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THE НЬЮ-ЙОРКЕР

Блитт

THE NEW YORKER

MARCH 6, 2017

DRAWINGS *James Stevenson, Paul Noth, Peter Kuper, Edward Steed, Jack Ziegler, Jason Adam Katzenstein, Liana Finck, Drew Dernavich, Michael Maslin, Roz Chast, Frank Cotham, Trevor Spaulding, Emily Flake, Ellis Rosen, Jim Benton*
SPOTS *Richard McGuire*

CONTRIBUTORS

Evan Osnos (*"Active Measures," p. 40*) has been a staff writer since 2008. His book, "Age of Ambition," won the 2014 National Book Award for nonfiction.

Joshua Yaffa (*"Active Measures," p. 40*) is a *New Yorker* contributor based in Moscow and a fellow at New America.

Claudia Roth Pierpont (*Books, p. 72*) is a longtime staff writer, whose book "American Rhapsody: Writers, Musicians, Movie Stars, and One Great Building" was published last May.

Zadie Smith (*Fiction, p. 68*) has published several books, including "Swing Time," which came out in November. This piece, "Crazy They Call Me," is the introduction to "Jerry Dantzic: Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill," a book of photographs by Dantzic.

Alexis Okeowo (*"Image Consultant," p. 34*) is a staff writer.

Emily Nussbaum (*On Television, p. 82*), the magazine's television critic, won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

James Stevenson (*Cartoon, p. 23*), who died on February 17th, was an artist and a writer. He contributed eighty covers and more than two thousand cartoons to *The New Yorker*. His most recent book, "The Life, Loves and Laughs of Frank Modell," was published in 2013.

Kathryn Schulz (*"Call and Response," p. 26*), a staff writer, won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing.

Sheelah Kolhatkar (*"Shorting a Rainbow," p. 56*) is a staff writer. Her book, "Black Edge: Inside Information, Dirty Money, and the Quest to Bring Down the Most Wanted Man on Wall Street," came out in February.

Hafizah Geter (*Poem, p. 61*) serves on the board of VIDA: Women in Literary Arts and works at Poets House.

Hilton Als (*The Theatre, p. 80*), the magazine's theatre critic, is an associate professor of writing at Columbia.

Shauna Lyon (*The Talk of the Town, p. 24*) is the editor of Goings On About Town.

LEFT: MERYL MEISLER

THE MAIL

"DEVIL, I GOT YOU NOW"

As a Turkish immigrant who has lost many objects and people, I was reminded, reading Kathryn Schulz's essay about her two seasons of physical, political, and personal loss, of Tying the Devil, a whimsy many Turks practice. ("Losing Streak," February 13th & 20th). Whenever my mother mislaid a brooch or her keys, and had resigned herself to failure after days of sporadic searching in drawers and in the dark recesses of furniture cushions, she would take a piece of string about twenty centimetres long, walk around the house tying knots in it, and recite, "Devil, I got you now. Let go of what you took from me, and I will let you go." She was tying knots around the Devil's penis to hold him hostage before he could permanently claim the lost object. After the keys reappeared, each knot had to be undone to free his penis, and my mother often spent days struggling with the string to release the Devil. I am old now, and my fingers have trouble undoing the knots in strings; these days, I allow what has been lost to fill what Schulz calls the Valley of Lost Things. If mastering the Boy Scout Book of Knots would bring back any of my dead for a sip of wine and conversation by the sea, I would gladly do it. The Devil, though, is only after my wallet and my keys.
Yesho
Asheville, N.C.

I'm assuming that I join a chorus of like-minded, psychodynamically oriented psychiatrists when I say that I was surprised to read that Schulz deems Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of why we lose things—unconscious motives are attached to an object or to a person—to be "interesting, entertaining, and theoretically helpful . . . but, alas, untrue." Schulz suggests a scenario in which unconscious motives aren't a factor. But here's the thing about the unconscious and its associated motives: they are always present! Don't tell Schulz this, because I'm affirming people's worst fear of shrinks (that we obnoxiously analyze everyone around us), but the first page of her piece certainly made me wonder what unconscious motives were leading her to lose everything.
Loren Roth, M.D.
New York City

I hope that everyone who reads Kathryn Schulz's account of her reaction to her father's death is moved to sympathy and sorrow. But having compassion for her loss does not mean that we must say, with her, "Where there was him, there is nothing." There are those who believe the dead are not lost to us, including C. S. Lewis, whom Schulz quotes. When Lewis wrote of his late wife, in "A Grief Observed," "I should nowhere find her face, her voice, her touch," he was giving honest expression to a moment of his reaction to her death. He continued to believe that human beings do not cease to exist at death. True compassion for Schulz in her grief means hoping that she can one day believe the same.
Ryan Larson
Chicago, Ill.

As I read Schulz's essay, I found myself underlining, and then copying, sentences that left me breathless, as if I were reading a lyric poem. "Death is loss without the possibility of being found," for example, establishes the distinction between lost objects, which might at some future time still be found, and loss through death, which is unrecoverable. Loss both hopeful and hopeless. Schulz also extends her gaze to the recent loss, for so many of us, of the Presidential election, which has brought with it a trail of imminent collateral losses: "civil rights, personal safety, financial security, the foundational American values of respect for dissent and difference, the institutions and protections of democracy." Perhaps the only consolation for life's inevitable losses is the rediscovery of camaraderie, with its reminder that, even at our most desolate, we are not entirely alone.
Brandon French
Los Angeles, Calif.

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Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

For adults with advanced melanoma,
KEYTRUDA could be your first treatment option.

"LAST YEAR I WORRIED I'D BE JUST A PHOTO TO MY KIDS. TODAY I'M DRIVING THEM TO SCHOOL." — ERIK

KEYTRUDA will not work for everyone. Results may vary.

At the time of patient follow-up, 67% (185 of 277 patients) treated with KEYTRUDA every 3 weeks were alive, compared to 60% (166 of 278 patients) treated with ipilimumab.

A clinical trial compared patients with advanced melanoma who received KEYTRUDA every 2 weeks (279 patients) or 3 weeks (277 patients) with those who received ipilimumab (278 patients).

KEYTRUDA is a prescription medicine used to treat a kind of skin cancer called melanoma. KEYTRUDA may be used when your melanoma has spread or cannot be removed by surgery (advanced melanoma).

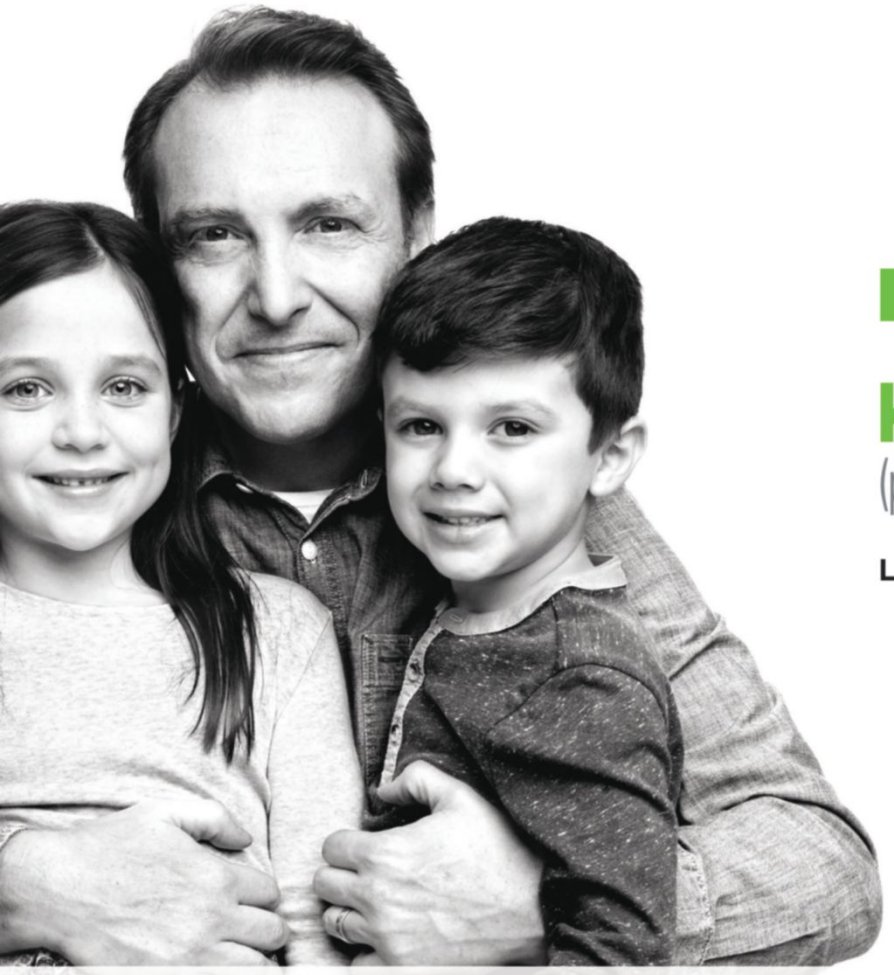
It is not known if KEYTRUDA is safe and effective in children less than 18 years of age.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Call or see your doctor right away if you develop any symptoms of the following problems or these symptoms get worse:

- **Lung problems (pneumonitis).** Symptoms of pneumonitis may include shortness of breath, chest pain, or new or worse cough.
- **Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine.** Signs and symptoms of colitis may include diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual; stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus; or severe stomach-area (abdomen) pain or tenderness.
- **Liver problems (hepatitis).** Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes, nausea or vomiting, pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen), dark urine, feeling less hungry than usual, or bleeding or bruising more easily than normal.
- **Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, and pancreas).** Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include rapid heartbeat, weight loss or weight gain, increased sweating, feeling more hungry or thirsty, urinating more often than usual, hair loss, feeling cold, constipation, your voice gets deeper, muscle aches, dizziness or fainting, or headaches that will not go away or unusual headache.
- **Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure.** Signs of kidney problems may include change in the amount or color of your urine.
- **Problems in other organs.** Signs of these problems may include rash, changes in eyesight, severe or persistent muscle or joint pains, severe muscle weakness, or low red blood cells (anemia).
- **Infusion (IV) reactions, that can sometimes be severe and life-threatening.** Signs and symptoms of infusion reactions may include chills or shaking, shortness of breath or wheezing, itching or rash, flushing, dizziness, fever, or feeling like passing out.

Getting medical treatment right away may help keep these problems from becoming more serious. Your doctor will check you for these problems during treatment with KEYTRUDA. Your doctor may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. Your doctor may also need to delay or completely stop treatment with KEYTRUDA if you have severe side effects. ***Important Safety Information is continued on the next page.***



IT'S TRU.

KEYTRUDA®
(pembrolizumab) Injection 100 mg

Learn more at keytruda.com.

Actor portrayal of a real patient from a clinical trial.

KEYTRUDA is a type of treatment called immunotherapy that may treat your advanced melanoma by working with your immune system. KEYTRUDA can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in many areas of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (*continued*)

Before you receive KEYTRUDA, tell your doctor if you have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus; have had an organ transplant; have lung or breathing problems; have liver problems; or have any other medical problems. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, tell your doctor. KEYTRUDA can harm your unborn baby. Females who are able to become pregnant should use an effective method of birth control during treatment and for at least 4 months after the final dose of KEYTRUDA. Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant during treatment with KEYTRUDA.

If you are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed, tell your doctor. It is not known if KEYTRUDA passes into your breast milk. Do not breastfeed during treatment with KEYTRUDA and for 4 months after your final dose of KEYTRUDA.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Common side effects of KEYTRUDA include feeling tired, itching, diarrhea, decreased appetite, rash, shortness of breath, constipation and nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA. Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Please read the adjacent Medication Guide for KEYTRUDA and discuss it with your doctor.

Ask your doctor if KEYTRUDA could be your first treatment option.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Having trouble paying for your Merck medicine? **Merck may be able to help. www.merckhelps.com**

MERCK

MEDICATION GUIDE

KEYTRUDA® (key-true-duh)
(pembrolizumab) for injection

KEYTRUDA® (key-true-duh)
(pembrolizumab) injection

What is the most important information I should know about KEYTRUDA?

KEYTRUDA is a medicine that may treat your melanoma, lung cancer, or head and neck cancer by working with your immune system. KEYTRUDA can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in many areas of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death.

Call or see your doctor right away if you develop any symptoms of the following problems or these symptoms get worse:

Lung problems (pneumonitis). Symptoms of pneumonitis may include:

- shortness of breath
- new or worse cough
- chest pain

Intestinal problems (colitis) that can lead to tears or holes in your intestine. Signs and symptoms of colitis may include:

- diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual
- stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus
- severe stomach-area (abdomen) pain or tenderness

Liver problems (hepatitis). Signs and symptoms of hepatitis may include:

- yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes
- nausea or vomiting
- pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen)
- dark urine
- feeling less hungry than usual
- bleeding or bruising more easily than normal

Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, and pancreas). Signs and symptoms that your hormone glands are not working properly may include:

- rapid heart beat
- weight loss or weight gain
- increased sweating
- feeling more hungry or thirsty
- urinating more often than usual
- hair loss
- feeling cold
- constipation
- your voice gets deeper
- muscle aches
- dizziness or fainting
- headaches that will not go away or unusual headache

Kidney problems, including nephritis and kidney failure. Signs of kidney problems may include:

- change in the amount or color of your urine.

Problems in other organs. Signs of these problems may include:

- rash
- changes in eyesight
- severe or persistent muscle or joint pains
- severe muscle weakness
- low red blood cells (anemia)

Infusion (IV) reactions, that can sometimes be severe and life-threatening. Signs and symptoms of infusion reactions may include:

- chills or shaking
- shortness of breath or wheezing
- itching or rash
- flushing
- dizziness
- fever
- feeling like passing out

Getting medical treatment right away may help keep these problems from becoming more serious. Your doctor will check you for these problems during treatment with KEYTRUDA. Your doctor may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. Your doctor may also need to delay or completely stop treatment with KEYTRUDA, if you have severe side effects.

What is KEYTRUDA?

KEYTRUDA is a prescription medicine used to treat:

- a kind of skin cancer called melanoma. KEYTRUDA may be used when your melanoma has spread or cannot be removed by surgery (advanced melanoma).
- a kind of lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). KEYTRUDA may be used when your lung cancer:
  - has spread (advanced NSCLC) **and,**
  - tests positive for "PD-L1" **and,**
    - you have not received chemotherapy to treat your advanced NSCLC and your tumor does not have an abnormal "EGFR" or "ALK" gene, **or**
    - you have received chemotherapy that contains platinum to treat your advanced NSCLC, and it did not work or it is no longer working, **and**
    - if your tumor has an abnormal "EGFR" or "ALK" gene, you have also received an EGFR or ALK inhibitor medicine and it did not work or is no longer working.
- a kind of cancer called head and neck squamous cell cancer (HNSCC). KEYTRUDA may be used when your HNSCC:
  - has returned or spread (advanced HNSCC) **and**
  - you have received chemotherapy that contains platinum to treat your advanced HNSCC, and it did not work or is no longer working.

It is not known if KEYTRUDA is safe and effective in children less than 18 years of age.

What should I tell my doctor before receiving KEYTRUDA?

Before you receive KEYTRUDA, tell your doctor if you:

- have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus
- have had an organ transplant
- have lung or breathing problems
- have liver problems
- have any other medical problems
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
  - KEYTRUDA can harm your unborn baby.
  - Females who are able to become pregnant should use an effective method of birth control during and for at least 4 months after the final dose of KEYTRUDA. Talk to your doctor about birth control methods that you can use during this time.
  - Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant during treatment with KEYTRUDA.
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.
  - It is not known if KEYTRUDA passes into your breast milk.
  - Do not breastfeed during treatment with KEYTRUDA and for 4 months after your final dose of KEYTRUDA.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

How will I receive KEYTRUDA?

- Your doctor will give you KEYTRUDA into your vein through an intravenous (IV) line over 30 minutes.
- KEYTRUDA is usually given every 3 weeks.
- Your doctor will decide how many treatments you need.
- Your doctor will do blood tests to check you for side effects.
- If you miss any appointments, call your doctor as soon as possible to reschedule your appointment.

What are the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA?

KEYTRUDA can cause serious side effects. See "What is the most important information I should know about KEYTRUDA?"

Common side effects of KEYTRUDA include: feeling tired, itching, diarrhea, decreased appetite, rash, shortness of breath, constipation, and nausea.

These are not all the possible side effects of KEYTRUDA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

General information about the safe and effective use of KEYTRUDA

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. If you would like more information about KEYTRUDA, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or nurse for information about KEYTRUDA that is written for healthcare professionals. For more information, go to www.keytruda.com.

What are the ingredients in KEYTRUDA?

Active ingredient: pembrolizumab

Inactive ingredients:
KEYTRUDA for injection: L-histidine, polysorbate 80, and sucrose. May contain hydrochloric acid/sodium hydroxide.
KEYTRUDA injection: L-histidine, polysorbate 80, sucrose, and Water for Injection, USP.

Manufactured by: Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., a subsidiary of **MERCK & CO., INC.,** Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889, USA

For KEYTRUDA for injection, at: Schering-Plough (Brinny) Co., County Cork, Ireland

For KEYTRUDA injection, at: MSD Ireland (Carlow), County Carlow, Ireland

U.S. License No. 0002

For patent information: www.merck.com/product/patent/home.html

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Revised: October 2016

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

ONCO-1206131-0000 01/17

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

"Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street," from 1979, may be Stephen Sondheim's masterpiece: a Grand Guignol thriller about a barber who slits his customers' throats and his merry accomplice, Mrs. Lovett, who bakes their remains into pies. In 2014, Tooting Arts Club staged its immersive version at Harrington's, one of London's oldest pie-and-mash shops. The production opens at the Barrow Street Theatre this week, complete with pie, mash, and its stars, Jeremy Secomb (above) and Siobhán McCarthy.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

All the Fine Boys
Abigail Breslin stars in Erica Schmidt's play, at the New Group, in which two teen-age girls in nineteen-eighties South Carolina pursue their crushes and grapple with adulthood. *(Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Opens March 1.)*

Bull in a China Shop
Bryna Turner's comedy, directed by Lee Sunday Evans for LCT3, follows forty years in the lives of the women's-education pioneer Mary Woolley and her partner, Jeannette Marks. *(Claire Tow, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. Opens March 1.)*

Come from Away
The Canadian duo Irene Sankoff and David Hein wrote this new musical, about a tiny Newfoundland town that was forced to accommodate thousands of stranded passengers on September 11, 2001. *(Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)*

The Emperor Jones
Obi Abili plays a despotic monarch who rules over a Caribbean island, in Ciarán O'Reilly's revival of the Eugene O'Neill drama. *(Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. In previews.)*

The Glass Menagerie
Sally Field stars as the redoubtable Southern matriarch Amanda Wingfield in Sam Gold's revival of the Tennessee Williams drama, opposite Joe Mantello, as Tom. *(Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)*

Miss Saigon
Cameron Mackintosh remounts the 1989 mega-musical, by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, and Richard Maltby, Jr., an update of "Madame Butterfly" set during the Vietnam War. *(Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)*

The Price
Mark Ruffalo, Danny DeVito, Jessica Hecht, and Tony Shalhoub star in the Roundabout's revival of the 1968 Arthur Miller play, about a man who returns to his childhood home to sell off his parents' estate. *(American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. In previews.)*

Significant Other
Joshua Harmon's angsty comedy moves to Broadway, starring Gideon Glick as a gay New Yorker searching for a life partner as his female friends keep finding husbands. Trip Cullman directs. *(Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. In previews. Opens March 2.)*

Sweat
A transfer of Lynn Nottage's drama, directed by Kate Whoriskey, in which a group of factory workers in Reading, Pennsylvania, find themselves at odds amid layoffs and pickets. *(Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin March 4.)*

War Paint
Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole play the rival cosmetics entrepreneurs Helena Rubinstein and Elizabeth Arden, in this new musical by Scott Frankel, Michael Korie, and Doug Wright. *(Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 866-870-2717. Previews begin March 7.)*

White Guy on the Bus
Delaware Theatre Company presents Bruce Graham's play, about a white businessman (Robert Cuccioli) and a black single mother (Danielle Leneé) who share a commute. *(59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Previews begin March 5.)*

NOW PLAYING

If I Forget
Family dramas are theatre's bread and butter, but when they are as expertly crafted as Steven Levenson's new play, at the Roundabout, you won't mind another helping of stage carbs. The siblings here are familiar archetypes, from the sanctimonious, underachieving youngest (Maria Dizzia) to the bossy, manicured oldest (Kate Walsh), with a passive-aggressive academic stuck in the middle (Jeremy Shamos). A conflict about money induces déjà vu as well, but Levenson (who also wrote the excellent book for "Dear Evan Hansen") paints internecine dynamics with deft dialogue and a keen sense of observation: note, for instance, how the spouses uneasily try to remain neutral as the alliances among brother and sisters shift. Fuelling the tension is a painful argument about Jewish identity and Zionism in modern America, but the show finds humor—sometimes dark, always affectionate—in the characters' predicament. *(Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)*

Kid Victory
Musicals have been dealing with dark subject matters for a long time, but few venture into waters as troubled as this new effort, from the composer John Kander and the book writer and lyricist Greg Pierce. A challenging, often disturbing piece, the show surveys family, love, and identity through the story of Luke (Brandon Flynn), a teen who was abducted by an older online friend (Jeffry Denman) and spent a year shackled in a basement. Pierce's unwieldy, narrative-heavy lyrics impart a characterless, post-Sondheimian quality to many of the numbers, and Luke himself never sings—a bold decision, suggesting his inability to express himself, but isn't singing to voice the unspeakable the whole point in musicals? Still, Liesl Tommy's production isn't afraid to make its audience uncomfortable, and it gets under your skin. *(Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)*

On the Exhale
It makes some kind of weird logical sense that if your seven-year-old son were killed in a school shooting you might feel crazy enough to buy the kind of assault rifle the gunman used, so that you could envision your boy through the crosshairs in the last moments of his life. And, if you were an angry single mother living in a community of smug, judgmental people, you might even contemplate turning that rifle on someone responsible for America's lax gun laws. The Tony-nominated actress Marin Ireland stands alone on an empty stage for an hour and tells this story, which should be devastating, but isn't; Ireland's performance, under Leigh Silverman's direction, is nuanced and entertaining, but Martín Zimmerman's tale is about events, not emotions. The story of the murder of a little boy should go deep, and this doesn't. *(Black Box, Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)*

Sunday in the Park with George
The sad truth about this revival of Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's beautiful musical is that the young director, Sarna Lapine, mars what could have been a lovely interpretation in the way she's orchestrated Phillip Boykin's performance. A powerhouse singer—he was an incredible Crown in "Porgy and Bess" several seasons back—Boykin basically plays an angry black man in the first act (set between 1884 and 1886, as Georges Seurat paints his masterwork "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte"), and then a ridiculously fluttery museum employee in the second act, sinking the show's theme of enlightenment. Jake Gyllenhaal gives his dual roles—Seurat and a contemporary artist named George—just the right amount of frenetic energy, brooding charm, and emotional nakedness. As his muse, Annaleigh Ashford brings wit, understanding, and melancholy to the proceedings. She's not a deep performer but an effective one, with an intuitive understanding of how the stage works. *(Hudson, 139-141 W. 44th St. 855-801-5876.)*

Sunset Boulevard
As Norma Desmond, in Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1993 musical adaptation of the 1950 film (directed by Lonny Price, with book and lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton), Glenn Close wears a turban, scarves, and florid gowns in black, white, and shades of gold, her eyes obscured by sunglasses, and her lips painted a murderous red. Norma is a creature from another age: a former movie star who made it in the silent-film era, when audiences fell for a star's face, not her voice. Now—it's the nineteen-fifties—she lives in a kind of mausoleum on Sunset Boulevard. The show's atmosphere is at once messy and banal; its relentless pop façade and the constant drama of its music preclude intimacy and distance us from feeling, while encouraging a kind of aggressive contempt. None of the characters are truly big, let alone human. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/27/17.) *(Palace, Seventh Ave. at 47th St. 877-250-2929.)*

ALSO NOTABLE

Dear Evan Hansen Music Box. • **Evening at the Talk House** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Everybody** Pershing Square Signature Center. (Reviewed in this issue.) • **Fade** Cherry Lane. *Through March 5.* • **How to Transcend a Happy Marriage** Mitzi E. Newhouse. • **In Transit** Circle in the Square. • **Jitney** Samuel J. Friedman. • **Joan of Arc: Into the Fire** Public. • **The Light Years** Playwrights Horizons. • **Linda** City Center Stage I. • **Man from Nebraska** Second Stage. • **Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812** Imperial. • **The Object Lesson** New York Theatre Workshop. • **The Outer Space** Joe's Pub. • **The Penitent** Atlantic Theatre Company. • **The Present** Ethel Barrymore. • **The Skin of Our Teeth** Polonsky Shakespeare Center. • **The Town Hall Affair** The Performing Garage. *Through March 4.* • **The View UpStairs** Lynn Redgrave. • **Wakey, Wakey** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Yen** Lucille Lortel. *Through March 4.*

MOVIES

OPENING

Before I Fall Ry Russo-Young directed this drama, based on a novel by Lauren Oliver, about a young woman (Zoey Deutch) who is forced to relive the last day of her life. Co-starring Liv Hewson, Jennifer Beals, and Logan Miller. *Opening March 3. (In wide release.)* • **Catfight** Sandra Oh, Anne Heche, and Alicia Silverstone star in this comedy, about former college friends whose rivalry is rekindled in adulthood. Directed by Onur Tukel. *Opening March 3. (In limited release.)* • **Donald Cried** Kris Avedisian directed and stars in this drama, about a lonely man who encounters a former high-school acquaintance (Jesse Wakeman). *Opening March 3. (In limited release.)* • **The Human Surge** A documentary by Eduardo Williams, about the intercontinental connections of modern life. *Opening March 3. (Metrograph.)* • **Logan** Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. *Opening March 3. (In wide release.)*

NOW PLAYING

Boy

Borrowing a sentimental trope from classic Japanese films—two young boys in mild conflict with their parents—the director Nagisa Oshima, in this 1969 drama, offers a quietly bilious vision of mercenary corruption and postwar trauma. Based on a true story, the film centers on a ten-year-old who, for most of the film, goes unnamed. His father and stepmother call him Kiddo (his toddler brother is Pee-Wee), and they make him work: he's forced to pretend to be hit by cars in order to extort money from drivers. The family stays a step ahead of the law by keeping on the move; the action flits from picturesque towns on Japan's western coast to snowbound Hokkaido, and Oshima depicts them all sumptuously, contemplating teeming cityscapes and desolate byways in coolly ravishing wide-screen images even while filling them with scenes of crime and cruelty. This family's pathological rounds of abuse and abandonment reach back to wartime; the father's crippling wounds fuel his rage at Japanese society, and graceful performances of classical songs about martial duty conjure a litany of enduring oppressions. In Japanese.—*Richard Brody (BAM Cinématek; March 4.)*

A Cure for Wellness

The director Gore Verbinski inflates a story ready-made for a brisk Gothic shocker into a bloated, self-important mess. A fast-rising young New York investment banker named Lockhart (Dane DeHaan) is dispatched to a clinic in the Swiss Alps to see Pembroke (Harry Groener), a former colleague whose signature is needed on a merger agreement. But the spa turns out to be a Roach Motel for elderly plutocrats—they check in but they don't check out. Lockhart gets stuck there, too, and he soon suspects that the clinic's suave director, Heinrich Volmer (Jason Isaacs), is up to no good; a prepubescent girl named Hannah (Mia Goth), whom Volmer treats as his "special patient," is a dead giveaway. The clinic's therapies range from subtle gaslighting to blatant mutilation; Verbinski plays the creepy, creaky tale for class conflict and anti-corporate satire, but he makes every frame of the film look expensive. With colossal chambers filled with elaborately macabre pseudo-scientific devices and ironic pageantry celebrating horror with forced glee, the director takes extravagance for substance and gimmickry for style; the results are show-offy, tasteless, and empty.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

Daguerréotypes

One of the great modern documentaries, Agnès Varda's 1976 portrait of shopkeepers on the street where she lives—Rue Daguerre, in Paris—established a new genre, affectionate anthropology. Starting with the quirky pharmacy where her teenage daughter, Rosalie, buys homemade perfumes, Varda peeps in on the rounds of commerce that keep the street vital. In the process, she exalts the sights and sounds, the very savor of daily life—the crust of fresh-baked baguettes, the alkaline allure of fresh-cut steaks, the sumptuousness of hand-stitched fabrics. She also sees what makes the street run: money (five francs for a cutlet, ninety centimes for evaporated milk) and the migration from the countryside to the city in pursuit of it. Observing traditional crafts and trades with loving fascination, Varda empathetically evokes their paradoxes—the depth of practical knowledge, the lack of variety in experience. These small-business owners (mainly long-married couples) may have no bosses, but they're tethered like serfs to their shops; even their dreams are colonized by the crush of daily details. Meanwhile, scenes of a local magician at work in a café hint at the origins of Varda's own enticing craft.—*R.B. (French Institute Alliance Française; March 7.)*

Fifty Shades Darker

The title is a lie, for starters. Once again, two white people fall for each other and go to bed: What could be paler than that? Since the first movie, little has changed. Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson) now works as an editor's assistant, but Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) still wears the perplexed look of a man who can't decide what to do with his time, his spare billions, or his ratcheted ankle cuffs. If anything, their relationship this time around takes a discreet step backward, into old-style courtship, complete with dinner and a yacht. True, she expresses a weakness for vanilla sex, whereas his preference, one suspects, is for Chunky Monkey, but that's easily fixed. The director is James Foley, who used to make thrillers with a certain grip, like "At Close Range" (1986), but here, confronted with E. L. James's slab-like novel, he struggles to locate a plot. The heroine's boss (Eric Johnson) becomes a designated villain, and Kim Basinger plays the old flame who, long ago, taught Mr. Grey all the mysteries of the boudoir. But that's it for thrills, unless you count the nicely polished performance from a pair of love balls.—*Anthony Lane (In wide release.)*

Frownland

This amazingly accomplished first feature by Ronald Bronstein, made with a crew of four for seemingly little more than the cost of film stock, throbs with energy and vision. The story concerns the struggles of a nearly aphasic, socially challenged yet smart, painfully self-aware, and desperately lonely young man to get through his days and nights. Keith (Dore Mann) is the odd man out in the crew of chirpy losers with whom he works selling coupon books door to door; he has a woman friend, Laura (Mary Wall, Bronstein's wife), who is even more tormented and self-destructive than he is, and an irresponsible roommate whose own travails end in ruin. Bronstein specializes in moments of embarrassment and minor emotional bruises which ramp gentle humor up to searing pain. With a sharp eye for telling details, he avoids satire and sentiment; his characters have a rare complexity, which is matched by the furious empathy of his incisive and rough-textured images. Mann, a distant cousin of Bronstein's, delivers a transfixing performance; his clenched jaws, squinting eyes, and stifled speech avoid all stereotypes as he brings the character to life from within. Released in 2008.—*R.B. (Alamo Drafthouse Brooklyn; March 5.)*

I Am Not Your Negro

The entire voice-over narration (spoken by Samuel L. Jackson) of Raoul Peck's incisive documentary is derived from the writings of James Baldwin, whose unfinished memoir and study of the lives of three slain civil-rights leaders—Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.—provides the movie's through line. Peck adds a generous selection of archival footage showing the heroes of Baldwin's project at work and detailing Baldwin's own intellectual activism at times of crisis. Moving from divisions within the civil-rights movement (including those separating Malcolm X from King) to its unities, Peck also spotlights Baldwin's analysis of the yet unbridged gap between the legal end of segregation and the practice of white supremacy. (Unredressed police killings of black Americans, as Peck shows, are a crucial and enduring result of that ideology.) The filmmaker cannily cites Baldwin's remarkable writings about movies to illustrate the author's overarching thesis, about the country's tragic failure of consciousness; Peck's references to current events reveal Baldwin's view of history and his prophetic visions to be painfully accurate.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

John Wick: Chapter 2

As the title character, Keanu Reeves flings himself vigorously into the martial-arts gyrations and choreographed gunplay of this high-body-count thriller, but these maneuvers offer as slight a sense of physical presence as do C.G.I. contrivances. This sequel features him, once again, as a retired hit man forced back into action—this time, he's compelled to travel to Rome to kill a Mob queen (Claudia Gerini), whose brother (Riccardo Scamarcio) covets her position. Wick scampers through the catacombs beneath her villa while blasting heads to a pulp. He tumbles down staircases while battling her bodyguard (Common); the two soon continue their fight in New York. The director, Chad Stahelski, revels in a contract-killer underworld that's hidden in plain sight (Manhattan's buskers, homeless, and rumpled passersby are in on the worldwide conspiracy), and he gives its bureaucracy an anachronistically picturesque back office filled with paraphernalia seemingly left over from a Wes Anderson shoot. But the paranoid jolts are played mainly for giggles, and a vast set piece in a mirrored museum exhibit unleashes showers of stage blood but hardly a drop of emotion.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

Land of Mine

At the end of the Second World War, Denmark has been liberated, but its western coast is a

International Relations

Will Holland's cultural exchanges.

Will Holland at home in Brooklyn, New York.

British musician Will Holland, aka Quantic, has been making records all over the world for more than twenty years. He has always found inspiration through travel, and his obsession with collecting music led to a love affair with South American sounds and a six-year stint living in Colombia. Now based in Brooklyn, Holland invited us into his home and studio as part of Lincoln's *Continental Stories* video series. View the video now on **newyorker.com**, and turn to the following page to see the sheet music from a favorite song Holland wrote in Colombia. Below, he talks about how travel impacts him, and his mutually beneficial relationship with the music of Latin America.

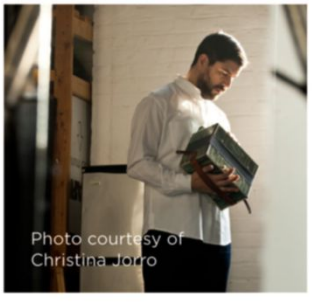


Photo courtesy of Christina Jorro

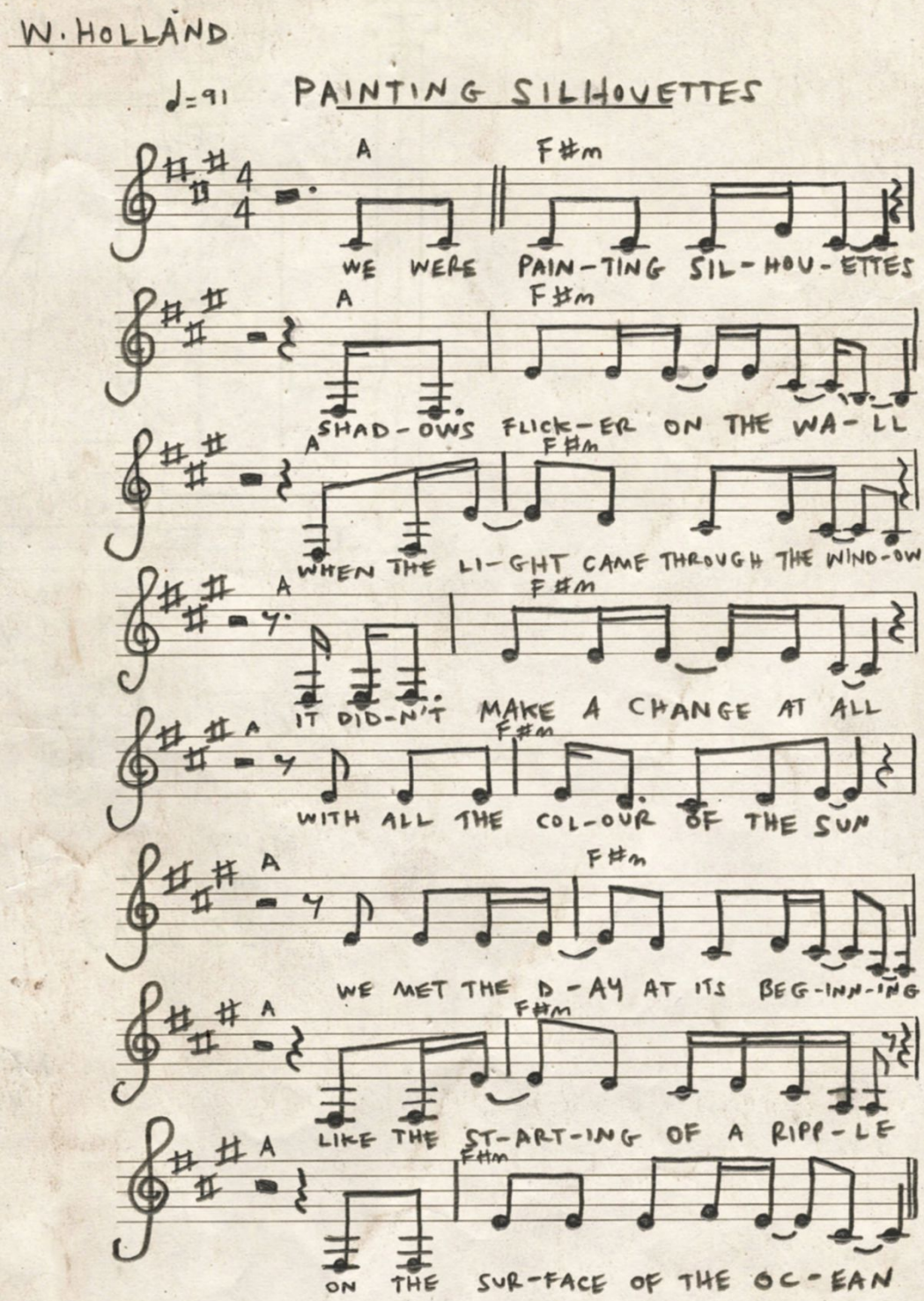
You often work within Latin American genres — what do you, as a foreigner, bring to them?
I believe I add an outside ear to the equation. With recording sessions, nothing is certain when you turn on the lights in the morning, but when you turn them off at night you have something on tape — it's about having the faith and perseverance to look for it. A lot of well-planned sessions between excellent musicians don't come up with an interesting vibe because things are too planned. Part of my job is to bring unexpected people together from different countries and walks of life.

Are you adding to existing musical traditions?
Sometimes I'm adding, at other times I'm adapting. I work with traditional rhythms and structures and try to give them a new twist. This is what musicians have been doing for years, but working with current sounds and music technology can give it a modernity and an up-to-date sound. I guess I've become known for adapting or reworking musical styles with modern production, but doing it in a way that doesn't damage the strength and intent of the song in question. I work a lot with percussionists who have a good knowledge of their folklore, but also know how to adapt to new rhythms of this generation. In Cuba, I've found drummers to be the most forward thinking.

You travel a lot to record and perform, how has it affected you?
It allows you to see from a new perspective. There's something within travel that keeps the mind ticking, and personally I feel my best as a musician when I'm on the road. Meeting new people and traversing new cities is exciting, and the energy of those long days translates into good memories. Heartache and nostalgia also come into play — songwriting is often hard without yearning or missing something or someone. In a way, my travels have made me who I am today. I like the idea of travel within music, too — the sense of exploration and descent into other worlds through sound. Music has always been an escape for me, but not in the sense of running away from something, more like an adventure.

What have you learned about yourself through travel?
That I can sleep through anything — gunfire, cockfights and baby goats, but not all at once. You should always dress nicely for the plane with a good hat. If you leave the house with a purpose it's normally a good thing, but the tangents can also lead to experiences that gather more value with time. Never complain about diversions in your journey — they can sometimes be the best thing about travel.

Overleaf: Handwritten sheet music from an original composition by Will Holland.



"Painting Silhouettes is a song I wrote in 2013. It speaks to the feelings and emotions one may feel in *'La Madrugada'* or early morning hours, when shadows and light dance on walls and the conscious and unconscious swirl around in the same glass. Sometimes the night can meet the light of the morning too early, taking the night by surprise and leaving it to hurry away into its shadows until another evening."

–Will Holland

minefield. Justice demands that the enemy, having planted the mines, should now be forced to unearth and deactivate them. Along one stretch of beach, that wretched task is assigned to a bunch of German prisoners, most of them scarcely more than kids. (The casualty rate is much as you would expect.) In charge of this group is a Danish sergeant, Carl Rasmussen (Roland Møller), whose vengeful brutality, at the start, yields to a more compassionate approach. Not every viewer will believe in that moral softening, or concur with the director, Martin Zandvliet, in his eagerness to present the German lads as innocuous victims. Nonetheless, it's impossible to deny the tension of the film or, thanks to the cinematographer, Camilla Hjelm, its frightening formal grace; we move from wide and tranquil vistas of dunes to closeups of nervous fingers, unscrewing fuses and scrabbling in the sand. In Danish.—*A.L. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13 & 20/17.) (In limited release.)*

The Lego Batman Movie

When does knowingness become just another shtick? That is the conundrum posed by Chris McKay's film, which clicks into place as a solid sequel to "The Lego Movie" (2014). This time, the action kicks off not with industrious good cheer but with a sly dig at the opening of every superhero saga—the black screen, the ominous score, and so forth. The hero in question is Batman (voiced again by Will Arnett), who hangs out in his lair with the courteous Alfred (Ralph Fiennes) but has no real friends; instead, he must make do with loyal enemies, such as the Joker (Zach Galifianakis), who promptly releases an entire plague of villains on a beleaguered Gotham. The filmmaker's plan is twofold: first, to cram the screen with pullulating detail, leaving us not just agog but aghast at all the gags that we missed as they flew by; and, second, against expectation, to steer the plot away from cynicism and toward a brand of domestic innocence—family values, no less. The whole thing might almost be a nod to the Lego ethic of yore. Michael Cera plays Robin, Mariah Carey plays a mayor, and Siri plays a computer. Of course she does.—*A.L. (In wide release.)*

A United Kingdom

A love story, but only just. In 1947, in London, and in defiance of the fog and the rain, a clerk named Ruth Williams (Rosamund Pike) meets Seretse Khama (David Oyelowo), who turns out to be the heir to a tribal throne in Bechuanaland. Without ado, they fall for each other and get married, to the indignant dismay of pretty much everyone, from the bride's father (Nicholas Lyndhurst) and the groom's royal uncle (Vusi Kunene) to a sizable wing of the British establishment. Things only get worse for the couple when they fly to his homeland, where Ruth finds herself disdained, for a while, by black and white women alike. Amma Asante's film, written by Guy Hibbert, has many themes piled on its plate, some of them far from digestible. We get large chunks of constitutional politics, plenty of stuff about Anglo-South African relations at the unsavory end of an empire, and a subplot about diamond mines. Oyelowo remains a commanding presence, especially in front of a crowd, but the movie affords him a fraction of the opportunity that "Selma" provided, and there are times when the romantic origins of the crisis all but vanish from sight. With Jack Davenport, as a Foreign Office cad.—*A.L. (2/13 & 20/17) (In limited release.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY LILIDESBELLONS

NIGHT LIFE

The Selector

Jonathan Toubin's raucous Soul Clap party celebrates its tenth birthday.

AT FORTY-FIVE YEARS old, the rock and soul d.j. Jonathan Toubin has established himself as the city's most reliable jockey for stripped-down rhythm and blues and rock and roll of a mid-century vintage. What started a decade ago as a down-and-dirty all-vinyl dance party has blossomed into a local institution, the New York Night Train Soul Clap and Dance-Off. This month is its tin anniversary, no small feat for an underground party, especially in New York City. On March 3, Toubin celebrates with a jam-packed show at Warsaw, the cozy, wood-panelled live room at the Polish National Home, in Greenpoint—though the event's legendary dance contest will still be held, this time Toubin won't spin a single record.

The party is Toubin's signature contribution to New York night life, but he remains skeptical of its success. "Good parties don't plan on running for more than one night," he told me recently, sitting in his pajamas in his apartment in Williamsburg, where he's lived for nearly as long as he's hosted Soul Clap. At the outset, the event was profoundly disorganized ("I got kicked out myself a few times," Toubin said), but the basic formula was simple: the d.j. spun rare 45s from the nineteen-fifties and sixties; a short dance contest happened in the middle; the best dancer was determined by a community panel of judges; and a cash prize was awarded. When the North Brooklyn service industry got off work, Toubin's parties were the place to be. Most of his audiences weren't familiar with the songs they were dancing to, but that was never really the point. It was music meant for sweaty dance floors and shaking hips, the same today as it was during the Eisenhower Administration.

For the anniversary party, Toubin is flying in some of his favorite musicians to bring his vinyl to life: Archie Bell, Joe Bataan, Maxine Brown, Young Jessie, and Ural Thomas, all artists with classic hits from the fifties and sixties, will be on hand, joined by a few other, slightly newer acts, including David Johansen, of the New York Dolls. The performers will play a few songs each, a throwback to the postwar rhythm-revue format, in which a handful of artists appeared on one bill, backed by a single band (led here by the Los Angeles guitarist Nick Waterhouse). Toubin is most excited for Irma Thomas, of New Orleans, a tough, pioneering soul singer. "She's the dream artist," he said. "The real deal." After years of incubating an audience, he's earned the ambitious bill; how often is the d.j. allowed to be selfish? "It's going to lose money," Toubin said with a chuckle, "even if we sell out."

—*Benjamin Shapiro*

ROCK AND POP

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

inc. no world
This Los Angeles duo (previously known as inc., and Teen inc. before that) is composed of the brothers Andrew and Daniel Aged, former touring and session musicians who bring a mellow and spacey style to their homemade R. & B.-lite. Their shape-shifting image and sound is part of their appeal, whether they're collaborating with fellow avant-pop acts like FKA Twigs or contributing to the all-original soundtrack for the video-game series Grand Theft Auto. For this gig at Baby's All Right, they are joined by **Starchild and the New Romantic,** a beloved New York guitarist and vocalist who's stepped forward from backing the likes of Solange and Blood Orange with a record of his own, and **Physical Therapy,** an electronic d.j. who cut his teeth on the GHE20 G0TH1K rave circuit and as the tour d.j. for the rapper Mykki Blanco. *(146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. March 2.)*

Kingdom and Rizzla
The electronic producer and d.j. Kingdom celebrates the release of his début album, the cheekily titled "Tears in the Club," at this Queens rave haven. Rizzla supports his Fade to Mind labelmate, but stands out in his own right as a bristling d.j. and producer who combines sharp industrial dance sounds with Caribbean rhythms—while deriding peers who do the same without proper homage to the music's originators. On his haunting six-minute composition "Homothanatic," Rizzla contrasts snippets of Christian evangelicals talking down life styles they see as sinful with descriptions of sexual-rebirth rituals, a comment on conversion therapy over droning synths and chords. His sets are pulsing clinics in dance and trance, with extended detours into dewy reggaeton and dancehall medleys. *(Knockdown Center, 52-19 Flushing Ave., Maspeth. knockdown.center. March 4.)*

Danny Krivit
In 1971, on the advice of a friend who owned the Stonewall Inn, Bobby Krivit converted the Ninth Circle, his fledgling West Village lounge and steakhouse, into a gay bar, to serve the neighborhood's growing queer community. Business boomed quite literally overnight, and, to keep his new basement disco churning, Bobby had his stepson Danny program tapes with dance music and custom edits. That same year, Danny met James Brown, who gave him a white-label copy of "Get on the Good Foot"; thus began a decorated career as a d.j. and promoter for landmark clubs throughout New York City, including the Loft, Area, Limelight, and the Paradise Garage. Krivit headlines Discotechnique, with support from **Rok One, David Kiss,** and **Zephyr Ann.** *(House of Yes, 2 Wyckoff Ave., Brooklyn. houseofyes.org. March 3.)*

Migra Punk Fest
"NO Racism. NO Sexism. NO Homophobia," reads the terse Facebook listing for this hardcore jam, before employing a Filipino swear that calls to mind many easily imaginable English equivalents: "*Tanginamo Trump!*" The bands that will tear through the evening all draw from their genre's steel-eyed inclusivity and anti-establishment ethos to voice third-world rage: the lineup includes **Kadena,** Filipino punk veterans who've been playing around the city for more than a decade; **Material Support,** a new, brilliantly sardonic agit-punk outfit from Queens; and the fastcore band **AninoKo,** from the Bay Area, who round out the otherwise local-leaning bill. Their recent single, "Tangina Mo Trump," clocks in at just twenty-three seconds, and costs a hundred dollars to download. *(Silent Barn, 603 Bushwick Ave., Brooklyn. 929-234-6060. March 3.)*

Power Trip
This Dallas-Fort Worth crossover act has been playing for a little more than half a decade, accruing adoration from critics and scenesters alike, first from the punk community and now, in the wake of tours with Napalm Death and Lamb of God, increasingly from the wide world of metal. Their second LP, "Nightmare Logic," released in February, was one of the most highly anticipated records in aggressive music in recent memory. The popular thrash group **Iron Reagan** supports them on the East Coast; for tri-state dates, including this Webster Hall appearance, the Pittsburgh punk act **Concealed Blade** and the up-and-coming New York favorites **Krimewatch** join the fun. *(125 E. 11th St. 212-353-1600. March 2.)*

The So So Glos
Alex and Ryan Levine, Matt Elkin, and Zach Staggers are revered names in New York's D.I.Y. punk scene for reasons that go beyond the ripping gigs they've stomped through for almost a decade. Formed in Bay Ridge garages around 2007, the So So Glos boast a dirty beach sound with metropolitan hooks: "There's a handful of kids on my block, they're crying," Ryan sings on the 2009 track "My Block." "They all tell me New York City is dying." It's the kind of thing that locals love to say, but few have taken as much action as this band, which helped to establish the performance spaces Market Hotel and Shea Stadium, venues that nurture young area bands and fans of all ages. *(Brooklyn Bazaar, 150 Greenpoint Ave. bkbazaar.com. March 3.)*

Thundercat
This Los Angeles bassist, born Stephen Brunner, has been an under-sung treasure for years, emerging from behind his instrument with a sun-soaked falsetto and a twisted sense of humor—on his latest single, "Friend Zone," he blows off an inconsistent date to play Mortal Kombat. He has nestled himself in his city's young jazz scene, which has shed the genre's strict formalities and drawn out its parallels in dance music and hip-hop in refreshing, forward-thinking ways. From collaborations with Flying Lotus and Kendrick Lamar to his own adventurous solo albums, Brunner consistently tests the limits of his form with inspired results, offering a brawny alternative to pop R. & B. that never takes itself too seriously. He tours in support of his new album, "Drunk." *(Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl. 212-777-6800. March 3.)*

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

"Django a Gogo"
The music of the legendary Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt can be ultra-romantic in its keening Gallic charm. But, with its finger-busting guitar and violin dashes, it's not for the faint of heart, either. Among the acoustic six-string athletes at this celebration of *jazz manouche* are Stephane Wrembel, Stochelo Rosenberg, and Al Di Meola, the latter best known for his lightning sprints with electric fusion ensembles. *(Carnegie Hall, Seventh Ave. at 57th St. 212-247-7800. March 3.)*

Dave Douglas
The compelling trumpeter and new-jazz conceptualist Douglas is obviously not a man with a frail ego. For his "Metamorphosis" project, he's surrounding himself with some of the most acclaimed names from jazz's cutting edge, both primary veteran players—including his fellow-trumpeter **Wadada Leo Smith,** the saxophonist **Oliver Lake,** and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille**—and such essential instrumentalists as the pianist **Myra Melford,** the percussionist **Susie Ibarra,** the bassist **Mark Dresser,** and the guitarist **Marc Ribot.** *(Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. March 4.)*

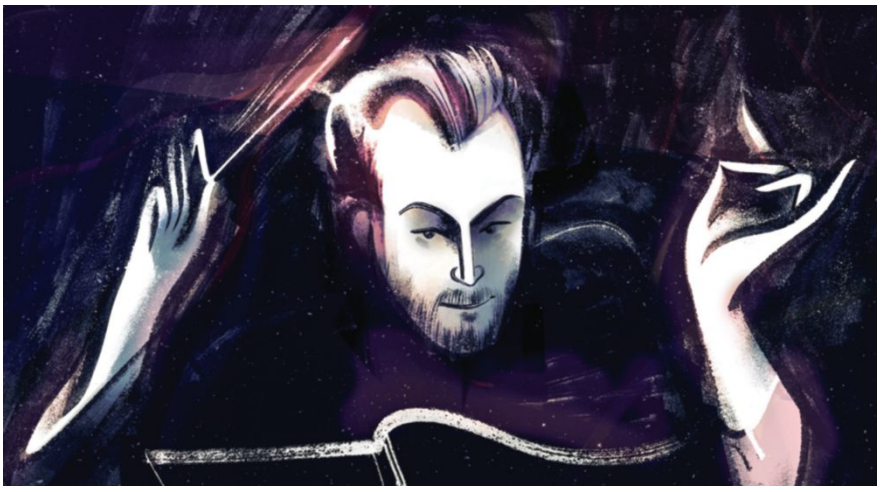
Dan Levinson
Although we naturally associate the Gypsy jazz of the iconic Django Reinhardt with guitars and violins (as exemplified by the Quintette du Hot Club de France, which Reinhardt co-led with Stéphane Grappelli), the clarinet also found its place in his swirling and evocative music. Levinson, long a key figure on the traditional-jazz scene, takes an affectionate look at the Belgian titan's durable legacy, supported by **Koran Agan** and **Josh Kaye** on guitars and **Eduardo Belo** on bass. *(Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. March 5.)*

MVP Jazz Quartet: "Remembering James Williams and Mulgrew Miller"
Williams and Miller were truly M.V.P. pianists who, although gifted with firm, individualistic instrumental voices, could fit into any given jazz situation. Unfortunately, both died too soon. A quartet of veteran players and peers celebrates their fortifying contributions: the pianist **Donald Brown,** the saxophonist **Bobby Watson,** the bassist **Ray Drummond,** and the drummer **Marvin (Smitty) Smith.** *(Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, Broadway at 60th St. 212-258-9595. March 3-5.)*

Oscar Noriega
With alto saxophone and clarinets in tow, Noriega has been the man to call when the heavy guns of the new-jazz scene need extra firepower. This in-demand support player steps into the spotlight to lead a slew of groups that, in various configurations, will feature such luminaries as the guitarists **Mary Halvorson** and **Jeff Parker,** the drummers **Pheeroan akLaff** and **Ches Smith,** and the saxophonist and frequent Noriega collaborator **Tim Berne.** *(The Stone, Avenue C at 2nd St. thestonenyc.com. Through March 5.)*

"Eddie Palmieri: Celebrating 80 Years"
A giant of Latin music, the pianist, composer, arranger, and bandleader Palmieri has spent the past six decades fusing idiomatic musical sources from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Caribbean with modern jazz, producing imaginative and inexorably propulsive sounds in the process. For this eightieth-birthday celebration, Palmieri, a formidable improviser himself, will extend his razor-sharp ensemble with guests from various editions of his former bands. *(Rose Theatre, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. March 3-4.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC



Andris Nelsons conducts new works by Sofia Gubaidulina and George Benjamin at Carnegie Hall.

Contemporary Boston

A vibrant young music director brushes up his new-music bona fides.

ANDRIS NELSONS, THE LATVIAN conductor who is in his third season as music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has been justly criticized—along with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Jaap van Zweden, the music-director designates at the Met and the New York Philharmonic—for lacking a strong profile in the area of contemporary music. But his current series of concerts with the B.S.O. at Carnegie Hall (Feb. 28-March 2) can be considered a kind of response to that charge, whether intended as such or not.

Nelsons's approach with the series is not only generous but holistic. The middle concert has no new work, but begins with a mid-twentieth-century classic, "Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee," by Gunther Schuller, a brilliant musical polymath who tried to merge the best of the Germanic tradition with the liberating force of American jazz. Beethoven's "Eroica" Symphony, an appropriate complement to Schuller's trenchant personality, ends the concert, with a Mozart piano concerto (played by Emanuel Ax) calmly nestled in between.

The two flanking programs feature important New York premières. The first pairs Shostakovich's "Leningrad" Symphony, an iconic Russian work, with the new Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Bayan by Sofia Gubaidulina, the last indisputable compositional genius in a tradition that goes back to Mikhail Glinka, in the mid-nineteenth century. Over her long career, Gubaidulina has crafted works whose intense and austere spirituality (she is a devout Christian) is rendered beautiful by her precise and exploratory knowledge of the technical possibilities of instruments—in this case, the bayan, the Russian button accordion. The English master George Benjamin has been broadly admired in New York since his opera "Written on Skin" rocked the Mostly Mozart Festival in the summer of 2015; Benjamin's musical language, unapologetically modernist but deeply alluring, is a stream of lulling consonance and violent dissonance which has its roots in the sensual but strictly calculated music of his idol, Olivier Messiaen. In the final concert, the countertenor Bejun Mehta and the Lorelei Ensemble, a women's chamber chorus from Boston, join the B.S.O. in Benjamin's "Dream of the Song," a setting of English translations of texts from the medieval golden age of Sephardic poetry in Andalusia and of Spanish texts by Lorca. French classics by Ravel and Berlioz (the "Symphonie Fantastique") will be its sympathetic companions.

—Russell Platt

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMAN MURADOV

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera
Richard Eyre's production of **"Werther"** pairs traditional costumes with sweeping, cinematic video projections, turning Massenet's opera about a moony, melancholic poet into an efficiently plotted Romantic period film. Vittorio Grigolo's Werther is a temperamental, artistic soul, alternating sensitive reveries with self-dramatizing outbursts; Isabel Leonard's self-possessed Charlotte is the perfect foil, her voice glowing gently, like warm embers. The conductor, Edward Gardner, savors the opera's subtle, subdued colors and sumptuous scoring. *March 4 at 1.* • The productions of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle—a director in the grand style, who staged half a dozen operas for the Met in the nineteen-seventies and eighties—are invariably being replaced in the Peter Gelb era. But audiences can still experience a bit of history with the current revival of his **"Idomeneo,"** which provided the opera with its company première, in 1982. Two first-rate Mozarteans, the conductor James Levine and the tenor Matthew Polenzani (in the title role), lead a cast that includes Alice Coote, Nadine Sierra, and Elza van den Heever. *March 6 at 7:30.* • **Also playing:** The soprano Sonya Yoncheva donned Violetta's famous red cocktail dress in Willy Decker's deconstructed take on **"La Traviata,"** in 2015, but after her stunning turn as Desdemona in a high-profile production of Verdi's "Otello," later the same year, there is heightened interest in her portrayal of the noble courtesan. Michael Fabiano and Thomas Hampson complete the trio of leads; Nicola Luisotti. *March 1 and March 7 at 7:30 and March 4 at 8.* • Mary Zimmerman's new production of **"Rusalka,"** Dvořák's version of the "Little Mermaid" story, takes the delicate water nymph of the title on a journey from a lush forest idyll to a hostile human world aflame with passions she doesn't understand. Kristine Opolais, a vibrant Rusalka, is joined by Brandon Jovanovich, Katarina Dalayman, Jamie Barton (in a career-making performance as the witch, Ježibaba), and Eric Owens; Mark Elder. (This is the final performance.) *March 2 at 7:30.* • With a new production by Bartlett Sher, the Met finally has a **"Roméo et Juliette"** that suits both Shakespeare's tragedy and Gounod's rhapsodic music. After its successful première, earlier in the season, it returns with a new cast and conductor: Pretty Yende and Stephen Costello are the impassioned couple, with Emmanuel Villaume, an expert in French repertory, in the pit. *March 3 at 8. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)*

Philadelphia Orchestra: "Bluebeard's Castle"
The Met's dynamic music-director designate, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, leads his glorious Philadelphians in a concert of starkly contrasting works. Selections from Tchaikovsky's enchanting ballet "Swan Lake" lead into a concert performance of Bartók's probing, kaleidoscopic opera, featuring John Relyea and Michelle DeYoung as the dark Duke Bluebeard and his doomed bride. *March 7 at 8. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic
The Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach, born in 1973, tends to favor conventional form and harmony, crafting works infused with fantasy and passion. The fiery violinist Leonidas Kavakos is said to have urged the Philharmonic to commission Auerbach's fourth violin concerto, "NYx: Fractured

Dreams," and appears here in the work's première; the conductor Alan Gilbert also leads Mahler's buoyant Fourth Symphony, featuring the German soprano Christina Landshamer. *March 1-2 at 7:30 and March 3 at 8. (David Geffen Hall. 212-875-5656.)*

Juilliard415 and Yale Schola Cantorum
The two fine period-performance ensembles, regular collaborators, perform in Gotham before moving on to New Haven and a first-ever joint tour (to India). The program is piquant and diverse: in between chestnuts by Rameau (dances from the operas "Les Indes Galantes," "Les Boréades," and "Naïs") and Bach (the Magnificat) comes a world première by the young composer Reena Esmail, "This Love Between Us: Prayers for Unity," in which the groups will be joined by performers on sitar and tabla. David Hill conducts. *March 2 at 7:30. (Alice Tully Hall. events.juilliard.edu.)*

St. Petersburg Philharmonic
As the Leningrad Philharmonic, this august Russian institution gave the world première of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, in November of 1937. Nearly eighty years later, the popular yet enigmatic work now figures into the orchestra's latest tour under the leadership of the veteran maestro Yuri Temirkanov, its principal conductor. It is paired with Brahms's stormy Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, a showcase for the dexterous pianist Nikolai Lugansky. *March 4 at 7. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

RECITALS

National Sawdust: "Spring Revolution"
For up-and-coming venues, mounting a festival is a great way to get attention, and this exuberantly youthful Williamsburg music club is pursuing that goal ardently with a series of concerts in March addressing vital contemporary issues. The first week's theme is "Female Empowerment," which embraces a variety of events. It's launched by Amanda Gookin, the cellist of PUBLIQuartet, who offers a concert as part of her Forward Music Project: seven world premières for solo cello with electronics and video (by Angélica Negron, Amanda Feery, and others), made in response to social-justice issues, such as abortion access. *March 1 at 7. (80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. For tickets and a full schedule of events, visit nationalsawdust.org.)*

Miller Theatre "Composer Portrait": Misato Mochizuki
Mochizuki, a young Japanese composer on the rise—whose education included a stint at IRCAM, the computer-music research center in Paris founded by Pierre Boulez—is Miller's next talent to reckon with. The musicians involved are impeccable: the JACK Quartet and the piano-and-percussion quartet Yarn/Wire, performing the U.S. premières of "Terres Rouge," "Au Bleu Bois," and other works. *March 2 at 8. (Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.)*

Brooklyn Art Song Society: "Cabaret Night"
In the last of five concerts celebrating the abundant musical glories of fin-de-siècle Vienna, the pianist Michael Brofman's plucky ensemble lets its hair down to offer works not only by Schoenberg and Weill but also by Satie, Poulenc, Britten, and William Bolcom—with just a dash of Édith Piaf. Joining Brofman are the soprano Justine Aronson and the pianist Spencer Myer, among others. *March 3 at 7:30. (Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. brooklynartsongsociety.org.)*

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: "Tutto Italiano"
Inspired by Mendelssohn's enchantment with Italy, the Society presents a concert featuring the pianist Alessio Bax, the violinist Paul Huang, and the esteemed Orion String Quartet. The program opens with one of Mendelssohn's solo-piano "Songs Without Words," mimicking the rocking of a Venetian gondola, but the rest is devoted to music by Puccini ("Crisantemi" and his Scherzo for String Quartet), Respighi (the grand and sensuous Sonata for Violin and Piano), and Nino Rota, along with classic string quartets by Wolf and Verdi. *March 3 at 7:30. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)*

Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players
The longtime series, devoted to odd corners of the Baroque-to-Romantic repertory, presents a concert with a twist this week. As a prelude to Bach's Goldberg Variations—arranged for string trio by Dmitri Sitkovetsky—comes a performance of the Stabat Mater (for three voices and three strings) by the Estonian master minimalist Arvo Pärt. It's a serious concert with serious talent, including the violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky, the violist Cynthia Phelps, and the soprano Hannah Yu. *March 6 at 2 and 7:30. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259.)*

DANCE

Wendy Whelan / Brian Brooks
To many, the best part of "Restless Creature," the 2013 show in which the sui-generis ballerina Whelan jumped barefoot into contemporary dance before retiring from New York City Ballet, was the duet of falls that Brooks made for her and himself. That duet, "First Fall," is now the finale of "Some of a Thousand Words," a suite of duets and solos for the pair that explores similar simple ideas: exchanges of weight, walks, games with chairs. It's still intriguing to watch Whelan try such things, especially with deluxe accompaniment by the string quartet Brooklyn Rider. *(Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 28-March 5.)*

Jen Rosenblit & Geo Wyeth
A companion piece to Rosenblit's 2016 group work "Clap Hands," which revealed some of the rewards and limitations of her dream logic and imaginative handling of humble props, "Swivel Spot" is a collaborative duet with Wyeth, a musician who shares Rosenblit's taste for do-it-yourself theatricality. The dance is about finding a way forward amid the detritus of life and old habits. *(The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 1-4.)*

New York Theatre Ballet
Despite struggling for years, this small chamber company soldiers on. This quick run at New York Live Arts is one of its most ambitious—all the dances will be set to live music. There is a new work by the ballet experimentalist Pam Tanowitz (her third for the company), as well as a staging of Nijinsky's famously shocking "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," from 1912, reconstructed from Nijinsky's notes by the dance historian Ann Hutchinson Guest. (Hutchinson Guest, now ninety-eight, personally coached the dancers.) And a curiosity: a short solo by Frederick Ashton, inspired by a Jean de La Fontaine story and set to music by Offenbach: "La Chatte Métamorphosée en Femme." *(219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 1-4.)*

Malpaso Dance Company
One of the only Cuban dance troupes operating without state funding, this four-year-old company is something of an American-style renegade. It's become the go-to Cuban import for presenters in the U.S. looking for signs of change, and the warmth of its skilled dancers has won it a following here. For its BAM début, the troupe adapts an American story by a lover of Cuba: Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea." Choreographed by Malpaso's artistic director, Osnel Delgado, "Dreaming of Lions" offers a Cuban take on the fable about a fisherman, with the Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble playing a score by its director, Arturo O'Farrill. *(BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. March 1-5.)*

Harkness Dance Festival / Philadanco!
In the second week of this year's festival, the venerable Philadelphia troupe shows off its ballet chops in Francisco Gella's "Between the Lines," a pretty swirl set unoriginally but harmlessly to a score by Philip Glass and Gidon Kremer. Christopher Huggins's "Latched" and Ray Mercer's "Super 8!" are cruder and more mawkish, but they showcase the dancers' winning determination and spirit. *(92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 3-4.)*

"Circus Now"
The nouveau-cirque companies at this mini festival offer a wide cross-section of the genre as it is being practiced in the U.S. and abroad. The New York-based company Only Child specializes in aerial acts with ropes and ribbons; its show "Asylum" explores the turmoil inside a mental institution. The Finnish ensemble Racehorse Company has a more high-tech, absurdist edge. And the French performer Nacho Flores has developed a technique out of navigating a field of wooden cubes. See nyuskirball.org for programs. *(N.Y.U. Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-998-4941. March 3-5.)*

Nihon Buyō Dance
Nihon buyō are the traditional Japanese dances associated with Kabuki. The performers here, all young, are from the Geimaruza ensemble, trained at Tokyo University of the Arts. These delicate, highly ritualized pieces are performed in elaborate costume and makeup, to the accompaniment of flute, drums, chanting, and the banjo-like shamisen. Some of the works are descriptive, like a poem denoting the changing of the seasons or the song of a nightingale. And some are funny: in "Ayatsuri Sanbaso," the dancer moves like a puppet on strings, like a Japanese Coppélia. The March 5 performance is a matinée for kids. *(Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. March 3-5.)*

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Museum of Modern Art
"Fifth Floor Galleries"
A week after the executive order of Jan. 27 banned citizens from seven Muslim-majority nations from entering the U.S., the museum rearranged its sacrosanct modern galleries to include seven works by artists from three of the countries. The 1964 painting "Mosque," by the Sudanese painter Ibrahim el-Salahi, now shares a room with Picasso. In staging its graceful protest, the museum has also increased the number of women artists represented in these vaunted rooms. The first newly installed piece that viewers encounter is a fragmentary, aerial landscape painting from 1991 by the Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid. A big photograph of three primary-color spheres by the Iranian-born, Berlin-based Shirana Shabazi plays call-and-response with the spinning circles of Duchamp's black-and-white film "Anemic Cinema," from 1926. The Iranian artist Tala Madani's silent, stop-motion animation "Chit Chat," from 2007, renders a combative conversation as a vomit-like cascade of yellow paint. Each work is identified in a wall-label text declaring "the ideals of welcome and freedom as vital to this Museum as they are to the United States."

Guggenheim Museum
"Visionaries: Creating a Modern Guggenheim"
This exhilarating tour of the six great collections that became the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is so judiciously laid out that the complex germs of early abstraction, the dry but secretly seething state of late-nineteenth-century painting, and the canon-defining tastes and interests of the businessman Solomon, his niece Peggy, the artist Hilla Rebay (who bought her own work, and also introduced the elder Guggenheim to the nonobjective art of Kandinsky), and three other major collectors all become enticingly transparent. Jewels of J. K. Thannhauser's collection, on display, fittingly enough, in one of the building's Thannhauser Galleries, include van Gogh's magnificently eccentric ink drawing "The Zouave" and Cézanne's "Man with Crossed Arms." A bravura sequence running up the museum's central ramp, from Picasso's 1911 "Accordionist" through pieces by Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, Marc Chagall, and Franz Marc, captures, in just a dozen canvases, the emergence of Cubism, its overlap with Expressionism, and its far-reaching echoes. *Through Sept. 6.*

International Center of Photography
"Perpetual Revolution: The Image and Social Change"
A team of curators, led by Carol Squiers and Cynthia Young, have marshalled a bleak vision of contemporary life, filtered through vintage photographs, photojournalism, viral videos, Instagram feeds, and the occasional (and, alas, often superfluous) art work. It's a hard show to love, owing in large part to our times themselves, whose myriad conflicts and travails have been pared down by the curators into six themes: climate change, the refugee crisis, ISIS propaganda, police brutality and the response of Black Lives Matter, L.G.B.T.Q. activism, and alt-right Internet memes. (The latter section, which has the impact of a swift punch in the gut, was added post-election.) The show is low on visual flair, but viewers are likely to leave feeling edified, if not uplifted. Most eye-opening, even for jaded news junkies, are the chillingly sophisticated ISIS videos, which bolster the show's tacit argument that there is an arms race of images being waged between the progressive inheritors of the lineage of "concerned photography" championed by the museum's founder, Cornell Capa, and the rising tide of radical conservatism of varying stripes which seeks to drag us back into the Dark Ages. *Through May 7.*

Neue Galerie
"Alexei Jawlensky"
A flavorsome retrospective of the Russian-born artist, often associated with a group of painters that included, most notably, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Franz Marc, who met in Munich around the turn of the twentieth century. Jawlensky was more a follower than an innovator, having had a relatively late start as an artist; an air of catch-up marks his derivations, from such styles as Henri Matisse's Fauvism and Kandinsky's proto-abstraction. One might see Jawlensky's passion as being more about art than as being fully engaged in it: poignant rather than powerful. But the show ends with the kicker of a room of small, even tiny, paintings of an abstracted face. A black stripe serves for the nose, horizontal bands for the eyes and mouth. The nose and eyes present as a cruciform, against grounds of vertical strokes in thinned colors that glow like stained glass. Jawlensky made about a thousand of these paintings, titled "Meditations," between 1934 and 1937, in Wiesbaden. The Third Reich had banned exhibitions of his work as "degenerate," and he was crippled with severe arthritis, which obliged him to use both hands to wield a brush. The pictures meld his innate talents, chiefly for color, with a yearning for transcendence, which comes across as forced or sentimental in earlier work. *Through May 29.*

New-York Historical Society
"Tattooed New York"
Native Americans, sailors, gang members, queers, artists, firefighters, breast-cancer survivors—ink borne by all these subjects and more is documented in this dense exhibition charting the history of tattooing through a local lens. Eighteenth-century prints show the striking geometric tattoos of the Haudenosaunee (known to Europeans as the Iroquois). Accompanying wall text explains that the designs functioned variously to identify their bearers, to commemorate momentous events, and to decorate and heal wounds, themes that recur over the next several centuries of tattoo culture in New York. Original art—pinup girls, flags, pierced hearts—from the tattoo parlors that cropped up on the Bowery and Coney Island, photographs of emblazoned aficionados from every era, short videos, and vivid displays of artifacts capture the evolution of tattoo technology and the distinct styles that have emerged from the city's shipyards, barbershops, and boutique studios. Despite New York's ban on the trade, between 1961 and 1997, the city is portrayed as fertile ground for cutting-edge artisans, home to a cosmopolitan confederation of subcultures that embraces even the most radically marked-up romantics. *Through April 30.*

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Vija Celmins
The most beautiful and most bracing exhibition in town is also a rare event, the first solo show in nearly seven years—and the first in Chelsea—of Celmins's work. Now seventy-eight, she is not only esteemed but cherished in the art world, as a paragon of aesthetic rigor, poetic sapience, and brusque, funny personal charm. Her compact paintings, some of night skies, done in oils, invite sustained, closeup attention. Other works bring a new painterly liberty to her signature realist imagery, commonly done in pencil or woodcut, of choppy seas in which every wavelet can seem to have sat for its portrait. The painted sculptures, of small stones and antique blackboards that bear

COURTESY PIETER HUGO/YOSSI MILO GALLERY

For his new series, Pieter Hugo photographed children born after 1994 in Rwanda and (as seen in the portrait above) South Africa. On view through March 11 at the Yossi Milo gallery, in Chelsea.

traces of use, are exceedingly hard to distinguish from the items they mimic, and with which they are paired in the show. "The making is the meaning—to look and record as thoroughly as possible," Celmins has said, about her labor-intensive sculptures, which stand at the extreme of a consecrated self-abnegation that governs all her art. *Through April 15. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)*

Martha Friedman
The centerpiece of this concise show is a forbidding sculpture titled "Two Person Operating System," a table-top rectangle made of stacked steel cylinders. Lengths of colored rubber tubes are "plugged in" to some of the components; others are pierced with menacing skewers. On a recent afternoon, two performers matter-of-factly manipulated the sculpture's parts, producing clanking and ringing—and the aura of focussed labor. Friedman is interested in the relationship of bodies to industrial materials and processes, and in rather stark terms. Although there are no figures visible in the two-dimensional works on the walls, they radiate a moody corporeality. *Through March 11. (Rosen, 544 W. 24th St. 212-627-6100.)*

Jack Whitten
Whitten's unusual way with paint exacts numinous formal complexity from sheer accumulation. Pouring layer after layer of acrylic onto the floor and letting it dry, Whitten builds up thick panels of solid color that he cuts into pieces and applies to canvas like the tesseras of a mosaic. Ostensibly simple abstractions—a square canvas inscribed with a large circle, black and gold pieces ridged like licorice, three huge panels made of nothing but shimmery blue—are like fractals, too replete with detail for the eye to capture them all. Ten rubbings on synthetic paper, made on striated surfaces using graphite and Renaissance wax, suggest lenticular postcards of the Shroud of Turin: in each one, a black oval peers through the middle like an adamant apparition. *Through April 8. (Hauser & Wirth, 548 W. 22nd St. 212-977-7160.)*

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

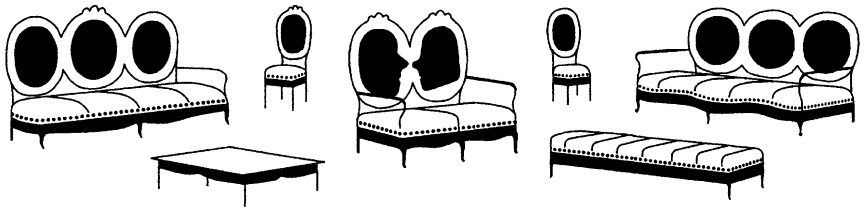
Cristine Brache
In this deceptively demure show, the Toronto-based artist reflects on her identity as the Miami-born daughter of parents from Cuba and Puerto Rico, and finds it full of contradictions. A video begins with found fetish porn in which a woman eats insects and ends with Brache's grandfather telling her that a woman without makeup is like a beautiful house whose garden has gone to waste. Delicate ceramic works—a dunce cap on a stool, a wall clock with no hands—evoke fragility. A curly-maple table displays porcelain playing cards, each one a Queen of Hearts featuring the artist's profile. *Through March 19. (Fierman, 127 Henry St. 917-593-4086.)*

Ken Okiishi
"Everyone is the other and no one is himself." What might sound like a gimlet-eyed take on the social-media age is, in fact, a quote from Martin Heidegger. The heart of Okiishi's deceptively cavalier, deeply felt show riffs on the quote's source, with a video titled "Being and/or Time," in which every picture the artist took on his smartphone between 2013 and 2016 flashes onscreen in a cascade of images, uniting art and information, memories and documentation, the meaningful and the banal. Save time to view a selection of the artist's poignantly hilarious videos from the late nineteen-nineties and early aughts, some of them made while he was still an art student at Cooper Union. *Through March 5. (Spaulings, 165 E. Broadway. 212-477-5006.)*

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

Jeremy Moon
Before he died in a motorcycle accident, in 1973, at the age of thirty-nine, the English artist made hundreds of paintings, ten of which are on view, along with one sculpture, marking Moon's first show in the U.S. The simple shapes, flat planes, and harmonious colors of his hard-edged abstractions offer pure, lucid pleasure. In "Garland," a delicate gold ring floats on a field of dark green. In "Orangery," circles of yellow, blue, and purple hug the edges of a bright-orange square. The wooden sculpture, glossy with apple-green paint, rests on the floor like a Brobdingnagian jigsaw puzzle, fragmented into thirteen rectilinear sections—a jazzy riff on the modernist grid. *Through April 16. (Luhring Augustine, 25 Knickerbocker Ave., Bushwick. 718-386-2746.)*

ABOVE & BEYOND



Entrepreneurs Festival
For the sixth year, New York University invites business-owning alumni to share advice and anecdotes at the largest student-run entrepreneurial event in the country. The festival includes various panels and roundtables exploring the nuances and unforeseen challenges of starting and running a company, and culminates with the Pitch, where attendees present their ideas to an audience of experts. This year's participants include Scott Harrison, the founder of the nonprofit organization charity:water, and Carley Roney, the co-founder of the online wedding-planning marketplace the Knot. *(N.Y.U. Tisch Hall, 40 W. 4th St. nyuef.org. March 3-4.)*

Queens County St. Patrick's Day Parade
The Rockaway Beach community comes out in force for this annual pre-St. Patrick's Day celebration. The day starts with a mass for peace and justice in Ireland, held at the St. Francis de Sales Church, followed by a brief breakfast. Revellers in Irish garb then take to Rockaway Beach Boulevard for the parade, beginning at 1; awards will be presented to parade honorees afterward, at the St. Camillus Catholic Academy. *(Parade begins at Newport Ave. and Beach 130th St. queenscountyparade.org. March 4.)*

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

This week, one of the city's biggest contemporary-art extravaganzas, the **Armory Show,** takes over two piers (92 and 94) on the Hudson River. (March 2-5; on March 1, MOMA kicks things off with a big party at the museum.) The fair has jazzed things up this year with multiple installations, most notably a large hanging chicken-shaped sculpture by the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. *(W. 55th St., at 12th Ave. 212-645-6440.)* • After a few fallow weeks, **Christie's** holds a bevy of contemporary-art auctions. The first (March 1) contains mainly prints and the occasional sculpture, such as Roy Lichtenstein's semi-abstract "Untitled (Head II)," executed in wood in 1970. Gerhard Richter's enigmatic "Onkel Rudi," a fuzzy old image of the artist's uncle clad in a Nazi uniform, is also in the sale. This is followed by an auction of postwar and contemporary paintings (March 3), and, later the same day, another devoted to the private collection of Earl and Camilla McGrath, two denizens of the rock-and-roll jet set of the sixties and seventies. The latter sale includes a drawing by the McGraths' close friend Cy Twombly ("Untitled"), a portrait of the couple by Larry Rivers, and a five-part watercolor by Brice Marden dedicated to Earl ("Talisman for Earl"). *(20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)* • **Sotheby's,** too, offers a series of contemporary works at its "Contemporary Curated" sale (March 2), which opens with a group of paintings from the private holdings of the high-powered New York art couple Ed Cohen and Victoria Shaw. The collection bursts with art by some big names, such as Rauschenberg, Currin, Kiefer, and Kentridge. *(York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)*

READINGS AND TALKS

n+1
The artist and activist Victoria Lomasko's graphic reportage captures the urgent stillness of modern dissent in Russia. Lomasko's illustrations of protest gatherings and various citizens of Moscow, coupled with brief interviews and reflections, are now gathered in a new book, "Other Russias." Her best work whittles down large political themes into small, quiet moments: in one spread, a woman slicing fruit at a wooden table says, "When I was young, I had a date lined up on every corner." In the next panel, she walks her dog past domed cathedrals. "There are no factories in this town, and no men." Born in Serpukhov, Lomasko has also co-authored the book "Forbidden Art," and co-curated two collaborative projects, including a collection of courtroom drawings. She discusses her latest title with Sophie Pinkham, the author of "Black Square: Adventures in Post-Soviet Ukraine." *(68 Jay St. #405, Brooklyn. nplusonemag.com. March 3 at 7:30.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO AMARGO

PHOTOGRAPH BY DOLLY FAIBYSHEV FOR THE NEW YORKER; ILLUSTRATION BY JOOST SWARTE

TABLES FOR TWO

Mermaid Spa

3703 Mermaid Ave., Brooklyn (347-462-2166)

THE SMELL OF chlorine emanating from the concrete building is the first hint that Mermaid Spa, in Coney Island, isn't Spa Castle. There are no crystal rooms, no "color therapy" experiences, and, thankfully, no uniforms reminiscent of a totalitarian regime. This is a Ukrainian-Russian community center, a blustery twenty-minute walk from the subway, as traditional as banyas get in New York City, with a clientele that takes its sweating very seriously. There is, happily, also a restaurant, which serves some solid Russian classics.

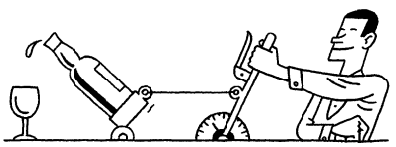
The dining room, guarded by golden mermaids, is built around a hot tub. There are older men in groups; younger, shiny men in groups; and fit couples throwing back plastic pints of beer. Everyone is wearing towels, and most are in felt hats that, counterintuitively, help with the heat. Claim a table—it's yours for the day—and head into the sauna. Sweat until you can't stand it, and escape to the cold shower. Pull the chain and a torrent of ice water rushes over you. Then go to the steam room and get lost in the fog, before plunging into the ice pools. Jump out, gasp for breath, and feel your head pound with shock and relief. Repeat until you're jelly, and then it's time to eat.

Many tables stick with giant bottles of water and platters of fresh fruit. But you came for the food, so go for it. The large meat dishes—lamb leg, beef stroganoff, chicken tabaka—are hefty in a way that seems ill-advised in the setting. The hot appetizers are a better idea. The borscht is rich and thick. The garlicky French fries, piled on a sizzling iron skillet, though not exactly what you'd picture eating in a bathing suit, are a banya staple. Even more traditional are the pelmeni, filled with beef, lamb, and veal, and topped with mushroom gravy, which are addictive until they congeal at room temperature. Luckily, the dish is too good to leave for long. The best, though, are the cold appetizers, especially the pickled herring or, if you dare, the salo—raw pig lard, frozen and sliced thin. The procedure is half the fun: Layer it over some brown bread. Salt it. Pick up a raw garlic clove. Salt that. Bite one, then the other. The sharp fire of the raw garlic gives way to the sweetness of the bread, and to the soothing fat as it melts. It's more bracing than the ice pools.

On the way out, do yourself a favor and stop by the beach, whose winter charm doesn't get enough credit. The steam rises off your skin. The coastline extends as far as you can see, populated by no one. What a gift the quiet is. *(Spa entrance $45; dishes $4–$30.)*

—Becky Cooper

BAR TAB



Rudy's Bar & Grill

627 Ninth Ave., between 44th and 45th Sts. (646-707-0890)

In the back yard of this midtown standby, late, a woman in a wilting fur peered at a man in a suit that was a size or two too big. "Look, I'm sorry," he said, touching her sleeve. Her eyes were cerulean, bloodshot. Earlier that night, she had been gripping his sleeve, grinning wildly. Now she glanced at the near-empty beer cradled between her legs and pulled him toward her, saying something sad and dirty, loud enough so everyone could hear. Inside, a dark-haired celiac wearing a choker was asking which liquors were gluten-free. "I don't know," a barkeep, all button-down and striped bow tie, replied. "Tequila?" Over on a sofa covered in red masking tape, a finance type leered as a woman straddled his lap to the fading strains of "Apple Bottom Jeans." Beers are three dollars, and come with a free hot dog if you want one. This would seem a bargain until you consider the "Stimulus Package"—a shot, a beer, and a hot dog, all for five dollars. A guy in a sweaty yellow T-shirt offered a girl a shot. She grabbed the celiac and said, "This is my girlfriend." Back outside, a sign denotes the spot where Drinking Liberally, "an informal, inclusive, progressive social group for like-minded left-leaning individuals," was founded. There are now similar meetups in cities across the country. Below the sign, a student said good night to a blond songwriter who'd given him her number. He pulled his coat over a T-shirt depicting a cat firing lasers from its eyes. "Rex Tillerson, he's so anti the environment," he offered, as a parting thought. "Yeah," she replied. "I mean, do you want the whole world to just be like Bermuda?"*—Nicolas Niarchos*

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
TRUMPCARE

The pitchforks are changing hands. In 2009, it was Democratic members of Congress supporting health-care reform who were set upon by outraged constituents. When they passed the Affordable Care Act anyway, it cost their party control of Congress in the 2010 midterm elections. House Republicans subsequently voted more than fifty times to repeal or cripple the A.C.A. Nineteen Republican-led states spurned the offer of federal funds to expand Medicaid coverage. In January, Donald Trump's first act as President was to order government agencies to avoid implementing, as much as is legally possible, what has become known as Obamacare.

But Obamacare, it turns out, has done a lot of good. It guarantees that people with preëxisting health conditions cannot be rejected by insurers or charged more than others. It has reduced the number of uninsured people by twenty million. It has increased access to primary care, specialty care, surgery, medicines, and treatment for chronic conditions. Patients are less likely to skip needed care because of the cost. As a result, according to studies conducted at Harvard, the A.C.A. is saving tens of thousands of lives each year.

Now Republicans in Congress are facing the wrath of constituents who don't want to lose those gains. Conservatives have had to back off from their plan to repeal Obamacare now and worry about replacement later. Instead, they must grapple with what they have tried to ignore: the complexities of our health-care system, especially in the four vital areas of employer-sponsored coverage, Medicaid, the individual insurance market, and taxes.

Half of Americans get their health coverage through their employer. For them, the A.C.A. brought such popular changes as uncapped coverage, inclusion of children up to the age of twenty-six, and requirements that insurers cover not only primary care but also pediatric dental and vision care, mental-health care, and, with no co-payments, preventive care. The Republicans probably won't risk eliminating these provisions—except for contraceptive coverage—but they dislike the measures that have kept employers providing health benefits: tax penalties for big companies that don't; tax credits for small businesses that do.

It was Obamacare's dramatic expansion of Medicaid, in participating states, to all Americans living near the official poverty line that produced the largest reductions in the uninsured. Many Republicans have vowed to cut back the program's funding, and to send the money to states as a lump sum, or "block grant." This approach, however, is apt to throw millions out of coverage and many states into fiscal crisis, and key Republican governors and senators are opposing it.

Republicans are also divided on what to do about the roughly ten per cent of Americans—freelancers, independent contractors, and the like—who aren't covered by an employer, don't qualify for Medicare or Medicaid, and must rely on the individual health-insurance market. Before the A.C.A., these people were the most vulnerable in the system; twenty-seven per cent of non-elderly adults have a preëxisting condition that makes them effectively uninsurable without the law's protections. Now they can sign up through online exchanges for plans that are priced without regard to health history and are subsidized based on income.

Republicans claim that the program is in a death spiral. It isn't; enrollment has held constant. But there is a need to draw in younger, healthier people to offset the costs of older, sicker people and keep the premiums steady. Doing so depends on promoting HealthCare.gov widely and enforcing the tax penalty for people who don't sign up. The President, however, has issued a raft of contradictory directives that ultimately instruct the government to do neither. As a result, more and more insurers are saying that they will pull out

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

of the exchanges, risking the collapse of the individual market.

Having promised to get rid of the insurance mandate, Republicans are considering alternatives, but so far they are all inadequate. A requirement for people to maintain "continuous coverage"—to take an example supported by the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tom Price, and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan—would mean that people who lose their insurance temporarily, because they, say, change jobs or suffer a financial setback, would also lose their preëxisting-condition protections. For these people and for others left behind, Price and Ryan advocate state-run "high-risk pools." But, in the thirty-five states that offered high-risk pools to the uninsurable before the A.C.A., inadequate funding delivered terrible coverage, with extremely high premiums and deductibles, and annual limits as low as seventy-five thousand dollars. Hardly anyone signed up.

For orthodox Republicans, the central issue is, of course, taxes. Obamacare increased them, particularly for high-income individuals and for industries that profit from the expansion of coverage, to pay for the costs of reform. (The A.C.A. actually reduces the deficit.) Many Republicans have made cutting those taxes their top priority; others see preserving coverage as the imperative. Each side thinks the other is committing political suicide. But, with so many Americans beginning to recognize how much they stand to lose, the political equations are shifting.

Governance is forcing Republicans to confront the reality that repeal without replacement is untenable. In a stalemate, Congress would likely need to delay repeal and, to reassure skittish insurers, focus on small-scale repairs, such as affirming that subsidies will continue to be funded, and either enforcing the existing mandate or revising it so that more young and healthy people sign on. (For instance, healthy people could be charged an extra ten per cent on premiums if they forgo insurance for a year, the same as the penalty for elderly people who refuse Medicare Part B.) In addition, the states that sat out the Medicaid expansion in order to thwart President Obama would be free to join in under a Republican Administration, as many would like to. "Insurance for everybody," Trump has vowed. A Trumpcare compromise could yet bring us a step closer to it.

But legislators have no time to waste. Insurers must decide by April whether to offer a plan for the exchanges in 2018, and at what price. That requires certainty about the future. Pitchforks have their uses, but crafting health-care policy calls for more delicate instruments. The basic functioning of the health-care system is at stake. So are American lives.

—Atul Gawande

BROTHERHOOD OF MAN DEPT.

Q. & A.

Altahir Sabor was born in Darfur in 1987. When he was eighteen, after the government of Sudan intensified its genocidal campaign, he was driven out of his home; he ended up in a refugee camp in Ghana, then was resettled in Kansas City, Missouri. He moved to Brooklyn and later earned American citizenship. During an extended trip back to Sudan, he met and married his wife, who soon became pregnant. He left the country before his son was born and can't afford a return trip to meet him. "I think he is an American citizen, because I am a citizen, but I'm not sure," Sabor said recently. "I want to get papers for my wife and bring them both here. Now President Trump maybe made that impossible."

Sabor, who works as an Uber driver, was in a small halal restaurant on Coney Island Avenue, not far from where he lives. He wore a black overcoat and a tall red watch cap. He had come to attend a meeting of the Darfur People's Association, a community group. Days before, President Trump had signed an executive order barring residents of seven countries, including Sudan, from entering the United States. The order caused widespread confusion. The meeting was for locals who had questions about how it affected them and their families.

Eventually, around two dozen Sudanese men showed up and adjourned to a banquet hall next to the restaurant. The space was unadorned except for some half-deflated balloons that read, "It's a Boy!" ("I hope whoever was in here was not celebrating the election," someone said.) Seated on a dais were the president of the Darfur People's Association and three immigration lawyers.

"I'm going to explain the order as best I can, because it came out very suddenly and it was very sloppily written," Tarek Ismail, one of the lawyers, said. "We don't know if that was an accident or on purpose. The fact is, our President's name is now Donald Trump, so anything is possible." Ismail works at the CLEAR project, a legal-services clinic at CUNY School of Law. He handed out brochures with the heading "Know Your Rights: Flying While Muslim." "They might ask you your name, which countries you've visited recently—that's fine, that's normal airport stuff," he said. "But if they ask you what your religion is, or what your opinion of Donald Trump is, then that's something they're not allowed to do. And we're getting reports that this is already happening. So if you are ever unsure, just don't answer, or, if you can, call our office and ask for our help. We're free, by the way." This drew a small round of applause. He added, "I should have led with that, I guess."

A man in the audience raised his hand and said, "According to CNN, they just announced they are making exceptions for people from the seven banned countries if they have dual residency in Canada, the U.K., places like that."

"That may well be true," Ismail said. "I haven't checked my phone in about an hour, so you know better than I do."

At around 5:15 P.M., the call to prayer issued from several cell phones in the room. The meeting ended, and people gathered near the dais to ask for advice about their individual situations. Sabor talked to Lenni Benson, a professor of immigration law at New York Law School. "I am a citizen," Sabor said. "My wife is not. And my son?"

"Unfortunately, it's not a straightforward yes or no," Benson said. She asked him a couple of questions: When did he become a U.S. citizen? When was his son born? She noted the dates on a yellow legal pad, then narrowed her eyes.

"According to the most recent statute, you need to have been a citizen for five years before having a child in order for this to kick in. So I'm not sure your son is a citizen."

"But I should still apply?" Sabor asked.

"Absolutely," Benson said. "That program is frozen, for now, but you might as well get in line in case it opens up again."

Sabor is saving money to study business. "In 2008, in the refugee camp, I watched the election of Obama very closely," he said. "This time, I was here, and I paid attention even more." During the campaign, when the occasional Uber passenger mentioned that he supported Trump, Sabor laughed it off. "I didn't think that he could win," he said. Asked when the prospect of a Trump Presidency started to seem less funny and more scary, Sabor shook his head and smiled. "Living in Darfur is scary," he said. "This is just a problem."

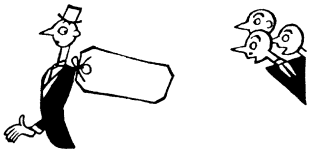
—Andrew Marantz

"'Cogito, ergo sum' is all very well for you, but what about me?"

• •

SMALLER THAN LIFE

COMPLETE SET



PATRIC VERRONE's two-and-three-quarter-inch plastic figurine of Donald Trump—he has been selling one per day, for around a hundred dollars, on eBay—is based on a 1968 toy figure of the Republican Presidential hopeful Charles Percy. It's a flattering representation. Verrone has kept Percy's stately pose—right hand grasping a lapel—and svelte physique, but given him a Trump makeover, with a fuller face and a yellow coif. Verrone hand-paints each of his little Presidents. He made Trump's tie bright red and much wider than Percy's.

"Little by little, the hobby has expanded into a business for me," Verrone said the other day. He is better known in the T.V. business, where he worked as a writer on every episode of the animated comedy "Futurama," which earned him a not-quite-Trumpian stream of residuals. In 2005, Verrone, who first trained as a lawyer, became the president of the Writers Guild of America West; he led the union during its 2007 strike.

But his Presidential obsession predates all that. In the nineteen-fifties, Louis Marx & Company began producing figurines of every U.S. President. Verrone was one of many thousands of children who collected them and pitted Thomas Jefferson and Franklin Pierce against their toy soldiers.

Verrone had ordered a complete set of the Presidents through an ad in a 1970 issue of *Parade*. "The picture in the ad went from Washington to Nixon, but when it arrived Nixon wasn't included," he recalled. Years later, while writing for "Futurama," Verrone helped make the disembodied head of Richard Nixon a recurring character. (The head is preserved in a jar but able to speak.) One episode, "All the Presidents' Heads," featured the jarred remains of all the former Commanders-in-Chief. Verrone brought in his Marx collection for reference. "We had the figurines on display in the 'Futurama' rewrite room," he recalled. By then, he'd found a Nixon on eBay—it was the last President that the now-defunct Marx had produced, perhaps understandably.

In 2002, the show was cancelled. (It later resumed.) With some time on his hands, Verrone decided to update his collection. Using clay, paint, and craft knives, he doctored a Marx set of the 1968 Presidential candidates. "I taught myself how to sculpt," he said. "I turned Hubert Humphrey into Gerald Ford by applying a little clay here and there. Reagan was Reagan. George Romney became George Bush. Nelson Rockefeller became Bill Clinton." For kicks, Verrone created molds using toilet-paper rolls, produced an extra set of figurines, and listed it on eBay as "the presidents Marx never made." It sold for more than six hundred dollars. Nostalgic completists apparently had been waiting. "There were tens of thousands of these sets," Verrone said. "People keep needing the remaining seven Presidents—now eight."

Verrone has since hired an L.A. toy manufacturer, Pretty in Plastic, to crank out figurines. He set up an eBay store. On it, he sells not only every President since Nixon, but Supreme Court justices (Antonin Scalia's sales outpace those of Ruth Bader Ginsburg) and historical figures. "I'm having a hard time keeping Alexander Hamilton in stock," he said. Almost all are based on original Marx models. Verrone's Barack Obama—his most popular so far, with thirteen hundred sold—is J.F.K.'s trim body with Harry Truman's right arm grafted on. The average price per President is twenty-five dollars.

Verrone added Trump last summer, when the candidate's chances seemed slim. He produced just a hundred figurines

STEVENSON, 5/3/69

based on Percy. "I didn't think it was necessary to make it that accurate," he said. He didn't want to repeat the mistake he'd made in 2008, when he paid a manufacturer to make a thousand John McCains, which he now gives away. "I still have about a hundred McCains sitting in a box."

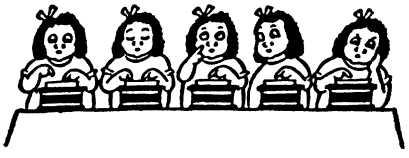
Hillary Clinton was trickier. Marx had produced a Mamie Eisenhower—"She was my basis for Sandra Day O'Connor," Verrone said. "And I used Jackie Kennedy to make Michelle Obama. But there were no female Marx figurines in pants suits." Eventually, he had Pretty in Plastic make a Clinton figurine using digital rendering. "Around the first of November, I was all set to push 'print' on two thousand of them, and I said, 'Well, let me just wait.'"

On Election Night, Verrone was painting figurines. "As it became clearer and clearer that Trump was going to win, I just thought I was high on fumes," he said. "But it turned out not to be the case."

Verrone recently commissioned a digitally rendered Trump that will be more accurate: the tie is longer, the face "more jowly," and "there's a little more in the breadbasket." To capture the President's skin tone, he puts "a bit more red and yellow in the paint mix." He added, "I am stocking up on white paint in the event I have to make a Mike Pence."

—Don Steinberg

UP LIFE'S LADDER
GOLDEN TICKET



What's a chef to do when the most important food critic in New York demotes his restaurant from a four-star to a two-star and calls it a "no-fun house," as Pete Wells did to Thomas Keller's Per Se in the *Times* last year? The review set Keller, the sixty-one-year-old chef and restaurateur, on a path of redemption that included, most recently, an haute cuisine form of baby kissing.

On a Sunday morning at Per Se, the staff went through its pre-service drill, in anticipation of its inaugural First-Time Diner's Lunch. The gimmick: children would eat a seven-course meal for free, and adults, for two hundred and fifteen dollars, would be granted the privilege of joining them. Around thirty servers were assembled in the dining room, overlooking Fifty-ninth Street, to take notes.

The chef de cuisine, Eli Kaimeh, a Syrian-American with a Brooklyn accent, ran down the first five courses. Both children and adults would start with a choice of chicken consommé with dumplings or blini with white-sturgeon caviar. Next

came either a Caesar salad with parsley shoots ("use tweezers") or the "PB & J," a "layered gâteau" of foie gras, huckleberry jelly, shaved peanut brittle, and something to do with nonalcoholic Gewürztraminer. At the pasta course—either spaghetti with caponata or sweet-corn ravioli, which was actually just one big specimen—a waiter had a grammatical question. "The single ravioli, should we call it a raviolo?" (No.)

Anna Bolz, the pastry chef, listed the desserts: a sorbet with a grape-soda flavor, a deconstructed banana split, and a "super special, super fun Wonka-style bar," in two flavors, Milky Way and Passionfruit Marzipan Delight. "Have you seen 'Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory'?" she asked, and explained that one of the Milky Way bars had a golden ticket hidden inside. The winner would get dinner for four at Per Se.

Sam Calderbank, the general manager, described a blueberry smash, served with a bendy straw, and offered a tutorial on *horchata*. He named every guest, including one who would be paying her sixty-third visit. He ended with a heartfelt plea. "We all know who the V.I.P.s are. The children, O.K.? Please, please, make sure we have fun today. It's all about fun. Just do it with a smile on your face."

Keller appeared and told the story of his inspiration, a kids' dinner at the Four Seasons to which he had taken his twelve-year-old niece. "We sat by the pool. It was magical." Then, a quiz: "What's my second inspiration?" Silence. He said, "Charlie Trotter would invite underprivileged children to eat at his restaurant, to give them aspirations, goals." He paused to let that sink in. "Let's have fun with it."

In the kitchen, scores of cooks, sous-chefs, egg-separaters, garlic-peelers, ganache-cubers, silver-polishers, and plate-straighteners rushed around. Someone yelled, "Kids first all day long, guys!" Everyone yelled back, "Kids first!"

Word came that diners had arrived, ages two and four. Keller worried about not having a high chair. "That's going to be a problem." He fretted about the younger kids: "Under seven, they might not be able to focus." He relaxed, recalling another Wonka moment: "For the twentieth anniversary of French Laundry, we did five golden tickets and I dressed up like Willy Wonka. I don't usually do things like that, but it was fun."

The tables were filling up. *Gougères* were served, along with Keller's signature cornets: salmon-tartare-filled ice-cream cones the size of golf tees. A boy of three put his menu on his head and slid to the floor. A seven-year-old was offered a pashmina from a humidor.

A nine-year-old stared as her consommé was poured from a pitcher, tableside. After one taste, she proclaimed, "I'm sorry, this is the most delicious thing I've ever had." A small girl screeched; a boy wiped his nose with the tablecloth. A three-year-old with a shark sippy cup stood on his chair next to his stuffed Mickey Mouse. The waitstaff didn't crack. His mother lured him back down with a spoonful of langoustine tartlet.

Nouvelle cuisine was summed up by the nine-year-old: "They serve you the biggest plates and the tiniest portions of food." A man walked by, losing his grip on a toddler in khakis and a navy blazer, with no shoes. A young girl took one look at her lamb rib eye and said that she really preferred lamb chops, which you can eat like a lollipop. No child was too full to resist the sweets: chocolates, macarons, caramels, doughnuts, truffles. The nine-year-old gave her review: "O.K., now I know my favorite restaurant."

—Shauna Lyon

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
TRUMP'S MARKET RALLY

In the run-up to last year's Presidential election, pundits, economists, and Wall Street analysts agreed on one thing: a Donald Trump Presidency would be a disaster for the stock market. The common wisdom is that markets hate uncertainty. They're all about prediction, and Trump is unpredictability personified. Citigroup said that a Trump win would send the S.&P. 500 down three to five per cent, and, on Election Day, the hedge fund Bridgewater Associates told its clients that the Dow could fall almost two thousand points—a full ten per cent—if Trump was elected. As the result became clear, these forecasts briefly looked accurate: stock-market futures took a vertiginous overnight tumble. But the day after Trump's victory markets rebounded, and, as he never tires of boasting, they've risen since. The Dow is up more than thirteen per cent, an impressive gain by historical standards.

At first glance, this seems bizarre. Trump's first five weeks in office have been even more chaotic than expected, and the global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index has spiked to levels unseen in this century. During Barack Obama's Presidency, many Republicans and economists blamed uncertainty about the Administration's policies for the slow recovery from the recession. Yet Trump is far more volatile and unpredictable than Obama ever was—risking a trade war with China, vowing to punish companies that move production abroad, calling for a new nuclear "arms race"—and markets are giddy with delight. Businesses are excited, too. A PwC study of private companies saw an "unprecedented" post-election jump in optimism, and, in December, the National Federation of Independent Businesses found that small-business owners were unusually optimistic. The new Administration looks as if it will be a roller-coaster ride. So why are companies and investors keen to jump aboard?

As far as business policy is concerned, there were two Trumps on the campaign trail. The candidate who appealed to the white working class was a blustery populist who promised to tear up trade agreements, bring jobs back to the U.S., and use America's bargaining power to drive down drug prices. The other Trump was a classic Republican businessman, who vowed to slash taxes, resurrect coal production, and keep Washington from meddling in business. He'd repeal Dodd-Frank, soften other regulations, and curb the E.P.A. Markets have bet that the second Trump will prevail, and so far it looks like they're right.

Trump has thrown a few bones to Main Street, such as scrapping the Trans-Pacific Partnership (which was more or less dead anyway), but he's already backing away from populist positions. The commitment to bargaining for lower drug prices didn't survive a meeting with pharmaceutical executives; Trump came out of it saying that he was opposed to "price fixing." Meanwhile, he has filled his Cabinet with corporate executives, handed the E.P.A. to a fervent opponent of environmental regulation, and threatened to rescind an Obama regulation making millions of workers eligible for overtime pay. He has launched efforts to dismantle Dodd-Frank and to halt a new regulation requiring financial advisers to act in the best interest of their clients. Agencies have been told that for any new regulation they introduce they have to get rid of two existing ones.

These moves have reassured business not just because they're corporate-friendly but also because they suggest that Trump will govern as a relatively conventional President. In developed countries, a leader's policies usually affect the business climate much less than general economic conditions do. Indeed, for all the business complaints about Obama's actions during the Great Recession, work by the economists Atif Mian and Amir Sufi indicates that uncertainty about his policies had a trivial impact. What really held down hiring was the carnage of the recession and doubts about when things would ever get back on track. Similarly, a 2010 study of businesses in Germany and the U.S. found that businesses base their decisions not on likely government actions but on the health of the wider economy. And right now the economy is looking very good for Trump, even though he spent much of his campaign bemoaning the state of it. There have been seventy-six straight months of job growth. Unemployment has been at or below five per cent for a year. Inflation remains low. Although growth is slow by historical standards, corporate profits are healthy. A business-friendly President and a robust economy are a good combination for investors. In retrospect, the only surprising thing about the market boom is that few predicted it.

Still, in economics there's a famous distinction, developed by the great Chicago economist Frank Knight, between risk and uncertainty. Risk is when you don't know exactly what will happen but nonetheless have a sense of the possibilities and their relative likelihood. Uncertainty is when you're so unsure about the future that you have no way of calculating how likely various outcomes are. Business is betting that Trump is risky but not uncertain—he may shake things up, but he isn't going to blow them up. What they're not taking seriously is the possibility that Trump may be willing to do things—like start a trade war with China or a real war with Iran—whose outcomes would be truly uncertain. Trump won the Presidency by shattering norms and bucking expectations. Markets had better hope that he won't govern the same way.

—James Surowiecki

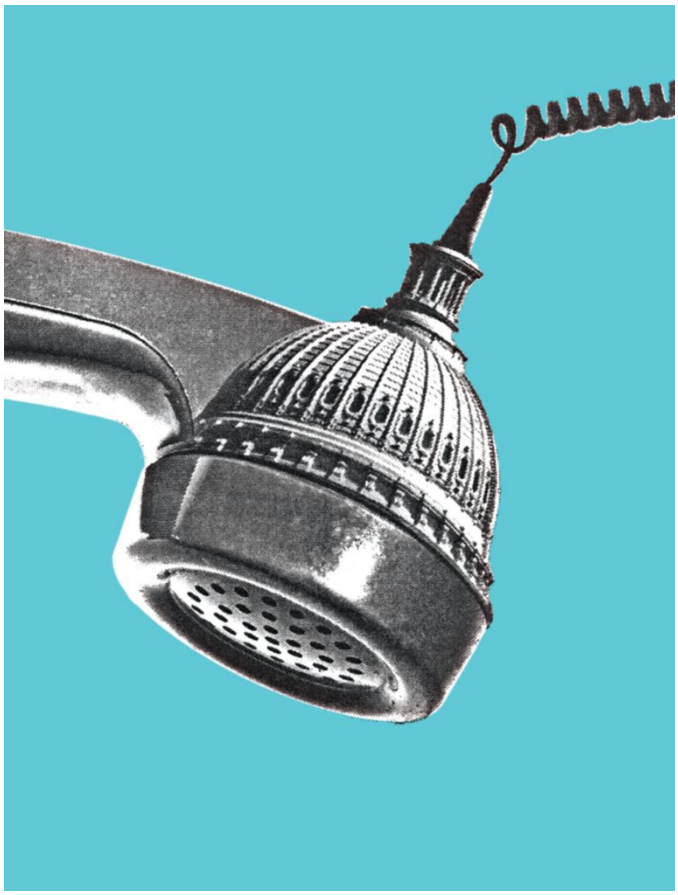
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

AMERICAN CHRONICLES

CALL AND RESPONSE

What happens when you phone Congress?

BY KATHRYN SCHULZ



Since the election, constituents have contacted Congress in unprecedented numbers.

ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER MUNDAY

SOURCE: GARY OMBLER/GETTY (PHONE)

Of all the liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the most underrated by far is the one that gives us the right to complain to our elected officials. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly: all of these are far more widely known, legislated, and litigated than the right to—as the founders rather tactfully put it—"petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

There are a great many ways to petition the government, including with actual petitions, but, short of showing up in person, the one reputed to be the most effective is picking up the phone and calling your congressional representatives. In the weeks following the Inauguration of Donald J. Trump, so many people started doing so that, in short order, voice mail filled up and landlines began blurting out busy signals. Pretty soon, even e-mails were bouncing back, with the information that the target in-box was full and the suggestion that senders "contact the recipient directly." That being impractical, motivated constituents turned to other means. The thwarted and outraged took to Facebook or Twitter or the streets. The thwarted and determined dug up direct contact information for specific congressional staffers. The thwarted and clever remembered that it was still possible, several technological generations later, to send faxes; one Republican senator received, from a single Web-based faxing service, seven thousand two hundred and seventy-six of them in twenty-four hours. The thwarted and creative phoned up a local pizza joint, ordered a pie, and had it delivered, with a side of political opinion, to the Senate.

Americans vote, if we vote at all, roughly once every two years. But even in a slow season, when no one is resorting to faxes or protests or pizza-grams, we participate in the political life of our nation vastly more often by reaching out to our members of Congress. When we do so, however, we almost never get to speak to them directly. Instead, we wind up dealing with one of the thousands of people, many of them too young to rent a car, who collectively constitute the customer-service workforce of democracy.

For them, as for so many of us, life in the past several weeks has taken a turn for the strange and exhausting. Politically minded citizens who went to work for Congress now find themselves in the situation of airline agents during a Category 4 hurricane: a relatively small cohort with limited resources encounters a huge number of people up in arms. If you tried to call a federal legislator anytime in the past several weeks (and, full disclosure, I did: for almost my entire adult life, I have been the kind of person who likes to talk to her elected officials, from school-board members on up to senators), you were as likely as not to reach an automated recording informing you that your call could not be answered, "due to an unusually high call volume."

Bureaucratically speaking, those are some of the most irritating words on the planet. But, politically speaking, they are the start of a tantalizing sentence: Due to an unusually high call volume, *what*? At present, an enormous number of people are calling their political representatives, not always to obvious effect. So what difference does it really make in the minds of lawmakers—and, more to the point, on the floors of the House and the Senate—when large numbers of everyday people start contacting Congress?

In 1876, the centenary of American independence, Alexander Graham Bell filed a patent for the telephone, and that device has been mixed up with our national politics ever since. The following year, Rutherford B. Hayes had

one installed in the White House. (Its phone number was "1.") Three years later, the technology came to Capitol Hill, in the form of a single phone placed in the lobby of the House of Representatives, where it was answered, increasingly often and increasingly to his inconvenience, by the House doorkeeper. More phones appeared soon afterward, but demand kept outstripping supply, until, eventually, Congress purchased a hundred-line switchboard, placed it in the Capitol Building, and, in 1898, hired a young woman named Harriott Daley to operate it.

"A brisk, pleasant little woman with probably the most important unofficial position in the United States Congress": that is how a newspaper correspondent once described Daley, who was twenty-five, widowed, and raising a young daughter when she took the job. In the beginning, she worked alone, from eight in the morning until as late as midnight, answering some two hundred calls a day across all of Congress. By the middle of the twentieth century, that number had increased to sixty thousand, or almost twenty-two million calls a year, and the telephone staff had grown in tandem. By the time Daley retired, in 1945, she oversaw fifty other operators, colloquially known as Hello Girls. Also by then, she could reputedly recognize some ninety-six senators, three hundred and ninety-four representatives, and three hundred journalists by the sound of their voices.

Almost as soon as Daley began answering the phones, everyday citizens began using them to give legislators a piece of their mind. In 1928, an oil and gas company urged citizens to call their senators to oppose a gas tax; sometime later, a Utah gentleman published a poem urging people to call their senators to request better wintertime road-clearing. Other early telephone activists called Congress about other concerns: the Selective Service, school funding, Social Security legislation, power-company regulation, the agricultural potential of sugar beets. By mid-century, a Marjorie Lansing, of Massachusetts, was travelling around the country encouraging constituents to adopt "the pester technique": "Call your senator in his office, call him at home late at night, call him in the morning before he's had his breakfast eggs." Even members of Congress sometimes urged people to call members of Congress: in 1941, Representative Jeannette Rankin, of Montana, told those opposed to American involvement in the Second World War to "call your congressman by telephone every day and tell him how you feel."

Today, thanks to the Internet-as-all-purpose-phone-book, it is easier than ever to call your Congress members, by bypassing the switchboard and phoning their offices directly. If you do so, your call will be answered not by a Capitol operator (today, they number only in the couple of dozen) but, most likely, by a staff assistant or an intern. Staff assistants are typically recent college graduates, twenty-three or twenty-four years old, learning the ropes of American politics before they go off to get a business degree or a master's in political science. Interns tend to be even younger—nineteen- and twenty-year-olds taking a summer job or some time off from school—although they do basically the same work, usually minus the salary. Together, these staffers can be found working for the five hundred and thirty-five voting members of Congress, the forty-nine congressional committees, commissions, and caucuses, and the district office of every lawmaker in every state. An exact head count is hard to come by, but the congressional employees whose time is mostly spent fielding constituent messages number in the thousands.

How seriously those messages are taken by Congress varies widely, chiefly because, when it comes to interacting with the public, there's really no such thing as Congress per se. There are five hundred and thirty-five small businesses that together form the legislative arm of government, and their way of dealing with constituents can differ as much as their politics. As a logistical matter, however, most congressional offices function in roughly the same way. No matter how a message comes in—by phone, e-mail, post, fax, carrier pigeon—it is entered into a software program known as a constituent-management system. Owing to stringent security requirements, only a few of these systems are authorized by Congress, and many members use one called Intranet Quorum, made by Leidos, a Virginia-based defense contractor and technology company. Like many things the federal government purchases from such companies, it is expensive, as are the other human and technological resources that go into fielding the concerns of average Americans. According to Bradford Fitch, the President of the Congressional Management Foundation (C.M.F.), a nonpartisan nonprofit group that works to improve the efficacy of interactions between citizens and lawmakers, constituent communications account for twenty to thirty per cent of the budget for every congressional office on Capitol Hill.

Exactly how many calls and e-mails and the like are collectively entered into constituent-management systems is impossible to say, because members of Congress are under no obligation to release that data. The same goes for district offices, which, in some cases, don't even keep those figures for themselves. (They do typically share with their D.C. headquarters the gist of incoming communications, if not a precise tally.) The Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper tracks both average and peak call volumes to the switchboard, but declines to make that information public, for reasons it likewise keeps to itself: possibly to prevent denial-of-service attacks, possibly to deter competitively minded constituents from trying to set new records.

Unlike call volume, the data on mail sent to Congress is public, and it suggests that, at least among the politically active, the U.S. Postal Service remains popular; the Senate alone received more than 6.4 million letters last year. Contrary to popular opinion, those written communications are an effective way of communicating with Congress, as are their electronic kin. "Everything is read, every call and voice mail is listened to," Isaiah Akin, the deputy legislative director for Oregon's Senator Ron Wyden, told me. "We don't discriminate when it comes to phone versus e-mail versus letter."

As it turns out, some less egalitarian offices do discriminate, but not in the direction you might expect. According to a 2015 C.M.F. survey of almost two hundred senior congressional staffers, when it comes to influencing a lawmaker's opinion, personalized e-mails, personalized letters, and editorials in local

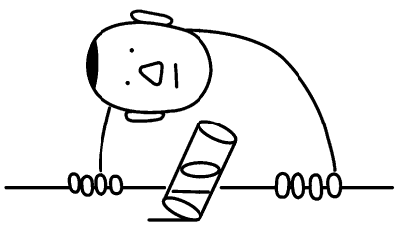
newspapers all beat out the telephone.

In normal times, then—which is to say, in the times we don't currently live in—calling your members of Congress is not an intrinsically superior way to get them to listen. But what makes a particular type of message effective depends largely on what you are trying to achieve. For mass protests, such as those that have been happening recently, phone calls *are* a better way of contacting lawmakers, not because they get taken more seriously but because they take up more time—thereby occupying staff, obstructing business as usual, and attracting media attention. E-mails get the message through but are comparatively swift and easy for staffers to process, while conventional mail is at a disadvantage when speed matters, since, in addition to the time spent in transit, anything sent to Congress is temporarily held for testing and decontamination, to protect employees from mail bombs and toxins. Afterward, most constituent mail is scanned and forwarded to congressional offices as an electronic image. In other words, your letter will not arrive overnight, and it will not arrive with those grains of Iowa wheat or eau de constituent you put in it. But, once it shows up, it will be taken at least as seriously as a call.

Some forms of correspondence, however, do not carry quite as much weight, starting with anything that comes from outside a legislator's district or state. Carter Moore, a former staff assistant for the late congresswoman Julia Carson, of Indiana, recounted an anecdote about a constituent who decided to write a letter on immigration to every member of Congress. One morning, Moore came in to work and found, piled up in his office, hundreds of identical envelopes, forwarded unopened. Other messages that staffers tend to disregard include tweets and Facebook posts (less out of dismissiveness than because of the difficulty of determining if they come from constituents), online petitions (because they require so little effort that they aren't seen as meaningful), comments submitted through apps like Countable, and mass e-mails that originate from the Web sites of advocacy groups. (These last have a particularly bad reputation. According to the C.M.F., almost half of staffers believe, incorrectly, that they are sent without the constituent's knowledge.)

Likewise, phone calls that hew to scripts from advocacy organizations usually get downgraded, especially if the caller seems ill-informed about the issue. Such calls also tend to annoy staffers. "You could tell when you walked in the office by how the staff was responding that they were getting the same call over and over," Josiah Bonner, a former Republican congressman from Alabama, said. (Jo Bonner, as he is known, was the victim of one of the few recurring errors made by the congressional operators, a result of having served in the House at the same time as John Boehner. "Not infrequently, I'd pick up the phone," he told me, "and someone would say, 'I'd like to tell the Speaker to go straight to hell.' And I'd say, 'Well, I'll be sure to get him the message.'")

Regardless of how they choose to do so, most people who contact Congress have legitimate concerns—but, as any staffer can tell you, there is a small but enduring subgroup of wiseacres and crackpots. Moore, the former congressional staffer, once took a call from a man who claimed, in all seriousness, to be the true and rightful owner of the moon. ("Pause, obviously," Moore said. "And then I was, like, 'I'm sorry, I missed that, can you say it again?'") For a while in the early two-thousands, a gentleman from parts unknown phoned up after



hours several times a week and left dirty limericks—a new one each time—on the voice mails of dozens of senators. Conspiracy theorists love to call Congress, and do so in droves: to claim that 9/11 was an inside job; to demand investigation into a train-maintenance yard ostensibly meant to serve as a FEMA-run concentration camp when the government declares martial law; to warn about the impending conquest of the United States by the Queen of England.

Such oddities aside, most communications to Congress fall into one of two categories. In the first, known as constituent services, callers have a specific problem with a federal agency and want their senator or representative to help solve it: by securing an honor guard for a veteran's funeral, resolving a filing issue with the Social Security Administration, nominating an aspiring cadet to West Point, obtaining political asylum for an imperilled relative, or helping out with an overseas adoption. The second category, conversely, might be called constituent demands: someone calls and expresses a political preference to anyone who answers the phone and hopes that his or her legislator will act on it. It is a curious thing about Americans that we simultaneously believe nothing gets done in Congress and have faith that this strategy works.

Actually, this strategy *does* work in a surprising number of cases, though probably not the ones that you're thinking of. If you ask your senator to co-sponsor a bill on mud-flap dimensions or to propose a change to the bottling requirements for apple cider or to vote in favor of increased funding for a rare childhood disease, you stand a decent chance of succeeding. This is not a trivial point, since such requests make up the majority of those raised by constituents. (They also represent the underappreciated but crucial role that average citizens play in the legislative process. "I've written bills that became law because people called to complain about a particular issue I was unaware of," Akin, of Senator Wyden's office, said. It was constituents, for instance, who educated Congress about America's opioid crisis and got members to dedicate funds and draft health legislation to begin dealing with it.)

If, however, you want a member of Congress to vote your way on a matter of intense partisan fervor—immigration, education, entitlement programs, health insurance, climate change, gun control, abortion—your odds of success are, to understate matters, considerably slimmer. To borrow an example from the C.M.F.'s Brad Fitch, four well-informed doctors might persuade a senator to support the use of a certain surgical procedure in V.A.

hospitals, but four hundred thousand phone calls to Senator John McCain are unlikely to change his position on the appropriate use of American military power overseas.

That kind of policy change isn't impossible, and it isn't unprecedented, but it is extremely rare. When I asked past and present Congress members and high-level staffers if constituent input mattered, all of them emphasized that it absolutely does. But when I asked them to name a time that a legislator had changed his or her vote on the basis of such input, I got, in every instance, a laugh, and then a very long pause.

It's easy to chalk that reaction up to embarrassment, as if Congress members had been caught paying lip service to constituents while voting in accordance with other influences: party leadership, polling, lobbyists, interest groups, donors, the dictates of conscience. And it is true that those influences are potent, while our own has been compromised in recent times by gerrymandering; politicians in the safe districts which that practice creates are still vulnerable to challenges from their base, as the Tea Party demonstrated in 2010, but oppositional voices, like oppositional votes, are less effective than they once were. But those very long pauses also reflected a legitimate and enduring conundrum of political theory: to what extent the job of a representative is to represent.

"We want people to know their voices are being heard," Phil Novack, the press secretary for Ted Cruz, told me, before going on to say, essentially, that they wouldn't be heeded: "The senator was elected based on certain values and ideals, and he's going to keep fighting for those, even though some of his constituents might disagree." That may be frustrating, but it isn't dodging or doublespeak, and it certainly isn't an attitude found only on one side of the aisle; it's a particular belief about the role a lawmaker should play in a representative democracy. Edmund Burke said roughly the same thing more than two centuries ago, while describing the relationship between a legislator and his constituents: "Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitted attention." You can almost hear the "but" coming, and then it does. "Your

representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion."

By this theory of governance, it *should* be difficult for average citizens to influence a lawmaker's vote. For one thing, those lawmakers have access to information and expertise unavailable to the rest of us. Jo Bonner described voting for TARP, the Troubled Asset Relief Program, over both his own distaste and the vociferous objections of his constituents, after listening to everyone from the head of the Federal Reserve to the President's Council of Economic Advisers explain why the American economy would tank if he didn't.

For another, everyone loves the idea of Congress members heeding their constituents, right up until we disagree with what those constituents think. Fitch told me that he once stopped by a senator's office shortly before a vote on legislation, drafted after the massacre at Sandy Hook, to close loopholes in gun regulations. The senator hailed from a deep-red state, and the phones were ringing off the hook. Fitch asked the harried assistant if the calls were running ninety-nine to one against the proposed legislation. The assistant said, "Yes, except for the one." Every single caller opposed the bill. The senator voted for it anyway.

For all that, constituents are not voiceless in a democracy, and every once in a while they do score major legislative wins. In 1989, Congress tried to give itself a fifty-per-cent pay raise, and the American public rebelled. In late 2005, the House passed a heavily lobbied-for immigration-reform bill that increased fines and prison sentences on the undocumented and made it a crime to offer them certain kinds of aid; its chances in the Senate were then swiftly tanked by a citizen uprising, including one of the first successful mass mobilizations of the Latino community against a piece of legislation. In 2012, what should have been a pair of obscure little intellectual-property bills, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA), provoked such a massive outcry that nearly a fifth of senators withdrew their support in a single day, and the acts were effectively killed.

Why constituents succeeded in making themselves heard in these cases while failing in others is difficult to say; political causality is famously, enormously complicated. (Consider the quantity of ink that was spilled just trying to account for Trump's victory.) Kristina Miler, a political scientist at the University of Maryland and the author of the book "Constituency Representation in Congress," has argued that activism works in part simply by making previously hidden segments of the population more visible to legislators. Tasked with representing anywhere from seven hundred and fifty thousand people to tens of millions of them, most lawmakers are familiar with only a tiny fraction of their district or state. But, in a series of surveys and experiments, Miler found that hearing from citizens changed lawmakers' mental maps and, in doing so, altered how they legislate. (SOPA is a good example of this. Before it failed, Congress members considering an intellectual-property bill were most likely to think about its potential impact on major copyright holders like the Walt Disney Corporation. Today, no one can contemplate such legislation without remembering other constituents, from librarians to the tech community, and adjusting plans and votes accordingly.)

For constituent activity to have more immediate effects on the actions of lawmakers, however, other conditions—most of them necessary, none of them necessarily sufficient—must apply. Broadly speaking, these include a huge quantity of people acting in concert, an unusually high pitch of passion, a specific countervailing vision, and consistent press coverage unfavorable to sitting politicians. Together, these can create the most potent condition of all: the possibility (or, at any rate, the fear) that the collective restiveness could jeopardize reëlection.

Such conditions do not emerge very often in American politics, but, when they do, pundits routinely describe them with recourse to the metaphor of a flood. Calls pour in; dams threaten to burst; legislators are deluged, inundated, swamped. "It's kind of like water flowing down into a dam," Fitch said. "If a hundred cubic feet of water flows down over a period of three weeks, it's not going to put pressure on the dam. But if a hundred cubic feet of water flows down in three minutes, something's going to give."

That language is vivid but hardly precise, so I asked Carter Moore how he might quantify a flood. "If you start seeing tweets or Facebook posts saying, 'Tried to call but got a busy signal,' that's one sign," he said. "If everybody in your office has been pulled off their regular duties to answer calls but the line is still clogged, that's usually a sign, too." In terms of actual call volume, he noted that flood levels depend, as they do in real life, on terrain; at baseline, representatives of populous districts with major media centers get more calls than those from Idaho or Wyoming. "Still, if the calls are coming in at forty an hour," Moore said, "something interesting is happening. If a member of Congress is presented at the end of the day with around six hundred to a thousand unique calls, I'd call that a flood."

Well, call it a flood. Call it, like Noah, *the* flood. Never mind the end of the day; last month, Senator Cory Gardner, a Colorado Republican, got three thousand calls in one *night*. Senator Maria Cantwell, a Washington Democrat, got thirty-one thousand in three weeks. Last year, in a fourteen-day period in January, Senator Bob Casey, a Pennsylvania Democrat, got a thousand pieces of mail on the subject of education; this year, during that same period, he got forty-five thousand. Compared with 2016, his over-all constituent correspondence shot up nine hundred per cent. Members of Congress claim that, Senate-wide, the call volume for the week of January 30, 2017, more than doubled the previous record; on average, during that week, the Senate got 1.5 million calls a day. Three of those days—January 31st, February 1st, and February 2nd—were the busiest in the history of the Capitol switchboard. (Even those numbers are necessarily underestimates. Once the lines are all busy and the voice mail is maxed out, all the other calls coming in go undetected, a storm after the rain gauge is full.)

Unlike most political protests, this recent surge in citizen action has not been limited to a single issue. Many early calls were about Betsy DeVos,

LISBURN ROAD

A few yards of vinyl records, well thumbed,
Under the cistern that sometimes overflows over the front door in London,
The drips giving visitors Legionnaires' disease. Books in four countries,
The same books. No turntable. None of this is a boast.

Boots, sweaters, jeans, from pre-designer days.
Papers, birth certificate, dead passports, their corners docked,
My degree, my decree.
Unopened letters from my mother.

Three sets of taxes, old boarding passes,
Coins, bundled stationery envelopes that are stuck down or won't stick.
The whatever world of passwords, streaming, and clouds—
Oh, streams and clouds by.

A trunk holding a suitcase holding a holdall,
The travel equivalent of the turducken,
Motheaten to buggery.
Children's clothes, Oshkosh, never worn.

Two paintings by a man called Smith, American in Paris, or Brit in New York,
One by 'Puck' Dachinger, a black canted nude in a pink camisole,
With a stove in the corner, scratched with the back of the brush:
Ravings from internment on the Isle of Man.

Blood on one of the doors, peach on one of the walls (don't ask).
Two plastic bottles of yellowing samogon mescal
From Mexico, sealed with extra twists of plastic.
Imagine travelling with liquids.

Afghan rugs. A reamer, a garlic press.
A funny cup. The "Porky Prime Cut" greetings etched in the lead-off grooves,
When not only did you listen to records,
You held them up to the light and read them.

—*Michael Hofmann*

Trump's then-nominee for Secretary of Education, but they quickly extended to include other Cabinet nominations, the executive order on immigration, the proposed repeal of the Affordable Care Act, tax returns, ethical violations, Russian involvement in the elections and with the Trump Administration, and Steve Bannon's presence on the National Security Council, among other areas of concern. Nor have callers been limited to the so-called coastal élites. People have taken not only to the phone but to the streets in cities and towns all around the country—in Oklahoma and Nebraska and Anchorage, Alaska; in Auburn, Alabama, and Little Rock, Arkansas, and Beckley, West Virginia. They have also taken to attending real and virtual town halls in truly staggering numbers. One House member, who typically has three or four thousand constituents call in to his telephone town halls, found himself joined at his latest one by eleven thousand constituents.

For political watchers, the most striking thing about this outpouring of political activism is its spontaneity. "If Planned Parenthood sends out an e-mail and asks all their donors to contact their Congress members—that's honest, it's real, it's citizen action," Fitch said. "But this thing was organic: people saw something in the news, it made them angry, and they called their member of Congress." At this point, he paused and informed me that he was "not one for hyperbolic statements." But what was happening was, he said, "amazing," "unprecedented," "a level of citizen engagement going on out there outside the Beltway that Congress has never experienced before."

In point of fact, most of the citizens doing that engaging have never experienced it before, either. "I generally don't like talking on the phone that much," Mikayla Dreyer, a registered Independent in Missouri, told me. "I'm a millennial, and that's not our thing." Since January, though, she's got over it. "I commute a lot to work, so I have down time. I have Bluetooth set up in my car and I just say, 'O.K., call Roy Blunt's D.C. office' every day now. That's my routine." She sent me a picture of her call log; in the thirty-five days from December 30th to February 2nd, she'd called Congress thirty-seven times. Belinda Rollens, who is eighty and lives in Tennessee with her husband of sixty-two years, was last given to writing her representatives during Watergate, almost half a century ago. Lately, though, she has taken to regularly e-mailing her senators. ("Senator Corker always responds quickly, saying, 'Thank you for contacting me,'" she said. "Lamar Alexander never says boo.") "This is such an unusual situation," she told me, "that I think anyone who can sit up and get to a computer should make themselves heard."

There is nothing particularly exceptional about these stories, which is the point. What's exceptional is how common they have become. "Protest Is the New Brunch," a sign at a rally outside Trump Tower in February read—the point being not only that citizen engagement is something to do on a Sunday morning but that it is a new kind of socializing: a way to see old friends

and meet new ones, a way to combat the political equivalent of a very rough Saturday night. ("It's good for my mood," Dreyer said about her call-a-day habit. "When I'm not actively standing up and doing something, I get dragged down and start to feel hopeless.") Moreover, for many people, including some who slept through high-school civics, the past several weeks have been a kind of adult-education seminar in American government. Whatever else it will change, in other words, this surge of grass-roots activism is already changing the people who participate in it. And that change can bring about others: today's newly engaged citizen might be 2018's motivated mid-term voter, or 2020's brand-new city council member, or the dark-horse victor in a Senate race in 2024.

In the meantime, other, more direct effects of this activism are already apparent. On January 2nd, House Republicans voted in secret to defang the Office of Congressional Ethics; less than twenty-four hours later, following what seemed at the time like a deluge of calls but later turned out to be just that loud patter you hear on your window before the storm really begins, they reversed their decision. On January 24th, Representative Jason Chaffetz, Republican of Utah, introduced a proposal to sell off 3.3 million acres of federal land. Barely a week later, on February 1st, he withdrew it, after getting an earful. "Groups I support and care about fear it sends the wrong message," he explained. "I hear you and H.R. 621 dies tomorrow."

Most unanticipated of all, Republicans have been stalling and backpedalling on the Affordable Care Act, which was originally expected to be the earliest, fastest, and most thorough casualty of the Trump Administration. Like nearly everyone I spoke with, Chad Chitwood, a former congressional staffer, attributed the fact that it's still around chiefly to constituents clamoring to keep it. "Watching the way that the Republican Party was gleeful at being able to get rid of the A.C.A. and then started hearing from people who did not realize they were on it or did not realize what was going to happen if it was taken away—I think that's why we're seeing the slowdown," he said. "Otherwise, they would have already taken it away."

Perhaps the most striking shift so far, though, has happened on the Democratic side of the aisle, in the form of a swift and dramatic stiffening of the spine. In the past month, at the insistence of constituents, the party line has changed from a cautious willingness to work with the White House to staunch and nearly unified opposition. "If you ask me, before the calls started coming in, someone like Neil Gorsuch"—Trump's pick for the vacant Supreme Court seat—"would have passed with seventy-one votes," said one Democratic senator's chief of staff, who has worked on the Hill for close to twenty years. "Now I'd be surprised if he gets to sixty." More generally, that staffer noted, the newly galvanized left is suddenly helping to set the Party's agenda. In thinking about Cabinet nominations, Democratic members of Congress had planned to make their stand over Tom Price, then the nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services—until their constituents chose Betsy DeVos. "That was not a strategic decision made in Washington," the staffer said. "That was a very personal decision made by all these people outside the Beltway worrying about their kids. We're not managing this resistance. We can participate in it, but there's no chance of us managing it."

Republicans, of course, can't manage the resistance, either—and, so far, they are struggling to figure out how to respond. Some have merely expressed frustration that so many calls are apparently coming from out of their district or state. But others, including Senator Marco Rubio, Senator Cory Gardner, and President Trump, have tried to discredit concerned citizens by claiming that they are "paid protesters," an allegation supported by precisely zero evidence. Still others have expressed disingenuous outrage over political organizing, as when Tim Murtaugh, a spokesperson for Representative Lou Barletta, of Pennsylvania, criticized "the significant percentage who are encouraged to call us by some group." And other legislators simply turned out not to like their job description. "Since Obamacare and these issues have come up," Representative Dave Brat, of Virginia, said last month, "the women are in my grill no matter where I go." In an apparent effort to dodge such interactions, a number of Republican legislators, including Representative Mike Coffman, of Colorado, and Representative Peter Roskam, of Illinois, have cancelled or curtailed town-hall meetings. Other G.O.P. legislators have allegedly been locking their office doors, turning off their phones, and, in general, doing what they can to limit contact with their constituents.

That is not, of course, a viable long-term strategy; at a minimum, these lawmakers will need to begin showing their faces come reëlection season. The deluge of constituent pressure, by contrast, is a viable long-term strategy, but only if it *is* a long-term strategy—that is, only if those doing it choose to sustain it. That would mean persevering in the face of both short-term defeats and the potentially energy-sapping influence of time itself.

Such perseverance is by no means impossible; here, too, political causality is complex. Setbacks can as easily stoke as sap, movements may grow as well as wither, and every critical mass has, of necessity, been built from a subcritical one. Moreover, and luckily for democracy, none of us requires a guaranteed outcome in order to act. We all do plenty of things without knowing if or when or how or how much they will work: we say prayers, take multivitamins, give money to someone on Second Avenue who looks like she needs it. So, too, with calling and e-mailing and writing and showing up in congressional offices: it would be good to know that these actions will succeed, but it suffices to know that they could. And at this particular moment, when our First Amendment freedoms are existentially threatened—when the President himself has, among other things, sought to curb press access and to discredit dissent—we also act on them to insist that we can. The telephone might not be a superior medium for participatory democracy, but it is an excellent metaphor for it, and it reminds us of the rights we are promised as citizens. When we get disconnected, we can try to get through. When we get no answer, we can keep trying. When we have to, for as long as we need to, we can hold the line. ♦

MYSTERY NOVELS INSPIRED BY A CO-WORKING SPACE

BY ZAIN KHALID

"And Then There Were None—Dry-Erase Markers, That Is"
Ten strangers are lured to a co-working space under false pretenses (subway advertisements featuring racially diverse college graduates happily sharing whiteboards). Despite this promise of harmony, the most observant of the co-workers, a twenty-five-year-old novelist, senses that something malicious is afoot. Sure enough, the dry-erase markers start to disappear, one by one, until finally they're all missing. Or stolen. Or dead. Who really knows?

"The Hound of the Guy Who Thinks It's Cool to Bring His Mastiff to Work"
A country lass with an idea for an iOS app is ensnared by a co-working space's devious six-month contract. Late one night, she falls victim to the unwanted affection of a hound belonging to a man working on a Web series. A novelist turned playwright valiantly protests this clear violation of the personal-space policy by sending several strongly worded e-mails to help@coworkingrules.com. When he doesn't hear back, he takes matters into his own hands and kidnaps the beast. Only time will tell if he ends up liking the friendly canine way more than the young lady and her app, which is basically Snapchat.

"The Talented Mr. Rabinowitz"
A well-dressed umpire named Ari Rabinowitz and his shady, tank-top-wearing business partner, Rocco, begin using a co-working space to develop a sports-betting Web site. Our protagonist, a playwright turned poet, overhears them talking about their upcoming weekend trip to Miami. On Monday, Rocco returns alone, wearing a pin-striped suit. Is Ari dead? Probably not, but the poet has been meaning to check out Miami anyway—and free verse is really, really hard.

" 'A' Is for 'Alice Did It' "
Someone has been using a co-working space's microwave to reheat what smells like tilefish casserole. Several co-workers are discussing hiring a private detective when Alice walks in, eating tilefish casserole. Will everyone respond by leaving passive-aggressive Post-its on her lunchbox? Or

will a hero, perhaps even a poet turned screenwriter with a torrented copy of Final Draft, rise up and destroy the microwave on behalf of nostrils everywhere?

"The Girl with the Snowden Tattoo"
It seems that an attractive woman with what appears to be a tattoo of Edward Snowden has given a screenwriter turned freelance-investigative-journalist the opportunity of a lifetime when she joins his co-working space. He invites her to lunch, hoping to get material for a raw, gritty BuzzFeed: Culture profile of the infamous whistleblower. When the woman reveals that her tattoo is actually of the "Twilight" star Robert Pattinson, will the freelancer have a loud panic attack in the bathroom of a Pret a Manger?

"The Postman Always Knocks Twice (And Then Your Package Disappears Completely)"
A freelance-investigative-journalist turned nature-writer uses his mom's credit card to order eight hundred dollars' worth of unlined Moleskine notebooks. When the package is late, our modern-day Ralph Waldo Emerson, suspecting foul play, looks up the tracking number and discovers that it was, in fact, delivered, and signed for by Laura, a talented fellow-wordsmith who somehow has a book deal, God damn it. Does the promising transcendentalist broach the subject of Laura's obvious theft? Will he say nothing, hoping she mentions him to her agent? Or will the box mysteriously appear on his desk the next morning?

"Crime and No Punishment Whatsoever"
A nature-writer turned travel-blogger is super depressed and running out of money to pay for his co-working space. In an act of desperation, he steals fifty Brita filters from the cupboard next to the sink and sells them to a cunning Bed Bath & Beyond employee. Will the blogger continue this vicious circle of petty fraud, or will he finally give up on himself, the space, and his site's fourteen monthly visitors?

"Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, M.F.A. Applicant"
With nothing to show for his artistic efforts, a travel-blogger turned Yelp-reviewer decides to apply for a creative-writing M.F.A. program. He resolves to sabotage his co-working space, hoping that its monthly rate will go down, allowing him to complete his application in an environment more inspiring than his mother's basement. Will his plan succeed, or will he be threatened with bodily harm when the custodial staff catches him replacing the hand sanitizer with warming lubricant?

"Gone Boy"
After receiving his seventh M.F.A. rejection, a newly hired waiter hatches a scheme to frame members of his former co-working space for his own pretend murder. Maybe in faux death his writing will finally be published—or maybe he will discover that he was meant to be an actor all along. ♦

GREG CLARKE

IMAGE CONSULTANT

The director who helped Beyoncé and Rihanna reinvent themselves.

BY ALEXIS OKEOWO

Melina Matsoukas says, of her imagery, "Sometimes it works and sometimes it goes awry."

Melina Matsoukas, a director of music videos and television shows, had just returned home from a trip to Cuba when she got a call from Beyoncé, asking her to direct a video for a song called "Formation." Matsoukas had directed nine of Beyoncé's videos, and considered her "family." But this assignment was unusually demanding. Beyoncé was working on "Lemonade," a deeply personal "visual album" that touches on betrayals in black marriages—her parents' and, reportedly, her own. "Formation" would be the first single, and an introduction to Beyoncé's new aesthetic: both vulnerable and political. She wanted to release the song the day before she performed it at the Super Bowl, which meant that Matsoukas would have to submit a video within a few weeks. "It was the fastest delivery I had ever done in my life," she told me.

When I visited her loft in Hollywood recently, Matsoukas opened her rose-gold laptop and pulled up the video. The brassy opening beats began as Beyoncé crouched on the roof of a police car, wearing a red-and-white blouse and a matching skirt: evocative of the rural South but made by Gucci. Matsoukas, who is tall and thin, with dark hair and high cheekbones, radiates a disconcerting hyperassurance. (She's a Buddhist, with a fluctuating practice.) She is, as she says, "very loud and New York," but her apartment projects an almost hermetic cool: Africanist art, a golden skull on a shelf, a tar-splashed vanity mirror.

After Matsoukas agreed to direct the video, Beyoncé invited her to her house in Los Angeles, and explained the concept behind "Lemonade." "She wanted to show the historical impact of slavery on black love, and what it has done to the black family," Matsoukas told me. "And black men and women—how we're almost socialized not to be together." This was a fraught subject for Beyoncé. She and her husband, the rapper Jay Z, are among the most famous couples in the world, and they had long been surrounded by rumors that he was unfaithful. Beyoncé considers herself a feminist, but for black women feminism can be a tenuous balancing act—advocating for women's rights while supporting black men against racism. Black feminists have often been forced to pick between being politically black or politically female. "It's an unfair struggle that only black women can understand and relate to," Matsoukas said. With the "Lemonade" album, Beyoncé was publicly calling out the men in her life, an unexpected and, to her fans, thrilling decision.

The video for "Formation" would be an anthem of female and black empowerment, set in Louisiana, where Beyoncé's maternal grandparents are from. "We spoke about the South, New Orleans, her mother's history as well as her father's," Matsoukas recalled. The concept suited Matsoukas, who is known for videos that retain contemporary hip-hop's commercial glamour but feature black women as the heroes. While the lyrics offered a certain amount of feminist swagger—Beyoncé promises that, if a lover pleases her, she "might take him on a flight on my chopper"—there wasn't an obvious story line.

As Matsoukas develops an idea for a video, she spends hours browsing online and through art books and magazines, looking for images that resonate. "I treat each video like a thesis project," she said. Stacks of old sources are piled

PHOTOGRAPH BY AWOL ERIZKU

behind her couch: books by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Noam Chomsky, and C. L. R. James; back issues of *Wallpaper*; math and science textbooks from college. For the "Formation" video, she found ideas in the work of Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Octavia Butler. She began to conceive scenes of black history, from slavery through Mardi Gras parades and the Rodney King protests. "I wanted to show—this is black people," she said. "We triumph, we suffer, we're drowning, we're being beaten, we're dancing, we're eating, and we're still here." She wrote out a treatment and sent it to Beyoncé in the middle of the night. Within hours, the singer had written back to say that she loved it.

Matsoukas, looking for a set that resembled a plantation house, rented a museum in Pasadena and decorated it to summon "Gone with the Wind" and "Twelve Years a Slave." Then she had her art director "blackify" the house, hanging French Renaissance-style portraits of black subjects. Films about slavery "traditionally feature white people in these roles of power and position," she said. "I wanted to turn those images on their head." Matsoukas planned technical details to create a sense of verisimilitude, shooting some scenes with a Bolex camera—for a "grainy look," like that of documentary footage—and others with a camcorder. She hired a camera operator named Arthur Jafa, who had been the cinematographer of "Daughters of the Dust," an iconic 1991 film about Gullah women in South Carolina whose focus on black sisterhood echoes throughout the "Formation" video.

Matsoukas had two days to shoot Beyoncé, between her rehearsals for the Super Bowl. She devised a scene of Beyoncé performing on top of a squad car, as it slowly sank into the floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina. "I wanted it to be a police car to show that they hadn't really shown up for us," she told me. "And that we were still here on top, and that she was one with the people who had suffered." She shot the scene on a Los Angeles soundstage, with an artificial lake backed by a blue screen made to look like New Orleans. A crane on a barge suspended a camera overhead while a lift lowered the police car, and Beyoncé, into the water. Matsoukas operated another camera from a speedboat. "Everyone was scared, because the water was cold," she said. "And Miss Tina"—Beyoncé's mother, Tina Knowles—"is calling me, like, 'You're going to give her pneumonia, and she has to perform at the Super Bowl.' " Beyoncé, who was wearing a wetsuit under her clothes, didn't complain.

In the first edit, the video ended with an image of Beyoncé sinking into the water, but the singer wanted the final note to be more uplifting. A friend of Matsoukas's had recently joked about the "black-girl air grab," an incisive gesture made with your forearm upright as your fingers stretch toward the ceiling and then close in a fist. In extra footage, Matsoukas found a portrait of Beyoncé sitting in the plantation house in a white dress, half in shadow, air-grabbing as she faced the camera. "It just felt so perfect," she said. She spliced it in after the drowning scene as an emphatic last gesture.

The response to the video was immediate and contentious. On Slate, a documentary filmmaker named Shantrelle Lewis accused Beyoncé of profiting from tragedy, writing, "Are we in need of mainstream blackness so badly that we'll mistake its exploitation for validation?" Police unions throughout the country protested, saying that Beyoncé had an "anti-police message." But the video was enormously popular among fans and critics, winning a Grand Prix Lion Award, at the Cannes Lions Awards; Video of the Year at the B.E.T. Awards and at the MTV Music Video Awards; and, earlier this month, a Grammy for Best Music Video. "I didn't know the video was going to incite all those conversations," Matsoukas said, closing her laptop. "But I was very pleased it did."

In the "Formation" video, a black man wearing a yellow T-shirt and a black Stetson rides a horse through a deserted alley, edged with shrubs and red brick walls; his white Adidas sneakers are fitted with spurs. The scene was inspired by Matsoukas's maternal grandfather, Carlos, an Afro-Cuban preacher and musician, known to friends as "the Cuban Nat King Cole," who rode in rodeos in Harlem and the Bronx. "We'd see him on his white horse, and he was just this regal-looking black cowboy," she recalled. Her maternal grandmother was a Cuban maid, who brought her six

"Baby, It's Cold Outside"
Ana Juan, February 8, 2010

children from Havana to New York after the revolution. Matsoukas's paternal grandparents were Greek and Polish Jews living on the Upper West Side. Her parents, David and Diana-Elena, met through one of Diana-Elena's brothers, who had encountered David in a socialist student group.

Matsoukas was born in 1981 and grew up in Co-op City, a sprawling housing development in the Bronx. Her father worked as a carpenter, and her mother taught math in a local high school. When Matsoukas was eight, the family moved to Hackensack, New Jersey, but as a teen-ager she often returned to the city to go clubbing. "I was just trying to be grown," she recalled. "Young girl trying to do too much." She read Malcolm X and Assata Shakur, and listened to socially conscious hip-hop by Rakim and A Tribe Called Quest. "She's always been an old soul, and she's always been confident," her mother told me. "I sometimes had to remind her, 'Melina, I'm the mother here.'"

In high school, Matsoukas began taking photographs—including portraits of her friends, dressed in Afrocentric clothing—and she went on to study film at N.Y.U. and cinematography in the graduate program at the American Film Institute. She admired the directors Spike Lee and Mira Nair, and imagined making films that documented the lives of people "who look like me and think like me." Her college thesis was a music video featuring a friend who was a singer, filmed on the subway and in an apartment building in the Bronx that her father owned.

Her first paid gig—two hundred and fifty dollars—was a video for a song called "Dem Girls," by her cousin the rapper Red Handed, in Houston. "It was just in the hood, doing hood stuff," she said, laughing. The result, which featured an assortment of preening video girls, was distinguished less by its imagery than by its precise focus and framing. Matsoukas shot in black and white, with split screens showing contrasting views of the same scene: gold-chained rappers playing dominoes set against children running through the grass.

After she finished graduate school, an agent named Inga Veronique got her a job directing a video for Ludacris and Pharrell. The song was a strip-club anthem called "Money Maker" ("Shake your money maker like somebody 'bout to pay ya"), but, Matsoukas said, "I wanted it to feel *rich*." Borrowing from fashion photography, she posed models in front of bright-colored backdrops and lit them as if for a photo shoot; to accompany one chorus of the song, she created a montage of gleaming watches, sunglasses, and stacks of cash. Veronique said that the video was "fashion-y without beating you over the head with fashion." The song went to the top of the hip-hop charts, and the video drew attention from the industry.

In 2006, on the night of the MTV Music Video Awards, Matsoukas met Jay Z and Beyoncé at a club in New York, and Jay Z hailed her as a rising star. Matsoukas shook Beyoncé's hand and told her, "I'm coming for you." Two months later, Camille Yorrick, a record executive who worked with Beyoncé, called to ask Matsoukas to direct four videos for a forthcoming album. "I had only done four videos in my whole life!" Matsoukas said. "I was really scared." Still, her work appealed to artists' managers. "The thing that stood out to me about her early videos was the way she made people look," Yorrick said. "She just made them look really beautiful—people of color, white people, it didn't even matter."

As Matsoukas made videos for such singers as Whitney Houston and Jennifer Lopez, she often relied on highly stylized settings. Generic lyrics could yield generic imagery: she set Lady Gaga's "Beautiful, Dirty, Rich" in a moodily lit mansion filled with piles of money, and Robin Thicke's "Sex Therapy" in a moodily lit mansion filled with acquiescent models. Her videos were often less concerned with narrative than with what the film theorist David Bordwell has called "world making." Unlike other directors, she selects the wardrobe for a video, and creates mood boards of clothes and accessories for her performers. "Fashion is as much a character in her work as everyone else," Yorrick said. She is also unusually capable of coaxing performances out of musicians. "She knows what she wants, and she knows how to command a set," Yorrick went on. "She's a negotiator—she negotiates her way to the best product." Beyoncé said of Matsoukas in an e-mail, "She is a force, deliberate and methodical."

When Snoop Dogg asked Matsoukas to make a video for a song called "Sensual Seduction," in 2007, she took the job with trepidation. A few years earlier, Snoop had released a film, called "Doggystyle," that blended hip-hop and pornography. "You walk into that kind of situation and you're, like, 'He's a pimp—I don't know how he's going to react to a female director,'" Matsoukas said. She envisioned a video that was radically at odds with Snoop's usual work:

an early-eighties throwback, in which he would dress up in outrageous suits and wigs and perform with a keytar. She won him over, she said, with playful enabling: "In order to make artists feel comfortable in a space they're not normally comfortable with, I go along for the ride." By mid-shoot, she had Snoop shirtless and dancing. "I remember being, like, 'Well, we want to attach this weave to your beard,' and he was, like, 'Sure, glue it on,'" she said.

In 2011, Rihanna asked Matsoukas to make a video for a song called "We Found Love." By then, Matsoukas had grown tired of making videos that simply conjured a mood. "I had done a lot of performance-based stuff, and I just wanted to tell stories," she said. She admired David Fincher's work with Madonna, which felt like four-minute melodramas, and she was drawn to experiments like Prodigy's "Smack My Bitch Up," a cinéma-vérité chronicle that follows a drunken, coked-up lowlife through a night out in London—fighting, vomiting, groping women—until, in the last scene, the lowlife is revealed to be a woman.

Matsoukas drew up a treatment for Rihanna, which evoked "Romeo and Juliet" and "Requiem for a Dream": a depiction of a relationship charged with drug-fuelled passion and domestic violence. To play the male lead—"that man we all want but we know we shouldn't fuck with," Matsoukas said—she found an amateur boxer from London named Dudley O'Shaughnessy. On the set, a farm near Belfast, the chemistry between Rihanna and O'Shaughnessy arose out of improvisation. Before the first scene, Matsoukas recalled, Rihanna "was in her trailer getting ready, and he was on set waiting, and of course we were behind. So when she came out there was no time for formal introductions. It was, like, 'O.K., take her hand and run, and get lost in it.' And then I was, like, 'And if you feel like it, maybe kiss her.' And he did—they kissed on the first take."

Two years before the shoot, Rihanna's boyfriend, Chris Brown, had assaulted her in a car, and pictures of her bruised face had filled the tabloids. Rihanna's fans saw an uncanny resemblance between Brown and O'Shaughnessy. Matsoukas denied that the resemblance was intentional, saying only that the video "was based on my terrible love life and obviously her terrible love life and every woman's terrible love life." Nevertheless, the violence of the onscreen relationship can feel unsettlingly reminiscent of Rihanna's real-life assault. "She was open to taking it there," Matsoukas said, "and with being honest and showing what life really is."

On the set, as Matsoukas prepared to shoot an argument between Rihanna and O'Shaughnessy in a parked car, fans crowded around them. Matsoukas warded them off with a bullhorn, then slipped into the back seat to coach the performers as a cameraman shot from outside. In the scene, Rihanna and O'Shaughnessy can be seen screaming inaudibly at each other. "They were saying the most nonsensical things, like 'Your pants are too tight!'" Matsoukas recalled. "But veins were popping out." The owner of the farm eventually grew uncomfortable with the spectacle, and evicted the crew. "I wanted it to feel free, and like they were living life, and Rihanna took off her shirt," Matsoukas said. "That was probably a bit too much for him." But the video helped Rihanna establish a grittier image. And it earned Matsoukas a Grammy for Best Short Form Music Video, making her the first solo female director to receive the award.

Two decades ago, the music video looked like a dead art. MTV was steadily losing viewers, as young people turned to purchasing or pirating songs online. But the rise of video-streaming services, in the late aughts, again linked the success of pop songs to videos. In 2015, Americans streamed more than three hundred billion songs, most of which were videos—an increase of a hundred and two per cent from the previous year. Matsoukas now checks her work on a laptop with a compact twelve-inch screen. "I like to see a video through a computer or through a phone to make sure it looks good at its worst," Matsoukas told me. "I hate when you perfect something for the ideal way of consuming things and then when you see it on YouTube it looks like crap."

A pop star is the head of an enormous business that sells one product: herself. Matsoukas's clients have to trust her to present them in a way that feels artistically gratifying and also inspires people to buy their music. Hype Williams, perhaps the most inventive video director of the nineties, once said, "At the end of the day, what we do is technically supposed to be a marketing tool as well as something creative." Female artists, especially, are drawn to Matsoukas because she guides them in bolder directions, attracting new attention. "She has the ability to hit the nervous system," Malik Sayeed, a cinematographer who worked on "Formation" and "Lemonade," said.

In 2012, Natalie and Elliot Bergman, the siblings who make up the band Wild Belle, asked Matsoukas to direct a video for "Keep You," a lovelorn song about a cheating partner. Matsoukas's treatment portrayed a turbulent relationship between Natalie, who is twenty-eight and white, and a prepubescent Jamaican boy, who, between bouts of philandering, clutches a Teddy bear, sucks his thumb, and swaggers around in a Boy Scout uniform. "When we saw the treatment, we were a little bit taken aback," Elliot told me. "But we also trusted Melina." Elliot recalled being persuaded by Matsoukas's intensity on set: "She's in your face. She's yelling at the top of her lungs, and she's right in there with the kids dancing on the car, dancing harder than any of them." By the second day of shooting, Matsoukas's voice was almost gone.

"Keep You" is Wild Belle's most-watched video on YouTube, but controversy doesn't always benefit Matsoukas's collaborators. "I like to create provocative imagery," she told me. "Sometimes it works and sometimes it goes awry." In 2012, she directed a video for No Doubt's "Looking Hot," a Wild West fantasy, in which the singer Gwen Stefani appears tied up and wearing a feathered headdress. As the video goes on, she dances around a fire, sends smoke signals, and writhes on a tepee floor with a wolf. The American Indian Studies Center, of U.C.L.A., responded with an open letter describing the video as "the height of cultural misappropriation," suggesting that it recalled "nineteenth-century paintings advancing the ethos of manifest destiny." A day after the video was released, No Doubt took it down.

Matsoukas's videos have also drawn criticism for being derivative. In 2011, she directed Rihanna in a video for the song "S & M," in which the singer danced in latex fetish wear, brandished a whip,

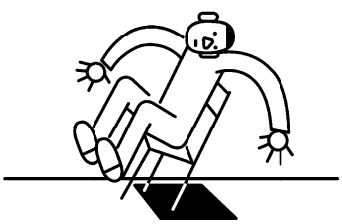
and led a man around on a dog leash. The provocation worked: even as the video was banned in several countries, it received tens of millions of views on YouTube. But later that month the artist David LaChapelle sued Rihanna, claiming that imagery in the video had been plagiarized from his photographs. (Rihanna settled the suit.) During the production of "Formation," Matsoukas intercut her own footage with shots of New Orleans from a documentary about bounce music called "That B.E.A.T." The documentary footage had been licensed from the company that owned the rights, but the filmmakers were still startled to see their imagery subsumed in a different, and much higher-profile, production. Abteen Bagheri, the director, tweeted that the use of the footage was "not cool," adding, with apparent resignation, "It's the sad reality of the music business." Matsoukas said that she was hurt by the criticism, but she also suggested that the pop-culture industry thrives on borrowing. "I've also seen stuff that I think looks similar to mine," she said. "People are influenced by similar things. I try to stay away from close references."

There are very few women of color working as directors in Hollywood, and Matsoukas has sometimes felt that she was not taken seriously. "People will challenge you and try not to listen," she said. "The director of photography will try to get over you and say, 'Oh, that's not possible—we can't light this way,' and I know what the possibilities are." If a camera operator won't film a scene the way that Matsoukas wants it done, she will step in and shoot it herself. Paul Hunter, a veteran director who helped found Matsoukas's production company, told me that he "loved her sense of style and cinematography and thought that she had a really special eye." Without missing a beat, he added, "It doesn't feel like a woman is directing it; it feels like it's just a top professional."

But, as a black woman in an industry dominated by white men, Matsoukas has an unusual affinity with her most frequent collaborators. Beyoncé wrote to me, "I feel safe working with her and expressing or revealing things about myself that I wouldn't with any other director, because we have a genuine friendship and I trust her artistry." Their first videos together were playful and unambitious: a teaser for the song "Kitty Kat," in 2007, was a minute-long vignette of Beyoncé vamping in a leopard-print bodysuit. Over time, their work became moodier. In "Why Don't You Love Me," from 2010, Beyoncé drinks Martinis and screams lyrics into a Princess phone, her mascara running, like a deranged housewife from "Valley of the Dolls."

Matsoukas set the video for the 2013 song "Pretty Hurts" at a fictional beauty pageant, focussing on the ways that beauty standards affect women. She gave Beyoncé bulimia, and shot a scene of her throwing up in a bathroom stall. (Though, even then, she didn't fail to make her star look captivating.) "They're cool girls who play together," Dream Hampton, a filmmaker and music writer, told me of Matsoukas and Beyoncé. "Melina is very supported. Black filmmakers don't generally get to play in film—it costs too much money. But Beyoncé is willing to invest."

Matsoukas has also become close with Beyoncé's family; she has directed videos for Solange, and in 2014 she spoke at her wedding. "One of the special things about our friendship is, nine times out of ten we are on the same wavelength," Solange told me. "Her being a black woman being able to tell those stories in such a bold, unique way is really rare." In "Losing You," from 2012, Solange wanted to feature *sapeurs*, an informal society of Congolese men who compete to have the most ostentatiously stylish



outfits. Matsoukas recalled that security concerns prevented them from shooting in Congo, so they moved the shoot to South Africa and invited some *sapeurs*. "We really had no money," Solange said. "We didn't have a real plan, because we didn't have a full production team." For a scene in which Matsoukas wanted magazine clippings on the walls of a night club, she and Solange worked with the crew to cut up magazines.

Last year, on Solange's thirtieth birthday, Matsoukas posted a tribute to their friendship on Instagram. She recalled their first meeting, on a conference call, when "I thought you were high but later realized you were just a slow ass talker," and a moment of bonding when they "ate mad sushi and became sisters." In the post, Matsoukas described the "Losing You" video as "one of the best pieces of art that I've ever made."

When Matsoukas started working on the "Formation" video, mainstream black artists were showing unaccustomed interest in issues like police brutality. "The people rose up, and the artists were so behind—the artists were still navel-gazing," Hampton told me. "Because of the Black Lives Matter movement, artists are not relevant if they're not talking about what's happening in the streets." One of the most arresting scenes in "Formation" depicts a black boy facing a line of white policemen, doing what Matsoukas calls a "peace dance." The camera cuts to a wall emblazoned with graffiti, which reads "Stop Shooting Us." "I wanted to talk about police brutality and talk about us dying and us being killed, but do it an artful way," she said. The boy was supposed to dance shirtless, but he had arrived at the set in a black hoodie. Matsoukas told him to keep it on. When Beyoncé saw the footage, she questioned the change. "I was, like, 'Please let me keep it,'" Matsoukas told me. Beyoncé acquiesced. The singer and her dancers then performed at the Super Bowl wearing black berets and militaristic leather that resembled Black Panther attire.

After the performance, Beyoncé told *Elle* that she was not anti-police. "I have so much admiration and respect for officers and the families of the officers who sacrifice themselves to keep us safe," she said. "But let's be clear: I am against police brutality and injustice." The backlash was intense, with extensive Fox News coverage and police unions threatening not to provide off-duty security for Beyoncé's "Formation" tour; in response, the Nation of Islam offered its own protection. Matsoukas worried about the heated reaction. "It's kind of scary," she said. But she doesn't regret her choice of imagery. "When they said 'Formation' was anti-police, I was, like, 'So what are you, pro-shooting us, then?'" she said.

Beyoncé funded the "Lemonade" film herself, allowing for a kind of artistic

control that few black artists have experienced. Despite boycotts, the album sold more than two million copies. It was first released on the music platform Tidal, of which Beyoncé is co-owner, helping to attract more than a million new users in a week. The "Formation" tour promoted her other ventures: Before one performance, I watched two extended ads for her sportswear line play on the giant screens. Other black musicians Matsoukas has collaborated with—most notably, Rihanna—espouse the same message of economic self-determination. We have money now, their lyrics suggest, so we're going to build a kind of power that has been denied us. "Malcolm X, during the Nation of Islam years, was absolutely a capitalist," Hampton said. "Elijah Muhammad's idea of self-determination and independence was very much linked to black capitalism." With Matsoukas's help, Beyoncé has made the idea of capitalist liberation an essential part of her presentation. The last lines of "Formation" encourage listeners to put business before feelings: "Always stay gracious, best revenge is your paper."

Matsoukas is now working on her first television show, an HBO series called "Insecure," which grew out of the comedy writer Issa Rae's Web series "Awkward Black Girl." The show is a sendup of Rae's trials in work and romance, and a love letter to South Los Angeles, where she grew up. Most music-video directors hope to eventually move to film and television, which offer more prestige and creative scope. Few are successful. "The industry discounts music-video directors as being all style, and so it makes it hard for executives to see beyond that," Paul Hunter, the veteran music-video director, said. Another director in the industry told me, "In videos, you can do quick cuts and pretty shots because it's exciting just to look at Rihanna or Beyoncé's face. When you don't work with big celebrities, you can't get away with that."

Rae requested Matsoukas for the job, but told me that she and Matsoukas sometimes clashed on how to balance authenticity and glamour. "Her taste is more elevated than mine," Rae said. "A lot of our biggest battles come from me wanting this to be grounded, and we end up meeting halfway. She comes from a more heightened world, and I'm self-proclaimed basic." Matsoukas, who is an executive producer of the show, brought on Solange as the music consultant. Where the Web series was amateurishly filmed, with nondescript interiors and haphazard lighting, "Insecure" is artfully composed and glossy. The characters' travails play out in a shabby-chic apartment, a glass-walled boardroom, or a South L.A. mansion—environments that suggest excellence rather than a struggle to get by. For a sequence in which Rae's character pursues a love interest at a corny open-mike night, Matsoukas found a historic club with swirling tile mosaics on the walls, then painstakingly lit it to flatter the actors. "She's a perfectionist," Deniese Davis, a producer on the show, said of Matsoukas. "It obviously wears everyone out around her, but I think when you see the end result you always appreciate it." "Insecure" received six N.A.A.C.P. Image Award nominations, including best directing in a comedy series. The show recently began preproduction for a second season.

One afternoon, Matsoukas and Davis took Matsoukas's black Range Rover out to scout locations for B-roll. Davis drove while Matsoukas, wearing a rose-colored blazer over a lacy camisole, skinny Levis, and peach heels, shot video on her phone. As reggae played on the car stereo, we headed to Leimert, a mostly black neighborhood in southern L.A., with palm-tree-lined streets and tidy bungalows and ranch houses in pastel shades.

Rae had made a list of places that were significant to her when she was growing up. The first was the Vision Theatre, a vaudeville-era landmark facing Leimert Park that has been in the midst of stalled renovations for two decades. Matsoukas shot only the building's green tower, avoiding its dilapidated façade and shuttered windows. "We're trying to show Leimert and Inglewood in a nice way," Matsoukas explained. "To show that it is a vibrant community that has a lot of culture. It's where the black people are."

The next site, in a nearby plaza, was a concrete fountain, with a flute in the center streaming water. "That fountain is not poppin'," Matsoukas said. She studied the fountain warily. "Maybe a moving shot from the street or having someone pass through it," she mused. "The trees kind of frame it nicely." But there was a limit to what Matsoukas would work with. Rae had included on her list a doughnut shop that she had frequented as a kid. "I'm, like, 'I'm not shooting the Krispy Kreme,'" Matsoukas said. "I don't know how to make that look good." ♦

"To be honest, I inherited this mess."

ANNALS OF DIPLOMACY

ACTIVE MEASURES

What lay behind Russia's interference in the 2016 election—and what lies ahead?

BY EVAN OSNOS, DAVID REMNICK, AND JOSHUA YAFFA

I. SOFT TARGETS

On April 12, 1982, Yuri Andropov, the chairman of the K.G.B., ordered foreign-intelligence operatives to carry out "active measures"—*aktivniye meropriyatiya*—against the reëlection campaign of President Ronald Reagan. Unlike classic espionage, which involves the collection of foreign secrets, active measures aim at influencing events—at undermining a rival power with forgeries, front groups, and countless other techniques honed during the Cold War. The Soviet leadership considered Reagan an implacable militarist. According to extensive notes made by Vasili Mitrokhin, a high-ranking K.G.B. officer and archivist who later defected to Great Britain, Soviet intelligence tried to infiltrate the headquarters of the Republican and Democratic National Committees, popularize the slogan "Reagan Means War!," and discredit the President as a corrupt servant of the military-industrial complex. The effort had no evident effect. Reagan won forty-nine of fifty states.

Active measures were used by both sides throughout the Cold War. In the nineteen-sixties, Soviet intelligence officers spread a rumor that the U.S. government was involved in the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. In the eighties, they spread the rumor that American intelligence had "created" the AIDS virus, at Fort Detrick, Maryland. They regularly lent support to leftist parties and insurgencies. The C.I.A., for its part, worked to overthrow regimes in Iran, Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Chile, and Panama. It used cash payments, propaganda, and sometimes violent measures to sway elections away from leftist parties in Italy, Guatemala, Indonesia, South Vietnam, and Nicaragua. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the early nineties, the C.I.A. asked Russia to abandon active measures to spread disinformation that could harm the U.S. Russia promised to do so. But when Sergey Tretyakov, the station chief for Russian intelligence in New York, defected, in 2000, he revealed that Moscow's active measures had never subsided. "Nothing has changed," he wrote, in 2008. "Russia is doing everything it can today to embarrass the U.S."

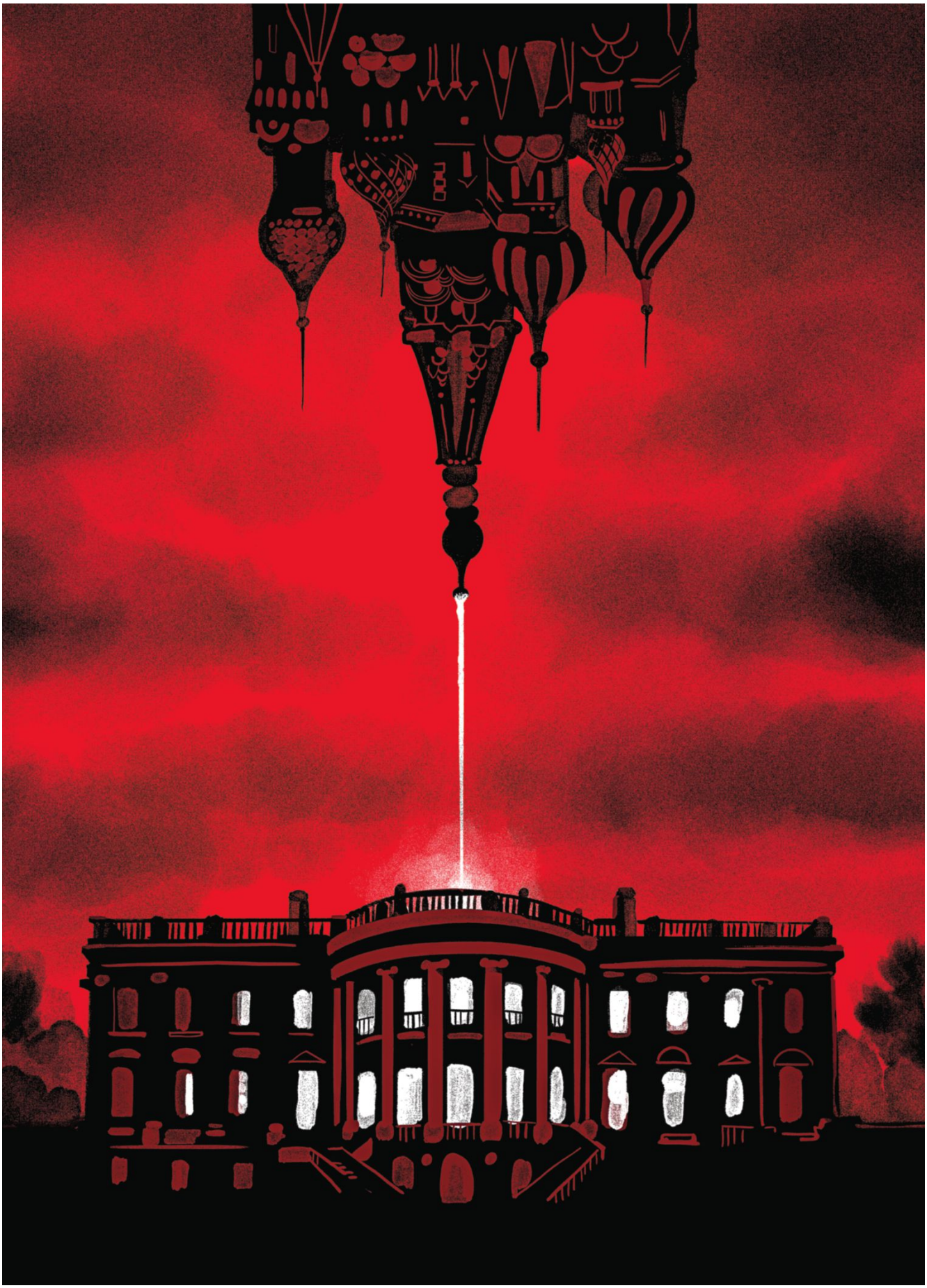
Vladimir Putin, who is quick to accuse the West of hypocrisy, frequently points to this history. He sees a straight line from the West's support of the anti-Moscow "color revolutions," in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine, which deposed corrupt, Soviet-era leaders, to its endorsement of the uprisings of the Arab Spring. Five years ago, he blamed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the anti-Kremlin protests in Moscow's Bolotnaya Square. "She set the tone for some of our actors in the country and gave the signal," Putin said. "They heard this and, with the support of the U.S. State Department, began active work." (No evidence was provided for the accusation.) He considers nongovernmental agencies and civil-society groups like the National Endowment for Democracy, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the election-monitoring group Golos to be barely disguised instruments of regime change.

The U.S. officials who administer the system that Putin sees as such an existential danger to his own reject his rhetoric as "whataboutism," a strategy of false moral equivalences. Benjamin Rhodes, a deputy national-security adviser under President Obama, is among those who reject Putin's logic, but he said, "Putin is not entirely wrong," adding that, in the past, "we engaged in regime change around the world. There is just enough rope for him to hang us."

The 2016 Presidential campaign in the United States was of keen interest to Putin. He loathed Obama, who had applied economic sanctions against Putin's cronies after the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of eastern Ukraine. (Russian state television derided Obama as "weak," "uncivilized," and a "eunuch.") Clinton, in Putin's view, was worse—the embodiment of the liberal interventionist strain of U.S. foreign policy, more hawkish than Obama, and an obstacle to ending sanctions and reëstablishing Russian geopolitical influence. At the same time, Putin deftly flattered Trump, who was uncommonly positive in his statements about Putin's strength and effectiveness as a leader. As early as 2007, Trump declared that Putin was "doing a great job in rebuilding the image of Russia and also rebuilding Russia period." In 2013, before visiting Moscow for the Miss Universe pageant, Trump wondered, in a tweet, if he would meet Putin, and, "if so, will he become my new best friend?" During the Presidential campaign, Trump delighted in saying that Putin was a superior leader who had turned the Obama Administration into a "laughingstock."

For those interested in active measures, the digital age presented opportunities far more alluring than anything available in the era of Andropov. The Democratic and Republican National Committees offered what cybersecurity experts call a large "attack surface." Tied into politics at the highest level, they were nonetheless unprotected by the defenses afforded to sensitive government institutions. John Podesta, the chairman of Hillary Clinton's campaign and a former chief of staff of Bill Clinton's, had every reason to be aware of the fragile nature of modern communications. As a senior counsellor in the Obama White House, he was involved in digital policy. Yet even he had not bothered to use the most elementary sort of defense, two-step verification, for his e-mail account.

"The honest answer is that my team and I were over-reliant on the fact that



The D.N.C. hacks, many analysts believe, were just a skirmish in a larger war against Western institutions and alliances.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

we were pretty careful about what we click on," Podesta said. In this instance, he received a phishing e-mail, ostensibly from "the Gmail team," that urged him to "change your password immediately." An I.T. person who was asked to verify it mistakenly replied that it was "a legitimate e-mail."

The American political landscape also offered a particularly soft target for *dezinformatsiya*, false information intended to discredit the official version of events, or the very notion of reliable truth. Americans were more divided along ideological lines than at any point in two decades, according to the Pew Research Center. American trust in the mainstream media had fallen to a historic low. The fractured media environment seemed to spawn conspiracy theories about everything from Barack Obama's place of birth (supposedly Kenya) to the origins of climate change (a Chinese hoax). Trump, in building his political identity, promoted such theories.

"Free societies are often split because people have their own views, and that's what former Soviet and current Russian intelligence tries to take advantage of," Oleg Kalugin, a former K.G.B. general, who has lived in the United States since 1995, said. "The goal is to deepen the splits." Such a strategy is especially valuable when a country like Russia, which is considerably weaker than it was at the height of the Soviet era, is waging a geopolitical struggle with a stronger entity.

In early January, two weeks before the Inauguration, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence, released a declassified report concluding that Putin had ordered an influence campaign to harm Clinton's election prospects, fortify Donald Trump's, and "undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process." The declassified report provides more assertion than evidence. Intelligence officers say that this was necessary to protect their information-gathering methods.

Critics of the report have repeatedly noted that intelligence agencies, in the months before the Iraq War, endorsed faulty assessments concerning weapons of mass destruction. But the intelligence community was deeply divided over the actual extent of Iraq's weapons development; the question of Russia's responsibility for cyberattacks in the 2016 election has produced no such tumult. Seventeen federal intelligence agencies have agreed that Russia was responsible for the hacking.

In testimony before the Senate, Clapper described an unprecedented Russian effort to interfere in the U.S. electoral process. The operation involved hacking Democrats' e-mails, publicizing the stolen contents through WikiLeaks, and manipulating social media to spread "fake news" and pro-Trump messages.

At first, Trump derided the scrutiny of the hacking as a "witch hunt," and said that the attacks could have been from anyone—the Russians, the Chinese, or "somebody sitting on their bed that weighs four hundred pounds." In the end, he grudgingly accepted the finding, but insisted that Russian interference had had "absolutely no effect on the outcome of the election." Yevgenia Albats, the author of "The State Within a State," a book about the K.G.B., said that Putin probably didn't believe he could alter the results of the election, but, because of his antipathy toward Obama and Clinton, he did what he could to boost Trump's cause and undermine America's confidence in its political system. Putin was not interested in keeping the operation covert, Albats said. "He wanted to make it as public as possible. He wanted his presence to be known," and to "show that, no matter what, we can enter your house and do what we want."

2. COLD WAR 2.0

Remarkably, the Obama Administration learned of the hacking operation only in early summer—nine months after the F.B.I. first contacted the D.N.C. about the intrusion—and then was reluctant to act too strongly, for fear of being seen as partisan. Leaders of the Pentagon, the State Department, and the intelligence agencies met during the summer, but their focus was on how to safeguard state election commissions and electoral systems against a hack on Election Day.

That caution has embittered Clinton's inner circle. "We understand the bind they were in," one of Clinton's senior advisers said. "But what if Barack Obama had gone to the Oval Office, or the East Room of the White House, and said, 'I'm speaking to you tonight to inform you that the United States is under attack. The Russian government at the highest levels is trying to influence our most precious asset, our democracy, and I'm not going to let it happen.' A large majority of Americans would have sat up and taken notice. My attitude is that we don't have the right to lay blame for the results of this election at anybody's feet, but, to me, it is bewildering—it is baffling—it is hard to make sense of why this was not a five-alarm fire in the White House."

The Obama circle, which criticizes Clinton's team for failing to lock down seemingly solid states like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, insists that the White House acted appropriately. "What could we have done?" Benjamin Rhodes said. "We said they were doing it, so everybody had the basis to know that all the WikiLeaks material and the fake news were tied to Russia. There was no action we could have taken to stop the e-mails or the fake news from being propagated. . . . All we could do was expose it."

Last September, at a G-20 summit, in China, Obama confronted Putin about the hacking, telling him to "cut it out," and, above all, to keep away from the balloting in November, or there would be "serious consequences." Putin neither denied nor confirmed the hacking efforts, but replied that the United States has long funded media outlets and civil-society groups that meddle in Russian affairs.

In October, as evidence of Russian meddling mounted, senior national-security officials met to consider a plan of response; proposals included releasing damaging information about Russian officials, including their bank accounts, or a cyber operation directed at Moscow. Secretary of State John Kerry was concerned that such plans might undercut diplomatic efforts to get Russia to coöperate with the West in Syria—efforts that eventually failed. In the end, security officials unanimously agreed to take a measured approach: the Administration issued a statement, on October 7th, declaring it was confident that the Russians had hacked the D.N.C. The Administration did not want to

overreact in a way that could seem political and amplify Trump's message that the vote was rigged.

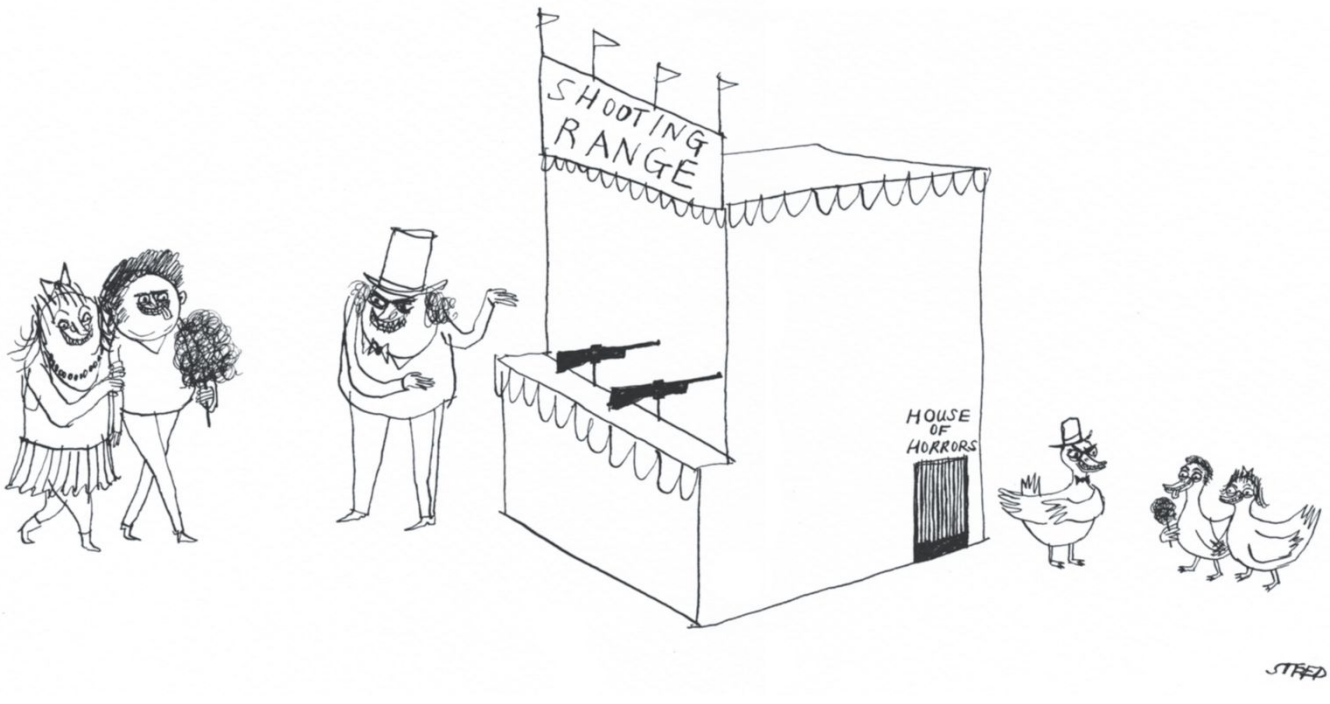
The White House watched for signs that Russian intelligence was crossing what a senior national-security official called "the line between covert influence and adversely affecting the vote count"—and found no evidence that it had done so. At the time, Clinton was leading in the race, which, the official said, reinforced Obama's decision not to respond more aggressively. "If we have a very forceful response, it actually helps delegitimize the election."

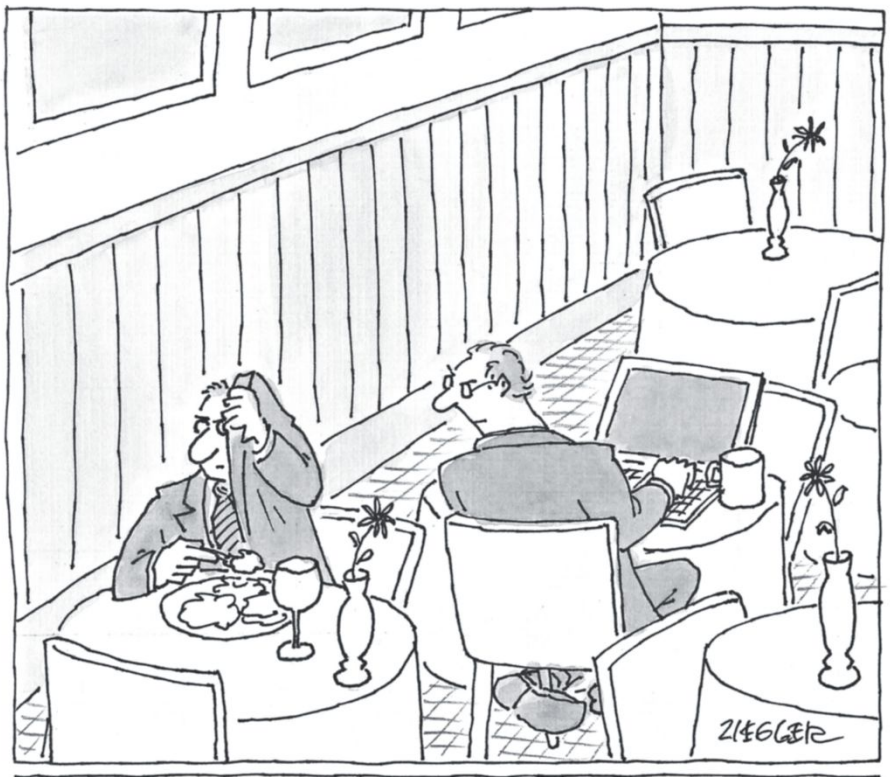
That sense of caution continued during the transition, when Obama was intent on an orderly transfer of power. Secretary of State Kerry proposed the creation of an independent bipartisan group to investigate Russian interference in the election. It would have been modelled on the 9/11 Commission, a body consisting of five Republicans and five Democrats who interviewed more than twelve hundred people. According to two senior officials, Obama reviewed Kerry's proposal but ultimately rejected it, in part because he was convinced that Republicans in Congress would regard it as a partisan exercise. One aide who favored the idea says, "It would have gotten the ball rolling, making it difficult for Trump to shut it down. Now it's a lot harder to make it happen."

During the transition, officials in the Obama Administration were hearing that Trump was somehow compromised or beholden to Russian interests. "The Russians make investments in people not knowing the exact outcome," one senior Administration official said. "They obtain leverage on those people, too." No conclusive evidence has yet emerged for such suspicions about Trump. Another Administration official said that, during the transfer of power, classified intelligence had shown multiple contacts between Trump associates and Russian representatives, but nothing that rose to the level of aiding or coördinating the interference with the election. "We had no clear information—that I was aware of—of collusion," the official said. That question, however, persists, and will likely be a central focus for congressional investigators.

By Inauguration Day, January 20th, the evidence of a wide-scale Russian operation had prompted the formation of a joint task force, including the C.I.A., the F.B.I., the N.S.A., and the financial-crimes unit of the Treasury Department. Three Senate committees, including the Intelligence Committee, have launched inquiries; some Democrats worry that the Trump Administration will try to stifle these investigations. Although senators on the Intelligence Committee cannot reveal classified information, they have ways of signalling concern. Three weeks after the election, Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, and six other members of the committee sent a public letter to Obama, declaring, "We believe there is additional information concerning the Russian Government and the U.S. election that should be declassified and released to the public." At a hearing in January, Wyden pushed further. While questioning James Comey, the director of the F.B.I., Wyden cited media reports that some Trump associates had links to Russians who are close to Putin. Wyden asked if Comey would declassify information on that subject and "release it to the American people." Comey said, "I can't talk about it." Wyden's questioning had served its purpose.

Later, in an interview, Wyden said, "My increasing concern is that classification now is being used much more for political security than for national security. We wanted to get that out before a new Administration took place. I can't remember seven senators joining a declassification request." Asked if he suspects that there has been improper contact between the Trump campaign and Russian interests, Wyden said, "I can't get into that"—without revealing classified information. "But what I can tell you is, I continue to believe, as I have for many months, that there is more that could be declassified." He added, "When a foreign power interferes with American institutions, you don't just say, 'Oh, that's business as usual,' and leave it at





AT LUNCH WITH MY UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHER

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that. There's a historical imperative here, too." After viewing the classified materials, Mark Warner, of Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said of the Russia investigation, "This may very well be the most important thing I do in my public life."

Two weeks before the Inauguration, intelligence officers briefed both Obama and Trump about a dossier of unverified allegations compiled by Christopher Steele, a former British intelligence officer. The thirty-five-page dossier, which included claims about Trump's behavior during a 2013 trip to Moscow, had been shopped around to various media outlets by researchers opposed to Trump's candidacy. The dossier concluded that Russia had personal and financial material on Trump that could be used as blackmail. It said that the Russians had been "cultivating, supporting, and assisting" Trump for years. According to current and former government officials, prurient details in the dossier generated skepticism among some members of the intelligence community, who, as one put it, regarded it as a "nutty" product to present to a President. But, in the weeks that followed, they confirmed some of its less explosive claims, relating to conversations with foreign nationals. "They are continuing to chase down stuff from the dossier, and, at its core, a lot of it is bearing out," an intelligence official said. Some officials believe that one reason the Russians compiled information on Trump during his 2013 trip was that he was meeting with Russian oligarchs who might be stashing money abroad—a sign of disloyalty, in Putin's eyes.

Trump denounced the dossier as a fake. Putin's spokesman called it "pulp fiction." But, before the dossier became public, Senator John McCain passed it along to the F.B.I.; later, some of his colleagues said that it should be part of an investigation of Trump. Richard Burr, a Republican from North Carolina and the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, vowed to investigate "everywhere the intelligence tells us to go."

For many national-security officials, the e-mail hacks were part of a larger, and deeply troubling, picture: Putin's desire to damage American confidence and to undermine the Western alliances—diplomatic, financial, and military—that have shaped the postwar world.

Not long before leaving the White House, Benjamin Rhodes said that the Obama Administration was convinced that Putin had gone into an "offensive mode beyond what he sees as his sphere of influence," setting out to encourage the "breakup" of the European Union, destabilize NATO, and unnerve the object of his keenest resentment—the United States. Rhodes said, "The new phase we're in is that the Russians have moved into an offensive posture that threatens the very international order." Samantha Power offered a similar warning, shortly before leaving her post as United Nations Ambassador. Russia, she said, was "taking steps that are weakening the rules-based order that we have benefitted from for seven decades."

For nearly two decades, U.S.-Russian relations have ranged between strained and miserable. Although the two countries have come to agreements on various issues, including trade and arms control, the general picture is grim. Many Russian and American policy experts no longer hesitate to use phrases like "the second Cold War."

The level of tension has alarmed experienced hands on both sides. "What we have is a situation in which the strong leader of a relatively weak state is acting in opposition to weak leaders of relatively strong states," General Sir Richard Shirreff, the former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, said. "And that strong leader is Putin. He is calling the shots at the moment." Shirreff observes that NATO's withdrawal of military forces from Europe has been answered with incidents of Russian aggression, and with a sizable buildup of forces in the vicinity of the Baltic states, including an aircraft-carrier group dispatched to the North Sea, an expanded deployment of nuclear-capable Iskander-M ballistic missiles, and anti-ship missiles. The Kremlin, for its part, views the expansion of NATO to Russia's borders as itself a provocation, and points to such U.S. measures as the placement of a new ground-based missile-defense system in Deveselu, Romania.

Robert Gates, who was Secretary of Defense under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, describes relations

between Obama and Putin as having been "poisonous" and casts at least some of the blame on Obama; referring to Russia as a "regional power," as Obama did, was "the equivalent of referring to ISIS as a J.V. team," in his view. "I think the new Administration has a big challenge in front of it in terms of stopping the downward spiral in the U.S.-Russia relationship while pushing back against Putin's aggression and general thuggery," Gates said. "Every time NATO makes a move or Russia makes a move near its border, there is a response. Where does that all stop? So there is a need to stop that downward spiral. The dilemma is how do you do that without handing Putin a victory of huge proportions?"

Some in Moscow are alarmed, too. Dmitry Trenin, a well-connected political and military analyst for the Carnegie Moscow Center, said that in early fall, before Trump's victory, "we were on a course for a 'kinetic' collision in Syria." He said that the Kremlin expected that, if Clinton won, she would take military action in Syria, perhaps establishing no-fly zones, provoking the rebels to shoot down Russian aircraft, "and getting the Russians to feel it was Afghanistan revisited." He added, "Then my imagination just left me."

Not in a generation has the enmity run this deep, according to Sergey Rogov, the academic director of the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies, in Moscow. "I spent many years in the trenches of the first Cold War, and I don't want to die in the trenches of the second," Rogov said. "We are back to 1983, and I don't enjoy being thirty-four years younger in this way. It's frightening."

3. PUTIN'S WORLD

PUTIN'S RESENTMENT OF the West, and his corresponding ambition to establish an anti-Western conservatism, is rooted in his experience of decline and fall—not of Communist ideology, which was never a central concern of his generation, but, rather, of Russian power and pride. Putin, who was born in 1952, grew up in Leningrad, where, during the Second World War, Nazi troops imposed a nine-hundred-day siege that starved the city. His father was badly wounded in the war. Putin joined the K.G.B. in 1975, when he was twenty-three, and was eventually sent to East Germany.

Posted in one of the grayest of the Soviet satellites, Putin entirely missed the sense of awakening and opportunity that accompanied perestroika, and experienced only the state's growing fecklessness. At the very moment the Berlin Wall was breached, in November, 1989, he was in the basement of a Soviet diplomatic compound in Dresden feeding top-secret documents into a furnace. As crowds of Germans threatened to break into the building, officers called Moscow for assistance, but, in Putin's words, "Moscow was silent."

Putin returned to Russia, where the sense of post-imperial decline persisted. The West no longer feared Soviet power; Eastern and Central Europe were beyond Moscow's control; and the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union were all going their own way. An empire shaped by Catherine the Great and Joseph Stalin was dissolving.

In Moscow, Western reporters could arrange visits to crumbling nuclear-weapons sites, once secret underground bunkers, and half-empty prison camps. The most forbidding commissars of the Soviet Union—leaders of the K.G.B., the Army, and the Communist Party—failed in an attempt to pull off a counter-revolutionary coup d'état, in August, 1991, and were locked away in a notorious prison called the Sailor's Rest. Other high-ranking loyalists, refusing the judgment of the new order, administered justice for themselves. The head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, knowing that he was about to be arrested, wrote a note ("I lived honestly all my life"), shot his wife, shoved the barrel of a revolver into his mouth, and pulled the trigger.

For Westerners caught up in post-Cold War triumphalism, it was easier to take note of the new liberties than of the new anxieties, which were profound for millions of Russians. The fall of the imperial state meant the loss of two million square miles of territory, a parcel larger than India. Tens of millions of ethnic Russians now found themselves "abroad." Amid newfound freedoms of expression, travel, religion, and association, there was also a palpable sense of disorientation, humiliation, and drift.

In speeches and interviews, Putin rarely mentions any sense of liberation after the fall of Communism and the Soviet Union; he recalls the nineteen-nineties as a period of unremitting chaos, in which Western partners tried to force their advantages, demanding that Russia swallow everything from the eastward expansion of NATO to the invasion of its Slavic allies in the former Yugoslavia. This is a common narrative, but it ignores some stubborn facts. The West welcomed Russia into the G-8 economic alliance. The violence in the Balkans was the worst in Europe since the end of the Second World War and without intervention would likely have dragged on. And Russian security concerns were hardly the only issue at stake with respect to the expansion of NATO; Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries in the region were now sovereign and wanted protection.

"It just felt to me grotesquely unfair, if that word can be used in geopolitics, that yet again the Central Europeans were going to be screwed," Strobe Talbott, Bill Clinton's leading adviser on Russia and the region, said. "To tell them they had to live in a security limbo because the Russians would have hurt feelings and be frightened just didn't hold water." Nevertheless, American politicians did worry about how reordering the economic and security arrangements of Europe would affect a fallen power and would-be partner. Clinton and his advisers were aware that reactionary political forces in Russia—the so-called "red-brown coalition" of diehard Communists and resurgent nationalists—viewed the United States as exploitative and triumphalist and hoped to gain control of the state.

In 1996, during a summit meeting in Moscow, Clinton went for an early-morning run with Talbott in the Sparrow Hills, near Moscow State University. Clinton had known Talbott since they were students at Oxford, and confided his anxiety. He did not regret the expansion of NATO or the decision, at last, to battle Serbian forces in Bosnia. But he knew that he was making Yeltsin's political life excruciatingly difficult.

"We keep telling ol' Boris, 'O.K., now, here's what you've got to do next—here's some more shit for your face,'" Clinton

told Talbott as they ran. "And that makes it real hard for him, given what he's up against and who he's dealing with."

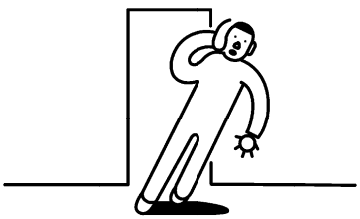
Earlier that year, Yeltsin had summoned Talbott. "I don't like it when the U.S. flaunts its superiority," he told him. "Russia's difficulties are only temporary, and not only because we have nuclear weapons but also because of our economy, our culture, our spiritual strength. All that amounts to a legitimate, undeniable basis for equal treatment. Russia will rise again! I repeat: Russia will rise again."

When the 1996 election season began, Yeltsin was polling in the single digits. Much of the country held him responsible for economic measures that seemed to help only those close to Kremlin power. For millions, reform—including the "shock therapy" pushed by Western advisers and politicians—meant a collapse in basic services, hyperinflation, corruption, kleptocratic privatization, and an economic downturn as severe as the Great Depression. Most Russians blamed not the corrosion of the old system but, rather, the corruptions of the new. *Demokratiya* (democracy) was popularly referred to as *dermokratiya* (shit-ocracy). Yeltsin, benefitting from the support of both the oligarchs and the International Monetary Fund, managed to eke out a victory against his Communist opponent, but he continued to drink heavily, despite a history of heart attacks, and, in his final years in power, was often a sorry, inebriated spectacle.

On New Year's Eve, 1999, Yeltsin appeared on national television sitting in front of a Christmas tree. Looking blocky and moribund, he said that he was resigning. "I am sorry that many of our dreams failed to come true," he said. "I am sorry that I did not live up to the hopes of people who believed that we could, with a single effort, a single strong push, jump out of the gray, stagnant, totalitarian past and into a bright, wealthy, civilized future. I used to believe that myself."

A man who had resisted a coup eight years earlier no longer had the endurance for office or the political imagination to advance the cause. "I have done all I could," he said. "A new generation is coming." With that, he appointed as his successor Vladimir Putin, a relatively obscure intelligence agent who had been accelerated through the ranks because he had proved himself disciplined, shrewd, and, above all, loyal to his bosses.

One of Putin's first decrees was to protect Yeltsin from future prosecution. Then he set out to stabilize the country and put it on a course of traditional Russian autocracy. "As Yeltsin started to withdraw, the old system reconsolidated, and Putin finalized this regression,"



Andrei Kozyrev, the foreign minister between 1990 and 1996, said. "The fundamental problem was an inability to complete the economic and political reforms, and so we slipped back into confrontation with the West and NATO."

Putin revealed his distrust for an open system almost immediately. He saw a state that had become barely functional, and he set about restoring its authority the only way he knew how: manually, and from the top. He replaced the freewheeling anarchy of Yeltsin's rule with something more systematized, casting aside or coöpting the oligarchs of the nineteen-nineties and elevating a cast of corrupt satraps loyal to him—an arrangement that became known as Kremlin, Inc. Every aspect of the country's political life, including the media, was brought under the "vertical of power" that he constructed. When Yeltsin held office, privately owned television stations, such as NTV, reported on the horrific war in Chechnya and even satirized Yeltsin and other Kremlin leaders on a puppet show called "Kukly." NTV, which was owned by an oligarch named Vladimir Gusinsky, seemed to test Putin in the beginning, airing discussions about corruption and human-rights abuses; "Kukly" added a puppet depicting the new President. Putin was not amused. Within five months of taking power, he dispatched armed Interior Ministry troops to raid Gusinsky's headquarters; by 2001, Gusinsky had been forced to give up NTV to more obedient owners and had fled the country. Ever since, television has been under strict federal control.

Putin, in his first few years in office, was relatively solicitous of the West. He was the first foreign leader to call George W. Bush after the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. When he spoke at the Bundestag, later that month, he addressed its members in German, the language that he had spoken as a K.G.B. agent in Dresden. He even entertained the notion of Russian membership in NATO.

America's invasion of Iraq, which Putin opposed, marked a change in his thinking. Bush had made some progress with him on bilateral issues such as nuclear-arms proliferation, but by 2007 Putin had grown deeply disenchanted and came to feel that the West was treating Russia as a "vassal." Robert Gates recalls a security conference, in Munich, in 2007, at which Putin angrily charged that the United States had "overstepped its national borders in every area" and that the expansion of NATO was directed against Russian interests. "People were inclined to pass it off as a one-off," Gates said. "But it was a harbinger."

For Putin, it was a story of misplaced hopes and rejection: he became convinced that, no matter how accommodating he might try to be, Western powers—the United States, above all—had an innate disinclination to treat Russia as a full partner and a respected member of the international order. At home, Putin was increasingly drawn to an authoritarian, nationalist conception of the Russian state. He knew that the fall of Communism and Soviet power had left a vacuum—the lack of a "national idea" to replace Marxism-Leninism. When Putin returned to the Presidency for a third term, in 2012, he felt the need to develop a Russian ideology of his own, and called on currents that run deep in Russian political culture: nationalism, xenophobia, and social conservatism. When, four years ago, Putin endorsed anti-gay legislation, for instance, he was playing to entrenched conservative prejudices that predate Soviet Communism—perhaps not for Western-oriented intellectuals and the urban middle class but for many millions of others.

Putin was hardly surprised by the liberal umbrage voiced by the Obama

Administration and other Western governments. That confrontation was the point, a means of cementing his authority at home by playing up the notion of an encircled, perpetually menaced Russian state. Although Putin grew up under Soviet atheism, he nonetheless decried secular Americans and Europeans for "rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization." His conservatism, he insisted, "prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state."

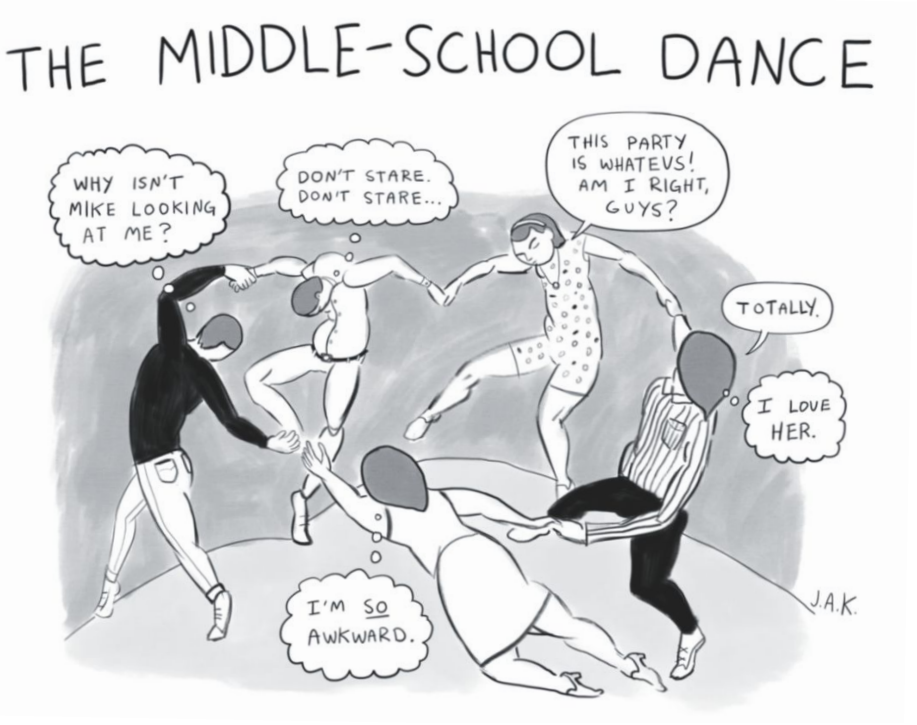
He was alarmed by the Obama Administration's embrace of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. And he was infuriated by the U.S.-led assault on Muammar Qaddafi's regime. In early 2011, as Libyans challenged Qaddafi, Putin was ostensibly offstage, serving as Prime Minister; his protégé Dmitry Medvedev was President, and made a crucial decision not to veto an American-backed U.N. Security Council resolution in favor of military action in Libya. In a rare public split, Putin condemned the decision, comparing the resolution to a "medieval call to the crusades." In October, 2011, a crowd of Libyans found Qaddafi hiding in a culvert with a gold-plated 9-mm. pistol, dragged him out, and killed him—a gruesome event that was broadcast worldwide. From Putin's perspective, this was a case study in Western intervention: stir up protests, give them rhetorical support and diplomatic cover, and, if that doesn't work, send in the fighter jets. The epilogue comes in the form of uncontrollable violence and an inglorious end for the country's leader. According to Mikhail Zygar, the former editor-in-chief of the independent Internet station TV Rain and the author of "All the Kremlin's Men," Putin absorbed the death of Qaddafi as an object lesson: weakness and compromise were impermissible. "When he was a pariah, no one touched him," Zygar wrote. "But as soon as he opened up he was not only overthrown but killed in the street like a mangy old cur."

Putin also regarded the anti-Kremlin, pro-democracy demonstrations in Moscow, which started in 2011, as a rehearsal for an uprising that had to be thwarted. Together with the upheavals abroad, they compounded his grievances against the West. Obama's national-security adviser at the time, Tom Donilon, observed that Putin's concerns were then focussed on domestic political stability and perceived foreign threats to it. He was convinced that "there were efforts under way to undermine his regime," Donilon said. "From the outset of his second run as President, in my judgment, he was bringing Russia to a posture of pretty active hostility toward the United States and the West." In September, 2013, after Putin declined requests to turn over Edward Snowden, Obama cancelled a planned summit in Moscow. "The communication really broke after that," Donilon said. He saw Putin steadily remove non-intelligence personnel from his orbit. "In sharp contrast to the Chinese situation, there's not a Russian national-security 'system,'" he said. "He works with a very small group of individuals, namely, former K.G.B. and F.S.B. people."

Dissent has now been effectively marginalized. Opposition candidates are frequently kept off the ballot on legal technicalities, and, when they do make it on, they are denied media coverage, let alone the "administrative resources" enjoyed by pro-Kremlin politicians. Some thirty journalists have been murdered in Russia in the past decade and a half; human-rights groups that receive funding from abroad are registered in Moscow as "foreign agents." And contemporary Russian television is not only compliant but celebratory. "Imagine you have two dozen TV channels and it is all Fox News," Vladimir Milov, a former deputy energy minister under Putin and now a critic, said.

Yet those channels bear little resemblance to the dreary Soviet broadcasts with their stilted language and shabby production values. Just as Putin no longer fills prison camps with countless "enemies of the people," as Stalin did, but, rather, makes a chilling example of a famous few, like the businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky or the group Pussy Riot, his propagandists have taken their cue from foreign forms: magazine shows, shout-fests, game shows, and reality shows. There are many figures in public life who are not permitted to appear on any talk show or news program. Russians can still find independent information on Facebook and various Web sites; critical books and magazines are available in stores and online; Echo of Moscow, a liberal radio station, hangs on. But, even in the Internet era, more than eighty per cent of Russians get their news from television. Manipulation of TV coverage is a crucial factor in Putin's extraordinarily high popularity ratings, typically in excess of eighty per cent—ratings that Donald Trump both admires and envies.

In October, 2012, on the occasion of



"Thanks, but I'm fine."

• •

Putin's sixtieth birthday, Dmitry Kiselyov, the host of "News of the Week," a favorite TV show of Putin's, delivered a long encomium to the President: "In terms of the scope of his activities, Putin can be compared to only one of his predecessors in the twentieth century—Stalin." NTV aired a documentary, "Visiting Putin," that sent a broadcaster to his office and his house on the outskirts of Moscow. Although well-informed critics have said that Putin is worth tens of billions of dollars and has twenty residences at his disposal, the program portrayed him as a near-ascetic, who wakes at eight-thirty, lifts weights, swims long distances, eats a modest breakfast (beet juice, porridge, raw quail eggs), and works deep into the night.

"All these TV genres emphasize the stature of Putin, as being above everybody and everything—not just the ultimate boss but the embodiment of Russian statehood," Masha Lipman, the editor of the journal *Counterpoint*, said. The most important political space is not the grounds of the Kremlin. It is the space within the President's skull.

"A well-known person once said, 'You can get much farther with a kind word and a Smith & Wesson than you can with just a kind word,'" Putin says in "President," a long documentary that aired on state television in 2015. "Unfortunately, he was right." Later in the documentary, the host asks Putin if he thinks that the West fears Russia, because a "once failing state" is now "suddenly a powerful political player." He calls Putin "the leader, if I may say, of the conservative part of both European and American society."

Putin accepts both premises. "The so-called establishment, the political and economic élites of these countries, they like us only when we are poor and standing there with a beggar's bowl," he says. "As soon as we start talking about our interests and they start feeling some element of geopolitical competition, well, they don't like that."

In February, 2014, hours after President Victor Yanukovych of Ukraine, weakened by months of protests, fled Kiev, Putin made the decision to invade Crimea. He feared that Ukraine would turn its back on Russia and gravitate toward Europe. It was a way for Putin to signal, loudly and rudely, that he was finished going along with the Western-led order. It was personal as well. Michael Morell, a former deputy director of the C.I.A., said that the fall of Yanukovych led Putin to worry about his own power and well-being. "It happened in the heart of the Slavic world, and he could not allow it to become a precedent for a similar movement in Russia against him," Morell said. "He had to crush it."

Putin and members of his circle also saw the Syrian civil war as an opportunity to halt a trend that had started with the invasion of Iraq and continued through the downfall of dictators in Egypt and Libya. A former senior U.S. official who has interacted with Russians said, "There was this period of time when the United States, in Putin's view, was able to use international institutions to take on regimes that we found offensive, right through Libya, and Putin was determined to put a stake in the ground in Syria, to have Russia be at the table, and be able to resist the international community's efforts to continue this pattern of conduct." As Russia's Defense Minister, Sergey Shoigu, remarked last month, Russia's intervention in Syria "helped solve the geopolitical task of breaking the chain of 'color revolutions.'" Russian television, of course, covered the siege of Aleppo as an enlightened act of liberation, free of any brutality or abuses.

In the United States, the issue of what to do about Russia was a growing point of contention between the Pentagon and the White House. Ukraine's government wanted advanced weaponry to help battle Russian-backed rebels. Evelyn Farkas, the Pentagon's most senior policy officer for Russia, strongly supported the request; Obama and others on his national-security team turned it down. Instead, the U.S. provided "nonlethal" aid, including vehicles, radar, and body armor. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in 2014, Farkas argued for greater American force, calling Russia's actions "an affront to the international order that we and our allies have worked to build since the end of the Cold War."

The Administration believed, with considerable justification, that escalating the conflict would provoke retaliation from Russia, push Putin into a corner, and—since Putin would never let the rebels suffer a battlefield defeat—prove

costly for Ukraine. But Farkas disagreed: "We just ignore everything the Russians do in Ukraine because, well, that's Ukraine and the stakes are so high for Russia there. They wouldn't risk it in the U.S." Finally, she gave up trying to convince Obama. "I was so done," she said. "I was so tired of fighting." She resigned in October, 2015, and eventually became a foreign-policy adviser to Hillary Clinton, who had sometimes favored the use of military force when Obama did not. "The crazy thing was, when I joined the Clinton campaign, I was, like, Great, I'm not going to have to fight anymore, because she got it on Russia," Farkas said. "Then it just got worse."

4. HYBRID WAR

Putin rarely uses a computer, but he has moved his country into the digital age. Russia was once a technological laggard: the Soviets did not connect to the global Internet until 1990, and the state security services were so befuddled by the technology that, according to "The Red Web," by Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, agents demanded that Relcom, Russia's first commercial Internet Service Provider, print out every communication that crossed its network. (Engineers rebelled, and the order was abandoned.) By 1996, however, a new generation of hackers in Russia had achieved the first state-directed penetration of America's military network, pilfering tens of thousands of files, including military-hardware designs, maps of military installations, and troop configurations. In 2008, according to "Dark Territory," a history of cyberwar by Fred Kaplan, Russian hackers accomplished a feat that Pentagon officials considered almost impossible: breaching a classified network that wasn't even connected to the public Internet. Apparently, Russian spies had supplied cheap thumb drives, stocked with viruses, to retail kiosks near NATO headquarters in Kabul, betting, correctly, that a U.S. serviceman or woman would buy one and insert it into a secure computer. In the past decade, cyber tactics have become an essential component of Russia's efforts to exert influence over its neighbors.

Late one evening in the spring of 2007, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia was at home using his laptop computer. He had trouble getting online. The news sites were down. The banks were down. Government sites were down. The President figured that it must be some kind of technical glitch. "The first reaction is not 'We're under attack,' " he said recently. But, after a few calls, he realized that someone was attacking one of Estonia's core assets.

The birthplace of Skype and the home of other tech firms, Estonia is known in technology circles as "eStonia"; it is one of the most wired countries in the world. But Estonia was involved in a conflict with Russia over plans to move a Second World War-era statue of a Soviet soldier out of the center of Tallinn, the capital. Estonians regarded it as a symbol of occupation. The Russian government had warned publicly that moving it would be a grave offense to history and "disastrous for Estonians."

On April 27th, the statue was moved. Almost immediately, commentators in Russian-language chat rooms posted instructions on how to become a "script kiddie," an amateur hacker. The attackers did not need to "hack" Estonia's sites, exactly; they simply swamped them with a "distributed denial of service"—DDoS—assault, which continued for two weeks. Investigators never pinpointed the source of the attack, but Ilves, who left the Presidency in October, 2016, believes that it was an alliance between members of the Russian government and organized crime. "I call it a public-private partnership," he said wryly. "It was a state actor that paid mafiosos."

Although the incident barely registered in international headlines, it was a landmark event: a state-backed cyberattack for political purposes. "What Estonia showed was that Russia was going to react in a new but aggressive way to perceived political slights," Michael Sulmeyer, a senior Pentagon official in charge of cyber policy under Obama, said. "What was the offending act? The Estonians moved a statue."

Russia was acquiring a reputation, in defense circles, for ambition, technical acumen, and speed. Barely a year after the Estonia attack, during a conflict with Georgia over the territory of South Ossetia, Russian tanks and planes crossed into the disputed territory at the same moment that hackers broke into fifty-four Web sites serving the government, media, and banks. They stole military information and immobilized the nation's Internet. Georgian officers struggled to send orders to troops, and bewildered citizens had no way to find out what was happening.

The Georgia campaign was "one of the first times you've seen conventional ground operations married with cyber activity," Sulmeyer said. "It showed not just an understanding that these techniques could be useful in combined ops but that the Russians were willing to do them. These guys implemented."

And yet Russian military planners and officials in the Kremlin regarded Georgia as a failure in the realm of international propaganda. Although Russia prevailed militarily, its narrative was overshadowed by the Georgian one from the first minutes of the campaign. For Russia, the five-day conflict represented a "total defeat in the information space," said Pavel Zolotarev, a retired major general in the Russian Army, who is now a professor at the Academy of Military Sciences. "Our television showed how the shelling started, the incursion of Georgian forces, and so on," Zolotarev, who helped draft Russia's national-security doctrine in the nineteen-nineties, said. "These pictures were shown in the West two days later—but as if Russia were doing the shelling, attacking Georgia." Russian generals took this lesson to heart, and began to study how to use the media and other instruments to wage "information war," later putting what they learned into practice in Ukraine and then Syria.

The United States, meanwhile, had its own notable cyberwar success. In 2008, in tandem with Israeli intelligence, the U.S. launched the first digital attack on another country's critical infrastructure, deploying a "worm," known as Stuxnet, that was designed to cause centrifuges in Iran to spin out of control and thereby delay its nuclear development.

Yet diplomatic concerns inhibited some of the United States' active measures. The Obama Administration had a "reset" policy with Russia, forging agreements and coöperating on select issues, despite an over-all increase in tension. "Cyber was an area where we were trying to work with Russia," Evelyn Farkas, the Pentagon official, said. "That's the irony. We were meeting with

their big spies, trying to develop some kind of arms control for cyber."

When Robert Knake arrived as the director of cybersecurity policy at the National Security Council, in 2011, the White House had a formal initiative to combat Chinese hacking, known as the Counter-China strategy. Knake recalled, "The question was: 'O.K., now, what's the counter-Russia plan? And the counter-Iran plan?'" The difficulty was that, in the aftermath of Stuxnet, the U.S. needed Iran's coöperation on diplomatic priorities. From 2011 to 2013, Iranian-backed hackers waged a sustained DDoS attack on dozens of American banks and financial-services companies, but the U.S. didn't respond in kind, partly because the Administration was negotiating with Iran to curb its nuclear program. "If we had unleashed the fury in response to that DDoS attack, I don't know if we would have gotten an Iran deal," Knake said. In other cases, the Administration declined to respond forcefully so that it could retain the option of deploying similar means on other countries. "As long as we think we're getting more value from this set of rules than we're losing, then this is the set of rules we want to promote," Knake said.

A new doctrine was taking shape, under which Russia sought to study the nefarious tools of the West, as it understood them, so as to counteract them at home and put them into practice abroad. One indication of what that might look like came in February, 2013, when, in the pages of the *Military-Industrial Courier*—a journal with a tiny yet influential readership of Russian military strategists—Valery Gerasimov, the Russian chief of general staff, published an article with the anodyne title "The Value of Science in Prediction." The article identified and urged the adoption of a Western strategy that involved military, technological, media, political, and intelligence tactics that would destabilize an enemy at minimal cost. The strategy, which came to be known as "hybrid war," was an amalgam that states have used for generations, but the text took on the status of a legend, and is now known in international military circles as the Gerasimov doctrine.

Gerasimov is sixty-one years old, and is always photographed in a stiff, forest-green military uniform and with a perpetually sagging frown. He trained as a tank commander, and then climbed the military hierarchy; he led the Fifty-eighth Army during the Second Chechen War. In the article for *Military-Industrial Courier,* Gerasimov suggested that, in the future, wars will be fought with a four-to-one ratio of nonmilitary to military measures. The former, he wrote, should include efforts to shape the political and social landscape of the adversary through subversion, espionage, propaganda, and cyberattacks. His essay, written in the shadow of the Arab Spring, cited the anarchy and violence that erupted in Libya and Syria as proof that, when faced with the combination of pressure and interference, a "perfectly thriving state can, in a matter of months, and even days, be transformed into an arena of fierce armed conflict, become a victim of foreign intervention, and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, and civil war."

Such events were "typical of warfare in the twenty-first century," he wrote. "The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness."

Pavel Zolotarev, the retired Russian general, explained that, when Gerasimov's essay was published, "we had come to the conclusion, having analyzed the actions of Western countries in the post-Soviet space—first of all the United States—that manipulation in the information sphere is a very effective tool." Previously, one had to use "grandfather-style methods: scatter leaflets, throw around some printed materials, manipulate the radio or television," Zolotarev said. "But, all of a sudden, new means have appeared."

Gerasimov's prescriptions began to look prophetic a year later, when Russia annexed Crimea in a quick operation that caught U.S. officials by surprise and contravened international law. Russian-made propaganda whipped up pro-Moscow sentiment in a population that was already wary of Ukrainian political leaders in Kiev and had deep, historical ties with Russia. Unidentified soldiers (the so-called "little green men") surrounded Ukrainian bases in Crimea, and within days Russia had pulled off a hastily organized, stage-managed referendum.

Even with the rise of new technologies, the underlying truth about such operations hasn't changed. They are less a way to conjure up something out of nothing than to stir a pot that is already bubbling. In the U.S., a strategy like the alleged hacking of the Democrats was merely an effort to deepen an existing state of disarray and distrust. "For something to happen, many factors have to come together at once," said Alexander Sharavin, the head of a military research institute and a member of the Academy of Military Sciences, in Moscow, where Gerasimov often speaks. "If you go to Great Britain, for example, and tell them the Queen is bad, nothing will happen, there will be no revolution, because the necessary conditions are absent—there is no existing background for this operation." But, Sharavin said, "in America those preconditions existed."

As tensions with Russia rose over the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, in early 2014, the U.S. was stung by a tactic common in Moscow politics: the weaponized leak. While the U.S. and the European Union discussed the details of a potential transitional government in Ukraine, an aide to the Russian deputy prime minister tweeted a reference to part of a wiretapped conversation, posted soon afterward to YouTube, between Victoria Nuland, a U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, and her colleague Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. Ambassador in Ukraine. Nuland is heard saying "Fuck the E.U."—a line that the Russians knew would cause difficulties between the Americans and their E.U. counterparts. The State Department called the leak "a new low in Russian tradecraft." Asked what form of penalty was extracted from Russia, Michael McFaul, the Ambassador to Moscow during the Obama Administration, said, "To the best of my knowledge, there was none. I think that was a mistake."

Obama's adviser Benjamin Rhodes said that Russia's aggressiveness had accelerated since the first demonstrations on Maidan Square, in Kiev. "When the history books are written, it will be said that a couple of weeks on the Maidan is where this went from being a Cold War-style competition to a much bigger deal," he said. "Putin's unwillingness

to abide by any norms began at that point. It went from provocative to disrespectful of any international boundary."

In the fall of 2014, a hacking group known as the Dukes entered an unclassified computer system at the U.S. State Department and gained enough control so that, as one official put it, they "owned" the system. In security circles, the Dukes—also referred to as Cozy Bear—were believed to be directed by the Russian government. Very little is known about the size and composition of Russia's team of state cyberwarriors. In 2013, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it was forming "scientific" and "information operations" battalions. A defense official later explained their purpose as "disrupting the information networks of the probable enemy." Oleg Demidov, an expert on information security and cybercrime, and a consultant at the PIR-Center, a research institute in Moscow, said, "At the time, this idea was met with laughter. But this was something real, these units were indeed formed, and staffed by graduates of the country's leading technical universities." The next year, the Russian military expanded its public recruitment of young programmers; social-media ads for the "Research Squadron of the Russian Federation" depicted a soldier putting down a rifle and turning to a keyboard, accompanied by a heavy-metal soundtrack.

A retired K.G.B. colonel recently told the magazine *Ogonyok* that Russia had about a thousand people working in military and security operations online. According to a detailed report that appeared last November in the well-regarded online publication Meduza, several hundred technical specialists have left commercial firms to work for state-run cyber teams. A Defense Ministry spokesperson refused to confirm any details, telling a Meduza correspondent that the topic is secret, "so no one can see how we might apply these methods," and warning against publication: "Don't risk doing anything further—don't put yourself in the crosshairs."

After penetrating the State Department, the Dukes moved on to the unclassified computer network that serves the executive office of the President. (The network manages, for instance, details of his movements.) By February, 2015, the increasing intensity of Russian intrusions into sensitive political targets had raised alarms in Washington, and Clapper, the director of national intelligence, told a Senate hearing that the "Russian cyberthreat is more severe than we have previously assessed."

General Valery Gerasimov was an exponent of Moscow's "hybrid war" strategy.

European officials voice similar concerns. The Directorate-General for External Security, the French spy agency, is reportedly worried that Russian spies, hackers, and others are working to help Marine Le Pen, the Presidential candidate of the far-right National Front Party. Russian state media have suggested that one of her opponents, Emmanuel Macron, is a tool of American banks and has a secret gay lover. Le Pen, whose party has received loans from a Russian bank, has toed the Kremlin line on Crimea, saying that the territory was always part of Russia.

Bruno Kahl, the head of Germany's foreign-intelligence agency, has expressed concern that Russian hackers are also trying to disrupt the German political scene, where Chancellor Angela Merkel is standing for reëlection as a stalwart supporter of NATO and the E.U. Citing Russian interference in the American elections, Kahl told the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* "The perpetrators are interested in delegitimizing the democratic process, as such, regardless of whom that ends up helping." The director of Germany's domestic-intelligence agency has since warned of "growing evidence for attempts to influence the federal election." He told the *Times* that there has already been an increase in "aggressive cyberespionage" aimed at German politicians.

When the Dukes turned their attention to the Democratic National Committee, in 2015, the evident goal was to exploit divisions among Party members. In September, an F.B.I. agent called the D.N.C. and said that its computer network appeared to have been hacked. The agent was transferred to the help desk, where a tech-support contractor jotted down the information, checked Google for information on "the Dukes," and ran a basic check for evidence of hacking. The F.B.I. agent left follow-up messages in October but never visited the office, and the D.N.C. leadership failed to mount a full-scale defense.

By March, 2016, the threat was unmistakable. Cybersecurity experts

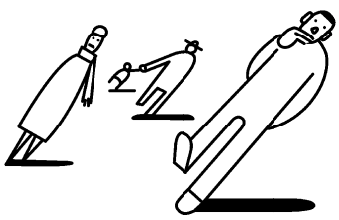
ILLUSTRATION BY CRISTIANA COUCEIRO; PHOTOGRAPHS: MIKHAIL METZEL/TASS/GETTY

detected a second group of Russian hackers, known as Fancy Bear, who used "spear-phishing" messages to break into accounts belonging to John Podesta and other Democratic officials. Like Cozy Bear, Fancy Bear had left a trail around the globe, with its technical signature visible in cyberattacks against the German parliament, Ukrainian artillery systems, and the World Anti-Doping Agency. "I've never seen a group that doesn't change its style of work after it has been detected," Ilya Sachkov, who runs a leading cybersecurity firm in Moscow, said. "What logic led them to not adjust their methods?" Charles Carmakal, a specialist at FireEye, a cybersecurity organization that had previously studied the hacking groups implicated in the election operation, said that sophisticated hackers often leave forensic trails. "Even the best teams make mistakes, and, a lot of times, the guys who are great at hacking are not forensics guys who also know how to do investigations and understand all the artifacts that they're leaving on a machine."

Ultimately, the attack didn't require an enormous amount of expertise. Gaining access to an e-mail account through spear-phishing is more akin to breaking into a car with a clothes hanger than to building a complex cyberweapon like Stuxnet. Oleg Demidov, the information-security expert, said that, from a technical perspective, the hacking was "mediocre—typical, totally standard, nothing outstanding." The achievement, from Demidov's perspective, was the "knowledge of what to do with this information once it had been obtained."

On July 22nd, three days before the Democratic National Convention, WikiLeaks released nearly twenty thousand e-mails, the most damaging of which suggested that the D.N.C., though formally impartial, was trying to undermine Bernie Sanders's campaign. In one e-mail, the D.N.C. chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, said of Sanders, "He isn't going to be President." Her resignation did little to tamp down public anger that was fuelled by the themes of secrecy, populism, and privilege—already a part of Trump's arsenal against Clinton. Months later, Wasserman Schultz reproached the F.B.I. for not reacting more aggressively to the hacking. "How do they spend months only communicating by phone with an I.T. contractor?" she said in an interview. "How was that their protocol? Something has to change, because this isn't the last we've seen of this."

The interim chair of the D.N.C., Donna Brazile, had worked on seven Presidential campaigns, but she was unprepared for the level of anger, including death threats, directed toward



D.N.C. staff and donors. "I'm from the South, and I've been through the traditional kind of campaigns where everybody got to call you the N-word, the B-word, or the C-word," she said. "But this was not the usual kind of antipathy that you find in American politics. It was something else." Someone created a fake e-mail account in her name and sent messages to a reporter at the *Times*. "It was psychological warfare at its best," she said. (CNN, where Brazile had been a commentator, cut ties with her when hacked e-mails revealed that, after attending network strategy sessions, she shared potential debate questions with the Clinton campaign.)

While officials in the Obama Administration struggled with how to respond to the cyberattacks, it began to dawn on them that a torrent of "fake news" reports about Hillary Clinton was being generated in Russia and through social media—a phenomenon that was potentially far more damaging. "The Russians got much smarter since the days of rent-a-crowds and bogus leaflets," one Obama Administration official said. "During the summer, when it really mattered, when the Russian social-media strategy was happening, we did not have the whole picture. In October, when we had it, it was too late."

In the weeks after WikiLeaks released the D.N.C. e-mails, John Mattes, a Bernie Sanders organizer who ran a Facebook page for supporters in San Diego, noticed a surge of new adherents with false profiles. One "Oliver Mitov" had almost no friends or photographs but belonged to sixteen pro-Sanders groups. On September 25th, Mitov posted to several pro-Sanders pages: "NEW LEAK: Here Is Who Ordered Hillary To Leave The 4 Men In Benghazi!—USAPoliticsNow." It was a baseless story alleging that Clinton had received millions of dollars from Saudi royals. Mattes said, "The fake news depressed and discouraged some percentage of Bernie voters. When I realized it, I said, 'We are being played.'"

A post-election study by two economists, Matthew Gentzkow, of Stanford, and Hunt Allcott, of New York University, found that, in the final three months of the campaign, fabricated pro-Trump stories were shared four times as often as fabricated pro-Clinton stories. The researchers also found that roughly half the readers of a fake-news story believed it. A study led by Philip N. Howard, a specialist in Internet studies at Oxford University, found that, during the second debate of the general election, automated Twitter accounts, known as "bots," generated four tweets in favor of Trump for every one in favor of Clinton, driving Trump's messages to the top of trending topics, which mold media priorities. Internet researchers and political operatives believe that a substantial number of these bots were aligned with individuals and organizations supported, and sometimes funded, by the Kremlin.

On October 7th, WikiLeaks released the first installment of a total of fifty thousand e-mails from Podesta's account. In the years since WikiLeaks gained prominence, in 2010, by posting secret U.S. government documents, its founder, Julian Assange, had taken refuge in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London to avoid a Swedish rape investigation that he considers a pretext for an American effort to extradite him. He has remained politically outspoken, hosting a show on Russian television for a time and later criticizing Clinton's candidacy, writing, in February, 2016, that she "will push the United States into endless, stupid wars which spread terrorism."

WikiLeaks put out a new batch of the e-mails nearly every day until the

election. Reporters covered the contents of the messages—gossipy asides, excerpts from Hillary Clinton's highly paid Wall Street speeches, internal discussion about Clinton's statements on Benghazi, infighting at the Clinton Foundation over the political risks of foreign donations—and Podesta believes that the impact of individual stories was magnified by manipulation on social media. The Clinton campaign tried to shift focus from the details in the e-mails to the fact that they had been hacked. That argument was largely futile. "You don't see the full extent at the time," he said. "But it's corrosive and it's eating away underneath."

Some Clinton aides suspect that Roger Stone, an on-again, off-again adviser to Trump, counselled WikiLeaks on the optimal timing for its disclosures. Six days before the leaks began, Stone tweeted, "@HillaryClinton is done. #Wikileaks." Stone said that he was "flattered" by the suspicion but denied that he had given the group advice. He said that he was merely alerted to the leaks by a "mutual friend" of his and Assange's: "And I was told that the information he had would be devastating to Hillary. I was not told the subject matter." Stone was among those named in news reports about evidence that Trump associates had had exchanges with Russian intelligence officials. According to Stone, he has not been contacted by the F.B.I., and such suspicions are unfounded. ("If they have evidence of a crime, indict somebody," he said. "I have not been in touch with anybody in Russia. I've never been to Russia. I don't know any Russians.")

The Clinton campaign was making plenty of tactical errors, without foreign assistance, and Trump was reaching white working-class voters far more effectively than the media recognized. But, in Podesta's view, hacked e-mails did heavy damage to the campaign, because they revived a preëxisting liability, the unconnected story about Clinton's use of a private e-mail server. "It shaped the Facebook newsfeed," he said. "It kept 'e-mails' front and center, even at a very slow boil. There was just a dark cloud under the banner of 'e-mails.'"

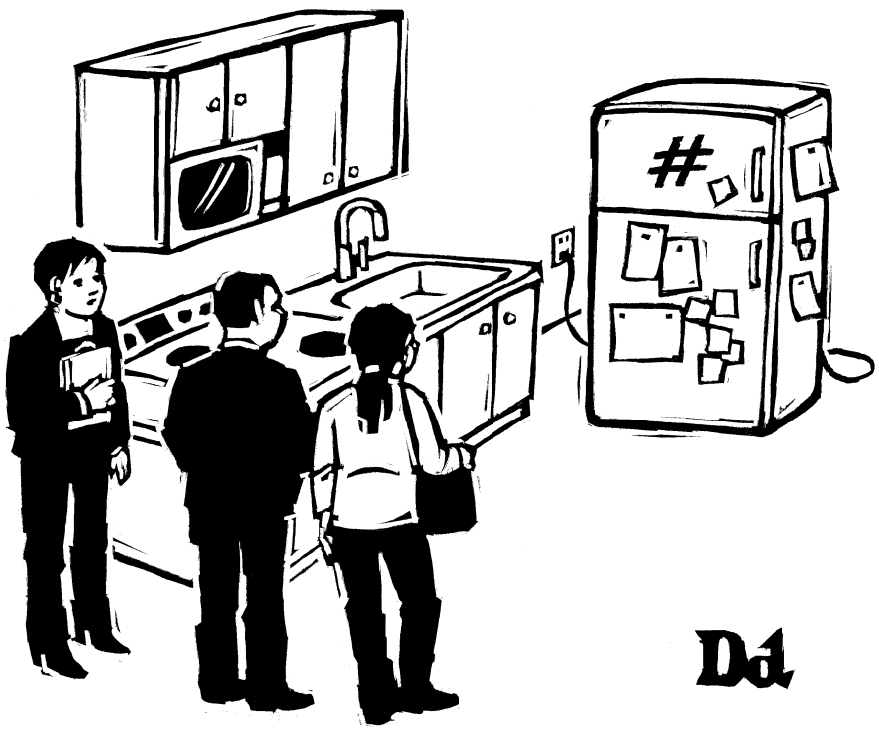
On Friday, October 28th, the F.B.I. director, James Comey, announced that new e-mails from Clinton had surfaced, in an unrelated case. Podesta said, "It's not until that Friday, eleven days out, that you see a major movement of public opinion. The group in the electorate that was moving around the most was non-college-educated women. I think particularly the pushing of the fake news in the last couple of weeks was important in the places that mattered. When you lose by a total of seventy thousand votes in three states, it's hard to say if any one thing made the difference. Everything makes a difference. I think it definitely had an impact. The interaction between all of this and the F.B.I. created a vortex that produced the result."

5. TURBULENCE THEORY

Russia's political hierarchy and official press greeted Trump's Inauguration with unreserved glee. An old order had crumbled and, with it, an impediment to Putin's ambitions. "In 1917, armed supporters of Lenin stormed the Winter Palace and arrested capitalist ministers and overthrew the social political order," the lead article in the daily *Moskovski Komsomolets* read. "On January 20, 2017, nobody in Washington planned to storm Congress or the White House and hang prominent members of the old regime from lampposts, but the feeling of the American political élite, especially the liberal part of it, is not different from that of the Russian bourgeoisie one hundred years ago."

On "News of the Week," Dmitry Kiselyov, the host, dismissed charges that Trump was a racist as "unfounded myth," and the new President's sexist and predatory remarks as nothing more than a "minute's worth of impulsivity." Trump, Kiselyov said, "is what we call in our country a *muzhik*," a real man. "On the first day of his Presidency, he removed from the official White House Web site the section protecting the rights of gays and lesbians. He never supported that. He was always behind the values of the traditional family."

No reasonable analyst believes that Russia's active measures in the United States and Europe have been the dominant force behind the ascent of Trump and nationalist politicians in Europe. Resentment of the effects of globalization and deindustrialization are far more important factors. But many Western Europeans do fear that the West and its postwar alliances and institutions are endangered, and that Trump, who has expressed doubts about NATO and showed allegiance to Brexit and similar anti-European movements, cannot be counted on. Although both Secretary of



"The microwave is smart, but the refrigerator is woke."

"When Brooklyn became unaffordable, we moved to the Middle Ages."

• •

State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary James Mattis have expressed support for traditional alliances, Trump remains entirely uncritical of Putin. "Trump changes the situation from a NATO perspective," General Shirreff said. "The great fear is the neutering of NATO and the decoupling of America from European security. If that happens, it gives Putin all kinds of opportunities. If Trump steps back the way he seemed to as a candidate, you might not even need to do things like invade the Baltic states. You can just dominate them anyway. You're beginning to see the collapse of institutions built to insure our security. And if that happens you will see the re-nationalizing of Europe as a whole."

"How long will Angela Merkel hold out against Donald Trump?" Stephen Sestanovich, who was an adviser on Russia to both the Reagan and the Clinton Administrations, asked. "She is already by herself in Europe. Putin is going to look like the preëminent power in Europe." *Der Spiegel* published a startling editorial recently that reflected the general dismay in Europe, and the decline of American prestige since Trump's election. The new President, it said, is becoming "a danger to the world" that Germany must stand up in opposition to.

Strobe Talbott, the former Clinton adviser, said, "There is a very real danger not only that we are going to lose a second Cold War—or have a redo and lose—but that the loss will be largely because of a perverse pal-ship, the almost unfathomable respect that Trump has for Putin." Talbott believes that Trump, by showing so little regard for the institutions established by the political West in the past seventy years, is putting the world in danger. Asked what the consequences of "losing" such a conflict would be, Talbott said, "The not quite apocalyptic answer is that it is going to take years and years and years to get back to where we—we the United States and we the champions of the liberal world order—were as recently as five years ago." An even graver scenario, Talbott said, would be an "unravelling," in which we revert to "a dog-eat-dog world with constant instability and conflict even if it doesn't go nuclear. But, with the proliferation of nuclear powers, it is easy to see it going that way, too."

Andrei Kozyrev, who served as foreign minister in the Yeltsin government, now lives in Washington, D.C. He left Russia as it became increasingly authoritarian; he now sees a disturbingly similar pattern in his adopted country. "I am very concerned," he said. "My fear is that this is probably the first time in my memory that it seems we have the same kind of people on both sides—in the Kremlin and in the White House. The same people. It's probably why they like each other. It's not a matter of policy, but it's that they feel that they are alike. They care less for democracy and values, and more for personal success, however that is defined."

Although the evidence for Russia's interference appears convincing, it is too easy to allow such an account to become the master narrative of Trump's ascent—a way to explain the presence of a man who is so alien and discomforting to so much of the population by rendering him in some way foreign. In truth, he is a phenomenon of America's own making.

At the same time, Trump's management style as President has been so chaotic, so improvisational, that the daily bonfire sometimes obscures what has been put in place. "Putin likes people like Tillerson, who do business and don't talk about human rights," one former Russian policy adviser said. The Trump Administration, notably, said nothing when a Russian court—the courts are well within Putin's control—found Alexei Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner and Putin's only serious rival in next year's Presidential election, guilty of a fraud charge that had already been overturned once, a conviction that may keep him out of the race. The Russians see friendly faces in the Administration. Tillerson, as the chairman of ExxonMobil, did "massive deals in Russia," as Trump has put it. He formed an especially close relationship with Igor Sechin, who is among Putin's closest advisers, and who has made a fortune as chief executive of the state oil consortium, Rosneft. Trump's first national-security adviser, Michael Flynn, took a forty-thousand-dollar fee from the Russian propaganda station RT to appear at one

of its dinners, where he sat next to Putin.

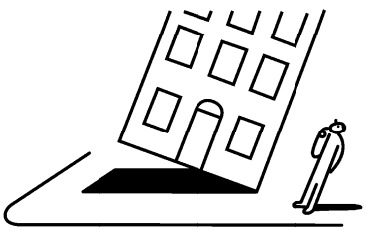
The Obama Administration, in its final days, had retaliated against Russian hacking by expelling thirty-five Russian officials and closing two diplomatic compounds. The Kremlin promised "reciprocal" punishment, and American intelligence took the first steps in sending new officials to Moscow to replace whoever would be expelled. "People were already on planes," a U.S. intelligence official said. But on December 30th Putin said that he would not retaliate. To understand the abrupt reversal, American intelligence scrutinized communications involving Sergey Kislyak, Russia's Ambassador to the U.S., and discovered that Flynn had had conversations with him, which touched on the future of economic sanctions. (Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, met with Kislyak in Trump Tower during the transition; the aim, according to the White House, was to establish "a more open line of communication in the future.") Flynn was forced to resign when news broke that he had lied to Vice-President Mike Pence about these exchanges.

Trump has given risibly inconsistent accounts of his own ties to Russia. When he was in Moscow for the Miss Universe contest in 2013, and an interviewer for MSNBC asked him about Putin, he said, "I do have a relationship and I can tell you that he's very interested in what we're doing here today"; at a subsequent National Press Club luncheon, he recalled, "I spoke indirectly and directly with President Putin, who could not have been nicer." During the Presidential campaign, he said, "I never met Putin, I don't know who Putin is." Trump has tweeted that he has "nothing to do with Russia"; in 2008, his son Donald, Jr., said that "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of a lot of our assets." At a news conference on February 16th, Trump was asked, again, if anyone in his campaign had been in contact with Russia, and he said, "Nobody that I know of." He called reports of Russian contacts "a ruse," and said, "I have nothing to do with Russia. Haven't made a phone call to Russia in years. Don't speak to people from Russia." The next day, the Senate Intelligence Committee formally advised the White House to preserve all material that might shed light on contacts with Russian representatives; any effort to obscure those contacts could qualify as a crime.

By mid-February, law-enforcement and intelligence agencies had accumulated multiple examples of contacts between Russians and Trump's associates, according to three current and former U.S. officials. Intercepted communications among Russian intelligence figures are said to include frequent reference to Paul Manafort, Trump's campaign chairman for several months in 2016, who had previously worked as a political consultant in Ukraine. "Whether he knew it or not, Manafort was around Russian intelligence all the time," one of the officials said. Investigators are likely to examine Trump and a range of his associates—Manafort; Flynn; Stone; a foreign-policy adviser, Carter Page; the lawyer Michael Cohen—for potential illegal or unethical entanglements with Russian government or business representatives.

"To me, the question might finally come down to this," Celeste Wallander, President Obama's senior adviser on Russia, said. "Will Putin expose the failings of American democracy or will he inadvertently expose the strength of American democracy?"

The working theory among intelligence officials involved in the case is that the Russian approach—including



hacking, propaganda, and contacts with Trump associates—was an improvisation rather than a long-standing plan. The official said, "After the election, there were a lot of Embassy communications"—to Moscow—"saying, stunned, 'What we do now?'"

Initially, members of the Russian élite celebrated Clinton's disappearance from the scene, and the new drift toward an America First populism that would leave Russia alone. The fall of Michael Flynn and the prospect of congressional hearings, though, have tempered the enthusiasm. Fyodor Lukyanov, the editor-in-chief of a leading foreign-policy journal in Moscow, said that Trump, facing pressure from congressional investigations, the press, and the intelligence agencies, might now have to be a far more "ordinary Republican President than was initially thought." In other words, Trump might conclude that he no longer has the political latitude to end sanctions against Moscow and accommodate Russia's geopolitical ambitions. As a sign of the shifting mood in Moscow, the Kremlin ordered Russian television outlets to be more reserved in their coverage of the new President.

Konstantin von Eggert, a political commentator and host on Russian television, heard from a friend at a state-owned media holding that an edict had arrived that, he said, "boiled down to one phrase: no more Trump." The implicit message, von Eggert explained, "is not that there now should be negative coverage but that there should be much less, and more balanced." The Kremlin has apparently decided, he said, that Russian state media risked looking "overly fawning in their attitude to Trump, that all this toasting and champagne drinking made us look silly, and so let's forget about Trump for some time, lowering expectations as necessary, and then reinvent his image according to new realities."

Alexey Venediktov, the editor-in-chief of Echo of Moscow, and a figure with deep contacts inside the Russian political élite, said, "Trump was attractive to people in Russia's political establishment as a disturber of the peace for their counterparts in the American political establishment." Venediktov suggested that, for Putin and those closest to him, any support that the Russian state provided to Trump's candidacy was a move in a long-standing rivalry with the West; in Putin's eyes, it is Russia's most pressing strategic concern, one that predates Trump and will outlast him. Putin's Russia has to come up with ways to make up for its economic and geopolitical weakness; its traditional levers of influence are limited, and, were it not for a formidable nuclear arsenal, it's unclear how important a world power it would be. "So, well then, we have to create turbulence inside America itself," Venediktov said. "A country that is beset by turbulence closes up on itself—and Russia's hands are freed." ♦

SHORTING A RAINBOW

It looked like a pyramid scheme that preyed on the poor. Could you make a fortune by bringing it down?

BY SHEELAH KOLHATKAR

One day in the summer of 2011, Christine Richard arrived at the forty-second floor of a high-rise on Fifty-seventh Street in Manhattan to visit a hedge fund called Pershing Square Capital Management. Richard worked for a boutique research firm that identified "short" opportunities—companies that investors could profitably bet against—and she was there to present an idea to Pershing Square's founder, William Ackman. On the way over, though, she was caught in a rainstorm, and by the time a receptionist directed her to a conference room she realized that she was dripping wet.

A few minutes past the appointed time, Ackman rushed into the conference room, trailed by an assistant who was listing a series of meetings for that day. Ackman couldn't stay, so he summoned one of his most trusted analysts, a twenty-eight-year-old redheaded Texan named Shane Dinneen, to sit down with Richard. She placed the rain-spattered report she had prepared on the conference-room table. On the cover was a three-leaf corporate logo. Underneath it was the word "Herbalife."

Pershing Square is what's called an "activist" hedge fund. Ackman uses its considerable resources—around eleven billion dollars, raised from wealthy investors, institutions, and employees—to amass major stakes in publicly traded companies. The intention is then to push the companies to improve their businesses, or at least their stock price, which is how an activist investor generally makes money. There are debates over whether activist funds strengthen the companies they invest in or simply force them into taking short-term measures—laying off employees, selling off divisions—to drive up profits and the share price. Ackman, who is sensitive to stereotypes about profiteering, says that Pershing Square has fewer than a dozen investments in its portfolio at a time, and sees them as long-term commitments. He maintains that his firm puts tremendous resources into each one, gives strategic advice over a period of years, and often recruits C.E.O.s and board members.

"This is going to sound goofy," Ackman told me recently, when we met at his midtown offices, "but we try to do things that we think are good for America." Ackman, a youthful-looking fifty, is tall, with steel-white hair and intense blue eyes. A devotee of tennis, he's muscular and trim; he can give the appearance, when you stand next to him, of leaning over you in a slightly possessive manner. He seems accustomed to employing his physical charisma in the service of his business interests.

"There's a good-for-America reason to do that, and there's also an economic reason to do that," he went on. "It's much easier, if you're an activist, if you're on the right side of things." He was gazing out over Central Park, through panoramic windows that cast the grand public space as his own back yard. To the far right of the vista was One57, a ninety-story skyscraper that looms over the city like a blade. He recently bought a duplex apartment there for $91.5 million.

To make his case, Ackman cited the example of Canadian Pacific Railway, a company that was established in 1881. Pershing Square bought fourteen per cent of its stock six years ago, and recruited a new C.E.O., who took it from the "worst-run railroad in North America" to the best, in Ackman's appraisal—while reaping a $2.6-billion return on the fund's investment. A less flattering example of Ackman's judgment is the fund's $3.3-billion investment in Valeant, the pharmaceutical company. Valeant was known for borrowing money to buy competitors and then raising the prices of their drugs—sometimes by a thousand per cent or more—while closing their R. & D. divisions. Valeant's profits soared, for a time, and other drug companies followed its example. Then Valeant came under federal investigation; its share price is now a fraction of what it was when Pershing Square bought it.

Valeant was the sort of company that Pershing Square should have bet against rather than bought into, but shorting stocks wasn't a big part of what the fund did. Short selling—betting that a company's stock price will go down—requires a special level of fortitude. It involves borrowing a stock from a brokerage or a bank (and paying a small fee to do so), selling the stock in the open market, and then returning the borrowed shares at some point in the future, having bought back the stock for much less than you sold it for. That's if things go well; the losses are potentially limitless if the stock keeps rising.

Short sellers are generally reviled by corporations as malevolent opportunists. But, unlike most investors, they're motivated to expose problems in public companies. "I think short selling, and in fact *public* short selling, where you share your concerns in a public way, is an incredibly healthy thing, not just for the capital markets but because the regulators do not have the resources to find these things," Ackman said. "What short sellers do is identify the problem, because they're economically incentivized to do so. But if you don't tell anyone about it, you know, nothing necessarily is going to happen." By shorting, he maintained, an investor can find that rare opportunity to profit handsomely while also providing a public service. "If you can find a really crooked company that's causing harm to poor people? The government's going to be a lot more interested in that company

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW HARRER/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

Bill Ackman saw his hedge fund's crusade against Herbalife as a moral battle with a billion-dollar payday.

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE McQUADE

than some other kind of fraud that's ripping off rich people." He added, "It's more interesting to fight evil than just to play with stock certificates."

Ackman grew up in the affluent New York City suburb of Chappaqua, where his father ran a brokerage firm. He graduated from Harvard College and then Harvard Business School, where he was on the rowing team, and had a reputation as someone who couldn't keep his opinions to himself. He and the rest of the team had rowed with oars adorned with dollar signs. "Let's face up to what HBS represents," he wrote in the student newspaper. "We spend 90% of our studies at HBS pursuing the maximization of the dollar."

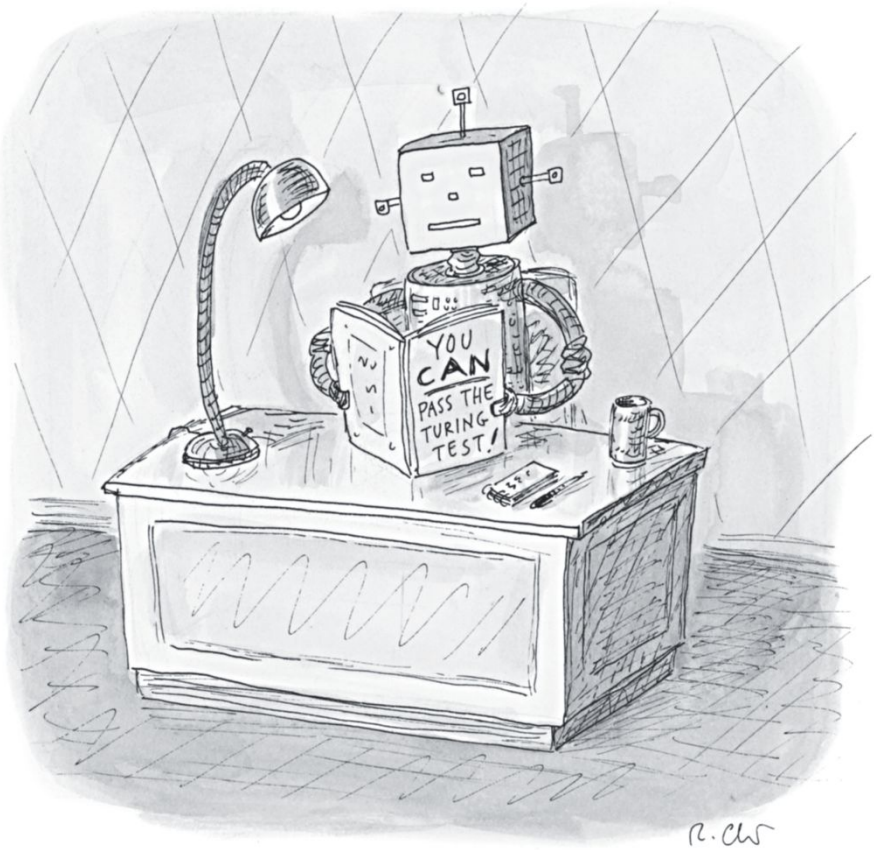
He started his first hedge fund, Gotham Partners, in 1993, at the age of twenty-six. Ten years later, after a series of misjudged investments and unfavorable court rulings, he was forced to close it. He was left with only one investment, a large short position in M.B.I.A., Inc., originally named the Municipal Bond Insurance Association. M.B.I.A. insured bonds issued by cities, states, corporations, and mortgage lenders; its backing gave bonds a high credit rating, assuring buyers that they were protected in case a borrower defaulted. At the time, M.B.I.A. was one of the most profitable companies in America. Ackman, though, had determined that it was concealing billions of dollars in potential losses on high-risk debt, including vast amounts of subprime-mortgage debt. He made a bet against the company, and then set about publicizing his opinion that it was in danger of going bankrupt. With the support of much of the financial industry, the company fought back, accusing Ackman of spreading false information to benefit his investment, and New York's attorney general, Eliot Spitzer, started investigating him. (Charges were never filed.)

Christine Richard, who is fifty-two, joined the financial-news service Bloomberg News in 2006 as a wire reporter covering the bond market. She has an earnest air, speaks with a soft voice, and has sympathetic blue eyes. She grew up in Union County, New Jersey, and earned a degree in psychology at Boston University while waitressing part time. As she pursued an M.B.A. at Georgetown University, she started reading the *Wall Street Journal*, which had distinguished itself as a source of consequential business journalism, and decided that she would rather write about the business world than work in it. Wire-service reporting was by nature a mechanical exercise, however, and Richard yearned to write longer, more narrative pieces.

It was just the sort of ambition that Ackman knew how to tap into. Part of his strategy for publicizing his investments was to favor certain journalists and shower them with attention. For a time, a reporter might find herself given scoops, granted interviews, invited to join a Wall Street luminary in his town car, while the rest of the media scrum were stuck outside. Ackman chose Richard to help bring scrutiny to M.B.I.A. The investment was Ackman's first short position that involved a concerted effort to convince regulators, auditors, Wall Street analysts, and Washington lawmakers that the target was hiding something. But M.B.I.A.'s credibility exceeded Ackman's, and for years Ackman got nowhere.

Then, in 2008, the financial crisis arrived, and, in just over a year, M.B.I.A.'s stock price plummeted from seventy-two dollars a share to three dollars. Ackman's position yielded a profit of a billion dollars. It also made him one of the few investors who foresaw—and made money from—the disintegration of the subprime-mortgage market. In 2010, Richard published a book about Ackman and M.B.I.A., titled "Confidence Game: How Hedge Fund Manager Bill Ackman Called Wall Street's Bluff."

After the book came out, to modest sales, Richard left journalism and joined Indago Group, a small research firm that catered to hedge-fund investors. It had been successful developing short-selling ideas in the for-profit education sector, where low-income students took out government-backed loans to earn largely worthless degrees—leading to a high default rate. Now Richard was charged with finding another industry that had been allowed to inflate into a fraudulent, and presumably fragile, bubble. She started



researching Herbalife. "Just looking at it, I vaguely felt that it was a fraud," she said. "I remember thinking, If someone smart were to just call it out, someone who had the ear of the market, it would collapse."

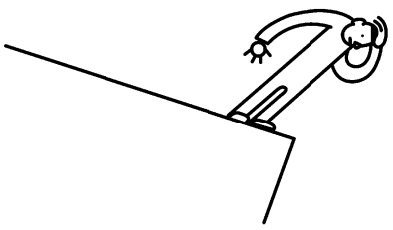
She called Ackman. "Bill," she told him, "I think I found your next M.B.I.A." It looked to her like a billion-dollar idea.

Multilevel-marketing companies such as Herbalife—and Amway, Mary Kay, and Nu Skin—peddle their products to the public through networks of salespeople rather than through retail venders. The salespeople both sell products and recruit more salespeople, and how much they do of each helps determine whether the company will run into regulatory trouble. Herbalife, which is based in Los Angeles, sells weight-loss-shake powder, vitamins, supplements, protein bars, and skin-care products, and when Richard started investigating the company it reported more than four billion dollars in sales.

Herbalife cultivates an image of wellness and athleticism; it sponsors more than sixty sports teams and a hundred and fifty professional athletes, including Cristiano Ronaldo, the Real Madrid soccer star. But most people who were getting involved in Herbalife, Richard believed, were responding to the company's aggressive promises, advertised in both English and Spanish, of a business opportunity that might lead to wealth and financial independence. Testimonials spoke of how much money they could make. ("Now, while earning $25,000 a month with Herbalife, I get to do all the things I love: play music and ride my motorcycle!")

Herbalife's recruiting technique involved revival-style "seminars" where distributors in company T-shirts stood up and shared stories about the weight that they had lost and the money that they had gained. On a Saturday this fall, one such seminar took place at a hotel near Newark Airport. About a hundred people, mostly black and Latino, were crowded into a small ballroom, many wearing buttons pinned to their shirts: "I ♥ Herbalife" or "lose weight now. ask me how!" The fee to attend the meeting, which was ostensibly for sales training, was thirty dollars, and the aesthetic in the room tended toward high heels and gold jewelry.

At the front of the room, a man named Reggie walked back and forth on a riser before a table of Herbalife products, pumping up the crowd. He had a bushy beard and wore a tight purple sweater that accentuated his upper-body musculature and slender waist. (The company encourages its distributors to use themselves as walking billboards.) Reggie was discussing a key skill for Herbalife entrepreneurs: how to deal with friends who were skeptical of the bold health claims made about the company's offerings. "This is why we don't have to know what's in the products," Reggie said. He gestured toward a slide on a screen, showing head shots of a group of medical experts affiliated with Herbalife. "We have awesome doctors, awesome scientists that make the product!"



The crowd roared ("*Yeah!*"), music blasted, and rocket sounds blared.

"If somebody asks you, 'What's in the products?,' *they* know!" Reggie went on. "*I* know it works!"

At the core of Herbalife's appeal is the individual testimonial—here's how I did it, and here's how you can, too—and Reggie began inviting people from the audience to come up and share their "product stories." He called out, "Who here has lost a pound?" There were cheers. "Five pounds? Who here has gained some muscle? Who here's got softer skin?" More enthusiastic applause. Many of those who spoke expressed gratitude for being able to spend more time with their kids.

Between the testimonials, a man named Juan—a member of Herbalife's Active World Team, one of the upper echelons of the sales hierarchy—spoke to the crowd. He said that he didn't want to "do" Herbalife at first, but he was unhealthy and overweight, and "my wife told me that there were going to be some services that were going to be cut off at home if I didn't start trying their products—if you know what I mean." Because of Herbalife, he said, he had lost thirty pounds and looked amazing.

Juan was there to explain how the business of Herbalife worked. It was based on a system of product discounts. Once people used the products and liked them, they could sign up and get them at a twenty-five-per-cent discount. They could use the products themselves, or become distributors and sell to friends and acquaintances at full price, keeping the difference. Distributors were required to purchase a "business pack," priced at ninety-four dollars. The pack included copies of a sales video, buttons, and product samples. As their purchase volume increased, they qualified for deeper discounts. "That is based on how many people you're sharing your story with," Juan said. "It doesn't happen overnight."

Distributors could bring in new salespeople and earn commissions from their "downline," the recruiting activities and purchases of everyone on the chain below them. The company also encouraged distributors to open "nutrition clubs," where they could invite prospects to come in and try Herbalife protein shakes, work out, talk about weight loss and fitness, and sign up to become distributors themselves. Juan explained that, if you bought enough Herbalife products each month, you would eventually qualify for a fifty-per-cent discount. If, over time, the friends in your downline started buying enough to qualify for the fifty-per-cent discount, "the business gets really, really, really exciting, because we start talking about something that is called 'royalties,' O.K.?" In addition to the commissions on your recruits' purchases, and on their recruits' purchases, and on *their* recruits' purchases, the company would start paying you a production bonus.

"I've managed a company with over six hundred people, and I only get paid on what I do, O.K.?" Juan said, referring to his previous career. "When they told me in Herbalife I can get paid on teaching some other people how to do

a good job, and when they do it I get paid as well, I was, like, yes, this is the kind of business that I want to be in!"

In a pyramid scheme, according to the definition most commonly used by courts and by the Federal Trade Commission, participants derive most of their compensation from recruiting other people into the network as salespeople, rather than from selling products to actual consumers. If recruiting is a company's main purpose, its survival depends on constantly bringing new people in, and those at the top of the pyramid make money largely from those coming in at the bottom. Still, it can be hard to distinguish between enterprises that are legally considered fraudulent and those which aren't, and no specific statute outlaws pyramid schemes. A series of settlements with the F.T.C. dating back to the nineteen-seventies have shown companies how to adjust their business models in order to remain in the zone of legality.

Christine Richard was doubtful that Herbalife had done so. From her research, she had concluded that the company's real business was recruiting people to recruit more people to recruit more people to sell its products. "Distributors were put on this treadmill of purchases in order to advance," she told me. "It was so manipulative." Most of the recruits appeared to be low-income people, particularly native Spanish speakers; many were spending thousands of dollars to open nutrition clubs that would never turn a profit. Herbalife was using the dearth of economic opportunity for people who lacked college degrees and other advantages in order to recruit more distributors. "People are losing their homes, their jobs . . . markets are crashing," one company recruiting video from 2008 says. "Let's face it, it's a scary time, the economy's in trouble." But Herbalife, viewers were assured, was "recession-proof." An Indago Group report was blunt: Herbalife was "a pyramid scheme whose revenue comes not from retail sales of its products, as it contends, but from capital lost by failed investors in its business opportunity."

After her initial meeting with Shane Dinneen, Richard gathered documents from the many lawsuits that had been brought against Herbalife over the years. If the company was a tempting target for a short seller, it was also an elusive one. Its structure, like that of many multilevel-marketing firms, was complex to the point of opacity. It had powerful lawyers and advisers on its payroll, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who appeared at several of the company's extravaganzas.

Meanwhile, Dinneen—described by a colleague as "Ackman's right hand"—began applying his own methods to studying the weight-loss-nutrition industry. "I think that looking at companies is like solving a puzzle," he says. "I like to understand the narrative behind a company." He and a colleague, Mariusz Adamski, started researching Herbalife intensively. Adamski told me, "We read some presentations, did some legal work, spoke to a bunch of consultants, and thought, This company looks like actual garbage."

Herbalife said that its flagship product, the Formula 1 nutrition-shake powder, had sales of $1.2 billion every year, about as much as Palmolive dish soap or Gerber baby food. Compared with SlimFast or other nutrition shakes you could buy at Whole Foods or G.N.C., Formula 1 was, Dinneen and Adamski believed, sold at an inflated price, and the claims that had been made for it—that it could swiftly produce enormous weight loss, even help curb diabetes and heart disease—seemed implausible. The more they looked into it, the more dubious it appeared to be.

None of this meant that the company would collapse, though, and certainly not on Pershing Square's schedule. Short sellers look for a catalyst—a precipitating event that will trigger the decline. This event could be a government action: an S.E.C. investigation or a charge from the Justice Department. Sometimes a presentation by a well-respected short seller will suffice.

Yet Indago's hedge-fund clients had been largely unresponsive to the Herbalife proposal. They warned Richard that most multilevel-marketing outfits were nearly indestructible, like cockroaches. Although a few had been shut down or sanctioned in recent decades, many prospered, contorting themselves to comply with the law. Investors had tried shorting some of them—notably Usana, another nutrition company, and Nu Skin, which settled deceptive-marketing charges with the F.T.C. in 1997, for $1.5 million—but the companies endured, and their share prices held. What Indago heard from its hedge-fund clients was some version of: "We've all looked at the companies, we all know they're frauds, but if you short them you get burned, guaranteed. What is the catalyst to put an end to them? If you can't tell me that—next!"

What's more, most hedge-fund investors were averse to publicity, which a campaign against Herbalife would surely entail; they saw little benefit in bringing attention to how much money they were making, and how they were making it. The prospect required a certain kind of self-assurance, possibly even narcissism—it called for someone who thrived in the center of controversy. In other words, someone like Bill Ackman.

Even Ackman had misgivings, though. "Collectively, we decided that we did not want to be the tip of the spear here," he recalled. "We just didn't think it was worth the brain damage. Getting attacked, and possibly sued. . . . There's just not enough *in it*." Pershing Square would probably have to spend millions of dollars just on legal advice. Given the effort and the expense, was Herbalife big enough, with enough shares trading each day, for an adversary to craft a truly lucrative short?

He went on, "It's going to take a lot of time and distraction, and they're going to go after us in the press. And, unfortunately, the media generally hate short sellers." The research piled up, but Ackman held back. Then, on May 1, 2012, Herbalife's executives hosted a conference call for analysts and investors, and the calculus abruptly changed.

"Good morning, everyone, and welcome to our first-quarter 2012 earnings conference call," Michael Johnson, Herbalife's C.E.O., said. "Our financial and business trends continue to be strong."

THE BREAK-IN

When I close my eyes I see my mother running
from one house to another, throwing her fist
at the doors of neighbors, begging anyone
to call the police.
There are times when every spectator is hungry,
times a thief takes nothing, leaves you a fool
in your inventory.
How one trespass could make all others
suddenly visible. My mother counted
her jewelry and called
overseas. My father counted women
afraid one of us would go
missing. When I close my eyes
I hear my mother saying, "*A'aha*, this new country,"
my cousins exclaiming "Auntie!"
between the clicking line and their tongues.
Tonight the distance between me, my mother, and Nigeria
is like a jaw splashed against a wall.
I close my eyes and see my father
sulking like a pile of ashes,
his hair jet black and kinky,
his silence entering a thousand rooms.
Then outside, trimming hedges as if home
were a land just beyond the meadow,
the leaves suddenly back.
When I close my eyes
I see my mother, mean for the rest of the day,
rawing my back in the tub
like she's still doing dishes.

—Hafizah Geter

Johnson, a former Disney president, had been recruited to be C.E.O. of Herbalife in 2003, and he had worked since then to establish an air of legitimacy. "As I approach my first decade at Herbalife, I've been reflecting on how much our company and business have changed over the past decade," he said. "We are consistent in teaching the importance of integrity and ethics in everything we say and do."

After the call was opened up for questions, David Einhorn, the founder and president of the hedge fund Greenlight Capital, came on the line. Einhorn was a highly respected investor, known for his instincts as a short seller. At an investor conference in 2008, he had stood up and correctly predicted that Lehman Brothers was going to go bankrupt under the weight of its subprime-mortgage debt.

"I got a couple of questions for you," Einhorn said to Des Walsh, Herbalife's president. "First is, how much of the sales that you make in terms of final sales are sold outside the network and how much are consumed within the distributor base?"

It was the key question to be asked of a suspected pyramid scheme, and Herbalife's executives seemed alarmed. Einhorn was, as *Vanity Fair* and *Fortune* reported, a client of the Indago Group, and had received Christine Richard's Herbalife pitch.

Walsh didn't really answer the question. "David, we have a seventy-per-cent customer rule, which effectively says that seventy per cent of all products are sold to consumers or actually consumed by distributors for their own personal use," he said. He spoke of the growth of Herbalife nutrition clubs: "That has given us visibility to the tremendous amount of products that are being sold directly through to consumers, and we see that as a growing trend in our business."

Einhorn returned to his question: "What is the percentage that is actually sold to consumers that are not distributors?"

"We don't have exact percentages, David," Walsh said, "because we don't have visibility to that level of detail."

Seconds after Einhorn's questions, Herbalife's stock price started dropping, from around sixty-nine dollars to the mid-fifties. Dinneen was listening to the call, and ran into Ackman's office. "We missed it!" Ackman recalls Dinneen telling him. "We should have been short already."

Ackman saw things differently. "I'm, like, 'No no no no no!'" Ackman told Dinneen. " 'This is really good!' " Einhorn, he figured, must have had a short in place already, and was profiting from the decline. If Greenlight Capital was going to lead the campaign, though, Pershing Square could draft behind it.

Within the hour, Ackman started shorting Herbalife stock. He decided to commit ten per cent of Pershing Square's capital to the short—around a billion dollars. He estimated that the most the stock could possibly go up, which would represent the fund's potential losses, was fifty per cent. On the other hand, once regulators and the public learned what was really going on at the company, he expected Herbalife stock to go to zero—whereupon his fund would net a billion dollars in profit.

"You take a lot of opprobrium for going after a public company, particularly a company like this one," Ackman said. "They've been prepared for battle. We assumed that Einhorn would be carrying the flag, and we could just ride his coattails."

But Ackman had misread the situation. He soon came to believe that Einhorn, after taking advantage of the sell-off he had prompted, then bought back his stock and completed the short, figuring that it would rise again. It looked as if Einhorn was playing a short-term game, and had no interest in convincing the world that Herbalife was going to collapse.

"We usually do all the work," Ackman went on, "so I'm, like, finally, we

can let David do all the work, and we'll make a bunch of money, and everyone wins." He sighed. "Well, it didn't work out that way."

Driving through some of the towns and neighborhoods where Herbalife has flourished is like taking a tour of vanished economic opportunity. You might find a high concentration of Dollar General outlets, interspersed with boarded-up Main Street businesses that went under after Walmart came to town, and then the Walmart itself, at the edge of the city, might have shut after incursions from Amazon. People are desperate for anything that seems like an escape from a life of working behind a cash register.

In the eyes of skeptics, the Herbalife "business opportunity" bore some resemblance to the American economy as a whole: a triangle in which the top one per cent of distributors received almost ninety per cent of the financial rewards, while those below tried to claw their way up the chain, often to little avail. Government investigators have found that it was almost impossible to make money selling Herbalife products, and that more than half the company's sales came from purchases of products by its own distributors. Hundreds of thousands of new distributors joined the network each year; after losing money, or at least not making any, eighty-nine per cent of them ended up dropping out within the same year. (The company disputes these conclusions, and says that most of its sales go to actual customers using its products, although it also says that it doesn't know the precise breakdown.)

Strikingly, many of the themes and slogans that multilevel-marketing companies favor—lots of gilt, and promises that "we are going to make you rich"—are the same ones employed by Donald Trump, whose pledge to solve Middle America's economic woes helped propel him to the Presidency. Trump honed his pitch during his own career in multilevel marketing, as a promoter of the short-lived Trump Network, which peddled "cutting-edge health and wellness formulas," in Trump's words, and as a spokesman for the telecom outfit ACN, which has settled state fraud charges. "The economic meltdown, greed, and ineptitude in the financial industry have sabotaged the dreams of millions of people," Trump said in a 2009 video for the Trump Network. "Americans need a new plan. They need a new dream. The Trump Network wants to give millions of people renewed hope, and with an exciting plan to opt out of the recession."

Herbalife has been singularly effective at selling the dream. The company was founded, in 1980, by Mark Hughes, a high-school dropout with a talent for storytelling and salesmanship. Within Herbalife culture, Hughes is a figure of worship. He was twenty-four years old when he started selling weight-loss products out of his car. (According to the Los Angeles *Times Magazine*, he used as part of his pitch a fake story about his mother having died of obesity.) By the mid-nineteen-eighties, the company had annual sales of more than three hundred million dollars, and Hughes was living in a mansion in Beverly Hills.

That was when CNN broadcast a devastating series about the company, in which scientists and physicians debunked Herbalife's claims for its products and challenged the company's assertion that it employed medical experts and ran a research lab. California's attorney general launched an investigation, and Hughes was called to testify before the Senate. Herbalife settled with the government, agreeing to adjust its business practices. Hughes died in 2000, reportedly of an overdose of alcohol and antidepressants. In the company's thirty-seven years, it has gone through several transformations. But at its core is a sort of prosperity gospel with deep American roots.

Ackman's bet was that rational scrutiny would prevail over extravagant hope. He was now fully committed to the campaign, and, after shorting twenty million shares in several months—borrowing them and selling them at the market price—he was eager to go public with the case against Herbalife. The company, he would argue, was a pyramid scheme. It was ripping off vulnerable members of the Latino community. The government was duty-bound to sanction it. The stock was going to zero.

Shane Dinneen, Christine Richard, and a handful of others—including David Klafter, Pershing Square's in-house counsel—hunkered down. Richard had left Indago to work full time for Ackman, under contract as a dedicated Herbalife researcher. She had been travelling around the country, documenting Herbalife nutrition clubs that were sprouting up in communities dense with Spanish-speaking immigrants. Dinneen had helped to compile a dossier of court filings, and had been tracking some of Herbalife's top distributors. The Pershing Square team talked about how quickly they could get regulators and state attorneys general interested in investigating Herbalife. Dinneen put in long hours and sometimes slept under his desk as he and his colleagues worked furiously to condense everything they had learned into some three hundred PowerPoint slides.

"We went to war," Klafter said. "And war is chaotic. You never quite know what's going to happen."

Pershing Square's first assault was launched on December 20, 2012, at the AXA Equitable Center, in midtown Manhattan, before a packed house. The presentation, called "Who wants to be a Millionaire?," was meant to capture the attention of government regulators, the mainstream media, and Spanish-language news outlets that could help spread the word to the Latino community.

Ackman strode onstage in a stylish black suit, one hand in his pocket and the other holding a slide-clicker remote. He began by announcing that Pershing Square was shorting Herbalife stock: "Herbalife stock goes down, we make money; Herbalife stock goes up, we lose money." He then argued that most of the company's sales came from distributors who bought products and then failed to make a successful business out of their investment, while those at the top raked in millions—a classic pyramid scheme. He showed a clip of a testimonial from an Herbalife Chairman's Club member, one of the company's top earners. "This is a product that changes people's lives," the man onscreen said, as images of sports cars flashed by. "In ninety days, our income hit ten thousand dollars a month." The presentation contained

dozens of pie charts and bar graphs, and went on for three and a half hours. Ackman pledged to donate his personal profits from the short to charity.

Given the depth of the research—and the fact that he'd been right about M.B.I.A.—Ackman says he figured "that we'd have a lot of credibility, and that it would cause the government to investigate." He added, "And the facts were so damning—I thought it could be a year?" At first, the bombardment had its desired effect: Herbalife's stock price dropped from more than forty dollars, around where Pershing Square had shorted it, to twenty-six dollars right before Christmas.

But a week after the presentation, to Ackman's dismay, Herbalife's stock price started to creep up. He found out why in early January, in his Gulfstream G550 on the way to Myanmar for a scuba-diving trip. A prominent hedge-fund manager, Dan Loeb, of Third Point L.L.C., had bought a significant chunk of Herbalife stock. Apparently, at the newly depressed price of twenty-six dollars, it looked like a good short-term value.

Maybe the company wasn't especially virtuous, Herbalife's defenders reasoned, but this didn't mean that it was provably a pyramid scheme, or couldn't survive by adjusting its business practices. Even if Ackman's charges were vindicated, would the government really shut it down, all to the benefit of a hedge fund? The company seemed to be expanding successfully into other countries, with millions of new distributors flowing into the network in China, Mexico, and Venezuela. Other investors reached similar conclusions and started to buy shares as well. The stock price moved further upward.

"You're obviously under consideration for something."

• •

On January 10, 2013, Herbalife Webcast a hundred-and-five-slide rebuttal, denying Ackman's allegations, and insisting that most people bought its products because they loved them, not because they wanted to recruit other salespeople. Ackman listened to the presentation on the deck of "some dive boat in Myanmar," rocking back and forth while clutching the satellite equipment he had brought along. He was neither surprised nor impressed. "A completely fraudulent response," he told me. "They were *totally* mischaracterizing our presentation. I thought it was a joke."

Ackman wasn't prepared for what came next, however. Two weeks later, the legendary investor Carl Icahn lashed out at Ackman and his Herbalife play on Bloomberg Television. "It's no secret I don't like Ackman," Icahn said. "I think if you're short you go short, and, hey, if it goes down, you make money. You don't go out and get a roomful of people to bad-mouth the company. If you want to be in that business, why don't you go and join the S.E.C.?" He went on, "I don't respect him. . . . Don't be holier than thou and say, 'Look, I'm doing this for the good of the world, and I want to see sunshine on Herbalife.' I mean, that's bullshit."

Icahn, who is eighty-one, made his career as a corporate raider—he launched hostile takeovers of companies such as T.W.A., Texaco, and R.J.R. Nabisco—and is estimated to have amassed a sixteen-billion-dollar fortune. (He is an economic adviser to the Trump Administration). Prickly and ready for a fight, he had a turbulent history with Ackman dating back a decade, when a joint investment led to a lawsuit that was resolved in Ackman's favor. A day after Icahn's attack, a CNBC anchor urged Ackman to respond. "I'm a little sensitive to the whole reputation thing," Ackman said, and so he agreed.

The interview was conducted over the phone. Ackman, inside his glass-walled office at Pershing Square, explained his history with Icahn, and then accused Icahn of being a hypocrite: Icahn himself had held very public short positions in the past. After a few minutes, the Pershing Square staff was stunned to see that Icahn had been

patched in to the interview. The two men were now arguing on live television.

"I've really sort of had it with this guy Ackman," Icahn said. "He's like the crybaby in the schoolyard. I went to a tough school in Queens, and they used to beat up the little Jewish boys. He was like one of these little Jewish boys, crying that the world was taking advantage of him."

For most of the twenty-seven-minute exchange, Icahn hurled insults at Ackman. (CNBC had to bleep Icahn and remind him that he was on the air.) Ackman mostly maintained his composure as he attempted to counter Icahn's charges. Occasionally, hoots and howls could be heard coming from the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, where the CNBC interviewer was situated. "I had dinner with him, and I gotta tell ya," Icahn said, "I couldn't figure out if he was the most sanctimonious guy I ever met in my life, or the most arrogant."

Icahn revealed not long afterward that he had bought fourteen million shares of Herbalife stock—thirteen per cent of the company. It wasn't clear whether Icahn simply saw a good profit opportunity or whether it was personal; there was no evidence that he had conducted the kind of in-depth research that Pershing Square had. Yet it was a public invitation for others to join him—especially investors who recoiled at Ackman's slick self-presentation as a champion of oppressed immigrants. The spectacle further buoyed Herbalife's stock price.

"It was not a helpful thing," one Pershing Square investor told me. "To engage a tyrannical eighty-year-old with a twenty-billion-dollar net worth who wants to fight you? That was not a helpful thing." Now the focus of attention had shifted from the case against Herbalife. All anyone wanted to talk about was the feud between the two men.

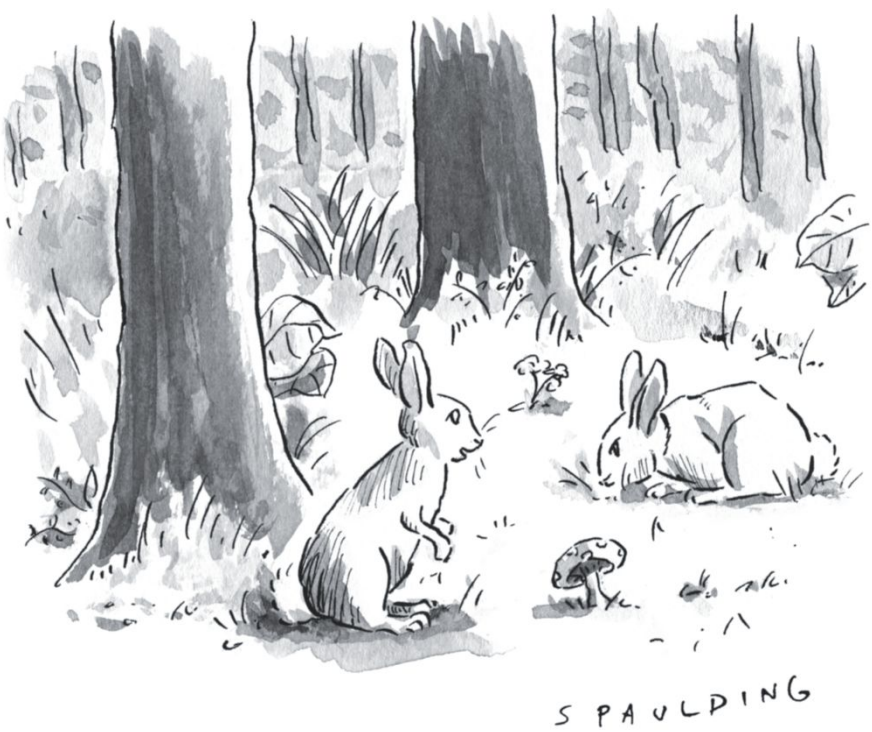
"Unfortunately, Wall Street for the most part is amoral," Ackman said when I asked him about it. "So, with Herbalife, people saw an opportunity for profit—my friend Carl was going on TV once a week saying, 'This could be the mother of all short squeezes!' Which was kind of a call to arms for people to buy the stock and restrict the supply of the stock, to cause the stock price to go up—figuring I would have to cover—and laugh all the way to the bank."

The more vocal Ackman became about Herbalife, the more the stock price rose. The company hired more lobbyists and advisers, including Antonio Villaraigosa, the former mayor of Los Angeles, and the law firm of David Boies. Ackman had set up a Web site called Facts About Herbalife ("Herbalife is a pyramid scheme that harms millions of people around the world"); the company countered with a Web site called The Real Bill Ackman ("Bill Ackman's self-serving activism has cost investors millions of dollars"). Herbalife benefitted from a widespread sense that Ackman was smug and patronizing. It wasn't that he was wrong, necessarily; it was that he took too much pleasure in believing he was right.

Shane Dinneen and Christine Richard found themselves reviled by association. As the stock price rose toward eighty, financial bloggers predicted that Dinneen would be fired. Richard received taunting messages. "You are a racist—and it will wind up costing you your reputation and your client billions of dollars," a rival hedge-fund manager wrote to her in an e-mail. "When this is over I will say that publicly. . . . You are a deeply offensive and morally reprehensible person." Dinneen decided to quit his job, telling his colleagues that he was burned out.

Ackman, meanwhile, redoubled his efforts to trigger an official investigation into his allegations. Pershing Square spent hundreds of thousands of dollars lobbying state senators; it also met with the S.E.C., and with activists in the Latino community. The *Times* reported that Pershing Square even bankrolled civil-rights groups to help find victims of Herbalife whom they could present to regulatory agencies, making videos of their stories and posting them online. The hedge fund's consultants met more than a dozen members of Congress or their staff, as well as representatives of New York's and California's attorneys general. Ackman also began coöperating with a filmmaker on a documentary about the battle, called "Betting on Zero."

"The company kept saying we're manipulating the stock price," David Klafter told me. "The joke around here was: We manipulated it *up!* We promised the deathblow, and it goes up. The irony is, only we could afford to do the kind of campaign we did. And the only reason we could do it is that we're not just trying to do the right thing, we're also managers of capital. But, because we're



"Ninety-six kids? Well, you look amazing."

managers of capital, everything we do is suspect. We were told that by regulators, too, by the way—boosting is American, shorting is not."

On March 12, 2014, Pershing Square's advisory board, which meets once a quarter, gathered in the company's largest conference room. The board members include corporate executives and old friends of Ackman's, such as Marty Peretz, who had been his undergraduate adviser at Harvard. Herbalife stock had reached sixty-one dollars, representing a loss for Pershing Square, on paper, of about seven hundred million dollars. The board meeting was a soul-searing discussion about how much the Herbalife crusade had cost the fund and whether it was wise to continue.

"Is the reason the government is doing nothing that we are short the stock and we stand to make a profit," Ackman recalled one of the board members asking, "and they just don't want to get in the middle of something and, in effect, pick sides between two rich people?"

Ackman was sitting at his usual spot at the head of the table eating cashews, which were his preferred healthy snack until recently, when he became concerned that they might contain toxic amounts of mercury. He knew that the board member had a point. But he was convinced of his case, and the idea of backing down was painful.

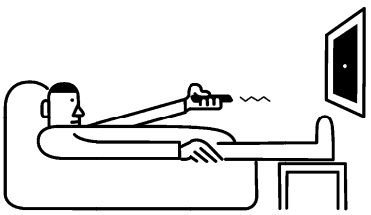
"If he gets obsessed with something, he is really obsessed," Peretz recalled. Peretz had helped Ackman with his senior thesis, which concerned racial inequities in Ivy League admissions. "I think other money managers would have long ago dropped Herbalife," Peretz went on. "He has a great sense of fairness, and that operated in his thesis, and it operates in his investing."

Still, Ackman says he was half-seriously considering surrender when the conference-room phone rang. It was Pershing Square's head trader, calling from his desk. "Herbalife stock is halted," he told Ackman. "News pending." The Stock Exchange was not allowing the stock to trade, because information was about to come out that could affect the price.

Speculation ensued. Was Icahn going to make a takeover offer? "Carl's never going to buy this company," Ackman said. It was something else. "If the F.T.C. launches an investigation of this company, there is a God!" he said.

Fifteen minutes later, the news arrived: Ackman was right, and God was in his Heaven. The F.T.C. was investigating Herbalife.

Herbalife's stock went down. Then it went back up again. During the next two years, Pershing Square continued lobbying and putting out reports and videos as it waited



for the F.T.C. to complete its investigation. Herbalife's stock price remained in the sixty-dollar range, well above the forties, where the fund had sold it.

On July 15, 2016, Ackman was at home, getting ready for work, when, he says, he got a call from a *Wall Street Journal* reporter. "We're hearing a two-hundred-million-dollar settlement with the F.T.C.," the reporter said. "Herbalife has been determined not to be a pyramid scheme." Ackman was startled. "Two-hundred-million-dollar settlement—yeah, sounds about right," he recalled. "But 'determined it's not a pyramid scheme'? There's no way that's right." He told the reporter not to run with that story; it was wrong. "And don't rely on Herbalife's characterization of this," he added.

Later that morning, after the F.T.C. released its report, Ackman learned that the agency had confirmed many of his allegations. The commission did not use the phrase "pyramid scheme" in the document, but it did accuse the company of engaging in "deceptive and unlawful acts," by luring people with misleading promises of how much money they could make. Herbalife, according to the F.T.C., was not offering its distributors a viable opportunity to sell products to actual retail customers, and the company was structured mainly to reward people for recruiting new distributors. Most people who started nutrition clubs lost money. A federal court ordered Herbalife to restructure its business so that people were paid based on their retail sales, not on recruiting new people—a measure that, Ackman believed, could lead to its downfall. (The company says that the F.T.C. misunderstood the nature of its sales.) The two-hundred-million-dollar fine was meant to compensate members who had lost money. Many of the strictures will not go into effect until May of this year.

"It was amazing," Ackman said. "Confirmed every one of our allegations." He went on, "Look, when this whole thing is over? I'm going to hold everyone accountable. Madeleine Albright, the Gibson Dunn firm"—one of several law firms working with Herbalife. "All the enablers. They are facilitating fraud, and they're collecting a huge amount of money doing it. I think they are culpable."

Once again, however, Ackman's expectations were confounded. Despite his urgings, the *Wall Street Journal* ran the story with the headline "Ackman dealt blow as Herbalife settles with FTC." The New York *Post* went with "Herbalife no pyramid scheme: FTC." Other news outlets followed suit. The commission's findings could have been interpreted as a major setback for Herbalife; instead, they were cast as a victory—a validation of its business model. Icahn issued a statement saying that Herbalife offered many people the chance to "start their own business," and that Ackman had been proved wrong. Icahn increased his ownership stake to thirty-five per cent. Herbalife continued to insist that its business was healthy, and that its future would be unaffected. Its stock price, in turn, continued to reflect a reality vastly different from the one the F.T.C. had described.

Herbalife's corporate headquarters occupy two stories of a building in downtown Los Angeles. The lobby is bright and airy, with expansive terrazzo floors that bring to mind a European airport. Glass cases display pills and powders; one wall is covered with framed portraits of Herbalife's Founder's Circle and Chairman's Club members, the highest-earning distributors. In these precincts, the official message is that everything is fine and

the settlement with the F.T.C. was the best thing that could have happened to the company.

"I'm an operating person," Michael Johnson, Herbalife's C.E.O., told me, sipping from a purple protein shake and surrounded by sports equipment and trophies. "I have pretty good financial chops. But I did not know about activist investors." Johnson is tan, square-jawed, and broad-shouldered. Like Ackman, he's a competitive athlete; he'll put in hours traversing a mountain range by road bike before showering and taking his place behind his desk in the morning. He recounted the battle with Ackman with a slight air of P.T.S.D.

After Ackman made his presentation at the AXA Equitable Center, Johnson said, Herbalife's top executives went into crisis mode. They divided into teams; one would continue running the business, while the other—including the chief financial officer, the legal and communications departments, and Johnson himself—formed a reaction unit. "That became, I don't want to say a holy war, but it became a process that engulfed some of us for a while," Johnson said. "We hired a ton of consultants. We were a full-employment act for every P.R. firm, law firm. We were spending a lot of money"—around eighty-five million dollars, Herbalife says. In 2014, the company brought in Alan Hoffman, Joe Biden's former deputy chief of staff, to help fight off Ackman. "It's horrible playing defense all the time, but with him we had to," Johnson went on. "Then we went on the offense a bit. We said, 'We need the world to see what Bill Ackman is all about.' We'll see if his act is as wonderful as he thinks he is." A thousand-page dossier on Ackman was prepared, containing allegations of market manipulation, and Herbalife sought to generate news stories that reflected its point of view.

The F.T.C. settlement places some onerous conditions on the company: in order to continue giving full commissions to its salespeople, it must prove, through documented receipts, that eighty per cent of its revenue comes from actual retail demand for its products. To qualify for commissions, individual distributors must show that sixty-six per cent of their sales comes from retail customers. Johnson says that the F.T.C. didn't understand how many consumers Herbalife had. At the same time, however, Herbalife executives maintain that they really didn't know who was buying the company's products before, and what their intentions were. Now, with the May deadline approaching, the company is rushing to implement technology that can track every sale, and is teaching its hundreds of thousands of distributors to use it, all in the hope of showing that people are buying Herbalife products for the right reasons.

Because the chair of the F.T.C. had stated that Herbalife needed to "start operating legitimately, making only truthful claims," the company hired a hundred and thirty people to comb through its distributors' social-media profiles, in order to remove pictures of their exotic cars and to curb exaggerated boasts about the money they were making. In January, Herbalife announced that two hundred thousand of its five hundred thousand U.S.-based distributors had agreed, in exchange for a twenty-five-dollar product coupon, to declare themselves to be Herbalife retail customers rather than distributors. (Previously, everyone in the network was known as a "distributor"; the company is now trying to distinguish between distributors and "members.") This, according to the company, is an indicator that its business is sound.

"We've had lies thrown at us, we've seen manipulations of the press, of

media, at local, state, and federal levels," Johnson said. "It's been, frankly, a multifaceted, multi-front attack on us." After the F.T.C. settlement, he agreed to step down as the company's C.E.O. in May, as the new rules go into effect, though he will stay on as executive chairman.

When I asked Johnson how he felt about all the people who had lost money trying to get rich through Herbalife, he hesitated. "I'm sorry that it happened," he said. "I'm sorry people lost money at a racetrack and at the lottery. Today's Herbalife is about hard work and energy. I can't go and fix anything in the past."

A central question for Ackman is whether the company could simply become smaller in the United States and make up its business in China and other countries where the F.T.C. order doesn't apply. "Herbalife is going to have to go from a D to a B-plus," Kevin Thompson, an attorney who works with multilevel-marketing companies, said. "Herbalife will have to change its culture. But I don't think it'll have to change its culture so much that it'll go out of business." There is always the possibility that the F.T.C.'s findings could translate internationally, though, which would be a blow to the company's prospects. Thompson added, "It boils down to: can Bill Ackman learn Chinese fast enough?"

A few months after the F.T.C. settlement, Christine Richard travelled to Las Cruces, New Mexico, a flat, dusty city of about a hundred thousand people, an hour's drive from El Paso. In 2012, she had compiled a report on the town, because it seemed to have a particularly dense concentration of Herbalife nutrition clubs relative to its population. Now she wanted to see if anything had changed. I accompanied her as she drove past block after block of pawnshops, bail bondsmen, used-car dealerships, and Mexican restaurants. I learned to recognize Herbalife clubs in the little strip malls. They typically had green curtains covering the windows, in keeping with company policy, because they were meant to be invitation-only; attracting foot traffic would make them retail stores. They had names like The Good Life Nutrition, Living Healthy Nutrition, and Triple Threat Nutrition. Richard was trying to track down the club owners whom she had met on her last visit, but they were hard to find. There were dozens of the clubs. A few were open and busy; many others appeared to be abandoned.

We wandered into one called The Nutrition HeadQuarters, next to a hair salon on a stretch of highway. A fit young man in jeans and a red T-shirt

was there by himself; his club consisted of a tiled floor and, in a corner, a bar with a blender and a sink. Herbalife posters hung on the wall, and country music was playing. In order to pursue his new business, he said, he had dropped out of New Mexico State University and quit his job at Sam's Club.

"I just fell in love with the Herbalife business opportunity," he told us.

In exchange for five dollars, he poured Richard some Herbalife aloe water, which was supposed to relieve indigestion. He said that he had taken over the club from someone who had left the business, and that he was there six days a week, trying to sell shakes and to recruit members.

When we asked him about the F.T.C. settlement, he said, "In my opinion, it's absolutely the best thing that could have happened to the company. To show the world that we are not a scam." He assured us that in five years he would have reached the company's President's Team level, where the average earnings are more than a hundred thousand dollars a year. In Michael Johnson's terms, these are the lottery winners. (According to Herbalife's own disclosures, the chance of a new recruit reaching this level is vanishingly small.) It was hard not to recall how Trump had pitched his version of Herbalife: "The Trump Network offers people the opportunity to achieve their American Dream."

Richard shook her head as we walked back to the car. "I wonder if he's living with his parents," she said.

She seemed to be wearying of the bleak task of exposing Herbalife's lures; occasionally, she worried about what she would be qualified to do after researching one company for one hedge fund for so many years. "Being a hedge-fund researcher is sort of like being a journalist, without all the camaraderie," she said.

Over enchiladas that evening, Richard told me about an experience she had had when she was a college student home for Christmas break. Her parents were then living in Allentown, Pennsylvania, around the time that Bethlehem Steel, the major employer in the area—and once the second-largest producer of steel in the United States—was spiralling into bankruptcy.

"Maybe my argument will make more sense if I run it through some of these sick effects pedals."

• •

Looking to earn some extra money, she responded to a newspaper ad for a part-time job well suited to students and stay-at-home moms. The interview was to be held at a community college, and when she arrived there was already a small crowd of people.

As she and the others were led into a classroom, Richard realized that it wasn't a job interview but some sort of sales seminar. A man came out and started spouting clichés about closing the deal, about having what it takes. He was there to introduce them to a multilevel-marketing outfit that sold Cutco knives. The man walked around the room, asking the attendees one-on-one questions: "Are these knives going to sell themselves? Is the answer 'Yes,' because they're so good, or 'No,' because they need a good salesman?" People started to become agitated. They had responded to the promise of a well-paying job, and here they were being pitched on a door-to-door sales gig. It became clear that they'd all have to buy at least one set of knives in order to start selling them. As the sense of unrest grew, Richard recalled, the man suddenly paused.

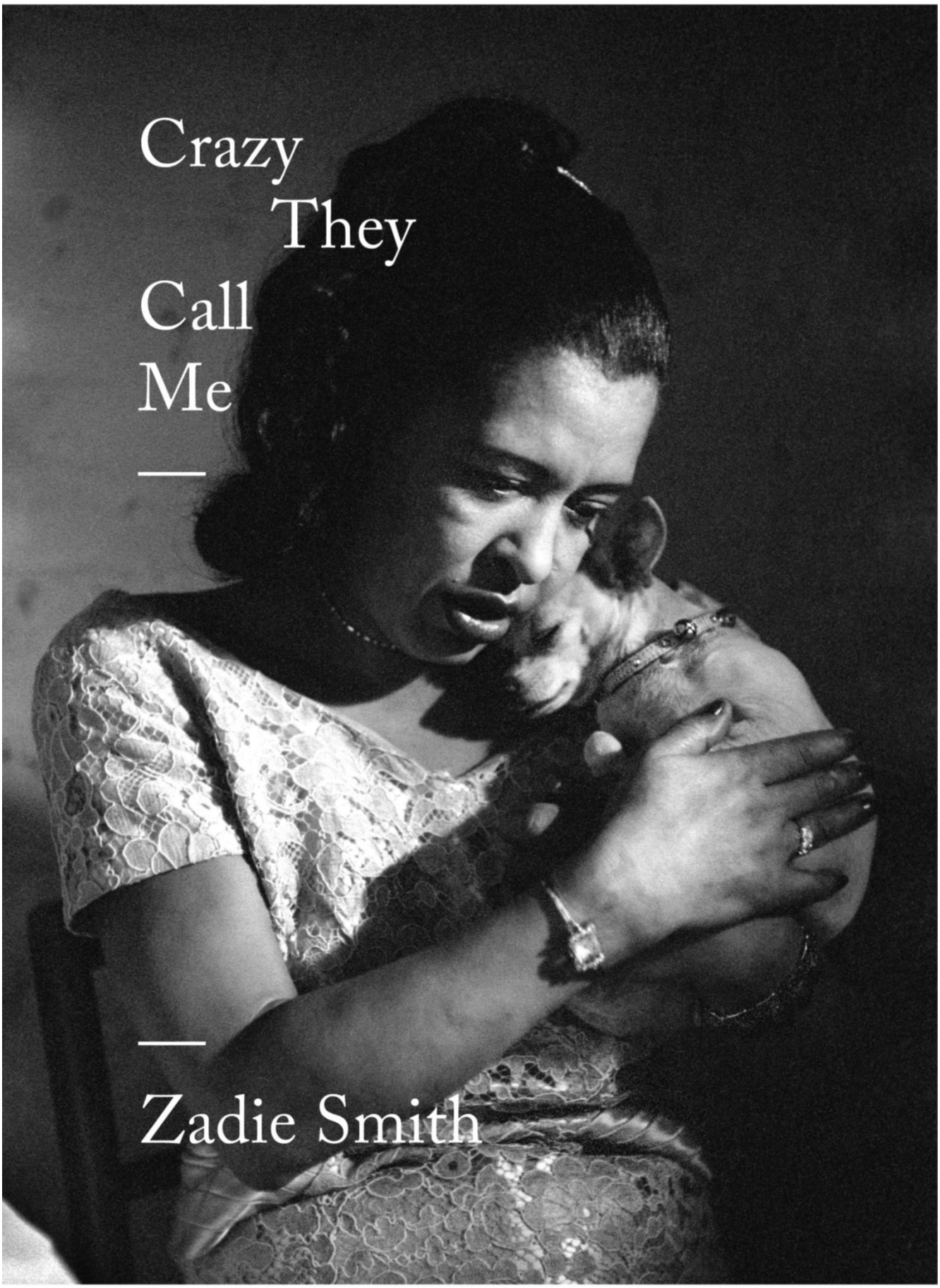
"Someone here has a negative attitude and doesn't belong here," he told the group darkly. He turned to Richard. "Christine, you need to leave."

She sensed her cheeks burning and her eyes welling up. Almost involuntarily, she found herself apologizing and begging to stay, to no avail. It was a clever tactic, she later reflected; everyone she left behind must have felt thankful that they got to stay.

This evening in Las Cruces, she saw a connection between that moment, when someone had tried to manipulate her desire to earn some money, and what she was doing now, trying to expose Herbalife, and disabuse all those recruits who believed that the company would grant them lives of financial security.

"You get so tired of stomping on people's dreams," Richard said. "I don't want to be the one stomping on people's dreams anymore." ♦

Crazy They Call Me



BILLIE HOLIDAY, 1957; PHOTOGRAPH: JERRY DANTZIC

Zadie Smith

Well, you certainly don't go out anyplace less than dressed, not these days. Can't let anybody mistake you for that broken, misused little girl: Eleanora Fagan. No. Let there be no confusion. Not in the audience or in your old man, in the maître d' or the floor manager, the cops or the goddam agents of the goddam I.R.S. You always have your fur, present and correct, hanging off your shoulders just so. *Take back your mink*, *take back your pearls*. But you don't sing that song, it's not in your key. Let some other girl sing it. The type who gets a smile from a cop even if she's crossing Broadway in her oldest Terylene housedress. You don't have that luxury. Besides, you love that mink! Makes the state of things clear. In fact—though many aren't hip to this yet—not only is there no more Eleanora, there isn't any Billie, either. There is only Lady Day. Alligator bag, three rows of diamonds nice and thick on your wrist—never mind that it's three o'clock in the afternoon. You boil an egg in twinset and pearls.

They got you holed up in Newark for the length of this engagement, and one day the wife of the super says to you, *So you can't play New York no more, huh? Who cares? To me, you always look like lady*. She's Italian. She gets it. No judgment. She says, *I look after you. I be your mother.* God bless her, but your daughter days are done. And if a few sweet, clueless bobby-soxers, happy as Sunday, stop you on 110th to tell you how much they loved you at Carnegie Hall, how much they loved you on "The Tonight Show," try your best not to look too bored, take out your pearl-encrusted cigarette box and hand them a smoke. Girl, you must give away twenty smokes a day. You give it all away, it streams from you, like rivers rolling to the sea: love, music, money, smokes. What you got, everybody wants—and most days you let 'em have it. Sometimes it's as much as you can do to keep ahold of your mink.

It's not that you don't like other women, exactly, it's only that you're wary. And they're wary of you right back. No surprise, really. Most of these girls live in a completely different world. You've visited that world on occasion, but it's not home. You're soon back on the road. Meanwhile they look at you and see that you're unattached—even when you're hitched—they see you're floating, that no one tells you when to leave the club, and there's nobody crying in a cot waiting for you to pick them up and sing a lullaby. No, nobody tells you who to see or where to go, and if they do, you don't have to listen, even when you get a sock to the jaw. Now, the women you tend to meet? They don't know what to do with that. They don't know what to do with the God-blessed child, with the girl that's got her own, who can stay up drinking with the clarinet player till the newspaper boys hit the corners. And maybe one of these broads is *married* to that clarinet player. And maybe the two of them have a baby and a picket fence and all that jazz. So naturally she's wary. You can understand that. Sure.

And you've always been—well, what's the right term for it? A man's lady? Men are drawn to you, all kinds of men, and not just for the obvious. Even your best girlfriends are men, if you see what I mean, yes, you've got your little gang of dear boys who aren't so very different from you, despite appearances: they got nobody steady to go home to, either. So if some lover man breaks your heart, or your face, you can trust in your little gang to be there for you, more often than not, trust them to come round to wherever you're at, with cigarettes and alcohol, and quote Miss Crawford, and quote Miss Stanwyck, and make highballs, and tell you that you really oughta get a dog. Honey, you should get a *dog*. They never doubt you're Lady Day—matter of fact, they knew you were She before you did.

You get a dog.

Women are wary, lover men come and go and mostly leave you waiting, and, truth be told, even those dear boys who make the highballs have their own thing going on, more often than not. But you're not afraid to look for love in all kinds of places. Once upon a time there was that wild girl Tallulah, plus a few other ladies, back in the day, but there was no way to be in the world like that, not back then—or no way you could see—and anyhow most of those ladies were crazier than a box of frogs. Nobody's perfect. Which is another way of saying there's no escape from this world. And so sometimes, on a Friday night, after the singing is over and the clapping dies down, there's simply no one and nothing to be done. You fall back on yourself. Backstage empties out, but they're still serving. You're not in the mood for conversation.

Later, you'll open your vanity case and take a trip on the light fantastic—but right at this moment you're grateful for your little dog. You did have a huge great dog, a while back, but she was always knocking glasses off the side tables, and then she went and died on you, so now you got this tiny little angel. Pepi. A dog don't cheat, a dog don't lie. Dogs remind you of you: they give everything they've got, they're wide open to the world. It's a big risk! There are people out there who'll kick a little half-pint dog like Pepi just for something to do. And you know how that feels. This little dog and you? Soul mates. Where you been all my life? He's like those dogs you read about, that sit on their master's grave for years and years and years. Recently, you had a preview of this. You were up in the stratosphere, with no body at all, floating, almost right there with God, you were hanging off the pearly gates, and nobody and nothing could make you come back. Some fool slapped you, some other fool sprayed seltzer in your face—nothing. Then this little angel of a dog licked you right in your eye socket and you came straight back to earth just to feel it, and three hours after that you were on a stage, getting paid. Dogs are too good for this world.

Maybe a lot of people wouldn't guess it but you can be the most wonderful aunt, godmother, nursemaid, when the mood takes you. You can spot a baby across a room and make it smile. That's a skill! Most people don't even try to develop it! People always telling these put-upon babies what to do, what to think, what to say, what to eat. But you don't ask anything at all from them—and that's

your secret. You're one of the few who just like to make a baby smile. And they love you for it, make no mistake, they adore you, and all things being equal you'd stay longer if you could, you'd stay and play, but you've got bills to pay.

Matter of fact, downstairs right this moment there's five or six of these business-minded fellows, some of them you know pretty well, some you don't, some you never saw before in your life, but they're all involved in your bills one way or another, and they say if you don't mind too much they'd like to escort you to the club. It's only ten blocks, but they'd like to walk you there. I guess somebody thinks you're not going to get there at all without these—now, what would you call them? *Chaperons.* Guess somebody's worried. But with or without your chaperons you'll get there, you always get there, and you're always on time, except during those exceptions when exceptional things seem to happen which simply can't be helped. Anyway, once you open your mouth all is forgiven. You even forgive yourself. Because you are exceptional, and so exceptions must be made. And isn't the point that whenever a lady turns up onstage she's always right on time?

Hair takes a while, face takes longer. It's all work, it's all a kind of armor. You got skinny a while back and some guys don't like it, one even told you that you got a face like an Egyptian death mask now. Well, good! You wear it, it's yours. Big red lips and now this new high ponytail bouncing around—the gardenias are done, the gardenias belonged to Billie—and if somebody asks you where exactly this new long twist of hair comes from you'll cut your eyes at whoever's doing the asking and say, *Well, I wear it so I guess it's mine.* It's my hair on my goddam head. It's arranged just so around my beautiful mask—take a good look! Because you know they're all looking right at it as you sing, you place it deliberately in the spotlight, your death mask, because you know they can't help but seek your soul in the face, it's their instinct to look for it there. You paint the face as protection. You draw the eyebrows, define the lips. It's the border between them and you. Otherwise, everybody in the place would think they had permission to leap right down your throat and eat your heart out.

People ask: what's it like standing up there? It's like eating your own heart out. It's like there's nobody out there in the dark at all. All the downtown collectors and the white ladies in their own fancy furs love to talk about your phrasing—it's the fashion to talk about your phrasing—but what sounds like a revolution to others is simple common sense to you. All respect to Ella, all respect to Sarah, but when those gals open their mouths to sing, well, to you it's like someone just opened a brand-new Frigidaire. A chill comes over you. And you just can't do it like that. Won't. It's obvious to you that a voice has the same work to do, musically speaking, as the sax or the trumpet or the piano. A voice has got to feel its way in. Who the hell doesn't know that? Yet somehow these people don't act like they know it, they always seem surprised. They sit in the dark, drinking Martinis, in their mink, in their tux. People are idiots. You wear pearls and you throw them before swine, more or less. Depends what pearls, though, and what swine. Not everybody, for example, is gonna get "Strange Fruit." Not every night. They've got to be deserving—a word that means a different thing depending on the night. You told somebody once, *I only do it for people who might understand and appreciate it. This is not a June-Moon-Croon-Tune. This song tells a story about pain and heartache.* Three hundred years of heartache! You got to turn each room you play into a kind of church in order to accommodate that much pain. Yet people shout their requests from their tables like you're a goddam jukebox. People are idiots. You never sing anything after "Strange Fruit," either. That's the last song no matter what and sometimes if you're high, and the front row look rich and stupid and dull, that's liable to be your only song. And they'll be thankful for it! Even though it's not easy for them to listen to and not easy for you to sing. When you sing it you have been described as punishing, you have been described as relentless. Well, you're not done with that song till you're done with it. You will never be done with it. It'll be done with you first.

In the end, people don't want to hear about dogs and babies and feeling your way into a phrase, or eating your heart out—people want to hear about you as you appear in these songs. They never want to know about the surprise you feel in yourself, the sense of being directed by God, when something in the modulation of your throat leaps up, like a kid reaching for a rising balloon, except most kids miss while you catch it—yes, you catch it almost without expecting to—landing on an incidental note, a perfect addition, one you never put in that phrase before, and never heard anyone else do, and yet you can hear at once that it is perfection. Perfection! It has the sound of something totally inevitable—it's better than Porter, it's better than Gershwin. In a moment you have written over their original versions finally and completely. . . .

No, they never ask you about that. They want the cold, hard facts. They ask dull questions about the songs, about which man goes with which song in your mind, and if they're a little more serious they might ask about Armstrong or Basie or Lester. If they're sneaky with no manners, they'll want to know if chasing the drink or the dragon made singing those songs harder or sweeter. They'll want to know about your runins with the federal government of these United States. They'll want to know if you hated or loved the people in your audience, the people who paid your wages, stole your wages, arrested you once for fraternizing with a white man, jailed you for hooking, jailed you for being, and raided your hospital room, right at the end, as you lay conversing with God. They are always very interested to hear that you don't read music. Once, you almost said—to a sneaky fellow from the *Daily News*, who was inquiring—you almost turned to him and said *Motherfucker I AM* music. But a lady does not speak like that, however, and so you did not. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Zadie Smith on Jerry Dantzic's photographs of Billie Holiday.

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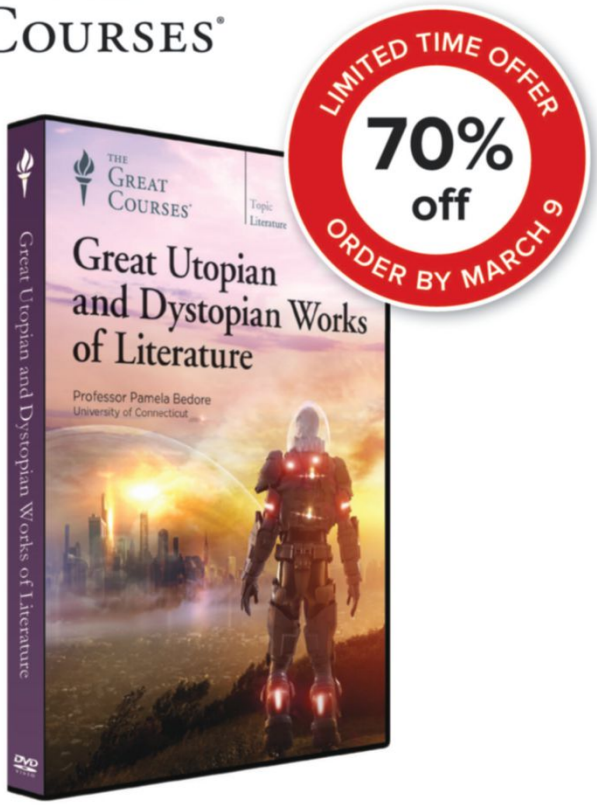

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BOOKS

THE ISLAND WITHIN

Chaos, control, and Elizabeth Bishop.

BY CLAUDIA ROTH PIERPONT

The first of Elizabeth Bishop's losses was her father, who died when she was eight months old. The second loss was more protracted: Bishop's mother, shattered by her husband's death, suffered a series of breakdowns. Sometimes loving in her behavior, sometimes violent, she went in and out of mental hospitals and was finally committed permanently, when Elizabeth was five. At the time, in the spring of 1916, the little girl was living with her mother's family in a tiny town in Nova Scotia, a comforting place where she had often stayed before. Like many uprooted children, she had vivid memories: the pictures on the pages of the family's Bible, the rhyme that her grandmother made when shining her shoes (using imaginary "gasoline" and "Vaseline"), and, when she was six, being taken away—"kidnapped," she felt—by her father's far more prosperous family, to live in their large and loveless house in Worcester, Massachusetts. It seemed then that she had lost a country, too. Although she was born in Worcester and had spent her earliest life there, and although her father had grown up in the same house, she did not feel at home, or even American: when she sang the required songs at school, the words "land where my fathers died" seemed aimed directly at her.

In later years, a psychiatrist told Bishop that she was lucky to have survived her childhood. In fact, soon after arriving in Worcester she developed both asthma and eczema sores, which became so severe that she was confined to bed. It was only when the family feared that she might truly be dying that she was bundled off again, this time to live with her aunt Maud—one of her mother's sisters—and Maud's husband, Uncle George, in a run-down harborside town outside Boston. The sea air was meant to do her good, and it did. Far more helpful, however, were the kind ministrations of Aunt Maud and another of her mother's sisters, Aunt Grace, a trained nurse who came to help coax her back to health. And when the asthma returned, causing her to miss weeks of school, her aunts read her the enthralling stories in verse of Tennyson, Longfellow, and the Brownings, which she absorbed so deeply that she believed they entered her unconscious. She started writing poetry when she was eight. At twelve, patriotically reconciled, she won her first authorial prize, for an essay on the subject of "Americanism."

This second chance at childhood made her so grateful to her aunts (or so afraid of further losses) that she never told them, or anyone, about how Uncle George touched her when he insisted on washing her in the bath, or how he tried to feel her breasts once she began to have breasts, or even about the time he grabbed her by the hair and dangled her from the second-story balcony. These wretched facts, revealed in Megan Marshall's new biography, "Elizabeth Bishop: A Miracle for Breakfast" (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), derive from a trove of letters, unknown to previous biographers, that Bishop wrote to her psychiatrist, in 1947. (Marshall explains that she discovered the letters in plain sight, in the Bishop archives at Vassar, where they were made available, after being locked away for decades, in 2009.) Bishop's bluntly objective chronicle of abuse—"Maybe lots of people have never known real sadists at first hand"—adds far more evidence than was needed to convince us that she was indeed lucky to survive.

Despite the book's often harrowing content, and Bishop's lifelong drive toward alcoholic self-obliteration, Marshall's account is lively and engaging, charged with vindicating energy. Another newly disclosed group of letters, from the same source, documents a passionate love affair that Bishop began when she was nearing sixty, with a much younger woman, a relationship that lasted until the poet's death, at sixty-eight, in 1979. (Bishop's homosexuality was a carefully kept secret in her lifetime.) Marshall, an aspiring poet in her youth, writes from a deep sense of identity with her subject: she studied with Bishop at Harvard, in 1976, and her biographical chapters are interspersed with pages of her own memoir, also centered on family, poetry, and loss. It's an odd but compelling structure, as the reader watches the two women's lives converge, and it allows for some closeup glimpses of Bishop as a teacher. Marshall seems still sensitive to having given up poetry, the one great thing that Bishop, for all her losses, never let go. There's an emotional undertow even in Marshall's treatment of poetic forms (the sestina, for example, of Bishop's early poem "A Miracle for Breakfast," or Marshall's student attempt at the mad complexities of Catullan hendecasyllabics) and in her unwavering reverence for the magic that form cannot explain. The book is ultimately about how words ordered on a page may supply some order for one's life, may assuage and even redeem tragedy.

Because Bishop didn't just survive. By the time Marshall entered her class, she had won a Pulitzer Prize, a National

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"When you write my epitaph, you must say I was the loneliest person who ever lived," Bishop said to Robert Lowell.

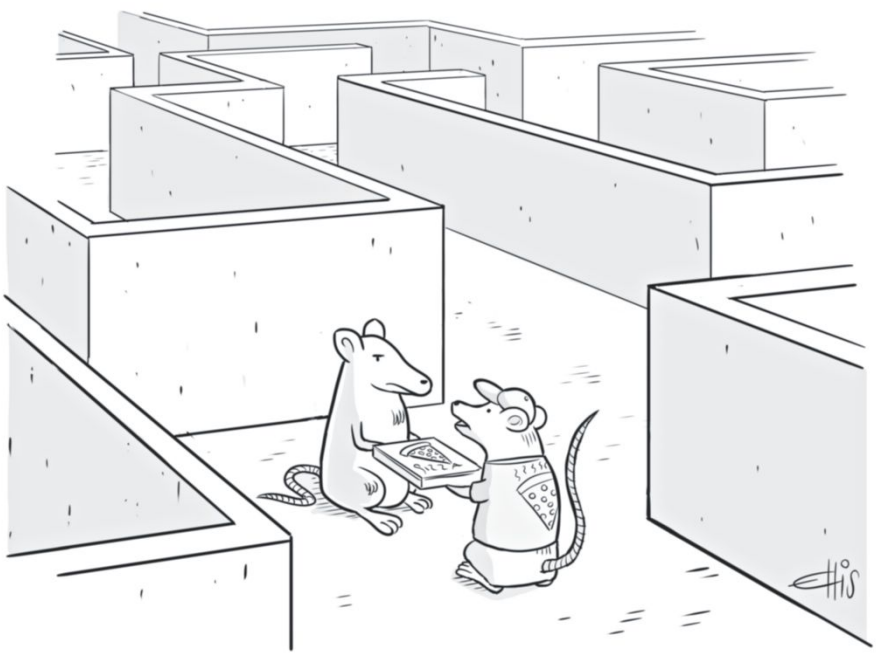
Book Award, and an award from the government of Brazil, where she lived for many years. She'd been the subject of a brief biography; Ned Rorem and Elliott Carter had set her poems to music. But the Bishop phenomenon had barely begun. In 1983, the revelation of Bishop's sexual identity prompted Adrienne Rich, our leading feminist poet, to discern qualities of "outsiderhood" and "marginality" throughout the poems; Bishop's work now appeared to be not merely good but "remarkably honest and courageous," and Bishop herself became a contemporary heroine. In the decades since, her relatively small body of work—some hundred published poems, a dozen stories—has been greatly outweighed by volumes of letters, previously unpublished poems and drafts of poems, biography, and criticism. In 2008, she became the first female poet to be published by the Library of America. She even made it onto a U.S. postage stamp, in 2012. As Marshall points out, an Internet search under her name today yields millions of results, ranging from "Elizabeth Bishop Society of Nova Scotia" to "Popular Lesbian and Bisexual Poets."

She would have been appalled. Except perhaps for her mentor, Marianne Moore, it is hard to name a poet whose work so thoroughly disinvites private scrutiny. Admirers of Bishop's early work—Moore, Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell—praised its cool objectivity, its calm impersonality, what Moore described as its "rational considering quality" (hardly the usual praise for poetry), its "deferences and vigilances." What the young poet deferred to was poetic form and an increasingly old-fashioned sense of manners and discretion. She was vigilant in giving nothing of herself away.

"I HADN'T KNOWN POETRY could be like that," Bishop wrote of her first encounter with Moore's work. Bishop was a literary star at the élite girls' boarding school where she was sent, at sixteen, courtesy of her father's family, and maintained a similar status when she got to Vassar. She was a class behind her equally ambitious friend Mary McCarthy. When the stodgy Vassar literary magazine wouldn't accept their writing, the two young women joined with friends to form a magazine of their own. As the campus poet, Bishop was chosen to interview T. S. Eliot when he came through during her junior year, in 1933. Her own poems at the time tended toward imitations of Gerard Manley Hopkins or of the English Baroque: elaborate, archaic in tone, willfully artificial. Discovering Moore, the following year, changed everything. Here was a poetry resolutely modern and hard-edged yet meticulously structured and linguistically glittering. Perhaps most important, here was a rich new variety of subjects: in place of romantic love or God or childhood, Moore offered poems about animals—snakes, chameleons, a big-eared desert rat—and exotic objects ("An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish"); she even had one about a gritty American coastal town, like the town where Bishop had lived with her aunts. Strong yet mysterious, set in the immediate world, these poems demonstrated a way to proceed. Bishop had no religious beliefs; she couldn't bear to contemplate her childhood; she couldn't reveal anything about whom she loved. For all her determination to be a poet, what was she to write poetry about?

Thanks to a good word from the Vassar librarian, Moore agreed to meet her young admirer at a bench outside the main reading room of the New York Public Library, in April, 1934. Moore, at forty-six, was not yet famous, but she was esteemed among poets. She was then being courted by Eliot, who, as editor at Faber & Faber, wanted to bring out a British edition of her poems; Ezra Pound had written to implore her (she was characteristically filled with reservations) to "LET HIM DO IT." Prim and erect in a blue tweed suit, she wore her hair in a braid wound around her head, a style that she had not changed since her student years at Bryn Mawr. The contrast between Moore's radical poetry and her old-fashioned demeanor was always a surprise. In fact, the fearless modernist still lived with her mother, in a small apartment in Brooklyn, in a relation that had the appearance of deep filial devotion. Only the closest observers understood that Moore was permitted virtually no freedom and no privacy. Linda Leavell's biography of Moore, published in 2013, reveals that the two women even shared a bed, and that the relation more accurately resembled psychic subjugation.

Bishop, with her round, cherubic face and mop of curly hair, looked even younger than her twenty-three years, but she was fully as proper as Moore, in white gloves and pearl earrings. She arrived early, but Moore was earlier. They talked about Hopkins's poetry, among other things, and it's hard to say which of them came away more impressed, or more in need of what the other had to give. Bishop later recalled that she loved Moore immediately. Moore began enthusiastically recommending Bishop's poetry to



"Sorry I'm late. It took me forever to find this place."

editors, including Pound, before the acutely shy young poet had allowed her to read a word of it. By the time Bishop started showing Moore her work, the following year—by the time they had become friends, going to the movies together, and the circus—the poems were starting to resemble everything that Moore had said they were.

Did they ever speak about mothers, families, their inner lives? Bishop's mother died a month after she met Moore, in the institution where she had been confined since 1916; Bishop had not seen her in all the intervening years. She had frequent crying jags that spring, usually fuelled by alcohol: this was the year she began to drink in earnest. Beyond the shock of the death, she was frightened that her mother's illness was hereditary, and she was also suffering from a blossoming love for an unresponsive Vassar beauty. There was apparently nothing Bishop felt she could say about any of this to the abstemious, morally upright Moore, although she might have found more sympathy than she expected.

Or, at least, more experience. Moore never met her father, who was confined to a mental institution before she was born. Her puritanical mother had lived in a lesbian relationship (who would have thought it?) from the time that Marianne was twelve. It was when her mother's lover deserted her that Marianne, age twenty-three and thrilled with being on her own, with a job and friends—"I am spending a wild life, wild and glorious"—was summoned home to heal the wounds. Like Bishop, she used poetry to survive. But these two profoundly afflicted and original women never ventured past the white-gloved propriety of their sustaining myths; it was four years before they were on a mutual first-name basis. Even so, the bond was exhilarating. Moore had found not only a friend of her own rare mental calibre but an adventurous young soul who brought light and air into her cloistered world. Bishop later pictured Moore's double-initial "M" as standing not only for "manners" and "morals" but for "mother." Of course, such intimate feelings went unsaid. But perhaps the silence gave each woman what she wanted most: a poetry whose surface composure—as hard won as her own surface composure—glimmered with the depths of what she dared not say.

"The Map" is the first poem that Bishop wrote in her own, recognizable voice, as she well knew: she placed it at the start of her first published book, "North & South," in 1946, and, twenty-three years later, in the same position in "The Complete Poems." The subject appears to be exactly what the title claims: a map, specifically of northern regions ("The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still"), described with the flatness and stillness of the two-dimensional shapes themselves, as though the poet were becalmed by focussing on them.

It may have been just such a calming exercise that Bishop set herself when she wrote the poem, sick and alone, on New Year's Eve of 1935. She was living in New York by then, a logical post-college move, although she'd been drawn chiefly by the presence of Margaret Miller, the Vassar beauty she still hopelessly loved. In fact, she was having Christmas dinner with Margaret and her mother when she had to flee because of an asthma attack; flu compounded her miseries, leaving her bed-bound. Maps had been used by Moore to great effect. Her long poem "An Octopus" is about the eight-armed glacier system that Mt. Rainier presents on a map—more than two hundred lines of minute description and fearsome intellectual vigor. Bishop's poem (a mere twenty-seven lines) is modest, gentle, and filled with questions ("Is the land tugging at the sea from under?") about the meaning of what she sees. For a moment, pondering how printed names overrun the places they identify, the poem offers a hint of unlikely emotion:

> The names of seashore towns run out to sea,
> the names of cities cross the neighboring
> mountains
> —the printer here experiencing the same
> excitement
> as when emotion too far exceeds its cause.
> These peninsulas take the water between
> thumb and finger
> Like women feeling for the smoothness of
> yard-goods.

But what is the printer's excitement to us, or to the author of this determinedly unemotional poem? For some readers, there was no meaning to Bishop's exercise. Adrienne Rich admitted that she found this poem (like other early works by Bishop) "impenetrable: intellectualized to the point of obliquity." Another estimable critic, William H. Pritchard, finds the poet's questions simply annoying. ("Oh, *you* decide, *I* really don't care.") Megan Marshall views the childlike questions and the northern setting biographically, and imagines an immense unspoken question—"Will my mother come back?"—hidden beneath the rest. But this question does nothing to unlock the poem: it is hard to imagine any emotion about Bishop's mother exceeding its cause. Bishop's previous biographer, Brett C. Millier, more convincingly links these lines to thoughts that Bishop confided to her notebook a few months earlier, while suffering over Margaret Miller: "Name it friendship if you want to—like names of cities printed on maps, the word is much too big, it spreads all over the place, and tells nothing of the actual *place* it means to name."

"Friendship" is the overspilling word that Bishop used, perforce, for the love she felt for Margaret, and the word she used (out loud, at least) for the subsequent women in her life. Her asthma-inducing emotion may well have exceeded its cause at Christmas dinner, and found its way into the poem. The lines are filled with feminine imagery (those peninsulas) and a subdued sensuality—the bays within the peninsulas can be stroked, "as if they were expected to blossom"—which exert some subliminal counterforce against the poem's insistently neutral tone, even if the force never quite breaks through. Of course, any such biographical explanation is a cheat: the reader cannot be expected to supply these facts; the poem means what it means, on its own. Bishop's withholding is less a matter of Moore-like modernist obliquity, however, than of the guarded reticence that was her legacy and her means of control. The result, in her poetry, is a mysteriously muted ever-presence that Mary McCarthy—another orphaned, abused child—saw most clearly, and most beautifully, as "the mind hiding in her words, like an 'I' counting up to a hundred waiting to be found."

Bishop began to travel restlessly—France, Morocco, Spain—at about the time she began to publish, in the mid-thirties. She had no real home, after all. At school, she had always hated holidays, getting through in an empty dormitory or as a friend's appendage or

sometimes just staying in a cheap Boston hotel. Her father's estate provided enough money so that she didn't need to work, and the Vassar classmate who *did* respond to her feelings, Louise Crane, was seriously rich. (The Crane family made paper, including the paper used in dollar bills.) Bishop was attractive to both women and men, sometimes too much so for her own good. In 1935, she turned down a marriage proposal from a young man she had strung along (just in case?) since college. He committed suicide the following year, and a postcard he'd sent her arrived a few days later, inscribed "Elizabeth, Go to hell."

Louise whisked her off to Florida to recover, and she soon discovered Key West. Still a sleepy backwater of an island, it became her regular haven for nearly a decade, long outlasting the relationship with Louise. Bishop was deeply drawn to islands—places where she felt isolated, solitary, safe. Although she continued to spend time in New York, she hated the city's pressures. Even having lunch with people from *Partisan Review* (including McCarthy) gave her nightmares. She wrote very slowly, often working on a poem for years, and increasing requests for publication only made her aware of how little she had done. Her finest works of the late thirties were two Kafka-like stories that seem to reflect her emotional state: "The Sea & Its Shore," in which a man toils to keep a public beach free of ever-accumulating papers, working every night, by lantern light, and trying to make sense of the scraps he finds; and "In Prison," a condition that the narrator anticipates with relief.

Bishop managed to keep travelling during the war years—in Mexico, she got to know Pablo Neruda—but her health was poor, and after 1942 she wrote almost nothing. By the time she began regularly seeing a psychiatrist, in 1946, when she was thirty-five, her low literary production seemed to her a problem comparable with her drinking, her disabling shyness, and the asthma that medical science was identifying as psychosomatic. It's no surprise that Marianne Moore disapproved of psychiatry; Bishop had quit an earlier attempt at treatment, under Moore's counsel, after only a few sessions. But she was desperate now, and had also learned to assert some independence after Moore and her mother largely rewrote a poem that Bishop had sent to Moore (and not her mother) for her thoughts. The high-handed mother-daughter team had regularized the deliberately jagged rhyme scheme, omitted terms they found offensive (including "water closet"), and even changed the title from "Roosters"—Bishop's derogatory term for men who propagate war—to "The Cock," a classical usage in which the decorous ladies saw no possible misreadings. Bishop politely declined almost all the changes, and was vindicated when "Roosters" was singled out in reviews of "North & South." Reactions to the book itself were mixed, but the most influential voices were highly favorable. Moore, wholly ungrudging, wrote a keen appraisal in *The Nation*, and Randall Jarrell, the most brilliant critic of the time, set the tone for future evaluations with his praise of Bishop's "restraint, calm, and proportion," just as she was entering a period when she seemed to be trying to drink herself to death.

Jarrell gave Bishop another important gift when, in January, 1947, he introduced her to Robert Lowell. Tall, handsomely tousled, and six years Bishop's junior, Lowell charmed her as no one had since she'd met Moore. Indeed, he soon replaced Moore as her most valued friend, even though his first commercial book, "Lord Weary's Castle," also published in 1946, beat out "North & South" for the Pulitzer Prize. Throughout their lives, his work was far more celebrated than hers. Yet any competitiveness was softened by his devotion to her writing, by his eagerness (and ability) to help her in material ways—grants, jobs, reviews—and by an aura of romance, which he perpetuated (Lowell gave pretty much everything an aura of romance) and she indulged. Two years after they met, he nearly proposed; he remembered later that she told him, "When you write my epitaph, you must say I was the loneliest person who ever lived."

She had given up seeing the psychiatrist by then, after little more than a year, whether because she believed that she was sufficiently healed or that she never would be healed is impossible to say. In May, 1949, her alcohol consumption out of control, she checked into a Connecticut psychiatric hospital for a two-month stay. Depression, alcoholism, asthma, writer's block: nothing seemed to alleviate her problems, not a prestigious job as poetry consultant at the Library of Congress (arranged by Lowell), not lengthy stays at the writers' colony Yaddo. ("At Yaddo," she complained, "one must *produce*.") She was running out of possibilities when, in the fall of 1951, she decided on a "crazy trip" and took a freighter to Brazil.

She'd meant to travel on through South America. But, stopping in Rio to see a couple of women she had met in New York, she discovered one of them to be the love of her life. Maria Carlota Costellat de Macedo Soares, known as Lota, was a wealthy landowner, an art collector, and a woman of such inordinate confidence and strength that she was directing the construction of a sleek new glass-and-steel house for herself in the mountains outside Rio. She had no doubt that she could heal the troubled poet who had turned up at her door, and she soon added a gleaming studio for Bishop behind the house—"way up in the air," Bishop noted with pleasure, as she settled in. It was not quite happily ever after: the asthma got worse before it got better, the drinking abated but did not stop. Yet, if the poems came as slowly as ever, the silences were not as punishing. Bishop had found a home, at last, and, fifty miles inland, her perfect island: lushly beautiful, isolating—although she eventually translated both prose and poetry from Portuguese, she never really learned to speak it—and exactly the liberating prison she had wanted. She began almost at once to write stories drawn from long-forbidden childhood memories. The best of these, "In the Village," tells of a fragile woman's mental collapse, as seen (and overheard) by her little girl, who confuses "mourning" with "morning" and is haunted for the rest of her life by her mother's scream. Even in Brazil, though, in perfect safety, Bishop couldn't finish a story she began about her later childhood, outside Boston, a story that would have had to include Uncle George.

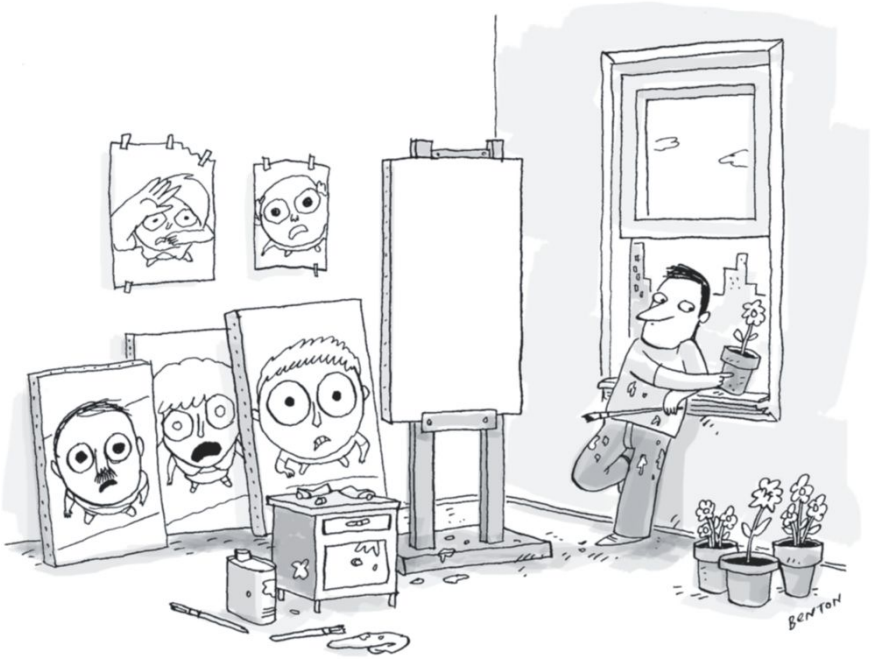
It was years before she was able to write about her new home. There is nothing about Brazil in her second book, "A Cold Spring," published in 1955, unless

one accepts a glancing little poem of unusual warmth, titled "The Shampoo," which begins with lichens growing slowly, promises such measureless time to a "dear friend," and concludes:

> The shooting stars in your black hair
> in bright formation
> are flocking where,
> so straight, so soon?
> —Come, let me wash it in this big tin basin,
> battered and shiny like the moon.

The fact that the black hair was Lota's—her grays, the shooting stars—has led biographically informed critics to greet "The Shampoo" as a tender celebration of love between two women, although the poem contains no reference to gender. The fact that both *The New Yorker* and *Poetry* rejected the poem, after accepting virtually everything Bishop had submitted for years, is suggested, by Marshall, as proof that its meaning was understood even at the time. When Bishop sent the poem to Moore, she received no response, a lapse that Bishop excused by noting, in a letter to another poet friend, the openly lesbian May Swenson, "I'm afraid she can never face the tender passion."

The poems about Brazil that finally started appearing, in the late fifties, have raised charges of condescension toward the people Bishop treats as characters. "Manuelzhino," for example, is a fond but exasperated complaint, in a landowner's voice, about an inept gardener—"half squatter, half tenant (no rent)"—who genially fails at every assigned task. The speaker is fully aware of the inequities between master and servant ("the steep paths you have made—or your father and grandfather made—all over my property") but also fully enjoys the system's benefits. Marshall makes a strenuous case for Bishop's social enlightenment, and argues that, while Bishop indeed lived a life of privilege in Brazil, she was nevertheless "an outsider, a dependent whose trust fund met only basic expenses"—a rationale that may make one queasier than anything in the poems. There are a few startlingly ugly statements in another letter that Bishop wrote to Swenson (quoted in Millier's biography but not by Marshall, nor is it included among the published "Letters"), concerning "backward people who are incapable of any of the more highly refined emotions." On the other hand,



there is the piercing empathy of a poem titled simply "Squatter's Children." For Bishop, Brazil was above all a sanctuary, a place to breathe and to write. The finest poem she set there, a multipage elaboration of an Amazonian folk tale, "The Riverman," has the Yeatsian radiance of a land beyond human discourse.

By the time she collected these poems into a book—"Questions of Travel," published in 1965—her life in Brazil was essentially over. The descent began when Lota's skill at managing construction was noticed by a politically minded neighbor who went on to become the state governor, and hired her to build an enormous park on a stretch of landfill along Rio's Guanabara Bay. Through the early sixties, the complex project came to possess her; she spent all her time in Rio, working, increasingly nerve-racked and depleted, and didn't notice, at first, when Bishop started drinking heavily again, or stopped writing, or took a lover in a distant, quiet town (an act that Bishop described as finding "a mother-figure and a refuge"). In early 1966, Bishop escaped for a few months to a teaching job in Seattle, where, amused by the genteel Lady Poet treatment she received, she began an affair with the pregnant twenty-three-year-old wife of a local artist, a young woman named Roxanne Cumming, apparently less than fully stable herself. The relationship continued by letter, which was how Lota discovered it, once Bishop returned to Brazil. Bishop was almost literally suffocating by then, experiencing her worst asthma attacks since childhood. But it was Lota, suddenly ousted from her job through political changes, and madly jealous, who broke down. Hospitalized, she became hysterical whenever Bishop entered her room. Even after her release, the doctor ordered Bishop to stay away, but Lota persuaded him to change his mind and the women were reunited—with Lota now the sick, fearful, and dependent one.

When Lota broke down again, the following summer, Bishop fled to New York. She was giving her time to recover; the doctor said that it would take months. So Bishop was wary when, just a few weeks later, in September, 1967, Lota claimed to be well enough to visit. Bishop picked her up at the airport, they had dinner together, and, exhausted, they went to sleep; in the early hours, Bishop awoke to find that Lota had taken an overdose of sedatives. She died in St. Vincent's Hospital the following week. Bishop, consumed with guilt and blamed by Lota's friends in Brazil, insisted that there had been no harsh words between them: Lota had simply been too sick to make the trip. And although Bishop moved in with Roxanne (and her eighteen-month-old son) just after Christmas—a disastrous

relationship that lasted roughly two more years—she found that she missed and loved Lota more as time went on.

On the unnamed island, overhung with all the hemisphere's leftover clouds—"a sort of cloud-dump," in Bishop's phrase—Robinson Crusoe had nightmares of countless other islands, and feared that, eventually, he would have to live on every one. Bishop started writing a poem about Crusoe in the mid-sixties; she took it up again three years after Lota's death. ("I seem to be working again at last, after three years," she wrote to *The New Yorker's* poetry editor, Howard Moss.) The poem takes the form of a monologue by Crusoe, long after his rescue from the island and the death of "my dear Friday." It is the account of a man grown old, looking back at a time marked by harsh solitude and anguish, but also by energy, invention, and an intense and irretrievable sense of meaning: even the knife he used for daily tasks "reeked of meaning, like a crucifix." Bishop's Crusoe, unlike Defoe's, managed to brew alcohol from island berries—Bishop's little joke on herself—and struggled to remember lines from books far out of reach. Now, back at home (if he is truly "home": Bishop changed the title from "Crusoe at Home" to "Crusoe in England"), he drinks real tea and can look things up. But he lives "surrounded by uninteresting lumber." The precious knife is just another thing. Of course, in England he is still living on an island, although it doesn't seem like one—"but who decides?"

The year Bishop began writing again, 1970, was also the year she began to teach at Harvard. The prestigious and much needed job had come to her through Lowell, now Harvard's star poet-teacher and still looking out for her after nearly twenty-five years, although they'd spent hardly any of that time together. (Their published correspondence runs to some eight hundred pages.) She was the first woman to teach an advanced writing course at the university—it probably would have taken longer, without Lowell's interference—but on any terms she was not the obvious choice, since her work was now entirely out of fashion. These were the glory days of "confessional" poetry, and, ironically, the most glorified of the self-confessors was Lowell, who displayed no qualms about making poetic use of his marital problems, or his stay (one of many) in a mental hospital, or even other people's private letters. That year, he had quoted a particularly anguished letter of Bishop's, in a series of poems dedicated to her, compounding the offense by making her identity impossible to ignore.

It seems unlikely that she would have forgiven anyone else. She never quite forgave Mary McCarthy for her portrait of a lesbian member of their old Vassar circle in her scandalizing novel "The Group." The character looks nothing like Bishop, but the notably butch partner she brings back from Europe—"This woman was her man," the other girls realize, with shock—was a dead ringer for Lota de Macedo Soares, whom McCarthy had met once in New York. Lowell, however, was exempt even from Bishop's outrage over the dominating School of Anguish, as she scornfully called the poets—Anne Sexton, John Berryman—who had learned from his example. (An even more telling term she used was "the self-pitiers.") In an interview for a *Time* cover story on Lowell, in 1967, she was careful to implicate only his imitators when she said, "You just wish they'd keep some of these things to themselves."

On campus, she cut an almost exaggeratedly modest figure. At a time when Sexton was giving readings accompanied by a rock band, Bishop was assigning her class exercises in iambic pentameter. She was fifty-nine when she arrived, and remained until she was sixty-six; her students often described her as looking like someone's aunt or grandmother. (This was the only sort of comment, she admitted, that brought her "feminist facet uppermost.") The poems she wrote in these years were no less modest than her demeanor, and no less deceptive. The missing word in a Wordsworth line that Crusoe, on his island, struggles to remember, is "solitude"; some things cannot be faced head on.

In "The Moose," completed (after some twenty-five years of work) in 1972, madness and illness and dark family secrets are the murmured stuff of conversations on a long country bus ride, at night, until the passengers are jolted by the emergence, from a nearby wood, of a towering, gentle, otherworldly moose. Despite the passengers' lack of anything remotely resembling expressive language ("Sure are big creatures." / "It's awful plain"), they are overcome with joy, lifted from their narrow selves for a luminous moment, before the bus rolls on. Bishop, who complained of the "egocentricity" of a confessional poet like Sexton, found deliverance in gazing steadily outward. Her later poems are filled with a quiet, tentative gratitude—like the passengers looking at the moose, hushed in wonder at the things that save them from themselves.

Bishop was writing the finest poems of her life, one after the next. Not quickly, to be sure. Her final book, "Geography III," published in 1976, contained just nine new poems (and one translation), written over ten difficult years. The book was dedicated to Alice Methfessel, the attractive blond administrative assistant for Harvard's Kirkland House, who was just twenty-seven when, in the fall of 1970, she helped Bishop adjust to university life. During the next few years, the women behaved with utter discretion. And, given Bishop's increasing infirmities—the old asthma (aggravated by smoking), the new rheumatism, recurrent dysentery, the occasional broken bone due to a drunken fall—the young woman could easily have passed for her caretaker. But their community of students and poets soon understood that the two were lovers. Marshall heard the gossip during her Harvard years; Millier's biography, published in 1993, makes the outlines of the relationship clear. But it's something else to read the newly unearthed, intensely ardent letters that Bishop wrote to her last love, the young woman she was bound to lose, as she imagined her going off to ski or swim or make love with some young man—"I hope I die first"—which is more or less what seemed to be happening in the fall of 1975.

By October, Alice had delivered the news, and his name was Peter. Bishop went to Florida in December (Alice drove her to the airport) and in mid-January took an overdose of pills with alcohol. Discovered by neighbors, she survived. Being Elizabeth Bishop, she apologized, aghast at having almost caused the kind of pain she'd always known. Poetry had failed her this time. She'd fought to master the loss, writing seventeen quickly successive drafts of an exactingly structured villanelle, a form with origins in the French Baroque. The result is her most famous poem, a mixture of a higher Dorothy Parker with (in the commanding

aside to herself, as she struggles to write) Gerard Manley Hopkins, the neat summing up of a life, titled "One Art":

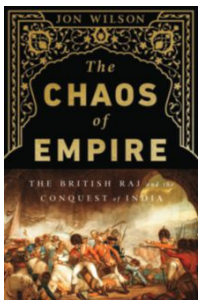
> The art of losing isn't hard to master;
> So many things seem filled with the intent
> To be lost that their loss is no disaster.
>
> Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
> of lost door keys, the hour badly spent,
> The art of losing isn't hard to master.
>
> Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
> places, and names, and where it was you meant
> to travel. None of these will bring disaster.
>
> I lost my mother's watch. And look! My
> last, or
> next-to-last, of three loved houses went,
> The art of losing isn't hard to master.
>
> I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
> some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
> I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.
>
> Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
> I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
> the art of losing's not too hard to master
> though it may look like (*Write* it!) like
> disaster.

A fixed form of nineteen lines: five tercets, a concluding quatrain, and a rhyme scheme tight enough to keep any feeling from spilling over the borders. A triumph of control, understatement, wit. Even of self-mockery, in the poetically pushed rhyme word "vaster," and the ladylike, pinkies-up "shan't." An exceedingly rare mention of her mother—as a woman who once owned a watch. A continent standing in for losses larger than itself.

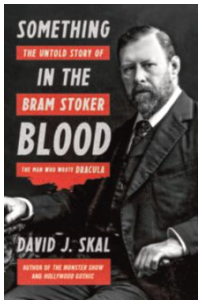
But it wasn't a disaster, after all. Alice returned at winter's end, and remained with Bishop until she died, of a brain aneurysm, a year and a half later. "One Art" was finished in time to be included in "Geography III," and Bishop seemed to enjoy "all the fuss" about her "very thin book," even if she claimed that she didn't. There were few completed poems after that, but many letters in which she reported on the pleasures of having survived yet again: the pleasure of teaching good students, of eating Boston spumoni, of snubbing Mary McCarthy. Most of all, there were the pleasures of being with Alice, during summers on North Haven, Maine—her last island—and of travelling, restless as ever, from place to place. Driving through what she called "the wilder sections of Maine," the summer before she died, she and Alice saw "TWO moose," she wrote, beside a deserted road. One of them, standing behind a tree, thinking that it could not be seen, was looking back at her. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

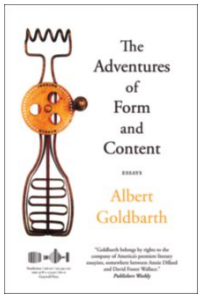
Lara, *by Anna Pasternak (Ecco)*. This history explores the affair between the author's uncle Boris Pasternak and Olga Ivinskaya, the inspiration for the character of Lara in his novel "Doctor Zhivago." It's a largely unknown story: the author says that her family "repressed" it for a long time, because Pasternak had a wife, whom he didn't like but wouldn't leave, just as he wouldn't leave Soviet Russia, despite fearing for his life. His somewhat baffling sense of loyalty was mirrored by Ivinskaya's; she received punishments that Stalin was loath to dole out to Pasternak, doing two stints in the Gulag. The author confesses to being "frustrated" on Ivinskaya's account: had Pasternak married her, he might have prevented her incarceration. By the end of this riveting, tragic tale, it's hard not to share the sentiment.



The Chaos of Empire, *by Jon Wilson (Public Affairs)*. This sweeping history of British colonial India rejects nostalgic portrayals of pomp and ceremony, arguing that the imperialists never stopped feeling vulnerable—hence their vengeful violence in the face of dissent. This almost psychoanalytic approach underplays complex power dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized. But the book has memorable accounts of how railways and canals reshaped, and often deformed, Indian landscapes and social norms, and of the acquiescence, collaboration, or resistance of local élites. Stories of colonial tax collectors and judges in small towns scattered throughout India are also moving. Their lives were lonely, and their children's graves carry inscriptions that suggest "distance and failure."



Something in the Blood, *by David J. Skal (Liveright)*. This biography of Bram Stoker, the author of "Dracula," gives his life a context in the social developments of the time. Born in Dublin, he suffered a mysterious paralysis as a boy but grew up to be athletic. His writing took him into the orbit of men like Oscar Wilde, Walt Whitman, and Hall Caine, who influenced both his work and his struggle with homosexuality. In the background was London—a city of disease and murders, and perfect material for a mind inclined toward the gothic. Skal draws on vast research but admits that Stoker is elusive. Studying everything around him is the closest we can get to understanding him and his iconic tale.



The Adventures of Form and Content, *by Albert Goldbarth (Graywolf)*. "We are compounded of halves," Goldbarth writes, in this inventive essay collection crowded with doubles—"different stories" that "share a spine." The life of Clyde Tombaugh, the discoverer of Pluto, echoes that of John Keats; an ancient handprint in the Chauvet caves mirrors the final gesture of a dying friend of the author's. Trying to understand our divided natures and the fusion of form and content in perfect works of art, Goldbarth covers subjects as varied as Catullus, science fiction, and the life of a professional escort. Formally, too, the book unites the "inescapable halves of a single being": it's a *tête-bêche*, two books printed as one, with two front covers, two beginnings, and two ends.

THE THEATRE

GOD ONLY KNOWS

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins takes on "Everyman."

BY HILTON ALS

A few years ago, I told a journalist who was writing about the now thirty-two-year-old playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins that I thought he should write a play about love—that which cannot be explained. One of the more cerebral dramatists of his generation, the Obie Award-winning Jacobs-Jenkins delivered his first pieces on a sharp, powerful ray of thought, but it sometimes happened that his characters couldn't get out of the way of their own thinking. Or not their thinking, exactly, but their attempts to disrupt the received ideas about any number of things, including race and what constitutes a society.

In his first full-length play, "Neighbors" (2010), Jacobs-Jenkins set out to address "a three-hundred-year history of black people in the theatre." (He has never lacked ambition.) The piece's protagonist, Richard Patterson, is a rather uptight black professor of political philosophy, who is married to a white woman. Patterson relies on his wheat-paste tolerance—he's almost a parody of academic "whiteness"—to help him keep it together in a world that he thinks it's an achievement to belong to. It's hard to tell whether he knows that his docility is a stereotype of black behavior. Maybe it's all an act. Anyway, his world view gets majorly messed with when a black family, in blackface, and with names like Sambo, Mammy, and Topsy, move in next door. These tokens of minstrelsy are loud and disruptive, caricatures of the kind of blackness that Patterson has sought to escape. As tensions between the neighbors mount, certain questions arise, such as: What defines a black man if he has been shaped by racism's idea of him? And is black skin a mask that dictates behavior or does the mask free one to engage with the minstrelsy at the heart of American blackness? "Neighbors" didn't quite come together, because it couldn't: the stage can contain only so many ideas, and sometimes it felt as if Jacobs-Jenkins's weren't entirely worked through. He'd suffered some of the horrors of racism—no black man can avoid them—but he hadn't figured out how to embody that legacy; it took him some time to learn how to sculpt the flesh and blood that would support his characters and their provocations.

Jacobs-Jenkins asks, What can the theatre do, besides talk?

Jacobs-Jenkins worked as an assistant in *The New Yorker's* fiction department from 2007 to 2010, and it was through him that I first heard about Young Jean Lee's identity-based theatre pieces and Thomas Bradshaw's scripts about racism as a form of spiritual and physical debauchery. After I saw Jacobs-Jenkins's play "Appropriate," in 2014, I understood how committed he was to rooting around in and talking back to "the culture"—that is, the theatre history that was capable of producing him and, before him, Sam Shepard and Lorraine Hansberry and Eugene O'Neill, distinctly American voices that contributed to his own. "Appropriate," the story of a white family grappling with the death of its patriarch, is both an homage to and an investigation of writers like Shepard, who drew a map of this country through so many tired living rooms furnished with recrimination and repression.

The frenzy of "Appropriate" (there's a black secret in the attic, as there is in most of American life) led to the beautiful high hysteria of the brilliantly crafted "An Octoroon" (also 2014). From Dion Boucicault's 1859 play "The Octoroon," about a white Southerner who falls in love with a mixed-race woman, Jacobs-Jenkins fashioned a kind of theatre-essay, whose parentheses are filled with dialogue about performing blackness, the theatre as a live art, and the basic concerns that haunt the thinking mind trapped in a body that's defined by skin color, gender, or speech: life makes each of us a target for someone else. "An Octoroon" isn't just an alternative to the irony-free "black American theatre" of Hansberry and August Wilson; it's part of it—and part of many other things, too, because Jacobs-Jenkins's surrealism grows out of naturalism, the strange circumstances that make us open our mouths, hoping to be heard, even as we forget to listen. By experimenting with numerous theatrical genres in a single work, like "An

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL ROGERS

Octoroon" or his new play, "Everybody" (directed by Lila Neugebauer, at the Signature), Jacobs-Jenkins is displaying how serious he is about the form. Again and again, he poses these questions: What can the theatre do, besides talk? What makes a play? Is it love?

With "Everybody," Jacobs-Jenkins has written a play about love—or, rather, a play that shows how impossible it is to write about love—and it fills the heart in a new and unexpected way. Like "An Octoroon," "Everybody" is both a response to and a dismantling of an earlier text: "The Somonyng of Everyman," a fifteenth-century morality play about Christian salvation and how to achieve it. In the original, a Messenger enters, imploring the audience to listen. Then God announces that Everyman has become so craven and materialistic that he can purge himself of these impulses only by dying. Naturally, Everyman doesn't want to die, at least not alone, so he gets Death to agree that he can take a companion on the journey to the other side. Everyman approaches Fellowship, who flakes, and Kindred, who declines, and Good Deeds, who is too weak to make the journey—Everyman has neglected her for too long. After Everyman repents of his sins, Good Deeds does gather her strength, and she calls on Beauty, Discretion, Strength, Knowledge, and Five Wits to join them. But she is the only figure who's willing to go with Everyman into the wormy grave.

Jacobs-Jenkins follows this plot structure, but, instead of Good Deeds, it's Love who accompanies Everybody into the afterlife; Love is as imperfect as all the other figures, but he doesn't forsake Everybody. Thinking about the original script while watching Jacobs-Jenkins's adaptation is like listening to an expert d.j. play two records at once, and at different speeds. The playwright's interest in colloquial speech and in "niceness" as a tactic are fully expressed during the first moments of the play, when Usher (the excellent Jocelyn Bioh, who also plays God and Understanding) takes the stage. Because she's dressed like all the ushers at the Signature, we assume that she is one. But when she continues on long beyond the time it takes to ask us to silence our cell phones and unwrap our candy *now*, all the while smiling "pleasantly," it becomes clear that she, like the Messenger in "Everyman," will be our stern but civil guide into this strange, earthbound terrain.

Everybody is played by one of five actors (there are nine cast members) who is chosen by lottery before the performance. On the evening that I saw the show, Brooke Bloom brought a calm confusion to the role, which was reminiscent, in comedic terms, of the Woody Allen-era Diane Keaton. Her Everybody was a poetic evocation of that cosmic joke otherwise known as life, though her humor was worn down, at times, by scenes that didn't quite work, such as the voice-overs of Everybody's thoughts that play as she eats a hot dog or sits chatting with Kinship or whomever. Or whatever. Are these characters people? Is Love just an idea?

Love (the well-cast Chris Perfetti, who always plays the role) is not an easy emotion. He's the last character Everybody asks to accompany her on her journey, when, of course, he should have been the first. Love is resentful at having been made to wait, and then seemingly vindictive. Before he goes with Everybody, he requires her to strip down to her underwear and run in a circle, reciting over and over, "I don't love how my body keeps changing!" It's a killer moment, one of the best I've seen in contemporary theatre—we are all the cruel custodians of a mortality that we can't prevent—and it goes on for a long time before Love and Everybody disappear into death, to reëmerge as dancing skeletons electrified by eternal being.

Those skeletons reminded me of Antonin Artaud's writing from Mexico, where he did so much of his thinking about the theatre. In a 1936 lecture, he noted, "For me, the essence of Surrealism was an affirmation of life against all caricatures." And it was in this surreal moment that, in my mind at least, all of us sitting in the theatre abandoned the beings we were supposed to be and became atomized into this lovely, wordless physical manifestation of a feeling that Jacobs-Jenkins couldn't control with his considerable intellect but allowed to dance free in his considerable heart. ♦

ON TELEVISION

BEACHES

Monterey murder on "Big Little Lies."

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM

The trailer for HBO's "Big Little Lies" made my heart race, but it also made me wary. The whole project felt like a seduction by someone with big, shiny teeth: so many A-list Hollywood stars, running barefoot on California sand, hands clutching muscular backs in ecstasy, all scored to the urgent bounce of "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone." A murder mystery set on beachfront property, the show seemed, much like "The Affair" and "Revenge" before it, to be aimed squarely at my demographic: women with an equal craving for murder mysteries and beachfront property. More suspiciously, it was written by David E. Kelley, the creator of "Ally McBeal," my least favorite anti-feminist fantasia.

But sometimes a seduction, like a beach house, rewards the investment. "Big Little Lies" is based on a novel by Liane Moriarty, one of many recent dishy dark comedies about liberal moms chafing in their marriages, reduced to competing for spots in the school parking lot. The adaptation trades the book's Australian setting for gleaming Monterey. It's directed by Jean-Marc Vallée, of "Dallas Buyers Club" and "Wild," and he does a wonderful job capturing the luxe bohemia of velvet-rope yoga classes and shabby-chic seaside restaurants, Nancy Meyers kitchens and decks made for perfect sunsets. But while the show begins with a Schadenfreudian air—like a prestige-TV twist on the "Real Housewives" franchises—it deepens. Generous to its characters, even those who begin as clichés, the series becomes a reflection on trauma; at its best moments, it makes risky observations, especially about the dynamics of domestic abuse. Even when it doesn't dig so deep, it's still full of strong performances, including those by a terrific set of child actors, whose unforced sweetness is a reminder of who the victims are when family life turns ugly.

The show is most interesting when it's examining the aftermath of violence.

The story begins with the sound of a person gasping, in either panic or passion. Someone—the identity of the victim is itself a mystery—has been killed during a fund-raiser for a school called Otter Bay. Initially, we learn the details via cable drama's latest pet structure: interrogations by the police, punctuated by flashbacks of the events leading up to the crime, doubling as unreliable voice-overs. "True Detective" pioneered the technique; "The Affair" has used it, too. In "Big Little Lies," the witnesses being questioned aren't the suspects but a Greek chorus of Otter Bay parents, whose put-downs reminded me of the narrator of the opening of Jonathan Franzen's "Freedom," a voyeur who sees the book's main character in coldly satirical terms. If the story were all this contemptuous, it would be brittle stuff.

Instead, those camp zingers ("She grew up wanting to be Betty Grable, I think—ended up Betty Crocker") work in counterpoint to the flawed but not cartoonish women we come to know—and it's that tension that drives the series. Like cast members on a reality show's third season, each woman is hyperconscious of her own "type," and, by extension, how the culture sees her story, through condescending lenses like chick lit and mommy wars. At times, the women embrace those roles. The chirpy, know-it-all Madeline Martha Mackenzie—a Reese Witherspoon character played perfectly by Reese Witherspoon—introduces herself with a showoff's humility. "It doesn't really count," she says, of her side gig in community theatre, contrasting herself with the school's "career mommies." Like Jane Austen's Emma, she adopts a project: Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley), a lower-middle-class single mother, an outsider who gets dismissed by the Greek chorus as "a dirty old Prius parked outside of Barneys." There's also Nicole

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

Kidman, as Celeste, a corporate lawyer turned stay-at-home mom, and Laura Dern, as a Silicon Valley macher whose daughter is bullied at school. Madeline is married to a nice-guy Web designer, played by Adam Scott, but she's rattled by the presence of her ex-husband, a V.C. type who flaunts his yogafied new wife, played by Zoë Kravitz; their second child, who attends Otter Bay; and the family's ostentatiously Zen life style.

As a school battle builds over whether Jane's sweet son Ziggy is the bully in question, Madeline, Jane, and Celeste bond, and not merely in the Team Madeline sense. Six episodes in (I haven't seen the finale), it's pretty clear what sort of revelation is emerging—an overlap of family-abuse histories. But the show isn't, at its core, a whodunit. Like "Happy Valley" and "Top of the Lake," "Big Little Lies" is most interesting when it's examining the aftermath of violence—and the false faces that women put on, rather than risk pity. "I still hope that whoever he is is a nice guy," one character says, musing over an incident from her past. "That, like, maybe that night was just a bad misunderstanding? Or a night gone wrong. Or he had a bad day." It's an exchange that captures the crazy-making quality of abuse, the temptation to rewrite history, erase it—anything to avoid that other standard female role: the victim in a Lifetime movie of the week.

The standout performances are by Nicole Kidman and Alexander Skarsgård, as a couple who are the subject of titillated envy. Celeste is the town's most stylish hostess; Perry is the hot, younger jet-setting husband who can't keep his hands off her. They've got Instagram-pretty twins and a house out of *Architectural Digest*. They're too showily sexual to be grownups—or, at least, that's how the Greek chorus sees them. It's quickly apparent that something else is going on: whenever they're alone, he picks a fight, getting physical fast. Although they seem to have sex non-stop, the arguments and the sex aren't really separate, and the sex itself is only superficially consensual—as episodes go by, it's hard not to suspect that Celeste is consenting, in part, so that she doesn't have to admit that if she didn't agree he wouldn't stop.

These scenes of gray-area marital rape are filmed in ways that hover queasily between pornography and horror. When Celeste struggles, it could be violence or a power play—both she and Perry are complicit in the decision not to clarify that. But the violent sequences also help us understand the story the couple has sold not just to the neighbors but to themselves: that they are simply more passionate than normal people. When this notion begins to unravel in therapy, it's peculiarly touching. As chilling as his character is, Skarsgård makes him more than a Lifetime monster; often, Perry seems to buy his own con, in which he's merely the boyish, insecure satellite of his beautiful wife. The fact that her cage looks enviable makes it harder to acknowledge how dangerous he is; it's easier to carry on their shared mythology.

While I watched Kidman, it was impossible not to think of all her other roles. I first saw her in the terrifying "Dead Calm," in which she faked love for her rapist in order to survive. Then, there was "Eyes Wide Shut," about a woman whose tightly wound husband (played by her tightly wound then husband, Tom Cruise) goes crazy, because he suspects that she once had a sexual fantasy—not even an affair!—about someone other than him. She was even better as the manipulator in "To Die For," playing a girlish spider whose flies had no chance. In each role, there is something waxen and watchful and self-possessed about Kidman, so that, even when she's smiling, she never seems liberated. While other actors specialize in transparency, Kidman has a different gift: she can wear a mask and simultaneously let you feel what it's like to hide behind it.

As Celeste, she keeps lowering her head and raising her eyes, always feminine, glamorous, and diplomatic. It makes it all the more powerful to watch Kidman's eyes connect with someone else's whenever something big happens—when she realizes, over drinks, that Madeline is lying about her marriage, too; when she bubbles with taboo joy at the notion of going back to work. In one lovely scene, Jane tells her new friends how detached she feels, as if she were peering at them from far away rather than sitting with the two of them. As Madeline chatters, Celeste stays quiet, locking eyes with Jane. The camera holds on the two of them, capturing the early alchemy of a friendship—and the suggestion that, even in mean-girl world, women might choose to be allies instead of enemies. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

SCARY PLACES

"Get Out" and "Logan."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The hero of "Get Out" is a young photographer named Chris (Daniel Kaluuya). He is charming, reflective, and a little on the quiet side. His girlfriend is Rose (Allison Williams), and they are heading off for a weekend at her family's home in the country. Her parents have yet to meet Chris, and he's nervous, in part because he is black and Rose is white. "Do they know I'm black?" he asks. "No," she replies, adding, "Should they?" "I don't want to get chased off the lawn with a shotgun," he says. As if.

Daniel Kaluuya and Allison Williams in the first feature directed by Jordan Peele.

Happily, Chris's trepidation is ill-founded. The welcome he receives from Rose's father, a neurosurgeon named Dean (Bradley Whitford), and her mother, Missy (Catherine Keener), a psychiatrist, could not be more effusive. If anything, it is awkwardly warm, with Dean enfolding Chris in a hug on the porch, addressing him as "my man," and hastening to claim—as Rose had predicted—that, given the chance, he would have voted for Barack Obama a third time. What we have here, in other words, is the spectacle, at once touching and comical, of good liberals falling over themselves to prove their moral credentials. With pride, Dean shows off the ethnically varied *objets* that he has gathered on his travels, explaining, "It's such a privilege to be able to experience another person's culture."

The one quirk in this affable setup is the hired help: a groundsman named Walter (Marcus Henderson) and the housekeeper, Georgina (Betty Gabriel), whose beatific expression looks glued into place. Both are African-American; they worked for Dean's father and stayed on. Georgina stares into mirrors, as if something in her features were awry, and, as for Walter, he comes sprinting out of the night, directly at Chris, for no reason whatever. Dinner is a fraught affair, thanks to the attendance of Rose's brother, Jeremy (Caleb Landry Jones), a raggedy hothead, and freakiest of all is Missy's offer, later that evening, to hypnotize Chris—supposedly to cure him of a pesky smoking habit, though he feels himself tumbling down through darkness, under her spell, into what she refers to as "the sunken place."

What *is* that place? And what kind of movie is this, anyway? "Get Out" is the first feature to be written and directed by Jordan Peele, famed for "MadTV" and "Key & Peele." It's a hell of a leap, shedding almost every trace of the sketch format, and pressing ahead with the drastic demands of the story. There's plenty to make you wince, especially once a gaggle of friends and relatives show up at the house the next day, each of them, when introduced to Chris, striving to say the right thing and getting it wrong. An elderly golf pro tells him, "I do know Tiger." A flirt inspects his muscles, glances crotchward, and inquires of Rose, "Is it true?" There is one other black guest, but when Chris offers him a fist bump he politely shakes hands with the fist.

All this sounds like a rousing social farce, and so it is. There are broader and more jagged laughs, too, courtesy of Lil Rel Howery, who plays Rod, Chris's best friend and dog minder, back in the city. But listen to the threatening thuds of Michael Abels's score; wait for those moments, scattered throughout the action, when the winces quicken into jolts and jumps; and consider how much is packed into Peele's terrific title. "Get Out": you could say it to an invasive bogeyman, a discarded lover, an insolent guest, or a guy who needs to leave, right now, in order to save his skin. Some skins, you soon realize, need saving more urgently than others.

If you were forced to fit "Get Out" into a slot, you would have to describe it as a horror film. That is certainly how it's being marketed, and the plot does begin to stream with blood in the final quarter, as pretty much everything, including a deer's antlers, is pressed into service as a homicidal tool. To fans of the genre, though, that kind of feral chaos will be nothing new. What will shock them, rile them, and quite possibly divide them is the fact that race—not gender, not country, not class, but race—accounts for every inch of violence that we see. White on black, black on white, no quarter is given: that's the deal, and it's all the more alarming because Chris, at the start, is so keen to deflect any hint of eth-

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHIE POPE

nic tension (it's a wonderfully calibrated performance by Kaluuya, who is British), and because the whites, likewise, are civil souls, rather than rednecks, who would present too obvious a target. In a delectable detail, Missy's hypnotic aid is not a swinging wristwatch but the tinkle of a teaspoon in a china cup. Appearances are there to be preserved, right up to the instant they crack.

Can a film be too inflammatory for its own good, or are there times, and places, when only fire will suffice? In an interview with the *Times*, Peele, whose mother is white, admitted that the movie was originally intended "to combat the lie that America had become post-racial," and the result is like an all-out attack on a rainbow. Short of making us listen to "Ebony and Ivory" over the closing credits, "Get Out" could hardly be more provocative. There's a scene with a head-stamping, a scene with an exposed brain, and a truly creepy scene with a bowl of Froot Loops. And yet, despite all that, what makes this horror film horrific is the response that it gives to the well-meaning and problem-solving question "Can't we just learn to live together?" To which the movie answers, loud and clear, "No."

Such a sport, Hugh Jackman: strapping, smiling, and patently decent, with a head uninflated by the nonsense of being a star. Never is he more in his element than when bellowing the big numbers from "Oklahoma!" or "Carousel" onstage, and there's not a speck of doubt that, had he been born fifty or sixty years earlier, he would have given Howard Keel a run for his money as the Rodgers-and-Hammerstein shows bounced onto the screen. Instead of which, what has been Jackman's fate, for the past seventeen years? To sprout blades from his knuckles, substitute growls for grins, and cultivate such a density of facial hair that it may well qualify as horticulture. In short, he has been busy playing Logan, a mutant better known as Wolverine, and, if you count cameos, his new film, "Logan," represents the ninth occasion on which Jackman has shouldered the role. These days, Logan walks with a limp and drinks straight from the bottle. His beard has grown badger-gray, and, in a sorry new development, he has to buy reading glasses. If ever there was a time to hang up his claws, that time is now.

The year is 2029. Little has changed, except that the trucks zipping along the freeways appear to be driverless lumps. It is said that no new mutants, of the sort that the "X-Men" franchise has taught us to delight in, have been born for twenty-five years. Yet here's the exception: a girl named Laura (Dafne Keen), who was bred by an illegal bioengineering program in a Mexican laboratory—you know, the usual. Her gift, or her defining curse, is similar to Wolverine's. After escaping, she finds herself alone, until taken in hand by Logan and his grumpy old mentor, Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart), who, despite the age difference—Laura is eleven and he's ninety—takes a shine to the new arrival. The trio sets off across the country, making for North Dakota and the Canadian border, on a quest—derided by Logan—to find a spot called Eden, where other superpowered children are rumored to gather. It took me a while to work out what this road trip reminded me of, but I got there eventually. It's Little Miss Mutant Sunshine!

Like Millie Bobby Brown, in "Stranger Things," Dafne Keen seems both haunted and haunting, her reticence blended with a fierce glare; there are echoes, too, of the young Lukas Haas, in "Witness" (1985). But her character, when roused to vengeance, grows even more savage than Logan, and you have to wonder how easy it is for Keen's parents to watch their daughter launch herself at grown men, tear at their flesh with murderous paws, and, in one case, sever a head. "Logan" is R-rated, and the director, James Mangold, stages bout after bout of frenzied barbarity. At one point, Charles and Laura sit in a hotel room, engrossed in a showing of "Shane" on TV. Plainly, Mangold wants to establish a parallel: Jackman, like Alan Ladd, is standing up for justice and protecting a child. But look at the final shoot-out in the older film, as Shane enters the rich brown shadows of the saloon; look at Jack Palance, carefully moving aside the coffeepot for a cleaner view; look at the dog, wisely skulking out before the killing begins. These quiet images brand themselves on the mind, and the gunshots come as an overwhelming release, whereas when Logan and Laura unleash their furious scythes nothing feels settled or satisfied. The world grinds on, fruitlessly weary and wild. ♦

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 Kim Warp, must be received by Sunday, March 5th. The finalists in the February 13th & 20th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 20th 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

" "

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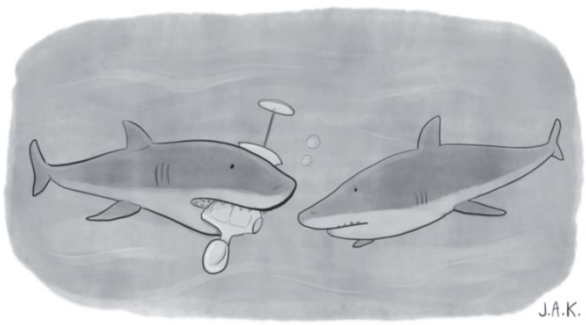
THE FINALISTS

"What do you mean it's your mother's recipe?"
Dean Woolley, London, U.K.

"I'll be damned."
Judith Carter, Gloucester, Mass.

"Wait, we have an oven?"
A. J. Wipfler, St. Louis, Mo.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"The doctor said it might help me quit."
Vincent Conitzer, Chapel Hill, N.C.

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"The March"
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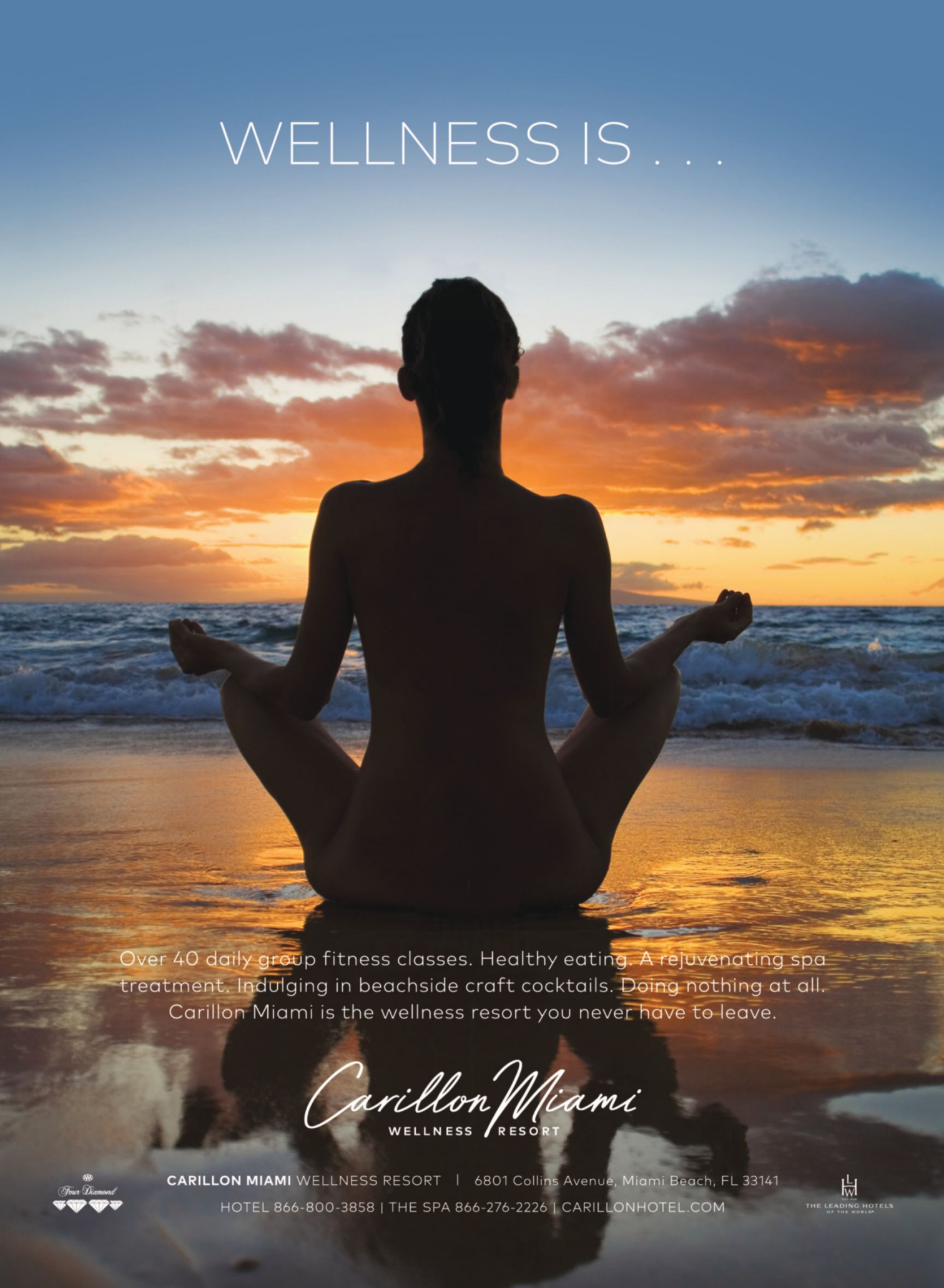
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