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THE NEW YORKER

MAY 22, 2017

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Everything in the magazine, and more.



PODCAST

Evan Osnos analyzes how Trump's firing of James Comey, the F.B.I. director, will damage his Presidency.



VIDEO

A profile of a student who attends an underground university for undocumented immigrants.

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THE MAIL

YOU'RE FIRED!

Evan Osnos, in his article on the ways that Donald Trump could be removed from office, focusses on options outlined in the Constitution ("Endgames," May 8th). But the example of Spiro Agnew, the Vice-President under Nixon, who was removed from office in 1973, suggests another possible approach. Agnew's fall was not directly connected with the Watergate scandal but, rather, was connected with allegations of corruption during his term as governor of Maryland. Charged with that crime, he resigned the Vice-Presidency as part of a plea deal. If Trump turns out to have gained the Presidency, in part, by coöperating with Russian efforts to smear Hillary Clinton, that not only might open him up to further investigation in Congress, as Osnos suggests, but could also end in plea deals that take Trump, and perhaps even Mike Pence, off the stage without actual impeachment or invocations of the Twenty-fifth Amendment.

*Michael H. Goldhaber
Berkeley, Calif.*

The possibility that Trump could be forced out of office isn't titillating—it's terrifying. The Presidency is not a beauty pageant, where the vacated position goes to the first runner-up, nor is it a congressional seat subject to a special election. The Presidential line of succession is prescribed by the Constitution, and, if you think saying "President Trump" is scary, try saying "President Pence." The Vice-President is a deeply religious, far-right ultra-conservative, whose presence on the national stage owes primarily to his anti-L.G.B.T. and anti-choice legislation in Indiana. And there is no reason to think that he will be any less fanatical if he assumes the Presidency. It looks to me as though the efforts to position Pence as a replacement for Trump began early on, by insulating him from the events surrounding the firing of the national-security adviser

Michael Flynn. Pence is presenting himself as a moderate, thoughtful figure, at home in the halls of Congress and on the international stage. He already looks and acts "Presidential," and there is a very real possibility that he could win in 2020. The only way to block Trump's destructive juggernaut is for Democrats to win control of either or both houses of Congress.

*Paul Scoles
New York City*

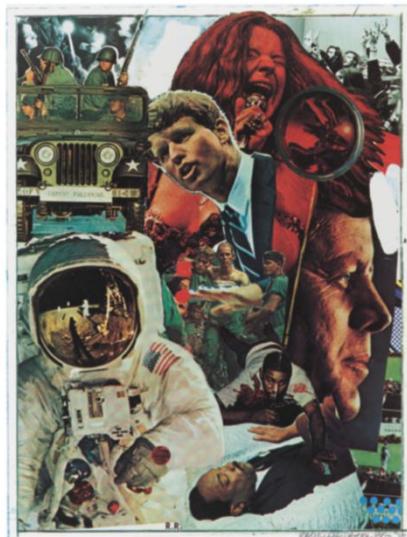
CHEAP EATS

I was glad to see Michael Grabell's article on Case Farms and its exploitation of undocumented immigrants in slaughterhouses, but it's not news that slaughterhouses and construction companies mistreat their workers ("Cut to the Bone," May 8th). In the mid-seventies, I was a migrant worker in the Pacific Northwest and in California, and we knew that the real problem was greedy farmers. We also knew that the laws meant to restrict those farmers' malfeasance had many loopholes. Grabell should place greater emphasis on the responsibility that the modern American consumer bears for keeping hellholes like Case Farms in operation. Right now, the average American spends about five per cent of her or his wages at the supermarket. In 1950, when I was born, it was seventeen per cent. The corporate control of agriculture depresses the price of food and the wages that farmers and farmworkers receive. If the middle-class consumer were willing to pay more for quality, those of us who are sustainable farmers would be able to make a living.

*Walter Haugen
Ferndale, Wash.*

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MAY 17 – 23, 2017

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Alexei Ratmansky's new ballet for **American Ballet Theatre**, "Whipped Cream" (premiering on May 22, at the Metropolitan Opera House), is an extravaganza for the eyes and ears. Dancers dressed as candies, pralines, and liqueur bottles move to Richard Strauss's decadent, swooping melodies from 1924. Their surreal world, conjured by the artist Mark Ryden, is a blend of kitsch and Old Masterly detail. The story is slight, but, then, isn't that true of many of the old ballets? Most of it occurs in a dream. "It's a ballet *féerie*," Ratmansky says. "Ballet in its purest form."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCELO GOMES

DANCE



The Trisha Brown Dance Company performs the late choreographer's iconic "Opal Loop," at Jacob's Pillow.

Summer Preview

What can explain the enduring fascination of George Balanchine's "**Jewels**"? The ballet, which turns fifty this year, doesn't have a plot; some would argue that it's not even top-shelf Balanchine. Yet it has undeniable glamour. And perhaps no other ballet so fully encapsulates three such distinct worlds: the aqueous mystery of Gabriel Faure's music, in "*Emeralds*"; the glinting, and very American, jazziness of Stravinsky, in "*Rubies*"; and the grandeur and melancholy of Tchaikovsky, in "*Diamonds*." This summer, at the Lincoln Center Festival, three equally distinctive companies—New York City Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, and the Bolshoi Ballet—will perform it at the David H. Koch Theatre (July 20–23). The French dancers will take on "*Emeralds*"—always the most elusive of the three—and the Americans and Russians will take turns in the other two.

The **Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival**, in the Berkshires, turns eighty-five this year. One event worth the trip is "**Tireless: A Tap Dance Experience**," a show put together by Michelle Dorrance, whose tap chops are matched by her enthusiasm for the form. She invites soloists and ensembles from across the country—and one duo from Tokyo—to show their stuff, June 28–July 2. On Aug. 16–19, the **Trisha Brown Dance Company** pays a visit; since Brown's death, in March, such appear-

ances feel increasingly essential. Who knows how long it will be possible to experience the laid-back elegance of works like "*Opal Loop*," in which dancers follow enigmatic pathways like loose-limbed visitors from another world, or "*Groove and Countermove*," a more explosive work, last seen a decade ago? On Aug. 13, the company will appear on the grounds of the Clark Art Institute, in Williamsburg, Mass., with a compendium of shorter Trisha Brown works, called "**In Plain Site**." It will be performed outdoors, Brown's natural element.

In 2007, the photographer **David Michalek** had a curious idea: What would dancing look like if it were slowed down to less than a hundredth of its normal speed? For the film "*Slow Dancing*," using specialized cameras designed for analyzing car crashes, he captured forty-three dancers in styles ranging from butoh to ballet, to mesmerizing effect. Now he is focussing on Yvonne Rainer's 1966 work "*Trio A*." The original five-minute piece consists of everyday movements like tilting, bending, and sitting. In collaboration with Rainer, Michalek filmed several dozen dancers—including his wife, the ex-ballerina Wendy Whelan, and Rainer, now eighty-two—each executing a seven-second segment of the work. At Danspace (June 23–July 1), the results, entitled "*Slow Dancing/Trio A*," will be projected at a speed so reduced that movement is barely perceptible.

—Marina Harss

American Ballet Theatre

The season opens with a bit of skirt-swishing fun: the Spanish-themed "*Don Quixote*." The production, full of colorful crowd scenes, offers ample opportunities for showing off with fans, capes, guitars, and whatever else falls to hand. If it's fireworks you're after, see Isabella Boylston and Daniil Simkin (May 17 evening, May 20 matinée), but this is also a good opportunity to catch débuts, including Misty Copeland in the role of the passionate Kitri, on May 16 and the evening of May 20. Christine Shevchenko, an exciting soloist, gets her first stab at a leading role in the May 17 matinée. The New York première of Alexei Ratmansky's new fantasy ballet, "*Whipped Cream*," takes place on the following Monday. • May 17 at 2 and 7:30, May 18–19 at 7:30, and May 20 at 2 and 8: "*Don Quixote*." • May 22 at 6:30 and May 23 at 7:30: "*Whipped Cream*." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-477-3030. Through July 8.)

New York City Ballet

There are three programs to choose from in the final week of the "*Here/Now*" festival. On Program 8, the highlight is Justin Peck's new ballet, "*The Decalogue*," set to a piano score by Sufjan Stevens (their third collaboration). However, that mixed bill requires sitting through Jorma Elo's hard-driving, twitchy "*Slice to Sharp*," a throwback to a time, not so long ago, when the Finnish choreographer's ballets were ubiquitous. Program 9 offers a chance to revisit Alexei Ratmansky's "*Concerto DSCH*," from 2008, a sporty romp set to Shostakovich, one of the most popular works of the past decade. (That program also includes Christopher Wheeldon's "*After the Rain Pas de Deux*.") • May 17 at 7:30 and May 19 at 8: "*Jeux*," "*The Shimmering Asphalt*," "*Unframed*," and "*Fearful Symmetries*." • May 18 at 7:30 and May 20 at 8: "*Chiaroscuro*," "*Slice to Sharp*," "*Stabat Mater*," and "*The Decalogue*." • May 20 at 2 and May 21 at 3: "*Red Angels*," "*Varied Trio (in four)*," "*Barber Violin Concerto*," "*Polaris*," "*After the Rain Pas de Deux*," and "*Concerto DSCH*." • May 23: "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through May 28.)

Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana

The company, a solid presence on the American flamenco scene for more than thirty years, will offer three new ensemble works by contemporary flamenco choreographers, plus various solos, at BAM's intimate Fisher theatre. Keep an eye out for Ángel Muñoz, a performer of enormous spontaneity and verve, who will be dancing a solo and also presenting a new work, "*Caminos*," for three men. (321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. May 16–21.)

Parsons Dance

David Parsons is best known for an effective gimmick: the strobe-lighted, gravity-flouting illusions of his 1982 solo "*Caught*." That signature piece is on both programs again this season, joined by a more up-to-date device: small drones that buzz around the dancers in "*Hello World*," a première that grapples with human and technological evolution. There's also "*UpEnd*," a fresh collaboration between Parsons and Ephrat Asherie, a skilled and imaginative b-girl whose open spirit should fit well with the company's enthusiastic, athletic style. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 16–21 and May 23. Through May 28.)

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Michelle Boulé

Long a cherished performer, at once down-to-earth and enigmatic, Boulé has been choreographing her own work for the past few years, pieces that struggle to vivify esoteric ideas, sometimes graced by low-key humor. Her new solo, "The Monomyth," borrows from Joseph Campbell's notion of the archetypal hero's journey. The hero is Boulé, alone, with disco fading in and out. (*The Chocolate Factory*, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. May 17-20. Through May 27.)

Stacy Matthew Spence

Spence, like other alums of Trisha Brown's company, is a delicate dancer who fashions delicate dances. "This Home Is Us," choreographed and performed with the similarly spindly but more intense Joanna Kotze, continues Spence's investigation into heightening awareness of place through movement and sound. The score mixes noises recorded in the homes of both performers into the vibrations of St. Mark's Church, the home for dance where the work is performed. (*Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St.* 866-811-4111. May 18-20.)

"FLEXN Evolution"

Two years ago, "FLEXN" took fiercely talented practitioners of the broken-bodied street form called flex and let them flounder in the vastness of the Park Avenue Armory. The direction (by Peter Sellars) encouraged them to address topical issues but gave insufficient guidance in the perilous transfer from street to stage. Now the production returns in revised form. As before, each performance is prefaced by frank panel discussions about racial equity and criminal justice, but the coda that follows the final show might be most illuminating: a multigenerational demonstration of flex's evolution. (*Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St.* 212-933-5812. May 18-21.)

"La Mama Moves!"

The opening week of this year's festival culminates in a daytime block party on May 20. In addition to a d.j., a marching band, and free food, there will be a showing of "#Here to Dance," a compilation of minute-long dance videos, submitted over the Internet, on the subject of human rights. Before that come the premières of Young Soon Kim's "youuswe" and Jeremy Nelson and Luis Lara Malvacas's "A" and "D." A globally varied miscellany of premières follows. (*Ellen Stewart, 66 E. 4th St.* 646-430-5374. May 18-21. Through June 4.)

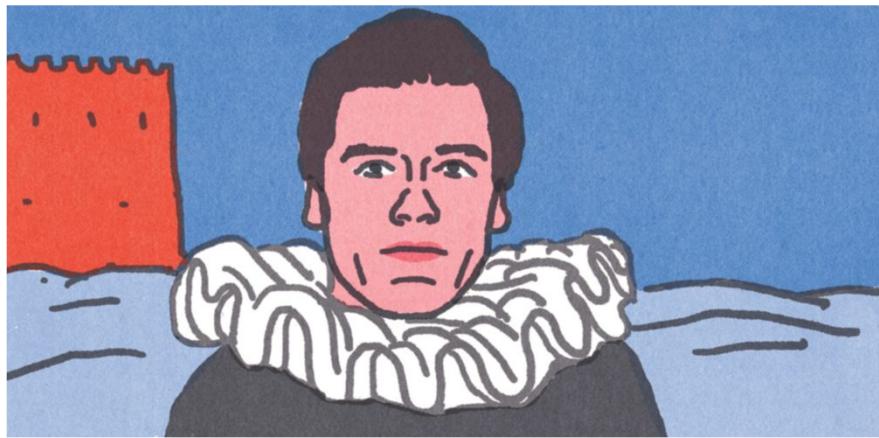
François Chaignaud and Cecilia Bengolea

In recent years, Dia:Beacon has presented the work of such dance eminences as Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Steve Paxton. Now this less established and less exalted Paris-based duo gets the museum's imprimatur. Their 2004 piece "Sylphides" is an intriguing art project that involves vacuum-sealing dancers in body bags. "Dub Love," from 2014, shallowly mixes ballet pointe work with moves from club and street dance. The accompanying reggae-and-dub d.j. set should get the former factory thumping. (*3 Beekman St., Beacon, N.Y.* 845-440-0100. May 19-21.)

"Tap Attack"

The American Tap Dance Foundation celebrates National Tap Dance Day with a free outdoor event. Honoring the inclusive spirit of the tap tradition, the program combines students and professionals, children and elders, set pieces and improvised jam sessions. (*Hudson River Park, Christopher St. at the Hudson River.* 646-230-9564. May 21.)

THE THEATRE



Oscar Isaac plays the title role in Sam Gold's production of "Hamlet," at the Public, starting June 20.

Summer Preview

Among the signifiers of a New York summer—the Mister Softee jingle, air-conditioner droplets messing up your hair—is the sound of blank verse. Shakespeare has become a mostly May-to-August affair, despite the Bard's penchant for discontented winters and warring winds. Oscar Isaac, who played Romeo in Central Park years before "Inside Llewyn Davis" and "Star Wars" made him a heartthrob, will take on "Hamlet," at the Public, beginning previews on June 20. Sam Gold's production, also starring Keegan-Michael Key ("Key & Peele"), as Horatio, has already caused its share of drama. Last year, Gold pulled the production from Theatre for a New Audience's upcoming schedule, citing artistic differences—apparently his revision of the text was too out-there. (Broadway audiences got to know Gold's experimental streak with this season's polarizing revival of "The Glass Menagerie.") The Brooklyn company swapped in "Measure for Measure," Shakespeare's acid tale of hypocrisy, which plays at the Polonsky Shakespeare Center starting June 17, directed by Simon Godwin.

Meanwhile, the Public's free Shakespeare in the Park season kicks off at the Delacorte on May 23, with "Julius Caesar," directed by Oskar Eustis and featuring Gregg Henry (Caesar), Eliz-

abeth Marvel (Antony), Corey Stoll (Brutus), and John Douglas Thompson (Cassius). The second Delacorte offering, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," starting previews July 11, will showcase the comedic gifts of Annaleigh Ashford (Helena), Danny Burstein (Bottom), and Kristine Nielsen (Puck), under the direction of Lear deBessonot. **The Drilling Company**, the scrappy troupe behind Shakespeare in the Parking Lot, also specializes in verse al fresco, minus the line; the group returns to Bryant Park's Upper Terrace with "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (May 19-June 3), "Twelfth Night" (July 28-30), and "The Tempest" (Aug. 25-Sept. 9).

The composer Michael Friedman ("Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson") programs City Center's flavorful **Encores! Off-Center** series, which revives Off Broadway musicals for short runs. This summer's slate includes "Assassins" (July 12-15), Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's 1990 revue of Presidential predators, a politically fraught piece no matter who's in the White House; "The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin" (July 26-27), Kirsten Childs's 2000 portrait of a young dancer trying to make it on Broadway; and "Really Rosie" (Aug. 2-5), Maurice Sendak and Carole King's beloved children's musical, serving up songs of chicken soup with rice and alligators all around.

—Michael Schulman

The Taming of the Shrew Bolshoi Ballet

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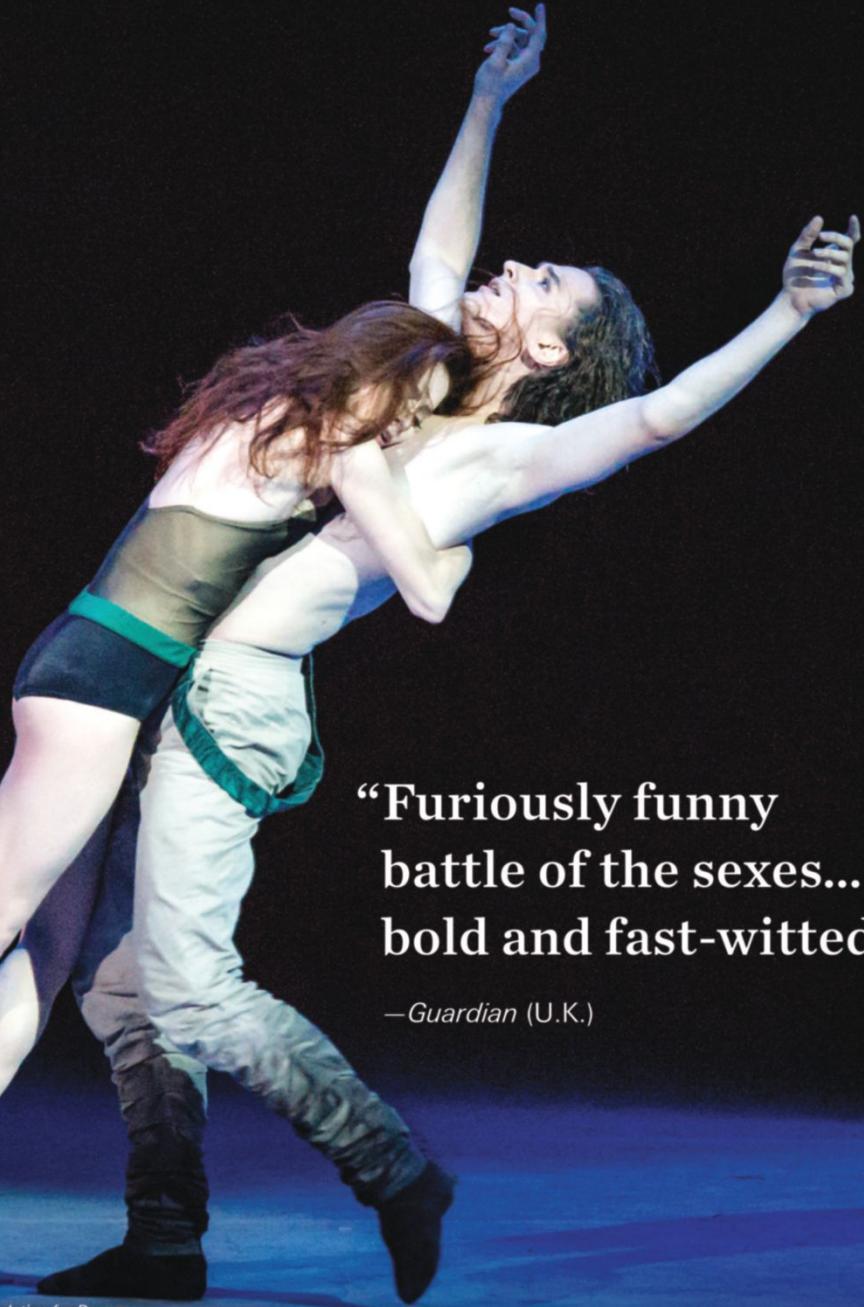
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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Bella: An American Tale

Robert O'Hara directs a new pioneer-era musical by Kirsten Childs, about a wanted woman (Ashley D. Kelley) who flees out West, where her Buffalo Soldier awaits. (*Playwrights Horizons*, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. *Previews begin May 19.*)

Building the Wall

Robert Schenkkan's political thriller, written in rapid response to the 2016 election, is set in the near future, as President Trump's campaign promises unfold. (*New World Stages*, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. *In previews. Opens May 21.*)

Can You Forgive Her?

In Gina Gionfriddo's play, directed by Peter DuBois, Amber Tamblyn plays a woman afflicted with financial and romantic problems who finds refuge with an engaged couple on Halloween. (*Vineyard*, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. *In previews. Opens May 23.*)

The Cost of Living

Martyna Majok's play, directed by Jo Bonney for Manhattan Theatre Club, tells the parallel stories of an unemployed truck driver who reunites with his ex-wife and a doctoral student who hires a caregiver. (*City Center Stage I*, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. *In previews.*)

The Government Inspector

Red Bull Theatre stages the Gogol satire, directed by Jesse Berger and featuring Michael Urie, in which the corrupt officials of a provincial town assume a new arrival to be an undercover inspector. (*The Duke on 42nd Street*, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. *In previews.*)

The Lucky One

The Mint revives A. A. Milne's 1922 play, directed by Jesse Marchese, about two brothers whose enmity erupts when one of them lands in legal trouble. (*Beckett*, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. *In previews. Opens May 18.*)

1984

Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan's adaptation of George Orwell's dystopian novel transfers from the West End, featuring Tom Sturridge, Olivia Wilde, and Reed Birney. (*Hudson*, 139-141 W. 44th St. 855-801-5876. *Previews begin May 18.*)

Seeing You

The immersive-theatre producer Randy Weiner and the choreographer Ryan Heffington (known for Sia's "Chandelier" video) created this site-specific piece, which transforms a former meat market into nineteen-forties Hoboken. (450 W. 14th St. 866-811-4111. *In previews.*)

Somebody's Daughter

Chisa Hutchinson's play, from Second Stage Theatre Uptown, is about an Asian-American teen-ager desperate for her parents' attention. (*McGinn/Cazale*, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-244-4422. *Previews begin May 23.*)

The Whirligig

The New Group presents Hamish Linklater's play, directed by Scott Elliott and featuring Zosia Mamet, Dolly Wells, and Norbert Leo Butz, in which divorced parents care for their ailing adult daughter as figures from her past reemerge. (*Pershing Square Signature Center*, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. *In previews. Opens May 21.*)

NOW PLAYING

Arlington

After a recent performance of Enda Walsh's latest Irish import, a woman in line for the ladies' room loudly polled her fellow audience members: "Did you get it? Anyone?" No one said yes. The show is certainly elusive, but the woman probably wouldn't have asked the question if it had been billed as a dance piece, which is perhaps how it's best thought of—although just as central are Walsh's urgent, enigmatic monologues and an unusually haunting use of video projections. Charlie Murphy (and, for one magnificent extended dance passage, Oona Doherty) plays an engrossingly self-possessed young woman trapped for decades in a waiting room in a dystopian city, her every move surveilled by an affably skittish Hugh O'Conor. The tone tilts between slapstick and nightmare; the message seems to be about solitary confinement in all its forms. (*St. Ann's Warehouse*, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

Ernest Shackleton Loves Me

There's a lot to explain at the outset of this ultra-high-concept musical comedy. Kat (the violinist Val Vigoda) is a severely sleep-deprived forty-five-year-old single mother and struggling composer who joins a dating site while her baby's father is on tour with a Journey cover band, and promptly receives a highly interested reply from the long-dead polar explorer (Wade McCollum, who also plays banjo). And that's just the premise: the show's various technologies also need to be demonstrated, including green-screen projections and music assembled via live loops. Weighed down with so much apparatus, it seems the ship may never set sail, but then you find yourself immersed in Shackleton's crazy odyssey as filtered through Kat's smart-aleck sensibility. Not everything is equally enchanting; the songs, by Vigoda and Brendan Milburn, have a sameness to them, and the jokes are more cute than funny. (*Tony Kiser*, 305 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111.)

The Play That Goes Wrong

Mischief Theatre's combustible farce, originally staged above a pub in North London, invites us to the opening night of "Murder at Haversham Manor," a hoary nineteen-twenties whodunnit put on by the ostentatiously inept Cornley University Drama Society. "The Play That Goes Wrong" is a bit hoary, too—an intricately planned fiasco in which doors slam, cues go haywire, the leading lady gets knocked unconscious, and every inch of the musty drawing-room set (by Nigel Hook) is destined to come crashing down. Of course, it takes incredible skill to pull off such bungling, and Mark Bell's production nails every spit take and sight gag. (This is one of those genres that Brits just do better—you need those plummy accents to paper over the mayhem.) The show never tells us anything about its characters, but it succeeds as pure comedic eye candy. (*Lyceum*, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Present Laughter

This harmless production of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy about theatre, pretense, and lies should verge on farce—and does, at times—but the director, Moritz von Stuelpnagel, plays it safe when he shouldn't. Still, there are bright spots amid the dullness, and Kevin Kline, Kristine Nielsen, and Kate Burton are performers you look forward to seeing again and again. Kline plays the actor and rogue Garry Essendine; he can't remember who's loved him, but that doesn't mat-

ter, because he loves himself more. As his handy assistant, Monica Reed, Nielsen does what no one else does better: tries to make sense of another character's madness. And as Garry's wife, Liz, Burton is a model of good sense and strong character, poised and maternal. Each of these actors makes Coward's language sound fresh and contemporary while understanding that the play has nothing to do with naturalism. (*St. James*, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

Seven Spots in the Sun

Martín Zimmerman's fablelike play, directed by Weyni Mengesha, crashes together a practical doctor, a passionate nurse, a drunken priest, a vicious soldier, and an anxious wife. Set in an unnamed Latin-American country, it explores the brutalities of war and the confusions of recovery. The style is magical realism, which may put one in mind of a more starkly politicized José Rivera, and the script shifts between dialogue and direct address, spoken by a trio of actors playing townspeople. It takes an unusually confident writer to sketch a junta and its aftermath in just eighty minutes, and Zimmerman has that confidence. But while the play asks big questions, its working out of the answers feels both wispy and overwrought. Still, there are some startling and visceral images, as when the doctor, Moisés (Rey Lucas), savages a pile of pineapples with a claw hammer. (*Rattlestick*, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-627-2556.)

3/Fifths

James Scruggs's piece turns the entire venue into a bizarre theme park called Supremacy-Land—imagine an old-fashioned state fair in a world where the South won the Civil War. For the first half of the evening, audience members are free to roam this "atrocity carnival," visiting booths where they can ask a black man questions pulled from a list ("Can I touch your hair?"), watch "coon dances," or learn how to tie a noose. The attendants are unfailingly chirpy, which, of course, heightens the general discomfort. The show's second half, set in a subterranean cabaret space, is a backstage play involving SupremacyLand's staff. Scruggs's look at the way subservience is enforced—partly by the oppressed themselves, brainwashed into acceptance—is disquieting, to say the least. The ultimate horror: the shock wears off by the end of the three-hour production. (*3LD Art & Technology Center*, 80 Greenwich St. 800-838-3006.)

ALSO NOTABLE

Amélie Walter Kerr. *Through May 21.* • **The Antipodes** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Bandstand Jacobs**. • **Come from Away** Schoenfeld. • **A Doll's House, Part 2** Golden. • **The Emperor Jones** Irish Repertory. *Through May 21.* • **Gently Down the Stream** Public. *Through May 21.* • **The Glass Menagerie** Belasco. *Through May 21.* • **Groundhog Day** August Wilson. • **Happy Days** Polonsky Shakespeare Center. • **Hello, Dolly!** Shubert. • **In & of Itself** Daryl Roth. • **Indecent** Cort. • **The Little Foxes** Samuel J. Friedman. • **Miss Saigon** Broadway Theatre. • **Mourning Becomes Electra** Abrons Arts Center. *Through May 20.* • **Oslo** Vivian Beaumont. • **Pacific Overtures** Classic Stage Company. • **Six Degrees of Separation** Ethel Barrymore. • **Sunset Boulevard** Palace. • **Sweat** Studio 54. • **Vanity Fair** Pearl. • **The View UpStairs** Lynn Redgrave. *Through May 21.* • **War Paint** Nederlander.

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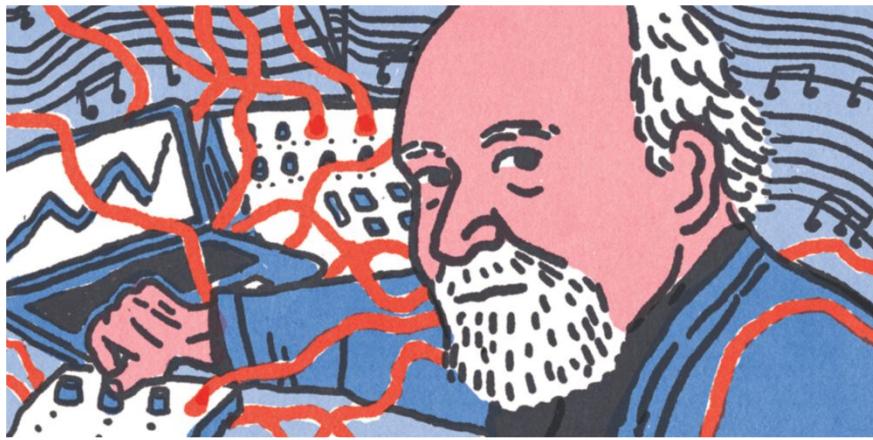
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Artist Talk
June 27, 6:30 pm

CLASSICAL MUSIC



Morton Subotnick, a living legend of electronic music, is featured at the Lincoln Center Festival.

Summer Preview

Operatic productions, given their ambitions and expense, are always planned at least a year in advance. But, in making their selections for this summer, the region's major players uncannily reflected our moment of deep political unease. One of the two productions that Francesca Zambello, who runs **Glimmerglass Opera**, in Cooperstown, is directing herself is the Donizetti rarity "The Siege of Calais" (July 16-Aug. 19), which takes place during the Hundred Years' War. Zambello has moved the setting to the present day, the better to reflect on the refugee crisis in which all of Europe is currently embroiled. (Zambello will also direct "Porgy and Bess," an opera whose political dimensions are a permanent part of the American experience.) Those who prefer their bel canto straight up can always head to **Caramoor**, where Angela Meade, one of the Westchester festival's artists-in-residence, will be featured in a semi-staged presentation of Bellini's "Il Pirata" (July 8).

Dvořák's "Dimitrij," which will be mounted at **Bard Summerscape** (July 28-Aug. 6), also has a political thrust. The Bard Music Festival's focus this year will be on Chopin (Aug. 11-20), a composer whose fierce love of his native Poland was wrapped in layers of personal and aesthetic contradiction. But without a Chopin opera to stage,

Dvořák's potent work, which plunges gamely into the ancient intra-Slavic conflict between Catholic Poland and Orthodox Russia which flared up after the death of the tsar Boris Godunov, makes a fine substitute.

Back in New York, **Mostly Mozart** has shown wisdom in bringing back the thrillingly radical production of "Don Giovanni" (Aug. 17 and Aug. 19) by the conductor Iván Fischer, one of several prominent Hungarian artists who have spoken out against that country's increasing tolerance of anti-Semitism and homophobia. The festival's other theatrical presentation is "The Dark Mirror," a staging of Schubert's "Winterreise," featuring the captivating tenor Ian Bostridge (Aug. 12-13), which continues New York's near-obsession with this most personal of composers. (**Tanglewood** also presents a series of Schubert concerts this summer.) Seeming to float above it all is Morton Subotnick, the electronic-music pioneer whom the **Lincoln Center Festival** is hosting at the Kaplan Penthouse (July 20-22). "Silver Apples of the Moon," created, in 1967, specifically for a recording on Nonesuch Records, will provide a fix of analog-era high-tech bliss. But its new companion work, "Crowds and Power," is based on Elias Canetti's disturbing book from 1960, a volume that, sadly, remains just as relevant as ever.

—Russell Platt

New Opera NYC: "The Golden Cockerel"

The five-year-old company presents Rimsky-Korsakov's final opera, a lively musical fable that delivers a lavishly orchestrated parody of an incompetent autocratic ruler. This is the opera's first New York performance in the original Russian, and its first local outing since 1971; Igor Konyukhov directs, and J. David Jackson conducts. May 18-19 at 7:30, May 20 at 2 and 7:30, and May 21 at 2. (Loretto Theater, Sheen Center for Thought & Culture, 18 Bleecker St. nony.org/)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

Alan Gilbert's final weeks as the Philharmonic's music director continue as he indulges one of his favorite passions: new Scandinavian music. After beginning with Brahms's Violin Concerto (with Leonidas Kavakos), the program takes a northward turn with the New York premières of two works: "Aeriality," by the exciting young composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir, and "Wing on Wing," an extravagant piece for two sopranos and orchestra by a known quantity, Esa-Pekka Salonen. May 19-20 at 8 and May 23 at 7:30. • The traditional Saturday matinée features the program's major work (the Brahms concerto), preceded by lighter chamber fare, Schubert's "Trout" Quintet, played by the fine pianist Shai Wosner and several of the orchestra's principal strings. May 20 at 2. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)

NOVUS NY: Philip Glass's Symphony No. 5

An ambitious run of spring programming at Trinity Church wraps up with a performance of one of Glass's grandest works, a hopeful, evening-length piece for voices and orchestra (subtitled "Requiem, Bardo, Nirmanakaya") that draws on religious texts from several world traditions. In a smaller-scale midday event on Thursday, at St. Paul's Chapel, Julian Wachner and his outstanding players offer a welcome performance of John Luther Adams's Pulitzer Prize-winning piece, "Become Ocean," in addition to works by Jessica Meyer (a world première) and Luna Pearl Woolf. May 18 at 1; May 19-20 at 8. (Broadway at Wall St. No tickets required.)

The Orchestra Now: "Ives & Hartley"

Leon Botstein and his graduate training orchestra from Bard College have spent the season pairing music by great composers with artists whose works are currently on view at the Metropolitan Museum. The last concert brings together two hardy New Englanders, the composer Charles Ives ("Three Places in New England") and the artist Marsden Hartley, each of whom made art that combines rugged masculinity with unexpected tenderness. May 21 at 2. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

American Composers Orchestra: "Parables"

Rossen Milanov, the music director of the Princeton and Columbus Symphony Orchestras, leads an evening of new and recent works, each reflecting some striking facet of history. Along with John Corigliano's guitar concerto "Troubadours" (featuring Sharon Isbin) and Bright Sheng's "Postcards," the program includes world premières by the emerging composers Carlos Simon ("Portrait of a Queen") and Nina C. Young ("Out of Whose Womb Came the Ice"). May 23 at 8. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)

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RECITALS

Kyung Wha Chung

The veteran Korean violinist, an artist of poise and power, gives her first New York performance in twenty years: an evening (with two intermissions) devoted to Bach's Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. *May 18 at 7:30.* (*Carnegie Hall.* 212-247-7800.)

Daniel Gortler

A week bursting with keyboard talent also includes this fine Israeli pianist, who presents a program, at the Jewish Museum, that surrounds a work of Brahms (the Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor) with a piece that influenced the composer (Bach's Partita No. 6 in E Minor) and a work that he would influence in turn (Berg's exquisite Sonata, Op. 1). *May 18 at 7:30.* (*Fifth Ave.* at 92nd St. 212-423-3337.)

Murray Perahia

This refined pianist turned seventy in April, but he refuses to rest on his considerable laurels. Perahia will open with Bach's French Suite No. 6 in E Major—which he played buoyantly on his recent Deutsche Grammophon début—and close with Beethoven's Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, part of a new urtext edition that he is editing. Also included are works by Schubert (Four Impromptus, D. 935) and Mozart. *May 19 at 8.* (*Carnegie Hall.* 212-247-7800.)

Maurizio Pollini

This Italian master pianist's technique may not be as effortlessly pellucid as it was in his lengthy prime, yet he remains a formidable artist—and a polarizing one, too—for his keen intellect and his penetrating insights. Chopin's music has been in his repertoire since childhood; here, he devotes an entire program to that composer—a mix of nocturnes, ballades, and other works, culminating in the dramatic Sonata No. 3 in B Minor. *May 21 at 3.* (*Carnegie Hall.* 212-247-7800.)

Brooklyn Art Song Society: "New Voices"

Michael Brofman's adventurous organization is often at its best when advocating for new work. Its next concert is a case in point, bringing together the singers Laura Strickling, Steven Eddy, and Elisabeth Marshall to present fresh songs by the composers Tom Cipullo, Michael Djupstrom, James Kallembach, Glen Roven, and Scott Wheeler ("Ben Gunn," with words by Paul Muldoon). *May 21 at 4.* (*Old Stone House,* 336 3rd St., Brooklyn. brooklynartsongsociety.org)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center:**"America"**

This season-ending program is meant to convey a spirit of openness and optimism characteristic of the United States: a notion ideally addressed by the final work, Copland's "Appalachian Spring" Suite. A grand muster of Society stalwarts also offers aptly congenial works by Barber ("Souvenirs"), John Corigliano ("Red Violin Caprices"), John Harbison ("Songs America Loves to Sing"), and William Bolcom (Three Rags for String Quartet). *May 21 at 5.* (*Alice Tully Hall.* 212-875-5788.)

New York Philharmonic: "Contact!"

Thanks to the personal generosity of Alan Gilbert, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and others, the orchestra's new-music series has lived to see another year, with Salonen serving as adviser. The last concert of the season, at National Sawdust, uses the late Jacob Druckman's chamber masterwork "Come Round" as an anchor for a program highlighting new and recent works by three gifted young modernists, Sam Pluta, Eric Wubbels, and David Fulmer ("Sky's Acetylene"). Jeffrey Milarsky conducts the Philharmonic musicians in the Wubbels piece, with Pluta sitting in on electronics. *May 22 at 7:30.* (*80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn.* nypfil.org)

ART



"Calder: Hypermobility" opens at the Whitney Museum on June 9.

Summer Preview

MOMA kicks off the season with the highly anticipated "**Robert Rauschenberg: Among Friends**," a retrospective that shines a light on the American artist's radical gift for transforming the process of making art from a solitary act into a collective adventure. The show, which spans six decades, includes more than two hundred and fifty works, among them such classics as "Monogram" (1955-59), a paint-splattered stuffed goat with a tire around its middle, which collapsed painting and sculpture into a third form that Rauschenberg called a "combine"—the name alone expresses a desire to bring forces together. The exhibition, which was organized with the Tate Modern, in London, where it earned rave reviews, represents the artist's collaborations with John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns, Yvonne Rainer, Paul Taylor, and Cy Twombly, among others. Opens May 21.

If not for Marcel Duchamp, who knows what Alexander Calder might have called the painted metal-and-wire pieces he began making in Paris, in the early nineteen-thirties, which he thought of as performing sculptures? On a visit to Calder's studio, Duchamp coined the noun "mobile," and the rest is art history. In "**Calder: Hypermobility**," the Whitney allows

visitors to see the works as Calder intended—in motion. The exhibition, on the eighth floor, includes an extensive series of related performances and demonstrations of rarely seen works. It's also the swan song of Jay Sanders, the museum's first-ever curator of performance, who is leaving to helm the vanguard nonprofit Artists Space. Opens June 9.

In the twilight years of nineteenth-century Paris, the Rosicrucian critic Joséphin Péladan organized a series of exhibitions, extending invitations to artists of a symbolist bent across Europe. The Guggenheim revisits the scene in "**Mystical Symbolism: The Salon de la Rose+Croix in Paris, 1892-1897**," which includes works by such artists as Ferdinand Hodler, Georges Rouault, and Félix Vallotton, and also has a musical element, which emphasizes the influence of Erik Satie, Richard Wagner, and other composers. Opens June 30.

John Giorno is a poet, an activist, and a legendary downtowner—it was he who slept for five hours and twenty minutes so Andy Warhol could make his 1963 movie "Sleep." The New York native turns eighty on June 21, and, to mark the occasion, his partner, the artist Ugo Rondinone, celebrates with "**I ❤ John Giorno**," an exhibition in thirteen spaces around the city, from Hunter College to the High Line.

—Andrea K. Scott

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Chicago Tribune



MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES**Metropolitan Museum***"Irving Penn: Centennial"*

The American photographer, whose twin talents for dynamic portraiture and spartan still-lives dovetail beautifully in his fashion work, is perhaps best known for his six decades of contributions to *Vogue*. Penn, who died in 2009, shot a hundred and sixty-five covers for the magazine, including the very famous image, from 1950, of Jean Patchett in a wide-brimmed hat with a net veil. In the high-contrast, boldly geometric shot, the model's hands-on-hips stance and sidelong glance lend her a mischievous and distinctly modern character. This extensive retrospective shows all aspects of Penn's keen approach to his medium. A suite of portraits, from 1947-48, demonstrates his reputation-establishing trick of cornering his subjects—a brooding Capote, a commanding Schiaparelli, an impassive Joe Louis—with the use of angled stage flats. While the photographer was, without fail, technically virtuosic, he was not conceptually impeccable. The haigographic wall text touts his series of female nudes, from 1949-50, as images shot "without a lens of fashion or prudery," but the cropped compositions of white torsos are, in fact, paragons of sanitized formalism. And even the wall text finds it necessary to note, regarding Penn's studio portraits of Africans and Pacific Islanders, from 1967-71, that their setup "recalls colonialist traditions." Penn was at his best with fashion's striking sculptural volumes—a Balenciaga sleeve or Issey Miyake staircase pleats—and the personalities of the people who brought them to life. *Through July 30.*

Museum of Modern Art*"Louise Lawler: Receptions"*

In her best-known photographs, Lawler has pictured works of art as they appear in museums, galleries, auction houses, storage spaces, and collectors' homes. A Miró co-stars with its own reflection in the glossy surface of a museum bench. The floral pattern on a Limoges soup tureen vies with a Pollock drip painting on a wall above it. Johns's "White Flag" harmonizes with a monogrammed bedspread. An auction label next to a round gold Warhol "Marilyn" estimates the work's value, in 1988, at between three hundred thousand and four hundred thousand dollars. Lovers of art don't often reflect on the interests of wealth and power that enable our adventures. But if that consciousness is forced on us we may be frozen mid-toggle between looking and seeing. The effect is rather sadistic, but also perhaps masochistic. Lawler couldn't mock aesthetic sensitivity if she didn't share it. Having landed herself in a war zone between creating art and objectifying it, and between belonging to the art world and resenting it, Lawler capers in the crossfire. Her retrospective comes at a moment when an onslaught of illiberal forces in the big world dwarfs intellectual wrangles in the little one of art. Who, these days, can afford the patience for mixed feelings about the protocols of cultural institutions? Artists can. Some artists must. Art often serves us by exposing conflicts among our values, not to propose solutions but to tap energies of truth, however partial, and beauty, however fugitive; and the service is greatest when our worlds feel most in crisis. Charles Baudelaire, the Moses of modernity, wrote, "I have culti-

vated my hysteria with terror and delight." Lawler does that, too, with disciplined wit and hopeless integrity. *Through July 30.*

Jewish Museum

"Florine Stettheimer: Painting Poetry" It's a good time to take Stettheimer seriously. The occasion is a retrospective of the New York artist, poet, designer, and Jazz Age saloniste. The impetus is an itch to rethink old orders of merit in art history. It's not that Stettheimer, who died in 1944, at the age of seventy-three, needs rediscovering. She is securely esteemed—or adored, more like it—for her ebulliently faux-naïve paintings of party scenes and of her famous friends, and for her four satirical allegories of Manhattan, which she called "Cathedrals": symbol-packed phantasmagorias of Fifth Avenue, Broadway, Wall Street, and Art, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum. She painted in blazing primary colors, plus white and some accenting black, with the odd insinuating purple. Even her blues smolder. Greens are less frequent; zealously urbane, Stettheimer wasn't much for nature, except, surreally, for the glories of the outsized cut flowers that barge in on her indoor scenes. She painted grass yellow. She seemed an eccentric outlier to American modernism, and appreciations of her often run to the camp—it was likely in that spirit that Andy Warhol called her his favorite artist. But what happens if, clearing our minds and looking afresh, we recast the leading men she pictured, notably Marcel Duchamp, in supporting roles? What's the drama when Stettheimer stars? *Through Sept. 24.*

ham—but their kind of success eluded her. The artist spent her adulthood in and out of mental hospitals, eventually taking her own life, at the age of forty-five. This fascinating, welcome survey aims to rescue her from the footnotes of the avant-garde. *Through June 24.* (*Blum*, 20 W. 57th St. 212-244-6055.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA**Alex Katz**

As a student at Cooper Union, in 1946, Katz was struggling in drawing class, so he started sketching people wherever he went. The pocket-size results, exhibited here together for the first time, are an illuminating example of the contest between an aspiring artist's attempt to capture every detail of what he's seeing and the confident ease with which, as a mature painter, Katz came to encapsulate faces and gestures. In one drawing, a pair of women and a pair of men sit kibitzing on benches in Union Square; Katz captures all four physiognomies and expressions—from a querulous, sharp-nosed woman to a sympathetic, shovel-chinned man—with vigilant specificity. *Through June 30.* (*Taylor* 16×34, 515 W. 19th St. 212-256-1669.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN**Iván Argote**

The Parisian gallery stages a soft opening of its lavish new building on Orchard Street—the full renovation, which will include multiple exhibition spaces and a bookstore, should be complete by November—with a commensurately ambitious solo show by the young Bogotá-born, Paris-based artist, who invokes themes of history, memory, and dislocation. Works on view include intricately mounted, multilayered text pieces made from cut paper, cashmere, and ephemera; cast-concrete forms that suggest fragments of hole-punched paper; and a series of short videos about young people born the same day that the Berlin Wall fell. But the most striking piece here is the simplest, so ridiculous it's impossible to resist: an eight-and-a-half-foot-long aluminum sweet potato, clad in gold leaf. *Through June 11.* (*Galerie Perrotin*, 130 Orchard St. 212-812-2902.)

Mark Mothersbaugh: Myopia

After National Guardsmen shot and killed four Kent State students protesting the Vietnam War, in 1970, a few of their despairing classmates formed the conceptual art-punk band Devo, as a vehicle for their dystopian theory of "de-volution." The group, for which Mothersbaugh sings and plays keyboards, is his most famous project, and its singular aesthetic—a combination of sci-fi kitsch humor and biting social satire—characterizes his art works as well. In this dense retrospective, some thirty thousand postcard-size drawings, ranging from the cartoonish to the splatter-painted, are presented in plastic sleeves as a browsable, decades-spanning visual diary. Some of the images—including one in which a chair seems caught in the act of devouring a person—appear elsewhere as bright, fabricated rugs. From exhilarating photographs of the members of Devo performing in garbage bags to colorful animated videos and mutant "My Little Pony" sculptures, Mothersbaugh's resolute absurdism, and prolific experimentation, is uplifting. *Through July 15.* (*Grey Art Gallery*, 100 Washington Sq. E. 212-998-6780.)

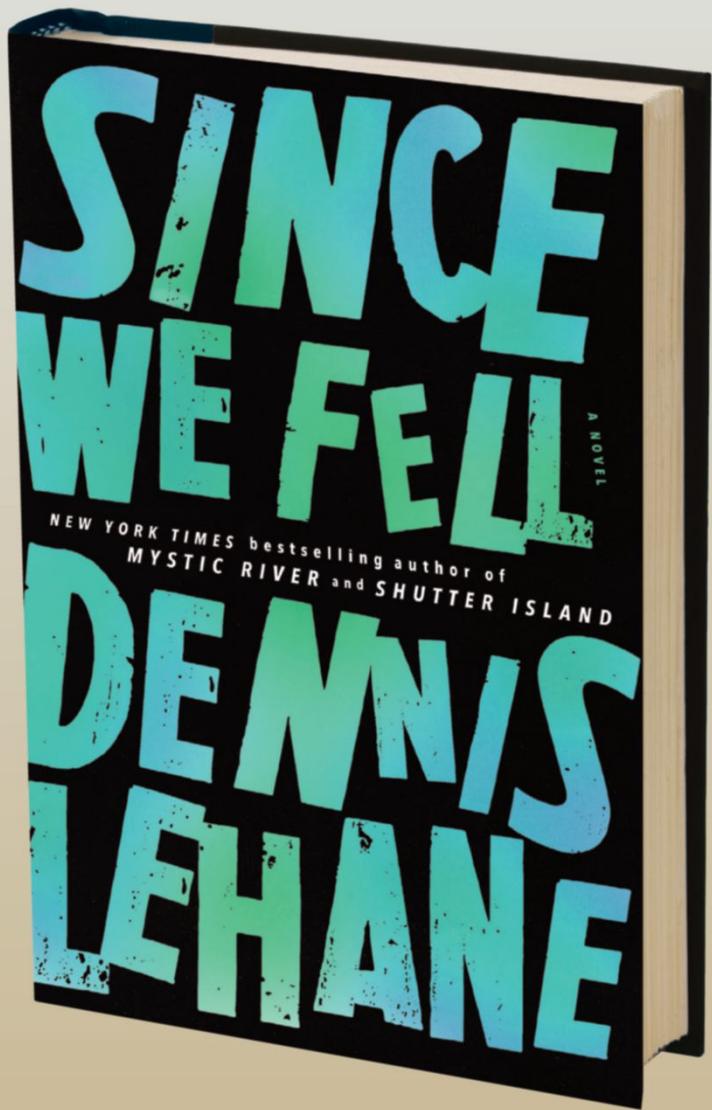
GALLERIES—UPTOWN**Wilhelm Sasnal**

The gallery inaugurates its new headquarters with a show that includes politically pointed paintings by the Polish artist—a canny choice, given that the five-story town house is just a stone's throw from Trump Tower. But the always pensive Sasnal complicates simplistic readings. Paintings of Angela Merkel, Hillary Clinton, and Marine Le Pen are offset by scenes both bucolic (birds silhouetted against a cloudy sky) and sinister (protesters holding a sign that reads "Choke on Your Silver Spoon You Fucking Nazi"). Particularly striking is a stark black-and-white trio of former U.N. Secretaries-General seen in extreme closeup: Ban Ki-moon, Kofi Annan, and Kurt Waldheim. *Through May 20.* (*Kern*, 16 E. 55th St. 212-367-9663.)

Sonja Sekula

This career-spanning show of small works by the little-known Swiss-born modernist contains nothing so dull as a series. Each bright drawing or painting is a world of its own, invented from scratch. In the nineteen-forties, Sekula experimented, in her meticulous fashion, with biomorphic and Cubist abstraction; later, her unfettered compositions included vibrant, washy areas and idiosyncratic glyphs. "7-Levels," from 1958, features a sunburst at its center and a doodle-like density of ink, overlaid with horizontal bands of pastel color. Photographs of Sekula portray her looking radiant in André Breton's New York apartment, posing with a bedridden Frida Kahlo, and sitting between John Cage and Merce Cunningham.

SHE LOVED HIM. SHE HATED HIM. SHE NEVER KNEW HIM.



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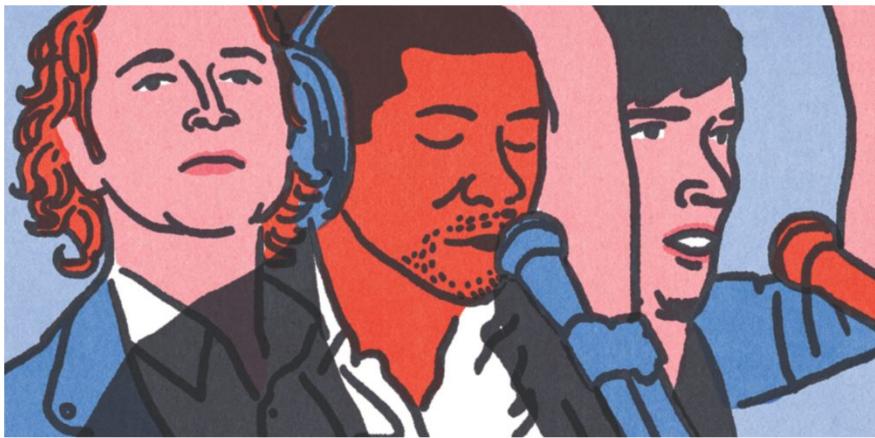
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NIGHT LIFE



Lee Tesche, Franklin James Fischer, and Ryan Mahan shout out hymnal-punk screeds as *Algiers*.

Summer Preview

The city's concert hounds are enjoying the opening weeks of Brooklyn Steel, the newest venue with the word "Brooklyn" in its name. The converted metalworking shop—now the borough's biggest general-admission hall, with a capacity of eighteen hundred—retains its industrial look, complete with exhaust fans, gantry cranes, and bolt-coated sheet metal; a lone disco ball hangs over the bar. Bookers have programmed the space well this summer, inviting buzzy new bands and discerning legacy acts out to East Williamsburg. Highlights include the re-united alt-rockers **Ween** (June 6–7), who were genre-blending and offending when most of today's ravers were tots, and the Venezuelan dance alchemist **Arca** (July 6), whose electronic sludge will bounce well off the venue's black walls. There are still jams to catch at long-standing haunts: Baby's All Right hosts **Algiers** (July 22), from the far-off tropic of Atlanta. The band has been honing a gripping sound that gathers disparate Southern modes—Americana harmonies, gospel choirs, chain-gang chants—into rousing protest punk.

If you prefer a patch of grass to the pit, festival season is in full bloom. Celebrate Brooklyn!, the free annual series, brings **Chronixx** (July 8), from Spanish Town, Jamaica, to the Prospect Park Bandshell; at just twenty-four, the

singer is an unlikely hero in his home town for reviving a roots-reggae sound that originated, in the nineteen-seventies, with Peter Tosh, Horace Andy, and several legendary dub producers. **Whitney, Weyes Blood**, and **Moses Sumney** (Aug. 11) take the Bandshell stage with sets that wouldn't be out of place on your favorite college radio station. Across the river, Governors Ball (June 2–4) will feature **Chance the Rapper, Lorde, Phoenix, Tool, and Childish Gambino**, and the nascent Panorama Festival (June 28–30), now in its second year, plants its flag on Randall's Island, with performances from **Frank Ocean, Solange, Nine Inch Nails, and A Tribe Called Quest**. Pro tip: walk there across the R.F.K. Bridge, at 125th Street, and take the shuttle bus back to the mainland.

The biggest ticket of the summer may be for **Kendrick Lamar** (July 20 and July 23), who follows up a charged Coachella set with two nights at Barclays Center. He tours in support of "DAMN.," released in April, which earned the year's best first-week album sales and has fans still picking it apart. Lamar brings **Travis Scott** along for the run; the pair's recent collaboration, "Goosebumps," is a sleeper hit as tender as it is raging—it strikes the most perfect balance of pop precision and mindless fun on the airwaves right now, and in arenas this season.

—Matthew Trammell

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

(Sandy) Alex G

Since 2010, the Philadelphia-based songwriter Alex Giannascoli, now known as (Sandy) Alex G, has recorded and released nearly a record a year of vibrant, whirring guitar pop. In August, the artist, primarily a solo act, surprised fans by playing on several cuts for Frank Ocean's acclaimed release "Blonde," and on the accompanying visual album, "Endless." On his latest record (his eighth), "Rocket," Giannascoli pivots yet again, combining Americana flourishes, noise collages, and breathless hardcore stylings. (*Park Church Co-op*, 129 Russell St., Brooklyn. 718-389-0854. May 18.)

Sacred Bones Ten-Year Anniversary

This modish label curates inspired, authentic music on the gloomier end of the spectrum, from paranoid synth-punk and noise to visionary experimental. Its roster of progressive artists will be on hand to celebrate this milestone birthday, as part of this summer's Red Bull Music Academy festival. Guests include the Norwegian vocalist **Jenny Hval**, the snarling duo **Uniform**, and two fascinating collaborations: one between the filmmaker **Jim Jarmusch** and the drone rockers **Moon Duo**, the other between the acclaimed cult figure **Genesis Breyer P-Orridge** and the electronic act **Blanck Mass.** (*Greenpoint Terminal Warehouse*, 73 West St., Brooklyn. 718-310-3040. May 20.)

Elza Soares

In 1959, the Brazilian singer Soares recorded "Se Acaso Você Chegasé" ("If by Chance You Arrived"), a swinging samba hit that lifted her out of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. At twenty-two, she was already a widow who had lost one of her three children to malnutrition. Since then, Soares's voice—a growl that has echoes of jazzy scat—has changed her fortunes, if not her luck. (She later lost another husband, this one an abusive soccer star, and another child.) The title of her most recent album, "A Mulher do Fim do Mundo" ("The Woman at the End of the World"), suggests that she has little to lose as she nears eighty, and the music is ripe with ambitious guitar distortion, a poetically raucous tribute to São Paulo's rock avant-garde. (*Town Hall*, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. May 19.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Jane Ira Bloom Trio

Bloom has concentrated on the soprano saxophone for decades, judiciously using its high-pitched sonority in the service of her own well-crafted modernist compositions. Her gifted trio mates—the drummer **Bobby Previte** and the bassist **Mark Helias**—offer both jostling interaction and shrewd use of space. (*Cornelia Street Café*, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. May 21.)

Lea Salonga

The first Broadway revival of the 1989 musical "Miss Saigon" is playing just a few blocks away from this newish bastion of cabaret. Although Salonga is indelibly associated with the role of the doomed Kim, which she introduced in the original London and New York productions, she has also scored points with a new generation of Disney fanatics, having provided the vocals for Jasmine, in "Aladdin," and for Fa Mulan, in "Mulan." (54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. May 15–22.)

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Kneeling Archer (detail), Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.), earthenware, Qin Shihuangdi Mausoleum Site Museum, Lintong.

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ABOVE & BEYOND

MOVIES



David Lowery's *"A Ghost Story"* fuses a low-budget Halloween trope with Texas history and folklore.

Summer Preview

Rooney Mara and Casey Affleck play a couple separated by a tragic accident in David Lowery's romantic fantasy **"A Ghost Story"** (opening July 7). It blends the moody Western melodrama of Lowery's 2013 film, "Ain't Them Bodies Saints" (also starring Mara and Affleck) and the sensuous fantasy of his 2016 remake of "Pete's Dragon." The new movie is a boldly imaginative tale set in a rustic Texas town where ghosts come to life in a traditional form: as gliding white sheets with eyeholes. The comedy inherent in the setup is balanced by the bereaved couple's anguish and longing; Lowery's spare, ardent images take a practical look at both sides of the boundary between life and death, between the present day and the eternal.

Sofia Coppola's **"The Beguiled"** (June 23) is a remake of Don Siegel's 1971 Civil War drama, about a wounded Union soldier who is given shelter in a Confederate girls' school and arouses the repressed sexual energy of students and teachers alike. Kirsten Dunst, Nicole Kidman, and Elle Fanning play residents of the school; Colin Farrell plays the soldier. **"Detroit"** (Aug. 4), directed by Kathryn Bigelow, is a historical drama about a police raid, during that city's 1967 riots, in which three black men were killed. John Boyega, Anthony Mackie, and Samira Wiley star. The documentary **"Whose Streets?"**

(Aug. 11), by Sabaah Folayan and Damon Davis, tells the story of the protests that followed the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri, from the perspective of the town's residents.

Gal Gadot stars in **"Wonder Woman"** (June 2), as the superheroine who leaves a remote island to attempt to put an end to the First World War. Patty Jenkins directed; Chris Pine and Connie Nielsen co-star. In Trey Edward Shults's postapocalyptic horror thriller, **"It Comes at Night"** (June 9), a family hides in a remote cabin to avoid a highly contagious disease. Joel Edgerton, Carmen Ejogo, Christopher Abbott, and Riley Keough star. The dystopian drama **"The Bad Batch"** (June 23), directed by Ana Lily Amirpour, stars Suki Waterhouse as a woman who is forced to live in a compound of outcasts that's threatened by cannibals; Jason Momoa, Giovanni Ribisi, and Keanu Reeves co-star. In **"Lemon"** (Aug. 18), Janicza Bravo tells the story of a forty-year-old director who's at a crossroads in love and in art. Brett Gelman, Bravo's husband, co-wrote the script with her and also stars; Judy Greer and Michael Cera co-star. Steven Soderbergh's **"Logan Lucky"** (Aug. 18) is a comedic caper about three siblings (Channing Tatum, Adam Driver, and Riley Keough) who plan a robbery that will take place during a Nascar race.

—Richard Brody

NOW PLAYING

Bless Their Little Hearts

Billy Woodberry's only dramatic feature to date, from 1983, looks deeply into the life of one family in Watts and plots its crisis in three dimensions: race, money, and gender. Charlie Banks (Nate Hardman), first seen in an employment office, has been jobless for a decade and does day labor when he can get it. His wife, Andais (Kaycee Moore), is the family's main support, but when it's time to give their three lively and helpful young children their allowance, she slips the coins to Charlie, for him to dole out as the nominal head of the household. Working with a script and cinematography by Charles Burnett, Woodberry crafts a passionately pensive realism—nearly every scene of action is matched by a long one in which one character or another, in observant repose, looks back and sees their self reflected in society's mirror. Bruised by struggle, Charlie seeks comfort with a former girlfriend; Andais has it out with him in a terrifying scene of domestic apocalypse, a single claustrophobic ten-minute take in which a lifetime of frustration bursts forth.—Richard Brody (*IFC Center*.)

Chuck

Philippe Falardeau's new film is centered on the boxing ring, although only a fraction of it is spent in combat. The hero is Chuck Wepner (Liev Schreiber), who almost went the distance with Muhammad Ali, in 1975, and never allowed anyone to forget it. We join him first in the buildup to the fight, as he delivers liquor around Bayonne, New Jersey, and makes life tough for his wife, Phyllis (Elisabeth Moss), and then in the long and painful aftermath, when he trades on his spasm of fame, gets flooded by drugs, and winds up sparring with a bear. The more intimate the movie grows, the more awkward it can be to watch—just look at Phyllis, joining her straying husband in a diner, where he's making nice to his latest pickup, or at Sylvester Stallone (Morgan Spector), offering Chuck a chance to be in "Rocky 2" and seeing him screw up. The script leans too heavily on voice-over, but there's no faulting the period texture and the rough-edged commitment of the performers; Schreiber nails both the bluster and the pathos of the hapless hulk.—Anthony Lane (*Reviewed in our issue of 5/15/17.*) (*In limited release.*)

The Dinner

The first—though not the most unlikely—thing that Oren Moverman's new film asks us to believe is that Richard Gere, age sixty-seven, and Steve Coogan, age fifty-one, could be brothers. Coogan plays Paul Lohman, a foul-tempered history teacher, and Gere plays Stan, a smooth-tongued congressman on the brink of a crucial vote. Paul and his wife, Katelyn (Rebecca Hall), on whom the smoothness clearly grates, meet Stan and his wife, Claire (Laura Linney), for supper in the kind of upmarket restaurant where an array of waiters processes to the table with each course. The meal is interrupted by calls on the politician's time, angry walkouts, memories of an earlier trip to Gettysburg, resurgent tensions between the two couples, and flashbacks to an outrage that involved their sons—the nominal (if implausible) reason for this pleasant occasion. The rancor is relentless, and the movie's moralizing, unlike the desserts, feels doughy and overcooked; despite the skill of the cast, you spend much of the film trying to decide which of its characters most deserves to choke on an appetizer.—A.L. (*In limited release.*)

El Dorado

From the first scene of this 1967 Western—in which Sheriff J. P. Harrah (Robert Mitchum) silently penetrates the hotel room of the hired gun Cole Thorn-

ton (John Wayne) with his rifle held erect—the director Howard Hawks makes a familiar plot resound strangely with new sexual overtones. Reworking his own 1959 classic, "Rio Bravo," in which a motley crew of lawmen holds a prisoner in the face of an outlaw siege, Hawks starts the story on a tragic footing. Cole unintentionally kills a boy, whose sister (Michelle Carey) then takes bloody revenge, shunting the action toward medical melodrama. As Hawks' heroes endure debilitating physical and moral wounds and display their neuroses along with their firearms, the jovial grandeur of the original gives way to antic irony. The aging characters start tall and proud but end up battered wrecks—Hawks shows how to be as funny as a crutch—and the romantic hero turns out to be a poetry-spouting young dandy (James Caan) on his own vengeful mission, who scatters his buckshot widely.—R.B. (*Museum of the Moving Image*; May 20.)

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2

The return of the ragtag outfit that made such an unexpected impression in 2014—here was a Marvel movie that presumed, if only in fits and starts, to spear its own pretensions. The crew in the sequel is pretty much unchanged: Peter Quill (Chris Pratt), who is way too goofy to deserve his title of Star-Lord; the mint-green Gamora (Zoe Saldana) and her semi-robotic sister (Karen Gillan); the enormous Drax (Dave Bautista), a stranger to the social graces; a thieving and sadistic critter named Rocket (voiced by Bradley Cooper), and Baby Groot (voiced by Vin Diesel), formerly a tree. New to the scene is Ego (Kurt Russell), whose name, it must be said, is a ready-made spoiler; he likes to flaunt his own planet in the way that other guys show off their sports cars. The director, as be-

fore, is James Gunn, but, as the plot grinds onward, with its compound of the flimsy and the over-spectacular, and as the finale grinds on forever, you sense that the genial balance of the first film has been mislaid. When the biggest laughs arise from a small piece of computer-generated wood, where does a franchise go next?—A.L. (5/15/17) (*In wide release.*)

Icaros: A Vision

The hallucinatory power of ayahuasca and the incantatory lure of rituals fuse with existential dread in this darkly hypnotic drama. Angelina (Ana Cecilia Stieglitz), a young American woman, travels to a rustic compound in the Peruvian Amazon to take the drug under the care of shamans. She's afflicted with cancer, and her hope for a cure seems secondary to her effort to face the end. Meanwhile, she befriends a young shaman (Arturo Izquierdo), whose vision is failing as his spiritual practice intrudes on his private life. Arturo's mother (Lurdes Valles), an expert in plants and potions, muses that, with the drug, "you can pass from dreams to reality without leaving the dream"—which holds true for the movie itself. The directors, Leonor Caraballo and Matteo Norzi, film the outpost and its wild surroundings with an ecstatic stillness. They capture the induced hallucinations with a visual imagination of rare specificity and fury, in which pop-culture memories and exotic natural splendors converge with personal troubles and metaphysical transformations.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

La Notte

In Michelangelo Antonioni's 1961 drama, the romantic conflicts of an intellectual couple

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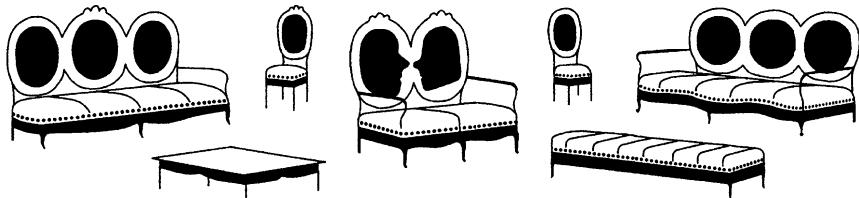
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in bourgeois Milan come to life in a visually dazzling yet psychologically dislocating pageant of clashing architectural styles. The Pontanos—Giovanni (Marcello Matroiani) and Lidia (Jeanne Moreau)—are in trouble from the start. He's an esteemed writer, she's an educated and frustrated housewife, and a hospital visit to their terminally ill friend Tommaso (Bernhard Wicki) lays bare the couple's fault lines. When Lidia, fleeing Giovanni, wanders through various neighborhoods, Antonioni submerges her in exotically inventive angles that transform the city into impenetrably alluring abstractions. The erotic roundelay that follows, at a wild party thrown by a philosophically inclined industrialist (Vincenzo Corbella), plays out as if following the blueprints of his villa's layout and the scheme of its décor. Antonioni captures vast currents of shifting power—whether sexual or cultural—in chilling and resonant details. The Pontanos' climactic confrontation on a golf course turns that wry setting into a primeval forest of their conflicting desires. In Italian.—R.B. (*Film Society of Lincoln Center; May 20.*)

Snatched

In this leaden comedy, Emily (Amy Schumer), a retail clerk with delusions of glamour, plans an exotic vacation in Ecuador with her rocker boyfriend. When he dumps her, she coaxes her mother, Linda (Goldie Hawn), who's divorced and solitary, to join her on the trip. Happily enticed by a romance-novel-type hunk at the hotel bar, Emily persuades Linda to join them on a back-road adventure that results in a kidnapping by local bandits. Spirited away to Colombia and left to their own devices, the women try to escape, leading to a series of tribulations that are meant to spark situation humor. But the director, Jonathan Levine, has no feel for comedy. Schumer fires off some asides of sharp obliviousness, but the humor, which may have seemed to fly in a script conference, sinks without a trace. Only one mercurial stunt, involving two retired American operatives (Wanda Sykes and Joan Cusack), has any glint of wit. With Ike Barinholtz, as Emily's agoraphobic brother, Jeffrey, and Bashir Salahuddin, as the State Department officer whom he badgers into action.—R.B. (*In wide release.*)

ABOVE & BEYOND



Dance Parade and Festival

If you find yourself swarmed by undulating bodies on a downtown stroll this Saturday, know that they are moving with purpose. This annual street festival, now in its eleventh year, includes more than eighty forms of dance, from Armenian folk to Brazilian zouk, creating a spectacle of sheer variety that is rooted, the organizers suggest, in equality, emotional and physical health, and empowerment. Since 2007, in a cheeky sendup of New York's antiquated cabaret laws, the organizers have enlisted their own New York Dance Police, who issue tickets—in the form of summonses to free and discounted dance classes—to people along the route whom they deem too stiff. (*Parade begins at Broadway and 21st St. and continues to Tompkins Square Park at St. Marks and Ave. A. May 20 at 1 P.M.*)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The showdown of big-ticket art auctions continues for a second week. **Sotheby's** presents contemporary art on the evening of May 18, preceded by a sale of Picasso ceramics and drawings from the collection of his granddaughter Marina, the daughter of Paulo, Picasso's son by the dancer Olga Khokhlova. The evening sale is led by a large Basquiat canvas ("Untitled, 1982") last seen in 1984, when

it was bought by the current owner for a pittance; the house is hoping it will attain a record price for the artist. An additional contemporary-art sale follows on May 19; sessions on May 23-24 are devoted to academic European art and American art. (*York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.*) • **Christie's** showcase of postwar and contemporary trophies (May 17) is especially notable for a triptych by Francis Bacon, "Three Studies for a Portrait of George Dyer," once owned by the writer Roald Dahl. The tripartite portrait was made not long after the two men met at a Soho pub—Bacon would go on to render Dyer's image countless times—and has never before gone to auction. Then, after a second day of contemporary-art sales (May 18), the house moves on to sales of African and Oceanic art (May 19) and of American and nineteenth-century academic European art (May 23). (*20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.*) • Peter Doig's "Rosedale," a haunting landscape reminiscent of early Klimt, leads the pack at **Phillips's** contemporary-art evening auction on May 18, part of a sale that also includes one of Damien Hirst's compositions with pills, "The Void." (*450 Park Ave. 212-940-1200.*) • **Bonhams**, too, has scored a high-value consignment for its May 17 auction of Impressionist and modern art: one of Matisse's much loved cutouts, bearing the whimsical title "Arbre de Neige." (*580 Madison Ave. 212-644-9001.*)

FOOD & DRINK



TABLES FOR TWO

Pith

Location will be provided upon purchase of tickets, at www.pith.space.

There are plenty of weird ways to get famous these days, and seemingly countless methods for capitalizing on that fame—consider Jiff the Pomeranian, who, one assumes, never dreamed as a puppy in Illinois that his cuteness would eventually earn him tens of thousands of dollars per sponsored Instagram post. Jonah Reider was a senior at Columbia University, hosting dorm-cooked dinners for friends, when celebrity came knocking, in 2015. The school newspaper ran a review of the “restaurant,” called Pith, in Hogan Hall, suite 4-B, where Reider made creative use of a toaster oven and offered fare that included lamb chops and mole popcorn. Overnight, Pith became one of the “hot-test” reservations in town, according to the *New York Post* and the *Washington Post*. Luckily Reider, like Team Jiffpom before him, knew how to spin a story, and, what’s more, he knew how to cook.

In April, Pith was reincarnated as a supper series, three nights a week, in a ritzy town house near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The other evening, a patron who’d dined in the dorm remarked on the aesthetic step up, from grubby linoleum and napkins by Bounty to Hans Wegner chairs and a wood-burning pizza oven. “Yeah, I’m chilling,” Reider said. He still speaks under-

grad-ese—“dope,” “dank,” “sick,” and, inscrutably, “bread,” are favored adjectives.

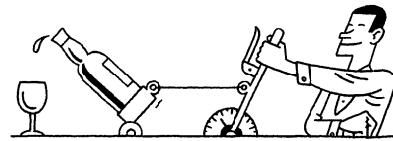
In a back garden, where Reider grows herbs, ten diners snacked on fiddlehead ferns (“mad popular for some reason”) grilled with white miso, and a tasty unripe-strawberry-and-porcini-spiked beef tartare. “This is the perfect setup for a murder-mystery-dinner-type thing,” one patron whispered. There was something potentially terrifying about forced small talk with strangers and a lack of health-department oversight. But wines selected by a precocious sommelier at Blue Hill at Stone Barns helped things along. “I don’t know shit about wine,” Reider said, as he poured a delicious natural orange one from the Czech Republic.

With each dish of the eight-course procession, it became clearer that everything would be “all Gucci,” as he’d put it. Particularly Gucci: a pillow-yet-rich spring-onion soubise with caviar; brûléed squash with lemon balm (Reider: “Tastes just like Froot Loops!”); buttery homemade pasta with morels and pea shoots; and a flawlessly seared Seattle wagyu sirloin.

After some huckleberry sorbet dusted with fennel pollen, most of the guests departed, and Reider and the return customer contemplated all that had changed. No more exams; far more trips to Australia bankrolled by KitchenAid. One thing remained the same: Reider still had to do all the dishes. (*Tasting menu, \$95.*)

—Emma Allen

BAR TAB



Bar Moga

128 W. Houston St. (929-399-5853)

This new cocktail bar has made it a priority to celebrate women. The menu features female-produced wines from around the world and cocktails devised by Becky McFalls-Schwartz and Natasha Torres, veterans of the New York mixology scene, who were trained by the late Sasha Petraske, at Milk & Honey. On a recent Sunday afternoon, cool breezes and early-spring light poured in through Moga’s large casement windows, which are left open, weather permitting. (Wild nights find patrons crawling in and out of them.) Japanese surf guitar filtered through the moody space, which is dim in the back, even during the day. On the walls are prints of revelling Japanese women from the nineteen-twenties, who were called “moga” (short for “modern girls”), marked by their independent, Western style. Today, they serve as the bar’s spirit guides. No doubt one would have gladly cozied up to a refreshing, tropical Sleepwalk (lemongrass shochu, yuzu, sake, coconut, ginger, lime) or an ethereally smooth Devil’s Pocket Watch (Scotch, sweet-potato shochu, apricot liqueur, pistachio-cranberry maple syrup). Hospitality precedes politics—“We’re mixing drinks, not saving lives,” Torres said—but a portion of sales from the bar’s signature cocktail, the Moga, is donated to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and the A.C.L.U. The drink is very spirituous, comprising Japanese whiskey, rum, and aged plum liquor—a subtle jab at the cliché of the “weaker sex.” “We wanted the Moga to be a strong cocktail, a serious drink,” Torres said. “We were also playing with the idea of creating a pink strawberry drink and calling it the Moba—for ‘modern boy.’”—Wei Tchou



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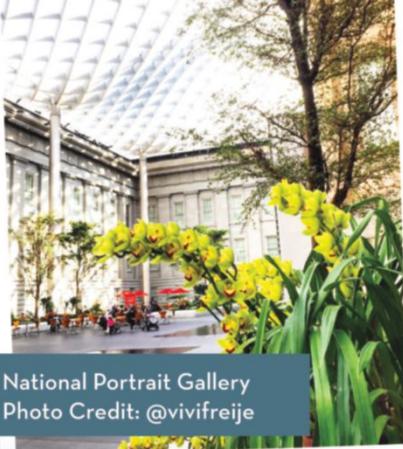
THE CAPITAL OF COOL

The District puts its party hat on with a slew of summer festivals.

CAPITAL PRIDE

June 8 – 11

This citywide commemoration of LGBTQ rights includes a rooftop pool party (June 8), the Pride Parade (June 10) and to cap it off, the famous Pride Festival and Concert (June 11).



National Portrait Gallery
Photo Credit: @vivifreije

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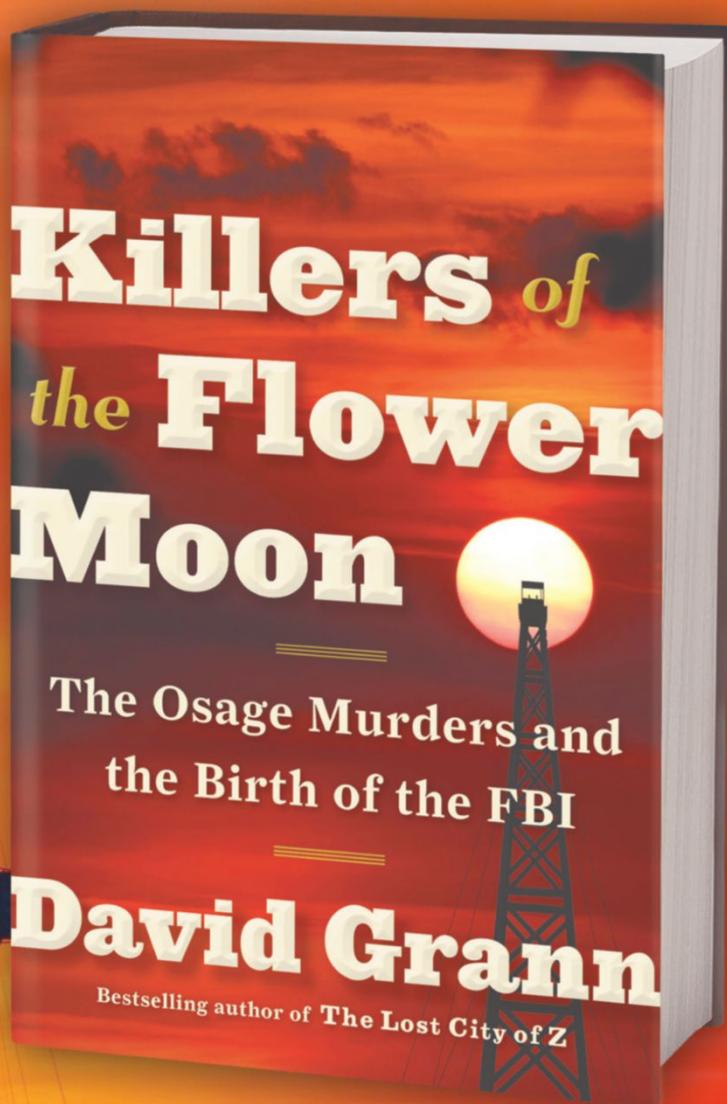
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT THE SILENT MAJORITY

On August 7, 1974, a trio of Republican politicians made a sombre journey from Capitol Hill to the White House. Senators Barry Goldwater and Hugh Scott and Representative John Rhodes had dedicated their professional lives to the conservative movement and to the electoral fortunes of the Republican Party. But, on this occasion, they chose to put the interests of their country ahead of the partisan concerns of the G.O.P. They had come to level with Richard Nixon, their fellow-Republican and the President of the United States. The three men told Nixon that the wounds of Watergate had finally cut too deep. His party was abandoning him. It was time for the President to go. He announced his resignation the next day.

The great question in politics today is when, or whether, any Republican will undertake a similar trip to the White House of Donald Trump. Throughout a hundred-plus days, Trump has proved himself temperamentally and intellectually unfit for the Presidency. Following the lamentable campaign of 2016, people surely had modest expectations for the manner in which Trump would conduct himself in office, but his belligerence and his mendacity have been astonishing even by his standards. Still, an undignified Twitter feed, albeit one that originates in the Oval Office, is just a national embarrassment, not a constitutional crisis.

The firing of James Comey, the F.B.I.

director, on the other hand, represents not only an abuse of language but an abuse of power. In 1976, Congress, recognizing the political sensitivity of the F.B.I. post, set the director's term at ten years. This act was partly intended to preclude lengthy tenures like J. Edgar Hoover's forty-seven-year reign, but also to provide the director with a measure of independence from the incumbent Administration. The law did allow the President to remove the director, but the prevailing norm called for this power to be used sparingly. Before Comey, only one director had been fired, in 1993, when President Clinton dismissed William Sessions for ethical lapses—a decision that generated little dissent.

On Tuesday night, when the news of the firing broke, Administration officials announced that the President had acted, at least in part, because Comey, in the course of clearing Hillary Clinton in last year's e-mail controversy, had made excessively harsh public comments

about her. This was patently absurd; Trump had spent the fall quoting and embracing Comey's criticisms. Later in the week, Trump contradicted his subordinates' explanation, telling Lester Holt, of NBC, that he had fired Comey because he was "a showboat" and "a grandstander" (coming from Trump, that sounded more like a projection than like a slight) and because Comey's leadership had left the F.B.I. "in turmoil," which it is not.

In fact, during the interview with Holt, Trump all but acknowledged that he had fired Comey because the director had made sure that the Bureau continued to investigate the ties between Trump's campaign and the efforts by the Russian government and its allies to hand the election to him. This is exactly the kind of investigation that requires the F.B.I. director to have independence; Trump's short-circuiting of the probe, with Comey's dismissal, is a grave abuse of Presidential power. The interference in an F.B.I. investigation replicates, with chilling precision, another part of the Watergate story. On June 23, 1972, six days after individuals associated with Nixon's campaign broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters, the President and his aide H. R. Haldeman discussed a plan to stop an F.B.I. investigation into the matter. As captured on a White House tape, Nixon told Haldeman that C.I.A. officials "should call the F.B.I. in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further into this case—period!" Yet there is one important difference between Nixon's and Trump's obstruction



of the F.B.I. Nixon had the decency, or at least the deviousness, to do it in secret. Trump, with characteristic brazenness, is conducting his coverup in full view of the public.

In 1974, the release of the June 23rd tape, which became known as the smoking gun, was the final goad to Goldwater and the other Republicans to cease their defense of Nixon and to join calls for his ouster. Trump seems almost to be courting comparisons with Watergate, as when, last Friday, he tweeted the Nixonian threat that Comey “better hope that there are no ‘tapes’ of our conversations.” Trump is not offering explanations; he’s making confessions. The comparison breaks down, however, in that the Republican response to Trump’s lawlessness has ranged from full-throated support to muted statements of concern to, mostly, silence. It is not just that moderate Republicans (and Watergate heroes) like Senators Howard Baker and

Lowell Weicker have passed from the Washington scene; it’s that the obsessive partisanship of current leaders like Senator Mitch McConnell and Representative Paul Ryan has stunted the conscience of their entire party. It’s a certainty that history will look unkindly upon the moral blindness of contemporary Republicans.

Only the voters, in 2018 and beyond, will have a chance to send the kind of message that today’s cynical G.O.P. will understand. In the meantime, the Trump Presidency will stagger from one crisis to the next. So far, to the good fortune of the nation—and, even, the world—the President has had to confront disasters only of his own making, like firing Comey and promulgating executive orders that discriminate against religious and ethnic minorities. But, in these perilous and unpredictable times, it’s worth pausing to consider how Trump’s recklessness might manifest itself in a national-security emer-

gency. His default response to conflict has always been to lash out, which can be entertaining on a reality-television show and effective in a political debate. But, as the President of the United States, who commands a nuclear-armed military, Trump is playing for incalculably higher stakes. Democrats, despite their characteristic caution and fecklessness, have begun to speak candidly about Trump, but their status as the minority party renders them nearly irrelevant to Trump’s fate. The Republicans alone have the power to impose limits on this Presidency or to end it altogether. To date, however, no one in the leadership, or even in the rank and file, has displayed the courage to live up to the example set by the honorable Republicans of the past. Daily, and conspicuously, Trump proves the danger of his continued service. His party’s stalwarts won’t be able to say that they weren’t warned.

—Jeffrey Toobin

ON THE COUCH THE GOLDWATER RULE



When Donald Trump accused his predecessor Barack Obama of wiretapping him, James Comey, then the F.B.I. director, told colleagues that he considered Trump to be “outside the realm of normal,” and even “crazy.” Many Americans share this view, but the professionals who are best qualified to make such an assessment have been forced to remain mum.

“I’m struggling not to discuss He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” a psychiatrist named Jerrold Post said last week, speaking on the phone from his office, in Bethesda, Maryland. Post, who is the director of the political-psychology program at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs, and the founder of the C.I.A.’s Center for the Analysis of Personality and Political Behavior, has made a career of political-personality profiling. However, he is also a distinguished life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, whose profes-

sional code of conduct forbids members to publicly comment on the psyches of living public figures whom they have not personally examined.

The ban, known as “the Goldwater rule,” is the legacy of an embarrassing episode from 1964. That year, *Fact* magazine published a petition signed by more than a thousand psychiatrists, which declared that Barry Goldwater, who was then the Republican Presidential nominee, was “psychologically unfit to be President.” Goldwater lost the election, but he won a libel suit against the magazine. The bad publicity seriously tarnished the reputation of the profession.

More than fifty years later, Trump appears to be testing the limits of the Goldwater rule. In March, the Washington, D.C., branch of the A.P.A. convened a meeting of its members to debate the rule. Post and several others argued that, given the President’s erratic behavior, the organization was infringing on its members’ freedom of expression. Psychiatrists, they insisted, have a responsibility to serve society at large. “I think there’s a duty to warn,” Post said. “Serious questions have been raised about the temperament and suitability of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.” He added, “It seems unethical

to not contribute at this perilous time.”

The psychiatrist John Zinner took the argument further, suggesting that, as doctors, who swear an oath to protect their patients, psychiatrists have an obligation to speak out about the menace posed by Trump’s mental health. “It’s my view that Trump has a narcissistic personality disorder,” Zinner said later. “Trump is deluded and compulsive. He has no conscience.” He said that psychiatrists have a constructive role to play in advising policymakers to add checks on the President’s control over nuclear weapons. “That supersedes the Goldwater rule,” he said. “It’s an existential survival issue.” (There were some dissenters at the meeting. Dr. Mark Komrad, who is on the staff at Johns Hopkins Hospital and Sheppard Pratt Health System, worried that overturning the rule could be bad for the profession. “We’re already seen as peddlers of a liberal world view,” he said. “If we make pronouncements about Donald Trump, nothing is gained. You don’t need a doctor to tell you that the guy on the plane with a hacking cough is sick.”)

Post is part of a push to have the A.P.A. form a commission to revisit the Goldwater rule. He’ll make the argument to a larger audience later

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this month, at the association's annual meeting, in San Diego. Meanwhile, the President's sudden firing of Comey presented an almost irresistible case study.

Post, when asked about the firing, chose his words carefully. He said he agreed with lay commentators that Trump appeared to be trying to suppress the F.B.I.'s investigation into his campaign's ties to Russia, revealing a pattern—a quickness to get rid of those who disagreed with or threatened him. The result, Post said, would be "a sycophantic leadership circle afraid to question him." He added that the manner of the firing, which Comey learned about from TV reports, displayed "a failure of judgment in crisis"; it was likely to turn Comey into "a dangerous and resentful witness." Post said that it reminded him of other leaders he had studied, including Vladimir Putin, "a quintessential narcissist," whose "way of handling criticism is to eliminate—literally—the critics." After the Comey episode, Post said, he worried that "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named's leadership is imploding."

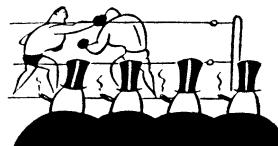
What would Post ask Trump, if he had the opportunity to get the President on his couch? Post cleared his throat and said, "I'm sorry, but I think I'd better not answer that."

The question reminded him of the time, during a television interview, that Dan Rather asked him what he would do if he encountered Saddam Hussein. Not realizing that the microphone was

turned on, Post, who had been discussing Saddam's "malignant narcissism," gave a less than scholarly answer: "I would run right out of the office!"

—Jane Mayer

DEPT. OF ROLE MODELS OUT-GUTTING



Chuck Wepner placed his giant hand on Liev Schreiber's spine and felt a tender spot. "You gotta be careful lifting weights," he said. Wincing, the actor said, "I thought I had to get big to play you!" "Nah," Wepner said, "you're plenty big."

It was a few hours before the film "Chuck" was to première at the Tribeca Film Festival, and the men were having lunch nearby, at Little Park. Schreiber, who co-wrote the film, plays Wepner, the brawny, easily bloodied boxer from Bayonne, New Jersey, who inspired Sylvester Stallone to write "Rocky." The actor, forty-nine, wore dungarees and a work shirt; the fighter, seventy-eight, wore a blazer with a jaunty pocket square.

Wepner earned his nickname, the Bayonne Bleeder, in 1969, when his fight against Sonny Liston rained blood on the spectators. Between bites of herbed scallops, the fighter said, "I could feel my nose breaking, hear my cheekbone cracking. The doctor looked at me and he went"—Wepner made a retching sound.

"I almost retired after that, but I had the doggedness." Working variously as a bouncer, an enforcer, and a liquor salesman, Wepner trained part time till he got his shot against Muhammad Ali, in 1975. "I was in such good shape for the Ali fight that I didn't know whether I wanted to fight him or fuck him. I hope I don't embarrass you," he said to Schreiber, who gave a cosmopolitan shrug.

"The way I fought—let's face it, it wasn't the best," Wepner went on. "When I got drinking, I'd pound the bar and say, 'I can lick any man in the world!' But I won by out-gutting guys, out-hearting them. Also, I fought dirty. I'd throw kidney shots, stick a thumb in the guy's eye, head-but him, spin him sideways, and hit him *under the cup*"—he mimed a wicked uppercut, and Schreiber instinctively covered his groin. "I'm a lucky guy," Wepner added, "because I never got knocked out and I still got a little left upstairs. And you *conveyed* all that. Right now, you're one of the top three or four actors in the world!"

Schreiber laughed. "With the fighters, there's always a ranking."

"But," Wepner said, "I did want a movie that would be children-friendly." Schreiber looked startled. The film focusses on Wepner's womanizing and drug use, which led to his serving twenty-two months in prison for dealing cocaine. And Wepner seemed delighted by the scene where his character jumps, "bare-assed, off a diving board, holding a bottle of vodka, into a pool with three girls. How many girls will come to the movie just to see Liev Schreiber's naked ass? Liev Schreiber is a sexual beast!"

"Oh, boy," Schreiber said, pushing his Brussels sprouts aside. "Here we go! Sometimes I apologize to Chuck, because I used his life to tell a cautionary tale of celebrity and narcissism: 'Be careful of telling your story too much! Of getting lost in who people think you are!' A prizefighter's journey is an existentialist ideogram for life, and the real fight, the real fifteen rounds, occurs in the heart, at home."

Wepner looked doubtful. He likes to hand out a business card that combines a portrait of him in his heyday—posing, fists up, wearing a Fu Manchu mustache—with the words "Inspiration for Rocky Movies" and "Went 15 Rounds with Muhammad Ali for World



"Before this goes any further, I should let you know that I have parents."

Championship"; a photo of Ali on the canvas after Wepner knocked him down; assorted boxing accomplishments with their insignia; and, finally, the name of his current employer, Allied Beverage L.L.C. All the card lacks is Wepner's phone number or e-mail address.

During pre-production, Schreiber said, "it was a real angle into the character when I noticed that Chuck, who's dominant in so many ways, was always deferring to Linda"—the fighter's third wife.

"I love her," Wepner said simply.

"I wanted to get away from 'Rocky,'" Schreiber said, "but there was this thing we couldn't get away from, and that was about love. Chuck does all these terrible things, but there's something



Liev Schreiber and Chuck Wepner

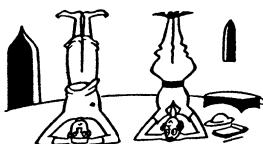
about him that's boyish, that's lovable, that's . . . innocent."

Near the end, Wepner recalled, he lost two fights to Victor the Wrestling Bear. Fresh in his memory was the Brillo-like fur, the beady eyes, the immense strength. Schreiber said, "Chuck and Linda come to the set the day I'm fighting the bear, and Chuck tells me, 'Liev, try and spin the bear so you get clear of his paws. Oh, and don't hit him in the nose—that's a very sensitive spot.' Finally, I say, 'You know I'm not really fighting the bear, Chuck, right? You understand the insurance company would never let me in the ring with an actual bear?' Chuck had the most disappointed look I've ever seen. He would have fought the bear *that day*."

"Nah," Wepner said. "You can't beat the bear."

—Tad Friend

O PIONEERS DEPT. OFF THE MAT



What can a brand stand for these days? Social justice is problematic (see Pepsi's Kendall Jenner ad), and sex doesn't sell the way it used to (for the 2017 Pirelli calendar, the formerly oiled-up models went makeup-free). So last year, when Lululemon, the athleisure pioneer, decided that it wanted to be known for something bigger than sumptuous yoga pants, Duke Stump, an executive vice-president at the company, interviewed dozens of advertising and marketing agencies. He ended up hiring Virtue, the in-house creative agency of Vice Media. Vice, he said the other day, at the company's offices in Venice, California, "made us feel uncomfortable in a really good way, and they do 'real' better than anybody."

Stump, who has a headful of wavy hair and was wearing a breezy blue shirt and a chunky turquoise ring, sat down with Spencer Baim, Virtue's founder, in a conference room named Tahrir. Baim, who is British, and his Brooklyn-based team had recently spent four days at Lululemon's headquarters, in Vancouver, for an "immersion" that included hours of yoga and meditation. "You should know that I only learned how to say 'Namaste' in the last few months, thanks to you," Baim said. "And then you guys came to our office and we got you fairly drunk."

He cued up a slide show that he'd designed for Stump to explain the new Lululemon campaign to store employees. The logos of Coca-Cola, Nike, and Apple appeared on a screen, paired with descriptions of what each stood for and their respective slogans (Apple: "self-expression, individuality, Think different").

"We're not saying those brands aren't great—obviously, they are," Baim said. (Stump used to be a vice-president at Nike.) "But they all represented a moment in time. Now you've got this desire for a personal journey—I want to find myself, I want to be someone special." That is really fucking hard."

Next, a Venn diagram: "personal im-

pact" in one circle, "purposeful life" in the other, and, at their intersection, "generation Lululemon." Stump folded his hands under his chin and cocked his head.

"O.K., so, the bigger reveal," Baim said. The next slide displayed the Lululemon logo, which resembles Mary Tyler Moore's flip hairdo, along with the words "personal impact, purposeful life," and a slogan, "This is yoga."

"It's the idea of taking yoga off the mat," Baim said, banging his hand on the table, "and extending its definition." This, he added, "would obviously extend your customer base, and tap into this overarching, massive trend that the world is seeing right now."

The screen showed a man diving, head first, from a tree swing into a lake. It looked bad for the spine.

Stump smiled. "We need to be inclusive," he said. "This needs to be aspirational in a way that invites people on their own journey to consider what it means to 'be yoga.'"

The ad campaign that Virtue dreamed up stars real people, young creative types and athletes who embody "principles of yoga," but who are not yogis. One is Paris Moore-Williams, a British grime rapper who goes by the name P Money. (Recent hit: "Gunfingers." Principle embodied: practice of breath.)

Stump said, "He's also a vegan."

Baim clicked to the next slide: a photo of Shi (Atom) Lu, a punk drummer in China, wagging her head and screaming into a microphone. (Principle embodied: practice of self-discovery.)

"I wish I was going to this shoot," Baim said.

"You and I both," Stump said.

Baim noted how many companies are jumping on the "be the best version of yourself" bandwagon, "whether they have a right to say it or not." He added, "Very few brands can say, 'This is yoga.'"

"The answer always lies within," Stump said, his voice grave. "We're actually giving yoga the biggest hug of its life." He spread his arms wide.

Baim: "You're taking the word back."

Stump: "Yeah!"

Baim: "You're regaining control of that conversation, and you're defining it the way it should be defined."

After the meeting, Baim was planning to drop by a photo shoot that was

in progress on a nearby beach. "You're perfectly dressed, man," Stump said, smirking. Baim was wearing black jeans and a white button-down shirt.

"I went for a run this morning after drinking, like, five glasses of wine on the plane," Baim said, defensive. "And I meditated!"

—Sheila Marikar

HE SAID, SHE SAID DIAL-A-FEMINIST



Awoman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society," Henrik Ibsen wrote in 1878, proving himself, in 2017 parlance, to be a woke bae. He was writing about "A Doll's House," his proto-feminist masterwork, which concludes with Nora Helmer, a restive Norwegian housewife, walking out on her husband, Torvald. The play ends with a slamming door, one of dramatic literature's greatest cliffhangers.

Enter the playwright Lucas Hnath, who has, fourteen decades later, written a sequel. In "A Doll's House, Part 2," which has been nominated for eight Tony Awards, Nora (played by Laurie Metcalf) returns fifteen years later, having written a popular anti-marriage novel under a nom de plume. "It's something I'd been threatening to do for a while, to write a sequel to 'A Doll's House,'" Hnath, a thirty-seven-year-old with Jim Morrison hair, said recently. "There's something about just saying that that sounded so audacious."

Hnath grew up near Orlando and read the play in high school. His mother bore some resemblance to Nora: she was divorced and, as an ordained minister, was a woman in a man's world. After moving to New York, Hnath saw an avant-garde production in which Nora had a lizard tail. "I came out of that thinking, That was a terrible production, but that play's kind of good," he recalled. In 2014, while travelling through Croatia by bus, he copied a bad translation onto his laptop and began writing his own adaptation. "By the time I got to the end of it, I felt the need to keep going."

But he needed help. In workshops, he polled the actors about how they imagined Nora's single life. Everyone assumed the worst: prostitution, debtors' prison. So Hnath went in the opposite direction, making her a successful author. He researched nineteenth-century Norwegian divorce law and read books such as "Ibsen: The Dramaturgy of Fear" and "Marriage, a History." Still, he said, as a man, he worried. "I wondered, Am I missing something?"

That's when his producer, Scott Rudin, proposed a playwriting method you might call dial-a-feminist. Hnath reached out to several academics, including Susan Brantly, who teaches Scandinavian literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Toril Moi, an Ibsen scholar at Duke and the author of "Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory." In one draft, Nora argued that she left because it was better for the children; Moi wrote to Hnath, "You could get some traction here by enforcing the idea that not all women are made to



Laurie Metcalf as Nora Helmer

be mothers.... This point of view is still shocking to some feminists."

The other night, two of Hnath's consultants caught the show, at the Golden Theatre. They were the New York University psychologist Carol Gilligan, best known for her research on female moral development ("In a Different Voice"), and the Princeton literary theorist Elaine Showalter, who coined the term "gynocritics" ("Toward a Feminist Poetics").

"Carol, we're in the program!" Showalter said, as they took their seats in Row E.

After the show, they got dinner at Joe Allen and discussed. "Tremendous!" Showalter said. "I thought it was going to be 'Helmer vs. Helmer.'" Among the questions they had received from Hnath: Could Nora be sympathetic if she had left her children? "I thought that the audience reaction tonight said 'No,'" Gilligan said—the crowd had cheered for Nora's daughter during a heated exchange. In her research following Roe v. Wade, Gilligan had interviewed pregnant women who were considering abortion. "The word 'selfish' kept coming up," she said. "There was this notion that the 'good woman' is selfless. So, according to that, Nora's a bad woman."

Showalter had advised Hnath to read up on Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who, in the late nineteenth century, left her husband and child. "Her daughter lived to be ninety-three years old and was still bitter," she said. Ibsen didn't consider "A Doll's House" a feminist play, but its impact was seismic. "In England, women said their lives were changed forever," Showalter said. "Eleanor Marx—Marx's daughter—learned Norwegian to translate the play."

Gilligan had helped Hnath fine-tune Nora's relationship with her children's nanny, Anne Marie. "It's a very intense issue within feminism today, where a lot of women are able to pursue the life they want because they hire nannies," she said. (Ivanka Trump is Exhibit A.) She began making a point about Nathaniel Hawthorne, and became so excited that she knocked her Pinot Noir into her meat loaf. The new play, she continued, "came very close at the end to the transformative feminist vision, which, interestingly enough, is part of nineteenth-century utopian thinking."

"I am very much a nineteenth-century utopian feminist!" Showalter said.

How did they feel about a man writing "A Doll's House, Part 2"? "The irony is that the most famous feminist heroine in the theatre, arguably, was written by a man," Showalter said. "There are aspects of the Nora that we've inherited that are filtered through a male consciousness. There just are. But women get a crack at it because they get to perform it."

—Michael Schulman



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ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

KIND OF NEW

Cécile McLorin Salvant gives old songs a fresh voice.

BY FRED KAPLAN



On a Thursday evening a few months ago, a long line snaked along Seventh Avenue, outside the Village Vanguard, a cramped basement night club in Greenwich Village that jazz fans regard as a temple. The eight-thirty set was sold out, as were the ten-thirty set and nearly all the other shows that week. The people descending the club's narrow steps had come to hear a twenty-seven-year-old singer named Cécile McLorin Salvant. In its sixty years as a jazz club, the Vanguard has headlined few women and fewer singers of either gender. But Salvant, virtually unknown two years earlier, had built an avid fol-

lowing, winning a Grammy and several awards from critics, who praised her singing as "singularly arresting" and "artistry of the highest class."

She and her trio—a pianist, a bassist, and a drummer, all men in their early thirties—emerged from the dressing lounge and took their places on a lit-up stage: the men in sharp suits, Salvant wearing a gold-colored Issey Miyake dress, enormous pink-framed glasses, and a wide, easy smile. She nodded to the crowd and took a few glances at the walls, which were crammed with photographs of jazz icons who had played there: Sonny Rollins cradling a

Wynton Marsalis said, "You get a singer like this once in a generation or two."

tenor saxophone, Dexter Gordon gazing through a cloud of cigarette smoke, Charlie Haden plucking a bass with back-bent intensity. This was the first time Salvant had been booked at the club—for jazz musicians, a sign that they'd made it and a test of whether they'd go much farther. She seemed very happy to be there.

The set opened with Irving Berlin's "Let's Face the Music and Dance," and it was clear right away that the hype was justified. She sang with perfect intonation, elastic rhythm, an operatic range from thick lows to silky highs. She had emotional range, too, inhabiting different personas in the course of a song, sometimes even a phrase—delivering the lyrics in a faithful spirit while also commenting on them, mining them for unexpected drama and wit. Throughout the set, she ventured from the standard repertoire into off-the-beaten-path stuff like Bessie Smith's "Sam Jones Blues," a funny, rowdy rebuke to a misbehaving husband, and "Somehow I Never Could Believe," a song from "Street Scene," an obscure opera by Kurt Weill and Langston Hughes. She unfolded Weill's tune, over ten minutes, as the saga of an entire life: a child's promise of bright days ahead, a love that blossoms and fades, babies who wrap "a ring around a rosy" and then move away. When she sang, "It looks like something awful happens/in the kitchens/where women wash their dishes," her plaintive phrasing transformed a description of domestic obligation into genuine tragedy. A hush washed over the room.

Wynton Marsalis, who has twice hired Salvant to tour with his Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, told me, "You get a singer like this once in a generation or two." Salvant might not have reached this peak just yet, he said. But, he added, "could Michael Jordan do all he *would* do in his third year? No, but you could tell what he was *going* to do. Cécile's the same way."

It was only because of a series of flukes that she became a jazz singer at all. Cécile Sophie McLorin Salvant was born in Miami on August 28, 1989. She began piano lessons at four and joined a local choir at eight, all the while taking in the music that her

mother played on the stereo—classical, jazz, pop, folk, Latin, Senegalese. At ten, she saw Charlotte Church, a pop-culture phenomenon just a few years older, singing opera on a TV show. “This girl was making people cry with her singing,” Salvant recalled, sitting in her apartment, a walkup on a block of brownstones in Harlem. “I was attracted by how she could tap into emotions like that. I said, ‘I want to do that, too.’”

She grew up in a French-speaking household: her father, a doctor, is Haitian, and her mother, who heads an elementary school, is French. At eighteen, Cécile decided that she wanted to live in France, so she enrolled at the Darius Milhaud Conservatory, in Aix-en-Provence, and at a nearby prep school that offered courses in political science and law. Her mother, who came along to help her get settled, saw a listing for a class in jazz singing and suggested that Cécile sign up.

“I said, ‘O.K., whatever,’” Cécile told me. “I was passive—*super* passive.” At an audition for the class, she sang “Misty,” which she knew from a Sarah Vaughan album that her mother often played. After she finished, the teacher, who’d been accompanying on piano, asked her to improvise. She didn’t know what that meant, nor did she care. “I didn’t want to get into his class anyway,” she recalled. “I had poli-sci, law, classical voice—I didn’t have time.”

But the teacher, a jazz musician named Jean-François Bonnel, was astonished by her singing. “Cécile was something else,” he wrote to me in an e-mail. “She already had everything—the right time, the sense of rhythm, the right intonation, an incredible Sarah Vaughan type of voice”—a pure bel canto, with exceptional range and precision. Two days later, Bonnel ran into her on the street and told her that he’d come ring her doorbell until she signed up for his class. “I always obeyed my parents and my teachers,” Salvant recalled, with a laugh. She enrolled, and found that she liked it. “There were all these cool people with dreads and cigarettes,” she said. “It was very different from the classical-music program, with these precious girls, or the poli-sci school, which was full of rich kids from

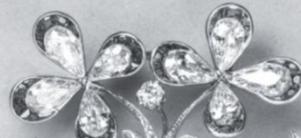
Saint-Tropez, very arrogant, politically on the right. I had nothing to say to those people. So I figured the jazz department would be like a good hobby—a place to make friends, like going to a community-theatre class.”

Soon, Bonnel formed a band for Salvant—he played piano, other students played bass and guitar—and, within three months, booked their first gig, at a local music hall. He also began putting Salvant through a crash course in jazz history. “He gave me recordings, twenty CDs at a time, which I played again and again,” she said. He started her with Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Billie Holiday—all of their albums, not just the ones her mother had played. Then came the early blues singers. “I listened to Bessie Smith’s complete recordings non-stop, all day,” she said. “I hated them at first, but eventually fell in love with her world. These songs were amazing. She sang about sex and food and savages and the Devil and Hell and really exciting things you don’t hear on ‘Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Songbook.’ I thought, This is great! All these great stories! I’d heard torch songs by Dinah Washington about ‘I’ll wait for you forever.’ But here’s Bessie Smith singing, ‘You come around after you been gone a year? Goodbye!’ It was empowering.” She went on to albums by later singers who fused jazz standards with earthy blues, especially Abbey Lincoln, who brought political consciousness and dissonant note-bending to the saloon-song tradition. “After coming from Sarah Vaughan, Abbey Lincoln felt harsh and a little depressing, too edgy and cold,” Salvant said. “I slowly began to love that edge, and went through a period when I didn’t like Sarah Vaughan because she *didn’t* have that edge.”

Toward the end of that year, Bonnel and Salvant were driving back from a jazz festival in Ascona, Switzerland. On the road, “just for fun,” he remembers, she did impressions of the great jazz singers—Vaughan, Fitzgerald, Holiday, Carmen McRae. “It was incredible,” he told me. She mimicked not only the sound of their voices but also their phrasings, rhythms, breaths. Bonnel’s next task was to prod her into finding her own way with this material. In class, he told her to focus on the piano, molding the songs’ harmonies into her fingers

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Arthur Getz, April 1, 1967

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THE
NEW YORKER

and improvising new melodies on top of them.

At this point, she wasn't intent on becoming a jazz singer. She had kept studying classical voice, and performed a few Baroque recitals in small churches. "The reason I turned to jazz was the gigs were coming in," she said matter-of-factly. "If more gigs had come in with Baroque, I'd have tried to do both." She recorded an album, called "Cécile," with Bonnel's band, and by 2010 she was singing throughout Europe. She figured that she'd give her jazz career three years to take off. She was twenty, young enough that, if things didn't work out, she could go back to school and try something else—maybe history or literature or law.

One afternoon, Salvant and I went out for lunch around the corner from her apartment, at a small, brick-walled place called Il Caffe Latte, on Malcolm X Boulevard. Salvant, stirring an iced coffee, seemed unaccustomed to being out in the middle of the day. When she's not on the road, she maintains a scholarly routine. "I'll listen for an hour to a record of someone soloing, and I'll sing along, improvising," she said. "I've been listening to Benny Golson, Coleman Hawkins, Oscar Peterson, Sonny Rollins. When you listen to a solo a lot, it's like you're trying to get in a person's brain. 'Why did Coltrane do *this* instead of *that*?'"

Onstage, Salvant projects confidence and subtle theatricality; offstage, she's

warm, smart, and funny, but also reserved and nervous, her voice more nasal than smoky. As she tells it, she is not a natural performer. "The first year I sang before audiences, I closed my eyes the whole time," she said. "After a while, I gave myself a challenge: try to look at people for a nanosecond, catch their eyes—see if I melt." As Salvant's mother watched her career develop, she was eager to see her succeed but didn't want to push her toward a life as a professional musician. "I never thought she would go where she is now," Léna Mc-Lorin Salvant, a tall, assertive woman who speaks with a pronounced French accent, says. "She's an intellectual. I thought she would go into academics."

Still, while Salvant was in school, her mother became interested in the Thelonious Monk competition, which is held annually—the closest thing that the commercially modest jazz industry has to "American Idol." Each year highlights a different instrument, and in 2010 it would be a singing competition. Léna insisted that Cécile record an audition disk. "Cécile is very malleable, she's very open, and I take advantage of that," Léna told me. "I told her the contest would be a good experience."

Cécile sent in a disk just before the deadline, and she was chosen as one of twelve semifinalists, out of two hundred and thirty-seven applicants. In October, she was flown to Washington, D.C., for the first phase of the contest, before a live audience, at the National Museum of the American Indian. She

was twenty-one and completely unknown in her own country.

As she faced the crowd, she seemed tentative. Ben Ratliff wrote in the *Times* that she "looked like an English teacher wearing a sensible black dress with magenta ballet flats" and "stared inquisitively at the house: really stared, as in 'it's not polite to stare.'" Her mother, who was in the audience, heard people laughing. "They were saying, 'Who's *she*?' and 'She's not glamorous,'" she recalled. "I thought, Oh, no, why did I put her through this?"

Salvant launched into "Bernie's Tune," a cool-bop anthem by Gerry Mulligan, followed by "Monk's Mood," a knotty melody by Thelonious Monk, and "Take It Right Back," a raucous Bessie Smith blues. "She had people eating out of her hand—it was ridiculous," Al Pryor, the A. & R. chief at Mack Avenue Records, who was also in the house, recalled. "I knew that I had to sign her up." Rodney Whitaker, the bassist hired for the rhythm section that accompanied the contestants, knew she was going to win even during the pre-show rehearsal. "I'd never met anyone that young who'd figured out how to channel the whole history of jazz singing and who had her own thing, too," he later told me. She and two other women made it into the finals. The next day, after a second round of competition, at the Kennedy Center, Salvant was declared the winner.

Afterward, she flew back to France to finish her law courses, but she quickly realized that New York was where a jazz singer needed to be. Pryor offered her a contract. So did Ed Arrendell, a prominent talent manager. In early 2012, she moved to Manhattan, on her own for the first time. "My concern was: How can I deal with the solitude of a creative life style?" she told me. "I'd been used to being a good student—get good grades, follow whatever structure I'm in. Now it was the idea of letting all that go, working from home—what a nightmare!"

Unnerved, she did what she was accustomed to doing: she enrolled in classes on composition and music theory at the New School, in Greenwich Village. But Arrendell was eager to jump-start her career. He sent her some names of pianists she might enjoy singing with. She particularly liked a YouTube



"O.K., everyone, a few important safety announcements."

video of a pianist named Aaron Diehl playing Fats Waller's "Viper's Drag"—precise, soulful, and joyous all at once. "It was exciting to see somebody play Fats Waller with a fresh take yet very much in the spirit of the music," she said. "I'd been trying to do this for years—take something old and make it yours but still authentic—and here was someone who'd figured it out." She called him, and they met. "He was very versatile, very serious, and didn't seem to be an asshole," she recalled. "Those were the boxes I checked off."

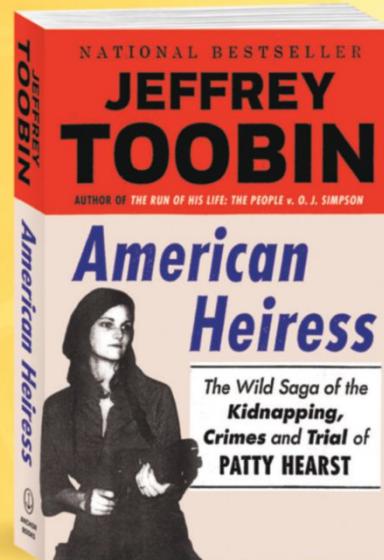
Their first gig was at the Kennedy Center. More gigs followed, with Salvant fronting Diehl's trio (including Paul Sikivie on bass and Lawrence Leathers on drums), and the musicians coalesced into a working band, on the road three weeks out of every month. She also recorded an album, called "WomanChild," for Mack Avenue, which received a Grammy nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album. (Her next album, "For One to Love," won the award.) Meanwhile, she flunked her composition course at the New School because she had an out-of-town gig on exam day. She dropped out, no longer needing the academic structure.

Before a recent tour in France, Salvant stopped by Aaron Diehl's apartment one afternoon to rehearse some songs. The two live in the same building, Salvant on the top floor and Diehl on the parlor and ground floors. "It's like the pros of having a roommate without the cons," she said.

Salvant wanted to try out a new discovery, a song from the nineteen-twenties called "Dites-Moi Que Je Suis Belle" ("Tell Me I'm Pretty"), by a cabaret singer named Yvette Guilbert. She played a YouTube clip of it on her phone, and sang along in a quiet, crystalline voice. They spent half an hour exploring ways to make it sound like jazz. Diehl picked out the chords, then tinkered with them, thickening the harmony; he added a pop-tune bass line, then discarded it in favor of a vamp that opened some space between choruses. Diehl is Juilliard-trained, academic in demeanor, attuned to the logical structure of a song. But he deferred to Salvant, partly because she's the band's leader and partly because, he

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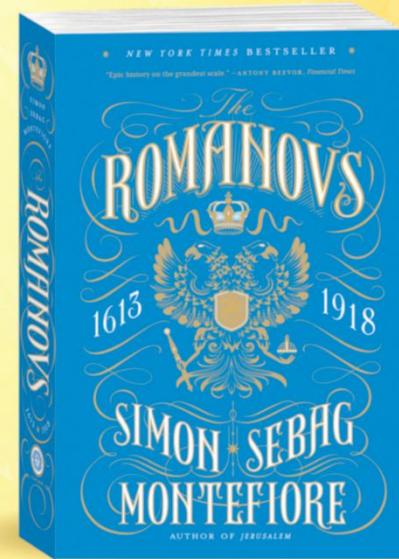


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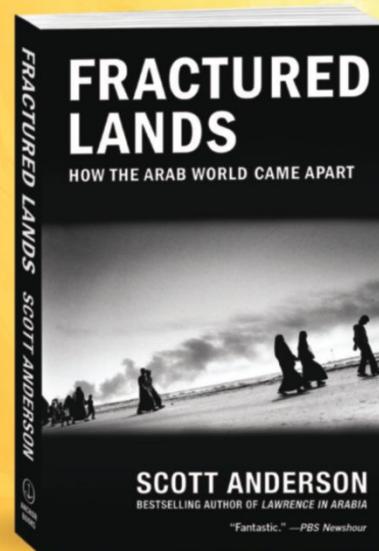


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—Charlie Rose

From the bestselling author of
Lawrence in Arabia

told me, "she has much better ears than I do."

Once they'd worked out a plausible arrangement, he asked her, "Will you be changing the phrasing of the melody?"

"I'll do that however this ends up," she replied. "But I want this to progress from shy and coy to desperate and a little intense and angry." She'd read that the song was one of Sigmund Freud's favorites, and her idea was to reclaim a frothy ditty as an enraged critique. They agreed to work on it more at their next rehearsal.

The singer Dee Dee Bridgewater, who was a judge at the 2010 Monk competition, told me, "I had never seen someone as young as Cécile invest in a lyric and tell a story in the manner that she did." This impulse to dramatize a song, treating it less as a monologue than as a play, sets Salvant apart from other jazz singers, even from many of the great ones. "To me, performance is acting as a character on the stage," Salvant said. "Trying to get inside a world for other people and getting them to join in—that's thrilling." As her early stagefright waned, she began to conceive of a song as a conversation between her and the audience. "I'm not just singing words that are strung together," she said. "They're a story. So who am I telling the story to? Not to the *band*. They're into making it sound good. I needed to acknowledge there are people in front of me. They're not my enemy. I'm sharing something with them."

Salvant looks back on the week at the Village Vanguard—some of which was recorded for an album that will be released later this year—as a breakthrough. She dislikes listening to herself, and cringes at excess acrobatics: "It's like I'm saying, 'Listen! Please! Like this! I really worked hard on this!' I don't want that desperation in my voice. I want to be natural and free and adventurous." In the weeks leading up to the Vanguard dates, she talked with the band about this habit and came up with a way to break it. "I said we should play like we're old—people who have lived and now we're natural," she recalled. "I want to act sixty years old. Desperation is a young person's thing. If I'm old, I'm not thinking. What can I be? I'm getting too old for that shit."

Al Pryor, of Mack Avenue, told me that when he heard Salvant at the Monk competition he wondered how she had acquired such broad knowledge of the music. He said, "She seemed to be an old soul in a young woman." Pryor was onto something. Salvant told me that, when she was a kid in Miami, her friends nicknamed her Grandma. "I walked slow," she said. "I was interested in old things—old books, old music." When she went through a death-obsessed phase, as many teen-agers do, she consoled herself by reading Guy de Maupassant. Aaron Diehl, who is four years Salvant's senior, told me, "I look at her as an older sister."

I asked Salvant if, like many musicians, she'd thought of covering contemporary pop songs. She winced. "It's fine," she allowed. "There are some new songs that I really like, but I never think, Maybe I'll sing this song. I don't care whether what I do is modern or of our time. I want to sing songs that have this timeless quality. I'm interested in history—how things differ, how they're still the same. I love it when a song is a hundred years old but still connects."

But, she said, "I'm finding it hard to find these songs. Maybe I need to figure out something new. Sometimes I'd like to be more outrageous—like write a musical play, or do a one-woman show, or design outlandish costumes and wear them, or somehow combine my visual art with my music." (She sketches and paints on the road, and illustrated the cover of "For One to Love.") "I have a notebook full of drawings and ideas. I call it 'My Book of Imaginary Projects.' If I tried them, I feel they'd be a catastrophe. But maybe I should try one."

In a phone conversation after the Presidential election, Salvant said, "The current political landscape is making me feel I want to be messier, sing more political songs, write more political songs." She'd recently given a lecture at the Chautauqua Institute, in upstate New York, on the history of race and women in popular culture. In it, she dwelled on the nineteenth-century phenomenon of black entertainers performing in blackface, which many have found demeaning but which she sees as a form of rebellion—African-Americans reclaiming their own stories. She talked

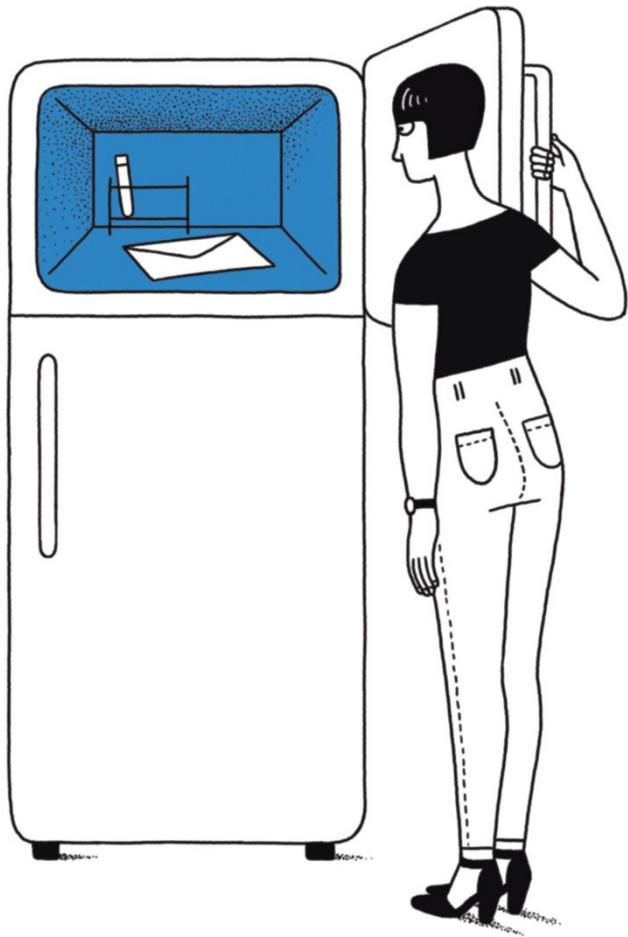
about parallels to songs of the nineteen-thirties, like Josephine Baker's "Si J'Étais Blanche" ("If I Were White"), and songs from the sixties, like Burt Bacharach's "Wives and Lovers," which warns women to be sexy for their men so that they don't run off with someone else.

"A friend once asked me why I didn't sing more feminist songs," Salvant recalled. "I said it's hard to find feminist jazz songs. But I thought about it, and I wondered if there were sexist songs that I could make fun of. I went online, looked up the ten most sexist songs in American pop history. 'Wives and Lovers' was the best. And Aaron happened to love that song. Rhythmically it's great, and the words sound wonderful."

She sang both songs at the Vanguard the night I saw her. She treated the Baker as a haunting dirge, lingering on the words "I'd like to be white / How happy I would be." She turned the Bacharach into a subversive anthem of assertiveness, purring its opening lines with a mix of come-hither bounce and menace: "Hey, little girl / comb your hair / fix your makeup / Soon he will open the door." In the silence after the song ended, I could hear sighs all around me, the collective release of an uncomfortable tension.

The lyrics of "Wives and Lovers" are "ridiculous," Salvant told me later. "But they're also things I really do. I'm not completely over the idea of needing to be presentable and looking my best. It's advice that I'll almost take, then say no. The songs that I sing and kind of make fun of—they have some kind of power over me. By making fun of them, I weaken that power."

Later, while Salvant and Diehl were on tour in France, she wrote to me in an e-mail that they had been performing "Dites-Moi Que Je Suis Belle," the Freud favorite turned feminist howl. The audiences seemed to get the irony, reacting with a "curious, nervous mood," like the one that "Wives and Lovers" inspires in American audiences. But Salvant and Diehl wanted to work on it more. "I just want it to be leaner and more incisive," she wrote. "Not sure if it has to even be funny. Also, wanting to do some digging for other songs like that, asking, 'Am I pretty?' I wonder if they are as rare as I think." ♦



YOUR FROZEN EGG HAS A QUESTION

BY SUSANNA FOGEL

Dear—

Wait, O.K., how do I address this letter? Who are you now, exactly, in relation to me? Because I was part of you for thirty-five years, right? We were one. So does that mean I'm addressing this letter to myself? No, because I live in a freezer now, with a dozen of your other eggs, and you don't. So I guess you are a "you" now, and I am a "me." But am I still thirty-five, like you? Will I continue to be thirty-five until you defrost me? And if we're going with that theory for a second—and I have temporarily stopped aging for the duration of the time that I am in this freezer, and am therefore currently in a state of suspended animation—does

that mean I have temporarily ceased to exist?

As you can tell, I'm freaking the fuck out in here.

Not that that's your problem! Do your thing. I just figured I'd touch base to see whether you had a sense of a time frame for all this. Like, if you had to predict how long you'll be keeping me on ice, what would you say? Just a guesstimate is fine. Because I remember that time when you and your two best friends went up to that cabin for Becca's thirtieth birthday, and, after rewatching all five seasons of "Friday Night Lights" and lamenting the fact that you'd never have husbands like Coach Taylor, you prom-

ised one another that if you got to thirty-eight and were still single you'd all move to Portland and live in a big Craftsman like hippies and bring up sperm-donor babies together and find random lovers to fulfill your sexual needs. Are we still on schedule for that? So T minus three years, you think? Or are you rethinking that whole plan, now that Becca got married (I think she settled, by the way) and Meredith's bathroom is always disgusting?

And I know there have been some recent conversations with your therapist in which you've admitted that you're not sure parenthood is right for you at all, and that you're worried you're just freezing your eggs because of societal expectations and your parents' hints about grandchildren. Dr. Fleming told you that you have to live your truth. I don't know what that means to you, but I'm guessing it means I may never get out of here—or, at least, that that's a possibility. Again, no judgment if that's what you choose. I totally get it, totally support it. I'd just personally love to know what to expect. I'm not a fan of surprises in general. They make me very nervous. I have a lot of nervous energy to begin with, and then you add a surprise to the mix? *No bueno.*

Not that it's terrible in here or anything! It's more of a personal preference. I've never been great with small spaces, and the climate is far from ideal. As you know, I'm used to more of a tropical environment: warm and wet. God, that sounded disgusting. I'm not trying to be disgusting. I'm just stating the facts about your ovaries, not body-shaming you. I would never do that—I have so much respect for women. Obviously. I was inside one for thirty-five years. Not like *that!* Well, actually, sort of. God, everything I say sounds disgusting. And confusing. I'll wrap this up.

So, yeah, just respond at your leisure. I hope it won't be too long, but, again—it's not about me. You go, girl! I'll be fine in here.

Just circle back to me sooner rather than later, if you can. And happy Valentine's Day.

Sincerely,
????? ♦

AMERICAN STUDIES

How undocumented immigrant students pursue a college education.

BY JONATHAN BLITZER



In Georgia, undocumented students are barred from the state's top public schools.

Melissa and Ashley, identical twins from Georgia, shared a bedroom while growing up. They had the same best friend, took classes together in high school, and dreamed of becoming artists in their own collective. "We're like two different people with one brain," Melissa liked to say.

In the spring of 2011, during their junior year, they decided to apply to college in their usual way—in tandem. The University of Georgia, in Athens, the state's flagship university, was their first choice. "All my life, I knew I wanted to go to college, even before I understood what that would entail," Ashley said. "My parents didn't go to college, so they didn't know how to navigate all this. We had to figure out the process for ourselves."

As soon as they started filling out the application online, however, they encountered a problem. The second page of the Web site wouldn't load.

Ashley called the university's admissions office to see if the site had crashed. The receptionist, who spoke in a treacly drawl, directed her to a question on the first page, which asked if the applicant was a United States citizen.

"It should say 'yes'—is that what you put?" she asked.

"We're sort of in limbo at the moment," Ashley replied. When the twins were six years old, they moved from Mexico with their parents and older sister to the suburbs of Atlanta. Victor and Verónica, their father and mother, came to Georgia legally to work in the con-

struction boom of the mid-nineties. In 2010, they applied for permanent residency, but a year later they still hadn't received a response.

"I don't know what to tell you, sweetie," the receptionist said. "It probably has to do with that."

Ashley and Melissa didn't know it, but the year before, the Georgia Board of Regents, which oversees the university system, had instituted a policy barring undocumented students from the state's top five public schools. Georgia had thirty-five public colleges, serving about three hundred and ten thousand students, of whom some five hundred were undocumented; only twenty-nine undocumented students were enrolled at the top five schools. Nevertheless, the state legislature wanted the Board of Regents to send a message. As a state senator's spokesman said, "We can't afford to have illegal immigrants taking a taxpayer-subsidized spot in our colleges." Two other states—South Carolina and Alabama—ban undocumented students from public universities.

Each year, about three thousand undocumented students graduate from high school in Georgia, but their opportunities for college are severely limited. At the public universities they're still allowed to attend, they must pay out-of-state tuition, more than double what state residents pay. To matriculate at private colleges, they have to apply as international students, and often that doesn't allow them to qualify for the financial aid they may need. Many of them have given up on applying altogether.

"I always just lived my life normally, until I tried to do stuff and couldn't," Melissa told me. She and Ashley are short, with round faces and dark eyes, and have a laid-back manner that often tips into reserve, except when they talk about their situation, which they do in chatty, almost lighthearted tones. The college application was like the driver's license they couldn't get, or the work permit for which they didn't qualify. The twins were used to improvising, and they decided to delay applying until their legal status was clarified.

On a winter day midway through the girls' senior year, their parents received a letter from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, telling them, without explanation, that their residency application had been denied. In the next

several hours, huddled in the living room, the family made a plan. Melissa and Ashley would graduate from high school; then the family would decide whether to stay in the country illegally or leave for Mexico.

An order of deportation came in the mail a few weeks later. In an apparent error, it was addressed only to their older sister, Melanie. The letter told her to leave the U.S. by June 15, 2012. Unsure what to do, the family waited, hoping that Melanie had been singled out by mistake. Then, on the day she was supposed to leave, President Obama announced that he was issuing an executive order called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which suspended the deportations of young people who had come to the U.S. as children. Melissa, Ashley, and Melanie would be allowed to stay, for the time being, but their parents' position had not changed.

Around that time, Verónica saw a post on a friend's Facebook page that mentioned Freedom University, in Athens, minutes away from the University of Georgia. It was a school for undocumented students who had been shut out of the public universities, offering free college-level instruction once a week. The school's exact location was secret, because Ku Klux Klansmen had threatened to break up classes and alert immigration authorities. The school's scrappy unconventionality attracted Ashley and Melissa; their friends were preparing for college, and the twins were restless to get on with their own educations. They filled out applications on the school's Web site and submitted short personal statements about why they wanted to attend. Soon afterward, they were accepted, and received e-mails with the address and their class schedules. One Sunday morning in August, Verónica drove Melissa and Ashley an hour east for their first day at Freedom University. In the car, they chatted nervously about what awaited them. "Who gets undocumented students all together?" Melissa remembered thinking. "This almost sounds like a setup."

The University of Georgia, in Athens, did not accept black students until 1961. The following year, in an effort to maintain segregation, the state spent four hundred and fifty thousand dollars on grants and scholarships to send black

students from Georgia to institutions in other states. Among the last schools to desegregate were the five universities that now barred undocumented students. "I see history repeating itself here," Erroll Davis, a former chancellor of the state university system and superintendent of Atlanta's public schools, told the local press. Davis had implemented the 2010 ban, but he said that he had little choice in the matter. Republican state legislators had threatened to pass an even harsher measure if the board failed to act. Referring to his former students in the public schools, Davis said to me, "All told, you spend over a hundred thousand dollars on them, and then you tell them they can't go to college in Georgia?"

In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, despite the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, school systems remained segregated, and black institutions were drastically underfunded. Between 1954 and 1965, black children in Mississippi made up fifty-seven per cent of school-aged students, but received only thirteen per cent of the state's spending on education. Throughout the South, civil-rights activists created informal institutions, called freedom schools, to educate and organize students in desperate need of academic support.

In Prince Edward County, Virginia, in 1959, the local government shut down the public-school system in order to resist integration. Freedom schools, also called training centers, sprang up in storefronts, back yards, and church basements. They educated roughly six hundred and fifty black students, providing them with courses in black history, the arts, and current events. In 1961, activists in McComb, Mississippi, founded Nonviolent High—which held classes at an office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—so that a hundred students who had been expelled from public school for protesting segregation could study algebra, English, physics, geometry, and French.

Many of the teachers at freedom schools were white college students from the Northeast. In 1964, during the Freedom Summer voter-registration drive, Mark Levy came from Queens College, in New York, to work at a school in Meridian, Mississippi. "Many of us wouldn't know how to survive down there, but these kids were survivors," he told me.

"We had to internalize that as teachers." Their authority assumed a different cast. As Jon Hale, a historian at the College of Charleston and a scholar of the freedom-school movement, said, "There's always this question of who has more knowledge. The teachers may know more about a particular subject, but they don't necessarily have the relevant life experience." Levy saw his role as encouraging students to become leaders, rather than as imposing a set curriculum. "We'd ask, If your goal is to fight segregation, what do you want that white society has—and what don't you want?" Students requested specific courses of study, performed plays, and published their own newspapers; after classes, they organized sit-ins. "They were all told at school in Meridian that they would be suspended if they were caught at a freedom school, but they came anyway," Levy said.

In April, 2011, seven undocumented student activists were arrested for blocking traffic on Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard in Atlanta while protesting the Board of Regents' policy. John Lewis, the local United States representative and a veteran of the civil-rights movement, encouraged the protesters. "I was beaten, left bloody, but I didn't give up," he told them. "And you must not give up."

Four humanities professors at the University of Georgia—Lorgia García-Peña, Pamela Voekel, Betina Kaplan, and Bethany Moreton—wanted to help fight the ban. They contacted the leaders of a group in Atlanta called the Georgia Undocumented Youth Alliance. At the time, GUYA was focussed on the arduous work of fighting individual deportation orders. One member told me, "Out of eleven hundred deportations a day, we could stop maybe one or two a month." Having the support of professors from the state's most prestigious public university was both a validation and an opportunity.

That summer, the professors met with some GUYA representatives in a seminar room at the university's Spanish department. Keish Kim, a bespectacled nineteen-year-old from Korea, told the group, "What we really want is to be able to be students. The state has stripped that identity from us." Another activist, a nineteen-year-old named Gustavo Madrigal, had graduated from high school two

years earlier and begun working four jobs, each paying less than minimum wage, to save up for out-of-state tuition at the University of Georgia. The ban blindsided him. “The premise of the Board of Regents’ policy was that we were taking someone else’s place and doing nothing with it,” he said. That struck him as ironic: because of the out-of-state-tuition law, he was actually subsidizing the cost of college for state residents. He also resented the insinuation about his scholastic ambition. “We needed the rigor of a college class, because that’s where we wanted to be.” The group agreed that the professors had a role to play as educators, and together they decided to start a freedom school to help fill the academic void. By consensus, the group chose the name Freedom University. It recalled the activism of the past, and, on T-shirts, it also made for a gratifying taunt: “F.U. Georgia.”

A few weeks later, the organizers began recruiting students, posting notices on Facebook and in Spanish and English newspapers. An activist named Beto Mendoza knocked on doors in the trailer parks on the outskirts of Athens, where many undocumented families lived, to speak to parents of prospective students. Almost a hundred students applied for some thirty places.

The viability of Freedom University would depend on two factors: money for school supplies and drivers to take students to school from across the state. Under a national immigration policy called Secure Communities, authorities could deport undocumented people who were arrested for petty crimes. Since the students weren’t eligible for driver’s licenses, they ran the risk of deportation anytime they got behind the wheel. An Athens-based organizer named Linda Lloyd, who led a group of predominantly black labor activists called the Economic Justice Coalition, offered to help. Lloyd’s work centered on registering voters and pushing for wage increases, and she was convinced that the fates of black and Latino workers were intertwined. “While we were advocating for a living wage, we found that Hispanic laborers were working for less than the minimum wage. So

we started keying in on immigrants’ rights,” she told me. The stories of deportations that broke up immigrant families reminded her of how families had been split during slavery. When she heard about Freedom University, she offered the Economic Justice Coalition as a clearing house for donations, since it was already established as a nonprofit. She also helped raise money for gas cards and enlisted volunteer drivers. Pamela Voekel told me that they needed a network of people who could arrange door-to-door pickup. They modelled their system on one developed during the Montgomery bus boycott, in 1955 and 1956.

In August, the founders held a rally at the University of Georgia, under an arch at the center of campus, to launch Freedom University. Three hundred people turned up, and the new students wore caps and gowns to simulate a graduation. Madrigal, dressed in a green satin robe, gave a speech in which he described his trip from Mexico to the United States, when he was nine years old. He and his family had been kidnapped and robbed by marauding gangs, and his mother had nearly died from dehydration. “Why am I sharing this with you?” he asked. “It’s not to gain your sympathy but to obtain your support.” The inauguration of Freedom University coincided with an anniversary: the University of Georgia’s fiftieth year with an integrated student body, which was being marked on campus by a series of events called Celebrating Courage.

When Melissa and Ashley arrived at Freedom University, the school’s organizers were still receiving menacing phone calls from anonymous vigilantes, so there were no signs posted outside. All the twins saw was a squat red brick building with green shutters, the home of a Latino community center that was lending its space.

Inside, next to a small kitchen, was a classroom, where twenty students were gathered around a table. About fifteen others sat on chairs behind them, with notebooks on their laps. The air was hot and stale, and a small fan rattled in the corner. Voekel was giving a lecture about

the pre-colonial Americas. “There was such excitement that students were practically talking over each other,” she told me. “You’d ask a question and it was like getting hit by a wall.” There were classes on racial identity in America and on semiotics and literature, and eventually there was a debate team.

As the lecture went on, the twins exchanged furtive glances. “In high school, there’d be a slide show, and you’d take practice tests,” Melissa said. “Then you’d have the real test and see how well you knew the material the teacher had just given you.” Her A.P. American-history class had been a rote recapitulation of American achievements, whereas Voekel encouraged the students to question everything they’d heard in school. “It wasn’t her saying, ‘Hernán Cortés discovered the savages,’ ” Melissa said. “These explorers weren’t saviors. They came and destroyed communities. I thought, Is she allowed to say this? Are we breaking some rules here?”

When they weren’t in class, the students at Freedom University worked at fast-food restaurants, supermarkets, and construction sites. “Under the circumstances, there was this understanding that attending Freedom U. and being in the classroom was a revolutionary action,” Melissa said. In a small room next to the kitchen was a makeshift nursery, where some of the students brought their children or younger siblings to play while their partners or parents were working. During a break, Ashley and Melissa milled around, eating pizza off paper plates, too timid at first to approach the other students. But the DACA policy, which had just been introduced, gave the newcomers something to talk about. “You’d say, ‘Hi, I’m So-and-So. Have you submitted your DACA application yet?’ ” Ashley told me. “It was the icebreaker.”

“You learn about your status as an undocumented person, and it’s no longer, like, Oh, I deserve this, because my family came here illegally,” Melissa said. She hadn’t realized how controversial the term “illegal immigrant” was until someone admonished her for using it in class. She was floored by the idea that such labels had turbulent histories. In one book she was assigned, “Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal,” by Aviva Chomsky, she came across the following



sentence: "Illegality as we know it today came into existence after 1965," when Congress overhauled the national immigration laws.

From the earliest days of Freedom University, a group of students held protests, called "actions," at public universities and at the offices of the Board of Regents. At first, Melissa and Ashley declined to participate. The demonstrations sometimes resulted in arrests, and, during their first year, they didn't yet have DACA protection. Verónica made them promise not to get in trouble. They tended to keep their heads down, a habit they had learned from their parents. "They are definitely the type of people who had it ingrained in them that immigrants are here to work and that anything they get, even jobs, is a kind of favor to them," Melissa said. When I met Verónica—a warm, exuberant woman in her mid-forties—she regaled me with stories of immigrant life in Georgia as though she were telling jokes. The punch lines were barbed and frequently unsavory, but she laughed anyway, darkly amused by the daily slights she suffered. She told me that she rarely faced outright hostility while at work, however, even though her job, as a land surveyor, frequently took her to the state's rural areas. The sight of a Mexican woman in a pickup truck was less jarring to people than seeing her at a P.T.A. meeting. She used to show up at her daughters' school to volunteer, only to be told politely that her help wasn't needed.

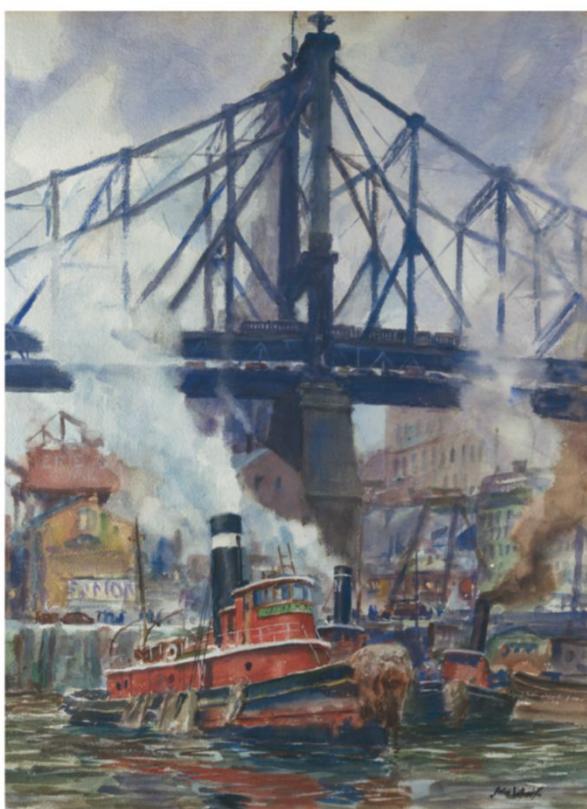
Once the twins received DACA status, in 2013, they got driver's licenses and began working legally. Melissa took a job at a McDonald's, where one of her aunts was employed, and Ashley became a waitress at a Mexican restaurant. Verónica worried about them less, and their relationship took on a more typically American aspect: the girls became more independent and defiant. Before long, they started participating in actions, where they quickly developed a reputation for fierceness. At one event, in which students disrupted a meeting of the Board of Regents in Atlanta, Melissa accosted one gray-haired member, who was stunned to be confronted. "I've been here all my life," Melissa said. "I'm a good student.

I should have the chance to apply to school." She told me later, "It was the first time I ever spoke passionately to someone who had more authority than I did."

In the fall of 2014, Freedom University moved to the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center, in downtown Atlanta. Three of the four founding professors had left the University of Georgia to teach out of state, and they named as their successor a recent Ph.D. from Emory University, Laura Emiko Soltis, who had done fieldwork with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, in Florida. Soltis, a voluble thirty-three-year-old from Minnesota, saw herself more as an activist than as an academic, and her leadership marked a shift in the school's mission. Student activism had always been a mainstay at Freedom University, but, within two years, it became the school's trademark. One of Soltis's first moves was to take Melissa, Ashley, and eight other students to Jackson, Mississippi, for the fiftieth anniversary of

the Freedom Summer. Rita Bender, who had started a community center in Mississippi in 1964 and whose husband, Michael Schwerner, was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan that year, congratulated the girls on their work. "I'm one of your biggest groupies," she said. Melissa, who'd read about Bender in class, was speechless.

The main target of the increased activism at Freedom University was the state policy. "We didn't think the ban would last," Lorgia García-Peña told me. "We thought we could embarrass the university presidents and regents, but they were scared of the legislature." Melissa and Ashley grappled with feeling like two people at once: during the week, they worked minimum-wage jobs; on the weekend, they were activists spouting social theory. Their co-workers often recognized them from the local television news. "Once you have a greater knowledge of injustices happening in the world, it feels neglectful not to do anything about it," Melissa said. "At the same



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"Quit hogging the sheets, loveless void!"

• •

time, you also have to keep living life."

One winter afternoon, the two drove to the University of Georgia to "integrate" a classroom. Seventy professors, college students, and undocumented activists gathered as organizers delivered speeches until the building closed for the night. One of them was Lonnie King, who had led the Atlanta Student Movement, in March, 1960. As college students, he and Julian Bond, who went on to lead the N.A.A.C.P., had published a letter titled "An Appeal for Human Rights," in which they announced their plan "to use every legal and non-violent means at our disposal to secure full citizenship." Less than a week later, they launched sit-ins at segregated businesses throughout Atlanta. "Latinos are treated as badly as blacks," King told the group at the university. "Oppressed communities need to come together!"

Melissa and Ashley had decided on a sisterly division of labor: if Melissa was arrested, Ashley would break the news to Verónica. When the police arrived, and ordered everyone to leave, Melissa gave her keys and backpack to Ashley and remained in the classroom. The

officers led her down a back stairwell and handcuffed her wrists behind her back, while Ashley watched from outside, through a small window on the first floor. She took out her phone to film, and began chanting, "Education, not segregation!"

Every year, Melissa and Ashley would apply to college. In 2013, they got into Syracuse University, but, as undocumented applicants, they did not qualify for full financial aid, and they couldn't afford the tuition. The following year, they applied to twenty-two schools between the two of them; the year after that, ten. They were wait-listed at Smith, Trinity, Dartmouth, and Mount Holyoke. The schools with better aid packages were also the most selective. The odds of getting in, with funding, were "like the chances of getting a hole in one in golf," Voekel told me. Melissa said, "As each year passes, you feel less qualified. I'm still presenting this profile of me as a high-school student."

Professors at Freedom University wrote students recommendations and gave them application advice. They called

colleagues and admissions offices, even showing up in person. The strategy was imperfect and laborious, but last year six of the school's twenty-six students received full scholarships—to Dartmouth, Eastern Connecticut State University, Hampshire, Berea, and Tougaloo. Those who didn't get in continued their coursework at Freedom University.

A few times a year, the students went on college tours up and down the East Coast, where they were hosted by Freedom University alumni and led panels about the school. Among the students, an accidental hierarchy emerged. Those with DACA identification documents could fly; the others had to stay home. Some of the unlucky ones came to represent DACA for the disparity, and Melissa and Ashley always specified that they counted themselves among the "privileged."

In Georgia, the girls gave talks at local universities, targeting campuses that were directly affected by the ban. "We don't have actual leverage over school resources," Melissa told me. "But students at these schools do." Chapters of student activists cropped up at the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, and Emory, the most distinguished private university in the state. In 2014, John Lewis delivered the commencement address at Emory. "It doesn't make sense that we live in a country, in a society, where more than twelve million people are living in the shadows," he said. He urged students to "get in the way and find a way; make a way out of no way." It was what he called "getting in good trouble, necessary trouble." Even before Lewis's address, Emory students, working with their counterparts at Freedom University, had been meeting with the college president to press him to reconsider the admissions status of undocumented students. In 2015, the university made students with DACA status eligible for full financial aid. "If it weren't for Freedom University, that never would have happened so quickly," John Latting, the dean of admissions, told me.

Even so, the twins' own determination to get into college, after three years of applying, was beginning to flag. Each applied to only one school for the 2016 academic year: Melissa to Dartmouth, where Voekel taught, and Ashley to

Emory, where Freedom University's debate coach was on the faculty. Both were initially rejected. Then, one Saturday last spring, the twins were at home playing cards with Verónica when Ashley noticed a voice mail from a member of the admissions office at Emory, telling her that, after further consideration, she'd been accepted. Ashley put the phone on speaker, and the three of them danced around it together. Then Verónica asked, "Did the admissions officer say anything about Melissa?"

"I always pictured it very abstractly," Ashley said. "If we ever got into college, it would be the both of us. I never processed that it might not be."

On the night of the Presidential election, the twins stayed up late watching the returns, alternating between despondency and anger. Donald Trump had promised mass deportations, and he'd threatened to cancel all of Obama's executive orders, which included DACA. At 5 A.M., Ashley wrote on Facebook, "I so desperately want to hold my parents close and tell them that I love them and that I'm sorry and that it'll be okay, even though I am in no position to make that promise." In the morning, the family held a meeting just as they had when their residency application was rejected. The question of whether to leave the country arose yet again; only now Ashley was nearing the end of her first semester at Emory. Once more, they decided to wait.

Melissa was working as an usher at a theme park at Stone Mountain, a massive quartz dome with a carving of three Confederate generals which had once served as a meeting place for the Klan. She was repelled by the symbolism, but she had friends at the park, and the hours were flexible; plus, she got to work with actors. "It's the entertainment business," she said.

One morning in November, Melissa took me to the Old Fourth Ward of Atlanta, a maze of streets and back alleys where she likes to wander among the sprawling murals and graffiti. As we made our way down Edgewood Avenue, she admitted that she was thinking about abandoning the idea of college and becoming an artist. Still, she said, "I talk to all my friends who are currently in college, and I know it's the

place for me. I can't have the conversations I want to have in my home town."

The twins still saw each other frequently, but their lives were diverging for the first time. I met Ashley for dinner one night, at an Italian bistro near campus. She wore a U.C.L.A. sweatshirt and a white headband, and had a nose ring. Over pasta, as jazz played in the background, we talked about the courses she was taking. The Presidential campaign had soured her on classes that dealt directly with current events. "No courses about race and politics right now—it'll get too personal," she said. Instead, she enrolled in a film survey, a sociology lecture, Portuguese, and a seminar called Cities of the Lusophone World. The classes were rigorous, but not overwhelming, and she vowed not to let her fluctuating grades be a source of stress. She was four years older than her roommate, but she had quickly fallen in with a group of friends her age, mostly upperclassmen who were activists.

Last fall, Freedom University began renting space at an Atlanta-area college from a sympathetic Latino student organization. College was now literally in sight for the undocumented students, and enrollment had reached about forty. The Sunday following my dinner with Ashley, the twins and I went to class at Freedom University, which occupies a glassed-in lounge in the middle of campus. The current students reverentially referred to them as "the elders." The twins were slightly wary: Freedom University was changing in subtle ways. The classes were more structured than before—Soltis had expanded the curriculum to include college prep along with meditation and yoga. But, as the activism increased, the classroom discussions occasionally seemed enervated, the participants vaguely distracted. Because Soltis led the actions, the lines of authority had blurred. Her involvement was not just academic but personal, and that made some of the students resentful at times.

Their leader, who was quick to applaud them for the risks they took as activists, wasn't undocumented herself. Soltis had trained students to challenge authority, and at Freedom University, she represented the school administration.

When we arrived, a young black professor named Ryan Maltese was teaching an introductory course on American politics. Maltese, who is broad-shouldered and gregarious, had diagrammed some of the essential facts of DACA on the board. A couple of students had asked what would happen if the President-elect eliminated the program, and Maltese stressed all the logistical complications involved in undoing it. The real concern, he said, was that the Georgia policy may already have prevented young immigrants from qualifying for DACA, which required that applicants be enrolled in, or have graduated from, an American high school. "If the state basically says to you that college isn't ever going to be an option, you don't stay in high school," he said. "You drop out and find work."

That weekend, the Board of Regents announced that it was taking two schools off the list of banned universities: the schools had accepted a hundred per cent of the academically qualified citizen applicants, and so could now open their doors to the undocumented. The logic underlying the original policy remained unchanged, as did the law precluding in-state tuition. A Democrat on the Georgia State Senate subcommittee on higher education told me that, in the months before the Presidential election, some Republicans were reconsidering the tuition law. When Trump won, they changed their minds.

Ashley, Melissa, and I left Freedom University together around six o'clock, and went to Emory for coffee at the student center. After class, Melissa had lingered to talk to a boy she hadn't seen in a while, and Ashley gently ribbed her. "It feels good being back," Melissa said. "There was a time when Freedom University was taking over my life, so I had to pull back a little." After all the actions she'd organized and the talks she'd given, she still wasn't a freshman in college.

We wandered out to the quad. Ashley had midterms to study for, and Melissa needed to get home. The car keys were in Ashley's dorm room, so the twins crossed campus to fetch them. They walked side by side before heading separate ways. ♦



A REPORTER AT LARGE

ARE YOU MY MOTHER?

A gay couple, an adoption plan, and a brutal custody battle.

BY IAN PARKER



Circe Hamilton (left) adopted her son a year and a half after she broke up with Kelly Gunn (right), but the women remained



close, and Gunn became the boy's godmother. That relationship formed part of the debate about what constitutes parenthood.

The week before Labor Day, 2016, Circe Hamilton, a freelance photographer in her mid-forties, was preparing to move back to the U.K., after twenty years in New York. She had begun to think of the city as an obstruction; she had recently struggled to make a living, and felt that she was depriving her young son of a gentler, slower childhood in west London, with access to English relatives, the National Health Service, and muddy playgrounds under gray skies. Hamilton is an American citizen—and, she recently learned, a descendant of Alexander Hamilton—but she grew up in England, sounds English, and has a British passport. When her friend Valentina Rice hosted a farewell dinner for her, on August 30th, Hamilton was surrounded by expatriate British women with careers in the media and in fashion. The guests ate blueberry polenta cake and said goodbye to someone they understood to be a single mother.

Hamilton's son, Abush, was born in Ethiopia, and was adopted by Circe in August, 2011, when he was a toddler. A year and a half earlier, Hamilton had broken up with Kelly Gunn, the woman who had been her romantic partner for several years. In their final year together, Hamilton and Gunn had begun the process of an overseas adoption. After the separation, Hamilton continued to pursue the process. The two women remained in close contact, and a year after Abush arrived Gunn became his godmother. Despite some friction between the women about the meaning of that role, Gunn and Abush developed a strong bond. He often stayed with her overnight; he loved her dogs.

On the morning of the farewell dinner, Hamilton had walked with Abush from her home, in the West Village, to Gunn's apartment, on Sullivan Street, a block south of Washington Square Park. The apartment is modern, with glossy dark floors and a wall of windows. Gunn had become wealthy by supplying Apple with display fixtures for its stores; she had run her own design company, and had been a partner in another. She owned property in Los Angeles, and a summer house on Fire Island. She had offered to take Abush to the beach for a few nights while Hamilton finished packing. Hamilton would join them on Thursday, September 1st, and then bring Abush back

to New York before flying with him to London, on Saturday night.

Hamilton is tall, with long hair and a long, pale face. Gunn, who is fifty-three, has cropped graying hair and wears round white-rimmed glasses on a round face; she prefers adventurously billowing clothes made of dark fabrics. Compared with Hamilton, who is unimpressed by displays of emotion, Gunn is happier to use the language of therapy, and is readier to share her feelings. Disorder can agitate her—she once sent an employee to her home to deal with an insect—and on the day of Hamilton's farewell party Gunn was upset about a blocked toilet. She had mentioned it in a text message, but was repelled when Hamilton carried her own plunger across town and into Gunn's apartment. Hamilton later recalled that, after she dropped off Abush with Gunn, she thought that her ex seemed “more panicked than usual.”

The next day, Wednesday, a shipping company collected Hamilton's belongings. She had what she thought would be her final photo shoot in New York: a portrait of Emma Forbes, a British TV presenter, for *Hello!* Gunn later sent her pictures of Abush having fun at the beach.

At one o'clock on Thursday, Hamilton was at home cleaning, expecting to leave for Fire Island in the evening, when she got a call from a woman who introduced herself as Nancy Chemtob. A New York family and matrimonial lawyer, Chemtob founded her own firm in her twenties; in the two and a half decades since, she has represented such clients as Bobby Flay, Star Jones, and Diandra Douglas, the ex-wife of Michael Douglas, in divorce proceedings. Her style is amused and unsentimental, and she has a strong Long Island accent. (Today, when Hamilton and Chemtob refer to each other, they use inexpert, mocking approximations of the other's accent.)

Chemtob told Hamilton that she represented Kelly Gunn. Hamilton only half-registered what came next. Chemtob recalls telling Hamilton that Gunn had just asked a New York court to recognize her as one of Abush's parents and award her joint legal and physical custody. As an interim measure, Gunn was seeking a restraining order that would stop Hamilton from taking him out of the country. Chemtob told Hamilton that, at 2:30 P.M., she must appear before

a matrimonial judge on Centre Street. She should bring Abush's American and British passports.

Hamilton began to shake. “I fell apart,” she said recently. (Chemtob, recalling Hamilton's shock, said, “She had no clue.”) Hamilton changed, got in a taxi, and called Valentina Rice. Rice began asking friends to recommend lawyers, and one of them spoke to a family-law specialist, who said that Hamilton should “get the hell out of there.” Without legal representation, she was “walking into an ambush.” Rice relayed this advice, but Hamilton, she told me, “felt she had to go, and she didn't have her son.”

In the courtroom, Gunn and Hamilton didn't speak to each other. “It was an out-of-body experience,” Hamilton recalled. “I thought I was in a really weird play: ‘Where am I, and how did I end up here?’”

Chemtob told the judge that Gunn was in a “co-parenting relationship where the child one hundred per cent believes, and knows, that he has two mothers.” Gunn and Hamilton had raised Abush “as both parents equally.” She acknowledged that Abush usually called Kelly Gunn by her first name—truncated to “Kee”—but only because Gunn and Hamilton had agreed that “‘Ma’ and ‘Mommy’ would be confusing.” Hamilton was a “flight risk,” Chemtob said, and Gunn had become “very concerned about the welfare of the child.”

The judge invited Hamilton to speak. “I have no idea why I was brought into the courtroom,” she said. “I am the sole parent.”

The judge allowed Gunn's petition to progress, and Hamilton relinquished Abush's passports. Leaving the courtroom, she briefly embraced Gunn, who was weeping, and whispered, “I'm so sorry.” Hamilton later told me, “I did feel sorry for her. It was ‘Why do you have to do this?’” Hamilton then cancelled her flight, reenrolled Abush in school, and hired a lawyer.

Gunn v. Hamilton—an inquiry into whether Abush had two parents or one—began the following week, and was still running in the new year. The proceedings, which exhumed hundreds of e-mails of love and regret, became an intimate history of a New York romance and its aftermath: a study of what counts as splitting

up, what counts as a family, and, in a quiet but stubborn subtext, whether the ability to pay for good dentistry enhances a legal claim to be something more than a godmother.

The case was the first of its kind in the city. "It's as if you gave me the keys to your apartment and, suddenly, I'm saying, 'The apartment is *mine*,'" Hamilton told me, bleakly, last fall. "What the fuck? Where does it end?" Her life had been put on hold, and her possessions were stuck in a shipping warehouse in New Jersey. Abush had returned to school; Hamilton couldn't take him out of state without permission. The court had allotted Gunn time with Abush on Sundays and on Thursday afternoons.

Several times a week for months, Hamilton and Gunn sat a few feet from each other in a bright, shabby courtroom, at 80 Centre Street. A sign on the wall noted that "loud and angry words generally indicate a weak argument," but the white noise of the city, through open windows, risked drowning out any form of speech gentler than a reprimand. Abush was not in the courtroom, but visitors in the public seats sometimes glimpsed his image when attorneys looked at e-mail printouts with photo attachments: a smiling boy with big eyes and a high forehead, playing with a dog or being held in the air.

If Gunn had filed her petition even a few days earlier, it might well have been quickly dismissed, and Abush would have spent Christmas in Oxfordshire. But Gunn came to court just after New York had expanded the definition of who counts as a parent. On September 8th, when Judge Frank Nervo began hearing the case, he understood—as did the half-dozen attorneys in front of him, and the wider community of family lawyers—that Gunn's petition would help set the limits of that expansion.

If Gunn won the case, this would create a striking precedent. Her supporters would laud the court for having restrained a woman who, with blithe unilateralism, had attempted to put an ocean between a small boy and one of his mothers. Supporters of Hamilton would see presumption rewarded; to them, a Gunn victory would suggest that legal chutzpah, and the funds to pay for it, could convert the desire to be a parent into the fact of being one. In New York City, in particular,



GIVE A MAN A FISH AND YOU FEED HIM FOR A DAY.
TEACH A MAN TO YODEL AND YOU MAKE HIM EAT ALONE.

© Garry Trudeau

where improvised extended families are commonplace, such a ruling would risk emboldening people who, having been invited into the lives of single parents, then object to being asked to leave: neighbors, babysitters, childless friends, siblings, flings.

"It's 'Kramer vs. Kramer' 2016," Nancy Chemtob told me, over a drink, in October. "It's *wild*." She had the air of a morning-news anchor after a few cups of coffee. The litigation was in its second month. Chemtob hadn't taken a day off since the summer. In court, she could be oddly playful. Several times, after fractious exchanges between her and Hamilton's lead attorney, Bonnie Rabin, of Cohen Rabin Stine Schumann, she asked me, in mock-exhaustion, "Do you want to take over?" Chemtob's informal style sometimes surprised Hamilton's lawyers, who maintained a more scholarly air. One of Rabin's colleagues told me that she'd never before seen the phrase "the bun was in the oven" in a legal memo. During the proceedings, Rabin, whose firm frequently handles L.G.B.T. cases, often struck a pose of speechless astonishment at what she was obliged to hear from the other side.

By the time Chemtob met with me, Gunn had spent eleven days on the witness stand. Chemtob recalled a recent conference in Judge Nervo's chambers, in which he addressed both sets of lawyers and protested that the slow-moving case was creating a backlog. "He was really sweet," she said. "He was 'Look, I'd love to be on the front page of the *Law Journal*, but I'd also love this case to be over. Why don't we, instead of making law, just see how we can get both to settle?'" But under New York law there's no legal middle ground between being a parent and not being one. Neither party was likely to settle, and, whatever the Judge's ruling, an appeal was inevitable. Chemtob, confident in her case and aware of Gunn's financial advantage, had repeatedly urged Rabin to "throw in the towel."

Chemtob mentioned a recent client, a financier who had impregnated a woman he met on Ashley Madison, a Web site for people seeking extramarital affairs; he did not want to support their child. Boys in fourth grade, Chemtob said, should be taught that "if you ever have sex you need to flush the condom down the toilet." She also recalled how she took Gunn's case. An acquaintance, Jane Aronson—a pediatrician who

calls herself the Orphan Doctor—had contacted her. Aronson's expertise, which has drawn her into friendships with Angelina Jolie and Hugh Jackman, includes the medical evaluation, from afar, of overseas children who are being considered for adoption in America. A few years ago, Aronson sought advice from Chemtob when she separated from her civil partner, a woman with whom she had adopted two sons; Aronson secured joint custody.

In late August, Aronson was sitting with Gunn in Christopher Park, outside the Stonewall Inn. She called Chemtob and handed Gunn the phone. "She sounded like a nut job," Chemtob recalled. To the extent that she could follow Gunn's scattered account—years of co-parenting; a looming flight to London—it seemed clear that she was legally unprotected. "The law's one hundred per cent against you," Chemtob told her. "You have absolutely no rights." (Gunn recalls that Chemtob used a disquieting phrase: "legal stranger.") Nevertheless, she suggested that Gunn make an appointment: "Let's see what we can do." Gunn told me that she had approached Chemtob, at Aronson's urging, hoping merely that "a strong letter" might compel Hamilton to "talk about this."

When Gunn came to Chemtob's office, weeping, on August 24th, accompanied by her sister, Jennifer, Chemtob was able to share some remarkably encouraging news. She had just read up on an ongoing case, *Brooke S.B. v. Elizabeth A.C.C.*, which was being closely watched by L.G.B.T. legal activists, but which had barely registered in Chemtob's midtown firm. (Describing her daily routine, Chemtob said, "I confess that I have to read the *Post* first.") The litigation, involving two women from western New York who were formerly in a relationship, and a boy who turned seven last year, was about to be decided by the Court of Appeals in Albany. Oral arguments had been heard in June. Chemtob explained that, if the petitioner in *Brooke S.B.* won, the precedent might make Gunn something more than a legal stranger. If the case went the other way, Gunn's litigation could take *Brooke S.B.*'s place as a trailblazer. "Nancy made me feel confident," Gunn told me. She recalled asking Jennifer, "Am I doing this?" Jennifer replied, "You're doing this."

Chemtob recommended filing a petition before Hamilton flew to London. She also suggested that Gunn wear contact lenses in place of her severe white glasses—advice that Gunn ignored.

(Chemtob said to me, "I always tell moms to dress like moms, dads to dress like dads.") An hour after the meeting, Gunn went to a West Village playground, where she hosted a farewell pizza party for Abush and some of his friends.

Americans are in unusual agreement about a parent's right to parent. According to Chris Gottlieb, a law professor at N.Y.U., who co-directs a family-law clinic there, this view "has stood the test of time, and couldn't be more essential to our democratic way of thinking." Gottlieb worked on an amicus brief in the *Brooke S.B.* case. On the issue of parental rights, she said, "I, as a progressive, agree with people whom I wouldn't agree with on almost anything." She explained, "We agree on this—you have the right to raise your kid in ways that I fundamentally disagree with. This right really has been understood as an on-off switch. If you're a parent, you get to make all the critical decisions: what religion your child is raised in, where they live, whether they can stay out until eleven and smoke marijuana."

So when the definition of "parent" becomes uncertain, it creates turmoil in the law. "The thing about parental rights is that you cannot give them to one person without taking them away from somebody else, unless it's with that person's consent," Gottlieb said. "That's unlike other rights. Most progressives would agree with me that you can give L.G.B.T. people the right to marry without taking anything away from a straight person. That's not true with this. When you give rights to *Brooke B.*, it's at the expense of *Elizabeth C.*"

New York's statutes describe the obligations and entitlements of a parent, but they don't define what a parent is. That definition derives from case law. In 1991, in a ruling in *Alison D. v. Virginia M.*, a case involving an estranged lesbian couple and a child, the Court of Appeals opted for a definition with "bright line" clarity. A parent was either a biological parent or an adoptive parent; there were no other kinds. Lawyers in this field warn of "opening the floodgates"—an uncontrolled flow of dubious, would-be parents. Alison D. kept the gates shut, so that a biological mother wouldn't find, say, that she had accidentally given away partial custody of her child to a



"With the knees, fellas, lift with the knees!"

worthless ex-boyfriend. But many saw the decision as discriminatory against same-sex couples, who can choose to raise a child together but can't share the act of producing one. Judge Judith Kaye, in a dissent that has since been celebrated, noted that millions of American children had been born into families with a gay or lesbian parent; the court's decision would restrict the ability of these children to "maintain bonds that may be crucial to their development."

Starting in the mid-nineties, some U.S. states began recognizing a new legal category: the de-facto parent. This usually defined someone who had been given permission, by a legal parent, to share parental duties; who had lived with, and bonded with, a child; and who had assumed some of the financial burdens of parenthood. This person would not necessarily be granted full parental rights but would at least have standing to argue, in the face of a legal parent's objection, that a child's best interests would be served by a continued relationship.

New York couldn't easily follow suit. Meg Canby, a matrimonial attorney at Blank Rome, a large law firm, told me that Alison D. was a "terrible ruling that had the imprimatur of precedent, leaving the state with a higher bar." In 1995, the state started allowing unmarried people—including same-sex partners—to become second parents through adoption. In Canby's view, this was "a salve on the wounds of Alison D.," but it wasn't equality: most heterosexual parents didn't have to get around this bureaucratic obstacle.

Over the years, the Alison D. rule was often challenged, and was sometimes bent a little. In 2006, the Court of Appeals decided that a man who had behaved as a child's father and was thought by the child to be a father—what another jurisdiction would call a de-facto parent—couldn't evade paying child support by proving that he wasn't in fact the biological father. In 2010, Bonnie Rabin represented a lesbian client who secured standing as a non-biological, non-adoptive parent, although on the narrow ground that she and her ex had entered a civil partnership in Vermont. Yet to the consternation of many Alison D. stuck, even after New York enacted same-sex marriage, in 2011. Meg Canby said that lawyers like her were "waiting and pray-

ing" for a case that looked something like Brooke S.B.

In 2015, Canby spoke on a panel about family-law issues affecting gay clients. She recalled that, afterward, Brett Figlewski, of LeGal, the L.G.B.T. bar association of Greater New York, "chased me down the street and got me into a Starbucks, and said, 'Meg, I think we've got the case.'" Canby went on, "I sat with him, reading the trial, turning over the pages, looking at the facts, and just saying, 'This could be the one.'"

The women at the center of the case, Brooke Barone and Elizabeth Chapman, grew up near Jamestown, southwest of Buffalo, and began a relationship in 2006. After Chapman became pregnant, through a donor, she and Barone had a baby shower. Barone cut the infant's umbilical cord. The child took Barone's last name. An announcement in the Jamestown *Post-Journal* named two mothers and four grandparents. The couple broke up in 2010. Barone, now living a few miles away, continued to provide financial support and to spend regular time with the child, who knew her as "Mama B." When Chapman married another woman, Barone attended the wedding. But, in 2013, Chapman denied Barone further access to the child.

Barone, then aged thirty-one, went to family court in Chautauqua County. A judge was sympathetic, calling the circumstances "very disturbing," but said that the law gave her no opportunity to intervene. (The decision, Barone told me in a phone interview, caused her attorney to cry.) In an unsuccessful appeal, Barone drew a contrast between her legal effort and more usual family-court cases—the kind that, as Meg Canby put it, involve "the mothers of children trying to drag fathers, kicking and screaming, to take responsibility for their kids, to see them, participate in their lives, to pay for them." Canby went on, "Brooke is *beginning* to come in and do that—and she's shown the door. There's just a fundamental unfairness."

In September, 2015, the Court of Appeals agreed to review the case. For those who hoped to see Alison D. over-

turned, the promise of Brooke S.B. derived in part from the fact that it involved, as Canby put it, "unsophisticated people from a rural small community." A more typical litigant would live in the city, be "very connected to the L.G.B.T.-rights community," and be aware that adoption was the only way

for an unmarried same-sex partner in New York to have unquestioned parental rights. Barone's misconceived certainty about being a mother was a legal asset. Blank Rome joined with Susan Sommer, from Lambda Legal, a civil-rights nonprofit. By last June, when Sommer delivered oral arguments, Barone hadn't seen the boy she considered

her son for three years—except by accident, in the supermarket.

On August 30th, the day that Hamilton dropped Abush off at Sullivan Street, the Court of Appeals published its decision; Barone did have standing as a parent. Judge Sheila Abdus-Salaam wrote that the Alison D. standard was "unworkable when applied to increasingly varied familial relationships." In circumstances like Barone's, Abdus-Salaam wrote, what should matter is a *plan* to parent—so that "where a petitioner proves by clear and convincing evidence that he or she has agreed with the biological parent of the child to conceive and raise the child as co-parents, the petitioner has presented sufficient evidence to achieve standing to seek custody and visitation of the child." (In April, Abdus-Salaam was found dead in the Hudson River, an apparent suicide.)

The Court of Appeals stopped short of establishing a de-facto rule for New York. The new rule would apply quite narrowly, in cases in which the evidence allowed a judge to feel confident about what a couple had been thinking *before* a child arrived. The rule would not apply when a child (or a pregnancy) predated a relationship. A case like that, the court wrote, was "a matter left for another day." The *Times'* editorial board described the decision, in a headline, as "AN OVERDUE VICTORY FOR GAY PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN." In October, Barone began seeing her son again.

Alison D. was gone. The floodgates had not been opened, but they were less



guarded. Soon after the Brooke ruling, a Long Island courtroom began to consider whether a ten-year-old boy, born into a Bay Shore ménage involving two women and a man, might be the state's first child to have three legal parents. Chemtob called Gunn, who was on her way to Fire Island with Abush. "It's the craziest thing," she recalls saying. "Brooke was just decided in your favor!" (Chemtob told me that the courts "would have thrown me out" if she'd filed two days earlier.) The next day, Gunn left Abush in Cherry Grove with friends he knew well, and she caught a ferry. In the rain, feeling sick with anxiety, she made her way to Centre Street.

During the trial, Hamilton and Gunn sat behind their lawyers. Hamilton usually held in her lap a black cardboard box containing photographs of Abush. Gunn began each morning by turning her chair slightly, making it easier to keep her back to Hamilton.

On September 8th, the first day that Gunn and Hamilton met in front of Judge Nervo, Rabin argued that the petition should be dismissed, in part because Chemtob had supported it with untruths, including the idea that Gunn referred to Abush as her son. (Rabin later answered a question of mine about Chemtob's strategy by saying that some lawyers "throw everything against the wall and hope that it sticks.") Nervo demurred; the case began.

"Parent" is a word no different—and I hate to say it, Your Honor—than a word like 'God,' or a word like 'love,'" Chemtob said. "It's a word that you can't really define. But when you talk about God, love, or parent, it elicits emotion. It's a feeling that you can't explain. You could be in a church or a synagogue and everybody believes in God. But what's God? What's love? You know it when it's there. That's what a parent is."

Rabin acknowledged that, while Hamilton and Gunn were a couple, they had made "a joint plan" to adopt. But that plan "was terminated, aborted, extinguished—clearly—when the parties separated." She went on, "You can encourage a loving relationship. You can encourage time together. You can encourage someone to support you, and I mean emotionally. That doesn't encourage them to be a parent." Hamilton had valued Gunn—as a god-

mother, Rabin said. "But Ms. Gunn wanted more. Ms. Gunn doesn't get to have more. That's not the way the world works."

On September 12th, Gunn took the witness stand and declared that Abush was her son.

"Objection," Rabin said.

On a morning last December when the case had paused, Gunn and her attorney were drinking coffee in Soho House, a members' club in the meatpacking district. Gunn was wearing a long-sleeved shirt that hid a line of tattooed paw prints near her left elbow. The tattoos, sometimes visible in court, commemorated the death of a pet Chihuahua. I asked Gunn about another design, half-visible under the watch on her right wrist, where, in 2012, she had tattooed Abush's name, in the Ethiopian script. "Whenever we take photos with my arm around him, it's there," Gunn told me. She had a smiling, earnest manner. "I say, 'Even when we're not together, I look at this and you're with me.'"

The daughter of a firefighter, Gunn grew up in Queens and left home at seventeen. She said that she got "a little lost in the cracks for a few years" before going to college, in the Midwest. She returned to New York permanently in her thirties, and only fully reconnected with her parents and her sister a decade ago. She has a brother, who has children, but who is not on good terms with the family.

Gunn and Hamilton's relationship began in 2004, after they met at a Valentine's Day party. Gunn was thirty-nine, Hamilton thirty-one. They moved in together in 2007, and bought the Sullivan Street apartment. By then, Gunn had discovered her commercial skills. She worked for a firm that supplied Apple Stores with large printed graphics; she also founded her own company, Shasty, to make acrylic signs. She was often away from New York. In 2012, Gunn earned three million dollars.

Hamilton became a part-time office manager at Shasty. She still had a career as a photographer: in addition to magazine and corporate work, she had a sideline, which had grown out of a personal art project; she made commissioned portraits of women who, often for therapeutic, confidence-building reasons, wished to be photographed unclothed for the first time.

Gunn told me that, in the winter of 2007, "I asked Circe to marry me." This was before same-sex marriage was legal in New York. She bought two diamond rings, and gave one to Hamilton. Gunn recalled the moment as awkward. "Her own parents got divorced—she's afraid of it," Gunn said. "She laughed and got really nervous and uncomfortable. Like, 'Oh, gosh.'" (Hamilton recalls the ring, and other gifts of jewelry, but told me that she didn't recognize the moment as a proposal, and never thought of herself as being engaged.) Gunn said that the episode illustrated Hamilton's emotional evasiveness: "She would say, 'I know I don't say 'I love you' that often.' Something happens to her mouth, she can't get the words out. So I take her *actions* as an implication of her feelings."

They had started talking about adoption. Hamilton took the lead in that conversation, and in the process that followed. "Circe needed this so badly," Gunn told me. "I had a big identity, a big job. And, without getting too binary, I wanted this for my partner, you know." In the fall of 2007, they attended an event for would-be adoptive parents at Rutgers, and Jane Aronson was one of the speakers; shortly afterward, they had a consultation with her.

Hamilton looked into applying for an overseas adoption, feeling that the process would be more predictable, and less fraught, than a domestic one. She was drawn to an agency that encouraged ongoing contact between adopted children and their birth families. In 2009, the couple applied for an adoption from either Ethiopia or Nepal. This required subterfuge. No country, in the shrinking category of countries allowing foreign adoptions, welcomed applications from same-sex couples. Hamilton presented herself as straight and unmarried; she even invented a boyfriend. The two women discussed initiating a second-parent adoption once a child was living with them. Gunn was included in the paperwork that began to amass—criminal-background checks, financial and medical reports, an apartment inspection—but only as a roommate.

Gunn told me that, over time, Hamilton forgot that she was enacting a fiction. She added, "I think she got too comfortable with it." Gunn went on to

describe Hamilton as homophobic: "She doesn't have a lot of gay friends."

The romantic relationship did not survive the year. Gunn voiced concern about the responsibilities of motherhood, and about the potential psychological difficulties that an adopted child might have. She was also attached to the life of comfort that she'd managed to build. (By now, this included the summer house on Fire Island. Hamilton recalled Gunn saying, "I just want to be drinking cocktails by the pool.") She rekindled a relationship with a former girlfriend, Maria Piñeres, an artist who lived in Los Angeles. As Gunn told the court, "This opened up a can of worms."

Judge Nervo interjected, "Who would have thought?"

According to Hamilton and her friends, the couple broke up in December, 2009. Gunn rejected that description. She said that they had experienced a moment of crisis—"a big excavation of important things that we needed to work through before the baby comes." She added, "I am entitled to go through a crisis. I'm entitled to take time and navigate that with a partner." Although she and Hamilton stopped sleeping together, their sense of family survived, she said. She claims that Hamilton didn't truly move away from Sullivan Street until 2011. "She came every day!" Gunn told me. "Her computer was still in my apartment." Hamilton sublet a series of apartments, but, in Gunn's opinion, these were merely for "lovers." As Gunn put it, "The only thing she couldn't do at my apartment was bring home a girlfriend." Hamilton disputes this—she certainly moved out—while acknowledging that she was often at the Sullivan Street home, as a friend and as an employee; she remained the office manager at Shasty.

Jane Aronson noted that many modern relationships take unconventional forms, and may not be best understood as being either on or off. "Who's to judge if they were broken up or not?" she asked, adding, "This is just a divorce with two people who can't work their shit out, and the kid's stuck in the middle. And we're trying to determine whether one's a parent or not? You would *never* do that if people were straight."

Neither side disputes that, in May, 2010, Gunn and Hamilton signed a separation agreement. Under its terms, Gunn



SURPRISE SEARCH AND FEEL BY TEXTURE AGENTS

paid Hamilton three hundred and fifty thousand dollars to remove her from the deeds of the New York apartment and the Fire Island house. These properties were co-owned, although over the years Hamilton had made a far smaller financial contribution to their partnership than Gunn had. Gunn now describes this cash as a gift—disguised, for tax reasons—that would allow Hamilton to set up one of the homes of their future child.

As the separation agreement was being discussed, Hamilton e-mailed the attorney who was helping them, and included a query about child support: might she ask Kelly for this one day? She added, "If I can manage on my own, I won't ask." The final agreement didn't refer to child support. But, in court, Chemtob brought up the e-mail dozens of times. When I talked to Hamilton about it, the subject flustered her. At one point, she claimed to be unfamiliar with "child support" as a phrase.

The adoption application—in Hamilton's name—was not withdrawn after the breakup. Hamilton kept the paperwork updated, and attended seminars about adoptive parenting. But Gunn contends that Hamilton never explicitly told her that she was now adopting as a single mother. In December, 2010, Hamilton bought a one-bedroom apartment in the West Village, and her adoption ap-

plication stopped referring to the Sullivan Street apartment, or to a roommate. Gunn insists now that she was no less a co-applicant than before. "We were pregnant, basically," she told the court. She has also described herself as part owner of the adoption application, which she called an "asset." (Gretchen Beall Schumann, a colleague of Rabin's, suggested to me that this was like claiming ownership of "the intellectual property of a *conversation* about I.V.F." after breaking up with a partner who subsequently began fertility treatments.)

In March, 2011, nearly a year after the separation agreement, the adoption agency sent Hamilton a photograph of Abush, who was fifteen months old. His mother had left his father, who had then brought him to an orphanage. In the photograph, Abush was wearing a white T-shirt with cartoon dinosaurs on it, and he was holding car keys in one hand and a bracelet in the other. He had perhaps been handed these to soothe him; he looked as if he had been crying.

The day she received the photograph, Hamilton forwarded it to Gunn, who was in Las Vegas on business. Gunn later told the court, "We both cried and felt, like, finally."

That summer, Hamilton made two trips to Ethiopia. On the first, she spent ten days with Abush. On the second, she

formally adopted him in Addis Ababa, and then flew back with him, through London. Gunn, who had been working in Hamburg, met them at Heathrow Airport.

"I can't describe the feeling," Gunn told me. "I just fell in love with him. He comes waddling through with Circe, holding an orange that he carried all the way from Ethiopia." She said that, at Heathrow, when Circe left her alone with Abush for a few minutes, she felt an "instant connection" with him.

He slept on her lap during the flight to Newark. "It just felt amazing," she said. "I have pictures. When I reclined my chair, he laid his little chubby hand on my arm. I didn't want to move, ever. It felt like, in that moment, all the shit that we'd gone through, and all the work—here's this person. It's such a long process, for gay people. The planning to have a child is so extraordinary. It's interesting—how much we have to plan, and how much stress that can put on your relationship."

I asked Gunn if she had thought of herself as a full partner in the adoption during the eighteen months before Abush flew to New York. "I did pursue it—full throttle," she said. "Had I not, I wouldn't have given Circe three hundred and fifty thousand dollars." She went on, "I did what I was always supposed to be doing. I'm the *provider*."

The day before the 2016 Presidential election, Circe Hamilton took Abush—now six—to a swimming class in Battery Park City. On the way, they stopped in the graveyard of Trinity Church, on Broadway, where Alexander Hamilton is buried. Circe's mother, Louanne Richards, was with them. Richards lives in Oxfordshire, but she spent much of last fall in New York. A former Royal Ballet dancer, she now works as an acupuncturist and a tai-chi teacher; she has an optimistic, utopian bent. When she first met Gunn, she scolded her for being a capitalist.

Hamilton's parents divorced when she was twelve. Harold Hamilton, her American-born father, lives in Rhode Island, and teaches film. Gunn said that he has the air of "someone waiting for the trust fund that's never going to come." When Harold was young, his parents divorced, and his mother married Pierpont Morgan Hamilton—the grandson of J. P. Morgan, and the great-great-grandson

of Alexander Hamilton. Pierpont adopted Harold. During Circe's childhood, the Hamilton ancestry was not a part of family conversations; she learned of it only last fall. "I called my grandmother's fourth husband," she told me. "I asked him, 'Is there a bloodline to Alexander Hamilton?' He said, 'Oh, yes.'"

In the churchyard, in front of Hamilton's tomb, Circe told Abush, "That's your distant relative." As Hamilton later recalled, he replied, "No way!"

The next week, I sat with Hamilton at the desk that she was using at the offices of her attorneys, in a tower by the Port Authority Bus Terminal. During the trial, she often went back to the office, after court, with Rabin and her colleagues; later, she'd go home to put Abush to bed, then return to midtown. She had her own supply of English tea bags in the firm's kitchen.

Hamilton showed me the box of pho-

POEM WITHOUT AN IMAGE

Just now it has come
to me again: the sudden
knowledge of everything
that remains to be done
though I worked my ass off
this week, doing things, doing
things. *What is my style?*
is a question I have never
asked until now, in the waiting
room at my dentist's,
when this article in *O Magazine*
encouraged me so cunningly
to do so. Maybe it is not
my job to surprise you, not
anymore, says the spirit.
O.K., I say. *O.K.* But still,
I want one more crisp
image, just one, though I know
I don't deserve it, I want it
to appear the way money once
or twice in my life has appeared
in my line of vision on
the street: some bill, nearly
alive, green god, its skin
giving off evergreen light,
unaccounted for and then
immediately mine, no
questions asked.

—Carrie Fountain

tographs that she brought to court each day. Many of the images had been taken on a return trip to Ethiopia, in 2015, when Abush reunited with his birth relatives. Hamilton expressed worry that these family members might learn of the legal case—and so register her lack of candor about her sexuality. She became tearful. This was unusual: in our conversations, she tended to be evidence-oriented and almost brusque; her hands busily sketched out arguments in the air, and her laments were accompanied by dry laughter.

Chemtob's witnesses testified for nearly two months. (Meg Canby called the trial "a proceeding run amok." Forty-day trials privilege the rich.) According to the case that Chemtob was making, a plan to adopt was an agreement made in perpetuity, unless it was explicitly cancelled. "It's good *forever*?" Nervo asked, at one point. "Yes," Chemtob replied. To buttress her claim that the plan had survived,

Gunn, along with friends and relatives, had testified to her parent-like behavior toward Abush.

Hamilton's lawyers had collected letters from a hundred people who challenged Gunn's story, but these witnesses had still not been heard. The protracted trial was testing Hamilton's outlook on life, which Valentina Rice had summarized as "It's all meant to be." Hamilton described a recent attempt by lawyers on both sides to agree on a calendar of the time that Gunn had ever spent with Abush; this required a meeting that stretched over three days, and involved a dozen people—their shoes off, ordering sushi—arguing about whether an overnight stay counted as two days or one. Earlier, Hamilton had heard Chemtob say to Rabin, "Just make her a parent, and it'll all be done."

In my conversations with Chemtob, she had been puzzled that Hamilton was able to afford her representation. Hamilton told me that she had borrowed money from family and friends, but it seemed unlikely that this was covering all the costs. (Chemtob had mentioned one small part of the expense: "rush" trial transcripts cost each side more than a thousand dollars a day.) Hamilton decided to sell her apartment; last week, she was in contract with a buyer.

Hamilton told me that Gunn lost interest in the adoption in 2009. "She was amassing her fortune—she just didn't have time," she said. "She was racing around the world for Apple." After the breakup, Gunn felt "sad and guilty," Hamilton said. The financial settlement was the act of "a concerned friend, saying, 'Yes, I know I jumped ship, but I want to take care of you.'" Hamilton noted an e-mail that Gunn had sent in January, 2010, from L.A., while watching reports of the Haitian earthquake on CNN. "You could get yourself a Haitian orphan," she wrote. Later, Gunn wrote from Colombia, on a visit with Piñeres: "Maria said you could get a kid here." In an instant-message conversation with Terri Potter, an old friend and a sometime Shasty employee, Gunn explained that she didn't expect to get back together with Hamilton: "We don't have a sexual connection / and I don't want to be a mother / two very big issues." Asked about the exchange in court, Gunn said that she was sarcastically parroting language that Hamil-

ton had used when telling people about their breakup. Potter testified that she had detected no sarcasm.

If Hamilton never announced, in writing, that she was now adopting alone, Gunn appeared to have registered this change. At the start of 2011, a year after the end of her romantic relationship with Gunn, Hamilton was renovating her new West Village apartment, and had a new girlfriend. Gunn e-mailed her: "You said I would wake up and realize I've lost everything. And that's where I am these days." A few minutes later, she added, "I am just going through a lot of emotions around the loss, of the baby that will never be, the life that will never be. I realize I'm a year too late, and this is your new year. New home, new partner, new life coming." In a February, 2011, e-mail to Aronson, Hamilton said that Gunn had experienced "a bit of a midlife crisis," adding, "We are friends, but I am pursuing this adoption solo."

When Gunn first saw a photograph of Abush, on the work trip to Las Vegas, she wrote to Hamilton, "He's adorable. I am so emotional from the news. I'm sure this is a big day for you." She went on, "I am doing my best to temper my own emotional reaction to this, and I want you to know I am so proud of you for following your dream. You made this happen!" Gunn added, "I saw his face, and a wave of grief rolled over me. He was supposed to be our son. I'm not sure I will ever get over my regret and sorrow over that. But I will be very very happy for you and for him, and hope to find a way to be in your lives." It was a striking aspect of the litigation that, for both parties in the dispute, affectionate and encouraging messages had become weapons for the opposing side. The case was a war fought with kind words.

That summer, Gunn hosted what was, at the time, referred to as a baby shower. ("It wasn't a shower," Gunn told me. "My staff and I went out and got stuff for her and went over for dinner.") Shortly before Hamilton brought Abush to the United States, Gunn wrote, "We're all ready for him in NY. It takes a village." After Hamilton agreed to Gunn's sug-

gestion that they should all meet at Heathrow, Hamilton wrote to a friend: "Kelly (the ex) weirdly is in Hamburg on a job and will help me." Gunn used frequent-flier miles to upgrade Circe and Abush on the flight to Newark. Chemtob later described this as a financial contribution to the adoption. "Miles are money!" she said.

When Abush first arrived in New York, he was not entirely healthy, and he didn't understand English. Hamilton had a wide network of friends—her group e-mails about the adoption went to eighty people—and she was happy to let Gunn be one of those involved in Abush's life, and to accept help. In the first months after Abush arrived, Gunn came to several of his medical visits. She also took him to Tumbling Tots classes at Chelsea Piers, and for walks in the park. Gunn describes this as a sustained pattern of parenting. If her role in Abush's adoption had at times been more auxiliary than collaborative, this could describe any number of people approaching parenthood; Gunn presents herself as a bountiful ex-partner who strayed, but who never renounced family commitments.

This reading seems to be challenged by the regret, the baby shower, the lack of evidence showing Gunn assuming the identity—joyful or not—of a parent-to-be. (In June, 2011, when Hamilton first visited Ethiopia, Gunn sent a jokey e-mail from a retreat in Italy: "Can you

take more than one kid? Guess it doesn't work that way exactly.") In Gunn's attempt to align her narrative with Barone's, her money—her availability as a provider—must stand in for other, missing facts.

And, if it's true that Gunn never retreated from the adoption—and that "the only one who broke any sort of plan was Circe," as Chemtob put it to me—it's confusing that Gunn approved an e-mail, sent to her company's staff and clients in September, 2011, that welcomed Hamilton's baby to their community but did not mention Gunn. And it's odd that there is no evidence of Gunn pushing, at the time of Abush's arrival, for a second-parent adoption. Instead, in an e-mail to Hamilton in November, 2011, she wrote, "You're doing a killer



job raising a vibrant kid. I admire you for all you've done, and are doing. How amazing you found each other."

It may be that, after Abush appeared—after he'd fallen asleep on Gunn's lap—she changed her mind. As Hamilton put it to me, "I think that she meets this little boy, and this wasn't what she expected, and she falls in love with him and wants ownership." If this is correct, then in those first months Gunn may have allowed herself to infer, from Hamilton's willingness to let her be involved in Abush's life, that if she played the part of a decent, divorced parent then Hamilton would treat her as one. But this proposal was unspoken. Regret, followed by stealthy solicitousness, would be understandable and not ignoble, but this would hardly be Brooke S.B.

Hamilton recognized that Gunn was keen to have time with Abush, but she didn't treat this as a risk—she remained fond of her, and maintained a casual confidence that things would work out, and perhaps valued Gunn as insurance against financial disaster. (Hamilton also wasn't opposed to the day-to-day advantages of having a friend with money: she drove Gunn's BMW more than Gunn did.) Just after Abush's arrival, Hamilton told Jane Aronson, in an e-mail, that Gunn now wanted to be involved with him. "I don't want to get back together with her and don't want her help financially but do love and respect her as a friend," she wrote. "So if there is another person in his life that wants to help babysit and look after Abu, I'm not saying no! We shall see how this pans out." Hamilton recently told me, "That's the big argument. Was my non-directness at fault for how I arrived at today? My kindness, my naïveté? My family has a lot to say about that."

Early in 2012, after six months in New York, Abush stayed overnight with Gunn for the first time. Not long afterward, Gunn thanked Hamilton for trusting her with the boy, and for "allowing me to love him and be loved back by him." Hamilton told Gunn, "I encourage him with his friendship and love for you."

But Gunn was beginning to chafe against limits to her access, or status. She was upset not to be mentioned in an ar-

ticle, in the London *Times*, about Hamilton's adoption of Abush. Gunn told me that one night in May, 2012, when Abush was at Sullivan Street, "he had some emotional freak-out in the middle of the night." She went on, "He starts crying—wailing. And I knew enough from the training, from books we read, from Jane, that these kids have problems, and you don't know what's going on. And he couldn't even talk. So I held him, and I said, It's O.K., I love you.' It was really—as a parent—one of those magical moments, where you comfort your kid. It was profound and beautiful."

The next day, she described this to Hamilton. "I'm thinking, She's going to react, like, 'Oh, my God, that's so sweet.'" Instead, Hamilton cried. Gunn saw this reaction as "cold." Her response to Hamilton's distress, and to Abush's, seems to have been narrowly focussed on her own emotional needs. "She was jealous that I had this bond with him," Gunn said. "She wanted to be the only one. She wasn't happy for me, or for him, that this moment happened. I can't imagine what else it could be." (Hamilton's memory is that she was pained to think that she hadn't been there to comfort Abush.)

Gunn called Aronson, who, she said, "validated my feelings that this was actually a very beautiful and poignant moment for Abush." Aronson gave her Chemtob's number. It was four years before Gunn used it. "I told Kelly from the very beginning, 'Keep a schedule of every visit,'" Aronson told me. "And 'Make sure you have all the receipts.'"

Hamilton recalled a series of conversations with Gunn that began in the spring of 2012. "She wants a title, she wants to be honored," she said. "We talk about it a lot. 'Aunt?' 'Godmother'?" According to Hamilton, there was no discussion then about a second-parent adoption. (Gunn disputes this.)

That summer, they agreed on "godmother." Gunn defined her role in a long memo, in which she noted, "My involvement in gymnastics, swimming, and other sports in my youth is something I'm excited to share with him as he grows." A later e-mail seemed to extract as much familial meaning out of the title as possible: "I am his godmother, that is family—I (god)parent him, nurture and love

him." Gunn and Chemtob now describe the godmother title as a restraining order.

After attending three or four of Abush's medical visits, Gunn never went to another. She didn't take him on vacation without Hamilton, or go to parent-teacher conferences. Gunn did often pick Abush up from school and take him to extracurricular activities, and there were frequent sleepovers at Sullivan Street—usually on Thursdays, when Hamilton liked to go to movie screenings hosted by a friend in the East Village. Hamilton recalled that Gunn was often in Los Angeles, where she later bought an apartment; Gunn and Piñeres were briefly engaged. ("We weren't the focus of her world," Hamilton told me. "She led a bicoastal life.") Gunn's argument is that, wherever one can see her involvement, this indicates co-parenting; where one cannot, Hamilton has sidelined her. (Or, as Aronson put it to me, "terrorized" her.) "I knew I had no actual rights," Gunn told me. "I didn't want to stir the pot. I was scared. But I had faith in Circe. I really thought she'd come around." In court, Chemtob referred to Gunn as "almost like an abused child." Aronson told me, "Kelly second-citizenized herself in this relationship, because of guilt, the nature of who she is culturally—Irish-Catholic girl, gay. You're always going to have a mind-set that you're worthless."

Hamilton seems to have treated Gunn as one might treat a difficult sibling. She valued Gunn's attachment to Abush, even if she connected it, in part, to turmoil in Gunn's life. In 2012, Gunn retired from the graphics firm and began to close down Shasty. A beloved dog died. During the next few years, Hamilton said, Gunn seemed to become unmoored and needy: "She became more obsessive—wanting more time, wanting to know who was in my world." Hamilton added, "It was 'What are we doing on the weekend? Who are you dating?'" According to Valentina Rice, Gunn clearly wanted to re-start a relationship with Hamilton. (Gunn denies this, saying to me that her interest in Hamilton's romantic life was related only to Abush: "I could give a shit who she's dating, but I *really* want to know if that person is sleeping in the same room as him.") Rice recalled that Hamilton also worried about Gunn spoiling Abush: "There were so many gifts and clothes and toys—and she didn't want to bring him up that way." Hamilton, whose distrust of materialism



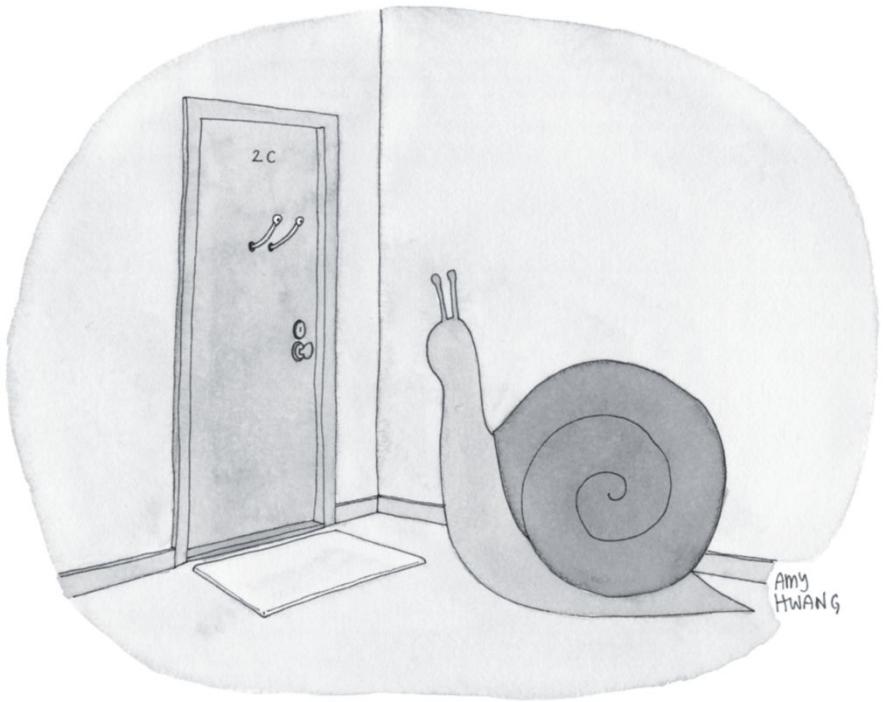
has British upper-middle-class roots—describing Gunn's apartment, she remarked that it contained no hand-me-down furniture—said that Gunn had told Abush, “You know that the beach house is yours, the dog is yours.”

When Rabin, Hamilton's lawyer, later came to survey this history, she concluded that Gunn had become used to “a lot of control over her world—her employees, her friendships.” Time with Abush, she said, “gave her a sense of family, and she didn't have to do any of the work—it was all play and fun.” Rabin detected in Gunn “a huge sense of entitlement”; her frustration with limits on her role was “about her ego,” Rabin said. “It's a narcissistic injury.”

By 2015, nearly four years after Abush's arrival, the relationship between Gunn and Hamilton had become strained. Gunn was pressing for weekend time, and protesting about not being included on the planned reunion trip to Ethiopia. Hamilton agreed to some shared sessions of therapy. “Why do I do these things?” Hamilton asked me. “I'm now trying to establish boundaries.”

In an e-mail sent in May, 2015, Gunn asked Hamilton for assurances of continuing “access, primacy, etc.” in her relationship with Abush, even if a stepparent came into his life, or if he moved to the U.K. “I long ago made peace with my role as godmother,” Gunn added, noting that she had “never inferred or articulated” to Abush, or to anyone else, that she was his mother. (Contradicting this, Gunn told me that she had always replied “yes” when asked if Abush was her son. She also said that he did, in fact, call her “Mommy,” although none of her witnesses recalled hearing this.) Hamilton withheld the assurances Gunn sought. “I don't know when or how ‘god mum’ meant ‘second mum,’ ” she wrote. “I am sorry that I haven't been clearer on defining your role with Abush.”

In March, 2016, Hamilton sublet her apartment, to save money. After one apartment fell through, she and Abush ended up, rent free, in a sunny, open-plan carriage house at the back of a friend's West Village brownstone; she is still living there. In court, Chemtob characterized these arrangements as being close to vagrancy, and noted, to me, that Hamilton had rejected Gunn's offer to give her half of a Brooklyn town house, and another offer to straighten Abush's teeth.



Chemtob said of Hamilton, “I don't think she does everything she can for the child. I'm not saying he needs a driver, but he definitely needs braces.” Hamilton sometimes seemed to be on trial for insulting two contrasting sets of assumptions about how a modern Manhattan family should look: she'd failed to gain full access to high-bourgeois comforts; and, by resisting Gunn, she was showing bias against new family configurations, and the gay culture that had helped to create them. Gunn described her to me as “heteronormative.”

Hamilton often told people that she might move back to the U.K. She saw work opportunities there, and Abush had fallen a little behind at school. She was also worn out by the negotiations with Gunn. Last summer, she and Abush took a six-week trip to England. They looked at schools. Midway through, Gunn came for a week. As Hamilton recalled it, Gunn declared, “I'm here to buy property in England. If you move back, I will come, too.” There were several long discussions. Gunn pressed for time with Abush on a schedule similar to their New York routine; Hamilton resisted. Gunn flew home, but changed her Facebook setting to show that she now lived in London. (Gunn recently claimed that she always changed this setting when travelling. But long after she returned to New York her profile page

still showed “Lives in London.”) Gunn told me, “I think it makes Circe crazy that she has to consider somebody else—and I'm pretty pliable. I allow her a lot of autonomy with Abush.”

On August 15th, Hamilton wrote to her, “I've decided I'm going to give England a try and I really need you to not come.” She said that they'd visit Gunn in October and the following April. When Gunn opened this e-mail, she recalled, “I just started *wailing*.” A few days later, she spoke to Chemtob.

By then, Hamilton had returned to New York. She went camping with friends, took Abush to Rhode Island to see his grandfather, and started to say goodbye.

In November, 2016, Chemtob rested her case. Rabin submitted a motion to dismiss, arguing that the evidence presented was so weak that the court should reject Gunn's petition without requiring a response. The Judge invited oral arguments from both sides. Chemtob read from a dozen e-mails in which, over the years, Hamilton had told Gunn how much she meant to Abush: “Marvelous time”; “We would be lost without you.” Rabin, in turn, described Gunn's petition as a form of assault on Hamilton. “Love doesn't make a parent,” she said.

“It just might,” Judge Nervo replied. The attorneys were not expecting

Nervo to respond to Rabin's motion before the end of the year. "The waiting is very scary," Hamilton told me in December. "I have to keep it together." She had just done her first work in months; this included a portrait of Clea Newman, one of Paul Newman's daughters. She had been denied permission to take Abush to England for Christmas. Gunn held a seventh-birthday party for him, at Sullivan Street, and posted photographs on Instagram. Hamilton said that Gunn now had "more access than she has ever had before," adding, "She has amped up the present-giving. And she's pushing her relationship with him to new bounds."

Hamilton and Gunn both worried about how the dispute was affecting Abush. Gunn told me, "He knows something's really weird, but nobody's saying what." She said that when she had referred to herself, in passing, as a part of his family he'd paused for a moment, then said, "But Mommy said you're just a friend." She had replied, "I think you know that's not true."

"The real law is what's in the best interests of the child," Chemtob told me. That phrase had hung over the proceedings. It had inspired unsuccessful attempts by Chemtob to bring Abush's opinions into the courtroom, by means of a forensic psychiatrist or a law guardian. And it provided some cover for Chemtob's courtroom remarks about Gunn's financial advantage over Hamilton. (Rabin, reacting to this line of argument, told me, "Judges are people, too.

And sometimes they sit there and think, Wow, if this person could pay for a private school and a good college . . .")

"Best interests" lies at the heart of family law. It guides a judge who's hearing a child-welfare case, or a dispute between parents, about custody and visitation. And it sounds like a natural, virtuous idea to bring to a conversation about who is and is not a parent. It helped establish the concept of de-facto parenthood. At a panel discussion held in December, Meg Canby argued for "a more child-centered jurisprudence" than the Brooke decision had provided for—something closer to a de-facto rule. The panel discussed a touching video of her son that Barone had shot, and a remark he'd made that was later quoted in Barone's appeal. He asked Barone, "You won't forget me, will you?"

Chris Gottlieb, the N.Y.U. professor, made a counterargument. "Courts are terrible at figuring out what is in the best interests of a child," she said. Judges "aren't free of biases," and so "a best-interests rule is likely to hurt a disadvantaged group"—hippies, at one time, and gays, until recently. Writing in 1973, Hillary Rodham described the rule as "a rationalization by decision-makers justifying their judgments about a child's future, like an empty vessel into which adult perceptions and prejudices are poured."

The amicus brief that Gottlieb and a number of nonprofit groups submitted in the Brooke S.B. case argued that Barone should be recognized as a mother, but it sought to steer the court away from

de-facto standards. Describing her concerns to me, Gottlieb imagined a working-class single mother who found that a fairly typical modern romantic life—a series of monogamous relationships—held alarming new uncertainties. "Is it the two-hundredth dinner that they cook for my kid before they get rights?" she asked. A de-facto rule could also give an abusive lover a new weapon, in the form of a threatened lawsuit. "I worry that, further down the line, you could even think about a nanny seeking rights," Gottlieb said. Such cases have not yet proliferated in the one-third of U.S. states that recognize some form of de-facto parenthood. But it takes time for such cases to appear, and New York is especially litigious. (In 2015, New York had a domestic-relations caseload of five hundred and ninety thousand; the caseload in California, which has twice the population, was three hundred and eighty-seven thousand.) "If it's really the basis of your rule that a separation would be hard emotionally for a child, that applies just as much to a nanny," Gottlieb said. "Because the truth is kids are emotionally damaged *all the time*, and we can't protect them from that. Somebody has to make the choices for them."

In December, Rabin was in the audience for the Brooke S.B. panel at which Canby spoke, and at the end she stood to make a skeptical point or two. In her view, the speakers had underestimated the legal consequences of making a person a parent. The panel's chair, a judge, asked Rabin to stop lecturing the room. It was a peculiar moment. Rabin—who is gay, and a parent, and who has no argument with Barone's victory, and who is admired for her own challenge to Alison D., in 2010—seemed to have been cast as a reactionary, intruding on a celebration.

I saw her in her office the next morning. "That's the focus right now—'What does the child think?'" Rabin said. "I really think that has to be the wrong question, unless you're talking about a ten-year-old who has only known this other person as a pure parental figure, not just somebody who spent a lot of time with them, paid for certain things, was loving to them." Barone was a parent, unquestionably, but if courts start "to mush it up, then the standards become lower and lower and that's when the confusing floodgate cases happen." She added, "What



"I know nobody here works with each other, but it seems like morale is down."

I'm concerned about is that judges will get persuaded by a picture that shows somebody with their arm around a child."

On January 5th, Judge Nervo rejected Rabin's motion to dismiss. Gunn and Hamilton had agreed to a plan to adopt, he wrote, and the plan existed "even after the parties executed a separation agreement." He observed that "at no time did respondent advise petitioner that she would be proceeding with this adoption on her own." Gunn's role in Abush's life wasn't godmotherly; rather, it resembled that of an "ordinary parent with a child conceived or adopted with a now-estranged partner." He quoted from an e-mail in which Hamilton told Gunn that Abush "loves you so very much and very much considers you part of his family."

This wasn't a final ruling in the case, but Chemtob was giddy. She told me that this was her career's highest point. She had again encouraged Rabin to throw in the towel. "I don't have a towel," Rabin replied.

Hamilton sounded distraught. After Gunn gave up on the adoption, she said, she did not: "And I'm so glad, and it's magical—but for her to crush it now.... It makes everything seem dirty, convoluted, a lie. It's so sad. Just dark, dark." Rabin told me that she was baffled by Nervo's idea that Gunn resembled a divorced parent. "She is told she's not a parent, admits she's not a parent, says, 'I've never told the child that I'm the parent,'" Rabin said. "All there is, in the most objective way, is a *relationship*. And some continuity of contact." I asked Rabin if Hamilton had allowed ambiguity to enter the relationships among Gunn, Abush, and herself. "I think that's why the court said, 'We want clear and convincing evidence of consent,'" Rabin said. "Relationships are about ambiguity. Especially for single parents who rely on other people."

Rabin knew that a judge has an obligation, when weighing one side's motion to dismiss, to regard the other side's evidence as impeccable—to assume that every witness has spoken the truth. But she nevertheless seemed taken aback. Nervo was perhaps again trying to force a settlement. On January 18th, the lawyers all met in his office. Neither side would budge on parenthood. In a case that had begun with Gunn hoping to send Hamilton a stern letter, Chemtob's current position, she told

me, was that Gunn needed "sole decision-making on medical."

So the proceedings resumed, and for eight days Hamilton's witnesses came to court. They reported that nobody had toasted Gunn at the baby shower; that before the breakup Gunn had declared her dogs to be "enough responsibility"; that she had not referred to Abush as her son. Terri Potter, Gunn's old friend, contradicted Jennifer Gunn, Kelly's sister, who had testified that before Abush's arrival a room was being set up for him on Sullivan Street. (Potter knew the room, because she'd slept in it often.) A teacher from Abush's preschool said that she didn't know Gunn as a parent. Another teacher said that she had never heard Abush say Gunn's name. Michael Gray, a neighbor in Hamilton's building, whose children became close to Abush, described having almost daily contact with him, and weekly sleepovers; he said that Abush called him "Daddy Michael." (Chemtob, in scornful reference to the idea that Gunn was just one member of a network supporting a single mother—in the spirit of "It takes a village"—referred to witnesses like Gray as "the village people.")

Gunn rotated her seat further, so that her back was more turned to Hamilton. During Potter's testimony, she wrote, "Ungrateful slag," on a Post-it note.

In mid-February, the court met for the last time. Chemtob and Rabin each spoke for forty-five minutes. The Judge said that he'd been given "a little too much to think about."

The court rose. It was a Thursday afternoon—time for one of Gunn's visits with Abush. She looked directly at Hamilton and said, "Where is he?"

On April 14th, Nancy Chemtob called me. "We lost," she said. Gunn's petition had been denied. Judge Nervo had written that, under Brooke S.B., a pre-conception plan could create a path to parenthood. In a case like Gunn's, he wrote, this had to mean a plan that had "continued unabated"; the words and actions of Gunn and Hamilton showed that their plan had been terminated. Nervo ruled that, on May 1st, Abush would get back his passports, and his court-ordered visits with Gunn would end.

Chemtob sounded affronted. Nervo's stress on "unabated" was an attempt to amend Brooke S.B., she said, and this risked reviving Alison D. She said, "Kelly used to say to us, 'This is about being gay, about discrimination.' And we would just try to get her away from that"—to keep the court's focus on her and Abush.

Chemtob was now persuaded that Gunn was right.

A few days later, Hamilton was walking near Bryant Park, to get lunch after a morning spent with her attorneys. She and Abush had just been away for spring break—first to see friends in New Jersey, then to a cabin in upstate New York. The news of the decision had come

as they approached the cabin. "I could finally exhale," she said. "I'd been holding it together for seven and a half months." She said nothing to Abush about the ruling. They went looking for deer in the woods.

Hamilton and I went to the offices of her lawyers and continued to talk. Rabin appeared in the doorway. "I just got notice," she said. "They want to go to the appellate division tomorrow."

The next day, Chemtob secured an interim stay on Nervo's decision. ("Yea!" she e-mailed to me.) The appeal would take months, and would be preceded by a decision about whether Abush would be expected to remain in New York during that time. Meanwhile, the court still held Abush's passports, and Gunn was still entitled to visits. When I spoke to Gunn, she was certain of the justness of her cause, and dismissive of Hamilton, her lawyers, and Judge Nervo: "This guy doesn't get to tell me I'm not Abush's parent." But she recognized the possibility of eventual defeat. "Every minute, I have to consider that I could never see him again," she said. She was in regular contact with Barone. "She was heartbroken for me and for Abush," Gunn said.

Hamilton's upstate trip had begun with a stop at Newark Airport, where she picked up a rental car. She recalled, "My son was 'Airplanes! England! Let's go!' And I was 'No, we can't yet.' He doesn't know why. And every time he asks—'Why didn't we move? Why didn't we go at Christmas?'—I say, 'It's up to the universe.'" Hamilton laughed. "What can I say? He's, 'Mommy, I'm cross! The universe can't talk. Just hurry up.'" ♦





Gerhard Steidl is known for fanatical attention to detail and for embracing the best that technology offers. "He is so much better than anyone,"

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK PECKMEZIAN

THE BOOK MONK

The printer the world's best photographers trust most.

BY REBECCA MEAD



The University of Göttingen, in Germany, owns one of the world's rarest books: an intact Gutenberg Bible. When Gerhard Steidl, a printer and publisher of photography books, was growing up in Göttingen, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, the book—one of only twenty surviving complete copies, and one of only four printed on vellum, rather than on paper—was sometimes on display at the university's library. Steidl, whose father worked as a cleaner in the presses of the local newspaper, had developed a precocious interest in the technical aspects of printing, and one day he asked the librarians if he might examine the book. "I wanted to learn as much as possible about Gutenberg, who invented the movable letters for printing, and I wanted to see the first result," he said recently. The librarians placed the Bible on a desk and walked away. "It was not even secured!" he recalled.

Steidl was struck by the book's durability: despite having been made in the fourteen-fifties, it looked almost new. Otherwise, he was disappointed. "I was really expecting that it was more *industrially* produced," he said. "But it was all more or less handmade—the color was by hand, the drawing was by hand. The letters were used to print the text, but there were many variations. Let's say it was interesting. But I was not impressed." As much as Steidl admired Gutenberg's revolutionary contribution to the dissemination of knowledge, the Bible itself was "a baroque illustrated object that was absolutely not to my taste."

Despite his dissatisfaction with the handiwork of the father of printing, Steidl considers himself to be in the tradition of Gutenberg, and he appreciates the proximity of the relic to his own printing and publishing business,

which he established in Göttingen in the late nineteen-sixties. He has been pursuing his craft there ever since. "I always say that the good spirit of the Bible, which is so nearby, brings a warm, creative wind here in my factory," he said. Among photographers and photography aficionados, Steidl's name recognition equals that of Johannes Gutenberg: he is widely regarded as the best printer in the world. His name appears on the spine of more than two hundred photography books a year, and he oversees the production of all of them personally. He also publishes literary books, among them the works of Günter Grass.

Steidl, who is sixty-six, is known for fanatical attention to detail, for superlative craftsmanship, and for embracing the best that technology has to offer. Edward Burtynsky, the Canadian photographer, who specializes in large-scale, painterly aerial images that show the impact of humans on the environment, said of Steidl's operation, "It is like the haute couture of printing. He takes it to the *n*th degree." Steidl seeks out the best inks, and pioneers new techniques for achieving exquisite reproductions. "He is so much better than anyone," William Eggleston, the American color photographer, told me, when I met him recently in New York. Steidl has published Eggleston for a decade; two years ago, he produced an expanded, ten-volume, boxed edition of "The Democratic Forest," the artist's monumental 1989 work. Eggleston passed his hand through the air, in a stroking gesture. "Feel the pages of the books," he said. "The ink is in relief. It is that thick."

Artists who work with Steidl typically travel to Göttingen, which is about four miles west of the old border with East Germany. They wait,

the photographer William Eggleston said.

sometimes for years, to be summoned, and are expected to drop everything when he calls. "It is like going to kiss the Pope's ring," Mary Ellen Carroll, the conceptual artist, said. (In 2010, she published "MEC,"—a book of her work, divided into categories including Mistakes, Boredom, and Lies—with Steidl.) When artists arrive in Göttingen, Steidl is often not quite ready to give them his attention, and so they must while away entire days in a library four floors above the company printing press, which runs non-stop, seven days a week. Steidl does not want artists straying into town, or dawdling at a restaurant or a bar where he cannot find them. "He is like a monk," Robert Polidori, whose work Steidl has published since 2001, says. "He is not a priest—he is there to work, but he doesn't perform miracles, or sacraments. He *delivers*."

Steidl can be brusque. "I have seen situations where grown men and women have cried," Polidori says. A certain submission is required. Dayanita Singh, an artist who lives in New Delhi, has been publishing with Steidl since 2000. She told me, "Everything is done to keep you focussed on whatever you are doing. There is this utter concentration—nothing else that is going on in your life is relevant. It's like if you went to a Vipassana retreat for ten days." She added, "He might call you down at five

in the morning and you could be stark naked, and he wouldn't notice."

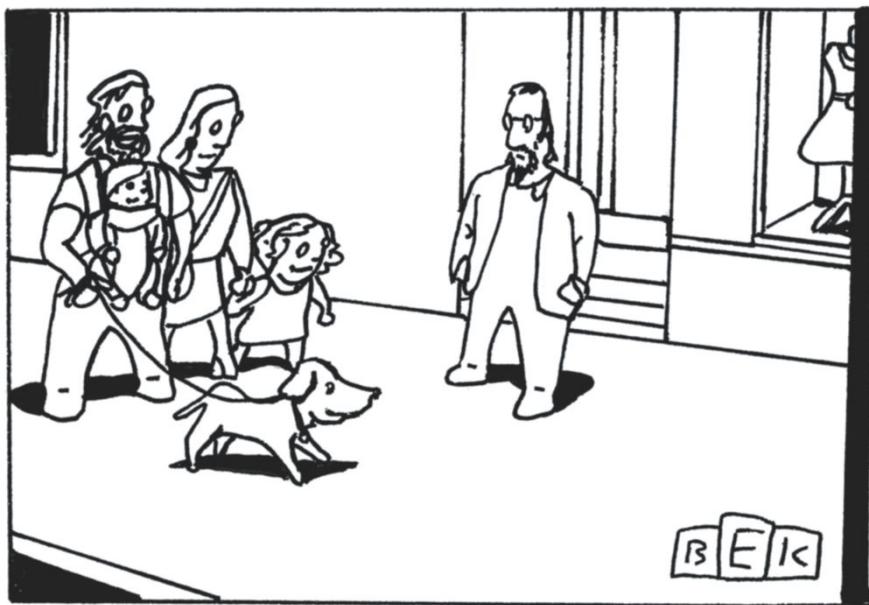
Göttingen, which was barely touched by Allied bombs during the war, retains a Teutonic quaintness, with its many half-timbered buildings. Steidl's factory is on a street in the center of town; next door, he owns a private guesthouse known as the Halftone Hotel, where his photographers stay while visiting. The compound is known familiarly as Steidlville, and his employees liken a stay there to entering a submarine: the door closes irrevocably behind you, and there is nothing to do but descend. The guesthouse is decorated with spartan luxury: there are narrow metal-frame beds, as in a dormitory, but the mattresses are excellent. Each room is named for an artist with whom Steidl has worked: one features Edward Ruscha prints; another has a plaque on the wall, a readymade that reads "Prof. Joseph Beuys Institut for Cosmetic Surgery/Specialty: Buttocklifting." A third room has photographs by Karl Lagerfeld, the designer of Chanel. Steidl executes much of the fashion house's printing and stages all of Lagerfeld's exhibitions.

Three-course, spa-like lunches—lentil salad, vegetable soup, dates with yogurt, juice extracted from the apples that grow in the back yard of Steidl's factory—are provided by an

in-house chef, Rüdiger Schellong, in a dining room where a long table is set with flowers arranged in a vase of Lagerfeld's design. Steidl's place at the head of the table is indicated by a stack of cream-colored notecards, made to his specifications at a nineteenth-century paper mill on the west coast of Sweden. He uses notecards to annotate his conversations, and writes on them with Staedtler pens, which he keeps, lined up, in the breast pocket of the white lab coat he wears while working. All of Steidl's choices are refined. "He has the best paper scissors on earth," Singh told me. Steidl likes his clients to prepare for consultations by cutting up their own photographic proofs and gluing them into mockup layouts. It is not unusual to see world-renowned artists bent over the dining table, cutting and pasting like kindergartners.

Steidl lives around the corner from his factory. He prefers to sleep in his own bed, and he often arrives in New York City on the first flight in the morning, and leaves on the last flight the same day. To prepare for the opening of Chanel's cruise collection last spring, which took place in Havana, Steidl flew from Germany to Cuba for the day, four Fridays in a row. On another occasion, after being honored at an early-evening award ceremony in London, he got on a plane to New York, arriving in time for another early-evening engagement—a screening of a documentary, "How to Make a Book with Steidl," at the Museum of Modern Art. His artists like to say that he moves faster than jet lag.

The proximity of his workplace and his home is convenient, but there is a serious political motivation underlying it, too. When Steidl was a teen-ager, he spent several weeks volunteering at Auschwitz, clearing paths for visitors and sleeping in a former barracks. His father had served in the German Army, and Steidl participated in a program that had been established, he said, to show young Germans "what the parents had done." The experience helped him confront "the dark side of Germany." One thing that he contemplated was the ethics of separating one's work from one's domestic life. "I read about how the



"Sundays we like to walk around being insufferable about our routine."

homes of the officers were outside the concentration camp, where they had a wife and children, and a little dog, and they were the nicest people you can expect,” he told me. “And then they were going to work—they were shooting and murdering and sending people to death. So I also thought that it makes a huge difference when you are not isolated from your work, when working and living is a symbiosis. Normally, when you have a business and you produce something industrial, you have the plant somewhere and it makes a lot of dirt, and poison, and noise, and destroys the environment. You are working there all day, and then in the evening you drive home and you have your pleasant place to stay, with clean air, while poor people have to live with the dirt you are producing. I control my noise, because I am sleeping there, with an open window, every night.”

Largely because of his profitable relationship with Chanel and other corporate clients, Steidl is free to disregard commercial viability when choosing the photographers he wishes to publish. He tends to print editions of three or five thousand, which, for art books, is the equivalent of mass production. Steidl’s books are expensive, but not prohibitively so. Polidori’s most recent book, “Hotel Petra,” sells for fifty-five dollars; the list price of Edward Burtynsky’s “Salt Pans” is seventy-five dollars. Steidl typically pays his artists a modest royalty up front. Copies on the secondary market can go for considerably more than the list price. The American fine-art photographer Joel Sternfeld, who has published with Steidl for years, told me, “He is creating, almost by himself, this new category, which is the semi-mass-produced book as a work of art. He has an unswerving commitment to the artist.”

Steidl prides himself on being a canny businessman: he has always wanted to make money, and funnels it back into the business when he does. But his admirers say that he is engaged in a loftier project than merely selling books. “Gerhard has an intense quest for making an encyclopedic, wide survey of the world of photography,” Polidori says. “It is almost a

race with him—to get as much done while the money lasts, and while his life lasts.”

Photography arrived late in the development of the visual arts, and, because of technical advances, its methods have been more quickly rendered obsolete. The last facility that processed Kodachrome film, which many mid-century photographers used, ceased to do so in 2010. An undeveloped roll of Kodachrome found in a late photographer’s archive today could contain an unlocked masterpiece that may never be seen. As the photographers who worked in the second half of the twentieth century reach the end of their lives, Steidl is engaged in an effort to print and catalogue work that might otherwise not be available, and to use advanced industrial means to distribute it widely: it is a Gutenberg-like goal, with the history of photography substituting for the word of God.

“Gerhard grasped that there was a historical moment—almost an imperative—to get this work, publish it, and put it in the historical record before it is too late,” Sharon Gallagher, the president of Distributed Art Publishers, which distributes Steidl’s books in the U.S., told me. “I think he sees what he is doing as a praxis—a social action toward political ends.” Steidl told me, “If you read a book, or a visual book—for me, it is all reading—or if you are in a gallery or a museum, and the curated show was done by an educated person, that educates you visually. That all adds up. I will not say it brings you to a higher level, but it makes life more valuable, than to be stupid.” Steidl is not sentimental about print qua print; he reads the newspaper on an iPad when he is travelling. But there is nonetheless a moral dimension to his book-making, a conviction that the book remains an ideal vehicle for culture’s remediating powers.

One Monday morning in October, Steidl was at work in his long, narrow press room with the American photographer John Gossage. Gossage’s best-known work, “The Pond,” pub-

lished in 1985, is a series informed by Thoreau; it includes black-and-white images of a scrubby body of water near Gossage’s home, in Washington, D.C. The work at hand had been among Steidl’s projects in progress for more than five years, and Gossage’s notes and technical specifications had languished in Steidl’s analog filing system—dozens of trays lining a wall in his office—while more pressing assignments jumped to the head of the line. A photographer typically makes three visits to Göttingen: the first to conceptualize the work, the second to print pages and test materials, and the third to print the book. Gossage was at the final stage. “I don’t care if it’s late, so long as it’s perfect,” he said.

The book, to be called “Looking Up Ben James,” was a record of a trip through Britain that Gossage had made with Martin Parr, the English photographer, who is best known for somewhat grotesque representations of working-class communities in Britain. Gossage’s images were more abstract and allusive: a curving road through overgrown hedgerows; a view over Welsh hills. Steidl told me, “I like his work because it is a kind of literature *and* photography. Many photographers say that they are telling a story, but it’s not really a story—it’s a set of images lined up. But John is telling a story.”

The book presented a technical challenge: though many of the images were black-and-white, some of them were to be printed amid a field of color—red, blue, yellow—making the image look as if it had been printed on tinted paper. Steidl’s press can print six colors—or five colors and a lacquer—at once. For Gossage’s book, ten colors were required, which meant that each sheet had to go through the printer at least twice. “There’s no other printer in the world that could make this book,” Gossage told me. “But, if Leonardo comes to your house, do you have him touch up the kitchen, or paint the ceiling? I’m having Gerhard paint the ceiling.” Steidl makes for a slightly unprepossessing Leonardo: he is a slight,



tidy man, precise and contained, with cropped dark hair and glasses worn over owlish eyes. He was dressed that day, as he often is, in a dark plaid shirt, jeans, and sneakers under his lab coat, a uniform that gives him the aspect of a nerdy twelve-year-old.

Gossage's book was to be printed on matte, uncoated paper, which is typically used for literary books, not for photography; to achieve the desired pictorial density, Steidl would be using multiple blacks and grays. Standard tritone printing uses black and two shades of gray; a preferred Steidl technique is to print with three different blacks and two shades of gray, with results that closely mimic the appearance of photogravure. The inspiration for the choices of paper and ink was Henri Cartier-Bresson's canonical book "The Decisive Moment." First published in 1952, Steidl reprinted it two years ago. He showed Gossage a copy of the 1952 edition—which he had bought second-hand a few years ago—as well as his reproduction, running his fingers over the surface of the page like a skater doing turns on ice.

In the press room, large sheets of blank paper were piled on wooden pallets in stacks, which looked like blocky pieces of contemporary furniture. Steidl gets his paper from factories around the world. When it arrives in Göttingen, it sits in the warehouse for about two weeks, in order to reach the optimal temperature and humidity for absorbing ink. Shelves were lined with inks made by a company near Hanover: warm gray, cool gray, something called "skeleton gray," and high-body intensive black. "Cheaper inks cost five dollars for one kilogram—this ink costs thirty dollars," Steidl said. "It's like good cuisine. If you use better product, the results are better."

Steidl had printed three versions of a single image: empty milk bottles arrayed on the doorstep of a Georgian town house. To the casual eye, they looked identical, with the glass showing a delicate luminosity against the stone. Closer examination revealed minutely differing degrees of density in the black of the shadows.

"What do you think?" Steidl asked.

Gossage examined the pages; he preferred the look of the middle image.

"The three blacks, with this new ink," he said. "It looks more *photographic* to me. It looks more delicate." Steidl, who referred to the book as "the art work," was now ready to print. While the process took place, in the course of the next three days, Gossage moved between the library and the press, spending abbreviated intervals in his bed at the Halftone Hotel—the kind of half-active, half-inactive twilight familiar to the parents of a newborn.

Steidl has never lived anywhere but Göttingen, unless you count the many hours he has spent in the first-class cabins of Lufthansa. (Joel Sternfeld tells a story of being on a plane to Frankfurt and getting up to use the bathroom; when he returned to his seat in coach, he found an impish Steidl sitting in it.) His parents were refugees from the East. In 1945, they spent a year in a British-run transit camp, with Steidl's older sister, then a toddler. Then a Catholic charity organization settled them in a modest apartment on the top floor of a building just outside the city walls. The camp, Friedland, now houses Syrian refugees.

Steidl's family was poor, and his parents had received no formal education. There were few books at home, and it was momentous for Steidl when he received one—Hans Christian Andersen's "Thumbelina"—as a Christmas gift. Steidl begged his sister to read it aloud to him immediately, and afterward he told his father how much he had loved it. Steidl's father, angered that the children had finished the book so quickly, struck the sister. Years later, Steidl's father explained that he had believed the book, having been read through, was now useless; before buying the gift, he'd never been in a bookstore.

Steidl received a scholarship to attend a Catholic school. (He is not religious, but, in gratitude for the early support, he helps fund a local soup kitchen run by the Church.) He ended his studies at the age of fifteen. By then, he had developed an interest in photography—he built a darkroom in the basement of the family apartment building—and in printing. He began designing posters for local student theatre, using photographs he shot him-

self, and printing them with paper and ink that, with his father's help, he purloined from the newspaper. At sixteen, he bought his first printing equipment with money that he had raised by selling diet pills—speed, essentially. A chubby child, he had been prescribed the medication to lose weight. "The empire was built on family crime," he told me, with satisfaction.

His earliest contact with the art world came in the late sixties, when he began hanging out at Kenter, a local club and performance space. "We played the Velvet Underground, and a lot of free jazz, and of course there was a lot of marijuana involved, which I never did," he said. "And a friend of mine had the idea to make exhibitions in this space—not prints on the wall, more concept art with readings." Steidl printed posters for the club, and also produced political posters; at Kenter, he formed connections with members of the Social Democratic Party, including Gerhard Schröder, the future Chancellor, who was attending the university's law school. Steidl remains active in politics, and for some years he was a member of Göttingen's city parliament.

Steidl curated shows at Kenter, and began following the international art scene. "I was reading in the local newspaper that there is a new style of art coming from the U.S.A. called Pop art, and that in Cologne there is an exhibition of one person who is a master of this Pop art, Andy Warhol," he recalled. "I went to Cologne and met Andy, and I was asking him, 'What is the technique you are providing here, and are you doing it by yourself?' I liked it a lot because the inks were so strong, and it looked totally different than etching or stone lithographs."

Warhol explained that the technique was screen printing, and invited Steidl to visit the Factory, in New York, to learn more. "Of course, I had no money to fly to the United States, but I wrote a letter to Gerard Malanga, his studio manager, and he gave me all the instructions." In the late seventies, a gallerist gave Steidl, in lieu of payment for a printing job, a portfolio of Warhol's "Marilyn" prints. They hang on the walls of a library he recently built next to his home—a repository for all company publications and for





"On the other hand, he's really good on infrastructure and tax reform."

• •

Steidl's private collection of several thousand art books.

By the early seventies, Steidl's printing business had grown sufficiently that he had several employees. Through Klaus Staek, a publisher of political poster art, Steidl began to work with Joseph Beuys, first as his printer and then as a kind of factotum. "He was my private professor," Steidl says. "I saw him every day, or week. He was giving serious answers to all my stupid questions. I would ask him something in the world of art, or art theory. He wanted me to do a good job for him and, therefore, he was explaining without getting tired." In 1974, Beuys made his first visit to the U.S., and Steidl accompanied him, as his personal documentarian. One of the few Steidl publications of which Steidl is a de-facto co-author is "Beuys in America," a collection of photographs of the tour. Four images chronicle a visit with a feminist group in New York—in one of them, Yoko Ono is present, in the background, holding a cigarette. And Steidl was the cameraman on a short video that Beuys made at the Biograph Theatre, in Chicago, where John Dillinger was shot.

Steidl is aggressively modest, insisting that as a printer he is a technician,

not an artist. He abandoned his own aspiration to become a photographer as a young man, after realizing that he would never be as good as the artists he admired. "But it helps me a lot that I have all this knowledge about photography processes—what kind of lens, what is the perspective, contrast, the darkroom work," he said. "I meet the artist on the same level—not intellectual, but on the same level of realization of the art piece."

Steidl collaborated with Beuys until the artist's death, in 1986. On the wall of the library in his factory, behind glass, hangs a chalkboard with a handwritten manifesto by Beuys: "The mistake has already begun when someone seeks to buy a stretcher and canvas." Steidl says, "I learned from him to use very basic materials. And I got a sense of a book not as an industrially produced product but more as a hand-crafted object, made in a manufacture as a work of art—but always serial. I never wanted to be selling unique pieces, or originals. I was always interested in serialization. I was interested in finding out how can you make a semi-industrial production highly individual."

In the early eighties, Steidl forged two important relationships. He began

printing books for Walter Keller, a publisher whose company, Scalo, was in the vanguard of photography. When Scalo eventually went bankrupt, Steidl became the publisher for many of Keller's artists. The other central figure for Steidl was the novelist Günter Grass, who was also a visual artist, though this work was less well known. Steidl came across an exhibition of Grass's etchings and lithographs at a gallery in the south of Germany. He recalls, "I tried to find a book, but there was nothing existing, so I was writing him a letter, saying, 'Can you give me some advice, is there a publication in Germany or another country?'" Grass wrote back, saying that there was no such book, because his publisher focused exclusively on literature. "There was a footnote to his letter, saying, 'I see from your stationery that you are a printer and publisher. Maybe this is something for you.'"

Steidl went to Berlin to meet Grass, and they prepared a catalogue raisonné of his art work. "His publisher was writing to me a very furious and angry letter, saying, 'If you touch again my Günter Grass, I will really put you out of business, and I have the power to do it.' I was writing back to him, saying, 'O.K., make the art book with Grass, if you have the know-how—he will be very pleased.' But they didn't have the know-how." Eventually, Grass entrusted all his books, including fiction, to Steidl. In 1999, Grass won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and Steidl subsequently sold hundreds of thousands of his books. Several years ago, Steidl bought the building next door to the Halftone Hotel, thinking that he would tear it down and build an archive for Grass's publications and editions. Analysis of timbers revealed that the building dated to 1307. Steidl renovated the building instead, restoring the exterior while transforming the interior into a showcase of medieval and modern-day technology. Iron girders support wattle-and-daub walls, and there is an enormous illuminated glass cabinet for Grass's books—a time capsule preserved for a future civilization. Steidl said of the building, "We decided to open it up, like a book."

Next door to the Grass archive is an empty lot; Steidl plans to build an art

gallery there. Nearly the entire block is now part of Steidl's domain, and includes his own home, which is on a pleasant square facing a church. He lives there with his girlfriend of thirty-six years, Gundula Kronewicz, a schoolteacher. Although they have no children, Steidl paid for the installation of a public playground in the space behind his house. Kronewicz tends not to have much to do with Steidl's work, and many of his artists have never met her. (When Steidl was showing me around his house one afternoon, we came across her in the kitchen, reading a book and sipping a glass of wine.) From his living-room window, Steidl can see the Halftone Hotel and his factory, which has a garden growing atop an extension that contains the printing press. Though he can walk from the back door of his home to the back door of his factory without venturing into the street, he told me that he goes to work "around the block, to see something from the real life."

Steidl is often overextended, and therefore late in delivering the books he has promised, to the frustration of his distributors. "He sees he has a role to do," Sharon Gallagher, of D.A.P., told me. "The irony is that he can't keep to a schedule while he does it. He's oriented in history, but not in time, perhaps." Steidl has only one working press—he has another in storage, for spare parts—and never allows his staff count to rise above fifty, to avoid the need for an extra layer of management. He knows how to run the machines with the same skill and delicacy as his employees, many of whom have been working with him for decades. Steidl also serves as his own janitor: typically the last to leave the office, he empties the trash cans every night. He finds it calming.

He prints only one book at a time. "When you're on press, it's like you're a couple," Steidl told me. "If there is another lover, it does not work at all." During this period, however, he is typically also working with other photographers whose projects are at earlier stages of development. While Gossage's book was being printed, Steidl turned his attention to a Swiss photographer named Benoît Peverelli and

his assistant, Rodolphe Bricard. Both men had just arrived in Göttingen.

Peverelli had already printed a book with Steidl, in 2014: a collection of photographic studies for paintings that Balthus made late in his life. (Harumi Klossowska de Rola, Balthus's daughter, is Peverelli's longtime partner.) This visit was to set in motion a new project: a book of backstage photographs taken by Peverelli at Chanel fashion shows. Peverelli had several thousand images from which to choose. "I need a strong concept, so I am counting on this guy," he said. "I'm a very bad editor, and it's all about editing."

Late in the afternoon, Steidl called Peverelli and Bricard in from the library, and sat down with them at the long dining table, in order to begin sorting through images of models in their finery. The photographs were front-lit, with flares of light in the frame. To achieve the effect, Bricard had stood in front of the camera, holding a light, and was then Photoshopped out. "I don't want to show the cables on the floor, the dressers, the guy who goes and cleans up the can of Coke on the floor," Peverelli said. "Everyone does that." They discussed whether the images should bleed to the edge of the

page, or be framed by white space. A lot of white, Peverelli said, would "give it some class."

Peverelli seemed slightly abashed at the images' potential elevation from commerce to art. There was a discussion of size: Should the book have a coffee-table format? "I find a coffee-table book pretentious, but I don't know if people are going to look at these photos if they are not big," Peverelli said. Steidl favored something smaller—he dislikes oversized fashion books. "After a few years, it is like a graveyard for photos," he remarked.

Being published by Steidl provides a commercial photographer with an imprimatur of seriousness, and can have substantial consequences on a career. Henry Leutwyler, a Swiss photographer based in New York, had secured prominent assignments from magazines, but had never published a book until Polidori connected him with Steidl. "Gerhard called on my mobile, and I almost dropped it," Leutwyler told me. "In our world, we play these jokes on each other—'Hello, this is Anna Wintour calling.'" Steidl visited Leutwyler in his apartment, and looked over a box of prints connected to a magazine assignment in 2009: shots



of personal items belonging to Michael Jackson, which had been crated up when the singer, in dire financial straits, planned to auction off his memorabilia. In 2010, the year after Jackson's death, Steidl published "Neverland Lost," a poignant portrait told through the star's possessions: a dime-store tube sock stitched all over with sequins; a white dress shirt with what looks like a pair of sturdy panties attached, to prevent shirttails going astray during strenuous dancing. "Gerhard opened that door I didn't know existed, which is the art world," Leutwyler said. "Until 2009, I gave away my prints as gifts. In 2010, we started selling them." Since then, Leutwyler has done ten solo shows; a print of Michael Jackson's sequinned glove can sell for fifteen thousand dollars.

Each Steidl title is unique, printed with a bespoke combination of inks and papers. But to the informed eye, and the informed hand, a Steidl book is as distinctive as an Eggleston photograph. Unlike another German art publisher, Taschen—which is known for reproducing risqué images by the likes of Helmut Newton in enormous formats that would crush most coffee tables to splinters—Steidl produces books that invite holding and reading. Steidl dislikes the shiny paper that is often found in photography books, and prefers to use uncoated paper, even though it takes longer to dry and thus makes a printing cycle more expensive. He opts for understatement even with projects that would tempt other publishers to be ostentatious. "Exposed," a collection of portraits of famous people by Bryan Adams, the rock star turned photographer, has no image on its cover. Bound in blue cloth, the book looks as if it might be found on a shelf in an academic library. Steidl wants his creations to satisfy all the senses. When he first opens a book, he holds it up close to his nose and smells it, like a sommelier assessing a glass of wine. High-quality papers and inks smell organic, he says, not chemical. To the uninitiated, a Steidl book smells rather like a just-opened box of children's crayons.



Steidl's biggest client, by far, is Chanel. He suggested to me that he could still function without it, but added, "Let's say that what I earn from the fashion business makes life more comfortable." His relationship with the company began in 1993, after Lagerfeld won a prize in Germany that included the making of a monograph printed by Steidl. "Karl said, 'The last thing I want to have in my life is a monograph about my work, so go to hell—I don't want it,'" Steidl recalls. "I was pissed, because I needed the money. So I was writing him a letter, saying, 'If you don't want a monograph, in what are you interested?' He said he had just had a photo book with another publisher that was really badly printed, and he was disappointed. I said, 'O.K., I am a printer, and we can make a test. Send me some photos, and I will print them for you, and you can decide whether it is worth it.'"

Lagerfeld evidently decided that it was worth it; eventually, he proposed that Steidl take over much of the printing for Chanel. Steidl went to Paris to meet with Lagerfeld, taking with him several test prints. Presenting one image, Steidl cautioned, "This is beautiful paper, but it is very expensive." Lagerfeld responded with four words: "Gerhard, are we poor?"

On behalf of Chanel, Steidl is driven to Paris dozens of times a year. He makes the trip in a Volkswagen Phaeton in which the passenger-side seats

have been replaced by a bed, as in the first-class cabin of an aircraft. He drinks a glass of good red wine before leaving Paris, and is asleep, sandwiched between two pillows, by the time the driver has reached the *périphérique*. "I wake up when the car gets off the highway—I

see the Burger King sign, and I know I have arrived in Göttingen," he told me. "Not one minute earlier."

Steidl was just back from Paris when I was in Göttingen, and I watched him one afternoon scanning the pages of the latest Chanel catalogue, looking for rogue pixelations as expertly as a dermatologist checking for moles. He lavishes as much attention on

Lagerfeld's photographs of models as he does on the photographs of artists like Gossage, whose book took four days to print. Binding is the only part of the process that Steidl outsources—sometimes to a fifth-generation bookbinder across the street from his factory, sometimes farther afield.

One evening, I joined Steidl and Gossage as they made the final decisions about the book's packaging. We sat at Steidl's cluttered desk—a counter, really, stacked with boxes and papers. Steidl uses a special stool that allows the sitter to incline forward, like a drunk at a bar. On a nearby shelf was a gold-colored insulated teapot filled with peppermint tea, which Steidl drinks in the afternoon. (In the morning, a silver-colored teapot is filled with black tea.)

Designing a book's packaging is a process Steidl particularly relishes. "He wants to pick the cover, he wants to pick the endpapers," Polidori told me. "He treasures this limited one-on-one time with the artist. It's almost a love act." Sometimes Steidl indulges in a brightly colored ribbon for a bookmark, like statement socks worn with a formal suit. He pays attention to elements that barely register with most readers, such as the head and tail bands—colored silk placed where the pages attach to the spine. "It's a tiny bit of fashion," Steidl said. "With Karl, it is the buttons. With me, it is the head and tail bands." For Gossage, he chose black bands and black endpaper, to contrast with the colored ink on the pages. The endpaper was made from cotton, and would cost thirty cents per book, as opposed to the seven cents it would cost if he used offset paper. "Using the cheaper one saves significant money for the shareholders," he said. "But I am the only shareholder."

Earlier that day, I was in the library when Steidl brought the finished pages upstairs. Gossage held them up to the window, to see them in daylight, and then let out a laugh. "This is such good printing—you have no idea how happy I am," he said. "I could conceive that it was possible to do it, but I had no idea how to get there."

Gossage turned to Steidl. "The only

question, Gerhard, is do I kiss you now, or later?" he asked.

"Later," Steidl said.

Two days before Christmas, Steidl flew to New York. Given the timing of his appointments, he could not avoid spending a night in the city. He took the last flight from Frankfurt and arrived at J.F.K. on Thursday night, then checked into the Mercer Hotel, in SoHo.

On Friday morning, he stopped off at the East Village apartment where Saul Leiter, a pioneer of street photography, lived from 1952 until his death, four years ago. Steidl has been working with the director of the Saul Leiter Foundation, Margit Erb, to publish "In My Room," a collection of intimate photographs of Leiter's wife and other women, selected from three thousand prints that Leiter made but never published. Steidl's first book with Leiter, in 2006, helped to restore the artist's reputation. Erb explained, "Saul had no money—he was in debt, he had a reverse mortgage, he would sell four or five prints a year. After the book came out, within one month he had paid back all his debts." Leiter went on to become a top seller at the Howard Greenberg gallery. "He died a wealthy man, because of this book," Erb said.

Steidl returned to a waiting car, driven by Lagerfeld's chauffeur, holding a box of Leiter's prints—ninety thousand dollars' worth of art work. Steidl tucked the images in his shoulder bag, by the front seat. "I have only lost one print in my life—an Eggleston chrome," he said. "It is somewhere, slided, in my files, but I cannot find it. It happens when I am not concentrating. One second you are not concentrating, and after a day you don't remember, and things are put on top."

Steidl's respect for the elders of the field is immense, but his approach is practical rather than reverential: he is seeking their authorization while they still can give it. "I feel myself in a position like a doctor," he said. "A doctor cannot be sentimental."

Later in the day, Steidl met with Robert Frank, who, at ninety-two, no longer makes the trip to Göttingen. One of Steidl's paramount projects has been to reprint the works of Frank, including his landmark work from 1958,



"The Americans," which Steidl reprinted a decade ago.

Steidl climbed a rickety staircase to the unrenovated downtown loft where Frank and his wife, June Leaf, have lived since 1971. "I brought cookies," Steidl announced, holding forth a small brown parcel. "I would have brought more, but I did not have the capacity." (Steidl travels with nothing but two Marimekko shoulder bags—one blue, one black.) Frank sat at a small table by the window, wearing a robe. Seating himself opposite, Steidl brought out a small pile of books that had been individually wrapped in glassine paper, like birthday packages.

"I like this moment," Frank said, slowly.

One package contained a past Frank publication, "The Lines of My Hand," which Steidl had printed in 1989. "In 2004 and 2005, we made a list of all the books that should be reprinted," Steidl said. "We said this one should *not* be reprinted. I looked again, and I think it is really a good book. I cannot think of a reason why it should not be reprinted."

"First of all, I think it is too big," Frank said. "It made sense then. It doesn't make sense now."

Steidl agreed that the reprint could be smaller. "The contents are very good," he said.

Frank turned the pages. "It is well printed," he allowed. "Did you print it?"

"Yes," Steidl said, gently. "When I was a baby."

Frank then turned his attention to a dummy of a catalogue he intended to publish, featuring all of his collaborations with the publisher. Steidl held the book in front of him, like a teacher with a child, as the artist turned the pages with interest. One page showed family snapshots made by Frank's father. Frank smiled.

"Is that your mother?" Steidl asked.

Frank nodded. He appeared to be pleased with Steidl's efforts. "It's a long catalogue," he said.

"We did a lot of things, Robert," Steidl said. The catalogue listed Frank's books, but, as Steidl explained, the list did not place them in the order in which Frank had made them. "It's in chronological order," he said. "As published by Steidl." ♦

A
LOVE
STORY

SAMANTHA
HUNT



A coyote ate a three-year-old not far from here.

"Yeah?"

"My uncle told me."

"Huh."

"He said, 'Don't leave those babies outside again,' as if I already had."

"Had you?"

"Come on." An answer less precise than no.

"Why's he monitoring coyote activity up here?"

"Because."

"Because?"

"It's irresistible."

"Really?"

A wild dog with a tender baby in its jaws disappearing into the redwoods forever. My uncle's so good at imagining things, he makes them real. "Yeah. It's just what he does, a habit." Or a compulsion.

"I don't get it."

But I do. Every real thing started life as an idea. I've imagined objects and moments into existence. I've made humans. I tip taxi-drivers ten, twenty dollars every time they don't rape me.

The last time my husband and I had sex was eight months ago, and it doesn't count because at the time my boobs were so huge from nursing that their power over him, over all men, really, was supreme. Now, instead of sex with my husband, I spend my nights imagining dangerous scenarios involving our children. It's less fun.

"Watch out," my uncle says. "Watch out," taking refuge in right-wing notions, living his life terrified of differences.

Once, I was a drug dealer, back when pot was still illegal here. I'm a writer now. I haven't made any money writing yet; still, that's how I spend my days, putting things down on paper. People continue to come to my house to buy pot and I sell it to them even though I'm no longer a drug dealer and they could get this shit legally, even though I'm sick of the people who pop their heads in my door, all friendly-like: "Hi. How you doing?"

"Fine," I say, but I mean, *Shut up and buy your drugs and stop thinking you're better than me.*

When I was young, I shopped at the Army-Navy with the thought that if I

bought these clothes and wore them I would prevent some beautiful young man from being killed in the garments. I'm romantic like that.

I'm telling you about the coyotes, the kids, the taxi-drivers, the drugs, the writing, and the romance because I want to be as honest as I can here. As I said, thoughts become material. I'm not hysterical or crazy. I'm laying the groundwork for real honesty.

I had great hopes that the threat of Lyme disease would revitalize our sex life. "Will you check me for ticks?" You know, and things would go from there. Grooming each other as monkeys do. In that way, at least for a while, I got him to touch me again and it felt good, but then Lyme disease never really took off in California like it did on the East Coast.

The men I know speak about sex as if their needs are more intense or deeper than women's needs. Like their penises are on fire and they will die if they can't extinguish the flames in some damp, tight hole. Through high school and college, I believed men when they said their desires were more intense than mine because they talked about sex so much. They developed entire industries devoted to their desire. The aches! The suffering of the boys! The shame and mutual responsibility for blue balls. The suffering of the boys. *Poor boys*, I thought. *Poor boys*, as if I were being called upon to serve in a war effort, the war against boys not getting any.

The only desire I have that compares to the way men talk about sex is my fervor for rehashing the past. I relive the exquisite pain of things that no longer exist: my father's jean jacket, my father, Travolta's 1977 dark beauty, how it felt to be alone in the house with my mom after my siblings left for school, the hypnotic rotations of my record-player spinning the Osmonds and Paper Lace, the particular odors of a mildewed tent in summertime. Memory as erogenous zone.

Then I realized that men think they are special because someone told them so.

Then I realized that I, too, have begun to burn lately, and, while no one wants to hear about middle-aged female sexual desire, I don't care anymore what no

one wants. There are days I ache so badly, the only remedy beyond a proper plowing would be a curved and rusty piece of metal or broken glass to gouge out my hot center from mid-inner thigh all the way up to my larynx. I'd spare my spine, brain, hands, and feet. I'm not irrational.

The list of potential reasons that my husband and I no longer have sex wakes me up at night. If I'm not already awake thinking about the coyotes. The first reason, and the wildest, craziest reason, is that maybe my husband is gone. Maybe one night a while back I kicked him out after a fight and maybe, even if I didn't mean everything I said, he went away and didn't come back. That would certainly explain why we don't have sex. Maybe I'm just imagining him here still. It can be hard to tell with men, whether they are really here or not. Especially a man with a smartphone.

The second reason I develop to explain why my husband and I no longer have sex is that my husband is, no doubt, gay. A faultless crime, though not without its heartache and deceit.

The third reason I concoct to explain why my husband and I no longer have sex is that he must be molesting our children when he puts them to bed each night. This reason does double duty for me, cultivating worry about both my marriage and my kids at the same time. Such efficiency.

The fourth reason is that I must look like a chubby English maid: bad teeth, mouth agape, drooling ignorance and breast milk. This reason sends me onto the Internet for hours, researching various exercise regimens and diets hawked by self-tanned women with chemically bruised hair. In the middle of the night, it's easy to hate myself as much as the world hates me. A few years ago, my husband bought me a short black wig as part of a sex-toy package. His ex-girlfriend has short black hair. I know the chemistry of other people's desire is not my fault, but the wig, so fucking blatant, really hurt.

Finally, the last reason I imagine for why my husband and I no longer have sex comes almost as a relief, because it requires very little imagination or elaboration and after I think it I can usually go back to sleep. My

husband must be having an affair.

I have a friend from college. She's a real New England Wasp, with a fantastic secret. Her family pays for all those Lilly Pulitzer, summers on Nantucket, and boarding schools from a fortune made manufacturing dildos and vibrators. I love that secret. One of the biggest sellers is a set of plastic prosthetic monster tongues, some forked, some spiky, most of them green or blue, all of them scaled for the lady's pleasure, especially a lady with a lizard fetish.

This friend once asked me a greasy question that returns on nights like this one: "Are you the kind of woman who would want to know if her husband's cheating on her?" And she left the question dangling. Her mouth may have even been slightly open. People cheat because they are no longer running away from sabre-toothed tigers. I get that. Adrenaline insists on being taken out for a spin. But there was an indictment inherent in either answer I could give my friend, so I stayed silent and wondered, Was she asking because she knew something?

We moved out of the city because there's no room for non-millionaires there anymore. In the country, life is more spacious. We bought a king-size bed. Some nights we snuggle like baby snakes, all five of us. Those nights, our giant bed is the center of the universe, the mother ship of bacterial culture, populated with blood, breast milk, baby urine. A petri dish of life-forms. Like some hogan of old. Those nights I know we are safe. But when our children sleep in their own room my husband and I are left alone on the vast plain of this oversized bed feeling separate, feeling like ugly Americans who have eaten too much, again.

The plague of perfectionism on parenting blogs is rancid. Alice in Wonderland birthday parties; Spanish-speaking nannies; healthy children harvesting perfect blue chicken eggs from the backyard coop; homeschooled wonders who read by age three; flat, tight bellies; happy husbands; cake pops; craft time; quilting projects; breast pumps in the boardroom; tenure; ballet tights; cloth diapers; French braids; homemade lip balm; tremendous flat pans of paella prepared over a beach campfire. What sort of sadist is running these Internets? And, more im-

LAMB'S EAR

No more at home here
than the lambs, though no
less so
among the Banks Peninsula's steep,
grassy, and almost pathless
declivities, the paired-off stalks can grow
to the height of a house cat; they slouch,
almost as much at ease
as a cat would be, amid the taller foxglove blooms, whose
buttered-popcorn and flame-
orange bells emerge
so early in the Southern summer's game,
as if to ring in the new year.

Too soft to be called teeth,
too thick, except
in direct sunlight, to see through,
the diminutive lobes on their immature
aluminum-gray or Statue-of-Liberty-green
leaves' edge look faded even when brand-new.

Their paler fur will catch
a drop from a hiker's water bottle if it spatters,
if that hiker happens to slide
down the unexpectedly parabolic
curve of a given hillside.
Though dwarfed by nearby sheaves
of bladed flax, or harakeke, the woolly stems

portant, how do these blogs not constitute acts of violence against women?

I glimpsed a huge beyond when I became a mother, the immensity of an abyss, or the opposite of an abyss, the idea of complete fullness, small gods everywhere. But now all that the world wants to hear from me is how I juggle children and career, how I manage to get the kids to eat their veggies, how I lost the weight.

I will never lose this weight.

When we encounter a mother doing too many things perfectly, smiling as if it were all so easy, so natural, we should feel a civic responsibility to slap her hard across the face and scream the word "Stop!" so many times that the woman begins to chant or whimper the word along with us. Once she has been broken, we may take her in our arms until the trembling and self-hatred leave her body. It is our duty.

I once thought motherhood loosened a woman's grasp on sanity. Now I see it is the surplus and affluence of America. Plus something else, something toxic,

leaking poison, or fear. Something we can't yet see.

I'd like to post some shots from my own childhood, a version of my parents' parenting blog, if such an abomination had existed back then. In these photos, through the fog of cigarette smoke filling the living room, across the roar of Georges Moustaki blasting his sorrow from the record-player at midnight, it would be difficult for a viewer to even locate the children in rooms so thick with adults acting like adults.

I've been thinking about drafting a manual for expecting mothers. An honest guide to a complex time of life for which no one's ever properly prepared. After I became a mom, I asked an older friend, "How come you never told me I'd lose my identity when I had a kid?"

"Cause it's temporary. They give you a new one. And I kind of forgot."

"Really?"

"No."

can hold their ground like hooves;
the individual petioles try
to overtake one another, competing
harmlessly, like teams
in the fairest of sports.

Each puffed leaf-ridge seems to invite
a child's finger and thumb.
No thicker than the skin
of a tuned kettledrum,
they might have come
here in search of a world without force,
or at least without force of arms.

If they could speak
they would not; they would wait
for a durable peace,
for people taking one another on faith
across the continents,
as well as in this not-quite-wilderness
with its traced-in, bush-sheltered not-quite-farms,
where no human being or sheep
is likely to get entirely lost,
given the tree-bark hash marks, dry plank
shelters, twine-bordered streambeds, and occasional hand-carved
fenceposts with their hand-mounted
scarlet or cherry-red fire alarms.

—Stephen Burt

When I sit down to begin my manual, I realize how specific my guide is to one demographic. So then, O.K., a mothering guide for middle-class, heterosexual women who went to college and are gainfully employed. But once I've arrived there, my pen raised and at the ready, I realize I actually have very little wisdom. So: a brochure. Pen in hand. Until I realize that what I've learned about being a middle-class, hetero mother who went to college could actually be boiled down to one or two fortune cookies. I write, "HORMONES ARE LIFE. HORMONES ARE MENTAL ILLNESS." I write, "EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES DOES NOT EXIST." And then my job is done.

A few days ago, I was scrubbing the rim of the upstairs toilet because it smelled like a city alley in August. My phone dinged. I'd received an e-mail. I pulled off my latex gloves to read the message. Who am I kidding? I wasn't wearing gloves. Real honesty. I was scrub-

bing the toilet with bare hands. I was probably even using the same sponge I use on the sink, that area right near the toothbrushes. The e-mail was from my husband. "Thought you might like this," he said. It was a link to a list of life hacks, simple tricks designed to make one's life easier: use duct tape to open stuck lids, keep floppy boots upright with pool noodles, paper-clip the end of a tape roll so you can find it easily.

I wrote him back. "Or you could marry a woman and make her your slave."

He never did respond.

I'm not saying that men have it better or women have it better. I don't ever want to be a man. I'm just saying there's a big difference between the two.

When I swim at the public pool, I wear sunglasses so I can admire the hairless chest of the nineteen-year-old lifeguard. I love it that he, a child, really, is guarding me, fiercest of warriors, a

mother, strong as stinky cheese, with a ripe, moldy, melted rotten center of such intense complexity and flavor it would kill a boy of his tender age.

Once, I woke Sam in the night. That's my husband's name, Sam. "Honey," I said. "Honey, are you awake?"

"Uhh?"

"I think I'm dying."

"Yeah," he said. "Uh-huh." And then he went back to sleep.

Presumably my husband likes stinky cheese and the challenge of living near my hormones. Presumably that's what love is.

Another night, also in bed, I woke Sam. I do that a lot. "I want you to agree that there is more than one reality."

"Huh?"

"I want you to agree that if I feel it, if I think it, it is real."

"But what if you think I'm an ass-hole?" he asked.

"Well. Then that's real."

"Really?"

"What does that word even mean, 'really'?" I started to scream a little.

"What?"

"The word 'really' suggests that we all see things the same way. It suggests one reality. Right?"

"Sure. Right. Really," he said. *Really.*

One huge drawback to my job as a drug dealer is that, while I grow older, passing through my thirties and into my forties, the other drug dealers stay young. They are almost all in their twenties. Normally, I don't socialize with the other drug dealers, but one night a group of the twenty-year-olds asked if I wanted to join them for a drink. I almost said no, but then decided, why not.

All the motions at the bar were familiar. It's not as if I forgot how to go out for a drink. I know what kind of wine I like. I had no trouble finding a seat. After our first drink, some of the young drug dealers disappeared to play pool, some wandered off to greet other friends. Halfway through my second drink, I was holding down the fort alone, a couple of purses, packs of smokes, and cocktails left in my charge. No problem. I didn't mind a moment of silence.

But then a young man—handsome, long hair, strong hands—joined me at the table. I started to panic.

This, I suddenly thought, is what it

means to go out for a drink. This is the entire purpose. Have a drink, meet a stranger, have fantastic sex all night long. But I didn't want to blow up my life. I love Sam. I love our life. Still, there was this young man beside me, interested in me, nervous even.

"Hi," he said. "I'm a friend of Alli's." One of the twenty-year-old drug dealers.

"Hi." I tried not to, but I imagined him naked, me naked. I imagined him accepting the way my body has aged naturally, despite the near-certainty that that would never happen. Very few bodies this close to San Francisco are allowed to age naturally.

"Alli told me you're a mom."

"That's right." It wasn't the sexiest thing he could say, but maybe, I thought, this is how it will work, how he'll appreciate the lines and rolls of my abdomen.

"I was thinking, since you're a mom, you might have some snacks? I'm really hungry. Like, is there anything in your purse?"

After a short excavation, the highest humiliation. He was right. I found a bag of baby carrots and a granola bar in my purse. I passed my offerings across the table to the young man.

"Thanks," he said, disappearing with the food. "Thanks." Some mother's child, some mother who had at least taught her son to say thank you.

Can you check me for ticks?" Sam switches on a light, picks me over, stopping at each freckle. How lucky I am to know such love, to momentarily remember what it means to have the body of a child, ignorant of age's humiliation. "O.K.," he says. "You're all clear."

"Thanks. Should I check you?"

"Nah. I'm good. There's no Lyme disease in California. Not really." He switches off the light and now it's night.

•
What's the scariest sound a person can hear?

In a quiet country house where the closest neighbors are pretty far away, the scariest possible sound is a man coughing outside at night. Because why is there a man standing in the dark, studying the sleeping house, licking his lips, coughing? Why would someone be so near to my home, to my children, in this place that is not the city?

I know the sounds of this house intimately. I know the difference between

the mailman and the UPS man, the garbage truck, the school bus, the washer-dryer in the basement. I know each door. I know the sound of a man outside coughing.

"What was that?" But Sam is already asleep. "Wake up." I whisper so that the coughing man won't know we're onto him. "Wake up, hon. Someone's outside."

"What?"

"Sh-h-h. I heard something."

"What?"

"There's someone downstairs. Someone's outside."

"Who?"

"A guy. Please."

"Please?"

"Go see."

"See?"

"Yeah."

In the dead and dark of night, I send away the only man who has sworn an oath to protect me. I must be an idiot. I must be really scared.

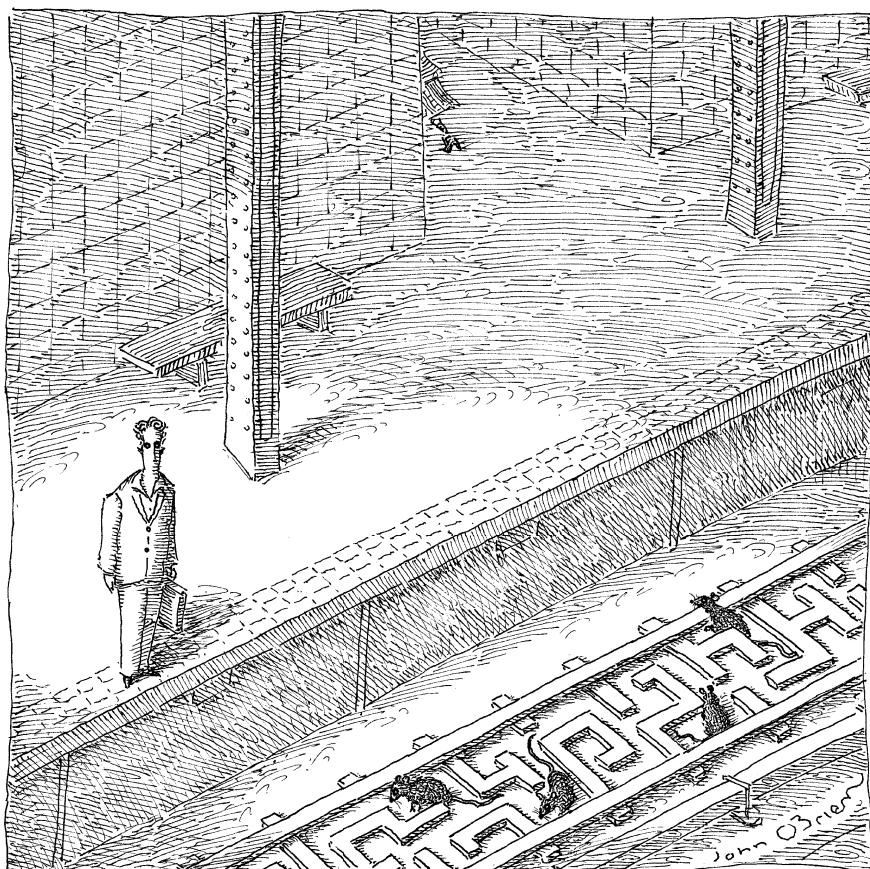
Sam disappears in his underwear and bare feet, leaving behind the retired baseball bat he once thought to stow under the bed for just this sort of occasion. The soft pads of his feet go down the top few steps and then there's no more sound. He's so gone I have a sense our entire downstairs is filled with stagnant black pond water through which he's now wading, swimming, drowning, trying to stay quiet so the bad guy, whoever he is, doesn't hear him, find the staircase, and tear our tiny world apart.

•
The uncertain position we all maintain in life asking when will violence strike, when will devastation occur, leaves us looking like the hapless swimmers at the beginning of the "Jaws" movies. Innocent, tender, and delicious.

"Sam?" I call softly, so the bad guy won't know we're separated.

There's no answer from downstairs. Why is it taking him so long to come back?

•
I hold the night the way I would a child who has finally fallen asleep. As if I were frightened it will move. I am frightened it will move. I am scared my life will suffer some dramatic, sudden change. I try to hear deeper. I try not to shift at all, not to breathe, but no matter how still I stay there's no report from downstairs. What if Sam is already dead, killed by



the intruder? What if the bad guy, in stocking feet, is creeping upstairs right now, getting closer to my babies, to me?

Part of me knows that he is. Part of me knows that he always is and always will be.

Where we live there are squirrels, rabbits, all manner of wild birds, foxes, mountain lions. There are rednecks getting drunk at the sports bar three miles away. There are outlaw motorcycle clubs convening. There are children dreaming. Other living things still exist in the night. Sometimes it's hard to remember that.

Sam is probably fine. He's probably downstairs on his computer. Barely Legal, Backstreet Blow Jobs.

Night ticks by.

"Sam?" There's no answer and the quiet becomes a dark cape, so heavy I can't move my legs. I can't move my body. I am only eyes, only ears. The night asks, *Who are you? Who will you become if Sam has been chopped to bits by the guy downstairs?*

This is a good question. Who am I? Who will I be without Sam? Without kids? I can hear how well-intentioned people at Sam's funeral will say, "Just be yourself." But there is no self left. Why would there be? From one small body I made three new humans. I grew these complex beauties. I made their lungs and noses. It took everything I had to make them. Liver? Take it. Self-worth? It's all yours. New people require natural resources and everyone knows you don't get something for nothing. Why wouldn't I be hollowed out? Who can't understand this math?

The strangest part of these calculations is that I don't even mind. Being hollow is the best way to be. Being hollow means I can fill myself with stars or light or rose petals if I want. I'm glad everything I once was is gone and my children are here instead. They've erased the individual and I am grateful. The individual was not special in the first place. And, really, these new humans I made are a million times better than I ever was.

The bedcovers look gray in the dim light of chargers, laptops, and phones scattered around our bedroom. In this ghost light I am alone. The night asks again, *Who are you? Who will you be when everyone is gone?* My children are grow-

ing, and when they are done I'll have to become a human again instead of a mother, like spirit becoming stone, like a butterfly turning back into a caterpillar. I'm not looking forward to that.

Who are you?

The answer is easy in daylight. But the night's untethering almost always turns me into someone I'm not. I spend nights thinking about the different women I become in the dark.

Where am I keeping these women when the sun is up? Where do they hide, these women who have breached the sanctity of my home, who know things about me so secret even I don't know these things? Maybe they are in the closet. Maybe they are hiding inside me. Maybe they are me trapped somewhere I can't get to, like in the DNA markers of my hormones, those proteins that make me a woman instead of something else.

You may ask, Are these women who bombard me at night real, or do I imagine them? You may eventually realize that is a stupid question.

I think about fidelity. To Sam, to myself. The light is still gray. The night is still so quiet. I let the women in, an entire parade of them, the whole catalogue, spread out on the bed before me. Sam is gone and these women keep me company. Even if they terrify me. I let the other women in.

An author lived for a time in a modern house behind mine, on the other side of a eucalyptus grove. She had recently divorced. She is a great writer, though she has written only one book. The book takes a frank approach to sex and bodies. I try to copy her writing. Her book is about prostitutes, so I assume she was once a sex worker. Or maybe she just wants her readers to believe that, for street cred at book parties, in university settings.

I could kind of see into the rear windows of her house at night with a pair of binoculars. These voyeur sessions never lasted long, because all she ever did was sit there. Maybe once or twice I caught her walking to her kitchen. It was boring. She was alone all the time, and while she was no doubt thinking amazing, fantastic thoughts about the nature of art, my

binoculars could not see those thoughts.

The town we live near is so small, it was inevitable that we would meet. We did, many times. We once even shared the dance floor at the local bar, a Mexican restaurant, really. We momentarily danced together like robots from outer space. But then each time we met again it was, to her, as fresh as the first time. "Nice to meet you," she'd say. Once,

had to deliver a piece of misdirected mail and she invited me in for a glass of wine. In an instant, I developed a fantasy of the famous writer and me as best friends. I dropped that fantasy quickly, because it was clear that her alien-robot routine back in the bar had not been an act.



When I mentioned that I had three children, her jaw came unhinged. "Oh, my God." Her hand rose to her face as if I'd said I had three months to live. Maybe that was what children meant to her.

I went to hear her read at the local library once when I was very pregnant. During the Q. & A., she spoke of child rearing with great disgust. Likening motherhood to a dairy operation. She said that children murder art, and though it was easy for me to dismiss her comments as ignorance—she'd never had a child, she'd never made a life or a death—I could not prevent the other people in the audience from looking at me with pity. "How did you like that?" a number of my neighbors asked me afterward.

"I enjoyed it very much, thanks."

When I was at her house she dismissed me after one glass of wine. "I have to eat my sandwich," she said, as if that sandwich were something so solidly constructed it would be impossible to divide, impossible to share. I left.

The next time I saw the famous writer, she was in the grocery store. Once again, she didn't recognize me or acknowledge the four or five times we'd already met, the wine we had drunk together, so I was able to freely stalk her through the aisles of the store, to spy the items of nourishment a famous writer feeds herself: butterfly dust, caviar, evening dew.

I stood behind her in line at the fishmonger's counter, my own cart bulging with Cheerios, two gallons of milk, laundry soap, instant mac and cheese, chicken

breasts, cold cuts, bread, mayonnaise, apples, bananas, green beans, all the flabby embarrassments of motherhood that no longer embarrass me. I heard her order a quarter pound of salmon. The loneliest fish order ever. I stepped away without ordering, scared her emaciated loneliness might be contagious. She kept her chin lifted. Some people enjoy humiliation. Maybe I used to be one of those people, but I don't feel humiliation anymore. The body sloughs off cells every day, aging. After all that, what is left to feel humiliated? Very little indeed.

The commuter bus that runs between here and the city is one small part of America where silence still lives. It's a cylinder of peace moving through the world swiftly enough to blur it.

Once, on a return bus, there was a woman seated in front of me. People do not speak on the bus. At least, no one who rides with regularity. We understand that this hour of being rocked and shushed is the closest we'll get to being babies again. But this woman was not a regular. She'd gone down to the city for the day. She was ten to fifteen years older than me, mid-fifties, though I never saw her face. I could feel she was buzzing. She'd taken a risk travelling to the city by herself, such a risk that accomplishing it had emboldened her to try other new things, like the voice-recognition software on her smartphone, that new-fangled device purchased for her by an older child who'd grown tired of having a mother who lived in a technological backwater.

There was nothing wrong with her hands, but she wanted to demonstrate that even though she was middle-aged and less loved now than she'd been in the past, she could be current with the modern world. She could enjoy the toys of the young. So, on the quiet bus, she began to speak into her phone as if recording books for the blind, loudly and slowly. Everyone could hear her. There on the silent bus, the woman shouted multiple drafts of an e-mail to a friend, laying plain her regret, fumes of resignation in the tight, enclosed area.

Hi. Just on my way home. I spent the day with Philip and his glamorous wife. He had a

concert at the conservatory. I hadn't been back in years. It was great to see him. His wife is gorgeous. They live in Paris. Ouch. I just

The woman paused and considered. She tried again. Her voice even louder, as if it were another chorus, a building symphony of mortification.

Hi. I'm on the bus back from San Francisco. What a day. I saw Philip. He had a concert at the conservatory. His wife is gorgeous, glamorous, everything I'm not. They live in Paris and their kids

She paused again. Take three. Loud and utterly desperate. Words falling apart.

Saw Philip and his gorgeous wife. Conservatory. Paris. Kids. I just

I turned to the window, which, although sealed, at least reminded me what fresh air meant, what it was to breathe without the toilet leaking air freshener, without having to hear that woman's echoing regret.

People should be more careful with their language. People shouldn't infect innocent bystanders with their drama.

There's a man I hardly know, an academic. He began sleeping with a graduate student when his wife was pregnant, but everything was cool, because, you know, everyone involved read criticism and all three of them really wanted to test the boundaries of just how much that shit can hurt.

I imagine that shit can hurt a whole lot.

Every time I hear about another professor with a student, I think, *Wow, that professor I know is way more messed up than I ever thought. Stealing confidence from eighteen-, nineteen-, twenty-year-olds.*

Nasty.

This professor, he cleared the fucking of the graduate student with his pregnant wife, and for reasons I don't understand the wife allowed him to dabble in younger, unwed women while she gestated their child, while her blood and bones were sucked from her body into their fetus.

Though the wife is an interesting part of this triangle, it's neither her nor the husband I'm thinking of here in bed while Sam bleeds out his last drop of life on our living-room floor. I'm thinking of the poor, stupid graduate student.

She and the academic attended a lecture together one night. After the lecture, there was a party where she was in the insecure position of being a student among people who were done being students. And though everyone was staring at her—they knew the wife—no one wanted to talk to her or welcome the grad student into the land of scholars.

This was not acceptable. She liked attention. She liked performance. She cleared her throat—and the noise from the room—as if readying for a toast. She stood on a low coffee table. Everyone stopped drinking. In a loud, clear voice, one that must still reverberate in her ears, the academic's ears, everyone's ears (it even managed to reach mine), she said, "You're just angry because of what I do with my queer vagina."

On my living-room wall I keep a photo of my Victorian great-grandmother engaged in a game of cards with three of her sisters. These women maintained a highly flirtatious relationship with language. "Queer" once meant strange. "Queer" once meant homosexual. "Queer" now means opposition to binary thinking. I experience a melancholy pause when meaning is lost, when words drift like runaways far from home. How did "queer" ever come to mean a philandering penis and vagina in a roomful of bookish, egotistical people? How did common old adultery ever become queer?

I feel the grad student's late-blooming humiliation. How she came to realize, or will one day soon, that her words were foolish. I remind myself there in bed, *Don't talk. Don't say words to people, because words conjure images.* Her words created a likely unwanted idea of an organ that, like all our organs, is both extraordinary and totally plain. Some flaps of loose skin, some hair, some blood, but, outside the daily fact of its total magnificence, it is really not queer at all.

I am alone with these thoughts, these women.

What is taking him so long to come back?

"Sam?" I climb out of bed. "Sam?" I call from the top of the stairs, placing my hand against the window in the hall. There, I hear that awful sound again. A

man outside coughing in the night. "Sam?" Each step down the stairs takes years. I'm frozen by terror. The photos lining the stairwell don't anchor me. Pictures of my girls at birthdays, the beach, riding ponies. "Sam?" I call from the bottom stair. The front door is locked, but the knob begins to turn against the lock and I can't move. Someone is trying to get inside. He's here, the man who has come to chop us into bits. The lock holds, but I am petrified. The man tries the doorknob again. "Sam? Where are you?"

"I'm out here." He turns the locked knob.

"You?" Sam is the man. "How'd you get locked out?"

I grab a corner of the kitchen table.

"Are you kidding?" He coughs again. It is Sam. He's at the door. I see him through the glass, coughing. Sam's the man who's come to chop us to bits. No wonder I kicked him out. No wonder I changed the locks. Sam cannot save me from death and I am so angry. If he cannot stop me or my babies from dying, what good is he? Why is he even here?

"Open the door."

I look at the night that absorbed my life. How am I supposed to know what's love and what's fear? "If you're Sam, who am I?"

"I know who you are."

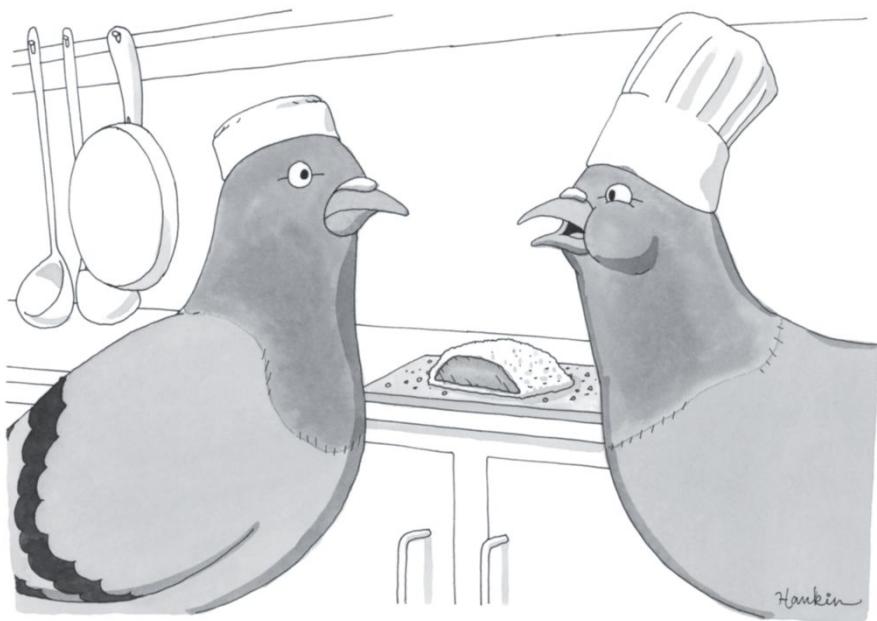
"You do?"

"Yeah."

"Who am I?" I ask. *Don't say wife*, I think. *Don't say mother*. I want to know if I am anyone without my family, if I am anyone alone. I put my face to the glass, but it's dark and I don't reflect. Sam and I watch each other through the window of the door. He coughs some more.

"I want to come home," he says. "I want us to be O.K. That's it. I'm simple and I want to come home and be with my family."

"But I am extremely not simple," I tell him. My body's coursing with secret genes and hormones and proteins. My body made eyeballs and I have no idea how. There's nothing simple about eyeballs. My body made food to feed those eyeballs. How? And how can I not know or understand the things that happen inside my own body? There's nothing simple here. I'm ruled by elixirs and compounds I don't even know. Maybe I love Sam because my hormones say I need a



"Needs more bread crumbs."

• •

"Yeah," I say. "Right." And I'm glad he gets that.

Sam cocks his head the way a coyote might, a coyote who's been temporarily confused by a question of biology versus morality.

What's the difference between living and imagining? What's the difference between love and security?

"Unlock the door," he says again.

This family is the biggest experiment I've ever been part of, an experiment called: How do you let someone in?

"Unlock the door," he says again. "Please."

I turn the knob. I open the door. That's the best definition of love I can imagine.

Sam comes inside. But when I go to shut the door behind him he tells me no. "Leave the door open." As if there were no doors, no walls, no houses.

"Open?"

"Yeah."

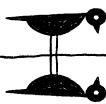
"What about skunks?" I really mean burglars, gangs, evil.

"Let them in if they want."

If they even exist. If I didn't make them up. "Really?" I ask.

"Really," he says, and pulls the door open wide, as open as it can be. ♦

THE CRITICS



ON TELEVISION

HARSH REALM

The bleak historical kaleidoscope of “The Handmaid’s Tale.”

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM

When Hulu’s adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” debuted, in April, nearly every review commented on its grotesque timeliness. It’s true that, early on, the Trumpian parallels are hard to miss. It’s a story about a government that exploits fear of Islamic terrorists to crush dissent, then blots out women’s reproductive rights. It’s about fake news, political trauma, the abnormal normalized. There’s a scene that so directly evoked the Women’s March that I had to hit Pause to collect myself.

But, for many readers of my generation, “The Handmaid’s Tale” is also a time machine back to the Reagan era, a mightily perverse period for sexual politics. Just a decade earlier, a woman could be denied a credit card without a man to co-sign, and yet, by 1985, when the novel was written, the media was declaring that feminism was *over, dunzo, defunct*—no longer necessary, now that women wore sneakers to jobs at law firms. At the same time, sexual danger was a national obsession, seen from two opposing angles, each claiming to protect women. On the right, there was the anti-abortion New Christian Right—led by figures like Phyllis Schlafly and the televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker—intent on restoring traditional marriage. On the left, there was the anti-porn movement—spearheaded by the feminist philosopher Catharine MacKinnon and the gonzo polemicist Andrea Dworkin—which argued that consensual sex was often an illusion and gender a cruel hierarchy. These weird sisters co-wrote laws that reframed pornography as a civil-rights issue, allowing rape victims

to sue publishers. It was a peculiar era in which to be a teen-age girl, equally prudish and decadent: the era of Trump Tower and cocaine, AIDS and “Just Say No.” It also made me a free-speech absolutist, wary of any clampdown on expression. My strongest memory of reading Atwood’s book is the rude jolt of a joke between college students like me. “You’re so trendy,” the narrator, Offred, recalls teasing her friend Moira, about the subject of a term paper. “It sounds like some kind of dessert. *Date Rape.*”

This was the context in which Atwood wrote “The Handmaid’s Tale,” which is set in a nightmare world called Gilead, where consensual sex is an illusion and gender a cruel hierarchy—and traditional marriage is compulsory. It’s told in the voice of a forced birth surrogate, or Handmaid, whom we know only as Offred (for “Of-Fred,” the name of the Commander who owns her); she’s stuck inside her head, desperately making dark jokes to stay sane. The plot reflects the era’s obsessions: trainers force the Handmaids to watch porn, as a lesson about how men treat women; Offred remembers throwing kink magazines into the flames with her feminist mother. Gilead, the new name for the United States, is Biblical fascism sold with faux-feminist icing. “Freedom from,” Offred’s trainer Lydia insists, is as valuable as “freedom to.” Offred thinks, bitterly and longingly, of her mother, a second-wave feminist from whom Offred had sometimes felt alienated, viewing her political struggles as ancient history. “You wanted a women’s culture,” she imagines saying. “Well, now there is one.

It isn’t what you meant, but it exists.”

In Gilead, men run the state, and women are split into types. Wives, dressed in blue, oversee the home; Marthas, in green, cook and clean; Handmaids, in long red cloaks, with white bonnets that hide their faces, have intercourse once a month, in a ritualized threesome, a state-sanctioned rape. An environmental disaster has caused mass infertility, and Handmaids are the solution—the regime’s goal is to get women not merely to accept their roles but to embrace them. There are also “un-women,” sent to clean toxic waste, and “gender traitors,” hanged. Later, we discover a wanton underworld called Jezebel’s, full of women in vintage Playboy Bunny attire, which provides a cathartic outlet for powerful men.

Atwood’s book has echoes of New England Puritanism, along with atrocities drawn from sources including Saudi Wahhabism, the Third Reich, American slavery, and the East German surveillance state. It’s constructed not as a realistic story, however, but as an eyewitness account, presented in a highly self-conscious, wordplay-drenched text, meant for an imagined reader, like Anne Frank’s diary. It’s deeply narrow, the story of a slave grieving her past—her lost child, her ex-lover—as her memories recede. The recurrent motif is Scrabble: the Commander enlists Offred in a secret game. (Women are not allowed to read.) He gives her a women’s magazine, samizdat that floods her with nostalgia. She finds a carved message in her bedroom from an earlier Handmaid, who hanged herself: “Nolite te bastardes carborundorum,” faux Latin for “Don’t



The adaptation of Margaret Atwood's novel dramatizes Offred's claustrophobia through gorgeous tableaux of repression.

let the bastards grind you down.” But, mostly, Offred observes. She hides a match in her mattress, but never lights it. Eventually, she uses sex, with the house driver, Nick, as a drug to distract her from resistance. Toward the end of the book, a black van pulls up, and she steps in, but we never find out where it takes her. In the final chapter, we get the brilliantly dark punch line: Offred’s future reader turns out to be a smug know-it-all, a future professor of Gileadean studies, who deconstructs her like a bug. Her desperate message was received, but misunderstood, because the future inevitably imagines itself superior to the past.

A TV show that replicated the book’s poetic compression, its formal strangeness, would be hard to pull off. But the Hulu adaptation doesn’t try. Instead, it is heavy-handed in the best way, dramatizing Offred’s claustrophobia through gorgeous tableaux of repression. It makes everything blunter and more explicit, almost pulpy at times; among other things, we learn Offred’s true name, June, right away. She tells us, “I intend to survive.” The first three episodes, directed by Reed Morano, sketch Gilead’s outlines. There’s the opulent mansion in which Offred (Elisabeth Moss) is fed like a prize pig, overseen by the Commander’s wife, Serena Joy (Yvonne Strahovski), a former televangelist; the wall where traitors are hanged; and the grim dorm where older women torture and tutor. Offred’s narration retains some of her wit and fury. But the emphasis is visual, making violence as beautiful as a nightmare: red dress, blue dress, white sheets, black van.

The third episode is a chilling showpiece, dramatizing Gilead’s tilt from liberal democracy into fascism, nimbly shifting from intimate scenes to grand ones, making one form of drama frame the other. There’s a graceful moment in the apartment June shares with her husband, Luke, as she, Moira, and Luke bicker in the aftermath of significant political events: the women’s money has been drained, their jobs taken away. All the characters feel like real people; their dialogue is unhurried. It’s a scene about power—Luke now has all of it—but it doesn’t grandstand. Yet this intimate moment is bracketed by deliberately operatic, even bombastic gestures. In a

parallel sequence, a lesbian Handmaid named Ofglen (played, silently, by the terrific Alexis Bledel) is gagged and kidnapped by the Secret Police, forced to see her lover hanged, and then given a clitoridectomy. In the end, Ofglen stands in her white hospital room, in shock, reaching into her medical stockings for the bandage on her crotch. It’s a scene out of a Cronenberg film: abstract, grotesque. And yet the two scenes complement and intensify each other. The show doesn’t try to replicate the near-pointillist density of the book, but at its best it manages to suggest something of its allegorical weight, its recognition of the futility of trying to separate the personal from the political.

Some of the smartest moments in the show—like Ofglen’s story, and one featuring a Handmaid named Janine—are radical edits from the book, making a passive plot active. Other changes, however well-meaning, muddy the message. In the book, Gilead is a white-supremacist culture. In the show, black actors play Moira and Luke. The result is an odd trade-off: we get brown faces, but the society is unconvincingly color-blind, as if race had never existed.

There’s a more unsettling change, however, which only fully crystallizes in the fourth episode. Most of that hour is a sharp exploration of Offred’s airless circumstances: she plays Scrabble; she flirts with Nick; her doctor offers to impregnate her. And then, in flashback, we learn about a failed escape, after which Offred was beaten on the soles of her feet. So far, so grim—“Game of Thrones” grim. The final sequence is a montage. As tinkly music plays, we see Offred on her bed, healing. One by one, other Handmaids place gifts by her pillow. Then we’re back in the current day, where she walks the streets side by side with fellow-Handmaids. In red, they glide, in slo-mo, their habits blooming against the dull street. The scenario is familiar to anyone who has seen a Tarantino film or “The Craft”: the storm gathering, the team uniting. June’s internal monologue adopts the defiance of a Nike ad: “We are Handmaids. Nolite te bastardes carborundorum, *bitches*.”

That go-girl moment made me sit up straight—and pull back. I could feel it being hashtagged, like “she persisted.” The book is never inspiring, not explicitly.

Offred is a witness, not a heroine. She’s often ashamed and numb. She’s even a little cold. It’s painful for her to remember her daughter, but her drive isn’t to find her family; it’s to stay sane. Her thoughts about Luke are complex, too: she suspects that when her power receded he liked it, a little. At one point, Offred finds herself desperate to do needlepoint, thinking of paintings that she’d seen, of harems and concubines. They were meant to be erotic, she realizes, but they actually depicted women waiting, being bored. “Maybe boredom is erotic,” she thinks. “When women do it, for men.”

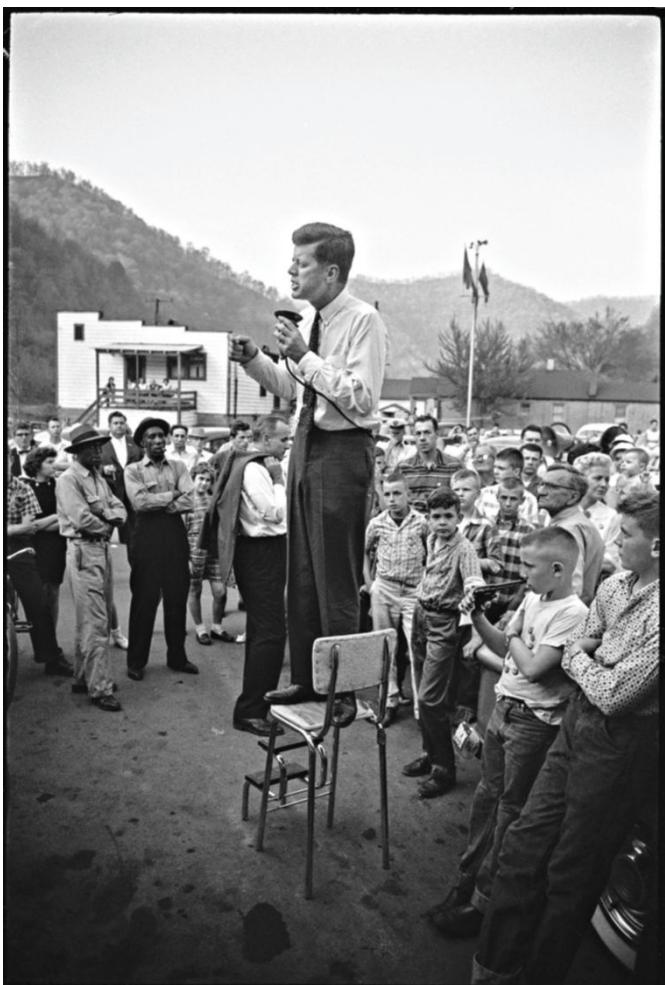
A television show, especially one that intends to run many seasons, can’t bore. And so, inevitably, the stakes are raised. The characters of Serena Joy and the Commander are played by sexy actors, expanding the potential for love triangles. Offred gets a more overt goal: to find her family. A few episodes in, we leave Offred’s perspective. There’s an episode for Serena Joy, who, like Mellie on “Scandal” or Claire on “House of Cards,” is softened by a backstory; then we visit Luke, a brave rebel up in Canada. Step by step, you feel the show mining Offred’s story for something that’s more aspirational, less psychological; less horror, more thriller. There are still many pungent scenes. But the icky, idiosyncratic force of Morano’s early episodes dims slightly, as the show hints at a more conventional path: “Escape from Gilead.” Maybe this move is inevitable; it might succeed. But there’s something lost along the way—the special beauty of a bleak ending. On television, that’s no longer impossible. (Just look at “Happy Valley” or “American Horror Story.”) But it can’t happen here.

The sexual politics of 1985 survive today only in distorted form, reordered like Scrabble tiles. Our President is a *Playboy*-brash predator; his Vice-President is pure Gilead. The anti-porn movement is as dead as the Shakers; naked photos are practically second-date etiquette. In pop culture, the eighties are often portrayed as cartoonishly sexist: “Well, it was the eighties, after all,” goes the excuse. It’s like the fifties, if you lived in the eighties. Atwood’s story may now be an artifact about an artifact, but it retains its great power as a reminder of the thin tissue between the past and the present. ♦

JACK BE NIMBLE

Trying to remember J.F.K.

BY THOMAS MALLON



On November 8, 1960, I voted for Richard Nixon. I had turned nine the week before. According to my fourth-grade report card, from that September, I stood four feet one and a quarter inches tall and weighed fifty-five pounds: small enough to be permitted entry into the curtained voting booth in the Stewart Manor School, on Long Island, where my father let me pull the lever for Nixon and Henry Cabot Lodge. It was a reach: during Nelson Rockefeller's long Albany reign, the Republican ticket occupied the top row on New York State's mechanical ballot.

The retellings of Kennedy's story are by now known more than the story itself.

John F. Kennedy's Catholicism cut little ice with many of the Irish ex-New Dealers who lived on our street. Their liking of Ike proved to be more than a fling, and by 1960 they were beginning to feel permanently at home in the Republican Party. Affection for my wry, sweet-tempered father, meanwhile, left me immune to much of J.F.K.'s chivalric glamour. My father always called him Ke-NAH-dy, a pronunciation meant to sound haut Wasp, which from his point of view this rich, educated New Englander might as well have been. But he also viewed

Kennedy with an easygoing detachment, rather as Kennedy tended to view himself; he laughed along with the affectionate Vaughn Meader impersonations and the *Mad* magazine spoofs of J.F.K. that I added to his reading of the *New York World-Telegram*, a middlebrow broadsheet unaware that, along with men's hats and women's cotton gloves, it was on the brink of death.

I recall how Phyllis Mindell, the twenty-three-year-old teacher who had noted my height and weight, assigned our class to watch the first Kennedy-Nixon debate. As Kennedy's inaugural arrived, Mrs. Mindell gave us a letter-writing exercise: we could send our congratulations to the incoming President, or offer the outgoing one our thanks. I loyally chose Eisenhower, and duly received an acknowledgment postmarked February 6, 1961, from Washington. The card inside was headed "Gettysburg, Pennsylvania." Eisenhower's bold printed signature (not dissimilar to John F. Kennedy's) sat where a stamp should have been—my introduction to the franking privilege—and as I look at the envelope more than five decades on I'm arrested by its little bits of archaism. There is no Zip Code, and the addressee, "Master Thomas Mallon," might as well be Penrod Schofield.

The following June, in her last set of report-card comments, Mrs. Mindell observed that "Tommy has expressed great interest in being a politician someday." The excitement of the election had clearly lingered.

Kennedy would have been a hundred years old on May 29th. His centenary brings with it new books, the most notable of which is probably "The Road to Camelot" (Simon & Schuster), a wearily titled but provocative reconstruction of his "five-year campaign" for the White House. The authors, Thomas Oliphant and Curtis Wilkie, both veterans of the *Boston Globe*, locate the effort's origin in a "cardiac double-header" from the summer of 1955, when President Eisenhower and Lyndon Johnson, then Senate Majority Leader, suffered serious heart attacks. Joseph P. Kennedy, confident of Johnson's recovery but not of Ike's,



"It takes a while to kick in, but this should do nothing."

suggested to L.B.J. that he consider a race for President in '56, with Kennedy's son, the junior senator from Massachusetts, as a running mate.

Johnson wasn't amenable to the idea, but J.F.K.'s Vice-Presidential prospects were nearly fulfilled when Adlai Stevenson, trying to jump-start his second doomed campaign against Eisenhower, told delegates at the Democratic Convention to make their own choice for the bottom of the ticket. Out in Chicago, Jack Kennedy made a fast, strenuous grab at the nomination, and posted a respectable loss to the Tennessee senator Estes Kefauver. Months before, Kennedy's young aide Theodore Sorensen had run an extensive set of numbers showing how a Catholic on the Democratic ticket could stem recent defections to the Republican Party by groups like those newly suburbanized Irish Catholics on Dover Parkway in Stewart Manor. Sorensen's report held that Al Smith's crushing defeat in 1928 had resulted from his stance against Prohibition, not his religion; Smith would have done worse still had he *not* been Catholic.

Kennedy spent the fall of '56 campaigning for Stevenson but picked his own venues, ones that could redound to his benefit four years later. A decision to try for the Presidency in 1960

was made weeks after Stevenson's defeat, at Thanksgiving dinner in Hyannis Port. Joe Kennedy had already pledged "whatever it takes" from his own fortune. Oliphant and Wilkie suggest that the actual rationale for Kennedy's candidacy lay in his understanding of "celebrity," as well as a confession he made to a group at Washington's Metropolitan Club: "It's not that I have some burning thing to take to the nation. It's just, 'Why not me?'"

This is the Kennedy now frozen in Isabel McIlvain's statue outside the Massachusetts State House: a youthful figure, regal and a little aloof, whose high, straight-ahead gaze isn't so much visionary as unapproachable. According to "The Road to Camelot," Kennedy was regarded by some Senate colleagues as "an indifferent Democrat with occasionally independent tendencies," and he needed to do more than the usual amount of broken-field running to please the Democratic Party's sturdy but mad coalition of segregation and social justice. Between 1956 and 1958, looking southward, he hinted at disagreement with Eisenhower's decision to send troops to Little Rock; offered campaign help to George C. Wallace, a candidate for the Alabama governorship; and put a Confederate legislator into "Profiles in Courage."

Still, he had more work to do with the Party's left than with its right. Kennedy took a forthright stance against French colonialism in Algeria, previewing his Peace Corps-style competition with the Soviets in the newly independent Third World. The columnist Joseph Alsop thought that Kennedy had potential to become "a Stevenson with balls," though the Senator's principal intraparty antagonist, Eleanor Roosevelt, still longed for Stevenson himself. Unforgiving of Kennedy's softness toward Senator Joseph McCarthy, Mrs. Roosevelt is believed to have been the first to recommend that J.F.K. show "less profile and more courage." The former First Lady was "brutally brusque" to him during the '56 Convention. When she finally endorsed him, well into the 1960 campaign, she conceded in conversation that Stevenson might not have made such a good President after all. "I almost peed in my pants," Kennedy told a crony who had heard the admission.

Oliphant and Wilkie occasionally get tough with their young subject—the coverup of his health problems, his "feckless" behavior with his wife—though they exhibit a lingering Boston tendency to sentimentalize the Kennedys. "Profiles in Courage" is described as a "genuine collaboration" between Kennedy and Sorensen, an odd description for a book officially attributed to the single author who took a Pulitzer Prize for it. Political dirty tricks that would be otherwise deemed reprehensible are just colorful displays of feistiness when executed on Jack's behalf. Of one Kennedy operative, who, in "an attempt at reverse psychology," likely mailed thousands of crude anti-Catholic pamphlets to Catholic voters, we're given the amused judgment of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.: "He took cheerful delight in causing trouble and in reorganizing the truth."

"The Road to Camelot" is replete with antique names and strategies, and not all readers will want to follow it into the weeds of bygone political science. Nonetheless, the best and most robust part of the book is an early chapter that has Kennedy, at a brawl of a meeting in Boston's Hotel Bradford, establishing dominance over the Massachusetts Democratic Party by ousting the state chairman and putting in his own man.

Jack was willing to countenance and supply whatever it took: trickery, muscle, even the shaking of hands.

Both my grandfathers had died long before I was born, a reason perhaps, those mailed good wishes notwithstanding, for my never feeling anything personal toward Eisenhower. With Kennedy, politics aside, everything was intimate, aspirant, literally seen from below. From the inaugural ceremony (I was home from school for a snow day) to the assassination (I was absent, with a cold, playing chess with my uncle), I experienced most of the thirty-fifth Presidency lying on our braided living-room rug, head tilted upward to the television.

Rhetorically, the Administration was an aural experience, heard through the radio-style mesh of the TV speaker. Some of its less remembered lines fastened themselves to me more lastingly than the ghostwritten flourishes that have entered historical memory. "It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union." On October 22, 1962, the syllogistic nature of this sentence seemed to impress me as much as the possibility it discussed. These were the words I reported to my father when he came through the door, arriving home from work past the middle of the speech.

A year later, when Kennedy made his civil-rights address, it was a rhetorical question, one that followed a list of indignities suffered by American Negroes, that registered with me: "then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place?" This exercise in empathy had guaranteed appeal for an imagination susceptible to the weekly premises of "The Twilight Zone." I could try to do this in the same way I had tried to see myself as Henry Bemis, the Burgess Meredith character who breaks his glasses just after realizing he has a lifetime of peaceful post-nuclear-apocalypse reading ahead of him.

My paternally inspired devotion to Nixon remained weirdly keen, but Kennedy was now my leader, and I was

ready to put my undersized shoulder to the wheel. Project Mercury (an Eisenhower program, I feel conservatively compelled even now to point out) had found in the new President a leader who looked as if he could himself be one of the seven astronauts in whose progress I took an obsessive interest. I was most comfortable surrendering to Kennedy when he was in the company of those pilots, making postflight calls, pinning on medals, or just being at Cape Canaveral with them, wearing his Ray-Bans. The incipient sexual dimension of all this is obvious to me now. Why should I have been less vulnerable than anyone else to the projection of desire onto Jack and Jackie? Even eleven-year-olds may have realized that this President, his hand always furtively in and out of his jacket pocket, had his own barely kept secrets.

The Administration was a family story, part drama—the loss of two-day-old Patrick Kennedy during its last summer—and part raucous sitcom: the pool parties at the home of J.F.K.'s kid brother Bobby, the high-strung Beaver to his Wally. The patriarch interested my own father, who always called him Papa Joe and admired him, however grudgingly, as a roguish son of a bitch whose interest in his children was evident and intense. Oliphant and Wilkie insist that Jack Kennedy was more, and earlier, independent of the old man than is generally believed. The ambitions fuelled by Papa Joe's dubiously made money were J.F.K.'s own.

After December, 1961, Joseph Kennedy, mostly mute and occasionally moaning, sat trapped inside the effects of a stroke—another sort of "Twilight Zone" scenario that I began to ponder with phobic regularity. The most emotionally striking, and uncharacteristic, photographs of the President show him kissing his helpless father on the top of his head, pictures I may have contemplated with some premonition of the illness that would one day cross our cheerful family doorstep and prematurely ravage my own father.

We are now as far from John Kennedy's time as his was from Theodore Roosevelt's. Available living memories are growing scarce. Here in Washington, the Kennedy Center, visible

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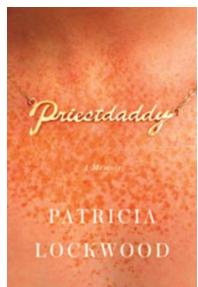
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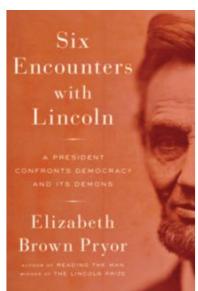
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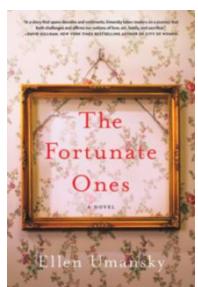
Priestdaddy, by Patricia Lockwood (*Riverhead*). The central character of this vivid, unrelentingly funny memoir is the author's father—a Catholic priest whose first stirrings of faith came, after he was already married, by way of repeated viewings of “The Exorcist” while he was serving in the Navy. Lockwood, a poet, is a “long and fatally lapsed” Catholic, but, she writes, “All my life I have listened to what people will let slip when they think you are part of their we.” Her stories of growing up immersed in the pro-life movement and in Church arcana—and, later, of taking her ailing husband to live with her parents in their rectory—are both savage and tender, shot through with surprises and revelations.



Six Encounters with Lincoln, by Elizabeth Brown Pryor (*Vi-*
king). By focussing on meetings that President Lincoln had with lesser-known figures, such as John Ross, chief of the Cherokee, this history aims at deconstructing Lincoln’s mythic reputation as the Great Emancipator to arrive at a more nuanced view. The man who emerges had a short temper and a penchant for bawdy, off-color humor; supported abolition only insofar as it would help expedite the end of the war; and voiced concern for the welfare of Native Americans but turned a blind eye to corruption in his Administration that led to the routine pilfering of tribal lands. Pryor paints a provocative historical portrait while testing common assumptions about an American icon.



Mikhail and Margarita, by Julie Lekstrom Himes (*Europa*). Black-listed by the Soviet authorities, Mikhail Bulgakov, the great Russian satirist, spent much of the nineteen-thirties unpublished and living in penury. This richly imagined retelling of those lean years—which gave rise to his phantasmagoric novel “The Master and Margarita”—mixes fact and fiction to create a narrative that is both foreign and familiar. Readers acquainted with Bulgakov’s work will recognize the memorable tropes: a burning manuscript, a delirium tremens diagnosis, linden trees at Patriarch’s Ponds. Yet the novel is not a tribute but a complex and original work, written in a style that is the polar opposite of Bulgakov’s antic magic realism.



The Fortunate Ones, by Ellen Umansky (*William Morrow*). The restitution of art works stolen by the Nazis provides the background for this début novel. A Chaim Soutine painting called “The Bellhop” unites two women: Lizzie, a lawyer mourning the death of her extravagant, difficult father, and Rose, a former Kindertransport refugee with dark memories of Vienna, Britain, and Los Angeles. The painting belonged to Rose’s family before the war; later, Lizzie’s family, amassing a fortune in California, owned it for a while. Umansky shrewdly avoids letting the issue of stolen art crowd out other aspects of the story, to which she gives a feminist tilt. Reconciling career ambitions with the pressure to have children occupies Lizzie and Rose as much as the crimes of the past do.

from my study window, feels as much an established marble fact as the Lincoln Memorial, a few blocks away. Only one of Kennedy’s eight siblings survives, his eighty-nine-year-old sister, Jean, who visits a son in the Watergate, more or less next door to the Kennedy Center. As I write, a single buckeye sits on my desk, a souvenir from John Glenn’s Ohio funeral, brought to me by the daughter of his successor in orbit, Scott Carpenter, the subject of an early novel of mine. He, too, is gone, like the rest of the Original Seven.

It is all by now a story whose retellings are remembered more than the story itself. But those reiterations continue to be made, in peculiar and unstable forms. Pablo Larraín’s recent film “Jackie” presents a surprisingly heartless version of the First Lady in the week following the assassination. She plans a funeral for her husband that is based on Lincoln’s, and stage-manages the famous “Camelot” interview with *Life*. Woe betide anyone who won’t march to her exact tune behind the casket. The film’s smallest pieces of set decoration and costuming are slavishly accurate, while bigger things are off. Peter Sarsgaard is a strangely irresolute Bobby, with no suggestion of a Boston accent. The production ends up being more historical porn than historical fiction, with its version of the fatal Frame 313 of the Zapruder film being held off until late in the picture: the money shot.

Jacqueline Kennedy is also the central figure in Michael J. Hogan’s new study, “The Afterlife of John Fitzgerald Kennedy” (Cambridge). She co-stars in an Administration that Hogan views as a thirty-four-month-long “performance.” Mrs. Kennedy, from the Lincoln-esque funeral onward, remained in charge of her husband’s image for the next thirty years, operating sometimes with taste and sometimes with grandiosity, occasionally deploying the vindictive manipulations that “Jackie” regards as her essence. She drove hard bargains with Roger Stevens, the first head of the Kennedy Center, threatening to take her husband’s name off the building if she didn’t have a voice on the board; “blasted” even Schlesinger, the President’s most enduring apologist, when he wouldn’t further perfume

his J.F.K. history, "A Thousand Days"; and helped drive an exhausted William Manchester, the family-appointed chronicler of the assassination, into a hospital.

Hogan's thoroughly researched book is aware of the bullying that accompanied the family's memorialization of the President ("a relentless war against countermemories or alternative narratives"), but he tends to beat a guilty retreat from any barrage of irony or skepticism as soon as he's launched it. The spell that Mrs. Kennedy casts at the funeral ("the very personification of strength and grace under pressure, of dignity, nobility, and majesty, of gallantry and composure, of duty and self-sacrifice") never breaks for long, and no threnody goes unsounded: "In Bolivia, people everywhere wept openly."

The most useful portion of this "Afterlife" is Hogan's sine-curving of three historical waves that have carried Kennedy's memory through the past fifty-four years. Jackie-sanctioned reverence remained "largely intact for most of the decade" after Dallas, giving rise to everything from Schlesinger's and Sorensen's reverent reconstructions to "Clare Barnes's lovely book on Kennedy's scrimshaw collection." Then came the revisionists, with pertinent questions about Kennedy's foreign-policy failures, domestic hesitations, and private morals. Hogan doesn't deny the legitimacy of their work but does cluck over the way they "seemed to sprout like mushrooms from the dank soil of American politics." (From what ground did the hagiographic lilies spring?)

If revisionism had, by 1990, "nearly shattered the idealized image" of Kennedy, both it and a third wave of "post-revisionism" ended up being, to a great extent, beside the point. As polls made clear, public opinion "remained largely indifferent to what scholars and pundits had to say." Even revelations of the President's Olympian infidelities were assimilated into the legend, infusing it with a priapic, pop-cultural vigor.

Among the ideological waverings of Kennedy's reputation, one finds a conservative regard first being test-driven in speeches by Ronald Reagan, who focussed on J.F.K.'s Cold War-

ring, while Reaganite supply-siders viewed Kennedy as a tax-cutting frère. Ted Cruz, as Hogan points out, got on board this train of thought in 2013. I suspect that my father would have remained cheerfully impervious to it, whereas I find myself making use of the argument from time to time, not just to win a political point but to feel further ensnared by those seductions of Camelot that a half century before I covertly craved and loyally resisted.

To reconnect with Kennedy at this long temporal remove, one still needs to go to Boston, from which his image was first projected, and where, even now, it receives its most active and serious freshenings. The chief monument to J.F.K., more important than all those built or renamed in the first decade of family-directed fealty—the myriad schools, the space center, the airport, the performing-arts center—is his Presidential Library and Museum. After a period of surprising resistance by the residents of already overbuilt Cambridge, the library eventually opened in Columbia Point, in the Dorchester section of Boston, in 1979. The I. M. Pei design, jutting toward the ocean, dominates the coastline, and even in sunny weather winds tear across a plaza near the visitors' entrance. On the April morning I visited, the entire place was lashed with rain.

Inside, Stacey Bredhoff, the museum's curator, led me into a room where some of the one hundred objects for a centenary exhibition were being prepared. It seemed a sort of Pointillist, inductive assemblage, some of the items political and others personal, including an assortment of J.F.K.'s neckties and pieces of the scrimshaw that brought forth a whole book. If the gathering conveys a different impression of Kennedy from the one made by the museum's permanent display, it's perhaps, Bredhoff said, "a sense of his ambition." The leather, unwheelied suitcase he used on his pre-Presidential travels lay on a table next to a flag from PT-109. A spokesperson for the Kennedy Library Foundation, in the room with me and Bredhoff, said that knowledge of the President among the museum's youngest visitors sometimes con-

sists of little more than "that he was young and that he died young."

I had come to the library to reconnect with a small piece of personal history, the missing half of an epistolary exchange. At home, for fifty-five years, I've kept a letter sent to me, in the summer of 1962, with a four-cent Project Mercury stamp, by the Kennedy White House. It was signed by Special Assistant to the President Ralph A. Dungan, the man, in Hogan's "Afterlife," whose White House office became the spot from which Kennedy's family and aides worked "red-eyed through the nights in order to plan all aspects of the president's funeral." On July 20, 1962, Dungan assured me that Kennedy was "always appreciative of the interest of those boys and girls who write to him," and enclosed a partial transcript of the President's recent press conference, to "clarify [my] understanding of the President's position."

I had evidently complained about Kennedy's urging Americans to "support the Supreme Court decisions even when we might not agree with them." The decision in question was *Engel v. Vitale*. On June 25th, the Court had ruled the New York State Regents' prayer—which public-school students recited "voluntarily," generally after the Pledge of Allegiance—to be an impermissible intrusion of church upon state. At his press conference, the President dodged the issue of constitutional amendments that might overturn the Court's ruling, but suggested that Americans pray more at home and in church: "That power is very much open to us."

The library has an *Engel v. Vitale* subject file of citizen mail whose contents generally range from the icy ("I hate to think that you are acting like Pontius Pilot") to the venomous: "Your support of the Supreme Court in putting God out of our public Schools, and putting the Niger in our schools, is truly the most disgusting thing I have heard yet." My own handwritten letter has survived, improbably enough, in Box 1709 of an alphabetical Name File, inside a folder marked "MALLO," where far-flung Mallons variously praise the President on Cuba, urge the impeachment of Earl Warren, and excoriate the proposed wheat



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sale to the Soviet Union: "Our mortal enemy is in dire trouble so we prop him up. How idiotic!" Only the context they provide makes me look less belligerent:

111 Dover Parkway
Stewart Manor, L.I.
June 28, 1962

President Kennedy
White House
Washington D.C.

Mr. President:

I was very disappointed when at your news conference (June 27) you talked in favor of abolishing the prayer we say in our fifth grade class every morning.

I feel that the Supreme Court made a very grave mistake abolishing this prayer and that you made a very bad error supporting them.

If the country can't pray in public how come In God We Trust is written on our money which circulates openly, and daily.

This is your administration's most terrible mistake.

Yours truly,
Tom Mallon

Not even "Dear" Mr. President! The dudgeon and scolding are such that, had my pen not reached the bottom-right corner of the page, I no doubt would have added "yet" after "most terrible mistake." The Glenn and Carpenter space flights, epochal events for me, had both occurred in the past few months, but I was cutting Kennedy no slack on their account. The whole little screed, based on a misapprehension (Kennedy was not supporting the Court's decision *per se*), shows a stiff anger.

Did the nuns—the ones who gave public-school pupils like me "religious instruction" each Wednesday afternoon—put us up to this protest? I doubt it. They would not have felt much fervor for the anodyne haste of the Regents' prayer. (Here it is, in its entirety: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.") For another thing, the letter's date, June 28th, indicates that we were already free of the nuns: Kennedy's televised press conference occurred during the first week of my summer vacation. I had nothing but rug-rat leisure to watch the afternoon broadcast all on my own.

Even the local aspect of *Engel v. Vitale*—the plaintiffs and the defendant were from New Hyde Park, right on the other side of Stewart Manor's main street—seems unlikely to have impelled my letter. What I hear in it, actually, is my father's extollings of Barry Goldwater, who by that point had (temporarily) replaced Nixon in his political affections. "*The Conscience of a Conservative*" was on a shelf in our house, perhaps even next to "*John Fitzgerald Kennedy: Youngest President*," which I had bought at the school book fair, its title no doubt appealing to my nascent political careerism. I don't think my father had much interest in the Regents' prayer, but I was already accustomed to his inveighings against the Supreme Court, absorbing them in the course of our sunny and secure filial romance.

I do, however, have to reckon with my use of "Yours truly," a closing that, I remember being taught, was less formal and businesslike than "Sincerely." And while I didn't go so far as to call myself "Tommy," I didn't use "Thomas," either. As if employing a secret double password, I believe I was signaling to the President that, despite my indignation—and even at the risk of betraying my father—we were friends. Underneath all that fustian, I can in fact find something attributable to John F. Kennedy, to a climactic line of his Convention acceptance speech: "I am saying to you that my decisions on every public policy will be my own, as an American, as a Democrat, and as a free man."

I recall the words as a thrilling rhetorical experience of parallelism, triad, and crescendo, no matter that I didn't yet know those terms. A latter-day parse leaves the sentence looking slightly off—surely, to preserve the ascent in importance, "Democrat" should precede "American"—but it lives in my memory as the single most resonant piece of Kennedy oratory, beyond the syllogism of the missile-crisis speech or the empathetic exercise proposed in the civil-rights address. Here I am, lambasting the President as a fifth grader, an unregistered Republican, and a *free man*, a sense of myself that even now, after decades of identity politics and bitter political

disappointment, feels ineradicable. And I know that it came, in some measure, from the Boston-accented voice my father used to mock.

Before the nine-thirty school bell rang on April 12, 1961, Phyllis Mindell called me up to her desk to ask if I knew “what happened today.” I said that Franklin Roosevelt had died sixteen years ago. That this was the fact I answered with—rather than the hundredth anniversary of the firing upon Fort Sumter, then being commemorated in newspapers and magazines—indicates to me that she was right about my political ambitions: Presidents were more important than events.

“No,” Mrs. Mindell replied, with excitement. “I mean what happened today—this morning. The Soviet Union put a man into space.”

The *World-Telegram* was an evening paper, and I hadn’t heard the news about Yuri Gagarin’s orbital flight. “Oh?” was, I believe, all I said. Could she really be seeing this as good news? To me, the space race was more about the Cold War than about wonder, and I was immeasurably distressed by what I took to be a definitive American defeat. I walked back to my desk as if I were having one of my Khrushchev dreams; he sometimes made personal appearances, angry and accusatory, during my slumbers.

On April 12th of this year—a week after my trip to Boston and fifty-six years to the day after she gave me the news about the Soviets’ leap into orbit—I have lunch with Phyllis Mindell, now eighty, an active and accomplished widow with thick, stylish white hair, if no longer the Jackie Kennedy clothes she jokes about once having favored. We talk about the vagaries of memory and wonder if she did not, after all, assign her students to watch the Kennedy-Nixon debates, since she and her husband did not own a television, a decision whose cultural pretentiousness she now laughs at.

We also talk about a letter that she wrote, in 1963, to John F. Kennedy, one that I was able to find through an archivist’s search of the Name File at the J.F.K. library. In it, she thanks the President for being “a sane man,” before

noting that “the yet unborn children of the world will remember you as one who helped to eliminate the evil of the atomic bomb.” She does not remember writing the letter—is astonished that it’s turned up—but the circumstances of its composition remain vivid. It was occasioned by Kennedy’s having reached an agreement on the limited nuclear-test-ban treaty with the Soviets, on July 25th.

At the time, Phyllis was twenty-six and had been married to Marvin Mindell, an engineer, for almost five years. She had once miscarried, and the couple were reluctant to bring children into a world that seemed on the brink of nuclear extinction. But the late summer of ’63 appeared to be the beginning of a more promising time, with the test-ban treaty and the March on Washington. They made a small contribution to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that season, and Phyllis now tends to think of the whole period as being more the “King era.” But her memories of Kennedy remain warm, if unblinkered. “You can be a sane man and have feet of clay,” she says. In the end, “that’s our problem, and we have to figure out how to sort that out.”

Newly hopeful, Phyllis again became pregnant late in October, 1963, on a trip that she and Marvin took to Rome. Back on Long Island, she miscarried the baby on the morning of November 22nd. She learned of Kennedy’s assassination later that day, from the weeping woman who had come to take care of her and had heard the news on the radio.

By 1966, Phyllis had given birth to two sons. One of them, David Mindell, an M.I.T. professor, is an important theorist of space exploration and a leading scholar of the Apollo lunar-landing program. The political victory that that effort provided will eventually be a paltry thing compared with the actual human transcendence that it initiated, however fitfully so far. Project Apollo seems to me, even at this remove—and surely in the fullness of time—what mattered most about John F. Kennedy’s life. It was he who committed us to it, six weeks after Professor Mindell’s mother made me look to the sky with a stiff upper lip. ♦

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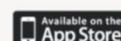


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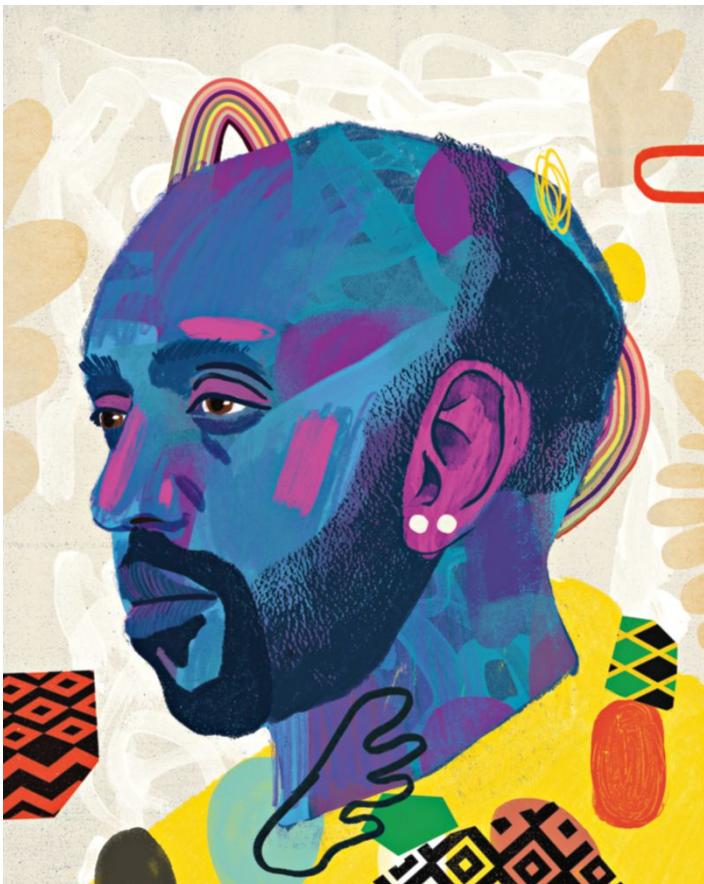
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FLY AWAY

A new novel of the sacred and the profane in backlands Jamaica.

BY LAURA MILLER



In his poem sequence “The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion,” the Jamaican writer Kei Miller has a Rastaman engage the title character in a debate. The cartographer explains his work:

What I do is science. I show
the earth as it is, without bias.
I never fall in love. I never get involved
with the muddy affairs of land.

But the Rastaman has his doubts:

... draw me a map of what you see
then I will draw a map of what you
never see
and guess me whose map will be
bigger than whose?
Guess me whose map will tell the
larger truth?

Kei Miller’s story-stuffed “Augustown” resists the stereotypes of the “poet’s novel.”

lowers gathered to see him fulfill his promise to fly up to Heaven. Instead, he was committed to a lunatic asylum, and became immortalized in a ditty sung by the novel’s schoolchildren: “Bedward jump, and Bedward bruck him neck!” In “Augustown,” however, Bedward the flying preacher, buoyed up by the faith of his congregation, really can fly, and, tethered by a team of deacons, he enters his church bobbing like a Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade balloon. Ma Taffy can swear to this, because when she was a girl she saw this feat with her own eyes.

“Augustown” doesn’t match the stereotype of a “poet’s novel”—that is, it isn’t introspective, replete with long passages of description, and scant of plot. Instead, it is stuffed with the characters and stories of hardscrabble Augustown, a former hamlet on the outskirts of St. Andrew founded by slaves freed in 1838. (It bears, as an introductory note explains, “an uncanny resemblance” to the real village of August Town, which was absorbed into the sprawl of Kingston.) The chapters tell of the flying preacher, but also the histories of Ma Taffy; her brainy niece, Gina; Clarky, a Rastafarian fruit vender bullied by policemen; a young gang leader who hides a cache of weapons under Ma Taffy’s house; the affluent light-skinned principal of Kaia’s primary school; and Mr. Saint-Josephs, a teacher at that school who triggers what Jamaicans call an “autoclaps,” or catastrophe, when, in a fit of pique, he cuts off Kaia’s dreadlocks.

Like Jane Austen’s “Emma,” “Augustown” is a village novel, and, even if (unlike “Emma”) it wears its politics on its sleeve, it exemplifies the belief that everything you want to know about human beings can be found in an overlooked, out-of-the-way little community, as long you pay it sufficient attention. Furthermore, as the novel’s mysterious, disembodied, and omniscient narrator explains from a perch somewhere in the sky above Augustown, “Each day contains much more than its own hours, or minutes, or seconds. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that every day contains all of history.”

The day during which the novel's main action takes place, the day of the autoclaps, is April 11, 1982, but the roots of what happens on that day go far back.

Where the poet's touch in "Augustown" becomes detectable is in the novel's epigrammatic concision and in the loping, conversational cadence of so many of its sentences: "Some days have more roads than others, and some roads more distance, so that when a woman complains how long the day is, maybe she is counting its roads rather than its hours." The barely perceptible Caribbean lilt in Miller's prose exerts a hypnotic effect that is one of the great pleasures of "Augustown," even if every so often he uses it to deliver a horror like the story of Ma Taffy's blinding. (An enormous rats' nest burst through her ceiling as she lay in bed at night, and the panicked animals gouged her eyes.) This is the language of "old-time stories—things that have never been written down and that live only in the recesses of people's minds," the narrator tells us. It stands opposed to the supercilious voices of journalists, officials, and other mouthpieces for "Babylon," that wondrously flexible Jamaican slang term for systemic power. Babylon is, as Ma Taffy describes it, "all them things in this life that put a heavy stone on the heads of people like you and me—all them things that cause we not to rise."

Babylon exercises its power directly, particularly in the novel's violent climax, but Miller is more concerned with the inner Babylon that has seeped unawares into the people of Augustown. Mr. Saint-Josephs, the schoolteacher, is a fallen man even before he commits the unforgivable offense of cutting off Kaia's dreadlocks. His wife has left him, and every morning this dark-skinned, round-faced man looks in the mirror and persuades himself that he sees a light-skinned, square-jawed man, "so strong and so desperate is his belief that he is other than what he actually is."

Rastafarians like Ma Taffy and her family make a vow, drawing on

the Nazirite tradition of the Hebrew Bible, never to let a "blade" touch their heads. But, to Mr. Saint-Josephs, Kaia's dreads aren't emblems of faith; they make him into "some dirty little African from the bush, and sitting right there in front of me, so brazen with his hairstyle." The teacher understands nothing, not even the received wisdom he thinks he respects. As part of a strict regimen designed to tamp down the many parts of himself he'd rather not acknowledge, Mr. Saint-Josephs starts every day reading two pages each from the Bible and from "On the Origin of Species," although "that the two books contradict each other is not a thought that ever occurs to him."

According to the narrator of "Augustown," Alexander Bedward's second-in-command collaborated with another preacher to write "The Promised Key," "widely regarded as the first book of Rastafari," and a work deeply influenced by Bedward's Afrocentric creed. The preacher, in the alternate, Augustown version of his story, was not a lunatic who tricked his flock into thinking that he could teach them how to fly back to the motherland but, rather, one of the unsung prophets of a new religion. To say that Bedward really could fly isn't merely "magic realism," the narrator admonishes: "This is not another story about superstitious island people and their primitive beliefs. No. You don't get off that easy." Rather than ask yourself whether you believe it, "you may as well stop to consider a more urgent question . . . whether this story is about the kinds of people you have never taken the time to believe in."

It's a tendentious question, especially when addressed to someone who is at that moment reading a novel about such people and finding them very easy to believe in. Occasionally, "Augustown" does lecture, although these passages become part of the emerging revelation of the narrator's identity. To a non-Jamaican, the novel sometimes gives the impression of eavesdropping on a family quarrel, but, then, all family quarrels are in some way alike, and many Ameri-

cans have found themselves in some version of a conversation that Ma Taffy's niece has with her rich white boyfriend. "What am I supposed to do about it, Gina?" he asks. "Find every striking person on this island that have less money than my family does and say sorry to them? *I'm so sorry that I'm white. I'm so sorry that my father makes a fuckload of money. I'm so sorry that I speak good English.* Would that help?"

"Augustown" isn't without its storytelling flaws. A scene set in the offices of the colonial authorities in 1920 is stilted and anachronistic; a tantalizing early appearance of one Soft-Paw, a gang leader renowned for his silent footsteps, ends with him slinking away, carrying rucksacks full of guns, never to appear again. (This reader spent the whole novel waiting for him to come back.) But these are the peripheral stumbling blocks of an expansive talent, of a writer stretching to catch up with his own curiosity and fertility. The center of the novel, Miller's portrait of Augustown, holds. The wind rustles the breadfruit trees, the voice of a radio-talk-show host named Mutty Perkins echoes from the open windows of every house, and the unofficial news of the neighborhood spreads in the usual way: "For everyone who gets the story, they want to be the first to have told someone else, so it goes from fence to fence and from phone to phone, circling its way around Augustown several times, so that those who were the first to deliver it will be satisfied to receive it again in just a short space of time from other sources, like a gift returned to them. Then they can say, 'Yes, man! Is just now you hearing?'" It will never appear in any newspaper or history book, but it is real. ♦

Correction of the Week

From the Times.

November 16, 2016

An Op-Ed article on Monday about the death of Leonard Cohen rendered Mr. Cohen's Hebrew name incorrectly. It is Eliezer ben Nisan ha'Cohen, not Eliezer ben Natan ha'Cohen. It also misstated the title of a Cohen song. It is "I'm Your Man," not "I'm in Your Man."

TEMPLES OF SOUND

Two spectacular concert halls open in Germany.

BY ALEX ROSS



Concert-hall design has entered its grand mannerist phase, or, some might argue, its age of decadence. Two years ago, the sensation of the music world was the Philharmonie de Paris, a silver-and-black cultural spaceship that had landed in the Parc de la Villette. This season, it is the Elbphilharmonie, in Hamburg, Germany—a brick-and-glass colossus that resembles an avant-garde ocean liner docked in the city's harbor. The new European halls seem to be competing with one another to see which can run up the most staggering bills and generate the most outraged headlines. With a price tag of three hundred and ninety-one million euros, the Paris Philharmonie

held the crown for a little while, but its notoriety was soon eclipsed by that of the Elbphilharmonie, which took a decade to build and consumed eight hundred and sixty-six million euros. The first billion-dollar hall is not far off.

The conventional wisdom in America is that concert halls have too often seemed like fortresses, and must become more down to earth. Such is not the philosophy guiding the Elbphilharmonie, which was designed by the Swiss firm of Herzog & de Meuron. It towers three hundred and thirty-five feet above the ground, the concert-hall portion of the complex resting atop a massive brick warehouse that formerly was used to

The Elbphilharmonie, in Hamburg's port, resembles an avant-garde ocean liner.

store cacao beans. The glass-covered upper structure lunges vertically from the foundation in a way that somehow reminds me of Neuschwanstein, King Ludwig II's hilltop castle in Bavaria. Yet there are no gemütlich touches. The glass exterior is cool, undulating, shimmering; the brick walls below have an industrial, almost military look. Far from welcoming you in, the Elbphilharmonie glowers imperiously, as if prepared to repel a sneak attack on the Hanseatic League.

As expenses and delays mounted, the Elbphilharmonie—Elphi, locals call it—was seen in some quarters as an indefensible waste of public money. Since the opening, in January, much of the ill will has ebbed away. Every concert has sold out—even the “blind date” programs, about which nothing is divulged in advance. Each day, thousands of visitors take tours of public areas within the structure. The excitement serves as a reminder that classical music has not lost its exalted position in German culture. According to the German Orchestral Association, more than eighteen million people attended classical concerts in the 2015–16 season. The association's director noted that this figure was considerably higher than the number of people who had gone to see soccer games in Germany's main professional league.

The interior of the Elbphilharmonie is spectacularly staged. First, you glide upward on what is billed as the world's first arched escalator—a two-and-a-half-minute ride in a sci-fi-ish white-walled tube. (The journey has been documented in dozens of YouTube videos.) You then arrive at the plaza level, taking in vertiginous views of city spires and harbor cranes. Finally, you ascend handsome, unadorned oak staircases to either of two halls: a large auditorium or a chamber space. The entire place exudes loftiness, in terms of both height and cultural aspiration. Nevertheless, because of public funding, tickets are more affordable than they are at the Met or the New York Philharmonic. Youngsters in sweatshirts and jeans mingle with the burghers.

The large hall, which holds around twenty-one hundred people, follows the now fashionable “vineyard” plan: as at the Paris Philharmonie, the Berlin Philharmonie, and Disney Hall, in Los Angeles, the performers occupy the center, surrounded by terraced rings of seats.

Even at the back of the highest level, you are no more than a hundred feet from the podium. (At Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall, the distance is a hundred and twenty feet.) The décor is sober and subdued, at least until you get close to the walls: they are made of plaster and are pockmarked by cavities, bringing to mind a beehive or a coral reef. The critic Jens Laurson has written that sitting in the space is like being "on the inside of a gigantic musical animal"—the whale that swallowed Hamburg.

The sound is a mild disappointment, at least on first encounter. The acoustician was Yasuhisa Toyota, who has engineered a string of triumphs, including Disney. His signature achievement has been to add resonant warmth to the clinical clarity that defines so many modern halls. In Hamburg, though, something is off. In late April, I saw a performance of Mahler's gargantuan Eighth Symphony, with the Hamburg State Philharmonic and two hundred choral singers under the direction of Eliahu Inbal. This score provides a good acoustical test, its dynamic range running from celestial pianissimos to apocalyptic thunder. The former floated out beautifully: the flutes seemed just feet away. The climaxes, alas, were a brittle jumble, missing the mellow blend you'd find in a hall with greater resonance. Also, the bass lacked oomph: when the lower end dug in, the floorboards didn't tremble sympathetically. Some of these issues can be addressed over time, although it is not easy to change the sound of a finished structure.

The chamber hall, which seats five hundred and fifty, should need few adjustments. I saw the pianist Kirill Gerstein play an ambitious and bewitching program consisting entirely of études: Liszt's Transcendental twelve, three by Scriabin, two by Ligeti, and several Gershwin tunes arranged by Earl Wild. Here the sound was fuller and richer, though still a touch dry. Rippling oak walls give the auditorium a curious appearance, again vaguely organic.

Soon enough, Elphi will be superseded by some other Instagrammable wonder. For now, the hall has a chance to entice the Hamburg public away from the tried and true. Happily, its artistic team has embraced that mission, offering an inventive array of programming, including a John Zorn marathon and,

next season, a Telemann festival. If the Elbphilharmonie can sustain its appeal over time, it will have confirmed what the Bavarian tourist industry long ago discovered with Ludwig's fairy-tale castles: that extravagance sometimes pays off in the end.

After two nights in Hamburg, I travelled to Berlin to see the latest addition to a crowded musical landscape: Pierre Boulez Saal, a chamber hall just south of the Staatsoper. Boulez Saal is the brainchild of the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, who envisioned a performance space and a music school allied with his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which brings together musicians from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds. Unlike the Elbphilharmonie, the Paris Philharmonie, and many other high-profile projects—including the renovation of the Staatsoper, which has been going on since 2010—Boulez Saal went up quickly and painlessly. It was built inside a nineteen-fifties building that previously housed Staatsoper sets. Frank Gehry, who served as the architect, first made sketches in 2012, and construction began in 2014. The total cost for the complex was a relatively modest thirty-five million euros.

Even if a mediocre hall had resulted, the avoidance of the usual cultural-political imbroglio would have been newsworthy. But Boulez Saal is a masterpiece of its kind. It consists of two elliptical-shaped seating areas, one on the ground level and one suspended above, each tilted on a different axis. The floor of the upper ellipse also curves up and down, giving the hall an unfixed, fluctuating profile. As in Disney Hall, bright wood tones—Douglas fir, cedar, and red oak—predominate. The capacity is six hundred and eighty-two. Listeners are never more than fifty feet from the musicians, who are often placed at the center of the auditorium. Those in the front row could turn pages, if asked. In all, the atmosphere is convivial and unshowy, despite the flamboyance of Gehry's swooping lines.

Toyota again planned the acoustics, and his longtime relationship with Gehry—they collaborated not only on Disney but also on the New World Center, in Miami—has again yielded a marvel. On the first night I was there, the

baritone Roman Trekel and the pianist Oliver Pohl gave an all-Schubert program: a meticulous, reserved performance in which the subtlest nuances registered. The next night, Barenboim led the West-Eastern Divan in the final three symphonies of Mozart. In the first half, I sat in the upper gallery, and felt that I was hearing these hyperfamiliar pieces for the first time. Each instrument sounded distinctly, and yet was integrated into a resonant whole. Barenboim used forty strings, which in most venues would have swamped the winds and the brass, but here the latter held their own. Down below, there was a slight loss of cohesion and a palpable gain in visceral impact. The "Jupiter" Symphony lived up to its name, storming in the air. Barenboim elicited performances at once weighty and vital.

The modernist master for whom Boulez Saal is named was a relentless critic of classical music's fixation on the past. Aptly, the hall's programming honors the present; the inaugural season, which began in March, has featured the Iraqi oud player Naseer Shamma, the jazz guitarist John McLaughlin, and the Damascus Festival Chamber Players (with a program of Syrian composers). Classical music has been recast here as a modern, global, socially conscious art. The singular element is the Barenboim-Said Academy, as the educational wing is known. Barenboim was a close friend of the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, and the West-Eastern Divan arose from their conversations. The academy's students, who come mostly from the Middle East and North Africa, receive not only musical training but also a liberal-arts education. Mena Mark Hanna, the academy's dean, told me that one class had been discussing motifs of Orientalism and degeneration in Schoenberg's textbook "Harmonielehre." All this fulfills the institution's Boulezian slogan: "Music for the Thinking Ear."

In the fall of 2015, Gehry went to Boulez's home, in Baden-Baden, bringing with him a model of the hall. Boulez was in poor health, and had only a few months to live. Nevertheless, he examined the model for hours, his eyes alive with interest. His understanding of sound was uncanny, and he may have sensed that the structure bearing his name would take its place among the great concert halls of the world. ♦

MOOD MUSIC

Jlin's operatic dance album.

BY HUA HSU



In June, 2010, Jerrilynn Patton sent a Facebook message to Mike Paradinas, a British producer who runs the adventurous electronic-dance-music label Planet Mu. She had heard that Paradinas was putting together a compilation of footwork, a niche form of club music that originated in Chicago. Many of footwork's practitioners were surprised at Paradinas's plans; they were barely known outside the Midwest, and it was hard to imagine that people in Europe had been paying attention. Patton, who records as Jlin, shared a track she had been working on, called "Tetris Freak." It was a fine distillation of footwork's at times over-

whelming sound: a controlled deluge of skittering snare and kick drums, bass lines that you feel rather than hear, and a chopped-up sample of the theme from the famous computer game. Paradinas was nearly done with the compilation, and he told her that she could be on the next one. They kept in touch, and Patton recommended some producers whose music Paradinas had never heard. She also suggested that he name the compilation for one of its standout tracks, DJ Trouble's "Bangs & Works."

Chicago dance-music d.j.s and producers often say that, in the nineties, the city's radio stations and clubs turned

Jlin's music seems to channel dancers' surges of adrenaline and melancholy.

away from house music, in favor of hip-hop and R. & B. This lack of a support structure meant that there were no gatekeepers to please, so the music became faster, weirder, and more profane. These aggressively jittery variations on house music took different names, most of which—like footwork and its predecessors, juke and ghetto house—were interchangeable. The only real distinction was what you were using the music to do: dance with people or against them.

Until the release of "Bangs & Works," in late 2010, the easiest way to keep tabs on footwork was either to live on the South Side of Chicago or to seek out the music on the Internet. But listening to tracks on sites like MySpace or imeem conveyed only half the story. Watching footwork dance battles on YouTube helped explain why the music was so punishingly frenetic: it existed to serve the dancers. Circles of kids competed to corkscrew their bodies at breakneck speeds, and often looked as though they were tap-dancing across hot coals. The battles were conversations between musicians and dancers, each pushing the other toward more extreme rhythms. By some estimates, the most agile dancers could take five steps per second, and the blurry quality of the videos made their moves seem even more superhuman. The dance floor's welcoming throb had been reimaged as a series of carefully choreographed pirouettes and stumbles. People became pure kinetic energy.

Patton admired footwork from afar. She was born and grew up in Gary, Indiana, about thirty miles from Chicago; she has a memory of hearing footwork for the first time when she was four. She was a curious, introverted student, and spent much of her spare time in college making music. In her twenties, unsure of what to do with her life, she took a job at a steel mill.

Patton used MySpace and Facebook to connect with producers she admired, befriending artists like RP Boo and DJ Rashad. At first, she learned by emulating the greats. She became a disciple of Chicago's DJ Roc; her early productions were so indebted to his style that she was often referred to as Roc, Jr. Though Gary was less than an hour from Chicago, the distance

proved to be liberating. Dance music has always been utilitarian—an excuse to throw a party, a reason to commune with strangers. But having little direct engagement with footwork's epicenter, particularly its live element, allowed Patton to play around with the genre's structures and dynamics. When Patton sent Paradinas the songs that he included on "Bangs & Works Vol. 2," in 2011, she had discovered a style of her own.

One of the most unnerving aspects of footwork is how it withholds catharsis. Drums and samples stutter repeatedly, like a gas stove that sparks but never lights. It can feel relentless, uptight, spooky, and desperate; you don't nod along so much as try to find your path through a maelstrom of way too many snares and high hats. Samples are sped up to a surreal, chipmunk whir or slowed down to a dirgelike pace, at times clashing with the furious rhythms. But there's something hypnotic about the sound of different rhythms coming together on a track. The music and the dancing can feel wildly free, or aspirational, as though it's up to the rest of the world to catch up to their speed and vision.

In 2015, Planet Mu released Patton's début album, "Dark Energy." She had internalized footwork's sensibility, that of the controlled freak-out, and turned it into something different. Her music was dense and operatic, based less on the hectic energy of sampling and more on immense, moody swells of synthesizer. Her chattering drum patterns verged on claustrophobia-inducing. The music seemed to respond to surges of adrenaline and melancholy, and to

focus on the moods that dancers were trying to exorcise rather than on the movements of their feet.

Patton's new album, "Black Origami," is an astonishing global exploration of what drums can do. Each track feels like an experiment in a different rhythmic idiom. "Hatshepsut" starts off like a marching band taking the field at halftime, before a jagged synthesizer begins gnawing away at the confident strut of cymbals and timpani. The echoes of a Bollywood score run through "Kyanite." The squalling synthesizers and open spaces of "Never Created, Never Destroyed" call to mind contemporary hip-hop production, except that no booming payoff ever arrives. I kept hearing Tone-Loc's "Wild Thing" in the festive opening seconds of "Nyakinyua Rise"; but then the song coiled into a fierce, tribal stomp, its slivered vocals at war with one another.

Many people argue that we've exhausted the possibilities of the human voice, and that this has led pop artists to tinker with digital processing. Listening to "Black Origami," I wondered if the same could ever be said about rhythm. I keep returning to the album, because it keeps me off balance. A song begins with a steady rhythm, and then its parts rearrange themselves into something frenzied and nightmarish. Nothing is where you expect it to be. "Holy Child"—a collaboration with the minimalist composer William Basinski—seems austere and slow, as a woman's chants are tracked by sparse, muted drumrolls. Her voice is slowly stretched apart, then reinserted alongside a massing riot of snares and kicks, until it becomes its own kind of

sputtering rhythm. This is the most enchanting aspect of "Black Origami"—its willingness to turn anything into a beat. There are kick drums and high hats, tambourines and claves, handclaps and foot stomps, the staccato stabs of a singer's voice; I also felt as if I were hearing the sound of change clattering around in a bowl or a car door being slammed, someone dropping a drum kit down a flight of stairs.

When I first heard footwork, I thought of go-go music, and how its laid-back, call-and-response funk jams never really caught on outside of Washington, D.C. There are plenty of regional styles that never travel the world, and footwork has no doubt benefitted from releases such as the "Bangs & Works" compilations, and from the Internet's capacity for making faraway subcultures seem both mysterious and digestible. Thanks to artists like Patton, who regard footwork from a loving remove, the genre continues to mutate. Some of my favorite music of the past few years has explored what happens when you take a preexisting model and build it with different materials; the producers Foodman and SELA., for example, imagine an intersection between footwork and blissful, dreamy pop.

Patton's music has ended up in unexpected places. The designer Rick Owens used one of her early songs, "Erotic Heat," for his 2014 runway show. This October, she will collaborate with the British choreographer Wayne McGregor for his company's latest work, "Autobiography." But success has also brought her to places she's always belonged. Last summer, she performed at the Pitchfork Festival. It was her first time playing in Chicago. ♦

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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Robert Leighton, must be received by Sunday, May 21st. The finalists in the May 8th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the June 5th & 12th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



"

"

THE FINALISTS



"So when are you two taking the plunge?"
William Anderson, St. Louis, Mo.

"You must be the hostages."
Kurt Rossetti, San Rafael, Calif.

"If you get a choice, the East River is nice."
Thomas Culbertson, Westlake, Ohio

THE WINNING CAPTION



"He calls it Ishmeow."
Ronnie Raviv, Chicago, Ill.

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