

The New Criterion

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The Critic's Notebook for June 29, 2015

by The Editors



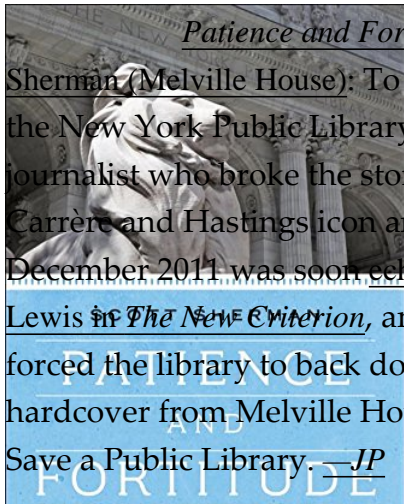
Preliminary sketches of the White Rabbit Preparatory drawing (graphite and pen-and-ink on paper), 1862-1864/ © Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford

Sign up to receive “Critic's Notebook” in your inbox every week—it only takes a few seconds and it's completely free! “Critic's Notebook” is a weekly preview of the best to read, see, and hear in New York and beyond, compiled by the editors of *The New Criterion*.

This week: Hunters, Huxtable, and Hares.

Fiction: *Hunters in the Dark*, by Lawrence Osborne (Hogarth): The vagaries of the international publishing market never cease to surprise. One would think that, with the rise of the internet, there would be no sense in staggering the release date of a novel between two countries that speak the same language. And yet, Lawrence Osborne's latest, *Hunters in the Dark*, was released in the UK in May of this year, and somehow won't make it to our shores until January of 2016. Of course,

through Amazon, one can order the UK version to the US, thereby circumventing the issue, albeit with serious shipping costs attached. Ultimately, it's enough to make one wish for the kind of escape that Osborne is so good at depicting. His previous novel, *The Ballad of a Small Player* (Hogarth) described the journey of one Lord Doyle, a charmingly malicious confidence man, through the gambling dens of Macau. Osborne's latest, also drawing on his extensive travels in the East, concerns the attempts of a schoolteacher to disappear in Cambodia. I look forward to reading *Hunters*; I'm just not sure when. —BR

The book cover for 'Patience and Fortitude' by Scott Sherman features a black and white photograph of a man, likely Scott Sherman, looking down thoughtfully. The title 'PATIENCE AND FORTITUDE' is printed in large, bold, blue capital letters across the middle of the cover. Below the title, the author's name 'SCOTT SHERMAN' is visible in smaller text. The background of the cover is a textured, light blue-grey color.
Patience and Fortitude: Power, Real Estate, and the Fight to Save a Public Library, by Scott Sherman (Melville House): To the names Astor, Lenox, and Tilden engraved atop the main branch of the New York Public Library, should we now add Sherman? Scott Sherman is the dogged journalist who broke the story on the "Central Library Plan," a proposal to gut the stacks of the Carrère and Hastings icon and move the books out of state. His criticism of the plan in *The Nation* in December 2011 was soon echoed by Ada Louise Huxtable in *The Wall Street Journal* and Michael J. Lewis in *The New Criterion*, among many others, leading to a chorus of dissent that eventually forced the library to back down. His fascinating story of library politics in the digital age is now a hardcover from Melville House called *Patience and Fortitude: Power, Real Estate, and the Fight to Save a Public Library*. —JP

Poetry: The Complete Poems, by Philip Larkin, ed. Archie Burnett (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux): The "Poets' Corner," that famed section of the south transept of Westminster Abbey, has a new honoree. Joining David Frost (the most recently memorialized) and manifold others, is Philip Larkin, England's most eminently dyspeptic poet. Larkin was largely responsible for the 2011 memorialization of Ted Hughes in the Corner (by turning down the title of Poet Laureate, which went to Hughes), and now joins the man whose poetry he declared "no good at all." Always quick with a prickly word, Larkin should also be remembered for the quality of his verse, collected in full by FSG in 2012. —BR

Art: *Alice: 150 Years of Wonderland* at the Morgan Library (Through October 11): It seems that every other anniversary is now cause for a celebration, remembrance, or book-writing frenzy. We're in the middle of the hundredth anniversary of the Great War, two hundred years from Waterloo, and many more that I've probably missed. All this has occasioned the usual coverage (I've read no fewer than ten Waterloo book reviews in the past week), but that's not for the worse; anniversaries remind us to assess critically at certain fixed intervals. So it is with the Morgan Library's new exhibit on Lewis Carroll's *Alice*. Though the museum could have waited until the two hundredth anniversary to bring this show together, the public should be glad it did not. Bringing Carroll's original manuscript to the United States for the first time in three decades, the show is a welcome display of depth, also featuring Carroll's original drawings to supplement John Tenniel's iconic illustrations. —BR

Music: *The Tchaikovsky Competition* (Through June 30): The International Tchaikovsky Competition wraps up this week, with the final competition rounds finishing today and tomorrow. The winners'

concerts are scheduled for Thursday and Friday, and while we don't yet know who will get that honor, I know I'm rooting for Alexandra Conunova in the violin division, after hearing her in the earlier rounds. Watch her spellbinding performance of the Sibelius concerto in D minor [here](#), and follow the rest of the competition on [medici.tv](#). —ECS

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From the archive: Philip Larkin complete, by Michael Dirda: With Philip Larkin on the mind, here is Michael Dirda's 2012 review of *The Complete Poems* and *Selected Poems*.

From our latest issue: Love bites, by Christie Davies: On James Gillray's caricatures, an exhibition of which ended June 21 at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.



Each week the editors of *The New Criterion* offer recommendations on what to read, see, and hear in the world of culture in the weekly Critic's Notebook. To get it first, subscribe to the free Critic's Notebook email by [clicking here](#).