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Your Blog About Town

with Mark and Edith

November 1, 2007

Special Bonus Catch-Up *New Yorker* Reader: "Among Animals and Plants," by Andrei Platonov

CATEGORIES: NEW YORKER READER

[Online here.](#)

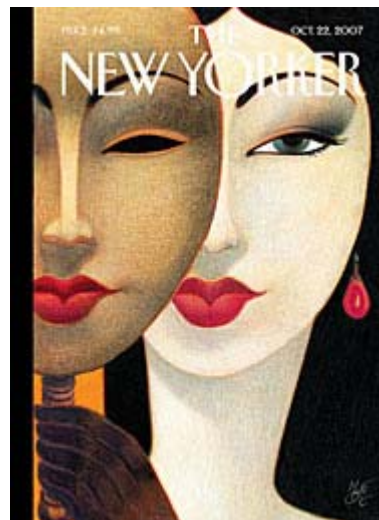
So I finally caught up with this story after not ever receiving the issue in which it appears. Lucky me: it's really good.

The last time the *New Yorker* published a story by a long-dead, off-kilter, underground Soviet writer, it was August, and the story in question was a series of fragments by one [Daniil Kharms](#). At the time, I said:

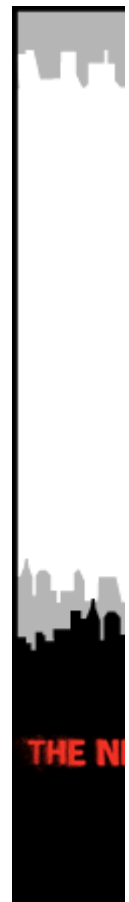
I'd previously encountered Kharms in the [Focus: Russia](#) section of Issue 2 of *A Public Space*, a lit mag that's further ahead of the curve vis a vis experimental and adventurous new and newly rediscovered lit-in-translation than you'd think would be possible given their not-really-quarterly publication schedule. The [Focus: Russia](#) is a great section and I'd encourage you to seek out a back issue; it helps provide a broader context [for the story we're discussing today].

Well, Platonov was in that same "Focus: Russia" section, with an excerpt from a never-finished absurdist dystopia. (In fact, that's the excerpt to which the above link leads you.) So I repeat what I said about *A Public Space* being well worth your \$12 (Issue #4 is out, with a delightful "Focus: Antarctica" section, and stories by Jim Shepard and others).

Now, then, this story. It's about a railroad switchman living in rural Russia in the 30s; the life of him and his family consists largely of daydreaming and bickering over their place in the surging, limitless culture of the new Soviet Union. It's an idea with which Platonov engages on all levels: the plot and dialogue (which is frequently hilarious, in a way that you know would not have pleased any cultural authorities), for one thing, deal with the family's dream's of engagement with History; but Platonov does a lot of things, with a silly cultural outsider's satirical wit, which also reinforce the idea. The main character brings a baby hare home from a hunting trip; his mother is displeased:



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 From music clubs, parties, and events, this is your daily guide to the city.



Then she picked the hare up and flung him outside -- he was no use to them, and she did not want him soiling the hut. The hare hid in the grass, lamented a little in his own way, then tidied his fur, crept through a gap in the fence, and disappeared into the forest, putting aside his recent grief for the sake of future life.

Even little extra digressions like that underscore the extent to which, as another writer working in an out-of-the-way spot behind the Iron Curtain once put it, life is elsewhere. The main character often sees trains whizzing by, marvelous wealthy and culturally engaged people aboard, and imagines what it would be like inside the train, rather than standing still as it passes him. Not that Platonov is didactic about it — he's half-bitterly, half-fancifully amused by the whole thing, and so are we. He's the kind of writer who dramatizes his character's spotty search for the real, full world out there like this:

One summer, a member of the Writers Union had come and given a talk about the current state of creative dialogue among writers. Fyodorov had asked sixteen questions and had been given "The Travels of Marco Polo" as a present; the writer had then left. The book was extremely interesting; Fyodorov had at once begun reading, from page 26. At the start of a book, a writer is just thinking, and that makes it dull; the most interesting part is the middle, or the end, which was why Fyodorov preferred to choose pages at random -- now page 50, now page 214. And although every book is interesting, reading this way makes it even better, and still more interesting, because you have to imagine for yourself everything you have skipped, and you have to compose anew passages that don't make sense or are badly written, just as if you, too, were an author, a member of the Soviet Union's Writers Union.

It's said that Platonov himself was occasionally disappointed, occasionally philosophical, and occasionally amused by his ultimate exclusion from the Russian canon, and from a larger community of contemporaries. This story is, of course, about a similar sense of cultural exclusion, though the figure at the center is far more Candide-like than Platonov was — convinced as he is that the new U.S.S.R. is the best of all possible societies, and that his exclusion from it couldn't possibly be attributable to its very nature.

Posted by Mark on 10/30/07

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Fill Up Your ~~Dance~~ Eating Card!

CATEGORIES: FESTIVALS, FOOD, ART, EVERYTHING

OK here it is.

Saturday, September 29

- **MORE OYSTERS PLEASE:** The Stone Street Oyster Festival, where you can eat a million oysters raw, fried, or in stews; drink Guinness; and listen to bands. Shuckin' competition at 2 pm! It's outside Ulysses, at 58 Stone Street. For more infoystermination, click [hoyster](#). Haha.
- Taco vs. Kwik Meal vs. Jerk Chicken vs. Falafel vs. Dosa! Which is the best street food!!? Find out at the [2007 Vendy Awards](#), judged by Mo Rocca, Andrea Strong, Ed Levine, Sara Moulton, Scott Stringer, and Michael Musto. Eat all of this stuff for \$60 in advance



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(\$75 at "door") at Tomkins Park from 3 to 5 pm.

- And, in case you are NOT FULL yet, [The Last Supper](#) is happening in Williamsburg from 7 pm to midnight, and it's a huge indoor/outdoor festival of food, art, music, and film from emerging food/art/music/film talents. It costs \$13, or \$10 if you bring some canned goods to donate. The indoor part is at [Hope Lounge](#), and the rest is thereabouts.

Sunday, September 30

- Ten Blocks of Madness: [The Atlantic Antic](#) on Atlantic Ave in Brooklyn will feature food, music, fun, and delight between 10 am and 6 pm. Plus I think pony rides!
- Outdoor BBQ at my favorite restaurant, [Flatbush Farm](#) in Prospect Heights/Park Slope. BBQ Spare Ribs, Spicy Gumbo with Carolina Rice, Pulled Pork Sandwiches, Vegetarian Chili, and specialty cocktails abound. BarbeCOOL! Three to 7 pm.
- And I have pretty much disgusted myself while writing this post, but let's finish it with something SWEET, like the [Pie Festival](#) in Dumbo, which brings us back to today's earlier posting about the Art Under the Bridge Festival, which will be happening at the same time, so you can take a break from art to eat some pie. Full circle. Full stop.

Beautiful weather this weekend, you guys.

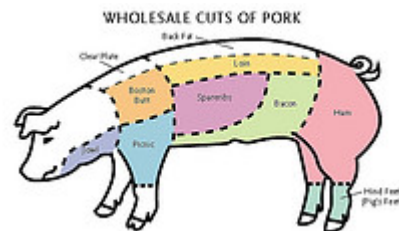
Posted by Edith on 9/28/07

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To Do 2Nite: Purses, Pamuk, Pork

CATEGORIES: NATIONAL SINGLES' WEEK, ORHAN PAMUK, IL BUCO PIG FESTIVAL

- Hey guess what. It's [National Unmarried & Single Americans](#) week. That sounds like a fun group, right? To celebrate National Singles Week, NUSA and Single Women In Search of Happiness ([SWISH](#), another inspiring website) are holding a ladies' cocktail party at [Madame X](#) tonight. At the party, you can buy t-shirts, listen to a reading from [Leslie Talbot](#), and--most importantly--talk about HANDBAGS. [Magnes Sisters'](#) handbags will be there for you to think about, talk about, and buy. Sometimes when I am lonely, I cover myself in purses. Anyway, go to Madame X if you are a single woman in pursuit of happiness, and for you that path is paved with bags. It's at 7 pm, and make sure you [RSVP](#).
- I agree with Mark that you should go see [Orhan Pamuk](#) read tonight at [Barnes & Noble in Union Square](#). Just yesterday Mark and I discovered that while he has been reading *My Name Is Red*, I have been reading *Snow*. Both are good. I once thought I was sitting across from Orhan Pamuk at Whole Foods (also in Union Square!), but I wasn't.
- Also, probably the biggest event today is the 13th Annual Pig Festival, aka "Sagra del Maiale," out front of Italian restaurant [Il Buco](#). It's today because it celebrates the Autumn Equinox (when day and night are the same length). It's a gorgeous afternoon that will be made even better by platefuls of luscious, delicious pig. For \$20 a plate (including ice tea or lemonade), you get rich heaps of slow-roasted pork cooked between two iron griddles over and open fire. I believe the menu includes "Flying Pigs Farm Porchetta Panini on Ciabatta with Mostarda, House-made Stone Church Farms Pig, Apple and Peperoncino Sausage, Farmer's Market Panzanella, Julie's Wild Arugula with Lemon, Red Onion and



Pecorino, and Apple Ricotta Fritters with Saba." Wine, prosecco, and beer are also available. It happens on Bond Street outside the restaurant (between Lafayette and Bowery) from 1 to 6 pm. Follow the scent of delight. Your lunch/dinner will be made out of a 160-lb Ossabaw pig from North Carolina named Ruffles.

Posted by Edith on 9/20/07

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Beerfest, Danceparty, Ariel

CATEGORIES: NEW YORK BEERFEST, AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, FLAVORPILL

You guys, this weekend is going to be huge. Mark and I have to have a non-iChat meeting just to discuss who is going to post about what. Just kidding, we don't talk not on iChat almost ever.

- **New York Brewfest.** Fifty-eight breweries from (mostly just) New York State (but also a few from other places in the Northeast) will provide beers, **four bands** will perform, and BBQ will be served. Upon entering, you get a four-ounce glass from which you can drink unlimited refills of the more than 300 beers available during the five hours the event spans, which are 5 pm to 10 pm at Piers 16 & 17 at the South Street Seaport. Click [on me](#) for directions. Feel free to click on the convenient advertisement to the right!
- Also tonight is **a giant danceparty** at the **American Museum of Natural History**, hosted by **Flavorpill**, featuring hip-hop, techno, and electronica from DJ King Britt, Bonde do Role, and Plastic Little. Plus they're screening *Passport to the Universe*, the space show narrated by Tom Hanks that catapults viewers on a veritable magical interstellar rollercoaster of delight. Food and alcoholic drinks will be on hand, it takes place in the Rose Center's Hall of the Universe, it's happening from 9pm to 1am, and it costs you \$20. At a later date, return to the museum for the **Mythical Creatures** exhibition. There's a mermaid made out of a monkey and a fish! A real mermaid, and she's beautiful.

Posted by Edith on 9/14/07

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Clamapalooza and Oktoberfestalooza and Footballalooza

CATEGORIES: CHOWDER, FOOTBALL, OKTOBERFEST, PROFESSOR THOM'S, DELIGHT

YES! There's a **clam chowder-cooking festival contest extravaganza celebration** tonight at **Professor Thom's** to mark the launch of **Harpoon's Oktoberfest Beer**. FREE chowder available to EVERY PERSON until it runs out, and the delicious autumnal beer will be only \$3. The winners of the chowder-cooking contest, which is OPEN TO EVERYONE, will get amazing/bizarre/useless prizes and respect. Food blogger Andrea Strong, of **The Strong Buzz**, will guest judge.



Plus you can watch **the Colts vs. the Saints** (8:30 pm) in the NFL season-opener, which means that I have something to do again on the weekends--guys, this event could not be better, except

that Professor Thom's is a RED SOX BAR, which means that the chowder will be extra New-Englandy and everything will be good. And Harpoon is a New England brewery. If New England annoys you, do not go to this event. Maybe also stop reading this blog.

Professor Thom's is at 219 2nd Avenue, between 13th and 14th Streets.

Posted by Edith on 9/6/07

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Laughing Keeps Me Trim

CATEGORIES: COMEDY, NIGHTLIFE, SLENDERNESS

Depending on your weight and the intensity with which you do it, laughing for 10 to 15 minutes will burn 10 to 40 calories, according to [this study](#). Crying will burn them too, but not as quickly. So I've just been sitting here laughing for the past 5 hours. My throat is bleeding.

Anyway, so that's great news for people attending [Bro'in Out With Leo and Tony](#) at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater tonight. Past Leo and Tony guests have included Paul Rudd, David Cross, Janeane Garofalo, Rob Corddry, John Hodgman, Aziz Ansari, and many, many more. The extremely long list of their most famous guests is on their MySpace page, which I've linked to and recommend.



The show is TONIGHT at 8 pm, and special guests are musical [Andrew WK](#) and Daily Show delight [John Oliver](#). The [Upright Citizens Brigade Theater](#) is on W 26th St and the show costs a cool \$5.

Posted by Edith on 8/20/07

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Movie Review By Edith, Age 24

CATEGORIES: MOVIE REVIEW

(Mark is the Film Editor here at *The L Magazine* so when he said I was allowed to write a review of *Transformers* I was like, "But Mark, I've never written a movie review before, I'm frightened." Then he said, "You can probably do it," which felt great, but then I realized it's because he doesn't see loud movies or ones in color. Mark, you're so smart! Someday you will teach me how to read subtitles. Anyway, here is my review.)



My favorite characters in *Transformers* were:

- 1) The hot male soldier with no discernable personality traits except for a hot scratch on his face (OK, not part of his personality, but it was hot).
- 2) The hot Australian girl who was smarter than the whole world even though she had a tattoo on her neck of a butterfly riding a dolphin (or something).
- 3) The freakishly, repulsively hot girl who always looked dirty (because she was—hotly) but it just

added to how grossly hot she was.

4) And the hot, yellow (he was hot and he was yellow, not hot-yellow) Transformer who made me cry when he [SPOILER ALERT!] died. Actually I don't think he actually [CONTINUING SPOILER ALERT!] died because some things in the film were unclear, and he was a machine so was he alive in the first place?

My favorite part was when the head Transformer—Optimus Prime—told the teenage hero (who was not hot) to put a magical cube into his chest, which is how Transformers have sex.

And that is my review of *Transformers*. When we were walking out of the movie, I turned to my friend and said, "Was that awesome?" and he said "No," and I said, "I thought it was awesome."

Pros: Unexpected but frequent and delightful moments of self-aware humor; hot people; colors; hi-tech machines.

Cons: Perpetual nonsense; no nudity.

Posted by Edith on 7/17/07

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Tonight In: Audio-Visual Aids

CATEGORIES: MOVIES, SCREENINGS

So, MoMA's big summer retro is on the industrial-strength sculptor and reconfigurer of space Richard Serra. And it happens that, back in the 60s and 70s, when he was a young, poor, unknown artist and probably doing a lot of drugs, Serra did what a lot of young, poor, unknown, probably drug-addled artists did, namely, made some experimental short films. And so, in conjunction with their big series, MoMA is holding periodic screenings of Richard Serra: Films (featuring *Hand Catching Lead*, pictured). Including tonight. (They're also screening Alfred Hitchcock's entirely atypical and actually entirely delightful comedy of remarriage *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, for those of you who really love a good Carole Lombard hissy fit, which I'm really hoping is all of you, because come on.)



I might also point you in the direction of the *Walter Reade*, where their tribute to Kino International continues with Joe Losey's *Eve*. Jeanne Moreau plays "Eve," so I'm guessing there's perhaps like the slightest bit of symbolism at work.

Posted by Mark on 7/9/07

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Pictured: My New Favorite Band (Oh God Just Look at Them)

CATEGORIES: MUSIC, CONCERTS

I'm surprised and delighted to report that my new favorite band is the *New Violators* (not to be confused with the New Pornographers, or, sadly, the New Radicals), who've come all the way from Norway to play *Pianos* tonight. Turns out I'm a total sucker for Scandinavian Duran Duran fetishists (only with even darker, swirlier synths). Who knew? (Well, I did, actually. I'm much less "surprised" than "delighted," honestly, but a lede's a lede.)



Also tonight, [Mercury Lounge](#) has one [Jamie T](#), who does the British working-class monologue thing with Mike Skinner's accent, Lily Allen's lilt, and a little extra Londonstani flavor on the production. And [Union Hall](#) hosts a generally solid bill headed by the [Real Ones](#), also from Norway, who have a fine 60s-inflected way with the kitchen sink ditties — for people who like Peter Bjorn and John but want credit for discovering a band themselves. Although I guess I screwed that up for you...

Posted by Mark on [3/21/07](#)

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Local Bands Worth Getting In On the Ground Level For, Take 2

CATEGORIES: [MUSIC](#), [CONCERTS](#)

A buncha months ago, I [posted](#) about this band, called [Bear Hands](#), that I didn't really know anything about except that they sounded pretty promising: if the guy that Mac McCaughey was singing about in "Slack Motherfucker" went on actually join Superchunk, the resultant band might have sounded a little like Bear Hands. Anyway, they then proceeded to not play any shows ever again (apparently one of them went on vacation or something), until tonight, when they're at [Pianos](#). Also on are Chicago's [Safes](#), who're three brothers making bite-sized, double-time morsels of throwback radio-ready guitar pop.



Elsewhere, the delightfully unironic power-pop anthems of the [Crash Moderns](#) are at [Rebel](#) making like they're actually at the Budokan; and [The Annex](#) has a bill including the utterly appealing cacophony of [Apollo Sunshine](#), and the utterly appealing shambling classicisms of [Vampire Weekend](#).

Posted by Mark on [2/28/07](#)

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Tonight: Anti-Romantic Literature

CATEGORIES: [READINGS](#), [LITERATURE](#)

If tonight's calendar of snuggly and cute and generally romantic events is really starting to tick you off, I have perhaps a solution for you: writers. Yup, count on the members of the World's Loneliest Profession to make you feel better about feeling bad on this holiday-invented-by-Hallmark of all holidays-invented-by-Hallmark. Tonight, the [Bowery Poetry Club](#) is hosting the blogger reading series [The WYSIWYG Talent Show](#), who tonight are holding their fourth annual "Worst. Sex. Ever." reading, which I can only imagine will be egregiously and delightfully awkward for all involved. Meanwhile, [Altoids](#) (yes, Altoids) have set up temporary shop (or, as they'd have it, "shoppe") at 350 Bleecker Street, where tonight, as the culmination of a series of V-Day events, they're holding some so-called "Love Lost Readings," hosted by, who else, Jonathan Ames (there'll also be sob stories told by *This American Life* contributor Starlee Kine and comedian Leo Allen).



And, of course, there's always the [Happy Ending Music and Reading Series](#) (at, uh, [Happy Ending](#)), which tonight features the happily married pop of the [Pauls Toutonghi](#)">Rosebuds, and readers include [Pauls Toutonghi](#), author of [Red Weather](#) and a semi-finalist at last year's Literary Upstart. (See what a Lit Up [submission](#) can do for you? Keep 'em coming, folks...)

Posted by Mark on [2/14/07](#)

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Not the Final Countdown, but the Only One for a While...

CATEGORIES: [MOVIES](#), [SCREENINGS](#)

Today, the [IFC Center](#)'s Robert Altman series continues with a spaced-out double feature: [Brewster McCloud](#) stars Bud Cort as a weird kid living in the Houston Astrodome and building a set of wings (and marks, to the eternal delight of all, the cinematic debut of the stick-thin, toothy, impossibly endearing gawkster Shelley Duvall); it's paired with his pre-*MASH* feature [Countdown](#), a for-hire sci-fi feature, made the year before the Apollo 11 landing, starring James Caan as an astronaut on a one-way mission to the moon (it's the only way to beat the Russians). The movie is rarely screened, and largely unavailable for renting.



Also tonight, it's the first day to catch a weeklong run of a restored print of David Lynch's revelatory debut wtf feature [Eraserhead](#) at [MoMA](#), and the last day to catch [Film Forum](#)'s revival of Billy Wilder's bilious media satire [Ace in the Hole](#).

Posted by Mark on [1/18/07](#)

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Greasequest 2006: Big Truck, Little Dog

CATEGORIES: [GREASEQUEST](#)

In which yours truly, The L Magazine's Conscientious Objector, travels a ridiculously long distance to buy an impractically old car (1982 Volkswagen Vanagon!) in the hopes of finally and completely freeing myself from the clutches of big oil. If the little brown box makes it over the Rockies and all the way back to New York I'm going to convert her to run on used fryer oil from restaurants, courtesy of the amazing [Greasecar.com](#).



The battleground states: Iowa to Nebraska to Ohio. My driving companion and I briefly considered the northern route through the Great Lakes and Canada but time and the season have made flyover territory into drive-through land. As two New Yorkers born and raised, we're always a little wary of the Midwestern red states, but to our delight and amazement we discovered a bio-diesel pump in Illinois, 45 minutes outside of Chicago: not only does it burn cleaner, it's also 15 cents cheaper per gallon than regular diesel. Sadly, though, most truckers I talked with were skeptical about making the switch, and the protestations of a New York liberal (and a girl!) seemed to have little effect, beyond a vague paternal bemusement. It's too bad because the scenes — repeated over and over at each truck stop — of 30 to 40 semis just idling their engines is bleak and depressing.

Outside of Omaha, though, I found myself experience a twinge of pride when a cashier assumed I was hauling a big rig and blurted out, "You're a lady trucker!?" Maybe I could buy an 18-wheeler and travel across the land spreading the gospel of alternative fuels... [Ed. Please don't.] I've

actually had some great conversations with truckers along the way, about politics, oil, and most frequently, dogs. It would seem that a small canine traveling companion is becoming de rigeur among truckers everywhere — chihuahuas are a popular choice. There was one really nice guy, however, who had an 18-year-old yellow lab by the name of Bear, who is evidently known and loved among truckers throughout the west.

Another nice discovery we've made has been the hunting outfitter Capelas. Don't be alarmed, we haven't taken up semi-automatic arms in the aid of duck-culling, it's just that Capelas has the very communitarian policy of allowing people to park and sleep overnight in the parking lot. For two nights in a row now we've taken advantage of this and woken refreshed and ready for the 16-hour drives (done in four-hour shifts). I may sound optimistic now, with thoughts of New York City late tonight (around 2am), but wish us luck — Pennsylvania has been known to crush brighter spirits than ours.

Posted by [Amanda Park Taylor](#) on 11/13/06

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NYFF Dispatch: *Inland Empire*

CATEGORIES: [MOVIES](#), [NYFF DISPATCHES](#)

By Mark Asch

The most accurately titled movie in I don't know how long, David Lynch's *Inland Empire* is a massive, hermetic beast, too inscrutable to fully embrace and more than a bit overwhelming, but offering surface pleasures that go id-deep. Made from footage shot by an ad libbing Lynch and his collaborators over the course of a few years, it's sort of grouped around a seminarrative featuring Laura Dern as an actress shooting an infidelity melodrama based on an unfinished Polish film, but bends with commercially untenable speed (the film is currently without a distributor, and it'll be interesting to see how that plays out) into its own looking glass — represented, here, as a cigarette burn in a piece of silk.



Functionally, the film is labyrinthine, its narrative inlets — Dern's movie, the uneasy truce between her, her, costar Justin Theroux, and her Eastern Bloc-accented husband blending, static-like, into the plot of the movie; Dern as an aspiring actress flopping with a pack of gum-smacking, halter-topped starlet wannabes; a segment in Polish and period clothes, that's either the story that inspired Dern's film or the story of its allegedly murdered lead actors (Dern's husband also appears in these scenes); Dern as a battered hick woman, spitting out a nail-tough monologue in the dim office of the most librarian-looking hitman (I think?) you've ever seen — merging, separating, and whirling around each other, structurally and especially temporally. It's also literally labyrinthine, with many scenes bridged by P.O.V. tracks down underlit hallways, or up various near-identical staircases.

Moment to moment, it's even less coherent than I've so far made it sound: did I mention the recurrent high-angle shot of what looks like a sitcom set, populated by one man and two women in rabbit suits, flatlining ambiguously prophetic one-liners to the delight of a canned studio audience? Or the homeless girl with a heavy Japanese accent rambling about her friend Niko, her friend Niko's blond wig, her friend Niko's pet monkey, her friend Niko's junk habit, and the hole in her friend Niko's vaginal lining? Or the seemingly ever-present humidifier buzz that gnaws its way through the soundtrack? Obviously, a lot of the problems people are having with *Inland Empire* stem from it being indulgent, and the perception seems to be that Lynch doesn't grant access to whatever's motivating the movie (assuming anything, or at least anything conscious, is); the issue, I think, is that it's primary grouped around the quintessentially Lynchian moods of quirked-up bafflement and primal dread, sensations it's easy enough to be elated by during the movie, and even retain afterward, but which don't make a particularly instructive template around which to organize your thoughts afterward.

And it's true that this is Lynch's movie, either made under the assumption that people will be happy to be along for the ride, or a disregard for whether they will or not (whether you suspect him of arrogance or undiluted personal vision goes a long way towards determining what you'll think of *Inland Empire*). The one exception, maybe, is Laura Dern, who gives an uncannily immersed performance (whichever permutation of herself she's playing), revealing a deep commitment to a project that would seem to deny its logic even to her. (Admiring her work here is almost more a moral than an aesthetic judgment.) The rest is more or less cameos: Jeremy Irons as Dern's speciously gallant director and Harry Dean Stanton as his codgery AD; Diane Ladd as a prefab talk show host and Grace Zabriskie as Dern's Polish émigré neighbor, who staggers in early on to forewarn of the imminent decoupling from reality.

Made on the fly by Lynch, it's not just impulsive (ie, a chorus of would-be actresses breaking out into an impromptu Locomotion) but reflexive (the ending credits play over a sort of choreographed cast party, with a host of familiar faces relaxing on couches around an interpretive performance and a guy sawing some wood left over from the set of either *Blue Velvet* or *Twin Peaks*). Presumably to expedite the movement of ideas from out of his subconscious and into his movie, Lynch shot the film on digital video; its washed-out, grainy feel is effective for a movie that features so much footage of people watching monitors, and surveillance-cam camera angles — *Inland Empire*'s night sweats are fueled in significant proportions by a kind of media-soaked, movie-fed paranoia — and helps Lynch get uncomfortably close to his actors' faces; it's also a bit distancing, after so many gorgeously shot Lynch films, to see his idiosyncrasies look so meager. And yet they're unmistakably his; this movie lives as far inside the severed ear as anything Lynch has done since his student shorts, and it's an exciting, awe-inspiring place to be.

And now that I've spent so much time discussing *Inland Empire* through the consensus frame that views it as more or less inscrutable, I'd like to propose that it actually isn't. It's possible that Lynch's follow-up to *Mulholland Drive* is, like that fever dream of crushed movieland dreams and a thwarted lesbian relationship, a movie about women chewed up and spat out by Hollywood. At one point in the movie, Dern finds herself out on the street with the gaggle of aspiring actresses, who in a previous scene had spoken casually of trading sex for a beneficial relationship. The shift between that scene in this one is so imperceptible that Dern, horrified, is the only one to realize it: "I'm a whore." And later, in the film's most harrowing sequence, she wanders off into an abandoned movie theater and watches her most soul-baring scene from earlier in the film flickering on the screen.

It bears mentioning (though it usually isn't): from the Elephant Man's mother being crushed by Victorian industry, to naked, damaged Isabella Rossellini wailing "I love you, love me!" to the Typical American Boy who indulged his dark side with her for a while before abandoning her for blonder pastures in *Blue Velvet*, to Bobby Peru trapping Dern in his hotel room and demanding that she beg for it in *Wild at Heart*, Lynch is a director preoccupied by the victimization of women. It's not exactly feminism — it's maybe closer to an admission of guilt over his complicity in the almost implicitly misogynist enterprise of moviemaking. And with *Inland Empire*, featuring an actress successfully navigating dark corridors and retaining a sense of self despite a constantly shifting set of circumstances and expectations, he's offered perhaps his most triumphant portrait of femininity yet.

Or maybe he hasn't. Who can tell, really?

Posted by Mark on 10/6/06

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... #285: Rumpshaker Phil; #286: Swing State Myron (Pictured); #287: Alistair Crowley, the Devil...

CATEGORIES: READINGS, LITERATURE

A while ago a friend of mine happened to show a bunch of us the book he was reading, which happened to be [The Areas of My Expertise](#), by former literary agent and humorist and Daily Show correspondent and all-around ticklish individual [John Hodgman](#). We were impressed and delighted by the whole thing, of



course, but especially by the section of the book listing [700 Hobo Names](#). We were recently discussing how delightful it would be to have an audio recording of somebody reading out the 700 Hobo Names, and to put it on as background music as parties and such. Well, John Hodgman was one step ahead of us: his [website](#) does, indeed, feature all 700 Hobo Names, read out loud by the author. [Here](#). Do it. When people started bringing headphones into work to wear at their desk computers, it was in anticipation of this day.

I should also point out that I mention all this because John Hodgman is reading from *The Areas of My Expertise* tonight at [Barnes and Noble Astor Place](#). I have to imagine he'll be reading other sections of the book; once is probably enough. Enjoy the next hour of your workday...

Posted by Mark on 9/7/06

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Vaguely condescending tone notwithstanding, I do genuinely like all three of these bands. Just to be clear.

CATEGORIES: MUSIC, CONCERTS

Tonight, [Bowery Ballroom](#) hosts designated "New York scene" [whipping boys French Kicks](#). I guess I sort of understand why people would be driven to use the band as a stand-in for everything they despise about artfully disheveled bands playing pro-quality approximations of the more groundbreaking iterations of garage, new-wave, and whatever other genres are currently fashionable; that's not an inaccurate description of what they do (though less calculatedly than I make it sound). Thing is, though, French Kicks have the songs to go with their hip taste, and if you're ok with occasionally listening to a band that manages to be good without being particularly original, you'll likely find tonight's gig entirely satisfying.



Elsewhere, tonight's [Mercury Lounge](#) lineup includes [The Blue Van](#), another group of unnaturally, delightfully polished American music savants from some Scandinavian locale (in this case Broenderslev, Denmark); you could categorize the music they play as "garage rock," assuming that the garage in question is used to house a two-door hybrid when the band's not practicing in it. And [The Fever](#) is playing at [Galapagos Art Space](#): go for the demonic, decadent, coke-fueled

hip-gritty neo-new wave; stay for the... well, stay for that, actually, because it's awesome.

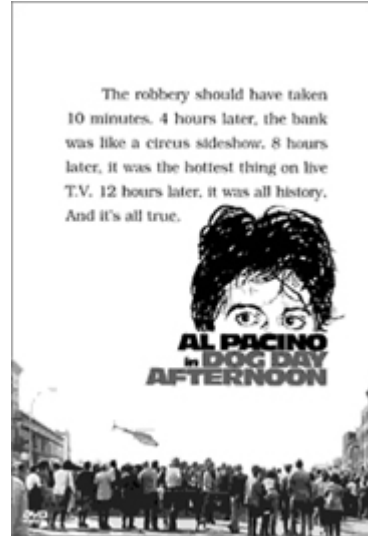
Posted by Mark on 9/6/06

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Attica! Attica!

CATEGORIES: MOVIES, SCREENINGS, SUMMERSCREEN

Originally, tonight's film at [Summerscreen](#) (the L's free outdoor film and music series at the [McCarren Park Pool](#)) was to be John Cassavetes's challenging, rewarding, exhausting character study [Love Streams](#). But, though Cassavetes carries mad cred with the cinephile crowd, and is such a delightfully left-field choice for an outdoor screening series... well... he doesn't exactly bring the fun, does he? Thus, we offer you tonight's Summerscreen film: [Dog Day Afternoon](#), Sidney Lumet's messy, dire, unceasingly compelling shaggy tabloid ode to a bunch of Brooklynite losers rising to their 15 minutes of fame on the hottest day of the year. (It's also the best movie ever made about the lengths a guy will go to pay for Prince Humperdinck's sex change operation.) The sundown screening will be preceded by music (starting at 7pm) from [Elliott Sharp](#), and Transcendental Railroad, a "nature-based interactive sound installation." Enjoy the show.



**Dog Day Afternoon (dir. Sidney Lumet), August 22
McCarren Pool. 7pm.**

*Main Arch, Lorimer St, between Driggs and Bayard Aves, Williamsburg
[L to Lorimer St; G to Metropolitan Ave]*

FREE

Posted by Mark on 8/22/06

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Warren Oates and the Russian Fantastik

CATEGORIES: MOVIES, SCREENINGS

A couple of unlikely, delightful, completely unrelated retrospectives are kicking off today: [Anthology Film Archives](#) is saluting [Warren Oates](#) (the man with, per David Thomson, "a face like prison bread") with a series of the stubborn, raggedy iconoclasts most characteristic roles. Tonight's offerings are absolute pearls: he takes complete command of Monte Hellman's existential road movie [Two Lane Blacktop](#), playing a would-be King of the Road blowhard determinedly, obviously staving off self-knowledge whenever it threatens to reveal itself; his best performance, in Sam Peckinpah's vortextual [Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia](#), sees him playing a wasted man with enough pride to be disgusted with himself and his world



In the altogether more rarified confines of the [Walter Reade Theater](#), meanwhile, tonight marks the beginning of [From the Tsars to the Stars](#), a century-spanning survey of Russian futurism, fabulism, and various unholy combinations thereof. The Opening Night offerings are [Zero City](#) (which begins with a Muscovite engineer being greeted at his new rural job with a cake that looks exactly like his head) and Tarkovsky's [Stalker](#).

Posted by Mark on 8/11/06

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Weekend Update

CATEGORIES: NIGHTLIFE, PARTIES

Saturday, May 27 and Sunday, May 28

- A **homoerotic** rugby match? Sounds like collegiate, intramural flag football.



Saturday, May 27th

- **Camouflage Trilogy Part 2: BoatCruise**, at the Temptress World Yacht Marina (41st St and the West Side Highway, Hudson River), 10pm boarding; 11pm departure; 2am return. \$20 in advance.

Head down to the Statue of Liberty with your DJs Craze, MC Armani, Kech, MC Swordz and Christian Burna spinning a **Carmina Burana's** worth of house that'll have you falling Orff the boat as only Hart Crane could. Afterparty with a "special UK guest" for ticket stub holders. Tickets.

- **Rated X, the Panty Party.**

The official statement from Michael T. and Theo:

We are delighted to inform everyone though that Rated/The Panty Party has found a new home and that we'll be restarting the party on saturday, june 3rd at Luke N Leroy's [7th Ave & Leroy St] . We're looking forward to seeing all of you and apologize to everyone if we caused any unintentional confusion over the last week.

Thank You for your continued Support!

Xo

Theo & Michael T.

- **Total War**, at **Black and White (86 E 10th St, between Third and Fourth Aves)**, 10:30pm, Free.

Phase 7 of **Total War** will be like WW3, as DJs Ryan R. and Glenn spin a set of cold wave, classic goth, deathrock, new wave and metal. Style your hair into a devil lock, raise your hand in the sign of the beast, and request your favorite, battle-related Iron Maiden song. My suggestions are either "The Trooper" or "Run to the Hills."

Sunday, May 28

- **Alex English and Larry Tee, at Marquee (289 Tenth Ave, between 26 and 27 Sts)**, \$10pm till midnight; \$15 till 1am with RSVP.

Since there's no work on Monday, which means no business luncheons, come out to this English-Tee Party (not my pun), with DJ Reflex upstairs. I hear that Alex and Larry are putting together an outline for their *Mrs. Dalloway*-inspired, day-of-party account. While, already confined to the upstairs, Reflex will write a free verse reflection/adaptation of Charlotte Perkins Gillman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." For list, email event@gbh.tv with your name and number of guests.

- **Camouflage Trilogy Part 3: Post-Party**, at **Sin Sin (248 E 5th St, at Second Ave)**, 10pm to 4am, \$5.

Part 3 of this weekender features DJ Evol's NYC debut appearance, 9x, Force and Konzept. The third night should be a climax, if you're too tired from the past two nights, then don't bother to come out.

- **Motherfucker**, at the Roxy (515 W 18th St, between Tenth and Eleventh Aves), 10pm, with invite, \$15 till 11pm; \$20 after midnight; \$25 all night, otherwise. Will the next Penelope Tree be discovered on the dance floor dancing to DJs Michael T., Justine D, DJ Jess, Dave P or JDH? Or will we spot Anna Wintour enjoying Willi Ninja and the House of Ninja's late night performance? The dress code demands formal and fabulous, but suggests outlandish. Wear something electric to MF's six-year anniversary, in honor of the fortieth anniversary of Truman Capote's Black and White Ball. Joseph Moncure March would be proud, this wild party institution is what New York danceparties aspire to achieve. Look for me, I will be there with all the MILFs.

Posted by Zachary on 5/26/06

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