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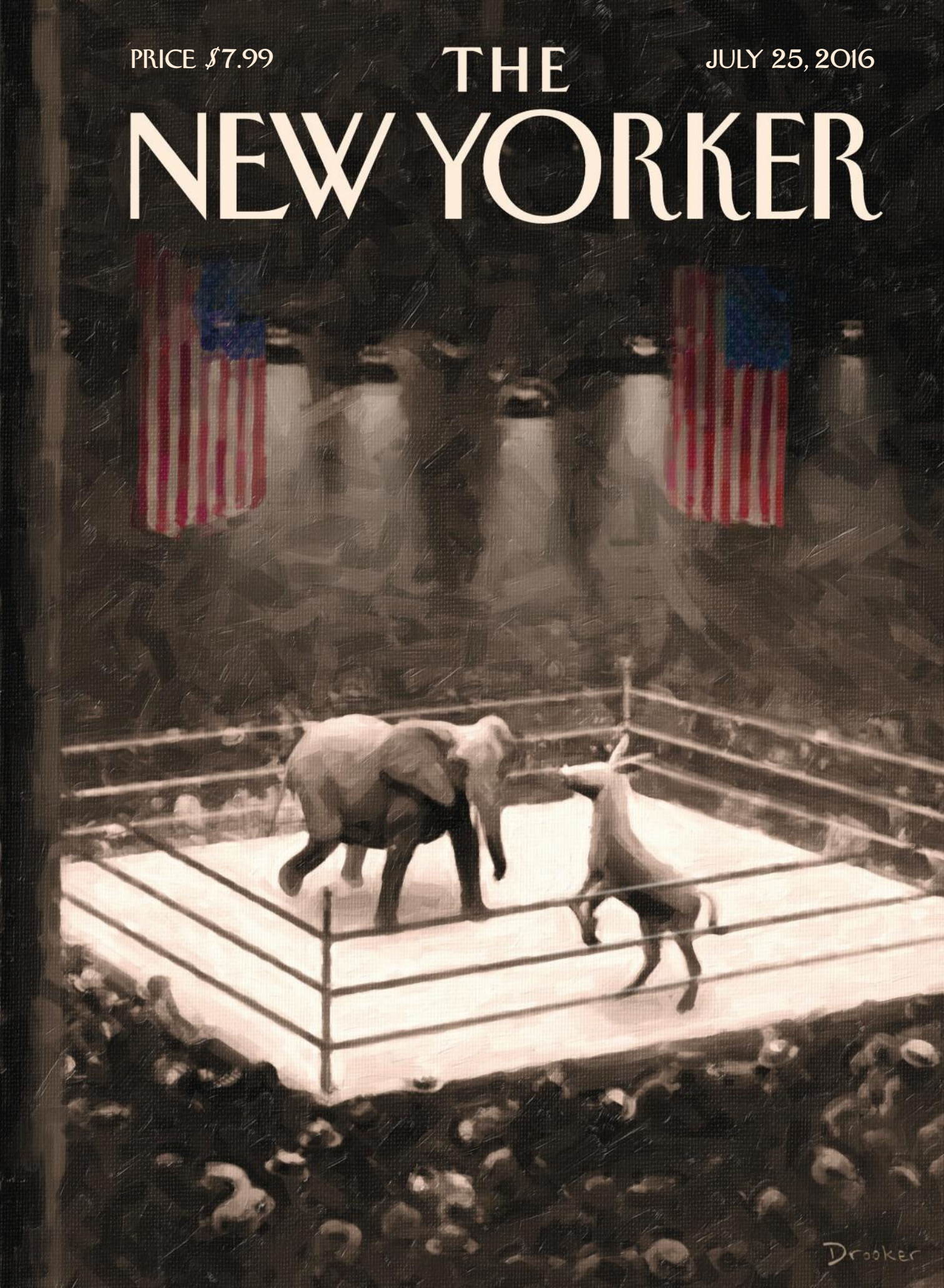
THE NEW YORKER

JULY 25, 2016



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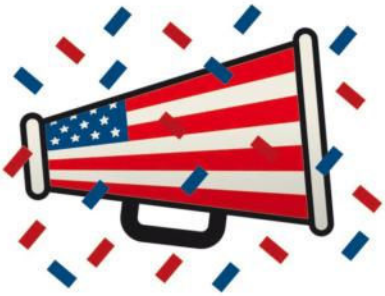
Everything in the magazine, and more.

PAGE-TURNER

Hua Hsu on the remarkable life of H. T. Tsiang, a Chinese-American poet, novelist, and actor.



2016 CONVENTIONS

Amy Davidson, John Cassidy, Benjamin Wallace-Wells, and others report from the G.O.P. Convention.

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THE MAIL

ACTIVISM AND ACADEMIA

Nathan Heller accurately captures the atmosphere at élite liberal-arts colleges in his piece on student activists at Oberlin College ("The Big Uneasy," May 30th). This article could have been written about my school, Colby. It is impossible to reconcile divisions among students within an institution—and across the country—when many of them feel afraid to speak up. Yet the piece casts the activist community in a negative light, and will inevitably become fodder for conservatives who claim that political correctness kills debate. Speaking as someone who could be considered a textbook example of a white, privileged kid, I have learned a lot from students who have campaigned for trigger warnings and brought up cultural appropriation and the "decolonization of academia." It's true that at liberal-arts colleges it often feels as if every debate comes with a disclaimer. At first, I often rolled my eyes, but I ultimately learned much more about myself, my peers, and my country by listening. In a certain respect, that is what college is all about.
Molly Feldstein
Colby College, Class of 2016
San Francisco, Calif.

Many of the students whom Heller depicts in his article came off sounding whiny and sheltered when they were expressing valid feelings of marginalization. Debates about the minutia of daily life at a liberal-arts college may sound ridiculous from the outside—but they always have. I graduated from Reed College fifteen years ago, and while the language of intersectionality may be new, the earnestness of youth is not. However, Heller understates the main issue: the brutal persistence of racism. He mentions the shooting of Tamir Rice in passing, as if it were merely an excuse for the students to rile themselves up, rather than an existential threat. The current wave of campus activism is motivated by the same kind of everyday racism that I see in Columbia, Missouri, where I teach. The anonymous comments section of our local newspaper regularly features racist language, and a white student recently received only probation for threatening to "shoot every black person" he saw. If Heller had taken these realities into consideration, he likely would not have trivialized the concerns of Oberlin's students. To use a phrase he must have heard during his time on campus: check your privilege.
Rosalie Metro
Adjunct Professor
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Columbia, Mo.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

I enjoyed reading about people acting like animals in Joshua Rothman's article, with those odd men squirrelling around like badgers, goats, and foxes ("The Metamorphosis," May 30th). What's missing is a nod to the differences within animal species. I run a small vegetable farm, where I've been trapping woodchucks in cages for more than ten years to prevent them from eating the crops. Each animal behaves uniquely in its captivity. Some hide in the corner of the cage, with head down. Some thrash about, even biting through a few strands of metal mesh. Some eagerly eat the beets I use as bait, while others are not interested. Some stare at me without blinking. Others turn away. The warriors are not all males; the docile creatures are not all females. The more accurate question is not: "What is it like to be a badger or a goat?" It is: "What is it like to be this particular badger, or that particular goat?" When we recognize each being's individuality, we have formed a more complex relationship and travelled farther from our preconceptions.
Miriam Latzer
Clermont, N.Y.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

Of the three European megamusicals that dominated Broadway in the nineteen-eighties, "The Phantom of the Opera" has never left us, and "Les Misérables" keeps coming back for more. But whither **"Cats,"** which vowed to be with us "now and forever"? Those kitties weren't joking around. The Andrew Lloyd Webber extravaganza has returned (in previews, at the Neil Simon), and a lot has changed in Times Square since its heyday. Will an Elmo-Mistoffelees turf war bring back the old grit? Watch and purr.

PHOTOGRAPH BY LANDON NORDEMAN

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Brooklyn Museum
"Disguise: Masks and Global African Art"
This welcome, if overdetermined, exhibition mixes contemporary works by two dozen artists from Africa and its diaspora with historical African masks and effigies, including a gloriously fearsome *gela* mask from Liberia, dripping with raffia and studded with horns and teeth. The theme of masquerade informs the street photography of Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou, from Benin, who shoots passersby wearing intricate disguises, and performances staged by Wura-Natasha Ogunji, in which women in space-age fluorescent costumes make their way through traffic, in Lagos. But masks seem only tangentially relevant to the excellent work of Nandipha Mntambo, from Johannesburg, who photographs herself in a matador costume and paints Cocteau-like portraits of bulls in love. The Angolan artist Edson Chagas, who won the Golden Lion at the 2013 Venice Biennale, appears here in four stark, composed self-portraits with plastic bags over his head. One bears the image of the President of the United States, who's just another brand on the streets of Luanda. *Through Sept. 18.*

Frick Collection
"Porcelain, No Simple Matter: Arlene Shechet and the Arnhold Collection"
Shechet is the first living artist to exhibit in depth at the Frick. Her installation—a balancing act of respectful and radical—pairs early-eighteenth-century Meissen porcelains with sculptures she recently made at the same German factory. It's a triumph that could have been a disaster, a paragon of Old Master virtue jumping on the make-it-new bandwagon, and the museum's curator of decorative arts, Charlotte Vignon, deserves major credit for taking the risk. So does the collector Henry H. Arnhold, who gave Shechet free rein of his trove of hand-painted plates, bowls, vases, tea services, and sublimely absurd figurines. What makes Shechet such an inspired choice isn't simply the twenty months she spent, on and off, in a Meissen studio, working closely with the company's artisans. It's her long-term interest in East-West connections. Since the nineteen-eighties, Shechet has made a close, secular study of Buddhist art. At one delightful point in the show, a robin's-egg-blue-and-white fluted bowl, from 1730, seems to float in midair above an elegantly chunky sculpture, made from the same mold in 2012. The bowl's form was inspired by a lotus, which, in Buddhist lore, is a reminder that even beauty is rooted in mud. It's a good metaphor for porcelain, too. *Through April 2, 2017.*

International Center of Photography
"Public, Private, Secret"
The museum relocates from midtown to the Bowery with an ambitious but bungled exhibition that expands its focus beyond photography to a catchall that the curator Charlotte Cotton calls "our contemporary image environment." Years before the word "selfie" entered the lexicon, photographers began making their private lives public, and the show rounds up some prime examples, including Nan Goldin, Larry Clark, and Lyle Ashton Harris. Photography turns predatory in Ron Galella's shot of Jackie Onassis fleeing across a lawn in Central Park, which hangs near an installation of grainy surveillance-like images by Don McCullin, which were commissioned by Michelangelo Antonioni for his movie "Blow-Up." Competing with pictures by Garry Winogrand, Larry Sultan, and Sophie Calle (among others) for the congested wall space are a mind-numbing range of projections and monitors of moving images, including live feeds under such trite headings as "Hotness," "Transformations," and "The Other." Several videos, notably Natalie Bookchin's grid of talking heads and Doug Rickard's montage of cops, cash, and guns, bring a critical acumen to subjects that elsewhere feel undigested and random. *Through Jan. 8.*

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Bas Jan Ader
In 1975, when he was thirty-three, the Dutch artist set sail in a small boat from Chatham, Massachusetts. He was expected to make landfall in England, but was never heard from again. Ader made an art out of failure and futility, which is evident in this poignant selection of works. On film and in ten grainy photographs, we see him bicycle through Amsterdam, then tumble into a canal. "Please don't leave me," pleads a work from 1969, in which those words are painted onto the wall and illuminated by light bulbs. Ader, now a cult figure, is too often mistaken for a calculating conceptualist. But his plea was sincere—as desperate and as enduring as those of Goethe's Young Werther. *Through Aug. 5. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)*

Hans Hofmann
In 1934, a year after Hitler's accession to power, the exiled German painter established his Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, on Fifty-seventh Street. It went on to become the clearinghouse of the first internationally successful generation of American painters. In the five succulent early works here, painted in Provincetown and predating Hofmann's more familiar paintings of solid blocks of color, you can see him infusing his European inheritance (specifically, the jarring non-local color of Fauvism) with American verve. A studio interior, from 1936, has the bright blues and violets of Matisse, but the orange pigment of a chest of drawers bleeds past its contours, onto the wall and the floor, prefiguring a combustible abstraction of 1944, whose uncontainable splatters offered a new model of creation. *Through Aug. 12. (Ameringer/McEnery/Yohe, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-445-0051.)*

Paul Outerbridge
The prolific modernist photographer, a serious rival to Edward Steichen in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, seems, in retrospect, to have more in common with Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia—like those sly avant-gardists, Outerbridge blended Surrealism and kitsch with wit. Well known for his elegantly staged still-lifes, Outerbridge produced advertising and editorial work that blurred the line between art and commerce; one of his most famous images was made for a shirt-collar ad. This thoughtful survey is the most extensive since the Getty's retrospective, in 2009, and it whets the appetite for a comprehensive museum show. The bite of Outerbridge's quirkily erotic nudes, many of them not shown in his lifetime, makes him a potent influence on today's young provocateurs. *Through Sept. 17. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)*

RongRong & inri
The artists, who are husband and wife, collaborated on—and star in—this series of idyllic black-and-white photographs taken in the snow country of rural Japan, in 2012. Their three young sons co-star, and the results suggest a family photo album as styled by Ozu. The heart of the show is a ceremonial pair of self-portraits, in which each artist is seen kneeling, *seiza*-style, alone in a room, bowing toward his or her partner across the frame. Throughout, self-consciously formal scenes are relieved by more intimate images, including ethereal double exposures in which domesticity gives way to sensuous bliss. *Through Aug. 21. (Chambers Fine Art, 522 W. 19th St. 212-206-0236.)*

Xaviera Simmons
"There are just so many different types of maps," begins the giant, text-covered mural that anchors this fine exhibition by the thoughtful American postconceptualist. Simmons's photographs, videos, and audio works create their own kind of geography, in which unidentified places seem haunted by bodies. In one video portrait, a serene shot of a swimmer at sea oscillates with grainy footage of go-go boys. Only one work, a sound piece, names specific locations; it's seductive until it's unsettling. A man mutters in French, Spanish, and Italian about his affection for black women (like the artist herself). As his voice flits across Africa, mentioning women from Egypt to Mozambique, he sounds less like a lover than a conqueror. *Through July 29. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793.)*

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Natascha Sadr Haghighian
The Persian artist, who is based in Berlin, makes her New York début with a whisper-thin video installation: two projectors, positioned slightly askew, cast words onto the same spot on a wall. Stand in front of one, and you'll be able to read the transmission from the other—it might say "cop," "mother," "male Arab," "prisoner," or "Martian"—but the first projector's words will appear on your back. (The text is all drawn from a novel by Kathy Acker.) What Sadr Haghighian's art lacks in complexity it makes up for with metaphoric force: the identities we choose are nothing compared with the identities that are thrust upon us. *Through July 31. (Matsumiya, 153 ½ Stanton St. 646-455-3588.)*

"On Empathy"
The scholar Miciah Hussey has organized a plangent symphony of a group show. Its tonic note is sounded by the late Rosemary Mayer, whose totems of snow, made in 1979 and long since melted, are evoked by a dozen signs scattered throughout the gallery. Loss, remembrance, and compassion course through the best pieces here. A tender film by Jessica Jackson Hutchins documents newspaper clippings of Darryl Strawberry's fall from grace; Andro Wekua's assemblage of found footage incorporates images from his own father's funeral. For years, curators and dealers have been lamenting the endurance of irony and detachment—rarely have they proposed an alternative. With this show, Hussey makes sincerity cool again. *Through Aug. 6. (Donahue, 99 Bowery. 646-896-1368.)*

DANCE

The all-female troupe Takarazuka will perform "Chicago," followed by a stage spectacular, at the David H. Koch Theatre.

Peach Boys

Japan's loose-gendered Takarazuka Revue, at the Lincoln Center Festival.

IN 1913, ICHIZO KOBAYASHI, the founder of Japan's Hankyu Railways, was looking for a ploy to get tourists to stay on his Osaka line all the way to the terminus, in the city of Takarazuka. He hit on the idea of starting in Takarazuka a theatre troupe like Kabuki—a travesty troupe, but in reverse, with women playing men. In 1914, the company put on its first show, "Peach Boy," about a heroic boy born from a peach. A century later, Takarazuka is the most popular theatrical enterprise in Japan, selling about two and a half million tickets a year. It has two theatres—one in Tokyo as well as the flagship house in Takarazuka—and dozens of elaborate, Vegas-worthy productions. The uncontested audience favorite is "The Rose of Versailles," about Oscar François de Jarjayes, a woman who dresses as a man and becomes a palace guard in order to protect her queen, Marie Antoinette. (This ends with an enthusiastic reënactment of the French Revolution.) But Takarazuka's repertory is quite eclectic, with shows based on everything from Japanese fairy tales to "The Brothers Karamazov."

All Takarazuka actresses are graduates of the company's school, where they spend two years in convent-like seclusion learning how to sing and dance. In their second year, they are divided into *musumeyaku*, who will take female roles, and *otokoyaku*, who will play male characters. The *otokoyaku* cut their hair short, pitch their voices downward, and learn to stride when they walk. In general, they are more popular with the spectators, who are something like ninety per cent female, and exceedingly devoted. A given *otokoyaku* may have a fan club of more than a thousand women, lined up at the stage door in matching scarves on her performance days and, in extreme cases, packing bento boxes for her and chauffeuring her to her acting classes.

Some observers attribute such ardor to the pleasure they believe Japanese women must feel in witnessing violations of their society's strict gender codes. The fans see women becoming palace guards or Dmitri Karamazov. What joy! Certain writers also point to the erotics of androgyny; others, to plain old lesbianism. One Takarazuka actress told an interviewer that all this reasoning was too fancy. As she saw it, the fans just loved "the gorgeousness."

A group of Takarazuka stars will be at the Lincoln Center Festival July 20-24, and I wish they were bringing more of the gorgeousness. I would have liked to see "The Rose of Versailles," with the hoop skirts. Instead, we are getting "Chicago," which, for this organization, is atypically sleek and uncorny. Maybe they worried that we'd make jokes about them. Or they calculated the cost of transporting all those trunks. But the second half of the production is an independent floor show, with plenty of razzle-dazzle, no matter what the opening drama.

—*Joan Acocella*

ILLUSTRATION BY PING ZHU

Lincoln Center Out of Doors
The free festival's dance offerings kick off on Saturday morning, with an all-ages block party run by the Philadelphia hip-hop collective Illstyle & Peace Productions. In the afternoon, members of Dance Theatre of Harlem and students in its summer program informally explain and demonstrate classical ballet, after which the Illstyle & Peace dancers return to show off their own formidable skills. This year's Heritage Sunday program, "The Global Beat of the Bronx: From Bambara to Breakbeats," lays out the connections between African, Afro-Caribbean, Latino, and hip-hop traditions, with performances by Bambara Drum and Dance Ensemble, Bombazo Dance Company, Chief Joseph Chatoyer Dance Company, and Full Circle Souljahs. *(Lincoln Center, Broadway at 64th St. lcoutofdoors.org. July 23-24.)*

BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn! / Camille A. Brown & Dancers
In "Black Girl: Linguistic Play," five women stomp speedily in sneakers and chant in rhyme, plugging into the irresistible rhythm and spirit of playground games. This joyful and tender work, Brown's best yet, had its début, at the Joyce, last fall, and it's a good choice for a free show in the Prospect Park Bandshell. For one thing, its set of raised platforms should reduce some of the venue's sight-line problems. The piano-and-electric-bass score is played live, and the harpist Brandee Younger opens the show. *(Prospect Park W. at 9th St. 718-683-5600. July 21.)*

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
We often think of dance as either an abstract art or a narrative one, but the two evening-length works that will be shown at Jacob's Pillow this week underscore the many shadings in between. At the Ted Shawn (July 20-24), Philadelphia's leading contemporary-dance company, BalletX, performs "Sunset, o639 Hours," by Matthew Neenan, one of its founders. The ballet—some dancers are on pointe, others are not—is loosely inspired by Edwin Musick's inaugural airmail flight across the Pacific, in 1938. The story isn't linear; rather, it's a poetic patchwork of ideas about flight, technology, communication, and distance. The impressionistic score, by Rosie Langabeer, which contains elements of jazz and Polynesian music, is played onstage. With "Escher/Bacon/Rothko," Zvi Gotheiner, the artistic director of ZviDance (at the Doris Duke, July 20-24), takes his inspiration from visual art. Each section of this modern-dance work is devoted to one artist: M. C. Escher's idea of infinity, Francis Bacon's turbulent sexuality, Mark Rothko's sensitivity to color and mood. *(Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Through Aug. 28.)*

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Cats
Trevor Nunn's long-running production of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, based on T. S. Eliot's "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats," returns, featuring Leona Lewis as Grizabella. *(Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 877-250-2929. In previews.)*

A Day by the Sea
The Mint stages N. C. Hunter's 1953 play, directed by Austin Pendleton, in which a Foreign Service employee has a midlife crisis during a seaside picnic in Dorset. *(Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin July 22.)*

Engagements
In Lucy Teitler's dark comedy, directed by Kimberly Senior for Second Stage Theatre Uptown, a young woman causes trouble at a series of summer engagement parties. *(McGinn/Cazale, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-246-4422. In previews.)*

Men on Boats
Jaclyn Backhaus's play, presented by Playwrights Horizons and Clubbed Thumb, is a stylized retelling of an 1869 expedition in which John Wesley Powell and a crew of explorers charted the Colorado River. *(Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. In previews.)*

Quietly
In Owen McCafferty's drama, directed by Jimmy Fay and set in Northern Ireland following the Good Friday Agreement, two men meet in a Belfast bar forty years after a violent incident. *(Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. In previews.)*

Summer Shorts 2016
The festival of short plays returns for its tenth year, with one-acts by Neil LaBute, Idris Goodwin, Cusi Cram, A. Rey Pamatmat, Richard Alfredo, and Alexander Dinelaris. *(59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Previews begin July 22.)*

Troilus and Cressida
Daniel Sullivan directs the second offering of the Public's Shakespeare in the Park season. The cast includes Andrew Burnap, Ismenia Mendes, Corey Stoll, and John Douglas Thompson. *(Delacorte, Central Park. Enter at 81st St. at Central Park W. 212-967-7555. In previews.)*

NOW PLAYING

Lincoln Center Festival
The festival's theatrical offerings include high-gloss revivals and reinventions, imported from around the world. The Parisian company Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord stages Molière's *comédie-ballet* "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," performed in French with English supertitles (at the Gerald W. Lynch, July 20-24). Jonathan Pryce plays Shylock in the Shakespeare's Globe production of "The Merchant of Venice," from London (Rose Theatre, July 20-24). And "Takarazuka Chicago" is an all-female, Japanese-language rendition of the Kander and Ebb musical, from the century-old troupe the Takarazuka Revue (David H. Koch, July 20-24). *(212-721-6500. lincolncenterfestival.org.)*

PTP/NYC
The Potomac Theatre Project presents, in repertory, two 1981 plays—both vigorously performed, but neither particularly fresh—that examine an artist's struggle under the heavy hand of the state. C. P. Taylor's "Good" concerns John Halder, a German novelist co-opted by the Nazis; as performed by Michael Kaye, the character is compelling, and even funny, as he spins the rationalizations required to transform from a nebbishy academic into a jack-booted S.S. officer. But this production's lack of live music, so central to the play's original conception, costs it dearly in both emotional power and dramatic clarity. By contrast, Howard Barker's "No End of Blame," about a Hungarian political cartoonist named Bela Veracek, whose work is suppressed in Budapest, Moscow, and London, benefits enormously from Gerald Scarfe's perfectly corrosive drawings. Still, its idea of an artist—impulsive, arrogant, wildly pretentious, preoccupied with "genius," and extremely male—feels like a relic of the twentieth century. If "Good" seeks to test our sympathies with its protagonist incrementally, "No End of Blame" explodes them from its opening scene, in which Veracek attempts to rape a half-naked woman on a First World War battlefield. *(Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 866-811-4111.)*

Simon Says
It's tough to tell whether the playwright Mat Schaffer intends audiences to take seriously the déjà-vu-all-over-again theory of history proposed in this histrionic three-hander. Set in the eclectically decorated living room where Professor Williston (Brian Murray) showcases the psychic talents of his protégé, James (Anthony J. Goes), the play stages a circular debate about chance versus destiny. This begins when Annie (Vanessa Britting), a new client, arrives, hoping that James's supernatural alter ego, Simon, can channel her beloved late husband. But Simon has other metaphysical fish to fry, morphing into a past identity as a member of the ancient Jewish Essene sect, then revealing that Annie and Professor Williston were Essenes, too, entangled in a drama of love and betrayal that is replaying itself in the present. For such a ploddingly literal concept, this plot proves perplexing to follow. *(Lynn Redgrave, 45 Bleecker St. 866-811-4111.)*

OUT OF TOWN

Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival
The festival marks its thirtieth year with three highly imaginative productions in repertory. Davis McCallum directs "Measure for Measure," a serious romp about changing a society from one based on retribution to one based on mercy, beautifully spoken in a range of comic dialects and led by Sean McNall (the Duke), Annie Purcell (Isabella), and Zachary Fine (Lucio). Lee Sunday Evans directs a three-woman "Macbeth" (Maria-Christina Oliveras, Nance Williamson, and Stacey Yen), and the conceit of expanding the roles of the witches to portray all the characters is illuminating. And Gaye Taylor Upchurch directs a full-cast version of "As You Like It," Shakespeare's comic tale of gender confusion and the search for love and justice in the wilds. LeRoy McClain (Orlando), Jessica Love (Rosalind), and Mark Bedard (Touchstone) are particularly winning. All this, and a gorgeous, soul-enriching natural backdrop. *(Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575. hvshakespeare.org.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

A very rare staging of Pietro Mascagni's opera "Iris" reveals the modernist innovations contained within its conservative Italian style.

ILLUSTRATION BY SIMON PRADES

Puccini Plus

Bard SummerScape examines an entire era of Italian creativity.

ANYONE WHO KNOWS the proudly obscurantist tendencies of Bard College's summer music series won't be surprised to learn that the main event at this year's edition, centered on Puccini, is something other than "La Bohème." From July 22 to 31, Leon Botstein, Bard's president and music master, will lead performances of Pietro Mascagni's 1898 opera, "Iris," which, along with most of Mascagni's output, apart from the inescapable one-act "Cavalleria Rusticana," has largely disappeared from view. Botstein's favorite tactic is to use a well-known figure like Puccini to shine a light on lesser-known contemporaries. "Iris" is an excellent beneficiary of that logic: although the opera is a shade too weird to ever regain a place in the repertory, it overflows with inspiration and may stand as Mascagni's most formidable achievement.

The libretto is by the journalist and dramatist Luigi Illica, who, in collaboration with Giuseppe Giocosa, created the texts for Puccini's three most famous operas: "Bohème," "Tosca," and "Madama Butterfly." Puccini kept his librettists on a short leash, and Illica's more florid literary ideas tended to fall by the wayside. In "Iris," he lets his imagination run riot, concocting a lurid, potent tale steeped in decadent orientalism. The title character is an innocent young Japanese woman who falls into the clutches of men bearing the names Osaka and Kyoto—one a lecherous aristocrat, the other a cynical brothel-keeper. Denounced by her own father, Iris hurls herself down into a cavern, where ragpickers poke around her body as she dies. Somehow, the opera manages to reach an ecstatic conclusion, as Iris's spirit ascends to heaven.

It sounds like "Butterfly" as rewritten by a committee of Symbolists. In fact, "Iris" came first, and it may have prompted Puccini to offer his own tale of a Japanese girl in jeopardy. "Butterfly" is unquestionably the finer work; Mascagni could never match Puccini's command of dramatic structure. In some ways, though, "Iris" is the more original score. It is rich in unstable, digressive harmonies—one recurring progression sets F major against C-sharp minor—and clouds of whole-tone tonality. The orchestration is at once luminous and shadowy: in the prelude to Act III, groping music for cellos, double basses, and harp suggests Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande," which had yet to be finished. Mascagni can't stop himself from unleashing explosions of Italianate ardor, which often have a disconcerting effect, particularly when Osaka is expressing vile sentiments. Yet such jarring juxtapositions add to the opera's ominous allure.

Puccini retakes center stage during the festival "Puccini and His World" (August 5-14). There will be concert performances of the short operas "Le Villi" and "Il Tabarro," alongside Act IV of "Manon Lescaut" and Act III of "Turandot," in the completion by Berio. Panel discussions will address Italian composers' relations with Mussolini—Mascagni was a shameless opportunist in that regard—and the evolution of Italian opera after Verdi. The label commonly stuck on the period is "verismo," implying blood-and-guts realism. "Iris," opulent and eerie, exposes the inadequacy of the term.

—*Alex Ross*

CONCERTS IN TOWN

Mostly Mozart Festival Preview
Louis Langrée, the festival's invigorating music director, honors the boy genius of Salzburg once more, with the traditional free preview concert, conducting the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, al fresco, in two favorites, the Violin Concerto No. 3 in G Major (with the Avery Fisher Career Grant winner Simone Porter) and the Symphony No. 41, "Jupiter." *(Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. July 22 at 7:30. No tickets required.)*

Mostly Mozart: "The Illuminated Heart"
The festival kicks off its fiftieth season with this specially commissioned work, which is essentially a high-concept production of a greatest-hits concert. It comes from the director and video artist Netia Jones, who will stage some of Mozart's most beloved arias in a white-box theatre, with video projections. The all-star cast includes Christine Goerke, Ana María Martínez, Peter Mattei, Matthew Polenzani, Christopher Maltman, and Nadine Sierra; Louis Langrée conducts the festival orchestra. *(David Geffen Hall. 212-721-6500. July 25 at 8 and July 26 at 7:30.)*

Roulette: "The Rake's Progress"
The adventure-seekers at this Brooklyn venue often get their fix by performing thorny contemporary work, but Stravinsky's neoclassical opera, a touchstone of twentieth-century modernism, presents its own, very daunting challenges. Tito Muñoz conducts the String Orchestra of Brooklyn and a cast that includes Gilad Paz, Benjamin Bloomfield, Stefanie Izzo, and Amy Maude Helfer. *(509 Atlantic Ave. 917-267-0368. July 21 and July 23 at 8.)*

Rite of Summer Music Festival: Kara Sainz and Peter Dugan
This innovative little festival is one of several organizations that is making Governors Island into a summertime playground for outdoor cultural events. Its next concert, at Nolan Park, is by an exceptional young singer and her able accompanist, performing songs by Gershwin, Ginastera, Purcell, and Falla. *(July 23 at 1 and 3. For information about ferries from Brooklyn and lower Manhattan, visit govisland.com.)*

International Keyboard Institute and Festival
For more than fifteen summers, this festival, spearheaded by the pianist Jerome Rose, has been a go-to event for piano aficionados—a mix of lectures, master classes, and, most tantalizing, robust concert programs from a variety of international virtuosos and up-and-comers. This year's big star is Philippe Entremont, a distinguished keyboard veteran rarely heard in New York. His showcase program offers bedrock works by Bach, Beethoven (the Sonata No. 30 in E Major), Chopin, Debussy ("Images," Book I), and Ravel. *(Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. July 23 at 8. For tickets and complete schedule, visit ikif.org.)*

OUT OF TOWN

Glimmerglass Festival
This season, the preëminent summer opera festival of the Northeast hews to a reliable formula in its lineup, presenting one warhorse, one relative rarity, one musical, and one twentieth-century opera. July 22 at 7:30: The director Christopher Alden sets Stephen Sondheim's **"Sweeney Todd"** in a village hall in postwar England, where the townspeople gather to retell the story of Sondheim's grisly dramedy over a meal of meat pies. Greer Grimsley and his wife, Luretta Bybee, are the demon barber and his salty accomplice, Mrs. Lovett; John DeMain conducts. • July 23 at 8: Given the current trend among opera directors to reinvent a work's setting with each new production, it seems almost radical that Francesca Zambello would set **"The Crucible,"** Robert Ward's 1961 adaptation of Arthur Miller's allegory of McCarthyism run amok, in seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts, where the actual witch trials took place. The cast is also noteworthy, with Brian Mulligan (John Proctor), David Pittsinger (John Hale), Ariana Wehr (Abigail Williams), and the much fêted mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton (Elizabeth Proctor); Nicole Paiement. • July 24 and July 26 at 1:30: E. Loren Meeker directs a Belle Époque-themed production of Puccini's beloved **"La Bohème,"** starring Michael Brandenburg and Raquel González as Rodolfo and Mimì; Joseph Colaneri. • July 25 at 1:30: Peter Kazaras's fairy-tale staging of Rossini's **"The Thieving Magpie"** (best known, in the modern era, for its sparkling overture) features Rachele Gilmore as Ninetta and Michele Angelini, a bel-canto specialist on the rise, as Giannetto; Colaneri. *(Cooperstown, N.Y. glimmerglass.org.)*

Tanglewood
Boston's musical duchy broadens its scope this week. July 20 at 8: An all-star roster—including the violinist Lisa Batiashvili, the violist Kim Kashkashian, and the pianist Emanuel Ax—offers chamber music at Ozawa Hall on Wednesday, a concert featuring pieces by Saint-Saëns, Mozart, Debussy (the Sonata for Violin and Piano), Britten, and Mozart (the Oboe Quartet in F Major, K. 370). • July 21 at 8: This summer, Tanglewood's annual Festival of Contemporary Music honors Steven Stucky, who programmed the festival before his untimely death, in February. Fittingly, the first of five concerts—exploring a range of transatlantic modernist styles—features two works by Stucky (the "Dialoghi" for solo cello and the East Coast première of the Chamber Concerto) as well as pieces by Stucky's lodestar, Lutosławski ("Chain 1"), and two trusted colleagues, Esa-Pekka Salonen ("Five Images After Sappho") and Magnus Lindberg; a full schedule is available at bso.org. • July 22 at 8: The first of three weekend concerts of the Boston Symphony Orchestra is led by Andrew Davis, who conducts the kind of program that mid-century British maestros once loved to indulge in: major music by the home team (Vaughan Williams's Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis), as well as by two favorites just beyond the German mainstream, Dvořák (the Violin Concerto, with Batiashvili) and Sibelius (the majestic Fifth Symphony). • July 23 at 8: Juanjo Mena conducts splashy repertory from Russia (Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, with Garrick Ohlsson) and Spain (Falla's "The Three-Cornered Hat," with the soprano Raquel Lojendio). • July 24 at 2:30: Mena returns to lead the Sunday-afternoon concert, adding a dash of Ginastera ("Variaciones Concertantes") to a program of music by Mozart (the Violin Concerto No. 4 in D Major, with Veronika Eberle) and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"). *(Lenox, Mass. bso.org.)*

Bard SummerScape: "Iris"
Pietro Mascagni's opera, which played into the fin-de-siècle trend for *Japonisme* with a sumptuous, evocative score, gets a rare staging courtesy of the Los Angeles director James Farrah, who has built a reputation for experimental productions that contrast richly scored works (such as Handel's "Semele" and John Adams's "A Flowering Tree") with muted colors and minimalist design. Talise Trevigne takes the starring role; Leon Botstein conducts. *(Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts. Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 22 at 7:30 and July 24 at 2. Through July 31.)*

Caramoor
This week, the gracious Westchester festival steps back from its orchestral and operatic exertions to present chamber music of an unusually interesting variety. On Friday night, the adventurous Music from Copland House ensemble presents "Songs America Loves to Sing," a buoyant Americana program offering not only the titular work by John Harbison but also pieces by Mark O'Connor and Pierre Jalbert, along with the legends Copland (selections from "Old American Songs"), Joplin, and W. C. Handy. Sunday afternoon features a concert by a commanding American artist, the pianist Jeremy Denk, who performs a "syncopation set" of miniatures by such composers as Byrd, Stravinsky, Hindemith, and William Bolcom, sandwiched between works by Bach (the Third English Suite) and Schubert (the Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960). *(Katonah, N.Y. caramoor.org. July 22 at 8 and July 24 at 4:30.)*

Norfolk Chamber Music Festival
An echo of Tanglewood in both its high musical standards and its bucolic setting, the longtime summer program of the Yale School of Music continues its noble tradition at its outpost, in northwest Connecticut. The Brentano Quartet, a smart and virtuosic American ensemble in its prime, joins the up-and-coming Argus Quartet for a concert in the grandly intimate Music Shed that offers music by Bach and Shostakovich (the String Quartet No. 14 in F-Sharp Major) as well as Mendelssohn's Octet for Strings (with the Argus). *(Norfolk, Conn. norfolk.yale.edu. July 23 at 8.)*

Marlboro Music
The legendary summer festival and school, where the world's leading musicians gather with their promising protégés to make chamber music on the loftiest level, is up and running. The Russian master Sofia Gubaidulina is this season's composer-in-residence; programs are announced a week in advance on the festival's Web site. *(Marlboro, Vt. marlboromusic.org. July 23 at 8 and July 24 at 2:30. Through Aug. 14.)*

Maverick Concerts
None of the region's distinguished summer festivals is as artisanal as the Maverick, which for the past century has presented its concerts in an idyllic music barn in the forest outside Woodstock. The vigorous and elegant piano trio Latitude 41 is its next featured classical ensemble; the musicians perform a program of trios by Haydn (in G Major, the "Gypsy"), Shostakovich (the seldom heard Trio No. 1 in C Minor), and Mendelssohn (the powerful Trio No. 2 in C Minor). *(Woodstock, N.Y. maverickconcerts.org. July 24 at 4.)*

NIGHT LIFE

Thom Yorke, Jonny Greenwood, and their mates celebrate twenty-five years of subverting the rules.

The National Fandom

Radiohead tours its ninth studio album, "A Moon Shaped Pool."

THERE ARE FEW modern rock craftsmen comparable to Thom Yorke, and few bands whose rockist flag waves more consistently than that of Radiohead. The Oxfordshire schoolmates drew from beloved groups, many of which foreshadowed their own cult appeal—the Pixies, with whom they shared early producers, and the Talking Heads, whose song "Radio Head" gave them a name. In 1991, Radiohead signed to EMI, and the following year delivered a début album bearing a hit that was impossible to ignore. "Creep" became the stuff of alt-radio legend, warmly suicidal and cynically tuned into early-nineties vogue, at once brutal and pitiable. But, alongside tabloid-tantalizing rock stars and engulfing musical movements like hip-hop, it was easy for pop middlemen to ignore the band. Radiohead never chased the crossover success that eventually found it—subverting your surroundings is easier from just left of center.

With each innovative new sound and paradigm shift, Radiohead has rejected the industry tropes that prescribe what a band should do and play. Its devotees, drawn to the group by virtue of its opacity, carve whole identities out of the band's transgressions. If you've ever sparred with a Radiohead fan, you know that "OK Computer"'s wobbly first steps toward avant-electronica presaged a generation of gear-headed punks, and that "Kid A"'s abandonment of guitar cliché gives it an unmatched stature in the indie alternative canon—the single "The National Anthem" (2000) manages to make baritone saxophone sound like record scratches. The band has remained dedicated to experimenting with methods of distribution, from decades-ahead streaming services to surprise album releases—benchmarks for which they only occasionally receive credit.

All this may be why, after the May release of "A Moon Shaped Pool," Radiohead's ninth studio album, Yorke said he was surprised to find out that people still cared. What insurrections were left? "I cherish the band," he said recently. "But I don't expect anyone else to." Yorke unintentionally echoes the default mode of a Radiohead fan—both brutal and pitiable. For the group's latest album campaign, it deleted its Web site and all the posts on its social-media accounts, clearing the walls for speculating bystanders to project onto. For two nights at Madison Square Garden, on July 26 and 27, Headheads can live out their love for a group that rarely asks for it, but has patently earned it.

—*Matthew Trammell*

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

Dr. Know Benefit
At the corner of Avenue A and Seventh Street sits Niagara, a landmark bar that from 1981 to 1984 was known simply as A7. The New York hardcore sound emerged from this zygote, which hosted legendary concerts by Minor Threat and Bad Brains, among others. The performances would spill over to Tompkins Square Park, where A7 locals would often opt to sleep afterward. **Breakdown, Cro Mags, Token Entry, Antidote,** and **Maximum Penalty** are all Bad Brains disciples from this era, and they will reunite to play in the park to raise funds for the medical expenses of Dr. Know, the seminal Brains guitarist who suffered from cardiac arrest and organ failure in 2015. *(E. 7th St. at Avenue A. July 23 at 1:30.)*

Kyary Pamyu Pamyu
The Japanese fashion model-turned-vocalist Kiriko Takemura has gone from a J-Pop oddity to one of her country's key soft-power exports. The twenty-two-year-old's ascent coincided with the Japanese government's increased investment in cultural influence abroad. In 2013, Shinzō Abe, the Prime Minister, pledged nearly a billion dollars to the so-called Cool Japan government initiative, in part to compete with South Korea's vast pop-cultural impact. Takemura, who performs as Kyary Pamyu Pamyu, is a proud emissary of the program, and an ideal ambassador for Harajuku's *kawaii* subculture. Her electro-pop brainworms are pathologically catchy, with a helium soprano that cuts through candy-sweet synths and propulsive drum machines. Her thrilling live show features frenetic backup dancers, manga-inspired props, and young cosplaying Japanophiles breathlessly trying to sing along. *(Playstation Theatre, Broadway at 44th St. 212-930-1950. July 25.)*

Potty Mouth
There's something in the water in Northampton, Massachusetts. Vintage alt is all the rage in this countercultural college town, and a small economy of labels, recording studios, and ad-hoc venues has blossomed there. This all-female trio is one of the Meadow City's shining stars, and its latest self-titled EP is worthy of comparisons to the brash feminist punk of Hole and L7. This week, Potty Mouth performs at MOMA, as part of a concert series in the museum's open-air sculpture garden. Go early to take in the first New York survey of the interminably innovative San Francisco artist Bruce Conner, whose oppositional collages, assemblages, photographs, and experimental films are presented in conjunction with the music. *(11 W. 53rd St. 212-708-9400. July 21 at 6:30.)*

Toro y Moi
The producer and songwriter Chazwick Bundick recently announced an upcoming live album of new compositions. Harry Isrealson filmed the show, performed under the Trona Pinnacles, in California, for a corresponding documentary, stitching together original animations and behind-the-scenes footage for an illuminating portrait of the reclusive artist. Fans of Bundick's humming, sticky club funk and indie affections will cherish the result. Since 2010, the Berkeley native's releases as Toro y Moi have been indiscriminate, from the campus-dive thump of his début, "Causers of This" to the woodland psychedelia of last year's "What For?" Bundick is aided by both his charming squeak of a voice and his malleability, with a bold and broad palette that comes in especially handy when manning a dance floor. This

ILLUSTRATION BY KRISTIAN HAMMERSTAD

week, he commandeers one of the city's best sound systems for a d.j. set that won't stay in any one place for too long. *(Output, 74 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn. outputclub.com. July 21.)*

Gregorio Uribe
The spirited genre known as *cumbia* first emerged, among Colombia's working-class and indigenous coastal inhabitants, during the Spanish colonial period. Yet the genre wasn't embraced by pop culture until the big-band heyday of the nineteen-fifties. The movement has since bled into popular forms as diverse as hip-hop and *chicha*, and continues to influence unprecedented (and highly danceable) sounds, thanks in part to this Bogotá-bred accordionist, composer, and vocalist. A Berklee College graduate who once busked his way across eight countries in Latin America, Uribe melds the traditional hand-drum beats of *cumbia* with *vallenato*, jazz, and funk traditions. Now based in New York, Uribe leads a sixteen-piece eponymous big band, whose credits include performances at the Kennedy Center and alongside the Latin-music titans Rubén Blades and Carlos Vives, and a monthly residency at Zinc Bar. Uribe brings a trio to Subrosa, in celebration of Colombia's Independence Day. *(63 Gansevoort St. 646-240-4264. July 20.)*

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Barbara Cook
Time takes what it must from us all, but the imperishable vocalist Cook toughs it out to give everything she's got for the glory of song. Heartfelt interpretation may have replaced technical command, but in the hands of this iconic trouper that's more than enough. *(54 Below, 254 W. 54th St. 646-476-3551. July 21-23.)*

Dick Hyman–Ken Peplowski Duo
Two walking compendiums of jazz—the eighty-nine-year-old pianist Hyman and the younger clarinettist and saxophonist Peplowski—are virtuosos who never forget that mirth isn't antithetical to sterling musicianship. The two, both New York treasures, have been featured on the soundtracks to various Woody Allen films, naturally. *(Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. July 22-23.)*

Jazz in July (Various Shows)
Under the watchful eyes and adroit fingers of the pianist and artistic director Bill Charlap, this venerated festival keeps on swinging. Tributes to Billy Strayhorn, Nat King Cole, and other luminaries highlight the series, which makes nimble use of such mainstream notables as **Houston Person, Sandy Stewart, Warren Vache, Anat Cohen,** and **Carol Sloane.** *(92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Ave. 212-415-5500. July 20-27.)*

Pat Martino Trio
The road provided plenty of unexpected twists and turns in Martino's six-decade musical journey, yet he has emerged a veritable patriarch of jazz guitar, a fleet modernist who's never forgotten his earthy roots. His customary organ-based trio is expanded here, with the addition of **Alex Norris,** on trumpet, and **Adam Niewood,** on tenor saxophone. *(Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. July 21-24.)*

Nellie McKay
One minute she's cooing a buttery song of sunshiny romance, the next she's ripping the system a new one with the caustic venom of a true dissenter. McKay and her steel-plated political agenda remain as delightfully and defiantly uncontainable as when she released her auspicious, anti-Bush recording début, in 2004, "Get Away from Me." *(Le Poisson Rouge, 158 Bleecker St. 212-505-3474. July 22.)*

MOVIES

OPENING

Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. *Opening July 22. (In limited release.)* • **Don't Think Twice** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening July 22. (In limited release.)* • **For the Plasma** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening July 21. (Anthology Film Archives.)* • **The Seventh Fire** Reviewed in Now Playing. *Opening July 22. (Metrograph.)* • **Star Trek Beyond** Justin Lin directed the latest installment of the intergalactic series, starring Chris Pine, Zoe Saldana, Idris Elba, and the late Anton Yelchin. *Opening July 22. (In wide release.)* • **Summertime** A drama, directed by Catherine Corsini, set in Paris in the nineteen-seventies, about a love affair between an activist (Cécile de France) and a farm worker (Izïa Higelin). *Opening July 22. (In limited release.)*

NOW PLAYING

The BFG
Steven Spielberg lavishes extraordinary care and skill on this live-action adaptation of a story by Roald Dahl, about an orphan named Sophie (Ruby Barnhill) who is plucked from a London orphanage by a giant named Runt (Mark Rylance) and brought to his home in Giant Country, somewhere to the north of north. There, Runt is bullied by nine even bigger giants, child-eating cannibals who mock him for being a vegetarian and try to hunt Sophie, whom he valiantly defends. Meanwhile, Runt plies his gentle trade as the world's dream-catcher and dream-brewer. The early scenes offer a sort of magic realism in which Runt struggles with the practical details of the modern city with a cleverly grounded whimsy that the movie's far more fanciful later conceits can't match for simple astonishment. Rylance brings an arch literary rusticity to Runt's brilliantly bungled language, and the gifted Barnhill isn't given much with the role of Sophie, who's written to be spunky, endearing, and blank. The film's technical achievements may be complex, but its emotions are facile. With Penelope Wilton as the Queen, who summons the British Army and keeps the American President, Ronald Reagan, informed.—*Richard Brody (In wide release.)*

Café Society
The new Woody Allen film, set in the nineteen-thirties, tells the tale of Bobby Dorfman (Jesse Eisenberg), from the Bronx. Bobby goes to Los Angeles and hooks up with his Uncle Phil (Steve Carell), an agent to the stars. Phil is always busy (nobody is better than Carell at that kind of busyness), and so his assistant, Vonnie (Kristen Stewart), gets to show the rube around town. They duly fall in love, as they would in any Hollywood romance of that period, except that there's a hitch: Vonnie is already having an affair with Phil. Allen is an old hand at teasing out such tangles, and, just for fun, he even ties on other strands of plot—perhaps too many. Bobby's encounter with a prostitute, played by Anna Camp, is even more awkward for the viewer than it is for the protagonists, and the figure of his brother (Corey Stoll), a gangster, is rarely more than a sketch. The fine cast includes Parker Posey, Blake Lively, and a rubicund Ken Stott as Bobby's father, but it's Stewart who takes the honors, allowing Vonnie's shyness to shade into mystery. The cinematography, by Vittorio Storaro, is almost illicitly beautiful; who better to pay tribute to a gilded age?—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 7/11 & 18/16.) (In limited release.)*

Don't Think Twice
The comedian Mike Birbiglia wrote, directed, and co-stars in this amiable, lovingly detailed comedy about comedy—specifically, about the life and possible death of an admired but struggling New York improv troupe called the Commune. Birbiglia plays Miles, who founded the troupe a decade ago but is struggling to find a place in the business at large. He and the five other members hold down day jobs (one's a waitress, another works in a store, and Miles teaches improv) while awaiting their big break. When a producer invites several of the members to audition for "Weekend Live," the Saturday-night broadcast that makes comedians instantly famous, the resulting turmoil of resentments and frustrations turns the Commune into a buzzing hive of individualists and threatens to pull it apart. Birbiglia films what he knows, offering ample and intricate scenes of improvisations performed onstage, along with an insider's view of the industry, and he pushes his colleagues to the fore—especially Keegan-Michael Key, who has a drolly ambiguous turn as a self-anointed star, and Gillian Jacobs, playing a powerhouse performer tormented by self-doubt, who is the film's movingly dramatic center.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

For the Plasma
This exquisitely delusional comedy, co-directed by Bingham Bryant (who wrote the script) and Kyle Molzan, delivers a dry New England strain of crazy. Its mainspring is the metaphysics of vision and the maddening quest for meaning; its subject is the pit of friendship. Two young women live in an isolated house in a seaside village in Maine: Helen (Rosalie Lowe), a forest-fire surveillance officer, and her old friend and new assistant, Charlie (Anabelle LeMieux). Helen bases supernatural stock-market predictions on the video feed with which she monitors the woods, and she seeks Charlie's help in taking them to the next level. Paranoid moods emerge from Helen's incantatory remarks and occult doodles on a newspaper's financial pages, as well as from Charlie's encounters with surveillance cameras in the wild. Then Herbert (Tom Lloyd), a crusty old neighbor and lighthouse keeper, shows up, his off-key solitude as tempting as the abyss. The movie's visual prose, aided by simple but fanciful camera work, has an original, giddy spin; Bryant and Molzan's smooth and floaty direction sublimates the rocky landscape into something disturbingly ethereal.—*R.B. (Anthology Film Archives.)*

Hunt for the Wilderpeople
Gentle and appealing performances can't rescue this facile and cloying comedy, about a neglected New Zealand boy who flourishes in an idiosyncratically rustic household. Julian Dennison plays Ricky Baker, a twelve-year-old foster child who has bounced from family to family, leaving behind a trail of trouble. He's adopted by Bella (Rima Te Wiata), a cheerful and open-hearted woman who lives with her gruff, taciturn husband, Hector (Sam Neill), a skilled outdoorsman. Bella, who kills wild boars with her bare hands, shows Ricky the love he never had

(her improvised song for his thirteenth birthday is the movie's high point). When she dies suddenly, Hector—a convict considered unfit to adopt—prepares to send Ricky back to the authorities and heads for the woods. Ricky follows him there, and the unlikely pair try to stay a step ahead of a punctilious child-services agent (Rachel House) and her police posse. Ricky and Hector lurch from adventure to adventure in a series of mechanical plot twists with a calculated blend of laughter and tears, and only a final showdown with a streak of earnest danger grounds the plastic sentiment in strong emotion. Directed by Taika Waititi.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

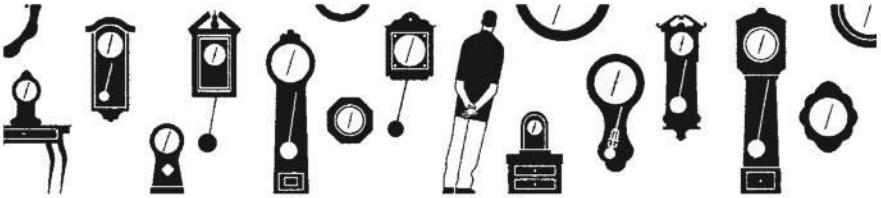
Life, Animated
This new documentary follows the story of Owen Suskind, who as a young child, in the early nineteen-nineties, was diagnosed with autism. Just as his parents, Ron and Cornelia, were starting to fear that their son was lost to them, an unlikely connection was made. Owen frequently repeated phrases that he knew from Disney cartoons, and it became clear that Disney was his principal conduit to the world, helping him to make sense of his experience. The film, directed by Roger Ross Williams, introduces us to the adult Owen, who is graduating from high school and setting up home on his own: a near-miraculous achievement, even if many viewers will be left wanting to learn more about his case. (At one point, Owen and his classmates are visited by two actors from "Aladdin." It's hardly the typical school activity, and one would like to know what the actors made of it.) Interspersed with all this is a series of animated sequences, designed by the French visual-effects company MacGuff, that trace the progress of the growing boy—charming enough, but no match for the clips from Disney movies, so beloved by Owen, that are also scattered throughout.—*A.L. (7/11 & 18/16) (In limited release.)*

Mike and Dave Need Wedding Dates
A fine cast goes to waste in this risk-free and cliché-riddled comedy, loosely based on a true story. The brothers Stangle, Mike (Adam DeVine) and Dave (Zac Efron), twentysomething liquor salesmen and roommates, have messed up one too many family gathering with their antics, and when their younger sister, Jeanie (Sugar Lyn Beard), plans a destination wedding in Hawaii, their parents demand that the young men bring proper young women to keep them on their best behavior. Mike and Dave place an ad on Craigslist and get scammed by the hard-partying Alice (Anna Kendrick) and Tatiana (Aubrey Plaza), who present themselves as sedate and then, in Hawaii, cut loose. Kendrick plays the slightly more sentimental Alice with puckish intelligence, and Plaza, as the uninhibited Tatiana, lets fly with quietly blazing profanities. Alice Wetterlund co-stars as the brothers' cousin Terry, a sharp and free-spirited lesbian, and Kumali Nanjiani plays a masseur with cool manners and hot methods, but the frivolities are tame and stereotyped. The resulting chaos threatens to drive Jeanie and her fiancé, Eric (Sam Richardson), apart before they reach the altar, but they're so thinly characterized that there's no reason to care. Directed, with scant comedic flair, by Jake Szymanski.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

Minnie and Moskowitz
Weary of the aggression that he faces in New York, Seymour Moskowitz (Seymour Cassel), a ponytailed, happy-go-lucky car parker and overgrown mama's boy, moves to California, where he learns that the aggression he faces is, in fact, his own. This romantic drama by John Cassavetes, from 1971, comes with a ready-made dose of fantasy—Seymour and Minnie Moore (Gena Rowlands), the single, middle-aged woman he rescues from a lout and loves at first sight, spend their free time at Bogart revivals. But, where Seymour sees a touch of Lauren Bacall in Minnie, she has few illusions about him. Brutality is everywhere—as many punches are thrown as in a boxing match, and far less fairly—and there's a special place in Hell for Minnie's married ex-lover (played by Cassavetes, Rowlands's real-life husband), yet, in this shambling tale of punch-drunk love, the rage is a part of romantic passion. The sculptural physicality of the images, a 3-D explosion without glasses, embodies that violence while preserving the antagonists' innocent grace; love smooths things out to a dreamy and reflective shine.—*R.B. (Metrograph; July 25.)*

The Seventh Fire
This deeply textured, rueful documentary, about several families in a desolate corner of White Earth Indian Reservation, is centered on two young men suffering the devastating effects of poverty, substance abuse, and neglect. Rob Brown, an aspiring writer in his thirties who's painfully lucid about his mistakes, faces incarceration for the fifth time, leaving behind his young children and pregnant girlfriend. Kevin Fineday, an adolescent, is a low-level drug dealer who's in trouble with the law. His father, a fisherman who kicked Kevin out of the house for stealing from him—"I gave him the prerogative to leave and he did"—observes the young man's struggles with wry and unsentimental wisdom. The director, Jack Pettibone Riccobono, gets cameras into a county courthouse and a local jail, and he spends time, at home and in public, with a wide range of Bob and Kevin's friends and family members, capturing a terrifying ambient sense of no exit. A foundation that intervenes in prisons to substitute Native American traditions for gang membership offers a hint of hope, but a remarkable sequence showing Rob's children debating the merits of Christian and "Indian" beliefs suggests that this, too, is a complex struggle.—*R.B. (Metrograph.)*

ABOVE & BEYOND



Orchard Beach Lagoon Birding
On the right late-summer day, canoeing on Orchard Beach Lagoon, in Pelham Bay Park, can feel like a trip up the coast to picturesque New England shores. The lagoon, which hosted the 1964 U.S. Olympic rowing trials and is still a practice ground for the Fordham Prep crew team, also hosts summer birding excursions, where city dwellers can row through Bartow Creek, looking out for the variety of species that call this stretch of the Long Island Sound home. Prior canoe experience is preferred; attendants may register via lottery. *(Pelham Bay Park, 1 Orchard Beach Rd., the Bronx. 718-319-0912. July 24 at noon.)*

The Hills on Governors Island
New York has a new view. A ten-acre park on the south end of Governors Island opens this week, after eight years of construction, featuring breathtaking views of the Statue of Liberty and the surrounding skylines of New Jersey, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. On July 20, the Sunrise to Sunset celebration invites attendees to welcome the new attraction, and free ferries run from dawn till dusk. *(govisland.com/hills. July 19-24.)*

READINGS AND TALKS

McNally Jackson
Susan Daitch's latest novel, "The Lost Civilization of Suolucidir," recounts the search for a mythical city said to have been tucked between the borders of Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Daitch traces the journeys of its seekers and obsessives, who dig through archived records and ancient scrolls. The city may have been a cultural hotbed that could shift contemporary views of the Middle East, or it may have been founded as a hub for ancient pornography. The author's prose is rich with winking allusions and send-ups of modern tomb-raiding tropes, down to an explorer with "a long stiff braid down her back." Daitch speaks with the author Emily Barton about building and burying an ancient metropolis and rerouting the explorer's path on a postcolonial map. *(52 Prince St. 212-274-1160. July 25 at 7.)*

St. Francis College
Mary-Louise Parker and Elvis Costello join The Big Think's Jason Gots for a discussion of their recent memoirs. Parker's "Dear Mr. You" is framed as a series of open letters addressed to real and hypothetical men in her life: the award-winning actress writes to a grandfather whom she never met and a firefighter she barely knew, unveiling intimate details about her childhood and her relationships with a refreshing sincerity. Costello's "Unfaithful Music and Disappearing Ink," published in 2015, is as warm and affecting as his songs: the pub-rock icon traces his life through standards like "Alison" and "Veronica," revealing the meaning and inspiration behind some of his most celebrated hits and countless anecdotes from his unlikely trip through fame. *(180 Remsen St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. July 26 at 7.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO AMARGO

FOOD & DRINK

TABLES FOR TWO

Covina

127 E. 27th St. (212-204-0225)

WHEN AN AWARD-WINNING chef says that he's not into being too "cheffy," you may wonder, with a touch of trepidation, what there is for dinner. At Tim Cushman's newest venture, a California-Mediterranean composite nestled in the same Park Avenue South hotel as O Ya, the popular outpost of his Japanese restaurant in Boston, the answer is a concise program of wood-grilled meat and handmade pastas. The well-constructed staples at Covina deliver subtle surprises, underwritten by an abundance of umami—a 2016 rebuke to the notion that simplicity breeds monotony.

Covina's location—in Kips Bay, where lacrosse bros-turned-bankers and indistinguishable high-rises have congregated in recent years—may not seem like the easiest locale in which to make a culinary statement. The requisite cauliflower dish is curried (and served with a creamy blend of cilantro-mint chutney and charred-garlic yogurt), and rivals the best of neighboring Curry Hill. The Hungarian fry bread, a precarious tower of smoked salmon, fried dough, and house-made kefir ranch dressing, deftly nods to both southwestern Navajo fry bread and New York City, topped with onion, capers, and dill. Those looking for lighter fare may select the asparagus "cacio e pepe"—in lieu of calorific carbs, finely shaved asparagus is tossed with Pecorino and champagne vinaigrette.

Pasta is a dominant motif, and a house favorite; handkerchief-thin *mandilli* arrived beatifically separated into green (pesto), white (ricotta), and red (marinara), a miniature, edible, round-edge Rothko. "The cheese is folded in like a present!" a genial waiter offered. The sixteen-ounce Montauk sea bass was served whole, dark and glistening on a bed of root-vegetable purée, olives, and energetic celery salsa verde. As some people at the table stared, unsure how to begin, one had already unceremoniously torn off the fish's head and was blissfully feasting on a length of jawbone, scaly skin dangling.

Even if you're full, order at least two desserts: the date cake and the chocolate budino. The delicious budino arrives in a small orange Mason jar with a cloud of cream. It takes a few bites to land the crunch of cocoa nibs, and something vaguely savory: a shockingly pleasant yet unplaceable umami that sends you back to hunt for more. It's the caramel, you guess. "The lime zest?" the waiter ventures. This is the best kind of "cheffiness," in which the secrets are tucked away: not to be told but tasted. *(Dishes $16–$68.)*

—Jiayang Fan

BAR TAB

Seaborne
228 Van Brunt St., Brooklyn (718-852-4888)

This cocktail bar's lyric name, plucked from a Yeats poem, suggests a breezy harborside cantina. Walking down an industrial stretch of Van Brunt Street, in Red Hook, however, what you encounter appears to be an abandoned storefront. A polite patron would knock, but someone less thoughtful might jerk at the locked door until the bartender, Sandy, swings it open. In the early evening, the space—red leather booths, steel tabletops—feels like a cozy, empty diner, with diffuse light filtering in through wavy glass blocks. Next to each booth is a tap for refilling water glasses, a stack of napkins, and playing cards. "You could basically be self-sufficient," one patron said on a recent Friday. "The only thing you can't do is make a drink." You'll be glad to leave it to Sandy. Though there is a terrific menu, the bartender prefers to mix drinks inspired by your mood. A grapefruit-and-tequila cobbler in a highball glass (refreshing with a bright red float of Angostura bitters) and a rummy Brooklynite ("A very cocktaily cocktail," noted its drinker, referencing the bracing but pleasant bite) were precisely made yet unpretentious. Both were fitting tributes to the late Sasha Petraske, who laid the groundwork for New York's thriving cocktail scene, starting with Milk & Honey, in 1999, as well as for Seaborne. Petraske died last August, before he could open the bar himself. It's now an elegant memorial, and one that you can have to yourself, at least for a little while—the party crowd doesn't file in until nine. Slipping out before then, you can walk along the expansive waterfront to catch the last of the sun, and, finally, the salt breeze borne from the sea.—*Wei Tchou*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY LIEBMAN FOR THE NEW YORKER; ILLUSTRATION BY JOOST SWARTE

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
ACROSS THE DIVIDE

THE RECENT CALAMITIES in Baton Rouge, St. Paul, and Dallas have the feel of a national turning point. This kind of trauma has been visited upon Americans with such regularity that the hope that any single outrage could foster change has been abandoned. But three such incidents in one week, each witnessed through the first-person lens of social media? Surely this warrants a detour from the unpaved trail that we've been stumbling down.

Last Tuesday, Senator Ted Cruz, who in 2013 had orchestrated a government shutdown in the hope of derailing the Affordable Care Act, flew with President Barack Obama on Air Force One to Dallas, to attend the memorial service for the five police officers who were slain there. En route, Obama telephoned the families of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, the men killed in Baton Rouge and a St. Paul suburb, to offer his sympathies. The Dallas service was a show of national unity. A pastor, an imam, and a rabbi offered prayers and condolences. An interfaith choir sang hymns. John Cornyn, the senior senator from Texas, who had met Obama's request for curtailed access to firearms with a bill to force all states to recognize concealed-carry licenses (Texas permits open carry), warmly greeted the President. The signs for a new dialogue were auspicious.

The voices of discord, however, were also to be heard. A few days earlier, on "Fox & Friends," Rudolph Giuliani said that when he was the mayor of New York he saved more black lives than the Black Lives Matter movement has, and that he had done so through aggressive policing. In other interviews, he claimed that the movement was "inherently racist" and that its rhetoric had put "a target on police officers' backs." Giuliani, who is scheduled to address the Republican National Convention, in Cleveland, this week, has made this kind of argument for years. His point is, essentially, that aggressive policing is the closest thing we have to a cure for the violence that plagues many poor black and brown communities, and that any criticism of those efforts jeopardizes the safety of both the police and those communities.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

In Dallas, Mayor Mike Rawlings smartly rebuffed Giuliani, saying, "Our police officers died for the Black Lives Matter movement. We were protecting those individuals. That is not a racist organization." But on Thursday Obama participated in a televised town-hall meeting in which the lieutenant governor of Texas, Dan Patrick, implied that the President had not done enough to articulate his support for law enforcement. This elicited a testy response from Obama, who challenged Patrick to find an instance of violence involving police officers in which he had not spoken of his respect for them. Given Giuliani's presence in Donald Trump's campaign, and Trump's new emphasis on law and order, this debate will continue throughout the weeks leading up to the election.

The memorial service inadvertently illustrated the nature of the deepening divide. The deaths of the officers elicited an automatic acknowledgment of the value of these men to the people whom they had served. Police departments from as far away as San Francisco and Pittsburgh sent representatives to Dallas. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, which keeps a tally of law-enforcement fatalities, reports that a hundred and twenty-four police officers died in the line of duty last year, forty-two of them from gunshot wounds. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, policing is not among the ten most hazardous professions, which include logging and commercial fishing, yet we don't stop to honor people who die on those jobs. That is because the dangers the police face are constant and are part of the

sacrifice that is fundamental to their work, and because they represent a broader societal jeopardy. The death of an officer is a tragedy that carries an implicit threat: a person who would shoot a police officer is capable of shooting anyone.

For those Americans who live in communities where the threat of violence is real, this is not an abstract concern. African-Americans compose thirteen per cent of the population but forty-four per cent of homicide victims, a circumstance that insures a disproportionate level of contact between black communities and the police. Yet seventy-six per cent of African-Americans believe that there is a problem with law enforcement as it pertains to race, as compared with thirty-three per cent of whites. The *Guardian* reported that twenty-five per cent of the African-Americans killed by police last year were unarmed. Where Giuliani sees aggressive policing as something like a cure, people in African-American communities may see it more like chemotherapy: a method of addressing a life-threatening condition which comes with its own hazards.

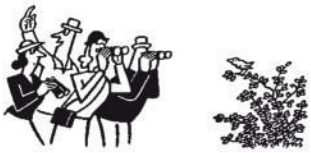
In the video that Diamond Reynolds recorded as Philando Castile, her fiancé, lay dying, the most wrenching moment occurs when she quietly recites to the officer who has just shot him the reasons that Castile's life matters. "He works for St. Paul public schools," she says. "He's not a gang member, anything." Castile had no record of committing serious crimes, but he had been stopped by police fifty-two times in the previous fourteen years. Statistical probabilities indicate that, as a thirty-two-year-old African-American male, Castile was eight times more likely to be murdered than other members of the population. He was also more likely to die at the hands of those charged with protecting him from that reality.

Here is the difference a color makes: "blue lives matter" expresses a fact in our society; "black lives matter" exists as a reminder, or an aspiration. The former is not a radical proposition; the latter, given the weight of history and habit, is a contested idea. The presence at the Dallas service of a mayor, a senator, a Vice-President, a former President, and a President sent a clear message about the importance of the men who died in that city and, by extension, of the profession to which they belonged. The movement that has sprung up to demand police accountability is voicing another principle that should be equally obvious: if the killing of an officer carries wider social implications, a killing at the hands of an officer does, too.

—Jelani Cobb

BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPT.

GOTCHA!



"I WISH I HAD eight pairs of hands, and another body to shoot the specimens," John James Audubon wrote in 1829. A similar yearning has gripped the population lately, thanks to the world-conquering success of the smartphone game Pokémon Go. In the "augmented reality" app, which has topped fifteen million downloads since its release, on July 6th, players venture into the streets to collect cute Pokémon creatures, which have been digitally overlaid onto real locations. At least the game gets you outside, the thinking goes. But, like any social experiment, it has its dark side. Pokémon hunters have popped up at Auschwitz, and, around the country, robbers have targeted players by staking out Pokéstops. A safety advisory from the N.Y.P.D. last week: "As you battle, train, and capture your Pokémon, just remember you're still in the real world, too!"

If Pokémon Go has a real-world analogue, it might be bird-watching, which also involves curious souls going outdoors in search of elusive critters, arranged in a detailed taxonomy. What is the Pokédex (where captured Pokémon are stored) if not a newfangled "life list"? With that in mind, a novice birder/Pokémon hunter, going by the avatar MonsieurJavert, set out for Central Park's Hallett Nature Sanctuary, a four-acre preserve that is rarely open to visitors. On his way in, he passed a group of Pokémon Go players. "We're leaving, because our phones are dying," Aaron Senson, a twenty-year-old engineering student, said.

"Yay, I caught a Shellder!" his friend said, flicking a finger across her phone's screen. They'd racked up plenty of Pidgeys—the Pokémon equivalent of the common pigeon (*Columba livia*)—and one had nabbed a Hitmonlee (a rarity, more like the black-bellied plover).

In the sanctuary, a volunteer in a mesh vest pointed toward a tree. "You see it?" she said. "A cardinal." She added, "We've seen woodpeckers, too." And Pokémon hunters? "Not on my shift. So far, so good."

Up a wood-chip path, Mei Chien, a retired graphic designer, was angling her Nikon at a robin. She seemed unimpressed when MonsieurJavert spotted a wild Pinsir (a sort of Viking bug) lurking in the bushes. "I like real stuff," she said.

MonsieurJavert yelled, "I got a wild Spearow!" A woman in a floral scarf spun around and squealed, "Oh, nice!" When she realized that it was a Pokémon situation, she said, "I thought you were a birder." But she didn't judge. She was Teri Tynes, a sixty-two-year-old blogger who chronicles her city strolls; she had also come to the sanctuary to investigate the overlap between birding and Pokémon. "Since it's said to introduce people to being outside, I needed to not just be dismissive of it but download it and go," she said. (Her avatar name: FridaCallow.)

Tynes, who lives in Inwood, where she sees egrets and great blue herons, had already spotted a gray catbird (real world) and caught a Pidgey (Pokémon). "I am not totally into birding culture, but I've been around enough to know about the excitement of seeing things in the wild and creating lists," she said. "There are parallels. You need a device with which to spot the bird, and so instead of high-power binoculars it's mediated with a screen." However, she added, "I have deep reservations about the idea of Pokémon Go as a flâneur-type activity. I have to stop and think, This is an artificial reality that has a baseline to get me to spend money within an app."

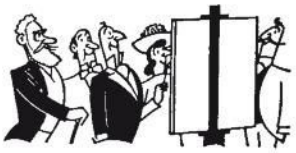
She turned around. "Oh, wait! There's one!" It was another Pinsir, at the foot of a red mulberry tree. A Park worker leaned in, looking astonished: "That's in the Park, right here?" Failing to capture it—Tynes's app froze—she went the Audubon route

and took a screenshot. Then she headed toward a promontory overlooking the Pond, where MonsieurJavert caught a Magikarp on a wooden fence. "I'm wondering what it's going to do to our sensibility," Tynes said, adding that the overlay of the natural and the mythic reminded her of the fairies in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Her eyes darted: "There's a blue jay!" She gazed out. "It's beautiful. I love these classic nineteenth-century vistas—oh, I got a buzz on my phone! It means there's a Pokémon nearby."

Strolling onward, MonsieurJavert caught a Pikachu in a patch of Virginia creeper, while Tynes photographed a bumblebee in a wild bergamot. "This is a good place to see real things," she said. "Maybe we'll see a 'Peterson Guide to the Pokémon of North America.'"

—*Michael Schulman*

AT THE MUSEUM
MULTITUDINOUS



On a recent Wednesday, at the Met Breuer, the Metropolitan Museum's new outpost in the old Whitney building, a typical crowd—older, white—milled around the inaugural exhibit, "Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible." Half-painted Picassos, a Warhol, and a large portrait by Kerry James Marshall, an African-American artist based in Chicago, were on view. The subject of Marshall's painting is a woman with skin shaded gray to black, holding a palette; behind her, like a shadow, is a color-by-number outline of herself. Kimberly Drew, the Met's twenty-five-year-old social-media manager and the founder of a popular Tumblr, Black Contemporary Art, admired the work with a friend, the artist Eric Mack. "It's a portrayal of black femininity that's not compromised—the direct stare, the skin color," Drew said. "It's a position of supreme power."

Mack agreed: "I am obsessed with the care he shows the subject—the drapery, her figure enveloped and protected."

Drew, who wore an orange dress and alligator loafers, and Mack, in satiny culottes, made their way toward another favorite, a painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat. The work, "Piscine Versus the Best Hotels (or Various Loin)," includes a graffitied list of deaths, body parts in blue paint, and what looks like a gibbet. "Basquiat means so much to people, particularly at this moment," Mack said. Drew added, "Before the advent of the Internet, he was recording these stories and outputting a black existence on his own terms."

The day before, police in Baton Rouge had shot and killed Alton Sterling, an African-American man selling CDs outside a convenience store. That night, Philando Castile, an African-American lunchroom worker, was shot and killed by a Minnesota policeman.

As self-proclaimed "Internet kids," Drew and Mack digest current events through Facebook. After Castile's death, Drew posted a photo of protesters on the steps of the Met and wrote, "When the Black Lives Matter rally shows up at your doorstep. Love New York. Love the folk." She also shared an image of the artist Dread Scott's flag bearing the words "A Man Was Lynched by Police Yesterday," a reworking of the banner that the N.A.A.C.P. once displayed outside its headquarters. "What great civil-rights movement hasn't had images?" Drew said.

She launched her Tumblr in 2011, after an internship at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Although she grew up in Orange, New Jersey, visiting museums with her parents, she realized that she knew only "like six" black artists. She adopted the nom de net Museum Mammy, and a handful of followers grew into thousands. "I built the blog as a critique of the art world, and now it has a seat in that world," she said. "There's a lot of work I post that I don't particularly like, but maybe it will resonate with someone else's experience." She is wary of the way that "tastemakers" dictate how art history is written: "We want to continue to present multitudes."

Drew joined the Met's social-media team last year, after the museum received a gift of fifty-seven works by contemporary African-American artists. "The Met is learning and has a lot to learn," she said. She cited an upcoming Kerry James Marshall retrospective as a good sign: "Kerry talks about being able to hang among your heroes, of celebrating being on these walls, and now there's so much more opportunity for that to happen."

Drew supplements her blog with Facebook (2,702 friends), Twitter (8,426 followers), and Instagram (98,400 followers), to champion black artists and the cause of Black Lives Matter. Of the movement, she says, "I don't want anyone to ever think it was just one person. Reporting on having been there, on *having been*, is a big part of the work."

Increasingly, Drew herself is a subject. The Web site artsy.net included her

Kimberly Drew

in a roundup of art-world leaders who are "advancing racial equality in the art world." She doesn't often dwell on the whiteness of the art establishment. "So much of my world is black-oriented," she said. "It's centered on blackness. It's centered on creativity." She added, "There's too much work to be done to be concerned with 'Oh, there's another Donald Judd show!' I don't give a shit, actually. It's like, 'Do you know about Eric Mack's show in Chicago?'"

—*E. Tammy Kim*

DEPT. OF FOREIGN RELATIONS
FIRST DAY

Last monday was Antonia Romeo's first day as Her Majesty's Consul-General in New York. Romeo rose at six, skipping her morning SoulCycle class, and slipped on a pair of snakeskin Louboutins to welcome Britain's outgoing Chancellor of the Exchequer,

George Osborne, who was in town to reassure Wall Street, post-Brexit. Romeo, who is forty-one, is the first woman to hold her position in its two-hundred-and-thirty-one-year history.

After seeing the Chancellor, Romeo dashed off to perform her first bit of diplomacy, a City Hall meeting with Melissa Mark-Viverito, the speaker of the New York City Council. "I wouldn't be me if I didn't feel a little frisson of excitement at being late," Romeo said. "Which is probably something you should leave behind when you join the Foreign Office."

"You're the first woman, congratulations!" Mark-Viverito said, in greeting. "I was the second woman in my position." (Minutes earlier, the two had learned that Theresa May would be Britain's second woman Prime Minister.)

Mark-Viverito told Romeo, who has a background in criminal justice, that she wanted to close Rikers Island.

"What do you have to do to end up in Rikers as a woman?" Romeo asked. "Murder?"

"It really runs the gamut," Mark-Viverito said. "People think that just because you're in Rikers you're guilty, but actually almost everybody there is awaiting trial." She continued, "There are several hundred women at Rikers. There are also men, and adolescents, all being held in one prison."

Romeo said, "I'm obsessed with stopping re-offending."

Upstairs, Mark-Viverito pointed out a desk that had been used by George Washington. "Isn't that the desk made famous in 'Hamilton'?" Romeo asked. It was. She's seen the musical twice, having moved here nine months ago, working as a special envoy to U.S. technology companies.

When the Brexit-referendum results started coming in, she was getting off a flight from San Francisco. As the vote swung toward Leave, she said, "I realized that the consul job would become much, much bigger." She anticipates meeting with U.S. companies to urge them to continue investing in Britain. When she explained the Brexit results to her eight-year-old son, Rocco, who had already channelled his passion for London's Arsenal soccer team into support for the Yankees and the Mets, she said, "Imagine you're in a club with friends where you do your homework together, and the club would protect you against bullies. Well, now you've left that club, but you can still have the benefits of being friends with the club members."

After her meeting at City Hall, Romeo was to introduce a screening of "Florence Foster Jenkins," with Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant. Jotting notes for her speech, Romeo remembered that Streep had won an Oscar for playing Margaret Thatcher. "Should I say, 'I wonder if Meryl is up for portraying the next female P.M.'?" she mused. She nixed the idea. "I suppose I don't want the media to lead with my 'Iron Lady Two' joke."

—Nicolas Niarchos

POSTSCRIPT
MICHAEL CRAWFORD

MICHAEL CRAWFORD WAS a cartoonist and a painter, a wry and sensitive artist who woke each day with his head full of dreams. Straight from bed he reached for his pencils and pad, the better to get those images and word clusters down on paper. For at least an hour every morning, "Michael was mining his dreams," his wife, Carolita Johnson, also a cartoonist for this magazine, said. "And when it came to cartoons he just started drawing, without any idea where things might go. Lots of drawings sat around for years without any caption. He was his own one-man cartoon-caption contest in that way. But he was patient."

There was a wild, improvisational streak in Crawford's work. He loved baseball, and imagined a cockeyed intimacy in the talk between, say, two pros in the dugout: "Why so aloof in here? When you're on base, you yak your ass off with every Yankee in sight." A student of American art, he redrew many of Edward Hopper's moody paintings as cartoons and then provided snappy dialogue for the painter's lonely souls. In his version of Hopper's bereft "Office at Night," the secretary asks her boss, "Will you be needing any more repressed sexual tension before I leave for the day, sir?" Crawford filled many of his drawings and canvases with gangsters. He loved their self-conscious carriage and their talk, the swingy three-quarters-contrived vocabulary of threat, loyalty, and doom. Crawford's fellow-cartoonist Roz Chast recalled how his personality converged with his work. "That loose, sweet, jazzy style that permeated his speech, his writing, his cartoons, his way of existing in the world was right there" in his very being, she said.

Crawford, who was seventy, and Johnson lived in the Inwood section of Manhattan until recently, when they moved upriver, to Kingston. He spent his last few days at home, surrounded by his family, some friends, his work, and his music. His friend Matt Dellinger sent word to the rest of us that when the end came Michael was listening to Cannonball Adderley's version of "Autumn Leaves." And then, Matt wrote, "the playlist shuffled meaningfully to Chet Baker's 'Someone to Watch Over Me.'"

—David Remnick

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PHILANTHROPIC FADS

Out of nowhere, a huge fad sweeps the country. It dominates social media and leads to a blizzard of think pieces, which are followed almost immediately by a backlash, as critics warn of the fad's baleful consequences. Eventually, people get bored and move on to something new. That could well be the story of Pokémon Go, the augmented-reality game that has everyone wandering the streets in search of Pikachus and Squirtles. It's also the story of the A.L.S. Ice Bucket Challenge, in 2014, in which millions of people filmed themselves dumping buckets of ice-cold water over their heads, in order to fight Lou Gehrig's disease. Facebook users posted more than seventeen million videos of dousing, and countless celebrities—Bill Gates, Justin Timberlake, Leonardo DiCaprio—got drenched for the cause. For a few weeks, a previously little-known and underfunded disease dominated the public imagination.

NISHANT CHOKSI

But the feel-good story made some people feel bad. The challenge was derided as "slacktivism"—a way for people to feel virtuous without doing much. Critics fretted that the exercise amplified people's tendency to donate for emotional reasons, rather than after careful evaluation of where money can do the most good. Some argued that it would divert donations from diseases that afflict many more people than the six thousand who receive a diagnosis of A.L.S. every year. People even attacked ice-bucketeers for wasting water.

All these critiques had the same underlying theme: the faddishness of the challenge undermined its value. This makes intuitive sense, but is it true? Actually, no. Silly though the Ice Bucket Challenge may seem now, it had far-reaching effects. It raised a reported two hundred and twenty million dollars worldwide for A.L.S. organizations; in just eight weeks, the American A.L.S. Association received thirteen times as much in contributions as what it had in the whole of the preceding year. Public awareness rose: the challenge was the fifth most popular Google search for all of 2014. Brian Fredrick, the vice-president for communications and development at the A.L.S. Association, told me, "The challenge suddenly made a lot of people who probably didn't even know who Lou Gehrig was aware of the disease. It really changed the face of A.L.S. forever."

More concretely, the money raised has led to more research and more spending on patient care. The A.L.S. Association has tripled its annual funding for research. "The research environment is dramatically different from what it was," Barbara Newhouse, the association's C.E.O., told me. "We're seeing research that's really moving the needle not just on the causes of the disease but also on treatments and therapies." Last summer, a team from Johns Hopkins published a paper in *Science* that was hailed as a breakthrough in A.L.S. research; the team members said that funding from the challenge had accelerated the pace of their work.

It's true that the vast majority of the people who made A.L.S. donations during the challenge haven't done so again. But contributions to the A.L.S. Association have stayed about twenty-five per cent higher than in the year before the challenge, and the average donor age dropped from above fifty to thirty-five. The campaign was an enormous success with millennials, a demographic most charities have had a hard time reaching. The young are the demographic least likely to make charitable donations, and millennials seem more resistant to traditional charity appeals than previous generations. The challenge circumvented those problems by leveraging the power of social media to spread the word, and by making it easy for people to donate via their cell phones.

If the success of the challenge had come at the expense of other charities, ambivalence might be justified. But there's almost no evidence that this was the case. According to Giving U.S.A., individual donations in the U.S. rose almost six per cent in 2014, which doesn't suggest any cannibalization effect. Indeed, it's likely that the very nature of the challenge, which belongs to a category known to anthropologists as "extreme ritual," made people more openhanded. Dimitris Xygalatas, an anthropologist at the University of Connecticut who has studied the effects of such rituals, ran a fascinating experiment with people who were undergoing *kavadi*—a Hindu ritual that commonly involves piercing the skin with sharp objects and then making a long procession while carrying heavy objects. Xygalatas found that people who did *kavadi*, and even people who just joined in the procession, donated more to charity than people in a control group. And those who gave the most painful descriptions of the experience donated the most. As a result, Xygalatas has suggested that the Ice Bucket Challenge, far from stealing from other charities, almost certainly increased the total size of the pie.

That, really, was the true accomplishment of the challenge: it took tools—the selfie, the hashtag, the like button—that have typically been used for private amusement or corporate profit and turned them to the public good. The campaign's critics implied that, had people not been dumping freezing water over their heads, they would have been working to end malaria instead. But it's far more likely that they would have been watching cat videos or, now, playing Pokémon Go. The problem isn't that the Ice Bucket Challenge was a charity fad. It's that it was a charity fad that no one has figured out how to duplicate.

—*James Surowiecki*

THE POLITICAL SCENE

TRUMP'S BOSWELL SPEAKS

The ghostwriter of "The Art of the Deal" says that Trump is unfit to lead.

BY JANE MAYER

"I put lipstick on a pig," Tony Schwartz, the ghostwriter, says. He feels "deep remorse."

LAST JUNE, AS dusk fell outside Tony Schwartz's sprawling house, on a leafy back road in Riverdale, New York, he pulled out his laptop and caught up with the day's big news: Donald J. Trump had declared his candidacy for President. As Schwartz watched a video of the speech, he began to feel personally implicated.

Trump, facing a crowd that had gathered in the lobby of Trump Tower, on Fifth Avenue, laid out his qualifications, saying, "We need a leader that wrote 'The Art of the Deal.'" If that was so, Schwartz thought, then he, not Trump, should be running. Schwartz dashed off a tweet: "Many thanks Donald Trump for suggesting I run for President, based on the fact that I wrote 'The Art of the Deal.'"

Schwartz had ghostwritten Trump's 1987 breakthrough memoir, earning a joint byline on the cover, half of the book's five-hundred-thousand-dollar advance, and half of the royalties. The book was a phenomenal success, spending forty-eight weeks on the *Times* best-seller list, thirteen of them at No. 1. More than a million copies have been bought, generating several million dollars in royalties. The book expanded Trump's renown far beyond New York City, making him an emblem of the successful tycoon. Edward Kosner, the former editor and publisher of *New York*, where Schwartz worked as a writer at the time, says, "Tony created Trump. He's Dr. Frankenstein."

Starting in late 1985, Schwartz spent eighteen months with Trump—camping out in his office, joining him on his helicopter, tagging along at meetings, and spending weekends with him at his Manhattan apartment and his Florida estate. During that period, Schwartz felt, he had got to know him better than almost anyone else outside the Trump family. Until Schwartz posted the tweet, though, he had not spoken publicly about Trump for decades. It had never been his ambition to be a ghostwriter, and he had been glad to move on. But, as he watched a replay of the new candidate holding forth for forty-five minutes, he noticed something strange: over the decades, Trump appeared to have convinced himself that he *had* written the book. Schwartz recalls thinking, "If he could lie about that on Day One—when it was so easily refuted—he is likely to lie about anything."

It seemed improbable that Trump's campaign would succeed, so Schwartz told himself that he needn't worry much. But, as Trump denounced Mexican immigrants as "rapists," near the end of the speech, Schwartz felt anxious. He had spent hundreds of hours observing Trump firsthand, and felt that he had an unusually deep understanding of what he regarded as Trump's beguiling strengths and disqualifying weaknesses. Many Americans, however, saw Trump as a charmingly brash entrepreneur with an unfailing knack for business—a mythical image that Schwartz had helped create. "It pays to trust your instincts," Trump says in the book, adding that he was set to make hundreds of millions of dollars after buying a hotel that he hadn't even walked through.

In the subsequent months, as Trump defied predictions by establishing himself as the front-runner for the Republican nomination, Schwartz's desire to set the record straight grew. He had long since left journalism to launch the Energy Project, a consulting firm that promises to improve employees' productivity by helping them boost their "physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual" morale. It was a successful company, with clients such as Facebook, and Schwartz's colleagues urged him to avoid the political fray. But the prospect of President

ILLUSTRATION BY JAVIER JAÉN

Trump terrified him. It wasn't because of Trump's ideology—Schwartz doubted that he had one. The problem was Trump's personality, which he considered pathologically impulsive and self-centered.

Schwartz thought about publishing an article describing his reservations about Trump, but he hesitated, knowing that, since he'd cashed in on the flattering "Art of the Deal," his credibility and his motives would be seen as suspect. Yet watching the campaign was excruciating. Schwartz decided that if he kept mum and Trump was elected he'd never forgive himself. In June, he agreed to break his silence and give his first candid interview about the Trump he got to know while acting as his Boswell.

"I put lipstick on a pig," he said. "I feel a deep sense of remorse that I contributed to presenting Trump in a way that brought him wider attention and made him more appealing than he is." He went on, "I genuinely believe that if Trump wins and gets the nuclear codes there is an excellent possibility it will lead to the end of civilization."

If he were writing "The Art of the Deal" today, Schwartz said, it would be a very different book with a very different title. Asked what he would call it, he answered, "The Sociopath."

THE IDEA OF Trump writing an autobiography didn't originate with either Trump or Schwartz. It began with Si Newhouse, the media magnate whose company, Advance Publications, owned Random House at the time, and continues to own Condé Nast, the parent company of this magazine. "It was very definitely, and almost uniquely, Si Newhouse's idea," Peter Osnos, who edited the book, recalls. *GQ*, which Condé Nast also owns, had published a cover story on Trump, and Newhouse noticed that newsstand sales had been unusally strong.

Newhouse called Trump about the project, then visited him to discuss it. Random House continued the pursuit with a series of meetings. At one point, Howard Kaminsky, who ran Random House then, wrapped a thick Russian novel in a dummy cover that featured a photograph of Trump looking like a conquering hero; at the top was Trump's name, in large gold block lettering. Kaminsky recalls that Trump was pleased by the mockup, but had one suggestion: "Please make my name much bigger." After securing the half-million-dollar advance, Trump signed a contract.

Around this time, Schwartz, who was one of the leading young magazine writers of the day, stopped by Trump's office, in Trump Tower. Schwartz had written about Trump before. In 1985, he'd published a piece in *New York* called "A Different Kind of Donald Trump Story," which portrayed him not as a brilliant mogul but as a ham-fisted thug who had unsuccessfully tried to evict rent-controlled and rent-stabilized tenants from a building that he had bought on Central Park South. Trump's efforts—which included a plan to house homeless people in the building in order to harass the tenants—became what Schwartz described as a "fugue of failure, a farce of fumbling and bumbling." An accompanying cover portrait depicted Trump as unshaven, unpleasant-looking, and shiny with sweat. Yet, to Schwartz's amazement, Trump loved the article. He hung the cover on a wall of his office, and sent a fan note to Schwartz, on his gold-embossed personal stationery. "Everybody seems to have read it," Trump enthused in the note, which Schwartz has kept.

"I was shocked," Schwartz told me. "Trump didn't fit any model of human being I'd ever met. He was obsessed with publicity, and he didn't care what you wrote." He went on, "Trump only takes two positions. Either you're a scummy loser, liar, whatever, or you're the greatest. I became the greatest. He wanted to be seen as a tough guy, and he loved being on the cover." Schwartz wrote him back, saying, "Of all the people I've written about over the years, you are certainly the best sport."

And so Schwartz had returned for more, this time to conduct an interview for *Playboy*. But to his frustration Trump kept making cryptic, monosyllabic statements. "He mysteriously wouldn't answer my questions," Schwartz said. After twenty minutes, he said, Trump explained that he didn't want to reveal anything new about himself—he had just signed a lucrative book deal and needed to save his best material.

"What kind of book?" Schwartz said.

"My autobiography," Trump replied.

"You're only thirty-eight—you don't have one yet!" Schwartz joked.

"Yeah, I know," Trump said.

"If I were you," Schwartz recalls telling him, "I'd write a book called 'The Art of the Deal.' *That's* something people would be interested in."

"You're right," Trump agreed. "Do you want to write it?"

Schwartz thought it over for several weeks. He knew that he would be making a Faustian bargain. A lifelong liberal, he was hardly an admirer of Trump's ruthless and single-minded pursuit of profit. "It was one of a number of times in my life when I was divided between the Devil and the higher side," he told me. He had grown up in a bourgeois, intellectual family in Manhattan, and had attended élite private schools, but he was not as wealthy as some of his classmates—and, unlike many of them, he had no trust fund. "I grew up privileged," he said. "But my parents made it clear: 'You're on your own.'" Around the time Trump made his offer, Schwartz's wife, Deborah Pines, became pregnant with their second daughter, and he worried that the family wouldn't fit into their Manhattan apartment, whose mortgage was already too high. "I was overly worried about money," Schwartz said. "I thought money would keep me safe and secure—or that was my rationalization." At the same time, he knew that if he took Trump's money and adopted Trump's voice his journalism career would be badly damaged. His heroes were such literary nonfiction writers as Tom Wolfe, John McPhee, and David Halberstam. Being a ghostwriter was hackwork. In the end, though, Schwartz had his price. He told Trump that if he would give him half the advance and half the book's royalties he'd take the job.

Such terms are unusually generous for a ghostwriter. Trump, despite having a reputation as a tough negotiator, agreed on the spot. "It was a huge windfall," Schwartz recalls. "But I knew I was selling out. Literally, the term was invented to describe what I did." Soon *Spy* was calling him "former journalist Tony Schwartz."

SCHWARTZ THOUGHT THAT "The Art of the Deal" would be an easy project. The book's structure would be simple: he'd chronicle half a dozen or so of Trump's biggest real-estate deals, dispense some bromides about how to succeed in business, and fill in Trump's life

story. For research, he planned to interview Trump on a series of Saturday mornings. The first session didn't go as planned, however. After Trump gave him a tour of his marble-and-gilt apartment atop Trump Tower—which, to Schwartz, looked unlived-in, like the lobby of a hotel—they began to talk. But the discussion was soon hobbled by what Schwartz regards as one of Trump's most essential characteristics: "He has no attention span."

In those days, Schwartz recalls, Trump was generally affable with reporters, offering short, amusingly immodest quotes on demand. Trump had been forthcoming with him during the *New York* interview, but it hadn't required much time or deep reflection. For the book, though, Trump needed to provide him with sustained, thoughtful recollections. He asked Trump to describe his childhood in detail. After sitting for only a few minutes in his suit and tie, Trump became impatient and irritable. He looked fidgety, Schwartz recalls, "like a kindergartner who can't sit still in a classroom." Even when Schwartz pressed him, Trump seemed to remember almost nothing of his youth, and made it clear that he was bored. Far more quickly than Schwartz had expected, Trump ended the meeting.

Week after week, the pattern repeated itself. Schwartz tried to limit the sessions to smaller increments of time, but Trump's contributions remained oddly truncated and superficial.

"Trump has been written about a thousand ways from Sunday, but this fundamental aspect of who he is doesn't seem to be fully understood," Schwartz told me. "It's implicit in a lot of what people write, but it's never explicit—or, at least, I haven't seen it. And that is that it's impossible to keep him focussed on any topic, other than his own self-aggrandizement, for more than a few minutes, and even then . . ." Schwartz trailed off, shaking his head in amazement. He regards Trump's inability to concentrate as alarming in a Presidential candidate. "If he had to be briefed on a crisis in the Situation Room, it's impossible to imagine him paying attention over a long period of time," he said.

In a recent phone interview, Trump told me that, to the contrary, he has the skill that matters most in a crisis: the ability to forge compromises. The reason he touted "The Art of the Deal" in his announcement, he explained, was that he believes that recent Presidents have lacked his toughness and finesse: "Look at the trade deficit with China. Look at the Iran deal. I've made a fortune by making deals. I do that. I do that well. That's what I do."

But Schwartz believes that Trump's short attention span has left him with "a stunning level of superficial knowledge and plain ignorance." He said, "That's why he so prefers TV as his first news source—information comes in easily digestible sound bites." He added, "I seriously doubt that Trump has ever read a book straight through in his adult life." During the eighteen months that he observed Trump, Schwartz said, he never saw a book on Trump's desk, or elsewhere in his office, or in his apartment.

Other journalists have noticed Trump's apparent lack of interest in reading. In May, Megyn Kelly, of Fox News, asked him to name his favorite book, other than the Bible or "The Art of the Deal." Trump picked the 1929 novel "All Quiet on the Western Front." Evidently suspecting that many years had elapsed since he'd read it, Kelly asked Trump to talk about the most recent book he'd read. "I read passages, I read areas, I'll read chapters—I don't have the time," Trump said. As *The New Republic* noted recently, this attitude is not shared by most U.S. Presidents, including Barack Obama, a habitual consumer of current books, and George W. Bush, who reportedly engaged in a fiercely competitive book-reading contest with his political adviser Karl Rove.

Trump's first wife, Ivana, famously claimed that Trump kept a copy of Adolf Hitler's collected speeches, "My New Order," in a cabinet beside his bed. In 1990, Trump's friend Marty Davis, who was then an executive at Paramount, added credence to this story, telling Marie Brenner, of *Vanity Fair*, that he had given Trump the book. "I thought he would find it interesting," Davis told her. When Brenner asked Trump about it, however, he mistakenly identified the volume as a different work by Hitler: "Mein Kampf." Apparently, he had not so much as read the title. "*If* I had these speeches, and I am not saying that I do, I would never read them," Trump told Brenner.

Growing desperate, Schwartz devised a strategy for trapping Trump into giving more material. He made plans to spend the weekend with Trump at Mar-a-Lago, his mansion in Palm Beach, where there would be fewer distractions. As they chatted in the garden, Ivana icily walked by, clearly annoyed that Schwartz was competing for her husband's limited free time. Trump again grew impatient. Long before lunch on Saturday, Schwartz recalls, Trump "essentially threw a fit." He stood up and announced that he couldn't stand any more questions.

Schwartz went to his room, called his literary agent, Kathy Robbins, and told her that he couldn't do the book. (Robbins confirms this.) As Schwartz headed back to New York, though, he came up with another plan. He would propose eavesdropping on Trump's life by following him around on the job and, more important, by listening in on his office phone calls. That way, extracting extended reflections from Trump would not be required. When Schwartz presented the idea to Trump, he loved it. Almost every day from then on, Schwartz sat about eight feet away from him in the Trump Tower office, listening on an extension of Trump's phone line. Schwartz says that none of the bankers, lawyers, brokers, and reporters who called Trump realized that they were being monitored. The calls usually didn't last long, and Trump's assistant facilitated the conversation-hopping. While he was talking with someone, she often came in with a Post-it note informing him of the next caller on hold.

"He was playing people," Schwartz recalls. On the phone with business associates, Trump would flatter, bully, and occasionally get mad, but always in a calculated way. Before the discussion ended, Trump would "share the news of his latest success," Schwartz says. Instead of saying goodbye at the end of a call, Trump customarily signed off with "You're the greatest!" There was not a single call that Trump deemed too private for Schwartz to hear. "He loved the attention," Schwartz recalls. "If he could have had

three hundred thousand people listening in, he would have been even happier."

This year, Schwartz has heard some argue that there must be a more thoughtful and nuanced version of Donald Trump that he is keeping in reserve for after the campaign. "There isn't," Schwartz insists. "There is no private Trump." This is not a matter of hindsight. While working on "The Art of the Deal," Schwartz kept a journal in which he expressed his amazement at Trump's personality, writing that Trump seemed driven entirely by a need for public attention. "All he is is 'stomp, stomp, stomp'—recognition from outside, bigger, more, a whole series of things that go nowhere in particular," he observed, on October 21, 1986. But, as he noted in the journal a few days later, "the book will be far more successful if Trump is a sympathetic character—even weirdly sympathetic—than if he is just hateful or, worse yet, a one-dimensional blowhard."

EAVESDROPPING SOLVED the interview problem, but it presented a new one. After hearing Trump's discussions about business on the phone, Schwartz asked him brief follow-up questions. He then tried to amplify the material he got from Trump by calling others involved in the deals. But their accounts often directly conflicted with Trump's. "Lying is second nature to him," Schwartz said. "More than anyone else I have ever met, Trump has the ability to convince himself that whatever he is saying at any given moment is true, or sort of true, or at least *ought* to be true." Often, Schwartz said, the lies that Trump told him were about money—"how much he had paid for something, or what a building he owned was worth, or how much one of his casinos was earning when it was actually on its way to bankruptcy." Trump bragged that he paid only eight million dollars for Mar-a-Lago, but omitted that he bought a nearby strip of beach for a record sum. After gossip columns reported, erroneously, that Prince Charles was considering buying several apartments in Trump Tower, Trump implied that he had no idea where the rumor had started. ("It certainly didn't hurt us," he says, in "The Art of the Deal.") Wayne Barrett, a reporter for the *Village Voice*, later revealed that Trump himself had planted the story with journalists. Schwartz also suspected that Trump engaged in such media tricks, and asked him about a story making the rounds—that Trump often called up news outlets using a pseudonym. Trump didn't deny it. As Schwartz recalls, he smirked and said, "You like that, do you?"

Schwartz says of Trump, "He lied strategically. He had a complete lack of conscience about it." Since most people are "constrained by the truth," Trump's indifference to it "gave him a strange advantage."

When challenged about the facts, Schwartz says, Trump would often double down, repeat himself, and grow belligerent. This quality was recently on display after Trump posted on Twitter a derogatory image of Hillary Clinton that contained a six-pointed star lifted from a white-supremacist Web site. Campaign staffers took the image down, but two days later Trump angrily defended it, insisting that there was no anti-Semitic implication. Whenever "the thin veneer of Trump's vanity is challenged," Schwartz says, he overreacts—not an ideal quality in a head of state.

When Schwartz began writing "The Art of the Deal," he realized that he needed to put an acceptable face on Trump's loose relationship with the truth. So he concocted an artful euphemism. Writing in Trump's voice, he explained to the reader, "I play to people's fantasies. . . . People want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. I call it truthful hyperbole. It's an innocent form of exaggeration—and it's a very effective form of promotion." Schwartz now disavows the passage. "Deceit," he told me, is never "innocent." He added, " 'Truthful hyperbole' is a contradiction in terms. It's a way of saying, 'It's a lie, but who cares?'" Trump, he said, loved the phrase.

In his journal, Schwartz describes the process of trying to make Trump's voice palatable in the book. It was kind of "a trick," he writes, to mimic Trump's blunt, staccato, no-apologies delivery while making him seem almost boyishly appealing. One strategy was to make it appear that Trump was just having fun at the office. "I try not to take any of what's happened too seriously," Trump says in the book. "The real excitement is playing the game."

In his journal, Schwartz wrote, "Trump stands for many of the things I abhor: his willingness to run over people, the gaudy,

tacky, gigantic obsessions, the absolute lack of interest in anything beyond power and money." Looking back at the text now, Schwartz says, "I created a character far more winning than Trump actually is." The first line of the book is an example. "I don't do it for the money," Trump declares. "I've got enough, much more than I'll ever need. I do it to do it. Deals are my art form. Other people paint beautifully on canvas or write wonderful poetry. I like making deals, preferably big deals. That's how I get my kicks." Schwartz now laughs at this depiction of Trump as a devoted artisan. "*Of course* he's in it for the money," he said. "One of the most deep and basic needs he has is to prove that 'I'm richer than you.'" As for the idea that making deals is a form of poetry, Schwartz says, "He was incapable of saying something like that—it wouldn't even be in his vocabulary." He saw Trump as driven not by a pure love of dealmaking but by an insatiable hunger for "money, praise, and celebrity." Often, after spending the day with Trump, and watching him pile one hugely expensive project atop the next, like a circus performer spinning plates, Schwartz would go home and tell his wife, "He's a living black hole!"

Schwartz reminded himself that he was being paid to tell Trump's story, not his own, but the more he worked on the project the more disturbing he found it. In his journal, he describes the hours he spent with Trump as "draining" and "deadening." Schwartz told me that Trump's need for attention is "completely compulsive," and that his bid for the Presidency is part of a continuum. "He's managed to keep increasing the dose for forty years," Schwartz said. After he'd spent decades as a tabloid titan, "the only thing left was running for President. If he could run for emperor of the world, he would."

Rhetorically, Schwartz's aim in "The Art of the Deal" was to present Trump as the hero of every chapter, but, after looking into some of his supposedly brilliant deals, Schwartz concluded that there were cases in which there was no way to make Trump look good. So he sidestepped unflattering incidents and details. "I didn't consider it my job to investigate," he says.

Schwartz also tried to avoid the strong whiff of cronyism that hovered over some deals. In his 1986 journal, he describes what a challenge it was to "put his best foot forward" in writing about one of Trump's first triumphs: his development, starting in 1975, of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, on the site of the former Commodore Hotel, next to Grand Central Terminal. In order to afford the hotel, Trump required an extremely large tax abatement. Richard Ravitch, who was then in charge of the agency that had the authority to grant such tax breaks to developers, recalls that he declined to grant the abatement, and Trump got "so unpleasant I had to tell him to get out." Trump got it anyway, largely because key city officials had received years of donations from his father, Fred Trump, who was a major real-estate developer in Queens. Wayne Barrett, whose reporting for the *Voice* informed his definitive 1991 book, "Trump: The Deals and the Downfall," says, "It was all Fred's political connections that created the abatement." In addition, Trump snookered rivals into believing that he had an exclusive option from the city on the project, when he didn't. Trump also deceived his partner in the deal, Jay Pritzker, the head of the Hyatt Hotel chain. Pritzker had rejected an unfavorable term proposed by Trump, but at the closing Trump forced it through, knowing that Pritzker was on a mountain in Nepal and could not be reached. Schwartz wrote in his journal that "almost everything" about the hotel deal had "an immoral cast." But as the ghostwriter he was "trying hard to find my way around" behavior that he considered "if not reprehensible, at least morally questionable."

Many tall tales that Trump told Schwartz contained a kernel of truth but made him out to be cleverer than he was. One of Trump's favorite stories was about how he had tricked the company that owned Holiday Inn into becoming his partner in an Atlantic City casino. Trump claimed that he had quieted executives' fears of construction delays by ordering his construction supervisor to make a vacant lot that he owned look like "the most active construction site in the history of the world." As Trump tells it in "The Art of the Deal," there were so many dump trucks and bulldozers pushing around dirt and filling holes that had just been dug that when Holiday Inn executives visited the site it "looked as if we were in the midst of building the Grand Coulee Dam." The stunt, Trump claimed, pushed the deal through. After the book came out, though, a consultant for Trump's casinos, Al Glasgow, who is now deceased, told Schwartz, "It never happened." There may have been one or two trucks, but not the fleet that made it a great story.

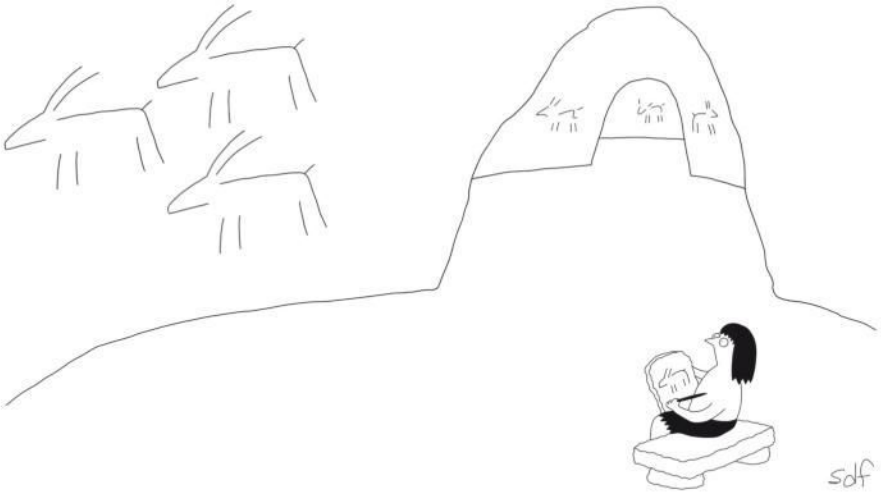
Schwartz tamped down some of Trump's swagger, but plenty of it remained. The manuscript that Random House published was, depending on your perspective, either entertainingly insightful or shamelessly self-aggrandizing. To borrow a title from Norman Mailer, who frequently attended prizefights at Trump's Atlantic City hotels, the book could have been called "Advertisements for Myself."

In 2005, Timothy L. O'Brien, an award-winning journalist who is currently the executive editor of Bloomberg View, published "Trump Nation," a meticulous investigative biography. (Trump unsuccessfully sued him for libel.) O'Brien has taken a close look at "The Art of the Deal," and he told me that it might be best characterized as a "nonfiction work of fiction." Trump's life story, as told by Schwartz, honestly chronicled a few setbacks, such as Trump's disastrous 1983 purchase of the New Jersey Generals, a football team in the flailing United States Football League. But O'Brien believes that Trump used the book to turn almost every step of his life, both personal and professional, into a "glittering fable."

Some of the falsehoods in "The Art of the Deal" are minor. *Spy* upended Trump's claims that Ivana had been a "top model" and an alternate on the Czech Olympic ski team. Barrett notes that in "The Art of the Deal" Trump describes his father as having been born in New Jersey to Swedish parents; in fact, he was born in the Bronx to German parents. (Decades later, Trump spread falsehoods about Obama's origins, claiming it was possible that the President was born in Africa.)

In "The Art of the Deal," Trump portrays himself as a warm family man with endless admirers. He praises Ivana's taste and business skill—"I said you can't bet against Ivana, and she proved me right." But Schwartz noticed little warmth or communication between Trump and Ivana, and he later learned that while "The Art of the Deal" was being written Trump began an affair with Marla Maples, who became his second wife. (He divorced Ivana in 1992.) As far as

Schwartz could tell, Trump spent very little time with his family and had no close friends. In "The Art of the Deal," Trump describes Roy Cohn, his personal lawyer, in the warmest terms, calling him "the sort of guy who'd be there at your hospital bed . . . literally standing by you to the death." Cohn, who in the fifties assisted Senator Joseph McCarthy in his vicious crusade against Communism, was closeted. He felt abandoned by Trump when he became fatally ill from AIDS, and said, "Donald pisses ice water." Schwartz says of Trump, "He'd like people when they were helpful, and turn on them when they weren't. It wasn't personal. He's a transactional man—it was all about what you could do for him."



According to Barrett, among the most misleading aspects of "The Art of the Deal" was the idea that Trump made it largely on his own, with only minimal help from his father, Fred. Barrett, in his book, notes that Trump once declared, "The working man likes me because he knows I didn't inherit what I've built," and that in "The Art of the Deal" he derides wealthy heirs as members of "the Lucky Sperm Club."

Trump's self-portrayal as a Horatio Alger figure has buttressed his populist appeal in 2016. But his origins were hardly humble. Fred's fortune, based on his ownership of middle-income properties, wasn't glamorous, but it was sizable: in 2003, a few years after Fred died, Trump and his siblings reportedly sold some of their father's real-estate holdings for half a billion dollars. In "The Art of the Deal," Trump cites his father as "the most important influence on me," but in his telling his father's main legacy was teaching him the importance of "toughness." Beyond that, Schwartz says, Trump "barely talked about his father—he didn't want his success to be seen as having anything to do with him." But when Barrett investigated he found that Trump's father was instrumental in his son's rise, financially and politically. In the book, Trump says that "my energy and my enthusiasm" explain how, as a twenty-nine-year-old with few accomplishments, he acquired the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Barrett reports, however, that Trump's father had to co-sign the many contracts that the deal required. He also lent Trump seven and a half million dollars to get started as a casino owner in Atlantic City; at one point, when Trump couldn't meet payments on other loans, his father tried to tide him over by sending a lawyer to buy some three million dollars' worth of gambling chips. Barrett told me, "Donald did make some smart moves himself, particularly in assembling the site for the Trump Tower. That was a stroke of genius." Nonetheless, he said, "The notion that he's a self-made man is a joke. But I guess they couldn't call the book 'The Art of My Father's Deals.' "

The other key myth perpetuated by "The Art of the Deal" was that Trump's intuitions about business were almost flawless. "The book helped fuel the notion that he couldn't fail," Barrett said. But, unbeknown to Schwartz and the public, by late 1987, when the book came out, Trump was heading toward what Barrett calls "simultaneous personal and professional self-destruction." O'Brien agrees that during the next several years Trump's life unravelled. The divorce from Ivana reportedly cost him twenty-five million dollars. Meanwhile, he was in the midst of what O'Brien calls "a crazy shopping spree that resulted in unmanageable debt." He was buying the Plaza Hotel and also planning to erect "the tallest building in the world," on the former rail yards that he had bought on the West Side. In 1987, the city denied him permission to construct such a tall skyscraper, but in "The Art of the Deal" he brushed off this failure with a one-liner: "I can afford to wait." O'Brien says, "The reality is that he *couldn't* afford to wait. He was telling the media that the carrying costs were three million dollars, when in fact they were more like twenty million." Trump was also building a third casino in Atlantic City, the Taj, which he promised would be "the biggest casino in history." He bought the Eastern Air Lines shuttle that operated out of New York, Boston, and Washington, rechristening it the Trump Shuttle, and acquired a giant yacht, the Trump Princess. "He was on a total run of complete and utter self-absorption," Barrett says, adding, "It's kind of like now."

Schwartz said that when he was writing the book "the greatest percentage of Trump's assets was in casinos, and he made it sound like each casino was more successful than the last. But every one of them was failing." He went on, "I think he was just spinning. I don't think he could have believed it at the time. He was losing millions of dollars a day. He had to have been terrified."

In 1992, the journalist David Cay Johnston published a book about casinos, "Temples of Chance," and cited a net-worth statement from 1990 that assessed Trump's personal wealth. It showed that Trump owed nearly three hundred million dollars more to his creditors than his assets were worth. The next year, his company was forced into bankruptcy—the first of six such instances. The Trump meteor had crashed.

But in "The Art of the Deal," O'Brien told me, "Trump shrewdly and unabashedly promoted an image of himself as a dealmaker nonpareil who could always get the best out of every situation—and who can now deliver America from its malaise." This idealized version was presented to an exponentially larger

audience, O'Brien noted, when Mark Burnett, the reality-television producer, read "The Art of the Deal" and decided to base a new show on it, "The Apprentice," with Trump as the star. The first season of the show, which premièred in 2004, opens with Trump in the back of a limousine, boasting, "I've mastered the art of the deal, and I've turned the name Trump into the highest-quality brand." An image of the book's cover flashes onscreen as Trump explains that, as the "master," he is now seeking an apprentice. O'Brien said, " 'The Apprentice' is mythmaking on steroids. There's a straight line from the book to the show to the 2016 campaign."

It took Schwartz a little more than a year to write "The Art of the Deal." In the spring of 1987, he sent the manuscript to Trump, who returned it to him shortly afterward. There were a few red marks made with a fat-tipped Magic Marker, most of which deleted criticisms that Trump had made of powerful individuals he no longer wanted to offend, such as Lee Iacocca. Otherwise, Schwartz says, Trump changed almost nothing.

In my phone interview with Trump, he initially said of Schwartz, "Tony was very good. He was the co-author." But he dismissed Schwartz's account of the writing process. "He didn't write the book," Trump told me. "*I* wrote the book. I wrote the book. It was my book. And it was a No. 1 best-seller, and one of the best-selling business books of all time. Some say it was the best-selling business book ever." (It is not.) Howard Kaminsky, the former Random House head, laughed and said, "Trump didn't write a postcard for us!"

Trump was far more involved in the book's promotion. He wooed booksellers and made one television appearance after another. He publicly promised to donate his cut of the book's royalties to charity. He even made a surprise trip to New Hampshire, where he stirred additional publicity by floating the possibility that he might run for President.

In December of 1987, a month after the book was published, Trump hosted an extravagant book party in the pink marble atrium of Trump Tower. Klieg lights lit a red carpet outside the building. Inside, nearly a thousand guests, in black tie, were served champagne and fed slices of a giant cake replica of Trump Tower, which was wheeled in by a parade of women waving red sparklers. The boxing promoter Don King greeted the crowd in a floor-length mink coat, and the comedian Jackie Mason introduced Donald and Ivana with the words "Here comes the king and queen!" Trump toasted Schwartz, saying teasingly that he had at least tried to teach him how to make money.

Schwartz got more of an education the next day, when he and Trump spoke on the phone. After chatting briefly about the party, Trump informed Schwartz that, as his ghostwriter, he owed him for half the event's cost, which was in the six figures. Schwartz was dumbfounded. "He wanted me to split the cost of entertaining his list of nine hundred second-rate celebrities?" Schwartz had, in fact, learned a few things from watching Trump. He drastically negotiated down the amount that he agreed to pay, to a few thousand dollars, and then wrote Trump a letter promising to write a check not to Trump but to a charity of Schwartz's choosing. It was a page out of Trump's playbook. In the past seven years, Trump has promised to give millions of dollars to charity, but reporters for the Washington *Post* found that they could document only ten thousand dollars in donations—and they uncovered no direct evidence that Trump made charitable contributions from money earned by "The Art of the Deal."

Not long after the discussion of the party bills, Trump approached Schwartz about writing a sequel, for which Trump had been offered a seven-figure advance. This time, however, he offered Schwartz only a third of the profits. He pointed out that, because the advance was much bigger, the payout would be, too. But Schwartz said no. Feeling deeply alienated, he instead wrote a book called "What Really Matters," about the search for meaning in life. After working with Trump, Schwartz writes, he felt a "gnawing emptiness" and became a "seeker," longing to "be connected to something timeless and essential, more real."

Schwartz told me that he has decided to pledge all royalties from sales of "The Art of the Deal" in 2016 to pointedly chosen charities: the National Immigration Law Center, Human Rights Watch, the Center for the Victims of Torture, the National Immigration Forum, and the Tahirih Justice Center. He doesn't feel that the gesture absolves him. "I'll carry this until the end of my life," he said. "There's no righting it. But I like the idea that, the more copies that 'The Art of the Deal' sells, the more money I can donate to the people whose rights Trump seeks to abridge."

Schwartz expected Trump to attack him for speaking out, and he was correct. Informed that Schwartz had made critical remarks about him, and wouldn't be voting for him, Trump said, "He's probably just doing it for the publicity." He also said, "Wow. That's great disloyalty, because I made Tony rich. He owes a lot to me. I helped him when he didn't have two cents in his pocket. It's great disloyalty. I guess he thinks it's good for him—but he'll find out it's not good for him."

Minutes after Trump got off the phone with me, Schwartz's cell phone rang. "I hear you're not voting for me," Trump said. "I just talked to *The New Yorker*—which, by the way, is a failing magazine that no one reads—and I heard you were critical of me."

"You're running for President," Schwartz said. "I disagree with a lot of what you're saying."

"That's your right, but then you should have just remained silent. I just want to tell you that I think you're very disloyal. Without me, you wouldn't be where you are now. I had a lot of choice of who to have write the book, and I chose you, and I was very generous with you. I know that you gave a lot of speeches and lectures using 'The Art of the Deal.' I could have sued you, but I didn't."

"My business has nothing to do with 'The Art of the Deal.' "

"That's not what I've been told."

"You're running for President of the United States. The stakes here are high."

"Yeah, they are," he said. "Have a nice life." Trump hung up.

Schwartz can understand why Trump feels stung, but he felt that he had to speak up before it was too late. As for Trump's anger toward him, he said, "I don't take it personally, because the truth is he didn't mean it personally. People are dispensable and disposable in Trump's world." If Trump is elected President, he warned, "the millions of people who voted for him and believe that he represents their interests will learn what anyone who deals closely with him already knows—that he couldn't care less about them." ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

MY GATHAS

BY JENNY ALLEN

LUCI GUTIÉRREZ

Gathas are small verses or poems which we use to help us in our mindfulness practice. A great practice is to compose our own gathas to help ourselves and others to develop mindfulness in our daily life.

—*The Web site for Luminous Ground, a Buddhist organization.*

Driving the Car

Getting into my car,
I vow that I will drive with
Mindful care and caution.
If, in fact, this is my vehicle,
For I often step into
Someone else's car
By accident.
If I have done so now, here in the parking lot of Stop & Shop,
May I smile with self-compassion,
And not curse my cluelessness,
As the cars where I live are all Subarus,
And all the same model, and all the same "jasmine green,"
A bewildering forest of Foresters.

Going to the Movies

Taking my seat in the movie theatre,
I am excited to be here,
And offer my heartfelt hope that it is not
A film like "Carol"—
Beautiful, but so boring.
I loved the period costumes
But wearied of the endless shots of the movie stars gazing soulfully
At each other
Or staring into space,
Like mute people.
"I love talking to you," one of the women says to the other in one scene,
Which is strange,
Because they hardly talked at all.
May this be a movie with more dialogue,
And fewer closeups,
And way better sex scenes.

Using the Phone

Breathing in, I call the operator to report
A suspicious voice mail from a person claiming to represent
My credit-card company.
Then I remember that there are no operators anymore, as there is
No "phone company."
Breathing out, I use this moment of agitation to reflect on how everything changes,
And remind myself of other bygone things I used to complain about but now sort of miss:
Rockefeller Republicans, airplane meals, Sonny Bono, Tom Carvel,
Times Square when it was
Nasty,
And men who leered at me on the street.
On second thought,
Maybe not Sonny.

Swiffering

Swiffering my floor, I offer thanks to the Procter & Gamble company
For a marvellous cleaning product, although I know that
Some people think P. & G. got the idea of electrostatic cleaning cloths from a Japanese firm,
And that the Swiffer Sweeper is based on the "razors and blades" model—that is: I must keep buying expensive new replacement cloths endlessly.
Nevertheless!
I love its silence, so unlike the infernal noise of the vacuum cleaner.
This silence has changed my life,
Allowing me to clean my house,
A chore I do not enjoy,
While talking to my friends on the phone.
A win-win for me.

Doing the Dishes

Breathing in, I wash the dishes,
Aware of their usefulness in holding
Nourishing meals that have sustained my family for many years.
I wonder why it is always, always me doing the dishes
By myself,
And whether, interconnected as all human beings are,
This may be the one exception.
Breathing out, I release my feelings into the universe, ever hopeful that someone, somewhere,
Will sense my need,
And offer to help.
I open my heart to the possibility of this miracle.

At the Workplace

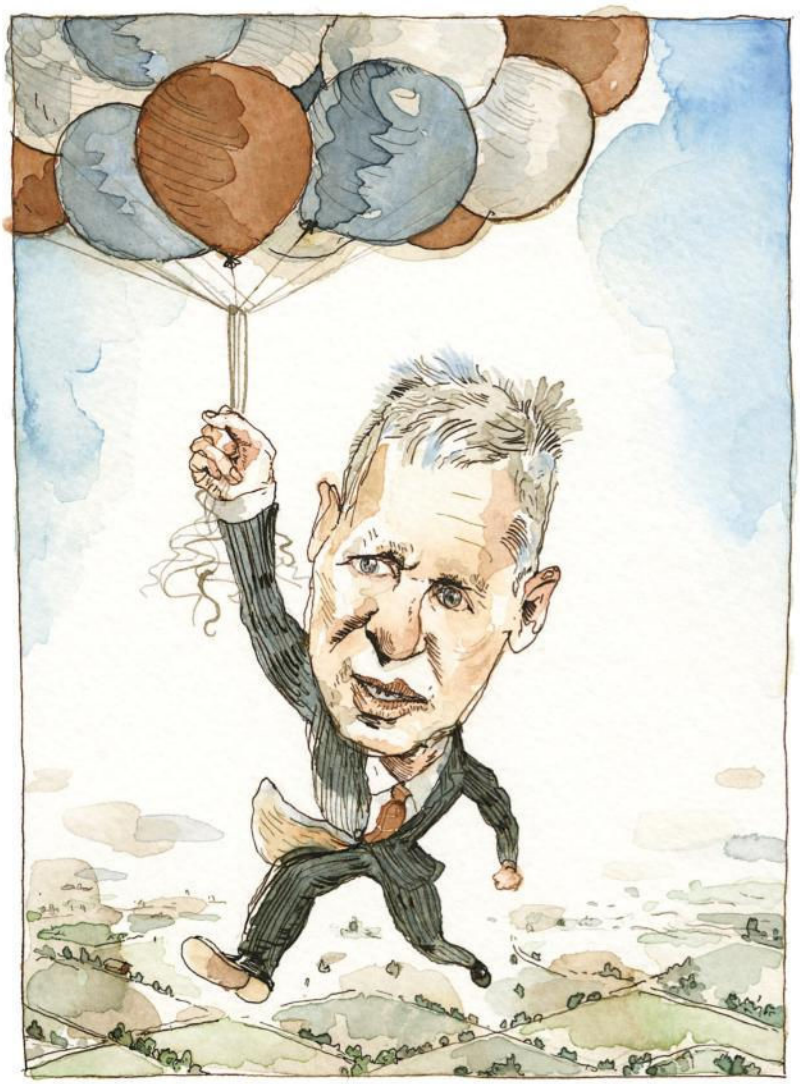
Today, I vow to regard my co-workers serenely, with
Loving-kindness and without judgment.
This one, who appears not to bathe and has a pungent odor,
That one, who leads the e-mail clique trash-talking the rest of us,
Are merely creatures caught in *dukkha*, or suffering.
May they one day be made whole and not so messed up,
Or at least be transferred to another department. ♦

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

FLYING HIGH

In a bizarre Presidential race, Gary Johnson might be the x factor.

BY RYAN LIZZA



NOT LONG AGO, Gary Johnson, the Libertarian Party's 2016 Presidential candidate, put a halt to his considerable consumption of marijuana. "The last time I indulged is about two months ago, with some edibles," Johnson told me in late June, in the lobby of a midtown hotel. Johnson, who was the Republican governor of New Mexico from 1995 to 2003, also ran for President in 2012, as a Libertarian, and received just under one per cent of the vote, but he believes this year could be different. At the end of May, William F. Weld, the former moderate Republican governor of Massachusetts, became the Libertarian Party's Vice-Presidential nominee, giving the Party its most mainstream ticket since its founding, in 1971. "It is beyond my wildest dreams that Bill Weld is my running mate," Johnson said.

Johnson and Weld were set to appear that evening in a CNN town-hall special, which, it was later estimated, was seen by almost a million people. The stakes for Johnson were high. When pollsters include Johnson with Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their surveys, he has been the choice of roughly ten per cent of respondents, and in a *Times*/CBS News poll released last week he hit twelve per cent. If his standing in the polls rises to fifteen per cent, he will likely qualify to participate in the Presidential debates. "If you're not in the debates, there's no way to win," Johnson said. "It's the Super Bowl of politics." Johnson has many flaws as a candidate, but being unlikable is not one of them. If he is allowed to debate Trump and Clinton, the two most unpopular presumed nominees in decades, then the most unpredictable election in modern times could get even weirder.

Johnson told me that the last time he got high was when he ate some Cheeba Chews, a Colorado brand that *High Times* has called "America's favorite edible." The occasion was an evening out with his fiancée, Kate Prusack, in Santa Fe, where they live. Johnson said he understood that the American people would expect him to be a substance-free Commander-in-Chief. "As President, I will not indulge in anything," Johnson vowed, as if he were J.F.K. promising not to take directions from the Pope. "I don't think you want somebody answering the phone at two o'clock in the morning—that red phone—drunk, either. Better on the stoned side, but I don't want to make that judgment."

Johnson, who is sixty-three, tan, and fit, with spiky gray hair, has long been unrepentant about his use of marijuana. During his first campaign for governor, in 1994, he was asked to quantify his earlier use. "I came up with two and a half times a week," he told me. Still, as governor, he earned plaudits from the right for being one of the more conservative governors. *National Review* praised him as the "New Mexico maverick" and as a "Reaganite antitax crusader," who cut income-tax rates, slowed the growth of government, and eliminated the jobs of hundreds of state employees. During his two terms as governor, Johnson vetoed more than seven hundred bills

The unpopularity of Clinton and Trump has created a rare opportunity.

ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT

passed by a Democratic legislature.

In 1999, after winning a second term, Johnson became the highest-ranking elected official in America to call for the full legalization of marijuana. His approval rating dropped into the twenties, and he returned to his agenda of lower taxes and less spending. He left office with an approval rating in the high fifties. Today, he is willing to make other concessions to the political mainstream. When we met, Johnson wore Nikes with a suit, his signature style since 2012. But, after a lively debate with his campaign advisers, he showed up for his CNN appearance wearing dress shoes.

There hasn't been a serious challenge from a third-party Presidential candidate since 1992, when Ross Perot, the eccentric Texas billionaire, ran as an independent and bought hours of TV time to educate voters about the large federal budget deficit. Perot won entry into the Presidential debates and received nineteen per cent of the vote against Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush. Bush blamed Perot for his loss, though the best analyses of the race concluded that Perot had drawn equal numbers of voters from Bush and Clinton.

This year, the unpopularity of Clinton and Trump has created an opportunity for Johnson to at least match Perot's impressive showing. Last week, Republican delegates in the Never Trump movement attempted to change the rules for the Republican National Convention, in a failed effort to deny Trump the nomination. For anti-Trump conservatives still searching for an alternative, Johnson may be the only option. On the left, anti-Clinton Democrats, including some determined supporters of Bernie Sanders, would prefer a candidate who is more socially liberal and noninterventionist than Clinton.

"We have arguably the two most polarizing candidates," Johnson told me. "Hillary has to go out and she has to appeal to this 'everything's free, government can accomplish anything, what can you give us' constituency. She's doling it out as fast as she can. Trump is appealing to this anti-abortion, anti-immigration, 'bomb the hell out of them, lock them up, throw away the key' constituency."

Johnson is charming and more transparent than most politicians—sometimes to a fault—and has a knack for putting a happy face on the rougher edges of libertarianism. Weld has a shabby-genteel bearing and a boarding-school sarcasm that comes across as both appealing and arrogant. Together, Johnson and Weld represent the first Presidential ticket with two governors since 1948, when the Republicans nominated Thomas Dewey, of New York, and Earl Warren, of California. One of the Johnson-Weld campaign slogans is "A Credible Alternative to ClinTrump."

Johnson was born in Minot, North Dakota. His father was an Allstate insurance salesman, and his mother worked in accounting for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. His father, who had fallen in love with New Mexico during a trip there as a Boy Scout, moved the family to Albuquerque when Johnson was thirteen and worked as a public-school teacher. When Johnson was eighteen, he read a book—he has forgotten the title—about what it means to be a libertarian, and it changed his life. "It was a thirty-minute read," he told me. "I have identified myself as a libertarian ever since."

Johnson, who as a teen-ager earned money by doing odd jobs, founded a construction company, Big J Enterprises, in 1975, when he was a senior at the University of New Mexico. He married his college girlfriend, Dee Simms, and they had two children. In 1986, Big J became the facilities contractor for Intel in New Mexico, where the company had a major manufacturing plant. A few years earlier, Intel had introduced its 286 microchip, which became the dominant processor for personal computers. "They couldn't make them fast enough, and I was in at the very start," Johnson said. He became wealthy enough that he would be able to self-finance his first gubernatorial campaign.

By 1987, Johnson was overwhelmed by the success of his business. "I wrote down the ten worst times of my life and the ten best times in my life," he told me. The best times "had to do with fitness." The worst times "had to do with drinking or substance—I don't want to say substance abuse, but just not getting enough rest, not being as healthy as I could be. So the epiphany was 'Man, I'm going to be in the best shape of my life every day. Why not?'" Johnson does not think he was an alcoholic, but he decided to give up drinking. He is now a triathlete and a competitive bike racer, and has scaled the tallest mountain on every continent. "I could go climb Mt. Everest tomorrow," he boasted.

After leaving office, Johnson got divorced and became involved in marijuana-legalization efforts. When he decided to enter this year's Presidential race, he stepped down as C.E.O. of Cannabis Sativa, Inc., a marijuana-branding company that hopes to benefit as legalization spreads. "Gary is not at all involved with Cannabis Sativa, Inc., now," James P. Gray, the company's chairman, said, adding that Johnson still owns some stock. "But he does mention it occasionally in his interviews, and he believes in it." Gray, a former superior-court judge in Orange County, California, was Johnson's running mate in 2012. At the company, Johnson told me, he hired the person who developed the branding for a product line called hi. "Small 'H,' small 'I'—really cool logo," he said. He also contributed to the development of a strain-specific edible lozenge that he said "is as good a marijuana high that exists on the planet." How did he know? "As C.E.O., I did some testing," he said. "Nothing was better."

"So, if someone wanted to try that strain, how would they acquire it?" I asked.

"Legally, they couldn't," Johnson said.

"What about illegally?"

"Well, I'd probably be able to connect you up illegally."

"Third parties are like bees," the historian Richard Hofstadter wrote, in 1955. "Once they have stung, they die." Third parties come buzzing to life when they seize upon an issue that the two major parties have ignored. If they gain enough popular support—the sting—one or both parties will adapt to the electorate's demands, and co-opt the third party's ideas. In 1912, former President Theodore Roosevelt broke away from the

Republican Party to form the Progressive Party, which championed political reforms, women's suffrage, and workers' rights. Roosevelt won twenty-seven per cent of the vote, the best result of any third-party candidate in American history. The Democrats and the Republicans included most of the Progressives' issues in their platforms, and the Party was largely defunct by the next Presidential election.

In 1948, Strom Thurmond, then the governor of South Carolina, left the Democratic Party to found the segregationist Dixiecrats. The voters, mostly Southern Democrats, who flocked to the Dixiecrats that year, giving it thirty-nine electoral votes, eventually joined the Republicans.

The sting of Ross Perot's candidacy was felt even before the 1992 election was over, when both Clinton and Bush adopted his views on deficit reduction. In 1996, a year after Perot founded the Reform Party, he ran as its candidate, but he didn't even qualify for the Presidential debates. By 2000, the Reform Party had no clear ideology, and had become an outlet for the aspirations of Donald Trump, Jesse Ventura, and Pat Buchanan, who won its nomination that year.

Unlike other parties that have come and gone, the Libertarians have had enough consistent support to maintain a national infrastructure. In 1992 and 1996, the Libertarian Party was on the ballot in all fifty states, and in each Presidential election since then its candidate has been on the ballot in more than forty states. Libertarians, who want less government interference in all aspects of life, have never been single-issue activists, but they serve as an ideological release valve for voters on the left and the right when the government becomes too interventionist at home or abroad.

In the nineteen-eighties and nineties, many leading Libertarians moved to the Republican Party as a way to advance their agenda. The brothers David and Charles Koch, who had previously tried to influence politics under the auspices of the Libertarian Party—David was the Party's Vice-Presidential candidate in 1980—became the most important donors to Republican causes and candidates. Ron Paul, who was the Libertarian Party's Presidential candidate in 1988, ran for the Republican nomination in 2008 and 2012; his son Rand Paul left this year's race in February.

Johnson endorsed Ron Paul in 2008, but in 2011, dismayed by the war on drugs, the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Barack Obama's liberal fiscal record, he decided to run for President as a Republican. He encountered formidable resistance when he tried to attract the right-wing Republican electorate in early-primary states, especially when it came to social issues and immigration.

"Thirty per cent of Republican voters out there right now believe the scourge of the earth is Mexican immigration," he told me. "You go to these Party events in New Hampshire and in Iowa, and they set the criteria for the entire nation. It's profound. You can't get beyond those two states, because you have to go out and appeal to anti-gay, anti-abortion, anti-drugs, anti-immigration—and I'm crossways on all of those. I'd argue I'm the pragmatist in the room, but you can't get past those groups, especially in those two states." In December, 2011, Johnson left the Republican Party and found a home among the Libertarians, who awarded him the Party's nomination. In the 2012 Presidential election, he won 1,275,971 votes, the Party's largest total ever.

But it was in 2015 that Johnson saw, with the rise of Trump, an unprecedented opening for the Libertarian Party. "I think Trump alienates more than half of the Republicans, and he alienates them because there's no sense of smaller government," Johnson said. "Immigration, the wall, killing the families of Muslim terrorists. He said, 'I'm going to bring back waterboarding or worse.'" Trump's agenda, he said, "is fascism."

Clinton's troubles with Sanders also emboldened Johnson. He tells Sanders supporters to take an ideological quiz at the Web site ISideWith.com. "You get paired up with a Presidential candidate most in line with your views," he said. "I side with myself the most, and then, amazingly, I side with Bernie next closest." Polls so far show that Johnson actually takes more voters from Clinton than from Trump. "It's about everything but economics," Johnson said, ticking off the issues on which he and Sanders agree: "on legalizing marijuana, on 'Let's stop dropping bombs,' crony capitalism."

But to seriously exploit Trump's and Clinton's vulnerabilities Johnson needed a running mate with mainstream credibility. Johnson and Weld got to know each other in the nineties, when both were governors—two fiscally conservative, socially liberal Republicans governing blue states and sparring with Democratic legislatures. Weld, who once dove into the Charles River, wearing a T-shirt and khakis, to demonstrate how clean it had become, liked Johnson's eccentric side. "I thought he was just so cool that he would do these giant slaloms after doing an Iron Man triathlon and ski five hundred feet in the air and then land in a pail of water," Weld told me. "I mean, he is a serious daredevil."

Weld won a second term in 1994, with seventy-one per cent of the vote. In 1996, he challenged John Kerry for his Senate seat. Weld lost, but the race became famous for a series of eight tough but high-minded debates that the two men staged across Massachusetts. That summer, during the campaign, Weld made a show of demanding that he be allowed to speak in favor of abortion rights at the Republican National Convention, a stunt that was popular in Massachusetts but which isolated him from the national Party.

Like Johnson, Weld found himself out of step with Republicans on numerous social issues. "I was in favor of needle exchanges, all the gay and lesbian stuff, medicinal marijuana," Weld told me. "They were not typical positions." In 1997, Bill Clinton nominated Weld to be the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, and Weld resigned as governor to take the job. But Jesse Helms, a Republican senator from


या दाता गरीब नवाज
haveKINDLEwillTRAVEL
JAIPUR, INDIA ARAVIND ADIGA, THE WHITE TIGER: A NOVEL @AMAZONKINDLE
किराणा का सामान, मेवा, देशी घी, तेल
गुड़, शक्कर, चावल, चारा, गुँ
amazon

North Carolina, who chaired the Foreign Relations Committee, blocked the nomination. As Weld recalled it, Helms claimed that Weld was "soft on drugs and we couldn't afford to have me in Mexico."

In 2006, Weld launched a longshot campaign for governor of New York, where he was born. He was endorsed by the state's Libertarian Party but failed to secure the Republican nomination, and he returned to practicing law. Weld was living a comfortable but dull life in Boston when one of Johnson's aides sent him an e-mail asking if he would consider being Johnson's running mate. "Hell, yeah, I like Gary," Weld replied. "I admired his run as a Libertarian last time. I was all in for Romney, but I always said to people, 'Hey, if you feel like it, vote Libertarian—Johnson's a good guy.'"

At the Libertarian Party convention, in Orlando, in May, convincing some of the more eccentric delegates that Weld should be on the ticket was almost as difficult as winning over Helms. In a video that became popular online, one heavyset attendee with a bushy beard and a tattoo danced across the stage and stripped down to a thong. "He was running for chairman of the Party, and so he was supposed to give a five-minute speech," Weld said, "but instead he did a five-minute striptease, and he didn't really have the figure for it." Johnson added, "Didn't hurt anybody, except maybe your sensibilities."

Weld spent several years running the Criminal Division in the Justice Department during the Reagan Administration, and delegates asked him a series of hostile questions about his prosecutorial record. As Weld told me, much of what he did at Justice was not "calculated to warm the cockles of the Libertarian heart." Other delegates objected to the fact that Weld's wife's great-uncle, Kermit Roosevelt, was the C.I.A. agent who led the American-backed coup in Iran, in 1953. "Kind of before my time," Weld said, laughing.

On the first ballot, Weld received forty-nine per cent of the vote, and Johnson's aides feared that he would lose. He won on the second, with just over fifty per cent. Johnson thinks that, without Weld on the ticket, the media wouldn't be interested in his campaign. He told me, "My opinion, having done this now for two cycles, is: I think the national media really likes me and likes what I have to say. But, at the end of the day, 'He's a Libertarian,' and that denotes some loose screws, maybe. But Bill Weld? No. I mean, what's Bill Weld doing hitching his train to the Libertarian Party and to me? I think it gives us amazing credibility."

For Weld, the decision was at least as much about Trump as it was about Johnson. Weld compared the Republican Party, in its crisis over Trump's nomination, to the Whig Party in its final years. The Whig Party splintered in the mid-eighteen-fifties, Weld noted, and some former members drifted into the anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party. Like Trump's rallies, Weld said, Know-Nothing rallies "had a lot of violence, they fomented a lot of conspiracy theories about people trying to overthrow the United States. They were nativists, they were—they called it racialist then, not racist. But they were everything that Mr. Trump's overtones are today. And they became very powerful for a few short years, and then they disappeared." Weld hopes that, by creating a split among conservatives, the Libertarian ticket can make it more likely that the same thing will happen to Trump.

"I came here to chop you down. Falling in love wasn't part of the plan."

In late June, Johnson was in Pasadena, California, addressing attendees of Politicon, a self-described "unconventional political convention." One booth in the convention center displayed original portraits of Donald Trump: there was a painting of the candidate naked, and one of his face made using the artist's menstrual blood. Johnson gave the opening speech before a room of several hundred left-leaning political junkies and a small band of fervent Johnson fans, mostly young white men, wearing Libertarian Party paraphernalia. "Is this the craziest political election you've ever seen?" Johnson asked the crowd. "And you know how crazy it is? You might be looking at the next President of the United States!"

Johnson's theory of politics is highly rational. He assumes that voters don't need to know much more than his positions to make up their minds. In his stump speech, he goes through a long list of his stances on issues in the areas of fiscal matters, social concerns, and foreign policy. It's the live equivalent of the ISideWith.com quiz. Johnson wants to raise the retirement age for Social Security and to limit Social Security benefits for the wealthy. He wants to get rid of the I.R.S. and replace most of the tax code with a single consumption tax. He wants to abolish the death penalty, expand vouchers for private

school, and drastically pull back the American military from its commitments around the world. "The unintended consequence of when you put boots on the ground, when you drop bombs, when you fly drones and kill thousands of innocent people—this is resulting in a world less safe, not more safe," he told the crowd.

Unlike Ron Paul and Rand Paul, who have been the most prominent libertarian voices in American politics in the past decade, Johnson emphasizes ideas on the left side of the libertarian spectrum. Johnson thinks that the Pauls were poor advocates for the libertarian cause. "Rand actually ran as a Republican," Johnson said of the younger Paul's failed campaign this year. "He was talking about building a fence across the border. He was a social conservative, and he was wearing it on his sleeve—build a fence, crack down on the illegal immigrants that are here. Man! And Ron did the same thing."

Johnson's full platform has the same problems that the Libertarians have always had: most voters don't support reducing the size of government to the levels he calls for. He believes that the private sector could solve many of the problems with health-care costs by creating markets for medical procedures. "We want Stitches-R-Us," he said. "We would have Gallbladders-R-Us. We would have advertised pricing with advertised outcomes."

But Johnson isn't reflexively against all government. He supports the Environmental Protection Agency, arguing that policing polluters is a proper function of the government. As governor of New Mexico, he aggressively used the power of the state to force Molycorp, a large mining corporation, to clean up a contaminated site. He eventually allowed the E.P.A. to declare the area a Superfund site, turning the issue over to the federal government, which had more resources to go after the company. "The government exists to protect us from harm, and that pollution is harm," Johnson said. "Libertarians would say, 'You and I have the ability to sue Molycorp. We can bring them to bear from a private standpoint.' But the reality? You can't."

After his speech, Johnson wandered around the convention greeting voters and conducted a round of interviews. One reporter asked him about the lack of diversity in the Libertarian Party, which, as some people remember from college dorm-room discussions, tends to attract a disproportionate number of young white males. Johnson said that there was no diversity problem, and that the Party would do better in nonwhite communities as he became better known. A few minutes later, an aide directed him to a room in the convention center that was named for Harriet Tubman. "Who's Harriet Tubman?" Johnson asked. (After the aide reminded him who Tubman was, Johnson recalled that she will appear on a new twenty-dollar bill.)

No third-party candidate has won an electoral vote since George Wallace's campaign as the candidate of the anti-civil-rights American Independent Party, in 1968. Wallace, who focussed on his base, in the South, did not try to win the election; rather, he wanted to win enough electoral votes to deny a majority to the Democratic and Republican candidates. According to the Constitution, if no candidate receives a majority of electoral votes—two hundred and seventy—the contest is decided by the House of Representatives, where each state's delegation has a single vote. When pressed, Johnson conceded that this is his real strategy. His targets, aside from his home state of New Mexico, are states in the West and the Great Plains that have been Libertarian Party strongholds in the past: Utah, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, and the Dakotas.

"If it gets thrown to the House of Representatives and it goes beyond one ballot, I could be President," Johnson said, smiling at the absurdity of the idea. "Because, if it goes beyond one ballot, Democrats are not going to cross over the line to change to Trump, and Republicans are not going to go over the line to support Clinton. They're going to have to compromise, and I'd be the compromise."

But Johnson has yet to convince some leading voices in the Never Trump movement that he's a credible alternative. Bill Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*, said he thought that Weld should be the Presidential candidate. "Weld-Johnson would be a much stronger ticket, and would have a shot to get to fifteen per cent," Kristol told me. "And Weld on the debate stage taking on Trump and Clinton could be formidable." Mitt Romney, the most high-profile anti-Trump Republican, said something similar to CNN in June, but he added that he was open to backing Johnson. "If Bill Weld were at the top of the ticket, it would be very easy for me to vote for Bill Weld for President," Romney said. "So I'll get to know Gary Johnson better and see if he's someone who I could end up voting for." Tim Miller, a former spokesman for Jeb Bush who now works for an anti-Trump super PAC, said of Johnson, "Picking Bill Weld was smart, but he needs to carry himself like someone who could seriously be President." Still, Miller added that at this point he was inclined to vote for Johnson.

As Johnson and I finished talking in Pasadena, Nate Silver, who runs the data-journalism and election-forecasting site FiveThirtyEight, and a team of his reporters entered the Tubman room to interview Johnson. It was another sign of the political press taking the candidate seriously. "He's in our model now," Silver said. The computer calculations were giving Johnson a less than one-per-cent chance of victory, but that didn't bother Johnson.

Johnson said he realized that the idea of him as President seems unfathomable now, but he compared it to a crusade that he started long ago and that also once seemed nuts. "It's similar to the legalization of marijuana," Johnson said, returning to the theme. "For those who wanted to implement the death penalty for marijuana, they don't go from death penalty to legalizing. They go from death penalty to 'O.K., let's forget about the death penalty.' So you move the needle. And right now we're moving the needle." ♦

PROFILES

CAPTAIN OF HER SOUL

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum's emotions.

BY RACHEL AVIV

MARTHA NUSSBAUM WAS preparing to give a lecture at Trinity College, Dublin, in April, 1992, when she learned that her mother was dying in a hospital in Philadelphia. She couldn't get a flight until the next day. That evening, Nussbaum, one of the foremost philosophers in America, gave her scheduled lecture, on the nature of emotions. "I thought, It's inhuman—I shouldn't be able to do this," she said later. Then she thought, Well, of course I should do this. I mean, here I am. Why should I not do it? The audience is there, and they want to have the lecture.

When she returned to her room, she opened her laptop and began writing her next lecture, which she would deliver in two weeks, at the law school of the University of Chicago. On the plane the next morning, her hands trembling, she continued to type. She wondered if there was something cruel about her capacity to be so productive. The lecture was about the nature of mercy. As she often does, she argued that certain moral truths are best expressed in the form of a story. We become merciful, she wrote, when we behave as the "concerned reader of a novel," understanding each person's life as a "complex narrative of human effort in a world full of obstacles."

In the lecture, she described how the Roman philosopher Seneca, at the end of each day, reflected on his misdeeds before saying to himself, "This time I pardon you." The sentence brought Nussbaum to tears. She worried that her ability to work was an act of subconscious aggression, a sign that she didn't love her mother enough. I shouldn't be away lecturing, she thought. I shouldn't have been a philosopher. Nussbaum sensed that her mother saw her work as cold and detached, a posture of invulnerability. "We aren't very loving creatures, apparently, when we philosophize," Nussbaum has written.

When her plane landed in Philadelphia, Nussbaum learned that her mother had just died. Her younger sister, Gail Craven Busch, a choir director at a church, had told their mother that Nussbaum was on the way. "She just couldn't hold on any longer," Busch said. When Nussbaum arrived at the hospital, she found her mother still in the bed, wearing lipstick. A breathing tube, now detached from an oxygen machine, was laced through her nostrils. The nurses brought Nussbaum cups of water as she wept. Then she gathered her mother's belongings, including a book called "A Glass of Blessings," which Nussbaum couldn't help noticing looked too precious, the kind of thing that she would never want to read. She left the hospital, went to the track at the University of Pennsylvania, and ran four miles.

She admired the Stoic philosophers, who believed that ungoverned emotions destroyed one's moral character, and she felt that, in the face of a loved one's death, their instruction would be "Everyone is mortal, and you will get over this pretty soon." But she disagreed with the way they trained themselves not to depend on anything beyond their control. For the next several days, she felt as if nails were being pounded into her stomach and her limbs were being torn off. "Do we imagine the thought causing a fluttering in my hands, or a trembling in my stomach?" she wrote, in "Upheavals of Thought," a book on the structure of emotions. "And if we do, do we really want to say that this fluttering or trembling is *my* grief about my mother's death?"

Nussbaum gave her lecture on mercy shortly after her mother's funeral. She felt that her mother would have preferred that she forgo work for a few weeks, but when Nussbaum isn't working she feels guilty and lazy, so she revised the lecture until she thought that it was one of the best she had ever written. She imagined her talk as a kind of reparation: the lecture was about the need to recognize how hard it is, even with the best intentions, to live a virtuous life. Like much of her work, the lecture represented what she calls a therapeutic philosophy, a "science of life," which addresses persistent human needs. She told me, "I like the idea that the very thing that my mother found cold and unloving could actually be a form of love. It's a form of human love to accept our complicated, messy humanity and not run away from it."

A few years later, Nussbaum returned to her relationship with her mother in a dramatic dialogue that she wrote for Oxford University's Philosophical Dialogues Competition, which she won. In the dialogue, a mother accuses her daughter, a renowned moral philosopher, of being ruthless. "You just don't know what emotions are," the mother says. Her father tells her, "Aren't you a philosopher because you want, really, to live inside your own mind most of all? And not to need, not to love, anyone?" Her mother asks, "Isn't it just because you don't want to admit that thinking doesn't control everything?"

The philosopher begs for forgiveness. "Why do you hate my thinking so much, Mommy?" she asks. "What can I say or write that will make you stop looking at me that way?"

NUSSBAUM IS DRAWN to the idea that creative urgency—and the commitment to be good—derives from the awareness that we harbor aggression toward the people we love. A sixty-nine-year-old professor of law and philosophy at the University of Chicago (with appointments in classics, political science, Southern Asian studies, and the divinity school), Nussbaum has published twenty-four books and five hundred and nine papers and received fifty-seven honorary degrees. In 2014, she

"What I am calling for," Nussbaum writes, is "a society of citizens who admit that they are needy and vulnerable."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF BROWN

became the second woman to give the John Locke Lectures, at Oxford, the most eminent lecture series in philosophy. Last year, she received the Inamori Ethics Prize, an award for ethical leaders who improve the condition of mankind. A few weeks ago, she won five hundred thousand dollars as the recipient of the Kyoto Prize, the most prestigious award offered in fields not eligible for a Nobel, joining a small group of philosophers that includes Karl Popper and Jürgen Habermas. Honors and prizes remind her of potato chips; she enjoys them but is wary of becoming sated, like one of Aristotle's "dumb grazing animals." Her conception of a good life requires striving for a difficult goal, and, if she notices herself feeling too satisfied, she begins to feel discontent.

Nussbaum is monumentally confident, intellectually and physically. She is beautiful, in a taut, flinty way, and carries herself like a queen. Her voice is high-pitched and dramatic, and she often seems delighted by the performance of being herself. Her work, which draws on her training in classics but also on anthropology, psychoanalysis, sociology, and a number of other fields, searches for the conditions for *eudaimonia*, a Greek word that describes a complete and flourishing life. At a time of insecurity for the humanities, Nussbaum's work champions—and embodies—the reach of the humanistic endeavor. Nancy Sherman, a moral philosopher at Georgetown, told me, "Martha changed the face of philosophy by using literary skills to describe the very minutiae of a lived experience."

Unlike many philosophers, Nussbaum is an elegant and lyrical writer, and she movingly describes the pain of recognizing one's vulnerability, a precondition, she believes, for an ethical life. "To be a good human being," she has said, "is to have a kind of openness to the world, the ability to trust uncertain things beyond your own control that can lead you to be shattered." She searches for a "non-denying style of writing," a way to describe emotional experiences without wringing the feeling from them. She disapproves of the conventional style of philosophical prose, which she describes as "scientific, abstract, hygienically pallid," and disengaged with the problems of its time. Like Narcissus, she says, philosophy falls in love with its own image and drowns.

In several books and papers, Nussbaum quotes a sentence by the sociologist Erving Goffman, who wrote, "In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports." This sentence more or less characterizes Nussbaum's father, whom she describes as an inspiration and a role model, and also as a racist. He was prejudiced in a "very gut-level way," Nussbaum told me. "It was about shrinking and disgust."

For the past thirty years, Nussbaum has been drawn to those who blush, writing about the kinds of populations that her father might have deemed subhuman. She argues that unblushing males, or "normals," repudiate their own animal nature by projecting their disgust onto vulnerable groups and creating a "buffer zone." Nussbaum thinks that disgust is an unreasonable emotion, which should be distrusted as a basis for law; it is at the root, she argues, of opposition to gay and transgender rights. Her work includes lovely descriptions of the physical realities of being a person, of having a body "soft and porous, receptive of fluid and sticky, womanlike in its oozy sliminess." She believes that dread of these phenomena creates a threat to civic life. "What I am calling for," she writes, is "a society of citizens who admit that they are needy and vulnerable."

Nussbaum once wrote, citing Nietzsche, that "when a philosopher harps very insistently on a theme, that shows us that there is a danger that something else is about to 'play the master'": something personal is driving the preoccupation. In Nussbaum's case, I wondered if she approaches her theme of vulnerability with such success because she peers at it from afar, as if it were unfamiliar and exotic. She celebrates the ability to be fragile and exposed, but in her own life she seems to control every interaction. She divides her day into a series of productive, life-affirming activities, beginning with a ninety-minute run or workout, during which, for years, she "played" operas in her head, usually works by Mozart. She memorized the operas and ran to each one for three to four months, shifting the tempo to match her speed and her mood. For two decades, she has kept a chart that documents her daily exercises. After her workout, she stands beside her piano and sings for an hour; she told me that her voice has never been better. (When a conductor recently invited her to join a repertory group for older singers, she told him that the concept was "stigmatizing.") Her self-discipline inspired a story called "My Ex, the Moral Philosopher," by the late Richard Stern, a professor at the University of Chicago. The story describes the contradiction of the philosopher's "paean to spontaneity and her own nature, the least spontaneous, most doggedly, nervously, even fanatically unspontaneous I know."

Nussbaum is currently writing a book on aging, and when I first proposed the idea of a Profile I told her that I'd like to make her book the center of the piece. She responded skeptically, writing in an e-mail that she'd had a long, varied career, adding, "I'd really like to feel that you had considered various aspects of it and that we had a plan that had a focus." She typically responded within an hour of my sending an e-mail. "Do you feel that you have such a plan?" she asked me. "I'd like to hear the pros and cons in your view of different emphases." She wasn't sure how I could encompass her œuvre, since it covered so many subjects: animal rights, emotions in criminal law, Indian politics, disability, religious intolerance, political liberalism, the role of humanities in the academy, sexual harassment, transnational transfers of wealth. "The challenge for you would be to give readers a road map through the work that would be illuminating rather than confusing," she wrote, adding, "It will all fall to bits without a plan." She described three interviews that she'd done, and the ways in which they were flawed. Among other things, they hadn't captured her devotion to teaching and to her students. One of the interviews, she said, had made her

"look like a person who has contempt for the contributions of others, which is one of the biggest insults that one could direct my way."

For our first meeting, she suggested that I watch her sing: "It's the actual singing that would give you insight into my personality and my emotional life, though of course I am very imperfect in my ability to express what I want to express." She wrote that music allowed her to access a part of her personality that is "less defended, more receptive." Last summer, we drove to the house of her singing teacher, Tambra Black, who lives in a gentrifying neighborhood with a view of the churches of the University of Chicago. It was ninety degrees and sunny, and although we were ten minutes early, Nussbaum pounded on the door until Black, her hair wet from the shower, let us inside.

Nussbaum wore nylon athletic shorts and a T-shirt, and carried her sheet music in a hippie-style embroidered sack. Her fingernails and toenails were polished turquoise, and her legs and arms were exquisitely toned and tan. She stood beside Black's piano with her feet in a ski-plow pose and did scales by letting her mouth go completely loose and blowing through closed lips.

The first aria she practiced was "Or sai chi l'onore," from "Don Giovanni," one of the few Mozart operas that she has never run to, because she finds the rape scene reprehensible. As she ascended in pitch, she tilted her chin upward, until Black told her to stop. She excelled at clarion high notes, but Black thought that a passage about the murder of the heroine's father should be more tender. "Can you make it a little more pleasant?" Black asked.

The next aria was from the final act of Verdi's "Don Carlos," which Nussbaum found more challenging. She had to embody the hopelessness of a woman who, knowing that she can never be with the man she loves, yearns for death.

"Put a little longing and sadness in there," Black said. "Don't give too much too early."

Nussbaum softened her tone for a few passages, but her voice quickly gathered force.

"You have too much power," Black told her. "Save a little for the end."

"I'll have to work on that," Nussbaum said, her eyes fixed on the sheet music in front of her. "It's difficult to get all the emotions in there."

"Of course you still make me laugh, just not out loud."

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Hours later, as we drove home from a concert by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Nussbaum said that she was struggling to capture the resignation required for the Verdi piece. She couldn't identify with the role. "I feel that this character is basically saying, 'Life is treating me badly, so I'm going to give up,'" she told me. "And I find that totally unintelligible."

When Nussbaum was three or four years old, she told her mother, "Well, I think I know just about everything." Her mother, Betty Craven, whose ancestors arrived on the Mayflower, responded sternly, "No, Martha. You are just one person among many." Nussbaum was so frustrated by this response that she banged her head on the floor.

Her father, George Craven, a successful tax lawyer who worked all the time, applauded her youthful arrogance. He thought that it was excellent to be superior to others. He liked to joke that he had been wrong only once in his life and that was the time that he thought he was wrong. The Craven family lived in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in an atmosphere that Nussbaum describes as "chilly clear opulence." Betty was bored and unfulfilled, and she began drinking for much of the day, hiding bourbon in the kitchen. Nussbaum's younger sister, Gail, said that once, after her mother passed out on the floor, she called an ambulance, but her father sent it away. Nussbaum's half-brother, Robert (the child of George Craven's first marriage), said that their father didn't understand when people weren't rational. "It was an emotionally barren environment," he told me. "You were supposed to just soldier on."

Nussbaum spent her free time alone in the attic, reading books, including many by Dickens. Through literature, she said, she found an "escape from an amoral life into a universe where morality matters." At night, she went to her father's study in her long bathrobe, and they read together. Her father loved the poem "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley, and he often recited it to her: "I have not winced nor cried aloud./ Under the bludgeonings of chance/My head is bloody, but unbowed. . . . I am the master of my fate:/I am the captain of my soul."

Her father's ethos may have fostered Nussbaum's interest in Stoicism. Her relationship with him was so captivating that it felt romantic. "He really set me on a path of being happy and delighted with life," she said. "He

symbolized beauty and wonder." Gail Busch found her father's temperament less congenial. "I believe he was probably a sociopath," she told me. "He was certainly very narcissistic. He was extremely domineering and very controlling. Our mother was petrified for most of their marriage." Busch said that when she was a young child her father insisted that she be in bed before he got home from work.

Nussbaum once wrote of Iris Murdoch that she "won the Oedipal struggle too easily." The same could be said of Nussbaum herself. Busch told me, "There were very few people that my father touched that he didn't hurt. But one of them was Martha, because they were just two peas in a pod. I know that he saw her as a reflection of him, and that was probably just perfect for him."

Nussbaum excelled at her private girls' school, while Busch floundered and became rebellious. In an interview with a Dutch television station, Nussbaum said that she worked so hard because she thought, This is what Daddy's doing—we take charge of our lives. Of her mother and sister, she said, "I just was furious at them, because I thought that they could take charge of their lives by will, and they weren't doing it."

EVENING POEM

Old scrap-iron foxgloves
rusty rods of the broken woods

what a faded knocked-out stiffness
as if you'd sprung from the horsehair
of a whole Victorian sofa buried in the mud down there

or at any rate something dropped from a great height
straight through flesh and out the other side
has left your casing pale and loose and finally

just a heap of shoes

they say the gods being so uplifted
can't really walk on feet but take tottering steps
and lean like this closer and closer to the ground

which gods?

it is the hours on bird-thin legs
the same old choirs of hours
returning their summer clothes to the earth

with the night now
as if dropped from a great height

falling

—*Alice Oswald*

Nussbaum attended Wellesley College, but she dropped out in her sophomore year, because she wanted to be an actress. Playing other people gave her access to emotions that she hadn't been able to express on her own, but, after half a year with a repertory company that performed Greek tragedies, she left that, too. "I hadn't lived enough," she said. She began studying classics at New York University, still focussing on Greek tragedies. She came to believe that reading about suffering functions as a kind of "transitional object," the term used by the English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, one of her favorite thinkers, to describe toys that allow infants to move away from their mothers and to explore the world on their own. "When we have emotions of fear and pity toward the hero of a tragedy," she has written, "we explore aspects of our own vulnerability in a safe and pleasing setting."

Nussbaum felt increasingly uncomfortable with what she called the "smug bastion of hypocrisy and unearned privilege" in which she'd been raised. She had spent her childhood "coasting along with assured invulnerability," she said. In a class on Greek composition, she fell in love with Alan Nussbaum, another N.Y.U. student, who was Jewish, a religion she was attracted to for the same reason that she was drawn to theatre: "more emotional expressiveness," she said. She associated the religion with the social consciousness of I. F. Stone and *The Nation*. Her father, who thought that Jews were vulgar, disapproved of the marriage and refused to attend their wedding party. Robert Craven told me, "Martha was the apple of our father's eye, until she embraced Judaism and fell from grace."

Four years into the marriage, Nussbaum read "The Golden Bowl," by Henry James. She kept thinking about Maggie Verver's "wish to remain, intensely, the same passionate little daughter she had always been." She was so captivated by the novel that she later wrote three essays about the ways in which James articulates a kind of moral philosophy, revealing the childishness of aspiring to moral perfection, a life of "never doing a wrong, never breaking a rule, never hurting." Nussbaum told me, "What drew me to Maggie is the sense that she is a peculiarly American kind of person who really, really wants to be good. And of course that's impossible. She has a particularly demanding father, and, in order to be fully herself with her husband, she has to leave her father and hurt him, and she just had no way to deal with that. She was not prepared."

Nussbaum entered the graduate program in classics at Harvard, in 1969, and realized that for years she had been smiling all the time, for no particular reason. When her thesis adviser, G. E. L. Owen, invited her to his office,

served sherry, spoke about life's sadness, recited Auden, and reached over to touch her breasts, she says, she gently pushed him away, careful not to embarrass him. "Just as I never accused my mother of being drunk, even though she was always drunk," she wrote, "so I managed to keep my control with Owen, and I never said a hostile word." She didn't experience the imbalance of power that makes sexual harassment so destructive, she said, because she felt "much healthier and more powerful than he was."

She soon drifted toward ancient philosophy, where she could follow Aristotle, who asked the basic question "How should a human live?" She realized that philosophy attracted a "logic-chopping type of person," nearly always male. She came to believe that she understood Nietzsche's thinking when he wrote that no great philosopher had ever been married. "I think what he was saying is that most philosophers have been in flight from human existence," she said. "They just haven't wanted to be entangled." She rejected the idea, dominant in contemporary philosophy, that emotions were "unthinking energies that simply push the person around." Instead, she resurrected a version of the Stoic theory that makes no division between thought and feeling. She gave emotions a central role in moral philosophy, arguing that they are cognitive in nature: they embody judgments about the world.

One of her mentors was John Rawls, the most influential political philosopher of the last century. He stuttered and was extremely shy. She said that one day, when they were eating hamburgers for lunch (this was before she stopped eating meat), he instructed her that if she had the capacity to be a public intellectual then it was her duty to become one.

Utilitarian and Kantian theories were dominant at the time, and Nussbaum felt that the field had become too insular and professionalized. She was frustrated that her colleagues were more interested in conceptual analyses than in attending to the details of people's lives. While writing an austere dissertation on a neglected treatise by Aristotle, she began a second book, about the urge to deny one's human needs. In "The Fragility of Goodness," one of the best-selling contemporary philosophy books, she rejected Plato's argument that a good life is one of total self-sufficiency. She argued that tragedy occurs because people are living well: they have formed passionate commitments that leave them exposed. She began the book by acknowledging:

> I must constantly choose among competing and apparently incommensurable goods and that circumstances may force me to a position in which I cannot help being false to something or doing something wrong; that an event that simply happens to me may, without my consent, alter my life; that it is equally problematic to entrust one's good to friends, lovers, or country and to try to have a good life without them—all these I take to be not just the material of tragedy, but everyday facts of practical wisdom.

Nussbaum describes motherhood as her first profound experience of moral conflict. Her pregnancy, in 1972, was a mistake; her I.U.D. fell out. She had just become the first woman elected to Harvard's Society of Fellows, and she imagined that the other scholars must be thinking, We let in a woman, and what does she do? She goes off and has a baby. Nussbaum carried on for nine months as if she weren't pregnant. She ran several miles a day; she remained so thin that her adviser told her she must be carrying a "wind egg"; she had such a rapid delivery—with no anesthesia—that doctors interviewed her about how she had prepared for birth. She told them that "Lamaze was for wimps and running was the key." She brought Aristotle's Politics to the hospital. Her husband took a picture of her reading. She was at a Society of Fellows dinner the next week. "I wanted everyone to understand that I was still working," she said.

Alan Nussbaum taught linguistics at Yale, and during the week Martha took care of their daughter, Rachel, alone. "Among the good and decent men, some are unprepared for the surprises of life, and their good intentions run aground when confronted with issues like child care," she later wrote. They divorced when Rachel was a teen-ager. When Nussbaum joined a society for female philosophers, she proposed that women had a unique contribution to make, because "we had an experience of moral conflicts—we are torn between children on the one hand, and work on the other—that the male philosophers didn't have, or wouldn't face up to." She rejected the idea, suggested by Kant, that people who are morally good are immune to the kind of bad luck that would force them into ethically compromised positions. She told me, "A lot of the great philosophers have said there are no real moral dilemmas. Well, we were saying, 'No woman would make that stupid mistake!'"

Nussbaum left Harvard in 1983, after she was denied tenure, a decision she attributes, in part, to a "venomous dislike of me as a very outspoken woman" and the machinations of a colleague who could "show a good actor how the role of Iago ought to be played." Glen Bowersock, who was the head of the classics department when Nussbaum was a student, said, "I think she scared people. They couldn't wrap their minds around this formidably good, extraordinarily articulate woman who was very tall and attractive, openly feminine and stylish, and walked very erect and wore miniskirts—all in one package. They were just frightened."

This was the only time that Nussbaum had anything resembling a crisis in her career. I was eager to hear about her moment of doubt, since she always seemed so steely. Projecting a little, I asked if she ever felt guilty when she was successful, as if she didn't deserve it. "No—none of that," she said briskly. "I think women and philosophers are under-rewarded for what they do." After she was denied tenure, she thought about going to law school. "The doubt was very brief," she added. "I thought about law school for about a day, or something like that."

Instead, she began considering a more public role for philosophy. One of her mentors, the English philosopher Bernard Williams, accused moral philosophers of "refusing to write about anything of importance." Nussbaum began examining quality of life in the developing world. She was steered toward the issue by Amartya Sen, the Indian economist, who later won the Nobel Prize. In 1986, they became romantically involved and worked together at the World Institute of Development Economics Research, in Helsinki. At the institute, she told me, she came to the realization that "I knew nothing about the rest of the world." She taught

herself about Indian politics and developed her own version of Sen's capabilities approach, a theoretical framework for measuring and comparing the well-being of nations. Her earlier work had celebrated vulnerability, but now she identified the sorts of vulnerabilities (poverty, hunger, sexual violence) that no human should have to endure. In an Aristotelian spirit, Nussbaum devised a list of ten essential capabilities that all societies should nourish, including the freedom to play, to engage in critical reflection, and to love. The capabilities theory is now a staple of human-rights advocacy, and Sen told me that Nussbaum has become more of a "purist" than he is. When it comes to judging the quality of human life, he said, "I am often defeated by that in a way that Martha is not."

Nussbaum went on to extend the work of John Rawls, who developed the most influential contemporary version of the social-contract theory: the idea that rational citizens agree to govern themselves, because they recognize that everyone's needs are met more effectively through coöperation. Nussbaum argued that Rawls gave an unsatisfactory account of justice for people dependent on others—the disabled, the elderly, and women subservient in their homes. For a society to remain stable and committed to democratic principles, she argued, it needs more than detached moral principles: it has to cultivate certain emotions and teach people to enter empathetically into others' lives. She believes that the humanities are not just important to a healthy democratic society but decisive, shaping its fate. She proposed an enhanced version of John Stuart Mill's "aesthetic education"—emotional refinement for all citizens through poetry and music and art. "Respect on its own is cold and inert, insufficient to overcome the bad tendencies that lead human beings to tyrannize over one another," she wrote. "Public culture cannot be tepid and passionless."

By the late nineties, India had become so integral to Nussbaum's thinking that she later warned a reporter from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that her work there was at the "core of my heart and my sense of the meaning of life, so if you downplay that, you don't get me." She travelled to developing countries during school vacations—she never misses a class—and met with impoverished women. She said she felt as if she were "a lawyer who has been retained by poor people in developing nations."

In the sixties, Nussbaum had been too busy for feminist consciousness-raising—she said that she cultivated an image of "Doris Day respectability"—and she was suspicious of left-wing groupthink. Once she began studying the lives of women in non-Western countries, she identified as a feminist but of the unfashionable kind: a traditional liberal who believed in the power of reason at a time when postmodern scholars viewed it as an instrument or a disguise for oppression. She argued that the well-being of women around the world could be improved through universal norms—an international system of distributive justice. She was impatient with feminist theory that was so relativistic that it assumed that, in the name of respecting other cultures, women should stand by while other women were beaten or genitally mutilated. In "Sex and Social Justice," published in 1999, she wrote that the approach resembles the "sort of moral collapse depicted by Dante, when he describes the crowd of souls who mill around in the vestibule of hell, dragging their banner now one way now another, never willing to set it down and take a definite stand on any moral or political question. Such people, he implies, are the most despicable of all. They can't even get into hell because they have not been willing to stand for anything in life."

In 1999, in a now canonical essay for *The New Republic*, she wrote that academic feminism spoke only to the élite. It had become untethered from the practical struggle to achieve equality for women. She scolded Judith Butler and postmodern feminists for "turning away from the material side of life, towards a type of verbal and symbolic politics that makes only the flimsiest connections with the real situations of real women." These radical thinkers, she felt, were focussing more on problems of representation than on the immediate needs of women in other classes and cultures. The stance, she wrote, "looks very much like quietism," a word she often uses when she disapproves of projects and ideas.

In letters responding to the essay, the feminist critic Gayatri Spivak denounced Nussbaum's "civilizing mission." Joan Scott, a historian of gender, wrote that Nussbaum had "constructed a self-serving morality tale."

When nussbaum is at her computer writing, she feels as if she had entered a "holding environment"—the phrase used by Donald Winnicott to describe conditions that allow a baby

" 'The Walking Dead,' 'American Horror Story,' 'Bates Motel,' or the Convention?"

to feel secure and loved. Like the baby, she is "playing with an object," she said. "It's my manuscript, but I feel that something of both of my parents is with me. The sense of concern and being held is what I associate with my mother, and the sense of surging and delight is what I associate with my father."

She said that she looks to replicate the experience of "surging" in romantic partners as well. She has always been drawn to intellectually distinguished men. "I suppose it's because of the imprint of my father," she told me one afternoon, while eating a small bowl of yogurt, blueberries, raisins, and pine nuts, a variation on the lunch she has most days. Her spacious tenth-floor apartment, which has twelve windows overlooking Lake Michigan and an elevator that delivers visitors directly into her foyer, is decorated with dozens of porcelain, metal, and glass elephants—her favorite animal, because of its emotional intelligence. "I used to observe that my close female friends would choose—very reasonably—men whose aspirations were rather modest," she told me. "That works out nicely, because these men are really supportive of them. I've thought, Wouldn't it be nice to have romantic and sexual tastes like that? But I certainly don't."

After moving to the University of Chicago, in 1995 (following seven years at Brown), Nussbaum was in a long relationship with Cass Sunstein, the former administrator for President Obama's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and one of the few scholars as prolific as she is. Nussbaum said that she discovered her paradigm for romance as an adolescent, when she read about the relationship between two men in Plato's Phaedrus and the way in which they combined "intense mutual erotic passion with a shared pursuit of truth and justice." She and Sunstein (who is now married to Samantha Power, the Ambassador to the United Nations) lived in separate apartments, and each one's work informed the other's. In an influential essay, titled "Objectification," Nussbaum builds on a passage written by Sunstein, in which he suggests that some forms of sexual objectification can be both ineradicable and wonderful. Straying from the standard line of feminist thought, Nussbaum defends Sunstein's idea, arguing that there are circumstances in which being treated as a sex object, a "mysterious thinglike presence," can be humanizing, rather than morally harmful. It allows us to achieve a state that her writing often elevates: the "abnegation of self-containment and self-sufficiency."

Nussbaum is preoccupied by the ways that philosophical thinking can seem at

odds with passion and love. She recognizes that writing can be "a way of distancing oneself from human life and maybe even a way of controlling human life," she said. In a semi-autobiographical essay in her book "Love's Knowledge," from 1990, she offers a portrait of a female philosopher who approaches her own heartbreak with a notepad and a pen; she sorts and classifies the experience, listing the properties of an ideal lover and comparing it to the men she has loved. "You now begin to see how this lady is," she wrote. "She goes on thinking at all times. She won't simply cry, she will ask what crying consists in. One tear, one argument."

Nussbaum isn't sure if her capacity for rational detachment is innate or learned. On three occasions, she alluded to a childhood experience in which she'd been so overwhelmed by anger at her mother, for drinking in the afternoon, that she slapped her. Betty warned her, "If you turn against me, I won't have any reason to live." Nussbaum prayed to be relieved of her anger, fearing that its potential was infinite. "I thought it would kill somebody," she said.

Anger is an emotion that she now rarely experiences. She invariably remains friends with former lovers, a fact that Sunstein, Sen, and Alan Nussbaum wholeheartedly affirmed. In her new book, "Anger and Forgiveness," which was published last month, Nussbaum argues against the idea, dear to therapists and some feminists, that "people (and women especially) owe it to their self-respect to own, nourish, and publicly proclaim their anger." It is a "magical fantasy," a bit of "metaphysical nonsense," she writes, to assume that anger will restore what was damaged. She believes that embedded in the emotion is the irrational wish that "things will be made right if I inflict suffering." She writes that even leaders of movements for revolutionary justice should avoid the emotion and move on to "saner thoughts of personal and social welfare." (She acknowledges, "It might be objected that my proposal sounds all too much like that of the upper-middle-class (ex)-Wasp academic that I certainly am. I simply deny the charge.")

For a long time, Nussbaum had seemed to be working on getting in touch with anger. In the nineties, when she composed the list of ten capabilities to which all humans should be entitled—a list that she's revised in the course of many papers—she and the feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon debated whether "justified anger" should make the list. Nussbaum was wary of the violence that accompanies anger's expression, but MacKinnon said she convinced Nussbaum that anger can be a "sign that self-respect has not been crushed, that humanity burns even where it is supposed to have been extinguished." Nussbaum decided to view anger in a more positive light. "I thought, I'm just getting duped by my own history," she said. In an interview a few years later, she said that being able to express anger to a friend, after years of training herself to suppress it, was "the most tremendous pleasure in life." In a 2003 essay, she describes herself as "angry more or less all the time."

When I asked her about the different self-conceptions, she wrote me three e-mails from a plane to Mexico (she was on her way to give lectures in Puebla) to explain that she had articulated these views before she had studied the emotion in depth. It was not full-fledged anger that she was experiencing but "transitional anger," an emotional state that embodies the thought: Something should be done about this, in response to social injustice. In another e-mail from the air, she

clarified: "My experience of political anger has always been more King-like: protest, not acquiescence, but no desire for payback."

Last year, Nussbaum had a colonoscopy. She didn't want to miss a workday, so she refused sedation. She was thrilled by the sight of her appendix, so pink and tiny. "It's such a big part of you and you don't get to meet these parts," she told me. "I love that kind of familiarization: it's like coming to terms with yourself."

Her friends were repulsed when she told them that she had been awake the entire time. "They thought it was disgusting to go through the procedure without their consciousness obliterated," she said. She wasn't surprised that men wanted to be sedated, but she couldn't understand why women her age would avoid the sight of their organs. "Here are the same women who were inspired by 'Our Bodies, Ourselves,'" she told me. "We said, 'Oh, let's not shrink from looking at our vaginas. Let's not think, Our periods are disgusting, but let's celebrate it as part of who we are!' Now we get to our sixties, and we are disgusted by our bodies again, and we want to be knocked out."

Nussbaum believes that disgust "draws sharp edges around the self" and betrays a shame toward what is human. When she goes shopping with younger colleagues—among her favorite designers are Alexander McQueen, Azzedine Alaïa, and Seth Aaron Henderson, whom she befriended after he won "Project Runway"—she often emerges from the changing room in her underwear. Bodily functions do not embarrass her, either. When she goes on long runs, she has no problem urinating behind bushes. Once, when she was in Paris with her daughter, Rachel, who is now an animal-rights lawyer in Denver, she peed in the garden of the Tuileries Palace at night. (Rachel was curt when we met; Nussbaum told me that Rachel, who has co-written papers with her mother on the legal status of whales, was wary of being portrayed "as adjunct to me.")

Nussbaum acknowledges that, as she ages, it becomes harder to rejoice in all bodily developments. Recently, she was dismayed when she looked in the mirror and didn't recognize her nose. Sinking cartilage had created a new bump. She asked the doctor who gives her Botox in her forehead what to do. "He is a minimalist," she told me. "He's very artistic." He fixed the problem by putting filler above the tip of her nose. It wasn't that she was disgusted. "But I do feel conscious that at my age I have to be very careful of how I present myself, at risk of not being thought attractive," she told me. "There are women like Germaine Greer who say that it's a big relief to not worry about men and to forget how they look. I don't feel that way! I care how men look at me. I like men."

In a new book, tentatively titled "Aging Wisely," which will be published next year, Nussbaum and Saul Levmore, a colleague at the law school, investigate the moral, legal, and economic dilemmas of old age—"an unknown country," which they say has been ignored by philosophy. The book is structured as a dialogue between two aging scholars, analyzing the way that old age affects love, friendship, inequality, and the ability to cede control. They both reject the idea that getting old is a form of renunciation. Nussbaum critiques the tendency in literature to "assign a 'comeuppance'" to aging women who fail to display proper levels of resignation and shame. She calls for an "informal social movement akin to the feminist Our Bodies movement: a movement against self-disgust" for the aging. She promotes Walt Whitman's "anti-disgust" world view, his celebration of the "lungsponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean. . . . The thin red jellies within you or within me. . . . O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul."

At a faculty workshop last summer, professors at the law school gathered to critique drafts of two chapters from the book. Nussbaum wore a fitted purple dress and high-heeled sandals, and her blond hair looked as if it had recently been permed. She appeared to be dressed for a different event from the one that the other professors were attending. As she often does, she looked delighted but not necessarily happy.

In one of the chapters, Levmore argued that it should be legal for employers to require that employees retire at an agreed-upon age, and Nussbaum wrote a rebuttal, called "No End in Sight." She said that it was painful to see colleagues in other countries forced to retire when philosophers such as Kant, Cato, and Gorgias didn't produce their best work until old age.

The libertarian scholar Richard Epstein raised his hand and said that, rather than having a national policy regarding retirement, each institution should make its own decision. "So Martha, full of vim and vigor, can get offers from four other places and go on and continue to work," he said.

"Sure, I could go and move someplace else," she said, interrupting him. "But I don't want to." If she were forced to retire, she said, "that would really affect me psychologically in a very deep way. And I have no idea what I'd do. I might go off and do some interesting thing like be a cantor. Or I might just get depressed."

"Martha, it's too autobiographical," Epstein said. His concern was not that "Martha stays on. It's that a bunch of dead wood stays on, as well, and it's a cost to the institution."

When another colleague suggested that no one knew the precise moment when aging scholars had peaked, Nussbaum cited Cato, who wrote that the process of aging could be resisted through vigorous physical and mental activity. Her celebration of this final, vulnerable stage of life was undercut by her confidence that she needn't be so vulnerable. She said that her grandmother lived until she was a hundred and four years old. "Why do I have my outlook?" she said. "It's a matter of the habits you form when you are very young—the habits of exercise, of being active. All of that stuff builds to the sense of a life that can go on."

Not long ago, Nussbaum bought a Dolce & Gabbana skirt dotted with crystal stars and daisies. "It had a happy look," she told me, holding the hanger to her chin. She planned to wear it to the college graduation of Nathaniel Levmore, whom she describes as her "quasi-child." Nathaniel, the son of Saul Levmore, has always been shy. Saul told me, "Of my two children, this is the one that's the underdog, and of course Martha loves him, and they talk for hours and hours.

Martha has this total belief in the underdog. The more underdog, the more charming she finds them."

Nussbaum has taken Nathaniel on trips to Botswana and India, and, when she hosts dinner parties, he often serves the wine. When I joined them last summer for an outdoor screening of "Star Trek," they spent much of the hour-long drive debating whether it was anti-Semitic for Nathaniel's college to begin its semester on Rosh Hashanah. Their persistence was both touching and annoying. Just when I thought the conversation would die, the matter settled, Nathaniel would raise a new point, and Nussbaum would argue from a new angle that the scheduling was anti-Semitic.

Recently, when I had dinner at Nussbaum's apartment, she said she was sorry that Nathaniel wasn't there to enjoy it. We sat at her kitchen island, facing a Chicago White Sox poster, eating what remained of an elaborate and extraordinary Indian meal that she had cooked two days before, for the dean of the law school and eight students. She served me heaping portions of every dish and herself a modest plate of yogurt, rice, and spinach.

I mentioned that Saul Levmore had said she is so devoted to the underdog that she even has sympathy for a former student who had been stalking her; the student appeared to have had a psychotic break and bombarded her with threatening e-mails. "I feel great sympathy for any weak person or creature," she told me. She mentioned that a few days before she had been watching a Webcam of a nest of newborn bald eagles and had become distraught when she saw that the parent eagle was giving all the food to only one of her two babies. "The other one kept trying to eat something, and didn't get it!" she said. "I thought it was possible that one of the eagles was getting weaker and weaker, and I asked my bird-watcher friend, and he said that kind of sibling rivalry is actually pretty common in those species and the one may die. I was really upset by this."

"Isn't that the sort of dynamic you had with your sister?" I asked.

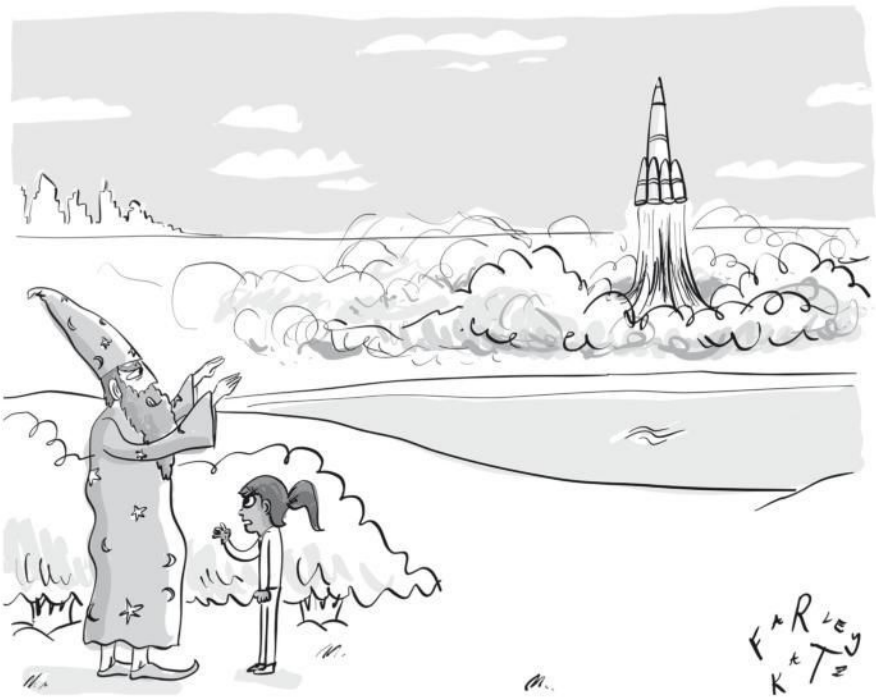
"Yeah, it probably is," Nussbaum said, running her finger along the rim of her plate. "It is, I guess." She said that her sister seemed to have become happier as she aged; her musical career at the church was blossoming. "Well, this is what we'll have to talk about in class tomorrow," she said. "Can guilt ever be creative?" She licked the sauce on her finger. "'Guilt' might not even be quite the right word. It's a kind of sorrow that one had profited at the expense of someone else."

We began talking about a chapter that she intended to write for her book on aging, on the idea of looking back at one's life and turning it into a narrative. "Did you stand for something, or didn't you?" she said. She said that she had always admired the final words of John Stuart Mill, who reportedly said, "I have done my work." She has quoted these words in a number of interviews and papers, offering them as the mark of a life well lived. The image of Mill on his deathbed is not dissimilar to one she has of her father, who died as he was putting papers into his briefcase. Nussbaum often describes this as a good death—he was doing his work until the end—while Nussbaum's brother and sister see it as a sign of his isolation.

She said, "If I found that I was going to die in the next hour, I would not say that I had done my work. If you have a good life, you typically always feel that there's something that you want to do next." She wondered if Mill had surrendered too soon because he was prone to depression.

"It does sound a little bit final," she went on, "and one rarely dies when one is out of useful ideas—unless maybe you were really ill for a long time." She said that she had been in a hospital only twice, once to give birth and once when she had an operation to staple the top of her left ear to the back of her head, when she was eleven. It poked out, and her father worried that boys wouldn't be attracted to her. "I just enjoyed having this big bandage around my head," she said. "I was acting the part of Marley's ghost in 'A Christmas Carol,' and it made quite an effect."

She stood up to clear our plates. "You're making me feel I chose the wrong last words," she called out from the sink. She returned with two large cakes. "I think last words are silly," she said, cutting herself a sliver. "Probably the best thing to do with your last words is to say goodbye to the people you love and not to talk about yourself." ♦



"Ugh, stop it, Dad—everyone knows you're not making that happen!"

• •

EPILOGUE

About a year and a half ago, I received an e-mail from a woman who had read a book I wrote about my parents:

She reassured me that she wasn't bats – that she was merely curious about where my parents' first baby was buried.

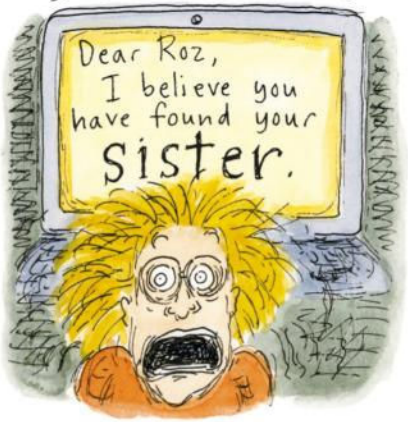
Her curiosity led her to a Web site called Findagrave* where she discovered something she thought I might find interesting:

- Chast, Female
- Died December 21, 1942
- Buried: Mount Lebanon Cemetery, Queens

*Yes. Really.

I *did* find it interesting. It was more information than I was able to get from my parents. So I contacted Mount Lebanon:

The next day, I received this message:



I was way beyond flabbergasted. Not only had my sister turned up in the archives but so had my mother's parents. This was all news to me. The man at the cemetery sent me photographs of their graves:

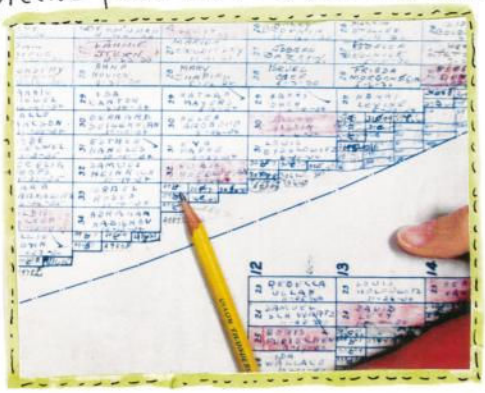
My parents' ashes, which had been in my closet since their deaths, in 2007 and 2009, had at last found a home.

SEVERAL MONTHS PASSED.

After all, there was no rush.

Finally, last fall, my son and I took a subway and then a bus to Glendale, Queens, where Mount Lebanon Cemetery is. I didn't bring the cremains. It was a two-part process, and this part was mainly for paperwork.

We met with the man who had found my sister and my grandparents. He showed us a book of archived cemetery maps and the precise place where my sister was buried.



He took us to her grave site, which was unmarked—common in the case of an infant's death. My son and I put stones on her grave.**

** Jews don't put flowers on graves. Just stones.

He showed us the niche wall where my parents' cremains would be housed.

J-2?!? The apartment where my parents lived for almost fifty years, where I grew up, was 2-J.

The other day, I returned to Mount Lebanon—this time with a pal and my parents' cremains.

I was tempted to say to my fellow L-train passengers, "Guess what—or WHO—is in this bag?"

A workman drove me out to the niche wall. I carried the bag on my lap. We were joined by a group of workmen at the wall. One of them climbed a ladder, opened the niche, and, one by one, placed my parents' ashes inside. Then he resealed it and climbed back down.

It was time to say goodbye.

R. Chr

LETTER FROM INDIA

PURIFYING THE GODDESS

Narendra Modi's grand plan to clean up the Ganges.

BY GEORGE BLACK

THE GANGES RIVER begins in the Himalayas, roughly three hundred miles north of Delhi and five miles south of India's border with Tibet, where it emerges from an ice cave called Gaumukh (the Cow's Mouth) and is known as the Bhagirathi. Eleven miles downstream, gray-blue with glacial silt, it reaches the small temple town of Gangotri. Pilgrims cluster on the rocky riverbank. Some swallow mouthfuls of the icy water, which they call *amrit*—nectar. Women in bright saris wade out into the water, filling small plastic flasks to take home. Indians living abroad can buy a bottle of it on Amazon or on eBay for $9.99.

To hundreds of millions of Hindus, in India and around the world, the Ganges is not just a river but also a goddess, Ganga, who was brought down to Earth from her home in the Milky Way by Lord Shiva, flowing through his dreadlocks to break the force of her fall. The sixteenth-century Mogul emperor Akbar called it "the water of immortality," and insisted on serving it at court. In 1615, Nicholas Withington, one of the earliest English travellers in India, wrote that water from the Ganges "will never stinke, though kepte never so longe, neyther will anye wormes or vermine breede therein." The myth persists that the river has a self-purifying quality—sometimes ascribed to sulfur springs, or to high levels of natural radioactivity in the Himalayan headwaters, or to the presence of bacteriophages, viruses that can destroy bacteria.

Below Gangotri, the river's path is one of increasing degradation. Its banks are disfigured by small hydropower stations, some half built, and by diversion tunnels, blasted out of solid rock, that leave miles of the riverbed dry. The towering hydroelectric dam at Tehri, which began operating in 2006, releases a flood or a dribble or nothing at all, depending on the vagaries of the season and the fluctuating demands of the power grid. The first significant human pollution begins at Uttarkashi, seventy miles or so from the source of the river. Like most Indian municipalities, Uttarkashi—a grimy cement-and-cinder-block town of eighteen thousand—has no proper means of disposing of garbage. Instead, the waste is taken to an open dump site, where, after a heavy rain, it washes into the river.

A hundred and twenty miles to the south, at the ancient pilgrimage city of

INSTITUTE

More than a billion gallons of raw sewage and industrial effluent enter the river every day.

The Hindu-nationalist government's restoration initiative plays directly into India's charged religious and caste politics.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SIMON NORFOLK

Haridwar, the Ganges enters the plains. This is the starting point for hundreds of miles of irrigation canals built by the British, beginning in the eighteen-forties, after a major famine. What's left of the river is ill-equipped to cope with the pollution and inefficient use of water for irrigation farther downstream. Below its confluence with the Yamuna River, which is nearly devoid of life after passing through Delhi, the Ganges picks up the effluent from sugar refineries, distilleries, pulp and paper mills, and tanneries, as well as the contaminated agricultural runoff from the great Gangetic Plain, the rice bowl of North India, on which half a billion people depend for their survival.

By the time the river reaches the Bay of Bengal, more than fifteen hundred miles from its source, it has passed through Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Kolkata, a hundred smaller towns and cities, and thousands of riverside villages—all lacking sanitation. The Ganges absorbs more than a billion gallons of waste each day, three-quarters of it raw sewage and domestic waste and the rest industrial effluent, and is one of the ten most polluted rivers in the world.

Indian governments have been trying to clean up the Ganges for thirty years. Official estimates of the amount spent on this effort vary widely, from six hundred million dollars to as much as three billion dollars; every attempt has been undone by corruption and apathy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, elected in May of 2014, is the latest to try. Modi and his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or B.J.P., campaigned on promises of transforming India into a prosperous, vibrant modern society, a nation of bullet trains, solar farms, "smart cities," and transparent government. Central to Modi's vision is the Clean India Mission—Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. He insists that rapid economic development and raising millions of people out of poverty need not come at the cost of dead rivers and polluted air. So far, however, the most striking feature of his energy policy has been the rapid acceleration of coal mining and of coal-fired power plants. In many cities, the air quality is hazardous, causing half a million premature deaths each year.

Two months after Modi was elected, he announced his most ambitious clean-up initiative: Namami Gange, or Obeisance to the Ganges. As evidence of his capability, Modi points to the western state of Gujarat, where he served as Chief Minister from 2001 to 2014, presiding over impressive economic growth. The Sabarmati River, which flows through Ahmedabad, the largest city in Gujarat, was given an elegant tree-shaded esplanade, where residents now walk their dogs and take the evening air; still, it remains one of the most polluted rivers in India.

Modi is better known for his long association with the radical fringe of Hindu nationalism than for good-government initiatives. Born into a low-caste family (his father sold tea at a railway station), he was just eight years old when he began attending meetings of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the mass organization that is the most aggressive face of Hindu-nationalist ideology. In his twenties, he became a leader of the R.S.S.'s student affiliate, and soon after he befriended another leading activist, Amit Shah, who became his most trusted aide in Gujarat.

In 1990, Modi, already recognized as a future leader of the B.J.P., was one of the main organizers of a protest pilgrimage from Gujarat to the town of Ayodhya, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. According to legend, Ayodhya was the home of the god Rama, and the protesters demanded that a Hindu temple be erected on a site occupied by a sixteenth-century mosque. In 1992, Hindu mobs converged on Ayodhya. They tore down the mosque, prompting nationwide riots, in which two thousand people died. Ten years later, when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, Hindu pilgrims made another visit to Ayodhya. As they were returning, Muslim mobs set their train on fire and fifty-nine people were burned alive. In reprisal, more than a thousand Muslims were killed, while the police stood by. Modi was widely accused of indifference, even of complicity, and, although he was later exonerated by the Supreme Court, he was denied a U.S. visa for a decade.

In 2014, Modi won a landslide election victory. Voters were tired of corruption, and Modi, a charismatic orator and an astute user of social media, promised to eradicate it. The business community clamored for deregulation. Young Indians were desperate for jobs. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty had exhausted its political appeal, and its choice for prime minister, Rahul Gandhi, the grandson of Indira, was a feeble campaigner, no match for Modi's dynamism.

For the most part, Modi did not need to appeal to Hindu-nationalist passions. But his promise to clean up the Ganges plays directly into India's charged religious and caste politics. Two problems are paramount. One is pollution from the tannery industry, which is centered in Kanpur, roughly midway along the river, and is almost entirely Muslim-owned. The other is sewage from Varanasi, two hundred miles downstream—an ancient city, considered the spiritual center of Hinduism, where the river is effectively an open sewer. Both cities are in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which has a population of two hundred and fifteen million and is central to Indian electoral politics. It is also notorious for extreme poverty, rampant corruption, rigid caste divisions, and communal violence, in which most of the victims are Muslims. At least half the mass killings recorded in India in the past quarter century have occurred in Uttar Pradesh.

In 2014, when Modi's ministers began to discuss the Namami Gange project, the details were vague and contradictory. Naturally, the sewers of Varanasi and the tanneries of Kanpur would receive special attention. The Ganges would become a "hub of spiritual tourism," but there was also talk of building dams every sixty miles along the busiest stretch of the river, to facilitate the transport of heavy goods. Four battalions of soldiers would be organized into the Ganga Eco-Task Force. Local communities would join the effort.

Modi has spoken of being inspired by the transformations of the Chicago River and of the Thames, but they are barely a tenth the length of the Ganges. Restoring the Rhine, which is half the length, took almost three decades and cost forty-five billion dollars. The budget for Namami Gange is about

three billion dollars over five years.

Modi announced the effort in Varanasi. Like the Ganges, Varanasi (formerly Benares) is said to be immune to degradation, although this is hard to reconcile with the physical reality of the place. The city's labyrinthine alleys are crowded with beggars, widows, and ragged ascetics, corpse bearers and the terminally ill, cows, dogs, monkeys, and motorbikes. A mixture of ornate temples and smoke-shrouded cremation grounds, Varanasi swarms with foreigners drawn by the promise of seeing India at its most exotic—dreadlocked hippies, Israeli kids just released from military service, Japanese tour groups in white surgical masks, stolid American retirees. When I visited, last October, the garbage and the post-monsoon silt lay thick on the ghats, the four-mile stretch of steps and platforms where thousands of pilgrims come each day to take their "holy dip." The low water at the river's edge was a clotted soup of dead flowers, plastic bags, feces, and human ashes.

Cylindrical towers, one emblazoned with an image of Shiva, stood at intervals along the riverfront—sewage-pumping stations that are designed to protect the most sensitive expanse of the bathing ghats, from Assi Ghat, in the south, to Raj Ghat, in the north. R. K. Dwivedi, a stout, sixty-four-year-old man who was in charge of the treatment plants, told me that the pumping stations, which were built in the nineteen-seventies, had recently been upgraded. But less than a third of the sewage that is generated by the 1.5 million people of Varanasi is treated; the rest goes directly into the river.

"From Assi Ghat to Raj Ghat, you will find almost nil flow coming to Ganga," Dwivedi said. I pointed out that the Assi River, a thirty-foot-wide drainage channel that flows into the Ganges just upstream of Assi Ghat, bypasses the pumping stations and pours raw sewage into the river. Dwivedi said that there was a comprehensive plan to install a sewerage system in the newer, northern half of Varanasi. But the engineers were still struggling with the challenge of laying sewer lines under the tortuous lanes of the old city—a problem that defied the efforts of Dwivedi's predecessors all the way back to the days of the Raj.

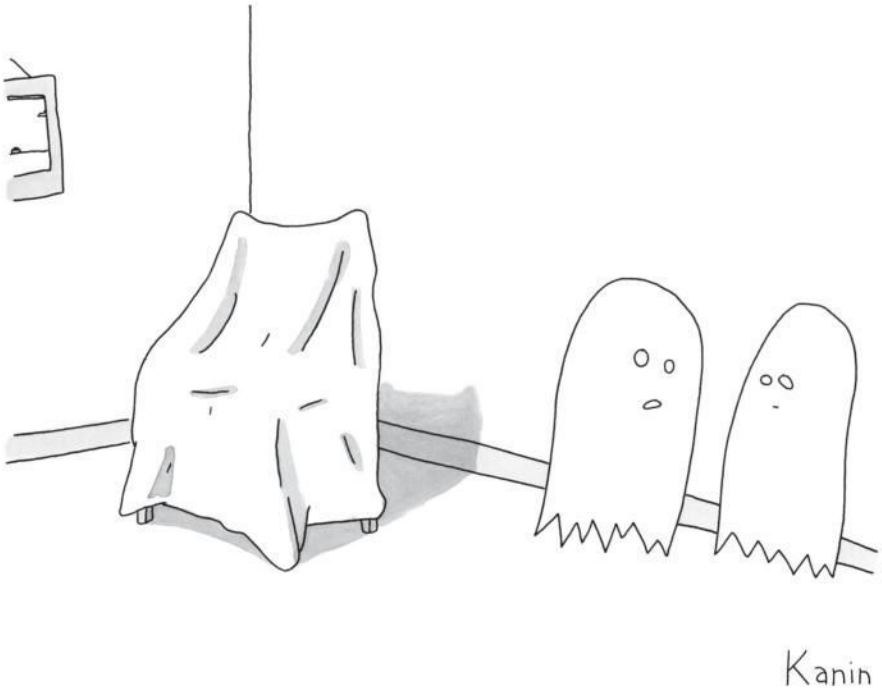
The first concerted attempt to clean the Ganges began in 1986, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched the initial phase of what he called the Ganga Action Plan. He made the announcement on the ghats of Varanasi and focussed on the city's sewers and the tanneries of Kanpur. The effort was haphazard. Thirty-five sewage-treatment plants were built in the three most populous states along the river—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal—but their capacity was based on the population at the time, and they quickly became obsolete. Moreover, although the central government paid for the plants, municipalities were left to operate them, and often failed to pay the wages or the electricity bills to keep them running.

In 1993, under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, new treatment plants and other pollution-abatement projects were added on several of the river's larger tributaries. This phase was followed by the creation, in 2009, of the National Ganga River Basin Authority, by the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. For the next two years, the cleanup was directed by Jairam Ramesh, the environment minister. Ramesh, who is now an opposition member of Parliament, is in his early sixties, with a head of thick gray hair. In many respects, he epitomizes the old Congress Party élite that Modi detests: cosmopolitan, fluent in English, Western-educated, with graduate studies at Carnegie Mellon and M.I.T.

Ramesh told me that he had taken a more comprehensive view of the problem than his predecessors. The unfinished hydropower projects I'd seen in the Himalayas were the result of a Supreme Court decision, which he had strongly supported, to halt construction in the ecologically sensitive headwaters of the river. Ramesh also ordered that the next generation of sewage-treatment plants be based on population estimates for 2025. The central government, in addition to funding plant construction, would bear seventy per cent of the operating and management costs for five years. Several new treatment plants will become operative during Modi's term, and he will likely take credit for them. Ramesh added that the Prime Minister's vow to "build more toilets than temples" was his own slogan in 2011. "And Modi attacked me for it," Ramesh said. "He is shameless."

I asked Ramesh if he saw anything in the Namami Gange plan that was new. Only one thing, he said: the addition of *Hindutva*, the ideology of

"Why are the Martinis always better at work?"



"Oh, there you are—I just spent three hours talking to a sheet draped over a chair."

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"Hindu-ness," which had cursed India with a poisonous history of communal strife.

As his parliamentary constituency, Modi chose Varanasi. "I feel *Ma Ganga*"—Mother Ganges—"has called me to Varanasi," he said in 2014. The idea came from Amit Shah, Modi's campaign manager in Uttar Pradesh and former aide in Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh epitomizes the impoverished heartland of Hindu nationalism, and Shah was given the job of delivering the state to the B.J.P. He is a brilliant and ruthless strategist, and it was an ugly campaign. Modi attacked Arvind Kejriwal, his opponent in Varanasi, as "an agent of Pakistan"—an incendiary charge.

Shah, who in 2013 had reiterated the call for a Rama temple to be built on the site of the demolished mosque in Ayodhya, made no effort to court Muslim voters. Instead, he concentrated on maximizing turnout among lower-caste Hindus, deploying thousands of young R.S.S. volunteers in an unprecedented door-to-door campaign. In the end, Modi took seventy-one of Uttar Pradesh's eighty parliamentary seats, enough to give him an absolute majority in the lower house of Parliament. Shah was appointed president of the B.J.P.

After this divisive campaign, it was noteworthy that Modi chose Uma Bharti to head a newly created Ministry of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation. Bharti is often referred to as a *sadhvi*, the female equivalent of a *sadhu*, or holy man, and has been a controversial figure throughout her career. A fiery Hindu nationalist, she was a prominent leader of the militants who tore down the mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 and still faces six criminal charges in the Uttar Pradesh courts, including for rioting, unlawful assembly, and "statements intended to cause public mischief." In a separate case, now before the Supreme Court, she is charged with criminal conspiracy. (Such prosecutions of powerful politicians almost never result in a conviction.)

In 2004, Bharti told reporters that the demolition of what she called "the disputed structure" in Ayodhya was "a victory for the Hindu society." Later, when an official commission of inquiry accused her of inciting the mob violence, she denied calling for the demolition of the mosque but said, "I am not apologetic at all. I am willing to be hanged for my role." (Neither Modi nor Bharti agreed to requests for an interview.)

The Hindu nationalists I spoke with in Varanasi—public officials, businessmen, priests, veteran R.S.S. activists—dismissed any criticism of Bharti or Modi. One evening, I climbed a steep flight of steps from the ghats to the tiny Atma Veereshwar Temple, where I met Ravindra Sand, a Saraswat Brahmin priest who is deeply engaged in the religious traditions of Varanasi and the river. He told me, "You can call Modi a rightist, a fundamentalist, an extremist, whatever you want." What really mattered, he said, was the passion and faith Modi was bringing to the monumental challenges facing India. "He is honest like anything. He sleeps three hours a night. I pray to God for Modi to be the P.M. of India for the next decade, at least."

When I mentioned the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya and the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, Sand looked at me as if I were missing the point. "Should I be honest?" he said. "I do not like Muslims at all." Modi felt the same way, he added. Ayodhya was the home of Lord Rama, and the Muslims had been the initial aggressors in the Gujarat incident. "If a person can slap you once, and I reply to him with four slaps, you are going to blame me for the fighting? It is not correct. I am sorry to say, these Muslims are not at all comfortable anywhere."

Such views are expressed openly by mainstream B.J.P. supporters in Uttar Pradesh. "Modi is a devotee—he is determined," Ramgopal Mohley, the mayor of Varanasi, told me. Namami Gange would leave the ghats spotless; garbage would be trucked to a new waste-to-energy plant; discarded flowers from the cremation grounds would be turned into incense. Like Modi, Mohley had travelled to Japan to scout out ideas in Kyoto, which is home to seventeen UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Like Varanasi, he said, "Kyoto is also a city of narrow lanes and temples. Under their lanes, there are subway lines. Over the lanes, there are flyovers." He conceded that Varanasi had more lanes and more temples—and, of course, India is not Japan.

I asked Mohley what he thought of Uma Bharti's appointment. "Everyone

loves Uma Bharti," he said. He declined to say whether Muslims might feel differently, steering the conversation back toward Bharti's plans for the river. "By October of 2016, you will start seeing the cleanness, up to twenty per cent. In another year, by 2017, you will start seeing the real cleaning.

"*Umaji*," he added, using the Hindi honorific, "has said that if Ganga is not cleaned in three years' time she might undertake *samadhi*." *Samadhi* is commonly defined as a state of deep, spiritual concentration, leading to a sense of oneness with the universe. For some ascetics, my translator added, it involved climbing into a ditch and burying oneself alive.

The next state-government elections in Uttar Pradesh will take place in mid-2017. Modi's national victory gave him control of the lower house of Parliament, but he does not control the upper house, which is largely elected by state legislatures. Uttar Pradesh is currently ruled by the Samajwadi Party, which has heavy Muslim support.

Modi and Amit Shah launched the campaign on June 13th in Allahabad, at the sacred confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna. The preceding weeks had seen a series of violent skirmishes in the town of Kairana, in western Uttar Pradesh, which evoked unsettling memories of India's last serious outbreak of communal violence, in 2013. Sixty-five people died on that occasion, and thousands of Muslims sought refuge in Kairana. Now the B.J.P.'s member of Parliament for Kairana claimed that hundreds of Hindus had fled, fearing for their lives. The charge was subsequently discredited, but Shah seized on it in his speech in Allahabad, warning of a mass exodus of Hindus if the Samajwadi Party retained power.

Three weeks later, on July 5th, Modi appointed three new ministers from Uttar Pradesh to his cabinet, a move generally interpreted as an appeal to caste-based voting blocs in next year's elections. One is a Brahmin, one a member of the "other backward castes," and the third a *dalit* (the term that has replaced "untouchable").

Kanpur, with a population of more than three million, is the largest city in Uttar Pradesh and a microcosm of everything that ails urban India. The British once called it "the Manchester of the East," for its booming textile mills, but these have gone into steady decline, replaced by tanneries, one of the most polluting industries in the world. As in Varanasi, about a fifth of Kanpur's population is Muslim, but Muslims wield greater political influence here, because the city's tanneries, nearly all Muslim-owned, bring in more than a billion dollars a year in export earnings.

One muggy afternoon in Kanpur, I went down to the Massacre Ghat, which is named for three hundred British women and children who were killed there in 1857, during a rebellion against the reign of the British East India Company, referred to locally as the First War of Independence. The river was a hundred yards from the steps, across a bleak expanse of silt. Raw sewage leaked onto the beach from a drainage channel. Cut off from the river, it had collected in a stagnant, bubbling pool. Groups of children were playing in the shallows of the river, and women clustered in circles at the water's edge, preparing offerings of coconuts, fruit, and marigold garlands.

Kanpur has four hundred and two registered tanneries, which discharge more than two-thirds of their waste into the river. Most are immediately downstream from the Massacre Ghat, in a Muslim neighborhood called Jajmau. In deference to Hindu sensitivities, the slaughter of cows is illegal in Uttar Pradesh. Most of the hides that reach Kanpur's tanneries are from water buffalo; the small number of cowhides are either imported or the result of natural death or roadkill.

Tannery owners in both the poorest and the most lucrative parts of the industry complained bitterly to me that they had been singled out for persecution because they were Muslim. "From the government side, there is nothing but trouble," Hafizurrahman, the owner of the small Hafizurrahman Tannery, in Jajmau, told me. Hafizurrahman, who goes by only one name, has been the president of the Small Tanners Association since 1987; his tannery works with offcuts that are rejected by larger enterprises. A soft-spoken elderly man with a white beard and a suède porkpie hat, he works out of a windowless shed with rough plaster walls. When I met him, flop-eared goats and quarrelsome geese were rooting around on the floor, and the yard was strewn with pieces of dried rawhide that would be turned into chew toys for dogs. A skinny teen-age boy, bare to the waist and glistening with sweat, squelched around in a brick-lined pit, sorting pieces of "wet blue," tinged that color from processing with highly toxic chromium salts, which leaves the leather more supple than the older, vegetable-processing method.

Hafizurrahman conceded that the tanneries do foul the Ganges, but said that the real culprits are corrupt state and city authorities. In 1994, when the city government opened a central plant to treat the tannery waste, tannery owners had to contribute part of the cost. Then the construction budget tripled and, with it, their contribution. "There were only a hundred and seventy-five tanneries at that time," he said. "But then another two hundred and twenty-seven came up—and the government asked them to pay again. But it never upgraded the plant. They just took the money."

In 2014, the Council on Foreign Relations named India's judiciary, police, and political parties the three most corrupt institutions in the country. Local officials commonly skim off a substantial percentage of the fee paid to private contractors working on public-service projects, such as water supply, electricity, and sewage treatment. "It's almost legal," Rakesh Jaiswal, the head of EcoFriends, a small environmental group in Kanpur, said. "If it's thirty or forty per cent, it's not corruption—it's more like a right. Sometimes all the money is pocketed by the authorities, a hundred per cent, and the work takes place only on paper." I asked if things had improved under Modi, and he shook his head. "Not even one per cent has changed," he said.

Taj Alam, the president of the Uttar Pradesh Leather Industry Association, had another complaint. Alam's tannery, Kings International, makes high-end

saddlery for export; situated in Unnao, a small town a dozen miles from Kanpur, it is surrounded by manicured gardens and walls draped with bougainvillea. In his ornate, air-conditioned office, Alam noted that the government shuts down the tanneries each year, sometimes for several weeks, to avoid polluting the river during India's greatest religious celebration, the Hindu bathing festival at Allahabad, a hundred and thirty miles downstream. This costs the industry tens of millions of dollars, Alam said. "But you have ten million people shitting in the river, urinating there, throwing stuff on the ghats. The tanning sector is maybe 99.99 per cent Muslim. Tell me, has the government imposed any treatment-plant order on any other industry?"

Alam told me that he was worried about next year's state elections. "If there's a B.J.P. state government, they can do whatever they want," he said. "When someone has an absolute majority, it can be misused. And it *is* being misused."

Cleaning up the tanneries of Kanpur has proved just as intractable a problem as cleaning up the sewers of Varanasi. I spent a day in the tannery district with Rakesh Jaiswal, the head of EcoFriends, touring the evidence. Jaiswal, who founded the organization in 1993, is in his late fifties, and has silvery hair and a courtly manner. We stopped at a cleared plot of land about a quarter of a mile from the river, where the detritus of the leather industry was heaped in large piles. Some were offcuts of wet blue. Others were made up of scraps of hide with hair and bits of flesh still attached, surrounded by clouds of buzzing flies. A laborer was hacking at the muck with a three-tined pitchfork. When he was done, it would be sold to make chicken feed and glue. Nearby, an open drain carried a stream of tannery waste down a gentle slope to the Ganges. The odor suggested a mixture of decomposing animal matter, battery acid, and burned hair.

In 1998, Jaiswal brought a lawsuit against the central government and a number of polluting industries, and a hundred and twenty-seven tanneries were closed. Many were allowed to reopen after installing a primary-treatment plant, but Jaiswal told me that the levels of chromium pollution in tannery wastewater were still as much as eighty times above the legal limit, suggesting that the plant owners were not spending the money to operate them, and that the new regulations were only spottily enforced. From the tanneries, the wastewater is pumped to a central treatment facility, which was built in 1994. At the plant, sewage and tannery waste are combined in a ratio of three to one. After treatment, the mixture is used for irrigation. The plant handles nine million litres of tannery waste a day, barely a third of what the industry generates. When I asked the project engineer why the plant had never been upgraded, he shrugged.

Later, I drove with Jaiswal to the outskirts of Kanpur, to see the irrigation canal. It ran along an elevated berm where workers had spread out hides to dry in the sun. The treated mixture of sewage and tannery waste came gushing out of two rusted outflow pipes and made its way down the canal at a fair clip. In 1999, Jaiswal conducted a study of contamination in the villages that were using this water for irrigation; his samples revealed dangerous levels of chromium in agricultural produce and in milk. I asked Jaiswal if the situation had improved since then. "The quality of the water is the same," he said.

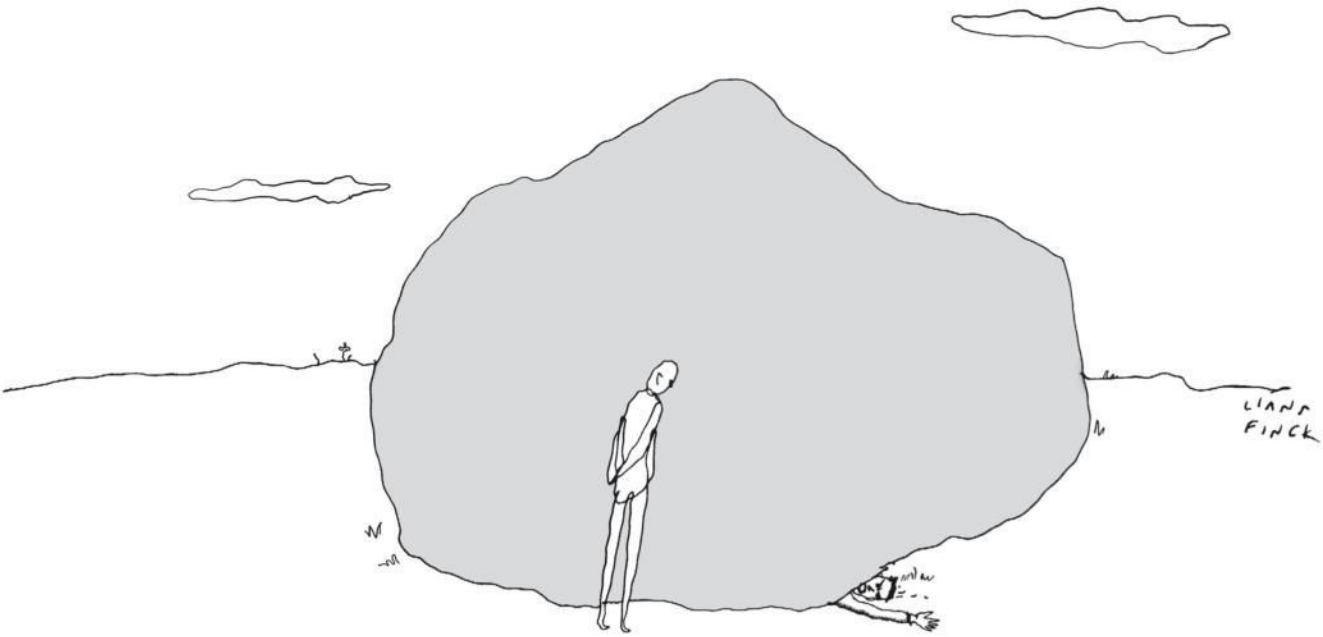
The success of Modi's cleanup effort will ultimately depend not on Uma Bharti, or even on Modi, but on less visible bureaucrats such as Shashi Shekhar, the water-resources secretary in Bharti's ministry, who is charged with carrying out Namami Gange. Shekhar, who is in his late fifties, was trained as an earth scientist. Before assuming his current post, last year, he was the head of the Central Pollution Control Board, a national agency that is respected for its professionalism but is frequently unable to enforce the standards that it sets, because the state-level agencies responsible for meeting them are typically corrupt or incompetent.

When I went to see Shekhar in his office in New Delhi last fall, he walked me through a PowerPoint presentation that he was about to deliver to the cabinet. It served as a reminder that Modi is not only an ideologue but a demanding chief executive. In 2015, India recorded a growth rate of 7.5 per cent, overtaking China. In September, during a weekend visit to Silicon Valley, Modi won commitments from the C.E.O.s of Google and Microsoft—Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella, respectively, both Indian-born—to help bring Internet access to villages and to install high-speed Wi-Fi in the country's railway stations. (India has the world's second-largest Internet market but the slowest average connection speeds in Asia.) He has also introduced programs designed to make the government more accountable to the public, such as PRAGATI, a videoconference platform where Modi grills government officials on citizens' complaints about bureaucracy, corruption, delays in executing public-works projects, and other issues.

"The P.M. is very particular about making the system efficient, accountable, and sustainable," Shekhar said. He acknowledged that the cleanup campaign had got off to a slow start, but said that his ministry was setting a series of deadlines that would soon begin to show tangible results. He had been in Kanpur just after I left, and he said there was now a more coherent plan for cleaning up the city's tanning industry. This included an order that each tannery install sensors to measure its discharge. Several lawsuits are also under way, including one before the Supreme Court, that could close down tanneries that exceed official pollution limits—although, as Rakesh Jaiswal noted, this has been done before, to little lasting effect.

Shekhar had also proposed a "paradigm shift" in the approach to sewage treatment. Despite the efforts of the previous government, sixty per cent of the treatment plants along the river were still either shut down or not operating to capacity, and ninety per cent failed to meet prescribed standards. Too much responsibility remained in the hands of corrupt local officials and contractors. Now the contractors would be paid only after they'd done the work. Otherwise, Shekhar said, "we found that the fellow does not put his skin into it."

Major corporations had agreed to clean the surface of the river with trash-skimming machines and booms. The Tata Group, India's largest conglomerate, would take on the stretch of river in Varanasi. Shekhar also planned to build communal toilets in some of the poorest riverside villages. Women were especially keen on this idea, he said, since, for privacy, they customarily go out into the fields in the pre-dawn dark or after



"No, Rick, I'm not hiding. Guess again."

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the evening meal, when they are vulnerable to snakebite and sexual assault.

Some elements of the cleanup shouldn't be difficult to execute. Sewage-treatment plants that are already under construction will be completed. Recently, Shekhar e-mailed me to say that work on cleaning the ghats in Varanasi, Kanpur, and Allahabad had begun on schedule; for a company with Tata's resources, this is not a particularly challenging assignment. Shekhar also said that the government had spelled out the terms of what it called a "hybrid annuity" plan for payments to contractors working on the new sewage-treatment plants and other public-works projects. But will tinkering with financial incentives truly reduce bureaucracy and corruption, especially in parts of the country where state authorities aren't under the control of Modi's political party?

Modi's greatest asset may be his conviction that he can inspire change through sheer dynamism. But this may also be his biggest liability. "The expectation is so huge," Shekhar said. "Even bureaucrats have the perception of him as Superman."

Shekhar acknowledged that Namami Gange would not fully restore the river. The hydropower dam at Tehri would remain, as would the nineteenth-century diversion canals. In lower stretches of the river, where the flow is already severely depleted, it will take decades to address the inefficient use of water for irrigation. Even so, he said, "never in the past has a government initiated a project of this magnitude. I am putting myself under great pressure as far as targets are concerned. But if you do not see high, you do not reach midway."

Early one morning in Varanasi, I went down to Assi Ghat to meet Navneet Raman, the chairman of the Benares Cultural Foundation and the scion of a family that traces its ancestry back to the finance minister of a sixteenth-century Afghan king. Raman is an environmentalist on a modest scale, planting trees and offering to compost the flowers left by worshippers at the Golden Temple, the most important temple in the city—an offer that the priests had declined.

We hailed a boatman to row us across to the east bank of the Ganges. It is considered to be an inauspicious place; anyone unlucky enough to die there will be reincarnated as an ass. As we pulled away from the steps, the rising sun flooded the curving waterfront of ghats, temples, and palaces. When we arrived at the other side, Raman reached into a bag and scooped out a handful of shiny purple seeds the size of pistachios. They were seeds of the tropical almond, *Terminalia catappa*, and would grow into what is known locally as "the sewage tree," because it can filter heavy metals and other pollutants out of standing water. We walked along a narrow strip of scrubland, above the flood line, scattering the seeds left and right.

"Most people come to Benares to pay last respects to the memory of their near and dear ones who have passed away," Raman said. "So I thought that on this bank of the river we could make a forest of remembrance. This is my guerrilla warfare. I am not doing it for Mr. Modi." Raman imagined leafy gardens and walkways, and benches where families could sit and look across the river at the beauty of the temples and the ghats. But he acknowledged that this vision lay far in the future.

I asked him if he ever grew discouraged by the slow pace of change. He shrugged and said that all he could do was place his trust in Shiva. "India is a land of discouragement," he said. "If you're not discouraged by the harsh summers, then you are discouraged by the cow eating your plant, or the motorbike or tractor or car that is running over your plant, or the neighbor who is plucking the leaves from it just for fun as he is going by. If you can't deal with discouragement, India has no place for you." ♦

Stuff

—

Joy Williams

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

It was December, and he was in the windowless consultation room of his doctor's office. A young man with a stunningly high forehead was informing him that he had lung cancer and would die—the certainty of this being considerable—soon.

The doctor was not familiar to Henry. The one he usually saw was at a baptism or a wedding that afternoon, Henry wasn't sure which, the information having been relayed to him by a receptionist hastily swallowing her lunch.

He asked the young man with the intimidating forehead if he would kindly repeat what he had just said. The words were repeated, and Henry's first thought was that his own doctor had been too embarrassed to tell him. His second thought was that this was unlikely.

"I call them work sticks," Henry said, somewhat defensively. "They're why I'm able to write so much."

"Really? What sort of thing do you write?"

"I wouldn't have been able to concentrate without cigarettes."

"There you go, then," the doctor said.

"I write a column for the community paper, the *Zephyr*. Every week I write a column. I have for years."

"I see," the doctor said.

Henry wrote about the seasons—companionable winter, radiant spring, mellifluous summer, and the tinglingly vivid fall. He wrote about hydrangeas—though he was wearying of hydrangeas—and twice a year he was depended upon to write about the equinox (the moment when a precise division between day and night occurs should not pass unnoticed). He wrote about screened porches and baked-bean pots. He enjoyed a modest but loyal following as one of the town's steadfast and honorable lights. Only Yolanda Piper—archon, intercessor, and indefatigable defender of the rights and needs of at-risk teens, particularly those suffering from anger issues—could be considered his peer. The citizenry depended on the two of them to do the heavy lifting of optimism and the good works necessary for the diffident functioning of the social contract.

"Funny name for a newspaper."

"What," Henry said. "Why?"

The doctor stared at him. "You made it to eighty-five—that should be a consolation."

"No, no, I'm not eighty-five."

"It says . . ." The doctor frowned. "This sheet's been misfiled, sorry. Those girls at the desk, all they think about is getting laid."

Bless them, Henry thought warmly.

The doctor turned to a computer and tapped savagely on the keyboard for a few moments. "You're sixty-three," he reported.

"That's me!" Henry cried.

"You have lung cancer as well, a bit more advanced, actually." The doctor stared at him again. "Sorry about the mixup."

In the parking lot, Henry got into his car, put on his glasses, and harnessed himself into his seat.

Click it or ticket!

He was the little boy who had once bought an instructional record: "How to Teach Your Canary to Sing."

Now he was going to die.

Only last year, he had been on the cover of the telephone directory, looking kind, fit, and comfortable. This was an honor that continued to elude Yolanda and her group of thuggish youths. He had been supplanted this year by an artist's rendering of a new wind farm. Green pastures, sleek white blades, blue sky—a pleasing evocation of the extraterrestrial and the ecologically sound. Except that little appeared freshly green or white or blue anymore. Everything looked increasingly worn and shorn, though no one was saying anything about it. That was why his columns were still being tolerated. He wasn't bringing it to anyone's attention, either.

He had researched the winds of the world for a column about the smoky sou'wester, and he liked to recount them silently when he felt a little low.

sirocco
cordonazo
harmattan
pampero
levanter
shamal
simoon

The parking attendant wanted twenty-one dollars. Henry had crossed the uncompromising boundary between the first and second hour while he was idling in the lot, thinking about his canary record. He hadn't even had a canary. He had hoped to have a canary.

He had the shameful urge to inform the attendant that he had just been told he had lung cancer and was going to die. Perhaps the fee would be waived. But he suspected that the fee would not be waived. This sort of thing must happen all the time. If the recently condemned weren't required to pay their fair share, the lot would bring in no money at all.

He wished it were May. He'd always enjoyed writing about May, with its confidence of daylight, the inviting lassitude of the sea. . . . But it was not May. It was twelve days before Christmas, and the daylight looked no more certain of what it was doing than he was.

Henry's Christmas columns were never his best. Dancing lights . . . hope and praise . . . the human hunger for realization through the symbolism of outward signs . . . that sort of thing. He'd authored some terribly insipid ones in the past, though even worse were the inaccurate ones, like the piece about the song "Guardian Angels," the one Mario Lanza had belted out so beautifully. Henry had always thought that the guardian angels *were* the bears, and not the beings who shooed *away* the bears. His credibility had taken a hit on that one. This year, though, given his newly acquired station, he could write a piece about his last Christmas. It could be heartwarming, maybe even become a classic. He'd write a column about buying a last Christmas tree and then show it to his old mother in that frightful home she was in, and, in that way, inform her that he was about to die. He'd never been able to tell her anything straight out, and this was no exception. She might not be overly alarmed, being close to a hundred years of age herself and the one who was supposed to be dying, though she never did.

Between Henry and his home, a town house of no distinction, lay the only Christmas-tree lot accredited by the town, which was managed each year with sturdy efficacy by Yolanda Piper and her at-risk charges. Henry swept decisively into the lot, apparently without signalling, as his fellow-travellers fell in fury upon their horns.

Five surly youths wearing red raglan

smocks and merry tasselled hats turned toward him in astonishment. He exited the car and smiled broadly, his teeth creaking. "Merry Christmas!" he screamed.

"I love Christmas," a girl said to no one in particular. "Santy Claus and all that shit. But I'm not as happy as I think I should be. Can you help me?"

"I want the biggest and most beautiful tree you have," Henry declared. "That one will do." He gestured toward a spruce thrust haphazardly in a bucket, its core a mandala of yellowing needles.

Yolanda appeared, out of nowhere, it seemed.

"The great essayist," she said in greeting. "How's the bears?"

The tree had already been hauled from the bucket and thrown at the feet of a boy wearing tight pegged jeans and a T-shirt. Yolanda was always provided with a youth from juvenile detention to fresh-cut the stumps, which seemed to Henry quite redundant, as far as the tree was concerned. The miscreant's duties also included trussing the tree in plastic webbing shot from a compressor for the journey toward its temporary final home.

"Yolanda," Henry said earnestly. "Merry Christmas!"

A pine needle protruded from her mouth. "Let me ask you something, Mr. Essayist. Do you think the trees smell as good this year?"

"Oh, I do!"

"They don't smell at all. Some beetle's been after them in the field. You're whiffing nostalgia, my friend."

There were several lines of verse tattooed on the delinquent's arm—though they weren't called delinquents anymore, of course. Against his better judgment, Henry strained to read them. He shuffled closer.

> And silence sounds no worse than cheers
> After earth has stopped the ears.

Housman! On this blighted youth! He was so happy. . . .

"Back off, creep," the boy said. "This is in honor of my friend, not for creeps."

"He was an athlete! And he died young!" Henry was beside himself. Here was a connection across the cruel and indifferent ages.

"Make this prevert back off, Yo."

"It's 'pervert,' Lawrence. How many times do I have to correct?" She regarded Henry. "Henry," she said.

"Yolanda!" He was still somewhat ecstatic.

"How do you want your life to be remembered, Henry?"

The youth resumed indelicately sawing away at the stump.

"Oh, I have no illusions that it will be remembered," he said modestly. He looked down at his shoes. They were formal shoes with his own feet concealed inside. This puzzled him for a moment.

"Why were you set loose on this earth, Henry? Do you have any idea?"

The shoes were really something. Shiny.

"Get out of here," Yolanda commanded. "Go home and write about your buttercups, you foolish old man."

He had never written about buttercups. Never. He had warmed over the dead gods of the months and he had written about wasps a couple of times, wrung some wonder from contemplating their world of insectual intent—the papery nests, the cells of mathematical perfection, the nurses and the workers, the grubs that waited for transformation behind their silken doors, their black eyes perfectly visible. . . . One column had been particularly good, something about wasps in the fall, crawling into houses or garages to prolong their lives a little. "In such a last retreat . . ." Was that how he had put it? "But it is not meant that they should continue. . . . Their ingenuity is in vain."

But that didn't sound like him. Maybe it was someone else who had written about wasps.

He felt blue. He was dying, and the doctor, or whoever that had been, hadn't even given him a prescription to fill. Still, he felt fortunate that he didn't have that moribund bound tree in his trunk. The teens at risk hadn't had an opportunity to stuff it in there while Yolanda was berating him. He drove reluctantly home. In the parking slot allotted to him in his town-house cluster, two men had set up a card table and were soliciting signatures for a proposal to give a tax credit to households

SLINGSHOT

A boy's bicycle inner tube
red as inside the body,
a well-chosen forked limb
sawed from a shrub oak,

& then an hour-long measure
to get it right. The taut pull
is everything. There's nothing
without resistance & the day

holds. The hard, slow, steady
honing flips a beetle on its back,
but the boy refuses to squash it.
He continues with his work.

Summer rambles into a quiet
quantum of dogwood & gum—
a girl he's too shy to tell his name
stands in damp light nearing dark

& biting a corner of his lip
he whittles the true stock,
knowing wrong from right.
Though Pythagoras owned

a single truth, the boy
untangles a triangle of pull
within a triangle of release,
the slingshot's tongue a tongue

torn out of an old Army boot
& Lord, what a perfect fit.
Feet spread apart, the boy
straddles an imaginary line,

settling quietly into himself
as the balance & pull travel
down through his fingers,
forearm, elbow, into muscle,

up through his shoulder blades,
neck, mouth, set of the jaw,
into the register of the brain,
saying, Take a breath & exhale

slowly, then let the stone fly
as if it has swallowed a stone
& that is when the boy knows
his body is a compass, a cross.

—*Yusef Komunyakaa*

with guns. They had occupied this slot before. They seemed comfortable with the assumption that it was the ideal space for their endeavor and had assured Henry that this was but the first step of the process. After they had won the tax credit, they would petition for the elimination of taxes altogether, because of the infeasibility of collecting them now that everyone had guns.

They nodded manfully at Henry as he drove past. He had never admitted to them that paying taxes provided him a quiet pleasure. He turned back onto the highway, to the indignant screams of horns, and drove to Ambiance, the home where his mother resided. He would forgo waiting to tell her about his condition until he had written the Christmas column. He didn't want to write that column. He thought the place was called Ambiance, but the name never stuck with him; it was the banner in the lobby that had made a persistent impression. "JUST TO BE HERE IS SO MUCH: RILKE." Rilke! The things corporations got away with . . .

His mother was a bit of a celebrity at Ambiance, because her previous home had been destroyed in a flood. She and the five other occupants of Wing Three in that place had been abandoned by the staff, and when rescuers arrived, a week later, with bleach and body bags, they weren't at all prepared for what they found. There was no joy, just troubled amazement. The old people were alive! Dehydrated, of course.

The new home his mother had been placed in was a continuing-care facility similar to the one that had washed away, though this one was constructed on a soccer field that had been built over a tailings-filled wash, which had once been the principal drainage for a mountain that had been topped for a dozen astrophotometrical telescopes. Since the personal effects of all the patients from the old home—not just the six left to rot on Wing Three—had been lost, the Ambiance staff had placed in each new room framed photographs of attractive people enjoying lovely things. It was a generous *non sui generis* approach that had worked out well—there were zero complaints—particularly since these photographs were shifted about weekly to create diversity and a fresh dynamic in each tenant's private environment. This had the added benefit, management maintained, of providing the professional caregivers with a little fun to keep their spirits up, for otherwise they'd be simpering, "Who's the President? Who's the President?" every other time they entered a room.

Henry climbed the great steps and entered the lobby. There was the banner, as commanding and insouciant as ever. He felt uncharacteristically bold enough to say to the receptionist, "How awful to use Rilke like this!"

"It's the risk poets run in their endless attempts to transfigure reality. Reality circles around and bites them in the ass."

The receptionist was a man of indeterminate age with a skin disorder. His face was raw; the skin seemed quietly percolating. He dug at his jaw and regarded Henry. Henry closed his eyes. It was only a matter of time before a hole would create itself from the weeping slough of the man's face, presenting a glimpse of the preposterous fundamentals, rather like the truth window in a straw house.

"Do I have to sign in or anything?" Henry finally asked.

"Naw, naw, you know the drill."

Henry fled, though he did not, having visited infrequently, to his intermittent shame, know the drill. After some difficulty, he managed to find his mother's room. She was sitting upright, wearing an elaborate flamingo-pink bed jacket with large padded buttons. She looked at him sympathetically as he searched for a place to sit. The room was cluttered, with most of the space taken up by a dark credenza, upon which baskets and boxes and vases were stacked. He remembered the credenza. It had held table silver in his childhood, each place setting stored in its own pocket of cloth. In the curves of the massive thing, he had concealed his plastic soldiers. He'd had two favorites. One was poised to throw a grenade, the other had a flamethrower holstered on his bent back. Each had a bland face beneath a helmet. Henry extended a hand tentatively to see if they were still there, then drew it back. Better not to know.

The photograph on the bedside table was of two blond children throwing

bread to a peacock. The peacock had turned from the mirror that kept it entertained in its pen toward the pieces of falling bread.

Henry pulled an animal's travelling crate close to the bed and sat on it. There was a frayed leather identification tag on the grille of the crate. It had been chewed.

"We have to speak quietly," his mother said. "Debbie's on the other side of the curtain there. She's into dystopian video games and she's very, very good."

"Thank you, hon," came a frail voice.

"I didn't know you had a roommate," Henry said. "I thought we—you—were paying for a private room here."

"I have friends, Henry. I suppose you don't. That does not surprise me. When you were a boy, the other children would draw a circle around you in the playground and tell you you couldn't break through it—and you couldn't."

"Perhaps that happened once, Mother."

"Oh, it was more than once."

The crate shifted beneath Henry and bumped the table, causing the picture to rock, though it did not fall. "Do you know who these people are?" he demanded, wanting to change the subject from that darn circle that had bedevilled him so.

"Of course I don't. Gertrude brought that in here, tried to make me think I had forgotten my own children. Gertrude's been in the business for years and hasn't suffered a single suicide. Won't even permit us to stop eating. She says that no one must anticipate God's absolving hand. We call her St. Gertrude."

"So you don't know who these children are," Henry said stubbornly.

"You think you're on your way to doing something and you're just stopping by for a moment. Is that correct?"

"Yes, for a visit." Maybe he wouldn't tell her about his diagnosis after all. She didn't seem to be in a receptive mood.

"We pity visitors. There are just us Gnostics here. And goth Deb. We maintain that the world is an illusion. The unconscious self is consubstantial with perfection, but because of a tragic fall it is thrown into a foreign domain that is completely alien to its true being. It's always a fall, a tragic fall, and here we are. That's it, in a nutshell."

"Goodness, Mother, when did you come up with all this?" The last coherent conversation he'd had with her had concerned some urinary-tract infection.

"Yarn-painting class. And sometimes when we do that low-impact foot exercise thoughts come. Some consider Gnosticism flawed, an individualistic, nihilistic, escapist religion incapable of forming any kind of true moral community, but naturally we disagree with that assessment."

Henry could not conceal his alarm.

"Oh, don't look so frightened. You were always such a frightened little boy. I stuck too closely to the recommended guidelines when I was raising you."

"You've never talked this way before, Mother." He felt the crate buckle a bit beneath his weight.

"Surely you realize that what we're saying here is very different from what you visitors think you're hearing, though I do wonder what's getting through to you, Henry."

He had been allowed to shine the silver with a round, almost weightless sponge that fit perfectly into the tin of polish.

He had been permitted to kiss his infant sister in her coffin. He had placed one of his soldiers beside her, couched in a pucker of silk. He had said that it was his favorite one, but it was not. It had never been his favorite one.

"I'm sure you were given the opportunity to learn a thing or two in this life, but the learning was so inappropriate to your situation that your not understanding was assured. Are you still writing those sappy articles, Henry? You sent them to me for the longest while. They were seldom subjects of discussion here. You wrote much that was regrettable."

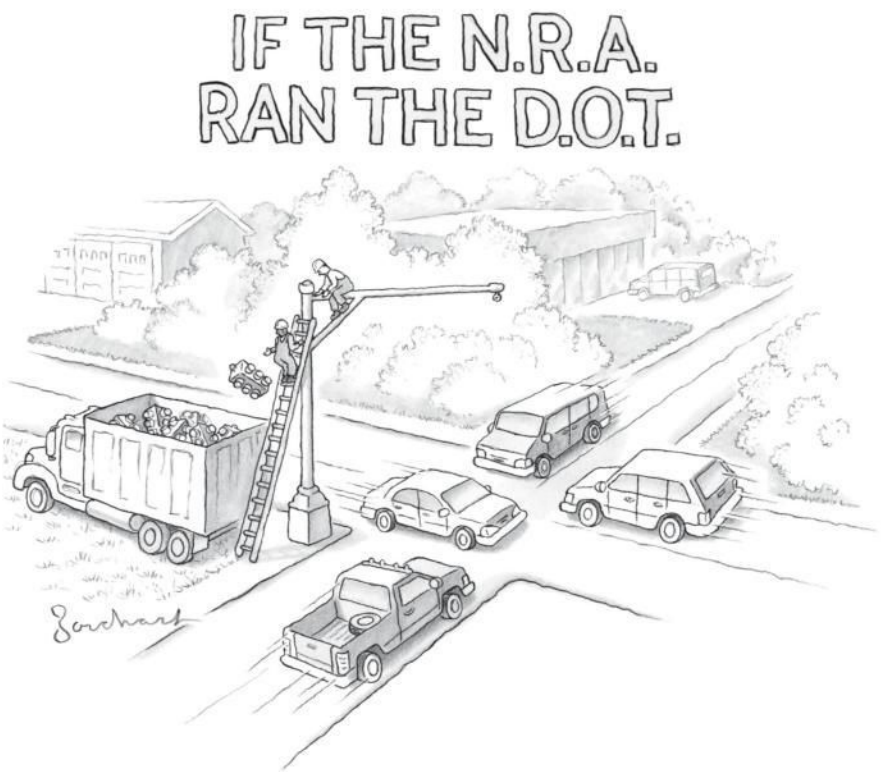
"I'm a nature writer," he protested. "The world has changed. I only try to provide something formerly recognizable that people can take comfort in."

His infant sister's forehead had felt like a feather.

"Your father and I always found the world to be unfamiliar, but it was the custom then to behave otherwise. We made every effort to reassure you, and would have done the same with your sister, had she lived."

The door opened and someone cried, "Who's the President?" From behind the curtain came a weary giggle.

With the door once more shut, the room resumed its pestilential pallor. A large crazed platter was displayed on the credenza. It had been brought out only on special occasions, whereupon Henry's mother would always



say, "Darwin married a Wedgwood heiress, which was why he could afford to think whatever nutty thing he wanted."

"There's so much stuff in here," Henry fretted. "It's practically a fire hazard."

"What 'stuff,' Henry? For a writer, you do choose words that lack evocative distinction."

There was a harrow in the corner. A harrow! There couldn't be a harrow. It was just something he remembered, rusting behind a barn, a barn around which an addled old dog of theirs had worn a worry trail.

"There is no stuff," she continued. "The trees are no longer trees, nor are the children children. You'll see."

The credenza couldn't be here, either, Henry decided. It had been destroyed in the flood. It was possible that it had been destroyed even before the flood, but it was not possible that it was here now. He felt better having arrived at this determination, though the credenza remained. Perhaps it thought it was a credence and not a credenza at all, one that had fallen, in the manner of an unlucky angel, to the blasphemous station of a mere sideboard. Whatever it was, it was allowing him no quarter.

"Why is your mouth open like that, Henry? Are you thinking?"

"Mother, I'm afraid I have some rather bad news. I'm going to die soon. According to the doctor, I'm dying. Just like you," he added unnecessarily.

After a moment she said, "Oh, well."

"Take that, you fucker," Deb murmured behind the curtain. He wondered what the old woman looked like, though it was probably irrelevant.

"We were handed a very imperfect deal, Henry," his mother said. She sipped from a tall fluted glass filled with a green liquid the inviting color of antifreeze.

"Goodness, Mother, is that a *stinger*?"

"Yes, it is. Why do you look so aggrieved? As a child, you so often wore an expression of aggrieved expectation. You always wanted what someone else had."

"I certainly don't want a stinger, Mother. I'm surprised they're allowed in here is all."

"Gnostics often use the terms 'drink' or 'drunkenness' to depict the pathetic fate of the entrapped spirit, but we don't take that literally. In any case, an exception is made in regard to stingers. Manhattans as well."

"Those things are crazy."

"Language, language, Henry. It's important to be precise."

"I had a stinger once," Henry said. "I got so sick."

He suddenly felt that he could make anything appear in this room, anything he wanted. His father's rack of pipes, the bird's nest he had destroyed on a

dare. Anything. His old dog, breathing heavily in dream. This was a magic place. He couldn't do it with words. He had never been able to do it with words. He looked around greedily. The cupcake that homely little girl had made for him in fourth grade, for he was homely, too. The lake they'd lived beside once, its water on his skin. . . . It was just a matter of control, of acceptance, of linking the two. Not difficult. Why had he not come here more often? He smiled and, raising his hand as if for further permission, just as suddenly realized that he could not make anything appear in this room.

He had never seen that lurid bed jacket before. The buttons were as big as baseballs.

He wished his mother had made more of a fuss over what he'd told her, or any fuss at all.

"But, as a rule, we depreciate matter first and foremost," his mother was saying. "Only the knowledge that results in self-transformation is necessary. Resurrection comes first. Death follows after. Unimportant. One who does not know himself knows nothing, Henry."

"I don't feel well, Mother."

"It may be one of those rolling heart attacks. Won't kill you but makes you queasy. But, on a lighter note, here's my question: Do you think there's a moral weight to our actions? We're sort of divided in regard to that question here. There are those who think that the middling among us perish forever. Others feel that if we've performed our duties in a more or less decent fashion we will continue to muddle on in some manifestation on an altogether different plane. Still others argue that it's perfectly acceptable to have confounded right and wrong throughout one's life and that there's not a sliver of difference between the two."

"I haven't an opinion," he said moodily. How desolate it was in here. A fluorescent bulb warbled listlessly above them. A pair of muddy gardening gloves lay at the edge of the coverlet. "No, I do have an opinion! I think it's folly to wonder about these matters here, now, at your age. *Folly*," he emphasized. Was it the right word? It would have to do.

His mother's face grew pale. She seemed about to cry.

"I suppose I'd select 'muddle on in some manifestation,'" he allowed.

Regaining her composure, she once again regarded him with exasperation. The gardening gloves slipped off the coverlet and disappeared in the dark whorled pattern of the rug.

"I have a radical-silence group in twenty minutes," she said, consulting a delicate watch on her bony, spotted wrist. "Goodbye, Henry."

"But I just got here," he muttered. Still, he clumsily vacated the animal crate, jostling the framed picture again. The representation didn't seem to be the same. There were similarities, many similarities, but . . . What did he know of the peacock? It is thirsty, always thirsty, and its tail is not a tail but a feathered train, a magnificent and seemingly unnecessary train.

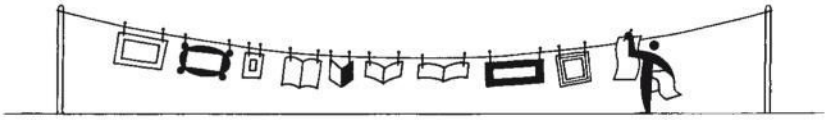
This didn't seem much to know.

"Will you be able to find your way out?" his mother said.

He nodded, somewhat stung by her dismissal, and exited into the hallway, which was empty and cruelly illuminated. On a monitor, news of the weather scrolled by. The winds were moderate; they had no special names.

He felt oddly that he had been robbed and that the robber was within him now. Even so, he would have to find the lobby, avoiding the receptionist, if possible, then brave the outside, where there would be darkness and steps to navigate. ♦

THE CRITICS



ON TELEVISION

COUNTING SHEEPLE

Political paranoia on "Mr. Robot" and "BrainDead."

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM

When the anti-corporate thriller "Mr. Robot" débuted, last year, it felt like a shock to multiple systems, one of them being the network on which it aired. That was USA, a subsidiary of NBCUniversal and Comcast; the home of upbeat, aspirational procedurals, it's known as the "blue skies" network. "Mr. Robot" was more of a hurricane advisory. Created by a newcomer, Sam Esmail, it was a parable of class rage, with a vigilante anti-hero, welding the paranoid style in American TV drama onto the ideology—and, just as important, the aesthetics—of both the Occupy movement and Anonymous.

Esmail's plot was a Philip K. Dick puzzle box, exposing one false reality after another. By day, the alienated junkie genius Elliott Alderson worked as a corporate cyber-security expert; by night, he was part of a radical hacker collective called FSociety. He'd been recruited by the mysterious Mr. Robot (Christian Slater, doing his jocular-bully shtick). Later, we learned that Mr. Robot was Elliott's dead father. Elliott's colleague Darlene was in fact his sister. And who was Elliott talking to in that deadpan voice-over? Was it . . . us? In any case, by the finale, FSociety had accomplished its goal: it had hacked Wall Street and dissolved global debt, erasing student loans, hospital bills, and exploitative mortgages. Anarchic celebrations erupted, framed by Sephora and Starbucks billboards—potential advertisers held up for mockery, a startling break with TV tradition. It was as if USA Network had rebranded as *Jacobin*.

Rami Malek's performance as Elliott was tremendous, as he peeked from a hoodie with sad-owl eyes, slicked with sweat and shuddering as if he were in continual detox from society's poisons. And yet there was something synthetic about the show, too, despite its rhetorical boldness and its sensational editing and music direction. The storytelling was a grab bag: niftily disorienting but also, at times, humorless or claustrophobic, as if it were less a show about human beings and more a staging ground for cathartic spectacles of economic justice. Conformist bad guys (cheaters, porn hounds, bankers) were hacked and blackmailed; a Wall Street shill shot himself in the head on live TV; and, at the end, the screen swarmed with protesters in Mr. Monopoly masks, holding signs that read "We Do Not Compromise."

In an affectionate critique written after the first season, the *New York* critic Matt Zoller Seitz diagnosed "Mr. Robot"'s deep investment in what he described as "Cinema de Dudebro": " 'Taxi Driver,' 'American Psycho,' 'The Matrix,' the complete works of Stanley Kubrick and David Fincher—you name it, 'Mr. Robot' probably carries it deep within its aesthetic DNA, along with the original 'Star Wars' trilogy." In Zoller Seitz's eyes, Esmail's mastery of fanboy pastiche was both a mark of the show's undeniable ambition and the "bug" in its code, the quality that kept it skittering on the surface of greatness.

That analysis nailed the show's most maddening quality, the way that it sometimes felt as if it cut through the world's bullshit—and then sometimes offered up its own brand as a replacement. This problem continues in the second season, which, in its first two episodes, alternates between sequences of masterly beauty—including two memorable acts of digital terrorism—and one too many deep talks between Elliott and his friends.

Still, I knew that I would keep watching, no matter what, after an early sequence that flashes back to a young Elliott in the hospital, because his abusive father has shoved him out a window. While his parents bicker about co-pays, the camera drifts, in a woozy unbroken shot, to gaze first *at* Elliott, then *with* him. We see an X-ray of his brain, and then, peering closer, a Rorschach test, or Dalmatian spots, a nagging pattern that we recognize but can't quite place. As Lupe Fiasco's "Daydreamin'" plays, the black-and-white blobs dance, and the lens widens to reveal the answer: it's the cover of a grade-school composition notebook. In quick cuts, we rise up to see the notebook, then the notebook framed by a desk, then the notebook framed by the now grownup Elliott's room, where he lies in bed like an invalid. He's sober, living with his mother, and, crucially, offline. His brain is the notebook is the computer: imperfect memory devices sustaining a broken system. "I've been keeping a journal," Elliott explains, in his trademark monotone. "It's the only way to keep my program running."

Sequences like this are so moodily elegant, evoking the fragility of perception, that they elevate the show's more familiar musings, especially Elliott's perseverations on the brainwashed basics who surround him. Yes, identity is an illusion created by advertisers; happiness is for analog folks who take Lexapro and watch "NCIS," who favor "the thick grimy film of Facebook friend requests and Vine stars." ("Isn't that where it's

ABOVE: MIGUEL PORLAN

"Mr. Robot" cuts through the world's bullshit—and then sometimes offers up its own brand as a replacement.

ILLUSTRATION BY RUNE FISKER

comfortable—in the sameness?" Elliott asks his therapist.) We're not supposed to accept Elliott's Andy Rooney hot takes at face value (for one thing, he's still hallucinating his father as Mr. Robot), but his reflections are too often borne out by the show's cartoon vision of the world: in the land of the one per cent, soulless rich bitches get off to knife play, sad P.R. flacks mutter along to motivational tapes, and dumb gigolos switch from the news to "Vanderpump Rules."

Elliott's own mental state is treated not so much as an illness (some combination of autism and schizophrenia) but as a metaphor for the pain of wokeness, the suffering of the princess who really feels the capitalist pea. This intensity can be accidentally funny, as in one sequence during which Elliott laugh-cries so hard that he resembles Paulina Porizkova in the Cars' "Drive" video. There's something exhausting about Christian Slater doing his "Dream Ghost" routine, too. But, even as I write these sentences, I feel like an absolute jerk. I mean, is Wall Street rigged? Pretty much, yeah, it is. "Mr. Robot" may be self-serious, but it's also a rarity on TV, capturing a modern mood, an ambient distrust based on genuine social betrayals. For all its flaws, it feels like an alarm going off. It's worth paying attention to.

There's a paranoid underclass hacker in "BrainDead," too, an autodidact chess genius who compares himself to Edward Snowden. His name is Gustav Triplett (played with fabulous flair by Johnny Ray Gill), and he's just one of the self-appointed detectives trying to figure out what's gone wrong in Washington, D.C. In "BrainDead," on CBS, it's not one-per-centers but space aliens who are rigging the system: a mysterious meteorite has crashed to Earth, releasing ants from another planet, which tiptoe into politicians' ears and literally eat their brains. Sometimes, those ants also fart inside the brain—and then the brain explodes.

Perhaps this premise sounds a little juvenile and simplistic to you! It certainly did to me when I saw the pilot, as a devout hater of both ants and scenes where bright-red brain matter leaks out of people's ears. But, two episodes in, it became clear that Robert and Michelle King—who are also the creators of "The Good Wife"—were working up a far stranger, more original, and certainly funkier allegory for Washington's woes. Ant-ification doesn't make senators and congressmen stupid or corrupt. (For one thing, they were already corrupt.) It just makes them insanely partisan and deaf in one ear. Ordinary Republicans become seething zealots; Democrats can't stop ranting about Denmark. Neither side sees the other as human, and, as a result, both sides become increasingly inhuman, incapable of participating in a system that is dependent on finding common ground, and compromise, with one's ideological opponents. Meanwhile, the non-infected people stare at the infected ones in bafflement, as the system grinds to a halt.

Unlike "Mr. Robot," "BrainDead" is aggressively funny and a little sloppy, and it's that sick-joke aggression, the refusal to take itself seriously, that is the key to its appeal. Each episode opens with a goofy "previously on" sequence sung by Jonathan Coulton. ("That's all the time I have, because this episode's too long," one number ends.) When the ants crawl into the ears, the Cars' song "You Might Think" always plays from a nearby radio. Even the episode titles are deranged: the fourth installment is called "Wake Up Grassroots: The Nine Virtues of Participatory Democracy, and How We Can Keep America Great by Encouraging an Informed Electorate." The performances are juicy and freewheeling; in particular, a hilarious, all-grins Tony Shalhoub is a zombified right-wing congressman, and Mary Elizabeth Winstead is a bleeding-heart documentarian whose brother is the Democratic Whip. It's a fun show.

It's also got a unique angle for TV, in that it's built to mock political paranoia, not soak in it. When Shalhoub's Senator Wheatus launches an Astroturfed grassroots organization called "The One Wayers," its members are politely baffled that murdering the socialist monsters he keeps ranting about might cross a line. Meanwhile, a progressive, incensed over arts cuts, confronts Winstead on the Capitol steps, wielding a Splendid Table pledge knife and screaming the names of PBS shows as if they were political prisoners. "Are you insane?" he yells, when she opens a rape-whistle app. "This isn't a rape! I'm a member of Men Against Rape!"

Buried beneath the show's dumb-joke premise is a sly argument that democracy is still worthwhile, not despite its reliance on pragmatism and influence trading but because of it. On "BrainDead," the real danger is people who view all policy disagreements through a conspiratorial lens, seeing even small divisions as indicative of bad faith. As this year has shown, "The system is rigged" has a bendy-straw flexibility: radicals love it, but so do cynics and schizophrenics. It suits whistleblowers and Truthers, Bern-or-Bust voters and Donald Trump at 3 a.m., the N.R.A. and neo-Nazis and Berkeley anti-vaxxers. Zombie stories rarely have happy endings, it's true. But there's something to be said for satire that gleefully cuts through outrage, instead of fuelling it. To quote Will Rogers, "If stupidity got us into this mess, then why can't it get us out?" ♦

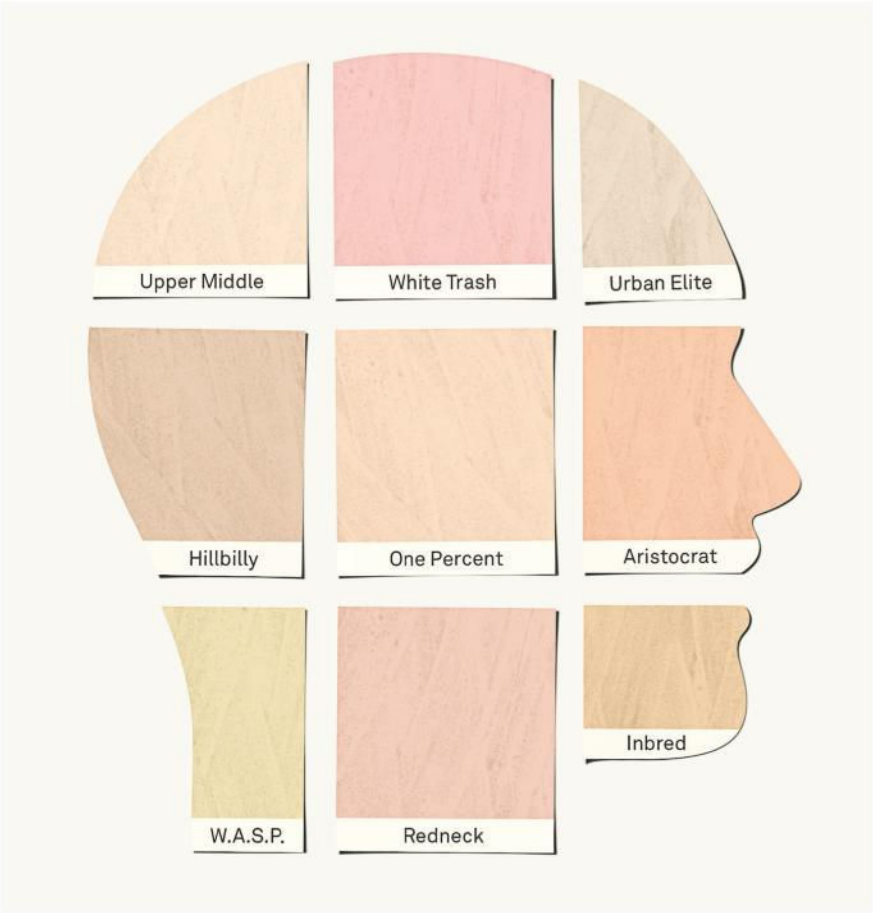
"I know it's small and expensive, but wait till you see all the Pokémon."

A CRITIC AT LARGE

PALE FIRE

Is whiteness a privilege or a plight?

BY HUA HSU



An identity politics has emerged in which whiteness spells dispossession.

On the morning of September 4, 1957, a fifteen-year-old girl named Elizabeth Eckford walked toward the entrance of Little Rock Central High School. It was among the first high schools in a major Southern city to admit a class of black students, in partial accommodation of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision calling for the desegregation of all public classrooms across the country. As a crowd formed around her, Eckford followed her mother's advice: that the best way to deal with the spiteful people she would encounter that day was to ignore them. The most famous image of this moment was captured by Will Counts, a photographer for the Arkansas *Democrat*. One figure in the crowd stands out: a teen-age girl, trailing behind and heckling. She later identified herself to reporters as Hazel Bryan. Bryan, who was also fifteen, simply believed that "whites should have rights, too."

Within a couple of days, Counts's photograph was everywhere, and inspired letters from around the country castigating the unidentified white girl. In "White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America" (Viking), the historian Nancy Isenberg describes Bryan in this photograph as "the face of white trash," a ready-made contrast to Eckford's calmness and sense of purpose. In Isenberg's telling, Bryan was the latest in a long line of poor whites who believed that black advancement would come at their expense. Bryan didn't have much. But she wanted at least to maintain her status somewhere between the upper-crust white and largely disadvantaged black worlds. One of the defining features of living in a putatively classless democracy, as has often been observed, is a constant feeling of status anxiety. In the absence of a clearly delineated hierarchy, we determine where we belong by looking above, at those we resent, and below, at those we find contemptible.

By the early nineteen-sixties, Bryan had come to see the error of her ways. She looked up Eckford in the phone book and called her to apologize. The conversation was awkward and brief—maybe both women assumed this would be their last encounter. But Bryan continued her efforts to make amends, immersing herself in community work and learning about black history. She hoped for a chance to tell the story of her transformation, and to replace the image of the petulant, hateful teen-age Bryan with a mature, enlightened one. The opportunity to share this story with Eckford finally arrived in 1997, as part of a series of events commemorating the bravery of Eckford and other black students, who had collectively been dubbed the Little Rock Nine. Counts returned to Central High School to document the changes that had taken place during the previous forty years, and Bryan and Eckford agreed to reunite as part of a new photograph. It didn't take very long for Bryan and Eckford to realize that they had a lot in common, and they became good friends. They participated in a local seminar on racial healing. They shopped for fabrics, gardened, and attended poetry readings together. They were inseparable.

Those who witnessed Bryan and Eckford's reunion at first hand described it as authentic, uncannily beautiful. Such stories model behavior for us, conveying a sense of what remains possible. People can change: they can forgive, or let go of their anger; they can realize that they have been walking the world with blinders on, and turn their guilt into something positive. Counts's new photograph was made into a poster titled "Reconciliation."

Over time, however, Eckford grew tired of life as a symbol. She had misgivings about the "reconciliation" concept: after all, she had just been trying to go to school. By the time the journalist David

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT CHASE

Margolick sat down with the two women in 1999, Eckford had begun to withdraw from the friendship, wondering if it hadn't merely been a one-sided exercise in unburdening. Bryan, for her part, thought that their friendship had been undone by Eckford's unwillingness to move on from the past. It was a reminder that we don't all experience history the same way. A few years ago, when Margolick interviewed the current principal of Central High School as part of a book he was writing on Bryan and Eckford's legacy, she pointed to a copy of the "Reconciliation" poster hanging in her office. "I'd like a happy ending," she told Margolick, "and we don't have that."

For many, the 2008 election of Barack Obama seemed as if it might be an "ending" of sorts. But of what? On a purely demographic level, Obama's rise embodied an inevitable future: by 2055, the majority of Americans would be nonwhite. He had merely arrived ahead of schedule. Still, one election wouldn't erase the structures and ideologies that had kept the country's wealth in white hands. Maybe what was ending was a bit more abstract. There was, in Obama's manner of carrying himself, something that upended traditional status relations. An early sign of this came while Obama was on the campaign trail. At a meeting with wealthy Democratic donors, he described the plight of the white working class in Midwestern small towns, where "the jobs have been gone now for twenty-five years and nothing's replaced them," and remarked, "It's not surprising then that they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." This certainly wasn't the first time an authority figure had spoken patronizingly of the white working class. But now the authority figure was black, and had spoken with the confidence that the future belonged to people like him.

Obama, in essence, had given poor and working-class white people the language to think of themselves as outsiders. After all, they weren't the kind of people who would have been in the room with him that day. Within the more responsive spheres of media and entertainment, of course, Obama's rise has helped us imagine how America will see itself once "white" and mainstream are no longer synonymous. One might point to cultural touchstones like Beyoncé, "Hamilton," and "Scandal" as a preview of what this future will look like. In these somewhat rarefied realms, whiteness is, in ways big and small, constantly being treated as a problem, from this year's #OscarsSoWhite outrage to calls to strip university buildings of the names of their more vexing white forefathers. Whiteness, among those with a title to it, is invoked only in a dance of disavowal.

Away from these predominantly liberal arenas, however, white identity has found a more potent form of salience. For poor and working-class whites, skin color no longer feels like an implicit guarantor of privilege. There is a sense that others, thanks to affirmative action or lax immigration policies, have nudged ahead of them on the ladder of social ascent. Their whiteness is, in fact, the very reason they suspect that they are under siege. Marginalized by a black President, as they imagine, and alienated by urbane élites of every hue, they have begun to understand themselves in terms of identity politics. It almost doesn't matter whether their suspicions are true in a strictly material sense. The accident of white skin still brings with it economic and social advantages, but resentment is a powerful engine, particularly when the view from below feels unprecedented.

When Obama distilled this narrowing sliver of America to a common fondness for "guns and religion," he was drawing on a long tradition of élites isolating poor and working-class white people as a containable threat. As Isenberg shows, anxieties about the white underclass have been at the heart of our history. Instead of revisiting the story of American inequality through slavery, she considers the problem of white poverty. Standard histories of the American spirit use a hard-scrabble past to anticipate our glorious present, but Isenberg takes every opportunity to mottle that picture. The early colonists were not brave explorers but "waste people" who had been expelled from England. The Founding Fathers were not sturdy believers in the democratic ethos but élites adrift without a clear-cut hierarchy, who propped themselves up by disparaging the poor. America was not a shining city on the hill but a large-scale experiment in social engineering designed to contain and minimize the impact of the "degenerate breed."

From the perspective of the British, Isenberg notes, the colonies were where the "surplus poor"—convicts, debtors, and the like—could go to make themselves useful. The vast majority of early American colonists lived out bleak existences. Travellers through the colonies were greeted by poor whites "with open sores visible on their bodies," pallid complexions, malnourished and "missing limbs, noses, palates, and teeth." For those charged with overseeing this "giant workhouse," the question became how to extract as much as possible from a congenitally flawed people. More often than not, the solution was to keep the poor busy and laboring, lest the colonies become the "spawning ground of a degenerate breed of Americans." As Isenberg explains, the subhuman status of slaves was different from that of "white trash," since they had no choice but to work. In contrast, poor whites had supposedly chosen to be "shiftless," suggesting the possibility of intraracial tensions that weren't immediately defined by a proximity to blackness.

Isenberg reminds us that many of these chauvinisms were simply absorbed into the ethos of this new nation, expressed as a set of murky class prejudices. The declaration that all men were equal certainly didn't mean that opportunities and economic mobility were equally dispersed. Full participation was never the assumed goal of democratic thinking, and the American republic wasn't established to provide every citizen with a pathway to success. Rather, the animating impulse was inherited from the Colonial past: how to deal with the problem of the lazy, landless poor?

In the absence of a rigid class hierarchy, part of the answer was to isolate their kind within a series of epithets. Isenberg vividly details the disparaging names given to poor whites: "leet-men," "lazy lubbers," "clay-eaters," "sandhillers," "red neck," "cracker," and "hillbilly" are just a few. The language of condescension has changed in the past four hundred years, but the qualities that made poor whites a legible group held steady. They were idle, lazy, and dim-witted, cursed with the inferior "breeding" that once underwrote a Progressive

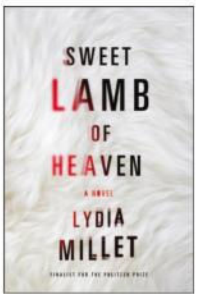
interest in eugenicist population control.

Things began to change, at least at a symbolic level, once politicians in the early nineteenth century realized the potential of appealing to poor and working-class whites for their votes. Andrew Jackson, for example, ascended to the Presidency by embracing, rather than looking down on, "the common man." As the twentieth century unfolded, a more inclusive version of white identity began to take shape, one in which working-class whites could share in the benefits of the New Deal, and participate in the rapidly expanding economy of postwar America. For all the condescension that upper- and middle-class whites felt toward their lowly brethren, they needed one another, and not just because of shared political and economic interests. They also balanced one another, as characters at opposite ends of the American dream. One was the lodestar, the aspiration achieved. The other was free to be the id—authentic and unbridled, capable of voicing sundry resentments and fears.

And today? There is certainly a kind of everyday snobbery toward what Isenberg calls "white trash" which has become routine and reflexive, a condescension that, for example, makes poor-white subcultures on reality television seem so exotic and fascinating. But does the fact that whiteness is no longer an unequivocal badge of privilege have any consequences for the systemic persistence of black disadvantage? These days, when we speak of white supremacy we are talking about more than hooded thugs terrorizing black America. It has become a rhetorical gesture used to link a universally deplored past with the structural advantages that white people continue to enjoy to this day, regardless of whether they harbor any feelings of racial animosity.

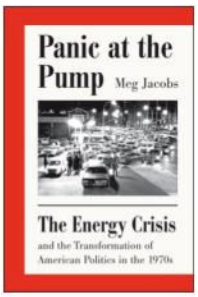
One of the ways in which white supremacy has sustained itself is by staying in the shadows and normalizing this structure of domination. Skepticism often awaits those who merely attempt to point out its existence, let alone to imagine solutions, such as when Rudolph Giuliani recently portrayed the Black Lives Matter movement as "inherently racist." As the scholar Carol Anderson argues in "White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide," one result of this has been our tendency to characterize

BRIEFLY NOTED

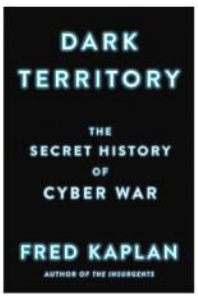


Sweet Lamb of Heaven, *by Lydia Millet (Norton)*. In this novel, which is in part a beach-read thriller and in part a contemplation of questions about God and communication, Anna, a young mother fleeing her estranged, sociopathic husband, grapples with a disembodied voice that only she seems to hear. Holed up in a battered motel in Maine with her daughter, she finds herself among a recovery group of sorts for people with similar problems. Even when the book's blend of action and philosophy feels forced, Millet's sense of pacing is acute and her prose is glittering and exact. "True language is the deep magic," as the voice tells Anna. "As old as time."

Imagine Me Gone, *by Adam Haslett (Little, Brown)*. Haslett's second novel depicts, with candor and tenderness, a family's struggle with the effects of mental illness. Narrated in various first-person voices, the story begins with the marriage of John, who suffers from severe depression, and Margaret, as they bring up three children while moving back and forth between England and America. Later, the novel shifts to the travails of their now adult children, particularly those of the eldest son, who develops from an articulate, disco-loving child into a man with a debilitating anxiety disorder. Especially moving is Haslett's ability to anatomize the ways that a family contorts itself around one member's struggles.



Panic at the Pump, *by Meg Jacobs (Hill & Wang)*. In October, 1973, in retaliation for Nixon's support of Israel in the Yom Kippur War, OPEC embargoed oil exports to the United States. Prices soared and lines at service stations stretched for miles. Successive Administrations tried to counter with price controls, reduced speed limits, and so on. By 1979, when the Iranian revolution interrupted oil imports again, the American public was ready to countenance a new modus operandi: environmentally destructive deregulation of the domestic energy industry and aggressive militarism to preserve oil access abroad. Jacobs's account is more descriptive than prescriptive, but, in the interest of economic, environmental, and physical security, she calls on our current leaders to promote independence from fossil fuels.



Dark Territory, *by Fred Kaplan (Simon & Schuster)*. In 1983, after seeing a movie about a teen-age hacker who nearly sets off a Third World War, Ronald Reagan asked, "Could something like this really happen?" So began America's cyber-warfare initiatives. This comprehensively reported history traces the government's covert and often ham-handed attempts to insure information security through the decades, from the development of a computer virus to sabotage Iran's nuclear program, in the late aughts (it ultimately spiralled out of control), to North Korea's 2014 attack on Sony. Kaplan draws parallels between these efforts and the anxious strategizing of the Cold War. The book's central question is how should we think about war, retaliation, and defense when our technologically advanced reliance on computers is also our greatest vulnerability?

moments of racial crisis as expressions of solely black anger. Her book grew out of an op-ed she wrote for the Washington *Post*, in response to the events in Ferguson. The issue, she argued, was not just "black rage." What we were seeing was the direct consequence of "white rage," a rage that surfaced time and again in the face of black progress, eager to roll back those gains. "With so much attention focused on the flames, everyone had ignored the logs, the kindling," she writes.

Anderson's book is a breezy history of give-and-take, looking at how the advances of Reconstruction, school desegregation and busing, the civil-rights era, and Obama's election were all targeted and slowly dismantled by whites wary of black advancement. A backlash is always waiting; the main difference over time is that expressions of racism tend to grow subtler, cloaked in softer language and innocuous-seeming legislation, allowing all who are not "sheet-wearing goons" to keep their heads in "a cloud of racial innocence."

One way of thinking about how this works in practical terms is to turn to what's been called our "democracy of manners," in which voters are willing to acquiesce in a busted political system as long as it produces leaders who appear to be "no different from the rest of us." Both Anderson and Isenberg discuss the postwar rise of political dog-whistling, coded appeals to specific constituencies. Being able to reach Southern whites without running afoul of any racial trip wires was critical to the Republican Party's Southern Strategy throughout the seventies and eighties. By constantly making references to "law and order," "giveaway programs," or "states' rights," Republicans were able to key in on Southern-white hostilities toward a government they felt had overreached in order to uplift African-Americans. (Of course, both parties have indulged in such appeals.) In Anderson's view, Obama's election put new stress on our preëxisting racial frameworks, in that he represented "the ultimate advancement, and thus the ultimate affront." Obama disrupted the way politics *sounded*, as well as the audiences his own coded messaging was intended to reach. The dog whistle began vibrating at mysterious frequencies.

A dramatic example of this occurred early in Obama's first term, when the Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., was arrested at his own home. The police had been summoned by a neighbor, who mistook Gates for a burglar, and when he loudly maintained that this was a case of racial profiling he was taken into custody for disorderly conduct. Obama sided with Gates and suggested that the officer, who was white, had "acted stupidly." The comment drew controversy. To those who had recently felt victimized by Obama's "guns and religion" remark, the President and his Harvard friend appeared far more privileged than the officer. The professor and the officer were eventually invited to the White House for a "beer summit" with Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden. It was an attempt to salvage a nasty situation that had spun out of control, and to underscore the lingering possibility of reconciliation, even without the prospect of a poster.

THE ANXIETIES PROMPTED by a sense of white displacement are the subject of Robert P. Jones's "The End of White Christian America," which isn't nearly as tetchy a book as the title suggests. Jones oversees the Public Religion Research Institute, a think tank devoted to examining the changing role of religion in American life, especially as it pertains to our shared "values." Since the country's founding, Jones says, "White Christian America" has provided believers and nonbelievers alike with a "shared aesthetic, a historical framework, and a moral vocabulary." Even at its worst—and Jones's is far from a triumphalist history—it offered a "coherent frame" for understanding the evolution of American public life. In this respect, "White Christian America" had constituted a visible mainstream, a set of aspirations, a shared touchstone for our "democracy of manners." Solemn yet wonky, Jones's book speculates about a future without a white Christian center.

Already, we've seen that, in the absence of a political system run by people "no different from the rest of us," many working-class whites feel abandoned, realizing that the system has always thrived on inequality. One result was the Tea Party, which emerged in 2009. Another has been the rise of Donald Trump, who, though opposed by many Tea Party activists, has drawn on the same loose energies that sustained that movement. He has shown that "white rage" and the nostalgia that underwrites feelings of racial resentment are renewable resources, and a cross-applicable rationale for xenophobia. As whiteness becomes a badge of dispossession, earned or not, it's likely that future elections will only grow more hostile, each one a referendum on our constantly shifting triangulations of identity and power.

Jones would prefer that we find a successor to white Christian America in a new crop of multicultural, multiethnic churches like Middle Collegiate Church, in Manhattan, and Oakhurst Baptist Church, near Atlanta. The flux surrounding white identity has also mobilized droves of young white people to begin understanding the set pieces of American prosperity as the product of privilege, and of systems that can be reshaped in more equitable ways. This was what was at stake when Bryan and Eckford reunited forty years later, a fantasy that two people seeing eye to eye might disrupt an entire social order. As their thwarted friendship suggests, however, history does not always yield to our desire for narrative closure.

White people interested in exploring this refashioned identity are realizing what people with a legibly minority presence long ago discovered: that these categories are more often than not placeholders, spaces evacuated of meaning, where the expectations that come with being told who you are rub up against the aspiration of figuring out what you might become. The question is whether whiteness, having arisen from a set of privileges accrued and institutionalized over centuries, can ever truly become a minority category, even if white people become a numerical minority. Whiteness was once described as invisible, a conspiracy that could never be brought into focus. But we can now at least contemplate the possibility that white might become a color like all the rest. This is what it would mean to enter into history, rather than simply bending it to your will. ♦

Constabulary Notes from All Over

From the Portola (Calif.) Reporter.

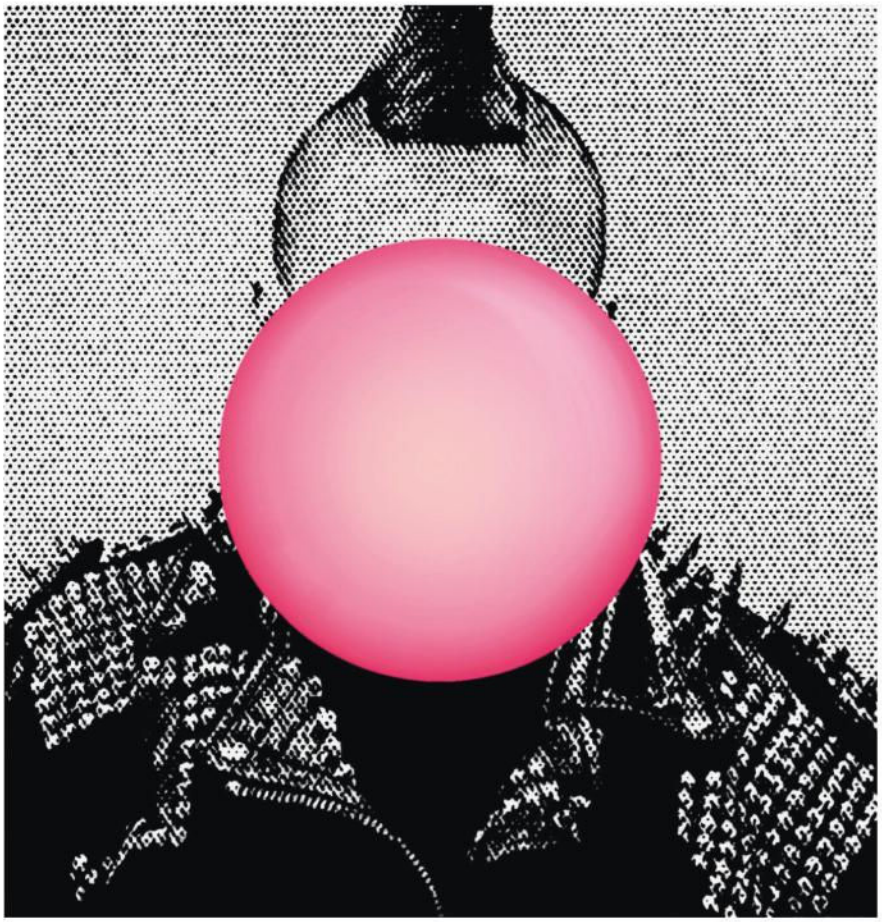
Near Sloat, a man complained about another man because he said the other man always stared at the caller's wife. A deputy reported that other people complained about the man because he was "icky."

POP MUSIC

GOOD CLEAN PUNK

How Blink-182 endured without growing up.

BY KELEFA SANNEH



Pop-punk is designed not to affront listeners but to gratify them.

In 1988, the Los Angeles punk band NOFX celebrated its fifth birthday by embarking on a tour of Europe. The first engagement was in Rotterdam, in front of hundreds of people, virtually all of whom were unimpressed. "I thought you guys were a lot better," the promoter said after the show. Mike Burkett, known as Fat Mike, is the bassist and lead singer of the band, and in a new oral history called "NOFX: The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories," he explains that the rest of the tour substantiated the promoter's judgment. "It finally started to sink in that maybe we were not a good band," he recalls. Audience members hurled insults, or bottles. Burkett was ready to quit when a friend played him a brilliant new album of "melodic punk rock" by a more established band, Bad Religion, which gave him a better idea. He writes, "I had a new plan: stop sucking."

This was not easily done. Musicologists may dispute, even now, that it was ever really done at all. But, in the years after that European tour, NOFX honed a slaphappy version of punk rock, fast but surprisingly catchy, with Burkett delivering his sneering lyrics more or less in tune. Mediocrity remained central to the NOFX brand: the band's two live albums are called "I Heard They Suck Live!!" and "They've Actually Gotten Worse Live!" But, starting in the nineteen-nineties, NOFX put out a series of spirited and memorable albums, which sound even more impressive once you read about the trying conditions under which they were created. "The Hepatitis Bathtub" is nominally a story about a band that somehow failed to fail, but it is also an estimable work of anthropology, criminology, and, above all, pharmacology. NOFX never broke up, and even without the benefit of a hit the band has amassed fans all over the world, enough to launch "The Hepatitis Bathtub" onto the *Times* best-seller list, at No. 3, in a category that surely amused Burkett and his bandmates: "Celebrities."

Years after Burkett hatched his plan, he helped encourage the next generation of punks to think big. In suburban San Diego, a NOFX fan named Tom DeLonge was inspired by the group's 1994 breakthrough album, "Punk in Drublic." The album opens with a rousing two-minute blast called "Linoleum," which is enhanced by deft tempo changes and some fairly precise vocal harmonies. In a 2014 interview, DeLonge remembered how impressed he was. "It was game-changing," he said. "It sounded *good*." He began to wonder whether it might be possible for his own band to evolve, too.

His band was called Blink-182, and he had formed it with his friend Mark Hoppus, who shared his obsession with punk—and, in particular, with pop-punk, a seeming oxymoron that was in fact a subgenre, known for simple chord progressions and memorable tunes. Pop-punk is user-friendly, designed not to affront listeners but to gratify them; some traditionalist punks consider it at best a guilty pleasure and at worst an abomination. But DeLonge and Hoppus played their four-chord songs with guileless enthusiasm, and their lovesick lyrics mimicked plot points from clean-scrubbed teen movies. They had a surprise hit in 1997, when rock radio stations started playing "Dammit," which has a refrain that speaks for wistful high-schoolers (and former high-schoolers) everywhere: "I guess this is growing up."

Instead of shrinking from mainstream success, the band embraced it. DeLonge and Hoppus fired their original drummer and hired Travis Barker, who is (unlike either of them) a virtuoso; in 1999, the trio released an album called "Enema of the State," which eventually sold more than four million copies in the United States. In the video for "All the Small

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIK CARTER

Things," they dressed up as members of an unusually inept boy band, but as the song ascended the pop chart, eventually reaching No. 6, the parody began to seem like a prophecy. They more or less looked the part—one early review in *Billboard* flagged their "beach-boy good looks." And their commitment to juvenile humor (the stage banter on their live album can be summed up in two words: "dog semen") camouflaged an equal interest in the evergreen pop topic of adolescent melancholy. At the center of "Enema of the State" sits "Adam's Song," a plainspoken chronicle of depression, with a video that became an MTV staple. They were pop-punk pop stars, and they cannily found ways to shift their focus without unduly complexifying their music.

Their adolescent outlook, especially in the early years, occasionally found expression in spiteful breakup songs in which boys wonder what's wrong with girls. "Enema of the State" included "Dumpweed," a downright giddy farewell to a "nightmare" girlfriend, in which DeLonge sings, "I need a girl that I can train." But many of Blink's best songs endure because they turn inward: the lovelorn boy has sense enough to wonder what's wrong with *him*.

"Take Off Your Pants and Jacket," from 2001, is by turns peppy, sulky, and stupid—Blink-182 at its finest. And in 2003 the band released a moody untitled album that became an unlikely fan favorite. Listeners who had once thrilled to a composition called "Dick Lips" were now just as happy to sway along with "I Miss You," a subdued love song that had Hoppus murmuring the first verse and DeLonge yelping the second one, which sounded like "Where arrre yehw? / And oy'm so sah-ree." DeLonge is known for his unplaceable drawl (SoCal skateboarder, perhaps, with a dash of London punk, in a combination so distorting that it can resemble a speech impediment), and its persistence reassured fans that he still hadn't finished growing up, and perhaps had barely started.

By 2003, when the untitled album came out, Blink-inspired acts like Avril Lavigne and Good Charlotte were beginning to appear, proffering their own combinations of punk and pop, and supplying a guitar-driven alternative to the R. & B.-inflected hits of Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake. (Compared with the sexually suggestive, sonically adventurous teen idols who ruled MTV, these young punks could seem charmingly square, with their unsyncopated rhythms and just-be-yourself attitude.) Blink-182 did not invent pop-punk: a bratty, sappy California band called the Descendents essentially created the style, in the early nineteen-eighties, with a sublime little album called "Milo Goes to College." And Green Day, a decade later, was the first truly mainstream pop-punk band. But it was Blink-182 that emerged as a touchstone, spawning more imitators than any American rock band since Nirvana. Their seeming ordinariness convinced a generation of goofy punks that maybe they, too, could turn out deceptively simple songs as well constructed as anything on the pop chart. And their prankish camaraderie made fans feel like members of their extended social circle. In a 2002 documentary, Hoppus grew earnest while talking about DeLonge. "He's my best friend," Hoppus said. "I'm sure he'll always be my best friend."

In recent years, Hoppus has had occasion to rethink that "always." (Perhaps this, too, is growing up.) In 2005, the band announced an "indefinite hiatus," apparently at the insistence of DeLonge, and then reunited a few years later and created an album called "Neighborhoods," which was decidedly ungoofy but surprisingly effective. Then DeLonge stepped away again—he is currently working on a multimedia project inspired by his research into exoplanetary life—and Hoppus and Barker decided to do something radical: hire a replacement. The new guy in Blink-182 is Matt Skiba, a singer and guitarist who is part of the Blink generation—the founder of an excellent goth-inflected pop-punk band called Alkaline Trio, which built its fan base in the aughts. Skiba, because he has a track record of his own, is obliged to sing like himself: apparently he is the rare Blink-182 fan who doesn't do an impression of DeLonge's accent, at least not when he is near a microphone. A few weeks ago, during a private

concert in New York, sponsored by Spotify, Skiba sang DeLonge's part in "First Date," an old standard, snarling instead of drawling. The fans chanted, "Ski! Ba! Ski! Ba!"—a gesture of welcome.

Hoppus, who is now the de-facto leader, feigned offense. "Ay, that's fucked up," he said. "I've been in this band, like, twenty-five years, and you guys cheer for Matt?"

The reconstituted Blink-182 was promoting its new album, "California," which functions as a big-budget reboot of a beloved franchise, and which made its début at the top of the album chart. It was produced by, and written with, John Feldmann, who helped to mobilize the post-Blink onslaught: he worked on albums by Good Charlotte and dozens of their peers, and more recently collaborated with the pop-punk boy band 5 Seconds of Summer. The vocals, which seem to have been aggressively pitch-corrected, have the same synthetic gleam as the electric guitars, and when Hoppus and Skiba run out of words, there is always a "Whoa," an "Oh," or a "Nah" nearby. The album includes a couple of novelty songs, presumably to evoke fond memories in longtime fans. (One goes, in its entirety, "I want to see some naked dudes / That's why I built this pool.") "Los Angeles," startlingly generic and overblown, should gratify fans in a different way: this is the boring band that Blink-182 could have become but, for the most part, didn't. Hoppus is forty-four and Skiba is forty, but the best songs could have been written only by overgrown teen-agers. "Left Alone" makes a bad relationship sound like the end of the world, partly because of Barker's apocalyptic drumming. And "Bored to Death," the rousing lead single, approaches the platonic ideal of late-period Blink-182: a rousing expression of post-adolescent—very post-adolescent—confusion.

Blink-182 was never cool. Barker quit another band when he joined, in 1998, and a former bandmate responded to the news by saying, "Are you joking? Those guys are posers." The members had no interest in punk credibility, and punk credibility had no interest in them. Fat Mike, of NOFX, never seemed impressed by the genial antics of Hoppus and DeLonge, who made a mockery of his conviction that punk should be at least a little bit confrontational. He once sang, "Fuck a Muslim, fuck a Jew / Fuck fans of Blink-182." (That is, roughly: Fuck them, fuck me, fuck you.) But the passage of time has made the members of Blink-182 seem less like posers and more like pioneers—the guys behind those old songs that provided a soundtrack to millions of childhoods. In a recent *Times* interview, Jake Ewald, of the thoughtful pop-punk-inspired band Modern Baseball, confessed that he was two musical links down the pop-punk chain. "I got into that kind of music from the bands that got into it from Blink-182," he said.

At a recent show in Brooklyn, another young band—quite obscure, and quite noisy—happily flaunted its debt. Posture & the Grizzly, from Willimantic, Connecticut, played a short set that ended with the singer, Jordan Chmielowski, howling, "I bet you're sad / This is the best time we ever had." Blink-182 fans surely recognized the words: this was a cover of "Please Take Me Home," a gloriously self-pitying song from "Take Off Your Pants and Jacket." And Chmielowski, doing great violence to the vowels, sounded quite a bit like DeLonge.

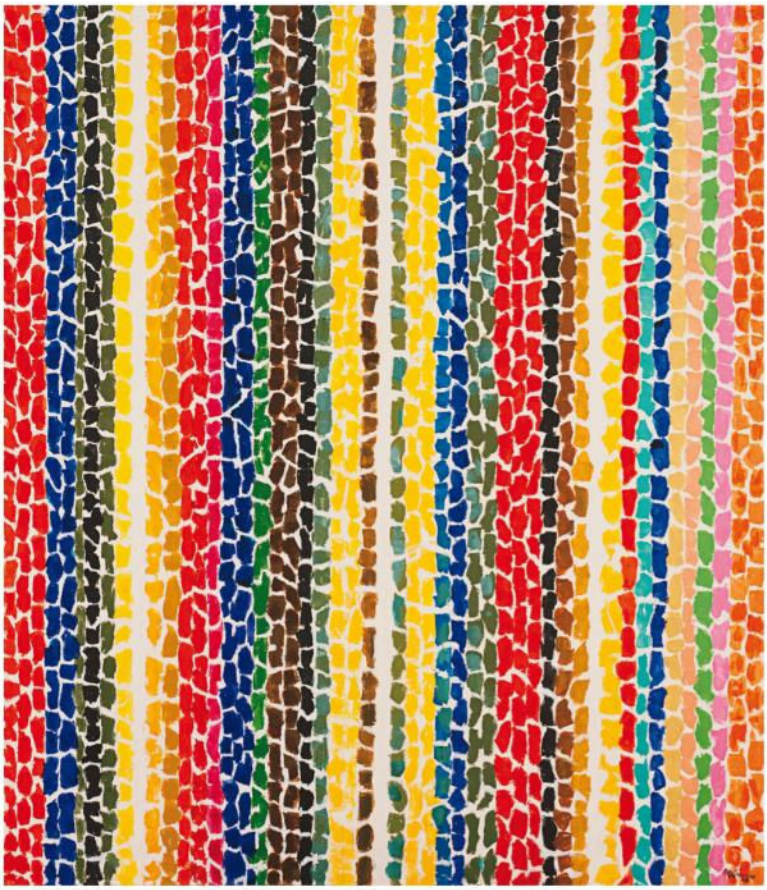
The new Posture & the Grizzly album is called "I Am Satan," and it shows that a great pop-punk record need not be particularly pop. If the album has a rallying cry, it is "Just fucking kill me," delivered with what sounds like startling sincerity, despite the jaunty bass line. When the album was released, in May, Chmielowski posted a message to fans on Facebook. "I need you to tweet @markhoppus and tell him how good I Am Satan is," he wrote. "I am confident if you all come together as one, we can kick skiba out and I will become the new Tom. Blink will be back and better than ever." This was a provocation but also, of course, a tribute. It has been seventeen years since "Enema of the State," and Chmielowski has kept the faith. No doubt he speaks for lots of people, many of them old enough to know better, when he gives voice to the conviction that Blink-182 should—will!—never die. ♦

THE ART WORLD

VIEWING PLEASURE

An Alma Thomas retrospective and a survey of sports photography.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL



Thomas's "Breeze Rustling Through Fall Flowers" (1968).

A SMALL BUT WONDROUS Alma Thomas retrospective at the Studio Museum in Harlem put me in mind of a desert plant that spends all year as an innocent cactus and then, in the middle of the night, blooms. Thomas, who died in 1978, at the age of eighty-six, was a junior-high-school art teacher in Washington, D.C., whose own paintings were modernist and sophisticated but of no special note until she retired from teaching, in 1960, and took up color-intensive abstraction. Her best acrylics and watercolors of loosely gridded, wristy daubs are among the most satisfying feats (and my personal favorites) of the Washington Color School, a group that included Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and others associated with the prescriptive aesthetics of the critic Clement Greenberg: painting shorn of imagery, the illusion of depth, and rhetorical gesture. Wielding brushes, Thomas eschewed the group's signal technique of working strictly with stains of liquid paint on raw canvas, proving it inessential to an ordered glory of plangent hues. She seemed to absorb in a gulp the mode's ideas—rational means, hedonistic appeals—and to add, with no loss of formal integrity, a heterodox lyricism inspired by nature. The boldly experimental work of her last years suggests the alacrity of a young master, but it harvested the resources of a lifetime.

Thomas, who was African-American, was born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1891. Her father was a businessman, her mother a dressmaker. She had three younger sisters. In 1907, the family moved to Washington and took a house in a prosperous neighborhood, in which she lived for the rest of her life. She concentrated on math in high school, and dreamed of becoming an architect. Unsurprisingly, given the time's odds against her race and her sex, in 1914 she found herself teaching kindergarten. In 1921, she enrolled at Howard University as a home-economics student, but gravitated to the art department, newly founded by the black Impressionist painter James V. Herring, and became the school's first graduate in fine arts. Later, she earned a master's degree from Columbia University's Teachers College and studied painting at American University, where she encountered Greenberg's doctrines.

Though she initially hung back from a studio career, Thomas was active in Washington's cultural circles, including a "little Paris salon" of black artists, in the late nineteen-forties, which was organized by the educator and artist Lois Mailou Jones. Thomas's modern-art influences included Vassily Kandinsky and Henri Matisse, especially after she saw a show of his paper cutouts at the Museum of Modern Art, in 1961. Recognition came slowly but steadily. When she became the first black woman to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum, in 1972, she told the *Times*, "One of the things we couldn't do was go into museums, let alone think of hanging our pictures there." She added, "Look at me now."

Thomas said that she was moved to paint abstractions after studying the shapes of a holly tree in her garden, and that she based her color harmonies on her flower beds—or on the way she imagined them looking from the air. Space exploration fascinated her. A painting of a disk in reds, oranges, and yellows is titled "Snoopy Sees Earth Wrapped in Sunset" (1970)—a whimsy that seems meant to deflect any hint of mysticism. Thomas was not sentimental. Nor, after painting some semi-abstract, resonant oil sketches of the 1963 March on Washington, was she political. She said, in 1970, "Through color, I have sought to concentrate on beauty and happiness, rather than on man's inhumanity to man." She did so with panache in such works as "Wind, Sunshine,

COURTESY THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION; PHOTOGRAPH: ARTHUR EVANS

and Flowers" (1968), which deploys touches of hot, warm, and drenchingly cool colors in vertical columns. Intervals of white canvas align here and there to form horizontally curving fissures: wind evoked with droll economy.

Thomas suffered increasing health problems, but her work developed apace. She closed the gaps between her surface strokes with underlying colors in the darkling "Stars and Their Display" (1972) and in the shimmering "Arboretum Presents White Dogwood" (1972). A startling late work, "Hydrangeas Spring Song" (1976), heralds a new style, with swift patches, squiggles, and glyphs (crosses, crescents) in two blues, energetically scattered on white. It feels quite as up-to-date, for its moment, as anything being painted then in New York or Cologne, where abstraction was sprouting representational marks and references on the way to revived figurative styles. The uncompleted arc of her talent makes her a perennial artist's artist, consulted by young abstract painters even now. Thomas didn't change art history, but she gave it a twist that merits attention, respect, and something very like love.

"Who Shot Sports" is an immersive, often dazzling survey, at the Brooklyn Museum, of sports photography by some hundred and seventy masters of the insufficiently respected genre. The show begins with the earliest known sports photograph: a calotype, from 1843, by the pioneering Scottish team of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, of a gent who holds a badminton racket across his smartly clad body in an oddly worrying manner, as if it were a weapon. We get that his pastime is glamorously serious and seriously glamorous. An implied ideal of manhood for manhood's sake sparks one current in a show that climaxes with surely the most indelible of all sports images: Muhammad Ali gesturing in triumph, braided with unspent rage, over a suddenly fallen Sonny Liston, a minute or so into the first round of their fight in Lewiston, Maine, in 1965. The photographer, Neil Leifer, was a twenty-two-year-old second-stringer for *Sports Illustrated*. I didn't know, but do now, that the stunned-looking ringside spectator framed by Ali's legs is Herb Scharfman, the senior photographer whom *S.I.* had assigned to the bout. So there's a supplementary upset win: the kid got the shot. Even lacking the world significance of Ali, it would be a great image. But it lacks neither that nor the dramatic irony of Liston's collapse: in effect, prostration to a demiurge of history on the turn.

But for such rare symbolic cruxes, we generally ignore the authors of sports photographs unless they are moonlighting artists of the camera: Jacques Henri Lartigue (whose pictures in the show depict rich folks at play, circa the nineteen-tens and twenties); Henri Cartier-Bresson (cunningly poetic coverage of a bicycle race, in 1957); Rineke Dijkstra (a young Portuguese matador, blood-smeared and tired but happy, portrayed in 2000); or Leni Riefenstahl, whose classicist images of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, from a book that she made for presentation to Hitler, both awe and sicken. The field's full-time professionals can be every bit as brilliant—the show's wealth of telling and beautiful pictures beggars stamina—but they're cloaked in sports photography's ritual service to the obsessions of a special constituency: fans, such as me, who are infected with what Roger Angell nailed, in this magazine, as "insatiable vicariousness."

We love losing ourselves to rooting for someone in any contest. Opening the sports pages, we look to refresh our pleasure at second hand. We might resent a little the alienating fanciness of, say, a gorgeous overhead shot of Michael Jordan soaring for a slam, his shadow cast on a brilliant blue ground. That's chiefly a show-off coup by the photographer Walter Iooss, Jr., who staged it in a parking lot in 1987. (But if it sells Jordan's charisma to non-fans, O.K.) We savor the capture of action that happened too fast, or too distantly, to be apprehended in person or with formal succinctness on television. We won't so much look at as sink into, with glad sighs, Barton Silverman's ground-level view, from 2010, of Derek Jeter stealing third, headfirst in a spray of dirt while the ball arrives—too late—as a blur toward the fielder's glove. The professionals are blessed and cursed with being hierophants of our cult. "Who Shot Sports" offers a chance to show them some penitent tribute. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

FUNNY WOMEN

"Ghostbusters" and "Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A SUBWAY TRAIN CLATTERS out of sight, into the gullet of a tunnel. Trapped in the last car is an evil spectre, glowing blue with rage, and gazing after it is an M.T.A. worker named Patty (Leslie Jones), who seems unmoved. "I guess he's going to Queens," she says. That is one of the quieter—and better—gags in the new "Ghostbusters," which is directed by Paul Feig, written by Feig and Katie Dippold, and based on Ivan Reitman's film of 1984. The format is intact, with a number of ghosts plaguing New York, and getting their immaterial asses kicked by a quartet of enterprising mortals. Patty is one of the four, the others being Abby (Melissa McCarthy) and Holtzman (Kate McKinnon), who are nutty scientists, and Erin (Kristen Wiig), once a pal of Abby's, who begins as a respectable scientist and ascends to nuttiness after contacting Abby again. Holtzman is especially keen to meet Erin. "I've heard terrible things about you," she says, with a winning smile.

Nothing in this movie is as mean or as frightening as the host of haters who went online when the movie was first announced and forbade it to exist, as if the rejigging of a Reagan-era comedy were tantamount to a reconstruction of the True Cross. Some of the loathing was in fact a fit of misogyny, squirming with unease at the prospect of male roles passing into the hands of women. To any such complaint, there is a one-word retort: Hildy. In "The Front Page," the Broadway hit of 1928 about shameless newspapermen, Hildy Johnson, the star reporter, was very much a guy, and yet, when Howard Hawks took a pop at the story, in 1940, Hildy became a dame, played by Rosalind Russell. The result, "His Girl Friday," was one of the smartest and most headlong movies ever made. The message to men was as loud as a banner headline: Anything you can do, we can do better.

Paul Feig's remake of Ivan Reitman's film stars female leads.

So, how do the Ghostbusters of today shape up against the boys of yesteryear? Pretty well, except that something vital to the success of Reitman's film—a shabby air of relaxation, with our heroes none too impressed by all that weird stuff from beyond the grave—seems to have leaked away. When Erin is deluged with green gunk from a phantom's mouth, she and her colleagues race outside, hop up and down, and exclaim, "We saw a ghost!" However much you share in their delight, it feels like a wet squib compared with the deadpan dryness of Bill Murray, back in 1984, who reacted to a comparable gunking with the words "He slimed me," followed by a more thoughtful assessment: "I feel *so funky*." I was praying that Kate McKinnon, one of those blessedly funny souls whose very presence cheers you up, would inherit the Murray mantle for the purposes of this film, and she does have a couple of swipes that do the trick ("I can think of seven good uses for a cadaver *today*"). But rather too much of her time is spent in pulling goofy faces and jerking around, as if her body had been invaded by the spirit of Doc Brown, from "Back to the Future," or, more dimly, by that of Jerry Lewis.

That touch of overkill derives, I think, from Paul Feig, who finds himself toiling on a scale that is both wider and less raunchily broad than what he is accustomed to. "Bridesmaids" (2011), "The Heat" (2013), and last year's "Spy" were all R-rated comedies, none of which demanded much in the way of special effects, unless you count the bathroom sequence from "Bridesmaids"—a retching rebuke to Mary Wollstonecraft, who stupidly forgot, while issuing her feminist call to arms, more than two centuries ago, to mention a woman's fundamental right to barf. "Ghostbusters," by contrast, is tame fare, rated PG, and it's as if the director, mournfully deprived of his regular curses and gross-outs, weren't quite sure how to fill the leftover space. His central foursome is never less than affable, but the backchat among the characters lacks the binding ease of Murray and the gang, and the women often perk up when they turn away from one another to bounce off lesser characters. McCarthy has her sharpest exchanges

ILLUSTRATION BY TOMER HANUKA

with a hapless deliveryman (Karan Soni), just as Wiig melts like butter at the arrival of Chris Hemsworth. He plays Kevin, the team's assistant, who is luscious and modestly brained—punitive casting, I suppose, in revenge for a long tradition of actresses being dished up as airheads in lowly roles.

Another hitch, for Feig, is that, whereas the cheesiness of the effects in the earlier "Ghostbusters" was part of its rackety charm, no current audience will settle for anything less than a welter of wizardry. And so he piles it on, until whole sections of the movie collapse beneath the visual crush. Some of it doesn't even belong in a spooky film. There are kicks to be had from a gremlinish dragon that roars around the revellers at a heavy-metal gig (most of whom presume that any fire-breathing is part of the act), but what is a dragon doing here in the first place? Is it even a ghost, and, if so, of what?

Atop all that lies an even heavier burden: G.G.I., or Ghostbuster-generated images. You might expect that the executives at Columbia Pictures, seeking a new audience, would concentrate on the millions of kids who, being too young to have seen the original film, have no fond and squishy memories to cling to. Instead, Feig and Dippold are forced to cram the frame with gestures of obeisance to the glories of 1984. Thus, we get the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, wobbling down the avenue; cameos from Dan Aykroyd and Ernie Hudson; the nagging hook of the theme song; the famous logo, freshly sprayed on a subway wall by a graffiti artist; and, yes, fear not, Bill Murray. He appears as a dandified debunker of the paranormal—itself a neat joke, since Murray has spent the intervening decades debunking the normal. Strolling into the Ghostbusters' office, he asks the women, "Why are *you* pretending to catch ghosts?" Close your eyes, and he could almost be a troll.

A BLOCKBUSTER FRONTED BY women alone marks a necessary step and, with luck, a shape of things to come. For a true model of manlessness, though, try the nineteen-nineties, when "Absolutely Fabulous" arrived at the BBC. The lineup was topped by Edina Monsoon (Jennifer Saunders), better known as Eddy, who worked, if that is the appropriate word, in P.R., and her longtime friend Patsy Stone (Joanna Lumley), whose principal loyalty was to booze and drugs. Eddy had a sensible mother (June Whitfield); an even more sensible daughter, Saffron (Julia Sawalha); and a personal assistant called Bubble (Jane Horrocks), whose dress sense made no sense at all. (Many people wear collarless shirts, but Bubble, reversing the trend, once wore a shirtless collar.) In such a world, the male sex was not simply unfabulous but superfluous, and the bickering among the women, across the generations, felt more liberating—and, oddly, more radical—than the hunting of silly monsters, in "Ghostbusters," does today.

All the characters now return in "Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie," directed by Mandie Fletcher. To transform a TV series into a film is to surround yourself with pitfalls, and "Absolutely Fabulous," sad to report, nosedives into every one of them. First comes the plot: no longer some local difficulty but a ramshackle tale involving the putative murder of Kate Moss—little more than an excuse, it turns out, for a march-past of middle-ranking celebrities. Then, there is inflation. The finest sitcoms are self-imprisoned within a few rooms, and "Absolutely Fabulous," on the small screen, was at its happiest in Eddy's basement kitchen. (Lumley's entrances, down the staircase, were of regal majesty and duration, from the first clack of her heels to the crown of the beehive hair.) The movie, though, takes the fatal decision to open up, and, once Patsy and Eddy flee the country, we are treated to threadbare views of the Côte d'Azur, backed by the lilt of thumpingly obvious songs—"C'est Si Bon" and "Where Do You Go To, My Lovely?"

To which Patsy and Eddy would reply, Where else? The best defense you could mount would be that the South of France is still their idea of bliss. If the TV show belonged to the nineties, the central characters were perennially glued to the myth of the sixties, and what lent the farce its terrific poise was that the bacchanalia were matched by jolts of pathos—the dread, in Eddy's eyes and Patsy's scarlet-lipped leer, that the jollity was growing ever harder to sustain because it was already a thing of the past. With the film, that balance has gone. "I'm fat and old and hated and nothing," Eddy says, as she sinks into a swimming pool. "Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie" is not that funny, but the more discomforting question is: How funny does it really want to be? ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Richard Brody blogs about movies.

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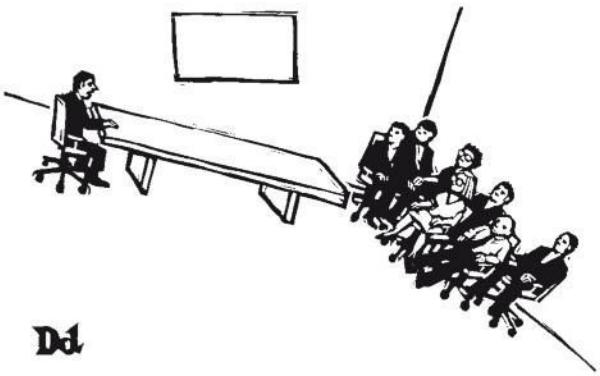
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

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 Peter Kuper, must be received by Sunday, July 24th. The finalists in the July 4th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 8th & 15th 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



"Welcome to orientation."
Joe Repine, Ann Arbor, Mich.

"Excellent slide show."
Tyler Stradling, Mesa, Ariz.

"First, welcome to Pisa."
Lance Sayler, Pittsburg, Kans.

THE WINNING CAPTION

"Ironically, it's for being so humble."
Mike Gandolfi, Sherman Oaks, Calif.