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THE NEW YORKER



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CONTRIBUTORS

Sheelah Kolhatkar ("Total Return," p. 34) became a staff writer in 2016. Her book, "Black Edge: Inside Information, Dirty Money, and the Quest to Bring Down the Most Wanted Man on Wall Street," will be published in February.

Kadir Nelson (*Cover*) is an artist whose work will be included in the Society of Illustrators' exhibition "Illustrators 59: Book and Editorial," on view February 1st-26th.

Vinson Cunningham ("Making God Famous," p. 26) is a staff writer.

Corey Van Landingham (Poem, p. 58), the author of the poetry collection "Antidote," was awarded a 2017 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

Ian Parker ("The Culling," p. 42) has been a staff writer since 2000.

David Denby (*Books*, p. 76), a staff writer and a former film critic for the magazine, is the author of "Lit Up: One Reporter. Three Schools. Twenty-four Books That Can Change Lives."

Rachel Aviv ("Surviving Solitary," p. 54) won a 2015 Scripps Howard Award for her *New Yorker* story "Your Son Is Deceased," about police shootings.

Rebecca Mead (*The Talk of the Town*, p. 24) has been a staff writer since 1997. "My Life in Middlemarch" is her latest book.

Thomas Pierce (*Fiction*, p. 68) is the author of the short-story collection "Hall of Small Mammals." His novel, "The Afterlives," will be published this year.

Adam Gopnik (*A Critic at Large*, p. 81), a staff writer, began writing for *The New Yorker* in 1986. He is the author of "The Table Comes First."

Charles Bethea (*The Talk of the Town*, p. 23) has been contributing to the magazine since 2008. His work also frequently appears in *Outside*.

Calvin Trillin (*Shouts & Murmurs*, p. 33) is the author of "No Fair! No Fair!: And Other Jolly Poems of Childhood," with illustrations by Roz Chast.

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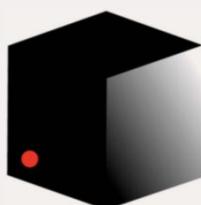


◎ GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

The musician Andrew Bird discusses his newest record, "Are You Serious," and his evolving creative process.

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THE MAIL

MOSUL'S OTHER CRISIS

Thank you for Dexter Filkins's recent article about the grave risk that the Mosul Dam poses to Iraq ("Before the Flood," January 2nd). Large dams, relying on shaky science (or ignoring good science), have for decades devoured development funds while creating more problems than they've solved. Dams are often built under authoritarian regimes, exacerbating political instability while destroying many citizens' lives and livelihoods. History has shown that dams are too costly a method of generating electricity, and this is particularly true in Iraq, which has vast and unexploited solar potential. Factoring in the ninety-seven-per-cent average cost overrun for large dams, a new structure downstream from the Mosul Dam could cost around four billion dollars. Dams are also a foolhardy investment: in our changing climate, desert reservoirs are drying up. More than twenty per cent of the Tigris River's precious freshwater is evaporating from its reservoirs, leaving behind saline-irrigation water that's slowly poisoning the adjacent land. The Mosul Dam, the project of a dictator's hubris, is a literal and metaphorical sinkhole—for the dreams of a nation and for funds that could be better used elsewhere. Pouring more money, and more concrete, into this ill-conceived behemoth, or into other dams, will only delay the inevitable. But there is a possible solution for Iraq: to decommission this dam. We can only hope that it does so before it's too late and the precarious region is plunged further into chaos.

*Kate Horner, Executive Director
International Rivers
Berkeley, Calif.*

THE WHISTLE-BLOWERS

Malcolm Gladwell's comparison of the whistle-blowers Daniel Ellsberg, a member of the intelligence élite, whom Gladwell calls a true "leaker," and Edward Snowden, an outsider, whom he calls merely a "hacker," seems to glorify and belittle them, respectively ("The Outside Man," December 19th & 26th). The two men are more similar than they seem,

and these labels ignore their key similarity: they both risked everything to reveal lies propagated by the government and by private corporations. In instance after instance, it is an individual—a bureaucrat, a contractor, a soldier, or a private citizen—who justly changes the course of civil society by protesting against the law. To enter the Trump era with an article that seems to cast judgment on the person who has told the most important truths in decades about state overreach infringing civil liberties is disheartening.

*Stevie Olson
Brookline, Mass.*

PEOPLE POWER

Jelani Cobb concludes that "democracy may thrive in the states, the courts, the next elections, and, lest the lessons of the sixties be forgotten, the streets" (Comment, January 9th). The Occupy Wall Street movement may have helped drive Bernie Sanders's campaign, but he was the only politician other than Donald Trump who recognized the widespread discontent in the United States. The D.N.C. and Hillary Clinton seem to have underestimated the concerns of a critical mass of people, leading to Trump's victory. In addition, reactionary Republicans control more than sixty per cent of the country's state legislatures and governorships, and vacancies on many courts, where appointments have for years been held up by extremists in Congress, will likely now be filled by right-wingers. Moreover, in 2018, when thirty-three Senate seats will be contested, the Democrats must win twenty-five seats just to maintain their current numbers in the Senate, and twenty-eight out of the thirty-three to win a majority in that body, which is highly unlikely. In fact, the streets may be the only place where progressive voices can be heard.

*Steven Morris
Mt. Pleasant, S.C.*

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

"BREATHTAKING"

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

Last Work

FEB 1—4



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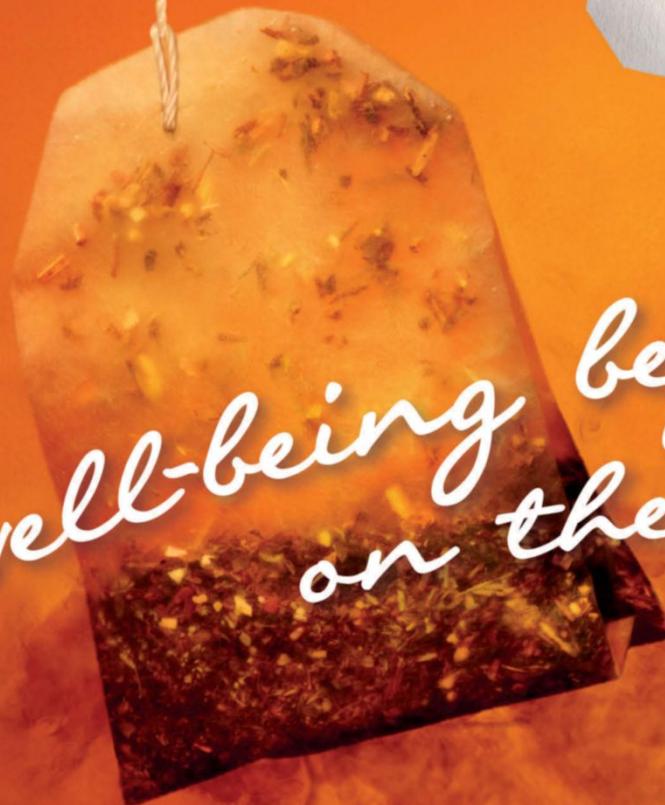
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JANUARY 11 – 17, 2017

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



The soul of silent film is comedy—the knockabout, loose-limbed antics of vaudevillians who sacrificed speech and song to the movies' technical wonders and expressive intimacy. This year's edition of MOMA's silent-era series, "**Cruel and Unusual Comedy**" (Jan. 13–26), offers off-the-cuff rowdiness from overlooked artists, including Mabel Normand, who also directed ten of her own early short films. In "Mabel's New Hero" (Jan. 14 and Jan. 22), from 1913, she's paired with Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle under the direction of the slapstick pioneer Mack Sennett.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

With a new production by Bartlett Sher, the Met finally has a “*Roméo et Juliette*” that suits both Shakespeare’s tragedy and Gounod’s rhapsodic music. The curtain rises on a handsome Veronese piazza (designed by Michael Yeargan) where the chorus is bedecked in glinting jewelry and lavishly colored eighteenth-century-style finery. Vittorio Grigolo is a beautiful Roméo, his sweet tenor tremulous with longing, and Diana Damrau a lovely Juliette, her voice now fuller and less flexible than it used to be. The conductor, Gianandrea Noseda, sometimes gets swept away in Gounod’s seductive reveries, but he keeps the critical later acts taut with portent. Elliot Madore (Mercutio), Virginie Verrez (Stéphano), Laurent Naouri (Capulet), and Diego Silva (Tybalt) fill out a fine supporting cast. *Jan. 14 at 8 and Jan. 17 at 7:30.* • The company’s four-month-long test of the durability of Puccini’s evergreen romance, “*La Bohème*,” continues in the New Year. This time, the youthful cast is headed by Ailyn Pérez, Susanna Phillips, Michael Fabiano, and Alessio Arduini; Carlo Rizzi conducts. *Jan. 11 at 7:30 and Jan. 14 at 1. These are the final performances.* • Bartlett Sher’s first production for the Met, a fleet-footed and sun-soaked “*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*,” remains one of his best. Three full-voiced singers—Pretty Yende, Peter Mattei, and Javier Camarena—head up the cast as Rossini’s lovable rascallions; Maurizio Benini. *Jan. 13 at 8. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)*

New York City Opera: “Candide”

The resurgent company seems to be carving out a niche in the city’s opera scene by offering contemporary works, but there is still room in the lineup for a backward glance. The Broadway legend Harold Prince—who first brought Bernstein’s deft operetta to the company in 1982—undertakes a new staging of the work, which stars an appropriate mix of opera and theatre talent, including Jay Armstrong Johnson, Meghan Picerno, Gregg Edelman, Keith Phares, Jessica Tyler Wright, and the redoubtable Linda Lavin (as the Old Lady); Charles Prince conducts. *Jan. 11-13 at 7:30, Jan. 14 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 15 at 4. (Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. nycopera.com.)*

“Prototype” Festival

The essential annual festival of new American opera winds up this week. David Lang’s hybrid opera/musical-theatre piece “*Anatomy Theater*” stages the confession, execution, and public dissection of a convicted murderer in eighteenth-century England. The work’s lurid libretto (co-written by Mark Dion) comes to life in haunting, darkly funny recitatives set against a post-minimalist accompaniment that thumps, groans, and heaves; Bob McGrath directs, and Christopher Rountree conducts. *Jan. 11-14 at 8. (BRIC Arts, 647 Fulton St., Brooklyn.)* • Though historians today cast doubt upon the criminality of Mata Hari, she was nonetheless executed in France for being a double agent during the First World War. In their world-première opera, “*Mata Hari*,” the composer Matt Marks and the librettist Paul Peers deconstruct the nostalgic sounds of the Paris café (including accordion and banjo) as a way of delving into the story of the free-spirited dancer

and courtesan who found herself at the center of a very dangerous game of espionage. Tina Mitchell and Jeffrey Gavett take the leading roles. *Jan. 11-14 at 7. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave.)* • With “*Funeral Doom Spiritual*,” the composer, pianist, and male soprano M. Lamar laces his particular brand of Afrofuturism with dark foreboding, gothic makeup, and theatrical piano flourishes. Inspired by spirituals that make mention of the end times, Lamar and his co-creators, Hunter Hunt-Hendrix and Tucker Culbertson, conjure America’s history of racial violence with images of guns and coffins, before envisioning a rapture in the year 2116 that liberates the African-American spirit and puts an end to white supremacy. *Jan. 13-14 at 7 and 10. (National Sawdust, 80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn.)* • The conductor and composer Julian Wachner, who leads the musical affairs of Trinity Wall Street and its famous choir, and Cerise Jacobs, who wrote the libretto for Zhou Long’s Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, “*Madame White Snake*,” team up for “*Rev. 23*. ” The opera dramatizes a new, imaginary chapter of the Book of Revelation, wherein Lucifer undertakes one last battle for Paradise-on-Earth with the help of a few Greek gods. Wachner conducts the NOVUS NY Orchestra in a workshop concert that features Josh Quinn (Lucifer), Vale Rideout (Hades), and Heather Buck (Persephone). *Jan. 14 at 3. (National Sawdust.)* (For tickets and full schedule, visit prototypefestival.org.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic

Of Brahms’s four symphonies, the Third, a deeply lyrical work rich in harmonic and psychological complexity, has never quite been as popular as its three companions. Alan Gilbert, however, is a big fan; he’ll use it to close a program that begins in strains of glory, as Stephen Hough, an especially thoughtful virtuoso, joins the orchestra in Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major, “Emperor.” *Jan. 11-12 at 7:30 and Jan. 13-14 at 8. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)*

RECITALS

London Haydn Quartet

The Boston Early Music Festival’s long-standing residency at the Morgan Library & Museum continues with an especially inviting concert by this winning ensemble (which has made a series of Haydn recordings on the Hyperion label). It is joined by the clarinettist Eric Hoeprich—a period-performance authority as well as a virtuoso—for a concert of music by Haydn (the String Quartet in F Major, Op. 77, No. 2), Beethoven, and Weber (the Clarinet Quintet in B-Flat Major). *Jan. 12 at 7:30. (Madison Ave. at 36th St. themorgan.org.)*

Richard Egarr:

“Clogg’d in the English Vein”

The distinguished harpsichordist chooses a cheeky title for a recital of Renaissance works by composers from his home country—such as Byrd (three pieces, including “The Bells”), Purcell, and Blow—with a dash of music by the great Dutchman Sweelinck (including the “Fantasia Chromatica”). *Jan. 12 at 7:30. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

Bargemusic

The upcoming weekend at the floating chamber-music series is centered on the violin and its increasingly varied literature. On Friday, the German violinist and composer Gregor Huebner and his ensemble of piano, bass, and percussion offer “El Violin Latino,” a rangy evening that blends the strains of Hispanic and Eastern European music with those of classical and jazz. On Saturday and Sunday, Mark Peskanov, the barge’s *commandante*, teams up with the pianist Gerald Robbins to perform the three formidable Sonatas for Violin and Piano by Brahms. *Jan. 13 at 7:30; Jan. 14 at 7:30 and Jan. 15 at 4. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org.)*

Brenda Rae

The American soprano’s Carnegie Hall recital seems like a straightforward program of four composers (Strauss, Liszt, Debussy, and Schubert) plus one famous concert aria (Mozart’s sublime “*Vorrei spiegarvi, oh Dio!*”), but it’s also a canny presentation of her talents as a coloratura singer with a substantial lyric voice. In Sun Suh plays piano. *Jan. 13 at 7:30. (Weill Recital Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

Subculture: “The Tell-Tale Heart”

The inviting venue, now an occasional place for classical performances, hosts an evening with the composer and pianist Gregg Kallor, whose work sits astride the boundary of classical and jazz. “*The Tell-Tale Heart*” is his setting of the chilling and outrageous short story by Edgar Allan Poe; Kallor’s companions, each an artist of considerable talent and charisma, are the soprano Melody Moore and the cellist Joshua Roman. *Jan. 14 at 11. (45 Bleeker St. subculturenewyork.com.)*

“Music Before 1800” Series:

“Valley of Tears”

The versatile New York baritone Jesse Blumberg joins the outstanding young early-music string ensemble Acronym for an afternoon exploring the works of a fascinating but little-known composer: Johann Rosenmüller, a significant figure in the super-competitive music world of Venice in the late seventeenth century. Several of the composer’s cantatas for bass voice will be interspersed with a selection of instrumental sonatas. *Jan. 15 at 4. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. mb1800.org)*

“Naumburg Looks Back”:

Frank Huang and Gilles Vonsattel

The violinist, the new concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, and the admired Swiss-American pianist, each a winner of one of the Naumburg Foundation’s coveted prizes, meet at Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall to perform a repertory program featuring Beethoven’s “Spring” and “Kreutzer” Sonatas and Prokofiev’s Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor. *Jan. 16 at 7:30. (212-247-7800.)*

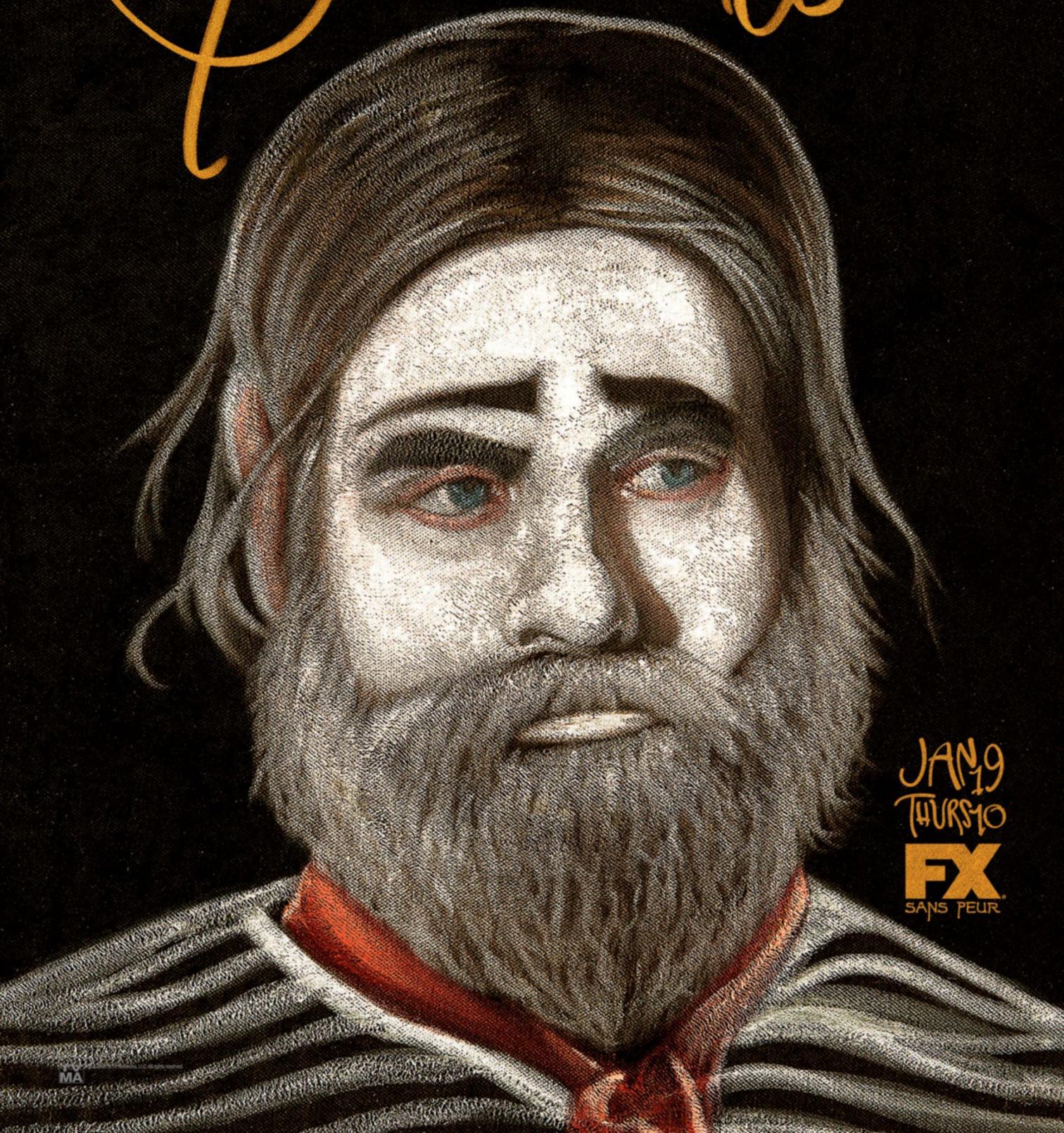
“Reflections and Projections:

“25 Years of Mirror Visions”

For a quarter century, this enterprising ensemble of voices and pianists has been presenting new American songs with both charm and expertise. Its anniversary concert (featuring the soprano Justine Aronson, the tenor Scott Murphree, and the pianist Margaret Kampmeier, among others) includes premières from the young composers John Glover and Margaret Barrett, classics by Britten and Brahms, and Tom Cipullo’s cantata “A Visit with Emily,” an expansive group of Emily Dickinson settings. *Jan. 16 at 8. (Sheen Center for Thought and Culture, 18 Bleecker St. sheencenter.org.)*

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Baskets



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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Whitney Museum

"MPA: Red in View"

The young American artist known as MPA, who lives in the Mojave Desert, explores the poetic and philosophical implications of colonizing the red planet, Mars, in this enigmatic four-part exhibition. On one recent evening, two gender-defiant dancers in red makeup moved with intensity through the museum's packed lobby; cutouts in their jeans revealed "moons," their bare buttocks playing the roles of the Martian satellites Phobos and Deimos. Curious viewers followed the stern, fast-moving performers into a red-lit, black-painted gallery, where MPA's installation includes moody photo-based works, a red phone (pick it up and a voice questions you about your Mars-based fantasies), and cryptic arrangements of detritus scavenged in the desert, paired with painted wooden dowels. A site-specific piece titled "Long Line" traces a crimson path through the museum; it leads to the third-floor theatre, where MPA will establish a "self-sustaining biosphere" in a ten-day, round-the-clock performance, starting Feb. 9. *Through Feb. 27.*



"Picasso's Picassos: A Selection from the Collection of Maya Ruiz-Picasso," at the Gagosian gallery, includes "Le Baiser" (1931), a taut portrait of a love-hate relationship.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"A True Friend of the Cause: Lafayette and the Antislavery Movement"

Hero of two revolutions, the Marquis de Lafayette was also a committed abolitionist, and this engrossing exhibition, largely drawn from the holdings of his namesake college in Pennsylvania, offers a timely reassurance that some politicians really do act on moral values. Two wartime engravings feature George Washington and his young French aide-de-camp; the general's enslaved valet is only partially visible, but Lafayette appears with a nattily dressed black groom standing proudly alongside him. After victory, Lafayette established a plantation in what is now French Guiana, where workers were paid and whippings were banned; in a letter here, he informs Washington that "I . . . am going to free my Negroes in order to make that Experiment which you know is my Hobby Horse." (The plantation was confiscated after Lafayette was jailed during the French Revolution. Its workers, named on a document here—Antoine, age twenty-five; Dorothée, age four—were resold.) Lafayette came back to the United States in 1824–25, where he visited manumission societies and greeted black war veterans,

and though he died ten years later his name echoed among abolitionists as this country divided. For Charles Sumner, the senator whose beating helped precipitate the Civil War, Lafayette was nothing less than "the impersonation of liberty." *Through Feb. 4.* (GROLIER CLUB, 47 E. 60th St. 212-838-6690.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Michelle Grabner

Cast-bronze blankets, whose surfaces look either knit or crocheted, stand upright around the gallery, drooping from the corners as if pinned to invisible clotheslines or held up by ghosts. The refined untitled sculptures, all from 2016, riff on high modernist grids while invoking the homey custom of bronzing baby shoes. Grabner's big paintings are sunny counterparts to the solemn sculptures. Yellow, turquoise, red, and orange monochromes could be taut gingham tablecloths, but close inspection reveals that they were actually laboriously composed of rectangular daubs (echoing the repetitive motion of knitting needles or a crochet hook). An ingenious effect of the installation is revealed when you view the paintings through the sculpture's irregular nets: the canvases appear as pixelated fields. In her trickily seductive show, Grabner mingles domestic and art-historical references with uncommon grace and economy. *Through Jan. 28.* (COHAN, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Elizabeth Murray

This array of deep cuts from the nineteen-eighties and nineties shows the exuberant abstractionist toying with ideas for her bright compositions. Murray, who died in 2007, made her name with surprising combinations of mechanical and intestinal forms in cartoony works that evoke twisted balloons, tangled showerheads, hamster mazes, and puzzle pieces. (The painter Carroll Dunham and the writer Dan Nadel, torchbearers of Murray's good-humored, Pop-inflected vibe, co-organized the show.) Small studies on graph paper or loose-leaf pages join finished drawings and one big, splashy painting, "Dust Tracks," from 1993. It's a shaped canvas, that suggests both a seahorse and a comic-book "POW!" with a skeleton-key hole. Periodically throwing cups or cacti into the mix, Murray walked a tightrope strung between the known world and her madcap imagination. *Through Jan. 29.* (CANADA, 333 BROADWAY ST. 212-925-4631.)

Marianna Simnett

A London gallery branches out in New York with a stellar show of two works by this young British artist of considerable talent and audacity. In a video, tucked away in the back of the space, we witness the artist undergoing Botox injections in her vocal cords, a procedure typically reserved for transgender people seeking to lower their voices. It is excruciating to watch, but Simnett's narration—part folktale, part scientific history, part diary—transforms the proceedings into a modern-day myth about the body's plasticity and limitations. In a thematically related light-and-sound installation, we hear the artist hyperventilate until she loses consciousness. It could have been a tired retread of endurance art; instead, the gasping for breath becomes both erotic and terrifying. *Through Jan. 22.* (SEVENTEEN, 214 BOWERY. 917-873-4115.)

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THE THEATRE



Marie Mullen and Aisling O'Sullivan play a caustic mother and daughter in Martin McDonagh's "The Beauty Queen of Leenane," at BAM; in 1998, Mullen won a Tony for playing the daughter.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

The Beauty Queen of Leenane

The Irish company Druid revives Martin McDonagh's dark comedy, directed by Garry Hynes, in which a mother in a provincial town tries to spoil her daughter's chance at happiness. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. In previews. Opens Jan. 14.)

Jitney

Manhattan Theatre Club stages August Wilson's drama about unlicensed cabdrivers in nineteen-seventies Pittsburgh, directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson and featuring André Holland and John Douglas Thompson. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)

The Liar

Michael Kahn directs David Ives's adaptation of the Corneille farce, in which a seventeenth-century gentleman causes havoc by telling outrageous fibs. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 866-811-4111. In previews.)

Made in China

The Wakka Wakka ensemble created this consumerism-minded puppet musical, in which a middle-aged American woman with a penchant for big-box stores falls in love with her Chinese neighbor. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. In previews. Opens Jan. 15.)

The Oregon Trail

Bekah Brunstetter's play, presented by Fault Line Theatre, tells the parallel stories of a teen girl playing the retro computer game and a young woman navigating nineteenth-century frontier

life. (McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 866-811-4111. Previews begin Jan. 13.)

Tell Hector I Miss Him

Paola Lázaro's play, directed by David Mendizábal, depicts a web of tumultuous relationships in a neighborhood in San Juan. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 866-811-4111. In previews.)

The Tempest

Phyllida Lloyd's all-female Donmar Warehouse production comes to Brooklyn, featuring Dame Harriet Walter and set against the backdrop of a women's prison. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Previews begin Jan. 13.)

Yen

Lucas Hedges ("Manchester by the Sea") stars in Anna Jordan's play, directed by Trip Cullman for MCC, in which two under-parented kids meet a neighbor who takes an interest in their dog. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-352-3101. Previews begin Jan. 12.)

Yours Unfaithfully

The Mint stages a comedy by Miles Malleson, published in 1933 but never produced, about a depressed writer (Max von Essen) whose wife tries to reignite their marriage. Jonathan Bank directs. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)

NOW PLAYING

The Babylon Line

A drama about a creative-writing class that is itself sporadically imaginative, Richard Green-

berg's memory play journeys back to 1967, when the stalled scribbler Aaron Port (Josh Radnor) takes a job teaching continuing education in Levittown. Amid the gossiping matrons and taciturn men, he finds one promising student, Joan Dellamond (Elizabeth Reaser), a troubled woman who seems on loan from a Tennessee Williams play ("I find tomorrow unimaginable"). Under Terry Kinney's direction, the performances are vigorous and the language tangy, but the play speeds along in inconsequential curves. Part of the trouble is Greenberg's writerly fluency. He's always had a gift for pert, persuasive dialogue, but lately the stories he tells are less than urgent. Here, he's content to steam from one aphorism to the next, rarely alighting on anything more essential. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart

A boozy gloss on border ballads with a sprinkling of Kylie Minogue, David Greig's captivating play, presented by the National Theatre of Scotland, takes the form of a deeply weird folk-music session. Prudencia (Melody Grove), a priggish Ph.D. student fleeing a humiliating academic conference, is seeking shelter when she falls into the arms of the Devil (Peter Hannah), who doesn't like to let go. Greig's script, much of it written in rhyming couplets, is sometimes smug in its modernizing of classic motifs. But Wils Wilson's irrepressible staging beguiles. Audiences are enticed with whiskey shots, trays of cheese sandwiches, and good-natured invitations to assist the five actors—who also form the superb band—as they dash and whirl between tables in the speakeasy space at the home of "Sleep No More." (The Heath at the McKittrick Hotel, 542 W. 27th St. 212-564-1662.)

Under the Radar Festival

The Public's avant-garde emporium concludes with experiments from home and abroad. The New York-based company 600 Highwaymen stages "The Fever," which uses audience collaboration to test the limits of group responsibility. The underground troupe Belarus Free Theatre, whose founders have worked in exile since 2011, performs "Time of Women," honoring three female dissidents who were jailed by the current regime. In "Hundred Days," the folk-rock duo the Bengsons link their own love story to the fear of mortality. The Indonesian artist Eko Nugroho created "God Bliss (In the Name of Semelah)," which uses shadow puppetry and video-game technology to trace how Islam entered Javanese culture. And, in "Latin Standards," the downtown solo artist Marga Gomez recalls her father's career as an entertainer in New York's Latino variety theatres. For the full program, visit publictheater.org. (Various locations. 212-967-7555. Through Jan. 15.)

ALSO NOTABLE

A Bronx Tale Longacre. • **Dear Evan Hansen** Music Box. • **Finian's Rainbow** Irish Repertory. • **The Front Page** Broadhurst. • **God of Vengeance** La Mama. • **Gorey: The Secret Lives of Edward Gorey** Sheen Center. Through Jan. 14. • **Holiday Inn** Studio 54. Through Jan. 15. • **The Humans** Schoenfeld. Through Jan. 15. • **In Transit** Circle in the Square. • **Jersey Boys** August Wilson. Through Jan. 15. • **Martin Luther** on Trial Pearl. • **Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812** Imperial. • **Oh, Hello on Broadway** Lyceum. • **Orange Julius** Rattlestick. • **Othello** New York Theatre Workshop. • **Othello: The Remix** Westside. Through Jan. 15. • **The Present** Ethel Barrymore. • **Waitress** Brooks Atkinson.

Performances Begin

- JANUARY 17 -

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ROCK AND POP

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

Dave East

A central conflict between two generations of New York rappers concerns issues of style and substance: elders perform with quick-tongued cadences but fall short on relatable narratives, while upstarts sacrifice traditional styles for fluency in the day-to-day life of modern city kids. David Brewster, from East Harlem, excitingly bridges the two tropes as Dave East. In his song "Keisha," from the September album "Kairi Chanel," he wakes up after a night spent with a woman he met that morning to find his money and jewelry missing; it's a tale that would fit in many dad-rap classics, modernized with scenes at the sneaker shop Flight Club, in SoHo, and the Mandarin Oriental, in Columbus Circle. This dexterous edge caught the attention of the hip-hop elder Nas, who helped raise East's profile in 2015 with an icy, out-of-time collaboration, "Forbes List." East appears alongside **Just Blaze** at this Boiler Room-hosted rap bash. (*Highline Ballroom*, 431 W. 16th St. 212-414-5994. Jan. 12.)

Forth Wanderers

Ava Trilling, the stunning vocalist of this Montclair slacker outfit, graduated from high school this past June. Her band's catalogue is just as young: Forth Wanderers got their start with a self-released album, which quickly caught the attention of Lorde and Father/Daughter Records. Such is the endearingly short path to

D.I.Y. fame, where news of your début album may appear in your campus paper: Ben Guterl, the band's co-founder and primary songwriter, splits time between the studio and junior-year seminars, and described his band's quick rise to the *Oberlin Review* as "kind of overwhelming and a little nerve-wracking." It's also well deserved. The lo-fi, low-slung rock found on their four-song EP, "Slop," is confident and untainted, and Guterl's mucky guitar tugs out Trilling's coy confessions in all the right ways: "I can't sleep when I'm uneasy / I get in my head, please relieve me," she sings on "Unfold." They are joined by **Half Waif**, **Trace Mountain**, and **Stolen Jars**. (*Baby's All Right*, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. Jan. 13.)

Sad13

Pop music, as a format, has historically functioned as an escapist medium, devoid of politics. But Sadie Dupuis, the front person of the protean rock band Speedy Ortiz, insists that tales of challenging political conversations with relatives over Christmas dinner can fit snugly between choruses that aspire to hit-factory sheen. Dupuis, who received her M.F.A. in poetry from UMass Amherst, writes in a distinctively angular way as Sad13: in November, she released her début solo pop effort, "Slugger," a saccharine set of exploratory love songs that recalibrate such topics as sexual consent ("Get a Yes") and platonic opposite-sex friendships. She's joined by local favorites and friends of the Exploding in Sound label, including **Patio**, **Painted Zeros**, and **Jackal Onassis**, for a benefit show, where proceeds will go to the Southern Poverty Law Center. (*C'mon Everybody*, 325 Franklin Ave., Brooklyn. cmoneverybody.com. Jan. 14.)



The Montclair, New Jersey, five-piece Forth Wanderers, named after the Scottish football club, released "Slop," a four-track EP of adolescent malaise, last November; they play Baby's All Right on Jan. 13.

Steve Davis Sextet

Davis may not have been around for the first flowering of hard bop in the nineteen-fifties, but for this supremely adept trombonist—who has also been heard with the neo-bop One for All unit, as well as with advanced ensembles like Chick Corea's Origin band—the idiom is as natural as his heartbeat. To stir up the action, he has gathered four similarly minded peers, including the saxophonists **Steve Wilson** and **Jimmy Green**, the bassist **Peter Washington**, and the drummer **Lewis Nash**, along with a highly regarded elder, the pianist **Larry Willis**. (*Smoke*, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Jan. 13-15.)

Marty Ehrlich

If you had your ears open to the work of Ehrlich back in the mid-eighties, it was obvious that a musician with mastery in his destiny was in our midst. The initial promise has long been fulfilled, as Ehrlich's extraordinary command of saxophones, flutes, and clarinets, his compositional and bandleading skills, and his ease with both conventional and new jazz practices have all ripened. Here, he leads a groove-aware quartet that includes his longtime collaborator the pianist James Weidman. (*Smalls*, 183 W. 10th St. 212-252-5091. Jan. 13.)

Frank Kimbrough and Masa Kamaguchi

In 2016, the pianist Frank Kimbrough celebrated two major milestones: his sixtieth birthday and his thirty-fifth year as a New York resident. He also released what may be his masterwork, "Solstice," a sparkling consideration of favored pieces by such Kimbrough heroes as Paul Motian, Andrew Hill, and Annette Peacock. Although the album found him with two trusted associates—the bassist Jay Anderson and the drummer Jeff Hirschfield—here Kimbrough duets with the bassist Masa Kamaguchi, a musician's musician who, in 2009, enhanced another of the pianist's bracing recordings, "Rumors." (*Mezzrow*, 163 W. 10th St. mezzrow.com. Jan. 12.)

Ohad Talmor

Talmor, a resourceful and creative saxophonist, arranger, and composer, often finds his name linked with his mentor and musical idol, the legendary saxophonist Lee Konitz, with whom he's collaborated on a number of rewarding projects. Here, leading the visiting EuroRadio Jazz Orchestra, Talmor will present his ambitious "Dionkan Suite," which references sources ranging from Wayne Shorter to medieval and Cuban ritual music, while adding a touch of spoken word to the mix. (*Jazz Gallery*, 1160 Broadway, at 27th St., fifth fl. 646-494-3625. Jan. 13-14.)

Kenny Werner and Chris Potter

The pianist Werner and the saxophonist Potter have been weaving stimulating tones together since at least 1993, when Werner guested on Potter's second album, "Concentric Circles." A year after that, the two cemented their intuitive association on a live duet recording. Two decades later, the reputations of both men have only solidified further: Werner is a respected bandleader and author; Potter, a questing stylist whose virtuosic work with Dave Holland and Pat Metheny has elevated him to venerated status. An intimate encounter will undoubtedly reflect the wisdom of accumulated experience. (*Jazz at Kitano*, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. Jan. 13-14.)

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MOVIES



In "Kaos," Giovanna Taviani—the co-director Vittorio Taviani's daughter—plays Pirandello's mother as a young woman.

Mother Tongue

A masterly movie adaptation of short stories by Luigi Pirandello.

THOUGH LUIGI PIRANDELLO's name is synonymous with the breaking of theatrical boundaries, much of his work is narrative, including the fifteen-volume set "Short Stories for a Year," comprising more than two hundred tales, published between 1922 and 1937. Five of these folkloric and political stories, set in his native Sicily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were adapted by the Taviani brothers, Paolo and Vittorio, for the luminous three-hour-plus feature "Kaos," from 1984, playing at Film Forum Jan. 13-19, in a series of films based on Pirandello's writings.

Beginning with a mysterious prologue, in which a group of peasants wantonly capture a raven and tie a bell around its neck, the Tavianis fuse many strands of Pirandello's experience and interests: myth and anthropology, unredressed economic inequality and feudal authority, unresolved historical conflicts and exquisite psychological intimacies, and, above all, the brazenly asserted power of men and its dev-

astating effect on the island's women. The opening tale, "The Other Son," is centered on a woman who has been driven nearly mad by a solitude that masks unspeakable ancient traumas. It's a story of the Sicilian diaspora—the massive emigration, largely to the United States, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and of the violent horrors arising from Italy's mid-nineteenth-century battles for independence and unification, of which women were the unconsidered victims.

In "Moon Sickness," a poor young newlywed woman, Sidora, learns that her husband, Batà, has concealed from her the howling rage that possesses him upon seeing the full moon. Sidora flees their isolated homestead for her mother's decrepit room in town, where an old wound is laid bare—Sidora's love for another man, Saro, whom her mother considered unfit for her to marry. "The Jar" is a wild political comedy about a tyrannical feudal lord, Don Lollo, who orders a gigantic human-size clay pot to hold his estate's great olive harvest. When the jar breaks, a mystical potter with a mysterious glue comes to fix it—and accidentally entombs

himself within it. The cavalier grandee is indifferent to the workman's fate and even, in a scene of comedic splendor, visits a lawyer in the hope of suing him. When the potter seeks escape by conjuring class solidarity among the estate's laborers, the Tavianis render the uprising as an ecstatic musical number in which the lord's subject women play a heroic role.

The film's epilogue, "Conversing with Mother," invokes the movie's one familiarly Pirandellian touch—the appearance of Pirandello as a character, returning to the deserted family home in Sicily and mentally summoning his mother in order to hear a tale from her youth that he has tried and failed to write, one of political persecution and exile that's also a story of joyful abandon and natural wonder. Filming on location in the region's still-wild landscapes, savoring the bird's-eye views of the raw and rocky terrain, returning to the world of childhood and listening closely to women's words, the Tavianis evoke the mighty sources of Pirandello's inspiration with a unique tone of secular holiness.

—Richard Brody

OPENING

Ma Celia Rowson-Hall directed and stars in this dance-centered and modernized retelling of the life of Mary. *Opening Jan. 13. (In limited release.)* • **The Son of Joseph** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening Jan. 13. (In limited release.)*

NOW PLAYING**Collateral Beauty**

This leaden fantasy, the latest installment in the year's dead-child movies, debases a strain of true emotion and wastes a cast of extraordinary actors. Will Smith plays Howard, a hearty, humane advertising executive who, after the death of his six-year-old daughter, rejects his friends, divorces his wife, and—apparently worst of all—neglects his business. When Howard ignores a lucrative buyout offer, Whit (Edward Norton), his best friend and business partner, contrives to get him declared mentally incompetent, and the ploy's the thing. In his grief, Howard has been writing defiant letters to three abstractions, Time, Love, and Death; Whit hires three actors (played by Keira Knightley, Helen Mirren, and Jacob Latimore) to impersonate those abstractions and answer Howard's letters in person. Whit is, as one member of the trio says, gaslighting his best friend. The setup is ludicrously rickety, but a director with imagination and style might have kept it buoyant; this one, David Frankel, sinks it under a burden of excessive and superfluous sentiment.—*Richard Brody (In wide release.)*

Fences

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

Full Moon in Paris

Eric Rohmer's 1984 romantic comedy is one of his most robust achievements, thanks to a cast that includes two of France's finest modern performers. Pascale Ogier—tall, angular, darting, filled with nervous energy and ardent longing—plays Louise, an interior designer who lives with her athletic boyfriend, Rémy (Tchéky Karyo), in a new suburban apartment complex. Needing more time to herself, she refurbishes the Parisian pied-à-terre that she had planned to sell, and, in the city, spends time with Octave, a writer played by the theatrical Fabrice Luchini, whose hyper-refined diction and magisterial gestures are the apotheosis of the aestheticizing intellect. But Octave caddishly presses the

physical side of things and puts the friendship at risk, even as Louise innocently stirs up trouble with Rémy. With a graceful round of self-deceptions and mistaken identities, exquisite rationalizations and fortuitous accidents, Rohmer pierces the glossy veneer of the social scene and the dignified realm of art to reveal the sexual fury that they embody. In French.—*R.B. (Metograph; Jan. 13.)*

Hidden Figures

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

I, Daniel Blake

Ken Loach's stirring and deeply empathetic drama, about the obstacles and humiliations faced by British citizens when applying for benefits, is centered on a sixtyish carpenter, Daniel Blake (Dave Johns), in Newcastle. Unable to work because of a recent heart attack, he is nonetheless thrown back into the workforce by bureaucratic fiat. An old-school craftsman who's never used a computer or written a résumé, Daniel endures the rigors and the indignities of searching for a job that, on doctors' orders, he can't accept—and when he admits as much the government pulls away his safety net. Along the way, Daniel befriends Kate (Hayley Squires), a single mother newly arrived from London, and becomes an indispensable presence for her two young children, but Kate's own troubles with the benefits office deepen grievously. A spirit of indignation and revolt energizes the drama, but Loach is so keen on engendering sympathy and inflaming political sensibilities that he leaves his working-class characters' complex humanity and discourse aside and instead spotlights his own virtuous intentions and demands. His Britain comes off as a land without populism.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

Jackie

Natalie Portman plays Jacqueline Kennedy, and does so with such careful intensity that it will be hard for future actresses to take on the role afresh and make it theirs. No one, certainly, will capture the First Lady's voice with quite such breathy precision. Much of Pablo Larraín's film, scripted by Noah Oppenheim, is set after the death of John F. Kennedy (Caspar Phillipson), although we are led a sorry dance between the period of mourning, the day of the assassination, and some of the brighter times that went before—Jackie's televised tour of the White House, say, in 1962. That narrative restlessness owes something to an interview that she

gives, when newly widowed, to a visiting reporter (Billy Crudup), but more to the frailty of her grieving mind, and Larraín often compounds the mood by trapping her, with no means of escape, in the center of the frame. Respectful viewers may find the results tendentious and even tactless; do we really need to see inside the Presidential limo after the shooting? Still, Portman gives the film her all, assisted by Peter Sarsgaard, as Robert Kennedy; John Carroll Lynch, as Lyndon B. Johnson; and John Hurt, as a ruminative priest.—*Anthony Lane* (*Reviewed in our issue of 12/5/16.*) (*In limited release.*)

Julietta

The latest film from Pedro Almodóvar is more temperate than what we grew accustomed to in his melodramatic prime, but it is just as sumptuous in its color scheme and no less audacious in shouldering a burden of plot beneath which other directors would sag. The source is an unlikely one: three stories by Alice Munro, which follow a single figure through motherhood and loss. *Julietta*—played in her youth by Adriana Ugarte and as an older woman by Emma Suárez—is a teacher of classical literature and myth. She has a child by a man whom she meets on a train (the scene is much lustier than it is on the page) and moves to be with him on the coast. But one sorrow after another intervenes, and it is only in maturity, after a chance encounter, that she starts to solve the puzzle of what feels like a broken life. Even then, the film is surprisingly open-ended; it leaves you wondering what mysterious path Almodóvar will take next. Fans will rejoice in the return of Rossy de Palma, one of his muses, although the role she plays here—a frizzy-haired Mrs. Danvers—may come as a shock. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (*12/19 & 26/16.*) (*In limited release.*)

La La Land

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

Lion

A small boy called Saroo (Sunny Pawar), born into a poor Indian family, falls asleep on a train and wakes up more than a thousand miles from his home. Eventually, after escaping various perils, he winds up in an orphanage; from there, he is adopted by an Australian couple (Nicole Kidman and David Wenham) and goes to live with them in Tasmania. We jump twenty years, to Saroo as a young man (now played by Dev Patel), who has an American girlfriend (Rooney Mara) and an unappeasable wish to discover where he came from.

Whether that desire has grown with time is unclear, but now, at last, it can be fulfilled, thanks to the miracle of Google Earth (for which the movie is an unabashed commercial). As is proved by documentary footage at the end, Garth Davis's film is based on a true story; though wrenching, there is barely enough of it to fill the dramatic space, and the second half is a slow and muted affair after the Dickensian punch of the first. The undoubtedly star is Pawar, whose débüt commands attention much as Sabu's did, in “Elephant Boy,” some eighty years ago.—*A.L.* (*In limited release.*)

Live by Night

Ben Affleck—as director, screenwriter, and star—revels in the juicy historical details of this Prohibition-era gangster drama (adapted from a novel by Dennis Lehane) but fails to bring it to life. He plays Joe Coughlin, a disillusioned First World War veteran and small-time Boston criminal who tries to keep apart from both the city's Irish gang, run by Albert White (Robert Glenister), and its Italian one, headed by Maso Pescatore (Remo Girone). But, after being brutally beaten for romancing Albert's mistress, Emma Gould (Sienna Miller), Joe goes to work for Maso in Tampa, taking over the rum racket and falling in love with a local crime lord, Graciella Suarez (Zoe Saldana), a dark-complexioned Cuban woman—and their affair provokes the wrath of the K.K.K. The drive for power, the craving for love, the hunger for revenge, and a rising sense of justice keep the gory and grandiose gangland action churning and furnish a hefty batch of plot twists and reversals of fortune. But Affleck's flat and flashy storytelling omits the best and the boldest behind-the-scenes machinations that Joe and his cohorts pull off, depicting instead the noisy but dull fireworks that result.—*R.B.* (*In wide release.*)

Manchester by the Sea

Kenneth Lonergan's new film is carefully constructed, compellingly acted, and often hard to watch. The hero—if you can apply the word to someone so defiantly unheroic—is a janitor, Lee Chandler (Casey Affleck), who is summoned from Boston to the coast of Massachusetts after the death of his brother Joe (Kyle Chandler). This is the definition of a winter's tale, and the ground is frozen too hard for the body to be buried. Piece by piece, in a succession of flashbacks, the shape of Lee's past becomes apparent; he was married to Randi (Michelle Williams), who still lives locally, and something terrible tore them apart. Joe, too, had an ex-wife, now an ex-drinker (Gretchen Mol), and their teen-age son, Patrick—the most resilient character in the movie, smartly played by Lucas Hedges—is alarmed to learn that Lee is to be his legal guardian. What comes as a surprise, amid a welter of sorrow, is the harsh comedy that colors much of the dialogue, and the near-farcical frequency with which things go wrong. Far-reaching tragedy adjoins simple human error: such is the territory that Lonergan so skillfully maps out.—*A.L.* (*11/28/16.*) (*In wide release.*)

Neruda

Another new bio-pic, of sorts, from Pablo Larraín, whose “Jackie” is still in theaters. Once again, the angle of approach is oblique, avoiding the standard procedures of the genre, although in this instance there is an extra dash of playfulness and mischief. That certainly fits the subject, Pablo Neruda (Luis Gnecco), whose poetry would later earn a Nobel Prize, but who begins the film, in 1948, as a member of the Chilean senate; as a Communist, he finds himself scorned by the recently elected President.

The dismissal becomes a witch hunt, with Neruda—sly, grand, lecherous, and overweight—fleeing from one safe house to another, lovingly supported by his wife (Mercedes Morán) and harried by an irrepressible policeman (Gael García Bernal). Much of this story, including the journey over the Andes into Argentina, is a matter of record, but other parts, like the character of the cop, were brewed up for the sake of the movie. The result is both highly unreliable and enjoyably persuasive; we are lured into Larraín's imaginings, such as a final showdown in the snow, much as Neruda's devotees succumb to the declamations of his verse. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (*1/2/17.*) (*In limited release.*)

Passengers

This science-fiction drama has the substance and the tone of a “Twilight Zone” episode while offering a too-good-to-spoil and too-evil-to-believe plot twist that's the movie's *raison d'être*. Sometime in the future, a private company offers paying customers the chance to colonize a planet in distant space. The autopiloted flight takes a hundred and twenty years, during which time the five-thousand-plus settlers and crew members are kept in suspended-animation pods that prevent them from aging. But after an unforeseen calamity only thirty years into the journey two travellers, Jim (Chris Pratt), a mechanical engineer, and Aurora (Jennifer Lawrence), a writer, are awakened too soon and face a lifetime as the only two functioning humans aboard the effectively empty spacecraft. (There's also a bartender named Arthur—played by Michael Sheen—but he's actually an android.) The director, Morten Tyldum, thrives on the peculiarities of the spaceship's amenities—the holographic greeters, the waitstaff robots with French accents, the implacable food dispensers, the swimming pool with a cosmic view—and the most engaging drama arises not from the pair's relationship but from the dangers of losing gravity. As for the big, crude, and ugly twist, it's just a prefabricated think piece.—*R.B.* (*In wide release.*)

Paterson

The new Jim Jarmusch film stars Adam Driver as the title character; to call him the hero would be something of a stretch. He is a bus driver living in Paterson, New Jersey, with his wife, Laura (Golshifteh Farahani), and their dog, Marvin. In idle moments, during the evening or on his lunch hour, Paterson writes poems, not for publication but as if to gratify some private compulsion or demand. Not that they seem to cost him much in terms of emotional turmoil; we hear him recite them in a frictionless calm while the words appear patiently onscreen. (The verses are by Ron Padgett, although the presiding spirit is that of William Carlos Williams.) The movie follows Paterson's lead, guiding us through successive days and noting the minor differences between them. Regular scenes in a bar or on a bench are barely ruffled by incident, and the only gun that is pulled turns out to be a replica. Even as the film flirts with dullness, however, it starts to wield a hypnotizing charm, and Jarmusch has few peers nowadays in the art of the running—or, in his case, gently strolling—gag.—*A.L.* (*1/2/17.*) (*In limited release.*)

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story

The latest entry in the franchise is a pure and perfect product with all the heart and soul of a logo. It's the story of Galen Erso (Mads Mikkelsen), a scientist who's forced by the Empire to work on the Death Star, and his daughter, Jyn (Felicity Jones), who's suspected by the Rebel Alliance of sympathy for the Empire because of his work. But, after receiving her father's holographic message with

insider information on how to destroy the Death Star, Jyn teams up with an international band of outsiders, including Captain Cassian Andor (Diego Luna), a blind monk and martial-arts whiz (Donnie Yen), an intrepid pilot (Riz Ahmed), and a tart-tongued robot (voiced by Alan Tudyk), to wage guerrilla war on the Empire. The action involves some serious unpleasantness—destruction, bloodshed, death—but the characters are so underconceived and the performances so constrained that none of it has any emotional impact. Even the special effects—the forte of the director, Gareth Edwards—offer few delights or thrills. The key plot point, involving the transmission of a giant data packet, seems ready-made for repackaging as a cell-phone commercial. Only Greig Fraser's shadow-shrouded cinematography displays any imagination.—R.B. (*In wide release.*)

The Rules of the Game

The director Jean Renoir gives himself a star turn in this panoramic romance—made in 1939, on the eve of the Second World War—that's both a portrait of the artist and a vision of the times. He plays Octave, a failed musician and social butterfly, whose high-society machinations result in a grand reception for France's heroic transatlantic pilot (Roland Toutain), who is in love with their hostess, a Viennese émigrée (Nora Gregor). She, in turn, is the wife of a French marquis (Marcel Dalio), who is cheating on her with a Parisian sophisticate (Mila Parély). Meanwhile, Octave flirts with a chambermaid (Paulette Dubost), sparking the violent rage of her gamekeeper husband (Gaston Modot). Renoir fills the majestic château with the themes and characters of the day, including a fatuous general; a gaggle of socialites with their heads in their finery; a pervasive anti-Semitism; and an emphasis on “class,” the elegant lies that keep the masquerade going. Renoir's operetta-like confection is booby-trapped; stupefied revellers staring at a player piano as it rattles out the “Danse Macabre” take their place among history's passive victims. In French.—R.B. (*Anthology Film Archives; Jan. 13–15.*)

Silence

Martin Scorsese has never made a Western; his adaptation of Shusaku Endo's 1966 novel, set in the seventeenth century, is the closest thing to it. Two Portuguese priests, Sebastião Rodrigues (Andrew Garfield) and Francisco Garrupe (Adam Driver), have heard rumors that their teacher and confessor, Father Cristóvão Ferreira (Liam Neeson), a missionary in Japan, has betrayed his Christian faith, and they travel to search for him. En route, they learn of the bloody persecution that Christians face in Japan, and when they're smuggled into the country they, too, face the authorities' wrath. Rodrigues is the protagonist of this picaresque epic of oppression and martyrdom, which Scorsese ingeniously infuses with tropes from classic movies, as in the mannerisms of a good-hearted but weak-willed Christian (Yosuke Kubozuka) and a brutal but refined official (Issey Ogata), whose intricate discussions of religion and culture with Rodrigues form the movie's intellectual backbone. Many of the priests' wanderings have the underlined tone of mere exposition; but as Rodrigues closes in on Ferreira the movie morphs into a spectacularly dramatic and bitterly ironic theatre of cruelty that both exalts and questions central Christian myths. It plays like Scorsese's own searing confession.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

The Son of Joseph

This arch, bold, and tender transposition of elements of the Nativity to the cramped secular

life of a high-school student in current-day Paris is as much of an emotional wonder as a conceptual one. Vincent (Victor Ezenfis), an only child, is something of a loner; he's being raised by his mother, Marie (Natacha Régnier), who refuses to tell him anything about the father he never knew. But Vincent does some snooping, finds out that he's a big-time book publisher named Oscar (Mathieu Amalric), and insinuates himself into Oscar's splashy and decadent milieu, with tragicomic results. Meanwhile, Vincent encounters Oscar's ne'er-do-well brother, Joseph (Fabrizio Roncione), and discovers surprising affinities with him. The writer and director Eugène Green, an American émigré and a specialist in Baroque theatre, assigns the actors archaic diction and declamatory airs and stages an ecstatic scene of musical drama as an ideal fusion of style and substance. But the passionate heart of the action, Vincent's quest for emotional connection, involves his radical rejection of norms and proprieties and sparks the timeless fury of revolt; it's as thrilling as it is ingenious. In French.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

Toni Erdmann

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

20th Century Women

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

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DANCE

New York City Ballet

No sooner have the last lingering snowflakes been swept up than the company begins preparations for its winter season. It includes two new works by Justin Peck, the first of which, "Scherzo Fantastique," had its première last summer in Saratoga. Set to early Stravinsky, it features bright, colorful designs by the Brooklyn-based artist Jules de Balincourt. In the second new work, as yet untitled, the dancers wear sneakers—shades of Jerome Robbins—and move to music by Dan Deacon, an earnest indie rocker from Baltimore. In addition to two weeks of Peter Martins's sleek and efficient "Sleeping Beauty" and another week devoted to works by Balanchine, the company offers a new ballet by the Swedish-born choreographer Pontus Lidberg, his first for N.Y.C.B. • Jan. 17 at 7:30: "La Sonnambula," "Prodigal Son," and "Firebird." (David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-496-0600. Through Feb. 26.)

"American Realness"

This annual festival of avant-garde performance, long based at Abrons Arts Center, now has a second home at Gibney Dance, where the festival's founder and director, Thomas Benjamin Snapp Pryor, has recently been put in charge of performance and residency programming. The schedule is as packed as ever: five world premières, six U.S. premières, encore presentations, exhibitions, and discussions, and at least one party. One of the best bets is "Mercurial George," a volatile reckoning with identity by the Canadian choreographer Dana Michel. Also on the program are Julianne F. May's "Adult Documentary," Jen Rosenblit's "Clap Hands," and Trajal Harrell's "Twenty Looks or Paris Is Burning at the Judson Church(s)." (Various locations. 212-352-3101. Jan. 10-12.)

L-E-V

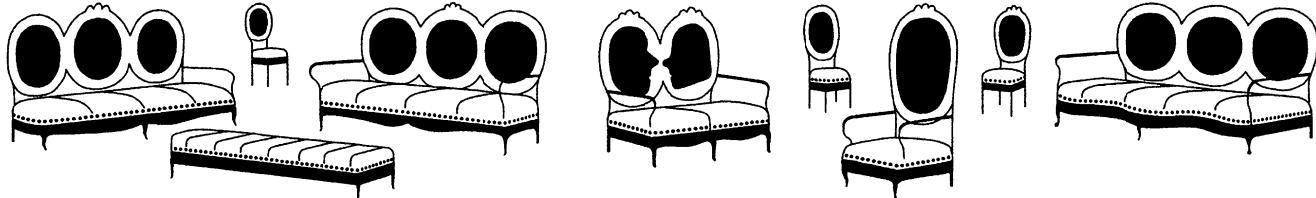
Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a fitting subject for this recently founded Israeli troupe. The

company's choreographer, Sharon Eyal, and its dancers are alums of the Batsheva Dance Company, and Ohad Naharin's influence is highly visible in its abnormal extremes and extraordinary pliability. But the sway of its co-artistic director, Gai Behar, who once organized raves, is also strong. Set to a live techno score by the d.j. Ori Lichtik, "OCD Love" attacks ritualistic repetition with catwalk hauteur. The poem that inspired it, by Neil Hilborn, describes a woman who finds beauty in the speaker's symptoms but ultimately flees in exasperation. That's a risk that L-E-V runs with audiences. (*Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 11-15.*)

COIL 2017

The dance selections of P.S. 122's multidisciplinary festival conclude with "A Study on Effort." A collaboration between the violinist Keir GoGwilt and the remarkable dancer Bobbi Jene Smith, an Iowa-born beauty who spent a decade in Israel with the Batsheva Dance Company, the work is a series of vignettes indulging in the pleasures of maximal exertion. (*Invisible Dog Art Center, 51 Bergen St., Brooklyn. 212-352-3101. Jan. 12-14.*)

ABOVE & BEYOND



Zlatne Uste Golden Festival

Eastern European and Middle Eastern music, dance, and culture coalesce at this annual festival, held in New York City for more than thirty years. Balkan traditions and customs unfold across two nights and four stages, where attendees can shop for folk arts and sample the wide array of foods native to the region, spanning roughly from Romania to Greece and from Croatia to Turkey. The main draw is a marathon of groups staging performances from the region, including Egyptian traditional dance, a Slavic chorus, a Balkan brass band, and a Mediterranean outfit of violin, accordion, and clarinet. Profits generated from ticket sales will be donated to charitable and educational organizations aiding Balkan communities. (*The Grand Prospect Hall, 263 Prospect Ave., Brooklyn. goldenfest.org. Jan. 13-14.*)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

The collection of the late Nelson Doubleday, scion of the Doubleday publishing family, goes under the gavel at *Doyle* (Jan. 11). More of a sportsman than a bibliophile, Doubleday sold the family business in 1986, the same year his other main asset, the New York Mets, won the World Series. As befits these two competing facets of his life, the sale features maritime paintings—Doubleday was an avid sailor—by Buttersworth and Dawson,

championship rings, and a trove of leather-bound tomes (including a complete edition of the works of Charles Dickens). (*175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.*)

READINGS AND TALKS

Powerhouse Arena

Knowledge of the human body grows increasingly precious. We enlist specialists and trainers and hunt new diets and regimens, largely forgoing detailed information on anatomy and physiology in favor of a sort of science-based service industry. James Hamblin, the senior editor of *The Atlantic*, delivers "If Our Bodies Could Talk: A Guide to Operating and Maintaining a Human Body" this week, a witty how-to book touching on health concerns and blind spots in areas including sex, aging, wellness, and nutrition. Hamblin has helped explain our bodies to us since 2012, when he joined *The Atlantic* to build out its health section—the book arrives as an extension of his video series on the site, and answers questions about things like optimal sleeping patterns and cell-phone radiation based on responses from health-care professionals and medical experts. (*28 Adams St., Brooklyn. 718-666-3049. Jan. 12 at 7.*)

Nitehawk Cinema

"Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" arrived on British shelves in 1997, a year ahead of

its publication in the U.S. Nitehawk Cinema celebrates the franchise's twentieth anniversary by screening all eight of the film adaptations, and hosts a completist's dream of a talk: the authorities and enthusiasts Alise Morales, Aliza Weinberger, Matt Zoller Seitz, and Matt Jacobs will debate whether the Potter novels or their big-screen counterparts are better at delivering J. K. Rowling's tangled wizard universe. (*136 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn. nitehawkcinema.com. Jan. 12 at 7:30.*)

"Apollo Uptown Hall"

The political leadership and public works of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the face of opposition, have come to embody the power of civil disobedience, and the willingness of our country to bend toward progress. In 1967, King published "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" in which he considered the next steps for the social-justice movements of his time and how they might develop in the future with respect to wage inequality, housing, poverty, and education. A panel of writers, activists, and religious leaders, including Opal Tometi, Shaun King, L. Joy Williams, Rabbi Ben Kamin, and Staceyann Chin, gather to read from King's writings and examine their newfound contexts in our contemporary social and political climate. (*Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 800-745-3000. Jan. 15 at 3.*)

FOOD & DRINK



TABLES FOR TWO

Agern

Grand Central Terminal (646-568-4018)

WHEN GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL first opened its doors, a century ago, there was a Russian bath in the Men's Waiting Room. Last April, Claus Meyer, a Danish food entrepreneur and the co-founder of Noma, in Copenhagen, opened a Nordic eatery named Agern in that lost oasis. Two hard-to-find entrances lead into an elegant room of muted Aalto-ish minimalism. Glowing silvery orbs hang from the ceiling, an echo of both the celestial mural in the main concourse and the starry sky that cloaks Scandinavia in darkness for much of the year. If Grand Central is a cathedral for commuters, Agern is a chapel for indulging the senses. Best to stay put.

The head chef, Gunnar Gíslason, grew up in northern Iceland, and the menu at Agern features the flavors of his childhood, reinvented with Hudson Valley ingredients. The Land & Sea tasting menu (Field & Forest is the vegetarian option) starts with a staccato array of tiny snacks. A single oyster topped with fizzy cranberry foam goes down in a tart, briny splash. A fried pork trotter tastes like a bacon Tater Tot; a waiter explained that it's made from "parts of the feet and parts of the face." A rye crisp dolloped with smoked cream cheese conjures a ghost of lox.

One night, a warm "ocean broth," made tableside, was the meal's first al-

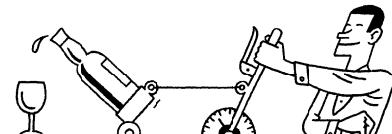
chemical ritual. The server poured dill oil and powdered phytoplankton into a corked glass press filled with salt-and-vinegar water, emulsified the concoction, then poured the hot broth into a black ceramic cup. "I hope it makes you feel like you're standing on an oceanside cliff at sunset," he intoned. Apothecary-chic microalgae may be a dated culinary trend, but who cares? It's mermaid tea, and its powers of salty transport are real.

Three servers paraded to a table like the Magi bearing gifts: walnut shells containing steaming rounds of sourdough, fresh-whipped-butter cumuli, a baked beet carved from a vegetable-ash crust. (After such theatrics, the root was unremarkable.) Gíslason's home town is a fishing port, yet it was the fowl that stood out. Tender, juicy guinea-hen breast lay on a pillow of sunchoke cream, accompanied by the leg, sprinkled with bits of deep-fried skin.

For dessert, buttermilk ice cream with watercress and whey recalled a cool, grassy crème brûlée, and Gíslason's Icelandic birch schnapps, sourced from forests he helped plant, evoked a Christmas tree—in a good way. "I can't make this here," he said. "The birch branches taste differently." What else does Gíslason miss from his native country? He sighed. "The hot geothermal baths. You take off your clothes, get in, and stare at the stars." (*Tasting menu: \$140-\$165. À la carte: \$29-\$56. Prices include service.*)

—Carolyn Kormann

BAR TAB



Paul's Casablanca
305 Spring St. (212-620-5220)

The other night, in west SoHo, two young men were rebuffed at the entrance of a bar. "Is this Casablanca?" they asked. A bouncer in a balaclava shook his head. Fifteen minutes later, after wandering up and down the street, they found themselves underneath a neon sign that read "McGovern's Bar." Could this be the place? Another bouncer, this time in a hood, nodded. "We're at capacity," he said, waving through a man in a bone-white fur and matching spectacles. They would have to wait. This is because the Casablanca they sought is Paul's Casablanca, the latest venture from Paul Sevigny, begetter of the Beatrice Inn, baron of the Baby Grand. Sevigny's new bar draws a little from both of those but has neither the cocoonish hustle of the former nor the graffitied luxury of the latter. Instead, Sevigny has gone for a purer form of fun: an enfilade of domed caverns where dancers sway to rock and disco hits flanked by tiled nooks from which clusters of beautiful folk watch the whirling crowd. The effect? A little like an after-party to Malcolm Forbes's seventieth-birthday party in Tangier, which oddly obsessed glossy-magazine writers for a period in 1989. Mixed drinks, which are almost impossible to order at a long bar near the entrance but easily acquired at an arabesque nook in the back, are in the twenty-dollar range—not that the price seems to bother any of the ebullient patrons, who are presumably too drunk or too well heeled to care. Just make sure that when checking items downstairs you don't lose your ticket. Recently, a woman was howling at the attendant, "It's the black mink coat! It's probably the only real mink there." To which the response came: "We got a lot of black mink back here." —Nicolas Niarchos

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT BIRTHDAY WISHES

ON APRIL 8, 1968, Representative John Conyers, from Detroit, marched through downtown Memphis with Coretta Scott King, Ralph Abernathy, Harry Belafonte, and thousands of people who had come to that city from across the country. Four days earlier, Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot and killed there, on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, and a fugue of disbelief and despair hovered over the crowd as it continued down the road that King had travelled. The march served as a momentary validation of King's work, but Conyers hoped to craft a more enduring one. That week, he introduced legislation in the House of Representatives that would make King's birthday, January 15th, a national holiday. It languished in committee.

Two months after the assassination, Coretta Scott King founded the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change, in Atlanta. It was intended to serve as a well-spring for works of the type to which her husband had dedicated his life, but it was quickly deployed in a secondary mission: to lobby for the holiday, which she later described as "a day of interracial and intercultural coöperation and sharing." In 1971, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which King had led, delivered to Congress a petition bearing three million signatures in support of the effort. In 1973, Harold Washington, an Illinois state representative who was later elected the first black mayor of Chicago, sponsored a bill that made his state the first to recognize the holiday. A handful of other states followed, but there was little federal momentum. Coretta Scott King kept up pressure on elected officials, writing, speaking, and testifying twice before congressional committees.

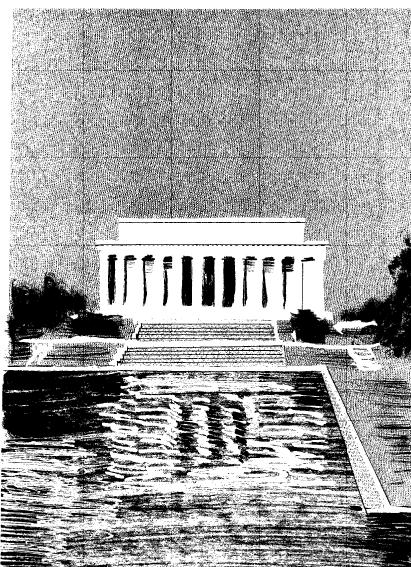
In 1979, a House bill failed by five votes, even though President Jimmy Carter had endorsed it. King then enlisted the aid of Stevie Wonder, who composed "Happy Birthday," a jaunty bit of agit-pop that included the lines "I never un-

derstood / how a man who died for good / could not have a day that would / be set aside for his recognition." Finally, in 1983, a bill written by Representatives Jack Kemp, a Republican, and Katie Hall, a Democrat, passed in the House. In the Senate, Jesse Helms, who had denounced the 1964 Civil Rights Act as "the single most dangerous piece of legislation ever introduced in the Congress," tried, unsuccessfully, to have the bill, which was sponsored by Edward Kennedy, sent back to committee. Undaunted, Helms moved to have King's F.B.I. files declassified, so that the Senate might explore the specious claim that he was a Communist stooge. In a fit of anger, Daniel Patrick Moynihan threw a copy of Helms's documents to the floor of the Senate, denouncing them as "filth." The bill passed by a vote of seventy-eight to twenty-two, and President Ronald Reagan, despite initial reluctance, signed it into law, in November of 1983, declaring that Martin Luther King, Jr., Day would be celebrated every year on the third Monday of January.

It had taken fifteen years for Conyers's original gesture to become a legislative reality, a journey that reflected a growing national acceptance of King's ideals of pacifism and racial and economic equality, and a posthumous validation of his

approach to social change. Nevertheless, King Day has occupied an awkward niche in the progression of American commemorations. It was not fully recognized in all the states until 1999—New Hampshire was the last. Currently, Alabama, Arkansas, and Mississippi also celebrate the birth of Robert E. Lee on the day set aside for King.

The awkwardness persists on other levels. For an activist to be honored by a government, even one hoping to recognize that activist's principles, is an inherently contradictory event. On King's seventy-fifth birthday, in 2004, President George W. Bush, mired in a disastrous war in Iraq, took the time to lay a wreath at King's tomb, in Atlanta. A police barricade surrounded the President, yielding



a tableau of antiwar demonstrators being kept away from the tomb of a pacifist, in deference to a man overseeing a war. In 2009, the holiday fell on January 19th, a day before the Inauguration of Barack Obama, the first African-American President. The proximity of those events suggested a kind of moral momentum, a verification that the will toward democracy wins out in the long run.

Next year, Donald Trump will preside over a holiday dedicated to a man whose principles he scarcely seems to comprehend. In a speech that King delivered in 1967, in Atlanta, he condemned the Vietnam War and warned against what he called “the triple evils of racism, economic exploitation, and militarism.” All three figured prominently in Trump’s Presidential campaign. Moreover, in 1973 the Department of Justice sued Trump Management, of which Trump was the president, for refusing to rent apartments to African-Americans. Specifically, the government charged that the company had violated the Fair Housing Act—a landmark piece of legislation passed in 1968, partly in tribute to King’s desegregation work. Now Trump, instead of calming the racial fires that he stoked during the campaign, has opted for private meetings with B-listers of black life: Don King, Ray Lewis, Jim Brown—a coalition of the compromised.

King’s insights into our society have never been more crit-

ical. In 1961, he declined an invitation from President John F. Kennedy to attend his Inauguration, but two weeks later he gave a speech outlining the ways in which Kennedy might use legislation, executive orders, and the moral authority of the Presidency to diminish racial discrimination. He closed by quoting a line from a 1947 report issued by the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, established by Harry Truman: “The United States is not so strong, the final triumph of the democratic ideal not so inevitable that we can ignore what the world thinks of us or our record.”

The divided bounty of America is such that it is a place where King was both hailed and spat upon; where he wielded influence over a President and was hounded by federal investigators; where he was afforded official accolades and was murdered on the balcony of a nondescript motel. Now, at the outset of this Presidency, King’s words to Kennedy warrant repeating. His ideals have survived him, but they have inherited the same unreconciled, and maybe irreconcilable, status. In 2009, the King holiday pointed to how far we had come. This year, it highlights the fact that we’ve arrived at a place where the familiar landmarks are missing. The Memphis marchers in 1968 held one advantage: they knew the road they were going down.

—Jelani Cobb

DOPPELGÄNGER DEPT. NEW YORK STRIP



EVERY MORNING, Willie Degel, the proprietor of Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse, on West Fifty-sixth Street, less than an avenue away from Trump Tower, has a blunt conversation with his mirror. A couple of days before Christmas, he sat with a visitor at a slightly wobbly table upstairs at Uncle Jack’s and described his routine. “I look at myself and I say, ‘I’m the man,’” said Degel, a round-faced, crewcut fellow in his late forties, with a sturdy build that was testing the seams of his three-piece suit. “I say, ‘Who’s the man? I’m the fucking man. Today, I’m going to work, I’m taking on this world, I’m making it the way I want it to be.’ And I’m uplifted, I’m inspired. You gotta say it three times. The third time, you gotta really be looking yourself dead in your eyes and tell yourself who you are and what your mission is.”

That particular day, Degel had told himself that his mission was to get vehicular traffic moving on his block, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. For

more than six weeks—ever since the Presidential-election result had imposed gridlock on the neighborhood—barriques at both ends had been business killers. Volume at Uncle Jack’s was down more than twenty per cent, and that was an improvement over the first two weeks. “Completely shut down,” Degel recalled. “Pedestrian traffic, commercial traffic, cars, everything. It was, like, ‘Red alert!’ The city wasn’t prepared for it. You mention Fifty-sixth Street, people were like, ‘Ohmigod, you must be dead. Are you going out of business?’” Now, at least, the police were allowing selective breaching of the Sixth Avenue barricade: vendors could make deliveries and garbage was being picked up, but to get out you had to make a U-turn.

None of this had diminished Degel’s esteem for a certain President-elect. “Trump’s been here,” he said. “He orders steak. He loves the New York strip steak. I just renamed it the Trump Strip. It makes me laugh when people, to ridicule him, talk about how his father maybe left him a few million dollars. And you turn it into five hundred or seven hundred million? You know how hard it is to make money? He’s not an idiot. He’s a smart man, he’s a businessman, he’s a developer. I’m pro-Trump.”

Degel, who grew up in Flushing and

owns six restaurants, including the original Uncle Jack’s, in Bayside, declined to identify his party affiliation. “I don’t call myself anything,” he said. “I’m an entrepreneur. I make my own decisions. I’m a smart guy in the sense that I’m not highly educated, but I break things down and simplify. I’m a really good problem solver.”

Another parallel: As he made plain in an interview several years ago, he’s not inclined to curl up with, say, “Mrs. Dalloway.” (“I don’t read books. I read people.”) Also, like POTUS 45, he’s been the star of a reality-television show—“Restaurant Stakeout”—in which he tactfully told people how they were doing their jobs wrong. It’s pure coincidence, probably, that in the early nineties, when Trump was stiffing his bankers for hundreds of millions, Degel did six months in federal prison for conspiracy to commit credit-card fraud.

Though all evidence pointed to the Secret Service and the N.Y.P.D., Degel preferred to blame Bill de Blasio for the street closing. “I want the Mayor to do a better job,” he said. “I paid for this location, I pay taxes, I pay rent. We reached out to the Mayor. We invited him to a breakfast. Nobody’s knocked on this door once.”

What if the situation persisted?

“Let’s make this whole block into a

café-type block. You don't want car traffic? No problem. But let's put tables and picnic things, and put little coffee trucks and make it really cool. And make this the best destination to walk to and go eat and drink. It's, like, Vegas does it, but it's in a mall. So let's do it right here."

Three days into the new year, the Sixth Avenue barricade had been removed and cars were moving, sort of; the block between Fifth and Madison remained closed. A reporter's request for an explanation from Secret Service personnel inside Trump Tower proved as fruitful as a visit to the Tomb of the Unknown Complainier. Degel, meanwhile, had a new headache.

"The week after New Year's, you become a ghost town anyway," he said. "Everybody's got resolutions and is going to the gym. Supposedly, there was a rift between the Mayor and the Secret Service. I don't really know what went down. The Mayor was grandstanding—this was what people were saying. What people? You know, just people in general. I don't know. No one tells you what's going on. It was just politics. Everything's politics."

—Mark Singer

BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT. MONKEY DO



BEN PASTERNAK DROPPED out of high school in Sydney, Australia, last year and moved to New York, with the goal of making what he called "the No. 1 app in the world." One recent afternoon, he woke up at one o'clock, in his twenty-seventh-floor, forty-two-hundred-dollar-a-month apartment in Hell's Kitchen. He put on one of his six identical pairs of Zanerobe black pants. "You can save, like, a year and a half of your life if your outfit is pre-chosen," he said. "We did the math." He walked to the kitchen, past inspirational quotes taped to the wall—"Life is divine chaos" (misattributed to Keats); "Listen to the kids, bruh" (Kanye)—and opened the refrigerator: seven bottles of Soylent drink and some cheese dip.

"I was up until five-thirty," he told a visitor. "Isaiah is the better Monkey founder. He stayed up until

seven, because the server kept crashing."

Isaiah Turner—also a rail-thin high-school dropout, with bleached hair—lay on a couch, the only elevated place to sit other than a plastic folding chair "for adults," kept in a closet. Wearing pajamas, Turner, who is eighteen, typed code on his MacBook.

"Yo, I'm afraid to not be a teen-ager in two years," Turner said. "No one takes you seriously as an adult."

A week earlier, Pasternak and Turner had débuted Monkey, a video-chat app that aims, Turner explained, "to fill the loneliness void in teen-agers." He added, "It's like Chatroulette, without the perverts."

The app already had fifty thousand users, who'd made half a million randomized calls to one another. Tim Cook ("a dope adult") congratulated Pasternak in an e-mail. John Maloney, the former Tumblr president, texted. Chris Smith, an entrepreneur who is helping to pay Monkey's startup costs, has advised Pasternak on a range of questions: Should he star in a reality-television show called "CEO@16"? ("Yes.") Should he have tipped his SoHo hairstylist for his hundred-and-twenty-dollar Bieber do? ("Being Australian, you get a pass.")

Pasternak had recruited Turner, an up-and-coming hacker and app developer, a few weeks earlier, as Pasternak was struggling to take down eBay with Flogg, a kid-friendly commerce app he'd developed. (This app led ABC News to wonder whether Pasternak was "the next great titan of technology.")

"Ben repeatedly told me, 'You're gonna die one day and no one's gonna come to your funeral,'" Turner said. "Now I live here on his nice couch."

"He buys fifteen-hundred-dollar electric skateboards," Pasternak said. "He's not broke."

"Yo, that's actually true. I own fifty total things, and it is one of those things."

"It's a nice skateboard," Pasternak said.

"It's a dope skateboard," Turner agreed. "It goes twenty-two miles per hour, so I don't have to take cabs."

"Yo, I just take a lot of Ubers," Pasternak said.

They got back to work on Monkey. Pasternak rode in circles on his hoverboard as they discussed a new feature.

"Yo, Isaiah—how's the emoji thing?"

"It's almost done."

"Do you think 'verified emojis' is a good term?"

"No. That's what, like, an adult would say if they made Twitter."

"We could make it 'veri-emojis.'"

"No, that's also, like, super-adult."

"'Emojified'? To emojiify."

"Yeah, that's good."

Pasternak's phone buzzed. He went into the hall to take his daily call from his mother. He returned ten minutes later and Swiffered the floors.

Around four-thirty, Ryan Metzger, a



Ben Pasternak

twenty-year-old William & Mary dropout with a five-hundred-thousand-dollar venture-capital fund and a study app called CoffeeCram, came by. ("He's where I was maybe a year and a half ago," Pasternak said, before Metzger arrived.)

"Yo," Metzger, who wore jeans and a puffy jacket, said. He took a seat on the floor and opened his laptop.

"Yo," Pasternak and Turner replied.

"I think I just raised another two hundred and fifty thousand," Metzger said.

"Cool," Pasternak said. He then named an angel investor who "wants to give me a hundred grand."

"You should take his money," Metzger advised.

"Some of these guys don't know what they're doing," Pasternak continued. "Being in V.C. without having been a startup founder, it's like"—he searched for a metaphor—"being a lifeguard without knowing how to swim."

"I've got to send this offer to my lawyer," Metzger said. "Have you seen the app Ironclad? It does automated legal paperwork."

"Lawyers will be completely gone, like, pretty soon," Pasternak said.

"Same with cashiers," Metzger said. "They make no sense. And non-automated cars? Those are dangerous."

"I'm never learning to drive," Pasternak said. "Cars are so big and ugly. In fifty years, we'll look at them like steam locomotives."

At six o'clock, Turner looked up. "Yo, let's get breakfast," he said. "I'm hungry." Half an hour passed. Metzger set a five-minute timer on his phone. When it went off for the third time, Pasternak put on a pair of Yeezys, Turner got dressed, and they walked down to Chipotle.

—Charles Bethea

SCOUTING MISSION MUSE



SILAS FARLEY, WHO is a dancer in the corps of New York City Ballet, became an aficionado of the Metropolitan Museum a few years ago, after he was given a membership by a donor to the School of American Ballet, where he was a student. "I call her my New York City ballet fairy godmother," Farley, who is twenty-two, said recently. "I started to come all the time." One Monday morning not long ago, Farley was back at the museum, at the invitation of Limor Tomer, who presides over the Met's live performances. The goal: to walk through the galleries in the hope that the muse—Terpsichore, specifically—might strike.

The tour began in Arms and Armor. "There are a lot of objects here, but, more importantly, the Met is a huge repository of ideas," Tomer said. A couple of years ago, the Gotham Chamber Opera took over the space for a performance of "Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda," by Monteverdi, paired with a modern work by Lembit Beecher. (As part of the latter piece, an actor dressed in camouflage was installed in a glass case usually occupied by suits of armor.) Farley nodded approvingly, and said, "You reconsider the art work because of the way it is activated by the performers."

He and Tomer stopped in at the Robert Lehman court, where the contemporary choreographer Dai Jian showed a dance in 2015. Rehearsals took place

during museum hours. "Thousands of people who would self-select out of any contemporary performance were seeing work in progress," Tomer said.

In the American Wing, Farley struck a pose identical to that of Augustus Saint-Gaudens's gilded Diana. "One of my favorite things to do with my friends is reenact the poses of sculptures," he said. Last summer, while New York City Ballet was performing at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Farley proposed to his girlfriend, Cassia Wilson, who is a dancer in Austin. They went to the Louvre and impersonated "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss," by Canova.

Farley grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, the youngest of seven, and began dancing at the age of seven. (One brother took a different, if no less physically demanding, path: Matthias Farley is a defensive back with the Indianapolis Colts.) He has choreographed for the School of American Ballet, and also teaches there. He said he was shocked when some of his students hadn't recognized the name Vaslav Nijinsky. "I thought, I could get mad, or I could just tell them about Nijinsky," he said. "It's not that they're callous or they don't care. It's just that there are so many distractions—all the tweets and the texts. But put them in front of beauty, and it will change them." Farley is not on social media. "I'm, like, from the sixteenth century," he said.

As a visitor to the Met, Farley said, he has enjoyed the Costume Institute's exhibitions, including a show from a couple of years ago about Charles James—"It was as if George Balanchine had written all the plaques on the walls"—and the recent "Manus X Machina" exhibition, on the intersection of fashion and technology. "I sat and looked at that first Lagerfeld dress for, like, twenty minutes," he said. He'd just seen the Kerry James Marshall show at the Met Breuer, and wanted to return with his students: "The same conversation we're having about diversity in dance is happening all across the arts." (Farley is one of only a handful of African-American dancers in the company.) Rounding a corner, Farley had another moment of recognition. "Hi! How are you?" he said, greeting a security guard; the man was a member of his Bible-study group, at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on the Upper West Side.

The final stop was the sixteenth-cen-

tury Vélez Blanco patio. Tomer said that the British company Erratica had created a site-specific video opera for the space, which was seen by more than twenty-five thousand visitors. Farley's eyes widened. "Those are football numbers," he said. He looked up at the gallery. Something was percolating.



Silas Farley

"Classical ballet is this elevating form—you have to rise to meet it, whether you are the dancer or the audience," he said. "The thing is, the audience possesses the same instrument. The audience members have the same body. It's like a cello playing for an audience of cellos."

—Rebecca Mead

END OF INNOCENCE TRAFFIC



"THREE YEARS AGO, I had no idea what child sex trafficking was," Mary Mazzio said. The documentary filmmaker was at Smith & Wollensky, having lunch with a former New York City deputy mayor named Carol Robles-Román and the litigator David Boies, who was cross-examining the menu through rimless spectacles. "The images we saw were always the same," Mazzio continued. "Fish-net stockings being pulled up, then a young African-American woman leaning in the window of a minivan. I'm embarrassed by how I bought into the 'Pretty Woman' scenario of child prostitution."

Mazzio's "I Am Jane Doe," which opens next month, is three films in one. She began by filming a retired managing partner at the law firm of Ropes & Gray, near her home, in Boston, who was representing three children who'd sued Backpage.com, an online classifieds site where they were marketed as "escorts." According to a Senate report, Backpage commands more than eighty per cent of online-sex-ad revenues. The company has been accused of enabling child sex trafficking, although Backpage denies this. "I thought it would be an antiseptic legal project," Mazzio, a former lawyer and Olympic rower, said.

Then she interviewed some of the more than a hundred thousand American children who are being trafficked. Pimps and their female accomplices dazzle girls by promising, "I will never let anything bad happen to you." They get them hooked on heroin or meth—the "leash" that keeps them from running away, back home—then, through ads that use code such as "fresh off the boat," sell them to be raped as many as twenty times a day. The documentary features three girls—one just thirteen—who escaped that life, but only physically.

Robles-Román said, "Mary, I'm embarrassed that I didn't believe the advocates, because I wasn't reading about it anywhere. But, when I visited homeless shelters or schools, inevitably one student would stay afterward and say, 'Don't look at me—I don't want you to know who I am—but I was trafficked.' Why is it a secret how many children are being raped by pedophiles?"

"I Am Jane Doe" eventually becomes a quest for a hero: which crusading lawyer or outraged politician will pierce Backpage's legal shield? That shield is Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, a law that Congress passed in 1996 to protect Internet companies from liability for content posted on their sites by other parties. In the end, none of the lawyers whom Mazzio interviews—not the professorial litigator in Boston, or the fiery solo practitioner working out of a strip mall near Seattle—can convince the courts that the C.D.A. was never intended to protect a forum for the sexual marketing of children. When a Senate subcommittee held a hearing on the matter, Backpage's C.E.O. didn't show up.



"If a sixth borough opens up, I'll let you know."

Enter David Boies, who represented Al Gore in Bush v. Gore and marriage-equality proponents in Perry v. Schwarzenegger. The seventy-five-year-old counsellor recently filed an amicus brief on behalf of several children's and women's organizations, led by Legal Momentum, which Robles-Román now runs. The brief asked the Supreme Court to hear the case against Backpage arising from the First Circuit, in Boston, whose interpretation of the C.D.A. it termed "particularly nonsensical." As he cut up his chicken, Boies explained, "We're pursuing three approaches. One, get the Supreme Court to enforce the C.D.A.'s true intent. Two, find a legislative solution." This week, the Supreme Court is expected to announce whether it will hear the case, and the Senate subcommittee is holding another hearing. "And, three," he continued, "use additional legal avenues to go after Backpage. It's a dramatic failing of our legal system that something so obviously terrible continues to flourish."

Mazzio said, "Having been a lawyer—and hating most lawyers—I have to thank you for doing this work."

Boies raised his Diet Coke in acknowledgment, then said, "The real heroes are the Jane Does who are coura-

geously pursuing this, and who motivate us. It's not just happening in the Philippines. It's happening *here*, in every strata." Last month, Kamala Harris, then the California Attorney General, charged Backpage's C.E.O. and two of the site's former owners with pimping and money laundering. They have denied the charges.

"The endgame," Robles-Román said, "is getting an injustice out of our justice system." Referring to the 1896 case that upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine, she continued, "Plessy v. Ferguson—thank God people didn't just say, 'Well, the Supreme Court has ruled, let's move on.'"

Child rape has become a huge, entrenched business, Boies pointed out: "Backpage is owned by a Netherlands company that runs a web of nefarious Web sites. One is called Cracker. Backpage is *mild* compared to Cracker."

"Have you gone on Cracker, David?" Mazzio asked.

"I have not," he said. "I've had people go on it." He added, with barely tempered outrage, "I don't know of another organized-crime group that's as sophisticated in their corporate structure."

"Wow," Mazzio said. "You're really saying it, aren't you?"

"Wait till you see our litigation."

—Tad Friend

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

MAKING GOD FAMOUS

How Kirk Franklin is pushing the boundaries of gospel.

BY VINSON CUNNINGHAM



Franklin (seated) blends secular sounds with an uplifting devotional message.

IT'S HARD TO describe in a word what Kirk Franklin does for a living. Franklin, forty-six, is the most successful contemporary gospel artist of his generation, but he isn't a singer. He plays the piano, but only intermittently onstage, more to contribute to the pageantry than to show off his modest chops. Above all, he is a songwriter, but in performance and on his albums

his role more closely resembles that of a stock character in hip-hop: the hype man. The best hype men—Flavor Flav, Spliff Star, the early Sean (P. Diddy) Combs—hop around onstage, slightly behind and to the side of the lead m.c., addressing the microphone in order to ad-lib or to reinforce punch lines as they rumble by. But a hype man is, by definition, a sidekick, and while most

of the sound in Franklin's music comes from elsewhere—usually, a band and an ensemble of singers—he is always and unquestionably the locus of its energy and intention.

When I first saw Franklin perform live, last spring, at the newly renovated Kings Theatre in Brooklyn, he stood at center stage, spotlit, rasping out preachy interjections whenever his singers paused for breath. The theatre had the grandeur of a cathedral: blood-red velvet curtains framed the stage; golden ceilings, patterned with blue-and-purple paisleys, soared over vaudeville-era balconies and plush seats. During "I Smile," a bouncy, piano-propelled anthem to joyful resilience against life's troubles, Franklin punctuated the chorus with a rhythmic series of shouts: "I smile"—"Yes!"—"Even though I'm hurt, see, I smile"—"Come on!"—"Even though I've been here for a while"—"Hallelujah!"—"I smile."

Meanwhile, he danced. Franklin's music is rife with recognizable influences, from traditional Southern gospel to R. & B., hip-hop to arena rock, and he accentuates this fact by offering audiences a flurry of accompanying bodily references. He is short—five feet five on tiptoe—and has friendly features: sleek eyes with penny irises, arched eyebrows, a mouth that rests in a grinning pout, taut balloons for cheeks. He wore white pants with black racing stripes, a long black shirt, and, around his neck, a neatly knotted red bandanna. Cradling the microphone stand near the lip of the stage, he wiggled his feet like James Brown and drew miniature scallops with his hips, then galloped from one side of the stage to the other, like a sanctified Springsteen. During the down-home numbers, he turned his back to the crowd and waved his hands in the direction of the singers, a slightly comic invocation of the Baptist choir director's showily precise control. Then he broke into a survey of recent dances made viral by teens on Vine and Snapchat: the Milly Rock, the Hit Dem Folks, the Dab. Sometimes, as if overtaken by joy, he simply leaped into the air and landed on the beat.

The show was a stop along Franklin's latest tour, "20 Years in One Night." The tour's title had rounded down the years ever so slightly: Franklin released

his first album in 1993. Since then, he has sold millions of records and won scores of awards for a brand of gospel that blends secular sounds with an uplifting devotional message. He has also collaborated with some of the biggest names in pop: a few months before the Brooklyn show, he appeared on "Ultralight Beam," the first song on Kanye West's newest album, "The Life of Pablo," and performed the song alongside West on "Saturday Night Live."

The mostly black audience at Kings Theatre was older than the usual concertgoing crowd, and well versed in Franklin's œuvre, frequently breaking, unbidden, into surprisingly competent harmony. "Y'all sound good!" Franklin said. Later, he joked about his relationship with West: "Anyone can be saved . . . even Kanye!" The crowd laughed. The show ran for two and a half hours, with a short intermission; at several points, Franklin asked the audience if they had got their money's worth. He was a genial narrator, a kind of hovering intelligence, pulling his fans through the healing places in his songs. When he was done, a woman of maybe sixty looked over at me, dazed, and said, "That's why he's so skinny—he's got a lot of energy!" "What a blessing," somebody else said. "I feel so light."

IN THE MID-NINETIES, when I was ten years old, my mother and I became members of a Pentecostal church in Harlem. We had recently moved back to New York after six years in Chicago, where my mother taught grade-schoolers and my father was the music director at a Roman Catholic church. The hush of Catholicism was most of what I knew about religion—my dad had a talent for sneaking gospel sounds into hymnody, but the Mass had a staid, stubborn rhythm of its own—and the biggest shock of my first few months immersed in charismatic religion was the wild, unceasing stream of noise. Even as the pastor preached, the organ would honk, or a cymbal would crash, or someone in the congregation would open her mouth and let fly a stream of Spirit-given tongues. The other sound I remember was Franklin's music. He was a fairly new phenomenon, and his songs had already become inescapable. Every respectable church choir seemed

to have at least a few of them in its repertoire. His melodies and harmony parts were easy to teach to amateur ensembles, and congregations were sure to know them, and to sing along.

Franklin had forged an uncommon connection with "the youth," as the elder churchgoers called us. His message rarely differed from that of the other gospel music circulating at the time, but his sound and his attitude were of a piece with the most popular hip-hop and R.&B. acts of the moment. His physicality sometimes scandalized the older crowd. I often heard people complain, "He's bringing the world into the church." But those parents also accepted, sometimes grudgingly, that this flashy figure might hold the key to keeping their sons and daughters in the pew and off the streets.

Franklin's first album, a live recording called "Kirk Franklin and the Family," offered a smooth, pop-adjacent brand of gospel, descended from acts like Andraé Crouch, the Winans, and, perhaps especially, Edwin Hawkins, whose 1969 hit "Oh Happy Day" laid the template for the kind of mainstream acceptance that Franklin hoped to win. Franklin's songs had compulsively singable melodies—there was little of the sweaty, melismatic display typically associated with gospel vocalizing. His choir, the Family, sang in sweet, perfectly blended, middle-of-the-register unison, splitting into three-part harmony only toward the propulsive endings of their songs. The lyrics were earnest statements of affection toward the divine. "I sing because I'm happy," went one of the more popular numbers. "I sing because I'm free"—"His eye is on!"—"His eye is on the sparrow"—"That's the reason!"—"That's the reason why I sing."

"Kirk Franklin and the Family" sold a million copies, becoming the first gospel début to go platinum. Franklin's next record, "Whatcha Lookin' 4," went platinum as well, and earned Franklin his first Grammy. Both albums topped Billboard's gospel-album category. And, surprisingly, they appeared on the R.&B. chart—a sign that gospel, Christ and all, might finally cross over. In 1995, Jimmy Iovine, then the chairman of Interscope Records, home of Tupac Shakur and Dr. Dre,



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engineered a partial acquisition of GospoCentric Records, the independent label that had signed Franklin. One of Interscope's talent scouts had brought Franklin to Iovine's attention, and Iovine was enthralled by Franklin's charisma as well as by his commercial potential. He heralded Franklin—who, by now, was heading a new outfit, called God's Property—as gospel music's Bob Marley.

"Stomp," the lead single on Franklin's next album, "God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation," made the Top Forty charts in 1997. Its video, which entered regular rotation on MTV, opens with Franklin, in a white suit and shades, issuing a warning directly to the camera: "For those of you that think that gospel music has gone too far—you think we've gotten too radical with our message. Well, I've got news for you: you ain't heard nothin' yet. And if you don't know, now you know. Glory, glory!" It was a deliberate echo of the Notorious B.I.G.'s introduction to his 1994 hit "Juicy," and served as a kind of mission statement for Franklin's gospel/hip-hop hybrid. Throughout the video, the members of God's Property—dressed, variously, in baggy jeans, shiny athletic gear, and Nike Air Force 1s—dance boisterously, striking poses you'd otherwise expect to see in a night club.

"Lately I've been goin' through some things that's really got me down," the choir sings. "I need someone, somebody to help me come and turn my life around." Beneath the voices is a sample from Parliament-Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove," and this undecurrent of funk, along with Franklin's interjections, keeps the song lively and aloft. Toward the end, Cheryl James—otherwise known as Salt, of the rap duo Salt-N-Pepa—offers a verse. "God's Property" went double platinum, and reached the No. 3 spot on the Billboard 200 chart. Franklin won another Grammy. Iovine's comparison of Franklin to Marley began to seem almost reasonable.

IN AUGUST, I went to see Franklin for a few days in Fort Worth, Texas, where he was born and raised and still lives, with his wife, Tammy, and their children. We spent time with his fam-

ily, talked over meals, and stopped by his old high school. The family attends the Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, a Dallas congregation led by the pastor and radio personality Tony Evans, who has become a mentor and spiritual adviser to Franklin. When we first pulled up to Franklin's house, which is topped by spires and slatted roofs, and set behind a black wrought-iron gate on a secluded street, Franklin turned to me and said, "Now, remember, this is Texas."

On a bright, hot afternoon, we had lunch at a Mediterranean restaurant near his home. We were joined by his manager and closest confidant, Ron Hill, a slim, cerebral guy in his early thirties who went to college in New Orleans and, after getting started in the music scene there, lost nearly everything in Hurricane Katrina. After the storm, he recommitted himself to his faith, then became an intern at Franklin's label, Fo Yo Soul Recordings, a joint venture with RCA created in 2013. He is now its president. The two men engaged in rolling, big-brother, little-brother banter, littered with industry gossip and notes on new albums. The conversation inevitably returned to what they see as the rut that gospel music has fallen into. Why, they ask, can't the genre be as dynamic and unbound as its secular counterparts? And why can't more of its listeners applaud risks like those which Franklin has continued to take?

Franklin has a raspy voice, like a preacher after service, and a slight stutter. He is given to parables and analogies, and he speaks with his entire torso, leaning over and looking you in the eyes to make sure you're still with him. Discussing the business of music, he started many sentences by saying, "See, the problem with my genre . . ." One of the problems, he said, is gospel's dual role as artistic endeavor and as purveyor of religious experience. "They don't come to gospel for the production or for the beats," he said of his audience. "They come because they wanna be ministered to. So sometimes it's, like, Well, if that's all I'm good for, what do I do with all these ideas, and these creative dreams, and growth I want to do as an artist? I

wanna give you Jesus, but I wanna give you Jesus with an 808. I wanna give you Jesus with some strings." Hill nodded in agreement.

As a teen-ager, Franklin spent days on end at a record shop near his high school, looking up the names of the producers who had created the songs he loved. Other musicians, Hill said, "who grew up in church and knew they could sing or whatever, they were just sort of pushed toward gospel music. That's the natural frame of mind—'People in church say I could be bigger, so I'll go into it.' Not 'I wanna pursue this,' not 'I'm gonna spend my time honing my craft, and listening to other music, and growing as an artist.'"

Franklin pulled my audio recorder across the table and said emphatically, "This cat Ron Hill could easily run Apple, he could run Microsoft, he could run Google. He is one step away from something crazy that is going to change the culture."

Franklin's interest in fame and his devotion to the church can both be traced to his early years. Born Kirk Mathis, he was abandoned by his father and his mother by the time he was four years old. He was adopted by a relative, Gertrude Franklin, a pious woman and a widow in her sixties. Her age was alienating for Kirk, as was the fickle presence of his biological mother, who lived close enough to stop by a few times a year and then disappear again. He listened to Top Forty radio constantly, and his talent was obvious from an early age: at eleven, he became the minister of music at his church. When he began to write songs—and started performing them, along with choirs he'd assembled, in churches all over Fort Worth—his first impulse was to meld the secular and the sacred. His first song was a reworking of Elton John's "Bennie and the Jets," called "Jesus Is Coming Back."

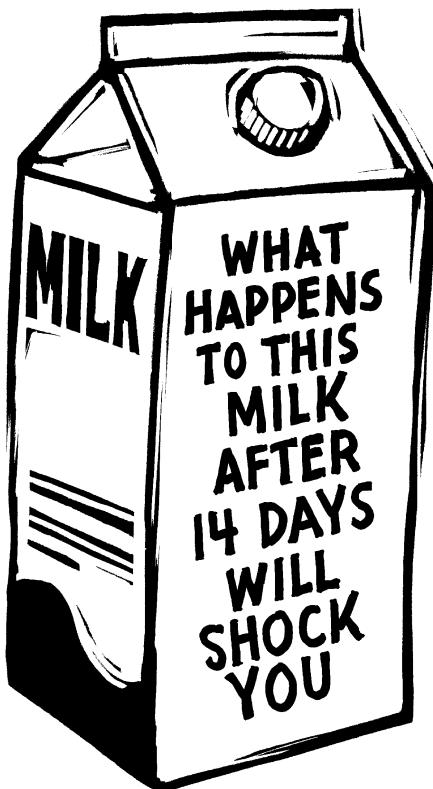
Franklin's career is replete with unlikely collaborations, each reflective of a love for pop tunes: Bono, Mary J. Blige, and R. Kelly have all shared a studio with Franklin. Recently, the collaboration with Kanye West had angered some portion of Franklin's fans, and, at lunch in Fort

Worth, Franklin and Hill were still smarting from that reaction. West grew up in Chicago and was raised in the church; on “Ultralight Beam,” he uses Franklin’s voice as a kind of associative device, meant to ratify his assertion that “The Life of Pablo” is a gospel album. Franklin arranged the choir parts that provide the background for the song’s chorus, and he speaks at the end of the track: “Father, this prayer is for everyone that feels they’re not good enough. This prayer’s for everybody that feels like they’re too messed up—for everyone that feels they’ve said ‘I’m sorry’ too many times. You can never go too far, where you can’t come back home again!”

Even before the song was released, a photograph was posted online of Franklin and West together in a recording studio, and Franklin received a raft of negative Instagram comments. (“Why is Kirk in a picture with Kanye?” one fan asked. “I really hope and pray he is not collaborating with that blasphemous fool!”) After performing the song on “S.N.L.,” Franklin posted a black-and-white photo of himself and West on Instagram. “Kanye is not me,” he wrote in the caption. “I am not him. He is my brother I am proud to do life with.” He added, “To a lot of my Christian family, I’m sorry he’s not good enough, Christian enough, or running at your pace . . . and as I read some of your comments, neither am I. That won’t stop me from running.”

In Fort Worth, Franklin spoke of the constraints he feels as a gospel artist. “If I’m writing and doing music celebrating the Creator, who is the most creative being in the world—I mean when you look at nature and when you look at all of the beautiful created things—why should I be limited in expressing myself? He’s creative, so why shouldn’t my music be creative, too? But everyone in my community, and especially the consumers, they don’t see it that way. Which is weird for me. It makes you feel good when you do a song that, sonically, can fit right next to Drake. But our audience, they don’t care. And it hurts that they don’t care!”

Hill said, “His music may not al-



CLICKBAIT DAIRY

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ways get accepted in the church. But we’re trying to reach the people that don’t know the gospel.”

ONE SIMPLE WAY of understanding the customary path from gospel prominence to mainstream stardom is to listen to two recordings by Sam Cooke, “Wonderful” and “Lovable.” The melodies and song structures are almost identical. They both speak of an otherworldly, all-accepting love; on both tracks, Cooke rests his trademark yodel over classic gospel-quartet chords. But “Wonderful” is about God, and “Lovable,” released one year later, is about a woman, any woman, maybe you. Sam Cooke crossed over.

Acts like Cooke, Solomon Burke, and Aretha Franklin made their way into the hearts of pop audiences by shedding their music’s religious content while retaining its fervor. They left traditional gospel behind and invented, in its place, an entirely new American genre: soul. Other acts held on to the sacred, and some of them were swept into wider fame by the social turmoil of the sixties. Mahalia Jackson soundtracked the civil-rights movement, echoing its overtly religious

appeal. But nobody danced to Mahalia; hers was a moral moment, and the mainstream largely left her there.

Kirk Franklin has held on to the gospel message while moving his sound, and his presentation, in the direction of hip-hop and contemporary R.&B., the genres with an increasingly solid grip on the imagination of America’s youth. Last June, he travelled to Los Angeles for the BET Awards. He’d been nominated for Best Gospel/Inspirational Artist, an award he had won several times. Before the ceremony, he was slated to participate in a public interview, called a BET Genius Talk, hosted by DeVon Franklin, a friend who has worked as a Hollywood executive and is a preacher and motivational speaker. The talk took place at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Backstage, as both Franklins waited to begin, DeVon turned to Kirk and playfully said, “Now, listen, I don’t want the humble Kirk. The people want to hear the *genius* Kirk.” After DeVon went off to greet some friends, Franklin turned to Hill and asked, “The humble thing—am I coming off insincere? That’s just how I am.”

Soon he was rushed onto the stage,

and the crowd hooted and clapped. Prompted by DeVon, he outlined his life, presenting his abandonment and adoption as obstacles faced and, by degrees, overcome. "Sometimes, when you feel like you've hit rock bottom, often you find out that God is the rock at the bottom," he said.

After the event, a young assistant pulled Franklin into a vast ballroom and pointed to a makeshift triangle of black draping, where he could change clothes for the ceremony. "They told me there'd be, like, a little room," he said, smiling. The assistant shrugged and shook her head. Franklin disappeared behind the curtain.

Franklin dislikes awards shows, which remind him of how explicit the celebrity machine's hierarchy can be. Everything from seat assignments to the number of camera flashes that an attendee attracts on the red carpet is meant, in some way, to fix a person in his place. To no one's surprise, Franklin won again that night. He took the stage with his wife, Tammy, and gave a short, slightly nervous speech. Watching from the audience, I wondered what might have happened if, at the commercial and cultural apex of his career, Franklin had rocketed away from music about Jesus and into the heart of secular pop, the way Cooke and Aretha had. You sometimes get the sense, hearing him talk, that he wonders this, too. But, despite his periodic restlessness, leaving was never a serious consideration. Gospel, he told me later, is "closely connected with the dude that I am." His relationship to the genre, he said, was like that of "a married man who sometimes gets frustrated with his marriage." He went on, "You know, he can get frustrated, having arguments and disagreements, and be, like, 'Man, if I was single I wouldn't have to be dealing with this.' But you never get to the point where you're in divorce court or you're talking to an attorney."

Beginning in the late nineties, Franklin's life was roiled by less metaphorical troubles. First, members of God's Property filed a lawsuit against him, claiming that he hadn't paid them sufficiently. (The suit, along with a similar one brought two years later by members of the Family, was resolved

THE FOX

Marine helicopters on maneuver kept dipping toward swells at Black's Beach, my board's poise giving way to freefall of my wave tubing

over me, nubs of wax under my feet as I crouched under the lip, sped across the face and kicked out—all over Southern Cal a haze settled: as if light breathed

that technicolor smog at sunset over San Diego Harbor where battleships at anchor, just back from patrolling the South China Sea, were

having rust scraped off and painted gray.
This was my inheritance that lay stretched before me:
which is when I felt the underbrush give way

and the fox that thrives in my brain,
not looking sly but just at home in his pelt
and subtle paws, broke from cover and ran

across the yard into the future to sniff my gravestone,
piss, and move on. And so I was reborn into
my long nose and ears, my coat's red, white, and brown

giving off my fox smell lying heavy on the winds
in the years when I'd outsmart guns, poison,
dogs and wire, when the rooster and his hens

clucked and ran, crazy with terror
at how everything goes still in that way a fox adores,
gliding through slow-motion drifts of feathers.

—Tom Sleigh

out of court.) A few years later, he and Tammy gave interviews, first in a series of Christian magazines, and finally on the Oprah Winfrey show, in which they divulged that Franklin was addicted to pornography, and that the habit had threatened their marriage.

Franklin says that he has always craved attention and approval, especially from women, and that he became promiscuous in his early teens. He often got involved with—and hung around the homes of—girls whose families were more conventional than his. Eventually, Gertrude kicked him out—rightfully, he says. "I was smoking in the house, sneaking girls in and out to have sex," he said. "She loved me, but I could tell that my adolescence disappointed her. She didn't

know how to lovingly navigate me through it. So I was kind of written off. But I knew that she loved me." It was around this time, Franklin says, that an anonymous benefactor, who had heard about Franklin's musical talents, offered to pay his tuition to a new private high school for the performing arts. There were thirty students in the entire school. For the first time in his life, Franklin was the only black student in his class, surrounded by "white weirdos" who listened to Pink Floyd, and who considered Franklin cool because he was black and knew how to dance. He felt lucky; somehow, he fit in. He was sleeping most nights on couches and in cars. At the end of the school year, he found out that his girlfriend was pregnant. He quit school

for good before his son Kerriion was born.

Gertrude died when Franklin was twenty, and left him her house. He sold it, paid off a few bills, moved into an apartment in nearby Hulen Heights, and began to write the songs that appeared on "Kirk Franklin and the Family."

Franklin speaks of God as if he were in the next room, a shout away. Spurred by what he calls his "mama issues," he has from time to time played the analysand. "I'm a Christian who believes in therapy," he told me. In the aughts, Franklin underwent an artistic metamorphosis that was primarily lyrical: he turned, sharply and compellingly, toward the personal. The result was the creation of a specific, fully realized "I" in his songs, an innovation familiar from blues and pop that had never before wholly crossed into gospel. That character first appears on "Hero," an album released in 2005. "Hero" is Franklin's most autobiographical album, and his best. In "Let It Go," a spoken-word near-rap driven by a moody sample of "Shout," by the band Tears for Fears, Franklin begins, "My mama gave me up when I was four years old/ She didn't destroy my body but she killed my soul.... Ten years old finding love in dirty magazines/ Ms. December you remember I bought you twice/ Now I'm thirty plus and still paying the price." It continues in this autobiographical vein: "Had a sister that I barely knew/ Kind of got separated by the age of two / Same mama different daddy so we couldn't fake it/ I saw my sister's daddy beat her in the tub naked."

Another song, "Imagine Me," a wistful ballad held together by a soft, vaguely martial snare, a bright acoustic guitar, and a sweetly repetitive piano riff, pulls a neat psychological trick: instead of telling the customary gospel story of absolute, transformational change, the narrator presents the act of even imagining an uninhibited relationship with God as a kind of breakthrough. "Imagine me," the chorus begins, in a tender unison that sometimes sprouts into harmony, "being free, trusting you totally/ Finally I can imagine me./ I admit it was hard to see/ You being in love with someone like me/

But finally I can imagine me." Just before the song's closing crescendo, Franklin begins to speak directly to the listener. "This song is dedicated to people like me," he says. "Those that struggle with insecurity, acceptance, and even self-esteem. You never felt good enough; you never felt pretty enough."

Franklin talks about the change in his work directionally: he had started out writing, like much of the gospel industry, "vertically," man to God—"You know, 'God, we praise you!,' all of that, which is beautiful"—but now he wrote "horizontally," person to person, hoping that the particulars of his life would strike a universal chord in both believers and unbelievers.

"It's still very much a genre that wants these vertical songs," Franklin said. "But I want to write about the God that I live with, not just the God that I love. Because the God that I live with sees me having doubts with him, and being afraid of him, and being mad at him, and saying sorry, and making up." "Hero" briefly charted on the Billboard 200. It is the last of his albums to go platinum.

IN AN INTERVIEW last year on NPR, Franklin said, "My job on earth, the reason why Kirk is created, is to make God famous. I just want God to be well known." God does not seem to lack for name recognition, but the renown that Franklin has in mind is a kind of cultural capital, or, as he explained it to me, "a seat at the table of culture." Secularists sometimes fear that theocracy is right around the corner, but in America God remains uncool.

"Christianity, and the framework of religion, makes us a subculture," Franklin said. "But there's a whole other world going on—technology, and science, and racism, and economics, and capitalism, and all of these things happening, but we have this bubble. And the problem is that when people leave this bubble they have to go into the world to work, and to raise their kids, and to find a spouse, to pay taxes. So why wouldn't you take what you learn

in the bubble and affect the world? You can't do that if you only know the bubble."

Escaping this provincialism is the theme of Franklin's most recent album, "Losing My Religion," which was released late in 2015 and was just nominated for a Grammy. The title was instantly and predictably provocative: Franklin's fan base wondered if he planned to depart from Christian doctrine. He didn't. "I just wanna have deeper conversations that intellectually challenge us, to make sure that we're growing the right way," Franklin said. "I wanna make sure that we're not just being cultural Christians, just 'cause we're black. Or because we're American. I want to talk about weighty stuff." The "20 Years" billing of the recent tour was partly a way to wrap these "deeper conversations"—about the church's efficacy in an increasingly secular world—into the context of Franklin's entire career. "I wanted them to know that I'm still their boy," he said, referring to the fans who have stuck with him through the years.

Assurances notwithstanding, "Losing My Religion" is an open rebuke to the stuffier, more conservative corners of the church. "Religion is a prison but truth sets us free," Franklin says on the album's opening track, an a-cappella spoken-word piece. He continues, "Terror, famine, disease / Millions in poverty / Hungry, can't sleep / With all of this religion, why these babies can't eat?"

Franklin blames church-world cloistering, in part, for Donald Trump's success among conservative evangelicals. Trump, he thinks, offered churches—often courted by mainstream Republicans as a source of votes, and then all but ignored—a highway back to cultural prominence. "To see the evangelical community be so desperate for relevancy, that really breaks my heart," he said. "You know what that means to me, also? There have been decades where you didn't do good work. Decades where you didn't lay down a good framework where the culture saw you as not only passionate about the rich but passionate about the poor." Shortly



after the election, Franklin published an essay on the Huffington Post, titled “Dear Fellow Christians . . .” He walks a tightrope in the letter, declining to praise or condemn either candidate. Instead, he expresses consternation toward his co-religionists. “My shock is in the worst I’ve seen in those that claim to believe like I do,” Franklin writes. “While we fight and argue about abortion and sexual orientation, we apparently forgot one of the greatest sins that God continuously acknowledges He hates: PRIDE.”

The political realm is thorny for a figure like Franklin, whose audience is largely culturally conservative and drawn to a positive, uplifting message. Today, in contrast to the sixties, much social-activist energy comes from secular sources. Some black religious leaders from more liberal traditions have aligned themselves almost totally with progressive politics, even on issues like homosexuality. Franklin is not quite so free, though he occasionally skirts the edges of orthodoxy. During an interview on “Sway in the Morning,” a popular radio show on Sirius XM, he addressed the matter of same-sex relationships. “As Christians, as the church, we’ve come off like the police,” he said. “What I always wanna say, man, is I’m sorry for all of the ugly things and all of the painful things that people have even heard from church people. Because things can come from a very homophobic lens—sometimes it feels very homophobic when people are trying to make their stance or their beliefs.”

Life in the bubble won’t do for a crossover artist like Franklin, who approaches his visits to churches and hip-hop radio shows with equal ardor. He has souls to win, seats to fill.

THE FIRST LEG of the “20 Years in One Night” tour ran mainly through big cities, and was organized and promoted by the entertainment behemoth Live Nation. The crowds were so large that Franklin and his team organized a second leg on their own, through smaller markets—Tulsa, Savannah, Clearwater—where they were at the mercy of independent promoters. I joined him at the ivy-clad Main Street Armory, in Rochester,

New York. He stood in the Armory’s gravel alleyway, wearing the same black-and-white outfit that I’d seen in Brooklyn. His background singers, mostly women, hung around him in a loose, laughing cluster, and the band, all male, stood a ways off. The sun was beginning to set, making soft shapes on the musicians’ horns.

“All right, let’s pray it up,” Franklin said to the group.

The huddle tightened.

“If the light shining on you,” Franklin said.

“Is brighter than the light shining in you,” the rest replied.

“Then the light shining on you”—
“will destroy you.”

After the prayer, we could hear the squalls of an opening act—one of an exasperating five, none of which Franklin had been involved in choosing. “There’s no support system,” he said as he stretched, hoisting first one leg, then the other, almost level with his head, against a brick wall. “It’s almost like when women started doing their hair natural. The style was always perms, but then somebody said, ‘You know what?’ Here he slipped into a head-snapping, wrist-flipping impression. “I’m start getting my hair natural.’ And then their girlfriends were, like, ‘Yeah, girl, let’s go natural!’ So they all went natural, but the beauty shops didn’t know. They still had all these chemicals and stuff, and girls showed up, like, ‘Do me natural,’ and the shops were, like, ‘Huh?’ ’Cause they’re still used to the perm.”

Promoters didn’t understand that you couldn’t sell tickets to a big gospel show the way you would for a Rihanna tour, he said. “You gotta go to the churches, you gotta include the churches, churches gotta know you, you gotta become a partner.”

After one of the recent concerts, he said, a promoter told him that he was three thousand dollars short of the fee he owed Franklin. “You wouldn’t do that to John Legend,” Franklin said, clearly still upset. “You wouldn’t do that to Jill Scott or Erykah Badu. So what do you think of me and my genre, that it’s so country and so backward that you can do that to me?” He found the whole experience discouraging. “You mean after twenty years I’m still

having a promoter come up to me and tell me he doesn’t have three thousand dollars? That’ll make you want to go home. My community’s still doing that? I’m done.”

Toward the end of the show in Rochester, Franklin hopped off the stage and waded into the crowd. He offered the microphone to maybe a dozen people in turn and asked, “What’s your favorite Kirk song?” Each of them beamed and answered the question.

Returning to the stage, he didn’t hop quite high enough, and for a second he was stuck, with his torso on-stage and his legs wiggling. After a few moments of struggle, he worked himself up and onto the stage, and stood shaking his head and scratching his brow. An embarrassed smile passed across his face. He started to laugh, and the crowd laughed along. Later, on board his tour bus, he was still good-naturedly embarrassed. “Ha!” he barked. “Please include me getting stuck,” he said, pointing to my recorder. “I have more ambition than I do physical capacity.” He had changed into sweats and bobbed like a wrestler atop the bus’s couch. In a few hours, he would take off for the tour’s final show, in Baltimore. He didn’t look much more tired than he had before the show. “Like, if you wanted to go eat, I could go eat,” he said. “You want to go maybe see your peoples? We could go see your peoples. Can I do a whole ‘nother concert? Probably not.”

Also aboard were two women, a reporter from Rochester’s weekly black newspaper and a friend of hers. The reporter wanted a photo. Franklin obliged, but not without extracting some market research.

“So was this a good turnout for Rochester?”

The women laughed.

“No, no, really,” he said, raising his eyebrows. He’d seen a scattering of empty white folding chairs throughout the Armory. “Was it a good turnout?”

They assured him that it was. Almost nobody big comes through Rochester, they said, and even fewer get a crowd like this.

Franklin gestured toward his road assistant. “One of y’all has to go see how many people came out,” he said. ♦

TOSSING AND TURNING

BY CALVIN TRILLIN



SINCE THE ELECTION, I sometimes wake up at three or four in the morning, disturbed by dark thoughts, and when that happens I try my best to think of the surprising amount of shrimp consumed in Las Vegas every day. We all have our own way of dealing with this thing.

My way is what might be called replacement denial. In order to avoid dwelling on a depressing or disturbing subject—the sort of subject that can keep you from falling back asleep—you concentrate on a subject that is so engrossing that it can drive the depressing subject from your mind. Concentrating on shrimp consumption in Las Vegas is not my first attempt at replacement denial. On previous nights, for instance, I'd done my best to contemplate the ramifications of a similarly surprising fact: the largest state east of the Mississippi, in land area, is Georgia.

Diverting ramifications were not forthcoming. All I could think of was that people who are asked to name the largest state east of the Mississippi tend to say that it's Pennsylvania or Florida—both states won by the man I was trying to put out of my mind. After that, I tried to make do with the fact that Edna St. Vincent Millay's middle name is not an old family name, as people tend to assume; she was named for St. Vincent's Hospital, in Greenwich

Village. But that staved off the depressing subject for only a moment or two, as I searched my mind for other poets with buildings in their names. I tried out, unsuccessfully, a few more geographical surprises, such as the fact that the second most populous city in Illinois is Aurora. Then I settled on shrimp consumption in Las Vegas.

I had acquired my knowledge of Las Vegas shrimp consumption from one of those interstitial statements that "PBS NewsHour" flashes on the screen to give viewers a sort of bonus fact about the segment they've just seen. What had flashed on the screen, after a segment that took place in Las Vegas but had nothing to do with shrimp, was this: "60,000 pounds of shrimp are consumed per day in Las Vegas, more than the rest of the country combined."

On the first night I put that fact to use, I'd awakened at about 4 A.M., thinking, Could it really be that American children are going to be raised to look up to a coarse blowhard who has boasted about assaulting women?

"According to no less a source than PBS," I replied to myself, "Las Vegas consumes more shrimp every day than the rest of the country combined."

There was a slight delay. Was it working? Not yet, because this thought came into my mind: His appointments so far—people who are opposed to the

mission of the departments they're supposed to lead—seem to indicate an attempt to find a fox for every henhouse.

I countered with: "Where did that figure, sixty thousand pounds of shrimp, come from? It was confirmed, in an Internetish sort of way, by some sites with names like Fun Facts About Las Vegas."

Had I chased away the depressing thoughts? Not quite. I could still envision him as President, giving out the Medal of Freedom to some beloved old television star. Instead of a few graceful remarks of the sort we came to expect on such occasions from, say, Obama or Reagan, he's boasting that the ratings of the star's show were nothing compared with the ratings of "The Apprentice," which, he explains at length, was shafted by the Emmy Awards because the Emmy Awards are definitely rigged.

I was ready for that. "Saying that more shrimp is consumed in Las Vegas than in the rest of the country is not like saying that more toasted ravioli is consumed in St. Louis than in the rest of the country," I said to myself. "St. Louis is about the only place where people actually eat toasted ravioli, so that would make sense. But think of all the shrimp consumed in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Aurora."

But imagining that Medal of Freedom ceremony had started something. Now I could envision a state dinner for the President of France, during which, in the room where the cellist Pablo Casals played so memorably for the Kennedys, the guests are being entertained by a tag-team exhibition from World Wrestling Entertainment.

"And consider the shells," I said to myself, even before the thump of huge men hitting the canvas faded. "There must be mountains of shrimp shells, piled on the desert like slag heaps in a played-out coal county. Let's say that there are thirty or so shrimp to a pound. That means peeling two million shrimp every day." I could envision the shrimp-peelers, probably paid by the shell, peeling and counting: "One million four hundred and eighty-six thousand five hundred and eleven . . . one million four hundred and eighty-six thousand five hundred and twelve . . ." Long before they got to two million, I was asleep. ♦

TOTAL RETURN

What happened when the feds went after a hedge-fund legend.

BY SHEELAH KOLHATKAR



Government officials spent years investigating Steven Cohen's financial empire.

ONE DAY IN early 2013, Preet Bharara, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, met with his deputy, Richard Zabel, about one of the biggest cases of his career—a crackdown on insider trading in the hedge-fund industry. Although the financial crisis had receded, popular rage against Wall Street bankers and traders was still strong; most Americans had seen their incomes stagnate while the fortunes of the wealthiest continued to swell. For the previous few years, Bharara and the prosecutors who worked under him at the Southern District, along with investigators at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Securities and Exchange Commission, had been studying phone logs,

wiretapping traders' calls, and flipping witnesses, one after the other, as they worked their way deep into some of Wall Street's most profitable hedge funds. Bharara was now considering a criminal indictment of Steven A. Cohen, the founder of a fourteen-billion-dollar hedge fund called S.A.C. Capital Advisors.

Cohen was a captivating figure on Wall Street. He was not the sort of investor who, like Warren Buffett, took a large stake in a company and held it for years, immersing himself in how the business worked. He was a short-term speculator, who had built a vast personal fortune by placing high-volume bets on small movements in stock prices; he was often driven by earnings an-

nouncements and other such events, and maintained high returns, against the odds, year after year. He was short and thick, had a fierce mind and a quick temper, and he lived in a thirty-five-thousand-square-foot mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut. A passionate art collector, he would spend a hundred million dollars or more on a single work.

Zabel and Bharara had had multiple conversations about the case, and the time had come to decide how they were going to proceed. The two men were often in agreement about how to approach their cases—Bharara has called Zabel “my consigliere and my closest friend”—but Bharara relied on him especially for his insight into white-collar opponents and their highly compensated defense lawyers. In fact, Zabel had more in common with rich Wall Street defendants than he did with Bharara.

Bharara, the son of a pediatrician, immigrated to the United States from India as a young child, grew up in New Jersey, and moved swiftly through Harvard, Columbia Law School, and, eventually, into the office of Senator Charles Schumer, of New York, where he spent four years as chief legal counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee. For Zabel, by contrast, the hedge-fund industry was native ground: his father was a founder of Schulte, Roth & Zabel, an immensely successful law firm that served hedge-fund clients. Many on Wall Street saw Zabel as one of them. One prominent fund manager, whose company had been investigated by the U.S. Attorney's Office, recalled many bitterly competitive rounds of squash with Zabel, and was convinced that they had led to ill will between them. Like others in the hedge-fund world, he felt that his industry was being unfairly persecuted by government officials who were overly aggressive in advancing their cases.

Bharara, having amassed dozens of guilty pleas and convictions for insider trading, had come to enjoy the feeling of winning, and was not inclined to file ambitious cases unless he was confident of victory. He had just brought insider-trading charges against two S.A.C. employees: Michael Steinberg, a high-level portfolio manager who was

close to Cohen, and Mathew Martoma, a former portfolio manager, who had made enormously profitable trades in two pharmaceutical companies, Elan and Wyeth, before Cohen fired him, in 2010. In both cases, it appeared to Bharara and his colleagues that Cohen had made money trading stocks on the basis of inside information that Steinberg and Martoma provided.

Bharara had to decide if his office was going to bring criminal charges against Cohen as well. Putting a legendary hedge-fund manager behind bars would send a strong message to the industry, and show the public that the Justice Department could take on one of the most powerful men in finance. Yet mounting a trial against such a prominent defendant, who had billions to spend on his defense, was daunting. It would be helpful to have an idea of what the prosecutors were up against.

It was not uncommon for prosecutors to meet with the attorneys of a prospective defendant, giving them a chance to present their side and try to talk the prosecution out of filing a case. Now Bharara and Zabel agreed that it was time to bring Cohen's lawyers in and hear what they had to say.

THE EIGHTH-FLOOR conference room at 1 St. Andrew's Plaza, the home of the Manhattan U.S. Attorney's Office, is the largest one in the building. But even its ample capacities were tested on the morning of April 25, 2013, when men and women in dark suits began streaming in for the meeting between prosecutors and Steven Cohen's lawyers. Bharara did not attend, but Zabel did, and he took a seat at the center of the "government" side of the long table. On either side of him were federal prosecutors, the securities-unit chiefs, the head of the asset-forfeiture unit, and the leader of the office's criminal division, along with several F.B.I. agents and S.E.C. lawyers. Someone had to get extra chairs from down the hall.

On the other side of the table sat Cohen's main defense attorney, Martin Klotz, looking slightly dishevelled. Klotz, who was the senior counsel at Willkie, Farr & Gallagher, had been Cohen's, and S.A.C.'s, outside legal adviser for more than a decade. He had

also spent time as a prosecutor, in the late nineteen-eighties, had a Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale, and was known for his courtly demeanor and his reluctance to raise his voice. He was accompanied by a colleague from his firm and three partners from Paul, Weiss. Theodore Wells, a star trial lawyer at Paul, Weiss, was also in attendance. He didn't speak, but the implication was clear: if this case reached a courtroom, Wells, whose closing statements were so powerful that he sometimes brought himself to tears, would be the government's adversary.

Klotz led the presentation. He and Cohen's other attorneys came prepared to target the prosecutors' fear of losing a big case. Every member of the defense bar knew that the government's calculations were based at least in part on risk assessment and vanity. The aim was to get the prosecutors to think hard about what it would be like to suffer a humiliating defeat at trial.

A Willkie associate distributed a black binder to everyone in the room. Klotz looked out at the crowd of faces. "Thank you all for giving us this time to come and talk to you today," he said.

The government's case relied on an e-mail that Michael Steinberg had received from his analyst, Jon Horvath, who was now coöperating with the prosecutors. Horvath had obtained inside information about the computer-manufacturing company Dell from a friend at another hedge fund, and had shared it with Steinberg. (Horvath pleaded guilty to insider trading in 2012, but charges against him were dropped before sentencing, in 2015.) The source predicted that Dell would miss the estimates most investors were expecting. "I have a 2nd hand read from someone at the company—this is 3rd quarter I have gotten this read from them and it has been very good in the last two quarters," Horvath wrote on August 26, 2008, two days before Dell publicly announced its quarterly earnings. To a layperson, it wouldn't have made much sense, but to sophisticated Wall Street traders it meant that the information about Dell's as yet nonpublic earnings had come from someone inside the company who had provided valuable information in the past. The e-mail was forwarded to another portfolio manager

at S.A.C., and, eventually, to Cohen. Shortly afterward, Cohen began selling all five hundred thousand of his Dell shares. On August 28th, Dell made its earnings announcement: it had indeed missed the estimates, and its stock fell. Cohen avoided a loss of \$1.7 million.

Klotz focussed on whether Cohen could be convicted of insider trading on the basis of the "2nd hand read" e-mail. He made a three-part argument: that it was highly unlikely Cohen had read the e-mail; that even if he had read it he didn't necessarily trade on the basis of it; and that, even if he had made a trade based on it, this didn't necessarily constitute insider trading, because Cohen knew so little about the original source of the tip, and the e-mail didn't indicate that its contents were nonpublic.

"There is no evidence that Steve read the '2nd hand read' e-mail or that he spoke to anyone about the e-mail," Klotz went on. "There isn't a single witness who would testify that they discussed the e-mail with Steve." He added, "Steve only reads a very small percentage of his e-mails."

Opening his binder, Klotz flipped to a screen shot of Cohen's e-mail inbox. Cohen had spam filters that diverted junk messages from his correspondence, but he still received almost a thousand e-mails every business day. According to Cohen's legal team, he looked at just eleven per cent of them, and at only about twenty-one per cent of the e-mails from the research trader who had forwarded the "2nd hand read" e-mail. Klotz's screen shot included a message about scheduling a golf game and dinner; research reports from various brokerage firms about oil prices and geopolitics; and a report on the Federal Reserve minutes.

Halfway down, the message from Horvath—"FW: DELL," in bold type—was clearly visible. The government lawyers tried not to chuckle at the Amazon message directly above it—"Up to 60% Off Art Magazines." Apparently, the spam filters didn't always work.

Klotz pointed out that Cohen's desk had seven monitors on it. His Microsoft Outlook messages appeared on the far-left one, behind multiple other screens, further increasing the likelihood

that he never saw the Dell message. He would have had to “turn to the far left of his seven screens, minimize one or two computer programs, scroll down his e-mails, double-click into the ‘2nd hand read’ e-mail to open it, read down three chains of forwards to read the ‘2nd hand read’ e-mail, before issuing an order to sell shares of Dell.” And all of this would have taken place in less than half a minute.

Klotz was essentially saying that Cohen, the most successful trader of his generation, was winging it every day. Maybe he read a critical e-mail; maybe he didn’t. Who knew? Cohen lived in a swamp of information so deep that there was no way to prove that any particular e-mail was read, let alone acted upon. There was no method to what he did; it was all improvisation.

Most of the government investigators in the room balked at this notion. They had been studying Cohen for years and understood him to be a rapacious consumer of information about his stocks. They believed that S.A.C. had been structured to insure that Cohen, a notoriously demanding boss, had access to every bit of trading data that was gathered by his portfolio managers and their teams. The suggestion that he ignored eighty per cent of the messages from his own research trader, whose job was to alert him to critical market information, struck them as absurd.

Still, as a glimpse into Cohen’s potential defense arguments, it was unnerving. Klotz reminded everyone of the convoluted journey the “2nd hand read” e-mail had taken before being sent to Cohen. “Steve does not remember reading it,” Klotz said. “He may not have read it.”

KLOTZ THEN STARTED attacking the legal underpinnings of the Dell case. The information had been passed from a Dell investor-relations employee to an analyst at an investment fund and then to an analyst at another fund before reaching Horvath, whereupon it went to Steinberg, then to another portfolio manager, then to Cohen’s research trader, and, finally, to Cohen. Klotz and his colleagues believed that Cohen was too far from the original

source of the information, and too ignorant of the circumstances, to be criminally liable for any securities fraud.

“A number of people I’ve spoken to say that isn’t a legitimate extension of insider trading,” Klotz said.

“Are any of these people federal judges?” Zabel asked. He, like his colleagues, felt confident about his interpretation of the events. “Give me a break.”

Zabel understood how hedge-fund



people operated, and he wasn’t afraid to express his cynicism about their motives. But, where his bluntness would normally have prompted laughter, there was only awkward silence. The government attorneys knew that Cohen’s distance from the Dell leak was a serious weakness.

Then, there was the Mathew Martoma case: the former S.A.C. portfolio manager had an inside source—a doctor who helped supervise drug trials for the Elan Corporation—and investigators had established that Martoma made a phone call to Cohen shortly before Cohen gave orders to sell the stock. But Klotz observed that, before the selloff, Elan had risen from nineteen dollars to more than thirty, and that several analysts had issued reports arguing that the stock had peaked. It made sense for Cohen to sell his shares. In Klotz’s telling, Martoma had told Cohen that he was “no longer comfortable” being long in the stock. Given that S.A.C. had an unrealized profit of around eighty million dollars, selling was simply the prudent thing to do.

When Klotz finished, Zabel shook his head. “I’m sorry, I just don’t buy it,” he said. Klotz’s points involved few positive assertions. Cohen *may* not have read the e-mail. He *may* not have had time to react to it. It was a bit like saying, “I might have been in the bank, and I might have had a mask, and I might

have had a gun, but that doesn’t mean I robbed the bank.”

Still, Cohen had been notably discreet. The government had subpoenaed his e-mails, his phone records, and his instant-message logs; prosecutors and F.B.I. agents had studied his communications patterns and his trades in detail. They had even placed a wiretap on his phone. They wanted to find, say, Cohen thanking Steinberg or Martoma or someone else for sharing his valuable inside information—some piece of evidence that would prove that Cohen knew the information was dirty before he traded on it. Nothing like that had turned up, and, having scrutinized Cohen and his background, the prosecutors had an inkling about why.

ONE MORNING IN December, 1985, Cohen, a twenty-nine-year-old trader at Gruntal & Company, a small New York brokerage firm, spoke on the phone to his brother Donald. The two often talked about stocks, and on this day Cohen had a recommendation to pass along: he suggested that his brother buy shares of RCA, the parent of NBC. “I believe there might be a restructuring going on,” Cohen told him, according to testimony that Donald gave later to the S.E.C. “These TV stocks were pretty hot,” Donald recalled him saying. “If NBC was spun off, it could run up about twenty points.”

After studying RCA’s stock chart over the weekend and looking through a few back issues of *Forbes*, Donald bought twenty March call options in his personal trading account at Fidelity. This gave him the right to buy RCA shares, three months later, at fifty dollars, an aggressive bet that the stock price was going to increase. According to Donald’s testimony, Cohen had made a similar investment in his own account.

Cohen had grown up in Great Neck, the third of eight children. His father ran a garment firm, and his mother gave piano lessons. According to people who were close to Cohen then, he knew from an early age that he didn’t want a version of his family’s middle-class life, and was intensely driven to make money. He attended the Wharton School and joined Gruntal shortly after graduating, in 1978. On his first

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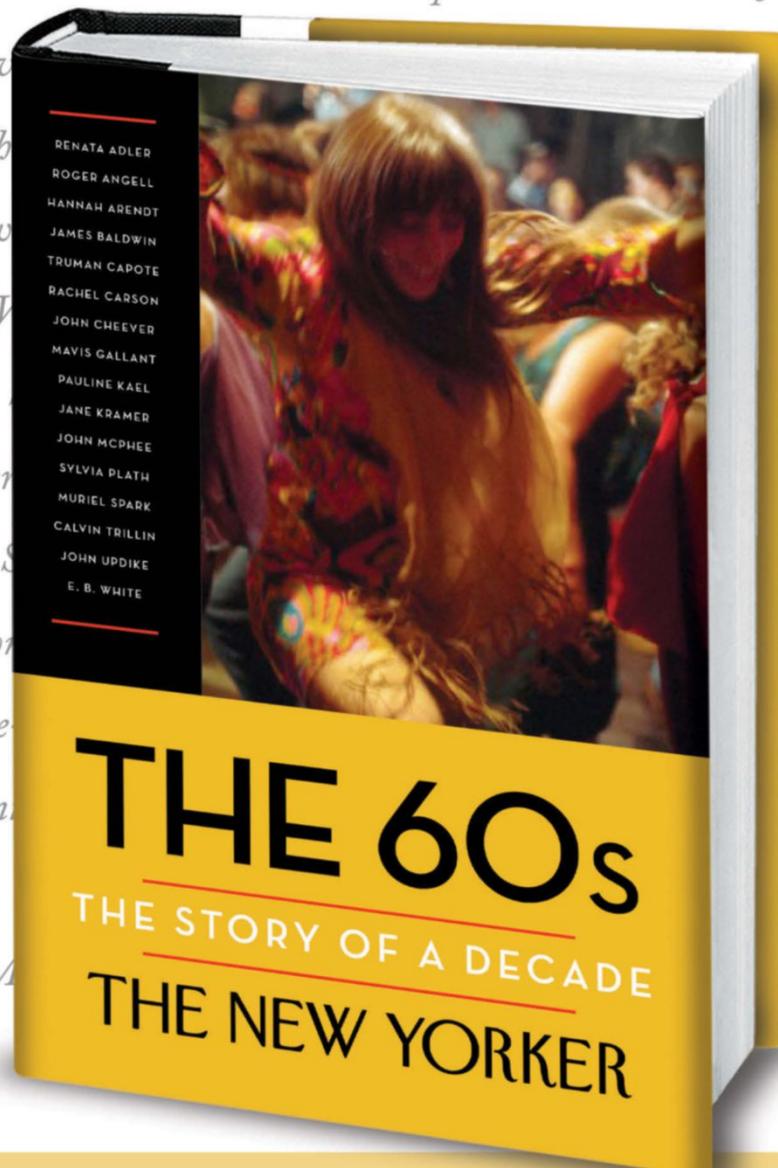
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day there, Cohen made eight thousand dollars trading, a significant profit at the time. He wasn't a math wizard, had no deep knowledge of global economies, and didn't rely on a unique investing philosophy. He was simply a great trader. "I knew he was going to be famous within a week," his boss at Gruntal said. "I never saw talent like that." Seven years later, he was running his own division.

The movement of RCA's stock looked like the skyline of the Andes, a series of dramatic spikes as investors kept buying more shares in response to takeover rumors. Cohen's first wife, Patricia, later said in court filings that he'd been telling people that a Wharton classmate had mentioned an impending takeover offer for the company. Five days after Cohen's conversation with his brother, General Electric announced a takeover of the broadcaster, for \$66.50 a share, which sent RCA's stock price shooting up. Cohen made twenty million dollars on the trade, according to a lawsuit that Patricia later filed against him.

Four months later, an S.E.C. subpoena arrived at the office of Gruntal's legal counsel. The agency had launched an investigation of possible insider trading in RCA before the takeover, and wanted Cohen to testify.

The S.E.C. was looking at other

stocks, too—Warner Communications, General Foods, and Union Carbide. It was a violation of securities law to trade on material, nonpublic information that was leaked by an insider who was supposed to keep it confidential. According to the agency's investigation, a group of people had accumulated shares of all four stocks right before public announcements drove the prices higher. The agency suspected an insider-trading ring.

Donald got a subpoena, too. He called Steven, who reassured him. "Everyone that bought RCA at the time was being questioned," Donald recalled him saying, in his testimony.

Privately, though, Cohen was stressed, according to court documents filed by Patricia. Around the same time, Dennis Levine—a top mergers-and-acquisitions banker at Drexel Burnham Lambert, the firm where the junk-bond financier Michael Milken worked—was arrested and charged with orchestrating an immense insider-trading scheme. The arrest was just the beginning of a series of securities-fraud prosecutions—run by Rudolph Giuliani, then the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York—that dominated news headlines for months. The S.E.C. accused Levine of accumulating \$12.6 million in illegal profits and froze his assets.

Around 6 P.M. on June 5, 1986—the same day that Levine pleaded guilty to tax evasion, securities fraud, and perjury and agreed to become a government witness—Cohen arrived at 26 Federal Plaza, at Broadway and Worth Street. He was about to be deposed in the RCA investigation. Gruntal had arranged for Cohen to be represented by Otto Obermaier, a former head trial lawyer for the S.E.C. Obermaier was one of the most talented and well-connected defense attorneys in the field, and he was about to validate his reputation.

An S.E.C. staff attorney and a financial analyst who evaluated trading data for the agency's enforcement division greeted Cohen and Obermaier, and the formal proceedings began. "This is an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission entitled 'In the matter of trading in the securities of RCA Corporation,'" the staff attorney said. Cohen then raised his right hand and was sworn in. "Have you seen the subpoena?" the staff attorney asked Cohen.

"He has," Cohen said, referring to Obermaier.

The staff attorney looked at Obermaier, then turned to Cohen again. "Have you seen the subpoena?"

"I don't think so," Obermaier said, answering for Cohen. "It hasn't been shown to him."

The agency had sent a separate subpoena to Cohen requesting trading records and other documents as part of its investigation. The staff attorney mentioned this and then asked Cohen, "Do you plan to produce any documents today?"

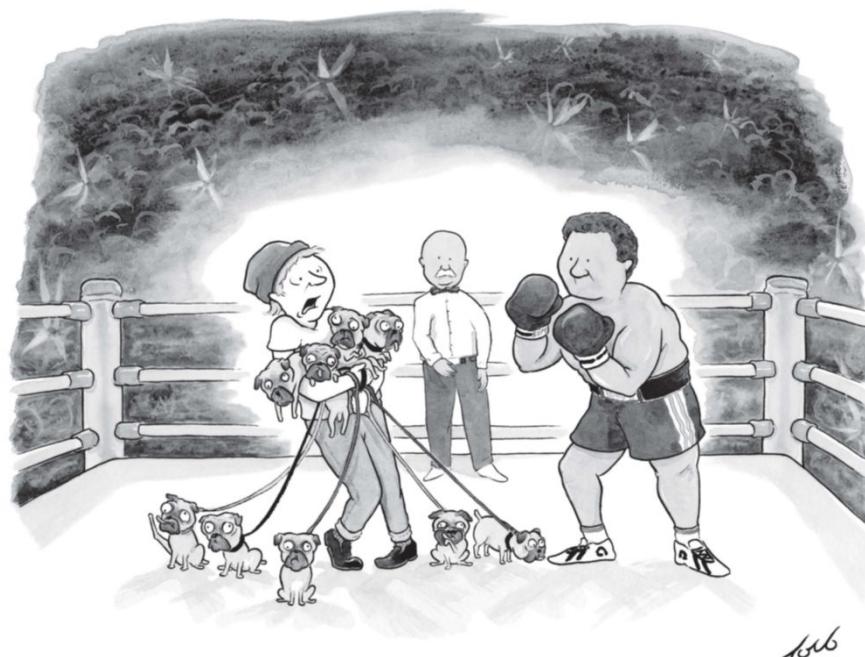
"No," Obermaier said, again on Cohen's behalf. Obermaier said that they would "decline the invitation to produce documents," on the basis of his client's constitutional rights.

"Which constitutional right is that?" the staff attorney asked.

"The provision that no person shall be compelled to be a witness against himself," Obermaier said.

"That's his Fifth Amendment right," the staff attorney said, trying to insist that Cohen answer the question about the documents himself.

During depositions, there was usually some wrangling over this point.



"I misunderstood the term pugilism!"

The S.E.C.'s preference was always to get a witness to admit, on the record, that he was "taking the Fifth" when he was refusing to answer questions; it could be used later as an inference of guilt. If you were innocent, the thinking went, why wouldn't you use the opportunity to tell the S.E.C. all about it? White-collar defense attorneys were well aware of this, of course, so their job was to keep the client from saying that he was "taking the Fifth," even when he was taking the Fifth, for precisely the same reason. It was standard legal maneuvering.

"He has to assert personally his right not to produce documents under the Fifth Amendment," the S.E.C. staff attorney said, trying again.

"I don't think he does," Obermaier replied. "I'm responding as his lawyer."

"What is your date and place of birth?" the staff attorney asked Cohen.

"Upon the advice of counsel," Cohen said, "I respectfully decline to answer the question on the ground that I'm being compelled to be a witness against myself."

"Did you purchase securities on behalf of Gruntal & Company in December of 1985 while in possession of nonpublic information concerning RCA?"

"Same response," Cohen said.

The staff attorney asked more questions: Did Cohen purchase RCA shares in his own account in December, 1985? Did anyone tell him that RCA would be involved in a merger with General Electric before the public announcement? Did Cohen, in December, 1985, recommend that anyone else buy RCA shares? Each time, Cohen repeated the same answer, taking the Fifth without saying that he was taking the Fifth.

The testimony was over in twenty minutes. Riding the elevator back down to the lobby, Obermaier felt that it wasn't a major event. Cohen, though, worried that he was at risk of losing his livelihood.

"I'm just a stock trader and I happen to have been trading in these stocks," Cohen complained to a friend on the golf course, according to the friend's later testimony. "It's creating a lot of problems for my family, my children, and my personal life."

Much to Cohen's surprise, though, the investigation seemed to go quiet during the months after he testified—or, rather, refused to testify. Cohen was never charged or sanctioned in the case. Taking the Fifth, Cohen learned, could take all the momentum out of a securities investigation.

AFTER KLOTZ LEFT and the meeting concluded, Zabel tried to summarize the salient points of Cohen's defense for Bharara, distilling his impressions before sharing them with the larger team of prosecutors working on the case. Zabel explained that Klotz's basic argument—which could be reduced to "Cohen probably didn't read his e-mail"—was weak. The picture of Cohen as a hands-off investor who didn't care what his other traders were doing defied belief. "It's just inconceivable that they didn't explore their position, with that much money flying around," Zabel told the team. "It just isn't credible."

The insider-trading investigation had been an enormous investment of time and resources—at the expense of other financial-fraud cases that could have been pursued, in the opinion of some critics—and people were now waiting to see whether Bharara would indict Steven Cohen. If Cohen went to jail, it would be one of the most significant Wall Street prosecutions in history, possibly bigger even than Giuliani's case against Milken. It would prove that the new billionaires who dominated America's economic and political life were not above the law. But the government was running up against the statute of limitations. A decision had to be made quickly.

A few weeks earlier, Bharara had asked his team to prepare a detailed memo outlining all the evidence that the government had against Cohen. Two prosecutors, Antonia Apps and Arlo Devlin-Brown, had spent a week putting it together. In addition to describing the Dell and Elan cases, the memo contained many other examples of Cohen receiving what seemed to be inside information from his traders and analysts; some had told the F.B.I. that they regarded it as part of their job. Yet nothing definitively proved that Cohen knowingly traded

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on inside information. Martoma and Steinberg were pleading innocent and fighting their indictments; no witness would testify that he had given Cohen inside information and that Cohen knew it.

In the room with Klotz, Zabel and his colleagues had felt confident. But now, looking through the memo, and reviewing what Cohen's defense arguments seemed likely to be, they felt their confidence waning. Resignation was setting in. They knew that they had to assess the evidence coldly. They looked again at what they had, and what they had, they saw, wasn't enough to insure a victory. Klotz's defense was patchy, tenuous, and rooted largely in speculation, but it could be enough to withstand the government's meagre evidence. And Cohen, like most powerful Wall Street defendants, was unlikely to testify. The time and energy prosecutors would have to spend trying the case, the years of appeals and arguments, all under close public scrutiny, would be excruciating. If it resulted in failure, the entire narrative of Bharara's tenure would change.

Bharara and his colleagues could still take action, though. Legally, when any employee acting within the scope of his employment committed a crime, that crime could be attributed to the company he worked for. Steinberg and Martoma had been charged with insider trading, and six others from S.A.C. had pleaded guilty. (U.S. prosecutors withdrew the charges against Steinberg in 2015.) Bharara and Zabel analyzed the evidence in light of the principles of corporate prosecution that appear in the U.S. Attorney's manual, and agreed that there was easily enough to meet the requirements. They decided to indict S.A.C. Capital, and not Cohen himself. It wasn't what many in the office had hoped for, but it seemed a respectable fallback.

ON THE MORNING of July 25th, an alert went out from the U.S. Attorney's Office to members of the news media: "1 P.M.—A press conference will be held on a securities fraud matter." Bharara was ready to unveil his indictment of S.A.C. Capital Advisors, with all the pageantry of a major announcement. Around lunchtime, cam-

era crews started setting up tripods along the back wall of the ground-floor atrium at 1 St. Andrew's Plaza. The room grew so crowded that people had to stand in the aisles. At 12:59 P.M., Bharara stepped out from behind a dark curtain and stood behind the lectern. "Today, we announce three law-enforcement actions relating to the S.A.C. group of hedge funds," he said, against a soundtrack of clicking camera shutters. He outlined three sets of charges against Cohen's company: insider-trading charges, wire-fraud charges, and civil money-laundering charges, which could entail forfeiture of assets tied to the illegal trading. He also announced the guilty plea of another portfolio manager at S.A.C., the eighth employee to be charged with insider trading.

"When so many people from a single hedge fund have engaged in insider trading, it is not a coincidence," Bharara said. "It is, instead, the predictable product of substantial and pervasive institutional failure. As alleged, S.A.C. trafficked in inside information on a scale without any known precedent in the history of hedge funds." He described the scope of illegal trading at S.A.C. as "deep" and "wide," spanning more than ten years and involving at least twenty different securities from multiple industries, and resulting in illegal profits of "at least" hundreds of millions of dollars.

Bharara said that he would take a few questions from the reporters in the room. "Do you plan to criminally indict Steve Cohen?" one of them asked.

A hint of irritation crossed Bharara's face. He knew, of course, that the media would fixate on the absence of charges against Cohen. He had not, in the press's familiar story line, caught the "big fish," and reporters would be eager to cast the indictment of S.A.C. as something short of total victory. "Today, we're bringing the charges that I've described," he said, hoping that would be the end of it. "I'm not going to say what tomorrow may or may not bring."

That weekend, Cohen retreated to his home in East Hampton and, as the news continued to circulate, had a word with his four youngest daughters. According to an account in *New York*, he

warned that they were going to be hearing unpleasant things about him. "People in the company have done things that are wrong, and they're going to pay for what they did," he said. But, he reassured them, "I didn't do anything wrong."

For the rest of the summer, Cohen made a point of being at his desk by 8 A.M., as always. He sat in front of his seven screens and traded. Even though his company had been branded a criminal enterprise, major investment banks like Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase, and Goldman Sachs, which had earned hundreds of millions of dollars in commissions from Cohen over more than a decade, refused to abandon one of the most profitable traders they had ever worked with.

"They have been an important client to us," Goldman Sachs's president, Gary Cohn, said on television about S.A.C., just days after the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York called the firm a "magnet for market cheaters" and alleged that it had "trafficked in inside information" on a vast scale. Cohn called S.A.C. "a great counterparty."

Before S.A.C.'s indictment, the U.S. Attorney's Office had made it clear that, in order to resolve the case, Cohen would have to shut down his hedge fund. The government could not stop him from managing his own money, though; he would still have close to ten billion dollars of his personal fortune to trade and invest as a private family office. Cohen and his army of traders would still command respect from Wall Street's major investment banks and have access to the best I.P.O. allocations. The ten-billion-dollar figure sent a signal to the world that nothing had really changed.

Four months later, on November 4th, Bharara announced that the government and S.A.C. had reached a final settlement. The firm had agreed to pay \$1.8 billion. (In fact, the fine was \$1.2 billion, because the company was given credit for \$616 million in fines that it had already committed to pay the S.E.C.) The settlement would also include a guilty plea by S.A.C.—an admission, in court, that the firm had done what the government was accusing it of. For Americans who were still

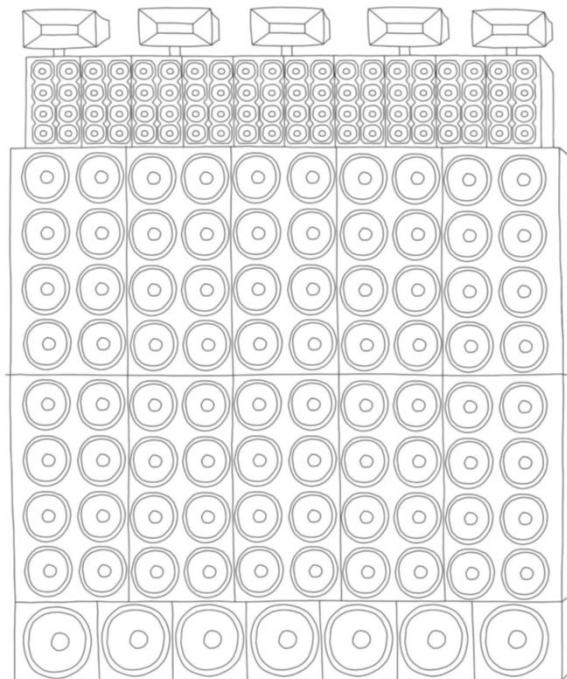
upset that nobody had been held responsible for the crimes that led to the financial crisis of 2008, the punishment of Cohen's company was, ostensibly, a clear victory for the forces of fairness and integrity.

A few days later, S.A.C. registered its guilty plea before a federal judge. While TV networks beamed news of the settlement onto trading floors around the world, Cohen sat at his desk in Stamford. He had an aggressive P.R. firm on retainer, ready to counterattack the second Bharara made his announcement. "The tiny fraction of wrongdoers does not represent the 3,000 honest men and women who have worked at the firm during the past 21 years," S.A.C.'s public-relations firm said in a statement. "S.A.C. has never encouraged, promoted or tolerated insider trading."

In his office, Bharara and his colleagues couldn't believe what they were reading. S.A.C. had just signed a guilty plea admitting that it had, in fact, been built on a culture of securities fraud. The chief of Bharara's securities unit called Cohen's lawyers and told them to retract the statement, which they did. Then they released a new one that said, "We greatly regret this conduct occurred."

A YEAR AND A HALF later, on May 11, 2015, Christie's hosted a special evening sale for the world's top art collectors at its headquarters, at Rockefeller Center. The auction was called "Looking Forward to the Past," and it was built around a carefully selected group of twentieth-century masterpieces. The night's sales were expected to be record-breaking, attesting to a worldwide boom in the art market, fuelled largely by Wall Street money and exploding wealth in Asia. One of the paintings up for sale was from Cohen's collection—"Paris Polka," by Jean Dubuffet. It had an estimated sale price of twenty-five million dollars.

In the months after S.A.C.'s guilty plea, Cohen, no longer burdened by the threat of criminal charges, seemed determined to show the world that he was as powerful as ever. He sat courtside at a Knicks game at Madison Square Garden, in full view of the television cameras. On November 10th, he made news



by spending a hundred and one million dollars at Sotheby's for an Alberto Giacometti sculpture called "Chariot."

Cohen had been working to cleanse his reputation on Wall Street as well, trying to distance himself from the legal scandal. He had all but erased his old firm's name, S.A.C. Capital Advisors, and rebranded his private family office as Point72 Asset Management, a reference to its address, at 72 Cummings Point Road, in Stamford. But, since he had ten billion dollars to invest, his daily life seemed little changed. When he looked for a new head of compliance, a recruiter contacted several prosecutors and F.B.I. agents. Eventually, Cohen hired a former Connecticut U.S. Attorney to be Point72's general counsel and announced plans for a six-person "advisory board," made up of high-profile business leaders who would counsel the firm on management and ethics issues. Cohen even started a program for college students called the Point72 Academy, a "highly-selective and rigorous 12-month training program" that would teach investment strategies to young people seeking careers in finance. In 2016, he reached an agreement with the S.E.C. that allowed him to return to the hedge-fund business in 2018.

And, of course, Donald Trump won the Presidency, promising to drastically cut back on financial regulation. According to news accounts, Cohen's new legal counsel worked briefly as part of Trump's transition team. The result of the government's nearly ten-year battle against Cohen's empire was looking increasingly like a momentary setback.

The night of the auction, the Christie's building was overflowing with the international élite. The atmosphere was feverish. Just before the auction's start time, at 7 p.m., Cohen's car pulled up to the building, and Cohen mounted a flight of stairs to the packed auction.

Smiling his gap-toothed, kid-in-a-candy-store smile, Cohen arrived right at the start of one of the season's most hotly anticipated art auctions—another assertion of power. He knew that the sale couldn't begin without him. Toward the end of the auction, Giacometti's bronze sculpture "L'Homme au Doigt" ("Pointing Man") came on the block. It is widely considered one of the artist's greatest works. After several rounds of aggressive bidding, Cohen placed the winning bid, paying in total \$141.3 million. It was the most anyone had ever paid for a sculpture at auction. ♦



A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE CULLING

At Danish zoos, surplus animals are euthanized—and dissected before the public.

BY IAN PARKER

Three employees at the Odense Zoo—Sofie Berg Hansen, Lærke Stange Dahl, and Malene Jepsen—make incisions in a culled lion.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MITCH EPSTEIN



A space heater helps to thaw the carcass.

ONE AFTERNOON LAST January, two years after staff members at the Copenhagen Zoo surprised many people by shooting a healthy young giraffe, dissecting it in public, and then feeding its remains to lions, another Danish zoo was preparing for a public dissection. Lærke Stange Dahl and Malene Jepsen—biology students in their early twenties and part-time guides at the zoo in Odense, Denmark's third-largest city—sat at a table in the zoo's education room. They were surrounded by skulls and skins, and by tanks containing live snakes and cockroaches. Fruit flies hovered, and crickets chirped. This is where the zoo greets school groups, and hosts team-building exercises, centered on rodent dissections, for Danish corporations.

The next morning, Dahl and Jepsen were scheduled to dissect a young lion in front of a family audience, as part of a weekend-long event called "Animals Inside Out." The lion, which had been euthanized a year earlier, then kept in a freezer, was thawing nearby. It had been ruled surplus to the zoo's needs. In 2014, a similar judgment had been made about the giraffe in Copenhagen, known as Marius; its death became a social-media sensation, created panic in the international zoo business, and revealed a proud Danish unfussiness about animal mortality. Although the practice of culling zoo animals—euthanizing them for reasons of population control—is not restricted to Denmark, the practice elsewhere tends to be hidden, if not denied. In Denmark, culled animals are viewed as educational opportunities, and as meat for other captive animals. (A headline at the time read: "GIRAFFE'S KILLING IN COPENHAGEN REVEALS ZOOS' DARK CULLING PRACTICES.")

The women were pleased to have been assigned the dissection. They had an open, earnest confidence, founded, in part, on two years spent leading zoo tours and narrating sea-lion feedings. But neither of them had dissected a mammal larger than a rat. So they had arranged a study session—bringing coffee, reference books, and a laptop whose screen image was now projected onto a wall, just above a stuffed lion. They had cued up a YouTube video of

a previous lion dissection at Odense.

"It's not really different from a rat, except the size," Jepsen said.

"There's more cutting," Dahl said.

They were worried that the lion might not fully defrost before the morning. A colleague, passing through the room, reassured them that a lion's breastbone was "easier to cut than ice cream just out of the freezer."

The video showed an outdoor scene. Two zookeepers stood behind a table on which lay a dead lion, its legs in the air. A couple of hundred people, in winter clothing, watched from bleacher seating, with young children at the front. One of the zookeepers, in the tone of a kindergarten teacher, asked the children what they expected to see. A child called out, "Liver!"

As Dahl and Jepsen watched the video, they began to write an outline of their event. They would first need to say something about surplus animals and conservation: the Danes are mindful of maintaining a genetically varied stock of a species, and culling can help preserve that diversity. Then the women would cut into the lion,

working from the tail to the head. "Intestines—what else do we meet on the way up?" Jepsen asked, holding a pencil in the air.

"We should definitely take the kidneys out, and the liver."

"And the spleen," Jepsen said, grudgingly, as if the organ were not important enough to be included in the dissection.

"Cut larynx off," Dahl said, summarizing the end of the process. "Blow up lungs. Take out tongue. Cut off head."

"Shall we take out the eye, if the kids are asking about it?" Jepsen said.

Dahl and Jepsen decided to check on the lion. Outside, it was cold and almost dark; un-Scandinavian birds squawked. We walked to a farmland-like area of storage rooms and workshops. Here, two days earlier, I had seen the lion in a walk-in freezer, alongside trays of rats, a sitatunga, and a severed giraffe leg, upright in a corner. The lion, nine months old when it died, looked a little compressed by gravity and bloodlessness, and its fur had an infant paleness; it could have almost been a shorn sheep. A forklift had carried it across the yard.

Now it lay on a pallet on the concrete floor of a small, bare room that is normally used to prepare food for the zoo's carnivores. Next door, there was a room packed with the remains of horses; the zoo had euthanized the animals after they were donated by members of the public. (These deliveries had peaked at the start of the year, suggesting that end-of-life decisions had been deferred until after Christmas.) The lion's tongue was lolling out of its mouth, from which a few drops of viscous blood had spilled to the ground.

Jepsen pressed gently on its side with two hands, like someone shopping for a sofa.

"Oh, my God," she said. There was almost no give.

She brought an air heater closer, while acknowledging a fear of cooking the flesh.

"As long as it doesn't take us an hour just to get to the heart," she said.

In 2014, not long after Marius, the giraffe, was shot in Copenhagen, a British zoo professional had a conversation with Bengt Holst, the Copenhagen Zoo's scientific director and the public face of the zoo's euthanization and dissection policies. As the Briton recently recalled, he began by asking Holst, "What the fuck were you thinking?"

Zoo directors in the United States and Europe have a recurring obligation, largely unknown to people who run art galleries and amusement parks, to explain to the public that their institutions deserve to exist, and aren't sad, and will still exist in thirty years. The oddity, and arguable unkindness, of displaying animals that are prevented from doing much of what they do in natural settings—breeding, hunting, walking from here to there—has to be discussed and defended, even on days when public attention isn't drawn to the issue, as it was by the death of Marius, or by the death, in May, 2016, of Harambe, a gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo. Harambe was shot and killed after it picked up a three-year-old boy who had climbed inside its enclosure. The child recovered from his injuries. (Harambe has had a strange afterlife, as a shorthand joke about Internet sensations—a meme about memes.)

The modern defense of zoos tends



"I'm Juliet. Who the hell is Rapunzel?"

to refer to four achievements: education, conservation, scientific research, and the societal benefit of getting people out of the house. Much of this is often packed into a single claim, which may be true even if it is unsupported by good evidence: zoos are said to cause people to value wild animals more than they otherwise would, thereby improving the survival prospects of threatened species.

A modern zoo hopes to tell a story of refuge and empathy. So a giraffe's dismemberment, observed by unsmiling children, suggested a counternarrative, and one that carried a particular risk of public-relations contagion. Giraffes are easy to like—in part for seeming so unassuming about their height advantage—and the international zoo industry couldn't dismiss the Copenhagen Zoo as a renegade operation. Following Marius's death, Holst, a sober-looking white-haired man in his early sixties, appeared frequently on television, talking steadily about education, conservation, and scientific research.

When I visited the Copenhagen Zoo, early last year, the grounds were dotted with charcoal braziers, and children were daring one another to put their fingers into the flames. The zoo is compact—lions living alongside camels, as in a picture book. Holst's office had a view of the cobbled alley, just off one of the main thoroughfares, where the zoo conducts outdoor dissections. His manner, like that of Richard Dawkins, combines reserve and certainty in a way that can suggest adolescence: sometimes, when countering one of his critics, he reddens slightly, and half smiles.

In 2012, Holst became the chair of Denmark's Animal Ethics Council, which advises the government on issues such as cloning, bestiality, and ritual slaughter. (The council recently recommended a ban on catch-and-release fishing, on the ground of cruelty.) But before the death of Marius, Holst was not a public figure. Today, he has an e-mail folder reserved for death threats. On a windowsill outside his office, there is an award, made of Styrofoam, that he received in 2014, after readers of a Danish newspaper, *Politiken*, voted him Copenhagen's "person of the year." The

paper, discussing the award, praised Holst for his "calm, scientific voice," and quoted an observation of his: "Every schoolchild in Denmark has been on a farm and seen someone chop off a chicken's head. In this country, we know that it's sometimes necessary to kill an animal."

Holst handed me the award, saying, "This ugly thing!" He added that his children had been happy about it. He then recalled that he had been pleased,



too. The Marius affair, he said, "started as a shit storm, and we turned it around."

We walked outside and stopped at a strong-smelling giraffe house. Here, in February, 2012, a male giraffe was born into a herd of seven. In accordance with zoo policy, the giraffe was not given a public name. A zoo animal's standing, in relation to humans, depends in part on the outlook of the institution in which it lives. An animal can be a city's shared pet, or it can be a quasi-agricultural team member whose work is to be seen and to breed and, perhaps, to die young. The Copenhagen Zoo, more than most others, aims to include virtually every animal in the second category, and to avoid what Holst likes to call the "Disneyfication" of nature. When zoo animals are anthropomorphized, they become "clowns in our world," Holst said. (He once described Knut—the famously cuddled polar bear in the Berlin Zoo, which died in 2011—as so plump that it resembled "a barrel on four legs.") Holst, who has a dog named Bassti, went on, "It's fine to get attached to the animals—as our keepers are. But you also have to be realistic. This is not a fairy tale, where everything gets born but never dies."

The giraffes were out in the yard. We were standing by a claw-grab machine that was filled with anatomically imperfect plush giraffes. Holst's challenge is to make an argument about

unsentimentality and clear-sightedness in a place that, like almost every zoo, sells toys, surrenders to fairy-tale opinions about the preëminence of certain species, and creates fantasy habitats; the Copenhagen Zoo has placed thatched huts next to an icy field and called the area "Africa."

Although the giraffe had no public name, the zookeepers needed an easy identifier when referring to its diet or its health. They began to call it Marius. According to Mads Bertelsen, one of the zoo's two veterinarians, who was present when the giraffe was born and when it died, the name was an homage to a well-liked contractor responsible for collecting the zoo's trash. In a recent e-mail, Bertelsen put the name in quotation marks. Holst told me that, during dozens of media appearances in 2014, he "always said 'the giraffe'—deliberately."

As we walked back to Holst's office, we passed a display, for children, that arranged suède gloves, a shaving brush, and a salami against silhouettes of their source animals.

IN CAPTIVITY, GIRAFFES can live for twenty-five years. Marius's misfortune was to be male. Captive giraffes of both genders tend to be removed from their family groups before they reach sexual maturity, to avoid inbreeding; many are then transferred to another zoo. The three hundred and twenty-one members of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) exchange animals among themselves for no fee; the receiving institution normally pays for shipping.

Male giraffes, once they are one or two years old, will fight with each other when they share space with females. Some zoos keep male-only groups, but the typical captive giraffe herd has several females and only one adult male. It's the same for many other animals, including elephants. As a result, the over-all demand for males is lower than for females. And Marius was born at a time of giraffe plenitude in Europe. The captive-birth rate had been increasing; as Holst explained, this was in part because zoos had learned that giraffes breed better in groups than in marital pairs.

Marius's conception could have been

prevented, either by separating his parents or by using contraception. This is the preferred American way. But the Copenhagen Zoo adheres to a practice known as “breed and cull.” The case for this policy, which is followed by many other zoos in Europe, if with less gusto, is this: because contraception carries medical risks, and because animals can become infertile if they don’t breed, and because zoos must deprive animals of many natural behaviors, it’s important to allow them to mate and raise infants. “Why take *that* away?” Holst asked me. The zoo will, if necessary, euthanize an offspring—ideally, at an age when the animal would typically leave its family in the wild. The Copenhagen Zoo culls twenty or thirty animals a year. These are usually goats, antelopes, and reindeer, but the zoo has also culled lions, tigers, zebras, and bears.

The argument in favor of culling extends beyond a notion that sex matters. According to Holst, the only zoos likely to exist in a few decades will be those working to insure that their captive-animal populations are genetically and demographically equipped to survive for many generations. This requires killing animals, he said. “If zoos hide, or don’t want to modernize, some will no doubt go under,” Holst added, without regret.

The underlying proposition, widely advanced by zoo professionals, is that, in an era when it’s no longer acceptable to round up wild giraffes, maintaining a sustainable stock in a zoo is not simply a business necessity; it’s an achievement of conservation—or, at least, a sign of scientific ardor. David Hancocks, a zoo consultant who formerly ran the Woodland Park Zoo, in Seattle, recently dismissed this idea as part of “the conservation myth, where anything’s justified if you’re ‘saving the species.’” In truth, many zoo populations are too small to encourage real hope of long-term survival, no matter how fastidiously they’re managed. There are about nine hundred giraffes in EAZA institutions; five subspecies are represented, and there are some hybrids. EAZA’s immediate ambition is to strengthen four subspecies while allowing the other populations to dwindle to zero. But the organization does not claim that the

selected giraffe groups will be large and diverse enough to allow for indefinite survival.

Moreover, most captive populations of endangered animals will never play a conservation role in what remains of the world’s natural habitats. Zoo officials often talk about the Arabian oryx, which was once extinct in the wild and now has a wild population of a thousand, thanks to reintroduction programs, using captive animals, that began in the nineteen-eighties. But such programs are rare: they are costly and require a viable natural habitat, and loss of habitat is the primary cause of species endangerment.

The global giraffe population has declined by nearly forty per cent in the past thirty years, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature recently declared the animal to be “vulnerable” to extinction. Hancocks said, “I don’t think it is at all likely that any captive-giraffe population could replenish the wild population.”

So one can build a better conservation ark, but it will probably remain forever at sea. Dale Jamieson, a professor of environmental studies and philosophy at N.Y.U., who has written skeptically about zoos, put it to me this way: “If I’m a Silicon Valley billionaire who freezes myself at the point of death, is the probability that I’m going to be immortal greater than if I hadn’t? Yes, there’s a *greater* probability, but is it one that we want to place any value on?”

Nevertheless, many people in the zoo industry argue that they play a role in protecting endangered species. According to David Powell, a mammalogist who recently left the Bronx Zoo for the St. Louis Zoo, breeding programs are conservation tools because they contribute to “fund-raising and education—and inspiration.” This argument assumes that bake sales and documentaries couldn’t achieve the same effect without cages. And the educational claim—what Jamieson described to me as “dreamy stuff about the touch of the tiger’s fur turning someone into a conservationist”—is unproved. The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums recently commissioned a global survey of the impact of zoos on the public understanding of biodiversity; its report included

some data supporting the “dreamy stuff” argument but hurried past the finding that zoo visits made people seventeen per cent less committed to take action on habitat protection and creation, and nine per cent less likely to act against pollution and climate change.

But it is hard to question Holst’s premise that, as long as one has zoos, culling helps to keep captive populations genetically robust. In the EAZA network, some employees have the job of “species coördinator.” As Holst described it, they have the power to say, “This animal *has* to breed with that animal, and this offspring *has* to be moved over to that zoo.” When Marius was born, its fate was nominally in the hands of Jörg Jebram, EAZA’s giraffe coördinator. As Jebram and Holst both knew, Marius’s genes were well represented across Europe. Even if there were a space in a herd of celibate bachelor giraffes, it would be better to reserve the spot for a more unusual specimen. When Marius was about a year old, Jebram informed Copenhagen that the giraffe was genetically unnecessary.

At that point, the Copenhagen Zoo might have found a home for Marius elsewhere—say, at an accredited zoo outside Europe. “We may have found a place *somewhere*,” Holst said, weary—in China, perhaps. “But we cannot look all around the world every time we have a surplus animal of any kind. Because this happens *all the time*. It happens every day!”

EAZA has estimated that its members cull between three and five thousand animals a year. According to the Copenhagen Zoo, in the five years before Marius was born half a dozen young male giraffes had been killed, quietly but not illicitly, in other Danish zoos.

BY THE START of 2014, Marius was twelve feet tall. (Adult males can reach twenty feet.) His father was frequently shoving him against walls and trees, and the abrasions left him with furless patches on his neck. A final call was made to Jebram, in case Marius’s relatives in other zoos had unexpectedly died, making him genetically precious. This hadn’t happened. The zoo decided to euthanize Marius on February 7th, a Friday.

Two days before the scheduled culling, someone e-mailed *Ekstra Bladet*, a Danish tabloid, about it; the e-mail used the name Marius, which had never been shared with the public. (The zoo assumes that a visitor overheard zookeepers talking; there's no suggestion that a staff member wrote the e-mail.) Mikkel Selin, a reporter for the paper, spoke to Holst, who noted that, were Marius

create an international provocation, it had made a bold public-relations decision: it would defend its right to kill a giraffe by showing itself to be unembarrassed about killing a giraffe. On Wednesday afternoon, *Ekstra Bladet* published a temperate story, beneath a photograph of Marius looking sweetly reproachful. "It was for local consumption, for local people," Holst said. "And

the giraffe's death, has counted two hundred and thirty thousand Marius-related tweets, in English and Danish, in the week after the *Ekstra Bladet* article appeared.

Holst told me that he and other zoo officials received forty thousand e-mails in the first days of the story, including dozens of death threats. Until Sunday morning, "people thought they could



The dissection of Marius, at the Copenhagen Zoo, on February 9, 2014.

released into the wild, he would probably be "shot or run over two days later," Holst told Selin that Marius's autopsy, which had been planned as a private event, would be performed before the public. Most of the zoo's mammals are autopsied, and these procedures are occasionally shown to visitors. (The Odense Zoo had started doing public autopsies in Denmark twenty years earlier.) For staffing reasons, a public autopsy couldn't happen on Friday, so Marius's death was delayed until Sunday.

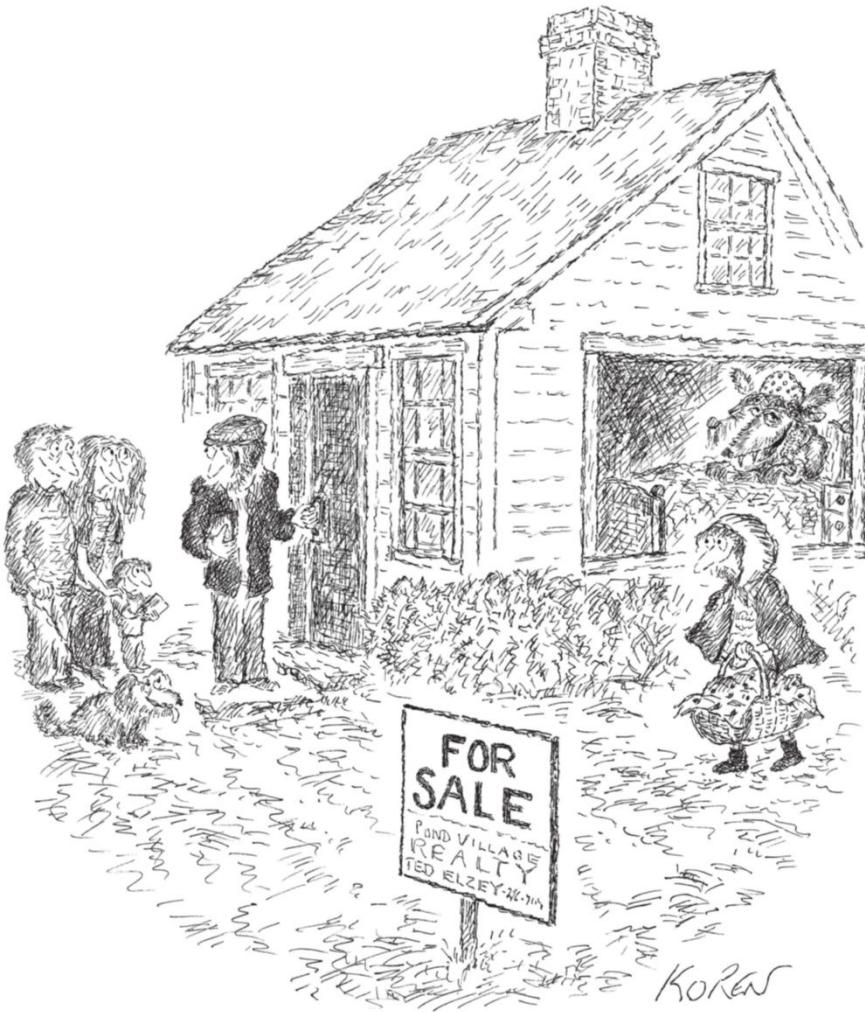
Being candid about the zoo's policy didn't require a spectacle. But, as Mads Bertelsen recently put it, zoo officials had decided "that we would not be bullied." Even if the zoo wasn't seeking to

we've had no fuss whatsoever in the past." He added, "But it's one of these animals with the nice eyes, very nice-looking, and a big animal."

And Marius was, for the moment, still alive. The Copenhagen Zoo appeared to have scheduled an atrocity. For a couple of days, the story was reported only in Scandinavia. But on Saturday, after a tweet from the president of the Born Free Foundation, a British animal-welfare nonprofit, the story was picked up by the London *Independent*, then by the BBC, and then by the rest of the world. Chris Zimmerman, a doctoral researcher at the Copenhagen Business School, who has been studying the international response to

save the giraffe," Holst said. "As if we could be influenced—as if we'd say, 'Oh! O.K. then, we won't do it.'" Several petitions were started. On one of them, a signatory noted, "I love animals and these people should get the shit beat out of them."

The media reported on several last-minute offers to rehouse Marius; the Copenhagen Zoo rejected or ignored these offers, surprising many people who assumed that any institution exhibiting live animals would be won over by a narrative of rescue and redemption. Åke Netterström, the owner of a zoo in Frösö, Sweden, that had no giraffes, made one of the rebuffed offers. (He has also tried, unsuccessfully, to



"I think you'll find this home has real storybook charm."

acquire giraffes through a private dealer in France.) He recently said of the Copenhagen Zoo, "I think it's a sickness. They wanted to show the world: We do what we want."

According to Holst, the Frösö Zoo, which is not part of the EAZA network, "had no clue what a giraffe was." But Yorkshire Wildlife Park, in the North of England, is in EAZA. That Saturday, a Yorkshire staff member left a message at the Copenhagen Zoo's switchboard, offering to add Marius to its all-male herd of four. On Facebook, Yorkshire described this as "an attempt to save Marius." The giraffe's supporters were impressed. "You rock," one wrote. "Bless you for offering him a home."

The BBC mentioned the offer in its reports. This was, perhaps, York-

shire's plan. The zoo's foundation had recently generated media coverage, and cash, by campaigning to "rescue" a polar bear living in a Mexican zoo. That zoo had no intention of giving up its animal. If Yorkshire had space for a fifth giraffe, then Jörg Jebram, the giraffe coordinator, could have supplied, at any time, the best candidate from Europe's surplus. Mads Bertelsen, the vet, described Yorkshire's offer as "a P.R. stunt." (Yorkshire Wildlife Park declined to comment for this article, and even asked for its decision not to comment to be off the record.)

The same day as that offer, Holst took a call from a Dane in Los Angeles. According to Holst, the caller, Claus Hjelmbak, proposed giving the zoo a million dollars for Marius. Holst recalled saying, "No way. You can give

me five million dollars, I won't take it." According to Holst, the man got angry and said, "I offer to get you out of this shit, and to save the giraffe, and I will give you a lot of money. How can you dare not say yes? You are a scoundrel, you are a killer."

When I called Hjelmbak, he described himself, "very humbly," as "one of the most influential celebrity brokers" in American entertainment. (He has sometimes helped organize parties attended by celebrities.) "I can raise funds to do a party with Britney and Sharon Stone in no time—*of course I can save a giraffe!*" he said. He claimed that a billionaire, whom he would not name, had urged him to make the call. "She could have built her own goddam zoo and not even worried about it, moneywise," he said. (He recalled offering Holst "a few million Danish kroner.") The call with Holst, he said, "was like talking to a pervert who was pleasuring himself."

IN 1903, AN elephant suffering from foot abscesses was euthanized in the Berlin Zoo. It was hanged, on the premise that this was the most civilized method. A modern zoo sometimes tranquillizes a doomed animal with a dart, and then injects it with an overdose of barbiturates; this is how the Odense Zoo euthanized its young lion. But a tranquillized giraffe might injure itself terribly in a fall, and an animal killed with chemicals can't become food. On February 9, 2014, before the Copenhagen Zoo opened, a zookeeper let Marius out into the yard beside the giraffe house. With a slice of rye bread, the keeper drew the giraffe to a spot where Mads Bertelsen was waiting with a Winchester rifle. Marius leaned down, took some bread, and stood up, and Bertelsen shot him in the head. Bertelsen is confident that Marius died instantly. (One of his colleagues played a video of the shooting at a meeting of Scandinavian veterinarians.)

The zoo opened at ten. A few protesters stood outside the entrance. In the alley beneath Holst's office, Bertelsen led the dissection, assisted by Cathrine Sauer Jørgensen, a Ph.D. student in animal nutrition, who was able to add to her collection of digestive tracts from three dozen giraffes.

Zoo visitors, including children, stood with no barrier between them and Marius's body. Bertelsen tried to disregard the reporters and the photographers standing at his shoulder. It was a cold day; people came and went. After three hours, the autopsy was over. "We cut certain pieces up, and put them on our little electric cart, and put everything else in the freezer," Bertelsen said. He added, "Nobody could eat a whole giraffe." He took the meat over to the lions. "They're fed three or four days a week, but they don't normally get hot meat."

Images of that meal helped set the tone for what followed. Kirstie Alley tweeted, "Oh man, I've seen a lot of abuses in my life, but this baby Giraffe killing at the Copenhagen Zoo is overwhelming. I have to take a cry walk." On the zoo's Facebook page, someone posted, "This place is a hell on earth. The 'humans' who work there are the real 'surplus' in society. These people should be lured away, shot and butchered." Sergey Donskoy, Russia's minister for natural resources and ecology, wrote online that the killing was an "unforgivable mistake, an inhumane and horrific act." An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* argued that Copenhagen had broken an "inviolate if unwritten contract" prohibiting the killing of zoo animals.

A few hours after Marius's death, a news show on Britain's Channel 4 ran a long interview with Holst. As he recently recalled it, "Something happened in that interview, and that was lucky for me." Matt Frei, the host, addressed him in a chagrined, accusatory way. "The whole thing is cruel!" Frei cried, adding that the Danish children who observed the autopsy were "clearly freaked out." John Oliver, on HBO, later drew the same inference from images of children holding their noses at an animal dissection in Odense. Such commentaries seem to suggest that Danish children don't cry, or hide, or run, when horrified.

Frei asked Holst, "If you allowed schoolchildren—some very young children—to watch the *dismemberment* of the dead giraffe, why not just invite them in to see the killing?" Holst responded, "There's no education in seeing the killing." He said of the autopsy,

"Schoolchildren can actually learn a lot from seeing this." He went on, "To see the big neck . . . and see the big heart. Why does it have a big heart? Well, it has to pump the blood two metres up in the air to reach the brain." He noted that children "asked a lot of questions, and the vet answered a lot of questions." Asked about feeding the giraffe's carcass to the lions, Holst said, "We try to show the public what an animal is, what animal wonders are, in all its aspects. . . . And the real-life lions eat meat, and meat comes, among others, from giraffes."

Frei denounced Holst as "clinical and cold." His tone may have puzzled fans of Channel 4's documentary series "Inside Nature's Giants," which also airs on PBS. The show has broadcast the dissections of a dozen exotic animals, including a giraffe.

Holst stayed civil and unruffled, which played well in Denmark. The announcement in *Politiken* of Holst's "person of the year" victory noted that Frei had been put in his place, and added that Danes "should not change the world into a Disney one where nobody ever dies." Zoos everywhere have to counter animal-rights activists who re-

gard zoos as immoral, and calm broader public disquiet about keeping animals in captivity. These rebuttals are tailored to local appetites. With Marius, the Copenhagen Zoo was able to reinforce its allegiance to a strand of Danish animal exceptionalism. Danes aren't unusually careless about animal welfare, but there's a tradition of pragmatism—or, a critic could say, an insular and self-congratulatory moral laxity—about animal death. Denmark's largest pig slaughterhouse is open to the public, and a hundred and fifty visitors tour it each day. One of Denmark's 2015 submissions for a foreign-language Academy Award, "Men & Chicken," which stars Mads Mikkelsen and involves human-animal hybridization and bestiality, was, according to its director, Anders Thomas Jensen, "much more taken as a comedy" at home than in the United States. Jensen, speaking on the phone, recalled that in his first film, "Flickering Lights," Mikkelsen played a thug hiding out in the country, who shoots a cow in the head for no good reason; the animal crumples to the ground. Jensen acknowledged dryly that the film would be "unable to include a tag saying that 'no animals were harmed'"



"He's a nice guy—he's always giving me free stuff."

during its production. The cow, which was due to be slaughtered for meat, was shot on camera by a vet wearing Mikkelsen's wardrobe.

Casper Tybjerg, a film historian at the University of Copenhagen, recently described how his ten-year-old daughter, who was caring for a rabbit at an after-school center, had been prepared by staff members for the likely fate of her rabbit's future offspring. As Tybjerg recalled it, his daughter was told, "You should know this. There will be all these cuddly things, and half of them will have to be clubbed to death." This was the Danish mind-set, Tybjerg explained. "We like to think of ourselves as open about things that Victorians were closed-minded about." This self-image, he said, derived in part from a school of Danish thought, in the early twentieth century, that stressed "a greater openness around sex and death and gross bodily functions." He noted that Denmark was the first country in the world to legalize pornography, in the late sixties.

Tybjerg is an authority on "Løvejagten," or "Lion Hunting," a classic of Danish silent cinema, released in 1907. The film was shot partly at the Copenhagen Zoo. The sub-Saharan savanna was represented by an island in a fjord that Tybjerg described as "about the size of a tennis court." Two elderly lions, bought from a German zoo, were shot and killed, under watery skies.

"I mean, when you're dead you're dead," Holst said to me at one point. And animals "don't have any expectations of what happens after death, or that they could have had a longer life." He said that he recognized just one ethical boundary among species. "I think the only place is between human beings and the rest," he said. "Some people say, 'The apes, they are so close to us, they should be in our group.' But the apes are also very close to the rest of the African primates, so if we take them on, too, then you go down the ladder . . ." Holst went on, "And since we have agreed on killing animals for consumption, hundreds of thousands of years ago, we have agreed that we can, for a reason, kill an animal, take a healthy life. If there's a reason for it, we can do it with an ape or an elephant or

a horse or a dog." (The Copenhagen Zoo has considered, and rejected, the idea of breeding animals that could be supplied to visitors as meat.)

Peter Sandøe, a philosopher at the University of Copenhagen, has known Holst for years. Sandøe recently noted that although he accepts the need for culling in zoos, he and Holst have often disagreed about whether it's better for an animal to be alive or dead. "I'm of an age that whenever I get to a birthday the alternative is worse," Sandøe told me. "And I have the same view about animals." He noted that Holst disagrees, adding, "He gets very upset whenever we discuss it."

Some Danes were unimpressed by the zoo's handling of Marius. Torsten Jansen, a former cultural attaché in the Danish Embassy in Washington, D.C., and now a lobbyist in Copenhagen, recently compared the episode to the decision taken by a national newspaper, in 2005, to publish satirical cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. He called Denmark "a tiny country trying to get noticed," adding, "We're like a younger brother with eight siblings who goes into a store and smashes something." He said, "We don't have to display *everything*. We don't have to increase the amount of information around our visits to the rest room."

But Holst received widespread support. Chris Zimmerman, the business-school researcher, has tabulated the hundred most frequently used words, in English and Danish, in the media and social-media coverage of Marius. The language of violence ("murdered," "execution") was far more common in English than in Danish, and words of attachment ("healthy," "baby," "beautiful") could be found only in English. Denmark's largest animal-welfare nonprofit supported the zoo's decision, to the regret of similar groups elsewhere in Europe. So did most of the country's politicians. Pia Kjærsgaard, a co-founder of the populist, anti-immigration Danish People's Party, was out of the country when Marius died, and criticized the zoo in a Facebook post. But, as Holst recalled, "people from her own party, at home, said, 'Please shut up, you're not here, *finally* someone is doing something for Denmark. We have a special Danish view on

things—you should defend this one.'"

The D.P.P. is now the second-largest party in a parliament that has passed measures designed to make Denmark less attractive to refugees. The rhetoric of pragmatism, or of rejecting political correctness, has perhaps made it easier for Danes to accept an unwelcoming stance. Karina Due, the Party's animal-welfare spokeswoman and a parliamentarian from a rural district, recently met me in her office and discussed the D.P.P.'s commitment to the preservation of Danish culture. She connected the furor over Marius to urban ignorance of agricultural ways. "In Copenhagen, people think that eggs come from the stores, not the butt of a chicken," she told me.

In response to the death of Marius, Rufus Gifford, the U.S. Ambassador to Denmark, wrote on Facebook, "I find the situation to be disturbing and the video hard to watch." Danes responded by referring to the U.S. death penalty, and to a proposal, then in the news, to cull two thousand swans in New York. A few months later, Gifford was interviewed in a Danish magazine; without referring directly to the case, he sought to rehabilitate the word "Disneyfied." He defined it as American optimism: "It means that we always believe in a 'happy ending,' that we can get married to the prince, become a millionaire, and save the world." (Through a spokesman, Gifford said that the State Department would not allow him to comment further.) Holst told me that he wasn't sure if Gifford's comments about Marius were diplomatic, and added, "We are Danish, we work this way. The Americans work the American way."

THE UNITED STATES experienced its own Marius affair three decades ago. In 1982, the Detroit Zoo appointed a new director, Steve Graham. Arriving from Baltimore, he chose to stop giving animals names, to stop selling surplus animals to dealers, and to publicly acknowledge the need to cull. Graham soon announced the impending euthanizations of four elderly tigers. He and the zoo were sued by the Fund for Animals, and there were well-publicized court hearings. "I wish I could put you in a small, slippery-floored

cage,” an anonymous correspondent wrote to Graham. “Then I would torture you each day . . . until you died.” The zoo did kill three of the tigers. Graham, who is now retired, said in a phone conversation that, during the worst of the tiger crisis, Coleman Young, Detroit’s mayor, “lent me his Uzi guy”—a bodyguard who carried an automatic weapon in a gym bag.

American zoos did not follow Graham’s lead. They chose instead to cel-

family with children sitting watching a lion take an animal apart,” he told me.

After the Marius scandal, zoos everywhere felt besieged and betrayed. Terry Maple, a former director of Zoo Atlanta, and now a consultant and author, said that the incident was “a huge public-relations blunder,” adding, “It reverberated all over the world. Every zoo director was asked, ‘How can this happen?’” The public outcry over Marius’s killing threatened the zoo industry’s

To the extent that zoos around the world have come to define themselves as scientific, progressive institutions rather than as immersive, slow-motion circuses, Holst had called their bluff. American zoos were keen to distance themselves from Copenhagen, but they struggled to find the right ethical objection. Tom Stalf, Hanna’s successor at Columbus, suggested to me that the children who viewed the autopsy at the Copenhagen Zoo “might be horrified but unaware of it.” He said that they might realize their distress only in middle age.

A few days after Marius’s death, AZA, the American equivalent of EAZA, released a statement that claimed, in part, “Incidents of that sort do not happen at AZA-accredited zoos.” This is accurate if by “incident” one means a particular sequence of bloody events, including a giraffe’s severed neck being transported on a golf cart through weekend crowds. But the statement could easily be understood to mean that healthy animals are never euthanized in the U.S. This is how NPR reported it, and it’s how Wayne Pacelle, the director of the Humane Society of the United States, described AZA policy in a recent phone conversation, before he revised his thought. Asked several times if culling occurs in American zoos, Rob Vernon, a spokesman for AZA, told me, variously, “No,” “Yes,” and “That’s a good question.” He made the candid observation that his own discomfort reflected the industry’s discomfort.

American zoos do cull, and AZA rules allow it. Terry Maple told me, “I would have never done it, most of my colleagues in the United States would have never done it.” He immediately added, “But when you get below the example of a charismatic mega-vertebrate”—a storybook species—“and go to animals that are a little less special, there are cases of killing.” He recalled Zoo Atlanta euthanizing dozens of newborn pythons with his blessing. Maple has written, critically, of “taxonomic élitism” in zoos, but, in an apparent attempt to diminish the act of snake-killing, he described the pythons to me as slithery and mean.

One could argue that certain beloved species should be protected from



Danish children, after attending a lion dissection, cut open dead rats.

ebrate animals’ birthdays, send surplus animals to roadside zoos, and never talk about death. In current industry guidelines on population control, the phrase “non-living” is used eight times, and there’s no use of a shorter, more common alternative.

America’s folksy model is symbolized by Jack Hanna, the former director of the Columbus Zoo. Now its “director emeritus,” he is widely known for his “Jungle Jack” television appearances. In 1990, Hanna compared Steve Graham to Hitler. (When I spoke to Graham, he called Hanna the “clown prince of zoos.”) In a recent phone call, Hanna argued that Columbus’s keepers would all resign if the zoo introduced culling. He noted that he’d made six hundred television shows about wild animals and had never shown a kill. “There’s enough going on in the world—I don’t need to have a

ability to present itself as a prime agent of conservation. As Maple put it, “If it hadn’t affected the rest of us, I’m sure we would have thought, That’s a pretty eccentric decision. But when you begin to see how it moves the people who support you—when they’re in tears, and they just can’t believe this—it starts to undermine the credibility of zoos, which have to be justified, have to be supported by the public.” He called the episode “an existential threat,” and added, “We’re under enough attack from animal-rights groups, even when we do the right thing.” A few weeks after Marius’s death, Maple wrote an op-ed in the San Francisco *Chronicle*, in which he claimed, wrongly, that the giraffe had been shot in view of visitors. He still refers to the case as one “where you just walk out and kill the animal, I would say in cold blood, in front of your adoring public.”

culling because they're beloved. (Why shouldn't humans have favorites?) But Maple was making the case a little differently—by disparaging the euthanized pythons. "They were going to grow into twenty-six-foot-long animals that could eat your dog or maybe your kid!" he said. In American zoos, the preferred term for culling is "humane euthanization"—a phrase that begins to defend the practice even before it's been announced.

Just as Denmark's zoos can't rid themselves of Disney, America's zoos are more Danish than they would like to acknowledge. At the time of Marius's death, David Powell, the mammalogist, was researching the use of euthanasia in breeding programs in American zoos. He asked thirty-three zoos about their culling practices (promising not to name them). In a co-written paper, he reported that forty-five per cent of the zoos had said they were euthanizing healthy animals; in this cohort, seventy-nine per cent were culling mammals.

In a conversation that took place in

a building opposite the Bronx Zoo's "Madagascar!" exhibit, Powell said he was confident that these percentages would hold up in a larger sample. He added that AZA's statement about Marius was "unfortunate." Powell's paper didn't include specific examples of species that had been culled by the surveyed zoos. But he had the data on his computer. He opened the file and read from the screen: "Python . . . deer . . . invertebrates . . . 'Ungulates as needed' . . . 'Fish or amphibians only' . . . Guinea pigs . . . 'Hoofed animals' . . . rodents . . . wallabies . . . 'domestic mammals' . . . and a tiger."

TWO AND A HALF months after Marius's death, EAZA zoo directors gathered for a conference in Saumur, in western France. The weekend was dominated by fractious debate about the Copenhagen incident. Although European zoos were more likely than American zoos to cull large animals, many of them were no readier to acknowledge the practice. Holst recalled being asked, "Why were you so open

about it? And why didn't you warn us that you were doing it?" Leo Oosterweghel, the director of the Dublin Zoo, which doesn't cull, had written in an Irish newspaper that the death of Marius was "cold, calculated, cynical and callous." He recently told me that he found it easier to accept obfuscation than Danish confidence. "I prefer the people with less pride, people who say, 'Gee, I *had* to do this, and I'm not comfortable with it, and I don't really want to talk about it.'" He blamed the Marius crisis on the promotion of scientists to zoo-leadership positions.

In one Saumur session, David Williams-Mitchell, EAZA's communications manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation, "What Went Wrong, and What We Should Do About It," which suggested that one reason for the reach of the Marius story was "media-consumer weariness regarding Syria and other human catastrophes." The presentation scolded Yorkshire Wildlife Park, arguing that there should be "absolutely no collusion with animal-rights agendas" that might "conflict with the future survival of our members and the species they protect." An annual report later referred to "gut-churning sanctimony" in some parts of the international zoo community, and described European disunity on the culling issue as the organization's nadir. Several changes have been made to EAZA rules; member zoos are now asked to warn the organization if a scheduled culling might cause a fuss. Since the death of Marius, thirteen giraffes have been culled in EAZA zoos.

Haig Balian, the director of ARTIS Royal Zoo, in Amsterdam, told me that he had first reacted to Marius's death by asking himself, "How stupid can you be?" He then became grateful for the controversy, because it had placed questions about the purpose of zoos "in the middle of society." His zoo recently introduced a policy of not naming animals, and has begun to list euthanizations in annual reports. In April, 2016, Balian opened a long-planned exhibit that has become, he said, an accidental meditation on the death of Marius. It's a study of the work of microbes. The body of a three-day-old giraffe, which had died in the zoo of natural causes, was allowed to start decomposing. After six months, the



"Mommy, when will I blossom into a beautiful projection of male desire?"

process was halted. The giraffe—looking desiccated but not disfigured—was put on display in a clear, airless box.

ONE MORNING IN 2015, in a provocation that helped to establish the limits of Danish acceptance of animal deaths, Asger Juhl, a talk-radio host, killed a rabbit live on the air during a three-hour discussion about meat-eating and animal rights. Juhl lifted the rabbit's back legs—as he'd watched others do on YouTube—and hit it on the head with a bicycle pump. An intern had given the rabbit a name, Allan. "I first had the idea of a pig," Juhl told me when we met. "But you'd need a vet, and it was too complicated." After the show, he took the rabbit home, skinned it, and gutted it. He and his co-host ate it for supper.

Holst disapproved. "Why make a drama out of killing to start a discussion about killing?" he asked me. The majority of Juhl's listeners felt similarly. (And Ricky Gervais, on Twitter, wrote, "I just battered a Danish d.j. to death with a bicycle pump to show how terrible murder is.") The police opened an investigation. Juhl was interviewed on Russian television. "The angle, more or less, was: People in the West are barbaric, personified by this one man," Juhl recalled.

Several months later, Malene Jepsen and Lærke Stange Dahl dissected the lion in the Odense Zoo. The lion was largely defrosted, and there was a sour, cabbagey smell in the air. In the audience, young twins with pacifiers, one wearing a "Hello Kitty" hat, were distracted from the blood and the fur by sea lions swimming in a pool just beyond the disectors. In the foreground, intestines unspooled, and a translucent bladder of frozen urine was held up to the light. Then there was an effortful decapitation, with Jepsen keeping up buoyant patter as Dahl tried to sever vertebrae, using a knife held horizontally in two hands. "You have to find the small gap and push the knife down, between the nerves and whatever," Dahl later explained.

At the end of an hour, Jepsen put down the lion's head, which she'd been holding, and said, "We hope you've learned something about the lion and yourself." There was warm applause.



"It was a surprise how heavy it was," she told me a moment later. "It was: O.K., I can't stand too long like this. I think it's four or five kilos."

As the crowd dispersed, a dozen children gathered at the table, where internal organs lay alongside what remained of the body. Dahl had blood on the front of her fleece. She showed a boy clumps of horsehair that were inside the lion's stomach. He looked happy. The next day, a girl of four and her parents came upon a similar scene, following the dissection of a sitatunga. The girl boldly asked to see a bone being cut, but when this was done she crumpled into tears. She was the only child I saw showing any distress. Dozens of others seemed either thrilled or a little wary of a weekend event

that had a weekday, classroom flavor.

A boy observing the dead lion asked, "What's the brown stuff?"

"It's shit," Dahl said.

Another boy said, "What a shame for the lion."

Dahl said, "It's not a shame for the lion, because the lion is dead."

A zoo worker was waiting with a plastic wheeled trash can. Referring to the remains as *kød*—meat—rather than as a lion corpse, he asked if it was time to clean up. He pulled at the lion's tail, and Jepsen pushed from the other end, and the headless body slid into the trash. "I feel like the undertaker," he said.

Jepsen and Dahl hosed down the table. "Super!" Dahl said, taking off her gloves. ♦

SURVIVING SOLITARY

Albert Woodfox was in isolation longer than any other American. Then he came home.

BY RACHEL AVIV

LAST SUMMER, FIVE months after being released from prison, Albert Woodfox went to Harlem. It was there, in 1969, during his last week of freedom, that he met members of the Black Panther Party for the first time. He had been mesmerized by the way they talked and moved. "I had always sensed, even among the most confident black people, that their fear was right there at the top, ready to overwhelm them," he told me. "It was the first time I'd ever seen black folk who were not afraid."

Woodfox had intended to go to a meeting of the New York chapter of the Party that week, but he was arrested for a robbery before he could. Instead, he founded a chapter of the Party at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, in Angola, where he was held in solitary confinement for more than forty years—longer than any prisoner in American history. He and two other Black Panthers, who were in solitary confinement for a total of more than a hundred years, became known as the Angola 3.

Woodfox, who is sixty-nine, strolled along Malcolm X Boulevard with three former Panthers: his best friend, Robert King, one of the Angola 3, as well as Atmo Smith and B.J. Johnson, members of local chapters of the Party. He had never met Smith or Johnson before, and the conversation was halting and restrained; they spoke of gentrification, Jackie Wilson, and the type of diabetes they had. Woodfox is reserved, humble, and temperamentally averse to drama. When he talked about himself, his tone became flat. He was scheduled to speak at a panel on solitary confinement the next day, and he felt exhausted by the prospect. "I get apprehensive when somebody asks me something I can't answer, like 'What does it feel like to be free?'" he said. "How do you want me to know how it feels to be free?" He'd developed a

stock answer to the question: "Ask me in twenty years."

They reached the Apollo Theatre, and Johnson told the others to stand under the marquee for a photograph. They all looked soberly at the camera and raised their arms in a black-power salute. There were pouches under Woodfox's eyes, and a thick crease between his eyebrows. His Afro was straggly and gray.

On Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, they browsed souvenirs, T-shirts, and jewelry arrayed on tables along the sidewalk. "Black Lives Matter!" one vender shouted. "We got the shirts—ten dollars!"

Woodfox walked by, paused, then turned around. "Give me one of those," he said. He handed the man a ten-dollar bill. "I'll wear it tomorrow," he told the others.

Suddenly, the men's mood became lighter. Now they all wanted to buy something. Johnson sampled musks and decided on a three-dollar glassine of "Bleue Nile," while King and Smith contemplated buying their own "Black Lives Matter" shirts.

Then Johnson led the men four blocks south, to the original headquarters of the New York City chapter of the Party, now a bodega called Jenny's Food Corp. Several elderly men sat smoking at a card table in front of the shop.

"We've got original Panthers here," Johnson told the men at the card table.

"Originals?" one man said, putting out his cigarette and standing up.

"All right, all right," Woodfox said, deflecting attention.

"Can I take a picture?" another man asked.

The four Panthers posed in front of the store, next to a sandwich board advertising hot oatmeal. Woodfox held his new T-shirt in a plastic bag and raised his other fist. The men from the card

table stood behind him, clenching their fists.

"This is Brother Albert Woodfox," Johnson said. "Longest man in solitary confinement in the history of America!"

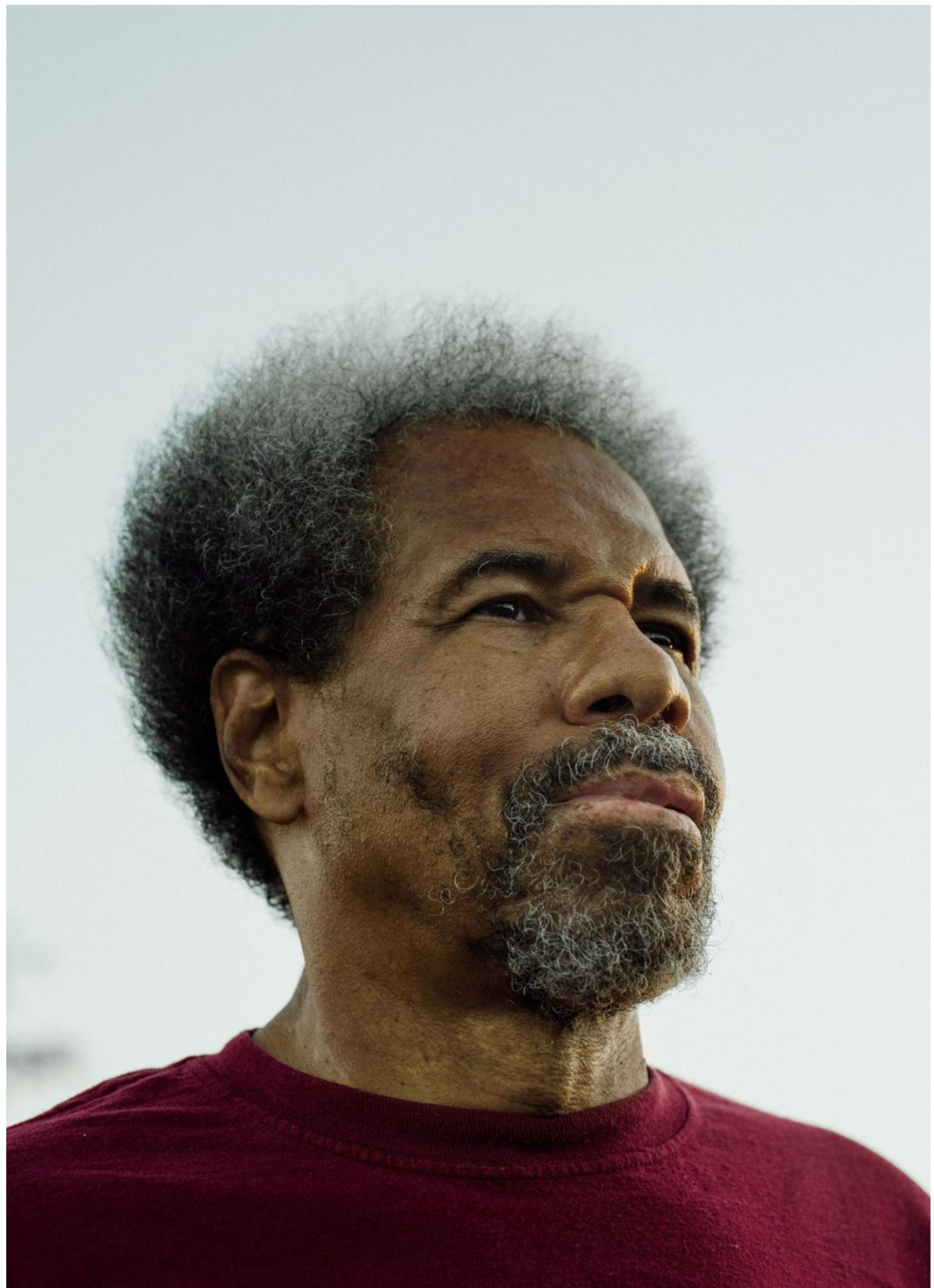
One of the men said that he'd been in solitary, too. "I thought I was in the box a long time," he said. "But I'll just put my troubles in my pocket."

"Look, one day in the box is enough," King said.

WHEN WOODFOX WAS a child in New Orleans, he made money by stealing flowers from gravestones and selling them to mourners. The oldest of six siblings, he grew up in the Tremé, one of the first neighborhoods in the South to house freed slaves. He remembers standing at a bus stop with his mother when he was twelve and trying to figure out why, when a police car passed, she pulled him behind her, as if to hide him. "She was so scared of white folks," he said. "We all knew they had absolute power over us."

In 1962, when Woodfox was fifteen, he was arrested for a car-parking scheme: he and his friends charged drivers to protect their cars. Two years later, he went to jail for riding in a stolen car. That year, he got his girlfriend pregnant. He paid little attention to his newborn daughter, Brenda. He took pride in being a good crook. "They used to call me Fox," he said. "You didn't mess with Fox."

When Woodfox was eighteen, he was arrested for robbing a bar and sentenced to fifty years in prison. After the sentencing, he overpowered two sheriff's deputies in the basement of the courthouse and fled to Manhattan. He had been in the city for only a few days—he had just met Panthers in Harlem, and was angling to date some of the female Party members, who seemed more self-possessed than any women he'd ever



"What does it feel like to be free?" Woodfox asked. "How do you want me to know how it feels to be free?"

met—when a bookie accused him of trying to rob him. “I remember thinking, What’s wrong with you—you can’t stay out of jail,” he said. “I thought it was just me, that something was wrong with me.”

He was extradited to New Orleans and placed on the Panther Tier at the Orleans Parish Prison. Eighteen members of the Black Panther Party, waiting to be tried for shoot-outs with the police, held classes on politics, economics, sociology, and the history of slavery. Steel plates had been affixed to their windows so that they couldn’t communicate with prisoners on other tiers. Malik Rahim, the defense minister of the New Orleans chapter of the Party, told me, “They thought they were separating us, but everywhere we went that infectious disease called organizing was taking hold.” They ripped apart Frantz Fanon’s “The Wretched of the Earth” and divided it into sections, so that each inmate could study a chapter and teach the others what he’d learned.

Formed a year after the assassination of Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party

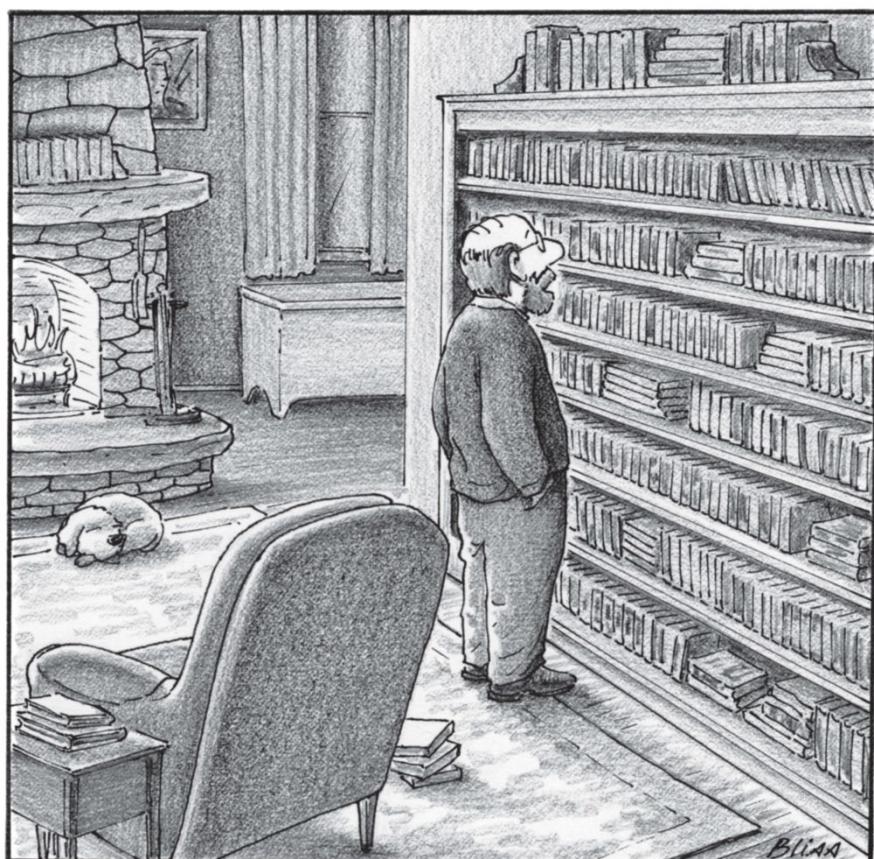
was disillusioned by the incremental approach of the civil-rights movement. Huey Newton, the Party’s co-founder, said that black people were tired of singing “We Shall Overcome.” He said, “The only way you’re going to overcome is to apply righteous power.” The Panthers saw a direct link between the country’s armed interventions abroad—in Vietnam, Latin America, and Africa—and what Eldridge Cleaver, a Party leader, called the “bondage of the Negro at home.” Black people, he said, lived in a “colony in the mother country,” shunted into inferior housing, jobs, and schools. The Panthers followed the police, whom they saw as occupying troops, through the ghetto. If an officer questioned a black person, the Panthers got out of their car and monitored the encounter, drawing loaded guns.

J. Edgar Hoover called the group “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country,” and, as part of his COINTELPRO program, ordered the F.B.I. to disrupt and discredit its activities. But much of the Party’s work was focussed on providing community services in

neighborhoods that had been neglected by the government. Under the slogan “Survival Pending Revolution,” the Panthers established screening centers for sickle-cell anemia, provided pest control and trash disposal, and gave free breakfasts to children, who ate while learning black history. The first goal on the Panthers’ ten-point program was: “We want the power to determine the destiny of our black community.”

Woodfox said that the Party “helped bring out who I really was.” He felt giddy when he used the language that the Panthers taught him for articulating his discontent. He realized that he’d been part of the lumpenproletariat, a term that Marx coined to describe “thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society.”

By the time of Woodfox’s trial, in 1971, he believed that it had been his moral right to flee. On the morning of his trial, he and three other Panthers who had been placed in a holding pen under the courthouse sang, “Pick up the gun / put the pigs on the run / there aren’t enough pigs/in this whole wide world/to stop the Black Panther Party!” Officers beat them and sprayed them with mace. When Woodfox was called into the courtroom, his face was bruised and burning. His ankles and wrists were chained to a steel belt around his waist. He turned toward the spectators in the courtroom and shook his chains. “I want all of you to see what these racist, fascist pigs have done to me,” he said.



“Look alive, Proust, you’re next.”

WOODFOX WAS SENT to Angola, the largest maximum-security prison in the country. The penitentiary, situated on eighteen thousand acres of farmland and bordered on three sides by the Mississippi River, is a former cotton plantation and slave-breeding business. It was named for the African country, the source of its slaves. After the Civil War, a former Confederate general acquired the plantation and leased state convicts—most of them black, including children as young as seven—to work at Angola, easing the labor shortage brought by Emancipation. The state purchased the plantation in 1901, but convicts still slept in former slave cabins and worked seven days a week, cultivating sugar-cane and cotton.

When Woodfox arrived, black and white inmates lived separately, in cinder-block compounds, and the cafeteria was divided by a wooden partition, to keep the races apart. Every guard at Angola was white. Woodfox and two other inmates he'd met at the Orleans Parish Prison requested permission from the Panthers' Central Committee, in Oakland, to establish a chapter of the Party at Angola—the only recognized chapter founded on prison grounds. The new Panthers encouraged the other prisoners, who cut crops for two cents an hour, to work more slowly. Woodfox said, "It was this macho thing where the guys would deliberately work at a fast pace to show off how masculine they were, and we'd explain to them that all they're going to do is take you to another field."

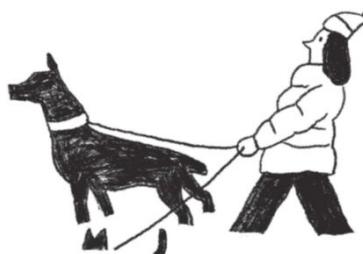
A few times a week, a group of nearly fifty men pretended to play football while discussing how to conduct themselves as revolutionaries. Woodfox, who now described himself as a "dialectical materialist," summarized what he'd learned from the Party's list of some thirty required books, by writers like W.E.B. Du Bois, Michael Harrington, and Marcus Garvey. Prisoners who knew Woodfox from New Orleans, where he'd earned a reputation as a hustler, at first thought that he was operating some sort of scam.

Angola was known as the most dangerous prison in the South. According to the editor of the prison's newspaper, the *Angolite*, a quarter of the inmates lived in "bondage": raped, sold, and traded, they generated income for their owners as well as for prison guards, who were paid to look the other way. The Panthers organized an Anti-Rape Squad, which escorted new prisoners to their dorms. "We would let them know who we were and that we were there to protect them," Ronald Ailsworth, a member of the squad, told me. They armed themselves with bats and knives, which they fashioned out of farm equipment, and used mail-order catalogues and dinner trays as shields.

Woodfox was inspired by the 1971 uprising at Attica, and felt connected to a movement of prisoners, many of them Panthers, calling for reform. The McKay Commission, which investigated the situation at Attica, reported that "many inmates came to believe they

were 'political prisoners,' even though they had been convicted of crimes having no political motive or significance. They claimed that responsibility for their actions belonged not to them but to society, which had failed to provide adequate housing, equal educational opportunities, and equal opportunities in American life."

Woodfox took a similar view. In an interview with the *Angolite*, he said, "I've always considered myself a political pris-



oner. Not in the sense that I'm here for a political crime, but in the sense that I'm here because of a political system that has failed me terribly as an individual and citizen in this country."

ON APRIL 17, 1972, Brent Miller, a twenty-three-year-old guard at Angola who had just been married, was stabbed thirty-two times in a black dorm. He and his bride, Teenie, had grown up on the grounds of the prison, in a settlement for three hundred families who worked at Angola. Miller's father supervised the hog farm; his brother guarded the front gate; and his father-in-law ran the sugar mill. C. Murray Henderson, the warden, described the Millers as "one of my favorite families on Angola; they were a close-knit family, the boys made music together, they had a good band and played for dances."

Friends of the Millers came to the prison armed with shotguns and baseball bats, to assist with the investigation. Woodfox was the first prisoner to be interrogated. Warden Henderson, who described Woodfox as a "hard-core Black Panther racist," assumed that the murder was a political act. "You had a group of Black Panthers inside who felt that they had to do something to get attention, and they decided to kill a white person," he said later. Woodfox said that the sheriff of St. Francisville, the town closest to Angola, pointed a gun at his forehead and told him, "You Black Panthers

need to bring y'all ass down to St. Francisville. We'll show you something."

Miller's body had been found near the bed of Hezekiah Brown, a black inmate who had been sentenced to death for rape. Brown initially said that he knew nothing about the murder. Four days later, Warden Henderson promised Brown a pardon if he would "crack the case." Brown named four prison activists from New Orleans: Woodfox, Herman Wallace—a charismatic and scholarly thirty-year-old who had co-founded the New Orleans chapter of the Party—Chester Jackson, and Gilbert Montague. Brown said that he had been drinking coffee with Miller when the four Panthers ran into the dorm, pulled Miller onto Brown's bed, and stabbed him. (The prison's chief security officer later confided to the warden's wife that Brown was "one you could put words in his mouth.")

The four suspects and some twenty other black men, all known as militants, were transferred by van to Angola's extended lockdown unit, called Closed Cell Restricted. According to the *Black Panther*, the Party newspaper, the men were dragged into the hallway at night and two rows of guards attacked them with baseball bats, pick handles, and iron pipes. An inmate told the paper that those "who weren't beaten nearly to death were made to sit while 2, 3, or 4 pigs cut their hair in all directions."

TWO WEEKS AFTER Miller's death, the four men were charged with murder. There was an abundance of physical evidence at the crime scene, none of which linked them to the killing. A bloody fingerprint near Miller's body did not match any of theirs.

In preparation for trial, the New Orleans chapter of the Panthers formed a support group, the Angola Brothers Committee. The treasurer was an F.B.I. informant, Jill Schafer, who, along with her husband, Harry, received nine thousand dollars a year to infiltrate radical organizations, as part of the COINTEL-PRO project. By instigating rifts among members, Schafer sabotaged the committee's efforts to raise money for a defense lawyer.

At Woodfox's trial, all the jurors were white. The prosecutor, John Sinquefield, referred to them as "common,

ordinary everyday folk like us.” Although two inmates had testified that they were eating breakfast with Woodfox at the time of the crime, the jury deliberated for less than an hour before finding him guilty. A year later, Wallace was also convicted by an all-white jury. (Jackson became a witness for the prosecution, and Montague was acquitted, because prison records showed that he was in the infirmary at the time of the murder.) After the trials, the warden secured Hezekiah Brown’s pardon and release, using prison funds to pay for his campaign for clemency.

Woodfox and Wallace, sentenced to life without parole, were returned to Closed Cell Restricted and placed in six-by-nine-foot cells. For more than five years, they never went outside.

WOODFOX ALLOWED HIMSELF to cry only when everyone else on the tier was asleep. His youngest brother, Michael, who visited the prison every month, said that Woodfox no longer permitted himself the pleasure of reminiscing about their childhood. Handcuffed and shackled, he spoke through a heavy wire-mesh screen. “He can’t allow the pain to be expressed,” Michael told me. “He feels he has to be a conqueror, a leader, a demonstration for other men. He doesn’t want people to know he has weaknesses.”

Woodfox and Wallace soon became close with another Panther, Robert King, who was also in C.C.R. and had been convicted of killing an inmate. They believed that he, too, had been framed because of his connection to the Party. The three men had all been raised by single women in New Orleans; had met their fathers only a few times, or not at all; had dropped out of school, because they didn’t see the point of it; had been arrested for petty crimes—both Wallace and Woodfox were picked up for violations of Jim Crow laws, like standing too close to a building without the owner’s permission—and had been sent to Angola for robberies. They were all introduced to the Party in jail and saw its teachings as a revelation. Until then, King said, “I had the attitude that life had nothing more to offer me, nor could life get anything from me, for I had nothing. I felt I had done it all and, should I perish the next morning, so be

it.” Woodfox said, “Our instincts and thoughts were so closely aligned it was frightening.”

In C.C.R., they were permitted to leave their cells for an hour a day to walk along the tier alone. During their free hour, Woodfox, King, and Wallace held classes for the other inmates, passing out carbon-copied math and grammar lessons. Woodfox gave them twenty-four hours to study lists of

GILLY’S BOWL & GRILLE

As for the beer, I bring my own. I haven’t touched
another human
in twenty-three days, not even someone’s palm

passing my change.
I forget—because I am in heels, because California
still owns

a portion of my body, and is on fire—my socks.
The owner
of the alley lends me his daughter’s,

who is behind
the concession counter and looks, in braces,
blond hair

twisted on top of her head, like she could
be mine. *They’re clean,*
he tells me. Crew, bleached white, mid-Atlantic

preteen packaged.
She wants, I am sure of it, something synthetic.
She wants,

in pink polka dots, in patterned tiny stereos,
to forget
the same five boys corralling the boxes of M&M’s,

sodas sweating
in their Styrofoam cups. Peeling out on the simulated-
driving games,

they push in quarter after quarter she drops to their
cupped hands.
And as I test each polished orb for weight, I think

the white, ribbed
cotton socks are the rows of corn she rides
her brother’s bike

by. Shoot after shoot of the alleys
she sweeps

words—“capitalism,” “imperialism,”
“feudalism,” “totalitarianism,” “bour-
geoisie”—and the following day he
quizzed them.

Gary Tyler, an African-American inmate in C.C.R., said that the teachings made him consider himself a political prisoner. At seventeen, Tyler was sentenced to death, after a jury convicted him of shooting a white classmate who had been protesting the

after the boys are picked up and taken home.

I drink
the beer her father wouldn't, brewed in a fancy
coastal town.

I'm not, we both know, from around here. No one else
bowls alone.

I christen each column with a name I always wanted.

Brooke, Madison.
Biblical *Joannas, Rachels, Lydias*. Women with history.
The children

I will never have. The year my father died
I swore it—
never leave another behind. Keep to yourself.

Move often,
and far, and spend your money. It is, I hope,
his business—

Gilly's—named for her, so that, when she has moved
to Pittsburgh,
or Cleveland, and he has been gone almost ten years,

she can know
he wanted, for her, somewhere that people would drive to,
in the dark,

to drink under the neon lights and hurl their lives away
for an hour
or two. To sweat into her own socks, which will still

be here
then, clean, white, and when they place them
on the counter

a man might grab a stranger's hand
and tell her
she cannot leave with her open bottle of beer.

—Corey Van Landingham

desegregation of his school. (A federal judge called his 1975 trial "fundamentally unfair"; all the eyewitnesses eventually recanted.) Woodfox, Wallace, and King gave Tyler reading lessons and lent him radical newspapers, like *Fight Back! Newspaper of the Revolutionary Brigade*, and *Final Call*, founded by Louis Farrakhan. "These guys were able to break down the politics surrounding my situation—the educa-

tional structure of the schools, why the black schools were poorly financed," Tyler told me. "I used to get mad at them sometimes, because they acted like they were my dads. They left me no room to be a risk-taker."

Kenny Whitmore, another inmate in C.C.R., said that Woodfox "should have been a professor." Woodfox told Whitmore to stop reading his "trash-ass pimp books," urban crime novels

that degraded black women, and to try "Native Son," by Richard Wright. Whitmore told me, "Man, I kept on reading and reading. Then I looked in the mirror and saw Bigger Thomas. I was coming to terms with who I was as a person, with my blackness, with being at the bottom of the world."

After reading a history of chattel slavery, Woodfox told the inmates in C.C.R. that Southern plantation owners used to inspect the rectums of the slaves they intended to buy at auction. Woodfox said that the process resembled what they endured whenever they left the cell block: they were forced to strip, raise their genitals while lifting each foot, and bend over and spread their buttocks while coughing. Woodfox, Wallace, and King circulated a letter to all the inmates on one tier, describing a plan for resistance. On the chosen day, nearly all the inmates began refusing the strip search. A few were beaten so badly by guards that they had to be hospitalized.

THE THREE MEN worked to curtail their desires. None of them drank coffee or tea or smoked. "If I feel a habit is developing, or even a disorder of any kind, I counsel myself in spirit," Wallace told a psychologist. "The more food you eat, the more your body craves food," he wrote to a friend. "It's the same for sleep—most of it is mental." He didn't like being dependent on security guards to turn the light on every morning, so he kept it on all the time and covered it with a legal pad when he slept, which he did for fewer than three hours each night.

In 1978, when the prison opened a small outdoor exercise cage in C.C.R.—inmates could go outside for a few hours a week—the three men ran barefoot outside, even when frost covered the ground. "We had to make ourselves think that ordinary things didn't apply to us," Woodfox told me. "We wanted the security people to think that they were dealing with superhumans." It was also a coping strategy. "Before I let them take something from me, I deny it from myself," he said.

Woodfox spent several hours a day writing letters to pen pals, many of whom were also known as political prisoners, like Leonard Peltier and Mumia Abu-Jamal. He said he was

"positive that the people—our brothers and sisters outside—would rise up and organize for us." But the Party had splintered—Huey Newton envisaged a party devoted to community service, while Eldridge Cleaver advocated urban guerrilla warfare. By 1982, the Party had collapsed. The plight of the Angola 3 was forgotten.

Yet the three men, who communicated with one another by sending written and oral messages, passed from one cell to the next, continued identifying as Panthers. Wallace described the principles of the Party as "indelible mental protection," the "key to the mental stability of every one of us." The men were repeatedly singled out as important enough to take revenge on, a fact that helped them preserve their self-esteem. A security officer acknowledged in an interview with Warden Henderson's wife, Anne Butler, who wrote books on regional folklore, that at one point he gathered a "good crowd" of officers at C.C.R., armed with pistols and a gas-grenade launcher. He said, "Everybody'd done went to arguing about who was gonna get Woodfox and Wallace."

FOR TWENTY YEARS, Woodfox had no lawyer. He, Wallace, and King taught themselves criminal and civil law. In 1991, King wrote a brief for Woodfox, arguing that he had been unconstitutionally indicted, because his grand jury, like every grand jury in the history of St. Francisville, excluded women. A judge agreed, and overturned Woodfox's conviction. Before he could be released, however, the state indicted him again. One of the grand jurors was Anne Butler. She had devoted part of a book to the case, describing how the Angola Panthers left "their own bloody mark on history." She said that she asked to be excused from the jury but that the D.A. insisted she serve. (Later, after an argument, the warden shot her five times, almost killing her, and was sentenced to fifty years in prison.)

The trial was held in Amite City, a town where many Angola guards lived. Woodfox's lawyer, a public defender who

drank heavily during lunch breaks, did not ask the state to test the bloody fingerprint, and he didn't discover Hezekiah Brown's special treatment. Instead, the focus of the trial was Woodfox's militance, though his views had softened. When the prosecutor, Julie Cullen, asked Woodfox if he still felt that he had the right to escape from the courthouse, he said no. "I was afraid," he said. "I was a young man. I was afraid."

Cullen asserted that Woodfox's political views were "diametrically opposed" to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent approach.

"No, they were not," Woodfox said.

"All of this talking about revolution and bloodshed, death, sacrifices," she said, referring to a letter he'd written in 1973. "You're not an advocate of any of that? You're a victim of all of that?"

"Well, I think I was a victim of racism in this country," he said. "Yes—from the day I was born."

When Cullen asked Woodfox if he was still politically active, he said that he tried to teach inmates on his tier to have "pride, self-respect, a sense of self-worth, and to see that the way to change things is to first change themselves."

"Is that a yes or a no?" Cullen interrupted.

"That is a yes," Woodfox said.

He was convicted and again sentenced to life without parole. "Some may view that victory as a sign to end my existence," he wrote to a friend.



DURING HIS TRIAL and the two years leading up to it, Woodfox was in the general population at a county jail in Amite City, where he was never disciplined for breaking a rule. When he returned to Angola, a social worker noted that there were "no indications of behavioral problems about this inmate reported by security." Nevertheless, he was placed in solitary confinement.

Social workers, who occasionally circulated on the tier, described Woodfox as "respectful," "positive," "cooperative," and "neat." King was characterized as "friendly," "calm," and "polite." When Wallace complained that he had been in solitary confinement for nearly three decades, a social worker noted that he

"did not appear depressed" and that his attitude was "appropriate to situation."

Every ninety days, a Lockdown Review Board set up a table at the end of the hallway on Woodfox's tier. Shackled and handcuffed, he stood at the table for a brief conference with two board members. They had his disciplinary record, but they rarely looked at it. He often informed the officers that he hadn't had a rule violation for years. Once, a sympathetic board member told him, "Hey, this comes from higher up. We can't release you, and you know that."

Prisoners in C.C.R. who had killed inmates or tried to escape—one had kidnapped the warden at knifepoint—were eventually released. But Woodfox, Wallace, and King remained. The Lockdown Review Summaries for the three men always provided the same explanation for their confinement: "Nature of Original Reason for Lockdown."

Burl Cain, who was the warden from 1995 until last year, acknowledged in a deposition that Woodfox appeared to be a "model prisoner." But, Cain said, "I still know that he is still trying to practice Black Pantherism." He didn't like that Woodfox "hung with the past," he said. An assistant warden, Cathy Fontenot, said that the three men had to be kept in lockdown because "they have tremendous influence with the inmate population."

Gary Tyler, who was eventually released from C.C.R. and placed in Angola's general population, told me, "As time went on, it became utterly impossible for me to even reach these guys. The warden kind of built a wall around them. They were considered the pariahs of the prison."

WOODFOX OFTEN WOKE up gasping. He felt that the walls of the cell were squeezing him to death, a sensation that he began to experience the day after his mother's funeral, in 1994. He had planned to go to the burial—prisoners at Angola are permitted to attend the funerals of immediate family—but at the last minute his request was denied. For three years, he slept sitting up, because he felt less panicky when he was vertical. "It takes so much out of you just to try to make these walls, you know, go back to the normal place

they belong," he told a psychologist. "Someday I'm not going to be able to deal with it. I'm not going to be able to pull those walls apart."

In 2000, the three men filed a lawsuit, arguing that twenty-eight years of solitary confinement constituted cruel and unusual punishment. The groundwork for the case was done by a law student, Scott Fleming, who began studying the court records in 1999, after receiving a letter from Wallace, who wrote to any lawyer or activist whose address he could find. Fleming knew the neighbor of the daughter of Anita Roddick, the founder of the Body Shop, and after learning of the case Roddick visited Woodfox in prison. She decided to pay for lawyers for the three men.

George Kendall, one of their new lawyers, said he thought that "part of this case is going to be figuring out how to hold these guys together mentally." But their resilience became as much an object of psychological scrutiny as their suffering. Stuart Grassian, a psychologist hired for the lawsuits who studies the effects of solitary confinement, wrote, "I have never encountered any situation nearly as profound or extreme as that of the three plaintiffs in this case."

Even the state's psychologist, Joel Dvoskin, seemed impressed by the men's endurance. He wrote that Woodfox "maintains a demeanor of quiet dignity, he asserts his rights in a similarly dignified way." When Dvoskin asked Woodfox if he would ever take medication for his anxiety, Woodfox replied that he would control the problem through "concentration and will power."

He told another psychologist, Craig Haney, that he was afraid of how well he'd been "adapting to the painfulness." "There is a part of me that is gone," he said. "I had to sacrifice that part in order to survive."

Woodfox felt that his strength was his ability to hide "what's going on deep inside of me," and the conversations with the psychologists left him unhinged. At the end of the interview with Grassian, he said, "When you leave, I have just minutes to erect all these layers, put all these defenses back. It is the most painful, agonizing thing I could imagine."

He steadied himself with a rigid routine that required at least two hours of



"Just to be clear, this is just a spaceman and a spacewoman on a spacewalk. This isn't a spacedate."

daily reading. He decided, after a romantic relationship in the nineties that developed through letters, not to become involved with another woman as long as he was in prison. "From my reading, I knew that revolutionaries had to purge themselves of being chauvinistic," he said. Rebecca Hensley, a professor of sociology at Southeastern Louisiana University, who corresponded with Woodfox for many years, said that when she expressed romantic feelings for him he gently declined. He told her to read a book called "The Prisoner's Wife," about the pain of prison relationships.

IN 2001, KING'S conviction was overturned, after the state's two witnesses admitted that they had lied, and recanted their testimony. King was told that if he pleaded guilty to a lesser charge he would be released immediately. "King was real reluctant to leave us," Woodfox told me. "It was the comradeship,

the love between us. He felt he would leave us shorthanded."

A sinewy fifty-nine-year-old, King walked from C.C.R. into Angola's parking lot. He moved into a small apartment in New Orleans with a former Panther, Marion Brown, and rarely left. He couldn't sleep for more than an hour at a time. Brown said that King was "filled with fear, suspicion, conspiracy." If she moved a piece of furniture, he assumed that someone had broken in.

Prisoners from Angola often called King collect, and, though he had no income, he never refused the charges. Grassian, who met King when he was free, observed that he "somehow seems to feel that neither he nor Marion can lead any semblance of a normal life until he gains his friends' release. He devotes almost all his concentration and energy to talking about, or thinking about, his two friends who remain at Angola."

Not long after he was freed, King

returned to Angola to visit Roy Hollingsworth, an inmate in C.C.R. who credits the Angola 3 for his moral awakening. Hollingsworth said that, years before, he was about to rape a young inmate and smash his head when King called out from another cell and asked him to reflect on what he was about to do. When King got to C.C.R., five security officers approached him and terminated the visit. He was told never to return.

In a deposition, Warden Cain said he expected that King would resume his “revolutionary stuff” if Woodfox and Wallace were ever released. “He is only waiting, in my opinion, for them to get out so they can reunite,” he said. “So they can pick up where they left off.”

IN 2008, JOHN CONYERS, the chair of the House Committee on the Judiciary, and Cedric Richmond, a Louisiana state representative, learned about Woodfox and Wallace’s decades of confinement and visited them at C.C.R. After the meeting, Richmond told the press that a “massive amount of evidence” showed that Woodfox and Wallace were innocent. Brent Miller’s widow, Teenie Rogers, had also begun to question the state’s evidence, after a young investigator on the case, Billie Mizell, befriended her and made charts mapping inconsis-

tencies in the state’s testimony. Rogers wrote Richmond a letter saying that she was “shocked to find out that no real attempt was made to find out who the fingerprint did belong to, which should have been a very simple thing to do.”

The state met doubts about the case with unusual vigor. After the case received national media attention, on NPR and in *Mother Jones*, the public-information office for the Louisiana Department of Corrections set up a Google Alert and notified Angola’s administration when the men were in the news. Louisiana’s attorney general, Buddy Caldwell, who was elected in 2008, said of Woodfox, “I oppose letting him out with every fibre of my being.” He had been friends since first grade with the original prosecutor in the case, John Sinquefield, whom he promoted to the second-highest position in his office.

Caldwell requested the recordings of nearly seven hundred phone calls made by Wallace and Woodfox, including conversations with their lawyers. Warden Cain said in a deposition, “We were kind of curious to see just how far they would go . . . to see what rules they would break.”

Investigators listened to all the calls, and found that, in an interview with a project called Prison Radio, Woodfox had stated that he continued to live by

the principles of the Black Panther Party. As punishment, Woodfox was prevented from going outside. Soon afterward, Warden Cain decided that he no longer wanted Woodfox and Wallace at his prison. “I got tired of the Angola 3,” he said. The men were transferred to new prisons, at opposite ends of the state. They remained in solitary confinement. Woodfox wrote to a friend, “I would go insane if I for a second allowed an emotional connection to take place with what is my reality!”

When the psychologist Craig Haney visited the two men at their new prisons, he was shocked to see how much they had aged. “The separation was devastating,” Haney told me. “They had a powerful connection to each other that had sustained them.” Woodfox told Haney that he had “lost interest in everything.” He was again subject to strip searches up to six times a day. The men in the cells on either side of him were mentally ill and screamed for much of the day. He felt overwhelmed by the sour smell of their breath.

At Angola, Woodfox and Wallace had seen themselves as “village elders,” but at the new prisons the other inmates treated them like ordinary criminals. Wallace told Haney that he felt as if he were reaching his “end point.” His voice cracked, and he seemed hesitant and slow. He thought that there was something wrong with his heart. Crying, he said, “I can’t stand up to it.”

WALLACE LOST FIFTY pounds. He complained of stomach pain, which the prison doctors diagnosed as a fungus. “No palpable masses—exam limited by prison room chair,” one doctor wrote in June, 2013. Five days later, a doctor hired by Wallace’s lawyers found an eight-centimetre bulge in his abdomen. He received a diagnosis of liver cancer. Wallace told Haney, “The majority of my life I have been treated like an animal, so I guess I will die like an animal.”

The cancer swiftly spread to his bones and his brain. In letters, Wallace referred to himself as a “soldier” and drew ornate pictures of panthers. He liked to use the term “W.W.T.P.D.”—What would the Panthers do? A friend, Angela Allen-Bell, didn’t understand his devotion. “You have given your



whole life to the Party," she told him. "Why aren't they here for you now when you are sick and need help?" She said that he told her, "I didn't join the people—I joined the Party. The Party transformed my mind, and that's all it owes to me." Another friend, Jackie Sumell, said that Wallace's and Woodfox's commitment to the Party reminded her of the "Japanese fighter pilots that they found on some of the Philippine Islands thirty years after the war, still fighting."

In September, 2013, Wallace gave a deposition in his civil suit from a bed in the prison's infirmary. He hadn't eaten for several days, and was being given heavy doses of the opiate fentanyl. The state's lawyer requested that the deposition be adjourned, because Wallace was vomiting, but Wallace told him, "Come on. Come on with your questions." He was capable of saying only a few words at a time. He said that being in solitary confinement for forty-one years had reduced him to a "state of being where I can barely collect my own thoughts." He pursed his lips and appeared to be holding back tears. "It's like a killing machine," he said.

"You're on your deathbed, is that your understanding?" one of his lawyers asked him.

"Yes," he replied.

"Are you able to say with a clean conscience, as you prepare to meet your maker, that you did not murder Brent Miller?"

"Yes."

Five days later, a federal judge responded to Wallace's habeas petition, which had been lingering in the courts for years. The judge overturned his conviction, ordering that he be released.

At dusk, Wallace was loaded into an ambulance and taken to New Orleans, to stay with a friend who lived half a block from where he'd been raised. Family and friends, some of whom he hadn't seen for forty years, gathered around his bed. One friend read him the last chapter of Eldridge Cleaver's "Soul on Ice." Another held flowers to his nose.

On Wallace's second day of freedom, the state impanelled a grand jury, which reindicted him for Miller's murder. Wallace was never told. He died the next day. He asked that his funeral program begin with a quote by Frantz Fanon: "If

death is the realm of freedom, then through death I escape to freedom."

Woodfox couldn't accept that Wallace, whom he described as "the other part of my heart," had become an "ancestor," the term Panthers used to describe the dead. "We always believed that we would survive anything," he said. He could no longer avoid the thought that a similar fate awaited him. He said, "All these years and years of study and discipline and carrying myself a certain way, in order to die in prison."

A YEAR AFTER WALLACE's death, Woodfox's conviction was overturned again, because of racial discrimination in the selection of the grand jury. The state issued a new arrest warrant and, in February, 2015, convened a grand jury to indict Woodfox for the third time. Deidre Howard, a sixty-one-year-old dental hygienist from St. Francisville, was the forewoman. She said that the prosecutor explained that the case had to be "run back through" because of a technicality. "They told us we just needed to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's," she said.

The coroner in the case had been Howard's doctor; the district attorney worked down the street from her and had lent her a tent for her outdoor Bible meetings. Warden Henderson had been her neighbor. Howard felt that she owed it to the Miller family, who owned a restaurant where she sometimes ate, to keep Woodfox locked up. According to Howard, the prosecutor emphasized to the jury that the Black Panther Party was devoted to "raping and robbing." She signed the indictment. "There really wasn't anything to deliberate," she told me.

As she lay in bed that night, Howard realized that she had determined a man's life with less consideration than she devoted to buying a new refrigerator. She could barely remember his name. The day after the indictment, Woodfox was transferred to West Feliciana Parish Detention Center, which is three blocks from Howard's house. One evening, as she was getting ready for bed, she heard the siren of an ambulance. From her bedroom window, she saw the ambulance heading toward the jail. She had read in the newspaper that Woodfox had renal problems, diabetes, hepatitis C, and car-

diovascular disease. Still wearing her pajamas, she got into her car and followed the ambulance to the hospital. She tried to see if the man being unloaded from the gurney was Woodfox, but she couldn't get a view of his face.

Three months later, she sent a letter to a judge who had presided over previous hearings. "I have made a terrible mistake," she wrote. She also wrote to the judge who had overseen her grand jury, telling him that after researching the case she understood that crucial facts had been withheld from her. "I feel violated and taken advantage of," she said. In another letter, she begged Buddy Caldwell to stop the prosecution. When she received no replies, she mailed a letter to the governor, Bobby Jindal, whom she had voted for. "This is the worst human tragedy I have ever seen," she wrote.

In April, 2015, she and her twin sister, Donna, drove to a prayer vigil for Woodfox at a church in Baton Rouge, to mark his fortieth year in solitary confinement. They remained in their car, and, as Woodfox's brother and other supporters arrived, they leaned down, so that no one would see their faces.

IN LATE 2015, Buddy Caldwell was voted out of office, and Deidre Howard sent the new attorney general, Jeff Landry, more than a hundred pages of letters that she had written to attorneys and judges involved in the case. "Jury service has been a devastating experience," she wrote. Although people had been protesting the case for years, it was the first time that anyone from St. Francisville had seemed bothered.

Landry offered to end the prosecution if Woodfox pleaded no-contest to manslaughter. For years, Woodfox had fantasized about walking out of court after being acquitted by a jury, but his lawyers urged him to avoid a trial. Despite requests that the location be changed, the case would be heard in West Feliciana, a parish in which the Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, during a Senate bid in 1990, had received seventy-five per cent of the white vote.

As Woodfox was contemplating the offer, Woodfox's fifty-two-year-old daughter, Brenda, ran into one of Woodfox's childhood friends in New Orleans. Woodfox hadn't seen her in nearly twenty

years. The friend took a photograph of Brenda and sent it to Woodfox, to confirm that the woman was his daughter. Then Brenda visited him at the jail, bringing her son and her two grandchildren. "Up until that point, there was this constant internal battle going on," Woodfox told me. "I've always preached to other men, 'You have to be willing to sacrifice everything, even your life.' If I took the plea deal, would I be a hypocrite?"

Woodfox's brother Michael told him about a conversation he'd had with Brenda. "She was crying and said she didn't have a daddy," Woodfox said. "I can't tell you the depths of pain I experienced from hearing that." He decided that a plea deal could be justified.

Woodfox had a week to prepare for his release. For years he had created imaginary budgets, determining how much he could pay for food, given the rent and his monthly utilities. He had spent four decades, he said, living "in the abstract." He told himself, "I can handle this—I just need to see it coming." He revisited lists that he'd made, edited over the course of decades, of what to do when he was free: visit his mother's and his sister's gravesites, learn how to drive again, go to Yosemite National Park, "be patient."

On February 19, 2016, his sixty-ninth birthday, Woodfox packed his belongings into garbage bags and put about a hundred letters in a cardboard box. He put on black slacks and a black bomber jacket that a freed Angola prisoner had sent him.

Not until he was outside did he believe that he was actually going to be freed. It was a warm, clear, sunny day. He squinted and held the hem of his jacket. When he reached the front gate, he raised his fist and gave a closed-lip smile to a small crowd of supporters.

Michael led him to his car, a blue Corvette. Woodfox shuffled when he walked, as if shackles still connected his feet. Biting his lip and crying, Michael helped his brother into the passenger seat and showed him how to fasten the seat belt.

THAT NIGHT, WOODFOX and Robert King went to a party in Woodfox's honor at the Ashé Cultural Arts Center, in New Orleans. People kept tapping Woodfox's shoulder, an experience

he found frightening. He was used to guarding the front of his cell without having to worry about "the damage someone can do from behind," he said. King sensed Woodfox's discomfort and moved closer to him, guiding him through the room. Woodfox kept his eyes on the floor. His expression seemed frozen in an apologetic smile.

At the party were people he hadn't seen for forty years. He thought that they would still see him as a "petty criminal who victimized my own neighborhood," he said. Most of his supporters in recent years had been white, and he worried that the black community would find him inauthentic. Toward the end of the evening, an old friend invited him onto a stage and handed him a microphone. Woodfox pulled up his pants, which were too loose, and held the zipper of his jacket. "I'm kind of new at this," he said. "I hope you understand that I have been through a terrible ordeal. I need a little time to get my footing so I won't make a fool of myself."

The friend handed the microphone to Robert King, who shrugged. He has a leisurely, meandering way of speaking. "Anyway," he said. "What can I say?" He pointed to Woodfox. "This is your night, bro."

"Whatever is my night is your night," Woodfox said quietly, looking at his sneakers.

The d.j. played Stevie Wonder's



"Happy Birthday" for Woodfox, who nodded and gave the black-power salute.

WOODFOX HAD INTENDED to spend a month camping in the woods, gazing at the sky—a cleansing ritual. After years of being forced to listen to men talking to themselves, he was desperate to be alone on his own terms. Once he was released, though, he felt that this would be an indulgence. He spent his first month at the house of a

friend in New Orleans, hosting visitors. Most nights, he sat in a pink armchair wearing his prison-issue gray sweatpants and a pair of Crocs that his brother had bought for him. He found it a "strain to stay within the social dialogue," he said. He often warned new acquaintances, "I'm not good at, as they say, 'chitchat.'"

He worried that his family would feel that he had abandoned them, but his daughter, Brenda, became a regular visitor. She exuded an aura of patient competence, seeming content to sit silently on the couch, observing her father with others. She often brought her boisterous grandchildren. Her ten-year-old granddaughter, Michaela, liked to dance to pop songs on Woodfox's new iPhone, a gift from a detective who worked on his case. Woodfox nodded to the beat and occasionally said, "Hehe." "Your great-grandpa is a quiet soul," Brenda told Michaela. "Quiet but deadly. Don't mistake his quietness for weakness."

Woodfox discovered that a typical day in the house—moving from the kitchen to the bathroom to the living room—entailed more steps than his entire exercise regimen in prison. He felt overwhelmed by options. "I have to submit to the process of developing a new technique to fill the hours," he told me, three weeks after he was released. "I'm trying to strike the right balance with being free."

He walked slowly, with such intense concentration that he didn't notice when someone called his name. His footing was unsure. "He seemed very nervous, very insecure," his friend Allen-Bell told me. "I'd never seen that Albert before." Theresa Shoatz, the daughter of Russell (Maroon) Shoatz, a Black Panther who was in solitary confinement for twenty-eight years in Pennsylvania, said that Woodfox appeared "docile and withdrawn. He didn't look you in the eye. He just held his head down and said, 'Thanks for your support.' I didn't see much happiness on his face."

Years before, Woodfox had said that if he was ever released he would "unleash the little man inside of me and let it jump up and down." But he didn't feel that sense of abandon. He felt ashamed that he'd pleaded guilty to anything. "I've learned to live with it,

but I still haven't come to terms with it," he told me. "I still regret it. I don't care how you look at it: I was not standing for what I believed in. I truly feel that."

After a month in New Orleans, Woodfox moved into a spare bedroom in Michael's home, in Houston. Above his bed, he taped a picture of Wallace and him at Angola, and placed a few Panther buttons on the dresser. "I don't like an over-cluttered room," he said.

Michael said that sometimes he'd pass Woodfox's bedroom and see him lying in bed awake, his arms folded across his chest. Michael urged Woodfox, "You have to tell your mind, 'I am free. I don't have to just sit there.'"

WOODFOX DISCOVERED THAT he felt more comfortable in social settings if King was by his side. At a family reunion in a suburb of New Orleans, his relatives congregated in his cousin's kitchen while he and King sat at a card table in the garage. Woodfox kept his back against the garage door and picked at a small bowl of egg salad. He almost never finished a meal. He sometimes went all day without eating before realizing that there was a reason he felt so depleted.

King assured Woodfox that he was also a sensitive eater. "I gotta eat in increments," he said. "If I eat a whole plate, I lose my appetite."

"Yeah, I'm a nibbler," Woodfox said.

Woodfox's cousin had invited several supporters—Woodfox and King called them their "Angola 3 family"—including Deidre Howard. She and her twin sister, Donna, sat in the garage with him and King. They were dressed identically: black platform sandals, ruffled collared shirts, gold pendant earrings, and their hair in a French ponytail with the same type of barrette.

Woodfox asked Deidre if people in St. Francisville still thought that he was guilty. She swiftly changed the subject. "I did not have the heart to tell him that our community still sees him as a murderer," she said later.

TWO MONTHS AFTER Woodfox's release, he and King settled their civil suit with the state. The agreement requires that Louisiana's Department of Corrections review its system for plac-



ing inmates in solitary confinement, and consider the status of segregated prisoners in a more meaningful way.

With a modest sum from the settlement, Woodfox and King, who had moved to Austin after his home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, decided to buy houses in New Orleans. Woodfox looked at ten houses before choosing one in East New Orleans, in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, for less than seventy thousand dollars. He wasn't entirely sure why he liked the house—the interior was dark, and he wished it had a larger back yard.

Allen-Bell researched the frequency of 911 calls in the neighborhood and tried to dissuade him. "It's not a place where you are going to feel comfortable walking on the street," she told him on the phone.

"I don't care if there are nine hundred 911 calls," he said. "I'm buying the house."

"Why?" she asked him.

"Why?" he said. "Because I want it, that's why."

She told him that the 911 calls were for serious matters: armed robbery, kidnapping, rape.

"So?" Woodfox said.

A few days after the phone call, Woodfox finalized the purchase. Brenda drove him to the real-estate agent's office, in a high-rise, to sign the paperwork. She had begun taking him to all his appointments. He liked to tell people, "I'm a dad now."

They were two hours late for their appointment with the agent, a chirpy blond woman. "We got caught up in traffic," Woodfox told her casually. The process required two witnesses, and the agent asked me to be the first one. Although Brenda was sitting beside me, the agent asked another white woman who was working behind the desk to be the second. Woodfox signed the papers, and then we did, too.

Later, I asked Woodfox if he thought it was strange that the agent had ignored Brenda. He said that he figured it was a mistake, and not worth dwelling on. "I don't spend a lot of time

looking for racism," he told me. "Look, if it really manifests, then I will give the person a tongue-lashing. I think I've developed a pretty good vocabulary to do that, a pretty good philosophy."

A few weeks earlier, a cabdriver had demanded that he and King pay for their ride before they reached their destination. Insulted, Woodfox said that his first instinct was to get out of the car; instead, he and King handed over the cash and at the end of the ride gave the driver a large tip—"guilt money," they called it.

Woodfox didn't have the keys to his house yet, but he wanted to show it to Brenda. We parked in front of the house, a brick ranch with bars on the front windows, a screened-in patio, and a lawn with six squat palm trees and some spindly shrubs. A chain-link fence surrounded the property. Woodfox mentioned a few things that he appreciated about the neighborhood—most of the lawns were mowed—but he admitted that none of that really mattered. "To be honest," he said, "I just wanted a house close to my family."

Brenda realized that chocolate had melted over her car's center console. She and Woodfox spent the next ten minutes wiping it up with tissues,

at which point they were ready to leave.

"Bye-bye house," Woodfox said.

BY SUMMER, WOODFOX felt that he was getting his "street legs," as he called them. A sly sense of humor surfaced. But he was also increasingly exhausted. He spoke at panels about prisoners' rights in Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Baton Rouge. "I feel an obligation, because when I was in the position of the guys in prison I used to wonder why nobody spoke for us," he told me. His friend Kenny Whitmore, who is still at Angola, told me that when Woodfox was freed "he took a part of me with him." Whitmore said, "That old man is going full speed ahead."

In early August, Woodfox flew to New York City to receive an award from the National Lawyers Guild, an association of progressive lawyers and activists, at the organization's annual conference. He wore a gray blazer over a T-shirt that said "I Am Herman Wallace." At the podium, he announced that he wanted to honor "my comrade and good friend." He extended his palm toward King, who was in the third row of the auditorium, but became too choked up to say his name. Woodfox pressed his

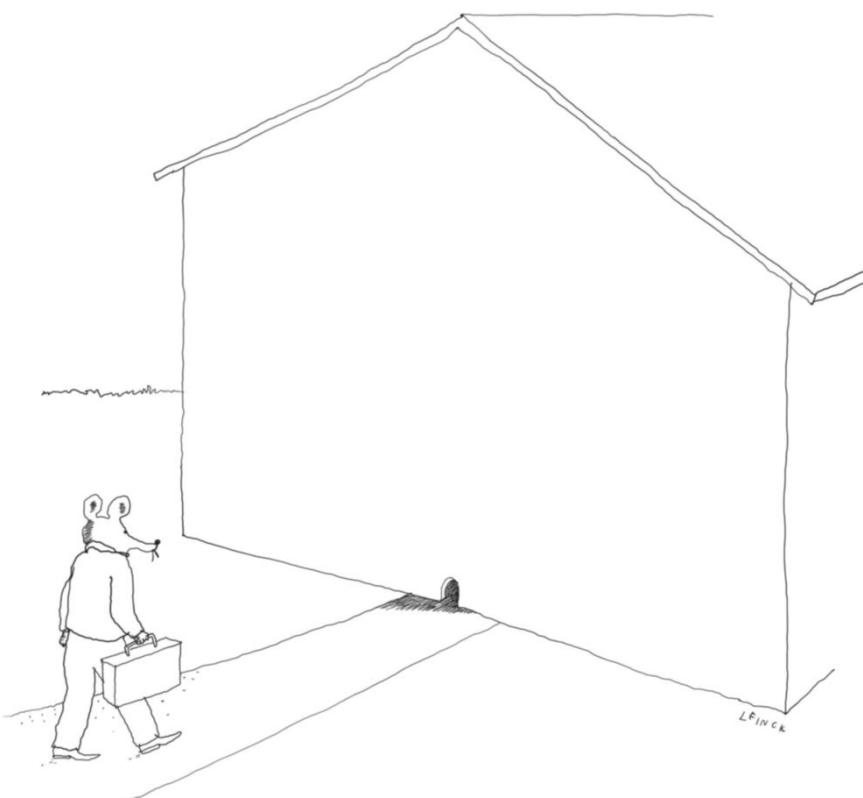
lips together and paused, regaining his composure. "I hope that my being here tonight is a testament to the strength and determination of the human spirit," he said.

After the speech, Woodfox and King headed to a lounge on the second floor of the law school, where people were selling buttons, T-shirts, and posters that said "Free All the Angola 3." Woodfox signed a dozen posters, writing in steady, capital letters, "I AM FREE! ALBERT WOODFOX." People kept approaching him to ask if they could take selfies. "It's amazing to be in the room with you," one person told him. "Talk about moving and inspiring!" another said. "O.K.," Woodfox said in response to most compliments.

A woman who had recently been released from prison tried to commiserate. "It's scary getting out," she told Woodfox. She wore anti-embolism stockings and carried a plastic bag containing dozens of tubes of toothpaste. "I just bought a house in New Orleans," he told her. Then he seemed to feel guilty for making it sound too easy. "I'm trying not to get too frustrated," he added. He pointed to King: "Fortunately, I have him as an example."

Although he'd been too nervous to sleep the night before, Woodfox stayed out until 2 A.M., going to bars with lawyers and activists. He had a workmanlike approach to socializing. He didn't drink, and he never seemed to judge people. The most skeptical thing I'd ever heard him say was that someone was "quirky." He had a hard time saying no to anyone. Although he hoped to eventually have a romantic relationship, he didn't feel that he could devote time to it. "I mean, I'm open to a relationship," he told me, "but right now that's not my primary thing. I know the interest in me and what I went through is going to die, so I'm trying to get as much done while people are still interested enough."

Two days after the speech, Woodfox, King, and I had breakfast at their hotel, in Greenwich Village. At the conference, Woodfox had felt himself being turned into a mythological figure, a process that he found uncomfortable. "All these people who have been involved in social struggle for so long want to shake my hand," he told me. "I don't



have an emotional connection as to what the big deal is. Sometimes I just don't think that, you know, surviving solitary confinement for forty-one years is a big deal." I asked if that was a coping mechanism, and he said, "Pretty much everything I did for the last forty-four years was some sort of coping mechanism."

He said that, in the early two-thousands, inmates at Angola began telling him, "Thanks for not letting them break you." It was the first time he grasped that, by staying sane, he had done something unusual.

King, who was eating a piece of toast with jelly, recalled one of the first protests in C.C.R., when the Panthers persuaded inmates to refuse the strip search. After a few days, King had realized that inmates were being beaten so badly that they could die, and he wrote a letter to Woodfox recommending that they end the protest. "It is the man who creates the principles," he wrote. "The principles shouldn't kill the man."

King took a bite of his toast. He seemed to be contemplating the decision for the first time in many years. "In the final analysis, I think we made the right decision," he said.

"It was the right decision," Woodfox said.

"I mean, I could have given my life and been beaten to death," King said. "The legacy I would have left is that no one would know why I was killed." He leaned back in his chair, smiling. "I'm so glad that decision was made. I'm so glad that decision was made."

IN OCTOBER, EIGHT months after his release, Woodfox passed the Louisiana driver's test, scoring ninety per cent. He bought a Dodge Charger and drove for the first time in forty-seven years. "I just whipped out the old phone, gave the G.P.S. system my brother's address, and ten minutes later I was pulling up to his house," he told me.

A few days after getting his license, Woodfox flew to Oakland for the fiftieth reunion of the Black Panther Party. The *Panther Post*, a newspaper printed by the Panther alumni association, announced on its front page, "With much joy we welcome our comrade, Albert Woodfox, back to the community that he was ripped away from."

Some two hundred original Party

members had gathered at the Oakland Museum of California for panels and discussions. At night, many of them went to a jazz club called Geoffrey's Inner Circle, in downtown Oakland. Tins of macaroni and cheese, fried fish, and collard greens drew a long line of men and women that stretched across the dance floor. Their bellies had become soft, and their pants rose a little high. They wore Velcro shoes or Tevas with socks. A few used walkers or canes. "I'm not trying to sound conceited," Woodfox told me, "but I seem to be more animated than some of these guys." He ordered orange juice from the bar and sat in a booth, watching the crowd. Eventually, he and King migrated to the dance floor. Woodfox had danced only a few times since he'd been released: his style was slow, deliberate, and somehow gentle. There was no excess movement.

Conversations drifted toward police shootings. "The more things remain the same, the more things remain the same," Woodfox said after someone described a shooting. When a young reporter from a black-news Web site asked him for a five-minute interview, Woodfox quickly got to his point. "We have to protect Black Lives Matter like we didn't protect the Black Panther Party," he said. Later, he told me, "I can't tell you how proud I am of them." The greatest disappointment of freedom, he said, was realizing how little had changed. "It's the same old America."

People often introduced themselves to Woodfox by claiming a central role in the Party. "Oakland, born and raised, 1967, four months after the Party started," one man announced. "I'm the only original Panther besides Huey Newton named Huey," he said, though later he acknowledged that Huey was his middle name. A former Panther who sells historical artifacts—slave shackles, Ku Klux Klan robes, abolitionist newspapers—told Woodfox that he had been one of the founders of the Party, which he said originated in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Woodfox listened silently and looked at him slightly askance. Then he excused himself.

"I'll tell you—that's the fifteenth story I've heard that the Party started in some other city," he told me.

For years Woodfox had imagined

that the Panthers existed on an otherworldly plane, free of fears and flaws, and he was surprised to see that they could pass as ordinary human beings. "I'm realizing how normal they are," he said. "Made extraordinary by circumstances." His friend B. J. Jennings, one of Huey Newton's former aides, told me that Woodfox had been able to survive because "you stand on the principles of the Black Panther Party, and, baby, you are empowered. It's like how people read the Bible, take that word for word, and stand on that mentality to get free."

When Woodfox was released, he told me that he wanted to write a book that would ask the question "Why the Party?" By the time of the reunion, he had given up on formulating a complex theory. "From the Party I learned that I had worth as a human being," he said. "How do you explain something that's in your heart and your mind and your soul?"

Woodfox and King had been talking about "the fiftieth," as they called it, for months, but when I asked Woodfox if he enjoyed events of this kind he shook his head and grunted. "I enjoy being alone," he said. Nevertheless, he kept inviting people to stay at his new house in New Orleans, telling them about the things he had purchased: a washer and dryer; a refrigerator with an ice dispenser and an electric stove; a leather sectional sofa; two bedroom sets with dressers and mirrors. His daughter was furnishing his house, and he was delighted by her ability to take charge and find a good bargain. "I'm just kind of holding on by the fingernails," he told me.

He planned to move into the house shortly after his seventieth birthday, in February, and then he hoped to cut back on travelling. "I have to," he told me. "I can't keep doing this. I mean, I can—but I choose not to." He was sleeping only a few hours a night. He sometimes jolted awake, overcome by the sensation that the atmosphere was pressing down on him. All four walls appeared to be inches from his face. He felt so constricted that he removed all his clothes. He calmed himself by pacing—four steps forward, four steps back—a technique he'd been using for decades. After four or five minutes, the walls of the room would snap back into place. "The only thing I can do is walk it off," he said. "It happens. And I move on." ♦



PHOTOGRAPH: TETRA IMAGES/GETTY

AFTER TONIGHT HE'D never see any of these people again. Dom Whipple—the notorious corporate raider, the scourge of boardrooms near and far, the layoff king—had traded his entire fortune for a one-way ticket to a distant planet, and even guys like Lenny Westerfeld, a man he had once blackmailed into an early retirement, had come to bid Dom farewell.

"Every cent?" Lenny asked him. "You mean to tell me you really gave that church every single cent?"

"It's liberating, Lenny, it really is. I've never felt so free in all my life."

"Be honest, though. No secret investments squirrelled away? No offshore accounts?"

Dom shook his head. "Not a one."

"Well, I think it's lovely," Sheila Park chimed in. "I'd do it myself, only I'm probably not religious enough. What's this church of yours called?"

"God's Plan for Space. G.P.S."

"Oh, my," she said. "And I get nervous telling people I'm an Episcopalian anymore!"

God's Plan had a simple mission—to establish a more egalitarian society on another planet and to spread the message of God's love to unexplored solar systems—but Dom's best efforts to explain it had mostly been met with blank stares and polite jokes.

Blake Robbins sidled up next to Dom, reeking of whiskey, and threw his arm around Dom's shoulder. "So fucking up one planet isn't enough for you, pal? Kidding, kidding." He leaned in, and his voice softened. "Seriously, though, we'll all be rooting for you, buddy."

Dom had the odd sense that he was at his own funeral and soon he'd be zooming off to Heaven. Heaven, in this case, was a small planet orbiting a faraway sun, a planet from which he would never be able to return. The chance of his death was in fact rather high. The ship might collide with an asteroid at the outer edge of the solar system or its thermal protection shield might break apart and all on board might spend eternity asleep in their freeze boxes, never aging but essentially dead. Anything could happen, and Dom had tried to prepare himself, mentally and spiritually, for all possible outcomes.

Across the room, near the fireplace, he spotted his ex-wife, Nona, chatting with

Bob Wykoff, the new chief exec at River-Hill Capital Management, and tugging at his lapel flirtatiously. Dom had heard rumors about those two. He tried not to care. She had her journey, he had his.

Guests continued to arrive, and Dom smiled amicably through the many toasts, attempting an expression that he'd rehearsed in the mirror more than a few times, an expression that he hoped would put people in mind of the Dalai Lama. I'm amused, this smile of his said, but nothing you say can touch me, because none of this really matters, not ultimately, and maybe one day you'll wake up and realize that everything you've spent a lifetime chasing and acquiring is, ultimately, beside the point.

Not an easy look to achieve, this smile.

As instructed by the church, Dom was using these farewells as opportunities to make amends with as many people as he could, and generally this meant avoiding business talk. When Marty Corey came over and asked for his thoughts on the R.G.C./PharmaFields merger, Dom shook his head goofily and told Marty he wasn't up to speed and wished him all the best. Next, he apologized to Harriet Luff for never returning her calls after that night they'd shared at the Hilton in New York all those years ago. He grabbed Erica Balou by the shoulders and pulled her into a long hug. He tried to convince her that he'd been a terrible mentor and pleaded with her not to follow too closely in his footsteps, though he knew she'd be every bit as ruthless as he'd ever been. It was like asking a jackal not to feast on a zebra's entrails.

"This here is some swanky shit," Jerome said.

Jerome was Dom's shadow for the week, his Earth Chaperon, assigned to him by the church. Dom had already forfeited his cars and phones and most of his cash, so Jerome was responsible for getting him where he needed to be, for keeping him well fed, for making sure he had a place to sleep. Jerome was rail-thin, with dark scruffy eyebrows and an odd sense of humor. He liked flicking guys in the nuts, for some reason. He'd spent a few years in jail, in his early twenties, for mailing fake I.D.s across state lines, but now he was on the "straightened arrow," as he put it, often. Dom was not especially fond of Jerome.

"I ate about thirty shrimp just now."
"Eat thirty more."

Jerome took it all in: the room, its antiques, the stone fireplace, the floor-to-ceiling draperies, the custom chandeliers. "You really gave all this up, huh?"

"It's just a house."

"Says the man who got to live in it. What about your ex—what's her story?"

"Nona? She's a good person."

"She looks like a hard woman to please," Jerome said, smiling. "Am I right?"

Dom said nothing.

"Don't worry," Jerome said. "There'll be plenty of other ladies on the trip."

That was true, but in order to couple with a fellow-passenger, Dom knew, he would first have to marry that passenger, and in order to marry her he would have to get the church elders to bless the union, which would require a series of counselling sessions and interviews.

There'd be no hanky-panky in the alien Garden of Eden.

God's Plan had selected its future home from a list of candidates provided by the government for possible planetary colonization. Dom had joined the church about a year after his divorce, and he'd volunteered as a colonist for the new settlement six months later, a commitment that required him to sign over all his assets to the church. He was one of about two thousand people who'd volunteered for the trip, and the size of his largesse had all but guaranteed him the next available spot on a ship. The irony of the fact that a near-billionaire had bought his way into a future socialist community did not escape him, though it didn't exactly bother him, either. After all, in giving up his substantial wealth, wasn't he sacrificing more than, say, the line worker at the electric-car plant who'd signed over only a double-wide and a meagre 401(k) plan?

His ship would be the second to depart for the planet, and it would transport five hundred and twelve colonizers. The first ship, which had left two years earlier, was carrying only ten passengers. All available data suggested that the planet would be more than hospitable to human life, but if these brave ten arrived and found the conditions unsuitable their job was to trigger a warning system that would automatically



"Renk just discovered beard oil."

reroute the second ship—Dom's ship—back to Earth.

God's Plan was well funded—Dom was hardly the only wealthy person to divest his interests to the church—but the ships were incredibly expensive, and most of the parts, for reasons of economy, had been purchased secondhand. Even the freeze boxes had been stripped off a decommissioned asteroid-mining ship. As it happened, the mining ships had belonged to a company in which Dom had once been the majority shareholder, a fact that amused him. The ships were functional, but far from pristine. The church elders had advised all passengers to place their faith in God during the voyage through the cold, dark wilderness of space.

A shield of prayer, they called it. This degree of faith was difficult for Dom to achieve, not because he didn't believe in God—he did—but because his philosophy in business had always been to know as much as possible about his investments and to take only manageable risks. That is, risks that weren't true risks.

ARE YOU SURE you want to do this?" Nona asked him.

The party was over, and they were sitting on her couch together, polishing off a bottle of white wine. Dom wondered if he'd ever drink something as delicious as a chilled Sancerre again. Probably not. He doubted that wine grapes were among the seeds in the church's seed banks. He bathed his tongue in every sip. For the

first time all night, Nona really looked at him. She was as beautiful as ever. Why had he been so awful to her, so unfaithful? He could no longer fathom it, why he'd ever been tempted by any others.

They'd met in business school, as members of the outdoor club. The first night they'd spent together had been in a tent. She'd been a beautiful girl, strong, with a rock climber's dry, cracked hands, one or two of her fingers always bandaged with white tape. In her nightstand she'd kept a small spiral notebook in which she had scribbled a long list of life goals. High on the list was marriage to an "ambitious, driven man," and also one child, "preferably a son." She had never been a frivolous person. When Dom proposed to her, she'd said yes immediately, as if ready to embark on their life together the very next morning. They'd never had children, but he had at least been ambitious and driven for her. The divorce was amicable enough, to the extent that any divorce can be truly amicable, and he'd willingly given her more than half of everything, not to mention the beach house, which she'd always loved more than he did. He was the one who'd cheated, after all.

He was long past the point of obfuscation. He regretted everything.

"I saw you talking to Bob Wykoff tonight," he said. "You two looked very chummy."

She smiled. "Does that bother you?"

"Of course it does. I'm still in love with you."

"Please. Two days from now I'll be a distant memory. How old will I be by the time you get there and unthaw?"

"You'll be sixty-one," he said. He'd done the math many times.

"So I'll be an old woman, and you'll still be forty-five years old. What will it matter to you then if I wound up with Bob Wykoff, or anyone else, for that matter?" She took his hand. "Dom, you do realize you don't have to do this. You can still back out."

"I've given the church everything."

"This crazy church—it's so unlike you. Never in a million years would I have suspected you'd get religious." She sipped her wine. "Dom, you don't have to go on some dumb space mission to save your soul. You know that, right? You can stay right here and walk the line on earth."

He leaned over and pressed his lips to hers. A last kiss, he told himself, a farewell, a nostalgic indulgence. He hadn't made love—not to her, not to anyone—since the divorce. The church forbade sex outside marriage, and he'd promised God to obey the church's rules, but surely this particular rule didn't apply to an ex-wife? He unzipped the back of her dress and soon was on top of her. She helped him with his pants. By the end, he was sobbing into her chest. His face was on fire, and he could taste his own tears. Embarrassed by the outburst, he didn't dare look up at her. She patted his back gently until he regained control of himself.

"Sorry," he said, eventually. "I'm so sorry. I don't know where that came from."

"Time for sleep," she said.

They went upstairs, moving quietly past Jerome's room, and climbed into bed together. She rolled over onto her side, and he pressed himself to her back. It was almost as if they'd never separated. Maybe there was still hope for them, after all. Maybe a couple of years apart had healed the rift. Tomorrow morning he'd cancel his trip; he'd move back in with her; they'd start over. With a little help from Nona, just a little bit of money, he could get things moving again, surely. Or his lawyers! Maybe they could find some loophole, some wrinkle in his donation to the church. Maybe they could find a way to get it all back for him.

He woke up the next morning alone. He found Nona downstairs in the kitchen, fully dressed, giving orders to the maid, Lucy, who was busy clearing away the

empty glasses from the party. Dom stood there in his underwear, scratching the crust from the corners of his eyes. Lucy poured him a glass of orange juice. Nona smiled at him as he gulped it down.

"I've got to be somewhere this morning," she said. "You're welcome to stay as long as you'd like, of course."

"You can't cancel?"

She kissed his cheek. "Are you maybe reconsidering?"

"I don't know. Maybe we go get some breakfast and talk it over."

"I'm sorry, I really can't."

"I'm leaving forever. What could be more important than this?"

"That's funny," she said, her voice airy and faraway. "I might have asked you the same question."

She moved to the door, where she jammed her feet into some designer boots.

"Let's talk more when I get back," she said. "Just a couple of hours. To be continued, right?"

She grabbed her purse off a hook and left. Standing by the door, he could hear the clack of her boots on the steps outside. The maid skittered away to the back of the house. After a shower upstairs, Dom slipped into his clothes and knocked on Jerome's door. At length, Jerome appeared. He blinked heavily and muttered that he'd gather his things.

THE PURPLE-HAIRED WOMAN who handed Dom his coffee at McDonald's, the dent of his teeth in the cup's paper lip, the smell of exhaust on the interstate in bumper-to-bumper traffic, the silver dice dangling from the rearview mirror of Jerome's truck—Dom marveled at the world he was soon to leave behind.

A pop country song was playing on the radio—a song about a Styrofoam cooler in a fishing boat, a father-daughter dance, a marriage cut short by cancer, the usual. Never again would he hear songs like this. The church wasn't letting anyone bring prerecorded music to the planet. Music from Earth, it had been decided, would only lead to feelings of melancholy. Maybe one of the other colonizers would figure out how to fashion an instrument. He could already imagine it, sing-alongs on an orange sand beach as giant long-beaked insects feasted on little pink jellyfish that washed up onshore. Anything was possible; all a mystery.

Jerome, with a very serious expression, asked what Dom would do if an alien wanted to have sex with him.

"Well, I very much doubt that will happen."

"Like, do you think you'd have anywhere to put it?"

Put what? Oh, right. That.

"Honestly," Dom said, "I've given no thought whatsoever to the hypothetical reproductive organs of any hypothetical alien creatures I might encounter."

"Yeah, I mean, for all you know, it might just be a bunch of"—Jerome grinned—"spores."

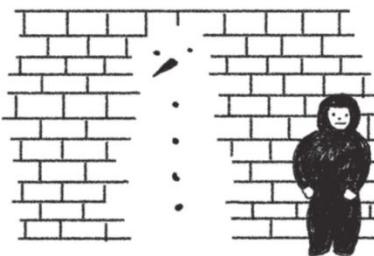
"Spores?"

"Like, little yellow sea-urchin-looking things that stick on your nut sack and suck out the sperm."

"Jerome," he said. "Why would I need to reproduce with a spore-alien thing when there will be plenty of women there? Human women. Women who will be more than happy to reproduce the old-fashioned way, sans spores."

"Sure," Jerome said. "Only, it boggles the mind, doesn't it? The possibilities."

They reached Jerome's house—an old mill house near Charlotte—just before dinnertime. When they walked through the door, Jerome's wife, Rachel, was stationed at the kitchen table, sliding coupons into plastic sheets in a giant binder. She was a big-bottomed woman, her hair streaked blond and red, and Dom had no trouble imagining her waddling through grocery stores, flipping through



her binder in search of discounted moisturizers, cereals, and hair dyes.

Even though he no longer had any money to his name—and even though he knew it was contrary to his new spiritual values to think so—he felt that he was inherently better than this woman. His thoughts clearer and more perceptive. His body odor less offensive. His heart larger and more open. He knew he wasn't supposed to harbor such thoughts—that they were all

God's children and so forth, and yet . . .

Anyway, in twenty-four hours he'd never have to see Rachel again. Quite possibly, twenty-four hours from now—at least, as he would experience those hours—she would be an old woman, still messing with her coupons at the same table, and meanwhile he would be shutting down to an entirely new world as an entirely new man. He tried not to feel bad for them, these future old geezers in this grimy kitchen, on this miserable planet, making the best of it, muddling through their lives without attempting anything big or monumental.

Dom was feeling excited about the trip again, thank God. He felt almost as exuberant as he had months earlier, when he signed up. He was on a path to become a better person. His priorities had been all wrong until he joined the church. Forking over every dime, he'd finally felt it, the release, the weight sliding off him, those terrible barbells clang against the floor and rolling away. He was like a child again! Innocent, full of awe. He had nothing but the shoes on his feet and a message of love to spread.

A message to preserve. If the Earth was going to die—and the way things were going, thanks to people such as himself, this seemed like the inevitable outcome—wasn't it the responsibility of decent Christians to preserve the teachings of the prophets, to insure the survival of at least a single community of believers in the universe? That was the mission, really, because what was the point of telling everyone to love each other if pretty soon there'd be no one left to love?

Jerome plopped down in his recliner, and Dom sat on the tartan couch.

"I tell you I dropped by the control room a few days ago," Jerome said. "Signal off the other ship is loud and clear, you'll be glad to know. Slow and steady, across the universe it rolls with the Intrepid Ten."

The Intrepid Ten—that was how the congregation referred to the first ten settlers.

"What do you think the weather will be like?" Jerome asked. "I think you ought to find a nice beach and set yourself up there. Build yourself a little beach hut. Drink coconut milk and eat crabs."

"I sort of doubt there'll be any crabs or coconuts."

"Whatever. The alien equivalent. You

know what I mean. The sun won't ever set, so you better find yourself some shade."

The planet was tidally locked, because it didn't rotate as it revolved around its sun. Half the planet was forever in the light, the other in the dark, the sun's position fixed in the sky. While this didn't sound immediately hospitable, all the data suggested that ideal conditions for life might be found where day and night met. It was in this liminal zone that the settlers would live together, between a permanent twilight and a permanent dawn.

Most likely they'd be living on a string of small islands in a band of ocean that girded the planet. Evidence suggested that an ice world loomed on one side of the ocean and a desert on the other, but the islands in the middle of that thin sea were expected to be lush tropical oases. The job of finding the ideal site would be the responsibility of the Intrepid Ten.

Jerome dug around in the cushions for the remote, and when he finally found it he put on a survival show about a group of couples competing to see who could make it the longest in the Australian outback without cracking.

"That'll be you tomorrow night," he said, with a smile.

Dom said nothing. Obviously life wasn't going to be easy on the planet. Obviously there would be struggles and sacrifices. But why did Jerome see the need to remind him of this fact on the night before his departure? As Dom's chaperon, Jerome had a responsibility to put him up for the night, but Dom still had a few dollars left. Enough at least for a cheap motel room.

He would have stayed with his parents, only an hour south of Charlotte, except that the church advised against being with family the night before launch. Dom had said goodbye to them a few days earlier. Like Nona, they'd thrown him a going-away party, to which his relatives had been invited. His father had stood up to give a toast but, overcome with emotion, had been unable to finish. His mother had refused to come outside and see Dom off when Jerome arrived in his truck.

"Don't do this," she'd pleaded. "You'll meet other women. Things will turn around."

"This isn't about Nona. It's about me. It's about finding the right path."

"I hate her for doing this to you." "It's not Nona's fault. I'm the one who

messed things up with Nona. I wasn't a good person, O.K.? I did things I'm not proud of."

"What things? What are these things you're always talking about? You're a good boy, Dom. You always were. In the eighth grade you turned yourself in for cheating on that test. You turned your own self in!"

This was a story she'd been telling for years, and Dom didn't have the heart to remind her that, in fact, he hadn't turned himself in but had been caught with the answers scribbled on his hand. It was an embarrassing, if minor, episode in his life that somehow had become a central feature in a narrative that existed only in his mother's head. But how to tell your mother that you are not in fact a good person? That you have blackmailed people to get what you want? That you have made unwelcome advances on various women? That you have orchestrated—in a roundabout, legally fuzzy way—another man's death for the purposes of keeping said man from a deposition hearing that might have endangered a natural-gas company in which you had, at the time, a controlling interest? That was the sort of shame you didn't disclose to a mother so sweet and guileless, the sort of shame you spared her and saved for God alone. A shame that, Dom feared, would follow you across the galaxy.

"Just trust me," he'd told her. "I'm not someone you should be proud of. But this is my chance for a fresh start, O.K.? This is a good thing."

"Go, son," his father had said then. "Just go. We'll pray for you. We'll be fine. Go."

And so Dom had gone, but now, sitting on this couch in Jerome's squalid living room, watching reality TV, he had an overwhelming urge to see them one last time, to wrap his arms around them, to try to make amends. After tonight, he'd never have another chance to tell them how sorry he was for being such a terrible son, for abandoning them here on this crumbling planet, this once and future wasteland.

"I'd like to borrow your truck for a few hours," he told Jerome.

"What for?"

"To see my parents. A quick trip. There and back."

Jerome looked over at Dom grumpily and scratched his belly through his

T-shirt, blue, with the church's insignia over the left breast. "You think that's such a good idea?"

Dom stood and held out his hand. "Please. Help me out here. The last favor I'll ever ask you for."

Jerome seemed unwilling to fork over the keys. Maybe he thought Dom would drive off and never come back. With a sigh, he stood and said that he was coming, too. On their way through the kitchen, Rachel asked if they were going out for food.

"Naw," Jerome said. "Chairman Space-man here wants to go hug his mommy again."

"Don't call me that," Dom said.

"What's wrong with Chairman Space-man?" Rachel asked. "It's a compliment!"

"I'm not the chairman of anything. I leave here with nothing. I'm just like everybody else."

"Oh, lighten up, Dom," Jerome said, laughing. "Ten grand says you'll be running that planet by the end of the first fiscal year. You should have seen his house, Rachel. Unbelievable. It was like a god-dang hotel."

"Oh, my Lord, that sounds nice." Rachel groaned with envy. "All that money, gone to the church!" She shook her head wearily. "I tell you what, we could have used some of that money. We haven't even paid off Jerome's truck yet."

"Hush," Jerome said.

"In debt up to our eyeballs!"

"I already told you," he said. "None of that, please."

"What's it matter?" she asked. "It's all true, and he'll be gone tomorrow morning anyway. Why not say what we're thinking?"

"Dom doesn't owe me nothing, and I can take care of my own," Jerome said, irritably.

"Of course you can. That's not what I meant by it. It's just"—her eyes blazed large—"all that money, gone just like that. Like smoke. Like it never meant anything."

THE LEXUS DOM had bought his parents wasn't in the driveway. Nobody answered when he knocked on the door. He let himself into the house using the key under the fake rock by the door. All the lights were off. He reached for his pocket, instinctively, thinking he'd just call them, but he'd already forfeited his

phone. He picked up the landline and then stared at the keypad. He didn't have their cell numbers memorized.

Now that he had it in his head to say goodbye again, he was desperate to see them. He didn't like feeling so thwarted, and he didn't want to carry this failure with him to a new planet. For the rest of his life, he'd wonder about what they might have said to each other if only they'd had a few more hours. Why had they decided to go out the night before his launch? Why the hell weren't they at home, like always? He wandered through the house in a daze, trying not to give in to self-pity.

Jerome poked his head in the door. "You find them?"

"They're not here. God, it's unbelievable!"

"Well, it's not like they knew you'd be coming by, right?"

Dom could have punched him. Jerome! He was almost as bad as that idiot wife of his.

"What's this?" Jerome asked, kicking at a box by the door.

Dom hadn't noticed it. He walked over to it and crouched down. Things were piled high in the box. His college diploma. A James Brown bobblehead doll. A stack of photographs: Dom and his parents, years ago, on a cruise ship; Dom and Donny Means, his best friend in the eighth grade, holding up a bucket of crawdads; Dom as a toddler on the beach with sand all over his face.

This was his mother's doing, no doubt. Dom hadn't even launched yet, and already she was throwing away the few remnants of his life in the house. He tried not to be mad at her. Maybe this was her way of grieving the loss of her son, and, besides, she'd always been a serial purger. Dom had come home from his first year at college to discover that she'd thrown out all his Ray Bradbury books and his arrowheads and his 1905 Barber silver quarter, which he'd marked as special by keeping it in a small ziplock bag.

"This all your stuff?" Jerome asked.

Dom nodded.

"Oof, that's rough, brother." He picked up the James Brown doll, tapped its springy head. "I like this little guy. Probably a collector's item. You mind if I take it?"

In his vows to the church, Dom had renounced the earthly life and, with it, all possessions. He wasn't supposed to

care about photographs, about the little glazed clay figurine he'd sculpted in the third grade, or about a ratty camp T-shirt, all of which would wind up in a landfill anyway, all of which would degrade, all of which was temporary, but Dom had to keep himself from snatching the James Brown bobblehead away from Jerome. He wasn't sure why he didn't want Jerome to have the toy, but he didn't.

"It's yours," he said.

With a smile, Jerome went outside, and Dom slid the box back against the wall. Two folded sheets of paper shook loose from the pile. Dom unfolded them and discovered his father's toast, the one he'd failed to finish delivering a few nights earlier. It occurred to Dom then that maybe it was a good thing his parents weren't here, that possibly it would have been cruel to prolong the goodbye.

He tucked the speech into his pocket and left.

RACHEL WAS ALREADY asleep by the time they got back, but she'd put sheets on the couch. Maybe he'd misjudged her. She was a sweet woman. He couldn't fault her for being a coupon

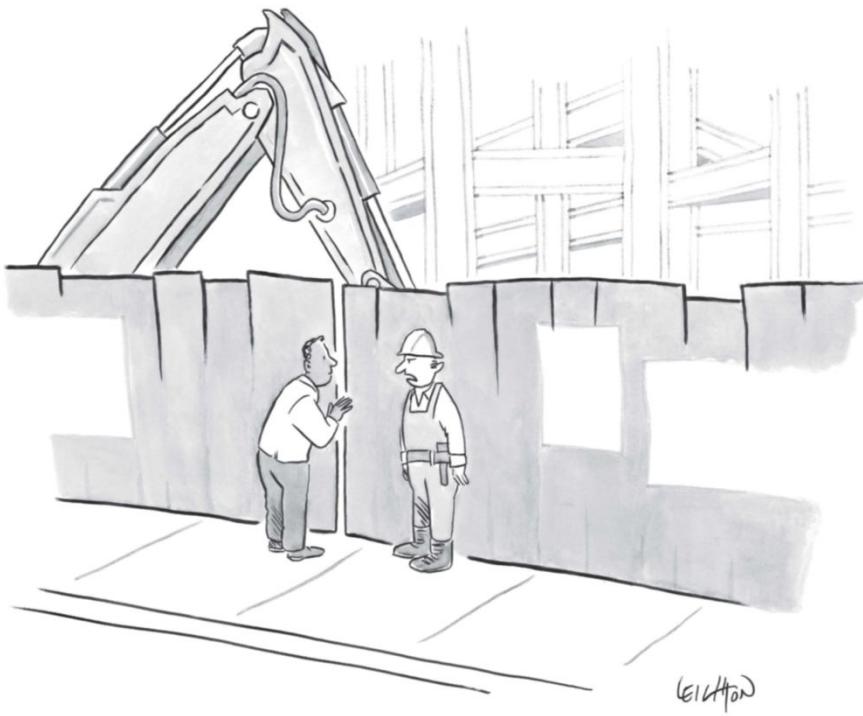
junkie. She was doing the best she could to get by in life.

Dom brushed his teeth at the kitchen sink, and then, once he was under the sheet on the couch, he read his father's toast. His father had delivered most of it, Dom saw now, except for the last few lines. "All I ask," it said, "is that you remember us. When you're standing on some very foreign shore, don't forget to gaze up into the night sky sometimes and think about your parents and your friends, all the people who loved you here on earth, regardless." That word, "regardless," hit Dom hard. "We'll be gone by the time you get there, so maybe we'll be closer by than you think. Good luck, Dom. Safe flight."

Reading this, Dom felt sick. Unable to sleep, he turned over onto his stomach and closed his eyes. The couch smelled like cigarettes. After tomorrow he would never smell cigarettes again, since the church wasn't permitting anyone to bring tobacco. Dom had been lying there for about twenty minutes, thinking of all the things he'd never see or smell again, when he heard the floor creak. When he rolled over, Rachel was



"If only the aftertaste came first."



"You'll see it when it's done."

standing just a few feet away, her back to Dom. She was patting at his jeans, which were draped over the chair. He cleared his throat, and she turned around with a stricken look on her face.

"Sorry if I woke you," she said, coming over and kneeling down on the floor beside the couch.

Their faces were maybe a foot apart, and even through the darkness Dom could see the trails of a white cream across her brow.

"Listen," she said. "Jerome is a good man, but that's sort of his weakness, too. Ever since prison, he's been timid. He's not like you. He'd rather get stung than kill a wasp, you know what I mean? We've maxed out all the cards, there's the truck, and my parents have basically cut me off. I know you've got some funds hidden away somewhere, and I'm begging you to help us some. We've taken good care of you, haven't we? You want to be a good Christian? This is how. Help us out. You won't ever need that money anyhow."

"I've got about eighty in my wallet. That's it. Take it if you want it."

"Eighty dollars?" she said. "Please, like that'll do us a lick of good! Come on, where's the rest of it? Be honest with me."

"The rest I gave to the church," he said, truthfully. "I'm flat broke. I've got less than you."

"Don't even tell me that. You could make two phone calls right now to the right people and get yourself a hundred grand. Probably more. Who've I got to call? Nobody's gonna take my call, believe me."

"I'm sorry," he said.

She huffed angrily and stood up. On her way out of the room she grabbed the wallet from his jeans and took the cash.

EARLY THE NEXT morning, Jerome drove Dom to the launch site, outside town. The James Brown bobble-head, on the dash, jiggled violently as they drove down a long gravel road. After he parked, Jerome shook Dom's hand.

"Who knows, maybe we'll jump on one of these ships eventually and see you there one day."

"I hope you do."

"You don't mean that, but I appreciate it."

"I do mean it."

"Dom," Jerome said. "We're never going to see each other again. You don't like me and you don't like Rachel. You

think we're beneath you. Maybe we are, I don't know. The God's honest truth is we don't like you all that much, either. But we love you like we love all God's children and we wish you the best of luck."

"I like you both just fine," Dom said. "I don't know where you're getting this."

"Anyway." Jerome tried to smile. He bopped the bobblehead. "In the immortal words of James Brown, get on up."

Dom nodded, got out of the truck, and went over to stand in line with the others. No one had any bags or suitcases. They had nothing at all. The line led into an airplane hangar, where a lady with two brown front teeth sat Dom down in a chair, threw a barber's cape around his shoulders, and buzzed off all his hair. After that, he was issued a small green bag, which contained two work uniforms, a leisure outfit, underwear, pajamas, and a utility belt with some basic tools. In the next room, along with everyone else, he got naked and tossed his I.D.s and cards into a large blue barrel. He held on to his father's toast for a few moments, and then tossed it in, too.

Dom climbed a steep set of metal stairs and boarded a shuttle, which delivered him to the ship's loading dock.

"Naked as we came," the woman behind him said, smiling.

"I must have eaten three pounds of ice cream last night," someone else said.

"My dog wouldn't let me leave this morning," a man said. "He kept trying to block the way. What do you make of that?"

Some people were crying quietly. Others stared ahead with vacant expressions.

A woman—naked, head shaved—walked by in the opposite direction, flanked by techs in blue shirts. Tears were streaming down her face as she passed, and her breath was ragged.

Dom turned to watch the woman go. He knew there were about fifteen people on standby in a nearby facility, hoping for a spot to free up. Launching the ship was far too expensive for any unoccupied freeze boxes.

At the end of a gangway, one of the church's pastors stood at the ship's entrance, blessing each person as he or she stepped aboard.

"Go with God," he said, patting Dom's shoulder.

Inside they stored their bags in lockers

and then waited for their freeze-box assignments.

"Whipple, Dom," a woman said, sternly. "77-A. Up and to the right."

He found his place and stood in front of the box, a casket connected to a central machine via a series of long corrugated tubes and thin metal pipes. He had to wait only a few minutes before a tech came over and helped him get situated inside his box. The tech instructed Dom to remain as flat as possible, to keep very, very still. The freezing process would be almost instantaneous, he said, and Dom wouldn't feel a thing.

"In just a minute, I'm going to close this lid," the tech added, calmly. "As soon as I push this button"—he indicated a small gray button on the side of the box—"you'll be there. Voilà. Sixteen years and a trip across space in a single instant. Isn't that amazing?"

Dom gazed up at this stranger, trying not to feel overwhelmed. He told himself he was about to get an MRI. He was about to have a cavity filled. All this was totally normal, totally routine.

The lid closed, shutting out the noise of the ship. Dom was alone with the sound of his own breath. Through a small window he could still see this stranger's smiling face. The tech flashed Dom a thumbs-up. A high whistling noise filled the box. Like a steaming teapot. A heavy heat shuddered through him. His head seemed to taffy away from his body at the neck. His vision bounced and blurred. Little pink balloons swelled into view ahead of him, like engorged blood cells, crowding and bumping. More and more balloons appeared. So many balloons! A celebration was under way, only Dom didn't feel especially excited. In fact, he was beginning to panic. He looked for the man on the other side of the window but couldn't find him through the balloons. Where the fuck were all these balloons coming from? He tried to swat at the balloons, but there were too many of them. Everything was so pink and bright and obnoxiously happy.

The lid popped open, and Dom sat up in his freeze box. He coughed up a thick yellow syrup into his hands. He could hardly breathe. Thank God, he thought. They must have aborted the launch. Or maybe the tech had seen him panicking. He could still go home.

"There you go," came a voice, nearby. "Good, good, cough it all up, buddy."

Dom sucked in and then coughed harder, loosening more liquid from his throat. The syrup was drizzling down the sides of his face, too, and he did his best to smear it away. All around him were the other freeze boxes, most of their lids open. Had it already happened? Was he there? His body tingled. Sitting ahead of him in a small folding chair was a woman with long gray hair and a cane across her lap. When Dom's eyes met hers, she smiled and brought her hand to her mouth, as if in shock. Just behind her stood a younger man in a khaki military uniform, his arms stiff at his sides. He was tapping his foot against the ship's grated metal floor.

"Dom Whipple," he said. "Can you hear me?"

"Yeah," Dom said, coughing up more syrup.

"It's important that you stay calm."

Dom nodded that he understood.

"Mr. Whipple, my name is Lieutenant Roscoe Green. We've never met. I know this must be very confusing for you, what's happening right now, and I'm going to do my best to explain. Sir, you were a member of a now defunct organization called God's Plan for Space, and you departed Earth on this ship approximately thirty years ago. I can see that you're alarmed. Don't try to stand. Hold on. Allow me to explain. Fifteen years into your trip, your ship received a signal from another ship that had arrived on the planet ahead of you, and this signal automatically reconfigured your flight plan and redirected you back here to Earth."

"I'm back on Earth?"

"Yes, sir, you are."

"How long did you say it's been?"

"Thirty years, sir. From what we've pieced together, through a series of messages that we only recently received—" He frowned. "Well, it's very odd, but, from what we can gather, the planet—that is, your destination—was already occupied when the first group of settlers arrived."

Dom waited for the man to continue.

"What I mean is there was another intelligent life-form already living on the planet, which did not take kindly to a human presence."

"So I was almost there," Dom said,

"but then I came all the way back to Earth?"

"Dom," the woman said, leaning toward him. Her eyes glistened. "They've been waking each of you up individually, and they asked family members to be here when possible. To help ease the transition."

"Nona?"

"Oh, Dom," she said, her frail hands taking his despite the goo, squeezing them gently. "Dom, my dear, you're home. You're home again. You must think I'm hideous. I almost didn't come. I was afraid to see you again after all this time. But here I am, I'm right here."

Nona was wearing no jewelry, no makeup, and her dress looked as if it had been made from burlap sacks. A white scar peeped above the neckline at the center of her chest. What sort of life had she lived?

"My parents," Dom managed to say.

She shook her head. "A long time ago. I'm sorry."

Dom said nothing.

She sighed. "Your parents, my parents, Bob . . ."

"Bob Wykoff?"

"Yes, all gone now. Sometimes I think it's for the best. Especially these last few years. The world's a different place. Nothing is like it used to be. Oh, Dom, I'm afraid you're in for quite a shock."

The lieutenant cleared his throat.

Nona squeezed Dom's hands again. "They think I'll overwhelm you if I tell you too much, but they don't know you the way I do. Besides, look at you! You'll be fine, won't you? You're still strong. You're still so young!"

Lieutenant Green smiled weakly, as if to reassure Dom of this fact, and then fished a small shaving mirror from his pocket. He held it up close enough to Dom's face that he could see his reflection.

"I can't get over it," Nona said. "You look exactly as I remember you."

Dom tried to make sense of the mess in the mirror as it jittered. That bald head, those greasy, hairless cheeks, the swollen eyes that looked as though they'd only just now opened to the light for the first time—a hideous baby. ♦

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

SPIELBERG AT SEVENTY

What he did, and how he did it.

BY DAVID DENBY

A BOY, ASLEEP IN the country, is awakened by a strong light outside his window and some strange rustlings in the house. A few feet from his bed, a toy monkey claps its cymbals together—like a stick banging the floor three times in a French theatre, announcing the beginning of a show—and tanks and police cars spin and race around the room. The boy, who has a snub nose and wondering hazel eyes, is not at all afraid. A little later, the house is invaded again, this time not so gently: a Hoover suddenly sweeps across the floor, like a column of Roman soldiers, terrifying the boy's mother. Out in the street, while light pours down from above, a row of mailboxes rattles furiously, as if under siege from a tornado.

The first hour or so of Steven Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"—a movie that opened forty years ago—is unparalleled in its combination of scary and funny ideas. In Muncie, Indiana, something has definitely arrived. The aliens extend a galvanizing finger, reaching out not like the Sistine God to a naked and powerful Adam but to a boy, to toys, and to appliances. The American consumer world is thrilled into electric activity, the rubbish scintillated and redeemed. In Spielberg's movies, transcendent or threatening forces enter ordinary existence, where, despite them, children play and couples quarrel, make up, and split. Life goes on. The people don't know, so to speak, that they are part of a movie with a fantastic premise: they go to the beach oblivious of the shark; they tidy up the kitchen without noticing the alien in the house. By nature, most of us are busy with small tasks and immediate pleasures; we are self-

interested and literal-minded. Yet the boy in "Close Encounters" stands before an open door, and the reddish-gold light beyond beckons him to some adventure he couldn't possibly have had before.

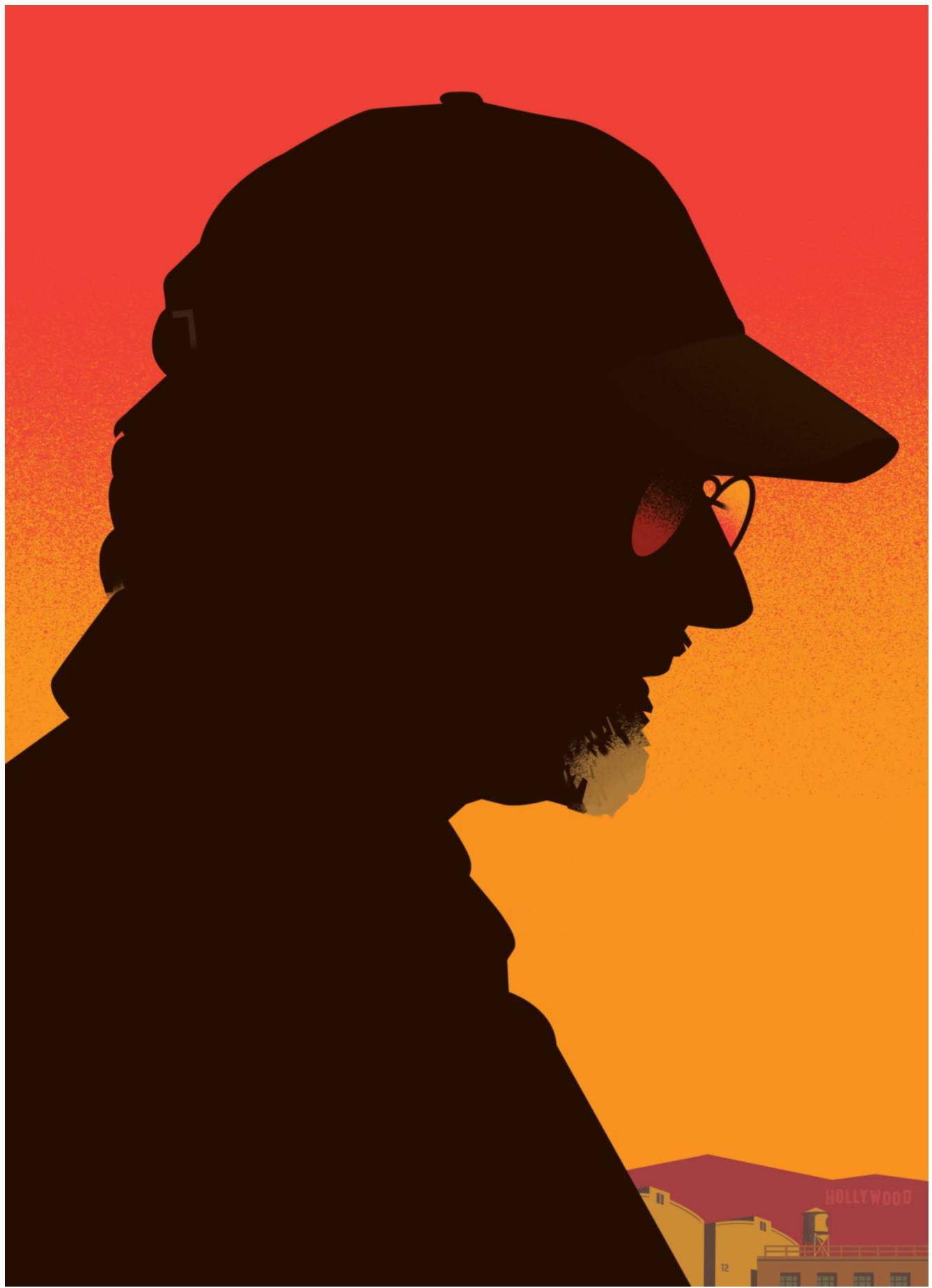
At the start of "Great Expectations," Young Pip is terrified by the convict Magwitch rising up in a graveyard and threatening to eat his liver. Spielberg has created, with skill equal to Dickens's, the strangeness felt by an innocent—the bewildering oddity, the physical enthrallments and terror of something entirely unprecedented. He captures the experience sensationally (in both senses of the word), with all the immersive physical violence that movies are capable of, and also as an abrupt change in awareness. In the famous scene near the beginning of "Saving Private Ryan" (1998), set at Omaha Beach on D Day, the bow ramp of the lead landing craft falls open and the soldiers in front immediately get shot; the rest struggle to get onto the beach, their vision blurred by fear, their hearing dulled by exploding shells. Janusz Kaminski, the cinematographer, works with a handheld camera that thrashes in the water. It is one of the great, tragic sequences in the movies, an experience as bizarre and dislocating as it is deadly.

Steven Spielberg is the most popular moviemaker who has ever lived, yet he has made many people uneasy, even resentful. Some have found him glib, his sense of action larger than life, his frame too busy, his temperament a jarring combination of violence and suburban sunniness. He can be tiresomely old-fashioned. In the spoofing, neocolonial "Indiana Jones" films, the turbaned Arabs and Indians, gesticulating and shouting, bite the dust like braves in an

old Western. When compared with his ambitious contemporaries, he doesn't seem like an artist—he's not self-punishing and dark, like Martin Scorsese; or mischievous, even malevolent, like Brian De Palma; or complicated, elusive, and bitter, like Robert Altman. He hardly touches the current world of work, identity, and play—his imagination is set either in the past or in the future. Such moods as alienation and melancholia have no place in his films. He goes right down the center of common emotions, often with jolting force. He is positive, external, and patriotic, a public filmmaker.

"Saving Private Ryan" was made for adults, but Spielberg's audience is often the child harbored in the adult—the viewer open to fear, excitement, and exaltation. He has directed thirty-four features, and has served as a producer or an executive producer on almost seventy other films. He has also produced TV series ("Band of Brothers," "The Pacific") and documentaries. He has founded (with partners) a studio, DreamWorks, and then lost it. His enormous output poses obvious questions: How can anyone appeal to innocence in big, expensive Hollywood movies? Innocence is of dramatic value to an audience only if it is violated. Spielberg, despite his mild public face, is a great violator. But what kind of violation is exploitative, and what kind changes consciousness, as the best popular art often does?

FOR A MAN who readily identifies with Peter Pan, attaining the age of seventy (as Spielberg did on December 18th) seems a mistake, somehow. Yet Spielberg has been famous as an inspired boy at least since June 20, 1975,



With many Spielberg movies, the audience is the child harbored in the adult—the viewer open to fear, excitement, and exaltation.

when "Jaws" opened and the country, laughing and screaming, went mad for it. He is now the subject of a new study, written by the film critic Molly Haskell, "Steven Spielberg: A Life in Films," the latest volume in the distinguished series "Jewish Lives," published by Yale. As Haskell admits, she's an odd choice for the subject. She's not Jewish, a fact that, it turns out, matters not at all—she handles the Jewish part of Spielberg's identity briskly and convincingly. More centrally, she's a lifelong feminist, primarily concerned with the relations of men and women in movies, and especially with the intimation of sex. The intimation of sex is something that Spielberg has more than a little trouble with. He's not much interested in men and women together—a skittishness that puts him in a long line of American narrative artists, including James Fenimore Cooper, Melville, and Twain.

Haskell also remains a sixties cinephile at heart, in love with the formal inventiveness and the implicit and indirect meanings of European movies. Spielberg may keep up with the latest in film technology (in "War of the Worlds," from 2005, he ripped up the digital landscape with the best of them), but he's hardly an experimentalist. His moviemaking heroes are John Ford and David Lean, not Roberto Rossellini or Jean-Luc Godard. In freewheeling, frequently blitzed and blotto Hollywood, he has led a sober, work- and family-driven life. In brief, he's a square, which is part of what Haskell likes about him, since, she says, she's one, too. Disdaining cultists and box-office rhapsodists, she places each of his films adroitly in the culture of its period, and warmly praises some of his lesser-known works, like "The Sugarland Express" (1974), "Empire of the Sun" (1987), and "A.I.: Artificial Intelligence" (2001). She has written a swift and elegant introduction to Spielberg's life and work, in which admiration for his talents and his stupefying success overcomes most of her resistance.

When Spielberg was eight or nine, his father, Arnold Spielberg, a computer engineer, gave him a tiny transistor. Spielberg swallowed it. He was defiant at the time—the ingestion was not intended as a reverential act—but Haskell sees the event as a communion. Like Joseph McBride, whose magisterial "Ste-

ven Spielberg: A Biography" was first published in 1997, Haskell finds portents of Spielberg's visual imagination—his obsessions, his tropes—embedded in his early life, particularly in the family romance of mother, father, and child. Spielberg's mother, Leah, who is always described as a free spirit, was a permissive parent. ("We never said no," she said in a 2012 interview. "Steve really did run us. He called the shots.") The boy was not an attentive student, which grievously disappointed Arnold, who wanted him to study science and math.

Until Spielberg was three, he lived in a comfortable and comforting Jewish community in Cincinnati, but then the family moved to New Jersey, near Camden, and, when Spielberg was ten, to a newly built suburb of Phoenix called Arcadia—a place very much like the setting of "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial," with its ranch houses and its freshly poured sidewalks and streets, so good for bicycling. The parents, mismatched, fought a lot and, when Steven was nineteen, divorced. In his eyes, Arnold, who was always working hard and often away, was to blame, though Spielberg later found out that Leah had had a sexual adventure outside the marriage.

For biographers and journalists, Spielberg's estrangement from his father, which lasted for years, has become the figure in the carpet—Spielberg has made film after film touching on fathers in one way or another. There's the workaholic father ("Hook"); the weak or missing father ("Close Encounters," "E.T.," "Empire," "Catch Me If You Can"); and the hyper-responsible father ("War of the Worlds"). Even in "Lincoln," the father has troubles with his firstborn son, Robby, and slaps him in the street. But all this is a little puzzling. Spielberg's father gave him his first movie camera (8-mm.) and, later, took him to the desert in the middle of the night to see a meteor shower. When Spielberg was in high school, his father helped him make "Firelight," a kind of dry run for "Close Encounters." Whether Spielberg suffered emotional injuries that caused his paternal fixation or, like many male filmmakers, simply brooded on the nature of authority and heroism, associating the latter with fatherhood, it's impossible to say. There may be no Rosebud in Spielberg's life, just an inveterate urge

to make fictions and a natural sense of what's broadly appealing.

He didn't have the grades to get into the illustrious, connection-making film programs at U.S.C. or U.C.L.A., so he put in a couple of years at Cal State Long Beach. But Universal Pictures was his real school. When he was sixteen, he had wangled a pass to the studio, through a family friend. He sat at a desk in a shared office and hung out on sets, eavesdropping, inquiring, viewing—a process of bold assimilation and imposture recapped in his 2002 movie, "Catch Me If You Can," in which a real-life teen-ager, Frank Abagnale, Jr. (Leonardo DiCaprio), insinuates himself into successive careers. In 1968, when Spielberg was twenty-one, he got his professional start working in TV, signing a seven-year contract with Universal Television. During the next few years, he directed episodes of "Marcus Welby, M.D.," "Columbo," "The Name of the Game," and "Night Gallery," including an episode starring the sixty-two-year-old Joan Crawford, who had trouble remembering her lines. They apparently got along well enough. He knew what he was doing on the set.

Having served his apprenticeship in series work, he made, in 1971, a TV movie, "Duel," in which he broke with TV aesthetics and created a film grammar of his own. In "Duel," a harassed Everyman played by Dennis Weaver (the sidekick in "Gunsmoke"), driving in the California desert and mountains, gets caught up in an increasingly nerve-racking competition for the road with a trucker whose face you never see. There's certainly no father figure in this one. An exercise in vehicular virtuosity—chase, pass, ram, escape—the movie is relentless, mischievous, almost perverse; at times, you're invited to enjoy Weaver's torment. The unhinged trucker, after all, is a great entertainer.

The shark in "Jaws" is a nasty wit, too. He's more than hungry—he's the Joker in the water, a large, very bad fish. He keeps upping the ante on everyone, including Robert Shaw's sulfurous, Ahab-like hunter. Spielberg yoked horror-film frights to a man-against-the-sea adventure story, and the movie turns into a classically shaped humanist drama. Both "Duel" and "Jaws" have metaphysical overtones. You have to read them

allegorically, as fables about the relative weakness of innocence and the bottomless malice of the universe.

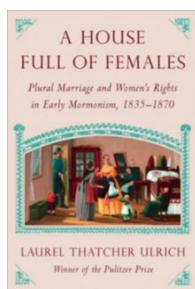
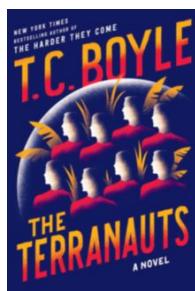
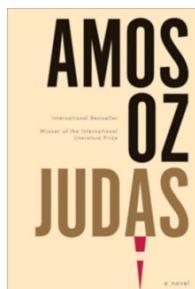
IF NINETEENTH-CENTURY theatre was I.D. W. Griffith's frame of reference, and nineteenth-century American painting John Ford's, Spielberg's is fifties TV and classic Hollywood adventure films (like Victor Fleming's "Captains Courageous" or George Stevens's "Gunga Din"). He absorbed the elements of popular storytelling, and created his own charged rhetoric of emotions—the climaxes extending to almost unbearable lengths, the faces turned upward as the camera moves rapidly or gravely toward someone who's taking something in. In Spielberg's films, thought is dynamic. The action is furious, but the key dramatic moments arrive in closeups, when characters realize what is happening and decide what to do. They are like punctuation marks in his stories. The characters must understand what is going on, or they die. And the audience understands from such moments the significance of an unprecedented experience.

Spielberg became a prince of momentum—he is nothing if not Newtonian. Once a line of force begins, he keeps it going, even adding strength to it, until it meets an immovable object or exhausts itself in open space. When a car turns a corner, the camera picks it up and hangs with it; when someone walks down stairs in a house, he or she is followed out the door and along the street. Spielberg has always understood that one of the sheer pleasures of movies is joining the action, not simply watching it. He turns us into participants, sometimes wary participants.

In "Munich" (2005), Israeli commandos approach Beirut in small boats, jump onto the wharves, change into women's clothes as a disguise, shoot the fedayeen sitting on a dock, run up the stairs of a hotel, and charge into bedrooms and fire again, the camera following in a rush, all of it a single vector of force, each shot precisely connected to the next. We are meant to be complicit in the savage excitement that the moviemaking creates—and therefore active in the incessant debate among the Israelis (Tony Kushner and Eric Roth wrote the screenplay) over the morality of targeted assassination and retaliation.

Once Spielberg sets his basic pattern of movement, he produces some of the

BRIEFLY NOTED



Judas, by Amos Oz, translated from the Hebrew by Nicholas de Lange (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). In this novel of nineteen-sixties Jerusalem, Shmuel Ash, lovelorn graduate student and lukewarm socialist, abandons his thesis ("Jewish Views of Jesus") to care for a frail, elderly Zionist living in a funereal villa. There he meets a cynical beauty who lost both father and husband in the mid-century wars, backroom and battlefield, that defined the contours of Israeli statehood. The novel has a clear message; as Shmuel says, "All the power in the world cannot transform someone who hates you into someone who likes you." But Oz tempers this didactic edge by making Shmuel a hapless figure—with walking stick, inhalers, and baby-powdered beard—unimpressive to the aristocratic recluses he's stumbled among.

The Terranauts, by T. C. Boyle (Ecco). The Terranauts of the title are the inhabitants of E2, an airtight, simulated-Earth environment—a test run for colonizing other planets in the face of ecological catastrophe on Earth. E2 and its inhabitants are closely monitored, but a pregnancy upsets the supervisor's calculations. Despite the sci-fi premise, Boyle works toward an intimate portrayal of the contingencies of character, shifting perspectives among the father-to-be, the mother-to-be, and the mother's bitter frenemy on the outside. With many of the characters literally under glass, our attention is directed from the future of humanity toward human behavior as it is now.

A House Full of Females, by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (Knopf). This empathetic account of the women of early Mormonism focusses on the doctrine of polygamy, first articulated by Joseph Smith in 1843. Ulrich, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, explores complex and contradictory responses to a practice seen by Mormons as answering a divine imperative to procreate; with many wives, a man could beget dozens of "spirits" of the faith. Ulrich describes the daily lives of these women in attentive detail, their sorrows (child-mortality levels were high), their stubborn strength, and their willingness to defy social norms. To the astonishment of the outside world, the same women who vigorously defended multiple marriages also fought for—and won—female suffrage.

Labyrinths, by Catrine Clay (Harper). Carl Jung once wrote to Sigmund Freud that the secret of a successful marriage was a "license to be unfaithful." As this entertaining portrait of his long-suffering wife, Emma, shows, he meant a license only for him; among his conquests were several women attached to the asylum where he worked. Emma was a naïve fiancée, eager to be a traditional, supportive wife. (She not only helped Carl with his research and reports but also brought wealth and respectability to the marriage.) Clay follows her subject from difficult decades of bringing up the children of a man whose capriciousness increased with his fame to an impressive late flourishing: in the nineteen-twenties, Emma, in her forties, became an author and a practicing psychoanalyst.

freest, most absurd bits of play since the silent era. The dangerous heroism of Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton—push a little beyond the actual, but keep it believable—re-emerges and triumphs all through the run-tumble-fall “Indiana Jones” series. Even when Spielberg goes digital, he doesn’t place us entirely in fantasy; he plays within the confines of realism, or mock realism. The raptors that take over the gleaming kitchen in “Jurassic Park” bump pots and pans off the counters like careless boys. One of them, confused by the reflection of a hiding girl, charges into a cabinet door and knocks itself out. This is so strangely funny—a klutzy raptor—that it’s comparable to a great poet dropping a comic simile into a formal design.

BY HIS LATE forties, Spielberg was over the top—way over. He had directed four of the biggest box-office successes in history (“Jaws,” “Close Encounters,” “E.T.”, and “Jurassic Park”). He had not one but two guardian angels—Sid Sheinberg, the president of Universal, and, later, Steve Ross, the C.E.O. of Warner Communications, who inculcated in him the grand manner of Hollywood living (multiple houses) and the pleasures of philanthropy. His first marriage, to the actress Amy Irving, had broken up, and he got married again, to Kate Capshaw, Harrison Ford’s knockabout mate in the second “Indiana Jones” movie. Today, he has seven children and four grandchildren.

In 1982, Universal bought the film rights to Thomas Keneally’s just published novel, “Schindler’s Ark,” a slightly fictionalized account of how Oskar Schindler—a member of the Nazi Party—employed eleven hundred Polish Jews as workers in his Krakow factory and saved them from Auschwitz. Feeling unready, Spielberg tried to pass off the project. It took a decade, and various writers working on the screenplay (Steven Zaillian wrote the one that got filmed), before he was ready to commit to “Schindler’s List.”

As he admitted, there was some unfinished personal business at hand, a reckoning to be made. He had been troubled growing up as a Jew, especially in the Phoenix suburbs. He had a big nose and his ears stuck out. Known by some kids at his high school as Spielbug, he was repeatedly taunted by an anti-Semitic bully. All

this may have been particularly hurtful to a boy who, on the day of his bar mitzvah, sat on the roof of his house and pelted his parents’ guests with oranges. “I never felt comfortable with myself,” he said in 1993. “I wanted to be like everybody else . . . I wanted to be a gentile with the same intensity that I wanted to be a filmmaker.” When he made “Schindler’s List,” he was reclaiming his identity as a Jew.

The question, then, was how to shoot the movie. The Holocaust has yielded powerful memoirs and documentaries; fictionalized Holocaust films are no more than a minor genre. Theodor Adorno said, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”: any attempt to aestheticize the camps, to redeem the irredeemable, only trivializes the events. Spielberg may not have heard such sentiments, but he nevertheless provided a series of answers. There is, for one, the extraordinary sixteen-minute sequence called “The Liquidation of the Ghetto.” On a vile, wet day with white skies, members of the S.S. drag men, women, and children into the street, pulling apart families, dumping the contents of suitcases from upper floors as the victims rush to find a nook, a corner, a place under the floorboards to hide, all done at Spielberg speed but with just enough breathing room so that we can see the fate of everyone we have known up to that point. The movie—and that scene in particular—has often been characterized as “documentary” in style, but no documentary ever looked like this. Janusz Kaminski’s camera presses along the edge of the violent, messy actions, or pitches into the middle of them, bucking, affrighted almost, but catching what it needs to catch as anguished movement churns on all sides. Far from being documentary, the directing style pushes representation to the end—toward life fully realized at its most terrible. The only answer to Adorno is the irrepressible courage of an artist.

In the big-bodied, beguiling person of Liam Neeson, Schindler is a complex fellow: a party-giving sensualist, a war profiteer who bribes everyone in sight. For all his worldliness, however, he’s another of Spielberg’s innocents overwhelmed by experience. He’s not prepared for what the Nazis plan to do to his workers. When the roundup begins, he’s riding with a girlfriend on a bluff overlooking the city; the entire scene plays off his stricken gaze. As Haskell says, the way the sequence is

constructed “expresses a crucial connection between seeing and understanding: as those below are scurrying, their views restricted, Oskar becomes both witness and conscience.” Thereafter he changes, and all that we’ve seen—the casual, sometimes whimsical, but unrelenting destruction of a people—begins to register in him as insane. The observer becomes an actor, even a protective father figure; the transformation is a kind of turbulent landing place for Spielberg’s strategy of observation and participation.

SPIELBERG WAS WIDELY praised for his “maturity” in making “Schindler’s List,” but his career has never moved in a straight line of rising achievement. Since “Schindler,” he has tended to alternate serious movies with fun ones: “Munich” followed by “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull,” and, recently, “Bridge of Spies” followed by an animated film, “The BFG.” In the midst of this productivity, the subject of Abraham Lincoln forced a change in style. He restricted his moving camera to following Lincoln down a White House corridor or, slowly, in a magnificent sequence, across a corpse-strewn battlefield. This time, the person looking and comprehending was the director, who respected the stillness deep within his hero. Working with a script by Tony Kushner, Spielberg drew on the rich theatricalism of the nineteenth century, culminating in the moment when Lincoln’s mighty hand (there’s no other way of putting it) smashes down on a table in the Cabinet room, a moment Biblical in its weight and its emphasis. Transcendent force, it turns out, can live on earth, too.

At seventy, Spielberg seems to be picking up the pace. Another “Jurassic Park” sequel is in the works, and another “Indiana Jones,” too. A science-fiction movie based on Ernest Cline’s dystopian novel, “Ready Player One,” will come out next year. He’s also working with Kushner on “The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara,” a story about a Jewish boy in Bologna, Italy, in 1858, who, having been secretly baptized, is forcibly taken from his family on the orders of Pope Pius IX and raised as a Catholic. It is another movie about a broken family, in the course of which we will likely understand, with full physical power, and from the inside, how it feels to be a father whose child is snatched away. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

MIXED UP

Montaigne on trial.

BY ADAM GOPNIK



FRENCH WRITERS OF the airier, bel- letristic kind used to enjoy pointing out that Michel de Montaigne, the man who invented the essay, was born Michel Eyquem, in Bordeaux in 1533, and that the family name and estate survive to this day in the name of Château d'Yquem, the greatest of all French sweet wines. The connection feels improbable—as though there were a Falstaff Ale that really dates to Shakespeare's Stratford—but also apt. Montaigne's essays can seem like the Yquem of writing: sweet but smart, honeyed but a little acid. And, with wine and writer alike, we often know more about them than we know of them—in the

wine's case because it costs too much money to drink as much as we might desire, in the writer's because it costs too much time to read as much as we might want.

“*Que sais-je?*” “What do I know?” was Montaigne's beloved motto, meaning: What do I *really* know? And what do we really know about him now? We may vaguely know that he was the first essayist, that he retreated from the world into a tower on the family estate to think and reflect, and that he wrote about cannibals (for them) and about cruelty (against it). He was considered by Claude Lévi-Strauss, no less, to be the first social scientist, and a pioneer of relativ-

ism—he thought that those cannibals were just as virtuous as the Europeans they offended, that customs vary equably from place to place. Though some of his aphorisms have stuck, both funny (“Doctors ‘are lucky: the sun shines on their successes and the earth hides their failures’”) and profound (“We are, I know not how, double in ourselves, so that what we believe we disbelieve, and cannot rid ourselves of what we condemn”), he is not really an aphorist. He is, we think, a philosopher, and somehow accounted the father of modern liberalism, though he was aristocratic in self-presentation. We think of him, above all, as we do of Thomas More: a nice guy, an ideal intellect. S. N. Behrman, the American playwright and diarist, began but never finished a heroic play about Montaigne called “The Many Men,” which might have sealed him as the man for all seasons before the other guy got there.

Philippe Desan, in “Montaigne: A Life” (Princeton; translated from the French by Steven Rendall and Lisa Neal), his immense new biography, dryly insists that our “Château d'Yquem” Montaigne, Montaigne the befuddled philosopher and sweet-sharp humanist, is an invention, untrue to the original. Our Montaigne was invented only in the early nineteenth century. The Eyquem family, in their day, made no wine at all. They made their fortune in salted fish—and Desan's project is to give us a salty rather than a sweet Montaigne, to take the Château d'Yquem out of his life and put the herring back in. Montaigne, to Desan's dauntingly erudite but sometimes jaundiced eye, was an arriviste rather than an aristocrat, who withdrew into that tower out of fear as much as out of wisdom, having ridden political waves and been knocked down by them in a time, in France, of unimaginable massacre and counter-massacre between Protestants and Catholics. His motto was safety first, not solitude forever. That new form, the essay, is made as much from things that Montaigne prudently chose not to look at or evasively pretended not to know as from an avid, honest appetite for experience. We confuse him with the truly *engage* Enlightenment and Romantic writers who came long afterward, as they came to confuse his

The essays were not written in isolation in the tower but often dictated on the run.

briny Bordeaux with their winey one.

The idea of a salty rather than a sweet Montaigne follows the contemporary academic rule that all sweet things must be salted—all funny writers shown to be secretly sad, all philosophical reflection shown to be power politics of another kind. Desan has many crudely reductive theories—the most insistent being that Montaigne wrote essays about the world right now because he was covering up the truth that in the past his family were merchants, not lords—but he is a master of the micro-history of sixteenth-century Bordeaux. He lists all the other recipients of the royal necklace that Montaigne was proud to receive in midlife, signifying his elevation to the knightly Order of St. Michael, and no one, we feel assured, will have to go back and inspect those records again. At the same time, Desan suffers some from the curse of the archives, which is to believe that the archives are the place where art is born, instead of where it goes to be buried. The point of the necklaces, for him, is to show that Montaigne rose from a background of bribes and payoffs; he doesn't see that we care about the necklaces only because one hung on Montaigne.

He establishes convincingly, though, that the Eyquem family had long been in trade—and was quite possibly Jewish in origin on Montaigne's mother's side—and that Montaigne's persistent tone of lordly amusement was self-consciously willed rather than inherited. The family imported herring and woad in large enough quantities to buy an existing estate and win a kind of ersatz ennoblement. That act of ennoblement fooled nobody—the old aristocrats knew the difference and so did your bourgeois neighbors—but it gave you license to start *acting* aristocratic, which, if continued long enough, began to blend seamlessly with the real thing. “Most of these new nobles preferred to stress their way of living in retirement on their lands, free from any visible commercial activity,” Desan writes. “Family history is usually not mentioned, to the advantage of the present and everyday pre-occupations.” The merchant Eyquems, under Michel's father, Pierre, became noble “Montaignes,” able to use a single name in signature. The son's retreat

to the château and the tower was, on this slightly cynical view, simply another way of advertising and so accelerating the family's elevation.

But, we learn, the Montaignes, father and son, being the virtuous bourgeois they really were, played an active role in that *parlement* that the family had bought its way into. Here we begin to enter a more fertile vineyard of implication. The bureaucracies of justice and politics in which Montaigne found himself are, as Desan describes them, instantly familiar to anyone who knows the equivalent in contemporary France. They combined, then as now, a wild bureaucratic adherence to punctilio and procedure with entanglements of cohort and clan that could shortcut the procedure in a moment. Montaigne had to learn to master this system while recognizing its essential mutability or, if you prefer, hypocrisy. The forms had to be followed, even when there was no doubt that the fix was in.

This sense of doubleness—that what is presented as moral logic is usually mere self-sustained ritual—became essential to Montaigne's view of the world. (Lawyers to this day seem particularly sensitive to the play between form and fact, which makes them good novelists.) “There is but little relation between our actions that are in perpetual mutation and the fixed and immutable laws,” a chagrined Montaigne wrote later. “I believe it were better to have none at all than so infinite a number as we have.” His most emphatic—if perhaps apocryphal—remark on the subject is still applicable. He is reputed to have said that, having seen the law at work, if someone accused him of stealing the towers of Notre-Dame cathedral he would flee the country rather than stand trial.

Montaigne was witnessing the beginning of the parallel paper universe of the French bureaucratic state, where euphemism allows interest, and sometimes evil, to take its course. But in his time these daily tediums were laid over the violently shifting tectonic plates of religious warfare. The struggles between Catholic and Protestant in mid-sixteenth-century France killed more than a million people, either directly or by disease. By the time the wars swept through Bordeaux, the is-

sues had long since been swamped by simple tribalism, of the kind that has afflicted Christianity since the Arian controversy. It was a question not of two sides warring over beliefs but of two sides for whom the war had become the beliefs.

As the battles between those faithful to Henry of Navarre and those opposed to him went on in ever more intricate and absurd factional dances, Montaigne's place within them was as treacherous as everyone else's. Smart people got killed, and often. It was dangerous not only because your side might lose but because there were so many factions to keep track of. Early on, he wrote, cautiously, that it was a mistake to look to the fortunes of war for proof of the rightness of either side's cause: “Our belief hath other sufficient foundations, and need not be authorized by events.” But events were in the saddle.

The first stirrings of Montaigne's deflecting, double-sided literary style appear in his 1571 eulogy for his closest friend, the philosopher Étienne de La Boétie. Though the eulogy is modelled on classical stoic death scenes reaching back to Plato's *Phaedo*, its originality lies in Montaigne's honest reporting of the comic absurdities of his friend's passing, and of his own emotional ambivalence at his death. La Boétie, suffering from some kind of ill-defined infection, is shown to be less than admirably resigned. The delirium of his final hours led him to believe that he was back in court, declaiming: “The whole chamber”—that is, his bedroom—“was filled with cries and tears, which did not, however, interrupt in the slightest the series of his speeches, which were rather long.” La Boétie implored Montaigne to guarantee his “place”—meaning, presumably, his social position—to which Montaigne replied, in a black, punning moment out of a Samuel Beckett play, that “since he breathed and spoke, and had a body, he consequently had his place.”

Montaigne's friendship with La Boétie helped convince him that religious belief is purely customary—that what we believe is what we are told to believe, but that our beliefs are still a duty to our social hierarchy. “Voluntary servitude” is the course that La Boétie

recommends: obedience to the state or Church, with the inner understanding that this is a course we've chosen from social prudence, not from personal conviction. "We are Christians by the same title as we are either Périgordins or Germans" was Montaigne's most forceful statement on this point.

Desan scolds both Montaigne and his friend—there is a lot of scolding of subject by author in this book—for thereby recommending or even inventing "the cornerstone of modern liberalism: individual freedom detached from any political or social action." To say this, though, is surely to underestimate the originality of the position, or its audacity in its time. The assertion of individual freedom is a *form* of political action. As subsequent generations of intellectuals caught in violent irrational wars or under repressive governments have also learned, learning not to *think* foolishly is the first step toward sanity. (Live not by the lie, Solzhenitsyn urged his countrymen. Montaigne's is the same idea, in a warmer climate with better wine.) *Your mind belongs to you.* Recognizing that everything is customary was not customary. Your body and your allegiance may indeed be given, prudently, to the state. But no one can make your mind follow suit: only a fool fools himself. The first step in dealing with the madness of the political world is not to let it make you crazy. "God keep me from being an honest man, according to the description I daily see made of honor," Montaigne wrote.

DESAN ALSO SCOLDS Montaigne, vis-à-vis La Boétie, on a literary point, complaining that Montaigne, having first been inspired to literary effort by a friend, allows the idea of friendship to dissipate in his later essays, which entail no friend but the reader. The essay becomes an impersonal form of intimacy, betraying a fear of passionate commitment and political engagement. But each written form creates its own reader. A sonnet is addressed to an indifferent object of passion; even if the actual lover warms up, the sonneteer can't become too easily complacent—a dark lady suddenly sunny produces no one's idea of a poem. So, too, an essay is *always* addressed to an intimate

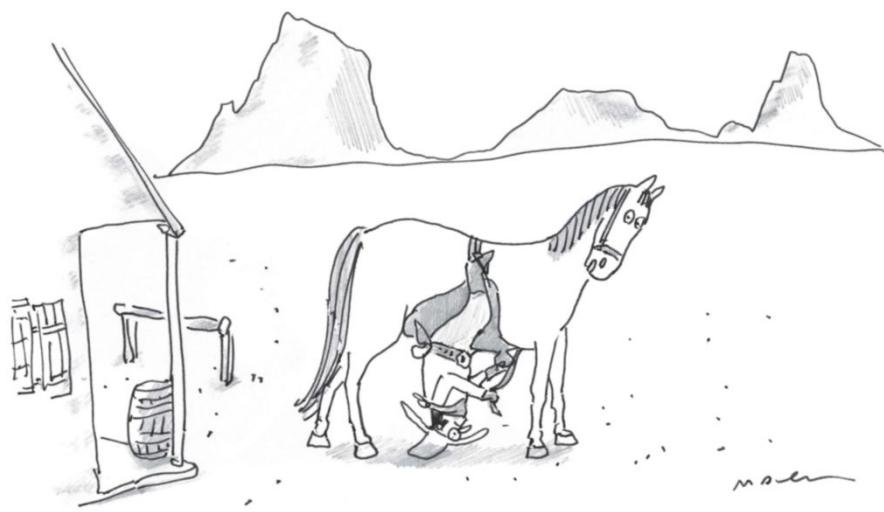
unknown. E. B. White, a modern Montaigne, who got there through Thoreau, was deeply attached to his wife, Katherine. But she makes few if any appearances in his essays (though she's there, hypochondriacally, all over his letters). He wasn't neglecting her—it's just that if the essays were even implicitly addressed to a particular intimate they would become too specific. The illusion of confiding in the reader alone is what essayists play on. *You're my best friend*, Montaigne, like every subsequent essayist of his type, implies to his readers. By dramatizing an isolation that can be cured only by an unknown reader, the confidences come to belong to all.

Montaigne made several attempts at his *essais*—the French word means, simply, "tries," in the sense of experimental effort, though the English word "sketches" comes closer—and the bulk of the work of writing was done in the seven years following La Boétie's death. Far from being rendered in elegant isolation, we now know, the essays were written while Montaigne took part in Bordeaux politics, travelled to Italy (where the book was briefly confiscated by Church authorities, and he was subjected to a withering examination and a warning), and, eventually, became the mayor of Bordeaux. When Montaigne tells us that his library is where "I pass the greatest part of my live days and wear out most hours of the days," he was being poetical. The pieces were, it now seems, far more often dictated on

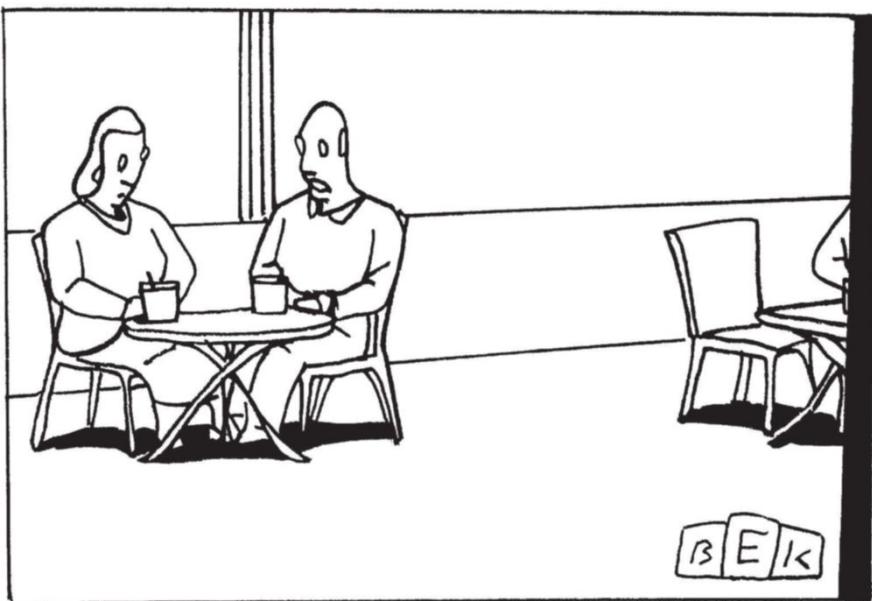
the run than written in that tower, dictation being the era's more aristocratic, less artisanal method of composition. (They still occasionally bear dictation's marks of run-on breathlessness.)

Montaigne's "Essais," in any of their stages—they went through three editions in his lifetime—are one of those classic books that benefit from being read irresponsibly. Sit down to read them thoroughly step by step, even in the great contemporary English translation, of 1603, by John Florio (whose renderings I've mostly been using), and you will be disappointed, since the "argument" of the essays is often less than fully baked, and the constant flow of classical tags and quotations is tedious. Open more or less at random, though, and dip in, and you will be stunned by the sudden epiphanies, the utterly modern sentences: "Super-celestial opinions and under-terrestrial manners are things that amongst us I have ever seen to be of singular accord," he writes, giving as an example a philosopher who always pisses as he runs.

Montaigne accepts, as no other writer had, that our inner lives are double, that all emotions are mixed, and that all conclusions are inconclusive. "In sadness there is some alloy of pleasure," he writes in the essay called, tellingly, "We Taste Nothing Purely." "There is some shadow of delicacy and quaintness which smileth and fawneth upon us, even in the lap of melancholy. . . . Painters are of opinion that the motions and wrinkles in the face which serve to weep serve also to



"Saddle up."



"I wasn't nervously hovered around enough as a child."

• •

laugh. Verily, before one or other be determined to express which, behold the pictures success; you are in doubt toward which one inclineth. And the extremity of laughing intermingles itself with tears." Having two emotions at once is better than having one emotion repeatedly.

By giving life to this truth, Montaigne animates for the first time an inner human whose contradictions are identical with his conscience. "If I speak diversely of myself, it is because I look diversely upon myself," he writes, in "On the Inconstancy of Our Actions." In the writer's soul, he maintained,

all contrarieties are found . . . according to some turn or removing, and in some fashion or other. Shame-faced, bashful, insolent, chaste, luxurious, peevish, prattling, silent, fond, doting, laborious, nice, delicate, ingenuous, slow, dull, forward, humorous, debonair, wise, ignorant, false in words, true speaking, both liberal, covetous, and prodigal. All these I perceive in some measure or other to be in mine, according as I stir or turn myself. . . . We are all framed of flaps and patches, and of so shapeless and diverse a contexture, that every piece and every moment playeth his part.

Lists are the giveaways of writing. What we list is what we love, as with Homer and his ships, or Whitman and his Manhattan trades, or Twain and steamboats. That beautiful and startlingly modern list of mixed emotions suggests a delectation of diversities—

he *likes* not knowing what he feels or who he is, enjoys having "wise" and "ignorant," insulated by nothing but a comma, anchored together in one soul's harbor. They bang hulls inside our heads.

Although those epigrammatic sentences can be arresting—"Nothing is so firmly believed as that which a man knoweth least"—Montaigne doesn't think epigrammatically. What makes him astonishing is a sort of "show all work" ethic that forced thought as it really is, mixed in motive and meanings, onto the page. He seems wise, more than smart or shrewd—wise without being smart or shrewd. He can be embarrassing, as he was often thought to be in his time, in a way that recalls less a polished columnist than a great diarist, like James Boswell or Kenneth Tynan, incapable of being guarded, the way shrewder people are. When he writes about the joys of having sex with cripples, we feel uneasy, nervous, and then enlightened. Whatever he's telling, he's telling it, as Howard Cosell used to say, like it is.

D^ESAN, WRITING ONLY about the French Montaigne, avoids the question that, for an English speaker, is essential: the great question of Montaigne's relationship to Shakespeare.

Although Florio's 1603 effort was the first English rendering of Montaigne's essays to appear in book form, they had certainly been circulating in manuscript before that. In an introduction to a new edition of the Florio, Stephen Greenblatt tantalizes us with the suggestion that the relation exists, and shows how richly it can be teased out—and then responsibly retreats from too much assertion with too little positive evidence, willing to mark it down to the common spirit of the time.

Well, essayists can go where scholars dare not tread—a key lesson to take from Montaigne—and this essayist finds it impossible to imagine that Shakespeare had not absorbed Montaigne fully, and decisively, right around 1600. It is evident not in the ideas alone but in a delighted placement of opposites in close relation, even more apparent in Shakespeare's prose than in his verse. Writing shows its influences by the contagion of rhythm and pacing more often than by exact imitation of ideas. We know that Updike read Nabokov in the nineteen-sixties by the sudden license Updike claims to unsubdue his prose, to make his sentences self-consciously exclamatory, rather than by an onset of chess playing or butterfly collecting. Hamlet says:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an Angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

And the balancing of opposites, the rhythm of assertion and counter-assertion, the sudden questioning turns, all of it seems irresistibly like Florio's Montaigne, notably in the springy, self-surprised beat:

How often do we pester our spirits with anger or sadness by such shadows and entangle ourselves into fantastical passions which alter both our mind and body? What astonished, flearing, and confused mumps and mows doth this dotage stir up in our visages! What skippings and agitations of members and voice!

It's not merely in the steady (and modern) use of exclamation points

but in the sudden turns and reversals, without the mucilage of extended argument—the turn-on-a-dime movements, the interjections, the tone of a man talking to himself and being startled by what his self says back. The alteration in the inner lives of Shakespeare's characters around 1600, as evident in "As You Like It" as in "Hamlet," bears his mark—as in Jaques's speech on the seven ages of man, which very much resembles Montaigne's insistence that life-living is role-playing. ("We must play our parts duly, but as the part of a borrowed personage.")

Indeed, the Frenchman Jaques, even more than Hamlet, and from the same year, is Montaignean man. In this case, a specific relation seems to exist between Montaigne's great essay "On Cruelty" and the scene in "As You Like It" where Jaques is reported brooding on the death of a deer. Montaigne's point is that when it comes to cruelty we should subordinate all other "reasoning"—stoic, of degree and dependency—to the essential fact of the stag's suffering. We can reason our way past another creature's pain, but, as we do so, such "reason" becomes the indicted evil. Jaques feels the same way. "We are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse/ To fright the animals and kill them up," he says, while "weeping and commenting upon the sobbing deer." We are meant to find Jaques's double occupation of weeping and commenting, feeling and keeping track of his feelings, mildly comic—Shakespeare being always convinced, in his English way, that the French are hypersensitive and overintellectual. But Jaques is not a ridiculous figure. He is conscience speaking through contradiction.

IT WAS IN the midst of all this that Montaigne was elevated to mayor of Bordeaux—an achievement, Desan shows, that was rather like getting appointed police commissioner under Tammany Hall. He wasn't much of a mayor, although it was under his administration that the first protection and "control" of Bordeaux's *cru bourgeois* was attempted, wine having crept up to become the city's most impor-

tant export, more important even than the salt fish that the family fortune had been built on. (It was a sign of the middle-class affluence that sped along in spite of the wars of faith.) His one attempted intervention in the religious conflict led to his being arrested and held in the Bastille, for a few hours, by extremist Catholics in Paris. He was released only after convincing the jailers of his Catholic bona fides. Fanaticism always seems foolish until it locks you up.

After his mayoralty, combining, as it did, the trivial and the terrifying, Montaigne moved away from political action, and Desan, in the end, is hard on his politics. "Montaigne's humanism, as it was conceptualized starting in 1585, implies a renunciation of politics," he declares, and elsewhere he sees in Montaigne a sort of false dawn of liberalism. Montaigne's retreat was only a rich man's way of getting off the highway before history ran him over. "Montaigne is supposed to be the best proof of . . . the victory of private judgment over systems or schools of thought," Desan writes. "Modern liberal thought discerns in Montaigne the starting point of its history . . . but let us make no mistake: most of the strictly philosophical readings of Montaigne are the expression of a form of (unconscious) ideological appropriation that aims to place the universal subject on a pedestal, to the detriment of its purely historical and political dimension."

This view is deaf to the overtones of Montaigne's self-removal. To be against violence, frightened of fanaticism, acutely conscious of the customary nature of our most devout attachments—without this foundation in realism, political action always pivots toward puritanical self-righteousness. It is not that Montaigne is placed on a pedestal; it's that we look up at him only to find that he is already down here with us. His houses are built on sand, rock being too hard for people, who are bound to fall. His moral heroism lies in his resilience in retreat, which allows him to remind us of our capacity to persevere. His essays insist that an honest relation to experience is the first principle of action. As a practical matter, this has been most

actively inspirational at times of greatest stress. The German author Stefan Zweig, in flight from Nazism, turned first of all to Montaigne, writing, "Montaigne helps us answer this one question: 'How to stay free? How to preserve our inborn clear-mindedness in front of all the threats and dangers of fanaticism, how to preserve the humanity of our hearts among the upsurge of bestiality?'"

Montaigne is present now in the things he feels and the way he sounds, and that is like a complete human being. He's funny, he's touching, he's strange, he's inconclusive. Ironic self-mockery, muted egotism, a knowledge of one's own absurdity that doesn't diminish the importance of one's witness, a determinedly anti-heroic stance that remains clearly ethical—all these effects and sounds of the essayist are first heard here. We imitate the sound without even knowing its source. Good critics and scholars can teach us how to listen. Only writers show us how to speak—even when they tell us that it is best to whisper.

Montaigne's writing has not been taken out of his time. It exists outside of his time. He is not plucked out to become a false father; he is heard, long past his time, as a true friend. He is an emotional, not a contractual, liberal. He didn't give a damn about democracy, or free speech, or even property rights. Equality before the law he saw as impossible—not even aristocrats could get it. But he had a rich foundational impulse toward the emotions that make a decent relation between man and state possible. Here was a far-reaching skepticism about authority (either the ancients' or the actual), a compassion toward suffering, a hatred of cruelty that we now imagine as human instinct, though all experience shows us that it must be inculcated. Montaigne, having no access to the abstract concepts that were later laid on this foundation, gives us deeper access to them, because he was the one who laid it. The liberalism that came after humanism may be what keeps his memory alive and draws us to him. The humanism that has to exist before liberalism can even begin is what Montaigne is there to show us still. ♦

FAMILY PACKS

"The Founder" and "The Ardennes."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Michael Keaton plays Ray Kroc in a movie directed by John Lee Hancock.

WHO WOULD DRIVE from Missouri to San Bernardino, California, to check out a burger joint? The answer is Ray Kroc (Michael Keaton), the hero of “The Founder.” The brothers who own the place, Mac McDonald (John Carroll Lynch) and Dick (Nick Offerman), have ordered eight multi-spindle milkshake mixers, of the kind that Ray has been hauling around in the trunk of his Plymouth and trying to sell, without success. So he wants to see what sort of operation needs eight. When he arrives, he is nonplussed by the novelty of the setup. Used to sitting in his car at drive-ins, and waiting forever for the food to come, he finds it strange to stand in line for his meal and receive it without delay. “I just ordered,” he says. “And now it’s here,” the server replies. Ray hesitates, then asks, “Where do I eat it?”

Keaton is made for such moments. He has that trick, honed over many movies, of glancing to one side before delivering a line, especially a question, as if all information were secret and the surrounding world were populated by spies. Wartime conditions would suit him nicely. We feel both lured into his confi-

dence and nervous of whatever he is about to propose or perpetrate. In short, he belongs to the Unrelaxers—that club of leading men, staffed by people like John Malkovich and Jeff Goldblum, whose bound duty is to never leave us at ease. So scarily does the Keaton smile flash on and off, with a sudden baring of incisors, that his entire career seems to have prepared him to play a man named Kroc. One lesson of “The Founder” is that there’s nothing wrong with biting off more than you can chew. You can always swallow it whole.

Tucked inside the title is a gristly joke. Kroc did not found McDonald’s. In 1954, he came upon the concept of fast food, in the enterprising hands of Mac and Dick, took it up, took it over, and built the corporation that we know today, with its sacred mission to swell the planet’s girth. “Franchise the damn thing,” he declares, from “sea to shining sea.” A dangerous proportion of “The Founder,” which is written by Robert D. Siegel and directed by John Lee Hancock, is spent on the phone or in face-to-face meetings, but, then, this is a film about business. Kroc strides onto a golf course brandishing a substandard burger and raging

about lettuce, and, when he loses his heart to a woman named Joan Smith (Linda Cardellini), they seal their love, in a late-night call, by discussing foot traffic in one of the franchise outlets. Viewers hoping for sex—something that appears to be vanishing from Hollywood productions, without any help from a censor, let alone public consultation—will have to settle for Joan stirring instant-milkshake powder into a glass of water, working up a fine foam, and taking a sip before Ray’s bulging eyes. Vanilla flavor, of course.

Not that Ray has that much heart to lose. If you were shown a précis of “The Founder,” you might well assume it to be packed with salty satire. After all, Ray performs every task that we expect of a mean bastard: he dumps a loyal wife (Laura Dern), who has done nothing but sustain him through his career; he filches Joan from another guy; he fortifies himself with slugs of Canadian Club, though never enough to dull his wits; and he tramples all over the nice old-fashioned boys from San Bernardino. “Is he a pain in the rear?” Mac asks. “I’m a tad miffed,” Dick says. When Ray unleashes an actual swear word, Mac faints. We are doubtless being invited to side with such homely virtues, and to sniff at what Dick refers to as the “crass commercialism” of the Krocist ideology. Does Hancock not yearn to declassify? Is that not the movie’s grand plan?

Sorry, but I don’t buy it. However decent the director’s original intentions, “The Founder” emerges as the first Trumpist film of the new era. By a happy serendipity, it goes on wide release on January 20th, the day of the Presidential Inauguration. I would suggest watching either the movie, at a theatre, or the ceremony, on TV. Both would be too much. Time and again, whenever Ray presents his case we are offered miraculous mantras, as if repetition alone could prove them true: “Persistence,” “Speed,” or “The Name”—McDonald’s, that is, not Kroc. “Three words,” he announces. “McDonald’s. Is. Family.” From where does he learn these Trump-like hammer blows? Well, near the start of the movie, when Ray is still a travelling salesman in a lowly hotel room, with a portable record player, he listens to a recording of “The Power of the Positive,” by a certain Clarence Floyd Nelson, who recommends

"a never-ceasing flow of energy." That is in fact a line from Norman Vincent Peale's "The Power of Positive Thinking," which was published in 1952 and remained on the *Times* best-seller list for more than three years. For Nelson, read Peale. By rights, the nasty dazzle of Keaton's performance should undercut this sermonizing pomp, but that's not what happens. Instead, he grows ever more effective, until the sheer brunt of the character mows down all resistance. Remind you of anyone? Reverend Peale, it should be noted, presided at the wedding of Donald and Ivana Trump, in 1977.

In the end, Hancock lays not a glove on Kroc, any more than he did on Walt Disney in "Saving Mr. Banks" (2013), and the camera conspires to smooth any wrinkles of villainy. When Ray first approaches the brothers' stand, in California, our gaze is ushered upward, to a sign that reads "McDonald's," as if we were standing in front of a Gothic cathedral, and the music, by Carter Burwell, rises in concord with the mood. More preposterous still, later on, is the gleam of golden arches reflected in Ray's windshield, and the drumroll that we hear just before he reveals his expansionist dream to Mac and Dick. "Do it for your country. Do it for America," he says. McDonald's, he adds, must aspire to be "the place where Americans come together to break bread"—a blasphemous touch, but openly backed by Hancock, with his shot of a burger-munching family gathered on a bench, and of a woman, in slow motion, feasting ecstatically on her bun. Likewise, on Ray's pilgrimage across the land, the fond glimpses of small-

town life are meant to soften us up for his creed—a genuine hope that the franchise might yet become as ubiquitous as a courthouse or a church. Why, there is even a black person waiting for her meal at McDonald's, who gets to speak a line! (Just the one, but you have to start somewhere.) And so, layer by layer, this dumbfounding movie devises its magical recipe, and dares us to resist it: ketchup, mustard, two slices of pickle, and hold the irony. Delicious.

IF THERE WAS a battle of the brothers, the McDonalds, being honorable citizens, wouldn't last a minute against Kenny (Kevin Janssens) and Dave (Jeroen Perceval). These two unlovely fellows tramp through "The Ardennes," getting caught in all manner of malignity. On the plus side, nobody invites them to enter the hamburger business, and for that we must be grateful. I don't even want to think about how they would source the meat. Or mince it.

One of the recent Belgian films to cause an international stir was the gloom-ridden "Bullhead" (2012), and "The Ardennes," the first full-length feature by Robin Pront, is similarly aimed at an audience of fatalists. The atmosphere reeks of compulsive wrongness: "You don't always get to choose," one of the characters says. They cannot move without stumbling into error, and what's impressive is how rapidly we grasp that dour habit. As the story begins, the brothers commit a crime—a housebreaking—with mixed results. Dave gets away, with Kenny's girlfriend, Sylvie (Veerle Baetens), at the wheel, but Kenny is left behind; refusing to squeal on his accomplices, he is sentenced to seven years.

And how long does Pront take to show all that? Three minutes. On this evidence, he may be just the man to film Eugene O'Neill. The long day's journey would be over and done by lunch.

By the time Kenny is freed, having served four years, Dave and Sylvie are a couple. Neither of them dares to mention this to Kenny, and with good cause, since he doles out head-butts as a common courtesy. "I'm waiting for the right moment," Dave explains. The film, as though infected by his indecision, slumps in the middle, only to compensate with a final act, set in the wooded region of the title, that feels rich in kills and overkills. We meet a transgender thug named Joyce (Sam Louwyck), and Kenny's former cellmate (Jan Bijvoet), whose hobbies include the tending of bonsai trees and the unlawful use of a cleaver. Creepiest of all is a pair of ostriches, on the lam and plainly looking for trouble. That's Belgium for you, I guess.

Dave's dread of his brother hooks "The Ardennes" onto a long chain of fraternal crime dramas, from "The Public Enemy" (1931) and "On the Waterfront" (1954) to "We Own the Night" (2007). Pront can hardly be blamed if his actors lack the sinew of Cagney or Brando, and, to be fair, the film does add a few grace notes to the perennial theme, as when the boys' mother, a gentle soul, urges Dave to look after Kenny on his release. Without warning, she makes her point with a tigerish swipe across her son's cheek. You rear back and think, So that's where the fury comes from. ♦

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Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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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 Joe Dator, must be received by Sunday, January 15th. The finalists in the January 2nd contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the January 30th 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



"Row v. Wave."
Laura Silver, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"Don't worry, the polls show it will miss us."
Peter Wingate, Hadley, Mass.

"We shall overcomb."
Timothy J. Hanley, New York City

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I admire your restraint."
Linda Pickering, Lawrenceville, N.J.

Kristiansand, Vest-Agder Kingdom of Norway



Certificate of Marriage

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

G

LAURIE METCALF

CHRIS COOPER

and

R

JAYNE HOUDYSHELL

and

CONDOLA RASHAD

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

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PART 2

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Directed by

SAM GOLD

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

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