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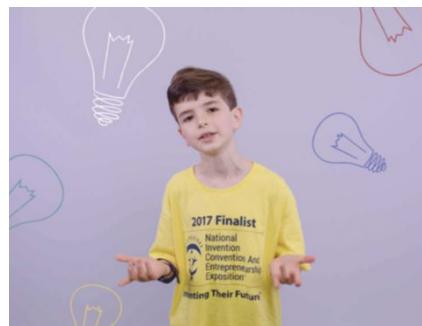
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Daniel Alarcón ("Away Games," p. 62) recently published the story collection "The King Is Always Above the People."

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VIDEO

Students at the National Invention Convention offer sage advice on solving real-world problems.

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New Yorker writers discuss what has changed in American politics since the Political Scene debuted, a decade ago.

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NEW FROM #1 NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LEE

A
JACK REACHER

NOVEL

CHILD

THE MIDNIGHT
LINE

Author photograph: © Axel Dupeux

Some lines should never be crossed.
But then again, neither should JACK REACHER.

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THE MAIL

SELLING ADDICTION

I thought I was inured to the skulduggery of Big Pharma, but then I read Patrick Radden Keefe's article about how the philanthropic Sackler family promotes opioid addiction through its company Purdue Pharma ("Empire of Pain," October 30th). It is time for the beneficiaries of the Sacklers' name-buying largesse—the Metropolitan Museum, Harvard, Columbia, and the Louvre, to name just a few—to scrutinize the provenance of large donations. They might also consider installing in the lobby of each Sackler Wing, Gallery, Museum, and Institute a large plaque reading "This building is thanks to the generosity of the Sackler family and Purdue Pharma, which started and continues to fuel the epidemic of prescription-opioid addiction that is responsible for two hundred thousand overdose deaths."

Burns Woodward
Waban, Mass.

Keefe's article makes painfully clear how Purdue and the Sacklers have benefitted from being able to legally operate in the dark. Purdue, by gaining F.D.A. approval and aggressively marketing a drug that is so highly addictive, has taken full advantage of the law. Even when it has been forced to settle liability suits, business has continued to grow. Its coffers are barely dented, its owners are not personally liable, and nondisclosure agreements have kept adverse publicity to a minimum. As a privately held company, Purdue is under no legal obligation to publicly disclose the details of its business, as would be the case if it were publicly traded. But shareholders and prospective investors are not the only people who have legitimate reasons to know how a company is generating huge sales and profits, and if it is risking liability, damaging the environment, or endangering public health. We all do. While there is no substitute for stronger

regulation, privately held companies of a certain size play too large a role in our economy and our society not to be held to the same standards of disclosure and transparency that apply to publicly traded companies.

Nathaniel Spiller
North Chevy Chase, Md.

In 2002, Theresa Sackler acquired in a charity auction the right to name a new variety of rose. She chose to honor her husband, Mortimer. I have an example of this beautiful rose. For many years, as I mulched and pruned, I imagined a Morty of my own: a charming and diffident librarian, a fine public servant whose wife sold their modest house in preparation for a life in a comfortable retirement home.

Oh, dear. Well, a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, and mine is now called Rosa Perez, in honor of Jill and Marianne. It will perhaps be a somewhat dolorous rose, but no less beautiful for that.

Barry Coleman
Northamptonshire, U.K.

I've been a heart surgeon for three decades and, at sixty-two, an occasional patient as well. I prescribe opioids to my patients, although only the short-acting variety, and usually without ongoing refills. I had a major chest surgery at the age of fifty, and can attest to the wondrous relief from acute, severe pain that these medications can provide. I took them for several weeks postoperatively, in tapering doses, and then stopped "cold turkey," in order to return to my operating and on-call duties. So I can also attest to the powerful effect of abrupt cessation. The Sacklers' true genius was understanding how to sway the hearts and minds of physician prescribers. This vision has blossomed into the direct-to-consumer marketing currently practiced by most major pharmaceutical manufacturers. In the latest iteration of this marketing, the consumer, instead of being pitched the medication itself, is being

"sold" a disease for which, conveniently, there just happens to be a pill or an injection available. Patients often arrive in a physician's office demanding an advertised medication. Given the number of heavily promoted drugs, the industry obviously hopes to actively and expensively medicate millions of people.

Daniel J. Waters
Clear Lake, Iowa

THE REAL TULSI GABBARD

As Representative Tulsi Gabbard's aunt, it gives me no pleasure to publicly air my doubts regarding my niece's political agenda, which Kelefa Sanneh describes in his Profile ("Against the Tide," November 6th). However, I take my role as a citizen seriously, and I would be remiss not to share my concerns. Sanneh raises the issue of Gabbard's lifelong immersion in the Science of Identity Foundation, an opaque religious organization that she and its founder, Chris Butler, have attempted to reframe as a "resource." Gabbard's answer to a basic question about Butler is troubling: despite calling him her "guru dev" (spiritual master) in her own promotional video, she denies that he is more important than any of her other teachers. She also has a notably mixed voting record, and associations that veer from certain progressive causes to the apparent courting of such strongmen as Narendra Modi, Bashar al-Assad, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (not to mention Trump)—this zigzagging path through positions is vexing. Sanneh's article walks the fine line of investigation and exposition in a way that points to shadows worthy of further illumination.

Caroline Sinavaiana Gabbard
Honolulu, Hawaii

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.



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NOVEMBER 15 – 21, 2017

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



In 1985, Roger Troutman sang of finding “Computer Love” in the glowing eyes emanating from newfangled screens. This May, **Poppy**, who plays Music Hall of Williamsburg on Nov. 15, fell for the machine itself. “I’ve got a thing for my laptop computer,” she sings on one of her many meta-songs, uploaded to her YouTube channel alongside hundreds of sterile, cybernetic monologues. Portrayed by Moriah Rose Pereira, Poppy reads the Bible, interviews plants, and denies belonging to a cult. Her followers remain undeterred.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHANIE GONOT

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera

Luis Buñuel's absurdist 1962 film, "The Exterminating Angel," skewers the comforts and complacency of the leisure class by forcing a group of guests to endure a never-ending dinner party that slowly drives them mad. Thomas Adès, in his gripping operatic adaptation, turns Buñuel's quiet, Surrealist satire into a psychological horror show. The music is filled with sinister foreboding, brutalist percussive noise, jagged vocal lines, and fleeting wisps of romance, and Tom Cairns's production fences in the well-heeled guests with a cold, monumental threshold that's far removed from Buñuel's luxurious yet cozy interiors. The singers work together like a crack theatrical ensemble, and Adès conducts the orchestra in a blistering performance. *Nov. 18 at 1 and Nov. 21 at 7:30. These are the final performances.* • Massenet's "Thaïs" is unquestionably a star vehicle—when Renée Fleming sang in the 2008 première of John Cox's production, she was lavishly costumed by Christian Lacroix—but it also requires two compelling singing actors who can carry a story that's light on plot. For the current revival, the Met has entrusted Ailyn Pérez and Gerald Finley to flesh out the inner conflicts of the courtesan title character and of the holy man who is captivated by her; Emmanuel Villaume conducts. *Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 18 at 8.* • **Also playing:** Franco Zeffirelli's gloriously over-the-top production of Puccini's "Turandot" is on offer this week, with Oksana Dyka in the title role and with Aleksandr Antonenko and Hei-Kyung Hong as Calaf and Liu; Carlo Rizzi. *Nov. 16 at 8.* • An early high point of Peter Gelb's tenure, Anthony Minghella's vividly cinematic staging of "Madama Butterfly" still feels clean, fresh, and vital eleven years later. The revival stars Hui He, Roberto Aronica, David Bizic, and Maria Zifchak; Jader Bignamini. *Nov. 17 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 7:30.* (*Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.*)

Juilliard Opera: "La Finta Giardiniera"

Mozart's early opera doesn't have the deftness and melodic splendor of his later masterpieces, but it's still a diverting comedy with a slew of gratifying arias ready to be dispersed among a roster of promising conservatory singers. Joseph Colaneri conducts, and Mary Birnbaum directs. *Nov. 15 and Nov. 17 at 7:30 and Nov. 19 at 2.* (*Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School. events.juilliard.edu.*)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Mariinsky Orchestra

Valery Gergiev conducts his magnificent, battle-hardened orchestra in two nights at Carnegie Hall, each with a superlative pianist as guest star. Denis Matsuev, known more for his force than for his insight, will be out front in Prokofiev's steely Second Piano Concerto on Tuesday night, in a program bookended by symphonies by Shostakovich (the tragicomic Ninth) and Scriabin (the ecstatic Third, "The Divine Poem"). On Wednesday evening, the star is the thrilling Daniil Trifonov, who will perform the New York première of his own Piano Concerto, part of a concert that also includes Strauss's "Don Juan" and Prokofiev's Symphony No. 6 in E-Flat Minor, one of his most profoundly

compelling works (and a Gergiev specialty). *Nov. 14 at 8 and Nov. 15 at 7.* (212-247-7800.)

Vox Luminis: "Royal Funeral Music"

Early-music fans are accustomed to encountering music for coronations and royal weddings on concert programs, but the fourteen singers of this Belgium-based ensemble, presented in the Miller Theatre series, are shining a light on funeral music that combines majesty with emotional acuity. The selections include Schütz's "Musikalische Exequien," for Prince Heinrich von Reuss (who picked out the texts himself), and works by Bach, Purcell, and Morley. *Nov. 18 at 8.* (*Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. millertheatre.com.*)

RECITALS

Paul Lewis

Lewis, a pianist of reliably penetrating insight and poetic disposition, opens and closes his latest recital program with sonatas from the apex of Haydn's career: one in C major, the other in G major. In between, he plumbs the depths hidden just beneath the amiable surfaces of Beethoven's Bagatelles (Op. 126), and illuminates the bravura and contemplativeness of Brahms's sublime Klavierstücke (Op. 118). *Nov. 15 at 7:30.* (*Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800.*)

Benjamin Grosvenor

The extraordinary young British pianist, whose playing combines effortless virtuosity and limpid beauty with just a touch of eccentricity, makes his début at the 92nd Street Y with a program combining the Romantic, modern, and Baroque eras: music by Bach, Brahms (the Klavierstücke, Op. 119), Brett Dean ("Hommage à Brahms"), Berg, Debussy, and Ravel ("Gaspard de la Nuit"). *Nov. 15 at 7:30.* (*Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.*)

"The Crypt Sessions"

The American soprano Alyson Cambridge performs William Bolcom's thought-provoking song cycle "From the Diary of Sally Hemings" in the chapel underneath the Church of the Intercession, in Hamilton Heights. A wine-and-food pairing precedes the program. *Nov. 15 at 8.* (*Broadway at 155th St. deathofclassical.com.*)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: "American Romantic"

In a time of ascendant modernism, the cellist Nicholas Canellakis and the pianist Michael Brown, two of the Society's finest younger artists, make a case for the neo-Romantic tradition in American music, offering eloquent advocacy for the music of such figures as Copland, Barber (the richly Brahmsian Sonata for Cello and Piano), Gershwin (Canellakis's arrangement of the Three Preludes), Foss, and Ned Rorem (Dances for Cello and Piano). *Nov. 16 at 7:30.* (*Rose Studio, Lincoln Center. 212-875-5788.*)

Park Avenue Armory: Barbara Hannigan

The intrepid Canadian soprano has emerged over the last half decade as one of the most vital and original musicians of her generation. She confirms her deep devotion to the modernist tradition in two recitals with her distinguished accompanist, Reinbert de Leeuw: the first explores the legacy of the Second Viennese School in lieder by Schoenberg, We-

bern, Berg (the "Seven Early Songs"), Wolf (the "Mignon Lieder"), and Alma Mahler, while the second is devoted entirely to music by Satie (including "Socrate"). *Nov. 16 at 7:30; Nov. 18 at 5 and 8.* (*Park Ave. at 66th St. armoryonpark.org.*)

Tetzlaff Quartet

The ensemble, whose playing balances intensity of expression with clarity of execution, reflects the stylistic equipoise of its leader, the stellar violinist Christian Tetzlaff. Deeply based in the music of the Viennese masters, it offers a program at Zankel Hall that features string quartets by Mozart, Berg (Op. 3), and Schubert (No. 15 in G Major). *Nov. 16 at 7:30.* (212-247-7800.)

Miller Theatre "Composer Portrait": Marcos Balter

A Brazilian-born composer whose visceral, coloristic music blends the elemental force of Varèse, flamboyant instrumental techniques, and bold flights of spontaneity, Balter benefits here from the advocacy of the nonpareil International Contemporary Ensemble, whose members are among his closest collaborators and champions. The program includes the New York première of two pieces Balter wrote for the group, alongside his Violin Concerto (with David Bowlin) and further works. *Nov. 16 at 8.* (*Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. millertheatre.com.*)

Jennifer Choi

Appearing under the aegis of the composer John Zorn's "Stone" series at the New School, this refined and adventurous violinist anchors two disparate programs. The first features the Secret Quartet in pieces by Earle Brown, Lev (Ljova) Zhurbin, and Trevor Dunn; the second offers an eclectic mix of works for smaller forces, including a trio arrangement of Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat" and world premières by Neil Rolnick and Jen Shyu. *Nov. 17-18 at 8:30.* (*Arnhold Hall, 55 W. 13th St. thestoneny.com.*)

Open Source Music Festival

"Extended Play" is the theme of this brand-new contemporary-music festival, the brainchild of the pianist Joel Fan, who believes that technological innovation will drive the way composers perform and share their music in the future. The all-day event certainly embraces a range of top-rate talent, with the JACK Quartet, the electronica duo Teengirl Fantasy, and the baritone Jeffrey Gavett (among others) performing works by such composers as Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, Bernard Rands, and Augusta Read Thomas. *Nov. 18, beginning at noon.* (*Abrons Arts Center, Grand St. at Willett St. opensourcemicmusicfest.com.*)

Peoples' Symphony Concerts: Dover Quartet

The low-cost, high-quality concert series, long based at Washington Irving High School, hosts the commanding young American string quartet, whose program will combine dulcet works of high Romanticism by Mendelssohn and Schumann (the Quartet No. 2 in F Major) with pieces by two composers who endured the Holocaust, Viktor Ullmann (who perished) and Simon Laks (who survived). *Nov. 18 at 7:30.* (*40 Irving Pl. 212-586-4680.*)

"Music Before 1800" Series: Quicksilver

In the connoisseur spirit of the seventeenth century, this impressive Gotham early-music band (featuring such stars as the violinist Robert Mealy and the keyboardist Avi Stein) explores the repertory of several composers who pushed the harmonic and aesthetic boundaries of the Baroque era, including Heinrich Biber, Dario Castello, and Matthias Weckmann. *Nov. 19 at 4.* (*Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. mb1800.org.*)



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THE THEATRE



Forever Young

The innovative company Bedlam revives “Peter Pan.”

Bedlam's been around for five years now, and while the move to establish a grassroots theatre company in our current cultural landscape might strike some as foolish, there are others who believe that an attempt to make something new is always a step in the right direction: it injects fresh blood and ideas into the theatre community. Bedlam is all about jolting the audience out of complacency. From the beginning, the company's co-founders, the forty-eight-year-old artistic director, director, and actor Eric Tucker and the thirty-nine-year-old actress Andrus Nichols, were committed to reconceiving well-established plays and stories while, in the process, doing away with the distance audience members generally feel in the presence of a “classic.”

Tucker and Nichols met in 2009, at an acting workshop at Shakespeare & Company in Massachusetts. Afterward, Nichols hired Tucker to direct a play she was producing. It didn't take long for her to see that she and Tucker had similar interests, and a similar vibe, when it came to making work. Bedlam's first show, a revival of George Bernard Shaw's 1923 play “Saint Joan,”

was presented downtown in a fifty-seat theatre and cost relatively little to produce in Broadway terms, but loads for an unknown troupe. Tucker's vision for the piece (Nichols starred in it) included four actors playing twenty-five roles, and it's his ability to peel away the layers while supporting the emotionalism of a performer that makes you see things with new and less cynical eyes.

Bedlam's energy is infectious. Its rendition of Jane Austen's “Sense and Sensibility,” adapted with aplomb by the company member Kate Hamill, was a hit in part because the actors never stopped moving: watching them was like living inside the writer's mind, with all those jokes and ideas and sympathies bouncing off one another. Now Tucker takes on another story from across the sea: J. M. Barrie's legendary “Peter Pan” (in previews, opening Nov. 19, at the Duke on 42nd Street). First produced in 1904, the Scottish-born author's play originally had a cast of thirty actors; Tucker's version has six, and it's exciting to imagine how he will get the performers to tap into their inner child to draw out our own, that kid who fell in love with the theatre at an early age because he equated it with magic.

—Hilton Als

A Billion Nights on Earth

At the Next Wave Festival, Thaddeus Phillips directs a piece drawing on pop-up books and Kabuki, in which a father and son (Michael and Winslow Fegley) travel into an alternate dimension. (*BAM Fisher*, 321 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 15-18.)

Brigadoon

Kelli O'Hara, Patrick Wilson, Aasif Mandvi, and Stephanie J. Block star in a concert production of the classic Lerner and Loewe musical, directed and choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon, about a mythical Scottish town that appears once every century. (*City Center*, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Nov. 15-19.)

Bright Colors and Bold Patterns

Drew Droege reprises his one-man comedy, about a misbehaving guest at a gay wedding in Palm Springs. Directed by Michael Urie. (*SoHo Playhouse*, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555. In previews. Opens Nov. 20.)

Cruel Intentions

Lindsey Rosin and Jordan Ross created this musical version of Roger Kumble's 1999 teen film, itself based on “Les Liaisons Dangereuses,” featuring a jukebox score of nineties pop songs. (*Le Poisson Rouge*, 158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. Previews begin Nov. 17.)

The Dead, 1904

Irish Rep brings back its site-specific staging of the James Joyce tale, adapted by Paul Muldoon and Jean Hanff Korelitz and accompanied by a holiday feast. With Melissa Gilbert and Rufus Collins. (*American Irish Historical Society*, 991 Fifth Ave., at 80th St. 212-727-2737. Previews begin Nov. 18.)

Downtown Race Riot

The New Group presents Seth Zvi Rosenfeld's play, directed by Scott Elliott and starring Chloë Sevigny as a single mother during the 1976 mob attack in Washington Square Park. (*Pershing Square Signature Center*, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. In previews.)

Harry Clarke

In David Cale's one-man thriller-comedy, directed by Leigh Silverman, Billy Crudup plays a Midwestern man who moves to New York City and poses as a swinging Londoner. (*Vineyard*, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. In previews. Opens Nov. 21.)

Hundred Days

The folk-punk duo the Bengsons composed this musical (with a book co-written with Sarah Gancher), about living as if you had only a hundred days left on earth. Anne Kauffman directs. (*New York Theatre Workshop*, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475. In previews.)

Latin History for Morons

John Leguizamo's newest one-man show, in which he recounts his search for a Latin hero for his son's history project, moves to Broadway. Tony Taccone directs. (*Studio 54*, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. Opens Nov. 15.)

The Mad Ones

Prospect Theatre Company stages a new musical by Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk, about a young woman torn between following her mother's path and taking a dare from her best

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friend. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. In previews. Opens Nov. 16.)

Meteor Shower

Amy Schumer, Keegan-Michael Key, Laura Benanti, and Jeremy Shamos star in Steve Martin's new play, about a dinner party interrupted by falling space debris. Jerry Zaks directs. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)

Once on This Island

Michael Arden directs a revival of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty's 1990 musical fable, in which a young Caribbean woman falls in love with a man from the other side of her island. (*Circle in the Square*, 235 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)

The Parisian Woman

Uma Thurman stars in a drama by Beau Willimon (the creator of "House of Cards"), as a Washington socialite navigating power and relationships after the 2016 election. Pam MacKinnon directs. (*Hudson*, 141 W. 44th St. 855-801-5876. In previews.)

Pride and Prejudice

Kate Hamill, who previously adapted "Sense and Sensibility" for the Bedlam company, takes on another Austen novel; she also plays Elizabeth Bennet in this Primary Stages production, directed by Amanda Denhart. (*Cherry Lane*, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens Nov. 19.)

School Girls; or, The African Mean Girls Play

MCC Theatre presents Jocelyn Bioh's play, directed by Rebecca Taichman, about a teen-age beauty queen at a boarding school in Ghana who longs to enter the Miss Universe pageant. (*Lucille Lortel*, 121 Christopher St. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens Nov. 16.)

SpongeBob SquarePants

A musical based on the anarchic cartoon, with direction by Tina Landau, a book by Kyle Jarow, and songs by artists including Steven Tyler, Sara Bareilles, John Legend, Cyndi Lauper, and the Flaming Lips. (*Palace*, Seventh Ave. at 47th St. 877-250-2929. In previews.)

The Wolves

Lincoln Center Theatre transfers Sarah DeLappe's play, directed by Lila Neugebauer and set at the practice sessions of a girls' soccer team in the suburbs. (*Mitzi E. Newhouse*, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. In previews. Opens Nov. 20.)

NOW PLAYING

After the Blast

The planet has descended into nuclear winter. Surviving humans live in underground warrens. Puppies are endangered. And couples still fight. In Zoe Kazan's tender dystopian play, at LCT3, Oliver (William Jackson Harper), an environmental scientist, and Anna (Cristin Milioti), a former journalist, want a baby, but haven't yet been approved for pregnancy. To help Anna fill her days, Oliver presents his wife with a home-assistance robot in need of training. Gradually, Anna and the bot (an uncredited lump of yellow fuzz, and a breakout star) form an affectionate bond. Under Lila Neugebauer's clear-eyed direction, the actors—and the bot—imbue the sci-fi jargon and situations with poignancy and emotive truth. The futuristic setting, however plausible, is a beguiling veneer for the play's real con-

cerns: how people love and betray and trust and fail, aboveground or under it. (*Claire Tow*, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. Through Nov. 19.)

At the Illusionist's Table

Scott Silven is a debonair young mentalist with Severus Snape hair and a sweet Scottish lilt. In this intimate evening of magic and munchies, he presides over twenty-eight audience members around a long banquet table in the "Sleep No More" dining hall, where candelabras and stage smoke set the mood. During a three-course dinner, Silven pulls off increasingly elaborate mind-reading feats, guessing playing cards and secret numbers over appetizers and wowing everyone by dessert. The show easily passes the "How the hell did he do that?" test, but it's Silven's light gothic touch—and some tasty whiskey—that give the evening its flavor. (*The Heath at the McKittrick Hotel*, 542 W. 27th St. 212-564-1662.)

The Band's Visit

It has a wisp of a plot: an Egyptian police orchestra, conducted by Tewfik (Tony Shalhoub), lands in the wrong town in the Negev Desert, where the locals, stone-faced and few, put the musicians up for the night. In the morning, they leave. And yet David Yazbek and Itamar Moses's new musical, based on a 2007 Israeli film, fills up the stage with feeling, the muted kind that dwells in missed connections and half-remembered tunes. The director, David Cromer, has enormous trust and patience in his material, letting the emotional music of an uneventful night in the middle of nowhere rise to the surface. But the show's not so secret weapon is Katrina Lenk, who plays Dina, a café owner with a dry stare and a drier wit. When she finally opens up to Tewfik, in a song about the "jasmine wind" that brought in Umm Kulthum on her mother's radio, she's a radiant presence. (*Ethel Barrymore*, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

Jesus Hopped the "A" Train

Stephen Adly Guirgis's terrific play, first produced in 2000, could accurately be described as a sequence of philosophical arguments about justice, religion, and the conundrums that occur at their points of intersection. It's also a propulsive and harrowing prison comedy about Angel Cruz, whose shooting of a cult leader, in an attempt to rescue a friend from his influence, has landed him in protective custody on Rikers Island. There, to his great misfortune, he himself falls under the influence of Lucius Jenkins, a serial killer who has found God. The excellent leads of Mark Brokaw's production are all the more impressive given that both were late replacements: Sean Carvajal's Angel is heartbreaking in his desperate helplessness, and Edi Gathegi's Lucius is unforgettable, an enigmatic monster who's almost always on the move inside his tiny cage, but at his most chilling when he's perfectly still. (*Pershing Square Signature Center*, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

Junk

Ayad Akhtar ("Disgraced") is a playwright who seems the most energized when he has big issues to dive into, and what could be juicier than Wall Street greed and maleficence? The year is 1985, and Judy Chen (a superb Teresa Avia Lim) is a business journalist covering new financial strategies that are redefining the idea of capital in America. Robert Merkin (Steven Pasquale) embodies those changes: sleek as a shark, he's the head of an L.A.-based bank that's been very aggressive about hostile takeovers. Merkin lives in a world where guilt is a burden and loyalty is an inconve-

nience: money is, as Chen says, "the thing." Directed by Doug Hughes, this slick production of a thin play features twenty-three actors, so there's not a lot of room for character development. But, in a way, that doesn't matter: sometimes it's fun just to sit there and get off on the testosterone and the swiftness of the action, like most of the play's guys do. (*Vivian Beaumont*, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

M. Butterfly

David Henry Hwang's most famous drama, which won the 1988 Tony Award for Best Play, premiered on Broadway with John Lithgow in the role of Rene Gallimard, a French official who falls fatally in love with a male Chinese opera star named Song Liling—whom Gallimard believes is a woman. Played by the handsome Clive Owen in this creaky revival (directed by Julie Taymor with atypical restraint, despite the occasional spectacle), Gallimard is less existentially confused than in Lithgow's interpretation, and thus less interesting. As Song, Jin Ha is perhaps too self-righteous, but that may have something to do with Hwang's rewrite of the script, which explains and justifies mysteries that should be left to the imagination. (*Cort*, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

Office Hour

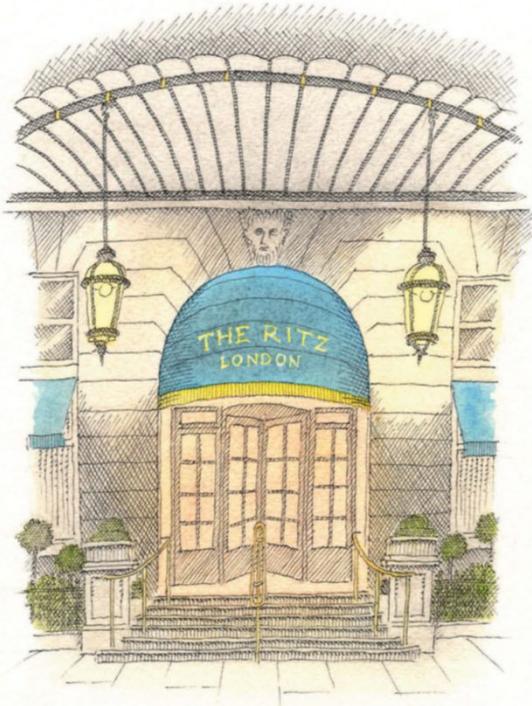
The setup is damn near perfect: in a conversation that manages to be both frightening and funny, three college English instructors discuss how to handle a seemingly impossible student (Ki Hong Lee) who always hides behind sunglasses and a hat, almost never speaks, and writes only about disturbing violence—a "classic shooter," two of them agree. The third (Sue Jean Kim) isn't so sure, and most of the rest of Julia Cho's play, directed by Neel Keller, is devoted to her deeply awkward attempt to draw him out in a one-on-one conference. At worst, their encounter gets bogged down in implausibly confessional chatter. But when it dares to be outlandish it's exceptional, especially in the way it dramatizes both the teacher's imaginings of worst-case scenarios and the danger of throwing adjuncts into heavy situations with no training. (*Public*, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

People, Places & Things

Emma (Denise Gough), the protagonist of Duncan Macmillan's play (a transfer from the National Theatre in London), is an actress, a sloppily confrontational, drug-addled mess in a business populated by handlers who applaud inflated self-regard. Like many junkies, Emma is a brutalizing sentimentalist chasing the dragon—a line of coke, a handful of tranquilizers, booze—while also chasing some idea of love, which involves regret as well. When she is shown to her room at a rehab facility by an administrator (Alistair Cope, who, like the rest of the supporting cast, is excellent), she flips him off with snotty remarks: she is defiant, or acting defiant. The Irish-born Gough knows how to play Emma's lies without foregrounding them or trying to make us comfortable with her character's psychology. Her performance is greater than the script, and the script is terrific, if conventional; it gives Gough a framework through which to express her genius. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/13/17.) (*St. Ann's Warehouse*, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

Red Roses, Green Gold

This jukebox musical, set in a saloon, draws on songs from the Grateful Dead catalogue, mostly tracks from the band's early-seventies albums "Workingman's Dead" and "American Beauty"



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and mostly written by the group's leader, Jerry Garcia, and its resident lyricist, Robert Hunter. These are fine songs, probably the Dead's best known and most popular, each hinting at a rich story. But stringing them together, as Michael Norman Mann has done in a banal, flimsy, and forced script, was a bad idea. The eight cast members, led by Scott Wakefield and Natalie Storrs, are talented singers, dancers, and instrumentalists, and some of the songs hit the mark. The director and choreographer, Rachel Klein, uses the stage cleverly, but encourages a painfully broad style of Dogpatch hokum. The approach falls flat, and does the music no honor. (*Minetta Lane Theatre*, 18 Minetta Lane. 800-745-3000.)

Shadowlands

William Nicholson's 1990 play (made into a movie in 1993) receives a thoughtful and satisfying revival from Fellowship for Performing Arts. C. S. Lewis (Daniel Gerroll), the noted Christian theologian, Oxford professor, and author of the Narnia books, opens the show by delivering a lecture full of moral and spiritual conundrums. Next, he's engaging in comfortably donnish discourse with his peers. Into this tweedy world, where women are mostly a theoretical construct, bursts Joy Davidman (Robin Abramson), a New York poet and a fan of Lewis's writing, travelling with her young son. With her straightforward, steely intellect—and the occasional well-placed zinger—she not only holds her own in conversation with Lewis and his stodgy colleagues but begins an unexpected love affair. Under Christa Scott-Reed's direction, the exceptional cast (also including John C. Vennema and Sean Gormley) catches every nuance of this fine play. (*Acorn*, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

Springsteen on Broadway

In his new solo show, Bruce Springsteen cribbs from his memoir, "Born to Run," to take us on what lesser artists would call "a journey." The words come tumbling out, at his own pace, starting with his poor upbringing—how he was desperate to leave home but ended up, as we all do, in one way or another, back where he started. "Now I live ten minutes away from where I grew up," he says, somewhat ruefully, in one of many amusing disclosures. Springsteen isn't humor-challenged, exactly—he's too self-aware not to know when to make fun of himself—but he's a romantic, and romantic feeling guides this intimate spectacle. His commitment to his subject matter makes the show a kind of sermon, one that he has written in order to understand not only himself but what goes into the making of a self. (10/30/17) (*Walter Kerr*, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

What We're Up Against

This play by Theresa Rebeck ("Seminar"), written in 1992 and staged by WP Theatre, has aged much better than its protagonists' office wear of culottes and baggy pleated pants. Set at an architectural firm where the men and the women are pitted in a vicious—and utterly familiar—war of the sexes, the story takes off when Eliza (Krysta Rodriguez), furious at not getting any assignments, makes a bold move that shakes up the power balance. Alliances and betrayals abound, and the deft cast, moving at breakneck speed under Adrienne Campbell-Holt's punchy direction, makes a meal of the snappy dialogue. Fuelled by cathartic fury, this dark feminist comedy leaves nobody unscathed, from the dumb, smugly sexist supervisor (Damian Young) to the accommodating older colleague (Marg Helgenberger)

who's deemed "a Nazi collaborator" by the brazen Eliza. Rebeck's arguments are not new, but that doesn't make them tired. (*McGinn/Cazale*, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 866-811-4111.)

ALSO NOTABLE

Animal Wisdom The Bushwick Starr. • **The B-Side** The Performing Garage. *Through Nov. 19.* • **The Home Place** Irish Repertory. • **Illyria** Public. • **The Last Match** Laura Pels. • **Lonely**

Planet Clurman. *Through Nov. 18.* • **Marcel + The Art of Laughter** Polonsky Shakespeare Center. *Through Nov. 19.* • **Oedipus el Rey** Public. • **Off the Meter, on the Record** Irish Repertory. *Through Nov. 18.* • **Squeamish** Beckett. • **Strange Interlude** Irondale Center. *Through Nov. 18.* • **Stuffed** Westside. *Through Nov. 19.* • **Time and the Conways** American Airlines Theatre. • **Tiny Beautiful Things** Public. • **Too Heavy for Your Pocket** Black Box, Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre. • **Torch Song** Second Stage. • **Uncommon Sense** Sheen Center.

DANCE

Big Dance Theatre / "17c"

This deft troupe of dancer-actors delves into the past to comment on the present. Its latest show, "17c," is centered on the British naval administrator Samuel Pepys and a contemporary of his, the playwright and novelist Margaret Cavendish. Pepys, a man-about-town and a womanizer, was also an avid journal writer; Cavendish wrote what is now considered one of the first works of science fiction ("The Blazing World"), and has become a feminist icon. Annie-B Parson, who conceived the show, and Paul Lazar, her codirector, cleverly interweave music, dance, text, and video to create what Lazar calls "a discourse between the current moment and the seventeenth century." (*BAM Harvey Theatre*, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 14-18.)

Complexions Contemporary Ballet

This is the second season at the Joyce Theatre this year for Dwight Rhoden's crew of diverse, physically impressive dancers, and—less justifiably—for Rhoden's hyperextended, stunt-crammed work. The two programs include his recent "Gutter Glitter" and his lip-synching tribute to David Bowie, "Star Dust," as well as a première by Jae Man Joo and three short new pieces by Rhoden, Dee Caspary, and Ido Tadmor, the last featuring live music by the Israeli pianist Daniel Gortler. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 14-19 and Nov. 21. *Through Nov. 26.*)

Marjani Forté-Saunders

Inspired by the stories of the choreographer's father, but also jumping off into fantasy, "Memoirs of a . . . Unicorn" (presented by New York Live Arts and Collapsible Hole) investigates the overlapping categories of maleness and blackness. Audience members wander through an installation of visual projections by Meena Murugesan, a sound environment by Everett Saunders, and sets by Mimi Lien, before watching a solo by Forté-Saunders. (*Collapsible Hole*, 55 Bethune St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 15-19.)

AXIS Dance Company

Marc Brew was a twenty-year-old Australian-born professional dancer in 1997, when a car crash left him paralyzed from the chest down. He became a choreographer, and last year he took over as artistic director of this Oakland-based ensemble, which, by mixing performers with and without physical disabilities, has been thwarting expectations and changing attitudes for three decades. Brew's "Radical Impact," set to a hip-hop-influenced string quartet by JooWan

Kim, is a study of strength and vulnerability. It shares a program with "The Reflective Surface," by the rising Bay Area choreographer Amy Seiwert. (*Gibney Dance: Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center*, 280 Broadway. 646-837-6809. Nov. 16-18.)

Gillian Walsh

A dry and rigorous formalist, Walsh is bent on circumventing conventions of dance and theatre, but that doesn't mean she shies away from big questions. "Moon Fate Sin" takes on psychoanalysis, the occult, the unconscious, and the death drive. Rather than anything overtly dramatic, expect an austere meditation and tedium that might turn transcendent. (*Danspace Project*, St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Nov. 16-18.)

Jasna L. Vinovrski

This Croatian choreographer's piece "Staying Alive" is a comedy about migration, silly on the surface but darker underneath. In a skirt suit, Vinovrski holds an iPad and does a little line dance by herself while drolly reciting lyrics from the Bee Gees song referred to in the title. This task is absurd, as are others, such as humble feats of balance, but certain phrases resonate: "I'm going nowhere / Somebody help me." (*Abrons Arts Center*, 466 Grand St. 212-598-0400. Nov. 17-18.)

"Works & Process" / Sarasota Ballet

The Gulf Coast-based company has made its name through impeccable stagings of works by the twentieth-century British choreographer Frederick Ashton. At the Guggenheim, the company's director, the British-born Iain Webb, will discuss Ashton's repertory and style with Marcelo Gomes, a principal at American Ballet Theatre who recently appeared in Sarasota Ballet's production of the 1961 work "The Two Pigeons." A few excerpts of this touching ballet will be performed, as will a preview of Gomes's first choreographic commission for the company. (*Fifth Ave.* at 89th St. 212-423-3575. Nov. 19.)

Eiko Otake

After more than four decades as half of a renowned slow-moving duo with her husband, Koma, Eiko went solo a few years back. Alone, her presence is even more powerful—frighteningly vulnerable but also just plain frightening, like a potentially vengeful ghost. "A Body in Places" is what she has been calling her hauntings of sites around the world. This week, she appears at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (*Fifth Ave.* at 82nd St. 212-535-7710. Nov. 19.)



Anselm Kiefer



Mario Vargas Llosa



J. PAUL GETTY MEDAL AWARDED TO ANSELM KIEFER AND MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

The Getty is honored to present the J. Paul Getty Medal—which recognizes extraordinary contributions to the practice, understanding, and support of the arts—to German artist Anselm Kiefer and Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa.

Anselm Kiefer is best known for complex paintings that confront German history and taboos, particularly Nazi rule. He uses a wide range of cultural, literary, and philosophical allusions, and integrates an array of elements, including concrete, glass, and burned books. His monumental body of work has been shown and collected by more than eighteen museums worldwide.

Mario Vargas Llosa, considered the most prolific and successful Latin American writer of the past quarter century, has received numerous international awards for his novels and essays, including the 2010 Nobel Prize for Literature. His deeply intellectual work often draws on his experiences as a native Peruvian or explores power structures around the world.

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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum

"Rodin at the Met"

A team of Met curators led by Denise Allen has installed about fifty bronzes, plasters, terracottas, and carvings by Auguste Rodin, along with works by related artists, in the grand foyer of the museum's galleries of nineteenth-century painting. (One room is filled with chronological survey of his drawings.) The show marks the hundredth anniversary of the artist's death, but no occasion is really needed. Rodin is always with us, the greatest sculptor of the nearly four centuries since Gian Lorenzo Bernini perfected and exalted the baroque. Matter made flesh and returned to matter, with clay cast in bronze: Rodin. (There are carvings in the show, too, but made by assistants whom he directed. He couldn't feel stone.) You know he's great even when you're not in a mood for him. Are "The Thinker" and "The Kiss" kind of corny? Does the grandiosity of "Monument to Balzac" (for which there is a small study in the show) overbear? Sure. There's a stubborn tinge of vulgarity about Rodin, inseparable from his strength. But roll your eyes as you may, your gaze is going to stop, again, and widen at the sight of one or another work of his. He—or his hand, as his mind's executive—wrenched figurative sculpture from

millennia of tradition and sent it tumbling into modernity. *Through Jan. 15.*

Museum of Modern Art

"Club 57: Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978–1993"

This calculated clutter of ephemera, art work, and experimental films opened, appropriately, on Halloween. Inspiration for last-minute costumes could be found in such treasures as a transparent vampire cape constructed from a shower curtain, worn by the New Wave legend Klaus Nomi, and a coat made from fibreglass insulation; or, more generally, in the anything-goes, drag-punk aesthetic that suffused the East Village scene. Club 57 was located in a church basement on St. Marks Place and defined by its visionary team: the artist Keith Haring was the exhibition organizer, and the actor and cabaret cutup Ann Magnuson curated performance. The venue was a creative hub for the interdisciplinary, operating at the margins of the official art world. So it's no small feat that a major museum captured the scope and spirit of this Reagan-era subcultural landscape, down to the darkened club environment in the lower-level theatre gallery. Here, among the deluge of anonymous, Dadaesque flyers and campy silk-screen posters by the performance artist John Sex, you'll cross paths with an early Ellen Berkenblit horse painting and a ballpoint Basquiat drawing. The film programming prom-

ises surprises as well: in December, new MOMA preservations will be shown along with No Wave classics. *Through April 1.*

MOMA PS1

"Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting"

In one of the New York artist's iconic performances, "Interior Scroll," from the nineteen-seventies, she unfurled a text from her vagina indicting the sexism of her experimental filmmaking milieu. Around the same time, in a mesmerizing sendup of Action painting's macho posturing, Schneemann swung nude, from a harness, marking the walls with a crayon. But the artist's career adds up to much more than an extended riposte to the insults of the male-dominated avant-garde, which this survey makes clear. Moving from her dynamic abstract paintings of the fifties to her Fluxus-inspired events and Super 8 films of the sixties and on to recent installations, schematic drawings, and multichannel videos, the show reveals Schneemann's quest for a feminist visual vocabulary to be the unifying force of these disparate endeavors. In her ongoing series of often hilarious lecture-performances, she indexes ancient symbols of female sexuality; in grids of color photographs, from the eighties, she documents her unorthodox relationship with her cat; "More Wrong Things," from 2000, is a foreboding tangle of cables and monitors displaying disaster footage and her own archival performance clips. With this decades-overdue retrospective, Schneemann is shown to be a crucial forebear to younger performance-based artists, and a groundbreaking Conceptualist attuned to the tactile properties of every medium she takes on. *Through March 11.*

Whitney Museum

"Toyin Ojih Odutola: To Wander Determined"

The young Nigerian artist, who is based in New York, uses an evocative conceit to unite her figurative works—and to heighten their intrigue. Faux letterhead announces that the large-scale works on paper, in charcoal, pastel, and graphite, merge the collections of two aristocratic Nigerian families. Her regal depictions of Africans retool traditions of European portraiture, as well as strains of contemporary photography (think: Instagram), showing the wealthy at leisure or enshrining their belongings in luminous vignettes. Ojih Odutola is known for her intense, even psychedelic, renderings of black skin, an approach echoed in her textured depiction of clothing, interiors, and landscapes. The sumptuous collision of gleaming tile, gauzy fabric, and desert scrub in "Pregnant" (2017) is especially noteworthy. Its off-kilter composition suggests an enlarged snapshot, but the pose of its subject is curiously formal. "Wall of Ambassadors," also from this year, is an unabashed moment of meta-commentary, showing a panelled wall of oval-framed portraits. Each mysterious dignitary speaks to the dizzying detail of the artist's invented history, as do the hands entering the bottom edge of the still-life, to complete it with an elegant arrangement of leaves. *Through Feb. 25.*

Morgan Library and Museum

"Drawn to Greatness: Master Drawings from the Thaw Collection"

The practice of drawing in Europe is as old as the lines on the caves at Lascaux. But there was a sea change during the Renaissance, when the earliest pieces on view here were made. Artists began to think with their hands, working through ideas on paper, rather than merely recording the world. In one sublime pen-and-ink sketch, from 1450–55, Andrea Mantegna posed the same columnar saint



Nina Chanel Abney casts a sharp eye on race relations—and packs a colorful, graphical punch—in her new paintings (including "Whet," above) at the Shainman gallery, through Dec. 20.

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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Arshile Gorky

During a rare happy time in his tragic life, in the mid-nineteen-forties, Gorky produced some of the most important art of the twentieth century, often while working outdoors: drawings, leading to paintings, that distilled the influences of Picasso, Miró, and Matta into essences of what was yet to be called Abstract Expressionism. This great show of thirty-two pictures, aptly titled "Ardent Nature," vivifies the adventure. The vestigial imagery is Surrealist—sectoid ciphers, in linear snarls and visceral biomorphic shapes. But these are incidental to the impulsive marks in crayon or charcoal and to the drenching oil washes. Keyed to landscape, the compositions generate an engulfing sense of scale regardless of their size. A new kind of pictorial space is born. Even works that fail—by going slack or jittery—excite, as evidence of the risks that Gorky bravely ran in his rush of passionate experimentation. What would he have achieved had he not died in 1948? As it was, his innovations proved crucial to the stylistic triumphs of Willem de Kooning. Here, you can readily parse elements of the formal vocabulary that de Kooning employed in service to consummate visual poetry. *Through Dec. 23.* (Hauser & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-794-4970.)

Emmet Gowin

The high point of the American photographer's new show is the series "Mariposas Nocturnas," which does for the moths of Central and South America what Bernd and Hilla Becher once did for European water towers, transforming an apparently lowly subject into riveting art works, displayed in grids. (At seventy-five, Gowin is breaking fresh ground: this is his first work in color.) Over fifteen years, he photographed more than a thousand species on visits to Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, French Guiana, and Panama, celebrating nature's inexhaustible knack for art direction—each moth is a unique marvel of ornamentation. But such biodiversity is under threat, by development and deforestation. So it adds to the visual thrill to learn that nearly all of the specimens were photographed while they were alive. *Through Jan. 6.* (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"Nuvolo and Post-War Materiality 1950–1965"

The Italian artist Giorgio Ascari picked up the pseudonym Nuvolo as a teen-ager in the Italian resistance. It derives from the word for "cloud," but there's nothing ethereal about the abstract experiments he composed with a sewing machine. Even beside stellar works by a dozen of his contemporaries—a square frame wrapped in black bandages by Salvatore Scarpitta, a ripped-poster marvel by Mimmo Rotella—Nuvolo has the power to startle. One untitled 1961 grid of dyed deer-skin squares is a hybrid of haute couture and Paul Klee; a roughly Texas-shaped patch of corduroy sewn onto raw canvas, from 1959, curls up at its edges like an unruly cowlick. *Through Jan. 26.* (Di Donna, 981 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-259-0444.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Mary Kelly

Three recent series by the veteran Conceptualist unite the personal and the historical using an unexpected domestic material: compressed dryer lint. "7 Days" re-creates covers of a defunct leftist publication; the jumble of early-nineteen-seventies

headlines—"Germaine Greer Talks," "Miners on Strike"—suggests a spin cycle of history. "Notes from Home" documents the same era, borrowing its imagery from Kelly's private archive: an enlarged letter from a friend offers advice about a love affair, invoking that of Sartre and de Beauvoir. The show's centerpiece is "Circa Trilogy," in which a flickering light illuminates re-creations of famous photographs, including one of a girl with a flag in Paris, in 1968. *Through Nov. 22.* (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

Howardena Pindell

One way to combine postmodern deconstruction of the painted surface with a feminist reclamation of craft is to sew together scraps of canvas, as Pindell does here for her knockout first show of new paintings since 2001. Using a sailmaker's needle, she assembles her elements into irregular shapes and paints them in bright solid colors before adding her trademark hole-punched paper disks; the unstretched paintings are then further embellished with ovals and circles cut out of foam. "Nautilus #1," a yellow spiral whose drifts of multicolored dots evoke ocean currents, may be the sunniest, but all the pieces radiate joy, even as their visible sutures evoke dislocation and trauma. "Songlines: Labyrinth (Versailles)," which is loosely rectangular and pale turquoise, is waiting patiently for a museum wall. *Through Dec. 16.* (Greenan, 545 W. 20th St. 212-929-1351.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Farah Al Qasimi

The stately directness of the Emirati-raised photographer's portraits is offset by the ambiguity of their backgrounds. She posed her father, a former diplomat, under curtains that match his dark tan *thawb*; her friend Ghaita is a study in white—his outfit, bedsheets, a headboard—posing between his own shadow and an even crisper one cast by a rose. In "Living Room Vape," faces disappear altogether—one beyond the picture's edge, another behind a cloud of mist—and the busy colors of patterned carpets and chinoiserie vases rush into the void. One image, "Piper at a Barbecue in Houston," is both distinctly American and genuinely shocking: a dog with flash-reddened eyes cringes near a coffee table piled with guns and raw meat. *Through Dec. 22.* (Anrather, 28 Elizabeth St. 212-587-9674.)

Scott Covert

In the zine accompanying this two-gallery show, there's a telling photo of a minivan, its back door open to reveal stacked, rolled-up canvases. Covert, a figure of New York's fabled downtown scene (whose work also appears in MOMA's "Club 57" exhibition), has spent several decades creating paintings from gravestone rubbings, a technique that takes him on cross-country pilgrimages. Surprisingly, the results are anything but macabre. One glittery white work features the name and short life span of the Warhol superstar Candy Darling, floating above a rubbing of Marilyn Monroe's grave, as if uniting the performers in Heaven. A deep-blue monochrome pairs the frenemies Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. The paintings commemorate a diverse group—Houdini, Frederick Douglass, Frank Sinatra—but the meaning of the juxtapositions can remain foggy. Covert's keen color sense and gestural variation—he's both tender and scribbly—reveal a flair for experimentation. (The exhibition continues at Situations, 127 Henry St. www.situations.us.) *Through Dec. 10.* (Fierman, 127 Henry St. 917-593-4086.)

in three variations; the sheet has the immediacy of a live rehearsal. Divided chronologically into nine sections, this almost unbearably excellent show spans five hundred years and proceeds through Rembrandt, Goya, Picasso, and Pollock (and Monet, Cézanne, Gauguin, and Matisse). For every blockbuster name there's an unfamiliar astonishment, like the ink-and-watercolor menagerie by the Netherlandish painter Jacques de Gheyn II, from 1596-1602, which splices together exquisite realism and outlandish fantasy, as a toad, a frog, and a dragonfly share the page with a mutant bird-moth. A transfixing 1828 landscape by the English Romantic Samuel Palmer features a subtly anthropomorphized oak that trumps any weirwood on "Game of Thrones." It hangs near an ingenious nocturne by Caspar David Friedrich, from 1808: the moon in the lonesome landscape has been cut out and replaced with a circle of paper for lamplight to shine through. *Through Jan. 7.*

SculptureCenter**"Nicola L.: Works, 1968 to the Present"**

The Moroccan-born artist lived between Paris and Ibiza in the nineteen-sixties, before settling in New York, at the Chelsea Hotel, where she still lives. Her art embodies the Pop-underground glamour one might expect. There are mod anthropomorphic furnishings with a wry, feminist edge—lamps, coffee tables, bookshelves, and "La Femme Commode" ("The Dresser Woman"), a curvy figure divided into strategically placed drawers. Other works suggest but resist the functional, including a transparent briefcase stuffed with inflated pink body parts. More recent works include the poignant "Femme Fatale" series from 1995, large collages of bedsheets, found photos, and handwritten text that pay tribute to women, both famous and infamous, from Billie Holiday to Ulrike Meinhof. Two rectangular banners from 2012, labelled "Sun" and "Moon," made of gold and silver fabric, respectively, have drooping legs and sleeves fit for a giant. People are seen wearing earlier examples of these soft sculptures in her short film "Sand, Sea, Sky," made in the mid-nineties. Shot in the Bahamas, its hallucinatory narrative shows L.'s singular countercultural vision in action. *Through Dec. 18.*

Studio Museum in Harlem**"Fictions"**

This lively exhibition, the museum's fifth in a series of surveys of new tendencies in art, presents nineteen emerging artists of African descent. As the title suggests, many works imagine fantastic or speculative worlds. The painter Christina Quarles depicts a surreal scene in which slumbering figures occupy parallel planes of existence, delineated by contrasting patterns. Michael Dempsey's nearby sculpture—a tilted obelisk supported by scaffolding—is inspired by medieval alchemy; its rough, gray surface of candle wax and electromagnetic crystals will morph in response to sound waves and humidity during the show. A few installation works stand out as anchors, including Allison Janae Hamilton's immersive "Foresta," which conjures a mythical wood with birch logs, horse-hair, and a video of raindrops projected onto a wall of tambourines. In Paul Stephen Benjamin's "God Bless America," dozens of stacked monitors flash, playing video clips including Aretha Franklin singing at Jimmy Carter's Inauguration and Lil Wayne's "God Bless Amerika" video, from 2015, a desolate riff on the original song. Benjamin's layered meditation on the African-American experience implies that the "fiction" may be that of social progress. *Through Jan. 7.*

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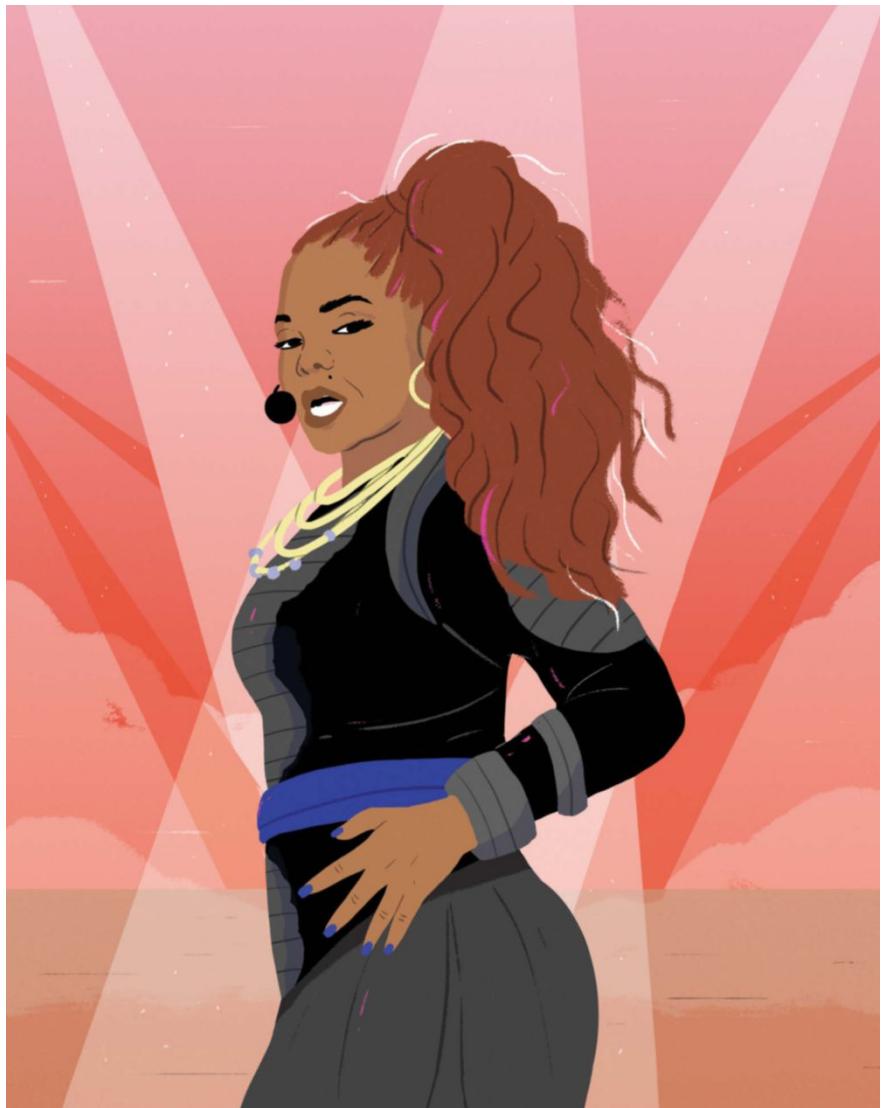
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NIGHT LIFE



Current State

Janet Jackson resumes her world tour, returning to a stage she helped create.

Just after Halloween, Sony announced that a new model of Aibo, the beloved robot pup that swept holiday seasons at the turn of the millennium, would be available in Japan next year. The original Aibo, released in 1999, recognized its owner, responded to orders, and performed tricks that mimicked the movements of a real dog. It became something of a pop-culture icon, a kitschy symbol of the consumer-tech future we clawed toward then, and which we seem to have reached today:

in a world where Siri and Alexa are always listening for your next command, what's novel about a rechargeable pet? If we're lucky, Aibo's return means we're closer to the bulbous, pastel metropolis conjured by Janet Jackson in one of the most forward-leaning music videos of its time, "Doesn't Really Matter," from 2000, in which the plastic canine crossed over to MTV, and the video director Joseph Kahn sparked a decade of pop aesthetics.

"Doesn't Really Matter" was Jackson's awaited comeback single, after the success of 1997's "The Velvet Rope." She wrote the song with her longtime producers, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis,

during the filming of "The Nutty Professor II: The Klumps," a slapstick romantic comedy in which Jackson plays the love interest to Eddie Murphy in a fat suit. She thought the song fit the film's plot, about falling for someone for who they are, not what they look like; it was the track's minimalist pitter-patter and Latin flourishes that caused radio jockeys to put unfinished leaked versions in rotation before the film's soundtrack was released. In the \$2.5-million music video, Jackson wakes up in a Tokyoesque studio apartment, where gadgets make up for a lack of floor space: her closet whirls out colorful, rave-ready ensembles while Aibo watches TV (apparently, we couldn't foresee flat-screens just yet). The project further raised Kahn's profile—in footage captured for MTV's "Making the Video," Jackson playfully notices Kahn's comfort in front of the camera—and got him gigs directing seminal videos for Britney Spears ("Toxic") and Eminem ("Without Me"). His latest credit, for Taylor Swift's "Look What You Made Me Do," similarly bears his world-building thumbprint. Watch closely and you'll see a kitty flash on an L.E.D. screen.

Jackson performs at Barclays Center on Nov. 15, as part of her "State of the World" tour, resumed after she took a break to welcome a child. In 2017, fashion is loud, apartments are small, robots are routine, and Jackson has a batch of new songs with Jam and Lewis that fondly recall her standards. This latest album, "Unbreakable," has been out for two years, and is still ripe for the mining. Its best bit is "Damn Baby," Jackson's stab at the up-tempo springy pop found on today's charts; there's a bridge that samples her classic "I Get Lonely" and some anonymous ad-libs that sound a lot like Migos. But over all the record is irresistibly calm and tenderly familiar: having worked from the future for so long, Jackson has earned the right to live in the present.

—Matthew Trammell

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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.

Cousin Stizz

Stephen Goss grew up in Dorchester, just a few miles away from Fenway Park and Faneuil Hall, earning his familial title from the corner boys for whom he ditched football practice to hustle with as a teen-ager. His loitering sessions spawned casual attempts at rap, eventually resulting in "Suffolk County," a free mixtape of slow-churning street mantras that resonated far beyond his suburb. He packed the Williamsburg hot spot Kinfolk when it was released; now he returns to New York on his "One Night Only" tour. Devotees will thrash to "No Bells," in which Stizz grills an unidentified outsider who has wandered onto his street, slyly highlighting the small-town purview that keeps kids like him sharp: everyone knows everyone. (*S.O.B.'s*, 204 Varick St. 212-243-4940. Nov. 16.)

Downtown Boys

Since this bilingual punk band began blasting out of basements and loft parties in Providence, Rhode Island, in 2011, they have shown little concern for personal safety or noise-induced hearing loss. Downtown Boys' brash vocalist, Victoria Ruiz, is committed to left-wing causes: she's worked for the Rhode Island Public Defender's office, she sings in both English and Spanish "to speak to as many people as possible," and she titled the band's debut album "Full Communism." This week, they appear alongside **Olivia Neutron-John** and **Big Huge**, for an all-ages show in one of Greenpoint's best rec houses. (*Brooklyn Bazaar*, 150 Greenpoint Ave., Brooklyn. Nov. 17.)

Heems

Himanshu Suri's long dance with the music industry has been as unconventional as the sardonic, confessional rhymes he's doled out since 2008. The Wesleyan alum was born in Queens; he flirted with a career in finance before joining his friends Victor Vasquez and Ashok Kondabolu to form the group Das Racist, a wisecracking hip-hop trio that carried the esoteric spirit of the Beastie Boys and De la Soul into the information era. The group disbanded after one studio album, and Suri, known as Heems, set off on his own, starting a label, organizing politically in his native borough, and releasing witty rap projects like "Nehru Jackets" and anxiety-riddled albums like "Eat, Pray, Thug." Now he splits duties in a new band, Sweet Shop Boys, with the actor Riz Ahmed. Heems's loopy, hoarse flow, combined with a ceaseless barrage of both cultural references and self-deprecation, makes him an Everyman savant; he performs a solo set at this newly opened concert venue, supported by the Swedish-Iranian rapper and singer **Nadia Tehran**, who has studied M.I.A. well. (*Elsewhere*, 599 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn. elsewherebrooklyn.com. Nov. 21.)

Luna

When the woozy, melancholic rock band Galaxie 500 disbanded, in 1991, the group's lyri-

cist and guitarist, Dean Wareham, was undeterred. Soon, he brought together this new, more pop-inflected band, which has endured with songs that ooze sweetness and sadness in equal measure: "Why are we hidin' from our friends / Rushing 'round in taxicabs?" Wareham observes on "Chinatown." After a breakup in the mid-aughts and various lineup shuffles and reinventions over the years (including the union of Wareham and his longtime creative collaborator Britta Phillips, in both matrimony and the band itself), Luna has reemerged to build upon the reverb-swathed gems that its members have been tinkering with for decades. At Brooklyn Steel, they'll be performing on the heels of their latest album, "A Sentimental Education," their first since 2004. (319 Frost St., East Williamsburg. 888-929-7849. Nov. 18.)

Palm

This quartet from the Hudson Valley is slicing and dicing indie rock in its own image, forging a collaged, frantic take on worn-out song structures. Palm formed amid the fruitful live-music scene at Bard College; its songs bob across odd time signatures, looping together asymmetrical phrases and barely tonal harmonies as if applying William S. Burroughs's cut-up technique to pages of sheet music. The jazz-ish result is entrancing, with the knotty rhythms supporting the coy vocals of Eve Alpert and Kasra Kurt. "Shadow Expert," the band's last batch of songs, is an essential listen for long road trips through weird towns; at this show, they'll preview a new release, "Rock Island," due out next year. (*Elsewhere*, 599 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn. Nov. 15-16.)

Jonathan Richman

Richman's approach to music has always made him an outsider among outsiders. Amid the burgeoning punk squalor of the nineteen-seventies, Richman sang—in his wan, languid voice—about being "straight" (meaning drug- and alcohol-free) and the simple joy of driving around all night along a Massachusetts state highway. Richman didn't write the kind of punchy lyrics then associated with pop radio hits, yet he had an undeniable ear for antic wordplay: he rhymed "avocado" and "El Dorado" on the tune "Pablo Picasso." He and his band, the Modern Lovers, became one of the most beloved cult post-punk acts, and, over the past four decades, his songs have remained as cheeky as they ever were. Richman performs a five-night residency at an experimental haven, as New York welcomes him back with open ears. (*The Kitchen*, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Nov. 21-22.)

Total Freedom

When the unruly menswear label Hood by Air staged its 2014 fall runway show, it tapped this subversive d.j. to create the score. The resulting twenty-four-minute composition, "10,000 Screaming Faggots," wove together soaring Beyoncé samples and poetry by Julianne Huxtable, all laid under silver-bullet drums and synths that clawed at warehouse walls. Ashland Mines, who goes by the name Total Freedom, plays club sets that are just as gripping. He once hosted a

series of parties in Los Angeles where attendees were strictly forbidden to dance—if anyone broke form, he'd stop playing until the entire room froze again. He takes the stage in support of **Jlin**, a prodigious daughter of Gary, Indiana, who is sweeping electronic circles with her anxious, terse take on the Chicago footwork sound. (*Elsewhere*, 599 Johnson Ave., Brooklyn. elsewherebrooklyn.com. Nov. 16.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS**Bill Charlap Trio**

A taste for perfection isn't mandatory, but it doesn't hurt when it comes to appreciating the Charlap trio. A classic balance of calibrated interplay and dynamics governs the pianist Charlap's mainstream unit; his airtight rapport with the nonrelated **Washingtons** (**Peter** on the bass and **Kenny** on the drums) is as indivisible on the trio's latest recording, "Uptown Downtown," as it was twenty years ago, when the three men first connected. (*Smoke*, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. Nov. 17-19.)

David Hazeltine, Peter Bernstein, and Todd Coolman

There's an alluring transparency to the piano-guitar-bass configuration that's been attracting discerning jazz musicians since the ascendancy of Nat Cole's streamlined trio in the nineteen-forties. The "Trifecta Trio" brings together the pianist Hazeltine, the guitarist Bernstein, and the bassist Coolman, each a respected straight-ahead stylist well versed in the art of lyrical swing. (*Mezzrow*, 163 W. 10th St. mezzrow.com. Nov. 17-18.)

Daryl Sherman Trio

No veteran singer inhabits the full range of the American popular-song repertoire quite like the irreplaceable Sherman, and precious few possess her abundant versatility, style, and charm. A gently swinging pianist as well, she gets kindred support from the guitarist **James Chirillo** and the bassist **Boots Maleson**. (*Jazz at Kitano*, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. Nov. 15.)

Dan Weiss/Matt Mitchell Duo

All serious drummers should be enticed by the mysteries of rhythm, but Weiss is obsessed with the permutations of the beat. Incorporating his longtime study of Indian drumming into his multidirectional style, Weiss co-leads an aggressively interactive duo with the pianist Mitchell. (*Cornelia Street Café*, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Nov. 17.)

John Zorn

Where it once seemed like a massive turning of the tide for the iconoclastic Zorn to get a stint at this hallowed jazz institution, by now it feels like old home week. Nine different ensembles will present work from the third book of the composer's ever-growing *Masada* repertoire. Participants include **Bill Frisell**, **Christian McBride**, **Julian Lage**, and **Frank London**; Zorn himself is scheduled to perform with the Zion 80 band on the final night. (*Village Vanguard*, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Nov. 14-19.)

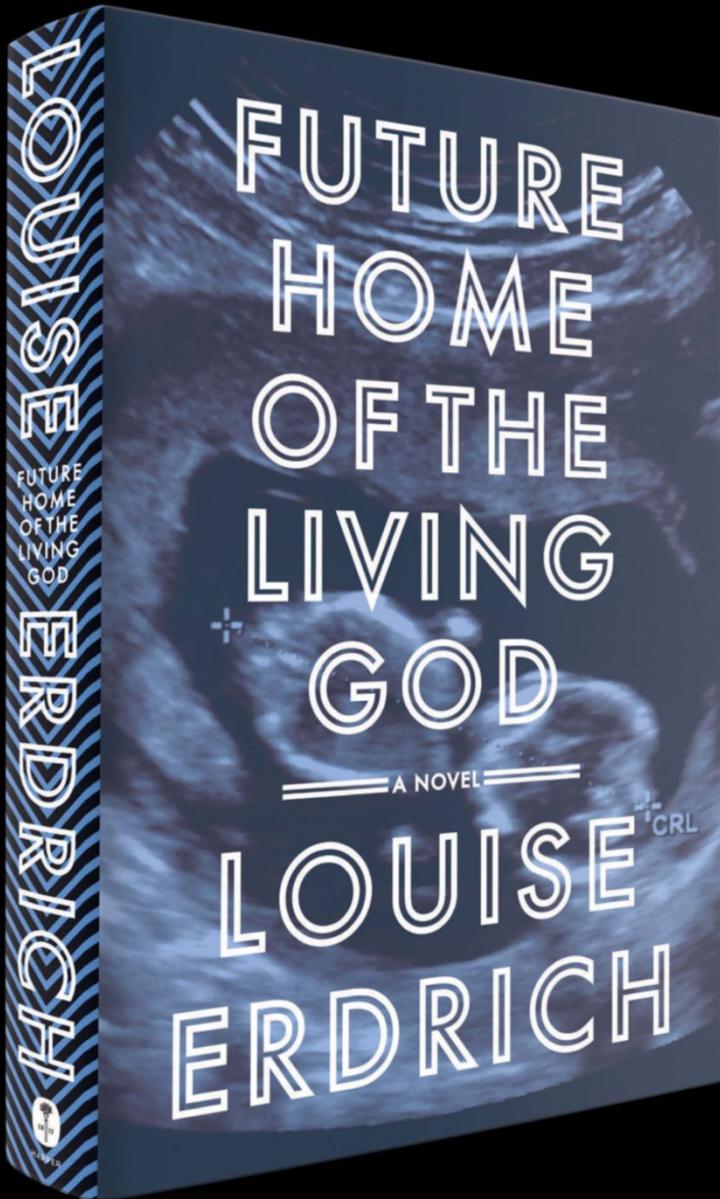
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MOVIES



Immigrant workers from Niger in colonial Abidjan fictionalize their lives and their identities in Jean Rouch's groundbreaking 1958 film "Moi, un Noir."

Truth and Consequences

Jean Rouch's inspiring metafictions break silences in politics and art.

Two of the most influential and original films in the history of the cinema are finally getting a U.S. DVD release, which should bring long-overdue recognition to their director, Jean Rouch (who died in 2004). Those films, "Moi, un Noir" ("I, a Black Person"), from 1958, and "The Human Pyramid," from 1961, are part of the boxed set "Eight Films by Jean Rouch" (Icarus Films); their blasts of metafiction, which helped spark the French New Wave, are still being felt throughout the medium, in drama and nonfiction works alike.

In "Moi, un Noir," Rouch, an ethnographic filmmaker, worked with poor migrant laborers from Niger in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, as they developed and reenacted their own stories for his camera. These nonactors, playing versions of themselves, perform and discuss their own stories in voice-over. Tellingly, they draw crucial aspects of their self-image not from African culture but from American and French media. The film's star, Oumarou

Ganda, a veteran of France's war in Indochina who does day labor on the city's docks for scant pay, is nicknamed Edward G. Robinson. His best friend, Petit Touré, a door-to-door salesman, calls himself Eddie Constantine (an American-born French action star); Gambi, the woman they both love, is a prostitute they call Dorothy Lamour. These self-dramatizations create a virtual documentary of both inner and outer life—although Rouch, following the men's perspective uncritically, films Gambi as their object of fantasy. "Moi, un Noir" captures the ravages of urbanization and cultural imperialism, the physical and mental toll of poverty. Ganda unfolds big dreams and great woes, tall tales of war and sex and adventure, and nostalgia for his childhood in Niger; he has traded his own culture for gleaming Hollywood fantasies but comes to recognize their irrelevance to his life.

When Rouch made "Moi, un Noir," the indigenous sub-Saharan African cinema was just emerging. Ousmane Sembène, one of the first black African directors, praised "Moi, un Noir," saying, "In principle, an African could have made it, but none of us

were in a position to do so at the time." Ganda, who eventually expressed dissatisfaction with his depiction in the movie, became a pioneering first-person filmmaker in Niger during the mid-nineteen-sixties.

In "The Human Pyramid," Rouch considers the educated African middle class, focussing on the relations of Africans and Europeans—and examining his own role in their representation. His stated subject is racism, and his film is a social experiment intended to overcome it. The project brings together two groups of seniors from a French high school in Abidjan—indigenous black students and white Europeans, all nonactors—and Rouch shows himself working with them to develop characters in a story that he provides, about the efforts of the students to overcome racial segregation. The film's title comes from a French poem that reflects the teen-agers' romantic longings. Rouch constructs a classic coming-of-age melodrama, filled with emotional extremes and intimate revelations, which displays at each step the political assumptions and artistic artifices on which it's based.

—Richard Brody

OPENING

I Love You, Daddy Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening Nov. 17. (In limited release.)* • **Justice League** Batman (Ben Affleck) and Wonder Woman (Gal Gadot) team up to fight evil. Directed by Zack Snyder; co-starring Jason Momoa, Amy Adams, and Henry Cavill. *Opening Nov. 17. (In wide release.)* • **Mudbound** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening Nov. 17. (In limited release and on Netflix.)* • **On the Beach at Night Alone** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening Nov. 17. (Film Society of Lincoln Center and Metrograph.)* • **Porto** Anton Yelchin stars in this drama, as an American scholar in Portugal who begins a relationship with a French student (Lucie Lucas). Directed by Gabe Klinger. *Opening Nov. 17. (In limited release.)* • **Roman J. Israel, Esq.** Denzel Washington stars in this drama, as a civil-rights lawyer who makes unpleasant discoveries about the firm where he works. Written and directed by Dan Gilroy; co-starring Colin Farrell and Carmen Ejogo. *Opening Nov. 17. (In limited release.)*

NOW PLAYING

L'Argent (Money)

Robert Bresson's last film, from 1983, adapted from a story by Tolstoy, features Christian Patey as Yvon, an oil-truck driver who is paid by a client in counterfeit money. Arrested for passing the bills, Yvon loses his family while imprisoned; when he gets out, he acts on his blankly righteous rage. Bresson captures the moral weight of tiny gestures in brisk, precise images, and conveys the cosmic evil of daily life through one of the all-time great soundtracks, full of the rustle of bills and the clink of change, the click of a cash register and the snap of locks. These noises make the exchange of labor and goods for money play like original sin itself. Bresson builds a brilliant sequence from an oppressive succession of doors—of a paddy wagon, a store, and a subway car, ending with the hellish barriers that separate a prisoner from his freedom. A spiritual filmmaker, Bresson is fascinated by violence. Here, he revisits a classic moment from "Psycho" in a terrifying wink and reveals the making—as well as the meaning—of a sacred monster. In French.—Richard Brody (*Anthology Film Archives, Nov. 19, and streaming.*)

The Crime of Monsieur Lange

Beginning with a not quite young couple preparing to escape across the border from France to Belgium, the director Jean Renoir tells, in flashback, the story of why they're escaping and why they're right to do so. The crime is murder, and the killer is Amédée Lange (René Lefèvre), a publishing clerk and a naïve dreamer whose pulp fiction became a hit; his lover, Valentine (Florelle), a laundress, is pleading his case to townspeople threatening to turn him in. This rowdy erotic drama, from 1935, pulsates with populist energies and the political conflicts of the day. Lange's Wild West novels feature a hero who stops lynchings and fights Fascists, and they become the subject of mercenary manipulations by Lange's boss, the publisher Batala (Jules Berry), a swaggering, seductive crook and a sexual predator who seduces poor women with cheap promises and offers up his secretary to creditors he fleeces. Sexual consciousness and political consciousness are raised together in Renoir's tender, teeming vision of hearty collective action and the passionate force that backs it up. His revolution is indeed a dinner party—an uproariously drunken one. In French.—R.B. (*Film Forum, Nov. 17-23.*)

I Love You, Daddy

Louis C.K.'s new feature—which he wrote, directed, and stars in—is, on the surface, a gloss on Woody Allen's "Manhattan," down to the black-and-white cinematography and the lush score. Louis C.K. plays Glen Topher, a New York television writer and producer whose seventeen-year-old daughter, China (Chloë Grace Moretz), to his distress, becomes involved with a sixty-eight-year-old movie director, Leslie Goodwin (John Malkovich), who is also Glen's idol. But Louis C.K. doesn't approach his subject substantially; rather, he uses China's coming-of-age story as a wedge to endorse, with an obviously unconditional smugness, the merits of relationships between older men and teen-age girls. While producing a new series, Glen also starts a new relationship, with an actress named Grace Cullen (Rose Byrne), who tells him a similar story about her own teen-age years. Glen's opposition to his daughter's actions comes off as a narrow-minded moralism that ruins his personal life as well as his art. The film's grotesque distortions include detailed explanations of feminism offered by Glen and Leslie to the women in their lives; the movie plays like a men's-rights commercial. With Edie Falco, as Glen's beleaguered producing partner; Charlie Day, as a comedian who mimics masturbation in front of her; and Pamela Adlon, as Glen's ex-girlfriend.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

Lady Bird

As writer and director, Greta Gerwig infuses this comedic coming-of-age drama with verbal virtuosity, gestural idiosyncrasy, and emotional vitality. The loosely autobiographical tale is set mainly in Gerwig's home town of Sacramento, in the 2002-03 academic year, and centered on Christine McPherson (Saoirse Ronan), self-dubbed Lady Bird, a senior at a Catholic high school whose plan to escape to an Eastern college is threatened by her grades and her parents' finances. Lady Bird's father (Tracy Letts), with whom she shares a candid complicity, is about to lose his job; her mother (Laurie Metcalf), with whom she argues bitterly, is a nurse who works double shifts to keep the family afloat. Lady Bird infiltrates the world of rich kids and risks losing true friends; she dates a Francophile rocker (Timothée Chalamet) whose walk on the wild side is comfortably financed. Deftly juggling characters and story lines, Gerwig provokes aching laughs with gentle touches (Metcalf's etched diction nearly steals the show), but her direction remains self-effacing until late in the film, when several sharply conceived scenes suggest reserves of observational and symbolic energy.—R.B. (*In limited release.*)

Last Flag Flying

A curious project for Richard Linklater, whose most enjoyable films, light-headed with promise, have scouted the territory of youth. The new movie, on the other hand, dawdles among the middle-aged and attends to their crusty recitations of old times. In 1993, a mournful soul named Doc (Steve Carell) shows up at a bar run by the disreputable Sal (Bryan Cranston), a comrade from Vietnam. Together, they seek out Mueller (Laurence Fishburne), a fellow veteran of the war, whom they once knew as a hell-raiser, but who now, as a minister, lifts his gaze to Heaven. Doc's son has perished in Iraq, and he asks his friends for support as he accompanies the casket to Arlington. The manner in which this solemn plan goes awry, and the japes that arise along the way, confirm that the model for Linklater's film is Hal Ashby's "The Last Detail" (1973), in

which a trio of service personnel took a roughly comparable trip. In Ashby's film, however, not only the mission but the mood was very different; the sailors cackled, snapped, and snarled, whereas the three comrades in this movie grow ever more plaintive and tired as their journey proceeds.—Anthony Lane (*Reviewed in our issue of 11/6/17.*) (*In wide release.*)

The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)

In his new film, Noah Baumbach stays in his discomfort zone: messed-up modern families in New York. The patriarch of the Meyerowitzes is Harold (Dustin Hoffman), who aimed to be the great sculptor of his generation and missed, though you wouldn't know it from his manner—lordly, intemperate, and blisteringly quick to take offense. This has not made things easy for his sons, Matthew (Ben Stiller), who lives in Los Angeles and makes good money, and Danny (Adam Sandler), who does nothing much except fret, or for his desolate daughter, Jean (Elizabeth Marvel). Other characters are tossed into the mix: Harold's latest wife, the boozy Maureen (Emma Thompson), and his granddaughter, Eliza (Grace Van Patten), who, alone in the clan, seems lightened by hope and good sense. Baumbach not only finds time and room for these restless souls but makes us believe in them as they clash, make peace, and clash again. The movie is comically intimate with their lives, yet it covers a lot of ground.—A.L. (*10/23/17.*) (*In wide release and on Netflix.*)

Mudbound

This historical drama, directed by Dee Rees and adapted from the novel by Hillary Jordan, is centered on two families in rural Mississippi, one black and one white, during the nineteen-thirties and forties. It offers a keen and outraged view of the laws and practices of Jim Crow and the monstrous dangers awaiting anyone who defied them. The story shows how the McAllan family, who are white—Henry (Jason Clarke), Laura (Carey Mulligan), and their young daughters—slip from middle-class Memphis to a bedraggled Mississippi farm, where they're in close connection with their tenants, the Jackson family, who are black—Hap (Rob Morgan), Florence (Mary J. Blige), and their four children. When the Second World War starts, Henry's brother Jamie (Garrett Hedlund) becomes a pilot, and the eldest Jackson son, Ronsel (Jason Mitchell), becomes a tank commander. Both come back heroes, but tragedy looms when they become friends. Rees uses voice-overs to bring the many characters to life, but the text is thin; the movie's exposition is needlessly slow and stepwise, and the drama, though affecting, is literal and oversimplified. With Jonathan Banks, as Henry's bitter, racist father.—R.B. (*In limited release and on Netflix.*)

On the Beach at Night Alone

There's a dark romanticism powering Hong Sang-soo's furious, tautly controlled, yet coolly comedic drama. The story is inspired by his own real-life relationship with the actress Kim Min-hee. She stars as Young-hee, an actress who, in the wake of her scandalous affair with an older, married director, flees Seoul for a small German city, where she lives in contemplative solitude. Eventually returning to South Korea, she reunites with old friends and considers restarting her career—but she sees the milieu that she left behind, and the men in it, with a defiant and contemptuous clarity. Young-hee's deeply insightful, bitterly frank, and poetically passionate temperament emerges in a series of long and far-reaching conversations

with friends and colleagues—in parks, over meals, and in bars—which Hong films in long takes with brusque zooms and pans matching her decisive vigor. For all its intimacy, the drama has a vast scope, a fierce intensity, and an element of metaphysical whimsy (including one of the great recent dream sequences), which all come to life in the indelibly expressive spontaneity of Kim's performance. In Korean and English.—R.B. (*Film Society of Lincoln Center and Metrograph*.)

Thor: Ragnarok

The director Taika Waititi brings exuberant visual wit and comedic sensibility to the latest Marvel extravaganza. Chris Hemsworth again plays the hero with the hammer; this time, after the death of his father, Odin (Anthony Hopkins), Thor must fight his vengeful sister Hela (Cate Blanchett) to save his home planet of Asgard and its residents from her wrath. But, before he gets there, he's taken prisoner on the remote planet of Sakaar and forced into gladiatorial combat against a fearsome monster—who turns out to be none other than Hulk (Mark Ruffalo). A lively set of supporting characters, including a Valkyrie (Tessa Thompson), an Asgardian warrior (Idris Elba), and a creature made of rocks (Waititi), contribute heart and humor. Waititi makes the most of the churn and flash of battles and settings realized with C.G.I., filling the screen with wild whirls of color, launching characters and vehicles into loopy trajectories, and shifting from place to place with an antic sense of surprise. Even the long exposition and the sentimental ending can't burst the giddy bubble.—R.B. (*In wide release*.)

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri

Frances McDormand plays Mildred Hayes, whose daughter was raped and killed by persons unknown. Many months on, the police, headed by Sheriff Willoughby (Woody Harrelson), are no closer to finding the guilty party, and Mildred takes matters into her capable hands, renting billboards to advertise the woeful facts of the case. This makes her unpopular with the locals, but she doesn't care, nor does McDormand hesitate to make Mildred intimidating, and at times unsympathetic, in her single-minded hunt for justice. You might think that someone as tough as Mildred would overwhelm the film, but the writer and director, Martin McDonagh, finds space for the growth of other characters, especially Dixon (Sam Rockwell), a cop, a mama's boy, and a racist blowhard. Not that he sees the error of his ways; rather, through a series of events both fiery and farcical, he comes to understand that other ways exist. The movie is much funnier, in its blistered dialogue, than the grimness of the story might suggest, but viewers who like their mysteries wrapped up like a gift should probably look elsewhere. McDonagh draws committed performances from Peter Dinklage, John Hawkes, Lucas Hedges, Abbie Cornish, and Caleb Landry Jones.—A.L. (*11/13/17*) (*In wide release*.)

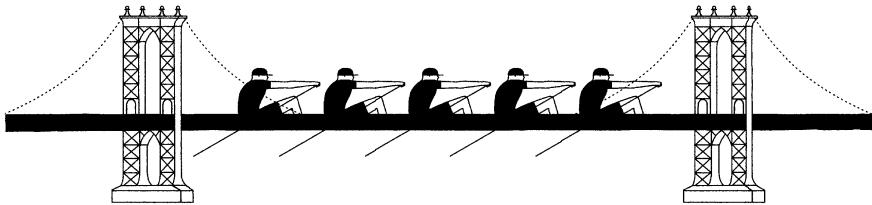
Wait for Your Laugh

Rose Marie, one of the last of the vaudevillians, is ninety-four, and Jason Wise's lively and fascinating documentary about her career as an entertainer—beginning with her early radio stardom, at the age of five—is filled with her vital, lucid recollections and her hearty presence. Her father was a small-time gangster; Al Capone was "Uncle Al," and Rose Marie (who never used her

last name, Mazetta) was a Las Vegas headliner under the tutelage of Bugsy Siegel and his cohorts (whom she calls "the boys"). Abandoning Hollywood after a harrowing episode of on-set sexual harassment, she turned to television and, in the early nineteen-sixties, found new fame on "The Dick Van Dyke Show," in the role of a comedy writer—the only woman in the writers' room.

Wise interviews Carl Reiner (the show's creator), Van Dyke, and others; mixes in an enticing batch of home movies and archival footage (plus a few ill-advised reenactments); and unfolds a remarkable tale of show-biz smarts and steadfast purpose. Ever a trouper, Rose Marie still yearns to work, and her past success is shadowed by her recent idleness.—R.B. (*In limited release*.)

ABOVE & BEYOND



Winter Village

Bryant Park, renovated in 1992 to discourage crime and welcome midtown strollers, is now one of the city's cherished holiday destinations, hosting various winter activities around its seasonal ice rink. College Skate Nights offer two-for-one skate rentals with a school I.D., with themes including Mardi Gras and Battle of the Boy Bands. Scavenger hunts, pop-up retail shops, and the requisite tree-lighting extravaganza dot the schedule, along with family-friendly performances. (*42nd St. at Sixth Ave. wintervillage.org. Through Jan. 2*.)

Grand Central Holiday Train Show

At this annual train show, now in its sixteenth year, the M.T.A.'s history is brought to life as scale models of classic red subway cars, double-letter trains, and even commuter-rail cars race through iconic stops and dart through labyrinthine tunnels. Back by popular demand is the Transit Museum's Holiday Nostalgia Train, featuring restored vintage subway cars in use between 1932 and 1977, which passengers can ride up Second Avenue; it sets out on its first voyage on Nov. 25. The show is open to the public seven days a week through Feb. 4. (*New York Transit Museum Gallery, 89 E. 42nd St. grandcentralterminal.com. Opens Nov. 16*.)

Brooklyn Public Library Solar Observing

The Amateur Astronomers Association, founded in 1927, has hosted lectures and events around the city for decades; last summer's schedule included talks on how astronomers took the universe's "baby picture" by capturing millennia-old light, and on theoretical alternatives to dark matter. The association invites enthusiasts and the curious to examine the sun's surface through specially designed solar-viewing telescopes. Attendees can gaze at sunspots and flares from the steps of one of Brooklyn's most beautifully designed libraries, weather permitting. (*Flatbush Ave. at Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. aaa.org. Nov. 18 at 1*.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Just as a new biography of Leonardo da Vinci, by Walter Isaacson, hits the shelves, **Christie's** has been entrusted with one of the Master's few extant paintings, "Salvator Mundi" (ca. 1500), a portrait of Christ smiling enigmatically as he holds a translucent orb in his left hand. The painting, once thought to have been destroyed, turned up in an estate sale in 2005 and was analyzed for years before being declared to be a bona-fide Leonardo, after which it was reportedly bought by a Russian billionaire, who is now selling it. Thrown into the house's sale of contemporary art, on Nov. 15, it will be auctioned off—possibly for a record sum—alongside Warhol's 1986 homage to Leonardo, "Sixty Last Suppers." Sales of Latin-American and American art follow on Nov. 21-22. (*20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000*.) • There are no Leonards in **Sotheby's** sale of contemporary art (Nov. 16), although the top lot, "Nero Plastica L.A.," is by another Italian artist, Alberto Burri. Also included in the auction is a triple portrait of George Dyer by Francis Bacon, a Louise Bourgeois spider ("Spider IV"), and a Basquiat ("Cobra") from the collection of Yoko Ono. A second, less pricey contemporary sale will be held on the following day (Nov. 17), followed by one of European art—filled with decorative Bouguereaus and Alma-Tademas—and another of Latin-American works (both on Nov. 21). (*York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000*.)

READINGS AND TALKS

Symphony Space

The New Yorker's Andy Borowitz hosts an evening of readings centered on behaving badly—as a subject, not a prompt. In his own writing, Borowitz delights in skewering the motives and perspectives of politicians and noteworthy figures who do wrong in public, seemingly without remorse. The performers at this reading include the Tony-nominated Broadway actress Judith Ivey; the selected short pieces will humorously celebrate and dissect characters who venture off the straight and narrow path. (*2537 Broadway. symphonyspace.org. Nov. 15 at 7:30*.)

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FOOD & DRINK



TABLES FOR TWO

Merakia

5 W. 21st St. (212-380-1950)

When Lord Byron travelled to Greece, in the early nineteenth century, he encountered bandits “on the hills / That look along Epirus’ valleys,” he wrote, “Where Freedom still at moments rallies, / And pays in blood Oppression’s ills.” The Klephths, as these outlaws were called, robbed travellers blind and, more charmingly, helped overthrow four hundred years of Turkish tyranny. Merakia—officially called Merakia Greek MountainThief Spithouse + Steak—is a new Flatiron restaurant that celebrates the Klephths (or, as the owners would have it, Greek MountainThieves) and their love of spit-roasted lamb.

Merakia’s menu traces its origins to another kind of theft, of sorts—“young beautiful and Jewish girl” meets “boy from a Greek mountain village” who “horns in” when she’s stood up at a “wild Greek dance party”—but there’s little here that feels rough-and-ready. The space is lovely and considered. Soft golden lighting is refracted from the coffered ceiling to illuminate whispering couples tucked into mint-green upholstered booths. Between them, Andreas, a flowing-haired Hellene, strides the aisles proffering wine suggestions. Particularly good is a wild-fermented organic Evharis Assyrtiko, a white from Santorini, which “tastes a bit

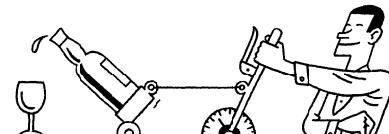
funkier because the grapes are allowed to dry on vine leaves.”

The food at Merakia is excellent, yet manages to maintain a sense of humor. Dancing with the Lamb is a forty-eight-hour marinated cut of meat piled over vegetables. A rib-eye steak is served bone-in, with a pile of oregano and salt to season it. *Kleftiko* lamb stew (named for a dish made with stolen lamb in hidden underground ovens), redolent of garlic and lemon juice, bursts from a grenade of bread. Among the smaller dishes, the *keftedes*, or meatballs, are standouts: they sit on a bed of ouzo-infused tzatziki and crumble in the mouth. For vegetarians, there’s “rabbit food” (salad), *kafteki* (spicy soft cheese), and mac and *tiri* (mac and cheese made with Greek *kefalagraviera*). Sweets include baklava and honeyed yogurt.

Make sure to try the cocktails. The other night, a mustachioed bartender presented a drink topped with what looked like a maroon Dorito. “Whatchagottado is lick the side”—he pointed to the rim dusted with a spicy red salt—“take a sip, and then have a bite of this. It’s a dehydrated strawberry.” The concoction, called a Metal and Dust, combines pasilla- and mulato-chili-infused tequila, cacao, dark lager, and mole bitters. It was soon gulped down, and another was ordered. Just be sure you stop at two, lest the Greek MountainThieves steal the rest of your evening. (*Dishes \$19-\$65.*)

—Nicolas Niarchos

BAR TAB



Do or Dive

1108 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn

It appears that no expense was spared to make this relatively new bar in Bed-Stuy look thoroughly sleazy. The tufted red pleather booths seem like they could have hosted orgies in the nineteen-seventies. The bathroom downstairs is a black hole with a mirror completely obscured by graffiti. Countless vintage neon beer signs hang from the ceiling and on the walls. Not long ago, the space was the home of the hipster restaurant Do or Dine, famous for serving goose-liver doughnuts. The drink offerings here are equally berserk. There are no menus, so a certain level of trust is required, and knowing what to ask for is essential. On a recent Thursday evening, the bartender—receding hairline, long, curly dark hair, a sleeveless undershirt—explained that the “Soup of the Day,” advertised for eleven dollars on a sign near the antique cash register, was the Painkiller, made with rum, pineapple juice, orange juice, and coconut milk. For an odd but delightful spin on *kalimotxo*, the Basque drink of choice, try the Red Red Wine, a blend of red wine and Red Bull. A seven-dollar adult slushie of coffee liqueur, milk, and brandy is served in a Greek paper coffee cup. The signature drink is the Bad Dad, which combines vodka with a splash of grape Pedialyte. There are several craft beers available on tap, but regulars usually order one of the bottles or cans chilling in a metal cooler, like a Miller High Life, and pair it with a shot, like Evan Williams bourbon. Despite the spacious patio out back, dogs tend to run around off leash indoors. This, along with the tacky interior, will not charm those who prefer to drink in peace. The upshot is, it’s cheap.—Lauretta Charlton

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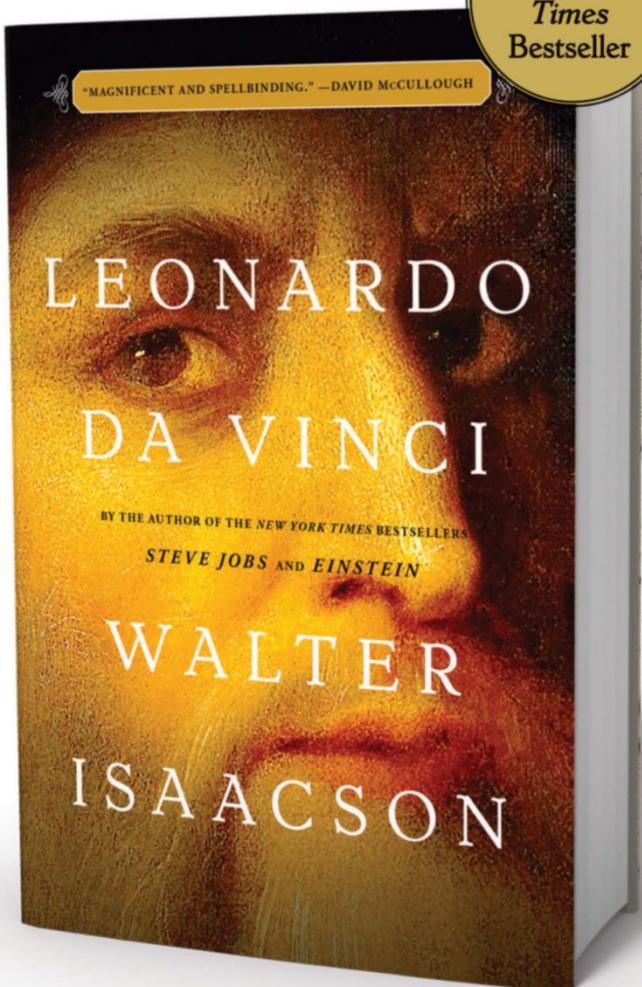
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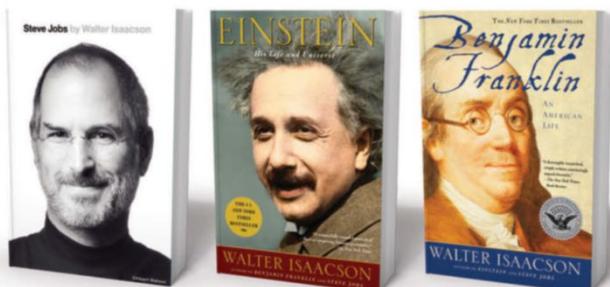
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

AUTUMN OF THE PATRIARCHY

In 1975, Susan Brownmiller published a startling and controversial volume in the literature of feminism. It was called "Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape." Deploying a wide range of examples from history, criminology, psychoanalysis, mythology, and popular culture, Brownmiller came to a provocative conclusion about the origins of the patriarchal order. "Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear," she wrote, "must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe." Sexual coercion, and the threat of its possibility, in the street, in the workplace, and in the home, she found, is less a matter of frenzied lust than a deliberate exercise of physical power, a declaration of superiority "designed to intimidate and inspire fear."

Brownmiller chronicled the use of rape as a weapon in warfare, from classical antiquity to Vietnam; its role in the history of marital and property rights; the grotesque way that it shapes our notions of "masculinity" and "femininity." Some of her arguments, particularly those pertaining to race, met with strong and convincing resistance from such critics as Angela Davis—Brownmiller's treatment of the Emmett Till case reads today as morally oblivious—but "Against Our Will" remains an important prod to our understanding of the social order.

One of the most pernicious myths,

Brownmiller wrote, is that women "cry rape with ease and glee." As Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, in the *Times*, and Ronan Farrow, in *The New Yorker*, have made plain in their recent reporting on the Harvey Weinstein case, women who speak up about sexual predation do so with extreme difficulty and dread. Rumors persisted for years that Weinstein, a film producer and distributor of extraordinary influence, set out to defile and degrade countless women. And, using the instruments of his power—jobs, payoffs, nondisclosure agreements, expensive lawyers and private investigators—he sought to keep them silent.

That so many women have summoned the courage to make public their allegations against Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, and Bill O'Reilly—or that many have come to reconsider some of the claims made against Bill Clin-

ton—represents a cultural passage. An immense cohort of victims and potential victims now feel a sense of release. Suddenly, a number of issues are in play: What constitutes harassment? What relation is there between the worst offenses and more ambiguous ones, between physical assault and verbal slights? What are fair guidelines and sanctions? Do men really understand the ways that harassment can diminish and undermine a woman?

These questions resonate far beyond Hollywood and the media, in less publicized places of work. They are, in a sense, a resumption of the discussions of 1991, when Anita Hill testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that a Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, had harassed her repeatedly when he was her supervisor. Perhaps times are changing. Thomas won confirmation; he donned a robe and took his place on the Court. Weinstein, according to some news reports, may soon find himself in court, too, but in less comforting circumstances.

The Weinstein Moment is also a chapter in the Trump Presidency. When the news broke about Weinstein, Trump declared that he was "not at all surprised." He seemed intent on signalling that he was in the know, a man of the world. And yet his knowingness comes from a different source—his own history. And that history is a disgrace. A year ago, on Election Night, when the most decisive precincts in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin began to yield their results, there was shock, and a deep sense of offense,



among countless Americans at the prospect of seeing Trump in the Oval Office. There were many ways to frame and understand the election, but one was surely this: a cartoonish misogynist had defeated an intelligent feminist. Hillary Clinton, the first woman to have a genuine chance to be President, lost to someone who had flaunted his contempt for women generally and for her personally, even prowling behind her during a nationally televised debate.

Trump has indulged in more scandalous behavior than is easy to recount. For some reason, his record of misogyny, in both language and acts, his running compendium of self-satisfied creepiness, the accumulated complaints against him of sexual harassment and assault (all denied, of course), have attracted only modest attention, one defamation lawsuit, and no congressional interest. The specificity of these accusations—by a former Miss Utah, by a

reporter for *People*, by several former teen-age beauty-pageant contestants, by his ex-wife Ivana, who said that he had torn out a patch of her hair and violated her—is disturbing. Breast groping, crotch grabbing, unwanted kisses on the mouth. This is the President of the United States.

Before the election, Jia Tolentino determined for this magazine that twenty-four women had “corroborated Trump’s own boasting,” and twenty have come forward publicly. None with ease and glee. “As always happens when someone accuses a high-profile man of sexual misconduct, these women will be tied to their unpleasant, formerly private stories for life,” Tolentino wrote. There may be hope, however. According to some assessments, a pivotal factor in last week’s elections was a sense of disgust with the President—and one of the results was a sharp increase in the number

of female candidates and winners. Stephanie Schriock, the president of EMILY’s List, recently announced that more than twenty thousand women have declared themselves candidates for public office—a “gigantic spike,” according to a detailed report by Christina Cauterucci, in *Slate*.

Donald Trump, with Steve Bannon drawing battle plans, believes that he is the initiator of a great culture war in America. But it may turn out to be a war of a very different kind, with a very different result. It seems to be occurring to more and more Americans that Trump would not pass muster before any decent department of human resources. And if he would surely be disqualified from running a movie studio, a newsroom, or a medium-sized insurance firm, how is it that he presides over the most important office in the land?

—David Remnick

THE SPORTING SCENE GLOVES OFF



On a recent Friday night, John A. (Junior) Gotti, Jr., arrived at the Twin River Casino, in Lincoln, Rhode Island, north of Providence. The former crime boss, who led the Gambino family after his father’s conviction, in 1992, was not there to play craps or to catch the Rat Pack Christmas Show. (That’s not until later this month.) He had come for a mixed-martial-arts fight. His son, twenty-five-year-old John Gotti III, was making his professional début, on C.E.S. M.M.A. 46, a fight series sponsored by a Providence-based promoter called Classic Entertainment and Sports.

Gotti, Jr., who is fifty-three, looks like an accountant who spends most of his free time in the weight room. He wore glasses, a black tracksuit, and pristine white sneakers, and he carried a small leather briefcase. Inside the casino, swarms of fans greeted him as he made his way to the Event Center. Many well-wishers wore black T-shirts emblazoned with the Team Gotti logo—a

drawing of a roaring lion devised years earlier by Gotti, Sr., who was known as the Dapper Don. “We got three busloads coming,” Junior said. “One from Queens, one from Brooklyn, and another from the Island.”

Providence and New York have had a cozy Cosa Nostra connection since the nineteen-sixties, when, on occasion, the New England mob boss Raymond L. S. Patriarca would travel south to mediate disputes among the five New York crime families. The previous afternoon, as Junior accompanied his son to the weigh-in at the casino’s Wicked Good Bar & Grill, he’d run into a trio of familiar faces: Tony Fiore, a seventy-four-year-old retired master thief and armored-car stickup man; and Kevin and Billy, whose uncle Gerard Ouimette, a.k.a. the Frenchman, ran a particularly ruthless Patriarca faction and had been close to Gotti, Sr.

“Hey, John,” Fiore said. “How do you stay in such good shape?”

“Prison,” Gotti, Jr., said, laughing, as the two men hugged. “Scoping out any banks lately?”

Fiore and Gotti, Jr., bonded while doing time, in the early two-thousands, at F.C.I. Ray Brook, a medium-security federal prison near Lake Placid, New York. “Remember how I used to make

the pasta in my cell?” Fiore said. “I’d hang it from dental floss to dry it.”

“So, John,” Kevin Ouimette said. “What do we do about our tickets?”

“Big Steve’s got ‘em already. I’ll make sure he finds you.”

The banter turned to Junior’s son’s impending fight. After three years on the New York amateur circuit, amassing a 5–1 record, the young welterweight felt that he was ready to take the leap.

“I didn’t think he should turn pro so soon,” Gotti, Jr., told his pals. “But this show came up, and he wanted to do it. They give him a choice of maybe eight opponents, and he picks the toughest one. My son! He’s got his grandfather’s balls but not his brains. I mean, if it was me making my début I’d want to fight a guy with one leg!”

On fight night, at the Event Center, Gotti, Jr., ran into Fiore and the Ouimette brothers again. But this time the vibe had darkened. It was 8:15 P.M., and one of the Gotti buses hadn’t shown up. “The driver picked them up an hour late and got lost,” Junior groused. “I’m sick, because my brother and nephews were on that fucking bus.”

Gotti’s agitation masked fatherly concern. “He didn’t want his son to do this,” Jimmy Burchfield, Sr.,



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the president of C.E.S., explained. Burchfield wore a dark suit, a striped shirt, and a silver tie that matched his hair. "John said, 'I've been through four grand juries, and I'm more nervous watching my son fight.'"

The bout began at 8:35 P.M. Johnny (the Wild Child) Adams, a rangy, bearded welterweight from Rutland, Vermont, was introduced first. "Let's go, baby!" a female Adams fan yelled. "Rip his fucking head off!"

Gotti III entered the octagon to a frenzied chorus of "Got-ti! Got-ti!" In black-and-silver shorts, he looked the bigger fighter, a tapestry of tattoos covering his muscled hundred-and-seventy-pound frame.

The bell rang. After a long moment in a standing clinch against the cage, the two fighters landed on the canvas. Gotti III maneuvered on top of Adams and launched a barrage of right-hand jabs, until the ref stopped the contest. In just under four minutes, he'd won.

Gotti made his way ringside and embraced his father. Nearby, P. J. Centofanti, a graphic designer, looked on. "I didn't even know he was fighting," Centofanti said.

A friend tapped him on the arm. "You getting a selfie with John Gotti?"

Centofanti leaned over the ringside barricade and gestured toward the fighter, who was obliging. An arm around the shoulders, a click, and Centofanti raised his arms triumphantly. "I got it!"

—Tim Struby

**WINK DEPT.
SINCERELY**



One morning at an upper-Manhattan TV studio, the writer, performer, and life-style guru Amy Sedaris was in her dressing room on the set of her new joys-of-domesticity show, "At Home with Amy Sedaris," on truTV, getting ready to change into her fish-gutting pinafore. "Mary Adams, who designs wedding dresses, made it for me," she said. "I had these dinner napkins"—nautical, with anchors, sailboats, and lighthouses—"and she made this. It's a good one, right?" In the show's first episode, in preparation for making a fish dinner, Sedaris entertains a "knife man" (David Pasquesi) and a fishmonger (Kurt Schreiber) and talks about the importance of lamb chops. ("As it turns out, a lot of people don't like fish.") "We keep saying it's a cooking show, but I haven't turned the oven on once," she said. What has she cooked on the show? "Today, we're going to do sausages coming out of a pot on a wire," she said. "I'll be playing a flute and they're going to be coming up. I've made baked-potato shoes—tater shoes. I've made a baked Alaska. I've made, like, a birthday-cake kind of a thing. A cheese ball."

On the show, Sedaris plays several characters—including a hobo, a hollering Southern socialite named Patty Hogg,

and a butch, rump-shaking wine expert named Ronnie Vino—but she mostly plays a heightened version of herself. The set, a brightly decorated partial house festooned with rickrack and ball fringe, was inspired by her real-life West Village apartment. "I brought in a lot of my props," she said. "I wear all my own shoes and jewelry. I look around set and I'm, like, 'Oh, I've got to remember to bring that casserole dish home, or those hot dogs.' Moving out of here is going to be a lot. But I don't want to be in a scene and be, like, 'Oh, I wish I had that papier-mâché cigar.'" The cigar was in her dressing room, near a mobile of tissue-paper ghosts ("I make these every year, and I send them to Todd Oldham"); a portrait of Sedaris looking gravely pensive, by Hugh Hamrick, her brother David's partner; and a cactus-motif pillow embroidered with the words "Your ego is not my amigo," in a humble cursive.

Sedaris created "At Home" with her longtime friend and collaborator Paul Dinnello, who also appears in the second episode as a placid bouzouki player. Sedaris, Dinnello, and Stephen Colbert met at Second City, in the late eighties, and in the late nineties they were co-creators of the series "Strangers with Candy." Sedaris played Jerri Blank, a recovering "boozier, user, and loser" returning to high school in middle age, with zeal, unflattering pants, and an overbite. Blank was a grotesque infused with optimism; "At Home" is optimism improved by the grotesque. Glass breaks; glue gets into the food; a prim lady friend (Cole Escola), on hand to help make spanakopita, is introduced to Sedaris's newfound love—her bannister, which she slides down, in a rapture.

Hosting a domestic show has been a dream of Sedaris's since childhood, in Raleigh, North Carolina. "It feels like it was just yesterday when I was little, watching 'At Home with Peggy Mann' with my mom," Sedaris said. "It was really boring," and that was part of its charm. "She would just sit on this set and have local people come by and talk about a book or a craft. I remember pointing at the TV and saying, 'That's the show I want to do.'"

At first, Sedaris was nervous about playing herself. "I was, like, 'Paul, I need a hook, false teeth, or a hump!'" she said. But could it be liberating, even fun? "It is, and you know who told me that was Colbert," she said. "He had tears in his



"I'll be right back—can you watch my Large Hadron Collider?"



Amy Sedaris

eyes. He was, like, ‘Getting to play yourself is really—you know, how lovely it was, how great it was and challenging it was.’ Good hosting is important, Sedaris said—“Growing up in the South, someone always had an ice-cream cake and a dead squirrel in their freezer”—and on a show like this, full of fake foods and set rooms and made-up characters, sincerity is important, too. “I try to be sincere,” she said. “And then it’s a wink.” She smiled to an imagined camera, and gave a little gasp, as if in greeting. “Hello! I was just putting these googly eyes onto this mushroom.’ You know? Sincere that way.”

—Sarah Larson

THE BENCH WET PAINT



Last week, Alec Baldwin caused a Twitter uproar after he tweeted, to one of Harvey Weinstein’s victims, “If you paint every man w the same brush, you’re gonna run out of paint or men.” Another thing happened last week that may shed light on why Baldwin had paint—and grievance—on the brain. Mary Boone, the New York gallery owner, agreed to write him a seven-figure check to settle a civil-fraud case that he had filed against her last year over a painting.

Like many lawsuits, this one began as a love story. In 1996, the artist Ross Bleckner painted “Sea and Mirror,” a large canvas dotted with shimmering shapes. Some years later, Baldwin re-

ceived an invitation to a show of Bleckner’s work; it featured a photograph of “Sea and Mirror.” Baldwin loved the image, and carried the invitation around in his briefcase for years. In 2010, Baldwin bought a painting from Bleckner’s “Time” series from Mary Boone, and he told her that he’d like to buy “Sea and Mirror,” too. Boone e-mailed that she was “thrilled” that Baldwin would have the painting, and they agreed on a price of a hundred and ninety thousand dollars. A few months later, the painting was delivered to Baldwin.

When the picture arrived, it was signed, dated, and, on the back, stamped with “7449,” the inventory number of the 1996 work. But Baldwin thought the colors looked off. Last week, calling from a movie shoot, he said, “They were bright, like M&M’s.” Also, he added, “the brushstrokes were less feathery, and the paint smelled, well, fresh.”

He went on, “When I called up Mary and asked, ‘Why do these paintings look so different?’ she said the owner was a heavy smoker, so Ross had taken the painting off the stretcher and cleaned and repaired it for me, as a courtesy, before delivering it. At first, I was not prepared to tell myself it was a fake. I was inclined to believe them, partly because it was Ross, who I respect and whose work I love.”

Six years later, Baldwin mentioned the matter to some artist friends, who told him that the story sounded fishy, and that no reputable artist or dealer would clean a painting without permission from the owner. They suggested that Baldwin might have been snookered. He then hired an expert from Sotheby’s, who confirmed that the painting Baldwin bought from Boone was not the 1996 “Sea and Mirror” that he’d bargained for.

Baldwin decided to confront Bleckner, and arranged to meet with him at a friend’s house. The artist admitted that the painting was a copy, and later wrote, in an e-mail to Baldwin, “I’m so sorry about all of this. I feel so bad about this.” Baldwin then called Boone for an explanation. After numerous calls and e-mails, he said, she admitted that she’d sold him a copy. “Mary cried on the phone,” he recalled. “She said, ‘You caught me. I wanted to make you happy.’” Boone told him that he could return the painting for a full refund, plus interest.

Baldwin was angry, and he wanted to expose Boone. The six-year statute of limitations precluded him from pressing criminal charges, however, so last year he filed a civil suit in New York State Supreme Court against Boone and her gallery, charging that they had intentionally defrauded him. The suit alleged that Boone, unable to buy back “Sea and Mirror” from the anonymous collector who’d purchased it at Sotheby’s in 2007, hatched a scheme whereby Bleckner reproduced the painting, and the pair pawned the copy off on Baldwin as the original. Baldwin’s suit sought “punitive” and “exemplary damages” designed to “deter defendants from continuing its fraudulent practices.”

Boone’s lawyer responded by asking the court to dismiss the suit, alleging that Baldwin had known all along what he was buying and characterizing him as a whiny celebrity throwing a temper tantrum. The court declined to dismiss, and the case was scheduled for trial in early 2018.

Then, in the course of pretrial discovery, Baldwin’s lawyers turned up what they considered to be incriminating e-mails referring to aging the painting and making sure the paint was dry. Last week, the parties settled. Baldwin’s lawyers, assuming that Boone would not want that correspondence to come out in court, believe the settlement far exceeds the value of “Sea and Mirror,” and, likely, the amount of damages a jury would have awarded. A representative for Boone said that she was preparing a show and was not available for comment. Reached by telephone, Bleckner said, of the dispute, “It is resolved. I am sorry the whole thing happened.”

The reproduction of “Sea and Mirror” is now crated up in the basement of Baldwin’s East Hampton house, but he has plans to take it on the road someday as part of a lecture series on art fraud. “I’ll call it Boonedoggle Tour,” he said. In addition to the money (half of which he plans to donate to the fund to rebuild the Sag Harbor Cinema, which was destroyed by fire last winter), the settlement awards Baldwin several Bleckner paintings, including one commissioned to his specifications. Baldwin said, “Maybe I’ll have Ross paint a picture of the seven-figure check that Mary paid me to settle.”

—Susan Lehman

The St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, in upstate New York, sits at the U.S. border with Canada, and most of its residents are citizens of both countries, as well as of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, a territory that includes land on the Canadian side of the border. Much of the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation's income comes from a casino, but its revenues have lately flattened, and the unemployment rate on the reservation is twice that of Franklin County, which abuts it and is itself one of the poorest parts of the state. Recently, however, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe acquired a major new source of revenue. It has become the owner of six patents for Restasis, a drug for dry-eye syndrome that is the second-highest-selling product of the pharmaceutical company Allergan. Soon, tribal leaders say, they will have a small portfolio of patents, covering other medicines and also computer software and hardware. No tribe members were involved in designing these products. The business opportunity fell into their lap, thanks to an intellectual-property lawyer in Texas named Michael Shore.

For years, Shore had a successful practice representing patent holders, mostly universities, whose intellectual property had been infringed upon. Then, in 2012, Congress passed the America Invents Act, which created a streamlined procedure, known as "inter partes review," for the adjudication of patent challenges by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Shore immediately realized three things. First, a streamlined procedure would encourage many more challenges. Second, the law was written in such a way that it didn't apply to sovereign entities, such as foreign countries, U.S. states, and Native American nations. Third, a patent held by a sovereign entity therefore had a greater effective value than the same patent held by an institution subject to the new procedure. By Shore's calculation, transferring a patent from a non-sovereign entity to a sovereign one would increase its value anywhere from four to

ten times over. If he could broker such deals, everybody—patent owners, sovereign entities, and Shore himself—could make millions.

Shore set about looking for a suitable sovereign. He didn't know much about Native American tribes, but he knew they were often in need of money. He called the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe—as a kid, growing up in East Texas, he had visited a Coushatta-run campground. The Coushatta weren't interested, but they mentioned a St. Regis Mohawk Tribe member who was a prominent attorney and might better understand Shore's idea. A quick trip to the New York reservation got the tribe on board.

Next, Shore needed to find a non-



sovereign patent holder. He looked first at some software firms, but then came across Allergan: patents for its drug Restasis were being challenged by companies, such as Mylan and Teva, that hoped to manufacture generics. Allergan stood to lose a monopoly worth more than a billion dollars a year, and didn't need much convincing that cutting a deal with the tribe would be far cheaper than fighting claims in inter partes review. In the deal Shore brokered, the tribe agreed to lease the patent back to Allergan, exclusively, for a fee of fifteen million dollars a year (plus \$13.75 million up front). Shore hopes to negotiate more deals for the tribe and is already talking to several other Native American nations about doing the same for them.

Without clear property rights, capi-

talism and the modern economy could not exist. After all, what are markets other than forums for trading ownership of things of value? When it comes to physical goods and land, property rights are usually fairly intuitive. But intellectual property is inherently more arbitrary. Even if we agree—and many sensible people don't—that people should have the right to exclusively exploit their own inventions, how long should that right last? Who decides whether another invention is a mere copy or a substantive enhancement that deserves protection, too? There is no objective standard, and the answers will always involve some legal wrangling. This, together with the changing nature of our economy, explains why intellectual-property law is a burgeoning business. The Patent Office estimates that intellectual property currently represents more than a third of all value created in the U.S., and its value is growing far more quickly than the economy over all. Every year, patents and trademarks will collectively be worth trillions more than the year before. That creates enormous incentives to do what Shore did: find clever new ways of gaming the system.

Maneuvers like Shore's rarely go unchallenged. Last month, a federal judge in Texas ruled that some of Allergan's Restasis patents were invalid. (The company has said that it will appeal.) The judge also commented that "sovereign immunity should not be treated as a monetizable commodity." On the same basis, some members of Congress, led by Senator Claire McCaskill, are so annoyed that they're calling for the abrogation of Native American sovereign immunity in patent-claims cases. This is theoretically possible, because the sovereign immunity of tribes, unlike that of states, isn't enshrined in the Eleventh Amendment. But Shore points out that such a measure would penalize Native Americans without actually closing the loophole. If Congress limits tribal immunity, he could easily shift the patent portfolios to state universities. Shore says that he's in talks with several underfunded state-run historically black colleges and universities. As long as there's money to be made gaming the system, he figures it's desirable (and good P.R.) for some of that money to go to those who need it most.

—Adam Davidson

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THE SPORTING SCENE

REVENUE STREAMING

For the stars of video gaming, success means working around the clock.

BY TAYLOR CLARK



The most followed players on the platform Twitch earn well into seven figures.

One humid morning this past summer, Omeed Dariani drove his black Tesla sedan through the foothills east of San Diego, looking apprehensive. Dariani is the founder and C.E.O. of Online Performers Group, a talent-management company dedicated to professional video-game streamers, who broadcast their game play and commentary live over the Internet. He is thirty-eight, with a dry, ironic wit and a nervous habit of twirling his goatee, which is rapidly going gray; his clients are, for the most part, young, boisterous, and unpredictable. That day, he was on his way to meet the streamer Roberto Garcia,

who was supposed to be at home but had instead gone to a casino outside the city to celebrate his girlfriend's birthday. Dariani's speedometer crept toward ninety miles per hour. "We just need to get there before he starts to drink," he said.

Garcia, known online as Towelliee, is a star broadcaster on Twitch, a streaming platform whose popularity has turned recreational gaming into an improbably viable career. Each month, a hundred million visitors watch their favorite personalities play video games on Twitch, spending an average of nearly two hours a day there. This audience is large enough

to make the site one of the twenty most trafficked in the U.S., yet it's perhaps more apt to measure Twitch against a different medium. With viewership numbers that rival those of MSNBC or CNN, Twitch is less like a conventional Web site than like a kaleidoscopic television network: thousands of channels at once, broadcasting live at every hour of the day.

Shortly before noon, Dariani pulled up in front of the Viejas Casino & Resort and handed his keys to a valet. He strode inside, eyes scanning the acres of slot machines. Though Dariani is chummy and non-judgmental with clients, he's seen enough drunk streamers fall off balconies at industry parties to inspire an almost parental anxiety. He glanced at his phone, and then showed me an eclectically punctuated text from Garcia. "That's probably not a good sign of sobriety," he said. Yet when Garcia appeared—bearded, stout, and wearing aviator sunglasses—he was convivial but composed. "I just watched my girlfriend lose nine hundred dollars in about three minutes," he announced cheerfully.

Garcia led us up to the casino's Presidential Suite, where his girlfriend, Aracely, was waiting at the bar. When Garcia started streaming, in 2010, he'd recently been laid off from a quality-assurance job at a pharmaceutical-software company; he and Aracely scraped by on unemployment checks and her wages from Costco. Game broadcasting was new, and the business model all but nonexistent. Still, Garcia thought that he could make it work, so he sat Aracely down to convince her. "Imagine telling your girlfriend, 'I'm going to stop looking for a job and play video games for a living,'" he told me. Aracely, sitting beside him, nodded. "It was a hard conversation," she said.

Game streaming, Garcia discovered, required non-stop work. The only way to attract viewers, and to prevent the ones you had from straying to other broadcasters, was to be online constantly, so he routinely streamed for eighteen hours a day. "That's what I had to do to grow the viewership," he said. His ankles swelled from sitting at his computer. His weight grew to four hundred and twenty pounds.

Garcia's specialty is the multiplayer fantasy game World of Warcraft. While he isn't its best player, he has a knack for talking entertainingly over his play: he is funny, brash, and filled with stories about his delinquent childhood in Newark. ("I was so bad, I got kicked out of the DARE program," he told me.) After a year of broadcasting, he had a steady audience of seven hundred, but he was still desperately broke. During a stream, he asked viewers to help him hang on a little longer. One sent him fifteen hundred dollars—a gift that reduced Garcia to tears. "I had to shut my mike off and walk away," he said. "Everyone was, like, 'Where'd he go? Is he dead from the donation?'"

Six years later, Garcia makes several times that amount on a good day. Since 2011, he has been one of Twitch's "partners," an élite group that includes some twenty-five thousand streamers, of the 2.2 million active on the site. Between his thousands of subscribers—who pay a monthly fee for access to perks such as ad-free viewing—and his sponsorships, appearance fees, and tips, he earns a "low- to mid-six-figure" income. His streaming schedule has become more manageable, though it remains arduous: sixty hours a week, no days off except occasional Saturdays. He has devoted nearly thirty thousand hours to World of Warcraft. "I'm a grinder, man," he told me.

To sponsors, Twitch offers a novel opportunity: access to a generation that resists traditional advertising media but is steeped in video games. Young people watch game streaming in huge numbers (Twitch claims to reach half of the millennial males in the United States) and often in prodigious quantities. "This year, Towelie's viewers have watched five hundred and ninety-four years of his content," Dariani said. In 2016, Garcia sold nearly three million dollars' worth of his sponsors' products through links on his Twitch channel.

For all the traffic and revenue that Twitch generates, the game-streaming market remains a free-for-all, its driven, rambunctious broadcasters struggling to manage their newfound success. Dariani aims to become streaming's William Morris—a pio-

neering talent manager who leads a new class of entertainer into professionalism. Already, his best-paid clients can earn two million dollars a year; some command twenty thousand dollars to play a studio's game for a single three-hour stream. Executives both covet and fear Twitch broadcasters' influence. "This eighteen-year-old punk kid shows up," Dariani told me, describing a typical meeting with potential sponsors, "and he's talking about how things are 'retarded' and making fart jokes and not listening to your team with a hundred years of experience. And you're sitting there going, 'This is the guy who makes the decision about whether my company succeeds or fails?'" Dariani smiled. "First you're angry. But then you're terrified."

Online Performers Group's office sits on the top floor of a putty-gray building in San Diego's Point Loma neighborhood, less than a mile from the airport; the roar of plane traffic frequently interrupts conversation. "We call it the Point Loma pause," Dariani said. "It gives you time to reflect." One recent afternoon, Oliver Pascual, an account manager, stood at his desk watching a client's stream of a game called Farming Simulator 17. Onscreen, a grimy blue tractor hauled a trailer through an autumnal pasture. "People like watching him farm stuff," Pascual explained, shrugging. "He's literally looking for a place to dump grass right now."

Nearby, a whiteboard listed dozens of pending deals, including projects with Intel and Logitech. On the opposite wall, a huge television showed a client called ProfessorBroman broadcasting the sci-fi blockbuster Destiny 2 for an audience of six thousand. (A few days later, another client, KingGothalion, would play Destiny 2 in a marathon stream that attracted more than half a million viewers.) Meanwhile, on a love seat in the waiting area, the streamer Cinthya Alicea, who broadcasts as CinCinBear, toyed idly with her blue hair extensions as she chatted with employees about an upcoming cruise to Mexico to which O.P.G. was treating its clients and staff.

Outside a doorway warning "KEEP

OUT: Omeed's Private Volcano Lair," Dariani stood in his typical outfit of T-shirt, jeans, and sandals. His wife, Jennifer, a Harvard history-of-science Ph.D. who is O.P.G.'s chief operating officer, emerged from the adjacent office with news that another streamer had just signed—the tenth in the past week, nearly doubling their client count, to twenty-four. The two paused a moment, mulling the extra work that this would entail. "That's great," Dariani said, uncertainly.

Dariani's usual demeanor is one of skeptical diligence. The son of an Iranian father and an Oklahoman mother, he dropped out of the University of Virginia in 2000 and spent years working for the companies that make the card games Magic: The Gathering and Yu-Gi-Oh!. In 2012, he joined Sony Online Entertainment as a global brand manager. On his first day there, he recalled, the president of his division spoke with the marketing team: "He starts yelling at us, 'If you marketing fuckers don't figure out this Twitch thing, we're going to get buried!'"

But Twitch resisted easy figuring out. The service began less as a commercial venture than as a piece of performance art. In 2007, a group of recent Yale graduates concocted the idea of broadcasting every moment of the co-founder Justin Kan's life, through a Web site that they called Justin.tv. For nine months, from a camera attached to his hat, Kan beamed out live video of everything he did (except for bodily necessities), using a streaming tool that the group had developed. The stunt eventually wore thin, but viewers kept asking for a way to live-stream their own exploits. To the founders' surprise, what users wanted most was to broadcast themselves playing video games. "It became the tail that wagged the dog," Emmett Shear, a co-founder and Twitch's current C.E.O., later told the *Times*. "It ended up taking over our whole company." In 2014, Amazon acquired the service, which had been renamed Twitch, for nine hundred and seventy million dollars. It now has more than twelve hundred employees.

Generally speaking, a Twitch stream is not riveting entertainment—or even,



"I keep telling you, poppy-seed bagels are nothing but trouble."

to the uninitiated, all that comprehensible. Click on a channel, and what you will encounter is routine game play, along with two other frames: a miniature box showing the face of the streamer, who provides occasional commentary; and, to the right, a chat window that scrolls with the indecipherable speed of a spinning game-show wheel. The streamer, seated before his computer, might grow animated as he reacts to the game, but just as often he is fixated and still, his expressionless face blue-lit by monitor glow. Even Dariani struggled at first to make sense of the site. "I started watching a lot of streams," he recalled, "and it was, like, Guy with a beard, another guy with a beard, another guy with a beard. They're all heads in boxes playing the same game."

The central mystery of Twitch, at least to newcomers, is why anyone would choose to watch such a thing, when he could play the game instead. Twitch's spokesman, who goes only by Chase, argued, "That's like saying to a chef, 'Why are you watching the Food Network? Shouldn't you be in the kitchen, cooking?' Or to an athlete, 'Why are you watching ESPN? Shouldn't you be out shooting hoops?'

No. People enjoy watching others who are good at what they do."

The deeper draw to Twitch, however, is its capacity for interactivity. It was this function that intrigued Dariani. When he gave presentations on Twitch to Sony executives, he often displayed a stream behind him—and then, after a while, sent a chat message to the broadcaster, who returned his greeting on camera: "Hey, Omeed!" This invariably made the executives sit up. "All of a sudden, you see the power of the medium," Dariani said. "Imagine you watch a television show and the show literally talks back to you, customized to what you want to hear."

Dariani e-mailed dozens of broadcasters, asking what they would charge to play Sony's games on their streams. "They were completely random numbers," he recalled. "The smallest guy wanted twenty-five thousand dollars. The biggest guy said, 'I'll do it for free—just send me a copy.' I was, like, 'There's no plan here.'" In order to make contacts, Dariani set up shop in dive bars near gaming conventions and invited broadcasters to talk over free food and drinks. What they all told him, he remembers, was, "We

don't know what we're doing, we don't know anybody, and we're terrified." In 2014, Dariani left Sony and began representing a few streamers part time.

At the beginning of last year, Dariani had one employee, and worked from his dining-room table. The company now has a staff of thirteen, along with an array of analytics tools. Its software can tell clients what hours are best for them to stream (Twitch's viewership peaks before noon, when the North American and European crowds intersect), what their audiences' viewing habits are, and what their sponsorship time is worth (1.1 cents per viewer per minute). One morning, Jennifer Dariani showed me a widget that they'd created which ranks, in live time, the best games for clients to play in order to maximize viewers.

O.P.G. earns its commission from clients' sponsorships. A healthy Twitch channel, Dariani says, should make about half its revenue from subscriptions and tips and the other half from promotional work. In recent months, this pool of sponsorship money has deepened considerably, as companies, from game studios to energy-drink brands and fast-food chains, rush to purchase streamers' influence. When I visited O.P.G., a studio had just signed a deal for two hundred thousand dollars a month. In the car one evening, Dariani fumed that a company had asked to fly a client to Japan for an event, offering a four-thousand-dollar fee for a week's work. "No," Dariani had replied. "That's the rate he gets per day."

In the next few years, Dariani expects, the annual marketing expenditure on Twitch streamers will surpass a billion dollars. By his rough estimate, two thousand broadcasters are already making a middle-class income through Twitch; he has seen clients turn down fifty thousand dollars for a two-hour convention appearance because they didn't want to deal with the travel. "The amount of money in content creation is ludicrous," David Martinez, an acquaintance of Dariani's who manages the streamer and YouTuber Ryan "Northernlion" Letourneau, told me. "It's one thing to make a living playing video games.

It's another thing to be people like us who make a living off those people, and live comfortably. It's fucking crazy."

This August, I accompanied Dariani on a visit to his client Anthony Kongphan—whom he described, with some managerial embellishment, as “the hottest commodity on Twitch right now.” (Despite placing only two hundred and seventieth in the site’s rankings, Kongphan was gaining several thousand followers a day.) On a hilltop northeast of Portland, Oregon, Kongphan showed us into a modern exurban house that he shares with two other broadcasters. Inside, a thick layer of dust coated what little furniture was in evidence: two tables pushed awkwardly against a wall. A dining area had been converted into a makeshift bedroom, illuminated by a set of shoebox-size photography lights on telescoping stands. Mail and packages lay in unopened piles. Dariani nodded. “This is a pretty typical streamer house,” he said.

Kongphan, who is thirty-two, stands out amid Twitch’s largely sallow, non-descript streamer base. Lithe and tattooed, with an impeccably spiked crest of black hair, he is a former model and actor who once had a part on “The Young and the Restless.” After struggling to break through in Hollywood, Kongphan saw a friend streaming and decided to try it. He spent years building an audience, delivering pizzas on the side. “I will never do it again, but I streamed once for sixty-three and a half hours straight,” Kongphan told me. Now he broadcasts every day from early evening to around 4 A.M. “I just wake up, eat, work out, and then stream,” he said. Recently, he’d hired his older sister to work as his assistant, doubling the salary she made at an insurance company.

In the living room, Dariani spotted a box of samples from the St. Louis coffee company Madrinas, which had been courting Kongphan. Dariani looked vexed; he’d forwarded the package months before. “Always love seeing the stuff you sent them that they didn’t even open,” he said. He unsealed the box and extended a can of cold-brew coffee to Kongphan. “Dude, try it. They want to pay you so much money. If you

don’t like it, we won’t do it.” Kongphan, who doesn’t drink coffee, eyed it warily before taking a sip. “That’s not bad, actually,” he said. “It works really well with late-night streaming,” Dariani replied.

Can in hand, Kongphan led us up to his studio. At the top of the stairs, an enormous translucent purple dildo sat mounted on the wall like a floppy trophy head. “Oh,” Kongphan said, registering it. “Yeah. Don’t mind that.” Unlike the rest of the house, Kongphan’s studio was almost obsessively tidy. On his desk, a container of Clorox wipes rested beside a copy of “Heated Beat,” an erotic novel, discovered by his then-girlfriend, that features a stock photo of Kongphan on the cover. (Kongphan’s former girlfriend is also a streamer, a common situation; non-streamer partners often won’t tolerate the job’s demanding hours.) Thick black curtains blocked the evening light.

Kongphan sat down in front of an array of four computer monitors and clicked a button to alert his followers that he was about to start streaming. Fans surged in, filling the chat window with emotes—small, emoji-like images that are Twitch’s preferred mode of expression. (Kongphan’s emotes, available only to his subscribers, are largely ninja-themed, matching his channel’s graphics.) Kongphan put on a gaming headset and leaned in to the microphone above his keyboard. The moment the video feed kicked in, his demeanor brightened. “Hello, hello, everyone!” he called out, grinning. “What up? Twitch is alive!” For ten minutes, he mostly greeted viewers, calling them out by name: “RevTomato! Muntface! Nick! Razer!”

Like all of Dariani’s clients, Kongphan is a “variety streamer.” While some broadcasters focus exclusively on one game (and consequently lose viewers if



“Hey, guys! This cave is actually a tunnel to the twenty-first century!”

WAITING FOR SPIDER-MAN

I came late to television. I was five when my neighbor in Santo Domingo bought the first set on our street, the first I'd ever laid eyes on. I can still see it in my mind's eye: a small color TV with long insectoid antennae; an alien device to a kid who had spent most of his childhood with no running water, who considered watching goats climb onto cars and houses serious entertainment.

Maybe I would have been O.K. if I'd seen anything else: the news, a variety show, a political debate. But my earliest exposure to television was a Spider-Man cartoon—one of the flipped-out Ralph Bakshi episodes from the late sixties. In other words, the first thing I saw on TV was America.

A little context: I had a father in New York City whom I did not remember, and who (it was promised) would one day deliver my family to the States. And here was my first television and my first cartoon and my first superhero—a hero who, like my father, was in America—and somehow it all came together for me in a lightning bolt of longing and imagination. My father's absence made perfect sense. He couldn't come back right away because he was busy fighting crime in N.Y.C. . . . as *Spider-Man*.

The diasporic imagination really is its own superpower.

I became convinced that I was the son of Spider-Man. Like, seriously. You couldn't tell me otherwise. I went apeshit for climbing trees; sometimes I ran head first into our zinc fence, like the Rhino. (I had no problem playing both hero and villain.) My mother was too busy working to make much of it, but my abuela, who watched my brother and me, was, like, "Algo se le montó."

It all ended exactly as you might expect: one overcast day, I plummeted out of our avocado tree with an unheroic shriek and landed belly down on the barbed wire separating our house from our neighbor's.

My mother stitched me up herself and promised to knock me out of the next tree she found me in. She didn't have to worry; the hole I'd sliced into my abdomen put an end to my Spider-Man reenactments. I stopped climbing,

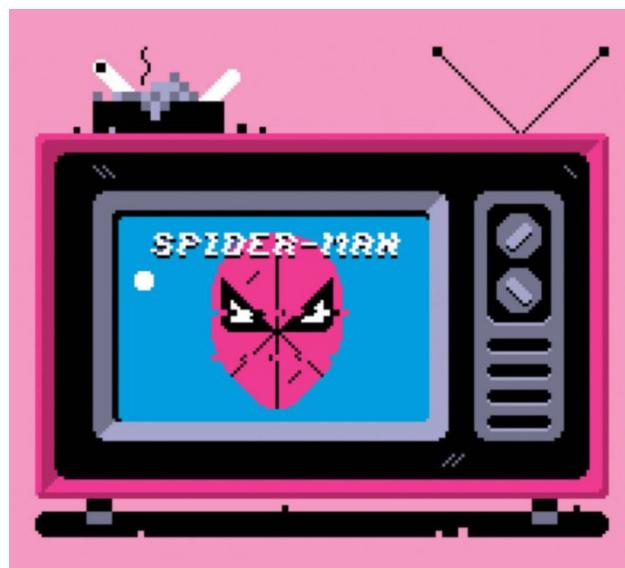
like the Spider-Man cartoon, not even the landfill.

Those first years, we had a pretty rough time of it. It's hard to describe the initial shock, the terrible bewilderment, the agonies. No way to talk about it then; barely any way to talk about it now. I had no idea how I was supposed to act or dress or walk or be. I didn't understand what anyone was saying, or why the other black folks in our neighborhood didn't speak Spanish.

My father was the worst shock of all. He had no problem laying hands on us kids for the slightest infraction. Beatings like he was making up for lost time. Like he was mad he had a family. Before our first month was out, he had introduced my brother and me to his side chick as though it were the most normal thing in the world. It turns out the old man did have a secret life in America, but it had nothing to do with fighting crime. No, he was not the hero I had dreamed of, and no amount of wishing could make it so.

Are you surprised, then, that I was drawn back to the television? Haunting it as much as it haunted me. Flipping through the channels restlessly. From VHF to UHF, and back. Late into the night, when everyone else was asleep and almost no channels were on. Because I was lost, because I wanted help with my English, because my father was a nightmare. And because I was convinced, foolish little fantasist that I was, that somehow my family and I had ended up in the wrong America and that the country and the father I'd first glimpsed on TV in Santo Domingo, the country and the father I'd been promised, were still out there somewhere.

I just had to find them.
Never did. ♦



stayed resolutely terrestrial. But TV—that was something else altogether.

No sooner was I allowed out of bed than I was hobbling back to my neighbor's set. That eerie little box had a power that not even evisceration could discourage. Near-gutting or not, I believed I had seen my father on that TV, and if I paid close enough attention it would show him to me again. TV was my scryer's ball, my very own palantír, and, Denethor-like, I consulted it feverishly, searching for signs of my long-lost dad and the new world to come.

For the record: my father did eventually return and take us to the States. Not to New York City, as expected, but to central New Jersey. Goes without saying that none of it looked

that game's popularity declines), variety streamers switch titles freely, succeeding on the strength of their charisma. "Their audiences aren't just there to watch them play League of Legends," Dariani said. "They're there because they like that person." This congeniality makes variety streamers much more appealing to sponsors. Whereas some high-level gamers grow too focussed on matches to speak, streamers like Kongphan are as garrulous as morning-radio hosts, able to talk enthusiastically—and to boost products—for hours. Kongphan's audience is so loyal and adoring (some fans have tipped him more than ten thousand dollars over time, or watched him stream for twenty-four hours straight) that his channel can resemble a benign personality cult, built around a carefully honed version of himself: engaged, jokey, ceaselessly positive.

It helps, of course, that Kongphan is also a highly skilled gamer, his reflexes sharpened by thousands of hours of practice and enhanced by a diet of his own devising. (It involves a lot of chicken breast.) In his studio, he started up PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, a game that Twitch helped propel to success. In Battlegrounds, matches begin with a hundred players, who scrounge weapons and supplies from a constantly shrinking map; the last player left alive wins. Kongphan is almost always that player—even though he is only half paying attention. As he played, fingers clacking across the keyboard, his eyes flicked periodically from the screen to his chat monitor, so that he could keep up a steady patter with his audience. "Would you rather have spatulas for hands or have to fight 10 midgets on PCP?" one viewer asked. Kongphan, still shooting enemies, presided over the ensuing debate.

The broadcaster BurkeBlack told me, "Streaming on Twitch is a game of its own"—a puzzle that requires specialized skills and strategies. The lifeblood of a Twitch channel is its "subs": broadcasters get a share of every five-dollar monthly subscription. According to streamers I spoke with, that share ranges from fifty to seventy per cent, depending on their popularity. For every Twitch star earning seven figures, there are thousands struggling

to figure out how to lure enough subscribers to survive. Do they need a gimmick? Should they play different games? Interact more with chat? "There's no right answer," Daniel "iKasper" Bong, a longtime streamer, told me. "The audience gets to choose what they want to watch, and it's almost like putting our fate in their hands. It's scary."

Perhaps the best embodiment of the effort to master Twitch is Ben Cassell, O.P.G.'s first client, who broadcasts, as CohnCarnage, from his farmhouse in North Carolina. After nearly quitting Twitch in 2013, when sixteen-hour streams weren't winning him an audience, Cassell instead dedicated himself to research. "This medium is brand new," he explained. "There's nowhere to go to see how to succeed on Twitch." So he built data-tracking software, and studied scheduling, game selection, and the market's niches: hardcore professional gamers, lighthearted jesters, "boobie streamers," histrionic yellars, baseball-cap-wearing frat bros. Based on his findings, Cassell reinvented his channel as upbeat and safe-for-work; to followers, he told me, "my channel is 'Cheers.'" Every day—and he has logged more than fourteen hundred in a row, including the one on which his first child was born—he begins his stream at 8 A.M., right before Twitch's audience crests.

Cassell now has four full-time employees, along with a squad of contractors: artists, coders, sound technicians. The graphics on his channel, from the splashy title sequence to the customized overlays for each game, wouldn't be out of place on cable television. Paid moderators scrub any toxicity from his chat window. While he streams, he monitors a variety of applications so that every decision is optimized. "Twitch is not 'If you build it, they will come,'" he said. "It's like surfing, where you have to go to the waves."

In the early morning of February 19th, the Virginia broadcaster Brian Vigneault stepped away from his Twitch stream, telling his viewers that he was taking a cigarette break. At the time, Vigneault, a thirty-five-year-old father of three, had been live for twenty-two hours of a charity stream

that was planned to last a full day. The broadcast never resumed; later, Vigneault's body was found in his Virginia Beach home. Many of his peers speculated that he had suffered a heart attack from too many marathon streams. Months later, it emerged that he'd died of an overdose of the opioid fentanyl. Yet the speculation had not been implausible; several broadcasters, including one of Dariani's clients, have suffered heart attacks while streaming. "What we do is not healthy," BurkeBlack told me.

At this summer's PAX West—a yearly convention that inundates downtown Seattle with gaming fans—virtually every streamer I spoke with voiced concerns about the health risks of overwork. "My doctor told me I was going to die if I kept doing it like this," a young broadcaster who goes by Bria Leigh said. "You spend ten hours a day in the chair. And you don't even want to get up to use the bathroom, because you're afraid you'll lose viewers."

On the convention floor, thousands of gamers, many in costume as bionic angels and blue-skinned assassins, waited in line to play demos and to pose with any of a half-dozen colossal sculpted dragons, which developers had brought to promote games. Outside Twitch's area, Sonja Reid, a Canadian streamer known as OMGitsfirefoxx, signed game consoles for fans and posed for selfies in yellow-tinted sunglasses. Reid is the most popular female broadcaster on Twitch, with close to a million followers. (This places her sixty-sixth in the site's rankings; Twitch's broadcasters, like its viewers, are overwhelmingly male.) But later, away from her fans, she told me that she was stepping back from Twitch. "I got burned out," she said. "I wasn't doing anything else with my life. I wasn't going outside. I was spending all my time on the Internet."

Reid also had to contend with a gaming culture that can be shockingly hostile to women. Like Bria Leigh, she had been stalked by viewers. She'd been "doxxed," her personal information revealed online. Many female broadcasters cope with sexual solicitation and other forms of harassment. The streamer Cinthya Alicea matter-of-factly told me what it was like to be

"swatted"—a vicious prank in which trolls anonymously report a made-up threat to police, summoning a SWAT team to a target's home. As Alicea streamed, officers stormed into her house and put her in handcuffs. "I'm just thankful they didn't shoot my dog," she said.

For Dariani, protecting his charges is a constant concern. Several times, I saw him and his wife implore clients to let them take work off their hands. Need prizes shipped to viewers? "We can do gift fulfillment for you." Forgot to bring toiletries to the conference? Here's a kit with toothpaste, Purell, and multivitamins. When Kongphan mentioned wanting to move to Austin, Texas, Dariani volunteered to find him a house. "These streamers don't have anybody in their corner," Dariani told me. "We need to be that person." The Darianis own a rental condo on the beach in San Diego, and they offer it for free to clients who need time away. No one has ever accepted. "They just don't take vacations," Jennifer Dariani said. To help break this trend, O.P.G. recently devised a plan to pay clients to take up to ten days off a year.

Streamers accept the difficult conditions because they know that success requires them to allow fans constant access: for viewers, a Twitch channel is not just entertainment but also a virtual community, which functions only when its most important member is online. Gaming began, decades ago, as a social experience, in arcades and on living-room sofas. But as games have become more lushly immersive and complex—often designed to reward thousands of hours of play—they have in many ways become more isolating, encouraging solitude and, for some gamers, loneliness. Twitch has succeeded because it made gaming feel communal again. As Chase, Twitch's spokesman, told me, "We're essentially a social network for the gaming age."

Garcia and Cassell both like to compare their channels to a neighborhood pub. Streamers become favorite bartenders, charming and constantly available. Viewers, swapping messages in chat, become fellow-regulars. There might be the occasional bar fight—Twitch can be as noxious

as anywhere else on the Internet—but the tone is typically convivial. Viewers generate inside jokes, ask for life advice, even discuss their experiences of grief or depression. (They also pair off, as two of Cassell's moderators did.) "There are two ways to look at Twitch," Cassell told me. "One is that it's people playing video games and other people watching, which is what ninety-nine per cent of the world sees. But the other side of Twitch is that you are playing a game with someone on the couch. There's a level of interaction that's just not there in standard media."

This interaction has an unusual kind of immediacy: participate enough in Cassell's Twitch channel, and he'll greet you by name, every day. "If you asked a hundred viewers why they watch their favorite streamer, what they're all going to tell you is, 'I feel like I could be their friend,'" Cecilia D'Anastasio, who covers Twitch for the gaming site Kotaku, said. Michael Blight, a DePaul University communications professor whose research has explored viewers' bonds with Twitch streamers, told me that these largely one-sided "parasocial relationships" grow deeply meaningful. "People were almost sheepish about revealing this, but they'd say, 'I know I'm just one of his thousands of fans, but I really do feel like he understands me,'" Blight said. "They come to feel like this person is a part of them."

Late one afternoon in the PAX West exhibition hall, Kongphan, in a slim-cut white Oxford shirt, stood at a Twitch lectern, signing autographs alongside three other streamers. The line, a hundred deep, kept stalling as admirers reached him. Some fans were preteens, chaperoned by parents. Others displayed their own Twitch handles on nametags. As the event wore on, one of Kongphan's chat moderators, who goes by MrMcStabby, introduced himself to me. Kongphan's channel, he said, was his "big, weird family," a balm after shifts at his day job, as a security guard. "It's a bunch of blood-thirsty maniacs, but very supportive," he said. "Maniacs that care."

While we spoke, a party of eight young Asian men in e-sports attire

reached the head of the line and swarmed Kongphan. Each, in turn, handed him a convention badge to sign, the entire group cheering every pen stroke. When Kongphan, posing for a selfie, hugged one fan suggestively from behind, a cry went up: "I'm jealous! I'm jealous!" As the other streamers looked on, bemused, MrMcStabby leaned in to me. "You see?" he said, smiling. "Maniacs."

That evening, at a party for streamers in an Irish pub, I found Dariani, looking especially careworn. In the past twenty-four hours, he had closed five sponsorship deals. Across the bar, he spotted a brunette so diminutive that the crowd seemed periodically to swallow her. "That's HaleyBaby, another new client," he told me. "She does streaming and Lolita modelling." "Lolita?" I asked. "In Japan, it doesn't mean the same thing it does here," he hastily explained. "Well, it *does*, but it's less sexual."

Dariani made the rounds of streamers, many of whom brightened at his approach. Every day, he's petitioned by broadcasters who hope that O.P.G. will represent them, but he plans to expand the company at a sensible pace. "A year from now, I'll bet we could manage a hundred clients," he told me. Already, he has received investment and acquisition offers, which he has turned down. "I love these people and love what I do," Dariani said. "When I see a guy who a couple years ago was functionally homeless and now is able to have a family and buy a house, how can you burn out on that?"

On the sidewalk outside, dozens of streamers in purple Twitch T-shirts stood vaping and talking, in the effervescent manner of people expecting good things. Among them was Zachary Whitten, the Twitch liaison for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital; in large part through O.P.G. broadcasters like Kongphan and ProfessorBroman, St. Jude has raised more than six million dollars on the site. "What Omeed's doing is forcing the modernization of this industry," Whitten told me. He gestured out at the crowd. "Because a lot of these kids don't recognize their value, right? Omeed is showing these streamers exactly what they're worth." ♦



DISNEY PRINCES REIMAGINED AS FEMINIST ALLIES

BY BLYTHE ROBERSON

Prince Charming, from "Cinderella"

When the king throws a ball to gather all the eligible maidens in the land, Prince Charming is, like, "Uh, a ball full of maidens? That's really demeaning to women." The prince starts a #BallsFullOfMaidens hashtag, for women to share their stories about being seen as only wives or girlfriends. It goes viral, and, without consulting any of the maidens, Prince Charming signs a seven-figure "Balls Full of Maidens" book deal. He later marries Cinderella because it makes him look like he has socialist bona fides, even though Cinderella technically comes from money.

Prince Phillip, from "Sleeping Beauty"

Prince Phillip would *never* touch a woman without her consent. He knows that a woman in a magically induced

coma cannot consent, even if she was flirting with him in the woods earlier, and even if they have been betrothed since birth. (He feels weird about the betrothed-since-birth thing, but doesn't want to confront his conservative family about it, because it makes him uncomfortable.) Prince Phillip is horrified to hear that there are men in the kingdom who do not wait for a woman's consent, and he issues a proclamation asking women to relive their traumas on social media, for the sake of "awareness." He doesn't talk to any of his bros about it because he knows that they are good dudes.

Prince Eric, from "The Little Mermaid"

Prince Eric is extremely committed to female equality in his kingdom. He has so much to tell Ariel about the

plight and oppression of women that he fails to notice that she doesn't have a voice.

Prince Adam, from "Beauty and the Beast"

Prince Adam is *fine* with having been turned into a beast by an enchantress. No, seriously, he knows he deserved it. He spends a lot of time worrying that he is one of the "bad" men. He keeps Belle at his house so that whenever this anxiety overwhelms him he can ask her, over and over, if he is a misogynist. Is he holding Belle hostage? I mean . . . maybe, technically? But he's doing this for her, and for *all women!* He's just trying to be a good guy, and that's worth her not having any agency to pursue her own interests. Which are what, exactly? Oh, reading? The Beast gave Belle a whole library that she can use whenever he doesn't need her to perform emotional labor. Every single book in it is by Don DeLillo.

Aladdin, from "Aladdin"

Aladdin uses all three wishes on lapel pins that say "Male Feminist."

Captain John Smith, from "Pocahontas"

When the Virginia Company asks John Smith to go to America to steal land and gold from Native Americans, he declines. Also, he's really into giving women foot rubs.

Li Shang, from "Mulan"

After it has been revealed, in the final fight scene, that Mulan is a woman, Li stands to the side while she battles to save his life, telling her, "It is *so* cool that you don't wear makeup. Honestly? I prefer women who don't wear makeup. Maybe that makes me a weird dude. But I just, like, don't *need* a woman to pour time and resources into fitting a punitive, entirely fabricated standard of beauty for me to think she's hot. I guess what I'm saying is I think you're hot. Anyway, nice sword moves. You're not like other girls; you can really hang."

Prince Naveen, from "The Princess and the Frog"

Literally just treats women like human beings. ♦

GETTING ON

Why ageism never gets old.

BY TAD FRIEND



We tend to caricature the elderly as either raddled wretches or cuddly Yodas.

Early in his career, Paul Newman personified a young man in a hurry forced to wait his turn. His go-getter characters infiltrated the old-boy network, wore the gray flannel suit, and toiled away before finally, in midlife, grabbing the brass ring and coasting for home. In “The Young Philadelphians” (1959), for instance, Newman played Tony Lawrence, whose mother, over his cradle, gloats, “Someday, he’ll take the place in this city that belongs to him.” Young Philadelphians, it’s clear, are merely old Philadelphians in the making. While Tony is at Princeton, a silver-haired Philadelphia lawyer so venerable he has a British accent tells him, “I’m confident that in due time you’ll become a partner in Dickinson

& Dawes.” As Tony shinnies up the greasy pole at an even more eminent firm, he grumbles when old man Clayton has him work on Christmas and grousing that big clients are “reserved for the seniors” who wear homburgs and smoke pipes. Eventually, though, he makes partner and smokes a pipe of his own. Yay.

Times have changed. In “Disrupted: My Misadventure in the Startup Bubble” (Hachette), Dan Lyons, a fifty-one-year-old *Newsweek* reporter, gets his first shock when he’s laid off. “They can take your salary and hire five kids right out of college,” he’s told. His second shock occurs when he takes a lower-paying job at a startup called HubSpot, where his boss is a twentysomething named

Zack who’s been there a month. Lyons arrives for work in the traditional uniform of a midlife achiever—“gray hair, unstylishly cut; horn-rimmed glasses, button down shirt”—to find himself surrounded by programmers in flip-flops who nickname him Grandpa Buzz. His third shock is the realization that the tech sector usually tosses people aside at fifty. A few chapters later, he advances the expiration date to forty. A few chapters after that, he’s gone.

This sharp shift in the age of authority derives from increasingly rapid technological change. In the nineteen-twenties, an engineer’s “half life of knowledge”—the time it took for half of his expertise to become obsolete—was thirty-five years. In the nineteen-sixties, it was a decade. Now it’s five years at most, and, for a software engineer, less than three. Traditionally, you needed decades in coding or engineering to launch a successful startup: William Shockley was forty-five when he established Fairchild Semiconductor, in 1955. But change begets faster change: Larry Page and Sergey Brin were twenty-five when they started Google, in 1998; Mark Zuckerberg was nineteen when he created Facebook, in 2004.

With the advent of the cloud and off-the-shelf A.P.I.s—the building blocks of sites and apps—all you really need to launch a startup is a bold idea. Silicon Valley believes that bold ideas are the province of the young. Zuckerberg once observed, “Young people are just smarter,” and the venture capitalist Vinod Khosla has said that “people over forty-five basically die in terms of new ideas.” Paul Graham, the co-founder of the Valley’s leading startup accelerator, Y Combinator, declared that the sweet spot is your mid-twenties: “The guys with kids and mortgages are at a real disadvantage.” The median age at tech titans such as Facebook and Google is under thirty; the standard job requirements in the Valley—which discourage a “stale degree” and demand a “digital native” who’s a “culture fit”—sift for youth.

That culture is becoming *the culture*. At Goldman Sachs—a century-and-a-half-old investment bank that is swiftly turning into a tech company—partners are encouraged to move on after five years or so, or risk being “de-partnered.”

As one senior banker says, “There’s always somebody on your six”—military terminology for the guy right behind you. A recent A.A.R.P. study revealed that sixty-four per cent of Americans between forty-five and sixty had seen or experienced age discrimination at work. Accrued eminence still matters at law firms and universities (though tenured positions have fallen fifty per cent in the past forty years), but the rest of the culture has gone topsy-turvy. Even as Lycra and yoga make fifty the new thirty, tech is making thirty the new fifty. Middle age, formerly the highest-status phase of life around the world, has become a precarious crossing. The relatively new tech sector is generating enormous amounts of a very old product: ageism.

“Ageism” was coined in 1969, two years after the Federal Discrimination in Employment Act set forty as the lower bound at which workers could complain of it. The upper bound continues to rise: the average life span grew more in the twentieth century than in all previous millennia. By 2020, for the first time, there will be more people on Earth over the age of sixty-five than under the age of five.

Like the racist and the sexist, the ageist rejects an Other based on a perceived difference. But ageism is singular, because it’s directed at a group that at one point wasn’t the Other—and at a group that the ageist will one day, if all goes well, join. The ageist thus insults his own future self. Karma’s a bitch: the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging reports, “Those holding more negative age stereotypes earlier in life had significantly steeper hippocampal volume loss and significantly greater accumulation of neurofibrillary tangles and amyloid plaques.” Ageists become the senescent figures they once abhorred.

The baldest forms of ageism include addressing older people in “elderspeak”—high, loud tones and a simplified vocabulary—and tarring them with nouns like “coot” and “geezer” or adjectives like “decrepit.” The young can’t grasp that most older people don’t feel so different from their youthful selves. When Florida Scott-Maxwell was living in a nursing home, in 1968, she wrote in her journal (later published as “The Measure of Our Days”), “Another secret we

carry is that though drab outside—wreckage to the eye, mirrors a mortification—inside we flame with a wild life that is almost incommunicable.” She felt like the person she’d always been. Last year, Americans spent sixteen billion dollars on plastic surgery, most of it on fountain-of-youth treatments for wrinkles, trying to close the gap between interior vitality and exterior decay.

Eye tucks get an eye roll in two books that view the problem not as the elderly but as a culture that has forgotten how to value them. Ashton Applewhite’s “This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism” (Networked Books) and Margaret Morganroth Gullette’s “Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People” (Rutgers) both grapple thoughtfully with how we got here. Yet each writer tends to see ageism lurking everywhere. Gullette, a resident scholar at the Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center, is given to such pronouncements as “Typically, anonymous old people portrayed in art exhibits, websites, and journalism convey decline ideology.” That’s a lot of terrain to cover with a “typically.” Applewhite, an activist whose blog, “Yo, Is This Ageist?,” fields inquiries on the topic (the usual answer is yes), is the more grounded guide. She begins by suggesting that we call the elderly “elders.” Ordinarily, this sort of cream concealer—“aging” replaced by “saging” or “elderling”; Walmart greeters hailed for their “encore career”—deepens the frown lines it’s meant to erase. But Applewhite’s point is that older people may not be qualitatively different from “youngers.” She notes that only ten per cent of Americans who are at least eighty-five live in nursing homes, and that half of those in that cohort don’t have caregivers; for the most part, she maintains, they are cognitively robust, sexually active, and “enjoy better mental health than the young or middle-aged.” Her conclusion: “Clearly, hitting ninety was going to be different—and way better—than the inexorable slide toward depression, diapers, and puffy white shoes I’d once envisioned.”

Well, wait and see. Applewhite attacks those who carelessly attribute “decline to age rather than illness,” but the distinction lacks a real difference; age is the leading precondition for most of the decline-hastening diseases, such as can-

cer, heart disease, and Alzheimer’s. Ageism can be hard to disentangle from the stark facts of aging. Ursula K. Le Guin, who’s eighty-eight, remarks in her recent book of essays, “No Time to Spare” (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), “If I’m ninety and I believe I’m forty-five, I’m headed for a very bad time trying to get out of the bathtub.” And that’s just the physical difficulties. A third of those over eighty-five have Alzheimer’s. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the most virulent forms of ageism sprout in retirement communities: in some, if those in assisted living visit the independent-living dining room, they’re forbidden to bring in their walkers or wheelchairs. This often means that a couple married for fifty years can’t eat together.

Gullette argues that ageism stems from the perception that old people are irrelevant. She links the rise of ageism over the centuries to broad trends: the printing press and widespread literacy made the lore that elders carried in their heads available to all (a process hastened, and even finished off, by Google); the industrial revolution increasingly demanded younger, more mobile workers; and medical advances made so many people live so much longer.

Ageism is further fuelled, Gullette believes, by what she calls the “ideology of scarcity”—the trope that the elderly are locusts who swarm the earth consuming all our resources. The relevant economic terminology is indeed grimly suggestive: those over sixty-four are part of the “dependent” rather than the “productive” population; they are “the burden” that the young must carry. A Moody’s report suggests that the aging population—often apocalyptically referred to as “the gray horde” or “the silver tsunami”—will dampen global economic growth for two decades. The two biggest federal outlays, by far, are Social Security and Medicare, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that between 2016 and 2024 the five fastest-growing jobs (aside from wind-turbine service technicians) will be in health care and elder care.

Yet older people, increasingly, aren’t simply creeping off into a twilit world of shuffleboard and sudoku. In 2000, 12.8 per cent of those over sixty-five were working; in 2016, it was 18.8 per cent. Furthermore, old people have most of

the money. Thirty years ago, households headed by those over sixty-five were ten times as wealthy as those under thirty-five; now they're fifty times as wealthy. So the elderly are a huge market. Think how often you've seen ads selling the twin bathtubs of Cialis and the guy tossing the football through the tire of Levitra.

Gullette argues that pharma and cosmetic companies aren't catering to the old so much as catering to the ageist idea that getting old is unbearable. Using similar reasoning, *Allure* decided this summer to drop the phrase "anti-aging" from all its copy. The magazine will now tell you only that Retinol can smooth wrinkles and fade spots, which may make you look, um, different. The A.A.R.P. has proclaimed that "anti-aging" and its synonyms "serve no other purpose than to, well . . . make people feel bad about aging." Dior, choosing its own way to show how vibrant a woman of a certain age can be, just made Cara Delevingne the face of its Capture line of wrinkle creams. (Delevingne is twenty-five.)

Gullette and Applewhite want you to feel great about aging. The path to that bliss is obscure, though, because they think everyone is doing aging wrong. Gullette warns against not only stereotypes of decline but also "the opposite homogenization: positive aging." If you go skydiving, as George H. W. Bush did on his ninetieth birthday, you're guilty of "competitive ableism." Even if you simply murmur into your diary that you don't feel eighty-one, Applewhite finds you guilty of "internalized ageism." Comparing your state of mind to the number on your driver's license, she says, "gives the number more power than it deserves, contributes to ageist assumptions about what age signifies and ageist stereotypes about what age looks like, and distances us from our cohorts." Her way out of the aging pickle is "more examples in the media, many more, of elders living ordinary lives, neither drooling nor dazzling." Here's to the Meh Generation.

Applewhite contends that fear of aging is more Western than Eastern, and that it doesn't exist in places that have escaped the reach of global capitalism. "In most prehistoric and agrarian societies," she writes, "the few peo-

ple who lived to old age were esteemed as teachers and custodians of culture." This is a comforting idea: if ageism is a by-product of modernity, it should be relatively easy to reverse.

In truth, many nonindustrial societies—half of those which have been surveyed—forsake their elderly. The Marind Anim of New Guinea bury senescent elders alive. The Chukchee of Siberia stab them through the heart. And the Niue of Polynesia view impaired old people as "the nearly dead," who threaten the barrier between worlds. For Niueans, the medical anthropologist Judith C. Barker writes, "To laugh at decrepit elders, to deride their feeble endeavors at being competent humans, to ridicule them, to neglect them, to be wary of and distant during interactions with them is not to disrespect an elder but to guard against foreign intrusion. These behaviors do not involve elders, but an entirely different category of being." Namely, the Other.

A meta-analysis by the academics Michael S. North and Susan T. Fiske reveals that Eastern societies actually have more negative attitudes toward the elderly than Western ones do, and that the global ageism boom stems not from modernization or capitalism but from the increase in old people. North and Fiske also note that "efforts to intervene against age prejudice have yielded mixed results at best." Having students simulate the experience of being old by donning weighted suits and vision-inhibiting goggles, or exposing them to "intergenerational contact"—actual old people—doesn't lead to kumbaya moments. "Such approaches do not appear to incite a long-term desire among the young for interaction with elders," they regretfully conclude, "and contact can backfire if older adults are particularly impaired." Ageism, the slipperiest ism, is also the stickiest. What makes it so tenacious?

We don't just caricature the elderly as raddled wretches. We also caricature them as cuddly Yodas. The anthropologist Jay Sokolovsky observed that "the ethnographic literature now abounds with this type of dramatic alternation between 'Dear Old Thing' and 'Scheming Hag' metaphors." In 1862, Ralph Waldo Emerson situated the tog-

gle point for these obverse perspectives on the outskirts of town:

Age is becoming in the country. But in the rush and uproar of Broadway, if you look into the faces of the passengers, there is dejection or indignation in the seniors, a certain concealed sense of injury.

Nowadays, this toggle point is situated in film and television, where elderly Native Americans and black men are portrayed as sages (Morgan Freeman has played the leader of each of the three branches of government, as well as God) but other elderly people are nearly invisible. "One of the worst things you can be in Hollywood is old," Kathy Bates, who's sixty-nine, remarked recently. A U.S.C. study of the films nominated for Best Picture between 2014 and 2016 showed that only 11.8 per cent of the actors were sixty or older, although that age group constitutes 18.5 per cent of the U.S. population. The same vanishing act occurs even earlier offscreen: one TV-writer friend of mine was warned when he got to Hollywood, "Don't tell anyone you're thirty, because you still look a little younger." Older writers are sometimes called "grays," as in, "We already have a gray."

In the U.S.C. study, seventy-eight per cent of the films had no older female actors in leading or supporting roles. Actresses have always had a shorter runway; Jimmy Stewart was twice Kim Novak's age in "Vertigo." Economists call this phenomenon, in which older women's looks are judged more harshly than older men's, the "attractiveness penalty." A Web site named GraphJoy analyzed the gender gap in studio films and found that Tom Cruise, for instance, was three years younger than his "Risky Business" co-star Rebecca De Mornay, in 1983, but that lately he's been as much as twenty years older than his female co-stars. Two years ago, Maggie Gyllenhaal, at thirty-seven, was told she was "too old" to play the love interest of a fifty-five-year-old man. As Goldie Hawn's aging-actress character observed in "The First Wives Club," "There are only three ages for women in Hollywood: babe, district attorney, and 'Driving Miss Daisy.'" Last year, California passed a law requiring sites such as IMDb, the movie and TV-show database, to remove people's birth dates upon request.

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that ageism in Hollywood has grown even more rampant because so much content is being viewed on younger-skewing platforms like Netflix and Amazon. Even as the number of broadcast-television viewers has dropped and the average age has risen, to fifty-four—well above the eighteen-to-forty-nine tranche coveted by advertisers—the four programs most watched by eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds last fall were on Netflix. This downward migration will only increase now that Apple and Facebook are rolling out programming of their own.

As with any form of social struggle, age warfare plays out metaphorically onscreen. The first zombie film, George Romero's "Night of the Living Dead" (1968), begins with an aged mother sending her two children into a remote area to visit their father's grave—where a graying zombie attacks and kills the son. A newscaster sombrely explains, "People who have recently died have been returning to life and committing acts of murder." The taboo thrill that lifts "The Walking Dead" and its zombie ilk is watching mayhem unleashed on this lurching, teeming enemy—the "nearly dead" the Nieueans loathe.

This generational combat also surfaced on "The Simpsons," when Montgomery Burns told his assistant, "Look at those delightful children, Smithers—all those healthy organs ripe for the harvesting!" America's most beloved show depicts the elderly in a remarkably raw light. (Yes, it's an animated comedy, but, still.) Homer's father, Abraham (Grampa) Simpson, is a senile galoot, consigned by Homer to a retirement home, prone to telling rambling stories, the butt of every joke. Montgomery Burns is a powerful tycoon given to underhanded schemes. But he, too, is both physically feeble and senile: not so much forgetful as lost in the past. At the post office, he declares, "I'd like to send this letter to the Prussian Consulate in Siam by airmail. Am I too late for the four-thirty autogyro?"

Mash up Grampa Simpson and Montgomery Burns and you get Donald Trump. If, as Michael Kinsley once suggested, Al Gore is an old person's idea of a young person, then Donald Trump is a young person's idea of an old person. He and his aging, billionaire-

laden Cabinet—the oldest since Reagan's; the richest ever—embody the revenge of the old Philadelphians. The senile, reactionary elder who's the target of Silicon Valley's youth bias is a straw man. But that straw man will be hard to dispatch so long as he is running the country.

In the eighties, body-switch movies such as "Like Father, Like Son" and "Vice Versa" were told largely from the kid's point of view: What would it be like to suddenly have all the perks and responsibilities of a grownup? With the cultural power now reversed, the frame is, too: What would it be like to suddenly have all the perks and responsibilities of a millennial?

In the pilot episode of the comedy "Younger," which recently finished its fourth season on TV Land, forty-year-old Liza (Sutton Foster) tries to return to publishing after taking fifteen years off to raise a family. She tells the two snippy young women interviewing her at one publishing house, "Look, I know I've been out of play for a while, but I am a much smarter, more capable person than I was fifteen years ago!" They barrage her with all that she's missed:

FIRST WOMAN: Facebook, Twitter, iPhones—
SECOND WOMAN: iPads, ebooks, YouTube—

FIRST WOMAN: Instagram, Snapchat, Skype—
SECOND WOMAN: Pinterest—
FIRST WOMAN: Bang with Friends.

Liza finally lands a job as an assistant at a house called Empirical—but



only by pretending to be twenty-six. She dyes her hair, buys a flannel wardrobe, and bones up on such cultural touchstones as Katniss Everdeen and One Direction and on lingo like IRL, sorry/not sorry, truffle butter, and spit-roasting (which prove not to be the culinary terms they seem). Yet what makes Liza invaluable at Empirical—what propels the show past its central absurdity—is less her newfound facil-

ity with Krav Maga than her conscientiousness and wisdom. Because she solves everyone's problems, her new friends tacitly agree to ignore the fact that she looks and acts forty.

Liza's anxiety is not about keeping up; it's about acting her supposed age—for instance, she can never quite get the hang of a meme. "Younger" deftly shows how the new ageism expresses itself as a question less of competence than of cultural fit. At one point, a twerpy Silicon Valley billionaire named Bryce becomes an investor in Empirical. He introduces "hot desking," flies in cocktails by drone, and tells Liza, "I'm recommending we cut staff by forty-five per cent next quarter. Not you—just the old people."

The Valley's denizens, despite their sloganizing about worldwide empowerment, secretly believe that tech creates a series of moats in which digital immigrants eventually drown. Cord-nevers look down on cord-cutters, who look down on landliners, who look down on TV-setters, who look down on AOL-addressees like me. (I'm hoping it will eventually seem retro in a cool way, like blacksmithing.) Shortly after Google began, it marked its cultural boundary when Larry Page and Sergey Brin took a meeting with Barry Diller, the old-media tycoon. Brin arrived on Rollerblades, and Page kept staring at his P.D.A. Nettled, Diller asked if he was bored. "I'll always do this," Page said, continuing to stare at his P.D.A. Devices are divisive: they divide us from them.

Can the olds thrive among tech's youngs? Earlier this year, Chip Conley recounted in the *Harvard Business Review* how he became a patriarch at Airbnb at fifty-two. "Many young people can read the face of their iPhone better than the face of the person sitting next to them," he explained. Offering emotional intelligence in return for their digital intelligence, he styled himself as a "modern Elder," "who serves and learns, as both mentor and intern, and relishes being both student and sage."

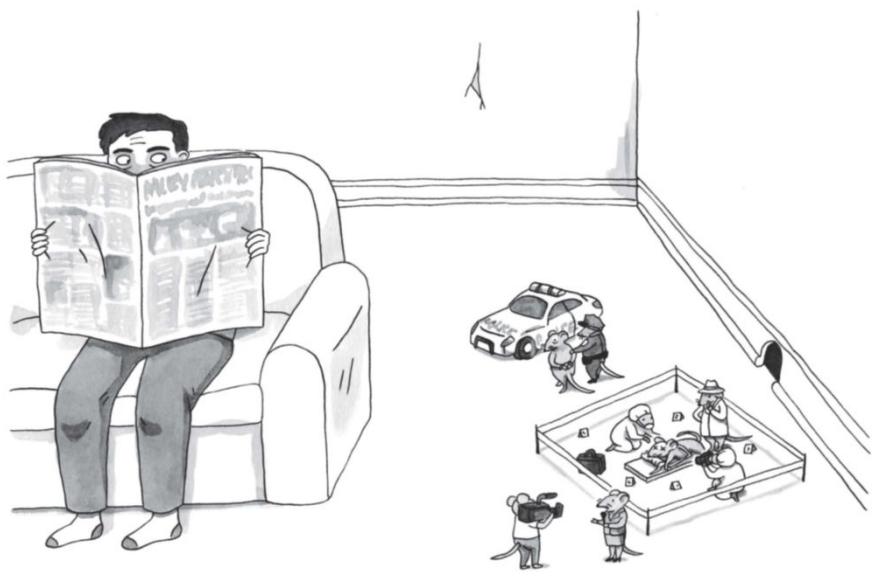
If that sounds goopy but screenplay-ready, it's because it's essentially the plot of "The Intern" (2015), which was written and directed by Nancy Meyers, Hollywood's leading impresario of

later-life fantasies. Robert De Niro plays Ben, a widowed, menschy seventy-year-old who becomes a “senior intern” at a fashion startup run by Anne Hathaway’s character, Jules. Discriminated against in his job interview (“What was your major? Do you remember?”), and initially ill-adapted to this new world—he wears a suit, carries a briefcase, and uses a flip phone and a Casio calculator—Ben soon learns from Jules how to set up his Facebook profile. In return, he saves Jules’s company and her marriage, teaches the twentysomething interns how to man up, and even scores with the company masseuse. There may be snow on the roof, but there’s still a fire in the kitchen.

De Niro, at seventy-four, is too old to play a traditional leading man. But Hollywood has finally found a solution to the technology-hastened problem of stars aging out of the demo: better technology. In “The Irishman,” a forthcoming Martin Scorsese Mob film, the director will pair once more with De Niro, his favorite actor. The twist is that motion-capture technology and C.G.I. will enable the actor to look fifty in the film’s present day—and thirty in its flashback scenes. The time-honored Hollywood cry “Get me a thirty-year-old Robert De Niro!” is being answered by De Niro himself. Can the late Paul Newman be far behind?

The germ of ageism is age—what it brings and what it bodes. “Aging: An Apprenticeship” (Red Notebook Press), a collection of essays edited by Nan Narboe and written by a parliament of mature observers, is rife with gimcrack Zen. “The sound of the ocean is the sound of time passing, the sound of one moment giving way to the next,” one writer intones, and another imparts the axiom “Old age grounds us and from that grounded point of view, we can begin to attend to our inner and outer world in a way that we could not when we were speeding over the surface of things.” Children astonish; priorities change; wisdom accrues; readers nap.

The book’s flintier writers, all on the older end of the spectrum, scorn such piffle. Edward Hoagland observes, “By not expecting much, most of us age with considerable contentment—I’ve been



noticing lately at senior-center lunches and church suppers—and even die with a bit of a smile, as I remember was often the case during a year I worked in a morgue in my twenties.” The poet Donald Hall casts a wintry eye at our circumlocutions for death—pass away, go home, cross over, etc.—and notes that “all euphemisms conceal how we gasp and choke turning blue.”

Timeless writers are ageists nonpareil. Shakespeare referred to life’s final scenes as “second childishness and mere oblivion, / sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.” Philip Larkin, in “The Old Fools,” wrote, “Their looks show that they’re for it: / Ash hair, toad hands, prune face dried into lines.” And Philip Roth, in one of his later novels, wrote that “old age isn’t a battle; old age is a massacre.”

How can we avoid this savage truth? Obviously, by shunning old people. In “Ageism: Stereotyping and Prejudice Against Older Persons,” a collection edited by Todd Nelson (M.I.T. Press), a chapter by the psychologists Jeff Greenberg, Peter Helm, Molly Maxfield, and Jeff Schimel points out that many people preserve themselves from “death thought accessibility” by shunning “senior citizen centers, bingo parlors, nursing homes, golf courses, Florida, and Rolling Stones concerts.” The authors dryly conclude, “Another way to avoid older adults is to keep them out of the workplace.”

Ageism is so hard to root out because it allows us to ward off a paralyzing fact with a pleasing fiction. It lets us fool ourselves, for a time, into believing that we’ll never die. It’s not a paradox that ageists are dissing their future selves—it’s the whole point of the exercise. The cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker codified this insight as “terror management theory.” Becker wrote, “The irony of man’s condition is that the deepest need is to be free of the anxiety of death and annihilation; but it is life itself which awakens it, and so we must shrink from being fully alive.”

If ageism is hardwired, how can we reprogram ourselves? Greenberg and Co. suggest three ways: having the elderly live among us and fostering respect for them; bolstering self-esteem throughout the culture to diminish the terror of aging; and calmly accepting our inevitable deaths. They note, however, that “all these directions for improvement are pie in the sky, particularly when we think of them at a society-wide or global level of change.” So ageism is probably inevitable “in this potentially lonely and horrifying universe.”

That took kind of a dark turn, didn’t it? The only way to eliminate the terror that animates ageism is to eliminate death. The good news, sort of, is that the eager beavers in Silicon Valley are working on that, too. ♦

THE DISRUPTERS

The tech world is notorious for its gender discrimination, but more and more women are pushing for change.

BY SHEELAH KOLHATKAR

One day in 2013, AJ Vandermeyden drove to Tesla's corporate headquarters, in Palo Alto, California, sat down on a bench outside the main entrance, and waited, in the hope of spotting someone who looked like a company employee. Vandermeyden, who was thirty years old, had been working as a pharmaceutical sales representative since shortly after college, but she wanted a different kind of job, in what seemed to her the center of the world—Silicon Valley. She knew that Tesla's ambitious, eccentric co-founder Elon Musk was managing companies devoted to space flight and solar energy, in addition to running Tesla, which was producing electric cars, and she was inspired by his mission. Tesla was growing quickly and offered numerous opportunities for employees to advance. The company, Musk liked to say, was a "meritocracy," and Vandermeyden wanted to be a part of it.

Vandermeyden saw a man wearing a Tesla T-shirt and walked over to introduce herself. After she found out that he worked in sales, the department she wanted to join, she decided to deliver her pitch to him right then. He seemed impressed by her nerve. A few weeks later, she was hired at Tesla as a product specialist in the inside-sales department.

At first, Vandermeyden thrived at Tesla. After almost a year, she was promoted to the job of engineering project coördinator in the paint department. The new position involved working out of Tesla's automotive manufacturing facility in Fremont, California, where hundreds of apple-red robot arms assembled Tesla vehicles on a white factory floor. The whirr of the robots in motion gave the plant the feel of something out of science fiction.

But even in this futuristic environment there was something about life at Tesla that seemed distinctly atavistic—and deeply wrong. Vandermeyden, who worked closely with a group of eight

other employees, soon learned that her salary was lower than that of everyone else in the group, including several new hires who had come to Tesla straight out of college. She was, as it happened, the only woman in the group. Her supervisors, and her supervisors' supervisors, were male, all the way up the chain, it seemed, to Musk himself.

At Tesla, as at many tech companies, gallows humor prevailed among some of the women. There was a sense that the male executives had little understanding of the challenges women faced at the company. One former Tesla employee told me that women made up less than ten per cent of her working group; at one point, there were actually more men named Matt in the group than there were women. This became a source of rueful comedy. One male colleague quipped that they should change the sign reading "Women's Room" to "Matt's Room."

Vandermeyden was a dedicated employee. Before long, a manager from the general-assembly division, who had heard that Vandermeyden had worked for twenty-six hours straight on a particular project, persuaded her to switch to his group. She started wearing steel-toed boots and safety glasses at work. She noticed that sometimes, when female employees walked through certain areas of the plant, male workers whistled, cat-called, and made derogatory comments. Women called it the "predator zone."

In July, 2015, about three months after Vandermeyden joined the team, several of her male colleagues were promoted. Although she was under the impression that she would shortly receive a promotion and a raise, she did not get either, according to court documents. She e-mailed her boss, listing her accomplishments and reminding him that her performance reviews had all been positive. He didn't seem to be taking her concerns seriously, so she started copy-

ing the human-resources department on her e-mails. She scheduled a meeting with her boss's boss, who cancelled it at the last minute, just before he left town for two weeks of vacation.

Finally, two months later, Vandermeyden's managers told her that, in order to be given a raise, she would have to increase the rate of the production line by a hundred per cent within a year. This was an aggressive, probably unrealistic, goal, Vandermeyden felt, and she couldn't help thinking that the company was setting her up for failure, so that it would have cause to fire her. She decided to consult a lawyer. On September 20, 2016, Vandermeyden filed a lawsuit charging Tesla with sex discrimination, retaliation, and other workplace violations.

Since October, when dozens of women went public with accusations of harassment and assault against Harvey Weinstein, the problem of sexual harassment has become a central topic in the national conversation. After a long silence, women have come forward to make allegations against other powerful figures, including the film director James Toback; the head of Amazon Studios, Roy Price; and the political analyst Mark Halperin, with new names being added every few days. Many of the alleged abuses have taken place in the entertainment business, which seems almost uniquely structured to facilitate the exploitation of women, with generations of young actresses trying to climb a career ladder built and controlled by male producers and directors. But the allegations in other areas, from academia and local government to corporate offices, have made clear that the broader American workplace resembles Hollywood more than most people have previously acknowledged.

After the revelations about Weinstein and others—revelations that have included harrowing stories of rape and



Almost half the women who get tech jobs eventually leave the field, more than double the percentage of men who do so.

assault, which Weinstein and others deny—issues like unequal pay and lack of promotion might seem minor by comparison. They aren't, of course, Weinstein-level problems—but they are the problems that create men like Weinstein. It's the imbalance of pay and power that puts men in a position to harass, that gives them unchecked control over the economic lives of women and, as a result, influence over their physical lives. These subtler forms of discrimination, familiar to almost any woman who has held a job, can in fact be especially insidious, since they are easier for companies, and even victims, to dismiss.

This problem is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the technology industry. In 2015, a group of female tech investors and executives conducted a survey of two hundred senior-level women in Silicon Valley. Titled “The Elephant in the Valley,” the study demonstrated how intertwined, and how pervasive, these kinds of discrimination are. Eighty-four per cent of the participants reported that they had been told they were “too aggressive” in the office, sixty-six per cent said that they had been excluded from important events because of their gender, and sixty per cent reported unwanted sexual advances in the workplace. A large majority of those advances came from a superior, and a third of the women said that they'd been worried about their per-

sonal safety. Almost forty per cent said that they didn't report the incidents because they feared retaliation. “Men who demean, degrade or disrespect women have been able to operate with such impunity—not just in Hollywood, but in tech, venture capital, and other spaces where their influence and investment can make or break a career,” Melinda Gates, the co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, told me. “The asymmetry of power is ripe for abuse.”

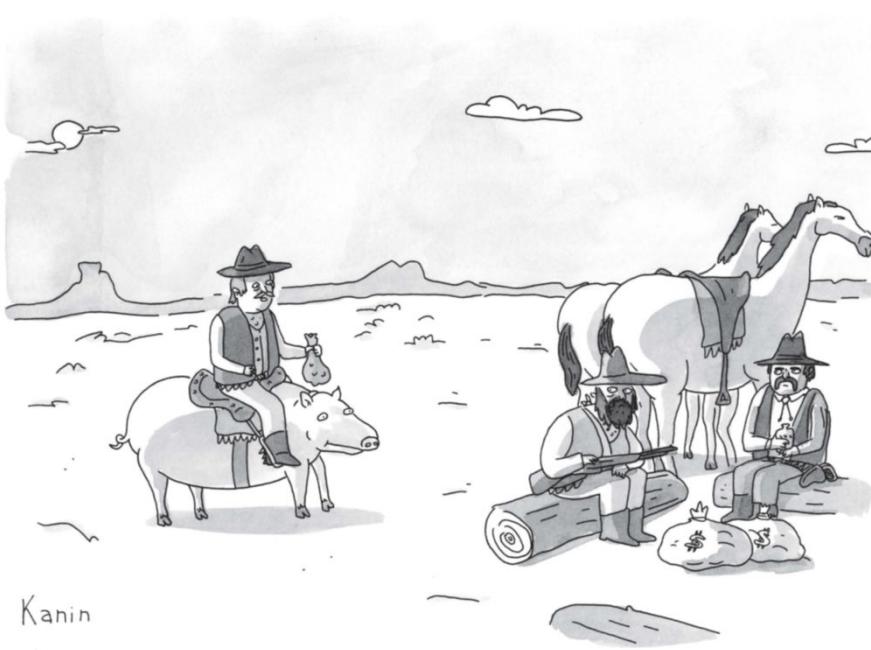
This inhospitable climate is partly a result of tech's hugely imbalanced gender ratio. Studies estimate that women make up only a quarter of employees and eleven per cent of executives in the industry. There have, of course, been other male-dominated fields notorious for similar behavior, including Wall Street and Madison Avenue. But part of what differentiates tech is the industry's self-regard, as a realm of visionary futurists and tireless innovators who are making the world better. Without irony, they tell themselves, “Don't be evil,” parroting Google's code of corporate conduct. In many ways, the tech world *does* represent the future: it has attracted a generation of the most promising engineers, scientists, and coders and paid them handsomely, all but assuring that they will have influence over the nation's ideas and values for years to come. It's deeply troubling, then, that many

of these companies and their C.E.O.s have created an internal culture that, at least when it comes to sexual harassment and gender inequality, resembles the Mad Men era, without the skinny ties and Martini lunches.

Tesla's situation shows how a heavily male-dominated enterprise—even a highly innovative one—can leave women feeling powerless. After Vandermeyden filed her lawsuit, word gradually spread throughout the company. A few months later, an e-mail went out to Tesla's internal group of female employees, inviting them to an event to celebrate International Women's Day.

The event was attended by vice-presidents and senior executives; only one of them was a woman. (There were around forty-five V.P.s at Tesla at the time, two of whom were women, according to a person familiar with the company.) The meeting quickly became tense. Several female engineers spoke about equal pay, and pressed the company to disclose compensation numbers for male and female workers. An employee named Justine announced, “I'll be shortly leaving Tesla because of the environment. As I look at our leaders in the front row, I do see a common theme, which is white male.” Another woman asked about a general staff meeting that had recently taken place with Musk. “He was supposed to talk about it . . . the anti-discrimination and anti-harassment efforts, and he beautifully sidestepped the whole thing,” she said. “He didn't say, ‘Harassment is wrong, discrimination is wrong.’ He brought a bunch of people onstage and said, ‘If you try hard, you will succeed.’” She continued, “How much harder do we have to try to get to where everyone else is up there? So my question is: Is this a priority to Elon? Because if Elon doesn't care it won't happen.”

The moderator of the meeting read comments from female staff members at Tesla's Gigafactory, a facility based in Nevada that produces batteries for Tesla cars. Women there said that they didn't know how to report incidents of harassment; some of them had been directed to an ethics hotline, which seemed to consist of an automated answering system. There had been no evidence, the women said, that anyone ever listened to the complaints left there.



“Sorry we missed the heist—we got sidetracked when Roscoe smelled some truffles.”

The moderator then asked the employees present to raise their hands if they had been catcalled inside the Tesla factory, according to a person who has seen a video of the event. Many hands went up. One employee suggested that a woman be fitted with a GoPro camera and filmed walking through the predator zone so that the male V.P.s could see what women experienced. Several of the male executives voiced their concern. “As a father of a daughter, I do not want to be a part of an organization or create a culture that would limit her,” Jon McNeill, the president of global sales and service, said. “I can’t help that I’m a white dude, but I can help the culture that gets created.” Two of the executives pledged to “eliminate” the predator zone as soon as the town hall was over. Shortly before the meeting ended, Vandermeyden stood up. “It really shouldn’t have to reach this level,” she said, “to start this talk.”

On May 29th, Vandermeyden was heartened by a sign that her complaints, and those of the other women at the company, had finally been heard. According to a person familiar with Vandermeyden’s account, she was asked to meet with Gabrielle Toledano, Tesla’s new chief people officer, so that they could discuss ways the company could become more inclusive of women. At least, that’s what she thought. After Vandermeyden arrived at the meeting, Toledano started by saying, “Let me show you what I’ve been working on.” It was an exit package. “If you sign this,” Toledano allegedly told her, “this lawsuit won’t take over your life.” Toledano added that, if she coöperated, Musk would send out a company-wide e-mail notifying employees of her departure, and Tesla would help her find another job. If she didn’t sign it, however, the company would fire her immediately. Vandermeyden was stunned. She said that she’d done nothing wrong, and that she wouldn’t leave. “Tesla is my life,” she told Toledano. The company terminated her employment. (According to Tesla, the company investigated Vandermeyden’s claims. A spokesperson said, “After we carefully considered the facts on multiple occasions and were absolutely convinced that Ms. Vandermeyden’s claims were illegitimate, we had no choice but to end her employment at Tesla.”)

Vandermeyden’s lawyer, Therese Lawless, who runs the San Francisco firm Lawless & Lawless with her sister, told me that although firing whistle-blowers is generally against the law, it’s a common form of retaliation against women who complain of discrimination. “That’s the message the company sends if you speak up. That’s why people are fearful,” Lawless said. Vandermeyden, she added, was “the sacrificial lamb.”

Sexual harassment wasn’t established as a legal concept until the nineteen-seventies, when two cases brought by African-American women against their male bosses forced the courts to confront the issue. In 1977, Paulette Barnes, a payroll clerk at the Environmental Protection Agency who was fired after refusing her supervisor’s sexual advances, sued the agency. The case went to the Supreme Court, which, in 1986, ruled that sexual harassment was a violation of the Civil Rights Act. Still, the idea didn’t take hold in the public consciousness until Anita Hill testified before Congress, in 1991, about the harassment she had suffered while working for the Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas at the Department of Education and, later, at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Thomas was confirmed, but in the five years after Hill’s testimony the number of sexual-harassment filings more than doubled.

During the nineteen-nineties, major cases were filed against Wall Street banks and brokerage firms, such as Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch, which paid out multimillion-dollar settlements. One branch office of Smith Barney, which was later acquired by Morgan Stanley, allegedly had a “boom boom room” in the basement where male brokers’ birthdays were honored with “strip-o-grams.” Women at the company, meanwhile, were paid lower base salaries and were eight times less likely to be promoted to the position of broker. More than two thousand women joined a lawsuit against the firm, and Smith Barney ultimately paid a hundred and fifty million dollars in settlements. New allegations continue to surface about Wall Street—just last

month, allegations of sexual harassment at Fidelity Investments emerged, and a discrimination case is ongoing against Goldman Sachs—but most major banks and law firms eventually adopted harassment training and other human-resources strategies that eliminated some of the most egregious behavior.

Silicon Valley has, in many ways, replaced Wall Street as the country’s nexus of money and power. Like Wall Street, it has been dominated since its early stages by men. A permissive attitude toward certain behaviors prevailed, and the business model of the tech world exacerbated the problem. Many startups begin as a collection of young entrepreneurs in a room, with no clear rules. They rarely have human-resources departments at first, meaning that there is no one charged with fielding complaints. And the emphasis among venture capitalists on “growth at any cost” often leads investors and board members to ignore workplace problems—as well as more serious violations—so long as a company’s valuation is going up.

The broader public got one of its first glimpses of the particular hostility women face in the tech world in 2014, with Gamergate, when several women in the video-game industry, including the game critic Anita Sarkeesian, were targeted by an angry mob online. Anonymous cyber harassers published the women’s addresses and other personal information and made death threats and rape threats, in what Sarkeesian called “an organized, concerted effort to destroy” their lives. (“I hate ovaries with brains,” one representative comment read.) Some of the women were forced to go into hiding.

The same year, Whitney Wolfe, a co-founder of Tinder, filed a lawsuit after one of her fellow co-founders, whom she had previously dated, allegedly began harassing her. She was twenty-four at the time. The C.E.O., who was the accused harasser’s best friend, pushed her out of the company. In one text message, the ex-boyfriend, apparently fearing that she was seeing someone else, allegedly wrote, “You prefer to social climb middle aged



A DRINKING PROBLEM

One morning last spring, I woke up on my kitchen floor covered in blood. My head ached and my nose was bleeding profusely. This was pretty alarming for me. The last I remembered, I had been sitting at the table reading something on the Internet, when my eyesight started to go fuzzy. What happened next, I had no idea. I decided to call an ambulance. While I waited for it to arrive, I checked the last time I had accessed a Web page: one minute before the ambulance call. It seemed clearly preferable to black out for one minute, as opposed to, say, ten minutes or an hour, and I felt reassured, almost amused. Sixty seconds? That was it? In the emergency room, a doctor asked me in an offhand tone if anyone in my family had ever died suddenly and unexpectedly at a young age. Less cheerful now, I said no. Then he asked if my nose had always been crooked. Keen to circle back to the topic of sudden and unexpected death, I asserted that it had.

An X-ray soon confirmed that my nose was broken, but the rest of the diagnosis took longer. In the following months, I was subjected to heart monitors, blood-pressure gauges, electrocardiograms, and echocardiograms. The doctors were reluctant to divulge what they were looking for, but I had read online that heart conditions causing sudden blackouts could be fatal. The test results came back normal, prompting more tests, which were also normal. In the autumn, I passed out again while getting out of bed, at which point the possibility of my impending death really started to bother me. I lay awake at night listening to my pulse suspiciously, as if surveilling an enemy within.

Finally, another doctor wanted to know if I was drinking enough water.

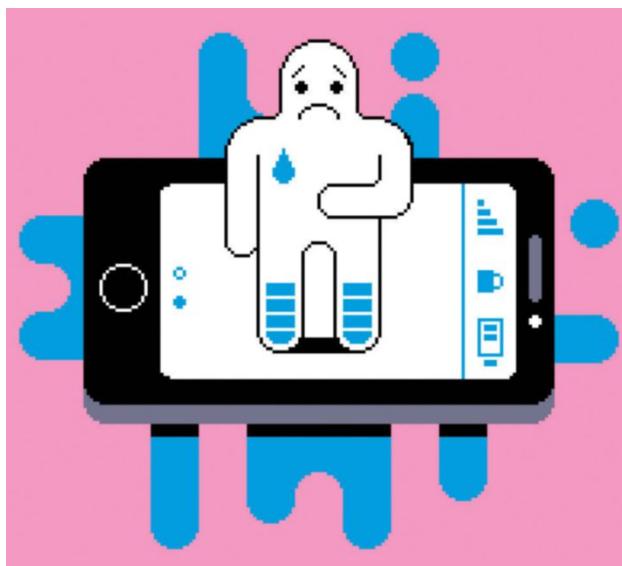
Dehydration could cause my naturally low blood pressure to fall even lower. Low enough for me to faint abruptly? She shrugged. Maybe. It was true I drank very little water, some days none at all. And this benign explanation for my blackouts had a lot of appeal for me: it was nonfatal, and it was something I could fix. I seized it for all it was worth, and arguably more.

Why wasn't I drinking enough water? I just wasn't thirsty, or wasn't

it issued a notification bearing some friendly text like "Take a break with a cup of water!" If I followed this advice, I could enter the amount consumed into the app's interface (in millilitres or fluid ounces, as preferred). A graphic illustrated the water entering a human body—I could even change her hair style to make her look more like me. By nightfall, my body was ideally filled to the brim with bright-blue liquid.

Many apps muscle in on territory that once belonged to conventional business: cabs, for example, or hotels. WaterMinder, by contrast, performs a function more traditionally fulfilled by the human brain—specifically, the hypothalamus, which regulates thirst. Is the hypothalamus ripe for disruption? It would seem so. WaterMinder has thousands of users who consistently report trouble remembering something without which they will literally die. "With such a hectic schedule I forget sometimes," one reviewer writes.

For a few months, I used the app diligently, entering updates every time I made myself a cup of tea or drank a few mouthfuls of juice. I compared my day-to-day progress on a line graph and earned badges when I reached my daily goals. I didn't have any further blackouts, so I stopped recording my intake but continued using the reminder notifications. More than a year has passed since the last time I fainted, and, frankly, the threat of total bodily collapse just isn't the motivator it once was. When I hear the app's chirpy tone emanating from the bottom of my handbag, I am no longer struck with terror. I don't take a break with a cup of water. I have contracted out one of the essential functions of my body to a piece of software, only to find that—like my body—technology is surprisingly easy to ignore. ♦



sure what thirst felt like. The symptoms of dehydration—dry mouth, headaches—were, on the other hand, very familiar. The cultural critic Mark Greif writes that such privations "go with a degree of discernment and class distinction." To be driven by basic impulses implies an existence rooted in primal sensation; the discerning person has accumulated so much culture that no room is left for natural instinct. Was my dehydration a symptom of class aspiration? Was it a response to cultural messages around femininity, a subliminal wishing away of physical desire? Was there just something wrong with my brain?

It was at this point that I discovered an app called WaterMinder. Its function was simple. Every ninety minutes,

Muslim pigs that stand for nothing.” (The lawsuit was settled with no admission of wrongdoing. Wolfe is now the C.E.O. of the networking app Bumble.) A year later, in 2015, a former Facebook employee named Chia Hong sued the company, claiming, among other things, that her boss had repeatedly admonished her for pursuing a career rather than staying home with her kids. (Hong later dropped her suit.)

The issue of discrimination took on new urgency in February of this year, when Susan Fowler, an engineer who had worked at Uber, published a first-person account of her experience at the company on her Web site, describing how she had been propositioned for sex by her manager. Fowler went to the human-resources department with chat logs documenting these transgressions, assuming that the manager would be punished. Instead, she wrote, “upper management” told her that her harasser was a “high performer” and that she would either have to find a job in a different group at Uber or continue working for him. Fowler said that a manager later threatened to fire her for making H.R. complaints. She soon got to know other women at the company who had similar stories—even, she wrote, about the same manager who had harassed her.

Fowler’s post prompted an internal investigation at Uber, led by the former Attorney General Eric Holder. By June, the company had fired twenty employees and disciplined forty others, and, in the wake of the scandal and other company troubles, the C.E.O. and co-founder, Travis Kalanick, was forced to leave. A series of disclosures about other tech companies followed, leading, in the past six months, to the resignations of Justin Caldbeck, who ran the venture firm Binary Capital; Dave McClure, the co-founder of the tech incubator 500 Startups; Robert Scoble, a prominent technology critic; and others. “Obviously I’m outraged, but what I’m not is shocked,” Melinda Gates told me. “The only people who didn’t know what was happening in Silicon Valley were the ones trying very hard not to see what was right in front of them. I don’t think there’s a woman who has worked in tech who hasn’t experienced some form of bias or sexual harassment somewhere along the way—myself included.” Arianna Huffington, the founder

and C.E.O. of Thrive Global added that companies need to reassess their values: “This includes rejecting the cult of the top performer, which tolerates otherwise unacceptable behavior, and instead building a culture that functions as the company’s immune system: surfacing cases of abuse and identifying toxic elements as fast as possible, and then quickly rejecting them.”

During the latest cycle of accusations and apologies, something about the response—in the press and in the public—has felt different. In the past, women were often criticized or made to feel ashamed for speaking openly, while alleged harassers evaded serious scrutiny. More recently, however, some of the accusations have led to swift consequences for the men accused. It may be that allegations against high-profile men such as Bill Cosby, Bill O’Reilly, and Roger Ailes, as well as distress about President Trump’s attitude toward women (Trump has also been accused of multiple sexual assaults), has created a more receptive climate for accusations of harassment and assault. The volume and the vociferousness of some allegations have raised legitimate concerns: What are the checks on accuracy in a social-media environment designed to amplify outrage, and what recourse do the accused have to respond? Still, after years of attempting to resolve harassment and discrimination complaints through ineffectual human-resources departments, or through lawsuits kept quiet by powerful attorneys, women have found a path that produces results: gathering an unimpeachable number of witnesses and going public.

According to women I spoke with in Silicon Valley, more allegations have yet to emerge. One female entrepreneur told me that, in July, “stories were flying around my women’s networks” about men who were later identified as alleged harassers in the press. “What they’ve been publicly named for,” she said, “is the tip of the iceberg.”

Almost anytime the subject of women in Silicon Valley comes up, people return to one particular case: the 2015 trial involving Ellen Pao. Pao was not on trial, but from afar it seemed as if she were. She was a former junior partner with Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, one of the most influential venture-cap-

ital firms in Silicon Valley and an early investor in Amazon and Google. Pao charged the firm with creating an atmosphere of both insidious and overt sexism that stymied her career. She also alleged that it had ignored the behavior of a male partner who had harassed several female colleagues, including Pao. On a business trip, he had shown up at the hotel room of a female colleague in nothing but a bathrobe and propositioned her. Pao had a brief relationship with him before she was married and, after she ended it, she said, the partner retaliated against her. When she and others complained to the company, a senior partner joked that women should be “flattered” by his attention. Kleiner Perkins denied the accusations and vigorously fought them in court.

On a recent evening, I met Pao at the restaurant of the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown San Francisco. It was early, around six, and the restaurant, a favored spot among investors and tech-company founders, was still mostly empty. Pao was dressed conservatively, in khaki pants and a navy T-shirt, and as we talked she sat perfectly upright, her hands folded in her lap. She told me that when she entered the industry, in the late nineteen-nineties, women were vastly outnumbered by men, but the atmosphere was not as aggressive or money-obsessed as it is today. She described many of the early investors and entrepreneurs as “dorks,” united by the fact that they “were all interested in technology.” The environment changed, she said, after the early venture-capital firms started investing in tech. “They happened to all be white guys who had graduated from the same handful of élite colleges,” she said. “And they tended to make investments in new firms started by people they knew, or by people who were like them.” This created a model of hiring and investing that some refer to as the “Gates, Bezos, Andreessen, or Google model,” which Melinda Gates recently characterized as, “white male nerds who’ve dropped out of Harvard or Stanford.” Little has improved over the years: two recent studies found that, in 2016, only seven per cent of the partners in venture-capital firms were women and just two per cent of venture-capital funding went to female founders.

Pao said that the change was reinforced by another event, in 2012: the initial

public offering of Facebook, at well above a hundred billion dollars, which cemented Silicon Valley's reputation as the place to make a quick fortune. Tech companies increasingly began competing with banks and hedge funds for the most ambitious college graduates. "Now you had the frat boys coming in, and that changed the culture," Pao said. "It was just a different vibe. People were talking more about the cool things they had done than the products they were building."

In Pao's recent book, "Reset: My Fight for Inclusion and Lasting Change," she satirizes the over-the-top money culture that resulted. At Kleiner Perkins, "managing partners were always competing for more—more board seats, more houses, more land, and, always, more jets," she writes. They coveted professional basketball teams, Hollywood movie-producer credits, and "private-jet escape routes to New Zealand" (in case of rising water levels, plague, or a proletarian revolt). In this environment, Pao argues, there was little awareness of the ways in which the industry's gatekeepers had made it difficult, or even impossible, for outsiders to break in. "It's just this reinforcing cycle, and everyone has built a culture around it. How do you break that cycle, in a way that's meaningful?" Pao said. "Adding a few women to the mix is not going to fix this."

Before and after the trial against Kleiner Perkins, Pao was the focus, along with her husband, of negative media coverage, much of which at least superficially left the impression that Pao was a poor performer and a disgruntled former employee pursuing a vendetta. In fact, the depiction of Kleiner Perkins's workplace—including the subtly sexist and racist jokes, the negative way that ambitious women were portrayed, the practice of steering female employees toward more administrative roles and male colleagues toward high-profile, profit-driven work—would have been familiar to many professional women. When she launched the case against Kleiner Perkins, Pao told me, she "just wanted to make sure that they wouldn't do it again." Over time, though, her goals shifted. "When I saw the press, and it was so accepting of the status quo, it became more about, Hey, no one should do this." Other women in the industry felt the same way. On the Web site Recode, Susan Decker,

the former president of Yahoo, wrote that she pulled her daughters out of school to witness the closing arguments, which she hoped would be a "watershed moment" for women in technology.

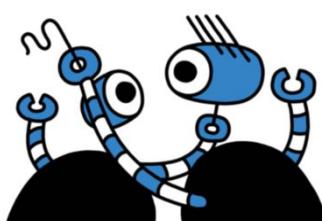
Pao lost the case. But despite the result, the trial brought the subject out into the open. In *Fortune*, Anita Hill wrote, "Hearing the ruminations on Ellen Pao's failed gender discrimination suit against her former employer . . . the famous words of Justice Louis Brandeis come to mind. 'Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.' In Pao's case, the sunlight is beginning to do its work." Other women in the industry wrote to Pao, to thank her and to share their stories. During the trial, two women filed gender-bias suits of their own, against Facebook and Twitter. Commentators began speaking of the "Pao effect."

Still, Pao's experience illustrates why it is relatively rare for women to file harassment suits. "You wouldn't wish it on your worst enemy—it's a horrible experience," Pao told me. "It's draining, emotionally and financially." Joelle Emerson, a women's-rights lawyer who runs Paradigm Strategy, Inc., which advises companies on diversity, told me that there's a particular reluctance to sue "among professional women who are really career-driven. They know all the potential negative consequences that can result." Pao, who was the interim C.E.O. of Reddit at the time of the trial, was subjected to criticism and harassment online, in part because of choices that were unpopular

firms, whereby disputes such as harassment must be settled through arbitration rather than litigated in federal court. The arbitration process is both shielded from public scrutiny and generally considered more favorable to employers. Tech companies have also embraced the use of employee confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements. Ostensibly, such agreements exist to protect company secrets, but when they are too broad they prevent employees from comparing salaries or talking publicly about their experiences at work. One former Google employee told me, "I wish we could have a twenty-four-hour moratorium on N.D.A.s, because that day would rock the tech industry."

Therese Lawless, who, in addition to representing AJ Vandermeyden, was one of the lawyers who represented Pao, told me that these strategies to limit the rights of employees to air grievances are especially harmful to women and minorities. "That's how you keep out unions," she said. "And that's how you silence women and keep them from talking about their wages." She told me that these provisions have led many tech companies to think that they can do whatever they want in the workplace. She added, "All of the gains that have been made by the labor movement over the years are being slowly chipped away under this guise of 'We're in hip Northern California, and everything we do is so cool.'"

It is not a coincidence that the earliest gender-discrimination cases, as well as many of the newer cases against tech companies, were brought by women of color. The problem of racial disparity is often inextricably tied to gender disparity, and minority women may be doubly targeted, with both racism and sexism. Freida Kapor Klein, a founding partner at the social-impact investment firm Kapor Capital and a co-founder of Project Include, which promotes inclusiveness in Silicon Valley, told me that both of these problems are bound up with the industry's lofty self-conception. "The core of why this has been such a problem for tech is that tech has deluded itself, as a sector, into believing that its practices are meritocratic," she said. "So if you believe that you're a meritocracy, and that your meritocracy results in you being disproportionately



with some Reddit users, including her decision to ban revenge porn. Four months after the Kleiner Perkins verdict, she resigned.

Meanwhile, the tech industry continues to erect barriers to legal action. A recent study by the law firm Carlton Fields Jorden Burt found that in recent years in Silicon Valley there has been an enormous increase in the use of arbitration clauses in employee contracts—a legal strategy pioneered by Wall Street

and overwhelmingly white and Asian male, then you believe that any tinkering with how you recruit, assign, promote, and retain people is somehow, quote-unquote, lowering the bar." She added that tech has been unwilling to acknowledge that it is "unintentionally a rigged system."

In 2014, Google, after years of public pressure to release its diversity data, finally disclosed the gender and racial makeup of its workforce. In technical roles, women accounted for just seventeen per cent of the company's employees. Hispanics made up two per cent and African-Americans one per cent. (In the company's third diversity report, released in June, those percentages had improved slightly, to twenty, three, and one per cent, respectively.) Erica Joy Baker, a senior engineering manager at Patreon, a membership platform for artists, worked at Google between 2006 and 2015 and has spoken publicly about the need for diversity. Baker, who is African-American, told me that during her time there, the vast majority of opportunities went to employees who fit a particular mold. "Throughout my career at Google, there was the standard thing: 'I know you want to work on this thing, but we're going to let a white dude work on it. Sorry, we're going to let a white dude go ahead of you,'" Baker said. "That was really frustrating."

At one point, Baker said, she was working as an engineer in a group that provided technical support to Google's top executives. She told me about a day, in 2008 or 2009, when her teammate, a man named Frank, was out of the office and she was sitting in the executive-tech-support room on her own. Google's C.E.O., Eric Schmidt, walked into the room in need of help, and asked where Frank was. "He's not here, is there something I can help you with?" Baker recalled telling him. She said that Schmidt asked her to leave Frank a message describing his technical issue, which she was more than qualified to address. "I said, 'Oh, I can take care of that for you.' And he said, 'Oh, you're not his assistant?'" Baker recalled. Schmidt then suggested she put a sign on the door explaining her role, even though other offices didn't have such signs. She added that senior Google employees often confused her with the sole other black



woman in a technical job on her team. "We used to jokingly call ourselves the Twins, even though we don't look anything alike," Baker said. Her impression was that many of her colleagues couldn't "distinguish two completely different black women from each other." (Google did not respond to requests for comment about the incident.)

In 2014, Baker's experiences prompted her, along with co-workers, to create a document at Google called the Salary Spreadsheet, on which employees could enter their salary and bonus information. When the spreadsheet started, it was maintained on a company server, but eventually the *Times* obtained a copy and, in September, reported that the data showed that women were being paid less than their male counterparts at five of the six job levels the database covered. (Google called the *Times* analysis "extremely flawed," and noted that it drew from a very small sample size.)

Earlier this year, the Department of Labor conducted an initial audit of Google's pay practices, and found, according to court testimony in April, "systemic compensation disparities against women pretty much across the entire workforce," showing, one official has said, six to seven standard deviations between pay for men

and women in nearly every job category. Google, however, repeatedly refused to hand over fuller pay data to the Labor Department, and, after the government sued to obtain it, fought the case in court for months, arguing that the demands constituted unreasonable search and seizure. In a statement, the company said that its own internal analysis had found no imbalance. A judge ordered the company to hand over additional data in July.

In September, three women brought a class-action lawsuit on behalf of all female Google employees, accusing the company of "segregating" women into lower-paying jobs and of paying them less than their male counterparts for "substantially similar work." (Google said in a statement that it disagrees with the central allegations.) Similar class-action gender-discrimination suits are pending against Twitter, Microsoft, and Uber. In 2016, Qualcomm settled its own suit before it was even filed, for almost twenty million dollars. This year, the Labor Department also filed a discrimination suit against Oracle, which is ongoing.

"I think that every major technology company has to be concerned right now. We've reached a tipping point," Kelly Dermody, a lawyer who is working on the cases against Microsoft and Google,

told me. "Women are tired of not being taken seriously, and attending ridiculous seminars on how women can get ahead. How about we work on the men? It's been a long time of talking about skill-building for women, but men aren't making room, and they're treating women in a sexualized way and not paying them fairly. And you can never catch up."

Almost half the women who go into technology eventually leave the field, more than double the percentage of men who depart. The turnover of women and minorities, according to a 2017 study on "tech leavers," costs Silicon Valley more than sixteen billion dollars each year. The same study showed that, in almost sixty per cent of cases, employees who had been sexually harassed said that the harassment contributed to their decision to change professions. The primary differences

between the experiences of employees who left and those who remained, according to another study, had to do with negative perceptions of the workplace environment, unfairness, and lack of opportunity.

The prospect of this kind of thwarted trajectory can be especially dispiriting to a generation of women who, like Kathryn Minshew, the founder of the career Web site the Muse, "grew up with parents who convinced me I could do anything I put my mind to." Minshew told me that for years she scoffed at the idea that she was at a professional disadvantage as a woman. When McKinsey & Company, the consulting firm that was her first employer, came to Duke to recruit graduating students, the company hosted a women-only lunch, and at the time Minshew thought that such an event seemed patronizing and unnecessary. She soon came to think

otherwise. "I was naïve," she said. "I entered the workforce and was very quickly hit with the reality that women are often still perceived differently from men."

At McKinsey, Minshew said, it was clear that, to some of the firm's clients, "as a very young female analyst I was there to get the coffee, and the young men were assumed to be the math geniuses or the tech whizzes." In 2011, she co-founded the Muse, which was initially aimed at early-career women looking for advice on everything from asking for raises to dealing with difficult bosses. The conventional wisdom about such questions was based on what had worked for men, Minshew felt, and many of the rules that applied to men were not the same as those that applied to women.

Soon Minshew and her co-founders began to raise money for the company, something that many of their male classmates who were entrepreneurs seemed to be doing with relative ease. "That was a very defining moment for me, in terms of encounters with sexism and gender bias in tech," she said. "It really existed on a spectrum, from overt sexual passes and comments to very dismissive or patronizing attitudes toward me because of my gender." Minshew told me about one meeting that, at the last minute, an investor's assistant moved to his hotel bar. Minshew and the investor ordered drinks and talked about her business plan. "We went to sit, and the next thing I knew he was so close to me," Minshew said. She found herself wedged between the end of a sofa and the man's body as he leaned into her. It was clear that she was no longer at a pitch meeting, and she left, feeling shaken. "It's funny, because I think if you had asked me, 'What would you do in that situation?,' I would have said that I would have been so much more badass and assertive," she said. "But then it happened . . ."

Many women in Silicon Valley have reported some version of this encounter. Aileen Lee, a founder of the venture-capital firm Cowboy Ventures, told me that she'd witnessed behavior that ranged from biased to illegal, and had faced racism, sexism, and harassment. "Like most women, I've experienced things across the spectrum," she said. "I've had a general partner at another firm—who had earlier in the day talked to me about how much I'd like his wife and how she was



a smart working woman and how we should all have dinner together with their kids—call me at three in the morning while we were on a business trip and ask if he could come to my room.”

Minszew told me that the reaction from friends in the industry made her feel that it was pointless to speak up about the incident. “When I told several male entrepreneurs the next day, the general attitude was, ‘Well, what do you expect? You’re a pretty girl and of course these guys are all going to try to get in your pants.’” She said that the response felt “doubly demoralizing.”

She also realized that very few investors had dealt with female founders before, and that some struggled with how to comport themselves. Although she had many positive meetings, she also told me that male investors often couldn’t conceive of a business that catered to women who worked full-time. They would ask multiple times whether her customer base would disappear once women entered their thirties and started having children. Many of the investors’ wives didn’t work, which they cited as proof that this theory was correct. Frequently, Minszew recalled, investors spoke to her as if “they thought it was so cute that I was trying to play with the boys, like I was a circus animal.” She was also repeatedly told that she should seek funding from Golden Seeds, a venture-capital firm that exclusively funds women-led companies.

Minszew persisted, and, in 2012, the Muse became one of the first all-female teams admitted to the prestigious startup accelerator Y Combinator. The achievement laid bare how much of her earlier mistreatment was a result of the industry’s power dynamic. Minszew told me that as soon as the company established itself, the predatory behavior from male investors stopped. “I think the stakes for making an inappropriate comment became much higher,” she said.

In some cases, sexual harassment allegations are a sign of even more serious violations at a company. Robert Ottinger, Jr., an employment attorney who previously worked at the New York attorney general’s office, is pursuing one such case. Ottinger, who is slight and boyish and speaks in a near-mumble, now runs his own practice out of San

Francisco, and sometimes finds himself representing Silicon Valley employees. He told me that his interest in defending workers against abuse came from his own experiences. “I grew up with a really authoritarian stepfather—he was a real jerk,” he said. “So I know what it’s like to live under a power-monger kind of person.” Noting the recent harassment and assault stories that have dominated the press, he said, “We’re only hearing about the movie stars, but there are so many people who aren’t that high profile, and no one cares about them. It’s kind of showing us that these laws don’t really work. They’re not really helping women that much. Even though it’s illegal, it’s still happening.”

One day last June, Ottinger received a call from Brandon Charles, a thirty-three-year-old operations manager living in nearby Santa Rosa. Charles had started working at a firm called Social Finance, or SoFi, a few months earlier. SoFi, which was co-founded by a charismatic former trader named Mike Cagney, was a startup with a unique business model—it pooled money from investors and used those funds to make or refinance student and other kinds of loans—and the company had raised more than two billion dollars from investors such as Softbank and Baseline Ventures. Charles’s job included managing a team of five people and, he said, the very first time that he sat down with them he could tell something was amiss. Toward the end of the meeting, he asked them to be candid and let him know if there were problems within the company that he could help address. “When I said that, the way they reacted—it was almost like they were victims of war,” Charles told me. “They literally looked at me, and one said, ‘Why should we trust you?’”

Over the next few weeks, a range of allegations emerged. It turned out that an employee was convinced that managers in another office were manipulating loan applications in order to pad their own quarterly bonuses. The atmosphere of the office was overly sexualized: male executives made lewd comments to female employees, and employees, including managers and their subordinates, were having sex in parked cars and in bathroom stalls. One manager allegedly joked about dipping “his pen in the com-

pany inkwell,” according to court documents. He also allegedly asked one of his female subordinates to fetch him K-Y Jelly, and talked to another about anal sex. SoFi denies these claims.

To Charles, upper management had to have known about the alleged activities, including the bathroom shenanigans, but they didn’t seem to care. Cagney had wanted to create a “fun” atmosphere at SoFi, of the sort he’d seen at other tech companies, and the office perks included kegs of beer and a regular margarita cart, according to a former employee. In fact, Charles soon learned, Cagney and the company C.F.O., Nino Fanlo—a Wall Street veteran who had formerly worked at Goldman Sachs and at the private-equity firm KKR—also had reputations for unprofessional behavior. Female colleagues told one another to “watch out,” and not to get “cornered” by Fanlo. (Fanlo told me that this characterization was inaccurate. “I never hit on anyone there, ever,” he said.)

Cagney was married and had two children. His wife also worked at SoFi, as the chief technology officer. Nonetheless, several former employees of SoFi told me that he seemed to be “dating” several women in the office at various points. He liked to host wine-tasting parties at his house, and a former employee who attended one said that Cagney spent much of the evening boasting about his sexual conquests and visits to strip clubs. (Cagney denies that he discussed these topics.) In 2012, SoFi paid a settlement to an executive assistant named Laura Munoz, who had accused Cagney of harassing her, according to two people who heard about the agreement. One former SoFi employee who worked with Munoz said that she complained about receiving a stream of sexually explicit text messages from Cagney, and would frequently cry in the office. According to two former employees, one of Munoz’s male colleagues tried to report the harassment to the company’s board of directors. Afterward, he was demoted, and eventually left the company. (The SoFi board has said in a statement regarding the Munoz case that there was “no allegation or evidence of a romantic or sexual relationship between Mr. Cagney and the employee.”)

Charles said that he wrote a memo

AWAY GAMES

In the early nineteen-eighties, my uncle Lucho had a Sunday-night soccer radio show in a small town several hours south of Lima, Peru. On game days, he would take a bus up to the city with a tape recorder, and when he didn't have enough money for a ticket he would go to my cousins' house and watch the match on their color television. He would insist on having the volume off while he narrated the plays into his recorder, turning the sound up occasionally to get some authentic stadium ambience. At halftime, he would interview my cousins, as if they were fans he'd found in the stands, and they would play along, breathlessly recounting the game's most exciting moments, predicting victory for whichever team they were supposed to be supporting. Lucho would even pretend to be in the booth with the announcers, his tape recorder pressed up against the television speaker, pulling it away to splice in his commentary with theirs. When the game was over, Lucho would head to his radio station and play the unedited tape over the air. My cousins tell me that participating in these dramatizations was the best way to watch the game. You felt as though you were a part of something.

My own soccer upbringing was a little different. My family moved to Birmingham, Alabama, when I was three. The suburban teams of my childhood were filled with castoffs from more popular sports—kids too small to play football, too distractible for baseball. We practiced twice a week, competing for patches in certain skill areas—juggling, chipping, dribbling. Our mothers ironed the patches onto our jerseys as if we were Boy Scouts.

Compared with my teammates, I considered myself a sophisticate because of my heritage. The country of

my birth was also my nickname—"Pass it, Peru!"—which surely began as bullying but eventually became a source of pride. I'd been to a stadium in Lima exactly once, an experience I remembered more for its air of danger—fireworks and chanting and scores of shirtless fans—than for anything that happened on the field. Still, I considered the sport a kind of inheritance, something that my American friends were merely borrowing. Most of my teammates had

which I send to other friends. Until I intervened, my twelve-year-old was getting an alert on his phone every time a goal was scored in the top dozen professional leagues. I find it difficult to explain to him what it was like to be a soccer fan in the U.S. when I was his age, when love for the sport was mediated by scarcity.

A few weeks ago, Peru played Colombia in a World Cup qualifier, and we streamed the game directly to our

television via YouTube. My wife is Colombian, and her sister was there, too. We were all in the same room, before the same screen, but we weren't actually watching the same game. They streamed the Colombian TV commentary through their earbuds, imagining that they were in Bogotá; I watched with my phone in hand, anxiously WhatsAppping my cousins in Lima, a friend at the stadium, and another one in Maine. When the unease was too great, I tweeted out my nervousness and heard back from dozens of Peruvians in similar states of anguish all over the world.

At one point, with Peru down a goal and nearly out of the World Cup, my wife, moved by pity, brought me a glass of rum. Other than that, we hardly spoke. Only when the game had ended, in a draw that served both teams, did we return to a kind of normalcy.

This is how we experience the world's most popular sport today. Watching a game with Twitter is like watching in a crowded bar. Watching with WhatsApp is like watching in someone's living room. Watching with both is a kind of meditation, a sense of being in many places at once—or, more to the point, in some other realm altogether, outside time and geography, connected to an event but floating above it, near it, holding hands with strangers and loved ones who are doing the same thing. ♦



never seen adults play the sport—not in person, not on television. It was a child's game. Beyond the hallowed ritual of the halftime orange slice, we had no soccer culture to speak of.

When I was eight, the coach of my neighborhood team decided to change that. He started a library, loaning out VHS tapes of European games. I remember how the tapes spilled from an old duffelbag, each one labelled with a ballpoint pen. He must have tired of watching us race across the field in a pack. He wanted us to watch at least one game a week, he said. It was homework.

I'm forty years old now, and though I still play, I mostly watch. On any given weekend, I have the pick of the world's best teams, on screens of all sizes. Friends send me links to highlights,

outlining the fraud allegations and sent it to his superiors at SoFi. He felt strongly that he was doing the right thing. Still, he said, "I was sure I was going to get fired." At first, it appeared that the company was taking his allegations seriously. During a meeting in early April, a vice-president of human resources told Charles that the allegations about the manipulation of loans to increase manager bonuses had proved to be true. Charles filed another report with H.R. a month later, detailing sexual harassment at the company. In June, he received a message from human resources requesting a meeting. Charles told me that he had already packed his desk by the time he arrived at the appointment. The director of human resources told Charles that his sexual-harassment allegations had been found to be without merit and that the company was terminating his employment, effective immediately. (SoFi claims that they did not receive a memo from Charles and that he was never told the fraud allegations had proved to be true.)

On August 14th, Charles, with Robert Ottinger's help, filed a lawsuit against SoFi alleging retaliation. Ottinger told me that, over the summer, word spread that he was preparing the lawsuit, and he became a sort of clearinghouse for unhappy SoFi employees. The day that Charles filed his suit, Ottinger filed another case on behalf of five other former SoFi employees alleging labor-law abuses, including failure to pay appropriate overtime, and seeking class-action status. On September 11th, after sexual harassment allegations appeared in the press, SoFi announced that Cagney was stepping down as C.E.O. On September 21st, another Ottinger client, a former SoFi loan reviewer named Yulia Zamora, filed a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment.

In some ways, the SoFi scandal seems like a bizarre mishmash of offenses, with sexual harassment and abuse intertwined with allegations of financial fraud and other misdeeds. But Valerie Aurora, the principal consultant at Frame Shift Consulting, a diversity-and-inclusion consultancy, and Leigh Honeywell, a technology fellow at the A.C.L.U., argue that this situation is actually fairly typical, and that sexual harassment is a tipoff that other misconduct may be taking place at a com-

pany. They've formulated their argument as "The Al Capone Theory of Sexual Harassment," which they posted online last summer. Capone was a Prohibition-era gangster whom federal authorities spent years trying to prosecute for serious crimes, including smuggling and murder. Eventually, they arrested him for a completely different offense—tax evasion. Aurora and Honeywell developed their theory after they noticed a pattern in the tech world that mirrored the Al Capone case: predatory sexual behavior was often accompanied by other infractions. "People who engage in sexual harassment or assault are also likely to steal, plagiarize, embezzle, engage in overt racism, or otherwise harm their business," the pair wrote. "All of these behaviors are the actions of someone who feels entitled to other people's property—regardless of whether it's someone else's ideas, work, money, or body. Another common factor was the desire to dominate and control other people."

Aurora and Honeywell provided examples, including that of Mark Hurd, a former C.E.O. of Hewlett-Packard, who was accused of sexual harassment but resigned for lying on expense reports (an internal investigation at Hewlett-Packard found "no violation" of the company's "sexual harassment policy"). In Aurora and Honeywell's view, it's no coincidence that federal prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation into Harvey Weinstein's charity transactions even as he is being investigated on rape charges. When I asked Aurora why she thought this connection existed, she said, "There are several reasons, but the most interesting one is entitlement. The same personality flaw says, 'I am more important than all other people.'" She added, "It's really helpful to have Donald Trump as President—we now all know how narcissists behave."

As in other fields, women in tech have always had their own information networks, both formal and informal, on and offline, to exchange career advice and other intelligence. An app called Blind gives employees from more than a hundred companies, including Uber, Twitter, Google, and Facebook, a platform to talk anonymously

about their workplaces. (According to the *Times*, after Susan Fowler posted her piece about Uber, the ride-sharing company's employees logged into Blind "more than 10 times on average each day—spending more than 3.5 hours—to discuss the scandal.") Over the summer, Y Combinator sent a form to more than three thousand entrepreneurs, asking them to report sexual harassment by venture capitalists and promising to compile a blacklist. As the outpouring on social media over the past months indicates, the Internet has become the new whisper network, and the claims are not being whispered anymore.

Minschew, the founder of the Muse, told me she was hopeful that the public conversation about women in tech would help reshape the culture. "For so many years, it felt like talking about it was the kiss of death for your career," she said. "This summer is the first time I've ever seen consequences for bad behavior. And that is empowering. Before, it seemed like nobody will fund you, and nothing will change." Therese Lawless said that her law firm had been flooded with calls from women. "I do hope maybe the norms are changing, and people are saying, 'We can't just keep sweeping it under the carpet,'" she said. "It's women saying, 'I'm going to come forward and I'm going to talk about this.'"

Other women I interviewed were less optimistic. One former Tesla employee told me that she had learned early in her career to roll her eyes and laugh off incidents of sexism and harassment, but that today she would handle things differently. "In this climate, I definitely would have said something," she told me. "Especially after the election. That was so deeply disappointing, and I made a rule to myself that I am going to speak up, no matter what. I'm not going to sit and try not to rock the boat anymore." But she was dismayed by what she saw as the deeply ingrained hypocrisy of the tech world. "What I find specifically disturbing," she said, "is that this is an industry that is supposed to be the future. They are so dedicated to making things different, and better. But this is a huge problem that they're not addressing and not really trying to change." She paused. "I don't think they're capable of changing, honestly." ♦

GOING NEGATIVE

Can carbon-dioxide removal save the world?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

Carbon Engineering, a company owned in part by Bill Gates, has its headquarters on a spit of land that juts into Howe Sound, an hour north of Vancouver. Until recently, the land was a toxic-waste site, and the company's equipment occupies a long, barnlike building that, for many years, was used to process contaminated water. The offices, inherited from the business that poisoned the site, provide a spectacular view of Mt. Garibaldi, which rises to a snow-covered point, and of the Chief, a granite monolith that's British Columbia's answer to El Capitan. To protect the spit against rising sea levels, the local government is planning to cover it with a layer of fill six feet deep. When that's done, it's hoping to sell the site for luxury condos.

Adrian Corless, Carbon Engineering's chief executive, who is fifty-one, is a compact man with dark hair, a square jaw, and a concerned expression. "Do you wear contacts?" he asked, as we were suiting up to enter the barnlike building. If so, I'd have to take extra precautions, because some of the chemicals used in the building could cause the lenses to liquefy and fuse to my eyes.

Inside, pipes snaked along the walls and overhead. The thrum of machinery made it hard to hear. In one corner, what looked like oversized beach bags were filled with what looked like white sand. This, Corless explained over the noise, was limestone—pellets of pure calcium carbonate.

Corless and his team are engaged in a project that falls somewhere between toxic-waste cleanup and alchemy. They've devised a process that allows them, in effect, to suck carbon dioxide out of the air. Every day at the plant, roughly a ton of CO₂ that had previously floated over Mt. Garibaldi or the Chief is converted into

calcium carbonate. The pellets are subsequently heated, and the gas is forced off, to be stored in cannisters. The calcium can then be recovered, and the process run through all over again.

"If we're successful at building a business around carbon removal, these are trillion-dollar markets," Corless told me.

This past April, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached a record four hundred and ten parts per million. The amount of CO₂ in the air now is probably greater than it's been at any time since the mid-Pliocene, three and a half million years ago, when there was a lot less ice at the poles and sea levels were sixty feet higher. This year's record will be surpassed next year, and next year's the year after that. Even if every country fulfills the pledges made in the Paris climate accord—and the United States has said that it doesn't intend to—carbon dioxide could soon reach levels that, it's widely agreed, will lead to catastrophe, assuming it hasn't already done so.

Carbon-dioxide removal is, potentially, a trillion-dollar enterprise because it offers a way not just to slow the rise in CO₂ but to reverse it. The process is sometimes referred to as "negative emissions": instead of adding carbon to the air, it subtracts it. Carbon-removal plants could be built anywhere, or everywhere. Construct enough of them and, in theory at least, CO₂ emissions could continue unabated and still we could avert calamity. Depending on how you look at things, the technology represents either the ultimate insurance policy or the ultimate moral hazard.

Carbon Engineering is one of a half-dozen companies vying to prove that carbon removal is feasible. Others include Global Thermostat, which is based in New York, and

Climeworks, based near Zurich. Most of these owe their origins to the ideas of a physicist named Klaus Lackner, who now works at Arizona State University, in Tempe, so on my way home from British Columbia I took a detour to visit him. It was July, and on the day I arrived the temperature in the city reached a hundred and twelve degrees. When I got to my hotel, one of the first things I noticed was a dead starling lying, feet up, in the parking lot. I wondered if it had died from heat exhaustion.

Lackner, who is sixty-five, grew up in Germany. He is tall and lanky, with a fringe of gray hair and a prominent forehead. I met him in his office at an institute he runs, the Center for Negative Carbon Emissions. The office was bare, except for a few *New Yorker* cartoons on the theme of nerd-dom, which, Lackner told me, his wife had cut out for him. In one, a couple of scientists stand in front of an enormous whiteboard covered in equations. "The math is right," one of them says. "It's just in poor taste."

In the late nineteen-seventies, Lackner moved from Germany to California to study with George Zweig, one of the discoverers of quarks. A few years later, he got a job at Los Alamos National Laboratory. There, he worked on fusion. "Some of the work was classified," he said, "some of it not."

Fusion is the process that powers the stars and, closer to home, thermonuclear bombs. When Lackner was at Los Alamos, it was being touted as a solution to the world's energy problem; if fusion could be harnessed, it could generate vast amounts of carbon-free power using isotopes of hydrogen. Lackner became convinced that a fusion reactor was, at a minimum, decades away. (Decades later, it's generally agreed that a workable reactor



Carbon-dioxide removal could be a trillion-dollar enterprise, because it not only slows the rise in CO₂ but reverses it.

is still decades away.) Meanwhile, the globe's growing population would demand more and more energy, and this demand would be met, for the most part, with fossil fuels.

"I realized, probably earlier than most, that the claims of the demise of fossil fuels were greatly exaggerated," Lackner told me. (In fact, fossil fuels currently provide about eighty per cent of the world's energy. Proportionally, this figure hasn't changed much since the mid-eighties, but, because global energy use has nearly doubled, the amount of coal, oil, and natural gas being burned today is almost two times greater.)

One evening in the early nineties, Lackner was having a beer with a friend, Christopher Wendt, also a physicist. The two got to wondering why, as Lackner put it to me, "nobody's doing these really crazy, big things anymore." This led to more questions and more conversations (and possibly more beers).

Eventually, the two produced an equation-dense paper in which they argued that self-replicating machines could solve the world's energy problem and, more or less at the same time, clean up the mess humans have made by burning fossil fuels. The machines would be powered by solar panels, and as they multiplied they'd produce more solar panels, which they'd assemble using elements, like silicon and aluminum, extracted from ordinary dirt. The expanding collection of panels would produce ever more power, at a rate that would increase exponentially. An array covering three hundred and eighty-six thousand square miles—an area larger than Nigeria but, as Lackner and Wendt noted, "smaller than many deserts"—could supply all the world's electricity many times over.

This same array could be put to use scrubbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. According to Lackner and Wendt, the power generated by a Nigeria-size solar farm would be enough to remove all the CO₂ emitted by humans up to that point within five years. Ideally, the CO₂ would be converted to rock, similar to the white sand produced by Carbon Engineering; enough would be created to cover Venezuela in a layer a foot and a half

REPENTANCE

After Vermeer's "Maid Asleep"

To make it right Vermeer painted then painted over
this scene a woman alone at a table the cloth pushed back
rough folds at the edge as if someone had risen
in haste abandoning the chair beside her a wineglass
nearly empty just in her reach Though she's been called
idle and drunken a woman drowsing you might see
in her gesture melancholia Eyelids drawn
she rests her head in her hand Beyond her a still-life
white jug bowl of fruit a goblet overturned Before this
a man stood in the doorway a dog lay on the floor
Perhaps to exchange loyalty for betrayal
Vermeer erased the dog and made of the man
a mirror framed by the open door *Pentimento*
the word for a painter's change of heart revision
on canvas means the same as remorse after sin

deep. (Where this rock would go the two did not specify.)

Lackner let the idea of the self-replicating machine slide, but he became more and more intrigued by carbon-dioxide removal, particularly by what's become known as "direct air capture."

"Sometimes by thinking through this extreme end point you learn a lot," he said. He began giving talks and writing papers on the subject. Some scientists decided he was nuts, others that he was a visionary. "Klaus is, in fact, a genius," Julio Friedmann, a former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy and an expert on carbon management, told me.

In 2000, Lackner received a job offer from Columbia University. Once in New York, he pitched a plan for developing a carbon-sucking technol-

ogy to Gary Comer, a founder of Lands' End. Comer brought to the meeting his investment adviser, who quipped that Lackner wasn't looking for venture capital so much as "adventure capital." Nevertheless, Comer offered to put up five million dollars. The new company was called Global Research Technologies, or G.R.T. It got as far as building a small prototype, but just as it was looking for new investors the financial crisis hit.

"Our timing was exquisite," Lackner told me. Unable to raise more funds, the company ceased operations. As the planet continued to warm, and carbon-dioxide levels continued to climb, Lackner came to believe that, unwittingly, humanity had already committed itself to negative emissions.

"I think that we're in a very uncomfortable situation," he said. "I

Were she to rise a mirror behind her the woman
might see herself as I did turning to rise
from my table then back as if into Vermeer's scene
It was after the quarrel after you'd had again
too much to drink after the bottle did not shatter though
I'd brought it down hard on the table and the dog
had crept from the room to hide Later I found
a trace of what I'd done bruise on the table the size
of my thumb Worrying it I must have looked as she does
eyes downcast my head on the heel of my palm In paint
a story can change mistakes be undone Imagine
Still-Life with Father and Daughter a moment so
far back there's still time to take the glass from your hand
or mine

—Natasha Trethewey

would argue that if technologies to pull CO₂ out of the environment fail then we're in deep trouble."

Lackner founded the Center for Negative Carbon Emissions at A.S.U. in 2014. Most of the equipment he dreams up is put together in a workshop a few blocks from his office. The day I was there, it was so hot outside that even the five-minute walk to the workshop required staging. Lackner delivered a short lecture on the dangers of dehydration and handed me a bottle of water.

In the workshop, an engineer was tinkering with what looked like the guts of a foldout couch. Where, in the living-room version, there would have been a mattress, in this one was an elaborate array of plastic ribbons. Embedded in each ribbon was a powder

made from thousands upon thousands of tiny amber-colored beads. The beads, Lackner explained, could be purchased by the truckload; they were composed of a resin normally used in water treatment to remove chemicals like nitrates. More or less by accident, Lackner had discovered that the beads could be repurposed. Dry, they'd absorb carbon dioxide. Wet, they'd release it. The idea was to expose the ribbons to Arizona's thirsty air, and then fold the device into a sealed container filled with water. The CO₂ that had been captured by the powder in the dry phase would be released in the wet phase; it could then be piped out of the container, and the whole process re-started, the couch folding and unfolding over and over again.

Lackner has calculated that an apparatus the size of a semi trailer could

remove a ton of carbon dioxide per day, or three hundred and sixty-five tons a year. The world's cars, planes, refineries, and power plants now produce about thirty-six billion tons of CO₂ annually, so, he told me, "if you built a hundred million trailer-size units you could actually keep up with current emissions." He acknowledged that the figure sounded daunting. But, he noted, the iPhone has been around for only a decade or so, and there are now seven hundred million in use. "We are still very early in this game," he said.

The way Lackner sees things, the key to avoiding "deep trouble" is thinking differently. "We need to change the paradigm," he told me. Carbon dioxide should be regarded the same way we view other waste products, like sewage or garbage. We don't expect people to stop producing waste. ("Rewarding people for going to the bathroom less would be nonsensical," Lackner has observed.) At the same time, we don't let them shit on the sidewalk or toss their empty yogurt containers into the street.

"If I were to tell you that the garbage I'm dumping in front of your house is twenty per cent less this year than it was last year, you would still think I'm doing something intolerable," Lackner said.

One of the reasons we've made so little progress on climate change, he contends, is that the issue has acquired an ethical charge, which has polarized people. To the extent that emissions are seen as bad, emitters become guilty. "Such a moral stance makes virtually everyone a sinner, and makes hypocrites out of many who are concerned about climate change but still partake in the benefits of modernity," he has written. Changing the paradigm, Lackner believes, will change the conversation. If CO₂ is treated as just another form of waste, which has to be disposed of, then people can stop arguing about whether it's a problem and finally start doing something.

Carbon dioxide was "discovered," by a Scottish physician named Joseph Black, in 1754. A decade later, another Scotsman, James Watt, invented a more efficient steam engine, ushering

I SAW DEAD PEOPLE

The summer of 2005, I was twenty-four and running a punk bar in Wuhan, the biggest city in central China. During the school year, the place was packed with expats and local kids who came to see shows and mingle. There was something darkly utopian about it—moshing and chain-smoking mixed with the innocence of flirting and practicing languages. But by June all the revellers had left town. Most nights, I sat alone behind the bar until 4 A.M., drinking cocktails of my own invention from a limited supply of Western liquor.

Wuhan is notorious for hot, humid summers. Several nights a week, my neighborhood lost power. I had to drench my bedsheet in cold water, wrap it around myself, and lie down on the tile floor if I was going to sleep at all. I didn't have an Internet hookup, and it was often impossible to reach anyone back in New York over the phone. I should probably mention that, in addition to cigarettes and alcohol, I was subsisting on a daily diet of one melon slice and four hours of exercise. This was all I knew how to do to try to make myself feel alive.

One morning, I walked around the corner to a dirt road lined with small shops, where you could find Popsicles, concrete mix, puppies, prostitutes, and the latest pirated DVDs. I went into an herbalist's den, and asked for a tea "to wake me up." The herbalist, an old man, got off his stool and peered into my eyes. He got closer to me than anyone had been in months. I wanted him to hold me, rock me gently in his arms, feed me tinctures that would soothe my nerves and crystallize my vision, tell me that I would soon be in the cool and easy swing of things. Instead, he sold me a prepackaged health tea and warned that I should quit drink-

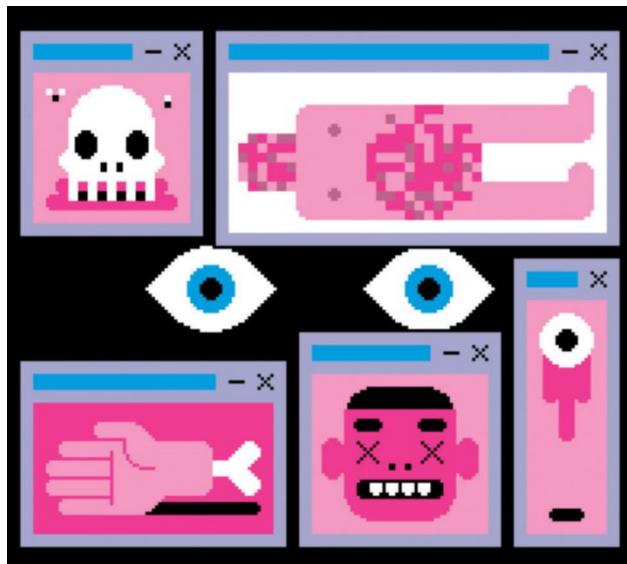
ing iced beverages. "Or else you'll die," he insisted.

"That's O.K." I said, then paid and left. I walked to an Internet café up the road. My anxiety at this time was both vague and maddening. It fed on itself, and spat out words for me to obsess over. That day, I sat down at a computer and Googled "death." The first photos I saw were of mummified corpses—bodies shrunken, masklike faces gaping in silent horror. Then

table. Hangings, car accidents, gunshot wounds to the head. I looked around the Internet café to see if anyone was watching me: no. The other patrons were all teen-age boys, eating junk food and watching clips of sex scenes from romantic movies like "The Lover." They sat and stared, as though their souls had left their bodies and entered the bodies on their screens. I suppose I was doing the same thing, a tourist in the underworld. I felt distinctly alive as a voyeur. The revulsion got my heart racing, my blood pumping. "Click here for chainsaw accidents." I did. Click, gasp, rush, sigh.

I visited the Internet café every day that summer. I found the sites I liked best and looked at the same photos over and over again, as though I were visiting old friends. The photo I remember best showed an old man who had sat dead and undiscovered so long that his skin had fused with the plaid fabric of his armchair. A half-eaten piece of toast remained on his TV tray. A cuckoo clock on the wall. Floral drapes. This photo, a portrait of solitude, moved me to tears.

By the end of the summer, I'd saved enough money to buy a plane ticket back home. I returned to my family and friends, and sobered up. Over time, my need to view the dead on a daily basis subsided. Still, when I'm feeling uninspired or self-pitying or numb or dumb or confused, I pick up my old habit. The other day, I found myself clicking through pictures of people drowning—first staged photos of actors playing dead, then real corpses washed ashore. Among them, I saw one that was different: a man being pulled out of the water alive, gasping, eyes wide, face wrenched in panic and disbelief. He had made it back to the land of the living. He looked as if he had just been born. ♦



I found Victorian postmortem portraits—children propped up in chairs, perfect posture, only their dry eyes and lolling heads revealing the difference between strict obedience and extinction. Why preserve the dead, I wondered. What did these people know about life that I didn't? Could I find it if I kept looking?

Most American news sites were blocked in China, but that afternoon I found scores of personal blogs devoted to dead-people pics. Some were carefully curated, with stories alongside the photos. Others were sloppy aggregates from around the Web. A man who'd jumped off the top level of a parking garage lay on the ground like a pile of clothes. Marilyn Monroe's bloated face rested on an autopsy

in what is now called the age of industrialization but which future generations may dub the age of emissions. It is likely that by the end of the nineteenth century human activity had raised the average temperature of the earth by a tenth of a degree Celsius (or nearly two-tenths of a degree Fahrenheit).

As the world warmed, it started to change, first gradually and then suddenly. By now, the globe is at least one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than it was in Black's day, and the consequences are becoming ever more apparent. Heat waves are hotter, rainstorms more intense, and droughts drier. The wildfire season is growing longer, and fires, like the ones that recently ravaged Northern California, more numerous. Sea levels are rising, and the rate of rise is accelerating. Higher sea levels exacerbated the damage from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and higher water temperatures probably also made the storms more ferocious. "Harvey is what climate change looks like," Eric Holthaus, a meteorologist turned columnist, recently wrote.

Meanwhile, still more warming is locked in. There's so much inertia in the climate system, which is as vast as the earth itself, that the globe has yet to fully adjust to the hundreds of billions of tons of carbon dioxide that have been added to the atmosphere in the past few decades. It's been calculated that to equilibrate to current CO₂ levels the planet still needs to warm by half a degree. And every ten days another billion tons of carbon dioxide are released. Last month, the World Meteorological Organization announced that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere jumped by a record amount in 2016.

No one can say exactly how warm the world can get before disaster—the inundation of low-lying cities, say, or the collapse of crucial ecosystems, like coral reefs—becomes inevitable. Officially, the threshold is two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels. Virtually every nation signed on to this figure at a round of climate negotiations held in Cancún in 2010.

Meeting in Paris in 2015, world lead-

ers decided that the two-degree threshold was too high; the stated aim of the climate accord is to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C" and to try to limit it to 1.5°C. Since the planet has already warmed by one degree and, for all practical purposes, is committed to another half a degree, it would seem impossible to meet the latter goal and nearly impossible to meet the former. And it is nearly impossible, unless the world switches course and instead of just adding CO₂ to the atmosphere also starts to remove it.

The extent to which the world is counting on negative emissions is documented by the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was published the year before Paris. To peer into the future, the I.P.C.C. relies on computer models that represent the world's energy and climate systems as a tangle of equations, and which can be programmed to play out different "scenarios." Most of the scenarios involve temperature increases of two, three, or even four degrees Celsius—up to just over seven degrees Fahrenheit—by the end of this century. (In a recent paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, two climate scientists—Yangyang Xu, of Texas A. & M., and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography—proposed that warming greater than three degrees Celsius be designated as "catastrophic" and warming greater than five degrees as "unknown?" The "unknown?" designation, they wrote, comes "with the understanding that changes of this magnitude, not experienced in the last 20+ million years, pose existential threats to a majority of the population.")

When the I.P.C.C. went looking for ways to hold the temperature increase under two degrees Celsius, it found the math punishing. Global emissions would have to fall rapidly and dramatically—pretty much down to zero by the middle of this century. (This would entail, among other things, replacing most of the world's power plants, revamping its agricultural systems, and eliminating gasoline-powered vehicles, all within the next few decades.) Alternatively, hu-

manity could, in effect, go into hock. It could allow CO₂ levels temporarily to exceed the two-degree threshold—a situation that's become known as "overshoot"—and then, via negative emissions, pull the excess CO₂ out of the air.

The I.P.C.C. considered more than a thousand possible scenarios. Of these, only a hundred and sixteen limit warming to below two degrees, and of these a hundred and eight involve negative emissions. In many below-two-degree scenarios, the quantity of negative emissions called for reaches the same order of magnitude as the "positive" emissions being produced today.

"The volumes are outright crazy," Oliver Geden, the head of the E.U. research division of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, told me. Lackner said, "I think what the I.P.C.C. really is saying is 'We tried lots and lots of scenarios, and, of the scenarios which stayed safe, virtually every one needed some magic touch of a negative emissions. If we didn't do that, we ran into a brick wall.'"

Pursued on the scale envisioned by the I.P.C.C., carbon-dioxide removal would yield at first tens of billions and soon hundreds of billions of tons of CO₂, all of which would have to be dealt with. This represents its own supersized challenge. CO₂ can be combined with calcium to produce limestone, as it is in the process at Carbon Engineering (and in Lackner's self-replicating-machine scheme). But the necessary form of calcium isn't readily available, and producing it generally yields CO₂, a self-defeating prospect. An alternative is to shove the carbon back where it came from, deep underground.

"If you are storing CO₂ and your only purpose is storage, then you're looking for a package of certain types of rock," Sallie Greenberg, the associate director for energy, research, and development at the Illinois State Geological Survey, told me. It was a bright summer day, and we were driving through the cornfields of Illinois's midsection. A mile below us was a rock formation known as the Eau

Claire Shale, and below that a formation known as the Mt. Simon Sandstone. Together with a team of drillers, engineers, and geoscientists, Greenberg has spent the past decade injecting carbon dioxide into this rock "package" and studying the outcome. When I'd proposed over the phone that she show me the project, in Decatur, she'd agreed, though not without hesitation.

"It isn't sexy," she'd warned me. "It's a wellhead."

Our first stop was a building shaped like a ski chalet. This was the National Sequestration Education Center, a joint venture of the Illinois geological survey, the U.S. Department of Energy, and Richland Community College. Inside were classrooms, occupied that morning by kids making lanyards, and displays aimed at illuminating the very dark world of carbon storage. One display was a sort of oversized barber pole, nine feet tall and decorated in bands of tan and brown, representing the various rock layers beneath us. A long arrow on the side of the pole indicated how many had been drilled through for Greenberg's carbon-storage project; it pointed down, through the New Albany Shale, the Maquoketa Shale, and so on, all the way to the floor.

The center's director, David Lerrick, was on hand to serve as a guide. In addition to schoolkids, he said, the center hosted lots of community groups, like Kiwanis clubs. "This is very effective as a visual," he told me,

gesturing toward the pole. Sometimes farmers were concerned about the impact that the project could have on their water supply. The pole showed that the CO₂ was being injected more than a mile below their wells.

"We have had overwhelmingly positive support," he said. While Greenberg and Lerrick chatted, I wandered off to play an educational video game. A cartoon figure in a hard hat appeared on the screen to offer factoids such as "The most efficient method of transport of CO₂ is by pipeline."

"Transport CO₂ to earn points!" the cartoon man exhorted.

After touring the center's garden, which featured grasses, like big bluestem, that would have been found in the area before it was plowed into cornfields, Greenberg and I drove on. Soon we passed through the gates of an enormous Archer Daniels Midland plant, which rose up out of the fields like a small city.

Greenberg explained that the project we were visiting was one of seven funded by the Department of Energy to learn whether carbon injected underground would stay there. In the earliest stage of the project, initiated under President George W. Bush, Greenberg and her colleagues sifted through geological records to find an appropriate test site. What they were seeking was similar to what oil drillers look for—porous stone capped by a layer of impermeable rock—only they were looking not to extract fossil fuels but, in a manner of speaking,

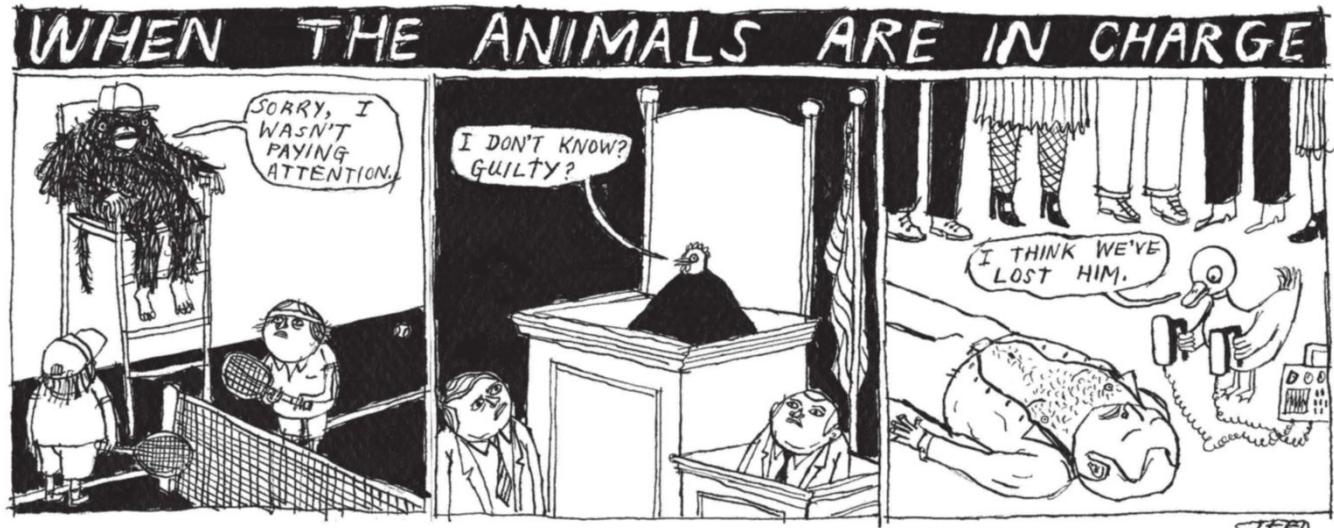
to stuff them back in. The next step was locating a ready source of carbon dioxide. This is where A.D.M. came in; the plant converts corn into ethanol, and one of the by-products of this process is almost pure CO₂. In a later stage of the project, during the Obama Administration, a million tons of carbon dioxide from the plant were pumped underground. Rigorous monitoring has shown that, so far, the CO₂ has stayed put.

We stopped to pick up hard hats and went to see some of the monitoring equipment, which was being serviced by two engineers, Nick Malkewicz and Jim Kirksey. It was now lunchtime, so we made another detour, to a local barbecue place. Finally, Greenberg and I and the two men got to the injection site. It was, indeed, not sexy—just a bunch of pipes and valves sticking out of the dirt. I asked about the future of carbon storage.

"I think the technology's there and it's absolutely viable," Malkewicz said. "It's just a question of whether people want to do it or not. It's kind of an obvious thing."

"We know we can meet the objective of storing CO₂," Greenberg added. "Like Nick said, it's just a matter of whether or not as a society we're going to do it."

When work began on the Decatur project, in 2003, few people besides Klaus Lackner were thinking about sucking CO₂ from the air. Instead, the goal was to demonstrate



the feasibility of an only slightly less revolutionary technology—carbon capture and storage (or, as it is sometimes referred to, carbon capture and sequestration).

With C.C.S., the CO₂ produced at a power station or a steel mill or a cement plant is drawn off before it has a chance to disperse into the atmosphere. (This is called “post-combustion capture.”) The gas, under very high pressure, is then injected into the appropriate package of rock, where it is supposed to remain permanently. The process has become popularly—and euphemistically—known as “clean coal,” because, if all goes according to plan, a plant equipped with C.C.S. produces only a fraction of the emissions of a conventional coal-fired plant.

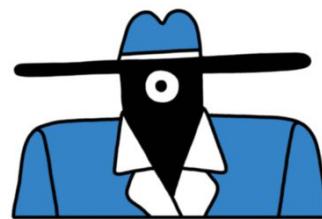
Over the years, both Republicans and Democrats have touted clean coal as a way to save mining jobs and protect the environment. The coal industry has also, nominally at least, embraced the technology; one industry-sponsored group calls itself the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity. Donald Trump, too, has talked up clean coal, even if he doesn’t seem to quite understand what the term means. “We’re going to have clean coal, really clean coal,” he said in March.

Currently, only one power plant in the U.S., the Petra Nova plant, near Houston, uses post-combustion carbon capture on a large scale. Plans for other plants to showcase the technology have been scrapped, including, most recently, the Kemper County plant, in Mississippi. This past June, the plant’s owner, Southern Company, announced that it was changing tacks. Instead of burning coal and capturing the carbon, the plant would burn natural gas and release the CO₂.

Experts I spoke to said that the main reason C.C.S. hasn’t caught on is that there’s no inducement to use it. Capturing the CO₂ from a smokestack consumes a lot of power—up to twenty-five per cent of the total produced at a typical coal-burning plant. And this, of course, translates into costs. What company is going to assume such costs when it can dump CO₂ into the air for free?

“If you’re running a steel mill or a

power plant and you’re putting the CO₂ into the atmosphere, people might say, ‘Why aren’t you using carbon capture and storage?’” Howard Herzog, an engineer at M.I.T. who for many years ran a research program on C.C.S., told me. “And you say, ‘What’s my financial incentive? No one’s saying I *can’t* put it in the atmosphere.’ In fact, we’ve gone backwards in terms of sending signals



that you’re going to have to restrict it.”

But, although C.C.S. has stalled in practice, it has become ever more essential on paper. Practically all below-two-degree warming scenarios assume that it will be widely deployed. And even this isn’t enough. To avoid catastrophe, most models rely on a yet to be realized variation of C.C.S., known as BECCS.

BECCS, which stands for “bio-energy with carbon capture and storage,” takes advantage of the original form of carbon engineering: photosynthesis. Trees and grasses and shrubs, as they grow, soak up CO₂ from the air. (Replanting forests is a low-tech form of carbon removal.) Later, when the plants rot or are combusted, the carbon they have absorbed is released back into the atmosphere. If a power station were to burn wood, say, or cornstalks, and use C.C.S. to sequester the resulting CO₂, this cycle would be broken. Carbon would be sucked from the air by the green plants and then forced underground. BECCS represents a way to generate negative emissions and, at the same time, electricity. The arrangement, at least as far as the models are concerned, could hardly be more convenient.

“BECCS is unique in that it removes carbon *and* produces energy,” Glen Peters, a senior researcher at the Center for International Climate Research, in Oslo, told me. “So the more you consume the more you remove.” He went on, “In a sense, it’s a dream tech-

nology. It’s solving one problem while solving the other problem. What more could you want?”

The Center for Carbon Removal doesn’t really have an office; it operates out of a co-working space in downtown Oakland. On the day I visited, not long after my trip to Decatur, someone had recently stopped at Trader Joe’s, and much of the center’s limited real estate was taken up by tubs of treats.

“Open anything you want,” the center’s executive director, Noah Deich, urged me, with a wave of his hand.

Deich, who is thirty-one, has a broad face, a brown beard, and a knowing sort of earnestness. After graduating from the University of Virginia, in 2009, he went to work for a consulting firm in Washington, D.C., that was advising power companies about how to prepare for a time when they’d no longer be able to release carbon into the atmosphere cost-free. It was the start of the Obama Administration, and that time seemed imminent. The House of Representatives had recently approved legislation to limit emissions. But the bill later died in the Senate, and, as Deich put it, “It’s no fun to model the impacts of climate policies nobody believes are going to happen.” He switched consulting firms, then headed to business school, at the University of California, Berkeley.

“I came into school with this vision of working for a clean-tech startup,” he told me. “But I also had this idea floating around in the back of my head that we’re moving too slowly to actually stop emissions in time. So what do we do with all the carbon that’s in the air?” He started talking to scientists and policy experts at Berkeley. What he learned shocked him.

“People told me, ‘The models show this major need for negative emissions,’ ” he recalled. “‘But we don’t really know how to do that, nor is anyone really thinking about it.’ I was someone who’d been in the business and policy world, and I was, like, wait a minute—*what?*”

Business school taught Deich to think in terms of case studies. One

CROSSED WIRES

Last fall, my wife, Emily, and I enrolled our five-year-old son in a public school in Washington Heights. A few days before kindergarten began, parents were summoned to the school to fill out a stack of paperwork roughly the size of a mortgage application. We offered up our home address, cell-phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and a list of approved family members who could pick up our son. We downloaded Class-Dojo, an app that allows teachers to send photos directly to parents. Before we left, the principal told us that we would be signed up for the school's robocall system, which would alert us to arts-and-crafts nights and field days.

All this info sharing felt exhaustive, and exhausting, but there was something sweet about experiencing it with my wife. Emily and I were trying to do this coparenting thing right. My dad had skipped out on me when I was a baby, and I wanted, desperately, to be a better man. I made our family breakfast every morning and dinner every night; I washed the dishes and made the beds. I probably didn't always pull my weight, but I hoped that Emily felt I was a real partner. The world wanted to reward me for this impulse. When I walked around the neighborhood with our newborn in my arms, passersby cheered me on. When my wife did the same, they usually just ordered her to put a cap on the baby's head.

One Friday night, at the end of our son's first week at school, my wife and I, tired by eight-thirty, hobbled into bed. Emily turned to me and asked if I had joined the PTA. I didn't even know they'd started recruiting. Had I at least signed up for Family Fridays? I'd never heard the term before. Where was my wife getting all this parenting intel? That's when Emily first mentioned the calls.

Since our visit to the school, a week before, Emily had received a half-dozen robocalls asking her to volunteer. Strangely, my phone hadn't buzzed once. I called the school and left a voice mail, asking them to make sure they had my information.

In the weeks that followed, I didn't get any robocalls, and Emily didn't report anything, either. I figured the school had hit parents hard in the beginning, and then quieted down. We're

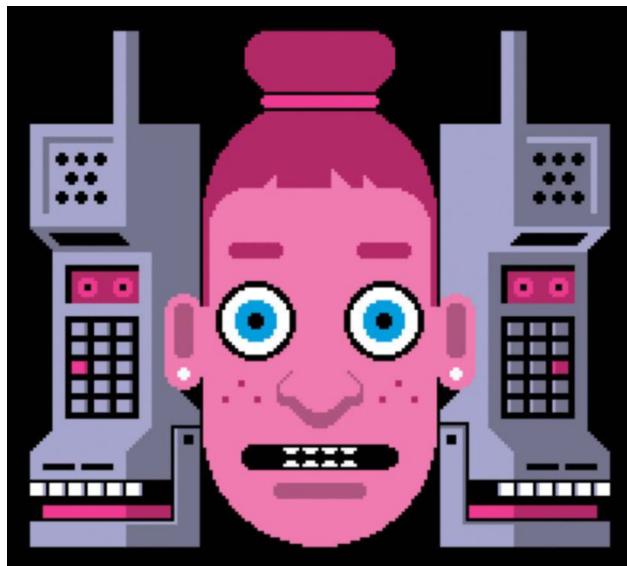
with the phone; a decade of dodging bill collectors will do that to you.

I didn't want to argue, so I suggested that we go down to the school and sort this out. The next morning, we dressed up a little, trying to make it feel like a date. Emily rolled in looking all Afro-Parisian chic. I at least avoided wearing cargo shorts. We found the principal in a large, open office, with parents buzzing around, signing in their kids for late drop-off. The principal greeted us warmly, and explained the situation. The school's phone system, the one used across the district, allowed only one parent to be listed as the caretaker for each child. In our case, someone in the office had signed up Mom. This was relayed so casually. What's the use of new technology if it's going to be programmed by the same old humans?

The principal did have a solution, though: she could switch Emily's phone number for mine. I looked at my wife. I didn't literally give her a thumbs-up, but I must have been wearing one hell of a grin; this was our chance to change things. But Emily seemed uncertain. She didn't want to be cut out of our son's life, either. And, if I didn't answer a midday call from the school nurse, who would be blamed for neglecting our sick son? If I forgot about a class picnic, who would be scorned by the PTA? Not me. In the eyes of much of the world, Emily would always be the default caretaker, no matter who was on the robocall list. To Emily, it felt like an impossible position to be in.

"Never mind," she said, sighing. "Leave it as is."

I still feel unsettled about where we landed. But, these days, before we sit down for dinner, Emily sets her phone on the kitchen table. She plays the school's messages on speakerphone so both of us can hear. ♦



not a knock-down-drag-out-fight kind of couple. I come from a family like that, and I'm grateful we've avoided it. But the festering family can be tough, too. It takes a while for the trouble to reveal itself. Until then, there's silence. One night, Emily sat me down.

Since our first conversation, she had been bombarded with calls from the school. She might hear the same message three times a day. Would she volunteer for the vegetable share, the bake sale, the harvest festival? She had worked a shift in the school garden and had baked the class cupcakes. She was overwhelmed. I asked why she hadn't told me about the calls until now; she asked how I hadn't noticed. Now, Emily didn't accuse me of ignoring the calls, but she might have had her suspicions. I'm flaky

that seemed to him relevant was solar power. Photovoltaic cells have been around since the nineteen-fifties, but for decades they were prohibitively expensive. Then the price started to drop, which increased demand, which led to further price drops, to the point where today, in many parts of the world, the cost of solar power is competitive with the cost of power from new coal plants.

"And the reason that it's now competitive is that governments decided to do lots and lots of research," Deich said. "And some countries, like Germany, decided to pay a lot for solar, to create a first market. And China paid a lot to manufacture the stuff, and states in the U.S. said, 'You must consume renewable energy,' and then consumers said, 'Hey, how can I buy renewable energy?'"

As far as he could see, none of this—neither the research nor the creation of first markets nor the spurring of consumer demand—was being done for carbon removal, so he decided to try to change that. Together with a Berkeley undergraduate, Giana Amador, he founded the center in 2015, with a hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar grant from the university. It now has an annual budget of about a million dollars, raised from private donors and foundations, and a staff of seven. Deich described it as a "think-and-do tank."

"We're trying to figure out: how do we actually get this on the agenda?" he said.

A compelling reason for putting carbon removal on "the agenda" is that we are already counting on it. Negative emissions are built into the I.P.C.C. scenarios and the climate agreements that rest on them.

But everyone I spoke with, including the most fervent advocates for carbon removal, stressed the huge challenges of the work, some of them technological, others political and economic. Done on a scale significant enough to make a difference, direct air capture of the sort pursued by Carbon Engineering, in British Columbia, would require an enormous infrastructure, as well as huge supplies of power. (Because CO₂ is more dilute in the air than it is in the

exhaust of a power plant, direct air capture demands even more energy than C.C.S.) The power would have to be generated emissions-free, or the whole enterprise wouldn't make much sense.

"You might say it's against my self-interest to say it, but I think that, in the near term, talking about carbon removal is silly," David Keith, the founder of Carbon Engineering, who teaches energy and public policy at Harvard, told me. "Because it almost certainly is cheaper to cut emissions now than to do large-scale carbon removal."

BECCS doesn't make big energy demands; instead, it requires vast tracts of arable land. Much of this land would, presumably, have to be diverted from food production, and at a time when the global population—and therefore global food demand—is projected to be growing. (It's estimated that to do BECCS on the scale envisioned by some below-two-degrees scenarios would require an area larger than India.) Two researchers in Britain, Naomi Vaughan and Clair Gough, who recently conducted a workshop on BECCS, concluded that "assumptions regarding the extent of bioenergy deployment that is possible" are generally "unrealistic."

For these reasons, many experts argue that even talking (or writing articles) about negative emissions is dangerous. Such talk fosters the impression that it's possible to put off action and still avoid a crisis, when it is far more likely that continued inaction will just produce a larger crisis. In "The Trouble with Negative Emissions," an essay that ran last year in *Science*, Kevin Anderson, of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, in England, and Glen Peters, of the climate-research center in Oslo, described negative-emissions technologies as a "high-stakes gamble" and relying on them as a "moral hazard par excellence."

We should, they wrote, "proceed on the premise that they will not work at scale."

Others counter that the moment for fretting about the hazards of negative emissions—moral or otherwise—has passed.

"The punch line is, it doesn't matter," Julio Friedmann, the former Principal Deputy Assistant Energy Secretary, told me. "We actually need to do direct air capture, so we need to create technologies that do that. Whether it's smart or not, whether it's optimized or not, whether it's the lowest-cost pathway or not, we know we need to do it."

"If you tell me that we don't know whether our stuff will work, I will admit that is true," Klaus Lackner said. "But I also would argue that nobody else has a good option."

One of the peculiarities of climate discussions is that the strongest argument for any given strategy is usually based on the hopelessness of the alternatives: this approach *must* work, because clearly the others aren't going to. This sort of reasoning rests on a fragile premise—what might be called solution bias. There has to be an answer out there somewhere, since the contrary is too horrible to contemplate.

Early last month, the Trump Administration announced its intention to repeal the Clean Power Plan, a set of rules aimed at cutting power plants' emissions. The plan, which had been approved by the Obama Administration, was eminently achievable. Still, according to the current Administration, the cuts were too onerous. The repeal of the plan is likely to result in hundreds of millions of tons of additional emissions.

A few weeks later, the United Nations Environment Programme released its annual Emissions Gap Report. The report labelled the difference between the emissions reductions needed to avoid dangerous climate change and those which countries have pledged to achieve as "alarmingly high." For the first time, this year's report contains a chapter on negative emissions. "In order to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement," it notes, "carbon dioxide removal is likely a necessary step."

As a technology of last resort, carbon removal is, almost by its nature, paradoxical. It has become vital without necessarily being viable. It may be impossible to manage and it may also be impossible to manage without. ♦



The
Sightseers

David Gilbert

While Paulette was getting ready upstairs, Robert took charge of dinner, which entailed pouring the sparkling water and calling for the children, after which Kiki appeared with the halibut and Brussels sprouts, spinach salad on the side.

"Looks delicious," Robert said, placing his phone face down on the table and then interlacing his fingers, as though this public denial of electronics were commensurate with saying grace. "Right, guys?"

"Thank you, Kiki," Lana said.

"Thanks, Kiki," Friedrich said.

"Yes, thanks," Robert concluded with a warm, conspiratorial smile. Kiki whom he paid on the books. Kiki from Tibet. My goodness, the calm essence of those people. The work ethic. Plus she happened to be an excellent cook, almost better than Chef Gary.

"Where are you going tonight?"
Lana asked.

"The Harrisons'," Robert said.

"Will Flip be there?"

"I suppose so."

Lana disappeared into her shoulders, her body nowadays like an overcoat, the wind and the rain kicking up from across the table. The turmoils of seventh grade. Over the past year she had bulked up; perfectly natural, the pediatrician had told Robert and Paulette, rocket fuel for the coming launch into puberty, though, just in case, Paulette had eliminated bread and dairy from her diet, and processed sugar, of course. Robert's side of the family had a history of weight issues, as Paulette often mentioned. His mother and younger brother. Those round nephews. Thank God they no longer marched to northeast Pennsylvania for Thanksgiving, no longer had to listen to that nonsense about this being everyone's favorite meal: turkey with sausage and stuffing, the two varieties of canned cranberry, the sweet potatoes topped with marshmallows, the heedless, almost irresponsible piling up of dish upon dish—the turnips, the peas, the butter-infused Pepperidge Farm dinner rolls—as if they were composing self-portraits in food. Watching them eat seemed vaguely cannibalistic. Robert, for his part, was in optimal shape, training five times a week with a former Navy SEAL and competing in marathons and triathlons. Next

year he planned to tackle the Ironman in Hawaii.

"I thought we were having salmon tonight," Friedrich said.

"Yeah?"

"Pretty sure."

Robert refrained from checking his phone and called in Kiki, who confirmed the switch. The halibut was fresher than the salmon, or so the man at the fish counter had told her. This unsanctioned change of proteins went against the purpose of the posted weekly menu, which was to lower daily stress by preparing the children for their dinners ahead—no surprises, no potential conflicts with lunch—and while Robert himself never trusted anyone who pushed product, whether stocks or warranties or halibut, he decided to let the matter pass without correction. "Oh, O.K.," he said to Kiki.

"Does that mean the next time we have halibut we'll have salmon?" Friedrich asked.

Robert turned to Kiki.

"I guess so," Kiki said.

"Yes," Robert declared, "salmon for halibut, halibut for salmon."

Lana hunched her shoulders even higher.

"An excellent suggestion," Robert told Friedrich.

"Sure, no problem," Friedrich said, unmoved by the fatherly approbation.

But Robert was heartened. "The old switcheroo. Genius." He got up from the table and went over to the floor-to-ceiling windows. The shadow of their building, new and narrow and tall, was tilting across the southern end of Central Park. Like a slow-motion salute from above. *You have achieved great success, good American.* The effect always stirred Robert, and he tried to identify his specific tranche of shade, as though he might glimpse himself standing in the monolithic darkness, eighty-three floors up. See his own small hand waving. He turned back around and faced his children, his dear children—my dear children, he thought. "I used to hate Brussels sprouts," he told them. The cue was obvious since Lana was warily stabbing at a green bud, but the tone was unexpected, almost contrived, as though he were reading words written inside his head. "Hated them with a passion. It was pure torture. Almost to the point of actual weeping. And Gram,

she knew I did, yet every couple of weeks, there they were again, Brussels sprouts—Bobby sprouts, she called them. Bobby sprouts," he repeated, impersonating his mother's witchy voice. "She steamed them. All mushy and bitter. Just awful. Then came Harvard and I was done with Brussels sprouts, which was one of the supreme pleasures of being an adult, never having to eat Brussels sprouts again. Hallelujah. So I went twenty years free of those"—he paused for maximum profane effect—"fuckers until this dinner party, a fancy one, and there they were, right under my nose. I was sitting by the host, so I had no choice. I had to eat them. To be polite. And I was scared. Literally sweating. But I mustered up the courage and had a bite. They were halved and caramelized and delicious. It was my road-to-Damascus moment—you know that story? How Saul becomes Paul, one of the apostles, how he goes blind seeing the light of God and converts? No? Nothing? Oh well. Just means it was a revelation. These are Brussels sprouts?! These things here?! And I wondered, had Gram been doing them wrong all those years, or had I finally grown up, or had there been a fundamental shift in the preparation of Brussels sprouts?"

Lana and Friedrich looked at Robert as though he were an embedded commercial in one of their on-demand shows, their eyes trying to click thirty seconds ahead.

"Anyway," Robert said, uncertain of the point himself.

Lana offered him a Brussels sprout. Robert grinned. "Very funny."

"What?"

"Yeah, yeah," Robert said. "Maybe tomorrow night, I'll tell you my complicated history with cauliflower."

"That's not on the menu," Friedrich said.

"I'm kidding."

Before Robert could change course and bring up their weekend, with the diver-certification class and the background lecture on the wreck of the Tecumseh from Professor Miller, Friedrich wiped his mouth and asked about the Herons, specifically what was going on. Seemed their cams were down. Or not down but just streaming their hotel room—the Ron cam, the Lisa cam, the Stan cam, the Maggie cam, all four cams

staring at the ceiling of the DoubleTree. "Almost creepy," Friedrich said.

Robert performed mild surprise. "Yeah?"

"You haven't been watching?"

"Not really," he lied.

"They should've gone to Disney World," Lana half-whispered, "like the Shacklers."

"Yeah, that looked fun," Friedrich said.

"Wish we would go there," Lana said.

"What was the name of that ride?"

Robert asked, pleased by the memory of the Shacklers and their four-day vacation in Disney World, which Robert and his family had sponsored with their initial foray into funded tourism.

"Splash Mountain," Friedrich said.

Lana brightened. "I'd like to see little Maggie Heron on one of those rides."

"Well, little Maggie Heron might be dead or something," Friedrich told her.

"Nobody's dead," Robert said, and though he was tempted to grab his phone and check the stream, he simply said, once again, this time with conviction, but casual conviction, "Nobody is dead." But in reality Robert was concerned. The stream had presented a full and active morning for the Herons: a crack-of-dawn breakfast, a double-decker bus downtown, visits to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and the 9/11 Memorial, another bus back to Times Square for a late lunch at the Brooklyn Diner. All of this was in keeping with their detailed itinerary, curated by Robert and Co. Some highlights: Stan and Maggie posing with Elmo on Forty-second Street, Elmo swindling Ron of twenty bucks; Ron and Lisa and Stan and Maggie standing in the wrong line for the ferry; Ron and Stan climbing to the crown of the Statue of Liberty, Ron sweating, Stan disgusted; Maggie at Ellis Island counting every exhaled breath over the course of a half hour until Ron begged her to please stop, sweetheart; Lisa getting teary thinking of her great-grandparents at the Immigration Museum while Ron focussed on a nearby woman, in particular her New World cleavage; Stan pretending to be an airplane in front of the 9/11 Memorial, Ron horrified and chasing after him, briefly resembling the second airplane; Ron and Lisa and Stan and Maggie waiting an hour for cheeseburgers and noodle kugel, Maggie and Stan panicking

over their devices' dwindling battery percentages, Ron staring into the ominously innocuous distance. After lunch, the family retreated to the DoubleTree for some rest. Their next activity—a carriage ride through Central Park—had been scheduled for 4:00 P.M. followed by a 6:15 P.M. dinner at the Hard Rock Cafe and an 8:00 P.M. performance of "Wicked." But according to their stream they were still in the hotel room, face up in their beds.

"I don't think they're breathing," Friedrich said.

"They're fine."

"They've haven't moved in, like, four hours."

"They're fine."

"I'm just saying."

"Why'd they want to come to New York anyway?" Lana muttered.

"Because it's a great city," Robert said.

"Whatever."

"People dream of this." Robert gestured to their view.

"Stupid."

With the clack of high heels as overture, Paulette the symphony rushed in, her silk chiffon dress, finished in tiered ruffles, giving the impression that she was bustling through a pile of brightly colored leaves. As always, she seemed to be mid-task, her eyes rearranging great swaths of air, her hands fiddling with imaginary clasps. "We should go or we'll be late," she told Robert.

"I've been ready."

"I know, I know, just play along." Paulette turned to the children and



their immediate needs, which were easier to cope with than the compounding fear of loss and loathing, of being unworthy of any reciprocating love. When they were babies, then toddlers, Paulette mothered without a second thought. But somewhere in their middle-school years the ineffable had been replaced by executive management and peer review, late childhood becoming a series of problems to be solved and then questioned afterward

in bed. She was like a threatened C.F.O. Robert, for his part, just wished she could relax more, though he understood the problematic jujutsu of that statement and so never used that word; rather, he suggested more yoga, or a massage, or maybe a visit to Mustique. "Not too late tonight, all right?" Paulette told Friedrich and Lana. "We all have a big day tomorrow." Paulette then summoned Kiki, who accidentally let Shawnie free from the confines of the kitchen. The dog was part chocolate Lab, part Great Dane, i.e., a Labradane, bred by some lunatic in southwest Ohio. Imagine a retriever on stilts.

Robert grabbed Shawnie's collar before that crazy tail could do damage and dragged him back to the kitchen.

"O.K.," Paulette said to Kiki, "they should be in bed by ten. No screens after eight-thirty unless they're watching a movie made before 1990. No exceptions. And only in the living room, the two of them watching together." Paulette turned back toward Friedrich and Lana. "And here's the deal: if you're reading a book, you can stay up until eleven. Maybe tackle some of 'A Sorrow in Our Heart' or 'West Wind, Flood Tide.'"

Both children sighed.

Paulette aped their sighs in return, the neckline of her dress revealing the core of muscle that in a certain light could be read as skin and bones. "Love you," she said, refloating. "Now damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead." She went over and comically started to push Robert toward the entryway, Robert who had been ready ages ago, Robert who had already picked their housewarming bottle of wine, Robert who was sort of disappointed in her lack of attention vis-à-vis the unsanctioned halibut, Robert who muttered, "Aye, aye, Captain Farragut."

"Rear Admiral," Paulette corrected.

"That doesn't sound nearly as good."

"But that's what he was. Drayton was the captain."

Regardless of these things, Robert raised the bottle of Cros Parantoux as if he were charging into a night of good cheer.

As usual, drivers were double-parked around the building, an idling black moat, though Johnson had snagged the spot in front, Carlos the doorman hustling ahead to open the back door. This

piece of service-oriented choreography reaffirmed the magic of New York, when the city seemed to bless your passage.

"You're the best," Robert said to Carlos, feeling the truth of the sentiment.

"Have a great evening."

The door closed and Johnson turned and smiled at them. "Hello, my esteemed employers."

"Johnson, my friend." And he was a friend, Robert thought, good old Johnson, and his wife, Elma, and their impressive boys, Laurence at West Point and Freddy at Amherst, Robert paying their tuition, or paying the portion their scholarships didn't cover. Johnson had once been a cop—all the best drivers had once been cops. They carried guns. Or could carry guns.

"So, the West Village?" Johnson asked.

"Yes, Charles Street."

"Perry," Paulette said, her eyes fixed on her phone.

"I thought Charles."

"Nope, Perry."

"Perry, then," Robert said, these minor adjustments—Rear Admiral, Perry—puncturing his basic sense of well-being. He sank into the quilted leather of the back seat, the wood and hide bringing to mind a panelled library, the windshield its glowing fire. Robert closed his eyes and took a breath. *Om Namah Shivaya*, he mouthed in his head, as he'd been taught by Seligman, the firm's shaman. He really should mention the halibut.

There were protests around midtown, so Johnson avoided Fifth by heading way west and then south, though in truth the traffic was horrible everywhere, this version of endless only five minutes shorter. Johnson was a confident driver, right down to his mustache, which reminded Robert of peak Burt Reynolds. "Smokey and the Bandit." "The Cannonball Run." Talk about the epitome of a man. Robert and his friends in Susquehanna had often reenacted those scenes on red Raleigh bicycles, dreaming of eagle-emblazoned Trans Ams. Not that Robert ever brought this likeness up with Johnson. Some things should remain unnoted. Because, otherwise, Johnson was chubby and chinless, the skin around his nose and ears red and flaky.



"Really, though, he flew too close to the ground."

"What is going on with the Herons?" Paulette asked.

"Huh?"

"You haven't been watching?"

"Not really," Robert said, like a serious man.

"Well, they're not doing anything," Paulette told him, raising her phone and showing him the Herons in landscape mode: Ron and Lisa and Stan and Maggie in quarter portions, each cam still streaming its own patch of ceiling. Paulette clicked on the Ron cam, the Lisa cam, the Stan cam, the Maggie cam. "All the same," she said, "for hours now."

Robert accessed the cams from his phone. He always wished he could see the things he missed or rewatch the things he enjoyed. Like the four of them riding in a taxi toward the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge—Robert had insisted on this particular entry into the city—the skyline opening its famous arms to them, those little-town blues melting away. The way Ron had muttered, "Will you look at that." And Maggie mentioning something about the President, about his building in the grand scheme of buildings, the four of them searching for a telltale golden sign. Yes, Robert would have enjoyed watching those scenes again, but there was no recording, only

live-streaming. "Tis strange," Robert said, the 'tis a surprise.

"They missed the carriage ride through the Park," Paulette said.

"Uh-huh."

"And their dinner reservation. I'm sure 'Wicked' is next."

"Not 'Wicked'?" Robert teased.

"Shut up, you know what I mean." Paulette opened the mirror app on her phone and checked her makeup against her proposed makeup scheme, her fingers patting and petting the various highlights and shadings as though her skin might respond like a touch screen. A small blast of frustrated air blew through those Black Dahlia lips. Robert understood this as a bid for attention, thanks to their private couples retreat with Dr. Gottman and his wife, Julie. He turned and faced Paulette and told her how beautiful she looked, how her eyes sparkled and her hair was perfect tonight, how lucky he was to have her in his life even if she was presently annoyed by the limits of her concealer. Paulette acknowledged the affirmation by touching his knee, then she asked, "Should we complain?"

"About what?"

"The Herons. I've heard of stuff happening before. Like with the Burkes."

The Burkes had come across a bout of unexpected lovemaking, which was

typical of the Burkes, to have that kind of luck. Their particular mom and dad were in France and had woken up in the middle of the night and slipped on their cams and had quiet yet vigorous husband-and-wife sex while their children snoozed in the adjoining room. Maybe they were trying to give their sponsors some naughty fun. Maybe they had forgotten the time difference and assumed that the Burkes would be asleep instead of sitting down with friends for dinner, those friends being the Meachams, who had shared the story: how, in the middle of their twelve-course tasting menu at Aska, this couple from Kansas had started screwing between the hay-grilled woodcock and the langoustine torched in chamomile and yarrow, the Burkes and the Meachams in absolute tears. Ah, Paris. So unusual things did happen, sometimes bordering on the disturbing. Like terrible screaming matches. Potential examples of certifiable abuse. Miscellaneous bad behavior. But for the most part the biggest sin was the old sin of being ugly Americans.

"Do you think they're dead?" Paulette asked.

"Funny, Friedrich wondered the same thing."

"Well . . ."

"Of course not," Robert said. "They just got sick of streaming and put the cams on the beds and are doing whatever they're doing, free from us. That's all."

"So you think they're heading to 'Wicked'?"

"I don't know. I would think so."

"Because I'd like to see that, the whole family at 'Wicked.'"

"Christ, maybe we should just get tickets ourselves."

"You know what I mean."

"We can go to 'Wicked,'" Robert said. "It's allowed."

"Stop."

"I'm just saying I'll be happy to go."

"We are not seeing 'Wicked.'"

"But we could."

"I know, I know." As Paulette said this, she was shaking her head, which Robert refrained from mentioning, despite Dr. Gottman's admonitions about the perils of unconscious undercutting. "It's just we're paying all this money so they can have a nice trip to New York, and they're not keeping up

RAIL

I set out over the
unknowable earth
once more. Everything
still underfoot. A mat
of fallen and unfallen
matter. Things flinch
but it is my seeing
makes them
flinch. Before, they are
transparent. Now they
line my optic
nerve. I feel them
enter. Brain
flinch husk
groove. Subject.

Honeysuckle,
bramble, vine,
vibration
and
web-tremble. How
will the real
let me drop just
in time.

How will it pay me
out,
pass me along to
the next
I? I
walk down the hill
where I feel my

their end of the deal, which is against the terms and conditions, I assume. We should complain. Otherwise we're just being our passive-complicit selves. Right? There must be a number we can call. Suppose we were witnessing a crime, like a murder, or an actual emergency, and they were in terrible trouble—what would we do then?"

"I can check the site."

"Remember the Shacklers, how grateful they were for everything?"

"The Shacklers were excellent," Robert agreed.

"They practically took us on their adventure."

While Johnson was skirting the madness of Times Square, Robert could still feel the proximate thrill of those blasting lights. This was the New York that had existed as a part of his rural imagination, before he graduated from Harvard and moved to As-

toria. It was a moment in time that was both embarrassing and uplifting, like most of his twenties, ensconced within the familiar parameters of middle-class striving. Except Robert had known better. His future success played like an amusing secret across his face. As though he were walking with "Enter Sandman" in his headphones while everyone else was listening to NPR.

The car turned on Twenty-third Street and then continued south on Seventh. They approached Robert's first proper apartment: an unloftlike loft across the street from the old Barneys department store, where he had been introduced to clothes on a whole new level. The strutting delight of that place, even when he was browsing alone, invisible women hanging on his arm. He had often paid in cash just so he could peel the bills from his roll of hundreds. Robert still had a

letting-go go
into the down
of the hill. I
know I will
have to leave
the earth—my
difference
running around
wildly looking
for where it
ends. That is
life I say
humming,
idling, mind's
engine dozing
in me, its
squint, that
sweet way of
inhaling before
speech while
the hand slides
down the spiral
rail like a
millennium
dappled with
DNA and spoor
just right
enough to
end.

—Jorie Graham

few suits from those days, suits he never wore, yet which retained their spark of joy.

"My old haunts," he said.

"Yeah, I know," Paulette answered.

Robert was curious what Dr. Gottman might say about that reply.

Paulette herself was native to this terrain, the Upper East Side her childhood home, so she treated the local geography with a certain amount of coolness; change for her was more a matter of replacement, nostalgia a series of trends circulating the same theme of money. There was a cynical naïveté to her attitude. Robert still found this incredibly sexy. The idea that she had picked him, eighteen years ago, when making a million dollars a year seemed like a big deal. Almost storybook, he thought on the good days. "I never imagined I'd be richer than my parents," she had once told him. "A lot richer," he

said. "Yes, I never imagined that." In this way, she was modest.

Barneys had morphed into the Rubin Museum, which was wonderful, or so Robert had heard. A wonderful museum. The collection specialized in the art of Himalayan Asia, as in sculptures of many-armed gods, mandalas created in the lobby by saffron-robed monks. A real gem, though Robert thought the bigger story was how this Rubin guy had managed to create his very own museum, in Manhattan, no less, from the bones of Barneys. Now, that seemed an otherworldly feat.

"So we do nothing?" Paulette asked.
"About the Herons?"

"Of course about the Herons."

"It is what it is." After saying this, Robert was haunted by his own emotional heritage via Dr. Gottman's smiling bearded face, which gently re-

minded him of how he was turning away and minimizing, doing something called meiosis, the exact definition of which Robert had forgotten, though he remembered the bit about a pebble not being just a pebble when in someone else's shoe. Then again, Dr. Gottman didn't trade currencies on the foreign exchange. But before Robert could self-correct, the car pulled tight to the curb in front of three combined town houses—the Harrison residence.

Johnson hustled to open their door.
"Wow, full service," Robert said.

"Have to put on a decent show."

"We'll probably be about three hours."

"I shall prepare a noble death song for the day I go over the great divide."

It was an odd thing to say, but Johnson often said odd things.

"O.K., then," Robert said, taking Paulette by the hand. "Good luck with that."

As they made their way up the stoop, Paulette shook her head. "It's absurd," she said.

"Look, I'll call someone later, I promise."

"No, not that, the doorknob," she said, gesturing. Robert tried his best to glean the brass knob's innate absurdity so that he might understand his wife better. The scale, maybe—it was about the size of an ostrich egg. Or the obvious hand-forged expense. But he came up empty, the temptation to touch this piece of hardware undone by his fear of leaving behind fingerprints.

The exterior maintained the semblance of three separate town houses, but the interior was open and grand and no doubt involved a level of engineering in keeping with public works in China. During the extensive renovation, the town houses had been no more than shells of themselves, like Hollywood sets, or the gutted remains of a firebombing, depending on your passing mood. The Harrisons had initially purchased the middle town house and they were beginning work when the town house on the left became available. Everything stopped while a new set of architectural drawings was drafted, then

submitted, then approved, eighteen months elapsing before work began again, when the town house on the right became available, the price unreasonable but what could they do, they were hostage to their own opportunity, so they went back to the drawing board and, two years later, commenced construction in earnest. Then they hit water. They were digging twenty feet down in order to accommodate a Turkish-bath-inspired indoor pool, or *hammam*, as Anna Harrison pronounced with cultural respect, when they hit actual water, one of those underground streams that meander beneath the city. Another year of delays. And that's when the town house on Charles Street became available.

"On Charles?" Robert said, glancing toward Paulette.

"Yes," Anna said. She was showing them around while Bill entertained the others on the terrace, which overlooked a back yard with a lawn large enough for a game of croquet. "It allowed us to create this piazza feel."

"Fabulous," Paulette said.

"Charles Street," Robert repeated.

"It's all been a blessing in disguise. It's the reason we had another child," Anna said.

Robert was uncertain if she was kidding.

"Well, it's spectacular," Paulette said as Anna guided them back to the cocktails. "Just spectacular," she said to Bill and the others: the Van Burens and the Harmars and the de Borbóns, all of whom had already had the grand tour. They were friends, but friends in terms of moving in similar circles, more professional and charitable and institutional than social. Like superheroes, they had their own private hideaways, their own distinct powers, their own secret identities. Robert guessed that if a bomb detonated in lower Manhattan four black helicopters would soon be hovering over Perry/Charles Street. They were people with contingency plans.

Bill opened his arms. "Our pied-à-terre in the Village."

"Nothing like downsizing," Lewis Harmar joked.

"Who was your contractor?" Sally Van Buren asked, decorator and architect being too obvious.

As they talked, Robert strolled through the expansive back yard, his eyes taking in the trees and the boxwoods and the wondrous grass, the absolute un-Manhattan aspect of this

sanctuary, but also appreciating the blue-stone paths and terrace. A particular piece of northeast-Pennsylvania geology. The ancient sea receding and leaving behind simple life forms trapped in sediment, the evidence of shallow, fast-moving water still present in the surface of the rock. It was like motion fossilized. Feldspathic sandstone, he remembered from sixth-grade science. And, as was his habit when faced with this type of paver, he subtly sloshed his drink onto the blue-gray surface. There were sermons in that stone.

"But no view," Anna was saying.

"No view," Bill said.

"Which means not great light," Anna said.

"Yeah, no light," Bill said.

"And shockingly loud," Anna said.

"Definitely loud," Bill said.

"People sometimes just sit on our stoop for hours," Anna said.

"The stoops are a nightmare," Bill said. "They smoke pot."

"We want to be good neighbors, but these aren't neighbors," Anna said.

"Just kids smoking pot," Bill said. "Sometimes not kids."

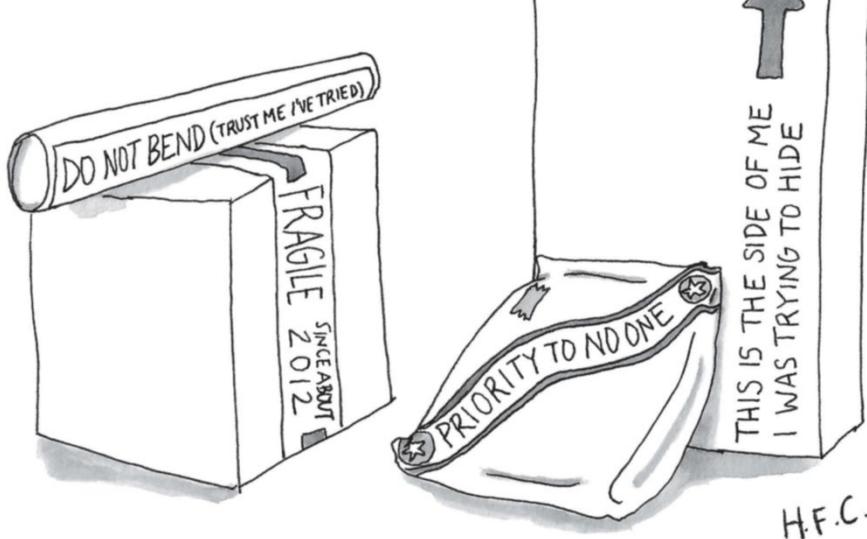
Robert returned to the group. "Who needs a goddam view when you have this?" he said.

Paulette looked at him, her brow implying a ripple.

"I'm just saying it's beautiful. Well done, sir." Robert tipped his imaginary hat.

Talk soon turned to politics, as talk did more often these days. Terry Van Buren mentioned his recent six-figure support for the A.C.L.U., Sally doing her part with Planned Parenthood; Lewis and Winnie Harmar were directing their foundation toward African-American and L.G.B.T.Q. causes while also helping finance a film about George Washington Carver and Austin Curtis; Maurice and Katerina de Borbón shook their late-Empire heads and occasionally muttered that maybe art would get decent again. And Paulette? She listened and nodded—Anna Harrison was talking N.G.O.s—no doubt waiting to mention that she had joined the advisory board of ProPublica and had reactivated her bar membership. Robert watched her and found this moment of marital clairvoyance endearing, more like peering into the past than

SHIPPING & HANDLING YOUR EMOTIONS



into the future, glimpsing the lanky girl navigating these social waters. Like those rare times when Paulette would get stoned with him and within the haze would slough her adult layer and reveal the unbridled sweetness underneath, the goofy charm—remember this, Robert always urged himself, remember this person here. How she obviously struggled. But before Paulette could step into the conversation, Flip Harrison appeared, her hair pastel-colored and flowing like the mane of a unicorn.

Terry and Sally Van Buren brightened. "It's Flip."

"Love the hair," Winnie Harmar said, with Lewis Harmar adding, "The Flipster."

Evidently the de Borbóns had no history with the esteemed Flip.

"Lana says hi," Paulette said, doing her part.

Robert knew that Lana had said nothing of the sort, so hearing this seemed a betrayal of their awkward daughter, Paulette suddenly racking into sharper focus: her nervous hands, her thin lips, her need for this thirteen-year-old's approval. Amazing the speed of such fault-finding.

"Lana's so funny," Flip said. "Such a great gal."

Fuck Flip, Robert thought. Then came this unwanted flash of imagination: him stepping forward and snapping her neck in one of those mortally quick chiropractic adjustments. Flip crumples. People scream—Paulette screams. And Robert stands there like he's dropped a plate loaded with food.

"The gates have opened," Flip said, gesturing with her tablet computer.

The gates?

"Ooh," Anna said and went to join her daughter.

Robert imagined the hell he knew from his Sunday-school days, demons dragging down the damned.

"Mavis is already crying, it's just so precious."

Bill Harrison checked his phone, smiled in that Bill Harrison way, as though his pleasure were a tradable commodity. "Just look at them," he said, and then for the sake of the others he projected the stream onto one of the reclaimed wood planters: the Taj Mahal materialized, empurpled by

rising light. "We've got this whole family in India right now," Bill told them. "The Altimiras, from Grand Rapids, all ten of them, mother, father, children, grandchildren. Nick and Mavis are renewing their vows today in a small, intimate ceremony." Bill toggled between cams: the Justin cam, the Kenny cam, the Becky cam, the Vicki cam, every cam similar—the grounds of the Taj Mahal, people taking selfies via arm or articulated stick, a few tourists running ahead so they might have a photographic moment alone with the architecture, Mavis and Nick holding hands, grinning with wonder and gratitude. "I guess they feel a kinship with Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal," Bill said.

"I think it's sweet," Flip said.

"What a romantic," Bill Harrison said, flashing the projector against Flip's romper.

"Dad!"

"Flip Mahal."

"Agra's a dump," Maurice de Borbón pronounced.

Winnie Harmar started to mention that they had just sponsored a two-week tour of Venice and Florence and Rome and Siena—

"Yeah, yeah, we get it, Italy," Lewis Harmar said, snapping his fingers.

"All on a tour bus," Winnie said. "A great big package deal for this elderly couple."

"Pompeii," Lewis added.

"That's right, Pompeii," Winnie said. "Everyone was so disappointed yet so spellbound."

"The most extraordinary complaining you've ever heard," Lewis told them.

"Herculaneum is better," Terry Van Buren piped in. "Smaller but better preserved, certainly less crowded. We went a few years ago and did a two-week archeological dig with Dr. Roger Speckle from Balliol College, Oxford. He was fantastic."

"Fabulous," Sally Van Buren confirmed.

"We helped finance the excavation of the forum complex."

"The kids had a blast."

Flip cutie-pied her face. "Silas and Beckett are the absolute best."

"Well, they think the same about you," Sally said.

Fuck Silas and fuck Beckett, Robert thought. And fuck Flip.

"The boys want to sponsor a cruise, like on one of those massive ships."

"That would be hilarious," Anna Harrison said.

"They're raising money by working in the stables and the farm stand."

"Good for them," Winnie Harmar said.

Robert wondered when Paulette would mention "Wicked." Or their upcoming dive on the U.S.S. Tecumseh. When she would speak up and inevitably disappoint him.

"Oh, look," Flip cooed as the Altimiras began gathering for a family photo in front of this most famous of mausoleums. "Do you know the Taj Mahal took over twenty years to build and would cost a billion dollars in today's money?"

Hearing this, everyone smiled.

Johnson took Sixth back uptown, the avenue mostly clear, the run of green lights holding sway, though he sometimes had to throttle up and tweak the edges of yellow. Robert, drunk on expensive wine, silently cheered from the back seat as though the car were bouncing along the track of a roulette wheel.

"Quite a place," Paulette was saying.

"Yeah."

"And the food."

"Yeah."

"Maurice de Borbón is a piece of work."

All this was true. In the Harrisons' more intimate second dining room was a single painting, a Rothko, blocks of burgundy and black against a larger block of darkest blue—a minor late Rothko, Maurice de Borbón had told Robert, who was admiring the painting, or admiring the obvious Rothkiness of the painting. The colors seemed to glow. Like those black-light posters from back in the day. Of King Kong and Alice Cooper. Cobras and panthers. Big-breasted women in bandoliers. Rothko had slit his wrists. Robert knew this without knowing the precise source of the knowledge. The poor man must have been exhausted by his own profound redundancy. The painting had distracted Robert all through dinner, this buzzy black hole on the wall. Like an almost sonic blur. The

meal consisted of three courses presented by the chef, who was evidently well known in Spain and who explained in detail the various preparations, his tone implying clandestine pinches of arsenic and cyanide. Or so Robert had thought. Robert was feeling bored with the company and blaming Paulette for their inclusion, though Bill Harrison had been his friend since junior year at Harvard. But Paulette cared more. And Paulette should have been above this crowd. She had gone to Brearley and Barnard and Columbia Law. But there she was, laughing as Maurice de Borbón told a long story about Rothko and the Pale of Settlement and the Four Seasons, no one really following, Maurice ending his monologue on the ecstasy and the doom of turpentine and impotence, which evidently was the punch line.

"Look at this," Paulette said in the car.

But Robert was more interested in the tricky section of traffic lights through Greeley Square.

"Just look."

Paulette was holding up her phone, her face as stern as a government agent with a badge. The ceiling of the DoubleTree was still glowing in quadruplicate. Nothing had changed. As expected, Paulette had mentioned the Herons during the cocktail hour, how they were going to "Wicked" after their busy day, though she held back on saying anything about this rogue static. Everyone enjoyed the idea of "Wicked."

"They haven't moved an inch."

"Obviously they're not wearing their cams," Robert told her.

"So they're flaunting the rules."

"The rules?"

"You know what I mean, but, yeah, the rules."

"You and your stupid goddam rules," Robert said, surprising himself.

Paulette glanced toward Johnson.

"Like salmon for dinner," Robert continued, "which was actually halibut."

"Huh?"

"Oh, and Lana hates Flip."

"No, she doesn't."

"Absolutely."

"I promise you she doesn't," Paulette said. "In fact, the opposite."

Johnson accelerated, the light they passed perhaps officially red.

Robert wished he were driving. Or up front whooping.

"So you're not concerned?" Paulette asked.

"About the Herons?"

"Yes, about the Herons."

"Nope," Robert said.

"How about angry, then?"

"Not at all."

"Angry at me, maybe?"

"Why would I be?"

"How about annoyed, or frustrated, or irritated? How about you give me a clue?"

Robert turned away from the streak of lights and looked at Paulette. Her face was trying to express bewilderment, and perhaps there was even amusement tucked into the smoothed furrows, what once would have been a charming squint as she attempted to decipher the mystery of his feelings. The saving grace of those eyes. A swirling blue-green. Like something spotted from the Hubble, Robert had once thought, vast newly seen distances from the void. How easily he could forget how much he loved her. Reach for her hand, Robert heard in his head, Dr. Gottman nudging him along. Find shared meaning.

Robert adjusted his posture. "How about that Rothko?" he tried.

"That was incredible."

"I mean, a goddam Rothko," Robert said, as the car sped through another near-red light.

At home, Paulette held the elevator while Robert hustled into the kitchen and grabbed the dog, Shawnie instantly going all lunatic, loping about, his tail conducting his own excitement. Paulette laughed, seeing man and man's best friend approach, and while Robert could recognize the bullshit sitcom pantomime, he still performed his part. When the elevator was halfway down, his phone chirped: it was Paulette—specifically, a photo of Paulette's dress hitched up and revealing her underwear. This was Bill Harrison's doing. During dinner he had angled the conversation toward sex, as he often did on these occasions, as though in testament to his iconoclasm, his virility. Bill mentioned how he and Anna had got into sexting recently—chuckling around the table—and in particular how they liked to send naughty pics back and forth, how this made their days infi-

nitely more interesting. Those wild Harrisons. Soon enough, Terry Van Buren was sending Sally a photo of himself from the bathroom, Sally cackling, "Oh, my God!" as everyone pleaded for a glimpse. Robert was thankful that Paulette had refrained from participating, not because he was a prude but because he suddenly really fucking hated that cocksucker Bill Harrison.

But here Paulette was now.

The hint of hairlessness where there once was hair.

Robert texted back, *So lovely*, trying to be nice.

Needing to clear his head and stretch his legs, Robert walked the dog north, into Central Park. At this hour it was empty except for a few bold tourists on the path and random seedier elements who lingered half-hidden in the trees, often just representatives of one's imagination. Shawnie pulled on the leash, easing up on command only to pull again a few seconds later. As if there was a scent. A trail. A pressing need on the other end. Robert reached over and unclipped the leash from the choke collar. He had always wanted a dog who would roam by his side, who would obey sharp clicks of the tongue and patiently wait outside stores and restaurants, who would seek human permission for every canine whim. One of those dogs. Not this brainless dope. But he decided to test things, and for a bit Shawnie reflected his ten thousand dollars' worth of training. He heeled. He heeled again. He sniffed and peed. But then something happened, something only a dog would notice or care about, something in the distance, and, head up, tail alert, Shawnie bounded into the darkness.

"Shawnie!"

Robert could hear the rustling of leaves.

"Shawnie, come!"

Rustle-rustle. Stop. Rustle. All in reeks of blue and gray and black.

"Goddammit, Shawnie!"

Robert scooted between park benches and walked toward the sound, downhill, near the trees that bordered the Pond. It was startling, the degree of darkness away from the path. Buildings with their steady lordship receded behind this sudden presence of nature. The ground cover grew thicker.

The air cooler. The smells of soil and other organic material seemed antique in their decay, the outside world like a rolled-up oriental rug, damp and fading, one of those bygone remainders that mildewed in the basement back in Pennsylvania. Robert noticed blond shadings of bedrock surfacing from the earth, and for a moment he conjured up humpback whales rising around him, their skin mica-flecked.

Robert had loved whales when he was a boy.

"Shawnie!"

A pause for listening. Nothing. No rustling. No jangling from the collar.

The more Robert called, the more absurd he appeared to himself. The concerned lilt in his voice, the hopeless scanning of the dark, the rope-like leash limp in his hand, the slow operatic rise toward panic—Robert oscillated between rage and drunken culpability. Stupid dog. Stupid man.

"Shawnie!"

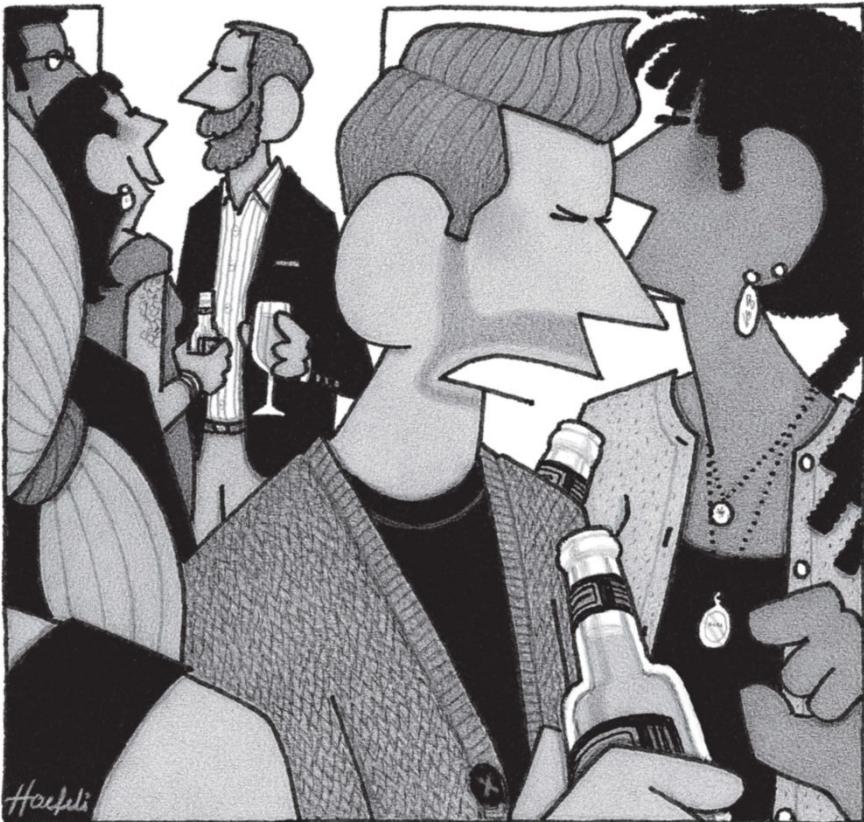
Like a scene from "Lassie." Watched while sprawled on the living-room floor.

Again, Robert listened and searched for movement in the inky Rorschach of trees. The strange unexpected wilderness of Central Park at this late hour. A culvert. The sound of katydids and crickets in the extended warmth of summer, the weeks before Thanksgiving like the week after Memorial Day. There was no moon above. No stars. The night blurred with surrounding ambient light, as though fogged by chlorine.

Robert sweetened his tone. "Shawnie, come on."

Nothing.

He moved closer to the trees. A twig snapped, the result of his own footfall, yet the sound reflected as another presence in the woods, stalking him, and once this idea was introduced, fantasy took hold. Robert almost laughed. The childishness of this fear. He could've been back in Susquehanna, ten years old and scared under the sheets, convinced there was an intruder in the house—how he would become both the murderer and the victim, climbing the stairs as he flattened himself under the comforter, his clueless expendable brother in the other bed. He thought about those missing Herons. Maybe they were hiding some-



"The bastard only funded my Kickstarter at the T-shirt level."

• •

The name Shawnie could have been equal with the name of God.

"Shawnie!"

A few more steps forward and Robert foundered in mud.

Damn.

And then he thought he saw them. The Herons. Tiptoeing through dead leaves, watching him, knowing that his type spooked easily, so be careful, Maggie, be careful, Stan, the four of them fanning around him, their hands spread in a red-rover-red-rover chain.

Robert froze. His eyes went upward, looking again for some civilizing sign—better yet, for the rectangular peak of his building, like the needle of a compass, the darkness down here the shadow of his life up there. Friedrich and Lana resting up for tomorrow. Paulette waiting for him, posed on all fours in bed. They were trying. He was trying. But above him there was just sky, and trees in all directions. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

David Gilbert on New York and money.

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

BOLD TYPE

How Tina Brown and Jann Wenner remixed the magazine.

BY NATHAN HELLER

One night in April, 1983, an Englishwoman, twenty-nine, stepped off a plane at J.F.K. and hailed a cab. She had come to the United States for business, though she would have been hard pressed to say what kind. She already missed her husband and the clatter of his typing back at home. As the cab headed toward Manhattan, Dr. Ruth's show blared on the radio. You "tek it in the mouth und move it slowly, slowly up und down," the good doctor advised. The woman in the cab was Tina Brown, and this was her initiation into the world of media in New York.

In the years since that spring night, Brown has become synonymous with the last great renaissance of American print magazines. At *Vanity Fair* and then at *The New Yorker*, she expanded readerships. Her editorial appetites were fierce; she raked in news and new writers and cash. Some people found her style unsettling, and her victories did little to alter that judgment. Brown's legacy remains controversial not because her success is in question but because, for some, too much was lost in her kind of success.

A chance for reappraisal has now come. "The *Vanity Fair* Diaries: 1983-1992" (Holt) is Brown's private account of her work at *Vanity Fair* for nearly a decade, the editorship often seen as her most dazzling feat. When she took over, less than a year after being blown into New York by Dr. Ruth, the magazine was tens of millions of dollars in the red, with a circulation of about two hundred and fifty thousand. By the time she left, it had more than doubled its pages of advertising and gained

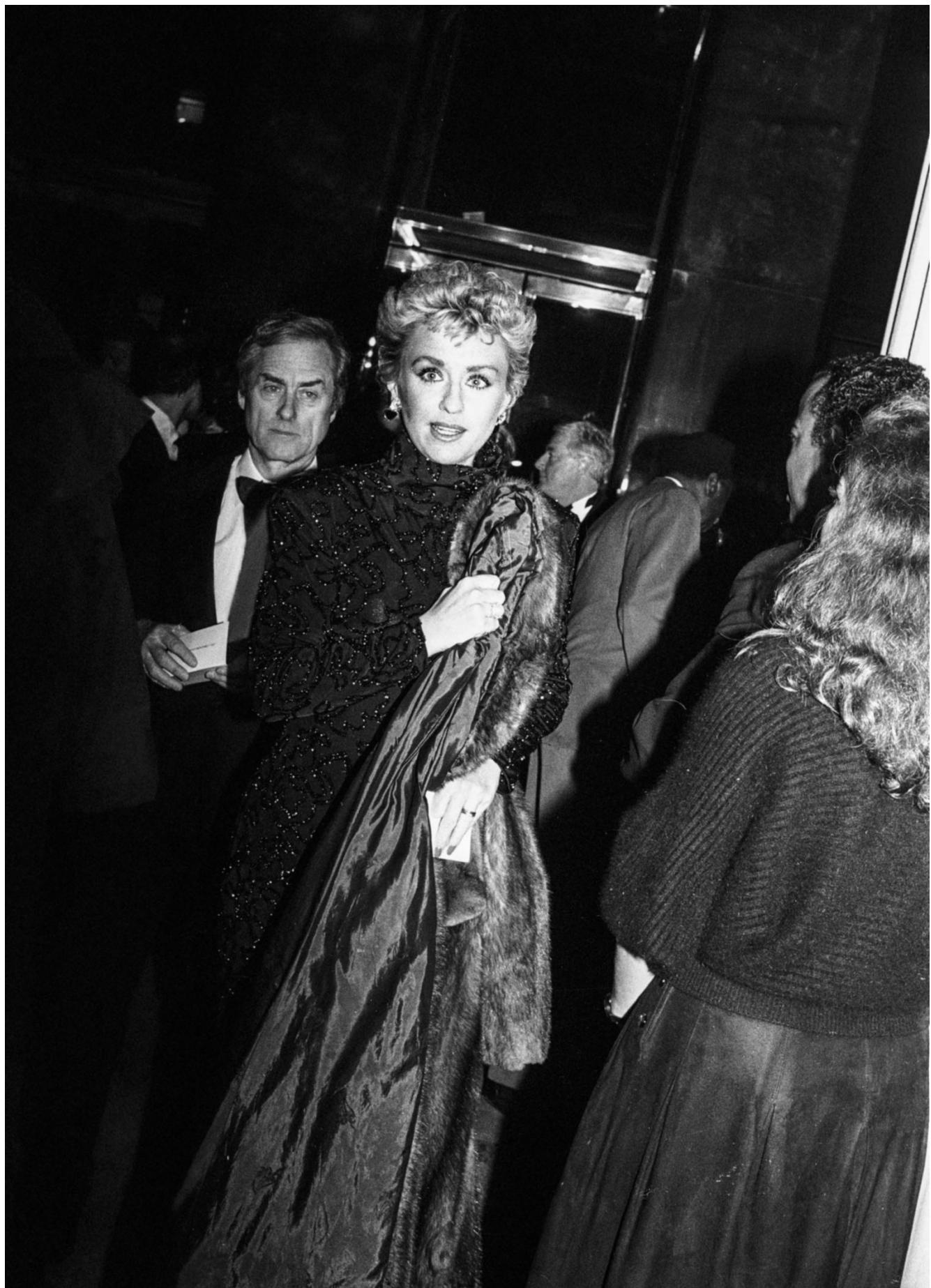
about a million readers. The diaries are a ledger of the workdays in between.

That time was filled with famous people, endless parties, comic misadventure. But it's Brown's reports on editing that offer an illuminating thrill. Brown calls herself "a magazine romantic," and, reading her diary, you see why: she collects old magazines the way some people collect baseball cards, and her entries flutter with the joy of conquest at a time when glossies were reaching a glamorous peak. Her narrative is juicy in the mold less of a chophouse steak than of a summer peach: a little tart, a little sweet, mostly refreshing. It's pretty irresistible. Brown is an entertaining writer of what could be called High Magazinese, a prose of front-loaded descriptors and punch-line squibs (from the introduction: "Large, blond, and ebullient in his well-tailored suits, my father filled a room with his commanding height and broken nose"), and, winsomely, she seems to write this way even when writing for herself. She has a novelist's sense of pacing and a perverse genius for description. One pompous woman is "a coiffed asparagus"; an aging lord's secretary is "a pretty, silent blonde girl with whom he probably enjoys recreational humiliation." Walter Mondale "would make an excellent prime minister of Norway," and Wallace Shawn is "like a small, anxious hippo." (There are misses along with the hits, and some descriptions—"Bill Buckley did a pale, sexy, contact-lens stare at me"—leave the reader not just cold but chilled.)

Every New York bildungsroman has

essentially the same plot. A wide-eyed outsider drifts among the city's urbane and jaded lions with fear and amusement, acutely aware that she is not one of those powerful, entrenched, kind-of-terrible New York people, until, one day, she wakes up and discovers that she is one of those powerful, entrenched, kind-of-terrible New York people. Brown's version is complicated by a sense of doubleness that she has from the start and never sheds; she indulges a persistent feeling that her true creative life lurks elsewhere. "America is too big, too rich, too driven," she writes. "America needs editing." And so she starts.

In the twenties, *Vanity Fair*, the glossy magazine that rose with Dorothy Parker and Robert Benchley, put fizz and tannins in the social ferment of New York. Its project soured during the Depression, though, and, in 1936, it was folded into *Vogue*. The Condé Nast company owned both, and worked to relaunch *Vanity Fair* early in 1983. The goal was sophistication, but that word has many meanings, and the first editor, Richard Locke, seems to have envisaged a Left Bank-style glossy of literature and the arts. The first issues hit newsstands with a thud, and then a rustle of derision. Locke was canned. Meanwhile, Brown was having conversations with the Condé Nast chairman, S. I. Newhouse, Jr., and his editorial director, the émigré artist Alexander Liberman. She studied them like fickle gods on Olympus; throughout the diaries, her writing about men is noticeably more nuanced and more searching than her portraits



Tina Brown (with Harry Evans) at the 1988 C.F.D.A. Fashion Awards dinner, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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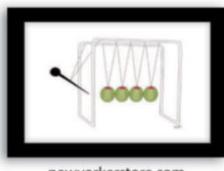
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of her female peers. "I know it's the wrong feminist answer," she confesses at one point, "but most of my role models have been men. They always had the lives I wanted."

Brown had spent her childhood in impish misbehavior before emerging, under Oxford's spires, as a sort of literary wunderkind. While still at school, she sent a play into production at the Edinburgh Festival. She was recruited to *The New Statesman* during her time at Oxford, and by her early twenties was a busy freelance writer. Awkwardly, she fell in love with one of her first editors, Harry Evans, who was twenty-five years older and married; charmingly, they've been together ever since. Evans taught her the editor's craft, she says, and there is more about that than about what she refers to as the "scandale" of their early life. (Possibly it's not that sort of book, or possibly Brown is not that sort of person; of her moment of *coup de cœur* with Evans, she writes, "I fell in love with his professional absorption.")

In 1979, when Brown was twenty-five, she became the editor of *Tatler*, a faded society magazine, and focussed it on the farces of the Royal Family and on the rising, striving Thatcherist world. She wrote much of the copy herself, including, under a pseudonym, a semi-satirical eligible-bachelor roundup. ("Gregory Shenkman is half-Russian but wholly available and in a city overrun with effeminate one-shave-a-day men is refreshingly hairy.") In two years, she expanded the magazine from a wan publication with ten thousand subscribers into a glad rag with tens of thousands more. In 1982, it was bought by Condé Nast, and Brown, restless and restive, left. That's when Newhouse and Liberman called her to New York.

At the office and at the Four Seasons, they talk of *Vanity Fair*. But she isn't sure what they're talking about. "Alex suggested I make a proposal about 'what I need to make this work. We need you.'" Is he offering the editorship? She wants it badly, but cannot bring herself to say so. Instead, she flies back to London and offers to consult on the magazine for a couple of months. This leaves her furious at herself. "No man would have fled town with a prospective editorship on the table," she

writes. Although she dislikes working under Locke's replacement, the *Vogue* veteran Leo Lerman, she learns from her vantage inside the magazine and finds New York thrilling: "It's high-stakes and frightening, which is pretty sexy." ("Sexy" is one of Brown's favorite words.) As the consultancy ends, she works up the courage to tell Newhouse that she wants the editorship. "I will do a good, jazzy job for you, Si, if you want me," she says. Then she goes home and becomes a nervous wreck, wondering whether she let her big break slip away. A doctor she consults suggests that she forget New York and produce children.

But at last a call comes. Brown, who is on Christmas vacation, in Barbados, flies to New York with her beach clothes. She has just turned thirty. But she knows what she wants to do. Her idea of sophistication is urgency, wit, and the eclectic front edge of cultural power. It will be Oscar season when her first issue appears, and she notices a new crop of blond actresses coming through. She puts one of them, Daryl Hannah, on the cover wearing a blindfold, with the line "Blonde Ambition." "She's holding an Oscar statuette in each hand like a glitzy version of blind justice, which adds another level of double entendre as the fate of the mag weighs in the balance," she tells her diary. If there was another meaning to be found in Tina Brown's naming her first American cover "Blonde Ambition," it does not seem to have occurred to Tina Brown.

What makes a great editor? The answer is not obvious, because neither is the nature of an editor's creative work. Some editors-in-chief are micromanagers. Others roam. Some are dais creatures; many huddle at their desks. The basic task of editing is to serve as a polarized filter—to let in light this way and not that way—but good magazine editors do something more: they focus light into a sensibility that comes through on each page. A *GQ* editor knows how his or her readers aren't *Esquire*'s. An editor moving from *The American Prospect* to *The Nation* must recalibrate in taste. "You have to be able to throw a magazine on the floor opened to any page and

instantly know what magazine you're looking at and who the reader is," a British editor tells Brown. She takes it as a standard for *Vanity Fair*.

Magazines can be text-driven, or photo-driven, or headline- and package-driven. What editors focus their attention on—what they bend and crimp the other elements around—transforms accordingly. Brown's *Vanity Fair* was driven by what she calls the "mix": the table of contents, the balancing and juxtaposition of features. "The endless conundrum of how to get the mix perfect is what keeps me from getting bored," she writes. A mixologist needs an instinct for eclecticism (*this* pairing is dull, *that* one has a kick) and a sensitivity to context. Also, a big cutting-room floor. Brown famously yanked pieces that didn't suit an issue; at one point, she kills three things because the mix includes an excess of bald heads.

"People management" becomes an issue in this climate. (The diaries' heroes are Brown's managing editor, who manages with sanity and warmth, and the Condé Nast human-resources head, who makes people problems go away.) Yet Brown rarely tires of writers, which is impressive, because writers, as a tribe, are strange. They keep odd hours and have weird, often bad ideas. At gatherings, they tend to skulk or to be over-present, like a recently uncrated Labrador leaping to lick your nose while piddling on your knees. Hollywood is filled with stories of prima-donna actor tantrums, wild affairs, trashed trailers, and overnight benders. Rather than erupting in this healthy manner, writers go home and quietly develop suicidal snacking habits, or unnecessary family troubles, or a rash.

The upside is that good writers, in their best moments, can conjure from a blank expanse of nothingness *something*: a text with a shape, a voice, a world, even a personality of its own, able to speak to those its author would consider strangers—the same thing that photographers and illustrators manage in their frames. The novelist William Maxwell, a *New Yorker* fiction editor for four decades, used to say that he could play on a writer's talent like a piano. Brown's first Bösendorfer in New York is Dominick Dunne, whom she meets at a dinner during her 1983 visit. He says that he has never writ-

ten nonfiction, but she knows he has the sound she wants. "I asked if he'd thought about writing for magazines," she says. "The emotion of the night ratcheted up when Dominick suddenly revealed to me something terrible—his daughter, Dominique, was murdered." He's about to go to Los Angeles for the trial, and Brown encourages him to keep a diary—she'd love to publish something, she says.

Dunne soon becomes a critical part of her mix, along with photographers such as Annie Leibovitz and Helmut Newton. "A VF formula that works is beginning to finally suggest itself," she writes. "Celeb cover to move the newsstand, juicy news narrative . . . A-list literary piece, visual escapism, revealing political profile, fashion. If we nail each of these per issue it's gonna work."

Her mixological skill helps her to dash a playful range into a newsstand of carefully channelled readerships. December, 1984: Joan Collins cover ("SHE RHYMES WITH RICH"); also, Muriel Spark on Piero della Francesca, Styron on Capote. A glance through these issues complicates Brown's reputation as a forward-looking iconoclast, ripping up the old order for something untested and new: mixology is the oldest practice in the editing of magazines—the word "magazine" originally referred to a storehouse—and she understands herself predominantly as a restoration gal, peeling away the shag carpet to reveal the parquet floors.



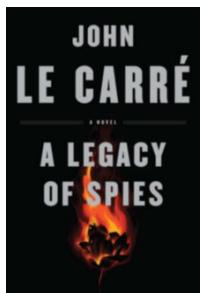
When she edited *Tatler*, her models were the piquant *Tatler* of the Augustan Age and a later, Jazz Age iteration. At *The New Yorker*, she sought to restore the newsier, jauntier illustrated weekly invented by Harold Ross. When she started at *Vanity Fair*, she cast off the zappy type and the coffee-table culture writing of seventies Condé Nast and reembraced the crispness of the twenties magazine. Glamorous, irreverent; traditional, fresh. Her risky vi-

sion was to have something for everybody, but to get the whole to hang together, too.

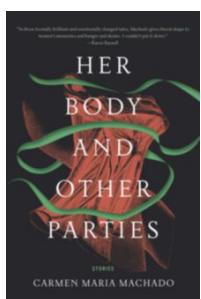
A reader expecting the steely workings of a brash executive mind will be surprised by Brown's inner life. She is bookish, uncertain, frequently unaware. When she tries to rent an apartment, she gives five thousand dollars in cash to a con man. She's a self-described introvert who quails at going out and spends a New Year's Eve alone in her apartment. She must remind herself that she's always glad she went to parties. (She gets her ideas there.) She is a balky, fussy writer, once holing up for three days in a hotel room trying to produce a thousand words on Henry Kissinger. She can often barely stand New York, and thinks she would be happier in California. If she is to stay sane in the city, she decides, she'll need to leave on weekends, so she and her husband rent a beach house out in Quogue, on Long Island, and she spends the Friday-afternoon rail trips staring dreamily out the window, relishing "that lonely sound of the train's honky warning as it rounds the bend."

She feels more comfortable in Quogue than in Manhattan, but, when they scrape together cash to buy the rental house, their mortgage application is rejected. In London, she never thought about money, she realizes. But in New York, despite making much more than she ever has (she is hired at a hundred and thirty thousand dollars, the equivalent of about three hundred thousand today), she frets about it constantly, feels that she never has enough, and finds herself obliged to act as if she had more than she does. A friend calls this "the New York disease." She finds it tiring. She longs for English self-effacement, and the days when she could read Philip Larkin in bed. When a British journalist notes her suit, her coif, and her "newsreader's smile," she winces: it's a costume, she thinks, an effort to pass. She tells herself that this "outer life"—the job, the dinner parties, the United States—is temporary, research for a novel she is going to write. The big question around diaries is always motivation: Why? For Brown, it becomes clear, the entries are a way of taking all the stuff that flies at you and framing it, weaving a story about an adventitious heroine called Tina Brown. "Here I live

BRIEFLY NOTED



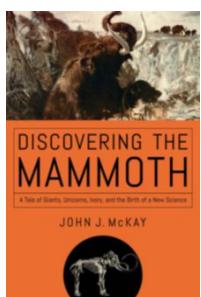
A Legacy of Spies, by John le Carré (*Viking*). The first George Smiley novel in more than twenty years, this thriller revisits intelligence operations from le Carré's masterpieces "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold" and "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" through the eyes of a Smiley disciple, Peter Guillam. We see Guillam—romantic Lothario, empathetic mercenary—both during the Cold War and in retirement, reckoning with events in which he participated. Le Carré meticulously unspools the two narratives, and creates tantalizing mystery around the ghostly absence of Smiley. The dénouement is less powerful than in earlier books, but le Carré remains unmatched at showing complex characters caught between human nature and inhuman institutions.



Her Body and Other Parties, by Carmen Maria Machado (*Gray-wolf*). In this début story collection, Machado moves among horror, science fiction, and realism, creating worlds that range from lightly surreal to dystopian. A seamstress sews the incorporeal bodies of vanished women into ball gowns; a middle-aged mother, recovering from gastric-bypass surgery, is haunted by the featureless, fleshy mass of her former self; a husband tries to uncover the secret behind a green ribbon that his wife wears around her neck, despite her pleas for him to desist. Occasionally, Machado's genre-bending conceits overreach, but her use of a vivid experimental lens to show women struggling for agency is startling.



Fray, by Julia Bryan-Wilson (*Chicago*). Combining history and criticism, this study of textile crafting highlights its social and political aspects. Bryan-Wilson explores items as varied as the Cockettes' drag-queen costumes, Chilean *arpilleras* that documented Pinochet's dictatorship, and the ideological rifts occasioned by the AIDS quilt. Discussing current crafting trends within the context of globalized mass production, she examines art—such as the unravelled-velvet "blacklets" of Angela Hennessy—that physically deconstructs fabric as a means of commenting on the meaning craft practices have for black women and other marginalized groups. Textiles, she writes, "are used to make the tangible things that surround bodies and that organize, structure, and lend meaning to the contours of everyday life."



Discovering the Mammoth, by John J. McKay (*Pegasus*). Mammals, before their extinction, coexisted with humans. But, as this intellectual history shows, seventeenth-century discoveries of gigantic bones provoked far-reaching perplexity. Early finds were thought to be the remains of Hannibal's elephants, an explanation that became untenable once skeletons were dug from the Siberian permafrost. The resulting reevaluation accelerated the understanding of biological extinction, and the growing realization that the earth is millions of years older than the Bible suggests. "Is it excessive to say that without the mammoth there would have been no paleontology and no dinosaurs?" McKay asks. Perhaps. But he argues persuasively for the mammoth as "a catalyst that drove a revolution in thinking."

in a permanent red-hot present, fascinated, appalled, thrilled, amused, enraged—but never ultimately touched, because in the end I am always a spectator and a foreigner," she writes.

That look at life from the outside gives the diaries good humor, and it offers Brown a kind of armor from herself. She has a healthy, possibly un-American attitude toward daily failures—she takes them as a cost of playing the game—and records her flops with matter-of-fact dispatch. She blew that crucial advertising meeting. She felt distracted by office politics and was rubbish on TV. That dinner party she gave? A comic disaster. Oh, well. It all keeps coming at you anyway. Despite her Britishness, she is a classic New York workaholic: it's not that she adores being in the grind of labor; it's that she is devoured by anxiety when she's not.

Not all things translate. Like many Europeans, Brown concludes that the U.S. has no sense of humor. She is baffled when Sally Quinn disinvites her from Ben Bradlee's birthday, after a *Vanity Fair* review calls Quinn's new novel "clitterature." She recalls a friend's impious joke, about the men in the late Christina Onassis's life, sending Brits into conniptions and causing a scandalized American to flee the room. The humorlessness complaint also has an editorial dimension. British editors often seem to hire writers, editors, artists, and photographers with an eye to character and quirk, as if casting an opera buffa: there's the prince, the ingénue, the intellectual, the dame, the dandy, the wit, and the sharp-shooting kid. Americans tend to favor well-decorated men and women who make sound and solid points, as if staffing a cabinet. In the diaries, Brown chafes against the sanctimony of American newsprint. "What I miss here is the surprise of a Hollywood splash lighting up a news page or an irreverent headline undercutting a pompous public moment," she laments. "There is huge snobbery and hand-wringing here about what 'serious' papers 'should' publish and where writers 'should' write."

By many measures, though, Brown's eighties world was less rule-governed than the present, and some rascals show their colors early on its schoolyard turf. In June of 1986, Brown

goes to Oxford for a story on the death of a young heiress from a heroin overdose. She hires a student journalist, Allegra Mostyn-Owen, to make introductions. Mostyn-Owen fobs off Brown at a lunch with posh kids and her boyfriend, “a young fogey with a thatch of blond hair and a plummy voice called Boris Johnson.” A bit later, the *Sunday Telegraph* publishes, under Mostyn-Owen’s byline, a snarky account of Brown’s visit, centered on the lunch. Brown finds that she’s extensively misquoted—unsurprisingly, since Mostyn-Owen wasn’t there. “Boris Johnson is an epic shit,” Brown concludes. “I hope he ends badly.”

She does better with other opportunists. At a dinner party given by Ann Getty in 1987, she finds herself between the editor Lewis Lapham and an Italian art dealer. Nearby is Donald Trump. “Ann, for some reason, monopolized Lapham for two courses, leaving me and Trump both stranded, so he leaned over them and started bombarding me with interest,” she writes.

“Tina,” he shouted, “what do you think of the *Newsweek* cover story on me?” “I haven’t read it,” I told him.

“You know, Tina, I could have had *Time*. They wanted me and I saw them, too. But *Newsweek* scooped them. Who do you think’s better, Tina, *Newsweek* or *Time*? ”

“*Time*,” I said mischievously.

“You really think so, Tina, you really think so?” His pouty Elvis face folded into a frown of self-castigation. “I guess it sells more,” he said in a tormented tone. “I guess it does.” Then he brightened. “You know how much Fawn Hall gets for a one-night appearance? Twenty-five thousand dollars! I’ve booked her for the night at Trump Tower. She can’t sing. She can’t dance. So what. She’s so hot everyone’s gonna come.” . . .

“You see this man, Trump,” hissed the Italian on the other side of me. “He is trying to force you to think like him, and I think it’s working.”

From then on, our President drifts through Brown’s memoir like a hot-air balloon in search of power lines. *Vanity Fair* publicizes the moniker “the Donald.” Brown has decided to excerpt his forthcoming book, “The Art of the Deal,” and that choice seems to mark the moment when her foreigner’s double consciousness sharpens into the shrewd detachment of the age. “It feels, when you have finished it, as if you’ve

been nose to nose for four hours with an entertaining con man,” she writes. “I suspect the American public will like nothing better.”

The secret self, the deference to effect, the calculating taste—all these shape a curious growth narrative, a story less about becoming than about appearing to become. Is there a difference? It’s a truism that the worlds of glamour, power, and success are populated with people who think they got in on a fluke and don’t belong. As far as creativity goes, though, is that sense of doubleness the static or the sound? The serious subject in the shadows of Brown’s account is the influence of a success economy on creative work. Pognantly, it also emerges as a question in the long arc of Brown’s life.

It’s instructive in some ways to look to an old master. Joe Hagan’s splendid new biography, “Sticky Fingers: The Life and Times of Jann Wenner and *Rolling Stone Magazine*” (Knopf), lays bare a subject who’s notorious for his appetites in commerce and fame. Yet Wenner’s flagship publication was also a crucial vector of the counterculture and an early champion of alternative art. Is there a contradiction? Hagan’s book is richly sourced, fair-minded, and, helpfully here, attentive to the tricky rapport between individual ambition and the growth of a creative enterprise through time. His underlying idea is that Wenner, far from being a flower-child fanboy who struck gold, was a business prodigy who realized that the boomer counterculture was aspirational, and thus salable—that the young people who bought a bus ticket to San Francisco, bought a tab of acid, bought “Jefferson Airplane Takes Off” weren’t really that different from the women who ad-shopped *Vogue* or the cocktail-party pundits who took *Partisan Review*. Wenner had been largely indifferent to music through his teens, when he was a loud, social-climbing, student-government type. (Multiple classmates recall him as “obnoxious”; at one point, he returned a girlfriend’s love letters with grammatical corrections.) But he recognized a need. “His original insight of 1967 was an abiding one: that the 1960s were, at bottom, a business,” Hagan writes.

Rolling Stone was not the first rock-criticism magazine; it was preceded by *Crawdaddy!* and *Mojo-Navigator*. It struck a nerve, though. Early issues, Hagan notes, were on newsprint with a trippy logo, but the pieces appeared in clear, crisp columns, “a no-frills *Daily Worker* for stoned rock fans.” This was shrewdness. Wenner: “What they respond to is somebody talking to them straight.” On the newsstand, *Rolling Stone* seemed *real*, man, and yet Wenner ran it with establishment concern. He went into business with Mick Jagger, and then put him on the cover. He let John Lennon edit his own interview—then sold it as a book, without Lennon’s approval. When *Rolling Stone* was drowning in debt, in 1970, Wenner bailed it out with money from the record labels and then, Hagan says, tweaked reviews critical of their stars. As the sixties ended and realness lost its market value, Wenner went fancy, “reframing rock and roll as a celebrity culture like any before it,” Hagan writes. All this seems to conspire against the sovereignty of creative freedom and outsider art.

Here’s the thing, though: who has ever read a piece from *Crawdaddy!* or *Mojo-Navigator*? Meanwhile, the art of portraiture made strides in the young Annie Leibovitz’s daring *Rolling Stone* photos, and “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas” (which *Rolling Stone* published), by Hunter S. Thompson (whom it brought into the footlights), is as genuinely “alt” a chronicle as exists. In recent years, Wenner has expressed nagging anxiety about social media, and it isn’t hard to see why. Imperial commercial ambitions now cross with an audience and a stage for creative discovery in, for instance, Facebook. A periodical can no longer survive just as an object with a table of contents; somehow, it must be first at hand—on phones, in earbuds, in life—without droning like a swarm of bees. Going forward, one imagines, visionary digital-age editors will be packagers: those who take this amorphous buzzing explosion, give it a shape, and figure out a way to sell it again as a special box.

Until then, strong voices, more than strong editors, lead. That hardly seems a good thing for truly creative work. Habits of doubleness are inherent in

many editors, not just Brown. (Hagan makes much of Wenner's long-closeted homosexuality.) It seems to help. Although such gatekeepers cater to the market gaze of readers, their aloofness guards them from easy consensus. They exist beyond the groupthink that emerges around voices in a crowd. Figures like the sales-minded gallerists who rent the space, draw viewers, set the frames, and put work on the wall tend to be absent from the legends of triumphant outsider artists such as Hunter Thompson. The editorial servants of a success economy may not be in the game for admirable reasons, but they make it possible for us to learn the work of the people who are.

What was Brown in it for? In the introduction, lest we get the wrong idea, she apologizes for the number of rich people in her book. That, she writes, was the eighties! The note feels gratuitous, partly because Brown's relationship to the swells is plainly vexed, and partly because the odd thing isn't her diary's glamour but its aperture. Major world events receive only a passing mention. Her entry for October 27, 1987, begins, "The stock market has crashed!", and then drifts into talk of portentous conversations she has heard at parties. AIDS gets ink, because it felled some of her friends and colleagues, but other spectres creep up on her. ("Return to New York and suddenly feel the stark difference between rich and poor," one entry begins, in 1987.) Throughout her career, Brown has been described as a newshound or as a trader in buzzy ideas, but the diaries suggest something else. Brown is a *people* hound, registering change when it crosses her near field of vision. Her gift is to feel the big story emerging in the small, human detail.

That instinct fuelled her rescue of *Vanity Fair*. In 1985, when its sustainability is still unclear and Newhouse comes within a hairsbreadth of pulling the plug, she scores a photo shoot with the Reagans, in the White House. As the First Couple breezes through, wearing black tie, her photographer starts playing a recording of Sinatra's "Nancy (with the Laughing Face)" on a boom box. The Reagans are taken aback. Then they begin to dance. The

First Lady kicks up a heel. *Snap, snap*. They kiss. *Snap. This*, Brown decides, is the image of the eighties.

How many of the thousands of reporters keeping vigil on the White House recognized what Brown saw—that the cornerstone of the Administration's success and resonance was not the policies or the polish but the public mystery of the Reagans' marriage? The kicked-up heel lands on *Vanity Fair*'s cover. The kiss is printed big inside, cropped close across the fold, with sixteen hundred words of perfumed prose on love and power. The spread changes the magazine's fortunes. Newsstand sales leap, and subscriptions nearly double from a year before. Headlines about *Vanity Fair*, long doomsaying, now marvel at its turnaround. "What you've done is nothing short of a miracle," Newhouse tells Brown. In 1987, in the wake of the collapsing market, the November issue breaches into the black.

The rhythm of Brown's social life hastens. Evans, who has been editing at *U.S. News & World Report* in Washington, D.C., comes back to New York to launch *Condé Nast Traveler*. They throw a joint party, and Helmut Newton shows off a boudoir mag he's founded. It contains a couple of photos of fellatio and what Brown calls "typical Newton, *Cabaret*-esque decadence with sinister animal sex thrown in." It is a waggish vision of the editorial road untaken: "Fuck it!" he exploded. "I'm sixty-seven on Halloween. What am I waiting for? To print cock-sucking when I am dead? To hell with it! I am paying for this myself." To which there is no answer really." More parties follow. Brown's patience for this landscape varies. "I love New York City, period," she writes one day. Then, some weeks later: "The thought of the city gives me herpes of the brain."

By now, though, her ambivalence has a protective edge. In 1985, in the midst of rescuing her publication, she discovered she was pregnant. Her son was born two months early, at a stressful time. The complications spooked her ("So you think you're going to romp through motherhood, too, huh? ... Remember pain and grief and failure?"), but she grew absorbed in her role. "It's so damn tough to make

the power woman-to-mommy switch," she writes. She worries about the life she leaves behind each morning; she fires a nanny who she gathers is competing for her son's affection. "I want to be home with my baby! Our house is too turbulent," she writes. "Knowing this makes me guilty." It seems to strike her for the first time that the way she's living is, in fact, her life.

Brown's all-in moment comes in 1989. *Vanity Fair* has won a big award. Its numbers are still climbing. The C.E.O. of Hearst courts her, offering *Harper's Bazaar* and the moon. Sensing her opportunity, Brown sends a shark agent to Newhouse and ends up with what she calls a "megadeal": forgiveness for a three-hundred-thousand-dollar loan, a salary increase to six hundred thousand, and a million-dollar bonus at the end of a three-year contract. What's more, Newhouse offers to pay her parents' health bills and to move them back to London from Spain, where they're at the end of their savings. "This is the day I will never forget as long as I live, the day I made my quantum leap," she exclaims. In her eyes, it is when she finally masters New York. Of course, it's also when the city finally masters her.

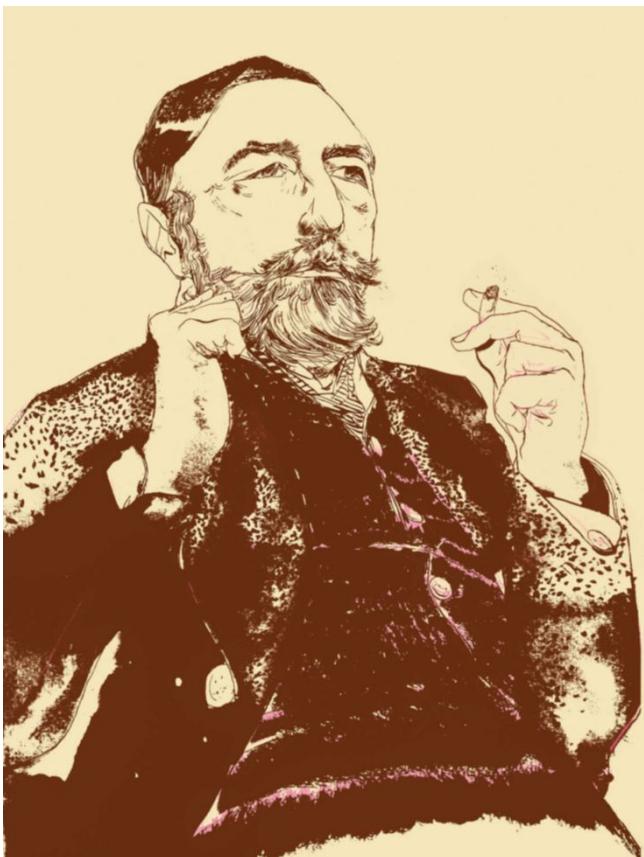
Or is it? Even after consecrating herself to the megadeal, Brown is fickle: "A few weeks without my trainer dragging me out of bed at six, a few forgotten visits to Louis Licari"—her very busy hairdresser—"in two months I would be a big girl in thick glasses with a bushy ponytail. How lovely that sounds." Another child is on the way. Her "stubborn dream," she confides to the diary, is to be an Oxford college master. When Evans is appointed head of Random House, her happiness comes with a sting of dread. "That locks us into NYC for another five years," she writes. "I will have to stop imagining there could still be an alternate reality in London."

She never stops looking behind her, at what was or, at least, could have been. But, for all her doubleness of vision, her escape path is now overgrown. The only option is to stay and continue mixing issues, showing up at dinner parties, getting three hundred blowouts a year. The only option, really, is to keep becoming Tina Brown. ♦

THE MARINER'S PRAYER

Was Joseph Conrad right to think that everyone was getting him wrong?

BY LEO ROBSON



In March, 1893, John Galsworthy—a product of Harrow and Oxford who had recently passed the English bar exam—was boarding the passenger ship *Torreens*, in Port Adelaide, when he noticed a small man with black hair boisterously loading cargo. In a letter home, a month into the voyage, he described “a capital chap,” Polish, somewhat odd-looking, with “a fund of yarns on which I draw freely.” Galsworthy’s sister credited this encounter with turning him away from the law. By early 1897, Galsworthy had assembled a book of short stories, and his Polish friend, who had engineered a midlife career change of his own from British seaman to English novelist, under the name Joseph

Conrad, was writing to Edward Garnett, who worked as a publisher’s reader—a sort of grand scout—asking him to look out for a manuscript by “my literary! friend.”

Mostly, though, the favors travelled in the other direction. For the next couple of decades, Galsworthy served as Conrad’s consigliere—lobbying the Royal Literary Fund (“No living writer of English, to my mind, better deserves support”), fielding Conrad’s queries about his son’s education (“I am sending you the prospectus to look at”), playing “in between’ man” during a dispute with the agent J. B. Pinker (“Conrad asks me to ask you to write to him”). One of Galsworthy’s greatest acts of service came in 1913, after

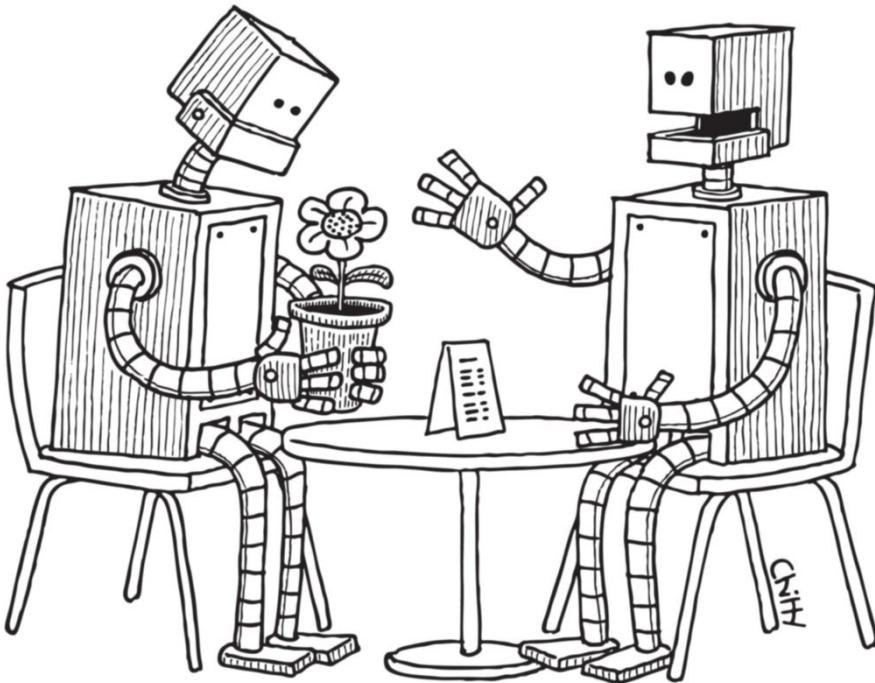
the publisher Frank Nelson Doubleday invited Conrad to lunch, in London, and proposed purchasing his existing American copyrights and reprinting his books. Conrad welcomed the idea, but, fearing it wouldn’t come off, asked Galsworthy if he could write to his friend Alfred A. Knopf, the Doubleday, Page employee who, in Conrad’s words, had formulated “this plan of ‘taking me up.’”

Knopf was twenty years old and brimming with ideas for remedying the outrage that “a great writer” could fail to command “a large audience.” Among his promotional schemes was an illustrated pamphlet, a press release parading as an essay. On receiving word from Galsworthy, he sent Conrad an effusive letter along with an aging, error-strewn ten-page typescript entitled “Joseph Conrad,” which he had found somewhere and was gutting for information.

Conrad read the typescript carefully, and made numerous amendments and additions. The southern province of Poland, where he was born in 1857, was “Ukraine.” His father, Apollo, a poet and translator, and his mother, Ewa, had been exiled to Vologda, not Siberia, for their support of Polish nationalism. (Apollo had marked Conrad’s birth with a poem entitled “To My Son Born in the 85th Year of Muscovite Oppression.”) When he was orphaned, at the age of eleven, he was “taken care of by his mother’s brother.” Conrad’s first voyages, in his late teens, had been to the Gulf of Mexico and the Mediterranean. Then he joined an English steamer—not a war vessel—bound for the Sea of Azov (not the Bosphorus). Where the “notes on me,” in his phrase, had mentioned “a trip to Pacific waters,” Conrad explained that after becoming a master in the English merchant marine—and a British citizen—he spent much of the eighteen-eighties in the East, organizing steamers out of Singapore, then commanding the bark *Otago*. The *Torreens*, he wrote, had been a sort of “swan-song.”

But Knopf wasn’t just asking for help with facts. He was granting Conrad a collaborative role in telling his own story—the selection of detail, the fixing of emphasis. In the finished pamphlet, which closely follows Conrad’s responses and his memoir, “A Personal Record” (Conrad sent Knopf a copy),

Conrad mined his life for material, but chafed at being called a “writer of the sea.”



"Can't we go five minutes without you checking your flower?"

• •

something else, and perhaps something more, than a writer of the sea—or even of the tropics."

In a limited sense, Conrad was simply stating what he considered to be a fact. As he put it not long before his death, in 1924, and exaggerating only a little, "In the body of my work barely one tenth is what may be called sea stuff." Things get a little shakier when you reach the bit about "the tropics." With few exceptions, most notably his novel about anarchists in late-Victorian London, "The Secret Agent" (1907), his stories unfold in Asia, Africa, and South America. But then Conrad was really talking aesthetics, not arithmetic—and making, or not quite making, an argument about how he treated his settings.

It had taken him a little while to find his favored route to abstraction. In his great novella, "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" (1897), about a sailor who refuses to accept that he is dying, the material world—the sailors' "forecastle," the London streets—is solidly present and correct. As Alan H. Simmons explains in his new scholarly edition, part of Cambridge's complete printing of Conrad's works, the novel-

ist distinguished between writers who treat the sea as simply "a stage" and writers in whose work the sea represents "a factor in the problem of existence." "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" straddles the border. The ship is a setting as well as a symbol, a microclimate as well as a microcosm. But it's possible to see Conrad chafing at the constraints of realist storytelling in his use of philosophical digression—and hinting at future priorities in the book's final paragraphs, which shift from a collective viewpoint with moments of omniscience, a "we" that behaves like a "he," to an unabashed first person: "I never saw one of them again."

Next came the breakthrough—a startlingly original narrative voice that not only severed Conrad's fiction from realism but questioned the idea of a consensual "reality." In January, 1898, the month after "The Nigger" was published, Conrad wrote the story "Youth," introducing the forty-two-year-old merchant seaman Charles Marlow, who recalls his maiden voyage to Eastern seas. Defined by his creator as "a mere device . . . a whispering 'daemon,'" Marlow is more specifically a vehicle for exploring the perspectival nature of human affairs—the idea that, for example, the Indian Ocean has no stable essence or identity beyond the excitement it inspires in one excitable twenty-year-old sailor. Recalling the Judea, the bark on which he served as second mate, Marlow says that, to him, it was not "an old rattle-trap" but "the endeavour, the test, the trial of life." Youth is what Marlow saw with and what he saw. Places tell us about the people who visit and inhabit them.

Marlow doesn't celebrate the role played by passion or prejudice in our descriptions of the world; it's just something he acknowledges. In Conrad's next Marlow story, "Heart of Darkness" (1899), set in an unnamed colony whose rulers talk exclusively in propagandist falsehoods, Marlow is the one person willing to call a rattletrap a rattletrap. Coming upon a group of natives labelled "enemies," he identifies men who were "nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom." But bafflement is futile. The world

his sea career is presented as virtually a hiatus between an eighteen-sixties childhood spent in prodigious feats of reading and the moment when he started writing "Almayer's Folly" (1895). Even Conrad's taste for the sea is pegged partly to a literary source—his father's translation of Hugo's "Toilers of the Sea," which he read aloud, from beginning to end. A synopsis of Conrad's life at sea that begins "He had been to the corners of the earth" culminates in "He had read widely in English and French." Conrad objected to being defined as "the greatest sea-writer," and Knopf instead celebrated a man who "has attained a distinction as a master of the art of fiction as great as that of any living writer."

Thanks to Galsworthy's intervention, Conrad became a best-selling Doubleday author, but Knopf quit the company soon afterward, leaving Conrad's work with those who hadn't been so closely coached. In 1916, Conrad received the galley proofs for a uniform edition of his work. Its name was "The Otago," the emblem a sailing ship. Returning the pages to Doubleday, he explained that he wanted "to avoid all reference to the sea," and added, "I am

has been rewritten in accordance with the white man's vocabulary. What he says goes.

Conrad's theme is familiar from countless earlier writers, notably Flaubert, who in "Madame Bovary" and "Sentimental Education" measured the gulf between fact and fantasy. But, where Flaubert adopted an air of superhuman detachment, Conrad insures that Marlow's position is itself relativized. Though clearly Conrad's alter ego and even mouthpiece, Marlow is not the narrator of "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness" but a yarn-spinner described by a member of his audience. Everything he says comes pinched between inverted commas.

The uncertainties are multiplied in "Lord Jim" (1900), Conrad's first full-length novel using this method. It concerns the spiritual odyssey of a young "water clerk," drawn to the sea by "light holiday literature," who abandons a sinking passenger ship called the Patna. The story, mostly delivered as a dinner-table anecdote, has been cobbled together from Marlow's own "impression" of Jim—at the Patna inquiry and during the warm friendship that followed—and from the reminiscences of various bit players, including the dying mercenary "Gentleman Brown" and "an elderly French lieutenant whom I came across one afternoon in Sydney, by the merest chance, in a sort of cafe." But the witnesses, far from helping him to "get at the truth of anything," only reinforce Marlow's sense that "there are as many ship-wrecks as there are men"—logic that holds not just for "belief" and "thought" and "conviction" but also for "the visual aspect of material things." Although "Lord Jim" departs from the previous Marlow tales in its use of an authorial narrator, the novel opens with this putative God's-eye view unable to determine whether Jim is one or two inches "under six feet." (In "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'" we are left in no doubt that James Wait is six-three.)

Reading Conrad today, it's easy to see why he struggled to explain what he was up to. "I am *modern*," he declared, in 1902. But his intentions became more intelligible in light of newer words and later work. The treatment of knowledge as contingent and

provisional commands a range of comparisons, from "Rashomon" to Richard Rorty; reference points for Conrad's fragmentary method include Picasso and T. S. Eliot—who took the epigraph of "The Hollow Men" from "Heart of Darkness." (That book would have played the same role in "The Waste Land" if Ezra Pound hadn't objected.) Even Henry James's late period, that other harbinger of the modernist novel, had not yet begun when Conrad invented Marlow, and James's earlier experiments in perspective ("The Spoils of Poynton," "What Maisie Knew") don't go nearly as far as "Lord Jim."

Looking back at the "new form" he had created, Conrad said that he "kept it up" only because "it was essentially mine." That could suggest complacency, but during the spectacular decade and a half that followed "Lord Jim" his storytelling underwent a series of revisions. Marlow's duties were given to other characters, such as Morrison, an Englishman adrift in what is now Indonesia, who reconstructs the story of the reclusive Heyst, in "Victory" (1915); and the shadowy "teacher of languages," in "Under Western Eyes" (1910), who provides an enticing, if ultimately rather cryptic, tour of the Russian community in Geneva. In "Nostromo" (1904), Conrad's portrait of an invented South American republic, and "The Secret Agent," the combined roles of the narrator and Marlow are assumed by a restless third-person intelligence that floats through the fictional world, jumping about in time, picking up one perspective, then another.

The device that Conrad called "irony" persists across these variations. At one level, the word simply describes his dramatic method, in which the reader knows more than any single character. But Conrad also adopted a broader ironic stance—a sort of blanket incredulity, defined by a character in "Under Western Eyes" as the negation of all faith, devotion, and action. Through control of tone and narrative detail, as well as some fairly overt nudging, Conrad exposes what he considered to be the naïveté of movements like anarchism and socialism, and the self-serving logic of such historical but "naturalized" phenomena as capitalism

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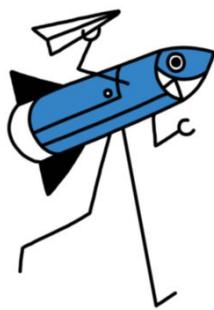
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(piracy with good P.R.), rationalism (an elaborate defense against our innate irrationality), and imperialism (a grandiose front for old-school rape and pillage). To be ironic is to be awake—and alert to the prevailing “sommolence.” In “Nostromo,” a novel full of people getting carried away, we are invited to admire the journalist Martin Decoud for ridiculing the idea that people “believe themselves to be influencing the fate of the universe.” (H.G. Wells recalled Conrad’s astonishment that “I could take social and political issues seriously.”)

What saves Conrad’s work from coldness and nihilism is his embrace of an alternative ideal. If irony exists to suggest that there’s more to things than meets the eye, Conrad further insists that, when we pay close enough attention, the “more” can be endless. He doesn’t reject what Marlow calls “the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilisation” in favor of nothing; he rejects them in favor of “something,” “some saving truth,” “some exorcism against the ghost of doubt”—an intimation of a deeper order, one not easily reduced to words. Authentic, self-aware emotion—feeling that doesn’t call itself “theory” or “wisdom”—becomes a kind of standard-bearer, with “impressions” or “sensations” the nearest you get to solid proof. Marlow may be just another partial observer, another myopic pair of eyes, but he knows what he is, so we trust his sincerity about the “glamour” he found in the East, or the depth of his engagement with Jim’s fate:

He swayed me. I own to it, I own up. The occasion was obscure, insignificant—what you will: a lost youngster, one in a million . . . an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind’s conception of itself.

It’s an article of faith among Conrad’s biographers that the stiff-backed, sure-footed Galsworthy, the socially conscious author of “The Forsyte Saga”—and the recipient of the 1932



Nobel Prize in Literature—could not possibly have understood his friend’s writing. But an essay he wrote in 1908, “Joseph Conrad: A Disquisition,” remains one of the sharpest accounts of Conrad’s use of perspective. The editors of the nine-volume collection of Conrad letters—an amazing achievement, overseen by Laurence Davies—suggest that Conrad liked the essay because it praised him. But he may have felt a deeper satisfaction in reading of the way he had used “the cosmic spirit” to escape his sense of “how small and stupid, how unsafe and momentary, solution is.”

“Joseph Conrad: A Disquisition” is a special case of privileged-access criticism: Galsworthy was aware of his friend’s intentions. More common were the reviews and articles that drew on knowledge of Conrad’s life—to this day, the dominant mode of commentary on his work. “The Dawn Watch: Joseph Conrad in a Global World” (Penguin Press), by the historian Maya Jasanoff—the latest example of this approach—proceeds from a vision of Conrad as belonging to “the vanguard,” though less as a writer than as a man. He may not have known the word “globalization,” Jasanoff says, but he “embodied it.” She acknowledges the “hero’s service” performed by the literary historian Norman Sherry, who wandered the globe in pursuit of Conrad’s “sources,” and her chapter on “Lord Jim” shows how Conrad “closely tracked a true tale” that he “would have heard” while working in Singapore—the case of a sailor who leaped with the captain and crew from the passenger ship Jeddah.

But the biographical habit, once acquired, can prove hard to shake. At one point, Jasanoff tries to celebrate “Nostromo,” a novel set on a continent Conrad didn’t know, as a “declaration of independence” from his past. It proves a strange kind of independence when you reach Jasanoff’s formula for how the novel was written: “Poles into Italians; steamships into trains, telegraphs, and more

steamships; ivory into silver.” A novel about a place Conrad had never been soon becomes “a novel about every place he’d been.” And, owing to the way Jasanoff has structured her book, giving the order of the “real-life” events that “inspired” Conrad’s books precedence over the dates of their composition, we have already seen him back in captivity, writing “The Secret Agent,” a novel that recalled his time as “a young foreigner in London,” and “mapped the contours of his early life” in its portrayal of Mr. Verloc’s family setup.

Conrad’s fiction is also pushed about by Jasanoff’s historical emphases. Although she defends Conrad against the charges of imperialist collusion—levelled most quotably by Chinua Achebe, who excoriated him as “a bloody racist”—she says that Patusan, the island where Jim finds refuge from his disgrace, reflects nineteenth-century stereotypes of “the Orient” as a realm of “faith” and “superstition,” harboring the kind of “authenticity that the west had long since abandoned.” Yet in the novel’s symbolic structure Patusan represents something richer and vaguer, a refuge from places “where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream.” That isn’t the East—it’s the world. Patusan is really a tailor-made nowhere land, the site of “pure exercises of the imagination.”

But then Conrad’s own ideas are slighted in Jasanoff’s account. The epigraph for “The Dawn Watch” comes from “Victory,” when the sinister mercenary Jones tells Heyst, “I am the world itself, come to pay you a visit.” You can see why Jasanoff didn’t quote the amendment: “If you prefer a less materialistic view, I am a sort of fate.” The less materialistic view is what Jasanoff is trying to avoid. At times, she resembles Ossipon, in “The Secret Agent,” who tells the Professor, “You are too transcendental for me.” She writes that Conrad “veiled” his meaning in “imprecise adjectives” like “inscrutable,” and that, in his “purplest patches,” he presented the sailing ship as a meeting place of the human and the supernatural. But virtually all Conrad’s work unfolds along roughly that

borderline, and those adjectives provide the ideal means of describing the obstacles to crossing over.

Jasanoff appears to accept Conrad's multiplicity ("Any great writer generates lots of interpretations and reactions") while remaining firmly convinced that her own approach is the one he would have sanctioned. She suggests that Conrad saw his books as a record of his "life in the wide world," and claims that he gave his "blessing" to articles by critics like Richard Curle about his "early travels and their influence on his work." That's hard to reconcile with the letter Conrad wrote, in 1894, asking his publisher not to identify the Berau as the basis for the Pantai River, in "Almayer's Folly," or his response to Curle's 1921 essay, "Joseph Conrad in the East":

I think I have given you already to understand the nature of my feelings. Indeed, I spoke to you very openly expressing my fundamental objection to the character you wished to give to it. . . . It is a strange fate that everything that I have, of set artistic purpose, laboured to leave indefinite, suggestive, in the penumbra of initial inspiration, should have that light turned on to it and its insignificance (as compared with I might say without megalomania the amplexness of my conceptions) exposed for any fool to comment upon. . . . Didn't it ever occur to you, my dear Curle, that I knew what I was doing in leaving the facts of my life and even of my tales in the background?

Conrad never denied that his writing was autobiographical, but he used the word in a specific connection. "Youth" was "exact autobiography," in his phrase, only insofar as the experiences it depicted had been filtered through his "temperament," or "the medium of my own emotions"—and that went for the "outward coloring," too. When he said that his life in the wide world could "be found" in his books, he was promising only an emotional record. What he really learned as a sailor was not something empirical—an assembly of "places and events"—but the vindication of a perspective he had developed in childhood, an impartial, unillusioned view of the world as a place of mystery and contingency, horror and splendor, where, as he put it in a letter to the *London Times*, the only indisputable

truth is "our ignorance." Writing replaced seafaring as his means of confronting this state of affairs.

But Conrad has also been the beneficiary of much tactful and sympathetic reading, especially in America. "Who's Mencken?" he asked Knopf, in 1913. "He doesn't seem to be afraid of lashing out right and left in the field of literature." The literary critic of *The Smart Set* had been "a good friend" to his prose, as Conrad wrote in a letter to Mencken himself, expressing "the pleasure of a writer who sees himself understood." Mencken was one of the earliest in a line of American readers to recognize how Conrad conjured up "the general out of the particular." Among those who caught his Conrad bug was F. Scott Fitzgerald, who, after some resistance, conceded in 1920 that "this fellow" was "pretty good after all." Writing to Mencken five years later, as the author of "The Great Gatsby," he complained that he had been omitted from a list of Conrad imitators: "God! I've learned a lot from him." What Fitzgerald learned, principally, was a mode of narration—the damaged overreacher, as recalled by his wonder-prone, meaning-seeking sometime sidekick, a seasoned listener.

Since Fitzgerald, dozens of American writers have confessed to similar debts, among them William Faulkner, William Burroughs, Joan Didion—and Philip Roth, whose alter ego Nathan Zuckerman, having provided a Marlow-like window on Swede Levov, Ira Ringold, and Coleman Silk, in the "American trilogy," wanders through its coda, "Exit Ghost," carrying a copy of "The Shadow-Line" (1917). The nested structures of novels as different as "My Life as a Man" and "The Counterlife" reveal a debt to Conrad's form; and Roth's final novel, "Nemesis," about a teacher who abandons a polio-ridden schoolyard—an episode reconstructed decades later by one of his former students—is undoubtedly a "Lord Jim" tale.

The most Conradian novelist in recent American literature, however, was Saul Bellow. In his Nobel Prize lecture, in 1976, Bellow recalled that as a "contrary" undergraduate, at the University

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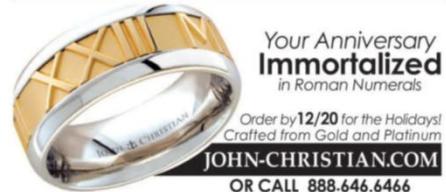
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of Chicago, he enrolled in a class on Money and Banking and then spent his time reading the novels of Joseph Conrad. (Thomas Pynchon, studying at Cornell in the fifties, was contrary in his own way: he skipped a class on some of Conrad's stories in order to read the whole of Conrad.) Bellow said he had "never had reason to regret this"—and why would he? All those decades later, he was quoting Conrad in a Nobel speech, teaching Conrad as a Chicago professor, borrowing from Conrad in his novels.

It's only a little reductive to say that Bellow spent the first half of his career describing himself and the second half describing his friends. Starting in 1975, with "Humboldt's Gift," he wrote a series of Conrad-like novels and stories about people he had known, as he had known them. In "The Bellarosa Connection," he went all the way, employing a frame narrator ("I got it in episodes, like a Hollywood serial"). But Bellow borrowed more than a narrative method. No reader of his late work can fail to hear a similar abrupt oracular tone in the opening of "The Shadow-Line." ("Only the young have such moments. I don't mean the very young. No.") Admirers of the descrip-

tion of Humboldt with a pretzel ("His lunch") must accept its origin, in "The Secret Agent," as the Professor's half-eaten raw carrot ("His breakfast"). The narrator of "Humboldt's Gift" shares Marlow's first name and sounds like him, too, when he describes himself "groping, thrillingly and desperately, for sense."

American academic criticism has always been open to Conrad's questing side, with the contributions of J. Hillis Miller probably being the most potent and agile. Now John G. Peters, the leading American Conradian—who plugged a glaring gap with his essential study, "Conrad and Impressionism" (2001)—has co-edited a collection of Miller's essays, published in a series of books between 1965 and 2015. Roughly halfway through that time span, Miller served a stint as president of the Modern Language Association. In his address to the 1986 convention, in New York, Miller bemoaned the shift away from literary interpretation toward "history, culture, society, politics," among other things. So the collection's title, "Reading Conrad" (Ohio State), is a pointed one.

It would be hard to imagine two Conrad fans less alike than J. Hillis

Miller and Maya Jasanoff. Perhaps to minimize thematic repetition, Peters and his fellow-editor Jakob Lothe have omitted Miller's most fiery challenge to the mainstream of Conrad studies—the preface that he wrote "in counterpoint" to a collection of essays emphasizing topical resonances. In one piece collected in "Reading Conrad," Miller notes that the temptation to compare a work of literature with its "background 'facts'" is "almost irresistible," but he insists that the details uncovered by Norman Sherry—about the Jeddah inquiry, for instance—cannot serve as a "point of origin" from which to judge "Lord Jim." For Miller, no point of origin exists even within the novel: "Lord Jim" is like a dictionary in which the entry under one word refers the reader to another word which refers him to another and then back to the first word again, in an endless circling." It might be observed that this description suspiciously coincides with the tenets of Miller's favored critical mode, but then, even more than globalization, Conrad anticipates the modern phenomenon known as deconstruction.

Still, "The Dawn Watch" and "Reading Conrad" have one area of overlap—an almost complete indifference to everything that Conrad published after 1910. It's surprising that neither gives more space to "Under Western Eyes," a novel crowded with enigmas and transmuted personal history. But to ignore "Chance" (1914) is to miss a crucial clue about Conrad's sensibility—and his aversion to what he saw as the sea stigma.

Conrad started work on the novel in earnest around 1905, but, in his first letter to Knopf, he wrote, "In this year of 'Chance' that baby is nearly sixteen years old." That places its conception closer to the late nineties, when the novice writer was at a crossroads. Recalling Conrad's efforts on "The Sisters"—about a young Ruthenian artist in Paris—his sometime collaborator and on-and-off friend Ford Madox Ford wrote that Conrad "wished to be what I have called a 'straight' writer, treating of usual human activities in cities and countrysides normal to the users of Anglo-Saxon or Latin speech," as opposed to "the relatively exotic



"First of all, stop calling them 'wishes.' That's loser talk. We'll call them 'goals.'"

novelist of the sea and the lagoons which fate, the public and some of his friends forced him to become." Prime among those friends was Edward Garnett, the publisher's reader—or, in Ford's terms, "literary dictator of London"—who, as Helen Smith shows in her valuable new biography, "The Uncommon Reader" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), proceeded from the belief that novelists wrote best about subjects they knew at first hand. (Galsworthy once sent him a list of a hundred and thirty aristocrats he had met as proof of his bona fides.)

It was Garnett who, in 1896, urged Conrad to abandon "The Sisters." Conrad did as instructed, though not before telling Garnett, "You have killed my cherished aspiration." Ford presents Conrad's decision to give up his "straight" ambitions as purely pragmatic—a sop to commerce. But that wasn't really the case. Compared with stories of what Ford called "normal terrestrial humanity," literary sea writing was a minority interest. Maya Jasanoff says that it's "no coincidence" that the oft-quoted, much mangled preface to "The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'" invokes the sailor's concept of "solidarity," but Conrad was really using the term to suggest that he was writing about—and for—the broad sweep of humanity. The problem of appealing to only a "limited coterie," he later wrote, recalling the breakthrough success of "Chance," was that it had begun to cast doubt on his "belief in the solidarity of all mankind."

Scholars regularly express bafflement that "Chance," of all Conrad's novels, became his first best-seller. Various extraliterary—or not very literary—factors have been adduced, such as the novel's female protagonist, its use of chapter titles, and the energetic campaign spearheaded by Knopf. But "Chance" is also a vivid, seductive, brilliantly written novel that exhibits Conrad's irony in straight—or meta-Victorian—garb. Marlow, making a return after more than a decade, recalls the story of Flora de Barral, the daughter of a famous swindler, whose elopement with the master seaman Captain Anthony is seen as a sort of betrayal by Flora's father on his release from prison. The Conrad form is to some degree the same, with Marlow collating the story from numerous testimo-

nies, as well as supplying a parallel "making of" commentary. But the device is employed to more dynamic ends. At one point, Marlow begins stalking Anthony's second mate, Powell, to get the next bit of Flora's story—only to discover that the story isn't over yet.

Following "Chance," Conrad scored another hit with a twist on his formula. "Victory" is an engrossing mélange of psychological case study, star-crossed love story, and home-invasion thriller—"Gatsby" meets Mills & Boon and Pinter. (The local expat community is amazed when Heyst becomes "mixed up with petticoats.") Conrad even revived elements of "The Sisters" in "The Arrow of Gold" (1919)—which sold more copies in America than any other English-language novel published that year. In 1923, at Doubleday's invitation, Conrad sailed to New York, where he was constantly pursued by reporters. (*Time*, which had débuted the previous month, put him on the cover.)

Shortly after Conrad's return to England, Richard Curle sent him the draft of a new article. Bruce Richmond, the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, had asked for "a history" of Conrad's books. Conrad expressed his disappointment in a long letter, noting his belief that a "general survey" might be used to liberate him from the obsession with his "sea life which has about as much bearing on my literary existence, on my quality as a writer, as the enumeration of drawing-rooms which Thackeray frequented could have had on his gifts as a great novelist." A few days later, he wrote to Curle again. Emphasizing how "the public mind fastens on externals," he suggested adding a few paragraphs about how authors transform their material "from particular to general, and appeal to universal emotions by the temperamental handling of personal experience": "Thus Richmond will get what he wants and you may save my hide from being permanently tarred." But, even as he bristled and grumbled, Conrad surely recognized that, despite the preoccupation of some admirers with the islands he had glimpsed and the storms he had survived, things were also looking good for the prophecy he had set down twenty years before: "This is my creed. Time will show." ♦



Charles E. Martin, March 24, 1975

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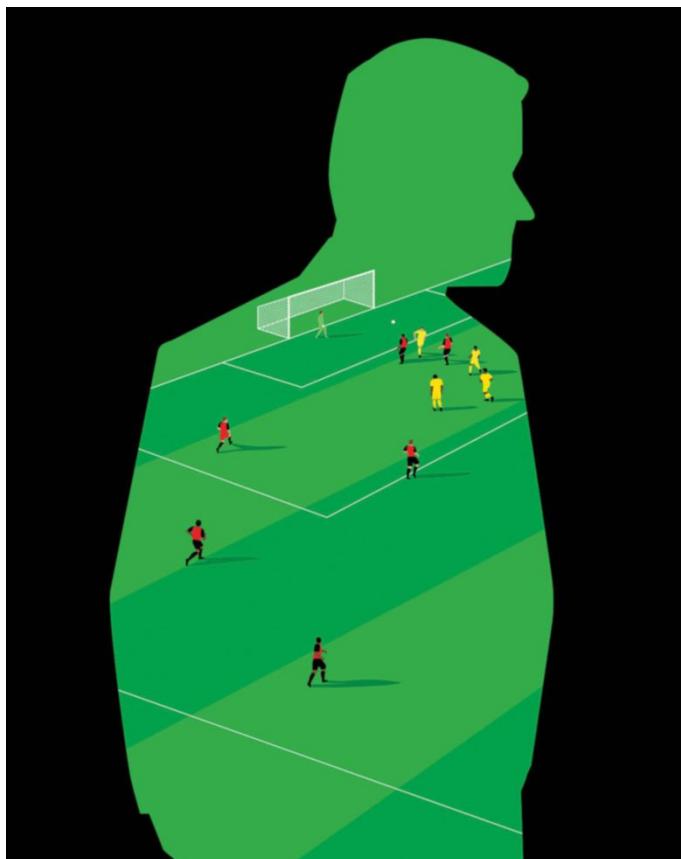
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I. Per cent paid	86.80%	86.63%
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L. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies	1,197,080	1,185,675
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THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL

Football Manager's immersive bureaucracy.

BY HUA HSU



In November, 2012, the Azerbaijani soccer team FC Baku hired a Swedish immigrant named Vugar Huseynzade to oversee the scouting and acquisition of new players. Although Baku's history included two league titles, along with appearances in prestigious European competitions, the club was now struggling, and facing financial ruin. Anything was worth a shot—even entrusting the team to Huseynzade, who was unknown within the professional soccer establishment. He was a twenty-one-year-old college graduate, whose primary qualification was that he excelled at Football Manager, a computer game.

The first edition of the game—

then known as *Championship Manager*—was released in 1992. Its creators were two British brothers, Paul and Oliver Collyer, who, in the late eighties, were dissatisfied with the simulation games that existed. “These games tended to make you the center of the world,” Paul explained in an interview with the Web site Factor. “We would prefer to be *in* a world.” Although tabletop sports simulations had been popular since the fifties, computer processing allowed the Collyers to build a game that felt expansive, in which your team’s progress was just one story line among many. The early versions of Football Manager mostly eschewed graphics. You picked a team, bought and sold

The quirk of the game is that it's a sports game in which you never play sports.

players, and set them up in formation. The subsequent action felt almost like an afterthought. Most of the game’s computing power was dedicated to storing statistics and strategies.

By the late nineties, Football Manager had become one of the most popular computer games in the world. To date, it has sold more than twenty million copies. There have been books (“Football Manager Stole My Life”) and films (“An Alternative Reality: The Football Manager Documentary”) chronicling the attachments that players develop to the game, and at least one academic study has used it to test theories of organizational strategy. There are Reddit threads and one famously busy message board devoted to sharing unusual successes. As the capacities of personal computers have grown, so, too, have the world-building possibilities of Football Manager. The newest version of the game, released this month, includes the input of more than thirteen hundred scouts from fifty-one countries, creating a database of information on more than seven hundred thousand players, coaches, and officials. It’s possibly the most comprehensive look at the global soccer rank and file in existence, a resource that’s frequently cited by players, scouts, and television analysts. In 2014, Sports Interactive, the producer of the series, began sharing its scouting reports with all the English Premier League teams.

The peculiar quirk of Football Manager is that it’s a sports game in which you never actually play sports. There are no rewards for dexterity or reflexes. Instead, it’s about management, from contracts to advertising deals, scouting to training regimens. You can begin as the manager of a famous club, where an open checkbook comes with a high level of scrutiny. Or you can apply for coaching positions in the lowest rungs of professional soccer, and try to work your way up. Regardless, the game demands extreme dedication to the minor calibrations that can separate the good from the great. You set the intensity of a training session and determine managerial philosophies, such as the

tone and the language you want to use when suggesting that a mercurial superstar fire his meddlesome agent. Then, based on your decisions, the game simulates play. Your choices have only a mysterious, indirect effect on what happens on the field.

At first, Football Manager feels tedious, like setting the table for a meal that you won't eat for days. A great deal of game play involves clearing your in-box of scouting reports, C.V.s from prospective assistants, questions from journalists. If you choose to be the manager of a national team, there are entire virtual months during which basically nothing happens. But the meticulous, bureaucratic slowness becomes mesmerizing. The game bears more resemblance to SimCity than to most modern-day sports games. The most engrossing parts involve scouring leagues around the world in the hope of finding underpriced talent or a sixteen-year-old prospect who might become the next Cristiano Ronaldo.

Perhaps its hypnotic, lifelike rhythm is why Football Manager continues to feel cultish and idiosyncratic, its mainstream success notwithstanding. This year's edition includes a more sophisticated view of team psychology—it requires you to cozy up to influential leaders or to gently break up cliques. Huseynzade bolstered Baku's roster and helped the club get to a respectable place in the standings, though gaming had not prepared him for the intricacies of interpersonal politics. He served out his contract and returned to Sweden.

It's often said that gaming deviates from the traditional understanding of narrative storytelling. Age-old anxieties about artistic intention, along with the moral lessons we learn from serious art, drift away when every player appears to be in total control of the story. As gaming grows increasingly immersive, there's a stodgy charm to Football Manager's clunky graphics and overwhelming array of variables and data points. Meaning accrues over time. Some of the hotshots you've carefully mentored become stars; others flame out. What happens is largely beyond your

control, because the game isn't actually about omniscience. It's about powerlessness.

In September, Electronic Arts released *FIFA 18*, the latest edition of the best-selling sports-video-game franchise in the world. Unlike Football Manager, in which largely indistinguishable players glide across the field, *FIFA* boasts fluid, head-to-head play and astonishingly detailed graphics. You can marvel at a player's angular, fringy hair style, or at his wonderfully garish boots. Last year, in *FIFA 17*, E.A. introduced a cinematic play mode that revolved around the fictional athlete Alex Hunter, a gifted mixed-race youngster working his way out of a gloomy neighborhood in southwest London. Hunter's story line is essentially a movie, shot with real actors and then rendered into graphics, that progresses as you achieve certain developmental markers. As Hunter, you have to score goals and earn the trust of skeptical coaches. In one scene, Hunter and his friends play *FIFA* at his apartment, and debate whether the game's programmers have correctly rated their skills. But, unlike Football Manager, which offers a different experience to every single player, your choices in *FIFA* are ultimately limited. It's impossible to stray too far from Hunter's preprogrammed success.

FIFA 18 continues the story, with Hunter trying to keep a level head despite his anointment as England's next superstar. One of the by-products of *FIFA*, and of Electronic Arts' hugely popular baseball, football, and basketball games, is that they encourage gamers to identify with predominantly non-white protagonists. There's a moment in *FIFA 18* when you jump from Hunter's story to that of his sister. Even in the world of fantasy, it's rare for a cast of characters to embody the diversity of a typical European professional soccer team. Football Manager takes this idea even further, requiring that you deal with language barriers and homesickness—typical problems among global labor pools. This year's edition includes a moment when a player generated by the game comes out as gay, affecting his club's revenue and its public-relations strategy.

These games, like the similarly data-driven world of fantasy sports, began

as expressions of fandom—of a basic desire to spend more time with our favorite athletes and teams than a given season allows. Now they are worlds unto themselves, stories that run free from what happens on the field. I've felt meaningful attachment to professional athletes I've managed in Football Manager but have never watched play, and I have imagined the interior lives of teen-age prospects whose non-pixelated faces I would never recognize. Does this draw fans closer, or does it simply recalibrate our expectations? Following sports these days means having access to players' social-media feeds and to round-the-clock reporting on practices, preparation, and medical information. Ideally, this kind of access might engender empathy toward people who often seem larger than life. On the other hand, in gaming, as in fantasy sports, professional athletes may become abstractions, commodities that can be bought and sold, disciplined or replaced. Video games come with an illusion of control and ownership, a sense that empirical models can provide the basis for predicting tomorrow.

There is a streamlined version of Football Manager for phones and tablets. Since last November, I've played through twenty-five seasons, beginning in 2017. Initially, I turned to the game as an escape. At some point, it ceased to feel like much of one, as the game intersected with real life. It's not that I forgot that I wasn't actually the greatest manager in the history of Manchester United. But, last summer, when Brexit caught many political commentators by surprise, the game's developers revealed that they had built the possibility of a "Leave" vote into the latest edition. Why not be prepared? Brexit would, after all, have real consequences for the movement of workers across Europe, including professional soccer players.

Decades from now, in the story that I am both playing and creating, the United States becomes a global soccer powerhouse and England wins the World Cup. British voters decide to reverse Brexit. I look up from the screen occasionally, remembering how many taps and swipes it has taken to move so many years into the future. And then I look at the clock and realize how little time has actually passed. ♦

ON TELEVISION

BEING WATCHED

"The Opposition" dives into the world of alt-media conspiracists.

BY ANDREW MARANTZ



S hortly before "The Colbert Report" premiered, in 2005, Stephen Colbert claimed that he would play a generic cable-news blowhard, a character drawn from a variety of sources—the "manliness" of NBC's Stone Phillips, the "folksiness" of CNN's Aaron Brown, the "commonsense" simplicity of MSNBC's Joe Scarborough. After a while, Colbert acknowledged the simpler truth: he was essentially doing a Bill O'Reilly impression. On air, Colbert started referring to O'Reilly as Papa Bear, and Papa Bear, though hardly known for easygoing self-effacement, seemed to take the ribbing relatively well. The two men formed a mutual-deprecation society, trading

barbs and, eventually, guest appearances on each other's shows. At the time, this felt transgressive—an infiltrator in enemy territory!—but, in retrospect, it seems almost inevitable. After all, Colbert and O'Reilly were in the same business. Both filmed basic-cable talk shows from studios in midtown Manhattan; both drew paychecks from multinational corporations; both, despite their political and stylistic differences, aspired to plausibility.

These days, the spectrum of media weirdness extends well beyond cable news. Since September, Colbert's former time slot has been occupied by Jordan Klepper, another tall, coiffed white guy with a perennially cocked eyebrow. He,

Jordan Klepper's character resembles the perspiring insurrectionary Alex Jones.

too, plays a blowhard anchor named for himself; he, too, has invoked multiple influences. In an interview with Seth Meyers, Klepper said that the target of his show, "The Opposition," would be "this alt-media landscape . . . this world of paranoid conspiracy that suddenly filters its way down into the mainstream and into the Oval Office." He mentioned Breitbart News and The Blaze, Glenn Beck's network. But Klepper has never been coy about his primary inspiration: Alex Jones, the founder and Cassandra-in-chief of the alternative-media network InfoWars.

Jones, for anyone who hasn't been living under a rock ceiling in a subterranean doomsday bunker, is America's foremost conspiracy barker. (Or maybe I should modify that with "full-time," to exclude such Twitter hobbyists as Louise Mensch and the President.) His show is taped at an undisclosed location in Austin, Texas. He sits at a wide desk covered with stacks of paper—articles printed out from the Internet—and, as he ruffles through pages, he is sometimes filmed from above, his hands framed as if he were a concert pianist. (The camera doesn't linger on the fine print, which Jones has a habit of misrepresenting.) And, whereas O'Reilly was a crotchety, old-school social conservative, Jones is something more unpredictable—a bug-eyed, perspiring insurrectionary who blows right past mansplaining into panicked incredulity. You've never heard of the FEMA death camps? Human-insect chimeras? No? Really? Well, look it up, folks, there's no time to explain; the globalists are planning a coup, we're on the brink of tyranny, and the only answer to 1984 is 1776. And so on, for several hours a day, six days a week.

Jones treats facts the way cats treat small rodents, batting them around for a few minutes before butchering them for sport. And yet, if we're being honest, his delivery is among the best in the business. His voice is a mellifluous yawp, at once abrasive and mesmerizing, with the dynamic range of a slain-in-the-Spirit preacher.

Klepper doesn't have Jones's pipes, but his vocal performance strikes an analogous tone—unnecessarily loud and full of unearned bravado. Acting is an underrated skill in news satire—perhaps because Jon Stewart, the twenty-first-century

standard-bearer, wasn't all that good at it—but Klepper, who trained at Second City and the Upright Citizens Brigade, is as much a performer as he is a comedian. He has the dexterity to deliver absurdist one-liners—"Birds are smart; they're nature's dolphins"—while grounding his performance just enough to make it incredible in the "I can't believe it!" sense, not in the "I don't believe it" sense.

"The Opposition" appears on Comedy Central, which has placed satirical ads in dozens of New York City subway stations ("THERE'S HYDROGEN IN THE WATER"). InfoWars doesn't spend much money on traditional meatspace ads, but, if it did, it certainly wouldn't put them in New York. "The Alex Jones Show" doesn't appear on any TV channel; it streams on Periscope and on Jones's Web site. Jones's most inspired rants—a representative fan favorite builds to the line "I don't like 'em putting chemicals in the water that turn the friggin' frogs gay!"—often go viral on YouTube, where he has more than two million subscribers. Jones calls his broadcasts "transmissions," as in, "If you are receiving this transmission, you are the resistance." This is a dramatic way of announcing that he is, as Internet marketers say, platform agnostic. Jones has advertisers, but most of his revenue comes from his brand of dietary supplements, such as Anthroplex and Survival Shield X-2, which he hawks relentlessly. In one ad for a water filter, Jones said, "You know, many revolutionaries rob banks and things, and kidnap people for funds. We promote, in the free market, the products we use that are about preparedness. That's how we fund this revolution against the New World Order." In other words, don't expect Klepper and Jones to start appearing on each other's shows. Unlike Colbert and O'Reilly, they aren't really in the same business. Epistemologically speaking, one wonders whether they are in the same universe.

In Klepper's première episode, he fidgeted in his chair and beckoned urgently at the camera. "This is the first minute of the first episode of 'The Opposition,' and you're already behind," he said. People who watch too much Alex Jones—and I'm one of them—noticed many familiar visual tropes: glitches and static; Orwellian banks of TV screens;

the wide desk covered with stacks of paper. "It's 2017, and you don't have to rely only on the Big News Industrial Complex for your facts anymore," Klepper continued. "You get facts from your phone, your computer, your intracranial chip implant. My what? Exactly."

This air of manufactured dread is sometimes spot on, especially when Klepper pivots to advertising Emergency Panic Rations, available for sale at shopposition.com. At other times, the show's approach can feel more generic. Most episodes start with Klepper, in front of a crazy-person vision board full of thumbtacks and red twine, saying some version of "I've finally figured it out," before making an incongruous connection between, say, autumn leaves and Communism. This is the sort of thing that happens in conspiracy-theory movies, not on InfoWars. What Jones actually says is stranger and more interesting than any cliché, and when Klepper points this out his punches land clean. In a segment explaining the disconnect between his previous comedic persona, as a liberal, and his new one, as a constitutionalist patriot, Klepper said, "If you see me, in an interview or a deposition, say that I'm playing a character, that's because in that moment I'm simply playing a character who, to throw them off the scent, would say that he's playing a character." In April, during a custody battle between Jones and his ex-wife, Jones's lawyer argued that Jones is "a performance artist," and that his outlandish behavior on InfoWars shouldn't be construed as evidence that he is an unfit parent. On his show, Jones reported that his legal defense was fake news. "They play these semantical lawyer games, ladies and gentlemen—it's ridiculous," he said. "We're defending the border, we're defending the Second Amendment, we're defending people's right to not be forcibly infected with vaccines or be made to eat G.M.O.s.... People don't know what satire is anymore."

The first episode of "The Colbert Report" included a monologue about "truthiness," a coinage so timely that it became Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year. We're now in an even more confusing moment, and Klepper's first-episode manifesto was slightly muddled. The mainstream-media "puppet masters," he said, want to "smuggle their dangerous ideas across the open borders of your

mind. I want to shut down those borders. I want to *close* your mind." It was clever, but a bit off target. Twitter is full of sycophantic pundits who see each of Trump's gaffes as a masterly move in a game of 4-D chess, but Steve Bannon, Glenn Beck, and Jones aren't among them. For two decades, Jones's shtick played equally well on the far left and the far right. Then Trump came along, and Jones's brand shifted: less antiauthoritarianism, more Americana; less "Resist the police state," more "Blue lives matter." Jones's problem is not that his mind is closed. If anything, his mind is far too open.

It's become a truism—with reality like ours, what's a satirist to do? The answer is as simple as Strunk and White: be specific. Klepper is most likely to fall flat when he espouses a general Trump-is-bad attitude—a deep vein of material, but one that is already being mined by several besuited men every night at eleven-thirty—without finding something unique to say. Two days after the mass shooting in Las Vegas, Klepper did a segment about how to shift the conversation away from gun control. It felt pedestrian, perhaps because it had little to do with the contemporary alt-media—mainstream conservatives have been steering discussions away from gun control for decades.

By the end of the week, Klepper had found his angle. He mocked the right-wing tabloid Web site the Gateway Pundit for blaming the shooting on an innocent leftist and then taking too long to retract the story ("Hey, you can't make an omelette without ruining someone's life"); he caught Fox News anchors directing their viewers toward unvetted theories on Facebook; he played several boldly self-contradictory clips from InfoWars' post-Vegas pontification. The shooter had connections to Islam; the shooter had connections to Antifa; there were multiple shooters; the shooting happened near a pyramid, so the Illuminati must have been involved.

"What moral responsibility do we have when we inject these hasty explanations into the greater conversation so quickly?" Klepper said, turning to the camera. "These are big, challenging questions that could take a long time to answer." He paused, but only briefly. "Or I could do it right now. It's pyramids. It's probably pyramids." ♦

CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

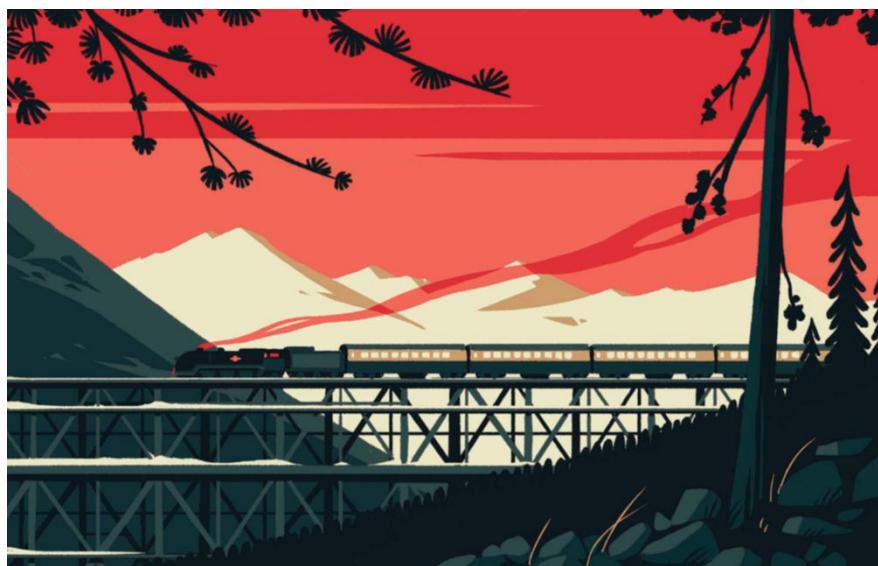
"Murder on the Orient Express" and "Thelma."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Unless you believe that the Bible was written by one person, then the position of Agatha Christie as the best-selling author of all time seems secure. Only Shakespeare threatens her eminence, and he sucked at whodunits. Honestly, all that jazz about Caesar being stabbed by a whole bunch of people: when would that ever happen? Personally, I'd pin it

(the top of the case was a thin scarlet silk kimono embroidered with dragons").

Given that Christie's books have sold more than two billion copies, there's no impugning the taste of her fans, but the fact remains that, in many of her stories, the murder should technically be logged as the second death, the life of the prose having been snuffed out long before that



Opulence of casting and of costumes define Kenneth Branagh's period piece.

on Mark Antony. Never trust a man who asks to borrow your ears.

"Murder on the Orient Express," which was published in 1934, and turned into a Sidney Lumet film forty years later, retains a certain cachet as one of Christie's most ingenious works. I was alarmed to realize, upon grinding through it once again, that ingenuity is all it has. The characters are perfunctory; their actions are described in galumphing style ("Hector MacQueen leaned forward interestedly"); the ethnic stereotyping is an embarrassment ("A big, swarthy Italian was picking his teeth with gusto"); and the Queen of Crime, as she is worshipfully known, cannot resist slipping into breathless italics at the prospect of something significant ("Neatly folded on

of the victim. Compare Georges Simenon, the creator of Inspector Maigret. He may not have been the commercial equal of Dame Agatha, with sales as paltry as half a billion copies, yet he outdid her in industry—he produced more than four hundred novels, to her sixty-six—and in pretty much everything else, displaying a frighteningly intimate acquaintance with mortal weakness for which she could only grope. If you have just started a Christie, and somebody tells you the murderer's name, there is no reason to go on reading. With a Simenon, there is no reason to stop.

All of which means that Kenneth Branagh, the director of the new "Murder on the Orient Express," and Michael Green, his screenwriter, are free to do as

they like. There is nothing to desecrate, and younger viewers will not recall, let alone cleave to, the 1974 version, which starred Albert Finney as Hercule Poirot, the dandyish Belgian detective. So what has changed? Well, we are still in the mid-nineteen-thirties, Branagh being loath to scrape off the period charms that encrust the story. I see his point. For those of us whose main concern, as we board a train, is whether or not we will get a seat, there will always be something dreamily bracing about the sight of the rich and lazy wondering what cocktail to sip in the restaurant car. And the clothes! Judi Dench, as the frosty Princess Dragomiroff, arrives in feathers and fur, and coat fetishists will swoon: Poirot's has a collar of the rarest Astrakhan, while that of the villainous Ratchett (Johnny Depp) appears to have been stitched from the hide of a well-bred mammoth.

The opening page of the book finds Poirot in Aleppo, and I was hoping that the movie might pay tribute, by way of imaginative reconstruction, to that all but ruined city. Sadly not. Instead, we begin in Jerusalem and skip to Istanbul, from where the Orient Express sets off on its long and winding route to the grayer delights of the Occident. An avalanche stops it on its tracks. Ratchett is discovered dead, unmourned, and Poirot ascertains that the solution to the crime must lie within a single locked carriage, which, like a mobile country house, contains first-class passengers and a sprinkling of the lower orders. Under his unfoolable eye, it will become the carriage of justice.

According to the end credits, Poirot is played by Branagh himself. So it was him. I was glad to have the mystery cleared up, having spent the previous two hours gazing at a vast expanse of salty mustache and trying to work out who, or what, might possibly be hiding behind it. Listening to him feels like chatting with your neighbor over the garden hedge, and it's all too easy to be distracted by the foliage, I'm afraid, as he maulders on about knife wounds and sleeping potions and missing kimonos. The clues are at once vital, finicky, and dull, and Branagh, perhaps fearful that his tale might be sagging, peps it up with escapades that would have had Christie dropping her teapot. Poirot, who starts by fretting about boiled eggs, finds himself chasing a caped figure along a precarious

bridge. He even gets a shot in the arm. The movie could use one, too.

Contriving somehow both to dawdle and to rush, "Murder on the Orient Express" is handsome, undemanding, and almost wholly bereft of purpose. Green adds some heavy-duty dialogue, in the final reel, about "the fracture of the human soul," but Christie's puzzles are too flimsy to bear such ruminative weight. If today's moviegoers are lured in, it will be for the same reason, I suspect, that they came in 1974: to observe an all-star cast—could there be a more antiquated phrase?—at play. Lumet had Lauren Bacall, Sean Connery, John Gielgud, and Ingrid Bergman, who won an Oscar for her pains. Branagh has Depp, Dench, Penélope Cruz, Willem Dafoe, and Daisy Ridley, who don't seem to be enjoying themselves half as lavishly as their predecessors did. The exception is Michelle Pfeiffer, as a husband-hunter, who yields glimpses of sadness behind her silken allure, and tells Poirot, at the explanatory climax, "You're an *awfully* clever man." He gathers the suspects together at the entrance to a tunnel, thus putting them at serious risk of being shunted from behind, and reveals the foreseeable truth. Again, I hate to offend Christie's devotees, but she definitely cheats here, granting Poirot extraneous information that was in no way available on the train. He would claim, naturally, to be employing "ze leetle gray cells." Yeah, right. More like ze leetle Google.

You enter a swimming pool, and sink down. It seems darker and deeper than a regular pool. Finally you rise to the surface, only to find that there is no surface. It is now a tiled wall, as if the

pool had been turned upside down. You beat against the tiles, unable to break through, like somebody trapped beneath a frozen lake.

Suffocating images of this kind prevail in Joachim Trier's "Thelma." After his gloomy English-language débüt, "Louder Than Bombs" (2016), Trier has returned to his native Norway. His heroine is Thelma (Eili Harboe), a shy soul, from a Christian family, rendered shyer still by arriving at college and knowing nobody there. She studies biology, and her scientific interests give rise to an awkward exchange about creationism with her parents, Trond (Henrik Rafaelsen) and Unni (Ellen Dorrit Petersen). They are loving but controlling—especially Trond, who follows her on Facebook, and to whom she confesses, in a phone call, that she has had her first drink. Long pause. "Maybe one beer isn't that bad," he says at last. He once held her palm over a candle flame, to demonstrate the looming pains of Hell.

But something even scarier than alcohol is heading Thelma's way. She starts to have sudden fits, which, after a series of grueling tests, are diagnosed as psychogenic non-epileptic seizures—"a physical reaction to mental suppression," one doctor says. What is being tamped down, and how far back the tamping reaches, grows clearer in the movie's second half, with scenes culled from Thelma's childhood; a couple of them, involving a baby, are fairly hard to watch. But why should the fits be triggered now, at college? The answer lies in part with Anja (Kaya Wilkins), a fellow-student, who befriends the lonely Thelma and takes her out dancing. (Always a sure sign of the Devil's

work.) The two girls draw close, and, given Thelma's vision of a serpent that coils around her throat and slithers into her widening mouth, I *think* she may have a problem with desire.

Moments such as this are none too subtle, and Trier's view—that religious faith is, in essence, the demolition of instinctual joy—has become a standard secular belief. If you want a proper spiritual tussle, try "Through a Glass Darkly" (1961), in which Ingmar Bergman, the son of a Lutheran pastor, tells of another young woman with a collapsing mind and a twitching dread of the divine. (She sees God, at one point, and describes him as a spider.) Yet "Thelma" exerts a grip of its own, not least when it presses against other genres, leaching details from both science fiction and horror. Although the plot is full of texting and MRI scans, there are murmurs of ancient witchery, as when one character catches fire, in open water, and another coughs up a bird. We soon sense that, Carrie-like, Thelma is causing involuntary damage to the surrounding world; as she and Anja hold hands, in a concert hall, and venture a caress, the vast acoustic fixture overhead begins to creak and sway. Above all, the movie relies and thrives on Harboe, who is scrutinized, in closeup, with a vigilance that even Bergman might applaud, and who has the blessed knack of seeming like a perfectly capable adult in one sequence and then, in the next, like a vulnerable child. Maybe we don't need to revisit Thelma's past, harrowing though it proves to be. Her story is there in her face. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

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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 Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, November 19th. The finalists in the November 6th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 4th 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



"I can give you the tools, but you have to do the work yourself."

Sudarshan S. Chawathe, Trenton, Maine

"I sense there's a lot more below the surface."

Gavin Bruce, New York City

"No, you'll still be conflicted, but you'll smell better."

Thomas C. Delaney, Shoreline, Wash.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Can I tell you about a few items that aren't on the menu?"

Don Culver, Windermere, Fla.



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