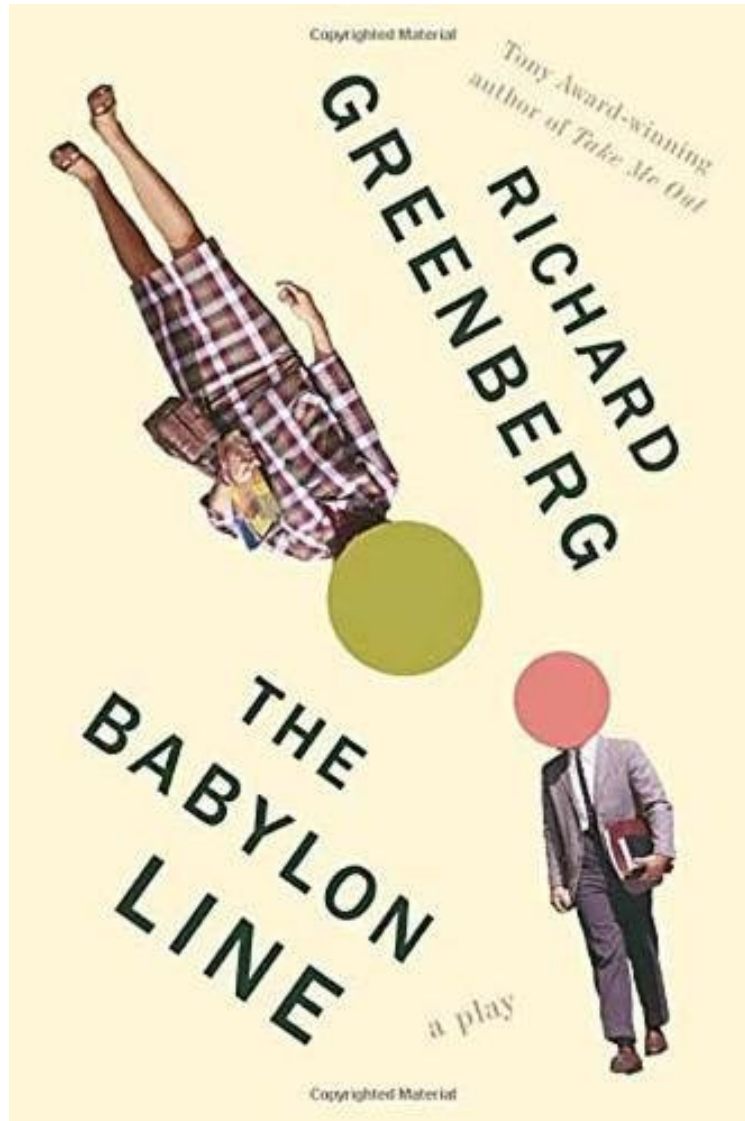


The Babylon Line

Richard Greenberg

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#1616879 in Books Greenberg Richard 2016-11-08 2016-11-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.30 x .40 x 5.40l, .43 #File Name: 039957655X144 pagesThe Babylon Line | File size: 53.Mb

Richard Greenberg : The Babylon Line before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Babylon Line:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully written.By Frank O'FileAbsolutely brilliant. Stunning surprising oddly hopeful. One of the best modern American plays I've come across. It snuck up on me in the most beautiful of ways. Bravo, Mr. Greenberg!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. but I felt like they were too awkwardBy Lyn G.It's much easier to follow than other plays I've read, but I still couldn't get into it. The characters were very awkward with each other - and I get that people are in reality, but I felt like they were too awkward.Note: I

received this book for free through Goodreads Giveaways.

An electrifying new play by Tony Award-winning playwright Richard Greenberg, *The Babylon Line* opens at Lincoln Center Theater on December 5, 2016. A thirty-eight-year-old writer from Greenwich Village, Aaron is painfully aware of his failures as an artist when his desperate need for a job forces him to commute along the Babylon Line to Levittown to teach. What awaits him is a classroom of varyingly unwilling students, some who attend because their preferred course was full, others who are attentive enough but sit silently at their desks and all of whom have yet to set pen to paper. Over the course of the semester, Aaron's adult pupils write increasingly more honest life accounts and stories, and cracks begin to appear in their small-town community. A particularly bold and troubled student, Joan, strikes up a rapport with Aaron that threatens to become something more, as the pair bond over their failing marriages and creative frustrations. In the end, we observe the life-changing effects of artistic expression as Greenberg maps out the rest of each of the characters' lives, full of triumphs and newfound joy that can be traced back directly to those few weeks in a classroom in 1967. Richard Greenberg's intelligent, nuanced, and perceptive dialogue has been described by the *New York Times* as "exquisite . . . sparkling gems that [he] delivers with gratifying frequency." One of America's most loved and frequently produced playwrights, Greenberg has wisdom that runs deep, and his humor and charm make his work destined to be read and performed for generations to come.

About the Author Richard Greenberg has written two dozen plays, including the Tony Award-winning *Take Me Out*, which was a Pulitzer Prize finalist, as was his play *Three Days of Rain*. He is the winner of *Newsday's* George Oppenheimer Award for Best New Playwright and the PEN/Laura Pels Award for a playwright in mid-career. He lives in New York City.

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AARON: The End. . . By which I mean what exactly? Once, briefly, I loved someone who hated quotations: she claimed they'd ruined her life. Nevertheless: Death sanctions all stories, wrote Walter Benjamin. But does it? And even if it does, the end that comes with death is by definition someone else's and so can't really bring us close to the notion. And for a lapsed atheist like me by which I mean, I continue to believe there is no God but suspect for me He might make an exception even that final ending is, possibly, not so final. . . But this is no kind of introduction. All right, then: The year is 2014 and I am eighty-five years old. I look wonderful. So much has turned out nicely. . . And that's about that for 2014. Listen: There's a story I've been meaning to tell and, I guess, avoiding for a long time. It's a simple story about a few events that took place in late fall and early winter forty-seven years ago and I may not come off well in it. But if not now when? So. Okay: The year is 1967 and I am thirty-eight years old. I look fretful. So much has turned out badly.

Lights on a high school classroom. Night. Aaron is with Frieda and Anna.

FRIEDA: We wanted Anna and I to take Contemporary Events and Politics, but that sold out like a shot when they announced that Dr. Rose Franzblau might be a Guest Speaker, which I hear is not the case. So back to registration and they ask us if we'd like to take Flower Arranging, instead. It's taught by John Scorfutto? You know, he owns Hempstead Turnpike Bloomery? (Oh, that's right, you're not from here.) Well, I never use them. Everything there is carnations; so cheap. Anyway, when it comes to Flower Arranging I think I'm more of an expert than John Scorfutto. Whereas Anna, whenever she's tried, her o-wers come out looking like gloves that nobody's wearing. So, no, thank you to Flower Arranging, and they wonder, can we do Wednesdays? As it happens, we can and writing was available so here we are.

ANNA: Actually, for me there was more to it than that. I've always been a good writer. I won a writing award in high school.

FRIEDA: Which was before they invented the pencil. You didn't have a dirty fingernail, you had to recite from memory. No, I'm kidding. However, my question is: Will we be, in this class, expected actually to write?

AARON: It's a writing class.

FRIEDA: Uh-huh. Now, that perturbs me a little.

AARON: Don't let it.

FRIEDA: I'm no James Michener.

AARON: I should hope not.

FRIEDA: I'm not claiming to be James Michener.

ANNA: Can we write about current affairs?

AARON: You may.

ANNA: Because that was the class we wanted to take.

AARON: I believe I knew that.

ANNA: Though this is exciting, too.

FRIEDA: But we haven't been formally introduced: I'm Frieda Cohen. You may have seen my house on the way over. It's the one with the well-known garden: If you haven't seen it in person, it was featured in *Newsday*. My husband, Lou, is a chemist and I have two boys. Todd is nineteen, Brian is seventeen; they're the joy of my life. And now let me introduce you to one of the most magnificent people you're ever going to meet: This is Anna Cantor, who, for whatever reason, got started late in the childbearing game and has two adorable five-year-olds, Seth and Abby, who are twins!

ANNA: You don't have to tell him they're twins. What? I have two five-year-olds who aren't twins?

FRIEDA: I was just pointing out.

ANNA (TO AARON): Twins are a lot more common than is generally known.

Midge enters.

FRIEDA: Midge! I didn't know you were taking this class!

MIDGE: French Cooking was full.

FRIEDA: Anna, you know Midge from the Sisterhood.

ANNA: I've known her twenty years; you introduce us every time we meet. Hi, Midge. You look terrific!

MIDGE: Vitamin E.

FRIEDA: Mr. Port, this is another uncommonly superb person Midge Braverman. Her husband is a CPA. Her son is, what, fifteen? Michael. And her other son, Stewart, is a year or so older.

AARON: Nice to meet you.

MIDGE (RE: AARON): He's a baby!

FRIEDA: Only comparatively.

AARON: I'm a lot older than I.

MIDGE: This is going to teach us to write?

AARON: I hope so.

Jack Hassenpug enters, finds a seat.

FRIEDA: This gentleman I

dont know, youre on your own with him.AARON: If youll excuse me. I have to . . .He heads for his desk.Marc Adams enters, pauses in doorway, tentative.FRIEDA: Oh my GodI dont believe it.MIDGE: Who is that?ANNA: Marge Adams boy, Marc.FRIEDA: Its such a pity.MIDGE: Which is Marge Adams?FRIEDA: Youd only know her from the PTA, but she was before your time.MIDGE: Shes not Sisterhood?FRIEDA: Marge Adams?ANNA: Hes not right, this Marc.FRIEDA: Hes not right in the head. He had so much promise.ANNA: A sports star.FRIEDA: A bully, though, kind of a mean kidMIDGE: What happened?ANNA AND FRIEDA: Drugs.MIDGE: Ooohh. What drugs?ANNA: Dope.FRIEDA: And marijuana.MIDGE (GETTING IT): He was a user.ANNA: This brilliant kid, isnt that terrible?FRIEDA: On course to be valedictorian.ANNA: Now all he does is take long walks and smile at everybody.FRIEDA: Hello, he says. Hello! Hello!ANNA: Its the lossFRIEDA: The loss.Marc sees them.MARC: Hello! Hello!He nds a seat.ANNA: In a way, hes pleasant.MIDGE: Such a shame.ANNA: It happens.MIDGE: These times.FRIEDA: And hes taking this class. Guttenyu.They take desks.AARON: I guess we can start. Hello. Good evening. Welcome.This is, as you know, Creative Writing.Im your instructor. My name is Aaron Port.Uh, rst: Dont feel you need to interpret the course title too rigidly. Any kind of writing is welcome: Fiction. Biography. Recipes.Well, maybe not recipes.What I mean to say is, this is not a highly formalized class.That doesnt seem appropriate to adult ed.Anyway, thats not how I like to learn so it wont be how I, um, teach.I like to learn things obliquely. Watchcries, dogma, interest me less.The way this will work is you will write, we will read, comment. Little by little, knowledge will accrue.Hemingway, whatever we may think of him, wrote: Write the truest sentence you know. Or something like that. I havent memorized it verbatim.I dont really like Hemingway much, he always sounds to me like a rst-grade primer: Dick, Jane, and Ernie.No one laughs.But the true sentence . . . I that, I stand by that. All right.Okay. Oh, by the way, Im sorry but no smokingI have asthma. So then.You were asked to bring to this rst class a sample of your writing, a little autobiographical something or . . .along those lines.Who would like to read rst? Silence and abashed expressions. Shall I pick someone?More deeply abashed expressions. Has anyone brought anything? Silence.Okay, then.Joan rushes in.JOAN: Am I late?They take her in. The three ladies look at one another with an opinion.AARON: A little, butJOAN: Im so sorryAARON: Youve missed very little. You are Mrs. um . . . (CONSULTS PAGE)JOAN: Joan.AARON: Dellamond, is it?JOAN: Ill just sit here in the back.She does.AARON (A BIT THROWN BY HER): We were sayingwrite the truest thing you know. Hemingway . . . wrote um . . .Beat.Have you brought anything to read?JOAN: Oh God, no.Subtle lights and Aaron talks to us.AARON: And so:A forty-ve minute vamp.A general discussion of important topics in literature ensues. Mrs. Cohen, Mrs. Cantor, and Mrs. Braverman become quite heated debating Norman Mailer on David Susskind the other night and the possibility that Truman Capote is a homosexual.Ganug.To the class:Since no one has brought in anything, Im going to end early, but I do ask that next week you come with something.Anything.A paragraph.As I said, there are no restrictions. Im.very excited about your potential. Good night.The class starts to leave.In the back of the room, Joan remains.Aaron sits at his desk, takes out a paperback, and starts to read it. Then he notices Joan.AARON: May I help you?JOAN: No.Beat.AARON: Is there somethingJOAN: Im waiting for the ladies to disperse. Theyre in the parking lot now ripping you to shreds,Id imaginebut cheerfully!and Im waiting for them to be gone.AARON: (NODS): Oh.Beat.Why?JOAN: I dont like being shunned.AARON: Do they shun you?JOAN: They do.Well, not these, Ive just met these, but . . . their ilk.Beat.You dont have to stay with meor do you have to lock up?AARON: My train isnt for another . . .JOAN: Oh, I see.AARON: Wantagh Station has few amenities this time of night.JOAN: No.And in daylight its even worse. AARON: Usually when I come its dusk. JOAN: Dusk is a little better.AARON: Theres aJOAN (OVERLAPS): Dusk isAARON: clemency to itJOAN (OVERLAPS): natures candlelight.AARON: Yes!JOAN: Tricky, tricky dusk.Beat.So you do the reverse commute?AARON: I do.JOAN: My husband is a regular commuter.AARON: Ah.JOAN: Works in the city; doesnt work at home.AARON: Thats more standard.JOAN: Levittown is not where people generally come seeking opportunities.AARON: No.JOAN: There have been no gold rushes in Levittown. No one, to my knowledge, auditions here.AARON: A bedroom community.JOAN: People do sleep here. I can attest to that.. . .If that should be necessary. For any reason.Smiles awkwardly.He smiles awkwardly back.One would imagine that a personwho lives in the city and works in Levittown would be involved in some singular pursuit.He shrugs, smiles, conceding.Or is a failure . . . ?A failure of some kind . . . ?AARON (AMUSED?): Why do the ladies shun you?JOAN: Well, I dont know thats the word.AARON: Its your own word.JOAN: They dont really shunnot in a formal, not in a literal way.. . .No ones Amish.AARON: Ha.JOAN: Maybe its me. Maybe Im a paranoiac.I havent really made friends yet in Levittown.AARON: It can take a while.How long have you lived here?JOAN: Eighteen years.Beat.AARON: Thats a long time, eighteen years.JOAN (VAGUELY): Yes.Beat.Why do you have to travel so far to teach?AARON (TOO QUICKLY): Oh, Im not a teacher! I meana friend knew of this job and soJOAN: Yes, I think I know what you mean. Well.I wish you luck.AARON: You are coming back?Backing off:Under six people, they can make us disband.JOAN: I expect Ill try . . . to try again. Even so, I wish you luck.