



For "Must-See Show of the Month" (page 62), **Regina R. Robertson** reviewed the HBO movie *Lackawanna Blues*, about a boy raised by an eccentric grandmother figure. Watching the film, Robertson was reminded of Mrs. Bewley, her childhood neighbor in Jamaica, New York. "We all have people outside our family who loved and supported us when we were young," says Robertson. "Unfortunately, we often forget them when we get older." Robertson, who lives in Los Angeles, writes for *Essence* and the Associated Press. She's editing an anthology of short stories about fatherless daughters.



When food writer **Nina Simonds** was 23, she returned from studying cooking in Taiwan determined to make only authentic, to-the-letter Chinese dishes. But after years of travel throughout Asia and India and a two-year stint in London, she has become less stringent. She now happily mixes influences to create unique, flavorful recipes, like those featured in "Spice" (page 184), which are taken from her ninth cookbook, *Spices of Life* (Knopf),

out this month. "I tried to reshape traditional ideas, to personalize them and to make them simpler for people," she says. Simonds, who lives with her husband and teenage son in Salem, Massachusetts, regularly contributes to *The New York Times* travel section.

In compiling her list of "Books That Made a Difference" (page 146), author **Mary Gordon** was forced to leave a few things out—like several of the texts (Forster's *Howards End* and Conrad's *The Secret Agent*) she immersed herself in while writing her latest novel, *Pearl* (Pantheon). "I look to different writers to show me how to do different projects," says Gordon. "On the days when nothing comes to me, I copy by hand passages that accomplish what I'm trying to do." Gordon, who lives with her husband in New York City, also practices French by struggling through three pages of Proust each morning.



"The Man Who Didn't Get Away" (page 151) is author **Rick Moody's** (*The Ice Storm*) contribution to the new collection *Committed: Men Tell Stories of Love, Commitment, and Marriage* (Bloomsbury). Moody says he wanted to take part because the book fills an important void in literature, but the assignment was a challenge. "Fear of commitment is an element of male psychology that we don't easily talk about," he says. "I found myself incredibly resistant. I had to dig deep." Moody, who lives in Brooklyn with his wife, is finishing a novel about the television business.

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