circles throughout the English-speaking world. In July, Lauren Southern, the Canadian alt-right Internet personality, posted, on YouTube, a video titled “The Great Replacement”; it has received more than a quarter of a million views. On great-replacement.com, a Web site maintained anonymously, the introductory text declares, “The same term can be applied to many other European peoples both in Europe and abroad . . . where the same policy of mass immigration of non-European people poses a demographic threat. Of all the different races of people on this planet, only the European races are facing the possibility of extinction in a relatively near future.” The site announces its mission as “spreading awareness” of Camus’s term, which, the site’s author concludes, is more palatable than a similar concept, “white genocide.” (A search for that phrase on YouTube

yields more than fifty thousand videos.)

"I don't have any genetic conception of races," Camus told me. "I don't use the word 'superior.'" He insisted that he would feel equally sad if Japanese culture or "African culture" were to disappear because of immigration. On Twitter, he has quipped, "The only race I hate is the one knocking on the door."

Camus's partner arrived in the study with a silver platter, and offered fruitcake and coffee. Camus, meanwhile, told me about his "red-pill moment"—an alt-right term, derived from a scene in the film "The Matrix," for the decision to become politically enlightened. As a child, he said, he was a "xenophile," who was delighted to see foreign tourists flocking to the thermal baths near his home, in the Auvergne. In the late nineties, he began writing domestic travel books, commissioned by the French government. The work took him to the department of Hérault, whose capital is Montpellier. Although Camus was familiar with France's heavily black and Arab inner suburbs, or *banlieues*, and their subsidized urban housing projects, known as *cités*, his experience in Hérault floored him. Travelling through medieval villages, he said, "you would go to a fountain, six or seven centuries old, and there were all these North African women with veils!" A demographic influx was clearly no longer confined to France's inner suburbs and industrial regions; it was ubiquitous, and it was transforming the entire country. Camus's problem was not, as it might be for many French citizens, that the religious symbolism of the veil clashed with some of the country's most cherished secularist principles; it was that the veil wearers were permanent interlopers in Camus's homeland. He became obsessed with the diminishing ethnic purity of Western Europe.

Camus supports the staunchly anti-immigrant politician Marine Le Pen. He denied, however, that he was a member of the "extreme right," saying that he was simply one of many voters who "wanted France to stay French." In Camus's view, Emmanuel Macron, the centrist liberal who handily defeated Le Pen in a runoff, is synony-

mous with the "forces of *remplacement*." Macron, he noted acidly, "went to Germany to compliment Mme. Merkel on the marvellous work she did by taking in one million migrants." Camus derides Macron, a former banker, as a representative of "direct Davos-cracy"—someone who thinks of people as "interchangeable" units within a larger social whole. "This is a very low conception of what being human is," he said. "People are not just things. They come with their history, their culture, their language, with their looks, with their preferences." He sees immigration as one aspect of a nefarious global process that renders obsolete everything from cuisine to landscapes. "The very essence of modernity is the fact that everything—and really *everything*—can be replaced by something else, which is absolutely monstrous," he said.

Camus takes William F. Buckley, Jr.,'s injunction to stand "athwart history, yelling Stop" to the furthest extent possible, and he can be recklessly unconcerned about backing up his claims. On a recent radio appearance, he took a beating from Hervé le Bras, a director emeritus at the Institut National d'Études Démographiques, who said that Camus's proclamations about ethnic substitution were based on wildly inflated statistics about the number of foreigners entering France. Afterward, Camus breezily responded on Twitter: "Since when, in history, did a people need 'science' to decide whether or not it was invaded and occupied?"

Camus has become one of the most cited figures on the right in France. He is a regular interlocutor of such mainstream intellectuals as Alain Finkielkraut, the conservative Jewish philosopher, who has called Camus "a great writer," and someone who has "forged an expression that is heard all the time and everywhere." Camus also has prominent critics: the essayist and novelist Emmanuel Carrère, a long-time friend, has publicly reproached him, writing that "the argument 'I'm at home here, not you'" is incompatible with "globalized justice." Mark Lilla, the Columbia historian and scholar of the mentality of European reactionaries, described Camus as "a

kind of connective tissue between the far right and the respectable right." Camus can play the role of "respectable" reactionary because his opposition to multicultural globalism is plausibly high-minded, principally aesthetic, even well-mannered—a far cry from the manifest brutality of the skinheads and the tattooed white nationalists who could put into action the xenophobic ideas expressed in "Le Grand Remplacement." (At a rally in Warsaw on November 11th, white-nationalist demonstrators brandished signs saying "Pray for an Islamic Holocaust" and "Pure Poland, White Poland.") When I asked Camus whether he considered me—a black American living in Paris with a French wife and a mixed-race daughter—part of the problem, he genially replied, "There is nothing more French than an American in Paris!" He then offered me the use of his castle when he and his partner next went on a vacation.

Although Camus presents his definition of "Frenchness" as reasonable and urbane, it is of a piece with a less benign perspective on ethnicity, Islam, and territory which has circulated in his country for decades. Never the sole preserve of the far right, this view was conveyed most bluntly in a 1959 letter, from Charles de Gaulle to his confidant Alain Peyrefitte, which advocates withdrawal from French Algeria:

It is very good that there are yellow Frenchmen, black Frenchmen, brown Frenchmen. They prove that France is open to all races and that she has a universal mission. But [it is good] on condition that they remain a small minority. Otherwise, France would no longer be France. We are, after all, primarily a European people of the white race, Greek and Latin culture, and the Christian religion.

De Gaulle then declares that Muslims, "with their turbans and djellabahs," are "not French." He asks, "Do you believe that the French nation can absorb 10 million Muslims, who tomorrow will be 20 million and the day after 40 million?" If this were to happen, he concludes, "my village would no longer be called Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, but Colombey-les-Deux-Mosquées!"

Such worry about Muslims has been present across Europe at least since

the turn of the twentieth century, when the first “guest workers” began arriving from former French colonies and from Turkey. In 1898 in Britain, Winston Churchill warned of “militant Mahomedanism,” and Enoch Powell’s 1968 Rivers of Blood speech alleged that immigration had caused a “total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history.”

Anxiety about immigrants of color has long been present in the United States, especially in states along the Mexican border. This feeling became widespread after 9/11, and has only intensified with subsequent terrorist acts by Islamists, the Great Recession, and the election of the first black President. Meanwhile, white populations across the world are stagnant or dwindling. In recent years, white-nationalist discourse has emerged from the recesses of the Internet into plain sight, permeating the highest reaches of the Trump Administration. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the White House senior adviser Stephen Miller endorse dramatic reductions in both legal and illegal immigration. The President’s former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, has returned to his post as the executive chairman of the far-right Web site Breitbart. In a 2014 speech at the Vatican, Bannon praised European “forefathers” who kept Islam “out of

the world.” President Trump, meanwhile, has made the metaphor of immigrant invasion literal by vowing to build a wall.

In Europe, which in recent years has absorbed millions of migrants fleeing wars in the Middle East or crossing the Mediterranean from Africa, opposition to immigration is less a cohesive ideology than a welter of reactionary ideas and feelings. Xenophobic nationalism can be found on both the left and the right. There is not even unanimity on the superiority of Judeo-Christian culture: some European nationalists express a longing for ancient pagan practices. Anti-immigrant thinkers also cannot agree on a name for their movement. Distrust of multiculturalism and a professed interest in preserving European “purity” is often called “identitarianism,” but many prominent anti-immigrant writers avoid that construction. Camus told me that he refused to play “the game” of identity politics, and added, “Do you think that Louis XIV or La Fontaine or Racine or Châteaubriand would say, ‘I’m identitarian?’ No, they were just French. And I’m just French.”

**S**hortly after Trump’s Inauguration, Richard Spencer, the thirty-nine-year-old white nationalist who has become the public face of the American alt-right, was sucker-punched by

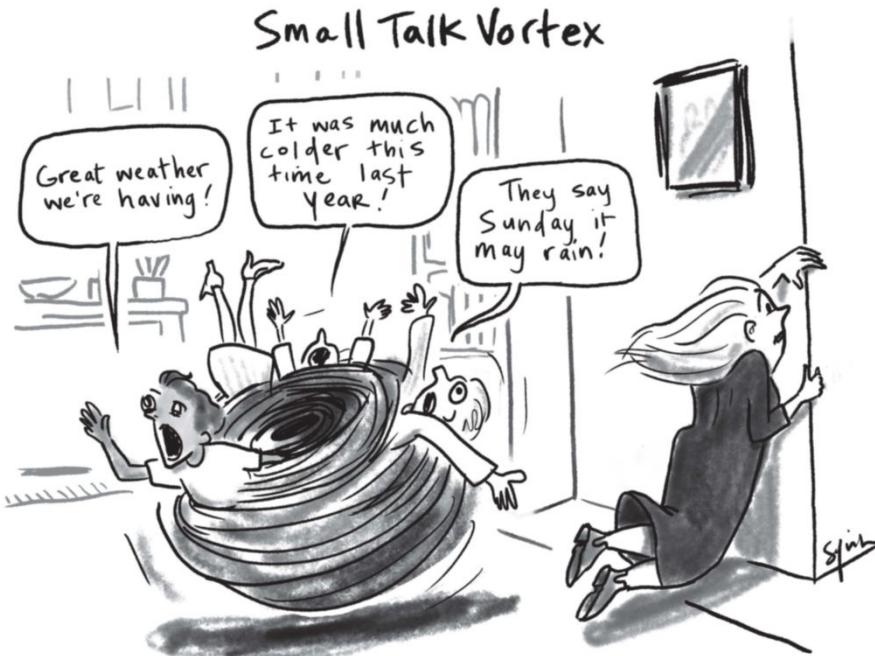
a protester while being interviewed on a street corner in Washington, D.C. A video of the incident went viral, but little attention was paid to what Spencer said on the clip. “I’m *not* a neo-Nazi,” he declared. “They kind of hate me, actually.” In order to deflect the frequent charge that he is a racist, he defines himself with the very term that Camus rejects: identitarian. The word sidesteps the question of racial superiority and co-opts the left’s inclusive language of diversity and its critique of forced assimilation in order to reclaim the right to difference—for whites.

Identitarianism is a distinctly French innovation. In 1968, in Nice, several dozen far-right activists created the Research and Study Group for European Civilization, better known by its French acronym, GRECE. The think tank eventually began promoting its ideas under the rubric the Nouvelle Droite, or the New Right. One of its founders, and its most influential member, was Alain de Benoist, a hermetic aristocrat and scholar who has written more than a hundred books. In “View from the Right” (1977), Benoist declared that he and other members of GRECE considered “the gradual homogenization of the world, advocated and realized by the two-thousand-year-old discourse of egalitarian ideology, to be an evil.”

The group expressed allegiance to “diversity” and “ethnopluralism”—terms that sound politically correct to American ears but had a different meaning in Benoist’s hands. In “Manifesto for a European Renaissance” (1999), he argued:

The true wealth of the world is first and foremost the diversity of its cultures and peoples. The West’s conversion to universalism has been the main cause of its subsequent attempt to convert the rest of the world: in the past, to its religion (the Crusades); yesterday, to its political principles (colonialism); and today, to its economic and social model (development) or its moral principles (human rights). Undertaken under the aegis of missionaries, armies, and merchants, the Westernization of the planet has represented an imperialist movement fed by the desire to erase all otherness.

From this vantage point, both globalized Communism and globalized capitalism are equally suspect, and a



## OVERPASS

The road wasn't as hazardous then, when I'd walk to the steel guardrail, lean my bendy girl body over, and stare at the cold creek water. In a wet spring, the water'd run clear and high, minnows mouthing the sand and silt, a crawdad shadowed by the shore's long reeds. I could stare for hours, something always new in each watery wedge—a bottle top, a man's black boot, a toad. Once, a raccoon's carcass half under the overpass, half out, slowly decayed over months. I'd check on him each day, watching until the white bones of his hand were totally skinless and seemed to reach out toward the sun as it hit the water, showing all five of his sweet tensile fingers still clinging. I don't think I worshipped him, his deadness, but I liked the evidence of him, how it felt like a job to daily take note of his shifting into the sand.

—Ada Limón

"citizen of the world" is an agent of imperialism. When Benoist writes that "humanity is irreducibly plural" and that "diversity is part of its very essence," he is not supporting the idea of a melting pot but of diversity in isolation: all Frenchmen in one territory and all Moroccans in another. It is a nostalgic and aestheticized view of the world that shows little interest in the complex economic and political forces that provoke migration. Identitarianism is a lament against change made by people fortunate enough to have been granted, through the arbitrary circumstance of birth, citizenship in a wealthy liberal democracy.

Benoist's peculiar definition of "diversity" has allowed him to take some unexpected positions. He simultaneously defends a Muslim immigrant's right to wear the veil and opposes the immigration policies that allowed her to settle in France in the first place. In an e-mail, he told me that immigration constitutes an undeniably negative phenomenon, in part because it turns immigrants into victims, by erasing their roots. He continued, "The destiny of all the peoples of the Third

World cannot be to establish themselves in the West." In an interview in the early nineties with *Le Monde*, he declared that the best way to show solidarity with immigrants is by increasing trade with the Third World, so that developing countries can become "self-sufficient" enough to dissuade their citizens from seeking better lives elsewhere. These countries, he added, needed to find their own paths forward, and not follow the tyrannizing templates of the World Bank and the I.M.F.

Benoist told me that, in France's Presidential election, in May, he voted not for Marine Le Pen but for the far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who shares his contempt for global capitalism. Benoist's writing often echoes left-wing thinkers, especially the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who wrote of "hegemony"—or the command that a regime can wield over a population by controlling its culture. In "Manifesto for a European Renaissance," Benoist argues that white Europeans should not just support restrictive immigration policies; they should oppose such diluting ideolo-

gies as multiculturalism and globalism, taking seriously "the premise that ideas play a fundamental role in the collective consciousness." In a similar spirit, Benoist has promoted a *gramscisme de droite*—cultural opposition to the rampaging forces of Hollywood and multinational corporations. The French, he has said, should retain their unique traditions and not switch to "a diet of hamburgers."

Despite Benoist's affinity for some far-left candidates, "Manifesto for a European Renaissance" has become a revered text for the extreme right across Western Europe, in the U.S., and even in Russia. The crackpot Russian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, who promotes the ethnopluralist doctrine "Eurasianism," has flown to Paris to meet Benoist. "I consider him to be the foremost intellectual in Europe today," Dugin told interviewers in 2012. Earlier this year, John Morgan, an editor of Counter-Currents, a white-nationalist publishing house based in San Francisco, posted an online essay about the indebtedness of the American alt-right to European thought. He described Benoist and GRECE's achievement as "a towering edifice of thought unparalleled anywhere else on the Right since the Conservative Revolution in Germany of the Weimar era."

Although Benoist claims not to be affiliated with the alt-right—or even to understand "what Richard Spencer can know or have learned from my thoughts"—he has travelled to Washington, D.C., to speak at the National Policy Institute, a white-nationalist group run by Spencer, and he has sat for long interviews with Jared Taylor, the founder of the virulently white-supremacist magazine *American Renaissance*. In one exchange, Taylor, who was educated in France, asked Benoist how he saw himself "as different from identitarians." Benoist responded, "I am aware of race and of the importance of race, but I do not give to it the excessive importance that you do." He went on, "I am not fighting for the white race. I am not fighting for France. I am fighting for a world view.... Immigration is clearly a problem. It gives rise to much social pathologies. But our identity, the

identity of the immigrants, all the identities in the world have a common enemy, and this common enemy is the system that destroys identities and differences everywhere. This system is the enemy, not the Other.”

Benoist may not be a dogmatic thinker, but, for white people who want to think explicitly in terms of culture and race, his work provides a lofty intellectual framework. These disciples, instead of calling for an “Islamic holocaust,” can argue that rootedness in one’s homeland matters, and that immigration, miscegenation, and the homogenizing forces of neo-liberal market economies collude to obliterate identities that have taken shape over hundreds of years—just as relentless development has decimated the environment. Benoist’s romantic-sounding ideas can be cherry-picked and applied to local political resentments.

The writer Raphaël Glucksman, a prominent critic of the French far right, told me that such selective appropriations have given Benoist “a huge authority among white nationalists and Fascists everywhere in the world.” Glucksman recently met me for coffee near his home, which is off the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, one of the most ethnically diverse thoroughfares in Paris. The Nouvelle Droite, Glucksman argued, adopted a traditionally German, tribal way of conceiving identity, which the Germans themselves abandoned after the Second World War. The Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt argued that “all right is the right of a particular *Volk*.” In a 1932 essay, “The Concept of the Political,” he posed the question that still defines the right-wing mind-set: Who is a people’s friend, and who is an enemy? For Schmitt, to identify one’s enemies was to identify one’s inner self. In another essay, he wrote, “Tell me who your enemy is, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

The Nouvelle Droite was fractured, in the nineteen-nineties, by disagreements over what constituted the principal enemy of European identity. If the perceived danger was initially what

Benoist described as “the ideology of sameness”—what many in France called the “Coca-Colonization” of the world—the growing presence of African and Arab immigrants caused some members of GRECE to rethink the essence of the conflict.

One of the group’s founders, Guillaume Faye, a journalist with a Ph.D. from Sciences-Po, split off and began releasing explicitly racist books. In a 1998 tract, “Archeofuturism,” he argued, “To be a nationalist today is to assign this concept its original etymological meaning, ‘to defend the native members of a people.’” The book, which appeared in English in 2010, argues that “European people” are “under threat” and must become “politically organized for their self-defense.” Faye assures native Frenchmen that their “sub-continental motherland” is “an organic and vital part of the common folk, whose natural and historical territory—whose fortress, I would say—extends from Brest to the Bering Strait.”

Faye, like Renaud Camus, is appalled by the dictates of modern statecraft, which define nationality in legal rather than ethnic terms. The liberal American writer Sasha Polakow-Suransky, in his recent book, “Go Back to Where You Came From: The Backlash Against Immigration and the Fate of Western Democracy,” quotes Camus lamenting that “a veiled woman speaking our language badly, completely ignorant of our culture” could declare that she is just as French as an “indigenous” man who is “passionate for Roman churches, and for the verbal and syntactic delicacies of Montaigne and Rousseau, for Burgundy wines, for Proust, and whose family has lived for

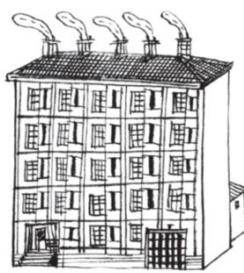
generations in the same valley.” What appalls Camus, Polakow-Suransky notes, is that “legally, if she has French nationality, she is completely correct.”

Faye’s work helps to explain the rupture that has emerged in many Western democracies between the mainstream right, which may support strict enforcement of immigration limits but does not inherently object to

the presence of Muslims, and the alt-right, which portrays Muslim immigration as an existential threat. In this light, the growing admiration by Western conservatives for the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, is easier to comprehend. Not only do thinkers like Faye admire Putin as an emblem of proudly heterosexual white masculinity; they fantasize that Russian military might will help create a “Eurosiberian” federation of white ethno-states. “The only hope for salvation in this dark age of ours,” Faye has declared, is “a protected and self-centered continental economic space” that is capable of “curbing the rise of Islam and demographic colonization from Africa and Asia.” In Faye’s 2016 book, “The Colonisation of Europe,” he writes, of Muslims in Europe, “No solution can be found unless a civil war breaks out.”

Such revolutionary right-wing talk has now migrated to America. In 2013, Steve Bannon, while he was turning Breitbart into the far right’s dominant media outlet, described himself as “a Leninist.” The reference didn’t seem like something a Republican voter would say, but it made sense to his intended audience: Bannon was signalling that the alt-right movement was prepared to hijack, or even raze, the state in pursuit of nationalist ends. (Bannon declined my request for an interview.) Richard Spencer told me, “I would say that the alt-right in the United States is radically unconservative.” Whereas the American conservative movement celebrates “the eternal value of freedom and capitalism and the Constitution,” Spencer said, he and his followers were “willing to use socialism in order to protect our identity.” He added, “Many of the countries that lived under Soviet hegemony are actually far better off, in terms of having a protected identity, than Western Europe or the United States.”

Spencer said that “clearly racialist” writers such as Benoist and Faye were “central influences” on his own thinking as an identitarian. He first discovered the work of Nouvelle Droite figures in the pages of *Telsos*, an American journal of political theory. Most identitarians have a less scholarly bent.



In 2002, a right-wing French insurrectionary, Maxime Brunerie, shot at President Jacques Chirac as he rode down the Champs-Élysées; the political group that Brunerie was affiliated with, Unité Radicale, became known as part of the *identitaire* movement. In 2004, a group known as the Bloc Identitaire became notorious for distributing soup containing pork to the homeless, in order to exclude Muslims and Jews. It was the sort of puerile joke now associated with alt-right pranksters in America such as Milo Yiannopoulos.

Copycat groups began emerging across Europe. In 2009, a Swedish former mining executive, Daniel Friberg, founded, in Denmark, the publishing house Arktos, which is now the world's largest distributor of far-and alt-right literature. The son of highly educated, left-leaning parents, Friberg grew up in a wealthy suburb of Gothenburg. He embraced right-wing thought after attending a diverse high school, which he described as overrun with crime. In 2016, he told the Daily Beast, "I had been taught to think multiculturalism was great, until I experienced it."

Few European nations have changed as drastically or as quickly as Sweden. Since 1960, it has added one and a half million immigrants to its population, which is currently just under ten million; a nationalist party, the Sweden Democrats, has become the country's main opposition group. During this period, Friberg began to devour books on European identity—specifically, those of Benoist and Faye, whose key works impressed him as much as they impressed Richard Spencer. When Friberg launched Arktos, he acquired the rights to books by Benoist and Faye and had them translated into Swedish and English. Spencer told me that Arktos "was a very important development" in the international popularization of far-right identitarian thought.

Whether or not history really is dialectical, it can be tempting to think that decades of liberal supremacy in Europe have helped give rise to the antithesis of liberalism. In Paris, left-wing intellectuals often seem reluctant to acknowledge that the recent arrival of millions of refugees in Eu-



*"Someday all these anonymous offshore accounts will belong to shell companies of which you will deny all knowledge."*

rope, many of them impoverished, poses any complications at all. Such blithe cosmopolitanism, especially when it is expressed by people who can easily shelter themselves from the disruptions caused by globalization, can fuel resentment toward both intellectuals and immigrants.

The philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy, who has long embodied élite opinion on the French left, sometimes falls prey to such rhetoric. A 2015 essay, which attempted to allay fears of a refugee crisis in Europe, portrayed Syrian refugees as uniformly virtuous and adaptable: "They are applicants for freedom, lovers of our promised land, our social model, and our values. They are people who cry out 'Europe! Europe!' the way millions of Europeans, arriving a century ago on Ellis Island, learned to sing 'America the Beautiful.'" Instead of making the reasonable argument that relatively few Muslim refugees harbor extremist beliefs, Lévy took an absolutist stance, writing that it was pure "nonsense" to be concerned about an increased risk

of terrorism. Too often, Lévy fights racism with sentimentalism.

Lévy recently met with me at his impeccable apartment, in a sanitized neighborhood near the Champs-Élysées. In our conversation, he offered a more modulated view. "I'm not saying that France should have received all two or three million Syrian refugees," he said. "Of course, there's a limited space." But France had involved itself in Syria's civil war, by giving support to opponents of the regime, and had a responsibility to help people uprooted by it, he said. Recent debates about European identity, he noted, had left out an important concept: hospitality. "Hospitality means that there is a place—real space, scarce, limited—and that in this place you host some people and you extend a hand." This did not mean that he wanted an end to borders: "France has some borders, a republican tradition, it is a place. But in this place we have the duty to *host*. You have to hold the two. A place without hosting would be a shrinking republic. Universal welcoming would be another mistake." A

necessary tension is created between “the infinite moral duty of hospitality and the limited political possibility of welcoming.”

When I asked Lévy why the notion of the great replacement had resonated so widely, he dismissed it as a “junk idea.” “The Roman conquest of Gaul was a real modification of the population in France,” he went on. “There was *never* something like an ethnic French people.” Raphaël Glucksmann made a similar critique of the idea of “pure” Frenchness. He observed, “In 1315, you had an edict from the king who said anybody who walks on the soil of France becomes a *franc*.” This is true, but there is always a threshold at which a quantitative change becomes qualitative; migration was far less extensive in the Middle Ages than it is today. French liberals can surely make a case for immigration without pretending that nothing has changed: a country that in 1900 was almost uniformly Catholic now has more than six million Muslims.

The liberal historian Patrick Boucheron, the editor of a recent surprise best-seller that highlights foreign influences on French life throughout the ages, told me that he had little patience for people who bemoan the country’s changing demographics. French people who are struggling today, he said, are victims of unfair economic policies, not Muslims, who still make up only ten per cent of the population. Indeed, only a quarter of France’s population is of immigrant origin—a percentage that, according to Boucheron, has remained stable for four decades. Boucheron sees identitarians as manipulators who have succeeded “in convincing the dominated that their problem is French identity.” For Boucheron, it’s not simply that the great replacement is a cruel idea; it’s also false. “When you oppose their figures—when you say that there were Poles and Italians coming to France in the nineteen-thirties—they say, ‘O.K., but they were *Christians*,’” he said. “So you see that behind identity there’s immigration, and behind immigration there’s hatred of Islam. Eventually, it always comes down to that.”

But to deny that recent migration has brought disruptions only helps the

identitarians gain traction. A humanitarian crisis has been unfolding in Paris, and it is clearly a novel phenomenon. This summer, more than two thousand African and Middle Eastern migrants were living in street encampments near the Porte de la Chapelle; eventually, the police rounded them up and dispersed them in temporary shelters. “We don’t have enough housing,” the center-right philosopher Pascal Bruckner told me. “The welfare state is at the maximum of its capabilities. We’re broke. And so what we offer to those people is what happens at Porte de la Chapelle.” Many liberals have downplayed the homeless crisis, rather than discuss potential solutions. “We turn a blind eye to this issue, just to look generous,” Bruckner said. At one point in my conversation with Lévy, he flatly declared that France “has no refugees.” Far-right figures, for their part, have relentlessly exploited Paris’s problems on social media, posting inflammatory videos that make it seem like marauding migrants have taken over every street corner.

Jean-Yves Camus, a scholar of the far right in France (and no relation to Renaud Camus), told me that there is a problematic lack of candor in the way that liberals describe today’s unidirectional mass movement of peoples. “It depends what you call *Frenchness*,” he said. “If you think that traditional France, like we used to see in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, should survive and remain, then certainly it will not survive. This is the truth. So I think we have to admit that, contrary to what Lévy says, there has been a change.”

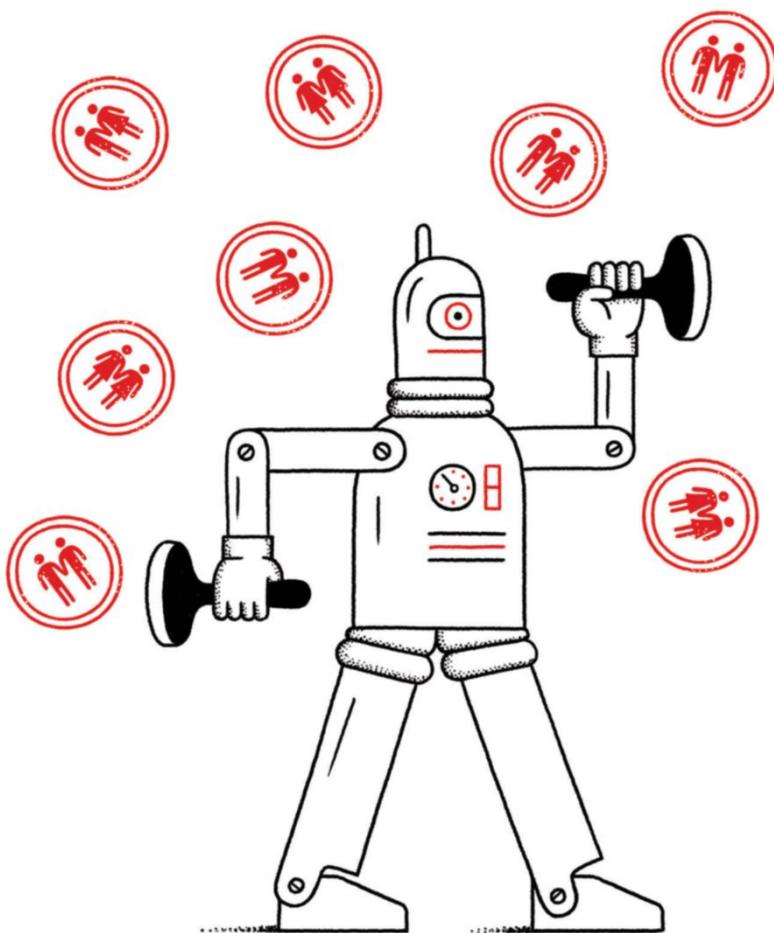
But what, exactly, does the notion of “traditional France” imply? The France of de Gaulle—or of Racine—differs in many ways from the France of today, not just in ethnic composition. Renaud Camus recently told Vox that white people in France are living “under menace”—victims of an unchecked foreign assault “as much by black Africa as it is by Northern Islamic Africans.” Yet feminism, Starbucks, the smartphone, the L.G.B.T.Q. movement, the global domination of English, EasyJet, Paris’s loss of centrality in Western cultural life—all of these developments have disrupted what it means “to be French.” The prob-

lem with identitarianism isn’t simply that it is nostalgic; it’s that it fixates on ethnicity to the exclusion of all else.

The United States is not Western Europe. Not only is America full of immigrants; they are seen as part of what makes America American. Unlike France, the United States has only ever been a nation in the legal sense, even if immigration was long restricted to Europeans, and even if the Founding Fathers organized their country along the bloody basis of what we now tend to understand as white supremacy. The fact remains that, unless you are Native American, it is ludicrous for a resident of the United States to talk about “blood and soil.” And yet the country has nonetheless arrived at a moment when once unmentionable ideas have gone mainstream, and the most important political division is no longer between left and right but between globalist and nationalist.

“The so-called New Right never claimed to change the world,” Alain de Benoist wrote to me. Its goal, he said, “was, rather, to contribute to the intellectual debate, to make known certain themes of reflection and thought.” On that count, it has proved a smashing success. Glucksmann summed up the Nouvelle Droite’s thinking as follows: “Let’s just win the cultural war, and then a leader will come out of it.” The belief that a multicultural society is tantamount to an anti-white society has crept out of French salons and all the way into the Oval Office. The apotheosis of right-wing Gramscism is Donald Trump.

On August 11th, the Unite the Right procession marched through the campus of the University of Virginia. White-supremacist protesters mashed together Nazi and Confederate iconography while chanting variations of Renaud Camus’s *grand remplacement* credo: “You will not replace us”; “Jews will not replace us.” Few, if any, of these khaki-clad young men had likely heard of Guillaume Faye, Renaud Camus, or Alain de Benoist. They didn’t know that their rhetoric had been imported from France, like some dusty wine. But they didn’t need to. All they had to do was pick up the tiki torches and light them. ♦



## MODERN SCIENCE

BY PAUL RUDNICK

Presented with photos of gay men and straight men, a computer program was able to determine which of the two was gay with 81 percent accuracy, according to Dr. [Michal] Kosinski and co-author Yilun Wang's paper.

*—The Times.*

A recent independent review of this program, which was expanded to include female subjects, has just been made public, with findings that include the following:

- There were many false positives. For example, when a photo of Mike and Karen Pence was submitted, the couple was categorized as both "gay" and "human."

- On several occasions, when a photo of an especially attractive subject was scanned, the hardware would disappear from the lab for many hours and then return with a sheen of perspiration and the categorization "YES."

- Because the photos used in the study were obtained from matchmaking and hookup Web sites, many of the heterosexual subjects had bathed and combed their hair, and were therefore judged "gay."

- The presence of a single arched eyebrow and a slight contraction of the lips cannot be used as evidence of male homosexuality, except when the subject is

examining furniture from West Elm.

- Female brunettes with shorter hair styles were often erroneously identified as "lesbian" or "Ted Cruz."
- The algorithm was able to ascertain sexual preference with ninety-eight-per-cent accuracy when using only photos of the subjects' shoes.
- When a photo of Donald Trump was scanned, the software shut down entirely and hired Gloria Allred.
- Photos of certain female subjects were identified as "lesbian until graduation, then heterosexual during two marriages before coming to her senses; currently finishing a memoir while living in a womyn's collective in Northampton, Massachusetts."
- Because of their mock turtlenecks, oddly positioned braids, and the residue of face paint designed to make them resemble cats, a group of female subjects were categorized as "sad."
- Subjects doing things with their tongues were categorized as "just no."
- Subjects with heartbreakingly hopeful facial expressions were reluctantly categorized as "I just can't."
- Photos of male, female, and nonbinary subjects currently attending progressive liberal-arts colleges refused to be categorized as "gay" or "straight," and made disgusted noises.
- Extremely Photoshopped images were categorized as "oh, honey."
- Frontal-nude photos were eliminated under the classification "don't you have parents?"
- Photos of males wearing backward baseball caps were categorized as either "hopelessly straight" or "gay from eight years ago."
- Photos of males making deliberately comic faces or winking slyly at the camera were categorized as "never."
- When completely unable to make a designation, the program would forward the photo in question to Judge Judy, who would snort and declare, "Whatever that is, it ain't gettin' down with me."
- Photos of individuals with oversized eyeglasses, polo shirts, and sparse mustaches were categorized as either "straight and alone" or "gay in a very small town."
- Photos of extremely unappealing but overwhelmingly confident males named Harvey were categorized as "run." ♦

# BATTLE SCARS

*How Virginia's past spurred a racial reckoning.*

BY BENJAMIN WALLACE-WELLS



**A**t about eight o'clock on August 11th, more than six hundred people, many of them liberal activists, gathered in the still air of St. Paul's Memorial Church, across from the campus of the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville. Over the years, parishioners at St. Paul's have debated everything from the Vietnam War to the ordination of women. Now they were facing something unprecedented and unpredictable: the prospect of a confrontation with the far right. The next day, a coalition of extremist groups, including young men who proudly proclaimed their loyalty to a white-nationalist ideology, planned to hold

a rally under the banner of "Unite the Right." Their ostensible intention was to protest the city's decision to remove a monument to the Confederate hero Robert E. Lee. Charlottesville was expecting as many as a thousand extremists, many of them armed.

The activists had been preparing for the rally for months. They had established safe houses, and some were avoiding their own homes. They had rehearsed counter-demonstrations, and several dozen of them, some also armed, had agreed to serve as security for the rest. A coalition of progressive members of the clergy had been holding training sessions; they had been

*Defending Confederate monuments became the hobbyhorse of far-right activists.*

telling one another that people could die. Now they had come to the church both for spiritual sustenance and for practical planning. From the pulpit, the philosopher and activist Cornel West declared, "This is a difficult situation—a difficult predicament—but I simply come to say that I find joy in the struggle for freedom." Susan Frederick-Gray, the president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, said that it was a "pivotal moment in our nation. I am here to show up on the side of love."

Toward the end of the service, cell phones began lighting up in the pews. About five hundred extremists were marching toward the campus, carrying flaming tiki torches that they had been instructed to buy and bring with them to Charlottesville. Unite the Right organizers had told the police about their plans, but even they had not expected so many people. The activists who were providing security outside St. Paul's passed word inside that it was not safe to leave.

The marchers were heading not toward the Lee monument, in a small park about a mile away, but toward a slender sculpture of Thomas Jefferson on campus. They were chanting, "You will not replace us!" and "Jews will not replace us!" By the time they reached the Jefferson statue, about twenty students from the University of Virginia had encircled it, locking arms. There were a few police cars parked across the street. At first, the officers watched the standoff but did not intervene. For a few minutes, the two groups shouted slogans and threats at one another. Then someone lobbed a flame from a tiki torch toward the statue, and someone else sprayed mace, until finally officers came running and dispersed the crowd. People who had been sprayed with the mace were clutching their eyes.

Inside St. Paul's, Seth Wispelwey, a minister who helped lead the coalition of progressive clergy, held his seven-year-old daughter, who clamped her arms around his neck. David Straughn, a thirty-seven-year-old member of the local chapter of Black Lives Matter, wandered into the church's library and found himself sitting next to West. "This is insane," Straughn said. West replied that this was how it had been

during the civil-rights era in the South. History seemed to be lurching both backward and forward.

There are seven hundred monuments to the Confederacy, most of them in the South, from Tampa to Charlottesville. Some, like the ninety-foot pyramid of granite blocks at Hollywood Cemetery, in Richmond, were built just after the Civil War, to honor the dead. But the vast majority were commissioned later, from the end of Reconstruction to the present. In 1890, the city of Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, installed a sixty-two-foot statue of Lee, the first of five statues that anchor Monument Avenue. When the statue to Lee was delivered, more than ten thousand citizens lined the streets to help pull it into place. Monuments to other Confederate heroes—Stonewall Jackson, J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, Matthew Fontaine Maury—followed.

Throughout the South, statues of Confederate heroes and soldiers were placed in public squares and on courthouse lawns. From the nineteen-twenties through the sixties, conservative groups paid for the creation of the Confederate Memorial Carving, of Lee, Davis, and Jackson, on Stone Mountain, in Georgia—a Confederate Mt. Rushmore. Four hundred feet above the ground and nearly two hundred feet wide, it marks the site where the Ku Klux Klan was revived, in 1915.

“The monuments were put up because the former Confederacy, the Southern states, was allowed full control not only over its story—its memorialization—but its politics,” David Blight, a Civil War historian at Yale, told me. “It won that by defeating Reconstruction, with violence and with politics. It’s their celebration of their story and their revival and their victory.” He added, “Most of them don’t say, ‘It’s a monument to white supremacy,’ but it is.”

The two Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, bronze equestrian sculptures of Lee and Jackson, were donated to the city by a local philanthropist, in the nineteen-twenties, and set in the center of small, leafy parks. Until the latter years of the Obama Administration, they were largely overlooked amid the

red brick courthouses and churches of downtown Charlottesville. Then, in June, 2015, Dylann Roof, a twenty-one-year-old who had immersed himself in white-supremacist ideology, joined a Bible-study group in the basement of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Charleston, South Carolina, and, in the midst of the discussion, rose from his chair and massacred nine black congregants. On his Web site, Roof had posted photographs of himself with a Confederate flag. He also posted a manifesto:

I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is [the] most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me.

In reaction to the slaughter at Mother Emanuel, South Carolina’s Republican governor, Nikki Haley, called for the Confederate flag to be removed from the statehouse grounds, and across the country liberal activists began tagging Confederate monuments with the words “Black Lives Matter.” Roof’s crime forced people throughout the country to reconsider questions of history, honor, and the role of memory in racial politics. “Charleston was the marker,” Blight said. “Everyone’s positions had to change.” In New Orleans, Mayor Mitch Landrieu began a campaign to remove four Confederate monuments. Two years later, as the last of the monuments came down, Landrieu delivered a speech in which he explained how he came to believe that they should be removed. A friend had suggested that he consider the plight of black parents trying to explain the presence of a statue of Lee to their fifth-grade daughter. In his speech, Landrieu asked, “Can you look into that young girl’s eyes and convince her that Robert E. Lee is there to encourage her?”

The conflict over Charlottesville’s Confederate monuments began with, among others, a sixteen-year-old girl named Zyahna Bryant. In March, 2016, Bryant, a freshman at Charlottesville High School, sent a petition to the City Council, asking that the Lee statue be removed and Lee Park be renamed. “As

a teenager in Charlottesville that identifies as black, I am offended every time I pass it,” Bryant wrote. “I am reminded over and over again of the pain of my ancestors and all of the fighting that they had to go through for us to be where we are now.” Her petition was posted on Change.org; several hundred people signed it. Wes Bellamy, a City Council member and computer-science teacher, invited Bryant to attend a rally at Lee Park later that month. She agreed. Speaking to a few dozen liberal activists and to a smaller group of counter-protesters, who were waving Confederate flags, Bryant said, “We are in 2016. Things have changed, and they are going to change.”

Bellamy and another council member, a writer and activist named Kristin Szakos, asked the City Council, chaired by Mike Signer, Charlottesville’s mayor, to vote to have both monuments removed. Signer, a forty-four-year-old Democrat with close-cropped hair and a serious mien, is a practicing lawyer. (In Charlottesville, the mayoralty is a part-time position.) He studied law at the University of Virginia and has a doctorate in political science from Berkeley, where he wrote his dissertation on how democracies resist demagogues. Signer told me that he was sympathetic to Bellamy and Szakos’s point of view but resisted the idea of “removing irritants,” as he put it, from public spaces. He lived in Fifeville, a historically black neighborhood, and when he asked an elderly woman there what should be done with the monuments she said that they should stay put, “so that my grandchildren can know what happened here.” Signer felt much the same, although he was receptive to ideas on how the statues might be altered. The Lee statue could be taken off its pedestal, or surrounded by panes of glass, on which the testimony of one of Lee’s former slaves might be printed. In 1866, a man named Wesley Norris had described Lee’s reaction to an attempted escape: “Not satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh, Gen. Lee then ordered the overseer to thoroughly wash our backs with brine.”

Charlottesville’s Confederate monuments had been installed undemocratically, when Jim Crow laws were in effect; now, Signer believed, they needed

to be reconsidered through a deliberative democratic process. The council appointed a commission of nine prominent citizens to study the issue and to deliver recommendations. Signer viewed the commission as a means of conducting a less emotional conversation. "The central problem of democracy for nine thousand years has been controlling the passions," he said.

From June to November of last year, Charlottesville's Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Memorials, and Public Spaces held seventeen public hearings. The chair, Don Gathers, the deacon at First Baptist Church, a historically black church founded just after Emancipation, and the vice-chair, John Edwin Mason, a professor of African history at the University of Virginia, led a largely liberal commission that believed its task was, among other things, to explore Charlottesville's history of slavery and segregation. But the most vocal group at the early hearings was composed of local preservationists; as the ranks of traditional heritage groups, most prominently

the Sons of Confederate Veterans, have dwindled, upholding a historically minded pride in Confederate heritage has fallen to dedicated individuals.

At Charlottesville's hearings, the preservationists included Lewis Martin III, a fourth-generation resident and the former president of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Bar Association. To Martin and many of the others, the commission was full of relative newcomers, who saw only race when they thought about Charlottesville's past. The notion that the monuments were about Jim Crow "doesn't get beneath the topsoil," Martin told me. "The people who were pleased with the erection of the statues in town were my Sunday-school teachers, and they weren't thinking about slavery or oppression. They were thinking about the veterans of the Civil War whom they knew personally, and the generals whom they considered heroes."

By the fall of 2016, Martin had started calling his group the Deplorables Plus Jane. (Jane Williamson was the only Democrat in the group.) The University of Virginia was back in session, and Mar-

tin found himself battling a faction at the hearings which was demanding that the monuments be removed. Jalane Schmidt, a forty-nine-year-old religious-studies professor, who was trying to establish the Black Lives Matter movement in the community, was supplementing the work of the commission with some historical research of her own. She found evidence that, several months before the Jackson sculpture was unveiled, in October, 1921, hundreds of Charlottesville residents had attended a Klan ceremony at Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, which included a cross-burning at Jefferson's tomb. To Schmidt, this left no ambiguity about the purpose of the Confederate monuments. "They were emblems of white supremacy," she told me. Schmidt is wiry and intense, and although she was fond of Charlottesville, she was cold-eyed about its politics: "People like to think that we're this progressive university place. At the end of the day, we're just a small Southern town."

The debate concerning the monuments became increasingly heated. Don Gathers recalled telling Mike Signer, "The only way you'll get me to contextualize Lee is if you put up a thirty-five-foot statue of Nat Turner holding an axe." The controversy spilled outside the commission. In November, Jason Kessler, a local conservative blogger, began a campaign to unseat Wes Bellamy, the only black member of the City Council. Kessler had found that Bellamy, a thirty-year-old high-school teacher and a member of the Virginia Board of Education, had a history of making vulgar remarks about gays, whites, and women on Twitter. Bellamy resigned from the board and from his teaching job, but he kept his seat on the City Council. At a council meeting in December, Kessler approached the speakers' table to denounce Bellamy. With his friends filming the encounter, he carried a portable speaker that blasted Tom Petty's anthem of persistence, "I Won't Back Down."

In early 2016, Charlottesville had seemed evenly divided about moving the monuments, Gathers told me. By the end of the year, it was much the same, but convictions on both sides had hardened. In December, the commission delivered a split recommendation to the City Council: the Lee and Jackson



*"I don't care if you're a food critic—you're not coming back in my restaurant wearing only a sash."*

monuments could either be moved or “transformed in place.” On January 17, 2017, the council deadlocked on a proposal to move the monuments. Bellamy and Szakos supported it, Mayor Signer and a fourth council member opposed it—and a seventy-two-year-old contractor named Bob Fenwick abstained, because, he said, he believed other programs should take priority. For a week, it seemed that everyone in town was mad at Fenwick the fence-sitter. Then, in late January, he announced that he would change his vote, to support the proposal. The Monument Fund, a non-profit founded by the conservationists, and by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, filed a joint lawsuit to prevent the removal of the monuments, and a judge granted a preliminary injunction in their favor. The formal debate was over; the statues stayed put.

**O**n February 11th, Corey Stewart, who had launched an insurgent candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, arrived at Lee Park. He planned to give a speech in defense of the monuments and of “Virginia’s heritage.” Stewart, a forty-eight-year-old lawyer and the chairman of the board of supervisors of Prince William County, represented the hard-right populist faction of the Party; he had briefly chaired Trump’s Virginia campaign, until he denounced the Republican National Committee as “establishment pukes.”

Stewart had low expectations for the Charlottesville event. “At the time, I thought, This is just a small, little issue that will probably garner me a few votes,” he told me. But he was immediately surrounded by counter-protesters, most of them affiliates of a group called Showing Up for Racial Justice. “They were yelling, ‘Hey hey, ho ho, white supremacy’s got to go,’” he recalled. One of his staffers was streaming the event on Facebook Live. “I knew it was going to go viral and it would become a big issue for my campaign,” he said.

Five days later, Stewart appeared at a press conference with Kessler. Stewart spoke about “Wes Bellamy and his group of thugs and tyrants on the Charlottesville city council.” Kessler went further, saying, of Bellamy, “He and his ilk have targeted all the Founding Fathers, philosophers, artists, and other leaders

of our glorious Western civilization.”

Stewart made the defense of Confederate monuments one of the central issues of his gubernatorial candidacy. “Nothing is worse than a Yankee telling a Southerner that his monuments don’t matter,” he tweeted. In the Republican primary, in April, Stewart came within five thousand votes, just over a percentage point, of beating the more establishment candidate Ed Gillespie, who had been an adviser to George W. Bush. (Later, Gillespie adopted Stewart’s defense of the monuments, in a failed effort to revive his campaign against the Democrat Ralph Northam.)

Stewart, who lives in a restored plantation house in northern Virginia, recognized the power of picking up a symbol that liberals had righteously rejected. “Look,” he told me, “I can go up and down Virginia, I can talk pro-life, and every conservative Republican is going to say, ‘Yeah, I’ve heard that, been there, done that. I agree with you, but it doesn’t make you different.’ When I went around Virginia and talked about preserving the historical monuments, and the lunacy of taking them down, that generated the same amount of guttural reaction and concern that the pro-life movement generated forty years ago.” The monuments are “the new social issue of the twenty-first century,” Stewart said. “That’s where the passion is now.”

By this spring, Kessler and Stewart had helped deliver the defense of Charlottesville’s monuments to the widespread white-nationalist movement, which stripped away the euphemisms and the nostalgia in favor of an unalloyed racist rhetoric. Brad Griffin, the thirty-seven-year-old spokesman for the League of the South, a white-separatist group that participated in the Unite the Right rally, told me, “When I was growing up, they were always saying that the Confederacy was about heritage, not hate. They had this whole narrative where the Confederacy was this multiracial paradise where hundreds of thousands of black Confederates fought for the Confederacy. Knowing history, I thought this was just ridiculous.”

I also spoke with Eli Mosley, the leader

of the white-supremacist group Identity Evropa. Mosley told me that, after Trump’s election brought more notice to the far right, he and others wanted to shift from an online movement to a real-life one, and Charlottesville was “aesthetically pleasing.” On May 13th, several leading extremists—including Richard Spencer and Matthew Heimbach, of the Traditionalist Worker

Party—addressed about two hundred and fifty people in front of the Jackson statue. “What brings us together is that we are white, we are a people, we will not be replaced,” Spencer said. That night, far-right groups staged a torchlit rally at Lee Park. Mosley said, “Once the

pictures went out, everyone in our movement was kicking themselves that they weren’t there. It looked cool.”

By mid-June, a Ku Klux Klan chapter from North Carolina had secured a permit to hold a rally in Charlottesville in July. Kessler, who was increasingly active in far-right circles, had a permit for Unite the Right, on August 12th. Many of the most prominent extremists in the country promised to attend. The liberal faction that had coalesced at the hearings of the monuments commission had, in a sense, been proved right: it had said that the monuments were symbols of white supremacy, and now white supremacists were coming to town to defend them.

By early summer, the activists—who included University of Virginia faculty and staff, lawyers, and clergy—had begun monitoring the online networks where extremists were organizing Unite the Right. Whenever one of them spotted Kessler and his allies having drinks at a restaurant on the downtown pedestrian mall, a group of liberal activists would surround them, chanting loudly to chase them away. Some younger faculty members, who felt that their tenure could be at risk, covered their faces with scarves or bandannas. There was shoving, and some arrests were made. “We just wanted to let them know we would not put up with white supremacists organizing here,” Ben Doherty, a law librarian, told me.

Mayor Signer believed Charlottesville was being trolled, and thought that



the activists should ignore Kessler's posse. Just before the Klan rally, in early July, he held a press conference with Al Thomas, the city's police chief, urging residents to stay home. "The irresistible instinct to go and confront can create its own cycle," Signer told me. Each encounter "piled outrage on top of outrage." But more than a thousand liberal activists turned out to surround a few dozen Klansmen, and, once the rally ended and the Klansmen had boarded their bus for the drive back to North Carolina, the police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. Twenty-two liberal activists were arrested, but no Klansmen, and some of the activists grew hostile toward the police. "The cops became the Klan in that moment," Seth Wispelwey, the local minister, told me. "The temperature rose again." The day before the Unite the Right rally, Signer sent his three-year-old twins to stay with a family friend outside town, as a precaution.

The rally was scheduled to take place on Saturday, August 12th, at noon, but a crowd had gathered beneath the Lee statue well before 9 A.M. Most of the extremists were staying out of town, so they met at points a few blocks away and then walked toward the statue in phalanxes, chanting. The liberal activists had held a sunrise service at a downtown church, and from there about twenty clergy had proceeded to Lee Park, followed by news cameras. Cornel West was among them, and he told me that the extremists were shouting at him. "I hadn't seen that kind of raw hatred up close coming from so many people," he said. "That was the distinctive feature."

At first, the clergy stood on Market Street, the only side of the park not cordoned off by the police. Wispelwey, watching the young men file into the park, noticed the sticks and shields they carried, but also how few of them looked old enough to shave. Members of the clergy moved to a small set of stairs and, in an effort to block the entrance to the park, locked arms. They held their position for half an hour. Then a contingent from the League of the South appeared, with military veterans at the front, and forced its way through.

For the rest of the morning, fights kept breaking out on Market Street. By

10 A.M., a group of black-clad members of Antifa had taken positions alongside the clergy. Sallies of eight or ten men emerged from the park periodically, to yell at them and try to provoke an attack. About a dozen men, wearing camouflage and carrying long rifles, patrolled the scene. Hundreds of police officers were on duty in Charlottesville that day, but, as the extremists and the activists clashed, they did little to intervene. (The Charlottesville Police Department declined to comment on the day's events, citing an active lawsuit.) Just before noon, Governor Terry McAuliffe declared a state of emergency, and police officers with bullhorns ordered everyone to disperse.

But the crowd was slow to respond, and the scuffles along Market Street continued for about half an hour. Ben Doherty said, "Smoke was everywhere, bottles were being thrown. It felt one step away from a brawl. There were hundreds of them marching by." Some of the extremists were focussed on getting out, but others still wanted a confrontation. Finally, the counter-protesters pushed south, farther downtown, as some of the extremists headed north, toward another park. The mood among the counter-protesters was boisterous. "It was kind of a good feeling," Doherty told me. "A lot of people felt like we had defended the city—it was ours."

David Straughn was in a crowd at Water Street as it turned onto Fourth Street, heading toward the pedestrian mall, at the center of downtown. "It was like we were going to do a little victory lap," he said. When he heard an engine revving, he thought that it might be a van parked in front of him. "Then I hear *bub-bub-bub-bump*," Straughn said, and he saw a gray car that had just plowed through the crowd.

Straughn could see that the car's front fender had fractured, and that it had caught a woman, Heather Heyer, by the leg. The driver reversed, pulling out of the crowd, and, as he did, he dragged Heyer a few feet before she fell off, in front of Straughn. There was a large, open wound across her thigh. His instinct was to move her, but he feared that he would worsen her condition. "It took me a good six seconds to yell 'Medic!'" he said. Then Straughn started running up Fourth Street, chasing the

car, shouting "Gray Dodge Challenger!" An armored vehicle, a BearCat, rolled toward him. People who had been hit by the car lay on the ground. Medics and clergy rushed toward them. Straughn turned back toward the wounded, too, looking for his people.

Heyer died, and nineteen others were injured. James Alex Fields, Jr., the twenty-year-old white nationalist who was driving the car, was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. A police helicopter that had been monitoring the rally crashed outside town, killing two officers. Activists retreated to safe houses, the extremists to cars and hotels. Later, Mayor Signer announced that he had changed his position on the monuments. The violence had "added a poisonous envelope around them," he told me, and Lee and Jackson would have to come down. The preservationists' lawsuit prevented the immediate removal of the statues, but city workers covered them with black tarps.

The following week, Confederate monuments came down across the country, without ceremony and often at night. President Trump defended both the monuments and their far-right supporters, saying that the activists on the left "came charging in, without a permit, and they were very, very violent." It fell to state and local officials to condemn the Unite the Right rally and to prevent more battles from erupting. On Monday, August 14th, two days after the rally, activists in Durham looped a yellow cord around a statue of a Confederate soldier and pulled it to the ground, as onlookers rushed forward to kick the figure. Roy Cooper, North Carolina's governor and a Democrat, issued a statement in which he acknowledged that the monuments should be removed. "Unlike an African-American father, I'll never have to explain to my daughters why there exists an exalted monument for those who wished to keep her and her ancestors in chains," he said. But he urged Durham's activists to have a little more patience: "There was a better way to remove these monuments."

The removals—more than two dozen to date—have left empty plinths and parks, which cities will somehow have to fill. New Orleans, where four monuments have come down, has requested

proposals for their replacements; ideas have included a sprawling Southern oak tree, a symbol of refuge. In Durham, unknown artists have twice, without authorization, placed sculptures—of a heart, and of fists thrusting upward—on the pedestal that formerly supported a Confederate soldier. The historian Eric Foner told me, “In the sense of who decides, and how do you decide what goes up and what comes down, it should be a sort of democratic process,” to compensate for the undemocratic process that created the monuments during Jim Crow. “You’re not starting from a blank slate. You’re starting from a completely undemocratic cast of characters all over the place.”

Last year, the writer David Rieff, in a book titled “In Praise of Forgetting,” warned against what he called “too much remembering”: the inculcation of new collective memories and the creation of new monuments almost inevitably leads to new forms of injury. Rieff wrote, “Far too often collective historical memory as understood and deployed by communities, peoples, and nations . . . has led to war rather than peace, to rancor and ressentiment . . . rather than reconciliation, and to the determination to exact revenge rather than commit to the hard work of forgiveness.” When a Southern city takes down a Confederate monument, it rights an old wrong, and removes the source of an old grievance. But it also risks creating a new grievance, among those who believe their own history has been excised.

The idealistic approach to Confederate monuments—the one favored, at least until recently, by most of the Democratic Party—is to transform their meaning. In theory, this is a way out of the grievance trap. But the larger and more significant a monument is, the harder it is to transform. This is an acute problem in Richmond. The city, the journalist Tony Horwitz noted, in his 1998 book “Confederates in the Attic,” is “a vast cenotaph of secession, with tens of thousands of rebel graves, countless monuments, and the remains of Confederate bulwarks, armories, hospitals, prisons, old soldiers’ homes.” During Reconstruction, Richmond installed the mammoth Confederate heroes of Monument Avenue, where mansions were built for a resurgent white aristocracy.



*“You know, it would be nice if, every once in a while, I got credit for hearing the first part of almost everything you say.”*

In 1996, the city added a bronze of Arthur Ashe, the tennis star and civil-rights hero. But, as Edward Ayers, a Civil War historian and a former president of the University of Richmond, told me, that “still doesn’t solve the problem of the monuments we have.”

This past June, Richmond’s mayor, Levar Stoney, a thirty-six-year-old African-American and a Democrat, created his own monuments commission, to propose ways of transforming Monument Avenue without moving any of the statues. But, in the wake of the rally in Charlottesville, Stoney went further, as much of the Virginia Democratic Party had, and asked the commission to consider whether the statues should be taken down. “I personally believe they are offensive and need to be removed,” he said.

When I visited Stoney at his downtown office this fall, I asked him what, apart from Charlottesville, had changed his mind. He told me that he had been thinking about his grandmother, who cleaned houses for a living. “Pretty much the only time black people would go

into those homes on Monument Avenue would be to clean them,” Stoney said. “If we lived in Richmond, that would have been her.” The longer Confederate monuments stayed up in a predominantly black city, the more they suggested an enduring power—you could call it white supremacy—that electoral politics could not touch.

From Stoney’s office, I drove to Monument Avenue to take another look at the statue of Lee: he is on horseback, his serene gaze on the horizon. Richmond’s monuments commission has promised to deliver its final recommendations by May of 2018. Ayers told me, “What I tell people when I talk about the commission is that the loss of Heather Heyer’s life was a tragedy,” but that Richmond could be part of its redemption. “Finally, black people have some political power. They’re able to reconsider things that white people had considered settled. Nobody would have wished Charlottesville. Richmond will determine what Charlottesville meant.” ♦

# TOP JOCKS

*Puerto Rico's Ortiz brothers are lighting up New York's racetracks.*

BY JOHN SEABROOK

**T**hey're off!" the trackside announcer called for the tenth time that day, a Wednesday in August, at the Saratoga Race Course. Starting next to each other on the far outside of the dirt track were Irad and Jose Ortiz, two Puerto Rican jockeys, age twenty-five and twenty-four, whose rides have been electrifying New York's racetracks in recent years. They burst from the gate together, with Irad, who is eighteen months older, slightly ahead, and Jose on his brother's flank. Within three strides, the pair led the field. They veered masterfully toward the rail, intimidating the other horses but not quite interfering with them.

As the horses hit top speed, about thirty-eight miles an hour, Irad, aboard a four-year-old filly named Fortunate Queen, held a two-length lead. His strategy was to get ahead, "save ground" by riding the rail, and hope to discourage Jose's mount, a three-year-old named Fairybrook, by kicking dirt in her face. But Jose remained close, while also wide enough of Fortunate Queen's hindquarters to avoid getting pelted, and settled into the space between the leader and the third-place horse, Miss Pearl, which, each brother knew from his research, was the only other horse with speed.

Everything about the brothers' gear is designed to weigh as little as possible, including the flak jackets they wear under their brightly colored silks, their shiny black boots that look like patent leather but are made of vinyl and weigh about three ounces each, and their lightweight helmets. When the track is muddy, jockeys will wear up to five pairs of plastic riding goggles layered on top of one another, so that they can quickly peel away the outermost lenses as soon as they become encrusted with flying muck; losing visibility, even for a microsecond, can be disastrous. Today, sunny and dry, was a three-goggle day.

As the brothers raced side by side, the

difference in their riding posture, or purchase, was clear. Irad was perched higher on his mount, his stirrups short, and his legs looked more severely chicken-winged than Jose's at the knee. Jose rides lower and gets more leg on the horse.

The brothers were competing for the purse money, as all jockeys do. The New York Racing Association's jockeys are guaranteed a mere hundred dollars per race for taking part in what is one of the most dangerous of professional sports. A kind of social Darwinism permeates the jockeys' world, not unlike that of the robber barons who made the upstate New York spa town of Saratoga Springs the place to be during the summer meet. For first place, jockeys receive ten per cent of the owner's share. At the N.Y.R.A.'s three venues—Saratoga; Aqueduct, in Queens; and Belmont, on Long Island—that is sixty per cent of the overall purse. Second- and third-place jockeys get a smaller percentage of the share. Riders who consistently finish out of the money don't stay around the N.Y.R.A. jockey colony long. The Ortizes' winnings have piled up quickly. Jose has earned more than ninety-eight million dollars in purses since 2012 and Irad more than a hundred and fourteen million since 2011. But they still ride in the everyday races that a lot of the top jockeys skip. Also, as trainers note with approval, the brothers race as hard for fourth place, which earns owners purse money but gets the jockey no extra percentage, as they do for third place or higher.

The tenth was a "claiming" race, which means that the horses were all for sale, and their prospective new owners had put in offers before the race started. Neither the horses in the race nor the thirty-seven-thousand-dollar purse they were vying for came close to the million-dollar stakes races typically run on weekends, where the fields

feature the top Thoroughbreds at the meeting, as graded by the American Graded Stakes Committee. The fillies in the tenth were all "maidens": they had never won a race. They belonged to the much larger class of equally well-bred Thoroughbreds who end up costing their owners money. As the joke goes, owning racehorses is a great way to become a millionaire—if you start as a billionaire.

I was watching from a box in the clubhouse with Sean Clancy, a former steeple-chase rider (jump jockeys belong to a different racing circuit entirely), who, with his brother Joe, puts out the *Saratoga Special*, a free daily newspaper. Features about upcoming races are interspersed with full-page ads for horse sales and stallion-breeding services, such as those of Tapit, a champion sire that earns his owner as much as three hundred thousand dollars per stud session.

Most jockeys become known as specialists in one or another part of the race. Speed riders break quickly from the gate and try to stay ahead; position riders are adept at saving ground and finding holes in the pack; closers ride best from behind. Some jockeys are better on dirt than on turf, some are better on faster horses, some are masters of a particular distance. The Ortiz brothers, Clancy said, excel in all areas, though each has his own style. Irad is the more aggressive rider of the two; tactically, he resembles John Velazquez, a forty-five-year-old Puerto Rican who is the leader of the N.Y.R.A. colony and is the top-earning jockey of all time, with three hundred and seventy-six million dollars in lifetime winnings. "When Johnny V. makes a move, you know it," Clancy said. Jose, on the other hand, sidles into the pack, more like Wayne Gretzky, the hockey great. "Gretzky looked slow, because he was so fast," Clancy went on. "He'd already made the move. Jose is the same



*Most jockeys become known as specialists in one or another part of the race. Irad (left) and Jose Ortiz excel in all areas.*

way. He's in the perfect spot, absolutely where he should be, and you have no idea how he got there."

Horse racing was the first mass American sport, but its popularity has been steadily dwindling since the nineteen-sixties, when it effectively lost its near-monopoly on legal gambling. There is still national interest in the Triple Crown races (the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes, the Belmont Stakes). And, if the audiences aren't what they used to be, the purses are bigger, including at the twelve-million-dollar Pegasus World Cup, first run at Gulfstream Park, in Florida, in January, 2017. NBC's telecast of the recent Breeders' Cup World Championships—a sort of playoff series of racing, which travels to a different élite track each November—had a strong N.F.L. vibe. The big race went off on a Saturday night, in prime time, and "Sunday Night Football's" Al Michaels and Cris Collinsworth made on-air picks. (Both backed the wrong horse.)

While emulating the N.F.L. might help in the short term, racing, like football (and boxing), faces difficulties in marketing to millennials a sport with significant health risks. And, unlike foot-

ball and boxing, horse racing is hard to televise. The action is quickly over, like a boxing match scheduled to last for only one round, with long downtimes in between races, which NBC fills with B-roll footage, bios of trainers, and live shots of ladies in hats. It's the opposite problem that baseball faces, with its three-hour-plus games.

Live, racing is much more exciting, and prestige racing venues like Saratoga continue to do well. This summer's handle—the total amount wagered at the six-week meet—was \$676.7 million, a record. Saratoga's much shabbier sister racetrack, Aqueduct, is struggling, however, as are many regional tracks around the country. Gamblers prefer casinos to playing the ponies: slot machines are mindless; handicapping races takes study. New York State has accepted proposals to redevelop Belmont Park, the third of the New York Racing Association's venues, and turn it into an entertainment destination, with a new on-site arena for pro sports (the Islanders and New York City F.C. are among the bidders) and concerts. Stuart Janney, the chairman of the Jockey Club, the breed registry for Thoroughbred horses in the U.S., characterized the state of the sport to me as "a tale of two cities—real suc-

cess stories, and there's also areas where racing is struggling."

One reason often cited for the sport's slow decline is that there is no Seabiscuit or Secretariat—a champion that the larger public can embrace. When, two years ago, American Pharoah won the Triple Crown, the first horse to do so since Affirmed, in 1978, the horse's owner, the Egyptian-American entrepreneur Ahmed Zayat, of New Jersey, retired the three-year-old at the end of the season, and sold the breeding rights for a reported twenty million dollars, rather than allow the horse to continue racing. (Secretariat also retired as a three-year-old.) "The stars need to stick around longer," Janney told me.

The performers who do stick around, year after year, are the jockeys. The N.Y.R.A. jockey colony, considered to be the Yankees of horse racing, already had two of the world's top riders in John Velazquez and Javier Castellano before the Ortizes showed up. Now the colony has two young sporting phenoms, who, like the Williams sisters at their best, seem to compete on a different plane.

But, while jockeys are celebrated when they win, they are strangely invisible off the track in the Houyhnhnmland of horse racing, where the animals are supposed to be the stars. When Velazquez won the 2017 ESPY Award for best jockey, the invitation to the ceremony from the sports network ESPN never got to him. "Shame no invite," he tweeted the day after the awards show.

The Ortizes are superb athletes, and Jose told me that had he been bigger he would have tried to play baseball professionally. (Irad is five feet three inches, and Jose is five feet five, although he is listed as five-seven in the N.Y.R.A. program, and both weigh a hundred and fourteen pounds.) They have thickly muscled shoulders, knotty forearms, meaty hands (their hands are huge, in proportion to their size), absurdly slim waists, and slightly bowed legs. On horseback, they are imposing and haughty, until they turn on their matinée-idol smiles in the winner's circle.

The adage is that racing is twenty per cent jockey and eighty per cent horse. If a horse wins by five lengths or more, it was the horse; the jockey only had to avoid mistakes, such as getting pinned on the rail or taking a turn too



wide. But in close races the jockey's tactics and riding skills can be decisive.

No horse can run flat out for a mile or more. (What makes the Churchill Downs track record that Secretariat set, at the 1973 Kentucky Derby, so remarkable is the fact that the champion ran each of the last four quarter miles in the race faster than the previous quarter.) The jockey's main tactical decision is when to burn the horse's energy and when to conserve it, by finding spaces inside the charging pack where his mount can settle in and switch off—that is, suppress the flight instinct that makes horses run in the first place, and relax in the security of the herd, saving fuel for the final turn and sprint. As Jose put it, "If they go slower, then I know they are going to have a little bit left. If you go fast early, then you slow down at the end. So, if I'm in the back of the pack and they're going slower, I know I can ask for a little bit more. And if I have a really nice horse then I know I can be in the back and go slow and still win."

In addition to tactical skills, jockeys must have a stopwatch in their heads. Riders can't see a clock or hear the announcer's call over the thundering hooves and the guttural grunts the horses make at full gallop, but, if the jockey's internal clock can measure twelve seconds exactly, he can calculate how fast the race is going. Eddie Arcaro, a Hall of Fame jockey of the mid-twentieth century, who won the Kentucky Derby five times, would supposedly count to twelve wherever he was—the car, the kitchen, the bathroom—keeping his inner clock wound.

"You think about what these jockeys do," the trainer Dale Romans said. "They're in a squatted position, they're going as fast as forty miles an hour, in a pack this far apart"—an inch separated his thumb and forefinger—"getting pelted with dirt, and they have to judge pace and look for holes." They also have to think about the safety of the horses, in particular the delicate cannon bones, in their forelegs, which can shatter if they put a foot wrong.

Clancy, watching the live feed on the TV in our box at Saratoga, noted that the pace for the quarter mile was slow, and imagined what the brothers must be thinking: "There isn't any other speed in the race that can beat them.

So now they know it's the two of them."

Irad went to "the ask" as they started into the final turn, hitting Fortunate Queen on the right side of her sweat-slick neck with his whip. The standard jockey's whip, a thirty-inch-long, leather-covered fibreglass shaft with a leather flap at the end, is used to override the animal's nature, which is to remain in the safety of the pack, and ask it to go out front, where a predator could pick it off.

Irad hit Fortunate Queen again, and again—"strong urging" is the racing euphemism—signalling that, if he had any chance to win, now was the time. Jose, still in the hole between first and third, saw his brother go to the whip early, which told him that Irad was running out of horse, and he could keep Fairybrook switched off a little longer before asking for more. "Not every horse likes the whip," Jose told me. "A lot of horses will run faster without it. You just show it to them and then"—he made a giddyap sound, like a loud kiss. "I couldn't tell when I started, I just whipped them all, but now I can tell if he's uncomfortable when I hit him. They tell you a lot with their ears." Both horses, being lesser mounts, did not respond to the whip with the burst that the brothers were used to from "live" horses, no matter how strong the urging.

"It's Fairybrook and Fortunate Queen side by side!" Larry Collmus, the N.Y.R.A.'s announcer, called.

The waves of sound from excited spectators built in the towering wooden grandstand as the Ortiz brothers approached, racing flat out with only inches between their stirrup leathers. But Jose, having conserved more energy, had more horse at the end. As they came by us in the clubhouse, Jose glanced left at the infield mega-screen to see how far ahead he was, and moved Fairybrook over in front of Irad, who caught some of his brother's dirt.

"Take that, brother!" Clancy yelled.

**T**he Ortizes are third-generation riders. The brothers' grandfather, Irad Ortiz Adorno, was a jockey at Puerto Rico's premier racetrack, El Nuevo Mandante, now called Hipódromo Ca-

marero, which is situated in Canóvanas, about twenty miles east of San Juan. (The track was devastated by Hurricane Maria, leaving ninety per cent of the barns without roofs, and no clean water or hay for the horses, which had to stand in shin-deep filth for days afterward.) Irad the elder, who is seventy-one and now lives in Brooklyn, tried to make it as a jockey in the United States in

the nineteen-eighties, riding in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Ohio. But he could never break into the N.Y.R.A. colony. Later, he worked at Belmont as a hot walker—one of the stable hands who cool the horses down after their workouts and races by leading them around in circles. He was instrumental in bringing the boys to New York.

The brothers spent their early years in Trujillo Alto, a suburb of San Juan, where their parents, Irad and Wilma, lived. Irad did not become a jockey (their uncle Ivan did), but he managed an off-track betting parlor where, Jose told me, "we would go with him on Saturdays and we could watch races all day." At home on big race days, their father would turn on the TV, put the boys on the bed, and equip them with a helmet and a whip and a pillow for a saddle, and they would pretend that they were the jockeys.

When they were young boys, their dad got them a pony for Christmas, which they named Popeye and took turns riding in a nearby river while the pony swam under them. The thing that Jose says he loves most about what he does, "the connection between the man and the horse," begins here; indeed, his lizard-on-a-rock racing posture resembles that of a bareback rider on a swimming horse.

In 2003, their grandfather brought the boys to New York, took them out to Belmont, and introduced them to an old friend from Puerto Rico, Efraim (Pito) Rosa, a longtime N.Y.R.A. security guard. "These are going to be my jockeys!" the grandfather exclaimed. Rosa put the boys on an Equicizer—a mechanical horse that jockeys use to practice technique and to warm up before races—and was amazed at their ability. "These kids are naturals!" he said.

At sixteen, Irad was one of eighteen



boys chosen from more than a hundred applicants for the two-year program at Escuela Vocacional Hípica, the state-run jockey academy, which operates out of a basement at the Hipódromo track, where their uncle Ivan also studied, and which has produced many talented Puerto Rican riders, including John Velazquez. A female instructor, Emilia Salinas, a former jockey, became Irad's mentor, "the one who would correct my mistakes," he said. Jose followed in his brother's footsteps the next year.

Velazquez described the curriculum for me: "The first three months, you don't touch a horse. It's all school," mainly equine science and anatomy. "They send you to the barn, where you start cleaning the horses, grooming, bathing, putting on bandages, hot walking, and cleaning stalls. Simple things. Then you get on this thing, it's basically a garbage can with springs, and you get your balance on it. And then you start riding horses." Jockeys who struggled with their weight were once expelled (as happened to Uncle Ivan), in the hope of protecting the kids from a lifetime of bulimia, a disease many jockeys contend with. "When I was there," Velazquez added, "if you were more than a hundred and eight pounds you were out." (Today, jockeys are referred to a weight-loss program or trained as gallopers.)

In their second year, students take part in as many as twenty practice races a day. At eighteen, they graduate to become apprentices, who, in the U.S., are called "bug boys," because the asterisk on the racing form indicating their apprentice status looks like a bug. Weight allowances are one of many conditions attached to any particular race. In a race with a hundred-and-twenty-four-pound weight allowance, a hundred-and-fourteen-pound jockey carries ten pounds of lead bars placed in pouches in the horse's saddle pad. But apprentices are allowed to carry less weight than fully fledged, or "journeyman," riders, which gives trainers an incentive to use them. In the U.S., a bug starts with a ten-pound advantage, which after five wins shrinks to seven pounds, then to five. His bug must end after a year, or forty races, whichever comes first. Irad began his Puerto Rican apprenticeship in January, 2011, and by April he had won seventy-six races, a remarkable

number that caught the attention of, among others, Pito Rosa, in New York.

Rosa brought Irad to Brooklyn and took him out to Angel Cordero's house, on Long Island. Cordero is the great Puerto Rican jockey who dominated the N.Y.R.A. colony in the seventies and eighties, until, in 1992, when he was forty-nine, his career ended with a life-threatening spill in which he ruptured his spleen. His success, built on that of pioneers like Manuel Ycaza and Braulio Baeza, opened the door for other Latino riders, who now make up the bulk of the N.Y.R.A. colony.

Cordero had an Equicizer in his garage, and he put the kid on it. Cordero liked what he saw, and promised to help him get established at Belmont. Irad got his first mount there as a five-pound bug in the spring of 2011. He was living with his grandfather in Brooklyn, and getting up at three in the morning to take a train to the track; later, Irad moved into a place near Belmont with Rosa. When Jose arrived in New York, the following year, and also passed the Equicizer test at Cordero's house, Rosa found a two-bedroom apartment that was big enough for all three of them. The brothers shared a bed, and one of the first things that Irad bought when he began to make money from riding was a king-size mattress for the two of them.

Irad won his first race less than a month into his bug, and by early 2012 he was a journeyman rider. "Racing in Puerto Rico is different from here," he said. "In Puerto Rico, once you exit the gate you are expected to race on the outside, whereas here people like horses to race on the inside." Jose, not to be outdone, won the first race he rode as a bug, on March 21, 2012, on a horse named Corofin, at Aqueduct. On Saturday, January 20, 2013, Irad and Jose won three races each, and on Sunday the brothers won seven out of nine races. Jose called it "the greatest day of my life," when the *Daily Racing Form* interviewed the brothers at home shortly afterward, back when Irad was still the top jock in the family. "I want to do what he does," Jose says in the article:

[Jose] looks at his brother affectionately, swelling with pride. "He won three Grade 1 races at Saratoga. He rode three at the Breeders' Cup."

Irad brushes his face and slumps in his chair, bashful and moved by his brother's praise, as if it were unexpected.

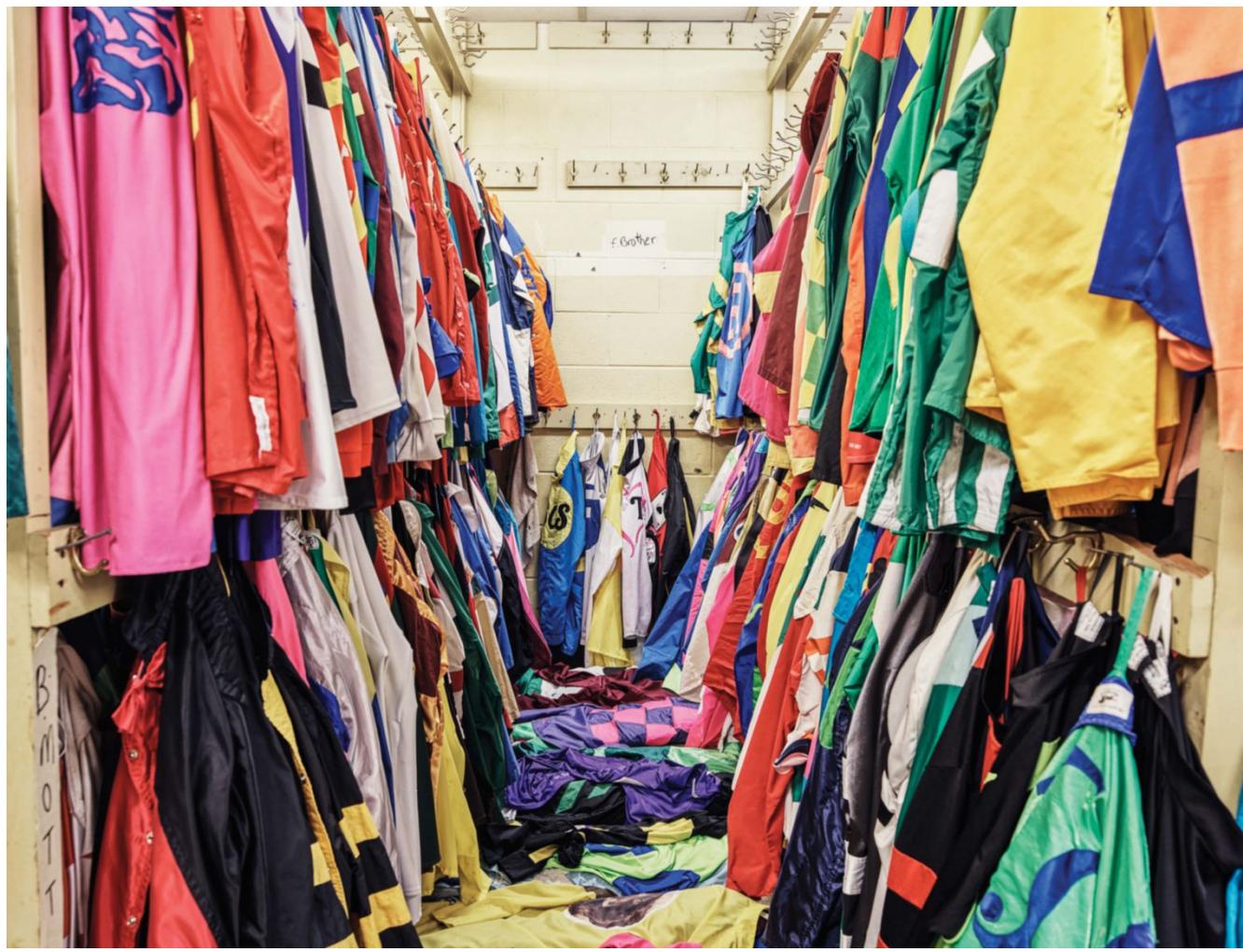
"You rode three at the Breeders' Cup, right?" Jose asks him. "Yeah," Irad says quietly.

Their rivalry has evolved since then. Irad was the first to win a Triple Crown race, the Belmont Stakes, in 2016; Jose won the race this year. Irad won his first riding title at Saratoga, in 2015, with fifty-seven winning trips, but the following year Jose beat Irad for the title, with sixty-five wins. Cordero, who presented the trophy, recalled asking Irad, "You coming?" (Irad doesn't remember this exchange.) "And he said, 'No! I didn't win it.' 'Yeah, but your brother won it.' 'Well, that was him. I'm not going.' He doesn't like to lose. Jose takes it a little better."

What makes the Ortizes so good has something to do with horsemanship, an ineffable equine intuitiveness that not all jockeys possess, and which is the key to getting the animals to relax. "I just love the horses," Jose said. "Sometimes you ride horses that are very talented but you can't figure them out. That's the hard part." Sean Clancy said, "Jose's got this really natural touch—it's almost empathetic. His gift is to get a horse to relax, and come off the bridle"—to stop straining and expending nervous energy by putting pressure on the bit—by keeping his hands low and the reins loose. "And Jose has the softest hands of any young rider I've seen," he added.

Another reason for the brothers' success may be that, in spite of their youth, they are both already family men, with small children of their own. (Jose has one daughter, and Irad's girlfriend recently gave birth to their second daughter.) Instead of hitting the bar scene after the races, as some jockeys do, they go home to their families, eat dinner, play *MLB: The Show* on the PlayStation (always against each other), and go to bed. Their parents live in the U.S. now, in the lower level of Jose's house, in Hempstead; Irad has a house nearby.

"What's scary about these guys is that they still aren't in their prime," Kiaran McLaughlin, a top trainer, told me. Not until their early thirties do most jockeys gain the experience and the confidence necessary to make split-second decisions



*Silks—worn by jockeys to identify the owners of the horses they're riding—in the Color Room, at Belmont Park.*

that can win close races. Age isn't a limiting factor for jockeys. Mike Smith, one of the top riders in the Santa Anita colony, in Southern California, is fifty-two. He looks like Yoda on horseback.

Injury, not age, is the jockey's greatest enemy. Sooner or later, every jockey has a bad spill. For those who aren't permanently maimed—fifty-eight jockeys are currently supported by the Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund—the test becomes whether they can ever ride with the same confidence they had before the injury. Jose punctured a lung in 2012, but so far the Ortizes have escaped serious harm. They don't talk about it, but in the jockeys' room, where their lockers are side by side, both with Bibles open on their dressing tables, the subject is ever-present. Jose told me, "I pray for safety, for good luck, and for my family, to keep us here and to keep everything the same."

For the Saratoga meet, the brothers had rented a big house nearby with their

parents. When I stopped by after the races, Wilma was making rice and beans and the boys were outside grilling pork chops, disagreeing about how best to cook them. Irad prefers to flip them more often than Jose does, and Irad had the spatula at the moment.

Sarai, Irad's almost two-year-old daughter with his girlfriend, Meliza Betancourt, was playing with a toy car in the garage. Jose's wife, Taylor Rice, came out with Leilani, their seven-week-old baby. Rice is a former jockey who met Jose at Aqueduct. Her father and aunt were jockeys, and another aunt is Linda Rice, one of the most successful N.Y.R.A. trainers; her mother manages a Thoroughbred farm in Ocala, Florida.

Her father wasn't keen on her becoming a jockey, but she did anyway; Taylor was the only one of her generation who could make the weight.

Neither Ortiz wants his daughter to be a jockey.

"A son, yes," Jose said.

"Dad says no," Rice said, "but when I was twenty I wasn't letting my dad tell me what to do."

If the horse is four times more important to winning the race than the jockey is, then a jockey's best tactical move should occur about a week before the race begins, when the riders are matched with their mounts in the racing office. The trainers and the owners, not the jockeys, decide who will ride their horses. It is the job of the jockey's agent, a key player in the jockey's life, to get the best possible rides for his client.

The most successful trainers—Chad Brown, of nearby Mechanicsville, New York, and Todd Pletcher, of Dallas, were the top trainers at Saratoga this summer—bring to a meet dozens of race-horses, belonging to lots of different owners. In the big races, trainers often have a go-to jockey, like John Velazquez, who is Pletcher's No. 1 rider, and whose agent is Angel Cordero. For the Triple

# LIFE HACKS

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R. A. C.

Crown races, and for the Breeders' Cup, the top horses and jockeys come from all over the world. This year, Velazquez got to ride Pletcher's best horse, Always Dreaming, in the Kentucky Derby, and won; Jose was aboard Pletcher's second best, Tapwrit—a son of Tapit—which ran sixth. (Irad didn't ride in the race.) Pletcher kept Tapwrit out of the Preakness, the second leg of the Triple Crown, to freshen him for the Belmont Stakes, then pulled Always Dreaming from the Belmont, after a disappointing show at the Preakness. He stayed with Jose aboard Tapwrit, giving him his first Triple Crown win. (Irad, on the trainer Steve Asmussen's horse, Lookin at Lee, finished out of the money.)

In the claiming races that fill up the weekday cards at tracks everywhere, the mounts are much more negotiable, and those negotiations are the agent's job. The agent handicaps each of the day's races (that is, he analyzes the many different factors that could determine its outcome) and decides on the horses that have the best shot at winning and also happen to be trained by barns with which he and his client have a relationship.

I met Steve Rushing, Irad's agent, on the backstretch at Saratoga, the vast stable area across from the grandstands. Rushing is soft-spoken, shy, almost sorrowful-looking, reflecting the misfortunes that have befallen a couple of his previ-

ous clients. His sympathetic demeanor makes him good at "spinning," perhaps the trickiest part of the job, where an agent really earns his commission of twenty-five per cent. To insure that his client gets a mount in a particular race, the agent often agrees to ride a lesser horse, while waiting for a better horse to become available. If the agent gets the better horse and cuts the lesser horse loose, he has to spin the lesser horse's trainer in such a way that he won't be angry the next time the agent comes asking about a horse. Rushing is widely acknowledged to be the best spinner on the circuit.

The backstretch comprises barns, paddocks, training facilities, and dormitories for eleven hundred or so workers who follow the horses and riders from meet to meet. Since the seventies, N.Y.R.A. backstretch workers have been mostly Latino men who earn not much more than minimum wage. Somewhat above the grooms and the hot walkers in the backstretch hierarchy are the exercise riders, many of them women. On the front side, there are very few female jockeys, in spite of the success of pioneering jockeys like Julie Krone and Rosie Napravnik. But on the backstretch you see a lot of women on horseback. There are also female trainers such as Linda Rice, who was the N.Y.R.A.'s third leading trainer at Saratoga this summer.

Irad, wearing his flak jacket, was sit-

ting on the back seat of a golf cart that Rushing was driving, slapping his whip against his boot—a crisp popping sound. Rushing's horse-crazy, fourteen-year-old daughter, Kylie, was next to Irad on the back seat, regarding him with awe while he lightly teased her. On Irad's lap was a box of sandwiches for the trainer Bill Mott's barn, because Irad had won a race on a Mott horse the day before. The sandwiches, Rushing explained, were "a little extra-special thank-you to the grooms and the hot walkers."

Agents offer their jockeys to breeze—gallop just under race speed—certain horses in the mornings and give the trainers feedback on their abilities. Irad had already breezed three that morning. "In order to know a horse," he later explained, "I just need to ride it and breeze it. That's how I can figure out what the horse likes and dislikes." His favorite of all mares is Lady Eli; he won two stakes races on her at Saratoga this summer. "I love her," he said. "Not sure if she loves me, but I love her."

Rushing, fifty-four, is a veteran of the backstretch of the Suffolk Downs track, on the east side of his native Boston, which is the last remaining Thoroughbred track in New England, kept alive today with money from the state's casinos. Beginning in high school, "I did everything," he said, as he drove Irad to his next breeze. "I was a hot walker, I was a groom, I was an exercise rider," galloping horses in ten-degree winter weather. He didn't plan to become an agent, but in the mid-eighties a young jockey named Gary Donahue persuaded him to "carry his book." Three months later, Donahue went down in a bad spill at Suffolk.

"I'll never forget it," Rushing said. "They took him to Mass General. The doctor calls us into a room, and he says, 'The best way I can explain it is, your spinal cord is like this'"—Rushing stopped the cart, and touched the straightened index finger of his left hand to his right. "And Gary's is like this." He moved his fingers slightly out of line. "He'll never walk again."

On the back seat, Irad and Kylie had stopped chattering.

Another of Rushing's clients was a Venezuelan phenom named Ramon Dominguez. In 2012, the year Irad lost his bug, Dominguez, thirty-five, earned

the nationwide jockey title in purse winnings. The following January, at Aqueduct, his horse clipped heels with another and unseated Dominguez, who was struck in the head by a trailing horse. "Traumatic brain injury," Rushing said. "He had a massive fracture in the back of his head, and several microfractures to the skull around. On the way to the hospital, he became unresponsive, and they had to resuscitate him. They didn't know if he'd make it through the night." Dominguez underwent multiple operations, and although he recovered, his doctors told him that one more fall might kill him, so he retired.

Dominguez's spill left the colony shorthanded—some of the regular jockeys prefer to race in Florida in the winter—and that gave the brothers opportunities they might not ordinarily have had. Irad had an agent, but he was looking to make a change, and called Rushing. Jose teamed up with a younger agent, James (Jimmy) Riccio, of Bayonne, New Jersey, who grew up around local tracks with his father, James, Sr., a small-time owner. He's thirty-nine, though he's quick to tell you that he looks older. Humility is at the core of his spinning style.

If he had both Ortiz brothers as clients, Rushing wouldn't have to spin trainers at all: "I could just say, 'I can't give you Irad, but here's Jose.'"

"No way!" Irad barked from the back seat, with a loud slap of his whip on his boot. Then Jose might win, "not because he beat me but because he had the better horse!"

"You want all the horses to yourself!" Kylie said, laughing.

"You're right," Irad said.

In turning a royal pastime into a profitable business, the founders of tracks like Saratoga and Churchill Downs democratized the sport, but they also planted the seeds of horse racing's slow demise. Many of the ills of racing in this country can be blamed on the overcommercialization of the sport, beginning with the dirt surfaces themselves. Kings' races took place on turf—that is, grass—which is the animal's natural running surface, and most big European races are still run on turf (as are some U.S. races). But you can't run ten races a day, six days a week, as tracks here often do, on turf—it turns to dirt

quickly. Besides, the developers of the sport in the U.S. didn't have the grassy pastures of the royal estates to work with: they hewed the tracks out of the forests.

Running in deep dirt puts additional strain on the horses' hearts, lungs, and limbs, especially when it's muddy. That's one reason that far more horses suffer catastrophic breakdowns on American tracks than on European ones, which drives casual fans away from the sport. Fifteen horses died at the Saratoga meet this summer, eight in races and seven while training. Some attributed this dismal statistic to the dirt track's being too deep.

Another reason is that some U.S. owners push young horses before they are ready to race, to gain an early return on their investment, and, for a few, to increase the breeding potential of the winners. Owners as a rule don't make money at the track, from winning purses. The bigger potential payoff is in owning a top mare or stallion, which gives owners an incentive to retire the graded horses early.

There is a pharmacopoeia of legal drugs in the U.S. that Thoroughbreds receive to treat the effects of the wear and tear of racing, such as phenylbutazone, an anti-inflammatory, and furosemide, a diuretic used for pulmonary bleeding. Then, there are illegal drugs, which have become harder to detect. There is no central racing commissioner's office, and as a result there is no way to set testing standards for drugs, or to effectively penalize doping; state racing commissions make their own rules, and often doping goes unpunished. The Horse Racing Integrity and Safety Act, a bill that would grant the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency the power to regulate drugs in American horse racing as it does in other sports, has been before the House since 2013. "Racing has to come to grips with the fact that, like every sport, we have integrity issues," Stuart Janney, of the Jockey Club, told me. "Drugs do get into our sport, they are more sophisticated, they are harder to detect, and they are more effective than they were in the past, and our method of policing our sport is out of date."

For a sport looking to broaden its appeal to a new generation, the optics

of "strong urging" are not very helpful, either. Janney pointed out that most people "are a long way from living on a farm, and most of their experience with animals is as a pet, not an agricultural commodity."

But for jockeys, as well as for the backstretch workers, these animals are not pets. The Ortizes love horses, and care for them, and depend on them, but they are also pragmatic about the sport and its demands, both on the animals and on the jockeys. They accept the hazards of racing as part of the job that both the animal and the rider were born to do. And there's a beauty even in the lowliest claiming race, a grace that reminds us of humanity's long relationship with horses.

**J**ose clinched the Saratoga riding title on the final day of the meet, in the sixth race, with another classic Ortiz duel down the stretch. Irad said later, "If someone is going to beat me, I'd rather that it be my brother. His is a victory for the family." Irad won the next race, however, to show that their rivalry was far from settled.

The colony returned to Belmont after Labor Day, and the fall meet began. Two weeks into it, in the ninth race of the day, Jose was aboard a three-year-old filly named Submit. After rounding the final turn, in perfect position to make a move, Jose went to the ask and moved Submit slightly outside. Suddenly, she stumbled, and put her head down, and Jose went

over her neck head first, landing awkwardly on the turf. He lay there on the ground, not moving, as the race went on to the finish line. Submit, finding herself alone on the track, tried to join the herd, but her left cannon bone was broken. She was euthanized on the track.

Jose was taken away by the trackside ambulance, but soon the announcer informed the crowd that he was up and about. An MRI on his knee showed no ligament damage.

Was the spill on Jose's mind in his first race back, the following week?

The younger Ortiz smiled before answering. "The day I am afraid to get on a horse is the day I retire from racing," he said. ♦



A REPORTER AT LARGE

# THE EMERGENCY

*Around Lake Chad, the world's most complex humanitarian disaster is unfolding.*

BY BEN TAUB



*The lake spans the borders of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger. In recent years, its people have been devastated by Boko Haram,*



*climate change, local militaries, and extreme poverty. Across the broader region, millions of people have been displaced.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAOLO PELLEGRIN

**C**had was named for a mistake. In the eighteen-hundreds, European explorers arrived at the marshy banks of a vast body of freshwater in Central Africa. Because locals referred to the area as *chad*, the Europeans called the wetland Lake Chad, and drew it on maps. But *chad* simply meant “lake” in a local dialect. To the lake’s east, there was a swath of sparsely populated territory—home to several African kingdoms and more than a hundred and fifty ethnic groups. It was mostly desert. In the early nineteen-hundreds, France conquered the area, called it Chad, and declared it part of French Equatorial Africa.

A few years later, a French Army captain described Lake Chad, which was dotted with hundreds of islands, as an ecological wonder and its inhabitants as “dreaded islanders, whose daring flotillas spread terror” along the mainland. “Their audacious robberies gave them the reputation of being terrible warriors,” he wrote. After his expeditions, the islanders were largely ignored. “There was never a connection between the people who live in the islands and the rest of Chad,” Dimouya Souapebe, a government official in the Lake Region, told me.

Moussa Mainakinay was born in 1949 on Bougourmi, a dusty sliver in the lake’s southern basin. Throughout his childhood and teen-age years, he never went hungry. The cows were full of milk. The islands were thick with vegetation. The lake was so deep that he couldn’t swim to the bottom, and there were so many fish that he could grab them with his hands. The lake had given Mainakinay and his ancestors everything—they drank from it, bathed in it, fished in it, and wove mats and baskets and huts from its reeds.

In the seventies, Mainakinay noticed that the lake was receding. There had always been dramatic fluctuations in water level between the rainy and the dry seasons, but now it was clear that the mainland was encroaching. Floating masses of reeds and water lilies began to clog the remaining waterways, making it impossible to navigate old trading routes between the islands.

Lake Chad is the principal life source of the Sahel, a semiarid band that spans the width of Africa and separates the Sahara, in the north, from the savanna, in the south. Around a hundred million people live there. For the next two de-

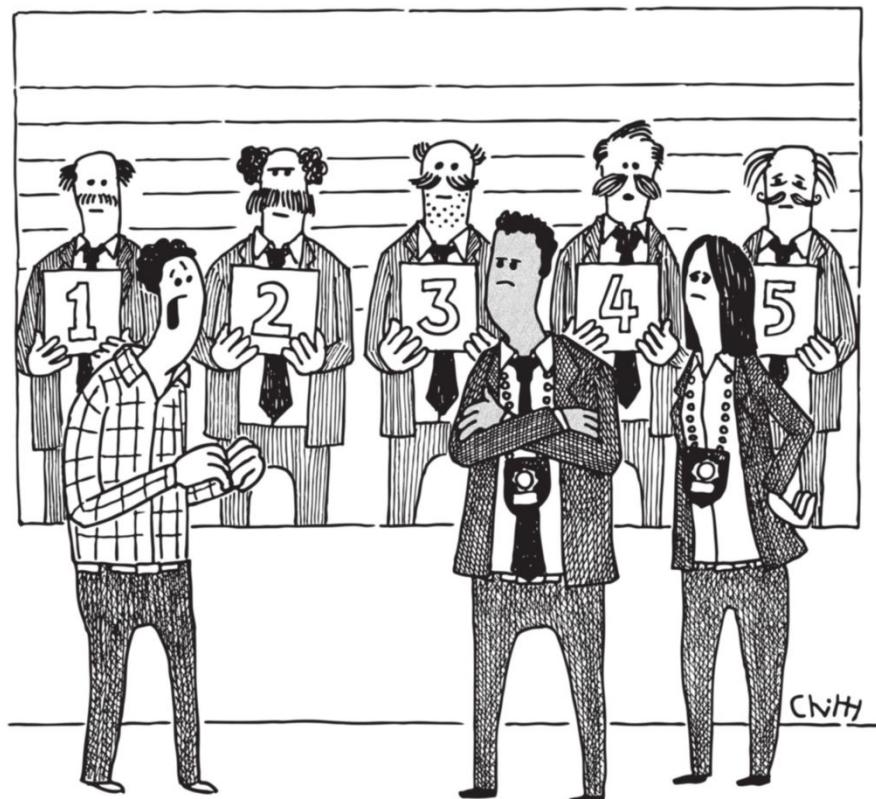
cades, the entire region was stricken with drought and famine. The rivers feeding into Lake Chad dried up, and the islanders noticed a permanent decline in the size and the number of fish.

Then a plague of tsetse flies descended on the islands. They feasted on the cows, transmitting a disease that made them sickly and infertile, and unable to produce milk. For the first time in Mainakinay’s life, the islanders didn’t have enough to eat. The local medicine man couldn’t make butter, which he would heat up and pour into people’s nostrils as a remedy for common ailments. Now, when the islanders were sick or malnourished, he wrote Quranic verses in charcoal on wooden boards, rinsed God’s words into a cup of lake water, and gave them the cloudy mixture to drink. By the end of the nineties, the lake, once the size of New Jersey, had shrunk by roughly ninety-five per cent, and much of the northern basin was lost to the desert. People started dying of hunger.

In 2003, when Mainakinay was fifty-four years old, he became the chief of Bougourmi. He was proud of his position, but not that proud; his grandfather had presided over more than four hundred islands—until the government stripped the Mainakinays of their authority as Chiefs of the Canton, a position that they had held for more than two hundred years. The center of power was moved to the town of Bol, on the mainland. The islanders were of the Boudouma tribe; the mainlanders were Kanembou. They didn’t get along.

Other political developments were more disruptive. Colonial administrators had drawn the boundaries of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger right through tiny circles of huts on the islands. When these nations enforced their borders, the fishermen and cattle herders of Bougourmi, which is in Chad, were cut off from the lake’s biggest market, which is in Baga, on the Nigerian shoreline. In the mid-aughts, hungry and desperate, they turned to foraging in the bush for fruit and nuts. Then they began to run out of fruit and nuts.

“These were our problems before,” Mainakinay told me, in late July, as he sat on the ground inside a reed hut. He wore a white robe over his bony shoulders, and his dark-brown eyes were



“Now that I think about it, he might have been holding a seven.”

turning blue at the edges, fading with age. "It was only recently that our real suffering began."

One night in 2015, Mainakinay saw flames coming from the huts on Médi Kouta, less than a mile away. For the past several years, Boko Haram had sought to establish a caliphate in north-eastern Nigeria. Mainakinay had heard of the group on his shortwave radio. Now, after spreading out along the lake, into southern Niger and northern Cameroon, Boko Haram had come to the Chadian islands and begun kidnapping entire villages, replenishing its military ranks and collecting new wives, children, farmers, and fishermen to sustain its campaigns. At dawn, Mainakinay led the people of Bougourmi to a neighboring island to hide. But Boko Haram continued its attacks, and so, for the first time, Mainakinay's people sought refuge on the mainland, leaving their cattle and belongings behind.

The jihadis encountered little resistance in Lake Chad. Most islands had no more than a couple of hundred inhabitants, and their machetes and fishing tools were no match for Boko Haram's grenades and assault rifles. When the militants arrived on Médi Kouta, they set fire to the mosque and beheaded a few men; after that, the terrified islanders followed the fighters into wooden boats and paddled west, to Nigeria and Niger. As they moved farther away from the Chadian side of the lake, the captives noticed that some islands were already flying the jihadis' black flag.

That spring, a few thousand Boudouma fled to the Chadian mainland, near Bol. The United Nations, anticipating military operations in the islands by Chad against Boko Haram, contacted the government. "We met with the minister of defense and the chief of the Army, and urged them to let us know what they're planning," Florent Méhaule, the head of the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Chad, told me.

Chad is a weak state with a strong military, known for its brutal treatment of combatants and civilians. In late July, without notifying the U.N., the Chadian Army ordered an evacuation of all islands in the southern basin, warning that anyone who was still there in a week would be considered a member of Boko



*"Don't worry! I just came to tell you I'm not like other grizzly bears."*

Haram. Around fifty-five thousand islanders rushed to the mainland. The Boudouma have an extensive history of raiding the Kanembou, and the Chief of the Canton did not allow them into the towns. According to Méhaule, "He just told them, 'Go stay in the empty land between villages. The humanitarians, in their white vans, will come.'"

The evacuation of the southern basin took place just before the harvest, so Boko Haram collected whatever millet, wheat, and maize the islanders had left behind. By the end of November, the Chadian Army had swept through the northern basin, forcibly displacing more than a hundred and ten thousand people in total. They ended up scattered among roughly a hundred and forty spontaneous sites across a vast, inhospitable terrain. "People were everywhere—in places we did not know," Méhaule said. Because Boko Haram had used boats to attack the islands, the Chadian government banned the use of fishing boats, so the Boudouma had virtually nothing to eat. Without sufficient pasture, many of the Boudoumas' cattle died.

Méhaule and his colleagues set off in convoys of white Toyota Highlanders, searching for the displacement sites. There

were no roads or signs, no paths to follow. "All of our maps were wrong, because they were from the nineteen-seventies," Méhaule told me. "We were driving through areas that should have been underwater, but we couldn't even see the lake."

In recent years, the Lake Chad region has become the setting of the world's most complex humanitarian disaster, devastated by converging scourges of climate change, violent extremism, food insecurity, population explosion, disease, poverty, weak statehood, and corruption.

The battle against Boko Haram spans the borders of four struggling countries. It is being waged by soldiers who answer to separate chains of command and don't speak the same languages as one another, or as their enemies, or as the civilians, in the least developed and least educated region on earth.

Across the Sahel, millions of people are displaced, and millions more are unable to find work. The desert is expanding; water is becoming more scarce, and so is arable land. According to the U.N., the region's population, which has doubled in the past few decades, is expected

to double again in the next twenty years.

The Sahel is rife with weapons and insurgencies, and some states are beginning to collapse. In recent years, cattle herders and farmers have started killing one another over access to shrinking pastures—the number of deaths exceeds fifteen thousand, rivalling that inflicted by Boko Haram.

Western countries and the United Nations have been trying to stabilize local governments. Since the early aughts, the U.S. has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on strengthening Sahelian security forces, in a bid to limit the spread of jihadism in the region's vast, ungoverned spaces. But this strategy fails to take into account the complex cruelties of colonialism and the predatory nature of the regimes that have developed in its place. Across the Sahel, many people experience no benefits from statehood, only neglect and violence. "What we are actually doing is making the predator more capable," a European security official told me. "And that's just stunningly shortsighted."

After France took over Chad, it learned that the territory lacked the riches that colonial powers had discovered elsewhere in West and Central Africa. France sent its least experienced and worst-behaved officers there—often as a kind of punishment—and, in the ensuing decades, French military campaigns disrupted trade routes and local economies, contributing to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people from famine. The French focussed their attention on the forced production of cotton, in a fertile part of southern Chad that they referred to as "le Tchad Utile"—Useful Chad.

In 1958, French Equatorial Africa split up, and two years later Chad became an independent state. The country's borders had been determined by colonial agreements, and many Chadians couldn't communicate with one another—there were at least a hundred and twenty indigenous languages. Some Chadians in remote areas were unaware that their villages now belonged to a state.

The country spent the next several decades "suspended between creation and destruction," as the South African historian Sam Nolutshungu writes, in "Limits of Anarchy: Intervention and

State Formation in Chad." It was "aberrant, marginal, a fictive state," a country that existed, "even in its peaceful moments, alternately under a cloud of contingent anarchy or tyranny."

Chad was constantly threatened from the north. Libya's dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, aimed to form what he called a "Great Islamic State of the Sahel," and he repeatedly sponsored attempts to topple Chad's leaders. The French usually supported whichever autocrat or warlord was in power. Chad's institutions were propped up by French investors and advisers, and hardly extended beyond the capital, N'Djamena. The illusion of Chadian statehood was useful for France and the United States, who saw a strong Chadian Army as a means with which to cripple Qaddafi's ambitions.

Hissène Habré became President in 1982, in a revolt sponsored by the C.I.A. He had led three violent rebellions and held Europeans hostage, and yet the moment he took the capital he inherited all the international structures of legitimacy afforded to any head of state. Habré ran a vicious security state, with secret detention centers, that tortured and executed tens of thousands of its citizens. But Habré despised Libya's leader; because of this, the U.S., under Ronald Reagan, supplied him with hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of weapons. In 1983, Qaddafi invaded northern Chad, using Soviet tanks. In theory, France and the U.S. were no longer backing a warlord. They were helping a President preserve the territorial integrity of his nation.

Habré's soldiers fought Qaddafi's forces in a fleet of Toyota Hiluxes supplied by the C.I.A. In what became known as the Toyota War, the Chadian Army killed thousands of Libyan fighters.

In 1987, as Qaddafi withdrew his troops, Reagan invited Habré to the White House and praised his commitment to "building a better life for the Chadian people." Then Habré resumed slaughtering ethnic minorities who protested his rule. He also accused three of his highest-ranking officials of plotting a military coup. Two of them were captured and killed. The third, a young colonel named Idriss Déby, fled east to Sudan, and recruited others to join him in a rebellion. Déby also went to Libya, where Qaddafi supplied him with cash

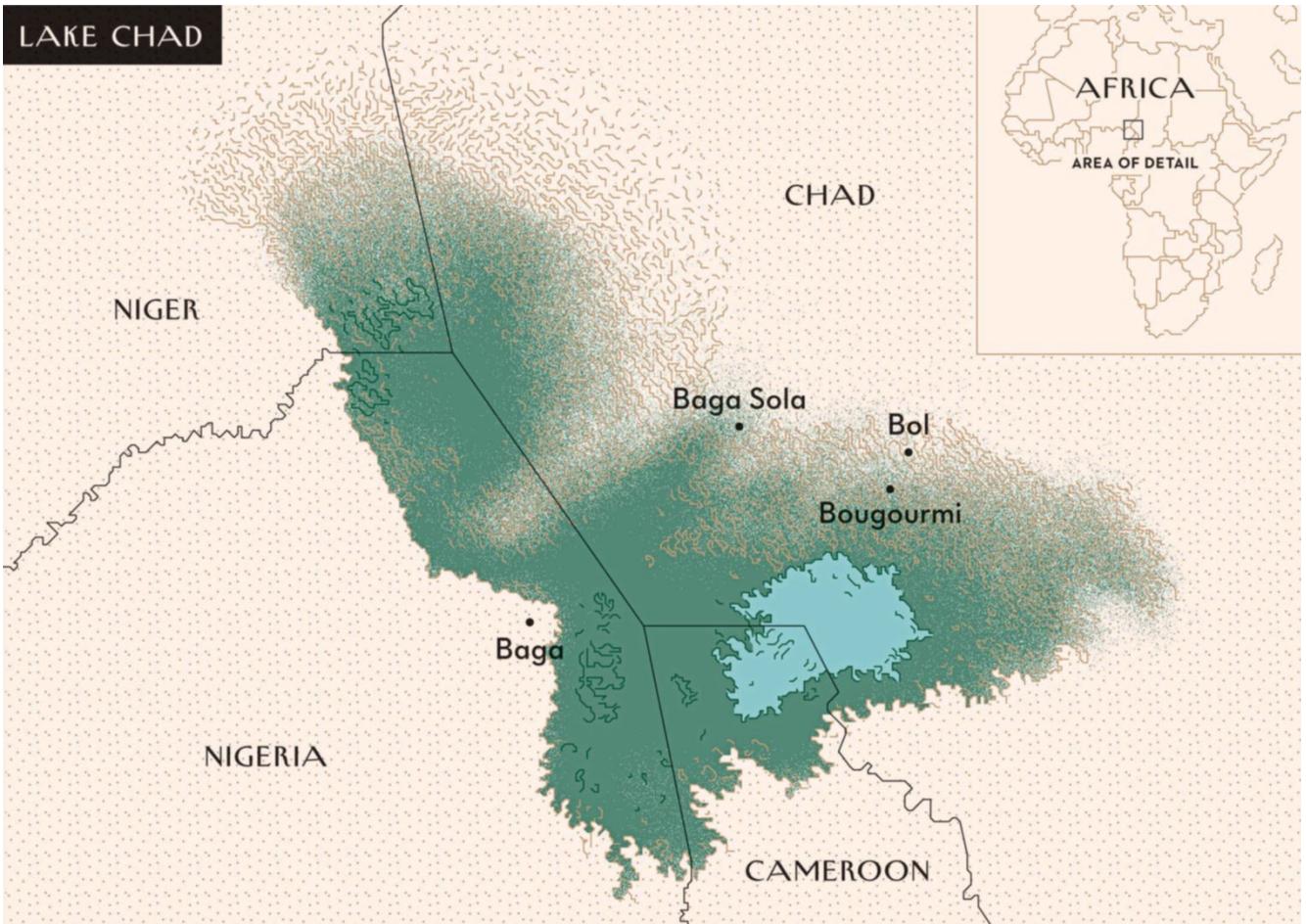
and weapons. The next year, Déby's group drove back across the desert. Habré fled into Cameroon, and Déby became the President of Chad.

It was December 2, 1990. To be Chadian was to be born into a territory where you had a fifteen-per-cent chance of dying before your first birthday. In a country of five million, there were five hospitals, and a few dozen qualified doctors. People routinely died of malaria, cholera, and starvation. The average citizen lived to thirty-nine.

Two days later, Déby gave his first public speech. "I have brought you neither gold nor silver but liberty!" he said. "No more military campaigns. No more prisons." He claimed that he was "determined to lead Chad, with the participation of all its citizens, to the system of government longed for by all: a system of government based on democracy." He paused. "I mean, democracy *in its fullest sense*." It was a telling slip: a new constitution enshrined freedoms of religion, expression, demonstration, and the press, but, in the years that followed, people who tried to exercise those rights often disappeared.

Chad's economy was nearly nonexistent. Many Chadians—including former and current rebels, soldiers, and police officers—resorted to highway banditry to survive. After Déby told gendarmes that bandits "should be shot down like a dog," some officials held public mass executions of suspected criminals, without trials. One day in 1996, gendarmes in N'Djamena arrested an elementary-school student who had stolen food from his neighbors. They put a bag over his head, shot him, and abandoned his body on the banks of the Chari River.

Ten days later, Déby met with representatives from several fledgling Chadian human-rights organizations. He told them that the killings were "in accordance with the wishes of public opinion." Otherwise, Déby has left his citizens in total neglect. The *Irish Times* reported that, outside the capital, Chadians were eating boiled leaves and animal feed, and digging up anthills to search for whatever grains the insects had dragged home. "This country is a bit of a police state, but mostly a pirate ship," the European security official told me. "That's the sense that I get when I'm here—that I'm on a pirate ship, and the captain is always drunk."



*Lake Chad, which was once as large as New Jersey, has shrunk by ninety-five per cent. Much of the northern part is desert.*

Déby's security forces used military planes supplied by the U.S. and France, and maintained by American and French technicians, to transport political prisoners. The French also supplied Déby's regime with money, trucks, fuel, communications systems, and handcuffs—resources that, according to Amnesty International, had been “diverted from their original purpose to be used for execution and torture.” Although French military advisers stationed at Chadian outposts had witnessed human-rights abuses, they did not intervene, saying that it was not their responsibility to come between the state and its people.

Since Déby took power, his forces have put down numerous rebellions and coups. In 2006, Déby and the President of Sudan sponsored insurrections against each other. The Chadian rebels made it all the way to N'Djamena. French soldiers helped stabilize the capital, but near the Sudanese border the Chadian Army forcibly conscripted children. “Déby has trouble finding soldiers who are willing to fight for him,” a senior

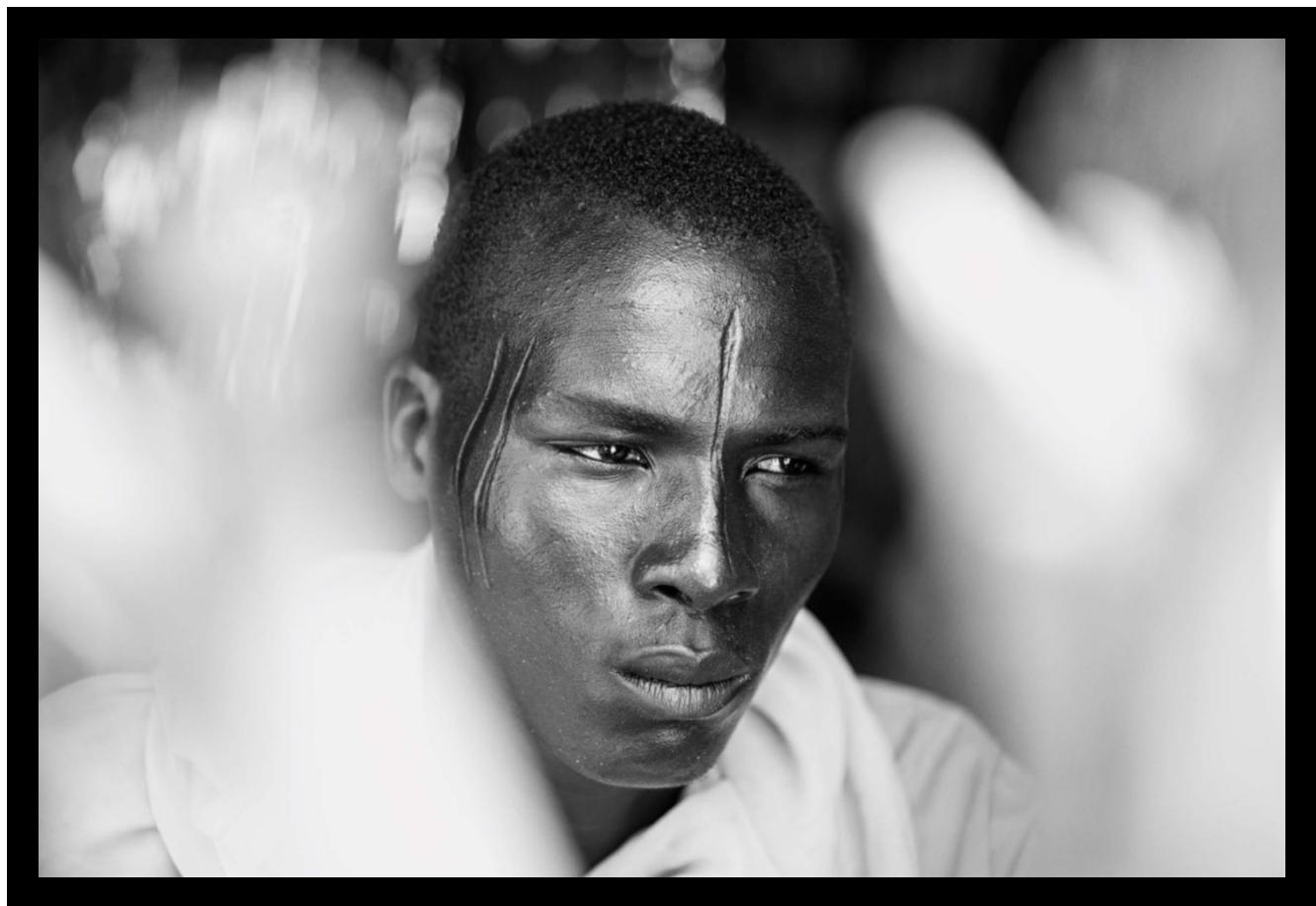
Chadian military officer told Human Rights Watch. “Child soldiers are ideal, because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and, if you tell them to kill, they kill.”

In 2008, Congress passed a law that banned American military support for governments that used child soldiers. But President Barack Obama secured a waiver for Chad, arguing that it was “in the national interest” of the United States to train and equip Chad’s military. Al Qaeda’s message was taking root in parts of Africa where nation-states had been sloppily crafted and poorly ruled. The war on terror had reached the Sahel.

**A**round that time, Mohammed Yusuf, a young Salafi preacher in northeastern Nigeria, was delivering sermons about the ruinous legacy of colonialism and the corruption of Nigeria’s élites. After decades of political turbulence and military coups, oil extraction had made Nigeria the richest country in Africa, and yet the percentage of people living in total poverty

was growing each year. “The Europeans created the situation in which we find ourselves today,” Yusuf said. It was easy to appeal to the existential grievances of northern Nigeria’s marginalized, unemployed youth. Yusuf told them that the only way forward was to install a caliphate in Nigeria. His followers, who became known as Boko Haram, revived a tradition of jihadism in northern Nigeria that goes back hundreds of years.

On June 11, 2009, police officers at a checkpoint in Nigeria stopped a group of Boko Haram members on their way to a funeral; in the confrontation that followed, officers opened fire and injured seventeen jihadis. The next month, around sixty Boko Haram members attacked a police station. Gun battles erupted in several towns, and Yusuf was arrested. A few hours later, the police executed him and dumped his body outside the station. A video of the mutilated corpse, still in handcuffs, went viral. Violence exploded all over northern Nigeria: at least seven hundred



*The lake used to give the islanders everything: they ate from it, drank from it, and built houses from its reeds.*

people were killed in the first week. Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau, became the leader of Boko Haram.

Shekau dispatched some of his followers to train with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. When they returned, the group detonated car bombs in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. Propaganda videos show Shekau double-fisting Kalashnikovs and screaming incoherently as he fires bullets into the sky. In 2012, after leading a rampage in the Nigerian city of Kano, he said, "I enjoy killing anyone whom God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams." Shekau's fighters terrorized remote villages, tossing grenades into huts and burning down mosques. They raped women, slaughtered men, and kidnapped children, whom they forced to carry out suicide bombings. Shekau pledged his group's allegiance to the Islamic State, but his battlefield tactics were so depraved that ISIS eventually disowned him. Young men who joined Boko Haram were sent back to their villages to recruit their families. As a teen-age fighter ex-

plained to me, "If your family doesn't come, you have to kill them, because they have chosen to be infidels."

The Nigerian security forces responded with a series of massacres that drove villagers into the insurgency. One day in 2013, after Boko Haram killed a Nigerian soldier near Baga, on the muddy western shores of Lake Chad, government troops stormed into the town, lit thatched huts on fire, and shot villagers as they tried to escape. Some villagers tried to swim to the islands and drowned in the lake. Roughly two hundred people are thought to have died, and more than two thousand structures were burned.

On January 3, 2015, Boko Haram returned to Baga and attacked a local military base. The soldiers shed their uniforms and fled into the bush, leaving behind weapons, vehicles, and ammunition. During the next four days, Boko Haram slaughtered civilians in Baga and the surrounding villages. "It was impossible to know how many people they killed," a survivor told me. "I just saw bodies in the streets. Everyone was run-

ning." Thousands of people made for the islands of Lake Chad. Boko Haram followed them.

Many islanders were open to Boko Haram. The Boudouma used Nigerian currency, and for decades those who could afford to had been sending their children to study with Quranic tutors in northern Nigeria. A few years ago, some of those children started calling their siblings and friends, urging them to leave the islands and join Boko Haram. "They told me that if I join them I will go to paradise," a sixteen-year-old Boudouma told me. "They also said that, at their camp in Nigeria, there are buckets full of money, and you can just take as much as you want. So I followed them."

Dimouya Souapebe, the government official, said that "it was easy for Boko Haram to come in from Nigeria and poison people's minds," by promising access to basic services and Islamic education. "The islanders never had a school. They've never had sanitation. They drink the same lake water they defecate in. Out in the islands, there is nothing."

As a first line of defense on the mainland, the Chadian governor of the Lake Region set up “vigilance committees,” with the help of tribal chiefs. Given Chad’s history of rebellion, the governor was wary of allowing vigilantes to carry weapons, but he distributed cell phones to young men so that they could alert the authorities.

On a Tuesday evening in December, 2015, some months after Moussa Mainakinay and his villagers fled Bougouri, a contact living on a jihad-controlled island warned him that Boko Haram was planning to attack the market in Bol, the biggest town on the Chadian side of the lake. That night, Mainakinay and a group of vigilantes stood guard, looking for boats. Eventually, they spotted a canoe moving toward them, containing several men and women. When it reached the shore, a few of the passengers detonated suicide vests, killing most of the others. Flesh and cloth rained down. A teen-age girl collapsed screaming; the explosion had mangled her legs.

The vigilantes took her to the hospital in Bol, a small concrete building with rudimentary supplies. Someone roused Sam Koulmini, one of only two doctors in Bol. (The other is his wife.) “Boko Haram told the girl that the explosives wouldn’t hurt her—that, if she killed some people in the market, they’d give her money when she got back,” Koulmini told me. That night, he amputated her right leg and one of her damaged fingers.

For the next several days, she was kept in an isolated room, guarded by gendarmes. During her time with Boko Haram, she had become addicted to tramadol, an opioid painkiller that is widely abused in the region. “A macro-dose of tramadol makes you feel as if you’re in the clouds,” Koulmini explained. “You’re afraid of nothing. Pretty much all the young people are taking it.” The injured girl showed severe symptoms of withdrawal; held in isolation, he says, “she became psychotic.” On the second day, she started smearing feces all over her body.

The gendarmes wouldn’t let Koulmini visit his patient more than once a day, and they rushed him as he changed the dressings on her wounds. By the time he noticed that there were still

pieces of shrapnel inside her left leg, it was too late; the limb was gangrenous. He had to cut that leg off, too.

**B**efore Boko Haram invaded the islands, humanitarian groups in Chad were preoccupied elsewhere, dealing with nationwide health and malnutrition crises, and with refugee crises near Chad’s borders with Sudan and the Central African Republic. “We all had to open very quickly,” Méhaule, of the U.N.’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told me. But the Lake Region was so poor and undeveloped that it was hard to distinguish the needs of the displaced islanders from those of mainland villagers. “Some of the displaced, for example, own a huge quantity of cattle,” he said. In the short term, they may be better off than people who have shelter but no food.

In late July, I flew from N’Djamena on an aging propeller plane that, twice a week, takes humanitarians and supplies to Bol. From the sky, I could see black smudges, clustered circles in the sand—remnants of burned-out villages. The movement of people and cows had left faint tracks across the islands and through the reeds and lily pads that filled the waterways between them.

For the next week, I travelled through the Lake Region with two UNICEF employees and the photographer Paolo Pellegrin. The Chadian government was kept informed of our activities and movements; each time we arrived in a different jurisdiction, UNICEF scheduled a “courtesy visit” with the local authorities, and gave them copies of our papers and photographs.

There are no roads in the region, so we followed in the tracks of vehicles belonging to the military and to other N.G.O.s—up sandy hills, past millet patches and goat pens made of gnarled roots and thorny vines. The pens rarely had any goats in them. We rattled downhill into flat, dark-brown depressions that, until recently, had been part of the lake bed. There, people were digging for natron, a mineral ash that’s put into camel feed; the going rate for a hundred-pound bag of natron is less than three dollars. According to Méhaule, the soil left by the lake’s receding waters is so rich that, properly farmed, it could grow enough

food to sustain everyone who’s currently starving next to it. But the Chief of the Canton has refused to give displaced Boudouma access to arable plots.

As we drove, we would suddenly come across a reed hut. Then another would come into view, then a hundred more—each big enough for three or four people to lie down in. We would pass a metal billboard announcing the name of the displacement site, as well as the organizations and the countries who were funding some of its needs. Here was the UNICEF-backed well. Over there was the Oxfam one, where children were using their full weight to pull down the lever. Then there was the sign announcing a “joint education project,” paid for by Handicap International, Cooperazione Internazionale, and the Swiss Confederation—although we saw no schools. In certain ways, the displacement sites offer an improvement over life in the islands. Every so often, representatives of international organizations arrive to vaccinate the cows; build a well; talk to the women about health issues; and weigh the children and measure their upper arms, to calculate the level of malnutrition. At one site, I met a woman whose hands had been blown off when Boko Haram threw a grenade into her hut. She had been nine months pregnant, with her seventh child, but after the attack she miscarried. When her husband saw her condition, he left her, sold their last cow, and remarried within two weeks. Having fled the islands, she is now regularly visited by a mental-health professional.

Still, on the Chadian side of the lake, it is better to be any nationality but Chadian. Just outside Baga Sola, the second-largest town in the Lake Region, there is a camp for displaced Nigerians. Around five thousand people live there, most of whom fled the massacre in Baga, across the lake. Because they crossed an international border, they have refugee status, which makes them eligible for funding and legal protections that are not available to the internally displaced. The Nigerian camp has a school with large classrooms, blackboards, chalk, and wooden desks. There’s an outdoor basketball court, with floodlights; indoor latrines are a short walk away. Police officers patrol the camp, which is divided into sixteen neatly spaced blocks of roomy, waterproof tents. “The security is good

here, and we have enough food,” a teenage girl told me. “I am getting an education for the first time. Why would I want to go back to Nigeria?”

No such amenities exist in the sites for internally displaced Chadians, or even in the Kanembou villages. One morning, a heavy rainstorm flooded Baga Sola. Goats huddled against a mud wall to avoid the wind. When the storm lifted, I went to the Kafia displacement site, which is home to a few thousand Boudouma. Everyone was soaked. Several reed huts had collapsed; their remnants were strewn across a desolate, sandy landscape. A camel gnawed at a prickly tree. “We eat one meal per day, at most,” a Boudouma chief told me. “Often we eat nothing.”

After Boko Haram attacked Baga, each country bordering the lake supplied a couple of thousand soldiers to an effort called the Multi-National Joint Task Force, which receives intelligence from Western partners. But coöperation among the countries is fragile. One day, at the task-force base in N’Djamena, I met the commander, a wiry, deadly serious Nigerian major general named Leo Irabor. He sat at an imposing desk, with a wall of maps behind him. I told him that I hoped to embed with his troops and to travel north of the lake, west through the desert into Niger, and then south into Nigeria. “It is a fine idea,” Irabor said. “But it is not possible,” because the M.N.J.T.F. doesn’t conduct cross-border operations. The military sectors are divided along national boundaries, and the countries have a history of mistrust—especially between the government of anglophone Nigeria and those of the other countries, which are francophone. Soldiers can pursue militants across borders, if necessary, but only Boko Haram fights as if the borders don’t exist. “None of the partner countries want to end up shouldering most of the burden,” a Western military adviser to the M.N.J.T.F. told me, with a shrug. “We can’t want it to work more than they do.”

The M.N.J.T.F. doesn’t fight for new ground in the islands during the rainy season—the weather can damage vehicles and leave fighters stranded—but, in the past two dry seasons, it has taken significant territory back from Boko

## IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

It’s June 15, 2017, a Thursday,  
fortieth anniversary of the infamous day  
the Mets traded Tom Seaver to Cincinnati  
and they’re still losing

I mean we are

7 to 1 to the Washington Nationals  
a team that didn’t exist in 1977  
the summer of a little tour in France  
with Henry James  
in a yellow Renault douze

the light a lovely gray  
the rain a violin  
concerto (Prokofiev’s No. 2 in D Major)  
and I had books to read

Huxley Woolf Forster and their enemy F. R. Leavis  
Empson a little dull for my taste  
also Freud on errors, Norman Mailer on orgasms,  
James Baldwin in Paris  
Dostoyevsky’s “Notes from Underground” Part 1

and John Ashbery tells me he is reading “The Possessed”  
translated as “The Demons” in the newfangled translation  
while Ron and I stay faithful to Constance Garnett

I went upstairs stood on the terrace ate some cherries  
admired the outline of trees in the dark

and Rosemary Clooney  
sang “It Could Happen to You”

and I was a healthy human being, not a sick man  
for the first summer in three years.

—David Lehman

Haram, spurring defections. Last year, on August 25th, seven Boudouma men and one woman showed up at an M.N.J.T.F. checkpoint in Chad, near the border with Nigeria. For more than a year, they had been living with Boko Haram; now they wanted to come home. By the end of 2016, around three hundred men and seven hundred women and children had returned. They were kept in military detention in Baga Sola while the government figured out what to do with them.

Eventually, all the women and children were let go, and it fell to the U.N.

to reunite them with other people from their villages among the scattered displacement sites. “There was a big risk that they wouldn’t be welcome—that they would be stigmatized or retaliated against,” Méhaule, of OCHA, said. “But the reintegration was surprisingly easy.”

One afternoon, at the Méla displacement site, near Bol, I met a twelve-year-old boy whom I’ll call Aboudou. He looked about half his age. He wore ragged green pants, a filthy shirt, and, despite the scorching temperatures, a yellow woollen hat, which he pulled down over his eyes whenever he started to cry.

His face was marked with the traditional scarification of the Boudouma—a deep cut down the center of the nose, and diagonal marks on each cheek—and his skin was so taut that you could see his jaw muscles move when he spoke.

Aboudou, his parents, and his four younger siblings had been kidnapped by Boko Haram, during the attack on Médi Kouta, near Bougourmi. The family had canoed with the jihadis for two weeks, until they reached the island of Boka, in southern Niger, where his mother and father built a house out of red water lilies. Each day, Aboudou and several hundred other children were given religious lessons by a man named Mal Moussa, who, Aboudou said, taught them that “if you kill an infidel, you will go to paradise.”

Life on Boka was hard. Sometimes Aboudou’s mother would try to talk to him about the abduction, but if someone else came near she quickly changed the subject. Most nights, his father disappeared, and he didn’t know why. People who disobeyed orders were beheaded. Eventually, the island ran out of food, and they moved to another one, to harvest maize.

One day, airplanes came and bombed all the huts. A piece of shrapnel pierced Aboudou’s shoulder. He had fifteen friends on the island, but when the attack was over all of them were dead. After that, his family fled to Chad, where they were detained by the military. He was much more afraid of the uniformed soldiers than he was of Boko Haram.

Aboudou’s mother confirmed his account. When I asked whether her husband had participated in jihadi raids on the nights he disappeared, she said she didn’t know. “He never told me what he did, and I never asked,” she said. When I asked to speak with him, she said that it was impossible—he was on his way to the market. But he had brought Aboudou to me a few hours earlier, and now I saw him, about fifty feet away, staring at us from his hut.

The Chadian military didn’t know what to do with the returning men. Many of them had received weapons training from Boko Haram, and some had carried out attacks. Méhaule advised the government to screen them, identify and prosecute perpetrators of crimes, and let the others go. “But the

government had no capacity to do this,” he told me. “It’s expensive to feed three hundred people, so, in January, they just released them. All of them.”

This year, several hundred more people have returned. “Those who had left to join Boko Haram learned that the humanitarian community is here, giving people food to eat, giving people money,” Souapebe, the government official, told me. “That’s why people started coming back.” To encourage further defections, he said, “I buy phone credit for the local boys. Then they call their friends in Boko Haram and tell them, ‘We’re O.K. We have food. We have shelter. The humanitarians have given us blankets.’” He continued, “When someone is no longer hungry, he is no longer dangerous.”

One of the boys who had voluntarily joined Boko Haram came back to Chad because, he told me, “Boko Haram lied to us about the money. All I saw was poverty and death.”

On the morning of July 22nd, we set off by boat in the direction of Médi Kouta. The chief of the island, a seventy-two-year-old Boudouma named Hassan Mbomi, met us at the shoreline and guided us uphill, through a grove of charred palm trees. He had returned to the island twenty days earlier, to try to grow millet, because he was starving on the mainland. About two hundred people had followed him. “When we got back, everything was burned,” he said. “We have to build our village from scratch.” A large group of men were waiting for us in a dusty clearing, but Mbomi said I couldn’t speak to them. He said that they had been kidnapped by Boko Haram and forcibly conscripted into the jihad before escaping.

To comply with U.N. safety rules, we were accompanied into the islands by a Chadian soldier named Suliman. He seemed ill at ease on Médi Kouta, and the people there eyed him with suspicion. When we left the island, Suliman told me that he didn’t accept the chief’s explanation. “Sometimes they go away, sometimes they come back,” he said. “But they are all complicit.” Some jihadis have a branding on their back—a circle with a diag-

onal line through it—but, in most cases, “we can’t distinguish who is Boko Haram and who isn’t,” Suliman said.

For two years, Suliman had been fighting in the islands. The Army had no boats. Sometimes his group commandeered fishermen’s pirogues, and he had come to believe that many fishermen worked as spies, alerting Boko Haram to the military’s movements. Like most soldiers, he grew up speaking Chadian Arabic, and cannot communicate with people in the Lake Region. We passed another island lined with burned palm trees. “The jihadis used to come to these islands at night, and we couldn’t see them,” Suliman said. “So we would light the trees on fire, so they wouldn’t come back.” He had torched the trees on Médi Kouta.

While I was in Baga Sola, six thousand people showed up near the Dar Nahim displacement site, a few miles from town. They belonged to a nomadic Arab community that has been in Chadian territory for hundreds of years, but they had just come from Niger, where some of them had fled during the Habré regime. Ordinarily, humanitarian workers would classify them as Chadian “returnees.” But national governments get the final word on status, and Déby’s regime insisted that they were Nigérien refugees, deflecting responsibility and costs to the U.N.

Because governments can decide where the U.N. operates within their national territory, humanitarians are routinely compelled to enter into morally fraught arrangements. In Syria, the U.N. is almost never allowed to deliver food or medicine to besieged civilians who oppose the regime. In Ethiopia, the government has spent the past several decades pressuring N.G.O.s into complying with its coverups of epidemics and a possible famine. In Chad, the International Committee of the Red Cross is the only international organization that has access to prisons. In order to maintain access, the I.C.R.C. keeps any atrocities it sees confidential.

But more common is the scenario in Lake Chad—in a neglected patch of



territory, the international community ends up fulfilling the unwanted obligations of statehood. The regime reaps the benefit: the threats that arise from its failure to govern are mitigated, and its leader is left to focus on the task of strengthening the security apparatus that keeps him in power. As Linda Polman writes, in “The Crisis Caravan,” from 2010, “If you use enough violence, aid will arrive, and if you use even more violence even more aid will arrive.”

Once a humanitarian emergency has been stabilized, it is usually followed by extensive development projects, funded by international donors and institutions. “Baga Sola is three times bigger than it was when we all moved in,” Méhaule said. “It’s amazing how the money flowing in from humanitarian assistance has changed the city.” Jihadi activity in areas susceptible to recruitment tends to attract the major Western donor countries, who see development as an instrument of stabilization. But, if Boko Haram were to suddenly disappear, the humanitarian emergency funds would be directed to other crises, in other desperate parts of the world. The people of the lake would be no less vulnerable to environmental degradation and all its consequences, but, as before, they would largely be on their own. Travelling through the Lake Region, I got the impression that almost everyone there—and especially those in the Presidential palace—has a stake in Boko Haram’s continued existence as a distant, manageable threat.

Even so, the assistance has fallen short of the need. This year, the U.N. appealed for a hundred and twenty-one million dollars in aid for the Chadian side of the lake, but only a third of that has appeared. In the northern basin, I met a twenty-seven-year-old man who, three days earlier, had become so hungry that he walked six hours into contested territory in search of fish. Fifteen other men had gone with him; all of them were captured or killed by Boko Haram.

This past spring, Boudouma men started heading back to the islands in the southern basin, to plant millet and maize before the rainy season. Méhaule’s team followed them. For two years, the Chadian Army had been telling the U.N. that the islands were empty and off limits, but now, he said, “we re-

alized that there were about forty thousand people living there.”

When Moussa Mainakinay, the chief of Bougourmi, went home, he could tell that the lake had receded several hundred feet since he left. There were more reeds and water lilies, and more mosquitoes. The lake water was so shallow and full of sediment that drinking it gave him a stomach ache. Boko Haram had taken the cows and the cooking pots, and either the jihadis or the military had burned all the huts. There was nothing left. But, on the mainland, many from Bougourmi had died of malnutrition, and Mainakinay was determined to bring the remaining people home.

After a few months, a community worker from Bougourmi named Bokoi Saleh arranged for a vaccine delivery to the island. The vaccines would inoculate children against measles, tetanus, polio, and tuberculosis. UNICEF paid for the transport logistics.

Saleh picked up the vaccines at the hospital in Bol and, with the help of a friend, hauled them into a pirogue. The load weighed more than six hundred pounds, split among several large coolers. The two men rowed the pirogue from the mainland to a nearby island called Yga, where they borrowed five donkeys to transport the vaccines to the other side of the island. The walk took forty minutes. At the shoreline, there were two hippopotamuses, making it too dangerous to leave. They spent the night there, sleeping on the ground.

Saleh got up at five o’clock in the morning. It was hot and humid, and he was worried that the coolers might not keep the vaccines fresh for much longer. The hippos were gone, but, during the night, a floating island of reeds and water lilies had blocked the area around his boat. Saleh and his friend started hacking through the reeds with machetes. But they were too thick, so the men abandoned the boat and started dragging the coolers across the top of the floating island. It took half an hour to go a couple of hundred feet, and they had to keep moving to prevent the vaccines from sinking. When they reached the other side, the water was up to their waists. They waved over another pirogue, loaded up the vaccines, and paddled the rest of the way to Bougourmi.

Saleh relayed this story to me later that day, outside a hut on Bougourmi. He was drooping with exhaustion. A few feet away, the vaccination campaign was in progress. At least a hundred women and children were sitting in the shade under the island’s biggest tree, waiting their turn.

I asked the translator to tell Saleh that I admired what he had done. Saleh frowned. “If UNICEF had rented me a pirogue with a motor, I could have avoided the hippos and the reeds,” he said. “It would have taken twenty minutes to get here from the mainland.”

He was right. That’s how UNICEF had brought me.

In N’Djamena, I came to know a Chadian spy who is close to the President. He sought me out, wanting to confide state secrets; I was nervous that it was a trap. But, at our third meeting, he described the structure of a group of military-intelligence agents whose job it is to spy not for the military but *on* the military—to look out for anyone plotting a coup. “Things are not good here,” he said. “The soldiers are unhappy.”

Déby’s hold on power is reliant on Western support. The European security official told me that “Déby basically blackmails us, saying, ‘If I fall, there’s a direct line between ISIS in the north, Boko Haram in the south, and Al Qaeda in the west.’” In a bid to prove his worth to international backers, Déby has been renting out the Army to international coalitions, sending Chadians to fight with U.N. forces in Mali and the Central African Republic. But many of those soldiers have not been paid.

The Chadian economy has become so bad that, in the past year, Déby has repeatedly cut civil servants’ salaries. This summer, he also cut the salaries of his troops, a move that was quickly followed by a carjacking and a spate of armed robberies and shootings in N’Djamena; one humanitarian worker’s stolen handbag turned up on the M.N.J.T.F. base. Chadian infantrymen are now being paid around fifty-eight dollars a month. “The Chadian people are starving for food and for freedom,” the spy said. “I work for the President, but my loyalty is to the Chadian people.”

August 11th was Chad’s fifty-seventh



*Many islanders have sought refuge in displacement sites on the mainland. “Often we eat nothing,” one chief said.*

Independence Day, and there was a military parade in the Place de la Nation, a vast public square that rarely has any people in it. Déby didn’t show up until three hours after the festivities began. The next time I met up with the Chadian spy, he said that Déby’s military-intelligence officers had inspected every weapon on display before the President’s arrival, to make sure that none of the guns had secretly been loaded.

Since the country’s independence, the French government has routinely sponsored Chadian military officers to train or study in France—including Déby, during the Habré era. Officially, the purpose of the training has been to help professionalize the Army. But it also seems like a kind of insurance policy, a guarantee that whichever officer leads the next successful rebellion will also have some loyalty to France. In recent months, Chadian rebels linked to Déby’s nephew, Timane Erdimi—who led a failed rebellion in 2008, and has been living in exile ever since—have been massing near the Libyan border. “Everyone dreams of being the President,” the spy told me. “I am just biding my time.”

On most mornings in N’Djamena, French fighter jets roar out of the international airport, to bomb Al Qaeda militants in Mali. The United States has special-operations forces in most Sahelian states, including Chad. The crises of the Sahel have “so many variables that, even in the short term, we don’t have a handle on things,” an American military officer told me.

In recent months, I have asked many American diplomatic and military officials to define a coherent long-term strategy for the region, but none of them have been able to articulate more than a vague wish: that by improving local governments and institutions, encouraging democratic tendencies, and facilitating development, the international community can defeat terrorism. In Chad, the security-based approach mistakes the strengthening of Déby’s regime for the stabilization of the Chadian state. The strategy is a paradox: in pursuing stability, it strengthens the autocrat, but, in strengthening the autocrat, it enables him to further abuse his position, exacerbating the conditions that lead people to take up arms.

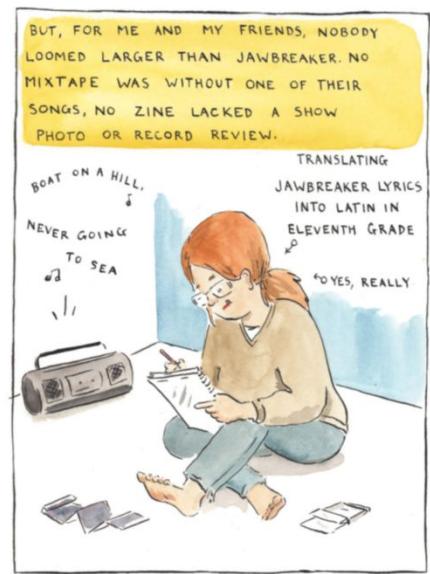
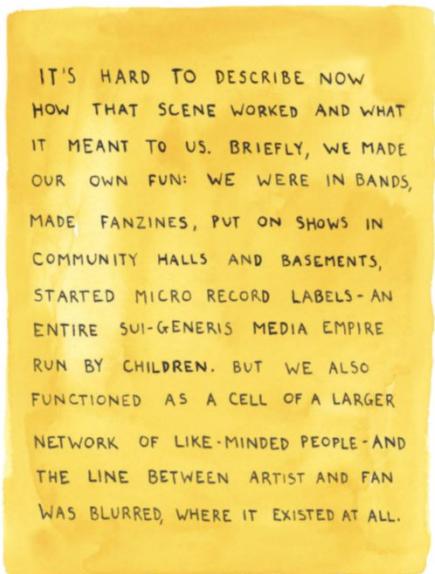
As part of international antiterror partnerships, security forces are increasingly coming into contact with communities of people who cross international borders every day. Many who fall into this category are nomadic herders; their way of life is fundamentally at odds with the enforcement of legal boundaries, and they are indifferent to the existence of nation-states. If they are denied the freedom to move with the seasons, their cattle will die. In recent years, as the Sahelian climate has worsened, many herders who had bought weapons to protect their animals have turned to jihad.

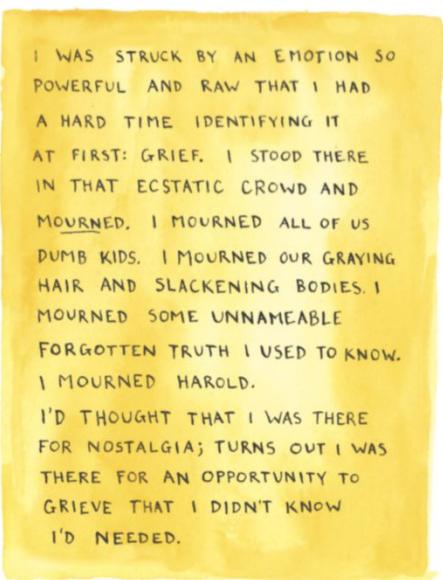
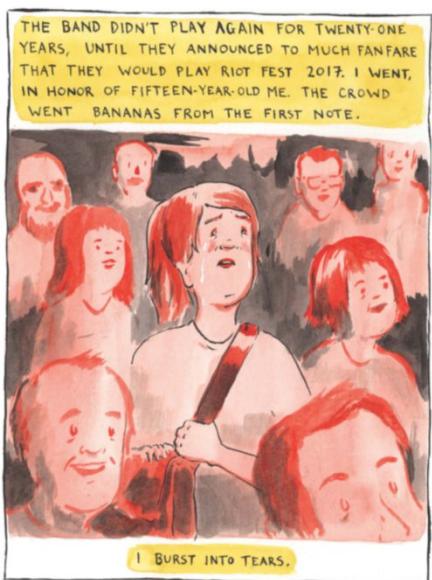
It seems likely that, even if Boko Haram is defeated, the rationales for insurgent violence will broaden beyond religion. I asked the European security official whether he thought that, in the future, there will be terrorist groups in the Sahel that carry out attacks in the name of equality instead of jihad. He smiled, and said, “If you examine the lacquer on a wooden table—I think your question is, how thin is that lacquer?”

“Yes.”

“I think it’s pretty thin.” ♦

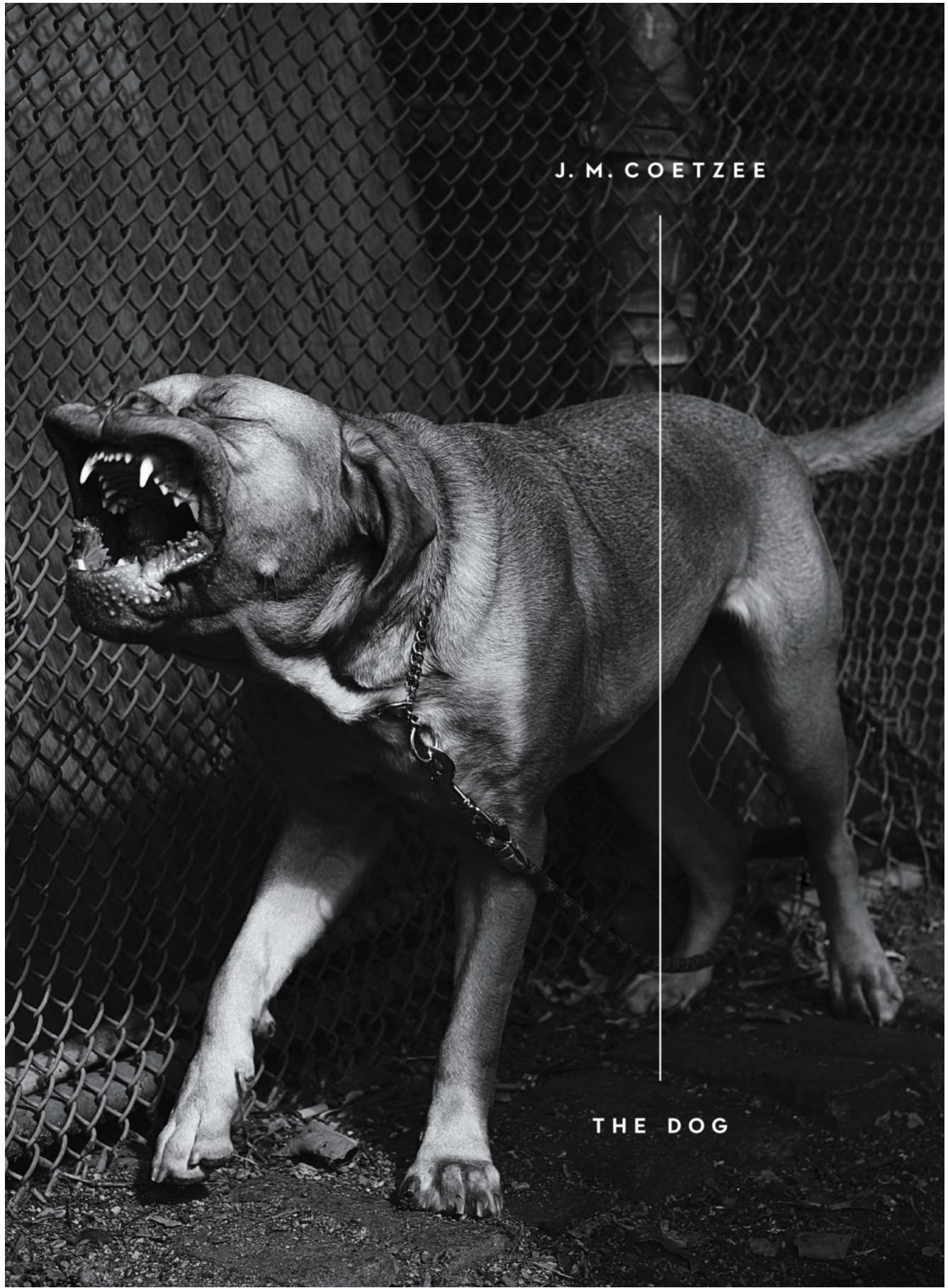
## YOUNG AND DUMB INSIDE: A COMIC STRIP BY EMILY FLAKE





J. M. COETZEE

THE DOG



**T**he sign on the gate says “*Chien méchant*,” and the dog is certainly *méchant*. Every time she passes by he hurls himself against the gate, howling with desire to get at her and tear her to pieces. He is a big dog, a serious dog, some sort of German shepherd or Rottweiler (she knows little about dog breeds). From his yellow eyes she feels hatred of the purest kind shining upon her.

Afterward, when the house with the *chien méchant* is behind her, she ruminates on that hatred. She knows it is not personal: whoever approaches the gate, whoever walks or cycles past, will be at the receiving end of it. But how deeply is the hatred felt? Is it like an electric current, switched on when an object is sighted and switched off when the object has receded around the corner? Do spasms of hatred continue to shake the dog when he is alone again, or does the rage suddenly abate, and does he return to a state of tranquillity?

She cycles past the house twice every weekday, once on her way to the hospital where she works, once after her shift is over. Because her transits are so regular, the dog knows when to expect her: even before she comes into view he is at the gate, panting with eagerness. Because the house is on an incline, her progress in the mornings, going uphill, is slow; in the evenings, thankfully, she can race past.

She may know nothing about dog breeds, but she has a good idea of the satisfaction the dog gets from his encounters with her. It is the satisfaction of dominating her, the satisfaction of being feared.

The dog is a male, uncut as far as she can see. Whether he knows she is a female, whether in his eyes a human being must belong to one of two genders, corresponding to the two genders of dogs, and therefore whether he feels two kinds of satisfaction at once—the satisfaction of one beast dominating another beast, the satisfaction of a male dominating a female—she has no idea.

How does the dog know that, despite her mask of indifference, she fears him? The answer: because she gives off the smell of fear, because she cannot hide it. Every time the dog comes hurtling toward her, a chill runs down her back and a pulse of odor leaves her skin, an odor that the dog picks up at once.

It sends him into ecstasies of rage, this whiff of fear coming off the being on the other side of the gate.

She fears him, and he knows it. Twice a day he can look forward to it: the passage of this being who is in fear of him, who cannot mask her fear, who gives off the smell of fear as a bitch gives off the smell of sex.

She has read Augustine. Augustine says that the clearest evidence that we are fallen creatures lies in the fact that we cannot control the movements of our own bodies. Specifically, a man is unable to control the motions of his virile member. That member behaves as though possessed of a will of its own; perhaps it even behaves as though possessed by an alien will.

She thinks of Augustine as she reaches the foot of the hill on which the house sits, the house with the dog. Will she be able to control herself this time? Will she have the will power necessary to save herself from giving off the humiliating smell of fear? And each time she hears the growl deep in the dog's throat that might be equally a growl of rage or of lust, each time she feels the thud of his body against the gate, she receives her answer: Not today.

**T**he *chien méchant* is enclosed in a garden in which nothing grows but weeds. One day she gets off her bicycle, leans it against the wall of the house, knocks at the door, waits and waits, while a few metres from her the dog backs away and then hurls himself at the fence. It is eight in the morning, not a usual time for people to come knocking at one's door. Nonetheless, at last the door opens a crack. In the dim light she discerns a face, the face of an old woman with gaunt features and slack gray hair. “Good morning,” she says in her not-bad French. “May I speak to you for a moment?”

The door opens wider. She steps inside, into a sparsely furnished room where at this moment an old man in a red cardigan sits at table with a bowl before him. She greets him; he nods but does not rise.

“I am sorry to trouble you so early in the morning,” she says. “I cycle past your home twice a day, and each time—no doubt you have heard it—your dog is waiting to greet me.”

There is silence.

“This has been going on for some months. I wonder whether the time has not come for a change. Would you be prepared to introduce me to your dog, so that he can familiarize himself with me, so that he can be shown that I am not an enemy, that I mean no harm?”

The couple exchange glances. The air in the room is still, as if no window had been opened in years.

“It is a good dog,” the woman says. “*Un chien de garde*,” a guard dog.

By which she understands that there will be no introduction, no familiarization with the *chien de garde*, that because it suits this woman to treat her as an enemy she will continue to be an enemy.

“Each time I pass your house, your dog goes into a state of fury,” she says. “I have no doubt that he sees it as his duty to hate me, but I am shocked by his hatred of me, shocked and terrified. Each time I pass by your home is a humiliating experience. It is humiliating to be so terrified. To be unable to resist it. To be unable to put a stop to the fear.”

The couple stare at her stonily.

“This is a public way,” she says. “I have a right, on a public way, not to be terrified, not to be humiliated. You have it in your power to correct this.”

“It is our road,” the woman says. “We did not invite you here. You can take another road.”

The man speaks for the first time. “Who are you? By what right do you come and tell us how to conduct ourselves?”

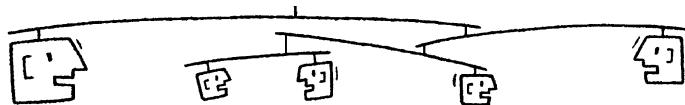
She is about to give her reply, but he is not interested. “Go,” he says. “Go, go, go!”

The cuff of the woollen cardigan he wears is unravelling; as he waves his hand to dismiss her it trails in the bowl of coffee. She thinks of pointing this out to him, but then does not. Without a word, she retreats; the door closes behind her.

The dog hurls himself at the fence. *One day, the dog says, this fence will give way. One day, the dog says, I will tear you to pieces.*

As calmly as she can, though she is trembling, though she can feel waves of fear pulsing from her body into the air, she faces the dog and speaks, using human words. “Curse you to hell!” she says. Then she mounts her bicycle and sets off up the hill. ♦

# THE CRITICS



POP MUSIC

## FORWARD MARCH

*Björk's visions of the future.*

BY HUA HSU

One day, I realized, to my surprise, that Björk was a normal person who did everyday things. Few pop musicians have seemed so futuristic and so weird for as long as she has. Since the early nineteen-nineties, the Icelandic artist has charted extremes—of ecstasy and intimacy, creativity and destruction—always attuned to the possibilities emerging from dance music’s experimental communities. Everything she does feels powered by an intense, full-bodied commitment, as though animated by forces greater than anything the rest of us will ever encounter. So it was shocking when, once, I saw her quietly shopping for CDs. We know that stars are just like us. But Björk has always seemed like her own solar system.

Part of the reason Björk has stood apart is that she projects complete confidence in her own vision, whether it lights on music, politics, performance, or fashion. (Her outfits—think of the swan dress she wore, at the 2001 Academy Awards—were Internet memes before such things existed.) But the most avant-garde aspect of her work has always been her willingness to defy the conventional structures of song. Starting in the early nineties, Björk’s solo albums had a way of translating the all-night euphoria of dance music into short, riotous bursts of sound. In the early two-thousands, she began composing with software like Pro Tools and Sibelius, and her music took an inward turn. Instead of hooks or cho-

ruses, there were intensities, pulses, sung words that meandered and then dissolved into crystalline sound. They were barely songs. But they were enough. The listener got the impression that language was insufficient to express her highs and lows.

In 2015, Björk released the album “*Vulnicura*,” whose context was her painful split from her longtime partner, the American artist Matthew Barney. The songs on it felt weary and doomed, expressing despair and also preventing her from falling too deep into its grasp. Now Björk, who is fifty-two, has released her tenth album, “*Utopia*.” In August, she hinted that it would be about putting herself back together and having fun again—her “Tinder record,” she joked. (In a recent interview, she pointed out that she is probably too famous to actually use the hookup app.) In September, she released “The Gate,” a single from the album, which sounds like a nighttime traipse through a pixellated forest, cricket chirps mixing with manipulated woodwinds and a murmuring synth line. “Didn’t used to be so needy/Just more broken than normal,” she sings. “Proud self-sufficiency/My silhouette is oval/It is a gate.” It feels as if she is exploring these soundscapes herself, searching for a melody that will steady her on her path.

“*Utopia*” suggests that each of us can make the world in which we want to live. The album is spacious, filled with flutes, choirs, field recordings of

birdsong—sounds that describe a place and also a peace-seeking state of mind. But the wounds are still there, and it’s bracing how direct Björk’s lyrics can be. On “*Sue Me*,” presumably a reference to a lawsuit that Barney filed for more “equitable custody” of their daughter, she repeats the title over and over, wrestling with the words until she seems to strangle them of any meaning. She blends her voice into the lush orchestration of “*Tabula Rasa*,” as she sings about her desire that the “fuckups of the fathers” will skip a generation. “I hope to give you the least amount of luggage,” she tells a child, controlling her quavering voice, as though to project a kind of self-restraint.

She ends up where so many of us do after a colossal breakup: out having fun, trying to evade the past but seeing traces of it anyway. (In her case: a beard, glimpsed from a distance.) There are hints at new pleasures and a mention of “Googling love.” Over the glistening harps of “*Blissing Me*,” she sings of “two music nerds obsessing,” sending each other songs. A file format has never sounded so lovely as when Björk stretches out the syllables of “MP3s.”

Naturally, friendship also fills the lover’s void, which is fitting, since her creativity has always been spurred by a kind of playful camaraderie. She has remarked in the past that critics often take her for someone else’s muse, the product of a male producer’s vision. She was getting at the



*Björk's music has never been paranoid about technology or change. Her optimism comes through on "Utopia."*

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different standards applied to female genius. She exercises meticulous control over every sound she makes, but she has collaborated with an eclectic, comparatively obscure circle, including the experimental cut-and-paste duo Matmos and the house musician Mark Bell, who died in 2014. For "Utopia," she put together an all-women twelve-piece flute orchestra—a gesture that was as much about atmospherics as politics.

Björk co-produced almost all of the new album with Alejandro Ghersi, a twenty-eight-year-old Venezuelan artist who records as Arca. Ghersi grew up listening to Björk, and you can hear traces of her influence on his latest album, "Arca," which was released this spring. His music, which has always been unnervingly emotional, full of shifting, ambient textures, doesn't require language to convey joy or pain. But on "Arca" he decided to sing, and his strident, dramatic vocals are a guide through his twisted synth compositions. He credits Björk's friendship as the catalyst for this new turn in his music; on one song, he even quotes her.

"Utopia" actually sounds like a place—a quiet, enchanted ecosystem with a constant thrum of activity. It harks back to one of music's oldest aspirations, to replicate the delights of the natural world. Occasionally, a mess of programmed drums or wobbly bass cuts through the quiet. But then Björk's voice returns, restoring a kind of balance. It's the type of power that drives many of the contemporary musicians who descend from her, like Kelela and FKA Twigs, artists who are enamored of the tension between what yearnings a voice can describe and what realities a machine can conjure. These days, Björk no longer seems that strange. Perhaps her greatest influence isn't merely musical—it's about seeing the world in an unfamiliar way.

**W**hen I first heard Björk's music, I was fascinated by her seemingly uncomplicated embrace of technology. The mid-nineties were a time when computers and the Internet still felt exhilarating and a little bit dangerous, mostly because nobody

could predict what the revolution that they represented might beget. But Björk's music was never paranoid about change. It had a sense of optimism, even then, about the future. She never sounded subsumed by the machinery, even when she seemed to be wailing against its rhythms. Instead, there was a faith that samplers and processors could help us transmit something essential about ourselves. She was an early adopter of the Internet and of production software. She has dabbled in virtual reality. Purchasers of "Utopia" will receive cryptocurrency. Even when she has warned, in recent interviews, of our ecological catastrophe, she stays hopeful that a tech visionary might figure out a solution.

In precarious times, it's difficult to see beyond the present, let alone to set our sights farther out. There's a kind of luxury to the songs on "Utopia," in their capacity to be so precious and so particular about language and sound. Is it a form of retreat, or is it magic? Maybe we can think of a good song as its own type of utopia—a pursuit of perfection that succeeds or fails for a moment, depending on whether its hook or its melodies or its performance catches listeners the right way. Björk's songs imagine heights that aren't so easily achieved. Instead, they are about the pursuit, futile or not, of harmony. "Imagine a future and being in it," she sings on "Future Forever," the album's final song. It's majestic and slow, with a pair of resplendent synth chords rippling outward. "Your past is a loop/Turn it off." It's a sublime texture in search of a song. It slowly takes shape, and then it becomes a vision to be followed. ♦

## Constabulary Notes from All Over

*From the Winchester (Mass.) Star.*

Police responded to Winchester Place for a report of a suspicious person. Police spoke to a resident of the building who said a bald man dressed in maroon was standing outside her door and appeared to be waiting for the elevator. She said the man had been standing in one spot for nearly 20 minutes. The woman said she saw the man through a peephole. When police brought the woman into the hall she was embarrassed to find the man in question was her neighbor's Christmas wreath.

# KILLING IT

*Is there something wrong with millennials?*

BY JIA TOLENTINO



*A generation has inherited a world without being able to live in it.*

**I**magine, as I often do, that our world were to end tomorrow, and that alien researchers many years in the future were tasked with reconstructing the demise of civilization from the news. If they persevered past the coverage of our President, they would soon identify the curious figure of the millennial as a suspect. A composite image would emerge, of a twitchy and phone-addicted pest who eats away at beloved American institutions the way boll weevils feed on crops. Millennials, according to recent headlines, are killing hotels, department stores, chain restaurants, the car industry, the diamond industry, the napkin industry, homeownership, marriage, doorbells, motorcycles,

fabric softener, hotel-loyalty programs, casinos, Goldman Sachs, serendipity, and the McDonald's McWrap.

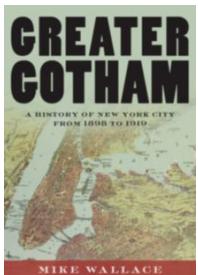
The idea that millennials are capriciously wrecking the landscape of American consumption grants quite a bit of power to a group that is still on the younger side. Born in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, millennials are now in their twenties and thirties. But the popular image of this generation—given its name, in 1987, by William Strauss and Neil Howe—has long been connected with the notion of disruptive self-interest. Over the past decade, that connection has been codified by Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, who

writes about those younger than herself with an air of pragmatic evenhandedness and an undercurrent of moral alarm. (An article adapted from her most recent book, “iGen,” about the cohort after millennials, was published in the September issue of *The Atlantic* with the headline “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?” It went viral.) In 2006, Twenge published “Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before.” The book’s cover emblazoned the title across a bare midriff, a flamboyant illustration of millennial self-importance, sandwiched between a navel piercing and a pair of low-rise jeans.

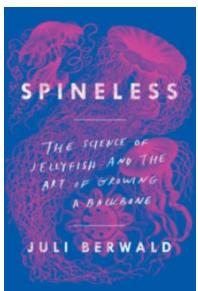
According to Twenge, millennials are “tolerant, confident, open-minded, and ambitious, but also disengaged, narcissistic, distrustful, and anxious.” She presents a barrage of statistics in support of this assessment, along with anecdotal testimonials and pop-cultural examples that neatly confirm the trends she identifies. (A revised edition, published in 2014, mentions the HBO show “Girls” six times.) Twenge acknowledges that the generation has come of age inside an “economic squeeze created by underemployment and rising costs,” but she mostly explains millennial traits in terms of culture and choice. Parents overemphasized self-esteem and happiness, while kids took their cues from an era of diversity initiatives, decentralized authority, online avatars, and reality TV. As a result, millennials have become irresponsible and fundamentally maladjusted. They “believe that every job will be fulfilling and then can’t even find a boring one.” They must lower their expectations and dim their glittering self-images in order to become functional adults.

This argument has a conservative appeal, given its focus on the individual rather than on the structures and the conditions that govern one’s life. Twenge wonders, “Is the upswing in minority kids’ self-esteem an unmitigated good?” and then observes, “Raising children’s self-esteem is not going to solve the problems of poverty and crime.” It’s possible to reach such moralizing conclusions even if one begins

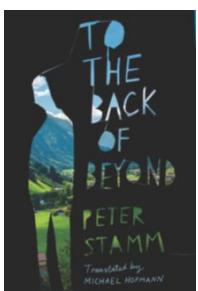
## BRIEFLY NOTED



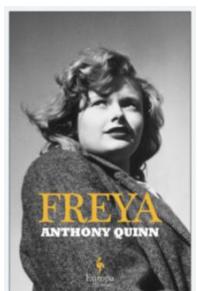
**Greater Gotham**, by *Mike Wallace* (Oxford). This gargantuan study of twenty-two formative years in New York history begins with the merging of the five boroughs, in 1898, which created the world's second-largest metropolis. Wallace, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, details the emergence of the "symbolic capital of a new American empire." The skyline's "constellation of megaliths" signalled economic might, and a "seamless river of rails" connected the city's districts. But not all was booming: chorus-line dancers in Times Square, New York's "densest pleasure ganglion," were poorly paid; suffragists (to whom Macy's marketed matching bonnets and hatpins for demonstrations) faced intransigent opposition. Interweaving the actions of plutocrats, anarchists, striking garment workers, and a host of others, Wallace gives a multifaceted account of the city Marcel Duchamp called "a complete work of art."



**Spineless**, by *Juli Berwald* (Riverhead). Melding science with meditations on the author's abandoned career in marine biology, this study of jellyfish asserts that they "are awash in misunderstanding." Berwald rejects the simple image of "goo and sting," and examines the complex lives of what one researcher calls "the most important predators in the sea." She also shows how even niche fields shed light on wider ecological issues: climate change could cause a global jellyfish "bloom," devastating fish stocks. Although Berwald sometimes struggles to unite the personal and the scientific in a meaningful way, her sense of wonder is infectious and the book is a heartfelt plea for humans to fulfill their responsibilities toward nature.



**To the Back of Beyond**, by *Peter Stamm*, translated from the German by Michael Hofmann (Other Press). One evening, Thomas, the protagonist of this slim, perceptive Swiss novel, walks out of his garden, leaving behind a half-full glass of wine, a stable career, a tranquil marriage, and two children. Stamm tracks Thomas's disappearance into the countryside, his struggle to escape modern life's "quiet consensus," and his wife's determined search for him. What initially seems a paean to a life free of constraints becomes a keen exploration of the marital bond. Stamm's precise observations of nature and character animate every line as both husband and wife confront "a future that was not prescribed and that could, with every step, be altered."



**Freya**, by *Anthony Quinn* (Europa). This novel opens in 1945, amid the celebrations of V-E Day—the day Freya meets Nancy. Freya, twenty years old and preparing to attend Oxford, is clever, confident, and crude, a forward-thinking feminist unafraid of her journalistic ambition. Nancy, an aspiring novelist, is equally smart but gentler and shyer. Over the next decades, the friendship is tested by excessive candor, manipulative men, and hurtful revelations. The pair's story unfolds as a double bildungsroman set against a background of political and cultural upheavals, from the Nuremberg trials to Britain's moral panic about "deviant" behaviors and the stirrings of sexual freedom, of which Freya is a committed proponent.

with the opposite economic premise. In "The Vanishing American Adult," published in May, Senator Ben Sasse, Republican of Nebraska, insists that we live in a time of generalized "affluenza," in which "much of our stress now flows not from deprivation but, oddly, from surplus." Millennials have "far too few problems," he argues. Sasse chastises parents for allowing their kids to succumb to the character-eroding temptations of contemporary abundance and offers suggestions for turning the school-age generation into the sort of hardworking, financially independent grownups that the millennials have yet to become.

The image of millennials has darkened since Strauss and Howe walked the beat: in their 2000 book, "Millennials Rising," they claimed that the members of this surging generation were uniquely earnest, industrious, and positive. But the decline in that reputation is hardly surprising. Since the nineteen-sixties, most generational analysis has revolved around the groundbreaking idea that young people are selfish. Twenge's term for millennials merely flips an older one, the "me generation," inspired by a 1976 *New York* cover story by Tom Wolfe about the baby boomers. (The voluble Wolfe, born in 1930, is a member of the silent generation.) Wolfe argued that three decades of postwar economic growth had produced a mania for "remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very self... and observing, studying, and doting on it." The fear of growing selfishness has, in the forty years since, only increased.

That fear is grounded in concrete changes: the story of American self-interest is a continuous one that nonetheless contains major institutional and economic shifts. Adapting to those shifts does tend to produce certain effects. I was born smack in the middle of the standard millennial range, and Twenge's description of my generation's personality strikes me as broadly accurate. Lately, millennial dreams tend less toward global fame and more toward affordable health insurance, but she is correct that my cohort has grown up under the influence of novel and powerful incentives to focus on the self. If for the baby

boomers self-actualization was a conscious project, and if for Gen X—born in the sixties and seventies—it was a mandate to be undermined, then for millennials it's more like an atmospheric condition: inescapable, ordinary, and, perhaps, increasingly toxic. A generation has inherited a world without being able to live in it. How did that happen? And why do so many people insist on blaming them for it?

**K**ids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials,” by Malcolm Harris (Little, Brown), is the first major accounting of the millennial generation written by someone who belongs to it. Harris is twenty-eight—the book’s cover announces his birth year next to a sardonic illustration of elementary-school stickers—and he has already rounded the bases of young, literary, leftist media: he is a writer and editor for the online magazine the New Inquiry; he has written for *Jacobin* and *n+1*. He got his first taste of notoriety during Occupy Wall Street: shortly after activists settled in at Zuccotti Park, he wrote a blog post for *Jacobin* in which he claimed to have “heard unconfirmed reports that Radiohead is planning a concert at the occupation this week.” He set up an e-mail account using the name of the band’s manager and wrote to Occupy organizers, conveying the band’s interest in performing. Later, in a piece for Gawker titled “I’m the Jerk Who Pranked Occupy Wall Street,” he explained that his goal was to get more people to the protest, and expressed disdain for the way the organizers responded. (Fooled by his e-mail, they held a press conference and confirmed the band’s plan to appear.)

Harris’s anatomizing of his peers begins with the star stickers that, along with grade-school participation trophies, so fascinate Sasse, Twenge, and other writers of generational trend pieces. “You suck, you still get a trophy” is how Twenge puts it, describing contemporary K through five as an endless awards ceremony. Harris, on the other hand, regards elementary school as a capitalist boot camp, in which children perform unpaid labor, learn the importance of year-over-year growth through standardized testing,

and get accustomed to constant, quantified, increasingly efficient work. The two descriptions are not as far apart as one might think: assuring kids that they’re super special—and telling them, as Sasse does, that they have a duty to improve themselves through constant enrichment—is a good way to get them to cleave to a culture of around-the-clock labor. And conditioning them to seek rewards in the form of positive feedback—stars and trophies, hearts and likes—is a great way to get them used to performing that labor for free.

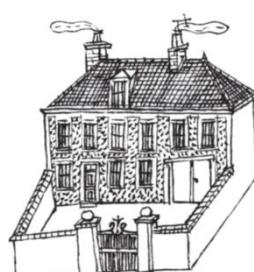
My memories of childhood—in a suburban neighborhood in west Houston that felt newly hatched, as open as farmland—are different, breezy and hot and sunlit. I attended, mostly on scholarship, a Southern Baptist school attached to one of the largest megachurches in America, and elementary school seemed like the natural price of admission for friends, birthday parties, and long summers full of shrieking, unsupervised play. (The very young aren’t much for picking up on indoctrination techniques; the religious agitprop felt natural enough, too.) But some kind of training did kick in around the time I entered high school, when I began spending fourteen-hour days on campus with the understanding that I needed to earn a scholarship to a good college. College, of course, is where the millennial lounges around on lush green quads, spends someone else’s money, insists on “safe spaces,” protests her school’s heteronormative core curriculum, and wages war on her professors if she receives a grade below an A. I did the first two of those things, thanks to the Jefferson Scholars Foundation at the University of Virginia. I also took six classes a semester, worked part time, and crammed my schedule with clubs and committees—in between naps on the quad and beers with friends on my porch couch and long meditative sessions figuring out what kind of a person I was going to be.

Most undergraduates don’t have such a luxurious and debt-free experience. The majority of American college students never live on campus; around a

third go to community college. The type of millennial that much of the media flocks to—white, rich, thoughtlessly entitled—is largely unrepresentative of what is, in fact, a diverse and often downwardly mobile group. (Millennials are the first generation to have just a fifty-fifty chance of being financially better off than their parents.) Many millennials grew up poor, went to crummy schools, and have been shuttled toward for-profit colleges and minimum-wage jobs, if not the prison system. (For-profit colleges, which disproportionately serve low-income students, account for roughly a tenth of undergraduates, and more than a third of student-loan defaults.) Average student debt has doubled just within this generation, surging from around eighteen thousand dollars at graduation for the class of 2003 to thirty-seven thousand for the class of 2016. (Under the tax plan recently passed by House Republicans, the situation worsens for student borrowers and their families: that bill eliminates the deduction on student-loan interest and voids the income-tax exemption for tuition benefits.)

A young college graduate, having faithfully followed the American path of hard work and achievement, might now find herself in a position akin to a homeowner with negative equity: in possession of an asset that is worth much less than what she owes. In these conditions, the concept of self-interest starts to splinter. For young people, I

suspect, the idea of specialness looks like a reward but mostly functions as punishment, bestowing on us the idea that there is no good way of existing other than constantly generating returns.



Harris and I were born in the same year, and we were in college when the financial crisis hit, in 2008. As I approached graduation, I watched news footage of crumpled-faced families carrying boxes out of foreclosed houses, followed by shots of expensively dressed professionals walking to work at their bailed-out banks. I joined the Peace Corps, and was assigned to Kyrgyzstan. Shortly after I returned to the U.S., in 2011, the grungy, amorphous

Occupy movement started blooming; protesters were railing against the impunity of “the one per cent” in Houston, as they were in dozens of other cities across the country. Suspended in the amber of my temporary underemployment, I spent long afternoons hanging around Hermann Square, downtown, making small talk with libertarian lawyers, pan-activists in bandanas and hiking sandals, and a lot of people in my own demographic—millennials coming into their political discontent.

That September, Occupy set up its makeshift camp in lower Manhattan. On the first day of October, some seven hundred demonstrators were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct as they walked on the roadway of the Brooklyn Bridge, blocking traffic. Harris was one of them. He argued, along with many others, that the police had led the group onto the bridge and then arrested them. In 2012, as the case was going forward, his Twitter archive was subpoenaed. Twitter resisted the order, but eventually provided the tweets, which made it clear that Harris had heard the police warning protesters to stay off the roadway. (“They tried to stop us,” he’d tweeted.) He was sentenced to six days of community service. These Occupy stories don’t make it into “Kids These Days”—Harris leaves out his personal experience altogether, keen to focus on structural analysis rather than anecdote. He does observe, though, in a discussion of social media, that “Coke tastes good even once you’ve seen what it can do to a rusty nail.” He continues to make frequent use of Twitter.

When Twenge first published “Generation Me,” social media had not yet become ubiquitous. Facebook was limited to colleges and high schools, Twitter hadn’t formally launched, and Instagram didn’t exist. But the millennial narrative was already taking its mature shape, and social media fit into it seamlessly: the narcissism of status updates, the shallow skimming of shiny surfaces, the inability to sit still. One might therefore conclude that the story of generational self-centeredness is so flexible as to have no real definition—it can

cover anything, with a little stretching. But there is another possibility: that social media feeds on the same conditions that have made millennials what they are.

“Over the last decade, anxiety has overtaken depression as the most common reason college students seek counseling services,” the *Times Magazine* noted in October. Anxiety, Harris argues, isn’t just an unfortunate by-product of an era when wages are low and job security is scarce. It’s useful: a constant state of adrenalized agitation can make it hard to stop working and encourage you to think of other aspects of your life—health, leisure, online interaction—as work. Social media provides both an immediate release for that anxiety and a replenishment of it, so that users keep coming back. Many jobs of the sort that allow millennials to make sudden leaps into financial safety—in tech, sports, music, film, “influencing,” and, occasionally, journalism—are identity-based and mercurial, with the biggest payoffs and opportunities going to those who have developed an online following. What’s more, cultivating a “personal brand” has become a matter of prudence as well as ambition: there is a powerful incentive to be publicly likable at a time when strangers routinely rate and review one another over minor transactions—cat-sitting, assembling IKEA furniture, sharing a car ride or a spare bedroom—and people are forced to crowdsource money for their medical bills.

Young people have curled around their economic situation “like vines on a trellis,” as Harris puts it. And, when humans learn to think of themselves as assets competing in an unpredictable and punishing market, then millennials—in all their anxious, twitchy, phone-addicted glory—are exactly what you should expect. The disdain that so many people feel for Harris’s and my generation reflects an unease about the forces of deregulation, globalization, and technological acceleration that are transforming everyone’s lives. (It does not seem coincidental that young people would be criticized for being entitled at a time when people are being stripped of their entitlements.) Millennials, in other words, have adjusted

too well to the world they grew up in; their perfect synchronization with economic and cultural disruption has been mistaken for the source of the disruption itself.

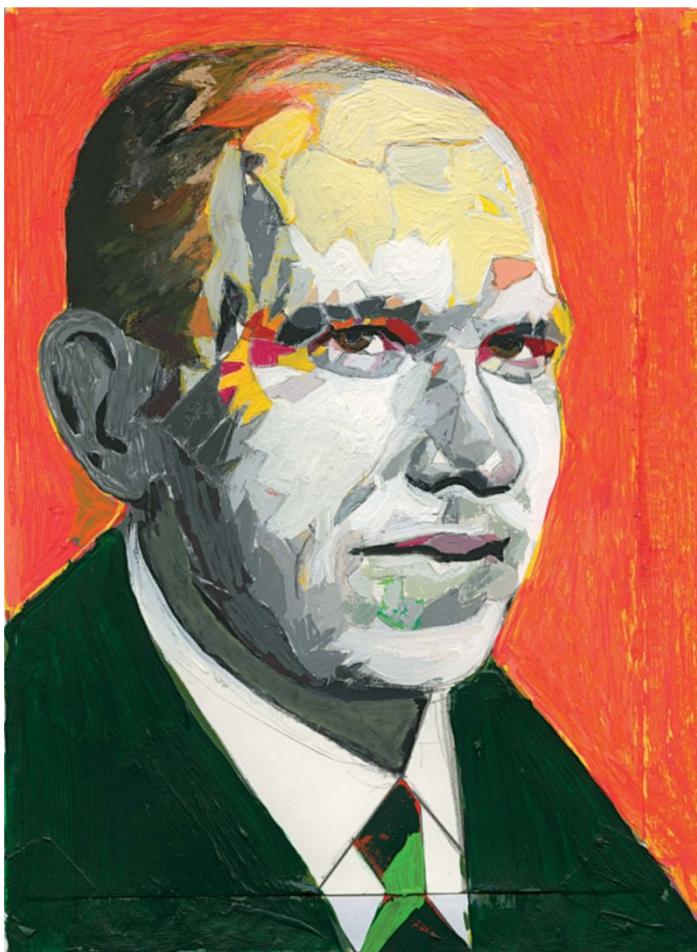
This idea runs parallel, in some ways, to the assessments of Twenge and Sasse and other conservative commentators. But Harris’s conclusions are precisely the opposite of theirs: instead of accommodating the situation even further, he argues, kids should revolt. “Either we continue the trends we’ve been given and enact the bad future, or we refuse it and cut the knot of trend lines that defines our collectivity. We become fascists or revolutionaries, one or the other.” It’s a near-apocalyptic vision. But the polarization that permeates American politics—stemming, in part, from a sense that extreme measures are necessary to render our world livable—is especially evident among millennials, some disaffected portion of whom form much of the racist alt-right, while a larger swath has adopted the leftist politics shared by Harris. In the 2016 Presidential primaries, Bernie Sanders won more young votes than Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump combined.

“The newfound popularity of socialism among millennials is an alarming trend,” Sasse writes in “The Vanishing American Adult.” He provides a syllabus that he hopes will steer people away from such thinking, and toward an intellectually mature adulthood, and he dutifully includes “The Communist Manifesto,” so that his hypothetical pupils can properly grasp how wrong it is. It seems more likely that a young person who opened “The Communist Manifesto” tomorrow would underline the part about personal worth being reduced to exchange value and go off to join the Democratic Socialists of America, which has grown fivefold in the last year. One of its members, a Marine Corps veteran named Lee Carter, was elected to Virginia’s House of Delegates in November. He was born in 1987. “Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism,” the critic and theorist Fredric Jameson wrote, fourteen years ago. These days, the kids find it easy enough to imagine both. ♦

# ONE MAN'S TRASH

*How A. R. Ammons turned the everyday into art.*

BY DAN CHIASSON



In November of 1963, A. R. Ammons, known to family and friends as Archie, the author of a single, privately printed book of poems and a manager at his father-in-law's glass factory, picked up a roll of adding-machine tape at a local store and began to "contemplate . . . some fool use for it." Back home, Ammons threaded the roll of tape into his Underwood typewriter and, beginning on December 6th, sat down to write a poem that recorded his daily impressions. The poem's margins were set by the tape's width, about two inches; it began where the tape started and ended when it ran out, with no chance for

revisions as Ammons's words slalomed down its length. This was during an unusually frigid spell in Millville, New Jersey, the shore town where Ammons and his wife lived; we can confirm it from the poem, which, among its many commitments to uneventfulness, tends to register the forecast with each new day's entry. Jack Kerouac's "On the Road," a record of three feverish weeks composed on a scroll of paper, was already a legend. Ammons was the anti-Kerouac: a shy, puttering man of ordinary routines, square verging on dorky in appearance, devoted to his back-yard jays and spruces. "Tape for the Turn

*Ammons believed that even the drabdest human realities vibrated with change.*

of the Year," the title an echo of the dactyls used by Homer and Virgil, was his homebody, D.I.Y. epic.

"Tape," like "Garbage" and "Glare," the later long poems that Ammons composed on coils of paper, works as an alternative timepiece that runs on writing. Ammons, an ambassador from calendar time, reports to the waiting roll of tape with news of the season's ups and downs: a car that won't start in the cold, a few flies hanging on in patches of sun on the porch, the death of William Carlos Williams. The poem's formal properties are ways of managing the rate at which tape-time elapses: when Ammons's lines are long, spanning the width of the tape, he preserves the length and buys more time; when he prints a narrow strip of words, more of the tape (and so, functionally speaking, more of the time) is gobbled up. Ammons cannot go too fast, or the poem will end before it has served its purpose as a bridge across the dreary days of winter, a period Ammons associated with depression. And so he has to shuttle between the two temporal imperatives, the tape and the year. The poem's erratic pacing as it negotiates a truce between them is one of its primary subjects:

poem must be now  
close to 40 feet long: I  
can't get it out  
to write letters or  
postcards or anything:  
well  
if  
it  
must  
be  
onward  
to  
the  
end,  
let's  
get  
there  
in  
a  
hurry: or  
is that cheating?

Whether it's cheating or not depends on the rules of the game, of course: in this case, intentional speedings up and slowings down, interruptions, elisions, and lapses are not only allowed but necessary for the agile writer living on and off the tape. Few poets have captured so movingly the experience

of living in time, or thought so lucidly, with the clock running, about how poems bargain against its passing.

Though Ammons viewed his poems as “criss-cross trellises in typhoon,” mere “bits, strings” that withstand the punishing weather of his imagination, here they are, collected in two large volumes by Norton, edited by Robert M. West, with an introduction by Helen Vendler. It is odd to hold these weighty objects, whose contents refer over and over again to the importance of what Ammons calls “gossamer distinctions,” celebrating everything fleeting and gauzy. The same could be said for Emily Dickinson’s body of work, uncannily heavy with the quicksilver actions of her mind. But the majesty of Ammons’s achievement, scattered previously in more than twenty volumes, some out of print for decades, can now be recognized. Ammons knew that permanence was transfigured disposability, an insight that made the lowliest experiences available to a poetry of the grandest imaginative ambition. In the seventies, when recycling came early to liberal enclaves like Burlington, Vermont, where I was, and Ithaca, New York, where Ammons lived, the humble household business of repurposing trash was seen by some as a Yankee eccentricity. But Emerson and Thoreau would have separated their disposables, and Ammons, a latter-day Transcendentalist and the greatest American poet

of daily chores, knew that garbage was matter in mid-change. He saw his work, too, as a refinement of matter, which explains why the surest path to immortality might pass through adding-machine tape. These new volumes are mere stops along the way for poems that embody the “dispositional axis from stone to wind, wind to stone.”

**A**mmons was raised during the Depression, on a subsistence farm in North Carolina, in a house lit by kerosene. The community had literally no currency: people bartered to live. His father was a Baptist, his mother a Methodist, but for the sake of convenience they often attended a church “less than a mile away,” the Spring Branch Fire-Baptized Pentecostal Church. There is a way of telling Ammons’s story by emphasizing the intensity of his early religious formation, but any family that attends a Pentecostal church, with its revivalist spectacles and dire preaching, because it’s more convenient than the more modern options down the road should be understood perhaps as more pragmatic than devout. Ammons might have learned his love of variety from the contesting absolutisms of his family’s all-of-the-above Christianity. But the chief lessons of his childhood had to do with scarcity—the necessity of exchange to even the most fundamental needs—and, above all, thrift. Add some genius

to that mix and you have the makings of an American poet.

Ammons was twenty-nine when his first book, “Ommateum: With Doxology,” was published, in 1955. Like everything that Ammons wrote, it was in essence outsider art, though his quick absorption into critical and scholarly acclaim meant that he would maintain his position on the fringe mainly through irascible rhetoric. Being an outsider on the inside only gave him more complex relations to consider. (“I have not found the flavor of orange/juice diminished or increased by this or that approach to Heidegger or *Harmonium*,” he wrote in “The Snow Poems,” from 1977.) When he was growing up, there were just “three books” in his house: “the family Bible and two others,” as well as the first eleven pages of “Robinson Crusoe,” which Ammons said he memorized. He joined the Navy and was trained at Key West as a sonar man, around the same time, he learned much later, as the New York School poets James Schuyler and Frank O’Hara, “younglings/with special gifts of sound.” Then he studied at Wake Forest, on the G.I. Bill, majoring in General Sciences. In an interview in *The Paris Review*, in 1996, Ammons looks back on a day when he was nineteen, “sitting on the bow of the ship anchored in a bay in the South Pacific,” when he was struck with an epiphany:

As I looked at the land, heard the roosters crowing, saw the thatched huts, etcetera, I thought down to the water level and then to the immediately changed and strange world below the waterline. But it was the line inscribed across the variable landmass, determining where people would or would not live, where palm trees would or could not grow, that hypnotized me. The whole world changed as a result of an interior illumination—the water level was not what it was because of a single command by a higher power but because of an average result of a host of actions—runoff, wind currents, melting glaciers.

The poems in “Ommateum” suggest that the imagination can be outfitted to do the work of a sextant, a microscope, or a hot-air balloon, depending on where the interesting action happens in any one process. Ammons was among the American poets, as Vendler suggests, to master the vocabulary of the sciences, without which he could explore those secret passageways of matter only through

## And this little piggy went OFF THE GRID



metaphor. That vocabulary keeps Ammons from too quickly laundering observed detail into symbol, as in a polemical poem about stubbornly nonsymbolic dice:

My dice are crystal inlaid with gold  
and possess  
    spatial symmetry  
about their centers and  
mechanical symmetry and  
    are of uniform density  
and all surfaces have equal  
coefficients of friction for  
  
my dice are not loaded

The dice issue the “hard directive” of a new, almost anti-poetical register of description, their essence the sum of their inherent qualities and not their instrumental outcomes. Somewhere behind this poem is William Blake’s tiger, whose “fearful symmetry” suggested to Blake, as it would not suggest to Ammons, a shaping “immortal hand or eye.” Ammons’s “dice are not loaded” with meanings—which is, of course, their meaning.

Ammons’s impulse, in a poem, to show the world’s marvels as “the average result of a host of actions” meant that he needed to include, among those actions, his own observation of them. He therefore had to locate himself inside the frame. He thought constantly about “the revolving galaxies, the endless space,” a scale of consideration that made human life seem puny by comparison. But he was still the one conjuring those immensities; the bind was how to acknowledge his own centrality in poems whose authority depended on his insignificance. Several poems in “Ommateum” try to solve the problem by engaging the universe in awkward colloquy:

I went out to the sun  
where it burned over a desert willow  
and getting under the shade of the willow  
I said  
    It’s very hot in this country  
The sun said nothing so I said  
    The moon has been talking about you  
and he said  
    Well what is it this time

The yokel persona is insufficiently ironized by being consigned to the past. An even weaker poem, unfortunately among Ammons’s most famous and most frequently anthologized, is “So I Said I Am Ezra”:

So I said I am Ezra  
and the wind whipped my throat



*“He’s clinging to territory that’s still under his control.”*

gaming for the sounds of my voice  
    I listened to the wind  
go over my head and up into the night  
Turning to the sea I said  
    I am Ezra  
but there were no echoes from the waves

The poem continues, gradually edging out of the picture the prophetic “Ezra” and his thwarted attempts to stamp his name upon the world. These early poems fail because they are staged as overwrought dramas between a “nature” too stably situated outdoors and Ammons, whose humility before creation is performed through a series of wearying guises, from pilgrim to hobo to minor prophet.

Ammons’s authority relied upon his presentation of himself as an ordinary person, not uniquely or exclusively called to the vocation of writing poems. This was not false modesty. Whitman, more and more a kind of supply closet that Ammons needed to raid, had declared himself to be “no stander above men or women or apart from them.” Ammons shared that commitment to his fellow-citizens, but substituted radical plainness for Whitman’s vivid distinctions: he needed to show that even the drabdest human realities vibrated with change. He wrote, along with poems of more conventional lyric length, very short morsel poems and very long process poems, that last group sometimes providing a kind of “mak-

ing of” documentary about how the little strobe-lit lyrics came to be. A short poem, “Snow,” is included in a passage about picking out a Christmas tree, from “Tape for the Turn of the Year”:

2:29 pm: (still sunny)  
I better get out of  
here & go  
get that tree:  
the good ones are  
gonna be gone:

&

Snow

The little tree  
on the hill  
could surely be  
bright & still

except the wind  
round the hill  
has a mind  
that isn’t still

&

I decided not to get the  
tree:  
instead, I lay down on the  
couch  
& nearly fell asleep  
& then sat up  
& then  
the little tree  
came to me

The little poem strips out of Ammons’s “real” work some basic vocabulary—“wind” and “mind,” “bright”

and “still”—while arranging those terms into a deceptively brittle lyric that a third grader might be pleased to have written. The surrounding poem imagines “Snow” as a substitute for the “real” tree that Ammons keeps not getting up to buy. “The little tree/came to me”: that’s what we say about inspiration, but it’s also a happy fantasy for the tired poet who wants to stay indoors on the couch.

In 1964, Ammons was hired to teach at Cornell, where he spent the rest of his life. From that moment forward, the poems never slowed. Domesticity was not in favor in American poetry, except as a site of tragic collisions between art and life; Robert Lowell’s “Life Studies” had set the tone for describing marriage and family as a zero-sum struggle for artists’ souls. It suited Ammons fine, however. He regarded settled life as a fixed axis against which the fluctuations of daily change could be plotted. He noted the appearance of frostbite on butterflies, or the “black blatant/clarions” of crows “in the gawky branches.” He was “not so much looking for the shape” of reality, he wrote, “as being available / to any shape that may be summoning itself / through me / from the self not mine but ours.” The work took on an occasional air of preëmpted condescension, sometimes seeming to embody a swallowed riposte to neighbors, colleagues, or fellow-poets whom Ammons greeted in real space with perfect courtesy. Here is “Project” (1970):

My subject's  
still the wind still  
difficult to  
present  
being invisible:  
nevertheless should I  
presume it not  
I'd be compelled  
to say  
how the honeysuckle bushlimbs  
wave themselves:  
difficult  
beyond presumption

These gorgeous observations are presented defensively, suggesting that the “nature” poet knew that he was accountable socially and even politically. Ammons’s poems from the late sixties and the seventies sometimes

strike a reactionary tone. But noticing that his neighbors noticed his habits was the beginning of a new phase in his work.

He became a poet of human systems: families, neighborhoods, faculties, cities. In “Garbage,” his great poem of 1993, he enlarged his study of human interaction to encompass the nation. Earlier poems saw him whet a scientific vocabulary that worked remarkably well for his own, and others’, behavior; the terms and concepts he lifted from that work—“symbiosis,” “sufficiency,” “extremity,” “mutuality,” and others—were now deployed to suggest paradox. He learned to see unity under external differences, and to see, under apparent harmony, a busy traffic in contradictions. In the opening stanza of “Garbage,” Ammons meditates upon an isolated “yard maple” deprived of the benefits of “crowding and competition” that would make a tree in the forest thrive. The “dynamics of struggle” teach a tree to flourish in “taken space,” but the prized cultivar suffers as a result of Ammons’s cossetting. The poem then shifts to a discussion of parents and children:

. . . we tie into the  
lives of those we love and our lives, then,  
go

as theirs go; their pain we can't shake off;  
their choices, often harming to themselves,  
pour through our agitated sleep, swirl up  
as  
no-nos in our dreams; we rise several times  
in a night to walk about; we rise in the  
morning  
to a crusty world headed nowhere,  
doorless:

our chests burn with anxiety and a river of  
anguish defines rapids and straits in the  
pit of

our stomachs: how can we intercede and  
not  
interfere: how can our love move more  
surroundingly,  
convincingly than our premonitory advice

The clichés in the passage are there to mark this as a real problem, its language borrowed, probably, from an agonized marital conversation. Parents watch their oversight of children dwindle, in a matter of a few years, from

physical attachment to feckless “advice.” Ammons’s wayward, oblique approach to the heartache only sharpens it.

With a body of work this capacious, you find yourself, if you’re in the mood to look. I realized in the middle of rereading “Garbage” that this is where I first encountered Ammons’s work, in the early nineties, as a graduate student—and realized, too, that his project, measuring itself against the recurring cycles of the day and the year, is itself now a standard of measurement. I have moved through it, then identifying with the thirtysomething poet of “Tape for the Turn of the Year,” now finding myself nearing fifty alongside Ammons in “The Snow Poems,” and soon enough identifying with the poet who writes, “I can’t believe/I’m merely an old person.”

Such lines are reminders that it’s not just ferns, larches, and finches whose entries and exits in calendar time can be predicted. “I was coming out of Goldwin Smith Hall after mail/call,” Ammons writes, about the Cornell building that houses the English department. It’s May, “the blues/and greens outdoing each other”:

. . . when a dear friend

said, come and see, it's Ralph, he's in the  
car, and  
thinking, I've never been asked to come see

Ralph before, I said, is anything the  
matter, and she said, terminal cancer of the  
brain,

and I said, terminal cancer of the brain,  
and  
she said, I found out a week ago, but  
don't say

anything to him

Ammons’s conclusions move from the discreet exemplum of “Ralph” to the weave of maturity and death as it becomes visible against the latticework of an English department. The lament soon broadens to encompass the department itself. “There never is/a department really,” he writes, but a “dissolve” moving through “tenure, or a job elsewhere,/part time, retirement, death.” The list makes no distinction between tragic and non-tragic attrition. Individuals come and go; a department, and so much more, is “a slow flow you can’t step in twice.” ♦

## WIRED

*What Alexander Calder set in motion.*

BY ADAM GOPNIK



**A** small plaint, as a starter, against the multivolume biography of the single-volume life. In the nineteenth century, the big sets were usually reserved for the big politicians. Disraeli got seven volumes and Gladstone three, but the lives of the poets or the artists or even the scientists tended to be enfolded within the limits of a single volume. John Forster's life of Dickens did take its time, and tomes, but Elizabeth Gaskell kept Charlotte Brontë within one set of covers, and Darwin got his life and letters presented in one compact volume, by his son. The modern mania for the multivolume biography of figures who seem in most ways "minor" may have begun with Michael Holroyd's two volumes de-

voted to Lytton Strachey, who was wonderful and influential but a miniaturist perhaps best treated as such. Strachey, at least, talked a lot and had a vivid sex life. But we are now headed toward a third volume of the life of Bing Crosby, and already have two volumes on Dai Vernon, the master card magician (a master, yes, but of card magic). This season, the life of Alexander Calder, toymaker to the modernist muses, arrives in the first volume of what promises to be two.

No one doubts that Calder is a remarkable artist, and in Jed Perl he has found a scrupulous chronicler. But, as we learn from Perl's seven-hundred-page "Calder: The Conquest of Time: The Early Years: 1898-1940" (Knopf), Calder's

*Calder in 1929. His work was reimagined in France as a mode of abstraction.*

is not a particularly dramatic life—he was neither much of a talker nor a prolific lover. In broad strokes, the career follows the customary arc of a modern artist, going from small, animated Parisian experiments, in the twenties, and ending with big, dull American commissions fifty years later—and though we are hungry to get him, we are not perhaps hungry to get him at quite this length. A dubious density of detailing—"In Paris, Calder had to wait an hour for his luggage, which he had checked through in London"—of the kind inevitable to such multivolume investigations may daunt even the reader who was eager at the start. The greatest British sculptor of the period, Calder's friend and exact contemporary, has, after all, kept his reputation afloat with only a single-volume biography—but this may be a situation where Perl, at least, believes that less is Moore.

Perl, an art critic at *The New Republic* for more than two decades, has a larger case to make in taking Calder so seriously and at such length. The premise of his project is that Calder is not a minor artist but seems so only because he has never slotted neatly into a fixed story of modernism. Calder fits neither the Clement Greenberg narrative of the inevitability of the abstract nor the later, postmodern narrative of the primacy of the political. He wasn't marginalized; he chose the margins. He just made things. The things he made were in some ways abstract and "formal" but never scanted the evocative function of art. Although a certain kind of politics can be discerned in his early work, his explicit politics were secondary to his acts of making: the fountain that he made for the Spanish Republican pavilion at the World's Fair in 1937 stood in front of Picasso's "Gernica," but no one could have detected in its beautiful patterning of mercury and water a polemical point. For Perl, considering the modern in what may seem "anti-modernist" terms, rescuing Calder is a way of rescuing the individual imagination from a reading of modern art too narrowly driven by a historical plot.

**H**appiness, unusually for a modern artist, is a theme in the early Calder, both in his largely serene childhood and in the largely mischievous art he made after. From his birth, in 1898, "Sandy"

had a blessed, if wandering, childhood—in Philadelphia, Arizona, California, and then New York—which haunted him forever; image-echoes of his toys and childhood landscapes remain everywhere in his mature work. “Calder’s embrace of toys, play and the like was further complicated by his having grown up in an artistic household where it was taken for granted that such childish things had a more than childish value,” Perl explains. Calder’s background made him one of the few American artists to emerge from a legacy of art-making. Both his father and his grandfather were Philadelphia sculptors. His grandfather Alexander Milne Calder sculpted the statue of William Penn that sits atop the Philadelphia City Hall, all big hat and benevolence, and his father, Stirling, was still more distinguished. Working in a modified Beaux Arts style, he made countless important public decorations, including the figure of George Washington within the Washington Square arch—the same spot where Marcel Duchamp and John Sloan later declared the Free and Independent Republic of Washington Square. Alexander’s mother, Nanette, was a fine portrait painter and graphic artist who had studied in Paris at the height of the Post-Impressionist moment. Calder never lost the easy feeling that art was, first of all, artisanal, a thing you did. “I wasn’t brought up,” he once said ruefully, apropos of his artistic background. “I was framed.” The huge advantage of being born in the business, especially when the business has an aura of glamour or mystery, is that it seems merely like a business. Steph Curry doesn’t think that the three-point shot is hard, because his father made it seem easy. It is often better in life not to have a dream but to see when you wake how something is done.

For all that, Calder really was a natural. Indeed, his very first juvenilia, a dog and a duck cut from brass sheet metal, which he made around the age of eleven, look completely like Calders, animals reduced to their essence in a manner more caricatural than stylishly sleek—though this is in part because Calder’s

later work instructed our eyes on how to appreciate childlike modelling of form. And his early graphic advertisements have a jaunty charm that is not at all the work of a beginner.

After earning a degree in mechanical engineering, at the Stevens Institute of Technology, in New Jersey, and spending time at the Art Students League, in New York, he arrived in Paris, in 1926.



Even given his precocity, it is startling to discover that the first thing he made in Paris remains perhaps the best thing he did in life. It’s the kinetic, wire-and-collage miniature circus, complete with a full cast of characters, from ringmaster to strongman, that has been one of the ornaments of the Whitney Museum since 1971. Living in a studio in the beautiful but out-of-the-way shopping street the Rue Daguerre, in the Fourteenth Arrondissement (not then or now a remotely fashionable or artist-haunted place), he made his circus, creature by creature, out of wire bent with pliers, and powered by everything from springs to balloons.

Calder’s circus was not meant to be seen; it was meant to be watched. Calder performed it, unpacking it from suitcases and animating it, and announcing it, in a way that presaged later generations of performance art. (A charming film survives of Calder making his circus run.) The force of his bent-wire caricature of form is still astonishing: no draftsman had a more fluid descriptive line; indeed, Calder’s wire portraits are the first really new thing in the caricaturist’s craft between Daumier and Dubuffet.

Perl does a terrific job of teasing out the varied sources of Calder’s circus, which went through many phases. He shows its origins in the special Parisian artistic world where cabaret culture and circus met high art; reveals compelling antecedents in toys that Calder would have known as a kid; and then documents the circus’s return to actual toy-making. (Calder wanted, and eventually got, a contract with a Wisconsin toy company to commercialize his ludic inventions.) This tale of the interpenetration of popular entertainment and high art recalls the art historian Jeffrey

Weiss’s pioneering study of the birth of Cubism in the entanglement of avant-garde and cabaret cultures. Indeed, it’s gratifying to see ideas about the nature of modernist innovation that the late MOMA curator Kirk Varnedoe and his students, Weiss among them, pioneered a quarter century ago become so widely accepted. Modern artists, they saw, innovate by breaking fixed barriers between popular entertainment and avant-garde experiment, creating a dynamic, circular exchange of forms and meanings, with what begins in a popular idiom altered in an art milieu, only to return to its original realm, transformed. This notion of artistic evolution by the displacement of decorums, once so controversial, now seems commonplace—itself an ironic demonstration of the principle.

Calder went back to America to show his circus as a performance piece, mostly in arty “society” circles. (Thomas Wolfe’s “You Can’t Go Home Again” contains a surprisingly hostile sketch of Calder demonstrating his circus; the ponderous novelist could view the playful artist only as a society dilettante.) Then, on Calder’s return to France, he was the subject of one of the telling episodes in the long history of Franco-American creative misunderstanding. Sometime in October of 1930, Calder performed his circus for a sober audience of advanced artists, including Mondrian and Léger, who found in it none of the antic charm that his American audiences had but, rather, intimations of a language of abstract order and kinetic movement. To eyes for whom the circus as a subject of serious art was self-evident, but for whom the idea of kinetic, encompassing performance attached to any artistic enterprise was new, Calder’s natural preoccupations seemed thrilling, even radical. His ascent among the Parisians seems to date to this performance, and led to a sudden elevation in his stature that appears to have been as bewildering to him as it was welcome. The New York salon ornament became, in a breath, a Parisian visionary.

Not long afterward, at Calder’s first gallery show in Paris, Léger, a magisterial figure in the French avant-garde, described Calder’s work as “Erik Satie illustrated by Calder.” He went on:

Why not? It’s serious without seeming to be. . . . His need for fantasy broke the connection; he started to “play” with his materials:

wood, plaster, iron wire, especially iron wire.... The wire stretches, becomes rigid, geometrical—pure plastic—it is the present era.

Perl rightly says that “it’s impossible to overstate the significance of Léger’s words,” both for Calder’s reputation and for the insight they provide into how his art was reimagined in France. Play had become pure plastic art, a radical form of abstraction. Calder’s circus is an American toy set to a French experimental melody.

This double movement—first toward mere play, then toward real power—is in part a classic cycle in the making of modern art, reversing Marx’s “first time as tragedy, the second time as farce” dictum. What begins as a *jeu* becomes, under sufficiently imaginative scrutiny, the apparent means to more radical artistic advance. Just as the naïve Sunday paintings and hot-house landscapes of Henri Rousseau had, in the years before the First World War, provided models of gravely simplified form to the Cubists—especially potent because of their obviousness, the absence of theory that let your theory walk right in—so Calder’s little circus suggested a new world of absolute animation, and the creation of a mobile, energized abstract space. Ideas that were still uncomfortably vague in the Parisian mind—about the addition of movement to art—seemed present in the simple, childlike joke of the performance. This clearly delighted Calder, since it meant that he was being taken seriously; it was also the case that, like any American in Paris, he was being cast in the role of an inspired naïf. It was not the favorite role of any American, although Calder—who in some little part *was* an inspired naïf, a maker first and a thinker second—didn’t entirely mind playing it.

The real advance in his work, however, came through more intimate exposure to two artists: the great exiles Piet Mondrian, who was present at the gallery show that night, and Joan Miró. It was in Mondrian’s studio that Calder was first exposed to a credible utopianism—not of vague half-comic abstractions about the fourth dimension but of white light and primary colors. Mondrian’s abstraction, like Calder’s, drew from the artisanal practice of decorative arts. The furniture of Rietveld an-

ticipated the painting of Mondrian. The purity of Mondrian’s vision spoke to Calder all the more deeply for being so entirely rooted in things made, not things imagined.

From Miró he took more directly a visual vocabulary—the biomorphic streamlined forms, at once abstract and animal, that would be the basis of his art-making for the rest of his life. To be sure, that language of simplified form still instantly recognizable as life was part of the common currency of Surrealism. But Miró’s sense of mission (and, perhaps, his alignment both with Catalan folk art and with Spanish Republican virtue) lent his work an authority that gave permission for Calder to be himself. Influence among artists works in many ways, but usually the most potent is to provide not a series of patterns but a set of permissions—confidence that what one is already inclined to do is not trivial. Calder had been making abstract animals since he was a child; Miró showed him that abstract animals were sufficient for major art. (It’s curious that Calder never seems to have been much impressed with Constantin Brancusi’s work, though Brancusi’s streamlined seals were closer in their way to his own preoccupations than the works of any other artist.) Calder became, and remained for the rest of his life, one of a rare kind: the American

imaginatively located in Paris, seen as very French in New York, as very New York in France.

Many touching pages are devoted to Calder’s courtship of his wife, Louisa, whom he adored but—oddly, given her generally placid and “philosophical” (his word) temperament—nonetheless nicknamed Medusa, and not only because of the beautiful way her long hair curled into snakes when stirred by an ocean breeze. He was excited to cast her in a Greek mythological part, it seems, as a way of explaining to himself the intensity of his sexual infatuation with her. He once drew an uncharacteristically raw sketch of her as a serpent herself, wrapped around a tree limb, her hair alive with snakes, with a figure recognizably Calder fleeing from her. It’s half a joke, but only half. He never stopped calling her Medusa, and though it eventually became an accepted nickname (Calder’s father, a few years later, addressed a letter to “Dear Sand + Medusa”), it helps italicize the passion that fuelled their marriage, which lasted for forty-five years.

It was only on his return to America, in the mid-thirties, and in his work of the early forties that what one thinks of as Calder’s greatest contribution to the language of modern form emerges: the Calder mobiles. The Paris Calders of the



“Thanks for flagging, Karen.”



*"I can't help but feel disappointed."*

mid-thirties move but are still often motorized, and so were part of the machine aesthetic that carried with it both longing for an industrial world and bewilderment by it. "A romantic adulation of the machine" was how his friend the art historian J. J. Sweeney put it. Now, settling into his home and studio in Roxbury, Connecticut, where he would stay for decades, Calder began to make work at once delicate and robust, spheres and half-circles and fish shapes bound to the end of just-curved wire lines, which turned with wind and air and the motion of the earth. Perl is surely right to see in these a response to the American hills on which they were mounted: "The two great shapes, one red, one black, seem

positively hungering to catch the wind, so that they'll be spun around. . . . The gallery in Paris has been traded for a hill in Connecticut. Calder's forms have relinquished a certain self-consciousness." The mobiles "are waiting for a wind-storm, so that the shapes can careen."

But there was nothing simply nostalgic or pastoral about Calder's formal language, which remained inherently modern. Another émigré artist who became a close friend, Saul Steinberg, once said of Calder that he was "a particular American type: the dogged tinkerer. We saw in him the face of the man who is always working on a perpetual motion machine, which he then sends to the patent office." A marriage between the Wright broth-

ers and the wind, between the barn engineer's dream of a perpetual-motion machine and a rural weathervane come upon by accident—the two poles of industrial-age form and American pastoral feeling are what give his best work its tension and make its movement matter.

Perl does a good job telling this story. He's excellent running, so to speak, north-south. He can construct a handsome and uncluttered opening sentence—"In the dozen months after the Motomar left New York Harbor in March 1930, Calder became an abstract artist and a married man"—and he can offer a solid book-in-a-phrase sentence, too: "If Calder's first encounters with Miró, a year earlier, had suggested that an artist might delve into the world of the phantasmagorical and absurd to which the Surrealists had laid claim while remaining entirely himself, Mondrian showed Calder how a near total transformation of the nature of art could be mounted as a matter of personal expression, a sort of revolution of the self conducted within the self and for oneself."

Perl's lateral movement is less impressive. When he steps out of narrative to place Calder's work in a broader context—beyond the immediate art-historical circles, which he knows well—he often makes puzzling connections. Talking about Calder's role as an American in Paris, he goes on at length about Henry James, though James's kind of transplantation—fixed, and longing for the ancient and implanted *permanence* of Europe—couldn't have been more unlike that of the Calder generation, who saw in Paris ferment and fizz. (Matthew Josephson's "Life Among the Surrealists" is the indispensable text on this moment in Paris, with American empiricism confronting French systematization.) When he wants to praise Calder's high moment in the early forties, when the mobiles matured as works of complete authority, he praises it as a "classical moment," and cites Charles Rosen on the Classical style—but Rosen is writing about how a collective style is made and shared, as with the German composers of the mid-eighteenth century, or the Italian artists of the cinquecento. What Calder achieved was a high moment within the arc of an individual life, quite a different thing, and "classical" only in a very woolly sense.

Out of a commendable distaste for

the opacities of artspeak, Perl insists on a simplicity of language that can sometimes spill over into the fatuous. So, deciding at the end, persuasively, that Calder's art is rooted in play, he says, "Calder's classicism grew out of his most basic feelings as a person who both early and late, as a child and as a man, knew how to play." True enough; we all agree that Calder is playful, and that one element in his work is its vindication of childhood. But there are as many ways of imagining play in modern thought as there are of imagining Eros. The special qualities of playfulness in Calder—his love of soft water and small wind, of the safe outdoors, of imaginary animals easily tamed—belong to a distinctive thread of modern art, the kind that William Empson, in his great discussion of childhood and play in the "Alice" books, called "the child as swain," reanimating nature with unconscious poetic wisdom more than with innocence. That's the way Calder plays. This vein puts Calder at one with the Prokofiev of "Peter and the Wolf" or the tongue-in-cheek tales and drawings of Maurice Sendak. Indeed, "Where the Wild Things Are" isn't a bad composite title for all of Calder's work, with the understanding, shared by both the illustrator and the sculptor, that the wild things are not that wild when stylized and shaped in your own distinctive hand. Art—it is the most natural metaphor of the circus lover—is the confident child's way of taming the elements, and making them behave.

The larger argument, on which the book is admirably staked, is that Calder is a major artist, kept from center stage by an art history unduly concerned with "advances" and inventions and directions. Yet Calder's art, magical as it is, is hard to make major in the only respect that matters, as supplying the renewed sense of possibility, of something as yet unseen, that some artists perpetually provide when we return to them. An artist like Florine Stettheimer, so beautifully revived recently at the Jewish Museum, is minor in the same way that Cole Porter is: they are artists who play contentedly with their own rules, without worrying too much about whether or not this is really the major league. Calder, at least after the first blossoming of the circus, is, by choice, so enfolded within the larger story of modernist art that we can't

help judging him as a character within its drama. Largeness of ambition and restlessness in pursuit of novelty seem, however enforced, essential to our idea of that kind of artistic majority.

No artist's career illustrates the traps of modern fame for an artist more clearly, or the risk of having a style become a brand; stretches of the second volume, obliged to take account of the immobile mobiles and stasis-filled stabiles that Calder churned out in later life, are likely to make dispiriting reading. The invention and imagination of the thirties slowed to a set of stereotyped, blandly biomorphic solutions. The early sense of play gave way to dulled-down, chunk-of-metal-in-a-plaza heaviness. (As Geoffrey T. Hellman wrote in these pages, in 1960, Calder's "works were now dangling importantly from the ceilings of banks and air terminals, as well as from the necks and earlobes of ladies in France and Connecticut.") There is no late period in Calder; just a last period, which, as most often happens, recapitulates the high period more sluggishly, in his case literally: motors had to be attached to some of the mobiles to get them moving, and the ones that did move are enwrapped by protective guards and curators and conservators who discourage them from being set in motion at all. (It might be better for the artist's legacy to let them have more wear and tear, live a few years less and spin a few feet more.) Calder, a hard-drinking man in a hard-drinking generation, must have had his own demons. In that video of the circus at work, charming as it is, Mrs. Calder has a very fixed and one-sided smile as she watches him.

Of course, part of the comedy of art is that critics who have been saying the same thing for twenty years demand that artists find something new to offer every time an exhibition opens. Or perhaps it's merely that unself-consciousness and self-satisfaction are developmental stages in some artists' lives: the enviable concentration of someone who works only for his own pleasure becomes the annoying complacency of someone who thinks that the same solution will always please. Major or minor, or somewhere between, Calder's American readiness—that perpetual-motion-machine man's confidence in his own invention—is comforting, cheering, even in its repetitions. Major or minor, it moves. ♦

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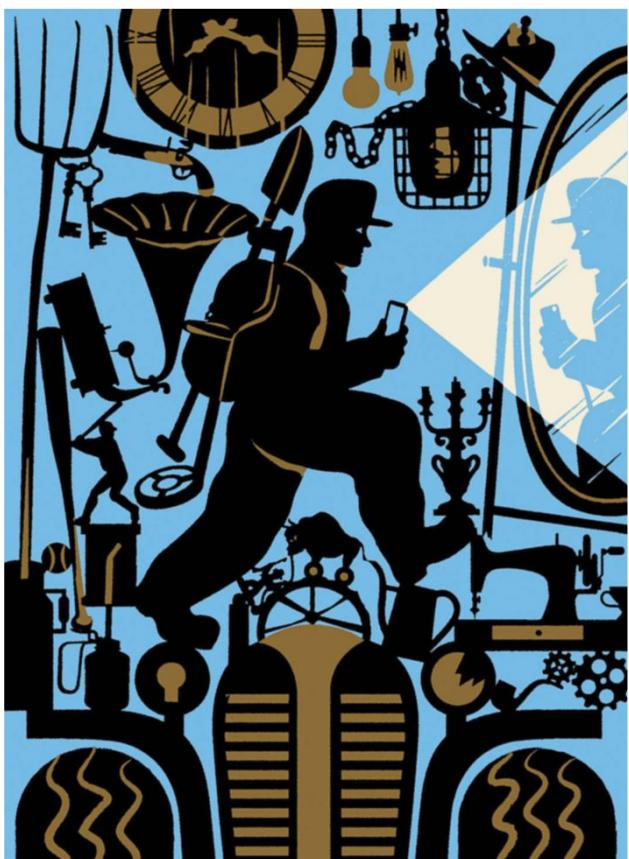
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# MINING GOLD

*How shows about our hidden heirlooms tell us our worth.*

BY AMANDA PETRUSICH



“Antiques Roadshow” premiered, on public television, in 1997. The premise of the program is terrifically simple. Regular folks present a relic—usually excavated from some unswept corner of the home—to a specialist, who then delivers a swift and unsentimental appraisal. By the start of its second season, “Antiques Roadshow” was the most watched prime-time series on PBS. The show has lasted for more than two decades in part because it perpetuates a seductive mythology—that we’re all sitting on gold mines and we simply don’t know it. It also affirms a very American belief in the enduring value of stuff. In the course of a three- or four-minute segment, a benign heirloom is imbued with vast historical and financial worth,

and an ordinary person becomes the keeper of an extraordinary artifact.

Earlier this fall, PBS aired a two-part special episode of “Antiques Roadshow” titled “Our 50 States,” in which it recapped notable discoveries from across the nation. In Alabama, a granddaughter of Tay Hohoff, the editor of Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird,” excitedly presented a signed first edition of the book. Ken Gloss, of the Brattle Book Shop, in Boston, valued it at twelve to fifteen thousand dollars. “Be still, my heart!” its owner proclaimed. In California, a woman brought in two carved artifacts—a ladle and a grease bowl, both fashioned from the boiled horn of a mountain sheep—that she had inherited from her great-great-grandfather, a

*Many programs take as inspiration “Antiques Roadshow,” now two decades old.*

colonel who had spent time near Sitka, Alaska, in the spring of 1877, and had received them from the native Tlingit.

“These are clan figures,” Ted Trotta, a tribal-art specialist, explained. “They are empowered. They’re spiritual. It’s an animistic religion that the native peoples practice—everything has a spirit.” Everything also has a price: Trotta estimated the value of the bowl alone at up to two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars.

“Antiques Roadshow” eventually inspired an avalanche of similar programs, and its influence seems to have reached a kind of apex recently, with series such as “Market Warriors,” “Oddities,” “Storage Wars,” “America’s Lost Treasures,” and “Picker Sisters”—there are more and more each year—in which curios and keepsakes are assessed.

These programs persist—and often succeed—despite mounting evidence that younger people are uninterested in amassing domestic effects. For many millennials, products are considered inferior to services. This makes sense, given the sorts of objects that now animate and enable contemporary life. Who could ever cherish a smartphone, knowing that its obsolescence is part of its marketing plan? Why assemble a library when you can simply download a book onto your tablet?

Yet there is a mortality-defying pleasure in watching material objects survive. “Pawn Stars,” on the History Channel, documents the World Famous Gold & Silver Pawn Shop, a family-run, twenty-four-hour pawnshop in Las Vegas; the show’s fourteenth season aired earlier this year. At the start of each episode, a customer expectantly deposits an item on the store’s glass countertop. One of the owners, Rick Harrison, typically receives it with narrowed eyes and a dubious “O.K.?”

Some sellers are handily dismissed, though others turn out to be bearing remarkable cargo. In one episode, a man wanders in with a 1961 Gibson SG Les Paul custom guitar, formerly owned and played by Paul’s wife, the singer and guitarist Mary Ford. “This is history, dude,” Jesse Amoroso, the owner of Cowtown Guitars, tells Harrison, after completing his appraisal. The drama of “Pawn Stars” is in the subsequent negotiation. The seller of the Gibson asks Harrison for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars;

Harrison counters with seventy-five thousand. (In the end, the guitar changes hands for ninety thousand dollars.)

It is nearly impossible for a viewer not to immediately begin fantasizing about the recesses of her own closet: What have I got, and what is it worth? Many of the pieces featured on the show were passed down to their owners by relatives; "Pawn Stars" inadvertently endorses the idea that tremendous wealth is, in fact, everyone's birthright.

**O**n "American Pickers," also on the History Channel, Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz, two antique buyers from eastern Iowa, zoom around the country in a white van, knocking on doors and amiably persuading whoever answers to let them scour their property for noteworthy items. Wolfe and Fritz are hunting for what they refer to as "rusty gold"—discarded or overlooked thingamajigs that they can sell to collectors. They clamber over shifting heaps of junk, flashlights held in their teeth. Their mission recalls the plot of "Parson's Pleasure," a short story by Roald Dahl, published in *Esquire* in 1958. Its protagonist, Cyril Boggis, roams the English countryside, looking for antiques to resell for two or three times what he pays. His ambitions are ultimately his undoing—unscrupulous profiteering, the story suggests, is a punishable sin.

Yet profit is not the only goal of "American Pickers." The antiques market is famously volatile—unlike, say, a bar of gold or a pickup truck, items with no set market value or practical utility aren't always easy to offload. (It takes a particular kind of person to invest in a tattered sideshow banner featuring a monkey wrestling an anaconda—which Wolfe and Fritz once disinterred from an abandoned amusement park in Forks Township, Pennsylvania, and later sold.) The pickers have loftier ambitions. "We make a living telling the history of America, one piece at a time," Wolfe says over the opening credits. The implication is that this history is somehow endangered—that we are losing touch with non-virtual objects, and, by extension, with an older, more tactile way of doing things.

It's fascinating to catalogue the pieces that outlive their immediate usefulness: vintage Levi's jeans; industrial light fixtures; old bicycles; Airstream trailers; flat-

billed wool baseball caps; oilcans; porcelain advertising signs. Though the pickers often sell their finds to interior designers (who might install a trio of artfully corroded pitchforks on the wall of a farm-to-table restaurant), much of what they uncover in barns and outbuildings was once utilitarian. When these pieces are repurposed as decorative, the hope is that they might still broadcast something about their new owner's authenticity—about the value they place (or wish to place) on simplicity and hard work.

Wolfe and Fritz, like the cast of "Pawn Stars" and the appraisers of "Antiques Roadshow," coax personal stories out of the people they're buying from. Doing so allows them to draft a parallel history: there's the tale of the thing, and then the tale of how the thing ended up in an outhouse in Kansas. Wolfe, especially, understands that meaningful narrative is its own kind of gold, and he emphasizes the autobiographical significance of each item he purchases. He is always sympathetic to sentimental value—what these pieces evoke, and what they mean to their owners.

Sometimes he and Fritz seem more like amateur ethnographers than like businessmen. On a recent episode, Wolfe bought a fixed-gear tandem bicycle from a man in Takoma Park, Maryland, whose mom used to ride it. (Wolfe paid three hundred and seventy-five dollars for it.) Wolfe expressed satisfaction with the price (he thought he could resell it for a small profit), but also with having resurrected an object that had meaning—a lineage that could now be extended. "There's a little bit of room on the back end, but what I want to do is push that story forward," he said to the camera. "This is from a family."

Mostly, these shows capitalize on nostalgia, and the heady desire to exist in any moment that is not ours. "Every passion borders on chaos, that of the collector on the chaos of memory," the philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin wrote, in 1931. Collecting and ordering becomes a sense-making process—a way of understanding and decoding the passage of time, or, perhaps, even reversing it for a moment, protecting the self against encroaching modernity. When an object is taken out of the garage and given a new life, it allows us to believe in the eternal worth of everything. ♦



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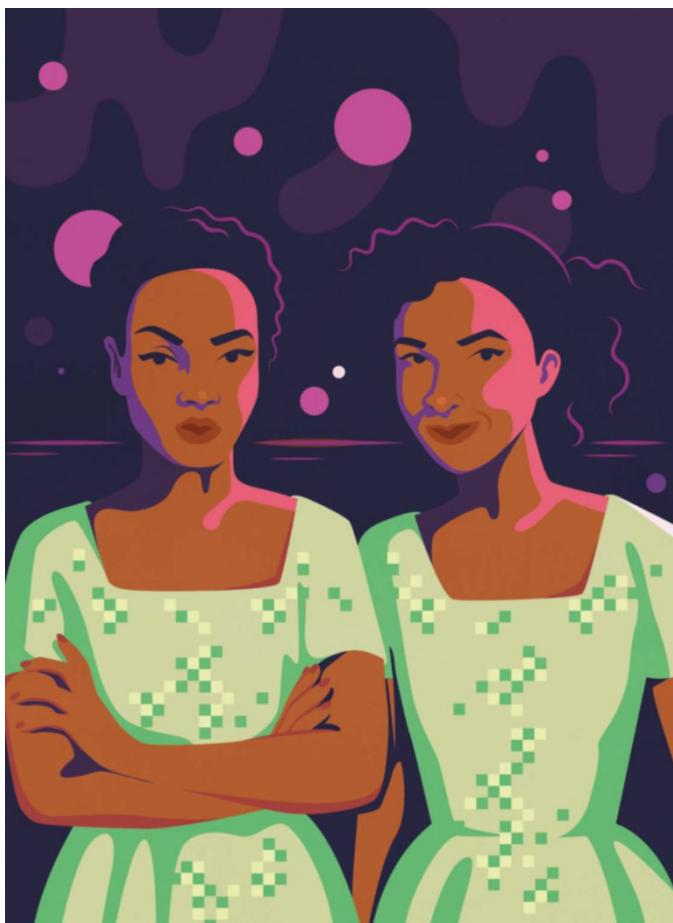
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THE THEATRE

## CAGED

Jocelyn Bioh's take on race and female rivalry in Ghana.

BY HILTON ALS



Jocelyn Bioh's "School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play" (an MCC Theatre production, at the Lucille Lortel) has so many fabulous moments drawn from cruelty and vengeance that attempting to separate the humor from the emotional barbarism would be like trying to peel a kernel of corn: you could do it, but it would take too long, and to what purpose? One of Bioh's aims is to examine how brutishness and the distancing effect of satire can frame comedy in general and, more specifically, her subject: the complicated interactions of teen-age girls. Bioh is less solemn about this than Lillian Hellman was when she wrote about a schoolgirl and betrayal, in "The

Children's Hour," in 1934, and she's less cool than Muriel Spark was when she looked in on those mischievous students in her 1961 novel, "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie." Instead, the thirty-four-year-old playwright, who also has a substantial career as an actress—she has performed in works by Suzan-Lori Parks, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and Simon Stephens—is a latter-day Restoration comedian, who never shies away from her characters' terrible thoughts. Her schoolgirls belch their manipulations onto the stage like a kind of noxious gas, as they primp before the mirror of their own, sometimes literally disfiguring, vanity. And, like Restoration comedy, which

*MaameYaa Boafo and Nabiyah Be, as schoolgirl enemies in a color-struck society.*

took over the English stage once the Puritan regime's ban on theatre ended, "School Girls" comments on the times—in this case, on our fascinating era, in which so much debate centers on the body, especially the female body.

Bioh's script opens with a jab about a girl's weight. We are in the dining hall of the exclusive Aburi Girls Senior High School, in the Aburi Mountains, in southeastern Ghana. (Bioh's parents are Ghanaian, and her mother attended the school.) The year: 1986. Imagine the days and the nights in that place—hot and dry, then cool and dry. It's breakfast time now, and five girls are in the hall, all wearing their school uniforms, green-and-white-checked frocks. Although Paulina (the very powerful MaameYaa Boafo) is petite, she is the dominant figure here, and the first words out of her mouth are mocking ones, directed at a heavier girl, Nana (Abena Mensah-Bonsu, terrific in the role), whom Paulina castigates for her eating habits. Nana can't seem to get enough of something—food, love—but what right does Paulina have to put her down for her needs? Paulina has enormous needs, too, though she's proud of the discipline with which she represses them; when the girls around her can't do the same, it turns her stomach, and turns her against them. What must it be like to be Paulina, with her constant irritation and discontent—signs of a profound insecurity that she can barely keep in check?

But, although Nana regards her enemy with bitterness and resentment, she also looks at her with something like envy: why can't she be as thin and self-possessed as Paulina? None of the girls can see through the masks they're learning to wear in order to be not what they want to be but, rather, what the world wants them to be. Nana's body makes her a target, and her weight is also the weight of her anger. Her classmates go along with Paulina's taunts and invective, but when Paulina leaves the room to get an apple—an apple a day doesn't keep her away—they apologize to Nana for having chosen power over loyalty.

Part of what fills Paulina up, at least temporarily, the way porridge fills Nana, is the attention of an audience. She demands that the other girls bear witness to her self-mythologizing and her foul pretensions, one of which is her claim to

knowledge of all things cool and American, including "Calvin Klean" clothing and White Castle. Paulina has a boyfriend named Kofi; he plays soccer and is very busy, which was why he didn't show up at the past two school dances. Even so—if he exists at all—he will come around for sure once Paulina is selected by a recruiter to compete in the Miss Ghana contest. Paulina's participation in the contest is, in her mind, a given, not an aspiration; she considers it her birthright. She rules her school, so why not her nation?

**B**ut then a new girl, Ericka (Nabiyah Be), arrives on the scene and drills a hole through Paulina's self-satisfaction. Ericka, who is lighter-skinned, with long, curly hair, is a transfer student from Ohio, whose father owns a large and prosperous cocoa factory near the campus. Because of a series of complicated family dealings, Ericka is back in the fatherland, and, as a "real" American, she has had access to all that Paulina pretends to know about—including the fact that White Castle is not a castle where food is served and that Calvin Klean is actually Calvin Klein. Using the flash of one culture to diminish another is not Ericka's goal, but Paulina is gunning for her, and, since this is a social war, the generals must have allies. The scene in which Nana and the other girls shift their allegiance to Ericka is one of many that Rebecca Taichman, the director of this eighty-minute intermissionless play, treats with interest and clarity: the style is naked, open, and honest, in a universe where the players are anything but.

Even the beauty-pageant recruiter, Eloise (the wonderful Zainab Jah), and the school's headmistress, Francis (the solid Myra Lucretia Taylor)—once students at the school themselves—are unable to relinquish their roles. Taking out a handkerchief and dusting off a cafeteria bench, the svelte Eloise, a former Miss Ghana, remarks on Headmistress Francis's thickness. She makes the insult sound like something the headmistress should be grateful for, or at least not complain about—a helpful criticism wrapped in practical advice.

Almost at once, Eloise takes Ericka under her wing. Paulina, in a last-bid effort to compete in the pageant, applies so much bleaching cream to her face that her skin starts to bleed: she's a martyr to

a look she can't achieve, a look derived from European standards of beauty that have infiltrated African culture. By choosing Ericka over Paulina for the competition, Eloise says something profound about black female society: the beauty it has matters less than the illusion of whiteness it hopes to achieve. White men are not even on the periphery of Bioh's world, but their centuries-old ideas of what gives a woman value as currency remain intact in the play, which explores an idea that Toni Morrison expressed in "The Bluest Eye": how someone else's thoughts about what you are, or should be, can drive you to acts of madness. Ultimately, Ericka and Paulina are trapped by the same system, one that deems Ericka, with her lighter skin, more desirable. Paulina's tragedy is that she wants to belong to the very society that says she's not good enough, while Ericka, who is also the victim of a number of forces she cannot name, including a father who ignored her, enters the Miss Ghana contest as a way of being seen and loved.

Bioh's story is a universal one, for sure, but it is first and foremost a story that belongs to Africa, to the Africa that young artists like Bioh and the Zimbabwean Danai Gurira are bringing to the stage in new and exciting ways. While Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and others have given us novels and plays about modern-day life on the "other continent," theirs are narrated from a male perspective. Bioh and Gurira belong to a new generation—interested in the old ways, but not so respectful of the patriarchy, a system that persists in marginalizing women until they turn against one another, and for what? What's the prize?

"School Girls" also pays homage, in a way, to those thrilling old "women's pictures," from "Caged" (1950) to "The Group" (1966)—stories about women living within and outside the male gaze. Bioh makes the psychic realities of life in a color-struck society integral to the story—even as they destroy it. After Paulina is ousted for her misrepresentations, the play has nowhere really to go, and neither do our questions: Should we regard Paulina's downfall as a tragedy or as a cautionary tale about being a person of color, even in a colored society? Why does color still define class and control our view of what is good or bad, beautiful or not beautiful, true or false? ♦

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## INTERTWINED

*"Call Me by Your Name."*

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new film by Luca Guadagnino, "Call Me by Your Name," begins in the summer of 1983, in a place so enchanted, with its bright green gardens, that it belongs in a fairy tale. The location, the opening credits tell us, is "Somewhere in Northern Italy." Such vagueness is deliberate: the point of a paradise is that it *could* exist anywhere

can pack a whole lifetime into six weeks.

The first words of the film are "The usurper." They are uttered by the Perlmans' only child—their son, Elio (Timothée Chalamet), who is seventeen. He stands at an upstairs window with his friend Marzia (Esther Garrel) and watches Oliver below, fearful that the American may break the reigning peace.



*Luca Guadagnino's sensuous film evokes the transformations of young love.*

but that, once you reach the place, it brims with details so precise in their intensity that you never forget them. Thus it is that a young American named Oliver (Armie Hammer) arrives, dopey with jet lag, at the house of Professor Perlman (Michael Stuhlbarg) and his Italian wife, Annella (Amira Casar), whose custom is to spend their summers there and also to return for Hanukkah. (Like them, Oliver is Jewish; a closeup shows a Star of David hanging from a chain around his neck.) The Professor, an American expert in classical archeology, requires an annual assistant, and Oliver is this year's choice. "We'll have to put up with him for six long weeks," Annella says, with a sigh. Not long enough, as it turns out. You

The Professor is more welcoming, and he proposes a kind of free trade, both spatial and emotional, that will resound throughout. "Our home is your home," he says to Oliver. "My room is your room," Elio adds, a few seconds later, like an echo. He has moved into the adjoining room for the duration of Oliver's stay, and they must share a bathroom. The sharing will deepen, from handshakes to confidences, and from cigarettes to kisses and other mouthly charms, concluding in the most profound exchange of all, whispered from a few inches' distance and proclaimed in the title of the movie.

"Call Me by Your Name" is, among other things, an exercise in polyglottery, and Elio chats to his parents and

friends in an easy blend of English, French, and Italian, sometimes sliding between tongues in the course of a single conversation. (Who would guess that a household, no less than a city, can be a melting pot?) His father and Oliver enjoy a clash of wits about the twisted root of the word "apricot," tracing it through Arabic, Latin, and Greek, and mentioning that one branch leads to the word "precocious"—a nod to Elio, who listens to them with half a smile. He is a prodigy, voraciously bookish, who plays Bach al fresco on the guitar and then inside on the piano, in the manner of Liszt and of Busoni, with Oliver standing in the background, contrapposto, with the elegant tilt of a statue, drinking in the sound and the skill. "Is there anything you *don't* know?" he asks, after Elio has told him about an obscure, bloody battle of the First World War.

Prodigies can be a pain, onscreen and off, and Elio—fevered with boyish uncertainties and thrills, though no longer a boy, and already rich in adult accomplishments, yet barely a man—should be an impossible role. Somehow, as if by magic, Chalamet makes it work, and you can't imagine how the film could breathe without him. His expression is sharp and inquisitive, but cream-pale and woundable, too, and saved from solemnity by the grace of good humor; when Oliver says that he has to take care of some business, Elio retorts by impersonating him to his face. Chalamet is quite something, but Hammer is a match for him, as he needs to be, if the characters' passions are to be believed. Elio is taken aback, at the start, by Oliver's swagger—the hesitant youth, steeped in Europe, confronted with can-do American chops. Hammer doesn't strut, but his every action, be it dismounting a bicycle, draining a glass of juice (apricot, of course), slinging a backpack over his shoulder, rolling sideways into a pool, or demolishing a boiled egg at breakfast until it's a welter of spilled yolk suggests a person almost aggressively at home in his own body, and thus in the larger world. Hence the abrupt note that he sends to Elio: "Grow up. See you at midnight."

You could, I suppose, regard Oliver as the incarnation of soft power. Cer-

tainly, his handsomeness is so extreme that the camera tends to be angled up at him, as if at one of the ancient bronze deities over which the Professor enthuses. When Oliver wades in a cold stream one glorious day, you stare at him and think, My God, he is a god. And yet, as he and Elio lounge on sun-warmed grass, it's Oliver who seems unmanned, and it's Elio who lays a purposeful hand directly on Oliver's crotch. Now one, now the other appears the more carnally confident of the two. They take awhile to find parity and poise, but, once they do, they are inextricable, rendered equal by ardor; the first shot of them, at dawn, after they sleep together, is of limbs so entangled that we can't tell whose are whose. As for their parting, it is wordless. They look at one another and just nod, as if to say, Yes, that was right. That was how it is meant to be.

The screenplay of "Call Me by Your Name," adapted from André Aciman's novel of the same title, is by James Ivory. He has done a remarkable job, paring away pasts and futures, and leaving us with an overwhelming surge of *now*. On the page, events are recounted, in the first person, by an older Elio, gazing backward, but Chalamet's Elio lacks the gift of hindsight. In any case, why is it a gift? Who wouldn't prefer to be in the thick of love? The book is a mature and thoughtful vintage; in the film, we're still picking the grapes.

It's tempting to speculate how Ivory, who, as the director of "A Room with a View" (1985) and of "Maurice" (1987), showed his mastery of Italian settings and of same-sex romance, might have

fared at the helm of the new film. The rhythm, I suspect, would have been more languorous, as if the weather had seeped into people's lazy bones, whereas Guadagnino, an instinctive modernist, is more incisive. He and his longtime editor, Walter Fasano, keep cutting short the transports of delight; the lovers pedal away from us, on bikes, to the lovely strains of Ravel's "Mother Goose Suite," only for the scene to hit the brakes. "Call Me by Your Name" is suffused with heat, and piled high with fine food, but it isn't a *nice* movie; you see it not to unwind but to be wound up—to be unrelaxed by the force with which rapture strikes. There is even a gratifying cameo by a peach, which proves useful in an erotic emergency, and merits an Academy Award for Best Supporting Fruit.

The film's release could not be more propitious. So assailed are we by reports of harmful pleasures, and of the coercive male will being imposed through lust, that it comes as a relief to be reminded, in such style, of consensual joy. "I don't want either of us to pay for this," Oliver says. By falling for each other, he and Elio tumble not into error, still less into sin, but into a sort of delirious concord, which may explain why Elio's parents, far from disapproving, bestow their tacit blessing on the pact. More unusual still is that the movie steers away from the politics of sexuality. Elio makes love to Marzia, on a dusty mattress, in a loft like an old dovecote, only hours before he meets with Oliver at midnight, but you don't think, Oh, Elio's having straight sex, followed by gay sex, and therefore we must rank him as bi-curious.

Rather, you are curious about *him* and his paramours as individuals—these particular bodies, with these hungry souls, at these ravenous moments in their lives. Desire is passed around the movie like a dish, and the characters are invited to help themselves, each to his or her own taste. Maybe a true love story (and when did you last see one of those?) has no time for types.

Not that anything endures. Late in the film, the Professor sits with his son on a couch, smokes, and talks of what has occurred. We expect condescension, instead of which we hear a confession. "I envy you," he tells Elio, adding, "We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty." He once came near, he admits, to having what Elio and Oliver had, but something stood in the way, and he advises his child to seize the day, including the pain that the day brings, while he is still young: "Before you know it, your heart is worn out." Much of this long speech is taken from Aciman's novel, but Stuhlbarg delivers it beautifully, with great humility, tapping his cigarette. After which, it seems only natural that so rich a movie should close with somebody weeping, beside a winter fire. The shot lasts for minutes, as did the final shot of Michael Haneke's "Hidden" (2005), but Haneke wanted to stoke our paranoia and our dread, while Guadagnino wants us to reflect, at our leisure, on love: on what a feast it can be, on how it turns with the seasons, and on why it ends in tears. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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VOLUME XCIII, NO. 39, December 4, 2017. THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: February 13 & 20, June 5 & 12, July 10 & 17, August 7 & 14, and December 18 & 25) by Condé Nast, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: Condé Nast, 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007. Elizabeth Hughes, chief business officer; Risa Aronson, vice-president, revenue; James Guilfoyle, executive director of finance and business operations; Fabio Bertoni, general counsel. Condé Nast: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman emeritus; Robert A. Sauerberg, Jr., president & chief executive officer; David E. Geithner, chief financial officer; James M. Norton, chief business officer, president of revenue. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. 123242885-RT0001.

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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 Drew Dernavich, must be received by Sunday, December 3rd. The finalists in the November 20th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 18th & 25th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



"

"

### THE FINALISTS



*"She left a note. No, I haven't read it yet."*  
Bob Surrette, Dennis Port, Mass.

*"I'd like to start receiving my bill online."*  
Chuck Loncon, Savannah, Ga.

*"What really hurts is that you couldn't tell me to my face."*  
Jeffrey Hutchins, Black Mountain, N.C.

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"I can give you the tools, but you have  
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Sudarshan S. Chawathe, Trenton, Maine

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